

I never realized (completely comprehended) just how protected and sheltered my life has been, until recently. I admit, I don't watch the news. I don't like the negativity and would rather be oblivious to everything than listen to what's going on in the world. I buried my head in the sand and decided, if all was well in my life, it was fine elsewhere.

The chance of a lifetime came for me to go to Israel. It had been a dream of mine for years and years. It's something one says as a kid, "I'm going to Bethlehem someday, Gramma!" and I continued saying it when I was older. However, I never actually believed it would happen.

On March 5, 2006, 28 of us left various airports in the United States and met in Frankfurt, Germany on March 6, 2006 around 11:00 a.m. We toured a bit of Frankfurt, with Ralph and Judy as our guides. We had a 12 hour layover so had plenty of time to see the sites.

I had never been out of the United States and had not flown much at all. Customs was new to me and I was rather shocked to find the metal detector went off from the metal I have in my back from back surgery when we were going through Customs in Germany. It hadn't gone off when we went through Customs in Denver. I had no card from a Dr. stating I'd had back surgery and had metal in my back. The only thing I could think of was to show her the scar. That seemed to do the trick!

It was a long eight hour flight to Tel Aviv. The plane was huge, but very cramped quarters. I was on the window side toward the back. I hated to bother the two guys I was sitting with so didn't get up as often as I should have. (I can guarantee I will next time!) Toward the end of our flight we had a bit of turbulence. I hadn't slept at all, but was just starting to doze when the plane started rocking. I was so startled I grabbed the poor guys leg next to me. I soon realized it wasn't Rick telling me it would be OK. Poor guy probably had bruises!

We arrived in Tel Aviv about 3:20 a.m., March 7, 2006. We got off the plane and walked and walked and walked to the baggage claims area. Tel Aviv is huge! It is a modern airport and I could not believe how far it was to get to the baggage claims area. Before we could claim the baggage we stood in line to go through Customs again. This time I was asked why I was there; who was with me; how many were with me; what were we going to do in Bethlehem; who were we seeing, etc. It felt like the third degree. Some of the people were asked the same questions, others were not. Once we went through the "customs

interrogation booth" we went into a big arena area where they had carts for you to use to take to huge round escalators to fetch our luggage. Once we picked up our luggage, Gordon, our Tour host, went to call the bus that was supposed to be there to pick us up. We waited and waited.

The bus never came and Gordon could not reach anyone at the Bethlehem College, so he called Taxi vans to come and take us to Bethlehem. By that time it was about 4:55 a.m. There were three taxi vans that came to pick us up. They threw our luggage into the vans and we headed for Bethlehem. I thought the taxi drivers drove quite fast! One of the guys in our van thought we were going about 75, but I thought it was much more and the roads were quite curvy. They seem to tailgate also. Bumper to bumper. It seemed as if there was one taxi van that wanted to race with our driver as they kept passing one another. What a whirlwind drive!

As we were looking toward the East, we saw the most beautiful sunrise. God truly was blessing our first day in Bethlehem. It wasn't long before we had to stop at a check point. I didn't understand what was going on, but all of a sudden we were told we were to get off. By now the time was 5:45 a.m. From what I could understand the drivers could not cross the checkpoint. I am so confused by the checkpoints and passing through here and there, I don't know if they were Israeli's who could not pass through or Palestinian's. Not only had I come to Bethlehem to walk where Jesus walked, but I was there to learn much more than that. Our adventure begins.....

So, here we are, 28 people standing on the cobblestone sidewalk, looking down at our two or three luggage bags, not knowing how far the Bethlehem college is from where we are. We strap our suitcases piggy-back, if possible, and start walking through the checkpoint. Gordon tries calling the Bible College again. We had to travel single file as the sidewalks were quite narrow. We saw many people lining the street, sitting, smoking, laughing, talking. Garbage is everywhere you look. On the road, in the dirt fields. It is quite a culture shock. It passed my mind that maybe one of our duties would be to collect garbage along the roads. I smile as I pass those along the way. I wondered why they were all there at this time of the morning. It looked as if some might have been waiting for rides or something. Little did we know. Someone's suitcase falls, we all go over to help straighten it out again. I keep wondering why these people don't offer to help? Then again... I suppose they can't speak English. We continue walking on the cobblestone sidewalks. We are still

wondering if we are going the right way. I had my two suitcases and an overnight/computer rolling case. We walk and walk (downhill, thankfully, but by this time everyone is sooooo tired as we've not had any sleep to speak of since Sunday when we got up, and we have walked so much already when in the Frankfurt & Tel Aviv terminal.). Gordon finally asks someone that speaks English if they know where the Bible College is and they tell us it is a short way, and point up the street. We must have looked a sight. I was worried about a couple of the people with us as they are older and were already dragging. I finally take a bag from Andy and put on top of my two suitcases. A couple others take the larger suitcase from Andy. We cross the median and start walking up a hill. There are two guys trying to sell their bread, but everyone continued walking up the hill. We come to an area with a turn-style gate and several of our people go through and others start passing their luggage pieces through the gate one at a time. We hear something and look around to find a soldier with a machine gun slung over his shoulder who had come out of a booth and told us to go around the fence. Another person in our group said something like, "They've got us now!" It was as if this was not happening, it was all a dream. I actually started to laugh! By this time we're thinking.... no way! We're not walking back down the way we came. There were tons of workers going in and out of a walk-through with some kind of work pass or something. A few of us were talking to each other, stating we were not going back down the way we had come! Someone walks around the parameter of the fence in the direction the soldier is pointing and found another entrance where we showed our passport again. Once through "the wall" there were taxi drivers on the other side (they must sit there and wait for people who might need a ride.) One taxi driver grabbed my luggage, told me to get in the tax, and then did the same to Delores, another lady in our group. We get in and we're sitting there wondering what to think of all this when the taxi drivers start arguing. Delores had just remarked she didn't like this, there were no handles on the inside of the door and no one really knew what was going on. The door of the taxi came open and we're told to get out. I think we were all so numb from lack of sleep and the whole thing we didn't really comprehend what was happening. Finally the one taxi driver that had grabbed our luggage and put it in his car, grabbed our bags out of the trunk. Then he took off with tires squealing and honking his horn. We had no idea if these taxi's would make it anywhere. They were quite old, had holes where the locks should be. They strapped the suitcases on the top of the taxi's as there was not enough room in the trunks. By the time the drivers got to our luggage they didn't have anymore "rope" or whatever they were using to tie the luggage down.

Finally someone found something to tie together and strap them on. The taxi we were in, had fold down backs to the back seat. This enabled three more to sit in another seat in the far back. Ward was in front and Jeanne H. had no other place to sit so she sat in front on his lap. Ward is wondering if anyone has gum, he's not brushed his teeth in two days! Everyone is laughing. It kind of broke up the uncertainty of what was happening. The poor taxi driver gets in and shakes his head NO regarding Jeanne sitting on Ward's lap, so Jeanne had to find another ride.

