

ISRAEL: THE JOURNEY



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“This is the story of a people scattered all over the world and yet remain a single family; a nation which time and again was doomed to destruction and yet, out of ruins, rose to new life.”

~Abba Kovag, poet

Inscription at entrance of the Diaspora Museum in Tel Aviv

In gratitude:

We are extremely grateful to our son David, whose Christmas present last year, was two first class, round trip tickets to anywhere in the world we wanted to go with two caveats: no serious business and you may not use this to visit children.

The timing of this generous and inspirational plan coincided with our viewing of the Morgan Freeman/ Jack Nicholson movie, *Bucket List*. While we have been very fortunate in our travels, including visiting all seven continents, there were still gaps we longed to address: Israel, Vietnam, Siberian Trans-Continental Railroad and much of Eastern Europe. With lots of discussion, Israel won out. We determined to explore the rich history, culture and archaeology of that beleaguered land.

We are grateful to our friend, James Snyder, Director of the Israel Museum, who recommended our Israeli travel agency, Mabat Platinum Ltd., who did the most professional job in every detail, including providing two sensational guides:

- Menashe Khazan –Jewish, parents from Iraq, wife from France, studied archeology in Paris, worked with El Al and has been an accomplished tour guide for over 15 years in Israel and beyond.
- Ahmad Khleifat – age 65, Muslim, born and raised in Jordan, worked with distinction for 18 years as a fireman and for the last 18 years has been a much- in-demand tour guide, particularly in Petra, Jordan.

Finally, I am most grateful to Judith for her exhaustive preparation and research for the trip. I got so much more, as usual, from her insights with regard to the Bible, the history of Christianity, art, culture and just plain good sense.

Introduction

This record of our Journey to Israel is principally written for our children and grandchildren. It's a practice we've followed for years. It's become even more important, and hopefully used, with its inclusion on our travel website: <http://charlieandjudith.com/index.html>.

The notes are mine and edited by Judith, who did most of the photography (only a small amount of which is included here). While we were responsible for our itinerary, with excellent input from our travel agent, a travelogue is challenging because of the chronological and subject diversity of our trip's objective. To simplify this, we have included two separate sections: *Fast Facts* and a *Chronology: "Small Country, Big History"* (see Appendix) to avoid repeating common discoveries and learnings. We suggest that you may want to peruse these two sections first to set the stage for our shared travel through Israel.

Finally, this is not intended to be a complete history of a given area or period. Background colour is added when it helped us to better understand/interpret what we were seeing/hearing.

And where will we go next? We have no idea but I do know that I have the best possible travel partner!

Charles Moore
December 9, 2008



FAST FACTS

Also known as:	The Holy Land; The Land of Milk and Honey; Palestine
Type of government:	Parliamentary democracy with legislative, executive and judicial branches
Population:	7.0 million (300 persons per km ²); population was 800,000 at the time of statehood (1948)
Median age:	28.3
Highest mountain:	Mt. Hermon in Golan Heights (9,230' above sea level)
Lowest point (on earth):	Dead Sea (1,369' below sea level)
Relative size:	Slightly smaller than New Jersey (7,849 miles ²)
Unemployment:	9%
Major industries:	Aircraft, high-tech, tourism, food, world's largest manufacturer of generic pharmaceuticals (Teva Pharmaceuticals), diamond cutting - 50% of the world's diamonds are cut and polished in Tel Aviv's diamond exchange.
World Heritage Sites:	10 sites recognized by UNESCO in Israel.
Forest:	Israel is the only country in the world to end the 20 th century with more trees than it had at the beginning of that century; 240 million trees were planted in Israel during the 20 th century.
Birds:	More than half a billion birds from the continents fly across Israel every spring and fall; during migration seasons, Israel has the highest concentration of birds of any country in the world.
Languages:	Hebrew, Arabic. There are 23 letters in the Hebrew alphabet.
Ethnic groups:	Jews 81%; Arabs 19%
Religions:	Jewish 76.5%, Muslim 15.9%, Christian 2.1%, Druze 1.6% (believe in transmigration of souls and ultimate perfection of mankind)
National anthem:	Hatikva ("The Hope"), written in 1886 by poet Naphtali Herz Imber

National symbol: 7-candle menorah, flanked by two olive branches



National bird: Hoopoe (since May 2008)
©Luc Viatour



National animal: Mountain gazelle



Flag of Israel: In 1948, after nearly two thousand years of exile, the State of Israel was reestablished as the Jewish homeland. The new flag of the modern state was unfurled at the UN in 1949. The flag has been a symbol of the proud return of the Jewish nation to its homeland. The flag's derivation is the *tallit* (blue and white prayer shawl), with a Star of David added. It is intended as a remembrance of the faith and prayers of the many generations of Jews who longed for return to their homeland. The Magen David is a traditional symbol of Judaism: the triangle that points up is spiritual and holy; the one that points down is earthly and secular. By leading a life of Torah and *mitzvot*, Jews strive to bring together the two worlds. Legend has it that King David adorned his shields with this six-pointed star.



Military service: Compulsory starting at age 18 (males for 3 years, females for 2 ½ years) plus reserves until age 50. You can defer going to college. Most of the Israeli army is reserves. Arab citizens of Israel do not have to serve in the Israeli army.

Energy conservation: Solar panels are required by law.

October 20 – Welcome Israel!

After ten hours of flying (5,677 miles), and a little sleeping, we were in the Ben-Gurion International Airport (approx. 1:30 PM local time). The new international terminal was finished four years ago and is very spacious; the old terminal now serves all domestic travelers. Met at the “sleeve” of our Delta 767, we were whisked away through special immigration lines and driven by car to the luggage area. We were beginning to learn that life is good in Israel in the special hands of our travel agency! Another driver met us with our luggage to take us to the Carlton Hotel in Tel Aviv, right on the beach.

It didn't feel very exotic but we were already experiencing our first Jewish holiday: Simhat Torah – the last day of Sukkoth (Feast of the Tabernacles) marking the end of the annual cycle of the reading of the Torah, the Five Books of Moses.

Greeted at the desk with lemonade, it was time for a short nap before our initial walk on our Mediterranean marina's “boardwalk.” It's an extensive beach flanked by dozens of hotels. The weather was clear and warm (75-80° F); wind surfers were everywhere. We watched a little boy fishing with a very large pole and only bread as bait. When he pulled out a tiny fish, his father proudly explained, “Little boy, little fish.”

Directly across from our hotel was a large apartment building with exterior Gaudi-like features; we later learned that the inside boasted similar attention to “Gaudi-esque” detail. We had dinner at Barbunya (recommended by David Owen of Cornell); not pretentious but exclusively fresh fish and terrific. With this as a great start and a bottle of Israeli sauvignon blanc, we were ready for bed (at 8 PM!)



October 21 – The Old City of Jaffa; Art and History in Tel Aviv

Another holiday (the Feast of the Tabernacles) but this time we were celebrating the recommencement of the reading of the Torah. To get into the international spirit, I ordered an omelet at the breakfast buffet where the chef was Romanian and wrote introspective poetry!

We met our guide and driver, Menashe, and headed for Jaffa, one of the oldest biblical cities in the world and an important seaport since antiquity. It was from here that Jonah embarked for Tarshish and was swallowed by the great whale.

The Tel (hill) of Jaffa is a hill of layers of civilizations. It became the symbolic site of the split between Judaism and Christianity when Peter baptized the gentile, Cornelius. In more modern times, Jaffa has been a center for the drug trade but is now considered the artistic hub of Israel. Most noted among the galleries we saw, was Frank Meisler's, who specializes in religious sculpture. The walkways in the artist colony date from the time of the Crusaders.

We visited St. Peter's Church and Monastery (Napoleon stayed there) and took note of the Greek Orthodox Church and the Vatican Embassy. I made the obligatory wish at the bridge of St. Peter's Monastery. Israel is famous for the Jaffa orange which accounts for a large amount of their citrus export. We were also introduced to the fact that there are **613** seeds in the pomegranate and 613 good deeds in traditional Jewish life! There are also supposed to be 613 tassels on a prayer shawl. (We didn't take time to count them or the pomegranate seeds.) The grounds were full of date and olive trees. We learned that olives are pressed three times to remind us of the three gifts from God:

- 1st squeeze – purest, representing anointment
- 2nd squeeze – less pure oil (for cooking) representing ordinary existence
- 3rd squeeze – oil for lamps, representing enlightenment

The views from Tel Jaffa are superb, including Andromeda's Rock just off the sandy shore. Greek mythology has it that this large boulder in the harbor is where the people of Jaffa took the virgin, Andromeda, to sacrifice her to a sea monster to appease Poseidon, God of the sea. But Perseus, riding the winged Pegasus, swooped down from the sky to behead the monster, rescue Andromeda and promptly marry her. Makes sense to me!



Next stop: Historic Tel Aviv. Sixty-six families founded Tel Aviv in 1909 on sand dunes from the resident Arabs, as part of the early Zionist movement. The city fathers dreamed of a “city of gardens”: one third of each property would be dedicated to the house, and two-thirds would be garden. Today, Tel Aviv is the cultural center of Israel, including National Theatre, Philharmonic, Tel Aviv Museum of Modern Art and the Diaspora Museum. We were impressed with the city’s Bauhaus architecture, often incorporating marine elements. We visited the Tel Aviv Museum of Modern Art, which displays well known Israeli painter’s work, as well as world renowned paintings. Interestingly, most of the holdings are from private collections.

Israel is active in agricultural development (including rain making from clouds over the Mediterranean); its meteorological station and volcanic institute. They have speeded up the maturation of peach bushes from 7 to 2 years.

