

## My memories from Israel trip December 2003

Bengt de Paulis  
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### 17th Dec

Early December we got information about a peace rally in Jerusalem. Since the Finnish church sponsored part of the trip cost, I could afford to go on the 17th and be in the rally in Independence park on the 22nd Dec. Flying from Helsinki on the 17th together with Barbara, Keijo and Einari.

Stopping at Warsaw airport for changing to Israel El Al flight to Jerusalem we were interrogated by El Al security personal, for about 1 hour. They asked just everything. Who invited us... who sponsored the trip. How did we know each other... why we joined this movement ... who is the founder... if we knew anyone in Israel, and so on.

Arriving in Ben Gurion airport around 5pm in misty air at a nice temp. around +21 degree. centigrade. We stayed 2 first nights at nice and cheaper Finnish Evangelical hostel, and after that with all the others at Novotel hotel in Jerusalem.

### 18th Dec

Cold and rainy morning. The day was planned for a guided tour in Jerusalem. I did not bring my umbrella and cote from our hostel to Novotel, since the rain was not so bad in the beginning. But now I rushed back to our hostel to pick it up. After returning to agreed meeting point at the Damascus gate... no one of the others where in sight... they probably gave up waiting eager to see the center of Jerusalem. Two choices: Either returning alone to our hostel ... or walking into central Jerusalem alone. Inside the Damascus gate waited the Muslim area. No westerners in site. A little reluctant at first but I proceeded inside to try my luck. Had it been late evening or nighttime I promised I would not have entered alone.

*We were actually warned by our English brother, leading the morning meeting, that there had been pickpockets in Jerusalem.*

The Muslims of course immediately tried to sell things to me. What a tourist "victim" I must have been, was for the professional salesmen. The shops were side by side and small like one small room. Inside lots of souvenirs on sale. From small plastic things to expensive carpets. Almost all shop owners inviting me for a cup of the.

I tried to walk on and find the church where Jesus tomb was, as I had read in my guidebook. Hoping also to bump into the others from my group. I had to buy a map from a shop, to find my way around the narrow streets. The young Palestine owner(?) explained how difficult it had been during the past 3 years of almost no tourists in Jerusalem. Struggling just to barely survive. He told me his wife's full time job made their family survive. I believed him. I believe you can see from a persons eyes how true he is talking. This man was honest. I am sure.

I finally found the church and also some from my group. One of my absolute greatest experiences was to pray, Jesus prayer... our Father in Heaven be thy will ... almost alone in the tomb, with my hands in prayer, on the very stone, where Jesus holy body was laid after his death on the cross. Incredible feeling of holiness and the long long time span of 2000 years, and millions of Christian pilgrimages coming from afar to this very stone.

I proceeded alone to the Jewish quarters and the wailing wall. I touched the stonewall, made a note on a paper for Muslims, Jews and Christians to accept True Parents as the Coming of Mahdi, Messiah and Second Coming of Christ, and for final true lasting peace in the Holy Land. Put the rolled paper in between the stones and made a prayer about the content.

After that it started to rain heavily... thunder broke out. I don't know if it was my prayer or the which on the paper that made the thunder Anyway I took shelter on the slopes of the nearby Kidron valley. Where I after the worst rain stopped, went down to the grave of the biblical old test. Sakarja. On the way down I saw 2 wild dogs. I was a little scared but persistent to head on to the huge monument. The monument over the grave was about 5 meters high and 5 meters wide as a square cube. I walked around it. Made a prayer with my head on the stone, and proceeded to Gethsemane some 200 meters up the hill on the other

side.

### **Gethsemane:**

Church of seven nations was built by seven nations together. A beautiful catholic church with high roof of many cupules. Inside some rock and also outside on one side a rock...where Jesus prayed his famous prayer.

Very old (1000 years?) olive trees in the garden. After praying there myself I walked back towards the hill leading up to the Lions gate in Jerusalem. On the way I passed the orthodox church where Mary is said to be buried. A long long stair leading maybe some 50 meter down underground to a crypt.

