

## Aliyah - Let Us Go Up!

Travel Log from July 22, 2005 through July 30, 2005

### Friday through Saturday, July 22-23, 2005

We began Shabbat on Friday evening by marching through the Old City through the merchants along David and Chain streets to the Western Wall. What a powerful experience to step onto the Prayer Mall, coming from the narrow streets with their pressing shops and worn paving stones. We approached the Wall with our own prayers and the prayers we carried from the U.S. for others.

The stones were smooth by hundreds of years of hands and tears. We added ours and blessed HaShem that as Ps 130 says, **HE IS THERE**. We knew He was there, and we knew His eyes were there, on that Place. With Janet dressed like the modest women she is, the boys in *kipot* and carrying *talitot* we for a moment a part of the Jewish nation - and we knew with a certainty that we were a part of the commonwealth of Israel.

A quick taxi ride home before sundown and then we lit candles in our apartment on a hill across from the Old City.

We slept late, still getting over the jet lag. After lunch we set out on foot for the Garden Tomb. The streets are like Charlotte, the names change, and make turns that are not on the maps.

From our apartment (which is next door to the famous YMCA and the King David hotel - and two blocks from the King David Citadel Hotel where Sec. State Condi Rice spent the night last night), it was basically a straight shot past the Damascus Gate and the Arab Shuk market to the Garden Tomb. We commented as we went by the Damascus Gate how unhappy Nehemiah would have been seeing the market at the Gate in full swing, on the Shabbat.

The Garden Tomb was a pleasant respite from the heat. The heat in the city was almost unbearable, but we entered the Garden and all it was all calm and cool. We got there right after they opened after the noon to 2:00 siesta time which meant we had it almost to ourselves. We sat in a cool area under the trees and read the Gospel of John account, walked up to the lookout of the hill that may have been Golgotha, and then stepped into the Tomb. **It was empty! HE WAS NOT THERE.**

We had our tzit-tzit tucked in, so as to not be an offense, but stopped to speak to another messianic believer, whose obvious blue techelet told us we had found another who honored the Master by revering His Torah. His first response at seeing our tzit-tzit pulled out for him to see was "Shabbat Shalom". Yes, there was much shalom in our Shabbat, in this City of Shalom.

While at the Garden Tomb, Judah (who like a trooper walked there and back under his own power) made special note of the groove where the stone went. Like he does as a part of our Erev Shabbat family tradition, he rehearsed the

Resurrection for us all, recounting the three days, the removed stone, and that John saw the head covering neatly folded.

We enjoyed spending a while listening to a group of Christian tourists singing to a guitar and then walked back through the maze of Arab merchants, back up the hill to King David Street. I had two big strong sons guarding their mother on either side.

After a break from the heat of the day, we ventured to a park to watch children play (Judah among them). A walk across the street to the Yemin Moshe neighborhood and the famous windmill, took us to a breathtaking view across the valley to the Old City. "On Your Walls O Jerusalem" faintly rang in our ears as we could see the Star of David flapping in the breeze above the Jaffa Gate.

Then, sadly our Shabbat was over as the strains of "Eliyahu haNavi" echoed in our apartment. Ahhh, what a Shabbat.

We thought about how interesting our first Shabbat in Jerusalem had been. Like most messianic believers, we found ourselves in two worlds; finding comfort at the Kotel and weeping with our brothers and sisters there - and then finding peace in a Garden and empty Tomb - singing songs with fellow believers about the Risen Messiah.

Like most messianic believers, we found ourselves in the middle - keeping Shabbat, and remembering the One Whose rising meant that we could enjoy Eternal Shabbat. We rejoice that we are not alone in the "middle".

### **Sunday, July 24, 2005**

We had a very good and busy day on Sunday. We started with a trip to the Holyland Hotel and the 2nd Temple model, which is an outside model of Jerusalem in 66 CE (it is moving to the Museum of Israel in the future). It is made from real stone etc. and gives you a marvelous perspective of what you are looking at when you are in the Old City.

After that, we went to the Tisch Biblical Zoo. It is one of the best zoos we have ever been to. It was more like a garden, and the variety of animals was remarkable. Judah got to see a real Asiatic Lion like those that roamed these hills 3,000 years ago when David kept his father's sheep.

After lunch at the Kanyon Yerushalayim [Jerusalem Mall - the largest in the Middle East], we drove over the Mount Hertzl and the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial. Today is 17 Tammuz, with the remembrance of Golden Calf incident, and beginning the 3 weeks of mourning that ends with Tisha B'av [9th of Av]. It was a more than fitting day to go to Yad Vashem. Being the 17th of Tammuz, it was packed.

Janet stayed outside with Judah (she has visited before), since the memorial is more than a little disturbing. Joshua, Jeremiah and I wandered through the halls with feelings ranging from shame (how Christians have persecuted Jews), anger,

despair, horror, and immense sorrow. We noted that most of the people were not weeping, or showing emotion at all. They appeared to be using the memorial - they appeared to be reminding themselves that this happened to the Jewish nation, but they are still here. After all, the Yad Vashem memorial is located in the State of Israel - something unimaginable to those millions of victims of the Holocaust.

HaShem knows of their sorrow. He knows of our thankfulness to Him for this Land.

After an Kosher Italian meal (what is great is Kosher is the NORM here!), at Jerusalem's "Little Italy Restaurant", where they were playing Hawaiian music, we went for a walk at sunset in Yamin Moshe and gazed across at the beautiful walls of the City of Gold.

Although traffic is hair-raising, and finding parking is next to impossible, we are getting around pretty good. The maps are almost useless with the multiple names for every road, but with GPS, at least we can see where we made a WRONG turn. We ended up on the road to Ramallah at one point today, and did a "u-ee" to return to West Jerusalem (Judah chirped, "What's a u-ee?")

