

〈記録〉

JAFFA, NAZARETH and GOLAN/OLTENIȚA, RUSE and IAȘI

Continuing the adventures out of Sasashima
in Ottoman Empire successor states

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This is a record of my visits to Israel and Romania early in 2019. If Tel Aviv is a Mediterranean version of New York City, then Neve Tsedek is a Greenwich Village going down to the sea. On the first evening there we had Ben Gurion rice for dinner - Israeli couscous -and I met Eelat with his daughter Meged, and he introduced me to the story of the ALTALENA AFFAIR....which I was able to follow up by visiting the memorial the next morning. It happened in June 1948. The Altalena was a cargo ship which sailed from France to the newly founded State of Israel with a cargo of weapons, donated by the French Government, and about 940 Irgun fighters. The leader of the Irgun in Jerusalem was Menachem Begin. There was a confrontation on the beach near to Netanya and then again off the beach near to Tel Aviv between the Irgun and the Israel Defense Force (IDF) and nearly a civil war between thema number of people were killed. Ben Gurion was the leader of the IDF. Begin made some concessions and the stand-off was closed. In the end the ship was towed out to sea and sunk.

On that first day I walked up the beach to Gordon to deliver a book from Tom McGonigle to Beatrice Smedley. On the way there I visited the Altalena memorial. I won't write any more about it here because it is too difficult to find out the full story. Certainly there have been strong differences of view in the Israel story, and they continue to this day.

I went to stay in the old Turkish Customs House in JAFFA. I rather like the atmosphere of this place, and the breakfast on the roof is civilised. I had met Moshe and Gilia Swede with my son Mark and he offered to show me round Jaffa. I met him at the Clocktower. And we walked to his home which is beside a mosque. His home was also in Turkish/Palestine style.....high ceilings with big fans rather than modern airconditioning, tall windows, and tiled floors with a few scatter rugs. They had two, possibly three, dogs.....two children, I think. We went out to a coffee shop and enjoyed sweet cakes 'knafe' and 'boklawaw' with Jordanian coffee, and talked about Tel Aviv schools. Tamara and Raphael, my grandchildren, were going to a good school, he said, though there was a need to supplement it at home with, for example, music and Arabic. We walked around Jaffa up to the point, passing the Tabeetha school (a Church of Scotland school, curiously) and had a workers' lunch...bread with hummus, onions and Coke. Conversation here was about Disraeli buying the Khedive's shares in the Suez Canal in 1875 with Rothschild money.....and Queen Victoria becoming Empress of India.....and we also talked about the Rothschild Caesarea Foundation.....30,000 dunams of land (7400 acres) up the coast from Tel Aviv. It seems that these days most Israelis have dual nationality, a place to retreat to whence they came.....The Zionist project is very splendid in many respects, but there is a feeling that it has been hijacked by extremists, and that things may not work out for the best. I stayed another night in the Jaffa hostel. During the night I heard shots fired in the market below, and there were police car lights on the ceiling of the dormitory.....the Italian I was with, Marco, didn't seem to be too worried...I lay there quietly and listened and then went back to sleep.

I returned to the safety of the flat in Neve Tsedek. Arkady was giving Tamara a lesson on the Yamaha keyboard lent by Amit, Shimrit's

