



TRAVELTERM 2023

ISRAEL



TRAVELTERM IS AN AN IMMERSIVE, FAST-PACED, AND UNPARALELLED INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE.

In this condensed semester, students taste, see, and experience first-hand what they have been studying. Students spend 10 days in the classroom immersed in history, geography, Bible, and practical life skills before traveling outside the classroom for 8-10 days. Students return to the classroom after travel to participate in activities, presentations, and projects to synthesize what they have experienced and learned, and how it has changed them. The final project culminates in a Travelterm Expo presentation.

Trips may include England and Scotland, Italy, Israel, and a service trip to Kenya, with the goal of students experiencing a new culture each year. These firsthand experiences shape and enrich our students' biblical worldview.



ISRAEL

JUNIORS & SENIORS



DAY ONE ISRAEL



“We recognize that our connection to God is not dependent on our visit to a physical temple...(And praise God for that!) Still, the experience of standing at the Western Wall—the very location of that temple—will make Scripture come alive for these students in ways they could have never imagined.”

—Good Comma Classroom, in the introduction to our Israel booklet

We arrived safely in country and with the gracious hand of the Lord leading the way, navigated the Tel Aviv airport through many security check points. It was almost as if an invisible Hand went before us, opening gates and directing our way. We easily claimed all of our bags, found our tour company, and loaded the buses for the two-hour journey to Nes Ammim, our lodging for the next three nights. We were greeted with a beautiful Middle Eastern buffet. We closed our night with an intellectual feast in the sidewalk talks presented by Nathan Robertson (The Yom Kippur War), Titus Anyabwile (Watergen), Reagan Fisher (Nazareth), Annalisa Woods (Garden of Gethsemane), and Madelyn Taliaferro (Kosher Dietary Laws).

We reflected on what the Good Comma Classroom team wrote in the introduction of our Israel booklet. We are thankful that God used this time to draw these students closer to him as they walked in the places where history was made—where grace was poured out—and where the physical work of the cross occurred. It’s a powerful thought to know that they are following the literal footsteps of Jesus.

In 1 Kings 8, the Ark of the Covenant—the dwelling place of God during Solomon’s time—is brought to the temple, and Solomon offers a prayer. In the prayer he points to a time when Gentiles will come to the temple, just as Isaiah prophesied that the temple would be a “house for all nations” (Isaiah 56:7). *Even for the foreigner who is not of your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your name—for they will hear of your great name, strong land, and outstretched arm, and will come and pray toward this temple—may you hear in heaven, your dwelling place, and do according to all the foreigner asks. Then all peoples of the earth will know your name, to fear you as your people Israel do and to know that this temple I have built bears your name.* (1 Kings 8:41-43, CSB)

In a way, these students’ journey to Israel, to Jerusalem, to the Western Wall, and to the tunnels beneath the wall, is what Solomon was describing. We recognize that our connection to God is not dependent on our visit to a physical temple, and we no longer need that structure in the same way the Israelites needed it. (And praise God for that!) Still, the experience of standing at the Western Wall—the very location of that temple—will make Scripture come alive for these students.

DAY TWO ISRAEL



“Visiting Nazareth after Christmas is a unique treat, allowing you to see the spot where Immanuel, ‘God with us,’ was first announced...None of us will receive news or a calling quite like Mary’s; however, as believers, we will receive a calling from the Lord. Like Mary, we might experience fear, apprehension, or confusion. We might have questions for God or feel unworthy. In spite of these fears and confusion, the way we respond will reflect our hearts...As students walked the streets of Nazareth, they reflected on Mary, an ordinary girl whose life was turned upside down when she was chosen by God...Similarly, student reflected on their own life: Are you open to where God is leading you? Are you prepared to wrestle with your fears, your insecurities, and your unanswered questions and answer God, ‘I am your servant; let it be to me according to your word’?

