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Mesora mavens

The Aris blaze new kosher trails

by Gil Hoffman
The Jerusalem Post

In the Jerusalem Talmud's tractate *Ta'anit*, Rabbi Hananya son of Rabbi Abahu said that there were 700 species of kosher fish and 800 species of kosher grasshoppers and countless kosher birds in the Land of Israel, and all of them accompanied the Israelites into the Babylonian exile and later returned with them, except for one fish called the shibuta.

For years, there was a dispute about the identity of the shibuta, which the tractate *Hulin* suggests had a brain that tastes like pork. Some thought it was the mullet or the sturgeon until Bar-Ilan University neurology professor Ari Zivotofsky, a former Silver Spring resident, proved in a scientific journal that the shibuta was a freshwater Iraqi fish in the Euphrates River bearing the contemporary Arabic and Farsi name shabut.

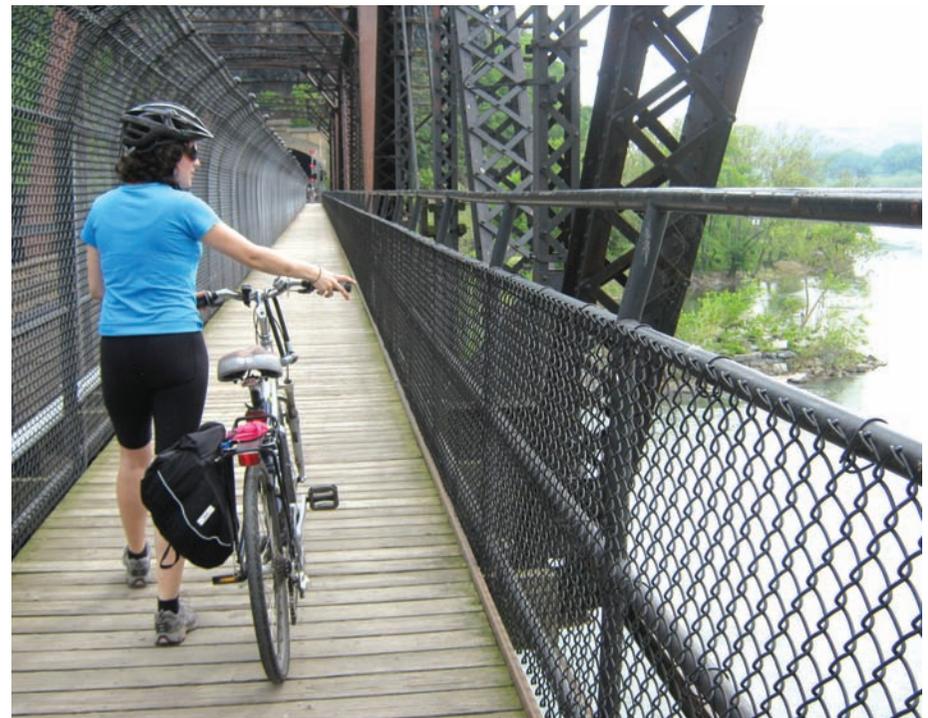
More than 250 people recently feasted on the shibuta at a meal at Jerusalem's Eucalyptus Restaurant opposite the Old City walls, marking what was apparently the first time that the fish was eaten in the Holy Land in some 2,600 years.

The fish were brought to Israel from Turkey, where a Muslim professor who read Zivotofsky's article had obtained them for him.

The shibuta was just one of 18 courses at the "mesora dinner" cooked by chef Moshe Basson and organized by Zivotofsky and Jerusalem dentist Ari Greenspan in an effort to pass along the chain of tradition of which animals, birds, fish and locusts are kosher and which are not, a quest the two Aris have been working on for the past 28 years.

The quest began when Zivotofsky and Greenspan were 18-year-old students at Yeshivat Har Etzion in Alon Shvut and were invited to study *shechita*, ritual slaughtering of animals.

When someone newly religious asked them to slaughter a pheasant that she recalled was tasty, they found out that



Emma Epstein trains for her cross-country bike ride.

Photo courtesy of Emma Epstein

Road warrior

Washington to Washington, activist to bike cross-country for Avodah

by Richard Greenberg
Associate Editor

Emma Epstein's rules of the road (two-wheel division) explores topics ranging from patching flat tires to eating properly (hard-boiled eggs get a nod) to surviving the bug wars.

"Even if at the beginning, you think, oh well I will be biking sooo fast that the bugs won't get to me ... well you are dead wrong," she wrote in a recent blog post, adding: "When the going gets dull, literally and you feel like taking your sunglasses off for lack of sun. DON'T! Those darn bugs that coated your chest will only start to pelt you in the eyeballs ..."

Epstein, 23, will soon have ample opportunity to encounter the insect world at high speed, feel the burn from screaming quads and experience whatever other challenges surface on a transcontinental bicycle tour.

The District resident will lead a 3,100-mile trek, slated to begin next week following a Thursday morning breakfast sendoff at the Washington DC Jewish Community Center. The terminus is Seattle, Epstein's hometown.

The bike tour is her way of raising awareness of and money for Avodah: The Jewish Service Corp, an organization that places young adults in full-time jobs at nonprofit agencies to fight poverty, build communities and otherwise live Jewish values. Avodah is endorsing the trip.

On Sunday, Epstein will complete her year of Avodah service, which she fulfilled by working at the CAIR (Capital Area Immigrants Rights) Coalition, a District-based organization committed to ensuring that "all immigrants are treated with fairness, dignity and respect for their human and civil rights."

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