Well, hang on, we're in for another hair-bending ride. Around hills and curves at a faster rate than one would think they could drive. They go around other people and cars as if they own the street. There are no rules when driving as far as I could see. Hand on the horn, foot on the brake or pedal was the way to go. Well, these taxi drivers did not know where the Bethlehem College was. They could not find it. We stopped three times before they finally decided, after much conversing, and found where the Bible College was located. We pull up to a place that has a gate in front of it. It's all locked up. We cannot get in. Someone in our taxi says, "Maybe Gordon's friend is gone. He left and took the money we sent." I can't help it, I'm laughing so hard. I am punch-drunk tired by this time and the entire situation is hilarious. Kent sounded just like Rick (my husband) with the remarks he was saying. I can't remember how long we waited before Gordon reached someone to open the gate. We climbed some stairs and the taxi drivers wanted to be paid and were arguing. The President of the school, Gordon's friend, Bishara Awad, settled what needed to be paid. I think it was \$10 a person. So, as we wait with our suitcases scattered, it was finally decided that there would be 8 who would go and stay at the Nativity Hotel a few blocks away as there was not enough room at the College. It was decided that the two singles, Marjorie and I, would go there and three others doubling up. Neva and Andy, Jan and Argelena, Dave and Betty . By this time it is about 7:30 a.m. We get a ride to the Hotel using one of the college vans. The Nativity Hotel is beautiful! We are the only guests there. The gentleman, our host, is a Palestinian. He also has American citizenship and has a place in Michigan. He said business is very poor and has been for 6 years or so. (Because of the unrest here in Bethlehem between Israel and Palestine.)

We are told Awatef, the lady who takes care of the hotel, will have breakfast for us at 8:10. We hurry to our rooms, wash up and go down for breakfast. What a spread she put on, too! Eggs with sausage, pastries, olives, pita-bread toast, some kind of coffee rolls and all sorts of goodies. As for coffee.... my vice, we had instant! (I hope to remedy that

soon.)

After breakfast, everyone goes back to their room to unpack and shower and rest a bit before the College van comes to pick us up for a tour of the college at 11:00.

The college is very nice! An older building with much character. The Garden was beautiful. Roses were already blooming. I was so impressed with how the college was started. I must say, I was jolted to the core when we were told the buildings in front of the college were refugee camps. These were Palestinian families who were told they had 5 minutes to leave in 1948 (46?) when the UN gave Israel parts of Palestine. They lived in tents and then the buildings were built. It breaks my heart and is beyond words. If you notice the barrels on the top of the buildings, every 20 days the people of Palestine have water pumped into these barrels. Their water must last the 20 days.

3/8/2006 Today is a work day. I am to work in the American Admin Office. I am introduced to an Access Database. (If only I could show them Filemaker Pro! It's so less cumbersome!) I begin editing and checking addresses and adding email addresses. Others from my group are working outdoors scraping and painting the metal fence in front, around back, cleaning weeds from the flower garden, helping fix things in the kitchen, working with students teaching English, cleaning rooms at the college, and working in the Library.

3/9/06 I take pictures of the scenery on our drive to Jericho. I tried to capture Ruth's Tomb, which is surrounded by a huge wall and no one can see it, but could not quite get the picture from the bus. I don't recall all the sites of each picture, but will fill this in as I'm working on the movie. I think the one with the tree in the Kidron Valley is possibly where Judas betrayed Jesus? I can't recall off hand, but will ask others if they recall. I know it was symbolic at the time I took the picture.

We first go to the older part of Jericho to see the Sycamore tree where Zacchaeus climbed up into a similar one many years ago to be the first to see Jesus. It is really not the Sycamore tree that was there in Jesus' time, but in a similar place. We first climbed the tel (hill) where there was found a tower built by the Roman's many years ago. It was built over several times as you can see the steps leading down to the different levels. (Jericho is in Palestine, also.) As we looked over and down to the valley you could see the beautiful green date trees. There was a building with a

red roof that held the water. The water comes from the natural springs. It is where God said there would be water. This is where it was.

Qumran: We drive to another area of Jericho, called Qumran (meaning two moons), where the Temple is built. This is where Jesus went for 40 days and 40 nights to pray and fast. It was a place to come to when you wish to get away from everyone, in the quiet. Or to escape for Political reasons, like Herod the Great. There were bath houses, cisterns, a pottery place, kitchen. Herod had been forced to become a Jew (he was a Dominion, I think.) Herod built several fortresses for the Jews and dedicated this Temple in Jesus' time. Here is where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found by two Bedouin kids. Many bits and pieces of the Bible of almost every book was found here. Isaiah was almost 7 millimeters long, and was written on goat skin. They did not find any pieces of the Book of Ester. Most of the scrolls were found by the Bedouins. These were proven to be 2000 years old by archeologists. Here also one could look across the terrain and see caves in the rock. This is where the people of that time slept. Here is where proof of the Bible was found in 1947. The scrolls are not there at Qumran now, but in a museum in Jerusalem.

The water for the ritual baths was gathered from rain water. These temples were ritual places for the Gentile. Anytime God was mentioned, they bathed themselves as a ritual. It was a purification. They believed they would be the only ones to go to Heaven. Some believed John the Baptist was part of this community, but that is still debated.

We follow the trail down to the gift store and wander around. I had some coffee, bought a beautiful purple scarf, a cross, and some posters of Jericho and Jerusalem. I picked up two rocks from the tel in Jericho and bought one postcard with a piece of the sycamore bark from a beggar for \$1.00. We headed for the bus and then sat on a camel. Some rode it, but the camel was so old and I felt so sorry for him I said I was not going to make him get up one more time. He was so very sore. His legs/knees were worn down and he could hardly get up. The guy had to stop for awhile to give him water. He drank and drank and went to the bathroom at the same time! I kept saying, he can hardly get up or down. You could tell he was hurting.

Bedouins: Along the way we see many shacks/tents on the hillside. These are the Bedouins, Palestinians who refuse to leave their place in Israel. Some might be sheep herders, etc. They were told to leave, but they have nothing to lose so they stay and live off the land. They will not

budge.

Dead Sea: Next we headed for the Dead Sea. It was so windy (wind started in Jericho) and quite cold with the wind. I went into the bathhouse and changed into capri's and a blouse. I went down to swim. It was quite a hike down. The waves were riding high. I had been in the Salt Lake before, so I wanted to see what it was like floating in the Dead Sea, which is said to be much saltier than the Salt Lake. I don't think the Dead Sea smelled as bad as the Salt Lake did. Jan was already in and told me to try using one of the chairs to hold on to and steady myself among all the rocks and mud. I soon put the chair aside.

