



Caesaria: ancient ruins of the Roman period.

Photo/Rita Mond

dustrial city. One of its most beautiful attractions is the Bahai Temple/Shrine and its exquisite Persian Gardens. We continued on to Safed, the city known for its artist colony and Kabbalistic movement (mysticism). I brought back some rather nice sketches from there. We then stopped right outside of Safed at Rosh Nikra where there is a U.N. army base and spoke to some of the French soldiers who were going on leave. It is right at the Lebanon border . . . in fact from the sea there is a cable car operating. We then proceeded to Naharia, a very nice resort town, which has lovely beaches. The U.N. has offices there. We then went to Acco, known as the underground city, where we saw the remains of the wall of the city which dates back to the Crusades. It also has a large fishing harbor. We stayed overnight again in Haifa.



Safed



Bedouin boy with his village in background.

Thursday, Mar. 10

An early morning trip, this time to Megiddo (also known as Armageddon). It was a vital strategic site throughout history and the scene of mighty biblical battles. We saw the many ruins of this "chariot city" built by King Solomon in the 10th century B.C.E. It also has a museum which contains model reconstructions of the main buildings and photographs of replicas of the more exciting objects found there, including the famous Megiddo Ivories.

Our next stop was the Beit Alpha Synagogue which is located right at Kibbutz Heftzi-Bah, at the foot of Mount Gilboa. The kibbutz is known for its dairy cows.

Bet Alpha's mosaic floor is one of the most beautiful, elaborate and well preserved discovered in Israel. The main decoration was in the nave. In the part of the mosaic, near the Ark are depictions of Jewish ritual objects — a holy Ark flanked by lions, birds and menorot and surrounded by animals, fruit and geometric designs. The central section of the mosaic contains a zodiac, with the symbols of the months and their names in Hebrew and Aramaic. In the center is the sun god, Helios, riding in a chariot drawn by four horses. In the four corners are figures of women, symbolizing the four seasons of the year. At the base of the mosaic is a depiction of the sacrifice of Isaac, accompanied by passages in Hebrew. The synagogue was probably destroyed by an earthquake at the end of sixth century C.E.

We then drove on through the Jordan Valley and stopped at a park, Gan Hashlosha, which is



Jericho — Fruit stand in center of town.

unique for Israel as it has a lagoon with a waterfall.

Then our second time in Jericho. We stopped in the center of town and there were very few tourists due to the recent Hebron massacre. However, all was peaceful there and we did not witness any unkind attitudes on the part of any of the Arabs.

We stopped along the way back to Jerusalem to see some of the Bedouin villages and were surprised to see how many cars of Arabs were returning from Jordan to Jerusalem. Of course there were several check points by the IDF along the way.

We checked into the King Solomon Hotel in Jerusalem and looked forward to a good night's sleep. The last few days of our visit to Israel would be spent in Jerusalem.

Friday, Mar. 11

We finally decided to do some shopping and so we headed to Mea Shearim, the very old extreme orthodox community in Jerusalem. We were told that it was the best place to buy religious items and artifacts. Irving wanted to buy a new tallis and kippot there and I wanted to buy some matzo covers for my daughter and daughter-in-law as Pesach was nearing. We did make these purchases there, plus of course, some other gifts.

However, we could not get

over just how interesting the area is. We felt that we were put back in time in a typical shtetl of eastern Europe. The streets were fairly crowded as it was Erev Shabbat and everyone was busy making last minute purchases in food shops, bakeries, etc. Oh how wonderful those breads and cakes looked!

Words can hardly describe the sights and smells that we encountered...I could not resist taking plenty of photographs when I was roaming through all the streets and alleyways. We were fortunate to meet a young man, originally from Chicago, who had made Aliyah several years ago, and he graciously gave us a private tour. We found out that he deprograms people who are in the cults. He was leaving the next week to deprogram a Jewish boy who was with the Hare Krishnas in California. Chaim Levin was quite interesting...he had graduated from of all places, Notre Dame, having gone there on a football scholarship. He has been written about in "Give Peace a Stance" by Hanocho Teller.

Stores close in Mea Shearim on Friday at 2 p.m. so we continued on to one of the main shopping areas... Mehane Jehuda...on Jaffa Street. Before we could do much looking around it started to rain and surprisingly there was a sudden hail storm. The hail stones were almost as



Irving stopped to chat with schoolboys and their rabbi in Mea Shearim, Jerusalem.

All Photos/Rita Mond

large as golf balls. We made a mad dash back to our hotel and for the first time during our trip actually took a late afternoon nap.

Saturday, Mar. 12

We decided to go to Masada and the Dead Sea with a bus tour. We had a very international group of passengers, but the most prominent group were 14 Canadian Christians. The number of Christian tourists far surpass those who are Jewish. The scenery along the way was magnificent. We passed Qumran and saw the cave where the first of the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. When we arrived at Masada we decided to take the easy way up...by cable car, but we then walked the 80 steps to the summit. The story of Masada, of course, is fascinating and the ruins discovered there are remarkable. The group was there so long that we got to Ein Gedi very late for lunch and though we brought our bathing suits to "swim" in the Dead Sea (and what a gorgeous sight that was), it had gotten too cool for us to go in — we'll do it when we hopefully return the next time (during the late spring or early summer).

When we got back to Jerusalem it was raining, but Israel

does need the water, every drop that they can get! The evening was spent with Irving's cousins at an excellent dairy Italian cafe near our hotel.

Sunday, Mar. 13

Our last day in Israel ... and freezing rain. We braved the elements and went for a walk after the disappointing news that our plans to visit the B'nai B'rith Children's Home in Bayit Vegan fell through. The person who was going to give us a tour, could not make it that day. We had looked forward to meeting with the boys who live at this wonderful place; it is one of the institutions that I have always supported. Next time...

Monday, Mar. 14

Woke up before the roosters to catch an early morning flight from Tel Aviv. We hated to leave, but as they say: "All good things must end sometime." It was a wonderful trip, an inspiring trip. We can't wait until we have the opportunity to go back. We urge everyone to go, whether it's a first time or a return visit.

If you'd like to know more about being a "tourist in Israel" I'll be glad to tell you more, just give me a call.