

GLOSSARY

Aqaba	A Jordanian town located on the Gulf of Aqaba next to Eilat. Prior to the founding of Israel in 1948, it was the only settlement located where the Arava meets the Gulf of Aqaba.
Arava	An extension of the Great Rift Valley of Africa, which extends almost due north from the Gulf of Aqaba 106 miles to the Dead Sea. It forms the eastern edge of the Negev and the border between Israel and Jordan.
ashel	(Hebrew) Tamarisk tree.
Baruch H'Shem	(Hebrew) "Blessed be the [Holy] Name [of God]."
Bedu	(Arabic) Literally "tribes," the name by which the nomads of the Middle Eastern deserts call themselves. Usually called "Bedouin" in English.
be'er	(Hebrew) A well.
Be'er Sheva	Also Beersheba, A city of about 250,000 located in South Central Israel and considered the "Gateway to the Negev."
biq'at	(Hebrew) A wide dry valley or <i>wadi</i> .
British Mandate	The period from 1922 until 1948 when the British ruled what are today Israel and Palestine under authority from the League of Nations.
Chabad	(Hebrew) A Chassidic sect, also called Lubavitch.
challot	(Hebrew - singular <i>challah</i>) The ceremonial braided loaves of bread prepared for the Sabbath and Holidays.
Chassid	(Hebrew) A member of one of several sects of Orthodox Judaism, known for their mysticism.
Chumash	(Hebrew) The first Five Books of the Hebrew Bible—Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. See also <i>Tenach</i> .
Cohanim	(Hebrew, pl.) The priestly caste that officiated over the Ark of the Covenant and later the rituals of the Temple.
Darb el-Haj	(Arabic) "Way of the Haj" The caravan trail from Cairo to Aqaba to Mecca followed by Islamic pilgrims.

Eilat	The southernmost town of Israel, located where the Arava meets the Gulf of Aqaba, between Egypt and Jordan.
el hudud	(Arabic) The sacred bounds of Mecca within which unbelievers are forbidden.
Ensha'Allah	(Arabic) "May it be God's will" or "God willing."
Erev Shabbat	(Hebrew) Literally, "evening of the Sabbath." Friday evening, the beginning of the Jewish Sabbath. Under Jewish custom, the Sabbath and other Holy Days begin and end at sundown.
gabiyah	(Arabic) Loose-fitting, pajamalike trousers, worn by some <i>Bedu</i> and informally in the home by other Arabs.
Ha chol besadar	(Hebrew) "Everything's O.K."
Haj	(Arabic) The pilgrimage to the Holy City of Mecca required once in a lifetime of all Muslims physically and financially able to make the journey. Also spelled <i>Hadj</i> and <i>Hajj</i> .
halvah	A Middle Eastern confectionery made primarily of crushed sesame.
har	(Hebrew) Mountain.
Hathor	The Egyptian goddess of desert regions, turquoise, and copper, often depicted with the features of a cow.
Intifada	(Arabic) The Palestinian uprising of the late 1980s and early 1990s and, again, beginning in September 2000 against Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank.
jahrah	(Arabic) A clay water jar.
Jehennem	(Arabic) Hell.
kafiah	(Arabic) The traditional cloth head cover worn by many Arabs.
kasharut	(Hebrew) The religious dietary laws that define the selection, preparation, and eating of food.
kazuach	A desert plant that tastes like celery and is used for flavoring lentils and similar dishes.
khan	(Arabic) Rest house or caravansary.

kibbutz	(Hebrew, pl. <i>kibbutzim</i>) Communal farm, which formed the agricultural foundation for the Jewish settlements of Palestine and the early state of Israel.
Koran	(Arabic) The Holy Scripture of Islam. Also transliterated as "Qur'an."
la'baneh	(Hebrew) A soft goat cheese, with the consistency of yogurt or heavy sour cream, common to the desert.
leba	(Arabic) An unleavened loaf of bread, baked in the coals of a fire.
loess	A wind-deposited soil, typical of deserts, composed of clay, silt, and sand.
mahmal	(Arabic) A canvas-covered tentlike sedan chair carried on the backs of camels.
matzah	(Hebrew) Unleavened bread. Historically baked by the Hebrew People when they fled Egypt and symbolically eaten by Jews during the Passover celebration
metzivot	(Hebrew - pl.) Upright stone pillars, often—but not always—associated with idolatry.
michiah	(Hebrew) A pleasure.
minyon	(Hebrew) The minimum of ten adult Jews (males in the Orthodox tradition) required for public prayer.
Negev	The desert region that encompasses all of southern Israel, extending south from Be'er Sheva 120 miles to the Gulf of Aqaba. During the Desert Revolt of 1916–1918, Lawrence of Arabia referred to the Negev as the Desert of Southern Syria.
playa	A depression in which runoff accumulates and later dries, often leaving a salt flat.
pygarg	Likely the biblical word for the addax, a large goatlike animal with long "wavy" horns, which inhabits flat areas.
rujum	(Arabic) A small stone cairn, used as a trail marker, typically placed at the edge of a descent.
Seder	(Hebrew) Literally "order" or "arrangement." The name of the ritual service that accompanies the first two evenings of the Passover celebration in the Diaspora or the first evening in Israel.

shabbat	(Hebrew) The Jewish Sabbath, which extends from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday.
Shacharut	The small village 35 miles north of Eilat situated on the edge of the Negev overlooking the Arava. My journeys began and ended in Shacharut.
shachor	(Hebrew) Black.
shalom	(Hebrew) Literally "peace." A conventional greeting and parting.
Shari'a	(Arabic) The corpus of Islamic Law.
Shema	(Hebrew) The core prayer of Judaism, which affirms the belief in and the oneness of God.
tallit	(Hebrew) The striped and fringed prayer shawl worn by adult Jewish males in the Orthodox tradition during synagogue services.
Talmud	The commentaries on the Torah compiled and written by Rabbinic assemblies in Palestine and Babylonia, following destruction of the Second Temple.
tehinah	A Middle Eastern condiment, with the consistency and color of heavy cream, made out of sesame. Also spelled "tahineh."
Tenach	(Hebrew) The complete Jewish Scripture, including the Five Books of Moses (Chumash or Torah), Prophets (Nevim), and Writings (Ketuvim).
terebinth	A large long-lived oaklike tree, associated with tree worship, especially among the Canaanites.
thamile	(Arabic) A location in a <i>wadi</i> , usually characterized by gravelly soil, where water pools just beneath the surface.
Torah	Depending on context, may refer to the First Five Books of Moses, the Jewish Bible in its entirety (See also <i>Tenach</i>), or the entire corpus of Jewish law, including the Bible, the Biblical Commentaries (Talmud), Rabbinic responsa, and the associated laws of behavior and social justice. The Jewish Bible is known to Christians as the Old Testament.
wadi	(Arabic) A dry watercourse characteristic of Middle Eastern deserts, similar to a canyon or arroyo of the American West.
yafruk	A Negev plant, which when crushed produces soap.

yallah (Arabic) Literally, "Ya Allah"—"With the Help of God." Commonly means "Go!," "Let's go."

za'atar A Middle Eastern spice blend, of which the primary ingredient is hyssop, a mintlike spice used during the Exodus in the purification rituals for the Ark of the Covenant and later in the Ancient Temple.

zuqe (Hebrew) A cliff, scarp.