

Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus and the Prophets:
A Spiritual Journey through the Holy Land
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OTTALIL
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I. ISRAEL

The Land of Israel, known in Hebrew as Eretz Yisrael, has been sacred to the Jewish people since Biblical times. According to the Torah, the Land of Israel was promised to the three Patriarchs by God as their homeland; scholars have placed this period in the early 2nd millennium B.C. According to the traditional view, around the 11th century B.C., the first of a series of Israelite kingdoms and states established rule over the region; these Israelite kingdoms and states ruled intermittently for the following one thousand years. The sites holiest to Judaism are located within Israel.



Between the time of the Israelite kingdoms and the 7th-century Muslim conquests, the Land of Israel fell under Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, Roman, Sassanian, and Byzantine rule. Jewish presence in the region dwindled after the failure of the Bar Kokhba Revolt against the Roman Empire in 132 A.D. In 628/9, the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius conducted a massacre and expulsion of the Jews, though a continuous Jewish presence in the Land of Israel remained. The Land of Israel was captured from the Byzantine Empire around 636 A.D. during

the initial Muslim conquests. Control of the region transferred between the Umayyads, Abbasids, and Crusaders over the next six centuries, before falling in the hands of the Mameluke Sultanate in 1260. In 1516, the Land of Israel became a part of the Ottoman Empire, which ruled the region until the 20th century.

The Palestine problem became an international issue towards the end of the First World War with the disintegration of the Turkish Ottoman Empire. Palestine was among the several former Ottoman Arab territories which were placed under the administration of Great Britain under the Mandates System adopted by the League of Nations pursuant to the League's Covenant.

All but one of these Mandated Territories became fully independent States, as anticipated. The exception was Palestine where, instead of being limited to "the rendering of administrative assistance and advice" the Mandate had as a primary objective the implementation of the "Balfour Declaration"¹ issued by the British Government, expressing support for "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people".

During the years of the Palestine Mandate, from 1922 to 1947, large-scale Jewish immigration from abroad, the numbers swelling in the 1930s with the notorious Nazi persecution of Jewish populations. Palestinian demands for independence and resistance to Jewish immigration led to a rebellion in 1937, followed by continuing terrorism and violence from both sides during and immediately after World War-II.



Ben-Gurion pronounces the Declaration of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948 in Tel Aviv

¹ The Balfour Declaration November 2, 1917: During the First World War, British policy became gradually committed to the idea of establishing a Jewish home in Palestine (Eretz Yisrael). After discussions in the British Cabinet, and consultation with Zionist leaders, the decision was made known in the form of a letter by Arthur James Lord Balfour to Lord Rothschild. The letter represents the first political recognition of Zionist aims by a Great Power.

In 1947, the British Government withdrew from commitment to the Mandate of Palestine. The newly created United Nations approved the UN Partition Plan Resolution No. 181 on 29 November 1947, dividing the country into two States, one Arab and one Jewish. Jerusalem was to be designated an international city - a *corpus separatum* - administered by the UN. The Jewish community accepted the plan, but the Arab League and Arab Higher Committee rejected it. On 1 December 1947 the Arab Higher Committee proclaimed a three-day strike, and Arab bands began attacking Jewish targets.

On 14 May 1948, the day before the end of the British Mandate, the Jewish Agency proclaimed independence, naming the country Israel. The following day the armies of five Arab nations - Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq - attacked Israel; Sudan, Yemen and Saudi Arabia also sent troops. After one year of fighting, a ceasefire was declared and temporary borders, known as the Green Line, were established. Jordan annexed what became known as the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and Egypt took control of the Gaza Strip. Israel was admitted as a member of the United Nations on 11 May 1949. During the conflict 711,000 Arabs, according to UN estimates, or about 80% of the previous Arab population, were expelled or fled the country.

In the early years of the State, the Labour Zionist Movement led by Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion dominated the Israeli politics marked by mass immigration of Holocaust Survivors and influx of Jews, some of whom persecuted in Arab countries. The population of Israel rose from 800,000 to two million between 1948 and 1958. By 1952, over 200,000 immigrants were living in tent cities. The need to solve the crisis led Ben-Gurion to sign a Reparations Agreement² with West Germany that triggered mass protests by Jews angered at the idea of Israel "doing business" with Germany.



Adolf Eichmann listens as he is sentenced to death by the court. (December 15, 1961)

During the 1950s Israel was frequently attacked by Palestinian *Fedayeen*³, mainly from the Egyptian-occupied Gaza Strip. In 1956, Israel joined a secret alliance with The United Kingdom and France aimed at recapturing the Suez Canal, which the Egyptians had nationalized. Despite capturing the Sinai Peninsula, Israel was forced to retreat following pressure from the United States and the Soviet Union in return for guarantees of Israeli shipping rights in the Red Sea and the Canal.

At the start of the following decade, Israel captured Adolf Eichmann⁴, an architect of the Final Solution, hiding in Argentina, and brought him to trial, which

had a major impact on public awareness of the Holocaust, and to date Eichmann remains the only person ever executed by civil authorities in Israel.

² The Reparations Agreement between Israel and West Germany (German: Luxemburger Abkommen) signed on September 10, 1952, stipulated West Germany to pay Israel for the slave labour and persecution of Jews during the Holocaust, and to compensate for Jewish property that was stolen by the Nazis.

³ Arab guerrillas who operate mainly against Israel

⁴ Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi war criminal responsible for transporting hundreds of thousands of European Jews to their deaths, was hanged († 31 May 1962 in an Israel prison at Ramla near Tel Aviv). His body was cremated and his ashes thrown into the sea. He had initially escaped justice by fleeing to Argentina after the war, but had been captured in 1960 by agents of the Mossad and brought to Israel for trial.

II. JUDAISM

Abraham is the Father of Judaism (Genesis 12); after Abraham tried to offer his beloved son, Isaac, in sacrifice (Genesis 22), says Yahweh: "I swear by my own self, Yahweh declares, because you have done this, because you have not refused me your own beloved son, I will shower blessings on you, and make your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven and the grains of sand on the seashore".

The fulfilment of the promise is taking some time, but today, Abraham is the Father of the Jews, the Father of the Christians and the Father of the Muslims ... a total of 3,317 millions... half of the inhabitants of the Earth!... and God has not finished yet!

In a "wide sense", "Judaism" is the sum of the descendants of Abraham. In a "strict sense", "Jew", comes from "Judah", the 4th of the 12 tribes of Israel, first used in 2 Kings 16:6, to mean "the citizens of Judah". In Jeremiah it means the "members of Israel", the Southern Kingdom. In the exile, in Esther "a religious meaning was added", with the distinction between "Jew" and "Gentile". By first century A.D., "Jew" and "Israel" had become almost synonymous terms, and in the New Testament the words are used interchangeable.

"Judaism", today, is the religion practiced by Jews; but it is not exactly, because the term "Jew" has both an ethnic and a religious meaning, and not all Jews follow the tenants of Judaism. In fact, the Knesset, the Parliament of the State of Israel, defines Jew with an ethnic meaning, so that atheists may be included in the category. Hebrew is the language of the Jews, but at times referred to the "Jewish people". "Palestine", from "Philistia", was the name given by the Romans to the boundaries of the actual state of Israel.

1. Signs and Symbols

1.1. Mezuzah

And you shall write [the words that I command you today] on the doorposts of your house and on your gates [Deuteronomy 6:9, 11:19]

On the doorposts of traditional Jewish homes (and many not-so-traditional homes), we will find a small case like the one pictured here. This case is commonly known as a mezuzah (Hebrew for doorpost), because it is placed upon the doorposts of the house. The mezuzah is not, as some suppose, a good-luck charm, nor does it have any connection with the lamb's blood placed on the doorposts in Egypt. Rather, it is a constant reminder of God's presence and God's mitzvot⁵.



The mitzvah⁶ to place mezuzot (mezuzah plural: mezuzot) on the doorposts of houses is derived from Deut. 6:4-9, a passage commonly known as the Shema⁷ (Heb: Hear, from the first word of the passage). In that passage, God commands us to keep His words constantly in our minds and in our hearts by (among other things) writing them on the doorposts of our house. The words of the Shema are written on a tiny scroll of parchment, along with the words of a companion passage, Deut. 11:13-21. On the back of the scroll, a name of God is written. The scroll is then rolled up and placed in the case, so that the first letter of the Name (the letter Shin) is visible (or, more commonly, the letter Shin is written on the outside of the case).

The scroll must be handwritten in a special style of writing and must be placed in the case to fulfill the mitzvah. The case and scroll are then nailed or affixed at an angle to the right side doorpost as you enter the building or room. Every time you pass through a door with a mezuzah on it, you touch the mezuzah and then kiss the fingers that touched it.

⁵ Mitzvah ("commandment"; plural mitzvot) is a word used in Judaism to refer to the 613 commandments given in the Torah and the seven rabbinic commandments instituted later for a total of 620.

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⁷ The Jewish "Creed", derived from the first word of Deuteronomy 6:4 "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One"

1.2. Tzitzit, Tallit (in Hebrew) Tzitzit and Tallit

"They shall make themselves tzitzit on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and they shall place on the tzitzit of each corner a thread of techeilet. And it shall be tzitzit for you, and you will see it, and you will remember all the mitzvot of the LORD and do them and not follow your heart or your eyes and run after them" [Numbers 15:38-40].

The Torah commands to wear tzitzit⁸ (fringes) at the corners of the garments as a reminder of the mitzvot. The passage also instructs that the fringe should have a thread of "techeilet," believed to be a blue or turquoise dye, but the source of that dye is no longer known, so tzitzit are today are all white. There is a complex procedure for tying the knots of the tzitzit, filled with religious and numerological significance.

The mitzvah to wear tzitzit applies only to four-cornered garments, which were common in biblical times but are not common anymore. To fulfill this mitzvah, adult men wear a four-cornered shawl called a Tallit (as pictured here) during morning services, along with the tefillin.



Strictly observant Jewish men commonly wear a special four-cornered garment, similar to a poncho, called a tallit katan ("little tallit"), so that they will have the opportunity to fulfill this important mitzvah all day long. The tallit katan is worn under the shirt, with the tzitzit hanging out so they can be seen.

1.3. Tefillin

"Bind [the words that I command you today] as a sign on your arm, and they shall be ornaments between your eyes" [Deuteronomy 6:8].



The Shema⁹ also commands the faithful to bind the words to their hands and between their eyes. The faithful do this by "laying tefillin," that is, by binding to their arms and foreheads leather pouches containing scrolls of Torah passages.

Tefillin are meant to remind us of God's mitzvot. We bind them to our head and our arm, committing both our intellect and our physical strength to the fulfillment of the mitzvot. At weekday morning services, one case is tied to the arm, with the scrolls at the biceps and leather straps extending down the arm to the hand, then

another case is tied to the head, with the case on the forehead and the straps hanging down over the shoulders. Appropriate blessings are recited during this process. The tefillin are removed at the conclusion of the morning services.

Like the scrolls in a mezuzah, the scrolls in tefillin must be handwritten in a special style of writing.

1.4. Menorah

One of the oldest symbols of the Jewish faith is the menorah, a seven-branched candelabrum used in the Temple. The kohanim¹⁰ lit the menorah in the Sanctuary every evening and cleaned it out every morning, replacing the wicks and putting fresh olive oil into the cups. The illustration at right is based on instructions for construction of the menorah found in Exodus 25:31-40.



⁸ Tzitzit or tzitzis are "fringes" or "tassels" worn by observant Jews on the corners of four-cornered garments

⁹ The Jewish "Creed", derived from the first word of Deuteronomy 6:4 "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One"

¹⁰ The Hebrew priesthood, descendants of Aaron

Menorah is a symbol of the Nation of Israel, which reminds Israel that their mission is to be "A Light unto the Nations" [Isaiah 42:6]. This idea is highlighted in the vision in Zechariah 4:1-6. Zechariah sees a menorah, and God explains: "Not by Might, nor by Power, but by My Spirit."

The lamp stands in today's synagogues, called the ner tamid (lit. the continual light, usually translated as the Eternal Flame) symbolizes the Menorah. Many synagogues also have an ornamental menorah, usually with some critical detail changed (for example, with only 6 candles) to avoid the sin of reproducing objects of the Temple.

The nine-branched menorah used on Chanukkah is commonly patterned after this menorah, because Chanukkah (Hanukkah) commemorates the miracle that a day's worth of oil for this Menorah lasted eight days.



1.5. Yarmulke

Cover your head so that the fear of heaven may be upon you. The most commonly known and recognized piece of Jewish garb is actually the one with the least religious significance. It comes from the Aramaic words "yerai malka" (Fear of or Respect for The King). The Hebrew word for this head covering is kippah (pronounced key-pah).

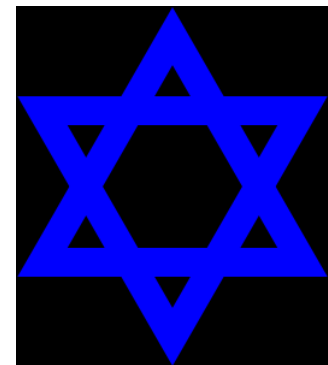
It is an ancient practice for Jews to cover their heads during prayer. This probably derives from the fact that in Eastern cultures, it is a sign of respect to cover the head (the custom in Western cultures is the opposite: it is a sign of respect to remove one's hat). Thus, by covering the head during prayer, one showed respect for God. In addition, in ancient Rome, servants were required to cover their heads while free men did not; thus, Jews covered their heads to show that they were servants of God. In medieval times, Jews covered their heads as a reminder that God is always above them.

2. Magen David (Shield of David, Star of David)

The Star of David or Shield of David (Magen David in Hebrew is a generally recognized symbol of Jewish identity and Judaism. It is supposed to represent the shape of King David's Shield (or perhaps the emblem on it).

In the middle ages, Jews often were required to wear badges to identify themselves as Jews, much as they were in Nazi Germany, but these Jewish badges were not always the familiar Magen David.

In the 17th century, it became a popular practice to put Magen David on the outside of synagogues, to identify them as Jewish houses of worship in much the same way that a cross identified a Christian House of Worship.



The Magen David gained popularity as a symbol of Judaism when it was adopted as the emblem of the Zionist Movement in 1897. Today, the Magen David is the universally recognized symbol of Jewry. It appears on the Flag of the State of Israel, and the Israeli equivalent of the Red Cross is known as the Red Magen David.

2.1. Chai

This symbol, commonly seen on necklaces and other jewellery and ornaments, is simply the Hebrew word Chai (living), with the two Hebrew letters Cheit and Yod attached to each other. Some say it refers to the Living God; others say it simply reflects Judaism's focus on the importance of life. Whatever the reason, the concept of chai is important in Jewish culture. The typical Jewish toast is l'chayim (to life). Gifts to Charity are routinely given in multiples of 18 (the numeric value of the word Chai).



2.2. Hamesh Hand

The Hamesh Hand or hamsa hand is a popular motif in Jewish jewellery. Go into any Judaic gift shop and you will find necklaces and bracelets bearing this inverted hand with thumb and pinky pointing outward. The design commonly has an eye in the center of the hand or various Hebrew letters in the middle.

