

twelfth century. Controversy raged in newspapers across the country. Finally, reasonable people got tired of such baseless objections and pointed out that there were thousands of churches in Germany and the Bahá'ís only wanted to build one building. One was no threat. The permits finally were approved and the building was erected. Today it is a cultural heritage site.

I was delighted to have this opportunity to go again.

It is a unique building, nine sided with a dome. Though nine sided, its circular shape is more obvious. The “sides” are denoted by the larger size of the nine ribs coming down from the top of the dome. The dome features 540 panes of glass to let light in during the day and out at night. It is a strikingly designed building. The side walls are all clear glass. Since my earlier trip, I noticed that light gray silhouettes of birds had been attached to these glass walls to warn birds not to fly in! Trees can be seen on the other side, through the building.

As with all Bahá'í houses of worship, there is no altar, no images, no pulpit, because there is no preaching, no clergy, and no collection of money. If money is offered, it is politely refused. The purpose of the building is to be a place where anyone can enter freely, equally, reverently, and pray and meditate. There are no trappings to distract the soul from worship.

The wedding and my trip were in October. In Kansas, October is early autumn, often a time of Indian Summer after the first frost, when the days are warm and it is a delight to be outside, and most insects are dead!. In Germany this is not so. Especially on my special day there, it was not. The weather made the day memorable. Freezing sleet was flying across the land almost horizontally! To make sure I noticed that, the bus which I had to take, did not go past the house of worship. The closest bus stop was about half a mile away. On this day, the bus driver was not an especially friendly one. My German speaking skills are very limited, too limited for me to say: “I want to get off at the bus stop closest to the Bahá'í Haus der Andacht.” I didn't know how many bus stops were in the town. And the driver was no help. So, I got off at the first bus stop in the town. It turned out to be on the opposite side of town from where I wanted to be!

Fortunately, it was a small town, but still, I had to walk over a mile in the freezing sleet coming straight into my face. I could not shield my face because, as a result of the possibility of terrorist bombings, it was no longer possible to put your luggage in a public storage locker – you had to carry it with you at all times. Because I was on my way to a wedding, in addition to normal clothes, I had my suit, good shoes, etc. I had both hands full! I trudged directly into the face of the freezing ice. By the time I arrived, I was frozen also.

Fortunately, beside the House of Worship is a visitor center. In this visitor center was a book shop. In this book shop was a very kind hostess. She had HOT TEA that she offered me. I sat, still in my heavy coat, at a table, and slowly sipped the hot tea until I felt I had thawed out enough to move and think. It

felt as if that took a very, very long time. I was so cold! More cold than I had remembered ever being.

Eventually, after I had warmed up enough to move around, I noticed that some of the books, which were in English, on the shelves, had some stories of mine in them, mostly stories for children. The hostess was delighted to discover that this frozen foreigner was actually a visiting author! She wanted to see which books my work was in and insisted on taking my picture with those books which she could post on Facebook. I was surprised at the attention.

From the visitor center, I went to the House of Worship, prayed, and walked back to the same bus stop. On the return hike, not only was the air warmer, but there was little wind and NO ice or rain! I'm sure the prayers helped at least a little bit!

When I got to Haifa, Israel, it was still like summer: hot!

All in all, it was a trip of a lifetime I will never forget.

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