

Israel and the West Bank 2022

INTRODUCTION written in February 2024

CONCLUSION written in April 2024 after a visit to Israel

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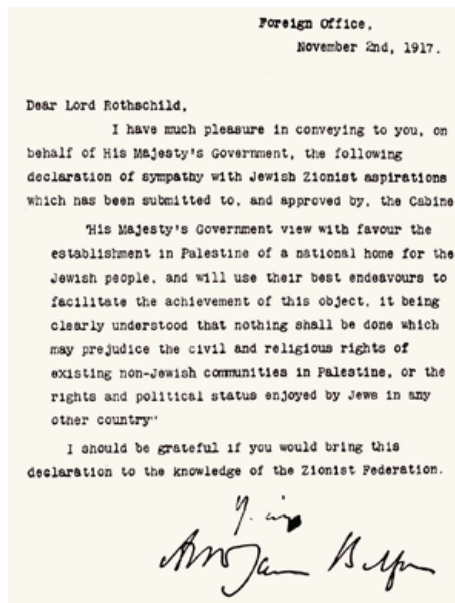
INTRODUCTION

I am writing this introduction in February 2024 in Portugal. The MASSACRE 虐殺 of Israelis at the Music Festival and Kibbutz in the Negev took place on October 7, 2023. My daughter might have been playing at that music festival, but she wasn't. I might have been visiting the kibbutz in connection with bees.....(Yad Mordechai Kibbutz close to the Eretz Crossing into Gaza is famous for bees and honey. We/I went there a few years ago, and interviewed Eitan Zion in his caravan on the Shabat. He is the great Israeli beekeeper. What an honour that was!) People say that the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) were not there on October 7.....at least there were not enough of them along the Gaza fence line.....to stop the wild people coming out. That is certainly the case. The Israeli women and children (like my daughter-in law and grandchildren) were killed with particular ferocity and cruelty, the intention of the wild people from Gaza clearly being to provoke a response. Immediately afterwards the Americans and the British became very supportive of the Israelis.....and the Israelis DID respond and there was war. But in a sense they fell into a trap.....It is not at all easy for the Israelis to win a war like this.....So now five months later the Israelis are still fighting and still bombing Gaza. The Hamas continues to use women and children as human shields, and a lot of women and children

have been killed or seriously wounded.....Or maybe they didn't fall into a trap. It is what (some) Israelis had been intending to do all along, but had been waiting for the opportunity to do.....The Settler Israelis seem to be in control on one side. They consider that the survival of Israel in on the line, and they may be right. But many Israelis do not think like the Settler Israelis and recently they have been demonstrating in Tel Aviv for the resignation of Prime Minister Netanyahu. And the Hamas extremists who want to throw the Israelis out of Palestine seem to be in control on the other side. But certainly many Palestinians do not support that either.

The article I wrote in 2022 I now present again with some additions. After the article I will give my opinions in a Conclusion.

But for now I will just offer the letter from Balfour to Lord Rothschild which I have stuck up on my fridge here in England!



Letter from Balfour to Lord Rothschild

This letter is in all the books. My neighbour laid her books out on the dining room table:

A Line in the sand. Britain, France and the Struggle that shaped the Middle East. James Barr. Simon and Schuster UK.

Enemies and Neighbours. Arabs and Jews in Palestine and Israel 1917-2017 Ian Black.

The Hundred Years War on Palestine. A History of Settler Colonial Conquest and Resistance. Rashid Khalidi

The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict. A very short Introduction. Martin Bunton

Britain in Palestine. The Story of British Rule in Palestine 1917-48 by Karl Sabbagh

The Balfour Declaration. The Origins of the Arab-Israel Conflict. Jonathan Schneer. Bloomsbury.

But maybe the Balfour Declaration has been wishful thinking from the start.

2022 article

I dedicate this article to my son Mark and his wife Shimrit and their five children....Tamara, Raphael, Daphne, Mikhaïl and Heleni (Now in 2024 there are 6.....Lavinia (or Libby) has arrived). At this time they are living in a flat on the 16th floor of a skyscraper in HAHASHMONAIM in Tel Aviv. (They did spend some time in England after October 7th, but now the children are back to school in Tel Aviv.) The flat has white tile floors and below is a picture of Mark cleaning them with a Dyson battery powered Hoover.



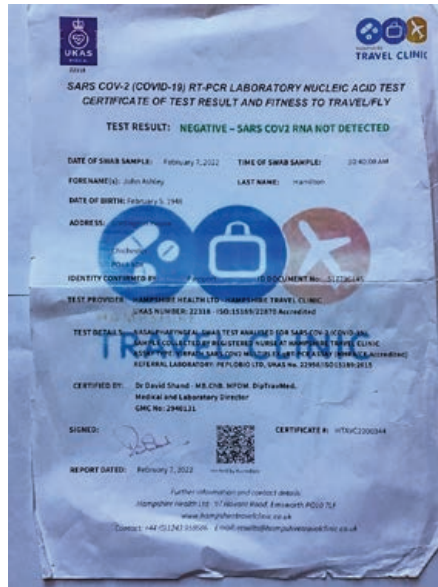
Mark Hamilton with Dyson hoover

For HAHASHMONAIM you have to think of the Hasmonean dynasty, 140 - 37 BCE in Judaea, and of the Maccabees....Today it is a part of a strip of skyscrapers going inland from Neve Tsedek to Ramat Gan.....a little Manhattan which is being built at this moment....The views out of their windows are very fine especially at night, particularly the YONG MAO cranes at night. There are a lot of Chinese working on the building sites there. The lifts (elevators) inside their building are state-of-the-art Manhattan....I have never seen such fine lifts.