There is nothing exclusively Jewish about the Hamesh Hand. Arab cultures often refer to it as the Hand of Fatima, which represents the Hand of God. Similar designs are common in many cultures. Why it has become such a popular symbol among Jews? In many cultures, this hand pattern represents a protection against the evil eye (a malignant spiritual influence caused by the jealousy of others), and the evil eye has historically been a popular superstition among Jews. Jewish lore as the Hand of Miriam or Hamesh Hand, serves as an ancient talismanic way of averting the evil eye, or more generally of providing a "Protecting Hand" or "Hand of God".



III. BETHLEHEM - BIRTH PLACE OF JESUS CHRIST

Bethlehem is the birthplace of Jesus and therefore a holy site to Christians around the world. The city also is significant to Jews because it is the burial place of the matriarch Rachel and the birthplace of King David. Samuel anointed David king in Bethlehem (I Sam. 16:1-13) and David was a descendant of Ruth and Boaz, who were married in Bethlehem.



Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem

The city, just 8 km south of Jerusalem, was turned over to the Palestinian Authority as a result of the 1995 Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement. Bethlehem has a population of approximately 50,000 people, with the Muslims holding a slight majority. In Hebrew, the town is Bet Lehem ("House of Bread") and, in Arabic, it is Bet Lahm ("House of Meat"). For centuries, Christian pilgrims have made the roughly 2½ hour walk from Jerusalem to Manger Square.

Manger Square is the focus of activity of Christmas celebrations not once, but three times a year. In addition to the traditional Western celebration which begins on December 24, the Greek Orthodox mark their Christmas on January 6 and the Armenian observance is on January 19.

1. The Church of the Nativity

The Church of the Nativity in the heart of Bethlehem marks one of Christianity's most sacred sites - the Birthplace of Jesus Christ. Situated on Manger Square, the church is built over a grotto where the Virgin Mary gave birth to Jesus. It is the oldest Church in the Holy Land still in use and one of the oldest churches in the world.

The church's large fortress-like exterior stands as a testament to its turbulent history; for centuries, it was one of the most fought over holy places. It was seized and defended by a succession of armies - including Muslim and Crusader forces. The first Church was built over the Grotto of the Nativity in the 4th century A.D. under the patronage of Emperor Constantine's Mother, Helena, which was later destroyed; Helena also was the person responsible for the construction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. In the 6th century, Byzantine Emperor Justinian built a new and more elaborate church on the site, and the present structure is basically the same as it was then. When the Persians invaded it

in 614, they left the church intact; legend has it, because they were moved by a painting inside of the Nativity story depicting the Wise Men of the East in Persian clothes. In the 11th century crusaders renovated the church. Control of the church has more than once led to physical warfare, most significantly when Napoleon III declared the entire complex French property in 1852 - an act that brought him into conflict with Russia, which supported the rights of the Eastern Orthodox Church. King Edward IV of England donated wood from English oak trees for the ceiling. He also contributed lead to cover the roof, but that was taken by the Turks, who melted it down to use as ammunition in the war.



The entrance of Nativity Church is out of scale with the importance of the interior. The main door of Justinian's Church was much larger (you can still see the shape of the original arch above the door) but it was lowered by the Crusaders during the middle Ages and further restricted during the Ottoman era to prevent mounted horsemen from entering the church. (Another story is that the door was

installed by the Muslims during their rule to remind Christians that they were guests in the country and must bow to their hosts.)

The church is divided into five naves¹¹ by four rows of Corinthian pillars. Traces of Crusader decoration are also visible on the pillars. The upper portions of these pillars are painted with images of various saints of the Western and Eastern churches (among those depicted are St. Sabas, St. Euthymius, St. Olav of Norway, St. Canute of Denmark and St. Cathal of Ireland). The names are written in Greek and Latin and many visitors have carved their own signatures over the centuries.

The floor of the nave has a hole that allows you to see what remains of the Byzantine mosaics that covered the original church floor. Some bullet damage from the siege of the church in 2002 is evident on the 12th century wall mosaics. The church altar is straight ahead. The Altar of the Nativity sits below a silver and gold chandelier. Stairways on either side of the main altar lead to the grotto.

1.1. Grotto of the Nativity and The Star of Bethlehem

The Grotto of the Nativity, a rectangular cavern beneath the church, is the Church of the Nativity's focal point. Entered by a flight of steps by the church altar, this is the cave that has been honoured as the site of Christ's Birth. The stairs on the right side of the altar lead down into the Grotto of the Nativity; a 14-point silver star embedded in white marble marks the exact spot. The star bears the inscription, *Hic de Virgine Maria Jesus Christus natus est - Here Jesus Christ was born to the Virgin Mary.* Of the 15 lamps burning around the recess, six belong to



Birthplace of Christ kissed by Pilgrims



The Grotto, with the Birthplace on the left and the Chapel of the Manger on the right

Of the 15 lamps burning around the recess, six belong to

¹¹ Nave is the main body of the church, where the members of the congregation are seated

the Greeks, five to the Armenians and four to the Roman Catholics. In another corner of the grotto, down three steps opposite the Altar of the Nativity is the Chapel of the Manger where Christ was laid. Facing this is the Altar of the Adoration of the Magi.

1.2. Bethlehem: Milk Grotto

In Bethlehem the sacred area around the Nativity Grotto has been the focal point of all traditions. Nevertheless in Bethlehem a small Chapel has been for long centuries a devotional site. The "Milk Grotto" over a small Chapel is frequently visited by local women, Christians and Moslems alike, to ask for the intercession of Virgin Mary.

A legend recalls how Mary spilt some milk while breast-feeding baby Jesus and this is the reason for the "white" stone of the cave. A tradition going back to the 7th century located at this site the burial place of the innocent victims killed by Herod the Great after the birth of Jesus.

1.3. Shepherds' Field

The roads descending 2 km to the east of Bethlehem lead through the mostly Christian village of Beit Sahour (or Bait Sahur), where one of the most sacred places of Christianity the Shepherds' Field is found: identified as the scene where the Angel of the Lord visited the shepherds and informed them of Jesus' Birth: "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field keeping watch over their flock by night. And the Angel said to them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people" (Luke 2:8-10).

In the Shepherds' Field in a small valley with olive trees some of them dating back 2000 years, an underground Church is dedicated to Synaxis¹² of the Mother of God (celebrated December 26th). On the night of Christ's Nativity, this underground church was the cave of the shepherds, who heard the angelic proclamation "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth and good will to men" (Luke 2-14). This cave was one of the many churches built by Saint Helena in the year 325 A.D.



IV. JERUSALEM (YERUSHALAYIM)

Jerusalem is the capital of Israel and its largest city in both population and area, with a population of 763,800 over an area of 125.1 km² (48.3 m²) if disputed East Jerusalem is included. Located in the Judean Mountains, between the Mediterranean Sea and the northern edge of the Dead Sea, modern Jerusalem has grown far beyond the boundaries of the Old City.

The city has a history that goes back to the 4th millennium B.C., making it one of the oldest cities in the world. Jerusalem is the Holiest City in Judaism and the spiritual center of the Jewish people, contains a number of significant ancient Christian sites, and is considered the third-holiest city in Islam. Despite having an area of only 0.9 km² (0.35 square mile), the Old City is home to sites of key religious importance, among them the Temple Mount, the Western Wall, the Dome of the Rock, al-Aqsa Mosque and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The old walled city, a World Heritage site, has been traditionally divided into four quarters, although the names used today - the Armenian, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Quarters - were introduced in the early 19th century. In the course of its history, Jerusalem has been destroyed twice, besieged 23 times, attacked 52 times, and captured and recaptured 44 times.

¹² A gathering of the faithful in honour of a saint

In 688 B.C., the Temple was cleansed, walls were built round the town and a tunnel dug to secure its water supply. In 628 B.C. Josiah¹³ made Jerusalem the only legitimate Jewish place of worship (2 Kings 22f.)

In 587 B.C. the town was captured by Nebuchadnezzar and its inhabitants were carried off to Babylon. After the end of the Babylonian Captivity, in 520 B.C. the Second Temple was built. In 445 B.C. Nehemiah built a new town wall.

In 332 B.C. Jerusalem came under Greek rule and was increasingly Hellenised. The desecration of the Temple by Antiochus IV sparked off the Maccabean rising of 167 B.C. Under the Maccabees and the Hasmoneans the town expanded westward on to Mount Zion.



Dome of the Rock and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre

In 63 B.C. it passed into Roman control, and in 37 B.C. Herod became king of the Jews. After his death in 4 B.C. Jerusalem became the city of the high priests, under Roman procurators. From 41 to 44 A.D. it was ruled by Agrippa I, who extended the city northward, building the Third (North) Wall. In A.D. 70 Jerusalem was

destroyed by Titus, to be rebuilt by Hadrian from 135 onwards under the name of *Aelia Capitolina*.

Jerusalem became a Christian City in 326, when Emperor Constantine and his Mother Helena built a number of churches. The Empress Eudoxia, wife of Theodosius II, who lived in Jerusalem from 444 to 460 and the Emperor Justinian (527-565) also built churches in the city. This era came to an end when Jerusalem was captured by the Persians in 614. It was recovered by the Byzantines in 627, but in 638 it was conquered by the armies of Islam. Thereafter the Omayyad Caliphs¹⁴ built the Dome of the Rock and the El-Aqsa Mosque.

A further period of Christian rule began in 1099 with the conquest of the city by the Crusaders¹⁵, who built many churches, palaces and hospices. Islam returned to Jerusalem, however, when Saladin captured the city in 1187, and it remained in Muslim hands under the Mamelukes (1291-1517) and the Ottomans (1519-1917), who built the present town walls (1537). In the 19th century the Christian powers of Europe, which had supported the Turkish Sultan against the Egyptian ruler Ibrahim Pasha, gained increasing influence from 1840 onwards. The Pope re-established the Latin Patriarchate, which had originally been

¹³ Josiah was one of Judah's best kings; he took the throne in Jerusalem at the age of eight, after his father Amon was killed by his own servants, and ruled Judah for thirty-one years from 640 to 609 B.C.

¹⁴ The Umayyad Caliphate was the second of the four Islamic caliphates established after the death of Muhammad. It was ruled by the Umayyad dynasty, whose name derives from Umayya ibn Abd Shams, the great-grandfather of the first Umayyad caliph.

¹⁵ The Crusades were a series of religiously-sanctioned military campaigns waged by much of Latin Christian Europe, particularly the Franks of France and the Holy Roman Empire. The specific crusades to restore Christian control of the Holy Land were fought over a period of nearly 200 years, between 1095 and 1291.

founded in 1099 but was dissolved in 1291. In 1845 a joint Anglo-Prussian Episcopal See was established. The German colony in Jerusalem was founded by a community of German protestant immigrants who arrived in Jerusalem in 1873 to found Heaven upon Earth and await the second coming of Jesus. They were members of a German Temple Society and accordingly called themselves Templers (no connection with the Knights Templar who were a military order formed to protect pilgrims in the aftermath of the Crusades) and in 1881 members of an American-Swedish group established the American Colony (north of the Damascus Gate).

In December 1917 British forces under General Allenby entered the city, and on July 1st 1920 it became the seat of the British High Commissioner in the Mandated Territory of Palestine.

Today, the status of Jerusalem remains one of the core issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

1. SIGHTSEEING OVERVIEW

Jerusalem being a common holy place for three major religions - Judaism, Christianity and Islam - is full of beautiful churches and mosques. It is a travellers dream and a city of never ending discoveries. Sightseeing in Jerusalem can never be complete unless you visit the Old City of Jerusalem. The beautiful remains of Wailing Wall, the sacred place of the Jewish people, are sure to thrill the visitors. Another important must see place is the Church of Holy Sepulchre, considered as one of the world's holiest shrines to Christians.

The first stop for any visitor has to be the Old City, which contains the sacred sites that have caused such turmoil and unrest. It's divided into quarters (the Armenian, Christian, Jewish and Muslim) each with its unique identity and character.

When sightseeing or just exploring, visitors should be aware of the intense campaign of terrorism being waged against Israel. Popular crowded venues, such as busy street markets, restaurants and cafés, crowded buses, discos, have especially been targeted by suicide bombers. Security guards have now been posted at the doorways or entrances to most such locations and it is advisable to be wary of venues that have not put any security measures in place. To date, tourist sights have not been struck by the bombers, and Arab areas or Muslim sites are of course unlikely to be hit.

2. The Austrian Hospice of the Holy Family in Jerusalem

We stayed at the Austrian Hospice of the Holy Family in Jerusalem, which is located at a most strategically central place. It is only walking distance to most of the holy sites such as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Dome of the Rock, the Wailing Wall or – beyond the Kidron¹⁶ Valley, the Mount of Olives, etc. As a matter of fact we visited the Holy Sepulchre as well as the Wailing Wall and the Dome on the Mount so often.



Sr. Bernadette Schwarz on Austrian National Day 2009

¹⁶ The Kidron Valley runs along the Eastern Wall of The Old City of Jerusalem, separating the Temple Mount from the Mount of Olives. An ephemeral stream flows through it with occasional flash floods in the rainy winter months. It then continues east through the Judean Desert, towards the Dead Sea, descending 4000 feet along its 20 mile course. The settlement Kedar, located on a ridge above the valley, is named after it.

Founded in 1857, the Austrian Hospice of the Holy Family was officially opened on 19 March 1863. Up until 1918 the Hospice also served as the residence of the Austrian Consul in Jerusalem, who acted in a protective function for Catholics and Askenasi Jews.

The Hospice¹⁷ is among the most traditional institutions in the Near Orient. Built in the mid-19th century on the Via Dolorosa (not far from the Damascus Gate), it was the oldest national pilgrim house in the Holy Land. In 1869 it served as the Residence for Emperor Franz Joseph and became a symbol of the Austrian presence in Jerusalem, demonstrating the importance of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy as a major Catholic power.

Up to the present time, the Hospice has remained one of the most impressive buildings in the Old City. Its 140-year history reflects the eventful development of the City. Falling into strange hands as a result of the upheavals of two World Wars, it has served in different ways as an orphanage, internment camp and as Officers' Academy.

Built in the style of a Viennese Ring Palace, the Hospice invites one to pause and meditate. Find peace in the house's own chapel, enjoy the magnificent view of the city for the roof terrace or relax in the wonderful garden of the Hospice.



In 1939 the Hospice was confiscated by the British as "German Property". The Rector at the time, Dr. Franz Haider, and the nurses of religious orders were interned. The house itself served as an internment camp for Austrian, German and Italian priests and members of religious orders. When the British withdrew from Palestine in 1948, they advised the Jordanian army to set up a military hospital there. It was later converted to a civilian hospital by the Jordanian Government.

But it was still decades before the Hospice building was handed back to its rightful owners. Only in July 1985 the hospital was closed on sanitary grounds and handed back to its Austrian owners in December of that year. In 1987 the building was completely renovated. Pilgrimage activities resumed in January 1988, and the official opening ceremony took place on 19 March 1988. Since then, guests from all over the world have been able to enjoy the wonderful view of the

Old City from the roof terrace.

While Sightseeing in Jerusalem, we can also try out other tourist attractions which include:

2.1. Gates of Jerusalem

The magnificent walls of Old Jerusalem have eight gates. Little is known about the extent and the position of the walls and gates of Jerusalem of the ancient period. We find in 1 Kings 9.15, that Solomon built the walls of the city; but we find no trace to determine how far it extended to the south and north.

