

2016.02.27 A week in Israel. Thank God for his mercy, protection & guidance.

My family (less Charity) arrived in Israel on the Sabbath: Saturday, February 20, met a colleague from Taiwan & drove to Qumran & the Dead Sea. Heading to the apartment in Tel Aviv we had rented for the week, I had trouble finding it & so stopped the car. A young Israeli & his girlfriend were walking by. He spoke English. He called their office (closed) that gave us an emergency number. He called it and they asked us to email a copy of my passport & credit card & call them again. The young man took a picture of my documents, emailed them, waited 5' & called them back. Finally the company gave us the security code. He then directed me to the apartment. His final comment was: "I hope that you will have a good impression of Israel." Thank God for his provision of this man.

Sunday we visited Jerusalem. 2 highlights: 1. Going through the tunnels of the excavation beside the West wall & standing on a pavement stone that would've been part of the road on which Jesus & the disciples likely walked. Maybe he even preached from this stone. It was also amazing to see the huge stones that Herod had placed for the foundation of the Temple Mount. While we can think about how they might've moved the smaller stones (~1 m³), how did he move the largest stone (~1 m high, 40 m long, weighing the equivalent of 670 elephants). Herod was clearly a genius. 2. While standing outside the tomb of Jesus (didn't enter because of the long line), I heard a woman complaining as she came out of the tomb: "There is nothing to see in there." What did she expect to see? Isn't that the point! The tomb is empty!

Monday & Tuesday, I attended NanoIsrael 2016 conference while Sharon & the children went to the beach & visited Joppa. God reminded me that I had received an email inviting me to attend a marathon on Friday morning (our flight was at noon). I found it was planned to surround the area in which we were staying. From talking with people & police I learned that all roads around our apartment were to be closed from ~4 or 5 AM until 3PM!

Wednesday, we visited Galilee, riding a small boat designed based on the design of the boats in Jesus' time, walking through the ruins of Capernaum, Mt. Beatitudes & the upper Jordan River. It seems unbelievable that a man could have a ministry in this small backward area that would affect the leadership in Jerusalem & then impact the whole world. A miracle.

For our final day, Thursday, we returned to Jerusalem where we walked along the top of the wall, visited the Mount of Olives, Gethsemane, walked the Via Dolorosa, & entered the tomb of Jesus. Returning back to Tel Aviv, in passing a small road, I felt God prompting me that I should come here & rest on Friday morning.

That night I was very anxious with my wife reminding me that: "we have already prayed & you can't do anything more, go to sleep." Getting up at 2:45 AM, we drove out of the exclusion zone, past the airport to this small road. Driving up it, there was a forest park as we entered the mountainous area just before the West Bank. We stopped the car & stayed until ~7:30 AM. It was beautiful: watching the sunrise over Jerusalem mountains, looking over the flat lands to Tel Aviv. It is clear from a military perspective, it would be irresponsible for Israel to give the West Bank to an enemy as they overlook every major Israel city in the plains.

Thank God for his goodness to us, if he did not remind us of this marathon & help us to meet people who knew the roads were going to be closed, we would have missed our flight. Thank God for his goodness to us, if there was not this marathon we would never come to the beautiful park. Despite the fact that I am anxious for my family, God is caring for my family & in control. If only I could learn just to rest in him.

This sign (see picture) above a small Coptic church in Jerusalem made the most impact on me. What are the struggles that we face compared to the struggles our brothers & sisters face each day. If I was in their place, what would I do? Forgive me God, for not holding my brothers & sisters up in prayer.

