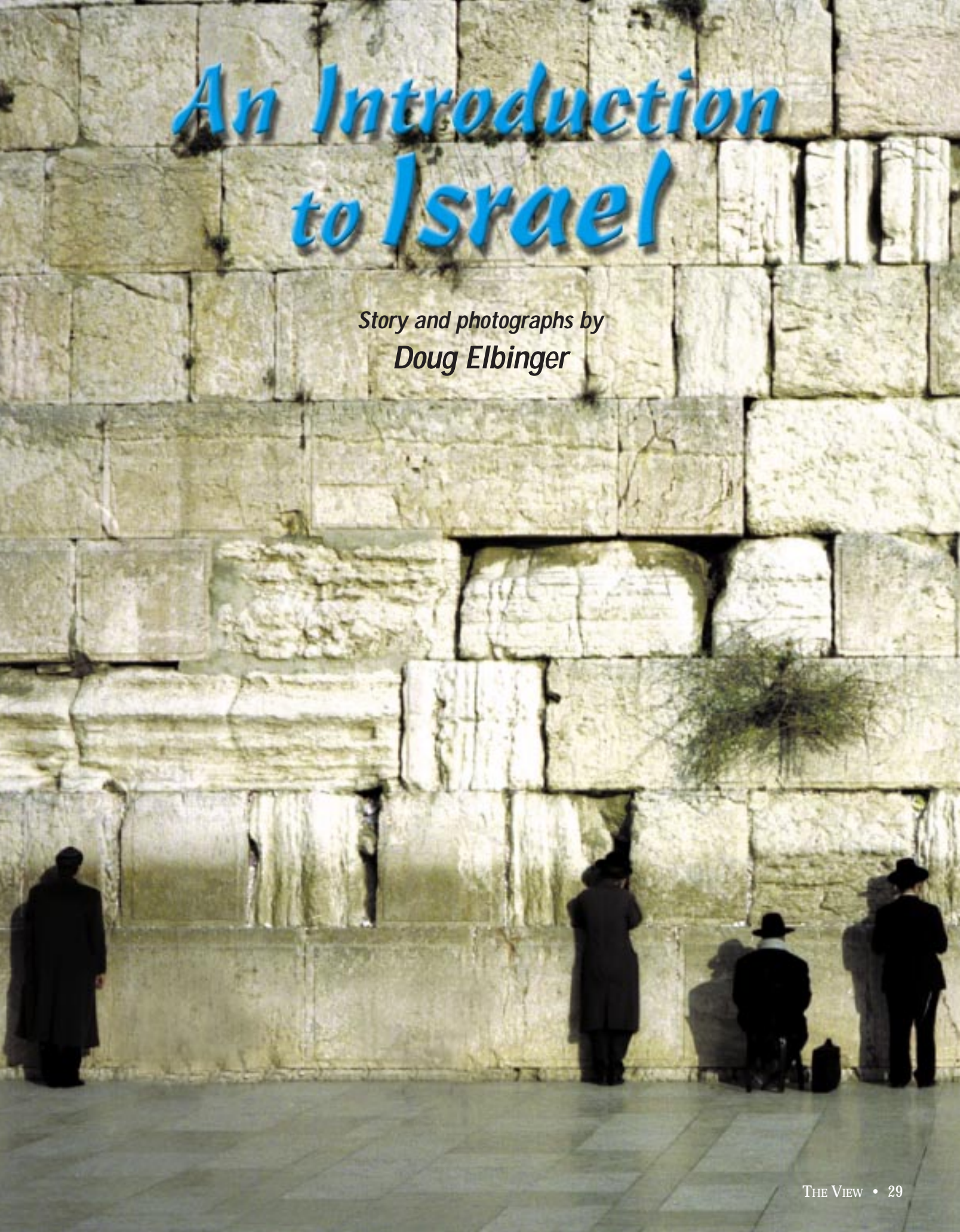


An Introduction to Israel

*Story and photographs by
Doug Elbinger*





previous page: The Wailing Wall in Jerusalem
top left: Excavations at Tel Megiddo
(Tel Megiddo means Armageddon in Hebrew)
top right: Israeli soldier in Jaffa Harbor
bottom left: Ruins in old Jerusalem along the Via Delrosa
bottom right: Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem
(Said to be the burial place of Abraham)

Israel is the original land of hospitality. For over five thousand years, Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike, have been welcoming pilgrims and tourists, as well as coping with invaders with time honored traditions. Israel is smaller than you might imagine. From one end of the country to the other is about the equivalent of a trip from Detroit to Traverse City. Even the sea of Galilee (aka, Lake Kinneret) is only slightly larger than Michigan's Crystal Lake. Nowhere else on the planet will you find so much history packed into such a small space. Kick over any rock and you'll feel connected to the origins of civilization.

I felt perfectly safe traveling there. Everywhere were IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) soldiers (male and female) packing Uzzis and M-16s. The major road signs are in three languages; Hebrew, Arabic, and English. If it wasn't for this, you might think you are in southern California. Not speaking a word of





Hebrew or Arabic, I was pleasantly surprised to find many Israelis speak English. I was also able to get by pretty well with my modest knowledge of Russian. Over a million Russians have immigrated to Israel in the last few years, making Russian the second language. Traveling by myself, I quickly figured out how to use their efficient and inexpensive public transportation system. I even hitchhiked a ride to a bus stop for the first time in thirty years.

Mostly, I toured the northern Golan/ Galilee region on the back of a



*top left: An Arabic inscription
top right: Jewish merchant in Jaffa
bottom left: Market in old Jerusalem
bottom right: A carpet merchant takes time for morning prayer*





One thing that quickly became apparent is that there are more artists and craftspersons per square foot than anywhere I've been before. Be prepared for art fairs, endless galleries, concerts, and various cultural festivals all year long. I was there in January, Israel's off season weather wise, but was not disappointed. Photographically speaking, Israel offers endless opportunities all year long.

motorcycle, taking backroads and visiting places I have often read about in the news, or seen in the movies, like Tiberias, Capernaum, Nazareth, Sefat, Tel Megiddo, Zippori, and Caesarea. It was not unusual to find a "cybercafe" in many small towns where you could relax, get a drink and e-mail your friends, telling them about your daily adventures in the Holy Land.

Douglas Ellinger



*top left:
Yitzak, the
goldsmith in Sefat.
top right:
Doug greets a 'Druse'
merchant in the Golan
(The Druse are a sect of
people exclusive to
Northern Israel who
follow their own religious
beliefs and customs)
center right:
Israeli soldier on the
bus with cell phone
and an M-16
bottom left:
Roman ruins in
Caesarea
bottom right:
Local hostel offers
accommodations for
a mere \$3 per night*

