May 29, Tuesday: Haifa. Depart this morning for Haifa, making some interesting stops en route.

Morning sightseeing at Jericho, one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world, with evidence of settlement dating back to 9000 BCE, providing important information about early human habitation in the Near East. It is known in Judeo-Christian tradition as the place of the Israelites' return from bondage in Egypt, led by Joshua, the successor to Moses. Archaeologists have unearthed the remains of more than 20 successive settlements in Jericho, the first of which dates back 11,000 years, almost to the very beginning of the Holocene epoch of the Earth’s prehistory.

Drive to Bet She’an to walk through this former Roman city and admire the Roman Theater. The semi-circular theater was built of contrasting black basalt and white limestone blocks around 200 AD when Scythopolis, as the Roman city of Bet She’an was known, was at its height. Excavated more than 30 years ago, the theater is the largest and best preserved in Israel.

After lunch drive to the Mount of Beatitudes enshrined by Christian tradition as the site of the Sermon on the Mount. The domed Roman Catholic church here was completed in 1937. The marble altar is in the center of the round church, immediately below the dome, the walls covered by mosaics with quotations from the Beatitudes. The church is surrounded by a terrace and offers a superb view of the Sea of Galilee.

Close by is Tabgha, where Jesus miraculously “multiplied” two fish and five loaves of bread to feed the crowds that followed him. The current church, dedicated in 1981, incorporates some remains of its fifth-century predecessor. In front of the altar here is the small and simple Loaves and Fishes, perhaps the most famous Byzantine mosaic in Israel.

End the day at Capernaum, the Center of Jesus' Ministry in Galilee and the spot to which he called many of his disciples, healed the afflicted, taught in the synagogue, and ultimately left the city for not heeding his message. The Franciscan Order whose mission in the Holy Land has been to acquire and preserve sites sacred to Christianity took possession of Capernaum in 1894. Work on the site brought to light a large Jewish town on the lake shore that had thrived from the Second Temple early Roman period (about the first century BC) to the Byzantine period (fifth to sixth centuries AD). Admire the modern church, which is literally suspended from its outer support pillars over the scanty remains of Capernaum’s central Christian shrine, the House of St. Peter. The church follows the octagonal outline of the Byzantine basilica that once encompassed the house where Jesus is supposed to have visited. The partly restored synagogue dominates the complex. Stone benches line the inside walls of the building, recalling its original primary function as a place of assembly in the Torah, which was read and explained on sabbaths and holidays.

Drive to Haifa, Israel's third largest city of over 270,000 people. Surrounded by sea and beaches on three sides, the city is built on and around the Carmel Mountain. Transfer to the Colony Hotel. B, L, D.
**May 30. Wednesday: Haifa.** Haifa was ruled for four centuries by the Ottomans and gradually grew into a cosmopolitan city whose port once served the entire Middle East. Haifa is a unique city with Jewish, Arab, and Christian communities intermingling and residing side by side. Haifa contains remnants of old settlements from the second century BC (Tel Shikmona), through the ancient Persians, the Hellenistic-Romans, the medieval Byzantines, the Arab-Muslims, Crusaders, and Mamluks, the Ottoman Turks, and Mandate-era British—all have left their historical imprint on the city.

Our tour of Haifa will begin at the summit of Mount Carmel, which offers a breathtaking panoramic view of Haifa Bay and Western Galilee. Close by is the Mane Katz Museum, the studio and house where the Expressionist painter Emmanuel Katz (1894–1962) lived and worked from 1958 until his death. Nearby is the Shrine of the Bab, whose gilded dome dominates as well as illuminates Haifa’s skyline. Haifa is the world center for the Baha’i Faith, which was founded in Iran in the nineteenth century and holds as its central belief the unity of mankind. A special visit has been arranged to the upper levels of the gardens.

Please note that this does involve walking down steep steps.

Haifa prides itself on the multi-cultural and inter-religious tolerance that has been typical of the city for many years, and we could arrange a round-table at the University of Haifa with someone like Professor Rachel Hertz Lazarowitz.

Enjoy a wonderful lunch at Duniana restaurant, near Acre.

After lunch walk through the ancient port city of Acre (now Akko), which was the main base for the Crusades. Here one can see the stunning halls and buildings of the Hospitaller and Templar Knights. Held by the Ottoman Turks in the eighteenth century, the city successfully repelled an attack by Napoleon, who laid siege to the town for two months without breaching its defenses. Before returning to Haifa there will be time to walk through the vibrant market.

Farewell dinner tonight. **B, L, D.**

**May 31. Thursday: Return home.** Drive to the Tel Aviv airport for your flight back to the U.S. **B.**