Israel’s power plants are mostly coal burning. They have pioneered in nuclear physics and advanced research. We had a fascinating visit to a kibbutz (collective settlement). The Zionist approach to the kibbutz is best described by the motto: “from each according to his ability, to each according to his need.” The kibbutz we visited at Ayalon was created in 1932 as a form of training camp. It was about to close in 1942 when the British mandated “no weapons for Jews”. Actually, the Jews already had sufficient weapons but insufficient ammunition. We visited the secret underground factory that produced ammunition. The only access was through hidden doors in the laundry and bakery. It was quite interesting and proved very successful in their fight for Independence against the British.

That night, after dinner at “Pronto” an Italian trattoria, we attended a concert by the Israeli Philharmonic with Zubin Mehta conducting Puccini’s “Turandot” in concert form for 2 sopranos, 5 tenors, 1 bass, 1 baritone and the Israeli Opera Chorus. It was grand.



October 22 – The Judean Hills

With the Jewish holidays over for at least a week, we embarked on a day full of Israeli Independence, vineyards, caves and the most incredible record of the Diaspora, topped off with dinner at Fodor’s #1 choice, Mul-Yam in the Old Port.

After our usual breakfast buffet loaded with every imaginable kind of “salad” and other good things to eat, we began with a visit to Independence Hall, located in the house of Meir Dizengoff, the first mayor of Tel Aviv. It was here on May 14, 1948 that David Ben-Gurion, who became the first Prime Minister, declared the independence of the new Jewish State: “On the basis of our historical rights (*biblical rights*), we are building today a democratic Jewish State. We extend our hands to our neighbors for peace, because it is our belief and legacy as well”, said Ben-Gurion. To this day, Israel doesn’t have a constitution, only a Declaration of Independence. Somewhat of a dreamer, Ben-Gurion stated his plans according to Old Testament prophets:

1. Recreate state of Israel (Ezekiel)
2. In-gather all Jews (Jeremiah)
3. The blooming of the desert (Isaiah)

Some historic perspective can be useful. With the outbreak of World War I in 1914, the Ottoman Turks plundered the young country to support their own war needs. Three years later, the British government issued the Balfour Declaration expressing support for a “Jewish national home” in Palestine. In 1918, Turkey, who sided with Germany during the War, abandoned Palestine. Tensions between Jews and Arabs in Palestine intensified. In 1922, the newly formed League of Nations confirmed the British Mandate entrusting the rule of Palestine to England, citing the text of the Balfour Declaration.

By 1939, the British Government issued a White Paper restricting Jewish immigration to Palestine and Jewish purchase of land there, in an attempt to secure Arab goodwill in the coming war. By the end of World War II (1945), two-thirds of the Jewish population of Europe had been annihilated by the Nazis. When British policy didn’t change, underground movements challenged British authority in Palestine. In 1947, the United Nations Special Commission on Palestine recommended a plan to partition the country into a Jewish state and an Arab state (three disconnected territorial segments in each) and to internationalize Jerusalem and Bethlehem, creating euphoria among Jews and Arab rejection. After a bitter struggle, on May 14, 1948, the last British forces were sent packing, ending the British Mandate.

Almost immediately, the surrounding Arab countries attacked Israel with troops and supplies from Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan and with help from other Arab nations. Victory on the part of Israel was a miracle! According to most, only one percent of their 600,000 people were killed.



Recognizing that, until now, we had only covered 40 years of a history that is over 4,000 years old, it was time to move on – to the Ella Valley Winery. On the way, we passed Emmaus (first appearance of Jesus after his resurrection); Sampson Junction (of Sampson and Delilah fame); Bet Shemesh (where the Philistines brought the Ark of the Covenant to store the Ten Commandments) and Ella Valley (where David is thought to have slain Goliath). We were ready for a glass of wine by noon!

It happens that the Ella Valley Winery (800 meters above sea level) re-wrote the book on making wine in a land where wine-making is as old as the Bible itself. They produce both kosher and premium labels (the wine is the same) under five important conditions:

1. Each field must be left fallow once every seven years.
2. Grape vines must be allowed to grow for three years before harvesting.
3. All operations are overseen by a kosher observer.
4. All additives are kosher approved.
5. The vineyard is closed on Saturdays.

Interestingly, their grapes are picked at night because the lower temperature reduces fermentation, and they use the French-made oak barrels three times and then dispose of them. Our wine tasting was just perfect, particularly the chardonnay and the muscadet.

On our way again, we passed several Zionist-inspired kibbutzim, like we had visited the day before. These are communal farms based on specific projects or products. At one time, 3% of the population lived on kibbutzim.



Guvrin National Park includes the ancient city of Beit Guvrin and contains antiquities and unusual caves. Beit Guvrin was once an important Roman city where relics from Greek, Roman, Byzantine and Crusader eras have been discovered. The caves were used for refuge during the Bar Kochba revolt against the Romans.

Tel Maresha Cave dates from 333 BC to 37 BC. An olive press was operated completely underground. As we climbed the mountain, we found it very pock marked with holes into the caves. Fences have been placed around these unexpected hazards to protect unaware tourists and goats. Now we know where the expression “Holey Land” comes from!

On the way to the Sidonian Cave, we passed the remains of a Byzantine Church. Named after a city in Lebanon, it was a tomb for the family, Apollophanaes. The very large Bell Cave was the most interesting, also carved out during the Byzantine period. The interior is a series of very large bell shaped rooms hollowed out through a small hole (9’ diameter) from the ground above; quite amazing and a great source for chalk. Any nature lessons? the carob tree (legume family; tastes like chocolate), jackdaws (from the crow family); lentic evergreen bushes (pistachio family) and almond trees (rose family). We also saw remains (scat) from ibex (deer) and

gazelles. As we left this “Philistine Plain,” we passed a kibbutz founded in 1949, whose Hebrew name translates to “house of strong men”.

Tel Aviv University was founded in 1962 and is today, Israel’s largest university (30,000 students). It’s an impressive campus and also home to the Diaspora Museum, which we visited. This museum is extremely well organized. It was the stories and quotes that left an indelible impression on me, like:

“A Jewish family puts the child’s education above anything else.”

“A tree may be alone in the forest; a man may be alone in the village, but no Jew is alone on his holy days.”

“Gates of penitence are always open; all Jews are responsible for one another.”

“I have chosen the way of faith. Belief in one God and the sanctity of human life are the supreme values of the Jewish religion.”

“After the destruction of the Second Temple, the synagogues represented Jewish continuity.”

“Six million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust, while the world stood by in silence.”

“The story of the interaction between the Jews and their changing environment is a continuous drama of settlement and expulsion, disaster and recovery.”

“The Babylonian Talmud is one of the greatest contributions of Jewish culture, which throughout the ages has moulded the way of life of the individual and community.”

“Between the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the Jewish population increased from 2 million to 10.5 million (88% of increase in Europe).”

“Within 200 years of the founding of the United States, the Jewish population in the U.S. represented 50% of the total world Jewish population.”

We thoroughly enjoyed seeing the models of synagogues from all over the world and the dramatic plotting of the course of Jewish Culture. I was enthralled with a 1657 “Portrait of a Rabbi” by Rembrandt.

October 23 – The Majestic Golan Heights (Happy Birthday, Brian)

Today, we departed for Megiddo. This important site dates back to the times of the Canaanites. During excavations, remnants of once-lovely palaces were discovered which belonged to the Israelite kings.



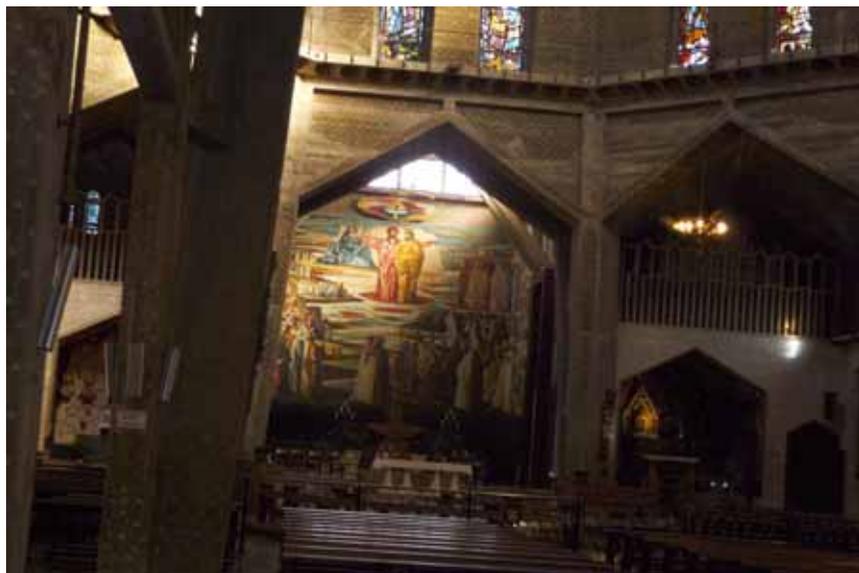
On the sea and near the northern Sharon Plain, we toured Caesarea, the ancient Roman port city, Byzantine capital and Crusader stronghold. Talk about layers of civilization! We walked over two miles, ending at the Roman theatre and Herodian amphitheatre and marveling over the wonderful mosaic floors.



At Megiddo, we climbed to the top of the Tel and down the famous Canaanite shaft to the water tunnel dating back to the year 4,000 BC: 183 steps down and 80 steps up. The University of Chicago Expedition (1925-1939) found 30 settlements on the site.



