



**Czech-Israeli Exchange**  
**Ten Years Together**

**2014-2024**

**Archbishop  
Grammar  
School  
Prague**

**Israel Arts  
and Science  
Academy  
Jerusalem**

On a warm afternoon we arrived in Israel.  
Every other night we ate falafel.  
In Gethsemane we prayed,  
At the Western Wall we wailed,  
"Shall we go to heaven? Shall we go to hell?"  
(IH)



## Three Stars in the Sky

*Ema Kazimírová, contemporary student of AG, 8th grade, exchange 2022/2023*



About a year ago, I was lucky enough to be part of an Israeli-Czech student exchange. When I first heard about it, I immediately knew I wanted to participate. It was such a unique opportunity!

When we arrived in Israel, my first impressions couldn't have been better. The students who greeted us were very open and friendly. We stopped to eat dinner together and get to know each other. The conversation was so easy and natural, it felt like we were already good friends. All of my nervousness disappeared.

In the following week, we explored Jerusalem and we also took a trip to the desert. I can't possibly list all of the amazing

memories I have, because there are so many. I and my friend were excited about literally everything and it was very interesting to experience this together with our Israeli friends. For them, it was just normal, but for us, everything was new and exotic – the food (we had a LOT of falafel), the weather (25 degrees in December!?), the architecture (I loved that all of the houses were built with the same stone), the language... We had a lot of fun when we tried to teach each other some basic phrases in Czech and Hebrew. We especially liked the word “yala” (=let's go) and we used it at every possible opportunity, which our Israeli friends found very amusing.

One of my best memories from our week in Israel was spending the weekend with the students' families. I was lucky to be staying with a wonderful family who live in the north of Israel. They were all very kind and generous to us, I felt very much at home with them.





They took us on a trip to the Sea of Galilee and to Nazareth, where we went to a church. We also celebrated shabbat and went to synagogue together. It was so special for me to share our different faiths and cultures. The atmosphere was really open and I felt like we were really welcome there. One thing I especially loved was how peaceful the village was during Shabbat. We took a walk in the evening and there were no cars at all. Our friend told us that shabbat ends when you can see three stars in the sky. I really liked that and I often remember it when I look at the stars.

For the next few months, I couldn't wait for our friends to come to Prague. When they finally arrived, it was like we saw each other yesterday. I loved showing them all of my favourite places in Prague like *Vyšehrad*, *Petřín* or *Malá strana*. I also really enjoyed it when we watched an Israeli comedy together - *Halfon Hill Doesn't Answer* – I think

Czech and Israeli humour is actually quite similar. We continued our language lessons and even got so far as to make short sentences. I really love the sound of the language. Now when I am choosing what to study at college, I am actually kind of considering studying Hebrew.

At the weekend, we went on a trip to Karlštejn castle. We ate traditional Czech food and had some fun walking on mud, which was very unusual for our friends. During our short time together, we became really close. When we said goodbye at the airport, we were crying.

All in all, this exchange was one of the best experiences I've ever had. I have so many amazing memories from it and I recall them very often. So far, we've kept in touch with our friends on social media and I hope we will continue. When we were leaving Israel, I and my friend made a promise that we would come back one day and I believe that we will.



## Exchange of Insights

*Samuel Soukup, student of Computer Science – Artificial Intelligence at Faculty of Mathematics and Physics, Machine Learning engineer, Charles University, exchange 2018/2019*



In September 2018, I applied for the IASA-AG exchange. After completing the given homework, much to my elation, my application was accepted.

Upon landing at Ben Gurion Airport, I worried about the language barrier and dietary differences. However, meeting my partner Omri and tasting the delicious falafel put my fears to rest. The heartwarming welcome by our host family and the delicious meals made me feel at home.

We spent our time understanding Israeli culture, visiting iconic places, and participating in discussions on contemporary issues. Unique experiences like hearing a busy street go silent during Sabbath and hearing about the deep-seated conflicts left a lasting impression. Our parting was brief as we met again in Prague.

Hosting our Israeli friends in Prague was insightful. Watching them enjoy our typical activities, like our dance class evening (“prodloužená”), was exciting. And similarly, for us their take on the Sabbath dinner (even with some flying bread) was unforgettable.

Fast forward to a year later, I revisited Israel and met with Omri again. As we talked, we found another cultural difference. We enjoy beer in pints, they savour it like we do wine.

We've kept in touch ever since, sharing significant life events and concerns during crises and connecting with friends. The exchange gave me a profound understanding of the region's issues, exposing the personal experiences of cohabiting cultures and the harsh realities they face.

In conclusion, the exchange exceeded my expectations, as I initially hoped to visit Israel, but left with invaluable experiences and insights into Israeli culture, which has enriched my perspective on life.



## Formative Experience and Lifelong Friendship

*Michaela Mlčková (Válková), Data Analyst at Agilent Technologies, Denmark, exchange 2016/2017*



Seven years have passed since the Israeli exchange, a profoundly formative experience during my teenage years. Reflecting on it now, I must admit that I do not recall the intellectual content from all the discussions, but it is rather the observational and emotional experiences that continue to resonate with me.

I was amazed how friendly and welcoming the Israeli students were to us from the very beginning. The introductions did not feel awkward at all, they instantly started asking us about our trip, trying to learn our names and just having a natural conversation that almost felt like we had known each other from before. During the group activities and discussions, I noticed that they were also notably more outspoken than us and unafraid of others' judgment when sharing their thoughts — a quality I still find challenging to adopt.

I vividly remember being mesmerized by the vibrant energy and vitality of the old town of Jerusalem. I was impressed by the narrow labyrinth-like streets, the distinctive color of the Jerusalem stone, shops where you should argue about price, and the coexistence of various religious groups in such a confined space. It felt like a dream when we explored various local rooftop shortcuts that led us away from the noisy tourist areas.

On a personal note, I believe I've made a lifelong friend in Noga. We still keep each other updated and try to visit each other when possible. I visited Noga in Israel about a year after the exchange, and it has probably been the greatest adventure of my life. I remember the trip being filled with a variety of iconic situations: In Jerusalem, we revisited the rooftops where we watched chickens and cats, played cards, and chatted with strangers. I found the best souvenir in a street library: an Ultra-Orthodox book about finding the commandments, in the style of *Where's Waldo*. We overnighted under the stars by the Sea of Galilee. We found a



last-minute place to stay in Haifa through Couchsurfing, hosted by a Technion. I don't think I will ever be able to get such an authentic experience when travelling again. After that, the two of us also managed to meet in Czechia and in Denmark, my current country of residence.

