

Experiencing Israel - December 2025



1st stop – photo op at Ben Gurion Airport, midnight after 24 hours of travel. It's always good to be “home”.

Day 1 in Israel – no picture but had a coffee meeting with Hillel Fuld (google or Facebook him) to talk about his efforts to bring Jews back from the diaspora to live in Israel. Very interesting guy with roots in high tech but now focused on talking with the world about the value of Israel. He's quite influential and may help with tourism.



Next stop – IKEA! There are 5 in Israel but very few have cars big enough to bring home the furniture.



Visited a few places in Jerusalem including this one of my favorites – the Room of the Last Supper above King David's tomb.



Holy Cross Monastery

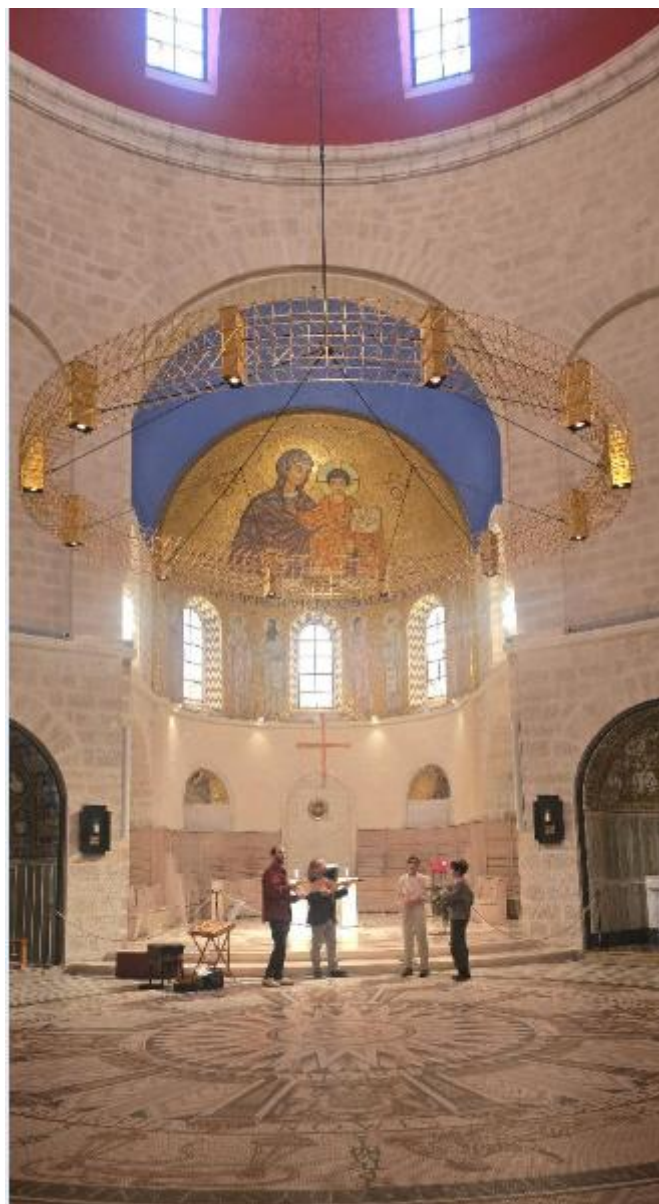
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Walking the “cardo” under the Old City



The Western Wall plaza was full of people during the official invocation of a new troop of IDF soldiers and their loved ones celebrating.



Abbey of the Dormition – this quartet was preparing for the Christmas Eve service. The echo is beautiful!



Coffee & strudel at the Austrian hospice



Stopped by to see Basti's newly renovated place near the 3rd station of the cross on the Via De la Rosa ²