—Good Comma Classroom,
from our Israel booklet

The first full day in Israel we drove north to the Lebanon border and the **Rosh HaNikra Grottoes**. Students enjoyed a geopolitical lecture while overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. After listening attentively, we rode cable cars that took us to a theater high in the rocks that explained both the geological wonders of the grottoes as well as the history of the area during the 20th century. Students eagerly explored the caves while dodging the surprise spray from the waves crashing through the holes in the rocks. Next we arrived in **Nazareth** and visited the Church of the Annunciation and then began a three-mile walk, mostly up some steep and narrow streets, to arrive at Nazareth Village for a lunch in tents just like Jesus would have experienced. We rose from the table and walked through a village very similar to one that Jesus would have lived in. After shaking the dust off our feet, we loaded busses and drove to an overlook of the **Sea of Galilee** for a short briefing before boarding a wooden boat for a cruise around Lake Tiberias—better known as the Sea of Galilee. Students reveled in the purples, pinks, and blues that painted the sunset and halfway through the voyage pulled out journals to capture their thoughts in writing. We ended our evening at a restaurant famous for serving St. Peter’s fish—*whole*. Tonight’s banquet called for Table Talks, where students Sam Arcara (Zionism), Samuel Ayers (Negev Desert), Kyla Townsend (Sea of Galilee), Caleb Dummermuth (Mt. Carmel and Cave of Elijah), and Charis Cho (Eilat Mazar) shared from their personal research.

DAY THREE ISRAEL



Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

MATTHEW 16: 13-16 (ESV)

We started with a drive to Kibbutz El Rom in the **Golan Heights**, where we watched a documentary that interviewed soldiers who fought in the Yom Kippur War. The students also listened intently to lectures given by their tour guides providing helpful context. We visited the **Valley of Tears** and saw the memorial to the 77th Armored Battalion of the Israeli Defense forces, and students braved the rain and the cold to look at a Syrian tank and an Israeli tank up close. Several students reflected that God’s hand must have been at work in the battle that awarded the victory to the Israeli force of only 160 tanks to the Syrians’ 1500 tanks. From several different vantage points, our students were able to peer through the mist and the fog into Syria and consider the complicated history and ongoing tensions between the two countries. After warming up at a coffee shop atop a mountain, we drove to one of the four villages in the Golan Heights and feasted at a Druze restaurant run by a local family. After the meal the owner spoke through a translator about the Druze community and their religion. Students were able to use their biblical-worldview muscles in a real-life situation as they listened, evaluated, and discussed what the Bible says as truth in follow-up conversations with parents and staff. After lunch, we headed to **Caesarea Philippi** to walk in a nature preserve and see the ruins of King Agrippa’s royal court and walk beneath a portion of the road to Damascus, where Saul met Jesus. We also saw where Jesus his disciples asked who He was, and see where Jesus asked His disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” and where Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” After dinner, students regaled us with personal research on sidewalk talks about Sects of Judaism (Cameron Blanding), Yitzhak Rabin (Kobe Baldwin), Flavius Josephus (Gus Jackson), the First Zionist Congress (Jeremy Mornan), and Capernaum (Hannah Leong). Students enjoyed some free time and then gathered to debrief the last three days, share what they are learning, challenge each other, pray together, and journal.

DAY FOUR ISRAEL



In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?
JOHN 14:2

We started the day at a **proposed site of the Semon on the Mount**, and although we do not know if our hill was the right one, it afforded us an incredible view of the Sea of Galilee, shrouded in mist and fog. As the sun rose higher, we learned some important historic background before breaking into smaller groups and reading through Matthew 5, 6, and 7. After reflection, we drove to **Capernaum** to see what a synagogue might have looked like, as well as a house with many rooms. Our group contemplated Jesus's words in John 14, *"In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."* The visual brought this verse to life and we discussed the faithfulness of his promise to return for his Bride, the Church.

incredible views of the Sea. After lunch we went to **Ginosar**, where students went off a distance by themselves for contemplation, prayer, and journaling then headed into the museum on-site that showcased the recent discovery of the Jesus Boat. Again our guide had students with open Bibles crisscrossing through the Gospels and the Prophets in discussion about why Jesus called fishermen and what it means to be a fisher of men. As the sun began to set, we loaded buses one last time and drove south toward Jerusalem. Our teachers are doing the intentional moment-by-moment work of discipleship as they walk with, listen to, and engage in follow-up conversations with students.

Our evening progressed with Anton, one of our guides, providing a personal welcome and traditional Middle Eastern hospitality from him and his wife (they call Jerusalem home) with pita dipped in chocolate and some juice for all of our team. We closed the night learning more about Church of the Multiplication (Dara Lagbaja), the Torah (Ace Cloutier), Passover (Jack Worosz), Akko/Acre (Will Parsons), and Zion (Evelynn Moorman) with our student sidewalk talks.