I remember being very excited to learn the Hebrew language, as I was drawn by its writing and the sound of it. At some point I even aspired to major in Hebraic studies at the university. Eventually, the plan didn't work out, but learning Hebrew is still on my bucket list, along with hiking the *Shvil Israel* in its entirety. I believe the experiences and conversations that I absorbed in Israel during and after the exchange have in its way affected and shaped my approach to life, opened my eyes and developed some independence and courage. For example, it motivated me to fulfil my aspiration of living and studying abroad. I am grateful for having had the opportunity to take part in the exchange and would like to express my thanks to the teachers from both schools for making this experience possible for students over the past ten years.

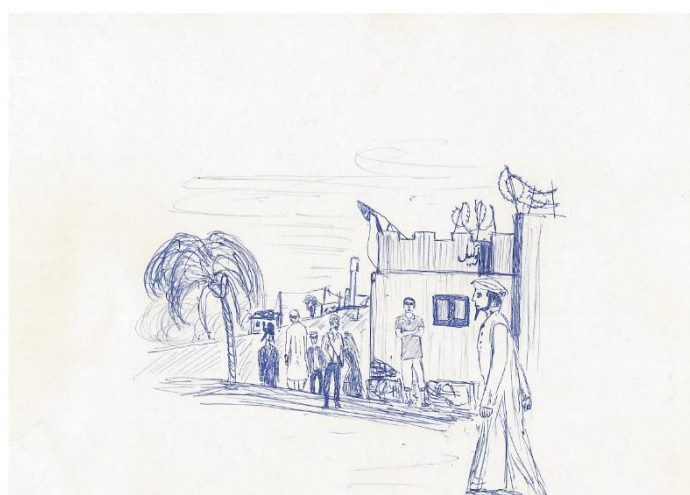


## More Important Things than Memorizing Data

*Richard Mašek, Law Student at Faculty of Law, Charles University, Exchange 2016/2017*



When our exchange program coordinator Ivana Hajičová announced the call for applications to the exchange program with Israel, I did not hesitate for a second. I had a number of reasons to reject the offer – my high school study was coming dangerously close to graduation exams, I had to get ready for my university selection process, and (as any teenager) I had a lot of day-to-day business going on. And after all, I had already gone through a language exchange program before. But I was sure that there was a different kind of experience ahead of me. There is a lot of discussion about what the school should bring into your life. And people say that there are more important things than memorizing data.



Some say that it is about experience and self-development. I was sure that the Israeli exchange program was just about that. That it meant more than studying. And I was right. I will always be grateful for the opportunity to take part in this program.

The exchange program provided me and my fellow classmates with unique real-life experiences. Frankly, it was a great platform for bonding. Ever since we were welcomed by our Israeli partners at the airport, we



were invited to share the experience of their families and communities. We met their parents, brothers, and sisters. We discussed with their teachers. And we were discovering the streets of Jerusalem. Once, we were tasked to find one specific gravestone in an old Mamilla cemetery. It was late in the evening, so we used flashlights and we had to be quiet. We all did our best but at the end of the day we had to rely on our Israeli partner because only he was able to navigate through the ancient Hebrew epitaphs.

For me personally, it was incredibly interesting to find out more about security and civil service in Israel. As a country which is constantly confronted by foreign and domestic adversaries, Israel provides many interesting insights into the organization of the state apparatus. To this day, I remember the permanent presence of law enforcement and the military among regular civilians. All citizens complied with strict security policies which affected their everyday life. In their families, at the market, at the school or in the park. The barrier between the state and a citizen (which we tend to appreciate so much in Europe) seemed invisible in Israel. I have used many of these experiences in my later professional and academic life which I dedicated to law and public administration. Also, as I have already said, there was a lot of time to strengthen the friendships among me and my classmates. During the trip to the desert or when we were walking through the Jerusalem catacombs, we had to cooperate and use our common strengths to overcome individual weaknesses. And for this reason, the exchange program with Israel is of great service to our school as it creates and supports the bonds between Archbishop Grammar School students. It was not a surprise for me that when I met my former classmates recently, we were talking about our travel to Israel.

I wish the best of luck to the Israeli exchange program this year and for many years to come.



## Ten Years of Long Distance Friendship

*Anna Schubertová (Martinovská), PhD student of Comparative Literature at Faculty of Arts, Charles University, exchange 2014/2015*



Our first exchange to Israel took place 10 years ago. My memories from the stay are all mixed up into a big sensory bundle: welcome cookies in the middle of the night when we arrived, floating in the Dead Sea with the salt burning on the skin (much less pleasant than I imagined), sense of wonder at Jerusalem vibrating with colors, smells and emotions, the uneasiness caused by the omnipresent machine guns, the amazing hummus dinner in a restaurant. Despite the sense of otherness, we didn't feel like tourists but as visitors: we and the Israeli students got on well from the start, talking about our families, philosophy, religion, politics, sexuality. I remember my amazement at how smart and outspoken everyone was, confident to argue their political stance in front of the whole class. We talked a lot about how different their lives and futures are with the requirement to go to the army, something we knew abstractly, but didn't realize in full. Despite distances, we established deep connections. It is my



privilege to be friends with Shira and Taili, two amazing women from the group, up until now. We only see each other once in a few years, but whenever we do, we catch up quickly. Drinking beer in Prague, having amazing food in Tel Aviv, going for a walk in Kutná Hora, shopping at the market in Jerusalem or recently dancing at my wedding... Our continuing friendship is the best gift this exchange gave me.

## Teachers Involved in the Exchange

### Israeli teachers



Liora Harari Amedi (Religion), Yael Justus-Segal (History), Gadi Prudovsky (Philosophy)  
Others: Edna Rupin (Homeroom, Literature), Michael Wolpe (Music)



## Czech teachers



Ivana Hajičová (Eng.), Martina Moravcová (Eng., Czech), Daniela Vejvodová (Philosophy)

Others: Jan Hajič (History), Klára Paseková (French), Arnaud Tchokonté (French)

## “Departments” across borders



## Students Involved in the Exchange

I. 2014 February 21 – 27, 2015 April 13-19



Kryštof Cejp, Salvatore D'Agostino, Veronika Flanderová, Natálie Košťálová, Filip Magalhaes, Anna Martinovská, Michaela Mecová, Anežka Santolíková, Štěpán Svoboda, Jáchym Vopařil, Matylda Votavová, Lucie Vovsová

Noa Benbaji, Tal Gross, Shlomtzion Evron, Taili Hardiman, Noa Hen, Geffen Horowitz, Maayan Karl, Imanuel Koren, Guy Meirav, Keren Paldi, Naomi Rubinchik, Kedem Snir, Shira Yahav, Amit Zaguri



