

BYU Jerusalem Center Video Transcript

[00:00:00] (*INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC*)

[00:00:08] Welcome to the Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies. We are pleased to share with you a spectacular view of the Old City and the distinctive architecture and spirit of this wonderful and unique building. Following this brief audio visual introduction, you will hear a short organ recital and tour the upper floors of the center as well as its gardens. Because much of the building is used for academic and housing purposes, some areas are not open to tours. This video will allow you to see these areas of the center and introduce you to those who live and study here. The Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies is an extension of Brigham Young University, a large private American institution. BYU, as it is often called, is located at the base of the Rocky Mountains in Provo, Utah, in the western part of the United States. BYU is one of the largest private universities in the world. It is sponsored by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, commonly called the Mormon Church. The Utah campus accommodates around 33,000 students who come from more than 100 countries. The Mormon Church also has colleges and universities in Idaho, Hawaii, and Salt Lake City, Utah. At these institutions, it provides college level educational opportunities directly to more than 70,000 students. In many countries outside of the United States, the Mormon Church provides grants to local students who are church members to support their post high school technical or college educations. Most BYU students are enrolled in undergraduate programs in sciences, arts, social sciences, humanities, communications, and business. The University has noted graduate and professional programs in accounting, business, law, nursing, education, and engineering.

[00:02:40] Many BYU students are fluent in a foreign language and have lived outside of the United States. The University is noted for its foreign language study programs with more than 50 languages taught at its Provo, Utah campus.

[00:03:00] Because of the language skills and international interests of its students, BYU offers opportunities for students to study, participate in internships, or conduct mentored research in countries throughout the world. Two of these programs are located at facilities owned by BYU, one in London and one in Jerusalem. The program housed in this building is the largest of BYU's

study abroad programs. Education is viewed by the Mormon Church, which sponsors Brigham Young University, as a divine commandment that is best summarized by the statement, "The glory of God is intelligence." Strong moral and ethical principles are also important to the University and its sponsoring Church. As such, students who study at BYU commit to live by a strict moral and ethical code.

[00:04:14] This spectacular building completed in 1987 was designed by Israeli architect David Resnick and American architect Frank Ferguson. It was built under the direction of construction engineer Eliezer Rahat. Since its completion, the building has been beautifully maintained by the MOR Company. The center has eight floors built above the mountain side on 400 pylons that extend to the bedrock of the mountain. You are currently sitting in a room on the eighth floor or the top most level of the building. Many of the building's architectural features, including its many exterior arches, reflect the architecture of the Old City. The building and its gardens were designed to be part of the architectural heritage of Jerusalem and also to contribute to the beauty of Jerusalem. This is a building of light. Each of its windows frames a view of the old city. Its classic simplicity and construction materials, which include teak, oak, glass, marble, and especially Jerusalem limestone, are meant to convey serenity and peace.

[00:05:42] In the main auditorium, which you will visit in a few minutes, visitors see an inspiring view of Jerusalem as they listened to organ and piano recitals or attend concerts. The organ, built by Marcussen Company in Denmark, is one of the finest in the Near East. The instrument contains over 3000 pipes, most of which are located behind those that are visible. The center hosts one of the most prestigious concert programs in the country. Programs feature local classical jazz and ethnic musicians. Concerts are held in the auditorium on most Sunday evenings and on some Thursday evenings and are free of charge. The eighth level also contains offices, seminar rooms, a library, a small theater, and a multipurpose room. The library contains more than 7,000 reference books as well as study space for students. The multipurpose room is used for art exhibitions and public receptions. The rotating art exhibitions spotlight local Israeli and Palestinian artists and are open to the public. On the seventh level, a large auditorium called the Forum is used for course instruction, public lectures, and student activities. Administrative and faculty offices are also located on the seventh level. At the heart of the

building is a fountain designed by Israel Hadani. The reflected light from, and the sounds of water tumbling down a bronze lattice give life to the building. Ancient mosaics on loan from the Israel Antiquities Authority are displayed in the central stairway of the building.

[00:08:02] On the sixth level is the Oasis, which is a cafeteria for students and staff that has both enclosed and patio dining space. It also displays a contemporary mosaic by Israeli artist Nirit Keren, which was commissioned specifically for the food serving area. The sixth level also has computer rooms, a gymnasium, exercise facilities, a student commons and snack bar, and five classrooms for course instruction. Housing facilities for 160 students and apartments for up to 10 faculty and staff families occupy the fifth through the first levels of the building. Each student and faculty and staff apartment has a balcony surrounded by a garden that overlooks the Old City. Laundry and storage facilities for those living at the Center are also located on these floors. Architect Dan Tsur designed the Center's gardens. The gardens and plazas accessible to the public feature trees, shrubs, flowers, and herbs native to the area, including olive and pomegranate trees. The plaza outside of the upper auditorium exhibits models of Jerusalem at various times in its history. The gardens to the west of the upper auditorium have models of ancient grape and olive presses. When the olives ripen, students make their own olive oil in the ancient way.

[00:10:03] The Center currently offers three semester-long programs each year, although the number of programs can be increased to accommodate more students when needed. Each program of study, which is repeated three times in a calendar year, lasts about 15 weeks. During each program, students study the Old Testament, the New Testament, ancient Near Eastern history, modern Near Eastern history, and either Arabic or Hebrew. About once a week, distinguished speakers address students on current political and social issues. At least once a week, students take a day long field trip to important biblical, historical, cultural, and archeological sites. In addition, students take field trips to other countries in the region, including, depending upon the program, Jordan, Egypt, and Turkey. Each group of students also studies in the Galilee for 10 days while living at Ein Gav. In addition to their academic work, each group of students is involved in modest humanitarian activities and service projects. The students seen here, for example, are assembling hygiene kits for distribution in the area. The

Center's faculty and staff provide students with a multinational perspective. Faculty members include Israeli, Palestinian, and American professors. Administrative and support personnel who work with students are also a mix of Israelis, Palestinians, and Americans.

[00:11:57] Jerusalem is among the great cities of the world, sacred to three religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Jerusalem is a special place for all people. Seeing and experiencing the beauty and variety of this remarkable land and its people while living in this unique building situated near the heart of this most unique city has a life changing and lifelong influence on BYU students. By welcoming BYU students, Jerusalem has given each of them a wonderful gift. This building, The Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies, is in turn Brigham Young University's modest gift to Jerusalem. Ahlan wa sahlan. Bruchim haba'im. You are most welcome here.