



A Journey to the Holy Land

MENNOJERUSALEM BIBLE LAND TOURS | HARVEST PILGRIMAGES



Light of Torah

A 21 DAY PILGRIMAGE | APRIL-MAY 2015

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'Let me introduce you to this Holy Land Tour...'

By Teresa Pirola

Life has a way of surprising us. It was certainly never part of my life's plan to become involved in gathering groups of pilgrims to experience the Holy Land. But somehow the last five years have led me to develop a ministry, *Light of Torah*, which includes just that. So let me introduce you to Light of Torah's custom-designed Holy Land tour (Israel and parts of the Palestinian Territories), in collaboration with *MennoJerusalem Bible Land Tours* and *Harvest Pilgrimages*. This tour was first 'road-tested' in April 2010 and is currently in its fifth year of operation.

First, what it's not. I wouldn't call this a 'devotional' pilgrimage (although we visit most of the usual Christian sacred sites). Nor is it a heavy academic program (although it is educationally rich). It's certainly much more than a tourist event (although there is time for shopping!)

What it is: a distinctive mix of educational and inspirational experiences that explore:

- Biblical geography and the spirituality of the land.
- The 'text in context': understanding the bible in its original setting.
- Rabbinic teachings and traditions, and their relevance for Christianity.
- The life of Jesus and the gospel teachings in the first-century setting.
- Issues of justice and peace in the current political climate.

In all this we meet Israelis and Palestinians, Arabs and Jews, Muslims, Christians.

Opportunities for reflection and prayer, in stunning locations, add to the personal and spiritual impact of the experience. A comment we often hear from participants is that the journey is 'life-changing.'

A notable feature of this program is its attentiveness to the deep links between Christianity and Judaism. Walking in the steps of Jesus we become very aware of his identity as a Jew and the Hebrew Scriptures and Jewish traditions which formed him. As part of the tour we have the opportunity to meet and learn from Jewish residents of Jerusalem, experience the spirituality of Shabbat (Sabbath), join in synagogue worship and study Torah with a rabbi. We even learn a little Hebrew!

Although the tour has a biblical rather than political focus, there are opportunities to listen to the stories of those affected by the politics of the region. We meet with Palestinian and Jewish families, and guest speakers address current issues. One of my personal favourite moments is the Eucharist we share with a Hebrew-speaking Catholic community who, despite their small numerical presence, play a significant role in Israeli society with all its religious, cultural and political complexities.

At the heart of this program is our chief tour guide and biblical storyteller, Glenn Edward Witmer of MennoJerusalem Bible Lands Tours. Glenn is a teacher, writer, tour leader and committed Christian who is passionate about the importance of the land to one's spiritual growth and understanding of the Scriptures.

Harvest Pilgrimages lend their expertise in coordinating overseas travel/booking procedures. Each tour is accompanied by past participants who act as 'leaven' within the group. A series of preparatory gatherings run by the Light of Torah ministry help to maximize the experience, introduce new concepts and strengthen a sense of community.

For more information and a sample itinerary, visit: lightoftorah.net

Our next tour is being planned for the last two weeks of April and into the beginning of May 2015; 21 days including travel time. Detailed itinerary available soon.

To register your interest and receive updates, phone or email: teresa.pirola@bigpond.com 0415 932 638

Come to the Holy Land with us, and expect a blessing!

www.lightoftorah.net

