

DONE Mission 1 Israel Project Report

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Landing in Israel

Stepping out of the airport already gave us a feeling that there is something special about Israel, including our church community there. As we went along through the days we noticed more and more how much the Israeli community invested in our trip, welcoming us with caps and water bottles, making our sandwiches, giving a museum tour, organising transport, Q+A with the National Leader couple, and so much love especially from Jarelle, Koriel and Liel. What particularly struck us was their faith despite there being so few of them. The testimony from Yaviel Ben Zvi, a blessed child doing his three year-long army service, and the others we met showed their strength of faith, pure attitude, and heart – it inspired us all.



“I think shalom is Israel’s most used word – when I talked to people there were often moments when I could feel this shalom in these people.” – Fidelio

“The openness and friendliness of the people! I never met that many nice people... I had people smile so brightly at me after I just bumped into them, or strangers giving me gifts. I’d like to copy this and take it back to my home.” – Karin

Despite only being there for a few days the schedule gave us a strong sense of the place. Conversations with strangers on the tram, soldiers with big guns, floating on the Dead Sea, mud spas, dancing in the bus with our cheerful Assyrian Christian tour guide, playing football with the local Kibbutz boys 700m from Gaza, Dead Sea Scrolls, Shabbat service in a Synagogue, hummus, camels, palm trees, shower-caps protecting orthodox Jewish hats from the rain and Kosher MacDonald’s, “Yalla Yalla” (meaning “let’s go” in both Hebrew and Arabic) - we experienced so much in the few days we were here; there is no way to describe it all.

The Way of Sorrows

A few hours after stepping out of the plane we were already following in Jesus’ footsteps on the Via Dolorosa (‘Way of Sorrows’) which led to his crucifixion. Through this we got a sense of the

claustrophobic nature of the closely packed religious quarters in the old city – a Muezzin’s call to prayer while visiting the place of Jesus’ trial; street markets and restaurants at the church marking the place Jesus met his mother; and a Jewish school just next to The Holy Sepulchre (marking the tomb of Jesus), which itself is divided between Eastern Orthodoxy, Oriental Orthodoxy, and Roman Catholicism. Each section has varying degrees of upkeep, from extravagance to extreme neglect. It was shocking to hear about the arguments occurring in this church as to which denomination is allowed to clean even a single step.



The rest of the Jesus-Journey was also very impacting, particularly the sites which True Father had also visited in the 60’s/70’s. It helps make the connection with the path of our elder brothers in faith and their longing for the Kingdom. God’s longing for His children emanates through the ground and the buildings which stand on the places our forefathers carried the providence. Knowing True Father was at many of those places too gives a sense of the intensity of God’s and humankind’s efforts over the thousands of years. From the Garden of Gethsemane you can see the Temple Mount across the valley. What Jesus must have been thinking when he looked upon it on his last night, what True Father was thinking when he stood in that very same spot...

“Realising where it was I was standing and what happened there 2000 years ago” – In Sun

“Where True Father found the holy tree – when I was in these places I felt really moved and I really felt that God was with me and God wants me to experience something beautiful.” – Iris



It felt like this place is the origin of God’s providence and the place of His presence here on earth. The Dome of the Rock today stands on the site of the Holy of Holies, from the second Temple that Jesus

visited many times 2000 years ago. Some of the stones even date back to the First Temple that King Solomon built 3000 years ago, on the site that is believed to be where Abraham almost offered his son as a sacrifice. So many layers of history in one place – almost unfathomable.

“When Patrick read the Sermon on the Mount it just felt very profound. The teaching is so old and still very much relevant.” – Robert

“All the places we visited gave me more hope for the future that so many people still believe and give value to these holy places.” – Iris

“Upon reflection I recall a few times where I sincerely prayed to meet Jesus while I was fundraising and the next thing I know I’m getting to see such an intimate account of his entire life.” – Frone

“I can definitely say that I feel closer to Jesus and I learned a lot.” – Joanna

The Jewish Experience

A few days into our journey, we visited the holocaust museum (Yad Vashem). Many of our group were German/Austrian related and did hit us hard, but it was even more shocking to learn of the support the Nazis received from the rest of Europe particularly among Christians whose persecution of Jews stretched back to ancient times.



That same evening, we were able to move on from Jewish persecution to one of Judaism’s most beautiful traditions – the Shabbat. It meant abstinence from electronics, a visit to the local synagogue, a Rabbi-blessed dinner, and an incredibly joyful family celebration that most of us only experience around Christmas – a weekly tradition in the Jewish life. Such was the family culture God worked to create.

