



THE LINK

PUBLISHED BY AMERICANS FOR MIDDLE EAST UNDERSTANDING

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July/August, 1971

INVITATION TO THE HOLY LAND

A letter from our Tours Chairman

Announcing Holy Land Tours of Understanding, 1971

Dear Friends:

July, 1971

Because of the great response to the recent travel issue of The Link, and believing that a specially planned tour to the Holy Land may be of interest to church folk and others, Americans for Middle East Understanding, Inc., is planning and sponsoring Holy Land Tours of Understanding, leaving New York on

September 20, 1971
October 11, 1971

November 15, 1971
December 13 (Christmas pilgrimage)

in the hope that the particular things we have been able to arrange may be of help to you.

First of all, of course, there are the rich experiences of a spiritual pilgrimage to Jerusalem and Bethlehem and Nazareth, with the further enrichment of days in Rome, Athens, Cyprus and Beirut. But there are two additional special features of the tour which we think would be of interest to you: The first is the plan to have our people from here meet with church people from there, individuals and families, Palestinian, Jordanian and Lebanese, and to have opportunities to chat and get acquainted.

The second is the arrangement to meet with leaders of Christian Eastern Orthodoxy, to attend worship services in the ancient churches of the East, and thus to take advantage of the unusual opportunities for ecumenical understanding which are characteristic of both Jerusalem and Beirut. Such special meetings, however, will be limited, in order not to restrict the opportunities for visiting the holy places and the historic sites.

Each of the four tours will be led by a tour director with personal knowledge and experience both in Middle East affairs and in biblical history. The attached article by Dr. Frank Epp, Toward Greater Holiness in Holy Land Travel, suggests the kind of thing we are wanting to do. Sensitivity and openness to what is going on are prerequisites to travel in the Holy Land today.

For 1972 we expect to announce further Holy Land Tours of Understanding. If you are interested in our plan, either for now or for the future, please fill in the coupon atop p. 4 and send the information in to us.

Sincerely,

Harry G. Dorman, Jr.

TOWARD GREATER HOLINESS IN HOLY LAND TRAVEL

By Frank H. Epp

International tourism has become the largest single factor in world trade—over 100 million travelers spending over \$20 billion a year. The International Union of Official Travel Organizations is optimistic that this massive global travel will generate, in addition to business, a spirit of international good will.

At least a part of tourism's hope for forging a more united community of man would lie in the creation of a World Tourism Organization (WTO), which would be related to the United Nations as an agency committed to the building of bridges via travel. WTO is a commendable idea. International commuting *should* lead to international community!

A "Christian Plus"

Some church denominations have established their own agencies to give travelers "a Christian plus".

The ethics and values of international travel for Christians have, however, rarely been adequately examined, and nowhere is this truer than with respect to travel to the land of the Bible. Indeed, the assumptions surrounding Holy Land travel have often left travelers uncritical and unguarded, hence easily subject to many abuses.

The pulling of the wool over people's eyes in the routine promotions, which now bring nearly 500,000 tourists to Jerusalem annually, has become quite serious. Most travelers are not sufficiently aware of the extent to which the promoters are eager to harvest political hay and squeeze commercial advantage from every Holy Land pilgrimage.

The pastors of North America, anxious to make the



THE 23RD PSALM and the New Testament imagery of the Good Shepherd gain new significance after watching a Palestinian herdsman's care for his sheep.

trip, but unable to afford it, and sometimes eager to supplement meager incomes, have shown themselves particularly gullible, and their followers with them.

One wholesaler of tours, for instance, advises ministers how they can earn their own trip and receive additional cash—\$4,000 to be exact—by recruiting 40 paying passengers for a tour. The many advertisements in the religious press suggest the effectiveness of these schemes.