We leave at 7:55 for school, Shimrit with five children (one in a pushchair)....we are late....the Headmaster is clapping as Mikhail and Daphne go in....he continues clapping as children later than us come running....then with Tamara and Raphael we go down in a lift (masks on, masks off) and across a crossing.....tick tock tick tock.....two sets of traffic lights keep us moving....then through a building site and across another road, and round a corner and we reach Tamara and Raphael's school on LLOYD GEORGE STREET, considered one of the best schools in Tel Aviv.....Beyond it there are fewer skyscrapers.....The white Bauhaus buildings are nice, especially from the inside, but it is the

trees which make Tel Aviv an attractive place to live.....and little coffee shops, always with a pretty girl...and WiFi.....that is important..... We go along LAURENCE OLIPHANT STREET with the pushchair. Who was Laurence Oliphant? I knew his name from somewhere. He was a British Member of Parliament, who was all over the Empire, an early Zionist, who was attacked and nearly killed by a Ronin with a big sword in Edo (Tokyo) in 1861.....That was how I had heard of him..... We went on to the bookshop and I bought 'Hebrew with Pleasure' by Edna Kadman and this time I really tried to master the script...but didn't succeed ! Again ! Near to Hahashmonaim is the Tel Aviv Art Gallery where there was an exhibition of YAYOI KUSAMA'S work. I had never heard of her though she is very famous and there were long queues to get in...so I looked at the catalogue instead of going in.....Certainly her pictures are bright and cheerful, fighting the forces of darkness.....so I can see why she is famous and popular !

I didn't expect to get to Israel, and so I didn't prepare very well. The PANDEMIC in England had gone on and on. Lots of people seemed to have gone mad. One had had to be so careful with one's personal relations. This was the story everywhere. It really was a very strange experience for everybody. Mark and his family, locked up on the 16th floor, were not allowed out sometimes, but seem to have survived quite well...they could take their exercise going up and down the stairs in their skyscraper. That was brilliant. In England I had had the three vaccinations, but I needed to have a Covid test within 72 hours of departure. Here is the result. It cost £125 Sterling.



PCR Test Result from Emsworth
(PCR stands for Polymerase chain reaction)

Then I had to have another test at Ben Gurion Airport, paid for in advance. I had a cold with a cough from my chest, so I didn't expect to pass this. But I did. Thus I got into Israel, against my expectations. But my cough didn't go away and I thought I would give it to the children. So after a few days I thought it best to go up to Nazareth. I would have gone to the Old Jaffa Hostel beside the flea market in Jaffa, which was for me the best place to stay in Israel, but it was closed for redecoration and under new management. So I went to the FAUZI AZAR INN in NAZARETH. And in the dormitory of the Fauzi Azar Inn I met Dr Lee Chul Soo, who was a real doctor. And he gave me some Korean medicine for my cough and within two days I had recovered completely. Conversation in these hostels is usually good. People ask me 'What did you do in Japan?' So I answer that I ended up a Professor in the Law Department. (That was an honour and thanks the Miyoshi sensei, a Professor of International

Law). They ask, ‘What did you teach ?’ I answer ‘ I taught the MAGNA CARTA in Japanese. And that is true.....Kimura sensei was there when I was doing it.....The Magna Carta is very important document...it is the beginning of Human Rights Law1215....the same date as the fall of Beijing to the armies of Genghis Khan.

I had a very good dinner with Dr Lee in the Al Sharq restaurant in Nazareth and we talked about Hong Wontak, the author of Paekche and Yamato Japan. It is an important book about the coming of the Japanese Imperial Family to Japan from the Korean Peninsula. Hon Wontak had studied the Nihongi . In Nazareth we talked about Nakwa am ‘ the Rock of Falling Flowers’ in Puyo , a cliff where 6000 Paekche (Kudara) girls committed suicide as the armies of Silla approached.....And there in Nazareth we talked about Yi Toegye the Confucian philosopher whose face appears on the Korean bank notes (Tsuyama sensei of Aichi University was a direct descendant of Yi Toegye)...and about Wu Kunsuk, the leading beekeeper in South Korea....Dr Lee could look all these people up on his phone. He was Korean Gentry class (Yangban) and he knew I knew something about Korea. What fun it was to meet him in Nazareth.....!

