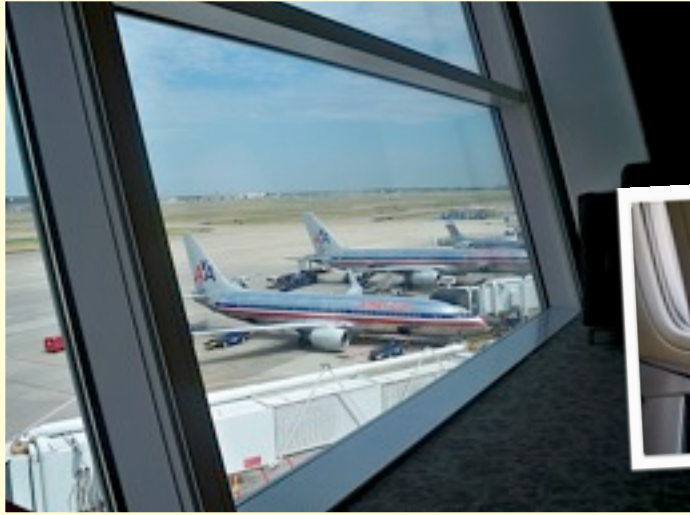


Israel

JULY 2008

ONCE IN A LIFETIME EXPERIENCE



*LeAnn goes to
visit Darrel in
Israel
July 16 - July
28th, 2008*

Israel or Bust!

Getting ready to leave for Israel

As I have been getting ready to go to Israel to spend 10 days with Darrel, I have been doing a little spring type cleaning, making sure all the bills are up to date and not due while I am gone, preparing a menu, making meals to put in the freezer and buying groceries. Checking schedules and making sure I have all the bases covered while I am gone. I am trying to keep things simple so no one has to do a lot in my absence. And I hope I do not miss anything really big. Darrel and I made out wills, this was long overdue. We should have done it the day Joshua was born, but it is one of those

things you keep putting off. I put the original in the fire safe.

What about the kids? My brother John Mark and wife, Nicole offered to watch the kids while I was gone, but Darrel and I decided it would be better if they stayed at our house (and John Mark could not come here due to work). The first 3 days, Jonny was the man in charge. Though Sarah had them during the day while Jonny worked. Then Joshua came in from camp for the weekend, so he was in charge. Sunday afternoon Joshua and Jonny went back to camp. Also on all of those days I had an adult friend checking in on them, ready to spend the night if needed and taking them to church, etc. From Sunday night on, there was an adult spending the night with them each night. Most of the time the adult, Amy and her

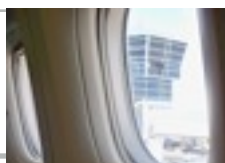
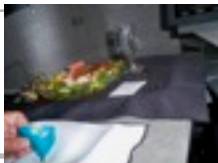
family were here for dinner and then some went home to sleep and some stayed at our house with the kids. I think Sarah did a great job caring for the kids

*What about the kids?
This was everyone's first
question both here and
in Israel.*

when an adult was not there to take over. She did many fun things with them and I am proud of her.

Amy Moffet

Amy picked me up and drove me to the airport on Wednesday Morning and picked me up on Monday evening. Great shuttle service!



Traveling to Israel

I felt a little more than selfish.

The flight over made me feel a little more than selfish. I flew first class from DFW to Chicago. They give you your own little 'area' with a chair that reclines to a complete bed position, a little seat area where a friend can come and sit and visit, a tv screen and a large selection of movies, games, flight info at your fingertips. They offer you warm cashews and almonds, any drink you could want, and a nice meal if you want it. The transfer in the airport was pretty easy as I only had to move down 4 gates. During the flight from Chicago to London, I had a business class seat. I had a lady beside me. She was very nice, her two children were in coach. They were taking her son to Cambridge to do a summer program there for high school students. She said her son did not want her to ride with him as all the other students would be on the same flight so she sat where she normally sat (business class), but then at the last moment she decided to take her 7 year old with her. So she had to get him a ticket in coach. They were from Santa Barbara, CA. The flight was nice, though her getting out many times (she was near

the window) to check on the boys, take the 7 year old back, go to the bathroom from 5 cups of wine, not only reminded me that my children were at home and not with me but also made it a little hard to rest. But, it was not uncomfortable and the food was excellent especially the chocolate ice cream with chocolate graham cracker crust at the bottom and fudge sauce and raspberry cheesecake chunks on top. As you can tell, I suffered through it. Our plane was a little late taking off and getting to London and the London airport is not real user friendly. No one tells you where to go, you just follow people and hope you are going to the right place. I went from terminal 2 to terminal 4 via stairs, long halls, long tunnels and a bus. Then when I got to terminal 4 I had quiet a time finding and being sure I had found the right place. As I had 2 minutes until posted departure time and no one was there to man the gate or answer my questions. I called Darrel and he assured me all was well. When they opened my doors to go down the tunnel to get on the plane it was actually a tunnel to go get on a bus. We took the bus to the airplane out on the tarmac and climbed up the stairs to the



It was fun to see the road signs written in different languages, most had hebrew, arabic and English.

and climbed up the stairs to the plane. When they saw my ticket was first class, they took my bags, took me to my seat, offered me a drink and slippers and asked if I wanted a sleep suit? I must have looked puzzled because she then explained they were pajamas. I noticed her asking others if they wanted sleep suits and they said yes, but no one changed into them. So I asked her, she said you can take them with you. So I said sure I will take them (so now Sarah has a new sleep suit) They come over to your private little cubby hole and unwrap your pillow and blanket and show you how to use the recliner/bed chair. This airlines was not American Airlines, it was British Airways and though their plane was not as nice as the American plane the staff were so much nicer. They catered to your every whim. I was able to sleep for maybe two hours on this flight. They had a very fancy meal, but it was a little too... fu-fu for me, I asked for just a plate of fruit, they kept asking if I wanted more. Flying over the Mediterranean Sea just before landing in Tel Aviv was beautiful, you could see yachts and sailboats floating through the incredibly blue water. Landing at Tel Aviv I tried to follow Darrel's instructions, but called him for clarification when I ran into a snag. I was blessed at each point, when I got to the passport check a line opened up so I didn't have to wait, for luggage I took a potty break and then waited only about 5 minutes (usually at least an hour) and I simply walked through customs no one stopped me or checked anything. It was wonderful to see Darrel's smiling face. We came to the hotel put up my luggage, Darrel worked for 30-60 minutes and then we went upstairs to the lounge for free dinner and then went for a walk in Tel Aviv. Came back and had some watermelon and went to bed. We are on the 10th floor and can see the sea and hear the waves. It is beautiful. After not having but maybe 3 hours sleep on the planes, I slept pretty good. Though I miss my babies, Darrel is so glad to have me here.