It may be noted that the original gates are angled so that one can't enter directly into the city without making a sharp 90-degree angle turn. This was to prevent enemies on horseback from charging full-speed, straight ahead through them, and to make it difficult to use a long battering ram¹⁸ to break them down. Also, you can see above some of the gates,

¹⁷ Hospice generally means: (1) a program of medical and emotional care for the terminally ill (2) a lodging for travellers (especially one kept by a monastic order)

¹⁸ strike or drive against with a heavy impact; "ram the gate with a sledgehammer"; "pound on the door"

such as Zion Gate, outside the Armenian and Jewish quarters, a hole through which boiling liquids could be poured on attackers.

Below is a thumbnail description of the gates, counter-clockwise from south to west:

2.1.1 The Jaffa Gate

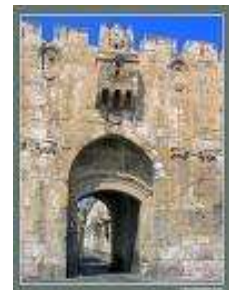
The main entrance to the city is the Jaffa Gate, built by Suleiman the Magnificent in 1538. This was the destination of Jewish and Christian pilgrims disembarking at the Jaffa port, hence its name. It led (and still leads) directly to the Jewish and Christian quarters, as well as to the most popular parts of the market, and to the Tower of David Museum, once Jerusalem's citadel and now a showcase of its history.

A road allows cars to enter the city here. It was originally built in 1898 when Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany visited Jerusalem. The ruling Ottoman Turks opened it so the German Emperor would not have to dismount his carriage.



2.1.2 The Dung Gate

Since the 2nd century, refuse has been hauled out of the city through Dung Gate, hence the name. Nehemiah 2:13 mentions a Dung Gate that was probably near this one. This Gate leads directly to the Western Wall and the Southern Wall Archaeological Park. It is also known as the Gate of the Moors because of the North African immigrants who lived in a neighbourhood next to the gate in the 16th century.



2.1.3 Golden Gate (Gate of Mercy)

One of the closed gates is the Golden Gate, located above ground level and below the Temple Mount. It is only visible from outside the city. According to Jewish tradition, when the Messiah comes, He will enter Jerusalem through this Gate. To prevent him from coming, the Muslims sealed the Gate during the rule of Suleiman the Magnificent

Golden Gate is also known as the Gate of Mercy or Gate of Eternal Life. It is said to be awaiting a miraculous opening when the Messiah comes and the dead are resurrected. Jews aren't worried about the Golden Gate being closed. As one tour guide put it, "If the Messiah came this far, he'd find a way in."



2.1.4 Lion's Gate (St. Stephen's Gate)

This portal is named after a pair of ferocious-looking animal carvings that flank it. They are actually tigers, the heraldic symbol of the 13th-century Sultan Beybars. It is also called St. Stephen's Gate, after the first Christian Martyr, who tradition says was stoned nearby. Lion's Gate, which leads to the Pools of Bethesda, the Via Dolorosa, and the Markets, became famous during the Six Day War.



2.1.5 Herod's Gate

Despite its name, the notorious Judean King had nothing to do with this gate. In Arabic and Hebrew this north-facing gate, which leads to the Old City markets, is called the Flowers Gate. Some say the name derives from a rosette carved over it. However, in Arabic a similar word means "awakened," and may refer to a nearby cemetery and the hope of resurrection.



2.1.6 Damascus Gate

This most imposing of Jerusalem's gateway also faces north and is named for the grand city from which Jerusalem's rulers once came. It is always a busy thoroughfare, thanks to the bustling markets within. Below the 16th-century gate, archaeologists have uncovered part of the entryway built by Emperor Hadrian in the second century B.C.



2.1.7 The Zion Gate

Bearing Jerusalem's earliest biblical name in Hebrew and English, this gate's Arabic name is the Gate of the Prophet David, as the Tomb of King David, on adjacent Mount Zion, is only a few steps away. Zion Gate leads directly to the Armenian and Jewish quarters.



2.1.8 The New Gate

This is the only Old City entryway not part of the original design of the 16th-century walls. It was breached in the waning days of the Ottoman Empire to allow Christian pilgrims quicker access to their Holy Places within the ramparts.



2.2. Citadel or Tower of David

From the Jaffa Gate side of the city, the most striking landmark is the Citadel, which is marked by David's Tower, a misnomer given that the cylindrical structure dates from the 16th century. By contrast, the tall, square tower is 2,000 years old and was built by Herod. Inside the Citadel is a courtyard and museum with exhibits on the history of the Citadel and Old City.



The best way to immerse yourself in the city is simply to head straight down David Street from Jaffa Gate into the Arab market, the souk, where you can expect to be verbally accosted by shopkeepers trying to entice you into their stores and to keep you occupied long enough to buy something. It's a great place to bargain, but keep in mind the shopping tips offered under trip preparation.

2.3. The Souk

As you make your way through the souk, you'll reach different junctions. Head to the left to go towards the Christian or Muslim Quarters and the right to reach the Jewish Quarter; the path to the major shrines, the Western Wall, Temple Mount and Church of the Holy Sepulchre, are not very well marked, but anyone you ask should be able to direct you.

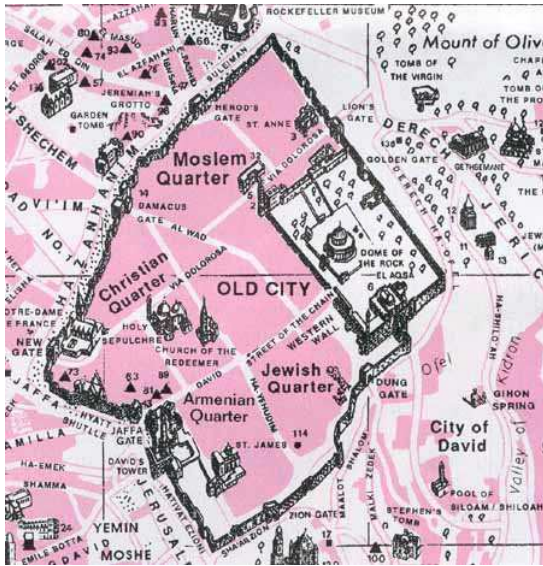
If you head towards the Muslim Quarter, or enter the Old City coming from the North from Mea She'arim or somewhere else off Suleiman Street, you'll want to look for Damascus Gate. This is where most Arabs enter the city and you'll find a bustling open-air market filled with people, carts, food and trinkets. Below the gate is a surviving arch built by the Roman Emperor Hadrian in 135 as the main entrance to the city he called Aelia Capitolina.



2.4. The Four Quarters

The Old City is divided into four neighbourhoods, which are named according to the ethnic affiliation of most of the people who live there. These quarters form a rectangular grid with different sizes. The dividing lines are the street that runs from Damascus Gate to the Zion

Gate - which divides the city into east and west - and the street leading from the Jaffa Gate to Lion's gate - which bifurcates the city north and south. Entering through the Jaffa Gate and travelling to David Street places the Christian Quarter on the left. On the right, as you continue down David Street, you'll enter the Armenian Quarter. To the left of Jews Street is the Muslim Quarter, and, to the right, is the Jewish Quarter.



A great way to visit the Old City is simply to wander through the labyrinthine paths and let you get lost. For safety reasons, it's best not to travel alone and to be careful about wandering beyond the main thoroughfares of the Muslim Quarter. It is also prudent to explore during the day, though the views of many sites - when you know how to find them - are often best at night.

Just inside Jaffa Gate, on the left beyond the Tourist Information Office, is a small enclosure with two graves nearly hidden beneath the trees! These are believed to be the graves of the two

architects whom Suleiman had rebuild the city walls. They were supposedly murdered either because the Sultan wanted to be sure they could never build anything more impressive for anyone else, or because he was angered by their failure to include Mount Zion within the walls.

The Old City is inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage Site List in 1981.

2.4.1 The Jewish Quarter

The present Jewish Quarter, which looks almost brand new and usually sparkling clean, dates roughly to 1400. The oldest synagogues - Elijah the Prophet and Yohanen Ben Zakkai - are roughly 400 years-old. These synagogues are below street level because at the time they were built Jews and Christians were prohibited from building anything higher than the Muslim structures.



In the main plaza, an arch stretches skyward where one of the walls of the Hurva Synagogue once stood. Originally the Great Synagogue, the Hurva was built in the 16th century, but was destroyed by the Ottomans. The synagogue was rebuilt in the 1850s, but was damaged in the 1948 war and then destroyed after the Jordanians took control of the Old City. Some consideration has been given to rebuilding the synagogue, but, for now the arch remains as a memorial.



Just off the plaza is the Cardo, which was a Byzantine road, roughly the equivalent of an eight-lane highway that ran through the heart of the city.

Today, a small area is preserved with some of the original Roman columns. Just beyond the

columns is an underground mall with a number of Jewish stores and art galleries. This is a good place to buy Judaica, and it is possible to haggle with shopkeepers.

2.4.2 The Christian Quarter

The Christian Quarter is situated in the north-western corner of the Old City, extending from the New Gate in the north, along the western wall of the Old City as far as the Jaffa Gate, bordering on the Jewish and Armenian Quarters, as far as the Damascus Gate in the east, where it borders on the Muslim Quarter.

The Christian quarter was built around the Church of the Holy Sepulchre – one of Christianity's Holiest places - which is the heart of the quarter. Around the church there are other churches and monasteries (around 40 in numbers). In general the quarter contains few living houses, which are mostly concentrated in the south-eastern part of the quarter near Jericho Gate.

The Christian buildings stand on a big part of the quarter. Besides the Church of the Holy Sepulchre which occupies the most land, the Patriarchy of the Greek Orthodox, the Franciscan Monastery, San Salvatore and the Latin Patriarchy take up large areas as well.

The quarter also contains lots of souvenir shops, coffee houses, restaurants and hotels. The shops are mostly concentrated in the market street, David Street, and along the Christian Road. Some of the hotels were built by the churches as places for visitors to stay (like the Casa Nova Hotel and the Greek Catholic Hotel).



In the 19th century, European countries aimed to expand their influence in Jerusalem and so began constructing several structures in the Christian quarter. The Ottoman authorities attempted to halt European influence and established rules for buying land in the area. But personal interventions from the Heads of those countries (Emperors such as Wilhelm II of Germany and Franz Joseph of Austria) led to construction of some buildings for those countries' religious authorities.

There was a natural desire for easy travel between the Christian Quarter and the new development, but at the time the Old City walls formed a barrier and travellers were forced to take an indirect path through either Jaffa Gate or Nablus Gate. In 1898, the Ottomans accepted the request of the European countries and breached a new gate in the Old City walls, in the area of the new development; the gate was called "The New Gate".

2.4.3 The Muslim Quarter and The Temple Mount

This is the Old City's largest and most densely populated quarter and is an experience for all the senses, with nargila (*hookah* or *famously known as Shisha*) to smoke, souvenirs to haggle over in the never-ending alleys of the souk, and Islamic architecture. Many of the buildings stem from the Mameluke period (13th-16th century). Examples of this architecture are Khan al-Sultan on Bab al-Silsila Street, an inn for merchants that was built in 1386 and Madrasa al-Aghuniya on Bab al-Hadid Street, a religious learning centre built in 1358.



A path up from the Western Wall plaza leads to the Temple Mount, or Haram es-Sharif (*the Noble Enclosure in Arabic*). This 40 acre plateau is dominated by two shrines, the Dome of the Rock (which is not a mosque) and the Masjid-ul-Aqsa (*The Farthest Mosque* that is mentioned in the Koran) in Jerusalem.

The Quarter stretches all the way from the Damascus Gate to the Temple Mount. Al Wad Road will take you from Damascus Gate to the Western Wall in the neighbouring Jewish Quarter.

2.4.4 The Armenian Quarter

The Old City is said to be divided into quarters because of the concentration of Jews, Christians, Muslims and Armenians in corners of the nearly square area enclosed by the



Turkish walls. The Armenian section is actually the smallest, comprising about one-sixth of the area of the Old City. If you enter the city from Jaffa Gate and turn left, walk past the Citadel and Police Station and continue down the narrow street – watch out

for cars! – you will run smack into the Armenian Quarter. From Zion Gate, the first thing you will see is the Armenian shops where you can find beautiful hand-made ceramics.

2.5. Via Dolorosa

The Via Dolorosa (literally 'Way of Sorrow') is the route believed to have been walked by Jesus as He carried the Cross to his crucifixion at Calvary or Golgotha. The route begins at the Lion's Gate, passes through the Muslim Quarter and leads to the Calvary in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It is marked along the way by the 14 Stations of the Cross. The stations indicate events along the journey and at some of these points churches have been founded. Every year, tens of thousands of pilgrims walk this route in the belief that they are following in the footsteps of Christ.

Every Friday at 3 p.m. a procession led by Italian Franciscans makes its way along the Via Dolorosa.

Stations I-IX are on the Via Dolorosa, Stations X-XIV in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which is built over Golgotha and Christ's Tomb. The Stations on the Via Dolorosa are not to be regarded as historical sites but as stages in the procession. The detritus of many centuries has raised the ground level much above its level in the time of Christ, and later building has altered the line of the streets in detail. The course of the Via Dolorosa has thus frequently changed down the centuries, and the number of Stations has increased from the original seven to the present fourteen. The present route dates mainly from the 18th century; Stations I, IV, V and VIII were established only in the 19th century. Station I



(Christ is condemned to death) lies on the south side of the Via Dolorosa, in the courtyard of the El-Omariye Medrese, to which a flight of steps leads up.

2.6. Church of the Holy Sepulchre¹⁹ (Keniset el-Kiyaneh)

Holding the last five Stations of the Cross of the Via Dolorosa, this is the Holiest Christian Site in Jerusalem. Upon entering the church, the little stairway to the right lead to the Chapel of Golgotha and three Stations of the Cross - where Jesus was stripped, crucified and removed from the cross. The Sepulchre itself is at the centre of the Church and marks where Jesus is believed to have been buried and resurrected. Downstairs is the Angel's Chapel, where the resurrected Christ made known himself to Mary Magdalene. The site of the church was first chosen in the fourth century by Queen Helena and the existing structure dates mainly from the period of the Crusades. It is divided into sections, which are each under the jurisdiction of a different Christian denomination.



Chapel of Golgotha

2.6.1 Chapel of Adam

Going down the steps on the north side to the Chapel of Adam, in which there is also a split in the rock. The chapel gets its name from the legend that Adam's skull was found under the Cross at Christ's crucifixion.

On either side of the entrance are stone benches marking the site of the tombs of the first two rulers of the Crusader Kingdom, Godfrey of Bouillon and Baldwin I. Their remains were removed by Muslims in the 13th century, and the tombs themselves were broken up by fanatical Greek monks in 1808. The appearance of the tombs is known from drawings made before their destruction: low columns supported saddle roofs which bore Latin inscriptions, which also were recorded. One of them read „Here lies the famous Duke Godfrey of Bouillon, who won this whole country for the Christian faith. May his soul rest in Christ; Amen." The other read: "Here lies King Baldwin, a second Judas Maccabeus, the hope of his country, the pride of the Church and its strength. Arabia and Egypt, Dan and overweening Damascus feared his power and humbly brought him gifts and tribute. Alas! This poor sarcophagus covers him."



2.6.2 Stone of Unction

At the foot of Golgotha is The Stone of Anointing, also known as the The Stone of Unction, which tradition claims to be the spot where Jesus' Body was prepared for burial by Joseph of

¹⁹ Sepulchre is a type of tomb or burial chamber. In ancient Hebrew practice, sepulchres were often carved into the rock of a hillside

Arimathea. It is a polished red stone about six meters long and one meter wide. The lamps that hang over the stone are contributed by Armenians, Copts, Greeks and Latins.

