

# MennoJerusalem Bible Lands Tour in Israel, Palestine & Jordan

November 2<sup>nd</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> 2012

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with Mennonite Church, USA/Canada and resident of Jerusalem for 10 years.

**CALENDAR of Daily Itinerary & Activities\***



## DAY 1, Friday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>

Travel from Winnipeg or Toronto airport, to Tel Aviv.

## DAY 2, Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup>

11:00 Arrive Ben Gurion airport (near Tel Aviv, eight hours ahead of CDT). Bus transfer to Tantur Ecumenical Institute in Jerusalem, (my home in Jerusalem, and ours this week) for check-in and LUNCH.

2:30 Optional bus tour of city panoramas, Abraham's lookout [Genesis 22], views of **Hinnom Valley** and the **Mount of Olives**, the **Old City** and **Dome of the Rock**. **Knesset**, **Shrine of the Book**.

*The opening panoramas that we see as we circle the Old City already suggest the sweeping panoramas of the biblical story—from Abraham's encounter with the faith-testing God, to the views of the Holy City from the Mount of Olives as Jesus approached it so many times.*

*He would have recalled the many prophecies about future events anticipated for that location, and would himself figure large in the dramatic events of the salvation story, some of whose key scenes were played out on its slopes.*

6:00pm dinner (each day)

## DAY 3, Sunday 4<sup>th</sup>

9:00 Worship at Redeemer Church (at the Golgotha site)

10:30 Tour **Holy Sepulchre Church of the Resurrection**, chapels, cisterns, and caves; site of Golgotha/ Calvary and the tomb of Jesus...

12:30 LUNCH at Tantur

*(rest period...backup time for possible intro-tour changes as a result of a later Saturday arrival time)*

4:00 Orientation session: Chapel Seminar Room

5:30 Tantur Community Prayer, Chapel

6:00 Sunday Tantur Community dinner

## DAY 4, Monday 5<sup>th</sup>

7:30 Depart to the **Ophel** excavations of the south Temple Mount area, to the **Davidson Center** exhibits near the first-century Roman street of Jesus' time; see **ritual baths/miqva'ot**.

Climb to the **Temple Mount**, with the **Golden Dome of the Rock** and **Al-Aqsa Mosque**.

To the **Western Wall** where bar mitzvahs and family celebrations will be in progress.

*The Temple was central to Jewish life and faith. It remained so also for Jesus who often came into conflict with its inner circle of religious Jewish leaders because of what they had let it become. We visit one of the two possible sites for Jesus' encounter with the Roman authorities after having been found guilty of blasphemy by the religious leaders.*



*We will walk the sites of the Temple compound and discuss its role and importance through that period of history, including its destruction that Jesus had spoken about, in tears, 40 years earlier.*

From the Temple Mount area, proceed through **Muslim Quarter**, along part of the Via Dolorosa to "**Ecce Homo Convent**" to visit the **Lithostratos**/ pavements of Jesus' trial before Pilate.

12:00 LUNCH on own on Via Dolorosa. To **St. Anne's Church** and archaeological site of **Bethesda Pools at Sheep's Gate** [St. John 5 story of Jesus' miracle].

3:00 Exit city from **Lions Gate** through Kidron Valley.

3:30 To the **Garden Tomb**, singing and meditations on the biblical story of crucifixion and resurrection.

Then visit **Herod's family tomb** (with best example of a rolling stone tomb in Israel).

**Return to Tantur for Dinner.**

#### **DAY 5, Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup>**

8:30 Drive southwards to **Hebron**, visit the mosque at the Tomb of the Patriarchs (Gen. 23).

11:00 Continue south toward the Negev desert, to the **Arab village of At-Tuwani**, meet with Christian Peacemakers Team stationed there.

12:30 LUNCH by the local Arab women's cooperative Talk with Muslim community leaders. Tour the village and join a CPT group near the Jewish settlement of Ma'on.

#### **DAY 6, Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup>**

7:30 Depart for **Passion Route**, from **Bethphage** by Bethany, down the **Mount of Olives** to **Dominus Flevit** Tear-Drop church, **Gethsemane** and **Church of all Nations/Basilica of the Agony**.

Cross the **Kidron Valley to Mount Zion**.

Picnic LUNCH on site of St. Peter in Gallicantu and **High Priest Caiaphas' house**.

Site tour, story of Jesus in custody and Peter's denials.

To **Upper Room, Mount Zion** (also *Acts 2, Pentecost*).

*The Jewish people longed for a messiah, the person who would finally free them from the oppressive Roman occupiers, set up an independent political rule and kingdom, and begin the time of peace and prosperity that was promised with the messiah's arrival. But Jesus began on the wrong beast, it seemed—a donkey instead of a stallion! Other things too would 'go wrong' for the followers who started to realize that the messiah they were following would not reach his goal.*

*We will deal with the poignant moments of Peter, realizing the 'failure' of his leader, when he begins to separate himself from Jesus—"following at a distance," and then denying any knowledge of him during the crisis of being a religious-*

*political prisoner.*

4:15 Meet with Rabbi at **Kol HaNeshama Synagogue** for an introduction to Jewish spirituality and worship, preparing for Friday evening's Sabbath celebrations.

