

# *The Voice of My Beloved*

## *A HANDBOOK ON OBEDIENCE*

*by  
Esther Korson*

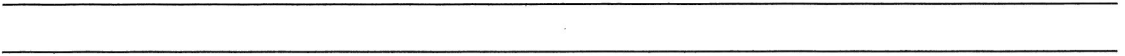


*"I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of  
my Beloved that knocketh.  
Behold, He cometh leaping upon the mountains  
skipping upon the hills..."*

*Song of Solomon 2: 8; 5: 2*

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Scripture Quotations are from the King James  
Version of the Bible

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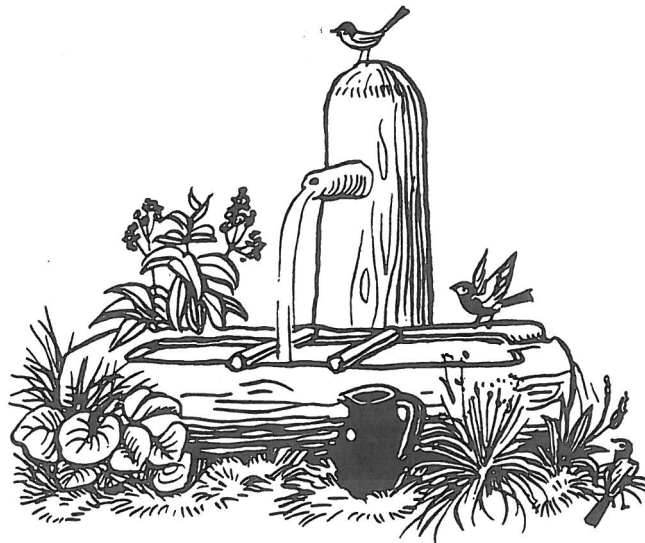
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*"Freely you have received,  
freely give..."*

Matthew 10: 8

Under no circumstances is  
this book  
to be sold.





*"A stronger desire to do the will of the Father...  
is surely the best thing God Himself can kindle in  
the heart of any man. For what good is there in  
creation but the possibility of being yet further  
created? And what else is growth but more of the  
will of God?"*

*-George MacDonald,  
Far Above Rubies*

*"We receive His blessings  
and know His Word,  
but do we know Him?"*

*-Oswald Chambers.  
My Utmost for His Highest*



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*Part of this book  
was written in a tiny Swiss chalet  
high in the Alps.*

*The mountaintops were covered with snow,  
but the evidence of spring was everywhere—  
in the buds on the trees,  
the wild primroses,  
the small brave crocuses blooming above the tree line  
still frosty with snow,  
the sweet melody of the birds,  
the dry beds turning into gurgling brooks  
as the snow began to melt,  
and the waterfalls leaping from the ragged cliffs.*

*My prayer  
is that the springtime of God's love  
will awaken within your hearts,  
even through the pages of this book.*

*May our lives echo the words of Yeshua  
when He said:  
"And He that sent Me is with Me:  
the Father hath not left Me alone;  
for I do always those things that please Him..."  
John 8: 29*

*This handbook is dedicated*

*with love*

*and*

*a heart full of thankfulness*

*to*

*my dear*

*Prayer Partners*

*who have stood by my side*

*through it all.*



# *Introduction*

As I've travelled extensively around the world, I've met people from many nations, backgrounds and beliefs. But I've noticed in each person a universal yearning, in one way or another, to know God. Some already had a relationship with Him, or at least knowledge of Him. Some only had a yearning in their hearts for a deeper meaning to life. But God's love for each and every one never wavered and continued to fill me with an ever-deepening sense of the greatness and the depth of His love for each person. It also amazed me to see the many ways He expressed that love, as varied as the individuals I met. One thing is certain. The Lord knows every single person upon this earth. He knows everything each person has experienced, every single thing they've ever thought, even the number of hairs upon their heads. And He knows, in each case, just how to touch each one with His love in such a personal and special way.

God reaches out in His love to every person in many ways throughout each individual's life. Sometimes it's through a beautiful sunset. Sometimes it's through another person sharing about God's love. Sometimes it's through His Word, the Bible. Other times it's through circumstances that seem to work out just as we would have wished for them to. Occasionally it's even through tragedy and suffering, a time when our defenses are down and it's easier for us to see our need for God. Sometimes God speaks to us through nature, through some of the beautiful things that He created to delight our hearts. At times He reaches out to us through the simple love of children or the devotion of pets. Many recognize His love, and many don't. Often people call it "coincidence" or "luck" and try to explain it away in natural terms. Others feel His love, and then allow anger, or bitterness, or simply a love of the world, to cloud out the light of His love in their lives. Each person has a choice. They can accept His love, and recognize it for what it is, or they can reject it, and continue on in pursuit of their own seeming happiness. For those who recognize the love of God, and accept it, and place their lives in His hands, it is a very important beginning. But many don't realize that a relationship, a friendship, is possible with the Lord that is meant to strengthen and to grow throughout our lives.

At the outset, it is enough to simply open our poor hearts to receive the wonders of His love for us. It is important in the beginning of our relationship to Him to allow Him to love us. But there comes a point in our walk with Him when we have to begin to return some of that love. God gives His love to us freely. He *is* love. His love was expressed the most clearly when He placed His own Son upon the altar of sacrifice, in fulfillment of the Passover, to become the final sacrifice for our sins. In that moment, as sinful and as impure as we were, He reconciled us to Himself, removing the veil from the Temple and allowing us through this final sacrifice to enter unassisted into the very Holy of Holies, the presence of God Himself. When we accept His love—and when we accept as well the atonement that allows us to stand before Him forgiven—in addition to a deep sense of gratitude, we must also recognize His holiness and His right to sovereignty in our lives.

When we open our hearts to His love, *it is only the beginning*. When we accept the atonement of Yeshua (Jesus' Hebrew name), we can stand before God cleansed and forgiven. But that step alone will not guarantee us a place in heaven for all of eternity. Our lives must begin to change and to reflect some of the love that He is. We must learn to *truly* place our lives in His hands, not just in an abstract way, but in reality. We must learn to listen to His guidance within our hearts, and we must learn to obey Him.

The main question I was asked in my travels throughout the world was, "How do you hear from God?" I hope, through the pages of this book, to try to answer that question. However, in the end, it is always an individual struggle. In order to hear from God and to obey Him, we will always have a struggle with the selfishness of our own wills and desires. There is no simple answer, as the determination must come from each individual, a willingness to put aside the "flesh" and to truly reach beyond ourselves to serve the King. No matter how much I share in this book, a desire to serve and obey the Lord can only come from within each person. It's an on-going struggle, but the victory is possible each and every day. And if we truly love Him, then we will be rewarded beyond measure in seeing the greatness of His love expressed to others even through us. Through our obedience and our love for Him and for others, we can look forward to His welcoming embrace at the end of our path. The decisions to accept His love—and then to follow Him and obey Him—are the most important decisions that we can make with our lives. If your heart is open to Him, then hopefully the pages of this little book will encourage you along the way. But remember, the willingness to obey and to follow Him can only come from you. When the right decision is made, His steady hand will be there to guide you through.

# CHAPTER ONE

## *Beginnings*

The purpose of this book is to encourage you to draw closer to the Lord; to help you learn to listen to the gentleness of His voice; and to enable you to obey Him as you walk by His side day by day, secure in the knowledge of His love for you. The purpose of sharing my own experiences of God's faithfulness is only to encourage you to have experiences of your own! The place to begin, of course, must be in verbally placing your life in the Father's hands by accepting the atonement He provided, enabling us to be reconciled to Him. When Yeshua gave up His life for the sins of mankind, He fulfilled the Biblical story of Abraham and Isaac and also the Passover, as He became the Passover Lamb, the final atonement. He died so that for the first time since the days of Adam, we could enter into a real relationship with the Lord cleansed and forgiven, with the assurance that if we followed His will for our lives, we would dwell with Him for all eternity. When we place our lives in the Lord's hands and ask His forgiveness for our sins in Yeshua's name, it gives us a whole new beginning in life. God knows everything that we've ever done and everything that we've ever thought—and the wonder is that He loves us anyway! That's why He provided a way for us to be reconciled to Himself once again through the death of Yeshua. But when we receive cleansing and forgiveness, that is only a beginning. It is the mere beginning of a relationship and friendship with the Lord that is meant to last all of our lives. We are meant to walk forward in obedience to Him, in a wonderful partnership, as we become vessels of His love to a world without hope.

