

Dear Friends,

We literally worked the streets of Jerusalem the evening we arrived on our twelve days long visit to Israel in December. Legs replaced motors as the mode of transport on the City's roadways, the occasional car appearing as surreal as the train emerging from a fireplace in Rene Margritte's painting, "Time Transfixed". You didn't need a calendar to tell you that it was Shabbat; the city told you by its quiet. Tensions between the ritually observant and the secular were rendered moot by the reality of the *shalom* that comes with the day. *Shul* or street, it was the same --- peace.

The best thing about being in Israel is the unadulterated immediacy of it. I think and read about Israel daily. Newspapers, magazines, journals, the radio are all constant sources of information and triggers for my mind to contemplate or react to. But when in Israel, I read the people in the malls and holy sites. In Israel, eating *sabich* (chopped egg, sautéed eggplant, hummus, tehina and salad in a pita) or negotiating the use of the meter with a taxi driver replaces debates about politics and religion.

Directly experienced, Israel feels like an island of sanity in a world gone mad. Part of this feeling is based on the adaptability of Israelis and their general sense that all is good or good enough since everyone knows that things could always be worse. Israelis seize the possibility that each moment holds. I mean in no way to minimize the complexity of daily life, or to gloss over the difficulties that minority populations face, all of which informs the soul of the nation, but being on the land gives you the sense of the promise that the country holds.

Still with hope,

Lee