At Cana, there are two rival churches – one Roman Catholic (Franciscan), the other Greek Orthodox – that enshrine the scriptural tradition. Here, in one place or the other, Jesus performed his first miracle, turning water into wine at a wedding feast, thereby emerging from his “hidden years” to begin his three-year ministry in Galilee.



After all this history, we headed to the Mitzpe Hayamim Spa Resort, leaving just enough time for a massage (Charlie) and facial (Judith) before dinner with our guide.



October 24 – The Cradle of Christianity

We left our Spa at 8:00 am, heading north toward Syria and Lebanon. At one point we were just a few miles from both countries. Our destination was the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River, but we stopped first at Agamon Hula Nature Reserve, once just a swamp.

Our timing at the Nature Reserve was perfect (ahead of the crowds). We rented a golf cart and made our way around the lake where more than 25,000 common cranes were resting and/or fishing. They are simply majestic. In all, we spotted 17 varieties of birds (see Table 1) as well as lots of “lbjs”. This time of year, they expect to see 100 species but in the winter, at the height of the migrating season, it is not uncommon to identify 300+ varieties.



A beaver-like swimmer without the flat tail, the neutral was new to us. They were imported many years ago for their soft, valuable fur and have adapted well. They were everywhere and easy to spot because they swim with their head out of the water. The plentiful water buffalo were also fun.



Table 1 - Bird Sightings

<i>Spur-winged Lapwings</i>
<i>Common Cranes</i>
<i>Rock Martins</i>
<i>Black Storks</i>
<i>White Stork</i>
<i>Spoonbills</i>
<i>Common Kingfishers</i>
<i>Spotted Eagle</i>
<i>Ducks – Shoveler, Teal and Grebe</i>
<i>Marsh Harrier</i>
<i>Black Kite</i>
<i>Crested Larks</i>
<i>Egrets – Cattle and Great</i>
<i>Pelicans</i>

Next stop: the Mountain of Beatitudes, at the north of the Sea of Galilee – the Franciscan church there commemorates Jesus’ *Sermon on the Mount*, as he laid down the foundation of the Christian religion. The present church, built 1937, was designed by Italian architect Antonio Barluzzi. The windows are clear to better see the natural beauty God created.



We then visited the Benedictine Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes (you know, 2 fishes and 5 loaves to feed 5,000 people!). It has a wonderful mosaic floor depicting many birds, not all native to the region). In front of the altar is a mosaic showing a basket of bread flanked by two fish; quite beautiful. Next door, but not connected, is a Franciscan church that celebrates the Primacy of Peter as well as his possible birthplace. Judith brought home a stone from the shore of the Sea of Galilee.



Once a thriving town of merchants, farmers and fishermen, today Capernaum is an extensive Roman archeological site. There are two active monasteries on the site as well. The Greek Orthodox Monastery, distinguished by its red-domed, whitewashed church, is seldom visited. We came to see the Franciscan (Roman Catholic) one. The prosperity of this ancient Roman Jewish community is immediately apparent from the remains of its synagogue. Capernaum and neighboring cities were destroyed by a 6th century earthquake.

Our next stop was Bet She'an (Fortress Mound), at the intersection of the Jordan and Jezreel valleys. We visited the national park including the amphi-theatre, which was excavated in the 1960s. The rest of Scythopolis, as this great late Roman and Byzantine (2nd – 6th centuries AD) city was known, came to light only in more recent excavations. The enormous heads of marble statuary and friezes say much about the opulence of Scythopolis in its heyday. The semicircular Roman theatre was built of contrasting black basalt and white limestone blocks around AD 200. The Roman mosaics, especially those in the bath houses and brothels, were very elaborate. Flights of parrots added to the ambience of the ruins.

The tel dominating the site just to the north was the location of Old Testament Canaanite/Israelite Bet She'an 2,500 – 3,000 years ago and the location for the filming of *Jesus Christ Superstar*. A stark lone tree, left over from the filming, still stands against the sky as you look upward toward the tel. The city of Bet She'an was destroyed by an earthquake in 749 AD and never rebuilt.



The Sea of Galilee is a critical source of water. Only forty inches of rain fall in the winter six months in the northern areas of Israel which border on the sea. In the south, there is very little rainfall, so they pump water from the Sea of Galilee to an artificial lake for purification. The Jordan River connects the Sea of Galilee (fresh water) with the Dead Sea. John the Baptist is said to have baptized Jesus near where the Jordan River connects with the Sea of Galilee.

Leaving the “Cradle of Christianity”, we faced a long haul to Jerusalem, mostly through the desert. We passed the check points to the West Bank and to Jordan (Allenby Bridge). Our guide quipped, “Don’t you have to wonder why, when after Moses had wandered the desert for 40 years, he had to choose the only Middle Eastern country with no oil!?”

Finally, as we approached Jerusalem’s Western Wall, just at 4:45 PM (the appointed time to welcome the Sabbath), it was raining quite hard but we were determined to see it at that significant hour, so off we trudged. It looks just like the pictures we’ve all seen – but even more chaotic.

Sopping wet, we checked into the King David Hotel and found it very comfortable. There is a series of autographs of the famous people who have stayed at the King David laid right into the floor in the hallways connecting the lobby to the other ground floor areas. Famous photographs cover the walls. It’s a veritable history lesson just to linger there.

Across the street from the hotel is the largest, fanciest YMCA I’ve ever seen anywhere in the world. It was built in 1926-33 by Arthur Loomis Harmon, the creator of New York’s Empire State Building. Here, design elements from the three main monotheistic religions reflect themes from Byzantine, Romanesque and Islamic art. There is a lot of construction in this area of Jerusalem – new hotels, refurbished ones and shops galore. Israel is clearly hoping for a resurgence of tourism.



October 25 – The Eternal City of Jerusalem – on Shabbat

We had officially welcomed the Jewish Shabbat the night before at the Western Wall, but we had no idea how much we still had to learn in this amazing city. This morning, we started atop Mt. Zion by visiting King David's tomb, men from one viewing point, women from another. The site was first identified as David's tomb in the 11th century AD and in the 15th was incorporated into a mosque by Muslims who consider David to be one of the true prophets. It is one of the most revered Jewish sites, particularly between 1948 and 1967 when the Old City was under the rule of the Jordanians. Jews came here to pray who could not go to the Wall. The Church of the Dormition is also believed to be the site of Mary's ascension to heaven. As well, the chamber where Jesus had his "Last Supper" and washed the feet of his disciples is above the tomb of King David. We passed by Oskar Schindler's tomb as we journeyed down the hill from Zion Gate.

During our tour, we would visit all four quarters of Jerusalem: Muslim, Jewish, Armenian and Christian. En route to the Jewish quarter which had been occupied and demolished by the Jordanians, we came across a plaque: "Approaches to Mount Zion renovated with the help of John and Nancy Whitehead a project of the Jewish Foundation." We saw evidence in many places of strong support supplied by individual Americans to the rebuilding of many historical sites.

The many "layers" of civilization in Israel are very challenging to decipher. Everything we saw had several more religious sites beneath it. From the Western Wall, we passed the Temple Mount, known to Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary. The golden Dome of the Rock stands at the site where the Second Temple is believed to have been located. The Temple Mount was one of the greatest religious enclosures of the ancient world. In the first century BC, the Jewish King Herod had an immense wall constructed around the hill; at the center of the plaza stood his splendidly rebuilt Second Temple (the one Jesus knew). The Romans reduced it to scorched ruins in AD 70. The Dome of the Rock, completed in AD 691 was built to replace Mecca although it is 1,000 miles distant. It is known as the "other end" and is believed to be from which Muhammad ascended.



We walked under Lions Gate to the Crusader's Church, one of the few churches left from medieval times. The acoustics are terrific so it attracts all kinds of groups of singing pilgrims. There was also a wonderful statue of the Virgin Mary and St. Anne. It is believed that this is the place where Mary was buried.

There were two main streets in a Byzantine city: Decumanus and Cardo. We walked under Priest Bridge through an amazing assortment of shops to follow the Via Dolorosa (The Way of Suffering – or Way of the Cross); the route Jesus walked carrying his cross from the place of his trial and condemnation by Pontius Pilate to the site of his crucifixion and burial. Many of the 14 Stations of the Cross are marked by tiny chapels; the last five are inside the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Today, the Via Dolorosa winds through the busy market streets of the Muslim and Christian quarters. It was a challenging, yet powerful experience.

The first station is the Condemnation, where Jesus was tried by Pontius Pilate. Second is the Franciscan Monastery of the Flagellation where Christ was flogged and crowned with thorns. The third station is a small chapel (built after World War II), where Christ fell for the first time. The fourth station is where Mary embraced Jesus. The fifth station is where Simon of Cyrene picked up the cross. The sixth station is where Veronica wiped the face of Jesus. It is said the image of his face remained on the cloth. At the seventh station, Jesus fell for the second time. The chapel here contains one of the columns of the Byzantine Cardo (main street). The eighth station is where Jesus addressed the women in the street and is marked by a large Latin cross. At the ninth station, Jesus fell for the third time. The tenth station is where Jesus was stripped of his garments. Nearby is a unique Ethiopian church. The eleventh station is where Jesus was nailed to the cross. The twelfth station is where He died on the Cross. The thirteenth station commemorates the deposition from the cross. The fourteenth station is where Jesus was buried. The last five stations are inside the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, built by the Emperor Constantine in AD 345; it was destroyed by the Persians in AD 514. The Crusaders rebuilt it in 1114-1170 adding a rotunda. The latest reconstruction followed an earthquake in 1927. Its chapels and spaces are allotted to six different denominations.



