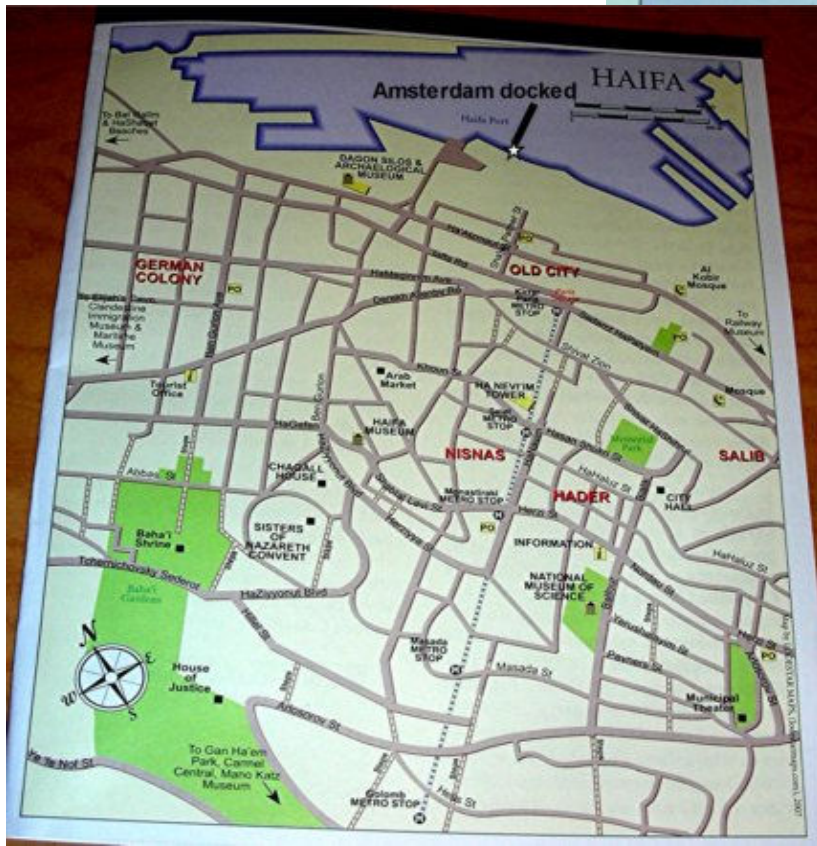


4/6/07 Day 81 – Nazareth - Friday, 6 April, 2007: We arrived in the port city of Haifa, Israel and docked about 7am on a calm sunny day. Here is where we were located on the map.

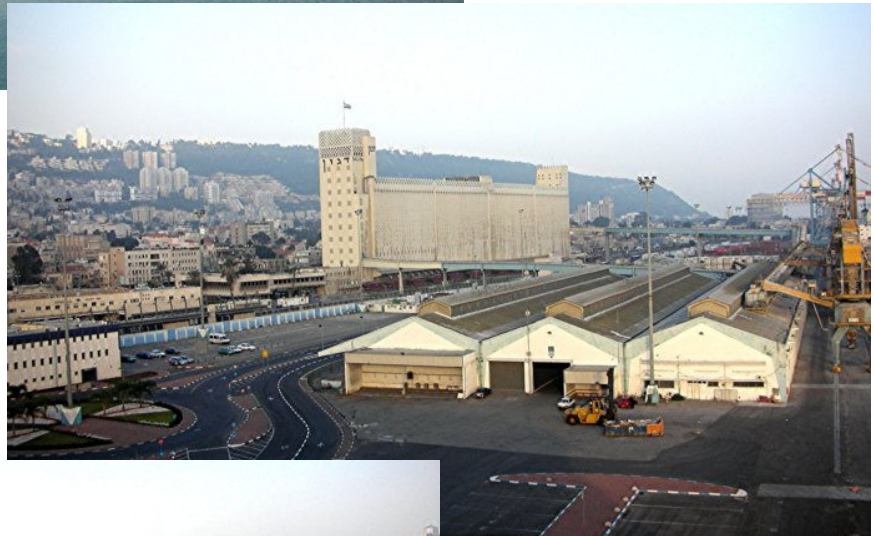


Haifa is the main city of northern Israel. It is the third largest city in Israel. Haifa is one of those pedestrian friendly cities that has a cruise ship pier

right at the doorstep of the city. Many people walked into the city without taking a taxi. Here is a view taken from the city showing the Amsterdam virtually in the city.



