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LEARNING TO WAIT

There are times in a life of faith when the Lord comes upon us in an unexpected way with a new and deeper lesson to teach us. Even though it has happened to me innumerable times, each time it comes as a delightful surprise that he would entrust such as me with a deeper revelation of Himself. (And each time I forget to look ahead to the deep lessons and times of chastening that must follow in order for the new understandings to become a reality in our daily lives!)

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you."

Psalm 32:8

Somehow I sensed from the Lord that in the busy times He had placed before me, in the intensity of the trip to Russia and all that followed, I had shifted my focus of attention away from Him and had instead become thoroughly involved in the circumstances of my life. This call of His to return at once to the Shepherd's fold seemed to be reinforced when I happened upon the following word from Oswald Chamber's *My Utmost for His Highest*:

"OUR LORD'S SURPRISE VISITS"

"Be ye therefore ready also." Luke 12:40.

The great need for the Christian worker is to be ready to face Jesus Christ at any and every turn. This is not easy, no matter what our experience is. The battle is not against sin or difficulties or circumstances, but against being so absorbed in work that we are not ready to face Jesus Christ at every turn. That is the one great need, not the facing of our belief, or our creed, the question whether we are of any use, but to face Him.

Jesus rarely comes when we expect Him; He appears where we least expect Him, and always in the most illogical connections. The only way a worker can keep true to God is by being ready for the Lord's surprise visits. It is not service that matters, but intense spiritual reality, expecting Jesus Christ at every turn. This will give our life the attitude of child-wonder which He wants us to have. If we are going to be ready for Jesus Christ, we have to stop being religious (that is, using religion as a higher form of culture) and be spiritually real.

If you are 'looking off unto Jesus', avoiding the call of the religious age you live in, and setting your heart on what He wants, on thinking on His line — you

will be called unpractical and dreamy; but when He appears in the burden and the heat of the day, you will be the only one who is ready. Trust no one, not even the finest saint who ever walked this earth, ignore him, if he hinders your sight of Jesus Christ."

But it seemed that the Lord was not simply asking me to remember Him in the press and rush of daily affairs, but to draw into something even deeper, reminiscent of Paul's "praying without ceasing", namely a continual awareness of the presence of God. It reverberated back to the "long ago" when I had read the book of Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*. Then I had barely understood it, but now I did, at least at one level, and it challenged my heart to maintain an attitude of continual listening.

My first task with this new challenge was to investigate the Scriptures, to see how deeply the concept of waiting upon God permeated His Word. The following is just a smattering of what I found:

"My soul, wait thou only upon God."

Psalm 62:5

"The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him."

Lamentations 3:25

*"Shew me Thy ways, O Lord:
Teach me Thy paths
Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me; For
Thou art the God of my salvation, On
Thee do I wait all the day."*

Psalm 25:4-5

"Let none that wait on Thee be ashamed."

Psalm 25:3

"Wait on the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage: Yea, wait thou on the Lord."

Psalm 27:14

*"Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.
Those that wait upon the Lord, They shall inherit the Land."*

Psalm 37:7, 9

"Blessed are all they that wait for Him."

Isaiah 30:18

"They soon forgot His works: they waited not for His counsel."

Psalm 106:13

*"I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry.
And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God."*

Psalm 40:1-3

*"I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, And
in His Word do I hope.
My soul waiteth for the Lord
More than they that watch for the morning,
More than they that watch for the morning."*

Psalm 130:5-6

*"And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him,
and He will save us: This is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will rejoice
and be glad in His salvation."*

Isaiah 25:9

*"They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with
wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."*

Isaiah 40:31

Then I understood that the waiting upon God was for the purpose of becoming so united with Him, that His will became my will; that I ceased to any longer even *have* a will of my own; and that therefore every prayer that I prayed would surely be answered — not because I would turn into a spiritual giant, but rather because I would empty myself to receive only the burdens that He placed upon my heart. The full and complete unity with the Father could come only in Heaven, to be sure, but we can aim to reach a measure of it upon this earth; and I knew that this would bring a calmness of spirit that could not be bothered by the trials of daily life.

Many times the Lord speaks His truth into our hearts and then confirms it in many ways, which gives us the strength to plunge into the deeper waters of faith. Shortly after this surprising challenge, I read the following in Andrew Murray's book, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*:

"Faith and obedience are but the pathway of blessing . . . It is as our faith grows into obedience, and in obedience and love our whole being goes out and clings itself to Christ, that our inner life becomes opened up, and the capacity is formed within of receiving the life, the spirit, of the glorified Jesus, as a distinct and conscious union with Christ and with the Father. The Word is fulfilled in us: 'In that day ye shall know that I am in My Father and ye in Me, and I in you.' This is the true abiding, the occupying of the position in which Christ can come and abide; so abiding in Him that the soul has come away from self to find that He has taken the place and become our life. It is the becoming as little children who have no care, and find their happiness in trusting and obeying the love that has done all for them.

To those who thus abide, the promise comes as their rightful heritage: 'Ask whatsoever ye will ...' It cannot be otherwise. Christ has got full possession of them. Christ dwells in their love, their will, their life. Not only has their will been

given up; Christ has entered it, and dwells and breathes in it by His Spirit. He whom the Father always hears prays in them; they pray in Him. What they ask shall be done unto them."

"Faith is obedience at home and looking to the Master: obedience is faith going out to do His will. He sees how he has been more occupied with the privilege and the blessings of this abiding than with its duties and its fruit. There has been much of self and self-will that has been unnoticed or tolerated: the peace which, as a young and feeble disciple, he could enjoy in believing goes from him; it is in practical obedience that the abiding must be maintained. 'If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love.' As before his great aim was through the mind and the truth it took hold of, to let the heart rest on Christ and His promises; so now, in this stage, his chief effort is to get his will united with the will of his Lord, and the heart and the life brought entirely under His rule."

"Beloved fellow Believer! let us confess that it is because we do not abide in Christ as He would have us that the church is so impotent in the presence of infidelity and worldliness and heathendom, in the midst of which the Lord is able to make her more than conqueror. But let us not be discouraged. The abiding of the branch in the Vine is a life of never-ceasing growth . . . Let us not be so much occupied with the abiding, as with Him to whom the abiding links us, and His fullness. Let it be Him, the whole Christ, in His obedience and humiliation, in His exaltation and power, in whom our soul moves and acts; He Himself will fulfill His promise to us.

And then as we abide, and grow evermore into the full abiding, let us exercise our right, the will to enter into all God's will ... Let us yield to the teaching of the Holy Spirit, to show each of us, according to his growth and measure, what the will of God is which we may claim in prayer.

Prayer that is really spiritually in union with Jesus is always answered."

"John 15:7 'If ye abide in me, and My words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you.'

It is not the effort of faith seeking to cling to Thee, nor even the rest of faith, trusting Thee to keep me; it is not the obedience of the will, nor the keeping the commandments; but it is Thyself living in me as in the Father, that alone can satisfy me. It is Thyself, my Lord, and abiding in me; it is this I need, it is this I seek. It is this I need, it is this I seek. It is this I trust Thee for."

"Thou sayest: ASK WHATSOEVER YE WILL! Lord! I know that the life of full, deep abiding will so renew and sanctify and strengthen the will that I shall have the light and the liberty to ask great things. Lord! let my will, dead in Thy death, living in Thy life, be bold and large in its petitions.

Thou sayest: IT SHALL BE DONE. O Thou who are the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, give me Thyself the joyous confidence that Thou wilt make this word more wonderfully true to me than ever, because it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for them that love Him. Amen."

* * *

When I returned to Jerusalem following the Soviet trip, I still had the inexplicable feeling that I would purchase an apartment in the city! Since the first time the Lord had spoken it to my heart in Australia, the longing filled my heart for a real home, a place where I was free to be myself, to decorate in the way I wanted to. But oh, how impossible it seemed to me from a financial perspective!

Jenny and Wolfgang came to visit me that autumn from Norway, and we had a happy reunion. Shortly after their arrival, we were sitting together in a Jerusalem cafe eating blintzes. I was filling them in on the details of my trip around the world, and then offhandedly I commented, "Do you want to hear something really goofy? I have an incredible feeling from the Lord that I'm going to purchase an apartment in Jerusalem!" -

I thought they would just laugh, but instead they glanced at one another, and then said quietly, "Maybe we can buy it for you."

As long as I've lived by faith, the Lord has maintained the ability to astonish me by His unfathomable love. He so often provides in ways totally beyond our expectations! And this provision was to be such an unexpected one. I couldn't imagine that Jenny and Wolfgang even *had* any money, as he was a landscape architect working as a gardener for a private hospital, and Jenny was a teacher. But they explained to me that a few years earlier, they had sold their apartment in Norway, and had been seeking the Lord's guidance as to what to do with the money. Their present home was provided for them on the hospital grounds, and so they had been considering using the money to purchase a summer home in Norway, which is commonly done. "But we would much rather have an eternal investment in Jerusalem!" they told me.

When we returned later to my apartment, they prayed, and no doubt it was a tender moment in heaven. "Father, please, you know that we have only one-third of the money needed to purchase a Jerusalem apartment. Please enable us to borrow the money upon our return to Norway, and to send it to Esther without any difficulty!" To me it all seemed like a dream.

The following morning I received a letter from the Israeli owners of the flat in which I was living and for which I was paying rent each month. They were living for two years in South Africa, and they wrote:

"This is probably a silly question to ask you, but we had such a strong feeling to contact you about this matter. When we return to Israel next year, we will need a larger apartment, as our family has grown. So we would like to know if there is any chance that you would be interested in purchasing our apartment!"

When the Lord confirmed strongly that this was indeed His will, my heart sunk a trifle. Many of the apartments in the Jerusalem suburb in which I lived had magnificent views of Jerusalem across the valley and faced the south and were therefore filled with the Israeli sunshine. The apartment that I was renting had no view and was gloomy and dark. But I know that the Lord's presence is the only thing that can truly make a house into a home, and so in obedience I wrote back to my landlords informing them that I indeed wished to purchase their apartment! And of course, in general I was grateful and amazed at the Lord's provision and care.

Three weeks later, Jenny and Wolfgang were able to wire me \$54,000.00, the amount necessary for the purchase of my apartment. Part of the money they had borrowed from Jenny's father, a treasure of a man who heads a little folk-school snuggled between mountains in the south of Norway. When he later visited the apartment, he was so blessed by the presence of the Lord that he felt there, that he refused to allow them to repay the

loan! And I would like to insert here that shortly after sending off the money to me, Wolfgang received two raises which covered the cost of the loan; and since that time the Lord has blessed them in ever so many ways. So we never need to be afraid to give *in obedience to Him*, for He as our Father can never, ever be out-given!

It's a strange thing, but Believers can be much harsher to one another than non-Believers ever could. I know that my regular Israeli friends have suffered with me during the difficulties and have rejoiced with me during the times when the Lord has chosen to bless in more visible ways. But Christians here in Israel (and elsewhere!) have been so ready to judge! And sad to say, not so many were happy for me when they learned that I had been able to purchase an apartment.

We as followers of Christ are not to be concerned with worldly possessions. We are not to desire them! We are simply *to accept whatever the Father offers us* — trials and temptations on the one hand, or material blessings and triumphs on the other hand. And Jesus stated so clearly in Mark 10:29-30:

"And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake, and the gospel's,

But he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."

I had by then given up a number of homes in obedience to Him — my apartment together with the boys in the States; the lovely flat overlooking the Mediterranean in northern Israel; my little room on King George Street in Jerusalem; and the fully furnished apartment with a telephone in Ramot Eshkol. It took me a long time to realize that those who judged instead of rejoicing with me *simply weren't friends at all*.

Upon my return to Jerusalem, I learned of the opening of the International Christian Embassy, a move to show Christian solidarity with Israel at the time when all Embassies had moved from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv due to Arab oil pressure. I know that it brought much comfort to the Jewish people, to know that even if governments were against them, they did have friends from every nation. And surely it was a precious testimony of Jesus as well, a deep sign of love and faithfulness to His people.

Shortly after my return, I journeyed to the coastal town of Nahariya to visit Victor Brailovsky's parents. When I arrived at their door bearing news and recent photographs of their loved ones in Moscow, they treated me as though I were an angel sent from heaven! Their joy made the journey to the U.S.S.R. worth it a thousand times over! They are very dear people.

The following week I caught the last two minutes of a news broadcast, which said:

"Soviet activist arrested in Moscow flat."

An hour later a friend called to share the sad news that the "Soviet Activist" was Victor Brailovsky, the kind Jewish man I had so much felt the Lord's love for in the time we had spent together in Moscow. I cried most of that day, because his was not just a distant name to me, but a very real person who, along with his family, had become a deep part of my life.

A week later, a letter reached Israel from Irina, telling that Victor was very ill in a Moscow prison, suffering from a disease of the liver. She said that daily she had trekked to the prison with his medication, and daily she had been turned away. In desperation she sent a letter to Israel begging for help. It resulted in a flood of letters to the Soviet authorities, a

method which always has an impact.

As I thought about it, I realized that the Lord had set His hand upon this family in a special way — this family who bravely risked even their lives for permission to return to Israel, the land of His promises. I was very grateful to the Lord that I had been able to encourage them to trust in God's love for them!

After settling into "my" home following so many months of travel, I resisted strongly the thought that months and possibly years of travel were still before me. Everything in me rebelled at the prospect of such a difficult path! (For those of you who have travelled for the Lord, you would be well aware of the difficulties as well as the blessings!) And then, on Christmas day, a Christmas card and letter arrived from the Soviet Union. It was from the young man who gave his life to Jesus in Kiev, and who so bravely said to me when I warned him of the dangers of faith in Russia, "But I am not afraid to believe . . ." When I read the following, I recognized at once my own hardness of heart:

*". . . Esther, please write me how you liked your four months' journey. I think it's beautiful to make journeys to various countries to see yourself how people live, rest, work. It would be great to meet you once more one day. I hope for that . . .
. Oh, my deep gratitude for your prayer and Jesus' love. Merry Christmas! Be happy in '81 with Jesus' love.*

Best Wishes

Sasha"

Sasha lives in a nation where travel to other lands can be only a distant dream. But I am free to travel, to do His will; and Sasha's joy in Jesus' love made me beg my Father's forgiveness for my unwillingness to leave the comforts of home ... and to say again, "Hineni, Lord. Here am I! Send me . . ."

The first door that opened was to attend a conference in Germany with three other Jewish Believers from Israel. Each one of us felt a great deal of love from the German Christians who attended the meetings, and a number asked us personally for forgiveness, confessing that they had been Nazis during World War II. Surely it is only through the Lord's love and forgiveness that former members of the Nazi regime and Jewish people can come together in *love*.

During the conference, one of the leaders announced that he had searched through the Scriptures, finding no reference to Jewish Believers in Jesus there for our day, and therefore renounced the Jewish Believers as having come from satan. And there we were, sitting at the front of the hall on the platform! His dogmatic statements were accepted without question by some of the Christians attending the conference, who sometimes tend to accept authority unswervingly. A spiritual battle ensued, but by the end the Lord had clearly confirmed that He was with us.

But it sparked amongst ourselves some serious discussions. We as the "first-fruits" of the nation of Israel are in a peculiar position. Our recognition of Jesus as the Son of God and Messiah of Israel at once separates us from the mainstream of Israeli society. This separation comes as a direct result of the history of persecution of the Jewish people at the hands of "Christian" peoples and nations throughout the centuries. And in most cases, the church itself hardly knows what to do with us. The traditional churches certainly have no room in their dogmas for the likes of us, but even amongst those groups who in these days have been touched and renewed by the Holy Spirit, we are often treated in a peculiar fashion. Often we are given undue attention and fanfare, which makes us feel in a sense even more alienated. Or else, at least in Israel, the local body of Gentile believers tolerate

and befriend us, but many times only until that friendship could cause them some anxiety in terms of their own status in Israel in relationship to visas and the Ministry of Interior. It is surely the opposite of the dilemma that faced the early church, who were astonished when Gentiles also recognized Christ, and hardly knew what to do with these new Gentile Believers! We all shared that we each had faced over the past years a sort of identity crisis. Exactly who were we? And where did we fit? All in all, the only place where we felt truly accepted for who we were, and where we received comfort and a sense of identity, was in the Beloved.

Upon our return to Israel from Germany, I received news that the Moscow prison had finally allowed Victor to receive the medication he so desperately needed for his liver ailment. And then came news that he would soon be on "trial" in Moscow. His trial was held a few weeks later. Many of his friends had gathered near the court that day, but only Irina was allowed entrance to the "courtroom". Dear Victor was sentenced to three to five years of internal exile, which is a circumstance of deprivation, hardship and family separation. However, it was a lighter sentence than was anticipated, and so for that all were grateful.

Victor's 75 year old father in Israel was inconsolable at first, crying every night out of grief for his son. But he continued to have hope, the hallmark of the Jewish people.

It frightens me as I see the nations of the world turning against Israel, one by one, day by day. But the fear is not for Israel, but for the nations that turn against her! For Israel alone has God's promise of care and protection, and the assurance from Him that never again will we be removed from *any portion* of our land. The blessings and fate of the Gentile nations depends on their obedience to the commandments of God to bless His chosen people.

". . . And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curseth thee: and in thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed . . ."

Genesis 12:3

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee . . ."

Psalms 122:6

". . . for he that toucheth you [Israel] toucheth the apple of His eye . . ."

Zechariah 2:12

"For the Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation."

Psalms 132:13

"For all the land which thou seest, to thee [Abraham] will I [God] give it [Israel], and to thy seed [the Jewish people] forever."

Genesis 13:15

Satan and all of his demonic powers are on a rampage against this land, as the newspapers testify day after day. Israel, a small nation, has a population of only three-and-one-half million people. Doesn't it strike you as absolutely incredible that what happens in this country seems to be everybody's business?

I feel very strongly to warn you — guard your love for this country, dear Believers in Israel's Messiah. Don't let public opinion colour the burden of love for Israel that the Lord has placed upon your hearts. For the enemy is trying with all of his power to turn even the



Prof. Victor Brailousky, who has now been sentenced to 3 years exile, photographed during better Times (March 1977) with his wife Irina at their Moscow flat by Werner Jerusalem.



During my visit in 1980 with the Brailousky's prior to Victor's arrest. Victor, son Leonid, Irina, Esther.

righteous against Israel! And often, because of biased newspaper reports, people are easily blinded to the really miraculous things that are happening!

In June I travelled to the States with a friend from Jerusalem. One morning we were in the Pittsburgh airport en route to Harrisburg when we stopped to make a telephone call. My friend sat down while I placed the call, and she casually picked up the newspaper that was left on the chair beside her. Suddenly she let out a cry of surprise, and soon both of us were reading with wonder and awe the story of the Israeli raid against the Iraqi nuclear reactor.

Our plane was delayed for two hours — a gift from the Lord! — so we dashed to a newsstand and purchased *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines, and read with tears of joy streaming down our cheeks the full details of the raid. To both of us it was like reading Bible headlines of yesteryear all over again, as so many of the Biblical stories are battles won against formidable odds! "DAVID SLAYS GOLIATH!" "GIDEON WINS THE BATTLE WITH ONLY A HANDFUL OF MEN!" "THE WALLS OF JERICHO CAME TUMBLING DOWN!" "ISRAELI COMMANDOS RESCUE ENTEBBE HOSTAGES!" "OPERATION BABYLON A TOTAL SUCCESS!"

In Israel, people are used to giving God the glory for the things that happen to us day by day. Again and again people respond by saying, "Baruch Ha Shem! Bless the Lord!" It was the Israeli response when a bomb was discovered minutes before it was set to explode. It was the Israeli response when a school was evacuated just two minutes before it was hit by a terrorist rocket from Lebanon. And that, too, was the response of Israel when they learned of the raid. "Baruch Ha Shem! Bless the Lord!" For without His guiding hand, it would have been absolutely impossible! Any of a million things could have gone wrong, as the pilots travelled over three enemy nations that had sophisticated anti-aircraft equipment. But, *because the Lord God of Israel was with them*, it was accomplished with 100% accuracy and safety!

The Israelis we talked to after returning home again felt as joyful and as thankful to the Lord as we did. But what a disappointment to hear the response of many Christians! They missed the miracle of it all! They simply echoed the cynicism of politicians and nations, who have continued to be influenced by Arab oil and by the powers of darkness against the Lord's land and His people!

We need to rejoice, however, for "Operation Babylon" was a very thrilling and amazing verification of the words of Isaiah:

"Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by Me; whosoever shall gather together against thee [Israel] shall fall for thy sake . . .

No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn . . ."

Isaiah 54:15, 17

The following are excerpts from the *Time* and *Newsweek* articles. I hope that as they are read, a sense of the miraculous will awaken within your heart.

TWO MINUTES OVER BAGHDAD
*How the Israelis Secretly Planned and Executed
Their Daring Attack on Iraq's Osirak Reactor.*

It was Sunday in Jerusalem, and the sun bathed the city in bright light. On Peretz Smolenskin Street, a quiet avenue shaded by handsome trees, Menachem Begin sat at home. As the afternoon wore on, he called in a

secretary and gave a brief order: all members of the Cabinet were to gather at his house at 5 o'clock. The secretary dutifully went to the phone, offering the ministers no reason for the sudden invitation. Curious, they arrived and took seats in the wood-paneled library. For a time they sipped tea, waiting for Begin. Finally, he emerged from his private study down the hall, a grave look on his face. Soberly he told his ministers that even as he talked, Israeli F-16s and F-15s were winging their way eastward toward Iraq — to destroy the Osirak reactor outside Baghdad.

The mission was called "Operation Babylon." According to Israeli sources, Begin organized it last October with the help of Gen. David Ivri, the Israeli Air Force commander, and Maj. General Yehoshua Saguy, chief of intelligence. About two dozen crack pilots were handpicked to carry it out. Their commanding officer was a colonel who had flown combat missions against the Arabs three times before — in the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967, 1970, and 1973. The pilots had been chosen for what Begin considered a sacred mission: a raid that would deal a major setback to the nuclear ambitions of one of Israel's most implacable enemies, Iraq's President Saddam Hussein.

Operation Babylon was perfected after some top-secret practice runs flown out of Etzion air base in the Sinai. In the initial phase of training, the Israeli pilots spent long hours brazenly crisscrossing the deserts of Jordan and Saudi Arabia. The goal was to build up their endurance — flying for long distances over monotonous desert terrain with few landmarks is physically and technically demanding — and to probe for 'blind' spots in the radar defenses of the Saudis and the Jordanians. The practice flights over the desert also enabled the Israelis to plot a route to Baghdad safe from detection by the electronic eyes and ears of U.S. Air Force AWACS radar planes, three of which have been keeping watch near the Persian Gulf since the outbreak of war between Iraq and Iran.

Within the safety of Israeli air space, the pilots schooled themselves in some difficult, tight-formation flying. The object was to devise a flight pattern that would enable the Israelis to confuse the enemy air-defense officers during the 650 mile dash across hostile countries to Baghdad. Some planes were to fly singly at low altitudes, others at very high altitude. Still others would fly bunched into extremely tight clusters. On enemy radar screens, the tight clusters would produce one large blip like that of a commercial airliner rather than the telltale specks of approaching warplanes.

In the final phase of their training, the pilots practiced bombing runs, using a concrete mock-up of the Iraqi nuclear reactor built to scale in the Negev desert. The Israelis feared that bombs dropped directly on the Osirak reactor might bounce off the plant's heavy concrete dome, causing only minor damage, so in addition to divebombing, the pilots practiced flying in low and releasing their bombs in a flat trajectory that would smash through the plant's walls and detonate inside — bursting open the reactor's dome and blowing up everything inside.

Mossad, the Israeli intelligence agency, predicted that the reactor would go into operation as early as July 1. Israeli sources say Begin scheduled the strike for late in April, only to postpone it when the press reported former Defense Minister Ezer Weizman telling friends that the Prime Minister was 'preparing an adventurer pre-election operation.' A second target date, May 10, was also scrubbed when Labor Party leader Shimon Peres learned of it and dashed off a

'Personal ... Top Secret' note to Begin advising him 'to desist from this thing' on the grounds that the raid could isolate Israel 'like a tree in the desert'.

Dilemma: Begin faced an agonizing dilemma. If he scrambled the jets before Israel's June 30 elections, he would be accused of trying to win re-election with a dangerous grandstand play. If he waited until after the elections, it might be too late. If Iraq's reactor were bombed after it had gone on-stream, Baghdad might be subject to radioactive fallout. Another fear also haunted Begin — that Peres might become Israel's next Prime Minister, and that the decision to strike or not to strike might be left up to a new and less reliable opponent. 'He believed that Peres would never have the guts to order the raid,' said one Begin aide. 'And Begin couldn't bear the thought of Israel living in terror of an Iraqi bomb.'

Operation Babylon was scheduled for the third time — and there were no more false starts. At Etzion air base, the Israeli pilots suited up and sweated through a well-rehearsed procedure. Out on the flight line waited fourteen planes in camouflage war paint — the newest and hottest in aircraft supplied by the United States. The attack wing consisted of eight F-16s, carrying two 2,000-pound bombs each, a total of 16 tons of TNT, and six 921-mile-an-hour F-15s. The mission of the F-15s was to fly a protective cap for the others. At 4 p.m. the pilots took off into a cloudless blue sky. They banked in a gentle easterly arc across Jordan and Saudia Arabia and headed flat out across the Iraqi desert.

. . . The 90-minute flight to Baghdad was tense. Sometime before the planes entered Iraqi air space, the voice of an Arab air-control officer — Jordanian or Saudi — crackled over the Israeli radio frequency demanding that the planes identify themselves. By one report, an Israeli replied in fluent Arabic that they were Jordanians on a routine training mission. By another, an Israeli pilot replied in English — the international language of commercial airlines — that what the air-control officer saw on his radar was a commercial jet. In any case, the ruse worked: the air controller signed off. And the Israeli warplanes droned on.

Bull's eye: At 5:30 p.m. (6:30 p.m. in Iraq) the planes raised the target — 12 miles southeast of Baghdad. The reactor was surrounded on three sides by a horseshoe-shaped earthen revetment, and guarded by anti-aircraft guns and surface-to-air missile emplacements. The planes climbed from deck level to about 2,000 feet, just high enough to allow them to line up on the bull's eye before making their bombing runs.

The Israelis had chosen the perfect time of day for a surprise attack. There was still enough light to enable them to drop their bombs with pinpoint precision. But the sun was sinking fast and dusk would soon settle over Baghdad. With the sun setting at their backs — and blazing into the eyes of any defender below — the F-16s screamed in from the west and dropped their bombs.

Each of the eight F-16s made one pass, dropping all 16 tons of TNT on the reactor. The precision of the bombing was stupefying,' said Jacques Rimbaud, a French technician who had been relaxing at a nearby cafe when the Israelis struck. The Israelis said later that they had used iron 'dumb' bombs. Pentagon experts studying satellite photos said the accuracy and damage of the bombing suggested that precision-guided 'smart' bombs may have been used. Whatever the case, the bombs cracked the reactor dome like an eggshell, knocking it off

its foundations and badly damaging two other buildings. U.S. experts estimated that it would take at least eighteen months to repair the damage —if the French were willing to help with the job. Afterward, Rimbaud cautiously approached the smoking ruins. The central building had been flattened,' he said. The nuclear reactor (is) damaged and the atomic shield has disappeared.' Video tape recorded by the Israeli pilots during the raid, and played back to an Israeli parliamentary committee, clearly showed the reactor core crumbling and crashing into the cooling pool. According to Begin, the bombs penetrated all the way into a secret plutonium-reprocessing plant some 12 feet below ground.

Casualty: Israel said it deliberately chose Sunday for the raid to avoid jeopardizing the 150 French and 50 Italian technicians employed at the plant. But one French technician, a highly respected young scientist named Damien Chassepied, lingered behind. Later, his body was found in the wreckage.

Overhead the F-15 pilots watched tensely for Iraqi interceptors taking off from one or more of the military airfields that ring Baghdad; but no Iraqi fighters rose to challenge them. Nor was there any reaction from Soviet-built SAM-6 surface-to-air missiles guarding the nuclear plant. There were 'considerable' bursts of flak from the conventional anti-aircraft guns surrounding the plant, according to the pilots, but none hit any of the Israeli planes.

Although explosions from the Israeli bombs were heard all over Baghdad, most Iraqis did not learn what had happened until the following day. Even foreign diplomats in the Iraqi capital were kept in the dark. About an hour after the late-afternoon raid, members of Baghdad's foreign diplomatic community gathered on the lawn of the Italian ambassador's residence to observe Italy's national-day celebrations. The guests watched a fireworks display over Baghdad as red tracers from anti-aircraft guns arced harmlessly through the night sky and flak burst overhead. By that time, the Israelis were well on their way home.

More direct route: On the return flight through the gathering darkness, to gain speed and security, the Israeli raiders flew a higher, more direct route, one that took them over the centre of Jordan. There was the risk of interception while the F-16s were being refueled high over the desert. By then the Jordanians knew that the Israelis had invaded their air space, and the pilots knew it would not be so easy to fool them a second time. Even so, the Jordanians chose not to try to intercept the Israelis. Shortly before 7 p.m. —almost three hours after they had taken off — the Israelis touched down at a military airfield somewhere between Tel Aviv and Beersheba, safe in the heart of Israel.

At Begin's home, the phone rang. Lt. Gen. Rafael Eitan, Israel's top military man, reported that all the planes had returned safely. 'Baruch HaShem,' Begin replied in Hebrew —.Blessed be God."

Special Report,
Newsweek/June 22, 1981

"In the winter of 1979, the Israelis began to assemble a 'combat file' on the proposed reactor site at El-Tuwaitha. Using the engineering blueprints, Israeli experts pinpointed the exact location of the reactor core within its sheltering cupola. They also measured the size and strength of the cupola and the precise

location of a computer installation that would eventually control the reactor's operation. In June 1980, the armed forces asked Prime Minister Begin to authorize a clandestine, infrared survey of the site at El-Tuwaita. Before the mission, Begin was given an aerial photograph of the area. He did not hesitate. With a flourish, he signed the bottom of the photograph: 'With the salutations of Zion. Menachem Begin.'

In September 1980, the Israelis received additional intelligence. Taking advantage of the confusion at the start of the Iran-Iraq war, unmarked Israeli planes flew over the reactor site, gathering valuable data. It was during this period that two Iranian warplanes made a bumbling attack on the reactor, causing little damage. Discussions about attacking the reactor were being conducted at that time by Begin's Ministerial Defense Committee on Security Affairs. The meetings were in part spurred by an intelligence report that the Iraqis might be able to start manufacturing two or three small nuclear weapons within a year...In October 1980, the raid plan was given the go-ahead. Thereafter, Begin took complete personal control of the operation.

In all, five different dates were set for the attack . . . After so many false starts, the cloak of secrecy sheltering the operation was beginning to fray. On May 22, word of the raid was leaked to Moshe Shaha, a Knesset opposition party leader. His source: former Defense Minister Ezer Weizman, who viewed the proposed strike as 'adventurist'. At roughly the same time, Begin's office received two additional intelligence reports that the Iraqis were prepared to activate the reactor (make it 'hot,' in technical jargon) as early as the first week in July. On June 5, Begin gave orders to launch the attack two days later. His day of decision was the 14th anniversary of the Six-Day War.

The Israeli Air Force had not been idle during those months of deliberation. A full-scale model of the entire reactor area had been built in a restricted part of the Sinai Desert, and a carefully selected group of the most talented Israeli pilots practiced their bombing runs until, in the words of one high-ranking officer, they knew 'every tree and house' along their eventual attack route. Despite the scope of the rehearsals, the U.S. says that it did not detect the operation, either by satellite or other means . . .

At 4:40 p.m. local time on June 7, the first of the F-15 support fighters that had been stored in underground bunkers lifted off from Israel's Etzion airbase in the eastern Sinai. Soon the F-16s joined them, and the jets headed east, flying low, the escorting F-15s above and on either side of the bombers.

The formation headed across the Gulf of Aqaba toward Jordan, following a top-secret route designed to take advantage of blind spots in Arab radar coverage along the borders of Saudi Arabia. The aircraft stayed close to the terrain, but varied their altitudes in a weaving pattern that had been tested by the Israeli Air Force as a means to further reduce radar visibility.

Even so, as they crossed the eastern bank of the Gulf of Aqaba, and began to climb over the nearby rocky red mountains, the higher flying F-15s were picked up by Jordanian radar based at Ma'an. The station radioed the planes in Arabic, using international emergency frequencies. The Israelis were prepared. They replied, in perfect Arabic, apparently convincing the ground spotters that the sighting was either Jordanian or Saudi aircraft. As the flight went on, the Israelis were aided by the fact that the surrounding Arab countries have failed to establish an integrated air defense command. Thus the Jordanians did not pass on the sighting either to Saudi Arabia or to Iraq.

The flight plan, exact details of which remain secret, skirted the southern tip of Jordan, then proceeded northeast across the top of Saudi Arabia. From time to time the jets would flash over a reference point, and the group leader would radio a code message ('sand dune yellow') to the war room in Tel Aviv's Defense Ministry building...

At 5:10 p.m. Israeli time, the lead fighter penetrated Iraqi airspace. The aircraft continued to change course continuously as they moved in on target, howling through the Sunday twilight at 400 m.p.h. For months the Israelis had studied the route up the Euphrates Valley, convinced that they could negotiate it without being detected by radar or ground observers. Fifty minutes after takeoff, the warplanes sighted their target, the distinctive cupola housing the nuclear reactor. The aircraft wheeled and climbed toward the setting sun—the classic maneuver prior to attack.

While the six twin-engine F-15s provided a protective umbrella, the specially armed F-16s screamed into their bombing runs. The lead plane fired a pair of video-guided 'smart' bombs, to punch through predetermined spots in the domed concrete. The following aircraft launched their own explosives through the jagged holes: a dozen conventional bombs weighing 2200 lbs. each. After a series of shattering roars, the roof collapsed, burying the reactor's radioactive core under hundreds of tons of concrete and steel debris. Two of the attackers, carrying cameras rather than heavy explosives, made a pass to film the scene. Then they streaked for home, ignoring the ineffectual puffs of anti-aircraft fire and leaving behind the one civilian casualty, one bomb that failed to explode and the mangled nuclear ambitions of Iraq.

In Baghdad, a line of barrage balloons designed to foil low flying aircraft floated placidly above the city. With the sun hovering low on the horizon, the jets had appeared suddenly out of nowhere. When the bombs dropped, there were muffled explosions. As guests arrived at the Italian embassy to celebrate the host country's national day, some speculated that the detonations might have something to do with the nuclear establishment. In downtown Baghdad, in the suqs (marketplaces) and along the riverbanks, no one seemed to notice. No anti-aircraft fire was heard until an hour later. The city went to bed largely unaware that Israel had carried out its brilliant attack.

Israel, too, was eerily silent about the raid. Begin had instructed his new press secretary, Uri Porath, to prepare an official announcement at short notice, not to be given before news reports of the attack came over the wires. Porath waited through all of Sunday evening for a telephone call from Begin authorizing release of the story. Not until the following day, after Amman Radio sketchily outlined the raid as a joint Israeli-Iranian venture, did Israel give its own version of events.

When Porath telephoned in the government's statement to a holiday skeleton staff at Israel Radio, journalists refused for an hour to believe that the startling report was genuine. Only when Radio Staffer Emmanuel Halperin, Begin's nephew, confirmed the facts with the Prime Minister himself, did the station put the reports on the air.

The Israeli reaction was, naturally enough, pride in their military accomplishment. But there was not the same spontaneous celebration in the streets, for example, that greeted the July 1976 pinpoint Israeli commando raid on Uganda's Entebbe airfield. One reason was that as international criticism started to pour in, many Israelis sensed an impending isolation. Said Eli Ben-

Hamo, 26, a Jerusalem cafe owner: 'It was necessary. It had to be done. But I'm worried. We're doing it to ourselves. For years the world didn't much like us. Nowadays we're giving them reason not to.' Others had fewer doubts. Said one Israeli official: 'I think something positive has happened to world welfare in the same way that we made a major impact on the hijacking situation at Entebbe. Today nobody gives in to hijacking blackmail. When the criticism has subsided, people will realize that you can't allow every small country, particularly like Iraq, to own the atom bomb.' Said Miriam Hefetz, 29, a government secretary: 'We're doing the dirty work for the rest of the world. We have nothing to be ashamed of. Somebody had to stop Iraq.'"

Time, June 22, 1981

"FROM THE SOUL"

"Rarely has a national leader laid out with such emphasis, or in such vivid language, the distinctive course he had set for his country as did Menachem Begin last week. Samples of the Prime Minister's impassioned discourse:

** The Iraqis were preparing atomic bombs to drop on the children of Israel. Haven't you heard of the 1 1/2 million little Jewish children who were thrown into the gas chambers?'*

** So we faced a terrible dilemma: Should we now be passive, and then lose the last opportunity without those horrible casualties amongst the Baghdad population, to destroy the hotbed of death, and then not be able to make it unoperational any more or forever — or should we act now, for reasons I do not have to explain?'*

** Another Holocaust would have happened in the history of the Jewish people. Never again, never again. Tell your friends, tell anybody you meet, we shall defend our people with all the means at our disposal.'"*

Of course, it is now commonly known that a number of times Iraq's leader has admitted that he had planned to unleash nuclear weapons against Israel — knowledge which was known to Israel at the time of the attack.

Even now, in 1984, as I sit typing this in Jerusalem, the incredibly anti-Semitic, anti-Israel U.N. Security Council is once again condemning the Israeli attack on the Iraqi nuclear reactor, which it has done annually since 1981. It seems that satan does not accept any kind of defeat easily at all! But we as Believers in the God of Israel need to see things from His perspective, for He is still in the business of protecting His people.

Also of great concern to Israel during this period was the continual barrage of Katyusha attacks directed at the northern Israeli settlements from the terrorist bases in Southern Lebanon. The following reports are quoted from *The Jerusalem Post*, July 1981:

"SHELLS BECOME GRIM FEATURE OF DAILY LIFE ON THE BORDER"

By JEFFREY HELLER
Jerusalem Post Reporter

"TEL AVIV — The terrorist shelling of the settlements along Israel's northern border has taken on a regular pattern that would be monotonous were it not so dangerous.

The big guns come into their own under the cover of darkness, usually unleashing 30 to 40 rockets and shells a night.

Camouflaged during the day against air attack, the mobile Katyusha launchers and 130mm cannon are replaced by the smaller one-rocket-tub field piece that in selective firing lets loose with about seven rounds while the sun is up.

It was most likely the 'nightshift' that killed the 40-year-old mother of four at Kibbutz Misgav Am with a 130mm shell at 6:15 Monday morning.

The terrorists then took a 13-hour break after that incident, renewing their shelling and rocketing of Israel at 8 p.m.

Since July 15, when three persons died in Nahariya and 25 were wounded there and in Kiryat Shmona, 840 Katyushas and artillery shells have been fired in 58 separate barrages toward 26 Israeli towns and settlements.

On July 15 alone, 140 Katyushas and shells were fired at the Western Galilee and the Galilee panhandle, the heaviest terrorist barrage from Lebanon since 1974.

