

ISRAEL

August 11 - 22, 1994

Jesus' 2000th Birthday Celebration

Suddenly I thought, "Day after tomorrow the adventure begins!"

Aug. 11, Thurs. Finally the morning came to head for the airport. When I arrived at J.F.K. in New York I transferred to the International Terminal, checked in, and then waited---and waited. Finally, two hours later, Paul Herrick arrived and we waited---and waited. VERY SLOWLY, hours later, other members of the group started to trickle in and at 7:15 p.m. we boarded Alitalia #609, a Boeing 747, and then didn't lift-off until 8:40 p.m. Such are the joys of travel.

Our group was scattered all around the plane. We stood up and visited for as long as possible before take-off knowing we would be sitting for a very long time. Various members of the crew visited with us too as they stowed hand luggage and went about their various duties. One particularly good looking blonde "stew" had a very British accent. When I asked her how she happened to be working in Italy for an Italian airline when she didn't speak Italian she said, "I think they just needed someone who could speak English to the passengers."

Dinner arrived at 10:00 p.m. and finally time to sleep even though it would only be for three hours.

Seated beside me were two nice looking Italian young men - probably around 20 years old - who were returning home after several years in the States. They had been studying at a special college which was to teach them English and our way of doing things as well as their own major subjects. There were a number of others of their group on the plane - both boys and girls. One of my seatmates was from Ancona, Italy with about four to five hours more travel after Rome, and the other from Brindisi with about six more hours to go. We had a great time during the journey with them teaching me how to read and pronounce Italian.

Aug. 12, Fri. As we came into the Rome airport we could see that it is surrounded by green fields and trees. Landing was at 9:45 a.m. (their time). We spent several hours there but had lots of fun visiting, taking pictures of each other, and playing "Hackey Sack". We left Rome at 12:17 p.m., flying out over the Mediterranean. Staying fairly close to the shoreline one could see the beautiful colors of the water due to different depths, many small pleasure boats, and the Greek Islands of Kypros and Nicossea.

We touched down at Tel Aviv airport at 4:00 p.m. and found Satu Sihvo already there waiting for us. When everything finally got organized, two busses, guides, drivers, luggage, people, we started on a small driving tour of the area before going to the Sun Hotel in Bat Yam.

Bus #1 for the Israel-Egypt group had, driver: Khader Farraj (Greek Orthodox) and guide: John Khouri (Roman Catholic). Bus #2 for the Israel group had, driver: Fausi ? and guide: Anis Ardaji (Greek Orthodox). We were immediately informed that WE had been given the best, very brand new busses.

It is only one hour from the airport to the Sun Hotel, but we were taken the long way home so we could see some of the sights. At first, near the airport, there were a lot of palm trees and it looked much like the exit from the Miami, FL. airport. But as we started crossing the Plain of Sharon from E. to W. it all changed and the buildings and streets started to look very seedy. Tel Aviv (Jaffa - Joppa) was on our right and one could see a lot of tall whitish-tan buildings, and Jaffa orange trees in large orchards. The tallest building is 400 ft.: 34 stories high and called Rosh Shalom. Now we're entering Joppa and can see a Russian Church that is about 100 years old. Joppa, Jaffa, Tel Aviv all used to be separate but now city growth has connected them. Since "48 Arabs are in a section of town - we can see a watchtower from the time of the Turks, about 450 years old - and we are 80-90 miles from the Gaza Strip.

Construction in Bat Yam is very different from that in Tel Aviv.



There are solar tanks on the roofs and laundry hangs out of all the buildings.

We drove along the shore of the Mediterranean to our hotel and then had to claim our luggage from the bus so it could be taken to the lobby. As I was checking along the ground for mine I heard a voice say, "Ticky, hello! How are you?" SHOCK! How did someone here in Israel know me? I looked up to see Becky Marshall, now Becky Kantor, standing on the curb. I've known Becky since First URANTIA Society days but hadn't seen her since the Green Lake, WI conference. We went into the lobby and there stood David whom I've also known for "donkey years". What a joy to see dear friends again.

We waited for room assignments and keys and were introduced to one of the nicest customs of foreign hostelry: ice cold fruit juice passed around to those of us just arriving. Oh, what a welcome respite from the heat that was!

Once we got all organized and to our rooms a number of us headed for the beach and the Mediterranean right there at the hotel property. I was one of those to whom it had not occurred to bring a bathing suit, so I just rolled up my slacks and waded right in. Oh, how warm it was, beautiful waves, great shell collecting, and a perfectly magnificent sunset. We all stayed until the very last minute we could and then made a mad dash to get ready for dinner.

Dean and I sat a table for eight, guys and gals, and wondered just what we might get to eat. Our waiter spoke English, but not well, and all we could gather was that we had a choice of fruit salad or fish - so we took the fish. Lo and behold, it was a large serving, deliciously prepared, and turned out to be only the first course in one of many including soup, meat, veggies, salad, beverage and dessert. Oh my! "Tired" and "stuffed" started to set in and we

lost people from our table one by one, but not before we witnessed a fascinating "happening" at the next table.

Three Israeli families had come to the hotel together to have their dinner in preparation for Shabbat. Suddenly the women took small head scarves from their purses, placed the scarves on their heads, and then both the men and women stood up, walked around their chairs and sat down again. This was repeated during the meal and prayers said. Our URANTIA Book tells us about "unnecessary rituals", but never could the lesson be brought home to us as was this one which we actually saw. 976.2

Aug. 13, Sat. Up at the crack of dawn! Breakfast in our hotel was self-serve and huge, like an European full breakfast. Then load the busses and on our way again.

As we started to travel our guides started to teach. A tel is a hill, Tel Aviv is "hill of spring". The older sector of modern Tel Aviv, Yafo, now an Arab neighborhood, succeeds a prehistoric settlement that was known as Jaffa when captured by an Egyptian pharaoh in 1468 B.C.; a harbor built by Phoenicians later made this the principal entry port for medieval pilgrims bound for Jerusalem. Tel Aviv grew out of dunes to the north early in the 20th century. Now combined, the cities form Israel's biggest metropolis and its commercial center. Tel Aviv has a population of about 600,000 now.

The port in Jaffa was built by the British and Israel now has four ports; Haifa in the north, Jaffa in the middle, Ashdod south of Tel Aviv, and Elat at the extreme southern tip of Israel on the Gulf of Aqaba.

On the way to Caesarea, about 20 miles north of Tel Aviv, we passed Solomon's Port and a Church of St. Peter. Caesarea is an ancient Roman city built 2,000 years ago in honor of the emperor Caesar Augustus. It was built by Herod the Great "the Idumean". 1334.6 Idumaea was below Hebron and Gaza and west of the Dead Sea.



Under King Herod's rule, Caesarea was built with piers, storage buildings, temples to Augustus and shelters for seamen. The port was used as a harbor for ships sailing between Egypt and Syria. Now the remains of the Roman harbor can be explored underwater by scuba divers. Only about one third of the harbor is left, but it was made of cement which hardens under water.

We all piled out of the buses to visit the 3,000 seat Roman Amphitheater which had been visited by Jesus, Gonod, and Ganid back when it could seat 20,000 persons. 1429.3 Excavated in the 1950's, reconstructed and used today in spring and summer for the Israel Festival and theatrical performances and concerts. I have a great picture of Warren standing on top of a stone column, like a conquering hero, being photographed by Berkeley.

We saw the Pontius Pilate tablet outside and went inside to marvel at it all. While we were there Becky gave a talk to give us some of the facts and history of the amphitheater. Then we walked the few hundred yards to the ruins of a Crusader Fortress from the 11th century A.D.

Do you remember the three smokestacks that were pointed out to us? They were from the electric station which uses coal from Africa. To sweeten the pot a bit we were told that all the diamonds in Israel are from South Africa too. Also saw a Turkish Mosque from 16 A.D. on the site. And when we walked around to the other side of the fortress; sea, beach, and swimmers. So much for consistency!

A short drive north and we visited Herod's eight-mile long aqueduct. In the past, it was used to transport water from Shuni Springs on the Carmel mountain range to Caesarea. Three clay pipes used gravity to do the job 2,000 years ago. Naturally, we all climbed up, down, in, over and out, and when we stood on the top, what to our wondering eyes did appear? Sea, beach, and swimmers!

The Plain of Sharon used to be a swamp. It was drained and many trees planted to suck up the water. It is now built upon. Negev means "the dry land". The northern part of Israel receives 40-50" of rain a year; Jerusalem and into the southern part, 20" of rain; south of Hebron, 8"; and below there drops to 1". There are 26,000 square miles in this country.