2.6.3 The Holy Sepulchre

In the center of the Rotunda stands the empty Tomb of Christ or the Edicule (Aedicule)²⁰.

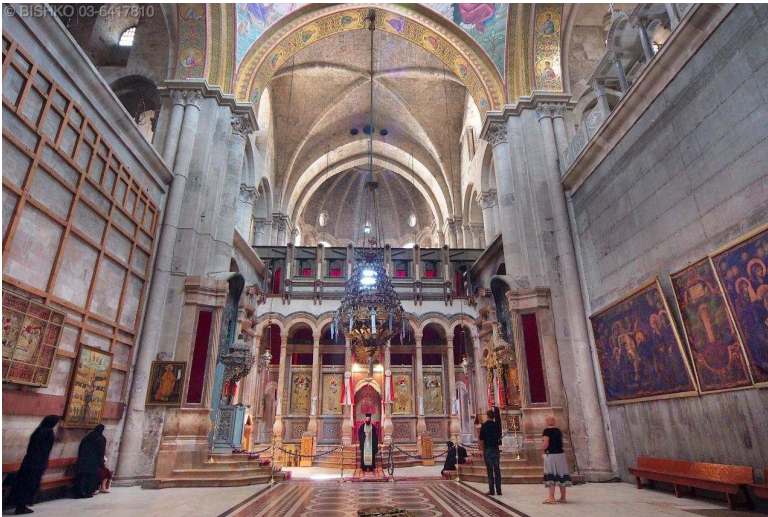
In front of the entrance are huge candelabra, and over the doorway hang 43 lamps (thirteen each belonging to the Greeks, Latins and Armenians and four to the Copts). They are lit according to the rite that is being celebrated. There is almost always a line of people waiting to enter the Edicule. The space is confined and no more than four people can be admitted at one time. People usually spend about three minutes praying inside.



The innermost chamber of the Aedicule covered in medieval marble

In an antechamber, the Angel's Chapel, is a stone on which the angel who announced the resurrection of Christ to the holy women is said to have sat. It is probably a remnant of the round stone which closed the mouth of the Sepulchre and was rolled away by the angel. A low door leads into the small tomb chamber, along the right-hand wall of which is a

marble slab marking the empty burial-place. Apart from the marble cladding, this is a tomb similar to many others dating from the time of Christ, closed by a round stone like a millstone whose diameter determined the height of the entrance. During the night before Easter Day the Holy Sepulchre is the scene of a ceremony in which the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem enters the Angel's Chapel, which has been closed since Good Friday, and lights the "Holy Fire" - a light from the darkness of the tomb which symbolizes the Resurrection.



The Catholicon is a large Greek Orthodox Church situated between Calvary and the Holy Sepulchre. Medieval cartographers marked this spot as the center of the world.

2.6.4 Chapel of the Jacobites

On the south, west and north sides of the Rotunda are semicircular conches. In the west conch, opposite the Coptic Chapel, is a chapel of the Syrian Christians (Jacobites), in which, on the left, is the entrance to a rock-cut tomb. It is traditionally ascribed to Joseph of Arimathea, who also provided the tomb for Christ (Matthew 27:60). It is still in its original condition, without marble cladding.

2.6.5 North Aisle²¹

The northern part of the Rotunda belongs to the Latins. Here are a chapel of the Franciscans, whose friary is immediately adjoining, and the Altar of Mary Magdalene. In the northern aisle are a number of columns of different periods, including richly decorated Corinthian columns from the original fourth century church. These are known as the Arches of the Virgin, because

²⁰ An aedicule (plural aediculae) is a small shrine

²¹ Part of a church divided laterally from the nave proper by rows of pillars or columns

the risen Christ is said to have appeared to His Mother here. At the east end of the aisle is a small square chamber known, without any historical basis, as the Prison of Christ.

2.6.6 The Chapel of St. Helena (Armenian Chapel of St. Gregory)

At the east end of the nave is a semicircular passage or ambulatory²² which runs past the Chapel of Longinus and the Chapel of the Parting of the Raiment to a flight of steps leading down to St Helena's Chapel. In the rock face on the right are small crosses incised by pilgrims of the Crusader period. The chapel is roughly square, with four short columns of the Byzantine period carrying the high arches of the roof structure. Through the dome light falls from above into the large central square, giving the chapel its own special atmosphere, which is enhanced by the lamps, the decorative fabrics and the altar. To the right of the principal apse²³ is a recess from which Helena is said to have watched the bringing to light of the Roman cistern in which the True Cross was found.



2.6.7 Chapel of the Invention of the Cross

A further flight of steps leads down to the former cistern, now the plain little Chapel of the Invention of the Cross (Roman Catholic), its walls still showing signs of its original function. The statue of St. Helena and the altar were gifted by Archduke Maximilian of Austria, the future ill-fated Emperor of Mexico.

2.7. Church of the Holy Sepulchre: Present Status

The site of the Church of Holy Sepulchre is venerated by Christians as Golgotha (the Hill of Calvary), where Jesus was crucified and buried (the Sepulchre). The church has been an essential pilgrimage destination since at least the 4th century. Today it also serves as the Headquarters of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, while control of the building is shared between several Christian churches and secular entities in complicated arrangements effectively unchanged for centuries.

After the renovation of 1555, control of the church moved back and forth between the Franciscans and the Orthodox, depending on which community could obtain a favourable firman²⁴ from the Sublime Porte²⁵ at a particular time, often through outright bribery, and violent clashes were not uncommon. In 1767, weary of the squabbling, the Porte issued a firman that divided the church among the claimants. This was confirmed in 1852 with another firman that made the arrangement permanent, establishing a status quo of territorial division among the communities.

The primary custodians are the Eastern Orthodox, Armenian Apostolic, and Roman Catholic Churches, with the Greek Orthodox Church having the lion's share. In the 19th century, the Coptic Orthodox, the Ethiopian Orthodox and the Syriac Orthodox acquired lesser responsibilities, which include shrines and other structures within and around the building. Time and places of worship for each community are strictly regulated in common areas.

Establishment of the status quo did not halt the violence, which continues to break out every so often even in modern times.

²² A covered walkway, outdoors (as in a cloister) or indoors: especially the passage around the apse and the choir (quire) of a church

²³ A domed or vaulted recess or projection on a building especially the east end of a church; usually contains the altar

²⁴ The word firman comes from the Persian farmân meaning "decree" or "order". In Turkish it is called a ferman

²⁵ The Ottoman court in Constantinople

None of the communities controls the main entrance. In 1192, Saladin²⁶ assigned responsibility for it to two neighbouring Muslim families. The Joudeh were entrusted with the key, and the Nusseibeh, who had been the custodians of the church since the days of Caliph Omar in 637, retained the position of keeping the door. This arrangement has persisted into modern times. Twice each day, a Joudeh family member brings the key to the door, which is locked and unlocked by a Nusseibeh.

For further reading please visit:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brotherhood_of_the_Holy_Sepulchre

3. Room of the Last Supper

Cenacle²⁷, or Room of the Last Supper, is believed to be the place where Jesus gathered His Disciples for a meal before He was arrested. The word "Cenacle" means "Upper Room", and this particular upper room of the Last Supper fame is located in a building a short distance from the Hagia Maria Sion Abbey on the southwest side of Old Jerusalem, outside the Zion Gate.

This room of the Last Supper is where the Holy Spirit descended on the Day of Pentecost.



View of the "Cenacle" in the building on Mount Zion as it exists today

When Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70, this site was not spared, and became the site of the first Christian Church, only to be destroyed by Persian invaders later. After Muslims razed the original building, the Crusaders built a basilica over it in 1333 with Franciscan monks as its guardians. The monks were evicted by the Turks in 1552, and the Room of the Last Supper was turned into a mosque. Christians

never get to set foot in the Room of the Last Supper until the state of Israel was established in 1948. Following the visit by Pope John Paul II, the Israeli Government allowed Catholics to take ownership of the site in return for a church in Toledo (Spain), which was turned into a Jewish synagogue.

4. Herod's Family Tomb

In a side street to the east of the King David Hotel is Herod's Family Tomb. Herod I built a monumental tomb for himself on the Herodeion near Bethlehem and a separate tomb for his family above the Hinnom valley in which his wife Mariamne and other victims of his violent temper and persecution mania were buried.

To the left of the entrance the foundations of a pyramid have been excavated. A flight of steps leads down to a rock-cut forecourt and the entrance passage, which could be closed by a round stone (still visible). Beyond this are a square chamber and behind it a smaller one, off which open three tomb chambers. Until the Second World War the sarcophagi were still in their original places, but when the British authorities used the tomb as an air raid shelter they were moved to the Monastery of Constantine, near the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.



²⁶ Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb (*c.1137-1138 in Tikrit, Iraq †4.03.1193 in Damascus (aged 55-56) (westernized to "Saladin") was the Sultan of Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Yemen, founded the Ayyubid dynasty, and captured Jerusalem from the Christians. He was the most famous Muslim hero and a consummate military tactician.

²⁷ The Cenacle (from Latin cenaculum), also known as the "Upper Room", is the term used for the site of The Last Supper. The word is a derivative of the Latin word cena, which means dinner.

5. Western Wall (Wailing Wall) (Kotel HaMa'aravi)

Continuing past the Porat Josef Synagogue in Jerusalem, we come to the holiest Jewish site, the Wailing Wall or Western Wall (Kotel HaMa'aravi). This massive stretch of wall, 48m/52yds long by 18m/60ft high, is part of the retaining wall on the southwest side of the Temple platform. Since 1967 a densely built-up area in front of the wall has been cleared to



Western Wall: Swearing-in Ceremony of the Members of the Israel Defence Force, 1966

make a large open space. The section of this area nearest the wall has been railed off and ranks as a synagogue, in which men go to the left and women to the right. This is where great religious ceremonies take place

and army recruits are sworn in. The Wailing Wall was so called because of the Jews' laments for the destruction of the Temple. In the past it was the only part of the Temple area from which they were almost always excluded. Nowadays pious Jews do not go up on to the Temple Mount, as they are now able to do, since the position of the Holy of Holies, which could be entered only by the high priests, is not known.

The Western Wall, constructed of massive rough blocks of golden stone, is a remnant of the outer retaining walls of the Second Temple as reconstructed by Herod in 30 B.C. (the First Temple, constructed by Solomon, occupied the same site but was destroyed by the Babylonians). Since the final destruction of the Temple by the Romans in A.D. 70, the Western Wall has been the Holiest place of prayer for the Jewish people. Jews come from all over the world to pray or to contemplate. Some place notes with hopes, dreams and messages of goodwill in the cracks of the Wall. In keeping with Orthodox Jewish practice (because the entire site is technically an Orthodox synagogue) the length of the Wall has been divided into separate sections for men and women. Any man or woman may enter their respective section, provided men have their heads covered (visitors can borrow a kippah or skullcap when entering) and women are modestly dressed.

6. Temple Mount (Mount Moriah)

Temple Mount (Har Habayit (Hebrew), Al Haram ash-Sharif (Arabic), also called Mount Moriah, is sacred to both Islam and Judaism. It is a natural hill, which was built up artificially to support the huge Jewish Temple that stood here for a thousand years in Biblical times. Temple Mount has remained the focus of the Jewish religion ever since - when praying, Jews worldwide still face Temple Mount.



Sign outside the Temple Mount warning Jews not to enter the mosque compound

6.1. Dome of the Rock

It was from a black rock within the complex of Temple Mount that, according to the Koran, Muhammad made his Ascension to Heaven at the conclusion of his dreamt 'Night Ride' from Mecca, and, according to the Bible, it was here that Abraham offered Isaac for sacrifice. With the arrival of Islam in the 7th century, the octagonal, blue-tiled Dome of the Rock, with its huge Gold Dome, was built over the large black rock. Dominating the skyline of the Old City, its dome glinting in the sunshine, this beautiful building is Jerusalem's most famous landmark.



The Dome of the Rock (Qubbet el-Sakhra) is one of the greatest of Muslim monuments, still sometimes called the Mosque of Omar - wrongly, because it is not a mosque and does not date from the time of Caliph Omar. It was built by Abd el-Malik (685-705), the fifth Omayyad Caliph: an octagonal structure with a high dome over the sacred rock of Moriah.

6.2. Al-Aqsa Mosque

Also on Temple Mount is the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the oldest mosque in Israel and (unlike the Dome of the Rock) an actual place of worship. Its silver dome dates from the 11th century. The Islamic Museum, the third building within the complex, contains Islamic artefacts and relics. Only one of the 10 gates to the complex, Al-Mughradia (Moors) Gate allows entry for non-worshippers. This is located to the right of the Western Wall and is accessed from Western Wall Plaza.

Al-Aqsa Mosque is the second oldest mosque in Islam after the Ka'ba in Mecca, and is third in holiness and importance after the mosques in Mecca and Medina. Al-Aqsa Mosque holds up to 400,000 worshippers at one time, bearing in mind that the space required for each person is roughly 0.8m x 0.5m to enable the submissive kneeling in prayer. On Fridays at noon, during the fasting month of Ramadan, and particularly the 27th of Ramadan (Lailat El-Qadr), the area is filled to virtual capacity.



The al-Aqsa Mosque is known as the "farthest mosque" in sura al-Isra in the Qur'an. It is traditionally interpreted by Muslims as referring to the site at the Noble Sanctuary in Jerusalem on which the mosque of that name now stands. According to this tradition, the term used for mosque, (Arabic: masjid), literally means "place

of prostration", and includes monotheistic places of worship such as Solomon's Temple, which in the Qur'an is described as a masjid.

7. Mount of Olives

The Mount of Olives (Har HaZeitim (Hebrew), Jebel az-Zeitun (Arabic) is a mountain ridge in East Jerusalem with three peaks running from north to south. The highest, at-Tur, rises to 818 meters (2,683 ft). It is named for the olive groves that once covered its slopes. The Mount of Olives is associated with Jewish and Christian traditions.

The Mount of Olives is first mentioned in connection with David's flight from Absalom (II Samuel 15:30): "And David went up by the ascent of the Mount of Olives, and wept as he went up." The ascent was probably east of the City of David, near the village of Silwan. The sacred character of the mount is alluded to in the Ezekiel (11:23): "And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city." Solomon built altars to the Gods of his wives on the southern peak (I Kings 11:7-8). During the reign of King Josiah, the mount was called the Mount of Corruption (II Kings 23:13).

The New Testament, tells how Jesus and his friends sang together - "When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives" Matthew 26:30. Jesus ascended to Heaven from the Mount of Olives as recorded in the Book of Acts 1:9-12. It will be the Mount of Olives to which He is to return as stated in the Book of Acts 1:11.



After the destruction of the Temple, Jews celebrated the festival of Sukkot on the Mount of Olives. They made pilgrimages to the Mount of Olives because it was 80 meters higher than the Temple Mount and offered a panoramic view of the Temple site. It became a traditional place for lamenting the Temple's destruction, especially on Tisha B'Av.

The Mount of Olives is frequently mentioned in the New Testament (Matthew 21:1; 26:30, etc.) as the route from Jerusalem to Bethany and the place where Jesus stood when he wept over Jerusalem. Jesus is said to have spent time on the mount, teaching and prophesying to his disciples (Matthew 24-25), including the Olivet discourse, returning after each day to rest (Luke 21:37), and also coming there on the night of His betrayal (Matthew 26:39). At the foot of the Mount of Olives lies the Garden of Gethsemane.

