



Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

Report Title: Israel and Palestine: A Land of Promise **Name:** Jeff Cherry
Other Team Members:
Program: Greater Houston Area Program
Trip Dates: 11/30/-0001 - 11/30/-0001 **Location Visited:** Israel
Post Fellowship Reporting Template: PFR Template 02

Project Summary: The land of Israel is a place of ancient history and of modern complexities. Possibly no place on earth conjures up more paradoxical pictures. A sacred space of temples, churches, and mosques in contradiction with military invasions, security issues for a modern state, and a struggling stateless nation.

This small, but beautiful country has overcome what seems like overwhelming geographic odds to become a land of amazing productivity. A modern and developed nation, yet faced with enormous inequities.

Visiting this land of hope and promise brought geography and history to life. I visited the modern coastal cities of Tel Aviv and Haifa, the fertile valleys of the Galilee, the iconic sacred sites of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Nazareth, as well as the occupied territories of the West Bank and Golan Heights. I would come away with a view of the future of this land through the prism of the past. Only by blocking the painful memories of the tragedies that befell them can both the Palestinian and Israeli people hope to live in peace side by side.

Mapping Israel in the context of the 21st century is a cartographic dilemma of enormous proportions. Yet with all of the apparent tension and contentious issues yet unresolved, the people of this land show incredible resilience and hope for the future. My new friends at kibbutz Ein Harod Meuhad have shown how through hard work, pioneering spirit, and a caring community anything is possible. May one day the Jews and Arabs of this Promised Land find resolution and peace.

Career Impact: The land of Israel conjures up so many images from the present to the past. A place of incredible importance to three great world religions has made it a land of sacred space. I traveled to Israel this summer to experience firsthand the amazing transformation of this country by Zionists settlers who came in the early part of the 20th century and to gain a further understanding of why Israel continues to be at the center of the concept of "peace in the Middle East".

I spent time talking with the various members of what is truly a multi-cultural society. From the sabras (born in Israel), to recent immigrants from places as diverse as Russia, Ethiopia, and Iraq, Israel is more diverse than one imagines. I talked with Palestinians Muslims who feel betrayed by all parties in the quest for statehood. Many Palestinian Christians expressed their fear of living in a no man's land. Feeling excluded from Israeli society and rejected by the larger Muslim Arab community.

Spending time in both the urban and rural settings of Israel gave me a greater sense of the disparate lifestyles of the people of this region. A sense that despite its modern status as a political and economic leader in the Middle East, much work remains to be a completely inclusive society.

The resilient spirit of the people is inspiring but their frustration with inevitable conflict yearns for greater understanding. As a geography teacher I came away with an appreciation for the complexity of this incredible land.

Classroom/Community Impact: The sharing of my experience in Israel will be brought to my community in a variety of ways. First, I will write curriculum that will enhance the understanding of this region and will be available to all of the teachers of our district. These lessons will be applicable at the secondary level in subject areas as diverse as geography, history, international relations, economics, and sociology. I will be producing information in digital format in the form of photo stories and power points. I will be presenting my trip to the community in a special evening lecture, as part of a broader series on global issues.

I believe that my students, colleagues, and community citizens will gain new perspectives on Israel's place in history and the future of the Middle East and the world.

Open Response: In addition to the lessons produced I will be presenting this project in both local and state wide in-service programs including the Texas Council of Social Studies Conference, the Friends of Geography conference, and the Region 4 Social Studies Conference. Through collaboration and discussion I hope to inspire my students to become aware of global issues and actively involved in peace resolution programs. My concern and caring for the people of Israel will present me with the desire of continuing a lifelong pursuit of greater understanding and hopefully producing meaningful research.

Quote: The people of Israel showed me what a country can accomplish when hard work and passion meet.

Photos:



The ancient and beautiful port city of Jaffa.



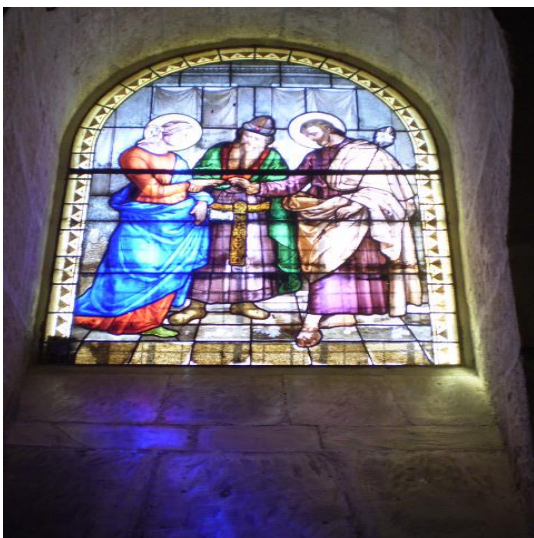
The kibbutz Ein Harod Meuhad in the lower Galilee.



Archaeological remains at Tel Megiddo and the valley of Armageddon beyond.



The Sea of Galilee from the site of the Mt. of Beatitudes.



Beautiful stained glass in the Church of the Annunciation.



Ultra-Orthodox Jews visit one of the 140,000 graves outside the Temple Mount.



I am enjoying the early morning sun with the Dome of the Rock and Temple Mount to my back.



The Western Wall of the Temple Mount continues to be a place of worship for the Jewish people.