



# **Explore Israel Family Trip**

## **Congregation Etz Chaim**

### **Led by Rabbi Daniel Dorsch**

### **July 5 - 16, 2026**

(Draft: May 27, 2025; Subject to change)

#### **Sunday, July 5<sup>th</sup> 2026 – Depart USA on overnight flight**

#### **Monday, July 6<sup>th</sup> 2026 – Going Up into the Land**

- Afternoon arrival in **Israel** to be met and assisted by your ITW representative (*today's program depends on arrival time*).
- Tour **Old Jaffa**, the ancient port city once known as *Zion Gate*, from which Jonah tried to flee and where Solomon brought the Cedars of Lebanon on the way to Jerusalem. Today, paintings and sculptures have been installed in its ancient alleys.
- **Shehekhiyanu**/Welcome ceremony on top of **Tel Jaffa** overlooking modern Tel Aviv.
- Check-in to the **Carlton Hotel** on **Tel Aviv's Mediterranean Coast**.
- **Welcome dinner and orientation** at **Goshen Restaurant**.
- **Overnight: Carlton Hotel, Tel Aviv**

#### **Tuesday, July 7<sup>th</sup> 2026– The Hebrew City and the Jewish State**

- Visit the **Palmach Museum** in **Ramat Aviv** to learn about the elite underground organization which played a critical role in founding the State of Israel.
- Stroll down **Rothschild Boulevard** to hear about David Ben Gurion declaring the new State of Israel outside Independence Hall and the establishment of Tel Aviv standing at the nearby **Founders' Monument**, then see the **Bauhaus** architecture for which central Tel Aviv was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Lunch on own and free time to explore the **Nachalat Binyamin Crafts Fair**. While there, check out the nearby **Carmel Market** and bohemian **Sheinkin Street** – All three of these Tel Aviv icons meet at the "**Magen David Junction**".
- Travel to **Rehovot** for a guided tour of the **Ayalon Institute** – An underground bullet factory used by Jewish forces before the founding of the State of Israel.
- **Free time to swim** in the **Mediterranean Sea** and enjoy **beachside promenade**.
- Free evening - Information will be provided about **local culture** and **entertainment venues**.
- Dinner on own
- **Overnight: Carlton Hotel, Tel Aviv**

### Wednesday, July 8<sup>th</sup> 2026 –Roman Caesarea and Mystical Tzfat

- Check out of hotel.
- Travel north along the **Mediterranean Coast**.
- Visit the ruins of **Caesarea**, including its **Roman Theater, Amphitheater, Hippodrome** and **Promontory Palace**, then ponder a rabbinic debate over Jews attending gladiator games.
- Lunch on own
- Tour mystical **Tzfat's** old synagogues and picturesque alleyways. Tzfat was the cradle of Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism) in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Judaism's Friday night service, Kabbalat Shabbat, and the hymn **Lecha Dodi** originated in Tzfat at that time.
- Drive to the Sea of Galilee region.
- Check-in to the **Ramot Resort Hotel** on **Moshav Ramot** overlooking the **Sea of Galilee**.
- Dinner at hotel
- **Overnight: Ramot Resort Hotel, Sea of Galilee**

### Thursday, July 9<sup>th</sup> 2026 – The Sources of the Jordan River and the Strategic Golan Heights

- Visit **Banias**, Discover Israel's mightiest waterfall and the thrill of the Hanging Trail at the Hermon Stream Nature Reserve, a treasure trove of historical wonders
- **Raft or Kayak** down the **Jordan River** – A great way to cool off on a hot day!
- Lunch on own
- Jeep tour of the **Golan Heights** for a perspective on Israel's complex geopolitics as we visit bunkers where the Syrian army "looked down" at Israel. Then look out at the border region from strategic **Mt. Bental**.