I started wading out, but the rocks hurt my feet. I kept going and a wave soon knocked me down. I tried to get up, stuck in mud, fell and more waves came. A tiny bit of salt water must have gotten in my eye as it burned. I wanted to make sure I didn't get more in the eye, nor in my mouth. I'd already had a taste of it and it was so salty! The sea was rocky and dirty. I swam a bit, but the waves rushed in and pushed me down again. I floated a bit on my back, but the waves pushed me closer to shore and the large rocks jutting out. I finally had to crawl out and struggle up on the deck. It wore me out! Some Japanese lady was video recording the entire thing. It must have been hilarious watching this big person struggling to get out of the Dead Sea! Gloria, one of the ladies in our group, had taken my camera and was taking pictures. Unfortunately the batteries were dying and it didn't take very good pictures. She pointed to my leg and asked me how I got cut. I looked down and blood is dripping down my leg into my sock. I must have been struck by a rock, which tore the skin. I hurried up the steps, carrying my bag with my good clothes in it so I could shower the salt water off and change. I went in the shower immediately after stripping the clothes off. I was still so damp, even after trying to towel off, it was difficult putting any clothes on. One Japanese lady came over and helped me drag my bra over and around. Another hilarious thing! Then I couldn't get my shoes on as my feet were still so wet. People were showering and I had to get out of there as everything was getting wet since all the water poured out onto the floor from open showers. Once I got my shoes on, I went outside and Rami asked me how I liked swimming in the Dead Sea. I told him I had battle scars and showed him my leg. He immediately went over to the concession stand to get the first aid guy to come and bandage it. They put this brown goeey stuff on it and then bandaged it. The cut went about a half-inch across and the bruise will be much bigger as it scraped a bit more to the left of the shin. It didn't hurt, though, which surprised

me. Oh well.... I can say I was knocked around by the Dead Sea. One had no clue there were living creatures in there until I got in. What a hoot! I forgot to mention I was watching one of the other guys, Lyle, and he could not get up either. He's quite tall and the waves kept knocking him down. Ralph seemed to be the only one that could swim out quite a ways. How he did it with the waves as high as they were is beyond me. Bonita and Clarence were the only ones who brought shoes to wear in the water, I think. I didn't have a pair I could walk in! Wish I'd have brought my Crocks. It was quite an experience, to say the least.

Replica of the Tabernacle: Once we left the Dead Sea we went to see the Replica of the Ark (The Tabernacle). It was so neat! It is exactly the same as the Ark God ordered Moses to build. (Exodus) It's called the Wilderness Tabernacle. This was where they did the sacrifices and presented it to God. It has the exact colors of Moses Tabernacle. Red, blue, purple and white. The site layout consists of 12 items. 1) Posts and Courtyard Enclosure 2) The Door to the Enclosure 3) Door (Screen) to the Holy Place 4) The Boards, Tenons, Sockets, and Bars 5) The Coverings 6) The Brazen Altar 7) The Laver 8) The Table of Presence (Shewbread) 9) The Incense Altar 10) The Menorah 11) The Veil of the Holy Place 12) The Ark and Mercy Seat

Dinner: We went back to the Bible College for a dinner of rice, meatballs, salad, and pita bread. Bill presented Bishara Awad and his wife with a check for \$300 from the Church in Hot Springs.

3/10/2006 Jerusalem Temple: We left today for Jerusalem and the Wailing Wall at about 8:30. On the way to the Wailing Wall we stopped outside of the Dung Gate to see the Temple built in the time of Herod. You can see by the bricks what era the building was built and what has been added on to since. The large stones were from the Herod days. It is much of a shell now, but surrounded by a wall. This was the part of old Jerusalem. There are long steps on the building which are called the Teaching Steps. Jewish slaves built this in Herod's day.

Wailing Wall: As we ventured further we went through the Damascus Gate and then through the Dung Gate to the Wailing Wall (or Western Wall as they would like it referred to). At one check-in gate we had to take off our fanny packs and they searched them. Then we were allowed to pass through to the Wailing Wall. Once there the ladies put on their hoods or a scarf. The wall is split in half. The men on the left side and the women on the right side. Bonita and I went to the right side and I left my

prayer to God in one of the cracks. There were many women at the Wailing Wall, more so than men.

It was called the Wailing Wall because the Jews are wailing over the Temple that was destroyed. They like us to call it the Western Wall. The lower course of stones is from Herod's day. According to Jewish people you must grow the side beard. The black dress is from the tradition. After the Holocaust there were so many who came from different countries, black became the tradition. The small little hat is to remind the Jews there is always somebody above them who is God. The prayer shawl (mentioned in the Bible), white and blue, with tassels. The tassels are a reminder to observe the law. Here at the Western Wall is where one opens their hearts and prays and leaves prayers to the Father. You can take pictures before the Sabbath but never during the Sabbath.

Pool of Siloam: We left the Wailing Wall and drove to another site that is being excavated at this time. It is new. It's called the Pool of Siloam. Jesus had told a blind man to go to the Pool of Siloam and wash his eyes and he would be healed. We are some of the first to see this area. There are very steep steps leading down to it from the road. Half of the other property belongs to the Greek Orthodox Church so the actual pool was not completely excavated. I would assume it will take years to excavate. Everywhere we go there are people trying to sell us something. Bonita bought two postcards from one guy and gave me one.

Church of St. Peter in Galllicantu: Our next stop was the Church of St. Peter in Galllicantu. This is the place where it is said Jesus said Peter would deny him three times. This is a beautiful Church. The inside is breathtaking! We went down and down into the various levels where it is depicted the Byzantine Cross that was found carved into the walls. As you come up out of the lower level you enter into a rock area, with steps, where it is possible Jesus sat and prayed. A stairway connecting Mount Zion to the Gihon Spring can be seen. The mosaics inside the Church is a true sermon to anyone wishing to see the love of Christ. As Rami said, it preaches Salvation.

Last Supper Room called the Upper Room: Further on up the road we stopped to visit the Last Supper Room. This is typical of the Crusaders era in the 9th, 10th, 11th Century. There is a hint in the Bible where Jesus tells his disciples to find the Last Supper Room where they will find a man carrying a jar. Men don't carry jars, women do! The first Church was built by the Byzantines in the 4th, 5th and 6th Century. All we saw was from

the Crusaders era except for the one turret. Pointed arches are typical of the Crusaders. There is one pillar that would be from the Byzantine Church that was there. Beautiful turrets depicting carvings of a Pelican mother feeding her two young ones. This shows that a mother would rip herself open and do anything to feed her young. As Jesus did for us. This is one hint to point to this place as being the Last Supper. The stained glass window was so beautiful. As I was looking around I was wondering where Jesus and the Disciples were sitting at the table. I could almost picture it between the two pillars in the Temple room.

Kidron Valley: On we rode in our bus to the Mount of Olives. What a beautiful view of Old Jerusalem it was. I took many pictures and hope to make a panoramic picture.