Onward and upward to Haifa. This city (pop. 236,000), built on a hill overlooking the Mediterranean, is reminiscent of San Francisco in some respects. We visited the Carmelite Monastery of Stella Maris (a Catholic order) up on the hill of Mt. Carmel. The inside of the dome of the church is really quite beautiful and many lovely paintings and stained glass windows are to be found there. We would have gone into the cave of Elijah (rumor) but a baptism was in progress so we just looked from a distance. We walked around the grounds and then, going out onto a rear terrace overlooking the city, we drank in the sights.

We looked down upon the Mediterranean and a large, modern city with a fantastic harbor. And there, just waiting for us, sat a U.S. Aircraft Carrier.

At the foot of the hill, in town, are the Baha'i Temple and Gardens. Only one Baha'i Temple is located on each continent and we have one right along the Lake Michigan shoreline of Wilmette, IL (second suburb north of Chicago). I've been in it several times and it is a lovely and peaceful setting.

How could we be hungry again? Since it was noontime we stopped at a small self-service restaurant and everyone ate. Now we were to come into contact with the very high price of food in Israel. I had a very small lunch; salad, some vegetables, a tiny bit of meat, no beverage or dessert; \$11.50 U.S.

Heading south and east through the Plain of Esdraelon we went to



Megiddo. Excavation has revealed layers of settlement back to 3500 B.C. Megiddo is the site of ancient Armageddon where some believe the final Apocalyptic battle between good and evil will take place. 724.3

We first visited the museum outside of the excavated city where we saw a video of the area and the work done on it. The heat got to Becky so she had to rest for awhile in the shade, and I had to make a short detour for what the guides explained to us is known as a "coffee out". When we all got back together we walked to the very far side of the area to start our descent into the deep, underground reservoir and tunnel system, which had been hewn from solid rock in that ancient time, to ensure a supply of water for the city in time of siege. NO PROBLEM ! All we had to do was climb down 186 rough, uneven steps hewn from stone - make our way through the tunnel - and then climb back up 80 steps to the outside. So - - - - we did !

We drove NE through Afula, continuing toward Nain where Jesus supposedly brought back to life the widow's son. 1645.

Jesus would know the significance of this area known as the Plain of Megiddo. He and his apostles traveled through here often on a road which ran by the base of this great straggling hill known as Mt. Tabor. In Jesus' day there was a fairly big town nestled on its summit. Today a Roman Catholic church, Church of the Transfiguration, is located here.

As we got closer to Tiberias one could see the Sea of Galilee and the Golan Heights in the distance. And it was in this area that we first started seeing "Roundabouts" at intersections along the roadway: just one more small memento from the days when Palestine was placed under British administration in 1920 by a League of Nations mandate. I couldn't wait to tell Owen about those.

A little south of Tiberias we stopped at the River Jordan where it leaves the Sea of Galilee, a holy Christian site from early times. It was, and is called Yardenit. There were throngs of pilgrims standing in line and standing in the water waiting to be baptised. A sign on the premises indicated that according to the scriptures Jesus was baptised very close to this part of the Jordan. According to The URANTIA Book it was a spot farther south, near Pella. 1501.5, 1502.4.6, 1503.3.5, 1504 all. But they surely are pretty close, aren't they?

We had time to wander around a bit and, around a bend, we found Tom Choquette in his bathing trunks, and Katie and Harry McMullan, Jennifer and Stephen Goebel fully clothed, in the river, splashing about and having a generally fabulous time of it.

Herod Antipas had good reason to establish a city in Tiberias, as the neighboring town, Hammat, was blessed with hot springs. Soldiers of the Roman legions, and centuries later, the Crusaders, came to Hammat to enjoy these hot springs, which are still operative today. We didn't stop, but it was pointed out as we passed by.

As we were on the way to Nof Ginosar we passed the ruins of Magdala, the birthplace of Mary Magdalene, and the place where she met Jesus. In those times, Magdala was the most important city in the Sea of Galilee region (before Tiberias was founded), and the home of 5,000 residents. Excavations in the area have uncovered beautiful mosaics with illustrations of the fish trade and of fishing boats. 1680.1.2

After a long day we finally made it to our kibbutz - Nof Ginosar - wonderful cold juice - luggage - keys - mix up - wait - and to our rooms. We had some time to unpack, get organized, (or words to that effect), clean up and head for dinner. Dinner which was wonderful, buffet style in the large second floor dining room, wine, and good friends. What more could one ask? But we managed to walk out to the Sea of Galilee for awhile before returning to a large room off the



dining room area for one of the evening meetings which were held each night.

Aug. 14, Sun. What a fantastic breakfast! They had everything, in Aces and Spades! But, for me, the most magnificent part was the big, hand operated orange press and the ice cold Jaffa oranges. Every morning I hit that first, took the O.J. to a table, and then thought about something to go with it.

This morning we're going for a boat ride. We were taken to a dock area near Tiberias that has excursion boats going out onto the Sea of Galilee. As we pulled out we could see a lot of very modern hotels and buildings along the shore. The boats are 2-deckers, open at the sides with a roof to keep off some of the sun. We headed farther out on the lake and in a northward direction. The Sea of Galilee is beautiful to see; it changes constantly.

It is a large freshwater lake, violin shaped, fed by the River Jordan which flows in from the north and then empties out again at the southern end. Along the entire route the Jordan is fed by many large and small tributaries. As the sun goes down and the air cools, winds are created which can rush down the gorges and create sudden and intense storms on the lake. 1694.8

When our ride was through we boarded the buses and headed for the highlands on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, between Tabgha and Dalmanutha Magadan, to visit the Church of the Beatitudes which is the "traditional" site of the spot on which Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount and chose his apostles from among his disciples. The place was named Mount of Beatitudes after the word Ashrei ("blessed") with which Jesus began each of the eight sections of his Sermon on the Mount. In the URANTIA Book this is where Jesus ordained the twelve. 1568.2 1569 #2 The Beatitudes were part of Jesus' ordination sermon and each began with the word "happy". 1570 #3 1573 #5 1575

We saw the lovely high altar and the stained glass windows depicting each of the eight sections of the Beatitudes. This Franciscan church was designed and erected by the Italian architect Biluzzi. From the spacious balcony we could see the Sea of Galilee. There was a farm in the distance and a long, long string of sheep returning to their shed. Very appropriate.

Heading north and slightly east we passed the place of the multiplication and a little farther on stopped at an area where we were able to buy bottled water at "a good price" and buy dates. The dates had been frozen and did they taste good that way. Back on the bus we asked John to recite The Lord's Prayer for us in Arabic. Fascinating!

When Jesus was here there were many small towns around the shores of the lake - now there is only Tiberias. As we travelled, we could see many Eucalyptus trees which had been brought from Australia. This is a region of apples, plums, peaches, avocados, quince, walnuts and cotton fields.

Then we passed through the town of Rosh Pinna which refers to the Parable of the Keystone or cornerstone (which was rejected by the builders and, when discovered by the people, made into the cornerstone.) 1894.3

We're about 4,000 feet above sea level now. The hills (they call them mountains) on our left are limestone and covered with scrub, and littered with outcroppings and chunks. We are about four to five miles from the Lebanon border and seeing a lot of Israeli soldiers in full uniform and carrying very lethal guns. We pass Qiryat Shemona (S.W. of C. Philippi) known as the Village of the Eight: the area was heavily shelled by the Hisbullah about eight months ago and eight men were killed. We're five miles from Metulla; the very northern tip of Israel; on the Lebanon border.



In front of us is Mt. Hermon, Dan (Antioch) is between Qiryat Shemona and Caesarea Philippi and in biblical times the tribe of Dan occupied this northern part of the country to Beersheba in the southern part of Israelite territory. Beersheba is located to the west of the Dead Sea. In Dan they now think they have found the site of the original Dan, the site of the Golden Calf, and the city walls and street.

We're in the Golan Heights in the northeast corner of Israel. On either side of the road are endless coils of barbed wire and mine fields in all directions. We passed the excavations of Caesarea Philippi on our right, had pointed out to us the ruins of a Crusader Fortress on top of a mountain, and went to the Caves of Pan (Paneion, Baniyas, Baniyas). It was a shrine to the god Pan with the caves right into the hill. Herod built a temple there and his son, Philip, enlarged the town, made it his residence and capital of the Gaulanitis and named it after Caesar. All that is now left of the temple is foundations and broken stone pillars. There are pretty areas of water divided by grassy, earthen dikes. Had it not been for a helping hand from Charles Lilly I'd have never made it across: things like that make me lose my balance. From the bus parking lot could be seen what is left of Caesar's residence.

