

# DREAMLAND

It was, literally, the land of milk and honey – and in the earliest paintings, so lushly exotic as to be out of a dream. But mid-19th century travelers to the Holy Land, expecting to find picturesque figures posed amid romantic ruins, with walled cities in the middle distance and scenic hills beyond, found desolation instead. The storied Holy Land was mostly rocks and dust: “a caked depopulated hell”, the American writer Herman Melville called it. Even Jerusalem was ramshackle and lifeless. “Of all the lands there are for dismal scenery,” young visitor Mark Twain wrote, “I think Palestine must be the prince.”

The 19th century missionaries, pilgrims and tourists, archeologists and Bible scholars, settlers, and consular officers who came to Holy Land found then, a place unimagined. But their feeling for the idea of the place – their dreams of it – abided. Whether influenced by the growing interest of other Western nations, or enhanced accessibility to the country, or improvements in transportation - from these early visits there emerged a connection to the Holy Land that has influenced American politicians and policy-makers to the present day.



Jerusalem from Mount Scopus. From *Picturesque Palestine, Sinai, and Egypt*, by Charles Wilson (on display).

The hand-written letters and documents on display are taken from the Collections of the Shapell Manuscript Foundation. The books and souvenirs are from the collections of The National Library of Israel.

The Shapell Manuscript Foundation encourages, by way of documentary films, scholarly publications and public exhibitions, the study and exploration of unique avenues of American and Jewish history through its extensive holdings of original historical documents.

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## American Travelers to the Holy Land in the 19th Century

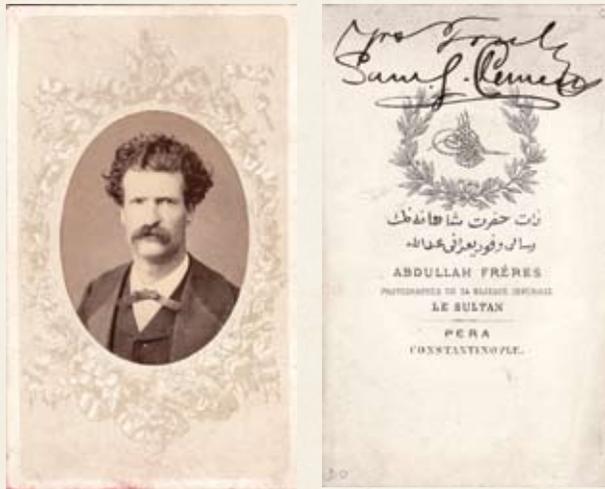
*“Palestine is desolate and unlovely.  
And why should it be otherwise?  
Can the curse of the Deity beautify a land?  
Palestine is no more of this work-day world.  
It is sacred to poetry and tradition – it is  
dream-land.”*

Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad*, 1869.

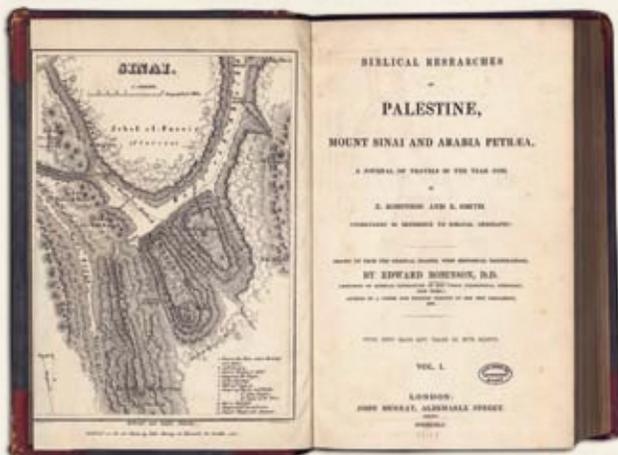
The National Library of Israel  
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**The sections are as follows:**

- Dreamland (Introduction) •
- Opening up to the West • Explorers • Writers
- Travel to the Holy Land • Guestrooms •
- Tour Guides and Agencies • Famous Visitors
- Women and Children • Missionaries



Signed photograph of Mark Twain, taken in Constantinople, September 1867 on the way to the Holy Land.



*Biblical Researches in Palestine, Mount Sinai, and Arabia Petraea; a Journal of Travels in 1838*, by Edward Robinson and Eli Smith (1841).

The mid-19th century was a time of great political change and inevitably, modernization. Travel was facilitated by technological advances, particularly the coal-fired steamship and the electric telegraph, the availability of hotel accommodation, as well as the emergence of organized travel agencies. Unique for Americans, in the wake of the Civil War (1861-65), was the possibility of spiritual renewal through travel to the Holy Land, then part of the Ottoman Empire.

Considerable prominence is given in this exhibition to the great American humorist and writer Mark Twain. Twain's account of his Holy Land travels and adventures in *The Innocents Abroad* (1869) contributed to the inauguration of a new age of travel writing.

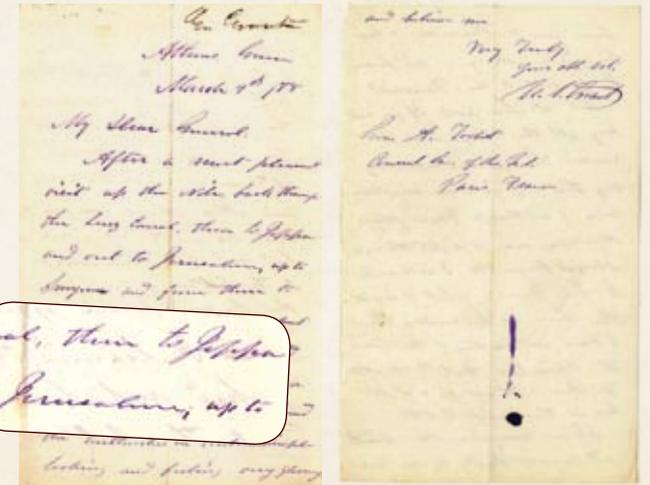


Model of the *Mediterranean Hotel* at its second location in 1867, when Mark Twain was a guest. Scale 1:75.



Sections of olive wood, cut from branches and carved with different patterns.

Other important American visitors featured are the writer Herman Melville and the Civil War generals Ulysses S. Grant and William T. Sherman. They were all guests at Jerusalem's Mediterranean Hotel, the main focus of "Guestrooms." This hostelry was also the intended destination of the Roosevelt family.



General Grant describes his journey mentioning Jaffa and Jerusalem to Alfred Torbert, U.S. consul general in Paris in a letter dated 9 March 1878.



The Roosevelt family. Theodore Roosevelt is second from the left.