### **Monday, July 25, 2005**

It just keeps getting better. We had a great Monday. We rose early and left our apartment opposite the Old City. The traffic in Jerusalem this morning was far lighter than we have seen except for the Shabbat [Sabbath]. Of course, leaving at first light helped. Our destination was the Dead Sea, and yesterday the temperature was 115 degrees, so we wanted to be on the Masada Fortress before the sun was too high in the sky.

I am normally a 'fraidy cat', so our shortcut over the Mount of Olives through Yesha [so-called West Bank] was not something I was thrilled about - but that is why I have two big strong sons - my body guards. With Jeremiah manning the GPS, and Joshua with a paper map, we shot over the Mount of Olives and out into the Judean wilderness on the Jericho Road. We recounted for Judah (still commenting on how EARLY it still was), the story of the "Good Samaritan".

Of course, like Yeshua, we made sure that he understood the point of the parable was not that the "Samaritan" was so good, but that our neighbors are people that HaShem shows us in need.

As soon as we joined the Jericho Road from our shortcut across the mountain, we could see the long line at the Israeli checkpoint for people coming the opposite direction - and then began to dread the return trip where we would be entering Israeli control from the Yesha side.

We passed through two more checkpoints before getting to Masada. Each time we were waved through without a second look. Everywhere we go we see what amounts to profiling - and we don't look like people who are trying to hurt other people - so through we go. The TSA could learn a few things here.

Which reminds me, this is one Gun-Loving-Place. With special IDs gun-toting citizens walk right past security into any and EVERY location. Security at the Western Wall is VERY tight, but all around there are men carrying - and when I say carrying, and ain't talking concealed (presumably that is true as well) - we're talking cool guns - automatic, with shoulder straps.

Something the US government could learn - in a crisis, it is always nice to know anywhere there are citizens, there are other citizens ready to defend them with deadly force if needed. Very cool, and very Torah observant. My favorite was at the mall - watching a man wearing a Talit like a pancho, and underneath a barrel sticking out with his automatic strapped to his back.

Back to our Dead Sea excursion. We arrived at Masada by 7:45 am and caught the first cable car up to the Fortress. The dawn hikers were already walking down the Snake Path to get down. It was already well over 90 F. Masada is an awesome place.

Near the lowest place on earth a mesa rises a thousand feet, and on it the Masada fortress. When the Romans built a huge ramp up the mountain to put their battering rams against the walls, the nearly 1,000 Jewish inhabitants committed suicide rather than let the Romans crucify them all. It has been a symbol of Jewish independence and resistance ever since.

So it was a thrilling thing to have our Masada excursion end with an air show by two IAF F-16s flying over Masada. In typical homage to the Jewish Zealots that stole the victory from the Romans in 73CE, the two IAF F-16s went across the top of the Masada fortress at about 100 feet, with one doing an aileron roll as he passed over the Flag of Israel on the Fortress. It is nice to know that there are men like that that ply the skies over this tiny nation - men who remember. It made our memories that much better.

One thing we learned that we didn't know and that was that the Masada rebels were actually quite an observant group. Herod's stables were converted into a synagogue and they even had a Torah room and an Genizah (Genizahs are for storing damaged scrolls, since the Holy Name should never be destroyed).

In the synagogue ruins, a father and his young son were laying t'fillin and donning talit for morning prayers. They had driven to Jerusalem for the privilege of praying from this place. Of course, they faced a direction quite foreign to us - until we remembered - Jerusalem was Northwest from Masada. It was the first time that my sons had ever been East of Jerusalem.

A stop at the En Gedi oasis, where David cut off King Saul's hemmed tzit-tzit, and the knowledge that the only way in was hiking (now 10:30am and getting VERY hot), we all voted to go to the En Gedi Dead Sea beach instead. Judah just HAD to float. He has been talking about it for a month, and will be talking about it for another month now, because he thought it was great. There on the beach were three IDF soldiers who were swimming as well. Swimming is not the word. Floating is right.

On the beach, there were a bunch of kids on an Israel Youth Heritage trip. Americans. Dutifully watching them, were several young armed body guards.

Judah was completely disgusted and more than a little upset when he got a little of the Dead Sea water on his tongue as he floated on his back. He was convinced, it wasn't like any water he had ever tasted.

Our dash out of the 45 Celsius heat took us past Jericho again as we climbed the 4,000 feet back to Jerusalem. Along the way Judah would occasionally start singing "Yehei, Yehei" at the top of his voice (a blessing for us, as we got to hear the real version by the Chevra once we got back to our apartment and fired up the iPod).

Along the Jericho Road, hardly a soul could be seen. The land is beyond desolate between Jericho and Jerusalem. Occasionally, a narrow valley would reveal some Bedouin shanty.

When we approached the checkpoint to come out of Yesha, the long line was not meant for us. When I rolled down my window, the IDF soldier merely looked at me and waved me past the line. I didn't have to empty my pockets, I didn't have to strip off my belt. I didn't have to take off my shoes. He just waved me through, with who knows what in the trunk. Yeah, I know I don't LOOK like someone trying to hurt someone. Again, the TSA could learn something here.

As we drove into Jerusalem we decided on a side trip to the Mount of Olives again for a stop at Gethsemane. The GPS took us right by "Ammunition Hill" on Mount Scopes. It was something we were going to do, but hadn't found the time yet. We stopped. What a treat it was. The museum and the memorial there are dedicated to the reunification of Jerusalem (June 7, 1967).

