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These are photographs of “Arise and Walk Through the Land,” as the popular Israeli song goes. The land which we see here is so familiar and realistic that it becomes unreal. Like a simple word (“table” for example) which you repeat again and again, till it loses its meaning. The place itself is unrealistic. Israel resembles a scenery warehouse. The actors take their roles seriously, but do not necessarily take the same pains to set up the proper scenery. Even the correct scenery, for instance the Jordan river (a priest in white with pilgrims immersing in the water at his feet) appears somewhat worn. The priest is an ironed, starched version of John the Baptist. The pilgrims wear thin tricot tops, as if they had recently taken part in a wet T-shirt contest for the middle aged. The river too is a bit worn, like an old pair of pants.¹

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Four women and a man on the stage of an amphitheater, actors who have forgotten their roles, or perhaps actors so skilled that their acting appears completely natural and free. One of them, in blue and white, is the allegoric figure representing the clouded sky.

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Everyone is hiking, vacationing. Paddling in water, floating on their backs, skating on snow, crowding into archaeological sites, waiting for the boat that will take them further. Standing in line for a boat trip. The attraction: the horizon.

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There's not enough room for all.

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Beneath the Wailing Wall – further excavations. Maybe another Wall will be found, another Temple.

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A modern football stadium – a Roman theater. The game goes on.

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And yet another amphitheater. Meaning: the festivities began a long time ago. You can hear the ancient handclapping.

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¹ This is not an article, but a list of various things which I saw in Orit Siman-Tov's photographs. Orit's photographs look at what surrounds us. They make no comment on it, they formulate no theories about it; they do not even criticize it. They point at events with the gaze of someone who has chanced into a foreign country with strange customs. I wanted to continue along the lines of the photographs, to gaze at the thing itself, not to thicken it with speech.

Wheel of a golf cart – in a nearby flower bed a column blossoms from ancient Caesarea.

Square path of an ancient excavated city: the sea floods it.

Someone has planted grass on the sea shore. The sand regards it with amazement.

Golf course lawn – in Caesarea. A small artificial lake. Augustus Caesar in a white shirt and matching shoes. White hair as well. Before him – a moderate slope. Oh, he'll cross it with ease.

Red kites in the sky – exploded watermelons – a red tent.

A girl in a pink shirt leans on a tree in a burnt wood. A long shadow is spread over the charred earth.

Minarets of a mosque – plastic chairs.

Watching a football game, wearing numbered shirts. Players in the gallery? If so, who is playing down there in the field?

The place is full to overflowing.

Swimming pool in the desert opposite the sea. The skyline of a city is reflected in it, sunken like the towers of Atlantis. Two lions stand over the sunken city, guarding (from no one) over the great city, center of the world, holiday Nineveh.

Public phone – group gymnastics class sitting down – shoe of the instructor is raised like the telephone receiver: all reply by raising their legs and get stuck.

Swimming pool – classical pillars – serenity. Paddling in the water like ancient Greeks.

Amidah prayer – one of those praying is marked with an arrow. His friend touches him as if touching the fringes of the cloak of God.

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Smearred in black mud, turning into Africans. The surrounding desert, tail-end of Africa, accepts this.

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Scenery of the past constructed today: a yellow crane erects fresh classic columns straight from their plastic covers.

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Excavation of antiquities – soldiers conquer it. Once more, the city is vanquished without resistance.

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Control site of the excavations– post of the sentry in charge of the past.

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Chasm beneath the new illuminated city – the entire city is spilled, with its light, into the pit, like peas into a sack.

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A military ceremony – amphitheater again – ancient luxury cars – the British flag waving over a fortress. The British Mandate has returned, as it seems.

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An improvised fashion show – “Coca Cola” umbrellas block the intense sunlight. A child unconsciously publicizes an insurance company on his shirt. In the background, “Goldmintz House” in Netanya. In the past it held a day camp for widows and orphans of the military deceased. Today it is a school for the development of military leadership.

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Attempting to float on the remnants of the Dead Sea. A sign forbids swimming. Everyone is swimming.

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Swimming forbidden. But the shore too is infected, leprous. A game of “sea-ground.” Mustn’t step here, mustn’t step there.

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A thick red pipe squirms over the swimming pool in a pagoda like palace, and emits swimmers. Someone with “lifeguard” printed on his back points to nowhere. Few swim. Most stand in the water.

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A snowy mountain. Signs declare “Lecture.” Waiting for someone to come and give a speech about the snow.

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Playing tennis. Arcs on the playing ground, distant arc of an ancient sealed gate. If the ball falls – it will be swallowed into the deepest past.

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