

**June 15--Valley of Elah (David and Goliath), Archeological Dig (Beth Guvrin), Tower of David, Warren's Shaft, Pools of Siloam, Hezekiah's water tunnel**

Today is our 42<sup>nd</sup> anniversary! We spent our honeymoon in Colorado, on the Pike's Peak massif, up about 9,000 feet. Today we are in Jerusalem, seeing things we have read about and also things that are new to us, if ancient to the world.

*Chuck Jr.* prayed. It is good to hear different people pray.

Hebrew word: KAH-mah, ZAY-oh-lay: How much does it cost? If you don't want something, say "Lo, Toh-Dah"---no, thank you.

The Grand Opening of the Lights Festival is tonight—we can walk from our Dan Boutique Hotel in Jerusalem, about a mile to the Jaffa Gate in the Old City. Kathy Larsen and Alicia Sweeney practiced last night after supper, and will be part of the Flash Dance (holding lights as they dance) party tonight.

The US Embassy is not in Jerusalem yet. It was here, until 1967. The USA did buy land for an embassy here.

**Do Jewish people know their tribe?** (This is really a Nebraska question: many, if not most American Indians in Nebraska know their tribe, but in other states the American Indians do not know—that has been lost over the years). For Jews, the answer is Yes and No. **They have kept track of the priesthood—names like Cohen or Levi.** There are even some black people in Africa who are Jews by their DNA. **The Jews in Ethiopia are from the tribe of Manasseh. In northeast India, the Bnei Menashe people are considered from the tribe of Asher.** Their oral traditions say they went from Persia to China, and from there to India. The Israeli government has recognized them as one of the lost tribes and made them eligible for immigration under the Law of Return

**There are people in the Burmese jungles** who circumcise their sons at 8 days of age, and speak of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

**Israel is desperate for Jews to come to Israel to live. If you are a genetic Jew, you get automatic citizenship when you come to Israel and an automatic loan to help you get started.** Many American Jews don't want the hardships. Many Russian Jews have forgotten their Jewishness. **But Israel has to have Jews—else the birthrate of the Arab Muslims will overwhelm the Jewish population in Israel.** Maybe Israel will open citizenship to Christians—there are Scriptures about accepting strangers..

The **Law of Return** (Hebrew: חוק השבות, *hok ha-shvūt*) is Israeli legislation, passed on 5 July 1950, that gives Jews the right of return and settlement in Israel and gain citizenship.<sup>[1]</sup> In 1970, the right of entry and settlement was extended to people of Jewish ancestry, and their spouses. Source [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law\\_of\\_Return](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law_of_Return)

We saw **Bethlehem** off in the distance. **Bethlehem used to be 80% Christians**—but now they have left, with most going to Chile and Argentina. The Shepherds' fields are the eastern fields below us. The **mountains of Moab** are dimly seen in the east—today is a very clear day—usually you cannot see them for the haze. Ruth and Naomi came from Moab to Bethlehem. The word Bethlehem means House of Wheat. Rachel is buried in Bethlehem. The Nisan olive woods are in Bethlehem—though now the Christian family that has owned this factory come to Jerusalem to sell their goods because **Bethlehem is in Palestinian hands**.

We couldn't go through Bethlehem, but we did go on tunnels under Bethlehem.

Hebrew had been forgotten, except for reading Scripture. A man called Eleazar Ben yehudah, who lived 150 years ago, *insisted* that everyone in his group actually speak Hebrew. He was convinced that if Jews would speak Hebrew, particularly in Jerusalem, that it would unite the Jews. He and his followers made up new words as needed.

We passed narrow-terraced hills by Bethlehem.

In 1967, Israel offered to give back any land except Jerusalem to Jordan and to Syria. They refused, saying “what was taken in blood will be reclaimed in rivers of blood”. Then in 1977, the Israeli settlements began again. Borders around **Gaza** were sealed, except for medical treatment. In the Bible, we read of the road to Gaza: the **Ethiopian Eunuch** was on this road, reading Scripture, when Philip was miraculously brought to meet him. **Samson carried the gates of Gaza**. The Tribe of **Dan** left the lowlands given them by God to go up north.