Day Two - Jaffa

This morning after Darrel went downstairs to work out and we had breakfast (free with our room) we walked about 3 miles to the Bezalel open-air market and to Jaffa. Bezalel market reminded me of the mercado (market) in Mexico and the open market days in the Netherlands. Sort of a very crowded flea market/farmers market. They set them up only one or two days a week and you go there to get most of your fresh produce and fresh baked breads. They also have a variety of things like hats, t-shirts, souvenirs, etc. It was fun to listen to them do their sells bit in Hebrew. They would compete with each other and do 'yells' together; you could tell they were having fun while working. It was also interesting to watch the people haggle for the prices. We then walked over to Jaffa. According to historians, Jaffa was named after Noah's son, Japheth, who built it after the flood. In Hebrew it derives from the Hebrew word 'yofi' which means beauty. Archaeological discoveries and ancient documents support that it existed as a port city some 4,000 years ago, serving Egyptian and Phoenician sailors in their sea voyages. Historians believe that Jaffa is the only port in the world which can boast uninterrupted inhabitation throughout its entire existence. The earliest known written reference to Jaffa is found in inscriptions on the wall of the temple of Karnak at Thebes. In it, Thutmose II, who ruled from 1490 to 1436 B.C., boasts of capturing a number of cities of Israel, including Jaffa. It is told of how Thutmose's minister of war went to Jaffa and took with him 200 human sized jars; in them they hid soldiers and slaves with ropes. He told the governor of Jaffa that he had run away from Thutmose and brought all these riches with him in the jars, so they brought them into the city. Once inside the minister killed the governor and all the soldiers came out of the jars and they took the city. Through Bible History, the city was in turn taken by the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and Romans in which it was included in the kingdom of

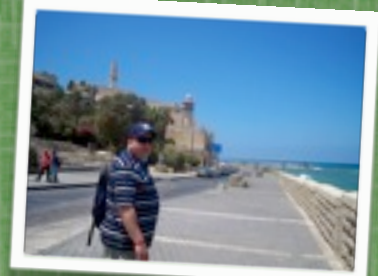
Herod The Great. The Bible mentions Jaffa several times. Although in some of its translations it is called Jaffa, Joppa, Japho, Jaffe, or Yafo. The biblical account mentions that the cedars from Lebanon for the construction of King Solomon's Temple came in via Jaffa's shore (2 Chronicles 2:11, 16). Remember Jonah running from God's calling, he took a boat out of the Jaffa port and soon was swallowed by the big fish! Simon the Tanner lived in Jaffa, and it was here that the Apostle Peter performed a miracle of raising Tabitha from the dead (Acts 9:36-43). In Jaffa Peter was divinely led to 'think out of the box.' The story in Acts 10:5-23, finds Peter on the rooftop of the House of Simon the Tanner, where he had his famous vision (Acts 10:12-13), that led him to preach the Gospel to the gentiles at Caesarea.

After the Israelites entered the Promised land under Joshua, the tribe of Dan received Jaffa but it was later lost to the Philistines. King David re-took Jaffa in his time, and when Solomon succeeded his father as king, he developed it into Israel's major seaport.

After learning about Jaffa and walking through the old city we enjoyed some beautiful views of the beach and the port. We watched surfers, swimmers and fishermen. We then went back to the hotel, cooled off and had a little rest. We then went for a walk in Tel Aviv to find a falafel stand, but it was shabat and we did not make it there before it closed down. On the way back to the hotel we did find an Italian restaurant and had some of the best alfredo we have ever had! Back to the hotel to talk to the kids, Darrel did a little work and we went to bed. I loved the walking, but now have several big blisters to show for the work. My clock is still a little off so I slept until 3 am and then could not go back to sleep. Shabat Shalom!



Coast near Jaffa. Our hotel far left



Port of Jaffa

Day Three – Caesarea

We drove up to Caesarea today. I do not like riding in a car in Israel, all the drivers are CRAZY including the one driving our car.... Oh, that is Darrel. Oops, I will be ready for my big van and Springtown traffic when I get home. Although the people here are very friendly, they all honk to tell you hello and in case you didn't hear it the first five times they will honk again. Very Friendly.

During Jesus' lifetime and well into the New Testament stage of Bible History, Caesarea was a major Roman political center in occupied Israel. It is located on the shore of The Mediterranean Sea, on the road from Egypt to Tyre, about 75 miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was built between 25 to 13 B.C. by Herod The Great, who named it after Caesar Augustus, the Roman emperor most famous for ordering the census (Luke 2:1) that resulted in Joseph and Mary traveling down from Nazareth to Bethlehem where The Savior was born.

It was originally established as an anchorage by Sidonian king Abdashtart in the 4th century B.C., when it became known as "Strato's Tower." The Hasmoneans took possession of it in 96 B.C., however Pompey brought it under Roman rule in 63 B.C.

Mark Antony presented the city to Cleopatra, however when Octavian (later known as Caesar Augustus) defeated Antony at Actium, it was put under the control of Herod who built it up and renamed it after the Caesar. It then became the capital of the Roman province of Judea, the headquarters for the procurators (governors) and the Roman troops.

Caesarea is mentioned frequently in New Testament events:

* Peter first took the message of the Gospel to Gentiles at Caesarea, while in the house of Cornelius, the centurion in what was known as the "Italian Regiment" (Acts 10:1-48). While there, as Cornelius was about to bow down to Peter, the apostle made it clear that he was merely a servant of The Lord, like the rest. (Acts 10:26)

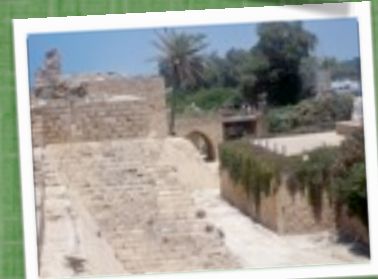
* Philip the evangelist lived in Caesarea with his four daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:8-9).

Not long after his conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul sailed from Caesarea to his native Tarsus (Acts 9:30). He passed through the city during his second and third missionary journeys. Later, he was held prisoner in the city for two years (Acts 24:1,27), where he was put on trial (Acts 23:31-26:32) before his voyage to Rome.

It was at Caesarea that Herod Agrippa I was struck down by God for his idolatrous blasphemy (Acts 12:19-23) Neat story, you should read it.

Today, the site of Caesarea is still known by its ancient name, Kaisariyeh, but there are only ruins remaining.

It is a beautiful port city or should I say it was as you can tell from the ruins. It was...thought provoking to walk into and around the hippodrome, the place where many Christians were tortured and killed as part of the 'games'. We went to King Herod's Palace, to the governors palace where Pontius Pilot would have lived when he 'washed his hands' of the crime against Jesus of Nazareth. We chased a huge lizard through some of the ruins, walked on top of some of the walls. Wanted to get our feet into Herod's pool but they had it chained off, though locals were on the other side fishing and swimming and having a good time. I did however go down to the seaside and get my feet wet in the tide at the foot of where the pool was and picked up some seashells for the kids. For lunch we had lamb chops, grilled chicken, hummus and mint lemonade. It was wonderful. The day was extremely hot and we walked several miles climbing up and down on the ruins, we had a great time together, learning history and walking where those who penned the Bible walked. We went through the amphitheater and were amazed by the incredible marble and granite work in the columns and buildings.



Moat around Caesarea



Hidden entrance into Caesarea



Day Four – Jerusalem

There is another guy from Lockheed working here in Israel, last night his wife came in to visit him for a week. Today they went sightseeing with us. We went to Jerusalem. It is about an hour drive East/South East of our hotel. You drive uphill much of the time as it is on the top of Mount Moriah. I took things to read so I did not have to enjoy the wonderful driving, last time I had a hard time pulling my fingernails out of the leather seats of the Jaguar that we were riding/driving in. ☒ Some of my reading material included: "After these things God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; and he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him." (Genesis 22:1-3)

"Then Solomon began to build the house of The Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where The Lord had appeared to David his father, at the place that David had appointed, on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. He began to build in the second month of the fourth year of his reign." (2 Chronicles 3:1-2)

Mount Moriah means "chosen by Jehovah". It is an elongated ridge with the southern end of the ridge at the intersection of the Kidron and Hinnom valleys. The northeastern ridge is the present Damascus Gate of the Old City. The Temple Mount and the Old City of Jerusalem as well as the Dome of the Rock, a Moslem shrine, are located on top of Mount Moriah. The Mount of Olives is just east of Mount Moriah.