## II. 2015/2016 February 17-25, April 4 -11



Kryštof Cejp, (Martin Fischer), Tonda Hynek, (Anežka Ibllová), Hedvika Klímová, Martin Klepetko, Bára Knotková, Tereza Martinovská, Markéta Pelantová, Anna Skočdoplová, Matylda Votavová

Aram Abu-Saleh, Yuval Batsha, Eitan Ben Elya, Emmi Cohen, Inbal Currasso, Raqefet Elkarat, Matan Erel, Ella Katz, Guy Meyers, Ida Rabinovich, Shir Ventura-Amsellem, Yanay Wolf





### III. 2016/2017 November 17-24, April 18-24



Jakub Březina, David Holub, František Hruban, Matěj Korčák, Zdeněk Kotrlý, Vojtěch Kutil, Martin Křížek, Richard Mašek, Martin Novák, Tomáš Reichel, Julie Stodolová, Michaela Válková

Omri Ganchrow, Talia Helenei Goldsmith, Mor Divshi, Tal Koren, Noa Moalem, Dana Navon, Noa Noy, Zohar Peleg, Ilana Rubinov, Yotam Tichover, Shimson Wiesen, Noga Yekutieli



## IV. 2017/2018 Nov. 30-Dec. 7, April 8-15



Jolana Chrástová, Cecylia Linková, Markéta Macounová, Valeriya Marikutsa, Šimon Mlček, Dagmar Smetanová, Klára Sousedíková, Magdaléna Stodolová, Jan Svoboda, Veronika Vacková, Gabriela Grünová, Alžběta Kameníková

Tomer Ben Shimon, Gal Ben Gershon, Naomi Sarah Bronner, Yahel Caspi, Avishai Shalom Ella, Ron Justus-Segal, Shoham Sahar Kisling, David Eyal Ruppin, Eytan Shinan, Daniel Eliezer Salomon, Nimrod Shai



## V. 2018/2019 November 22-29, April 1-8



František Kloda, Anežka Křivánková, Jiří Láska, Klára Lopuchovská, Jakub Matějů, Anežka Mrzálková, Eliška Oplová, Hana Patočková, Karolína Pelantová, Veronica Procházková, Johana Půčková, Michaela Rašková, Samuel Soukup, Klára Španělová, Otakar Šubrt

Tome Shmuel Bendetz, Anael Cohen, Tamari Rivlin Cohen, Adi Dery, Dikla Gilan, Shahar Leder, Ariel Pinhas Monzon, Yuval Nadir, Yasmin Ricci-Yahav, Guy Shapira, Ofri Shefie, Omri Sheffer, Ittai Straschnov, Naomi Turetzky, Ohav Haya Turgeman



## VI. 2019/2020 October 31 – November 7, covid



Julie Baboráková, Magda Částková, Marie Čížková, Veronika Fimbingerová, Emma Gerginová, Dominika Hadravová, Martin Hudlička, Lucie Lochmanová, Emma Pěchoučková, Oliver Rákosník, Anna Rosenbaumová, Zuzana Rosenbaumová, Magdalena Slováková, Anna Šípová, Anna Termerová

Uri Argaman, Noam Dekel, Naomi Ella, Daniel Forkush, May Gottlieb, Ofek Hagi, Rom Havivyan, Ori Lavi, Maya Lev, Nimrod Nakdimon, Mor Nelson, Stav Vered, Nitzan Weiss



## VII. 2022/2023 Nov. 27 – Dec. 5, April 13-20



Ema Kazimírová, Marie Křivánková, Ondřej Lesák, Daniel Matej, Linda Xochitl Součková, Vojtěch Sýs, Josefina Vrbenská, Marie Zemanová

Aviv Ben-Dor, Shahar Dror, Alon Ezrahi, Ella Kalmanson, Maya Naaman, Michaela Sagiv, Yuval Shahr, Ellay Shalev, Chana Shenhav, Roni Tzur



## VIII. 2023/2024 April 8-14



Emma Stella Bělohradská, Ella Burkertová, Karolína Grymová, Alena Horská, Magdalena Jansová, Ester Jobová, Aneta Lišťanská, Eliška Hovořáková, Anna Kábová, Vilém Kolář, František Polydor, Ada(m) Štrajt

Shira Bargad, Tzlil Inbar, Eyal Klin-Oron, Reut Kujman, Itamar Livne, Ayala Muller, Naama Ravid, Itamar Shoham, Nofar Shuman, Gabriella Vida Troen



# Tiny Tales or Little Moments Spent Together

2014

## On Jews and Christians (Ivana)

My parents were Jewish runaways from Germany to South Africa. At the age of fifteen I came to Israel. And I decided to convert to Christianity. My parents were horrified, "How can you join them after what they did to us?!!" We struck a deal: I would wait for ten years to make sure my decision was thoroughly contemplated and firm. And if I didn't change my mind, my parents wouldn't object any more. Ten years later I was baptized, in 1994 I joined the Jesuits, in 2000 I was ordained priest and now serve Hebrew speaking Catholics and migrant workers and asylum seekers as Patriarchal Vicar. (Fr. David Neuhaus SJ)

Daniel is an ethnic Jew. According to the Law of Return he asked for Israeli citizenship. Lo and behold, he arrived in his Carmelite cloak. If you are Christian, you are not a Jew, i.e. you cannot become an Israeli citizen. Fr. Daniel got his citizenship in the end – as a Righteous among the Nations (in 1962).

## Shalom Shabbat (Anička)

It's Friday afternoon, Shabbat is beginning in less than an hour. Compared to our Sunday in liberal Europe it feels like a real holiday here in Israel. The girls have disappeared into their rooms and they are getting ready for the Shabbat dinner. A group of students is decorating the dining hall. In a few minutes the public transportation will stop running until the next evening.

Two girls, who are really "religious", compared to their rather liberal classmates, are explaining to us, how to prepare a snack for the trip to the zoo scheduled for the following day (the English word "religious" is most fitting in this context, because the Czech equivalent for the term "believer" is not accurate – a Jew can keep rules and still be a non-believer).

"We should prepare the snack now, because we are not allowed to cook tomorrow. What we could do, is bring some vegetables with us and cut them up there."

"Wait, you are not allowed to cut anything on Shabbat!"

"Of course, you are! You are not allowed to wash the dishes, but cutting the vegetables is just fine."

"Nonsense, on the contrary!"

"No way!"

"I mean it, really."

"Amit, what do you think?"

The discussion continues for a while, but it doesn't lead to a satisfactory result.

"Oh dear, we are so NOT religious," the girls conclude and laugh.

## To the army (Anežka)

"Which university do you want to attend?"