The museum is something President Bush should see, since he seems to forget that before 1967, Jerusalem was held illegally by Jordan and Jews were not permitted in the Old City. Something many here do not forget. The anti-disengagement ribbons are on every other car, and many are wearing orange arm bands as we walk around the City. At the memorial, we joined a group of young men from New York area Yeshivas who were going in to the museum theatre - at the beginning of a 6-week tour of Israel with International Torah Tours.

Miah was impressed with the war displays and the IDF Sherman Tank. Joshua and Judah liked it too; and walking in the heavily fortified Jordanian trenches reminded us all of what a true miracle the Battle for Jerusalem was in June 1967.

At the Mount of Olives, we nearly stumbled into a Mosque, thinking it was a 'church'. We decided after that we didn't really want to see any gaudy 'church' nonsensical display that paganizes something they consider 'holy'; and opted for a nice quiet park half way up the Mount of Olives instead.

There among the olive trees we read the account of how Yeshua came down that very road from Beit Pagey and how His talmidim cried out, "Shalom in Heaven!" from Luke 19. Judah was picking up rocks and throwing them as I read. And then I got to the part where Yeshua told those that complained about what His talmidim were saying that if they did not praise Him, the rocks themselves would cry out. A teachable moment.

We were half way through the Matthew 24 "Olivet Discourse" where Yeshua describes this City surrounded by her enemies when the Mosques started with their afternoon call to "prayer". It was especially poignant when we got to the part where Yeshua says, "When you see the Abomination that causes desolation standing in the Holy Place" - with the sound of demonic calls over loud speakers in the background.

Then, reading Zechariah 14 we were comforted with the reminder that the Beautiful Gate would be opened, and King Messiah would enter through it - and the abomination that now sits on that place will be forgotten as He reigns on His throne on the Temple Mount.

Our field trip ended with a reading Zechariah 14 in the olive trees on the Mount of Olives - opposite the Beautiful Gate and the Temple Mount - and a reminder to Judah that Ezekiel 47 teaches that the Mount of Olives would be split and water from Tzion will flow to the Dead Sea - and it will be HEALED. The water there will no longer be salty and En Gedi will be a fishing village - and then Judah said, "And we'll go fishin'!". Yes, we will go fishing... in a sea that now has no life in it - and the desert around it will be one huge oasis. I wonder what we will call the Dead Sea then? Maybe Yam Chai [Sea of Life]? Even so, come quickly L-rd Yeshua, come.

Incidentally, today is the day that my Dad, of blessed memory, died in 1980. The Beautiful Gate reminded me how much he loved the song, "The King Is Coming". I remember how when we were here with him he talked about that Gate being the ONE.

Ah, City of Gold, how we love thee. Only in the Kingdom could it be better.

### **Tuesday, July 26, 2005**

When we left our apartment on King David Street this morning, Judah's comment was, "They like to honk a lot in Israel". Everyone immediately burst out laughing, including Judah. The statement of the obvious was pretty cute. We had heard that Israeli social discourse tends toward being cold. Our experience has been anything but that - except for driving. They drive like me - AGGRESSIVELY. Everyone we have met has been friendly, and polite. English is very common. You will hear someone speaking very fast Hebrew and then when you ask, "Anglit?" - they immediately switch to American English.

Although all the road signs are in Hebrew, Arabic, and English, our biggest complaint is that the roads are often named differently than the maps shows them. The vast majority of the young ladies here would fit right in at a homeschool

conference. And there are way too many pretty ones. We have already told the two oldest boys that we cannot stay here past next week; because we are afraid that they will find the attractions too great in Israel.

Our day began by walking the Western and Southern wall ramparts. We climbed the wall stairs at the Jaffa Gate and saw the Old City of Jerusalem from a very unique perspective. There, near the Jaffa Gate we could look east and see right next to the Wall the likely location of Pilate's Praetorium where Yeshua was tried.

As we followed the top of the wall, we walked next to where Herod's palace was again, where Yeshua stood trial before Herod. As we followed the walls when they reached the southern edge and turned east we passed right by where Yosef Kaifa [the High Priest Caiphas] plotted against Yeshua and tried Him illegally for blasphemy.

I know that I keep talking about how Judah is responding to what he is seeing and experiencing, but it really is amazing us how this little four year-old is drinking it all in. Every time he hears "Yehuda" [Judah] or "Yehudi" [Jew], he smiles to himself. Every once in a while he will look at Janet or me and say, "Their using my name". On his way to bed he shouts, "Erev Tov!" [good night]. While we walked along the top of the walls, there were occasionally steps to descend to lower wall sections. He would dutifully stand at them until someone took his hand. As we were walking the walls together we would occasionally start singing "On your walls O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen." I am sure that the people below where we were were wondering about the crazy Americans who were marching their walls - standing with Israel.

As we descended the walls into Jewish Quarter, we stepped immediately into the past, along the Roman Cardo road. We looked at the outside of the Ramban synagogue and the remnants of the Hurva synagogue while I explained to the boys that Rabbi Ramban had paid people from northern Israel to live in the City in the Twelfth Century because there were no Jews living there and worshipping there. A sad thought. The City of David, where "Christians" had driven every Jew out. Previously the Temple Mount was turned into a garbage dump by "Christians" and it was used as a symbol of how "Christianity" had "triumphed" over Judaism. Only once a year did they permit Jews to pray at the Western Wall, on Yom Kippur.

The Ramban, wisely understood that Jerusalem should always have the prayers of Jews in it. The synagogue stands as a reminder today of that sad history, and yet that courage is reflected now in the fact that the number one place in all of Israel for visiting is none other than the Western Wall. And although the "garbage dump" still remains on the Temple Mount, that is only for a while.