As of 9 a.m. yesterday, Metulla had received the most fire from Katyushas and shells, followed by Kiryat Shmona and with Nahariya a close third.

Twenty-three other settlements were targets for a total of over 100 Katyushas and shells: Sha'ar Yeshuv, Hanita, Shomra, Zar'it, Ben-ami, Margoliot, Kfar Giladi, Manara, Tel Avel-Beit, Maakha, Dafna, Beit Hillel, Kfar Blum, Neot Mordechai, Kfar Yuval, Achziv, Gesher Haziv, Dan, the Safed area, Dishon, and Misgav Am.

Despite the continuing bombardments, it is believed that the Israeli air strikes on five bridges over the Zaharani and Latani Rivers have disrupted the Palestinians' supply routes from the north and that ammunition shortages are beginning to be felt in South Lebanon.

The air attacks on regional terrorist headquarters in South Lebanon and on the high-rise Fatah and Democratic Front HQs in Beirut are also believed to have seriously impaired terrorist communications, administration, and overall decision-making.

This ostensibly was the aim of the IDF offensive — to make sure the Palestinians, moving from a guerrilla to standing army infrastructure, would not succeed in becoming a greater threat to the security of Israel."

"FARMING DAMAGED IN NORTH"

By Yitzhak Oked
Jerusalem Post Reporter

"TEL AVIV — Damage estimated in millions of shekels have been caused to agriculture in the North by the current shelling.

Exact losses will be determined in a few weeks when government assessors have completed their survey of the area.

The damage is in nearly all fields and orchards. Wheat and cotton areas have been burnt, water pipes have burst and chicken coops have been damaged, with thousands of chickens killed.

Shlomo Reisman, managing director of the Farmers Federation, told "The Jerusalem Post" that Metulla has suffered especially during the past few days. The settlers there have been working round the clock — between shellings —

fixing water pipes. Some water installations have been repaired three times during the past week.

Galilee panhandle apple and pear orchards have also been seriously damaged. Reisman said that in addition, farmers are not able to harvest apples because of the shelling.

Numerous agricultural implements including tractors have also been damaged.

The Agricultural Ministry has appointed a committee headed by director-general Meir Ben-Meir to decide what steps should be taken to aid the farmers.

Reisman said that at present the settlers do not need volunteers, but that this situation could change shortly."

There is a whole generation of Israeli children living in northern Israel, who have lived their entire lives under fear of rocket attacks. Innumerable times in their lives, often on a weekly basis, they have been awakened to the sounds of sirens blaring and have joined the mad scramble to the well-equipped bomb shelters which are located beneath most apartment complexes.

Strange that while Israel has been under almost continual attack, with constant loss of property and lives, the rest of the world has remained as complacent as can be.

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“FROM THE LAND OF THE NORTH”

While in the States in June of 1981, I visited with Joey and Michael and so much enjoyed our time together. It was always startling to see how much they had grown or changed in the interim of time since our previous visits. Perhaps if I had lived with them day by day, the changes wouldn't have been so noticeable. But each reunion made me painfully aware of the great gaps of time I had missed of their growing up years! But during our last day together, I had a fleeting hint that one day, somehow, we would be living together again (even before the Lord's return)! It was just an intangible little nudge, and I could do nothing but place it upon the altar along with them.

I also visited again with my friend Marie in Nashville, Tennessee. This time we did not have pizza together, but the Lord nonetheless chose my visit with her to reveal that he wanted me once again to apply for a second visa for a return trip to the U.S.S.R. By then I recognized all too clearly the dangers involved, and knew in the depth of my being that a trip behind the Iron Curtain was not something to be taken lightly. It was no place to be without the certainty of being sent there by God! I knew it carried an *extra* responsibility, for if I arrived in the Soviet Union out of the Lord's will, the people I visited could be very much in danger. And so I told the Lord on that astonishing day, "Father, I'm willing to go. I would much rather be in the U.S.S.R. in the centre of Your will, than any other place on earth outside of it! But please, Father, if this truly be of You, then somehow confirm it to me!"

The next afternoon, I was speaking to a small group of Believers on 'Music Row' in Nashville. The prayer meeting was held behind a tiny bookstore, and as we were walking through the store after the meeting, I said to the Lord, "If there's a book here that you would like me to read, please show it to me!"

He then guided me clearly to a book on the bottom shelf of one of the bookcases. The book was entitled, *Faith Despite the KGB*, and the foreword to the book was written by Georgi Vins. Georgi Vins had been a pastor in the U.S.S.R. in an unregistered Baptist church, and was later elected secretary for the Council of Evangelical Baptist Churches of the Soviet Union. He was arrested for his faith and sent to prison, but was later exchanged for Soviet prisoners and exiled to the West. Since that time, he has become a strong spokesman on behalf of the persecuted church in the Soviet Union. The unregistered church to which he belonged, similar to many others in the Soviet Union, refused to cooperate with the atheistic, anti-God government, and therefore bears the brunt of continual persecution. The churches that do cooperate with the government become no more than puppets of the Soviet regime, carefully controlled and watched by government officials and prevented from doing any evangelical work.

A few days later I was on an airplane travelling between Chicago and Minneapolis, enroute to my sisters' home. I was weeks behind in my correspondence, and so decided to

use the time of quiet on the plane to catch up on a letter or two. I therefore took out the writing paper and the letters I wanted to answer, and set to work. But almost at once the Lord said to me, "Put away the letters and begin to read *Faith Despite the KGB*."

"But Lord," I argued, feeling very foolish, "You know I need to catch up on correspondence!" But truly it was only pride that made me hesitate, because it seemed like a very foolish request indeed!

His reply disarmed me, as it usually does. "What do you have to lose by doing it?" He asked me. And of course, the answer was that I had nothing to lose. If I put the letters away and had actually heard wrong, all I would have to do would be to take them out once again! So I shrugged my shoulders, repacked the writing material, and began to read *Faith Despite the KGB* by Hermann Hartfeld.

A young woman had occupied the seat next to mine. Some minutes after I had taken out the book to read, she leaned over and asked me very confidentially, "Do you like the book that you are reading?"

"Yes," I told her with a smile, "I like it very much!" I was certainly unprepared for what would happen next.

"Well," she informed me, "it's my father who wrote the foreword to that book!"

My mind could hardly comprehend that here I was, on an airplane flying between Chicago and Minneapolis; reading the very book the Lord had directed me to buy; at the very moment when He told me to read it; and that it was Georgi Vins very own daughter who was sitting beside me! Once again I was filled with awe and with an acute awareness of how pride almost caused me to miss one of the Lord's great moments in my life. Oh, what a Lord we serve!

Both of us felt the Lord's presence so strongly, and had no doubt whatsoever of the Lord's hand in bringing us together that day. During the course of our conversation together, she told me that just the year before she had left Kiev for the U.S.A.

"Why, that's amazing!" I exclaimed, recognizing this meeting clearly as the Lord's confirmation for my Soviet trip, "for in just a few weeks I'm going to be in Kiev myself!"

She shared with me how much she missed her church back in the Ukraine, and how she often longed to be back there. (At that time I couldn't understand this at all, but within months I would clearly see the quality of faith that she was alluding to.) We both felt that it was in the Lord's plan for me to visit the church that her father had once pastored in the Soviet Union. She gave me the address of the church, the days and times of the meetings, and instructions on how to get there by Metro and bus. And when I later returned to Israel, a letter from her was waiting for me. She said:

"How are you? Do you remember our meeting on a plane from Chicago to Minneapolis? It was amazing!

Do you still plan to go to Kiev? If you will be there, give greetings to my friends.

I am sending you my picture and some information on the persecuted Christians in the U.S.S.R.

May God bless you as you serve Him. Tell me more about your trip and about your plans.

Love in Christ"

The following is but a part of her story:

"One day the teacher announced to our ninth grade class: 'Today you will write a composition entitled "Lenin's Place in My Heart". You should write

what Lenin did for all people in the world and what he has done for your family. Of course, you will write that Lenin occupies the main place in your heart and that you love him very much!

Everybody began to write. It was so quiet in the classroom. I prayed silently: 'God, help me! What shall I do? Only You, Lord Jesus, are in my heart, not Lenin. If I write candidly about this I will have so many problems! What shall I do, Lord Jesus?' Then I recalled Romans 1:16. Apostle Paul had written, 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.'

Most of the students had already finished their composition when I began to write: 'Lenin was a leader of the revolution in Russia in 1917. He is a famous man. But he is only a man, he is not God. I love Jesus, my heart belongs to Him. So there is no room in my heart for Lenin . . .' Then I wrote what Jesus did for me, how He gave His life for my sins and made me happy!

The class ended. I gave my composition to the teacher and left the room. The next day the teacher called me to her office. She was enraged:

'Lisa, what is this? How could you be so impudent? Do you know that I will have to send this composition to the KGB? Do you know that if you will continue thinking this way you will never study in a university or institute? We are being very kind to you — you could be expelled for this! Take this composition home and re-write it. Write About Lenin, not about Christ! If you believe in God, be silent about Him. Do not talk to anyone about your faith and never write about it. Believe quietly in your God, but in your composition write that you love Lenin. How can you love some kind of Jesus more than Lenin? You are a fanatic! Rewrite your composition immediately!'

I told her that I could not. I loved Jesus, therefore I could not do what she asked.

For a long time she spoke harshly to me. She criticized my father, Georgi Vins, who was imprisoned in a concentration camp in Siberia for preaching the Gospel.

A few days later she informed me: 'I sent your composition to the KGB. From now on I will send all your compositions to the KGB.'

The other teachers at school also read my composition. Some teachers even read it aloud in class and discussed it with their students.

I was so glad! Because of my composition, many people at school were hearing about Jesus and my love for Him. God protected me in a marvellous way!

In some schools children are beaten because of their faith in Jesus Christ. Sometimes children are taken away from their Christian parents and put into special state orphanages for re-education. They are forbidden to see their parents.

When my father was exiled to the United States in April 1979, our family was allowed to join him. Now I live in America and can study the Bible freely. But children in my homeland go to atheistic schools. Everyday they are taught that there is no God.

Please pray that children in my country will grow up to know and love the Lord Jesus. Pray that God will protect Christian children and make them strong . . ."

After such a strong and clear confirmation, I called Mr. G. and informed him that I wished once again to travel to the U.S.S.R. It was a bit scary, as it seemed to me very

suspicious that I would want to go for the second year in a row! But Mr. G. answered with his usual enthusiasm.

"Fantastic!" he exclaimed. "I've worked things out, and the whole country is open to you. I can get you to anywhere in the Soviet Union or in Eastern Europe — or even in China, for that matter!"

It was amazing news, and even to this day I don't know quite how he managed it; but sure enough, the visa application was once again approved. And before I returned to Israel, all of the funds had been provided for my complete trip to the Soviet Union. It surprised me that soon I would be on my way back there for the second time!

After I had returned home to Jerusalem, I was merely talking to a friend one day about my experiences in the Soviet Union, when unexpectedly the Lord informed me that I was the one He had chosen to write the book about my testimony. Up until that point I had believed that Marie would be the author of the book! It seemed like an overwhelming task, and I retorted grouchy to the Lord, "Oh, no! Don't tell me I have to write the book! First of all I had to *live* it. Do you mean to tell me that now I have to write it and type it and edit it and print it *besides*? It's not fair!"

His response to me was a little unnerving. "Be thankful," He chided, "that you *have* a testimony to tell!"

He also confirmed that the little Jewish print shop in Jerusalem, the same shop that has been printing my newsletters for the past few years, would be the ones to print the book. So I later went off to the print shop to speak with them about it. They informed me that the very best thing to do would be to type the manuscript on an electric typewriter. And so I notified friends in Jerusalem to be on the look-out for an electric typewriter!

A few days later I received a phone call from a Believer living in Israel named John. "I hear you're in the market for a typewriter!" he said when I answered the telephone. "I have an IBM Selectric II that is easily worth at least \$1,500.00, but I'd be willing to sell it to you for only \$1,000.00 if you're interested!"

At that time my finances were very, very low, and I don't think I had even 1,000 shekels, let alone 1,000 dollars! I therefore told him that I definitely *needed* an electric typewriter, that his sounded perfect, and that if the Lord provided the money in the next few days, I would surely contact him! But some days passed, and very little money trickled through.

A week later John called me once again. "Listen," he said, "the Lord has called me to a life of faith, and I know I need to do a fair bit of travelling in the coming months. How would it be if I just leave the typewriter with you? You're welcome to use it in the meantime, and when I sell it to someone else, I'll just come by for it! Right now it's only that bulky typewriter that is holding me back from beginning this journey!"

I was overjoyed, and the next day John and another friend delivered the IBM typewriter to my apartment. Since he is a writer, he also gave me many helpful hints, especially concerning the discipline it takes to complete a project such as the one that now faced me.

"A writer usually types a minimum of four hours per day, and if you miss a day, you have to make up the missed hours. But if you work more than four hours on a given day, you cannot subtract it from the following day's work!" As he spoke it, I knew that was the guideline the Lord was giving to me as well. And so, with the new typewriter, I set to work.

The next morning, John telephoned to tell me that the typewriter was mine! "It felt so right when I brought it to your house," he said. "I feel that giving the typewriter to you as a gift should be my first gesture in a new life of faith. I'm happy that it will be used to give testimony to the Lord! Use it with my blessings . . ."

Since that day, John's typewriter has felt like a special friend, as I have spent many, many hours pounding away on it as the manuscript for the book neared completion. And I

know the Lord will bless him for his faithfulness and trust in God's provision!

The Lord's preparation for my second trip behind the Iron Curtain began during the summer of 1981. I read a number of books containing the testimonies of Christians who had been imprisoned in the Soviet Union. As I read, I sensed with much apprehension that the Lord was also preparing me for the possibility of imprisonment. I remembered especially a comment that Brother Andrew (*Open Doors Ministry*) had made:

"For going into Eastern Europe, the Lord indeed sets before us an open door — but there is no guarantee that we will come out again..."

This preparation was quite a shock, and I remember sharing this with friends who were visiting Israel from the U.S. When I told them that the Lord was preparing me for the possibility of imprisonment or even death, they were horrified. "No, no! Don't claim that!" they cried. "He'll keep you safe! Never even think such a thing! It could never happen!"

I could understand their feelings. Somehow in the West we feel very alienated from the kind of suffering that fills the daily lives of our brothers and sisters in oppressive lands. "It can't happen to me!" was my immediate thought. But of course, it *can* happen, and I knew that fact was something I would have to accept.

When I could finally face the Lord with my willingness to undergo even persecution for the sake of His name, *I suddenly felt free!* All the fear was gone! Perhaps that in itself was the Lord's primary purpose — to prepare me so that I would not return to the U.S.S.R. in *fear*, but instead with the deep inner knowledge that *whatever happens will be God's perfect will for me*. Would I actually face imprisonment? Only the Lord had the answer to that question. But if we are prepared even to die, then what can man do to us?

*"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms:
He shall thrust out the enemy from before you..."*

Deuteronomy 33:27

For the first time, I had a deep, personal sense of the comfort of the Shepherd's care:

*"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil:
for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou
anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over . . ."*

Psalms 23:4-5

The Lord re-underlined in my heart the importance of obedience, and when I realized that I really had no choice except to *obey*, it made the acceptance of another trip to Russia easier to face. The Lord from the very beginning of my walk with Him has made me acutely aware of the dangers of falling away, of the lulling sense of complacency that so many Christians feel, having no idea at all that they are actually in danger of losing their very salvation.

*"There is a time, we know not when,
A place, we know not where;
Which marks the destiny of men
to glory or despair.*

There is a line, by us unseen,

*Which marks the boundary between
God's mercy and His wrath.*

*To pass that limit is to die,
To die as if by stealth;
It does not dim the beaming eye,
Nor pale the glow of health.*

*The conscience may be still at ease,
The spirit light and gay;
And that which pleases still may please,
And care be thrust away.*

*But on the forehead God hath set
Indelibly a mark;
Unseen by man, for man as
yet, Is blind and in the dark.*

*He feels perchance that all is well
And every fear is calmed;
He lives, he dies, he walks in hell,
Not only doomed, but damned!*

*O, where is that mysterious line
That may by men be crossed,
Beyond which God Himself hath sworn,
That he who goes is lost?*

*An answer from the skies repeats,
'Ye who from God depart.'
TODAY, O hear His voice,
TODAY repent and harden not your heart."*

— Joseph Addison Alexander

The Lord then paralleled for me the situation of the Jewish people in Esther's Persia with the situation of the Jewish people in the Soviet Union today. He told me then that just before I left for the U.S.S.R., I was to spend three days in prayer and fasting — without food or water — to echo before the Lord the words spoken by Esther so long ago:

*"If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request;
For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish...
For how shall I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?"*

Esther 7:3-4; 8:6

The Lord reminded me that Esther eventually had to make the same choice that the Church is being called to make. She had to openly and outwardly align herself with the fate of the Jewish people. When Mordechai learned of Haman's plan to destroy the Jews, he

sent word to Esther ". . . to charge her that she should go in unto the king, to make request before him for her people" (4:8). Esther immediately became fearful for her life, knowing that she could die if she went before the king unbidden. And then Mordechai gave her the same answer that the Lord gives to the true members of His Church:

"Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews.

For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Esther 4:13-14

I sensed that the situation in Russia was a challenge to the Church as well, for in the sight of the Lord, *we are one with His people in that land.*

And then, finally, He spoke the following to my heart:

"Soon I will open the door for the Jewish people to leave the Soviet Union. I am therefore sending you back to the U.S.S.R. to tell My people there that soon I will open the door for them to leave; and when it happens, they are to know that it is God, and they are to leave at once . . ."

At that time I did not know that anyone else in the world was aware of this second exodus. I only knew that I would have to travel to the Soviet Union bearing this message, simply trusting with all my heart that I would not be bringing them false hope.

The Lord then showed me the following passages, which seemed to clearly confirm that the message was indeed from Him:

"Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, But, the Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north..."

Jeremiah 16:14-15

"Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, the Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the Land of Egypt, But, The Lord liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land . . ."

Jeremiah 23:7-8

*"Fear not, for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west;
I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth . . ."*

Isaiah 43:5-6

"Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time I have heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;

That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places.

They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them; for He that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall He guide them.

And I will make all My mountains a way, and My highways shall be exalted. Behold, these shall come from far; and lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.

Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted His people, and will have mercy upon His afflicted . . ."

Isaiah 49:8-13

"In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers."

Jeremiah 3:18

"Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither.

They shall come with weeping and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of water in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble, for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born.

Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he."

Jeremiah 31:8-11

I was filled with a sense of wonder and awe all over again that we could be alive in this astonishing time in the history of the world. I had not the slightest hint from the Lord as to how He would lead His people out from the north country, nor did I have any idea when it would take place. All I could sense was that it was something that God alone would do, that no man was to touch it — for He alone will receive the honour and the glory when the deed is done.

29

RUSSIA RE_VISITED

The summer days ended by, and the time drew nearer for my departure to the States and then on to the U.S.S.R. (Of course, the Soviet Intourist Agency had no idea in the world that I am a resident of Israel, for if they knew it, I would never, ever be granted a Soviet visa! Therefore I had applied for the visa in the United States through the door that the Lord had opened, and planned to combine the departure with a visit with Mike and Joey.) I was scheduled to leave New York for Moscow on the 27th of September, 1981, and therefore made plane reservations to leave for the U.S. from Israel two weeks earlier, on the 12th of September.

About a week before my scheduled departure, I was faced with an enormous spiritual attack. It was really dreadful, and it felt almost as if there were an attack on my life. A friend in northern Israel sensed that a battle was raging, and came by just to join me in prayer. The battle became so severe that finally three of us stopped everything just to pray and fast. In addition, not a single penny had come in to cover the cost of my transportation from Israel to the United States, even though the entire Soviet trip had already been paid for! And then, in the midst of the battle, I received a completely devastating telephone call from Marcia in the States.

"Listen," she said when I answered the phone that dismal day, "I've called to tell you that Mr. G. has died suddenly." He was an older man, and not completely well. I was greatly saddened by the news. "It's even more complicated," she went on to explain, "as the Intourist agency can find no record of your visa or the necessary travel vouchers, nor any record that you paid for the trip!"

"Oh, no!" I exclaimed. I was supposed to leave for Moscow in two weeks!

Marcia and I then agreed that she should try to locate a bank copy of the cheque for \$2,000.00, as I had fortunately paid the bill with a bank cheque. "No money has come yet for my trip to the States, so I've had to postpone the trip for a week," I told her. "The battle on this end has been terrible as well! But I've now made reservations for a week later, on the 19th of September, and I'll see you then!" I gave her my expected arrival time, and told her I would see her soon.

After prayer, I reviewed the situation. From all of the circumstances, it looked as though the trip was totally impossible. I had no money to get to the United States. Mr. G. had died, and the visa was lost. But the Lord's confirmation had been so strong and so clear, that I knew I had to pick myself up off the battlefield, put on the armour once again, and begin to fight. For we often reach a point in a deeper walk with the Lord, when we can no longer judge things by outward circumstances, but only by the guidance of His love within our hearts.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Ephesians 6:12

The first thing to do, I knew, was to call for prayer. I alerted friends in Israel, and in the States, and also called Jenny and Wolfgang in Norway. (Usually the faithful friends who read my semi-annual newsletters have been my faithful prayer-warriors, but the enemy had won a victory on that battlefield as well. The newsletter had encountered many difficulties and delays, and therefore did not reach people in time to pray for the preliminary preparations.)

When I spoke with Wolfgang and told him the whole situation, he replied, "Someone just gave me a gift to pass on to you, and it would almost cover the cost of the air fare. I'll just add the rest and send it to your bank by telex, which usually takes only three days at the most!"

I hung up, feeling encouraged and aware that the battle was beginning to turn.

The next day I alerted the bank that soon \$600.00 would be on its way from Norway. At the end of the three days, I trooped off expectantly to the bank, but alas, no money had as yet arrived. I went there again on the fourth day and the fifth day; and by the sixth day, all I had to do was to stick my head in the door, and the bank teller shook her head negatively to signify that the money hadn't as yet reached the bank.

Since I live by faith, the Lord usually provides just the amount of money that I need to live on day by day. Therefore, I have a bank account only for the purpose of processing cheques, and since it is a small local bank, the tellers know very well that my bank account usually hovers between zero and one hundred dollars. And so when I arrived at the bank each day, long after the telex should have arrived, I don't think they even believed that the money was coming!

On the 18th of September, the day before my scheduled departure for the States, the money had to be in by 6:00 p.m. in order for the ticket to be issued, for that is the time the airline office would close for the day. And I knew that the trip could not be delayed for even another day. I also know that the Lord in His provision is seldom early, but He is never late. And so I was certain that on the morning of the 18th, when I walked once again to the bank, the money would be there. It just had to be!

I walked up to the teller, and when she looked up from the work she was doing, she said at once, "Sorry, Esther. No money today!"

So there I was, just one day before the time of departure, to find myself in front of yet another closed door. The money had not arrived! But I still knew in my heart that somehow, I was meant without a doubt to arrive in Moscow on the 17th of September! I therefore did something that is surely not an example of "faith". I called Sid and Betsy, who were at that time in the States for a visit, and explained the entire situation to them.

"I have only one idea left," I told them. "Why don't you see if you can pre-pay the ticket in the U.S., and then when the money arrives from Norway, I can reimburse you?" They promised to try as soon as the banks opened, instructing me to await news by telex at the travel agency in Jerusalem late that afternoon. I thanked them profusely and hung up the phone.

At 5:00 p.m. I arrived at the tourist agency on King George St., and asked Sarah, the Israeli owner of the office, if she had received any news as yet. Her reply was negative, so I sat down to wait. And then, at 5:30 p.m. — just thirty minutes before the airline offices would close — the telex arrived, notifying us that the ticket had been pre-paid. I was

overjoyed! At last, just minutes before the very end, the answer had come!

But it seems that this was to be no ordinary battle. Five minutes later, a representative from the airline called to say that the telex had to be returned, as a budget fare such as I had ordered could only be pre-paid twenty-one days in advance! And so there it was, the very last possibility. I shrugged my shoulders and said to myself, "Well, this battle is in the heavenlies now. There's nothing else that I can possibly do!"

Just as I prepared to leave, Sarah said to me, "Were you planning also to visit your family in the States?"

"Yes," I told her.

"And you can't possibly delay your trip a little longer?"

"No," I told her.

"Well, look, I'll give you the ticket. I know you'll return the money to me somehow!" She then told one of her assistants, "Call the airline office at once, and tell them to issue the ticket!"

At exactly ten seconds before the 6:00 p.m. deadline, I received the ticket I needed for my trip to the U.S.A. en route to Moscow. I felt the Lord's love for this dear Jewish woman, and had a sense that He wanted her to be a part of this trip from the very beginning. But other than that I was too battle-weary to feel anything but relief that it was finally over.

Ten minutes after I left the travel agency, Sarah received a telephone call from Sid and Betsy. When they received news that the prepaid ticket could not be accepted, they called Sarah to ask her to issue the ticket, assuring her that they would send a cheque to her at once. And she answered, I'm sure with a smile on her face, "Esther walked out of the office with the ticket ten minutes ago!"

I was unaware of this telephone call, as I myself had no phone at the time, and so I had left word at my bank for the Norwegian money to be transferred directly to Sarah's account. Weeks later when I returned to Jerusalem, she jokingly told me, "Some people never return the money to me! I must say this is the first time I ever received it *twice!*"

And so, on schedule, the next morning I left Ben Gurion Airport on my way to New York.

When I arrived in the States, I soon learned to my relief that the bank had been able to locate a copy of the cashier's cheque, that Intourist had managed to re-issue a visa, and that all of the travel documents were in order. Surely it was a miracle, and I was so grateful to the Lord that I did not let negative circumstances blot out His clear directions!

I spent two weekends with Mike and Joey. They had just moved from Connecticut, where they had lived all of their lives, to a town on the outskirts of Camden, New Jersey. It was an area infamous for drug abuse and crime, and when I visited Joey's school and saw the "toughness" of the kids hanging around, my heart sank to my toes. They were also on edge with one another and seemed quite tense. As I had no friends in the area, I had to stay in a motel, and it all made the visit seem a little unreal. I left feeling vaguely troubled, having no idea then just how long it would be before I would see them again.

A few days before my flight to Moscow, I spent three days of prayer and fasting at a retreat centre on the Savern River near Washington, D.C. It was a lovely, tranquil spot, and I was deeply grateful for this time of preparation and prayer. I had never fasted totally before, taking neither food nor liquids of any kind. But somehow I knew it was very important that the battle be won *before* I arrived in Russia. The Lord sustained me, so that by the end of the third day, although visibly weakened, I was able to maintain the fast.

The Lord had a special little surprise in store for me, something that helped to confirm that I was in the right place. One day He told me to go down to the dining hall during the lunchtime break, even though I knew I was not to eat or drink! I sat down at one of the tables, and began to talk casually with the five or six guests who were eating lunch. Finally

one of the nuns asked me (as it was a Catholic retreat house), "Are you by any chance the Esther who lives in Jerusalem?"

My mouth fell open in surprise, as she went on to tell me, "One of the sisters in my community has written to you for a number of years!" I knew in a minute she just had to be talking about Sr. Celine, whose letters had been such an encouragement to me. And in the Lord's grace, the next day Sr. Celine was able to visit with me at the retreat centre, as we met for the very first time!

By the end of the three days, I felt the Lord's strength, grateful that He had enabled me to keep the fast until the end. I left the retreat house knowing with God's help I was ready for whatever the road ahead would bring.

Finally, after saying farewell to friends in the States, I found myself on the plane en route to Moscow! How can I express what I felt at that moment?

When the plane arrived in Moscow, after a long wait in line, I arrived at the inevitable custom control station once again. This year, unlike the year before, they had x-ray equipment to check the baggage coming into the country, and most people were passed through fairly quickly. When my turn came, I placed my suitcase into the x-ray machine, and a moment later I was ordered to open the bag for closer inspection.

The previous year the Lord had kept hidden from discovery all the items I had brought with me that could arouse suspicion, and so therefore I naturally assumed that He would do the same thing this year as well. I was very shocked, therefore, when they soon uncovered the Russian hymn book that I had tucked away in the suitcase! And immediately thereafter they found the Hebrew book, *The History of the Jewish People*, that I had planned to bring to friends.

The Lord had prompted me to hide the addresses of friends and of the unregistered church in the clothing that I was wearing, and as they combed carefully through my belongings, I was very thankful that I had obeyed Him! But then, to my horror, a few minutes later they called for a female guard, instructing her to take me into a side room for a search.

As I followed her into the room, I told the Lord that I was willing, right then, to be turned away from Russia. "Oh, Father, if I've made a mistake, if I'm here not according to Your will, then I'm more than willing for this door to be closed! But please, please don't let them find the addresses of my friends. Please protect them, Oh Lord!"

Surely there's no shame in making a mistake if we're truly seeking the Lord's will, and I was open to the possibility that I had been wrong about it all. "Your will be done, Lord," I said softly as the door closed behind me.

As she searched me, I was able to turn just slightly so that she missed finding the papers by a fraction of an inch! A sense of relief flooded through, as I realized that my friends had been saved. I knew it was the hand of the Lord, and oh, was I thankful!

"What do you have in your coat pockets?" she asked me.

"Just some medicine for the flu, and this Russian Bible," I answered, as I handed both items over to her. The previous year they had not checked my coat at all, so I was sure that the Bible would be safe. But by then almost everything but the addresses had been found!

She brought the Bible out to the waiting police officers, and informed them that she had not found any papers. I breathed a prayer of thanksgiving for that!

One of the officers began to shout at me in Russian, as he held the Russian Bible in his hand.

"I don't speak Russian," I told him.

"Then what are you doing with this?" he demanded, holding the Bible in front of my face.

"Well," I said, as I rummaged through my handbag, "It says right here in my Intourist

Information Booklet' that we are allowed to bring a Bible for our personal use." I showed him the paragraph on the information sheet, which I finally located. "And so this is the Bible that I brought!"

"And what are you doing with this?" he asked holding up the Russian hymn book.

After praying quickly for the Lord's wisdom, I said, as conversationally as I could manage, "I heard that it was very difficult to get these books in Russia. And so I thought it would be nice to bring one of them with me!"

"And who will you give it to?" he persisted.

"I don't know," I replied.

"And this? Can you read this language?" he asked, as he showed me the final item, the Hebrew book.

"Yes," I answered.

They consulted together for some minutes, handed me back the three books, told me to close my suitcase, and waved me on! That was it — I had passed the inspection! I couldn't help but grin from ear to ear as I walked wonderingly away. The previous year the Lord had hidden all of the items from detection. But this year, most had been discovered, and *still* I was allowed into the country — with all of the books! "Oh, Lord, thank You!" I murmured, and then set off to locate the Intourist airport desk.

Soon I was taken to the black car that would deposit me at the same Moscow hotel as the previous visit. I was acutely aware that Mr. G. was not there this time to greet me! It was hard to comprehend that this hotel and its surroundings could be so familiar to me. It was located just a block away from Red Square and the Kremlin, in the very heart of downtown Moscow.

My first task in Moscow was to visit the synagogue on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, a very serious day of religious observance. In the Soviet Union, most churches and synagogues have been either turned into museums or simply closed, and the few that remain open are attended primarily by old people, as the premises are carefully watched by the KGB. But on Rosh Hashanah (and the other main Jewish holidays), an amazing, awesome thing happens in Moscow at the only remaining synagogue. It is flooded with literally thousands of Jewish people, who come together, old and young alike, on this one day, to celebrate their common heritage as Jews!

Perhaps this doesn't sound like such an unusual occurrence to those of us in the West who are used to the freedom of religious observance. But in the bounds of the Soviet regime, any trace of religious faith has been systematically dealt with. Children are taught atheism, and the KGB has used imprisonment and death as a means of discouragement for those who persist in religious beliefs. For almost a generation in the U.S.S.R., since the beginning of the Soviet regime, the Jewish religion was almost lost, as people simply tried to be "good Soviet citizens". The traditions of old were almost forgotten, as the Jewish people became absorbed into Soviet society. But in recent years, something quite astonishing has begun to happen. From very, very dry ground has sprung forth a new awakening to Judaism in the hearts of the Jewish people. It has come to life once again! They are beginning to re-discover the richness of their heritage, and they are yearning to learn more about who they really are. It is, of course, the working of the Lord; and it is the awakening of the spirit of hope within them that enables them to go to the synagogue on this special holiday. It sounds like a simple thing, but in reality they go, even knowing that it could result in imprisonment, loss of job, separation from loved ones — all of the things that we as Believers are supposed to be willing to risk! The Lord was sending me to see for myself this special miracle of grace, and to bring some of His people in captivity greetings from Israel.

A great deal of my time in the Soviet Union is spent locating the homes or the places I need to visit. The Lord had set up a pattern of sorts for me, that the day before I needed to



Crowds gathering in front
Of The Moscow Synagogue
early on the morning of
Rosh Hashanah



Inside the
Moscow Synagogue.

be at a certain place, I was to spend as long as necessary locating it! Sometimes that has meant walking in the cold for many hours, as it is not quite as simple as it may sound. The maps officially issued in the Soviet Union for tourists have only the major streets listed on them. The street signs are all in Russian, and I am hopeless when it comes to learning languages and therefore cannot read a single word. In addition, I cannot ask for help, neither at the hotel nor on the street, as it could therefore alert the KGB that I as a tourist was planning contact with Soviet citizens. And so I merely have to locate the general area, and then trust the Holy Spirit's guidance to the exact street that I am looking for!

On Monday afternoon, I set off for the general direction of the synagogue, having received some help as to the vicinity while in Israel. When I emerged from the Metro station, I felt quite hopeless, for there were endless possibilities, as streets stretched on and on in every direction. I searched in vain for over two hours, and finally sat down on a park bench, tired and cold, to pray for help. The Lord then clearly told me to turn left at the next corner, and then to take another left turn! When I followed His instructions, I found myself standing next to an imposing building with large pillars in front. He had helped me to locate the Moscow synagogue! I don't know if I ever would have found it without His help!

I returned to the synagogue on Tuesday morning, the day of Rosh Hashanah. I walked upstairs to the women's section, and found a seat which gave me a view to the men's gallery below. The Soviet government has tried so hard to stamp out the last traces of religious faith, and yet, here it was again — the unfailing evidence of God's great and faithful love. The four "chazans" sang beautifully the familiar Hebrew verses and songs, and the tears began to trickle slowly down my cheeks.

The synagogue would be swarming with KGB agents that day, and so I had no idea how I would speak to the people. I was very aware of the prayers of many friends, and very grateful for them.

The Lord had instructed me to bring my gold "Star of David" or "Magen David", as it is called in Hebrew, with me to the Soviet Union and to the synagogue that day. Oh, the simple wisdom of the Lord, for it was that small piece of jewelry that opened the door for me to greet many Jewish people that day! "Magen Davids" are impossible to obtain in the Soviet Union, as they are not for sale anywhere and people are forbidden to wear them. An old Jewish woman was sitting next to me and she noticed the necklace that I was wearing. In such a simple way, she realized upon spotting the jewelry that I must be from outside of the Soviet Union, and I was therefore able to give her New Year greetings from Israel! And slowly, the word began to spread, as one person told another, until I had been able to greet many who were in the synagogue that day! I also felt to greet one of the "chazans" after the service, a small man with such a gentle and happy face. It amazed and blessed him to learn that I was from Jerusalem, and it seemed to bring an encouragement to everyone with whom I spoke.

Needless to say, the Jewish people are not allowed by the government to take a day off from work on any of the Jewish holidays. When I returned to the synagogue that evening, it was filled to overflowing, and the whole area in front of the building was swarming with young people. Everyone who had worked during daytime hours had come to the synagogue that night, and it was such a crowd! A small group of young men were singing Hebrew and Israeli songs, and some groups of the young people were dancing the "hora", the traditional Israeli folk dance. They knew many of the old familiar songs, but seemed to especially love "Shalom Aleichem". I knew that I would think of them forever as I would hear that song in days to come! As I stood there singing with them, it seemed a very, very long way from Jerusalem. How long until they would be set free to come home to their beloved city?

Again I greeted many people, and began after a while to speak with a Jewish scientist by the name of Samuel. He offered to walk me to my hotel at about 10:00 p.m., and as we began

to walk away I turned for one last look at the sight of God's people singing His songs in a foreign land.

We had walked only half a block when a police car passed us with loud speakers blaring, followed by a number of Soviet soldiers on foot. They broke up the night of rejoicing, forcing everyone to turn for home. It was a grim reminder of just how far from Jerusalem we really were!

"Did you notice how everyone just left, as soon as the police car arrived?" Samuel asked me. "Ten years ago, it wasn't like that. At that time, when the car came, my friends and I tipped it over! But nowadays, people are just too broken and afraid to fight."

We walked for many hours, as he told me tales of life in the U.S.S.R. and I told him of life in Israel. He made a statement that I knew he was not saying lightly, and it gave me a hint as to the depth of God's work within his heart. "I would rather spend fifteen years of my life in a prison in Israel than another day in the Soviet Union," he told me. Oh my, how ready the Jewish people are to leave!

Much of what he told me gave me deeper insights into the harshness of life under the communist regime. The KGB and the Soviet government are almost fanatical in their efforts to keep the Russian people from contact with Westerners, as this story illustrates:

"One day," Samuel began, "an American asked me for help in purchasing an ice cream cone. And so I helped her, and went on my way. After a while, I became aware that I was being followed. I would turn the corner; the man behind me would do the same. I would wait until the last moment before leaping onto the Metro; the man also leapt onto the Metro!" We both laughed. He continued, "Finally, at the end of three days, I was brought in for questioning. 'What message did you put into that ice cream cone?' they asked me." We both laughed again, but with the kind of laughter that is tinged with sadness.

Samuel also told me about a professional colleague of his who had actually won the Nobel prize through fraud and deceit. Samuel brought this to the attention of the Scientific Institute, at great personal risk, and went through many hard years as a result of his honesty, for the deceitful scientist was powerful in the communist party. It was a privilege to meet such a courageous man!

We shared so much with one another that night about our hopes and dreams as we walked the silent Moscow streets. And how he longed for Israel!

When I first began to speak with him about faith in God, he thought that I was saying "face" and "guards"! We had a good laugh about it! I also told him, as I had to others in the synagogue, that I felt that the Lord would soon open the door for the Jewish people to leave the U.S.S.R. Neither of us could imagine how He will do it!

Finally, when my feet simply could not walk another inch, we said a last farewell. Perhaps one day soon we will be able to walk together through the streets of Jerusalem!

The next day, late in the afternoon, I went to the house of Irina and Victor Brailovsky. Irina's mother and little Dahlia were the only ones at home, and Irina's mother could speak only Russian and Yiddish and not English. People don't need a common language to speak with their hearts, however, and Irina's mother and I felt a genuine closeness, even without the help of words! She handed me a note that Leonid had left for me in English, telling me that Irina was visiting Victor in exile, and asking me to leave a message for him. I told him that I would come again on my return to Moscow in two weeks' time!

