

I AM MY BELOVED'S



ESTHER KORSON

"Freely you have received, freely give..."

Matthew 10:8

Under no circumstances
is this book
to be sold.

Scripture quotations are from the King James Version of the Bible; and in Chapter 21, from the Jewish Publication Society of America, according to the Masoretic Text.

Some names of people have been changed.

At the time of the books publishing the authors name was Esther Dorflinger and since has been changed back to her maiden name of Esther Korson.

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This book is dedicated in love to

Joseph and Michael

(The Lord will restore to you
the years
that the locust hath eaten . . .)

Joel 2, 25

This book was written on the island
of Patmos and in Jerusalem, Israel.
I pray that the peace and beauty
of God's love
that is present in both places
will be felt as well
by the readers of this book



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FOREWORD

One summer I visited a family in the centre of Finland. They welcomed me to their absolutely beautiful home, built for the express purpose of welcoming the Jewish people when they leave the U.S.S.R. in great numbers for Israel, and also to welcome Christians who are in need of a rest. It was one of the most beautiful homes I had ever seen.

"Oh, dear, no one who comes here will ever want to leave!" I told my hosts.

But the thing that really touched me is that they made no apologies for the beauty of their home. They were thrilled to have it to use for the purposes of God. And that is what I have done with this book. Many, many things have happened to me in recent years and, like my friends in Finland, I make no apologies for them. I simply wish to tell you the story, with the prayer that it will place a new song within your heart.

May the Lord grant you an extra measure of His love.

PART I

*"My Beloved is
white and ruddy,
the chiefest among
ten thousand..."*

*Yea, He is altogether lovely.
This is my Beloved,
and this is my Friend,
O daughters of Jerusalem..."*
Song of Solomon 5:10, 16



1

THE CASE OF

It was the summer of 1973, and my oldest son, Joey, was to begin school in the fall. We lived in the United States in a small New England town, and the school system was very antiquated. It seemed to me that there was very little understanding of the needs of children, or of their natural desire to learn. As a matter of fact, I received the distinct impression that the principal and the teachers at the local school didn't even *like* children! I loved my little son's enthusiasm for life, and I hated to see it destroyed by six hours of sitting in a chair learning abstractions on a blackboard!

I was discussing this one morning over tea with a close friend, a delightful Welsh girl named Yvonne. Her oldest son was already in school, and doing poorly; and a younger son was Joey's age. Very matter-of-factly, she said, "Well, why don't we start a school of our own? If you start it, I'll teach it!" And that was how the Creative Learning Centre was born.

By the time school was due to open in the fall, we had been licensed as a pre-school; we had two classrooms in the basement of a church; a French teacher and a music-and-gym teacher, both willing to work without pay; and twenty students, all of kindergarten age. We opened the school in Bristol, a large city close to the small town in which we lived. We had tuition based on a "sliding scale", so that lack of finances would not be a deterrent to any parents interested in enrolling their children.

Yvonne had been a school teacher in Britain before coming to the States, and the system of teaching that she used was excellent. The school was very structured, as it is important for children to know exactly what is expected of them. But within that structure, there was room for each child to grow at his own rate, with a learning program geared towards him; and with much positive reinforcement so that he could feel successful, even if he could not as yet manage to hold a pencil as well as his more developed classmate.

All in all, the school was a huge success. The children were learning rapidly and happily, and before we knew it our first year was at an end!

During the second year, our kindergarten students would move up to first grade, and we would welcome a new kindergarten class. We soon learned that this would then classify us as a regular elementary school instead of a pre-school, and therefore we would have to find facilities that would meet all the health, fire and building requirements for a regular private school.

"I hope you find something really great!" Yvonne teased, as she, her husband and her children were packing for a summer of visiting relatives in Britain. All too soon they were on their way, and I was left behind in Bristol to find a new location for the Creative Learning Centre!

It's difficult to describe exactly what I'm talking about, but somehow I had the unmistakable feeling that I would have help, and that the building would be provided just when it was needed! I don't know if it could even be defined as faith, but somehow I became

aware of God's help and concern with this project!

I had grown up in a Jewish family, and had always loved the family-centered Jewish traditions that are so much a part of Jewish life. But apart from the family, I felt very ashamed of having been born Jewish.

When I myself attended elementary school in the late 40's and early 50's, I would often be beaten up on my way to and from school by children who called themselves "Christian" and who blamed me as a Jew for the death of Jesus. I would walk home in terror of suddenly being confronted by the angry taunts, "You dirty Jew! You rotten Christ-killer!" I was shy and not very popular, and therefore hated anything that set me apart even more. So I fled from my identity as a Jew, and even in adult life did not tell some of my closest friends that I was from a Jewish background. I would insist stubbornly that being Jewish was a choice and a religion, and that it was not possible to be born a Jew!

I also had a great disdain for what I saw as the Christian religion. I associated Christianity with the likes of Hitler and the Polish priests who — in our lifetime — entered Jewish ghettos with angry crowds on Easter and Christmas to kill Jewish families in "retribution" for the death of Jesus. I also saw so much hypocrisy in the lives of the Christians around me. I had often seen people who self-righteously went to church every Sunday, wore their finest clothes, sang loudly, and then criticized and condemned everyone else before they even left the church!

No, my sense of God had nothing whatsoever to do with religion of any form. *Somehow I simply knew that He loved us.* I would look at the stars twinkling in the sky; or see the beauty of a transformed world after the first sparkling snow fall; or think of all the things that God created for us to eat, in every color, taste and texture, all meant to delight us — *and I would know that God is real.*

And in the summer of 1974, I also had a sense of His love as I waited for Him to find us a home for the school!

The summer days fled by, and the opening of the fall term was approaching. The parents of our students would call expectantly, and I would continue to tell them, "No, we have no building as yet, but I'm sure we will, just in time!"

I had searched everywhere by then, but not a single facility was available for our use. Some were too expensive; others did not meet the necessary requirements. And then, two weeks before school was due to begin, I received a telephone call from a friend.

"Eileen, I just thought to tell you! There's an abandoned school in an empty lot in my back yard! I think it's owned by the Parks Department, but it's fairly new, and has been sitting empty for a number of years."

Sight unseen, I knew without a doubt that it was the building that we would be able to use for the school!

The next day, the head of the Parks Department gave me a tour of the premises. We walked through weeds waist high before finally reaching the building — a low, flat structure sitting in the middle of an acre of untended land. We went inside. The floors were covered with debris and glass from the broken windows. It was desperately in need of paint and general repair, but all I could say was, "It's wonderful! It's perfect! It's just what we need! It has five classrooms, a big yard, and huge windows. I love it!" (The head of the Parks Department looked stunned, as he seemed to have difficulty in seeing past the weeds!)

I told him that I definitely wanted to rent the building for our school, thinking it would be a simple procedure.

"Well," he explained, "this building is under the *jurisdiction* of the Parks Department, but it is actually owned by the City of Bristol. I believe you would have to first obtain permission from the City Council."

The next morning I called the City Hall, and was informed that the City Council had already held their regular monthly meeting. "But," the secretary told me, "they are having an unscheduled, emergency meeting tonight, and I can put you on the agenda, if you would like!" It seemed that God had helped again. I dashed home to type up a proposal to hand to the Council members that night.

A few months earlier, Yvonne had informed me that we would need to hire a headmistress from Britain to develop the curriculum for us in future years as the school continued to expand and develop. We had very little money to offer for salary, but we had placed a simple, very hopeful advertisement in the British *Guardian*. This is what it said:

"Headmistress/master wanted to develop curriculum, small school, East Coast, salary limited to start. Mary Poppins desperately wanted!"

Apart from one stuffy headmaster who insisted, "I want a salary commensurate with my experience, and I do not understand the reference to Mary Poppins," the replies were delightful. One woman began the application with "supercalifragilistic ." Another applicant said, "While I don't have a large black umbrella, I do love children!" Finally we chose a headmistress with 23 years teaching experience in Britain.

I explained all of this in my written summary to the City Council, and I closed the report by saying, *"Please help us to rent this building for our school. We can't bear to tell the children that there is no Mary Poppins!"* I'm sure it wasn't exactly the kind of application that they were used to receiving!

I had never been inside the City Hall before, and I waited somewhat nervously for the City Council meeting to begin. I had handed our written request to members of the City Council before the meeting. The Mayor began by announcing that the initial reason for the emergency meeting had already been dealt with, but that they would be willing to hear my request if I wished!

I told them the story of the Creative Learning Centre, and of our desire to rent the facilities in question. I offered to pay \$200.00 per month rent, and to take care of all of the repairs and maintenance on the building. Would they be willing to grant us a lease?

The Council withdrew to discuss the matter, and the Mayor came back with some very amazing news.

"We have made a unanimous decision to let you have the school building for a nine year period of time, with a lease that would be renewable annually," he informed us. "We will charge you a rent of \$1.00 per year, and the Parks Department will plow the snow in the winter and mow the grass in the summer." I was so thrilled and amazed that I had to fight back the tears. "But," he said in conclusion, "you will need permission from the Planning Commission, the Board of Education, the Parks Department, the Real Estate and Zoning Commission, the Corporation Counselor, and then you will need permission from the City Council once again." And with that, the meeting was adjourned.

Some of the parents had attended the meeting with me, and they were astonished at the news. The City Council rarely agrees, unanimously, about anything, especially in an election year; but they had all agreed to give a private school permission to use a city facility for nine years and for only one dollar per year! We were simply ecstatic!

I had no idea that working through commissions and councils could take an endless amount of time. All I knew was that, with God's help, school was due to open in two weeks' time! And one door after the other swung open. Just days before school was scheduled to begin, all of the councils and commissions had given us permission to use the building. The only difficulty was that the Planning Commission had agreed to the rental at the rate of \$200.00 per month. But the City Council, when the proposal was returned to them at the

end, stated that the Planning Commission had no right to change a City Council decision, and they therefore voted to move the rental payment back to one dollar per year! A few days before the opening of school, the lease was signed, all of the papers were in order, and I was handed the key to the new location of the Creative Learning Centre.

I had no sense of just how great a miracle that was, until the Mayor's secretary angrily asked me, "How did things work out for you in such a short time? I work for the *Mayor*, but it still would have taken at least six months to clear all of those councils!"

As I was leaving City Hall that day (by then a familiar place), the City Comptroller called me into his office.

He cleared his throat. "Ahem, it's about the rent..."

I couldn't believe it! In all of the excitement, *I had forgotten to pay the rent!* I handed him the dollar for the first year of our lease, and we both laughed.

Bright and early the next morning, I called the Water Company.

"Would you please turn on the water in our school building?" I asked, giving all the necessary information. They returned the call the next day.

"There are no water pipes to the building that you mentioned!" they informed me.

We then called the Sanitation Department, the Telephone Company, and the Electric Company, and received similar news. The city did some investigation for us, and they finally discovered that the building that we had just leased for nine years had been attached to an adjacent mansion which had recently been destroyed by the city. All of the systems from our building had been tied in with those of the destroyed mansion, and so we were renting an empty shell, with no electricity, water, telephone lines, or sewage! Even the furnace had been stolen! (The city had been unaware of this when they leased the building to us.)

We called an emergency parent-teachers meeting. I explained the dilemma to everyone. We discussed it thoroughly, but not a single one of us could let go of our special dream! The school had been such a wonderful success, as measured by the children's eagerness for learning, and we couldn't bear to see it close. So, three of the parents decided to take out a loan for the school of \$3,500.00 to cover all of the renovations and repairs, and the parents offered to do the work themselves. And that is when the miracles began to happen!

First of all, one of the fathers worked for a copper tubing company, and offered to get us copper tubing for the water pipes at a cost per running-foot far less than what the Water Company was charging. The next morning, I called the Water Company.

"I want to know if we can have permission to install our own water pipes," I asked the person who answered the phone.

"WHAT?" he replied. "That's unheard of! No one has ever asked to do that before! I'll put you in contact with my superior."

"I want to know if we can have permission to install our own water pipes," I asked the person who came to the phone next, although by then I wasn't feeling quite as enthusiastic!

"Goodness, what an unusual request! I never heard of such a thing! You'll have to call one of our Board members for the answer to that one. He's at home with a broken foot." And he gave me the number.

"I want to know if we can have permission to install our own water pipes," I asked the Board member who *was* at home with a broken foot!

"I think in the entire history of the Water Company, this has never come up before. Let me put you in touch with the Chairman of the Board. I believe he's at the Golf Club right now." And he gave me the number.

"I want to know if we can have permission to install our own water pipes," I asked the Chairman of the Board, feeling by then like I had a bad case of the plague.

"Why, we have no precedent for that whatsoever! I don't think it's ever come up before!" And then he tried to refer me to everyone I had already spoken to. He finally

realized there was no one but him to make the decision! "Well," he said, "I don't see why not, as long as you take full responsibility for repairs on your own pipes!"

We had similar experiences with everything else. Another of the fathers was co-owner of a sewage disposal company, and he offered us the free use of the back-hoe for digging for the sewage pipes and underground cables. The place where we were to purchase glass for the windows offered to give us the glass at cost if we were willing to install it ourselves. The Telephone Company delivered the telephone poles free of charge. Even the man from whom we purchased our paint gave us free brushes and the pizza man free Coca-Cola!

Within two weeks, we installed 250 yards of underground electrical cables and telephone wire, with two telephone poles; a complete fire alarm system; 200 yards of sewage pipes; 350 yards of water pipes; the glass for seventy windows; one furnace; and we painted all five classrooms. The school opened only two weeks late, and all of the work was kept within the cost of \$3,500.00. (It would have cost a great deal more if each of the companies had done their own installations.)

All of it just had to be a miracle! I was certain that the staff and parents of our students understood, as I did, that it was God who had opened all of the doors for us and who had made it possible for the Creative Learning Centre to continue to exist. I had never discussed it with them, but to me there could be no other possible explanation.

On the day of my birthday, I learned a different lesson. It seems that they hadn't given the credit to God at all. On that day, they presented me with a surprise party and a birthday cake. On the cake they had written the following words:

"Happy Birthday to our own Mary Poppins"

In that awful moment, I realized that they had given all of the credit for the school's success to *me*.

Other things were happening during my life at that time. My marriage was in a shambles, and I was going through the agonizing decision of whether or not to file for a divorce. This brings me to a dilemma — I can't dismiss this lightly or act as though it were an easy decision to make; nor, on the other hand, do I feel at liberty to discuss it. A relationship between a husband and wife is a very personal matter, and there is no way I feel right about sharing the details of that turbulent and disappointing time in my life.

A divorce is bound to have disastrous effects on everyone involved, and the feelings of failure and the self-recriminations never seem to end. It was a devastating experience, and I don't want to make it seem like a light decision. But the fact was that, after agonizingly weighing all of the circumstances and my own ability to cope, I left my husband and our home in the country and moved with the children to an apartment in Bristol. It was a tragic time in my life.

On the first night in our new home, everything felt strange. I knew I had made the right decision, but I felt very alone and a little scared. I randomly grabbed a book to read to the children for their bed-time story, after we had talked for a long time together about the major change in their lives. (Michael was four years old at the time, and Joey was seven.)

The book was entitled *John J. Plenty and Dapper Dan*. I couldn't hold back the tears as I read it, for the story seemed to summarize part of what I had been struggling with! I had such an overwhelming sense that God had understood it all.

"John J. Plenty and Dapper Dan"

*"Ten years ago, or maybe twenty,
There lived an ant named John J. Plenty.
And every day, come rain, come shine,
John J. would take his place in line
With all the other ants. All day
He hunted seeds to haul away,
Or beetle eggs, or bits of bread.
These he would carry on his head
Back to his house. And John J., he
Was happy as an ant can be
When he was carrying a load
Big as a barn along the road.
The work was hard, but all John J.
Or any other ant — would say
Was More! Get more! No time to play!
Winter is coming!"*

*So all day,
All summer long, while birds were singing,
John J. Plenty kept on bringing
Beetle eggs, and crumbs, and seeds,
Moth-hams, flower-fuzz, salad-weeds,
Grub-sausages, the choicer cuts
Of smoked bees, aphid butter, nuts
And everything else you have ever thought of
That ants prefer to have a lot of.
As soon as he put one load away
In his cellar bin, he would turn and say,
More! Get more! No time to play!
Winter is coming!"*

*Now, sad to tell,
John J. had a sister and loved her well,
Until one day she met — alas! —
A grasshopper hopping about in the grass,
And playing the fiddle, and wrong or right,
(Though it's rare among ants)
It was love at first sight.*

*'Don't!' cried John J. 'You'll come a cropper!'
But he couldn't stop working enough to stop her,
For winter was coming, as you recall,
And there was a load he just had to haul.*

*So John J. Plenty's sister ran
Away with the grasshopper Fiddler Dan,
His name was. All he ever carried
Was the fiddle he fiddled. Well, they married.*

*And all day long from rose to rose
Dan played the music the summer knows,
Of the sun and rain through the tall corn rows,
And of time as it comes, and of love as it grows.
And all the summer stirred to hear
The voice of the music. Far and near
The grasses swayed, and the sun and shade
Danced to the love the music played.*

*And Dan played on for the world to turn,
While his little wife lay on a fringe of fern,
And heard the heart of summer ringing,
Sad and sweet to the fiddle's singing.*

*So the sun came up and the sun went down. So
summer changed from green to brown. So
autumn changed from brown to gold. And
the music sang, The world grows old, But
never my song. The song stays new,
My sad sweet love, as the thought of you.'*

*And summer and autumn dreamed and found
The name of the world in the sad sweet sound
Of the music telling how time grows old
Fields held their breath to hear it told.
The trees bent down from the hills to hear. A
flower uncurled to shed a tear
For the sound of the music. And field and hill
Woke from the music, sad and still.*

*John J. Plenty trudged along
With a load and a half. He heard the song.
He heard the music far and near.
'Get more!' he cried. 'It's almost here!
Winter is coming! As for those two —
Let them fiddle on. I have work to do!
Let them fiddle the hairs off the bow.
When once it comes time for the ice and snow,
You can bet that fiddle of theirs will fall still.
They had better stay away from my hill
When that time comes.' So said John J.,
As he carried his load and a half away.*

*'They'll get nothing from me!' So said John J.
And sure enough, there came a day
When the snow came down. It came to stay. It
chilled from twenty to ten to zero.
'I must shut the door,' said our provident hero.
He knew the music had fallen still.
But just to be sure, he stood on the sill
And listened and listened — not a sound.*

*Not a sound to be heard for miles around.
'Just as I told them!' John J. said.
And he shut his door.
And he went to bed.*

*He woke up hungry. He looked at his food
piled high as the ceiling, and all of it good.
'Well, now, some moth-ham would be fine.
With two poached beetle-eggs — divine!
And maybe a glass of thistle wine!'
And so John J. sat down to dine.*

*He had, in fact, heaped up his plate,
When a voice inside him cried out — 'Wait!
What if this time the winter stayed on
Until all your hard-earned food was gone?
You had better wait a day or two
To see what winter is going to do.
You worked so hard to carry this stuff, But
can you be sure you carried enough?'*

So John J. Plenty waited and fasted.

As for the winter, it lasted . . . and lasted.

*He nibbled a crumb one day in ten.
But he shook with terror even then.
When he thought of how he might be wasting All
that food he was hardly tasting.
And that's how it went.*

Until at last

*The sun grew warm and the winter passed.
Then John J. Plenty stirred once more,
Sighed with relief, admired his store
Of untouched food, and thought:*

`GET MORE!

*I've learned my lesson. This year I
Will stack my food up twice as high!
Then let winter stay and stay —
I'll eat all night, I'll eat all day!
I've learned my lesson. More! Get More!' He
said.*

And started out the door.

*He hadn't found his first good load, In
fact, he hadn't reached the road, When
he stopped and listened.*

And what did he hear,

But the music sounding far and near.
From far and near, from blade to blade,
He heard the song the springtime played.
It's softer fiddle than autumn knows
When the fiddler goes down the tall corn rows,
But the same far song. It grows and grows,
And spring and summer stir to hear
The music sounding far and near.
And the grasses sway, and the sun and shade
Dance when they hear the music played.

It was Dan, still singing for time to turn
While his little wife lay on a fringe of fern
And heard the heart of the springtime ringing
Sweet and new as the fiddle's singing.

John J. Plenty — ah; my dears! —
Listened, and couldn't believe his ears!
Or maybe he was too weak on his feet
From all that food he hadn't dared eat.
He took one wobbly step, and — flop!
He fell on his face and had to stop.

He fell on his face and he couldn't move
While the music sang its sad sweet love
And he had to listen all night and all day
To what the music had to say.

He had to listen all day and all night
While the music sang the birds to flight,
The flowers to bloom, the trees to bud

And there lay John J. — in the mud!

I guess he recovered. I hope he did.
I don't know where the Fiddler hid
With his pretty wife from the ice and snow.
About all I really know is —
Save a little, or save a lot,
You have to eat some of what you've got.
And — say what you like as you trudge along,
The world won't turn without a song.

And — Fiddlers grow thin and their hands turn blue
When winter comes, but they pull through.
There's this about music — and oh, it's true — It
never stays stopped. Just listen, and you Will
hear it start over, as sweet and new
As the first pale leaves and the first spring dew.

— And that's what John J. never knew."

Now please be assured that I'm not advocating "not working" by including this poem in my story. (After all, even fiddlers work — and what would a spring night be without the grasshopper's song?) But through reading that book, on that night especially, I was given a ray of hope that perhaps I had been right about life after all. It's difficult to explain, but I'll try!

Almost everyone I knew at that time seemed so settled and satisfied with their lives. But to me their visions were so limited! They worked hard, cleaned their houses, saved for better furniture, and put money in the bank for their children's education. I knew that all of these things were rightful concerns, but what astonished me was that *all of this seemed to fulfill their lives!* I was the only one of most of my acquaintances who seemed to cry out for more meaning to life. There *had* to be more to life than a nice home, material possessions, and money saved for the future!

Many times I would find myself in conflict with values that everyone else seemed to accept. One of the greatest struggles began shortly after my first son was born. When he was about eighteen months old, relatives, in-laws, and friends began to pressure me to return to work so as not to "waste" my career. With a Master's degree in Social Work and post-graduate training in play and family therapy, I knew that I could almost double our income. But to me it was unthinkable! Joey's life was a treasure, and I couldn't bear the thought of missing even a single day of it! To me, being a mother was a challenging and full-time job, and sharing in his little life meant more to me than saving for a distant dream. So I stayed home and enjoyed watching both of my sons grow! But through many similar experiences, I often felt isolated in my search for more meaning to life. It seemed that most people based their whole lives on fear of the future, and so few seemed to find real joy in today. But almost no one I knew then even thought about it!

Perhaps there is no way to express to you how much that book meant to me that night. For almost the first time in my life, I felt that someone else really understood. I felt God's love as I read that story, and I had such a deep sense that He had understood my struggles. And, most important of all, I had a beginning realization that perhaps I was right after all — *there was something more to life.*

Yvonne was really a special friend, and we shared many of the same views. She was also the only other person I knew at that time who shared my longings for travel. The only difference was that *she* had actually travelled, while I had been only as far as the Canadian side of Niagara Falls!

To me her greatest adventure had been when she had taken her three children (all toddlers at the time) on a cargo ship and had sailed from the States to visit her parents in Turkey. I never failed to laugh when she described the rows of diapers blowing in the wind, on both the port *and* starboard sides of the ship, and I always marveled at her calm and her sense of humour through it all. She described her Turkish adventures in vivid detail, and in my heart I travelled with her every time I heard her re-tell the stories. I longed to see other places, but most of our other friends were perfectly content to stay right where they were, in Bristol, Connecticut! Why was I always so different?

When Yvonne had returned to Connecticut from Turkey, she had searched for Turkish artifacts and for books about Turkey, but she had been able to find almost nothing. Now, I don't remember exactly when this began to happen, but I found myself in a dialogue with God. I would wake up on a particular morning, and He would tell me to drive to a particular shopping centre. When I arrived there, He would direct me to a book shop, and then to either a specific book or to a sentence within a specific book. And whenever I had the courage to obey Him, He would guide me each time to something about Turkey! He showed me things from Turkey and things about Turkey absolutely everywhere! No one was more amazed than I (unless perhaps it might have been Yvonne, who had searched for Turkish items for years to no avail!)

Quite simply, God had taken something that I was interested in, and had used it to confirm to me that I was hearing from Him! Every time that I had the faith to do what He told me to do, there would always be a "reward" waiting for me at the place that He sent me to! It helped me to be obedient to His quiet voice within my heart without my realizing quite what was happening! (Even a mouse learns, after a while, to follow the path that will lead to the cheese!)

At the end of the second year of the Creative Learning Centre's existence, Yvonne and her husband and family were moving to Chicago, and our music-and-gym teacher was moving with her husband to Puerto Rico. And so I needed to find a new teacher for the school. I put it in God's hands, as I had with the building, but this time it seemed as though it wasn't going to be quite so easy! I knew that God would help; but as the summer wore on and no teacher appeared, the parents of our students were becoming more and more agitated. Most vocal of all was a minister and his wife, Reverend and Mrs. Smith. They accused me of being irresponsible, and they insinuated that if I didn't find a new teacher immediately, they would also begin to look for a new administrator for the school!

In spite of all the pressure, I continued to believe that God would act, and He didn't fail me! I found a wonderful teacher for the school, on the day before it was due to open! I expected all of the parents to rejoice with me, as they had the previous year with the building. But by that time, the damage had been done. For some reason, they no longer had faith, in me or in anyone else! The first year they had mistakenly given me the credit for the school's success; and the second year, with the same zeal, they were giving me the blame for the delay in locating a teacher!

A few days after school opened, I left with Joey and Michael by train to visit my parents in Iowa. (I had been tied up with the school during the summer months, and had been unable to visit with them then). While I was away, the parents, led by the minister and his wife, *stole my school!* The rumor was started that I had left the country for Turkey! The minister had gone into the bank to change the account from my name to that of a "Parents' Committee". He also changed the license and all of the other accounts from my name to theirs! Because he was wearing his clerical collar, he was able to steal the school with no difficulties. No one questioned him at all!

When I returned to Connecticut a few weeks later, I returned to a school that was no longer mine! There were only three people from the school who stood by me — a divorcee named Beverly and a married couple named Sandy and Jim. They were as astonished as I was over what had happened!

The week after I returned from Iowa, the new "Parents' Committee" scheduled a meeting, which I was invited to attend. Beverly, Sandy, Jim and I somehow kept a sense of humor through it all, and we decided that on the night of the meeting, I would simply "steal back" my school!

At the beginning of the meeting, the atmosphere in the room was bone-chilling. I was treated as an agent from an enemy camp. No one seemed to remember that it was / who had started the school out of concern for my son! They grimly accused me of negligence in finding a new teacher for the school.

When it was my turn to speak, I became equally solemn. Then I pulled a toy revolver out of my handbag, and informed them that I had come to steal back my school! It was meant to bring comic relief to a very tense situation and to clear the air, at least a little — but it turned out that nobody, but nobody, even smiled! Oh my, such a dismal night!

The "Parents' Committee" informed me that all of my previous responsibilities would henceforth be handled by others. It was unbelievable! They had no concept whatsoever that they could in any way be wrong, or that they had indeed stolen the school! But the

really unforgiveable thing that they did was to begin to mistreat Joey — by refusing to teach him!

After some time, I realized that the differences would never be reconciled, and that for Joey's sake I had to leave the school. And so, together with a small group of friends, we embarked on an alternative plan. One Saturday afternoon, we drove up to the premises of the school with cars and vans, and proceeded to empty the school out of all materials, furniture, and teaching equipment! (All of it had been purchased by Yvonne and me when we first opened the Creative Learning Centre. Legally the school and everything in it still belonged to me even though they had changed the license, as I was the only one of the original incorporators still left in Bristol.) We had decided that they could have the building with all of its problems — we would simply take the equipment and find another location for the school!

I had by then moved to a school district in Bristol that had a very positive program of education. I planned to enroll Joey in the public school there, until our own school could be re-established again. Our new apartment had a big room in the basement, a perfect place to store the school supplies until another place could be found for the school.

About an hour later, two police officers came to my apartment. "We have a report from a Reverend Smith that you have stolen some property from a private school," they reported, as they showed me their badges.

"Well, as a matter of fact, I did take school property," I told them. "We pulled up to the school this afternoon, and took all of the school materials and furniture, and I have them stored in my basement." The police officers looked stunned. "Of course, it is *also* true that I just happen to own the school!" And I showed them the papers of incorporation. They apologized and left.

In the days that followed, I continually received threatening phone calls from various parents from the school as well as unfriendly visits from them, demanding the return of the equipment. And then I heard that they had contacted Yvonne in Chicago to convince her to relinquish her right as incorporator in the school in favor of them. Yvonne had worked relentlessly for the school, and under her care it had become such a wonderful learning environment. It infuriated me that they were trying to involve her in the whole dismal mess, and that they were also trying to interfere in our friendship.

A legal advisor, Bruce Morris, encouraged me to take the whole situation to court, as the school legally belonged to me, and they had no legal right to it. But I knew in my heart that it wasn't worth the fight, especially as far as the children were concerned. And so, at last, I called Reverend Smith.

"Come to my apartment tomorrow, and pick up every single item of educational equipment that I have in the house. But I don't ever, ever want to see or hear from any of you again!"

The following week, I enrolled Joey in the local public school.

(Author's Note: The school itself managed to survive only an additional four months before the new "managers" found it necessary to disband the school completely. Fortunately, the building has since been used by a very positive pre-school program.)

2

A short time after Joey transferred to his new school, he had a winter holiday, and during that time Joey, Michael and I took a trip by train to New York City. The children loved to explore places as much as I did! While we were there, God directed me to a grubby little shop, and under a pile of odds and ends He guided me to a beautiful plaque. This is what it said:

LOVE is giving with no thought of getting. It is tenderness enfolding with strength to protect. It is forgiveness without further thought of the thing forgiven. It is understanding of human weakness, with knowledge of the true man shining through. It is quiet in the midst of turmoil. It is trust in God with no thought of self. It is the one altogether lovely, the light in the mother's eye, the glory in the sacrifice, the quiet assurance of protection. It is in the expectation of our Father's promise coming true. It is the refusal to see anything but good in our fellow man. It is the glory that comes with selflessness and the power that comes with the assurance of the Father's love for His children. It is the voice that says "No" to our brother, though "Yes" might be more easily said. It is resistance to the world's lust and greed. LOVE . . . the one thing no one can take from us . . . the one thing we can give constantly and become increasingly rich in the giving. LOVE can take no offense, for it cannot know that which it does not of itself conceive. It cannot hurt or be hurt, for it is the purest reflection of God. It is the one eternal, indestructible force for good. It is the will of God, preparing, planning, proposing always what is best for all His universe . . .

It was so beautiful. It moved me deeply, and I yearned to know more of the greatness of God's love.

A few days later, upon our return to Bristol, the Lord directed me to a book shop, and then to the book that He wanted me to read. I was flabbergasted! It was a Christian book, *The Life Story of Pope John XXIII!*

Actually, I had come to know quite a bit about the Catholic religion. In 1960, my parents had sent me to a girl's Catholic boarding school in Wisconsin for a year and a half. I had been somewhat of a rebellious teenager, and I think they didn't know quite what else to do with me! It was a memorable experience, to say the least! The girls in the school had never seen a Jewish person before, and on my first evening there they stood a silent vigil around my bed to watch as I unpacked my suitcase. They were certain that my suitcase would be filled with robes and sandals! Upon my arrival, one of the girls had screamed, "What's a stinking Jew doing here anyway?" (She later became one of my closest friends.) That night,

when the lights in the dorm had been turned out, I pulled back the bed covers before climbing into bed. And there, under the bedspread, someone had placed a crucifix that glowed in the dark! Feeling very lonely and strange, I put the pillow over my head and cried myself to sleep.

My husband had been Catholic, and had actually spent six years in the seminary studying for the priesthood. (I met him a year after he had left the seminary, and together we received our Master's degrees in Social Work.) Many of his friends were priests or seminarians, however, and we often had long discussions about religion.

I went through a difficult time because I had married a Catholic. I was the first person in the history of my family on either side to marry outside of the Jewish faith, and it caused deep anguish to both of my parents and a bit of a scandal in the family as a whole. My parents disowned me at the time, and we were reunited only three years later after the birth of my oldest son.

Even though I had learned so much about Catholicism, and even though I felt I had no identity as a Jew, I was nonetheless very hesitant to read a Christian book, and I left the store that day without purchasing the book that God had directed me to. I knew that it was the very book that He wanted me to read, as by then he had guided me hundreds of times before, and "Turkey" had always been my encouragement towards further obedience. But *The Life Story of Pope John the XXIII?* I just couldn't!

The next three days were agony, as God continued to remind me that I was not obeying Him. Finally I couldn't stand it any longer.

"Oh, all right!" I stormed, as I returned to the store and in exasperation whipped the book off the shelf. I opened it randomly, and when I glanced down my eyes nearly fell out of my head. It said "Turkey" at least three times on the pages that were opened before me! (He had spent time in Turkey before he had been elected Pope!)

Needless to say, I read the book. It was such a wonderful story of how this man brought the life of God's love to the Vatican. He seemed to have been so open to God! But what the Lord underlined as I read it was the fact that when he was still a peasant, it had been prophesied to him that he would one day be Pope. When he had been told this, nothing in all the world seemed more impossible. But yet it had happened! And so I knew instinctively that *if prophecy is of God, He fulfills it.*

A few days later the Lord directed me to yet another book. He wanted me to read only one sentence: "Israel was once under Turkish rule, as it became part of the Ottoman Empire." And I never again received another word about Turkey!

A while later, the Lord sent me to a neighborhood bookstore, and showed me a book written by Paul Gallico. I was ready to purchase it, when the Lord clearly told me not to, that I had a book by the same author at home in the children's bookshelves, and it was the book at home that He wanted me to read! I left the store, but I argued all the way home.

"Surely if I had a book by that author in my very own home, I would know about it . . . It just can't possibly be! . . . I never saw a book like that before in my life! . . ."

And I continued grumbling all the way up the stairs to the book shelf in Mike and Joey's room. And there, on the second shelf to the left, sat Paul Gallico's book entitled *Ludmilla*. How terrible I felt! After month's of God's confirmations, one after the other, over and over again, how did I dare to disbelieve Him?

The story took place in a small Swiss village, and tells the touching tale of a young girl who prays that her weakling cow would win the village milking championship that year, even though it seemed to be the most impossible thing that she could have asked for! But then, through a whole series of circumstances, her cow *did* become the milking champion, and she knew her prayer had been answered. In the village there were people who had no faith in God, however, and they could not accept the fact that a miracle had occurred. And

then came the meaningful part of the story for me, especially so soon after my experience with the school. The book explained that *a miracle is always a miracle to those who believe in them*, but only a coincidence to those who don't. And that is precisely what had happened with the school! *I* knew that it was the hand of God that had opened so many doors for us, but it seemed that no one else had really understood it in terms of God at all!

A few days later, the Lord directed me to yet another book. How carefully He was teaching me His ways through these books! And of course, He knew how much I loved to read! This book was called *Father Malachy's Miracle*. It took place in a small village in France. (The Lord also knew of my longing for travel!) The local priest, Father Malachy, wanted to prove to the minister in the church across the street that God was real and could answer prayers.

In the town in which they lived there was a dance hall on the main street which was distressing to both clergymen. One day the priest said to the minister, "If you meet me tomorrow night at 11:30 p.m. in front of the dance hall, I'll ask God to move the dance hall to the mountain across the lake." The next night they arrived at the appointed place a little early.

"I'm sure I could ask God to move the dance hall now," the priest mused, "but no doubt He's busy helping someone else right now, so we can wait until 11:30."

And, sure enough, at exactly and precisely 11:30 p.m., the dance hall was moved by the hand of God to the mountain across the lake. The people who had been in the dance hall had to row across the lake in order to reach the town again! Well, as the story goes, there were no major disasters in the world at that time, and so it made the international news. But oh my, what a controversy it caused! It caused *so* much controversy, as a matter of fact, that even though the dance hall still sat on the mountaintop, and even though the people had had to row across the lake to reach the town, no one believed any more that it had really happened!

Finally, in exasperation, Fr. Malachy simply asked God to please move the dance hall back to where it had been to start with.

It was a delightful story! And through it I learned the very important principle of *praying only those prayers which God places upon our hearts; to pray in His wisdom, and not in our own*.

The next book was a novel about the life of St. Paul. It was a fascinating book, and it amazed me to realize that Paul had been Jewish! And not only Jewish, but a student of the famous Rabbi Gamaliel! I thought for sure that the author must have been mistaken! Halfway through the book, I began to have second thoughts again. *Maybe I'm wrong about all of this. Can God really want me to keep reading Christian books?*

I put the book down, having by then talked myself out of finishing it.

That same afternoon, I walked over to the local pharmacy to pick up some chocolate for a surprise for Joey and Mike. As I was browsing through the store, I spotted a tiny "Hallmark" book. I began to read it, and it was simply the most beautiful little book that I had ever read in all my life.

*"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.
And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing.
And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, I am nothing*

*Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is
 Not puffed up,
 Doth not behave itself unseemingly seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked,
 thinketh no evil;
 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;
 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.
 Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether
 there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish
 away.
 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.
 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done
 away.
 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a
 child: But when I became a man, I put away childish things.
 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in
 part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.
 And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."*

I was crying even before I had reached the end of it! And then I heard, within my heart, the gentle voice of God.

"I turn to the front cover to see who the author is," He told me.

I turned the book over expecting the name of a modern author, and instead, to my amazement, it said:

***"ST. PAUL'S WONDERFUL WORDS OF WISDOM AND LOVE
 from I Corinthians 13"***

It was such a beautiful confirmation from God that I was to finish reading the book about the life of St. Paul!

One morning during this time I called Marcia, a close friend of mine. We had done a lot of searching together for life's answers throughout the years, and I had been sharing with her all of the things that had been happening to me over the past year or two. I had never openly faced the fact that it was really *God* who had been so strongly directing my life. Instead I had kept it hidden deep within my heart, as I had not had the courage to really deal with it. But that morning I told Marcia that I desperately needed some kind of confirmation that it really was God, for things were happening too often and too strongly to be denied any longer. I had to face it!

That same evening, some friends came to visit, and they brought a gentle old woman with them. During the course of the evening, the elderly woman called me aside to tell me some things that I knew had come from the heart of the Lord. I remembered at once the lesson from *The Life Story of Pope John XXIII*, and I knew that if what this woman was speaking to me was really prophecy, then it would have to be the truth and therefore would really happen! But I listened that night in almost total unbelief. Even so, I still remember every single word that she spoke to me! This is what she said:

"You are one of the most blessed women who have ever lived. It will take you a long time to accept who you are, because that is how you are; but when you do accept it, it will be like a flower opening. Two crosses will follow you everywhere. And so much will happen to you that a book will be written that will draw millions of people closer to the Lord."

I'm afraid at that point the disbelief must have registered on my face, because she touched my hand in a reassuring way, and said, "Now, dear, don't be afraid! God loves you very much! There's nothing to fear!" She then went on to say that all the books that I had been receiving had been sent to me by a Man who loved me very much.

"A MAN!" I gasped. "Why, that's ridiculous! The books didn't come in the mail, you know! And how do you know about them, anyway?" She smiled and reassured me once again of God's love. A short time later she left with my other friends. I never saw her again.

My heart was fairly bursting. I had asked for a confirmation, and I knew, even though I couldn't understand or accept it, that the Lord had answered my prayer. It was becoming harder and harder to deny the fact that God seemed to have a call upon my life.

After everyone had left, I sat by the kitchen table. I had borrowed a Bible from a friend with the New Testament in it, because I had wanted to look up the beautiful verses of St. Paul's that I had read in the Hallmark book a few days earlier. As I was sitting there with the Bible in my hand, suddenly I was overcome by the feeling of the presence of God. I felt His love so strongly, and a surprising warmth enveloped my heart. And then slowly, gently, He began to show me Scriptures that blessed me more than I could ever tell. Many of the Scripture verses contained things that I had always believed in, such as "You can't love God and money"; but I had never dreamed they were *Biblical* principles! I was also amazed to see in the *Bible* one of my favourite verses:

"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace . . ."

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

And then, surrounded by the presence of His love, the Bible opened to the following verses:

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.

And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God."

Revelation 19:7-9

In that moment of time, I suddenly understood that it was Jesus who had been guiding me to all of the books! Jesus was the Man that the elderly woman had been talking about! It was Jesus whom I had come to know and to love in the preceding weeks and months! It was

Jesus who loved me!

Suddenly I was filled with such an overwhelming sense of awe. I had always seen the beauty of the world around me, and that to me had always spoken of the love of God. *Could there possibly be more?* I could barely contain the joy that I felt when the realization dawned that the Lord had also provided us with an answer to our sins which, until Jesus, separated us from Him. And that, in addition to the beauty of this world, *we could dwell with Him in heaven for all eternity!* It was almost too wonderful to comprehend, and the sense of wonder that I felt that night has seldom left me.

The greatness of the love of God was more than my poor heart could bear. I cried tears of repentance and joy as I placed my life in His hands.

3

FROM DARKNESS

From that night on, the same warmth continued to envelop my heart. It was a very real sensation and a reminder of the constancy of the Lord's presence within me. When I was feeling sad, my heart would feel heavy, and when I was feeling afraid, it would feel tight. But most of the time, I would simply 'feel the wonderful warmth of Divine love.

All of my life I have had a deep sense of the goodness of God. But I had no knowledge or understanding of evil or of spiritual forces of darkness. I *sensed* something like that when the school turned against me, but I looked on it as almost a superstition to believe in such things. And so, shortly after I came to know the reality of the love of Jesus in my life, I also came to know the reality of satan and his demonic forces.

It all began when Sandy and Jim introduced me to a friend of theirs by the name of Greg. And he introduced me to a new spiritual realm. "Spectacular" things began to happen, and I became aware of a power that I assumed was from God; but it continually brought me down a blind alley. Greg introduced me to the ouija board, and through it many promises were made; but when the time of fulfillment would come, the unseen forces would blame me for lack of faith as the reason for their failure to fulfill each promise. And then, one day, the ouija board spelled out, "Satan has you by the ankle"; and I felt his venom and hatred.

During this entire time, I continued to feel the warmth of Jesus' love within my heart. For some reason, he seemed to be allowing all of this to happen!

Many things took place during those weeks, and I found myself becoming more and more confused as time went on. One night, I went over to Sandy and Jim's. Greg was there, and the feeling of an evil presence was especially strong. Satan was openly venomous that night, and I felt such hatred and evil directed at me. Greg, as I later learned, was a priest of satan's, and this night he had orders from satan to kill me. (Sacrifices among satan worshippers even in "civilized America" were not an unheard of thing. That very week someone had been killed in the woods in a village near to Bristol!)