The Bible, from beginning to end, tells about God's instructions to others and their response to it. It tells of His dealings with the Israelites, with the prophets, with the Kings, and later, more directly, through His own Son and the apostles. Over and over and over again, the Bible says, "...The Lord said..." In all of the Bible stories, either people *obeyed* God's instructions, or they didn't. But throughout the Bible, the concept of God *communicating* with His people was clear. Whether He spoke to people directly or through His servants or through the prophets, *God was always in communication with people from one end of the Bible to the other.*

Having grown up immersed in Jewish tradition, the Biblical stories are part of our history and heritage, involving people just like us. As a result, I never doubted God's ability to communicate, nor the importance of obeying Him, since both principles were so clear in our Biblical history. Through Yeshua's final atonement, through the forgiveness of my sins, that communication could be even closer. Since I've only known Yeshua in a Jewish context, I accepted His Messiahship in the whole context of our history. It was therefore natural to me that we could now hear from the Lord in an even *more* direct manner than was possible *before* the atonement. As I had never grown up in any kind of Christian tradition, I therefore had nothing to "unlearn" in terms of what a walk in faith should be about. It was such an advantage! I was rather surprised in later years, when

the Lord sent me out to speak in many nations, to learn that the concept of direct communication with the Lord is not universally recognized. Somehow traditions that are accepted as "Christianity" have long since taken the place of any real and meaningful dialogue with the Creator Himself. Traditionally people attend church on Sunday, study their Bibles together, pray and then go on in general with their daily lives. Many, many times in my travels throughout the world I would be criticized for saying, "The Lord told me," or "The Lord said..." I didn't understand the criticism at first, for I don't say such a thing lightly. Pride allowed me to become self-conscious about my relationship with the Lord, and as a result I tried not to acknowledge Him in the things that I taught. But it felt very uncomfortable! Finally one day the Lord dealt with it directly.

"Did I tell you that?" He asked, not at all pleased by my hesitancy to give Him credit for something He *had* taught me.

"Yes, Lord," I answered.

"Then you had *better* give Me credit for it, and stop worrying about what people will say!"

In the end, I finally understood that the fault lies with traditions that many are comfortable with, setting aside certain times for "Christian" things, with no real sense that a vital, moment by moment relationship with the Lord was even possible.

So the first thing someone seeking a deeper relationship with the Lord must do is to take an honest appraisal of his or her concept of "Christian" faith right now. Into what areas of your life have you given access to the Lord? Do you believe that a real relationship with Him is possible? Have you truly accepted God's love for you? Have you accepted His right to sovereignty in your life? It's necessary to be truthful with yourself, to evaluate honestly what has been the basis for a relationship until this point. God already knows the answers to each question, so it is even *more* important to be open before Him.

The next step would be to bring that desire for a closer relationship directly to the Lord. Tell Him that you are willing to truly place your life in His hands, that you desire to hear from Him, and that, with His help, you are willing to obey. It is important at this point not to have any pre-conceived ideas of what God will do. It is impossible to know in advance how God will communicate with someone. For me, generally it is a gentle voice within my heart, a simple *knowing* that the Lord is speaking. Sometimes He also communicates to me through His Word, suddenly making a particular verse of Scripture come to life. Sometimes He speaks through a book that I have read, because I do love to read, or through something said by another speaker. Sometimes He also expresses His love through a beautiful sunset, or through things in nature which have always been so special to me. The Lord will not always communicate in the same way even to the same person. But one thing I can guarantee is that if you are really serious in your desire to walk with Him more closely, He will begin to communicate with you. No doubt He already has, although possibly you haven't been able or willing to recognize it as Him. The important thing to remember is that like any kind of friendship or relationship, it takes time to develop. The Bible tells us:

"...He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.



To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep 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 Yeshua said further:

"I am the door: by Me if any man enter, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep..."

John 10:2-4; 9; 11

Sheep aren't able to speak a language, and in the beginning, even a new puppy has not yet begun to understand the meaning of his master's words. But they understand the *tone* of voice. In the beginning, God will speak His peace and love and acceptance, and later words and guidance and direction will follow. It's a process, just like in any new or developing friendship. Before we can progress any further with the Lord, however, we have to be able to accept His love for us. Sometimes previous life experiences can have been so negative and so painful that it's almost impossible to accept love from someone else. But love is the very *nature* of God, and to reject His love is to reject the Lord Himself. None of us will ever be *worthy* of His love. None of us can even comprehend with our finite minds the depth of the love that He is. He doesn't ask us to understand. He asks only that we trust Him enough to simply open our hearts to receive His love. It is nothing we have to earn. It is nothing we could ever earn. He gives it freely, simply because He loves us.

We also have to be careful not to limit His love. So often we say, "Well, surely the Lord can't be concerned about *that*...It is much too small and inconsequential a matter..." In all of His creation, He has provided everything needed for the entire life cycle of every living thing. But for human beings His care is even greater, for He calls us His children, created in His image. And therefore there is nothing in our lives with which He, in His Fatherly love, isn't deeply concerned. We have to be careful as our relationship continues that we don't in any way by our attitudes close the door to Him in any aspect of our lives. We have to begin to widen our conception of Him, and even then we will have only a limited sense of all that He is and can be.

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us."

1John 3:1

"Here is a love that defies description. It oversweeps every obstacle. It extends to infinity in every direction. It is love incomparable. There is no love like it. It is love immeasurable. Breadth and length and depth and height cannot contain it.

It is love inseparable. Neither the experiences of life, the extremes of nature, the excesses of the supernatural, the extensions of time, the expanses of distance, nor the existence of anything else can separate the Believer from that surpassing love..."

J. Boyd Nicholson

Before we truly get to know Him and we're just beginning a deeper relationship, there are a few important guidelines to go by. The first is to understand that God will never ask anything of us that would contradict His Word. Secondly, it is easy to discern whether something is from God or not by the fruit of it. We can usually ask, "If I obey this, will it bring me or someone else closer to the Lord?" The fruit of our own thoughts and the fruit of satan's are usually very far from the will of the Lord. We're the ones who question and complain, and we must understand at the outset that from the flesh no good thing will come! And satan is the one who will try to plant the seeds of doubt, saying, "This can't be from God. Think how foolish you'll look if you obey. How can you be sure?" Jean Watts, a precious friend from the U. S., put it this way:

The Holy Spirit never speaks to us counter or contrary to the Word of God, God's main vehicle for speaking to us. But just as you and I value the Holy Spirit's leading, direction and warnings—it is always in accord and in the spirit of the Word. There may not be a specific Scripture telling me to do something a bit differently than I have been doing it—but it will be in the spirit and intent of the Word. When people do not know to go according to God's will and look for a 'voice' otherwise; they'll be in trouble. Thank our Lord for His voice to us in many ways—the Great Shepherd of the sheep leads His people—and they know His voice on a continuing basis. But only as they desire to do His will and not their own. Other-wise any message could be 'garbled' because their heart was divided and not truly receptive.

In the beginning, until the friendship grows and develops, if we're genuinely unsure as to whether or not what we've heard is from the Lord, then He doesn't at all mind if we ask Him for a confirmation. His will is always clear. But we have to be honest with ourselves on this point as well. If our motives are pure, and we're genuinely seeking to hear from the Lord, then the confirmation will come. But if we're asking for a confirmation only as an excuse *not* to obey, then no doubt the Lord will not repeat His instruction to us. He looks at the heart, and He's never fooled! Also, as our relationship with Him grows and develops, it becomes almost an impertinence to continue to ask Him to confirm His direction to us. If we're truly open and listening, His voice is unmistakable! But even when we've walked in faith for quite a while, there will be times when some very important, life-changing decisions will have to be made. In that case, it would be important to seek God's confirmation. His wisdom will help us to discern when we should ask for a confirmation—and when He simply expects us to obey!

After we've been honest in the type of relationship that we already have, and after we've communicated with the Lord the type of relationship we desire to have, after we've simply opened our hearts to His love, we must then learn to listen. It's not something that we must force ourselves to do for a certain period of time each and every day. Instead, it must become an attitude of life. It is definitely important to begin the discipline of clearing our minds of all the things that will stand as obstacles to a real life of faith. That means we have to make ourselves stop worrying and fretting and planning. We must not allow our minds to become full of dozens of trivial and unimportant details. All of our thoughts, not centered on Him, will help to prevent us from hearing His voice. But learning to listen is more than just that. It must be a beginning awareness that He is

with us always, in every single thing that we do and in every single thing that we experience. We need to live our lives in expectation of hearing from Him, but in the deep knowledge that He is with us whether we have a conscious sense of His nearness or not. Yeshua explains it in the following way:

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the gardener.

Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He prunes it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Now you are clean through the Word which I have spoken to you.

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it remains attached to the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me.

I am the vine, you are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in Him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me, ye can do nothing.

If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered: and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be My disciples. As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you: continue ye in My love. If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love, even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love.

These things have I spoken unto you that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy may be full."

John 15: 1-11

To "abide" in Him means to remain in Him, to live in Him, to remain attached to Him. If we live our lives with a true sense of living in His presence, with a conscious awareness of His closeness day by day, then hearing from Him and obeying Him will be a natural extension of the awareness of His continuing hand upon our lives.