"Well, I don't know yet. When I graduate from IASA, I'm joining the army and then we'll see."

"The army? Aren't you scared?"

"Well, I'm not going to fight, you know..."

"I see, and what are you going to do then?"

"Most of the people from this school won't fight. We usually do the technical work, computers and stuff. Many girls end up making coffee for the soldiers. In practice just around a third of the recruits really go and fight. You may also do social work to avoid army. Orthodox Jews and physically challenged people are pardoned, so some people misuse this and pretend they are lunatics. But they are viewed as idlers or cowards."

"I see. And do you think it would be better if there was no army after school?"

"Well, I actually don't know, for me it is a matter of course. I can't even imagine not going. Everybody goes to the army!"

## 2016

### **The Siren** (Raqefet)

We waited for the tram – a usual moment in Prague. Then suddenly the siren surprised us. We, the Israelis, jumped immediately. I could see the worried faces. But the Czechs looked normal and life around us went on as usual. After we realized that there is no Holocaust day in the Czech Republic and that the missiles from Gaza can't reach that far we asked what the siren was for. "It's for emergency cases, just a drill," the teacher said. I felt like an idiot. "Why are you so alarmed?" I asked myself. "It's only a drill."

### **Metro Station** (Eitan)

"Before we go to the next metro, I need to tell you that you should wait for everyone to get off the metro before you get on it."  
 "Oh sorry, I didn't notice."  
 "Yeah, because you got on it and then everyone got confused."

### **Czech Passover** (Ida)

"We have this tradition in Passover, when all the boys make whips that are made of twigs and they need to whip the girls with it. In return they get presents from the girls."  
 "What??"  
 "Yes, but it's for the benefit of the girls. They become younger and more beautiful."  
 "What??"  
 "For example, look at Emmi. You can tell she doesn't participate in this tradition." :D

### **In church** (Emmi)

It is really cold in this church. Everyone is sitting down straight. Their gazes never leave the priest. There is an echo all around. And it feels as if the walls, the paintings, the statues were all coming to life. The organ starts playing and everyone is singing.  
 This never would have worked in Israel, we have far less talent for harmonizing.

### **Israeli manners** (Liora)

At the beginning I felt uncomfortable. Everything here is so aesthetic and efficient

and organized. You have to walk quickly and be just on time, everyone is so elegant.

Michael was the first to say – we have different time and it is OK. It is not inferior, it is different. I love to walk slowly, experience the moment and not organize it.

At some point this year (I think after our trip to the desert), I just felt it. Maybe we have some difference in our behaviour code. And I am a sensitive and very polite person but I still don't have to apologize. I won't feel inferior in front of great Europe. I am great as well.

"Well, there is nothing like European manners," Daniela said.

### **Public transport** (Yannay)

"Run, run, we'll miss the train." Finally, we missed the train. We were standing in the metro station and I was looking at those red electronic letters that tell you when the next train is coming.

"It will come in two minutes!"

"Yeah, I know."

"So why did we have to run like crazy?"

"Because, obviously, I did not want to miss the train."

### **On being religious** (Kryštof)

We are discussing religion. The Israeli students ask us:

"You guys are all Christians?"

"Well, yeah, most of us."

"OK, but are you, like, religious Christians?" they continue asking.

We don't understand.

"Of course we are religious Christians, what kind of question is that?"

"I mean – do you believe in God?"

"Yes, that is the condition! You can't be a Christian and not believe in God, that's a contradiction. Then you are just an atheist."

Our Israeli friends are astonished.

### **Good manners** (Tonda)

We were just about to leave our train so we were getting ready. I, as a real gentleman, started to help my exchange partner, who happened to be a girl, to put her coat on, but in the next moment I stopped abruptly for she asked me, what the hell I was doing. She had



absolutely no idea, what was going on. I tried to explain that there is a kind of behaviour called "good manners" and one way to behave according to them, for men, is to be polite and nice to women, for example to help them with putting a coat on.

But she just couldn't understand: "Why would you help me, if I can do it perfectly on my own?"

### **Time Paradox** (Hedvika)

The family Anna and I stayed in lived in a city close to Jerusalem. In the evening we went for a walk to a local park. There was a huge empty concrete pool, so we asked our host if there is supposed to be water in it. He answered that it fills only when it rains; we asked how often that is and he said: "Oh, about once every three years."

There were also big models of dinosaurs scattered around the park with signs describing them. To these he said: "The year in which they lived used to be written on the signs, but since according to the Jews the world didn't exist then, they had to take them down and replace them."

### **How much is it?** (Markéta)

We were sitting on the grass when a girl came to us with a cup of hot chocolate in her hands.

"Hey, this chocolate is really good. Do you want to taste it?"

"Hmm, you are right, it's delicious. How much did that cost?"

"50 Crowns."

"That's actually quite expensive."

"What? Expensive?" an Israeli student asks in surprise. "For us it's eight shekels and that's half of our normal price in Israel."

"Here in the Czech Republic we could buy two beers for the same price. So it's expensive for us."

"Incredible. By the way, do you usually count the price in beers?"

"Yes, beer is a universal measure. We are just a beer-loving country."

### **Locking the door** (Bára)

"Wait, you forgot to lock the door."

"No, it's alright. We almost never lock it."

"Are you serious?"

"Yeah. There's no point in it."

"But aren't you scared that someone's gonna rob you?"

"Not at all. Maybe if we lived in Tel Aviv, we'd lock the door. But it's completely unnecessary here. Why are you surprised? Do you always lock the door in Prague?"

"Always. People would probably think you're crazy if you didn't."

"Really? That's weird..."

### **Flower relativism** (Daniela)

We are visiting a party at Hedvika's house in the evening. The guests cram on the staircase of our school and they cannot wait for the evening to come. One of the Israeli teachers is carrying a bouquet.

"Can I ask you a question?" she asks her Czech colleague worriedly.

"Yes, of course."

"I'm afraid I didn't pick a proper bouquet. I hope Mrs Klímová will not be offended."

"Let me have a look... I see, roses, I think they are perfectly alright!"

"Well, I mean, in Israel roses are the plainest flowers ever. Shouldn't I have rather bought tulips?"

"You might have, no question. But why should the tulips be fancier than roses?"

### **Shabbat** (Martin)

"Hi Martin and Tonda. Did you sleep well?"

"Yeah, we did, thanks."

It was almost twelve o'clock on Saturday in Mattan's house near Jerusalem. Saturday means Shabbat in Israel – and even "non-religious" people like Mattan (our exchange partner) celebrate it. We ate brunch (breakfast + lunch) and the plan for that day was to hike, to visit the former Arab village on the hill called Sataf.