Dr Lee came from Chonju. He had been at the ZAATARI refugee camp in Mafraq in north Jordan for 12 years with the Korea Refugee Project (KRP). There are over 345,000 Syrian refugees in Jordan. Zaatari is the biggest camp. There are many children in the camp. Dr Lee had founded a school which now has 500 children in it. He taught Taekwondo. He offered me a job in the School. (Maybe somebody else would like to do this. It would probably be best to learn some Arabic first. But it is an opportunity for somebody.) There was a girl on the reception at the Fauzi Azar called Hend, who had a painful shoulder. Dr Lee put her on a table and treated her with needles (acupuncture) and the next morning she was much better. What a wonderful surprise it was for me to meet Dr Lee. And it was really nice to be offered a job. I felt

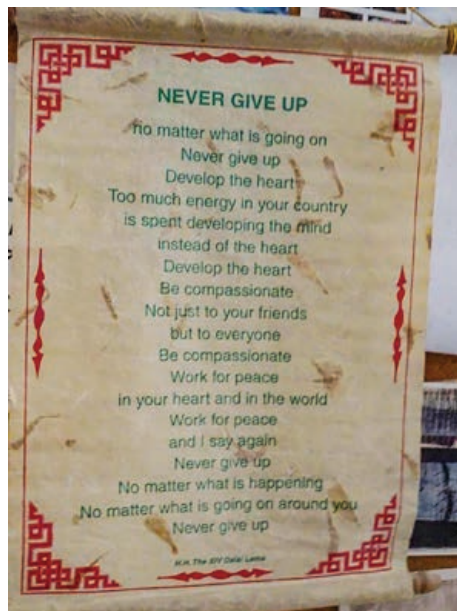
the younger for it !

There is a tourist attraction in Nazareth to which American tour groups to the Holy Land are taken. One of these groups accepted me as a member, so I joined them and went along. And to my surprise, I enjoyed myself. The group was off the plane from GRAND FORKS, NORTH DAKOTA and they were just out of quarantine. And here they were let loose on a Galilean hillside.....In the group there were two girls who were American Indians....I felt these were genuine, salt-of-the-earth Americans. A Baptist minister guided us through the almond blossom to a tomb (fake, of course) which they could all crawl into, and to a shepherd (dressed up) with some sheep with whom they could have their photographs taken. There was a reconstructed synagogue, in which they burst into hymns of praise, and also a reconstruction of Joseph's carpentry shop. The Baptist minister explained that Gethsemane meant 'olive press' and that the name Nazareth had something to do with the new shoots on the olive trees....I realised that I had a lot to learn.But this is what the whole world comes to the Holy Land for !

In the dormitory at Fauzi Azar that evening there was a girl from Bavaria (in the next bed to Dr Lee, which rather surprised him) and her boyfriend Albert from Valencia (nearer to me) who I met again at Roger's Hostel in Tel Aviv, and there was a Louis from Caen in Normandy who had been staying in an Air B&B in the Daheisha Refugee Camp in Bethlehem. He gave me the telephone numbers and actually wrote a letter to them introducing me. That was helpful. I wanted to keep my 'Ecclesiastical trip' fairly haphazard. ("Haphazard by starlight !" had been the title of a church retreat in England a week or two before.) It wasn't a plan-by-plan trip organised by somebody else.

I did go to Bethlehem, but first I went to Jerusalem. I have a friend there called Ruth Cohn, an artist who lived in Japan in the 1970's. She had been studying calligraphy with a big brush in a farmhouse in Nishi

Mukou 西向こう near to Kyoto. I had sent her a message from Nazareth to see if she was still alive, and she was, so I turned up, and there she was with her big dog Nakita, and a friend. I got to know the dog, and the dog got to know me, and during the next day or two we went several times with the dog to the Muslim cemetery below the Museum of Tolerance, and also I helped Ruth with other volunteers to pack up cardboard boxes because she was planning to move her small belongings to a house in Ein Hod near to Haifa, and rent out her studio house in Jerusalem. I am not sure that I was a great help, but we did manage to heat up the house with the wood stove using logs collected from the Muslim cemetery. The two things in Ruth's house that I really liked were the Kyoto tansu which she had picked up in the Toji flea market.....which, had she been Japanese, would have been full of silk Kimono.....and the other thing was a message from the Dalai Lama. It was good to find both these things in Jerusalem !



Message from the Dalai Lama

With Ruth I went to the Botanical Garden to buy plants. On the bus going back we met a grandmother originally from Italy. She had a daughter living in Jerusalem, another in Majorca. On her finger 4 was a beautiful diamond ring with a big diamond. She told us it had been found buried in the cellar of their house in Rome in 1945 after the war. Her father and almost all her family had died in Auschwitz.

I caught Bus 231 from the Damascus Gate. There were no checks on foreign passport holders going into BETHLEHEM. At the bus stop there was a taxi-driver waiting for me who I had never met before and I paid him much more than I should have done, but these last two years of Pandemic have been hard for people in the West Bank. There have been almost no tourists. He took me to see Banksy's angels on the Wall, and the Walled Off Hotel, and the Peace Dove by Banksy...(Several people thought I was Banksy because he does come sometimes.) but the really exciting thing for me was to meet a Beekeeping family in a village called Janata (Rakhama), and to meet the grandfather with his sheep and his beehives and his Carob tree from which comes very tasty honey, he told me.....and to meet his son who was a policeman in Bethlehem, and his grandsons who are now still Facebook friends, and his daughters-in-law, and the BEES. We looked inside the hives. I even met a Palestinian girl in the Yarmouk refugee camp in Damascus through them. Social media links everybody up, and that is no bad thing. The taxi driver telephoned ahead to Ibrahim and Aya in the Daheisha Camp, using the phone number given me by Louis in Nazareth. They knew I was coming but had no idea when. What a nice place it was, and what a nice family. I would have liked Mark and his family to meet them. Their apartment was actually about the same size as Mark's but was on the third floor not the sixteenth.