We zig-zagged back along the Sea of Galilee to **Tabgha** (the place where Jesus fed the 4,000). Again the students pored over the story, reading and listening with new eyes and ears. After this stop we sped to **Tiberias** to enjoy lunch and more

DAY FOUR ISRAEL



DAY FIVE ISRAEL



“In Deuteronomy, God gives instructions on where to build the temple, how to build the temple, how to make sacrifices, how to tithe, and so many other things. He was preparing the Israelites for life in the Promised Land. In his sovereign plan, he chose the location of the temple, the place where he would live among his people before sending his Son and the Holy Spirit. The students visited that very place today.”

—Good Comma Classroom

We awoke to a glorious sunrise over Jerusalem and an early morning breakfast in order to be ready to ascend the **Temple Mount**. Our guides talked about different locations of importance to the Jews, the Muslims, and the Christians. Our next stop was a special VIP tour in the **City of David**, where we were greeted with a reception of pastries and water as well as a gift of an embroidered City of David hat for each student. Our host, Ze’ev Orenstein, Director for International Affairs for the City of David, shared about the unique connection that the country of Israel and the United States have—a foundation of Judeo Christian beliefs. On our tour we viewed the city and its surroundings from the roof top of the location that was David’s palace, as well as going down into excavations to see the layers of the past and learn how the Bible is being confirmed in the discoveries of archeology. After that we headed down into Hezekiah’s Tunnel (dry) and viewed Warren’s Shaft. Then it was on to the newly discovered (larger) Pool of Siloam, and back up the VERY tight tunnel that led to the Temple Mount (where Jews hid from the Romans in 70 AD), and finally up into the Jewish Quarter for lunch after four very rigorous miles of hills, steps, and tunnels.

Wailing Wall, and the Western Wall Tunnels. What a joy it was to see our students pray on the Women’s side and the Men’s side of the Wailing Wall. My small group sat on the Triple Gate Steps and gazed at the Mount of Olives opposite us while we read Psalm 121—powerful words coming alive in a new and beautiful way: *“I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.”*

After some free time back at the Kibbutz, we enjoyed dinner and a dessert buffet and then moved into our **special program with Dr. Seth Postell, Academic Dean and professor at Israel College of the Bible.** The students listened carefully as Dr. Postell shared his testimony of how Jesus saved him and his journey to becoming a Messianic Jew living in Israel. Students interacted with Dr. Postell as he shared the importance of knowing the Old Testament in the study of the New Testament. We ended our evening in prayer.

After lunch we walked back to the temple and spent time at the **Southern Wall Excavation, the**

