

10 Places You Should See (in Israel) Before You Die

✖ Nearly everyone has a special place he would like to visit during his lifetime. For many people, that place is Israel.

The mere mention of the country's name evokes a wide range of emotions, one of which is longing. For thousands of years, Israel has held great significance for people from all walks of life, and those who have a heart for the land yearn to see it.

Some save for years to make a trip to the Holy Land. Those who have been blessed to go generally agree that while they were there, the Bible came to life and the visit changed them at a deep level. Many have been overwhelmed when they "walked where Jesus walked."

Charisma interviewed several prominent Christian leaders who often lead tour groups to Israel. The places that are most special to them range from the Sea of Galilee to the Western Wall, from Alon Moreh to Kfar Etzion, from the Temple Mount to the Garden of Gethsemane. Despite the wide range of favorite locations, the leaders all have one thing in common-they say their first visit had a tremendous impact on their lives.

Here are some of the places they named as their top pick:

Alon Moreh

For **Billye Brim**, who took her first trip to the Holy Land in 1983, Alon Moreh is not about the settlement, but rather about the tree on top of a mountain where scholars believe the Lord first appeared to Abraham when he arrived in the Promised Land (see Gen. 12:6-7).

"From this high vantage point one can see like Abram did, the

Mounts of Blessing and Cursing, Shechem (Nablus), the Valley of Tirzah,” says Brim, who in 1986 studied Hebrew at Ulpan Akiva in Netanya, Israel—a school founded just after the War of Independence in 1948.

Brim, founder of Prayer Mountain in the Ozarks in Kirbyville, Missouri, also notes about Alon Moreh that “though Israel has prepared a lovely place to sit under the tree, we have never met another tour group there. And in this spot we have experienced the most awesome presence of God and experiences in prayer.”

The living remnant of the house of Israel

Integrity Music recording artist **Paul Wilbur** first visited Israel in 1983 and has been back more than 24 times. To him the “historic places are fascinating, and it is fun to ‘run where Jesus walked,’ stand in the first-century synagogue in Capernaum, take a boat ride on the Galilee. “But,” he adds, “so many love the dead Jews of the Bible and completely ignore the living remnant of today.”

Wilbur explains: “When I connect with my brothers and sisters in Israel I feel as though I have connected with the heart of God. Jesus stated that He came to rescue the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and I believe His heart has not changed in 2,000 years.”

The more intense worship and the deeper fellowship of the people have had an eternal effect on his life. Says Wilbur: “The stones are old and significant, but the living stones are the dwelling place of the God of Israel. So when you go, be very certain to enjoy the history, but be more certain to touch the living stones that Yeshua gave His life to redeem!”

Kfar Etzion

Melva Lea Beacham has traveled to and lived in Israel for nearly 40 years. Her first trip at Christmastime in 1969 was the first of at least a dozen, but she also had the pleasure

of living there from 2005-2006. Though she revels in many fond memories of riding the Number 8 bus every day, the one place that really captured her heart is Kfar Etzion, site of the massacre by Arab armed forces on May 13, 1948-the day before Israel became recognized as a nation.

"I take my tours there to see firsthand and have it wrench their hearts," said Beacham, who served for four years as international director of development for Christian Friends of Israel in Jerusalem. "I want them to understand what the Jewish people have to experience every day to carve out their inheritance and their place in the world that God gave them. I want people to know and understand the resistance-demonic and from the nations-that these people face."

Western Wall

In the countless trips **John Hagee**, pastor of Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, has taken since 1978, a particular place as well as a particular moment stands out for him. On his visit to the 187-foot long Western Wall during his first trip, Hagee had a God-encounter that not only changed his life but also launched a movement that continues to gain in prominence and influence more than 30 years later.

At the wall that day "God told me to do everything in my power to bring Christians and Jews together because they have far more in common than the things that we had allowed to separate us over the centuries," Hagee says.

To Hagee's left that day on the western flank of the Temple Mount was an Orthodox Jew rocking back and forth, kissing the Bible. "I realized we were spiritual brothers, but he was afraid of me, and I knew nothing about him," Hagee says.

Less than three years later, Hagee held the first Night to Honor Israel, which eventually led to the formation in 2006 of Christians United for Israel, now the largest pro-Israel organization in the United States.

“Every visit to the Western Wall is the most enjoyable of the 10-day trip to Israel,” he says. “There is a spiritual force at the Western Wall for me like nowhere else on planet Earth. It is that spiritual experience I’ve never forgotten, and [that I] enjoy every time I go back.”

