

Memories of our Israel Sukkot Tours

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By Joseph F. Dumond

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SUKKOT 2010

Here are some emails from those who kept the Feast of Jerusalem with us this year. Although they are addressed to me they reflect what the many other speakers, and other tour guides and those who organized did to make this Feast possible and a special and memorable Feast for each and every one of them. And each one had their own special moment. It also reflects each person who was there just being a brother or sister to each of us.

For me some of my most special moments were; Simcha Torah which was very special and watching Joe, Harry, Bonny, Debra and Beau dance with the Torah was a highlight. Seeing the looks on the faces of the brethren as they learned about the Temple Mount and the walls was another. Just seeing the many smiling faces and talking to the brethren until 3 in the morning every night is another. Sitting in the restaurant overlooking the Kotel and just talking and eating such great food was another.

Watching the faces of the brethren as they fell in love with the goat farm. The Goat Farm of all places was just awesome and to see how the brethren reacted to it. And Hearing Kyle's thoughts on the last night was awesome. These are some of the moments that I will cherish for years to come. There are many others but I would like you the readers to hear what these people who were there have to say, their cherished moments of this most special Sukkot.

My Brother Joe has written . Know and understand that this fella only started to keep the Sabbath two weeks before he arrived in Jerusalem. He decided to do so after watching the DVD about the Sabbatical and Jubilee years at https://sightedmoon.com/sightedmoon_2015/?page_id=251 and was only part way through The Prophecies of Abraham when he came. Joe,

Sorry I don't have photos. They are too much for my computer & I've been sick & just getting over it! There, I'm done with the excuses!!!

The most profound experience I had during Sukkot in Israel, was late one night, close to Midnight we walked to the "Western Wall" to pray. Few people were there and we were able to walk right up to the wall and Pray. As I placed my hands on the wall and leaned my head in to touch my forehead to the wall a tide of emotion washed over me. I felt spirit of Elohim fill me and welcome my prayers. I Have experienced the Rouach Kodesh in the past, but as a new Torah observer, I have not experienced Elohim in this way. It was truly an exciting and memorable moment.

Thanks Joe for all you did and helped us see during the feast. It was wonderful. Steph & I are already planning for next year. She said that she would stay at the Petra. "It didn't seem to bad." Blessings,

Joe DeLand
USA

Joe wrote me again on Sunday and said this. " It was a little rough at church this morning, I got told that this wasn't a "Jewish church". Do tell!!"

Shalom Joseph,

It was a blessing from the Almighty that we were in Jerusalem to keep Sukkot 2010.

Till six months ago when we get to know you more, we have never dreamed of going to Israel.

Since I(Harry) was born to a Christian family and Connie asked Yahshua(we only knew Him as Jesus Christ then) to be her Saviour when she was in university, we had been wandering in the 'wilderness' for almost 60 years and 33 years respectively! This past trip to Israel represents our 'entering into the Promised Land' for the first time, we trust that this is the beginning of much more learning of our Creator. Our eyes were first 'opened' when a zealous brethren shared with us why we have to keep the seventh day Sabbath and the Feast Days. Subsequently, as we searched for the truth, we met you and others through all of you and His Words, we are able to unlearn many false doctrines of 'Christianity without the Torah'.

This trip really opened up our eyes to see and ears to hear, but most of all He had opened up our hearts to feel His presence! By understanding the importance of Torah as well as trying our best to keep the Torah on a continuous basis, our understanding of the whole Scriptures comes alive and are congruent. Now both Old and New Testament make far

more sense and reality for us especially being physically in the Land. All the Old Testament names and places are far more than just what are written on the pages of Scriptures! This visit to the Land helps us to pursue our purpose in life-to know, obey YHWH and seek eagerly the truths in front of us. .

There are much more to learn and see, this is only chapter one for us on this journey.

Listening to speakers have given us many new perspectives of what the Scriptures is teaching us. Combined with the 'air' of the Land (culture of the Land) helps to bring life to the Scriptures! Now, many words and paragraphs of the Scriptures seem jumping out to greet us. All the teachings and messages from different speakers of different background are good and important and we cannot pick one over another!

Among many things we treasure from this trip is the friendship and fellowship we have made with brothers and sisters during Sukkot 2010. We are inspired to know that YHWH has drawn His children from many corners of the world and am able to understand and see the fulfilment of His promise to re-gather the lost sheep from all nations!

We thank you very much for your dedication in teaching, organizing and being one of our tour guides of this memorable trip!

Harry and Connie Lim,
Ontario, Canada

Shalom Joe

I have just got back from my trip to the amazing Land of our forefathers, because after leaving Yerushalayim I was blessed to be able to spend a further 10 days in Ariel where many of the beautiful people that I had met at the hostel were going to start their new lives as scholars of the Hebrew language and new inhabitants of the Land.

This has truly been for me a life changing experience and I am hard pushed to express my emotions. I would like to thank you most sincerely for the major part that you played in making this trip just so meaningful. I did not really even know that there was a formal plan and agenda to this gathering and was blessed out of my socks by the quality of the teachings that we were privileged to sit in on. The informal discussions and debates were just as much appreciated as the formal teachings. The highlights for me were the walks through the Old City and actually being in the garden where our beloved Messiah must have been.

Definitely an unforgettable moment was the walk through Hezekiah's tunnel and even taking the time to dip down and mikvah in the crystal clear water before walking the length in the eerie light of the leader's torch.

There were just so many sights, sounds, scenes, places and people that my little brain gets quite overheated just trying to list them all. From Ariel I had the wonderful opportunity to join in a morning of grape harvesting on the Mount of Blessings!

What a blessing that was!

I also had the opportunity to go shopping for gifts, curios and a Menorah to remind me of The LIGHT that shines from this awesome city.

I very naively thought that once I had been to Israel that I could give away my suitcase because I have no desire to travel again, – BUT – Having been once I now know that I have to go again and again and again.

Thank you Joe
Heather Tidbury
South Africa

Hi Joe,

I wanted to give you my thoughts again on L'Chaim Ephriam for you to post if you like.

It was a tremendous pleasure to be part of the L'Chaim Ephriam Feast of Succot 2010. I have been with many "Hebrew Root"/Israelite/Ephriamites, etc., groups over the past couple of years and I must say I have not been with a better group of people that exemplify Ephesians 4:1-3 who through LOVE endeavoured to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. What a sweet aroma it was as it says in Ephesians 5:1. It impressed me that the body that was present at this Feast were allowed to use the gifts and talents they were given for the body to grow and be edified, Eph. 4:11-16. In 1cor 13:1-3 it says that we can have all knowledge, great teaching, and prophecy, but without love it is nothing. I can attest to the fact that love flowed from this body of believers and I did not see the evidence of one thinking more highly of them self than another but only serving and accepting one another and those also that were outside of the group. All this was so much so that when we as a group were out in Jerusalem in the various places a dear lady that was hurting and lonely, found a place to be loved and accepted. She was not a believer or searching out her Hebrew roots. But because of the love, acceptance and inclusiveness of the group she heard much about our saviour and Hebrew roots. Also, others were able to come that were just there for a feast and tour and found out about the L'chaim Ephraim feast and came to hear teaching about the name and were blessed.

Others found that we were here to come alongside them, not convert them, to focus on what unites us rather than divides us and let the Father work out the rest. I appreciated this time so much and thank you to all who organized it. May you all be richly blessed for being an example of our Father who draws us with loving kindness, Jeremiah 31:3-6. I believe this time was an example of brothers dwelling in unity together which was truly pleasing to the Father. Laura Jarvis
Israel

Okay, Joe, I also want to personally let you know that you are a blessing. You have a great love for our heavenly Father and a great love for His people and purposes. You have a wonderful servants heart and I pray many blessings upon you.

Blessings in the name of Yeshua,
Laura Jarvis

(I had to include that part. It is not too often someone says that to me. LOL)

Laura was referring to a Lady who sat with us when we went to the Temple Mount Institute. She just got mixed in with our group. She began to talk with those in our group and liked the things we were saying to her. These are just those people in our group and not any of the leadership. She was invited to come to the Petra and visit. She then joined us on a bus tour and was welcome to take part in whatever we were doing. This was a lady who knew nothing about the Feasts days and was just there in Jerusalem on tour alone and hurting.

One of the things that Amanda insisted on last year and I agree is that because almost all of us were kicked out of some place and have felt the hurt of rejection by other groups, that if we were to do this Feast thing, we would welcome and try to make everyone feel welcome with our group. Most people, who show up, come with different beliefs. And they are welcome. I understand they all can't be as perfect as me. LOL I gest. So some come to keep the Rabbinic Feast Days, others the Sighted moon and barley Days, and others with some other variation

as they understand it to be. But those who are troubling and quarrelsome we do ask to leave.

We have not had to do that as yet.

So to make this Christian lady feel welcome was exactly what we would have wanted to do and it was the whole group who did that and not just any one person. For this I am most pleased to hear. So thank you Laura for saying this.

We also had Christians staying on the same floor as the meetings took place and they were always welcome and we had many a talk with them, never trying to convert or persuade. Just being friends with them as well.

Dear Joe!

Again I want to thank you for how much you (and many others) added to our Sukkot. I grew up keeping feast of tabernacles but this was by far the most incredible Sukkot. Not just because it was our first time in the holy land but because of the group of people. It was beautiful to see such a diverse group of people, some (or rather most of us) with some crazy ideas. Yet, despite these differences of background, and beliefs, there was such an overwhelming presence of love and respect and tolerance. It was beautiful to witness the two houses talking and showing respect in the instances when our Jewish brothers came to teach.

Another highlight for me was seeing the true sights. Not some church or monument or shrine built on a spot where 1500 or 500 or 200 years ago that a person claimed (I believe often erroneously) an event from scripture occurred. I wanted to walk where my biblical ancestors walked; pray where my Messiah prayed, and shed tears where so many have. Not at a shrine, or church but in the unadulterated places where they did. That is exactly where you took us and YHWH blessed us in being able to reach those places.

Also a special thank you for everyone who encouraged us and helped us with our two small children (2 and 4); they are already asking when we are going back to Jerusalem.

Teresa and Rob

Alberta Canada

Dear Joseph,

Over 25 years ago on my first trip to Israel, it was like Yeshua was standing right there close beside me, with an arm around my shoulder, pointing out all the places that He had lived, walked, and loved and suffered in the Land; it felt just like when I got engaged to marry, my fiancé took me back to his hometown to meet a lot of family and friends, see where he went to school, the burger drive-in, the house where he lived as a teenager... It's like that when you come to Israel, seeing it all and meeting the in-laws!

It has been many years since I toured Israel by tour bus with a group, so I really enjoyed the two days of touring in Judea and Samaria, seeing the beautiful countryside, eating delicious food, and especially the produce at this time of year is so wonderful, learning so much of the history, seeing the people in the group taking it all in, and meeting the wonderful Israeli's that are "holding down the fort" for everyone. I was very touched by the

Mayor of Shiloh who, even as a young man, knew his purpose and calling to Shiloh, Israel, to raise his family, and what injuries he and his son suffered just for being Jews, targeted for murder.

The facility there in Shiloh for treatment and help for trauma victims is a worthy place to make contributions.