Just before sunset, I took a walk through the Kremlin, wondering how in time, the Lord will arrange for the Jewish people to be released from this iron rule! It's ironic, but the Kremlin is filled with museum-churches. How proud the crosses seemed as they stood atop the spires, framed by the setting sun! And well they should, as it is only the Believers in the God of Israel who stand tall above the rubble of communist life.

On Thursday morning, I left for Leningrad. Just before the plane landed, to my

disbelieving ears came the strains of the popular song, "By the Rivers of Babylon." It played three times over the public address system on the aircraft! I smiled to myself, wondering what would happen if the authorities understood the real meaning of the words. Oh, how well I understood the ancient psalmist's longing for home when he sadly sang the words:

"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion.

We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.

For there they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.

How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.

If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

Psalm 137:1-6

My first few days in Leningrad were difficult. I felt abandoned and filled with so many questions about my possibly having missed the Lord's will. When travelling in the Soviet Union, it is necessary to be in a state of continual spiritual battle, and I was beginning to feel worn down and discouraged. Some special things happened nonetheless!

On Friday, October 2nd, my first day in Leningrad, I planned to take a "hydrofoil" ride to Petrodvorets to see the Summer Palace of Peter the Great, and the lovely gardens surrounding the palace. I arrived at the hydrofoil station by the riverside and waited there with the Russian people. Just before the hydrofoil was due to leave, a bus pulled up filled with tourists. The tourists boarded the boat, filling it completely, and the hydrofoil left for Petrodvorets without us! This is one of the many frustrations of daily life for the Soviet people. Members of the communist party and tourists are given priorities for *everything*. The concept of the dignity of man is totally lacking.

Although I had been given a letter from the hotel that would enable me to board the boat with the tourists, I felt from the Lord that I should wait. Two hours later, it was announced that *all* of the hydrofoils would be filled by tourists, and that we should travel by bus and train to reach the palace on the outskirts of Leningrad.

The small group of people who had been waiting with me "adopted" me, and off we went to the palace together! We had such a wonderful time, even though we had to pantomime the entire day! At one point, they asked me what kind of work I did. So immediately I formed a cross with two fingers, and pointed to the sky, signifying — to a Westerner, at least! —that I was a Christian working for the Lord! But, since they lived in an atheistic country, they were immediately convinced that I worked as an airline stewardess!

We toured the palace together, and then spent many hours walking through the trails of golden autumn leaves, "talking" as best we could with one another. We then travelled back to Leningrad, and bid one another farewell.

On Saturday, I went to visit my friends of a year ago, Ida and Aba Taratuta. They were not at home, however, so I left them a note telling them I would return the following morning.

The rest of the day left me feeling more miserable than ever! That night I attended an opera, but had to leave in the middle, as I was filled suddenly with an acute feeling of sadness. I returned to my room in the hotel, and began to weep uncontrollably for the Jewish people in the Soviet Union. It felt as though the Lord was giving me a share in *His* sorrow, and I knew then in such a real way *that He has heard the cries of His people and*

has shared in their sufferings with them. It gave me even greater hope that he would soon see to their release!

The next morning, I was so thrilled to find Ida and Aba and their son at home when I arrived! On my last day in Leningrad the previous year, I had left a bag on Ida's door containing a Bible, a book in English, and some money. I had prayed very hard that the Lord would protect the bag until Ida returned home to find it! And that was the first news with which she greeted me — the bag was waiting for her when she had arrived at the door!

It was such a blessing to be with them. I had never met Aba before, and he began almost at once to question me about my belief in Jesus. He had some deep and searching questions to ask, and the Lord gave such wisdom as I answered him, with such authority and assurance of truth that it reminded me of Paul! Two concepts especially intrigued him — the idea that Jesus is the Messiah of the *Jewish* people; and that attending church did not make someone a "Christian", but only a committed relationship to Jesus Himself. The Lord gave His wisdom as I unfolded Old Covenant prophecies to them and shared of their fulfillment in the life and sacrifice of Jesus, our sacrificial lamb.

I gave Aba the Hebrew book I had carried with me to Russia, and it thrilled him. He speaks and reads Hebrew much better than I do, and teaches others in Leningrad the Hebrew language. I also encouraged them both to have faith, that God would soon open a way for the Jews in the Soviet Union to leave. Their answer was the same as the others I have told: "We're READY!"

The next morning I was on a plane bound for Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine. I had been warned, both in Israel and from my friends in Leningrad and Moscow, that the situation in the Ukraine was very grim. Tourists had recently been arrested for contacting Soviet citizens, and the authorities had really begun to crack down on the Jewish people and Christians even more than usual. And so, as I was soon to discover, it was in Kiev that the Lord would have me to be more open than ever!

On my second afternoon in Kiev, I set off to try to locate the unregistered church. I found the subway station and the bus that brought me to the general area, but the street was nowhere to be found! I searched and searched and searched, to no avail. In the West, it would of course be a simple matter. I could ask directions from the hotel, or take a taxi! But in the U.S.S.R., the taxi drivers, especially near the hotels, were employed by the KGB, and I certainly did not want to announce to the hotel where I would be going! I could not ask directions on the street, since I know only six Russian words; and the street signs use the Russian alphabet, which complicates the situation even more. But the Lord had directed me to the synagogue in Moscow, and so I knew that if He wanted me to reach the church that night in time for the meeting, He would help me to find it as well!

Because my paternal grandparents came from the Ukraine, I look very much like a Ukrainian Jew! So I would leave the hotels, wearing a brown, somewhat dowdy, Soviet-style trench-coat, don a "babushka" (scarf) and melt into the crowds! Many, many times people would speak to me in Russian and even one of the Intourist agents at my hotel nearly fainted when I told her that I did not speak Russian.

"But you *have* to!" she exclaimed. "You have the perfect Russian face! I thought you were one of our Intourist agents from another city!" Such a natural "disguise" helped, I'm sure!

Late in the afternoon, I had planned to meet Sasha, the young Ukrainian who gave his life to the Lord the previous year when we had spoken together. He had written to me a number of times since then, and it was clear through his letters that his closeness to Jesus had deepened. But he has never owned a Bible and has never had any Christian fellowship! (How much we take for granted in the West!) I brought the Russian Bible with me that evening to give to him, and I had planned to take him with me to the church meeting that

night as well. I knew that he would be able to help me to locate the building, and also could act as interpreter once we arrived. I had written to him a few weeks earlier, telling him the time and the place where we should meet. I was so thrilled at the thought of seeing him again!

I arrived expectantly at the arranged place, but Sasha did not come. I guess my letter never reached him. After waiting for quite a while, I finally turned toward the Metro to find the unregistered church by myself!

When I left the Metro stop and boarded the bus, one of the passengers asked to purchase two of my extra bus tickets. I was happy to help her, and I then showed her the name of the street that I was looking for, written in Russian, to see if she knew where I should get off the bus. And oh, how I was praying! She didn't know, and neither did any of the people around her. Even my map of Kiev was no help as only the major streets were listed! Finally the woman sitting in front of me turned around, smiled sweetly, signalled for me to get off the bus at the next stop, and pointed me toward a narrow pathway between two factories. I never, ever could have found it by myself!

I began walking down the long pathway, and noticed a small group of people walking in front of me. "They are Christians," the Lord told me. "Just follow them and they will lead you to the church!"

At the end of the long pathway, they turned the corner, then turned again, onto a small dirt lane with cottages on either side. The small lane was the address I had been looking for! They then entered through a gate in a high fence to a courtyard beyond, and I followed them in. I knew that the Lord had indeed guided me there, and I could hardly believe that I had actually arrived on the premises of one of the persecuted churches in the U.S.S.R.!

I had no idea at all how to make contact with people, so I just stood quietly in the courtyard. After a few minutes, an older woman came up to welcome me. I shook her hand, and showed her the picture that Lisa Vins had given me of herself to take with me to Kiev.

"Oh, it's Lisa!" she exclaimed, and suddenly people were milling around me as the picture was being passed from hand to hand. I could tell by their reactions that Lisa had been very precious to them, and I could sense in that moment how much she must miss this family of friends.

The only problem was that no one could speak English. The only thing I could get them to understand was that I came from Jerusalem, Israel. It amazed them very much! Finally they signalled me to go ahead into the church, and that if someone came that could speak English, they would send someone into the church to get me.

When I entered, I spotted an empty chair and sat down. When I began to look around, I noticed at once that the church was divided into a men's section and a women's section — and I had taken a seat on the men's side of the room! Before I had time even to be embarrassed, however, I felt a tap on my shoulder as someone motioned for me to return to the courtyard once again. And there, waiting for me, was an Ethiopian named Abraham.

He explained to me — in English! — that he had no intention of even travelling to Kiev that day, nor of attending the church that night, but he had been guided there by the Lord. He told me that his father was a pastor in Ethiopia, and that his father had always taught him to love the Jewish people.

"But in all my life I had never met a Jew before!" he exclaimed. "How happy my father will be when I write to tell him!" The greatness of the love of the Lord!

We were soon joined by the pastor of the church, and the three of us went to a basement room to talk, with Abraham acting as interpreter. What a wonderful talk we had together, for over an hour! They both were very interested to hear news of Jewish people finding the knowledge and love of Jesus as Messiah.

The pastor asked me at one point, "Isn't it true that the Jewish people are supposed to

return to Israel from *all* the nations of the world?"

We both knew that he was inferring from the Soviet Union as well. "Yes," I answered, "and we believe it will happen soon."

"Oh, for that we can pray!" he said.

He asked me how I came to find the church, and so I told him the miraculous story of how the Lord had brought Lisa and me together on an airplane when I was reading a book with Georgi's name on it.

We spoke of much together. At the end of our discussion, he welcomed me to give greetings to the church, and then asked me if I would be willing to remain after the meeting to speak to the young people's group. I was thrilled! He then warned me that there would be KGB agents in the congregation as well, posing as Christians.

"If you tell that you are from Israel, and if you mention the name of Vins, you could be questioned by them and perhaps even asked to leave the country. But it's up to you!" he said, as he shook my hand warmly, and went upstairs to the church.

"Oh, dear, Abraham, what shall I do?" I asked.

Abraham smiled. "I think, Esther, that you must say whatever the Lord has given you to say."

It gave me the assurance and the courage that I needed. I knew that the Lord had made no mistake in bringing Abraham to the church that night!

Abraham and I had been invited to sit on the platform with the pastor and the young people's choir. The evening I spent in that small church in Kiev is something I shall never, ever forget! I have been to many churches throughout the world, but never before to one such as this!

In many places, church is taken lightly, but that night I sensed such earnestness in their prayers, and an awareness that they were serving a Holy and a Living God. Truly it *is* God upon whom they depend, and this sense permeated every square meter of the room! And when it was time for prayer, without question, every single person, old and young alike, would fall to their knees. The prayer was fervent, and many tears were shed as they pleaded before God on behalf of one another. And the choir — how beautifully they sang! Like nothing I had ever heard before!

In the natural, they have nothing in the grimness of Soviet life to be thankful for. There is almost no food available. Many have had to face separation from loved ones due to imprisonment and exile. They face constant pressure from the KGB and have the threat of even losing their children hanging over their heads. *But I have never seen such thankful Christians in all my life.* I knew that the Lord had brought me to see a special treasure of His heart.

I gave greetings to the congregation at the end of the meeting. To me it was almost like a dream! My heart was so filled with joy to even be there, that I hardly knew what to say! I told them to be encouraged in the greatness of God's love for them; that He has shared their suffering. I then told them of the joy I had felt when, as a Jewess, I had come to know the greatness of God's love through the love of His Son. I thanked them for their faith, telling them that it has been a real source of strength and encouragement for Believers throughout the world. I then closed by giving greetings to them from Jerusalem, Israel, and from Lisa Vins.

Many people greeted me after the meeting, and I was so touched by the welcome in their hearts. One of the preachers came to warn me against using the name of Vins. "The KGB hates that name the most," he told me ominously. "They'll send you out of the country!"

I assured him that I was aware of the dangers. Once again I was deeply grateful to the Lord's careful preparation for imprisonment, because I found that I was free from fear.

After some time I went into a back room to speak to the young people. The room was

packed, and they kept bringing in extra benches. I think so many people filled the room because of their love for Lisa. I shared with them for over an hour, with Abraham translating once again, telling of my experiences as a Believer in Jesus; of Israel; of the greatness of God. We felt so united in a bond of His love. Often our eyes were filled with tears.

At the end, they were welcomed to ask questions, and they had many. One friend of Lisa's asked, "And how did you meet Lisa?"

I turned to Abraham. "Oh, help! What should I do?" But his faith was immovable. "Tell the story!" he answered simply. And so I did, but I avoided mentioning the *name* of the book the Lord had used to bring us together, cognizant of the fact that representatives of the KGB would be present. Finally, someone asked, "And what was the name of the book?"

I gulped, took a deep breath, and said, "*Faith Despite the KGB!*" We all grinned.

One of the young women stood and read some verses and greetings that they had written for me, and they presented me with a bouquet of flowers. They welcomed me back to the Friday night meeting, and asked me if then I would sing some Hebrew songs for them. I promised that I would!

A group of us left the church together, as some of the young people were planning to take me back to the hotel. They all felt that the KGB would be waiting for me at the usual bus stop, and so we wound our way through fields to the trolley, holding hands and feeling the Father's love. At the trolley station I said goodbye to Abraham and the others who were travelling in the opposite direction. The friends who took the trolley with me walked to within a block of the hotel. They could not go directly to the hotel, as they could be arrested for meeting with a tourist. We waved to one another until they disappeared out of sight. Oh, such a wonderful night!

The next morning I called Natasha, the young Jewish girl who had translated for me the previous year when I had met many Jewish families at her Aunt Shoshanna's farewell party. We had written many letters to one another during the interim months, and I felt so close to Natasha and her family. She was so excited to learn that I had arrived back in Kiev at last! An hour later, Natasha and her parents were waiting for me near my hotel. I don't believe I have ever received such a warm welcome in all of my life! They hugged me until I thought I would break, and we all cried with joy at being reunited again.

"We want to know if you can come to us, Esther, to our house," Natasha asked immediately. I already knew from the Lord that I was to spend the next three days with them, and so I was thrilled to be able to answer, "Yes!" I wasn't free to stay overnight with them, of course, because if I didn't return to the hotel at night, the 'key lady' on my floor would report my absence immediately to the KGB. But by God's grace, we had the daytime hours to spend together. The first day happened to be "October Revolution Day" and so Natasha and her father did not have to work at the factory that day!

I received an even warmer welcome to their home! It was a two-room apartment, and I was so blessed to see my pictures with their family pictures. I felt so at home in this small Soviet flat! As soon as Natasha's mom had learned through my letter that I was coming for a visit, she had begun to cook. Her first remark to me was, "Oh, no! You're so thin!" Believe me, at the end of three days, I was no longer thin! Food is difficult to obtain in Russia, and I knew that the meals they put before me represented many long waits in food lines and much sacrifice. I was also overwhelmed by the gifts they showered upon me and my family. So poor, and yet so very rich in love!

I was amazed at the change in Natasha and her family in just a year. When I had met them in 1980, they had only recently applied for permission to leave the U.S.S.R., and they were still very much afraid. But one year later, a real transformation had taken place. They were writing once a month to Mr. Brezhnev for permission to leave the U.S.S.R. That has to take courage, and that kind of boldness surely must come from God! Natasha told me that

her mother also goes to the Ovir (immigration) office every single month, the office that processes the applications for exit visas for Israel. The Soviet government tries so hard to convince the world that no one would want to leave their marvellous country, but Natasha explained that hundreds and hundreds of Jewish people in the Ukraine have applied for permission to leave. Because many have received no answer, they are not part of the official "refusenik" statistics. But *so* many have applied to leave that it is a source of great embarrassment to the communist regime. So much so that they have now closed off the main street to the Ovir office for all but Jewish people, to prevent the mainstream of Soviet society from knowing that such a great number of Jewish people want to leave!

How can I portray in words the suffering of a people within a suffering people?

The next morning, Natasha and her parents took me to Babi Yar, the fateful field where thousands upon thousands of Jewish women, men and children were shot — "eliminated" — by the Nazi hand. Can you imagine what it means to the Jewish people in the U.S.S.R. when the Soviet government refuses to admit that *Jews* were killed there? The sign at the simple monument simply says:

"Over one hundred thousand citizens of Kiev and prisoners of war were shot here by the Nazi invaders between 1941-1943."

On the day of the dedication of the memorial, Jewish people were forbidden to attend, and many Soviet citizens to this day are unaware of the real story of Babi Yar. In September, friends of Ida and Aba's journeyed to Kiev for the anniversary of the Babi Yar massacres, and they were arrested for attending as Jews. But in their small way, the Jewish people of the Ukraine still show that this sight of destruction belongs to them. On wedding days, the Soviet brides and grooms bring flowers to the war memorials in their respective cities. But in Kiev, the Jewish brides and grooms choose instead to lay their flowers at the monument to Babi Yar.

Something happened during my visit with Natasha's family, just a little thing, but it spoke so clearly of the tender care that the Lord has for each of His people. Some months earlier, while still in Jerusalem, the Lord had prompted me one day to purchase an automatic umbrella, the kind that opens at the push of a button. It seemed like such a waste of money that at first I actually disobeyed and bought an ordinary umbrella. But the Lord persisted so I obeyed Him at last. It was very handy while waiting for busses loaded with packages! (Although one rainy day I really wondered, when it opened in the bank near my home by mistake, drenching the teller and his desk! Fortunately, it happened in casual Israel. The teller merely brushed off the water without even looking up, and continued to write!)

I had taken the umbrella with me to the Soviet Union, and on a cloudy day brought it with me to Natasha's home. Her father grabbed it as soon as he spotted it, and began to examine it thoroughly. Would you believe that they call him "golden fingers" because he can make anything; and that he had designed, and made, completely by hand, an automatic umbrella? His factory was waiting for him to perfect it, so that they could begin to manufacture automatic umbrellas! And the model that I brought to him from Israel gave him two new ideas for his umbrella! Once again, it was a deep lesson in the importance of obedience, even in the foolish things, and an even deeper reminder of the depth of God's love.

Natasha's father presented me with a Magen David that he had crafted for me himself, and he had engraved on it my name in Russian as well as my birthdate. It was so lovely, and such a treasure to me!

The 8th of October was the day of Yom Kippur, the most sacred of all the Jewish

holidays. Natasha explained to me that most Jewish people in the U.S.S.R. are located in the Ukraine, and that most of the Ukrainian Jews now live in Kiev. She told me that as she was growing up, she had no identity as a Jew. She simply wanted to be a "good Soviet citizen", as did most of her friends.

"But when I was 17 years old, or thereabouts, something happened to us. Suddenly we were aware that we are Jews! And now, on Yom Kippur, everyone goes to the synagogue. Everyone!" Natasha explained.

She, too, was wearing a Magen David that her father had made for her, and this awakening to a Jewish identity amazed me as I saw evidence of it once again. And she was right! Everyone, but everyone went to the synagogue on Yom Kippur! There were hundreds and hundreds of Jewish people, blocks filled with them as far as I could see. What a sight to behold! What a sign of the faithfulness of God!

The synagogue still open in Kiev is very small compared to the grandeur of the Moscow edifice, and we had to elbow our way through the crowds to enter it. When we returned to the street once again, some of Natasha's friends were waiting to greet us, as she had told them that I would be accompanying her to the synagogue that day. They presented me with a Ukrainian children's book. One of the young men inscribed it *in Hebrew* with the following words:

"To a memory of a visit in Kiev from friends living in this city with their great sadness..."

The Soviet regime has kept the memory of the Second World War alive in the hearts of the Soviet people. They teach continuously that the Soviet people should hate the Nazis for what they did to the Russian people. And then they teach, just as systematically, *that Zionism is the same as Nazism.*

Natasha showed me where "Jewish" was stamped in her passport. "It's the only thing they stamp!" she told me. "They don't stamp Ukrainian for the Ukrainians, nor Russian for the Russians — only Jewish for the Jews! The leaders of the collective farms have recently taken Jewish lives, *believing they are doing a service to the country.* And when the factory managers see 'Jewish' stamped in the passports, it gives them an excuse to say that the position has been already filled. Persecution is getting much worse all the time!"

In many countries, it is possible to discuss that land and its people without bringing in the State. But in the Soviet Union, it is absolutely impossible, since the State controls every aspect of their lives.

And what about the mystery as to why so many of the Soviet Jews leaving Russia travel to the United States instead of Israel? Over and over again, I sensed that the majority of the Jewish people in the U.S.S.R. have a great love for Israel, and a great longing to go there. But, they are *afraid.* And after hearing the Soviet news, it's no wonder. They hear continually that Israel is the great aggressor and in a continual state of war. And so they are simply afraid for their lives and for the lives of their families! Here is just one small quote from the *Moscow News* that is available to tourists:

"MOSCOW, July 1981 — Nothing can excuse the Israeli policy of genocide against the Palestinian and the Lebanese peoples, a policy which is reminiscent of the German Nazis during World War II. The Soviet Union resolutely condemns the new acts of aggression and terrorism undertaken by Israel against the Arab peoples, says the Soviet news agency TASS in its statement on the criminal escalation of barbarous attacks by the Israeli military against peaceful Lebanese towns and villages and the Palestinian refugee camps.

Israel would not conduct itself in such a defiant and brazen manner if it did not enjoy the support and even encouragement of the United States of America. It is America that provides Israel with a continuous flow of weaponry and ammunition used by the latter country to massacre Lebanese civilians as well as those Palestinians who found temporary refuge in the Lebanon. Soviet people give their full support to the government and people of the Lebanon and the Palestinian Resistance Movement, the victims of unprovoked acts of aggression, who courageously defend their legitimate rights and interests, it is said in the TASS statement."

Nothing could be further from the truth. It had been of great concern to the Israeli people for quite a number of years that the PLO and other terror organizations, operating within the boundaries of Lebanon, have massacred many, many thousands of Lebanese civilians — a tragedy to which the world fails to respond. It is just like satan to try to twist the truth beyond recognition, as the Soviet news agency attempts to make the PLO — avowed terrorists bent on the destruction of Israel — appear as the innocent victims of aggression. And even more astonishing is the audacity it takes to compare the most barbarous act in the history of mankind — the wholesale destruction of one-third of the Jewish people — with the Zionist call of God's chosen people to their promised land.

But news like this is fed to the Soviet citizens in a steady stream. So I was very grateful to tell many of the people I met what Israel is really like, and to bring them the news that God will soon open the door for them to leave, to come home to Israel. And the exciting thing is that the news is beginning to spread. Natasha's father shared the news with a friend at work, and the friend was so happy that he jumped in the air for joy!

Natasha's mother explained that they are so ready to leave that they don't buy anything that they don't absolutely need, as they hope to leave the Soviet Union soon. And I know that it is not an empty hope! The whole family reiterated that they would be ready to go at a moment's notice, wearing only the coats on their backs! It is God's preparation in their hearts.

It was sad to have to say goodbye to them after our three days together.

It was odd, but one day in a time of prayer, the Lord had told me that *if* I was to go to prison, it would happen on the 9th of October. I should have recognized the tongue-in-cheek way in which He told me, but sometimes I get too introspective and serious about such things! And so on the 9th of October, as I left the hotel on my way to the church, I packed a little "prison bag", just a few things to take with me just in case. At such times, I often wonder if the Lord giggles, or just wishes He didn't know me. At any rate, I boarded the bus after leaving the Metro station, and got off at what I thought to be the right bus stop. With the "prison bag" slung over my shoulder, I began to walk down the pathway between the two factories. It seemed narrower than I remembered and it was hard to see, as bright lights were shining in my face. As the lights seemed to get even brighter, I stopped to look around. I soon discovered that there *were* lights shining in my eyes — spotlights from the guard towers of the prison that I had mistakenly taken myself to! I quickly turned around and re-traced my steps to the bus stop, thankful that I looked simply like any other Soviet citizen, and *not* like a foreigner!

The Lord had surely been right — for on the 9th of October, I had taken myself to a prison! I must say that I don't always appreciate His sense of humour.

After a short bus ride, I located the correct street and continued on my way to the church. The members of the church welcomed me as a member of the family! I sang the Hebrew songs for them, as I had promised, and they presented me with three roses and a

box of chocolates. I was also given a picture of the young people's choir, which I really treasure!

A few of the young people brought me back to the hotel following the service. We took the trolley once again, and towards the end of the ride, all the other passengers had already left. Two of the men, who sing in the choir, sang with full voices, in Russian, unto the Lord, the great old hymn, "How Great Thou Art". Oh, such unforgettable, tender moments!

Within a block of the hotel, we stopped, and they asked me to pray for them. We stood in a small circle, and with all my heart I prayed for God's protection for them, as they continue to share His love. We then turned and went our separate ways. I'll never forget them!

The next day I returned to Moscow, and went immediately to the Brailovsky home. The Lord's timing is so perfect, as Irina's mother signalled me that in five minutes Leonid would return!

I was so happy to see him again. "Who should begin?" he asked, as we both had news to share.

I began by telling him about his grandparents and uncle in Israel, and brought pictures of them to him. The news that he had, brought a special encouragement, as I had asked many friends to pray and to write letters on Victor's behalf to the heads of the Soviet government.

"Tell your friends, and everyone that helped my father, that their letters and prayers and concern really *did* help!" Leonid said.

He then told me that the most difficult time for his father had been during the long weeks of imprisonment while he was awaiting trial. Because of his liver disease, he knew that if he would be given a prison sentence or sent to a labour camp, he would not live through it. And so it was with much relief that he received the sentence of five years of internal exile, the mildest sentence of all.

Leonid told me that he had just received a telephone call from his mother and father the previous day, and that they both sounded very well.

Leonid then went on to say, "My father was supposed to be taken to exile by slow transport, during which prisoners often die. But instead, he was flown there! And he was not sent to Siberia, but by the Caspian Sea, with camels and sand dunes and a milder climate! He is on a major railway line with a direct train from Moscow, which takes only 36 hours. And my father does not have a labour-job, but they have given him a sitting-down job repairing computers. And we can visit him! My mother will stay with him until he is assigned his own small apartment or room, and then she will return to Moscow for a time. I hope also to visit him soon!"

Irina's mother invited me to stay for supper, and we ate borscht and talked for hours around the kitchen table. I was so happy to be with them again!

The next day I was whisked away in a black car to the airport, to board the plane that would take me from the U.S.S.R. to Helsinki, Finland. There was another search of my possessions at the airport, but once again the addresses and other important things were protected by the Lord. I was very conscious of the prayers of so many faithful friends throughout the entire time. Prayers make such a tremendous difference!

Marja was the lone figure waiting for me in the Helsinki airport. It was a tense moment for her, as she would be the first to know whether or not I came out of the Soviet Union on schedule. We had a great reunion, and then I journeyed on to Norway for some days of restoration and quiet with Jenny and Wolfgang in their home surrounded by a lovely forest on the grounds of the hospital in which they work. My stay in Russia, with continual pressure and oppression, left me drained, and I needed to feel again the quiet strength of the Lord before returning to busy Israel.

Often people have asked me how I have the courage to travel by myself to the

Soviet Union and while there to so openly share the Lord's love. Their comments often startle me, for I do not consider it to be brave at all. The truth is that I am simply too much of a coward to disobey the Lord when something is so strongly confirmed as His will. I wouldn't want to be anywhere else in the world when He has clearly shown that it is to Eastern Europe that He wishes for me to go! It is that sense *that there is no other choice* that gives me the determination to obey. But many times I feel afraid, and need therefore to trust in the Lord in a deeper way than I had previously imagined. While in the Soviet Union, I have had such a deep, deep sense of His sovereignty. All that has happened is due completely to Him, and not in any way to me.

"A missionary is one sent by Jesus Christ as He was sent by God . . . The ideal is to be true to Him, to carry out His enterprises . . . When looking back on the lives of men and women of God the tendency is to say — What wonderfully astute wisdom they had! How perfectly they understood all God wanted! The astute mind behind is the Mind of God, not human wisdom at all. We give credit to human wisdom when we should give credit to the Divine guidance of God through childlike people who were foolish enough to trust God's wisdom and the supernatural equipment of God."

Oswald Chambers
My Utmost for His Highest

It was astonishing to leave the Soviet Union this time with the belief and the hope that soon the Lord God of Israel is going to see to the release of His people in that dark and distant land. It is a hope that goes against the logic of reality. But I couldn't help but think of the famous lines from a George Bernard Shaw script:

*"When you talk, I hear you say, why — always why.
But I dream things that never were — and I say — why not?"*

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WINTER LESSONS

Shortly after my return to Israel, two Believers came to visit me, Corrie from Holland and Rebecca from Canada. Corrie had been a number of times to Poland, and I was fascinated as I heard tales of her journeys there. I also told them both about my two trips to the Soviet Union. When I mentioned to them the message that the Lord had prompted me to bring to the Jewish people there, they both laughed, while Rebecca exclaimed, "Don't you know that this is a common vision throughout Europe?"

Of course, I had no idea at all as to what she could possibly be alluding to, as I had delivered the message in simple, blind faith, unaware that it was known to anyone else on the face of the earth!

They went on to explain that the Lord had revealed the same thing to many Christians throughout Europe, and had called upon them to make preparations to welcome and to help the Soviet Jews on their way from the Soviet Union home to Israel.

A few days after receiving this astonishing bit of information, I received a letter from Marja in Finland, in which she wrote:

"... I've met Christians in the centre of Finland who have a special burden for the Jews and are waiting for them to soon be released from Russia. This week I heard of more people. It seems to be a common vision now. Christians in Finland are preparing to help the Jewish people. They all seem to have the faith that God will soon fulfill His word . . ."

We knew that the soon release of the Jewish people from the Soviet Union was something to keep very much in our prayers.

In December, 1982, my parents came to visit me in Jerusalem to celebrate their fortieth wedding anniversary. When I was deported from Israel in 1976, it was a great disappointment to them as parents and as Jews. They had worked tirelessly all of their lives on Israel's behalf, and to them it was such a disgrace that due to my belief in Jesus I was thrown out of that country! Because of their hurt and disillusionment with me, they vowed never to come to Israel to visit as long as I lived there. And so I was very grateful to the Lord for their willingness to come. Since 1976, He had taught me what a privilege it is to be able to "honour thy father and thy mother," and He had enabled me to reach out to them in love on different occasions. And His love had changed their hearts!

The day after they arrived, we took off in a rented car for the north. We toured

many places, and visited my believing friends on our way. In each and every home, my dad himself brought up the subject of Jesus. We really teased him about it! As a result, they both heard many testimonies from Jewish Believers, young and old, living in Israel. Some delightfully funny things happened to us as well, and we laughed a lot during our trip around Israel's beautiful Galilean countryside. In one kibbutz guest house on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, we were laughing so hard that I'm certain that the staff there thought we were drunk! (Drunkenness, incidentally, is a sight almost never seen in Israel.)

To me, one of the highlights of our tour was our afternoon sojourn through the Golan Heights. It was such a beautiful drive, with the view of the farm-land sitting tranquilly below us and the majesty of Mt. Hermon off in the distance, snow-covered as usual. After driving through that cloudy afternoon, we returned to our hotel by the shores of the Sea of Galilee. The next morning, we glanced at the newspaper headlines, and we were thrilled and amazed to realize that we had been annexed to Israel! At the very moment that we had been driving through the Heights, the Israeli Knesset had enacted into law that the Golan Heights was to henceforth be a part of Israel! To have been a part of that great decision, in even a small way, brought such joy to each of us, and it was a special seal of God's hand upon our trip through Israel. It is the Lord God who gave the Jewish people the title deed to this land, and so it was a wonderful feeling to know that we had been right there when part of it was officially accepted within the boundaries of Israel!

When we returned to Jerusalem, we were invited to the homes of friends, visited the Western Wall and other historical sights, of which Jerusalem abounds. We then took the long drive down from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea, passing the tragic sight of the Masada ruins, continuing down to the resort town of Eilat on the shores of the Red Sea. We journeyed some distance down the coastline, acutely aware that very soon this area of the majestic Sinai would be in Egyptian hands.

Two days before their departure, we drove to Tel Aviv to see the "Diaspora Museum" located at Tel Aviv University. I'm used to the buses in Israel, and therefore often find it difficult to know how to get someplace by car. And, believe it or not, I could not find Tel Aviv University! We found ourselves at Bar Ilan University instead, and decided while there to at least get out of the car to have a look around the campus. My parents remembered that my childhood Rabbi used to be a professor at Bar Ilan, and so we located the administration office to inquire about him. We were told that he had retired and was now living in Jerusalem, and so they called him upon our return home. They were invited to visit him the next afternoon. What transpired as a result of their visit with him amazes me even now!

At the end of December, my two-year "Temporary Residence" visa was due to expire, and I had felt from the Lord that it was time to apply for permission to live permanently in Israel. And so, just prior to my parents' visit, I had sent in my application for "Permanent Residence" to the Ministry of Interior. It was the head of that agency, Dr. Joseph Burg, Minister of Interior and Police, whom I had opposed in court in 1978-79. Was it possible that the same agency I had taken to court would grant me, as an acknowledged Believer in Jesus, permission to live permanently in Israel?

During my parents' visit with the Rabbi, they described to him some of the work I had done on Israel's behalf. The story of the love scroll especially touched him. They then told him of the struggle I had endured to stay in the country, and that I had just applied to the Ministry of Interior to have my status changed to that of a permanent resident.

"Is that so!" the Rabbi exclaimed. "Well, I definitely think your daughter deserves to

be a resident of Israel, after all she has done to encourage people to show their love for this country. It just so happens that Joseph Burg is one of my closest friends. I see him at least once a week, and I promise you that I will put in a good word on your daughter's behalf! I'll tell him that I feel she should be given permanent residency, and I know it will help!"

My parents were so excited later that day when they told me the news. "Perhaps that's why we even had to come to Israel now!" my dad said. Who would ever believe that my own parents and my childhood Rabbi would be instrumental in my getting permission to stay in Israel forever? All three were well aware of the fact that I have accepted Jesus as the Messiah! It was a wonderful and very surprising answer to many prayers.

All in all, my parents' time in Israel was truly blessed by the grace and the presence of the Lord, and He helped to deepen the bonds of love between us. My parents recently wrote: "While we may not agree with your religious ideas, you are still our daughter, and we love you!" I shall sing of the mercies of the Lord forever.

The rest of the winter was a fairly dismal time, during which I had quite a few things to learn, and a number to re-learn as well. Have you ever had that experience in the Lord, where you know a rule of faith so well, and then somehow lose sight of it? It seems like starting all over again. It showed me more clearly my desperate need for the continual guidance of the Lord; for without His guidance, I could be in the middle of the right path, and not recognize it at all!

To be more specific, I lost sight of the basic rules for living by faith. It happened so gradually that I was barely aware of it at all. After my return from the U.S.S.R., some large bills remained un-paid, and the Lord's provision was very small. Not one day passed where I didn't have something to eat, but each and every day felt like a battle in faith. I should have just quietly rested in the Lord and trusted His hand, no matter what the outward circumstances appeared to be. But instead, I started "hinting" to friends about my needs and my attitude grew gloomier as the days wore on. I believe that the un-paid bills only complicated things for me, for in all of my experience in trusting the Lord as my Provider, bills had always been paid on time! The burden of it all weighed heavily, as I was not at that time walking in the victory of the Lord.

That winter I had planned to spend three months in the States, speaking at a number of places. But as the time of my departure drew nearer, the money for the fare simply did not arrive, not a single penny of it! Usually, when the Lord withholds provision, it is either to attract our attention or it is a time of testing. During this time, not only was no money arriving, but my travel documents were still tied up at the Ministry of the Interior with my residency application. And so it seemed impossible for me to leave Israel at the time that I had planned! Finally I stopped everything and sought the Lord about it. I realized at once that the idea to go to the States had "slipped in" when I was so involved with the Soviet Union, and that the Lord had never confirmed it at all! What's more, He clearly showed me that I had neglected to take seriously the work that He *had* commissioned me to do — namely, to write the book of my experiences!

Oh, dear me, but it was true! In the summertime, the Lord had clearly confirmed the writing of the book as His will. He had provided a wonderful typewriter, a new desk built by a believing carpenter in Tiberias, and someone to print the book — and I had barely begun to write at all! I was very grateful to Him for attracting my attention through the lack of funds and for preventing me from walking through the wrong door.

My first reaction was not so joyful, however! Even though the Lord showed me

clearly that going to the States was not in His will, I was still tempted to go anyway. Meetings had been arranged, and I had planned to see the children many times during those three months; and I knew that friends would loan me the money for air fare if I asked. It is a great temptation to give in to the voice of pride at such times, instead of simply facing up to the fact that I had made a mistake!

But finally, thankfully, I realized that if I travelled to the States *outside* of the will of God, it would not bring a blessing to anyone. And so I wrote a letter to friends in the States, asking their forgiveness for the inconvenience my mistake had caused, and I settled down in Jerusalem on the first of February to begin work on the book. During those cold Jerusalem weeks, I completed many pages, and learned much as I waited before the Lord while working on the book.

I was certain, after cancelling the trip to the States, that the bills would then be paid and money would come in more freely. But such was not to be the case. Perhaps the Lord used the lack of funds to simplify my life so that I would have no distractions from working on the book. And perhaps it was a time of testing even of my life of faith! But I finally came to the conclusion that if I waited for the bills to be paid for twenty years, and if no money ever came in, there was nowhere else that I could go. I had nothing in all the world to offer anyone apart from the love and the knowledge of Jesus. And so I felt very much like Peter when he said to Jesus: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life ..." (John 6:68)

Before the Lord provided once again, He had me read the inspiring book, *George Muller of Bristol*. Through his experiences, I had to re-learn the basic rules of living by faith. There was one day when those rules were sorely tested! I received in the mail a gift of 220 D.M. from a friend in Germany. It arrived on a day when I had barely \$2.00 left to my name! I rejoiced in the provision, when unexpectedly the Lord told me that the money would have to be returned. He reminded me that I had written to her and had "hinted" at my need, and therefore I had no right to accept it. And so I walked sadly to the post office to return the money to Germany. The very next day, German visitors arrived, and left me with 930 D.M., enough to cover one of the large un-paid bills! So it was a great joy to have all of the lessons of faith so deeply confirmed, and to be back by His side with renewed determination *that He alone has the gift of eternal life*.

On the 16th of March, the Lord let me know that it was His will for me to return to the U.S.S.R. again in the autumn. At that moment, it felt to me like the shadow of the cross fell upon the pathway in front of me once again. When faced with having to return another time, I felt so helpless, until the Lord reminded me that if I went to encourage even one person, it would be worth it! And with that in mind, I could do nothing but to say, "Hineni, Father. Here am I. Send me!"

The following week I met a very dear Believer who had been herself to the Soviet Union over twenty times. Her work was primarily to help the persecuted church, and I breathlessly listened to the many stories she had to tell, all pointing once again to the sovereignty of the Lord that we serve. She also gave me advice that I recognized again as the Lord's preparation. Among other things, she told me that if I was interrogated by the KGB, not to let them intimidate me in any way; not to eat or drink anything they would offer me, as it could be drugged; and to accept the whole experience in the victory of the Lord. Having experienced something of what she was talking about when I had to be open in front of the KGB in Kiev in October, I could almost feel the strength of the Lord as she spoke.