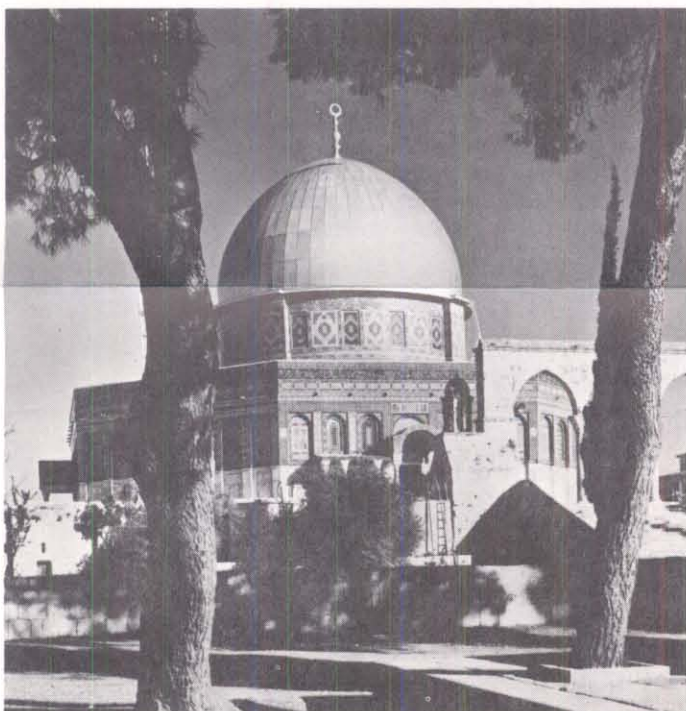
Ministers might and should be paid for their time as well as their ticket if they host a good tour. But when the publicity reads that "your tour members are in no way paying for your trip" you suspect that there may be some hanky-panky. Another brochure projects earnings above trip costs of \$9,100 for hosting a 44-person 15-day tour. In other words, the unwary may find themselves misled and exploited.

Getting Full Value

Other examples could be given, though they might becloud the fact that there are many honest promoters and tour conductors. But the first rule for a holy experience in Holy Land travel calls for careful choosing of one's travel agent and tour host. Especially pious-sounding publicity must be carefully watched.

The tour package too should be closely examined for value related to cost. The packages vary greatly and sorting out the best value in international travel is becoming almost as difficult as selecting the most, the best, and the cheapest from the multiplicity of packages on the grocery shelves.

The economic, religious, and political implications of Holy Land travel should be reviewed also in other ways. Sometimes it seems that the massively commercialized Twentieth Century tourist phenomenon, with its undercurrents of glorification of political and military success, bears resemblance to the Crusades of 1,000 years ago,



THE DOME OF THE ROCK in the Old City of Jerusalem is on a spot sanctified by Abraham's sacrifice, the preaching of Jesus and the ascent of Mohammed. In 1966 the Jordanian government, aided by Islamic countries and institutions, restored this historic mosque to its full Seventh Century glory.



STAINED GLASS IS UNNECESSARY in the Dominus Flevit Church on The Mount of Olives. Looking across its altar one may gaze out upon the Holy City of three faiths as a reality, not just a picture.

especially in its overriding disregard for the people of the land, whose home it has been for centuries. Such callousness in Holy Land zealotry must be diligently resisted.

For a true religious experience, travelers should seek out not only ancient rocks and so-called holy places, but also the holy people living there today. It is one thing to worship where Jesus once walked and quite another to follow him where he is or would be walking today—with the poor, down-trodden, discriminated-against masses. No doubt, Jesus' road to Galilee today would be via the refugee camps in Jordan.

The promoters are anxious to make Holy Land travel a very happy experience, but there is agony in the Holy Land today! No Christian pilgrimage is complete without acquaintance with the grief of the once-persecuted and still-sorrowing Jews from Europe and the oppressed and bitter Arabs in Israel or in the Administered Territories.

Broader Perspectives Needed

Travel to the Holy Land has political dimensions and no Christian tourist does justice to himself, to his Christianity, or to the area without visiting both sides. A Holy Land tour is, therefore, incomplete, if within Israel it avoids close contact with the Arabs and if within the Middle East it does not include at least one Arab country, and preferably more.

Indeed, this tourist-journalist for one cannot any more imagine a true Holy Land experience without a visit to the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon or Syria, or without a meeting with the Christian leaders of Cairo.

Tourism should benefit the local residents economically, especially if their countries are desperately in need of development. While it isn't necessary always to pay the prices first asked in the market places, Christian tour-

ists should overcome their compulsion to bargain away all the profits for local merchants and their supplies. The craftsmen and women, who provide the most cherished souvenirs, are artists, and they, too, are worthy of their hire.

The economic benefits should flow to the residents also in other ways. Christian tourists should request from their agents that they be housed in domestically-owned hotels and services by local guides. Those luxury packages, which basically benefit only Western investors, should be avoided.