6:00 DINNER at Tantur.

#### **DAY 7, Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> Check out of Tantur**

8:00 Bus leaves for **Herodion**, fortress, palace ruins, burial site of King Herod the Great outside Beit Sahour.

Return across the **Fields of Boaz** (Ruth chap. 4) to **Shepherds Fields**—readings, carol-singing in the ancient caves. Visit Holy Land Olivewood Coop founded by MCC.

*"Let us go straight to Bethlehem to see this thing that has come to pass" –Luke 2:15.*



(Nativity Church)

*Bethlehem first figures in the biblical story in Genesis with the death of Rachel, who tradition holds, is buried at the entrance to the town—today a disputed political area surrounded by an eight-meter concrete Wall. Muslims and Christians have their own stories through the ages, but we will focus on the time of Herod, friend of the Roman Emperor, whose 'occupation' of the Land was to be challenged by angels singing to shepherds nearby, and visits by Oriental wise people. Herod would try to kill any competitors; he himself was buried near the town.*

11:00 To **Bethlehem's Nativity Square** and Basilica, Jesus' birth **grotto**, caves of **St. Jerome**; **St. Catherine's Church** [world-wide Christmas Eve TV service originates here].

12:30 LUNCH with tour of Bethlehem Bible College  
2:30 Meet with Zoughbi Zoughbi, Founder/Director of *Wi'am*, Palestinian Conflict Resolution Center  
4:00 Bethlehem old city strolling, shopping option.  
5:30 Meet our Palestinian hosts, home for the evening.

### **DAY 8, Friday 9<sup>th</sup>**

8:15 Depart for **Efrat**, a Jewish settlement in the West Bank next to Bethlehem for discussion time in their synagogue with an Israeli settler.

#### **10:30 Yad Vashem, Holocaust Memorial**

Hall of Remembrance, and Children's Memorial.

*Debriefing and reflection on the lawn.*

*Twenty-five percent of the victims were children. The new holocaust memorial is a vivid display of the horrors of humanity that seemed to draw us to the rock-bed lowest of our history—as people, as Christians. 'Holocaust' means 'totally consumed', the word in the Hebrew Scriptures to refer to the sacrifice for sin. For that reason, Jews refer to that horrible period of 20<sup>th</sup>-century history as the Shoah [catastrophe]. By being exposed to their story, we have a better base to understand the Palestinian situation, and hear current stories from a new perspective.*

12:30 LUNCH on own in Old City.

*Shopping option or free time activity.*

3:00 Return to homes to prepare for shabbat evening.

5:30 To **Kol HaNeshama Synagogue**, for the *erev shabbat* worship service (“welcome the shabbat bride”)

8:00 Dinner in Bedouin tent-style restaurant overlooking Shepherds Fields, joined by our hosts for conversation, Palestinian music and dancing.

### **DAY 9, Saturday 10<sup>th</sup>** *Check out of Palestinian homes*

8:00 Depart for **Jericho**, the world's oldest city, and **Qumran/Dead Sea Scrolls discovery**; site of the excavations; home of the **Essenes**.

11:00 Option of a Dead Sea float and seaside relaxation

12:30 LUNCH by the sea

1:30 To Masada, massive ancient fortress, and palace ruins of King Herod.

*A day around these sites at the lowest point on earth will also let us pick up the stories of Moses, who died just across the Jordan River from the place we stop.*

*Joshua passed through the waters of the Jordan in a triumphal 'completion' of the salvation journey of his people since they left Egypt to reach the Promised Land. Jesus would also enter the Jordan River to open another chapter of the salvation story for his people—the people of the world, having already been identified in the Temple as being a light to the nations/Gentiles.*

4:00 To Arava crossing into Jordan; overnight in Aqaba.

### **DAY 10, Sunday 11<sup>th</sup>**

8:00 Morning worship in a desert setting.

10:00 Drive north to **Petra**, a UNESCO World Heritage site. It is a vast, unique hidden desert city, carved into the sheer red rock face by the Nabataeans over 2000 years ago.



In 2007, Petra was named one of the new Seven Wonders of the World.

LUNCH

2:00 Visit the Petra site in the afternoon, horse-riding option to the siq entrance. Overnight in Petra.

### **DAY 11, Monday 12<sup>th</sup>**

Drive north from **Petra** to Jesus' **baptismal site at Bethany-across-the-Jordan**, visit **Madaba's** famous mosaic map of Jerusalem, and climb (by bus) **Mount Nebo**, Moses' burial place...

LUNCH on the mountain, with a panoramic view.

Drive to **Amman** for city highlights bus tour, visit the **Grand Hussein Mosque**, and overnight in Amman.