The angel of the LORD commanded David to set up an altar unto the LORD in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, after the destruction of Jerusalem was halted. King David bought the threshing floor from Ornan the Jebusite, an inhabitant of Jebus (early name for Jerusalem) and the descendants of the 3rd son of Caanan, and paid full price for the land with six hundred shekels of gold by weight. 1 Chronicles 21:18-30)

King Solomon built the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in Mount Moriah. Mount Moriah is where the LORD appeared unto David the father of Solomon, in the place David had prepared in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. (2 Chronicles 3:1)

We went to the Western Wall. The Western Wall (Hebrew Ha-Kotel Ha-Ma'aravi), also popularly known as the Wailing Wall, is all that visibly remains of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, which was destroyed by Roman Legions in 70 A.D. Measuring some 160 feet long and 60 feet high, it forms part of a larger retaining wall of the Temple Mount.

The Western Wall is constructed of limestone blocks, one of which measures more than 13 feet in length, and has an estimated weight of 628 tons. It is the greatest stone ever quarried by man – nothing of its size exists anywhere else, including in the great Pyramids of Ancient Egypt. Just beside it is a stone weighing 407 tons, and there are others over 100 tons. Modern engineers express amazement at how such massive stones could have been placed as they are.

For nearly two thousand years, since the destruction of the Temple, the Western Wall has been the focal point for prayer of Jews in Israel and throughout the world.

We had to wash our hands before entering the women's side of the wall, Darrel and Jerry did the same to enter the men's side, plus they

had to cover their heads. Although I truly know that God is not anymore at the wall than He is anywhere else I go, I prayed for those I loved while at the wall. I also prayed for the Jews that they would open their eyes and see that Jesus was and is the messiah. I prayed for the muslims that are being lead away by a horrible cult. When you leave the wall you walk backwards out of respect not to turn your back on the wall. It is sad to think that day after day Jews go there to pray to God though they are not really praying because they do not believe that God can hear them until the temple is rebuilt. It is wonderful to know that God does hear us because of His son and our savior.

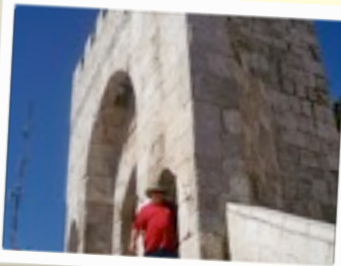
We wanted to go in the tunnels behind the wall and see the cisterns, etc. But they do it by reservation only and are booked. They do the tours even at midnight so we figure our chances of getting in were null.

We went through Damascus gate, Jaffa gate and Zion gate. We passed the Dung gate and the New Gate. We walked through the Muslim quarters and through the market streets, they were vendors on the sides of the streets and the streets are very narrow with walls on each side that go straight up and so with the vendors it was were two people could barely fit through. They had everything for sale in there. Trinkets, toys, whole lambs, goat heads, intestines, etc.... clothes, menorahs, things made out of olive wood, anointing oil, you name it they probably had it. We were glad to get out of there. Plus we sort of got lost in there and so we were glad to find our way out.

We explored all though the tower of David. Several groups of Jewish school children were there. They were so cute. Darrel and I loved the history and enjoyed reading all about it; the couple with us were tired of it after just a short while.

Jerusalem

The City on a Hill



David's Tower



moat around the citidal



The Citidal



Hebrew School Children at base of Citidal



Stone carving from Citidal



Although I truly know that God is not anymore at the wall than He is anywhere else I go, I prayed for those I loved while at the wall.

Jerusalem - Day Four continued

For lunch we ate in Jerusalem. They had schwarma and I had falafel. Both were really good. It was a very HOT day! The hottest day so far. We walked miles and miles.

We went to Christ Church. That was very neat. They had a service going since it was Sunday and they were so gracious to us. We listened in on the beautiful choral singing of the congregation for a few minutes. Then the hostess told us about the church and their ministry in Israel. They are praying for and working toward the salvation of both the Jews and the Muslims there. They also found a tunnel under their church that leads to the temple mount. They are only allowed to go so far in it, so they are not sure if it is in good structural shape the whole way, but it was neat. They are located on part of the land where King Herod's palace use to stand. I would say if you are going to Jerusalem you should to go Christ

Church and talk to the people there. They have a wonderful grasp on the Lord's work in Israel and it was a joy to visit with them.

We went to where David is supposedly buried and they have put a little prayer room there. (men and women divided of course and you must pay to go?) We went to the upper room though who knows if it was the actual upper room that Jesus was in for the last supper. But it was an upper room in Jerusalem.

We were very hot and very tired when we left the city. We drove home, took showers and ate in the lounge of the hotel, though they did not have any real choices for a main dish, we loved the watermelon. We talked to the kids and went to bed. We are starting our day by leaving our hotel rooms at 7am. I want to get to see and do as much as I can while I am here.

God Bless you, Shalom

Day Five - Acre/Akko

One of the oldest Port Cities in the world.



fisherman at Acre



Templer Tunnel water system



Acre/Akko/Acco



Port of Acre



Inside the fortress



walls of Acre



This was the city market during the time of the crusaders.

Today we drove up North to Acre or Akko as it is sometimes called. Standing on the hill, which still bears his name, a little over a mile east of the present day Acre, Napoleon had his eyes fixed on History as he directed his army's siege of the walled city in 1799. Unknown to him, history was curled up beneath his feet, some 4,000 years waiting to be exposed. Archaeologists have now stripped back layers of the past and have exposed one of the oldest settlements in this part of the world. It was first mentioned in writings of the Egyptian Pharaoh Thutmose III. Acre/Akko appears in the Bible. The city was part of the territory designated to the tribe of Asher, but as Judges 1:31-32 tells us "Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Acco, or..... So the Asherites lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; for they did not drive them out." 200 years later, Akko is mentioned as part of King David's empire along with a strip of coast extending to Tyre. David's son, Solomon,

handed this territory back to Hiram. A major landmark in Acre's history was Alexander the Great's unopposed conquest in 332 B.C. Julius Caesar visited it in 47 B.C. The city is now inhabited mostly by Muslims, Israeli Muslims. We toured a Turkish bath and were ... I don't know if entertained is the right word, Darrel says ripped off by a cheesy video production of the bath done very much in a revisionist history of the bath and the area done from a Muslim point of view with Al Jazzar being the just ruler (looping off of ears, noses and heads is after all a very just way to deal with someone you do not like, at least their history believes it is just) and Jews being sneaky and not to be trusted. We had some good falafel and chips (French fries) and enjoyed some ice-cold fresh squeezed orange juice. We also went and saw an old Templar's tunnel, built to take water to the city by the Templar knights.