All the itinerary was just great, very personal, enlightening, and touching- even the painful realization, for example, of the Kfar Daniel, Gush Etzion bunker, of what it takes to hold the Land- educating the hearts of us all, and connecting with Israelis in places that not many people get to experience- a life changing trip! practicing for Zech. 14...

To meet the person that I had read about the day before in the paper for being arrested for going up on Har HaBeit and looking like he just might be praying, David Hivri, another privilege, to meet the real people, real families, that have settled the villages and that are coping with the reality on the ground here in the Land.

The wonderful smell in the neighborhood came from underneath the Samaritan synagogue we visited- a tahina factory!

I bought it hot off the press.

So, start right now: bshanah habaah b'Yirushalyim... next year in Jerusalem!

Make a decision and start preparing for your trip next sukkot... you will never be the same ruined for the ordinary!

Shalom y'all,

MB~

Israel

Shalom Joseph,

Apologize for not getting back to you sooner.

Here's some of my memorable moments:

1. It starts at home, my dearest wife, Roselle, a nurse, and also makes jewelry used some of her earnings to help me get to Israel during Feast of Sukkoth. There are three Feasts of YHWH that men present themselves to Him, and it is at this time that we could pull enough funds for me to go. She is truly a blessing to me.

2. The Land, when we went to Shomron, Shiloh, there I felt a connection to the Land, and to see where the Mishkan once stood, and to listen to David Rubin speak of some of

the trials this community experienced with terrorism, is heart wrenching. Gen 49:22-26 came to my mind,

Gen 49:22 Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:) Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.

To witness this community build in the face of “archers,” is truly the work of Yah’s Spirit, and His Scriptures come alive.

3. His Scriptures come alive, every step in Jerusalem, the first morning, when a few of us walked Old City, Western Wall, City of David, Kidron Valley, Temple Mount....all Yah’s scriptures come alive! The mikvah in the Gihon Springs...priceless!

4. The fellowship and hospitality I witnessed and received when my knee swelled up for unknown reasons...truly amazing...the hospitality of Avraham clearly evident among the community. Blessings and thanks to all.

5. When some of my coworkers asked me about my vacation...I told them it was not a vacation...it is a pilgrimage. Going to the Land, the Land where Yah’s Eye’s are upon, is not the reward, it is a vehicle to fulfill His purpose, at least for me to tell others when you go according to all that Yah commands, blessings come, and that blessing for me is that all of His scriptures come alive as I read through His Word. These scriptures are not just stories, they are real, and are a witness of Him to the rest of the Nations to call upon the name of YHWH.

Blessings always, and if Yah wills next year in Jerusalem,
Marsh

Colorado USA

Shalom Joe

There are so many, but the biggest for me was YAH teaching me that I am a Binyamite. That is so humbling to me to know from which tribe I belong. I also thought it was so amazing that so many people who weren’t part of our “group” (as if we were more than

just a gathering of likeminded believers) ended up finding their way to fellowship with us. Really amazing to watch YAH at work.

Tracey Zimmerman

Missouri

Shalom Joe.

I am Michele Annaccarato from Italy and I am writing this few lines to tell you thank you for the many thing you have done during Succot in Jerusalem like many other people.

In my opinion It has been a wonderful Succot.

Joe have a very good Shabbat!!

Michele

Don't these letters make you want to come to your Father's house? Are you planning on coming for the next Feast or for Sukkot? You can meet Family and Brethren from around the world who believe as you do. Sort of.

Start putting away some money every week and ask our Father to make a way for you to come. If you don't like our group then find another. I can tell you of some, but come and stop with all the excuses that you have used in the past. What happens here changes people's lives, it has nothing to do with us and everything to do with Him blessing you while you are at His House. So make plans right now on coming to Jerusalem and visiting your Father at the Apple of His eye.

Although these emails are addressed and sent to me because I have asked for them so I can share them with you, there are other people who were at the Feast and did a tremendous amount of work before and during the feast in order to make it all come about. Amanda Boyd did much of the leg work along with Frank Mecklenburg in making the housing arrangements and renting of equipment for the presentations. They also booked the Bus company and Bruce Brill who did the tours for us taking us to the not so common places of Israel which we all thoroughly enjoyed like the Piazza stop and the goat farm stop along with Etzion, Arutz Sheva, Shilo, and many other places. All of this takes planning and phone calls and arranging. Frank and Bruce led us and kept us all on schedule or almost on schedule. Please do not neglect how much work Amanda and Frank along with Charlotte and Carolyn did in preparing for this Sukkot in scheduling and planning. These emails are sent to me but the lion's share of thanks goes to these two for organizing this event. But they will tell you just how many little miracles Yahovah did to make it all come about. It is Yahovah above and beyond anything anyone of us did who

opened doors so that we could go to certain places and to have the rooms we wanted on such short notice and that just the right people came. It was Yahovah who protected us in some of those not so safe places we went to and allowed us to go to them. It was Yahovah who moved those people who were here in a way that no man could ever do to affect these people and change their lives so that they will never be the same as they were before they come. Although there were those who worked to arrange these things all the glory goes to Yahovah for allowing each one of us to enjoy this Sukkot together.

SUKKOT 2011

Brethren, as you know I have been to Israel 12 times now. I am simply in love with the land of our ancestry. I have been so privileged to have gone, but even more so to have been shown the things Yehovah has revealed to me. It does blow me away.

Again as some of you already know we have been raising money in order to purchase a farm in the land of Israel. This has been a slow process and we still pray that this will come about.

There are a few reasons for doing this, but the main one is so that we can show our faith to Yehovah by actually planting a crop in the 6th Sabbatical year of 2015 and then by not planting anything in the 7th Sabbatical year of 2017. We seek to show Yehovah and Judah our brother as a group the blessings for obeying and keeping the Sabbatical year at the right time in the Land. This has not been done since the Bar Kochba revolt when Judah was again forced out of the land.

Each Year people go to Israel. Many leaders take people in the off season and charge the full season prices. They do this to provide for their ministry. One such group is right now charging over \$4000 for the 12 days they will be there. So when you have two buses of about 100 people that is \$400,000 that is being raised. And the actual cost is less than \$200,000.

I have gone to Israel for 14 days and had two meals a day and a room for \$35 Euros a day. And my airfare only cost me between \$900 and \$2500 depending on the time of year. But I always went at the high days. So you do the math and know just how much these other groups are taking to feed their ministries.

Each year that I have gone I have shown people around and we have cohosted with others and not profited anything. It was done for cost and cost alone. This way more people who could not otherwise afford it could come to Israel and see our Fathers home.

Last year we went with Avi ben Mordechai and it was an awesome time. Avi makes a living giving tours so it will cost you to go with him. If you have ever wanted to go to Israel and want a tour then let me say, this guy Avi ben Mordechai is tops.

You can see different tours he offers which you can take any time of the year. Just book them with him in advance. <http://www.cominghome.co.il>

And in case you're wondering what Avi is like, then go to his site and read his teachings or browse his tour itineraries.

I want to share with you the diary of one young lady from South Africa as she describes her trip to Israel last year in 2011. It was her second time there. I had asked her to use her posting at some time in the future. That time is now. Unfortunately she has not written about the whole tour. This is what happens when life catches up with you. But you can enjoy what she did write.

Shalom Joe

I can't imagine how you would want to use any of these ramblings, but , certainly, if they can be of any use to you. – By all means feel free to use what you want to.

Blessed greetings!

Heather

Dear Friends and Family

As most of you know, i have just come back from another trip to Israel and I would like to share with you all some of the wonderful experiences and “Wow!” moments that I had in the Land of our Forefathers.

As you know, I am not a “frequent flyer” and so all the little checks and balances at the airport have the potential to just ruffle the surface for me. My family came down to the Pmb airport to see me off and I was a little uneasy about having enough time at the OR Tambo airport to pick up my bag from domestic arrivals and then get over to international departures before the desk closed. My plane in from Pmb arrived at 1800 and Lufthansa departure was for 2020. The travel agent had nodded and said ‘yes, that should be fine”. i grabbed my bag , grabbed a trolley and asked directions to the international departure hall, whereupon a porter stepped forward asked which airline , and took off at a brisk pace. Upstairs and down and to the furthest – literally the LAST line of windows in the building. All closed. The porter turns to me and says “you’ve missed the plane!”

I turned to a lady at a computer in the Swissair window and asked for help. She tickled a few keys and told me that I was booked Lufthansa operated by SAA and had to go all the way back to terminal A, where I had started out and book in with SAA !! So, now, brisk pace forgotten, the porter and I RAN all the way back and booked in. Now the porter wanted a tip and looked at the R10 I gave him as thou I had given him a chappie bubble gum. All I had with me was a R20 note, which he grabbed and then told me I could push the trolley further myself!

Then I had a further brick loaded onto my stress meter when I was asked for my visa to go to Germany. This necessitated calling someone else to verify that i was not going to Germany, but to Israel. and therefor did not need a visa. I then had to produce evidence that i was on a booked tour, and that I had an address in Israel where I was expected.

The check in lady asked what my seat preference was and I asked for a window. She said there were no window seats, but she would give me an aisle seat on the side, meaning I would have only one passenger between me and the window. So fine. Once on the plane and the stairs were rolled away and seat belts fastened it appeared that there was no one else and I had both seats to myself – and it was the first row of the economy class. – so I had a blank wall in front of me and could sleep across both seats and put my feet up against the wall. Lovely!

But even so it was quite difficult to sleep.

I had a two hour wait at Munich where I sat and watched planes coming in to land. It was fascinating to see that no sooner had one plane landed than the next one came into view. There were just in my small field of vision, always two planes in the sky. I just had view of one landing strip and there were always two planes coming in. Where are all the people going all the time?

Once on the plane ready to depart for Tel Aviv, the pilot announced that the Greek airlines were on strike, and we would not, as planned, be able to fly over Greek airspace, so would have to divert over the Black Sea, and thus would need to take on extra fuel. And so a delay of 2 hrs. while this was accomplished!

Anyway it took them about 40 and then we took off over Turkey and parts of Russia. I was fortunate to have a window seat, and could get a bit of a view of the landscape. Unfortunately the window was a bit fogged so could not take any photos through the window.

As stated before, I am not a frequent flyer at all but it really amazes me that the different countries and different airports are so different in their security checking. Quite

unintentionally, once I unpacked my handbag (which was quite full) at my destination, I found that the bag had gone through 6 x ray checks and a little 200ml liquid fruit drink had gone thru undetected! The bags were checked twice at Munich but were not checked on entry to Israel! Quite weird. They will confiscate a little old lady's knitting needles, but they hand out metal knives and forks on the plane, and do not count them back when they collect the used meal tray!

Anyway, It seems that it is taking the whole of episode 1 of my story just to get into the land! Point being that I was not asked a single question at the passport control and my hand luggage was not checked on entry to Israel. Now to get sherut taxi (which is a sort of combi taxi) 10 seater shuttle service from the airport to the major centres. I had the name of my host and her address printed out, but not one of drivers seemed even vaguely interested in going to Mevasseret Ziyyon. Which is a suburb of Jerusalem. I noticed that there seemed to be one man in charge of telling all the drivers where to go, so I just followed him around, letting him realise that ,if necessary, I would follow him home if he did not put me on a taxi to my required destination. Which he duly did. So I arrived with my host, Naomi, a lovely Swiss Jewish lady who has recently made Aliyah and come to live in Israel. She truly is a very sweet and friendly lady in her mid-40's and we just really got on very well.