We drove S.W. past Tel Hazor which is partly excavated. This Canaanite city-state was heavily populated at the time of its reported destruction by Joshua. Solomon rebuilt it in the tenth century B.C. On south past Safed and Rosh Pinna to near Tiberias for lunch at a cafe outside the pier from which we took the boat ride. The heat was starting to get to me and I found that if I had a large bowl of hot soup and a soft drink for lunch each day it got me through with no problems. It was good too.

And now, back north to Capernaum: do you get the feeling we're zigging and zagging? Excavations in the area have uncovered the rem-

nants of the famous Jewish village from the Roman period. There is a new Roman Catholic Church built over the excavations of Peter's house and family living quarters - all built of hewn stone, of course - and quantities of huge chunks of carved stones depicting geometric ornamentations, plants, animals, the Star of David, a menorah, etc., etc. They are fascinating to see and truly beautiful.

Just a few steps away and we were at the ruins of the ancient synagogue, built in the third century and restored in the fifth century, built of beautifully hewn white limestone. This synagogue is very much like the one in which Jesus spoke. A good number of us spent a good length of time in the synagogue looking, wondering, and talking. We sat on a stone ledge to get in the shade and then linked hands to pray together. Barbara sang for and with us and it was a very moving experience for all.

Back on the bus and a little west to **Tabgha**. We went to see the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and the Fishes. The first church was built here in 350 A.D., and upon its ruins this church. In the courtyard was a wonderful old millstone and olive press hewn from stone. Inside, in front of the altar, is an early mosaic floor with illustrations of the basket of loaves and the two fishes. It also depicts birds, peacocks (the symbol of eternity), the lotus flower and other plants. This is considered to be one of the most beautiful mosaics in all of Israel. The large hunk of rock beneath the table is thought to be the rock on which Jesus may have sat during the feeding of the five thousand. This "traditional" site at Tabgha is across the north end of the Sea of Galilee from the site in a beautiful park south of Bethsaida-Julias which is the actual site to which Jesus and the apostles went from Bethsaida. 1699.3  
1700-01-02

The name Tabgha is a distortion of the Greek word Heptapegon which means "Seven Springs". In the past, seven springs met at this point



and flowed into the Sea of Galilee; today only five remain.

Walking out and around the property along the pathway we came to a Dalmanutha prayer site on the church property. The level of the lake is down now and looking out into the water one can see the ruins of columns underwater. A tall tree trunk cross is on the promontory. We sat, talked and prayed, and shared bread and wine. We kind of hated to leave.

Dinner that night was, as usual, wonderful. As I'm a confirmed chocaholic (dark chocolate only) I loaded up on the excellent desserts - again. I assume that others did as did Dean and I; rotate tables and companions at every meal. Such a nice way to get to know so many more people.

As we left the dining room we couldn't help but notice and stop. There sat Barbara Hester on a chair on top of a table with John Thiele plaiting her hair into French braids. It looked darned good too, when it was finished. Shortly thereafter, our evening meeting. Also, it was Rachel Bellman's 21st birthday and afterwards a bunch went dancing in Tiberias.

Aug. 15, Mon. On this day we traded guides from the two busses so that we could experience the style and outlook of each. Bus #1 now had Anis and Bus#2, John.

Man has lived in this area of the world from the Paleolithic era (early stone age): a Paleolithic skull was found here recently. The Abrahamic period is the beginning of history for the - Abra, meaning to cross: Habiru meaning the people who crossed (Israelis). At the time of Jesus the land was divided into the provinces: Gaul in the north, Samaria in the middle, and Judah in the south. More prophets came from the northern kingdom than the southern.

Driving through Nazareth we head over to **Cana** where we stop at a

church on the site (they think) where Jesus attended the wedding and changed water into wine. 1530.2 The church is made from large blocks of white stone - probably limestone - with entry arches, a balcony, and statues of stone. Inside is a very pretty altar.

We made a short stop in the old town of Nazareth where we visited the Basilica of the Annunciation - which is built above the ruins of a fourth century church - which was supposedly built on the site of Jesus' home. There is also a Church of the Annunciation which we did not see. There are carvings in stone outside and a bas relief of Jesus' life on the iron door. The 1965 addition to the Basilica was largely financed by donations from Frank Sinatra: a fact not widely known. It happens, however, that there are several other sites that claim to be the "real" one.

Our next stop was the Nazareth Synagogue from the second century A.D. that is thought to be on the site of one in which Jesus preached. Our group, along with crowds of others, wandered through the many rooms and then we went down a few stone steps into a large, rectangular stone room with a stone ledge around the sides. We sat, and prayed, and then all held hands while Barbara sang both with us and alone. It was so beautiful and so spiritual. Honestly, I'm sure we just must have all gained a circle on this trip.

We saw Mary's Well which is supposedly on the site of the original spring. I found it difficult to even remember that I had seen it because a brand new square structure has been built over the site. It is of white stone with a peaked roof and a large circular opening on the face of it. In that are six or eight metal bathroom-type handles with four or five stone water spouts below them. And one sees it as one is crossing the street to see something else.

We then went to the hill in the northerly part of Nazareth where Jesus used to go to play. Berkeley had the guides take us there as it was a place she had remembered from her previous trips. From the



top one could look in all directions and see Mt. Hermon - Mediterranean - Mt. Tabor - and Mt. Carmel. EXCEPT, when we got there, there was a high wall and a locked gate which hadn't been there before. Warren rang the bell and spoke to the nuns who most graciously unlocked the gate for us and let us in, but it was just a gravel parking area and we couldn't see the view.

Our next destination was a short distance northwest: **Sepphoris**. About the time of Jesus' birth, Herod Antipas made this settlement dating from the Iron Age the capital and "ornament of all Galilee". As an administrative hub, Sepphoris minted its own coins. It was probably here about A.D. 200 that Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi compiled the Mishnah. The remains of a Roman theater and aqueduct and a Byzantine fortress have been found.

We went to Sepphoris National Park where excavations started in 1985. Sepphoris = Zippori = Tippiori = the bird. We went to the home of a wealthy aristocrat, or possibly it was the Governor's Villa, which is in the process of excavation and restoration. Going inside into the comparative darkness and surrounded by stone walls was a welcome respite from the heat. There were many rooms and even a bathroom with a toilet. And the floor in the central area was perfectly magnificent mosaic. I'd love to see that again when it is finished.

The ruins of Sepphoris are more extensive than I had expected. Work is presently going on in the digs and more and more parts are being pieced together. As we walked up a dusty incline we could see the working areas, most of them covered by tarps hung from poles, to help keep the blistering sun and heat off the workers. There were small groups of us in various areas. Waldine snapped a picture of the Governor's residence, stepped back, the sand and pebbles shifted a bit, and down went Waldine. We tried to shade her while one of the group ran to locate Dr. John. Her knee had been badly wrenched and she had to be carried by Tom Choquette back to the bus. Fortunately there was ice which could be used for cold compresses. She had a wrapped leg and was in a wheelchair for several days and not a com-



plaint out of her. What a wonderful, gutsy lady!

Back on the bus - back on the bus! And a drive N.N.E. to Safed (Zefat). This magical village is set high in hills that are often shrouded in fog. Safed is a beautiful old, old city, the birthplace of the cabals (Jewish mysticism) and host to a large artists colony. Above the city are the ruins of another Crusader's castle.

The streets are NARROW and our buses really threaded their way through them. The bus parking area was small and already just about full when we arrived. Our driver jockeyed that bus around and backed into a space that was about the size of a dime, and he got 9¢ change. It was truly amazing. We all cheered and then poured out onto the street to start our sightseeing. Dean White, Dennis Creel and I started out going through the shops to see as much as possible in the allotted time and were soon joined by Loren Leger. We kept criss-crossing with others of our group and finally ended up in a little shop with a big loom just inside the door. The lady owner wove all her own fabrics on the loom and then made some lovely jackets and shawls from them. Dean found a beautiful jacket, tried it on, and decided to make a purchase. I walked over to her and very quietly said, "Bargain!" Her eyes lit up and she said, "Yes it is." I waited a moment and tried again, "Dean, bargain!" She nodded happily and continued making payment arrangements. In desperation I went over to her one last time and hissed, "For heaven's sakes, Dean, will you please bargain with the woman for a lower price or get something else with it at no additional cost?" And thus was my dear roommate introduced to the wide open world of bargaining! She ended up with a pair of beautiful sterling silver earrings to boot. We've giggled about that one ever since.