Surreptitiously, Greg put an overdose of barbiturates into my glass of lemonade, along with a hallucinogenic drug. Under the influence of drugs, satan can wield enormous power, and it brought me into a living nightmare. I overheard Greg saying in the other room, "I wonder what's taking her so long?" And then, suddenly, I felt deathly ill, *and I knew that I was dying.*

Greg brushed two knives together, with the utterance, "Now we have the sacrifice of another lamb. And the nice thing is, no one will ever know!"

I saw my two sons sleeping peacefully on the sofa, and in my confusion I thought satan was trying to take their lives and not mine. And so, feeling life leaving me, I fell down between them with the desperate cry, "Oh, Jesus! Take my life and not theirs!"

And then, inexplicably, I felt fine. The *Lord had saved my life.* I carried the children to

the car and drove home. I was terrified, however, and so I called the police and asked them to take me to the hospital and to have someone watch over the children until I returned. When I arrived at the hospital, they gave me something to counteract the hallucinogenic drug, and I was able to sleep. I had never taken any form of drugs before; but it was the venom of satan that the drug opened me to that was the most terrible and fearful thing of all. By choice I stayed in the hospital for three days, because I was simply too frightened to go home!

During that time, Sandy called begging me not to report her and Jim to the police. She explained that she had had no idea what Greg was planning to do, and she promised that they would not bother me again. I promised not to report them.

While I was in the hospital, a special friend came to visit me. Her name was Karen Austin, and she and her husband Emery used to live down the road from me when I was still married and living in the country. They had seven children, but even with such a houseful, they always had time to be thoughtful and kind, and they were quite a bit of fun besides! Karen came to visit me in the hospital that day, and left me a card and a small gift. On the card she had written the following message:

"The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field;

Which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."

Matthew 13:31-32

If you have the faith of a mustard seed, nothing will be impossible to you!

Love,

Karen and Emery

And there, carefully wrapped up, was a tiny mustard seed that seemed to arrive with the distant promises of God. It was the tiniest ray of hope, and I clung to it with a feeling of desperation. It seemed at that point that I had absolutely no faith at all. Before my experience with the forces of evil, I had seen everything supernatural as having come from God. But after those frightening experiences, I over-reacted in the opposite direction, and I assumed instead that everything that had happened to me had come from satan, and not from God at all! And so I had thrown my experience with Jesus out of the window, and went home at the end of three days feeling betrayed, certain I would be facing an empty life.

During my first three days at home, *absolutely nothing happened*. Now, that might not sound like such a strange experience to some, but for me it was the most startling thing that could have occurred. Things had happened to me continuously for years! The story of the school should give you some idea of what I'm referring to, but even in day-to-day living, something was forever going wrong!

One day, for example, I asked friends to stop at my apartment to pick up some papers for me. Suddenly I received a frantic phone call from them.

"Eileen, someone's broken into your house and ransacked it! It's just a mess! I think we'd better call the police!"

We agreed to meet the police at my apartment, and with a police escort, I walked through the apartment to survey the damage.

"It's probably your husband who did it," the police officer said as soon as he learned that I had recently filed for a divorce. "Can you tell me what's missing? I think you should bring this to court for sure!"

I began to look around, and as I did, I became more and more appalled. "Well," I finally managed, "I think it's really okay. Nothing seems to be missing, and I don't really want to press charges! Thank you for your trouble, though," I added, as I started to edge him towards the door. My friends and the police officer kept trying to talk me into filing a complaint, but I remained firm. "No, really, it's okay," I continued to insist.

As soon as the police officer finally took his leave, I collapsed in a fit of laughter. "What happens to most women when they have a few bad days and their house gets a little untidy? Why, nothing at all! They simply come home when they have time to straighten it up! But me? What happens to me? My nincompoop friends decide that my house has been ransacked and call the police!"

"But why didn't you tell us?" they gasped between laughs.

"How in the world could I? I'm filing for custody of the children. The police would think that my house looks like this *all* the time!"

But that wasn't all. Things seemed to go wrong every single day as well. My "mile-high lemon chiffon pie" would collapse all over the refrigerator. My English setter would happily gobble up the neighbours' prize tulips. Things were forever happening!

When Yvonne and I first became friends, I tried to warn her that my life was a bit of a natural disaster. One morning, we headed for a large shopping mall with her two sons, Richie and Russell, and with my two sons, Michael and Joey. Suddenly she noticed that she had lost Russell in the crowd! We searched everywhere, and even asked the police in the mall to help us to look.

Finally, Yvonne suggested, "You watch the other children, and I'll go to the car to see if he's there."

She came back a few minutes later with her son in tow, tearfully explaining to his mum that when he couldn't find us, he had gone to the car to wait.

Suddenly Yvonne screeched, "Eileen, where's RICHIE?"

I don't know how it happened, but her other son had also disappeared! The police could not believe that we had lost *another* child! When we finally collected Richie as well, who had wandered off to the pet store, we left the shopping centre as quickly as we could, while we still had everyone with us!

A similar experience happened with a friend of Yvonne's by the name of Diane. I went to the same shopping mall one morning with Diane and her daughter. We went into a restaurant for a bite to eat. But her daughter wasn't with us! Remembering what had happened with Yvonne's son, I asked calmly, "What does she usually do when she gets lost? Go to the car?"

Diane glared at me. "This is the first time I have ever lost one of my children," she said testily.

Another time, undaunted, Yvonne, Diane and I drove to New York to pick up a parcel that Yvonne's parents in Turkey had sent to her via the captain of a Turkish ship. We had a lovely meal on board the ship, served with true Oriental hospitality, and late that evening we headed back towards Connecticut with the parcel. Diane did not have the same sense of adventure that drew Yvonne and me together firmly as friends, and she was very anxious that she would be getting home to her family later than she had expected. The tension in the car became unbearable as time continued to pass! We soon crossed the state line from New York into Connecticut, and drove for another two hours. It was a bit foggy, but we were sure that we would soon be home. Suddenly we came to a sign that said, in big black letters: "WELCOME TO NEW YORK".

Yvonne and I laughed so hard that we had to pull over to the side of the road, but there was not even a hint of a smile from the back seat of the car! Finally I drove on until we found a place to ask directions.

I walked into a restaurant and asked, "Can you tell me where we are?"

"Never mind where you are," the man answered. "Where is it that you *want* to be?" And soon we were once again on our way, this time on the right track for home! (Diane never spoke to me again.)

I could go on forever with stories of things that happened during those years. But I think I've shared enough to give you an understanding of why I was so astounded on those three days when everything suddenly stopped happening. Nothing went particularly right. Nothing went particularly wrong. Nothing but nothing seemed to happen! It was the most tangible quiet I have ever lived through!

I woke up on the morning of the fourth day, clearly hearing the Lord's direction once again, and suddenly finding myself at a crossroads. After the nightmare experience I had recently endured, I was very fearful of trusting the Lord again. I had instead simply dismissed everything that had happened to me as having come from satan, where previously I had credited everything to the Lord. What was I to do?

I called Marcia and explained my dilemma to her.

"I have a suggestion," Marcia replied. "I recently met a really nice pastor by the name of Dr. Reid. Perhaps he would be willing to see you. He's usually very busy, but I'll try to call him to see what we can arrange! It probably won't work out for this Sunday, but we'll see what we can do!"

She called back a few minutes later. "Wow!" she said. "I called him, and he explained that he was ready to leave for a few days away, and had just dashed back into the house for something he had forgotten when the telephone rang! And he can see you this Sunday after church, only three days from now!"

"Oh, Marcia, what ever will I tell him?" I wailed.

"Don't worry, Eileen. When the time comes, God will show you. He always does!"

I hung up the phone, feeling a joy deep within my heart as I began to sense that my faith in Jesus had not been in vain. It seemed that He was working in my life again!

"What will I tell Dr. Reid on Sunday?" I asked the Lord, moving back into the relationship I had previously known with Him, before the period of "testing" by satan.

"Tell him all of your experiences," He answered at once.

"Oh, no, not everything!" I replied, still feeling embarrassed by it all. But deep within my heart, I knew that the time had come to be open at last about what had been happening to me over the past year and a half.

I accompanied Marcia to the church, and for me it was quite an experience. I had been to church when I attended the Catholic school, and also a number of times with my husband. But never before as a real Believer in Jesus!

A group of young people led the service that day, and it was really wonderful. One of the young girls stood before the congregation at one point and said, "I'm going to compare our growth as Christians with that of the growth of a flower . . ."

I sat bolt upright, as at once the Lord reminded me of the words that the elderly woman had spoken to me — "*It will take you a long time to accept who you are . . . but when you do, it will be like a flower opening . . .*" It seemed that this was to be an important lesson.

She then proceeded to hold up some roots, still fresh from the earth and anything but beautiful. She went on to say, "As you can see, the roots are ugly and not appealing in the least. No one would rush home to put them in a crystal vase! But before the flower can ever blossom, the roots must form firmly within the soil. They must be nourished and

strengthened, and then, the flower is able to grow."

She held up a beautiful, delicate rose in the other hand. "The roots *must* come first before the flower can blossom. They are not beautiful to look at, and for us they represent deep lessons and difficult times, all tempered by the Master's constant nourishment and care. But we cannot blossom as Christians until these roots have formed!"

At that moment, the Lord gently helped me to understand that it would be a long, long time before the "flower" would open. My "roots" would first have to be formed.

After the service had ended and the last parishioner had disappeared through the door, Dr. Reid and I went downstairs to talk. I started at the beginning, and told him the entire story, showing him the books and the other confirmations from the Lord as the story unfolded. I felt foolish and self-conscious throughout the whole tale, and it was only my confidence that the Lord had arranged this meeting that kept me going from the beginning to the end.

When I had finished at last, Dr. Reid smiled. "At first," he said, "I was a little put off by the books and all of the things that you had brought. But the Lord immediately told me to stop being distracted and to listen to the thread of what you were telling me! Most people have a pocket full of miracles. What are you doing with a shopping bag full?" he warmly teased.

He prayed silently for a few minutes, and then he said, "I know from the Lord that it is God who is leading you and that Jesus has a call upon your life. I sense very strongly, Eileen, that He will be sending you to the spiritual desert for a time, as there is much that He needs to teach you. I think you need especially to learn to discern between the things of satan and the things of God. He has shown you that satan does indeed exist, but you need to learn that Jesus is always victor when we look to Him! A good rule to go by, in learning to tell the difference between satan and the Lord, is that, if something happens and you can't find a basis for it in the Scriptures, then throw it out as not being from God! I also feel that the Lord wants you to be baptized, but that under no circumstances are you to join a church. I don't understand that part of it, Eileen, but it seems to be what the Lord is saying!"

I should have been shocked that a minister was advising me not to join a church — but it was the thought of baptism that took my breath away!

"Baptized?" I gulped. "Oh, no, do you really think I have to be *baptized*?"

Dr. Reid explained to me that baptism does not make someone a member of a denomination, but that it is done in obedience to the Word of God and symbolizes the new person that we become after the forgiveness of sins that we receive when we accept and confess Jesus.

I knew by my adverse reaction that I was more Jewish than I cared to admit! "No one has to come, though, do they?" I asked him, hoping for a secret baptism.

"Well," he smiled, "usually there are a few witnesses!"

Dr. Reid went on to tell me the story of his walk in faith with the Lord. He told me that he had planned a professional career, when he was suddenly aware of the Lord's call on his life to become a minister.

"You mean *God* can call someone to become a minister?" I asked incredulously.

"Well, many men decide themselves to become ministers, as another person would decide to become a doctor or a lawyer. But a *true* minister of God must know Him, and not just study *about* Him," he explained to me. (At once I understood that poor Reverend Smith probably didn't even know the Lord at all!)

Dr. Reid then told me that the ministry the Lord had called him to at that time was to be an "interim" pastor. "I go to the churches where the Lord sends me, during the interim time while a church is waiting to choose a permanent pastor. The Lord usually sends me to a church that is in need of His life and His love. Often, as soon as the church has come to know Him, He sends me somewhere else!" It seemed to me like a very difficult job.

We talked for most of the afternoon, and I was so thrilled by his personal knowledge of Jesus and by his warm sense of humour. But the greatest joy of all was knowing that he understood all of the things that had happened to me!

Before we parted, he said, "Call me if my wife or I can ever be of any help, Eileen! And you're very welcome to join us at the church any time you would like!"

On the ride over to Marcia's (I had promised to share with her what had happened), I went through a sort of crisis reaction. Up until that point, no one had ever really confirmed that God was with me, except for the elderly woman a few weeks earlier. Suddenly I was faced with the responsibility *of accepting the fact that God had a call upon my life, that I now belonged to Jesus, and that I could no longer ignore all that had been happening to me. I felt dreadful.*

When I arrived at Marcia's, I immediately called Dr. Reid, as I had felt such comfort in his knowledge of the Lord's ways. I described to him the panic that I was feeling. "You told me that if I ever needed help, I should just phone you," I reminded him. "So, can I move in?" I teased.

Dr. Reid laughed. "Well, I must admit that I didn't expect to hear from you *quite* so soon! But I know the Lord will continue to guide you, Eileen. Have courage!" he said.

And so, it seemed, a new adventure had begun.

4

SONGS OF LOVE

Many things happened during my days in the spiritual desert. One of the first was for me to learn more about Jesus and who I was in relation to Him. The first book that the Lord directed me to was called *The Practice of the Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence, a lay brother working in the kitchen among the barefooted Carmelites in Paris in the 1600's. The publishers described Brother Lawrence in this way:

"The value of this book lies in its Christian humility and simplicity. No conceited scholar was Brother Lawrence; theological and doctrinal debates bored him, if he noticed them at all. His one desire was for communion with God. We find him worshipping more in his kitchen than in his cathedral; he could say, The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer, and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament."

And so, in the very beginning of my walk in faith, in the "desert" place where the Lord had brought me, He laid down a very basic principle of faith: *It was possible to be continuously in His presence, and I was to strive to live so that everything I did was at the centre of His will.* The Lord gave me such a longing for the awareness of His presence to become a part of every breath that I breathed!

Brother Lawrence explained:

"That it was a great delusion to think that the times of prayer ought to differ from other times; that we are as strictly obliged to adhere to God by action in the time of action as by prayer in the season of prayer.

That his prayer was nothing else but a sense of the presence of God, his soul being at that time insensible to everything but Divine love, and that when the appointed times of prayer were past, he found no difference, because he still continued with God, praising and blessing Him with all his might, so that he passed his life in continual joy; yet hoped that God would give him somewhat to suffer when he would grow stronger.

That we ought, once for all, heartily to put our whole trust in God, and make a total surrender of ourselves to Him, secure that He would not deceive

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That the whole substance of religion was faith, hope and love, by the practice of which we become united to the will of God; that all besides is indifferent, and to be used as a means that we may arrive at our end, and be

swallowed up therein, by faith and love.

That all things are possible to him who believes; that they are more easy to him who hopes; that they are more easy to him who loves ; and still more easy to him who perseveres in the practice of these three virtues.

That the end we ought to propose ourselves is to become, in this life, the most perfect worshippers of God we can possibly be, as we hope to be through all eternity.

That when we enter upon the spiritual life, we should consider and examine to the bottom what we are. And then we should find ourselves worthy of all contempt, and not deserving indeed the name of Christians . . . in fine, persons whom God would humble by many pains and labors, as well within as without. After this we should not wonder that troubles, temptations, oppositions, and contradictions happen to us from men. We ought, on the contrary, to submit ourselves to them, and bear them as long as God pleases, as things highly advantageous to us.

That the greater perfection a soul aspires after, the more dependent it is upon Divine grace."

What Brother Lawrence was saying struck a responsive chord deep within me, although at that early stage in my walk of faith I had barely an awareness of my sin at all. But I did sense that it was possible to be continually aware of the presence of the Lord within my heart.

I had no idea, however, that it was something that the *Lord* would have to work into my life through chastenings and disciplines until at last I could become a vessel emptied for His use. Instead, I tried to take on the characteristics that I assumed would be befitting of a saint! I stopped laughing, of course, and tried to be as pious and as holy as I could possibly be. Marcia had been touched by Jesus' love at about the same time that I had, and she also was hard at work trying to change herself into the image of someone who now belonged to God.

Naturally, it was a great strain. By the end of three weeks, the holiness was beginning to wear a little thin. One day, the children and I were visiting Marcia, and while they played, she and I sat around the kitchen table shelling peas. Very cautiously, we began to discuss the matter with one another.

"The Lord knew us *before* we gave our lives to Him, right?" Marcia asked.

"Right," I answered.

"And He *still* loved us, right?"

"Right."

"So maybe, just *maybe*, it's all right to act like we always have, and let the *Lord* worry about changing us!"

"Oh, Marcia, do you really think so?"

We both tried a tentative laugh, and when the roof didn't seem to fall in, we knew we could lay the "monks" to rest and be who we were, simply trying each day to be obedient to the dealings of the Lord within our lives.

A while later I wandered into Marcia's living room, and the Lord guided me to a passage in a book on one of her bookshelves:

"Let us picture the relationship between God and man with a simile of sunlight striking a window. The state of the window has something to do with the amount of sunlight flowing through. The more clean and pure the window is, the more sunlight can shine through it. But, no matter how clean and pure the window may become, it is, after all, still a window. It retains its own distinct

nature. So it is in a relationship between God and man. We need to be open to receive His light, but we are, after all, still imperfect beings."

It was the Lord's confirmation. It was such a relief to know that we could leave the job of changing ourselves in His hands!

During those summer months, the Lord had much to teach me. The most important lesson of all was to learn to discern between the voice of the devil and the voice of the Lord. It was often easy to tell, because satan would bombard my mind with thoughts and doubts and questions and confusion, while the Lord would speak in His clear and gentle way within my heart. The Lord was careful to confirm His will to me, and I learned very early that when I was in doubt as to whether or not I had heard from the Lord, I should do nothing until or unless it was confirmed by Him. (Of course, as soon as it was confirmed, I also knew that He expected me to be obedient to whatever it was that He was asking me to do!)

I could often judge by the "fruit" of it. Satan is the king of confusion, and tries in every way possible to dim our faith and our vision of Jesus. When I was unsure, I would often ask myself the question: "If I obey this directive, will it bring me or someone else closer to Jesus?" Judged by that standard, it was easy to determine who was speaking to me. Finally, after a time, I came to know and to recognize the voice of the Lord most of the time.

In the Book of John, chapter 10, Jesus speaks about a shepherd's relationship to his sheep:

"And the sheep hear his voice, and he calleth his own by name, and leadeth them out.

And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers."

John 10:3-5

Jesus went on to say:

"I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of mine. . . .

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

And I give unto them eternal life . . ."

John 10:14, 27-28

The Lord also taught me the awesome fact that Biblical prophesy was being fulfilled in our lifetime, and that Jesus would be returning within this generation to reign upon the earth for one thousand years! It absolutely astonished me, and I could hardly grasp the fact that we had the privilege to be alive during such an incredible time in the history of the world!

I often wondered why other Christians weren't as overjoyed as I was and burning with the desire to tell others of the height and depth of the love of God. But then, the Lord reminded me of something Dr. Reid had explained to me — that many people who call themselves Christians do not really know Jesus' love at all! They believe in an empty religion with the doctrines of men, instead of coming face to face with the reality of Jesus' love for them. I realized then that having come from a Jewish background was an advantage, as I therefore had little to "unlearn" about the Christian faith. (The only thing I had to "unlearn" was that the terrible things that have been done to the Jewish people throughout the ages in the name of Jesus had nothing to do with Him at all!) It must be very difficult to grow up all of your life believing that you are a Christian, and then having to

accept that you never really were at all! But Jesus' love is so wonderful that it would out-weigh the sense of wounded pride that many people must feel.

At that time, all that I knew about Jesus was what I myself was experiencing. I had known His love for over a year before I had even known that it was *Him*, and from the night that Jesus revealed His love to me, I continuously had a feeling of warmth enveloping my heart. It was a very real experience. As I shared previously, when I was sad, my heart would become heavy, and when I was frightened, my heart would feel constricted; but most of the time it was enveloped in a heavenly blanket of warmth. I was used to listening to the stirrings of His guidance within my heart; He spoke to me often, and continued to reveal more and more about Himself day by day. He was truly becoming a friend and a companion, and I enjoyed my time in His presence more than any other minute of the day.

Two things surprised me very much as I came to know Him. One was His wonderful sense of humor. The other was a beginning understanding of His suffering and anguish, both when He lived upon this earth as well as His sadness in Heaven today — over each person who turns from His love, and because of the dreadful things done to others in *His name*.

He would often guide my steps, and always waiting for me when I followed Him would be a special token of His love for me, or a lesson or confirmation of one sort or another.

To me, all of this equaled a Christian walk! It was all that I knew! Therefore I became very insecure when I realized that Marcia and other friends were not being dealt with by the Lord in the same way that I was. Perhaps it was simply my lack of faith in the dealing of God in my life, but I became frightened when I realized that no one else seemed to really understand all that was happening to me.

One day I brought the problem to Dr. Reid. The children and I had attended his church regularly, and he had become a special friend. He commented smilingly that he knew that my experience was a little unusual!

"Let me explain it to you this way, Eileen. I believe you are having a mystical experience of the love of the Lord. It is a much confused and misused term in these days, but I mean it in the old-fashioned, traditional sense of the word. Perhaps I can best explain it like this. Let's say that there is someone in the congregation that the Lord has a message for. During prayer, the Lord will give me a sermon to preach on Sunday morning, and as I'm giving the sermon, He will touch that person with His love in some way. With the type of relationship that you have with the Lord, He will simply guide you directly to that person with the exact message He wants you to give!"

His understanding was a comfort to me, but as the days wore on, and as Jesus continued to share His love and His life with me, my distress became more acute. I had so much to accept even from the very first night that I came to know Him, and I simply did not know how to deal with it all. I wanted to accept His promise to me, but I simply couldn't. It was such a dilemma! Finally one night I could bear it no longer. I knelt, and with the tears flowing freely, I poured my heart out to Him. I told Jesus that night that I *wanted* to accept all that He had shown me; I couldn't deny His love for me! But I didn't know how to accept it! I begged and begged for His help, until I fell at last into a restless sleep.

The very next morning, He directed me to buy a particular record album in a store near my home. I rushed home expectantly with my new purchase, and as I listened to the songs, I could hardly bear the sense of His love that flooded my heart. It seemed as though Jesus was singing the songs directly to me, and it was such an answer to my cry to Him the night before! This was the first song that I heard as I played the album:

*"I dreamed last night that I was hearing your voice,
And the things you said they left me no choice.*

*And you told me we had the power,
And you told me this was the hour,
But that you don't know how,
If I could show you now."*

I was amazed! The song began with the words, I dreamed *last night* — and it was just the previous night that I had cried out to Him in my distress! The song continued:

*"Like a bird on a far distant mountain,
Like a ship on an uncharted sea,
You are lost in the arms that have found you.
Don't be afraid, love's plans are made,
Oh don't be afraid.*

*Oh I dreamed last night you were calling my name,
You were locked inside of your secrets, calling my name.
And you told me lost was the key,
And you told me how you longed to be free,
But that you don't know how. Oh, let me show you now!*

*If there's a time and a place to begin lone,
It must be now.
Let it go! Set it free!*

*Like a bird on a far distant mountain,
Like a ship on an uncharted sea,
You are lost in the arms that have found you.
Don't be afraid, love's plans are made,
Oh don't be afraid."*

I'll share the words from one of the other songs as well, in case there is someone who is reading this book and might be wondering if they, too, can have a relationship of love and friendship with Jesus. This song will answer that question, even as it did for me that day!

*"You don't need to ask me if I'll be your friend.
I am, I am.
I am your friend, you must remember Me,
I'm the one who saw through the world's disguise,
Took away its cloak and made it hide from Me.
Remember Me?
Walking on this earth finding you, you, you.
You don't need to find the words to say what's on your mind.*

*If you need a reason to begin again,
I am, I am.
You will find an answer at your journey's end. I
am waiting there, my friend.
You must remember Me,
I'm the one who knew you when,
I'm the one you call your friend.
Feel free, remember Me,
Walking on this earth finding you, you, you."*

This next song was my very favorite. In a way, the first line reminded me very much of how isolated Jesus was when He ministered upon this earth. He had followers and friends, of course, but no one *really* understood Him. They were amazed and awed by Him; they loved Him and laughed with Him; but His very Divinity, His unity with the Father, set Him apart from the milling crowds. And because of the very depth of His love, He suffered deeply. It made me long to bring Him comfort.

*"My boat sails stormy seas, battles oceans filled with tears.
At last my port's in you, now that I've discovered you.
Oh, I give my life so lightly for my gentle lady;
Give it freely, and completely, for my lady.*

*As life goes drifting by, like a breeze she'll gently sigh,
And slowly bow her head, then you'll hear her softly cry.
Oh I give my life so lightly for my gentle lady;
Give it freely, and completely, for my lady.*

*Words that you say when we're alone,
Though actions speak louder than words.
But all I can say is 'I love you so' —
Drive away all my hurt.
Set sail before the sun, feel the warmth that's just begun.
Share each and every dream — they belong to everyone."*

There were other songs on the album that meant a great deal to me as well. Some prepared me for suffering, and for the fact that the fulfillment of His promises to me would be in the distant future. The words to one of the songs even prepared me to travel to a new land, although I couldn't imagine for a minute what it was all about! But most important of all, they helped me to know Him even more deeply, as a person and as a friend. Probably those songs would mean very little to most people buying the album, but the Lord graced the songs with His love, and that is what made them come to life within my heart. Those songs were an integral part of those early days when I was learning to walk by His side.

But most important of all were the lessons they taught me about love — not human love, with all of its limitations, but Divine love, unlimited and beautiful. I sensed that God had to fashion and prepare us to be vessels of that love, but oh, how I longed for it!

I remembered the prophecy I had been given about a book as I listened to the song that follows, and I sensed from it that the book would have to remain wordless until I had learned of the love that He was talking about:

*"Isn't love strange,
A word we arrange,
With no thought or care,
Maker of despair.
Each breath that we breathe, with love
we must weave, to make us as one.*

*You know, it makes me want to cry. Wish I
could be in your heart,
To be one with your love.*

Isn't love strange,

*A turn of the page,
A book without lines,
unless with love we write. To throw it
away,
to lose just a day
in the quicksand of time —*

*You know, it makes me want to cry. Wish I could
be in your heart,
To be one with your love."*

Even now I can remember so clearly the many summer nights after the children were tucked into bed that I would listen to the songs that He had given me. On those nights, without fail, I would feel His presence and His love in such a powerful and yet gentle way, that I thought my heart would simply burst. It was so special, and I thought those summer days of love would last forever.

One day, in a way too personal to relate, Jesus showed me a page from another love song, *Song of Solomon* from the Bible. I later read the entire Song, and to me it spoke so clearly of Jesus, the Beloved; and the love spoken of within the poem was reminiscent of the love that He had showered upon me day by day.

So many things happened during those blissful months! It was as though Jesus held me within His arms and showered upon me the blessings of His love. To me, all of this was "ordinary", as it had been my only experience from the time that I first knew Him! At first I found it hard to believe that such things could possibly be happening to me in this day and age. But then the Lord directed me to such a precious book, *Two from Galilee* by Marjorie Holmes. As I read that true-to-life story of Mary and Joseph, I realized that both of them — and everyone else that God had used — were simply ordinary people who were chosen by God for His purposes! It helped me to reconcile all that I was experiencing even in our "modern age".

As unusual as my experiences were, there were a few things that happened to me that I classified as "extraordinary" as well.

One "extraordinary" experience happened to me after I had watched a series on American television called "Moses the Lawgiver". It was a very moving rendition of the ancient miracle, and it was produced so realistically that it made it still seem new and relevant for us today. After the final programme of the series, I turned off the television and walked quietly into the kitchen, feeling very moved by what I had seen. Suddenly, I was struck by the presence of God the Father. It was so powerful and so real, and His love was so immense, that my poor human heart simply could not bear it. I fell instantly to the floor, crying out for God to stop, as I knew I could not survive, could not live, in the presence of such a great magnitude of love.

In a moment's time it was over. The overwhelming sense of the presence of God had passed. But the brief experience had a profound effect on the rest of my life. Up until that moment, I had been complaining against the love that He had been showing me. I had often said, "Oh, Lord, thank you for Your love! But I don't deserve it! I'm so unworthy!" But in that one brief encounter with the Living God, I learned that He gives minuscule droplets of His love to our little hearts, *simply because no human being could ever live through or withstand the full measure of the Love that He is!* Love with a magnitude of such immense proportions is something that we cannot possibly comprehend! I also learned in that awesome moment of time that we will never be worthy of His love — *but our unworthiness does not stop Him from loving us!*

I knew that the revelation I had experienced of the greatness of the love of God was somehow related to Moses and the exodus of the Jewish people, but I had no idea why the Lord chose that particular night to bring me face to face with His holiness.

A few weeks later, I learned more about God's love through my son. One glorious summer's day, Joey, Michael and I were taking a drive through the countryside, when suddenly the rays of sun shone beautifully through the clouds. Many times that had felt like a sign of Jesus' love for me, but I was always too embarrassed to share that with anyone. It seemed preposterous that the Lord would show love to an individual person in such a grand way!

Suddenly, Joey said, very matter-of-factly, "Hey, look at the rays coming through the clouds! That's God's way of saying 'I love you,' Mom."

As Joey said it, the Lord underlined it in my heart. And suddenly I understood that *it is we who limit God. He is indeed able to show His love to us in any way that He wishes. We need only to recognize it as from Him!*

Joey's comment blessed me in another way, too. I love to be with children who are open to the Lord. They are exactly the way we as adults are meant to be — simply open to Him, and trusting, with no pretense or guile whatsoever! Children have always been a delight to me, and when I see them in relationship to the Lord, I can often learn more by observing them than any great theologian could ever teach me! (Even removing the Lord from the picture, think of the unself-conscious trust it takes for a child to jump from a height into his father's arms, not even *thinking* of doubting that his father will catch him! The corollary in terms of an adult's relationship to the Father is often heartrending. By most a jump of faith into the Father's arms would not even be considered! It's foolish, as natural fathers can fail us, but God's love and care will never fail!)

"The disciples came unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

And Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them.

And said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

And whoso shall receive one such little child in My name receiveth Me . . ."

Matthew 18:1-6

From the time that Joey was born, I considered being a mother an important, exciting and fulfilling job. Children fascinated me with their freshness towards life, their readiness to forgive, and their joy in discovery. I treasured Joey and Michael's "growing up" years. I tried to be understanding of them as people and I also tried to keep alive for them the sense that life was an adventure. Most of the time I think I succeeded in entertaining myself more than them, but with children around at least I had an excuse for having fun!

Grocery shopping was a graphic example of what I'm talking about. I disliked grocery shopping. To me it was a terrible bore, and so I used to play games with the children in the grocery store to keep them occupied and to keep me from hysteria. My favourite game was possible only on a weekday morning when the store would be almost empty. Whoever happened to be a toddler at the time rode in the cart. As soon as we found an empty aisle, I would run with the cart to the middle of the aisle while making "racing car noises", and then I would slide with the momentum of the cart to the end of the aisle. Over the years I was able to time it so perfectly that the cart always halted precisely at the end of the aisle, where I

would then proceed to walk out in a very dignified manner. No one ever saw us!

But then, there came a day when I wasn't so fortunate. I ran with the cart down the centre of the aisle, as usual, but when I began to slide I knew I was in real trouble — the floor had recently been waxed! And so, instead of coming to a halt at my usual dignified stopping point, we whipped out of the aisle at great speed, just missing a whole line of appalled customers, until we finally crashed unhappily into a large display cabinet! The employees in the store smiled at me for weeks afterwards, but I noticed that they also kept their distance.

While I'm at it, I might as well share with you two other hapless grocery store experiences! (I apologize to my more dignified readers, if you've even made it *this* far!)

On days when the store was crowded, running with the cart was impossible, of course, but I would still make "motor noises" as we walked along. It always made the children giggle and kept them somewhat distracted from the latest snack foods and candies on display. One evening I was concentrating very hard on the list of groceries that I needed, and out of force of habit I was abstractedly making "racing car noises" while walking along. After a while I noticed that people had turned to stare at me in a very strange way. Suddenly it occurred to me that the children weren't with me! They were on an outing with their father! No wonder people looked aghast — I was making motor car noises all by myself!

Another day I was shopping, and this time I *did* have Michael with me, and I didn't run or sound like a racing car. I was simply pushing the cart along, trying very hard to calculate whether or not I had enough money left to purchase ice cream. (My maths ability is non-existent.) Suddenly a woman came rushing up to me frantically screaming, "STOP! STOP! YOU'VE GOT MY CHILD?"

Astonished, I looked down and, sure enough, I had a grocery cart, and a child was in it, but it wasn't my child at all! I turned around, and there was my cart, at the other end of the aisle, with Michael in it staring at me like I had lost my mind.

In terms of family relationships, winter time seemed to be the most difficult period to live through. When bad weather kept us cooped up inside, it was a time when tempers could easily flare. I invented a solution that always seemed to help, but I think it would make my Social Work professors faint! When tensions began to mount, I would suggest a "screaming ride" in the country. We would pile into the car, and when we were safely away from civilization, we would scream at one another at the top of our lungs. It always ended in peals of laughter and a stop at a shop for donuts and hot chocolate, and it really did clear the air!

From the time that Jesus first touched my life, I knew that the Lord made each day seem new and very special. I always tried to give the children something to look forward to as well. I used to tell them that I was a reasonably good parent until 8:00 p.m., after which time I turned into a super grouch. So, after their bedtime story and prayers, if they were absolutely quiet until the next morning, I promised them a surprise the following day. (It was bribery, to be sure, but it made bedtimes bearable and gave them something to anticipate each day.) I would often put little surprises under their pillows, or take them on a special outing, or fix something special for them to eat, or buy them a special treat. Even at times when I had no money to spare, we would find *something* fun to do, like driving to the tallest department store just to ride the escalators!

One day, I decided to plan a treat for them in the middle of the night. I fixed the table with great care. I made sandwiches with faces on them using raisins and tiny marshmallows, and I set out their very favorite biscuits. I then tiptoed upstairs, planning to bring them downstairs individually, for a time just with me. I grabbed Joey first.

"Joey, wake up! Wake up! I have a surprise for you!" And I lifted him out of bed and carried him down the stairs. By the time we reached the kitchen, I was appalled to see that he was still sound asleep! I glumly returned him to his bed, and tried Michael next. Michael

did wake up, and began immediately to cry, "Leave me alone! I want to go to sleep! I want to go to sleep!"

So much for my midnight surprise. Tears of disappointment filled my eyes, only because I had planned the time with such love and care. I went back down to the kitchen, and sat looking unhappily at the surprise that Joey and Michael would never see.

Suddenly the Lord gave me insight into part of *His* suffering as our Father! He told me to think about the many things that He had created — out of love for us — all meant to delight us and grant us an assurance of the greatness of His love. And most of the time we never notice them at all! The beauty of a sunset; the purity of the first snow fall; the color and variety of food; even something as goofy as a rooster that greets the dawn — all of them are signs of God's boundless love. But instead of feeling loved, we're often too busy complaining about the rise in food prices; or grumbling about the need to shovel snow, instead of marvelling at its transforming beauty. It made me realize how very much we take for granted, or don't even notice at all, like children who never really wake up.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, Thou art very great; Thou art clothed with honour and majesty . . .

He watereth the hills from His chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of Thy works.

He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and the herb for service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth;

And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart.

My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord."

Psalm 104:1, 13-15, 34

Towards the end of the summer, I was sitting with Marcia in her yard one sunny afternoon. All at once, Marcia exclaimed, "Oh, all right!" She then stomped over to a lilac bush, picked off a branch, and plopped it on my lap, "There, I've done it," she muttered, seemingly to no one at all! I looked down in shock at the lilacs that had quite unexpectedly found their way to my lap.

"The Lord told me to pick some lilacs and give them to you, and He kept bugging me about it, so finally I obeyed Him. Don't ask me why! I haven't the slightest idea!" Marcia explained apologetically.

Because Marcia is very logical, she disliked doing anything foolish, and this to her seemed very foolish indeed! But through her obedience, I learned a very important lesson.

I looked at the lilacs carefully. Each branch consisted of dozens of perfectly formed, delicate flowers. At once I was reminded of the prophecy I had been given — "*You will be like a flower opening . . .*" I was reminded, too, of the enormity of the love that Jesus had showered upon me in the intervening months since the prophecy had first been given. And then, ever so gently, the Lord helped me to understand that I represented only one of the tiny blossoms in the lilac branch — and that His love was identical for all of the other blossoms.

I had come to know His love so deeply by then, and on that sunny afternoon, I came to understand that He loves everyone with the same tenderness and intensity. From that moment forward, I could speak to others about the greatness of God's love for *them* with unshakeable assurance.

It was a great lesson, but as yet I had no sense that the flower of His love had begun to blossom within my heart.

Since June, when I had first met Dr. Reid, the children and I had really enjoyed attending his church every Sunday, as did Marcia and her family. His sermons were full of life, as they came directly from the heart of the Lord; and so we were each faced with a challenge and a call to draw closer to Jesus every Sunday morning.

After I had been attending the church for just a few weeks, Dr. Reid invited me to give a children's sermon one Sunday morning. I was terrified at the thought of speaking in public, but I knew it was very special of Dr. Reid to have asked me. It was a sign of his trust in the Lord's hand on my life. So I agreed, and the following Sunday I spoke to the children and the congregation about simple trust in the Lord. My heart beat so frantically I thought I would faint, and when I finally finished and sat down, I hoped I would never, ever have to speak in public again!

In mid-September the church was planning a camping trip, and everyone was really looking forward to it. One day, after church, Dr. Reid commented that I should bring my baptism dress to the campsite "just in case".

"Oh, no! It just can't happen that weekend!" I gasped. "People will be there!"

Dr. Reid just smiled and reiterated that I had better plan to bring the dress anyway, and we would wait and see what the Lord had in mind.

By the time that the camping weekend arrived, I knew from the Lord that it would also be the weekend of my baptism, and therefore other friends had been invited on the camping trip, including Karen and Emery and their seven children. It was a wonderful time, except for the fact that a skunk crawled into my tent in the middle of the night foraging for food! Needless to say, I didn't even breathe until he had decided to leave again!

My baptism was supposed to be at sunrise on Sunday morning, and one of the church elders was going to awaken all of us with a bugle call. But even before his call, almost everyone was up and filled with expectation! We walked through the early morning woods, until we came to a lovely spot by a small lake. Just as the sun began to rise, we sang together the beautiful song, "Morning has broken".

*Morning has broken, like the first morning,
Blackbird has spoken, like the first bird.
Praise for the singing! Praise for the morning!
Praise for them, springing fresh from the Word!*

*Sweet the rain's new fall, sunlit from heaven,
Like the first dew fall, on the first grass.*

*Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden
Sprung in completeness, where His feet pass.*

It felt so much like a new beginning to my life, as my "old self" with its sins would be washed away, and I would be sealed with the name of Jesus.

It just so happens that the day of my baptism coincided with the Jewish "Rosh Hashanah", the New Year. It is one of the most serious of the Jewish holidays, where each person prays solemnly as he reviews the previous year and looks forward to the year ahead. Surprisingly enough, the Lord had prompted me on the day of my baptism to share about this Jewish holiday, and even to say the Hebrew words, "hineni" (which means "here am I") before stepping into the water. It astonished me, because to me my baptism seemed to have nothing to do with the fact that I had come from a Jewish background! But I was obedient, gave a brief testimony, and then walked with Dr. Reid into the water, while a hundred or so people waited and watched by the edge of the lake. My heart was so filled with joy, and to all of us it was a very precious moment. The Lord felt very near to everyone there that morning.

After the baptism, we sang songs of praise to the Lord as we walked up through the woods back to the campsite, where two of the men had stayed behind to make a huge batch of steaming pancakes and coffee.

Later that morning, we held a communion service on a small hillside overlooking the lake. And there, in the sky, formed by clouds, was a perfect cross in "carrying" position. The moment I saw it, I remembered the prophecy I had received in March — "*. . . two crosses will follow you everywhere . . .*" *The Lord then gave me the understanding that on the day that I was baptized in His name, one cross was placed upon my shoulders — the cross that I would have to bear as a follower of His. And the second cross was the cross of Jesus that I would need always to keep before me as I followed in His footsteps.*

"And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me..."

Matthew 10:38

"Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me . . ."

Matthew 16:24

It taught me from the very outset that the Christian way would not be an easy one in terms of the world's standards.

I'm glad that on that happy day I didn't know about the cross that would one day shadow my life.



5

THE LAMB

A few weeks after my baptism, I was reading Watchman Nee's book, *Song of Songs*, an interpretation of Song of Solomon in the Bible. Song of Solomon is a love story between a maiden and her Beloved, and in his book Watchman Nee compared it to the relationship between a Believer and Jesus. As I read the book, I could so easily identify with the experiences of the maiden in *Song of Songs*, although at that point I could barely grasp the deep lessons of faith that she was experiencing. When I reached a certain place in the book, I had an overwhelming sense from the Lord to give the book to Dr. Reid to read. The book was describing the following passage in Song of Solomon at the point where the Lord prompted me to stop reading it: -

"My Beloved put in His hand by the hole of the door, and my feelings were moved for Him.

I rose up to open to my Beloved; and my hands dripped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock.

I opened to my Beloved; but my Beloved had withdrawn Himself, and was gone; my soul failed when He spoke; I sought Him, but I could not find Him; I called Him, but He gave me no answer.

The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.

I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my Beloved, that ye tell Him, that I am sick with love."

Song of Solomon 5:4-8

In obedience to the Lord, I closed the book and delivered it to Dr. Reid that same afternoon.

I woke up the next morning, and instantly sensed that something was terribly wrong. At first I could not identify exactly what had happened. All I knew was that somehow everything felt not quite the same. And then, all at once, I realized with a sinking heart what it was — *Jesus was gone!* The sense of His presence had been with me continuously for many months by then, so that every waking moment had been spent in communion with the sweetness of His love! But then, on this dreadful morning, my heart felt as empty and as hard as a stone. I cried out to Him, but there was no comforting reply. I reflected for an instant on the portion of Song of Solomon I had read just prior to delivering the book to Dr. Reid the previous day. Perhaps the Lord had been preparing me that this would happen! But I could not accept that He was gone, and with despair I rejected the possibility that it was God who had allowed this to happen.

In the days and weeks that followed, my sense of abandonment became acute. I prayed

and pleaded and cried, all to no avail. I met only silence. It was the very depth of my relationship to Him that made the silence so painful. I longed for communion with Him again! I began to attend a variety of prayer meetings, searching for someone or something that would bring me back in touch with the beauty and joy of His presence and love. I did not know Jesus at all apart from the close friendship we had shared together!

