Sorry there have been no updates on the website for the past few weeks. I have been on holiday in Israel. This was my second trip to the holy land, and hopefully it won't be my last. This time I did get to visit a few places I had not been to before. Our trip lasted twelve days and began in Jerusalem.

Day one - Saturday

Our first hotel was the Ramada and our first day took us to the Mount of Olives, Gethsemane and the house of Caiaphas.

Day two - Sunday



On the second day, which was a Sunday, we attended the small assembly in Jerusalem run by Mary McBride. It was nice to be able to remember the Lord in this way, just a stone's throw from where He suffered for us. After this we went for a walk through the Old City, and visited the Pavement, where Christ was mocked by the soldiers. We also saw the pools of Bethesda, where Jesus healed the lame man. After this we went to see the eastern gate of the temple, where Christ is to enter through at His Second Coming. This was special, as we were able to walk right up to it this time, and it was fascinating to be able to stand in a place where so much prophecy has and will be fulfilled. My guide believes that the current eastern gate, which was sealed by Suleiman the Magnificent, does indeed stand above the original eastern gate of the temple that the Lord would have entered during His time on earth. Today there is a yeshiva located within the wall of the eastern gate. Our lunchtimes in Jerusalem were mostly spent in the Ramat Rachel, a kibbutz hotel with facilities large enough for catering for groups like ours. The food was generally nice, and I was able to practice a little of my Hebrew when I was there.

Dinner at the Ramada was nice too, although the plates weren't washed as well as they should have been.

Day three - Monday



On Monday we went to visit the Western Wall. This time we were able to go into the library at the wall that is located near Herod's gate. In a corner of the library there is a glass tile on the floor which enables you to look down to the base of the original wall built by Herod. The present day wall stands on more than 45 feet of rubble. Israel has been excavating beneath the Temple Mount, possibly to try and locate the ark of the covenant, which some believe could have been hidden by the Jews prior to the destruction of the temple. On this trip we were able to get onto the Temple Mount plaza itself and see the Dome of the Rock and the mosques that now occupy the site. This was a fantastic experience, to be able to walk where the first and second temples once stood, and where the Lord will reign from during the Millennium. We also stood within the Dome of the Spirits, where it is believed the Holy of Holies was located. Our Jewish guide was not able to do this, as this place is still sacred to them, despite having been defiled by the mosques. But it was nice to think that as Christians, we have a greater privilege, and our bodies are now the temple of the Holy Spirit. After this we visited Robinson's Arch, which people would have used to ascend up to the temple area during the time of Christ. We also visited the Western Huldah Gate. Later on we saw what is supposed to be King David's tomb and the upper room, after which we visited the Jewish quarter of the Old City. In the square there were Jewish people singing folk songs about the rebuilding of the temple and Jewish

school children were playing in the street. Our guide read the passage in Zechariah, how the Lord would regather His people and the streets of Jerusalem would once again be inhabited and boys and girls would play in its streets. It was a very moving moment.

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Later on we visited the City of David, where David's palace would have stood, and where he committed his sin with Bathsheba. After that we were able to walk through Hezekiah's tunnel, which is mentioned in the Bible, that he dug to bring fresh water within the walls of the city. This was quite a feat of engineering, 450 feet of tunnel carved out of solid rock using only chisels, and without the use of lasers as a guide. When the two digging teams met in the middle there was only a discrepancy of a couple of feet between the tunnels. At the other end we saw where the pool of Siloam would have been located, where the blind man received his sight.

Day four - Tuesday



The next day we went to see the Knesset, and then on to the Scroll of the Book, where some of the scrolls that were discovered at Qumran are kept. The Dead Sea Scrolls, which were hidden by the Essenes during the Jewish revolt in the first century, were only discovered in 1947, a few months before Israel became a nation. They were found to contain a copy of every book in the Old Testament, apart from Esther, and provided incontrovertible proof that the Bible we read today has not been corrupted by the passage of time. We also saw the model of

Jerusalem in the time of Christ, which is also located beside this exhibit. After this we went to visit Yad VaShem, the Holocaust memorial. This was particularly moving, even visiting it for the second time. It's difficult to understand just how much the Jewish people suffered, and just how callous the human heart can be. And to think that this happened in Europe only 60 years ago. Later on we visited Gordon's Calvary and the garden tomb, which is in the vicinity of, if not the actual place where the Lord was crucified.

Day five - Wednesday

The next day we went to see one of the locations where it is believed the town of Emmaus may have be located. And after that, to the valley of Elah, where David fought Goliath. This was the first time I had visited these places, and was able to pick up a few pebbles from the brook where undoubtedly David would have found his five smooth stones. During our holiday we were able to see some storks and vultures, mentioned in the Bible, which cross Israel on their migratory flights. In the afternoon we went to see the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, what could only be described as a shrine of idolatry. It is very sad to see people from many nations, kissing and touching the places where Christ was supposed to have been crucified, in the hopes of somehow obtaining favour from God. Still, a few in our group had good conversations with some of these people, and the opportunity was not wasted. This day was Jerusalem day, and we were able to see Jewish families celebrating down at the Western Wall, before getting a taxi back to our hotel. Our driver was an Arab Christian, and we had to do our best to persuade him that we didn't want him to take us to Bethlehem!

Day six - Thursday