The tomb, itself, contains two chapels: the outer Chapel of the Angel has a low bench incorporating a piece of the stone said to have been taken from the stone that covered the mouth of the tomb. The tiny inner Chapel of the Holy Sepulcher contains the XIV Station of the Cross and is the alleged place where Christ's body was laid.

There have been great arguments over the centuries as to who is in charge of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher: Greeks, Catholics, Coptics, Armenians, Ethiopians or Syrians. Our guide claimed they operate on a "time share" basis. By 1960, the church was in danger of collapse, when many parties came together to rescue it, including the impressive dome. After this all of this, we needed a break for another "salad" lunch. Turkish coffee picked Judith up as we tackled the other side of the Kidron Valley.

Next up: the Mount of Olives. Three valleys once intersected in the ancient City of David. The Kidron Valley is also known as the Valley of Jehoshaphat (meaning "Yahweh judges"). Believers think this to be the place from which the dead will be resurrected on Judgment Day. The hillsides are covered with old tombs. The cemetery on the side of the mountain is the oldest cemetery in the world in continuous use (3,000 years). The tombs (boxes) are in two parts (the soul is contained in the top half and the body in the lower chamber). We were there to follow the triumphal path of Palm Sunday, as Jesus had done – and so walked down the mountain!



On our way, we stopped at two churches, both designed by Barluzzi: The Sanctuary of the Dominus Fleuit (where Jesus wept over the fate of Jerusalem), with the Jerusalem Cross on the gate, and the Church of St. Mary Magdalene, which was built over a 7th century chapel, and completed in 1923. This church has a magnificent garden (the Garden of Gethsemane), with olive trees dating to the time of Jesus. The church has windows of alabaster and a wall of alabaster in back of the altar; its twelve ceiling domes were funded by twelve different countries.

It is believed this was where Christ prayed on the last night of his life. The gardener befriended us, took pictures and cut Judith an olive branch.



Final stop: The Garden Tomb, preserved as a Christian holy site because many believe it could be the garden of Joseph of Arimethea, in which Jesus was buried after his crucifixion. It is maintained by an independent British charitable trust, The Garden Tomb Association. It is located at Skull Hill (Golgotha in Aramaic) outside the walls of Old Jerusalem. In one day, we had heard two plausible explanations of where Jesus was crucified and buried. The Greek Orthodox Church insists it was at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The British General Charles Gordon, towards the end of the 19th century, disputed archeologists; subsequent excavations carried out in 1883 provide ample evidence for his position. After a full day of hearing/seeing all sides, I buy the compelling argument for the Garden Tomb theory (I actually went inside the tomb); Judith is still not sure! We did agree enough to have dinner together at a wonderful Moroccan restaurant – after the end of the Sabbath, of course!

October 26 – The New City of Jerusalem

Jerusalem, with its 730 thousand residents has grown from the outside in, partly to create a security ring of Jewish residents (rather than a military presence). This accounts for why there is no suburban sprawl outside the city limits, like Tel Aviv and most other cities. The population is equally divided between religious Jews, Muslims and those working for the administration (State, Social Security, National Bank, other national agencies, etc.). Still, Jerusalem has some of the poorest people in Israel. It is required by law that all buildings in Jerusalem be constructed of stone.

We started our day by visiting Yad Vashem, the memorial to the six million victims of the Holocaust. Yad Vashem was created in 1953. The grounds are beautiful and include a special Sculpture Garden. Individual trees are dedicated to important gentiles who risked their lives for Jews. There are two memorials dedicated to children: one of unshaped rocks (dedicated to all the children who lost their lives in gas chambers, whose lives had no chance to be “shaped”, while their parents were sent to concentration camps) and the other, a dark hall lit only by reflected candles where you see pictures of children and hear their names called. Very powerful!

From there we go into the Square of Remembrance in which is housed a common grave of ashes, as well as a darkened chamber naming the locations of all the Concentration Camps. (They have only identified the remains of 3.5 of the 6 million lost in the Holocaust). In this series of memorials, they stress the difference between the children, who had no choice (they were just taken from their families and murdered) and adults, who knew they would die, but could have some choice in the manner of their death.

The Historical Museum was designed by Moshe Safdie and opened in March 2005. It is a 200 yard long, triangular concrete prism. The powerful visual and audiovisual tableaux are housed in a contiguous series of galleries documenting Jewish life in Europe: both before the catastrophe and following the escalation of persecution and internment to the hideous climax of the Nazi’s “Final Solution”.

Two horrific selections:

“The images of Jewry will never pass away, and the poisoning of the people will not end as long as the casual agent, the Jew, is not removed from our midst.”

~Adolf Hitler speech, August, 1920

“On January 20, 1944, a meeting about the ‘Final Solution of the Jewish Question’ was held in Berlin. The purpose of the meeting was to coordinate the Reich in implementing the plan to murder 11 million Jews.”

Toward the end of the triangular corridor, you come to the Hall of Names, with photos in the dome and volumes of files stored in the walls. After passing through a “grieving room”, you exit to a vast panorama of green forest land with the city in the distance. What a relief! As I sat in the grieving room for a moment, I tried to get my head around what I had just seen. In a word, it

was poignant, indescribable, unnecessary, unthinkable, incomprehensible – probably all of the above, and more.



Outside, in the Sculpture Garden, our two favorite pieces were “The Silent Cry”, a bronze by Leah Michelin and an amazing piece of six horizontal stone blocks flanking a steel spire. As we left Yad Vashem, a huge Alexander Calder stabile looks down on this complex in tribute to the surrounding hills.

We drove by Hebrew University (25,000 students) on our way to the Franciscan Monastery of St. John. This church was built at the end of the 19th century on the location believed to be the place where Mary visited her cousin, Elizabeth on the way to Bethlehem. We did get to see some wonderful mosaics of the original church and some fine paintings in the current church from the schools of El Greco and Caravaggio. Nearby stands the Russian Church of Visitation with its elegant golden domes. We didn’t see the inside of the Dome of the Rock or the Russian church.

On to the Israel Museum, where our good Mercersburg friend and Director of the museum, James Snyder, had arranged for Susan Strul to host and guide us through this amazing institution. Opened in 1965, the Israel Museum today is ten times its original size, which covers 23 square miles. Much of it is undergoing reconstruction. It is generally recognized as one of the top ten museums in the world.

After a quick lunch with Susan and our guide, our first stop was a huge model of Jerusalem at the time of the Second Temple (before the Romans destroyed the city in AD 70). Installed three years ago, this vivid portrayal of Jerusalem (in 1:50 scale) is the largest model in the world. At the time of the Second Temple, Jerusalem was twice as large in area as it is today and had a population of 50-70 thousand.

Having only limited time, we toured the Shrine of the Book, a beautiful white dome on the outside with water pouring on it and the home of the Dead Sea Scrolls on the inside, including the Temple Scroll (over 23 feet).

We hastily visited several current exhibitions, seeing “among the many miracles”, the last British flag in 1948 and the first Israeli flag flown at the same occasion. The museum is undergoing an \$80 million expansion, all from private funds. Less than 10% of its budget comes from the government, and all its collections have come from art gifts or private funds raised for acquisitions. They have one of the leading collections of pre-Columbian and African art in the world. We have joined the Israel Museum and hope to return for its grand re-opening in 2010!



A final word on the sculpture, which is everywhere. The overall design of the Sculpture Garden is by Isamu Noguchi and it is named after Billy Rose. Most of the major sculptors of the 20th and 21st centuries, 50 in all, including Henry Moore, Botero, Archipenko, Egan (Israeli), Attermass, Flanagan, Hazor, Modigliani, Abakanowicz, etc. are represented.

The time had come to cross over into the West Bank and go to Bethlehem. Before crossing the checkpoint (passport required), we picked up a new (certified Palestinian) driver and hometown Christian guide. Bethlehem (Hebrew interpretation, House of Bread) has a population of 35 thousand, a little more than half Muslim, the rest Christian. Arabic is the required language taught in the schools. Our first stop was the Church of the Nativity. It is a 4th century (AD 326) Roman church, destroyed by the Samaritans in AD 529 and rebuilt in AD 540. When the Persians invaded in AD 614, they destroyed every Christian church and monastery in the land except this one. It is believed that the church was adorned with a wall-painting depicting the Nativity tale, including the visit of the infant Jesus by the Three Wise Men of the East. For the local artist, “east” meant Persia, so he dressed the wise men in Persian garb. The Persian

conquerors didn't understand the picture's significance but "recognized" themselves in the painting and spared the church. Therefore, this is the oldest standing church in the country.

Most surprisingly, the exterior of the Church of the Nativity is decorated by crosses representing the three denominations that share its space: the Greek Orthodox (Moses), the Latin (Roman Catholic, represented by the Franciscan order – St. Catherine) and the Armenian Orthodox (St. Thomas). Below the Catholic part is where St. Jerome translated the Old Greek Bible into Latin. It took him eight years! We also saw, in the basement, where St. Jerome lived when the angels appeared to tell him what he had to do. There's a statue outside in honor of St. Jerome (St. Hieronymus).



I forgot to mention, we shopped first, just after we passed the Jordanian checkpoint into Bethlehem. It seemed the "peaceful" thing to do. As we looked across the hills of Palestine, we couldn't help but marvel: 9 million population, 4.5 million of them refugees. This is a complex area of our world.

Coming to grips with life after a day like this was helped by a wonderful meal at a French restaurant named Cavalier, back in Jerusalem.