There was a school strike the next day because a child, a fourteen-year-old boy, had been shot dead nearby. Maybe he had been catapulting.....I

don't know. But as a result Ibrahim's children had to stay at home all day. I set off with Ibrahim in his car. We tumbled out of the Daheisha Camp. The roads in the camp are precipitous and narrow, but his car had good brakes. Their apartment was on the top of a hill about the same height as the hill with the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem a mile away. We set off in the direction of Jericho, stopping off at the monastery of Mar Saba, also the Nabi Musa Mosque and Maqam, the Maqam of the prophet Moses. We also went to the monastery of St George in Wadi Qelt. I liked the cave in the cliff across the gorge. I would like to live in such a cave ! We passed the prison in Jericho which Mark had visited when he worked for ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross). He used to take chess sets/ backgammon boards (made in China) for the prisoners to play on. When I went with him (this was some time ago) he was ordering up a ping pong table.....In central Jericho we had a falafel lunch . And then we went to Hisham's Palace and the GREAT BATH which dates from the Umayyad period 730-749 AD, which had been destroyed by the earthquake in 749. The bath, about 200 metres by 200 metres, had fine mosaic floors (not as interesting as those at Fishbourne near Chichester) and JICA (from Japan) had put a new roof over it. The Japanese recognise a good bath when they see one. We returned to the Daheisha refugee camp. There was a demonstration going to Al Khadar to the house of the boy who had been killed14 years old...I don't know the details of this incident, I repeat.

The next day we went to HEBRON, to the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque, with the Maqam of Ibrahim, Isaac and Sarah, and Jacob. It is not very far to get there by car, but there are lots of checkpoints. We also went to the Souk where I bought two sheep skins. One of them was from a Jacob sheep. There were strawberries from Gaza (they must use bees to pollinate thempossibly they came from the Yad Mordechai kibbutz), also some very fine cauliflowers, and cockerels and pigeons for sale. Ibrahim introduced me to the glass blower of Hebron, and he showed

me over his furnaces. But these last two years he hasn't been making any glass because there haven't been any visitors due to the pandemic. In one of the shops in the souk I met John Howard (and Sue from North Wales) of the World Council of Churches, EAPPI. This stands for the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel. They were there to observe (?) the Anniversary March the next day of the 1994 massacre in the Abraham Mosque. On February 25 1994 at the Dawn Prayer in the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron, American Israeli Baruch Goldstein shot 29 people dead and wounded 125. This was appalling . But I learned later there was a history behind this shooting. In 1929 there was a dreadful pogrom of Jewish families in Hebron, and there have been many other incidents there. Later in the day, Ibrahim left me to go into the Jewish side of the Abraham mosque by myself. He was not allowed to come with me. There was an Israeli tourist office where I bought some avocado honey. They had planted some nice roses at the entrance....rosa Glauca, I thought.....and others. There were plenty of Orthodox in black hats studying their Torah's. I find that I no longer feel uncomfortable with them. I imagine them to be like my brother-in-law Stephen, who has Jewish roots.

The next day, I walked around Bethlehem in my green gum boots (from Winnicott's store in Rowlands Castle £15). I had to be sure I could get back to the flat on the top of the hill in Daheisha. It was like a labyrinth, so I took photographs all the way. The road came out onto the big road just before a concrete bridge. To my surprise Daheisha refugee camp was only half an hour from the centre of Bethlehem. I passed a Carmelite convent. The Gate was open and there was nobody there. There were lots of olive trees. So I went in and walked round. It was very beautiful and silent. Nobody has been coming to Bethlehem for two years because of the Corona pandemic. I went on to the Church of the Nativity. There was almost nobody there either. I met some pilgrims who had come all the way from Irian Jaya....at the far end of

Indonesia. The cloisters and the crypt, with almost nobody there, were wonderful...but strange. I walked down to the Jacir Palace Hotel. It is the finest hotel in Palestine, but at the moment, due to the Corona, it is closed and surrounded by rubbish, the garden overgrown, a For Sale sign on the fence. Mustapha, the security guard, said I could come in and take photographs. Just next door, there was a Japanese cake shop, Osaka Ojisan, and I went in and had a cup of tea. That was wonderful. And outside suddenly I saw things were happening . There was a fire beside a car in the middle of the road, and some branches and furniture making a road block and five or six people, wearing balaclavas..... I went out, and a student who was with me, said that it was better not to hang around because soon the police would come with tear gas.....so I set off the road back to Daheisha ...in my green gum boots.....

