

June 8—Israel—Splashing in the Mediterranean by Roman Aqueduct

The jet we took from Philadelphia to Tel Aviv was an Airbus A330-200 (holds 258; the 300, US Airways' biggest, holds 293). The flight is 10 ½ hours long—we had a 100 mph tailwind part of the way. According to a lady I met waiting for the restrooms the return is 12 hours (prevailing winds west to east due to spin of the earth). Our groundspeed was 600 mph at the highest (500 mph + 100 wind). We flew over the boot of Italy, 1000 miles from Tel Aviv—and two hours away. I know this is basic distance = rate · time, but it is still very amazing to me.

On the plane I visited with an Arab lady sitting next to me (all dressed in brown cover and tan veil) who lived in Jericho. Her name was Reem (rolling the R's), and she had just been to the USA for the first time, to visit her new grandson, named Hussein, who is a week older than my new granddaughter Hazel (born June 1). Reem had been in Raleigh, NC. She says Raleigh is hot and humid but very beautiful. She wanted to know if I was Jewish. I said the Jews are God's special people, and I do worship Jesus Christ, who was a Jew. I do not worship on Sabbath (she asked). I am called a Christian. In the visit I showed her a picture of a horned owl we had seen in Nebraska. She said that is called a Boomah in Arabic. "Shukrah" means "Thank you" in Arabic.

They served two hot meals on the plane, and announcements were in Hebrew, English, Arabic and Farsi. Up in the Jetstream the outside air temperature was -76° F. at 2:30 p.m. Israel time, 7:30 a.m. Philadelphia time. It is just over 6000 miles (6055). I enjoyed the GPS, which even told details of ocean things we flew above. 2:30 p.m. Israel time = 6:30 a.m. Blair time (Israel is the same day, but 8 hours later).

Our bus driver is Gabbi, and our tour guide is Ronny Simon.

It is quiet in Tel Aviv, with little traffic. There is a holiday (Christians call it Pentecost; Feast of Sheaves—Harvest; the day Moses received the 10 Commandments). We are following the footsteps of Peter, along the coast from Jaffa to Caesarea. Tel Aviv means Hill of Spring—it was the first town built by modern Jews. Tel Aviv is the beating heart of the nation. There is little land, so under the new code, new buildings must be at least 30 stories high. Industry includes high-tech bio-engineering. We passed by citrus groves—Jaffa oranges. Israel is #3 in world for fruit and vegetable production. Only 100 years ago all this was desert and swamp, but today they supply 25% of Europe. We saw red bougainvillea along the way. There is no snow along the coast (the last was in 1950).

We were all wearing yellow Israel tee-shirts, with Sababa! (Awesome!) on the back. Apparently Sababa has Arabic, not Hebrew roots. We saw parasailing along the Mediterranean beaches. There is only one golf course in Israel, and it is at our hotel, the Dan Caesarea.

When the Soviet Union dissolved, Israel's population doubled. At first there was chaos.

Israel is a State, not a Nation. They have no constitution. The word "Israel" is a combination of land, religion, people, and, yes, a nation. The State of Israel is not a religion. Muslims, Jews, and more live in Israel, and are full Israeli citizens.

We traded \$50 for 156.50 shekels. We waded in the Mediterranean, by the Roman Aqueduct. It was a lot of fun—and seemed strange to be so close to 2000 year old stone structures.