During those months of closeness, the Lord had taught me much about Himself and His call to the life of faith. And now, for the first time, in my searchings I found myself face to face with other "Christians", far from His protective embrace. At one particular meeting, I felt such harshness on the part of the Believers who attended. If one person were in trouble, or having doubts, or feeling ill, the other Christians would blame him for some unconfessed sin in his life as the cause of the difficulties. The Lord had taught me that *all* of us are sinful, saved only by His grace. He had also begun to prepare me for the working of the cross in my life, which has to speak of trials and tribulations. It's His promise to us, along with His strength to endure! But yet, these people were demanding a trouble-free, prosperous life. It puzzled me greatly, and as time went on I felt more alienated and alone than ever.

I shared this with Dr. Reid one Sunday afternoon. He said, "May I ask you a simple question?"

"Yes, of course," I replied.

"If these meetings are so troublesome to you, why do you go?"

"You mean I don't *have* to attend?" I asked.

"No, of course not!" he answered me. "Again, you must judge all things by the fruit of it. Has attending these meetings brought you closer to the Lord?"

And of course, it had not. All of their accusations and recriminations against one another had made my faith very shaky indeed. I knew I had to learn to trust in all the Lord had shown me, but when people were very forceful and opinionated, it was often difficult not to waver.

I was grateful to Dr. Reid, for he taught me a very important lesson that day. And from then on I knew that I should not attend a fellowship that would stand in contradiction to the Word and the teachings of God. It sounds like such an obvious point, but there are so many things that are *called* Christianity, and often a new Believer finds it difficult to sift through it all to the heart of God. But the Bible and His Spirit within us are the faithful guides.

My distress at losing Jesus' love continued to grow, until one day I finally realized that I simply had to accept that He was still with me even though I no longer had a *conscious* sense of His love. How I had taken those days of sweetness for granted, thinking that they would last forever! At that time I had known nothing else. But now I had to begin to learn of His love in more distant ways, having *faith* that He was just as close to me as He had always been! I accepted it — but I couldn't help but miss Him, too.

During Christmas vacation of 1975, the children and I travelled by train to the Midwest. Our first stop was in Minneapolis to visit my sister and her husband, Goldie and Dave Winn. (I am the oldest of three girls — five years older than Goldie, and ten years older than my youngest sister, Cathy.)

Jesus had touched Goldie's life a year before I came to know Him. We had been almost completely out of contact with one another at the time. Goldie was a professional singer then, into drugs and the occult, and she and her husband were on the verge of a divorce. But then the Lord touched both of their lives, and in time healed their marriage in a really remarkable way.

In terms of my relationship to Goldie, it was Jesus who made us truly sisters for the first time! He really gave us His love for one another, and through our common faith we were able to build a relationship of friendship and love for the first time ever.

The children and I spent some happy days with them. They were members then of a newly-formed Messianic Jewish Congregation, and while I was there they had a guest speaker from Israel, a Believer in Jesus by the name of Richard Stoehr. At dinner one night, he said to me, "Eileen, I really feel from the Lord that He will be bringing you to Israel next September. Pray about it, and if it's His will, then He'll confirm it and it will happen!"

I felt as though I had been struck by a thunderbolt. *Israel? Why in the world would I want to go there? Hadn't I just become a Christian? And wasn't Israel a Jewish country?* All of my life I had been ashamed of my Judaism, primarily as a reaction to persecution. So to me Israel would be the last place on the earth that I would ever want to go! But, on the other hand, I did not want to miss the will of the Lord, so I simply put it into His hands. And somehow, even then, I recognized Him in it.

Several days later I left with Mike and Joey to visit my mother and father in Iowa. My dad was the administrator of a state mental hospital in Iowa, and actually had turned it from a dumping grounds for mental patients into one of the finest mental health care facilities in the country. They lived in a gracious apartment on the hospital grounds, and we always enjoyed our visits with them!

One day I mentioned to them the fact that we were considering the possibility of moving to Israel in September of 1976. They were delighted with the idea! They showed me slides of two trips they had taken to Israel, and gave me books to read about the country. I knew almost nothing about Israel at the time, and I was amazed when I saw the slides. It looked like such a lovely place!

On the train ride back to Connecticut with the children, I pondered over the unexpected turn our lives might possibly be taking. But it was still unfathomable to me! Why Israel, of all places?

The answer was soon to come. The Lord woke me up early one morning with the clear instruction that I was to invite the church to be my guests for a Passover celebration. I was flabbergasted! "Passover! But that's a *Jewish* holiday," I reminded Him. "And, oh dear, it's only four nights away!" I added. "You can't mean it!" But I knew better than to argue further. Later that morning I called Dr. Reid and told him about the Lord's instructions to me.

"Great!" he said. "I'll announce it in church tomorrow morning!" We arranged to hold the dinner at the church on Wednesday night, the first night of the Passover observance.

I had a small amount of money in the bank, and I knew that I was to use it to purchase the food for the passover meal. I had never in my life cooked and prepared a meal for over a hundred people, but I didn't really have enough time to ponder over it! I went to the store and began purchasing more Passover supplies than I could imagine. As I was stacking my cart full of jars of gefilte fish, another customer stood gaping at me in astonishment. "It's a good price, don't you think?" I said jokingly, as I moved on to add boxes and boxes of matzot to my already groaning cart.

I borrowed huge pots from the church, and then proceeded, with the help of friends, to cook the biggest pot of chicken soup I had ever seen in all my life. Finally, the night before the Seder meal was to take place, most of the preparations had been completed. A number of us were to meet at the church on Wednesday afternoon to set the tables, prepare the chickens, cook the matzah balls and vegetables, and arrange the rest of the food for serving. All that I needed still to do was to type a stencil for duplicating the "Order of the Meal" from the Haggadah, as I did not have enough of the traditional Passover books to go around. So on Tuesday night I began the final task. I was typing late into the night, when suddenly a most extraordinary thing happened. I felt as though a blindfold was being lifted from my eyes, as the Lord began to reveal to me the real meaning of the Passover meal!

To begin with, the Lord reminded me of the institution of the Passover, as explained in Exodus, chapter 12:

"And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.

Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying,

In the tenth day of this month, they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for a house: . . .

And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.

And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it . . .

And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: for it is the Lord's passover.

For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord.

And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.

And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.

Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; ...

And in the first day there shall be a holy convocation..."

Then, the Lord gave me the understanding that Jesus had become the sacrificial Lamb, the fulfillment of the Passover, and that *His* blood, as the Lamb without blemish, cleansed us once and for all from our sins. It was on the day of the *Passover* that Jesus gave us the gift of His life! (And now the angel of death will pass over us — for all eternity!)

"And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, He said unto His disciples, 'Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.'

. . . Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed, and He sent Peter and John, saying, 'Go and prepare us the Passover, that we may eat . .

And when the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him.

And He said unto them, 'With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:

For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.'

. . . And he took bread, and gave thanks, and break it, and gave unto them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me.' Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.""

Matthew 26:1-2

Luke 22:7-8; 14-16; 19-20

And at once — in a moment's time — I understood at last, that the hope of my people, the promise of the coming of the Messiah, had been fulfilled in God's gift to us of His Son. Jesus is the *Messiah!*

In those days, Israel was expecting the Messiah to usher in an earthly kingdom of peace and prosperity; the Scriptures speaking of the Messiah's reign are so clear! But that instead He would come first to die as our atonement for sin — those Scriptures were hidden and almost impossible to decipher until after their fulfillment. It was Jesus Himself who expounded these Scriptures to the disciples after His resurrection, first of all on the road to Emmaus:

"And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

Luke 24:27

And again, when the disciples were gathered together, Jesus appeared in the midst of them.

"And He said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures."

Luke 24:44-45

And so I learned in that moment of time that the Jewish people have not hoped in vain all these centuries for the promise of the Messiah — *for He had come.*

So many things were clarified for me in those joyous hours of revelation! I understood suddenly why the Lord had prompted Dr. Reid to advise me not to join a church. It was simply because I didn't need to convert to a "Gentile" faith! For Jesus is our Messiah! It's all *Jewish!* And so much of Jewish Biblical history was but a foreshadowing, like the story of Abraham and Isaac!

"And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.

And He said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. . .

And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

And Abraham said, My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together."

Genesis 22:1-2, 6-8

And then, the day came when God laid the wood upon *His* Son... and at the moment of His death, the veil in the Temple was torn in two — which meant that we now had access, through His blood, into the Holy of Holies, *the very presence of God.* Oh!

I also understood that night that I could lay to rest forever the dreadful condemnation that the Jews were alone responsible for the death of Jesus. He died as the atonement for the sins of all mankind, and the responsibility is born by all people:

"For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together . . ."

Acts 4:27

But in truth, as Jesus said in John 10:18, *"I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself."* And even as He hung upon the redemptive cross, He looked down on those who had crucified Him, Jew and Gentile alike, and He said, *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do . . ."* Luke 23:34. And in that moment, He brought forgiveness to us all.

Discovering that Jesus was the Messiah was an astonishment to me. I felt such a joy in knowing that God had kept His promises to the Jewish people, and that we have not hoped in vain!

Since I knew Jesus personally, and had come very close to Him during those idyllic months, I also sensed what those last hours must have been like *for Him*.

When He was in the Garden of Gethsemane, all of Heaven must have held its breath, because He had the choice. He could have changed His mind, and angels would have come to minister to Him. But He loved us too much, and He trusted implicitly in the will and the love of His Father, and so He said, during those agonizing moments of time:

"Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not My will, but Thine, be done . . ."

And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

Luke 22:42, 44

My heart ached with love for Him when I thought of all that He had endured that night and the following day. If only mankind had a sense of its sin, then it would appreciate the precious gift the Lord God gave to us in this, His Savior. *Through Jesus' gift of His life for our sins, we can now come into the presence of the Almighty.* One minute in God's presence is worth more than all the treasures of the world, but how lightly we turn aside from Him to pursue our worldly cares. To be able to turn to God for help; to be able to stand in His presence, cleansed and forgiven; to be able to commune with Him; and, most blessed of all, to be able to entrust our lives in His care, to serve Him, and to bring others into His saving grace — nothing in all the world could be so sweet! Jesus gave it all to us when He said that dark, dark night, *"Father, Thy will be done."*

As I reflected on all of this in the early morning hours, I prayed that my life would echo Jesus' words: *"Father, Thy will be done."* I prayed, too, that I would somehow be able to share with others the great miracle of Jesus' gift to us. But most of all, I stood in deep thanksgiving to Jesus for all that He suffered, and to God for giving us an answer for our sins, which had separated us from Him.

And so, on Wednesday evening, we held the Passover meal together in the church. It was right that, as a church, we should celebrate together this special event, as Jesus did so long ago with His disciples.

Traditionally on the Passover table, along with the wine, the bitter herbs, and the shank bone (symbolizing the sacrifice) are three pieces of matzot, the unleavened bread. They are

placed one atop the other and are separated between the folds of a white cloth.

After the blessing over the first cup of wine, the leader takes the middle piece of matzah and breaks it in half, leaving half of it there and "hiding" the other half until the end of the meal. Following the meal, traditionally, the children search for the hidden matzah, or "afikomen", and it is then broken and passed around and eaten by all present at the Seder table.

As we partook of the "afikomen" at the church that night, it took on a profound significance as I recognized the symbolism of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit represented in the three pieces of matzot. The middle matzah, broken in half, symbolized His sacrifice as well as His first and second comings. I thought then of the poignant words of Isaiah as he described the Messiah, broken for us:

"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.

Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: Yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth . . .

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: when thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand."

Isaiah 53:3-7, 10

At one point in the Passover service, the Jewish people recount the plagues on the Egyptians, and as each plague is mentioned, they take one drop of wine from their cups for each plague. The Haggadah explains:

"We are willing to indicate with it that we do not empty the cup of delight wholly, for we cannot celebrate the feast of our deliverance full of joy when so many thousands of human beings have perished."

It must be so in the lives of Believers, too. We cannot only celebrate when millions of people are still untouched by redemption. We must go into the world to save. On the very last page of the Haggadah, we read together these words:

"As the Haggadah commences with the thought of deliverance — that from Egypt — such it ends — with the even more significant redemption of whole mankind from all evil. Full of renewed hope, we finish the seder."

From that time on, the Lord began to teach me the very amazing story of the Jewish people. I came to understand that nothing spoke so clearly of the faithfulness of God as the fact that the Jewish people have survived as Jews for thousands of years.

After God had instructed Abraham *not* to lay his hand upon Isaac (and the ram was offered in sacrifice instead), God then told Abraham a very astonishing thing:

"By myself I have sworn, saith the Lord, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing, I will bless thee, in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast hearkened to My voice."

Genesis 22:16-18

The Lord confirmed the covenant He made with Israel through Isaac, and again through Jacob:

"And God appeared unto Jacob... and said unto him: Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and He called his name Israel. And God said unto him: I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; and the land which I gave unto Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land."

Genesis 35:10-12

And then year followed year, century followed century. Great and mighty nations have risen, and great and mighty nations have fallen. But the seed of Abraham have remained to this day, a people set apart by God for the fulfillment of His Word. They have survived and, as God promised, they have been a blessing to all the nations of the world. The Messiah of Israel has been a light to the Gentile (pagan) nations; and the Bible, richly filled with testimonies of the dealings of God and with the miracle of Jesus' great ministry of love, has enriched hearts from one end of the earth to the other as the centuries have marched past.

God's ways are so different from the ways of the world! Just as Jesus surprised Jewish scholars and theologians by coming to die (and then to live again!), so God's hand upon the Jewish people seems to run contrary to what we would think that being "chosen" might entail. For it is clear to see just by reviewing the often tragic history of the Jewish people that to be "chosen of God" does not bring earthly treasures; instead, it is often the pathway of greatest suffering. Jesus had to endure ridicule, torture, and even death. But yet He was the only begotten Son of God and now reigns with Him in glory. And the Jewish people, although persecuted and hated and killed by godless men, are still the apple of God's eye (Zechariah 2:8); He has kept them close to His heart even until this day. The faithfulness of God to keep His Word is the only possible explanation for their survival until now!

And then the Lord taught me yet another incredible thing — *the modern nation of Israel is a miracle and the fulfillment of His promises to the Jewish people!* I couldn't believe that we were actually living in a time when Biblical prophecies were being fulfilled right before our very eyes! And I hadn't known a thing about it! How astonished and amazed I felt! I'll let the Scriptures tell Israel's story themselves:

"Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; the Lord of hosts is His name:

If those ordinances depart from before Me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me forever."

Jeremiah 31:35-36

"And ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude; because thou wouldest not obey the voice of the Lord thy God. And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other . . ."

Deuteronomy 28:62, 64

"And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am the Lord their God."

Leviticus 26:44

"Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children."

Isaiah 66:8

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left.

And He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed from the four corners of the earth."

Isaiah 11:11, 12

"And I will bring again the captivity of My people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God."

Amos 9:14,15

"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose."

Isaiah 35:1

"But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to My people of Israel; for they are at hand to come."

Ezekiel 36:8

6

It seemed hard to believe that it was just four months earlier that I had first met Richard with his sense from the Lord that I would be moving to Israel in September of 1976. The Lord had taught me so much in the interim! He had given me an identity as a Jew for the first time in my life, with such a love for my people and a real longing to return home to the land of Israel.

One afternoon I shared all of this with Dr. Reid, and asked him what he thought about the word that I had received about going to Israel in the fall. His answer was firm. "If it is the Lord who is directing you to go, then He will make it possible and it will be done openly. Just leave it in His hands!"

In April I wrote a letter to the Israeli Aliyah (Immigration) office in New York requesting information. It was a step in faith, as the Lord alone could make it possible for us to go! Several weeks passed and when I received no reply, I decided to place a call to the Aliyah office. The woman who answered the phone had a delightful Brooklyn accent. I told her of my desire to immigrate to Israel with my two children. She inquired about my husband, and I informed her that I was divorced.

"Were you divorced by a Rabbi?" she queried.

My heart sank. "No," I replied.

"Well, my dear, you cannot possibly immigrate to Israel without a valid Rabbinical divorce. Call us again later . . ." and I could tell that she was about to hang up the telephone.

"No! Wait! Don't hang up! I can't be divorced by a Rabbi, since I wasn't married by one to begin with!" Then I begged her to give me an appointment to discuss the matter. I believe that she was so startled by my un-orthodox reply, that she gave me an appointment for the following week.

A week later I arrived on time for my appointment at the Aliyah office. I announced my arrival, and then sat down to wait. Twenty minutes went by. Then almost an hour. I was sitting in plain sight, so it seemed foolish to re-announce my arrival. But finally I was beginning to feel like a piece of office equipment, so I walked over to the reception desk once again.

The receptionist, it seems, had forgotten to relay the message! In a matter of minutes, I was ushered into a gentleman's office, and he forgave *me* for being late! I was too astonished to reply!

My talk with him was very encouraging. He informed me that Social Workers with my education and experience were very much needed in Israel, and he told me about a special program for Social Workers that would commence in September — the very month I had felt I would go! He gave me all of the necessary application blanks and information. He then explained that the Israeli government would give us a loan to cover the cost of transportation for the children and myself. We would then receive free housing for six

months in a centre for new immigrants where I would be given an intensive course of Hebrew study. And then they would help us to find an apartment and employment in the area of Israel where we would want to settle. (Usually they provide new immigrants with a living allowance as well, but since I hoped to receive child support, I would not be eligible for that assistance.) It all seemed too good to be true. *Perhaps we would really go . . .*

When I had first considered actually moving to Israel, it had seemed like a dream, because the children and I had so little money. But now, with Israel's help, it seemed that lack of funds would no longer be an obstacle. But a major obstacle still stood in the way! I could not imagine in a million years how Joe, my ex-husband, would ever allow the children to leave the United States. His opposition would be completely valid: he loved Michael and Joey! But I also knew that what Dr. Reid had advised me was true — if it was God's will for us to go, He would open all the doors!

To me it looked like an impossible dilemma. I had no idea what to do! And that, I think, is when the Lord is able to work the best. When we use our own methods and follow our own ideas, we seldom (if ever) stop to consult Him. But when we have come to an end of our own resources, then we are best able to place the entire situation in His hands. I'm still astonished at the way He chose to work it out!

It all began one day when I purchased some "fake fur" to cover my sofa and throw pillows in the living room. When I had finished sewing, the living room looked really lovely! But a few days later I began to have difficulty breathing, and it seemed to get worse as the days wore on.

Finally I consulted a physician, who felt that I had suddenly developed an allergic reaction set off by the fur. After testing, he discovered that I was allergic to almost everything!

"Your case," the doctor explained, "is fairly common in middle-aged people. It is similar to a dam breaking. It is as though a tolerance has been building for a number of years, and then the fur is what finally set off the severe allergic reaction to everything."

Naturally, his first instruction to me eliminated at once my attractive new decorating scheme in the living room! He then gave me medication to control the breathing, and vials of the allergens with hopes that he could eventually get the situation under control.

At about this time an old friend, Chris, had contacted me from Massachusetts. I had not seen her for a number of years! She had recently come to know the love of Jesus in a real way, and shortly thereafter she had learned of His love for Israel and for the Jewish people. And so she then remembered the only Jewish friend she had ever really known — me! She was, of course, thrilled to know that I, too, had come to know Jesus' love as well.

The children and I had visited with Chris and her family on numerous occasions and had gotten to know many of their friends as well. Everything was fine until I came down with the allergic condition. And then I heard the same thing again! "It's because of sin! You need to receive complete healing. Claim perfect health and prosperity!"

However, my condition continued to worsen. Unbeknownst to me, I had developed a lung infection superimposed upon the allergies. Every time I went for emergency treatment, they would treat it symptomatically, believing it to be a simple allergic reaction. Therefore, the infection went untreated. I would have relief for a short period of time, but then I would become really ill once again.

One night my breathing difficulty was particularly acute. I had gone upstairs to bed, but I could not breathe well enough to lie down. As a matter of fact, I could not breathe well enough to do anything, and I knew I was seriously ill. I was gasping for breath, and felt completely helpless and frightened. The children were sleeping, and I did not have the energy to drive myself to the hospital. I didn't know what to do!

Finally I got on my knees before the Lord, feeling very confused. I was saying to Him,

"Lord, I know you can heal! You already saved my life! Why isn't it happening? What is wrong with my faith? Why do You seem so far away?" Why was I so ill? Why was the Lord allowing this to happen? Without the accusations of friends, I'm sure I would never have reacted so strongly to something as commonplace as illness. But their insinuations made me doubt my relationship to the *Lord!*

Nights seem so dreadfully long when sleep is impossible. Finally, in the midst of my tears and my pleadings, I heard the still, small voice of God. "Trust Me," was all that He said. And so I did. I placed the situation in His hands, and made it through the night as best as I could.

The next morning, somehow I had the strength to get Joey off to school and Michael dressed, and then called a friend to take me to the emergency room. The doctor there administered emergency treatment. When that produced no apparent relief, he told me that he felt it necessary for me to be hospitalized immediately. I was appalled, and tried hard to talk him out of it.

"I'm afraid you have no choice. You have a severe lung condition that requires immediate hospitalization and treatment!" he reiterated firmly.

A short while later, I was taken to my room. I notified Joe, and he made arrangements to take care of the children. I soon realized that this hospitalization was to be a special time!

Physically, I could tell that my condition was quite severe. Initially I was on a liquid diet to relieve the strain on my lungs, and received two I. V.s — saline solution as well as antibiotics administered intravenously. I received oxygen, respiration therapy and postural drainage around the clock. I used a small inhalator and had three additional prescriptions to remove the mucous from my lungs.

When Chris and her friends heard of my illness, I underwent real condemnation. "Look at her!" they said. "Obviously her faith is weak!" And they were unable to reach out, in love, at a time of need.

All of this confused me greatly, but I knew in my heart that Jesus had said, "Trust Me." He taught me through it the vital lesson that when we are on the mountaintop, being showered with the gifts of God, our belief at that time has little to do with faith. His love to us there is a fact! But when we are in the valleys, and can *still* testify to His love, then we begin to learn what a walk in faith is all about.

Even though I was seriously ill, I was still able to witness to His faithfulness, and, as a result, lives were touched by His love. People came to visit me from the church who ordinarily wouldn't. I was able to share with other patients, and with the nursing staff, and with the cleaning staff. It was a blessed and very beautiful time!

It was such a special time that even by the second day, I knelt in the bathroom to praise Him for having blessed me with this illness! His response reminded me of His adorable sense of humour.

As I was thanking Him, He said, "Be aware that the mental health clinic is only one flight up!" And suddenly I pictured myself as the world would see me, and I couldn't help but giggle! There I was, dressed in a hospital "johnnie", with two I.V.s attached to my arms, kneeling on the floor thanking God for blessing me with an illness! Truly the world would never understand! (It was especially funny, as my ex-husband was the director of the mental health clinic!) The Lord's love is a comfort!

There were a number of illustrations of how the Lord turned my time in the hospital into a situation where others came to know His love for *them*. One afternoon, a woman from the church came to visit me. The minute she arrived, I knew from the Lord that I was to order her a guest tray. That astonished me, because she was always so terribly busy, and it seemed impossible that she would have the time to stay for supper, which was yet an hour away! I invited her, however, and she reluctantly agreed. She called her household, and gave lots of instructions for farm chores and so on, and then she sat down to talk.

From that point on, however, I did not have a chance to talk with her again! First, the

telephone rang it was a friend who had just learned of my hospitalization. No sooner had I put down the phone but it rang again. That time it was a neighbour. By then I was feeling wog ammo& %troth great exasperation. I said to the Lord, "But Lord, why does the phone cam ringing. I can't talk with Barbara at all!" He then gave me insight into His purposes. I *sniff* was not able to talk with her, but at least I knew why so that I could deal with it with a smile!

At long last, the phone stopped ringing. We had just begun a conversation when the nurse came in to take my temperature. Then the respiration therapist came in to administer my breathing treatment. First I received 20 minutes of oxygen. Then I needed to use the respirator for 12 minutes. It was during that time that our dinner trays arrived, and I signalled Barbara to go ahead and eat. While my liquid dinner turned cold, the therapist administered postural drainage, and then had to rearrange my bed. By then, over two hours had gone by since Barbara's arrival, and I had been too busy to talk with her at all. Every once in a while I would ask, "Barbara, do you have any understanding of what is happening?" Her answer was always, "No." And then we would be interrupted again before I would have a chance to explain! So much exertion was tiring!

Finally, when the respiration therapist left the room, I said, "O.K., Lord, hold it! I'm supposed to be *sick*, remember? *Please* stop the interruptions, at least long enough for me to explain!" (Barbara looked greatly surprised.) I then prayed silently for Him to give me the wisdom to know what to say.

"Barbara," I began, "think about what just transpired. Over two hours ago, you came here to visit with me. I ordered you a guest tray, and from then on, we have had no chance whatsoever to talk. Why? What happened?"

Puzzled, she answered, "You were busy continually."

"Right! One interruption followed another, and I never had time to talk. While I was busy being busy, you sat there patiently and waited for an opportunity to share with me. But it never came!" I paused. "Barbara, none of this happened by mistake. The Lord arranged it to illustrate to you the kind of relationship you have with Him. Jesus loves you. He longs to have time alone with you. He longs to draw you closer to His side. But you are always too busy to sit down and commune with Him! And He patiently waits — just as you did with me!"

It demonstrated to both of us in a really graphic way the need to give the highest priority to time alone with Him. For Barbara especially, the lesson really hit home.

She stayed another hour, and we were both acutely aware of the fact that we were not interrupted again! But at one point in our conversation, Barbara seemed unclear about the Lord's word to her. The minute I sensed that, I panicked. I was sure that in two minutes, the phone would ring, and the nurses would come, and fourteen people would arrive to visit and, once again, there would be no end to the interruptions. I stood up in bed, and from my superior vantage point, I definitely caught her attention. "Please, Barbara," I begged, "Tell me you'll remember! Quickly! Before it gets busy again!" She laughed, and promised to remember it always.

At 7:30 the next morning, the telephone rang.

"Eileen, it's me, Barbara! I just wanted to share the news!" She was really excited. She Shared that she had gotten up that morning the same time as always. She had given time to the Lord first. She had prayed to Him. She had felt His closeness. She had read the Bible. And not only did she then proceed to have the time to do all of her chores, but she had arrived at work early for the first time in 17 years! The amazement in her voice brought tears of joy to my eyes.

"And so," she concluded, "I thought you'd be blessed by the news as well!" She was right. I was!

During my hospitalization, I began reading a commentary on the Book of Job, which had been given to me as a get-well gift! So many terrible things happened to him that his life simply fell apart before his very eyes. But it astonished me when the author commented that he had not even had the Scriptures to read for encouragement! But he *still* had faith in God! I remember commenting to Jesus, "Oh, my, isn't that incredible! How could he still have faith after all he had been through!" Then the Lord told me to remember back to the time when I had almost been killed by satan.

Up until that moment, it was a memory He had healed, and He had never asked for me to deal with it in any way except in thankfulness to Him for the victory. Suddenly, however, the memories came flooding back. I relived the entire nightmare, and saw even more clearly the victory of the Lord. And then, that night in my hospital bed, Jesus gently reminded me that I, too, still had kept my faith in Him, even without ever having read the Scriptures! (The Lord showed me this a year after it had happened. If He had revealed it to me earlier, I would have seen it as evidence of the strength of my faith. But by this time, I knew that the fact that I still had faith in Him was not to my credit, but it was due to His hand upon my life. It illustrated to me the plan He has for each of our lives. We need only to rest in it without worry or fear!)

He then showed me this verse in the gospel of Mark:

"And these signs shall follow them that believe . . . if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them . . ."

Mark 16:18

I had been given a deadly drink at the hands of a priest of satan's, and *it had not harmed me*. All the books in the world could not have taught me as much about the sovereignty of God as did that one experience! (It was to be an invaluable lesson in times to come, as the Lord moved me closer to the centre of the spiritual battle.)

At the end of two weeks, the doctor said I could go home, as he felt I had recovered sufficiently. "But," he cautioned, "if there is any recurrence of breathing difficulties, call my office and return to the hospital immediately."

It would be so wonderful to see the boys again! I had missed them so! Jean Donegan, a friend from the church, called and kindly offered to come and stay with me for a day or two to help out with the housework and cooking. It was such a kind offer, and I gratefully accepted.

On my last day in the hospital, I knew from the Lord that Dr. Reid would be coming for a visit, and that he would be glad to give me a ride home. So, trusting His wisdom, I made no other arrangements. I explained this to a friend who called to offer me a ride home.

"Well, thanks, but I can hitch a ride home with Dr. Reid."

"Oh, you talked with him?"

"Well, not exactly. No. The Lord told me he was coming, that's all."

"WHAT? And you haven't verified it?"

Both of us were at an impasse. To me, it seemed obvious that if the Lord had told me Dr. Reid was coming, that was the greatest assurance in the world! The Lord — our all-knowing Father!

And to her, trusting in that way was unthinkable!

Just before noon, the respiration therapist came by to administer my final breathing treatment. When she handed me the oxygen mask, I knew my days of lying in bed would soon be over, and that I might just as well enjoy it while I could! I flattened the bed, stretched out luxuriously, placed the oxygen mask on my face, and closed my eyes to thank the Lord for the many miracles of His love that I had witnessed. It was during this time that Dr. Reid

came to the door of my room.

Although he had not as yet been to visit me, he knew through personal experience the strength of the Lord in times of illness. He therefore came to the hospital expecting to see me filled with the joy of the Lord! When he entered the room and saw me flat out in bed with an oxygen mask, he simply assumed that he had been given the wrong room number at the reception desk in the lobby. He walked to the nurses' station and asked for Mrs. Dorflinger's room number. When he was given the identical number, he panicked! He feared that something must be dreadfully wrong! He came into the room once again, this time expecting the worst. I'll never forget the quiet and cautious way he spoke my name! He was greatly relieved, to say the least, when I sat up, truly filled with the joy of the Lord, and asked for a ride home!

I had learned so much during those two weeks! When we trust the Lord in every situation — even though it seems in sharp contradiction to the "popular religious theories" of the day — we will see that He is, indeed, in control. My hospitalization began in spiritual confusion. People were saying that there must be something wrong with my faith because I was ill. But by the end of the illness, when I knew that Jesus had blessed many lives with His love, I realized that their accusations simply were not true! The Lord never promises us a perfect life! However, He *does* promise us the strength to get through whatever comes our way. Through it all, we have His promise of victory! He used my sickness to strengthen my walk by His side; to touch many lives with His love; and, most wondrous of all, He used that sickness to open *the door for me to take the children to Israel!*

My physician was very upset by the severity of my condition. He felt that if I remained in a cold climate during the winter, I might not live through it because of the grave danger of re-infection. I had shared with him previously of my desire to move to Israel, and he had personally funded a clinic there for lung disorders because the dry climate in parts of Israel was ideal! And so he wrote out the following order:

"It is mandatory for this patient to move to Israel. Diagnosis: Severe Bronchitis, streptococcus and staph infection."

A prescription to move to Israel! Isn't the Lord incredible? (I could also have moved to Arizona, where the climate is similar, but I had no money whatsoever. And the move to Israel had already been arranged, with assistance promised with transportation, language, housing and employment!)

Since Joe was employed at the same hospital I had stayed in, he knew the severity of my condition. When we discussed the doctor's recommendations, and the assistance Israel would give us, he had no alternative but to say yes! Oh, it was such a great miracle!

I felt a great sadness for him, however, as I knew how much the boys meant to him. (He knew nothing of my walk in faith; and, sadly enough, he didn't know Jesus, either.)

At the end of June, two weeks after I had shared with Joe our plans to immigrate to Israel in September, he brought the boys back after one of their weekly outings. He asked to speak with me for a few minutes.

"I'd like you to know," he began, somewhat formally, "that I'm about to be married. Jude and I have set the date for the 5th of July."

Tears came to my eyes. "Oh, Joe, I'm really happy for you. I think that's so special!"

I knew then that Joe would really be all right. I no longer felt so sad at the thought of taking away his children when I knew that he was to begin a new life with someone who loved him very much. It gave me even more assurance that it was the Lord's will for us to go to Israel!

After prayer, I also knew from the Lord that I was to take a reduction in child support so

that Joe and Jude would have the money to pay for the boys' round-trip air fare to the U. S. once a year.

The doors indeed had opened!

The summer days fled by, as the time for our departure to Israel drew closer. I was feeling wistful one particular August evening, as I was packing and sorting in preparation for our move. The port city of Ashdod was to be our new home, in an immigration centre a block from the Mediterranean. My parents had visited the centre on one of their tours to Israel, and described it to us. The centre was located across the street from a large shopping area and adjacent to a lovely park that sloped down to the sea. It sounded beautiful! But it was still very difficult to pack up a home and to say goodbye to friends and family, and then to face a strange new land!

Suddenly, I felt the Lord's presence, never dreaming that what He would say to me that night would turn my world upside down. He came, in fact, to lovingly unveil the cross that He had carefully prepared for me to bear.

He asked me a single question: "Do you love me above *everything* in your life?"

I reflected for a while. I knew that at that time in my life I was faced with putting the Lord and His will above all that was familiar to me — my home, my homeland, my friends and my relatives. But when I compared each of those things to the greatness of His love, I knew I loved Him more. And so I answered Him after some time had passed, "Yes, Lord, I love You more than any of these things!"

But God is never, ever fooled, and He knew that none of those things mattered so much to me. I knew that friends would still be friends and family would remain family!

He repeated the question: "But do you love Me above *everything* in your life?" I didn't know what was to come next, but I must have sensed it, for without knowing why, I began to cry. And then He spoke one sentence to me — just one sentence, that tore at my heart by the roots. "*If you follow My will for your life, you and the children will have six months together as a family in Israel, and then they will return to live with their father and step-mother in the United States.*"

My sons! The Lord knew it! For they and they alone were the centre of my heart! I loved them more than anything! I felt stunned, and tried to dismiss it as only a test, saying lightly, "Oh, Lord, surely you don't mean it!" But somehow I knew that He did, and quietly I went upstairs and tiptoed into their bedroom. They were sleeping peacefully, those two dear ones of mine, and all at once I was overcome by a grief and a sense of hopelessness and loss that I could never describe. I ran to my room, flung myself down on the bed, and sobbed and sobbed and sobbed.

After what seemed like an eternity, I knelt to face the Lord again. He had that night touched the very centre of my heart. He knew that nothing else that I could give to Him would really mean very much at all. It was little Joey and Michael who meant everything to me! But I knew I didn't really have a choice. The Lord had already taught me two very important things: First of all, life outside of the will of God is simply not worth living, no matter who it is that we are with! And, secondly, I knew that Joey and Michael *already* belonged to Him. I had even written with their pictures in the front of my Bible the words of Tennyson, "God gives us love, but someone to love He lends us . ." And so I symbolically placed them on the altar of sacrifice, just as Abraham had to do with Isaac so long ago, and I know his heart must have been just as heavy with grief. I put them in the Lord's hands, praying with all my heart that it was just a test, but knowing somewhere deep, deep inside that it was not.

The only way that I could face the days that followed was to dismiss it from conscious thought, with the distant hope that I had been wrong and it would never really happen. Otherwise I could never have survived! I told a few friends about what had transpired

between the Lord and myself that night, but for the most part I refused to let myself dwell on it in any way.

The long-awaited day arrived at last when we were to fly to Israel. Joe and Jude were driving Joey and Michael to the airport in New York to say goodbye to them there. Alease, my dear next door neighbour, along with Jean Donegan and other friends from the church, were driving me to the airport in Connecticut, and then I would fly to the New York airport. (Marcia had by then moved to Pennsylvania.) Just before it was time for me to board the plane, we all stood in a circle holding hands, and they prayed for the Lord's blessings upon me. They promised to pray and to write and to help in any possible way. I knew I would miss them all.

PART III

*"..As sorrowful,
yet always rejoicing...
as having nothing,
yet possessing all things..."*

2 Corinthians 5:10

Jesus said, "Come, follow Me." It is the way of sorrows. It is a pathway that leads to suffering, and hatred, and even death. In their beginning walk on the way of the cross, the Apostles were imprisoned and beaten:

*"And they departed from the
presence of the council,
rejoicing that they were counted
worthy to suffer shame
for His name."*

Acts 6:41

So few of us today are willing to suffer out of love for Him. And even sadder is the fact that we are unable to see the depth of His suffering — for it is only through Love that we become sensitive to the sufferings of someone else...

7

WHAT ARE WE DOING

IN THE DESERT

At the New York airport, I could sense Joe's anguish as he took a final look at Mike and Joey before they disappeared into the departure lounge. How could I tell him that these would be the last six months the children and I would have together? That we would have a time set apart, a last time together, and then it would be I who would be parting from them? It no doubt would have helped to ease his pain, but I was unable to share it with him. How could he possibly have understood it? And I was still hoping that it would all happen differently.

After supper on the plane, I read the boys a story and gave them their "travelling treats", the little gifts that I always made a part of our travelling together. When they finally drifted off to sleep, I found that for me sleep was impossible. I could hardly believe that we were actually on our way to Israel. Through Jesus' careful instruction, it had come to mean so much to me! As a Jewess, here I was winging my way home, to the land that *God Himself* had promised as a home to the Jewish people forever! It was so overwhelming as I realized that His promises had been fulfilled in my lifetime! For centuries the Jewish heart has yearned for a return to the Land of Promise. And here I was, on my way there!

"When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.

.Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them.

The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad."

Psalm 126:1-3

As a believer in Jesus, I knew Israel would have double meaning. It's my natural homeland, and also the land that Jesus loved so much; where He walked, and taught, and healed, and loved, and laughed, and wept, and suffered, and died; and there He rose triumphantly from the bonds of death to sit at the right hand of God. Such a holy place! As the wheels touched down at Ben Gurion Airport, I couldn't help but cry anticipatory tears of joy.

After our landing, time passed quickly in the flurry of activity that followed. We were herded through customs and sent to a government office for new immigrants. After being processed, we collected our baggage, received our papers, and were then placed in a taxicab bound (or so I thought) for the seaside city of Ashdod.

Joey and Michael were exhausted by then, and soon fell asleep with their heads on my lap. With eyes wide with wonder, I watched excitedly the glimpses of Israel that sped by from the taxi window. I saw trees heavy with fruit, fields filled with cotton, a countryside alive with growth and echoing the words of the prophets of long ago:

"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose."

Isaiah 35:1

"But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel; for they are at hand to come."

Ezekiel 36:8

"For God will save Zion, and will build the cities of Judah: that they may dwell there, and have it in possession."

Psalms 69:35

We were home. It was hard to believe!

The green fertile fields suddenly became the barrenness of desert sand. Such a vast and desolate stretch of wasteland! I spotted two camels standing majestically atop a sand dune, and then it finally dawned on me. *What are we doing in the desert?*

It was supposed to be a mere hour's ride from Tel Aviv to Ashdod. Therefore, I had not taken the time to exchange money at the airport. I expected to arrive in Ashdod by early afternoon, which would leave us plenty of time to unpack, to exchange some money, and to shop for food at the stores that I knew to be across from the immigration centre. But much more than an hour had passed, and still we were driving! The taxi driver spoke not a word of English, and in Hebrew I was adept at saying "shalom" and the blessing over the Sabbath candles, neither of which helped me to find out what we were doing in the middle of the desert!

After travelling for another hour or so, at last we came to the city of Beersheva, the capital of the Negev. The boys were wide awake by then, and my explanations to them were not very reassuring. The driver stopped many times to ask directions. To *where?* Oh, I longed to know!

Finally, just as the sun was beginning to set, it appeared that we had arrived at our destination. Our luggage was unloaded, and we were led to two small rooms. Someone said, in broken English, "Welcome! Tomorrow, office there, 8:00 a.m.," and pointed off somewhere. And then we were left alone surrounded by what little we owned in the world. Instead of being in a lovely new city by the edge of the sea, we found ourselves in a very ancient city, favoured 4,000 years ago by Abraham as a resting place. The immigration centre was on the outskirts of Beersheva surrounded by an endless expanse of desert sand. There were no banks or shops in sight.

We walked into the two rooms where our belongings had been deposited. They seemed so barren and cold and matched the growing desolation in my heart. Our first night in Israel! This surely wasn't how I had pictured it! There we were, feeling lost, tired, hungry and quite alone! And, if that weren't enough, on the wall behind the refrigerator sat the biggest insect I had ever seen in my life.

The boys asked what we were to do, and I had no answer for them. "Just pray," I answered wearily.

A few minutes later, there was a knock on the door. There stood an American family! "We were told that you would be arriving today, and we've come to welcome you. How may we be of help?" And then they offered us supper! There's no way to express the joy that we felt!

Their kindness to us that night was something I shall always remember. How much it can mean when someone reaches out in love! They shared so willingly the little that they

had, and the simple meal they put before us meant more to me than anything I had ever eaten.

They were full of helpful advice to ease our first days in a foreign country. We left their little home that night still puzzled, but warmed through with friendship and food.

The boys and I had a long talk that night. I could not explain to them what had happened and why. Jesus had confirmed to us that Ashdod was to be our home. "And so," I told my two small sons, "we have to believe that He will take us there!"

We agreed in faith not to unpack, and we each said a prayer that He would bring us to Ashdod. Our faith at that moment was not very great. Ashdod and our beautiful immigration centre by the sea seemed hopelessly far away. The boys were not greatly reassured, and I was not greatly reassuring.

It was hard for Joey and Michael to sleep, and when they finally did fall asleep, I found that sleep for me was impossible. My feelings of abandonment were acute. "Lord, You brought us to Israel. Why are we in the wrong place?" Questions and doubts kept plaguing me. I finally knelt to pray.

"Oh, Jesus, I don't understand. Is this where You want us? But Your verifications for Ashdod were so clear! So I *must* believe Your word to us! Please, move this mountain for us! If we've been expected here, it seems impossible that it could work out for us to get to Ashdod. But in spite of the difficulties, I will believe that You can work it out!

And, if Your will is for us to stay here, I will try to make the best of it. Even though it's desolate, and not by the sea, and with the biggest insect in the world on the wall!

Praise You, Lord. Help my unbelief! Amen."

I lay on my bed and waited for morning, keeping a wary eye on the wall behind the refrigerator.

Morning came at last — it always does! After speaking to the director at 8:00 a.m., I learned that they had been expecting us at the immigration centre in Beersheva for the past two weeks! She explained that the mistake had been made in the States — they never should have told us we would be going to Ashdod! My heart sank. It was not simply a matter of where we lived! That doesn't really matter! But I had believed God that we would be going to Ashdod, and if I was wrong about that, then perhaps I had been wrong about it all! I began to pray very hard.

The director agreed to call the main office in Jerusalem to investigate, and she taught me a Hebrew word she said was essential to life in Israel — "savlanoot" (it means "patience"). The office loaned us enough Israeli currency to take the bus to the centre of Beersheva, so that we could exchange our money and have some breakfast. A kindly person walked us to the bus and instructed the bus driver in Hebrew to direct us to the bank.