The following day was spent with Ibrahim's children. There was Aws aged 11 who was a good chess player, and Ayham aged 8 the artistic one....they were both singing in the back of the car with the iPhone to accompany them (that works very well), and Alma aged 4, the younger sister, who stayed with her mother that day (she had a game called ROBLOX on another phone). We went down to the Spring of Artas on the back side of Daheisha. It is not a tourist attraction, just a spring with water running through allotments and a big monastery (there was nothing much going on there it seemed) called the Convent of Hortus Conclusus. It was raining a bit. Up above in the mist on the top of the mountain was the Israeli 'settlement' of Efrat . The settlements are a bit like Japanese Danchi, except that they are gated and are connected by special roads to Jerusalem. There doesn't seem to be much communication between them and the people down by the Spring of Artas. I wondered whether Efrat, Shimrit's sister, lived in Efrat. Next time I shall try to stay in an Air B&B in a settlement.

Another suburb of Bethlehem that we visited was BATTIR, which is a beautiful place, and is indeed a tourist attraction (although there were

no other visitors). There is lots of water here, including a Roman pool on the side of the hill. There were orange trees and lemons, and again fine cauliflowers growing in the fields. It looked like the Italian countryside. Down below was the Jaffa to Jerusalem railway which I don't think has been running since 1948.....but the line is still there ! The last destination was Solomon's Pools. Again there was water and green grass. There had been aqueducts in Roman times to take the water to other places, but I didn't manage to explore the lay out. It had been a resort in Ottoman times, but the buildings seemed to have been abandoned.

The next section of this little article is about my visit to the GALILEE הגליל, more specifically the Sea of Galilee, Yam Kinneret ים כנרת though Israelis usually just call it Kinneret with the emphasis on the first e. My son Mark had asked for some money to help him buy a house beside the Sea of Galilee. In England the stock market had just gone up (it has gone down now) so we sent him £100,000. This was not enough money to buy a house, but it would have helped. Also I rather liked the idea of spending some of my retirement there, perhaps keeping bees beside the Sea of Galilee in 'the land of milk and honey'. But I had never been there. So Shimrit booked me into the hostel in Tiberias טבריה and I set off from Hashalom station which is ten-minutes-walk from their flat. The train goes up to Haifa and then from one of the stations there you catch a bus over the mountains to Tiberias on the shores of the lake. The hostel had room for about 150 people but because of the Corona virus pandemic, then just coming to an end, there were only four guests, myself, a German (Stefan), a Russian (Victor) , and an American (Jacob). I shared a large dormitory with Stefan who was walking all the hiking trails of Israel and the West Bank with a rather-too-heavy back pack (in my opinion !) But he was very charming and had a nice wife who I met on the Skype. Victor was an electrician who was married to a girl from Moldova. He blamed the Americans for the war in Ukraine because they had been arming the Ukrainians. And Jacob was racing

around Israel on a motorcycle from Tel Aviv delivering share scrip and documents to people.....and what was I doing ? I was looking for a ruin, a place to keep bees, possibly a boat.....for Mark and family.

The following day I caught a bus to Capernaum כפרנהקם on the north shore of the lake. I walked down the hill to the Church of the Primacy of St Peter which was supposed to open at 8:00 am, but had changed the time to 9:00am. Two busloads of American pilgrims turned up at 8:00 am...so we all walked down to the lake which was very beautiful.....then I noticed that the path continued through the reeds and along the side of the lake, so I set off exploring behind the fence and I found a big meadow full of flowers which would have been a perfect site for keeping bees, and I also found a boathouse (without a roof) down by the water.....and to my surprise I found some Coneys....water rats (?) and very tame, sitting on volcanic rocks beside the lake....about twenty of them.....I took a photograph.



Water rats beside the Sea of Galilee

From there I wanted to walk along the shore back to Tiberias but that wasn't possible. So I walked up the hill to the Church of the Loaves and the Fishes. There was a tour group just going in, so I joined as an extra member. The church and cloisters were quite pretty, and there was a

nun sweeping up leaves. The church had a fine mosaic floor probably some centuries old. I hadn't had breakfast and there was a little shop at the entrance. I bought a box of dates and was given a cup of coffee. When the tourist group had gone I talked to the man who ran the shop. He was Palestinian Israeli and Christian. He said that recently a group of Christians had come from Gaza and stayed at the church. That was interesting. In the shop he was selling honey. One of the pots was from Mount Arbel, that is the mountain beside Tiberias. So somebody up there was keeping bees. That was also interesting. So, fortified with dates, I set off up to the main road, and took the next turning down to the left towards the lake. It was there that I found the ruin. It was an Umayyad ruin, the palace of a Kalif Wahid (705 - 715) destroyed in the earthquake of 749. The site had been excavated by the University of Mainz during the 1930's but nothing much has been done there since. Curiously my new friend Stefan in the hostel lived near to Mainz and he was interested in archaeology to the extent of carrying a little drone in his backpack and getting a licence from the Israelis to use it. Here is my picture of the ruin. I wondered if it would be possible to buy it.



