Recently, the Chamber was part of a U.S. Chamber delegation of 11 CEOs from across the nation to travel to Israel to learn more about business opportunities, as well as the culture and history of this region. The trip was inspirational, eye-opening, thought provoking, educational and historical. It was also a trip about hope and opportunities. And the people, while very direct, provided warm hospitality rivaling many destinations.

We frequently hear about the violence and political unrest in the region. While this may be true, in speaking with the locals and especially the business community, they feel that the economy and business can help achieve peace as they realize the need for and importance of coexisting and embracing each other.

In addition to back-to-back meetings, the delegation attended a mixer hosted by the Israel Chamber, visited Parliament, Holocaust Museum, Masada and the Dead Sea, and walked through Old Jerusalem. We also visited a developing Smart City in Palestine and companies focused on innovation.

Some interesting facts about the country:

- The Israeli nation was founded in 1948 and has a population of about 7 million.
- Known as the Start Up Nation, Israel has more than 3.5k start-ups with 50 percent of its exports from the high tech industry.
- Located in a desert and in a continuous drought, the country is considered a world leader in water public policy and crisis management. More than 90 percent of its wastewater is reused.
- High school graduates, men and women, are required to serve in the military for two years. During this time, they are placed on different tracks to help prepare them for the future jobs.
- Technion University professors developed the Memory Stick and zip file technology.

In Hebrew, “tachlis” means, now what? Our hope for and mission of this trip is to increase access to global markets based on connections we have made, even if we are thousands of miles apart.