

Thursday, March 17

Hope all is well in Barrington. Hard to believe we are in the last stages of our trip. (Today please excuse my typing because this keyboard is in Hebrew.) Yesterday we spent in Petra, Jordan...an ancient (100 BCE) city with amazing rock carvings. It was an amazing experience for our group and we had a chance to visit the site excavated by Brown University. Six of us left the group and climbed an extra mile up to a monastery and a peak from which we overlooked much of Jordan.

Jordan was an interesting experience...a very challenging time emotionally as well as physically in some ways. When we arrived back in Israel late last night our bus erupted in cheers after working our way thru so much security.

Today we went to the Mount of Olives and Garden of Gethsemane and had some quiet prayer time in the midst of honking horns and a million tourists (which of course we aren't!). One of the huge challenges here is to be in sacred places and try to close your eyes and ears to the modern world so to feel the place. Even in the 12 years since Kathleen and I were here the development is almost frightening.

The afternoon was spent in the old city (keeping some of our people out of the markets was a trial!) and down into the tunnels that reveal the ancient Temple Mount walls of at least 2000 years ago. Of course, it wasn't until I was a hundred feet underground in a narrow tunnel that I remembered that I am claustrophobic...so you will have to ask someone else in the group what they learned from that part.

We walked the famous Ben Yehuda Street tonight and ate at (another) Middle Eastern restaurant (my meat and potatoes stomach has been shocked this week). Many in our group are tired with sore feet - but everyone has kept remarkably good spirits. Tomorrow is Shabbat.

Love to all - Kathleen has just passed the 800 picture mark (help me!)

Jeff