After exchanging our money and eating a rather unusual breakfast, we boarded a bus once again. When we got off the bus at what I thought was our stop, the immigration centre was nowhere in sight! So, there we were, lost in Beersheva, after having been lost by coming to Beersheva to begin with! I began to ask for the immigration centre in Hebrew, and wondered why everyone gave me such strange looks! (Later I learned that I had mistaken the word "immigrant" for "immigration centre"! Can you imagine someone wandering around saying, "Immigrant? Immigrant? Where's the immigrant?" But a friend of mine had an even funnier story to tell. As a new arrival, Lev had learned the Hebrew word for chicken. But whenever he asked the butcher for chicken, they would only look at him quizzically. Without realizing it, he was using the word for "ears" instead!)

Finally, Joey suggested we reboard the bus. "Perhaps we have to ride further, Mommy!" And he was right!

At last we returned to the director's office, and she explained that the Jerusalem office had verified that the mistake had been made in America. Reservations were for Beersheva,



Joey and Michael at the Immigration Centre, Ashdod, 1976



not for Ashdod! "But," she added, somewhat astonished herself, "they are willing to correct their mistake if you insist. There is one vacancy left for a family at the Ashdod Immigration Centre!"

And so, thirty minutes later, with tears of joy in our eyes and thankfulness in our hearts, we were once again in a taxicab — this time headed to the home the Lord had indeed prepared for us. And then, in the middle of the Negev desert, in the minuscule country of Israel, speeding along in a taxicab, the Moroccan taxicab driver leaned over and turned on the radio — and one of the songs that Jesus had given me, "My Gentle Lady", came on the air! He shows us His love in such unexpectedly wonderful ways!

Our new home in Ashdod seemed even lovelier than my parents' description of it. It was a beautiful new building so close to the sea. The two-roomed apartment seemed like a palace compared to Beersheva, and our delight knew no bounds! And I'm certain that if we had arrived at the Ashdod Immigration Centre directly from the airport, we never would have appreciated the loveliness of our new little home as much as we did after our misguided tour to Beersheva!

Almost from the very beginning, I fell in love with the nation of Israel. It has such life and vitality, and people who come to visit seldom leave quite the same. There is a feeling to the land that is difficult to describe, but nevertheless unmistakable — the sense of the presence of God. (And somehow I sensed from Him that my time in Israel was to be a time of chastening, that, as Paul had said, I had begun "to put away childish things.")

Joey and Michael attended the local schools, and were given private instruction in Hebrew. Classes for adults were held within the Centre itself. Classes for the three of us began each morning at 8:00 a.m., and we were finished for the day by 1:00 p.m. I arrived on the first day to discover that my class in Hebrew instruction had begun three weeks earlier. I was hopelessly behind from the very beginning, and it was such a discouragement. Fellow classmates were already speaking in Hebrew to one another, and I understood almost nothing!

Israeli society is based on a six-day work week, and so we attended school for six days as well. I will never forget our first Shabbat (Sabbath) in Israel. On Thursday, everyone scrubbed and prepared their homes for the special day to follow. When Friday morning dawned, the stores were jammed as everyone purchased their Shabbat supplies — always sure to include the special Shabbat bread, called "challah", along with fresh flowers and wine. On the eve of the Sabbath, a hush fell over the city. There was no longer any traffic, all of the shops had been closed, and the streets were empty. We had never before seen an entire city come to a standstill, and we were enthralled! Just before sunset, as we stood on the balcony of our little home, we could see Shabbat candles flickering in every apartment surrounding the immigration centre. How peaceful and beautiful it was!

It was a number of weeks before we began to celebrate the Shabbat together as a family, and I can't begin to describe the difference it made in our lives! It truly became a day set apart, a special time of family unity. On Friday afternoon, I would set the table (using a sheet for the white tablecloth). With fresh flowers, candles, wine and the special bread, our little home was transformed! The boys soon learned to recite the prayers, and we looked forward to the special evening more and more each week. How often it is said that even the simplest and poorest Jewish man is transformed into a king when he returns home from the synagogue to welcome the Sabbath, queen of the days!

"WELCOME, SABBATH QUEEN"

by Zalman Schneour

*"Oh, come let us welcome sweet Sabbath the Queen! The
cobbler abandoned his awl and his thread,*

The tailor's brisk needle now sleeps in its bed.

Father has bathed, washed his hair, and he says:

Sweet Sabbath is near,

Sweet Sabbath is here,

Oh, come let us welcome Sweet Sabbath the Queen!

The storekeeper locked and bolted his store,

The teamster unbridled his horse at the door,

The sexton runs hither and thither and says:

The sun sets in the sky,

Sweet Sabbath is nigh,

Oh, come let us welcome Sweet Sabbath the Queen!

The white bearded cantor has hastened along

To welcome the Sabbath with blessing and song,

Dear mother is lighting the candles and prays:

Day of holiness, rest,

Forever be blest,

Oh, come let us welcome Sweet Sabbath the Queen!"

Living in an immigration centre was an incredible experience. In one building were gathered families from many nations and diverse cultures, all there to learn the language and customs of Israel, the place chosen by each to be their new homeland. Once we all learned sufficient Hebrew to communicate, we enjoyed visiting one another.

We especially enjoyed the various field trips that were arranged by the centre for us. We would all board three or four buses and set off to explore the land. And Israel is such a wonder! A country with historical figures bearing names such as Abraham, David, Solomon, Ezekiel, Isaiah and Jesus surely speaks of a hallowed land!

We saw such beautiful sights! Abraham's well in Beersheva, the Dead Sea, and one of my favourites, Ein Gedi. It was there that David hid from Saul, and it was a site of such beauty! "Ein Gedi" means the "place of the mountain goat", and they can still be seen there today, high on the hills. We walked through tunnels of rush, and came to a magnificent waterfall. It was so unchanged, which is part of the miracle of Israel!

What amazed me the very most, however, was when I saw the sight where the "Dead Sea Scrolls" had been discovered. I had heard of their discovery while living in the States years before, but it meant little to me at the time. But when we actually saw the site of their discovery, in the midst of a wilderness, we knew it had to be the hand of God that had preserved them and then led to their discovery!

The scrolls had been found by an Arab boy, a shepherd. He had been tending his sheep in the wilderness near the Dead Sea, when he randomly tossed a stone into one of the high caves. He heard something break, and became frightened. The next day he returned with friends, and found jars with very old and smelly scrolls inside — part of which contained the scroll of Isaiah! The scrolls had been there for 1900 years. They were found in 1947. They validated the modern Jewish Scriptures as having been unchanged. And months after their discovery, the very words of Isaiah were fulfilled:

*"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me
to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the
brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the
prison to them that are bound;*

To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of

*our God; to comfort all who mourn;
To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them the oil of joy
for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be
called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.
And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former
desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many
generations."*

Isaiah 61:1-4

One of the trips included our first visit to the Holy City! We sat on the Mount of Olives and before our eyes lay "the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel". It was unlike any place I had ever seen. It sat there so majestically, golden Jerusalem, awaiting the return of her King. It has been a city favoured by the Lord down through the ages, and it has been truly blessed. And it still awaits its glorious future! Jerusalem has a history unlike any other city in the world, and a future so wondrous that we cannot even begin to comprehend.

Our first stop within the gates was at the "Western Wall". This is a place revered by Jewish people the world over. It is the only wall remaining of the original Temple, and it has become a beloved spot for prayer and lamentation.

As was the custom, I wrote my prayer on a tiny piece of paper and went forward to stick it in one of the cracks in the wall. It was at that moment that a deep burden for my people began to well up within me. I saw hundreds and hundreds of tiny scraps of paper, bearing the hopes and dreams and prayers and concerns of my brothers and sisters. I thought of the love of Jesus, our Messiah, that I had within me. I thought of the beautiful peace that He alone can give. And surrounding me were hundreds of my Jewish brethren, still praying before a wall! I felt a deep mourning, a sense of sadness and grief that I had never experienced before. I wept openly — I could not control the tears — and I begged God the Father to remove the wall of separation between them and Him, to welcome them as well into the Holy of Holies, through the blood of the Lamb. *"O Lord our God, lift the veil from their eyes! Let them know the greatness of Your love for them!"*

Without question, one of our favourite outings was when we were taken to see a "light and sound" production at Masada. Thousands of people sat around the foothills that surround that historic site. When darkness set in, we saw the dramatic re-enactment, through light and sound, of the Roman siege of the Masada fortress. It told a tragic story, for when the Roman soldiers finally made it to the top, they had a hollow victory. All of the Jewish men, women and children had taken their own lives, rather than submit to captivity.

Of all our experiences, I think what amazed me the most was what I continued to learn about the miracle of the re-birth of Israel as a nation . . .



“LITTLE DAVID”:

A SYNOPSIS

On 29 August, 1897, a Zionist congress assembled in Basle. It was the first official world-wide gathering of Jewish people since the dispersion 2,000 years before. And it was primarily the result of the vision of one man, Theodore Herzl.

Herzl spoke on the opening day of the conference, sharing his dream for a Jewish homeland in Palestine, a homeland that would be openly recognized and legally secure. During the Congress, a World Zionist Organization was established. Herzl was elected its president, "Hatikvah" ("The Hope") was chosen to be the national anthem, and the flag of Israel was created. Herzl worked tirelessly throughout his life to see this vision, this dream of the ages, the return to the land, fulfilled. On 3 July, 1904, he died of pneumonia at the age of forty-four. But throughout his life he had a tremendous influence upon the Jewish people. They began to dream again of a future shaped by their own hands!

Chaim Weizmann picked up the banner where Herzl had laid it down. In 1914, Weizmann proposed that international recognition should be given to the right of the Jewish people to "reconstitute a National Home in Palestine .. ." At that time, he was only a lecturer in Manchester University.

*"But there was a promise in the air — of wonderful opportunities to be snatched from the changing interests and fortunes of powers. And Chaim Weizmann was young and free, unburdened by history, failure, disillusion, or public office. It was the springtime of his people's hope and it was good to be alive. He swiftly gathered a few men around him, watched and nursed his chances, and then intervened in the central political arenas with such massive authority and sureness of timing as to change the whole direction of his people's history."**

The story of Eliezer Ben Yehuda is equally astonishing, the man who was fired with the compulsion to modernize the Hebrew language. It was a seemingly impossible task, but yet he tackled it when a Jewish homeland still seemed a mere distant dream!

Inspired by these men, scores of settlers arrived on the shores of Palestine. The story of these early Jewish settlers in the land of Israel is a tribute to courage, fortitude and faith. The conditions were severe. In the early years of this century, parts of Israel were malarial-infested swamps; the rest was a barren wasteland, stripped of life. Many people

*All quotes in this chapter unless otherwise indicated are from Abba Eban, *My People, The Story of the Jews*.

died of malaria. But as swamps were drained, roads built and trees planted, the land slowly, slowly began to lose some of its harshness.

The Jewish people for centuries had been denied the right to farm the lands of their dispersions. Now the new immigrants — intellectuals, shopkeepers and students — willingly turned to the soil to plant the reclaimed land and the desert places. And through their efforts, slowly, painfully, new life burst forth.

"Suffering was the badge of this new Jewish tribe. They lacked money and medical facilities, they were often subject to sharp cultural isolation and very often to physical danger. There were times when men went hungry in order that their cattle might eat. The explanation was engaging. 'We are Zionists, but our cows are not.' The new society was marked by a deep sense of moral preoccupation. The settlers tormented themselves with endless debates about the meaning of their lives, the purpose of their actions, and the shape of the nation that they were struggling to build... They were driven by a fierce and constant sense of mission. They learned from experiments and failure. Above all, they sought an inner spiritual rebuilding of their souls, a total reconstruction of the national will.

During the troubled years of 1937-1939, more new communities were established than in any previous period. By 1939, 450,000 Jewish people were living in Palestine. Settlement, cultivation of the land, and self defense, were the practical answer of Palestine Jewry to Arab hostility and British vacillation. The response was coloured by an awareness of the dignity of human life as a principle from which Jewish life could not be excluded. The years 1939 to 1945 would see that principle shattered across the blood-stained continent of Europe.

Life in those early days was earnest, austere, responsible, effervescent, somewhat irrational and, to strangers, a little ponderous and self-conscious. Every first tree, road, street, settlement, school, library, orchestra, university was ecstatically celebrated. The Jewish people lived at last with the unique taste of creativity."

And then, on the 31st of January, 1933, Hitler rose to power.

"Throughout the first phase of the Nazi assault, the Jews were faced with the spectacle of the world's great democracies retreating from one position to another . . . As boat loads of Jews were shunted from port to port, brushed off by humanity like bothersome insects, the humanitarian conscience expressed concern by allowing only emergency quotas of a few hundred or a few thousand to enter the Western lands.

The human imagination was not yet prepared to recognize that the twentieth century was capable of a wholesale descent into barbarity. It was not until the outside world finally came to the realization that the liberty of all was at stake that it took up arms; by that time, it was too late to save the victims.

As the crisis mounted, the opportunities for emigration decreased. Visas were impossible to obtain. Many Jews fled anyway, in a desperate attempt to save their lives. Often they were turned away from one port to the next because they were 'illegal' immigrants. Ships sank, Jews drowned. Many were forcibly returned to Europe. In a statement before the Palestine Royal Commission on 25 November, 1936, Chaim Weizmann, who had gone up to

Jerusalem to deliver his evidence, declared:

“There are six million people doomed to be pent up where they are not wanted and for whom the world is divided into places where they cannot live, and places where they may not enter. Six million!”

In eight years time, the problem presented by these six million Jews was to be solved. In 1945, these six million were dead.”

Most people in this day and age are aware of the Nazi crimes. But very few are aware of the terrible apathy towards the fate of the Jewish people on the part of the Allies. Western democracies were simply inactive toward the fate of the Jews until it was possible to save only a few. The rest had all perished.

“Weizmann and his Zionist colleagues were tireless in their efforts to break the public silence on the subject of the Holocaust in Europe. On 1 March, 1943, he took the floor at Madison Square Garden in New York to deliver a resounding cry of anguish:

“When the historian of the future assembles the black record of our days, he will find two things unbelievable: first, the crime itself; second, the reaction of the world to that crime. He will sift the evidence again and again before he will be able to give credence to the fact that, in the twentieth century of the Christian era, a great and cultivated nation put power into a band of assassins who transformed murder from a secret transgression into a publicly avowed government policy to be carried out with all the paraphernalia of State. He will find the monstrous story of the human slaughterhouse, the lethal chambers, the sealed trains, taxing the powers of belief.

But when that historian, overwhelmed by the tragic evidence, sets down the verdict of the future upon this savage phenomenon, unique in the annals of history, he will be troubled by still another circumstance. He will be puzzled by the apathy of the civilized world in the face of this immense, systematic carnage of human beings whose sole guilt was membership in the people which gave the commandments of the moral law to mankind. He will not be able to understand why the conscience of the world had to be prodded, why sympathies had to be stirred. Above all, he will not be able to understand why the free nations, in arms against a resurgent, organized barbarism, required appeals to give sanctuary to the first and chief victims of that barbarism.

Two million Jews have already been exterminated. The world can no longer plead that the ghastly facts are unknown or unconfirmed ... At this moment, expressions of sympathy, without accompanying attempts to launch acts of rescue, become a hollow mockery in the ears of the dying.

The democracies have a clear duty before them. Let them negotiate with Germany through the neutral countries ... Let the gates of Palestine be opened to all who can reach the shores of the Jewish homeland. The Jewish community of Palestine will welcome with joy and thanksgiving all delivered from Nazi hands.”

During this dreadful time, there were some courageous individuals and groups who

worked endlessly to try to rescue the Jewish people from extinction. And there are incredible stories of Jewish courage and strength as well.

"The chief source of comfort lay within, in the inner resources of the Jews themselves, in their vitality and optimism. It was this same faith that had helped the Jews face every threat and survive centuries of misery and persecution."

The defense of the Warsaw ghetto is an extraordinary example of this. Himmler had given orders to destroy the ghetto, and the 19th of April, 1943, was the date chosen for the final assault. But the brave Jewish fighters, with no hope of victory or even of preserving their own lives, fought the German troops for 28 entire days in a desperate effort to redeem Jewish honour. The commander of the German force reported to his headquarters:

"The resistance put up by the Jews and bandits could be broken only by relentlessly using all our force and energy, day and night."

The Germans had organized troops and tanks, while the Jewish fighters had only homemade bombs and their fierce determination to fight until the very end. After 28 days the battle ended, and the remaining Jews were destroyed.

One of the most heartbreaking descriptions of the atrocities of those years was told in Jerusalem at the Eichmann trial in 1961. It was a description of the children's convoy dispatched from Drancy in France to Auschwitz on Eichmann's orders that "children's transports can get under way ..."

"The children would arrive at the Drancy camp packed in buses, guarded by policemen. They would be put down into courtyards surrounded by barbed wire, guarded by a platoon of French gendarmes. On the day of deportation they would be awakened at five o'clock in the morning. Irritable, half asleep, most of the children would refuse to get up and go down to the courtyard. The volunteer women would have to urge them gently, patiently, and so tragically, so as to convince the older children that they must obey orders and vacate the halls. On a number of occasions, the entreaties did not help. The children cried and refused to leave their mattresses. The gendarmes would then enter the halls, pick up the children in their arms as they screamed with fear, struggling and grasping at each other. The halls were like a madhouse. The scene was too terrible for even the hardest of men to bear."

Each convoy consisted of about five hundred children and five hundred adults chosen from the camp prisoners. Within a period of about three weeks during the second half of August and the first part of September 1943, four thousand children thus made into orphans were transported in this fashion, exterminated with adult strangers."

All in all, one-and-a-half million Jewish children lost their lives at the hands of the Nazis.

"The dimensions of these actions are vitally important if we are to understand the scope of the mental disease which had gripped the German nation. Thousands of officials were necessary to carry out these tasks. They could not have been fulfilled except against the background of overwhelming social acquiescence. The anti-Jewish prejudice, burning fitfully throughout history, sometimes as a tiny spark, sometimes as a vast flame, had now left its scorched path across the territory of the human spirit."

As the horror of the Holocaust began to emerge, it became clearer and clearer that a Jewish homeland was essential for the very survival of the Jewish people. As the facts of the wholesale destruction of Jewish people became known to the Western world, not a single country interceded on their behalf. The silence could be heard to Heaven. No one entered the war until their own safety was threatened, even though the facts were known much earlier. And even more appalling, not a single nation opened wide its gates to allow access to freedom to those that had escaped the nightmare. Boatloads of Jewish people, fleeing certain destruction, were dubbed "illegal immigrants". They were transported from one port-of-call to the next, but the doors of the world remained closed. Some of the ships sank. Other shiploads were returned to Germany only to meet their "final solution".

As soon as the war ended, the Jewish survivors were certain that they would then be welcomed by other nations. They had, after all, been the victims of the most horrendous crimes ever unleashed against a single group of people in the history of the world. Two-thirds of the large and historic European Jewish community had been systematically liquidated. As the disastrous cruelty became known throughout the world, the survivors had a right to expect that the arms of the world would be open to them. But the opposite was true. Nobody wanted them. Most of them were forced to return to "Displaced Persons" camps in Germany — in the very country that had been responsible for killing most of their families! It confirmed to them that it was Palestine alone that could offer them a haven, a place where they could again live in dignity as human beings. The songs that were sung in the "DP" camps echoed the survivors' determination that they must be allowed to return to their historic homeland. And so they awaited the news of the rebirth of a Jewish nation.

British policy within Palestine itself was both arbitrary and cruel. The White Paper of 1939 had almost completely halted immigration and had sealed off the gates to the country at the most crucial time for European Jewry. Britain consistently refused to allow into Palestine even those refugees who had escaped the inferno. They were insistent that no "illegal immigrants" were to be allowed to enter the land. But the survivors were desperate and homeless, finding welcoming arms only from the Jews in Palestine. Many heroic attempts were made to bring these devastated people into the country through illegal means. The British intercepted and heartlessly sent many of the "illegal immigrant" ships back to Germany.

They had no realization that they as a nation were standing against the very Word and purposes of God. From that date onwards, the Great British Empire began to disappear from the face of the globe, and it has been beset by internal difficulties ever since. For even the fate of nations depends on obedience to God's solemn and ancient promise — "I will bless those that bless thee and curse those that curse thee ..."

Finally, because the tide of beleaguered humanity became so great, and Britain's policies so unpopular with the rest of the world, in 1947 they appealed to the United Nations.

The U. N. General Assembly met to deal with the issue on 20 November, 1947. The alternatives were either to allow the Jewish people independent development within the boundaries of Palestine, or to subject them to Arab domination.

"The second choice would involve the affirmation that Arabs must be sovereign wherever they are — and Jews nowhere at all. If an Arab minority lived under Jewish rule this would not destroy the very concept of Arab national freedom, which had expression in seven sovereign states, soon to become thirteen. On the other hand, if Palestine Jewry became a minority, Jewish nationhood would be repudiated forever. The international community took the line of lesser injustice. Its verdict was enhanced by a sense of guilt

toward the people whom the United Nations had been unable to save from horrifying disaster."

Finally, on 29 November, 1947, the U. N. General Assembly voted 33 to 13 to partition Palestine into two separate countries. One would become the new Arab state of Transjordan; the other, only one-eighth the size envisioned in the Balfour Declaration, would be the first Jewish commonwealth in two thousand years.

Shortly thereafter, the British announced that the Mandate would end and they would withdraw all forces from Palestine on the 14th of May, 1948.

As the actual date loomed closer, it became clear to the Jewish people that Israel could expect, soon after her birth, a major invasion from a number of Arab armies. The situation looked grim. The British had consistently denied the Jewish people the right to bear or stockpile arms or to defend themselves, while at the same time encouraging and even helping the Arabs in Palestine to build up weaponry arsenals. In addition, the Arabs consistently attacked the straggling Jewish settlements.

"The British Administration, formally responsible for law and order, held the door open to the Arab incursions with one hand, while with the other it proceeded to harry the desperate defense of the Jews.

It is difficult to describe the choking suspense in which Jewish life was lived during the winter of 1947-1948. The community in Palestine was under violent attack by Arab invaders. The British authorities neither protected the Jews, as they were legally bound to do, nor allowed them freedom of self-protection as moral duty demanded."

And then, on 5 December, 1947, less than a week after partition had been approved by the United Nations General Assembly, the United States government suddenly and inexplicably announced an embargo on the sale of all arms to the Middle East. This barely affected the Arab nations, who already had an impressive arsenal and had other purchase options open to them. They had already purchased over \$37 million worth of surplus American arms on the overseas market, and were being supplied by Britain as well. (Britain refused to follow the U. S. lead and impose an embargo because of "contractual obligations" to the Arab nations.) The Embargo therefore primarily affected the Jewish people. They were not allowed by the British to bring arms into Israel; and they were not allowed by the United States and other free countries to purchase arms — even in preparation for the battles for their very survival that were certain to be before them.

"The Jews were starting from scratch, and the embargo, in effect, kept them there. Contrary to expectation, the United States had not followed up its support of partition by selling them the arms they needed to defend their new state, but by denying them arms. It was a major blow to all of their hopes and calculations." (Leonard Slater, The Pledge)

The stories of how arms were actually gathered and smuggled into the country are astonishing. And at the very last minute, Czechoslovakia momentarily came to the rescue in supplying arms to the floundering Jewish State. But even with some successes in smuggling arms to the Jewish people, the prospects nonetheless looked grim. Early in 1948, Yigael Yadin, Chief Operations Officer of the Haganah, surveyed the military situation:

*"We will not discuss the problem whether or not there will be an invasion . . .
...Our information indicates that it is a certainty. Our plans for such an*

invasion are simple: all our forces and all our arms — all of them — will have to be concentrated in those places which are likely to be battlefields in the first phase of the battle.

The regular forces of the neighbouring countries — with their equipment and their armaments — enjoy superiority at this time. However, evaluation of the possibilities cannot be merely a military consideration of arms against arms and units versus units, since we do not have those arms or that armoured force. The problem is to what extent our men will be able to overcome enemy forces by virtue of their fighting spirit, of our planning and our tactics. It has been found in certain cases that it is not the numbers and the formations which determine the outcome of the battle, but something else. However, objectively speaking, there is no doubt that the enemy enjoys a great superiority at this time.

Our Air Force cannot compare with theirs. We have no Air Force. The planes have not arrived yet. It is possible that they may yet come on the decisive day, but I cannot rely on that. Even then, if the neighbouring Arab countries activate their Air Forces, a comparison will be invidious. Their Air Force is a hundred and fifty times the size of ours. At this moment, our planes operate contrary to all the rules of aerial tactics.

No other pilots would dare to take off in planes like ours. The planes are antiquated and obsolete, some of them are patrol planes or trainers; even with these planes we have had grievous losses, and we are now in a poor state, so it would be best not to take them into account as a military factor.

To sum it up, I would say that the outlook at this time seems delicately balanced. Or — to be more honest — I would say that their superiority is considerable, if indeed their entire forces enter battle against us."

But, as Golda Meir said when she left Israel for the United States to appeal to the Jewish community there for help, "You will not determine whether or not we fight. *We have to fight.* But you *can* help to determine how long we will last!" (She returned to Israel one month later with gifts and pledges totaling fifty million dollars!)

Finally, the historic and long-awaited day arrived. The 14th of May, 1948. As the British Mandate formally expired, a gathering of 240 Jews in Tel Aviv solemnly declared the birth of the new independent and sovereign Jewish state, the nation of Israel. Ben Gurion then read to the hushed assembly the following proclamation:

"WE EXTEND our hand to all neighbouring States and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighbourliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish people settled in its own land. The State of Israel is prepared to do its share in common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East.

WE APPEAL to the Jewish people throughout the Diaspora to rally round the Jews of Eretz-Israel in the tasks of immigration and upbuilding and to stand by them in the great struggle for the realization of the age-old dream — the redemption of Israel.

PLACING OUR TRUST IN THE ALMIGHTY, WE AFFIX OUR SIGNATURES TO THIS PROCLAMATION AT THIS SESSION OF THE PROVISIONAL COUNCIL OF STATE, IN THE SOIL OF THE HOMELAND, IN THE CITY OF TEL AVIV, ON THIS, THE 5TH DAY OF IYAR, 5708 (14th May, 1948)."

Following the reading of the proclamation, the 240 participants filed forward to the table to affix their signatures to the proclamation. The Hebrew benediction was then recited:

"Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has kept us alive and preserved us and enabled us to see this day . . ."

As the participants began filing out to the sun-drenched Tel Aviv street, air raid sirens began to sound, and there was a rejoicing throughout the new born state that has seldom been paralleled. The land resounded with Hebrew songs of praise and the footsteps of dancing feet — in their own land at last, the dream of the ages, realized in this single day. The words of the prayer book had come to life — "May our eyes behold Thy return to Zion in mercy."

At 5:16 p.m., President Truman authorized the recognition of Israel by the United States of America. Almost immediately, the first immigrant ship arrived, bringing at last the first joyous "illegal" detainees to be welcomed to their own free land. And then, within eight hours of Israel's Declaration of Independence, the Arab armies began to rumble across the borders. It was a very full day in Jewish history!

The Lebanese army arrived from the north; the Syrian army invaded from the northeast; the Arab Legion and the Iraqi forces attacked at the centre; and from the south the Egyptian army moved inland, supported by bomber planes.

"Whoever surveyed the military position on May 14, 1948, was bound to look to the future with very grave concern. The question was whether the Jewish forces could withstand the four regular Arab armies — the Egyptian, Jordanian, Syrian and Lebanese — now joining the battle. These were fresh, well-organized according to the pattern of regular armies, and were also well equipped. Two of them possessed tank units. All of them had field artillery regiments. Three had air forces with fighter squadrons, and Egypt had a squadron of bombers. The Haganah was unable to match this impressive superiority of Arab arms. It had exactly four field guns, a single tank, and a single fighter plane in addition to a few private planes. The first battle with an Arab regular army at the Etzion bloc had ended disastrously."

It seemed impossible, in view of this, that Israel could ever have survived. No one can say that their stunning victories had anything whatsoever to do with military superiority or larger armies. On every single front the fledgling Israeli army was outnumbered by more than five to one. But there was one fact upon which the Arab armies, determined to make a quick end of the Jewish State, had forgotten to reckon with — the God of Israel. For this time, the Scriptures promise that Israel will never again have to leave the land that He had promised to them through the Patriarchs thousands of years ago:

"And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them, and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God."

Amos 9:14-15

As dubious as anyone might be of the power of God and His relevancy today, they would be hard put to come up with an alternative explanation for Israel's survival against impossible odds!

"A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time."

Isaiah 60:22

The hero of the 1948 war was a little mortar named "Davidka" — "little David". It was put together with spare nuts and bolts and was supposed to be a cannon. But when it was all assembled, it was discovered that it wouldn't shoot properly, but it made a ferocious, earth-shattering noise! And so "Little David" was rushed from one scene of battle to the other, and had the effect of terrifying the Arab foes who naturally assumed that the Jewish troops had a great arsenal of weapons!

There are wonderful stories of the War of Independence, miraculous stories. One of the best known took place at an Israeli outpost in the beginning days of the war. A handful of Israeli soldiers were defending against the enemy's invasion. They were short on supplies, and knew it would be only a matter of time before they would fall before their heavily-armed Syrian foes. And then, just before the point of desperation, without any explanation at all, the Syrians fled, some even abandoning their tanks as they scrambled away towards the border! Reports came back that *they had seen great armies covering the hillsides, as far as the eye could see!* It had to be the army of the Living God. (Perhaps some might find this unpalatable, but I wonder why? Do you suppose that the God of the Old Covenant, the Lord of ancient Israel, has run out of ideas in *this* day and age to save His people?)

Another story took place in the Sinai as the Israelis were in pursuit of the Egyptians. Suddenly a huge wind and sandstorm blew up, forcing the Israelis to stop where they were and to wait for the wind to die down. And, when the winds finally abated, an entire mine field lay before them that had been exposed by the wind! Once again their lives were spared!

During the 1948 war, the odds were extraordinarily against Israel's survival. Israel had no Air Force and almost no weapons! But not only did she manage to survive, she was victorious on every front! Truly it was symbolic of little David facing Goliath once again. It can only be through the hand of God that Israel came through to victory!

The war in 1973, the Yom Kippur War, is another example of God's intervention. Yom Kippur is the holiest day on the Jewish calendar. The whole nation comes to a standstill, with no traffic; no radio or television programming; and not a single store or shop is opened. The nation en masse goes to the synagogue to pray for God's mercy and to plead that they may be written into the Book of Life for another year. It is a day when the sins of the past year are recounted and God's forgiveness is besought. Almost everyone spends the day in total fasting. And it was on this day in 1973 that the enemies of Israel decided to attack. The Israeli soldiers were called from prayer to battle, many without having partaken of food or water for almost 24 hours, to enter the hardest and most merciless war in Israel's brief history. The element of surprise gave the enemy a tremendous tactical advantage.

On the Egyptian front there was a tank ratio of 5:2 in favour of the Egyptians. When the Israeli infantry and armoured reserves finally arrived, there were a total of 800 Israeli tanks and 40,000 men — against 2,000 Egyptian tanks and 150,000 men! Again, it seemed that for Israel to emerge victorious was an impossibility! But yet, even after five days of heavy fighting, with the odds weighing heavily against the smaller Israeli forces, the Egyptians had been unable to advance a single metre beyond the line they had reached in the first two days.

A great supply of military hardware arrived by airlift from the U.S.S.R. to aid the Egyptians; all of it was brought up to the front, negating any possibility of an Israeli breakthrough. Egypt was therefore able to dig in along a 170 kilometer route. The fortifications of the Egyptian army also made it impossible for any Israeli aircraft to fly across the Egyptian lines. Three Egyptian armies were deployed along the Canal line.

After emergency consultation, the Israeli command decided to send out a commando unit to cross the Sinai desert in the weakest point, reach the canal and cross over in amphibian tanks.

This tough operation, dangerous and nearly impossible as it was, became the turning point of the war and succeeded beyond all expectations! A convoy of giant rafts advanced toward the canal. Two giant bulldozers levelled the shore of the lake to allow the rafts to be lowered straight into the water. Thanks to an all-out effort, the rafts were soon afloat, ready to take on a cargo of 60 tanks, dozens of cannon, trucks loaded with ammunition, and tankers full. Within minutes, the Israeli tanks crossed over from Asia into Africa! Once the IDF (Israel Defense Force) had established itself properly on the west side of the Canal, the advance began. From there, the Israeli troops were able to penetrate deep within Egypt!

The initial days of battle looked equally grim on the Syrian front. At 2:00 p.m. on Israel's Day of Atonement, 800 tanks and 40,000 soldiers stormed across the Golan Heights. They continued down towards Galilee, where one small outpost of Israelis was standing guard. They never would have sustained a continued assault — and if they fell, the Syrian troops would have been free to march into the heart of Israel. The war had started so unexpectedly that time was needed to call the reserves in from prayer and to reassemble the existing Israeli forces. And so this small outpost of men desperately needed time to enable supportive troops to arrive! And then, inexplicably, just as the Syrian soldiers came in view of the Sea of Galilee, they simply stopped their advance! For no apparent reason whatsoever! This astonishing respite gave time for Israeli reinforcements to arrive on the scene.

However, after two days of fighting, the entire Golan had fallen to the Syrians. Just as on the Egyptian front, when there was no possible way to break through the lines in the initial stages of the war, so on the Syrian front Israel was greatly outnumbered; and the capture of the Golan gave the Syrians a great strategical advantage, as the open plains now lay open beneath their artillery range. But yet, once again, the IDF recovered the area in a courageous assault up the steep Golani hills, and they also recovered a large salient of Syrian territory!

On the 9th of October, 1973, Radio Damascus announced:

"Syrian tanks are now on Israeli soil and are advancing in the direction of Haifa ..."

The report was true as far as it went: what Damascus forgot to mention, was that the tanks were being taken to Israel's large dumps of captured equipment on Israeli tank transporters!

By the time of the cease fire, Israel held the central road to Damascus (which was a mere 140 kilometers away) and they had reached a point only 15 kilometers from Cairo! At the end of the war, Israel was victorious on all fronts. If Israel had been able to fight another three or four days, it would doubtless have disposed of the entire Egyptian army.

In spite of their victories, the Israeli soldiers do not have the vengefulness of their Arab counterparts — who are taught to hate, to take revenge, and to desire the destruction of the nation of Israel. Instead, the Israelis have a deep reverence and respect for life, borne of much suffering. Even during the Yom Kippur War, when the Israelis were caught by surprise on their holiest day and many soldiers lost their lives, the Israeli soldiers before withdrawing from their Egyptian positions left letters and gifts for the Egyptian soldiers who were to take over their positions! This letter was nailed to a tree by an Israeli soldier before withdrawing from Egyptian soil, and it was similar to hundreds of letters and gifts left by the departing Israelis:

Jenifa, Jan. 1974

Israeli Army
TO OUR FRIENDS
FROM EGYPT SHALOM

Goodbye and see
you some day in Cairo
or in Tel Aviv
in PEACE!!!

"Remember, O Lord, Thy loyal and valiant sons and daughters, soldiers of the Israel Defense Force, and all the warriors of the underground and the fighting brigades, in the nation's battles who risked their lives for Israel's preservation. Remember, O Israel, and be proud of thy seed, and mourn the youthful splendour, the heroic courage, the inspired will and the dedicated spirit of those who were killed in the fearful battle. May the heroes of Israel's wars, crowned with victory, be inscribed in the hearts of Israel for time everlasting . . ."

When Golda Meir was requested as Prime Minister to comment to the press following Israel's victories, crying, she replied, "What are all great words against one bereaved mother?"

And that summarizes the special quality to life in Israel. The feeling of oneness, of belonging, of being a part of one family, of sharing all that there is to share — together.

The rescue operation at Entebbe is a prime example of this.

On Sunday, 27 June 1976, Air France flight from Tel Aviv to Paris took off from their intermediary stop in Athens with 246 passengers aboard. A short time later the flight controller in the Israeli international airport received the following message:

"Air France Flight 139 which left Israel this morning en route to Paris disappeared after take off at 12:30. All contact lost with it and all that is known is that the plane turned southeastwards . . ."

The hijackers, led by a German terrorist but under the auspices of the Palestinian Liberation Forces, eventually landed the plane at the Entebbe airfields south of Kampala, the capital of Uganda.

After some time, the hijackers finally identified themselves and made known their demands. In return for the release of the hostages and the aircraft, they demanded the release of fifty-three terrorists held in jails in Israel, France, West Germany, Switzerland and Kenya.

The Palestinian terrorist groups had made innumerable attacks against Israelis — beginning in 1968, up until the date of the Air France hijacking, 201 men and women had been killed and 213 wounded. Twenty-nine acts of hijacking and hits at aircraft were perpetrated, with an additional eleven attempted hijackings or assaults that were foiled. In 1973 alone fifty attempts were made against Israeli targets overseas!

Terrorist acts were carried out in thirty-nine countries, mostly by the El Fatah organization. (Incidentally, except for one attempt to hijack an El Al flight in 1968, no other

*All quotes and information on Entebbe are from Yehuda Ofer, *Operation Thunder: The Entebbe Raid, The Israelis' Own Story*.

attempt has succeeded, due to the careful security precautions taken to ensure the safety of El Al passengers.)

Israel had always made a supreme effort whenever possible not to release terrorists in exchange for hostages. The Israeli government has held to its policy that as long as an alternative existed, there could be no surrender to terrorist blackmail.

In the case of the Entebbe hijacking, however, it seemed that no other option was available! The government was gravely aware that submission to the terrorist demands would grant a decisive victory to international terror, creating a dangerous precedent. But on the other hand, the refusal could serve as the green light for the dozens of Israeli citizens to be massacred in cold blood. It therefore seemed that no option than to give in to their demands existed!

The government therefore announced its readiness to meet the demands and to release the imprisoned terrorists. (Prime Minister Rabin strongly felt that the Israeli government had no moral justification to jeopardize the lives of captives for the sake of a principle, no matter how important it may be!) The hijackers, when the news was relayed to them via France, extended their deadline.

On Friday morning, it was learned that 101 captives had been freed and had safely reached Paris. Those left in the terrorists' hands were only those holding Israeli citizenship or residency, along with a number of Jews of various nationalities. Therefore the affair became Israel's exclusive problem.

Military operational planning had begun almost the minute that the plane touched Ugandan soil. And when at last the negotiations bogged down (the hijackers kept making new demands) and time was running out, it was this option that was considered by the government of Israel — to rescue the Israelis from the terrorists' clutches! The planners knew that there would be great difficulties. An enormous distance — thousands of kilometers — would have to be crossed to reach the target without being discovered by enemy radar. Then they would need to land at a strange airfield without arousing the suspicions of the terrorists. (The Israelis knew that the first reaction of the terrorists would be to slaughter the civilian captives, men, women and children, held within the terminal building. The bitter experience in the northern village of Ma'alot, where over a score of school children on an outing had been ruthlessly wiped out by a terrorist brigand was still painfully fresh in Israel's memory.)

It became clear that the success of the mission would depend on landing silently, reaching the terminal as quickly as possible, and wiping out the terrorists so swiftly that there would not be time for them to kill the passengers.

The following four fundamental considerations were at the heart of the planned action:

"First: there had been talk about ten terrorists and from sixty to one hundred Ugandan soldiers in the terminal building — definitely not a negligible force, which had to be attacked with complete surprise.

Second: it would need accurate navigation and pin-point homing-in on the target through the choice of proper routes and surprise landing. For this purpose it was essential to develop a series of measures that would ensure the initial force arriving at the terminal in as complete a surprise as possible, so that the blow should be sharp, swift and altogether smooth.

Third: a full and meticulous intelligence picture.

Fourth: field security, that is to say, maintenance of secrecy. The order of the Chief of Staff was that no outside factor, no matter how highly placed, must be aware that the operation was in process of preparation."

When it was certain that the planes were capable of achieving their mission and each

detail had been scrutinized, the Chief of Staff announced his decision to go into action. There was a risk in the operation, to be sure, but the overriding question was — How many other people will be in danger of their lives in the future if Israel succumbs now to terrorist blackmail?

Following his decision, the government was consulted for approval. The general officer commanding the paratroops and infantry and who would lead the ground action commented to one of his units pessimistically, "The prospect that the government will approve carrying out the plan of action is one to nine!"

The sortie was planned for 3 July. On the afternoon of 2 July, Prime Minister Rabin called for a Cabinet meeting. The situation and the solution were presented to the Cabinet. During the exchange between Cabinet members, the Minister of the Interior, Dr. Joseph Burg, quoted from the weekly Scriptural portion, reciting these passages:

*"And when the king Arad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south, heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies; then he fought against Israel and took some of them prisoners ...
And the Lord hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered them and their cities;
and he called the name of the place Hormah ."*

Numbers 21:1, 3

He concluded the reading with the comment, "Would that we may call Entebbe — *Hormah!*" (The meaning of the Hebrew word is "utter destruction").

The Cabinet unanimously voted in favour of going ahead with the operation. It was agreed, "May the Almighty bless the way of the warriors." The Prime Minister also received the firm support of the Opposition leader, Menahem Begin.

"It may be said that, throughout the successive phases of consultation and consideration, the leadership of the State of Israel rose to a supreme height. Gone were all the dissensions and bickerings, large and small, and all collaborated as one body to achieve the objective of safe deliverance of the hostages. The outcome was balanced decisions and wise moves."

The mission was officially named "Operation Jonathan".

When the Ministers assembled in the government meeting chamber in Tel Aviv raised their hands in token of "Aye" the Chief of General Staff left at a run and ordered the start of the action.

The forces awaited the take-off command. Everything needed for the enterprise — arms, ammunition, jeeps and anti-tank carriers, sabotage equipment, medical equipment and signals equipment — were already stacked in the aircraft.

The planes themselves, the "Hercules-type", were laden to capacity; six inner tanks were filled with jet aviation fuel that had been pumped into them up to the brim. These, then, were the aircraft on the wings of which the liberators would reach the victims of the hijackers at Entebbe.

The flight teams knew they were about to take part in the most difficult and longest rescue operation ever undertaken by an air force. They were equally aware of the crucial role of the soldier

The three jumbo-sized planes, loaded down to the last pound, took to the air one after another into the sunset, hugging the runway with their wheels until it seemed they would never rise into the air. But finally their broad wings went up in a tremendous roar of the motors and began the long haul to Entebbe. "Operation Jonathan" was on its way.

The wheels of the first Hercules touched down at the lit-up runway at Entebbe one minute after midnight, precisely according to plan. The radar personnel should have spotted the aerial intruders, but for some reason failed to do so.

"From the moment the wheels of the first Hercules carrying the assault force kissed the tarmac only a few seconds elapsed before they were on their way to the terminal.

The raiders roared forward in the vehicles they had brought along in the belly of the plane, their entire thoughts concentrated upon one sole objective — to get to the terminal building before the guards realized what was happening. There were only a few fateful seconds available to them until the guards recovered their wits, and it was during that brief interval that the fate of the hostages would be determined.

The pilots gazed with incredulity at the speed with which the strike force erupted down the landing hoist in the tail onto the ground. They had never in their lives witnessed such a swift glissando of movement. They stood openmouthed.

