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The doctor and the rabbi who ride for Israel

Here is proof that with willpower one can do anything: Dr. Michael Ross and Rabbi David Lerner do not let illness stop them, and set out on a journey for Israel, sponsored by the Arava Institute.

Doreen Rottenstreich Rubin | Love Israel | Posted 13/11/16 13:4



Ride and enjoy. Dr. Michael Ross (right) and Rabbi David Lerner | Photo : PR

Last week some 200 Americans came to Israel for a five-day cycling journey from Jerusalem to Eilat. The goal: raising money to support students working on the environment at the Arava Institute – projects shared by Jews, Arabs, Palestinians, and Jordanians.

Among the riders, were two for whom the journey was particularly meaningful: Rabbi David Lerner and Dr. Michael Ross, one a congregational rabbi and the other a Sports Medicine and Emergency Room physician, the best of friends ever since grade school.

In college, they both became serious cyclists who raced for their schools. 2014 was particularly difficult year for both of them - Michael became critically ill with stage 4 colon cancer, while David suffered severe side effects of Crohn's disease which necessitated a week in the hospital. They had no choice but to abandon their planned participation in the 2014 Israel Ride as members of Rabbi Lerner's synagogue cycling team, the Lexington [Mass.] Minutemen. But, in 2016, when the cancer went into remission, they did not miss the chance to sign up for the ride.

The [Israel Ride](#) is an annual initiative of the Arava Institute at Kibbutz Ketura. As they rode the riders stopped on the way at several major points including Ashkelon, towns along the Gaza border, Yeruham, Kibbutz Ketura, and Eilat. During the trip, they also met with Israelis and heard from them what it means to live in Israel. The group of riders was accompanied by a professional team from the Arava Institute including Palestinians, Jews, Israeli Arabs, and Jordanians.



We wish everyone good health - always | Photo : Alicia Greenber

"Michael and I have known each other since we were 9 and we became *bnei mitzvah* 32 years ago in the synagogue where my father was the rabbi," Lerner explained. "As teenagers we would ride up

along the Hudson River in New York State on Sundays, and in college we became serious riders. Michael has always been a super athlete, and I tried to follow his example.”

We were supposed to do the Israel Ride in 2014, but it was not possible for us. Now we both feel better and we're going to ride. The goal here is more important than our personal health issues," he concludes.