And in conclusion: Travelers should be sensitive to other cultures, other peoples, other values. For the sake of true holiness, they should leave their own provincialities behind, as far behind as possible, when they go to the Holy Land. That, after all, is a major reason for traveling in the Middle East.

DR. EPP, Mennonite authority on the Middle East, is the author of *WHOSE LAND IS PALESTINE? The Middle East Problem in Historical Perspective*, an excellent volume to read before visiting the Holy Land. Published in the U.S.A. by Wm. B. Eerdmans and in Canada by McClelland & Stewart (\$6.95 hard cover, \$3.95 paperback), its hard covered edition may be ordered from Americans for Middle East Understanding, Room 538, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, N.Y. 10027, for \$4.40 U.S. postpaid.



PILGRIMS FROM AFRICA, EUROPE and other continents may join local Arab Christians at worship in Bethlehem.

To: Americans for Middle East Understanding
Room 538, 475 Riverside Drive
New York, N.Y. 10027

- Please find herewith my check for \$50.00 as a reservation deposit for the AMEU Tour of Understanding, leaving New York on:
- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> September 20 | <input type="checkbox"/> November 15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> October 11 | <input type="checkbox"/> December 13 |

I shall send balance of \$799 to reach you 30 days in advance.

- I am interested in joining one of the above Tours of Understanding, but cannot yet request a reservation.
- I cannot take part in 1971, but would like to receive information from you about later tours in 1972.

Name _____

Address _____

ITINERARY (15 days, \$849)

Holy Land, Lebanon, Greece and Italy
1st Day — *New York* — Depart by jet from New York's JFK Airport.

2nd Day — *Athens* — Afternoon arrival. The "Son et Lumiere" spectacle tonight at the Acropolis. Dinner and folk dances in the old quarter of Placa.

3rd Day — *Athens* — Full day sightseeing.

4th Day — *Athens/Delphi* — Full day excursion to Delphi.

5th Day — *Athens/Beirut* — Half day excursion to Cape Sounion. Luncheon on the sea. Leave for Beirut.

6th Day — *Beirut/Byblos* — Full day outing to the Dog River and Byblos. Visit the Armenian Orthodox Catholicossate in Antelias. Lunch at Balamand Monastery.

7th Day — *Beirut/Baalbeck* — Morning tour of Beirut. Church service at Community Church. Trip to the Roman ruins of Baalbeck. An evening ecumenical symposium.

8th Day — *Beirut / Nicosia / Jerusalem* — Lunch in the city of Nicosia enroute to Tel Aviv. Arrival late afternoon. Drive via Caesarea — to a kibbutz for overnight.

9th Day — *Nazareth/Sea of Galilee / Jerusalem* — Full day journey through the Holy Land to Jerusalem.

10th Day — *Jerusalem* — Full day sightseeing including the Christian shrines of the Old City, the Mt. of Olives, Gethsemane and Bethlehem. Evening reception with the eastern churches.

11th Day — *Jerusalem / Dead Sea* — Full day excursion to Jericho and the Dead Sea including the YMCA Refugee Workshop and Camp. Lunch and swimming at the Dead Sea. After dinner colloquium on "The Holy City & the Ancient Churches."

12th Day — *Jerusalem* — Full day of sightseeing in old and new Jerusalem including the Wailing Wall and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

13th Day — *Jerusalem* — Transfer to the airport and on to Rome.

14th Day — *Rome* — Full day sightseeing in Rome and to the Catacombs.

15th Day — *Rome / New York* — Leave Rome for New York. Arrive the same afternoon.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Assistance through Customs formalities and transfers to hotels and airports.
- Meetings with the Eastern Churches & Officials in the Holy Land and Lebanon.
- Overnight at a kibbutz.
- Each tour led by a clergyman with extensive experience in the Middle East.
- Round trip jet flights, with meals aboard.
- First Class Hotels.

THE LINK

aims at maintaining contacts among Americans who believe that friendship with the people of the Middle East is essential to world peace, who would contribute to this goal by spreading understanding of the history, values, religions, culture and economic conditions of the Middle East, and who would—in this context—press for greater fairness, consistency and integrity in the U.S. policy toward that area.

It is published by A.M.E.U. (Americans for Middle East Understanding, Inc.) whose directors are:

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- All meals including Tea and Coffee; Continental Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner.
- All portorage, taxes and service charges.
- All entrance fees for museums.
- Multilingual English-speaking guides.



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