She told of one experience of interrogation that lasted over 24 hours. In her handbag, she had documents and papers that would have disastrous effects if found by the KGB. The KGB asked to see the contents of her handbag, but she informed them

firmly, praying with all her might, "I happen to be a citizen of the United States of America, and this is my own personal property. In the United States we have laws that protect citizens from the likes of you. I refuse to let you see it!" Every so often, during the 24 hour span of time, they would ask her if she was sure she did not need to use the toilet facilities. But she continually told them, "I'm a grown woman, and if I need to leave, I'll tell you!" She knew that if she left the room to use the toilets, they would never allow her to leave with her handbag; and she also knew that under no circumstances could they open it to find the incriminating documents. And so she had to pray extra hard for the Lord's help during those long hours — and she received it!

It was such a privilege to have met someone who had so frequently risked her life to bring encouragement and support to the underground church! I was so filled with joy when I returned home from my meeting with her that I really had to laugh at myself. "What's the matter with me?" I asked myself. "I've just received preparation for interrogation by the KGB, and I'm *happy*?"

That very same week, I received a letter from the young man who had autographed the book for me in Kiev at the synagogue. The letter was written in excellent, self-taught Hebrew, and I recognized it as yet another confirmation from the Lord.

"Dear Esther,

I'm writing to you this letter for the third time already. But up until now I have had no answer from you. Very curious. I hope it's only because you're so busy that prevents you from writing to me. You know very well that I am waiting impatiently for your letter and truly I cannot expect your letters at any odd time. Because of this I have decided to write once more. I think I'll be successful this time, but only God knows what will be. I believe that I am not waiting in vain.

Here by us there is no special news. Everything is just as before. We are sitting and waiting like fishermen on the shore of a sea. We are waiting for good, pleasant weather. We want to cast our nets into the sea and we want to sail in the big sea and wander far to willing shores, to the shores of the dream of Jacob our father . . . In which words is it possible to describe our physical condition and our depressed state of mind.

Well, I hope that everything is clear to you and I don't have anything more to add to this. I hope that you and all of your family are found in good health and are preparing for Passover with much joy and happiness.

I am blessing you all and want to wish every one of you all the best in your lives. Esther, please write to me. You know what such a possibility means to me. My address you'll find on the envelope.

*Shalom and
see you later,*

Eugenia,

Your Friend"

His first two letters never reached me, no doubt due to censorship in the Soviet Union. How wonderful that the Lord honoured his faith, and the letter placed in God's hands arrived safely in Jerusalem. How his letter made my heart ache for friends still in captivity!

After having spent the major Jewish holidays in the U.S.S.R., it was special to be

back in Israel for the celebrations of Purim and Passover. Purim is such a joyous time. The little children dress up for the festivities like Queen Esther or Mordechai, and throughout the streets of Jerusalem poor people are rushing around with gifts of food for one another and for the poor. The highlight of the festival comes on the eve of Purim, however, following the traditional Esther fast. Everyone goes to the synagogue with one sort of noisemaker or another. The Rabbi or one of the synagogue leaders reads aloud the story of Esther from the Bible. Every time the name of the villain Haman is mentioned, everyone screams and shouts "BOO!" and bangs and rattles and in general makes the greatest racket possible. It is so symbolic of our victory over satan, the real villain.

"And Mordechai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews that were in all the provinces of the king Ahashuerus, both nigh and far, To establish this among them, that they should keep the fourteenth day of Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, yearly, As the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day: that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor ...

The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to their writing and according to their appointed time every year;

And that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed . . ."

Esther 9:20-22, 27-28

It was especially poignant to celebrate Purim in Jerusalem, still so soon after the nightmare of the Holocaust, the greatest tragedy in Jewish history. No doubt intense suffering makes the joyous times seem even sweeter, but surely the memories of past difficulties linger on.

Just before the celebration of Passover begins, there is such a sense of expectation in the air. Housewives are busy cleansing their homes of the last bit of "leaven", and it is a wonderful time for spring housecleaning when you know that the whole country is cleaning with you! Just before the eve of the Passover meal, or Seder, the Jerusalem shops were emptied of the last crumbs of bread, as everyone prepared to munch the un-leavened bread for seven days. Eleven guests were able to celebrate the Passover meal with me at home, and it was a lovely time! And they all survived my chicken soup! It was wonderful to celebrate as a nation the miraculous redemption from the bondage of Egypt. I couldn't help but look forward with joy to the next exodus, from the U.S.S.R., which the Bible tells us will be even greater than the first! Like many Jewish families, I set an empty place at the Passover table for the Prisoners of Zion, with a marker inscribed in Russian, Hebrew and English with the age-old Jewish hope, "Next Year in Jerusalem ..."

Easter fell during the middle of the Passover celebration. I went with a friend to the sunrise service at the Garden Tomb, amazed as I always am to be able to celebrate Easter in the very city of Jesus' resurrection. I then had been invited by Sid and Betsy to

attend a fellowship breakfast at the Intercontinental Hotel on the Mount of Olives. Following the meal, a worship service was held, with a very commanding view from the windows of the old city and the Temple Mount. As we sat there overlooking the mosque, a young Israeli man went berserk and entered the area of the mosque with his rifle blazing. As we were on the Arab side of the city at the time, we therefore heard first-hand the terrible anti-Israel propaganda that was immediately fed to the Arab people to encourage their hatred. They were told through loudspeakers that the Jews were trying to take over the Temple Mount, and that over 200 Arabs had been killed. Angry Arab mobs began stoning cars, and we saw one car of Israelis pull up to the hotel in search of medical help. The windshield of the car had been shattered, the driver was bleeding badly, and the little daughter, also injured, was screaming from fear. It was a terrible morning!

We were held "captive" on the Mount of Olives until 2:00 p.m., as the raging mobs refused to let any traffic through. But finally an Israeli taxi made it up a narrow side road, and we drove cautiously down the Mt. of Olives back to West Jerusalem. It was such a comfort to be back on the Jewish side of the city, and to see people calmly going about their daily errands, knowing nothing about the scene of violence we had just witnessed a few kilometers away. Someone said, "Wow, does it feel good to be back in Israel!" Of course, we had been in Israel all the time, but I know exactly what she meant.

Later news stories showed that only two people had been killed, not 200. The whole nation felt sad over what had happened. It was a shock to us all, however, that even weeks later, other countries and the United Nations were still up in arms over the actions of one deeply troubled young man who went mad on Easter Sunday morning. People are killed in every nation under the sun day by day, but it seems that international reaction occurs only when it is a Jewish person in Israel on 'the shooting side of the gun. Oh, dear, such a somber Easter day!

Three days later, on the last day of the Passover observance, I felt from the Lord to spend one day in total fasting and waiting before Him. I had no idea why this fast was being called, and so with no prior expectations, I waited in prayer before the Lord. What happened surprised me very much! He reminded me of Easter morning, when we had all been exposed to violence and bloodshed. He then began to unfold parts of Revelation to me. It was the very first time that He had really dealt with me about it in any real way, and so it came as a great surprise. He made it clear to me that from then on, we would not be so protected as in times past, and that very, very difficult times were soon to follow. He also made it very clear that during the difficult days ahead for all of us, the only way we would have any hope of surviving in faith until the end, would be to remain close to His side and continually cleansed in the blood of the Lamb. It was a stern warning, which He followed up with Psalm 91:

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust. He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shall thou trust: His truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day;

Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.

A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.

Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation . . ."

I could sense that it was a warning to be very firm about sin, and to bring even the least transgression before His throne of grace. But in general, I had no idea what it all meant. Could it be related to coming events in Russia? In Israel? Only the Lord has the answers; we need only to keep our eyes steadfastly fixed upon Him.

The Lord also confirmed that late in May, with my Greek friends, Nellie and Sophia, I was to spend a week on the island of Patmos, where John was actually given the revelation of the things that will befall us in these end times.

It was a sad spring in yet another way. Israel had to withdraw from the city of Yamit and from northern Sinai, and as a nation and as a family we felt together the heartbreak of it. The Jewish people have been uprooted so many times from so many places; it was terribly painful to witness it again so very close to home. From the barren desert sand, with hard work and high hopes, the beautiful city of Yamit had arisen. On the final day, when the Israeli flag was lowered for the last time and the Israeli soldiers sang "Hatikvah", many of them cried, and the rest of the nation with them. As Ariel Sharon said that day, "We have planted this day a tender young sapling of peace in the desert ..."

Three days following the traumas of the withdrawal, Israel took a deep breath and joined together to celebrate her 34th year as a nation. On the eve of the anniversary, downtown Jerusalem was closed to traffic, as thousands of people thronged the streets to sing, dance, eat ice cream, and bop one another on the heads with little plastic hammers. At times like these, we know we are a family, and I believe that the closeness we feel to one another is God's special gift to His little land.

Early in the spring, I received notification that my application for permanent residency had been approved by the Ministry of the Interior, and a few days thereafter I received my Israeli identity card. What a joy it was to know that even in an official way, Israel was to be my permanent home. And I knew that it was a definite victory, which re-confirmed to me that if the Lord wants someone to stay in Israel, He will work it out, no matter what the opposition may be! I had been deported from the country in 1977; declared no longer eligible for the Law of Return; refused permanent residency in 1979 and ordered to leave the country once again; but none of it mattered, as the Lord had given me Israel as my permanent home nonetheless! He is Lord of all the earth, and He decides where it is that His sheep are meant to pasture!

Shortly thereafter I received a letter from a Believer with whom I had corresponded for a year or so. His name is Peter Abas, and he is a seminary student at a college in Sarawak, Malaysia. He wrote saying that he had prayed for the Lord to bring me to his distant land to meet him and his fellow seminarians. I laughed when the letter arrived, as to me the possibilities of a visit there were remote indeed! And once again, I was unprepared for the Lord's surprising intervention.

"I'm sending you there!" He informed me, much to my amazement. He then confirmed that prior to my proposed trip to Russia, I was to travel first to Norway, then to the United States, New Zealand, Malaysia, and on into the Soviet Union. It seemed like such an enormous distance to travel for the second time, but in obedience I wrote to a friend in New Zealand who had offered to arrange meetings for me 'if I was ever to visit New Zealand once again. (I originally thought I would be visiting in Australia as well,

but the Lord clearly confirmed that it was not His will at that time. It is always a danger for human "logic" to get in the way of the Lord's firm purposes! Australia may have been close-by to New Zealand, but it is the timing of the Lord that matters the most, and not necessarily our logical thinking! He finally reminded me that when He has sent me to England, He did not send me to France, even though they were in close proximity to one another!)

A few weeks later, I received a letter from my New Zealand contact, requesting the arrival date and time to enable him to plan the itinerary. It was a simple enough request, but for me it posed a bit of a dilemma. One of the un-paid bills during the long winter months happened to be at the travel agency that had been such a wonderful help on my previous Soviet trip. Sarah, the owner of the travel agency, was well aware of the fact that I live by faith and was trusting the Lord for the payment of the bill. But as the months slipped by and the bill remained un-paid, it was my pride that kept getting in the way. I knew that the bill was His responsibility, but it was a very long time before my prideful nature would allow me simply to trust Him even in this. And then, within a single week in April, all the money arrived to pay the debt.

When the letter arrived from New Zealand requesting the travel information, once again I had no money. I therefore went to the travel agency again, and asked Sarah if she could simply book a reservation for me from the States to New Zealand, so that I could give an arrival date to my friend in New Zealand

"To New Zealand?" she asked me. "But where else will you be going?"

I told her the full itinerary as the Lord had given it to me.

"And what were you planning to do?" she inquired. I explained that I had planned to simply pay for the tickets one at a time, which often had been the way that the Lord had provided.

She gasped. "But it will cost you hundreds of extra dollars to do it that way!" she informed me. She then insisted that I speak with one of her employees named Peter, to see what kind of ticket could be arranged.

Finally, through Swiss Air, he booked a ticket for me from Norway to New York to Baltimore to Minneapolis to Honolulu to New Zealand to Singapore to Malaysia to Bangkok to Zurich to Moscow to Helsinki to Stockholm and back once again to Norway. And for all that distance, as far south as I could fly to almost as far north — 26,000 miles — he came up with the price of only \$3,500.00! It was really incredible! It was an extremely complicated ticket, as in addition to the great distances involved, it could not in any way indicate that it was purchased in Israel, as that would close the door to both Russia and Malaysia, a Moslem country. But eventually all the details were worked out!

It seemed that many weeks of travel lay before me in the months ahead.

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PATMOS AND OTHER PLACES

Late in the afternoon, for two weeks, to visit the island of Patmos with Nellie and Sophia, my Greek friends whom I had met in Athens in 1980. I travelled by ferry from Haifa, and had ordered a berth in a four-bed cabin, with the Lord's promise that I would have the whole cabin to myself. And sure enough, I did!

The first day on board, an announcement came over the intercom that a magician would perform for the passengers that evening. I immediately fled to my cabin to intercede in prayer, but as soon as I began to pray, I simply felt the Lord's peace.

"But Lord, he's a *magician!*" I said. But I continued to feel His peace, so I stopped praying and curled up with a book, *The Tongue of the Prophets* by Robert St. John. It told the amazing story of Eliezer Ben Yehuda, who accomplished the seemingly impossible task of modernizing the Hebrew language, years before Israel emerged as the Jewish nation. I could so recognize the hand of the Lord in his life that I read the book between tears and laughter, which somehow is always God's balance in our lives.

Later that evening, I went for a walk on deck, and I heard a group of people singing. I soon discovered that it was a group of forty Christians from eleven countries who were with "Youth with a Mission". No wonder I had felt such a sense of peace when praying against the powers of the magician! On such a small ferry, there were 41 Believers! And I soon discovered why the Lord had given me a cabin to myself. It was to enable us to meet and to share together! I must say it wasn't quite how I had pictured my trip to Greece, but the Lord is always full of surprises!

I spent one night in Athens, and the next morning Nellie, Sophia and I sailed to the island of Patmos. I fell in love with that little island from the moment we stepped across the gangplank to the hustle and bustle of the Patmos port at ship-arrival time. We could see the lights and the shops and the white-washed buildings, and felt at once the sense of peace and the closeness of God's love which has remained a part of that small place throughout the centuries. A man with a cart pushed our luggage to one of the port-front hotels, where we said good night and went right to sleep, as it was by then well past midnight.

When I awakened the next morning and pulled open the shutters, I'll never forget the beauty of the scene that my eyes beheld. The sun was sparkling on the Aegean and the whole panorama of the port and the monastery off in the distance was too beautiful to be believed. Patmos is a tiny island in the northern end of the Dodekanise, almost small enough to walk in a single day, and it has to be one of the Lord's favourite places on the earth. I was sad on the day when the ship finally pulled out of the port again, unaware at that time that Patmos would become a part of my life in the future. Sophia and Nellie had treated me to the entire week, and once again I felt so blessed by their

love and by the Father's hand in bringing us together. I was sorry to have to say good-bye to them!

The return ferry to Israel approached the shores of Israel almost at dusk. My eyes filled with tears as I saw the port of Haifa off in the distance. The ferry travelled parallel to the Israeli coast, from Rosh Hanikra on the Lebanese border to the port of Haifa. I had no idea of the drama that was being enacted on the roads to Lebanon.

After we arrived in the Haifa port and completed customs, I took a taxi to the home of friends, where later that evening Sid and Betsy were planning to pick me up for the trip up to Jerusalem. We headed towards home late at night, and noticed at once that travelling in the opposite direction, towards Lebanon, were all sorts of military equipment. We passed busloads full of soldiers, many tank carriers, a steady stream heading towards the north. As we passed each tank, jeep or military vehicle, we felt such an urgency to pray, and often could not help but notice the unusual flurry of activity. Busses were picking soldiers up at many places throughout the darkened streets. We were therefore some of the first to be aware of the military activity, as Israel that night entered Lebanon to put a stop to the terrorist activity that had been operating from Lebanon for many years.

Having lived in Israel since 1976, I knew of the dangers that the northern settlements have faced with the continual shelling of civilian areas. It is no small matter that a whole generation of Israeli children on the northern borders have grown up under the constant threat of bombs, air raid sirens, and a frantic dash to the bomb shelters — a regular part of their lives. I don't believe there are many nations in the world that would allow the enemy on its very border, continually killing its citizens, and wait all those years before defending itself, just for the distant hope of "peace".

When Israel finally entered southern Lebanon, there was no other alternative. The PLO had stockpiled so many tons of weaponry in southern Lebanon, that Israel's very existence was threatened. In just the very beginning of the war, Israel discovered 4000 tons of ammunition, much of it sophisticated, hidden in under-ground bunkers, of Soviet origin. Israeli troops also found 144 vehicles, plus 12,506 small arms. The store of weaponry was so vast that it would have taken 150 trucks working a full month on a daily basis to cart away the war materials discovered at the start of the war, which did not count the vast stores in Beirut or in other underground bunkers. The weaponry had become so sophisticated and of such vast quantities, that it was far more than just the northern settlements that were in danger, but the whole of Israel itself.

It was very touching to see how the people of southern Lebanon welcomed the Israeli soldiers as the tanks rumbled across the borders. The southern Lebanese had asked for Israeli intervention for some time by then, as they, too, had been the victims of terrorism. Over 100,000 southern Lebanese Christians had been killed at the hands of the PLO over the past eight years; and the world has remained silent. So when Israel finally crossed over the border, they were seen as liberators to the southern Lebanese people as well. Crowds of people gathered to cheer the troops; small children presented the soldiers with flowers; women prepared coffee and tea for them.

It was also very moving to see how carefully the Israeli soldiers tried in every way possible to protect civilian lives, often at the risk of their own lives. The Israeli people do not have a heart for war, as they have suffered too much themselves to have anything but respect for the dignity of human life. Unfortunately, war is war, but I don't think that an army has ever acted in such a humane and caring way. The following is a letter to Israel Defence Forces (IDF) soldiers from the IDF's Chief Education Officer, 11 June 1982:

THE IMAGE OF THE ISRAELI SOLDIER

Now that the aims of the Operation Peace for Galilee to guarantee safety of our citizens in the north have been achieved, Israel has initiated a cease-fire. Israel has called upon Syria to adhere to the conditions of the cease-fire in order to stabilize the situation in Lebanon.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) is now situated over extensive areas of Lebanon; soldiers are coming into contact with a large, diversified civilian population. This contact presents you with a challenge — to behave in a humane, Jewish and IDF fashion.

The Chief Military Prosecutor has published binding instructions to ensure such behaviour:

** It is absolutely forbidden to take spoils from any source whatsoever. Anyone violating this order can expect a trial and a maximum sentence of ten years in prison.*

** Roadblocks have been placed on all exit roads from southern Lebanon; everyone leaving the area will be checked.*

** The peaceful civilian population must not be harmed; in particular, respect for women must not be violated.*

** All IDF soldiers must refrain from harming sites of cultural value, including archeological sites, museums and the like.*

** It is forbidden to harm the holy sites of any religion.*

Every war stirs up feelings of hatred, revenge and disrespect for enemy life and property. Despite these feelings, every one, as a human being, must observe those morals and principles on which the existence of human society is based.

This time, the IDF is fighting a cruel enemy, who systematically used terror against defenseless civilians.

The IDF must not act according to the standards accepted by our enemies; we must not allow feelings of revenge to guide our behaviour towards the civilian population in Lebanon.

Our uniqueness, and our power, derive from our behaviour as decent human beings.

A deterioration of the rules of moral conduct in the IDF, which is a "people's army", will hurt you as a man and a citizen, and will have its effect on the moral level of Israeli society and on its quality of life.

The maintenance of the rules of fitting behaviour during your stay in Lebanon will also help Israel in its political and public opinion campaigns.

Part of the civilian population in Lebanon has shown itself ready to cooperate with Israel. One of the goals of Operation Peace for Galilee was 'the hope that a peace treaty will be signed with an independent Lebanon, its territorial integrity preserved.' This is why the initial contact between IDF personnel and the citizens of Lebanon is so important. This contact is what will determine the character of future relations between two good neighbours.

Therefore, in your contacts with civilians you must show a proper, humane attitude, and take care to respect their dignity. In addition, you must help prevent acts of violence, robbery and looting among the Lebanese citizens themselves.

The eyes of the world are now on our region. Many journalists and foreign

correspondents are now in the combat zone.

Acts of looting, or damage to property, holy places, cultural sites or natural or scenic areas will play into the hands of our enemies. You must see yourselves as having personal responsibility for the image of the IDF and of the State of Israel in the eyes of the citizens of Lebanon and of world public opinion.

The principles of morality are basic to the Jewish heritage. Even in wartime, it must be remembered that to his fellow man, a human being is a human being.

* * * * *

The letter was concluded with the following Scriptural quote:

"And Joshua said unto Achan... tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me. And Achan answered Joshua and said, Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonian garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it. So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it. And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the Lord. And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had, and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? The Lord shall trouble thee this day . . ."

General Rafael Eitan, then Commander of the Northern Forces, reconfirmed the moral responsibility of the IDF in a very moving speech given to the soldiers, reminding them that they were about to enter foreign land, and to be so careful — not only of human life — but not to even step on the flowers if they didn't have to! And the subsequent behaviour of the IDF made all of Israel proud to be represented by them. The Israeli soldiers many times risked their own lives to try to preserve the lives of the Lebanese civilians.

I left Israel in mid-June, and traveled first to Norway, then to the United States, and later to New Zealand, and I was horrified when I heard the blatant anti-Israel propaganda in the news, carefully propagated by the PLO. They greatly, greatly exaggerated the number of casualties, listing as dead at one time more than the whole population of Lebanon! They also blamed Israel for destruction that had actually been done by them years before. They showed horrible films of suffering and destruction, but journalists subsequently learned that the films were of the suffering actually inflicted by the terrorist organizations in years past, and not by the IDF at all! Even the Red Cross, which has consistently refused to recognize Israel, reported that 10,000 were killed as a result of the Israeli entrance into Lebanon, when the actual figure was not more than 460 dead.

What horrified me most of all as I travelled and heard the incredible distortions of the truth, was to see how ready the world was to believe it! When I heard of the outrageous lies that Hitler propagated about the Jewish people, I had often thought "But how in the world could people have *believed* him?" But now, it seems the whole

world is ready to believe in anti-Semitic lies again! The intensity of the reaction was really frightening, but more frightening for the other nations than for Israel. God knows the truth, *and that is Israel's comfort*. For no matter what the nations of the world may choose to believe, the Lord saw the heart of the Israeli soldiers, and *His* opinion is all that really matters.

We have to recognize that little happens in terms of Israel that can be understood with only natural eyes. It is the one nation upon the face of this earth that speaks of the faithfulness of God; and therefore Satan hates that nation above any other. And in these times, he is raging against this little country with fury unparalleled in the history of the world. And therefore I warn you once again as believers in Israel's Messiah — guard your love for Israel! God loves us even though we are less than perfect, and so must we continue to love the apple of His eye. For I believe that the anti-Israel propaganda will get even worse as time goes on. And therefore, Israel will need our love more than ever. In God's sight, we are one with them, and He will bless us as we bless them.

While I travelled during those distressing months, I sensed that the sword of division was getting even sharper. The Lord was deeply searching the hearts of His people, and separating those who truly were willing to stand in the gap for His nation from those who loved Israel only when it was the popular thing to do. For as I've said before, in these days, it is impossible to believe in the God of Israel and the Saviour of Israel and not share in the Lord's great burden of love for His people. Eventually it will cost us all something to stand with the nation of Israel. *But in the long run, it will cost us far more not to.*

The following excerpt from an Israeli soldier's letter to Norwegian friends speaks for itself:

"... We have been taking quite a beating in the international press, and I only want to tell you that we, at great risk to ourselves, were extremely careful not to harm Lebanese civilians (who seemed grateful to see us). In many villages, the PLO hid in civilian concentrations. Military strategy would say to bomb the village from the air or at a distance. But to save Lebanese lives (thereby endangering our own), we went into the villages to only attack the PLO and not endanger their Lebanese hostages.

The PLO, who send children to throw stones at soldiers, have finally had to put their bodies where their mouths are. Frankly, evacuating them from Beirut is akin to evacuating the S.S. from Berlin under safe conduct.

But you know, despite our 'military prowess', most of us are so un-warlike — so anxious to be kind to the Lebanese and so happy to get back to our homes.

The Norwegian radio English program interviewed General Bull, who made some rather nasty statements and today had a terrorist thanking the Norwegian people for their aid and sympathy. It hurt. So many of the terrorists were mercenaries, fighting for money instead of their supposedly patriotic cause.

The amounts of weapons found were staggering.

Dear friends, Israel has never stood more alone, but I know that you understand our cause. We all hope in God that the wars of the Jews will cease and that the redemption will come . . ."

The Lord helped the Israelis in this war as well. The Israelis early in the war went on a bombing mission to wipe out the SAM missile and radar sites in the Bekaa valley, and, as *Newsweek* reported, "They hit everything spot-on with enormous accuracy." In two

days of aerial combat, the Israelis shot down 85 Syrian MiG's, with no Israeli losses, sending out red balloons to deflect any anti-aircraft missiles. Sharon pronounced the Israeli mission, "one of the most brilliant, complicated and intricate operations" ever carried out by the country. Once again, the weapons prepared against Israel did not prosper. But the vicious, PLO propaganda unleashed against us was believed and reinforced by the news media throughout the world.

Following my Patmos trip, I had hopes that the money would have arrived for my round-the-world trip, but it hadn't. None of it! One week before my scheduled departure to Norway to begin the trip, I went to the travel agency to speak with Sarah about the whole matter. I planned just to cancel the reservations and then purchase the tickets one at a time as the money was provided. But Sarah, knowing that I was trusting the Lord for provision, simply gave me the \$3,500.00 ticket to the ends of the earth, telling me that I could wire her the money when I received it, and sending me off to Russia again with her blessings! It had to be a great test of faith even for her, as eight months had gone by before I had been able to pay for the last ticket! Surely the enemy had been trying to use the lack of funds to foil the plans of the Lord, but He knew this dear woman's heart. And I know He will bless her for her help at that time!

On the 18th of June, I left Israel with my gigantic ticket to begin the long journey. My first stop in Norway was at the home of Jenny and Wolfgang. Marja from Finland also joined us there, so it was a wonderful time of fellowship. I spoke at a conference near Oslo, and also flew to Bergen for some meetings there. And then, by the end of June, I arrived in the United States.

I had planned to spend two weeks with Michael and Joey. It had been almost a year since I had last seen them! But I soon learned that their father had misunderstood the dates, and the boys were out-of-State visiting relatives. He refused to re-arrange their plans, even though he knew I had come especially to see them. Instead, he insisted that if I really cared for them, I would cancel my trip to New Zealand and accompany them to Arizona for the two weeks in August when they would be visiting my parents there. Oh, such a dilemma!

Needless to say, I wanted to see them more than anything else in the world. But when I prayed, I knew that the trip to New Zealand could not be cancelled, and that it was therefore not going to work out for us to be together. It was so sad, and I could only trust that somehow they would know that I still cared about them. Jesus loves them, and that was my comfort. And I knew that often, before special things happen, He reminds me of the cross, the cost of serving Him. But I still cried with a mother's love.

At that time, Sid and Betsy were visiting with their family in the States, and so they brought me to Washington D.C., on the first of July, to apply for a visa to the U.S.S.R. It was the first time that I would be applying for a visa without dear Mr. G's help, and I felt very apprehensive. As I walked towards the travel agency that had handled my previous trip following Mr. G's sudden death, I was inventing all kinds of excuses to give them for wanting to return to the Soviet Union for the third year in a row. My anxiety level was rising steadily. And then, just before I stepped through the door, the Lord interrupted my thoughts. He said, *very* firmly, "You *don't need any* excuses. You're going to the Soviet Union because I am sending you!" And so I entered the office with no apologies, secure in His power and strength.

The Lord had given me the dates of the itinerary to be used in the Soviet Union, and I handed the schedule to Robert, the travel agent. After looking it over, he was very discouraging.

"Moscow will never give you permission to stay for a week each in Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev. They usually allow only two or three days at the most. And it will easily be a number of weeks before you will receive any kind of a reply at all," he informed me. It was disappointing news, for in just three weeks I would be leaving the country en route to New Zealand. I left the office feeling disheartened.

I had to return to the travel agency later that afternoon, with a \$150.00 deposit. When I arrived, Robert greeted me warmly, as he explained, "While you were gone this afternoon, I located your file from your prior trips to the Soviet Union. Sorry that I was so discouraging! Please be assured that I'll send this information by telex to Moscow today, and I'm certain that by the 15th of July, you'll have a positive reply. But I'm afraid it will be quite expensive!" He promised to notify me as soon as an answer was telexed from Moscow.

I left his office so amazed, dying of curiosity, as I longed to know what information in my file completely changed his attitude! I had to act like I knew the contents of the file, but in actuality, I had no idea whatsoever what method Mr. G. had used to obtain for me such an open door to the U.S.S.R. Surely it would have been a disaster if I had gone to the travel agency filled with excuses!

The telex was dispatched to Moscow on Thursday afternoon, the 2nd of July, and by *the very next morning*, a telex was returned from Moscow, with approval for the visa, with all the hotel reservations made, and with the complete cost of the trip — for the exact itinerary that I had presented to them! The Lord had opened the door to the Soviet Union in *less than a day*. How can we ever cease to be amazed at the sovereignty of God? And how would I dare *not* to go when it was God Himself who opened the door? Many people have said that they would never have the courage to go behind the Iron Curtain. But how then would they have the courage to disobey *God*?

I spent the next two weeks with Marcia and Dave in Pennsylvania. It was a great time, although a little sad for me, as I knew it was a part of the time that I had planned to spend with Mike and Joey. But it was fun to be a part of a family for a time. I then returned to Baltimore to visit with Sid and Betsy for a few days.

On the way to the airport on the 21st of July, I had made arrangements to stop at the travel agency to pick up my Soviet visa and the Intourist vouchers. By that morning I needed \$1,570.00, the cost of my 25 day trip through the U.S.S.R. By the 19th of July I still had none of the money. But I knew that if God wished for me to go, He would provide it; and for me, His provision would be yet another confirmation of His will. And, sure enough, by the very last morning, the final amount had arrived. Therefore, Sid and Betsy dropped me off at the travel agency en route to the airport.

A woman helped me this time, as Robert was on vacation. She informed me that the Russian embassy that morning had refused to release my visa. She had called them three times, and each time she was informed that I did not need the papers until September, and that they therefore refused to release the documents at such an early date. The Russian embassy closed for the day at 12:30 p.m., and she knew that I was due to arrive in her office by 1:00 p.m., expecting to find everything ready. And so she had persevered, and finally, at 12:00 noon, she at last was able to speak with one of the officials; and somehow by 12:30 p.m., all of my papers arrived at her office!

Sid and Betsy drove me to the airport, and I then took a plane to Minneapolis for a three-day visit with my sister and her husband. Afterwards I travelled to Honolulu for three days of rest and prayer in preparation for a five-week speaking tour of New Zealand. The fact that the Lord was giving me three days of rest *in advance* made me suspect very strongly that the days ahead would be busy indeed.

New Zealand is such a beautiful country, and I was overwhelmed by the reception I

received and the interest shown in Israel wherever I happened to be. My schedule was extremely full, as I had suspected, with one, two or three meetings scheduled daily for all of the five weeks. On one Sunday alone I spoke five times! And none of it included the newspaper, radio and television interviews, nor the great amount of travel from pillar to post. The tour of speaking culminated in Christchurch in the South Island where I had been slated as one of the main speakers for the Women's Aglow National Convention. By then I was exhausted from the weeks of intensive travel and the many meetings, and I was somehow determined, in an odd sort of way, to act with the dignity befitting a national convention speaker. The Lord reminded me at once that *He* had provided the opportunity for me to address so many New Zealand women for *His* purposes, and that it had nothing whatsoever to do with my own personal merits or lack of them! But my own stubborn determination resulted in some hilarious lessons in humility!

One evening in windy Wellington, the Israeli Ambassador, Mr. Yaakov Morris, had been invited to attend one of my meetings. I spoke that night strongly against the incredible anti-Israel propaganda that the war in Lebanon had unleashed internationally; about Israel; and about the Soviet Jews.

After the meeting, Mr. Morris said to me, "Why didn't you let me know sooner that you were here?"

"Well," I answered, "do you remember the last time we met two years ago?"

He chuckled and said, "You're a little hard to forget!"

"And you remember the letter I wrote to you?" He nodded affirmatively. "Well, I was too much of a coward to call you after that!"

We both laughed, and then he replied, "Rest assured that I made a special effort to be here tonight!"

We spoke together for quite some time, and I was ever so happy to have seen him again. Talking and laughing together with him made me realize just how much I missed Israel and the Israeli sense of humor. But dear old Israel still remained on the other side of the earth!

Later a friend attended a local Jewish meeting in which Mr. Morris gave the main address. She wrote to me the following report:

"During the meeting, Mr. Morris spoke about having met you to these Jewish people! He said to them, 'Ladies and gentlemen, you probably won't believe this, but just last week I heard a Jewish Believer in Jesus from Jerusalem speak to a group of Christians in Wellington. And when she spoke about Israel and the Soviet Jews, she said exactly what I would have said . . .'"

To me, those are the rewards of travel.

When I had first announced my availability for meetings in New Zealand, I had informed my hosts that I was willing to be as busy as possible, *as long as every week* or so *I had a day or two by myself at my own expense in a hotel to rest and pray and seek the Lord*. I personally find the rigours of travel to be very trying, primarily because of the pressures of continual contact with other people. I'm not at all outgoing by nature, and so as each new opportunity presents itself, I have to depend on the Lord's wisdom and love with all my might. I've found that with some preparatory time of quiet and listening, however, I'm usually ready once again to serve Him in any way. To me, *time spent alone with the Lord is the most important time of all*, for I am acutely aware of the fact that it is the Lord alone who can prepare and enable me to bring His message and His love to His people. (And when we as vessels become emptied, we do a

disservice to everyone to continue to operate in our own strength!)

This crucial need to be refilled and refreshed by the Lord had been underlined for me when I read the biography of George Muller. Even though he had been responsible to God for the care of tens of thousands of orphans, he refused to stay anywhere but in a hotel when he was invited to speak somewhere, as he insisted that he needed the time and the quiet to seek the Lord! How often I have wished for the same courage!

People have been ever so kind to me in all the homes I have visited in many countries. But staying in other peoples' homes continually still results in additional pressure, for it's still necessary to talk and to share and to adjust oneself to different homes and lifestyles — again and again and again.

The issue is only conflictual because very few of God's people anywhere seem to understand or appreciate the absolute importance of listening to the Lord and of drawing apart to rest in His presence! People seem to view it instead as a financial extravagance.

The same thing happened in New Zealand! When I first glanced at my schedule, my heart sank to my toes when I realized that in the entire five weeks, only two days had been allocated as days of rest! And even those days had been planned as a time of rest in someone's home! By the time the rest period finally arrived, I had been speaking and travelling non-stop for an entire month. I was by then desperate for a time alone with the Lord. And so I knew that I could not take the pressure of another home, but that I had to truly draw apart in aloneness with the Lord. I therefore insisted on being taken to a hotel, where I would be free to pray and to seek the Lord without interfering with anyone else's schedule. And oh, but it made all the difference in the world! But I didn't find anyone who seemed to appreciate the tremendous importance of this. I wonder why?

Time alone with the Lord needs to be the most important moments of our lives, not the least important. When travelling the world, I often long for the refreshment of the Sabbath day in Jerusalem, where the whole city obeys the Lord and rests, as God Himself did after having created the world.

For me, this was the only hard spot on an otherwise wonderful five weeks in New Zealand. I love the New Zealanders, with their openness and warm hospitality, and felt privileged to have been able to share in the Lord's love with them in so many different ways.

After so many busy weeks, I took the long flight from Auckland in the North Island to Singapore, and then on to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Most of the Arab or Eastern-bloc countries (with the exception of Romania) refuse to allow Israelis permission to enter their countries, and so it felt strange indeed as an Israeli (with a U.S. passport) to find myself for the very first time in a Moslem country. The greatest shock came when I purchased stamps at the local post office. The postage stamps had on them a picture of the mosque in Jerusalem and the following inscription: "For the Liberation of Palestine!" Of course, they meant for the liberation of Palestine from us, the Jewish people! What a grim reminder of the united Arab front to see the destruction of Israel. How would we survive in the presence of such powerful antagonists were God not on our side?

I spent a few days in Kuala Lumpur in quiet and rest, and was then warmly greeted by Christians in the city. I spoke one morning to a large Christian gathering, after which many of the Christians confided to me their deep and abiding love for Israel and for the Jewish people. "Since this is a strongly Moslem country," they told me, "many of our lives have been threatened because we continue to pray for Israel. But Jesus makes us one with you, whatever the risks! We've also been praying very hard that Arafat won't

come to our country." Their words were so courageous, and I know that many of us will face the same decision as times get more difficult; since standing with Israel could eventually cost us everything.

On the 10th of September, 1982, I took a plane to Kuching, East Malaysia (formerly Borneo). When I arrived, the temperature was at least 35° C., with a heavy and oppressive atmosphere due to volcanic activity in Indonesia. The airport was incredibly small, but I was happy to find the smiling faces of Peter Abas and his seminarian friends waiting to greet me as I stepped from the plane. After settling me in a small hotel, they gave me a tour of Kuching, unfortunately including a tower filled with skulls as a welcome to "the land of the head hunter". We also travelled on a barge across a crowded and murky river to visit a local friend in the police force. We had coffee with the family in their little flat on stilts, and then toured the police compound. Later that night they took me out for some traditional Malaysian food.

The next morning I addressed the seminary students in their college classroom, after having been introduced to the priests and teachers. I found it such a joy to actually be there together with them, and will always remember sharing bowls of rice together afterwards at long tables in their dining room. I later spoke to a small meeting of the Catholic renewal, and at both places there was a love for Israel and an understanding of the role of the Jewish people in God's plan of salvation. So even in that remote and distant land, the Holy Spirit had been hard at work! Most of the seminarians planned to return to their own tribes with the Gospel following their ordinations. To have met them all was a truly heartwarming experience.

I returned once again to Kuala Lumpur, and on the 15th of September I arrived at the Kuala Lumpur airport to check in for my flight to Bangkok. I was immediately informed by the airline receptionist that they seemed to have no record of my reservation, and that furthermore, the flight I desired to take seemed fully booked.

"But if I can't get on this flight, what will I do?" I asked her.

She merely shrugged her shoulders, which left me trying to imagine spending the rest of my life in the Kuala Lumpur airport. After conferring with someone else, she finally suggested that I wait until the flight had checked in to see if possibly a seat would somehow be made available. "The flight departure time has been delayed by two hours," she added almost as an afterthought. And so I knew it would be a long wait.