Day Six - Sea of Galilee

Today was a day of both disappointments and blessed revelation. Today we went to the area between us and the Sea of Galilee and to the Sea of Galilee, which is now called Lake Kenneret. The first place we went was to Megiddo or actually Tel Megiddo. This is also known as the battlefield of Armageddon. It is a beautiful valley full of bountiful crops of citrus fruits, pomegranates, melons, cotton, olive trees and others. We went up the hill (Tel means hill) to the ruins of Megiddo. From on top of the hill you can easily see the whole Jezreel valley which is Armageddon. You could see how the armies from Russia and China will come in from the North East and move down the valley on their way to Jerusalem. I really don't know how to describe how I felt up there looking out over the valley. I could imagine, though I know my imagination is not vivid enough to even begin to explain what it will be like when the 'blood runs as deep as the bridle of a horse'. On top of that hill, I prayed again for the salvation of the Jews, specifically the ones that we have come to know and love and the ones in strategic places of influence to other Jews, I prayed for those I love, my family and my friends and their families that no one in their realm of influence would be in that valley or on this earth for that matter during that time. I prayed that we and they would take and hold the high places (like Megiddo) both physically and spiritually. Then I looked over and I saw a single palm tree sitting there in the baking hot sun being an oasis of shade in this dry hot place and I saw Darrel and I there being that oasis. Over 10 years ago the Lord gave Darrel a very clear vision of his/our future and it involved an oasis. I think that is why He chose to show me how we are to be and we are an oasis. I cried like I have not cried in a long long time. I can't go into it in depth here, it is too

deep, but I can tell you God was on that hill in the high places and He reigns supreme over Israel and the world.

They were doing a lot of excavations on Tel Megiddo and we stopped and talked to a couple of kids that were working. One from Connecticut and one from Louisiana. They were college students and they came there for seven weeks to work in the excavations. What an opportunity, I would have loved to have been allowed to get in there and get my hands into the dirt looking for buried treasures that tell the story of the history or that place. The bible was the inspiration for excavators to turn over the first spade of earth at Megiddo in 1322. Megiddo is mentioned eleven times in the Bible including its conquest by Joshua (Joshua 12:21), its reconstruction by Solomon (I Kings 9:15), and as the location of the death of the two kings of Judah: Ahazia at the hands of Jehu's soldiers (2 Kings 9:27), and Josiah after his confrontation with Pharaoh Necho II (2 Chron. 35:22). (This of course was a heart tug for us as we named our seventh child Josiah, after the Child King who sought the ways of the Lord.)

We enjoyed going to the granary at Megiddo which was a 7-8+ deep granary that was built during a rebuilding of the city around 721-705 BC. It was fun to imagine the Red Hen Sisters going there to get their grain to make their bread. (hee hee ☺) the granary could hold approximately 12,800 bushels. We also saw Solomon's stables and thought of how Danene could bring her horses here and stable them so we could all go riding around the area. We went into one of their water systems that they dug out and filled with water (rain) and used to provide water to their city on the hill.

We had considered getting a tour guide to drive and take us on this day, but were very glad that we did not. At Megiddo we were passing a group and stopped to listen to the guide for a few minutes and it made

us very angry. He was saying how many people including himself believed that Josiah had not really found the scrolls of the torah, but he had instead written them himself to serve his purpose and the same was true for others in the Bible.

We went through Nazareth; it is a far cry from the Christmas card pictures of a land with grazing sheep. Though it is the setting of Jesus's younger years and the home of Mary and Joseph, it is now a gritty town. It is 1/3 Christian 2/3 Muslim and only a handful of Jews. We passed by Mount Tabor the site of Christ's Transfiguration. (Luke 9:28-36) We went through Tiberius.

We then went to Tabghe. This is in the area where Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes on the hillside to feed the 5,000. (Matthew 14:13-21) We went to the Mount of Beatitudes, but they were closed for the afternoon hours and we had a full schedule and could not wait. (Matthew 5) I did get out and get a few pictures including some looking down the mountain to the Sea of Galilee.

We went to the Church of the Primacy of St. Peter which commemorates the of the catching of fish on the other side of the boat, (John) but the other guys had on shorts that showed their knees so they were not allowed to go in, so I went in looked around and saw the rock that was supposedly where they had the meal after this big catch, went to the beach and put my feet into the sea and went back up where they were waiting. We went to Capernaum but again their knees were showing and so they would not let us in. I did not leave them and go myself; it would have taken too long for them to be waiting in the heat. And Darrel had been here on a previous trip so I knew I could look through his pictures.

An Oasis in a Dry Hot Place

We ate lunch right on the beach at the Fish Restaurant Kfar Nahum. Darrel and Jerry had Saint Peter's fish. They simply gut the fish and cook them whole. Though not my favorite, I did look the little fellow in the eye and taste of him. He was not bad, though I looked in his mouth and found no coins to pay the bill. Debbie and I had chicken k-bobs. We went down and put our feet into the sea. We went to Yardenit. The gospels say that John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River. So I took my own John (Darrel John) and he baptized me in the Jordan and I did the same for him. We both had to make ourselves go ahead and do it. It was hot and getting dressed for the baptism and then redressed and messing with all of it made us hesitate. We went and looked in the river and the catfish were huge, some were easily 18 - 24 inches..... But I knew I wanted to do it, so we forged ahead. When we got into the water, the mood changed, it was all about what was happening. I loved that there was no one else around except the people who were with us (Jerry and Debbie). Darrel talked to me about what we were doing and then prayed over me and

then dunked me under. When I came out from under the water, I felt so refreshed and clean and renewed. The sun seemed to shine brighter and yet it was much cooler. Like the breeze of the Holy Spirit rushed through there and descended upon us. Although we had both been baptized before we talked about how it was an outward expression of an inward decision and being obedient and doing it in front of those who are not Christians could be a witness to them. But honestly, when I came up from the water, I knew it was for me and my relationship with Christ and truly a part of that is me being a witness to others of the greatness of my saviour. Honestly, the sun seem brighter though cooler and it seemed to be directed on me. I felt a rush of cool air as if it were going to lift me up. I knew I was in the arms of my Lord. I felt cool and refreshed all the way home. And it was a long drive home. A funny thing that happened was when we were in the river there were lots of little bitty minnows. When I went into the place to change I felt something.....

Megiddo



excavating at Megiddo

Valley of Armagedon



Be an Oasis



Above is a prayer altar and below is me standing beside a granary.

tickling me in my shirt, when I took it off a little fishy fell into my shoe. I named her Jordan and let her go free. Also, on our way to Yardenit we were the closest we would probably ever be to Jordan the country. It was just maybe two miles away. We could see it through the windows of the car. Today, I read Deut 8:1-20. I was actually going there to read verse 8 where it talks about the different fruits and foods of the area, but ended up wanting to read the chapter. Just the first verse alone is beautiful... "All the commandments that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord swore to give to your forefathers." Do you see the promise in there? If we do what He commands, we will live and multiply and possess the land! Do you just want to yell "How Great Is Our God?" I do! Then the second verse comes and it is equally as deep. "An you shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not." Ouch, am I ready to be humbled, to be tested? Do I want God to know what is in my heart? That is where I want to be, but am I there. Verse 3 and 4 go on in that same manner tell us to remember the time of testing and to know that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord, not just bread alone. Then verse five tells us " thus you are to know in your heart that the Lord your God was disciplining

Sea of Galilee Area



St. Peter Fish for lunch



St. Peter Fish after lunch



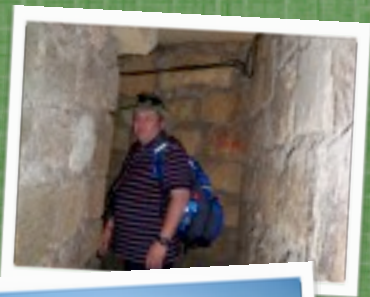
horse stables of Megiddo



water system of Megiddo



Jordan River



Armagedon



excavating at Megiddo



Mount of Beatitudes



Shofars for sale. Bowl of Hummus



Public Profession of an inward decision

...a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey...

you just as a man disciplines his son." Then again a reminder to keep his commands in verse six. Verse 7 "For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; a land where you shall eat food without scarcity, in which you shall not lack anything; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. Oh it just keeps getting better and better it goes on to give a warning for me to beware that after I eat good and multiply and am satisfied that I don't become proud and forget the Lord my God who brought me out from my land of Egypt where I was a slave. He brought me out of that and kept me in the wilderness and brought me into the land of milk of honey. I love this verse 16: "In the wilderness He fed you manna which your fathers did not know that he might humble you and that He might test you, to do good for you in the end.

