***By Tina Kitt***
***The Wauneta Breeze***

"If a person has any desire to go to the Holy Land, now is the time to go," exclaimed Ruth Speicher of Wauneta, who is organizing a trip to Israel for the fall of 2009.

Total per person cost for the 10 day trip is under $3,000 from New York, with a domestic flight from Denver to NYC bringing the total cost of the trip to approximately $3,500.

This will mark the 18th trip to Israel for Speicher who serves as a Holy Land tour host for Dr. George Phillips and TriStar Tours.

She made the trip last year in February after a 12-year hiatus in order to accompany her daughter, Millie, and son-in-law in touring the Bible lands before calling it quits for good.

But Jack and Linda Fanning of Wauneta had other ideas. Jack told Ruth she would have to plan on at least one more trip as February wouldn't work with their calving schedule and they wanted to see Israel with he.

Plans for an October 2009 trip have been in the works ever since, with Ruth stressing this upcoming trip will be her last. Well, more than likely.

With help from members of the First United Methodist Church in Wauneta where Ruth sings in the choir, she is hoping to get 20 to 30 people from southwest Nebraska to also make the trip, which will join Dr. Phillips and six or seven others from Kentucky on this Holy Land adventure. Those from all denominations welcome.

She's about halfway there, including the Fannings who are helping her coordinate this trip.

Now in her late 70s, Ruth made her first trip to the Holy Land over 30 years ago. By the time she made her third trip, in 1980, she was serving as a tour host, sharing information gleaned from her earlier trips as well as her vast Bible knowledge.

"It's so enjoyable when you travel with a group of people you already know. Everybody looks out for each other," said Ruth.

Excitement rings in her voice as she describes the sites included in the six full days of touring, much of it done in an air conditioned bus along with walking tours: Mt. Carmel, Megiddo, Nazareth, Canaan, boating on the Sea of Galilee, Mt. of Beatitudes, Capernaum, Jordan River Valley, Gideon's Spring, Masada, the Dead Sea, Mount of Olives, Gethsemane, Kidron Valley, Mt. Zion, Yad Vashen, Wailing Wall, Temple Mount, the Holy Sepulchre, Garden Tomb and more.

Each place offers special meaning and unique beauty, helping bring Bible teachings to life.

"The Garden Tomb is a spirit-filled place, a revelation," said Ruth. "I just stood there in awe."

For those interested in going a passport is a must. Ruth notes that it can take a month or longer to get a passport so the earlier the process is initiated the better.

Those making a $350 deposit by April 13 will receive a $50 discount off the $2,548 trip package which includes airfare from NYC, eight nights hotel accommodations, breakfast and dinner daily, six full days of sightseeing and all entrance fees.

Anyone interested in joining the local group on this tour of the Holy Land is encouraged to contact Ruth at 394-5825 or Jack and Linda Fanning at 394-5595.

"This is the chance of a lifetime," said Ruth, adding that she notices something special and new with each trip back to the Holy Land.