“I could really learn how valuable traditions are for family life.” – Robert

“I was so surprised how much they focus on the family and how fun their traditions are! I feel like I really want to learn from their ways.” – Karin

“Taking part in the Shabbat was just a beautiful experience. I really like the idea of families gathering together and having this amazing dinner and enjoying life. The whole atmosphere was just beautiful and I’m impressed that they really stick to their traditions like that.” – Julia

Children of Abraham

In Hoon Dok Hae we reflected how sad it is that Christianity has struggled to unite with itself and with its older brother Judaism over the years. Not only has it lost much of the beautiful culture and traditions, but it has massacred and watched massacres of its Abrahamic brothers. Then how do we ensure that we don’t just supersede Christianity with our own new arrogant faith? Our movement as the youngest brother of Christianity and Judaism still has a lot to inherit – at the very least, to ensure that we learn from the mistakes of our ancestors, at best, that we can help unite the three and build God’s kingdom together.

The church of the Apostles was the last stop on our pilgrimage. It was quite fitting to end with the home of Jesus’ disciples – today, a beautiful Greek Orthodox Church by the Sea of Galilee. Here we could connect to Jesus’ disciples, relating their failures with all our own short comings and limitations but also determining ourselves to inherit the fire that burned in the hearts of the disciples after the Resurrection and Pentecost, and their faith which they held on to, to the point of martyrdom. They are the bedrock on which Christianity stands today. Then who are we? After the passing of True Father, how strong is our

conviction?



“Coming to the end in one of the most beautiful places and having that time to pray was really nice. Seeing many parallels between Jesus’ time and now and being forced to ask myself some maybe more direct questions like at the church of the disciples at Galilee.” – In sun

“I felt like I could understand what True Father meant by “Jesus lived 30 years of sorrow” ... His path was so difficult and dramatic but his heart so strong and loving, I gained so much respect for him! From there I could also understand Father better. The disciples couldn’t understand Jesus in his lifetime but afterwards they set the foundation for world Christianity I felt like that’s our situation” – Karin

“Be a true disciple – for we are the chosen ones now.” – Alexandra



Tough Questions in Al-Tawani

From our visit to Al-Tawani, a small Palestinian village in the West Bank, we began to see that there is no way we can hope to fully understand everything in the short time we are here but we can learn to see the situation with a parental heart, see things from other perspectives, digest resentment and empathise.

Yad Vashem showed us how the nation of Israel is built on the need for a safe haven from persecution and suffering of the Jewish people, pushed around, exiled and massacred for thousands of years, culminating in the Holocaust. Even now Israel is surrounded by many Arab countries that would rather it not exist.

In Al-Tawani we found the double standards Israel’s occupation has it to in its support of Israeli settlers (through water and electricity etc.) in the West Bank and demolition orders for houses, mosques, and livestock for the Palestinian villagers. Religious nationalism settlers think it is God’s will to clear the country of Palestinians and do this through throwing rocks at schoolchildren and attacking shepherds. We saw a picture of a bruised old lady whose granddaughter, Qamar, we made friends with while harvesting

crops with the villagers.



The Italian Peace Corps, ‘Dove’, gave some hope in the work they do, protecting the Palestinian children on their way to school and hosting meetings between both Jewish and Palestinian victims of this conflict. Alex who works with them told us he has noticed an improvement since he joined them, but there is still so much work to do and it can only start with the people.



“This little girl Qamar... It was one of these moments where there is genuine love, genuine care for each other” – Sylvie

“To respect, accept and love others as a parent and to be open to take responsibility to never give up and be hopeful and grateful.” – Alexandra

“I feel the importance of knowing more about problems the world is faced with. To think more about what this world might need from us” – Ben

Grateful

The small service projects we did in At-Tuwani and in the Kibbutz were a good way for us not to feel completely indebted to the love and generosity that we’ve been given during our time here, though I think we still all do.

In the ten days here, we could touch so many different parts of history, glimpse so many different perspectives, and be invited into so many different cultures – all within one country. If there is one word to sum up the feelings of everyone from this trip, it would be gratitude.

“I’m so thankful from the bottom of my heart. Has strengthened my conviction, nurtured my resolve to become a person who influences more, a stronger wider helper.” – Ceri

“My experiences in Israel were just amazing. I experienced so many things. It made me think more about the attitude I should have.” – Joanna

“I wish everyone had the chance to visit and experience the culture here at least once in their lives.” – Melanie

“So unbelievably privileged to witness first-hand and experience such love in such beautiful places. My

receiver circuits are having trouble comprehending it all. I can't express the gratitude and love I feel towards God, True Parents and of course everyone in my life who made this experience possible" – Frone

