

Sunday, March 13th

Hi Everyone!

Tonight was our first night with Internet access.

We had an uneventful flight to Israel arriving at 11:45 am Friday, although everyone was very stiff from the 10 hour airplane ride. Probably got 30-60 min of sleep at most. It was raining. We took our bus to Old Jaffa Port and during a pause in the rain, had our first look at the beautiful Mediterranean coast, saw St Peter's Church, the house of Simon the Tanner and walked up and down the narrow quaint narrow alleys on the hill to the beach trying to find our zodiac tiles to have a year of good luck. Dinner and yesterday morning's breakfast had a great variety of typical Hebrew foods, specifically for Saturday's Shabbat breakfast. We all joined in for a Shabbat service Friday night and Saturday morning. Afterward, we went to the spectacular city of Caesarea Saturday morning and afternoon. Originally a Phoenician port, the Romans, under King Herod, built an elaborate port, fort, city, palace, temple, bath house, theater, hippodrome race track, and probably the first infinity swimming pool (for the king). The aqueduct (parts still present) supplied an infinite amount of fresh water for all and the pool. The ruins were interesting and amazing. Ultimately, the same site was taken over by the Crusaders and then by the Turks. Needless to say, there were many foundations built on foundations with different architecture. Tel Aviv is an interesting, European, modern city on the Mediterranean.

Today we ventured to Haifa, the Baha'i Gardens, Nazareth and a kibbutz on the Sea of Galilee where we will stay for a couple of nights. We first went to Independence Hall in Tel Aviv where the leaders of Israel wrote and signed the constitution. The hall for the congress was much smaller than I imagined. They saw pictures and learned about the founding of Tel Aviv in 1909 and, of course, the moving events surrounding Israel's independence in 1947. The Baha'i Gardens were beautiful terraced gardens (19 terraces) on a hillside in Haifa, created by the Baha'i, an independent religious group. We had great lunch on the way to Nazareth at a Druze home with typical foods from the area. In Nazareth, we went to the Church of the Annunciation, built around Mary's original home and devoted to Mary. We arrived at our "kibbutz" (really hotel) and had Sunday service on a dock on the Sea of Galilee, then another giant buffet dinner.

It is a packed trip! The group is sharing so much with each other and learning a lot from each other. Our tour guide is terrific and a wealth of knowledge concerning every aspect of the country.

Best,

"The Rabbi Klein and Reverend Larsen Interfaith Israel Trip" group