Church of All Nations: We have a view of the top of the Church of St. Mary Magdalene. We walked down to the Church of All Nations and the Gethsemane Garden. Looking out across the valley, up the hillside from the Mount of Olives, you can see what is called the Golden Gate. It is said that Jesus will come through the Golden Gate, which is now blocked. Jews who believe this are buried below the Golden Gate. They believe the day will come when Jesus returns and it is these gates they will pass and follow Jesus. As we went inside it was very, very dark. People were sitting and praying, looking at the beautiful blue and gold mosaic at the front of the Church. It was so dark I was unable to really capture the beauty of the inside. But, the peace and feeling of contentment that overcomes you is something I cannot explain. One has to experience it themselves. It was a washing of the mind and body when I said my prayer. Like a stream trickling over you and then a wave gently washing your soul. It leaves a lasting effect.

Garden of Gethsemane: Here, at the Mount of Olives, is where Jesus wept over what would happen to Jerusalem one day. It was in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus was arrested. Also here are eight very old olive trees. It was so quiet in the Garden. I could picture Jesus sitting here and weeping.

And so ended our second day of touring.

3/11/2006 Bethlehem / Jerusalem: I can't believe it is already Saturday! Today we are heading for Nazareth. We were ready and waiting for the bus at 8:00 sharp. The bus driver, Waildi and Rami came into the Hotel. We went out and there were a couple of beggars trying to

sell things. I bought two flutes for the grandkids. I finally ended up going back inside as they keep pressuring me. I didn't want any more bags. I have two I don't know what to do with! Once Rami and Waildi were finished with their breakfast we left to pick up the others at the Bible College.

On our way out of Bethlehem we first encounter a shepherd with his sheep in the road. It was so strange to see a herd of sheep being driven through the main streets of Bethlehem. The drive to Nazareth was about 1 1/2 hour. We have a beautiful, clear blue sky today! That's a first.

Caesarea National Park: Our first stop was Caesarea National Park. It was constructed by Herod in 20 B.C. We first went to the theater after stopping for a bathroom check and Rami telling us of this time of Herod before entering. It is a priceless piece of property Herod chose in his day. Right on the Mediterranean. What a magnificent view. There were many statues outside the fortress. The theater must have been spectacular in it's time. It was huge. The floors were of marble and some were still there. We saw some of the rock of the theater that was still from the time of the Roman period. After climbing down the steps from the theater we walked over to an area that was Herod's race track. Once there we walked out to where Herod had his Palace on the edge of the Mediterranean. Imagine yourself sitting on a balcony of your castle looking out over the blue, blue waters, hearing the waves wash up against your castle. You could still see some of the pillars that formed something. Could it have been the castle? Along the walk was a tomb. Some of the pillars had the Byzantine cross carved in it. It was beautiful and green. Some kind of white and yellow flowers coming up in the grass. There was another place, which did look similar to a castle that was further on, but we didn't have time to go to it. I did get two shells from Judy Peterson which she got from the Mediterranean Sea.

Scenery on the way to Megiddo: More scenery pictures as we travel to our next stop. Megiddo. (Pronounced: Megeedo, long "e" sound.) I found it particularly interesting to see homes built in a layered affect on the hillside. The terrace/deck of the homes were the others' roof. Everything is stone here. You see nothing of wood except things carved from Olive wood.

Megiddo Armageddon: Another name for Megiddo is Armageddon. It is where the good and evil will take place as it says in Revelation 16:16. We climbed to the top of the tel to see the place where there had once been

stables and a temple in the Canaanite era. We found pieces of old pottery and an old grain pit. It looked as if rough steps were circling downward into the pit. Once we reached the top we came upon the water system tunnel and climbed down probably 180+ stairs to the tunnel and to the Megiddo spring below. Actually it was 183 steps we climbed down and then up 83 steps (gradual) to reach our bus. This was one of the most invigorating walks of all. Just before going down to the Megiddo Spring and tunnel a cute little cat came to be petted. I could have taken him home. He was a beautiful gray, black, white, and orange kitty. This was one of the neatest sites. It is said that it has seen more battles than any other place. From the Assyrians, Canaanites, Egyptians, Greeks, Israelites, Persians, Philistines, and Romans. So much history here. If only the stones could speak!

Nazareth Village in Jesus Time: Not scheduled was a trip back in time at the Nazareth Village. Once you walked through the door it was as if you were walking in Jesus' time, as we met the shepherds and Israel children herding their sheep and donkey's and playing. Their houses were tiny. The roofs were made of twigs overtop large, log beams. The carpenter ground bowls of mahogany using a stone. He had carved out his own fork and spoon. They fed us bread baked on top of a round, black curved stove. We saw two young girls making the bread and "baking" it. We were led to a stone building where the olives were ground and the juice of the olives traveled through a stone trough or something like that to another area where it was separated for olive oil. The olive press is a huge circular stone where they tie a donkey up and he goes around and around until the olives are pressed and all the juice is out of them. We had olives with our bread. We petted and some held a 5-day old goat. He was so cute! There were beautiful red and yellow poppies blooming on the hillside. We went into their synagogue where people came to speak to others if their donkey had been stolen or a neighbor had done something else. It was settled in this way. It was a beautiful place and so realistic it was as if you were there where Jesus played as a child. We saw a mother spinning wool, while the carpenter made his bowls. In the kitchen was a butter churn which looked like a wine skin that one rocked back and forth hanging from a triangular (or teepee-type) thing.

St. Gabriel's Monestary: After leaving the Nazareth Village we headed for our hotel, the Saint Gabriel Monastery. This was once a nunnery. It was a most unusual place. I had a room on the 2nd floor. It was small, very high ceiling, and a large window overlooking the city of Nazareth. The bedroom contained two tiny single beds. I showered right away and

the water was cold. I don't think they turn it on until later. I'd just finished freezing and lathering up and had turned off the water I was so cold, but wanted to do my hair. Just as I turned it on to rinse, the warm water started. I'm of the thought they don't turn on the water until 4:00 or 4:30. It was chilly in the room, too, but they soon turned on the heat. I later found out someone had requested the heat be turned on. The shower was not enclosed. It had about a 2 inch mold around it, but the water seeped out around the molding. I had to use a towel to wipe up the water before it ran out onto the floor in the hall. The walls were made of stone, just as I would picture a monastery. It was an interesting place. The Church was gorgeous! We could not decide if it was Greek Orthodox or Catholic. We had a small supper and later went up to the Church located above the dining area. After supper we did some stretch exercises to limber up a bit after the long ride that day. Although we did keep very active the entire day, once we started walking. Then we all headed for our beds and I started today's journal of events. As I was typing away, the sounds of shots or firecrackers went off about 9:30 p.m. It really threw me for a loop. I wondered if we were being attacked! We still have no idea what it was and thought we'd tell everyone it was firecrackers. Rami told us that sometimes, at weddings, they do shoot off a gun. Who knows, someone might have been getting married!