In talking further with the woman we found out that her husband owned an open-air refreshment stand across the street and up a bit. And if we mentioned to him that we had purchased at her shop we would get 10% discount from him. We went over to buy cool drinks and sit



at a table for a short respite and a few more of our group drifted in as well.

After a few quick bits of last moment looking in near-by shops we boarded the bus - and waited - and waited - and waited. Julianne Clerget was not with us! Finally she was located up the street in some shop and brought back by a couple of the guys. Seems that John Hales was with her and when she said they had to rush back or they would be late he said with a perfectly straight face, "Oh no, Julie. After you got off the bus we all got together and got the time extended by  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour. So we don't have to get back yet." Gotcha! In any case - - - we were off again, this time for our kibbutz and a bit of free time.

A number of us gathered in the lobby near the cocktail lounge. We pulled up chairs around one of the large tables, got something to drink and sat and talked for awhile. Later we went swimming in that beautiful warm water of the Sea of Galilee. I went in fully clothed, again, but how I wish I had had some rubber soled thongs to wear on my feet. I'm evidently related to the princess in the fairy tale of "The Princess and the Pea." I can feel absolutely everything, even through the leather soles of a pair of loafers, and there were lots of sharp pebbles near the shoreline.

That night, at dinner, the trainee came over to the table to ask John Lange if he would take a look at his wife as she had not been feeling well that day. After dinner he went to see her and when he returned he said it looked as if it might be appendicitis. I never did hear of further developments, but next day she said she was feeling a bit better. We have been so fortunate on our trips to have John with us.

Aug. 16, Tues. This was a free day for all of us and we broke up into different groups to go our various ways. A group of eight decided to climb Mt. Arbel (Arabel, Arbela). It was a tough, hot

one. While on top the group prayed together while hearing bombs explode in the distance. This mountain is where one of the ancient kings let down his soldiers in baskets from the top so they could kill the fighters who were in the caves.

A large group decided to rent transportation to go up Mt. Hermon. I thought I'd like to go on that trip but, when the transportation turned out to be open sided jeeps, I opted out. However, thanks to Charles Lilly, I got a report of the trip.

There were three 4-wheel drive vehicles. They drove east past Capernaum (Kefar Nahum) and north along the west bank of the Jordan to the Bnot Ya'skov Bridge (Jacob's Ford), and east across the Jordan up and onto the Golan Heights. They stopped near Zivan Junction to view wind-turbines and look across the U.N. Disengagement Zone into Syria, about 40 miles S.W. of Damascus (Dimashq). They had lunch at Birket Ram lake near Mas'ada. Driving north took them through Mijdal Shams, a Druze Moslem village, and up into the Hermon Reserve, wherein is located Mt. Hermon (Mt. Habetarim). They drove as far as a ski lift and rode the double chairs to the top where there was a view of Syria and Lebanon. Prayers were said and the Book was read, 1492-94 1752-54 The Mt. Hermon mountain range stretches about 35 miles N.E. of the park.

The Dec. 1989 National Geographic HOLY LAND map shows a Bayt Jinn about 3 miles W. of Mazra'at Bayt Jinn, about 27 miles S.W. of Damascus in Syria. This may be the Beit Jenn in The URANTIA Book 1493.1 with Tiglath in a base camp. Charles, thank you.

Dean decided to go to the room for a rest and I hung around the lobby to visit for awhile and see if anything else might be going on. Larry Geis seemed to be working on something with our bus drivers and guides so I waited to see what it might be. He eventually came



back into the lobby to say that the drivers and guides were going into Tiberias and would drop off any of us who wanted to go and then we could return by taxi. I yelled, "I'm going, but you'll have to wait until I run to the room to get Dean." And I did run. She was in bed and nearly asleep when I burst in, but she jumped up, dressed, and we both ran back to the lobby. One group was dropped off at the diamond cutting factory, but a group of eight, Larry, Dennis Creel, Joan Biek, Paula and Glenn Thompson, Dennis Baker, Dean and I, went on into town. We were dropped off in the tourist section of town, had the taxi stands pointed out, and then started on our way. We looked at some of the shops and stalls, Larry bought a great cap, Dean her tan Australian hat, couldn't find lead-lined film bags, and finally got hot and hungry.

We found a charming little open-air café with tables and umbrellas under the trees and stopped for lunch. I saw a frozen yogurt shop a few doors up so I started with that. Hummus with olive oil and pita bread was ordered and we all sat, talked, and ate. From time to time we saw a few others who had not come in with us. We walked for awhile longer, saw the Old City Walls, part of the lakeside Promenade, passed an old Hebrew Synagogue, St. Andrew's Church (Scottish) and headed back to get a taxi. It was decided to go on down to the Yardenit area so we all piled in and headed a bit farther south. The guys hired three canoes and climbed in. We were set up with 3-3-2. Joan and I were the 2 and we shared our canoe with all the back packs, etc. As we 2 headed out from shore we heard Larry's voice saying, "It looks like you know what you're doing." I said, "You bet your boots we do." Joan and her husband had been in a canoeing club for a number of years, and I had paddled a canoe on and off from the age of 13 when I first went to summer camp.

We went downriver for a way, stopping here and there and then worked our way back up. It was so peaceful and lovely. There were a few families along the banks swimming and playing. At one place a stout rope had been tied to a tree which overhung the river and the child-

ren and father took turns swinging out over water, letting go and plunging in.

A quiet spot was found and the canoes pulled in. Glenn secured the ropes on shore, Joan and I stayed in our canoe, and the other five went into the river. Very solemnly Larry baptised the four and then Paula baptised him. I didn't want to miss out but didn't want to be dunked so Larry came over to the side of the boat, I extended my arm and was reverently baptised. Joan followed suit. Larry said his mother had always wanted him to be a minister, and wouldn't she be surprised when she heard about this? It certainly meant a great deal to all of us.

We turned in the canoes, went back to the kibbutz, the wet ones changed clothes, we picked up Satu Sihvo and Alice Hoedemaker, lost a couple of the guys, and set out again for Tabgha and the Dalmanutha site at the Church of the Multiplication. When we arrived there was a group holding a service at the site so we walked down the lane a way farther, climbed down the boulders to the stoney shore and prayed and meditated individually for awhile. We walked by the water's edge and Larry found a very large, old stone with a hole bored through the center which very probably had been used as an anchor once upon a time.



There were some very beautiful magenta flowers growing on an overhead trellis. Wish I knew what they were.

We went to the Dalmanutha site when the other group left and said a prayer together. Larry produced bread and wine "out of thin air" and we had our own little communion service. A couple had remained seated quietly at the back of the area and when bread and wine were passed by Alice it was offered to them also. They accepted and shared with us.

One would think that after that long day we would call it quits.



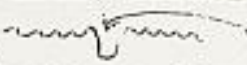
Not so! When we got back we decided we would meet at the Yigal Alon "Man in Galilee" Museum next to the hotel, where we could see the film of the Galilee's long history, including the 2,000 year old boat recently discovered on the bed of the lake. We didn't see the actual boat, however. It is being prepared and preserved so that being exposed to the air will not destroy it.

In 1985, after 10 years of drought, large areas of the Sea of Galilee had dried up. An ancient wooden boat was discovered in the sand and has been conclusively identified by researchers the world over as a boat dating to the time of Jesus.

After the show we went into the adjoining bookstore where we were able to purchase some fascinating maps and books of the region.

When dinnertime arrived we found the dining room closed and were told we would eat out on the lawn tonight. That didn't appeal to me one bit. I like comfort, elegance, and no heat, humidity, flies or bugs when I eat. What a surprise when we were seated! Tables had been set up on the expanse of lawn around the beautiful pool; white linens, silver and china, and buffet table after table of different foods from which to pick and choose. What a party! And to top it all, dear, thoughtful Paula brought over a glass of wine for me.

Aug. 17, Wed. Bus #1 has a new guide today: Louis Safieh (Greek Orthodox). We headed south down to the Jordan valley at the southern end of the Sea of Galilee. On the way we passed some caves in the mountains where bones have been found and carbon dated @100,000 years old. Passed the spas of Herod from the first century A.D. The water was very hot there and invalids came to these waters B.C.

We are now at the southern end of the lake and entering the Jordan Valley which is eighty miles long. Jordan is on one side, Israel on the other. On our left are the Gilead Mountains.  at the break Jordan starts. The Jordan Valley road is known as "Low

Man Boat". Jesus traveled this road many times. We passed fish ponds where the kibbutzim raise fish for sale and for their own use. On top of the mountain to our right are the remains of a twelfth century Crusader's castle called Belvoir (a corruption of the French "Belle Voir", beautiful view).