While hiking we were impressed by the great nature which was almost the same as for example Abraham saw it.

As we finally reached it, Mattan prepared Indian tea and we just sat and talked. Then I realized that I personally do not celebrate Sunday like that, which is a pity in my opinion.

**2018****Seeing Prague for the first time** (Ron)

On the first day we walked around and some of us saw Prague for the first time. It was breathtaking! After that we got on some boats and saw the city from a different perspective and I remember saying and thinking how amazing it all looks. And I realized that the Czech group really didn't see what I was seeing, to them it was just another metro station on their way to school and for me it was like seeing a new world. Maybe it is a part of the reason why we walk slower.

**From the outside or inside?** (Avishai)

It is one thing to see Prague as a tourist, and it is an altogether different experience to see Prague from inside a person's own house. I saw how happy people were to hear a little bad Czech as opposed to good English. They seem to really appreciate the effort, even if the result is not perfect. So now I know that to see a city for its history and architecture one must go as a tourist. To see the city for its people one must talk with them. (It also saves a lot of time getting around the city, especially with that extremely complicated metro system.)

**Frisbee** (Nimrod)

In the evening we went to the park and played frisbee. All the nice people and politeness disappeared at once and we all became competitive monsters whose goal is one: to win the game. Even though we lost, it was one of the best experiences here. There was absolutely no violence.

**Dancing in Prague** (Naomi)

I don't think I imagined the trip to Prague would involve so much dancing.

We went to a music center, where they played Czech folk music. There was a dance lesson, and I somehow found myself dancing the polka. Or at least trying to. At some point, Yahel and I became a danger to ourselves and others, so we stopped.

A few days later we had another dance lesson, but we had each other for teachers. The Czech

students taught us a dance they had learned in Kindergarden (Mazurka), and we taught them the Hora. Then we all danced the macarena.

**It is all about Putin** (Gadi)

This is my second visit to Radio Free Europe. It is the second time that we meet a high-profile impressive journalist that grew up in the USSR. And for the two women the diagnosis of our troubles in the world – wars, poverty, human-rights violation – was the same: it all comes back to Putin. The picture is so clear. They know more than we. Their arguments are persuasive. But something rings a warning bell for me: it is too reductive, somehow they are blind to everything else.

And still: he is so demonic!

**On a religious note** (Liora)

I liked the visit in the Israeli synagogue at Nachlaot. It was a small place and the peytan (Jewish liturgic) was modest but talented. His voice was peaceful and full of longing. He was very liberal and humane.

Usually when I go to churches I don't feel religious feelings. The statues and pictures are something I'm not used to. But I very much enjoyed the visit at Salvator church. Priest Tomáš Halík welcomed us and I think the things he said were humane, liberal and full of respect. He was talking about seeing God in the other's face. I felt there was God at this place.

**The Ambassador** (Gadi)

You don't expect much when you attend a memorial ceremony. After all, it is just a ritual. So we stood in the square and listened to people reading names of men and women – Czech Jews – that were murdered in the Holocaust.

A man in a fancy suit approached the stand. One of the many officials. He read the names in English – I did not detect any foreign accent. He finished the reading, paused for a second and added, "These people were all murdered – by my own countrymen."

**Old City in Jerusalem** (Gabi)

When we were walking through the Old City in Jerusalem, it was something totally different from the Old City in Prague, or generally different from Prague. Everyone seemed different, everybody talked different and the funniest thing was that when we wanted to buy something, everybody haggled. And if you don't haggle, they will get mad. This wouldn't happen in Prague.

**The Dinner** (Madla)

The thing I enjoyed the most in Israel was when I could experience the Shabbat dinner in the family. To feel the mood and see the habits and, of course, taste the food, which was absolutely amazing!

**The Shabbat** (Jolana)

The most interesting experience which happened in Israel was the Shabbat dinner. It took place at my exchange partner's Daniel. I really had no idea what it would look like and it was amazing. On the table there was so much food and after the dinner we were so full that we could not move. But the thing I liked most was that the family was together and they just talked to each other. It wasn't like in some families in our country, where people just work at the weekend and are not together.

**The Shabbat dinner** (Šimon)

What was really a kind of authentic experience for me in Israel was the Shabbat dinner at Eitan's grandparents. Singing before the dinner starts, washing hands according to the Jewish traditions or praying after the meal. The last thing was really surprising for me since we are used to praying before we eat.

**Take your time** (Madla)

The thing that surprised me and fascinated me was how often we had to wait for the Israeli students when we went from place to place. We made fun of them because we had never met anybody who would walk so slowly. But they had a very good excuse. Their ancestors needed forty years to cross the desert.

**Being ever so silent** (Martina)

I wonder what it is that makes people ask questions and voice their opinion. We cannot blame everything on the fifty years of communism and/or being browbeaten by authorities. What is it with us/about us that we often want to be invisible?

**My best experience in Israel** (Markéta)

My fondest memory from Israel is when we were on a beach. The beach was full of shells and the sun was setting. Some people went to swim but not that many because it was a little cold. We ate dates and figs and we spoke about many things for a long time. It was the most beautiful sunset I have ever seen.

**Landscapes** (Ivana)

One of the things I greatly appreciate about our visits both in Israel and in the Czech Republic are the trips out of the city into the countryside. I believe landscapes can offer you a better understanding of the people who live in them.

Walking along the Mediterranean shoreline – moments of solitude, feeling the ground, the sand, the rocks, the little shells with your feet, picking them up in your hands. The warm breeze touching your cheeks. It is December back home – cold, windy, wet, gray skies falling onto the ground. Nothing blooms in December. As I turn the corner of a rock I catch a glimpse of tiny crocuses. And behind another rock there is a cluster of daffodils, typical spring flowers for us. We'll have to wait for them to bloom at home for four more months.

That was my biggest surprise in Israel this time.

**The Place** (Vali)

I was lucky this year to visit Israel. This country became a real revelation to me. As for Jerusalem, it is truly a holy place. The place I will always remember is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. There were many people from all over the world there and there was a long line waiting to see the Tomb of Jesus.

Everywhere there was something beautiful, precious and holy.

### Yad Vashem (Šimon)

The Museum of Holocaust really impressed me. The whole area has its specific atmosphere, which was strengthened even more by the rainy weather the day we visited there.

### Churches and dragons (Martina)

Křivoklát – little wooden monsters on the top of the wooden pews. Pleasant to touch – especially the one that looks a bit like a turtle, while, in fact, it is a small dragon. Hagrid would like it here, I guess.

### What is “normal” (Šimon)

Generally – staying outside, wearing only a shirt in December, picking small oranges right from the tree in front of Eitan’s house or swimming in the sea in winter – these are things we cannot regard as “normal” in the Czech Republic.