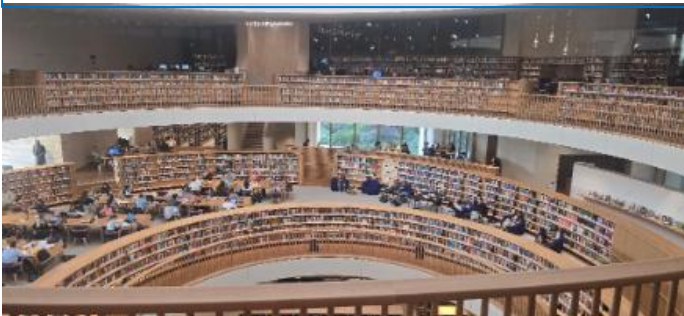
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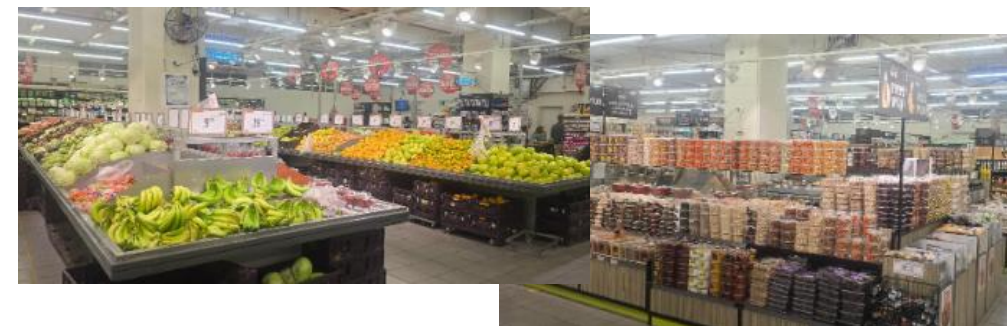
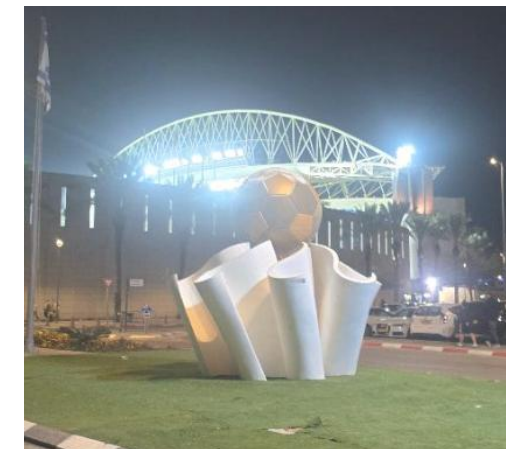
Day 2 – Caught up on sleep from a bit of jet lag, grocery shopping for some cooking later in the week (spices, fruits & veggies are amazing, google translate works on labels but they don't have tomato paste or ground beef like we do!), more time in Jerusalem old city (lots of people out at night + Christmas tree at YMCA), visit to the NEW National Library of Israel which houses some very old & unique Jewish texts obtained from around the world, and a robotic “no human” system for “pulling” requested books from storage, and Maccabi Netanya soccer game (always have to go!) + McDonalds's for a late-night dinner after.



The library tour took 2 hours and we so just saw a little of it – incredible new building!



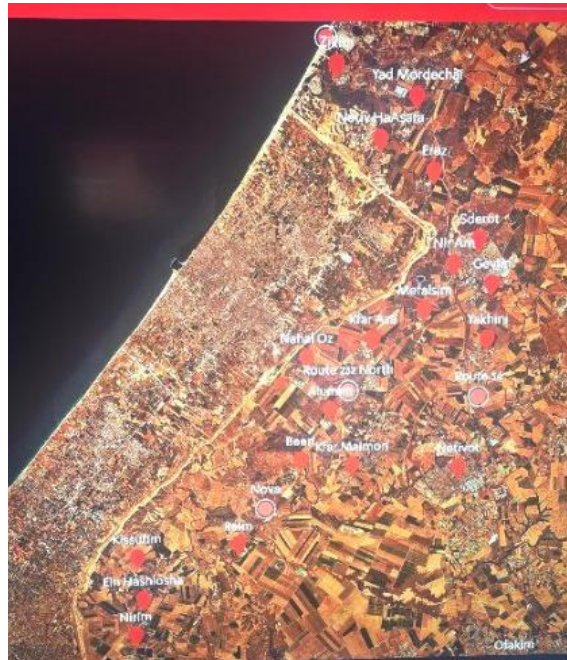
I love the Old City at night – peaceful and festive + shops are open! Stopped to see my friend Thomas here.



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Day 3 – Headed south to the Gaza border. Visited Tkuma, the burned car lot that has a cool new tent that presents Oct 7 hostage and survivor stories. Only 1 hostage left to be returned to Israel! For those who've been here, the burned car lot is to the left of this road to the tent. Also visited the new VR Visitor Center in Sderot which also tells the stories of the survivors & victims of Oct 7 using incredible technology. The map below shows most of the sites impacted by the attack. I visited most of them, again, to see the recovery efforts and resilience of the people. Most have returned to their homes to live again.