Many people ask, "But how do I know it's Him? How do I know that it's not the enemy or my own desires?" Let's go back a moment to John 10:

"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...

Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.

All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them...

The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it in fullest measure.

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep.

But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep and fleeth and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

The hireling fleeth, because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep.

I am the good shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of mine..."

John 10: 4-5; 7-8; 10-14

In this analogy, the difference between the true shepherd and the hireling, or between the true shepherd and the thief is obvious. The true shepherd is the one who is truly concerned for the welfare of the sheep in his care, and likewise the sheep know and obey his voice alone. Likewise in the world of faith, the difference between the Lord of Majesty, and satan, the enemy of our souls, is equally clear. The Lord does not in any way sound like the devil! The Lord speaks words of hope and comfort and strength and love for others. The enemy speaks words of doubt and anger and confusion and selfishness. When people ask, "How can I tell if it's the Lord...?" they're asking only because they don't know Him in a close way. And sometimes this question is also used as an excuse for *not* getting to know Him. A believer in Israel once commented that in all of his travels throughout the world, whenever his wife would telephone him, he would without fail recognize her voice. He wouldn't say, "How do I know this is my wife? Maybe it's the devil!" He recognized her voice, because he knew her and loved her, and in the same way, when we know and love the Lord, His voice will be easy to discern.

When we learn to abide in Him, and to put our own thoughts and desires aside, then we will know how to pray, for our prayers and our lives will then be united with the will of the Lord. It is not something that magically happens, however. We must really be firm with ourselves and steadfast in our desire for our lives to become more of a reflection of Him. This word from Oswald Chambers was an encouragement to me, because the battle with the flesh is a continuing one!

"Abide in Me" John 15:4

"The Spirit of Jesus is put into me by the Atonement, then I have to construct with patience the way of thinking that is exactly in accordance with my Lord. God will not make me think like Jesus, I have to do it myself; I have to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. 'Abide in Me'—in intellectual matters, in money matters, in every one of the matters that make human life what it is.

Am I preventing God from doing things in my circumstances because I say it will hinder my communion with Him? That is impertinence. It does not matter what my circumstances are, I can be as sure of abiding in Jesus in them as in a prayer meeting.

I have not to change and rearrange my circumstances myself. With our Lord the inner abiding was unsullied; He was at home wherever His body was placed. He never chose His own circumstances, but was meek towards His Father's dispensations for Him. Think of the amazing leisure of Our Lord's life! We keep God at excitement point; there is none of the serenity of the life hid with Christ in God about us.

Think of the things that you take out of abiding in Christ—Yes, Lord, just a minute, I have got this to do; Yes, I will abide when once this is finished; when this week is over, it will be all right, I will abide then. Get a move on; begin to abide now. In the initial stages it is a continual effort until it becomes so much

the law of life that you abide in Him unconsciously. Determine to abide in Jesus wherever you are placed."

In a beginning relationship with the Lord, many are afraid to step out in faith when God has spoken to them because they are afraid of making a mistake. This involves both fear and pride, issues that will be dealt with in the next chapter. But here let it suffice to say that if we make a mistake, God can cope with it. He knows our hearts, and He knows that we obeyed believing it was Him. It only helps us to recognize His voice more easily the next time. And if we're truly seeking to follow the Lord, and we step out on the wrong pathway, be sure that God will close the door in time and bring us back into the centre of His will. We never know when God asks something of us the fruit that our obedience can bear for eternity. Somehow we need to be able to turn things around—to understand God's holiness, and to have more fear *not* to obey than to obey and make a mistake! If we really understand who God is, and if we really love Him, then we really have no right to say "no" to Him, whatever the reason or the excuse!

"Ye call Me Master and Lord: and ye say well;  
for so I am." John 8:13

"Our Lord never insists on having authority. He never says, Thou shalt. He leaves us perfectly free—so free that we can spit in His face, as men did; so free that we can put Him to death, as men did; and He will never say a word. But when His life has been created in me by His Redemption, I instantly recognize His right to absolute authority over me. It is a moral domination—'Thou art worthy...' It is only the unworthy in me that refuses to bow down to the worthy.

If our Lord insisted upon obedience He would become a taskmaster, and He would cease to have any authority. He never insists on obedience, but when we do see Him we obey Him instantly, He is easily Lord, and we live in adoration of Him from morning till night. The revelation of my growth in grace is the way in which I look upon obedience."

Oswald Chambers  
"My Utmost for His Highest"

Up until now, some points have been given as guidelines to a deepening relationship with the Lord. Before continuing with obedience itself, I'd like to just quickly summarize those points.

- 1) To begin with, it is necessary to honestly appraise where your relationship with the Lord stands.
- 2) It is then important to tell the Lord directly of your desire for a closer walk with Him.
- 3) Your heart must be open to recognize and accept the greatness of His love for *you*, with the understanding that it is nothing that can be earned; it is freely given since the very nature of God is love.
- 4) When He speaks to you, nothing He asks of you will ever contradict His Word.



- 5) You need to put aside fear of making a mistake, trusting instead in His sure guidance in your life.
- 6) And, finally, it is crucial to acknowledge His holiness and His right to sovereignty in your life.

When we have opened our lives and our hearts to the Lord, it is certain that He will begin to communicate with us directly. If we have begun to develop an attitude of listening and expectation, His quiet instructions will come. It is extremely important, even at the very beginning of a new life of faith, to set aside any pre-conceived ideas of what a relationship with Him will entail. In my travels throughout the world, it was my experience that often believers viewed God as logical, practical, serious and humourless. In reality, you will find that He is very different from anything you would ever expect! Almost nothing He has ever done, especially as shown in the Bible, would fit into the category of “logical” or “practical”. What was logical about having a small boy slay a giant with a single stone? What was practical about having a mighty army march around a wall and shout? When surrounded by enemies, did it make sense to sit and wait until there was a rustling in the mulberry trees? And when Israel was expecting a Great King, was it logical for a tiny baby to be born instead? Most of the time God will ask us to do things that we will *not* understand, things that to us don’t seem practical at all. It is very important not to limit Him with any pre-conceived notions of what He is like. We need instead to come before Him as little children, simple and trusting, without complicating our walk with Him with our own ideas of what He should be like. He doesn’t ask us to understand. He only asks us to obey. And if we do, life will be a continual surprise! The Lord our God, who created the heavens and the earth, is *not* predictable and boring! In addition, He has a wonderful sense of humour, and an endless number of unexpected plans for our lives.

“It doth not yet appear what we shall be.”

“Naturally, we are inclined to be so mathematical and calculating that we look upon uncertainty as a bad thing. We imagine that we have to reach some end, but that is not the nature of spiritual life. The nature of spiritual life is that we are certain in our uncertainty, consequently we do not make our nests anywhere. Common sense says—‘Well, supposing that I were in that condition...’ We cannot suppose ourselves in any condition we have never been in.

Certainty is the mark of the common-sense life: gracious uncertainty is the mark of the spiritual life. To be certain of God means that we are uncertain in all our ways, we do not know what a day may bring forth. This is generally said with a sigh of sadness, it should be rather an expression of breathless expectation. We are uncertain of the next step, but we are certain of God. Immediately we abandon to God, and do the duty that lies nearest, He packs our lives with surprises all the time. When we become advocates of a creed, something dies; we do not believe God, we only believe our belief about Him. Jesus said, ‘Except ye... become as little children.’ Spiritual life is the life of a child. We are not uncertain of God, but uncertain of what He is going to do next. If we are only certain in our beliefs, we get dignified and severe and have the ban of finality about our views; but when we are rightly related to God, life is full of spontaneous, joyful uncertainty and expectancy.

'Believe also in Me,' Jesus said, not—'Believe certain things about Me.'  
Leave the whole thing to Him, it is gloriously uncertain how He will come in, but  
He will come. Remain loyal to Him."

Oswald Chambers  
"My Utmost for His Highest"

When we place each day in His hands, it is all right to make plans of our own. But they must always be held lightly, for we never know when His quiet instructions will come. And no matter how important we feel our own plans may be, we have to be willing to put them aside in a moment, and to do exactly what He asks of us. *Nothing matters more than His eternal purpose!* It's possible that to begin with we will not even see any result of our obedience. But each time that we obey, it helps us to become more and more sensitive to His quiet voice within us, so that when the really important time comes, we will be able to obey without thinking or debating. Every time we obey, it blesses the Father's heart! It is important to be firm with ourselves on this issue. We have absolutely nothing to lose by obeying—and ever so much to lose by *not* obeying!