Right near Hurva Square in the Jewish Quarter we found the remnants of Hezekiah's wall that he built to protect Western Jerusalem. Our Bible reading before starting out today had reminded us of this event, in 2Chronicles 31, as well as the tunnel to the Pool of "Siloam". From the Jewish Quarter we descended down next to the Western Wall. The Kotel was packed as it usually is.

Right near the Dung Gate we went into the Davidson Archeological Center. This was fairly new, and what a treat it was. The excavations were from next to the Kotel south toward the Hulda Gates.

In this Archeological Park, we were able to descend right under "Robinson's Arch" onto the First Century street that came along the Western Wall. Here, more of the Western Wall was exposed, but because it was below the ground level of the Kotel, it has not been used for traditional prayers - but it was still the foundation of the Temple!

Along the First Century street were the ruins of shops. The very place where Yeshua over turned the tables of the money changers and showed His zeal for His Father's House. We stepped down into a First Century covered *mikvah* [immersion pool] and recounted how we would have followed the Master through such a process if we had been one of His talmidim [disciples] back then.

Then we went by one of the ruins of the stalls and picked up an imaginary goat, and some birds (Janet has had three sons), and Temple Shekel for the imaginary Kohen to fulfill the *mitzvah* for the first born son. Then we took our imaginary items up the steps to the back side of the Temple - up the Hulda Steps, to the very Hulda Gates that pilgrims of the First Century would have entered to worship the King of all Creation. Back to reality... The gates are walled shut. We were kept out. But we knew that we have already been allowed in - we are already accepted in the beloved.

We stood on those precious steps for a few moments and breathed in. Joshua said, "He is here - not He WAS here - He IS here, NOW." Yes, He is. Janet started singing "Get yourself up, on a high mountain, O Tzion bearer of Good News. And lift up, your voices mightily, Jerusalem bearer of Good News. Lift them up, do not fear, lift them up, do not fear - and say to the cities of Judah, your G-d, your G-d is here."

The Davidson Park has the best movie I have ever seen explaining the sights and sounds that a First Century pilgrim would have seen and heard as he ascended from David's City past the Pool of Sh'loach [Siloam], up the steps, singing the Psalms of Ascent, entering the Temple for Passover, Shavu'ot, and Sukkot. I must say that by the time it was over I was crying like a baby.

Overflowing with a sense of privilege for having seen those stones, those paving stones, those gates, we marched back up into the Jewish Quarter and stopped at "Tzaddik's New York Deli" for some good old fashioned Israeli food... NY style.

We cut through the David Bazaar and exited the Old City for our afternoon break at the apartment. Our afternoon had only one thing on the agenda: the Pool of Sh'loach [Siloam]. This is the place that the Water Ceremony for Sukkot began - where at the end of it, Yeshua cried out, "Come unto Me all you who are thirsty, and I will give you living water". This is the pool where Yeshua sent the blind man to wash on that last week before Passover.



"Siloam" is a typical mish-mashed English transliteration. Sh'loach means "sent". The pool is called "Sh'loach" ["Sent"], and has been since 700 BCE when Hezekiah built it at the end of the 1,600 foot tunnel to bring water into the city (2Chron 31). Yeshua SENT one who had been blind from birth to a pool of water at the END of a 1,600 foot tunnel that was pitch black - to the place where He compared to Himself. How is that for some symbolism?

Well, our plan was to walk in the water, through the tunnel from the Gihon Spring to the Pool Sh'loach. It was not to be. It was nearly impossible to find. We went up and down some very scary Arab neighborhoods. We finally ended up walking down a road where we stumbled into a group of very wet Jewish teens. We knew we were on the right path all at once. The only problem is that the tunnel walk is one way, and we were at the exit. The good news is that the exit is the place we really wanted to see: the Pool of Sh'loach. We got permission to "go in the exit" and peered into Hezekiah's tunnel. We looked into the clear water at the Pool. Then dad embarrassed everyone by breaking out into "Mayim, Mayim!"

The hike back up to our car was excruciating - but Judah got a ride on his gentle, 6'2" brother, Jeremiah.

Off to Ben Yehudah Street for supper and some shopping. We will have to do Mechane Yehudah later. After a great kosher supper, we joined the CROWD on Ben Yehudah Street. Mixed with the Hebrew in the conversations of those that we passed by, was a lot of English. There were a lot of people there.. Just like us.

Tomorrow, *b'ezrat HaShem*, it is back across the West Bank to drive up the Jordan River Valley to Tiberias on the Kinneret [Sea of Galilee]. We will overnight at at Kibbutz there and hopeful see some calm waters. I hear that Yeshua walked on those waters - and calmed them one night as well. Even the wind and the waves obey His voice!

### **Wednesday, July 27, 2005**

Shalom from the Galil, along the shores of Yam Kinneret [Sea of Galilee].

When we were planning our trip to Israel, we specifically avoided visits to "traditional Christian sites." We did this for a couple of reasons - first, many of the most popular tourist sites are simply in the wrong location historically. Many of the traditional sites for "Life of Jesus" tours were established in the Byzantine era. When Constantine supposedly "converted" to Christianity in the Fourth Century, he sent his mother throughout the land of Israel to establish places for pilgrimage. Many of the locations of supposed events were chosen for convenience, and often just poor Bible-reading.

Another reason we chose to avoid them is the fact that most of them are more like a trip down idolatry road than something to honor the Master. Instead, for our itinerary we opted for the obvious, the historical, and the verifiable.

After all, PLACES ARE NOT HOLY BECAUSE OF SUPPOSED EVENTS. There is only one HOLY PLACE, and it is the Temple Mount. Now history is something else. And prophecy as well. So our trip to the see Galilee was not going to where the tour buses go - from "church of this" to "church of that". Instead, our trip was to see the lake, and the mountains - and some things that we could know to be true because of history, instead of Constantine's crazy mother. After all, you can't fake a lake.

