

**Sites:**

Ascend **Masada**. Explore the **Old City of Jerusalem** and **Temple Mount**. Pray at the **Western Wall**. Venture through episodes of Jewish life in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago at **Robinson's Arch**, the **Southern Wall Excavations** and the **Western Wall Tunnels**. Tour the **Jewish Quarter**, the **Christian Quarter**, the **Armenian Quarter** and the **Arab Quarter**. These are just a few of the archaeological sites that will open our hearts and our eyes to the historical and spiritual connections we have with the Land of Israel.

**Food:**

As you all know, I am a foodie. I believe that food connects us to culture and history. Therefore, a significant element of our trip will focus on exploring the finest food Israel has to offer. We will dine in some of the newest trendy restaurants; we will share meals with Druze and Arabs as we learn about their cultures; we will visit the bustling open-air **Machane Yehuda Market** to take in a slice of local life as Jerusalemites prepare for Shabbat; and we will eat some of the finest street foods the country has to offer.

**Education:**

The structure of this itinerary is designed to maximize our understanding of our faith and heritage in a unique chronological order. We will begin our adventure in the desert to explore how our ancestors found God in the stillness of the wilderness. From there, we will journey chronologically as we venture across the land. In addition to the usual visits to significant sites, we will have opportunities to study with scholars and explore the land through the lens of theology, archeology, history, politics and art.

**Nature:**

Israel is filled with natural wonders, and we will explore them from the desert to the sea. We will take a **Jeep tour** to explore **Makhtesh Ramon (Ramon Crater)** to discover magnificent desert landscapes and a fascinating geological window into the earth's past. We will spend time star gazing into the still desert sky. We will float in the **Dead Sea**. We will take a guided bird watching expedition in **Agmon Huleh**, Israel's largest wetlands reclamation project, to see thousands of migrating waterfowl come to roost, while riding in a special 'bird blind wagon'. We will enjoy sunsets and strolls on the Mediterranean Coast in Tel Aviv.

### **Politics:**

We will explore the political complexities of Israel through sites and conversations. We will travel north through the **Jordan Valley**, with pauses to note the issues that face Israel and its relationship with the West Bank and its population. We will take a guided tour in the **Golan Heights** to look out at Syria from strategic **Mt. Bental**. We will visit the home of **Naseeba Samara** in the **Druze village** of **Buq'ata** for lunch and a glimpse into the world of the Golan Heights Druze and the ramifications of the Syrian Civil War for their community. We will travel to **Kfar Kara** in the **Wadi Ara** region for a visit to the home of **Amna Kamaana**, a Muslim Israeli woman who established a **Muslim women's empowerment initiative** and an **Arab-Jewish coexistence initiative** in her home. We will study with Professor Paul Liptz, a social anthropologist, who will help us understand the complex tapestry of Israeli society and its relationship with Jews of the Diaspora.

### **Spiritual:**

Israel is one of the most spiritual places in the world. My hope is that the sites, sounds, smells and shared experiences of the land will move all who take this journey to deeper connections with God and our heritage. To that end, we will spend a few days in Jerusalem, where whispers of God's presence are everywhere. We will take a guided tour in mystical **Tzfat**, the cradle of **Kabbalah** and Jewish mysticism. We explore the ruins of **Tzipori**, the city where Rabbi Judah Hanasi sealed the Mishna, to see ancient mosaic pavements and an **ancient synagogue** with a wheel of the zodiac on its 1,500 year old floor. We will pray together, learn together, and grow together in way we could never imagine.