dinner in the garden, Mandy from Guandong and Jodi from Henan. Dinner was Chinese 米饭, 咸菜 (rice and pickled vegetables) and salad only, and no chopsticks 筷子 but it felt Chinese. The next morning I found some Avocado honey from the Golan in the hostel shop which was also served at the breakfast. In the shop they were critical of the Yad Mordechai honey which is available in all the supermarkets, describing it as not very good honey. It is true that I have yet to buy some really good Yad Mordechai honey, although what a beautiful place the Yad Mordechai kibbutz in Ashkelon is, and historical.....and dangerous too, so close to the Gaza Eretz Crossing. From Haifa I caught the bus to NAZARETH, which is about half an hour away. I do not have any notes about my stay in Nazareth but I do have some beautiful photographs. I stayed at the Fauzi Azar Inn which is a fine building at the top of the Souk again in the Turkish/Palestinian style. The dormitory beds were in what looked like a dungeon, at least a cellar and I slept very well there. The two people I met there were Vincent Masoja from Pretoria, South Africa (He was rather like Archbishop Tutu.) and Wu Yue 吴越 an architectural student from Beijing specialising in Palladio. Together with them I visited the Basilica of the Annunciation where the Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary....I thought of our Meg whose Christian name, given her at Takamori Soan, is GabrielAlso we visited Joseph's carpentry workshop, now a church. Nazareth is a pretty special place as you can imagine.and these days it is an Arab city.....I felt it would be a nice place to settle into and study Arabic in the morning and Hebrew in the afternoon and live in the dungeon.. ..perhaps even work as a volunteer in the hostel. There were a number of people staying there on that basis, and there were also people hiking the Jesus Trail across the Judean Hills and staying in tents....but nevertheless happy to take refuge in the hostel with its showers and good breakfasts. Thanks to Vincent Masoja from Pretoria (He was charming.....I felt an example of Commonwealth good manners) I

was able to meet a great grandson of Fauzi Azar.....I think his name was Rawywho invited us out on the town.....but we decided against it this time. It was really special to be exploring Nazareth with an African and a Chinese girl, and enjoy both Arab and Israeli hospitality. From here I went to the GOLAN HEIGHTS. I caught a bus from a stop across the road from the Basilica to Qiryat Shemona, a little town often shelled from the Lebanon by the Hezbollah in the north part of the Golan Heights. Recently there has been talk of the Americans.....Donald Trump....recognising the annexation of the Golan by the Israelis....the Israelis have had control of it since the 1967 Six Day War. I am not quite sure how far this talk of recognition has gone. A year before, that is 2018, the Americans had been moving their embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. But actually my reason for my visiting the Golan was the delicious avocado honey I had had for breakfast in Haifa. Also because I knew that Eitan Zion of Yad Mordechai had hives up there during the summer. My destination by bus was the hostel on Mount Odem. This is an extinct volcano which looks north towards another extinct volcano Mount Hermon which was covered with snow and is mostly in Syria and the Lebanon. On the way the bus passed the ruins of Nimrod Castle visible some way off to the left. (This was built in 1229 by a younger son of Saladin along the road between Galilee and Damascus as a bastion against the Crusaders. In 1260 it was captured by the Mongols who needed the mountain grass for their horses. Later, from 1517 it was used as a prison by the Ottomans. In the 18th century it was damaged by an earthquake. It was from the 19th century that the Druze called it Qal'at Namrud (Nimrod Castle)). The hostel at Mount Odem was not very interesting for me, though it might be a nice place to go with children during the summer. But I did meet a musician there, who had just finished his military service, a future conductor (!) who was called Yuval Seeberger, with his girlfriend Yaara Dagoni. He asked me where I came from and I said Chichester in the south of

England. And he said “Ah, Bernstein, the Chichester Psalms.” which took me by surprise, at Mount Odem, because last year quite by chance I had been to a concert in Chichester Cathedral which had included the Chichester Psalms sung in Hebrew - a first time for me to hear Hebrew in church in England - by the three choirs of Chichester, Winchester and Salisbury. The Cathedral had been full as I had never seen it before. I spent the evening at Mount Odem reading ‘Ponsonby remembers’ about my grandfather’s experiences in Beersheba with Allenby in 1916, and in the morning walked over Mount Odem to the other side where I found a mountainside covered with apple orchards.....apples lying on the groundI ate one having not had much breakfast.....There were lots of irrigation pipes lying on the ground, but I didn’t see any bees. I guess they bring them up there in April. I caught the bus down to Qiryat Shemona. In the bus station there was a little coffee shop where a mother and daughter were selling coffee - excellent coffee - so I got a coffee and a doughnut. The daughter looked like Shimrit, and the mother was blonde and looked like Shimrit’s mother Tammy. So I asked where they came from before Israel, and they said Fez in Morocco...same place.....Israel is like that.



