

# Where the Land Remembers Us<sup>1</sup>

*Walking with stories through the Golan — a journey of memory, gratitude, and love*

## Opening Reflection

Travel, at its best, is never only about distance. It is about remembering — who we are, where we come from, and how deeply a place can hold us when we allow ourselves to slow down. Some journeys unfold not through movement, but through presence: shared meals, open landscapes, and stories carried gently from one generation to the next. This short escape to the Golan was such a journey — walking with memory, guided by gratitude, and grounded in love. Baruch HaShem, we arrived open, and we returned full.

---

## DAY 1 — Sunday, December 14 (Chanukkah Eve)

We left home with light hearts and no rush, watching the landscape slowly change as we traveled north. Familiar hills softened into open skies, the air grew cooler, and with every kilometer, the noise of everyday life quietly faded. As we ascended into the Golan Heights, the land itself seemed to invite us to slow down and breathe. By the time we arrived at Kibbutz Merom Golan, surrounded by green, silence, and wide horizons, we already felt held by the place.

Check-in at the Merom Golan Hotel was warm and easy. We unpacked, rested, and allowed ourselves to settle into the calm. As evening fell, we lit the Chanukkah candles together — a simple, luminous moment that quietly anchored us in time and place. Dinner at the Bokrim Restaurant followed, generous and deeply satisfying, setting the tone for the days ahead.

After dinner, we walked through the kibbutz paths, where sculptures created by local Golan artists appeared unexpectedly along the way — owls, dogs, birds, and others I can no longer name, though their presence lingered clearly. Each one added quiet character to the night, playful yet thoughtful, as if the kibbutz itself were gently watching over us. It was simple, surprising, and utterly captivating.

Photo caption:

---

<sup>1</sup> Rifka Epstein®. All rights reserved. This article may not be copied, reproduced, or shared in whole or in part without prior author's written consent.

## Watching the Night



One of the sculptures created by local Golan artists, quietly scattered along the kibbutz paths — playful, thoughtful figures adding warmth and character to our first evening in Merom Golan.

---

### **DAY 2 — Monday, December 15 (ANNIVERSARY DAY)**

The day began slowly, exactly as we wished. Breakfast at the kibbutz dining hall was abundant and joyful — fresh vegetable salads, fruits, cheeses, fragrant na’ana tea, good coffee — everything colorful, fresh, and lovingly prepared. There was no need to hurry anywhere.

Late in the morning, we headed to nearby Ein Zivan for a visit to the De Karina chocolate workshop — a fun, delicious, and unexpectedly romantic experience. From there, we continued to the Bahat Winery, where we lingered, tasted, and chose a few bottles to bring home for Shabbat.

After returning to the hotel for lunch and a well-earned nap, we drove north to Tel Hai. Standing before the Lion Roars Monument, the visit became deeply personal. I suddenly remembered the stories my mother used to tell us about Yosef Trumpeldor — stories passed down not as history lessons, but as living memory, filled with courage, sacrifice, and love for this land. The roaring lion, strong and silent, seemed to carry not only the weight of the fallen, but also the voices of those who kept their stories alive through generations. In that moment, past and present met — my mother’s words, Trumpeldor’s legacy, and our own quiet presence there. Tel Hai did not feel like a monument to death, but a testament to life, continuity, and belonging.

We returned to the kibbutz in time for Chanukkah candle lighting. Seeing so many children gathered together, each holding their own chanukiyah, lighting candles side by side and singing together, felt like standing inside one large family.

Dinner again at the Bokrim Restaurant was wonderful, and the night ended as it began — slowly, warmly, under the Golan sky.

Photo caption:



Where Stories Stand Guard

The Lion Roars Monument at Tel Hai — where memory, courage, and generations meet in silence.

---

### **DAY 3 — Tuesday, December 16 (Return Day)**

After another delicious breakfast at the kibbutz dining hall, we visited Mishelanu (משלנו), a small art store within Kibbutz Merom Golan. It is a magical place, showcasing the work of more than twenty local Golan artists — ceramics, jewelry, textiles, woodwork, and more — each piece reflecting the land, the people, and their quiet creativity.

From there, we drove a short distance to Mount Bental. The day was clear and breathtaking. Standing there, we could see Syria and Lebanon stretched out before us. Walking through the accessible trenches, listening to the recordings that tell the story of the place, surrounded by sculptures, wind, and silence, history felt close and tangible — never abstract, always present.

Our final stops took us to Kibbutz Ortal, to the Tel Shifon winery, and then to Grineli, a handcrafted cheese factory. The road between them was scenic and unhurried — classic Golan, calm and generous.

We drove home filled with gratitude and quiet joy, already longing to return. This journey was more than a getaway; it was a spectacle of land and memory, a delight for the eyes and the heart — inviting us, and anyone who loves beauty, history, and stillness, to come back again and again.

Photo caption:



A Land That Remembers

At Mount Bental, under a clear Golan sky — borders visible, history close, silence profound.

---

Some places welcome you once. Others stay with you — inviting you back, again and again.