I arrived late on thurs afternoon 6 oct. Naomi had made a very tasty supper and I went to bed early.

The next morning, being the day before Shabbat, Naomi had a few things to do around town, and I just went along with her. She also is a trained nurse, but due to various technical hitches, has not been able to register as a trained nurse in Israel, so she is doing caring work. We went home and I helped her to make the Challah (plaited bread) because she had a sore shoulder and could not kneed. I learned a trick from her – she puts the bread into a cold oven, then turns on the oven. So the bread rises while the oven is warming. It worked beautifully. We made stuffed veggies – cabbage leaves, sweet pepper, and veg marrow stuffed with lamb mince.

Very nice indeed.

That afternoon, the tour guide, Avi ben Mordechai, came over to meet me and I just liked him immediately. No big deal, no hype. Just ordinary and likeable.

The next day was the Rabbinic Yom Kippur.(Day of Atonement) Some of you will understand without explanation the confusion that exists among followers of the full authority of Scripture with regards to The Calendar. The only point that all will agree upon is that the calendar which is followed by the secular world is NOT the calendar which was instituted 'at the beginning' by the Almighty. There are, I think, something like 26 (or more)

different “scriptural” calendars all with a very plausible and scriptural justification as to why this particular version is correct. I am not going into that subject in any detail, except to say that I can’t agree with the Rabbinic Calendar because under this system it happens every few years that Yom Kippur, which is a FASTING day falls on the Shabbat, which is a FEAST day, and a day of joyous celebration.

And so this situation is for me a conflict.

However, be that as it may, on YOM KIPPUR Israel SHUTS DOWN. There is not one shop open, and not one car on the roads. No TV and no radio broadcast. For the whole morning, pretty much there is not a soul out of doors. Around midday, families start coming out, and kids on bicycles and tricycles take to the roads. Unfortunately I have not yet had my photos processed to be able to show photographic evidence that there is not one car on the roads. Naomi and I went for a walk down to the main highway between TelAviv and Jerusalem. Nothing. All along the main commercial centre, the kids were playing in the road. I have a photo of a group of little kids (as it happens, they were black) sitting in the middle of what would normally be a very busy intersection, playing some sort of board game on a manhole cover in the middle of the road. They had drawn chalk markings and were moving stone pieces around!

Unfortunately I picked up a bug on my travels, and am not fully recovered. I still have a persistent earache and fuzzy head, so I think that this will be enough for session 1.

If there is anyone receiving this who would really rather not have all this minute detail of what I did , where I went, what I ate and what I saw, please just drop me a line and I’ll leave you off of the next and subsequent instalments.

Blessed greetings!

Heather

Dear Friends and Family

Many thanx to those of you who have already read and responded positively to the first installment.

Sadly, my ‘bug’ has not left yet, and I now have a full blown otitis media (middle ear infection) which is proving quite tiresome.

To continue: On the day after Yom Kippur I left with Naomi as she had to go to town and I then walked down to the Jaffa Gate to the old city. Before leaving Howick I had heard from two different sources within the space of 3 days that I should be sure to join “Bart” at Jaffa Gate at

08.45 any morning except Shabbat and go with him on the Rampart walk. So this I did.

Bart Repko, and his wife, Yoki ,are a Dutch couple who have felt the conviction to preach the word of Isaiah 62 to anyone who will listen. He is a self-appointed “watchman” on the walls of Jerusalem. He is an enthusiastic, energetic and compelling preacher who goes day after day and preaches to anyone who comes – and they come – by recommendation from friends, people come from the “” four corners of the earth” on a daily basis. Sometimes so many that a friend helps him and they take two groups.

He preaches the message of the horrors perpetrated over the centuries by zealous and misguided groups of “Christian” missionaries – the crusaders, the inquisition- the holocaust, to say nothing of all the oppression and subjugation over the millennia of Turks, Moors, Assyrians, Babylonians Egyptians etc, Oppressors who have sought to annihilate the Jews. The point he makes is that prophecies are being fulfilled today, in our life time. In spite of the hordes of nations that have tried to obliterate the nation of Israel, Israel is today being recalled from the North, South, East and West to become again a nation occupying the land of Israel.

He uses Isaiah 62;2 as his stamp and he invites all who would to join him as he proclaims from the walls “Oh YHWH, Mighty one of Israel ! I hold You to Your promise and give You no rest till You establish and make Jerusalem a praise in all the earth” He quotes liberally from the book of Joel 2:19 onwards. In fact the whole of the book of Joel becomes his message. Also verses from Jeremiah 31:31 “Behold the days are coming” declares YHWH “when I shall make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant I made with their fathers in the day when I strengthened their hand to bring them out of the land Of Egypt, My covenant which they broke though I was faithful to them” declares YHWH “For this is the covenant I shall make with the house of Israel after those days, “declares YHWH: “I shall put my law (Torah, teachings, instructions) in their inwards parts, and write it on their hearts. And I shall be their Elohim and they shall be My people...”

After the walk along the top of the old city wall he then invites people to come and have refreshment with him and then the informal discussion goes on for hours afterwards. What a dedicated ministry.

Bart has written a book in Dutch which talks of the “stone of offense” from Isaiah 8:14, and mentioned again in 1Peter 2:8.

I had taken along with me , just on a prompting , one of John’s books, “Blowing the Trumpet” and I went along again the next day just so that I could talk with Bart and give him John’s book. I told him that he has to write his book in English, and that if he found anything in John’s book (which has never been published) that he could use, then would he please

do so. He was very touched and grateful for the gesture. I hope that he will write his book in English and I hope that he will be able to make use of some of John's research.

Noami had recommended a little gift/book store near the Hurva Synagogue called Shoreshim ,but cautioned that the storekeeper sometimes closes the shop when he has a group of interested people, and gives an impromptu lecture on whatever- the history of Israel or whatever the appropriate topic may be for his purposes at that moment. I did get there, but unfortunately had missed the talk because, true enough, the shop was closed and I could see through the window that there was a group of absorbed listeners. When I went back about 20 min later, the shop was open and the group were still there, buying various things. I could not help but overhear that they were speaking Afrikaans! They were a group from Stellenbosch. We chatted a little in Afrikaans and one lady said they had just had a very interesting lecture of the history of Israel.

I then had the afternoon to myself and wanderer around through the maze of tunnels and shuuk market stalls. (Unfortunately I still have not had my photographs put onto a disc so that I can include them – but pictures will follow) The myriad of little stalls and shops – some of them no bigger than a toilet are just too difficult to describe. there will be a shop selling clothing -all hanging out into the walkway, then a shop selling jewelry, pottery, glassware, followed by a fruit seller, selling freshly squeezed pomegranate juice, next will be a little alleyway with a wizened little man sitting mending shoes on a museum piece sewing machine; then there will be a grocery store followed by a restaurant and then a souvenir seller with a whole bunch of tacky kitchy religious figurines and symbols. "You mention a faith and we will sell you an emblem" For those of us who are of my vintage and can remember the old Indian market in Durban -it is a lot reminiscent of that. All the colours, aromas, sights, sounds and pushy Arabs wanting to catch an unwary tourist for a sucker!

I worked my way up to the Jewish sector of the new town where the Kosher fruit, veg and meat is sold in a slightly different type of shuuk. There again – What a display. Nothing is packaged – just all arrayed in open boxes. The most beautiful fruit, pomegranates, oranges, bananas, persimmons, melons etc. There will be the spice shop with sacks of all the aromas and colours of heaped up spices, followed by the dried beans, rice, lentils, cuscus, chickpeas, and so on. Then just next to that suddenly will be the meat shop with all the meat just open on display – not wrapped or packed at all, and then a sweet shop with trays and trays of different colored sweets, dried fruits, dates, raisins, and so on. Lots and lots of shops selling scarves and pashminas of the most beautiful colours and designs. The Orthodox Israeli married women all cover their hair – either with a hat, beret, scarf or, if they want "hair", then they will wear a wig!!

I saw a lovely selection of sweet melons (spanspek) and before I could stop myself, I had walked over and smelled one. I then felt obliged to buy it as I had put my nose to it! Anyway Naomi and I enjoyed it for supper that night.

I had to use a lot of self-control in walking past the fabric shops as they really did have a wonderful selection of fabrics. All I bought was a pair of long pink shoelaces which I used to tie my hat on as I had nearly lost it that morning on the rampart walk!

Just a few notes about orientation to the Northern hemisphere. Of course, they drive on the “wrong” side of the road which can be quite disturbing when you are sitting in a bus and then you find the driver going the wrong way around a traffic circle! And cars whizzing by on the left hand side of the bus. Even though it is my second time in Israel I still found that confusing. Then their light switches switch the wrong way round. They switch up for on and down for off. The books and magazines open back to front and so do the CD covers! Just as well that I could not read anything as they read bottom to top and back to front. How these “goyim” families who have gone to live in Israel are managing I really don’t know. It is all just too confusing for me!

Here endith part 2 . I’m going to lie down with my sore ear.

Much love to all

H

Dear Family and Friends

Thanku to those who have responded so enthusiastically to these lengthy diary entries. I am enjoying writing it all up from my scanty notes that I made “on site” because it is refreshing all these memories for me and I am reliving it.

The reason that these letters are coming so prolifically is that I am still not well. My ear is still blocked and making my head feel like a pumpkin, so I am not able to roar around and attend to the trillion things that I have to do.

I have also not yet been able to resume my “granny-nanny” duties and am suffering from withdrawal. I have only seen my precious little bundle once since I got home.

So now – for the next episode:

I see that I neglected to say that I had bought a whole packet of little bits and pieces of spices from the spice shop. I hadn’t a clue what I was buying – just went by sight and smell. All the labels were in Hebrew. The shop assistant was very helpful though, and we made ourselves understood to each other with simple one word instructions and a lot of face and body language.

I also bought a very expensive piece of Halva. There was a young man promoting his wares by offering little pieces of the MOST delicious coffee flavoured Halva. When I asked him how much that piece would be, he said fourteen shekels. So I agreed and he wrapped and packed it and then took 40 shekels out of the money I gave him. We then had a little discussion which necessitated his father coming in to apologize that the young man was still learning English and I then heard them discussing the difference between 14 and 40!

I must say I have to take my hat off to the shop merchants in Israel and in Jerusalem particularly as they do get to meet so many different people from all over the world on a daily basis, and all the languages are so very different. There are many mandarin speaking visitors to the Land now as well. Each with his own idea of the value of an item. Many of the shops have prices in Euros or dollars as well as, or instead of, shekels. It is easy to get mixed up about prices, especially when one is converting to Rands to try and decide if it is worth the price or not.

It just emphasizes for me how much of an international crossroad Israel was in antiquity before the age of air and sea travel. All the land routes from anywhere to somewhere else crossed through Israel. This also has been confirmed by archaeological diggings and findings of international coinage among the ruins. This also brings to mind one of the very interesting things that Avi showed us. We know of the money changers in the time of Yahushua, and of course, before. Apparently from archaeological finds they have established that the money changers were referred to as the “person who sat on the bench” or the “banke”, whereas most of the other traders did their job standing up and walking around – as they still do today. But the person who sat at the table on a “banke” became known as the banker. Think about it – how many languages do you know where the place where money is kept is called some derivative of the word “bank”?