October 27 – Masada and the Dead Sea Area (Happy Birthday, Amanda)

Before leaving Jerusalem, we asked to see St. George's Cathedral, the principal Anglican Church, which is near one of the two U.S. consulates. It's very beautiful and has a Pilgrim's Guesthouse, where two of our St. Thomas friends will study in November. On our way to Masada, we passed Bedouin camps where they continue to sleep in their tents and use the houses the government has built for them to house their camels and goats! There are satellite dishes mounted on some of the tents and many of the shepherds are using cell phones. The best thing the government has done for this "aristocracy of the desert" is to pipe water to them. Later on, we passed the Qumran cliffs where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. To our left (east) we could see the Dead Sea, which is definitely shrinking; to our right (west) were mountains of limestone. Flash floods are a problem as the rain from the mountains of Jericho covers this area. There was ample evidence of earth moving equipment clearing the road for the day before's flooding. We stopped at Ein Gedi, an oasis, Study Center and Field School, where we saw many ibex.



Masada is a World Heritage site. We ascended to this first century BC cliff-top fortress by cable car. King Herod had built this impregnable refuge and as we explored, we were impressed by the ancient remains of fortifications, King Herod's palace, store rooms and baths, but we were most impressed with the stories of the last Jewish defenders in 66 AD. These Zealots held out for three years against the legions of Flavius Silva and chose to die free men at their own hands in preference to being captured by the Roman armies and put into slavery. The Romans only stayed four years, and then moved on to Petra. We chose to descend by cable car, rather than on foot via the Snake Path. There is a bird called a Tristram Grackle that lives on Masada and nowhere else in the world. Always great to see a new bird.

As we proceeded south through the Negev Desert, we noted the "harvest" from the Dead Sea: bromine (requires glass containers), potassium and magnesium. Israel and Jordan are also considering connecting the Red Sea and Dead Sea and producing hydro-electric power.

Soon, we stopped at a Spa Resort for lunch and a therapeutic dip in the Dead Sea. 12,000 years ago the Dead Sea water was fresh. Now it is 30% salt. The buoyancy is amazing. We both also had mud massages. Were we relaxed! We arrived in Eilat after dark. Somehow, our hotel upgraded us to the honeymoon suite!

Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan



October 28 – Welcome Jordan!

As we were leaving Eilat, we stopped at the Underwater Sea Observatory and Aquarium, which is also the Marine Museum. Enroute we passed Eilat's four Red Sea harbors: for navy/military, oil (mostly from Egypt and Syria), commercial (you never saw so many cars, mostly from Japan), and a now-discarded glass-bottomed boat operation. Trade is much more robust since the 1982 peace treaty with Egypt.

The shark tank boasted mostly sandbar sharks and spotted eagle and black sting rays. The rare fish tanks highlighted a wide variety of trigger fish (blue, Picasso and orange-shaped); surgeon fish; all kinds of wrasses; butterfly, scorpion and freckled frog fish; morays; octopus and seahorses. They have 40 of the 345 species of the Blenry anemone. The Underwater Observatory featured all kinds of magnificently colored coral and sponge, with beautiful species of fish meandering throughout.

On the way to the Arava border crossing, we passed a police station, which in 1949, was operated by a Turkish official who loved to fish so insisted on locating their regional station in Eilat. When we got to the border at 10:30 AM, we were told that it had been closed for an "undetermined" time (estimated until 12 noon). It was supposed to close at 9:00 AM but had actually closed at 8:30, shutting out dozens of people planning to go to Petra just for the day. Many of these people were unhappily forced to return to Eilat. A large group of Malaysian pilgrims arrived and sang to all of us for more than an hour. I guess it's always helpful to bring a guitar to a border crossing.

Our deadline to adopt Plan B (giving up on Petra and driving to Tel Aviv to spend our final day there) was 12:30 PM. At that exact minute, the border magically re-opened. We learned that the delay was a security measure with the Israeli and Jordanian fire departments conducting anti-terrorist drills! Working through Jordanian customs proved to be as primitive and tedious as some of our third world experiences visiting Jim in Egypt and India! An hour later, we were in the hands of our new guide and driver and being introduced to Jordan.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, as we know it today, was founded by King Abdullah I, after World War I. It was ruled by his grandson, the last King Hussein for 46 years until his death in 1999, when his son King Abdullah II ascended the throne.

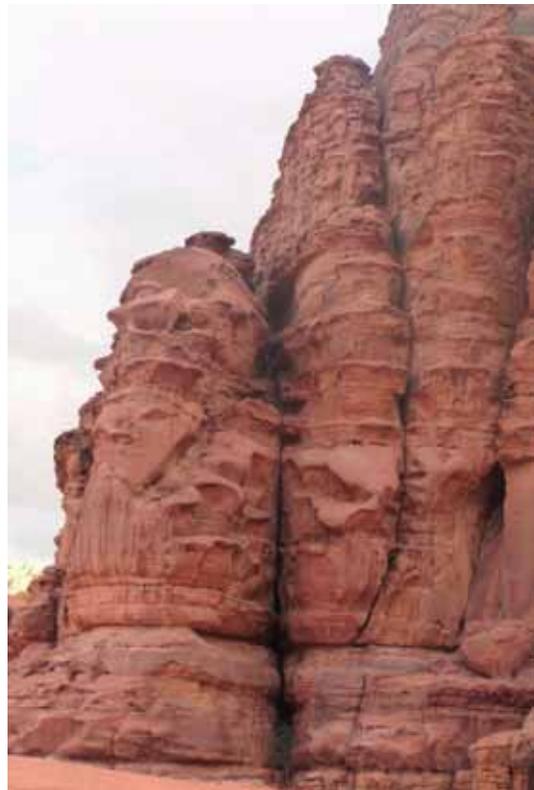
Jordan's total population is 5.5 million, including 750 thousand immigrants from Iraq. Two million people live in Amman, Jordan's capital. Four percent are Christian/Greek Orthodox; the balance are Sunni Muslims. Their oil comes from Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Their biggest challenge; like so many desert countries, is the shortage of water. Education in Jordan is compulsory until age 18 and is government run. Four-year college costs about \$5,000 per year. Military service is not compulsory (as it is in Israel). Exports include phosphate and silica. Their currency, the dinar, is worth about \$1.50. They have 12% unemployment; only 20% of the women work.

Our first destination was Wadi Rum, but to get there, we went through/around Aqaba (Jordan's Red Sea port) and north on the Desert Valley Highway. Aqaba, has a population of 50 thousand and depends 50% on tourism and 50% on trade as it is Jordan's only port.

Our ride was across red desert sand and sandstone mountains, with black stripes of granite running through. The highest mountain in Jordan, at 5200', is near the Saudi Arabian border. We passed a few Bedouin camps. The Jordanian government has made a serious effort to control these nomads. Once they accounted for as much as 50% of the population, and in the last twenty years relocation has dropped this statistic from 30% to as low as 1% (I doubt it from what we saw).

Wadi Rum is a dry riverbed in a maze of monolithic rockscapes that rise up from the desert floor to a height of 50,000', creating a formidable challenge for serious mountaineers. We weren't even tempted! T.E. Lawrence described the largest and most magnificent of Jordan's desert landscapes as "vast, echoing and Godlike." Wadi Rum is also known as "The Valley of the Moon" for obvious reasons.

After a quick (and not very good) lunch, we set off with our spirited "jeep driver". We were offered the choice of riding camels but declined! We had three destinations: T.E. Lawrence's spring; Khazad with its amazing rock formations; and moving sands. We saw writing that was 2,500 years old and fig trees growing out of rocks. Archeologists have found evidence of 4th century Byzantines, and this was an early stopping point for the Nabataeans (before they settled in Petra). At Khazad, we got a preview of what we could expect in Petra. The last stop (moving sands) suits its name and reminded us of jeeping in the desert of Abu Dhabi. As we left the grounds, we admired the 7-Pillars of Wisdom, where Lawrence of Arabia wrote his book of the same name.



It started raining hard as we made our way north on the Desert Highway. The rain got worse and combined with dense fog as we turned onto King's Highway. It was quite harrowing but thanks to a cautious, skilled driver, we made it. Petra is small and charming (what we could see of it at 7:00 PM). Our hotel, Beit Zaman, is fantastic, possibly the best place we stayed. But alas, another delay: another party has mistakenly been given our room! After 45 minutes of frustration, we were encouraged to go to the dining room to have dinner while we waited for the staff to figure things out. Sure enough, as we finished, our beautiful suite was ready and bags were delivered. Judith says I just have to learn to be more patient!



October 29 – The Red Rose City of Petra

Around thirty million years ago there began a series of cataclysms that tore open the face of our planet, throwing up wild mountains on either side of a deep depression. The effects of this ancient turbulence remain – the Great Rift Valley, that long groove in the earth’s crust, runs southwards from south-eastern Turkey, through the Jordan valley, the Dead Sea (the lowest point on earth) and the waterless Wadi Araba, rising to sea level at Aqaba, then plunging beneath the waters of the Red Sea before striking deep into the eastern side of Africa as far as northern Mozambique.

Hidden in the russet convolutions of sandstone and porphyry east of Wadi Araba lies Petra, famed for the prodigious monuments which the ancient Nabataeans carved into the faces of the rock using primitive and inadequate tools. At the stroke of a million chisels they made Petra their own for all time, leveling mountain tops to form terraces for the worship of their gods, cutting grand processional stairways to reach these high places, grooving channels in the rock to direct water into their city from miles around – redesigning nature with Olympian insouciance. Above all, they carved strangely beautiful architectural façades in honour of their dead, creating as they did so an art gallery of Nabataean style in the living rock.