The fighters who had burst into the hall shouted warnings in Hebrew to the captives to lie on the ground and they then wiped out the Palestinian Arab terrorists in the hall within a few seconds.

The fierce combat raged as the captives lay prone on the floor between the Israel Defense Force commandos and the terrorists, and the bullets whizzed in trajectories the length of the hall.

Within forty-five seconds the four terrorists who were the greatest menace to the hostages had been wiped out. That was in effect the moment of liberation for the captives, although many hazards were still to be expected."

When the commandos had first arrived, it was impossible for the captives to absorb what was really happening. One of the rescuers immediately called out to them in Hebrew, "Friends, chaverim, lie down, we're soldiers of Zahal — Israel Defense Force!" Never had they heard more beautiful words in all their lives!

One of the captives later commented that all at once she finally realized who was firing. It seemed like a miracle! Deep pride had welled up within her heart for the wonderful boys who had gained control of the situation so quietly and confidently. But she still found it hard to comprehend it in the first few moments. *"Are these our soldiers here? In Uganda?"*

The voice of a soldier, amplified by the megaphone he was holding, reached her ears. "We've come to take you home!"

The firing went on as the liberated captives were taken to the planes whose motors were still running.

The evacuation of the freed passengers was conducted quietly and expeditiously. Most of them kept silent and followed in the tracks of their liberators, except for the wounded who were loaded on the vehicles with the doctors tending them and administering first aid. The operation had claimed a total of four lives at Entebbe — three civilians and one of the military men, Lieutenant-Colonel Jonathan Netanyahu. In addition, five civilians and four soldiers were wounded. Ten army doctors, who arrived at Entebbe with the invading force, treated the wounded with the best mobile medical equipment. The Army Medical Corps had foreseen every need down to the last detail.

The whole operation lasted only fifty-three minutes — two minutes less than the "dress rehearsal" held on the previous day in Israel.

"With the completion of the operation, while the aircraft were still on their way

back to Israel, all of the men and officers who had been engaged in 'Operation Jonathan' assembled in the Prime Minister's chambers.

Without further delay, the Prime Minister informed the President of the State of the liberation of the hostages from the hands of the beasts of prey at Entebbe.

Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goron, Knesset members Itzhak Navon and Menahem Begin, and all government Ministers received the stirring news from the Prime Minister's lips. The joyous scenes in Rabin's office were mingled with the sorrow over the men who had lost their lives."

One of the hostages, a young man from Bat Yam near Tel Aviv, had been thinking of emigrating from Israel prior to the hijacking ordeal. When he returned to Israel with the rescue team, he gazed with pride at the people who welcomed them at the Israeli military air base.

"Never would he forget that reception . . . The thought of emigration from Israel, even for a short while, seemed now to belong to a past era, perhaps to someone else.

Looking at the crowds and throngs of people delirious with joy, he knew there was no substitute whatever for this people of his, brethren with whom 'to dwell together in unity'."

Adversity has made Israel resourceful, "a people that dwelleth in solitude and is not reckoned among the nations". Through Entebbe, Israel took a firm stand against terrorism and evidenced the closeness and caring that is the hallmark of Israeli life. The outside world, whether fascinated or infuriated by Israel, cannot fail to acknowledge this special quality to its life!

Israel is the only State in the world that speaks the same tongue, upholds the same faith, and inhabits the same land as it did 3,000 years ago! There had always been Jews in Palestine. In addition to the land remaining sacred in the memory of the Jewish people throughout the Diaspora (dispersion), there has been an unbroken *physical* link as well. Throughout the ages, small Jewish communities have clung tenaciously to Jerusalem, Safed, and Hebron. In past centuries many nations have invaded Palestine, concluding in our memory with the Ottoman and British Empires. But the Jews alone, few and poor as they may have been, had an indigenous sense of attachment, whereas their conquerors had their original home somewhere else.

Israel itself consists of a mere 8,000 square miles of land, mostly desert. It is so small that an F-15 can slice Israel's skies from Metulla to Eilat in a mere eleven minutes — and that is the entire length of the nation! At its widest point, east-to-west, the country can be crossed by the same plane in only 1.2 minutes!

Compare that with the four-and-one-half *million* square miles in which 100 million Arabs have been able to establish twenty-two sovereign states, rich with oil, rivers and petrodollars! The pro-PLO view, which shows such ignorance both of the Scriptural and natural facts of the situation, indicates again that the Arabs must be sovereign everywhere and the Jews nowhere at all! The Israeli people cannot help but be consciously aware of their minute size compared to their towering and wealthy neighbours. And after the Holocaust, the need for a land of welcome, a land called "home" for the Jewish people, is a deep core of the Israeli spirit. The Israelis are so often criticized for policies which few seem to realize are to ensure their very survival!

"Image is all very well, but to the Israelis it is concrete interests that matter. If the choice is between being popular and being alive, most Israelis prefer to be alive!"

Military accomplishments do not comprise the whole story. Between May 1948 and December 1951, 687,000 newcomers landed in Israel. During Israel's early years, it was hard to imagine that a small community could absorb a population three times its size without any of the newcomers ever sleeping in the street or suffering starvation or having their children bereft of school for a single week. Yet no less than this had been achieved! By the mid-50's, production not only caught up with population increase, it had so far overtaken it as to generate a surplus! The memories of hardship have begun to recede. On a million acres Israel produces enough food to sustain over 80% of its population at a high level of nutrition and also exports \$500 million worth of agricultural products to the world's markets — and this with a small land space and scanty resources!

"When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.

Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them.

The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.

Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south.

They that sow in tears shall reap with joy.

He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him . . ."

Psalm 126

And, last but not least in my "Israeli synopsis", comes Jerusalem.

The heartbreak of the 1948 war, in addition to the loss of the lives of 4,000 soldiers (many fresh from the DP camps) and 2,000 civilians, was the fact that the Old City of Jerusalem fell into Jordanian hands. The Jordanian captors completely devastated the Jewish quarter of the Old City, after the inhabitants had been driven out (constituting the first break in the continuity of Jewish life there for over 2,000 years!) The synagogues were also demolished, and the Jordanians used Jewish gravestones to line their latrines!

Who can describe the Jewish attachment to Jerusalem throughout the ages?

Naomi Shemer, a beloved Israeli songstress, composed the words to this poignant song in 1967. Her longing for the ancient city found an echo in Jewish hearts everywhere:

Jerusalem of Gold

Naomi Shemer

"Mountain air as clear as wine and the scent of pine, borne on the evening wind with the sound of bells.

And in the slumber of trees and stone imprisoned in her dream is the city which dwells alone, a wall within her heart.

*Chorus: Jerusalem of gold, of copper and of light,
Behold, I am a harp for all your songs.*

How have the cisterns dried out, the market square is empty, and none go up to the Temple Mount in the Old City.

Through the caves in the rocks the winds howl, and none go down to the Dead Sea by way of Jericho.

Chorus: *Jerusalem of gold, of copper and of light,
Behold, I am a harp for all your songs.*

*But when I came today to sing unto you and to bind garlands for you, I became
smaller than the youngest of your sons, or the least of the poets.*

*For your name burns the lips like the kiss of a seraph,
Let me not forget thee, O Jerusalem that is all of gold.*

Chorus: *Jerusalem of gold, of copper and of light,
Behold, I am a harp for all your songs."*

Her song, with the lilting melody and the haunting words, echoed the longing of Jewish hearts for the return of Jerusalem; the longing that had stretched throughout the two thousand years of wandering; the longing that was even harder to bear so very close to home. And then, exactly one month after the publication of the song, Jerusalem was once again in Jewish hands. This verse was added to the song at that time:

*"We have returned to the cisterns, to the market and the square. The shofar
calls on the Temple Mount of the Old City.*

*And from the caves in the rocks a thousand suns glow again. We will go
down to the Dead Sea by way of Jericho.*

Chorus: *Jerusalem of gold, of copper and of light,
Behold, I am a harp for all your songs."*

When the IDF forces during the 1967 war broke through to the Old City, the soldiers wept for joy, and Jews throughout the world wept with them. To be able to pray once again at the Western Wall, the one remaining wall of the ancient Temple, in a united, Jewish Jerusalem, brought a rejoicing that words cannot describe.

"JERUSALEM from a Rabbi's Desk"

*"It is hard to believe that some sixteen years have passed since that
glorious day in June 1967 when we first heard of the liberation of Jerusalem by
the Israeli army. Since that day we Jews are still trying to define the
phenomenon called JERUSALEM. What is the magic hold upon the destiny of
our people? What is JERUSALEM? Is it a city, like any other city in the world?*

What is JERUSALEM? There was a Jerusalem before there was a New York City or Toronto. When Berlin, London and Paris were still miasmal forests and swamps, there was a viable Jewish community in JERUSALEM. What is JERUSALEM? It is the place upon which the prophets walked, their words flashing like forked lightning. It is the place where a lonely people who wanted nothing more than to be left alone, fought off waves of would-be conquerors, bled and died and hurled themselves into the flames of their burning Temple rather than surrender. And when finally overwhelmed by sheer numbers, and led into captivity, they swore: 'If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right arm lose its cunning.'

What is JERUSALEM? It is the place towards which our ancestors, throughout two pain-filled millennia, turned and prayed, three times

daily. While they were the unwelcome pariah of Western society, they petitioned the Almighty: 'And gather us from the four corners of the earth, bring us upright to our land.' Return us in mercy to Jerusalem, Thy city, and dwell therein, as Thou has spoken.'

What is JERUSALEM? It is the word which held out the only hope for our people. The phrase 'Next year in Jerusalem' kept us through the inquisitions, pogroms, expulsions and the ghettos into which the hostile world jammed us. 'Next year in Jerusalem' allowed us not to be broken even while nations forced baptism on us, or their sophisticated anti-Semitism, or the Holocaust: and worst of all, that unspeakable atrocity, the world's indifference to its unbelievable results.

What is JERUSALEM? What infuses this ancient city with its remnant of a wall with such emotion-packed force and power that its liberation became synonymous with Jewish survival? What caused heroic soldiers, religious or otherwise, to stand by that wall and weep? One soldier put it as follows:

`Asa my uncle died at the wall.
In a village called Lublin he died at a wall. The SS
shot them all.
For him, and for them, I weep at the Wall.

Sarah my cousin died at a wall.
In a chamber at Auschwitz she died at a wall. With a
child at her breast,
So hungry — so small.
For her child, I weep at the Wall.

Shalom my brother died at a wall.
On the Syrian border he died at a wall. By the
house he had built.
He was rugged and tall.
For my brother Shalom, I weep at the Wall.

O God of my fathers, I fought for this Wall.
For my uncle and those who fell with him — for all. For my
cousin, her baby, so hungry, so small,
For my brother Shalom, rugged and tall.
Now let my tears win the right — just to fall.'

JERUSALEM is not a city, not just a religious centre, not just a capital. It is the very soul of our people. We the Jewish people are home again for the first time since the year 70 C.E. For the first time since the rivers of Babylon can we sing with full tones and joyous hearts.

Home is JERUSALEM and what a lovely sound the word 'home' has for a people whom the nations for centuries have willed to wander the face of the earth ... WE ARE HOME ... NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM, AND THE NEXT, AND THE YEAR AFTER THAT, TO THE END OF TIME. IR SHALOM — The City of Peace.
JERUSALEM, OH JERUSALEM ..."

9

THY WILL BE DONE

O notes. Kids in Israel just seemed to fly by! But there were a few discouraging notes. Not being able to catch up with the Hebrew lessons was such a disappointment. In addition, in all that time not a single letter had arrived from friends in the States. My dear mom was the only faithful correspondent! It was also a great strain to have no one with whom to share, as I had not met any Believers as yet. My one consolation was that Michael and Joey seemed to be adjusting so well! And then that, too, had been shattered.

One day I received a note from Joey's teacher, requesting a conference with me at his school. I went expecting a positive report, and therefore was totally unprepared for the news that she had to give. She explained, with the help of an interpreter, that the school was used to immigrant children, since Israel was a country built upon immigration. She went on to say that my son Joey was one of the worst behaviour problems that they had had in ten years and that he seemed to be in a time of severe crisis. I was dumbfounded. He had seemed so happy and content at the immigration centre!

I left the school and walked to the beach to be alone with the Lord. Tears burned my eyes. I poured out my heart to Him. I was alone in a new country! I could not speak the language! There was no mail from friends in the States; and no one here to pray with! And now, I had learned that my son was terribly unhappy! I sat there alone on a deserted beach and cried from my heart, *"Help me, Lord!"*

I expected the comfort of His love, the promise of a better day, a sense of His understanding. But His reply to me was as distant and firm as it could be. It was at that moment that He reminded me that these were to be the last six months that the children and I were to have together, and that I now had to begin to accept it. I left the beach that day with a very heavy heart.

A day or two later I needed to call Joe in Connecticut to find out what had become of the child-support cheque. It was very late in arriving, and our funds were low! I also told him then of Joey's great difficulty in school and my sense that he seemed to need more security than I could now provide. And then, feeling as though my life were ending, I asked him if he and Jude would ever consider taking custody of Joey and Michael. His answer was a gift from the Lord! He explained that the support cheque had already been mailed, and that with it was a letter from him. He quoted from it:

"I know how much the boys mean to you, and I would never try to take them away from you. But since their absence, I have realized how much they have meant to me. If you ever change your mind about custody, Jude and I want very much to have them."

His next words were so kind! "Eileen, you love them very much. Think it over very carefully before you make such a decision. And then let us know." I promised that I would, and I said goodbye, grateful that he couldn't see the tears that were streaming down my cheeks.

I felt so sad knowing the struggle that little Joey was having. At the time, I didn't understand why it had to happen; but I later came to understand that in the Lord's infinite wisdom, He allowed a situation to develop where loving the children meant being willing to let them go. Their father was able to offer them real security, and a mother, and a real sense of family life — everything that was familiar to them, including family and friends. On the other hand, I could offer them very little. My health was poor, and the security that they seemed to need then was unavailable. It was a situation placed before me that gave me one of two choices. If I thought of myself and my own needs as a mother, I could never part from them, not even for a day. But if I put myself aside and thought only of them, the choice was clear.

The very next afternoon I received a phone call from Richard, the friend we had met the previous year in Minneapolis who had felt that I would come to Israel in September of 1976. It was wonderful to hear a familiar voice!

"Shalom, Eileen! I'm at a Scandinavian Church in Ashdod now, and thought you'd like to come and meet the Christians here and have some fellowship. I'll come by for you at 8:00 p.m."

I was almost speechless with joy. Jesus had led me to a table in the wilderness! The day before I had sat alone before the Lord on a deserted beach. The very next day, I was with others praising His name! How grateful I was! Back in the States I had taken Christian fellowship so much for granted, but that night I learned what a special gift it really is.

I met three people that night who were to remain special friends — a young man from Germany by the name of Klaus, and a couple from Norway by the name of Jenny and Wolfgang. Each of them had volunteered to serve at the Scandinavian Church for a year.

I told the small gathering there about Joey's serious adjustment problem at school, and the fact that I had had "doctor's orders" to move to Israel due to very poor health. I then explained that there was a possibility that the children may have to return to the United States to live with their father and step-mother. It was such a comfort to have such a burden lifted by others to the Lord!

Just before the evening ended, the minister prayed for me. "Please give Eileen the strength a mother will need to part from her children," he said. And that was when the reality of our parting reached my heart.

I went back to our apartment at the immigration centre. I tiptoed in to the boys' room to cover them and to give them a kiss, as I always did. I stood for a moment and watched them sleeping, listening to the sound of their peaceful breathing. I knew then that they were the Lord's children first, and that He had entrusted them in my care for all these years; and that now they were to belong to their earthly father as well. They were so precious to me, and I softly wept, not being able to imagine a single day without them. They had been the centre of my life for such a long time!

And then, in the depths of my own personal sadness, Jesus gave me a glimpse of His suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane. Because my anguish at that moment was so deep, I could glimpse a part of what He had felt that lonely night so long ago when He, too, was faced with separation from those He loved. I don't know how it happened, but I no longer felt sorry for myself. Instead, I was filled with gratitude that He allowed me to understand even this small part of all that He endured to bring us salvation. His sacrifice of love meant more to me than ever before.

From that evening on, I knew in my heart that the Lord would fulfill His call on my life. And so one afternoon, while the boys were playing with matchbox cars in their bedroom, I wrote to Joe to request that he and Jude take custody of the children, and that he would

send their airplane tickets when the necessary arrangements had been completed. (My reduction in child support would have covered the cost of their transportation.)

I could never describe what that moment was like for me.

One night, while I knelt in prayer, the Lord gave me a message that I hastily wrote in a small notebook. It said simply:

"When you are chastened by God, it is like going through the fire of purification, but it doesn't make you more worthy. Instead, it convinces you of your unworthiness, and of the incredible holiness of God."

I didn't really understand it at all that night, as to me it seemed the opposite of logic. But I *did* understand that perhaps a time of "purifying fire" might lay ahead!

Another night, the Lord drew near and asked me a second question, reminiscent of the question He had asked the summer-night that had resulted in my placing the children in His hands.

"Do you love Me enough to die for Me?"

Death was something that in Jewish tradition was always avoided in conversation, and therefore remained shrouded in mystery. Fear was my first reaction, then astonishment that the Lord would ask such a question of ME! It made me laugh. I realized that the Lord knew me very well, and therefore He couldn't possibly have overlooked the fact that I am probably the greatest coward that ever lived. I would scream if I simply saw a cockroach! Hardly the stuff that martyrs are made of!

But I finally came to understand that all He was asking for was my *willingness* to die for Him. He helped me to see that if I was simply *willing* to die for Him, and the time for suffering unto death ever came, *His strength would see me through it*. But if I was not willing, there would be no way that I could ever stand in the face of danger. I knelt and placed my life in His hands anew, telling Him that if it was His will, I would be willing to die for Him...knowing *that only His strength could ever see me through it*.

No sooner had the prayer been uttered than I felt as though a heavy weight had been lifted from my heart. I felt free from fear and surprisingly filled with joy! At last I understood the simple truth *that when we are willing to love Him above everything else in our lives, including our lives, we have nothing left in all the world to be afraid of — except for the fear of being out of the will of God!* It was such a release!

The next day was to bring an amazing lesson.

Upon awakening and placing the day in the Lord's hands as always, He instructed us to spend the day in Tel Aviv! The children and I were thrilled, as we had not explored much of Israel on our own! We ate a hurried breakfast and left by bus. We spent the morning sightseeing, and then took a bus to the ancient city of Jaffa. We got off the bus at what I thought was the wrong stop. Directly in front of us was a tiny bookstore. We went to ask directions, and upon entering we were amazed to find ourselves in a Bible shop with a meeting room in the rear! "Is this a chapel?" I asked the woman who was sitting there.

I was surely unprepared for her reply! "Yes, it's a meeting place for Jewish Believers in Jesus," she informed me. In Israel at that time it was something like finding buried treasure, only infinitely more valuable!

"I happen to be one myself," I replied, trying somehow to contain my joy, and I sat down at her invitation to talk. She shared that she had been a Believer living in Israel for 50 years. It's hard to say which part of that statement astonished me more! She had so much to tell of the miracles of God as Israel came into existence, formed from His promises! She also told me of the persecutions she and her husband had endured due to their religious beliefs.

"My husband often wishes for those difficult days back again," she confided a little

wistfully, "because these days it is very hard to tell a true Believer any more!" She then proceeded to tell us an incredible story:

"Many years ago in Russia, a large room full of Christians were praying and worshipping together. Suddenly, in the midst of their worship, the door burst open and a soldier entered and aimed his rifle at the crowd. 'THOSE WHO DO NOT BELIEVE IN JESUS MAY LEAVE!' he bellowed at the gathering.

Even though everyone was there in His name, for most of them there was something in their lives that they loved more than Him; whether it was their homes, or their families, or even their lives. Within minutes, the hall emptied, as people ran for the door as quickly as they could — except for a small handful of people who, even at gunpoint, loved Jesus enough not to deny Him.

The soldier stood for a moment and studied the faces of those who remained. He slowly lowered his gun, and very quietly, he said, too, am a Believer in Jesus, and I wanted to know who the true Christians were, so that we could rejoice together!"

She smiled at my tears. "It was a night of rejoicing like no other!" she concluded. I could only imagine what that night must have been like for those who had remained!

Time had passed so quickly! We had been talking for two hours, and by then the boys were getting very restless. I made plans to return with them for a service. She gave each of us a hug, and then we were off.

We stopped next at the Church of St. Peter, and met a monk there who gave us a tour of the church and just overflowed with kindness. Following a supper of spaghetti, we boarded the bus for home.

After the boys had been tucked into bed for the night and their prayers had been said, I finally had time to think back over the day. And suddenly the Lord gave me the understanding that what He had asked of me — to love Him more than anything in my life, including my life — to Him was nothing special at all. *He had simply revealed to me the true meaning of Christianity.*

As time for our separation drew nearer, I received strength from the Lord in totally unexpected ways!

One day, I received a cheque for \$100.00 from a fellowship in Massachusetts. I had so much wanted to show the boys as much of Israel as possible before they had to return to the States, and so I made immediate plans to use the money for a four-day trip to the resort town of Eilat, situated by the shores of the Red Sea. I cashed the cheque, packed our things, and off we went! I did not consult with the Lord, for fear that He would have said no. *I wanted to go to Eilat!*

Because it had not been according to *His* will, we arrived in Eilat for three very dismal days. Everything went wrong. The first night we stayed in a place that was crawling with insects. The second night, we moved to a youth hostel overlooking the Red Sea. That night, it was so cold that we spent the entire evening under piles of blankets trying to keep warm! In addition, Joey's camera was stolen. (It was a treasured gift he had just received from his dad and Jude for his ninth birthday.) It was too cold to swim. We ran out of money to stay anywhere by the third day, and had to leave for Ashdod. And I continually felt the oppression of satan. The boys were miserable and so was I. We were continually on edge with one another, and quarrels never seemed to cease.

The only bright spot of the entire escapade was our visit to the underwater aquarium. It was fascinating! The sea life was breathtakingly beautiful, and some of the fish were exquisitely coloured. We walked out feeling such reverence for God's creation.

We found we had just missed the once-an-hour bus back to Eilat, so we sat down for a long wait. An Arab camel owner near the bus stop with his camel was trying to persuade tourists to pay for a ride. He tried with us as well! I told him that we were new immigrants, not tourists, and that we couldn't afford it! The boys begged, until his heart softened. "I am going back," he said, nodding in the direction of Eilat. "Come for 20 shekels instead of 200."

"But I'm too chicken to ride a camel!" I protested. One glance from Michael and Joey indicated that I had no choice. After all, I did have to live with them! Gingerly, I climbed aboard. Michael and I were wedged into a saddle usually meant for one, and Joey had to hang onto the rear. The way camels stand up is a bit terrifying! First they raise their back legs and then they raise their front legs, so that we abruptly lurched forward and then backward!

I still smile when I picture the three of us, amidst the magnificent backdrop of the Sinai wilderness, high atop the camel, being led by an Arab with his kafiyyeh (head covering) blowing in the wind. We rode for over two miles before the Arab spotted the bus approaching from the rear. Suddenly we were racing to the bus stop, amid the cheers of everyone aboard the bus! Israel has such vitality. It is always an adventure just to walk down the street. Usually this is the feature I love the most. But it is impossible to dismount gracefully from a camel, and at that moment I definitely did not appreciate the cheers! But as far as the boys were concerned, the camel ride had salvaged the trip!

For me, however, the entire three-day fiasco had been a very humbling experience. The lesson I learned was a deep one. The Lord helped me to understand in a graphic way *that life outside of His will would not be worth living*. If I therefore turned my back on His will and kept the children, I could not live in disobedience and still expect His favour and grace upon my life. And so that experience brought the strength I needed to keep my eyes fixed on the road ahead.

Another day I was feeling particularly sorry for myself. I whined to the Lord, "But Lord, You're asking me to give up my *children*!" Once again the Lord gave His strength, but with such firmness that I realized that my complaining had to stop. That afternoon, while the three of us were walking together eating ice cream cones (their surprise for the day), we passed a little boy walking with his mother. The face on the little child was deformed beyond belief. I had to look away.

That same evening, the immigration centre showed two films for the adult residents. One was about the formation of Israel, and the second was a documentary on the Holocaust. I saw children wrenched from their mothers' arms only to be destroyed.

Through those two experiences, I knew that the Lord was showing me that I had no reason to feel sorry for myself. I had two healthy and handsome children who were to return to a warm and loving family in the United States of America. And not only that, they belonged to the King of Kings ...

One thing bothered me terribly. I had been a Believer, baptized in the Holy Spirit, for many months, and I had had a deep revelation of Jesus' love — but I still smoked cigarettes! Believers had criticized me many times for it. I had tried everything to help me to quit, all to no avail. It seemed impossible!

One day Klaus stopped by to take the boys for an outing to the sand dunes. They always had such a great time together! As they were leaving, Klaus remarked, "You really should stop smoking, you know!" The Lord underlined it so powerfully that I had to sit down to catch my breath.

"But Lord," I muttered, "You know how many times I've tried!"

He then set a question before me. "Why is it that you want to quit smoking?" It was one of those questions that He alone can answer, which He then proceeded to do!

"You want to quit smoking, not because it's a danger to your health and a bondage to satan! You want to quit smoking because other Christians are pointing their fingers at you in condemnation, and you *want to look right before them!* That is pride, and it can cause a cancer of far more serious consequences than smoking ever could! If you begin to deal with the pride, I'll take away your desire to smoke!" He then proceeded to teach me some very important lessons.

He gave me the understanding that *each* one of us is *sinful*. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to perfect and purify us, but in our entire lifetime we will never arrive at perfection. As Paul stated, revealing our sinfulness by nature:

"For the good that I wish I do, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not wish."

Romans 7:19

As Believers, our own pride would make us wish for the Lord to deal first with the *visible* sins — such as smoking — while often Jesus is more concerned with the *hidden* sins which can be far more serious.

Because of my *visible* sin of smoking, I received condemnation from many of the Believers I met. Some even stated that I couldn't possibly be a Christian and still smoke! Because of it, *I learned what it felt like to be judged*.

The Lord helped me to see that not one of us is perfect. There is only one perfect Man who ever lived! And that was Jesus! For our entire lives, even if we live as long as Methuselah, the Holy Spirit will have to continue the work of perfecting us. But we will never arrive at perfection in our walk upon this earth. Therefore, as Believers, it is terribly wrong for us to judge one another! While we are judging another's *visible* sin, we are manifesting a far more serious sin within ourselves! As Paul stated to the church at Corinth:

"... the one who examines me is the Lord. Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts ... in order that no one of you might become arrogant on behalf of one against the other. For who regards you as superior? And what do you have that you did not receive? But if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?"

I Corinthians 4:4-7

The Lord enabled me to understand that He has placed us here not to judge but to love one another! (Every time we point a finger of condemnation at someone else, if we look closely, we'll notice that no less than three fingers are pointing back at ourselves!).

Because I lived through so much condemnation, I knew how it felt. I knew that no matter what people said, I did belong to the Lord, even though I had not as yet been freed from cigarettes! Therefore, from then on, whenever I recognized a visible sin in someone else, I knew that it would be dealt with by the Lord in His perfect timing if that individual continued to follow Him. And we never know what God is dealing with in someone's life that may be visible only to Him! Each person needs first to feel loved by the Lord and His people before they can possibly have the humility to look at their sins without feeling condemned! It's helped me since to bring the visible sins of others in prayer to the Lord, instead of looking at them critically and judgmentally as though I myself were without sin!

The very next morning, the Lord spoke once more. "Beginning this morning, you will no longer smoke."

From that moment on, it felt as though I had never smoked! I couldn't believe that for fifteen years, twenty times a day, I had actually inhaled that horrible smoke into my lungs! It was not difficult to stop, because the desire was completely gone. I had been delivered from smoking!

All went well, until the third day. And this is where I learned about free choice! Even though I no longer had the physical craving for a cigarette, satan convinced me that I should try just one to prove my deliverance. I am sorry to say that I wanted to believe what he said, and so I tried one more! And I got my just reward. I had satan for company for a miserable three days. The presence of the Lord left me, and I felt only the gloats and venom of the opposition. I didn't know if it would ever end, and I kept telling the Lord how sorry I was.

On the fourth day, at last I felt the presence of Jesus once more. By then He had etched the words into my heart: "MY WORK IS NOT TO BE TAMPERED WITH!"

To this day, I have never smoked another cigarette. But I am still battling with pride!

10

IN ALL THINGS

GIVE THANKS

The Jewish people have suffered much religious persecution, and for the most part this has made them very tolerant of the religious beliefs of others (as long as their own beliefs are not threatened). But the ultra-orthodox sector of Israeli society has one blind spot, and that is where Jewish Believers in Jesus are concerned. They try to cause difficulties whenever possible (although nothing has ever happened that can truly be termed "persecution"). They constitute only a very small — but highly vocal — segment of Israeli society. But most Jewish people have reason enough to look upon Jewish Believers in Jesus as traitors to Judaism. History is full of persecutions against Jews by those professing to be Christians, and many, many Jewish people have lost their lives at "Christian" hands. How are they to know that those people so filled with hatred and vengeance were not really Christians at all? Only the love of their Messiah for them can ever heal the scars and wounds that have been caused by His name.

When the children and I first arrived in Israel, due to fear and the fact that my life was still not fully committed to the Lord, I kept secret the fact that I believed in Jesus. We kept our Bibles hidden and prayed together very quietly at night. And I told no one about my new-found faith!

There was one young man living in the immigration centre who seemed so lonely and unhappy that my sadness for him eventually overshadowed my fears. I knew that Jesus alone could fill the emptiness in his life!

His name was Stan. He was from a very wealthy American family but he had had a very lonely life, having often been left with housekeepers while his parents travelled to other lands. As he came to visit me one October afternoon, the topic of conversation turned to religion. After silent prayer for the Lord's help, I showed him references to the Messiah in the Holy Scriptures, particularly Isaiah 53. I told of the many prophecies concerning the Messiah in the Tanach, and how I had learned that each one had been fulfilled in the life of Jesus. I also made clear that He is the Messiah of the *Jewish* people, and that belief in Him as our Messiah completely fulfilled our Jewish heritage, the Law and the Prophets!

He asked many questions that day; and I shared as well the way the love of Jesus had touched my life and had given me such a love for Israel. We discussed it once or twice thereafter, but then weeks went by and the topic remained closed.

One day in early December, Stan came to visit, and our dear friend Klaus was visiting us as well. Klaus' enthusiasm for Jesus was impossible to contain, and he spoke unself-consciously and happily of the wonders of Jesus' love. This time, Stan became very agitated and upset. As the days passed, Stan's attitude became more and more hostile, and I had a feeling that I was heading for trouble.

One morning just before class, one of the American students came up to me: "I feel I'd

better warn you," he cautioned. "Stan has reported you to the director of the immigration centre, and has spread word throughout the absorption centre that you are a Believer in Jesus and that you have come to Israel as a Jewish immigrant under false pretenses." He shared with me the names of everyone that Stan had talked with a number of days earlier, and I felt hurt that none of my friends had told me! I thanked him for his kindness, and resolutely faced the fact that trouble was brewing.

I went into class, and sat next to Stan as always. The fact that I knew must have shown all over my face, because Stan looked at me and then said, "I'm sorry, but I did what I felt I had to do."

"It's all right," I replied. "I can certainly respect that."

And it was true. I could. I completely understood his feelings. It was impossible for him to know how completely Jewish an acceptance of Jesus made a Jewish person. That knowledge could come only from a touch by the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In his eyes, I was simply a traitor to the Jewish ideals, and I did respect him for doing something about it.

While in class, concentration was impossible. I kept wondering what was ahead. I glanced over at Stan, and at that very moment Jesus filled me with an over-whelming love and compassion for him.

And suddenly, Jesus gave me a further glimpse into His agony out of love for us! He allowed me to see, at that moment, the greatness of His suffering when He was being betrayed and mocked and scourged and delivered to death. His suffering was not due only to the physical pain, as unbearable as that was. He helped me to understand that He suffered also *because He dearly loved each one of His persecutors*. It was the love that He had for each one of those people that made the situation almost impossible to endure. Therefore a part of His agony during those heart-rending hours was His realization that His tormentors *did not know Him*. It was hard to fight back the tears as I realized anew the depth of Jesus' love for us that enabled Him to endure all that He did!

It's hard to describe how incredibly the Lord can reach down and touch our lives with just a simple reminder of Himself and through it transform everything! Because I left class no longer feeling sorry for myself! Instead, the Lord had given me a beginning awareness of the privilege it is to be able to suffer for Him, in even a very insignificant way. I also had a deepening awareness of His great love for us and a sense of His tremendous burden of love for Stan. How things had changed in just a moment's time!

As I walked out of class, the receptionist called to me. "The director of the centre wants to see you in his office now," she informed me. I went in filled with His calm.

"Please sit down," Saul said, and then he got right to the point. "I have heard that you believe in Jesus. Is that true?"

In the world's terms, I now had a choice. I could deny it, and life would go on as before. Or I could admit it, and perhaps be asked to leave the immigration centre. In terms of faith, however, there simply is not a choice. I loved Jesus. How could I grieve Him — and it surely would — by denying Him?

"Yes, it's true," I told him. I then added, "But believing in Jesus does not make me anything but more Jewish than ever, since He is the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies in the Tanach!"

Saul looked astonished! It was then that I realized that he had not expected me to answer yes to his question! He fumbled a bit for something to say, and then he told me that the boys and I would most assuredly have to move out of the absorption centre.

"It is nothing against you," he added, "but we had a similar situation once before and it caused a great deal of trouble."

I asked him if we had to move out that very same day.

"No, not today, but as soon as possible." And that ended our conversation.

I walked upstairs to our tiny apartment, and the minute I closed the door behind me the tears began to flow. It was the thought of the boys that made me cry. They would have a new ordeal to face! It would be hard for two such little ones to suddenly be without the security of a home, especially in view of Joey's struggle in school! And there was such a short time until Christmas. Where would we go? What would we do? I had some money, from our monthly support cheque, but never enough to find another place to live!

By the time the children returned from school I had my tears in check. I told them as gently as possible what had happened, and I tried to sound very brave and reassuring. We ate a sombre lunch, and then we walked over to the Scandinavian Church. I was certain that they would help us, and that at least there we would have a place to stay until the airplane tickets arrived for our already planned return to the United States.

We found no one at home, and it was then that my panic began to grow. I decided to send an emergency telegram to Joe, to inform him of the latest developments. It read as follows:

"Have been asked to leave immigration centre due to religious beliefs. Send mail to Scandinavian Church (and I gave the address)."

We returned to the Scandinavian Church after dinner. Jenny was home by then, and in a torrent of words I told her all that had transpired. She is such a kind and gentle person, and I knew that her pain for us was as great as mine.

"Surely you will be able to stay here," and she went off to telephone the pastor in charge of the church to obtain permission.

At that moment I was filled with an unmistakeable foreboding; I began to pray. In a few minutes Jenny returned with a look of complete disbelief on her face.

"He said no, he could not allow a Jewish Believer to stay here for fear of reprisals on the part of the ultra-orthodox." Poor Jenny looked so miserably unhappy at that moment that I just had to reassure *her*!

"It's all right," I said, "the Lord just helped to prepare me for what might happen. Never fear, something will work out!"

We both calmed down a bit and talked it over. It simply amazed us both that someone in the Lord's name would close the door on a mother and two small children who had nowhere to go! We knew his refusal to help was a sign of spiritual trouble. We prayed together for him, and for the situation. I then made a collect call to the United States.

Before I had left the States, many Christians had offered to help me in any way possible. I was assured many times that all I needed to do was simply to ask! In view of the latest developments, I made a collect call to my friend Jean. I shared with her briefly all that had transpired. I asked her if she would be willing to contact each of the churches and various friends, and ask if everyone would be able to help. Even a small amount from each person, a dollar or two, would surely be more than we had! I never doubted for a moment the sincerity of each and every offer of "help-if-ever-needed", so I was sure that very soon enough money would arrive to help us in such a difficult circumstance!

I thanked Jenny for her support and help, and promised to keep her informed of any developments. In the meantime, she offered to keep looking for a place for us to stay. So that was that!

The boys and I had a long talk, and the next day they went off to school with my assurance that something would work out soon. In the days that followed, Richard contacted many Christians in Israel for us, asking for help, but there wasn't one that wanted anything to do with a family who was known to the authorities as Believers! (As it was just

before Christmas, from then on I could read the precious Christmas story with some understanding of Mary and Joseph's feelings when they learned that the inn was full!)

A number of days went by, and we still had nowhere to go. Jenny continued to try to find us a place, and Richard made a great many phone calls on our behalf. In the meantime, the situation at the absorption centre had grown very tense. None of my former friends talked with me, and the staff members were equally distant. But suddenly I became aware of a situation that made the rest seem mild by comparison! Since that day in class when Jesus had revealed His suffering to me, *I had completely forgotten Him*. I had turned once again to man for help.

Why He continues to love me — why He continues to love *any* of us — goes completely beyond my ability to comprehend. But, as always, His forgiveness was immediate and complete. And then, for the first time since it all happened, I put the situation completely in His hands. (If I had only turned to Him to begin with, no doubt I would have saved myself some disappointments!)

I went to bed that night with the complete assurance that it would all work out. Therefore, it greatly surprised me when I was awakened in the middle of the night by Michael, who was burning with fever and obviously quite ill.

Michael's fever was extremely high, and he felt so miserable that he needed the security of my presence constantly. I held him in my arms for the remainder of that seemingly endless night, and I prayed constantly to the Lord. The next morning Joey became as concerned as I was about Mike's health, so he stayed home from school to accompany us to the doctor's office. I carried Michael there, as I did not have enough money to hire a taxi. After an examination, the doctor informed us that Michael had a serious dose of the flu, and would probably remain quite sick for a number of days. He loaded us with medications, and we trudged back to the absorption centre. By then I was exhausted from the long walk and the many pressures, and I knew that without the Lord's help I would never survive. Inside the centre, with a sick little bundle in my arms, I came face to face with Saul.

Without even thinking, I just blurted out, "Please, we just can't move out now, Michael is very sick, and we have no place to go!" And then I burst into tears.

What happened next will never cease to amaze me. Saul called us into his office, and then he said, "Since you're planning to leave Israel soon anyway, why don't you just stay here until your ex-husband sends the money for the boys' airplane tickets? I certainly can't just put you out on the street!" At that point, I was too weary to fully comprehend the miracle that had occurred. I simply thanked him, and went upstairs to our rooms with the boys.

Michael's illness dragged on, and he wanted me by his side continually. Jenny came every day or two so that I could dash out to the store for fresh groceries, but for the remainder of the time I ministered to Mike and managed with Joey as best I could.

It wasn't until he began to recover and I had the first good night's sleep in many days that I truly realized what had happened. The day after I had placed our plight in Jesus' hands, He had found us a home! Because of Michael's condition, Saul's heart had been completely turned around. It also reminded me again of the concern for one another that is the special hallmark of Israeli life. Many "Christians" refused to welcome us, but it would never occur to most Jewish people to refuse to help someone in need, perhaps because they have been in need themselves so many times. Saul was no exception.

So often, in the midst of a trying situation, it is difficult to see the hand of God. But when it is over, we can then see His wisdom and His love so clearly, and it helps us to know that He never leaves our side!

After a few days, Michael recovered and life returned to normal. By then, I had a small amount of money left over from Hanukah and Christmas gifts. I knew that very soon the

tickets would come for our return to the United States, and the children had still seen so little of Israel! After prayer, I felt it was in the Lord's will for us to spend three days in the Galilee, to enable Mike and Joey to visit the area of Israel so beloved by Jesus. (After our experience in Eilat *outside* of His will, this time I wanted to be *certain* of His will!) The minister of the Scandinavian Church had felt badly after his earlier refusal to help us, and therefore offered us the use of their home in Haifa. It was a final confirmation!

We left careful word with Saul before leaving, informing him that we would be returning to Ashdod in three days, in case the airplane tickets should happen to arrive while we were gone. Then we boarded a train and took off for the Galilee! The train ride was wonderful! The track follows along the lovely Mediterranean coast to Haifa. We so much enjoyed the ride!

Haifa is a lovely port city, and we spent our first day exploring it. We took the "subway" up to Mt. Carmel, and from the top of the mountain had a magnificent view of the Mediterranean with the ancient city of Acre off in the distance.

On the second day we boarded a bus. Our first stop was in Tiberias on the edge of the Sea of Galilee. There is no way to adequately describe the fresh beauty of the Sea of Galilee with its surrounding hillsides! It felt so peaceful, and we could tell in a moment why Jesus had loved it so. Once again, I marveled at how unchanged Israel is in so many ways. Surely it must have looked much the same two thousand years ago, when Jesus spoke the precious words that still echo in the hearts of men!

We found a quiet spot by the water, and I read to the boys from the Bible all that Jesus had spoken by the Sea of Galilee and all that had transpired there. How privileged we felt to be there!

We then stopped for lunch to sample the specialty of the region, "St. Peter's Fish"! Michael took one glance and was appalled.

"But Mommy," he gasped, "it still has eyes!" Needless to say, I ordered him something a little less realistic.

Our next stop was in the now-Arab city of Nazareth. We explored the narrow streets, teeming with activity, and looked over the hillsides, picturing Jesus romping there with His boyhood friends. We returned to Haifa that night, feeling close to Jesus in a very special way. It felt as though He had shared with us a portion of His life!

The next morning it was time to return to Ashdod, but we had thoroughly enjoyed our three days away.

Upon returning to the Immigration Centre, two telephone messages were waiting for me in our mail box. One was from Joe, and the other from the office of the American Consul in Jerusalem. Both had urgent messages to call immediately! Completely baffled, I called the United States first.

As soon as Joe heard my voice, he queried, "Are you all right?" I sensed the panic in his voice.

"But Joe, of course I am! Why ever did you ask?" Perhaps he had heard something in the news about Israel that we had missed after three days away from a radio. I was certainly unprepared for the answer he gave!

"I had been told that you had run away, and that I would never see the children again unless I sent the tickets for them immediately."

I was stunned. "But Joe, that's absurd! The boys and I just took a three-day holiday to the Galilee! If I had run away, how would I now be here to get the message that you had called? I told the director here where I was going. Why in the world would you be told that we had run away?"

"I don't know. I'm just relieved to hear that you're all right!"

"Of course we're all right! The boys are here to say hello, and I'm sure that will reassure you. I'll put them on!"

Joey and Michael had much to tell their father, as they related to him all we had seen and done. When they had finished, I took the phone again. "Joe, why is there a message to call the American Consulate?"

His answer was extraordinary! News of our supposed "run away" had frightened him, and he had therefore called two United States Senators out of concern for our welfare. And they in turn had notified the American Consulate in Jerusalem!