The drive from Jerusalem was about 2 hours. We left early and went by Jericho and up the Jordan River Valley. We drove by Bet She'an where King Saul was defeated and he took his own life. Next to that Har Moreh and Har Gilboa where Gideon defeated the Midianites.

The change from desert wilderness, to rolling grassy hills, to lush farmland was remarkable. Tiberias was our first stop. The plan was to stop and get a boat schedule for a boat tour. Let's just say that Tiberias has seen better days for tourists - and the only boat tours were prearranged.

Not to be deterred, we headed out in search of the Sower's Cove that is between K'far Nachum [Capernium] and Tabgha. GPS took us to the traditional site of the "Sermon on the Mount" after walking onto the grounds and seeing the typical shrine, we quickly left. We knew that the Bible had Yeshua praying on the mountain before the "sermon" - but that it took place by the sea, on a hill up from there. Sower's Cove is the spot that best fits the Biblical account. Thankfully, Constantine's mother did not know that, so there is nothing at Sower's Cove today. Well, that is what we thought. It turns out the National Parks has put a very nice park nearby, and using GPS mapping, we could see the clear outline of the cove as we pulled into the park.

We walked out into a field and sat upon some rocks and then read the Matthew 5 portion of the Sermon on the Mount. Sitting in the location we could easily see Tiberias on the hill opposite our location on the lake. "A city set on a hill cannot be hidden" gained its obvious object lesson. From Sower's Cove one can easily see Nof Ginosar [Plain of Gennesaret], which has some of the most fertile soil in all of Israel - the "good soil" of the soil parable gained its obvious object lesson.

From there we went to K'far Nachum [Capernium]. It was one of the cities that Yeshua cursed, and it ceased to exist (again, Constantine's mommy was clueless of their archeological location, thankfully). The K'far Nachum archeological site now can reveal what was K'far Nachum. There are ruins of a 3rd Century synagogue, and underneath that synagogue are the remnants of a First Century synagogue. Which means that the K'far Nachum synagogue is where Yeshua taught the John 6 "Bread of Life" teaching. This is the watershed event in Yeshua's earthly ministry, for it was after this that the crowds stopped following Him. The teaching was too hard. In it, He uses strong Covenant language and symbolism (mistaken by those who abandoned the Hebrew roots of their faith to be the initiation of some form of "sacrament").

We were treated to the sweet simplicity of sitting in that ancient synagogue which only has a few walls and some pillars and read the John 6 account. We then went

outside the synagogue and we ate bread and grape juice in honor and remembrance of the Master, blessing HaShem with the Hebrew blessings that He said when He was here.

We then went back to Tiberias and visited the Galilee Experience, and their well-made multimedia show done by some messianic believers as a ministry tool.

Our day ended at Kof Ginosar. This is the place where Yeshua got out of the boat after having walked on the water that night (called Gennesaret in your Bible). There is now a kibbutz on it, and we are staying the night at the kibbutz. We swam in the lake. Judah waded. At one point he moved past me saying softly, "I'm following Jesus - I am walkin' in the water." I reminded him that he had a way to go, Yeshua walked ON the water.

What a beautiful lake this is. The Kinneret reminds me so much of Lake Kivu where we lived in Central Africa. Nof Ginosar is a farming community and they have banana trees all around it, to add to the comparison to Lake Kivu. From here, looking over at Tiberias, it looks like the city of Bukavu in Eastern Congo.

Out our bedroom window in the kibbutz, we can see the Arabel Cliffs rising suddenly from the lake shore. This is where the Galileans unsuccessfully resisted the Roman 10th Legion in 66CE. This is where the bloodshed of the First Revolt began. The Kinneret was red with blood, Josephus said. The Jews had converted their fishing boats, into war craft. The Romans' rafts provided ample platforms to cut down the Jewish resistance. One of the boats was discovered here in Nof Ginosar not long ago, and the kibbutz has this 2,000 year old boat on display.

The food at Kibbutz Nof Ginosar was amazing. Jeremiah decided that he would like to come and stay awhile. After his third breakfast, we had to say, "enough."

Everywhere we went around the Galil region we said the Blessings to the Almighty, in Hebrew.

### **Thursday, July 28, 2005**

Shalom from Yerushalayim, City of Gold!

Our stay at Kibbutz Nof Ginosar in Galilee was a great experience. The food was great, and the people were very sweet. With sadness we left our spot on the Sea of Kinneret this morning to head out of the valley that makes up the Galilee. It is 600 feet below sea level, so the drive through the Jezreel Valley and across the mountains to the coast was going to give us cooler weather. I say 'cooler' - not 'cool'. In Nof Ginosar yesterday, it was 43 Celsius - and humid. We decided that Jerusalem in the Summer is far more comfortable.

We headed out in our little Toyota up through Migdal, where Miriam of Madgal was from. It was a short drive past the Cliffs of Arabel and the Valley of Doves to the valley near Natzaret [Nazareth]. The Arabel Cliffs are a very unique topographical feature - a feature that would have been very familiar to the Master and His

talmidim, since they are visible from anywhere on the Kinneret. We didn't stop at Natzalet, or Mount Tabor. Mount Tabor can't be faked, but as "Mount of Transfiguration" it is indeed a fake, and the shrine on the top is not a welcome site to those following the Most Humble of Servants, our Master Yeshua.

As for Natzalet, the real location is most likely 5 miles north, so the only thing to see in the modern Natzalet (other than it being a great city in Israel), is the numerous "shrines" to various events - which did not occur in that location. The one event upon Mount Tabor that we were referencing was to Devorah and Barak. Since Tabor was simply the assembly point for the army of Devorah and Barak, we decided to go straight to Megiddo, which is near Ta'anak where the Kishon flows and the army of Sisera was defeated by Israel (and the host of heaven).