It costs 16 shekels to go from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem by bus. This time

I wanted to go to the Holocaust Museum at YAD VASHEM. The museum consists of a forest to remind people of the forests of Northern Europe where so many of these dreadful things happened, and a museum where the rise of Fascism in Germany is clearly explained..... (though is it possible to explain clearly how a whole country like Germany went crazy?) At the entrance to the museum there is a haunting photograph of Jewish circle dancing with a background of klezmer music I think probably from somewhere like Belarus, whence came Chagall. He survived, got away to America, but many didn't. It is an extraordinary and appalling story, hard to believe then and even harder to believe now. It couldn't have happened, but it did. I have been to Auschwitz, and to Majdanek, and to Warsaw, and to Krakov from which 300,000 Jewish people were sent out secretly to Belzec. And we have on our shelves here in England 'The Auschwitz Album The Story of a Transport' which is a collection of photographs of a Jewish community from Hungary arriving in Auschwitz. It is astonishing that civilised people like the Germans could have done these things. These days in England the issue we are agonising over is Brexit. The whole idea of the European Union is that war should not happen again in Europe, and that things like the Holocaust simply should never happen again. Should the United Kingdom be walking away from it. Should we be staying in it and would that help to stop everything going wrong again, or can we do that better from outside? I am not sure. But these were the things I was thinking about at Yad Vashem.

Below are some watercolours of the Theresienstadt Ghetto in the Sudetanland in 1944. Also exhibited in the Yad Vashem art gallery were paintings of the south of France by Charlotte Salomon 1917-1943.

Down the hill from Yad Vashem is the Knesset and the Israel Museum. The most precious things in the museum are the DEAD SEA SCROLLS. They were discovered in the Qumran caves by Bedouin near to the

north shore of the Dead Sea in 1946 and 1947, and more were found in 1956. They are written mainly on parchment, some on papyrus, and are mostly written in Hebrew, though some are in Aramaic and Greek, and they date from the 3rd century BC to the 1st century AD. It is an almost complete set of the Jewish scriptures, in other words the Christian Old Testament - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Proverbs, Numbers, Judges, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Samuel, Joshua, Ezekial, Psalms, Daniel, Lamentations, Job, Ruth, Kings, Ecclesiastes...only the Book of Esther seems to be missing.....There are quite a lot of manuscripts that are not in the Christian Bible.....The Dead Sea Scrolls are the oldest manuscripts written in the Hebrew language which has now been resurrected as the language of Israel. The museum is built around the Shrine of the Book which houses them. The rest of the museum is a mixture of things for the tourists - Ai Weiwei's (艾未未) Iron Trees, sculpture by Isamu Noguchi (野口勇), some magnificent 13th century BC coffins, beautifully illuminated. In Oxford the Ashmolean Museum has recently had a remake funded in part by Meitar, the Israeli law firm, and maybe the same people did the Israel Museum.

I usually find some art in Neve Tsedek which appeals to me. This time it was a sculpture workshop with abseiling figures on the wall outside (see below).

Also I was interested in the way the girls dress, especially the girls who have dogs. Somehow the clothes matched the dogs, and the leads created a relationship. But I haven't got any good photographs of this.

Two weeks later I was again in BUCHAREST (București). It is always nice to be back there. This time I was looked after by Carol Vacărescu, and we used the underground to get where we wanted to be. The station Eroilor Sanitari is just around the corner from the Vacărescu house. The destination was a shop which Carol thought



would sell gumboots, but it didn't sell gumboots, only beautiful custom made leather shoes which was not what I wanted. So we went into the church next door SF. Mucenița Filotheia, Church of the Martyr Philothea which it turned out had been restored by Văcărescu Ianache. We were warmly received by the people in the church, and I came away with a beautiful beeswax candle, and an icon for Lilu and Carina, and a cross was put round my neck. I felt I had become a member. What a nice way to be welcomed to Romania! The food at the Văcărescus was really good. Thank you, Elena. Zacuscă and sărățele (salty crackers) in the shapes of fossils which is one of her specialities. For lunch on the first day, which was served when Horia and Sînziana turned up (about 3.30)....by which time the fish had had time to cook slowlyWe had șalău (pește strapozan) a kind of perch from the Danube with lemon, "very good for health (bolnav)" I was assured. After lunch....already eveningSînziana and Elena went to work on their music textbook in front of the computer screen, interrupted from time

to time by telephone calls from Holloway in London, where I could see my granddaughters.....Carol and I meanwhile were enjoying the Țuika (plum wine) which had been given them by Relu Cotoban.