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Day 3 continued en route to Eliat at the southern tip of Israel through the Negev desert which comprises over 60% of the land in Israel. It's desolate out there but agriculture in the arid desert is thriving and new communities are forming. To the left is my favorite sign in Israel. We usually do see camels on or near the road, just like we see deer in US. We stopped at Machtesh Ramon for a coffee and enjoyed the gorgeous overlook and chatting with the ibex that roam everywhere. It's like the Grand Canyon and so undeveloped in this area.



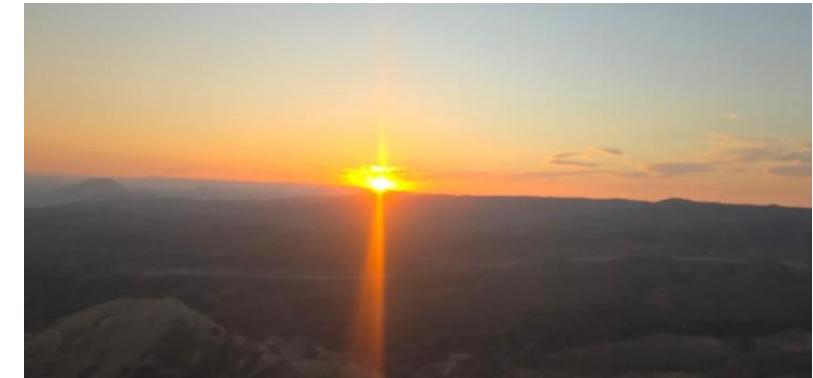
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Still on our way to Eilat. The maps to left show proximity to Jordan & Egypt and the Negev. The photo below shows the border fence with Egypt.

Israel has the most beautiful sunsets, and this one is at Eilat Mountain Nature Reserve. From the viewpoint, we can see Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, & Israel which is incredible. This area also hosts my favorite acacia tree and, somewhere in those Jordanian mountains is my tour name badge from 2022 that was lost while riding a camel there. 🕶️

In my quest to know Israel, I have visited all 82 national parks and many of the 400 nature reserves. Israel has a unique & varied landscape!



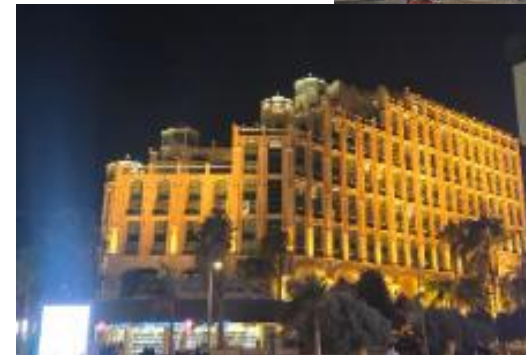
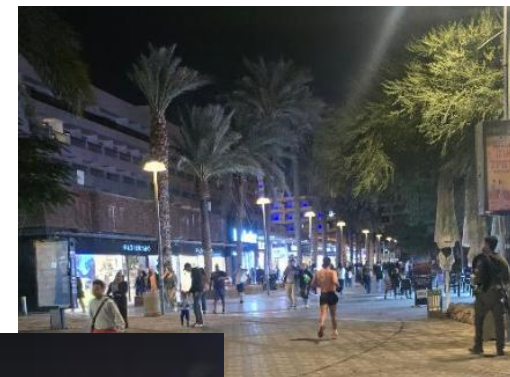
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Day 3 continued...Finally made it to Eilat at the southern tip of Israel. We normally cross through the border here for a few minutes when transferring from Egypt to Jordan and that is where I met my amazing friend Anna. We spent some lovely time together!

The area is a resort for Israelis with big hotels on the beach, it's quite lively, and it's also a no-tax zone so Israeli's make the trek here for bigger \$\$ purchases.

The view from my room was gorgeous, the food is incredible (Israeli's love their salads!), and we listened to music at a fun bar named the Three Monkeys. The travelers who have met Anna know that, together, we are certainly 2 of the three!



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Day 4 in Eilat was filled with time on the beach, a bit of nature finding gazelles near the man-made salt ponds where a flock of gray, not pink, flamingos live. My grandson explained they are grey because they don't eat fish from these ponds like they do in zoos or natural habitat that bring out the pink. Interesting! The beaches are varied in Israel but this view across the water to Jordan is stunning and the tropical fish were beautiful. Eilat is known for its diving and water activities. We did a bit of tax-free shopping and enjoyed another night out, visiting the 3rd Mike's Place in Israel for some music, walk on the promenade, and a water show ala Bellagio. What a great weekend getaway!