I was really blown away by the number of archaeological diggings and excavation sites. Everywhere in Jerusalem and on every drive out into the country one just kept seeing remains of an earlier civilization. Little pieces of pottery shards and bits of mosaic stones just lying in the roadside, scattered around and available for anyone to pick up. Remains of archways, and stone paving are everywhere. All the older buildings in Jerusalem are solid stone, sometimes white, sometimes pinkish or greyish or beige. All the newer buildings are of concrete, but faced with the same Jerusalem stone. So that in looking at the landscape, all the buildings are of stone. No painted walls anywhere. Having said that, there are a few blank walls here and there amongst the newer buildings, but then a mural artist is engaged to paint a scene onto that wall. – Very often commemorating some particular event. Even the electricity meter boxes have scenes painted onto them!

So the next day, mond 10 oct, Naomi was still troubled with her sore shoulder and thought that a dip in the Dead Sea might help her. I offered to help with the expenses if she would take me along, so we packed a picnic lunch and set off to the Dead Sea.

The distances in Israel are not very great, as the country itself is hardly bigger than the Kruger National Park. – Just a lot more roads and traffic and people!! On the way there the countryside was very desolate. Much like a lot of the pictures one sees in Biblical atlases. – Just hills and hills of reddish brown sand – not even a bossie here and there. Stones – lots and lots of stones, rocks and dry ground. We saw two “Bedouin’ encampments – which really just looked like our SA rural African settlements. Couple of goats, couple of shanty houses, washing hanging on barbed wire fences. Half-dressed little kids running around barefoot. A battered car next to the shanty and a TV aerial. No difference! Except that there were only a scattered few here and there. Not like ours where the whole landscape is covered in them.

I found the Dead Sea quite curious in many ways. Firstly, it and the Jordan River and Sea of Galilee form the Jordanian border – So there was a lot of military presence. Lots of barbed wire and razor security fencing which restricted access to the sea line. Then, of course there is the AHAVA company which processes the minerals into beauty and spa products – So there is the harvesting infrastructure along the sea line, also restricting access to the shore. Then there is actually a lot of agriculture going on there as well. This I find the paradox. One would think that the land would be quite saline and not really good for agriculture – and where does the fresh water come from?

Naomi told me, and indeed I could see evidence that the level of the sea is dropping each year, so that means that no water is flowing into it, and yet, there is evidence in valleys leading down to the sea, of trees, reeds, and grass growing. They must be getting water from somewhere?

We stopped at a little resort – not the main resort with the spa facilities and restaurant etc. and then spread out our picnic on hard dry stony ground which is the “beach”, under a little canopy. We took it in turns to go and swim, with the other one sitting by all the spread. Naomi told me that I should take off all jewelry as the water would tarnish the silver and the gold.. NO swimming, splashing or disturbance in the water, as even one tiny drop in the eye is extremely acid and potentially dangerous.

Of course, I did go into the water. The sea looks blue, no waves, more like a lake than a sea. – Especially as it is quite small and one can see the Jordanian border on the other side. The air is very foggy and hazy because of the depth below sea level. – Very close and quite oppressive atmosphere. The water felt oily and sort of silky. One could see the

supersaturated concentration of the salts in sort of wavy “lines” in the water. The salts also crystallized out onto the rocks at the water’s edge. Then, of course, was the sensation of buoyancy. Everyone around looks as if they were standing on a rock because they were so far out of the water, then you realise that you are also standing chest high out of the water. A strange, pleasant sort of sensation. I would like to do that again sometime. (?)

We also stopped at Qumran caves, which is right there on the Dead Sea coast. We saw a 3D movie enactment of what it must have been like – based on archaeological findings of the remains of the Essene village right there at the base of the mountain where the Qumran scrolls were found.. It would seem, from the writings that they have been able to decipher that the Essenes were a community of men only, who had left their families for a period (maybe a year) to go and study scripture and write new scrolls to replace those that were old and worn. From the “diary” of one of the students it would seem that John the Baptist spent a lot of time in this community. – Absolutely fascinating!!!

We also had the opportunity to browse through the little tourist curio shop which was specializing in AHAVA products. Just too expensive for me, I’m afraid, so apart from looking at one or two ‘special offers” which I realized were only “special” if you were paying in US\$, I did not even look at the stuff. Even the other curio stuff was way out of range, but I did buy a rather nice map of Israel, geographical on one side, and road map on the other.

Then Naomi’s automatic car window had a problem, and we could not wind up the passenger side window. We then had about half an hour to get back to Jerusalem and get the car to the workshop where she had taken it only a week before for the same problem. Driving in peak traffic in Jerusalem was much like Joburg without the ring roads. Just lots of intersections, traffic circles, impatient drivers all with what Avi Mordechai terms the “me first” syndrome. I’m glad I wasn’t driving.!

Then followed what could have been any workshop scenario here in SA. Complete with language problem . . The reception clerk being Hebrew, and able to communicate sufficiently in English understood Naomi and passed the problem onto an Arab worker whose communication was limited to Arab and a little Hebrew. Naomi still learning Hebrew. Enough!

We got home quite late and had lovely rosti for supper.

Another thing I found quite curious from the day – One of the ways that the Arabs make a bit of money from the tourist industry is by allowing tourists to take photographs of a camel all dressed in its robes and colourful saddle cloths. We saw two of these. What I found fascinating was how still the camel sits. The first place where we stopped at the marking of

sea level at a siding on the road, there was this camel. I walked up to it because I thought it was a statue. It just did not blink, or wave its tail, or move its head at all. Only when the Arab walked up from his shelter under a tree did the animal blink an eyelid. I did not take the photo.

On the way home we stopped briefly to have a cool drink and I saw another two camels and no Arab. These I thought, must be statues. So again, I walked right up to them – this time I could smell them, but still thought that the manure must have been brought in and put there to “authenticate” the look. Then, again an Arab appeared from out of the side of the building and looked interested in taking some money from me. And still the statues did not move!

On the next entry I actually join the “Coming Home” tour. . . .stay tuned !

Dear Family and Friends

Thank you so much for the warm and encouraging responses that I have had, and for the good wishes for my health.. Praise Abba, I am feeling a little more “with it” today – maybe that has something to do with the fact that it is the first time in a week since I got home that the sun is out. But I still have the “thick head ” syndrome. Ear still blocked and the pumpkin head feeling.

– sound of rushing water in my head constantly.

So on with the saga.

We are now on tues 11 oct

I left Naomi's early because I wanted to get to Bart again to give him John's book. I bought a bus ticket, pointed to my grey hair and asked for a pensioner's discount. I also, on Naomi's advice, asked for a “ma'avar” – remember that word, it could be useful to you when you go to Israel and travel on a bus.- It simply means that he gives you a ticket, at no extra charge, that you can use again and again on the same day.!

I had hoped to walk a different section of the wall on that day, but unfortunately, we did the same section again from Jaffa to Dung Gate. One little amusing highlight on that day was that the ticket seller (to gain access to the wall) seemed to be quite grumpy and austere. He came out of his booth, looked at the row of tourists waiting to buy tickets and growled “no change – give me 8 shekels” so everyone dived into their bags looking for small change. I was the last in line, and had seen him just take money and issue tickets without any smile or comment. I expected nothing different, but when I took my ticket from him, I practised one of the few Hebrew phrases I know and said “todah raba” (thank you very much). My goodness – this just switched a switch for him and he promptly burst into song ”

Todah raba... todah raba...todah raba..." and started beating time on the edge of the table, giving a little clap in between. That was my fun for the day!

After the second time around the walls, this time with a friend of Bart, Albert, (The group had been too big and Bart had taken a Dutch group.) Albert told me on the walk back to the open air restaurant where they always finish up for a drink that he (Albert) and his wife had been helping Bart for a few weeks and would also be selling up in Holland, to join Bart on a fulltime basis in their ministry in Jerusalem in the next year.

I am hearing of so many people, with families, who are leaving their comfort zones and going out, in faith, to minister in the Land. Not to missionize or convert the Jews, but to be a light and to minister to the needs of the people in the Land. Be they orthodox Jew ,or, more likely, as in this case, to visitors to the Land, to help to show the Light and Love of Messiah and to support Brother Judah in regaining a rightful tenure of the Land of inheritance to the "People of Israel"

This is the concept of uniting the full house of Israel, as described in the book of Ezekiel ch 37, – just after he has talked of the dry bones becoming fleshed (the people of Israel returning to the land) but not yet alive, because they lack the Spirit, – and then in verse 14, he puts His Spirit in the people. Anyway just after that, in verse 16 the prophesy is for the uniting of all the twelve tribes of Israel. Both the House of "Israel" (which was the northern kingdom consisting of 10 tribes dispersed among the nations) and the House of Yehudah (which was the southern kingdom of two tribes that went into captivity in Babylon). Ezekiel speaks of this union happening in the latter days. We read in Luke 1: 31 where the Angel says to Mary that the Son she is carrying will reign over the House of "Jacob". This signifies all the twelve tribes together... "and there shall be no end to His reign." HALLELUYAH!! Pardon me, but I do get quite excited when I see prophecies from centuries ago being fulfilled in our lifetime!!

After that I walked up from Jaffa Gate through a very modern and upmarket shopping mall called "Mamilla" where a lot of modern Hebrew sculptors' work is on exhibition. Some of it was quite inspiring, but some of it I actually found a bit offensive. Just another side to the actuality of life in modern Israel.

Modern Israel is really a rich patchwork of peoples...some religious, some secular, some Orthodox Judaic, some Orthodox Russian or Greek Christian, some western,(a lot from USA) Christian, Jew, and Muslim. Some dressed ultra conservatively, some dressed rather immodestly with short skirts, low necklines and exposed backsides. One thing all the citizens of the new Israel seem to have in common is that, as a general rule, I can safely say they all believe in having large families. Every young married woman has at least two or three by the hand, and is pushing a pram. I know that there are some who would criticise

this as irresponsible family planning, but I just see it as a sign of hope and trust in the Future. (as Duncan would have said “we don’t know what the future holds, but we know Who holds the Future”) One can so easily become despondent about the bleak prospects ahead when one reads of the plagues and terrors to come in the book of Revelations, but then one has to hold on to the joyous and triumphant prophecies for the “faithful remnant”.

So then, with my “ma’aver” ticket, I was able to jump on another bus, and go to Ramat Rachel which was the Kibbutz and hotel where the tour had been booked. Naomi very kindly ferried my bags across for me and met me there. The afternoon was spent in unpacking and wandering around meeting some of the rest of the group. Some of us had opted for the budget accommodation and a few others had the more upmarket rooms. There were three of these rooms that opened out onto a small private lawned area which the hotel management had kindly allowed Avi to use to put up a Sukkah. – a slightly more modern version than described in Leviticus 23 verse 34-44.. You see, we still see this as a valid instruction to us to remember that we are in a temporary dwelling, and not to make ourselves too comfortable in this temporary life. There are greater plans for us hereafter. HALLELUYAH !! Besides, it is a wonderful time for the community of believers to come together and celebrate the return of the Bridegroom. Get out – stop work for a while- come together and discuss the Word – Enjoy the kids, have fun, Prepare for His return!! Sorry, but I have to put in another HALLELUYAH !!