DAY FIVE ISRAEL



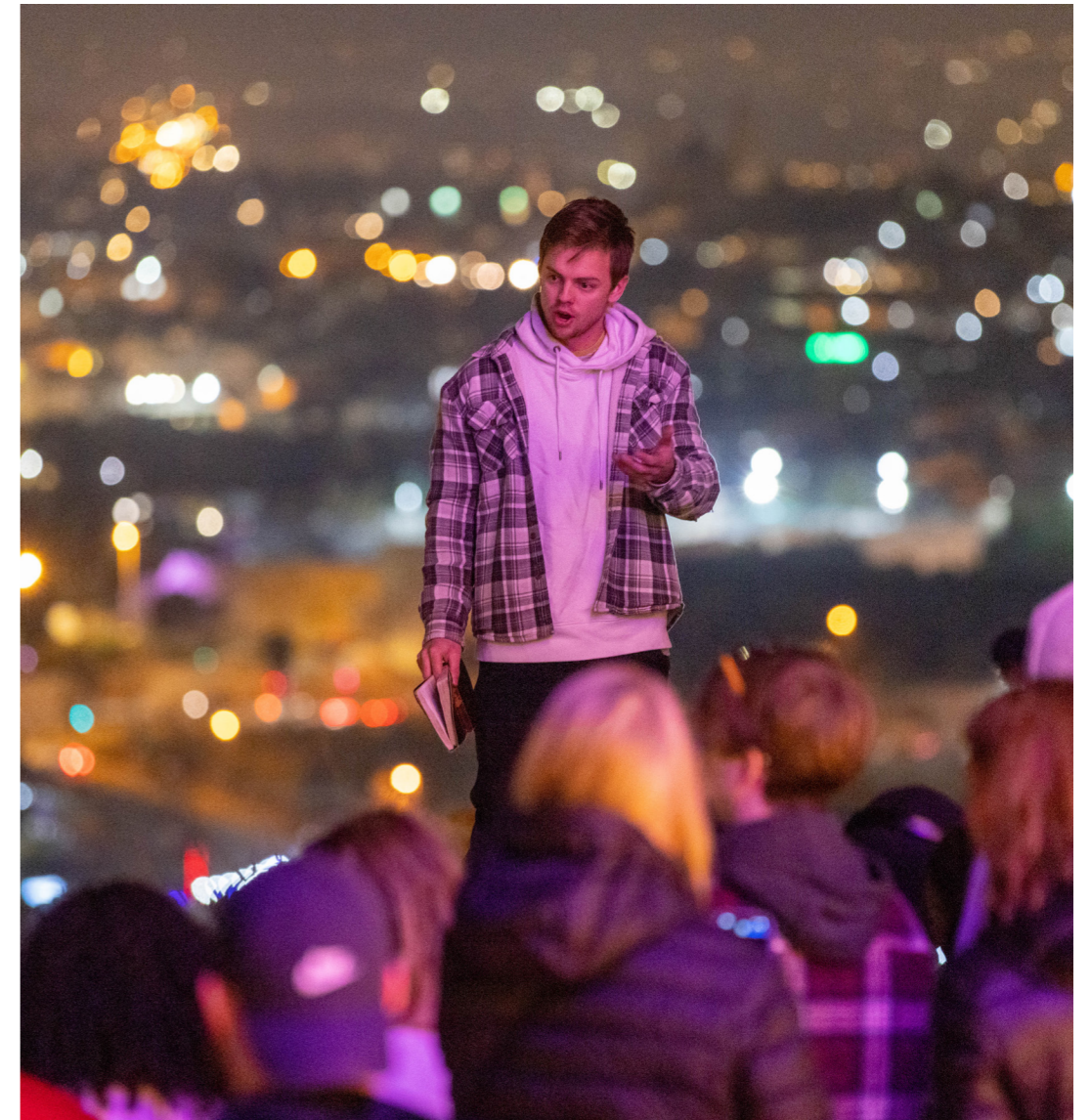
DAY SIX ISRAEL

After our typical Israeli breakfast fare that included a wide assortment of cheeses, fish, fresh veggies, prepared salads, potatoes and sweet potatoes, several kinds of eggs, pastries, a yogurt and toppings bar, and three glorious coffee machines, we were off to **Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust Memorial**. Before dividing up for our three VIP tours, Paster Tim Fisher read Isaiah 56 to us and shared some thoughts and a challenge about “a monument and a name” (in Hebrew, Yad Vashem means “a monument and a name”). Each group of students walked through the museum with a special guide who paused to ask questions and help students process what they were seeing and reading. The students respectfully and thoughtfully dealt with this difficult chapter in history and the issues of the Holocaust that are still affecting our world today. At the end of the tour we had arranged a special session with a survivor who told her story to our students. There were many tears as we listened to her powerful story. One student had the foresight to record the story and shared with me that she never wants to forget.

After a quick drive-by tour of the **Knesset and National Menorah**, we headed to a **local market** for authentic Israeli street food and a little shopping. Late afternoon found us driving out of the city to **Neve Shalom** (Oasis of Peace), a 40-year-old village where Palestinians and Jews live and work together. The mayor of the

town shared the nonreligious goals of peace and unity as the inhabitants work to educate the next generation. Mr. Kounter did an excellent job of debriefing and helping the students connect our biblical worldview and specifically our definition of being a Christ-follower to this unique village—comparative religions in action. We are looking forward to meeting later in the week with pastors and ministry leaders who are using the gospel to work together.