## Out of the City

### An overview of trips



- February 2014: Massada, Dead Sea, Ein Gedi
- April 2015: Theresienstadt Ghetto, lecture on music in Theresienstadt (Wolpe)
- February 2016 Mitzpe Ramon, Makhtesh Ramon Crater
- April 2016: Roztoky in Prague-West District (linocut and mosaic workshops)
- November 2016: Wadi Og, Wadi Qelt, St. George´s Monastery, Dead Sea
- April, 2017: Kryštofovo údolí (Christopher´s valley), paper mill workshop in Papyrea
- December 2017: Acco and Habonim Beach
- April 2018: Nižbor, workshop at Nižbor in Rückl glassworks, Křivoklát Castle
- November 2018: Kfar Masaryk kibbutz, drawing on porcelain, Habonim Beach
- April 2019: baroque Hospital Kuks, old pharmacy
- November 2019: "Mekorot", Eshkol Visitor Center, Arbel mountain, The Sea of Galilee
- December 2022: Ein Gedi – Wadi Arugot, upper pools
- April 2023: Kutná Hora, workshop at Printing Press Museum, silver mine
- April 2024: trip to Karlštejn Castle

## Lectures, Debates, Events...

### An overview of educational activities



- **Regular events**

Tour to Jewish Museum and Prague Castle with Karel Pacovský

Catholic mass in St. Salvator Church

Sabbath gathering for dinner, blessing, candle lighting, songs

- **February 2014**

Conversation with Father Neuhaus about Christian community in Israel in IASA

Martina's class on Kafka's *A Country Doctor*

Hanan Harif's lecture on Prague intellectual Jewry in the first third of the 20th century (Kafka's *The Bridge*)

Joint learning – reflections on contemporary issues in education in Israel.

- **April 2015**

Class on Hrabal's work and literary walk around Libeň with Martina

Visit to Lauder school in Prague – lesson of Hebrew

Debate about forgiveness led by Daniela

Light show *Wonderful Circus* in *Laterna Magica*

Joint workshop of creative writing led by Daniela ("Tiny Tales")

▪ **February 2016**

Discussion about Zionism led by Gadi  
Joint reading with Gadi on Enlightenment from *A Revolution of the mind* by Jonathan Israel  
Martina's class on Kafka  
Concert in Mormon Center  
Movie night in Shir's house  
Discussion with Czech Middle East correspondent Jakub Szantó

▪ **April 2016**

Hrabal tour around Libeň led by Martina  
Joint workshop of creative writing led by Daniela ("Tiny Tales")  
Garden party at Hedvika's  
Hm Music group at Malostranská beseda

▪ **November 2016**

Meeting with Father Neuhaus – Christian community in Israel (Ha-Rav Kook St.)  
Concert of Music department students with their Austrian guests (YMCA)  
Debating comic books about Israel (Guy Delisle, Joe Sacco), led by Gadi and Daniela

▪ **April 2017**

Joint reading of Zygmund Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust*  
Visit to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Russian-Ukrainian conflict  
Organ concert at St. Ignatius  
Theatre workshop – students' performances (*The Conquest of the North Pole* by Jára Cimrman, *Schuster* by Hanoch Levine)

▪ **November/December 2017**

Meeting with Father Rafic at his church (Ha-Rav Kook St.)  
Joint learning with Martina on Hrabal  
Joint learning with Gadi on censorship  
Meeting with a Jewish liturgics musician, Nahlaot

▪ **April 2018**

Joint learning about Hrabal led by Martina  
Visit to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty  
Class on Primo Levi's short stories *Lilith* led by Gadi  
Joint workshop of creative writing led by Ivana ("Tiny Tales")

▪ **November 2018**

Oriental concert at Beit Avi Chai  
Meeting with Fr. Alberto

Joint learning with Dov Abramson at Beit Avi Chai

Joint learning with Liora – The Israeli society through Hip-Hop song

Joint learning – Israeli Art with Adi Shalmon

▪ **April 2019**

Visit to marionette theatre Říše loutek

Václav Havel Library – debate about Havel’s *Letter to Husák* led by Daniela

Educational programme “Space for manipulation” in DOX gallery

▪ **November 2019**

Joint study about water in Israel

Lecture on religious aspects of water by Dr. Moshe Blidstein

Trip to rainwater harvesting system in elementary school (lecture: Amir Yechieli)

Seminar on wet poetry led by Martina (Karel Erben’s poem *The Water Goblin*)

Meeting with Father Rafik

▪ **November/December 2022:**

Musrara School of Art and Society, a workshop for taking photos with smartphones

Classes on the underground theme by Martina (Havel, *The Plastic People of the Universe*) and Gadi (Foundations in philosophy)

▪ **April 2023**

Criss-Cross Prague, presentations of photographs from hop-on hop-off game

Discussion led by Ivana about Gothic architecture in Kutná Hora (prep. by Daniela)

▪ **April 2024**

Standing on the shoulders of our ancestors – class about family photos led by Daniela

Criss-Cross Prague, presentations of photographs from hop-on hop-off game





# Crossing Religious Borders

Bits and pieces from email correspondence



## Our first Sabbath in Israel in 2014



In the evening we joined several local students to celebrate the beginning of Sabbath in the synagogue nearby in the recently built neighbourhood of Givat Masua. It was quite an experience, although women are separated from men by a decorated glass partition, so the view is very limited. Nevertheless, the sung prayers were beautiful. We admired how everybody was neat and well-dressed. What surprised us was that people arrived during the prayers, chatted, even looked through advertising handouts, while others were fully concentrated. The women in the

gallery were mostly young – what a difference from our churches.

When we came back the whole school had Sabbath dinner, however, as most students are secular, the ceremonial rites were limited. We were surprised to see how everybody dressed up for the synagogue service and the dinner as well. The tables were nicely set, we were seated in the middle and given a warm welcome. They even drew our flag and joined it with the Israeli flag by a heart. (Feb. 2014, IH)

## Inside and outside the city walls



As for sightseeing so far, we have quite thoroughly examined the traditional Old City (its Armenian, Christian, Jewish and Muslim Quarters) as well as much more civil Western Jerusalem. Jerusalem is spread out on hills, so one can enjoy views of a rather arid landscape dotted with houses built of white limestone (a special God-blessed kind, they say). We started to explore the city by walking on the ramparts, which at first

sight seem to be ancient – I almost thought they were left from Roman times – however, they were built by Suleyman, the Magnificent in the 16th century. (Romans also had walls, but those were destroyed together with the Second Temple.) The walk on the ramparts is beautiful; the sounds of basketball, market, muezzin calls to prayer, Christian church bells all mix together.

