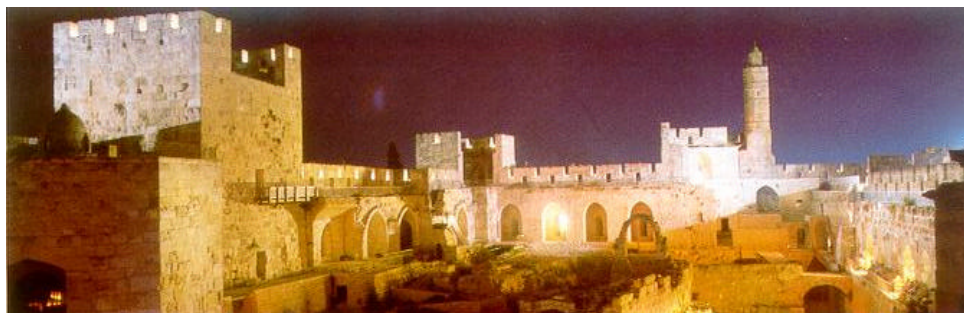


MY TRIP TO JERUSALEM

I would love to describe the emotion I felt living a week under Jerusalem's sky. Although it is quite difficult, because nobody can understand this land if he has never been there.



Jerusalem has got thousands of aspects and hundreds of names. In fact it is a holy land for the three biggest monotheistic religions existing: Hebraism, Christianity, Islamism.

Many people, with their different culture, customs or folk traditions live together on the same territory. But their vision of the world is completely opposite: so a continuous comparison between these conflicting cultures increases the tension, and people become more nervous and aggressive.

I have had the occasion to go to Israel thanks to my village choir, which I am a member of.

On the first week of September 2000, every folkloristic or artistic Italian group was invited to take part to a festival called: "Italy for Palestine". We were expressly called to bring our message of peace to Israel. So we accepted with enthusiasm, even because we knew we had the possibility to visit a very fascinating and mysterious land. We travelled by plane and by bus; we found a very hot climate, the temperature wavered between 35 and 40°.

We all arrived happy, with the strong conviction to give our contribution to peace.

The joyful songs we sang created a sort of union, of cultural exchange between our culture and the Palestinian one.

We had our hotel in Bethlem (which is part of the Palestinian territory) but we visited Jerusalem (on Israeli boundary) several times. I went through Nazareth, Jericho and Hebron. We also went bathing in the Dead Sea, and we had much fun.

The beauty of this land (with its big desert planes and mountains) is wasted by Jewish settlements that are the symbol of their possession over this country. We found much control: check points were installed everywhere, and armed soldiers controlled us and looked into our bags.

We also visited a refugee camp in Ramallah a little village North Jerusalem. We met many little children who smiled at us and were very surprised and excited looking at us; we felt like aliens on a different planet. I also made friends; there were girls of my age very interested to meet us. In particular, I talked with a girl called Nana and we had a great time together. That's why we have been keeping in touch exchanging e-mails. All the people were very nice and invited us to stay and have supper with them; in Arab tradition, eating together is a big manifestation of friendship.

I could communicate in English with some of the adults, who wanted their difficulties be known abroad. One of these people, whose son has been murdered brutally at the age of 18, told me that in every Palestinian family, at least one component has been killed by a Jewish gun.

This travel, but in particular these meetings, have been surely one of the most important experiences of my life. I'm very grateful to music, because if I hadn't been part of the choir, I would have lost a great occasion to enrich my consciousness.

Unfortunately, only a few weeks after we left, *Intifada* started again and the conflicts and tensions seem not to have a rest. Unless the minds of the opposite sides don't convince themselves to go through peace and comprehension, there will be no peace under Jerusalem's sky.