

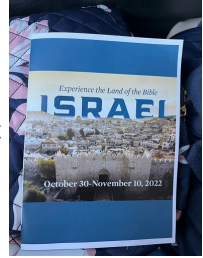
Journaling a Preacher's 2022 Pilgrimage to Israel

The Half Shekel Journal 2022- by Ed Rice

#00 Day 1 Monday 31 Oct 2022 Travel Day Arrive at Tel Aviv



It is a great privilege for Beverly and I to go on this pilgrimage to Israel and even greater to be accompanied by my son Shane and Kathy Rice, and grandson Micah Rice. Micah got to go at the last minute as his senior trip from Vision Baptist College of Solid Rock Baptist Church, who hosted this tour to Israel.



Pastor Charles Clark III, called herein Pastor Chalie, worked with Keshet Journeys, 33 Pierre Koenig Street, Jerusalem, KeshetJourneys.com, to secure his friend Joe Freedman to be the tour guide for this trip. The two have had a working relationship for several previous Israel tours for Vision Baptist College.

Pastor Shane and Kathy drove 330 miles from Anchor Baptist Church in Massillon Ohio, stayed overnight in Col Crane's Mansion, where we live, and

then drove us 290 miles to Solid Rock Baptist Church, Berlin NJ, on Saturday, 29 Oct. Bless their heart.



We were to spend the night with Lieutenant Colonel (Ret) Mike Bliss and his wife Cheria, dear friends from years gone by. Mike's father, Dale Bliss, was saved at Good Samaritan Baptist Church two years back, and our granddaughter, Rachel Rice, lived in a downstairs apartment of their home. This spring

Rachel and Rebekah had graduated from Vision Baptist College of Solid Rock Baptist Church, Berlin New Jersey, and Rachel moved out of the dorms, and in with the Bliss family. She is teaching third grade in the school at Solid Rock.

After a tremendous reunion, and securing a place to pillow our heads, the next order of business was, of course, some Italian food. Bev and I live on Waneta Lake outside of Dundee, New York, where we must drive for 45 minutes east to find a Walmart, an hour south-east to get to an abandoned Corning Elmira Mall, with an open for business Texas Road House, and an hour and a half north to Rochester to get to



a Chick-fil-A! We were absolutely overwhelmed to drive past so many restaurants in the quest to get Italian food. Kathy had selected a Fat Tomato¹ for the Rice contingent to gather in. Turns out we ended up in one on route 73 instead of Pasta Vinnies on route 30 because we were reuniting more than we were watching details, and who da thunk they would have so many Italian bistros in the same square mile of Berlin?



The traffic, the people, the stores, the restaurants, the Chick-fil-A's, all jammed into one place, ... Bev and I were glad we were only passengers on this great quest for food.

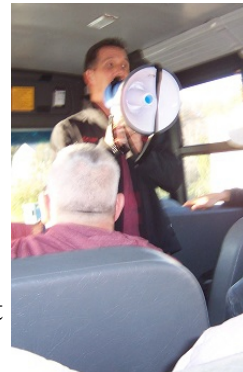
Granddaughters Rachel, a VBC grad, and Charity, a VBC sophomore, and grandson Micah, a VBC senior, showing great promise of being a graduate next spring, gathered with their



parents and grandparents for a festive Italian feast. As life would have it, three of their close friends, Matthew, Brandon, and Abby, in that order, all joined us. We were there to love life, love food, love family, and tell stories about college life. All that took three hours.



It was not an external clock that woke me at 4 AM. I had my normal four hours of sleep, and my sacroiliac joints needed their morning stretch. Ankylosing spondylitis², my morning alarm clock, had me sitting in the Bliss living room well before dawn. The house stirred to life before I finished my Bible reading and prayer time. It was good to be in a home that stirred early on a Sunday

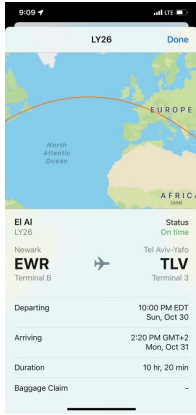


morning and had an eager anticipation for a full day of worship.

