Letter From Jerusalem

She feels like “a dumb American,” she says, having been told on a London bus by a kindly London lady all about queuing up and boarding in an orderly London fashion, she and her friends.

And after security checks as sobering as a prayer, she talks on the flight from Stanstead with “a really nice Jewish lady” while in black hats, black coats, black beards, men—she calls them “funny-looking”—pray aloud at the rear of the plane. “Now this,” she says, “is going to take some getting used to.” She and her ordinary ways. But what she sees and hears is ordinary—signs and talk upon the streets, kibbutz view.

She’s slipped into an element both strange and ordinary. A paddling out from shore. “A dumb American.” Each hike of hand or proffered English word from strangers she finds strange to the ear and at this juncture kind. She’s never seen a fig tree, seldom tasted figs, or seen an olive grow. Nor has she walked in dust touched on a Galilean shore by the flesh of some extraordinary life.

Lewis Horne