After dinner, we headed out to a beautiful overlook of the city to listen to a devotional and pray together. Last night we had seven students share their sidewalk topics: Western Wall (Sebastian Nava), UN Partition Plan (Micah Husby), Moshe Dayan (Amy Hoey), Ethiopian Jews (Keri Theodros), Golda Meir (Paige Sawyer), and the Crusades (Benjamin Kincaid). Tonight, we listened to The Six-Day War (Caleb Wolf), The Israeli Missile Defense Systems (Kaleb Kahler), The Mossad (Kaitlyn Miracle), King Herod the Great (Rilyn McAllister), Mount of Olives (Kallen Kahler), Modern Jewish Lineage (Cassie Hoffman), and Righteous Gentiles (Dominic Orsini). After taking pictures of Jerusalem lit up at night and singing the Doxology, students headed to bed to get a good night's sleep in order to prepare for an early start and another full day in the city tomorrow.



DAY SEVEN ISRAEL



Today was a day saturated in scripture. At the **Mount of Olives**, our guides did an excellent job of reorienting us to the Old City and other sights that we had seen from the other side on Monday. We then began our descent, stopping at a church and chapel along the way before pausing for 30 minutes in the **Garden of Gethsemane**. We sat amidst the olive trees and read from Luke 22:39–46. Mr. Kounter rehearsed Isaiah 53 with all of us, reminding the students of Christ’s sacrifice for us. Students had time to go off by themselves and pray, reflect, or journal. After a quick stop at **Church of All Nations** and a look at the oldest olive tree in Israel (carbon dated to 1092), we walked into Jerusalem via the Lions’ Gate.

Inside the city walls, our first stop was the **Pool of Bethesda** (which means House of Lovingkindness). There we read the story of the man Jesus healed without helping him in the water—which is what he thought he needed. Then it was on to the **Church of St. Anne** where our students gathered at the front and sang two verses of “Amazing Grace” and then the Doxology: “Praise God from whom all blessings flow.” Our guide walked us through the history of the traditional stations of the cross as we walked down the **Via Dolorosa** (“The Way of Suffering”) to the **Church of the Holy Sepulchre**, which was a fusion of history and art, as well as a brief study of the Roman Catholic Church, Greek Orthodox Church, Armenian Apostolic Church, and to a lesser degree, the Coptic, Syriac, and Ethiopian Orthodox churches, who share responsibility for the church.

We walked out of the Damascus Gate into the Muslim Quarter of the City and on to the **Garden Tomb**. There, students explored the idea of this location for Jesus’s death, burial, and resurrection. We ended this time as a large group and read Mathew 28:1-10. Some of our students are already seeking Jesus with every fiber of their being. Some are actively exploring the idea of seeking Jesus. Some are yet to personally seek Jesus. I love them all and have been praying that this trip will encourage each one of them, as only the Lord knows their hearts perfectly and the journey he has them on.

We ended our evening at a local church, where we enjoyed Israeli pizza and listened to ministry leaders from Ramallah (West Bank) who minister to Palestinian believers and their Muslim neighbors. Once a week they drive to Jerusalem to lead worship at a Jewish Christian Church (Jerusalem Assembly—House of Redemption) where Messianic Jews worship. Students were able to ask them questions before hearing from the Pastor of the Church.

DAY SEVEN ISRAEL



DAY EIGHT ISRAEL



We rose before the sun this morning and after a two-hour drive, we arrived at the site of **King Herod's northern palace**—built around 24 B.C. With the Dead Sea as our backdrop, we hiked a half mile via the Roman Ramp to the top of the mountain. There we were able to walk through the ruins of the palace grounds. Our guide explained the story of how 300 Jews hid from the Roman conquerors after Jerusalem fell to the Romans in A.D. 70. After three years, their hiding place was discovered and the hideaways held off around 10,000 soldiers and 6,000 Jewish slaves for seven months. The students were able to sit in a synagogue where it is thought that the decision to end their own lives rather than being captured or killed by the Romans was made.

Arriving at the **Dead Sea** from Masada at mid-day, the students had a quick and delicious outdoor sandwich lunch in sunny 70-degree weather and then headed for the beach. Everyone was amazed at the



buoyancy of the salt water; it's essentially impossible *not* to float! The only problem for a few is encapsulated in the phrase, "rubbing salt into a wound," but even the momentary sting for some didn't dampen their enthusiasm. A great time was had by all!

Following their soothing float in the Dead Sea (a high point for many students), we hiked into the seemingly sparse national Park of **Ein Gedi**. As we began our peaceful hike up the desert canyon, one could nearly picture Moses striking the rock at the Lord's divine command, because rain water filtering down through the desert stone eventually bursts through the limestone, creating waterfalls and streams that bring life to the desert. Students splashed in the fresh spring water as others hiked on, spotting both ibex and hyrax.