"Well, Lord, this is surely in Your hands!" I said, and walked over to the small but busy cafeteria to get a cold drink. The young man seated at my table began to talk with me. He was a Buddhist, but as always the longing in men's hearts to know the truth about God is universal. He soon confessed that he had been seeking to learn the truth about God for many years, as he had found nothing in the religion of his parents. "I even went to Rome to ask Christians, but no one could give me any real answers there," he confided. I carefully explained to him that true Christianity was more than a religion, it was a relationship with Jesus Himself, the only Saviour for the world. I then told him about the plan of salvation; I shared with him about the reality of God's love for him; and that God Himself would reveal that love to him through Jesus if he placed his life in the hands of the Lord. I gave him the address of my Malaysian Christian friends, and I left him with a New Testament that someone had just given to me. He began to read it at that very moment, and with a smile I left him to walk back over to the airline reception desk. There were still no places available on the flight to Bangkok.

I had a very unusual ticket for a number of reasons, and I knew that if I did not make it on this flight, being stranded in Malaysia would become a real possibility. But there was no choice except to patiently wait, to pray and to see what the Lord would do. And then, just fifteen minutes before the doors of the plane were due to close, a young

woman stepped up to the counter. "I've been making some phone calls," she said, "and there is a much more direct route to where I wish to go. I therefore really wish to cancel this flight and to fly out to Singapore instead." Minutes later, I was told to run to the departure gate as fast as I could, and moments before the plane was ready to leave the airport, I gratefully fastened my seat belt. The Lord had done it again!

When we arrived in the Bangkok airport, I spent an un-eventful four hours waiting for the overnight flight to Zurich. We arrived in Zurich the next morning in the midst of a dense fog, on the very day of my departure to Moscow. The plane came in for a landing at the Zurich airport, and then, just before the wheels would have touched the ground, the plane suddenly banked sharply and began to circle the city. The pilot's voice finally crackled over the public address system. "I imagine you're all wondering what's going on!" he said, as a gallant attempt at humour. He then explained that the automatic pilot was not working properly, but that in some minutes they would make another attempt to land. The plane approached the runway for the second time, and then, as before, the plane banked sharply just before landing and we circled again. After a long while, the pilot announced that we would have to fly to Basel and try to land there. The word "try" was admittedly not much of a comfort, but when we arrived at the Basel airport we were able to land with no trace of difficulty.

We had to wait inside the plane for almost an hour until land arrangements could be made. Finally we were transferred to waiting busses which drove through the thick fog to Zurich. Because of the adverse driving conditions, the trip took almost two hours. I finally arrived at the Zurich airport with only an hour to spare before my departure to Moscow. I knew it would be my last hour in the "free world", and I was longing to speak with friends. I therefore quickly checked in for the Moscow flight and dashed for the telephones. I first tried to call Sid and Betsy in Jerusalem, but found no one at home. I then got through to Jenny and Wolfgang's home in Norway, to find only Wolfgang's mother at home. She speaks only German, so the best I could do was to simply leave my name and say good-bye. By then it was time to board the plane for the U.S.S.R.

The plane was scheduled to stop first in Warsaw, and there were a total of only five passengers on board. It already began to feel very Eastern European, and having had a sleepless night and a rather unusual morning, I was feeling as glum as could be. And then it was announced that even *this* plane would be delayed for an hour! I made myself as comfortable as possible and tried to concentrate on a book, but I couldn't help wondering what was ahead. I was feeling very alone.

After some time, the stewardess addressed me. "Are you Mrs. Dorflinger?" she asked.

"Yes," I replied.

"Come with me, please," she said. "The pilot has a message for you."

With that news, I simply did not know how to react. *How in the world could the pilot have a message for me?* "Perhaps my visa to Russia has been cancelled," I thought, as I followed her into the cockpit.

The pilot smiled. "You Mrs. Dorflinger?" he asked. I nodded. "Well, this just came over radio control for you. Do you understand it?" he asked, as he handed me a slip of paper. It said:

"We love you. Jenny and Wolfgang from Norway."

I said yes, I understood it, as tears filled my eyes. I was so happy and amazed. The Zurich airport is very large and complex, but somehow this simple message of love got through. "How ever did they do it?" I kept asking myself over and over again. I knew

that it was a very real reminder that I wasn't alone, that many people were praying; and I felt very close to them at that moment. And somehow it helped me to know that it was going to be all right.

Two people left the plane in Warsaw, and so only three of us disembarked at the Moscow airport. And, as both times before, the custom officials asked me to open my suitcases, and once again the search began.

I had with me a large number of Stars of David to give to Jewish people, and many olive-wood crosses for the young people at the church. I had Hebrew lesson books and many tapes of Israeli music. I had pictures from Jerusalem to give as gifts, some addresses, and four Bibles. The custom officials began taking whatever looked suspicious to them, and putting all of the questionable items over to one side. A very impressive pile was growing. They seemed especially suspicious of the tapes.

"Music!" I exclaimed hopefully, but after some minutes they took the tapes off with them to listen to. Fortunately, they listened only long enough to discover that they *were* music, but not long enough to discover that the music had come from Israel!

Eventually they returned everything to me except for the four Bibles. (They never found the jewelry or the addresses.) I smiled, because the Lord had told me long ago that my job was not to smuggle Bibles, but to take some nevertheless, and that day I understood His wisdom at last. The Bibles had satisfied the KGB agents that they had found *something*, and so all the other things that I was bringing to encourage the Jewish people got through with only minor difficulty! Finally, after a very long time, I was at last able to close the suitcases and proceed to the Intourist desk for my transfer to the hotel.

As I caught glimpses of the city as the car sped through the Moscow streets, it was hard to believe that I was there again!

The next morning, after a much needed night of rest, I took a walk to Red Square, a block from my hotel, and also to the famous GUM department store, a massive conclave of smaller shops. I also rehearsed the subway ride to the synagogue in preparation for my visit there the following morning.

On Saturday morning, the first day of Rosh Hashanah, I again left the hotel and took the metro to the Moscow synagogue. I climbed up to the women's gallery, and felt very moved as I heard the beautiful singing of the chazans in the sanctuary below. Almost at once, the women I had met the previous year recognized me and gave me such warm greetings. They treated me as an honoured guest as they ushered me over to the very front section and introduced me to the daughter of the Moscow Rabbi. I then began to pass out some of the Stars of David that I had with me from Jerusalem. Many of the women cried as they received such a tangible symbol of the awakening to Judaism that had been growing within their hearts.

I saw a friend of mine from the previous year, an older Jewish woman by the name of Miriam. She cried when she saw me, and said that she had prayed (!) that I would be there again, and in faith she had even brought with her that day some gifts to give to me. She was very afraid of the KGB, however, and therefore asked me to follow her to the toilets, and only there did she feel safe enough to give me the gifts.

In the evening I returned to the synagogue again. And, as the previous year, the street was packed with hundreds of young people, singing the songs of Israel and dancing the hora. Again, many remembered me from the year before, and I was able to encourage many that God was soon going to open the door for them all to return home to Israel. So many replied, "We can hope."

HATIKVAH (THE HOPE)
(Israeli National Anthem)

*As long as in a Jewish breast,
The soul's stirring has not ceased,
The eye for longing will not rest,
Until it gaze on Zion in the East.
Our ancient hope will not perish
Hope for ages long since past,
To live free in the land we cherish
Zion and Jerusalem, at last.*

But to have hope, in something seemingly impossible, is a very special gift, and shows the workings of the Lord within their hearts.

At around 10:00 p.m., the police arrived to disperse the singing crowds. Two of the young men who had led the singing walked back with me towards the hotel. They looked so Israeli, and spoke Hebrew much more fluently than I spoke it. "You belong in Israel, not here!" I told them. They smiled sadly and nodded their heads in affirmation.

As we walked along together, I told them the purpose of my visit to the U.S.S.R. I quoted the Scripture verses from Jeremiah, and told also of all the preparations that are being made to help the Jewish people once the Lord opens the door for them to leave the Soviet Union. They were interested and amazed.

As we were walking on one particularly dark street, suddenly a car pulled up next to us. It was filled with Soviet army officers. The three of us stopped talking but continued to walk. The door burst open and an officer jumped out — but he wasn't after us, he only stopped to use the telephone booth on the corner! It was a false alarm, but it is the kind of tension that these young Zionists must contend with all the time; and even as a visitor, I am always aware of the dangers.

I offered them a Hebrew instruction book from Israel, as they were both Hebrew teachers, and also some of the Israeli music tapes. They therefore waited for me near the metro station while I returned to my room in the hotel to get the items. My room happened to be right next to the key lady's desk this time, and so I had to pray that she wouldn't be suspicious of me arriving at the hotel at such a late hour, only to leave once again. I greeted her as I entered my room, and then quickly gathered the books and tapes and returned to the street to my waiting friends. We then walked together along the street, and I handed them the items. Again I had to pray that no one on the street would report us. The final danger came in the return to my hotel, as there is always a guard at the entrance. But all worked according to His purposes, and I went to bed that night with a very full heart.

I won't repeat all of the potential dangers as each incident is related, but I felt it important to give some idea of the necessity for intense prayer support on these trips — not just for the large blessings, but also for protection in all the small details as well, day by day. For anyone reading this book who has been faithful in prayer for me on these Eastern European trips, let me just take this opportunity to say — thank you, thank you, thank you! I wouldn't dare to go without your help.

The following morning I returned to the synagogue for the third time, and passed out more Stars of David. I was so moved as I saw their joy in receiving for themselves this symbol of their hope. Oh, how very much we take for granted!

That evening, I took the long metro ride to the home of Victor Brailovsky. As I approached the now-familiar apartment building, my heart beat faster in anticipation.

How I hoped someone would be at home!

Irina's mother answered my knock, and Irina was standing just behind her. Leonid and Dahlia were home as well. I was so thrilled to be with them all again! I gave them the gifts that I had brought with me from Israel, as well as pictures of Victor's family in Nahariya. Then Irina and Leonid and I sat down to talk.

I was very anxious to hear news of Victor, who by then had completed a year in exile by the Caspian Sea. Irina and little Dahlia had visited him at the end of August, and Irina was very concerned because his state of health had deteriorated. The summer climate was very oppressive and hot — 45°C — with no relief for many weeks. This, combined with Victor's liver disease, had caused a further decline in his health.

We talked for quite some time, until finally Irina's mother called us to the kitchen for some supper. We sat together around the kitchen table. It's my favourite place, as I have many happy memories there from other visits! While we were eating, I told them a story that Prime Minister Begin had told at a state dinner given in his honour in Washington, D.C. The entire evening had been televised on the Israeli television network.

President Reagan had begun the meeting by telling some slightly off-colour Bible stories, not realizing that they would be an offense to Mr. Begin. And then it was Prime Minister Begin's turn to speak. This is the tongue-in-cheek story that he told:

"I apologize in advance for the chauvinism of this story! A while ago, I was invited to President Reagan's oval office. I noticed while there that he had three telephones on his desk: a red one, a white one and a blue one.

'What are they for?' I asked him.

The red one is our direct line to Moscow, and the blue one is to Thatcher,' Reagan replied.

'And what about the white one?' I asked.

'Oh, that one is our line to God.'

Do you use it often?' I asked.

'Oh, no,' Reagan hastily replied. 'It's a very long distance call, you know, and we have to try to conserve costs! We almost never use it!'

And then President Reagan came to visit me in Jerusalem, our eternal capital. (Note: When we heard that statement on Israeli television, it was greeted with wild cheers, as it was said with Begin's usual great courage. Neither the United States nor most other countries of the world will recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel!) And he noticed that I also have three telephones on my desk: a red one, a blue one and a white one.

'And what are your telephones for?' he asked me.

And so I told him that the red one was to Sadat (he was still alive at the time the story was told); and the blue one was to Mitteraund (it was a dig because France has been so anti-Israeli).

'And the white one?' Reagan asked.

'Oh, that's our direct line to God.'

'And do you use it very often?' Reagan inquired.

'Of course!' I told him. 'All the time! From Jerusalem, it's considered a local call!'"

Dear Mr. Begin, thank you for being so fantastic!

Just before leaving to return to my hotel, I made arrangements to visit again the following evening and to purchase as much food as I could at the tourist shops for Irina

to bring to Victor in his place of exile. There was much food there that was not at all available to the regular Russian people!

The next morning I located the food shop, and purchased as much food as I could carry. I also found an absolutely beautiful warm and furry coat for Dahlia as a gift from her grandparents in Israel. The food cost a great deal more than I had expected, and my funds for the rest of the trip were running very low. I didn't see how the Lord could possibly provide for me while in the Soviet Union, and so I knew that in the days ahead I would just have to do without a few meals here and there.

On the taxi ride back to the hotel with my bulging parcels, I began to worry. There was nothing suspicious at all about arriving at the hotel with tourist bags full of packages. But I knew that leaving later that evening with full bags and returning with nothing would immediately arouse the suspicions of the ever-watchful key-ladies. I also had no idea how I would carry such heavy parcels on the metro and then on the long walk to the Brailovsky's home. All I could do was to put the entire situation in the hands of the Lord and hope for the best.

When I arrived at the hotel, I picked up my key at the reception desk, and rounded the corner to the elevators. Just at that moment, the elevator door opened, and out walked Rebecca, the friend who had visited me in Jerusalem with Corrie and had told me of the European preparations for the exodus! For a fleeting moment I simply stood there in shock, as my mind simply could not grasp the fact that we were bumping into each other, not on the friendly streets of Jerusalem, but in the capital of the Soviet Union, a teeming city of over eight million people! Rebecca had no idea that I would be in the U.S.S.R. at that time; and, as she had never before travelled to the Soviet Union, she was the last person in the world I would have expected to see standing by the elevator in my Moscow hotel!

When we recovered from the initial shock, we gave each other an enormous hug, both keenly aware of the extraordinary timing of the Lord in bringing us together in such a way.

"Come up to my room!" I offered, not knowing quite what else to say. When we closed the door and again greeted one another, I wrote on a slip of paper, "Would you like to come with me tonight to visit the family of Victor Brailovsky?"

She immediately began to cry tears of joy, as she had spent many long hours in intercession for Victor and his family.

"Would you like to walk with me to Red Square?" I said out loud, for the benefit of the ever-listening KGB.

When we finally reached the comparative anonymity of the street, I explained that we would be delivering parcels of food as well. We then agreed to meet at my room at the hotel at 8:00 p.m. to divide the packages between us, and to then proceed together to the Brailovsky home. Between the two of us, we were able to leave the room with the supplies without arousing the key-lady's suspicions.

When we arrived at last and told Irina the circumstances of our meeting, she shared in our joy and astonishment. Rebecca was able that night to confirm with even more details the story I had shared with Irina just the previous day of the preparations for the exodus to Israel. Irina seemed quite moved by Rebecca's love and the words of hope that she was conveying.

Irina, with her face bathed in the light of God's love, told us that she and Victor had been aware of God's love in their personal lives. "We know that many things have happened to us that cannot be explained apart from God. And we've also thought how often we've been able to help other people to leave the Soviet Union, while we have not been able to leave ourselves. And so we think perhaps God has a purpose in our still

being here!" And of course, He does! It was so beautiful to see her heart awakening to the possibilities of God's love, and I know that both Rebecca and I will remember that night forever.

The next morning Rebecca left for another part of the country, but by the Lord's amazing hand, we were to be together again at the same hotel in Kiev! On the very same dates! Rebecca was spending only six days in the Soviet Union. It was beyond our comprehension that in those six days, He had arranged it for us to meet not only once, but twice!

After saying goodbye to Rebecca, I returned once again to the food shop to buy additional food for Victor. As I began to lug the packages out to the street, my eyes filled with tears in gratitude to God for enabling me to buy food to help a man as precious as Victor Brailovsky!

When I returned to the Brailovsky apartment for the third night in a row, Irina began to describe in more detail her deepest concerns at that time.

"The situation for us is rather bad at this time for a number of reasons. To begin with, Victor's state of health became much worse after this horrible summer. The summer is very hot in his place of exile. In addition to temperatures of around 45⁰ C., there are no trees, no gardens — nothing, just desert with dry grass. There's bright sunshine from morning to evening with a very stifling atmosphere, so that you feel that it's very hard to breathe. And in this stifling atmosphere, there is dry, hot dust in the air, with no fresh air at all. During other times of the year it's more or less endurable. But the summer is terrible. Even when we visited in the beginning of September, it was still so hot that we had to remain inside all day long until after 8:00 p.m. And Victor had endured even worse conditions for the previous two months. His usual state of health is not good. And so, after these two months — day after day in the

same harsh conditions — he became exhausted and even worse than before. His liver condition worsened, something started with his heart, and there are now some difficulties with sleeping. It's not only due to the climate, but because of the complete impossibility of obtaining a proper diet for him, as only canned goods are available. And with this extremely hot weather and bad climate, the absence of fresh and good food contributed to his poor state of health.

I had hoped very much for his release before the end of the term. He has now completed two-thirds of his sentence, and according to Soviet law, it was therefore possible for him now to be released — without consideration of his case again, without the need for him to be declared innocent, just on the grounds of his good behaviour. And he had of course received no 'bad marks' at all — neither from his chiefs on the job nor from the militia in the village nor from his neighbours, as he was on extremely good terms with everybody.

Then, all of a sudden, some days ago, they organized and purposefully produced a bad mark against him just to prevent the possibility of his being released before the end of the term. In Russian it is called `regavar; it is a special paper with an official registration of some minor violation on the job. He asked the local authorities the reason, and they were a little ashamed and started almost to apologize for it, but they nonetheless were insistent on the existence of this paper. It was clear that they had been ordered to produce such a paper to prevent his early release.

Therefore my hopes for his being released for the moment failed. I had hoped that this terrible summer would be the last for him. I am very sorry, as I

know that efforts were being made on his behalf. Now there is still a year and a half more to the end of the term. I'm very, very sad and upset with the bad end to this story, especially in view of his poor health. I'm very disappointed.

And besides, more news, this time about my son Leonid. He applied to leave the country without us and again was refused — on extraordinary grounds! He was told he could not leave the country because his mother had access to 'state secrets' when she was a professor at Moscow University. Four years ago the Moscow University administration reviewed my case and admitted that I had never known any 'state secrets'. But now, after ten years of absence from the job, not me but my son was refused because of his mother's knowledge of 'state secrets'!

It's just a sign that they have not stopped their persecution of our family and their attempts to torment us in some way. I don't know what else they would like from us! They have imprisoned my husband, detained us for ten years, and have not allowed us to work as scientists. I can't imagine what else they would like to take from us! But these recent events — the failure of my husband's early release and the refusal of my son — are both signs that the authorities have decided not to stop the persecution of our family and are now going to continue in some way. I don't know how . . ."

My heart ached for them, and I knew that they desperately needed real intercessory prayer. I told her that many people were already praying for them, and that I would see to it when I returned to Israel that friends would pray even harder than ever.

A wonderful thing happened that evening! In the middle of our conversation, the telephone rang, and it was actually a telephone call from Victor from his place of exile far away by the Caspian Sea! I spoke to him myself that very night, and was so happy to be able to tell him that thousands of people around the world dearly loved him and that he was by no means forgotten. I then was able to tape a message from Victor for his family in Israel!

After we had settled down from the excitement of his call, we then sat around the kitchen table. In turn, everyone taped a message for me to take back to Victor's family in Israel. It was such a special time! I promised I would return to visit them on the 10th of October, which would be my last night in the U.S.S.R.

I was able to leave a very warm coat for Irina that had been given to me by a friend in New Zealand. Her own coat was so thin, and Moscow winters are so severe. How grateful I was to the Lord to be able to minister even a portion of His love to such dear people! They are truly beloved of the Lord, and are being persecuted for the sake of His name.

The next morning I arrived in Kiev, and immediately took a metro ride and a bus ride to review again the way to the unregistered church. I relaxed that night, and then met Rebecca for breakfast the next morning, as we had arranged in Moscow. Oh, how blessed it was to see a familiar face in an Intourist hotel! We toured Kiev together in the morning, and in the afternoon a guide took us to a church compound. We followed her down what seemed like hundreds of steps into dark catacombs far below. How good to know the Lord of life!

We returned to the hotel with just enough time to grab a cup of coffee and head out for the unregistered church. It was such a joy to me to have someone to share this night with! As we transferred from the metro to a bus and then began the long walk to the church, Rebecca marvelled at how the Lord had enabled me to find this place a year



*Brailousky "Family Portraits":
Irina, Dahlia and Leonid visited Victor in
exile far from Moscow.*



*Dahlia and Irina are standing in front of
Victor's "home" in exile.*



ago! Truly, it would have been impossible without the Lord's sovereign help. While we

walked I told Rebecca that I had no idea whether or not the pastor would remember me, but that simply being there with such dear brothers and sisters in the Lord would surely be an experience to remember forever.

We entered the courtyard at last, and I was so happy to be retracing my footsteps of a year ago. We walked around to the side of the building and when we reached the front, the pastor spotted us. He gave me such a warm welcome, and then greeted Rebecca, offering us seats just behind him. It was a thrill to see him again.

The service was very moving. Rebecca and I both had tear-filled eyes for most of the evening. Some of the prayers were especially heart-rending. A woman near us began to weep and to pray for her 23 year old son who had just been arrested for witnessing to young people. And most of the church cried with her. And as last year, the music was oh, so beautiful! It was obvious that they mean what they sing with all of their hearts. It is certain that no lukewarm Christians would survive in that oppressive land. We in the West have very much to learn from them!

The pastor welcomed me to greet the church again, and as the previous year, I was filled with such a sense of inadequacy. What ever did I have to say to them? Their faith is so deep and so real, as it has been purified by fire.

I began with the assurance- that they had been in my heart, thoughts and prayers every day since the last time we had met the previous year. I then told them that they were loved by brothers and sisters all over the world, and that they were especially loved by the Lord. I also spoke to them about Israel. In closing, I commented, "The Bible tells us that all of the nations of the world will turn against Israel before Jesus returns. But it's a very lonely place for a country to be, and they need our love and our prayers now more than ever before!"

The church then gave us a word of welcome, and sang for us in Russian, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus".

After the meeting, a number of people whom I had met the previous year welcomed us. After some time, the young woman who had translated the message for me, Bella, came over and quietly cautioned us that the police were waiting, and that Rebecca and I should follow her. She led us to the back of the church; and there, two men from the church, Bella, Rebecca and I slipped through a hole in the fence onto the railroad tracks behind the church. It was pitch black, and we had to walk for quite a distance, but we talked of the Lord as we walked along until we finally reached a safe bus stop. We walked along hand in hand, and felt such a deep bond of love in the Lord. I gave Bella all of the olive wood crosses that I had brought for the young people at the church, and I told them that I would be back the following Tuesday night. We thanked them so much for having guided us to safety, and when the bus at last arrived, we went our separate ways.

Rebecca left for Moscow early the next morning, and a day later she was to fly out of the country. Before we parted, she left me with a gift of \$100.00. It made me feel so ashamed of my worrying and doubts! Wasn't it I who had said that the Lord couldn't possibly supply money to me in the U.S.S.R.? Sometimes, when I limit Him in such a ridiculous way, all I can do is laugh at myself. How could I possibly have thought that the Lord would have no ideas for taking care of me behind the Iron Curtain? "O ye of little faith" is a *very* familiar verse to me!

In the afternoon, I found a telephone booth away from the hotel, and called my friend Natasha. She and her parents were the only friends in the Soviet Union who knew in advance that I would be coming to visit them once again. As soon as she heard my voice, she exclaimed, "Oh, we've been waiting ages for you to call!"



With the Brailousky's in 1982. Leonid, Irina's mother, Irina, Dahlia



With Irina and her mother



Irina actually speaking to Victor as he called from his place of exile near the Caspian Sea.



Sitting around the kitchen table making a tape recording to give to Victor's family in Israel.

We made arrangements to meet in front of the fountain on Kiev's main street. They greeted me so warmly once again, and we then took a bus to their home where a huge dinner was waiting for us. We talked our heads off, and I marvelled at how close I felt to them, as if they were my very own family.

In the evening Natasha and I took a bus to visit other friends, in honour of her nephew's first birthday party. Many were gathered there that I had met two years before in Natasha's aunt's apartment, and we all had a wonderful evening together. I spoke much about Israel, and told of the confirmations that God would soon open the way for them to leave the U.S.S.R. Wherever I shared this news in Russia, the reply was the same. "We've been waiting for years to leave and to return home to Israel. When the door opens, you think we won't go?" (Note the touch of Jewish humour!)

The next morning I took a bus to Natasha's house, and she and her father went with me to Babi Yar. It was my second visit, but my heart still lurched when I saw again the scene where so much Jewish blood had been spilled. We walked around the monument, and then Natasha's father took me to the road where the Jewish people had been led on that fateful day. He pointed to an old building and explained, "That used to be a synagogue. It had a Jewish graveyard behind it, and so the Nazis purposely chose to kill the people next to the graveyard. The Jewish people were told that day that they were being taken on their way to the promised land, and so they went with singing and with joy; only to be led to the edge of the ravine and killed in cold blood. One hundred and fifty thousand of them!" (I knew deep within my heart that on that day, they were gently gathered and brought to a Better Land, for indeed they were killed in the name of the God of Israel. And He has never forsaken the apple of His eye.)

While we were talking near Babi Yar, Natasha's father came across an old Jewish couple standing in the forest. They were praying from an old Yiddish prayer book and weeping, no doubt in mourning for their loved ones who had been killed at this site. I gave them a tiny gold menorah from Jerusalem, and prayed for the Lord to comfort them with His love.

We returned to Natasha's home and spent a quiet afternoon and evening together.

The next day was the eve of Yom Kippur, and late in the afternoon we went together to the synagogue in Kiev. Like the previous year, blocks were filled with Jewish people as far as you could see. The KGB is most repressive in the Ukraine, and so they met together with almost a quiet sense of desperation.

I spoke with many that Natasha had introduced me to before, and again my heart was filled with the knowledge of God's love for them. After a while, with Natasha and a number of her friends, we took a long walk back in the direction of my hotel. I talked especially with one older man, who told me that he had fasted for the first time in his life that day.

"And God has helped me to do it!" he exclaimed. "I don't even feel hungry!" He was so thrilled.

"Now you're a true ben Israel, son of Israel," I told him.

"I never have been before," he confided. "But I think you're right. I am now. It's never too late, is it?" And we smiled together. Again there was the evidence of the awakening to Judaism in the Soviet Jewish hearts. And soon they will know the Messiah's love as well, for God has promised — "Before they ask, I will answer them!"

One of Natasha's friends had a more discouraging story to tell. He said that for seven years he had been an active Zionist, as he had a longing to go to Israel to become a rabbi. But he felt that God had not answered him, and therefore he had given up hope. He now had a wife and two young children, and so he was afraid to fight any longer. I explained to him very carefully all that I could about God's plan to soon open

the way for the Soviet Jews to leave for Israel.

"God has not forsaken you. He's heard your prayers, and He loves you. Don't be afraid to trust in Him!" And I could tell by the look on his face that a tiny spark of hope had been rekindled.

On my last visit with Natasha and her family, Natasha's mother showed me all the letters they had written to Soviet officials and to Brezhnev, asking for permission to leave the Soviet Union. Again I was struck by the courage of these people! They told me that for each person who applies to leave, they must pay the Soviet government more than 3,000 rubles for the application alone. Both Natasha and her father earn salaries of under 200 rubles per month, which barely covers living expenses; and so it is obvious that each person must make a tremendous sacrifice simply for the distant hope of Israel and freedom. For most of them it would be impossible without help from friends and relatives.

We also talked a great deal about the repressive measures being used against the Jewish people in the Ukraine. The news is continually filled with reports against Israel. The Zionists are likened to the Nazis, who the Soviet people have been taught to hate. There is an all-out propaganda campaign to show that Israel is filled with "terrorist aggressors", and that the Jewish people who wish to leave the Soviet Union for Israel are enemies of the State. And of course, all of this is beginning to filter down to the daily lives of the people. Natasha's mother told me of an experience she had gone through just the previous day. She had waited for almost an hour to purchase some tomatoes. When it was finally her turn, the woman who was selling them said, "You're a Jew! An enemy of the Soviet people! I refuse to sell you tomatoes!" The daily pressure in their lives is staggering.

Just before I said goodbye to them for the third year in a row, Natasha's father gave me a special gift — one of the automatic umbrellas that his company had manufactured! I really miss them even now.

On the evening of the 28th of September, I returned to the church once again. Just before the end of the service, the pastor prayed for the congregation, and as he prayed, giant tears slid slowly down his cheeks. "We want to remember our dear brother who was baptized some time ago and who is now in prison," he prayed. "It has been very difficult for him to part from his family. We pray that God will strengthen his wife. We pray for all the brothers and sisters, for everyone who is passing through difficulties. God is great. We thank you, God, that You chose us, You gathered us through Your Holy Word. You told us that our hearts should not be troubled, that our hearts should be strengthened; that we should be strong and continue in Your way. Let them do to us what they have done to the people of Israel. We believe in You, and we trust that in these days, you will do with us what you did *for* the people of Israel. We shall be strong and believe in You. You forgave everyone. You forgave Your servant David. Oh God, help us, that we will not take our faith lightly; that we will walk in Your way. In these days, our people are threatened, especially the wife of the man who was arrested. Oh God, defend this man. There are probably many others who are being threatened, and we don't know of them. Help him and help everyone in this meeting. Bless them, and give them new life. Reveal Yourself to Believers and non-Believers, especially to the children who have no faith. We ask that all the children of believing parents will come to you. I pray for all the brothers and sisters. Make it possible for them to receive everything that we have received. Protect all those who are gathered here today, for they are faithful to You. Let not one be lacking. We need the Church. We need to meet. Help us to love You and to love one another. God make it possible. That is what You



Babi Yar where over 100,000 Jewish people were killed by the Nazis.



Elderly Jewish couple crying and praying in the woods near Babi Yar.

want to do for Your people. Receive our prayer from your people who love You, amen ...”

He is a true shepherd, a humble servant of the King. After the service, he greeted me warmly.

"Esther," he said, grinning, "tell me again the story of how you met Lisa Vins! And are there really Christians in Israel?" It blessed me that he had remembered all that I had shared with him in our talk together the year before. The pastor and other friends said they would be happy to see me again in the year ahead — but none of them would be more happy than I!

After speaking with members of the congregation for some time, Bella signalled to me and we walked quietly out to the back of the church, to slip away again via the railroad tracks. But we found that somehow the KGB had discovered our means of escape, for the hole in the fence had by then been boarded up and padlocked. We had no alternative but to wait in the dark shadows behind the building until most of the people had left, and then we walked out to the bus stop. Before saying goodbye, I was able to give her the tape recorder and microphone I had brought with me to the U.S.S.R., with Christian music tapes, to help with the young peoples' choir. They sang more beautifully than anyone I have ever heard in my life! We agreed to write to one another. What could I really say to this brave young one who had twice helped me to escape from the KGB? We were sisters in Him, and one fine day we would have eternity to rejoice in His love.

On the 30th of September, I flew to Minsk, the capital of Byelorussia (White Russia). It was primarily for three days of rest, as my first two weeks in the Soviet Union had been quite intensive; but it was also to fill in the time so that I could be in Leningrad for Simchat Torah, which would not begin until the evening of the 9th of October.

Shortly after I arrived in the Minsk hotel, I was called to the Intourist desk. Minsk is not quite as used to Western tourists as the larger cities are, and so I attracted extra attention. The Intourist agent informed me that the Director of Intourist wished to see me in his office at 4:00 p.m. When the time came, she directed me down a long corridor of offices, where the Director of Intourist greeted me. He assured me that they wished to make my stay as comfortable as possible, and they wanted to know if there was any way that they could be of help. He asked questions in such a way as to discover why in the world I would be travelling by myself in the Soviet Union. Knowing that he was part of the KGB, I was not very helpful. I only told him of my intense dislike for organized tours; and that I could say with real conviction.

Finally he said, "You can visit people here, of course, but it's better for your own sake if you let us help with meetings if you wish to see Russian people." After quite some time, he escorted me back to the lobby.

It was the closest I had come to anything resembling an interrogation (except for the usual ordeals at the airports) and it made me really smile. Minsk was the only city where I had no plans to visit anyone, and therefore I could honestly act like a "typical tourist"!

One night while in Minsk, I attended the ballet, Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake". I adore classical ballet, so it was a real treat. And it made me feel more like a tourist than ever!

Early the next morning, I was speeding through the city streets on my way to yet another airport, this time to take a plane to Leningrad. It was hard to believe that it would soon be the start of my last week in the Soviet Union.

Leningrad is a lovely city, especially in the fall when the foliage is just bursting with colour and the leaves crunch underfoot. I spent a day in the Hermitage, and especially loved the section on Russian culture. I also took a hydrofoil ride to the summer palace of Peter the Great. The palace I had seen before, but I loved walking through the

surrounding parks and gardens. The autumn leaves were breathtaking, and my heart could do naught but sing praises to God.

One night I went to visit again with Ida and Aba, whom I have also come to know well over the past three years. We spent an evening together, and had much to tell one another as we sat around the kitchen table. Visiting them was a young couple, newly married. How tragic their lives have been! The young man had just returned from a two-year prison sentence because of his refusal to join the Soviet army, as he and his new wife have applied for visas to Israel. And therefore they face a very uncertain future. He is unable to find employment as a result of his application to emigrate from the country. And therefore he could easily be arrested again as a "parasite" or else be drafted into the army another time. A draft would face him again with the same decision — either to enter the army and thereby jeopardize his chances for a visa to Israel, or to refuse and again face a prison term. Even with such pressures, at least a quarter of a million Jewish people have applied for visas to Israel. It takes a special kind of courage and tenacity.

Aba, a scientist by profession, has been without professional employment for eleven years, ever since he and Ida filed their applications to leave the country for Israel. He currently has a job stoking fuel. With typical Jewish humour, he said, "Well, at least I don't come home tired!" I love talking with them, and we shared some happy hours together.

On Saturday night, the 9th of October, I met them in front of the synagogue in an older section of Leningrad close to my hotel. They introduced me to many of their friends, and it was the first time I came to know more of the refusenik community in Leningrad.

One of their friends came over to speak with me. "My whole family has left the country by now," he told me. "My wife, my children, my parents, everyone. I'm the only one left here now. But the authorities won't give me permission to join them." Then he showed me a picture of his son. "This year he will be bar mitzvahed," he told me. For a Jewish boy, it is one of the most important moments of his life, when he becomes a man and accepts all the responsibilities and privileges of Jewish life. The two of us stood there in the cold and let the tears slide silently down our cheeks. It was all that I could say.

As in Kiev and Moscow, many hundreds of people gathered to celebrate this day of rejoicing in the Law. And again the street was ringing with the sounds of Israeli songs. I could feel the Lord smiling at His people there, with the tenderness only a Father can give.

It was a bitterly cold night, so after some time Ida and Aba's friends invited me to join them for a party. On the way, I stopped with another scientist and his wife, also refuseniks for the past four years. They proudly showed me their five room apartment, which they share with his parents.

"It's much bigger than most Soviet apartments," he told me as he gave me a tour. "I received it as a result of my position in the scientific community before we applied for exit visas. But I'd happily return it to the Soviet government in a minute if I would be given permission to leave for Israel!"

We soon arrived at the party, and once again I was so touched by the way people opened their hearts and their homes to me. We spent some wonderful hours sitting around the table talking and laughing and sharing the dream of Israel. Difficulties are still ahead for all of them, to be sure; but in the end, God will give a great victory and a deep revelation of His love. Oh, but it was hard to say goodbye when the time finally came to leave for the hotel!



Ida and Aba Taratuta at home in Leningrad (Notice the Israeli map on the door!)



Ida and Aba Taratuta with another “refusenik”, whose entire family now lives outside of Russia, but still he is not allowed to emigrate.

In the Intourist information bulletins that I receive each year, tourists are warned not to drink the water in Leningrad due to the presence of a microorganism called *guardia lambia* which results in a form of dysentary which can be fatal if untreated. It takes a ten day incubation period for the symptoms to appear, and only one antibiotic thus far discovered is strong enough to combat the disease. This form of dysentery is found in only two places in the world, Leningrad being the better known. If the Soviet government is willing to admit that something is wrong, then I knew I had to take it very seriously, and so I always spent my time in Leningrad guarding against contagion with a fanatic's zeal. At Intourist's suggestion, I avoided all but cooked and boiled fruits and vegetables; I brushed my teeth with bottled soda water; and I drank only bottled or boiled drinks. However, this particular year the hotel served on the tables pitchers of apple juice. I assumed that the apple juice came from a can, so in the course of the week I'm sure I consumed litres of the stuff. It wasn't until my very last day in Leningrad that I discovered that the apple juice had been mixed from a syrup and water from the tap. I knew without a doubt that serious trouble could be ahead, but it was as yet too soon to tell.

The next morning I returned to Moscow by plane. When I arrived at the Moscow airport, I recognized at once the Intourist agent who had been sent to meet me at the plane. But since I look Russian rather than American, he did not pick me out of the crowd as the person he was waiting for. I walked in to the baggage claim area, and then stood right next to him as he continued to look for the American tourist. He looked like he had a sense of humour, which was the only reason I dared to have some fun with him! He and his friend approached two passengers who "looked" American, and as they continued to search the crowds, I stood right in front of them. Finally they decided that they would watch for the baggage, as mine would have Intourist tags on it; and therefore they would be able to identify the tourist when the baggage was claimed. At last they spotted my suitcases, and eagerly watched to see who would pick them up! When the suitcases came my way on the conveyor belt, I grinned at the two men and reached for the bags.

They laughed heartily, as they realized by then that I had been joking with them. "It's impossible!" they exclaimed. "We've never, ever been wrong before! But you look so Russian, never would we have guessed that it was you!"

We got into the Intourist car together, and to make conversation, I asked them, "When did the weather turn so cold?" A blast of icy wind had greeted us when we had stepped out of the terminal building.

"Tomorrow morning," one of them replied.

"Do you mean yesterday morning?" I queried, trying to suppress a laugh.

"No, no, it became cold *tomorrow* morning," he said emphatically. By then I couldn't help it. I began to laugh. Finally he realized what he had said. "Oh, ho ho, I said tomorrow morning instead of yesterday!" and the two of us laughed until we were gasping. How wonderful it felt to be laughing again after so many serious days!

When I arrived at my Moscow hotel, the receptionist reached over absently to hand me my key, but found that it was stuck in its slot and wouldn't budge. She pulled with one hand, and finally had to put the phone down and tug with both hands until it finally pulled loose. By then we were both laughing as well! It turned out to be a special key, as it was room number 1410 — and that is the date of my birthday, the 14th of October! I had never quite imagined myself laughing on my last day in Moscow, but a walk with the Lord is always full of surprises.

That evening, my last in the Soviet Union, I went to visit the Brailovsky's once again. I arrived in the midst of a flurry of activity, as that very night Irina was leaving by train to

visit Victor in his place of exile. It felt so special to be with them again, and I marvelled once more at the example of courage and strength that this family has been to so many in the U.S.S.R. who share their common goal to return to Israel. We ate some soup together, and then I returned to the hotel, feeling that they should be left alone during their last hours together as a family before Irina returned to them again. I felt Dahlia's pain as she prepared for the separation from her mother. What comforted me was to know that in terms of God's economy, none of their suffering will be wasted.