## DAY 12, Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup>

8:00 Leave for the ancient site of the **Decapolis city of Jerash**. Enter the hippodrome for a show of Chariot Racing and Roman army re-enactments, followed by a tour of one of Jordan's largest archeological sites.

Lunch overlooking the **Jabbok River Valley** (story of Jacob and Esau's reconciliation) (Gen. 32 & 33).

4:00 Cross into Israel at the Sheik Hussein Bridge.

Check into the **Kibbutz Ma'agan Holiday Village Resort** on the **Sea of Galilee** for four nights.

## DAY 13, Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup>

7:30 Bus climbs the **Golan Heights** for a panoramic view over the Sea and region of Galilee, views of the "Evangelical Triangle" of Jesus; to **Mitzpe Ofir** overlooking the site of the **Kursi/Gerasenes** story of the demoniac and swine (Mark 5).

North through Upper Galilee to the **Lebanese border** and the cliffs of **Banyas/Caesarea Philippi** at the base of **Mount Hermon**, the source of the Jordan River.

*We begin the day with an overview of the region—Golan/Bashan to Mount Hermon and Banyas, where Jesus takes his students [the Greek form is 'disciples'] to confront the dual powers of his day: the Roman political machine, and the religious shrine of the gods at 'the gates of Hades' in that cliff. This is a major teaching site for Jesus, and Peter learns a bitter lesson from Jesus' anger.*

12:00 LUNCH, Lebanese restaurant, on the **Jordan River**. Return south to **Capernaum**, site of Jesus' synagogue, Peter's house, and Jesus' second home.

To **Tabgha** (the seven springs) and the site of several biblical accounts with the disciples, including the "Feeding of the five thousand."

## DAY 14, Thursday 15<sup>th</sup>

8:00 Baptismal reflection and meditation time at **Yardenit**, on the Jordan River.

10:00 Across Plains of Gennesaret to boat ride on the Sea of Galilee. Dock at **Kibbutz Ginnosar** for exhibit of the ancient 'Jesus' boat; video of its discovery.

12:30 LUNCH at kibbutz café, on own. Shopping option.

2:00 **Mount of Beatitudes**. Sing in the chapel, read the Matthew 5 story in the gardens overlooking the sea.

To **Peter's Primacy**, seashore biblical story of Peter's reconciliation with Jesus, from John 21.

Drive to the base of **Mount Arbel** for photo opportunities of the first-century **zealot caves**.

4:00 To Ma'agan via **Tiberias**, built up as a regional capital by Herod's son when Jesus was a teenager.

*Swimming, relaxation time.*

7:00 Dinner at Galei Galil on the promenade in Tiberias, beside the Sea of Galilee.

## Day 15, Friday 16<sup>th</sup>

8:00 Depart for **Nazareth Mount of the Precipice**—overview of the **Jezebel valley** toward **Nain, Megiddo**, and **Mount Tabor** with its stories from Judges chap. 4, and the traditional site for the transfiguration account.

10:45 **First-century Nazareth Village**.

LUNCH is a first-century meal typical of what Jesus would have eaten. Visit the village and synagogue reminiscent of Jesus' time, see a working farm and animals, workers in first-century costume.

*Understanding the Jewishness of Jesus, his upbringing in an orthodox Jewish family, his being raised in a Hasmonean Jewish*

*'settlement' and being immersed as a youth in the history and stories of the*



*Israelite people through the ages—all helps us understand both the contextual settings of his teaching and the way those around him heard him teach—and the present-day significance of Jewish spirituality and worship for Christians.*

2:30 Afternoon visit to the **Basilica of the Annunciation**, over the village **cave home of Mary** and Joseph. Museum of artifacts from the first century.

Walk to the Orthodox Church over **Mary's well**, in downtown Nazareth.

4:30 Return to Ma'agan via the traditional site of Cana.

*Pack for travel...and relaxation by the sea.*

7:00 Dinner at Ma'agan followed by our final tour debriefing / meditation time by the seashore.

**Day 16, Saturday 17<sup>th</sup>** *Check out of Ma'agan*

8:00 Cross Jezreel Valley near the Via Maris pass of the Carmel Mountains, story of Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Ba'al (I Kings 18).

To Haifa, setting of Baha'i Temple gardens.

LUNCH

Continue down the Mediterranean coast to Herod's aqueduct (swim in the Mediterranean Sea).

6:00 DINNER in Jaffa (Joppa) / Tel Aviv.

*(stay at hotel near airport for Sunday flight).*

**DAY 17, Sunday 18<sup>th</sup>**

Three-hour advance check-in at Ben Gurion airport.

*\* Depending on his travel schedule, a possible audience with Archbishop Elias Chacour, head of the largest Christian denomination in Israel, Melkite Catholic (and author of Blood Brothers).*

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*\* Correct as of December 15, 2011. Subject to revision.*

***Prepared by Glenn Edward Witmer,  
MennoJerusalem Leader & Story-teller***

*"Come and See!" & Expect a Blessing!*  
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