3/12/2006 Church Service at the Monestary: This morning we had breakfast of fruit, sandwich meat (turkey, bologna), cheeses and cereal. After breakfast we went up to the Church and had a beautiful service. We sang some songs and Jeanne read verses from Matthew 5, I believe it was. The sounds, when singing, reverberated throughout the Church. The acoustics were wonderful. I would have loved to hear a choir singing several hymns in this Church. Notice the sun shining through the stained glass window in the front of the Church. I had wondered last night if the sun would light up the stained glass.

Church of Cana of Galilee: We went to a beautiful Church on our way to the Mount of Olives. It was not planned and now I can't remember where it was without some help from the recorder. It was a small village outside of Nazareth and it was not mentioned in the Old Testament. It was established in the 1st or 2nd Century B.C. Cana of the Galilee, I believe. We visited the Church of Cana. We did not get to see all of it or take pictures as there was a service that was just starting. (Here, like a klutz, I tripped over the prayer knee support thing and Andy caught me. Gosh!) The Church was gorgeous!!! The stone in the basement of the Church was limestone. Very strong. (Heifer means literally "View over the Valley".

Jonah lived here.)???? I think this was Tiberias. We saw homes called Kibbutz, which means House of Sharing. Many could not afford homes so those who could buy them or build them, shared them with others. The people living in the homes helped work the fields, etc.

Sea of Galilee: City on a hill just before the Sea of Galilee, which was our next stop. It is so beautiful. We took a boat ride in a wooden boat and it was awesome! I could have stayed there all day. The crew of the boat put up the American Flag and then we all sang America the Beautiful. I took so many pictures here. I can picture Jesus going out in a boat to get away from all the crowds. Here, I think, is where Jesus met Simon, the fisherman, and Simon caught more fish than his boat could hold. (Luke 5:2) Simon followed Jesus once on shore. (Luke 5:10-11) You could hear the rush of birds wings as they flew by to try and catch fish, the waves gently brushing the sides of the boat. Close your eyes and imagine yourself floating, with nary a person around. The wind gently touches your face as you breath deeply of the sea air. Your breathing is relaxed. You hear the fish jumping, the waves are putting you to rest. You can feel the presence of someone near you, knowing it is Jesus you are walking with. Do not worry. He is with you at all times. After the boat ride, I had to go down to the beach and touch the water. It was so refreshing, although I wish I would have waded in. As I was turning to grasp my camera I fell and sprawled on my right side, hitting my ribs. My camera went flying. I ended up with another scrape on the right knee, my right rib hurting like crazy, a scrape below the right elbow and I said, "Lord, I know you want me to stay!" He is trying to get my attention. As I sit and write this, OK... Lord, you have it.

Capernaum Church: We went to another Church. It was in Capernaum. It was gorgeous! The trees were beautiful surrounding it. We saw the ruins of two synagogues. One was constructed of the dark, grayish basalt from the first century CE. This is the synagogue referred to in the four Gospels. I think it was Simon that had lived here. Here is where Jesus left Nazareth and settled in Capernaum. Jesus preached in the Synagogue and threw the demons out of people. (Luke 4:31 - 5:11) As we sat in the Synagogue, it was so easy to picture Jesus speaking to the people and healing them. We saw a mosaic which was found of a ship/boat similar to what Jesus would have been using in his day. And an old olive press in Capernaum. Notice how many loaves of bread and how many fish in the mosaic tiles. How many did Jesus feed?

Mount Beatitudes or Sermon on the Mount: After lunch was our trip to

where Jesus gave his Sermon on the Mount. This is called Mount of Beatitudes. It is an awesome place. We had a reading of Matthew, and then sang a song that Jeanne Higgins had written some time ago. I remembered to try and pick up some dirt (difficult to do as it was so very dry and hard) for Margaret Koch. We had prayer and then went into the Church.

Jordan River, Reaffirming Our Baptism: Next we headed for the area of the Jordan River specifically used for baptism purposes or reaffirming their baptism. Most of us reaffirmed our baptism and it was a special day since it was my birthday. Several of us took water from the Jordan River to take home with us. Here, on the Jordan, is where Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. It was a very special time and a special place. Something we will all remember for many years.

Jordan in the distance: As we left the Jordan River and were driving along, Rami made mention that off in the distance we could see Jordan. Everything is so green! Here there are electric fences to keep the Palestinians from coming over to their side. It is such a sad thing. It is incomprehensible to me to think that they are not free to go where they please. From what I gather, there are no rules or laws enforced on the Palestinian side. Whether this is true I shall have to find out more. If it is, it's not what the people we have been with the past week want. They are wonderful, Christian people!

Rest stop / Soldiers: We stop at a rest stop for a drink. Bonita bought a beautiful dress there. (Black with red embroidery.) I had just bought a lemonade and looked around and there stood two Israeli's with machine guns. I tried to be subtle and took their picture. I was taking pictures of the camel as people were riding it, etc. It is so odd to see these people walking around with guns. In looking back, this was the night before the trouble in Jericho. It makes us wonder if those soldiers were heading across to Jericho to take the prison the next day!

Jerusalem Rush hour: On our way back into Jerusalem we got caught in the rush hour traffic. That was interesting as we would creep along and then maybe three vehicles were lucky enough to get through the stop light. It is amazing how many people are crowded into this little area. We thought we would be shopping but because of rush hour we had no time.

3/13/2006 Work Day / Birthday cake for Delores and me: Today was work time at the College for everyone.

I spent most of the day entering and checking addresses and email addresses in the database. We left about 8:00 to go downtown (Gordon, Jan, Me and the gentleman who took us) to get some money from a bank. I was almost out and owed Marilyn for the fish lunch yesterday. At the one store we found real coffee!! Not espresso! So, now I can make my coffee syrup!

The painting of the gates, etc. are really coming along. Things should be fairly well done if we have one more day of work.

My ribs hurt terrible today when I move or cough or laugh. Can't stop laughing, though. Too many funny things going on!

3/14/2006 Olive Wood Factory: Our guide this morning was Elias, I believe was his name. We will meet Rami in the afternoon before going to the Old City. Beit Sahour means House of the Shepherd. We went here first. I forgot my camera so now I can't remember what this was all about. I recall it is run by the YMCA and I can see it clearly. But not having the photos makes it difficult to remember what it was about. Here, however, was the place Ruth and Boaz were. They worked these fields of Olive trees at harvest time. Now there has been so much construction so agricultural land is gone.

After leaving Beit Sahour we went to an olive wood factory where the people were making the figurines of Jesus, Mary, Baby Jesus, Joseph, Nativity sets, etc. The smell of olive wood is so good! The first thing they do is let the olive wood dry in the hot sun. Once the wood is dry they cut the wood the size of the figure. Inside the building we go. A man sits on a stool and works four saws connected together cutting out the beautiful figures. It then is passed on to another person who does the detail work using dentist tools. Once the figures are carved they are then thrown outside in a bin and left to dry some more as there is much oil in the wood and it must dry completely or it will crack. Once the figures have dried, it will then return for fine finishing and a light glaze of stain put on it. Olive wood is so beautiful! I love the grain. For Christmas I am ordering a large Nativity Set from the College!