When the GPS flipped out going through Afula, Judah's little voice in the back seat, immediately, and resolutely announced to the family, "We're lost". It broke all the tension while Miah rebooted the GPS. Judah is so pleased with his ability to make the family laugh.

We skirted on east side of the Valley of Jezreel, and then cut across the middle to the southern end of the ridge that makes up Mount Carmel to the north. Our destination was Megiddo. The archeological park is run by Israel's National Park service. So far, of the places that we have visited, the ones that are the best-equipped and maintained are National Parks. Their web site is excellent as well. Plus, the added advantage of no "incense burning" permitted on National Park grounds.

Tel Megiddo is a huge site. The most important of the finds were the stables and palace of King Solomon. We descended hundreds of feet down into the hill in the shaft that went to the tunnel of the underground spring that supplied Solomon's fortress here.

From a high point on Har Megiddo, we stopped and read Devorah's song from Judges 5. We knew that this praise song was written as prophecy as well so we read from Daniel 12, and Psalms 83 - where the events surrounding Israel's existence in the midst of hostile neighbors are brought into perspective. HaShem owns this Land. He has given it to this people - and NO ONE will defeat Him.

Har Megiddo plays prominent as the Biblical symbol that represents that G-d will not permit the forces, no matter who they are, or what they claim to believe (are you listening President Bush?) to thwart His plans for this people and this Land. Read Psalms 83 and you will read the ancient names for the same countries that today threaten the existence of this tiny outpost of freedom. But HaShem is the MOST HIGH, and He will fight for these people. We finished our Bible reading there, overlooking the vast Jezreel and the site of the battle of the End Days, by reading Revelation 19.

Our hearts thrilled to the thought of Messiah riding down upon this valley to deliver His beloved - and that we were included in that group. Joshua reminded us that

Hosea speaks of Jezreel as a symbol for the Ger [the Stranger joined to Israel] being His own.

It was hot. Judah was certain that any place could be better than an archeological site in the middle of nowhere. A promise of a quick drive to the ocean changed that.

Caesarea was a short drive from Megiddo. It plays an important role in our faith. It was the home of one of "the seven," Phillip. It was where Paul landed on his last visit to Jerusalem, where he was later imprisoned for 2 years, and where he made his appeal to Caesar. Most importantly, to a Gentile like me, it was the home of Cornelius. This was the place that Gentiles learned once and for all that they could be a part of the commonwealth of Israel without rabbinic conversion. This is where the Holy Spirit came upon Gentiles.

We found a Middle Eastern food stand (i.e. no A/C) and we ate kosher grilled cheese sandwiches next to the National Park at Caesarea (did I mention that we like the National Park sites best?). When we wandered into the famous Caesarea amphitheatre, it was being set up for a concert (in use today). We found a cool arch to sit down and I read to the family Acts 10, and the account of Cornelius and Peter. We read Acts 21, and part of 25 where Paul was in this city - and then we read Ephesians 2. We blessed HaShem for including us. We have no right to be in this Land, and calling it "Home" - we have no right to call Avraham our father. We have no right to call Yeshua our Master - and yet by the perfect atoning work of Messiah - and His resurrection, we have made us one with Israel. We who were not a people are now called the people of G-d. Baruch HaShem! We have a Name, we have a Family, we have a Redeemer, and with Him we have a Home... Forever.

The hour and a half drive from Caesarea to Jerusalem took over two hours. We hit a SERIOUS traffic jam north of Tel Aviv, and GPS can't get you out of those. By the time we arrived back in Jerusalem, we were exhausted. Judah has decided that this is HIS town, and his energy infected us all - so after dropping off our stuff at the apartment, we headed out to Mechane Yehudah market. There Judah purchased his first talit katan. He is so excited with what he calls his "Neat-tzit" (I wear the tee-shirt type talit katan with threads - which are called "Neat-tzit"), he asked Janet to wash it when we got home so he could wear it to the Kotel [Western Wall] for prayers on Erev Shabbat. He is trying to figure out the difference between HOTEL and KOTEL, but he is pretty sure he likes the Kotel better. He chose the talit katan that has a picture of little boys praying at the Kotel on the front. With his new Tzahal [Israel Army] kipa on his head he sure thinks he is cute - and he is.

At Mechane Yehudah, Joshua and Jeremiah got their first full sized talit. Although the blue thread commanded in Numbers 15 was not tied into the corners, we were impressed that the shop owner had blue thread to tie your own - which is what we will do when we get home. You don't see much techelet [blue thread] in men's tzit-tzit here, but it appears that it is more of a monetary thing than not. Techelet is expensive.

Supper at Ben Yehudah Street again was a welcome thing for our tired bodies. We walked through the dense crowd, where Joshua bought an orange band signifying his support for the courageous settlers of Gush Katif, who understand the inheritance from HaShem should not be given away. This Land is G-d's - and He has given it to the Sons and Daughters of Jacob. Period.

Baruch HaShem! We have been so blessed by His Presence in this place. We have been so blessed by the culture, and the people. We have been safe (even in crazy Jerusalem traffic). We are completely filled up - so that not another ounce of blessing can possibly fit in... And yet we seek more of Him. Tomorrow, perhaps we will hear Him whisper to us at the Kotel, "I love that you love this place, and love these my people. Thank you for coming to My City. Come back soon." I know that last week at the Kotel, as I pressed up against those stones, I could almost hear Him say, "Rick, welcome home. What took you so long?"

### **Friday through noon, July 29, 2005**

From the heat of the day, in the City of Gold, Shalom!