"Joe, I don't know why you were ever told such a thing, and I don't know why you ever believed it. We're doing fine. The boys are happily awaiting their return to the States!" He then told me that he was putting the change of custody through the court, so that it would not be an extra burden for me when we returned to the country. "As soon as that comes through," he related, "I'll send off the tickets immediately through the Jewish Agency in Boston." I thanked him, wiping away the tears that the thought of our imminent separation never failed to produce.

A while later I called the American Consulate, assuring them of our safety. "We certainly never 'ran away', and I can't imagine how a misunderstanding as incredible as that ever happened!" I thanked them for their concern, and then dismissed the incident. I never dreamed then that it was only the beginning of a continuous campaign on the part of someone in the Jewish Agency to get me out of the country!

One night while at home in the centre, a young man came to visit me. He introduced himself as Manuel, a friend of Klaus'. He was Jewish, and had been born in India.

"I have heard very much about this Jesus and His love from Klaus," he stated, getting right to the point in typical Israeli fashion. "I would like to know whether or not His love is real!"

I was at a loss to know what to do. Manuel rescued me!

"Could you help me to pray?" he asked.

I held his hands as we prayed together. He asked the Lord to forgive him for his sins and to come into his life. I then asked Jesus to touch him and cleanse him and fill him with His Holy Spirit. Manuel was silent when we finished praying. After a few minutes, I could no longer contain myself.

"Manuel," I asked, "when we prayed together, did you feel His love?" (It was an unusual question, I guess, but I had noticed that prior to our arrival in Israel, that had happened whenever I prayed for someone directly. The other person without fail felt the love of Jesus! Somehow it seemed to be the special gift He had given me! But while in Israel, the Lord had begun to show me my own unworthiness — and so I couldn't imagine that He would still use me as a vessel of His love!)

"Of course!" was Manuel's immediate and definite reply. How small my faith seemed at that moment compared to his! Only minutes old in the Lord, his calm assurance taught me a lesson!

"Oh, Manuel, you must go to tell Klaus! How thrilled he will be!"

Manuel left for the Scandinavian Church, promising to come back to visit us again. The entire incident had taken only a matter of minutes, but in such a short time two lives had been so richly blessed!

Klaus was such an example of living faith to us all. He was so young, but he had fully committed his life to the Lord. He radiated the Lord's love and joy, and I have never seen him unwilling to help someone else. He shared Jesus with everyone he met. Jesus was such a major part of his life, that he couldn't *help* sharing Him!

One of the people Klaus had shared with was a wonderful Jewish man by the name of Yehuda. Yehuda had a strong faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but he could not accept the divinity of Jesus. But he would often ride his bicycle to the Scandinavian

Church, where he and Klaus would spend hours sharing together the wonders of God, in the Hebrew language.

Klaus had served for a year at the Church, and was soon to leave for Norway before returning to his home in Germany. His stop in Norway was to see the young Norwegian woman to whom he was engaged. Two weeks before his scheduled departure, he received a letter from his fiancée. It was disappointing news! She broke off the engagement, saying she believed that it definitely was not in the Lord's will. After prayer, the Lord confirmed this to him as well, but it was too much for him to accept, so he kept his airplane reservation for Norway, hoping just to be able to speak to her about it!

The night before Klaus was scheduled to leave, a farewell party was held for him at the Scandinavian Church. It was a sad time for all of us! Joey and Mike would miss him terribly, as Klaus had spent so much time with them. He had helped them to feel at ease in a strange country, and had taken them on many outings on his time off from the Church. It was an unhappy little band that hugged him goodbye that night!

Late the next afternoon, Jenny came by the immigration centre.

"I have some news!" she breathlessly announced. "Klaus was in an automobile accident on the way to the airport! He was not seriously hurt, but he has been hospitalized."

It was shocking news, but somehow both Jenny and I felt a sense of peace about it.

"Goodness, Jenny, can't you just see him in the hospital, praising the Lord?" We both smiled, as we knew Klaus would continue to radiate the joy of the Lord!

"Wolfgang will take us to see him tonight, if you and the boys want to come along." We made the necessary arrangements, and Jenny dashed back to work.

When I shared the news with Michael and Joey, reassuring them that Klaus had not been seriously hurt, they were overjoyed at the fact that he had not left Israel, and that they could see him again!

Jenny and I had not been wrong. In the hospital, Klaus was smiling as broadly as ever! What a lesson we all learned from his experience! Because of the accident, Klaus was detained in Israel an additional two weeks. During that time, he understood that the Lord, in His grace and mercy, had given him a second chance to accept His will for Klaus' life. Klaus was able at last to acknowledge that the marriage was simply not in God's plan for him. It was disappointing for him, to say the least, but he loved Jesus enough finally to accept it!

Just before Klaus left for Germany, the Lord gave him a special gift. One night, his friend Yehuda came to the Church. His face was radiant. Yehuda had had a vision of Jesus, and realized that He is indeed the promised Messiah of the Jewish people. With his hand on his heart, Yehuda would say, "Oh! Yeshua Hamashiach! Yeshua Hamashiach!" (Jesus the Messiah!) And then he would hug us all. At the age of sixty he had found the fulfillment of his Judaism, and he never, ever lost the joy of the first moment of revelation. Klaus wept as the Lord allowed him to see one of the seeds that he had planted bear fruit before his very eyes. It was a beautiful moment! Klaus left on his journey home to Germany two weeks later than expected, but by then he found himself much closer to the side of his true Beloved.

11

CHILDHOOD

In addition to my adjustment problem, my own battle with poor health, children, and the chastening hand of God — we had almost no money! Because I had taken the reduction in child support, our income was limited to begin with. If the child support cheque would arrive on time, I would have no problem. But very often it left the U.S. late, and the mail took at least ten days.

I was also unprepared for the cost of living in Israel. How this tiny nation of people, struggling so hard for their very survival amidst untold odds ever makes it, is beyond my ability to comprehend. It testifies to one thing and one thing alone — the sustaining hand of God upon His people! Food is very reasonable in price, with the exception of meat and specialty foods. But everything else is expensive. Everything! And the average Israeli income isn't high!

I remember a little "dream list" that I had posted above the sink in our kitchen. On it were listed two things: a dish drainer, and a wonder pot. A dish drainer is something that people purchase in the United States without even thinking about it. *Everyone* has a dish drainer! (Unless, of course, they happen to have a dishwasher instead!) But one day, I suddenly realized that I really did not need one! Having come from affluent America, that was really an astonishment to me. And I never did purchase one!

A wonder pot is an ingenious device invented as a substitute for an oven, since many Israelis have only two burner stoves without ovens. The pot cost only 40 shekels (about \$6.00) but it took many weeks before I could afford to purchase one. There were many days when we had only about 10 shekels per day for food (about \$1.25). In Israel at that time, it would buy, for example, a loaf of bread, milk, eggs, cheese, one carrot, cucumber and tomato, and three apples. With the wonder pot, I was eventually able to cook more economically. As difficult as it was, the Lord never let us starve. As a matter of fact, we never missed a single meal! But He was surely ridding me of my American ways.

After we had been in Israel only a short while, I received some unexpected birthday money from my parents. I knew how disappointed Joey and Michael would be if they were unable to buy me a gift for my birthday. (I had always taught them the joy of giving as well as receiving!) So I put our other needs aside and watched as my birthday money trooped off to a store across the street. A long while later the boys returned, each clutching a small package. Just seeing their excited faces made me know I would love whatever they had chosen! My birthday was yet a day away, but Michael could not wait that long.

"Please, Mommy," he begged, "just open them now for a little peek, and then you can wrap them up again!" When I opened the packages, I could hardly believe my eyes! Joey had chosen two beautiful bracelets for me, and Mike had chosen a delicate ring and a lovely necklace. (Instinctively I knew the items had cost far more than the money I had given

them:1 I thanked them both and promised to be surprised in the morning as well, as I carefully rewrapped their treasures.

The next morning, while they were both in school, I dashed over to the store where the boys had made their purchases. I said to the owner, "I happen to be the mother of the two little boys who came in here yesterday to purchase birthday gifts for me. The gifts are truly beautiful, but I know that they were worth far more than the money I gave them. Since the children are now in school, I came over to pay you the difference. I guess you didn't want to disappoint them yesterday by telling them that their selections cost too much!" Her answer was so typically Israeli!

"No, no!" she exclaimed. "I wouldn't *think* of taking the extra money! I have never seen little children shop like that, and it was such a joy! It was worth it just to see their happiness!" And she refused to accept an additional shekel, even though the gifts actually cost double the amount I had given to the boys! How blessed I was by her kindness!

Financially speaking, January was the most dismal time of all. We finally ran out of both money and food, as the support cheque from the States simply didn't arrive. Jenny and Wolfgang sent us some groceries, but even they couldn't feed us forever! One morning, before the boys left for school, I called for a time of prayer. "Boys, we simply have to ask Jesus for help! We have no money and no food, and He has promised to take care of us!" They prayed their beautifully simple prayers, and marched off to school in full confidence that He would provide. Their mother, however, was sorely lacking in their simple faith!

Naturally, I expected the mail to bring our answer. Promptly at 10:00 a.m., I went to the reception desk to await mail call. I watched as, letter by letter, the mail was distributed. Our box remained empty. I then checked with the secretary to see if the tickets had arrived yet from the States, thinking that perhaps Joe would send the support cheque along with the tickets. Her answer was no. "Oh, dear!" I commented. "We have no money for food!"

I went back to our apartment. "Oh, Lord," I moaned, "How can You disappoint Joey and Michael? Think what that will do to their faith! How can I tell them that You failed to provide? After I risked sharing our dilemma with them?"

Obviously it was my faith and not theirs that was in question! But still no help came. They arrived home bursting with questions! "Hey, Mom, did help come in the mail? How did He give us our money for food?" They were so eager to know! How disappointed they were when I told them the truth. But immediately they agreed, "He'll help us still! We'll just wait and see!"

They ate their meagre lunch of "cream of wheat" and then went out to play. Suddenly I heard my name called out for the telephone. Breathlessly, I answered it. "Saul wants to see you in his office," I was told. And so off I went!

"Sit down," he instructed. Only a month earlier I had come to this very office, to be told to leave the Immigration Centre due to my religious convictions. I wondered what he wanted now?

"Eileen," he began, "why didn't you tell me you had no money for food?"

I was speechless!

"You're still here under my care, you know, and that is something I take very seriously! I have made arrangements for you to receive our monthly grant given to regular immigrants, which you have not needed due to income from child support. You simply take this authorization down to our office in 'Area Aleph' in Ashdod, and they will give you 1400 shekels." That was a small fortune. Over \$100.00! From the very man who had previously asked us to leave the Immigration Centre! How tenderly the Lord had honoured two little boys' very big faith!

Tears filled my eyes and I could barely say thank you! I ran upstairs to thank the Lord. As I knelt in prayer, I knew there was something He wished to show me in my Bible. He guided me to Proverbs 30:8:

*"Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with bread allotted unto me;
Lest I be full and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and
steal, and take the name of my God in vain."*

Proverbs 30:8-9

At last I understood that for all of those weeks, the Lord had been giving us our "allotted bread". It was such a fine balance between the vanity of riches and the desperation of poverty; and it had all come from Him! It had been a difficult but very necessary time of "weeding out". He had begun to purge me from my American tendency to waste. I had learned to appreciate every morsel that He provided. I no longer left any food on my plate when He filled it! I also learned not to rely on expected sources of provision — the mail, for example! He taught me, instead, *to look to Him*. I learned as well that many of the things that I had once seen as "essential" no longer were important at all. My life had become greatly simplified. It was often difficult to endure, especially with two small boys who soon would no longer be mine. (I had so much wanted to bless them in so many ways!) But I know how necessary that time of discipline was.

That night, the night of the Sabbath, the boys and I held a "Festival of Thanksgiving", which I still have recorded on tape even to this day. We turned it into an evening of thanksgiving, not just for His provision, but also for the happy years He had given us as a family. I'll quote each of our prayers, to share the deep gratitude we felt toward our true Provider!

Joey began by reciting the Hebrew blessing over the wine. He commented, "I love Shabbat, Mommy!" Michael then gave the blessing over the bread.

Then I said, "Jesus, this is a Festival of Thanksgiving to You, because You taught us this week that everything we get comes from You, including the food that we eat. Today we have really been blessed, so we're going to sing these songs to You!"

We then sang many songs together, some of which Joey accompanied with his harmonica. We began with one of our favourites:

*"You said You'd come and share all my sorrows;
You said You'd be there for all my tomorrows.
I came so close to sending You away:
But just like You promised, You came here to stay.
I have only to pray!"*

*And Jesus said —
'Come to the water, stand by My side;
I know you are thirsty — you won't be denied!
I felt every teardrop that in darkness you cried:
And I've come to remind you, that for those tears I died.'*

*Your goodness, so great I can't understand;
But dear Lord, I know that all this was planned.
I know You are here now and always will be:
My heart lost its shame and I know I am free!
But Jesus, why me?"*

*And Jesus said —
'Come to the water, stand by My side;
I know you are thirsty — you won't be denied!
I felt every teardrop when in darkness you cried:
And I've come to remind you, that for those tears I died.'"*

Then we sang another favourite, "Rejoice in the Lord Always", followed by many others. By that time, since everyone in the Immigration Centre knew of our beliefs, we did not have to be afraid to openly sing praises unto Him! Finally Michael said, "Let's eat!" These, then were our prayers:

Joey: "I thank You so much for this food and the money You gave us. Thank You so, so much for everything in this world! Thank You Lord! And for this food which we are about to receive from Your bounty. Praise You Lord, Amen."

Michael: (said so shyly) "I thank You for this money and for this food. Hallelujah. Amen."

Me: "We just thank You for this celebration tonight. If this is to be our last Shabbat together as a family, we ask You to help each of us with our sadness, to make our lives joyful unto You, and to help You to know that we thank You for the happy years that we've had together, Lord. And we just thank You for the love that You've shown us just so many, many times! We thank You for the food we're about to eat tonight. Without You we wouldn't have any, right, boys? We learned that! So we just offer this meal to You and we praise Your name, Amen."

Michael: "Don't cough at the table!"

Then, during the meal we talked about all the times that the Lord had provided for us. Joey's favourite memory was an unexpected birthday gift that he had received! One day we were sitting in our living room in the absorption centre working on a puzzle. The head of the housekeeping department had once asked if she could use our small apartment to show to tourists, as she had loved the way I had decorated it with the few articles I had brought with us from the States. So, this particular day, a group of tourists came to see it. While they were there, Joey happened to mention that in two days he would be eight years old! They all immediately sang "Happy Birthday" to him, and then they all chipped in and gave him a gift of 100 shekels! How his little face had beamed!

We concluded the very special evening with bedtime prayers and another round of songs.

Michael: "Jesus, thank You for the food, and for the yummy bread, and for this money, and I thank You for a beautiful day. Amen."

Joey: "Dear Jesus, thank you so much for this beautiful day. I pray that my mother and brother will fall asleep quickly and we'll all have a good night's sleep, and I pray that I'll fall asleep real quickly, too. Thank You, Jesus, Amen."

Me: "As Joey and Michael get ready to sleep, on this Festival of Thanksgiving to You for all your beautiful love to us today, I just thank You for so many blessings You've given us, Lord. And as Mike and Joey get ready to go back to the U.S., I just pray that You'll fill their lives with Your joy and give them so many happy days, Lord. Help them to know that it won't be long and we'll be together *forever*. And so I just praise Your name for all Your love. Keep Mike and Joseph safe in Your arms tonight, Lord. Give them protection so that their dreams are happy ones. And keep them happy and safe in Your love all day tomorrow, too. We ask it in Jesus' precious name, Amen ... What did you guys like best of all that you saw in Israel? Jerusalem? Bethlehem? Eilat? The Sea of Galilee?"

Joey: "I just *loved* Masada. It made me almost cry."

Mike: "Yeah, wow, I liked Masada too!"

Me: "Remember the first day we went to Jerusalem, how beautiful it looked? And Joey, you had your first ride on a camel there, too!"

Joey: "Yeah. Boy, was I scared!"

Mike: "Hey, Mom, I just had an idea! You shouldn't have bought *food* with the money today. You should have bought a big car!"

We all laughed.

Me: "Well, dear, the Lord did provide us with a lot of money today. But not THAT much!"

Michael then sang two Hebrew songs that he had learned at school, "Shalom Yeladeem Toveem" (Peace, Good Children) and "Ha Yom Shabbat Shalom" (This Day, Sabbath Peace). And, last but not least, Joey sang the following song that he had "composed":

*"Jesus is beautiful, Jesus is beautiful,
He loves just everyone!
He loves me, He loves me!
Jesus is beautiful, Jesus is beautiful,
He loves me and you! Jesus loves me and you!
Jesus is beautiful. Yes, He is!
Jesus is beautiful,
And He loves you and me."*

I know that to the Lord's ears, it was a masterpiece.

And that concluded our "Festival of Thanksgiving". How close and how blessed it made us feel!

Learning to live with very little money had been a difficult lesson, especially in our last few months together. But in many ways it brought us much closer to the Lord and to each other, as we learned together to look to Him for our help.

Since my initial phone call in December to the States for financial help from my friends, seven weeks had gone by and I still had not heard one word. Not a letter, not a card, not a single solitary dollar bill had arrived. Seven weeks is a very long time when every single day of every week I went expectantly to my mailbox, and every single day of every week I walked away again, empty handed. Needless to say, it was not only the lack of money that had disappointed me. But where in the world were my friends?

One Friday morning toward the end of January, I had checked my mailbox as always, and could not believe that it was empty again. That day I had no money whatsoever. Our supply of food was gone. The support cheque had never arrived at all, and we had depleted by then the grant that Saul had given us almost a month earlier. The shops were due to close in less than two hours, and we would then face two days with nothing to eat. I sat outside in the sunshine on the steps of the Immigration Centre, feeling terribly dejected. I knew that the tickets could arrive any day from the States, and that knowledge made one day more painful than the next. And now, here we were, without a single thing to eat in the flat!

I was too despondent at that point to believe that the Lord would provide once again. We had been through it many times by then, and I guess I was just plain sick of "having faith". That day I preferred food, money and friends! I knew I was feeling sorry for myself — *so* sorry for myself, as a matter of fact, that I felt I had every *right* to feel sorry for myself!

I must have been a dismal sight to behold on the front stoop of the Immigration Centre! As I sat there, Helga, the director of housekeeping from the centre, came rushing up to me. It was the first time she had spoken to me in seven weeks! She blurted out, "I have been watching you now for seven weeks. Ever since we heard about your faith in Jesus. I know that during this time you have been through some very difficult times. But always you have been smiling! When I see you today so unhappy, I don't know what to do!"

Then she repeated to me something I had told her many times when we had talked together prior to December. "Don't worry about it," she stated. "Whatever the problem is,

the Lord will take care of it!" She followed this with a reassuring hug, and hurried off.

The significance of what she told me dawned on me slowly. I thought back over all she had said ... *For seven weeks, she had been watching* ... Seven weeks earlier, everyone in the absorption centre had come to know of my faith in Jesus. When they all stopped talking to me, it never occurred to me that they would watch instead! I was so amazed! I slowly began to understand that in this way, I had been an even more effective witness of His love and strength in trying circumstances than if I had gone around to every room in the centre and personally shared my beliefs! It made me so grateful that I had remained open to His love in spite of all that had happened! It made me so joyful that I practically skipped up the stairs to our apartment. While I was in prayer offering thanks to the Lord, there was a knock on the door. It was Helga once again. "Saul wants to see you in his office. See, I told you it would be all right!" I gave her a hug and dashed down to Saul's office.

Saul knew that once again we had no money, so I thought he called me to his office to say he had found a way to give us some. Therefore, the news that followed came as a complete and unexpected shock.

"The tickets have arrived, and you can leave for the States any time. The office of the Jewish Agency wants to see you in Jerusalem on Sunday morning with your passport." He gave me the money to get to Jerusalem by bus, and there was a little extra to purchase food for the Sabbath. The second Saul finished, I dashed to the store, arriving minutes before it closed. I was sure money would be waiting for us in Jerusalem with the tickets, since our January support cheque still had not arrived, and it was almost February! So I used every bit of extra money to purchase food.

After I returned to the apartment, I put the groceries away and then allowed myself to feel for the first time since Saul's announcement. I had braced myself against the dreaded news for many weeks, and I don't think I could ever describe the anguish I felt when the news finally arrived. The reality hit home at last. *Within days, we would* no longer be a family. I would no longer have two little sons to cook for and to clean for, to scold and to pamper. We had been together all of their lives, so how could I even picture a day without them? I was flooded with remembrances of the special things we had always done together, and most of all, of the special things that made them who they were. I would no longer be given daily the little pictures that Michael drew with such simplicity and joy. I would never again be amazed at Joey's inventions, or by the incredible things he managed to create out of Lego. I would so much miss his favourite treat for me — an omelet in bed on Sabbath morning! Michael would no longer be there to climb up on my lap for a cuddle or to try to teach me a new song that he had learned in school. No more little ones to greet each morning and to tuck sleepily into bed each night. No more dear children to laugh with and talk with and pray with and sing with. I hadn't allowed myself to really feel the sadness since the day I had written the letter to Joe confirming that I wished to relinquish custody. I guess the Lord alone knows how I felt in those few awful moments, and it was only He who could ever wipe away the tears.

The boys arrived home from school, and I don't think it hurt them to see me cry. They knew that my tears were for them, and they would never be able to truly doubt my love for them or my heartbreak over our separation. (I had always told them that they were very fortunate young men indeed — most children had one or two parents who loved them with all their might, but Michael and Joey had a grand total of THREE!)

I hugged them both, and told them that the tickets had arrived. We all cried together. But later we were able to share the excitement and joy they felt, too, at being reunited with their father and step-mother. We talked about all that they had missed and how happy they would be to see many friends and relatives again after such a long separation. The conversation helped them, of course, but it helped me most of all!

On Sunday, we left on our journey up to Jerusalem. I had precisely enough money to get us to the office, and not a single *agora* more! We arrived at the Jewish Agency to discover that all they needed was my passport, and they would then proceed to make all the arrangements necessary for our departure. They informed me, however, that the funds for the tickets had indeed arrived, but no additional money had accompanied them. I was flabbergasted! We were supposed to spend the night with friends in town, but with no money for bus fare, they might as well have lived on the moon! Finally the official offered to give us a lift, and so we departed for Richard's, which seemed to be the nearest point.

When we arrived at his address, we were surprised to find no one at home! By then it was well past lunch time, and a thorough search through pockets and wallets unearthed enough change to buy one bottle of soda and three soft rolls. Since we had expected *nothing* to eat, it seemed more like a banquet than the meagre meal it was! We sat out in the garden in front of Richard's apartment. It was very cold, so we huddled together for warmth. Our spirits were high, however, with a real feeling of expectation. We had walked with the Lord long enough to know that if things were going *this* badly, a special treat was soon in store!

It was about two hours before Richard finally arrived. He was horrified to find us sitting outside in the cold, and quickly hustled us in. He then proceeded to treat us as royal guests! He gave us all the leftovers from his huge Shabbat meal, and for us it was a feast! He warmed us through with friendship, hot tea and food, and then treated us to a bus ride to our overnight destination. He also gave us 100 shekels, which he said was a gift given to him by a tourist earmarked for a Jewish Believer. (He never failed to come up with one of those!) That meant we already had more than enough money to return to Ashdod the next evening!

The next morning Richard had made arrangements for us to meet a Believer at the Garden Tomb, and then he planned to meet all of us for lunch in the Old City. Richard has an incredible ministry of bringing Believers together, not just in Israel, but in many places throughout the world. It is a ministry he is completely oblivious to, however! Richard simply says, "I'd like to you meet so and so . . ." and then the Lord goes POW! It's an extraordinary experience, and that morning at the Garden Tomb turned out to be no exception!

A visit to the Garden Tomb is an experience in itself! The tomb is very near the hill of Golgotha, and many people believe it is the actual place of Jesus' burial. (It was only uncovered in the last century). Even more important than the historical accuracy of the site, however, is the fact that it is a place where every pilgrim is met with warmth. The light from the One who rose from the tomb surely shines forth. (And of course, *that* is the most important fact of all — He is RISEN!)

The Believer we were to meet there was a Swiss woman named Constance. During our conversation together, I mentioned how I had begun to appreciate the strength of the Lord during times of suffering. This comment surprised her greatly, as she knew that few American Christians are truly prepared for the difficult days that lie ahead! We had a wonderful talk together, sitting in a quiet spot in the warmth of the Jerusalem sunshine while the children explored the gardens surrounding the tomb. Just before we were to meet Richard for lunch, she informed me that there was a place that she simply had to show me. To the boys' delight, we tramped off through the Old City, and just before reaching the *via Dolorosa* (the Way of the Cross), she led me into a tiny church.

"Now look," she instructed; and there on the wall behind us was a mural that spoke to me at that moment more than a thousand words ever could. It was a picture depicting men of all nations walking across the face of the earth, each bearing a cross upon his back. In the picture, most of the men carried their crosses while keeping their eyes lowered to the ground. They were almost doubled over from the great weight of the cross! There were a few, however, who kept their eyes up, and in front of them was a beautiful image of Jesus

walking before them. Each man that kept his eyes on Jesus *still* had a cross to carry — but the expressions on their faces radiated joy! (Needless to say, those who kept their eyes to the ground never even noticed Him at all.)

Jesus was relaying something very special to me at that moment, and Constance took the boys on a miniature tour so that I could be alone with Him for a few minutes. With tears in my eyes, I knelt before Him in that small chapel in thankfulness for the gentleness of His love. With one soft touch of His hand, He had transformed a mountain of sadness into joy. Just this assurance from Him that He knew how I felt about relinquishing the boys helped me to look upwards once again. I felt His love so strongly for just that moment of time, and I knew that my face must have mirrored the radiance of the men on the mural who kept their eyes upon Him — even with the heavy cross upon their backs. I have remembered often the encouragement He gave to me that day.

We had to hurry off to keep our luncheon appointment with Richard. He brought us first to the site where Jesus had been mocked and scourged, and the remnant of a "kings game" could still be seen in the pavement from 2000 years ago! Since Jesus had so recently given me a glimpse into His suffering at that very spot, our visit there meant a great deal to me. Richard also showed us the enormous cistern below the pavement, which is still used for water storage today! Joey and Michael and I looked at each other with wide eyes! He then took the four of us to a small restaurant in the Moslem section of the Old City. The boys were enthralled!

While waiting for our dinner to be served, Richard shared that he had told two Norwegian women about our long wait in the cold the day before. "They were so moved by the story," he continued, "that they asked me to give you this." And he proceeded to hand me 200 shekels!

"Well, as a matter of fact, the Lord prompted me to give you a gift, too!" Constance remarked, as she handed us 400 shekels! It was turning out to be a day so much like my original walk with the Lord — with every road taking an unexpected and delightful turn! It had been so long since I had experienced His love in this way that it truly felt like a stream in the wilderness.

After lunch, the boys and I accompanied Richard to the Mount of Olives. When we arrived, I fell in love with Jerusalem all over again as we stood gazing at the view of the City! Richard then brought us to a Bible shop where a dear Believer named Heinz gave us a gift of 300 shekels and his blessings for our journey to the U.S.! I also saw someone there that I had met previously. She was in a rush, so chatted with us only briefly, but what she said was a warning of things to come. "Be aware," she cautioned, "that very few people in the U.S. will understand your separation from the boys!" At that time it seemed impossible to me that anyone could misunderstand, but I was to learn all too soon how prophetic her warning had been! She gave us each a big hug on our way out the door.

At the end of a full and surprising day, Richard waved as we boarded the bus on our return to Ashdod.

Jenny came by to visit that evening after the boys were in bed. As I recounted to her our experiences, I pulled out the Israeli shekels, and we were astonished when I finally took a total count! Two days earlier, I had arrived penniless in Jerusalem. Forty-eight hours later, we had a grand total of 1000 shekels! Over \$100.00! I had prayed for the money to buy the boys their last pair of shoes from me as their mother, as they needed new shoes so badly, and for money for haircuts for them as well. And the Lord had answered!

I called Joe the next morning to inform him that all had been arranged for our return to the States. The call was placed on Tuesday, 31 January 1977, and the plane reservations had been made for Friday, the 3rd of February.

"Oh, dear," he replied. "Could you possibly change the reservation and come on Monday instead? We are having their bedroom wallpapered, and we just spent \$500.00 on

new bunk beds and furniture, but none of it will be ready before Monday!" He went on to tell that both he and Jude were planning to take the entire week off from work, so that they could truly welcome the boys and help them get settled. Their love and concern for Mike and Joey helped to lighten the load.

I told him that I would send him a telegram with notification of the new flight number and time of arrival. I then asked him to call up my friend Jean and request a ride home from the airport for me. I hung up filled with gratitude. Jesus had just given us the gift of an additional three days together as a family.

In the few days that followed, the boys picked out their new shoes, and on Saturday night we had a great time as we munched our last "sidewalk supper" of falafels and ice cream cones. But all too soon, even our additional three days came to a close.

On the morning of our departure, the Immigration Centre provided a ride for us to the airport. It puzzled me as to why all the arrangements were being made so carefully through official channels, but the burden on my heart was just too great then for me to really care.

The Jewish Agency social worker accompanied us to the airport, and upon our arrival at Ben Gurion she was joined by another official. We were swiftly guided past the security and customs checkpoints with all our possessions, and again I was puzzled.

Soon our flight was announced. As we prepared to board, the official said, "Now you must give us your 'teudat oleh!'" (What he was referring to was the small booklet containing all of our rights as new immigrants in Israel.)

"But why?" I queried. "I plan to return to Israel!"

"It will be kept on file for you in Ashdod," he assured me. "Just request it when you return." It seemed very strange to me, but I was in no position to argue. I gave him the booklet and we boarded the plane.

All too soon, we were on our way. Oh, what a terrible day it was! I knew that every minute in flight brought me closer to the United States and permanent separation from my very own sons. As they sat on either side of me on the plane, I tried to be as cheerful as possible, while inside the ache continued to grow. I tried to remember every word that they spoke. I studied the way they looked, and smiled, and laughed, and argued with each other. As each hour passed, I gave them the little "travel treats" that I always made a part of our journeys together. As they opened each one, I would think, "Oh my God, in hours we will no longer be a family. How will I do it? How will I do it?"

The most agonizing thing for me had been packing away their things. Each piece of clothing, each treasured toy, every single item had memories attached to it. And as I had folded and sorted and placed each item into the suitcases, it felt like bits of my heart were being packed amongst them. Oh, the heartache of knowing that from then on the clothes would be washed and folded and cared for by someone else!

That agony was the first thing I thought of when the boys finally fell asleep, and I wept and wept and wept, but still felt as though the sadness would overwhelm me. I tried to memorize the sound of their breathing as they peacefully slept. I felt such an urgency to build a storehouse of memories!

By the time the plane landed in London, I had the tears under control. I was simply too numb to feel any more. We had a two-hour stop-over at the London airport, and this was a welcomed distraction. We shared a snack together, and the boys enjoyed seeing people from many nations!

When the plane finally landed at the New York airport, I wanted to grab the children to me and beg the Lord to change His mind. It was a desperate feeling; but I knew what His answer would be. As we walked from the plane towards customs, I wished it could take forever! I had one persistent thought — on, *the other side of that door, they will no longer be mine.*

Michael had begun coughing again, and we had to walk slowly in order for him to keep up with us. When we finally arrived at the customs area, we could look above and see the friends and families waiting for the new arrivals to join them. The boys quickly spotted their dad and Jude. My own sorrow was forgotten for a time, as I sensed the love that flowed as they waved in anticipation to the boys. Cindy (a friend from the church) and Jean had come to pick me up, and they were welcome faces!

All too soon we were finished with customs, and it was time to walk through that door.

All that happened next I barely remember. I felt completely drained and more like a spectator than a participant. Joe and Jude were so overjoyed to see the boys, and I remember much activity as our belongings were separated. Jean and Cindy helped with my luggage, and we all waited while Joe packed the boys' things into his car. When the car was loaded, I gave the boys a quick kiss, and reminded them that I would see them the following weekend. Somewhere the strength was there not to cry, until their car had pulled away from the curb and driven off out of sight.

I knew at that moment a loneliness I had never experienced before in my life.

12

From the moment that Jean, Cindy and I arrived at the car, I could sense that something was wrong. The issue was avoided for quite a while, however. Instead, Jean commented, "I can see in your face that you've gone through a great deal, Eileen. You seem different from the person whom we said goodbye to in September. I can sense a new depth in your experience with the Lord!" I nodded, too overcome by the recent departure of Joey and Michael to speak. Thankfully, she and Cindy went on to tell me all that had transpired at the airport.

While waiting for our plane to arrive, they had had an opportunity to speak with Jude and Joe and to learn of the preparations that had been made in anticipation of the boys' arrival. "They both took a day off from work to speak with the teachers and the principal at the boys' new school, and a very positive program has been worked out for Joey," Jean explained. "Jude is also planning to work only half-a-day from now on, so that she'll be home when Michael returns home from his kindergarten class. Joe has cut out many activities to enable him to spend much time with the children, too. And they also told us about all the furniture they purchased for the boys' new bedroom!" All of it was welcome news!

There was still a strain on the part of each of us. Finally, Cindy commented that many were deeply concerned about my Christian witness in view of all that had happened, and that I definitely needed to heed the advice of others. So then I knew the cause of the tension, and I could hardly believe my ears! I felt a great sadness in my heart.

"Fine, Cindy," I said. "We can talk about it in a few days. Right now I just can't deal with another thing!" Or so I thought. But with His strength, we can make it through more than we ever dreamed possible.

Nothing more was said on the subject until we reached Cindy's lovely old farm manor, where I was to stay for the next few days. A number of acquaintances from the church were already gathered around the fire-place, and the advice began the minute I set foot in the room.

"Don't you think it is a very bad witness as a Christian for a mother to give away her children?"

"We hope that now you'll listen to reason and get a job! You have to set an example in the community, you know."

"When you get yourself in trouble, are you always going to expect others to bail you out?"

And no one was interested at all to hear the precious lessons I had learned during our months away. It was all so unexpected, I barely knew how to react. I felt a growing despair.

After about an hour, I excused myself to try to call my sister in Minneapolis. Sensing a reaction, I added, "Collect." There was no answer. I then placed a call to my parents.

"Perhaps I can go home right away," I thought, longing to see my family again and to be cared for on the saddest day of my life. My mom answered and accepted the call.

"Hi, Mom, I'm back in the States, and can't wait to see you!"

She inquired after the boys, and asked how our trip was. She then said, "Your father and I both feel it would be better if you didn't come home right now. We feel it is time you started making something of your life, and there are things that are better left unsaid. We believe it's time for you to take responsibility for yourself. You're welcome to write to us, however. We want you to still keep in touch!"

"But what about the boys? You'll maintain contact with them, won't you?"

"Of course. We plan to call them after they've had a day or two to get settled." She then wished me well and hung up the phone.

"Oh my God," I sobbed. "I know how they feel. But don't they realize this is the worst day of my life?"

To help still the panic, I tried the call to my sister once again. And this time she was home! She said she was hoping that I could visit them, but she and Dave were going on vacation, so our visit together would have to be wedged in sometime after her holiday. That information did not help my growing sense of abandonment! In general, however, we had a wonderful time of sharing, which helped to ease the ache within my heart.

I went back to the living room for a time, and then excused myself to try to get some rest. The minute I closed the door to my room, the tears began to flow. It was my first night of separation from the boys, and oh, how I longed for them! And there I was, facing separation from my parents as well, in addition to the judgmental attitude of friends! I have no concept of how long I cried.

After what seemed an eternity, I spotted a tiny pile of letters on my bedside table. In the midst of darkness, the Lord had provided a ray of light. There amongst the mail was an answer to a letter I had written to a Believer in Europe. I had never shared with her my suffering — I had simply asked for prayers for "two little boys who would soon have to leave their mother." On that first disappointing night, her reply was a gift from God. On the first page, she had written the following words: "MY FATHER, I DO NOT UNDERSTAND THEE, BUT I LOVE THEE!" And then she wrote:

"Dear Mrs. Dorflinger,

Your dear lines from 4th January, which I found waiting for me when I returned from a time away, moved me very deeply. Thank you so much for writing, and for the trust you showed me in your letter.

It is my sincere prayer that our Lord Jesus will comfort you in your great suffering and that on this very path which has brought you so much grief, you may experience His nearness in a special way.

May the word on the front of this note strengthen you to follow Him on the way of the cross, no matter what it costs, for out of love for us He forsook the Father and all the glory of heaven. He knows how great your sorrow is and He will let fruit for eternity grow out of this path of suffering. Place your trust in your Lord Jesus Christ. He brings help on every pathway, for He is Love, and He loves you personally. If you expect and await this, you will experience it.

With all my heart, I commit you to the love of our Heavenly Father, also your two little boys. He is watching over them and can also draw their hearts to their Saviour.

I am united with you in the fellowship of His love."

Like a small child, I kept that letter under my pillow as I cried myself to sleep.

The situation did not improve. The next morning I called friends to announce my return, and Marcia in Pennsylvania seemed to be the only one pleased with the news! After speaking with many in the days that followed, I began to piece together what had happened. Somehow rumours had begun to fly, and everything I had written from Israel had been blown completely out of proportion. Even my request for financial help (to which no one had responded) had been distorted beyond belief! Somehow everyone thought that I was asking for huge donations, and no one even believed that my request had been for only one dollar from each person! One spiritually-poor person remarked angrily, "How dare you ask for money just before Christmas when we already have to give?"

Discord had resulted when one person had received a letter from me before another, and the situation had gone from the sublime to the ridiculous. (I didn't understand it then, but I was seeing Christianity without Jesus. In "comfortable Christianity", there is no concept of suffering and chastening, but only of good works. These people had sent me off to Israel with great expectations, not understanding that God's deeper dealings were one day to bear eternal fruit.) After hearing many, many accusations, I knew that *I* wouldn't even like the person they had begun to see as me! It seemed as though satan had had a field day.

It had even affected my lawyer, Bruce. "Why in the world didn't you contact me from Israel?" was his immediate response to my voice on the phone. He was terribly upset that I had relinquished custody of the children without notifying him as my attorney.

"Oh, Bruce, it was only because I had barely been able to pay you for the *last* time you helped me!" He hadn't understood, and had taken it very much to heart. He then shared with me some very alarming news! He told me that someone in the office of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem had told outrageous stories about me!

"Joe and your parents were informed that you were an unfit mother, and that if the money were not sent for your plane tickets immediately, the children would be put in an institution and Joe would never see them again. Then they were told by him that you had run away, and that the money had better be sent immediately for your return to the United States. We also heard that you had never really been asked to leave the Immigration Centre at all!" So that's why my parents had been so upset; and that's why they had sent me the ticket to leave Israel! And that's what had caused Joe to contact the senators! I couldn't believe my ears! I called Joe at work immediately.

"Joe, why didn't you tell me about all of that? You poor thing, you must have been frightened to death. And how could you have believed it? You *had* to know better!"

"I didn't tell you about it because I knew you had enough to deal with. And I only believed it until I spoke with you by telephone from Israel. After speaking with you I knew it was a heap of lies, and I was furious with that man in the Jewish Agency!" He paused for a moment. "Anyway, I'm glad you called, because I have some news. Michael is in the hospital. He was hospitalized because of his breathing shortly after our return home Monday night. Boy, it sure made us a family fast! It helped us to have time alone with each of the boys, however."

Tears burned my cheeks. All I could think about was poor little Mike in the hospital for three days, wondering why his mother didn't come to visit him!

"Oh, Joe, I just have to see him!"

"Jude will be visiting him tonight, so why don't you plan on spending the day with him tomorrow?" I thanked him and hung up the phone. I felt a helplessness I had never experienced before.

Michael was standing in the doorway watching for me the next morning, as Jude had told him that I would be visiting. To me, the entire morning was like a living nightmare. I could sense his bewilderment and confusion over our separation, and I was at a loss as to

what to do. (Knowing the heartbreak it caused to Mike and Joey was the greatest anguish of all. They were such little tykes — only four and eight years old!)

Michael was physically well enough to go home by then, and so I stayed with him until Joe arrived to take him home. I walked beside his wheelchair (the use of one is customary for discharging patients); and I never will forget as long as I live the desperate way he clung to my hand all the way to the car. There was no way I could comfort him, and no way I could explain. Only Jesus could ever heal the ache in both our hearts.

"I'll see you Saturday," I said, and watched long after the car had driven out of sight.

Before I went back to Cindy's, I spent some much needed time alone. I thought back to the last few days the boys and I had shared together in Israel. At that time, it seemed impossible that I would ever make it through the separation from them. Little did I know then how much more was to happen! How bewildered it all made me! I couldn't understand why it was all happening, and I thought that I must surely be to blame. Worse still, I could not in any way feel the Lord's presence. I had felt it so seldom in the preceding months! I prayed, "Lord, I understand so little of this. I can't feel Your closeness, yet I continue to believe that all this is according to Your will. You seem so far away! But I accept it all as from You." And then I tried to laugh it off by saying, "Why on earth did You ever give me a prophecy about writing a book? Who in the world would want to read a book as gloomy as these past days have been?" But the time apart did not seem to have helped, and, feeling more miserable than ever, I stopped to visit a friend of mine named Claudia on my way home to Cindy's. I had been there for a while when the doorbell rang, and in walked Jimmy (someone I had met after my divorce and before I had come to know Jesus). He was the last person in the entire world that I had expected to see! It seemed as if this was satan's final try. By then I had been worn down physically due to lack of rest and I was emotionally drained beyond belief. And in walked this man that I had once cared for very deeply. I knew intuitively he still cared for me. All I had to do was to take a simple step forward, and I could be in someone's arms, to be held and comforted. How easy it would have been at that moment! Thank God I still knew the *real* love of my life, Jesus! I knew nothing could ever justify my hurting Him intentionally!

Jimmy was equally astonished to see me! He was so astonished, as a matter of fact, that he gobbled five dry donuts in a row without a single thing to drink, and he wasn't even aware of it! The three of us talked for a while, and I told Jimmy of the Lord's hand upon my life before I left to return to Cindy's.

My love for Jesus had protected me from temptation; but by then I was just empty and weary of it all.

While in Israel, I had received letters from a few fellowships in the States welcoming me to visit them. I made arrangements to do so, grateful that the days between my weekend visits with the children would be filled. I was due to leave in a few days, but had no money and no transportation!

Claudia had suggested that I speak to a man named Tony, the used-car dealer from whom she had purchased her car. So the next morning I went to see him. I gave my name, and explained that Claudia had recommended that I speak with him concerning the possibility of renting a car from him for a few months.

"Aren't you the lady she told me about who gave her a place to stay a few months back?" he asked. Two years before, when I was still living in Connecticut, I had gone one morning to a neighbour's for a cup of coffee, and the neighbour had told me that an acquaintance of hers named Claudia had been thrown out of her home with her two small children by her husband, and that she had nowhere to stay! Even though I had not as yet met her, I had

immediately welcomed them to stay with me until they could find an apartment of their own. Tony had been very moved by the story when Claudia had shared it with him, amazed that a complete stranger would offer help in such a way. "Listen," he said. "Come back in a little while, and I'll have a little car registered for you for six months. No charge. Just take it. You were kind to someone once, so maybe I can be kind to you." I was too overwhelmed to speak!