Yet Petra is not only a memorial to the Nabataeans. For countless millennia before their advent, the region was inhabited by Stone Age people, and by the Edomites; and, in the centuries after the fall of the Nabataean empire, Romans and Byzantines held sway here for a time, and the Crusaders passed through fleetingly much later. All have touched this magical place with their own distinct color. So too have the present-day people of Petra – Bdoul, Liyathna and Amareen – who have inhabited the area for who knows how many centuries.

Historians have attempted to chronicle the history: Early Paleolithic (a million years ago) and Middle Paleolithic (80,000 to 40,000 years ago). Fast forward to the Kushu (later known as Edom) and to the Nabataeans of Arabia, where records exist from as early as 650 BC but serious settlements in Petra can only be established from 168 BC. On that basis the tenure of the Nabataean kings tell their own story:

Aretas I	168 BC
Aretas IV (‘who loves his people’)	9 BC – AD 4
Rabbel II (‘who brings life and deliverance to his people’)	AD 70 – 106

In total, there were eleven kings: Aretas I – IV; Rabbel I, II; Obodas I-III; Malichus I, II.

Our guide and driver picked us up at 8:30 AM (7:30 AM Israeli time), and we were off! On our way, the name “Philadelphia” came in view; it’s a city in Jordan, one of the ten Roman cities described in the Decapolis.

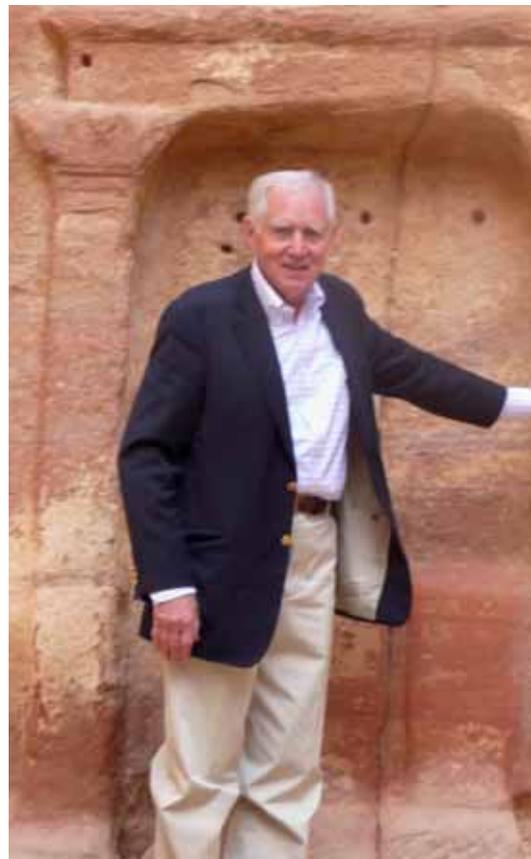
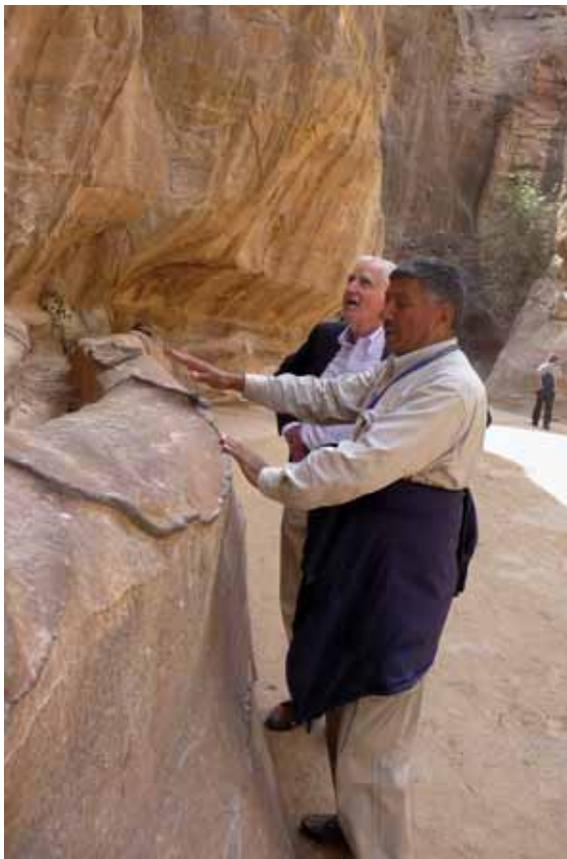
After its heyday, Petra (Greek for rock), was inhabited (as noted above) by the Romans/Christians, Byzantines and Crusaders and then there was a long period of drought when

Petra fell into disuse. In 1812, a Swiss explorer rediscovered Petra. Bedouins lived there for over 100 years, their cave fires ruining the amazing natural color of the caves they lived in. The modern state has built a whole village for them but they still proliferate as merchants and camel drivers.

When you enter the Sig (the natural crack created by the earthquake thirty million years ago), you are suddenly in a magical world. There are four major tomb blocks with tops. You see pronounced veins (I call them “squeezings”) caused by certain minerals in the sandstone that are harder than the sandstone, itself. There’s an aqueduct built on the left side of the path built by the Nabataeans and an enclosed aqueduct on the right side built by the Romans. The key to the Nabataeans success was their ability to manage the most precious commodity in the desert, water.

The Nabataeans worshipped the sun, water and especially the Mountain God. Their obsession with tombs was everywhere evident. In preparation for burial, they dried the body outside in the open air. The mummification process performed by the Egyptians apparently didn’t work in this climate.

We were enthralled by all the rock carvings everywhere and the determination exhibited by pistachio, fig and juniper trees growing, literally, right out of the rock. You walk, or drive, down a wide road excavated 14 feet deeper than the present surface by the Romans. It has since filled with silt. You have to pay attention to traffic: there are walkers, camel riders, horse and donkey riders and charioteers to avoid.



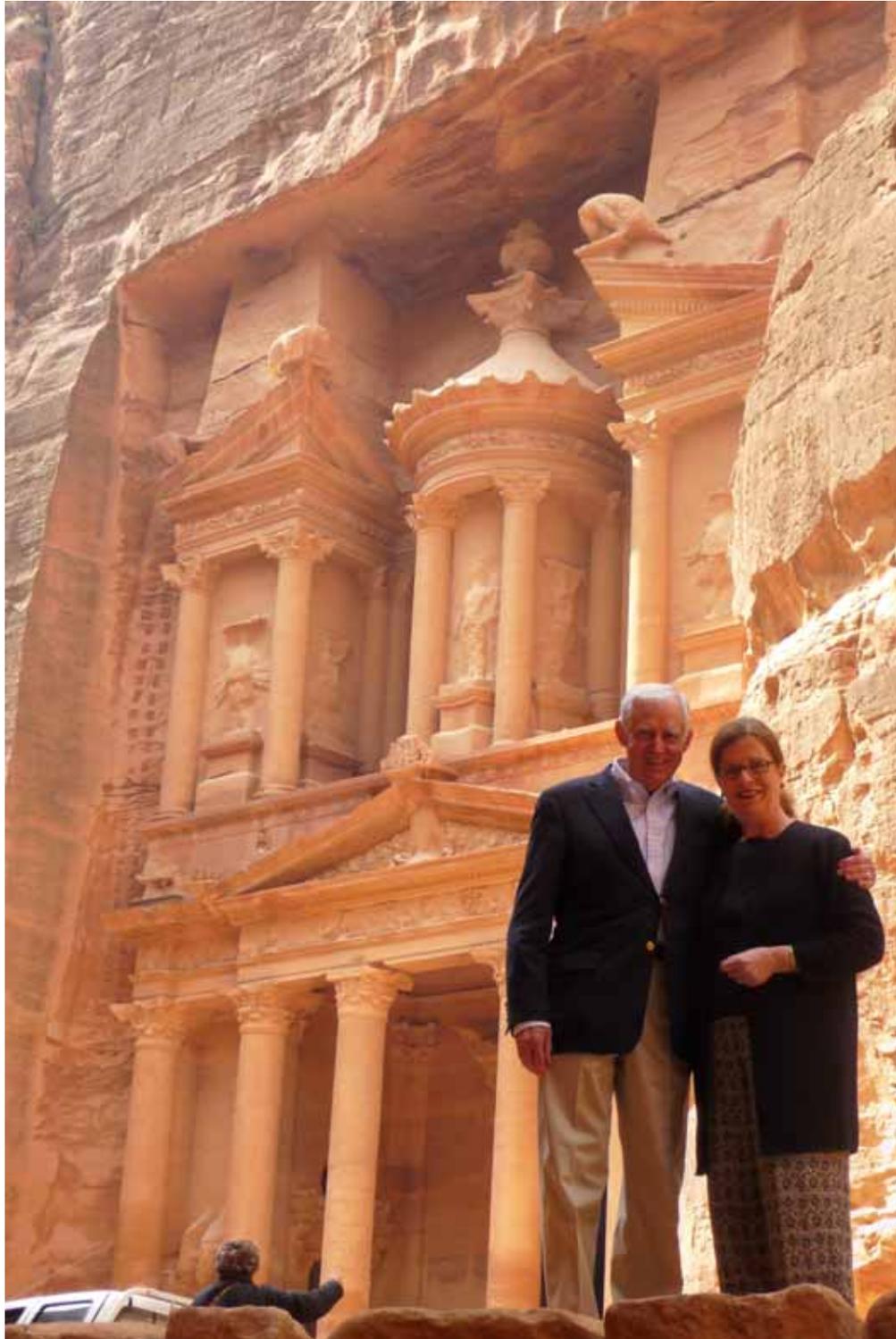
Before we could see the Treasury, the climax to every visit to Petra, our guide asked us to turn away, close our eyes for a count of 10. When we turned around and opened our eyes, there was the famous facade in all its glory!! Ahmad played a tape with the fanfare from Indiana Jones's *Lost Ark*! The film was made in Petra and Harrison Ford had recently come through on a tour. Two Commanders in the British Royal Navy described the sight best in 1818, "We do not know with what to compare this scene. Perhaps, there is nothing in the world that resembles it."