We spent the morning wandering the halls of the Israel Museum near the Israel Kinneret. The Great Isaiah Scroll, from the Dead Sea Scrolls was amazing. We were also able to see part of the War Scroll, and the community "Rules". The Qumran community had community identification rules. Every community does - but they wrote them down for us. An example for us might be seen in the unwritten rule not to stand closer than 18 inches from someone when speaking to them. This is unwritten, but when someone does not adhere to it, we immediately know that the person is either a rules breaker, or from outside our culture. These "rules" are called the "works of the law" in Qumran language. Until the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, it was always assumed that Paul's use of that phrase meant "keeping the Law of Moses". Which, when compared to Yeshua's words in Matthew 5:17-18 and Paul's writings in Romans, is contradictory. Based upon the Qumran use of the phrase, many scholars now believe that the "works of the law" are in fact the extra-biblical identity markers of a community.

We also saw a sign from the Second Temple that was destroyed by the Romans in 70CE. It was from the wall that separated the "court of the Gentiles" and the inner Temple. It was this wall that Paul was using as a symbol in Ephesians 2 - a wall that kept Gentiles out. That wall was not mandated by Scripture, and the ordinances of men had excluded Gentiles from the community of Israel. That wall has been torn down in Messiah - the wall that separates Gentiles from Jews - not a wall that Torah defined. No, Torah has specific instructions for Gentiles and their inclusion in the community of faith. Deuteronomy 4 shows us that one purpose for the Torah of Moses was to bring Gentiles to the community of faith. The Israel Museum has the sign that was on that wall. Written in Greek, it says that Gentiles may not pass - on pain of death. Acts 21 and 22 come to life with that in mind.

We were able to see the Aleppo Codex, which is the oldest Masorite version of the Hebrew Scriptures. It is the very copy that the RAMBAM used to write his monumental work, "Mishneh Torah". It was from ben Asher. What a treasure.

Incidentally, it is nearly identical to the pre-rabbinic texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls. This is why the Dead Sea Scrolls were such an important find - it shut down forever the liberal "scholars" who assumed the Scriptures had been corrupted over the years. No, the Hebrew Scriptures are accurate, thanks to the scribes of the ben Asher family.

We also saw the ossuary of Yosef Chaifa - the "High Priest" who tried Yeshua illegally. Well, the Tomb of Yeshua is empty, but the "bone box" of Yosef Chaifa was used to store Yosef Chaifa's bones. I love that.

Also in the museum we saw the "Moses seat" from the Korizan synagogue - the one that was there when Yeshua walked in Galilee. Matthew 23's reference to "Moses seat" made more sense after its discovery.

We drove around the Knesset and walked the Wohl Rose Garden - they sure have beautiful parks here.

We are back for lunch before a final trip into the Jewish Quarter for some shopping before cleaning up for Erev Shabbat and our walk to the Kotel [Western Wall] for prayers. With Shabbat coming up, we will finish our report on the airplane back. I hope you were able to get some grasp of our experiences while we were here. But let me say, this is not even close to a substitute. If you love the Master, you must come here. But if you come, don't come with a tour - do it on your own. It takes some work to plan it out, and it may be a little more expensive - but you will get far more out of it by doing it without the particulars of a tour group.

Baruch HaShem! We have been blessed. Shabbat Shalom to everyone - and may we all say, "Next year in Jerusalem!"

### **Friday through Saturday, July 29-30, 2005**

We ended our Sabbath in Jerusalem much like thousands of other homes in the City of the King. We blessed HaShem for the day of rest and for the sweet gift of the Shabbat. We sang "Eliyahu HaNavi" like we do each week - like families have been doing since the ancient past. The song's words reflect that Eliyahu [Elijah] is the forerunner of Mashiach [Messiah].

*Elijah the Prophet,  
Elijah the Tishbite,  
Elijah the Giliadite  
Speedily may he come to us  
with Messiah son of David*

It was our last moment in Jerusalem before starting the drive to Ben Gurion Airport to return to the U.S. It was bitter sweet. Sweet because of the blessings we had experienced these past nine days. Sad because our souls longed to stay. We began the Shabbat the evening before like we did our first Sabbath in Jerusalem, at the Kotel, the Western Wall. We went to pray with many others who begin their Sabbath in prayer at the Wall. The Kotel is like no place on earth. It commands

reverence by its sheer presence. It invites participation. It is where *HaShem has placed His Name*.

We wept with the people praying around us. Some prayed out loud, and some silently wept as we did. Our tears were not like so many of the tears that have been shed on those stones for thousands of years - we have not suffered as they have. For thousands of years, when Jews were allowed to pray at this place, the tears shed were tears filled with questions along with petition. Questions of where the Holy One was, blessed be He. Had he abandoned these people and this City? But I doubt if they were ever faithless questions. The fact that such prayers were offered at the Kotel at all shows their faithfulness. The prayers offered now at the Western Wall are prayers that are even more expectant of the coming of Messiah - for they have begun to see the prophecies fulfilled. For those who stand at the Wall three times daily know their people's history - and their history confirms their resolute faith in the G-d of Abraham, the G-d of Isaac, and the G-d of Jacob.

We too know their history, and we know of their faith because of it. We have spent the past nine days reliving it.

In the past nine days, we have stood on Masada and in our minds could see the Roman Tenth Legion launch their siege against the Jews at the top of the mountain fortress. We stood at the Herod family tomb and contemplated an Idumean who masqueraded as a Jewish king. We swam in the Sea of Galilee at the shore at Ginosar, where the Romans slaughtered so many Jewish men that the waters were red with blood.