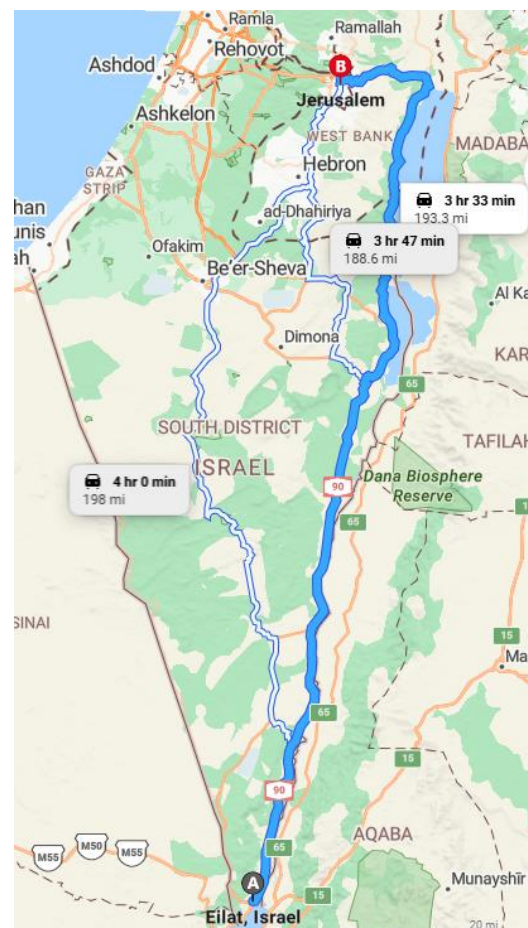
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Day 5 – Returned north to central Israel via the long and barren Road 90. We had taken Road 6 south to Eilat. The area was under flood warning and closed an hour after we left.

The photo below left is what the road looks like most of the way but there is a detour to the Dead Sea which we didn't take this time. We did stop for Aroma, Israel's coffee place (no Starbucks!) for lattes and chai.

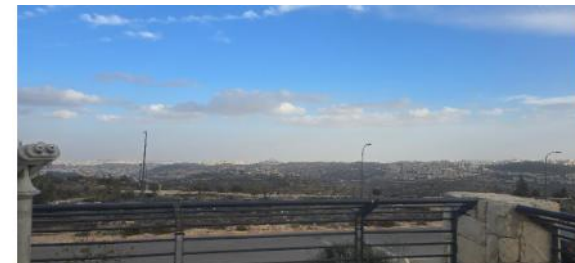
Each order comes with chocolates and it's all so yummy. I spent some time cooking for friends as I usually do in thanks for their hospitality on my visits.



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Days 6-8 – Drove north to the border with Lebanon area, the Golan Heights, and to many places I have been before & have continued to check on post Oct 7. I was most interested in seeing the restoration and recovery of places that had been hit by missiles. What I found most inspiring was the Israeli people who were happy to be back home, were working hard in all areas of their lives, and were united in truly caring for each other. I'm so glad I was able to experience this! 1st stop was along the Israel coffee trail (pop-up shops in gorgeous areas everywhere!) and then the Gush Etzion visitor center which tells an amazing story of the resilience of the people who originally settled that area. We then went to the Lion of Judah overlook which is 1000m above sea level. We can see Herodium, Jerusalem, and the Dead Sea from this point.



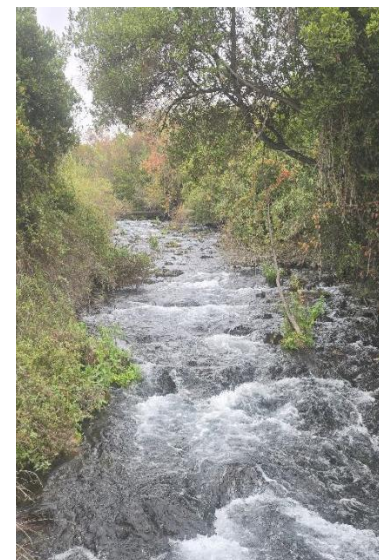
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Days 6-8 A visit to Northern Israel is not complete without a visit to the Omelet Guy. They have been there for decades, serving soldiers and people traveling the area, and serve an amazing omelet sandwich with all the Israeli goodies in it including French fries, hummus, & pickles!

Next stop was Tel Dan, a national park and one of my favorite places in Israel. It's gorgeous year-round but the water levels were low. Many of my groups have walked through water in that rocky path (shown at lower right) on past trips. The shop there was hit by a missile from Lebanon but they are rebuilding it now.