Ruined Umayyad Palace

There was a footpath running along the edge of the lake with many Eucalyptus trees and willows, and some palm trees. In several places there were people fishing. It was so beautiful I thought I was no longer in Israel! The path went through reeds and then crossed a dried up river bed. I think I had entered the back of the Ginnosar Kibbutz גִּינְנָסָר. There were some big family houses in the fields but closed up. Maybe the families came from Haifa at weekends or for their holidays. I walked on through the Kibbutz. It is a much liked place and I could see why. Somebody there knew how to look after roses because in several places I found roses in flower. A kind man gave me some water and told me I could walk along the shore all the way to Tiberias, but by then I was tired so I headed up to the road and the bus shelter. It was the beginning of the Shabat but I had been told by the Palestinian at the Loaves and the Fishes Church that there would still be a few buses. About an hour later, a bus did indeed come to take me back to Tiberias.

The next day was the Shabat and there were definitely no buses moving in Tiberias, and all the shops were closed. Stefan gave me some of his breakfast.

I decided to climb MOUNT ARBEL אַרְבֵּל and see if there were bees up there. So, wearing shorts, green gum boots, and carrying a red umbrella, I walked up the hill from the hostel which was close to the lake for about an hour picking up a pancake on the way. Nobody seemed to know where Mount Arbel was. Near the top of the hill was a big sign saying SEA LEVEL which surprised me. I think it was Mediterranean Sea Level because the Sea of Galilee is 200 metres below Sea Level. I learned later that the Hebrew and Arabic words for sea level are more poetic than the English ! A bit higher up I turned north toward the Horns of Hittim (There was a battle in 1187 at the Horns of Hittim at which Saladin defeated the Crusaders, but I didn't go there this time.) and Arbel. Then at the turning east to Arbel village I found a carand the driver said he would take me to where he thought the bees were five

minutes away. Well, he took me to an orange grove, which turned into a lemon grove and then a big field full of flowers (a lot of oilseed rape at that time of year).....but no bees....but there was no blossom on the citrus either, it being the beginning of March....so the bees were elsewhere. I ate a couple of delicious oranges off the ground to supplement my pancake. And then I set off up Mount Arbel which is a beautiful place....cattle in the fields, horses.....wild poppies of several colours, prickly pears, weeping willows, gorse and cattle grids to stop the cows wandering..... cliffs and volcanic rocks and far below twinkling, the Sea of Galilee. Altogether I walked for about six hours (I takes six hours to climb Mount Fuji, so it was a half Fuji ...quite strenuous for me. There were lots of signs saying ‘Danger, don’t go down this way’ but people I met told me it was not dangerous. I did nevertheless have a fall and broke my umbrella. On the way down I went through a grove of grapefruits and ate a delicious small grapefruit off the ground. I wanted to visit the village of Magdala with its church where Mary Magdalene was said to have been born, but I took the wrong path so I will have to do that next time. By the time I got back to the hostel I was exhausted so I stayed there for another night to Stefan’s surprise.

I wanted to go to TSFAT תצפת for the music. There had been Klezmer festivals there before the Corona and I thought Meg, my daughter would be interested. She is a Klezmer violin player (started violin in Toyohashi aged 4). Both Tiberias and Tsfat are important places for Jews. Tiberias has the tomb of the Rabbi Yohanan Ben Zakkai who escaped the destruction of Jerusalem (70 AD) in a coffin, and jumped out in front of Emperor Vespasian, and prophesied he would be the new Caesar. (Vespasian incidently was the founder of Chichester in England which is where I live. ...) Also in Tiberias is the tomb of Maimonides who died in Egypt in 1204. His ashes were put on a camel, and he was buried where the camel died....I am not ‘Chosen Race’ but Meg my daughter plays their music, and Mark my son has married an Israeli

(who is charming) .

TSVAT (Safed, Zefat, Tsfat, Sfat) is a mountaintop castle town in the north of Galilee. It was a beacon village in the 2nd century BC fortified by Josephus AD 66-73, leader of the Jews at that time. Later it was a Crusader citadel which Saladin destroyed. The Sefardic Jews came there from Spain in the 15th and 16th centuries. (That is where the name comes from, I think.) The 1837 earthquake killed 5000 people and levelled many of the 69 synagogues. And there were riots there in the 1920s and 1930's. The British divided the city..... In 1948 there was a battle there and the Arab community left. The Arab quarter became an artists' colony. I was told in Nazareth that the Arab quarter has been very well preserved. Hasidic families began to arrive in the 1980s, hence the Klezmer festivals there. It has been a centre of Jewish mysticism and famous Jewish Rabbis lived there in the 16th centurythe Ari (Lion), Yitzak Luria.....Rabbi Yosef Caro, born in Spain 1535, who wrote Beit Yosef.....Rabbi Yitzak Abuhav.....and others.

I arrived in Tsvat, off the bus from Tiberias. It was raining (sleet) and windy. Shimrit had warned me that it was a bleak place in winter. So 15 minutes later I was on the next bus back to Tiberias and Nazareth.it wasn't a long visit. Tsvat was for next time.....!