(Things don't always look good or feel good when we are in a wilderness but that doesn't mean they are not good for us!) Otherwise, you may say in your heart, My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth." Then there is a reminder to keep his command and not to go after or worship or serve any other gods because if we do we will surely perish. We need to never forget that it does not have to be a guy with a fat belly to be another god, TV can be a god, stuff can be a god, money can be, anything that we put before God can be a god. Makes me meditate on my priorities and where I spend my time and my energy. Sometimes you can get so busy doing for god that you are not doing for God. Anyway, I loved that passage today, I am going to go and read it again and maybe have some figs or pomegranates or honey and wheat..... Deuteronomy 8 1-20.



Top to Bottom: excavating at Megiddo, horse stables of King Herod at Megiddo, water system/ tunne and cistern of Megiddo, Darrel and LeAnn at Tel Megiddo



The Sea of Galilee was beautiful, though not really a sea, it was a lake.



I was baptized by my Darrel 'John the Baptist'. And then I baptized him.....

Day Seven Dead Sea Area

Today was a very full day... full of lots of walking and hiking and climbing. It felt like all uphill... both ways... but I know it wasn't. But it was a great day of exploring this wonderful land it's rich history. We drove as close as the highway would take us to Jericho, but it is in Palestinian territory so we were not able to see it, but I did take a picture of the area it was in out through the car window. It was fun seeing all the camels in the dessert on the trip to Qumran. We looked for one that we could hire to take us for a ride, but I don't think the guys were much into the idea. Our first stop was at Qumran; my children would know this as the place that Jathom was taken by the monk who rescued him by acting like a fool. It is most widely known for being the place where the Dead Sea scrolls were discovered.

Let's see if I can put the story in a nutshell for you. It all began in the spring of 1947 (my dad had just turned 11 but that is another story). It was the beginning of another ordinary day for Muhammad Adh-Dhib and his tribe of Bedouin. Little did he know what the day would have in store for him. A group of Bedouin from the Ta'amireh tribe were on their way from Transjordan to the black market in Bethlehem. The purpose of the journey was to sell a herd of 'contraband' goats. Normally such a route would not have been used but due to the political scene in Palestine at the time, they needed a route that would avoid them getting caught. Muhammad noticed that one of his goats had wandered off up the steep rocky cliffs while he was seeking fresh water and tending the other goats. He immediately set off to retrieve the stray goat. Bedouin are renowned for their ability to track down stray animals through the hills and deserts of the wilderness. While searching he came across a small opening in the rocks and became curious and proceeded to throw rocks into the cave. When he did he

heard a sound of breaking pottery. Thinking he may have discovered hidden treasure, he returned to get some help from a friend. They both returned to the cave excited and hopeful of what they might find. Inside they found fragments of broken pottery littering the floor and large earthenware jars all along one side. They removed one of the lard bowl like lids and found some dusty old parchments with strange writings on them, all of which were wrapped up in linen cloth. Muhammad nor his friend knew how to read so the writings had no meaning to them. They took their findings into Bethlehem and someone there recognized them as an important find. After a few years of haggling and maneuvering to gain control of the scrolls they announced their find. The actual scrolls are now in the Israeli museum in Jerusalem. Knowing that there must be some type of community close to the caves that held the scrolls, archeologist started looking for signs of life and found Qumran. Qumran was a monastery once occupied by the Jewish Sect known as the Essenes. We walked up on the Qumran Watch tower over looking the Dead Sea and enjoyed learning about the water system. It was very hot here being in the dessert. Today's temperature was 109. All the places we went today were along the Dead Sea or in the Dead Sea area. The Jordan River is the only major stream flowing into the Dead Sea. There are no outlet streams but because of it's dehydration rate it is receding 80 cm per year, this is alarming both the Israelis and the Jordanians and they are now looking into what they can do about it. Ezekiel 47:7-10, 18 tells us of Ezekiel's prophecy regarding this body of water and the Israeli and Jordanian desire to build a channel from the Red Sea, gulf of Aqaba in order to bring it back to past levels.....

In Numbers 34:3 and Numbers 34:12 it is called the Salt Sea.

Deuteronomy 3:17 and Deuteronomy 4:49 call it the Sea of the Plains.

Joel 2:20 call it the East Sea and Zech 14:8 call it the Former Sea. We then went on to En Gedi. It was quiet a hike up to the upper springs, but on the lower part we enjoyed some of the flora and fauna of the oasis. We saw the 'Christ-thorn jujube' it is believed that this is what was used to make the crown of thorns placed on the head of Jesus Christ. Its Latin name is Z. spina-christi. We also saw many Ibex; these animals live in herds and are famed for their ability to climb steep hills that provide them with refuge form predators. They look similar to a deer. We also saw a lot of Rock Hyrax. They are also called conies; they live in rock crannies or in thickets. They live in groups and are remarkable climbers. They feed on plants some of which are poisonous. Despite the fact that they are mammals, their body temperature is not constant, changing according to the temperature. Therefore on cold mornings it is possible to see them sunbathing on top of rocks before resuming activity. They are pregnant for 7 ½ months. They are small like a big rabbit but look somewhat like a badger. We saw lots of dragonflies and beautiful birds and a little mouse. Thankfully we saw no black vipers or leopards both of which also live there. This vital oasis was allotted to Judah's tribe for an inheritance (Joshua 15:62). The area became known for its palms, vineyards, and balsam (Song of Solomon 1:14) In 2 Chronicles 20:2, En Gedi was called Hazazon-tamar and was involved in several Old Testament events. Kedorlaomer conquered the Amorites here (Gen 14:7); when David fled from Saul he found refuge in the many caves of the region (1 Samuel 23:29, 1 Samuel 26); and in Ezekiel's vision of Israel's restoration, fishermen would catch fish from the Dead Sea from En Gedi to En Eglaim (Ez 47:10).

Meeting and getting to know the people that Darrel works with and seeing the work that he does.

One night we drove up to meet a group of the people that Darrel works with at the base. They are such a nice group of people and it was very interesting to fellowship with them and get to know them. We meet Amos and his wife Karen and their little boy, Yiftav. Mini and LeeRoza, Mayeer, Sagi, Slomo, and Ori. The couple with us also went (Jerry and Debbie). Then one day when we went to Jerusalem, Ariel, his wife Meital and their little girl, Tohar were our hosts to show us the market and then we had lunch. Their little Tohar is one month younger than Daniel. She was adorable. They are observant so they have to choose whether to eat a dairy kosher meal or a meat kosher meal as they are not allowed to mix dairy and meat within 4 hours of each other. We chose dairy and had some wonderful Italian food.