The next day was Sunday. For breakfast we had Creier Vițel (calf's brains).....we used to have brains quite often in England, but since the Mad Cow Disease, they do not seem to have been for sale.....we also had Ochiuri în apa (poached eggs).....nice music, Tchaikovsky, was coming from the kitchen round the corner. We set off in HBC (their nickname for the car ...its number, Horia, Bogdan, Carol) southwards towards the Danube, Maria Tanase singing away splendidly from the dashboard.....buying some milk (lapte) from a farm on the way. When we reached the Danube after about an hour.....it is the southern frontier of Romania...we drove to CHIRNOGI and stopped in front of the bell tower (bell is 'clopot' in Romanian) of the church Biserica Sfintul Nicolae. It was very quiet and I didn't think anybody was about. We walked across the churchyard...it was still quite silent....and entered the church....and it was full of people.....a congregation of about 200 people with a Mass in progress. We were ushered up to the front by our host Relu Cotoban. (I didn't see him go, but at some point after Mass, Carol slipped out to collect a fish that had just been brought in, a Fitofag (Novac)...a huge fish that I only saw the next day on a bed of ice.) It was a beautiful church. The service was taken by a priest called Adrian. Another priest called Daniel read the lesson about the Prodigal Son. There were references to Vincent, the Bishop of Călărași. To the side in front of the Iconostasis, were the relics of the martyr Saint Dasie from Silistra (This was Dasius of Durostorum, a martyr from the 4th century AD) There was a carpet with Byzantine Eagles.



After church we went to have a delicious lunch with Relu Cotoban. Relu Cotoban's full name is Ionil Aurelian Cotoban (so Relu is a diminutive of Aurelian, I learned) and he has written a book 'Orthodoxia fără frontiere Pelerin pe ambele maluri a le Dunării.' (Orthodoxy from the Frontier. Pilgrimages on both sides of the Danube.) This was an inspiration for me. At lunch we had red wine from Bulgaria and white wine from Chirnogi.....Venison and Goose. Indeed it was a feast, all prepared by Lucia, Relu's mother. And Ionut Carciog was there in the role of interpreter, so I didn't have to guess too much what was going on (as I have been doing for 35 years in China/Japan.) At the end of Relu's garden there were seven or eight beehives facing out southwards towards the Danube and Bulgaria beyond. After lunch we went for a drive in Oltenița along side the Danube and visited an old customs house where we were told people with the plague had been quarantined. This fits because it is not far from there, across the Black Sea to the Crimea whence came the bubonic plague all the way from China in the 14th century.....and all the way to England. From Oltenița on the Romanian side we could see the fishing village of Tutrakan on the Bulgarian side. Relu told us that there was a fishing museum there, and that in 1942 a 4.5 meter long Sturgeon weighing 380 kg had been caught and that it

was exhibited in the museum...I began to think that I should take the hint from Relu Cotoban and go across and visit Tutrakan. England had yet to leave the European Union so my British passport would still be valid to enter Bulgaria.

We returned to Bucharest in HBC, and the next day for lunch Carol cooked the Fitofag

Again Horia and Sînziana were late, and again the fish was cooked to perfection. It had quite a lot of bones so we all had to be very careful. Carol had an eating fish story. A man was concentrating very hard so he didn't swallow a bone. A friend asked him about a relative.....He died, the man said.....The friend asked about another relative.....He also died, the man replied.....The friend asked about them again.....

