

# SHALOM MY FRIENDS,

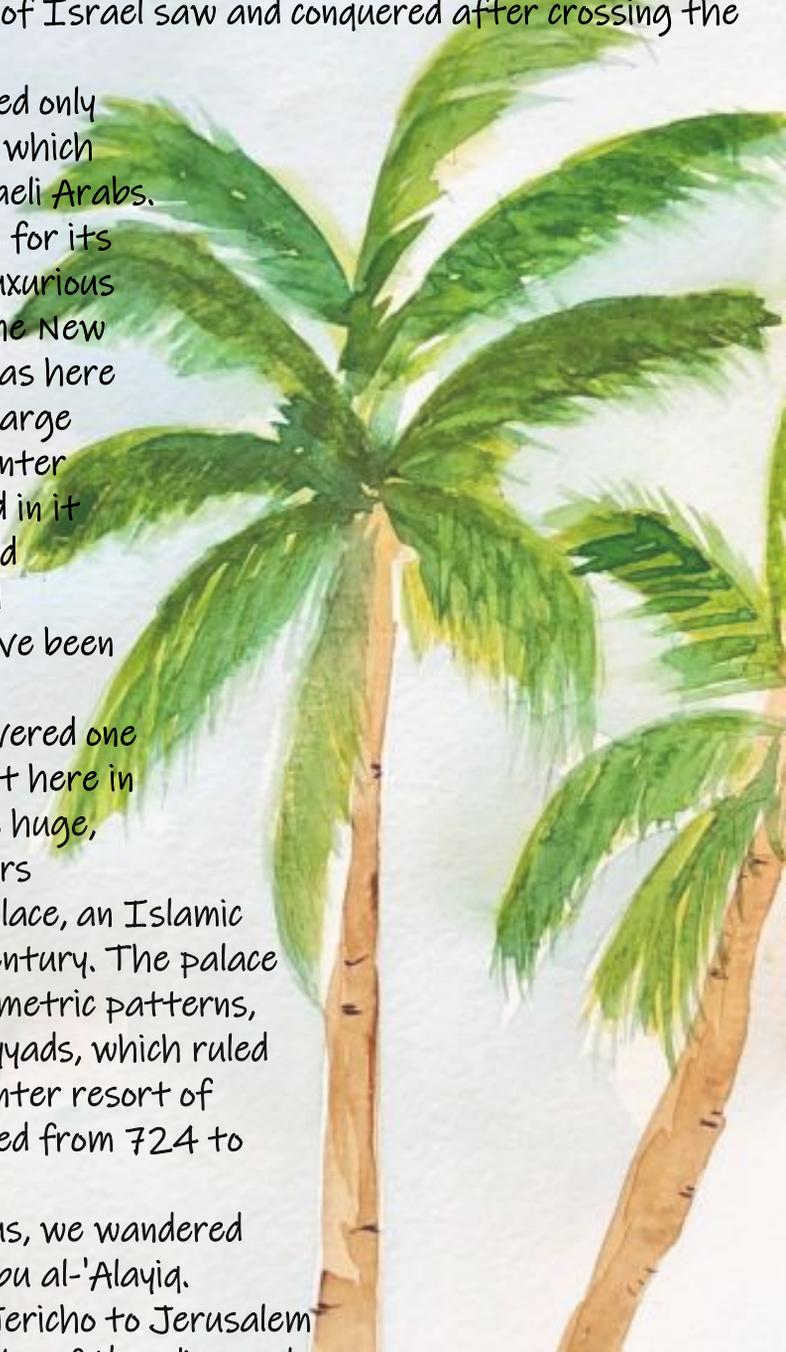
Today we travelled down, down, down to the lowest and oldest inhabited city on earth! This first city that the children of Israel saw and conquered after crossing the river Jordan.

Jericho is now a bustling city placed only about 5 km from the edge of the river, which has a population mainly made up of Israeli Arabs. As in the times of the Bible, it is known for its plethora of date palm trees and large luxurious homes and hotels. During the time of the New Testament, historians tell us that it was here that many of the priestly families had large sprawling estates. Herod also built a winter palace complex in Jericho, which resulted in it becoming a popular place for the rich and famous of that time period to also build winter holiday homes, many of which have been dug up.

Recently archeologists have discovered one of the largest mosaics in the world right here in Jericho. Resembling a fancy carpet, this huge, ancient mosaic covers 836 square meters (8,998 square feet) at the Hisham Palace, an Islamic desert castle dating from the eighth century. The palace and its stone mosaic, with intricate geometric patterns, were built during the reign of the Umayyads, which ruled from Damascus. The palace was the winter resort of Caliph Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik, who ruled from 724 to 743 AD.

Focusing back to the time of Jesus, we wandered around the western plain, called Tulul Abu al-'Alayiq. Here the Roman road that leads from Jericho to Jerusalem and back again meets up with the complex of Herodian and

Hasmonean royal winter palaces. Not only did they have running water, through clay pipes, to cool the buildings – they even had 2 swimming pools! I guess one wasn't enough! Just to the north of those palace ruins, they have found the remains of a large 112 acre irrigated farm and orchard which was used to provide food for not only the rich



inhabitants of these palaces but also their guests. 2 Roman built aqueducts watered the area year-round, providing the ability to farm in this dry desert area. One of these you can see today and sit under its' shade as you read the parable of the "kind Samaritan". After walking along the same Roman road that Jesus mentions in his parable, and seeing the ruins of the magnificent buildings in Jericho it adds another layer to this lesson. Both the Priest and the Levite were travelling back down to Jericho after serving in the Temple. No doubt they were heading towards a comfortable home, for the priest likely it was a large stately home as those found in the ruins of Herodian Jericho. Instead of stopping and helping, they hurried past on the opposite side of the road anxious to return to their comfortable homes and a yummy waiting dinner. Whereas the Samaritan stopped and helped, providing medical care and finally bringing the beat up traveler to an inn to finish healing. I wondered, walking along that ancient Roman road, how many times in our busy lives do we ignore those in the meeting that need help, even just a kind word. We all need to slow down and take notice of those that need help, and as Jesus says - help them. Do you know who else lived here? Zacchaeus! Imagine how incredible it would have been for him to look down at Jesus from up in that Sycamore tree - and to then have Jesus tell you he was coming to your house for dinner - WOW!

My Favourite part is the really ancient part of Jericho. They have discovered that it had 2 walls around it, and that there were houses built into and on top of the walls! The walls at some point have fallen out, creating a ramp for the invading army to go into the city. We see can even see the burn marks from when the city was burnt, including jars of dried grain.



Isn't it amazing that God has left this evidence of the miracle of the falling of the walls of Jericho right there under the sand for the archeologists to dig up! So which part of Jericho is your favourite? I don't know about you, but I could really use a jump into those swimming pools of King Herod's right now, it is so hot here in Jericho! Instead, I will sit here under the palm trees, fanning my face with my sun hat and gulp down cool pomegranate juice to try to cool down. I am so thankful for the air conditioning in the van for our drive back up to Jerusalem!

Until Next Time:  
CRAZY AUNTIE LINDSAY

p.s the seal on the front is from a tomb of a young 8 year old from the time of Joshua