The natural color in the more than 600 stone caves is beautiful. It's hard to believe that the carvings are not covered by frescos. The Bedouins operate many trinket outlets as you walk through the site to our great distraction. We walked several miles beyond the Treasury to a huge theatre set in the middle of a necropolis, but we did not add another 2 miles to go to the Monastery, originally a feasting hall used for banquets in honor of the deified King Ododas.



The Romans finally ran the Nabataeans out following their third siege. Actually, the Romans made further improvements, especially in water management. Much excavating continues, by Brown University and others.

We walked all the way back out of the site, eschewing the offer of horses, donkeys and chariots, had lunch, and then drove to our very gracious guide's Petra home for mint tea and then back to Eilat. We flew to Tel Aviv and then onto JFK, arriving at 7:00 AM on the 30th. It had been an amazing trip!



Epilogue

Israel is a journey: of history and civilizations; of Judaism, Christianity and more; of politics and war; of art and architecture; of scholarship and culture; of identity and continuity and wonderful people.

That's where we started: no pre-conceived conclusions; just profound interest in and questions about the small State of Israel at the end of the Mediterranean Sea with a history tracing back five – six thousand years. We went in search, for ourselves, of early Christianity, of modern Judaism, of centuries of history and civilizations, and lessons learned from Israel's tumultuous past.

As the only land bridge between Africa and Asia, Israel has always been a thoroughfare, a distinction that made it desirable to foreign powers and often turned it into a battleground. Moreover, the country's geography – isolated mountain areas and well-traveled valleys, and its position between the desert and the Mediterranean Sea – has determined its climate, its economy, and by extension, the character of those who conquered and settled the land.

We think we used our ten days wisely: Jaffa, Elah Valley, Cana and Galilee, Golan Heights, Capernaum, Jordan Rift, Masada, Red Sea, Wadi Rum and Petra, not to mention Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The museums in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and the native preserves were critical to our search. We stayed in some of the best hotels, ate in some of the best restaurants and were thrilled to see Mehta conduct the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. Still, as you can tell from our notes and photos, we were caught up in the **miracle** that is Israel: the civilization and religions that have shaped its history and its present. In a sense, Israel is all about stories: from the Bible, Dead Sea Scrolls, wall carvings, mosaics, conquerors and the like – with lots of conflicting stories and misunderstandings. That's part of the magic, part of the challenge.

Our crossing to Jordan was special; our visit to Petra unforgettable. On our drive to Eilat, we reached a point where we were only three miles from Egypt, four miles from Jordan and ten miles from Saudi Arabia. We visited all four of Israel's seas: Mediterranean, Galilee, Red and Dead.

While we learned so much, we are challenged by how much we don't know or understand – about Israel's past, present, and future. And the future is our present concern – Israel, as it has always been, is surrounded by Arab countries who, for the most part, don't really like Israel. We asked a myriad of questions and did a lot of listening – and left with a new love and affection for this State of Miracles but no strong sense that it can continue to coexist with its Arab neighbors.

Shalom is used to say hello and goodbye. We have been to the Holy Land and are much better for the experience.

APPENDIX

CHRONOLOGY “SMALL COUNTRY, BIG HISTORY”

Pre-historic

- ca. 1.2 million years ago Earliest known human habitation in Israel (Lower Paleolithic period), at Ubeidiya, in Jordan Valley.
- ca. 7800 BC Establishment of Jericho, the oldest walled town ever found.

Canaanite Period (Bronze Age)

- ca. 3200 BC Writing is developed in Mesopotamia; beginning of recorded history.
- ca. 2150 BC Early Bronze Age in Israel. Major cities built: Megiddo, Hatzor and (apparently) Jerusalem.
- ca. 2150-1550 BC Age of the Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
- ca. 1550-1250 BC Time of Hebrew’s enslavement in Egypt. Decline of Egyptian power. Moses believed to have led Hebrews in exodus from Egypt. Israel divided into Canaanite city-kingdoms.
- ca. 1290 BC The Hebrews – the “Children of Israel” – receive the Torah (the Law) at Mt. Sinai. The nation of Israel is formed, the basis of its religion established, and its relationship with the one God defined.

Old Testament/First Temple Period (Iron Age)

- ca. 1250 BC Moses dies within the sight of the Promised Land. Joshua leads the nation across Jordan River and embarks on the conquest of Canaan, beginning with Jericho.
- ca. 1150 BC The Philistines invade from the west and establish a league of five city-states in the coastal plain. Israelites appeal to the prophet Samuel for a king.
- 1025 BC Saul, of humble origin, is the first King of Israel.

1006 BC	Saul and three sons, including Jonathan, are killed fighting the Philistines. David rules Judah.
1000 BC	David conquers Jerusalem, a Jebusite enclave, and makes it the capital of a unified Israel. He brings the sacred Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem and establishes the city as the new religious center.
968 BC	Solomon becomes king, consolidates David's kingdom, and ca. 950 BC builds the First Temple of the Lord, in Jerusalem.
928 BC	Solomon dies and the kingdom splits. The northern tribes, under Jeroboam, secede and form the kingdom of Israel. The southern tribes, now known as the Kingdom of Judah, are ruled from Jerusalem by Solomon's weak son, Rehoboam.
865 BC	Ahab rules as King of Israel (871 – 851) and Jehosaphat as King of Judah (867 – 843). Peace exists between the two kingdoms. Ahab's wife Jezebel, reintroduces pagan idol-worship, incurring the wrath of the prophet Elijah.
721 BC	The Kingdom of Israel is destroyed by the Assyrians and its population exiled. Judah comes under the Assyrian yoke.
701 BC	Hezekiah, King of Judah, revolts against Assyria. The Assyrians lay siege to Jerusalem, but with new fortifications and a clever water system, the city survives.
609 BC	Josiah, the last great king of Judah (640-609) and a religious reformer, is killed at Megiddo trying to block an Egyptian advance. Jeremiah prophesies national catastrophe.
586 BC	The Assyrians are defeated by a new power, the Babylonians, whose king, Nebuchadnezzar, conquers Judah and destroys Jerusalem and the Temple. Of those who survive, large numbers are exiled to the "rivers of Babylon."

Second Temple Period

538 BC	Cyrus, King of Persia, conquers Babylon and allows the Jewish exiles to return home and rebuild the Temple (completed circa 516).
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- 445 BC Nehemiah, a Jewish nobleman, is sent to Jerusalem by the Persian king, with the authority to rebuild the city's walls and rule the district.
- 333 BC The Persian Empire is defeated by Alexander the Great, and the entire Near East comes under Hellenistic sway.
- 323 BC Alexander's death precipitates a struggle for succession. His empire is split up: Ptolemy rules in Egypt; Seleucus in Syria and Mesopotamia.
- 301 BC Ptolemy establishes control over the whole land of Israel. Egypt's now Greek-speaking Jewish population expands. The Bible is translated into Greek and called the Septuagint.
- 198 BC The Syrian Seleucids defeat the Egyptian Ptolemies at Baniyas, the headwaters of the Jordan, annex the country, and establish good relations with the Jewish community.
- 167 BC The Seleucid king Antiochus IV outlaws all Jewish religious practices, sparking the Maccabean Revolt.
- 165 BC After four decisive victories over Hellenistic armies, Judah the Maccabee (Judas Maccabeus) enters the desecrated Temple in Jerusalem, purifying and rededicating it (commemorated by the Jewish festival of Chanukah).
- 142 BC Simon, brother of Judah the Maccabee, achieves independence for Judea and establishes the Hasmonean dynasty.
- 63 BC Pompey, the Roman general, enters the country to settle a civil war between the last Hasmonean princes and annexes it as a Roman province.
- 48 BC The influential royal counselor Antipater, a convert to Judaism, appoints his sons, among them Herod, to key administrative positions.
- 40 BC Mark Anthony appoints Herod as king of the Jews.

37 BC	After fighting his way through the country, Herod claims his throne in Jerusalem. Hated by the Jews, he seeks to legitimize his reign by marrying a Hasmonean princess (whom he later murders).
31 BC	Antony is defeated by Octavian, now the emperor Caesar Augustus. Herod pays homage to Augustus in Rome and is confirmed in his titles and territories. He rebuilds the Second Temple in Jerusalem on a grand scale, winning great esteem.
ca. 5 BC	Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.
4 BC	Death of Herod, called by history “the Great.” His kingdom is divided among three sons: Archelaus rules in Jerusalem for 10 years (and is replaced by a Roman procurator); Herod Antipas rules the Galilee and Perea; and Philip controls Golan, Bashan and the sources of the Jordan River.
ca. AD 26	Beginning of Jesus’s Galilean ministry. He calls his disciples, heals and performs miracles, teaches and preaches, mostly around the Sea of Galilee.
ca. AD 29	Jesus and his disciples celebrate Passover in Jerusalem. Arrest, trial and crucifixion of Jesus by the Romans on orders of the governor, Pontius Pilate. For the Romans, the claim of Jesus as Messiah, with its implication of kingship, is tantamount to high treason. The New Testament relates that Jesus’s death and resurrection were divinely determined, an expiation for the sins of humanity. Identification with this event as the way to personal salvation becomes the basis for the community of faith that is Christianity.
AD 66	Start of Great Revolt against Roman oppression. Jews briefly reassert their political independence.
AD 67	Galilee falls to the Romans. The Jewish commander defects to the enemy. Romanizing his name to Josephus Flavius, he follows the Roman campaigns, eventually recording them in <i>The Jewish War</i> . He is known as the first real historian of his day.