Landmarks on the Mount of Olives include Yad Avshalom, the Tomb of Zechariah, the Church of all Nations, the Church of Maria Magdalene, Dominus Flevit Church, Gethsemane, Mary's Tomb, the Mount of Olives Hotel and the Seven Arches Hotel.

7.1. Church of the Pater Noster

Named for the "Our Father" prayer (Latin: Pater Noster), the Church stands on the traditional site in Jerusalem where Jesus taught his disciples how to pray. The unique feature of this convent is that the walls are decorated with 140 ceramic tiles and each one inscribed with the Lord's Prayer in a different language (there are at least 7-8 in Indian languages, including Malayalam, the language of over 35 million from Kerala, India).



It is one of the most popular and important places of sightseeing in Jerusalem. Inside the Iron Gate of Pater Noster convent visitors can see the richly decorated plaques containing

the entire Lord' Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13). Several of the languages in which the Lord' Prayer is written are truly unusual which includes Tagalog, Pampango, and Ojibway.



beautiful memorial to a princess whose favourite and most comforting speech was the Lord's Prayer.

7.2. Dome of the Ascension

The Church of the Holy Ascension taken by Saladin in 1187 was converted into a mosque and remains such today. It contains what is traditionally the last footprint of Jesus on earth before he ascended into heaven.

Constantine's mother Helena built a church under the modern Pater Noster Church to commemorate this event. A much later tradition connects the Russian Orthodox Church of the Ascension to Christ's return into Heaven.

(To my dismay I found the Sanctuary was not properly maintained nor kept clean, though visitors have to pay entry fee! To the contrast the mosque is kept neat and clean!)



Scripture indicates that the Jesus ascended into heaven in the vicinity of Bethany. This village is down the east slope of the Mt. of Olives about 1.5 miles (2 km).

7.3. Jewish Cemetery on the Mount of Olives

From biblical times until today, Jews have been buried on the Mount of Olives. There are an estimated 150,000 graves on the Mount, including tombs traditionally associated with Zechariah and Avshalom (Absalom). Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, who as Prime Minister initiated Peace Talks with Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, asked to be buried on the Mount of Olives near the grave of Etzel²⁸ Member Meir Feinstein, rather than Mount Herzl National Cemetery.



A paved road leads from the top of the Mount of Olives to the back of the Basilica of the Agony at the bottom. Along this route, you may enter various sections of the oldest continuously used Jewish cemetery in the world. The local custom is to place a stone on the cenotaph to indicate a visit.

Jewish burials were halted in 1948, and massive vandalism took place from 1948-1967. During the nineteen years of Jordanian rule, 40,000 of the 50,000 graves were desecrated. King Hussein permitted the construction of the Intercontinental Hotel at the summit of the

²⁸ In present-day Israel, the Irgun is commonly referred to as Etzel, an acronym of the Hebrew initials

Mount of Olives together with a road that cut through the cemetery which destroyed hundreds of Jewish graves, some from the First Temple Period. After the Six-Day War, restoration work began, and the cemetery was re-opened for burials.

7.4. Tomb of Avshalom (Yad Avshalom)

The Tomb of Avshalom (Absalom) is a grand monument in the upper Kidron valley (Yehoshafat valley) on the foothills of Mount of Olives, facing the Temple Mount. The entire tomb is cut into the natural rock and is a remarkable memorial.



The bible tells us that this is the tomb of Avshalom (Absalom), son of David, who was killed by David's men after a failed mutiny.

According to the bible, the tomb was built by Avshalom himself in his lifetime, since he had no sons who would build the tomb. This contradicts Chapter 14 where we are told he had 3 sons, but maybe they died earlier, or were not worthy of erecting this memorial. According to legend, on top of the tomb was a hand, since in Hebrew the Hand (Yad) means "Memorial".

2 Samuel 18:18: "...and he called the pillar after his own name: and it is called unto this day, Absalom's Place"

For 3,000 years the site was covered by small rocks, thrown on the tomb by visitors that showed their disgust against the acts of the son rising against his father. In 1925 the area was cleaned and the stone piles were removed.



7.5. Tomb of Zechariah

This grand monument is built into the rock on the foothills of Mount of Olives. According to tradition it is the tomb of the Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest.

2 Chronicles 24: 20: "And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest... and they conspired against him and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king"

7.6. Garden of Gethsemane

The Garden of Gethsemane is at the foot of the Mount of Olives, within the walled grounds of the Church of all Nations (also known as the Church of the Agony). It's a peaceful garden among a grove of ancient olive trees, looking back at the eastern wall of the City of Jerusalem.



Jesus frequently went to Gethsemane with His disciples to pray (John 18:2). The most famous events at Gethsemane occurred on the night before His crucifixion when Jesus was betrayed: Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." (Matthew 26:36)

Each of the Gospel writers describes the events of that night with slight variations, so reading the four accounts (Matthew 26:36-56, Mark 14:32-52, Luke 22:40-53 and John 18:1-11) will give an accurate picture of that momentous night in its entirety.

Remarkably, the Garden of Gethsemane still contains dozens of ancient olive trees that date to approximately 2,000-years-old!

7.7. Grotto of Gethsemane (The Grotto of the Betrayal/Grotto of the Agony)

In the garden of Gethsemane there are two places which attract the attention of the visitors:

1. The grotto where Jesus with his disciples assembled. It was here in this grotto where Jesus returned after his prayers, that Judas gave him the Kiss of Betrayal. It was here that the soldiers captured him.



2. The spot, a little away from this grotto, where Jesus prostrated himself, sweated blood and prayed. On the spot is a rock of hard lime stone. Enclosing this rock stands a magnificent basilica.

Jesus, in the company of his disciples reached this grotto. On previous occasions when he came to Jerusalem, very often he had prayed and spent the night here with his disciples; this grotto was a natural cave in the rock, very convenient to remain in peace, pray and rest at night. In St Luke's Gospel, we read: "And in the day time he was

teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the Mount of Olives." (21:37).

When Jesus reached this grotto, he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee (James and John), and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me" (Mt 26:36-38).

7.8. Basilica of the Agony (Church of All Nations)

The Church of All Nations, officially named the Basilica of the Agony, is located at the foot of the Mount of Olives next to the Garden of Gethsemane. The Church enshrines a section of stone in the Garden of Gethsemane that is believed to be where Jesus prayed on the night of his arrest (Matthew 26:36). The Basilica of the Agony was built from 1919 to 1924 using funds from 12 different countries, which gave its name: Church of All Nations.

The domed roof, thick pillars, and floor mosaic give the church a Byzantine appearance. The architect of the building was Antonio Barluzzi, who also designed the nearby Dominus Flevit Church.

The symbols of each country that contributed to the church are incorporated into the inlaid gold ceilings of 12 cupolas. The 12 cupolas rest on six monolithic pillars. The front of the church features a colourful façade supported by a row of pillars. The mosaic above the entrance depicts Christ as the link between God and Humanity.



The Church of All Nations lies on the foundations of two earlier churches: a 12th century Crusader chapel abandoned in 1345 and a 4th century Byzantine Basilica, destroyed by an earthquake in 746.

7.9. Tomb of the Virgin

The walk over the Mount of Olives starts at a bend in Jericho Road below St Stephen's Gate in Jerusalem. After passing a memorial to Israeli paratroops killed here in 1967, we come to the Tomb of the Virgin Mary, which has a Gothic Façade of the Crusader period (12th century). It is one of many buildings in this area dating from three different periods: Early Christian (4th and 5th century), the Crusaders (12th century) and the 19th and 20th centuries.

A flight of 47 broad marble steps leads down to the dark underground shrine; half way down are two recesses: the one on the right contains the Tombs of Joachim and Anne, the Virgin's parents, the one on the left an altar over the Tomb of Joseph. At the bottom of the steps, 12m/40ft below ground level, we turn right beyond a Greek Orthodox altar to reach the rock-cut tomb of the Virgin, at the east end of a long chamber. It is flanked on the left by an Armenian altar and on the right by a medieval Muslim prayer niche. At the west end of the chamber are a cistern, whose water is credited with healing powers, and an altar of the Abyssinian Christians.



There is a house at Ephesus in Asia Minor in which the Virgin is said to have lived; but there is an early Christian tradition that she spent the last years of her life in Jerusalem, where she died 22 years after the death of her Son and was buried in the valley of Jehoshaphat. The tomb is also known as the Church of the Assumption, in the belief that it was from here that Mary was carried up into heaven by angels.

7.10. Dominus Flevit

Luke 19:41-44 records that Jesus looked over the city of Jerusalem and wept for its future destruction. The chapel, designed by Italian architect Antonio Barlucci, was built in 1955. During construction, archaeological remains from the Canaanite period, and a lovely Byzantine chapel were discovered, along with tombs from the Second Temple and Late Roman periods. The Byzantine mosaic floor with its intersecting circles, flowers, fruit, leaves, and fish, was incorporated in the building. Barlucci's arched window provides one of the most famous views of Jerusalem.



7.11. Church of Mary Magdalena

This Russian Orthodox Church was built in honour of the Czar's Mother in 1888 and the mosaic inside depicts the legend of Mary Magdalene presenting an egg to the Emperor Tiberius. The egg allegedly turned red when she handed it to him, symbolic of Jesus' Blood. 28 nuns from all over the world live in the convent here today.



8. Abyssinian Church

From a side gate of the Russian Compound in Jerusalem a street runs northwest into Prophets Street (Rehov HaNevi'im), beyond which is the Mea Shearim quarter. Turning left into Prophets Street, we take the first street on the right, Abyssinian Street (Rehov HaHabbashim), named after the Abyssinian Monastery founded and enlarged by Emperors John (1872-89) and Menelik (1889-1913).

The church of the monastery is a round building with a green dome. The reliefs of lions above the doorway recall the style of Lion of Judah borne by the Abyssinian dynasty which traced its origins back to the Queen of Sheba; it was believed that the Queen of Sheba was also Queen of Abyssinia and that when she visited Solomon in Jerusalem he granted her a coat of arms with the Lion of Judah. The church contains numbers of Abyssinian icons.

9. Mea Shearim

To the north of the Abyssinian Monastery is the Mea Shearim district, where the second Jewish settlement outside the Old City was established in 1875. At the entrances to this quarter are notices asking visitors to respect the customs of the strictly orthodox Jews who live here. This applies particularly to the Sabbath, but at all times visitors should avoid wearing "improper dress" (e.g. shorts, short-sleeved blouses and dresses) and taking photographs of the inhabitants.

The name Mea Shearim ("Hundred Gates") refers to Isaac's "hundredfold" harvest (Genesis 26:12). The ultra-orthodox Jews can be recognized by their old East European dress, their black clothes, felt hats (streimel) and side-curls (peiyot). They speak mostly Yiddish, since they regard Hebrew as a sacred language to be used only in religious services. An extreme group (Neturei Karta) refuses to recognize the State of Israel because it was not established by the Messiah and regard themselves as a ghetto of true orthodoxy within the Jewish state. In this quarter there are numerous synagogues, ritual baths (mikvot), Talmudic schools and Torah scribes.

10. River Jordan (Baptismal Jesus' Location)

River Jordan (Nahr al-urdun (Arabic), Nehar hayarden (Hebrew) rises on the Syria-Lebanon border, flows through Lake Tiberias (Sea of Galilee), and then receives its main tributary, the Yarmūk River. It drains into the Dead Sea at 1,312 ft (400 m) below sea level after a total course of 223 mi (360 km). It is considered to be one of the world's most sacred rivers.

Jordan is derived from the Hebrew word pronounced yar-dane, meaning Descender as it runs its course from the heights of its sources near Mount Hermon to the depths of the Dead Sea.



Beginning in the north, the River exists in three sections:

- From its multiple river sources (the Bareithit, the Hasbany from Mount Hermon, the Leddan, the Banias) to Lake Huleh.



- Lake Huleh to the Sea of Galilee in Galilee, about 10 miles/16 km.
- From the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea, in a straight line about 65 miles/ 105 km.

From its beginning in the north to its terminus at the Dead Sea, the elevation of the river drops tremendously - from the heights of Mount Hermon to the depths of the Dead

Sea - a drop of about 2,380 feet. Due to its winding course, the river itself actually measures nearly 200 miles/325 km, over twice its direct distance.

The Jordan River is mentioned frequently in The Bible, about 175 times in the Old Testament and about 15 times in the New Testament.

The first mention of the Jordan is when Abraham and Lot parted company: "And Lot lifted up his eyes, and saw that the Jordan valley was well watered everywhere like the Garden of The Lord, like the land of Egypt, in the direction of Zoar; this was before The Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. So Lot chose for himself the entire Jordan valley, and Lot journeyed east; thus they separated from each other." (Genesis 13:10-11 RSV)

Jacob was renamed Israel at the ford of the Jabbok River, a tributary of the Jordan: "The same night he arose and took his two wives [Leah and Rachel], his two maids, and his eleven children [The Tribes of Israel], and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. And Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and Jacob's thigh was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." And he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." Then he said, "Your name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed." (Genesis 32:22-28 RSV)

At the end of their Wilderness Journey, after Joshua succeeded Moses as the leader of the people, the Israelites entered the Promised Land by crossing the Jordan River that, like the Red Sea, was miraculously divided for them (Joshua 3:15-17).

The prophets Elijah and Elisha were active on both sides of the Jordan. In earlier times, the Israelites possessed the territory on both sides of the Jordan. Today the Jordan River forms much of the international boundary between Israel and the Kingdom of Jordan.

The New Testament states that John the Baptist baptized unto repentance in the Jordan (Matthew 3:5-6; Mark 1:5; Luke 3:3; John 1:28). This is recounted as having taken place at Bethabara (John 1:28). So this is where John the Baptist, in his garment of camel's hair, fed on locusts and wild honey, preached and worked and baptised our Lord.

John, who called the people to repentance, called them to change their ways, called them above all to return and be true to God. Not to worship by words but by deeds; not to offer sacrifice by burnt offerings, but by relinquishing selfish desires and seeking the common good. This Baptism happened on these banks nearly 2000 years ago; a moment in time with a consequence in eternity.

11. King David Hotel

The rectangular building, constructed of locally quarried pink sandstone was opened in 1931 on Julian's Way (today King David Street). The hotel hosted such royalty as the dowager Empress of Persia, Queen Mother Nazli of Egypt and King Abdullah I of Jordan, who arrived with a retinue on horses and camels. The hotel afforded asylum to three royal Heads of State who had to flee their countries: King Alfonso VIII of Spain, forced to abdicate in 1931; Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, driven out by the Italians in 1936; and King George II of Greece, who set up his Government in Exile at the hotel after the Nazi occupation of his country in 1942.



During the British Mandate, the entire southern wing became the administrative and military center of British rule in Palestine and was blown up in July 1946 by the Irgun²⁹. Irgun leader Menachem Begin stressed his desire to avoid civilian casualties

²⁹ Jewish right-wing underground movement in Palestine founded in 1931. It became in 1936 an instrument of the Revisionist Party, an extreme nationalist group that had seceded from the World Zionist Organization and whose policies

and said three telephone calls were placed, one to the hotel, another to the French Consulate, and a third to the Palestine Post, warning that explosives in the King David Hotel would soon be detonated.

The call into the hotel was apparently received and ignored. Begin quotes one British official who supposedly refused to evacuate the building, saying: "We don't take orders from the Jews." As a result, when the bombs exploded, the casualty toll was high: a total of 91 killed and 45 injured.