That evening, we met the other tour members from all over the world, Canada had a strong contingent, as did the USA, one from the Philippines, one from Thailand, one from Malaysia – Actually it get a bit confusing after this, because there is Santi who is from Hong Kong, living in

Canada, Suzanne from South Africa, living in Australia, Jeanette who originates from

Malaysia, living with her husband in Germany, Barb, from Australia living in Canada,(and now come to Israel for the Hebrew language study course.) Then there was me and a lovely family with three young boys from the republic of KZN . A truly cosmopolitan group.

What was amazing was the different stories and life histories that each brought to the group. What stood out for me especially was Joe Bartling, from USA. He and his wife have a son of their own, I think just in his 20’s , and then they have adopted 6 young children, all blind, and some of them with special ed needs. – Wow that is commitment.!

I was very privileged to make acquaintance (and ongoing friendship) of a warm and loving young woman, Suzanne, who emigrated from SA to Australia with her husband and two sons, aged 15 and 17, just over a year ago. Her husband and his brother opened a

company together in Australia. Her husband was killed in an accident in Feb of this year when he had stopped to help someone at the side of the road and another vehicle came and crashed into them. Obviously she still has a lot of emotional pain and we were able to have a few good chats.

The spread of food at the hotel was just astonishing. There was a selection of probably six to eight different hot meal choices every evening, with corresponding hot veg dishes, then there was a table the most exotic colourful and flavourful salads. Not the usual lettuce, cucumber and tomato here. Oh no. Get a cookbook out of the library and find the most exotic selection of eastern dishes with bringals, sweet peppers, cuscus, qinoa, chicpeas, labna, ... Oh my goodness what an array. No possible way that you could have "a little of everything please"

And then the sweets – Chocolate mousse, cheesecakes, pastries, apple pies, strudel, baklava, and a host of other delicacies.

And so to bed. Only a handful of the men slept out in the Sukkah the first night, and they were rudely awakened in the morning at 0400 when the automatic sprinkling system came into operation to water the lawn !!

Enough for today. Next episode.. Down Town Yerushalyim and a 4×4 jeep tour of the hills and vales.

Shalom again Dear Ones

Thank you to all those who have responded individually. Please forgive me for not reciprocating. I need to get this all down before it goes out of my head, and while there is time. Tomorrow I will not have time so... wed 12 oct.

Breakfast in the Hotel dining room was, as might be expected after the magnificent spread of the night before, just as spectacular. Fruit, cereal, yoghurt, and the usual breakfast type egg thingies Omelets made to order while you watch etc . But also another huge display of cold meats (all Kosher), cheeses, salads – yes, salads! Then there were the various breads, rolls, pastries, and even halva! Sadly I did not discover the halva until about the fourth morning. – but from there on, I had halva every morning after the muesli and yogurt.

So enough about the food already! After breakfast, we were taken out into the garden where we met friends of Avi who have recently made Aliyah and are earning a living through photography. So we had group and individual photos taken – as we were, and then dressed in biblical type shepherd costumes. We had great fun in the dressing up parade!

We then were put on the city bus and sent to town for the day to 'explore'. We were given very clear landmarks and time schedules and money for lunch! Several of us joined up with Joe Dumond, who is a regular visitor to Israel, and who has various very interesting places to take people to, and several interesting theories about the actual whereabouts of significant sights.

I had the privilege of meeting with Joe last year when I was in Israel, and purchased a copy of his book "The Prophecies of Abraham" An extremely interesting and in depth study on the Sabbatical and Jubilee years and their significance throughout history. This book was actually nominated this year for the Noble Peace Prize , by a South African university. In their motivation for the award they cited that "Mr. Dumond has produced this year's most outstanding work, having proven beyond all doubt when the Sabbatical and Jubilee Years are. He also shows when the curses associated with these years are expected to come and what it means to us today.. We strongly feel that this book must be seriously considered for this year's Nobel Prize."

Anyway, Joe took several of us on a trip to have a look at the traditional sites where it has been said that the crucifixion took place, where the "garden tomb" is and where it is said that the Temple of Solomon was located. He then allowed us to make up our own minds, based on what we saw, what is recorded in scripture, and the position of other undisputed landmarks.

This was the day before the Rabbinic first day of Sukkot, which is a Sabbath of no work. This means that all the public services, such as buses etc, close down early in preparation for the next day. We had a few anxious moments while waiting for our bus as to whether we had missed the last bus. The buses became fewer and fewer, and were all the wrong number, then just as we were contemplating having to fork out for a taxi (expensive) the number 7 bus pitched.

That evening, after supper, we were entertained by Bruce Bril, a fascinating little man. I say "little" because he is slight in build. I had actually met him last year when he took us on a one day bus tour through Judea. We visited a few very interesting places, but what I found interesting about him, even then, was his diversity. He was doing the "tour guide ".thing all day – and telling us all sorts of very interesting things, then on the way home he took us past his house to show us his wind turbine which he designed and built, and which supplies his household with electricity. Then on the last trip, the "home straight" he started playing a cd which he had recorded. "Just me and my banjo" -an accomplished balladeer as well.!

What a pleasant surprise it was to see him again and to hear his stories about his childhood in the USA, and how he had learned to play the “fiddle” and the banjo as a young child, and to listen to his songs. Very interesting and intelligent man. Did you know, by the way, that the song ‘She’ll be coming round the mountain when she comes’ was actually written as a Hebrew spiritual song, and the “She” referred to is actually the Shabbat!

Many times I get frustrated by my ineptitude on the computer. I know that one can actually access a U Tube recording of Bruce playing but I can’t give the links and whatever’s to get there. I have just been fiddling around, trying to get some pictures out of last year’s selection to insert into this letter, but have not succeeded.

Now I have lost my impetus. I have a picture from last year showing how he carries a gun just stuck into his jeans waistband. He carries it with him always.

Anyway, quickly. before I go to bed, let me tell you about the jeep trip we took the next day. No, I can’t do this quickly.

We set out early next morning in an open jeep type vehicle, much like those used here for game viewing. Off to Adullum Caves mentioned in Genesis 38, the story of Judah and the Adullamite man named Hirah. then again in Josh 12: 15, the area is mentioned. In 2Samuel :23:13 we see David camped at Adullum. We trekked along a dusty bumpy dirt road and arrived at a site where there were some ruined remains of stone walls, and then found an entrance to the caves where David and his men camped. How do we know this was the actual site? Because the land of Israel is only about as big as the Kruger Park, and it is full of places, like Jerusalem, which are still called today what they were called in Biblical times. This place is still called Adullum today, and there are archaeological remains and artefacts which were found there, dating to that time. so, THESE ARE THE ACTUAL CAVES WHERE KING DAVID CAMPED WITH HIS ARMY. Then we all crawl into and out of the caves, and see there are the remains of stone ‘workings’ in the cave that must have been done at that time!! And over 3000 years later, there it still is. Amazing

Then we went on to a place called Churvat Midras which is another archaeological site of the place of the tomb of the prophet Zechariah. Also at this site, a later building of a Byzantine church complete with mosaic floors. Just nearby to this is a large limestone cave where doves were kept – “farmed” actually. All over were little nesting areas carved out of the rock. These doves were evidently fed and given place to roost here, and then culled as required for the pot.

We then went on to yet another archaeological dig called Tel Qeiyafa. (there are

archaeological sites all over the place), The peculiar feature of this site is that the excavations reveal a city that clearly has two entrances – an unusual feature in this time period. The two entries are clearly discernable. Look in 1 Samuel 17. 52. This verse puts the battle between Israel and the Philistines at a place called Sha'arayim, and mentions the town of Ekron.

Strong's number 8189 gives the meaning of sha'arayim as 'two gates'.

Just across from this two-gated city is another hillside excavation which reveals the remains of a Phillistine encampment called Ekron.(Joshua 13:3 calls Ekron a Phillistine town) These archaeological finds pinpoint this as the actual place where the young David meets and slays Goliath, the Philistine champion. And guess what? Just there, in the valley, is a stream where he probably picked up his 5 smooth stones! Mind blowing! Nothing has changed in all that time. Just over there is the hillside where the Philistines are camped (and there is the archaeological proof) Over here where we are standing in the portals of the city with two gates (and look! here they are! 2 gates) we can look down onto the field where they must have met! Amazing!!

We then look up 1 Samuel chapters 4, 5 6 and 7 (note 6;16 again puts Ekron as the Phillistine village) :and read the sad story of what happened to the Ark of the Covenant when it was misused by the Israelites as a "good luck charm" without the authority of The Almighty and see that it was taken by the Philistines to Ekron. We then followed the trail taken by the two cows on their way to Beit Shemesh. All this area is still undeveloped and basically unchanged since the time of these events told of in Scripture!! Beit Shemesh also confirmed archeologically by the presence of a gigantic underground water cistern. I really found that quite a mind blowing experience to stand on the ACTUAL SITES where these ancient biblical events took place.

And now to bed. It is late and my ear still blocked.

Next episode deals with a variety of places and activities over the next few days.....stay tuned!

Shalom again everyone.

To those of you who enquired, yes thank you, my health is improving and my life is returning to "normal".

Have just had a break from the computer as I have been back to work and catching up with "stuff" that was put on hold while I went on holiday. Funny that – how it sits and waits for you to come back !

One of the things that has come to interrupt my time at the computer has been a visit from the well-known Messianic Teacher from the States, Brad Scott. What a welcome

interruption that was. A really good speaker and a thoroughly likeable man. We had the privilege of hosting him and his wife, Carol, in our home for a night and so were able to have extended discussions with him. It truly is so enlightening to hear just how intimately the “old” and “new” testaments of the scriptures are linked and to realise just how much we have missed over all the years of Christian teachings because we have concentrated only on the “new” testament. Like building a house with no foundation.

And so where were we?

Ah yes, Frid 14 oct.

More of an easy day. Late start and then a walk through the streets chatting along the way.

Avi is a mine of information, and we stopped frequently along the way for him to explain some interesting point about a building, or the person after whom a street was named. So interesting were his comments that a local lady joined in with our group and just followed along listening to all his stories.

We arrived at a very wide and beautiful walkway called the Goldman Promenade, and I regret I forgot now who Goldman was because of the stunning view that just totally captivated my attention. We spent a long time identifying landmarks from the ancient and the modern landscape in front of us, and then had a relaxed picnic lunch on the lawn in the beautifully laid out public park.

A lovely Erev Shabbat dinner in the Sukkah that night, followed by Joe Dumond’s teaching which was sobering to say the least. Joe has done extensive work, as I said before, on the Sabbatical and Jubilee cycles, which show that over the time period from Adam to now, certain disasters occur in repetitive cycles. He showed what we can expect from this pattern to be repeated in the next few years to come. His website at sightedmoon.com is a mine of information. He also puts out a lengthy newsletter each week to which anyone may subscribe for free. I have to admit I can’t always read all of it and I don’t know how he writes it all as well as everything else that he does.

On Shabbat, 15

After a sleep in and a relaxed breakfast we went for a walk into the nearby Olive Tree Park, where an artist, Ran Morin has put up an enormous “living” statue in the form of 3 gigantic stone columns supporting a concrete platform, on top of which are planted three full grown olive trees. Radiating out from the central columnar statue are three pathways dividing the land around into three triangular parks where olive trees are planted in neat rows radiating outward. We had a long discussion on the possible symbolism and the practical logistics of

how the trees on top of the columns are kept watered and anchored against winds and storms.