Beit Sahour Shepherd's Fields: Leaving the Olive Wood Factory we drive a short distance and go to a place owned by the YMCA. Here we see natural cave homes where people in Beit Sahour live in a house above the cave. If the person living in the house is about 50+ that would have been the parent that was born there in the cave below? In those days,

the cave would be laid out with the animals in the back of the cave, separated by a wall, the next room would be the kitchen, the next room would be the children and then the next room would be the parents. So, say for instance, a neighbor came to the door and asked the parent for some flour. The parent would not get it because he would have to walk over the children to go get the flour in the kitchen area. This was their way of living. There we also found a manger carved in stone where the owners would feed their animals and put the grain in.

Church of Nativity in Bethlehem: Next we went to Bethlehem. **Beth** means House and **lehem** means Bread (House of Bread). In the Bible Jacob and Rachael were mentioned living in Bethlehem and Ruth was the first woman in history (known) dying while giving birth. Here also is the Tomb of Rachael, which we cannot see.

We travel to the Church of Nativity. It is the oldest Church. It has always been thought that Joseph was a carpenter, but he was actually a stone builder. He traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem and it took him 9 days. Now it takes two hours or so. This is where Jesus was born. Because of my rib I could not bend down and touch the place where he was born, but I did touch Jan's hand after she touched it. I would have loved to have touched it. There were so many tour groups coming in and going down it was difficult to get around in the various areas. After the Church of Nativity we view the area where St. Jerome worked. He is the one who translated the Bible into the Latin version. He was an Italian. (4th Century) His work was so much appreciated because in later years the Bible was translated into other languages. Today his version is the main Bible used in the Catholic Church. St. Jerome was also the first person to use the anger control methods. He went to a cemetery and brought back a skull and stone. He was a high tempered man and angered quickly. That is the reason he has the skull beneath his feet and almost every picture depicted him with this skull near him. Whenever he was angry he would take the skull in his left hand and the stone in his right hand and knock on his chest telling himself, "Jerome, Jerome, you had best calm down. Otherwise you will die and become like this person and you will never finish your mission" This worked for him.

Lunch in Bethlehem: After leaving the Church of Nativity we went to a small place next to **The Wall** dividing Palestine/Bethlehem and Jerusalem. It was so good! We had shaved turkey, lettuce, olives, cucumber sauce in pita bread. And chickpeas! Those were so good hot! It is said these people will more than likely close up shop and leave because there is no

business here for them with The Wall cutting them off from making a living from the tourists. It is a very bad time here for the people of Bethlehem.

Jerusalem Old City: After lunch we went to the Old City of Jerusalem where we meet Rami. We went through the Damascus gate (#7 I believe it was). Here is the place Jesus was led away as he carried the cross along the Via Dolorosa. The market place is unreal. We were warned of pick-pockets so we all left our fanny packs on the bus and put money in our front pockets. What an amazing place. We first encounter young men hauling things in a cart they are pushing. Food, candy, dead sheep. In the back of the cart, as they go down the hill, they ride a tire to help brake the cart. All the walkways are cobblestone. It is very narrow and very crowded. Wall to wall people. You are bumped and jostled and the only thing you can do is hang on to someone else in your group. At one time I touched one of our group, Pat, and she thought I was a pickpocket! It was hilarious. We stopped at all the gates along the Via Dolorosa. The streets had steps here and there so you really had to watch your footing. There were carts that would come by and you'd have to crowd together to get out of the way. It was said that this was the way it was when Jesus was there. Very crowded. The shops are tiny, tiny rooms on each side. Now they cater to tourists, much of it commercialized inside the Old City. It is so different to see the candy, nuts, food, in bins right out there in the street. When you want something, the person puts his hand in the bin and grabs it and bags it for you. I would think it would be very unsanitary. We passed the butcher shops where the skinned meat was hanging outside. There were a few where the meat was in a glass square refrigerated place, but the stench was prominent. There was the blood of the meat draining into the street. Many drainages were built into the cobblestone. People think nothing of it. Just after the market place were doorways leading to ones apartments. Kids were running up and down the cobblestone streets going home from school or somewhere. Inside the old city there are 11 schools, I think Rami said. Remember, these are the very same streets Jesus carried his cross he was to be crucified.

Church of St. Anne & Pool of Bethesda: Once we left the Old City of Jerusalem we went to the Church of St. Anne and the Pool of Bethesda. The Pool of Bethesda (known as "house of mercy") was where Jesus healed those in the natural springs. There were five pools or porches. It was a unique area with one area that was very, very deep. Here in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, they build one house on top of another. So the Byzantine came and built their house. When they were overtaken the Crusaders came and built on top of the old house. Then the 3rd century

the Roman's came and built on top of that. There was one spot I went down into and sat on a rock. I just sat and listened and thought, this is Heaven. I heard the birds singing, all else was quiet and anyone in our group who might have been there said not a word. I could hear nothing but the birds and the peace and quiet of absolution. There was a feeling of peace that washed over me from my head to my toes. I remember closing my eyes and turning my face upward, thanking God for watching over us and keeping us all safe this trip, and thanking him for this awakening. It was as if the purifying of the soul was in progress. I know not what else to call it but absolution! Actually there are no words to describe it.

I walked back up the steps and we all entered the St. Anne Church. This Church has the acoustics where singing is so beautiful. It is perfect. They say nothing is perfect, but this place is. We sang a couple of songs and the last we sang was Hallelujah. As we were singing, another tour group had come in and joined in our song. It was the most beautiful echoing you have ever heard. Just as before, a tour group from Nigeria had been there and they were sitting up front singing a song in their native tongue. It was the most beautiful singing I had heard in a very long time. It touched you to the core of your heart.

Scenery to Skull Mountain: After leaving the St. Anne Church we stopped at the Wall separating Bethany and Jerusalem. May there be a time where that Wall will fall! We headed for Skull Mountain and the Garden Tomb. This place is surreal. In the Bible it says that Jesus was buried somewhere near here as this is right near Skull Mountain. We saw Skull Mountain. I can imagine Jesus hanging up there on the hillside nailed to the cross. Once Our Father had taken him, he was brought down and put into the Tomb. Three days later he arose from the Dead. He saved us from our sins. Before we had gone into the Tomb (the line was very long) we decided to go break communion together. A place had been set aside for us to have our communion. It was another beautiful day!

Garden Tomb: "Don't be afraid. We know that you are looking for Jesus, the Nazarene, who has been crucified. Why are you looking for the living among the dead? He is not here, but he is risen, just like he said he would. Don't you remember what he told you when he was in Galilee? The Son of man was going to be delivered up into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and risen again on the third day. Come, look at the place where they laid him! See the place where the Lord lay. Now, go quickly

and tell his disciples and Peter: He is risen from the dead and he is going to meet you in Galilee. You will see him there.”