The hotel subsequently became a British fortress until May 4, 1948, when the British flag was lowered, and the building became a Jewish stronghold. At the end of the War of Independence, the hotel found itself overlooking "no-man's land" on the border that divided Jerusalem into Israeli and Jordanian territory. When Jerusalem was reunited in 1967, the hotel reopened under new management and has been the hotel in Israel ever since.

12. Knesset

The Knesset sits on a hilltop in western Jerusalem in a district known as Sheikh Badr before the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and now known as Givat Ram, built on land leased from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem. It was financed by James A. de Rothschild as a gift to the State of Israel.

Before the construction of its permanent home, the Knesset met in the Jewish Agency building in Jerusalem, the Kessem Cinema building in Tel Aviv and the Froumine building in Jerusalem.



The term "Knesset" is derived from the ancient Great Assembly or Great Synagogue which according to Jewish tradition was an assembly of 120 scribes, sages, and prophets, in the period from the end of the Biblical Prophets to the time of the development of Rabbinic Judaism - about two centuries ending 70 B.C. There is, however, no organizational continuity and - aside from the number of members - little similarity, as the ancient Knesset was an essentially religious, completely unelected body.



Near the entrance is a 5m/16ft high bronze Menorah (seven-branched candlestick) by Benno Elkan, a gift from the British Parliament. It is decorated with 29 reliefs of figures and events in Jewish history.

The interior is decorated with mosaics and tapestries by Marc Chagall. When Parliament is not sitting there are conducted tours of the building; when it is sitting visitors can usually get

admission to the visitors' gallery.

13. Yad Vashem

"And to them I will give, in My house and within My walls, a memorial and a name [Yad Vashem] an everlasting name that shall not be cut off." [Isaiah 56:5]

Yad Vashem is the world's principal Holocaust Memorial and Archive, located in west Jerusalem. The name of the world's most important Holocaust Memorial, means 'A Hand and a Name', the word Hand also meaning 'Memorial' and implying that every victim will be individually remembered. Yad Vashem (or the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority) is located on the western edge of



Jerusalem. It is best known as a monument to the devastation inflicted upon the Jewish people by the Nazis during World War-II. There are indoor and outdoor exhibits, including museums, memorials, sculpture and a research and documentation centre.

The tree-lined Avenue of the Righteous Among the Nations commemorates and honours gentiles who risked their lives to save Jews and leads to the Historical Museum, Yad Vashem's prism-like central concrete structure lying mainly below ground, where the course of Hitler's 'Final Solution' is traced.

The Hall of Remembrance is a solemn tent-like structure that allows visitors to pay their respects to the dead. Also contained within the Yad Vashem complex is the wooded, walled Valley of the Communities, recording the names of Jewish communities wiped out in their entirety, and the Hall of Names, where the names and details of over three and a half million individual victims have been recorded and are being constantly added to. There is also a poignant Art Museum, containing work produced by Jewish inmates of the Death Camps. Possibly the most heart-rending, however, is the Children's Memorial, where, in a dark underground chamber, names from the list of 1.5 million children murdered in the Holocaust are constantly read out.

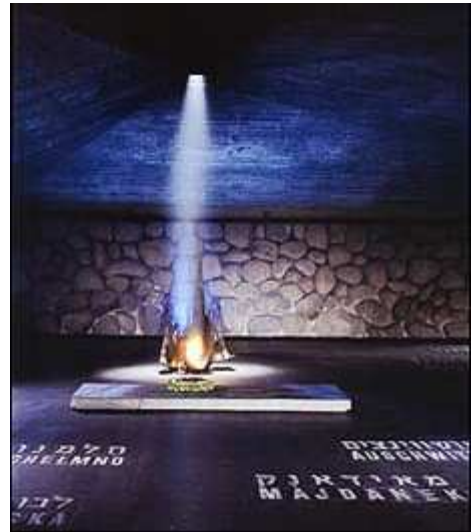
The Yellow Star often seen in exhibits and books about the Holocaust was a cloth badge, three or four inches across, sometimes with the word "Jew" in the appropriate language.



The Nazis required Jews to wear these on their clothing for easy identification. Later it helped in rounding them up for deportation to ghettos or concentration camps. As the Nazis occupied one country after another, they required Jews to wear the six-pointed star as well. In Denmark, many non-Jews - and the King himself - wore them as a gesture of defiance. In the camps, different groups wore similar symbols: for example, pink triangles for homosexuals, purple triangles for Jehovah's Witnesses. Today the yellow star is a Badge of Honour for survivors and their families.

14. Ammunition Hill – National Memorial Site

In the early 1930s, the British mandatory authorities built a Police Academy in northern Jerusalem. The ammunition was stored on the nearby hill, which became known as Ammunition Hill. The Jordanians captured parts of northern Jerusalem in the 1948 War, and the Police Academy and Ammunition Hill became outposts to help prevent Israel from connecting to its Mt. Scopus enclave. On the morning of June 7, 1967, during the Six Day War, a bloody battle was waged on Ammunition Hill, which was ultimately taken by Israeli soldiers and opened the way to Israel's capture of the Old City. In 1975, at the initiative of the grieving families and comrades-in-arms of the fallen soldiers, a memorial site and museum was dedicated on Ammunition Hill, and 182 olive trees were planted – the number of the fallen



in the battles for Jerusalem in the Six Day War. In 1987, Ammunition Hill was declared a National Memorial Site.



Israeli soldiers celebrate in the Sinai Peninsula during the Six-Day War in June 1967

Following numerous border clashes between Israel and its Arab neighbours, particularly Syria, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser expelled the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) from the Sinai Peninsula in May 1967. The peacekeeping force had been stationed there since 1957, following a British-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt which was launched during the Suez Crisis. Egypt amassed 1,000 tanks and nearly 100,000 soldiers on the Israeli border and closed the Straits of Tiran to all ships flying Israeli flags or carrying strategic materials, receiving strong support from

other Arab countries. Israel responded with a similar mobilization that included the call up of 70,000 reservists to augment the regular IDF forces.

On June 5, 1967, Israel launched a surprise attack on Egypt. Israel has always considered this a pre-emptive attack. Jordan, which had signed a mutual defence treaty with Egypt on May 30, then attacked western Jerusalem and Netanya.

15. The Israel Museum

The Israel Museum is the nation's leading showcase for its archaeology, anthropology and art. It houses a vast number of fascinating exhibits relating to the long history and culture of the Jews in the region. Among the highlights are the modern sculptures of the Art Garden, the 20th century artworks of the Art Pavilion, and the Archaeological Galleries, where major discoveries are displayed. In the Ethnography and Judaica wing, exhibits include a collection of ancient Jewish artefacts. A Youth Wing features hands-on activities for families and art classes for children.

The museum's greatest treasure is contained in a striking separate building called the Shrine of the Book. Resembling the lid of an earthenware jar, this structure was created to hold and display the Dead Sea Scrolls and other ancient manuscripts. Discovered beside the Dead Sea at Qumran in 1947, the Scrolls consist of the oldest known scripts of the Torah or Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament), as well as the enigmatic scrolls of an austere, scholarly Jewish sect apparently resident at Qumran.



15.1. Rossini's Restaurant

We had a hearty evening at Rossini's Restaurant in East Jerusalem, which serves more than



authentic French and Italian Cuisine in a very friendly warm and comfortable atmosphere with nice and charming music playing silently in the background.

The team of Executive Chef Joseph Asfour, who appreciates style, class, royal treatment, "not in castles or mansions only, but also around a crowded table of friends, relatives or loved ones with an urge to celebrate and enjoy food that is both pleasing and good, entertained us." When I came to know from the photos hanging on the wall that we were being served with food prepared by the very man who cooked for His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI during his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the late President Yasser Arafat, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas the Head of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), the Russian President Mr. Vladimir Putin, or the previous British Prime Minister Mr. Tony Blair, and the late Pope John Paul II, my enthusiasm turned to speak to him at length for which he found time.



I was astonished with Joseph Asfour's outstanding and unique knowledge in French, Italian, Irish, Palestinian, and we remained in contact since then.

V. TEL AVIV-JAFFA

1. INTRODUCTION

The reason for our sudden trip to Israel was to visit our son who was undergoing his final year medical training at the Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Centre.

During the final clinical year, German medical students undertake periods of clinical training in internal medicine, surgery and one subject of their choice (the so-called elective³⁰), each period lasting three months (tertia). The first two tertials were conducted at the Christian Medical College (CMC) Vellore and St. John's Medical College, Bangalore.

1.1. Christian Medical College (CMC), Vellore

CMC Vellore is one of the largest and most reputed medical centres in India. This century



old Christian institution, founded by Ida S. Scudder, seeks to be a witness to the healing ministry of Christ, through excellence in education,



service and research.

From a one-bed dispensary established in 1900, the hospital now caters to 3,000 outpatients, 1,000 inpatients, 55 surgical procedures, 22 clinics, and about 30 births every day.

1.2. St. John's Medical College, Bangalore

Started in 1963 St. John's Medical College is one of India's premier medical institutions. It is part of the St. John's National Academy of Health Sciences run by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India.

A premier institution dedicated to health and health related services respected across India, comprises a 1,200-bed hospital with all medical and surgical departments including super-speciality departments, a college of nursing, and a research institute, located in a sprawling 132-acre plot in the city.

The training was conducted under the guidance of Radhika Dhanpal, Professor & Head, Department of Anaesthesia.



Author with Director Rev. Fr. Lawrence D'Souza

1.3. Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center, Israel

The Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center is one of the largest hospitals in Israel. It has the major task of serving the 360,000 inhabitants of Tel Aviv, in addition to the more than one million people who enter the city every day for work and pleasure.

The Center is spread out over an area of three hospitals: Ichilov General Hospital and Ida Sourasky Rehabilitation Center, Lis Maternity Hospital and Dana Children's Hospital. The

³⁰ An "elective training" affords practical experience and instructions in the various disciplines of medicine under the supervision and direction of faculty physicians at a Medical College Hospital as an approved part of the alien's foreign medical school education.

Center also serves as a teaching and research center affiliated with the Sackler Medical School and Tel Aviv University's Sheinborn Nursing School.

The Medical Center has 1100 hospital beds, over 60 departments and institutes, and approximately 150 outpatient clinics. It is also the national referral center for various specialties: These include trauma, adult neurosurgery, paediatric neurosurgery, orthopaedic oncology, surgical oncology, kidney-pancreas transplants and liver transplants, and microsurgery on the nervous system. The Center also treats Israel Defense Force soldiers both during times of war and peace, receiving injured citizens and army personnel. During the Gulf War, the Establishment was the critical centre for treating people injured by SCUD missiles.

In recent years, the Medical Center has treated victims of terror attacks in Tel Aviv, including the attacks on Bus Lines 5, 20, and 51, the Dizengoff Center attack, the Apropos Café attack, the central bus station attack, and the infamous attack³¹ on the Dolphinarium disco.

1.3.1 (Some) Landmarks Developments of the Medical Centre

- 1899: Opening of Shaare Zion Hospital in Yaffo,.
- 1914: Laying the corner stone of Hadassah Hospital.
- 1921: Victims of the 1920-1921 riots are treated at Hadassah Hospital.
- 1933: Assassinated Chaim Arlozoroff's³² body is brought to Hadassah-Balfour.
- 1940: Italian military planes bomb Tel Aviv, and the injured are brought to Hadassah-Balfour Hospital.
- 1948-1949: Israel's War of Independence; war victims are treated at Hadassah-Balfour Hospital.
- 1961: Opening of Ichilov Hospital in Tel Aviv.
- 1967: Transfer of the Municipal Hospitals, Hadassah-Balfour, Ichilov and the Kiryah to the joint authority of the Municipality and the National Government.
- 1973 June: The Association of Friends of Ichilov Hospital and the Municipal and National Governments sign an agreement to name the hospital after Elias Sourasky³³.
- 1973 October: Victims of the Yom Kippur War are treated at Sourasky Hospital.
- 1980: Finance Minister and Health Minister agree to amalgamate the three municipal hospitals into The Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center.
- 1991 January-1992: Victims of the Gulf War are treated at the Medical Center.
- 1995: Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was brought for treatment after being fatally shot.
- 1996: Ceremony naming the Yitzhak Rabin Trauma Center, in the presence of the King Hussein, acting Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Leah Rabin.
- 2005: placement of computerized information boards in the surgical sections that enable real-time follow-up of the patients' status.



Joseph Klausner (Professor and Head of Surgery, Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Centre)

³¹ 21 people were killed and 120 were wounded when a suicide bomber blew himself up outside a disco near Tel Aviv's Dolphinarium along the seafront promenade just before midnight on Friday, June 1, 2001.

³² Chaim Arlozoroff (*23.02.1899 †16.06.1933), Ben-Gurion's close friend and political associate, was assassinated, while walking with his wife on the beach in Tel Aviv.

³³ Elias Sourasky (1899-1986) was born in Byalistok, Poland. At an early age he made his home in Mexico, where he became a successful entrepreneur. His strong identification with the Zionist cause and his decisive support in the War of Independence are historically recognized in the formation of the state of Israel.

Dror Soffer (Director, The Yitzhak Rabin Trauma Division Assistant Professor of Surgery Tel - Aviv Sourasky Medical Center)

Both known internationally in their fields, gave their expertise and guidance in moulding the future of the trainee

2. Major Sight-Seeing Attraction of Tel Aviv-Jaffa

Sightseeing in Tel Aviv includes countless attractions like museums, observatory, parks and gardens, beaches and amusement parks. A two-day Pass for the 99 bus, which gives a guided tour of the city, will allow discounted entry to the Israel Museum, Tower of David Museum and the Biblical Zoo:

2.1. Azrieli Observatory

Situated on the 49th floor of the highest building in Israel, the Azrieli Observatory in Tel Aviv is a wonderful experience, which must not be missed. It provides the opportunity to look at Tel Aviv from the highest possible perspective

2.2. Ben-Gurion House

The house of former Israel's' Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion³⁴ is a major sightseeing in Tel Aviv as it houses a vast collection of books. It also displays part of his library and numbers of his letters.



For those interested in Israeli history, David Ben-Gurion's private home is the place to visit. Built in 1931, the house has been preserved in the same condition as when it was lived in, and it presents a permanent exhibition on Ben-Gurion's life and legacy. Seminars and study groups on social and political issues are also conducted here.

It is easy to spend several hours in the library, which has 20,000 books in a multitude of languages, covering topics such as politics and anthropology.

2.3. Frishman Beach

Frishman beach is located in the west end of the street carrying the same name, at the center of the Tel-Aviv Promenade. Access to Frishman beach by public transportation is easy and there are many parking lots nearby. The beach is very well kept, and includes all required needed facilities for families, including first aid, life guard services, showers and toilets. The beach has no entrance fee and offers sun-tanning beds and deck chairs rental for an average charge of 12 NIS during the bathing season. Pay attention to the colour of the swimming flags: black means swimming is forbidden, red means swimming is dangerous and white means that swimming is allowed.



Frishman has a main eatery, SoFrishman ("the end of Frishman"), which is where locals and tourists gather around outdoor seafront tables and have a cold

³⁴ David Ben-Gurion (*David Grün on 16 October 1886 † 1 December 1973) was the first Prime Minister of Israel. Ben-Gurion's passion for Zionism culminated in his instrumental role in the founding of the State of Israel.

beer and snacks on almost every hour of the day. There are few other beach bars nearby, all offering the same combination of snacks, cold drinks, lovely view and friendly atmosphere.