I really enjoyed getting to know the people Darrel works with in Israel. Darrel and I really have a burden to reach them and pray for

them. Psalms 122 We want to see each of them saved, but have a real passion towards reaching Mini and LeeRoza and Ariel and Meital. I was saddened that we did not get to see Ralphie his wife and son Ariel this trip. They were not able to make it to either of the get togethers. We have the same feeling about them too.

Honestly I could have spent a lot more time with these people and really enjoyed it. Perhaps they will someday get to come back to Texas.

I had Schwarma one time and had falafel several times. I really really liked falafel. I hope to learn to make it here at home and I really hope that my family will like it too. I will need to learn to make good fresh pita bread because everything I find at the store is not fresh. In Israel their pita is so very fresh. It is wonderful.



Falafel



F-16s



Ariel and Tohar



Yiftav, Amos and Karen



Above: LeeRoza and Mini. Below: Sagi



RLTB: Ori, Jerry, Debbie, LeAnn, Darrel, Mair, Sagi, LeeRoza, Mini, Slomo, Amos

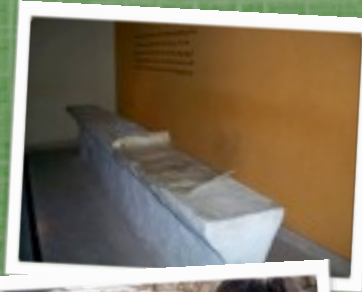
The heroic though tragic stand of the zealots of Masada in 73 AD is probably the most well known story in the long history of Israel.

The springs were beautiful though filled with people. One group from Birth Right Israel was here at the same time we were. This is a program where the Jews in Israel pay host Jews (ages 18-26) from other countries to come here and have a ten-day visit in the holy land. Sadly, these young people use the trip as a party trip instead of a learning trip. Although I am sure they learn a few things as they visit all the wonderful places, they also dress inappropriately (g-strings and Speedos being normal attire), party and drink (legal drinking age here is 18). We have encountered many while in Israel..

After a big bottle of water to cool us down we got in the car to drive up to Masada.

The heroic though tragic stand of the zealots of Masada in 73 AD is probably the most well known story in the long history of Israel. Herod's stronghold is set on a wide plateau overlooking the Dead Sea. A few coins minted during the reign of Alexander Jannaeus were found during excavations and are all that remain from this king's reign. In 40

BC Herod fled from Jerusalem, taking refuge with his wife and family at Masada. Leaving them there he continued on his journey to Egypt, finally reaching Rome. Chosen to be king of Judea in 37 BC Herod returned to Masada together with two Roman legions. He built himself huge palaces with wonderful mosaic floors and magnificently decorated walls. Enormous storehouses and massive fortifications were also added to the complex. When Herod in 4 BC Masada passed to his son, Archelaus, but soon it was taken over by Roman rule. Masada became an armed Jewish encampment when it was take over by zealots in 66AD. Many survivors fled from Jerusalem after its fall in 70 AD Taking refuge atop Masada they banded together holding out against Rome until 72 AD when the Tenth Roman Legion with roman governor of Judea, Lucius Flavius Silva started to attack this final Jewish stronghold. They laid siege to the fortress. After failed attempts to breach the wall, they built a circumvolution wall and then a rampart against the western



Top to Bottom: Writing table at Qumran, food 'shelf' at Qumran, ritual bath at Qumran, Darrel and LeAnn standing in front of caves where Dead Sea Scrolls were found.



Above is a Rock Hydrax and below is me standing in front of one of the many caves around the springs of En Gedi.

face of the plateau, using thousands of tons of stones and beaten earth. The zealots held out for another year until 73AD when they (1,000 men, women and children) chose to commit mass suicide rather than be captured by their enemy. (This part I think was a bad decision, a wrong decision.) But one woman and five children did survive the mass suicide/murder by hiding in the southern cistern. They have found the pieces of pottery that were used to cast lots to see who would be the last ones standing. First the men were to kill their wives and children, then the men drew lots to see who the last ten would be and then of the ten the one who would be last. Each making sure the ones before him did what they had promised to do. Then when the Romans broke in all they found were burning buildings and the dead bodies. They did not destroy the mass storehouses of food because they wanted the Romans to see that they were not starving, they chose dead over slavery. (This they found out from the woman and children who hiding in the cistern.)

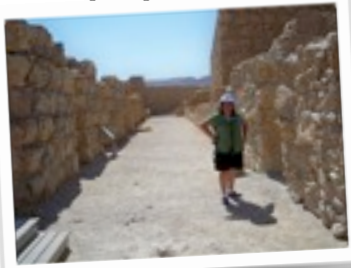
We opted to take the cable car to the top of the fortress and spent hours climbing around on top in the 109 heat exploring all the ruins (we also had an audio tour and loved it.)

We enjoyed joking about the dovecotes which is where they kept and trained pigeons, this being their pigeon building. (Only Real Family readers will understand this joke)

Dead Sea Area



Top to bottom: Darrel and LeAnn at Masada, Masada with Dead sea in the background, LeAnn entering storage area at Masada



Top to Bottom: LeAnn in a very salty Dead Sea, LeAnn covered in Dead Sea mud (felt great!!!), Ritual bath at Qumran



Top to Bottom: Figs and Mangos at market, LeAnn buying wheat at Market, LeAnn floating in dead sea and Darrel standing at Sea Level



En Gedi springs were a beautiful place in the middle of a hot dry dessert. You can see why David and Saul went there.



Top right: Qumran Dead Sea Scrolls caves, Top left: cave at En Gedi. Bottom right: En Gedi

Bottom Left: En Gedi Springs

Dead Sea Continued

They did have the high place here at Masada and they also had their pigeon building. ☒

We were all pretty tired when we left here, but we were set on going to the Dead Sea and floating in the refreshing water. The first beach we found was closed. The second beach was opened, but the changing rooms were closed and unlike many others on the beach we were unwilling to change out in the open.... Debbie and I did however get into the water. It was very warm and the beach was all white salt, the rocks near the edge were rock salt rocks and we could see pillars of sand out in the water, they looked like ice bergs. I guess you could call them salt bergs. I got in to above my knees and it felt wonderful. The sand under the water was soft. But the guys were VERY hot being on the beach and not in the water so we did not stay very long (109 degrees on a snow white beach near the water). I didn't dry off my legs, just got into the back of the car. The salt dried on my legs, my legs felt very.... Oily. 1 ½ hours later when we got to the hotel and I wiped off the dried salt my legs were so very soft and even the next day they looked oily soft. It was a great feeling. We were really tired when we got back so we opted to shower and then have room service.

ISRAELI MONEY



They have copper coins and they are worth less than a shekel and they have silver coins and they are 1, 2, 5 and 10 shekels. Their smallest paper bill is a 20. One shekel is equal to 0.289746 US dollars. Though at the hotel where we exchanged money we are getting a lot less for our dollar. The copper coins are called 'agorot'. They are 10, ½, 1, 2 and 5, though they stopped minting the 1 agoro so they are not possible to find.



En Gedi Springs



Everyone's was good except mine and the meat was raw, but I didn't mind the potatoes were enough after a full day of hiking and walking in the heat. It was a GREAT day!