On my last morning in Moscow, I met Natasha's aunt and uncle. He is a scientist in Moscow, and they also have been struggling for many years to leave the Soviet Union. They were so warm and so kind to me, and gave me as a birthday gift a large "Matryushka" doll, a wooden doll that contains smaller dolls inside in graduated sizes. I remembered them from my own childhood, as my grandparents had one as well! About an hour before my scheduled departure, they brought me back to the hotel.

Throughout my entire 25 days in the Soviet Union, the protection and sovereign hand of the Lord had been evident. I visited families who are continually under the surveillance of the KGB. I openly shared with them, as well as in the synagogues that the Lord God of Israel was soon going to set them free. I also had been open at the church in the presence of the KGB. But throughout it all, I had been able to rest in the shadow of His wings, both for my protection and for the protection of the people I visited. It was a privilege to have been able to bring comfort and hope to the Lord's own people. And I was very cognizant of the faithful in prayer — for their prayers surely made all the difference in the world.

At the Moscow airport, my bags were examined before I was given permission to board the plane. This time I had tapes, many addresses, and various messages from Soviets to friends or families in Israel. And for a short time, the Lord removed His protective grace. I simply couldn't watch as they began to search through my belongings, and the peace of the Lord had disappeared. I went through a very difficult battle of prayer; and then finally, after a very long period of time had elapsed and they had made a thorough examination, they allowed me to close the suitcases and pass through control.

It was a shattering experience, and it took me a long time to recover from it! Perhaps the Lord allowed a momentary glimpse into the nightmare the trip could have been without His protection. But I knew with all my heart that I wouldn't survive too many experiences such as that one.

Finally, finally the call came to board the plane to freedom. And just before the plane left Soviet soil, I felt Jesus' presence, as if He were holding me in His arms. All the tension dissolved and I was safely at rest in Him again.

The Lord indeed sets before us that open door — and that is exactly what He did for me in the Soviet Union. He promises a way in, but He never guarantees that there will be a way out again, for it is impossible ever to know the greater purposes of God. We must simply be prepared for any eventuality. I believe that it's impossible to survive in such a situation unless you are prepared to suffer, knowing that the strength of the Lord will see you through whatever may lie ahead.

Dear Marje's face was such a welcome one as I passed through customs at the Helsinki airport. Waiting for me each year must be a difficult time for her, as she would have no way of knowing whether or not I would be on the plane! Needless to say, we had a joyous reunion. She handed me a beautiful rose, and in that moment I truly knew that the ordeal was over for yet another time.

I spent three days visiting with her, and we talked together and laughed almost non-stop. I then visited Christians in Sweden for two days. It was my first time in

Sweden, and I must say that I found the immorality and lack of family bonds to be devastating.

And then, on my last morning in Sweden, I awakened to stomach pains, and with a sinking heart I realized that the ten day incubation period had passed, and it seemed that the symptoms of dysentery were just beginning. It was the morning of my birthday.

When I arrived later that day in Norway at Jenny and Wolfgang's home, I was finally able to tell them in person what a tremendous encouragement their message to me had been that day on the flight en-route to Moscow. They were thrilled to learn that the message had gotten through, and that it had actually come over radio control to the pilot himself!

Just before going to bed that night, I told them that I needed to see a doctor for treatment, and with that I retired to my room. By the following day, the pains had increased in severity, and I knew I would no longer be able to eat any kind of solid food. I also knew that the condition would only worsen without the proper treatment, and that I was in desperate need of medical attention. But all the next day, no one called a physician on my behalf. Finally that night, in the privacy of my room, I knelt before the Lord and cried out to Him. "Father, I know this is serious, but yet no one seems to be paying any attention to it! What ever shall I do?"

He replied, "It's your fault for understating it." I smiled, because it's always a warm and cosy feeling to be known so well by someone we love. And no one knows us better or loves us more in all the world than does the Lord. And I knew He was right! I have a very high pain tolerance, and usually just make a casual comment when others would scream out in pain. I knew that due to my understating of my condition, Jenny and Wolfgang would have no idea just how serious it was. So the next day I moaned and groaned and absolutely insisted on help, and finally the doctor was contacted.

In their quiet little corner of Norway, my condition was quite a rarity, and the doctor was ready to hospitalize me at once. But since I had no health insurance there, he prescribed the one antibiotic that would be of help, and instructed me to stay on a very bland, liquids-only diet.

The weeks ahead remain in my memory as a nightmare. The pains were terrible, and I was very weak. But people kept planning meetings for me to speak, even though I kept saying over and over again that I was really far too ill to do it! In spite of my complaints, the greatest ordeal came when a meeting was planned in the south of Norway that would entail a long train ride. I felt like I was being used just to obtain "blessings", and it seemed as though nobody cared about me or my feelings at all. I know that often missionaries home on leave must feel that way as well. They arrive tired and drained from years of service in the field; and instead of receiving the rest they must so desperately need, they are made to travel and speak and share to all the groups that had helped them in some way in the past. It's an odd phenomena, and a not very pleasant one, as I discovered the hard way.

In an even deeper way, the Lord used that time to bring my friendship with Jenny and Wolfgang through the waters, and in the end our relationship had been further strengthened by the Lord. But there were some difficult moments! Of course, the Lord alone knew the incredible door of ministry that was soon to open for both Wolfgang and myself, and we had to be ready to stand when the floods arrived.

I had to delay my return to Israel for quite some time, but finally arrived home feeling rested, refreshed, strengthened and very grateful to my Norwegian family for their love and care. And oh, after twenty weeks of travel, there is no place quite like home! It was a blessing to again greet friends and neighbours and to walk the streets of the city that I loved so much.

In the spring of 1982, prior to the long trip I had just completed, I had been working one afternoon on the book. I suddenly felt impressed of the Lord to include a section on Israel. He then made it clear to me that it would be impossible to write about Israel without including something about the Holocaust. And, truly, it would be impossible to understand this country apart from the tragedy of the loss of six million Jewish lives! As Prime Minister Begin had said so often, "When the enemies of Israel threaten to destroy us, we *have to take them seriously.*"

There is a very precious couple named Rozia and Motek living in northern Israel whom I've come to know and to love over the years. They are both survivors of the Holocaust. And in the spring, the Lord let me know that I was to ask Rozia to share her story for my book. He also told me to say nothing about it to her until I returned to Israel in the fall, that it would weigh upon her too heavily over the summer months. I had almost forgotten about it in the rush of activities that followed. But upon my return to Israel, the Lord reminded me.

In November, I travelled north to her home, and asked her if she would be willing to tell her story for use in my book. I knew that the re-living of her experiences would cause her untold anguish, and so I could only trust the Lord's love and care for her. She agreed almost at once, however, feeling that she had survived simply to be able to tell the story for those who had perished.

The very next week I returned to her home, as I did not want her to have to think about it for a long period of time. I brought a tape recorder and a number of cassettes, and one Saturday afternoon we sat down together at her kitchen table with a tape recorder. I had no idea how profoundly that afternoon would change my life.

For the next twelve hours, she related to me a tale of horror that caused both of us to weep together the entire time. The enormity of what the Germans had perpetrated against the apple of God's eye finally sunk through to my heart. I'll never forget that night as long as I live, as I heard the agony of one life exposed to the greatest horrors mankind has ever known. And through it all, the Lord made me deeply, deeply aware of the depth of *His* suffering during those dark and terrible years.

The following, then, is Rozia's story.

walked I told Rebecca that I had no idea whether or not the pastor would remember me, but that simply being there with such dear brothers and sisters in the Lord would surely be an experience to remember forever.

We entered the courtyard at last, and I was so happy to be retracing my footsteps of a year ago. We walked around to the side of the building and when we reached the front, the pastor spotted us. He gave me such a warm welcome, and then greeted Rebecca, offering us seats just behind him. It was a thrill to see him again.

The service was very moving. Rebecca and I both had tear-filled eyes for most of the evening. Some of the prayers were especially heart-rending. A woman near us began to weep and to pray for her 23 year old son who had just been arrested for witnessing to young people. And most of the church cried with her. And as last year, the music was oh, so beautiful! It was obvious that they mean what they sing with all of their hearts. It is certain that no lukewarm Christians would survive in that oppressive land. We in the West have very much to learn from them!

The pastor welcomed me to greet the church again, and as the previous year, I was filled with such a sense of inadequacy. What ever did I have to say to them? Their faith is so deep and so real, as it has been purified by fire.

I began with the assurance- that they had been in my heart, thoughts and prayers every day since the last time we had met the previous year. I then told them that they were loved by brothers and sisters all over the world, and that they were especially loved by the Lord. I also spoke to them about Israel. In closing, I commented, "The Bible tells us that all of the nations of the world will turn against Israel before Jesus returns. But it's a very lonely place for a country to be, and they need our love and our prayers now more than ever before!"

The church then gave us a word of welcome, and sang for us in Russian, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus".

After the meeting, a number of people whom I had met the previous year welcomed us. After some time, the young woman who had translated the message for me, Bella, came over and quietly cautioned us that the police were waiting, and that Rebecca and I should follow her. She led us to the back of the church; and there, two men from the church, Bella, Rebecca and I slipped through a hole in the fence onto the railroad tracks behind the church. It was pitch black, and we had to walk for quite a distance, but we talked of the Lord as we walked along until we finally reached a safe bus stop. We walked along hand in hand, and felt such a deep bond of love in the Lord. I gave Bella all of the olive wood crosses that I had brought for the young people at the church, and I told them that I would be back the following Tuesday night. We thanked them so much for having guided us to safety, and when the bus at last arrived, we went our separate ways.

Rebecca left for Moscow early the next morning, and a day later she was to fly out of the country. Before we parted, she left me with a gift of \$100.00. It made me feel so ashamed of my worrying and doubts! Wasn't it I who had said that the Lord couldn't possibly supply money to me in the U.S.S.R.? Sometimes, when I limit Him in such a ridiculous way, all I can do is laugh at myself. How could I possibly have thought that the Lord would have no ideas for taking care of me behind the Iron Curtain? "O ye of little faith" is a *very* familiar verse to me!

In the afternoon, I found a telephone booth away from the hotel, and called my friend Natasha. She and her parents were the only friends in the Soviet Union who knew in advance that I would be coming to visit them once again. As soon as she heard my voice, she exclaimed, "Oh, we've been waiting ages for you to call!"



With the Brailousky's in 1982. Leonid, Irina's mother, Irina, Dahlia



With Irina and her mother



Irina actually speaking to Victor as he called from his place of exile near the Caspian Sea.



Sitting around the kitchen table making a tape recording to give to Victor's family in Israel.

We made arrangements to meet in front of the fountain on Kiev's main street. They greeted me so warmly once again, and we then took a bus to their home where a huge dinner was waiting for us. We talked our heads off, and I marvelled at how close I felt to them, as if they were my very own family.

In the evening Natasha and I took a bus to visit other friends, in honour of her nephew's first birthday party. Many were gathered there that I had met two years before in Natasha's aunt's apartment, and we all had a wonderful evening together. I spoke much about Israel, and told of the confirmations that God would soon open the way for them to leave the U.S.S.R. Wherever I shared this news in Russia, the reply was the same. "We've been waiting for years to leave and to return home to Israel. When the door opens, you think we won't go?" (Note the touch of Jewish humour!)

The next morning I took a bus to Natasha's house, and she and her father went with me to Babi Yar. It was my second visit, but my heart still lurched when I saw again the scene where so much Jewish blood had been spilled. We walked around the monument, and then Natasha's father took me to the road where the Jewish people had been led on that fateful day. He pointed to an old building and explained, "That used to be a synagogue. It had a Jewish graveyard behind it, and so the Nazis purposely chose to kill the people next to the graveyard. The Jewish people were told that day that they were being taken on their way to the promised land, and so they went with singing and with joy; only to be led to the edge of the ravine and killed in cold blood. One hundred and fifty thousand of them!" (I knew deep within my heart that on that day, they were gently gathered and brought to a Better Land, for indeed they were killed in the name of the God of Israel. And He has never forsaken the apple of His eye.)

While we were talking near Babi Yar, Natasha's father came across an old Jewish couple standing in the forest. They were praying from an old Yiddish prayer book and weeping, no doubt in mourning for their loved ones who had been killed at this site. I gave them a tiny gold menorah from Jerusalem, and prayed for the Lord to comfort them with His love.

We returned to Natasha's home and spent a quiet afternoon and evening together.

The next day was the eve of Yom Kippur, and late in the afternoon we went together to the synagogue in Kiev. Like the previous year, blocks were filled with Jewish people as far as you could see. The KGB is most repressive in the Ukraine, and so they met together with almost a quiet sense of desperation.

I spoke with many that Natasha had introduced me to before, and again my heart was filled with the knowledge of God's love for them. After a while, with Natasha and a number of her friends, we took a long walk back in the direction of my hotel. I talked especially with one older man, who told me that he had fasted for the first time in his life that day.

"And God has helped me to do it!" he exclaimed. "I don't even feel hungry!" He was so thrilled.

"Now you're a true ben Israel, son of Israel," I told him.

"I never have been before," he confided. "But I think you're right. I am now. It's never too late, is it?" And we smiled together. Again there was the evidence of the awakening to Judaism in the Soviet Jewish hearts. And soon they will know the Messiah's love as well, for God has promised — "Before they ask, I will answer them!"

One of Natasha's friends had a more discouraging story to tell. He said that for seven years he had been an active Zionist, as he had a longing to go to Israel to become a rabbi. But he felt that God had not answered him, and therefore he had given up hope. He now had a wife and two young children, and so he was afraid to fight any longer. I explained to him very carefully all that I could about God's plan to soon open

the way for the Soviet Jews to leave for Israel.

"God has not forsaken you. He's heard your prayers, and He loves you. Don't be afraid to trust in Him!" And I could tell by the look on his face that a tiny spark of hope had been rekindled.

On my last visit with Natasha and her family, Natasha's mother showed me all the letters they had written to Soviet officials and to Brezhnev, asking for permission to leave the Soviet Union. Again I was struck by the courage of these people! They told me that for each person who applies to leave, they must pay the Soviet government more than 3,000 rubles for the application alone. Both Natasha and her father earn salaries of under 200 rubles per month, which barely covers living expenses; and so it is obvious that each person must make a tremendous sacrifice simply for the distant hope of Israel and freedom. For most of them it would be impossible without help from friends and relatives.

We also talked a great deal about the repressive measures being used against the Jewish people in the Ukraine. The news is continually filled with reports against Israel. The Zionists are likened to the Nazis, who the Soviet people have been taught to hate. There is an all-out propaganda campaign to show that Israel is filled with "terrorist aggressors", and that the Jewish people who wish to leave the Soviet Union for Israel are enemies of the State. And of course, all of this is beginning to filter down to the daily lives of the people. Natasha's mother told me of an experience she had gone through just the previous day. She had waited for almost an hour to purchase some tomatoes. When it was finally her turn, the woman who was selling them said, "You're a Jew! An enemy of the Soviet people! I refuse to sell you tomatoes!" The daily pressure in their lives is staggering.

Just before I said goodbye to them for the third year in a row, Natasha's father gave me a special gift — one of the automatic umbrellas that his company had manufactured! I really miss them even now.

On the evening of the 28th of September, I returned to the church once again. Just before the end of the service, the pastor prayed for the congregation, and as he prayed, giant tears slid slowly down his cheeks. "We want to remember our dear brother who was baptized some time ago and who is now in prison," he prayed. "It has been very difficult for him to part from his family. We pray that God will strengthen his wife. We pray for all the brothers and sisters, for everyone who is passing through difficulties. God is great. We thank you, God, that You chose us, You gathered us through Your Holy Word. You told us that our hearts should not be troubled, that our hearts should be strengthened; that we should be strong and continue in Your way. Let them do to us what they have done to the people of Israel. We believe in You, and we trust that in these days, you will do with us what you did *for* the people of Israel. We shall be strong and believe in You. You forgave everyone. You forgave Your servant David. Oh God, help us, that we will not take our faith lightly; that we will walk in Your way. In these days, our people are threatened, especially the wife of the man who was arrested. Oh God, defend this man. There are probably many others who are being threatened, and we don't know of them. Help him and help everyone in this meeting. Bless them, and give them new life. Reveal Yourself to Believers and non-Believers, especially to the children who have no faith. We ask that all the children of believing parents will come to you. I pray for all the brothers and sisters. Make it possible for them to receive everything that we have received. Protect all those who are gathered here today, for they are faithful to You. Let not one be lacking. We need the Church. We need to meet. Help us to love You and to love one another. God make it possible. That is what You



Babi Yar where over 100,000 Jewish people were killed by the Nazis.



Elderly Jewish couple crying and praying in the woods near Babi Yar.

want to do for Your people. Receive our prayer from your people who love You, amen ...”

He is a true shepherd, a humble servant of the King. After the service, he greeted me warmly.

"Esther," he said, grinning, "tell me again the story of how you met Lisa Vins! And are there really Christians in Israel?" It blessed me that he had remembered all that I had shared with him in our talk together the year before. The pastor and other friends said they would be happy to see me again in the year ahead — but none of them would be more happy than I!

After speaking with members of the congregation for some time, Bella signalled to me and we walked quietly out to the back of the church, to slip away again via the railroad tracks. But we found that somehow the KGB had discovered our means of escape, for the hole in the fence had by then been boarded up and padlocked. We had no alternative but to wait in the dark shadows behind the building until most of the people had left, and then we walked out to the bus stop. Before saying goodbye, I was able to give her the tape recorder and microphone I had brought with me to the U.S.S.R., with Christian music tapes, to help with the young peoples' choir. They sang more beautifully than anyone I have ever heard in my life! We agreed to write to one another. What could I really say to this brave young one who had twice helped me to escape from the KGB? We were sisters in Him, and one fine day we would have eternity to rejoice in His love.

On the 30th of September, I flew to Minsk, the capital of Byelorussia (White Russia). It was primarily for three days of rest, as my first two weeks in the Soviet Union had been quite intensive; but it was also to fill in the time so that I could be in Leningrad for Simchat Torah, which would not begin until the evening of the 9th of October.

Shortly after I arrived in the Minsk hotel, I was called to the Intourist desk. Minsk is not quite as used to Western tourists as the larger cities are, and so I attracted extra attention. The Intourist agent informed me that the Director of Intourist wished to see me in his office at 4:00 p.m. When the time came, she directed me down a long corridor of offices, where the Director of Intourist greeted me. He assured me that they wished to make my stay as comfortable as possible, and they wanted to know if there was any way that they could be of help. He asked questions in such a way as to discover why in the world I would be travelling by myself in the Soviet Union. Knowing that he was part of the KGB, I was not very helpful. I only told him of my intense dislike for organized tours; and that I could say with real conviction.

Finally he said, "You can visit people here, of course, but it's better for your own sake if you let us help with meetings if you wish to see Russian people." After quite some time, he escorted me back to the lobby.

It was the closest I had come to anything resembling an interrogation (except for the usual ordeals at the airports) and it made me really smile. Minsk was the only city where I had no plans to visit anyone, and therefore I could honestly act like a "typical tourist"!

One night while in Minsk, I attended the ballet, Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake". I adore classical ballet, so it was a real treat. And it made me feel more like a tourist than ever!

Early the next morning, I was speeding through the city streets on my way to yet another airport, this time to take a plane to Leningrad. It was hard to believe that it would soon be the start of my last week in the Soviet Union.

Leningrad is a lovely city, especially in the fall when the foliage is just bursting with colour and the leaves crunch underfoot. I spent a day in the Hermitage, and especially loved the section on Russian culture. I also took a hydrofoil ride to the summer palace of Peter the Great. The palace I had seen before, but I loved walking through the

surrounding parks and gardens. The autumn leaves were breathtaking, and my heart could do naught but sing praises to God.

One night I went to visit again with Ida and Aba, whom I have also come to know well over the past three years. We spent an evening together, and had much to tell one another as we sat around the kitchen table. Visiting them was a young couple, newly married. How tragic their lives have been! The young man had just returned from a two-year prison sentence because of his refusal to join the Soviet army, as he and his new wife have applied for visas to Israel. And therefore they face a very uncertain future. He is unable to find employment as a result of his application to emigrate from the country. And therefore he could easily be arrested again as a "parasite" or else be drafted into the army another time. A draft would face him again with the same decision — either to enter the army and thereby jeopardize his chances for a visa to Israel, or to refuse and again face a prison term. Even with such pressures, at least a quarter of a million Jewish people have applied for visas to Israel. It takes a special kind of courage and tenacity.

Aba, a scientist by profession, has been without professional employment for eleven years, ever since he and Ida filed their applications to leave the country for Israel. He currently has a job stoking fuel. With typical Jewish humour, he said, "Well, at least I don't come home tired!" I love talking with them, and we shared some happy hours together.

On Saturday night, the 9th of October, I met them in front of the synagogue in an older section of Leningrad close to my hotel. They introduced me to many of their friends, and it was the first time I came to know more of the refusenik community in Leningrad.

One of their friends came over to speak with me. "My whole family has left the country by now," he told me. "My wife, my children, my parents, everyone. I'm the only one left here now. But the authorities won't give me permission to join them." Then he showed me a picture of his son. "This year he will be bar mitzvahed," he told me. For a Jewish boy, it is one of the most important moments of his life, when he becomes a man and accepts all the responsibilities and privileges of Jewish life. The two of us stood there in the cold and let the tears slide silently down our cheeks. It was all that I could say.

As in Kiev and Moscow, many hundreds of people gathered to celebrate this day of rejoicing in the Law. And again the street was ringing with the sounds of Israeli songs. I could feel the Lord smiling at His people there, with the tenderness only a Father can give.

It was a bitterly cold night, so after some time Ida and Aba's friends invited me to join them for a party. On the way, I stopped with another scientist and his wife, also refuseniks for the past four years. They proudly showed me their five room apartment, which they share with his parents.

"It's much bigger than most Soviet apartments," he told me as he gave me a tour. "I received it as a result of my position in the scientific community before we applied for exit visas. But I'd happily return it to the Soviet government in a minute if I would be given permission to leave for Israel!"

We soon arrived at the party, and once again I was so touched by the way people opened their hearts and their homes to me. We spent some wonderful hours sitting around the table talking and laughing and sharing the dream of Israel. Difficulties are still ahead for all of them, to be sure; but in the end, God will give a great victory and a deep revelation of His love. Oh, but it was hard to say goodbye when the time finally came to leave for the hotel!



Ida and Aba Taratuta at home in Leningrad (Notice the Israeli map on the door!)



Ida and Aba Taratuta with another “refusenik”, whose entire family now lives outside of Russia, but still he is not allowed to emigrate.

In the Intourist information bulletins that I receive each year, tourists are warned not to drink the water in Leningrad due to the presence of a microorganism called *guardia lambia* which results in a form of dysentery which can be fatal if untreated. It takes a ten day incubation period for the symptoms to appear, and only one antibiotic thus far discovered is strong enough to combat the disease. This form of dysentery is found in only two places in the world, Leningrad being the better known. If the Soviet government is willing to admit that something is wrong, then I knew I had to take it very seriously, and so I always spent my time in Leningrad guarding against contagion with a fanatic's zeal. At Intourist's suggestion, I avoided all but cooked and boiled fruits and vegetables; I brushed my teeth with bottled soda water; and I drank only bottled or boiled drinks. However, this particular year the hotel served on the tables pitchers of apple juice. I assumed that the apple juice came from a can, so in the course of the week I'm sure I consumed litres of the stuff. It wasn't until my very last day in Leningrad that I discovered that the apple juice had been mixed from a syrup and water from the tap. I knew without a doubt that serious trouble could be ahead, but it was as yet too soon to tell.

The next morning I returned to Moscow by plane. When I arrived at the Moscow airport, I recognized at once the Intourist agent who had been sent to meet me at the plane. But since I look Russian rather than American, he did not pick me out of the crowd as the person he was waiting for. I walked in to the baggage claim area, and then stood right next to him as he continued to look for the American tourist. He looked like he had a sense of humour, which was the only reason I dared to have some fun with him! He and his friend approached two passengers who "looked" American, and as they continued to search the crowds, I stood right in front of them. Finally they decided that they would watch for the baggage, as mine would have Intourist tags on it; and therefore they would be able to identify the tourist when the baggage was claimed. At last they spotted my suitcases, and eagerly watched to see who would pick them up! When the suitcases came my way on the conveyor belt, I grinned at the two men and reached for the bags.

They laughed heartily, as they realized by then that I had been joking with them. "It's impossible!" they exclaimed. "We've never, ever been wrong before! But you look so Russian, never would we have guessed that it was you!"

We got into the Intourist car together, and to make conversation, I asked them, "When did the weather turn so cold?" A blast of icy wind had greeted us when we had stepped out of the terminal building.

"Tomorrow morning," one of them replied.

"Do you mean yesterday morning?" I queried, trying to suppress a laugh.

"No, no, it became cold *tomorrow* morning," he said emphatically. By then I couldn't help it. I began to laugh. Finally he realized what he had said. "Oh, ho ho, I said tomorrow morning instead of yesterday!" and the two of us laughed until we were gasping. How wonderful it felt to be laughing again after so many serious days!

When I arrived at my Moscow hotel, the receptionist reached over absently to hand me my key, but found that it was stuck in its slot and wouldn't budge. She pulled with one hand, and finally had to put the phone down and tug with both hands until it finally pulled loose. By then we were both laughing as well! It turned out to be a special key, as it was room number 1410 — and that is the date of my birthday, the 14th of October! I had never quite imagined myself laughing on my last day in Moscow, but a walk with the Lord is always full of surprises.

That evening, my last in the Soviet Union, I went to visit the Brailovsky's once again. I arrived in the midst of a flurry of activity, as that very night Irina was leaving by train to

visit Victor in his place of exile. It felt so special to be with them again, and I marvelled once more at the example of courage and strength that this family has been to so many in the U.S.S.R. who share their common goal to return to Israel. We ate some soup together, and then I returned to the hotel, feeling that they should be left alone during their last hours together as a family before Irina returned to them again. I felt Dahlia's pain as she prepared for the separation from her mother. What comforted me was to know that in terms of God's economy, none of their suffering will be wasted.

On my last morning in Moscow, I met Natasha's aunt and uncle. He is a scientist in Moscow, and they also have been struggling for many years to leave the Soviet Union. They were so warm and so kind to me, and gave me as a birthday gift a large "Matryushka" doll, a wooden doll that contains smaller dolls inside in graduated sizes. I remembered them from my own childhood, as my grandparents had one as well! About an hour before my scheduled departure, they brought me back to the hotel.

Throughout my entire 25 days in the Soviet Union, the protection and sovereign hand of the Lord had been evident. I visited families who are continually under the surveillance of the KGB. I openly shared with them, as well as in the synagogues that the Lord God of Israel was soon going to set them free. I also had been open at the church in the presence of the KGB. But throughout it all, I had been able to rest in the shadow of His wings, both for my protection and for the protection of the people I visited. It was a privilege to have been able to bring comfort and hope to the Lord's own people. And I was very cognizant of the faithful in prayer — for their prayers surely made all the difference in the world.

At the Moscow airport, my bags were examined before I was given permission to board the plane. This time I had tapes, many addresses, and various messages from Soviets to friends or families in Israel. And for a short time, the Lord removed His protective grace. I simply couldn't watch as they began to search through my belongings, and the peace of the Lord had disappeared. I went through a very difficult battle of prayer; and then finally, after a very long period of time had elapsed and they had made a thorough examination, they allowed me to close the suitcases and pass through control.

It was a shattering experience, and it took me a long time to recover from it! Perhaps the Lord allowed a momentary glimpse into the nightmare the trip could have been without His protection. But I knew with all my heart that I wouldn't survive too many experiences such as that one.

Finally, finally the call came to board the plane to freedom. And just before the plane left Soviet soil, I felt Jesus' presence, as if He were holding me in His arms. All the tension dissolved and I was safely at rest in Him again.

The Lord indeed sets before us that open door — and that is exactly what He did for me in the Soviet Union. He promises a way in, but He never guarantees that there will be a way out again, for it is impossible ever to know the greater purposes of God. We must simply be prepared for any eventuality. I believe that it's impossible to survive in such a situation unless you are prepared to suffer, knowing that the strength of the Lord will see you through whatever may lie ahead.

Dear Marje's face was such a welcome one as I passed through customs at the Helsinki airport. Waiting for me each year must be a difficult time for her, as she would have no way of knowing whether or not I would be on the plane! Needless to say, we had a joyous reunion. She handed me a beautiful rose, and in that moment I truly knew that the ordeal was over for yet another time.

I spent three days visiting with her, and we talked together and laughed almost non-stop. I then visited Christians in Sweden for two days. It was my first time in

Sweden, and I must say that I found the immorality and lack of family bonds to be devastating.

And then, on my last morning in Sweden, I awakened to stomach pains, and with a sinking heart I realized that the ten day incubation period had passed, and it seemed that the symptoms of dysentery were just beginning. It was the morning of my birthday.

When I arrived later that day in Norway at Jenny and Wolfgang's home, I was finally able to tell them in person what a tremendous encouragement their message to me had been that day on the flight en-route to Moscow. They were thrilled to learn that the message had gotten through, and that it had actually come over radio control to the pilot himself!

Just before going to bed that night, I told them that I needed to see a doctor for treatment, and with that I retired to my room. By the following day, the pains had increased in severity, and I knew I would no longer be able to eat any kind of solid food. I also knew that the condition would only worsen without the proper treatment, and that I was in desperate need of medical attention. But all the next day, no one called a physician on my behalf. Finally that night, in the privacy of my room, I knelt before the Lord and cried out to Him. "Father, I know this is serious, but yet no one seems to be paying any attention to it! What ever shall I do?"

He replied, "It's your fault for understating it." I smiled, because it's always a warm and cosy feeling to be known so well by someone we love. And no one knows us better or loves us more in all the world than does the Lord. And I knew He was right! I have a very high pain tolerance, and usually just make a casual comment when others would scream out in pain. I knew that due to my understating of my condition, Jenny and Wolfgang would have no idea just how serious it was. So the next day I moaned and groaned and absolutely insisted on help, and finally the doctor was contacted.

In their quiet little corner of Norway, my condition was quite a rarity, and the doctor was ready to hospitalize me at once. But since I had no health insurance there, he prescribed the one antibiotic that would be of help, and instructed me to stay on a very bland, liquids-only diet.

The weeks ahead remain in my memory as a nightmare. The pains were terrible, and I was very weak. But people kept planning meetings for me to speak, even though I kept saying over and over again that I was really far too ill to do it! In spite of my complaints, the greatest ordeal came when a meeting was planned in the south of Norway that would entail a long train ride. I felt like I was being used just to obtain "blessings", and it seemed as though nobody cared about me or my feelings at all. I know that often missionaries home on leave must feel that way as well. They arrive tired and drained from years of service in the field; and instead of receiving the rest they must so desperately need, they are made to travel and speak and share to all the groups that had helped them in some way in the past. It's an odd phenomena, and a not very pleasant one, as I discovered the hard way.

In an even deeper way, the Lord used that time to bring my friendship with Jenny and Wolfgang through the waters, and in the end our relationship had been further strengthened by the Lord. But there were some difficult moments! Of course, the Lord alone knew the incredible door of ministry that was soon to open for both Wolfgang and myself, and we had to be ready to stand when the floods arrived.

I had to delay my return to Israel for quite some time, but finally arrived home feeling rested, refreshed, strengthened and very grateful to my Norwegian family for their love and care. And oh, after twenty weeks of travel, there is no place quite like home! It was a blessing to again greet friends and neighbours and to walk the streets of the city that I loved so much.

In the spring of 1982, prior to the long trip I had just completed, I had been working one afternoon on the book. I suddenly felt impressed of the Lord to include a section on Israel. He then made it clear to me that it would be impossible to write about Israel without including something about the Holocaust. And, truly, it would be impossible to understand this country apart from the tragedy of the loss of six million Jewish lives! As Prime Minister Begin had said so often, "When the enemies of Israel threaten to destroy us, we *have to take them seriously.*"

There is a very precious couple named Rozia and Motek living in northern Israel whom I've come to know and to love over the years. They are both survivors of the Holocaust. And in the spring, the Lord let me know that I was to ask Rozia to share her story for my book. He also told me to say nothing about it to her until I returned to Israel in the fall, that it would weigh upon her too heavily over the summer months. I had almost forgotten about it in the rush of activities that followed. But upon my return to Israel, the Lord reminded me.

In November, I travelled north to her home, and asked her if she would be willing to tell her story for use in my book. I knew that the re-living of her experiences would cause her untold anguish, and so I could only trust the Lord's love and care for her. She agreed almost at once, however, feeling that she had survived simply to be able to tell the story for those who had perished.

The very next week I returned to her home, as I did not want her to have to think about it for a long period of time. I brought a tape recorder and a number of cassettes, and one Saturday afternoon we sat down together at her kitchen table with a tape recorder. I had no idea how profoundly that afternoon would change my life.

For the next twelve hours, she related to me a tale of horror that caused both of us to weep together the entire time. The enormity of what the Germans had perpetrated against the apple of God's eye finally sunk through to my heart. I'll never forget that night as long as I live, as I heard the agony of one life exposed to the greatest horrors mankind has ever known. And through it all, the Lord made me deeply, deeply aware of the depth of *His* suffering during those dark and terrible years.

The following, then, is Rozia's story.

PART VI

*"Until the day break,
and the shadows flee away,
turn, my Beloved,
and be Thou like a roe
or a young hart
upon the mountains of Bether..."*
Song of Solomon 2:17



32

ROZIA

I was born in Poland. My father came from a very wealthy, upper-class family. Not just wealthy, but upper-class for many generations. His family was very loved and respected in Lodz, the city in Poland where I grew up. My father was a doctor, and owned a very large drug store. But he had the misfortune of falling in love with a girl from a lower-class family. They were very much in love with one another for over ten years. Finally they were married, much to the consternation of my father's family. My mother was a very beautiful woman, charming and gentle. But then my mother died shortly after I was born. My father was heartbroken. He had loved my mother very much.

A few years later, my father re-married, a marriage of convenience arranged by the families, to a woman from another upper-class family of long standing. But he never really loved her. It was many years before I knew that she wasn't my real mother, as in those days parents believed in keeping such things hidden from their children. My step-mother was a very harsh woman, and refused to allow my father to show me any affection in her presence. But my father and I were very close.

My father was always dreaming about Israel, and he would share his dreams with me. Whenever he had an occasion, he would tell me a little about his dreams of living in Israel. He would close his eyes and just picture Israel with us living there. And when I was sick, whenever he would sit next to my bed to make me feel better, he would tell me all kinds of beautiful stories. And I would say, "Daddy, where did you read it, in a book?"

And he would answer, "No, I'm just imagining what the land will be like." He was a dreamer. And he would say so often, "Oh, eretz Israel, it's so beautiful and it's our country!"

I remember the time, although I don't remember exactly what year it was, that Jabotinsky came into Poland. He was calling on all the Jews to move to Israel, to go, but few paid attention to him. Everybody said, "How can we leave all this behind and move? Not knowing? You just don't do things like that! Here is our home, here is our business, here are our roots." It's the same thing the Jewish people in America are saying today. "You can't just pick up and leave!" And life went on.

As time passed, anti-Semitism grew and grew in Poland. Every once in a while, as we sat together in the evening, a rock would come through the window with a nice note — "*Jews, we hate you. Go to Palestine!*" And I knew that there were certain places where we were not wanted. Of course, all Poland was Catholic, and the Catholics had something out for the Jews. They hated us. When I was a young girl, they'd spit on me as they passed me on the street, they'd hit me. I was fortunate that I went to an all-Jewish school, as that way I didn't have to face persecution every day, as some of my other friends did.

The first school that I attended was the best. My father had said, "We'll send our Rozia to the best!"

And imagine that the language spoken every day was Hebrew! We studied Polish for an hour each day, but the language they expected us to eventually learn and to speak as we conversed with one another was Hebrew! What I learned in my first year in the school was enough to last me until I turned sixteen and the war broke out, because after that first year I changed schools.

It was my own fault. Shall I tell you why? In that school, with the high society of Lodz, I didn't behave. I was a tomboy. It was like putting a bird into a cage. I was pinching and fighting and kicking. I took all of my anxieties out on the other children.

When it came time for 'open school week', my step-mother went to the school to get the report. She was told, "Your daughter doesn't behave well here. We're sorry, but you will have to remove her from the school."

My mother came home crying, and she said to my father, "Never again will I go to 'open school week'. I was so humiliated!"

But my gentle father simply sent me to another school, also private, but on a slightly lower socio-economic level. There the language of the day wasn't Hebrew anymore, it was Polish. But Hebrew was still taught as a secondary language.

All through the years the anti-Semitism grew and spread all over Poland. Attending a Jewish school shielded me from much of it, as I met it only in our Gentile neighbourhood. And the dream was dreamed. We talked about Israel, and that's how we carried on with our lives.

One terrible Sabbath day, a number of Jewish families were picnicking in the lovely park near our home. And a group of Poles killed them all.

The very next day, on Sunday, my father said, "Come, Rozia, we're going for our walk." I was terrified, because every Sunday we walked through the park!

"But Papa, they'll kill us!"