We continued on south to **Bet She'an**. It is one of the oldest cities of the Ancient Near East. The remains of some twenty layers of settlement, going back to the 5th millennium B.C.E., have been found at the tel (man-made mound) on the banks of Nahal Harod. The importance of Bet She'an since ancient times is the result of a combination of factors, including its position at a major crossroads, the fertile land surrounding it, and the abundance of water found nearby. Important finds dating to the period of Egyptian rule over Canaan during the 16th to 12th centuries B.C.E. were made in the excavations carried out at the tel during the 1920's and 1930's.

At Bet She'an National Park we walked all around the ancient city center which is being excavated. The first area we went into was a huge Roman theater with an approximate seating capacity of 7,000. Then we spread out and wandered over the very large area, and climbed up the steps to the top of the tel overlooking the digs for a great view. That was a thousand steps we climbed, wasn't it? In the heat it seemed like it.

Just a few hundred yards away have been found the ruins of a Hippodrome where chariot races were held. In the center would have been placed a stone or piece of metal which would reflect light and shine into the eyes of the horses. This would frighten them and keep them running very fast without resorting as much to the whip.

The property on which the Hippodrome was found belongs to a man who has a house there and refuses to let the excavations proceed unless he paid \$1,000,000 for it. Nice work if you can get it!



As we drove on south toward Jericho we encountered one of many military check posts. You remember those: lots of coiled barbed wire: young soldiers with big guns: and a roadway with barriers and spikes that made it look impossible for the bus. But our drivers made it every time.

Ahead we saw the mountains of Samaria, arab villages, farmland, Israeli settlements, all desolate except where irrigated, barbed wire, and the border between Jordan and Israel.

For lunch we stopped at the large Temptation Restaurant at Jericho, the city of palms and the oldest city in the world. Outside there were swarms of traders hawking their wares, but inside was an oasis of cool, a large ceramic tile fountain in the vestibule, and the restaurant with good food. After lunch we still had some time before moving on so we descended upon the large shop next to the fountain. They had all kinds of goodies there and many bought keffiyahs, the traditional desert headdress. I was interested in finding a T-shirt for myself and for my grandchildren. There were tables and tables, and boxes and boxes of them at the back of the shop. I had trouble finding sizes so one of the salesmen came over to help. Then I found it and I exclaimed, "Oh, the Tree of Life!" He looked up and said, "You know the Life Tree?" And so we talked about our both knowing of it. As I continued looking around I became aware that he and another salesman were talking together in the aisle behind me. My ears started twitching and I turned and said, "¡Español! ¿Uds. hablan Español?" They looked up in shock and then we all kept speaking Spanish. They told all the other clerks in the store and I got discounts when I checked out. What fun!

We stopped at the archeological site of Jericho, Tel is-Sultan, best known for its capture by Joshua in the 13th century B.C.E. when the ramparts of this walled city came tumbling down at the blast of trumpets.

Onward and downward, southwest, that is, on an old Roman road. On our right was the Old Testament Jericho, desolation, Land of Judea, donkeys, a short stop to look down into a ravine at a third to fourth century Greek monastery. On our right, Mt. Scopus, 3,000 ft. above sea level; on our left, Mt. of Olives, 2,850 ft. above sea level; up some twists and turns to our 7 Arches Hotel in Jerusalem.

Just before dinner many of us ended up in the cocktail lounge to wait for the dining room to open. This dining room was a large one too, and very good buffet service for dinner - and breakfast. The lobby was narrow and rectangular and spread across the whole length of the main building with a glass wall of windows looking out onto the lovely lawn and garden at the back of the hotel. During our stay there were several wedding receptions held there and we could sit and watch the proceedings; in one instance even join in.

After dinner a bunch of us were approached by some drivers who offered to drive us, free of charge, to Dajani's Orient Bazaar in the Old City. Why not? So we all piled in and away we went. They must have made a shuttle service of it because every 20 minutes or so more of our people arrived. In any case, they had two floors of just about everything. And, of course, many purchases were made.

As I worked my way along the many racks and counters I picked up something, I can't even remember what it was now, and started reading the Spanish on it out loud, very quietly to myself. The owner rushed over to me and said, "Wait, wait! I have an employee in back who is from South America." He brought him out and we spent the next 15 minutes talking with one another. He gave me a card with his name and address so I could write to him after returning home, and told me he was in Israel studying to be an optometrist. And, of course, I got a discount on the crystal and other items I purchased.

Two times in one day - come on! But it really did happen.



Aug. 18, Thurs. At breakfast I discovered the fresh plums of the region. And I carried some with me every day to eat along the way. We boarded our buses and headed for the Old City. The best view of the Old City is from the Mount of Olives outside the city walls. Jewish tradition declares that the Messiah will come through here, resurrecting the dead who will follow him to Jerusalem. For that reason the ancient and most sacred Jewish cemetery, believed to be the oldest cemetery in the world still in use, is located on the mount. From in front of our hotel, which was on the Mount of Olives, there was a spectacular view of the city and, as we drove in, we could see more and more.

As we walked from the bus park we saw a young bearded man, in long flowing robes, sandals, and gold crown, playing a harp and singing. We walked past the S.W. corner excavations and entered the Old City through the Dung Gate from which the city's refuse used to be thrown. We went to the Wailing Wall which was already jam packed with Israelis and tourists. We had been given small pieces of paper on which we wrote our prayer to be placed in a crack in the wall, thus ensuring that our petitions would go up to God. I have always believed, "When in Rome eat Roman candles." So after writing my small prayer I did place it in the Wall. One sad commentary on the moment though. A couple of the women there let me know by the looks they gave and their actions, that I am an outsider and they darn well weren't going to make it easy for me to get a place at the Wall.

As we moved over a little farther to the left there was a large fenced area in which numerous Bar-Mitzvahs were being performed. Thursday is the traditional day for this. The men wore Yarmulkes on their heads, prayer shawls, and we could see the candidates with phylacteries on their foreheads. These are small, black leather boxes which contain slips of parchment on which are written Scriptural passages. The rabbis were carrying the Torah.

The Western (Wailing) Wall is Jewry's most sacred site and premier

premier place of pilgrimage throughout the Exile. The Western Wall in the Jewish Quarter is a holy place by proxy. It's the west side of a huge, stone rectangle that served as retaining walls for the massive plaza (Temple Mount) surrounding the sacred, second Jewish Temple. With the Temple's destruction by the Romans, the Western Wall became the focal point of the Jewish religion.

When pilgrims in Jesus' time went to Jerusalem for the Passover they would enter the temple through the Porch Gates. At that time there were a number of tall porticos leading into the temple. El Aqsa Mosque is now built around the south porch gates.

