

May 18 – continued

TRAVEL

Taking the Kids to Israel

History With a Whiff of Adventure



Yoray Liberman for The New York Times

Lively and colorful, laid back and casual, Israel fits the bill for families seeking adventure and intrigue. At Genesis Land, a Biblical-style encampment, tourists can take a camel trek through the Judean Desert.



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The Ayalon Institute, formerly a clandestine munitions factory built by the Haganah (the pre-independence armed forces), has been restored and is open to the public.



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No trip to Israel would be complete without a dip in the Dead Sea, the deepest [?] salt lake on earth, sitting 2,621 feet below sea level. The mud is rich in minerals and is often used by swimmers for impromptu spa treatments.

There is a balm in Gilead
To make the wounded whole;
There is a balm in Gilead
To heal the sin-sick soul...

So affirms the Negro Spiritual. But the Lord, via Jeremiah (46:2) warned a soon-to-be defeated pharaoh: "Go up to Gilead and take balm... but you multiply remedies in vain; there is no healing for you."

In view of the [late Prime Minister Menachem] Begin Doctrine, which holds that Israel will not countenance any hostile country in the region acquiring nuclear weapons, the land of History With a Whif of Adventure will soon have to put up or shut up when it comes to dealing with Iran's uranium enrichment program. On the put up side, Israel's arsenal includes six hundred American-designed and manufactured "bunker buster" bombs. Though given the extraordinarily difficult logistics of a mission involving planes, the Israelis might opt for the ICBM route against which the Iranians possess no defense. The Israeli Jericho III missile, purportedly just come online, has a range of up to 6,500 kilometers, and can carry a multi-megaton nuclear warhead...

Imagine.

May 19

It is we the workers who built these palaces and cities here in Spain and in America and everywhere. We, the workers, can build others to take their place. And better ones! We are not in the least afraid of ruins. We are going to inherit the earth; there is not the slightest doubt about that. The bourgeoisie might blast and ruin its own world before it leaves the stage of history. We carry a new world here, in our hearts. That world is growing this minute.

Said Buenaventura Durruti, who, like Woody Guthrie, and the fall of the Bastille, shares your daughter's birthday.

May 19

On a map of Baghdad, the US Army's Forward Operating Base Falcon is clearly within city limits.

Except that Iraqi and American military officials have decided it's not.

As the June 30 deadline for US soldiers to be out of Iraqi cities approaches, there are no plans to relocate the roughly 3,000 American troops who help maintain security in south Baghdad....

"We and the Iraqis decided it wasn't in the city," says a US military official. The base on the southern outskirts of Baghdad's Rasheed district is an example of the fluidity of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) agreed to late last year, which orders all US combat forces out of Iraqi cities, towns, and villages by June 30.

"We consider the security agreement a living document," says a senior US commander....

Reports the *Christian Science Monitor*.

May 21

Returning from your early morning run, you back your bike, its handlebars laden with bags of fruit and vegetables, into the elevator. A fly gets on too. Large and very buzzy. Ah, you'll be companions for the whole ride up. You hit the button marked 20, and then, to move things along, reach to press the Close Door button. But you miss and instead hit the button right above it, first floor.

When the door opens at 1, the fly alights on the grooved metal saddle along which the elevator door rollers run. The door begins to shut. Which way will the fly fly? Aloft, he zags in back into the elevator then zigs out into the first floor hallway just as the door shuts. Upward the mechanism of *la vida* takes you, having moved a fly one floor up in a twenty-one story building.

Yesterday, you continue, after a nearly a year's hiatus, to plumb the mysteries of the trout lilies. Or more precisely, how very often trout lily leaves grow through dead

leaves on the forest floor, often becoming trapped within the vein structure, unable to unfurl.

Last May, on the trail up at Slide Mountain with F., you'd observed the same phenomenon: numerous trout lily leaves, partly pushed through, and uplifting as they grow, multiple layers – you counted as many as six – of fallen tree leaves, usually beeches.



And at the time you'd asked yourselves, how does this happen? Do the trout lily shoots opportunistically find preexisting holes or tears to grow through, or do they create them?



This year, again, you observed plenty of trout lily leaves trapped in mid-unfurl by the skeletal structures of the fallen leaves.



But this time you also saw some trout lilies that had grown clear through a hole precisely the circumference of their own stems, without getting trapped by the layers of pierced leaves.



And nearby, grasses too, which had grown in a similar fashion, directly through the cellulose tissue of dead leaves.

Is there some spiraling force that drives these sharp shoots, like tiny, expanding needles through the fallen leaves? It would seem so. Otherwise the living plant would have to seek a ready-made hole or a tear to grow through, and its stem would likely be forced to veer at off at an angle from its initial trajectory. But this is not so in the plants you observed – the stems were as straight as anything in nature. Or as the Ba Gua axiom goes: Straight but not straight....

Yet on a day like this, the dry leaves are so light, its difficult to imagine how any point, however sharp could pierce straight through. You'd think that even the slightest pressure would simply push them aside. But perhaps this piercing happens when the fallen leaves are saturated with water from rain or snowfall...

Fly one is not fly two.

The Chinese government says that 150 million of its citizens will have to be resettled as, in northwest as well as several other parts of the country, the water table drops, temperatures climb, rivers run dry, wells salinate, dust storms blow, and farms and villages submerge in sand.

A lifetime spent satisfying the needs of hungry abstractions.

No doubt the species was mutating, perhaps even sub-speciating or something more. But into what, who could say?

For a second time in as many days you see, bound-hopping along the sidewalk on a leash, a three-legged dog.

O Adam S., tell us: what is the relations between the production of pins and the multiplication of false need(le)s?

So that even the leased among us can clearly see...

Now that things have come fool circle.



6 p.m. Church Street near Leonard. On the sidewalk, a slick new stainless steel bike park and pedestrian bench. In the street, a dumpster full of perfectly good rolling chairs. To the left down the block, a dumpster full of perfectly good filing cabinets.

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Hexagram 1, heaven over heaven: Qian, the creative. Yang qi reaches its peak. Spring grain buds fully formed. Plants begin to fruit.