Dan is near the Lebanon & Syria border.



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Days 6-8 Read below about Jeroboam's temple found at Tel Dan. This temple was created to provide two temples for Israel and Judah but it only created problems for his Kingdom and people.

The gazebo is a modern addition to show what the temple would have been like back in the day.



Jeroboam's temples were religious sites established by King Jeroboam I of Israel (c. 930 BCE) in Dan (northern border) and Bethel (southern border) to prevent his people from worshipping at the Temple in Jerusalem, a move that led to widespread idolatry with golden calves, marking a pivotal sin that contributed to the northern kingdom's downfall.



Archaeological evidence, particularly at Tel Dan, confirms the existence of cultic centers with altars and platforms where these practices occurred, despite Jeroboam's intention to solidify his rule by redirecting worship. [🔗](#)

Key Details:

- **Purpose:** To stop pilgrimages to Jerusalem, which Jeroboam feared would lead to the people's loyalty returning to

- **Archaeological Findings:** At Tel Dan, archaeologists discovered a large platform with monumental steps (the "High Place") and other cultic structures (altars, incense shovels, etc.) that align with the biblical description of Jeroboam's religious center. In essence, Jeroboam's temples were political and religious innovations that created lasting schism and idolatry, becoming symbols of the northern kingdom's rebellion against Yahweh. [🔗](#)

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Days 6-8 Another significant feature at Tel Dan is the world's oldest arched gate, known as Abaham's Gate.



Three earthen arches that span a gateway are the world's oldest known arches made of this material. The gate, set on sloping earth ramparts, was constructed in the second millennium B.C. as a defense for the Canaanite city of Laish. The site had been occupied since the fifth millennium B.C. and its identified with the biblical Dan and reputed to be where King Jeroboam reinstituted worship of the golden calf in the tenth century B.C. Excavations carried out from 1966 to 1999 revealed city walls, an Israelite sanctuary, sacred pillars, a tomb, artifacts, and the 15 ½ -meter-wide, 7 meter tall, 13 ½ -meter-deep gate complex.



The arches survived the millennia covered in soil. Deteriorations of the earthen brick began soon after excavation in 1979 uncovered the eastern face of the gate. For protection, the Israel Antiquities Authority backfilled the central arch and western face of the gate and erected a roof over still-visible surfaces. Exposure to the elements is jeopardizing the gate and arch. Even though conservation and management plan for the site has been devised, no work has begun.

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كان على العالم ان يتحول الى كرة تخطفها اقدامهم الصغيرة، وتزجي بها في شبكات المرمى بعيدا عن العاب الكبار

انت الآن تلقى امام نصب تذكاري يخلد ذكرى التي عشر طفلان وطفلة، ارتقوا في 72 تموز 2024، إثر اصابة مباشرة صاروخ سلفا على المعصب المتجاوز.

الثا عشر ملاكا نادرونا، شذرات الاطفال الجرحى، الالف العيون الدامعة، وحبوة في قلب كل جولاني.

ليل خيم فوق قرانا.

وربما ان الشمس لم تلتأخر يوما عن موعدها، عبيد كانت تشرق، وسيلونا تلتأما لتأخي الكون: "هنا لم يتحول العالم الى كرة، تخطفها اقدامهم الصغيرة، وتزجي بها في شبكات المرمى بعيدا عن العاب الكبار".

ولا جواب، وحده السدى يحفر في قلوبنا، نقول: "كفى! اقلنا القذراع" سار الصمت، وانصوح ايرا، نقش في الأخاديد سورهم، كما يلمح الشدا ثيابا الصخور، ود من ذكهم يبايق التور. كان ليقيم الصغيرة مرفوعا نحو السماء، لهمس: "لا تحزنوا، سولنا فدا من جديد.

قد تولد في السماء نجوما، او ورثا من تحت لروح جبل الشيخ ساهز، نصير ايشامو كل طفل ان يعرف الحروب يوقا سولنا سائل قمع، تمنا العالم حلقولا



هذا النصب التذكاري هو مبادرة مشتركة من مجموعة شباب وسيدات مجتهد شمعن، تم تصميمه وتشييده بجهود جماعية، وجرى تشييده في (أربع) تخطيطا تذكاري شجياا الصاروخ.





"The world had to turn into a ball that their little feet scratched up, and throw it into the goal net away from Adult games"

You are now standing in front of a memorial that commemorates twelve children and a child, killed on 12 Tammuz 2024, following a direct hit by a rocket that fell on the adjacent stadium.

