

been in the Israeli armed services and diplomatic corps subsequently. The helicopter had come from Tel Aviv, I assumed. Those of us waiting at Kalundia entered through the lowered back like Jonahs being swallowed at the wrong end of the whale, took our seats and were almost immediately in the air and in a couple of minutes flying over Jerusalem. I have flown over many cities, but never over one that appeared more beautiful from the air. And the view over the Temple Area of the entire Haram esh-Sherif with the bronzed dome of the Mosque of Omar and the silvery dome of the el-Aqsa mosque is unforgettably wonderful. Fortunately, a helicopter flies comparatively slowly, and so we could pick out numerous familiar landmarks before we had overflown the city. And then over familiar country, across the Wilderness of Judah and continuing southward above the west bank of the Dead Sea. Everything was so sparkingly clear. Soon we saw the oasis of En-Gedi, which has obviously developed considerably since I saw it last some years ago. And then the massive site of the great fortress of Masada, with the Roman walls of circumvallation stretching around its base and the outlines of the camps of the Roman besiegers and then the excavated top of Masada itself, so expertly and successfully and brilliantly opened up during several seasons of work by Yigael Yadin, with a staff of hundreds of volunteer laborers from all over the world. The pilot of the helicopter, Captain Tuvia Dagan, circled the great fortress three or four times. That view alone would have made the trip worthwhile. The great fortress that had involved such magnitudes of effort to fortify it and then to reduce it, seemed from the air to have a degree of vitality when viewed in its entirety, greater even than can be grasped from the ground. But more important than the physical grandeur of Masada, eloquent beyond words in the ordered cleanliness and partial restoration of its ruins and in the indestructible magnificence of its strategic nature and position, was one of the Dead Sea Scrolls discovered there by Yadin and the significance of its and their enduring import for Israel in particular and humanity in general. I could have wished that we would keep on circling the site for hours on end, but within a few minutes the pilot turned the helicopter straight southward and we flew along the west side of the Wadi Arabah.