After seeing the crypt I went up the hill and entered Lions gate, in the wall surrounding Jerusalem. Again coming into the Muslim area I was invited by a salesman to have a cup of tea, and looking at his beautiful carpets on sale. There was one incredibly beautiful one, where the color gradually changed as you walked around it. Of course I could not afford the 600 dollars. But it was truly a most beautiful carpet. Something to make future Sunday prayer pledges on. Tired and back at the hostel I fell into a deep refreshing sleep.

### **19th Dec**

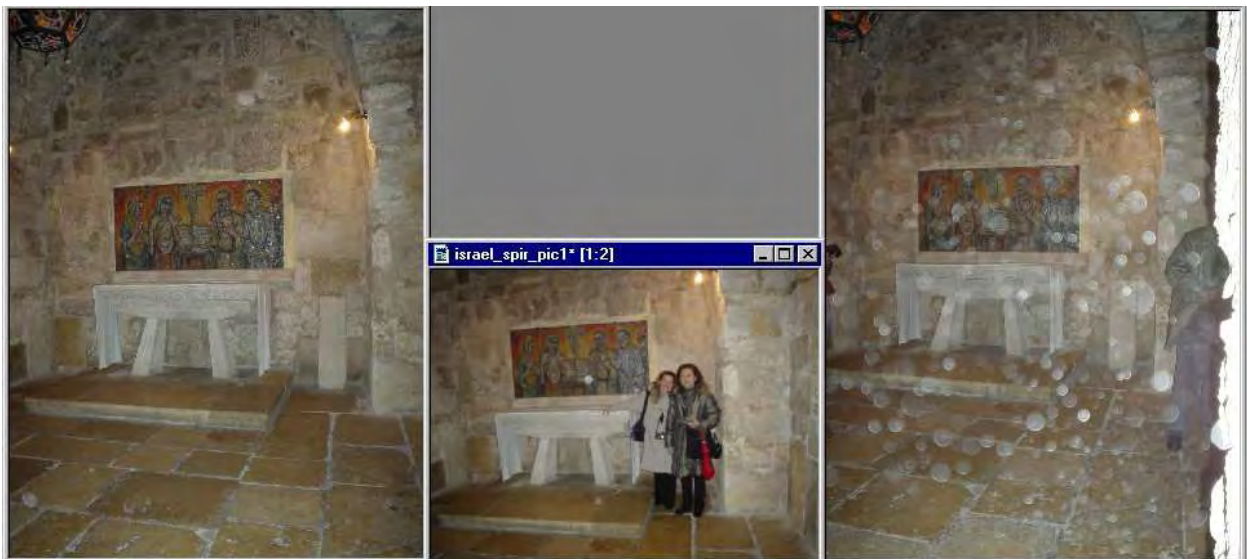
After Hoon Dok Hae at 05 and breakfast we started our bus journey to Bethlehem. A Jewish bus and guide took us to the border of Palestine area, since Bethlehem is in Palestine controlled area. But what a miserable border. Some storehouses in bad shape and barbed wire as a sign of the border. Its truly a second class citizenship for the Palestinians. Since 80% of people in Bethlehem lives from tourism, and tourism has been almost nonexistent for the past 3 years, they are in a very difficult situation, together with the Jewish salesmen as well, off course.

After the border another Palestine bus and local guide took us to the birthplace of Jesus. The stable and birthplace of Jesus was in a cave where they now build an altar and a church on top of it. We entered the cave. At the very birthplace there is a big silver star in the floor. We kneeled one by one, in front of it, touching with the hand in the middle of the star, where there was a hole. And at the same time had our photos taken by someone standing nearby. After that we sang Holy night...in front of the stable...beautiful solemn feeling.

Coming up in the church again, we could see buckets on the floor catching the rain, from the leaking roof high above. This is the real grim situation of the local church. Tourism down since 3 years have left them with not enough money for proper care. And this is the very most holy churches of all Christianity! Wonder what pope Paul and the catholic church would think if they knew about this... After this we went into the newly built catholic church as an annex to the old church. This is the church where they transmit worldwide on TV, the mass every Christmas.