The car he loaned me was a blue 1971 Vega, and I loved it the minute I saw it! I could not believe the Lord's providence! I thanked Tony profusely, as I got behind the wheel and drove off.

The next morning I drove over to see Dr. Reid. It was to be my first visit with him since my return to the States. What a welcome sight he was! Amazingly enough, because he had by then moved out of the congregation to another church, he had not heard a single solitary rumour about me. He had remained untouched by it all! I was invited to speak to his new church that evening, and we had a wonderful time together! Just before I was ready to leave the church, Mrs. Reid handed me a gift of \$80.00. "We feel that this is to be a seed offering for your journey. May it be constantly multiplied!"

I then had enough money to travel to Marcia's in Pennsylvania, the beginning of my journey, and I also had a car! Jesus had supplied!

I returned to Cindy's and retired early. The next morning I was on my way downstairs to the kitchen for breakfast when I overheard Cindy and some of her boarders talking in the kitchen.

"I think it's just terrible," someone said. "No mother is ever supposed to give away her children, and it's a terrible witness for her not to be working as well. She just expects to sponge off others forever!" My eyes opened wide. Everybody present agreed, offering comments of their own. It was devastating, because it fed the growing doubts I had about myself. I had been saying to everyone who criticized, "My walk with the Lord may be *different* from yours, but that does not mean that it is not equally valid!" But as things had continued to appear to go wrong, I myself was beginning to wonder. Trying to hide the panic growing within me, I went down into the kitchen, acting as though I had not overheard their conversation. I knew, however, that I had had enough, and I planned to move out after breakfast. "I will begin my journey now," I decided. There was so little left to hang on to!

After breakfast Cindy left to do the farm chores and the residents left for their various jobs. I was all set to move quietly out of the house, when I eyed the sink full of dishes. "Well," I thought, "I will move out, but first I'll do her dishes!" And I stepped over to the sink.

All at once, as I was engrossed in the task at hand, the Lord unmistakably let me feel the loneliness and emptiness that Cindy had been feeling. It was so sudden and so real that I was moved to tears!

When Cindy returned, I simply shared it with her! "Cindy, as I was doing the dishes, Jesus helped me to see that you've been feeling very lonely lately!" She immediately began to weep.

"It has been the worst winter I have ever lived through," she confessed. I shared with her how Jesus had continually been alone, even when surrounded by multitudes, as no one completely understood Him at all. But He had never been *lonely*, because of the continual presence of God the Father (until that awful moment upon the cross when He felt that even God had forsaken Him).

"By the same token, Cindy, you never need to feel loneliness! Jesus can fill that empty spot in your heart! May I pray with you for your heart to be filled with the knowledge of His presence and the greatness of His love for you?" She nodded, and we sat down and prayed together.

"It feels as though a great weight has been lifted!" she exclaimed.

"Just remember that He will be your friend when everyone else has failed, Cindy, so that you need never to feel lonely again. He will always, *always* be with you!"

I walked up to my room with such a feeling of reverence and awe. As I knelt in prayer and thanksgiving, the Lord unexpectedly spoke the following to my heart:

"All that you have ever loved has by now been taken from you. You stood helplessly by as, one by one, they disappeared from your life. You had nothing left in this world. Due to the chastening you endured, you felt that I, even I, had deserted you. But yet you were still able to reach out in love to someone else."

And then, almost in front of my eyes, I spotted a tiny book on the corner of the bookcase. In all the time I had stayed in that room, I had never noticed it before! I picked it up, and felt a new outpouring of His love. The book was entitled, *For You with Love* by Louis Untermeyer. This is what I read:

*"Love is the whisper of earth
When the stars pale
And the dawn-winds hail
A new day's birth . . .*

*Love is God's plenty ..
An endless measure
Of gifts that descend
In sun and in shower
On mountain and plain .. .*

*The quickening rain,
And the storied treasure
At the rainbow's end . . .*

Love is the coming alive

*Of a golden bush
That cannot wait for spring
Blossoms that bring
Joy to the day
And honey to the hive . . .*

*The call of the hills
and the answering ocean
When everything's a maze
and a blaze
of color and motion .. .*

*Torrents of wonder, of waves,
and wings .. .
And the whole sky sings .. .*

*But first and last .. .
Time present, time future,
and time past .. .
Past all belief and thinking of ...*

*Earth beneath
and heaven above . .*

*Beginning and ending...
Forever new ..*

Love
is
you

And then, as I turned to the very last page, tears burned my eyes as I felt His love — for there was a tiny, full-blossomed rose.



I knew it was a gift of His love relating to the prophecy given so long ago — *It will take you a long time to accept who you are . . . but when you do, it will be like a flower opening ...?*

He then helped me to understand that when I had walked over to the sink full of dirty dishes, *the flower of His love had blossomed at last within my heart.* . . . It was a moment in my life that I shall remember always.

The next morning I saw Michael and Joey again, at the end of our first week of separation. They shared a great deal about their new life, and they both seemed happy and relaxed. How relieved I was as well, knowing that from then on their lives would be more settled and secure!

At one point in our conversation, I said to them, "Jude has never been a Mommy before, you know, and there are many things she will do differently than I did them, but you must always remember that she loves you very much!"

"But Mommy," Michael replied, "I like her better, because she never yells at us and I can pick whatever I want for breakfast!"

Children are so precious!

It was a good visit together with them, but difficult, too, as I could not silence the yearning of my heart. We made plans to visit again in two weeks' time.

The next morning I left for Marcia's home in Pennsylvania. I spent five days there with Marcia and her family, and as always, we talked incessantly! We had been friends for a long time, and it was wonderful to see her again! She was horrified to learn of the condemnation that I had received upon my return from Israel, as she had also been untouched by it. We had so much to talk about!

While there, I made the final arrangements with the fellowships who were welcoming me to visit with them.

All too soon our time together came to an end, and I said a sad farewell, leaving behind all that was familiar.

One phase of my walk by His side had drawn to a close.

PART III

*"I am my Beloved's
and my Beloved is mine:
He feedeth among the lilies..."*
Song of Solomon 6:3



13

THE FATHER'S CARE

The prayerbook used at my parents' synagogue has the following quotation:

"Only a single man was created in the beginning of the world, to teach us that if any individual causes a single person to perish, Scripture considers as though he had caused a 'whole world' to perish, and if anyone saves a single person, Scripture credits him as though he had saved a 'whole world'!"

The New Covenant also teaches the great value of a human life. Jesus' love was so enormous that He would have endured all that He did in order to save even one person from sin's clutches. The Lord had helped me to understand what an utter privilege it is to be able to bring the majesty of His love to even one person on the face of this earth. And so, on the day when I departed from the children, I said a silent prayer to the Lord. I knew that if, in the remainder of my life, I could be used to bring *even one person* to the Saviour's feet, all of the tears of sadness that I had shed would have been worth it.

At the time that I prayed, I couldn't even formulate the words, as it seemed like such an impossible dream! I had spent six months in the "valley", where many "secret sins" — the "little foxes that spoil the vines"* — had been laid bare beneath the Lord's scrutiny. I had then returned to the United States to find one closed door after the other. Like in the story of Job, my friends saw my life in ashes, and tried to convince me that I was at fault! It all made me very sure that I would never be used by God. But He hears even the silent prayers of our hearts.

On the first day of my trip, I was headed for somewhere in Ohio (en route to Indiana). The Lord had provided me with \$16.00 for a motel room since I had no home to stop in on the first evening. Marcia's husband Dave had helped me with maps to route my trip, and so I entered the highway we had decided upon. I soon came to learn that since I had placed this trip in the *Lord's* hands, it was possible that He might have other ideas!

The highway was full of ruts and bumps and holes, and my poor car was jostled unmercifully! Suddenly I had a feeling from the Lord to turn back to the main interstate (a huge road system that stretched from one side of the country to the other). To me, this seemed completely illogical. The interstate was not the most direct route, as it went west when I needed to travel southwest. But fortunately I had sense enough to obey! (The bumps in the road helped.)

After travelling for most of the day, I saw a sign for a certain motel, and I knew that was where the Lord wanted me to stay. The motel cost only \$12.95 including a free breakfast, so that left me with enough money for the next day's lunch!

*Song of Solomon 2:15

I enjoyed a quiet evening alone, and used the time to write some letters and to rest and pray. The next morning Jesus awakened me as always, and I was very surprised to notice that it was much later than I had expected. I dressed quickly, packed, and hurried out to breakfast. An older man left his room at the same moment, and greeted me with a friendly, "Good morning! Isn't it a lovely day?" We chatted for a few minutes, and he then asked me if I would be eating breakfast alone. Jesus provided me with the answer, as well as the understanding that this meeting was not a mistake!

"I'm eating, but not alone! I have the Lord for company!"

He then asked me if I was employed, and my answer was the same. "By the Lord!" I replied.

"This should be an interesting breakfast. May I join you?"

I welcomed him, praying for the Lord's wisdom. As I shared about the Lord's love, he listened attentively. After a few minutes, he shared with me as well. He informed me that he was the son of a minister, and that at one time he had accepted Jesus as the personal guide to his life.

"But that was many years ago," he continued. "I've wanted a walk with Him again, but my ways have become sinful, and I'm not always sure I wish to give them up. Or that the Lord would forgive me even if I did!"

I then told him how Jesus had rerouted me and had sent me to this particular hotel.

"When I met you this morning, it was not an accident. It all happened because of the great love that Jesus has for you. He is not asking you to change in a day. He is simply saying, 'Come, take My hand today, and we can work it out together.'"

After breakfast, I asked him if he was ready to accept the offer Jesus had made to him. His answer was yes, and so we joined hands and prayed together. Jesus touched Him with His forgiving love, and he left that morning hand-in-hand with the Lord once again. And, so often in the way of the Lord, we receive help as well as give it! My new brother made the following comment, "Last night I was in an elevator, and I saw a woman whom I believed to be a prostitute. If she had been, it would have cost me \$20.00. Today, I have begun to try to turn my life around. Please accept this money to further your work for the Lord!"

I went back to my room and let the tears of joy flow freely. It was only the very first day of my journey, and the Lord had answered the prayer of my lifetime. *He had used me to bring someone to Him.*

The goodness of the Lord completely overwhelmed me. He had lifted me gently from the valley to the highest peaks, and from there my feelings soared! God, the Almighty, enjoys doing great deeds — even for the least of His children!

My destination for the second night was a little town in Indiana near the Kentucky border. I was to stay for two days with my brother-in-law's aunt and uncle.

I felt welcome the minute I stepped through the door. Instead of treating me like the stranger that in truth I was, they treated me as an honoured guest, and I felt at home immediately!

The first evening, I listened as Spencer and Evelyn sang for me. They are wonderful gospel singers, and for many years saved many souls in their street ministry. But, unbelievably, the local churches forced them to stop! (Traditional Christianity has often forgotten its true purpose — to bring others "unto the fullness of the knowledge of Christ.") We had such a great time of talking and praising that it was long past midnight before we all trooped off to bed!

The next night, they began to sing a song that Spencer had composed. It was a terribly sad song about the death of a very small child. When I asked them about it, they explained

that their only child had died shortly after birth, and they had never been able to have another.

As I listened to the song, the Lord described the situation to me. "Spencer truly opened his heart in love to that child, and when she died, he never completely forgave Me. That was 27 years ago, and because He never placed it in My hands, the burden and the sadness is with him even until today." I sensed the emptiness he felt.

"Spencer," I said, gently, "I know from the Lord that you truly need to forgive Him for the death of your little daughter. Jesus longs to fill you with His love and peace, but it is not possible as long as you carry that forgiveness in your heart."

He nodded in affirmation, and as we prayed together, Jesus filled him with His peace that goes beyond understanding.

And then a truly incredible thing happened! Through the Spirit of God, we were made a family! He took parents who were without a child, and a "child" who needed parents in the Lord, and made us one! He truly united our hearts, and the love we felt for each other was as deep and as real as if I had always been with them. When I left the next day, it was with a sadness at parting but with a special joy as well, as I hugged my new Mom and Dad an extra time before driving off!

Even though I have not seen my new family for many months, the bond of love has not been broken. It grows day by day! And Mom's letters are always a blessing and an encouragement!

The next night I visited a small fellowship in Ohio, and then I was on my way to Falls Creek, another small town in the heart of Pennsylvania.

I believe that I shall always picture the fellowship at Falls Creek exactly as I saw it that first night. Dorothy met me at the door, and ushered me into a huge, comfortable living room lined with chairs. She introduced me to her husband, who was sitting there with a grandchild on his lap. I then met their lovely daughter Linda, who was busy in the kitchen, and then all the rest of the clan. From the first instant, I felt as though I had known them all my life. That's how welcome they made me feel!

By 8:00 p.m., everyone had gathered in the living room to hear what I would have to speak about. Little did they know that the Lord had been dealing with me about it that entire day! He had made it clear that He wanted me to share the story of my separation from Joey and Mike. I never wanted to have to tell it to anyone. I couldn't bear the thought of it! The pain was still so intense! Every time I had begged Him to change His mind, He would always answer, "It's the story of My love and strength in your life."

And so, in obedience, I began to share my testimony, including that painful part of my walk by His side. I told only part of the story, as I would be speaking again the following night.

Every so often, when I shared a certain concept that the Lord had taught me, everyone would exchange smiling glances. I'm afraid that by then I was so used to criticism, that I was sure they must be disagreeing with everything I said! It wasn't until I had finished speaking that they shared how my talk had confirmed for them all the Lord had been teaching them.

"We've been learning the meaning of suffering for Jesus, and our need to commit our lives to Him in a total way," Dorothy explained. The others nodded in agreement. "And so your sharing confirmed to us that His strength is real and that there is *nothing* in our lives as important as following Him wherever He may lead! Through the valleys as well as the mountaintops!" My fears of rejection had been completely unfounded, and I knew that I myself needed to learn to trust more deeply.

After a time of prayer, we all recessed to the kitchen for a bit of fun along with coffee and

cake. Many humorous stories were told, and one fellow laughed so hard he sat on the cake by mistake!

The next afternoon, during a time of prayer, the Lord asked me, "Would you be willing to speak at the meeting tonight about the separation *without My strength*?" I didn't understand exactly what He meant, as I had not been aware of His strength. But, with a heavy heart, I put the time in His hands.

That evening, I had planned to begin speaking with the prayer over the Sabbath candles, as it was Friday night. After a time of worship and praise, the meeting was turned over to me once again. I knelt beside the coffee table to say the blessing, and suddenly His strength was gone. I tried hard to continue talking.

"Last night, I told you the story of how the Lord asked me if I loved Him more than my very own two children. When I told you about it then, it was easy to tell, for *I had the Lord's strength*. Tonight, without that strength, all you see before you is a mother weeping for her children." And by then, I was sobbing too hard to say another word. Without His strength, there was no way I could control great waves of sadness and the overwhelming sense of loss that I felt.

After a time, His strength returned. It was almost as though His hands were gently drying the tears.

Unknown to me, the Holy Spirit had been hard at work as I shared, dispelling the fears which had blocked each person from committing their lives more fully to Him. They were shown, before their eyes, the contrast; and learned that *with* His strength, we can survive anything!

I couldn't see it that night, of course, but that experience probably helped me most of all! It was the most visibly concrete lesson in the sufficiency of His strength I had ever received. Throughout my entire time in Israel and afterwards as well, I had been unaware of the fact that His strength had been with me the entire time. It was only when He withdrew that strength that I learned never again to take it for granted!

After many prayers of deeper commitment came forth, we ended the meeting and retired once again to the kitchen.

Unknown to my hosts, I had arrived in Falls Creek with only nine dollars. My financial situation was not unknown to the Lord, however! I was sitting down at the kitchen table when Dorothy suddenly handed me an empty potato chip bag. "Hold it!" she ordered. Much to my amazement, she then proceeded to dump an enormous jar full of coins into the bag!

"I save change for an entire year," she explained, "for what I call the 'one great hour of sharing'. About a week ago I asked the Lord what He wanted me to do with it. And this morning, He told me it was to be given to you!"

Everyone clapped. Then her husband grinned as he handed me two cheques from the fellowship. "Usually we give \$75.00 to anyone who comes to share," Bill explained. "But last night we decided to close out a second chequeing account and give the money to you as well!" The second cheque was for \$40.00.

Then *everyone* grinned! It seems that the Lord had spoken to each person separately, and had prompted them to give a certain amount in addition to the total contribution they had already made. In a few seconds I had a handful of cheques! I could hardly believe my eyes!

I knew it would be an encouragement to them to know just how important their obedience had been! "I arrived here with exactly nine dollars," I told them. "The Lord doesn't allow us to ask people for money, and so I simply had to trust that somehow He would help me. But I never dreamed in a million years that I would arrive with almost no money, and leave two days later with bags full of it!"

All in all, it had been a memorable two days.

For those unfamiliar with the ways of God, accepting money from others would seem strange and very foreign to worldly ways. (I have learned as the years have slipped by that God's ways are always so much greater!)

For me, learning to live by faith was a gradual process. It began almost as soon as the Lord revealed His love to me, and the lessons deepened as my trust in the Father's care has grown. The children and I saw His faithfulness so many times, particularly during our experience in Israel. But one day the Lord dealt with me directly. He woke me up early one morning and asked, "When you were a child, did you wake up every morning and worry about whether your parents would feed you and clothe you and tell you what to do?"

The question seemed so absurd that it almost made me laugh. As a child, I never worried about it even for a minute! (I was fortunate that I didn't have to!) I woke up each morning with a carefree heart, knowing that breakfast would be on the table and my mother would send me off to school at just the right time. I never even thought about needing a new pair of shoes or a warm winter coat. My parents always supplied, and so I took their provision simply for granted! And therefore I knew nothing of the fear that the Lord was alluding to.

And then He said to me, *"I am the Creator of heaven and earth, and yet you do not trust Me even as much as you did your own parents!"*

When He stated it so clearly, it seemed absolutely ridiculous that I would trust my own parents more than Him! His wisdom was infinite, and His love so grand, and yet I hadn't learned to trust Him in even the most basic way! That morning I read again Jesus' words in Luke, and for the first time I understood that they were meant to be more than just beautiful words. I realized that He meant it literally, and not just for bygone days — it was meant for us today as well.

"Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.

The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.

Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?

And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit?

If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?

Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

If God so clothe the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven: how much more will He clothe you, O ye of little faith?

And seek not what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind.

For all these things do the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.

But rather seek ye first the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Luke 12:22-31

As George Muller explained, God cares even for the "odd sparrow". In Matthew 10:29, Jesus says:

"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows . . ."

And, in Luke 12:6, Jesus says:

"Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? and not one of them is forgotten by God . . ."

It would appear that when two farthings were offered, an "odd sparrow" was thrown in, as of so little value that it could be given away with the other four. And yet even for the one sparrow, not worth taking into account in the bargain, *God cares*.

This journey was actually the very beginning of my walk down the pathway of faith. His ground rules were very simple and very firm. I was not to make my needs known to anyone but Him. I was to look to Him for daily direction. I was to remain obedient to His will. I was to look to Him for the provision of all my needs — but it was to be my needs *as He saw them*. (I had learned through the story of Father Malachy not to pray in my own wisdom. So I learned that praying only in accordance to the will of God applied to a life of faith as well!) I also learned that giving is a very central and important aspect of a life of faith. The Lord taught me that the concept of tithing — that is, giving ten percent of your salary for the work of God — is only the minimum; that *all I* had belonged to Him, and that *all of it* was to be used at His discretion.

I soon discovered that when we learn to walk in the centre of His will, the joy is boundless and the surprises of His grace never seem to end!

It dawned on me gradually that the Lord was actually calling me into full-time service for Him. In the beginning, when people would ask me what I did, I was very apologetic and embarrassed about it! I would lamely explain, "Well, I have a master's degree in Social Work, but now, I urn, you see, well I ... ahem, serve the Lord full time . . ." But in time the Lord dealt with that, too. One day, after I had given my usual apologetic reply, I felt His displeasure as He made His point clear: *"Don't you dare apologize for serving Me. I am the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings, and there is not a more important job on the face of this earth!"*

I could only weep tears of repentance, for in that moment I understood the truth in what He said. And I have never apologized again, as I realize to the depths of my heart the privilege He had given me to be His servant and His friend.

The concept of providing for our daily needs is a difficult one to express. It began in the days of Moses, when God carefully and in great detail described to Moses His plans, and the rules He had set forth, for the house of Israel. Speaking through Aaron, the Lord set the Levites apart from the tribes of Israel, to minister unto Him in the "tent of meeting". And He made it clear to them that all of the tithes from the house of Israel, of money, of first fruits, of the best oil, shall be theirs as a "perpetual allotment". And the Lord said to Aaron:

"You shall have no inheritance in their land, nor any portion among them; for I am your portion and your inheritance among the sons of Israel."

Numbers 18:20

And He further instructed them to tithe the tithe!

"Moreover, you shall speak to the Levites and say to them, 'When you take from the sons of Israel the tithe which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then shall you present an offering from it to the Lord, a tithe of the tithe.'"

Numbers 18:26

So in the very beginning, the Lord set the standard that those who were called apart to minister unto Him full-time should be taken care of by the house of Israel, but that they were to give even of what they had received.

It is very similar to the instructions that Jesus gave to the disciples. He called them to go forth to the lost sheep of the house of Israel:

"And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.

Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses. Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes nor yet staves; for the workman is worthy of his meat."

Matthew 10:7-10

Jesus teaches that it is more blessed to give than to receive, so those that give in His name will be blessed by Him.

I finally understood that serving Him can be a full-time job, and not one to be ashamed of, but rather one to rejoice in continually! The Lord also helped me to see that He would provide for me as I walked and worked according to His will! But the key to it all was obedience that would come only from a listening heart.

The ways of the Lord — so very different from the ways of the world — are beautifully set forth in this portion of Jesus' beloved "Sermon on the Mount":

*"And He lifted up His eyes on His disciples, and said,
Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.*

*Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled.
Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.*

Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.

Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.

Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,

*Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.
And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also.*

Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy

goods ask them not again.

And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.

And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.

And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.

Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."

Luke 6:20-38

Many Christians give ten percent of what they have, and they often feel complacent with the little that they give. Often it is a sign that they are only ten percent committed to the Lord, however!

Of course, I am not trying to discourage people from tithing, for it is very blessed to give a portion to the work of the Lord. But tithing is meant to be the minimum, and we must be sure that our lives are **TOTALLY** committed to the Lord! He commands us again and again in the Scriptures to love Him with *all* our hearts, and to withhold *nothing* from Him.

The concepts of "traditional Christianity" are very hard to unlearn! God alone can call us to serve Him, but the hearts of many people are already closed to the possibility!

"And He spake a parable to them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

And he said, This will I do; I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

And I will say to my soul, soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry.

But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?

So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God."

Luke 12:16-21

It seems to those of the world a great risk to abandon everything and to trust the Lord. But for those who know and serve Him — it seems like a greater risk *notto*! For we can rest far more assuredly in the promises of *His* care and provisions as we walk in obedience to His will, than in anything the world can offer!

"Sell that ye have, and give alms: provide yourselves a treasure in the

*heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.
For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."*

Luke 12:33-34

14

After departing from the fellowship in Pennsylvania, I returned to Connecticut to spend a weekend with the boys. I longed to visit with them *every* weekend, but I knew that it would only make their adjustment more difficult. Our time together was bittersweet. We made arrangements for our next visit together, in two weeks' time! But this time, I parted from them with a new awareness of the strength of the Lord, and with deep gratitude for His help! I still cried when they drove off again with Joe, but never again with the same desperation as that night in Pennsylvania.

The next morning, I was on my way once again. I drove to Philadelphia, met with a fellowship there, and boarded a Greyhound bus en route to my sister's home in Minneapolis.

There were many hours of quiet on the bus, and during this time the Lord revealed His surprising plans for me in the coming months! He confirmed that it was His will for me to attend an Easter retreat that I had heard about in Germany! Then I would visit Klaus in Castrop-Rauxel before journeying on to England to visit my youngest sister Cathy and her husband. And then I would return home to Israel!

It was devastating news! It meant a real separation from Mike and Joey — that I was even to live in another country! Whatever could I do, except trust in His love for them? And for me?

The news of having to go to Germany was also appalling. I had actually told the Lord when I was in a magnanimous mood one day, that I would be happy to travel for Him anywhere in the world that He wanted to send me. Except to Germany. I never, ever wanted to go there! And so, it seems, Germany was to be the first country on my itinerary. I had no way to deal with the thought of going there, but I felt relatively safe anyway, since I didn't even have the bus fare to return to Philadelphia, let alone to travel to Germany! And so I simply left it in His hands.

As the bus sped along, I became engrossed in a book by Watchman Nee. He was speaking about the need for followers of Christ to put self completely aside and to simply wait for the Spirit's guidance in every aspect of our lives, including our minds.

"Why, that's absurd!" I thought. "It's almost as though he was telling us to stop thinking!" And at once, the Lord confirmed it.

I was horrified! "But Lord," I argued immediately, "that's impossible! How in the world am I to stop thinking? And what did You give us a mind for anyway?"

His answer was firm. "Every time you find yourself thinking, stop for a minute and analyze it. Most of the time you will be planning or worrying or criticizing! Each time you're lost in thoughts, stop and ask yourself one question — 'Does what I'm thinking bring me closer to Jesus? Or does it prevent me from hearing His voice?'"

I knew instantly that what He had revealed to me was completely true. My own thoughts rarely, if ever, brought me closer to Him. It seemed impossible to put my thoughts aside, but I knew He was calling me to begin that very discipline. Initially, the "flesh" often balked. I gave all the typical arguments! "If God expected me to be a robot, He would have created me without a mind!" But deep inside, even while I argued, I knew this was simply the voice of pride. How slowly and painfully we die to self! When I finally acquiesced, I learned immediately that human wisdom, when compared to His, loses all its impressiveness! As a child, I had been tested as a very high I.Q. I had attended university, obtaining two degrees, with an additional year of post-graduate work in family therapy. All of that, when compared with the wisdom of God — *our Creator* — seemed infinitesimally small!

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

Isaiah 55:8-9

He was beginning to teach me a degree of trust that I had not known even existed. I had believed that I trusted Him when I placed my two sons in His hands. But now He was beginning to teach me a *total* dependence upon Him — not just for my children, and for daily provision of food and clothing, but even for my thoughts. I understood that we can only be really open to hear His still, small voice when our own minds are at rest!

That very day, I tried to put my thoughts into His hands. I discovered immediately that it would eliminate one very major question — "Was that my will or His?" It can be only *His* will when He teaches *us* no longer to have one! It gave me a new understanding of Brother Lawrence and how he was able to have a continual awareness of God's presence.

"Show 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 . . ."

Psalms 25:4-5

"Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually . . ."

Hosea 12:6

Andrew Murray graphically explains this concept in his book, *Waiting on God*:

"If waiting on God be of the essence of true religion, the maintenance of the spirit of entire dependence must be continuous. The call of God, 'Wait on thy God continually,' must be accepted and obeyed . . . This waiting continually is indeed a necessity. To those who are content with a feeble Christian life, it appears a luxury something beyond what is essential to be a good Christian. But all who are praying the prayers, 'Lord! make me as holy as a pardoned sinner can be made! Fill me as full of Thy love as Thou are willing to do! Keep me as near to Thee as it is possible for me to be!' feel at once that it is something that must be had. They feel that there can be no unbroken fellowship with God, no full abiding in Christ, no maintaining of victory over sin

and readiness for service, without waiting continually on the Lord.

The waiting continually is a possibility . . "

Andrew Murray further explains that we must have the concept of God at work continually in us. If we think of the Lord always at work, we then understand why it is possible to wait on Him continually!

"Your waiting continually will then come of itself. Full of trust and joy, the holy habit of the soul will be, 'On Thee do I wait all the day.' The Holy Spirit will keep you ever waiting."

While on the bus journey, I began a journal, to record some of the special lessons I felt certain the Lord would continue to teach me along the way. (Since I'm not the journal-keeping type, I recorded in it only three times!) The first entry was on 18 March 1977:

"On the bus today, a deaf girl sat next to me, and I thought, 'Oh, how I wish I had the gift of healing!' And then You helped me to understand that nothing was more precious than the gift of Your presence and love. 'Of what use is hearing if we are yet blind and cannot see? Of what use is sight if we are yet deaf and cannot hear?' You have given me the gift of You, and surely it is the most treasured and wondrous gift of all. It left me with such a sense of awe. Help me to be open, Jesus, in every way!"

An hour or two out of Chicago, we suddenly had a commotion on the bus. It seems that a young man had come on board the bus without paying for a ticket. When we pulled into a bus station, he refused to get off the bus. When he was requested to pay the fare, he said he had no funds. The federal law prohibits forcing him off the bus without the proper authorities present, so the only alternative was for all of the passengers to disembark and to transfer to another bus. It would cause a great deal of inconvenience for the other passengers, and all the luggage would have to be transferred as well. The bus driver kept pleading with him to leave the bus, so that the rest of the passengers could continue on with their journey.

My thoughts, I'm sure, mirrored those of the other passengers. *"If he wants to take the risk of sneaking on board, that's his business. But how can he be so rotten as to inconvenience the rest of us by refusing to get off the bus?"*

I was thoroughly annoyed and disgusted. At that moment, unexpectedly, the Lord spoke. *"My thoughts, not yours!"* He said. And at once I was able to see that young man through Jesus' perspective and not through the eyes of Eileen. I had judged him, forgetting at once my own sinfulness. But Jesus looked past the circumstances to see a lonely, frightened and deeply discouraged young man, who was broken not only financially but spiritually as well.

At that moment, a struggle went on within me. I knew I should help him, but I could not completely shake my judgmental attitude. *"If I help him," I thought, "will it really be helping him? Won't it be better if no one bails him out and he learns for himself?"*

Jesus interrupted by saying, once again, *"My thoughts, not yours!"* And, as before, my attitude reversed. His thoughts were filled with love, in spite of the fact that the young man had boarded the bus under false pretenses. All of us are sinful, yet Jesus still reached out in love to us!

Everyone on the bus had turned against him in anger. With the mind of Jesus, however (at least at that moment!) I walked to the back of the bus and sat beside him. I handed him \$35.00. *"I'm sorry that this is all the money I have, or I would give you more. Jesus loves you."*

He has prompted me to give you this money. Please, get off the bus so that you won't cause further trouble for yourself! Jesus really does love you. He wants you to turn to Him for help! He won't ever let you down!" I squeezed his hand and returned to my seat. Moments later, he got up and bolted out of the bus. How I prayed that he would be led right into Jesus' waiting arms!

When the Lord shows us something in our lives that needs correction ("visible sins" such as gossiping or "hidden sins" such as pride or jealousy), He reveals them not to condemn us, but because it is in His timing to begin helping us to deal with them. The same thing is true at each new level of faith. The Lord reveals the new step He wants us to take into the water. And then, almost always, in each situation, He gives us immediate opportunities to put into practice what He has just revealed! Therefore, if we truly wish to be committed to Him and obedient, then we have to learn to begin with the immediate, every-day, practical situations that the Lord places before us. So many people stop before they've even begun!

Corrie ten Boom's beloved example was when she said to the Lord, "Lord, I'll go anywhere in the world that you send me!" That very same day, He instructed her to visit a family that happened to live on the tenth floor of an apartment building. Corrie began climbing the ten flights of steps, complaining to the Lord all the while. Finally He said to her, "But didn't you say you'd go *anywhere* in the world for me?" (When she finally reached the family, they gave their lives to the Lord!)

So it is very important, as the Lord begins dealing in areas of our lives that need changing or purifying or challenging, that we heed His call in the commonplace; for step-by-step, that is what will lead us to His kingdom! If the Lord is dealing with gossip, then no doubt almost at once an opportunity will arise to enable us not to gossip. And in such a way, the Lord gave me the prompt opportunity on the bus to exchange my own self-centered thoughts for His thoughts of love and forgiveness!

We each need to become attuned to God's ways and His voice, and be determined to answer "Here am I" to each call, large or small, for God doesn't measure by earthly standards!

When I arrived at last in Minneapolis, I felt quite different from the person who had begun that journey only two days earlier! I certainly had no idea what to expect next, as each day thus far had been so incredibly different, with beautiful and painful things happening side by side. The next few days were to be a special treat!

Goldie and I had a happy time sharing together all the blessings of knowing Jesus as our Messiah. We continually marveled at how the Spirit of God had united us as sisters in a bond of His love. While visiting with Goldie and Dave, I listened as they ministered musically with their group, "Yeshua's Children." The group was an outreach ministry from the Messianic Jewish Congregation they attended. What a blessing they were!

I had arrived in Minneapolis on Saturday, and would have to leave by bus on the following Wednesday in order to make it back to Connecticut in time for Michael's sixth birthday celebration.

On Monday night, I met the minister of the Congregation. After we had spoken together for a while, he asked, "If we pay for your plane fare back on Saturday morning, would you be willing to stay and speak to our Congregation on Friday night?"

"I'll pray about it. Thank you!" was my immediate reply. When I actually brought it before the Lord later that day, His answer made me laugh. "You have been offered a plane ride instead of a two-and-a-half day bus ride — and you have to *pray* about it?"

"I guess that means my answer should be yes," I said, grinning to myself. I called the minister to thank him and to accept his offer, and then I rejoiced so much in the Lord's provision! I had arrived in Minneapolis without even enough money for me to return by bus

never dreaming that He would provide even enough for me to return to the east coast by air!

I had only one request left, and that was for the money to purchase a birthday present for Michael. That very night, I spoke at a church and was given a gift of \$75.00! It was more than enough money for a gift for Mike!

The next morning, upon awakening, I rejoiced in the Lord, thanking Him again for His answer to prayer. Suddenly, the Lord said, "I want you to give the entire amount to Goldie and Dave."

I refused to believe it! I had only one day left to purchase Michael's present, and now the Lord was telling me to give away all the money that I had! I'm afraid I was weary of "having faith" by then, and in that awful moment I coveted the \$75.00. I didn't want to give it away!

I shelved the whole issue, and picked up the book I had been reading. Much to my dismay, I began to read about someone's walk in faith. He described a situation in which money stopped coming. After a time of prayer, he realized it was due to his lack of faith, and repentance followed! I knew the Lord was speaking to me through his example. "O.K., Lord," I said reluctantly, like the stubborn child that I am. "I'll give them the \$75.00."

I gave the money to Dave. "But we don't need it!" Dave replied.

"Please, Dave, just take it! I'm in enough trouble with the Lord as it is!"

It was true. They didn't need the money — until four hours later, that is! Dave had spent the afternoon looking for an apartment, as their present lease was soon to expire, and came back tremendously excited.

"I went to re-check on an apartment we had seen over three weeks ago," he explained. "I never dreamed it would still be available, but sure enough, it was still empty! They required a deposit of \$100.00, and thanks to your gift, now we have the money to pay it!" Oh, how close I had come to missing this chance to bring the Lord's blessing because of my own lack of faith!

That night, I visited friends of Goldie and Dave's. We had an interesting talk together, and in the course of the conversation, I mentioned to them my conviction that I would be in Germany for an Easter retreat. (I had no way of knowing that one of the friends was a travel agent. The very next morning he went to work, and, in faith, made reservations for me on a flight to Germany! He believed God for the provision of the money. He made out the tickets, and typed on the bottom, "May the Lord bless your journey in a special way!")

The next morning, friends took me out for breakfast at a fantastic Jewish deli, and stated that the Lord had impressed upon their hearts to give me a gift of \$35.00. *Michael's present!*

While shopping later for his gift, I remembered that I desperately needed some new pairs of socks, but then I also remembered that I was learning to trust the Lord for all things! I don't know why He cares so much about even the smallest details of our lives. But He does!

That night, as we all arrived at the Messianic Jewish Congregation, a couple handed me a paper sack. On the front of it they had written:

"Dear Eileen,

We hope this gift is all right. We prayed about what to get you, and this was all the Lord impressed us to buy!

'And how shall they preach except they be sent? Just as it is written, HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS!' Much love — !"

Inside the bag I found three pairs of warm and wooly socks. *No one but the Lord had known that I needed them.* That gift marked the beginning of a truly memorable night!

As I spoke to the Congregation, I related the story that I had heard in Jaffa about the soldier in Russia who had burst into the Christian meeting, aimed his shot gun at those gathered there, and had screamed, "THOSE WHO DON'T BELIEVE IN JESUS MAY LEAVE!"

When I concluded the story, I said, "Now, I don't recommend that as a method for finding out who the true Believers are!" We all laughed. "But I believe that Jesus is speaking to each one of us with that small tale. When the soldier screamed, 'Those who don't believe in Jesus may leave,' many ran for the door. There were things in their lives that they loved more than Him. The people who stood there, however, expecting at any moment to lose their lives, loved Him with all their hearts. The thought of betraying Him was impossible to them." I paused. "What Jesus is saying to each of us this night is for us to make that kind of commitment to Him now. When we are actually faced with persecution, there is no way we will ever be able to stand firm without His preparation. We must make our decisions to put Him first in our lives this very day, for we never know what the future may hold! We need to ask ourselves what we would do if that door were to open right now," and I pointed to the door at the rear of the building. And then, *at that exact instant*, the door began to open! The timing was incredible!

The open door revealed a member of the Congregation who had arrived late, hoping to slip in unnoticed. Imagine his surprise when he quietly opened the door and everyone turned around and screamed! (I believe it cured him of tardiness for life!)

Of course, when we all recovered, I explained to him what had happened. We all knew, however, that it had not been a mistake. We had been deeply affected by that experience. Each of us knew that the Lord was calling us to make a life or death commitment to Him *at that moment*.

After the meeting, while I was talking with various people, a few people handed me money, sharing that they had had the Lord's guidance to do so. But I didn't know yet about the greatest miracle of all! The Congregation was then still small, and they always collected a love gift to give to visiting speakers. The most they had previously collected was around \$100.00. But that night the gift totalled \$367.00 — exactly enough to cover my ticket to Germany that had been ordered by faith! When I later counted the additional money that had been handed to me following the meeting, it amounted to precisely \$75.00. The day before, I had reluctantly placed all of my money in Jesus' hands. Just twenty-four hours later, He not only returned the \$75.00, but I also had Michael's birthday gift, three pairs of socks, plus a ticket to West Germany!

Early Saturday morning, Goldie and Dave and their friends sleepily drove me to the airport. I knew that they were to be a special part of my spiritual family, and I waved a last farewell with a lump in my throat. What a wonderful week it had been!

I spent two more weekends with the children before my departure for Germany. I recognized the Lord's hand in the way the door had opened for this trip, and that knowledge was the comfort I held on to as the day of our separation dawned. They were so little, only six and nine years old. And I was their mother.

Together we would have to trust the Lord for better days.

15

When the plane landed in Frankfurt, I was horrified to actually be in the very country that had been controlled so devastatingly by satanic forces, unleashed against the Jewish people. My people! I glanced at the older Germans as I journeyed by train and tram to my destination, cognizant of the fact that they had actually been alive at the time when the nightmare occurred. "What part did they play in it all?" I wondered as I looked at each of them.

I had arrived in Germany feeling drained and terribly sad about being separated by such a great distance from the boys. The weariness and emptiness that I felt made me unwilling to face the pathway that lay ahead!

I finally reached the conference centre and was shown to my room. There, waiting for me on the bedside table, was a verse of Scripture. With it was a note explaining that, following prayer, the Scripture had been chosen especially for me. The verse came from the deep-spring of His all-knowing heart:

*"Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old.
Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it?
I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert . . ."*

Isaiah 43:18-19

His love is such a wonder! It was a reminder of the constancy of the Lord's presence, and I knew I would have to concentrate on the radiance of His love and not on the darkness around me!

The Easter retreat was a very special time, and I knew at once why it was important for me to attend. We shared together the passion of Jesus — His last agonizing hours before He presented Himself as the sacrifice for our sins. We were reminded that Jesus waits for an ointment of love from each of us!

"The passion meditation is an event for today, for a heart that truly loves Him won't be content with the resurrection alone. We must ask, 'Jesus, what did it cost You the whole way?' And we must yearn to share together the depth of His suffering, for it was for us that He endured the cross. The celebration of Easter alone is bereft of its meaning if we don't beforehand share in His death."

The Germans who sponsored the conference also seemed to have a special love for Israel and for the Jewish people, and in a way it surprised me very much. But of course, again I had limited God, for He is able to reveal truth and work repentance in every human

heart. This is a portion of their call to prayer for Israel:

"The people of Israel were chosen by God; they are the people of His special love. Scripture says of them, 'the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.' (Romans 11:29) We should love all whom God loves. When we love, we pray for each other and bless each other.

We Germans have yet another reason for praying for Israel. We have injured the apple of God's eye. We have inhumanly tortured Jews, killing six million of them. God is waiting for us to acknowledge our guilt so that He can forgive us and be gracious to our nation. Does He not expect us, as an expression of our genuine contrition, to bless and pray for His chosen people? Our prayers will help to hasten the day when Israel's eyes will be opened to recognize the Messiah. At this time, when Israel is becoming more and more the centre of world events, God is especially waiting for our prayers for His chosen people."

As you can imagine, it brought a great comfort to my heart.

After the retreat, Klaus came to pick me up, and it was such a joy to see him again! We talked continually from the moment we got in the car until the moment we got out of it two hours later in Castrop-Rauxell! His mother was already waiting for us on the porch when we arrived at his home, and I loved her from the moment we met!

Klaus had been invited by friends of his to visit them in Munich, and so on Friday we prepared for our trip. Klaus' mother packed us a lunch, and I had never seen so much food in my life! "Klaus," I asked suspiciously after peering into the bags, "are you sure it's not going to take us a week to get to Munich? How in the world are we ever to eat all of this?"

The drive to Munich was a treat, and we arrived by late afternoon. We went directly to the home of his friends, a couple he had met in Israel. And, as always in the Lord's family, they had become fast friends.

I had dreaded coming to Germany, not knowing at all what to expect, and I was surely unprepared for the reaction of Klaus' friends! When we arrived, Klaus explained to them in German that I was a Jewish Believer on my way to Israel. Their response to his statement amazes me even to this day. From that moment on, I was treated with a love which had depths I never even knew existed.

They immediately ushered me into the kitchen to get warm, and the elder Mr. Guse placed a hot water bottle on my feet, but with such tenderness that it gave me an inkling of what it must have felt like when Jesus had washed the disciples' feet! Because of his age, it was painful for him to walk, but yet every few minutes he would come over to me to be certain that the bottle was still warm and adjusted just right on my feet!

We couldn't speak a word to each other the entire two days, because of the language barrier, but I do believe the intensity of their love would have rendered me speechless at any rate!

I finally came to understand that those in Germany who are open to the love of Jesus feel the intensity of His sadness and grief over all that had transpired against His chosen people in that land. Their remorse is tremendous, and they have been granted an extra measure of love for the Jewish people.

