

First-Time Visitors to Israel Fall in Love With Holy Land

✖ It was a passage in Zechariah 14 that clinched it for Susan Jones, a Christian supporter of Israel from the United Kingdom. Immediately after reading the passage, Susan knew the time was right to plan her first trip to Israel.

“I was reading the book of Zechariah where it says that the nations will come up to Jerusalem after Jesus comes back,” she said. “I thought, ‘I need to do this now, before Messiah comes back. I need to come up to Jerusalem on behalf of my nation and worship Jesus.’”

And this trip is likely to be her first of many. For many tourists in Jerusalem the Feast of Tabernacles is the time they choose to visit Israel. According to the Ministry of Tourism, Jones is among 8,000 Christian visitors from all over the world who pour into Jerusalem during the Feast, despite a wide-reaching global financial crisis.

“I feel moved to be here,” Susan told Travelujah. “It is an adventure. Fortunately we have friends who showed us around. We’re discovering things out of relationship with the people we are meeting. We are looking at things through someone else’s eyes.”

Collin Jones, Susan’s husband, said he was touched by his experience on his first morning in the country when they visited the Temple Mount.

“I felt very moved that I was going up to the temple, like it says in the Bible, ‘I was glad when they said unto me let us go up to the house of the Lord,’” he said. “I am also very preoccupied with the way things are coming together as they were prophesied in Scripture and the way they’ve come to life.”

The Bible comes to life for first-time visitors to Israel. Many are allured by the Scriptures and then moved immensely by seeing the physical ground where Jesus taught, where prophecies were given and where all faiths converge.

Millions of Christians in over 175 nations, prayed for the peace of Jerusalem on Sunday, Oct. 4. Robert Stearns, founder of Eagles' Wings and co-chairman of the Day of Prayer for the Peace of Jerusalem (DPPJ,) led the Jerusalem celebration of the DPPJ where approximately 2,000 believers gathered.

"It is a new day in the Christian Church," Stearns said. "There are millions of Christians declaring that they will pray for the peace of Jerusalem. We are not spectators, we are not bystanders, and we will not be silent. ... The sin of silence (during the Holocaust) will not be repeated. ... Shalom to Israel is shalom for the world."

Many Christians who joined the Day of Prayer in Jerusalem said there is nothing comparable to praying on the actual ground for which the Bible commands us to pray rather than from abroad.

"When you can hear, you can touch, taste, smell it and you are praying against the very stone right here—it's the fulfillment of all your prayers," said Canadian Bethany Campbell. "You see the people you are praying for and seeing their faces."

"His name is on this very place, so there's something special spiritually" about praying here, said Rachel Ford from Brisbane, Australia.

One veteran visitor emphasizes the importance of blessing Israel on the land of Israel. Edwell Katsande, a pastor from Botswana, makes a pilgrimage to Jerusalem almost every year at great expense in order to be obedient to the biblical command to "go up to Jerusalem" during the Feast of Tabernacles.

"The most important thing when you come up to Jerusalem is to

bless Israel,” said Edwell, on his 13th trip to the Holy Land. “Israel has blessed the whole world. Now is our time to bless them. They gave us the Book that brought us salvation. Now we need to bless them.”

Nicole Jansezian writes for , the only Christian social network focused on travel to the Holy Land. Travelujah is a vibrant online community offering high quality Christian content, user and expert blogs, travel tours and planning services for people interested in connecting to the land.