The man answered, No they are still alive. The next day early in the morning Carol put me on a minibus to Giurgiu. I think he was helped by Sînziana who knew this route quite well. She has a brother, the beekeeper, who lives down in that direction. I found myself sitting with three doctors doing their daily commute and they told me where to get off, a place where I could find a frontier taxi to take me over the long bridge to ROUSSE (PYCE) and change some money. I don't think any of the Vacarescus have been to Ruse even though it is a short hop from Bucharest (.....but then I have never been to Birmingham!) But Rouse in Bulgaria is quite a place. During the 19th century it was three days downstream from Vienna and three days on by boat to Istanbul. The elegance of Vienna floated down the river. Today it is a town of 200,000 people with some fine buildings around the main square. I visited the cathedral which was very beautiful, half below ground. I was told that the Ottoman town planners didn't want a church to dominate the city, so the architects put the nave 30 foot below ground

level. I also visited the houses of Baba Tonka and Zaharias Stoyanov who had been amongst the leaders of the liberation risings against the Ottomans 1875–6.



This was the time of the Bulgarian massacres which Gladstone spoke about in the English House of Commons. The massacres by Ottoman troops took place in villages near to Plovdiv quite a long way from Rouse.

From Rouse I caught the bus along the river to Tutrakan (Тутракан) opposite to Oltenița where I had been two days earlier with the Vacarescus. I could now look across the river from the other side. There was indeed a Fishing Museum there and I found the huge stuffed sturgeon. And I stayed in a restored fisherman's house down by St Nicholae's church. Beside the main street there was a bust of Empress Catherine's General Suvorov who won a great battle here against the Turks on May 10th 1773. Also there are the ruins of a Roman fortress here, now a park, one of the fortresses of Emperor Diocletian. The population of Tutrakan over the last 20 years has fallen from 15,000 to 5000. Bulgaria joined the European Union in 2007. Clearly the opportunities are elsewhere. It is the same across the river in Chirnogi according to Relu and Ionut. But I enjoyed my dinner in the fisherman's

house restored by Ivailo and Marietta. I was on the side of a birthday party for Polina aged eight with chocolate sparklers and balloons. Between the beams in the ceiling there were fishing nets, actually looking rather like cobwebs. I caught the bus along to Silistra and from there took the ferry over a much wider Danube to Călărași, where I found a train back to Bucharest.....just in time to go to the opera (5 minutes walking distance from the Vacarescus) Rossini's 'Il Barbiere do Sivilia (in Romanian 'Bărbierul din Sevilla') a fantastic performance directed by Alberto Veronese in modern dress and with modern set, quite brilliant.



The next morning we headed north for Breaza, skirting round the oil city of Ploesti. In the distance the Carpathians were snowcovered. It reminded me of the South Alps in Japan. We parked the car on a slope in Câmpina and went into the GRIGORESCU house. Actually it was the house where he spent the last years of his life (1890–1907). It was quite messy and very much to my taste, with Turkish rugs and guns on the walls, also a Gobelin tapestry, and carpet fragments and plates which he

used in his paintings, and upstairs plants in pots that had been made by his son, and some pictures painted in Barbizon and Brittany on the walls. There was one 'Ox and Cart' (...Caru cu boi..), the ox called 'Snowdrop' because he named his animals after flowers. There were some big tile stoves to keep the place warm in winter. Nicolae Grigorescu (1838–1907) is Romania's Impressionist painter. He started off painting icons at the age of 10 and sold them in the market. Then he painted the faces of an iconostasis in a church. In 1861 Mihail Kogălniceanu got him a scholarship to study at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris. He spent time in Barbizon, south of Paris in the Fontainebleau forest where he met Corot, Rousseau and Millet. 1877 saw him as a 'Front Line' painter in the War of IndependenceFrom Câmpina we went on to Breaza, which is surely a lovely valley in summer, and found Azorike, the Vacarescu dog and Dode, the farmer who looks after it. There were lots of fruit trees there - strugari (vines), mere (apples) para (pears) pruna (plums) gutui (quince) nuc (walnut trees) and I collected some măceși seeds to plant in England, reminding me of Vasile Spinei's book of poetry 'Gardul de măceși'Eglantine Hedge 'Eglantine' is 'Dog Rose' for the non-gardeners.....

