

# Top 7 Reasons Why You Need to Visit Israel

This summer marks our 30th year as pastors at King of Kings Community in Jerusalem. My wife, Ann, and I still pinch ourselves because we get to do this!

From time to time, I've toured Israel with "newbies," and often they're pastors. It's fascinating to get a fresh look at Israel through their eyes and to watch their childlike excitement.

I often hear them say, "Why didn't I come years ago?" A few have even confessed they'd unwittingly told some lies in their sermons due to their ignorance about the land of the Bible.

And just recently, George O. Wood, the general superintendent of the Assemblies of God, preached for us at King of Kings. He's been to Israel more than 40 times! We were encouraged to learn he's initiated a program to enable every Bible student in the AG denomination to get to Israel at least once in their lives.

Excited yet? Here are my top seven reasons you really need to visit Israel—especially if you're a pastor or Bible teacher.

**1) The pages of your Bible will be made even more alive and real.** This is where Abraham trekked, Joshua battled, David reigned and the Son of God lived, died, rose and ascended.

After seeing the land and people, you'll teach the Bible with more accuracy and confidence.

When well-known pastor Mark Batterson of the National Community Church in Washington, D.C., came to Israel for the first time this year, he tweeted, "One revelation from our trip to Israel? I read the Bible wrong! Just knowing the

geography adds nuances of meaning. Text + context = aha!"

After you've scanned the topography, heard the sounds, breathed the air and smelled the scents, you'll paint the backdrop of a biblical narrative with more vivid colors.

**2) A visit to Israel will enable you to pray more intelligently for the Middle East.** Israel is the epicenter of a conflict as old as the patriarchs. CNN and Fox News can't convey the whole picture.

Coming to the land will enable you to better understand the realities.

A visit to Israel will also allow you to meet with Jews and Arabs. You'll get to know their faces and names—as well as their stories—and this will inspire you to “pray for the peace of Jerusalem” (Ps. 122:6).

**3) You can hear fresh and exciting testimonies from local believers about how God is at work in Israel today.** Many will tell you how the Lord revealed Himself in a dream or vision. Local ministry leaders will share how the body of Christ has grown tenfold in Israel in the last 20 years.

Getting to know Christ's body in this land will introduce you to ways you and your church can partner with local ministries—and receive blessings in return. (See Genesis 12:3.)

**4) A trip to Israel will increase your level of faith for your nation.** The blessing of God is on Israel. Its very existence is a miracle you've got to see with your eyes to believe.

Friends who return to Israel every few years marvel at the progress that's been made since their last visit. Israel is a shining example not only of how to survive but *thrive* against all odds.

With limited natural resources, a microscopic piece of real

estate, and existential threats of war and terrorism, the only explanation of Israel's success is God.

**5) Israel is teeming with history and culture.** Whether visiting archaeological sites, roaming museums or spending an evening with the Israel Philharmonic, you will be enriched.

**6) Israel is a great place for a vacation.** You're going to spend money on a vacation anyway, right? We have one of the most ideal climates in the world. If you come in the winter, it's possible to ski the snow-peaked Mount Hermon in the morning and swim with the dolphins along the coral beaches of the Red Sea in the afternoon. We have three remarkable seas—the Med, the Red and the Dead—and, of course, the Sea of Galilee, around which the Lord did much of His public ministry.

**7) You could even visit Israel for free.** Yes, I said free. Most travel companies offer a free trip for every seven to 10 people you bring with you. Now what's your excuse?

If you're a serious Bible teacher or student of the Word, you've probably spent thousands of dollars on theological education. You've invested in building your library. And you continue to spend money on resources to keep you current. In other words, you know the value of investing money in the best tools of your trade. Here's a thought: Amortize the cost of a trip to Israel over 50 years of ministry, and it's peanuts!

I am convinced that a visit to Israel is a wise investment in every sense—including your ministry and those you serve. Aren't you convinced now too?

*Along with his wife, Ann, **Wayne Hilsden** has been a resident of Jerusalem since 1983 and is the senior pastor of King of Kings Community. He leads the King of Kings ministry team, preaches regularly in Jerusalem and travels internationally speaking on the restoration of Israel.*

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