- AD 70 Jerusalem, torn by internal faction fighting, falls to the Roman general Titus after a long siege. The Second Temple is destroyed. Slaughter and enslavement of Jews follow. The revolt is officially at an end.
- AD 73 The last Jewish stronghold, at Masada, falls. Its defenders take their own lives rather than surrender.

Late Roman and Byzantine Period

- AD 132 When the Roman Emperor Hadrian threatens to rebuild Jerusalem as a pagan city, another Jewish revolt breaks out, led by Bar Kochba and supported by Rabbi Akiva. Secret preparations and a strong unified command bring spectacular initial successes.
- AD 135 Death of Bar Kochba. The revolt is brutally suppressed, but only after severe Roman losses. Hadrian plows over Jerusalem and builds in its place Aelia Capitolina, a pagan city off-limits to Jews. The name of the country is changed to Palestina, and Jewish religious practice is outlawed.
- AD 325 Emperor Constantine the Great makes Christianity the imperial religion. His mother, Helena, comes to the Holy land in 326 and initiates the building of major churches – the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem and the Nativity in Bethlehem.
- AD 330 Constantine transfers his capital from Rome to Byzantium, now renamed Constantinople. Beginning of the Byzantine Period. Judaism is on the defensive.
- AD 351 A Jewish revolt, primarily in the Galilee, against the Roman ruler Gallus is brutally suppressed.
- ca. AD 400 Final codification of the so-called Jerusalem Talmud, the result of years of rabbinic elaboration of the Mishnah.
- AD 527-565 Reign of Emperor Justinian. Many important churches were built or rebuilt, among them the present Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. Vibrant Jewish community despite persecution.
- AD 614 Persian invasion, with destruction of churches and monasteries.

- AD 622 Muhammad's flight from Mecca to Medina in Arabia; beginning of Islam. This is Year One on the Muslim calendar.
- AD 628 Persians defeated and Byzantine rule restored in Israel.
- AD 632 Death of Muhammad. His followers, ruled by a series of caliphs, burst out of Arabia and create a Muslim empire that within a century would extend from India to Spain.
- AD 636-640 Arab invasion of Israel. Byzantine Jerusalem falls to the caliph Omar ibn-Katib in 638.

Medieval Period

- AD 691 Caliph Abd al-Malik builds the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.
- AD 1099 Sworn to wrest Christian holy places from Muslim control, the European armies of the First Crusade reach the Holy Land. Jerusalem is taken, and most of its population, Muslim and Jew alike, is massacred.
- AD 1110 Most coastal cities in Crusader hands.
- AD 1187 The Crusader army is routed by the Arab ruler Saladin at the Horns of Hattin, near Tiberias. The Crusaders are expelled from the country.
- AD 1191 The Third Crusade arrives, led by Richard the Lionheart of England and Phillip II (Augustus) of France. The Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem never regains its former size and glory. The Crusaders content themselves with the coast from Tyre to Jaffa and the Galilee. Akko becomes the royal capital.
- AD 1228 The Crusaders gain Jerusalem by treaty but lose the city again in 1244.
- AD 1250 The militant Mamluk class seizes power in Egypt. The crusade of King Louis (St. Louis) against Egypt fails. He is captured but comes to the Holy Land after his release.
- AD 1265 Muslim conquest of the land begins under Mamluk sultan Baybars.

AD 1291 Akko falls and the Crusader kingdom comes to an end. Beginning of a period of outstanding architecture, especially Jerusalem's Temple Mount and Muslim Quarter, and in the Cave of Machpelah in Hebron.

AD 1492 Expulsion of the Jewish community from Spain. Many of these Sephardic Jews later immigrate to Israel.

The Modern Period

AD 1516 Mamluk armies defeated in Syria by the Ottoman Turks, who extend control over the land of Israel (Palestine) as well. Sephardic Jews (Spanish exiles) settle throughout the country.

AD 1520-1566 Suleiman the Magnificent reigns. Among his many projects is the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls.

AD 1700 A large contingent of Ashkenazi (Eastern European) Jews settles in Jerusalem.

AD 1799 Napoléon Bonaparte's military campaign founders in Akko.

AD 1832 Egyptian nationalists under Muhammad Ali and Ibrahim Pasha take control of Israel but are expelled in 1840 with the help of European nations.

AD 1897 First World Zionist Conference, organized by Theodor Herzl in Basel, Switzerland, gives great impetus to the idea of a "Jewish national home."

AD 1906 The Second Aliyah, or wave of immigration, of young Jewish pioneers from Russia and Poland, including David Ben Gurion, who would eventually become Israel's first prime minister.

AD 1909 Tel Aviv is founded. Degania, the first kibbutz, is established on the southern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

AD 1914 Outbreak of the Great War (World War I). The Ottoman Turks plunder the country to support their war needs.

AD 1917 The British government issues the Balfour Declaration expressing support for a "Jewish national home" in Palestine. General Edmund Allenby captures Jerusalem.

AD 1918	Ottoman Turkey, which had sided with Germany during the War, abandons Palestine.
AD 1920-1939	As Arab nationalism rises in the post-Ottoman Middle East, tensions increase between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, peaking in the massacres of Jews in 1920, 1929 and 1936. Jewish militants form to counter the violence. Substantial immigration of European Jews, who come with growing urgency, as Nazis take power in Germany.
AD 1922	The newly formed League of Nations confirms the Mandate entrusting the rule of Palestine to Great Britain, incorporating the text of the Balfour Declaration in its Terms of Reference.
AD 1939	The British Government issues a White Paper restricting Jewish immigration to Palestine and Jewish purchase of land there, in an attempt to secure Arab goodwill in the coming war. In World War II, Jews enlist on the Allied side. "We shall fight the war as if there were no White Paper," said Palestinian Jewish leader David Ben Gurion, "but we shall fight the White Paper as if there were no war."
AD 1945	End of World War II, in which two-thirds of the Jewish population of Europe was annihilated by the Nazis. When British policy does not change, underground movements challenge British authority. Illegal immigrants, most of them Holocaust survivors, are brought in on ships; many don't get through the British blockade. (see the film, "Exodus" starring Paul Newman and Eva Marie Saint) Clashes with Arabs increase.
AD 1947	United Nations Special Commission on Palestine recommends a plan to partition the country into a Jewish state and an Arab state (three disconnected territorial segments in each) and to internationalize Jerusalem and Bethlehem, with the result of Jewish euphoria and Arab rejection. Beginning of Israel's War of Independence. Discovery of the first Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran.
AD 1948 (May 14)	Last British forces depart, ending the British Mandate. David Ben Gurion declares Israel an independent state. The new state survives invasion by the armies of seven Arab countries.

AD 1949	End of fighting in January. U.N.-supervised cease-fire agreements signed. Transjordan annexes the West Bank (of the Jordan River) and East Jerusalem, which it captured in the war, and changes the country's name to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Egypt annexes the Gaza Strip along the southern Mediterranean coast. Palestinian Arabs, who fled or were expelled during the conflict, are housed in refugee camps in neighboring countries; those who remain behind become citizens of Israel. First elections to the Knesset, Israel's parliament. David Ben Gurion is elected prime minister; Dr. Chaim Weizmann, first president.
AD 1949-1952	Israel absorbs great numbers of Jewish refugees, tripling its Jewish population by the end of the decade.
AD 1950	The Knesset enacts the Law of Return, giving any Jew the right to Israeli citizenship.
AD 1964	Formation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which seeks an independent state for Palestinians and refuses to recognize the legitimacy of the State of Israel.
AD 1967 (June)	Outbreak of Six-Day War. Egypt, Jordan and Syria are routed; Israel occupies Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, and finds itself in control of almost one million Palestinian Arabs. Some Jewish settlements are established in the West Bank and Golan Heights.
AD 1973	Egypt and Syria attack Israel on the holiest Jewish holiday, the Day of Atonement (hence the name "Yom Kippur War"). Israel beats off the invasion but the euphoria and self-confidence of '67 are shattered.
AD 1974-1975	Signing of Disengagement Agreement on the Golan with Syria and the Interim Agreement with Egypt.
AD 1978	Camp David Accords give direction to Egypt-Israel peace talks and produce guidelines for a solution to the Palestinian problem.
AD 1979	Israel –Egypt peace agreement signed.

AD 1982	Israeli forces cross into southern Lebanon in pursuit of Palestinians shelling civilian settlements in Israel. This escalates into the Lebanon War (1982-85), which is met with unprecedented opposition within Israel.
AD 1989-1992	Israel absorbs more than 50,000 Soviet Jewish immigrants.
AD 1993-1994	The Oslo Accords provide for mutual recognition of Israel and the PLO, as well as Palestinian autonomy in the Gaza Strip and Jericho. Nobel peace Prize shared by Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres and Yasser Arafat.
AD 1997	Israel and the Palestinians sign the Hebron Agreement.
AD 2002	Israel launches a large-scale military response to the wave of suicide bombings on civilian targets. Ultimately, over four years of intifada, more than three thousand Israelis and Palestinians will lose their lives.
AD 2006	The year gets off to a disquieting start as Ariel Sharon is incapacitated by a stroke in early January and Hamas, unexpectedly, has a landslide win in Palestinian elections. In March elections, Israelis vote Kadima, the new Centrist party founded by Sharon when he broke with Likud, into power. Kadima's leader, Ehud Olmert. Become prime minister.
AD 2008	The Moore's visit to Israel.