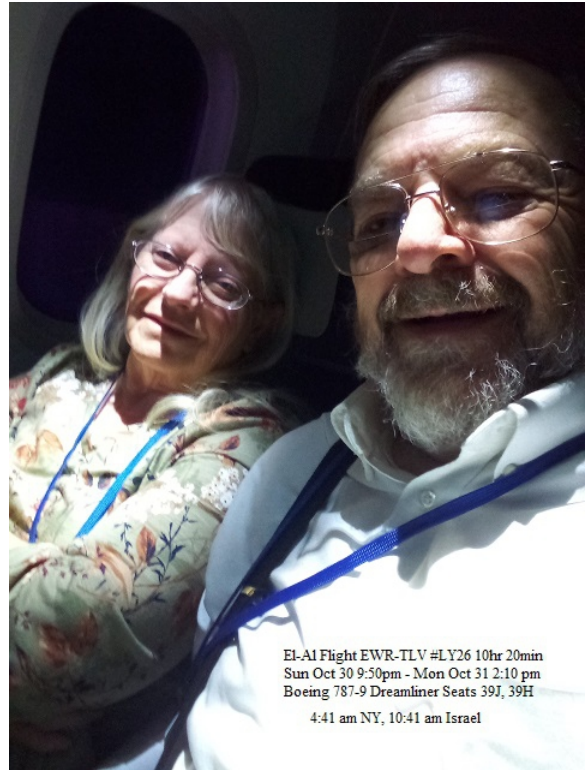
More than most, Bev and I relished what went on at Solid Rock Baptist Church and were eager to attend every and any service we could here. We had spent 23 years in the military attending and working in independent fundamental KJV Bible believing churches of large or moderately large size.

1 Text Sunday 1/15/23 8:14 am to Kathy, Rachel, Micah, Charity: "Good Morning, What is the name of that Italian Restaurant we ate at on Sat night 29 Oct 2022? Yes, I am writing a book.

2 Ankylosing spondylitis (AS) is an autoimmune disease that causes a type of inflammatory arthritis that affects the vertebrae and joints of the spine. In addition to causing pain, severe cases of AS can cause new bone growth that fuses the joints in the spine. Although AS primarily affects sacroiliac joints, it can also cause inflammation in other joints and, more rarely, organs and eyes. I was a more rarely AS.



They were set in military communities, containing very disciplined, hard-working people, who knew the value of sacrifice. When we retired and moved back home to pastor a small fledgling Baptist Church in Yates County we found ourselves thrust into a society that is exactly opposite of all those attributes, a socialist, welfare type of society. In our 27 years of labor, small shrunk to tiny, and we have not had a functioning bus route or van route, youth group or choir in 20 years. We have not had a piano player since Arlene moved to North Carolina back in the 1900s! Today we can go and sit in the middle of Solid Rock Baptist Church and just absorb all the activity, all the ministries, all the ministers, all the singing, all the special music, all the worship.... And so we did for, 3 ½ hours on this Sunday morning.



Back at the church later we stood beside our carefully packed suitcases as crowds gathered and the bus pulled up. It was so exciting to meet half of the group that we would spend the next 10 days with. The Clarks did a masterful job of providing a color brochure with everyone's names and profile pictures.



This was going to be a wonderful experience, with wonderful folks, and a superb host.

We boarded the Solid Rock Baptist Church bus which headed out for the Newark Liberty International Airport an hour and a half north. Since we were missing Sunday evening church, we had a church service on the bus.

We sang some familiar songs and then Pastor Burton Gates, of Liberty Baptist Church, Philadelphia PA, gave his testimony and preached a five point message out of Psalm 119. This trip to Israel, and the Word of God



rehearsed there, ought to Effect us, Excite us, Enliven us, Enhance us, and Endure in us (Ps,119:10,17,18,41). Awesome. Brother Gates, while hurdling down the highway at 65 mph, had our minds going another 60, and all that, made one stop and think. At this point anticipation of a Holy Land tour was at an all time high.



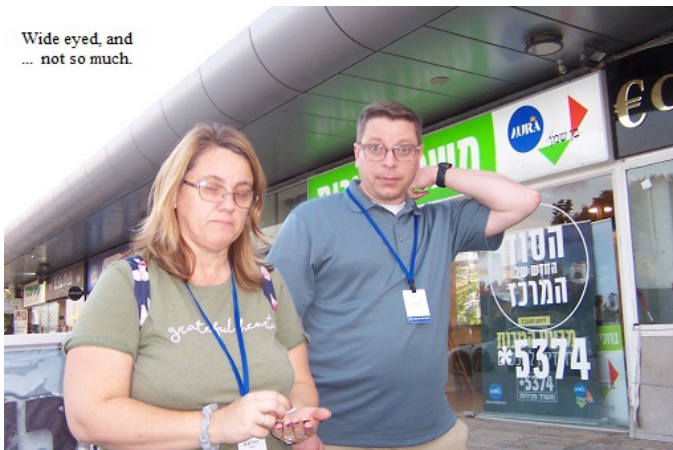
El-Al airlines is one of the best. Just the same sitting in the tiny airline seat for a 10 hour flight from Newark, New Jersey, to Tel Aviv, Israel, makes for a lot of strain on their perfected service with a smile. One of the last boarding passengers was supposed to take the window seat in our row. Bev moved to the window, I to the center, and the thankful late comer took the aisle seat. I have found that every time I fall asleep in an aisle seat, someone hurrying to the restroom would step

on my foot, kick me in the knee, and then glare at me for hanging out into the very narrow aisle. Well, at the time, I thought it would be fine letting him have the aisle seat.