Also walked over to the boundary between Israeli occupied territory and Arab territory and had a look at the remains of a dugout used in the 6 day war. What struck me particularly was that Israel is such a relatively small piece of land, but it has such a wealth – over 6,000 years – of recorded history! You can't turn a corner without facing some site of historical significance. Even modern Jerusalem, as a metropolitan city, is really rather small – but my goodness, so much of interest and archaeological, historical significance. Impossible to take it all in, in one short visit.

That evening, after supper we went in to central Jerusalem to Ben Yehudah street. – Now I can't remember whether I've talked about this street yet. Just had to go back and read to see that I have not yet recorded it in writing, although I know that I have told many people about this street.

It is the prime tourist attraction of modern Jerusalem, especially at night. Not a very long street that becomes totally a pedestrian mall after sundown. Buskers and 'wandering minstrels' come out and sing and play their instruments – be it guitar, "Jewish harp" (do you remember how our Dad used to play his 'trompie' ?), or even the conventional harp. Street artists, – You will find it all there, as well as lots and lots of people – families with two, three and four children or more. There is also a sort of open air stage where often one of the Rabbinic sects will be singing, dancing, and celebrating the season of Sukkot.

On that night we found a Korean Christian group singing. The tourist curio type shops are all open until late, as are the "eating and drinking" shops. A favourite spot is the frozen yoghurt shop. One has to squeeze through the crowds to buy a ticket and then stand in a sort of crush around the stand and drool over all the items on display. They have an enormous display of trays of frozen fruits, -sorry, I just have to mention a few of them – pineapple, kiwifruit, melon, granadilla, pomegranate, mango, berries, nuts, choc chips, biscuit bits, smarties, halva, and many more etcetera's, and then finally the scoop of plain frozen yoghurt. Once you have made your selection, they stick it all in a super blender machine and out comes your twirl of frozen fruit yoghurt. LOVELY !! Then of course, all the other "eatie" thingies like swarmas, falafels, and the good old MacDonald's are all available as well.

I've now covered 10 days in 6 episodes – another 10 days to go! So thanku all for "hanging in" -and take courage – we will get to the end!! Next episode will take us through Hezekiah's tunnel

Shalom again to you all.

Thanku to those who have asked for the next episode. No, you were not left off the mailing list, I just have been really busy with other pressing details – like going to work – to get to the computer for the next episode!

Duncan always said we must not let the “urgent” overshadow the “important”. How right he was.

And so. where were we?

Sunday 16 oct

One must realise that in Israel, with the seventh day being kept as the Shabbat, that the first day of the week, or Sunday is a normal working day. Most people would say that the seventh day Sabbath applies only to the Jews, but we prefer to take scripture as our reference right there in the book of Genesis 2:3 where clearly the seventh day is hallowed, sanctified, set apart as the day on which to rest. Again in Exodus 20:8-11 this same day is endorsed as THE SABBATH. Numerous texts found throughout scripture all reinforce this commandment for the seventh day. This seventh day was determined by The Almighty Himself and shown specifically again to His people when they came out of slavery, as in Exodus 16 :23-28. Take particular note of verse 28 .

The notion that Messiah rose on the first day and the Holy Spirit was poured out on the first day, thus changing the Sabbath to the first day is a typical example of how the Truth becomes twisted to create an erroneous view. Yes, indeed those two significant events did occur on the first day of the week, but nowhere is there a scripture which then tells us that the Sabbath has changed to the first day of the week. In fact, there are numerous sites on the internet which will show clearly when in history the early Christians were forced to observe the Sabbath on the first day, and on whose instigation that was. Look up emperor Constantine of the Roman Empire

Leviticus 23:10-11 will show that the Messiah was the First Fruits Offering, and that is why He rose on the first day of the week; the First Fruits offering was made on the first day of the week Also the disciples were gathered in the upper room on the first day of the week in accordance with the instruction in Lev 23:15-16.

Anyway, so the first day of the week, except on these Feast Days as described in Lev 23 are normal working days. This being so, we set out for Hezekiah’s tunnel. We were first treated to a 3D film where we had to put on special glasses which made the presenter appear to almost sit in your lap while he presented the history of the young king David and his conquests over the Philistines as long as he was obedient to The Almighty YHWH.

We then entered the tunnel which is casually mentioned in scripture in 2 Kings 20:20 where it talks of a "conduit". Well, for me this word conjures up an image of a little water canal like they used to have in the "old" days (of my youth) in GraafReinett, running by the side of the road. An open channel about 30cm deep and about 20cm wide. Not Hezekiah's "conduit"

Hezekiah was a righteous king and reigned at the time of the siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrians. His great feat was to divert the water from the Gihon spring and bring it into the city to the Pool of Siloam where the Israelites could get water in safety. This remarkable feat he accomplished by digging a tunnel through a mountain of solid rock, by starting two teams, one at each side of the mountain, digging towards each other. The tunnel is not straight, is about a kilometer long and is solid rock on both sides. It is high enough and wide enough for a big man to get through, occasionally scraping shoulders on the sides, and occasionally having to duck the head. The place where the two tunneling teams met up is clearly discernable as the second team was a little too high and they then had to dig deeper and lower the floor level to meet with the first team, so for the second half of the journey there is suddenly a lot of head room. This walk is done in ankle to midcalf deep fresh spring water all the way.

We come out into the open into a little pool which for years was assumed to be the Pool of Siloam, but recent archaeology has found where the original pool is and they have been able to excavate a small section of it. The major part of the pool lies under a privately owned piece of land (owned by the Catholic church) and they are not willing to allow excavations on their property.

However, what we were able to see was the recently opened extensive excavations of the steps leading from the Temple Mount all the way down to the pool of Siloam. Last year I saw just a small section of this, and now this year we were able to walk back from the Pool of Siloam, underground, following the excavation of what would have been the underground sewer system, under the steps of Siloam. Avi bringing it all to life for us with his rhetoric, quoting long passages from the writings of Josephus, and pointing out where the paving stones had been broken by the Roman guards, looking for refugees hiding underground in the sewer system during the sacking of Jerusalem in 70AD.

After lunch some of us went walking up the Mount of Olives with Joe Dumond to one of his favourite places. Joe has done extensive research into the exact location of the sites of historical significance. i.e. the location of Solomon's Temple, Herod's temple, the site of the execution of Messiah and the "garden tomb". Joe had taken some of us on a bit of a pilgrimage on the first day of the tour, to visit some of the sites that are traditionally believed to be the actual sites, and we had much discussion on the logic and the scripture verses

that give us an idea of the location and as to why the traditional sites cannot be accurate. Anyway Joe took us to a place, a catholic guest house, which he believes to be the true site of the crucifixion. We had to wait to get permission to walk around from the mother superior who was in a meeting. Then we ran out of time and someone came out and asked us to leave and come again another day – which, sadly, we were not able to do. However, I did go there last year with Joe, and have a few pictures from then.

Monday 17 oct.

We spent the day in the Old City and visited The Davidson Centre Archaeological Park, saw a computer generated reconstruction of the temple mount, the main street, shops and houses, all based on archaeological evidence. Then we went and saw the “burnt house” museum and the Wohl Archaeological museum which contained the actual remains of the homes of the wealthy dating back to the time of Messiah. Some very well preserved ruins, complete with mosaic floors and mural paintings. very very interesting.

Later that afternoon we walked through the Moslem Quarter and went to visit the site of the Sheep pools or Bethesda pools near the Lion Gate.

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So the long break in-between where I left off, in part 7, and now has been due to a whole lot of diverse distractions, including a couple of days when I was blessed with a visit from my elder brother, Bleign, and his family from Pretoria. We, together with my other brother, Kevin, who also lives in Howick, and their wives had some good times together. Also just celebrated the first birthday of my beautiful and cute little grandson, who is just thinking about walking now and really is into all the cupboards that he is able open!! Needs Fulltime supervision !!

I have just gone back to re-read Part 7 – and ohmygoodness! It looks as though I just abandoned it midsentence.

We went to the Sheep pools at Bethesda (another site of significance which is currently in the care of the catholic church) and there some of us went into the church building which dates from the crusaders time. My goodness!! what beautiful acoustics!! It really was quite an experience. There was another group there from one of the Central African countries – I forget which – but they went in and sang the HalleluYah chorus and the sound vibrations were just absolutely goosebumpy!

That evening we had a talk from the archaeologist, Jozi Garfinkle, (yes, that really was his name!) who was responsible for the dig that we had seen at the city with two gates. Very interesting.

So now to continue – Tues 18 Oct. and another bus trip out to Samaria. (Thanku Guida, it must have been you who sent me an sms for Mom's birthday – unless it was Bleign. My phone did not recognise the number) On the way, we called in at the ruin of a crusader castle. Really fascinating to see the real old King Arthur type castle situated on a hill with a really good lookout vantage point for miles in all directions. We all had fun trying to identify what each of the rooms were used for, and how we could rehabilitate the building and who would live where!

Then on to Shilo (1 Samuel :chapter 4) where we saw the ruins of the site where the Ark had rested and we had Avi acting out the whole sad story of the capture of the Ark and the death of Eli. We even identified a cave where, very possibly, Eli lodged.

We went on to Shechem, which is the site of the Samaritans. Interestingly, there is still a community of Samaritans there today and one can see both the modern Samaritan temple as well as the ruins of the ancient Samaritan temple, overlaid with the ruins of a Byzantine church and the remains of a minaret from the Turkish occupation, and interestingly, the remains of the British army barracks from the 1947 British occupation. – All on top of mount Gerezim. (I actually saw these the first time I went to Israel) The origin of the Samaritan split from Judah can be read in 1 Kings chap 12.

Also from the top of Mount Gerezim we were able to look down into the Arab occupied town of

Nablus which is built on the site of Jacobs well where Yahshua had the conversation with the Samaritan woman. We could also see the well-defined border between Israeli and Palestinian occupied territory. We were actually standing in no man's land between the two.

On Wed 19 we set out early to go all the way up to Galilee. On the way there we stopped at yet another ruin site and walked through the remains of a synagogue at Korazim. What was remarkable here was that this was one of the two places in all the archaeological endeavours where an intact "seat of Moses" had been recovered. The seat of Moses was the prominent seat in the synagogue from which the Rabbi would read the Torah.

We called in at the ruins of the ancient town of Capernaum on the shore of the Sea Galilee. Here we saw the ruins of the synagogue which Yahshua would have attended as well as the ruins of the home of Peter's mother-in-law. (Once again, this site is in the care of the catholic church,) and they have very cleverly built a modern church raised up on stilts, over the archeological site.

We then went out on one of the highlights of the tour- a boat ride across the Sea of Galilee. More like a lake actually – no waves. I had secretly been a bit anxious about the boat ride

because of my notorious travel sickness. But, really, it was such a calm sea and such a steady and stable ride that it really was a pleasure. I was disappointed not to have been able to take a dip in the water. I had hoped that I could hop off the boat and into the water – but the skipper wasn't having that. I am currently reading "The Big Fisherman" by Lloyd C Douglas and am really enjoying being able to picture it all in context.