Let me share a small example with you of what I mean. I love Switzerland, and have spent a lot of time there. Usually I travel there for a time of rest before returning to Israel from my journeys abroad. One day I was on Bahnhofstrasse in Zurich in one of the large department stores. I had planned to go to my favourite restaurant later in the afternoon, and was really looking forward to it. However, at around noon, the Lord clearly said, "Go to McDonalds..." Now, I wasn't hungry at all, and I don't particularly like McDonalds. In addition, I didn't want to give up *my* dinner plans, and I was enjoying my time browsing in "Jemoli" department store. And furthermore, it didn't make any sense at all! Any one of those arguments would have been enough to convince me to continue on with my own foolish plans and ignore the promptings of the Lord. However, I *know* the Lord, and I trust Him, and I want more than anything in the world to be obedient to Him. It's a continual struggle, and sometimes I fail, but daily I pray for His grace to enable me to fulfill His purposes for that day. So—I went to McDonalds!

When I joined the queue to place my order, I was shocked to see a Swiss lady push in line ahead of me, something *very* out of character for the Swiss! The shock must have shown on my face, for she immediately apologized. "I've never been to McDonalds before," she told me, "and I didn't exactly know what to do!"

"That's all right," I replied, laughing. "I'm from Israel, and there it happens all the time! I was just surprised to see someone push in line in *Switzerland!*" She laughed as well. She was interested when I said I lived in Israel, and, since McDonalds was crowded that day, we decided to sit together at the same table. All we did was exchange names—but the minute I mentioned *my* name, inexplicably she began to cry!

"Yesterday was 'Women's Day' in Switzerland," she finally explained, "and I was listening to a program on the radio where female authors were being discussed. They spoke about you and your book, *Ich Gehore Meinem Geliebten*" (the name of my book in German). "I have never even believed in God," she continued, "but yesterday, for the very first time in my life, I prayed. I said to God, 'If you're real...*please let me know how to get a copy of that book.*'"

With a sense of wonder and with deep gratitude in my heart for His help in enabling me to be obedient, I said to her teasingly, “Well, the Lord must *really* love you! He didn’t just send you the book—He sent you the *author*—!”

She went on to tell me that she had worked in the centre of Zurich for 16 years, and had never before been to McDonalds. “But today I just knew I had to go!” I shared with her the Lord’s strange instruction in Jemoli’s, and we were both so amazed at His answer to her simple prayer. It’s quite possible that her life will never again be quite the same. I hope that it helped her to truly open her life to His love. But once again, I was thankful in the depths of my heart that He had helped me to be obedient. We seldom know why God asks us to do something. We simply have to love Him enough and trust Him enough to obey. That’s all He asks of us. The rest is up to Him!

Phil Briggs from Australia commented, “How slowly do we learn that as ‘improbable’ as His ways can appear, yet He knows what He is doing and in the absence of any explanation from Him we can but trust. In fact, I believe one day it will be seen that our trusting at such times brings Him more glory than had we understood. Doubtless there’s more blessing for us in trusting thus...”

It will be *much* easier for us if we obey without trying to understand. He doesn’t tell us we have to understand His ways with our natural minds. He tells us only to have faith, and to trust, and to obey. Who could ever comprehend the mind of God?

“Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable...”

The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in Truth.

He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them...”

Psalm 145: 3; 18-19

Whenever people have asked me, “How do you hear from God?” I’ve always been quite surprised. I’ve asked myself over and over again, “If they *don’t* hear from God, talk with Him and obey Him, then on what basis do they have a relationship with Him? Is their relationship only something abstract, and not real?” In my relationship with my two sons, especially in their teenage years, the most difficult times were those when they refused to communicate. Fortunately it didn’t happen often, but there were times when they wouldn’t listen and they wouldn’t share their problems, either. As a result, there was no real communication until we were able to talk to one another again! I don’t think a relationship with the Lord is meant to be any different. We’re *His* children, and He longs to hear from us! And not only that, *He longs to communicate to us the burdens on His heart*—and use us to help to ease those burdens!

I think the “Christian church”, with all of its massive volumes on theology, has helped to complicate the situation. People study *about* the Lord with no concept that a real relationship with Him is even possible. But in reality, there’s nothing complicated about it at all. God speaks. We listen. We love Him enough to obey. To God it is very simple. We’re the ones who insist on complicating it! For some reason, we’re not willing to be simple! We need only to come to the Lord, tell Him of our desire to hear



from Him, and when we do, we then have to take ourselves in hand and *obey*. *That is the way in which we show Him that we trust Him, and it is the very best way to return love to Him. Isn't it incredible, beyond belief awesome and wonderful, that the Creator of the universe wants to work with us?!?*

I hope to explain many aspects of obedience in this book, searching for all of the problems that people have in this ever-so-important aspect of faith. But in the end, it still remains simple. First of all, we need to seek God for Himself—not with any other motive in the world, simply with a desire to know Him. That is the basis for trust, a simple acknowledgment that our all-powerful Father knows what is best for our lives. We need only to open our hearts and our wills to His love and direction in our lives. The following quote from Oswald Chambers (“My Utmost for His Highest”) helps to emphasize that we must most of all seek Him—not His gifts, not His answers to our prayers, not His signs and wonders—but the Lord Himself. He is everything, our sufficiency in every aspect of our lives!

What do you want?

“Seekest thou great things for thyself?”

Jeremiah 45:5

“Are you seeking great things for yourself? Not seeking to be a great one, but seeking great things from God for yourself. God wants you in a closer relationship to Himself than receiving His gifts, He wants you to get to know Him. A great thing is accidental, it comes and goes. God never gives us anything accidental. There is nothing easier than getting into a right relationship with God except when it is not God whom you want but only what He gives.

If you have only come the length of asking God for things, you have never come to the first strand of abandonment, you have become a Christian from a standpoint of your own. ‘I did ask God for the Holy Spirit, but He did not give me the rest and the peace I expected.’ Instantly God puts His finger on the reason—you are not seeking the Lord at all, you are seeking something for yourself. Jesus says—‘Ask, and it shall be given you.’ Ask God for what you want, and you cannot ask if you are not asking for a right thing. When you draw near to God, you cease from asking for things. ‘Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him.’ Then why ask? That you may get to know Him.

Are you seeking great things for yourself? ‘O Lord, baptize me with the Holy Ghost.’ If God does not, it is because you are not abandoned enough to Him, there is something you will not do. Are you prepared to ask yourself what it is you want from God and why you want it? God always ignores the present perfection for the ultimate perfection. He is not concerned about making you blessed and happy right now; He is working out His ultimate perfection all the time—‘that they may be one even as We are...’

In the beginning of our deepened walk with the Lord, every time we are willing to step out beyond ourselves and *obey*, it truly does delight the Father’s heart. It brings us closer to Him, and often brings others closer to Him as well. We simply have to do it! It’s very much a battle with the flesh, and therefore it’s terribly important that when the

temptations come to disobey, we need to keep our eyes on the Lord and not on ourselves. In George MacDonald's "At the Back of the North Wind," the following conversation describes an act of bravery. But obedience *is* an act of bravery as well, and I think in terms of obedience what he says is just as true.

"You had to be taught what courage was. And you couldn't know what it was without feeling it: Therefore it was given you. But don't you feel as if you would try to be brave yourself next time?"

'Yes, I do. But trying is not much.'

'Yes, it is—a very great deal, for it is a beginning. And beginning is the greatest thing of all. To try to be brave is to be brave. The coward who tries to be brave is before the man who is brave because he is made so, and never had to try...'

Faith means believing in something we cannot see, that we have no concrete evidence for. Obedience is an act of faith in the Lord, a way of showing Him that we trust Him. If instead we try to understand Him, then that step of faith will never be possible for us at all. When people refuse to simply *believe* in the power of God, I'm often reminded of something that I read once that really made me chuckle:

"Many are like the infidel who asserted that he would not believe anything he could not see.

It was a good retort the Quaker made. 'Friend! Does thee believe thee has any brains?'"

In a life of obedience, it is also important to be sure that our motives are pure. Angela Smith from the U. S. wrote the following in a letter:

"Here in the West, I believe we've been so indoctrinated with the idea that obedience brings blessings (which it truly does), but most people here equate this with *material* blessings i.e., if I tithe, God will give me *more* money. Then they tithe and difficulties follow! It bewilders them. But God looks at the *heart motives*. When we decide to obey out of an overwhelming desire to bring joy to *His* heart and to get to know *Him* better, just because we love Him and want to get closer and closer to Him, He sees *that* as our heart motive. Then He speaks loud and clear and we do hear and happily follow Him.

Just this morning as I was making my bed I thought, 'Lord, I really would like to live a life of faith like Esther's.' Immediately I heard, 'No, my dear, what you want is a feeling of confidence you think you'd receive—but I *am* your confidence.' Wow! I've asked the Lord to show me my heart more this year. I hastily repented and said, 'Oh Lord, thank You for making me aware of this so I can repent. Please help me to just want You *for Yourself alone*...'