The **Philistines** came from Crete and the Aegean Sea. The Philistines tried to conquer Egypt in the days of Ramses III (1182-1152 BC) and nearly beat Egypt because there was no Egyptian navy. The Philistines had **iron chariots**. Pharaoh offered Canaan to the Philistines so they could be gate-keepers. ‘Goliath’ was the name of a social position—a class of warrior. Achish is the name of a king or a ruler. **I Samuel 5, 6 tells** of a time the **Ark of the Covenant was with the Philistines** in Ashdod—and did them absolutely no good. (That's quite a story by the way—their idol Dagon came out rather poorly two days in a row, and changed the way the worshippers of Dagon entered their temple thereafter).

Ronny said many battles have been lost when the winners returned to loot the bodies.

David recruited Philistines to be his bodyguards.

Incidentally, Palestine ≠ Philistine. The cultures were different.

Finally we arrived at place where David fought Goliath—because of clues in Scripture they are pretty sure this is the place. It is now a field, off to our right. The brook is dried up in summer. We walked out to the field, and it was very hard to think of ancient battles being here—just like when I looked out at Gettysburg in the USA, or over some of the

old Civil War battlefields in the USA. We smelled the hot dust, and walked by the field of melons or squash, and saw the different flowering weeds. Ronny said he didn't know the name of a round purple flower in English, but it is Bar-ZEEN in Hebrew. That was fine by me—I was pretty impressed that he knew as much about farming and plants as he did. He told a story of slingshots when he was young in the Israeli military, and his group were in charge of keeping the peace. Every day the little Palestinian kids would throw rocks, or dirty diapers, or other trash at the soldiers. After careful study, one Ethiopian man in Ronny's group figured out that the rules of engagement, which prohibited many weapons, had neglected to list slingshots. Now back home in Ethiopia, this man had used slingshots many a time to protect his sheep. So he built a slingshot. Next day, sure enough, the pesky little Palestinian boy was there, throwing things. So the Ethiopian pulled out his slingshot—and missed the boy. Ronny didn't say if the boy quit throwing things after that.

### **Beth Guvrin—Maresha: the archeological dig**

We are going to do archeology for 2-3 hours. It is voluntary, and I kept a smile on my face, but inside I was not looking forward to several hours bending over, working in the hot dusty Israeli landscape. I cheered right up when I saw that we were going down into a cave! Apparently this Maresha is a place of caves. Like so many other places, the area has been built in layers.

Our archeologist leader, Missy, illustrated the layers by placing ball caps, one on top of the other, on Alicia Sweeney. Missy came from the USA, but I think is now an Israeli citizen—she certainly is a good teacher.

Our place, a cave named Lumpy, is part of a Philistine town about 2500 years ago. The people had stone houses on top of the caves, but when they knew they would be conquered, they broke up the walls and tipped the houses down into the caves. Lumpy was a cistern—you could tell by the plastered walls. Today we could just stoop to enter the cave—when they first started excavating it they had to crawl into it. It was cool in there, and Missy gave us black plastic buckets (one for “good” stuff like potsherds or animal bones, and the other for earth to be brought up to the top and sifted yet again). We had little pick-axes. They told us to work close to the walls of the cistern/cave. I found a few potsherds, and a squared-off stone that was part of one of the houses that had been tipped into the cave long ago. Then Chestnut Livermore found a little glass cylinder, about the size and shape of your little finger—Missy said it was part of a Roman perfume bottle. Before the town had been attacked, it had done trading with Rome. Then Steve found an “ear” of a jug—a little better than an ordinary potsherd! Then Bob Sweeney, who was digging next to us, said, “Oh oh, that sounded hollow!” Missy got the head archeologist to join him, and together they lifted out a complete, un-cracked, 2500 year old “juglet”—eared handles and all—about 15” high and about 7” in diameter. That didn't go up to the surface in a black bucket!!! In fact, the archeologists took a picture of Bob and Libby Sweeney with their find, and posted it on their website.

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Then we schlepped all the buckets up to the surface, and under a tent the archeologists gave us wire mesh to jiggle the “junk dirt” through. We watched for little pieces of charcoal and animal bones—both to help for dating, and also to see what diet people had. We also found some little shards that way. Later people would wash and assemble the found shards, like a big 3-D jigsaw puzzle.