The Temple Mount

Robert Stearns first traveled to Jerusalem in 1991 and has been back 18 times for the Feast of Tabernacles. All told, he has made more than 40 trips to Israel. He admits the Western Wall is his favorite place, but he also names The Temple Mount and Masada as must-see sites.

The Temple Mount, also known as Mount Moriah, contains the holiest site in Judaism. Hotly contested over the years and possibly one of the most recognizable sites because of the golden dome atop the Islamic shrine-the Dome of the Rock-Israel and the Palestinian authority both claim sovereignty over the Temple Mount.

Masada

Masada is the name for a site of ancient palaces in the southern district of the country. Some consider a hike up the Snake Path on the eastern side of the mountain part of the Masada experience, but a cable car is available. The remote location and arid environment has kept the site well-preserved for thousands of years.

“Jerusalem, more than a metaphor, is a literal place to which the nations of the earth are turning once again,” says Stearns, who claims, “It is a Biblical mandate for us as Christians to pray faithfully for the peace of Jerusalem (Ps. 122:6) and for all of Israel (Rom. 9-11).”

Garden of Gethsemane

Joni Lamb, co-founder, vice president and executive producer of the Daystar Television Network-like other leaders Charisma interviewed-did not hesitate when asked to reveal her special

spot, the Garden of Gethsemane. Although she will take only her fourth trip to the Holy Land later this year, the significance of the garden inspired her book, *Surrender All*.

Located at the foot of the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, the garden is where Lamb believes the ultimate surrender took place. "I think of the emotional anguish that Jesus felt," Lamb says. "That place is very significant and very spiritual because of that surrender. It's the place where He cried out [to the Father], 'Not My will, but Your will be done.'"

She adds: "Had He not surrendered there, He would not have been able to walk to the cross. I'm sure it was tormenting with the drops of blood and the emotional anguish that He felt. That surrender changed the world."

Sea of Galilee

No place in Israel means as much to **Ben Kinchlow** as the Sea of Galilee. "This was a vital place in Jesus' ministry," Kinchlow says. Of the nearly 30 miracles Jesus performed, roughly 20 were performed in this region and a dozen right on the shores.

"I can't find a more unchanged place than the Sea of Galilee. Nothing has changed there," says Kinchlow, who notes the area is mostly free of buildings and tourist attractions.

At nearly 700 feet below sea level, it is the lowest freshwater lake on Earth. Kinchlow, founder of *Americans for Israel* and the co-host of the *Front Page Jerusalem* radio show, who first went to Israel in the 1970s, recommends sitting on some of the rocks and hills.

"This is a place away from the tourist stuff," Kinchlow claims. "This is such a place of solitude."

Nimrod Fortress

Off the beaten path, Nimrod Fortress is a site **Perry Stone** visited for the first time on his most recent trip to Israel—even though he's traveled to the country more than 30 times.

He definitely plans to go to the site again.

Ruined by an earthquake in the 18th century, the fortress is situated in the northern Golan Heights on a ridge rising about 2,600 feet above sea level. This is the place where God made His covenant with Abraham.

"From up there you can see the opening of the Promised Land," says Stone, excitement rising in his voice. "This is the view Abraham saw."

Many tours don't visit Golan Heights because of time constraints, but Stone said the trip is worth the time. His group spent more than two hours there.

"It's worth sitting there and soaking it all in. It's historical and the scenery is beautiful," says Stone, a fourth generation minister, who directs one of America's fastest-growing ministries, the Voice of Evangelism. "You're going back in time with Abraham. This is where it all began. This is where the covenant was made."

Jerusalem

Jonathan Bernis, the executive director of Jewish Voice Ministries International and host of the weekly television program Jewish Voice Today, loves Jerusalem. He has visited 50 times since his first trip in 1984.

The epicenter of the Christian faith and site of "intense spiritual warfare," Jerusalem is one of the oldest cities in the world. Considered the spiritual center of the Jews, the Old City, despite being less than .5 square miles, contains a number of significant Christian sites-the Temple Mount, Western Wall and Church of the Holy Sepulcher, to name a few.

"I feel a closeness to God there like no other place in the world," says Bernis, the founding Rabbi of Shema Yisrael Messianic Congregation in Rochester, New York, where he served as senior Messianic rabbi from 1984-1993.

Although not an exhaustive list, these 10 sites are a great place to begin your first-or next-trip to Israel. You may find other places that touch your heart more, but according to those who have been, your life will never be the same after taking a trip to the one nation no Christian should neglect to visit.

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