When exploring the Old City (duly accompanied by a bodyguard armed with a machinegun) we visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (with the Golgotha rock and God’s grave – a unique grave without the remains!). There our guide explained at length the disputes among the various Christian churches – Coptic (Egyptian), Catholic, Armenian and Orthodox. The Protestants arrived too late to claim any part of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. On the other hand, theirs is the merit for setting up hospitals and other social institutions. They set a good example which the other churches could not ignore.

Besides that, we visited The Israel Museum, where ancient scrolls from various parts of Israel/Palestine are stored. And we strolled through the outdoor sculpture garden with beautiful works by Henry Moore. We walked past the Knesset and the Highest Court of Justice. In the Old City we criss-crossed the market colliding with Via Dolorosa, I tried to brush up my haggling skills (with little success). In the end we peeked into the Tomb of King David and the Cenaculum. (Feb. 2014, DV)

## Ein Kerem & synagogue skirts

I must acknowledge that the Church of the Visitation in Ein Kerem rests in a beautiful setting. I love these characteristic steep narrow valleys with winding roads and direct views of opposite-lying hills. We were guided by a Czech 1970s émigré to Israel, who works as a children’s psychologist. When he heard of a Czech group, he offered to show us around Ein Kerem. He lives in the mountains in a settlement of eighty families, mostly Jews from Morocco, and commutes to work in Hebron.

Now I must go and take a shower and dress up for the Sabbath.

(Liora: You don’t have to, but if you like, you can wear skirts to the synagogue.

Gadi: No, you don’t have to, indeed, but if you don’t, everybody will stare and point at you...) (Feb. 2016, DV)

## In the footsteps of Muhammad



After a hasty breakfast we left IASA at 8.15 and Yael, the super-experienced driver, navigated the bus driver so as to avoid traffic jams. We arrived at the Lions Gate at 9 precisely. For this outstanding feat we adopted Yael into our Czech group so she could visit the Temple Mount too. Women and girls covered their hair and we all followed the local guide. He kept urging us along, which wasn't exactly pleasant, but in the end we had to admit that

he knew better – there was so much to see in the short time before we had to leave because of Muslim prayers. He took us even inside the late 7th century Dome of the Rock, from where Muhammad was supposed to take off on his horse for his Night Journey, and also into the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Museum of Islamic Art. We could marvel at the fine stonework, mosaics, tiles, fluffy carpets, calligraphy of ancient Qurans, etc. And we had it all to ourselves! It was an altogether unique experience. (Nov. 2016, IH)

## Ancient and modern hermits



The first stop on our trip was the Greek Orthodox Monastery of St. George “glued” to the steep side of Wadi Qelt. Hermits used to live here in ancient times and the monastery was founded in the 5th century. The monks were hospitable, served us some tea and cold drinks, but unfortunately, they didn't speak much English. Nevertheless, we found out that they buy their food in a supermarket, that there are lots of

tourists, that they take water from a spring nearly 3 km away and the pipes leak, that it last rained on 10th April, that a hermit lived in a cave above the monastery for 20 years and another one has lived nearby for 18 years. We saw the cave above the monastery and the ladders leading to it – I certainly wouldn't like to live there. The landscape is totally dry but at one point we saw a small spring and around it there were green plants and moss. The monastery even has a little garden. We were surprised that the monastery didn't charge any entrance fee and the monks even refused a contribution we offered. (Nov. 2016, IH)

### **An altogether different view on Christianity**



From our meeting point at Jaffa Gate we easily walked to Ha-Rav Kook St. 10, the home of the Hebrew-speaking Catholic Community. Our Israeli partners were already waiting for us as well as F. David Neuhaus SI (for his personal story see Tiny Tales) and a IASA graduate who had become member of the community. The talk was most interesting and eye-opening. I believe our students gained an altogether different view on Christianity and the various Christian Churches in the Holy Land and in the whole world. Two hours went by without us noticing.

After a short break we came back for mass. We received a warm welcome by the local community and a lady showed us where we could borrow English Bibles to be able to follow the readings. (Nov. 2016, IH)

### **Twelve tribes of Israel**



At 9.30 we split into two groups: the big one took bus 23 from the rear gate to the Yad Vashem Memorial, the small one (mine) took bus 12 from the front gate to Hadassah Hospital in Ein Kerem. Not because of an injury or illness but because in the huge hospital complex is a small, simple 1960s synagogue, whose crown and glory are twelve stained-glass windows by Marc Chagall, depicting the twelve tribes of Israel. And they are truly breath-taking. I had seen pictures before, however, printed on paper they can stand no

comparison to the real windows on a sunny day. By the way, they were an inspiration to Czech composer Petr Eben for his opus Windows. What is also interesting is the story of the hospital itself and Henriette Szold (born 1860 in Baltimore), founder of the women's organisation Hadassah, which established healthcare for all in Palestine. Hence the name of the hospital. (Nov. 2016, IH)

### **Hebrew-speaking Catholic parish**

Walking along the ramparts and Jaffa St. we arrived at the Simeon and Anne House, home of the Hebrew-speaking Catholic parish, where at 4 o'clock we met up with the Israeli students. There is a new priest here; F. Neuhaus has been succeeded by equally interesting and very pleasant F. Rafic. He spoke about the origins of the community and what they do, for example volunteer daycare for children of gastarbeiter mothers, who have to work and cannot take care of their children. His personal story is just as noteworthy: originally a Lebanese Maronite, he went to study engineering in France for three years. There he decided to become a Roman Catholic priest, and thus went to study in Rome. On returning to the Middle East, he did not go back to Lebanon, but to Israel. He knew the Hebrew of the Bible but he had to learn modern Hebrew. Our students sat still and speechless (at least they didn't

seem to be falling asleep), the situation was saved by the Israelis, who not only asked questions but even offered to volunteer.