On the way home we stopped off at Jezreel Spring. 1 Samuel 29:1 talks of the spring at Jezreel. Once again it was really amazing to stand there at the fountain and know that this is the fountain where King Saul and his army camped. Right here – at this spring!! And the countryside all around still undeveloped – pretty much as it would have looked in Saul's time. Really goosebumpy stuff. Avi also identified the hill where one would suppose the death of king Saul and his sons took place at the hands of the Phillistines.(1Samuel :31)

Avi then took us on to another site where archaeological digs had put the castle of Jezebel. We then read the gory details of her deeds and death.

I'm really needing to condense the last few days because of time constraints. My "publisher" is pushing me to finish in this episode !

Thurs 20 oct saw us reluctantly packing up from the Ramat Rachel hotel, and then a bus ride through the outskirts of Jerusalem to visit a few sites of interest. We stopped and carefully examined a magnificent work of art, called The Copper Scrolls. These are two enormous cast iron scrolls, one depicting the tragedy and horror of the holocaust and the other depicting the triumph and victory of the return to Eretz Israel in 1948.

We called in for coffee at the Elvis Cafe. This is the brainchild of a quirky Elvis fan, Uri Yoeli, who did not know what to do with all his Elvis memorabilia when his wife banned them from the house – So he opened a cafe. The whole interior is painted with various pictures of the icon and there are busts, statues and 1,728 pictures of him all over the place. Of course, his music is played continuously and although one pays an exorbitant 20 shekels for a cup of coffee, you get to keep the mug which, of course, has an Elvis picture on it. I have a souvenir from the diner, the paper place mat with a whole lot of useless info such as that he bought more than 100 cadillacs, most of which he gave away to his friends.

Not ever really having been an Elvis fan, I just found it interesting and quirky, but as we were leaving, Avi announced "Now that was awesome!" I caught the look on my friend Joe's face. – He just knew that I would not let that one pass because he, Joe, had got the sharp end of my tongue last year for using the word "awesome" frivolously.

I really endorse my dear husband, John's, aversion to popular slang misuse of words. My personal trigger being the way the young people use the word 'awesome' when they simply mean "pleasant, enjoyable, fun, exciting, great, fantastic, (and I'm not even using a thesaurus here), or just plain good." – what is wrong with the word "good" ? – It is a perfectly good word. My problem with the misuse of the word "awesome" is just this – what word will you then use when you see the Victoria Falls for the first time? – What word will you use when you experience a thunderstorm in the Drakensberg? – What word will you use to describe Aurore Borealis? – What word will you use when Messiah returns? Oxford dictionary still gives "reverent fear" as the definition of this word and it really will be sad to have lost that word simply to replace the now outdated "cool" – Anyway that's enough of me on the soapbox for now.

We then went on to another hilltop in the greater Jerusalem surrounds where the prophet Samuel is alleged to be buried. Another old Byzantine church ruin there with the most amazing ("awesome") acoustics. I really wonder why modern buildings have not been able to replicate the design to get the same effect? And a synagogue still in use. The spectacular aspect of this lookout was that we got there just at sunset, and apart from the beauty of the sunset, Avi told us that this was the setting of the story told in Joshua 10. The famous verse 12 wherein Joshua told the sun and the moon to stand still. This incident has always been interpreted as Joshua bidding the day to last longer so that they could finish the battle and smite the enemy. But on site, where we could orientate towards where the compass points were and which direction the Amorites would have been coming from, and in which direction Jerusalem lay, it became clear that there would have been early morning mist towards the east, with the rising sun shining through, blinding the eyes of the enemy who were moving eastward toward Jerusalem. And so, with the moon behind the Israeli army, lighting the scene for them, they had the advantage and could wipe out the enemy with virtually no losses. – as verse 13 says 'and the sun stood still and the moon stayed until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies' ... Now that, my friends, is awesome.

We then booked into the Hotel Lev Y'rushalayim which is situated in the heart of the new city, right at the top of the popular Ben Yehudah street. It is also a semi residential hotel and had quite a number of traditional observant Jewish families in residence. The dining room also being strictly Kosher. the spread was not as lavish as the Ramat Rachel had been, and less tourist friendly. The first evening there I felt like a cup of coffee, and duly poured a cup and then looked around for the milk. I made the mistake of asking the maitre de (or whatever he would be called) for some milk. I was told in no uncertain terms that this was a Kosher dining room and no milk would be served with dinner. (There had been meat

served at dinner, so no milk would be in the same room as the meat) If you want milk with your coffee, have it at breakfast when there will be no meat in the dining room. Ok so that was my first lesson in Kashrut. After dinner coffee is black. That's that.

That evening some of us had booked to go to the sound and light show at the Citadel of David in the Old City. A remarkable feat of sound and light technology and engineering. I did see it last year and was totally blown away by it and so was quite keen to go again. Really magnificent. – Although I was a bit disappointed to see that it was exactly the same show as last year. I did think that they would do a different show each year.

Fri 21oct . Avi took us on a walking tour through the modern city of Jerusalem. “modern” as in not the Old City, but we saw a lot of the early resettlement buildings of the last two or three centuries. Very interesting stories of pioneers and men of vision such as Conrad Schick, a German protestant missionary who was sent to Israel in the 1800's and besides all the missionary related work which he did, was an accomplished architect and was responsible for the construction of Mea Sherim, the ultra-orthodox section of the community and for many public buildings still standing today. His own home, in the street of the Prophets, is styled on the altar in the tabernacle. Fascinating. The remains of one of his buildings still stands at the top of Jaffa road, just the front wall of the building , the name Talitha, and a clock. This is what remains of a home he built for young orphaned girls.

Shabbat was spent quietly with many of us chatting, walking around the quiet streets, reading, sharing, and discussing and saying sad farewells.

On Sunday evening we were taken on a tour down below street level to the foundations of the Western wall and through some of the many tunnels that network under the old city. The mind just boggles at the sheer age and antiquity of it all and the impossible size of the building blocks. I just spent my time wondering around with my mouth open saying “it's not possible – but there it is!” And everywhere along the tunnels there will be little groups of orthodox Jews praying at the base of the Western Wall. – Little pieces of paper folded up and pushed into the tiniest cracks. I don't believe what they believe, but I do respect the dedication and conviction with which they practice their beliefs.

And so, this is the conclusion of the booked tour to Israel. I still had two more days which I spent back with Naomi. One day I spent shopping for gifts for my family and the next I spent with Avi, Dina and James just unwinding and trying to collect all the fragments of this most stimulating experience.

One of the main reasons for recording all of this experience in such minute detail was to serve as a memory jogger for myself to relive the experience, and as I sit here now I am

aware of so much that I have left out, and can't think where it fitted. There is also so much that I have forgotten and so much that I missed even while I was there. I really really would love to go again, but will have to leave that to our Almighty Father – if He wants me to go again He will make it happen.

I realise that I am really privileged to have been able to go to Sukkot in Israel two years in a row, and that I was able to experience the best of both trips. Last year I was blown away by the quality and the diversity of the excellent teachings which we had, and this year, the focus of the experience was getting out and seeing places and “touching the Land”.

Heather has now finish these lovely letters and we look forward to the next time we can meet and tour the Land of Israel with other pilgrims..

SUKKOT 2012

Oct 27, 2012 Newsletter

We had an awesome time on tour in Israel this year and we had a few bumps along the way. Last week I told of our week in the Negev on the Farm. Each week now until we have heard from all of those on the Tour I am going to post their comments for you to consider in case you should want to come to Israel. Or to help you to decide to come to Israel.

Hi Joe

Here is my take on our 2012 Sukkot tour.

After keeping the Feast of Tabernacles for 16 years within the churches of God system, I was delighted to have the opportunity to participate in Avi and Dina's “Coming Home Sukkot Tour of 2012 in Israel.

Through your “Sighted Moon” newsletter promoting the trip and speaking with you personally during several teachings, I was convinced in my heart that I must visit the land of my fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Happy was I with that decision! Because ... a cliché applies here; the scriptures came alive! Not only from the physicality of being at the location of a biblical/historical site, but in the way

Avi enthusiastically and animatedly brought a story to life, e.g., 2Kn 9 when we stood in Jezreel

“RIGHT HERE” at the tower of the watchman, v17, who saw Jehu coming across “THAT VALLEY” (the property of Naboth) just near Mount Gilboa where Saul was pursued and died and where his 3 sons were killed. Where Jezebel was thrown out of the window and her blood splattered on the walls right where we were standing (2Kn 9). The same place as in 2Kn 10, Ahab’s 70 sons were beheaded and their heads laid in two heaps at the entrance of the gates, again, “RIGHT HERE”!!!

This is the graphic way Avi teaches at all the sites we visited. It helps you to visualize the actual events taking place.

Avi’s teachings are thorough and enlightening and therefore the highlight of every site visited. Dave Sekerak From Ontario

Coming Home Sukkot 2012 Study Tour (Avi Ben Mordechai and Dina Orit)

“ Real People, Real Places, Past and Present.” Submitted by Margaret Douthart Sekerak
How can I possibly sum up 12 days of a tour celebrating Sukkot, fellowshiping with wonderful people and learning about Israel in one or two paragraphs or even a page and do it justice?

Every day Avi strove to let us know, as he said with ardor “folks, these were real people, these are real places.” Every day of the tour, his corresponding bible verses and passionate explanations are what brought the bible alive for me. I enjoyed all of the sites but I guess the people and places past that became most real for me where:

- a) The tour started out in Tel Dan, where Jeroboam built his temple complete with a golden calf. Then on to Banias, at the foot of Mt Hermon, in the north of Israel where the worst of paganism was practiced and where Jesus was believed to say to Peter “Who do people say I am?”
- b) Tiberius and the boat trip on the Sea of Galilee, where we sang, danced and saw a lovely sunset. Think of the fellowship Jesus had with his disciples on the Sea of Galilee – did we experience a piece of that, I wonder?
- c) Gamla, – that challenging 1/2 day trail hike, where the 6 day war earned Gamla, the name Masada of the North, with all its implications for the Jewish people. We also were asked to be open for the consideration of the possibility that it may have been the ancient Nazareth (bible verses to substantiate – considering how many time Jesus was coming from Capernaum to Nazareth).

d) The Safari Jeep tour, which was rugged, breezy and fun. For me, David came alive on this tour when Avi played out the battle in the Valley of Elah, between David and Goliath before David became king and the Adullam Caves where David sought refuge from Saul. And between these two sites a refreshing lunch under a huge, gnarled red berry tree. We even saw a shepherd!

e) And finally the tour was completed with underground Jerusalem, where Avi, back to his robust self after a couple of days not feeling well, brought to life the Gihon Springs, Hezekiah's Tunnel and the Shiloh Pool and the real people who walked these places.

The people and places present included meeting 30 plus people from all over the world – South Africa, Taiwan, Japan, Switzerland, United States, Canada and Israel. These were real people from far spread places who had lots in common, but one thing in particular – a desire to honour our Father by celebrating Sukkot and living in our temporary dwelling in harmony. Sharing our gifts of service and friendship was easy. Sleeping on an air mattress with the huge moon and a million stars lighting up the sky wasn't difficult – yes the snoring was a challenge; sharing a suitcase room was a challenge; waiting for a free bathroom was a challenge but through it all, there were no notable issues. Those that cooked deserved Kudos. The praise and worship, with guitar accompaniment was special. Men's voices debating and singing was a treat. It was a preparation of things to come and it was a delight. My thanks go to Avi and Dina who opened up their home and the size of their tour group to this challenge. My thanks go to Joe Dumond for his teachings, which as always remain, thought provoking. My thanks to those with whom I had meaningful conversations and a promise of continued friendship. Shalom "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom." James 3:13 Margaret Sekerak from Ontario

Dear Joseph,

First of all, glad to hear from you and sorry for giving you late response due to unexpected event, the loss of my uncle on October 22.