Later that first afternoon, Mrs. Guse took Klaus and me to see Dachau concentration camp. The experience was indescribable, and I was thankful when it came time to leave.

The next morning we all attended church together, and then, after dinner, it was time for Klaus and me to leave. I told his friends, "The love that you have shown me these two

days has given me an insight into what it will be like when Jesus returns and we all love one another in such a way! Thank you for the deep lesson you have taught me in these days!"

All too soon my time with Klaus and his family drew to a close, and soon I was on a train speeding towards Brussels, where I was to spend one night with American friends. My friends had arranged to meet me in the centre of Brussels, so I took my very first trolley ride to downtown Brussels! I had walked only a block when I bumped into a young man standing on the street corner talking about God. "Would you like one of our books?" he inquired.

"No, thank you, I don't need to read about Him. I know Him through the love of His Son!"

"You mean Jesus?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Well, look," he said. "I'd like to talk to you about it. May I buy you a cup of coffee? I was about to take a break anyway."

I knew it had not happened by mistake. I had something to learn, but it was not at all what I expected! He led me to a small coffee shop, and then complained about having to pay for the coffee.

"Well, I'd surely be glad to pay!" I announced.

"No, no, it's all right." We sat down with our coffee.

"Why do you believe in Jesus?" he asked. Before I had a chance to reply, he continued,

"Where are you heading?"

"To Israel," I said.

His whole countenance changed. "Why are you going to that evil country? The Jews have ruined this world, and need only to be destroyed. Our leader went to Israel to help the Jews with the real message, but they threw him out. That's how outrageous they are."

"And who is your leader?"

It turned out that he was a representative of the cult, "Children of God." He showed me their guide book. I looked through it, shuddering at the wiles of the devil. In such subtle ways, he convinces man of his own superiority. It was like venom, and I quickly handed it back to him. I tried to share with him the release he could have through Jesus, but it seems that he believed he already had all the answers. Every word I spoke fell on deaf ears. When we finished our coffee, he walked me back out to the street.

"You should really seek the true way," he said, "and God has rejected the Jews, so if you help them, you're really lost."

"No," I said sadly, "God has not rejected the Jews. I'm afraid it is you who are lost. How sad that the Lord gave each of us a choice and you have made the wrong one! Maybe sometime you'll just ask Jesus about His love for you."

His reply was to walk away in disgust.

Scripture tells us that in these end-times hatred for the nation of Israel and the Jewish people will spread to the four corners of the earth. This was my first actual confrontation with it as a Believer, and I knew instinctively that the same venom was poisoning the hearts of many. If Hitler lived today, there is no doubt that he would still have an enthusiastic following. How sad I felt for the scores of young people who have been so easily deceived. Oh, Jesus, come soon!

The time with my American friends was great fun! They treated me to a four-course meal in an elegant French restaurant, and then gave me the royal tour of Brussels. Such a beautiful city!

The next morning I was off again. The train ride through Belgium was delightful, and finally we arrived at the little seacoast village where I would catch the ferry to England. It was a long walk from the train to the ferry, but I enjoyed the fresh sea air.

I finally boarded and found a seat, excited at the prospect of actually crossing the English Channel! As soon as the white cliffs of Dover were spotted, I was one of the few passengers out on deck, willing to brave the cold!

After we docked, there was a long wait before we could disembark, and then an even longer wait in the customs line. At last it was my turn.

"How long are you planning to stay in England?" the customs official inquired.

"One month."

"Where will you go from here?"

"To Israel."

"How much money do you have?"

"Fifty pounds sterling," I answered proudly. (It was the remains of my income tax return, and to me it was a fortune!)

"And your ticket to Israel?"

"I don't have one yet."

"Why are you visiting Britain?"

"My sister lives here," I replied, feeling exasperated at the number of questions he was asking me.

"Does she have a telephone?"

"No, I don't think so."

"Well, we cannot issue a visa unless you have a ticket to leave England or can prove you have relatives here. Please wait over there." And he pointed to a chair over to the side. I went over to sit, feeling foolishly ready to burst into tears at any moment. "Lord, how can this happen? How can I get all the way to England and not be allowed to enter the country?" It was so unexpected. Finally, after every single person had been through the customs and passport control, the official called me over.

"We are going to check through your things. Please open them," he demanded.

Tears burned my eyes, which only added to my humiliation. I opened my small back pack, and he proceeded to take everything out. Those few belongings were all that I owned in the world! Finally he came to my mail and began to read the letters.

"Oh, Lord, why?"

"Think about what he is reading," the Lord replied. And, sure enough, the customs official had been reading one letter after another testifying to the Lord's love in people's lives! Suddenly I realized that, as in all things, God has His purposes. I prayed for His wisdom.

"Have you ever heard of living by faith?" I asked, and then began to share with the customs official my walk by Jesus' side, and His ability to provide things such as tickets at the time the need arises! "And His love is so special!" I concluded.

During my entire recitation, the official continued to impassively search through my possessions without saying a word. Finally he commented, "There is no way we are allowed to issue a visa into England unless you have a ticket to leave, or enough money to purchase one, or proof of relatives living here. You have neither the ticket nor the money nor the proof!" My heart sank.

He then smiled for the first time as he turned to face me. "But," he added, "I believe your story. I hope you will forgive me for the inconvenience this has caused, but we have to separate the wheat from the chaff, you know!"

Then it was my turn to grin!

"I will issue you a visa for one month," he continued, "and if you plan a longer stay, with your sister present you can easily get it extended."

I thanked him, and then shared with him my conviction that the whole episode had occurred simply because of Jesus' love for him. He explained that he had considered

himself a Christian, but did not really know Jesus in a personal way. "But I want to, and I'll think over carefully everything you've told me!" And I could sense that he really meant it.

I left the arrival hall an hour later than everybody else, but with a visa in my pocket and a song in my heart. How wondrous are Thy ways, O Lord!

I caught the next train to London, and felt lost in the enormity of Victoria Station. In order to reach Tiverton, the small town in Devon where my sister lived, I learned that I would have to take the underground to another station and from there the Devon train.

The Devon countryside was breathtaking, so lush and green and tranquil. I spent the entire three hours glued to the window, until it was too dark to see another thing!

By the time I arrived in Tiverton, it was 10:00 p.m., and I soon discovered that the train station was ten miles outside of Tiverton and the last bus had departed an hour earlier!

"Oh, no!" I thought. "How funny to get this close to my sister's home and not be able to see her!"

I finally located the station master. "Don't know what to tell you, miss," he said, with the most incredible accent I had ever heard. "Don't think even a taxi would come out this time of night!"

"Please, could you at least call one for me?" I begged.

"Well, all right, miss, but don't think it will do much good." The first he called refused, but the second agreed to come. Within minutes, I was actually knocking at my sister's door!

"Oh, Eileen!" Cathy cried as soon as she opened the door. "Welcome! We're so glad to see you!" I was so happy to be together with Cathy again and with Bev, her British husband.

What transpired during the next two weeks gave me an inkling of what Paul meant when he wrote in Hebrews 12:11:

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

Cathy is ten years younger than I am, and so when she was six years old and I was sixteen, about the only thing we had in common was the same set of parents! I have funny memories (like whenever I would bring a boy-friend home, she would insist on saying, "Kiss him! Kiss him!", which made me ready to choke her!) But when she became a teenager and I was newly married (and even after my divorce), she spent summers with us in Connecticut. We became very close. I loved and respected her, and we had great fun together, especially with the children. We also enjoyed doing things that pointed a finger at hypocrisy in a humorous way.

Many times when we went grocery shopping, she would walk to one end of the store and I would walk to the other end and begin shopping. When we would meet, she would exclaim, "Eileen! This is amazing. I haven't seen you in *years!*"

"Cathy! I don't believe it! How *are* you?" (By then all the other customers were listening, of course.)

"Eileen, you look *terrible!* What ever happened? You look about ten years older!"

"And wow, you've really put on a bit of weight! And I see you still have no taste whatsoever when it comes to clothing!"

It was silly, I know, but the expressions on the faces of the other customers were always magnificent!

This was my first visit with her in a number of years, and the very first since I had come to know Jesus' love. She and Bev were perfectly content with their lives, but to me, after having known the fullness of the love of Jesus, their lives seemed so empty! I wanted so

desperately to "prove" to them how wonderful Jesus is!

I talked about Him so often that it was simply obnoxious! I wanted them so much to know His love, but I never once had the patience to really place it in the Lord's hands and to simply trust in *His* love for them. And therefore, although I talked a great deal, without the anointing of the Holy Spirit, they were just empty words. The presence of the Lord simply was not there!

In actuality, it was even worse than that. I'll quote from the entry in my journal:

"18 May 1977: For days now I have had the terribly oppressive feeling of the hatred of satan. It has been with me every minute. It has helped me to understand a great deal, however!"

Since my initial experience with satan two years ago, I have now completely realized for the first time the loving protection Jesus has provided daily for these two years. None of the old fearfulness is here now, either. The protection of Jesus is real, and this satanic feeling will last only as long as it is allowed to by Jesus! I know as well that this is a preparation for my return to Israel, where the spiritual battle is so great. Surrounded by Jesus' love, following the way of the cross is hard to imagine! But the hatred of satan makes it more plausible, to be sure.

I no longer feel it, but I know that Jesus remains close at hand. And I'm thankful for even this smallest of opportunities to suffer for Him.

Last night, before I went to bed, even in the middle of an 'enemy siege', Jesus directed me to these two songs in a song book:

'Jesus, I am here
Yearn Thy path to share
Heeding not the grief and suffering,
Living only to console Thee
Take my life, I pray.
I yearn to go Thy way.'

'My heart hath found a refuge Oh
dearest Lord, in Thee, Amidst
hell's stormy raging, Thou art a
Shield for me.
Thy mighty arm will strive with The
armies of the foe
A table Thou has furnished; My
cup doth overflow.'

I praised the Lord for the experience and for the testing of my faith. The days were terrible, but I could live through them without fear.

At the end of two weeks, the situation reversed as abruptly as it had started! It was my last week in Tiverton, and beginning on Saturday night, the Lord's Spirit began to move. The time of oppression from satan had ended!

That Saturday night, my sister's friend Elizabeth was deeply touched by the love of Jesus. The joy she felt could not be contained!

"You'll never guess what happened," she gasped. "You know how staid the British are — trying never to show emotion or feelings?" I nodded. "Well," she continued, "I just dashed up to the vicar of St. Gregory's, gave him a big hug, and said, 'Isn't the love of Jesus wonderful?' He was so appalled, he might still be standing there in a state of shock!" We both giggled.

The next day, the Lord sent me to the Tiverton Baptist Church to attend their Sunday morning service. As I was walking out after the service, I spotted a little sign on the bulletin board which read: "STAMPS FOR ISRAEL". Sensing from this that the congregation had a burden for Israel, I mentioned to the minister as I shook his hand that I was a Jewish Believer in Jesus on my way to Israel. The information was warmly received, and he invited me to return to their evening service and to share with them some of my experiences. It's hard to imagine all that was soon to follow!

My sharing that night opened the door in Tiverton for some wonderful fellowship. Following the service, two dear elderly women, Miss Dennis and Miss Lee, invited me to tea on Friday afternoon. "We have saved stamps for Israel all our lives," one shared with me. The other had suffered a stroke and was unable to speak, but the love that flowed as she hugged me spoke for her. How dearly they loved Israel and the Jewish people, and how happy I felt to have met them!

I was also invited to join the youth meeting that night, which I enjoyed very much. I had a special time of sharing with John Rivers, one of the members who had come to know the Lord a year earlier. "And it has been the most astonishing year of my life!" he exclaimed joyfully.

The next day I accompanied my sister to the weekly market, where farmers and craftsmen came to buy and sell their products. There I was introduced to a young man named James, with whom I shared how profoundly Jesus had touched my life.

Hidden from me, but in full sight of God, was the fact that James and John shared a ride to work every day! The next morning in the car, James mentioned the woman he had met in the market and that she believed that Jesus' love was relevant for today. John replied, "I know her, too, and I have the same beliefs!" He then told James how the Lord had touched his life many months before, and how real that experience continued to be. Even though they had ridden together to work daily, there had never been an opportunity for John to speak about Jesus before. The next day, James bumped into Elizabeth as well, and some more seeds were surely planted. Her new-found joy was impossible to miss!

A few days later James came to visit me at my sister's home. He had come to tell me a heartbreaking story, the burden of which he had carried with him for many months. A year earlier, he had been driving his car and had caused an accident. His best friend, who had been sitting next to him, had been killed. He had been feeling a terrible sadness and guilt from that moment on. As he was telling me this, I could sense Jesus' heart aching with his and yearning to lift that burden with a touch of His love.

"James, you remember that I told you at the market of the love of Jesus?" He nodded. "His forgiveness is as real as His love. All you need to do is to pray. Ask Jesus to come into your heart, and at the same time He will lift that burden right from you. In the moment that you turn your life over to Him, all the sins that you ever committed are in that instant forgiven and forgotten by God. You will come to know that His love for you is real and lasting no matter what has happened in your past. May we pray together?" I asked gently. James nodded his consent.

"You pray first, James. Just open your heart to Jesus. Ask Him to come into your life, and to forgive you for all of your sins. Then ask Him to lift the burden from you of the death of your closest friend. When you're finished, I'd like to pray for you as well."

When he had finished, I placed my hands on his shoulders and prayed in agreement with him for the forgiveness of his sins, for the burden to be lifted, and for his heart to be filled with the Spirit of God's love.

"What power you have in your hands!" he exclaimed the moment I had finished praying. Then it was my turn to be blessed!

"Oh, James, that wasn't me! I wasn't even aware that anything had happened! That was

the Lord's love brought by the Holy Spirit, washing away your sins and making you a new person before the holiness of God!"

"I felt the power of God from the moment we began to speak," James remarked. "It has been the most extraordinary experience of my life."

"And you felt the forgiveness for the death of your friend?" I inquired. I hated to bring it up again, but I knew that it was necessary. The radiance on his face was impossible to miss. "Oh, yes!" he replied. "The moment we prayed, it felt as though a weight had been actually lifted from my heart!"

"His forgiveness is *real*, and it's such an incredible gift of His mercy to us! Now you'll need to spend time reading the Scriptures, learning more about Him, and listening to His guidance in your life," I told him.

After some time, James left for home. How blessed we both had been!

The next afternoon was my invitation to tea with Miss Dennis and Miss Lee. Those dear ladies had baked four different kinds of cakes and biscuits, and they made me feel like such an honoured guest. What a lovely tea it was!

Just before it was time to leave, we decided to have a time of prayer. And at once, those two dear old women dropped to their knees. It brought tears to my eyes, as I felt how heaven rejoiced to see the simplicity and the depth of their love for the Lord. Their parting gift to me was a package of four Bibles to take with me to Israel!

The next day, I went to see the vicar of the Anglican Church, Reverend Mr. Craig and his wife, and had a lovely visit and tea with them. They asked me to tell of my experiences, and when I had finished, the vicar commented, "Well, I see you have a personal relationship to the Lord. But it's most unusual and certainly not for everybody!"

"But there's nothing unique about my experience!" I exclaimed. "The love of Jesus is meant for all of us! We need no special qualifications to come to know Him other than an open heart!"

Mrs. Craig shyly added, "I know what you mean. Recently I have been reading books that tell of many people who have been touched by His love . . ."

Her husband abruptly changed the subject, and I knew it was time for me to leave. But I knew, too, that seeds had been watered, at least for the wife of the vicar.

Living on the same street as my sister was the caretaker of the Baptist Church and his family, and their home was my second stop. They greeted me warmly, and Sarah, their only child, made an astonishing announcement!

"Eileen! How I prayed you'd come by! I have worked it out for you to speak to our entire school assembly, and also to take over one period of our class in religion! It will all happen tomorrow morning at 10:00!" She then told me that I would have six minutes to speak in the general assembly, and the class period which followed would last for one hour. "And," she concluded, "you're to talk about Israel!"

I was totally amazed. I prayed when I returned home. So much of England was in spiritual darkness. How in six minutes could I bring something of the Lord to them? After waiting quietly before Him, I knew that I was to speak entirely about Biblical prophecy being fulfilled in Israel, telling of God's hand upon that small nation and its people, and of our need to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem".

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

Psalm 122:6

The next morning, promptly at 10:00, the head of the school and I marched stiffly up to the front of the auditorium. I was tersely introduced and reminded once again not to go over my allotted six minutes. I walked to the podium and peered out at a sea of bored and

disinterested faces. "Oh Lord," I thought, "how helpless I feel!" I began by telling them Scripturally of all the miracles that occurred as Israel came to be a nation, and tried to share indirectly of the reality of God's love in our lives! Within the six minute period of time, I left the podium. The assembly had come to a close.

I then went to share with the class. Most of the students had many, many questions, since their teacher had been trying to prove to them that God was dead. I felt more hopeless than ever! I spoke throughout the hour, not to those who were filled with clever retorts, but to those who were quietly listening. I knew Jesus' ability to water the seeds that He so gently plants! When the class drew to a close, I found myself completely drained. On the way out the door, I took one last stab at it. "I think perhaps 'thou dost protest too much,' Mr. Evans," I quipped at the teacher. "Sometime you really should ask Jesus what *He* thinks about all of this. But only if you're prepared for His answer!"

All in all, it had been quite a week! And that is the mystification of a walk with the Lord. One never knows where the next door will lead!

The next morning, Cathy, Bev and I took off for a three day excursion to London. Cathy and Bev had much to do the first days there, so we agreed to spend the third day together for a royal tour of London!

On the first day, I attended a conference I had heard about in Tiverton. After the meeting, I met a young couple, Daniel and Ruth, both Jewish Believers! We talked together for a few minutes, and just before they dashed out the door, they handed me their address and phone number. "In case you stay in London longer than three days, give us a call! We'd love to have you stay with us!"

My one month's visa for England was soon to expire, and I really felt that it was not the Lord's will for me to have it extended. I knew, instead, that I was to leave for Israel the following week, travelling from London to Venice on "The Magic Bus", and from there I was to reserve a seat on the Italian ship, "Livorno". The bus fare was a surprisingly low \$40.00, including the Channel crossing, and the ship would cost only \$110.00! I calculated that with the last of my funds, I could make it only one-third of the way! Once again I would have to trust in the Father's care.

The next day, I talked by telephone with a young pastor named Rob in London who had a great burden and love for Israel. While speaking to him, I had the unmistakeable impression that the Lord wanted me to ask him for fifty pounds.

"But Lord," I silently argued, "You've never had me ask before, not ever! And besides that, I need a lot more than fifty pounds!"

He reminded me at once that He had told me never to ask for money *unless He told me to ask*. It was obedience that mattered to Him and not some arbitrary rule! I swallowed self-consciously, and asked. Rob agreed to bring it before the Lord in prayer. An hour later, he returned my call.

"Eileen, a most astonishing thing has occurred! Minutes after I spoke with you, a young woman came to the office with a gift. She gave specific orders that it was to be given to a Jewish Believer!"

"Wow!" I exclaimed.

"The donation," he continued, "was for precisely fifty pounds! As soon as I prayed, the Lord confirmed that it is for you!"

And that is why I had been instructed to ask! The Lord was fully aware that the gift was on its way, and Rob needed to know what to do with it!

Rob then invited me to attend a meeting on Tuesday night, where a film about Israel would be shown. He gave me directions to the meeting, and said he would give me the fifty pounds then. And so it seems that I would be staying in London longer than three days after all!

In awe of His plans, I called Daniel and Ruth. "Guess what?" I asked Daniel when he answered the phone.

"Hurray! You'll be coming to stay!" Overjoyed, and so welcoming, he gave me directions to their home, and related that they also had plans to attend the Tuesday night meeting.

The next day, Cathy, Bev and I began our tour of London, and it turned out to be a royal tour indeed. London was all decked out for the fast-approaching "Queen's Silver Anniversary". We arrived at Buckingham Palace just as a fife-and-drum-corps was preparing to march. We then went to Westminster Abbey, arriving in time to see some beautiful folk dancing, and then we dashed off to see a performance at an old English theatre of "St. Joan of Arc". What a thrill it was to see! How brave she was as she stood undaunted even before kings, so sure was she of God's direction for her life! It had truly been a full and memorable day!

The following morning Cathy and Bev returned to Tiverton, and I left to visit Daniel and Ruth. (I planned to return to Tiverton to spend my last two days with my sister before my departure for Israel.)

When I arrived at Ruth and Daniel's, they immediately apologized for having very little food to offer me. In that instant, the Lord instructed me to take them out to dinner in a restaurant of their choice.

By that time I had \$55.00 left, more than enough money to purchase my bus ticket to Venice, which I had planned to purchase the very next morning. However, even the fifty pounds I would be receiving from Rob the next night would still not be enough to purchase my seat on the "Livorno". It made no sense whatsoever, in view of those circumstances, to spend the little that I *did* have for a meal in a restaurant! I was beginning to learn, however, that a true walk in faith many times has little to do with logic or common sense.

"YES — BUT . . . !"

"Lord, I will follow Thee; but . . ." Luke 9:61

"Supposing God tells you to do something which is an enormous test to your common sense, what are you going to do? Hang back? If you get into the habit of doing a thing in the physical domain, you will do it every time until you break the habit determinedly; and the same is true spiritually. Again and again you will get up to what Jesus Christ wants, and every time you will turn back when it comes to the point, until you abandon resolutely. 'Yes, but — supposing I do obey God in this matter, what about . . . ?' "Yes, I will obey God if He will let me use my common sense, but don't ask me to take a step in the dark.' Jesus Christ demands of the man who trusts Him the same reckless sporting spirit that the natural man exhibits. If a man is going to do anything worth while, there are times when he has to risk everything on his leap, and in the spiritual domain Jesus Christ demands that you risk everything you hold by common sense and leap into what He says, and immediately you do, you find that what He says fits on as solidly as common sense. At the bar of common sense Jesus Christ's statements may seem mad; but bring them to the bar of faith, and you begin to find with awestruck spirit that they are the words of God. Trust entirely in God, and when He brings you to the venture, see that you take it. We act like pagans in a crisis, only one out of a crowd is daring enough to bank his faith on the character of God."

Oswald Chambers
My Utmost for His Highest

How true it is that God's ways are far from ours! I took the plunge, and invited them out to eat. At first they refused, until I interjected, "The day I stop giving at His direction will mark that day that I stop serving Him! C'mon, we *have* to go!"

When they finally acquiesced, Ruth confided that it would indeed be a treat. "We haven't had the money to eat in a restaurant for at least five years!" And of course, Jesus knew that, and had arranged the dinner out of love for them!

We went to a terrific Jewish restaurant, and had all the things "that Mother used to make". What a feast it was! And, the very next morning, they received an unexpected cheque in the mail, and were able to give me the two pounds that I then needed to purchase my bus ticket!

On Tuesday night we attended the meeting together. A couple from the U.S. showed the Israeli film, and invited me to join them for a six week Bible study and tour of Israel, which would begin two weeks after my arrival in Israel! I accepted gratefully, amazed at this new door that had opened.

Ruth and Daniel invited me to stay with them following my visit to Tiverton, offering to drive me to "The Magic Bus" the next Saturday morning. On Wednesday morning I made the three hour train journey back to Devon.

I told my sister and Bev all that had transpired in the few days that we had been separated. I could tell, however, that they were thoroughly disgusted with my incessant referral to Jesus! It saddened me greatly, as I prayed fervently for them to know His peace! "Not as the world gives, give I unto you . . ."

Thursday night arrived all too soon, and early the next morning I would begin my journey back to London. I still was lacking the last fifteen pounds necessary for my seat on the "Livorno", and I brought it before the Lord in prayer. His response was firm. "You are to go and ask the vicar and his wife for the funds, even though they will refuse you the money."

Obediently, I set off for their home, but I dragged my feet every step of the way. His instructions once again revealed a core filled with pride. I felt so ashamed at my unwillingness to suffer humiliation for Him! When I rang the door bell, I braced myself as before a dose of castor oil! Much to my dismay, they were home.

As soon as we were sitting down in the living room, I explained the situation to them, sharing the Lord's direction to come before them with my need.

"Of course we can't help you," was Reverend Craig's immediate reply. "I'm sure the Lord must have another way, and you can't expect Christians to bail you out. Perhaps it's not even the Lord's will for you to return to Israel! If it was, then surely you would have the funds!"

"Well, we do have the extra money saved for our vacation," dear Mrs. Craig interjected. (I knew the Lord would bless her for her willingness to give, and perhaps that, after all, was the purpose of my visit.)

"That's out of the question! We wish you well," Mr. Craig remarked, as he speedily ushered me to the door. Minutes later, I was standing alone on the sidewalk, deeply feeling the humiliation, fully expecting the Lord's comfort. His response came as a total surprise!

"Why *don't you love them?*" He asked me. He made me instantly aware of the fact that I had been totally wrapped up in myself, and had not been open at all to His great burden of love for *them*. Would I never, ever learn to take my eyes off of *me*?

Feeling ashamed, I walked towards Elizabeth's home for our final talk together. I passed a parked car when a voice from the interior said, "Hello!" Peering in, I was overjoyed to see John Rivers! He was munching on a typical British dinner of fish and chips, and I got in the car to talk with him for a few minutes. How glad I was to see him on my last day in Tiverton! I shared with him all the events of the last hour, telling him the awful lesson I had learned about my own selfishness and pride. We prayed together, and I took his address, promising

to write from Israel. What a gift of joy he had, and I parted from him feeling renewed. Our Lord is so forgiving!

I returned from Elizabeth's a few hours later, and found Cathy and her friends in a state of total amazement.

"Eileen, quick, open this envelope!" Cathy exclaimed the minute I walked through the door. "At around 10:30 p.m., I said to my friends, 'Boy, I sure hope Eileen gets the last fifteen pounds she needs for her trip!' And, at that exact *instant*, this envelope popped through the mail slot. At 10:30 at *night!*" Her voice was filled with awe.

She handed it to me, and I looked at it wonderingly. On the front, it simply said, "Eileen". Inside was a gift of precisely fifteen British pounds! Not even a note accompanied the money, so I had no way of knowing who had brought it! How astonished we were, and even my disbelieving sister found it hard to deny the miracle of His provision, just hours before I was due to leave on my journey home!

16

TOURNEY HOME

Since leaving the States, I had written to Mike and Joey two or three times per week, sending letters, post cards, small gifts, and money when I could. On the morning that I left Tiverton, I also started a tape recording to send to them. (Little did I know what an incredible tape it would turn out to be!)

Cathy and Bev began the recording by greeting the boys and telling them the story of the provision of the fifteen pounds. Bev then spoke to them in the various British dialects. It was delightful! I then explained to Joey and Mike that I was on my way to London and that via the tape they could journey with me that day!

A friend of Bev's had offered to drive me to Exeter, where I had planned to catch the train to London. When Charles arrived, I thanked Bev and Cathy for the month I had spent with them, and left with tears in my eyes — partly because I would miss them, and partly from sadness that they were no closer to accepting Jesus' love than before I arrived.

Halfway to Exeter, Charles' car broke down. "It happens all the time," he explained matter-of-factly, urging me to hitchhike the remainder of the way. "It takes over an hour for the garage to come and rescue me!" He called the garage, and then sat resignedly on a bench to read his newspaper.

I grabbed my backpack, and crossed to the other side of the road. "What a dreadful way to begin my journey back to Israel," I thought. I felt helpless, as I had never hitchhiked before in my entire life. I wasn't even sure how to hold my hand!

The Devon countryside is lovely, with a feeling of peace and serenity. Unfortunately for me, part of that quiet stemmed from the lack of traffic! As I waited by the side of the road, I began to question the entire trip. *If things were beginning this badly, was I really meant to return to Israel?* The few cars that did come sped quickly by, and it seemed that I would never get to the Exeter train station.

After what felt like an eternity, a clunky old car came chugging along. I glanced at it, and when I did, I simply could not believe my eyes. Inside that clunky old car sat Elizabeth and her husband and children! In the middle of the Devon countryside! The Lord had given us a final, totally unexpected reunion! Who would have dreamed that the first time I had hitchhiked in my entire life, my very best friends in the region would be the ones to offer me a ride?

Since I had started the tape recording by telling Mike and Joey that they could journey with me that day, Elizabeth agreed to speak with Joey and Mike via tape as they drove me to the Exeter train station. This is what she said:

"Hullo, Michael and Joey! My name is Elizabeth, and I am one of your Mummy's friends! I'm sitting in the car with my two daughters and my husband, Rick. We were taking our once-a-month drive to Exeter, when we

passed a hitchhiker on the road. We simply couldn't believe it when we realized that the hitchhiker was none other than your very own Mum! Your Mummy has taught us a great deal about faith, and so we know that this wonderful surprise was a gift from the Lord!"

It surely was!

Standing at last at the edge of the platform at the Exeter railroad station, I continued the tape.

"O.K., boys," I spoke into the tape recorder. "Just close your eyes and pretend that you're with me. I'll talk to you just as though you were here, and that way we can take this journey together!"

I turned off the tape recorder until I could hear the train approaching, and then continued. "There's the whistle! Get away from the edge of the platform, boys, the train is coming!" And then, having had experience in travelling with two young boys, I added, "What? You have to go to the toilet *now*? All right, it's just around the corner, but hurry, please, or we'll miss the train!"

Suddenly I noticed an Englishman standing next to me who was trying his best to keep from laughing. In a flash, I realized how ridiculous it must seem for a grown woman to be saying to a tape recorder, "What? You have to go to the toilet *now*?" It was especially embarrassing in proper England, and I found myself blushing from head to toe. Devastated, I explained, "I'm making a tape for my children who are in the United States!"

He explained that he himself was just beginning a journey to the States, to find a new home for himself and his family. "May I sit with you on the train?" he queried. Immediately I knew it was a door the Lord had opened.

On the three hour train ride, I shared with Martin my experiences in travelling with Jesus. He listened intently as I told of the reality of Jesus' guidance and love. He then told me that he had once known Jesus himself. "That was many years ago, however," he concluded.

When we finally reached the gargantuan station in London, Martin asked me to pray with him, as he wished to renew his relationship with Jesus once again. "I don't want to travel another mile without Him!" he exclaimed.

Tears filled my eyes as we walked over to a corner of the station and prayed together. As people by the hundreds unknowingly rushed by, all the hosts of heaven rejoiced as Martin re-opened his heart to Jesus' love. As I watched him walk away, I knew that Jesus was walking before him.

Many people have been intimidated and are afraid to share about the Lord with others, because satan has convinced them that without "personal follow-up", the new Believer is lost. How terribly we exalt ourselves and limit God, for He is well able to look after the sheep who have placed themselves in His care!

After many months, I received this letter from Martin:

"Dear Eileen,

Greetings in the Lord, who has been so good to us, and who used you to help to lead me back to Himself. I praise God and thank you for the fellowship we had on the train to London.

When I got off the plane in Chicago, I met three young Christians and one invited me to stay at his house for a few days. In fact, I stayed with three Christian families around Chicago!

Not only have I given my life to the Lord now, but my wife and our eldest son, aged 9, have also. We are now awaiting God's guidance for our future,

but feel sure He wants us in the States somewhere.

I wonder if you are still making recordings to send to your children!

May God bless you in His service and take care of you.

My love in the Lord,

Martin"

I purchased my ticket for the ship after Martin and I parted company, and then I got on the train bound for Ruth and Daniel's, where I was to spend my last night in England. By then I had my bus ticket as well as the ticket for the ship, but I did not have an extra penny to purchase food for the entire journey, nor did I have the funds for the night I would have to spend in Venice! When I prayed about it, the only word the Lord gave me was the instruction to offer Ruth and Daniel my flute! It seemed ridiculous, as I didn't even know if they would want it, but perhaps they might know someone who would.

I was so happy to see them again! It was hard to believe that we had met only the week before!

After we had shared together all that had transpired in the days we had been apart, I queried, "Do you know anyone who would like a flute?" Ruth and Daniel glanced at each other and both began to laugh.

"Well, I guess it's ours!" Daniel replied. They then told me such an amazing story!

"You remember how you spent some of the last of your money to take us out to dinner?" Ruth began. I nodded. "Well, a few days later, when you were in Devon, the Lord told us that you had no money for food for your trip to Israel."

"Oh, wow!" was all I could say.

"Well, we had no money whatsoever to help you out," Daniel added. "But we knew that the Lord revealed your need to us for a reason! We placed the situation on the altar, and then the Lord told us what to do! In obedience to Him, we sold our clarinet and whatever else we could, and we made a joke with the Lord that someday He would return to us a 'tin whistle'!" We all laughed.

"We weren't planning to tell you that we had to sell our possessions," Ruth explained, "but when you walked in and asked if anyone wanted a flute, we knew we had received our tin whistle from the Lord!" They then showed me an enormous bag of food that they had prepared for my journey on the bus.

"Goodness, you guys, it's enough to feed the whole bus! How wonderful you are!" Their kindness simply overwhelmed me.

For those who have never experienced a walk in faith, our joy will be hard to fathom. I often feel sorry for those who have too much, for they surely miss the miracles and wonders of God's provision for His children. I learned long ago that there is simply no such thing as a "small" miracle. Each and every time that the Lord touches our lives is a wonder. And the 'Tat t bat' tiMelife4crieuen ssiti&ili ft; Mr.ihM ----?aAraViPairitiVacbigA_PaNe,r9W4 never cease to fill me with amazement and awe.

We talked for many hours, and it was hard to say goodbye to them at the bus the next morning. Just before I boarded the bus, they handed me an envelope. On the outside of it they had drawn a simple cross. When I opened it after the bus had pulled out of the station, I couldn't help but cry. Inside was a gift of \$160.00. It was such an echo from the days of the Apostles!

*"And all that believed were together, and had all things common;
And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them with all men, as
every man had need ..."*

Acts 2:44-45

How pleased Jesus must have been, and how richly He will bless them!

Oh, and the bag full of groceries! It had been put together with such love! There were at least a dozen sandwiches, and each one had an encouraging verse of Scripture taped to the wrapper. They had included in the bag a set of silverware, tea bags and sugar, fruit and fresh vegetables, bread and cheese for my two days in Venice, and even some sweets as well!

The girl who shared the front seat with me on the bus kept glancing at me out of the corner of her eyes, and so finally I told her the story behind the bag of groceries! Her name was Sue and she was from Australia, and I quickly learned that she did not even believe in God. I began to share with her about Jesus, and of the reality of His love, and by the time we got to the ferry to cross the English Channel, she had asked to read my Bible. She read it from the moment we boarded until we reached the other side!

Once on the bus again, we continued to talk. Each time I would share another incident of the Lord's faithfulness, her eyes would grow wide with wonder. The bus travelled day and night, and finally by the next morning, in a little town in France near the Italian border, she gave her heart to Jesus. I then knew from the Lord that I was to give her my Bible. It was a special Bible to me, as it had been a gift from Marcia, and Jesus had taught me so much from it as I read it every day. So before handing it to her I prayed that Jesus would reveal His word to her, and that it would be a special blessing to Sue as well. (Sue had the gift of a child-like faith from the very beginning!)

An elderly Jewish man sat behind me on the bus, and I was able to share the bag of food with him. He never spoke to me, until just before we arrived in Venice. He then quoted to me, one by one, all the Scripture verses that had been on his sandwiches!

Since Sue would be continuing by bus to Athens, I gave her the address of a youth hostel in Haifa that I knew was to be my destination for my first night in Israel, and asked her to keep in touch. And then, just before I got off the bus, I handed her \$50.00, as I knew from the Lord that her funds were getting low.

"No one has ever helped me like this before," she exclaimed. She didn't know quite how to respond!

"Sue, it's Jesus who provides the money that I have. It is *His* money, not mine. I have more than I need simply because some of it was meant for you! Just know that He loves you lots." We hugged each other, and I got off the bus.

Many weeks went by before I heard from Sue again. One day in July, a friend was going to buy me a Bible at a Christian book store in Jerusalem after we attended a worship service together. Sue was very much on my heart that day, since my old Bible was in her hands! That very day, as I was standing in the church, someone came over and handed me a letter. (The letter had been sent to the Haifa address, but to this day I don't know how it got to me in Jerusalem at that very moment!) As I'm sure you have guessed, the letter was from Sue. Once again, it spoke of the faithfulness of God in caring for the flock of His pasture. This is what she wrote:

"Dear Eileen,

I am the girl, Sue, who the Lord touched through your faith. I am in Puerto Rico now and it's amazing how I got here, by 'jumping on a ship', I mean

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but then it was only through my prayers that I managed to get off it safely.*

Miracles have been happening since we parted, and I thought you would like to hear about them.

When I was on the ship they had a search for stowaways and contraband. They searched the ship for two-and-one-half hours with ten men and walkie talkies. I realized that it was wrong to stowaway, and I asked the Lord to

forgive me and to protect me and to help me to have faith again. And He did. I started reading the Bible you gave me, and that really helped.

A man on the ship was an alcoholic. I prayed that the Lord may help him, and he told a friend to tell me that he is going to stop drinking. All these things are happening and I can't help but feel wonderful inside.

The Lord has brought me to a house here that needs my help. The men on the ship gave me \$350.00, as they knew I had no money, and I find that the Lord has given it to me to help this family as they had a gas bill they could not pay. A friend had given me a toy dog and some children's clothing, and the little girl that lives here fits perfectly into them! It's so amazing!

I still am not smoking or taking drugs, although due to losing my faith earlier I had begun it again. Now that my faith has returned I have no desire to smoke!

Well, thank you so much, and I'll be praying for you wherever you may be.

*All the best — I am sure we will
meet again. God bless you!*

Love, Sue"

The simplicity of her faith really spoke to my heart — all from a young girl who two months earlier never even believed that God exists!

When I stepped off the bus, I could hardly believe that I could actually be in Venice! And I was too exhausted to even enjoy it! The bus drivers had played Greek music day and night, and sleep had been impossible. I crossed the first canal and stopped at the very first hotel that I came to.

"I'd like a room for the night," I announced wearily to the desk clerk. He gave me an appraising glance, and, with disdain in his voice, remarked, "This is a first class hotel! It will cost you 28,000 lira for a single room!" I gulped. I had exchanged some money for my day-and-a-half in Venice, and all of it totalled only 25,000 lira!

"Please, could you direct me to a second class hotel? I work for the Lord, and fortunately we're all one class in His sight!"

His attitude softened, and he informed me that there was a nice, inexpensive hotel one canal away. Off I trooped, and found a lovely room for a civilized 9,000 lira! (I loved the Italian exchange rate, as it sounded like I had a fortune!) I hurriedly freshened up, and left the room for a spaghetti dinner. I then planned to return immediately for a good night's sleep. I was too tired to even explore Venice, and that meant I was very tired indeed!

I quickly located an outdoor cafe, and sat at a table next to the canal to eat. How lovely Venice was at night, with the lights reflecting romantically on the water! When the waiter arrived, I ordered spaghetti. At once, he began to shout at me, motioning for me to get up from the table. He then led me to another table far from the canal, plopped down a plate of spaghetti in front of me, and refused to come near me again! I couldn't imagine what could be wrong with ordering spaghetti in *Italy* until I studied the menu. It seems that in Venice, spaghetti is an entree and never the main course! When the waiter realized that I was ordering such an inexpensive meal, he quickly ushered me away from the choicest tables! How terribly class-conscious people seemed to be! In spite of it, I enjoyed the spaghetti thoroughly. It was such fun to eat my favourite food in an actual Italian city!

The next day I enjoyed poking around the avenues lining the canals, and then in the afternoon I located the "Livorno". Once on board, I quickly located my section. It was called "class DD" and consisted of hundreds of seats similar to those found on an airplane. It would be interesting to spend four nights sleeping on a seat! I was so thrilled to actually be

on an ocean liner for the first time in my life, however, that I believe I would have been happy to sleep sitting up!

I went out on deck, and stood watching until the port of Venice disappeared on the horizon. Then I sat in the cafeteria sipping a steaming cup of coffee, when a gentleman sat down across from me. As it turns out, he was a professor of comparative religion. He had been a professor for forty years, and had studied the major religions of the world. I shared with him my personal revelation of Jesus as the Son of God.

"Goodness," he replied. "It's pathetic if you stop there! There is so much more to a religious experience! When you go through the eye of the needle, there is a whole pyramid, a whole realm of experience awaiting you! You are limiting yourself terribly if you stop with Jesus!"

Since he was a learned man, a professor of religion, I felt too self-conscious to argue. Because of my reluctance, I felt the Lord's displeasure, however, and knew that in spite of myself, I would have to speak up. I prayed for His help!

"Have you ever read the New Testament?" I asked, having been prompted to do so by the Lord. To me it seemed like such an audacious question to ask such a learned man! "Parts of it," he replied.

"But have you never just read it?" I persisted.

"No, I never read the whole thing."

I explained to him the quote about the "eye of the needle". "What Jesus said was that it was easier for a camel to fit through the eye of a needle than it was for a rich man to enter the gates of heaven! How can you know that Jesus is not the way if you've never even read the New Testament?" I challenged him.

"I have found a realm of religious experience that is thrilling! As a matter of fact, I'm writing a book about it!" He then tried to convince me that he had found the true way.

"I'll tell you what," I said. "It is impossible to argue until you know what I'm talking about as well. I'll give you a copy of the Bible, and ask you to simply read the Gospels, asking God to shed His light upon it as you read. Then you can have the great privilege of speaking to me again!" I teased. Much to my amazement, he agreed to read the New Testament! I hurried up to my seat to get him a copy, and he left with it for his cabin. I prayed hard that Jesus would reveal Himself to him as he read it through!

During the next few days, I thoroughly enjoyed the quiet and the rest. How luxurious it was to be able to spend hours in the sunshine on the deck of a ship in the middle of the Mediterranean! It gave me time to write letters and to read and simply to enjoy a time of quiet before the Lord. After so many weeks of travelling, it was refreshing!

While sitting in the sunshine one languid afternoon, I read the Book of Esther in the Scriptures for the very first time. Not understanding why, I felt very close to her, and I was deeply moved by her faith that changed the course of history for the Jewish people. And then, inexplicably, I felt the presence of the Lord as He spoke clearly, strongly and firmly to my heart. "From now on," He said, "you shall be called Esther . . ."

I would see the professor occasionally, and always with the New Testament clutched in his hand! We never spoke again, however, until we arrived in the port of Athens, which was to be his destination. Just before disembarking, he appeared beside my deck

"Here," he said, handing the Bible back to me. "You take this Bible and share it with as many people as you can. I have studied systems of religion for many years, and in these few days I have found that for which I have spent a lifetime searching. Thank you." And with that, he left the ship.

I was deeply grateful to the Lord for enabling me to view His special transformation in that man's life. I knew, too, that if he remained open and obedient to the Lord, his extensive

knowledge of other religions could be used by the Lord to draw many unto Himself. It also underlined the fact that we can never really know the Lord through the intellect, unless the heart and soul are also involved!

The next day at 6:00 a.m., land was spotted, as we approached the Haifa port.