Stairs leading down to a nearby crypt, they had recently in the 80's found the graves of the children slaughtered by King Herod's soldiers, in an attempt to kill the promised Messiah, Jesus.

This was also the place were the angel told Josef to bring his family to Egypt as protection from king Herod's soldiers.



*1st picture almost "normal" picture with only one "spirit" visible at the left bottom. 2nd picture Italian sister Rita and japanese sister, with 2 "spirits" visible" 3rd picture hundreds of spirits visible!*

Nearby this crypt was the crypt and grave of St. Jerome. He came from Yugoslavia and was the first one to translate the whole Bible into Latin. That first Bible was called Vulgate. He spent 10 years learning Hebrew, Greek and Armenian and 20 years translating the texts.

*Einari (Finnish brother), took some pictures after most of us had left the room where there was a small*

*altar with St. Gerome's picture in mosaic. One Italian sister Rita, later told us she clearly heard an inner voice telling her to go back into the room (she was on her way leaving the room before Einari took the 3 pictures). She returned and on the picture Einari took, we could see a picture of the room and the two present sisters...and two clear white balls of light. The 3rd picture is full of white snowballs of different sizes. Like a heavy snowfall. Similar to the pictures of the angels from Chung Pyung Korea. Later Einari together with the 2 sisters, testified and showed the picture for the 200 participants in next mornings Hoon Dok Hae.*

Related similar pictures from other net-sources: [www.highspiritstours.com](http://www.highspiritstours.com)

## **20th Dec**

Now we had moved to our rooms in the Novotel Hotel, where the others were. I asked for a room together with Fred Persson from Sweden. We had a very nice sharing together of old memories from Sweden. This day was dedicated to service projects for us. Each day there was some service projects going on. So we switched between sightseeing and doing service projects.

One 2nd gen. sister responsible for the projects gave a very inspiring speech about the projects this morning. Our project this day was to help cleaning up an old Lutheran graveyard in Bethlehem, that had been neglected for years. After coming to Bethlehem with the buses, we first walked through some Palestinian refugee camp from the war 1948, in order to understand their situation.

Most of the refugees came from Tel Aviv after the 1948 war. They first lived in tents but later built up simple stone houses. All without any planning or order of streets or water supply.

Several Palestinians from the area followed us. Trying to sell their goods of necklaces, photos of Bethlehem, hats and other items. And off course some of us bought. At the end of the tour the Palestinian police confiscated all the items from one of the sellers. Sad to see their misery. He was soon seen again selling as nothing had happened. So the police confiscating seem to be daily routine and part of the business losses

Cleaning the cemetery took about half a day. We were served coffee by the local tenant. A big fire of the cleaned rubbish ended the work. Singing Song of Tongil holding hands in a circle around the fire ended the day of a very good sharing experience.

## **21st Dec**

This day was dedicated to sightseeing around Sea of Galilee. First our guide learned us some songs in Hebrew and Arab, while the bus was going east towards the Dead Sea. The landscape was rocky desert with Bedouins living in camps.

After passing a sign saying 0 sea level, we descended down some -600m under sea level. There at the bottom of the mounting was the biblical town of Jericho and the north of the Dead Sea. We turned north towards the Sea of Galilee. Soon the desert changed to grassy green as we proceeded north closer to the Sea of Galilee. It obviously rains more here. Plastic tents for flowers, vegetable...palms... banana trees... The bananas were covered with plastic bags to protect from insects. We came to the old roman town of Tiberias. Then continued north to Capernaum on the shore of Galilee, the place where Jesus multiplied the bread and fishes. Further up the slopes there was a beautiful church at the place where Jesus gave the sermon of the mount. After this we drove back to Tiberias for lunch. Sea of Galilee is a lake rich of fishes. One fish is called St Peters fish. That's the one we were served at the restaurant. Fresh dadles for desert.

Then going up the hills westward towards Nazareth. Nazareth is a beautiful village on top of one of many small hills. Jesus must have loved living in this beautiful nature environment near the sea of Galilee. First we went in to a church built on top of the home of Jesus mother Mary. There was a Palestinian catholic mass going on, in front of the cave.