Day Eight - Tel Aviv

Today was sort of an off day we walked around Tel Aviv for a few hours we ate at Darrel's favorite falafel stand and for the first time we spent a little time in the hotel. I read, Darrel worked and took a short nap. Then we went to the boardwalk and ate while watching the sunset on the beach. Tonight was Debbie's last night here. The sales men here are very aggressive. You think door to door sales men are persistent in America, you have seen nothing. They will not let you walk away, it is a fine art or holding you captive while you are

begging to get away. You say no thank you they say, yes I understand, I give it to you for 10 shekels, I get it to sell to you. You like it, no? Here I show you a nice necklace, you like it, yes. And it goes on and on. The secret is don't make eye contact in the first place, once they see the white of your eyes, you are trapped!

One interesting store/place we went into was the Israeli Bible Society. They sell bibles in all the different languages and they provide Bibles and other Christian materials free to Jewish people. We got a booklet that is the book Matthew for Darrel to give to one of the guys here. We are praying that it will be as the Bible said and be a seed planted, it is the word of God and thus it is living and active.

Day Nine Jerusalem

We are going to Jerusalem today. I started out reading Psalms 122 but ended up reading several before and several afterward. It is so beautiful. 133 talks about brotherly unity, and I think about how the Jews and Muslims both live within the city walls right now.. 129 says to me let go of your past and let the blessing of the Lord be upon you. 128 Every time you sit down to eat there are olives; I have seen dozens of varieties. It is as frequently seen on the tables at restaurants as catsup in America.

I wrote the above before we went to Jerusalem this morning. We meet an Israeli that Darrel works with named Ariel, his wife Meital and their baby girl, Tohar (purity). Tohar is adorable she is one month younger than Daniel, made me really miss my baby. They are observant Jews. Meital wears a head covering and she makes them and sells them in some of the higher end stores in Israel. They are really very pretty. We went to the Jerusalem market. I bought some wheat so when I get home, I can make some bread with wheat from Israel. I probably drove them crazy asking them questions about their faith, their culture, their country, etc. It is fun to relate with them since they speak English as a second language. Sometimes Ariel had to look in his i-touch on a dictionary to find the right word for one of my questions. It is really quite amazing how well they speak our language. I wish I knew theirs even half as well. They are such gentile and gracious hosts. It was such a pleasure to get to know them and spend some of the day with them.

After navigating through Jerusalem, we found our way to a parking area near the old city and went to the Garden Tomb. On the way to the tomb we had to pass through some of the Muslim quarter, not a real safe feeling for Christian Americans, but Darrel and I agreed that this was one of the best places that we

have gone while here. It is not incredibly impressive like Masada or as beautiful as En Gedi or the Mediterranean Sea but it was a wonderful place. It was full of scripture. They do not say that it is for certain the place where Jesus was crucified and buried, but they show how it fits the descriptions we have in the Bible. I'm not sure if I can express what I feel about our experience there. We walked around and saw the sites, Golgotha (the hill that looks like a skull) where they believe He was crucified, the tomb where they believe He was buried and rose again. Then we walked around and watched as people from different countries came and they had a church service, took communion, prayed over each other, sang worship songs and read the Bible all in their native tongues. You couldn't help but think.... This is what heaven will be like with every tongue praising the Lord. But as we witnessed speaking in tongues sounds the same in every language.

☺ We then found a quiet place and worshipped our risen savior. We prayed for those we love, for the peace of Jerusalem and for each of our children by name. We sat and we or maybe it was just me, cried. We spoke promises over our children and gave them back to the Lord again. It's hard to explain how powerful the presence of God was in that place. We enjoyed a nice visit with a lady who volunteers there for a month three to four times a year (she and her husband who is a guide live in England), she told us of when Collin Powell came to the garden and when he came out of the tomb he was weeping and he went to a bench and got on his knees and stayed there for a while weeping and praying.

After going to the Garden Tomb we drove around and saw a few of the sights, we went to the Garden of Gethsemane. It was located opposite the temple, across the Kidron Valley on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives. After the Passover meal with His disciples, Jesus engaged in fervent prayer in

the Garden of Gethsemane. He underwent a great inner struggle, knowing that the hour of his betrayal was coming soon. It was here that Judas betrayed Jesus to temple authorities who place Jesus under arrest (Matt 26:36, Mark 14:32-50, Luke 22:39-53, John 18:2-12) The name Gethsemane is used only in Matthew 26:36 and Mark 1:32. It means 'oil press,' also suggesting the presence of an olive grove. More than anything else Jesus realized that he must say yes to the Father and bare the weight of the sins of all mankind. He prayed three times and was pressed to the extent that he was sweating great drops of blood. It is interesting to note that olives are pressed three times. I got a couple of olive leaves off a tree here. ☺ We saw the Mount of Olives. On Sunday of the last week of Jesus' life, He descended from the Mount of Olives to cries of 'Hosanna'. On Tuesday of the same week, after answering questions from the religious authorities He taught his disciples about the end times while seated on the Mount of Olives. Matthew 24:3, Mark 13:3, Acts 1:12 There is now a huge cemetery located here. From here we also saw Stephen's gate, also known as Lion's gate.

We then drove back to the hotel. We went into Tel Aviv to eat and had a hard time finding anyplace that was open because of Shabot. We found an Italian place that we had eaten at last Shabot, but they had changed their menu and so we decided not to eat there. We then found a Mexican food place, yes I said Mexican food. ☺ It was actually pretty good for Israeli Mexican food. The salsa tasted like picante, which I am sure it was. A young guy and girl sat next to us. He was here on the Birth Right tour and she was here visiting family. They head meet on one of the sights and had hooked up for the night. (sad) He was an interesting guy, personality reminded me of my nephew Jeremy. But was lost. He

Shabot Shalom

went on and on about not being able to eat any meat that he had not killed himself but when we finished eating he asked if he could have our leftovers! It was weird and funny. We wanted to get a taxi back to the hotel (because the dark streets did not feel safe) but when we finally found one, he wanted 40 shekels which was at least double what we should pay so we got out and said no thank you. Darrel stayed up rather late working for work from his computer.



Top to bottom: Galgotha, Darrel in front of Galgotha, holocaust museum

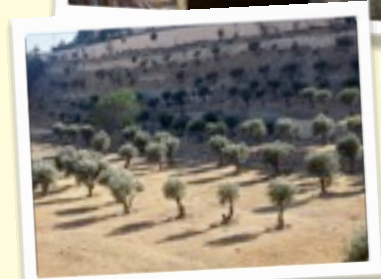
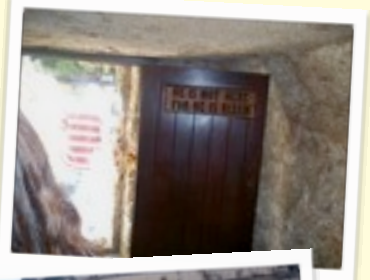


Top: Upper Room

Bottom: Ariel, Meital and Tohar



Above is me at the Western Wall and below is the mount of olives now covered in monuments.



right to left, top to bottom: tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, door on tomb, garden of the tomb and Garden of Gethsemane

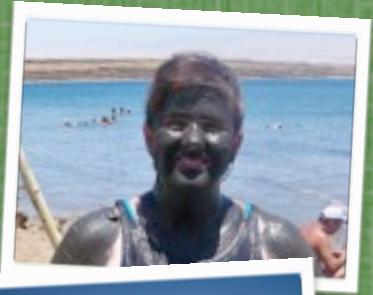
Covered in Mud From Head to Toe!