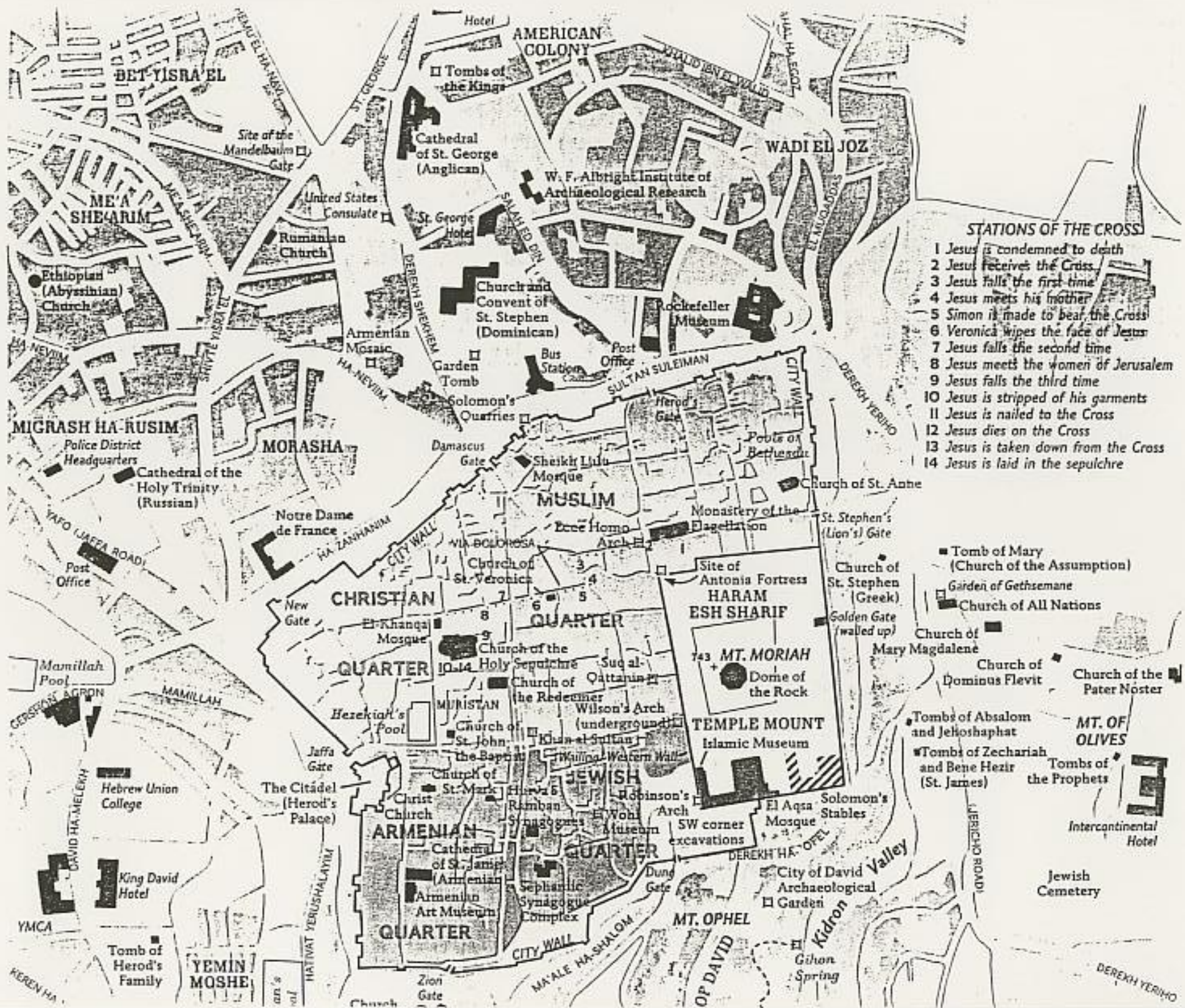
From there we took a stroll through the Muslim (Arab) section of the Old City. The city is divided into four sections: Jewish, Muslim, Christian, and Armenian. At this point we were walking between walls from the 15th, 16th, and 17th century. The narrow streets are paved with stone and the homes are of stone also. They are passed down from generation to generation and are called Insulars which means a home, on top of a home, on top of a home, surrounding a courtyard. There are long, huge, heavy keys for the doors.

From there we went over to the Pool of Bethesda where, according to tradition, Jesus healed the crippled man. 1649.1-5 1650.1.2. The ruins still show part of a small structure and two or three big stone holes which are probably where the pools were.

Almost right next to the pools is the Church of St. Anne. Inside St. Stephen's Gate, (East Gate - Lion's Gate), it is one of the best preserved Crusader buildings in the country. It is adjacent to the Pool of Bethesda and regarded as the home of Mary's parents, St. Anne and Joachim. The URANTIA Book says her parents were Joachim and Hannah. 1347.2

St. Anne's is a lovely, fairly large church. It is made of stone as are so many buildings in Israel. We looked through the many parts of





**STATIONS OF THE CROSS**

- 1 Jesus is condemned to death
- 2 Jesus receives the Cross
- 3 Jesus falls the first time
- 4 Jesus meets his mother
- 5 Simon is made to bear the Cross
- 6 Veronica wipes the face of Jesus
- 7 Jesus falls the second time
- 8 Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem
- 9 Jesus falls the third time
- 10 Jesus is stripped of his garments
- 11 Jesus is nailed to the Cross
- 12 Jesus dies on the Cross
- 13 Jesus is taken down from the Cross
- 14 Jesus is laid in the sepulchre

- Tomb of Mary (Church of the Assumption)
- Garden of Gethsemane
- Church of All Nations
- Church of Mary Magdalene
- Church of Dominus Fleuit
- Church of the Pater Noster
- Tombs of Absalom and Jehoshaphat
- Tombs of Zechariah and Bene Hezir (St. James)
- Tombs of the Prophets
- Intercantional Hotel
- Jewish Cemetery

Yes

Kefar Menal

Ga Te

1



the place and then all gathered together in the sanctuary of the church to pray and sing. Barbara sang "The Lord's Prayer" and then "Surely the Presence".

Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place  
I can feel his mighty power and his grace  
I can hear the rush of angel wings  
I see glory on each face  
Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place

The acoustics in the room picked up the sound and made it reverberate to a degree that caused all the other tourists in the church to come to a dead halt. It was literally MIND BLOWING!

I'm usually cool as a cucumber with anything and everything, but I literally fell apart on this one. It was a tremendous spiritual experience, and I just feel sure there must have been many of the celestial host enjoying it with us.

Our next stop was the Church (Monastery) of the Flagellation which is between Bethesda Pool and the Via Dolorosa and in the Muslim Quarter. It is supposedly on the site of a fortress, and there are two wings to the church with a courtyard in between. The floor shows an area where the Roman soldiers played games while Jesus was abused.

1984.3.4.5 The URANTIA Book states that the praetorium was an addition to the fortress of Antonia and the place where Pilate and his wife made their headquarters when stopping in Jerusalem. 1987.2 1990.9 1993.2 2001.5 2004.5 The Church of the Flagellation is not where Antonia's Fortress is. Jesus was scourged the maximum of 40 but 1 stripes: that is the number of your ribs. 1981.5 1982.2.3 1983.11.

We were next to walk the Via Dolorosa starting from the Tower of Antonia near St. Stephen's Gate and divided into fourteen stations, marking episodes on Jesus' route to Calvary. Nine stations lead to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, inside which are the last five.





2004-05-06. On the way is the Ecce Homo Arch, built by Hadrian and associated with this route. 1995.3 2000.4 thru 2021

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, in the Christian quarter, is supposedly the site of the crucifixion and the place where Jesus was buried and resurrected, and is said to be situated on the hill known as Golgatha (Calvaria in Latin, whence Calvary). The present church is a Crusader structure, though it has undergone many additions and modifications. Several Christian denominations share the church: Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Coptic, Armenian. It is divided into four sections by denomination, and each has jurisdiction over various areas of the church (it's easy to tell when you pass from one area to another). While they may be brothers in Christ, they are very competitive siblings. Since they can't agree on who among them should keep the key to the front door, it has been entrusted to the same Moslem family for centuries.

Our guide through the church was Kamil Sandouke (Moslem). There are some beautiful ceilings in the church, many wall paintings, magnificent stone work, relics, and on the first floor a slab of stone called the Stone of Anointment (Unction) which has Rosewood oil poured all over it. In the Roman Catholic section is an excavated part of the road Jesus walked - in the Greek Chapel they had the Flagellation Stone - and there was stone from the earthquake when Jesus died - and the empty tomb. I think we all had the feeling that this was all too ornate and unreal. And from the previous page references one can see that The URANTIA Book gives a rather different account. One very special thing we found there was the emblem of the three concentric circles inlaid in the marble floor just opposite the main entrance. They were black on a white background and large, about 8 feet across.

We went to a restaurant for lunch then headed off again. We drove out to the N.W. through the New Gate which, as its name implies is comparatively new, passed the Damascus Gate on the north side and

shaped like this  . Then we went on to see the Garden Tomb, Calvary. The tomb was discovered in 1883 by Gen. Gordon of Khartoum. It is called the "place of the skull" because the hill and caves actually do look like a skull. Our guide through this area was the Reverend Michael Tupper from Great Britain. He is quite knowledgeable and a delight to listen to.

There are two possible places for the place of crucifixion and tomb. This place might be the garden of Joseph of Arimethea because of the wine press and spring found here. Also, carved in stone to the left of the opening to the tomb is an Anchor Cross  . We saw the ledge of rock on which the body of Jesus was lain. Again, see the above page references. Calvary (Latin), Golgatha (Aramaic).

In the stone cliffs above the bus park is a broken water system which looks like caves or the eyes of a skull. People were stoned to death by throwing them off the cliff. Jeremiah was supposedly imprisoned in the smaller cave to the right.

After our groups did some URANTIA Book reading in the garden some broke off to walk through the Old City again and do some more shopping, and others went back to the hotel.

That evening there was an Arab wedding reception the lawn of the hotel which we could watch through the lobby windows. A few of our people went out to watch for awhile and were even invited to join in the dancing. And, as on most nights, a meeting after dinner for us to discuss plans for the next day.

Today is Karen Allen's birthday, so at dessert time Tom presented her with a present, we all sang Happy Birthday, and a big birthday cake was brought in for all of us to share. Making it even nicer, their four month old baby, Jeremy, and Karen's mother, Peggy Johnson were on the trip and could share in the festivities.