We walked the Ophel, and looked up at the Hulda Gates which had been walled up, barring entrance to the Temple Mount - on which the Byzantine 'church' created a city garbage dump, to illustrate in some perverted way how 'Christianity' had triumphed over Judaism. We gazed at the Beautiful Gate, sealed by Arabs - to keep the Jewish Messiah out. We drove through the streets of Arab Jerusalem observing the hate that so many of them have for the Jews. We walked the streets of the Old City, with so many of its streets bearing 'Christian' and Arabic names, in the City of David, the king of the Twelve Tribes of Jacob.

We walked through the halls of Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial. We wept over the sights of men, women, and children slaughtered. We walked the room of names - with two stories high of the files of the six million Jews killed by Germany. We gazed out over the Valley of Jezreel from the hill at Megiddo - where the nations will one day gather to war against Israel.

We have not suffered like these have. We have not continued to pray and worship the G-d of Abraham in the midst of such unimaginable national suffering. Our faith is untested like this people's faith.

These people who continue to come to the Wall to pray, who expect to see Messiah come and establish His Kingdom, have a *hope*. Their faith is sure, and G-d *has heard them* - and Messiah is coming to rule over them. Every day, three times a



day they pray the ancient Amidah prayer, which speaks of the hope of the coming of Messiah to establish His throne in Jerusalem:

*And unto Jerusalem, your City, return in compassion  
and take your rest within it, as you have declared.  
May you rebuild it soon in our day, an eternal structure.  
And speedily re-establish the kingdom of David  
Blessed art Thou, AD-NAI, Builder of Jerusalem*

*The sprout of David Your servant,  
Quickly cause to flourish,  
and exalt His power with Your salvation,  
because for Your salvation we hope all day long.  
Blessed art Thou, AD-NAI, Who brings forth the Horn of Salvation.*

Some might see the Chassidim with their black hats davening at the Wall and turn their noses up at such a sight. Not us. Even if we did not know the prophecies, we would hear their prayers and observe the faithful looking for Messiah, and know that some of these are possibly more prepared for the coming of the Messiah than those who know His Name is Yeshua. However, because we know the Scriptures, we know that this has been the plan of HaShem, all along. At the Kotel, you get the sense that the time is very near.

3,500 years ago, G-d spoke through Moses on the plains of Moab about this time in history, and about these people who revere the eternal Torah of the Creator of the Universe.

*Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the L-RD your G-d drives you, and you return to the L-RD your G-d and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, that the L-RD your G-d will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the L-RD your G-d has scattered you. If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the L-RD your G-d will gather you, and from there He will bring you. Then the L-RD your G-d will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. And the L-RD your G-d will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the L-RD your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. Also the L-RD your G-d will put all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you. And you will again obey the voice of the L-RD and do all His commandments which I command you today.*

*For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do*

*it' Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it. "See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the L-RD your G-d, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the L-RD your G-d will bless you in the land which you go to possess."*

Deuteronomy 30:1-8; 11-16

2,500 years ago, G-d spoke through Jeremiah about this time, and how His people would have His eternal Torah written on their hearts - not a different Torah, not a different Word - the **same one** that these people revere today. The Torah is not different, only the medium - from stone tablets, to hearts beating for HaShem.

*Thus says the L-RD: "Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears; for your work shall be rewarded, says the L-RD, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. There is hope in your future, says the L-RD, that your children shall come back to their own border."*

*Behold, the days are coming, says the L-RD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah - not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the L-RD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the L-RD: I will put My Torah in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their G-d, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the L-RD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the L-RD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." Thus says the L-RD, Who gives the sun for a light by day, the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, Who disturbs the sea, and its waves roar (The L-RD of hosts is His name): "If those ordinances depart from before Me, says the L-RD, then the seed of Israel shall also cease from being a nation before Me forever." Thus says the L-RD: "If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, says the L-RD."*

*Behold, the days are coming,' says the L-RD, 'that I will perform that good thing which I have promised to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah: 'In those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to David a Branch of righteousness; He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell safely. And this is the name by which she will be called: THE L-RD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.'*

Jeremiah 31:16-17; 31-37; 34:14-16

But Messiah could not come and establish His eternal Presence in our midst as our King until He first made a way to cleanse us from our sin. He cannot live forever among a sinful people. His first coming was for that purpose - and that work was sure, and it is complete. So His yet-future coming will now be one that those praying at the Kotel will surely recognize. They will line the Way of the King down from the Mount of Olives. They will join the voices of the disciples that day so many years ago. They too will cry out, "**Baruch haba b'shem AD-NAI** [Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the L-rd]". We who know the Name of Yeshua will be joined by the Chassidim, the Orthodox, and the like. As **one voice** we will welcome the King of Glory into His City.

*And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced...*

Zechariah 12:10a

As we said "good-bye" to the City of the King and His people we did so not with hopelessness, but with hope. We know that we will return to this place, *b'ezrat HaShem*. We know that those with whom we shared a place along the Wall will also one day name the Name of the Messiah Yeshua. We know that although we have not suffered as they have, nor has our faith been so tested; we have been 'grafted-in' - and we felt privileged to stand next to them. By the grace of the Almighty, we have been given an inheritance along with sons and daughters of Abraham.

And that simply leaves us **in awe**.

I live in Charlotte, North Carolina, but **my home is in Jerusalem**, in the Land of Israel.

*My heart is in the east, and I in the uttermost west –  
How can I find savour in food? How shall it be sweet to me?  
How shall I render my vows and my bonds, while yet  
Zion lieth beneath the fetter of Edom, and I in Arab chains?  
A light thing would it seem to me to leave all the good things of Spain—  
Seeing how precious in mine eyes to behold the dust of the desolate sanctuary.*

– Yehuda Halevi (1086-11