Here are some views of Haifa port from the Amsterdam showing more of the typical port facilities. This first picture shows some Israeli Navy ships that were nearby.



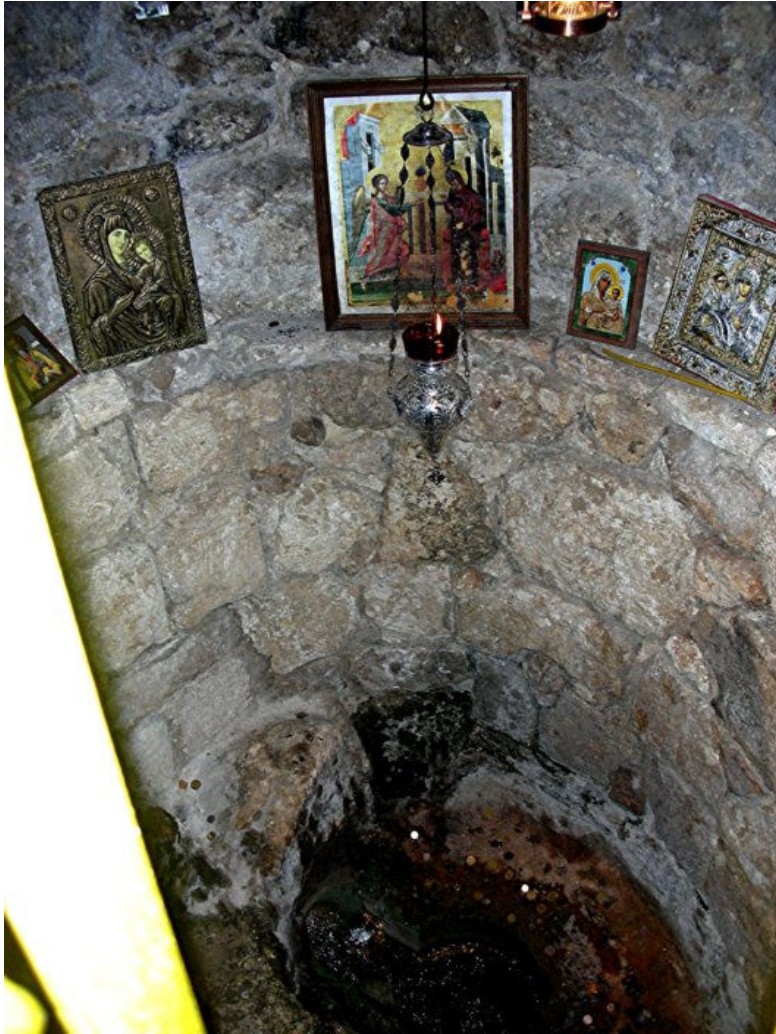
We wanted to take a tour of Nazareth, where Jesus grew up so we took an early bus tour leaving for Nazareth about 8am. The Amsterdam has a policy of sending an escort with each tour group to assist the professional local guides. The escort is a member of the Amsterdam staff who has volunteered to bring up the rear and make sure no passengers get lost in the crowds that are often encountered. Today our guide was Apollonia, the wife of Edward van Zaane, the captain of the Amsterdam. She is very friendly and engages the passengers in conversation while also making sure one of us tourists don't get left behind in some unfamiliar city. The escorts have a white plastic flag with our tour number on it so we can see the group location in crowded situations. Apollonia was our escort today and here she is doing her job.



Apollonia was also our escort two days ago, on the tour to Cairo and the pyramids. As we left Alexandria one of the passengers expressed some worry that the tour would be late in returning to the Amsterdam in the evening. Without hesitation Apollonia assured us all that she had the keys to the ship so that there was no concern for the Amsterdam leaving without us. Today one of the passengers asked her if she still had the keys to the ship. She quickly answered, "Of course, that's why my backpack is so heavy". We all got a good chuckle out of that remark.

Update on passenger needing medical evacuation on Day 30 – 2/14/07. While the Amsterdam was in Alexandria, Egypt, Joy, who had been evacuated by helicopter for medical reasons on 14 February returned to the ship to continue cruising. She and her husband, Larry, sit at a dinner table near ours and there was a great reunion upon their return. Both Larry and Joy were on our tour to Nazareth today.