וְתִהְיֶינָה עֲשָׂרִים יְלָדִים וְיָלְדָהּ תַּנְחִי, thousands of tearful eyes and a hole in the heart of every Jolani.

And although the sun was never late for its time, it was rising in vain, and our eyes were dark

The consequences of the universe: Why didn't the world turn into a ball that their little feet grab and throw into a net

The goal away from adult games?"

And it answers: Only the wife slips into our hearts. No say, "tough is harder as with emphasis"

the silence and the tears became again, their images are carved in the grooves, as silver curves the folds of the rocks.

And when it light emanated from the windows, their little hands were raised towards the sky, whispering:

"Don't let me, you'll be born again tomorrow"

Stars may be born in the sky, or a star may be born from under the sun of Mount Shikhil Salafat.

We are a smile every child will never know war

Wheat ears of wheat, fill the world with fields

This memorial is an independent initiative of the Magdal Shams youth and girls group. It was designed and implemented through mass efforts, and was inaugurated in Israel in memory of the victims of the rocket.



Azil

HAJALAH

EZEL

Alma

AMEER ABU

SALEH AW

Days 6-8 Visited Metula & Kiryat Shmona which were heavily bombed by Lebanon but are recovering. Remember Magdal Shams where 11 soccer kids were killed in a missile attack? They have put up a nice memorial.

Remember my story from June 2023 about the chicken barn that was hit by a missile just one day after the chickens were all evacuated? The chicken barns are restored and the farm is back in action.

A big storm was coming in this day but we were able to stop for Buza ice cream before the rains began. Buza produces yummy ice cream with no preservatives and has a few locations around Israel which are a must stop!



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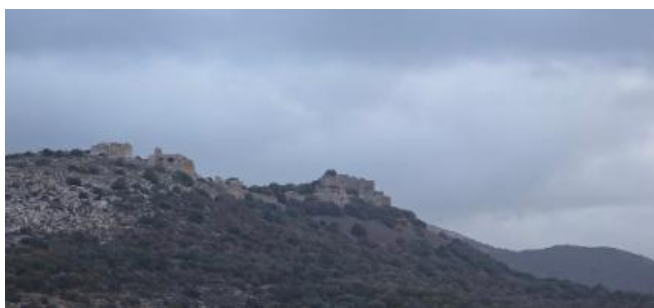
Days 6-8

Left – border with Syria

Right – overlooking Lebanon

Below – Nimrod Fortress near where I spent the night in the community that is the highest occupied/lived in area in Israel. Great story of how it came to be!

Far below – a cute Hyrax that we normally only see at Caesaria Phillipi, but who were all over the hills below the area to the right.



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Days 9-10

Back to Central Israel as a horrific storm developed. My volunteering plans to spend a day at the guide dog training facility were canceled as the work couldn't be done in the storm. I walked the beach in Tel Aviv, drove thru Jaffa, had a goodbye coffee with my guide friend, and then relaxed at night learning to play a new game while wind & rain pelted the area. I wasn't sure that I would be able to fly out on Friday but God cleared the skies just in time. He is so so good!



This is Ben Gurion, the first Prime Ministry of Israel when the state was established in 1948. The story is that he walked the beach in Tel Aviv every morning and that is where he did his best thinking. He is revered in Israel as a visionary and model for the Jewish people. He is buried in the south inside Ben Gurion National Park.

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I hope you enjoyed reading about my recent trip to Israel. This was my 17th trip there since God called me to start this travel/discipleship ministry in 2018. I LOVE it there and truly feel it is home for me. I can't wait to go back and experience more of just living there!

Clearly, it is safe in Israel. As a woman on my own, I can go anywhere by car, train, bus, taxi, or walking with no concerns for my safety. There are no sirens, no missiles, and plenty of kind, caring people around who look after everyone, Israeli or not. I honestly feel safer in Israel than I do at home – except for when driving as the traffic is crazy! Even when I'm using google translate to read labels in the grocery store, someone always offers to help. Israelis, Jewish Arab or other, are amazing people!

The picture to the left is my guide/friend Yoram whom all of our Israel travelers have had the pleasure of learning from. He is an amazing resource to me and to our ministry! We are both excited to welcome our 2026 Israel group next Fall as we have so much to show and teach you (not all of what I did this trip but so much more!). I promise you will be safe, feel comfortable, grow your faith, and leave there feeling better able to share the Gospel with others.

If you've been before, come again!

If you haven't been, don't wait until you can't!

If you want to support others in going, contact me.

Yoram is waiting for you to visit and I will be there with you!