



## Israel Study Tour: A Trip of a Lifetime

**Thursday, August 1, 2013 —**

As part of the Spring/Summer semester at Tyndale, a group of 28 University College and Seminary students visited the Holy Land for the Israel Study Tour. The tour was led by Dr. Rebecca Idestrom, Associate Professor of Old Testament at the Seminary, and Dr. Daniel Driver, Assistant Professor of Old Testament at the University College.



2013 Israel Group at Wilderness of Zin

The emphasis of the course was to study the historical geography of the Bible. They partnered with Dr. Ginger Caessens, who was their instructor and guide from the University of the Holy Land, as well as other professors from the university.

They travelled the path of Israel's ancient tribal regions as well as visited other geographical areas that are important in both Old and New Testament history. "Every place we went to we read Scripture that was related to each specific site," said Dr. Idestrom.

When they visited Galilee and the Sea of Galilee, they were even able "to see a first-century fishing boat from the time of Christ." They visited Nazareth, where Jesus grew up. This included Nazareth village, also dating back to the first-century and were given a good sense of what life in this village would have been like during the time of Christ.

One really exciting place they visited was the Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit at the Israel Museum. Part of this tour also included a visit to one of the caves where some of the Dead Sea Scrolls were found.

Dr. Idestrom lived in Israel for one year as a student in the eighties and has since led the Israel Study Tour five times, three times for Tyndale. Her personal highlight for this trip was visiting the “well preserved sites” in Shiloh, Shechem and Samaria, which are located in the West Bank. This was a memorable experience for Dr. Idestrom because in previous trips the area had not been accessible because of security concerns.

While in Shechem, the group was able to drink water from Jacob’s well. Terry McWhirter, an MDiv student majoring in Biblical Studies said that “travelling the countryside of the Galilee, drinking from Jacob’s well just as Jesus did with the woman from Samaria” was a notable moment for her. “I felt completely grafted into the generations of believers in ‘the one true God’ that came before me in that place.”

Like Terry, Dr. Idestrom’s highlights were many, but this year she was able to see the land from a new perspective. “The story of the paralyzed man and his friends in Mark 2 came alive to me in a new way,” said Dr. Idestrom, who experienced this tour on crutches after rupturing her Achilles tendon in April while playing floor hockey at Tyndale. “I felt like I experienced the Holy Land from the perspective of those who needed healing. So many people came to Jesus crippled and blind – or whatever physical ailment they had – looking for healing.”

The Israel Study Tour is typically offered every two years and is open to Tyndale students, alumni, faculty and staff.

Speaking to people who have not experienced the Holy Land before, Dr. Idestrom states: “I think there’s nothing compared to learning on the ground. To actually experience the land and involve all your senses opens up the whole world of the Bible. It’s a trip of a lifetime.”