Although Frishman beach tends to be pretty crowded during high-season (July and August) it doesn't seem to bother anyone. People who come to Frishman beach see it as a part of the beach culture - sitting right next to complete strangers, who are often more than willing to start a conversation about any topic in the world.

Though some beaches are less crowded, the central Frishman beach is one of the best beaches in Tel Aviv for those who wish to enjoy the crowd diversity and the lively atmosphere the city's beaches offer.

2.4. Independence Hall

Among the various sightseeing, the Independence Hall, located on Rothschild Street in Tel Aviv, is the major one. This is the building where David Ben-Gurion declared Israel's independence on May 14, 1948. The English text of the document is available at the front desk.

The building was restored in 1978, and preserved as it was on the evening of the declaration. Pictures and memorabilia from the event adorn the walls. It is also possible to listen to the original recording of the declaration speech. The building houses a separate museum and the Bible House.



2.5. Yitzhak Rabin Square

Previously Kings of Israel Square is the largest open public city square in central Tel Aviv, the square was re-named to 'Rabin square' in 1995, following the assassination of the then Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. The square is surrounded by the City Hall to the north, Ibn Gabirol Street to the east, Frischmann Street to the south and Hen Boulevard to the west.

Until the early 1990s, the square served on Yom Ha'atzmaut, Israel's Independence Day, as a public exhibition ground for Israel Defense Forces (IDF) field units (mostly tanks and heavy artillery).

At the conclusion of a rally on November 4, 1995, the Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin, was assassinated. In the days following the event, thousands of Israelis gathered on the site to commemorate Rabin.

At the top of the stairs leading up to City Hall's entrance, Rabin's last speech is engraved in Hebrew, Arabic and English.



2.6. Old Jaffa

Old Jaffa, one of the chief attractions in Tel Aviv with its old world charms, is a wonderful counterpoint to the bustling city of Tel Aviv. Ottoman Clock Tower, built in 1906, that stands at the entrance of the old town is a landmark.

According to Christian legend, Jaffa (Biblical name: Joppa) was named after Noah's son, Japheth, who built it after the Flood. There are others who believe that the name derives from the Hebrew word "Yofi" - beauty. From archaeological discoveries and ancient documents we learn that Jaffa existed as a port city some 4,000 years ago, serving Egyptian and Phoenician sailors in their sea voyages.



Old Jaffa from the Seaside

Historians believe that Jaffa is the only port in the world which can boast uninterrupted habitation throughout its entire existence. The biblical account mentions that the cedars from Lebanon for the construction of King Solomon's Temple came via Jaffa. Jonah departed from this city in his



flight from God. Greek legend tells of the chaining of the beautiful Andromeda to the rocks facing Jaffa's shore. Simon the Tanner lived in Jaffa, and it was here that Apostle Peter performed a miracle. Roman legions, Richard the Lion Hearted, Napoleon and Turkish Sultans all conquered the city; but with the eclipse of the Ottoman Empire, the city's vitality declined. Towards the end of World War I, the city was conquered by General Allenby, ushering in the period of the British Mandate.

Old Jaffa has since become one of Israel's tourist attractions. It is filled with artists' quarters, studios and art galleries. Shops catering for Judaica, archaeology, jewellery and art, line its narrow alleys which are named after the signs of the Zodiac.

Visitors from both Israel and abroad enjoy dining in its unique restaurants or simply wandering around. People seem to gaze in fascination at the sight of the ancient Port and the rocks, and some are dumbstruck by the beauty of Jaffa harbor set against the back drop of the city of Tel Aviv -

the first Jewish city in modern times - a vital, dynamic and vibrant metropolis that never sleeps - and which has grown out of Jaffa. Old Jaffa in itself is a quaint city, more picturesque than ever, with romantic paths and gardens. All this, together with the Mediterranean's sun-drenched waves and the special lighting effects at night, serve to excite and arouse the senses and the soul.

2.6.1 Jaffa Port

The Port of Jaffa, (the sole port at the time) served as the point of entry for the increased Jewish immigration that came to resettle the land. The Jews suffered from pogroms and persecution at the hands of the Arabs. The attacks reached a peak shortly before the declaration of the State of Israel in May 1948. Jewish defensive actions led to the flight of most of the city's Arabs, and shortly after that part of the city was settled by impoverished Jewish families whom the war had left homeless.

2.6.2 St. Peter's Monastery

A few hundred meters beyond the archaeological museum in Jaffa is the acropolis (37m/121ft), on which is the Franciscan monastery of St Peter, built in 1654 on the site of a

13th century Crusader Castle. Its name recalls the Apostle Peter's visit to Jaffa (Acts 9, 36-43), as does the so-called tomb of Tabitha in the Russian Monastery. From the courtyard of the monastery steps lead down to the vaulted chambers, still intact, of the **Crusader** Castle.

Stayed at the International Youth Hostel, Bnei Dan Guest House, Bnei Dan 36, Tel Aviv 62260, situated near the Yarkon Park within walking distance to the Mediterranean Sea Shore and the culture and entertainment centres of Tel Aviv



VI. EIN GEDI

Ein Gedi is a beautiful oasis located west of the Dead Sea, close to Masada and the Caves of Qumran³⁵. It is known for its caves, springs, and its rich diversity of flora and fauna. Ein Gedi is mentioned several times in the Holy Bible, e.g. in the Song of Solomon, the place where King David hid from King Saul who gave chase with an army of 3,000 men in the caves of Ein Gedi.

The name Ein Gedi means 'Spring of the Kid' which refers to the Ibex which can be spotted during quiet walks through the valley. Ein Gedi is mentioned several times in biblical writings, for example, in the Song of Songs.

"My beloved is unto me as a cluster of henna flowers in the vineyards of Ein Gedi" (1:14). Saul was the first king of the United Kingdom of Israel according to the Hebrew Bible. He was anointed by the prophet Samuel and reigned from Gibeah... in the caves here; "And David went up from thence, and dwelt in the strongholds of Ein Gedi" (I Samuel 24:1).



The high oxygen levels, low location and the pollution free air make it one of the healthiest places in the world. The area was first inhabited well before King David's time. The Jewish village of Ein Gedi was inhabited in Biblical times and was destroyed and rebuilt again and again over the centuries. However, before the founding of Kibbutz³⁶ in Ein Gedi in 1956 it had not been inhabited for 500 years. A group of young army recruits dreamt of a home in the Judean Desert. The location of the kibbutz makes the political difficulties of today in the



country seem a far cry away from the centre of the Dead Sea.

Vegetable gardens, Date plantations and Turkey houses were just a few of the original business ventures. It did not take long for the young pioneers to realize that they were actually sitting on an international treasure.

Cleopatra believed it so why shouldn't

everyone else. Black mud, Hot Sulphur water, Dead Sea and natural springs all generate a sense of rejuvenation, tranquillity, peace and serenity.

We stayed at the International Youth Hostel: Ein Gedi - Beit Sarah Guest House, Doar-Na The Dead Sea 86980, situated at the lowest place in the world, facing the Dead Sea; above it soar the Yehuda Desert cliffs.

³⁵ 122 biblical scrolls (or fragments) were found in this cave; from all 11 Qumran caves, every Old Testament book is represented except Esther.

³⁶ Kibbutzim served as the keystone of Jewish defense in the period prior to the state, and remained important factors in the economy, army and politics exerting an influence well beyond their small numbers.

1. Ein Gedi: Attractions

Ein Gedi National Park includes two spring-fed streams with flowing water year-round: Wadi ³⁷ David (David Stream) and Wadi Arugot (Arugot Stream). Two other springs, the Shulamit and Ein Gedi springs, also flow in the reserve. Together, the springs generate approximately three million cubic meters of water per year. Much of the water is used for agriculture or is bottled for consumption.

The park is a sanctuary for many types of plants, bird and animal species. The vegetation includes plants and trees from the tropical, desert, Mediterranean, and steppian regions, such as Sodom apple, acacia, jujube, and poplar. The many species of resident birds are supplemented by over 200 additional species during the migration periods in the spring and fall. Mammal species include the ibex and the hyrax.

A visit to Ein Gedi instils peace and tranquillity to any visitor. The Botanical Garden displays an abundance of flora whilst caressing the shores of the salty sea, entrapping a festival of light and colour and encouraging the visitor's senses to actually sharpen.

With Jerusalem being one hour away and Ben-Gurion Airport one and a half hours away, life is not boring in Ein Gedi, which is a reason Ein Gedi features on every Tour Operator's itinerary.



1.1. David's spring

Exquisite oasis in the Judean Desert which is mentioned in the First Book of Samuel as the lace to which David and his men escaped from Saul, the King, and where despite having opportunity to take Saul's life, David did not raise his hand against the anointed of the Lord.

1.2. Ein Gedi Spa

Despite the dry atmosphere water is a major element in this small corner of the globe. Nature Reserves with gushing waterfalls, Ein Gedi Spa with natural, hot, sulphur water pools and, of course, the Dead Sea: Three totally different types of water, three different forms of enjoyment and three different health aspects.

- Sea: The highest density of salt of any water in the world, allows the famous 'float' whilst reading the newspaper. A remarkable sensation, unequal to none!

- Sulphur Springs: These thermo-mineral springs are rich in sulphur, magnesium, calcium, sodium and potassium. The natural springs are situated beyond the mountains behind the spa complex and are pumped down into the building into 6 pools that are divided into 'Men' - 'Women' - 'Mixed' bathing facilities to allow maximum privacy.



Floating in the Dead Sea (This demonstrates the unusual buoyancy caused by high salinity)

³⁷ Wadi is the Arabic term traditionally referring to a valley; in some cases it may refer to a dry riverbed that contains water only during times of heavy rain

The natural minerals deeply penetrate and detoxify the blood stream and are also extremely effective in the relief of arthritis and rheumatism. The body is cleansed, muscle tension and pain are relieved and a deep sensation of calm provides long lasting revitalization. Fifteen minutes at a time is sufficient in the natural temperature of approximately 37° - 38° centigrade.

- **Swimming Pool (March-October):** A beautiful pool especially designed for all the family.

- **Sun:** The 'brighter and cheerful' atmosphere at the Spa is definitely contributed to by the filtered rays of the brilliant sunshine (remember 330 years of sun a year!). Warmth and comfort, freedom and happiness are all the sensations one feels here. The ultra violet rays are quite weak by the time they reach -420 metres below sea level making sunburn quite rare.



The Joys with Dave McMurtry and Judy Lin from San Francisco

- **Mud:** "Mud, Mud, glorious mud, there is nothing quite like it for cooling the blood." Oh how true, here, at the lowest spot on earth. The famous therapeutic black mud is available freely at the spa. Cleopatra used it frequently to relieve arthritis and rheumatism and here the Spa provides you with the opportunity to simply 'Wallow' in it! Plaster it all over yourself, your partner or your children, see yourself in the mirror and take your photo. The result? Soft, silky, cleansed skin. Even men are impressed!



- **Air:** Dry and high in oxygen and bromide content. The bromide reduces blood pressure and relaxes the nervous system. The oxygen (23%) opens the respiratory system and makes physical exertion easier. What could be healthier?

Where else in the world can you get these elements naturally whilst having fun?!

2. Dead Sea

The Dead Sea (al-Baḥr El-Mayyit (Arabic); Yām Ha-Melaḥ, "Sea of Salt" (Hebrew), is a Salt Lake, Jordan to the east and the West Bank and Israel to the west. Its surface and shores are 422 metres (1,385 ft) below sea level, the lowest elevation on the Earth's surface on dry land. The Dead Sea is 378 m (1,240 ft) deep. It is also one of the world's saltiest bodies of water, with 33.7% salinity. Only Lake Assal (Djibouti), Garabogazköl and some hyper-saline lakes of the McMurdo Dry Valleys in Antarctica (such as Don Juan Pond and perhaps Lake Vanda) have a higher salinity.

The Dead Sea, 67 kilometres (42 mi) long and 18 kilometres (11 mi) wide at its widest point, is a landlocked sea located right along the Jordan Rift valley where the earth's crust is being stretched thin.

The Sea is continuously fed water from rivers and streams flowing down the mountains that surround it; its main tributary is the Jordan River. Yet, there are no rivers to drain out of the Dead Sea. Thus, mineral salt carried into the Dead Sea from Local River is trapped here.

Moreover, only a way that water gets out of the sea is through evaporation. When the water evaporates it leaves behind the entire dissolved mineral in the sea just make it saltier. In fact, the salinity of the Dead Sea is about ten times higher than other seas. The sea is so saltier that no fish or plant can adapt. For this reason, nothing lives in this sea and is therefore called the Dead Sea.

The Dead Sea has attracted visitors from around the Mediterranean basin for thousands of years. Biblically, it was a place of refuge for King David. It was one of the world's first health resorts (for Herod the Great), and it has been the supplier of a wide variety of products, from balms for Egyptian mummification to potash for fertilizers. People also use the salt and the minerals from the Dead Sea to create cosmetics and herbal sachets.

Sodom and Gomorrah (ancient Old Testament Biblical cities) destroyed by God for the wickedness of its inhabitants, were near the Dead Sea.



3. Masada

Masada (Fortress), situated atop an isolated rock plateau

at the western end of the Judean Desert overlooking the Dead Sea, is the site of ancient palaces and fortifications in the South District of Israel. On the east the rock falls in a sheer drop of about 450 meters to the Dead Sea (the lowest point on earth, some 400 m. below sea level) and in the west it stands about 100 meters above the surrounding terrain. The natural approaches to the cliff top are very difficult.

The only written source about Masada is Josephus Flavius' *The Jewish War*. Born Joseph ben Matityahu of a priestly family, he was a young leader at the outbreak of the Great Jewish Rebellion against Rome (66 B.C.) when he was appointed Governor of Galilee. He managed to survive the suicide pact of the last defenders of Jodfat and surrendered to Vespasian



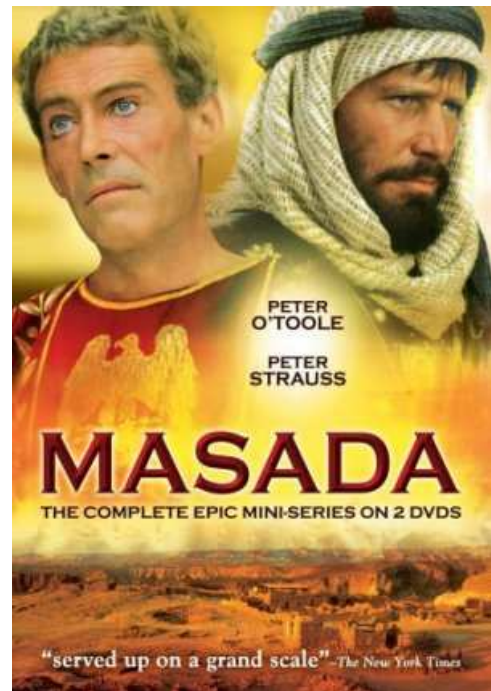
(who shortly thereafter was proclaimed Emperor) - events he described in detail. Calling himself Josephus Flavius, he became a Roman citizen and a successful historian. Moral judgment aside, his accounts have been proved largely accurate.