Then we went to the home of Jesus, which was just about some 100 meters to the north. All that remains is the underground basement of the house. Where people used to sleep above the stables to keep warm from the animals. Old times central heating system. Holy feeling to look down at the very stairs Jesus had walked as a young boy some 2000 years ago.

After this returning home with the bus to the hotel in Jerusalem. The darkness comes much quicker here close to equator, then in Finland. Some 10 minutes and it is pitch dark. On the way south we passed the biblical valley of Armageddon. Someone in the bus mentioned "not so good to build a house there in the last days"...;-)

## **22nd Dec**

This was the big day of the rally. Long briefing in the morning by brother Ron from England and Mr. Kim, our coordinator. Interestingly the spiritual world manifested itself through one oriental sister, who could not resist standing up and talking for about 15 minutes, the same time our coordinator mr. Kim tried

to give us the last information for the day. He smilingly called it "stereo distraction" for us... no one could stop the sister who were clearly talking in "tongues" about the importance of what we were doing! All was laughing and in a good mood

After breakfast entering the buses, and off for a march in Jerusalem. White nice signs to wear over our bodies, was handed out, saying PEACE in English, Hebrew and Arabic. First we went to the temple place, where we had a special permission to enter the Muslim areas on top of the temple ruins. Dome of Rocks and El Aqsa mosque are 2 of the most holiest places for Muslims, after Mecca.

We were told that for 3 years since the year 2000 no Jews, Christians or tourists are allowed into the place on top of the temple ruins. Special feeling... Picture taking of our group and some 15 minutes where we could freely walk around the area.

Michael Jenkins arrives with his Muslim Jewish and Christian friends/guests. They hold a speech surrounded by all brothers/sisters. Hand clapping, cheering and a general feeling of unity among us all.

During the time before Michael Jenkins arrived, I went alone to the eastern gate, called the Golden Gate. This is the very gate, where according to Jewish faith, the Messiah will enter. How sad that they still did not realize that this important prophecy was already fulfilled 2000 years ago, by Jesus of Nazareth, entering Jerusalem through that very gate.

Today the gate is closed. The Muslim rulers, some 1000 years ago, completely closed it with bricks and made a Muslim cemetery here. Since cemetery's are unclean places according to Jewish faith. It is now virtually impossible for any Jewish Messiah to ever come and fulfill the old messianic prophecy of coming through the "Eastern Gate". How sad... a long lost providence!

After visiting the most holy Jewish place the veiling wall, we entered our buses to go for lunch. We had our lunch on the south part of the Mount of Olives. Beautiful view over all Jerusalem. The guide pointed out historical houses like the high priest Caiaphas, who condemned Jesus as heretic 2000 years ago, and the place where Judas killed himself. Also some places where St Paul had stayed. It was like the whole Biblical Old and New Test. lying open in front of our eyes and feet.

After lunch off to Independence park where the rally was going to start at 1400. There was already a band playing on stage... many people... there.

We entered through security checking and then gathered bus by bus on the field. Since I felt the music was too loud for me. (I have an old hearing defect) I went to the back outside the fence. Where the music volume was more tolerable. After some beautiful gospel singing, the main speakers M Jenkins and other Muslim Jewish and Christian leaders spoke. People had come from all over Israel to this peace rally. There was clear proclamation of "father and mother Moon" as the Second Coming of Christ, and also the Crowning of Jesus as King over Israel was impressive, to the tunes of Sibelius music. A proud moment for fins. No protesters... no boos from the hecklers... like it used to be in the past.

Where I was standing there was a small group about 5-10, of young ultra-orthodox Jews, maybe 17-20 years of age. They were handing out negative leaflets about our movement. But they were so small group, compared to the 20-30000 inside the park, that their effect was marginal. They looked more bewildered then confident about what they were doing.

It felt like an echo of the Jewish rejection of Jesus 2000 years ago. But at that time it was a strong dangerous life threatening Crucify Him Crucify Him... This time a very very small rejection... of the Second Coming of Christ.

I got back and collected some 50 of our rally leaflets and handed them out, where I was standing in the back, to those who got some neg. leaflets from the young Jews. This way hopefully neutralizing their impact. A good meaningful place and mission for me during the rally.

