

## MY VISIT TO RHODES

By Sammy Sheff, Los Angeles (14 years old)

This past summer I took a short charter flight from Israel where I was vacationing with my family to Rhodes. I was with my brother, sister and parents. On the plane, my dad was telling us about his visits to Rhodes when he was single and how beautiful it was. He also happened to mention the beaches and how we would enjoy them the most.

Once we landed on the beautiful ocean side airport, we took a private bus to the Grand Hotel. My brother, Max (11) and I went to check out the pool only to find a couple old topless ladies smoking by the pool. We were in shock! We then realized what was so great about Rhodes.

On Friday, we went to the *Shalom* synagogue and met Sami Modiano, who spends his summers in Rhodes acting as a tour guide. He was just a 13 year old boy when the Nazis took him from Rhodes. As he told my family his story in *Ladino*, which I understood, he had us all in tears. When we asked him if he ever had children, he told us: "*Vozotros sosh mis ijos*" (you are my children). "*What my eyes have seen no human being should ever have to see...the Nazis squeezed us like lemons until we had not juice left, then they threw us away.*" I will always remember his man and his amazing story. We also visited the amazing museum next to the synagogue put together by Aron Hasson.

Friday night, when *Shabbat* started, we ate on our balcony overlooking the sea. On *Shabbat* morning, we walked from our hotel to the *kehila*. It was special to be in the synagogue where our ancestors had prayed for over 300 years. Luckily there was an Israeli family on our flight that went to celebrate their son's *bar mitzvah* or else there wouldn't have been a *minyan*. The lack of Jews on the island was very sad. Going there, I expected a huge Jewish community but I just found one synagogue, one rabbi and sadly no community. This was the first place I've ever been that had no regular *minyan*, not even a *Chabad* synagogue!

I really hope someday there will be a Jewish community as great as there once was in the old days of the *Rodeslis*.

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