The flight was packed. The Boeing 787 had nine seats in a row with two aisles. Seats were ABC DFG HJK with missing vowels (the Hebrew alphabet has no vowels). We were flying at 39,000 feet at 552 mph. I got up every two hours to walk around, step on people's feet and kick them in the knee. There was a nice exercise area in the rear, and when attendants were not preparing meals, there was room to walk circles, do deep knee bends, and toe touches, with all the coffee or juice you could want. The attendants were wonderful,... The passengers with sore



Wide eyed, and ... not so much.



knee caps, not so much.

The biggest challenge for me on this flight was eating three nice meals with my elbows stuck to my belly button, while food and coffee fell off my tiny little wobbly tray, and dribbled down past my knees. But I love a challenge. The sacrifices I made giving up an aisle seat, and surrendering the armrest as well, seemed to be met with animosity from the stranger beside me. "So, what's your name and do you fly often?"

“I am Bernard Feldman, and I fly all too often.”

“What do you do, and why are you flying to Israel today?”

“I own my own business, and I am going home after a sales meeting in Philadelphia. You?” ...

That’s the way these conversations are supposed to go on a 10 hour flight. Mr. Grumpy, sitting in my aisle seat, only mumbled some unintelligible name that I tried to pronounce back to him. He glared at me and looked back at his magazine.

When I followed up with “Why are you flying to Israel today?” Mr. grumpy said, “Because I live there! ... *you moron now leave me alone, can’t you see that I am reading!*” ... (Okay, he didn’t really say the italics part out loud, it was all contained in the glare he gave).

The only vengeance I took on Mr. Grumpy, for being grumpy, was every two hours or so I made him get up and let me into the aisle so I could go stretch my swelling sacroiliac joints.

EXPERIENCE ISRAEL
October 30–November 10 · 2022
with Pastor Charles Clark III

\$3,800 per person
FOR DOUBLE OCCUPANCY

TRIP INCLUDES

- Roundtrip airfare
- Hotels
- Coach bus
- Professional guide
- Daily breakfast buffet
- Daily dinner buffet
- Tips and gratuity

FOR THE LORD,
Br. Chalie

TRIP ITINERARY

Day 1 · Sunday, October 30
Late-night departure for Israel

Day 2 · Monday, October 31
Arrive at Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv, meet our guide, and transfer to our hotel in Jerusalem for dinner and a restful night's sleep.

Day 3 · Tuesday, November 1
Mount of Olives, Palm Sunday Road, Garden of Gethsemane, Pools of Bethesda, Hezekiah's Broad Wall, Temple Institute

Day 4 · Wednesday, November 2
Western Wall Tour, Temple Mount, City of David, Hezekiah's Tunnel, Pool of Siloam, Israel Museum, Southern Wall Excavation

Day 5 · Thursday, November 3
Ein Gedi, Masada, Dead Sea, Wadi Qelt

Day 6 · Friday, November 4
Shepherd's Fields, Bethlehem, Peter in Gallicantu, Golgotha, Garden Tomb

Day 7 · Saturday, November 5
Jericho, Beth Shean, Gideon's Spring, Jezreel, Mount Arbel

Day 8 · Sunday, November 6
Sea of Galilee, Mount of Beatitudes, Capernaum, Bethsaida

Day 9 · Monday, November 7
Tel Dan, Caesarea Philippi (Banias), Golan Heights-Mount Bental

Day 10 · Tuesday, November 8
Nazareth-Mount Precipice, Megiddo, Mount Carmel, Jordan River

Day 11 · Wednesday, November 9
Caesarea, Valley of Elah, transfer to the airport and depart on an overnight flight to arrive back home on November 10.

VACCINATION IS NOT REQUIRED.

REGISTER NOW!
SOLIDROCKINFO.ORG/ISRAEL

I love to visit the nation of Israel!

It is an absolutely awesome experience! Walking where Jesus walked will help to fill your heart with passion for your Savior. Traveling throughout the land of the Bible makes God's Word come even more alive in your heart. Your time in the Holy Land will give inspiration for your spirit and Bible education for your mind. Going on this trip of a lifetime is absolutely worth the expense. You will gain marvelous memories and be thrilled that you went—I guarantee it! I am praying for God to give us exactly who He wants on this trip. It would be wonderful if you are able to join us. I hope to worship God with you in Israel!