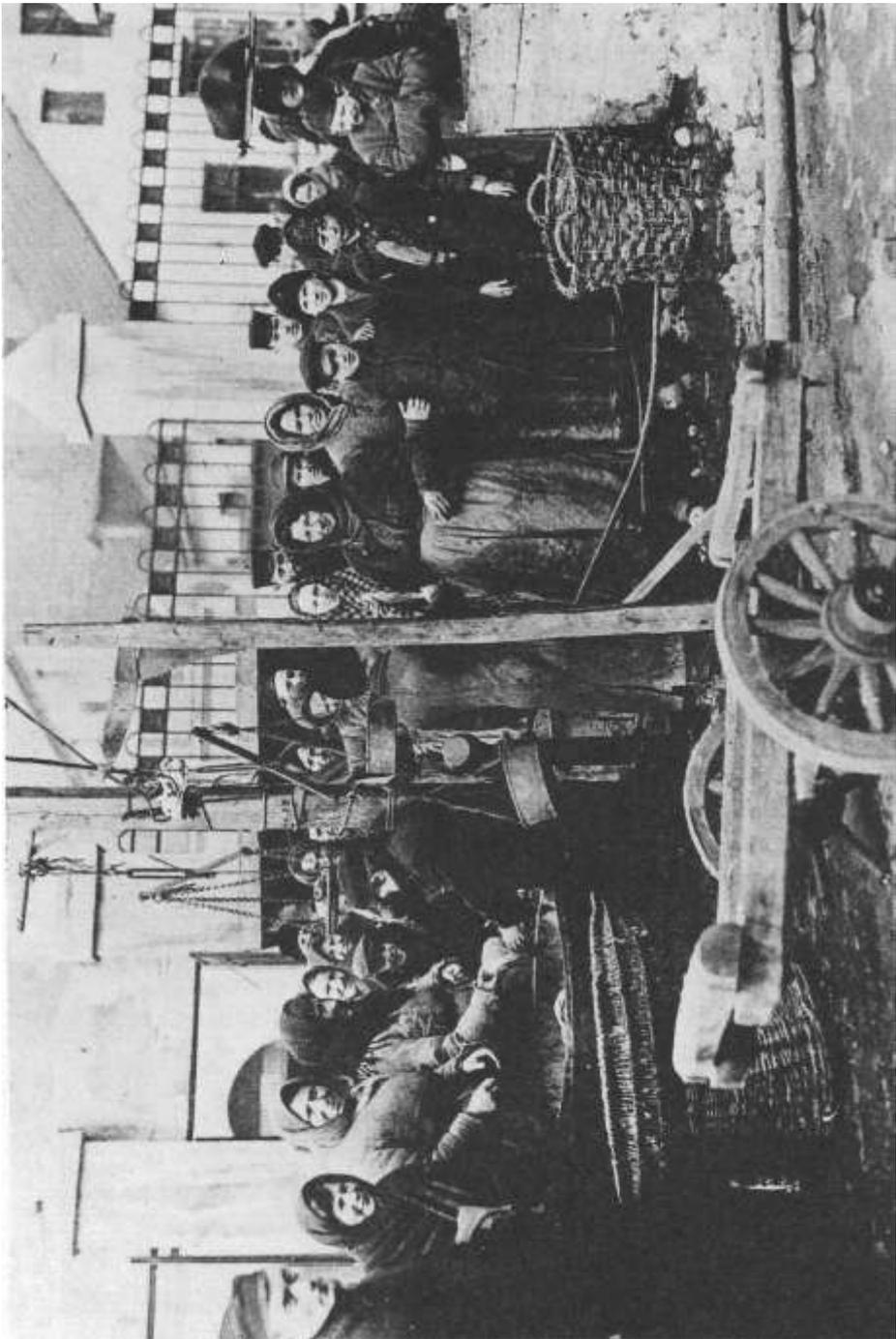
"We're going," he answered me.

I was frightened, but I knew if I stayed at home, Papa would walk alone. He had to, in honour of the people who were killed, our people. And so we walked together through the park. Papa kept his head held high, and the Poles had to honour him by nodding their heads, or removing their hats. He was very brave.

And then the war broke out. It was tragic news. My parents knew somehow that this time it would be terrible for the Jewish people. Years before, in 1937, 1938, we already had news from Germany about what was going on there, what Hitler was doing there. We knew already. But we didn't believe it. It seemed impossible! Our parents remembered the times from the First World War, when the Germans had been nice to the Jewish people. We would reason, "The Germans are such highly cultured people, it's impossible! They would never stoop down to such an evil and perverted system!" We didn't believe it. But in 1938 there were very large numbers of German Jews sitting on the borders of Poland to be let in, but Poland didn't want to let them in. They had been thrown out of Germany, and they didn't know where to go. We knew that. We had heard that. But we were still safe in our homes in 1938.

See, this is human nature. We're reading about those things. We're hearing about those things. But we think, we hope, "Things can't be that bad!" It was winter time. The news was coming — *"They're laying there, without food, cold, on the borders . . . It's so dreadful in Germany now for the Jewish people . . ."* But we were so sure that it couldn't possibly be true, that it wouldn't happen to us.

Truthfully, I knew very little about it all. I was still a school girl, not interested in politics. In my little world, everything was comfortable. In August of '39, it was summer vacation from school. I came back from the countryside. I was always sent to a special hotel, not with my parents, a special place for young people according to age. We had had a wonderful



Jewish Fish Market in Lodz, Poland.



Jewish children in Lida, Poland.

summer, a wonderful time. I came home again, and war broke out in Poland as well. We were at war with Germany.

It didn't take long, only two weeks, until the Germans were all over Poland. The Germans had an easy time in Poland, only Warsaw was a little more difficult for them. And that was it!

One morning we got up and we saw red flags with black swastikas, *on every house. On every one of our neighbours' homes!* That morning, when I stepped out of our house, and took a look around, and saw all the German flags flying, I grew up, in that instant. Up until then everything had been comfortable. I had been spoiled. But at that very moment, something happened to me, and at once I understood that there was a grave danger threatening us, and that our lives were about to be finished. *Every single house had the flags!* I said to my father, "What happened here? Suddenly there are Germans living around us? They became Germans overnight, the Polacks? The Polish people turned into Germans in a single night?"

All too soon the Germans marched into Lodz with their high-stepping goose step, and that was it. We knew that our lives were finished. And almost at once, things began to change. No more school. No more anything! And we knew that nothing would ever be the same again.

We didn't move. How can you? Some people started running. Some ran to Russia. Parts of Russia were still better. But then, little by little, things began to worsen. The Germans began trapping Jewish people in the streets and taking them off for labour. And then they began to talk about a ghetto. They were planning to close the Jewish people up in a ghetto! Then there was still time to run, especially for those who had money. My father wanted us to run, but Mama stopped him.

"Where will we run to?" she pleaded. "Who knows who is smarter? The ones who run or the ones who stay behind? It won't be so bad. How can we leave all that we have behind and just go? Where would we go?"

From that moment on, material things have ceased to have value to me.

As soon as the war broke out, the servants left, and we had to do all the work ourselves. We had to do the cleaning ourselves, we had to do the cooking ourselves, we also had to do the shopping ourselves. Our lives changed so drastically, so quickly! Then the rationing began. Even with money, we weren't able to get what we needed. People had to smuggle things through.

Suddenly they started moving the Jewish people from all over the city into only one section of the city. We were fortunate in that we already lived in the part of Lodz where the ghetto was designated to be. We had a house with many rooms, and so we had to give up most of the rooms. Then came the winter of 1941, I think it was in November. *They closed the ghetto.* They pushed the people in. They even gave it a German name. It was no longer Lodz, it was *lietzmannstadt Ghetto*'.

When they closed up the ghetto, we were forced to wear yellow stars, on the right side, front and back. Barbed wire surrounded the ghetto. The sidewalk in front of our store and home was part of the ghetto, the street was out of the ghetto, and the sidewalk on the other side of the street was in the ghetto once again. The Germans needed to use the street to drive from one end of the ghetto to the other, as it was a main thoroughfare. How did we cross from one side to the other? They had a gate on each side, and on both sides German police stood guard. Every fifteen or twenty minutes they opened up the gates, let us cross, and then they closed the gates again. At certain points they had bridges made above the street for pedestrian crossing. The bridges were quite high. In the wintertime they were a pain in the neck, because they became frozen with ice. The steps became so slippery that many people fell and broke their legs, but the Germans didn't care about that. Even under

the bridges there were German police standing and watching us, and they were always walking back and forth, watching. Some of our windows faced the street, and so we could always see the Germans walking back and forth.

Little by little things were getting tighter and tighter — less food, less medication, less fuel. Everything was rationed. Soon, people in the ghetto were dying from starvation. People were falling in the streets daily. They would just drop. Wherever you walked, you would find corpses. Just the way they showed it in the film, "Apples of Gold". That's how it looked. When they came to clean up the corpses, they threw four or five on top of one another. There were no funerals by then, nobody had the strength to bother with anything like that anymore.

Since my father was a doctor, I helped him in the ghetto. From the malnutrition, people developed boils, skin and bone cancer. Whole pieces of flesh fell away, leaving holes in the body. We didn't have enough fat, or proper vitamins. We lacked so much that people simply fell apart! The skin and the body disintegrated! My father didn't even have proper instruments to go in for surgery, but he had to operate nonetheless. As limited as he was in supplies, he had to cut pieces out, because gangrene had set in. And I would stand by and assist him. I wasn't afraid. I was eighteen or nineteen years old by then. If it hadn't been for that darn war, I would have been in medicine. I was so fascinated by it. I loved everything medical. I knew the Latin names of all the medications and everything in the store. I helped my father, and I helped also to prepare the ointments, whatever there was to do, I did. Using a special stick, he had to cut and burn the skin out, because the gangrene had to be removed.

We also had police within the ghetto. There were plain police and special police, called 'Sonderkommando'. Their job was to search the homes. The man who was the head of the Sonderkommando was my father's friend from before the war, a very intelligent man. We were still friends even within the ghetto. He used to come in and speak to my father, and a few times he even tried to talk my father into taking a position in the Sonderkommando, too. But my father said, "No, I'm sorry, I'm not going to join you. I don't care *what* happens to me! I know what you're doing. Listen, that's your business. But I would never in my life be able to do a thing like that!"

His friend said, "But you don't have to go out and search for anything! You could take a job in the office!"

My father replied, "I don't want to have anything to do with you people. We're friends. We can talk. Fine, you're welcome here any time. But no!"

"You prefer to starve? Don't you see? You would be better yourself, do it for your family!" But my father remained firm.

Because my father had been a well-known figure in pre-ghetto days, the people knew him. Therefore we also had a friend who had become the head of the plain police. He had been an ordinary salesman before the war, working for a medical supply company. All of a sudden, he enters the store with his special uniform, with his special hat. My father told us, "Guess who's now the head of the ghetto police?" Twice we needed to ask him for a favour. Such a change! In earlier days, he would come in for orders to my father; now, we had to turn to him in matters of life and death. It was now we who needed him. This is what happened.

From time to time, the Germans sent out groups of people from the ghetto to labour camps. We didn't know where they were going, however. Or if we knew it, we found it impossible to believe. Where are they sending the people? The Germans told us that they wanted people for special employment. So people reasoned, "Why should we just sit here in the ghetto? And have rations? There we can earn a living, and have more food and bread!"

The Germans talked so sweetly. "You'll have more," they'd tell us. "What do you have

here?" And so a number of people volunteered. They reasoned, "Why should we sit here and be hungry? We'll earn our bread!" Little did they know that sometimes they were really sent to labour camps - and sometimes they were sent instead to their deaths.

After a time, the Germans began to conscript labour. One day an 'invitation' to join a transport would simply appear at someone's door. We were in constant fear that they would split our family in this way, that they would send an 'invitation' and somebody would have to go. It could happen to either my father or my mother, as both of my parents were between forty and fifty years of age. And we also had a niece living with us, my mother's sister's daughter. So we lived in fear. (We imagined that I was still too young to be called by the Germans.)

And then, one terrible day, an invitation came for my mother. Oh, my God! And so what did my father do? He had to go and beg. He went to the head of the police. He said to him, "Look, look what's happened. Do something. Help us, please!"

Now this man's the big shot, right? But he did it. He just tore up the invitation. He told my father, "Go home. It will be all right. If you hadn't come to the office, they would have searched for you. She would have been taken from your house, the rationing would have stopped. But you came, and it will be all right." He did it, he fixed the list, whatever. That time, he helped us.

We had our own government in the ghetto, too. The Germans appointed Jewish police and a gestapo. Their function was to find the wealthy Jews and strip them of everything. One of the agents of course knew that my father had been extremely wealthy. And so one day they sent a pink invitation to us. My father had to report to the German police on a certain day. We knew that it was not good news. The first time they took my father in, they kept him for a week. They beat him every day. The fact that he came out alive was also a miracle.

He said to me, "Rozia, I survived this, just for you. Whatever they did to me, I saw you." They broke his ribs, knocked his teeth out. He gave them what he had. It wasn't enough. "You have more! You have more!" the gestapo kept insisting. They tortured him every day. When he came home, he was spitting blood and we didn't even have milk to give him. There was nothing to help to heal his internal injuries. Oh, this is heavy. But in time, he healed.

After my father was released from the gestapo office, they came and cleaned us out. They took everything. After a year or so, they called my father to the gestapo a second time. They kept him again, for three days. They also butchered it out. He said, "I have nothing more to give you. You took everything already."

But the Germans insisted. "For so many years you had so much! You must have more!" In the end he came home again. He came home alive again, but his spirit was broken.

At that time I was working in an office as a secretary. I was fifteen or sixteen years old when the war broke out, so by then I must have been eighteen or nineteen, and I had had an education. I also knew German, as we had studied German in school; in private schools, German was part of the curriculum. The office was in a big building in charge of ghetto maintenance. I was the secretary to the big boss. It was all Jewish. He liked my work, he liked me, he saw that I was working hard, and he was very satisfied. Often he helped us.

Whatever work we did in the ghetto was for the Germans. We worked for them in factories. Clothing, shoes, whatever they needed, we were expected to produce. Special ghetto money was printed, for ghetto use only, and we had to use it to pay for our rations. I was working in an office, other people worked in the factories. My mother was crocheting serviettes for the Germans. She had to produce a certain number per week. I helped her when I came home from work so that she would meet her weekly quota. She was listed as a worker, as was my cousin and my father. Each one of us had received a special card from the Germans to signify that we were employed.

From time to time in the ghetto, the Germans had a special day, called 'affaire'. On such days they entered the ghetto in force. Everyone was to remain at home. No one was to work.

One day, during an 'affaire', the S.S. entered the ghetto and began to shout for the young children to be brought to the streets. They began dragging people from their homes. The first time, they gathered them with the help of the Jewish police. The S.S. stood by, and the Jewish police were forced to do the dirty work. That time they were pulling out children under the age of five, as they were too young to work for the Germans.

It was a terrible day. I saw it myself. I stood by the window. Right across the street was a building, and they were taking a child from its mother. (Once in a while, if the mother was willing, they would allow her to accompany the child. But she knew where she would be going. That we knew by then. Straight into the oven). Most of the time the children were simply taken from their mothers. And that's what I saw. The screams were to heaven. Can you just picture a horrendous thing like that, taking a child away from its mama to *kill* him? The mother was hugging the child, clinging to it. And they just tore the child from her arms. But the Jewish policeman wasn't fast enough, so the S.S. grabbed the child, took it by its legs — it was a year old, a baby — and smashed it against the wall, smashing its skull — *in front of the mother*. Many of the mothers who remained simply lost their senses. They weren't normal anymore. They just ran around the streets screaming, yelling, crying. They might as well have died, because it was unbearable for them.

Some of the mothers went with the children. They didn't give a damn what would happen, they went with them. The Germans came that day with huge trucks, loaded everyone on, left, and that was their day's work, their pleasure. After an event like that, it took everybody a very long time to recover.

We often went through things like that in the ghetto. They just wanted to eliminate the population. Some got sick and died, some died of malnutrition, some received invitations to labour or death camps, and some were pulled out of the ghetto.

A few months passed. One day, they came into the ghetto looking for old people. Now, after having been in the ghetto for so long, everybody looked old by then, even the young people. My parents didn't look so good anymore as a result of malnutrition. Everybody on this day had to leave their houses to line up at a designated spot.

My father was very nervous and scared that day. He had a feeling that something bad would happen. He became pale, white. I grabbed some rouge and put some colour on him. I felt desperate. I cried, "Stop it! Don't look like that! Please!" And I pinched his cheeks. "Take the card. Tell them you're working, that you're all right!" We were so scared.

We lined up. Without saying a word, the S.S. were going around looking at faces and pointing with their fingers. Trucks were standing there. And one pointed at my father.

My father said, "But I'm working!" and he tried to show his card. But then, my father was shoved on the truck. My *father!*

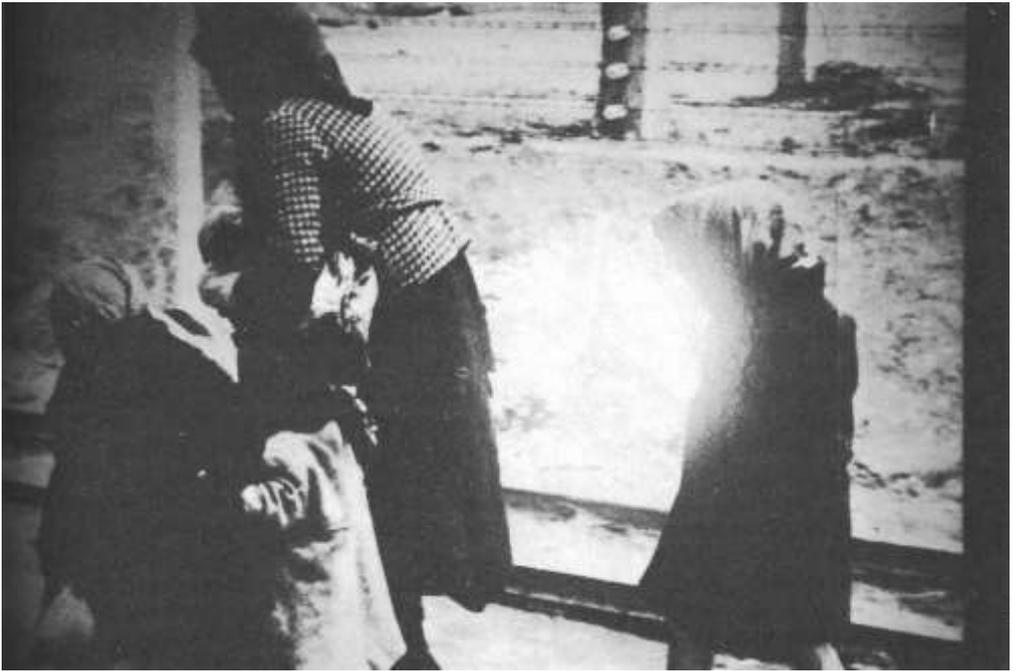
That day we were blessed. One of the policemen was our friend. He was not just a plain policeman, but he was in charge of a group. And he knew my father, everybody did. But he was our friend. He winked at us, and whispered, "Don't worry, you'll see, I'll do something. Just stand quietly and wait."

"But what can you do?" I asked him.

"Just don't worry, we'll get your father off!"

We turned around, the trucks started moving. I began to follow the trucks, I had to know what was going on. And then, all of a sudden, as I passed the entrance to a house, my *father was standing next to me. God Almighty!* He pulled me into the dark entranceway and we hid there until the Germans had left. My father explained that as the German





Enroute to the gas chambers.



officers had turned around, our friend had helped him off the truck and told him to run to the other side. And so he had hidden in the entranceway! If our friend hadn't helped, I don't know what I would have done.

So, for the Germans, that, too, was a day's work.

In addition to the gnawing hunger, we lived in a state of constant fear, constant pressure, day and night. We never knew when we would be called.

At that time we didn't have enough food to survive. Behind our houses there was a small plot of ground. Very rough ground, filled with stones. But I shared the land with a few neighbours, because I had not enough strength to work it myself and my parents were too weak from malnutrition to help. So with the young people, a few neighbours, we started digging and throwing away the stones. We made a garden out of it and planted things that would grow quickly — lettuce, spinach, anything! Later we had beets, scallions, whatever would grow quickly, we planted.

Working in the office, I was always hungry. There wasn't enough to eat. The rationed bread in the ghetto was like a small triangular piece. We received three slices per day. If you had other food to supplement it, you would eat something else with it, not just the three slices of bread! But if you eat just bread for months and years, as we often had to, it isn't enough. You're constantly hungry, and we had very little to eat besides the bread. In the ghetto occasionally we would be given a few potatoes. We had turnips, too. Whatever they had a surplus of, they sent it into the ghetto. How long can you make soup from turnips, rice from turnips? Whatever you did, grated it this way, fixed it that way, it's still turnips! We had saccharine, but no sugar. And for coffee we had ersatz coffee. What is that? When wheat is ground for flour, the stubble that is left over, like straw, is roasted. And then, when hot water is poured over it, the water turns brown, and that's supposed to be coffee. Things became so desperate that we took that grain — but it's not even grain anymore, that garbage — and made patties out of it. We put a little something in it to keep it together, not flour, since we didn't have any, and fried it. We didn't see eggs for six years. We didn't see milk, sugar, oil, nothing like that, for six years, from the beginning of the war. Margarine, yes, but very little, also in rations. So we put some saccharine into the patties, so that they wouldn't be so bitter. It was just something to stuff your insides with, so that the hunger could be satisfied.

In the office, when we worked a little overtime, we got an extra portion of bread with a slice of sausage on it. I brought it home for my father, my mother, our niece, so that we could all share it. I saw that my father was getting skinnier and skinnier and skinnier. He was fading. He was broken already, he had no mood for anything anymore; and I knew that hunger was doing it to him. He couldn't help himself. And he would just look at us, at me, and he would say, "Oh, my God, I'm here, and I can't even help you!"

He would always say to me, "You'll see, Rozia, when this all will end, you'll see, I'll make it all up to you. I'll make it up to you. I'll do anything to make it better, you'll see, I'll make it up to you!"

And then, it seemed that I was so strong, that I wanted to carry everyone else on my shoulders, because I was young, and I wanted so much to help, to do something.

Summertime was a little easier, but when the winters came, eventually we had no heating, nothing. So one winter, I started chopping up our furniture. And to my parents, to my father, that was such a terrible thing. He couldn't do it. And I was yelling, "What are you worrying about the furniture for? If we live we'll have different ones!"

He couldn't. I had to chase him out of the room. I chased everybody out. I don't know where I took the strength, how I had the energy. I took the hammer, the axe, it must have been that my anger was so strong, and I chopped everything into pieces.

I said, "Here, burn it, let's at least be warm. To hell with it!"

When he saw that, he fell apart. He started crying. And I didn't know what to do with myself. And then things got so desperate that I had to chop up even the stove. You know, a drug store has all those closets, drawers, so many things. It had been a very big store, a beautiful big store. But finally it came to that. We finished the wood from the furniture, and I had to chop up the stove in order for us to survive the winter.

My father said, "What are you doing?"

And I said, "Daddy, we can't help it. We're going to freeze to death here." I was chopping everything up into pieces and we were burning it. That got us through another winter.

Then came the next winter. We had finished with the wood. We didn't bother with big ovens, because that was too much, coal was needed for that. We simply needed something to warm us up, so we put up a little iron oven with a big pipe through the room. By then we only had a kitchen and one room left from all the rooms that were once ours. We didn't care anymore. Just a kitchen and the room where we slept. Somebody told me one day that in the little stoves you just needed sawdust. And so I went to a factory in the ghetto, a furniture factory, and I shlepped (dragged) home huge sacks of sawdust. I stuffed it into the stove. It burned quickly, but it didn't last long. But the pipe got so red, and we were warm for a while. I did whatever I could.

Then there was a rationing of potatoes. Frozen potatoes they gave to us, frozen, soggy and leaking, ugh! At five o'clock in the morning, I had to wait in line for the ration, and I shlepped those potatoes on my back, because nobody else had the strength anymore. It was quite a few blocks, and I don't know how I did it, God gave me the strength. By the time we peeled them, water was everywhere; they had a taste you should never know. But O.K., it was something to eat!

There was so much anxiety! Every minute we were afraid of something — no food, no fuel, somebody will call us for a transport, something will happen — and that was how our lives went, under so much pressure. I went to work and tried to do so much, and finally I got pneumonia. I became ill. Suddenly I had a very high temperature. My family didn't know what to do. My father was so broken up and everything that he was afraid to treat me himself. He could have cured me, but he was afraid to try. So he took me to another doctor. There weren't too many doctors in the ghetto. They examined me and then said, "She has pneumonia. If you could get cod liver oil, this is the only medication that will heal her."

Now where do you get that in the ghetto? We had to smuggle it in from the outside. My father's life was at stake, but he didn't care. When I got sick already, I was his everything. It was for me that he lived. Someone brought in a few bottles of cod liver oil.

But for all those years when I had been hungry, now all of a sudden I wasn't hungry anymore. I couldn't eat. I just couldn't! They stuffed the food into me. *Their* food. But I just couldn't eat. I cried. But then I forced myself to eat, because I figured, "I have to get well."

And they would beg me, "Rozia, eat, please eat. You have to eat!" And those tablespoons of cod liver oil, they were dreadful. So heavy and greasy. But O.K., I ate it, and I got better. It took weeks. I couldn't walk, I had become so weak. But at last I recovered.

As the years passed, it got worse and worse. We heard news that the Allies are coming, that there may be hope, that they'll save us, that it has to end. And then, one day, there came an invitation for my cousin. I saw the invitation and I knew that I wasn't a girl anymore. (I told you, from the day I saw those flags, I knew that was it). I had a

relapse. I was very sick, because I saw that our family was falling apart. 'Til then, we had fought together. I said, "*This is the beginning. We're going to lose each other now.*" And that's what happened. This time, nobody helped us. They took her. Daddy went, he went to his friend, but he was stiff as a board and couldn't do anything.

The Germans kept saying, "See, they're just going to work, they're just going to work." And the whole transport, with our niece on it, pulled out of the ghetto. Then in the transport carriers that returned to the ghetto, they found notes from people, writing, "Don't ever go. Don't listen to them. It's not true. They put gas into the cars, they don't even wait for the transports to reach a camp. They finish their lives right there, in the freight cars." It was horrible.

Somehow we survived that, too, but we missed her so, we were heart sick after that. And slowly I got well again. The boss for whom I worked helped, too. He helped to get the medication for me. They gave me some injections to build me up and everything. Before I got sick I had planted the garden, and then came the springtime, and things were growing already. They took me out to the garden, and they said, "RoZIA, look, see, everything is growing. What you did for us, it's nice. We'll be all right. Please get well, RoZIA. We have hopes!"

And my father kept saying to me, "Listen, whatever happens, you are young, you will survive it. Whatever happens to us, it's in God's hands. But you have to live!" And after a time, I got well again.

News filtered through. *Maybe a miracle will happen, help will come.* We heard this, we heard that. But time passed and we remained in the ghetto. It came to be 1944, it was also summertime. They decided to dismantle Lietzmannstadt Ghetto. They marched into the ghetto, the Germans, and they were chasing people out of their homes. They were saying, "You're going to work, you're going to work!"

I said to my father, "Let's hide out for a few days. Please. Let's try." So we hid for three days. We blocked the doors from the inside. We went to the front, to the store, we left the kitchen and our room open, and we put a big closet against the door. We could hear their voices outside on the street. We closed the shutters. We were in the front. If they had just opened the shutters, they would have been able to see us. We took pieces of bread, whatever we had, and wondered, "*How long will we last?*" And we just sat there. Our hearts! We didn't dare to move. Only when it got dark, in the middle of the night, we ate something. But in the daytime, we just sat there like mice. One day they came into the house, and we could hear them in the other rooms. They started cursing in German and screaming, "Where are they? Did they already leave? Where are they?" We were dying. But then they left.

How long can you sit like that and endure, with no food, nothing? I said, "Let's sit one more day." I couldn't bear to part from our home, from our life together, every moment was precious.

But my father said no. "I have no strength anymore. I can't. Whatever will be, will be. Let's go. I have no strength to fight anymore."

And I saw that I had nobody but me — just me — and I was not enough to keep them back. They simply couldn't endure it any longer. They looked so old already, so worn, and they were still young people.

We packed up whatever we could take in our rucksacks, and that was it. The three of us left our house to go to a labour camp. We went to the train station, to the `sammelpunkt where all the people were gathered. And again freight cars were standing there. It seemed we would be travelling 'first class'.

After a time, the Germans gave each person a whole loaf of bread. We received an

entire loaf of bread! All those years we had been sitting in the ghetto, dreaming, "Oh, if we live until the day when we can have a whole loaf of bread!" That was our dream, all those years, that once again a whole loaf of bread would be on the table to cut up, as much as we wanted. "*If we ever live to that day . . .*" And now, everyone received an entire loaf of the round Polish bread! They gave us the bread, a piece of margarine to put on it, and then they stuffed us into the train like sardines and locked the doors. There were only tiny windows in the cars with bars across them.

The train started. Where were we going? Nobody knew. We still had our illusions. "*Maybe . . .*" We hoped.

A whole night passed. We sat there, together. We weren't even hungry. Suddenly we saw light, we knew we were pulling into a station. People climbed up to try to see out of the windows. They saw some people with striped uniforms, with striped hats. Then the doors were opened. "EVERYBODY OUT!" And then we saw it, in big letters: 'AUSCHWITZ'. It's the end.

So many people had died in the ghetto. We were already the survivors of that nightmare. And now we had arrived at Auschwitz.

The Germans worked so quickly. Everything happened so fast. "OUT! OUT! Everybody out! Leave the things behind you! WOMEN TO THE RIGHT, MEN TO THE LEFT! OUT!"

That was it. My father embraced me, he kissed me, and he said to me, "You have to live. You must live, because you are young."

And that was the last time I ever saw my father.

Everything happened so quickly that I didn't realize what had really happened until much later, when I had time to collect myself. The Germans had a special technique. Already the men had begun to march in rows of five. And the soldiers, they were tall S.S. men, standing there like statues, such handsome men. Tall, blonde, overpowering everyone. Giving orders. "LEFT! RIGHT! LEFT! RIGHT!" We were in shock, in complete shock. We ceased to be human anymore, we couldn't think anymore. Nothing. It happened so quickly. They pushed you so quickly so that you wouldn't have time to think. If you were fast enough to do something, to run, it wouldn't have helped anyway. They would simply shoot you.

So the men were marching. The women remained. I was holding on to my mother. And then we, too, began to march. We came to the wall of the S.S. They said to my mother, "Right!"; to me, "Left!"

"Links, rechts, links, rechts ... "

And I'm pushed to one side, and my mother, you know, I wanted to hold her. And then, whoosh! someone grabbed her from me and screamed, "TO THE LEFT! LINKS!" I turned around, and she had disappeared. I didn't see her anymore! Where had she disappeared to? In thin air! That's how quickly it had happened!"

And that was it. I was left there because I was young. "March!" and they pushed me. "March!"

I couldn't cry. I couldn't scream. I couldn't yell. I was in a state of shock by then. I marched. We came into a big room.

"Everybody undress! Everything!"

The women looked at one another, we were all young women, nineteen or twenty years old. It was 1944. I got undressed. Everybody undressed. The clothes drop, you're in shock, you don't know what to do. We felt no shame, we felt nothing. We were just automats. We did as we were told.

The S.S. men, the S.S. women also, everyone was fat. Blonde and fat. They were

big, they were overpowering us with their voices, with their orders, with their guns.
"MARCH!"

We came to a table covered with papers and surrounded by S.S. men. And they looked me over. I was completely naked. "Turn around, back and front!" If they had found one blemish on my body, they would have sent me in another direction.

I was pushed, and we were marching again, to another room. And there stood a fat S.S. woman. She had on an apron and with a machine, she shaved off my hair. I had long, thick and beautiful hair, fixed with combs. I took them out, and after a few minutes, I was left with only the combs. I stood looking at them in my hand. I had a ring, my mother had given me a ring, her ring, but whatever they saw on you, they took it for themselves. And there I was, my hair shaved off, with nothing. You know, I didn't cry. I didn't let a peep out of myself. I couldn't!

All of a sudden we were pushed to another room. They gave us clothing to wear. We received a skirt and a blouse, no underwear, nothing, just a skirt and a blouse. They painted a red stripe on my back, I was supposed to be a 'political prisoner'. For whom, I don't know. Then we walked outside. We were fortunate that it was summertime. It was still warm. I think it was in August. We had bare feet. I had come from a wealthy family; but even in the horror of the ghetto, I still had my shoes on! I didn't look human any more. We all looked at one another. We couldn't recognise each other anymore.

They gave me a number there. I ceased to be Rozia. Now I became a number instead. No longer a name! Whenever they called me, it was by number, in German. I was lucky, because the ones who arrived earlier had their numbers tattooed on their arms. But because I arrived as late as '44, they held back a little.

That same evening the whole group of us were forced to sit in a field. Out came a fat S.S. woman, the one who was in charge. She stood on a box and gave us a speech. She said, "Now listen here, what do you think this is here? You didn't come to a paradise."

We were all sitting there feeling numb. We didn't know what was what anymore. She could have done anything with us. It wouldn't have bothered us.

"Just take a look over there, take a look to the right," she instructed us. "Do you see that smoke coming out of the chimney? That's where your parents are burning ..."

Oh, my God! *There was smoke! The crematorium!...*

We sat there the rest of the night. The next morning they led us to some kind of barracks. They had bunks, seven women in a bunk. How should I describe it to you? There were three enormous shelves. Seven women on one board, then a divider, seven women again, a divider, seven women again; that's how we slept. Together on boards. Then a second shelf, then a third. I went to the top, as I was afraid to be on the bottom. It was too close to the S.S., I was afraid they would hurt me, I didn't want to look at them.

I climbed to the top, with six other women, and we laid next to each other, like herrings. And there we started weeping and screaming and yelling.

"God, where are You? . . . What are You doing? . . . Why did we deserve this? . . . How could You let it happen to us? ... Did our fathers sin like that? ... Did they deserve that? . . ."

Later they came with a pail filled with pieces of bread, and they started throwing it up to the animals, you know, as if we were a cage full of monkeys.

The next day we were called outside at five in the morning. 'Appellplatz'. They wanted to count us. Who could run away? But no, they simply had to count. The Germans are fanatical, everything must be just so. Everything. We had to stand in very, very straight lines, like soldiers in the army. We felt like creatures, as if somebody came into a zoo to peer at us. There were speeches, and they counted us for over an hour.

Then they told us to sit down on the ground. Only then did they decide to feed us.

To every group of five, the first one received a big pot of soup without a spoon. Thick, hot soup. But how were we to eat it? With our hands? It would burn! But some of our young people had no control. They were starving. Some couldn't control themselves. They took it with their hands, like animals. And the guards stood there and amused themselves with the spectacle. That's one of the small things. There were plenty of other more horrible things that they amused themselves with.

I waited until last. I was always the last one. I never pushed myself in front. I didn't want to get beaten up, I couldn't stand them ridiculing me. I figured I would rather die than eat it with my hands. I didn't touch it until they came with spoons.

We were in Auschwitz for two weeks. Our daily life was exactly the same. There was even a certain time when we were allowed to go to the toilets. And even then we had to march, like soldiers. The toilets were outside, primitive, just holes. Every time we were watched. Once a day they threw bread to us, once a day we had hot soup. They were continuously yelling and screaming at us and beating us.

We were actually in the part of Auschwitz you have read about, Birkenau. It's the infamous part.

Every other day, somebody of a higher rank came and wanted to examine us, to look over the material. Each time we would be called out, commanded to strip and march in front of the men. And they looked us over. If we were still healthy, we were allowed to return to our cages. Whoever didn't look so healthy would be taken out and we would never see her again.

One day, they sent us on a march. They were taking us some place. We didn't know where. It took a long time. We walked, we sat, we marched, we sat, they fed us some water and a piece of bread. We arrived at last at a nice building — it was the crematorium. And they said to us, "You're going to take showers." We were then given a towel and a bar of soap. Have you ever seen the little soaps, 'Rein Yiddish Fat', pure Jewish fat? In the Holocaust museum you can see them. They were made from human fat.

And we went in. In a way we no longer cared what they were going to do to us any more. By that time we had ceased to be human. We didn't give a damn any more. We had no strength to fight or run or to do anything. We wanted to die. We wanted to die.

We walked in, and as soon as we saw the shower heads, we thought, "Either water or gas will come out of them!" We knew that for sure! There were heavy iron doors, like those used in a safe. We were really in the crematorium!

As it turns out, they brought us there just to scare us, just to torment us a little more, and for no other reason than their good pleasure. They had already decided that they could use some more workers, as we were still young and had passed through many selections already. *Water came out of the taps.*

They knew what they were doing to us. They went through special schooling on how to shatter the human mind, the human dignity, the human spirit. We were just putty in their hands. We had survived the ghetto, the separation, the hunger and now this. It was their grand finale. Drops of cold water came out. The shower lasted a minute. Then they pushed us naked into a room. They instructed us to pick some underwear, a cotton slip, a dress and a pair of shoes. They weren't ordinary shoes, they were wooden shoes. But not fancy wooden shoes like people wear today. They had a slab of wood on the bottom, and the rest of the shoe was canvas. I thought I would break my legs trying to walk in them.

After we were dressed, they gave us a portion of bread and sent us to the trains.

Into the same 'luxury cars'. They were taking us somewhere. They, of course, wouldn't bother to tell us where.

We rode and rode, night and day, who knew for how long. At last we came to a camp in a valley surrounded by mountains. Nobody could see it from a distance. Across a gigantic gate were written the words: 'Arbeitslager MITTELSTEINER'. We had arrived at a labour camp in Germany, not far from Breslau.

When we were pushed inside, we found new, hastily erected buildings, like wooden barracks. There were bunk beds again, three floors of them, but this time everybody had a bunk to herself. It was paradise! We each had a straw sack, two army blankets, and a straw pillow. Can you imagine that?

The rooms were long, with tables and benches in the centre. Each cabin held forty women, twenty on one side, twenty on the other. There were two hundred of us all together, two hundred Polish girls. The other side of the camp had the same number of barracks, filled with girls from Hungary. Each person received her own bowl and spoon. Luxury!

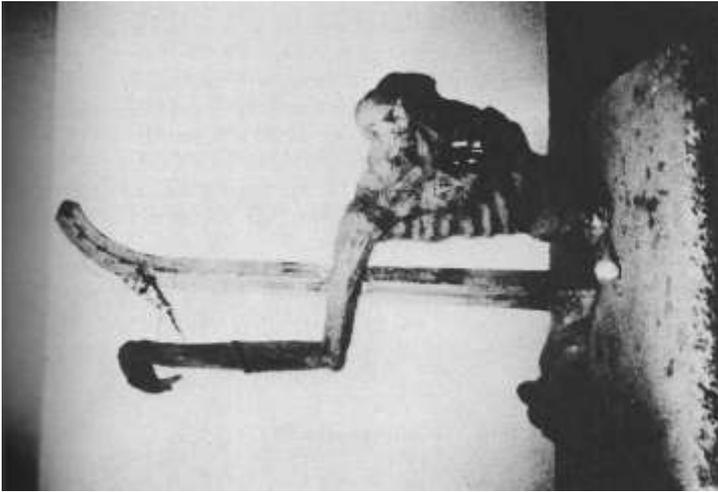
Outside of the barracks were S.S. women. And the S.S. women were worse than the men. The Wehrmacht were German soldiers, they were still human beings. When they watched us, they weren't cruel. But the S.S. took pure pleasure in all that they did to us. And the women, whew! They were all whores, prostitutes. They also took advantage of the food that was available to them. Every one of them was fat. They knew that everyone else was facing starvation; they ate double portions. We were all bags of bones. Every one of us. By that time my hair still hadn't grown. I looked horrible.

The next morning we were told we were going to work in a factory. At five o'clock in the morning we had to get up. The beds had to be made. When we left for work the blankets, everything had to be perfect, like soldiers. The S.S. came to check. If somebody didn't make their bed properly, exactly, they weren't given their ration of food. So at five o'clock in the morning, everyone frantically fixed their beds. Then we had to line up to be counted for an hour. At six o'clock we started marching. We marched to the factory. I don't know how many miles it was, but it took over an hour. Then we stood and worked for the rest of the day. At the end, we were given a bowl of soup and a chunk of bread. That was our daily meal. Each day we were taken to the factory by the S.S. women. Winter time was terrible, because we had only our clumsy wooden shoes. And the snow stuck to the shoes. But we still had to march in perfect rhythm ... "Eins-zwei-drei, eins-zwei-drei ..." If you complained or fell out of step, you were beaten.