In Tiberias Bus Station I asked a group of soldiers (aged 18/19) when and from where the 231 to Nazareth was leaving. They were most helpful, looking it up on their phonescharming and friendly ...with good manners. Also in the bus station I met a Hungarian widower (75) and a Romanian widow (63)....They had teamed up and were on their way to a hot spring , and invited me to join them. I should have! She had left a village near the Danube when she was 23 years old. I thought of those photographs of the Hungarian shipment to Auschwitz.. I think the Hungarian widower was lucky to have had a life ! I did eventually catch the 231 to Nazareth, and then dragged my suitcase a mile up the Souk to the Fauzi Azar Inn. I had been told there would be a Mass in

the Church of the Annunciation at 7:00am. I heard the church bells at 6:00 am and went straight down there. The Mass had already begun in Italian ‘ Non mi Abbandonare, mio Signor, Non mi lasciare, io confido in te.....’ It was a beautiful Mass. The priest seemed to be Vietnamese, the congregation mainly from Africa...a sister from Tanzania, another from Ghana. Later in the day on my way down to the bus stop I found the priest sweeping the pavement outside the church. I thanked him for the Mass and he turned out to be Japanese called Atarashi Naoki (あたらしなおき) He had heard of Takamori Soan in Nagano but had not been there. He came from Anjo in Aichi so had been a neighbour of mine when I lived in Toyota. I think that was why the Mass that morning had been somehow familiar to me. I proceeded to the bus stop. But the random encounters continued. I talked to a grandfather at the bus stop. He had a shop making violins, and two children who were musicians in Paris, and in London. He told me to look up Le Trio Joubran which I did. The bus arrived and off I went.

‘ Le Trio Joubran is an Oud trio playing traditional Palestinian music. The trio consists of the brothers Samir, Wassam and Adnan Joubran originally from the city of Nazareth, now dividing their time between Nazareth, Ramallah and Paris. The mother Ibtisam Hanna Joubran sang the Muwashahat (poems that originated in Arab Spain) while their father Hatem (who I met at the bus stop) is among the most renowned stringed instrument makers in Palestine.’

The last episode of this one-month ‘pilgrimage’ was to stay two nights in the JERUSALEM OLD CITY. I went in by the Jaffa Gate and by chance the Israeli Tourist Office was open (it wasn’t open the next day) and asked if I might be able to stay at the Austrian Hospice. They rang up for me and gave me a map and I trailed my suitcase through the old city (didn’t knock the wheels off) turned left up to the via Dolorosa and there it was. I hadn’t been there before. Actually, it is five minutes from the Damascus Gate which would have been a much easier gate to

reach it from.

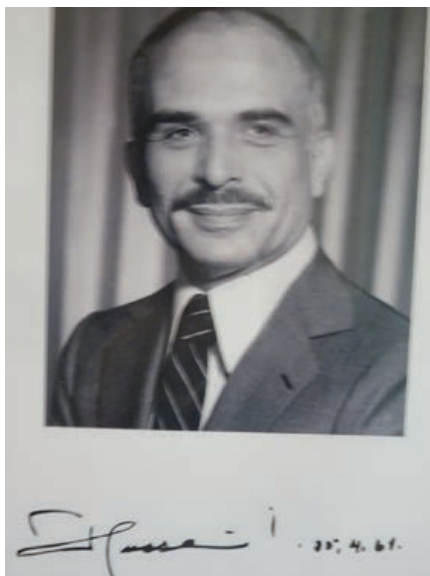
The Austrian Hospice had a Vatican flag (yellow and white) on the roof and a beautiful chapel within. There is a good view of the Dome of the Rock and Al Aqua Mosque from the roof. Behind the reception desk is a fine oil painting painted by Joseph Carl Berthold Puttner (1821 - 1881) showing Mount Arbel, and the Church of the Loaves and the Fishes, and Christ with the fishermen. That was where I had just been.

After breakfast, I walked up to the Damascus Gate to buy some flowers, but the flower shop was still closed, so I sat down in the coffee shop opposite. There were three Israeli 'soldiers' standing behind me with machine guns, two girls aged 18 (I asked....they were soon going to be 19 they said) and there was an officer.....maybe he was aged 22. I think he was Palestinian and not Jewish....They seemed like nice kids to me. Outside the Damascus Gate the day before tear gas had been used....inside the Old City somebody was knifed and somebody was shot while I was there.....perhaps that is why the tourist office was closed the following day.....The flower shop opened and I bought some daffodils and bluebells and also a fine CAULIFLOWER from a stall.....and then walked up and caught the Light Rail to Hail Ha'avir at the end of the line where Shimrit's mother lives. She was out but David gave me a cup of tea and I sat on the balcony until Tammy returned. The house had a cheerful atmosphere with a large screen television in every room it seemed (on, but on mute)that morning with Russian tanks and queues of refugees entering Moldova....I felt I was in the middle of things. Tammy returned and cooked the cauliflower. That family are very good cooksDavid advised me to visit the Church of Notre Dame outside the Jaffa Gate, and that evening I went to the Mass there which was beautiful.