FOR THE LORD,
Br. Chalie

When Bev and I read our Monday Bible portion out loud together, Mr. Grumpy softened a little. And when Bev and I attempted some conversation with Shane and Kathy seated behind us, I told glaring Grumpy, “That is my son, we are Baptist preachers going to Israel to tour the Holy Land.” “Oh!” his glare softened some more, and he was back into his book.

Later, when I took out my Hebrew/English portion of Isaiah 53 and started reading silently, he carefully, unnoticeably, glanced over several times. He finally asked, “Do you read Hebrew?”

“Yes I do, but only on a first grade reading level, so I can sound out most of the words here in Isaiah 53.” At that, Mr. Grumpy moaned some inaudible groan, and again went back to his book, and back to character of the name I had assigned him.

It was an excellent flight, ... Well as excellent as can be when squashed into a Boeing 787 with 245 other passengers. There were probably 30 orthodox Jews on the flight. I had bumped into two reading the Torah back in my exercise room and each accepted a Hebrew copy of Isaiah 53. When I forced Mr. Grumpy to get up and let me back into my seat, I still had a handful of papers in my hand. When I offered him one, he didn’t say a word, accepted the scripture portion, tucked it into his book, and continued reading; no

eye contact. Life is good, people are strange.

The plane touched down in Tel Aviv at 2:10 PM, right on time. As soon as planes stop, anxious people stand up and cram into the aisles to stand and wait for 10 minutes before the doors open. Bev and I sat comfortably for the onslaught, but Mr. Grumpy was first in the aisle and moved a row away before he turned, and said in a pleasant demeanor, “It was very nice meeting you.”

I was taken aback. There are a lot of things I could have said, but all I managed was, “It was nice meeting you too... Welcome home.” He smiled, “Enjoy your tour.”

Life is good, people are strange.

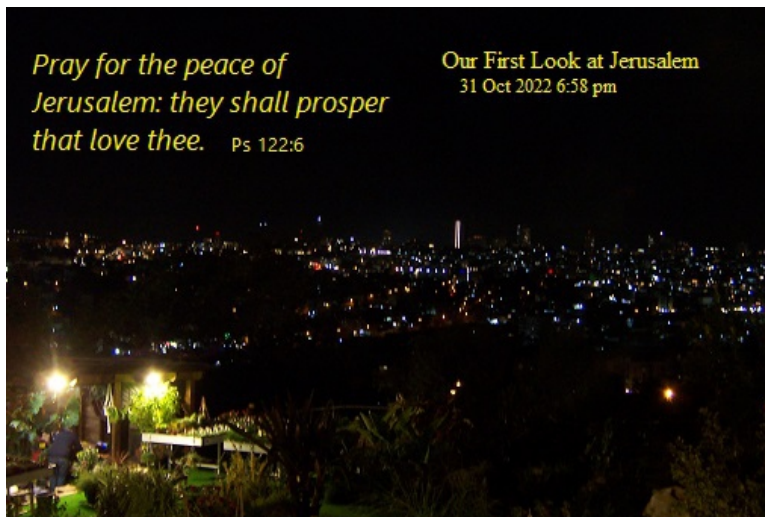
The excitement of being in Israel was not at all diminished by the hectic crowds pushing their way through the Israeli check in point. Jay Clarke organized our group as a group with ready passports and we were ushered through one line of the checkpoint with ease.

Israel is not well regarded by most of the world, so in order of that our passports were not stamped as having been there, we were given a little paper ID that said we entered the country. That was kind of curious, but we hurried off to



baggage claim and recovered our waiting bags.

All dragging suitcases, we were once again grouped together with ready papers and we were ushered to the front of the line at the customs check in. The whole group was guided through and we met a smiling Joe Freedman, our guide, on the other side. Land of the Bible Tours had greased the skids as it were, and in no time we were on the bus outside the terminal.



The second half of our group were still in the air³, so Joe, our guide, introduced us to Eiad, our bus driver, and gave us a welcome to Israel that would be more fully developed when the rest of the tour group arrived. “In the mean time, let's go shopping.” Eiad drove us to a nearby shopping plaza in Tel Aviv where we could stretch and get a bite to eat. Exhaustion was overcome by the excitement of being in Israel. We took some of our newly exchanged Shekels, bought Milka Ice Cream bars and sat in the plaza talking about all that had happened in 12 hours.

Back at the airport we picked up the other half of our group, and were excited to see that our grandson Micah, had made his last minute connections. Eiad pointed the bus towards Jerusalem, and the 48 minute ride was filled with smiles, talk, anticipation and excitement. I cannot put in words what was behind the smiles that Beverly and I exchanged.

3 American Airlines 10 hr 41 min Flight AA146 from JFK was to arrive at 5:00 pm GMT +2