Obedience is not just a vague concept; *it is the very essence of faith*. As a friend once commented, "Only the obedient truly know God." Obedience is the best way that we can return love to our Father, and it brings us closer to Him—and to His purposes—than anything else that we may do. If we continually disobey, usually hiding behind our excuses, eventually we will find that we have almost no relationship to the Lord at all. In

God's kingdom, we learn of Him not only through the things that we study *about* Him, but also through real, every day experiences of being obedient and seeing His faithfulness and His love in action. "Not everyone who says Lord, Lord, will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in Heaven..." Matthew 7:21

#### The Way to Know

"If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine..."

John 7: 17

"The golden rule for understanding spiritually is not intellect, but obedience. If a man wants scientific knowledge, intellectual curiosity is his guide, but if he wants insight into what Jesus Christ teaches, he can only get it by obedience. If things are dark to me, then I may be sure there is something I will not do. Intellectual darkness comes through ignorance; spiritual darkness comes because of something I do not intend to obey.

No man ever receives a word from God without instantly being put to the test over it. We disobey and then wonder why we don't go on spiritually. 'If when you come to the altar,' said Jesus, 'there you remember your brother hath ought against you...don't say another word to Me, but first go and put that thing right.' The teaching of Jesus hits us where we live. We cannot stand as humbugs before Him for one second. He educates us down to the scruple. The Spirit of God unearths the spirit of self-vindication; He makes us sensitive to things we never thought of before.

When Jesus brings a thing home by His Word, don't shirk it. If you do, you will become a religious humbug. Watch the things you shrug your shoulders over, and you will know why you do not go on spiritually. First go—at the risk of being thought fanatical, you must obey what God tells you."

Oswald Chambers

"My Utmost for His Highest"

Recently someone in Israel said that in a matter of hours he could convince me that my faith in Yeshua was wrong. It really made me smile. He could never do it if he talked with me for a hundred years! The reason is because I don't simply have *faith* in Yeshua. I don't merely *believe* in Him. I *know* Him, I have a deep friendship with Him, and I love Him. It again emphasized to my heart that it is not enough simply to study *about* Him, although to read the Word of God daily is vitally important. But we need as well to really *know* Him, in the intimate way that only a close, personal relationship can ever bring. To once again quote Oswald Chambers:

"It is possible to know all about doctrine and yet not know Jesus. The soul is in danger when knowledge of doctrine outsteps intimate touch with Jesus...The one sign of discipleship is intimate connection with Him, knowledge of Jesus Christ, which nothing can shake..."

When we are not willing to invite Him into our lives, when we desire to follow our own wills and not the will of God, then our soul is indeed in danger. And sometimes, as the Lord just reminded me, more than our *souls* can be in danger if we disobey Him!

Sitting here in the little Swiss chalet, I had just placed dinner in the oven. It was salmon-and-spinach-wrapped-in-phylo-dough, frozen, and according to the package, it

was supposed to bake for thirty minutes. So I popped it in the oven and sat back down to type. However, after only *ten* minutes, I had no sense of what to type next. Instead, the Lord nudged me to get on with my dinner. But looking at the clock, I realized that I had twenty minutes left until the dinner was supposed to be ready! It finally penetrated, however, that if I'm writing a book about obedience, then I really should obey! I walked into the kitchen—to find smoke pouring out of the oven door! The temperature setting on the package had been for new, modern stoves. But since my oven in the chalet was ancient, the corresponding number on my stove was double the heat of modern ovens. My extra five minutes of procrastination had thereby enabled the dough to burn to a crisp, and if I *still* hadn't obeyed, I probably could have burned down the entire house! So at this point, for myself as well, let me share with you a poem (composed by me, no one else would ever claim it):

"It doesn't pay  
to disobey..."

And now, to escape the smoke, I'm off for a hike in the hills...



# CHAPTER TWO

## *Along the Way*

Once our relationship to the Lord has truly deepened, and we are becoming more and more accustomed to a life of obedience, there are then other, more specific issues that need to be dealt with by Him. The Lord teaches all of these to us directly as we walk by His side, for He knows in each of us which areas in our lives are the most in need of His cleansing Spirit and help. Each of us is so wonderfully different! However, there are some basic principles written here to be used only as a general guideline. God helps us individually to reach out beyond ourselves to touch His eternal purposes in our lives. In all that will be explained in the following pages, the Lord will personally deal with each of us, as these areas become important in our walk with Him.

In the beginning of my relationship with the Lord, He showed me a great deal of love, and I felt so protected and secure! I had never known Him in any other way! However, after some months, upon awakening one morning, *I no longer had a sense of His presence*. It was devastating, for I was sure He had left me. My prayers and pleadings brought only silence. It took quite a while for me to accept and to understand that He was just as close to me as He had ever been, even though I no longer had the *conscious* sense of His presence that I had felt before. It helped me to understand that my relationship to Him was not based on *feelings*, nor was it based on *visible* evidence of His hand on my life. Rather, during the silent times, I had to learn that *He was every bit as near as He had been during those times when His love was much more apparent!* This is very important for us to understand at the very outset of our walk with Him. Even as Yeshua said to His disciples after the resurrection:

“Lo, I am with you *always*, even unto the end of the world.”

Matthew 28: 20

When we don’t sense His presence in our lives, then we need to trust in His Word and in His love for us—and have *faith* to know that He is always close by our side.

Understanding that God is always with us also helps us to truly abide in His presence in whatever we do with our lives. If we have a constant sense of His presence—based on *faith* in His closeness, not necessarily on actions by Him—then we can more easily rest in that presence, waiting only for a word from Him upon which to act.

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen...”

Hebrews 11:1

Losing the conscious sense of His presence in the beginning was heartbreaking, until I finally learned to trust in His presence *always*—whether it could be felt or not!

The first time He reprimanded me for something, I also felt devastated! Perhaps it reverted back to my own childhood feelings of rejection, but I took His criticism very much to heart. But in the end I learned a very important lesson. When God shows us something in our life that is not right, *He does it because He loves us*, not in any way as a sign of rejection! And, furthermore, when He does discipline us in a certain area, He does so only because He is ready to help us to deal with it! When satan is the one who criticizes, it is not done out of a heart of love, but in order to destroy. His criticism does not in any way bear fruit for God's kingdom! Rather, he criticizes in order to feed upon our weak points in an attempt to draw us *away* from God through our own feelings of inadequacy. But we can be *sure* that when God is dealing with us, He is simply freeing us from areas in our lives that hinder our relationship to Him in some important way. As a matter of fact, the closer we come to the Lord, the more aware we are of His holiness and our limitations in comparison. In my first book, I recorded an experience with God in a monastery in the Judean hills, where I had a deep revelation of His holiness and of my wretchedness in comparison:

"The monastery is truly located in a wilderness, and that is exactly the feeling I had the entire time I was there; that the Lord had brought me to a desert place, to a wilderness, at great distance from Himself as well as from the forms of civilization that I was used to. And there, He began to work upon my heart.

He first showed me, clearly, directly and unmistakably, just how wretched and hopeless and sinful and ugly I really was when compared to the glory of His majesty. It astonished me to the depths of my being, and beneath His scrutiny all the smug feelings of self-complacency, all the assurances of self-worth as a human being, all of them, all of them, fell away as ashes at His feet. And then, to place agony upon agony, He showed me not only how completely wretched and rotten I truly was, *but that I was helpless to do anything about it myself*.

He stripped me bare of all feelings of self-righteousness, of all distorted views of myself as a good, honest, decent human being, and showed me to the core what I really was—rotten, selfish, proud and always at odds with the workings of the Lord within my life.

God wasn't being unkind to me, as I see it now, for there is not one of us, when confronted by His holiness, who can fall back on anything worthy within himself that can in any way compare. We could do nothing but echo the words of Isaiah:

'Then said I, Woe is me! For I am unclean; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.'

Isaiah 6:5

And God shows us, each and every one of us that truly follows Him, that in us is not one good thing.

'But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags...'

Isaiah 64: 6



'For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me: but how to perform that which is good I find not.

For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do...

For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Romans 7:18-19; 22-24

He *has* to reveal this to us, to enable us to understand how desperately we need His help and His grace! Our true righteousness and worth comes when we have become sanctified as vessels for His use.

The most excruciating lesson of all was when He helped me to understand that I was helpless to do anything whatsoever to change the rottenness that was me. It took away from me the very last shred of self-importance. And it made me know, in a new and deeper way than I ever dreamed possible, *that I needed Him and His grace in my life more than I ever imagined, that without Him, I would not even make it through a single day.* All I could do was to cry out to Him, to beg Him to bring about those changes in my life that would make me a presentable and clean vessel for His use. But He felt very, very far away. It was an agonizing ten days, and I could but cry out to the Lord as David had in the 51<sup>st</sup> Psalm.

I *longed* to be totally, completely free of the putridness of 'self' that had been exposed to me beneath His scrutiny, but I sensed that I had such a terribly long way to go, and that brought me even deeper into despair. And then I understood for the first time, that the greatest gift that God can give to us, is not all the outward evidences of the *power* of God that people are continually clamouring for—but the greatest gift is God, Himself, within us, through us, for us, in every moment of our lives. *That* is what we should seek for, yearn for, pray for and humble ourselves to receive!"