According to Josephus Flavius, Herod the Great built the fortress of Masada between 37 and 31 B.C. Herod, an Idumean, had been made King of Judea by his Roman overlords and was hated by his Jewish subjects. Herod, the master builder, "furnished this fortress as a refuge for himself." It included a casemate wall around the plateau, storehouses, large cisterns ingeniously filled with rainwater, barracks, palaces and an armoury.

Some 75 years after Herod's death, at the beginning of the Revolt of the Jews against the Romans in 66 A.D., a group of Jewish rebels overcame the Roman Garrison of Masada. After

the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple (70 A.D.) they were joined by zealots³⁸ and their families who had fled from Jerusalem. With Masada as their base, they raided and harassed the Romans for two years. Then, in 73 A.D., the Roman Governor Flavius Silva marched against Masada with the Tenth Legion, auxiliary units and thousands of Jewish prisoners-of-war. The Romans established camps at the base of Masada, laid siege to it and built a circumvallation wall. They then constructed a rampart of thousands of tons of stones and beaten earth against the western approaches of the fortress and, in the spring of the year 74 A.D., moved a battering ram up the ramp and breached the wall of the fortress.

Josephus Flavius dramatically recounts the story told him by two surviving women. The defenders – almost one thousand men, women and children – led by Eleazar ben Ya'ir, decided to burn the fortress and end their own lives, rather than be taken alive. "And so met (the Romans) with the multitude of the slain, but could take no pleasure in the fact, though it were done to their enemies. Nor could they do other than wonder at the courage of their resolution, and at the immovable contempt of death which so great a number of them had shown, when they went through with such an action as that was." The Zealots cast lots to choose 10 men to kill the remainder. They then chose among themselves the one man who would kill the survivors. That last Jew then killed himself.



Masada today is one of the Jewish people's greatest symbols. Israeli soldiers take oath there: "Masada Shall Not Fall Again." Next to Jerusalem, it is the most popular destination of Jewish tourists visiting Israel.

Stayed at Masada Guest House and Youth Hostel at the foot of Masada, overlooking the mountains of Moab and the Dead Sea

³⁸ One of the four sects of first century C.E. Judaism, this was a group of radicals who wanted to use force to oust the Romans and re-establish an independent theocratic Jewish state in Palestine.

VII. EILAT

Eilat, the southernmost city of Israel, is a unique oasis extended on the coast of the Red Sea. Eilat lives by the rhythm of the sun, the desert, the sea and nature itself. The calm transparent waters of the Red Sea reveal a delightful surprise - breathtakingly beautiful Coral Reefs and an enchanted underwater world, featuring thousands of varieties of fish and other marine life forms. The inspiring tranquillity of the desert around Eilat will leave you with an indelible memory.

1. Biblical references

Eilat is first mentioned in the Bible in the Book of Exodus in the stations. The first six stations of the Exodus are in Egypt. The 7th is the crossing of the Red Sea; the 8th station is Sin Wilderness (Ex. 16:1, 17:1; Nu. 33:11-12) God supplies quail and manna, "Between Elim and Eilat": modern location Gulf of Aqaba. The 9th-13th are in and around Eilat after they have left Egypt and crossed the Red Sea. Station 12 refers to a dozen campsites in and around Timna in Modern Israel near Eilat. When King David conquered Edom, which up to then had been a common border of Edom and Midian, he took over Eilat, the border city shared by them as well. The commercial port city and copper based industrial center were maintained by Egypt until reportedly rebuilt by Solomon at a location known as Ezion-Geber (I Kings 9:26).

In II Kings 14:21-22: "And all the people of Judah took Azariah, who was sixteen years old, and made him King in the room of his father Amaziah. He built Eilat, and restored it to Judah, after that the King slept among his fathers." And again in II Kings 16:6: "At that time Rezin King of Aram recovered Elath to Aram, and drove the Jews from Elath; and the Edomites came to Elath, and dwelt there, unto this day".

Eilat is a busy port as well as a popular resort, which forms part of the Southern Negev Desert at the southern end of the Arava. The city lies adjacent to



Jumping Fish, Red Sea, Eilat

the Egyptian village of Taba to the south, the Jordanian port city of Aqaba to the east, and within sight of Saudi Arabia to the south-east across the gulf.

The city's beaches, nightlife and desert landscapes make it a popular destination for domestic and international tourism.

The Port of Eilat became vital to the fledgling country's development. After the 1948 Arab-Israeli War Arab countries maintained a state of hostility with Israel, blocking all land routes; Israel's access to and trade with the rest of the world was by air and sea alone. Further, Egypt denied passage through the Suez Canal to Israeli-registered ships or to any ship carrying cargo to or from Israeli ports. This made Eilat and its sea port crucial to

Israel's communications, commerce and trade with Africa and Asia, and for oil imports. Without recourse to a port on the Red Sea Israel would have been unable to develop its diplomatic, cultural and trade ties beyond the Mediterranean basin and Europe. This happened in 1956 and again in 1967, when Egypt's closure of the Strait of Tiran to Israeli shipping effectively blockaded the port of Eilat. In 1956, this led to Israel's participation alongside the U.K. and France in the war against Egypt sparked by the Suez Crisis, while in 1967 it was cited by Israel as an additional *casus belli* leading to the outbreak of the Six-Day War.

2. Red Sea

The name of Red (or Erythraean) Sea was used by classical historians and geographers to designate the waters of the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf. In modern geography, it is applied to the north-west arm of the Indian Ocean, some 1400 miles long and lying between Arabia on the east and Africa on the west. Understood in this latter sense, the Red Sea stretches from the Strait of Babel-Mandeb to the modern head of the Gulf of Suez. Its greatest width is 205 miles, and its greatest depth about 1200 fathoms. The Red Sea receives no river of importance, and is noted for its heat. Formerly its commerce was great, and it has much increased since the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869.

Crossing the Red Sea is the Biblical account of the crossing of Moses and the Israelites in their flight from the pursuing Egyptian army and is a part of the Exodus narrative on their journey out of Egypt, found in the Book of Exodus, Chapters 13:17 to 15:21.

According to the Book of Exodus, God parts the Red Sea for the safe passage of the Israelites, after which the pursuing Egyptians army is drowned when the waters return. At the end of these events, the Israelites sing the Song of the Sea to celebrate their deliverance.

2.1. Dolphin Reef

On the shores of the Red Sea in Eilat is an ecological site unique in Israel and throughout the world where visitors can enjoy a natural atmosphere, magical views, and secluded beach together with the unusual opportunity of meeting and observing dolphins in their natural habitat.

A group of "bottlenose" dolphins, including babies born at the site, maintain their daily routine of hunting, playing, courting and socializing. They are free to choose between human companies or to continue their daily routine in the group. The fact that the dolphins choose to be with us reinforces, in our opinion, the true bond created between them



and us. The Dolphin Reef is a favourite attraction in Eilat; here you can enjoy their company, you can swim with them or just observe from the deck.

Visitors can observe the dolphins which are free to come and go as they please but choose to interact with humans near the shoreline. Options for visitors include viewing the dolphins from floating walk ways that lead out from the shore or going on a guided swim.

2.2. Snorkelling³⁹ with Dolphins

If you are a confident swimmer between the ages of 10-88 years old, you can enjoy this special experience. The sessions are conducted in guided groups of up to three persons with one guide for the whole group. Everyone wears a mask, snorkel, fins, and wetsuit. It is important that you have used a snorkel and mask before, as there is very little time to learn.

³⁹ Snorkel is a breathing device consisting of a bent tube fitting into a swimmer's mouth and extending above the surface; allows swimmer to breathe while face down in the water

The session lasts one hour. Half an hour is devoted to choosing and fitting equipment, signing the medical statement and a briefing. After the briefing, half an hour will be spent in the water. Snorkelling takes place in the sea, where your group will swim out not far from the shore, but to deep water (14 meters or 45 feet deep) and watch the dolphins as well as a big variety of fish and corals.

During your visit with the dolphins in the sea, you will be observing them in their natural habitat, hunting, playing, mating and teaching the younger ones. When a dolphin approaches us, it does so of its own free will. We respect this approach by not touching, chasing or feeding them.

For your own safety, it is important that we will be notified if you suffer from the following: ear problems, respiratory problems (e.g. asthma, sinus and bronchitis), heart problems, high/low blood pressure, epilepsy, diabetes or



claustrophobia. If you have had recent surgery or illness, have open wounds, take medication, or suffer from other medical problems or limitations it must be notified. Pregnant women are not allowed to swim with the dolphins.

We stayed at: Israel Youth Hostel, Arava Road, Eilat 88101 overlooking the Red Sea shoreline and the Edom Mountain Ridge

2.3. Network of Guest Houses and Youth Hostels in Israel

Network of Guest Houses and Youth Hostels in Israel are brand-new, dazzlingly contemporary complex offer, air-conditioned rooms, each with its own private shower-only bathroom, TV, mini-fridge, and electric kettle. Everything is very simple, but well designed and fresh. With large terraces and lounges that overlook breathtaking desert landscapes and seas such as Mediterranean, Dead Sea and Red Sea and sprawling wings that help reserving private guests rooms from larger, possibly noisy groups. They offer a wonderful budget choice for those who want to explore Israel without having to stay at an expensive, glitzy hotel.

The facilities are open to guests of all ages, and if you don't have a Hostel Association Card, you can stay here for a rate that is only a few shekels more than members pay. As long as you are not travelling during summer, on weekends, or Jewish holidays, when the hostel is usually very busy, the management can generally arrange for two people or a family to be alone in a room (the price for a private double will be higher than for a dorm bed); towels, sheets, soap, and shampoo are provided. Fabulous buffet breakfast is included, and lunch and dinner or picnic meals can be arranged. All food services are kosher, and synagogues are available on premises.

VIII. CONCLUSION

1. Tel Aviv Ben-Gurion International Airport

After thorough and understandable questioning at Frankfurt/Main Airport (when checking-in for Lufthansa Flight to Tel Aviv), arrival and check-out at Tel Aviv Airport were delightfully smooth, quick and very courteous.

Ben Gurion International Airport is considered one of the world's most secure airports, with a security force that includes both police officers and IDF soldiers. Airport security guards operate both in uniform and undercover to maintain a high level of vigilance and detect any possible threats. The airport has been the target of several terrorist attacks, but no attempt to hijack a plane departing from Ben Gurion airport has succeeded.



On arrival, we queued for about 30 minutes at passport control. The security was pretty easy and friendly. They have to ask you the questions which they do and

the whole thing again took about 10 minutes. The young lady officer at the counter asked me questions smilingly to which I answered with a delightful chivalrous face. At last she wished us happy stay in Israel to which I extended her a cordial invitation to visit us in Germany (as and when she is around☺).

At the exit Prince received us and went together to board the train just at the very exit of the Airport! However, there was a small mishap came about just because of the lack of attention to get out at the right Station ... that is another story! At last we reached his campus without further trouble!

On departure also, the young lady who inspected our bags was pretty friendly. Then going through the personal security took about 5 minutes max - everyone was firm but polite so no problems.

Tel Aviv will always be a unique airport because of the security situation but I had no problems with any of the security questions being asked or the way in which the people concerned asked them. The staffs were nice and professional with good demeanour. All in all, Tel Aviv airport experience capped a most enjoyable trip to Israel; no complaints and we would very much like to visit again!

2. General Impression

It was great to be in Israel in general and Jerusalem and other historical places of biblical importance in particular. Without the local experience of our son, Prince, who had visited Jerusalem, Masada and Dead Sea on many occasions before while staying in Tel Aviv, we would not have been able to see what we have seen in Israel in relatively such a short time.

The journey was undertaken with the State Bus, as well as in excellent shared-shuttle transport except the one from Jerusalem to Bethlehem which was carried out in a Mercedes Benz brand new car. The Chauffeur, a



Israeli Wall with Watchtower in Bethlehem

Palestinian from the Kidron Valley, was an extremely friendly man, who narrated the Palestinian problem from his point of view. Because of the wall-barrier (the Palestinians call it the "Berlin Wall"), a distance of roughly 6 miles, or 9.6 km, from the center of Jerusalem was covered many times more than that because of the Wall-Barrier!

The Bible refers to Jerusalem by name over 700 times. Additionally, Rabbinic literature, the Talmud and Midrash, are brimming with references to Jerusalem. The Midrash tells us that the Beit HaMikdash (the Temple) was built in Jerusalem on the very site where Abraham bound Isaac. Yet another Midrash located the site of the Temple as the place where Hevel (Abel) built his Mizbeiach (Altar) to God.

King David declared Jerusalem the capital during his reign. His son Solomon took the political centralization of Jerusalem one step further by building the Temple and creating the spiritual-religious center for the Jewish people. To this day in the world, wherever a Jew may be, he turns in prayer toward Jerusalem.

The rabbis explain that there is a Heavenly Jerusalem (Yerushalaim shel ma'alah) perched over the earthly Jerusalem (Yerushalaim shel matah). This idea is anchored in both Isaiah's as well as Micha's prophecies. In masechet Taanit 5a, Rabbi Yochanan is quoted as saying: "The Holy One blessed be He declared, "I shall not enter the Heavenly Jerusalem until I can enter the Earthly Jerusalem." The relationship between the 'upper' Jerusalem and the 'lower' Jerusalem is clear. We must constantly strive to make the Jerusalem in which we live, Yerushalaim shel Matah, worthy of God's presence in order to merit the union between the two Yerushalaims, for the two are inextricably connected.

The emergence of the State of Israel in our days, and the recapture and reunification of the earthly Jerusalem in the Six Day War in 1967, has for some Jews brought the Heavenly and Earthly Jerusalem together. However, for Jews who believe in the divine messianic redemption of the world, modern Jerusalem is still just a shadow of the Jerusalem that will exist in the future. Obviously, for them the Heavenly Jerusalem is not yet complete, or the era of the messianic redemption would have arrived. For most Jews today, however, the achievements of the State of Israel in unifying and expanding modern Jerusalem are the fulfilment of the dreams and prayers of almost two millennia.

During a visit of George W. Bush a rally called upon by Israelis in Jerusalem formed a human chain around the Old City as an expression of their firm support for a united Jerusalem to send a message: Jerusalem is the Eternal Capital of Israel and the Jewish people, and must therefore not be divided.

On the preceding day of our return to Germany, we travelled on to Jerusalem again to participate in the Festival of Hanukkah at the invitation of the colleague and friend of Prince, Dr. Eran Nizri, who gave us a brief tour again of the Government District, where the Knesset and the Ministries are located. After returning to his home we met his lovely wife Dr. Gilat Nizri (working at the Institute of Chemistry, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem) and their lovely children, Yoav (elder son), and Hdar (younger daughter). We went from there to the synagogue Tiferet Mordechai. We were received at the synagogue with due courtesy and enthusiasm. I was so happy to be there as it was the first time ever I participated in a Jewish liturgy. After the ceremony, we had a brief discussion with a small group of Believers; I was surprised and inspired to hear from them the positive attitude concerning the Cochin Jews, whom they described as Smart!

Jerusalem is a shining example of religious and cultural freedom in an area of the world where religious persecution is practiced regularly and quite brutally. Jerusalem has seen much bloodshed in the past from religious conquests to dominate the region and the minds of her citizens. Thankfully today, there is freedom of conscience for all peoples. I am thankful to Israel and the Jewish people that I, as a Christian, can come here and celebrate the life of Jesus and worship freely without fear of intimidation or persecution.

Returning home, I couldn't help but think of King David's relevant and poetic words: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill! Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember thee; if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy! (Psalms 137:5-6)