Palestinian Friends Welcome Us into their homes: We arrived back at the College for supper at approximately 5:40. We had to hurry and eat as we were being met by local families who were taking us to their homes at 6:30. We were met by Fadi, a minister who had gone to the Bethlehem College. They are Arab Palestinian Christians. Their last name is Zoughbi. The father is Pastor Issa Elias Zoughbi. The Mom's name was Diana (pronounced Deeana). The next was Fadi, Basheer, Grace and Rajae. They have a Church below their house called the House of Bread Bethlehem Church. Rajae plays the piano in the Church. Basheer is the webmaster for the Church Web Site. We were served lemonade, fruit, jello, and just before we left Diana served us mint tea. Diana gave us each an olive wood dove and bookmark. Pastor Issa (pronounced Eessa... long e) gave us each a Bible of the New Testament. It was a delightful evening. Pastor Issa prayed over each one of us. It was a unique experience. Marilyn, Neva, Andy and myself went there together. Rajae brought us back to the Hotel about 8:15. I had asked Diana what she might like from the United States. She had been there with her husband one time. She said Taco Seasoning was her favorite and Raman noodles! And pecans. I will send her a package as soon as I can.

As we enter the Hotel, Awatef wondered why we came in a car. Just as we were explaining the manager of the Hotel arrives. Awatef said he had called 10 times that evening, worried about us. He was worried we were caught at Hebron and said we cannot go there on Thursday! He kept saying, No, No, No! There is no way we can know how some of the militant Palestinians will treat Americans. He even tucked the American Flag away in a corner behind a plant at the Hotel. There was something that happened in Jericho and since we were supposed to go to Hebron he thought we were there. The Americans and British were in charge of this prison in Jericho. (I don't know the whole story or didn't understand it all). The American's and British left and said it was over. The Israeli Army came in and took control of it and bull dozed the huge prison down. So, now they have all of Bethlehem closed off in places and the Palestinian's who want to go out and go to Jericho cannot leave as they have closed Jericho. This is more political stuff that is difficult to understand. From what I understood from Awatef, soldiers came often at night to see how the Americans were.

It was a most rewarding and beautiful day despite the turmoil upon

arrival back at the Hotel! Now I must go to sleep as it is almost 11:00. It has taken me almost 2 hours to write all of this! I am making my coffee tonight in the coffee toddy so I can take the coffee syrup to the College tomorrow and we can have it.

One other thing I forgot to mention. We heard this morning that there was shooting over by the college last night around 9:30 p.m. I guess some kids were throwing rocks at the Israeli soldiers. Something happened in Jericho and they closed the Jericho road. There were blocks all over the city of Bethlehem tonight. One of the guys in our group, Dick, saw the kids throwing the rocks. They were young and think the solution is to throw rocks because of what happened in Jericho? However, that is not what the Christian Arab Palestinian people want. They wish and pray for peace.

3/15/2006 Bible College Work

Today I spent the entire day going through emails and adding the correct emails to the database. I got through November of 2005. I was on October when 4:00 p.m. rolled around. There were about 210 emails in the inbox yet, but some of them were already put in. It was taking forever to work through them. There were over 400 emails when I first started out.

After work we went down and heard Bashira's son, Sami, speak on his Peace movement he wants so badly in Palestine. There was so much information and I will have to go through Clarence's recordings to get it all. It was so totally amazing what he was telling us! As the entire story these past two weeks has been. Beyond the comprehension of 85% of the Americans. It is difficult to tell people about it, they have to see it to believe it. I want so much to write up something for our Congressmen and President so they will really know what is going on. It is not enough to keep quiet about this. We must speak up!

Once I got back here to the hotel I took my shower and then started packing things up. I have far too much knick-nacs and I still need something for Rick and Corey! Otherwise, I think I have something for everyone. The gift shop was open today, but I did not have time to go there and get some more things. I was downloading Clarence's audio things and then his pictures. Now I must put the audio recordings in order per the right day since it's been several days since it's been captured. In fact, the last time it was captured was the day we went to have fish at

the Sea of Galilee. Yikes!

I forgot to mention that as I worked today in the admin office I heard groups of people marching by and hollering. Some of the workers outdoors had to come in each time they were going by. Most were students. Then we heard shots later on in the morning. That night Bashira's son told us it was tear gas and rubber bullets. Brenda, Alex's wife, who works in the admin office, too, said it was as if it were starting all over again. I hope it doesn't come to that for their sake. I pray God watches over the Palestinian's. Their belief and love for Jesus is a true passion. They are better Christian's than many of us American's. Me included! I pray to have the faith and love of one another that they have. Why can't we all live in Peace? It is a day we all want.

Tonight I was recharging Clarence's battery charger for his camera and left it for an hour. It started to smell so I hurriedly pulled the plug. Hope they are all right.

Well, I'd better go and take my pills, download the rest of the pictures of mine, and then convert all the audio files that Clarence had and try to put some semblance of order to them. It's already 9:02!

3/16/3006 Walking the Wall Again: Our last tour today. As we were going to enter Jerusalem, the guards stopped us and had us all get out and walk via the Wall again. We met the bus on the other side. We think it was because we had a different driver and Rami was not there. As we were waiting and walking, I looked up and saw a soldier above us, walking a pathway, machine gun in hand. How very odd to think you are considered dangerous and someone is watching your every move from above you. To think that those who come to the Bible College every day, students and volunteers, must come this way and some are strip searched. We did not have to be strip searched, but it's incomprehensible to even think of that being done every single day! Dare I say that Jesus did not die for us ALL to have this happening today!?

Masada National Park: We drove for about an hour and a half to Masada, along the route of the Dead Sea. Masada was Herod's royal palace or citadel. It was also the place where 960 rebels of Jewish faith, chose mass suicide rather than capture by the Roman's.

Masada is located on top of an isolated rock on the edge of the Judean Desert and the Dead Sea Valley. We took a cable-car up to the top of the

rock. I think Rami said it was about 440 above the Dead Sea. It was a perfect place for Herod to build a fortress to watch from all sides. Another way to reach the top, for the adventurous, was a snake path which was rather difficult to climb. Most of the buildings were done around 37 and 31 B.C.E. The Roman era was probably around 6 to 66 C.E.

Masada was the place of Jewish rebel's in 70 C.E. until the Romans built ramps to the top and tried to bring the walls down with a battering ram. Eventually they ended up destroying it by fire. In 1963 a full-scale excavation began of Masada. In two years they uncovered almost all of it and restored many buildings.

Herod first created an intricate water supply system. Twelve huge cisterns could hold about 40 thousand cu.m. of water. Herod had his palace on the northern edge of the precipice. He also constructed a western palace.