Day Ten - Dead Sea

We went back to the Dead Sea today. Since we were not able to get in and actually float last time, we decided to go back again. This time we went to Kalya beach or Qalia as they spell it. It was really quiet different from the on the other day. The sand looked like regular sand instead of salt and there were not salt rocks or salt pillars in the water. There was however lots of people and lots of good dark Dead Sea mud! It was amazing how hard it was not to float. Actually you couldn't help but float, but the water seemed to want to push you into a laying/floating position. But even when you were with your feet below you, you floated when staying completely still in the water. The water is 8 times as salty as the ocean. And believe me it was salty. They say the mud can cure arthritis and aching muscles (I hoped it would help my blisters ☺) but it did feel like acid aftershave. Any cut or rashed area burned. But it was well worth it! We loved it. I of course covered myself in mud.... Twice. I let the

first batch stay on for probably an hour and it dried hard as a rock. Darrel of course did not want anything to do with putting the mud on him. I did get him to feel of it. It was incredibly soft and pliable and warm. I thought it felt great in my hands and on me. I did run into a few difficulties though. While looking for some mud I hit a soft spot and immediately sunk down to mid thigh it was like quick sand, I had a hard time getting out and Darrel not daring to get in the mud just laughed at me. Then another time I had put on my shoes and one leg went in about 8-10 inches and came out without my shoe! I found it but the mud did not want to give it up, I had quiet a fight to retrieve it. Again Darrel just giving me this... you got yourself into this mess, you can get out sort of smirk. My skin does feel good and tight and soft now.... Except for the sunburn and it feels good and tight and soft and burned.

It was neat to go down below sea level and go around the curve in the road and see mountaintops that were below sea level. The Dead Sea is the lowest place on earth. It was



Darrel treated me like a princess the whole time I was there. He carried the back pack and any other bags that I had, he pulled out my chair, opened my door, treated me to whatever I wanted, walked on the road side of the sidewalk, held my hand and allowed me to look in any store I wanted for as long as I wanted without any reservation. He went out of his comfort zone several times to give me what I wanted. Again I am reminded, he is my knight in shining armor and I am blessed to have him.

M-16 toting 18 - 21 year olds

interesting to see the landscape change so quickly. Jerusalem is pretty, lots of trees and then you go another 15 minutes and it looks much like New Mexico, rocky mountains and fur trees and then it becomes just rocky mountains near Jericho and then dessert. And all of that within 25 minutes of Jerusalem. We saw lots of camels, sheep and shepherds, goats and goat's herds men. Lots of Bedouins, they are Muslim nomads. They live in the dessert or near dessert areas in makeshift shacks and they move around to graze their sheep, goats or camels.

Since we were very close to Palestinian areas on the highway to the Dead Sea we went through military checkpoints, but as soon as they heard our accents they waved us through. Though some of the young soldiers (18-21 years old, mandatory service for all Israelis), carrying M-16 type rifles were friendly. One came up to the car and the first thing he said when he heard our voice was... "I'll trade you my gun for your car! It's very nice, yes." He was cute. Wanted to know how much it cost and how fast it was. (Darrel's rental car is a Mercedes Benz C-120 sports car) I'm glad it is not red, I wouldn't be able to contain him.



While in the market, there were several vendors who sold a wide variety of olives, reminded me of the verse that says a blessed man has a wife who bears children in abundance like the olives on a table.

We walked down to the pier to have dinner and the waves and sunset were beautiful. There was a guy down there entertaining people by juggling and telling jokes and walking on his hands, reminded us of Pastor Joe ☺ and Jonny wrapped up in one guy. He loved it when the audience participated. He was really good though we could not understand a word he was saying.... Actually we did understand two words: Las Vegas and Obama. Who knows what he was talking about, but he was entertaining to watch.

Have I mentioned that Obama is in the newspaper every single day. On the front page everyday there is his smiling face. Tel Aviv is



a very liberal city so I am sure the articles are positive though I wouldn't know since they are all written in Hebrew. Tel Aviv is the gay/lesbian capital of Israel, so we have seen a little too much of that. I could tell you stories, but.... I think I will pass writing them down on here. Tel Aviv is a big city much like New York. I think it is dirty and such ... diversity. On one corner you have two nearly naked girls holding hands, on another is a rather large

guy in a Speedo, on yet another corner are hesetic Jews covered from head to toe with



clothing, girls wearing head coverings and guys sporting lots of hair, draidles (little locks of hair hanging down in front of the ears) and black suits with white shirts and black hats and on the last corner are Arabs with the women only showing their eyes or their faces the rest of them covered in mostly black and the men with their robes and heads covered. Darrel and I are in the middle gawking at them all. ☺☺☺

Mediterranean Sea is beautiful, anytime of day



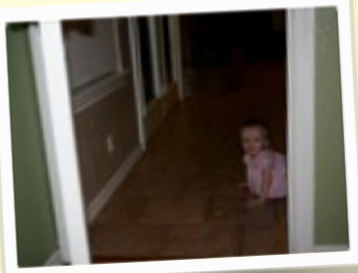
Sail boats were one of the many types of water craft we watched on the beautiful Mediterranean Sea.

Back to Obama, he was in Jerusalem yesterday, the same day that we were there. Though he was there earlier in the morning. I have the newspaper article that tells of his visit. They have a picture of him at the Western Wall. They say he put a piece of paper in the wall, onlookers tried to find the one he put in, but the one they pulled out thinking it was his was written in Spanish. Sadly, I have no doubt it was a curse and not a prayer as it was not offered to God.

It has been such a pleasure to pray for those we love while in the Holy Land. I think I could have spent at least another week or two here and not run out of things to do and see and read. Though I know what a blessing it has been to be here as long as I have, I can't help but want to stay longer. To go and see things we missed, to continue to sit on my hotel room bed and read the Word of God while sitting in His Holy Land. To stand on top of one hill or another where those

of the Bible have stood and offer prayer to the same God and know He is still all powerful. To see the places where they worshipped Him and to stand on that same ground. To touch the walls built by men under the direction of God so many years ago. Has it made the Bible seem to come alive, I think it has in a new way. The Word of God has always been and will always be living and active, but I thank the Lord for the renewed and new desire I have to read and meditate on His Word. Now I must in some way transfer this fervor to my children. I am very grateful to everyone who made it possible for me to go. To my children who watched and cared for each other, especially Sarah. To my friend Amy and her family who covered my children, to others who checked on them and covered them in prayer. And to Darrel who spoiled me with the trip of a lifetime. To my Lord who had great plans for me. Thank you!

While I was gone.....



Just barely 3 hours before my return, Stephen got a huge black eye!

I think Sarah had fun playing mommy

though I also think she was relieved when someone got here to help each time. But I also think she probably did a better job when no one was here because she felt responsible and when they were here, she reverted to being 100% kid with no responsibility (something she rarely does).

The Moffetts came by or checked on them daily for the first few days and then some or all of them, depending on the day and time moved in. Sarah made several meals for the kids and for both families when they were here. She enjoyed doing fun things like making shaped pancakes, and clown ice creams. She also

enjoyed a couple of movie nights with Brittany (17 year old Moffett) after putting the little ones to bed. They went to the jump house several times, went to Amy's high school reunion for a short hello, went to the EMACHE fellowship at the park, went on a picnic to Granbury, went to church and then out to eat.

I am sure there were a few hard times of getting the kids in bed, enforced the rules without mom or dad, sad babies wanting a hug from mom and dad, etc.

But overall they did great.

Several people checked in on them via telephone, including my mother several times. (This tickles me since she often forgets to call me until I call her.) I really know how much she loves my kids.