On the bus, as we got ready to drive to dinner, we read aloud and considered Numbers 20: 8-11 "*Take the staff, and assemble*



the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water. So you shall bring water out of the rock for them and give drink to the congregation and their cattle." And Moses took the staff from before the Lord, as he commanded him.

Then Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels: shall we bring water for you out of this rock?" And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice, and water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their livestock.

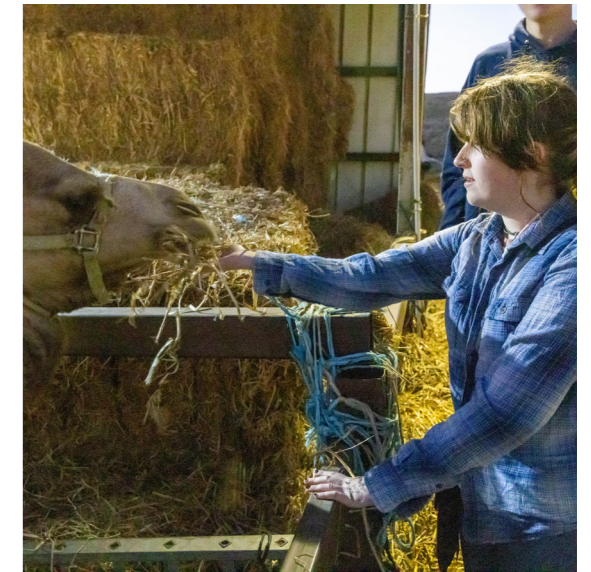
Departing our desert oasis of Ein Gedi with the sun setting behind us, we continued our wandering through the desert. Traversing mountain roads, we wound our way up to **Genesis Land** (an attraction set in the northern Judean Desert, offering a biblically-themed desert hospitality experience) where our gracious host,



Abraham, welcomed us into his warm tent overlooking the Jordan Valley. As we feasted like kings and queens, Abraham told us how he and his wife Sarah came out of the land of Ur to settle on such a beautiful mountain. Abraham also told us of the exciting discovery in the Qumran caves of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Last night students shared their personal research during sidewalk talks on the topics of Hezekiah's Tunnel (Christine Chon), King David Hotel (Emily Payne), Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Jacob Medley), Yad Vashem (Morgan Choat), Temple Mount (Ethan Thompson), and Mount Carmel (Joshua Wolf). Tonight we enjoyed listening to students share about the Dead Sea (Lydia Sutton), Masada (Caitlin Moseley and Katie DeWitte), Leah Goldberg (Lydia Reju), and Discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (Christina Pan).