On the south side, (I think) was the large bath house. There were perforated clay pipes which a furnace drove hot air. The walls of the castle were restored to some of it's original colors. There was a Church and the view from atop all areas was magnificent.

Lunch at Masada: Once we finished our tour on top, we went back down in cable-cars. You could see the four areas where the Roman's had built their fortress below ground. We ate lunch at the bottom of Masada. We ate hot dogs or pizza. Their pizza is quite different. It's a crust with thyme sprinkled on it, or onions. No sauce or cheese. The crust is about the size of a personal pan, thin crust. They then throw it on top of a cast iron stove that is being heated with fire below. Some of our people fed the birds as they ate.

Dead Sea pictures & Good-bye Rami: On our way back we saw more beautiful colors of the Dead Sea and a couple of salt pillars that I was able to capture on camera. Our bus driver did not want us to have to walk the wall again so he took the long way around where we were able to see more scenery. The route the Palestinians have to go to go back to Bethlehem is about 45 minutes longer than if they were allowed to go through Jerusalem. Here is where Rami said his goodbyes. He was a wonderful guide! Rami is soon to be married in July.

Back at the Hotel: We arrived back at our Hotel about 4:15 or so. I took a shower and took some pictures of my room. They were picking us up at 6:00 to go to dinner. I finished the rest of my packing. My suitcases were

full! I had to leave my coffee toddy for Awatef.

Shepherds' Valley Dinner: Promptly at 6:00 another bus picked us up and we headed up hill and down hills around Bethlehem to the Shepherds' Valley Bedouin restaurant. We had delicious salads and appetizers as a starter, and then roasted lamb and chicken with french fries. I'd never had lamb and it was wonderful! One of the guys from the Bible College was there with his wife and he talked and talked about the Palestinian way of life. I could have listened to him all night. He said the Palestinians are very family oriented. Kids know that if they get in trouble it's the entire "clan" of the family that will be shunned. So, crime etc. is almost nil in Bethlehem. Yet they are held prisoner's in a 6 mile by 6 mile radius. It's that lack of freedom to go visit the sites where Jesus lived and walked, or to go anywhere you want, that still boggles my mind!

We were home by 9:00. Most of the others went to bed and I said I'd set my alarm on the computer to wake them at midnight. By 11:00 I was tired, so went to bed and slept for about 45 minutes. The bus is picking us up at 1:00 a.m. so I'd better put this away and start calling everyone.

3/17/2006 Nativity Hotel 12:45 a.m.: Just before leaving we all gathered around in the lobby of the hotel, trying to take pictures. From left to right: Marjorie, Neva, Betty, Argelena, Andy, Jan and Awatef in the last picture. Dave was fiddling with his camera so he didn't get in the group picture.

City Lights of Jerusalem as we bid farewell: As we drove to the Tel Aviv airport I said good-bye to the City Lights of Bethlehem and Jerusalem. Here is a piece of history that will forever be embedded in my mind. It is a time of walking where Jesus walked, walking with him and Our Father, and feeling the pain of our brothers' and sisters' of Palestine and Israel. May the lives of these strong, beautiful people know peace. Thank you for sharing.....and Thank you Father for our safe return to America.

Tel Aviv, Germany, Denver and Home: We arrived at the Tel Aviv airport at 2:10 a.m. We had to go up and then downstairs to have our baggage checked. My smallest suitcase had to be unzipped and gone through before they allowed it to go through. Jan Speirs had to also have two of hers checked as she had so many things she'd bought. We just barely had enough time to get to our gate before they started boarding at 5:15. Our plane left Tel Aviv at 5:30 a.m. It is lucky we left Bethlehem when we did.

We arrive at the Frankfurt Germany airport to checkin at 9:05 a.m. We could not get into the boarding area in the Frankfurt airport until it was time to board, and that time wasn't until 12:55. We found places to sit here and there around the terminal. They really need to redo this place, which I think they are going to do. Clarence, Bonita and I were going to have a cup of coffee, but they wanted \$9.90 for a cup of coffee and a small cup of coke. Clarence said he refused to pay it and asked for his money back.

After awhile they let us into the waiting area where we could board. I worked on converting the remaining audio files of Clarence's to AIFF files. We boarded the 747 around 12:30 p.m. For once my seat was close to the front of the plane, 26D, and an aisle seat! I was thrilled since the trip was so long.

We took off about 1:00 p.m., which is 5:00 a.m. in South Dakota. I had a nice lady next to me so we yakked quite a bit. I got up quite often, walked and visited with people. I did try and sleep for about 45 minutes, so that felt good, too. We landed in Denver at 3:00 p.m. Going through customs was another long hassle. We had to check in our luggage once more, go through all of our carry-on luggage, even taking our shoes off. We caught a car to our Rapid City gate which was way at the other end of the terminal. It looked as if 7 of us had the late flight, once we all read our tickets. My flight was to leave at 9:10 p.m. Clarence, Bonita and I put ourselves on stand-by to go on the early flight, which was 6:25 p.m. Neva, Andy, Betty, Dave, Clarence and Bonita were on the late flight. I was able to get on the early flight and we arrived in Rapid at 8:00 p.m. By the time our bags arrived, it was 8:30 before we got out of there. My baggage didn't arrive. Rick took Gordon and Jeanne to Clarence's house to pick up their car. Poor Gordon slipped and fell on some ice getting to his car. He really hit hard. He had also done something to his knee at the Denver airport, so it was a worry.

As I came home and walked into the bedroom, I saw Rick had painted our bedroom and changed the room around. It looks nice, although I didn't think the color would be so yellow. Thought the walls were more of a tan, but Rick said it looks more tan when the light was not on and in daylight.

Rick then went back to the airport to get Clarence and Bonita. He also took Betty and Dave to a friend's house in West Hills Village. He didn't get back to our house until 11:30 p.m. The first thing I did was grind some

coffee beans for my coffee toddy and get a cold glass of ice water. The girls and boys were certainly happy to see me! They wanted to be petted.

I had taken a shower and tylenol and pills and went to bed to wait for Rick. Ah... it felt so good to rest in my own bed. I couldn't stay up any longer. I slept fairly well and I slept until 2:46 p.m. Saturday! I spent the rest of the day unpacking things and putting my foot up, it was so swollen. On Sunday I slept in until about 8:45 a.m. (Rick had gone to Church to do the fellowship rolls). It had been snowing most of the day Sunday. We didn't have school today 3/20/06. I went through my emails about 8:30 p.m. Saturday night. I couldn't get at it earlier as I was trying to keep my foot elevated. Sunday I washed my two weeks supply of clothes.

It's still snowing, but I'm sure we will have school tomorrow.

I also came home to a newspaper article saying they will not be replacing Joe Hillberry because of loss of impact aide. This is not good. How can they take away such an important person's job?? His job is more important than the Superintendent's! Joe runs the District! Will be anxious to find out what's going to happen.