**Please choose one of the following two "touring and tasting" options. Both located on nearby Kibbutz Ein Zivan** (Possibility of splitting the group):

- Chocolate making workshop at the **De Karina Chocolate Factory**.
- OR:**
  - Guided tour of the boutique **Bahat Winery** including wine tasting.
- **Barbeque dinner with young Israeli soldiers** who are giving some of the best years of their lives to the defense of Israel.
- **Overnight: Ramot Resort Hotel, Sea of Galilee**

### Friday, July 10<sup>th</sup> 2026 – Across Israel: Ancient, Modern and Distinctly Jewish

- See the **ancient synagogue** of **Hamat Tiberias** and discover why a wheel of the zodiac appears on its 1,500 year old mosaic floor.
- Continue south through the **Jordan Valley** and ascend to **Jerusalem**.
- Shehekhiyanu/Welcome ceremony overlooking the **Old City of Jerusalem**.
- Lunch on own
- Explore the bustling **Machane Yehuda Market** and take in a slice of local life as you rub elbows with Jerusalemites shopping for Shabbat.

- Check-in to **Inbal Hotel in Jerusalem**.
- Free time to relax and prepare for Shabbat.

***Friday evening/Kabbalat Shabbat options:***

- Join hundreds of other Jews from around the world to ***Greet the Sabbath*** at the **Western Wall**. Option to join the new **egalitarian Kabbalat Shabbat minyan** run by the **Masorti Movement** at the **Masorti Kotel**, where men and women can pray together (begins at 6:00 pm).

**OR:**

- Attend the "**Israeli Kabbalat Shabbat**" service at the **First Station Compound** (begins at 5:00 pm).

**OR:**

- Attend Friday night services at a local Jerusalem synagogue.
- **Festive Shabbat Dinner** at hotel
- **Overnight: Inbal Hotel, Jerusalem**

**Saturday, July 11<sup>th</sup> 2026 – And on the Seventh Day... in Jerusalem**

- **Shabbat morning services** at a the synagogue of your choice (Recommendations and directions will be provided).
- **Shabbat Lunch** at hotel.
- Free time to relax and enjoy **hotel pool**.
- **Late afternoon** walking tour to the historic **Montefiore Windmill** to discover the first neighbourhood built outside the walls of the Old City.
- **AND/OR:** Walking tour to First Temple period burial site at **Ketef Hinnom** – Where archaeologists discovered the oldest biblical text ever found.
- **Havdalah** with Rabbi Dorsch
- Free evening.
- Dinner on own.
- **Recommendation for the evening:** Visit the **First Station Compound**, Jerusalem's restored Ottoman railway station turned restaurant - cafe area.
- **Overnight: Inbal Hotel, Jerusalem**

**Sunday, July 12<sup>th</sup> 2026 – The Old City of Jerusalem – An Ancient Jewish Legacy**

- Discover the archaeological story of the **Western Wall** and episodes from rabbinic texts while standing where Jewish pilgrims walked 2,000 years ago at **Robinson's Arch** and the **Southern Wall Excavations**.
- Walk through the the **Western Wall Tunnels** to discover underground Jerusalem.
- Lunch on own in Jewish Quarter.
- Guided tour of **Jewish Quarter** including the **Cardo, Broad Wall** and **Rooftops** followed by free time to shop and explore on own.
- Explore the **City of David** using the Bible and archaeology to make Jerusalem's stones tell the story of the city's ancient past.
- Wade through **Hezekiah's Tunnel** – A still flowing ancient water system that saved the city of Jerusalem 2,700 years ago (dry option available).