There are 5000 caves in this area. After this we were invited to go into Cave 85, just to look around. There are cave systems, with interconnecting caves. **These caves were lit by candles, and you had to go down some holes, feet first,** and watch your step when you got through. We saw a **lot of little holes carved into the rock** walls of these caves, and they looked very familiar to me, but I couldn't think what or where I had seen things like this. They were pigeon nests, or dove cotes. **I remember seeing the pigeon loft up in the horse barn at Grandpa's place—but those dove cotes were high up. These were right at floor level**—but then the archeologist said the true cave floor was 20-25 feet below—and that made sense. The people raised doves to sell for sacrifices at the Temple, and used the droppings for fertilizer on their gardens, and ate the pigeons too, just like we did (well, no selling for sacrifice). It was a lot of fun to see all this.

**Just before we left, we were invited to take some sherds that could not be matched, and also given a thank-you archeology certificate.**

Today, drugs and drinking are major problems in Israel, but they don't have gangs—yet.

Israel does have capital punishment, but they only used it ONCE, back in 1962, when the 56-year old Adolf Eichmann, of Holocaust horror, was executed. Eichmann had fled to Argentina, but had been extradited to Israel.

**Ashdod** is the place (I Samuel 5, 6) where the Ark was captured by the Philistines, and their god Dagon fell on his face—twice. They sent the Ark back to the Hebrews at **Bet Shemesh** during harvest time (late April to mid-June). Today we are essentially following the route the Ark was taken. **Later, after David conquered Jerusalem, David took the Ark to Jerusalem.**

In 1948 there was major war in Israel. Jordanians had blockaded the Jews. In an attempt to bring food and water to people in Jerusalem, the Israeli army did load people into trucks and move them out of their homes. Ronny expressed sorrow over this part of history. We saw old 1948 Israeli army trucks left alongside the road, as a remembrance of these days. As we went back into Jerusalem, we listened to Jewish songs, and again the Holy City song.

Today in Jerusalem they are building nuclear bomb shelters, and the week after we leave, there is to be a mock nuclear drill. In Jerusalem we saw the David's Harp bridge, a gift of the Netherlands to Israel.

We saw the Model of Jerusalem as it was in Jesus' day, with a scale of 1 to 50. It was originally based on about six pages in Josephus, and as modern archeology reveals more details, or corrects old misconceptions, the Model is modified.

We also saw the **Shrine of the Book**, that has the actual Dead Sea Scrolls in careful preservation.

**Hezekiah's Water Tunnel** was dug in 701 BC, and is mentioned in **II Kings 20:20**. Jerusalem's water source, the Gihon Spring, was outside the city walls, and that was not good in time of siege, particularly as he knew Sennecharib of the Assyrians had eyes on his city. So King Hezekiah had the spring hidden, and then had teams of men digging through the solid rock so that the water would be sent to the Pools of Siloam. They kept track of the progress of the diggers by listening to the chink chink through the solid rock karst—but then came the time when the digging sounds were in the same place—but the teams had not met. One team was higher than the other. They dug down and up to join the two tunnels, and the water went through this new aqueduct, so Jerusalem would have enough water. The tunnel, about 1/3 of a mile long, was discovered in 1838, and contained an inscription in very early Hebrew writing. In 1899 another tunnel was found, in the same area, but it was essentially a dry ditch, covered over with rock slabs.

When we went to **Hezekiah's Tunnel**, there were two routes: the water tunnel and the dry one. They both started and ended at the same place. Steve went the dry route, and I had water shoes and so went the water route. The water is said to be waist high at times, but for us it was only about knee high at the highest, and ankle-high some of the rest. **We needed flashlights.** The people of those days were short, and even allowing room for the pickaxes, the taller people in our group had to stoop until we came to the triple high place where the overlapping tunnels had to be joined. The **solid rock walls** were fairly narrow, but as we walked along **we began to sing—and the acoustics were wonderful!** *Brad Roe, Jennifer McBride, and Mike Lewis* all have great voices, and I sang right along with them. It was simply amazing—a very special time.

**That evening was the Festival of Lights.** Steve and I walked with our friends, Jim and Judy Pounds, the mile from the Dan Boutique Hotel to the Jaffa Gate. There was Israeli security checking people's backpacks and bags, but it was low-key, and did make us feel safer. There was a live band, and a giant tree of lights, and a white inflated giant robot that grinned and stumbled along and shook the hands of the little kids. If you looked down the way you could see the Cirque Soleil doing a play outside by the Temple Walls. We saw Kathy Larsen and Libby Sweeney dancing in the Flash Dance group. We saw Muslim families, and Jewish families, and occasionally saw people from our own group—it was truly nice.

As Steve and I walked back to our hotel, holding hands and looking up at the moon, I thought, this is one of the nicest anniversaries ever.