*"I Am My Beloved's"*

It is therefore important not to feel rejected in any way when His chastening begins, but rather to rejoice, for it is a sure sign of the Father's love for us; and of His deep desire to make us as emptied vessels for His use—empty of the things of the flesh that stand in the way of a deeper communion with Him.

"My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou are rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth."

Proverbs 3: 11-12

"If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then ye are illegitimate, and not sons.

Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in submission unto the Father of Spirits, and live?

For verily for a few days they chastened us according to their own judgment; but He for *our* profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness.

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 trained thereby."

Hebrews 12: 7-11

On the other hand, we need also to be patient with ourselves. God knows the things within us that are a hindrance to the total dependence on Him that we would desire. But even if God deals with us for an entire lifetime, we'll still be far from perfect! So we need only to trust in His timing and in His discretion, knowing that He longs to draw us ever closer to Himself. And therefore, step by step and issue by issue, He will indeed deal with those things that stand in the way. He will deal with them, however, with a heart full of love and acceptance, only to enable us to become emptied vessels for His greater purposes in our lives.

There is another somewhat related issue that needs to be addressed, and that is the area of suffering. Many times new Believers are unprepared for difficult times. This is especially true in Western cultures, where materialism and a desire for "creature comforts" are prevalent. In much of the Charismatic movement, often a core of superficiality can be detected. People are willing to pray and to praise, but often they pray for things that would fulfill their own desires, insisting that problems and difficulties cannot possibly come from the Lord.

The following Scripture, I believe, is in part meant for those teaching in this day a "prosperity" message, often with noisy prayers against the enemy, but with an emphasis on what can be received *from* the Lord instead of what can be given *to* Him:

"Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, *but he that doeth the will of My father which is in heaven.*

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? And in Thy name cast out demons? And in Thy name done wonderful works?

And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from Me, ye that work iniquity..."

Matthew 7: 21-23

The key verse in that Scripture is, "Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven, *but he that doeth the will of My Father...*" Again, it is obedience, and simple trust in Him as our Father, that will assure us of a welcome into His Kingdom when our work upon the earth is complete. It is not necessarily an easy way. As a matter of fact, Yeshua promised us that we would make up for the suffering that He lacked!

"For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He also will deny us; if we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself." II Timothy 2: 11-13



And further, in Romans 8, it is clear that we must put aside the desires of the flesh, and accept the Lord as our Father, even with understanding that to suffer in this world is little to give in exchange for all that will one day be returned to us.

“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh (to obey our human natures).

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, *if so be that we suffer with Him that we may be also glorified together.*

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us...”

Romans 8: 12-18

None of us can ever know in advance what will happen to us in our short time upon this earth. In all things, we need to keep our eyes on the Lord, daily seeking His will and His help. And if we continue to follow Him day by day, His strength, love, help and support will be there to guide us through whatever lies on the pathway before us. Sometimes it will bring suffering, and when it happens, we need to look for what the Lord can teach us of Himself as we pass through the period of difficulty. It's important to understand that suffering is often part of our heritage as sons and daughters of God; otherwise, the trials and tribulations, instead of drawing us closer to the Lord as they're meant to do, will only draw us away.

As previously stated, when we accept the Lord and His atonement, it is only the beginning. *It alone does not guarantee us a place in heaven for all eternity.* We must *continue* on His way, possible only through obedience to Him and to His Spirit within us.

“Enter ye in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.

Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

Matthew 7: 13-14

“If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.

For whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it...”

Luke 9: 23-24

One morning during my time here in the village, I needed to go to the small shopping area to purchase groceries for the next few days. There are any numbers of ways to get to the village centre. However, that morning, a beautiful sunny day, with fragrances of spring in the air, I felt from the Lord His “okay” to take the longest way of all. It wound through the woods and gently sloped down through flower-filled meadows back up to the centre. It was about an hour's walk, and I ambled along, enjoying all the sights, sounds and smells as I walked. When I got near the end of the pathway, there

were two signs—one pointed up to the shops, and one pointed to the village in the valley far below. The sign indicated that the upward path would take ten minutes, and the downward path would take one “standard”, whatever that was. I knew that I needed to get back to the chalet to put in some more good hours of work on this book to complete my quota for the day; but the sun was shining, the birds were singing, and I started on the downward path. I should have known better, and the *direction* of the downward path should have given me a good hint—but off I went nonetheless.

At first the scenery was beautiful, but after a time I found myself in a forest and the path before me was as steep as it could be—and it went down and down and down. The alpine village was 1400 meters high, if that gives you any idea of the ordeal that lay before me! I looked back up, but I knew that to re-climb the distance would be even harder. And so I continued to descend. Sometimes the pathway was so steep it was downright scary, and at one point, after I had descended for an endless amount of time, I came upon a warning sign written in German. I couldn’t translate it, of course, and when I peeked over the edge, it looked like the pathway stopped a few meters ahead. The way to that point had been so steep and so treacherous (to me) that I knew I would never make it back up the way I had come. I decided that if the pathway did indeed end just up ahead, I would simply sit down and wait to die. I said it in humour, and even made *myself* laugh, but in all honesty I didn’t know exactly what I *would* do! I still don’t know what the sign said, but the pathway *did* continue—on and on and on. After a while my legs began to shake, as going downhill steeply is much harder on unused muscles than uphill climbing. It reminded me of my descent from Mt. Sinai (when the Sinai still belonged to us) when the same thing had happened. It also reminded me grimly of the Potemkin steps in Odessa, six hundred of the miserable things, which I also stupidly decided to clamber down instead of taking the escalator! Some people never learn!

Finally there was a bench up ahead, so I stretched out, moaning and groaning as I did so. I lay there for a long while, staring up at the majestic trees towering high above me and pretending that I wasn’t really halfway to nowhere, getting further and further away from my little chalet and this book by the minute. As I lay there, a much younger woman went whizzing past, practically running down the same pathway upon which I had taken one slow and painful step after another. That *really* made me laugh! Then, as I began to walk again, an elderly man—probably in his early 80’s—cheerfully passed me—heading *up* the mountain! Even the *thought* of having to climb *up* the mountain made me take another ten-minute break on a mossy bank. It took me over two hours to finally reach the valley far below, after having followed endless twisty, narrow, steep and horrible downward paths. I took the mountain train back up the mountain, returning to the village at exactly the time the grocery store was due to re-open for the afternoon. A few other customers were waiting, and we could see the owner inside. Then he tacked up a notice on the door: “Closed until tomorrow for inventory”. Agony! I trudged home, and the next morning, in pain, I trudged back to the village for the food—using the shortest path of all.

It was such a graphic lesson in obedience, I won’t insult your intelligence by discussing it! Anyone can figure out through that little tale what happens once we turn away from the Lord and His will and start off on the wrong path! It was pleasant at first,

as the enemy always tries to make disobedience or sin appear to be; but the farther away we get, the worse it becomes!

The next day, when every muscle ached, and I'm NOT exaggerating, the Lord showed me the following in Oswald Chambers' "My Utmost for His Highest":

"Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings."

1 Peter 4:13

That part made me laugh, as I knew the Lord was only teasing. But read what follows:

"If you are going to be used by God, He will take you through a multitude of experiences that are not meant for you at all, they are meant to make you useful in His hands, and to enable you to understand what transpires in other souls so that you will never be surprised at what you come across. Oh, I can't deal with that person. Why not? God gave you ample opportunity to soak before Him on that line, and you barged off because it seemed stupid to spend time that way.

The sufferings of Christ are not those of ordinary men. He suffered 'according to the will of God', not from the point of view we suffer as individuals. It is only when we are related to Jesus Christ that we can understand what God is after in His dealings with us. It is part of Christian culture to know what God's aim is. In the history of the Christian church the tendency has been to evade being identified with the sufferings of Jesus Christ; men have sought to procure the carrying out of God's order by a short cut of their own. God's way is always the way of suffering, the way of the 'long, long trail.'

Are we partakers of Christ's sufferings? Are we prepared for God to stamp our personal ambitions right out? Are we prepared for God to destroy by transfiguration our individual determinations? It will not mean that we know exactly why God is taking us that way, that would make us spiritual prigs. We never realize at the time what God is putting us through; we go through it more or less misunderstandably; then we come to a luminous place, and say—"Why, God has girded me, though I did not know it!"

It was in the very beginning of my walk with the Lord that He taught me the importance of obedience. Obedience became the very foundation of my relationship to Him. It was often a struggle with the flesh, especially when I first began; but each time I obeyed in simple trust, I was blessed so many times by His faithfulness. I soon discovered, however, that with obedience as the *foundation*, He was to dig much deeper and build much higher. In digging, He began to reveal the things in my life which were a hindrance to a deeper trust in Him, such as fear of rejection, pride, my need for isolation, etc. And in building, I discovered many layers could be added to the simple foundation of obedience.

