

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