The last journey of this exploration was to Iași, also written Jassy, and pronounced YASH. I had heard it was a beautiful city with lots of fine churches, full of students. I had also heard in Israel from Ruth in Jerusalem about the terrible Iași pogrom in 1941

All three cities, Iași in Moldavia (now România), Chișinău now in Moldova, and Odessa now in the Ukraine were very Jewish cities before the war. I got up at 5.00 o'clock in the morning and caught the wrong train at Eroilor, a train going in the opposite direction, so missed the 6.00 o'clock train from Gara de Nord to Iași. There wasn't another until midday, so I went and had a good breakfast and headed for the

Muzeul Național al Satului ('sat' means village in Romanian) which is like the Singleton Open Air Museum with a few lovely churches thrown in.....though in many of the houses there there were Kilims on the walls, table cloths on the tables, and bedding on the beds to make me at least feel at home. I particularly liked the half buried houses from Drăghiceni reminding me of the ones in Grigorescu's paintings, also of the half buried cathedral in Rouse. And I was interested in the beekeeper's house (Gospodar de Apicultor) from Cut Albă with wattle and daub skeps and a serious wax shed (Teasc des stors ceară). Eventually I caught the train to the north....București, Ploești,

Buzău, Focșani, Bârlad, Vaslui, and Iași. I was on the train with a couple whose daughter was studying photography at the George Enescu University in Iași (Maybe one day my granddaughter Lilu Văcărescu will study there). I got out at NICOLINA

STATION. It was already dark and I started walking towards the Hotel Moldova in the centre of town. This seems to have been an old Communist hotel, but was now renovated, the staff working there very charming, and conveniently sited next door to the Palace of Culture and Sf. Nicolae's church. The next morning the Palace still being closed, I went to the church.....there were beggars at the door....and (to my surprise for the second time) found the church to be full of people. There was a 'Pomenirea a Morților' (Mass in memory of the dead...Requiem Mass) in progress, tables laden with rounded breads 'forma de Cozonac', the Iconostasis alight with candles, many beeswax candles everywhere, bottles of wine, baskets of apples, grapes, bananas.....the priests wearing splendid robes, even more splendid than those in Chichester Cathedral....chants and answering chants...bread coming round for the Mass....people raising bottlestouching each other.....crossing themselves.....crossing myself fervently I slipped out

past the Stefan Cel Mare (1457–1504) statue to the Palace of Culture which had just opened. And a magnificent palace it is, with a very nice clock with a beautiful chime, and within a fine collection of Cucuteni pots 4800–3000 BC, Neolithic pottery I had not encountered before, and there were some good paintings too, by Grigorescu again, but not only by him. There was an excellent Hora de Pește at Olt (fish dance) by Theodor Aman, and a gathering of Jews by Octav Băncila, a Woman with a Fan by Jean al Steriadi. (I looked up Information about the Iași Pogrom June 29 to July 6, 1941. It was the time of Marshal Ion Antonescu. Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union began on June 22nd. Romania was joining in to win back Bessarabia. Many people in the Romanian Government associated Jews with Bolsheviks. So these were extraordinary times. Altogether between 13000 and 15000 Jewish people in Iași were murdereddragged out of their homes....put on trains and killed along the way.....by the Iron Guard and by the mob. This happened in Iași, and also in Chișinău and in Odessa. The details are too awful to write about here.We really don't want another war in Europe which leads to this kind of brutality. That is the main purpose of the European Union and why, in my opinion, Brexit is not a good way forward for the UK. This was my feeling at Yad Vashem. It is best for the British to be engaged, and to be part of it, have a chance to put it right.Iași is indeed full of students. I think there are four universities there. It is like a little Oxford. I think I walked the full length of it from the Palace of Culture to the Botanical Garden and there were some beautiful churches there. Certainly I would be happy to live there and I think it would be a good place for Lilu Văcărescu now 3 years old to go to university. On the train back to Bucharest there were lots of students. I asked if anybody spoke Bulgarian. No, was the answer. If we meet Bulgarians we speak to them in English.....So we British should be in there too....Should we not?