- Dinner on own in Jerusalem's **Mamilla Quarter**.
- Watch the **Night Spectacular** – Sound and light show at the **Tower of David**.
- **Overnight: Inbal Hotel, Jerusalem**

#### **Monday, July 13<sup>th</sup> 2026 – Masada and the Dead Sea: Freedom Fighters or Fanatics?**

- Set out across the **Judean Desert** and ascend **Masada** by cable car to tour the ruins of Herod's palace and the last outpost of Jewish independence.
  - Optional Bar – Bat Mitzvah Ceremony in the ancient synagogue
    - ❖ **Discussion: Which Jewish Legacy – Masada or Yavne?**
- Swim in the **Dead Sea**, the lowest place on earth, at a local resort. The resort also has a fresh water pool and spa facilities. Massage and spa treatments available by prior reservation at own expense.
- Lunch at Dead Sea resort.
- *Time permitting:* Walk in **Ein Gedi Nature Reserve** opportunity to bath in waterfalls and hear how David hid there from King Saul.
- Stop off at "**Abraham's Tent**" for a **Camel ride** and biblical dinner.
- **Overnight: Inbal Hotel, Jerusalem**

#### **Tuesday, July 14<sup>th</sup> 2026 – Holocaust, Remembrance and Continuity**

- Visit **Yad Lakashish** – A unique employment and Tzedakah project serving Jerusalem's elderly citizens and stop off its store *where shopping is a mitzvah*.
- Guided tour of **Yad Vashem** Israel's national Holocaust memorial and museum, including the **Holocaust History Museum** and **Children's Memorial**. (Children under age 10 are not permitted in Yad Vashem's historical museum).
- **Alternate program for younger children:** Visit Jerusalem's **Biblical Zoo**, where you'll see animals which lived in Israel during biblical times. (Children must be accompanied by an adult. Zoo visit not included in the tour price).
- Lunch on own
- See the world renown **Chagall Windows** at **Hadassah Hospital**.
- Experience the life story of Theodore Herzl, the 'father of modern Zionism' at the multimedia **Herzl Museum**, followed by a meaningful visit the **Mt. Herzl Military Cemetery** with a special emphasis on the personal stories of soldiers who fell in the Swords of Iron/October 7<sup>th</sup> War.
- Free evening
- Dinner on own
- **Overnight: Inbal Hotel, Jerusalem**

#### **Wednesday, July 15<sup>th</sup> 2026– Underground Adventure and Departure**

- Visit to the **Israel Museum** to see the **Dead Sea Scrolls** in the **Shrine of the Book** and the **Model of Jerusalem** in the first century. **Recommendation:** Stay at the Israel Museum to explore additional exhibitions, such as Modern

Israeli Art, Synagogue Interiors in the Judaica Section or the Archaeology Wing.

- Lunch on own
- Remainder of afternoon free to explore on own and get in last minute shopping.
- **Late check out**
- Farewell dinner at **Ima Restaurant**
- Transfer to Ben Gurion Airport – ***See you again soon!***

**Thursday, July 16<sup>th</sup> 2026 – Arrive in U.S.A.**

- ***Begin planning your next Israel trip with Rabbi Dorsch and ITW Tours!***

**Trip Highlights**

- 📍 **Old Jaffa** – Explore the ancient port city where history meets modern artistic charm.
- 📍 **Tel Aviv's Rothschild Boulevard** – Walk through the heart of Tel Aviv, where Israel's independence was declared.
- 📍 **Caesarea's Roman Ruins** – Witness the grandeur of Herod's coastal city, with its amphitheater and stunning Mediterranean views.
- 📍 **Tzfat's Mystical Alleys** – Discover the birthplace of Kabbalah and wander through picturesque synagogues.
- 📍 **Golan Heights Jeep Tour** – Gain insight into Israel's complex geopolitics from strategic viewpoints.
- 📍 **Shabbat at the Western Wall** – Experience an unforgettable Friday evening with Jews from around the world.
- 📍 **City of David & Hezekiah's Tunnel** – Walk through biblical history with a hands-on archaeological experience.
- 📍 **Masada & the Dead Sea** – Ascend Masada's fortress and float in the healing waters of the Dead Sea.
- 📍 **Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum** – Reflect on Jewish history at Israel's national Holocaust memorial.
- 📍 **Mount Herzl Military Cemetery** – Honor Israeli heroes with an insightful, meaningful visit.
- 📍 **Israel Museum & Dead Sea Scrolls** – See the world's oldest biblical texts and an ancient model of Jerusalem.