The trip to Israel for my sister and I were quite exhausted due to our health problems. But we both were grateful with the hands of Abba that we can continue and participate all the itinerary through the love of brothers and sisters in the group in praying for us and providing supplements and OTC drugs to cope with our situations. My experience in living in Sukkah was not truly a genuine one as others but at least learnt what it was to live in Sukkah. The

best part was that we can all fellowship in our breakfast, for the early bird ones, we can read bible together and pray for the protection of the day. We also enjoyed worship together at the end of the day.

To my memory, along the way to Gamla our coach had to climb up mountain (on the Golan Height?) which along the way was a magnificent view of how creative and awesome our Heavenly Father is. The trip to Gamla was a test of how endurance our physical body is.

Climbing down the cliff and up again was not an easy task during the heat of the day. But thank Abba that all who decided to go down could come up safely. The amazing thing was to see how the ancient Jewish people lived and built the city. We also saw one of the oldest synagogue. I admired Avi with his age and strength, had to carry his thick bible, notes, charts ,big bottle of water and explained enthusiastically throughout the trip with loud voice so that we could all hear and understand during the heat of the day. This was a worth to visit place. I felt sorry that my sister could not go down with us due to her sickness.

Another impressive trip was on the jeep tour. It was quite adventurous for us. We had a large natural Sukkah to accommodate almost 30 of us for lunch. We all enjoyed the lunch and time to relax under a big shade of tree.

To our disappointment in this trip was that you gave only one lecture on Shabbat which we did not quite understand because we cannot imagine of the chart you spoke about. We wish you could give more lectures. Nevertheless, you had been a good supporter for all of us.

May Yahweh bless you and keep you in His perfect peace. May Yahweh enlarged your vision and ministry.

Shalom, Munt Munt and Nee Nee

“Roughing it out” as Dina would say celebrating Sukkot at their place under a sukkah overlooking the beautiful Jezreel Valley where the last battle between good and evil awaits was the highlight for the Feast. Little did i know that our washing up the balcony , putting up the tent, getting prepared for the Celebration of Sukkot paid all our efforts for each and every one “roughing it out” to enjoy a taste of greater joy to come. It never occurred to me that the significance of sleeping outside in the sukkah was then like a bride awaiting for her groom under the canopy of Yehovah. How beautiful it was to imagine Yah’s shekinah glory upon each “roughing it out” as we laid down to rest. How still the nights were and how clear the sky to see the stars and the moon thru the netting though I’ve camped-out in the summer months in the

Arctic wilderness of Scandinavia and the Northern Territories, “roughing it out” on Avi and Dina’s balcony was something really very special. I came to understand that Yehovah instituted Sukkot so that we would remember His presence with us during that time and so that we would rejoice in His provision.

The intense schedule to go thru the sites where Avi did a wonderful job relating/sharing in every detail was worth the price. We wouldn’t have seen and learned as much if it were a relaxed trip. When coming to the land of Yisrael and walking thru the rubble of the past requires real saving up just to experience and feel the past occurrences, one would grab every opportunity to really get the most out of the whole thing. History became a reality as every site visited had a story to tell.

A blessing indeed that i pray for more provision to learn more of His Land where i would one day be brought back.

I’ve asked Avi for his notes on each site visited so i could share to my Christian lady’s group who wishes to visit the land one day. I doubt the guide the leader of the group went with 2yrs ago would be competent enough like Avi.

It would also be good for this group to open and understand the importance of coming back to Torah if they join Avi and you.

It’s now past mid-night my time that i need to hit the sack so i pray i was of help to you on your request about Sukkot 2012. Thank you very much for all the blessings you’ve given me.

Anyway, keep in-touch and remember my son, Cid in your prayers.

Shalom,
Corette

Dear Joe:

The Coming Home Tour made scripture come to life. Avi our tour guide was very enthusiastic with his teachings at all the sites we visited. For me the most impressive was when we were at Tel Qeiyafa and Avi was talking about how David slew Goliath. Then you, Joe, spoke about the Goliath’s we face personally. That hit home and my Goliath that I face in me.

What I found amazing was how we as a group could live together under one roof and get along even with our differences and there were a few. We were not all at the same level of understanding. I never had the opportunity to have a warm shower as by the time I got

there the hot water was gone, yet it was so hot the cold water was refreshing. LOL. I never once had the fear of a terrorist attack. Life just goes on like any other city in Canada, although I think terrorist attack maybe in some peoples mind as they go about in their daily lives in Israel.

The land is breath taking. Lots of rock/mountains/sand and growing vegetation. I loved how the houses were built on the side of the mountains and I could understand how King David could see Bathsheba bathing on her roof top.

I was baptized over in Jerusalem in the name of our Saviour Yahshua. I have had such peace since that time. It is not that I didn't have peace before but I just can't seem to put it in words. As for the things I learned there was a lot of information that still needs to be sieved through. I am looking forward to the teachings going on line or being sent to me so I can go over them again. I had a silent conviction from examples of other women in the faith from Deut 22:5. I have changed the way I dress now.

Joe, I'm not much of a writer or speaker but I hope this has helped you.
Sincerely in Jehovah's Name Donna

We will continue to share some of the letters we have received from those who joined us in Israel for Sukkot this year.

Goeiemiddag Josef (good afternoon Joseph)

I just felt the need to keep your Afrikaans going;-) since you are such a able and willing student.

Herewith my experience of our recent Sukkot tour in Israel. I tried to give a broader feeling of what the tour entailed, though probably a book won't be enough. I truly hope that someone may be blessed by it as I was when you posted that letters by a South African lady some time ago (if I remember correctly, her name was Heather?). I really experienced a bit of Israel then. We had no idea back then that it would be us who could share this awesome time with others. We truly were blessed by our Father.

I just wanted to share with you that as we waited at the airport due to a delayed flight, a Jewish lady from the States sat next to me. We

watched a baby crawling all over the place and we shared a smile as we watched him. She started conversation and it was not long before we found ourselves talking about Yahovah. She called HIM G-d of course. She told me that it was HIS will to bring all of us together in harmony. I agreed to that and somehow I shared that we celebrated Sukkot there in Israel. She was really astonished:-) We just casually continued and I mentioned something from Torah. She asked me.."you know Torah?" I said yes as if it was the most natural thing to answer in the positive. She asked again:" you do Torah, you keep Shabbat?" I said yes again. She asked: "from sunset to sunset or the day only?" I answered from sunset to sunset. Then she smiled. She then continued to ask whether we ate kosher and my reply was once again affirmative. I told her what our surname was and she immediately said: "but then you are Jewish. You can convert and make aliyah you know?" I replied that I did know but will wait on YHVH for the right time.

She then had to leave as they called out her flight number. As she got up she said: "you know, you know so much already, you should teach that to others". She then took off with us sincerely blessing each other.

When she had gone, I sat if stunned. I thought..."Abba, I already had the time of my life here in Israel and now to experience firsthand that YOU are so actively working in the hearts of both Ephraim and Yehuda to desire being restored as one House, YOU have blessed me right to the end. All glory and honor and praise to YOUR NAME".

I then realized how true it is that we should share that which is a common factor among ourselves (and in this case, it was knowledge of Torah), rather than trying to convince another of our beliefs in a limited time. Both this lady and myself were blessed by this conversation and we both have a story to share where ever we go.

I trust that all is well at your end and that you will continue in truth in all matters.

Shalom in Yahovah, our Elohim

Gina Steynberg

SUKKOT 2012 IN ISRAEL

When I first heard about the Sukkot tour in Israel in one of Joe Dumond's newsletters, I had no idea that I would be granted the opportunity to partake in it. Our Heavenly Father provided a miracle and we as a family of 5 members were all able to go. I was so grateful that for once in our lives, we would be able to stand as a family before YHVH in Jerusalem.

I was eager to know what the tour would entail and what I needed to do to ensure that I got the most out of this experience. I went to Avi ben Mordechai's website and read all I could on how to prepare. I found that we would do a lot of walking and encouraged my family to get fit for the tour. Was I ever glad I did that!

After a pleasant flight (my children's' first in their lives) Avi and Dina picked us up from the airport and welcomed us to their home and later on, put up with our tour group for 2 weeks. They were amazing. It is one thing being responsible for a group during the day and afterwards going home and getting some well-deserved rest from the day's activities, but it is quite something else being responsible for everyone's welfare even at all hours. They have shown true Torah-hearts by being able to do so.

The group accepted one another right away and it was more of a concern to get all to sleep than to encourage 'reaching out' to one another. We all felt that we were brought together for a purpose. There were those skilled in humor and also those who were quiet most of the time, but had so much to share about their journey in the Torah-life. Everyone was unique and we could see Shaul's reference to the body of Messiah consisting of many parts but being one.

From the very beginning of the tour, Avi gave descriptions of important places and historical occurrences and this continued all along the journey. I was grateful for my voice recorder because it was just too much to remember. At each of the archaeological sites we visited, I was just amazed at the man's knowledge and knew there was even more that could be shared if time allowed. Also his enthusiasm for his work and especially for sharing the Torah and the rest of the Bible on location, made a great impression on me. My Bible became alive....I would never choose another tour guide if I were ever granted another opportunity to go to Israel.

Every day's activities and schedule proved to be better than the day before and one of the highlights had to be the jeep trip. There is just something about being in an open vehicle in the open air...Every place we visited was special and I'm so glad we never visited any churches!

To end the tour with the walk through Hezekiah's tunnel, was definitely a memory to cherish.

What an awesome opportunity we had to do a mikvah as well – and that in the Gihon spring (the source of living waters)!

We will never be the same after this wonderful tour where Avi made it so alive that it is our inheritance that he was showing us. Truly a thought to cherish. That probably explains the longing in our hearts to return "home" as soon as possible.

Brethren did you see what Gina wrote? She and her family came to Israel because of a series of letters that one Heather Tidbury wrote about her time in Israel last year. So I shared this letter with Heather and here is what she had to say. Each of us can help others by the things we write and share. Those of you who have not written to me to share your memories, you still have time to do so. Do it now before you forget it all.

Shalom Joe

What a lovely letter! Thanku so much for sending it on to me. What a blessing for the whole family to have been able to go!

I just relived the whole experience again by reading her account, and the other letters included in your newsletter this week. My goodness, yes, i can just see my friend, Avi getting all excited and enacting some of the passages from Scripture exactly on location! i remember just how thrilling that was for me at the time when we were on tour.

From her greeting to you in Afrikaans, i gather that Gina is also South African. i will attempt to contact her also on the address at the top of her letter. How nice if we were close enough to meet!

Thanku for this week's letter concentrating on how to keep Shabbat. It does get a bit isolated here for me sometimes, and so I do appreciate the technology that makes it possible to link with others across the world. Bless you Joe

met baie liefde

Heather