The bus ride to Nazareth from Haifa took only one hour and our first stop was the Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation, built on the site of a water spring near where Mary, the mother of Jesus, is said to have lived as a girl. Church services were in progress but we were led across the back of the sanctuary and down to a lower level where water was flowing out of the bedrock.



Here is a photo of the spring that Mary may have used as a young woman.



We exited the Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation and the bus took us a short distance to the Catholic Church of the Annunciation.

This church is built on the site where Mary is said to have lived when the archangel Gabriel told her that she would bear the Son of God. The

Catholic Church of the Annunciation was closed at the time we were there so it was not possible to view the actual site of Mary's house which is on display inside.

We were given some free time to roam the market place that was adjacent to the Catholic Church of the Annunciation. This was a traditional open air market taking up most of the narrow street. One sight that caught our eye was a butcher shop where they had hung butchered animals ready for selling to customers who may come by.



While riding around Israel we had noticed that gas stations made a prominent display of two numbers like 15 and 185 in large signs. We assumed the numbers had something to do with the price of gasoline but it wasn't obvious how to come up with the price per gallon. There was a gas station near where the bus had parked and that provided an opportunity to photograph one of their signs which appeared to advertise the price of gasoline. Check out the red sign with the numbers 15 and 185.



We asked our guide, Edna, about the meaning of the numbers on the gas station signs. She said the price of gasoline is fixed by the Israel government for each of the grades of gasoline and for diesel fuel. She thought regular gas price was fixed at 5.6 shekels per liter. That would be about \$1.35 USD per liter depending on the current exchange rate. Using the crude approximation of 4 liters per gallon that's 4 liter/gal x \$1.35/liter equals \$5.40 USD/gallon. Since the dealers can't lower the fixed price of fuel they found a loophole in the law that allows them to give a discount on the fixed price in order to compete with the other gasoline stations around them. Edna said the numbers posted on the gas station signs showed how much discount the dealer would give per



liter. The number 85 stands for 0.85 shekel (\$0.20 USD) discount per liter of gasoline and the 185 stands for 0.185 shekel (\$0.05 USD) discount per liter of diesel fuel. Using the 4 liter per gallon approximation yields a discount of \$0.80 USD per gallon of gasoline and \$0.20 USD per gallon of diesel.

This dealer's sign near Jerusalem, shown on the left, is meeting the Nazareth dealer's 0.15 shekel/liter discount for gasoline but he is not competitive with

only a 0.170 shekel/liter discount on diesel.

We got back on the bus and Edna said she was taking us to a spot near Nazareth where Jesus performed a miracle early in his ministry.

The miracle was that he was walking among a group of people and then he disappeared.

According to tradition the miracle happened on a mountain on the outskirts of Nazareth. Edna pointed out this mountain shown on the right as the place where the miracle took place.



A beautiful little park has been created at the top of the hill and the bus took us to that spot which was deserted except for our group. Edna led us on a paved path to the edge of a cliff looking



down on a farming valley near Nazareth. She then did something we had never seen before. She had brought her Bible and asked our escort, Appalonia, to read Luke, chapter 4, verses 16-30. Appalonia proceeded to read the verses which described how Jesus had made some observations that angered the local people in the Nazareth synagogue.

Part of the problem was that they had known Jesus as a child and could not accept him as someone speaking with authority. They

were angry and took him to the brow of a hill outside the city of Nazareth and prepared to throw him over the cliff. However, he apparently became invisible and simply moved through the crowd and escaped to continue his ministry.

In the quiet of the little park it was a pleasant experience to contemplate the Bible passages about Jesus possibly referring to this very hill we were standing on.

After this thoughtful moment we all got back on the bus and were taken back to the ship in Haifa.

When we got back to Haifa we were taken along a road that provided a view down into the city. One of the most beautiful sights was the gardens that are kept by worshipers of the Bahi'a faith. The gardens stretch from the base of the mountain up to near the top where the road was located. A shrine with a gold dome is located near the center of the gardens as shown in the photograph on the right. All faiths, including the Bahi'a



are permitted in Israel as long as they do not aggressively attempt to recruit new members to the faith. This beautiful garden is a wonderful sight and apparently has been encouraged by the government and tourist interests of Haifa.

We returned to the Amsterdam and prepared to depart. We got underway for Kusadasi, Turkey about 11pm.