The Austrian Hospice (Osterreichisches Pilger-Hospiz) is a historic place. Emperor Franz Joseph stayed there in November 1869. It was requisitioned by the British in February 1918 and converted into an

Anglican orphanage.

The British Mandate lasted until 1948. From 1939 to 1944 the Austrian Hospice was an internment centre for clergy and sisters from ‘enemy countries.’ In 1948 it was given back to the Austrians.



King Hussein

King Hussein (born 1935), King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 1952 - 1999, visited the Austrian Hospice twice. As a student of the Royal Military Academy of Sandhurst in Britain, he accompanied his grandfather King Abdullah on a visit to Jerusalem where he witnessed an attack on his grandfather at the Al Aqsa Mosque. Wrapped in a prayer mat the badly injured monarch was taken to the nearest hospital....the Austrian Hospice....for emergency care where he died in the arms of Austrian sister Lilloso Friching. Hussein’s father Talal had been on the throne for only a year, when on August 11th 1952 he abdicated, passing the crown to his 16 year-old son Hussein. King Hussein visited the Austrian Hospice a second time on the 25th August 1961 and in

the chapel expressed his thanks to the sister for her efforts to help his grandfather. This photograph dates from 1961.

CONCLUSION

(Written in Rome April 10, 2024 on my way back from Tel Aviv to England)

I went to Israel for a week and I have been in Rome for a week. In Israel I spent time in Tel Aviv seeing my grandchildren. Then I went to Tiberias on the bus. I was the only guest at the Hostel though there were some evacuees there from Keryat Shimona on the Lebanese border, because rockets have been coming in from the Hezbollah. There was also an Irishman at the hostel. He had seen an advertisement in Haifa and was a volunteer at the hostel. Because of the war there are no tourists in Israel. With the Irishman I climbed Mount Arbel again (in my case). In fact we climbed down a cliff which was quite dangerous without proper climbing boots. I was glad he came with me., to pick up the bits if I fell. We also swam in the Sea of Galilee. He knew a good place. On EASTER DAY he went to Jerusalem but I stayed in Tiberias and went to the beautiful Catholic Church beside the lake. Afterwards I went to Migdala, a village along the beach, to look for the church dedicated to Mary Magdelene, which I found, though it turned out to be closed. It was Mary who found Christ's Tomb open on Easter Day. The next day I went to nearby Nazareth. It is an Arab town and it was RAMADAN, so on that day it was very quiet. The Fauzi Azar Inn was closed because there are no tourists in Israel at the moment because of the war. But I met the manager in the street and he remembered me and allowed me to stay. He was not there, but he gave me a key, and I had the whole place to myself, alone. It is a big beautiful building with high ceilings and

marble floors. I reflected that it would be a good place for somebody like Obama to come to negotiate a ceasefire and a new political settlement.

While I was there I worked out how many people lived in Israel/Palestine.

In Israel the population is 9,558,000, 73% Jewish 21% Arab, so there are 2,065,000 Israeli Arabs (278,000 of them living in East Jerusalem). In the West Bank there are 2,949,246 Arabs (2021 estimate). And in Gaza there are 2,375, 259 Arabs (2022 estimate). (Then there are 500,000 Jewish people living in Settlements in the West Bank and 220,000 in East Jerusalem, and 20,000 in the Golan Heights but these are included in the 9,558, 000 figure). I am not sure I have got this right but it seems to me that there are about 7.5 million Palestinians and 7.5 million Israelis. The two communities are about equal in number.

I decided not to go to the West Bank this time. I was worried about being kidnapped and becoming one more hostage. The friends there couldn't stop me being kidnapped, which would have been troublesome for lots of people (though it would have been a good chance for me to learn Arabic, maybe.) But I did go to East Jerusalem to see my grandchildren's other grandparents, and I did go into the Old City to the Austrian Pilgrim Hospice near to Damascus Gate where I have stayed in the past and feel comfortable.

After that I came here to Rome which I have not been to before. I have been enjoying the Vatican Museum very much. In the museum the first thing I found was a boat from the shore of the Sea of Galilee, a gift from the Ginosar Museum there. That was a surprise. My hometown in England is Chichester which is a Roman city with a Roman palace beside it, was founded by Emperor Vespasian in about 40 AD. His son I think destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD. So coming to Rome was a fitting thing to do. This Sunday I went to St Peter's Basilica in Rome and was blessed by the Pope from a high window. There was a lot of security. He prayed for 'negotiations in Ukraine and in Palestine', these words in

Italian which I could understand. I agree with this. Thousands of women and children have been killed and wounded in Gaza. The Hamas have been sheltering behind them and also the Aid workers bringing in food which can only benefit them. The war has been going on for 6 months. It was a MISTAKE for the Israelis to respond to the massacre in the way they did, and I said so at the time. It is now time for the Americans to send a Jimmy Carter to arrange a ceasefire and work out a settlement with both sides making concessions. Jimmy Carter made the peace between Sadat of Egypt and Menachem Begin of Israel and it has held. My strong suggestion is that all children in Hebrew language schools should seriously study Arabic, and all children in Arabic language schools should seriously study Hebrew. Everybody in Israel Palestine will object to this, but it is an important part of the solution.