Aug. 19, Fri. Today we headed south. Each day in Israel, on both buses, prayers were said to start the day, and parts from The URANTIA Book pertinent to the day's destinations were read out loud. I asked about the statements of going up to Jerusalem even when people were traveling from north to south. Because of the importance of Jerusalem to the Jewish people one says from every direction, N., S., E., W., "going up to Jerusalem".

To our right we could see the small village of Bethany down the side of a hill. The Samaritans called themselves the real Jews because other tribes intermarried with the Babylonians and others. Now we're heading down the Jericho road which is dry and rocky. And we arrive at Qumran 26 miles southeast of Jerusalem. This is thought to be the City of Salt. It was the center of the Essene community which lived there in the second century B.C.E. (before current era) to the first century C.E. (current era). The Dead Sea Scrolls were found 2,000 years later sealed in jars in nearby caves, hidden from the menacing Romans; included are early texts of the Hebrew Bible from about 200 B.C. A settlement of the Essene sect that preserved the manuscripts has been unearthed. Although we didn't go into any of the caves we did go into the area and could see the ruins of dwellings and the caves.

As we drove farther south we entered the Wilderness of Judaea bordering the Dead Sea. We saw brown goats, some sheep, and groups of Bedouins (nomads). They lead a completely different way of life from the rest of the people in Israel and are from the time of Abraham. There are two kinds; Bedouins and Medulls. The Medulls change with the times and with the occupiers of the country, the Bedouins don't. They eat Mensub which is bone meal, rice, and a small piece of meat with yogurt poured over all. It is not eaten on a table, but on the ground. They half kneel and use the thumb and first two fingers to dip in the pot for food and eating. Tents are goat or camel skin. They are Muslims and may have a second tent tied to the first for the second wife. For the marriage ceremony the bride



and her family are on one side, the groom and his family on the other. Each asks the other, "I am sitting on stone. Will you marry me?" They then go to the chief of the tribe in another location and he marries them as Moslems. The wedding goes on for three days and nights.

Driving south along the coast of the Dead Sea one can see the Mountains of Moab on the left. The Dead Sea is 1312 feet below sea level and has 100 m.m. of air pressure on its surface. At the lowest point on the earth's surface, this body of water has such a high concentration of minerals that it cannot sustain life. The lake has shrunk, partly as a result of water diversion projects by Jordan and Israel. Twenty million gallons of fresh water comes into this sea every year but more evaporates out. It is 50 miles long and 18 miles wide. The southern end has the most chemicals in it. As iodine evaporates from the water we inhale it and it makes us feel less tired. The land in this area is very desolate, some flat and some hilly.

A bit farther south we passed En Gedi (Engedi, Ein Gedi) meaning "Spring of the Goat". The Judean Mountains were on our right. Where we saw barbed wire along the side of the road with signs saying "Danger - No Swimming" is the En Gedi Nature Reserve which is the winter home of wild ibex (antelope). In April the desert blooms, and seems carpeted with wildflowers. 1496.6 1497.6.7 1817.1

Almost at the southern end of the Dead Sea is Masada. Herod, escaping the Parthians in 40 B.C., fled with his family to this cliff-top city. In the final Jewish stand against the Romans in A.D. 73, 960 Jews kept 10,000 Roman soldiers at bay for more than a year. When capture was imminent, the defenders committed mass suicide rather than kneel to Rome.

We took the cable car to nearly the top and then walked about 80 steps the rest of the way. Steve "ManiacIntosh" ran up the whole way and



beat us to the top.

There were wonderful views of the Dead Sea and the Judean Desert from the top. As we walked around we saw ruins of the rock quarry and walls, various rooms and buildings, the site down below where the Roman soldiers camped, and the steam baths. The flooring is gone now. It had been supported by stone pillars: hot coals of burning wood were placed between the columns and cold water was piped in through the wall to make steam.

We had lunch at the Herodias Restaurant, a large cafeteria type. A number of our group went in for a swim after lunch. I walked to the water's edge, dipped in one fingertip and very quickly touched it to the tip of my tongue. Even that miniscule amount stung fiercely. Unfortunately, Tom Choquette swallowed a mouthful and was desperately ill for the rest of the time in Israel. His wonderful roommate, Don Risk, gave up some of the places we went so that he could take care of him. The temperature was 40°C. which is 104°F.

Although we didn't walk through the En Gedi Nature Reserve on the way back, we did stop to take pictures from up above.

We piled into the buses again and headed north to Bethany, a 1 hour and 20 minute trip. we were shown the place of the empty tomb of Lazarus. "Mishnah" was the Jewish law requiring people to visit a tomb in three days time to make certain the person in the tomb was really dead: medical practice was not too good in those days: this is why the women visited the tomb of Jesus on the third day as well as, in this instance, feeling that the body of Lazarus had already started to decay.

We went to the Sanctuary of Bethany, a very lovely church. Up high on an outside wall are three stained glass windows; one each of Mary, Lazarus, and Martha. Inside, in the dome are three rows of stained glass windows of flying birds, trees, and flowers. At this church

Barbara sang "Eternal Life". 1375.4 1842-43 1845.2 As we went down the narrow street to our buses there were several cars parked along the side, each one having the trunk, roof, and hood covered with wares the vendors were selling.

After this long, hot day we headed back to our hotel for showers, visiting, and another great dinner. As on most evenings we had a meeting to make or discuss plans for the next day. An awful lot of us wanted to make the trip to see the circles on Mt. Hermon. The guys did a great job of bargaining with the drivers for a good price and we signed up for the next day.

Almost every night a group went out dancing at The Arizona Pub and Disco in Jerusalem. It has been rumored that you all had a pretty darned good time and some even danced on the tables, and the bar - - - like Berkeley. Crazy Americans!

Aug. 20, Sat. Twenty eight of us plus Carrie from Nawas left at 8:20 a.m. to see the Wheel of the Giants (Rujm el Hiri) and didn't get back until about 6:25 p.m. Our guide was Gozal Nesharim.

We headed northeast to cross into the Golan Heights below the Sea of Galilee. There is tremendously diverse landscape from south to north: uphill, sand, sand hummocks, sand and stone hills, desolate, sparse, trees, grasses, fruits, gardens, sheep, goats, cows, and huge flocks of birds in the sky, all in that sequence. As we started up the Golan Heights we were told that we were on the very best road in the region. Even so, there are treacherous heights and sharp curves. Looking back down we could see the Jordan Valley and a bombed bridge and we passed through areas with barbed wire on both sides of the narrow road, soldiers, guns, military checkpoints with the zig-zag barriers and spikes and then, when we got to the top, it was flat again. Every time we'd see soldiers I pressed my face to the window of the bus, smiled and waved to them. They'd look very start-



led, then break into laughter and wave back. I'm sure they too must have thought, "Crazy American!"

It had been necessary for our tour guide and driver to obtain permission from the military authority to allow us to go up to see the circles. Although I knew we were in the Golan Heights and going to an area on Mt. Hermon, it wasn't until I had been back home for several months that I suddenly realized that we were in Syria.

The bus was able to take us to within 2+ miles of the site. We unloaded and started the long hike. It was HOT at only 11:45 a.m., dusty, stoney, and in a couple of spots, a bit marshy. Our guide had a jeep type van from I know not where, and he shuttled back and forth moving groups of us a way forward until we all arrived at the circles. Then we had to start clambering over the rings of the wheel to get to the center pile of rocks. A big thank you to the guys who took my hand to steady me while climbing to the top of the center section. The whole structure is about 6 feet high and 3 football fields in diameter.

Gozal told us as much as he knew about the place including the fact that, during the war in '76 there were soldiers encamped there and they used the huge stones for target practice. In the very center, under the stones, is a small chamber which they think may have been a burial chamber. In addition, the outer ring entrances were astronomically aligned.

We left about 2 p.m.. both walking and riding, and that jeep looked like the Volkswagon in the circus that spills out all the clowns: we were piled up both inside and outside.

We headed back across the top and down the west side of the Sea of Galilee to an open air roadside restaurant just above Nof Ginnosar. We had a great buffet and many of us piled salad and falafel (fried balls of ground chick peas) into pita bread. Then those who brought

or wore bathing suits under their clothes went in for a swim until it was time to leave.

After dinner there was a meeting to plan for the next day's celebration. Waldine gave a talk and described the agenda and historical journey and then she and Barbara sang "O Holy Night".

There was a whole busload of us who missed that because we had signed up for the Tzabarim Folklore Ensemble show in the city. The ensemble is composed of young men and women born in Jerusalem. The name "Tzabarim" is the pluralized form of "tzabar", the fruit of the cactus (more commonly known as "sabra") which, like the native Israeli, is rough on the outside but sweet inside. These teen age boys and girls are high school students who also study and perform these native Israeli and Arab dances. Performing as Master of Ceremonies and singer was a very talented young woman. She was very animated, spoke to the various groups of tourists in their native tongues, and kept everything moving at quite a good pace.