One day He showed me the following verse, and as I read it, the understanding finally dawned that He meant it *literally*, not figuratively, even in this day and age—and that He was calling me to a deeper level of trust than I had thought possible!

"Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto his stature?

And why are ye anxious concerning clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all His glory was not dressed like one of these.

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, wherewithal shall we be clothed?

(For after all these things are the Gentiles concerned about): for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Do not worry about tomorrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Matthew 6: 25-34

As I read those verses, it began to dawn on me in an even deeper way that the Lord of Glory truly cared for us as His very own children; and that, if we would but trust Him and obey, *He* would take care of all of the details of our lives! He helped me to see that it was a sin to worry, no matter what it was that we worried about, for by our fears, *we were doubting His ability to care for us*. All of my life I had seen people filled with concerns for the future, living their lives based on that very fear. And yet, that day in *my* life, the Lord was clearly asking me to place my future—and the present as well—into *His* hands, being concerned only with "the kingdom of God and His righteousness..." I *had* trusted my parents in just that way. They were only human, and yet each day I was fed and clothed. In that case, how could I even *imagine* not trusting the Lord in such a simple and basic way?

That very day I knelt before Him, and said, "Lord, it amazes me to think that you care so very much about us that you are willing to take care of us in every way. From now on, Father, with Your help, I entrust my life to Your care. Please keep me faithful to Your purposes each day—and help me not to be concerned about the rest. I know that You will feed and clothe me and take care of me from this day forth."

I had no idea that I was embarking on a great adventure, for since that moment, 22 years ago, I don't think I've had a single, solitary day of boredom since! And I could tell you stories of God's faithfulness from now until the end of the earth.

It's certain that everyone is not called to live a total life of faith as I have been. But for each one, the *principles* of faith remain the same:

"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might..."

Deuteronomy 6: 5

And Yeshua said, in Matthew 22:38:

"This is the first and most important commandment..."

If we truly love the Lord, then we express our love in our willingness to do as we are bidden, being certain that He is first in our hearts. If He is first, then all that we have we will own lightly; and when He asks us to give of what we have, it can be a source of great delight. But, if our heart is divided, and He asks us to give, we will allow His will to be clouded out by our fears and our questions and our doubts.

The system of the world is based on fear of the future. In the world, people have only if they save. God's kingdom, however, is built on His assurance of protection and care, and it's the opposite of the way of the world. In God's kingdom, we have if we *give*. It's important to understand that everything we have belongs to God already. There is nothing in our possession that He cannot take from us in a second if He so desires. So it is foolishness to refuse to give unto the Lord that which belongs to Him already! And when we learn to give, we will see that it is impossible to ever out-give the Lord. (Our motives need to be pure, however. It doesn't work if we give only to receive more!) But if we obey His promptings, and give in obedience to Him, it truly blesses His heart—and *the gifts of His love that He returns can never be measured by earthly standards*.

We also have to understand that in view of eternity, it is not the condition of our physical lives that really matters. If we lose all of our material possessions, and yet retain His love and His Spirit within us, what then really have we lost? Our purpose on this earth is to make our final choice for eternity—and we work out that choice by our obedience day by day. The way to heaven is not an easy road. But eternity is an endless expanse of time, and when we say "yes" to the Lord in our friendship with Him, *He will return to us the promise of spending forever with Him*. What a gift! What a grace! What a promise! What a hope!

So we need to be careful not to allow fears for our physical well-being to interfere with our trust in Him and our love for Him. For when viewed from eternity, what does it really matter? As Paul said:

"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

I know both how to abase (to have nothing), and I know how to abound (to be prosperous): everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and suffer need.

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me..."

Philippians 4: 11-13

The Lord has given us the commission to reach out in His love to a world of darkness. We are meant to be vessels of His love to all those who know Him not. It is a *privilege* to serve Him, not something to be taken lightly. We have no right to refuse to reach out in His love, no matter when He asks us to do so, nor in whatever way He asks us to share that love. Sometimes it will be a prompting to share the testimony of our faith with another. Sometimes He will ask us to share of our possessions or our finances. Sometimes He will simply ask us to pray. Other times He will enable us to alleviate the sufferings of others. *But to be open, obedient, available vessels of His love is our*



*primary purpose upon this earth.* We so often allow the “cares of this world” to take priority, but each time we close the door to His will, we are also closing the door a bit more to our own eternal salvation. The “traditional Christian” doctrine—that you say some magic prayer of salvation, and no matter how sinful and self-centered a life you live, your salvation is guaranteed—is one of satan’s greatest tools to convince people to live self-seeking, complacent lives that are dulled to the callings and the promptings of the Spirit of God.

It is hard to visit places where “Christianity” is supposed to be strong, and yet see things like homeless people living on the streets. I’ll never forget coming to a church with friends in the U. S. some years ago. When we arrived, a homeless man was sleeping on the grate in front of their building. It was wintertime and bitterly cold. The only right thing to do, in the sight of God, was to welcome that man inside the church as if he were a member of our own family, to feed him, clothe him, and help his life to be somehow re-established. But most important of all, *to express to him the greatness of the Father’s love—especially for him.* I knew in the depths of my heart that this is the response the Lord wants from us in such circumstances.

But the pastor’s wife simply looked at him with disgust, and said, “Why is he sleeping here, in front of the church?” and walked inside to the comfort and warmth of her home inside the church building. I was so close to tears I could barely speak, but I managed to say, “Why don’t you help him?”

“Oh, they have shelters they can go to,” was her reply. “They” may have shelters to go to, but “they” are still human with the same needs that we all have—to be cared for, to matter to someone, to live in dignity as a human being—and most of all, *to be shown the love of God.*

Many times, while visiting in the United States, I sat in people’s homes as they listened to the news with reports of how many homeless people froze to death on their city streets that very night. Whenever I would ask (which was always), “But why don’t you help?” I would be met with indifference or one excuse or another. (In Israel, a tiny nation the size of Rhode Island with a Jewish population of only five million, we have in the past few years absorbed hundreds of thousands of homeless immigrants, from Ethiopia, the former U. S. S. R., and other former communist and third world countries. They all arrived penniless and homeless, and yet help was found for each and every one. And it wasn’t only the government that helped. Neighbours brought food and clothing and furniture etc., etc. According to the population, it would be the same demographically if the U. S. A. were to take in 10 million new immigrants over the same short period of time. In addition, Israel welcomed 1,000 “boat people” and offered Israel to them as a homeland when most of the rest of the world closed their borders). It’s so sad that things like homelessness are allowed to happen anywhere, when so many people *could* help if they were only open to the Spirit of God’s love within their hearts!

The following Scriptures are included as further confirmations, but it’s something to think about when God asks us to treat others as we would like others to treat us.

“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.”

Luke 6: 30-31

"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give unto your bosom. For with the same measure that ye give it shall be measured to you again."

Luke 6:38

"I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Yeshua, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Acts 20: 35

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets."

Again, there has to be a balance in all things. When we see a need, we need to be obedient to the Lord in how He wishes for us to help. But the sensitivity to His Spirit of compassion has to be there, and we have to hold all that we own lightly, so that when He asks us to meet a particular need in someone else's life, we can easily—and joyfully—say, "Yes, Father..." A friend wrote the following to me some years ago, and I think it perfectly describes the balance we need between awareness of the great needs around us and the fulfilling of them. It is terrible to be indifferent to the suffering of others; but on the other hand, we cannot meet all of the needs ourselves. As in everything else, it is obedience to His Spirit that will guide us along the way.

"I like your reference to the way the Lord has 'greatly simplified' your life in every way. I've only been in His way for 12 years (although it seems like many lifetimes!) but the more I go on, the more I find His truth to be simple and His way to be straight and plain. This world is full of busyness and distractions but Messiah's way is simple, uncluttered, and yet so full for all its lack of multiplied activities. It's so easy to have more to do than time to do it but I never see the Lord Jesus without time to do all that He was called to—and that with perfect poise and without haste. And so if I have too much to do it's only because I want to do more than He wants me to. How jealously He guards the rest in which His will is done. It can be a great temptation when we see so much to be done to be like Moses, and with vigour to set about going to work. Instead we need to go to the desert, to simplify, to meet Yahweh, to be brought to the end of our own things and brought into His vast sufficiency. Although it certainly seems to be late in the day and there seems to be more than ever to do, yet I know there is no anxious haste about our Master. Surely His servants are to be brought to the same!"

Another friend commented similarly, as follows:

"There is way too much busyness in life. At our jobs, this is expected of us. And it is so, even among Believers. If one says 'no' to doing more and more, he is viewed as being uncooperative, not bearing his share of the work. Of course, the answer is to obey God and not worry about what others think—but it is not easy. They can make it so uncomfortable for you."