DAY EIGHT ISRAEL



DAY NINE ISRAEL

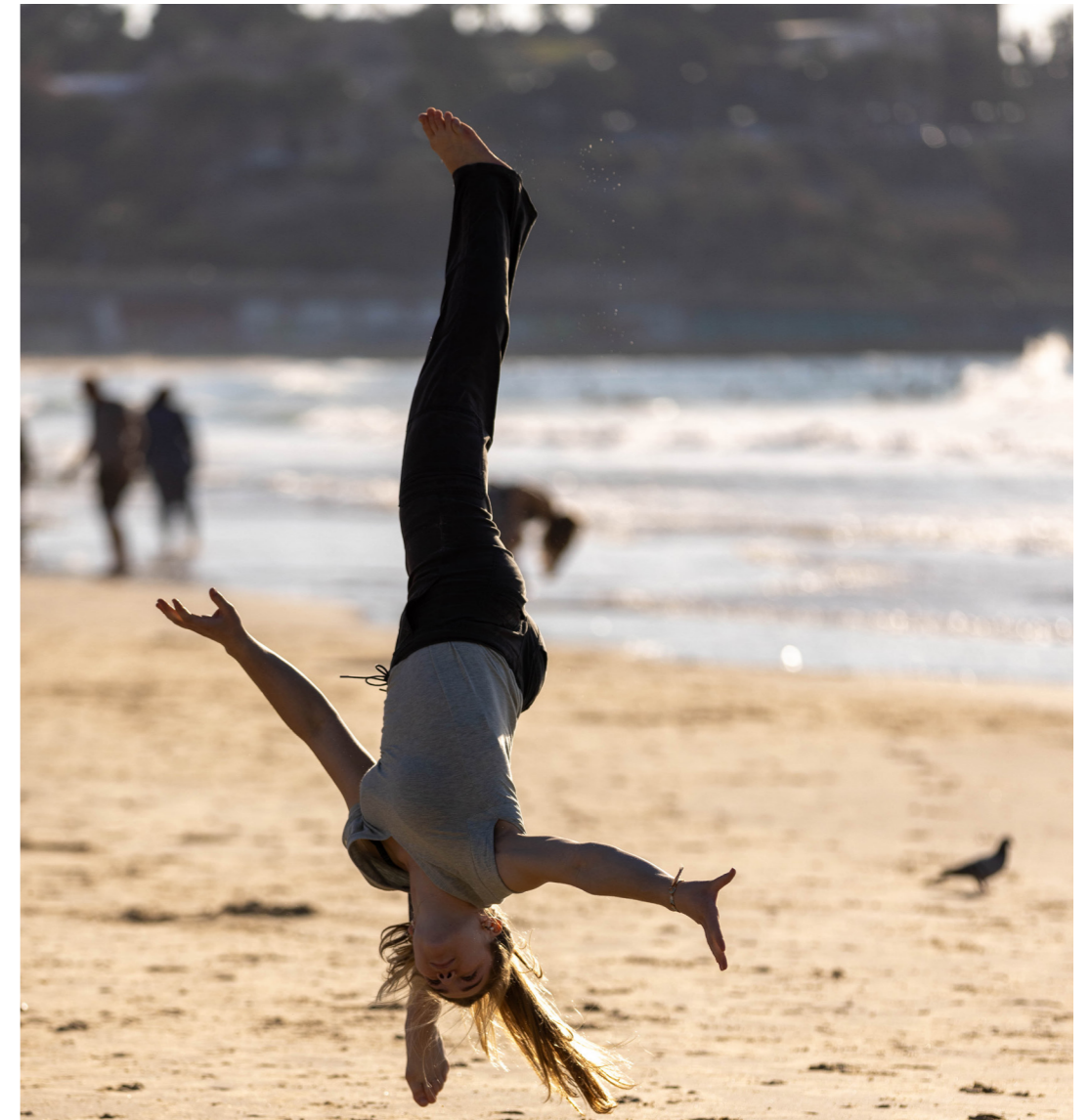
Our first stop of the day was the **Archeological Caves at Beit Guvrin National Park**. Students explored the famous Bell Cave as well as several others of the 800 that this UNESCO site boasts. As we climbed deep down into the earth, our guides painted a picture of what life must have been like in the first Temple period in the town of Maresha as well as in the civilizations that followed.

There were several olive presses and countless dove/pigeon nests. Both should bring to mind the concept of sacrifice. When Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, on the Mount of Olives, Luke's account says, *"And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground"* (Luke 22:44). Biblical scholars compare this burden that Jesus was carrying to the heavy stone that presses out the oil from the olives. The Idumeans would have used pigeons or doves in their practice of sacrificing to their gods and thus created these holes to attract them to nest. The Israelites were also well acquainted with their Levitical laws requiring regular atonement for sins. How amazing to walk among artifacts that point us to God's ultimate sacrifice of Jesus for us and his atonement for our sins.

After a full morning, we headed to **Tel Aviv** for lunch in the Carmel Market. Students and adult chaperones divided up to conquer

lunch at their desired location amidst the hustle and bustle (crush) of a Friday afternoon in Israel. After a walk through Tel Aviv, we spent the last hour of our afternoon walking alongside the **Mediterranean Sea** and frolicking on the beach. A few brave students dipped their toes (and ankles) into the water. After waving farewell to the sea (just for today, we'll be back tomorrow), we boarded our buses for the drive back to Kibbutz Yearim in the Judean Hills just in time for Shabbat.