You didn't know that we have a star in our group, did you? Well, we do. Toward the end of the evening she called up various persons from the audience, sat them down on chairs on stage and gave each a musical instrument to play. Chuck Burton is our star! Of course, she asked questions of each person to introduce him to the audience, and then told each which cue would indicate his turn to tootle, bang, or whatever. It really became quite hysterical as it progressed.

Groups of different nationalities sat in various locations in the auditorium. At intermission, which was before Chuck's performance, we started to visit with other groups seated around us. The very pretty lady seated behind my left shoulder was from France, as were the rest of her group. She spoke no English so I was forced to reach back into the recesses of my mind to dredge up my three years of high school French. My pronunciation is great - my vocabulary



is limited, but we had a good visit together.

The dances, dancers and costumes were quite excellent. We all had a most enjoyable evening and I'm sorry you couldn't have all seen it.

Aug. 21, Sun. We really got up at dawn on this special day so that we could be outside the hotel before sunrise. Through special "wheeling and dealing" with the management of the hotel we had been given permission to raise the three concentric circle flag over the hotel for just one half hour. It would be the first time the azure circles would be seen in Jerusalem since the days of Melchizedek, 4,000 years ago. Salem was the site which after the disappearance of Melchizedek became the city of Jebus, subsequently being called Jerusalem. 1015.5

Becky opened the service with a prayer and the flag was raised by David just as sunrise came over our hotel to bathe the city in gold. Various short passages from The Book were read by different people and Waldine and Barbara sang "My Tribute". What a lovely, moving way to pay tribute to the birth of our Jesus - Michael of Nebadon.

Do you really know what you have been given? Ours is the first group of mortals on this planet to celebrate, in Jerusalem, on the 2,000th anniversary of the birth of our Creator Son. In ages to come many, many groups will come to celebrate this day, but we will go down in the history of this universe as being THE FIRST. Never can anyone else claim this great honor and privilege that we have been given. Can you even imagine the vast number of all orders of celestial beings, and perhaps student visitors, who were very probably there with us for this magnificent morning? It is an experience that will live with me, and us, down through the ages of eternity.

After breakfast we left for a visit to Bethlehem, birthplace of King David and Jesus, where a church was built by Constantine over a

grotto revered as the site of the Nativity. It is a "traditional" site and offers visitors a chance to wait in line to touch the clammy rock marking the precise spot of history - in this case, where Jesus was born. The tribe of David built Bethlehem - it means "House of Bread".



I'm sorry, I just couldn't resist.

We saw the Valley of Gehenna on our left as we drove by. Also on our left the mountain shaped like a volcano is Mt. Heroditus. And we passed one of many Rachel's Tombs.



The Church of the Nativity original church was built in 325 by Helena, mother of Constantine, over a grotto that's thought to be the exact spot where Christ was born (the manger where the Magi viewed the child was close by - a chapel marks the spot). The present structure dates from a sixth century rebuilding and a twelfth century Crusader repair. There are five religions represented here; Christian - Roman Catholic - Greek Orthodox - Armenian - and Gnostic. Inside there is a very beautiful mosaic floor that has been uncovered and some lovely columns and wall decorations. Barbara sang "Battle Hymn of the Republic" which was re-written as a "Peace Hymn of the Kingdom".

Then we were taken to a lovely area called Fields of the Shepherd where we were to have our own remembrance supper out under the trees. Although there were some caves there we felt that outside would be better. Each of us had brought his own "goblet" for the wine. There were readings from The URANTIA Book, prayers, and silent worship. Tom Allen played guitar and sang, Barbara sang "Shepherd of My Heart, and then the quartet of Tom, Chick Montgomery, Waldine and Barbara sang "The 23rd Psalm" (Bobby McFerrin's arrangement). After this beautiful service the wine was poured and we tore off chunks of bread from the loaves that were brought around. Just as Jesus had taught his apostles to worship their Father in heaven amidst the trees and among the lowly creatures of the natural world, so did we in this place. 1840.5.6

This lovely place is run by the YMCA, Beit Sahour Branch and also contains the Jones Boys Camp (good name, Jones).

So that we might see another church and combine it with a Christmas service in church we went to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bethlehem. There were three beautiful stained glass windows above the altar, stone columns, and hewn stone walls. Our service was very short but very nice.

We headed back to Jerusalem and went through the Damascus Gate on the north end of the Old City. This gate to the city is one of the major gates. Jerusalem's most recognizable landmark is the Dome of the Rock, (also known as the Mosque of Omar), the third holiest site in Islam, after Mecca and Medina. Built atop the Temple Mount on Mount Moriah, where Solomon's Temple and, later, Herod's Temple stood, it is now a Muslim shrine.

The Dome of the Rock, in fact, covers the rock which tradition says was the very spot where Abraham offered up Isaac (or Ishmail, according to the Koran), and from which Mohammed rode to heaven. The rock is also considered the foundation stone of the Temple. Jew and Muslim alike are so certain of the authenticity of the site that a sign has been erected to warn the very devout Jews against entering the area, lest they inadvertently tread upon the very spot where the Ark of the Covenant once stood. It offers yet another stone to touch, this one an altar under the center of the Dome. The mosque also has a hair from the beard of the Prophet - it is said that if you stick your hand in the cabinet and make a wish, it will come true.

As in all mosques we visited we had to remove our shoes. The floors are all covered with various kinds of carpets, rugs, and mats and they are replaced piece by piece as they wear out. The inside of the place is not quite as ornate as some of the others we saw but lovely nonetheless.

We went down into a room in the basement where a group of singers was rehearsing for a religious presentation at a later date. They allowed us to stay and listen for awhile and when we left we thanked them for their courtesy to us.

El Aqsa Mosque is right next door, so to speak, and at this point I can't remember if we went in or not and, if we did, what it looked like. I think, at that point, my brain was running on overload



and about ready to shut down.

Even so, we made another stop. This time it was The Church of All Nations (Basilica of the Agony) which is located between the Old City and our hotel. Outside was a beautiful, small garden with paths, bushes, trees and beautiful roses. Inside the church was more traditional, semi-ornate style with murals painted in the space above and behind the altar in the sanctuary. I especially remember the beautiful shades and tones of blue.

Before Louis left us at the hotel he said, "If this book you read says nothing bad about Jesus, and nothing bad about my church, I will become one of you - I will read this book." In the twinkling of an eye Warren was up at the front of the bus with a gift book. After we returned home to the States Becky called me and I was told that the same thing happened with Anis on their bus. I've also been told that a book was given to Gozal, and another one to the man on the felucca in Aswan, Egypt.

The joy we find in communion with God, the love we have for Jesus, and the spiritual fragrance which we are all trying to nurture in our lives surely must have touched these men as it spoke to their souls. And now may we pray that these supernal teachings will enrich and expand their lives as they have ours.

When we went to the dining room for dinner we found one whole end partitioned off for us for a special Jesus' Birthday Dinner. On this night we had waiters and special food in honor of the occasion. Barbara sang "The Believer's Prayer" (U.B. version). What a truly fitting and wonderful way to end this day of tribute to our beloved father-brother.

Aug. 22, Mon. This morning Bus #2 group left for Ben Gurion airport for an overnight at London - Gatwick Airport Hilton. We all gather-

ed outside the hotel to say good-bye for now and wish them a good trip home. After spending two weeks together it was rather sad to part. Bus #1 group left a bit later for its flight to Cairo, Egypt.

I imagine both of our groups encountered the extra security measures. You're glad they're taking the extra precautions, but you wish they didn't have to. We stood in lines between ropes for hours; the lines move very slowly. Do you remember all the stuff they did? Every bag of every passenger is looked at and felt, and there is a body search, and questions: "Did anyone give you a package to take on board?" "Have you been with your luggage at all times?" "Do you know why I am asking you these questions?"

You know why.

My sincere thanks to all those who gave me bits and pieces of information to fill in the gaps in my memory and my notes. And thank you to those who have sent pictures to me.

Lois Hansel asked if I would please thank everyone for allowing her to join our group on the trip. Said she had a wonderful time with all of us. It was our pleasure to meet her.

We have all been so privileged to make this unparalleled trip together at this very special time. It can never happen again. Thank you Berkeley.

IN MEMORIUM

Berkeley Elliott

August 23, 1917 - January 3, 1995

KJH

*Licky*