Holy mass was similar to the one we had participated in the year before – nice, homely atmosphere. It was celebrated by four priests, F. Neuhaus among them. (Dec. 2017, IH)

### Jewish Liturgical Music



Wednesday evening was most interesting. After supper the bus took us to Nahlaot in Western Jerusalem and dropped us off at Bezalel Ave. From there we squeezed through a narrow lane and into a little cosy synagogue. A local chazan / cantor / piyut – simply a liturgical singer – welcomed us. He was very nice, open and kind. With great enthusiasm, eloquent gestures and of course sample performances he explained to us, how to sing in a synagogue and where the melodies come from (from local traditions). Each Sabbath, holiday, special occasion is assigned a special scale

(there have been lots of them over centuries) and the cantor improvises on it. Under the cantor's guidance we tried oriental singing and some of us did quite well. Then he wanted us to sing something typically Czech, which proved to be a bit of a problem, but in the end we managed to put together the Christmas carol *Nesem vám noviny*. (Dec. 2017, IH)

### A sad story of Mamilla cemetery



After self-service breakfast we took the bus to the city centre and got off close to Netanyahu's home, but the street is guarded and closed to the public. In a park near the Mamilla cemetery mixed-nationality student groups were given satellite images of the city with highlighted landmarks to visit. If they are swift and clever, they will manage to see them all, they are told. The first group set off immediately, the others bravely followed, while teachers gossiped over coffee, now and then catching sight of a student group running

by. Before 11 we met in the park again, the students picked up their bags from Yael's car and headed for Sabbath in families.

Mamila cemetery is originally an Arab cemetery, yet now rather devastated. And what more, its larger part is now being built over in order to create the Museum of Tolerance – an exquisite token of "tolerance" in its own right – a sad story... (Nov. 2019, IH)

## Mount of Olives & Chapel of Ascension



We walked through the Muslim Quarter of the Old City and through the Lions' Gate into the necropolises stretching outside the city walls and up the side of the Mount of Olives. We stopped in the Gethsemane Garden for a moment of contemplation. The ascent then was quite steep. Close to the hilltop are the Tombs of the Prophets – a huge hole in the rock. The path to the top and the look-out point there offer a magnificent view of the city. A richly adorned camel was lying at the look-out terrace and its owner was trying in vain to persuade

someone for a ride. At probably the highest point of the mountain is a small plain structure, the Chapel of the Ascension. Originally erected by Christians in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, it was turned into a mosque in late 1100s. Nowadays, it doesn't belong to any particular religion. Muslims built another mosque just outside the outer wall and the Chapel is open to visitors, albeit not for worship. So for Christian services there are several stone altar tables outside the Chapel. (Dec. 2019, IH)



## Czech-Israeli Exchange in Numbers

**10** years since 1st visit in Jerusalem

First visit 2014

**6 + 2** exchanges

2019 only Israeli part due to covid 19

2024 only Czech part due to Israel-Hamas war

**7** days in Prague - **7** days in Jerusalem

more than **190** students involved

**6** core teachers involved, more than **10** teachers in total

Smallest group: **18** students (IL+CZ)

2022/23

Biggest group: **30** students (IL+CZ),

2018/19, 2019/20

**3**-year gap due to covid 19

2019-2022





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**Czech-Israeli Exchange: Ten Years Together (2014-2024)**

Archbishop Grammar School in Prague, Israel Arts and Science Academy in Jerusalem

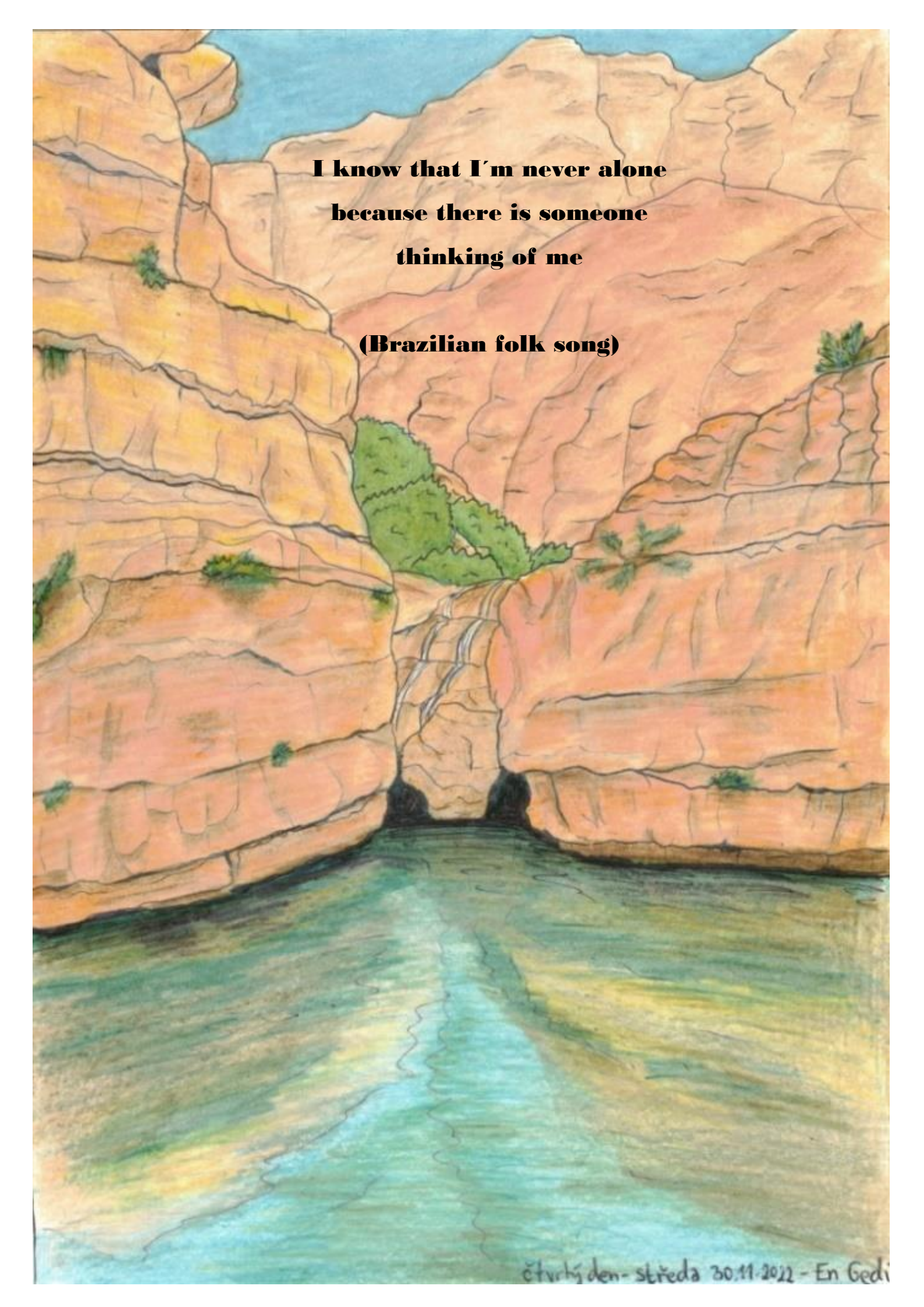
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Prague, April 2024



**I know that I'm never alone  
because there is someone  
thinking of me**

**(Brazilian folk song)**