When we arrived we found other political prisoners who were not treated like we were. They gaped at us because they had never seen a group of young girls with shaven heads. They were told that we were murderers and that we were the worst. They were not allowed to speak to us.

In the factory they had big machines, they were making airplane parts. So we had to learn how to work the machines. I was to be put in charge of a machine. We couldn't make any mistakes, as it was precision work. We would be punished for any mistakes.

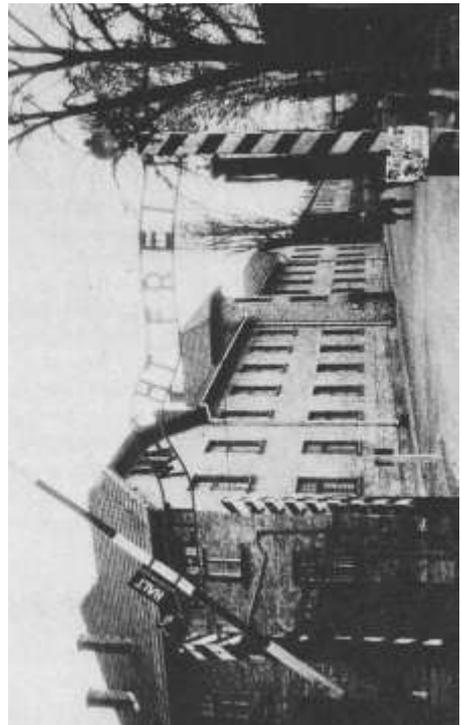
There was a German there, not a soldier, but a private citizen. They called him a 'meister', and he was in charge of five machines. He wasn't allowed to talk with me — only to explain what I was expected to do, and that was all. The S.S. women were watching us. We weren't allowed to hold conversations with anybody. I was standing there by the machine. The meister knew beforehand that he wasn't allowed to speak to me. But he was so curious. As he looked at the machine, he whispered to me in German, "Why did they shave you? Why did they do that to you? Why did they shave the hair off your heads?"



Auschwitz



Thousands gather in Nazi Germany under anti-Jewish slogans



Entrance to Auschwitz
“Work Makes You Free”

And I answered him, "Don't you know why? Because we are Jews." I didn't hide anything. He said no more. He simply showed me how to do my job. For me, the work was easy to understand.

The German people by that time in the war also had rationing, but somehow the meister had pity on me. He would leave a pear or a bowl of something on a little table, and as he passed me by, he'd whisper, "Take it! It's for you." Once, he even left a slice of bread!

Something else was happening. From time to time, during the night, I would dream of my father, and I would feel happy when I woke up the following morning. And whenever I dreamt of my father, something good happened in the factory the same day. It's as if my father, or God, were still watching over me. One day, following a dream, my number was called while I was working in the factory. I had to report to the one who was in charge of the whole big operation. He called my number! I thought it was the end for me. They never tell you what's happening, because that would be too humane, right? They called my number and the numbers of two other girls. As we followed him, I thought, "*Are they going to throw us out? Beat us? Did we do something wrong?*"

He brought us in to a dining room somewhere in the factory. He told us to sit down, and then we were given a bowl of soup! Amazed, I said to myself, "*Oh, God, my father is watching over me. He had told me to live!*" I had such a distinct feeling that my father was with me!

We were told to eat as much as we wanted, as much as we were able. By that time our stomachs had shrunk, and one bowl of soup was all that we could manage.

Another night I dreamt of my father. The next morning, all of a sudden my number was called again. Again! With a few more girls, I was taken to a room. A man came in, and he asked us, "Who can read and write German?"

I could, and the real German, because I had had an education. I replied, "I can."

"Write your name." All of a sudden he's interested in my name? "Write your name and address." He gave me a pencil. I wrote it. And I was chosen. There were other girls there, but I was chosen, and by name. He actually said, "Rozia!" He gave me a little table, sat me down, and from then on I wrote for him each day in German. The important fact was that I wasn't standing all day on my legs any more. I didn't have to use my energy any more, and it was such a gift, because on such a small portion of food, I was already dying. I was becoming weaker and weaker. I could barely survive any more. And then I was able to sit!

When we returned to the camp each evening, we were given our bowl of soup. Some of the girls didn't enjoy what they had, they ate so fast, in hopes that there would be some left over and that they'd be able to get more. They received more, but the S.S. women made a show for themselves. They took a thick stick, like a baseball bat, and beat the young girls on the back while they bent down over the kettle to eat. One thing you should never know, *no one should ever know*, is that feeling when a human being is so starved — not just hungry but starved — that he ceases to be human. It's impossible. The person becomes an animal. You can't even be surprised. You don't say, "Look at that, look what she's doing, she's eating with her hands, that's impolite!" No, I'm sorry. We were all the same by then! It's just that the one who could control herself, with all her might, would just say, "I don't care what will be, I can't do that." I couldn't go up there like some of the others. I figured I'd better enjoy the bowl I had rather than go out there, fight for more, and get beaten up! Because many times the S.S. broke the girls' ribs by beating them and they wound up in the hospital.

In the camp, we did have a hospital. One of our girls was a nurse, so she became the camp 'doctor'. She was a Hungarian. The hospital didn't deal with difficult cases. If it

was something that could be dealt with during three days in the hospital, fine. If not, you were sent out. They didn't bother with anything serious.

My turn came. All of a sudden I had a high fever, chills, and I had to go in there. I figured, "Whatever will be, will be." I didn't fight. I no longer cared. I said, "If God wants me to live, I'll live. If not I'll just die. I can't fight. I have no strength."

While I was in the hospital, I became friends with the Hungarian 'doctor'. Maybe God sent me in there for three days, because at least there they gave me soup three times a day, bread, and I rested. That's all that was wrong with me. I needed the rest. And I became friends with her. She saw that I was an intelligent girl, and I told her my background. Somehow I won favour in her eyes. She remembered me even after I left the hospital, and even one time she gave me an extra undershirt so I would be warmer. And that was something precious. And another time, when I was so weak that I could barely walk any more, I went over to her, and I said to her, "Would you give me an extra plate of soup or something? Please? I feel that I'm just going out, that I can't survive." She gave it to me.

On Sundays we had to be counted at five o'clock in the morning, as on every other day. Then after an hour or two of standing there in rain, snow, whatever, we had the rest of the day to ourselves. We washed the few clothes that we had. And we talked to each other. We helped one another.

We learned that the Germans had buried potatoes under the earth to prevent them from freezing. So in the middle of the night we took turns. If the spotlight were to hit us, who knows what would have happened? We took turns digging some of the potatoes out with our hands to share with one another. We worried about each other, we helped each other. Most of all, we spoke about food. We were dreaming of what we would like to eat. They knew that I could sing and knew some Polish and German songs. Often they would say, "Rozia, sing something for us!" So I sang.

There was a Jewish woman in charge of the barracks, and the S.S. gave orders through her. She never hit us, she just warned us, "Please, do it, be good, I don't want you to get hit!" She felt so sad for us, and she tried her best. One day when I was singing, she walked in, so I stopped. But she had heard me.

"Go on, go on, I want you to sing!" she said.

I was frightened of her, too, but I sang.

"Beautiful!" she exclaimed. "What's your name?" And so I told her. (Her name was Helen).

"Rozia, would you like to come in once a week to the clinic and sing a few songs to cheer up the women who are sick?"

"Is it all right?" I asked her. "You really want me to?"

"Yes, yes," she assured me. "I like your voice very much. Come in and sing for them."

And every time I went to sing, she gave me an extra bowl of soup. And so I was actually 'singing for my supper'!

One day, while I was singing in the clinic, the S.S. woman walked in. I had to continue. I was singing a German song, a beautiful song. I still remember those songs!

The S.S. woman had such an evil face. I would still recognize her after so many years. Such a mean face. And she wasn't such an old person, she was still young, in her 40's. Such a mean thing, and she always walked with a big dog, a German shepherd. The dog she called 'Mensch'. It means a man, a human being. I was the dog. If she was mad, she would just send the dog onto you.

"Who is THAT?" she bellowed. "Daring to sing a German song?" But then she mellowed. She liked it. "Where did you learn dat?" She couldn't imagine.

Singing was my break. I was able to eat an extra bowl of soup once a week. So, see? God was with me. My father was with me. Those little things helped me to survive.

One day the S.S. woman came into the factory to take a look at us, to see what her 'dogs' were doing. And she saw me sitting by a table writing. She went into a rage! I was shaking with fear. She went straight to the head of the factory, the man who had placed me there. She thought maybe I decided by myself to sit there and write?

He calmed her down. He told her, "Take it easy. We need her there. She knows how to read and to write in German. I need her there. Leave her alone."

We marched home that evening. As I was standing in the last row, all of a sudden she called out my number. I thought, "God, this is it." She could have done with me what she wanted, she didn't have to listen to the factory manager, she was S.S., she was above him.

"Humph!" she growled. She looked me up and down. "Imagine, she's writing!" she complained to our Helen. "She just sits there and writes!" After a few minutes of ridiculing me, she let me return to my place.

Later, Helen, with a smile on her face, asked me about it. When I explained how it had happened, she said, "How nice! I'm happy for you!" All of these small things, a bowl of soup here, a kind word there, all of them helped me to survive.

Often we heard the war planes flying overhead, and we prayed to God, "Let them drop a few bombs here, we've had it already, we can't take any more." Even with all of the little encouragements, it came to the point where each morning at five o'clock, I couldn't get my feet out any more. I couldn't walk. I was such a bundle of bones. If you looked at me, I didn't look like a human being any more. I was twenty years old, and I was like a board. My skin looked like the skin of a woman who was 120 years old. Wrinkled, brown. My hair wouldn't grow. I had a scarf on my head to cover it, I had torn a piece from my skirt to cover it, because I looked so horrible. We just couldn't hold on any more. We just dragged ourselves around. We weren't women any longer, we had no feeling, nothing.

In the beginning of 1945, they decided to dismantle Mittelsteiner. They divided us into two groups. They had to do something with us. I was on one side, and I thought, "Oh, my God." The S.S. pointed at my group. "This group will stay here. We'll find them a different group. The other group we're taking someplace else."

And for the first time I did something on my own initiative, I walked over to the group on the other side, the group that was leaving. I'd had enough of Mittelsteiner already, and so I took my chances.

Again they herded us into freight cars, and we began to travel. It was wintertime. They took us to Czechoslovakia. To another labour camp. This one was already an established labour camp, with a large number of women. They put us once again into barracks under the same conditions. But they didn't send us to work any more. They just gave us our daily ration of soup. It was already coming to an end. They had no work for us. They didn't know quite what to do with us.

By that time, really, I couldn't endure any more. I really prayed each night, "God please, let me go to sleep forever. Please. I can't take it any more. I have no strength to live." I couldn't walk any longer. I would have been happy to have just gone to sleep and never awakened again. I was praying for that to happen. But each morning I was still waking up!

We spent a month or two just like that. Just waiting. And then, we began to hear things. The Czech partisans began to get word through to us, that the war was coming to an end. "Hold on, girls, hold on!" they would tell us. "Hold on! It's almost over! You'll live!"

The Germans kept us until almost the last day. May 5th was the capitulation, when all the armies, the whole thing ended. They kept us until the 1st of May, until almost the last minute. Other areas had already been liberated. By the end, we were afraid they were going to take us out and just kill us! They continued to count us each day, but we could see their confusion. We were very much afraid, but in a way it didn't matter to us any more, we no longer had the strength nor the will to live.

One day we awakened in the morning. We got dressed, and we noticed that they weren't calling us to be counted. We looked out the window, and suddenly we saw the same S.S. women, in civilian clothes, on bicycles, fleeing from the camp!

I said to myself, "No, it can't be, I'm seeing things, I'm seeing things. It can't be. They're just going? They're leaving us alone?"

I called to the other girls, "Girls, come here, take a look at this! Are they running out? They're just going away? And leaving us?"

As I stood by the window, looking out, I realized that this was the end of the war, that I was still alive. My first reaction was to become hysterical. Crying, screaming, not laughing. I had never cried through all the previous years. I hadn't been able to. But this day, at this moment, it hit me. *"God, I'm all alone in this world! I have nobody! Where shall I go? What shall I do with myself now?"*

We had to remain in the camp for a few more days, because outside of the camp the chaos was terrible. The Germans were fleeing, running away. The partisans came into our camp, and they told us, "Don't go out on the road yet, don't go out, you're safer here. The Russians are coming. Wait here. It's too dangerous. The Germans could still kill you at the last minute. We'll help, we'll bring you some food!"

There were no longer any Germans in control of the camp. We went into the kitchen, dug some potatoes out, we got whatever we could. I couldn't even eat. I wasn't hungry any more. And that was also my luck, because some of the kids were so hungry, they over-ate. They got dysentery, they got sick, and they died. I wasn't hungry. I knew I was free, that in time I would have enough. I knew I didn't have to kill myself for food. I just had one potato in the evening.

The first evening of our liberation, we made a big fire in the iron stove that was in the center of our room. We baked potatoes, and we sang Hebrew songs. That same night we sat around the fire, and we sang "Hava Nagila" in Hebrew:

*"Let's rejoice, let's rejoice,
Let's rejoice,
Let's have rejoicing.*

*Wake up, brothers,
We have to be happy,
Wake up, brothers,
We have to be happy,
Wake up brothers,
We have to be happy."*

We were half dead, we were just bundles of bones, every one of us; and yet we still sang, "Hava Nagila". It was the first of May 1945. That's what it means to be young at heart.

After we had waited in the camp for a few days, my energy was restored, and I became the leader again. I said to my friends, "Do you want to sit in this hole any longer? C'mon, let's get out of here! I don't know where to go, but we'll see! Let's at least go! Now we're free, that's all that matters! There must be a village nearby with some people living in it. Let's go and see what the people will do for us!"

And so we started marching, with our wooden shoes, with our ragged clothes — people got scared just looking at us. We looked terrible, we were mere bones. There were five of us, five girls. But by then we weren't girls any more — five women.

There were Germans still living in Czechoslovakia. The young ones had fled, the soldiers fled, but the old ones couldn't run. The roads were filled with fleeing Germans, soldiers. They were afraid of the Russians, as they knew that the Russians would take revenge. The Germans weren't afraid of the Americans or the English, but our part of Czechoslovakia was liberated by the Russians.

We needed food, we needed clothing, we needed to take a bath, we needed to feel human again. We knocked at a cottage door and an old German woman opened the door. She began to shake, she was afraid, and before we could say anything to her, she exclaimed, "I didn't know anything! I didn't know anything!" She knew immediately who we were.

I informed her in German that we were not interested in whether she knew anything or not. "Give us some food and clothing, that's all we care about," I told her.

She was afraid. I don't blame her, because of the sight of us, but we entered and she went to prepare something for us to eat.

Suddenly I became so brave. I had the taste of freedom, I knew that for us the nightmare had ended. I told her, "We haven't seen an egg for years. We want eggs, we want milk, we want butter and bread!" She had it, as she lived near a village. She prepared it for us. And we sat down and we ate, whatever we could. Then she found some clothes for us, and we left her cottage. She was very grateful that we were not Russians. They would have taken her life. We asked directions to the main street of the village, to the head of the village. She told us, and we continued on our way.

We arrived at the village, it was all Czech people. They also knew right away when they saw us, they knew right away. The mayor welcomed us. "Good that you came to us," he said. "We wanted to go out, to look for you, to see how we could help." They knew that we were from the camp.

Then he told us, "We have to fix you up. You have no strength to go anywhere. You're too weak to do anything. We can't take you all in one house, as there are five of you. Do you trust us to care for you in separate homes?" We agreed, and so a few families made us welcome in their homes. I was taken home by a family that had a daughter my age, and they also had a younger son. They were wonderful. They were really wonderful. The real Czech people, they were so much better than the Polacks. They were better than anybody.

I still have a picture of that family. I was with them for four weeks. They wanted to adopt me. They wanted me to remain there with them. They were so sick over what had happened to us. They knew what had been going on. They couldn't help it. Then they noticed me with my hair cut off, and so right away the mother gave me a beautiful kerchief to cover my head with, because she knew that a girl would be ashamed to look like that. My hair had grown a little by then, but I still had no use for a comb. They kept saying, "Oh, God, what they did to you!"

They fed us, little by little, lean foods, so that we wouldn't get sick. With the peace and the love that they gave to me, the affection, I started to really blossom. My skin cleared up. I started gaining weight. I was no longer just skin and bones. My bust was coming back. I looked like a young woman again! And I learned the Czech language, so quickly! By the end of four weeks, I was one of the family! And they really wanted me.

But I said to them, "Listen, I was separated from my mother and father." They knew my story. I had told them how it happened. They wanted to know. "Maybe my father didn't burn. Maybe he's someplace. It's my duty to try and see. I wouldn't rest if I didn't. I have to go and search. I have to look for him. I have to travel to a major city, back to Lodz, to see

what's going on. I can't just sit here in a village! Maybe I'll meet somebody that has some information. You have to let me go. You have to understand. I'm so thankful to you. With all five of us, really, you all accomplished so much. You were so nice to us." And, really, they brought music, they played, they sang for us to cheer us up, so that we shouldn't be so sad. They knew we had had such a trauma in our lives. They tried everything. They were beautiful. I loved them.

I wanted to try to get back into Poland, to Lodz. There I could meet Jewish people. I could find out something. But after the liberation, travel wasn't easy at all. All of Europe was in chaos. Nothing was running on schedule. If a train came once a day, it was packed, people were hanging out of the windows. Europe was running. Survivors were running from one country to another, searching for loved ones.

The Russians were all over the country by that time. The Russians were the liberators, but they weren't very nice. They were just looking for the opportunity to lie down with a young girl. Our friends had to take us to a city in order to find a train, but because of the Russians, they had to hide us. So they took a wagon of hay with two horses, and we were lying under the hay, covered by the straw. By then we looked like young ladies again! Our hair had grown a little, we had colour, we were healthier looking, young. And by then I had even an extra skirt, an extra blouse, I had a satchel on my back with a few belongings already. And I even took a comb with me. I wasn't ready for it yet, but I knew the day would come.

They brought us to the train, and we said goodbye. They were crying. And they said, "If you don't find anybody, please, please come back to us."

I knew I wouldn't return. I didn't want to live among Gentiles. I wanted to go back, to be with Jews! My first thought was to search, to find my father. *I wanted so much to find my father.* And, if I didn't find him, I wanted only to go to Palestine. That was my dream.

We had to smuggle ourselves back across the border between Czechoslovakia and Poland. When the train arrived at the border in the middle of the night, we just ran across to the other side, into Poland, and then climbed onto the trains once again.

When I arrived in Poland, and heard the Polish language again, I was full of hatred already, because it hadn't left me with good memories. We came into Lodz. I arrived at the station and I felt very strange. I was born there, it was my home town — and yet I didn't even recognize parts of the city. First of all, there were Russian flags all over the place. So many of the buildings had red flags with the arm and sickle. And some of the city had been destroyed. While we had been in the ghetto, the Germans had done that to the rest of the city. It was the first time I had seen the destruction, as we had not been allowed outside of the ghetto before. The Germans did such terrible things!

We knew by then that the Jewish people had set up centres in every city. They knew that people would be searching for their families. When you walked into one of the Jewish centres, the walls, all of the walls, were covered in names. Whoever came in would write his name, to show that he was alive — here's my name, I was here, I survived. So you stood there and read through the names, you looked to see if by chance there was a familiar name. In every centre, all of the walls were full.

And then we asked people. Maybe somebody saw someone coming through . . . But there was no news for me. As I walked the streets, I dreamed. I would see an older man, and my heart would leap with hope. *"It looks like my father! — Maybe that one's my father! — Oh, no, it looks like my father over there!"* I was looking for him so hard. I wanted so much to find him. And so many times I thought, *"Maybe that one's my father!"*

The city itself made a strange impression on me. Every time I walked out, I saw blood in front of my eyes. I would see everything, the memories would come flooding back. I said to myself, "This place is full of blood! We lost everyone here! Everybody was killed here!"

Everything is dead here now. What am I doing here?"

Somebody we knew from the camp, a friend, had somehow managed to get a small apartment. It was almost impossible to get something in the Jewish section, it was so crowded. (It was impossible to stay in the section of the city where we used to live, as it was strictly Gentile). All the Jewish people were concentrated in the centre of the city, within just a few streets. They were afraid to live anywhere else, because the Polacks thought that too many of us had survived.

There were bread lines, even after the war. So when we stood in line to buy a piece of bread, we would hear them say, "Look at that! Hitler didn't get them all! Look how many of them came back! Look how many of them survived! What a pity!" And in Polish they cursed us.

I heard that, and I thought, "That's all I need." And they were still killing Jewish people, a lot of people got hurt by them.

And then, there were the Russians. They were on the lookout for young girls. So I didn't know who to run from first!

The friend that I stayed with didn't have a bed to sleep on, she had just a blanket, so I slept on the floor. It was summer, it was warm. She gave me a pillow, something to cover myself with. My four other friends also found temporary places to stay; they had each previously lived in Lodz as well. We split up for a while, but I told them, "Listen, people, more than a week I'm not staying here. *I can't stand this place. I can see only the worst.* We'll search for our families. But all I can hold out here is a week, and then I'm going, I'm running out of this place!" We agreed that at the end of a week, if we found no one, we would head back across the border to Czechoslovakia.

Before the war my father had owned property in Lodz, two houses. Not where we lived, but in the centre of the city. We had been well-to-do. We had been in partnership with a Polack, with a Gentile. I would often walk to the houses with my father. How many times my father said to me, "These are our buildings, this is our property. Listen, all of this, it's all for you, Rozia. One day, it will all be yours."

See, it shows how people worry and make plans for the future, right? But it's silly to worry about the future, to make plans and to worry. My father had even taken out a life insurance policy, so that, if everything had been normal, I would inherit everything when he died. (Of course, if everything had been normal, I would have gone to university and then entered medicine, too). My father had had beautiful plans for me.

I knew that before they had closed the ghetto, half of our valuable possessions — good furniture, furs, silver, crystal, and even medications, things from the store, were taken into the city to be kept for us by our Gentile partners. It was hidden for us by them. My father told them, "O.K., for the time being, keep it for us, we're going to be locked up in a ghetto. If we survive the war, you can give it back to us."

"Of course!" they assured us. "There's no problem! We'll keep it hidden for you!" They were great friends, right?

One day, I decided to take a chance and go to visit them, just to see what was going on, to see if they'd welcome me. I arrived at their home. When they recognized me, it was just as if they had seen a ghost. They weren't happy to see me at all! A goy is a goy. They're great friends, but only when everything is going well!

I walked into the living room, and I saw our crystal, and I saw our silver, and they had it all, standing, in use, on display. And I thought, "Oh, my God, look at this! It's from our home! From when we were together! But I have no use for it. I have no use for any of it now!" I simply went over to it, to touch it, to remember. And I figured, "What do I need it for? Look! It didn't help us any! I know these are the things my mother and father gave to them to keep for us. But I have nobody any more. What do I need all these things for?"

The Gentile said to me, "You know, the Germans came here and took half of the stuff away." He was so afraid that I would want him to give everything back to me, that I would want to set up a home there or something!

It just so happened that I had to sleep over there one night, because it was too late to walk back, as Poland was a dangerous place in the evenings. But I was scared stiff to sleep in that house! I didn't close my eyes for a minute! I was afraid they'd come at me with a knife! "Rozia," I kept telling myself, "You should never have come here!" But I did it out of curiosity, to have some touch with the past, and to see their impression. *Look who's here! Look who's come back from the dead!* They were twitching, they didn't know what to say to me! They were so afraid that I would claim something, and they really wanted to be rid of me! I saw it!

The next morning they said, "Would you like some of the things?"

I said, "No, *I don't want anything from you people.*" Choke on it!

Then they started telling me what a terrible time *they* had been through!

"Yeah, you're right. You had a bad time. If you can enjoy our things, enjoy them. Goodbye! You're not ever going to see me here again. I'm leaving, so stay at rest!"

I had courage another day, too. I wanted to see our home, where we had once lived together. And it was in such a neighbourhood! I didn't want to go there by myself, because I knew that the Polacks would get me. I needed someone to go with me. But everybody was afraid. The minute I mentioned the neighbourhood, they were afraid to go.

"It's strictly Polish! Jews don't live there!"

"But I have to go!" I said. "I have to see it! I can't just go away from here without seeing it. I have to see what they've done to it!" I knew that half of it would probably be demolished, because that's what they did to Jewish property. They went looking in the ghetto, at the Jewish homes, to see if money had been hidden in the walls. All the money that we had, had been taken by the Gestapo long ago. But they were so greedy and thought they might still find some more in the walls.

Finally one friend was brave enough. I should have had a man with me, but I couldn't think of anyone to ask. So the girl went with me. We travelled down there. The streets were so quiet, all Gentile, all Polish. I came to the corner. The house, the store, had been on a corner, the whole corner had belonged to us. But it was lying in rubble, with just one or two walls left standing. And amidst all that rubble, I saw papers rustling in the wind. I saw all kinds of papers from my father, half buried in the rubble, and I started digging. My friend was standing watch. She kept saying, "Rozia, faster, c'mon, let's go. Look at that, there's no people around. It's so terrible. I'm afraid. Please hurry!"

"Just wait, give me another five minutes!" I begged her.

I dug up some pictures, but none of my father and mother, not even one. But I did find two letters in my father's handwriting. He had written one to my mother when she had been away at a resort in Vienna one summertime, and I had also added a few words "Dear Mommy, we miss you so much." There was another letter of my father's with the stamp of our firm on it. I still have those letters, full of dust. And then I found one more letter that I had written to my friends, and also some pictures of my friends. I was so mad. If only she had stopped pressuring me! I would have found a few pictures! I haven't got a single picture left of my parents. I can't remember their faces any more!

After a few minutes a Gentile came over to us. "What are you doing here?" he demanded to know.

"What do you mean, what am I doing here? Nothing. Just looking."

"You're filthy Jews! You be gone from here in five minutes, or I don't know what I'm going to do to you. We don't want any Jews here! Get out!"

When I heard that, we just left. I never returned. And I was so sorry that I didn't again

with somebody, with a man, to look through all that rubble and to find something more, because there were signatures, all kinds of business papers, so much of our stuff. But it would have taken time to dig everything out. But I know I was brave to have gone there at all.

By the end of the week, I said to my four friends, "Listen, girls, we're going back to Czechoslovakia, to Prague. I don't want to see any more Polacks! I want to go home to Palestine! We survived! We don't belong here any more. Let's go!"

At last the train arrived. It was loaded to the brim, but I said to the girls, "Push, push with all your strength. We have to get on it. Maybe we won't get another one!"

As we scrambled on, somehow I sprained my ankle. We had to stand up all night, we couldn't sit down, there were no seats. We couldn't even sit down where we were standing, that's how tight it was! And I had to stand a whole night on one leg, with all that pain. But when you're young, you can do everything.

When at long last we arrived in Prague, the whole train emptied out. I told my friends, "Girls, now we're in a big city. I have to get into a hospital, I can't walk, I can hardly move. So I have to find a Red Cross station." These special health stations were set up near the trains to help the incoming survivors. In addition, Prague also had many special places where they brought the survivors for a few days of rest and care. To feed them, to give them rest, to help them on their way, to give them information, whatever they could do to assist them. It was a beautiful idea! And that was in Czechoslovakia. I don't know if other countries thought of that as well.

Because Germany had captured Czechoslovakia, the Germans had set up many labour • camps there. The greatest number of camps had been in Poland, of course, as it had been their favourite territory. The Polacks had cooperated with them the best. The Czech people didn't cooperate, but the camps were established nonetheless.

So we located the nearest Red Cross station, and I showed them my swollen ankle. Then they arranged for me to get into one of their clinics. They gave me an address. I had to go by bus. I had to say goodbye to my friends. "Listen, girls, you'll be all right," I assured them. "I'm sure a camp has been set up in Prague for the survivors to get together. You'll find it." And that's exactly what they found, a place where the Jewish people were gathering, from all over Europe. And I went to the clinic by bus with the little satchel over my back.

At the clinic there were nurses, doctors, clean beds, white sheets. First they gave me a wonderful hot bath. It was so wonderful, I can still feel it! And they fed me, and I went to bed. The doctor came and looked at my ankle. He didn't like it. He commented, "We'll see, we'll give it a chance to heal. But if it doesn't heal properly, we'll have to operate."

I told him, "Just hold it! Don't operate! Give me a chance! It's just a sprained ankle. I'm sure if I rest for a few days, I'll be all right."

And that's what happened! I needed a rest, after so many weeks of travelling. It was just a sprain.

Most people stayed at the clinics for no more than a week. I was there for a month. I became friends with everybody. I felt so good, and I was eating again. I began reading Czech books, and after a while I got so used to it that I spoke Czech with everyone.

When I could walk on my foot a little, I helped the nurses. Many people came into the clinic, so they appreciated my help. They even gave me a Czech name, Rejenka.

"So what are your plans? What are your plans?" they would ask me.

"What are my plans? I'm going to Palestine!"

"Oh, why don't you stay with us!" they would beg. "You could be a nurse. We'll send you to a special school, you're so good at it. If you had a diploma, you could become a Czech citizen, and you'd be with us, we love you so much!" They, too, were ready to adopt

me! I even had two fellows fall in love with me! I still have one of the love letters in Czech! I told one of the young men, "Look, I'm not ready to marry. I like you too, as a brother, fine, we survived. I'm not marrying. I'm going to Palestine!"

I was allowed to go out when I felt better. I was able to find out the address of the camp where all the young people got together, as only young people had survived. Almost no older people, and no children at all. I wanted to visit there, to possibly find someone I knew. I took the bus and came to a large building, all filled with Jewish young people. They had come from many different places. And near the entrance, someone was sitting with registration papers.

"What are you registering?" I asked.

"Oh, we're registering the people who want to go to Palestine!"

I was so thrilled. "Beautiful!" I exclaimed. "Put my name on the list! I'm going, too!"

They were talking about a transport, so many people wanted to leave for Palestine. Who knew what way? But we were certain that somehow we'd get there.

I returned to the little hospital. I told them, "I'm all set, I'm going. I'm sorry, but I have to say goodbye to you good people." I packed and I bid them all farewell. They, too, had been so good to me. They were sad to see me go, including my romances! ("I'll meet you in Palestine!" I told them).

I arrived at the Jewish centre. The very next day trains were available, from somewhere, and we were on our way! It was a mixture of freight trains, normal trains and wagons. But travelling that way this time didn't bother me. The freight train was empty. It was summertime. And the train began to pull out of the station. Where were we going? Who cared! We were all young people, between the ages of twenty one to twenty two. Boys and girls together, we were singing Hebrew songs, songs of freedom, songs of home. We were *free*.

After some time the train stopped for a few hours. We were not official passengers — whatever was empty, they let us ride in. We were told that the village centre was a fifteen or twenty minute walk. So the boys got off the train. They said, "We have to bring back some food! We can't sit here for days without food!" They returned with bread, butter, a knife from somewhere, whatever they could get. We were the survivors, we were used to bad conditions. As long as we were free! The rest didn't matter. We had one dress to wear, we didn't look fancy, but we were alive, we were free, and that's what counted. They even brought some straw for the girls, so that we wouldn't have to sleep on the bare boards. This continued. Whenever the train stopped, the boys went into the villages. They explained who we were, and the villagers gave food to them. And that's how we travelled for a week.

Finally we came to Landsberg, back to Germany; that was the big camp. But this time it was the camp of the survivors. (The camp had previously been a German military camp, for soldiers). It was already well established by the time we arrived. There was like a small Jewish government already. They had established that boys were separate, girls were separate. There were no married couples, all singles. So there were ten girls in one room, ten boys in another, big rooms, with beds. There were wrought iron beds with simple mattresses. Very simple. With army blankets and pillows. And then there was a community kitchen. Whoever knew how to cook did the cooking for all of us. They cooked big kettles of thick soup, and we had bread. Everybody received a bowl of soup.

It was provided by the U.N.E.R.A. But even though it was under the sponsorship of the United Nations, it was primarily the United States that helped us. *Then, they decided to help, after it was already too late to save most of our people.* Americans were sending in food and clothing. There were American soldiers there, not like in Czechoslovakia with the Russians. Bread came in, and eggs, whatever they could, they sent to us. We also had clothing and we had magazines. Our people worked and distributed everything. We each

had our portion, but it was enough. Nobody went hungry any more. We got enough. There I became acquainted with the American hard yellow cheeses. In the beginning, I didn't like them. "What is this, soap?" I asked. Now I love it.

The camp was like a miniature country already, so organized! And we had theatres and dances, and we even had an orchestra. We sang songs together. People were from so many different places. We sang Russian songs, Polish songs, English songs, and most of all, the songs of Israel, with an orchestra and everything. Often we danced the Hora. We had all kinds of talent! Each night at 8:00 p.m. the gates to the camp were closed. We weren't allowed to go out into the town for our own safety, because there were Germans outside. We had people watching the gate so that nobody could come inside, so that nobody could harm us. So that was the situation in Landsberg!

I had arrived in the camp with "body guards", with fifteen young men that I had travelled together with from the centre in Czechoslovakia. They had been wonderfully protective of me during our long journey together, and we had all become fast friends. When we arrived at the camp and they assigned us rooms, they didn't want to part with me! The camp wanted to place me in a girls room, the boys separate. And they all said, "No! You're not going to take Rozia and put her in a girls room! She belongs with us! We are one big family!"

Fifteen boys and one girl in a room. I had some nerve. I had more luck than brains. When I think of it now, whew! But at the time I thought, "I'm safe! If I would be with only one boy, I wouldn't be safe. But with fifteen, one was watching the other." And they simply didn't want to part with me! I was alive, I was free, I was full of life, dancing, singing, after six years in prison, it was like letting a bird out from a cage.

In the room with the fifteen boys, I demanded a corner to myself. I said, "I have to have some privacy! What do you want from me, guys! At least to go to sleep, I have to have one corner for myself!" So they took blankets and made a curtain in one corner. They put my bed there, my things, and that was my place. I went to sleep like a baby. I didn't worry for a second that somebody would come in during the night. And others said, "You know, she's sleeping with fifteen boys in one room!" It didn't bother me what they were saying. I knew no one could touch me. They couldn't touch me. I told them "Don't you put a finger on me! Don't you dare!" I had no need to worry.

This one wanted to marry me, that one wanted to marry me. I had proposals every other day. But I insisted, "Leave me alone already! I want to be free! I'm not getting married to anybody! We just came out from jail. What do you want? What do you want me to marry for, are you crazy, all of you? Nothing doing!"

There was one gentle, quiet one named Motek whom everyone went to for advice. Even my friends went to cry on his shoulder, to tell him, "What shall I do? I love her so much! And she doesn't want to get married!"

He took it all in, so calmly, and he would advise, "Just wait for her. Have patience. Maybe she'll change her mind." He was so nice!

I was the loud one of the bunch, the leader. We were always in a group, singing. I was free, and I was so exhilarated by it all, that I didn't miss anybody. I just wanted to be free! And everybody was my friend! I didn't care what I had or what I didn't have. I was happy!

Then a year later, people began to get married. There was one rabbi and he had a busy life! One night there were fifteen marriages, every day was a holiday! And then, finally, in February of 1946, I also got married, to Motek, to the quiet, gentle one. He was wonderful to talk to, and so calm and levelheaded compared to temperamental me. I didn't tell him about my background, that I had come from such a prominent upper class family in Poland. I didn't want him to know about it, because I was sure it would frighten him. He came from a poor house. If it hadn't been for the war, it would never have been. Never! So I didn't tell anybody; I wasn't a show-off. Some of the girls told stories just to impress others, stories

that weren't even true, just to feel important, needed, but I never mentioned it to anybody. Take me as I am! It's all right! But, eventually, Motek found out, through others. Many people in Lodz had known my family, even though I would not have known them.

The beginning of our marriage was a difficult time. I went into a depression. I missed my parents. I cried buckets. I began to have second thoughts, I was afraid of the responsibility. But in time I straightened myself out. Motek was the quietest one of all, and he's the one who got me. And I so much needed someone like him! Whenever I had needed advice with a little brain in it, I had always gone to Motek, not to the rest of my friends. The others were too much like me, so I didn't trust their advice!

Because of the terrible policy of the British in Palestine, because of their refusal to let the survivors enter the country, we had to wait in Germany for three years before the gates to Israel were opened at last. The illegal aliyah began in 1946. We heard heartbreaking stories, like the story of the *Exodus*, where the survivors of the worst nightmare ever arrived at last on the shores of home — only to be carried off again by the British and returned to Germany to be destroyed. When we heard that story, our hearts were deeply stirred, and we became more determined than ever that we, too, would someday have a nation to call our own, that Israel somehow had to be our homeland once again. Many times we sang this song, and our hearts beat with it:

"The Exodus"

*The world must hear it and be aghast
It should be blazed abroad like a flame --
The song of the illegal immigrants.
4,500 who fought on the waves of the sea.
The Jews on the Exodus came out of hell,
out of hatred, out of gas chambers.
He is going into freedom, to the Homeland,
To the land of Israel, to the light of day.*

*Only yesterday they left Hitler's Auschwitz,
Barely had they arrived at the shores
When the British drove them back,
Locked in floating prisons.
Be still my people — you sons and daughters
locked behind bars — guard your honour
with heroism and courage — illegal immigrants,
our advance guard.
On German soil we swear an oath
To carry our flag proudly
O Homeland, you will yet hear our footsteps
that declare that
Out of hell, out of hatred, out of the gas chambers,
We are going into freedom, to the homeland,
To the Land of Israel, to the light of day.*

And this is another song that we sang in the Displaced Persons camp in Germany. After all we had been through, we still had hope:

*Verse 1
The ships sail freely on the seas*

*Sails fluttering against the bright blue sky.
Only I with my desolate mother
must hide ourselves in the bottom of the boat.
My ship disappears so that no one can find us.
O strong wind, bring Mama's child to the Holy Shore.
We have waited long enough.*

Chorus:

*It will come to pass, it has to come to pass
We will all be together — we will see, we will
see. Our ships will sail freely on the sea.
Our holy desire to return to the Land of the
Prophets Will come to pass. I can hear it already
They will greet us with —
"Blessed are they that come."*

Verse 2

*The Nazi's drove us from our homes
We still have to stay with them.
We remained orphans — but He will have mercy on us.
Every nation has its own land.
We alone had to remain silent.
O people — tell us when the day,
Our day of expectation will come.
We have waited long enough.*

Chorus:

Verse 3

*The sea foamed in anger
We were tortured by the cold
But in spite of this we became young again,
As we saw the coast.
Although we were all exhausted,
We felt like flags waving brightly in the wind.
"Shalom" we cry — and then all at once
Warships encircle us — our luck has run
out. We are being sent back — but .. .*

Chorus:

*It will come to pass, it has to come to pass
We will all be together — we will see, we will
see. Our ships will sail freely on the sea.
Our holy desire to return to the Land of the
Prophets Will come to pass. I can hear it already
They will greet us with —
Blessed are they that come."*

In 1948, finally we heard the news. At long, long last, we have our own country. Israel! It's ours! The whole camp was jubilant. Oh, how we celebrated! Who could describe our joy?"

