

SHALOM Yeladim (children),

Upfront I apologize as words cannot sufficiently describe, nor do justice to the incredible events that have transpired today. The alarm jolted us into motion at 6:30am - I had already awakened by 6:10, I imagine because of the sheer excitement of the fulfillment of a lifelong dream. By 7:15 we were loaded up in "big white" and ready to say our prayer for the day's travels.

Our energetic guide Meir did an incredible job of pointing out all the places related to the Bible as we drove around for the duration of the day. We wove through the "edge of the desert" with a quick stop at Herodiam for the loo. We past the ancient site of Tekoa - the town of Amos the prophet and past numerous red area "A" signs. Gradually we noticed the change from the wilderness of Judea to lush farmland. The road to Hevron begins north of Elon Moreh and traces its path on the actual ancient highway that is referred to as the Path of the Forefathers. We were driving down the same twists and turns as Abraham had walked about 4,000 years ago. We drove through the Valley of Blessing, it's terraces overflowing with vines, heavy laden with grapes. Fields of olive trees and pomegranates and vegetable.

It didn't take long driving through to Kiryat Arba - the first Israeli town re-established after 1967. A bustling vibrant town full of houses, apartments, schools, grocery stores, cafes and banks. They asked to see one of our passports at the gate but we were quickly waved through. Continuing through the town we came to the final stage of our journey, entering the city of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - the city of Faith. Parking on a very steep slope we file down the road single file as cars fly past us down the hill. We clambered up and around to a congestion of layered minuscule mobile homes all painted orange. Turning a corner we find ourselves standing in front of an apartment building standing on stilts! It does look very odd looking up at the bottom of an apartment building. Ah, but there is a very good reason for the stilts. They have the rule in Israel that before you build you have to dig, dig in the archeology sense of the word. We are ever so thankful that they did because underneath is the most splendid treasure. Do you think of treasure as glittering gold or shining new coins? Oh no, this treasure is made of rock, piled rocks on two sides which frame in between them rough hewn slabs of white stone going up the hill.

The wall on the right hand dates back to the time of Abraham, as does the stairway style road! These are the very stones Abraham and walked on, the way to the gate where he purchased Maarat Hamachpela, the cave of the Patriarchs. Sadly politics stands in the way of archeologists finding the gate.. We stand their with our mouths open in shock and amazement as the realization of what we are standing in front of sets in. Everywhere we walk in God's land proof of the Bible is there right in front of us on display. Meir's eyes seem to twinkle as if to say "that isn't all" he motions with his hand to the wall on the left hand - this is from the time of Hezekiah, the time of the Kings. If that wasn't enough right next to it is a four roomed house typical to the times of the Kings of Judah. This is the area where they have found jar handles with the inscription "for the King" and Hezekiah's emblem. Remembering that Hebron was a city of refuge, and a Levitical city it makes sense to see the tax for the King to have been gathered here in



preparation to finally go up to Jerusalem.

We sat under an olive tree, with our friendly paratrooper nearby to keep us safe, and looked down from the ruins of Abraham to the field of Machpelah... closing our eyes we used our imagination to paint in our minds what it would have looked like with the fields spreading out around the town. "Follow me" Meir yells and obediently we all troop after this energetic young man as he scrambles down the hill following a narrow track of dirt path. Past the back of houses and under dry trees, we follow along next to a barbed wire fence and find ourselves in an open seemingly deserted area we are here to witness ruins from the time of Christ.



They have unearthed two giant stone Mikvahs next to a large industrial sized olive oil and wine press. This was so that those producing it would be ritually clean, thus allowing the olive oil and the wine to be transported to Jerusalem for use in the Temple. All of this dates back to the second temple period – the time of Jesus Christ. This was thrilling as we know that it is here that Zacharias and Elisheva (Elisabeth) lived, and Mary visited when she was told she was expecting the coming Messiah. Meir picks fresh pomegranate off of some of the community trees and wedges of juicy rube fruit is passed eagerly from hand to

hand.

Our final destination was Maarat Hamachpela, the cave of the Patriarchs. We had the lay out of the underground burial areas explained to us and then we climbed up the steps into Machpela itself. This large stone structure was built, no surprise here – by Herod the Great! Only half of it is open to the Jews - In fact while we were inside, we found ourselves locked in! The IDF and police lock the Jews in while a mufti walks through the Jewish area to yell out his prayers on a loud speaker.



We walked around and saw a large ornate chair. We had found what they call Elijah's chair which the Jews have there ready and waiting for him to teach them from when Messiah comes. Walking around on our own I found a quiet corner in the women's section to tuck myself into and watch. Young women vibrating with the energy of youth, wrinkly grandmothers, and mothers with vivid and deep rich coloured head coverings holding a baby on the hip, they all come and go They do not pray to those buried there but rather pray to God to remember his promises to the Patriarchs and save Israel by sending Messiah. A tear etched its pathway down my dried cheek as I thought about what it will be like when Abraham & Sarah, Isaac & Rebekah, Jacob & Leah are resurrected from this cave. Then the time when these Jews that live in the city where King David began his reign over Judah will finally except the greater than David: Jesus Christ as their Messiah and King will come true!

We left to retrace our pathway out of Hebron, heading evermore Zionwards. Up and up we ascended through the mountains of Israel, following the pathway of not only the Patriarchs but also Zachariah and Elisheva as they made their way with other faithful families ascending to the Temple, perhaps in company with the olive oil for the menorah that had been prepared in the press we saw in Hebron. That night as we sleep our dreams are filled with the joy of what the Kingdom will be like when the faithful will again go up to Zion to worship in the Temple. Oh how we long for that day! Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

Until Next time;
Crazy Auntie Lindsay