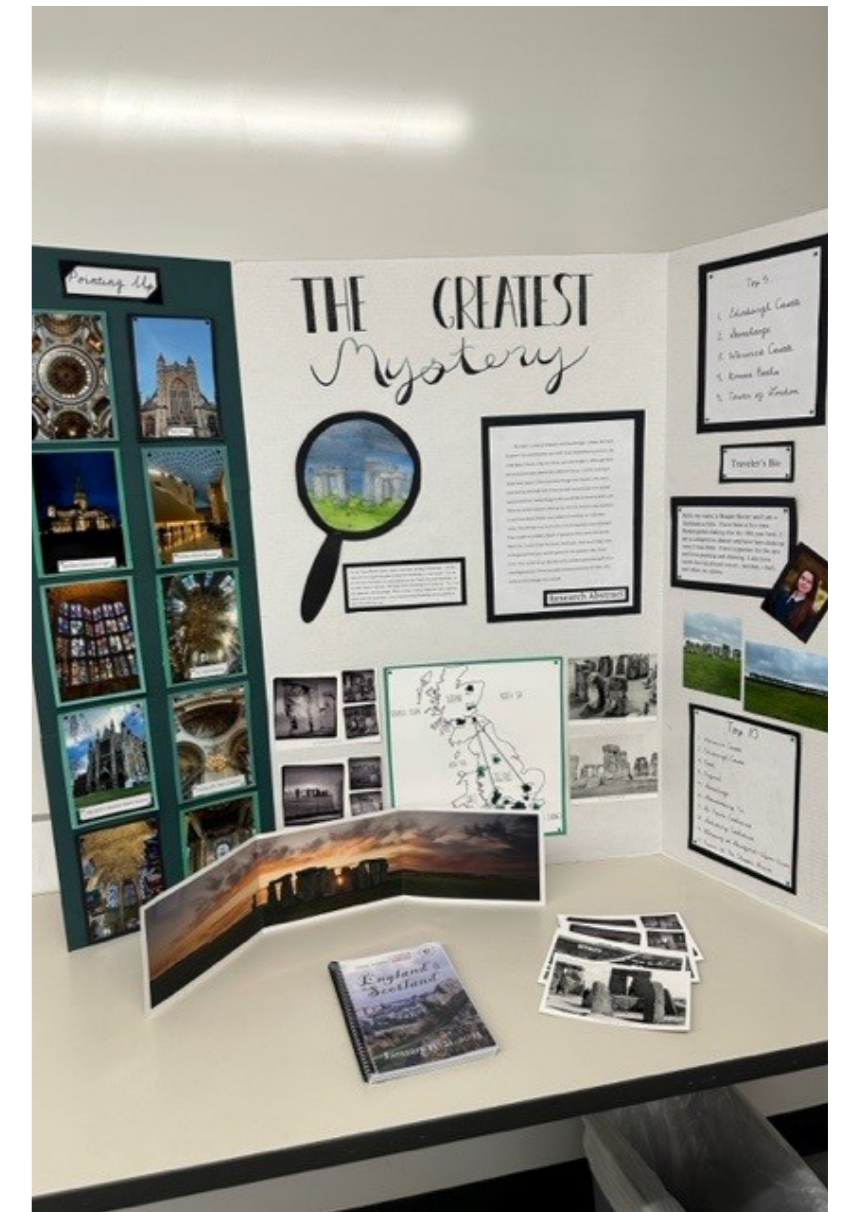
Before dinner, we had a special Shabbat lesson by Jonah Rosenberg and his wife, Cassandra, where they shared their testimony and explained the tradition behind **Shabbat**. After lighting the candles and praying, we broke bread and drank juice together then walked into the dining hall, which had been transformed with white tablecloths and cloth napkins. After eating, we gathered for another round of student-led sidewalk talks. Tonight's topics featured Judas Maccabeus (Sigrid Gustafson), the British Mandate (Scott Currey), the Six Feasts of Israel (Cat Doran), The Tomb of Absalom (Becca Sobolik), Jordan River (Cameron Welburn), Gypsies in Israel (Canaan Cuthrell), and Tel Aviv (Jack Priebus).



TRAVELTERM EXPO



Students returned to the classroom after travel to participate in activities, presentations, and projects to synthesize what they have learned and how it has changed them. The final project culminated in the TravelTerm Expo, an evening presentation to explain their research and showcase their experiences.





**WE PARTNER WITH FAMILIES TO
INSPIRE STUDENTS FOR PURPOSEFUL
LIVES OF LEARNING, GODLINESS, AND
SERVICE.**