After returning from a successful rally, and having a nice evening meal we were told that rev. Kwak would hold a meeting for all of us Europeans at 10 o'clock. There was also the alternative of joining a candle light march.

We left with the buses to Sheraton Hotel where we all gathered in the basement meeting hall. Rev Kwak was holding his meeting with the Japanese members in some other location, so we had to wait. During waiting we sang holy songs... Gospels... and one Danish brother shared a testimony about this peace rally in Jerusalem received spiritually, through a Danish pastor many years ago. And a quire from second generation task force sang beautifully.

The delay got longer and longer ... after 1 hour we were told that rev. Kwak had arrived in time but was delayed by an ongoing phone call directly from True Father. After talking with True Father in Korea for more than 1 1/2 hour, rev. Kwak finally arrived. The main thing I remembered him saying was that True Father wants to make us all into NEW PEOPLE!. Whatever that means. I am sure all of rev. Kwaks speech is on internet by now.

We had to leave early to have time for the long long security checkup before flying home. A rainbow finally greeted us farewell as we entered the plane in Tel Aviv.

On the way home we, (Mary Irish living in Estonia, Einari Finnish and I Swedish) met a nice Finnish girl living in Tel Aviv now on her way to Finland for Christmas celebration. We were able to discuss about living in Israel, and witness to her about our experiences and Divine Principle, for a couple of hours at the Vienna airport, and also exchange email-addresses.

She recommended a book about Israelites. I think I remember her saying the title "The Israelites". But the only closest I found on amazon.com was this:

*"Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?"*

*Reviewer: L C Sheppard (see more about me) from Atlanta, Georgia If one must rely on a single source relating to the historicity of the Old Testament Professor William Dever's latest book is the one. "Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?" effectively makes use of his concept of "convergences between artifacts and texts." He brings to bear archaeology, history, mythology, scripture and tradition on the people he calls the proto-Israelites, the forebears of the nation in ancient Canaan we have come to know as Israel of the Iron Age through Roman times.*

*Another great book about modern 20th century Israel I am presently reading (spring 2004) is*

*"A Death in Jerusalem" by Kati Marton"*

*Amazon Review:*

*A good book about a tragic place, March 2, 2001*

*Reviewer: Doug Lashwylie from Boston, MA A lot of interesting and tragic history is presented in this book, including an excerpt from the now-infamous 1940 letter in which Lehi (the Stern Gang) sought help from Nazi Germany to fight their common enemy, the British.*

*Marton's book shows plenty of violence on both sides. For example, we are told of the destruction of the Arab village of Deir Yassim, where, Lehi commando Baruch Nadel recalled, "There were people killed in the most brutal way." And we get the violent Arab response, an attack on a convoy of cars carrying Jewish civilians: "Suddenly, brandishing rifles and hurling blazing gasoline-soaked rags, hundreds of Arab guerrillas swooped down on the convoy, turning its armor-plated cars into blazing steel-trap prisons."*

*The book's subject is Lehi's assassination of the first UN peace mediator to the Middle East, so of course the book focuses on the violent activities of Lehi and, to a lesser extent, the Irgun. That said, Marton makes clear that what motivated these people was not a love for violence, but a love for the state of Israel.*

*Marton's writing is sometimes a little awkward, sometimes a little breathless. And Count Folke Bernadotte is a far less interesting subject than Yitzhak Shamir. But the book does a good job of documenting an event that, as Arthur Schesinger wrote, "...has stained the politics of Israel ever since."*

*Depressingly, the obstacles to peace in 1948, such as the question of the right-of-return for Palestinian refugees, are still with us today.*

*Also recommended, Avi Shlaim's THE IRON WALL.*

*Conclusions of the trip to Israel: A great experience and a successful rally. No need to worry about any danger being there as tourist...as far as I could understand. Next time I will bring my mobile phone (that was left in Finland on suggestion), in my hand luggage. Hope to be back soon in a great warm country among very friendly Jewish and Palestinian people.*

*/Bengt, swede living with my family (3 daughters and Finnish wife) Maarit in Finland.*