In the “work-ethic” society in which we live, often we feel our only worth is in what we do. Therefore so much of church tradition is based on “good works”, on those things that are visible to the community and confirm us as “good Christians”. But God’s way is so different from the way of the world. He values us for who we are, not for what we do. He wants us available for His purposes—to reach out in His love. But if we fill our lives to the brim with “service”, simply for the sake of it, most of the time our busyness will push out His gentle promptings. We need to learn to rest in Him, to listen, and then to quietly obey. We also do not need to concern ourselves with the *results* of our obedience. We need to do only what God has asked, nothing more. And yet simple obedience is everything! It brings such joy to the Father’s heart.

There is always a danger in a walk with the Lord, in our own eagerness and enthusiasm, to run ahead of Him, or to add something to what He has shown us. We have to remember that God asks us to do *exactly* what He shows us—nothing less, but nothing more as well. The enemy of our souls is always ready to lead us astray in any way that he can, in an attempt to destroy the purposes of God. And he will often try to “slip something in” when our defenses are down and we’re least expecting it.

In addition to helping me to understand the simplicity of a life devoted to Him, the Lord has also taught me a lot about the importance of enjoying life. It’s important to work and to serve—in obedience to Him alone, the rest doesn’t count. But there must be a balance! All that He created is an expression of His love and was *meant* to be enjoyed! So often in my travels around the world I’ve seen “Christianity” expressed as such a joyless thing. But the Lord Himself has such a wonderful sense of humour, is so filled with joy and vitality and life, and has created such wonders for us to delight in. The more we know Him, the more our lives become a reflection of all that He is!

I’m reminded of an experience that I had a few years ago. Springtime in Israel is a glorious time. After so many hot, dry months, following the latter rains the whole countryside bursts into life. Flowers cover the hillsides, and even the desert places are filled with wildflowers. Every year without fail I’ve taken a “flower tour” of the north, as I especially love to cross the Carmel, follow the northern border road, and travel through the Golan to Tiberias and home again across the Jordan valley. One particular spring, however, our financial situation was very grim indeed. There were many unpaid bills, and to me a trip to the north was unthinkable. But Michael had very much wanted us to spend three days at a horse ranch in the Galilee, to hike and to ride horses and to see the springtime beauty of the area. Perhaps people would assume that God would say, “Now, you must be practical. Bills need to be paid, and it’s impossible to spend money on a holiday in the north...” But that is not what He said at all.

When I brought Mike’s request to Him in prayer, His answer was so wise. “You’ll always have bills,” He told me, “but a chance to do something special with Mike you won’t always have...” And so we left for three days in the north with His blessings, and had an incredible time. Just one year later Mike left Israel to study in the States. I *still* have bills to pay, but we also have the memory of that lovely time together.

In the spring of 1992, I spoke unexpectedly at a few meetings in Switzerland. One meeting was the result of a letter I had received from someone who had read my book by the name of Sister Ruth. She informed me that they had a guesthouse in the Alps and would welcome me to visit there. When I prayed about it, even though



basically my years of speaking in other countries were over by then, I felt to accept her invitation. When I arrived, I found myself in one of the most beautiful places I had ever seen. It was a little car-less village high in the Alps, and the scenery literally brought tears to my eyes. When I awakened my first morning and slipped out to the balcony to drink in the view, I had a sense from the Lord that it was to this very village that I would return the following spring to write a book on obedience. That was *really* a surprise, for I never imagined that I would write a second book! I shared the idea with Sister Ruth later that day.

“What kind of a book will you be writing?” she asked.

“On obedience,” I answered.

“Why, that’s exactly what the Lord has been teaching me!” she exclaimed. “The importance of obedience to *Him*...”

Next to the guesthouse was a small chalet that her community had been praying to own for many years. They had just learned that it would at last be available for sale in December. “And if everything works out,” she told me, “we could let you stay in the little upstairs apartment to write your new book...” I also knew that it would be a great blessing to have Sister Ruth there, enabling me to share with her the things that I would write day by day. It was such a beautiful place on God’s earth that it seemed like a dream, but I am typing this very minute in the chalet, overlooking the splendour of an alpine spring.

But a further treat was in store and a deeper lesson once again in God’s ways versus the ways of the world. In August of 1992, Mike was planning to leave Israel to attend university in the States. While visiting in Switzerland, I also had a sense from the Lord that before Mike left for America, Mike and Joe and I would be able to have a holiday together at the guest house. Again it seemed like a financial impossibility, but as the time drew nearer, the Lord continued to confirm it as His will.

However, a week before our scheduled departure date, no money whatsoever had arrived for the trip. When I prayed, the Lord told me to telephone to Switzerland to friends of mine, Hermann and Heidi, to tell them the situation and to ask them to pray. This instruction surprised me, since ordinarily the Lord never has me tell anyone but Him my need (except under certain circumstances). But I knew that the important thing to do was to *obey*, and not to insist on a certain rule! So I called them, telling them we had no money for the trip and asking them to pray. The next day, Tuesday, I fasted all day, still seeking God’s confirmation on the journey! By the following day the tickets had to be ordered, and everything had to be completely taken care of by Friday, as much of Israel closes down for the Sabbath and we were due to leave early Sunday morning. At the end of the day of prayer and fasting, I sensed from the Lord to judge the situation by His word to us—and *not by the circumstances*. This is an extremely important rule of faith, for many times circumstances will seem contrary to what the Lord has told us! We must simply hold on to His Word of truth, and in the end all works out for His purposes. I knew that if He truly meant for us to go, the doors would remain open, no matter what.

Early on Wednesday morning I drove to town to the travel agent’s office. I explained to him that we still planned to go to Switzerland, but that no money had as yet arrived for the journey. “I don’t know quite what to do,” I told him.

"Well," he said, "it's clear that if you're going, the tickets need to be ordered today. I'll give you the tickets with our bank account number, and you send me the money from Europe. If not, just pay us when you return!"

I was amazed! The door had not closed!

The following morning I visited my bank, asking the teller if by any chance any money had arrived for me from abroad. It didn't happen too often, but I knew that *somehow* God had to help us with this trip! But, alas, no money had arrived. The teller, whom I had known for a number of years, could see my disappointment.

"What's wrong?" he asked. "What do you need?"

I explained that we were leaving the country on Sunday, and no money had arrived as yet to take with us for the journey.

"How much will you need?" he asked. "We'll give it to you, no problem!"

And so I asked for enough to pay the then-in-existence-travel tax of 250 shekels each and \$300.00. I knew it would only be enough for our first two days in Zurich, but that's the amount I sensed from the Lord to request. When I returned the next day, with our tickets in hand, the bank advanced me the shekels and the dollars! It's a part of the caring quality of life in Israel, and amazed me beyond words. There still was no money for the whole rest of the week nor for the ticket payment, but I knew that we were definitely meant to go!

Early on Friday morning, I received a telephone call from a woman named Denise in Zurich. "Hermann and Heidi told me to call you," she said in way of explanation. "I have a story that they thought I should tell you!" She then explained that on Wednesday morning, she had been directed by the Lord to give a copy of my book, "I Am My Beloved's" in German to an elderly neighbour of hers. The next evening, at around 10:00 p.m., she happened to see that same woman walk by her window. She went outside to speak to her. In a major city like Zurich, it was amazing that she had even seen her pass by! But the story she had to tell was even *more* amazing!

"My neighbour said that the book had touched her so much that she had stayed awake all night reading it. The next morning, on Thursday, she knew she had to send you 2500 Swiss francs, so she went immediately to her bank and sent them to the trust fund in care of Hermann and Heidi! I had to call Hermann and Heidi for another reason, and strongly felt from the Lord to do it then even though it was late at night. And in the end I thought to tell them the story about my neighbour and the money. They were so happy when I told them, for they knew it was an answer to prayer!"

I felt so astonished! Hermann and Heidi were the only people who knew we had no money—and the Lord had me tell them so that when the money arrived they would know what it was for! The thread of obedience is woven throughout this little story. I had to obey the Lord by telling Hermann and Heidi in the first place of our financial need. Denise had to obey the Lord by giving her neighbour my book. And the neighbour had to obey the Lord by sending the money as she had felt to do. And once again, Denise had to obey the Lord by phoning Hermann and Heidi late Thursday night! All of it worked out perfectly in time! When I arrived in Switzerland, I sent most of the 2500 Swiss francs to the travel agency to pay for the tickets, and kept some for our journey up the mountain.

When we arrived at last in the tiny alpine village, the entire place was ensconced in the thickest fog I had ever seen. It was impossible to see anything even three feet in

front of us, and the breathtaking alpine peaks were totally lost to view. The boys teased me quite a bit, since there was nothing to see whatsoever—although the mist gave it all a fairytale feeling. By the next morning the mist began to clear and the majestic mountain peaks were unveiled one by one. We took a chair lift to the top and the hike down was incredible.

I still wasn't sure, however, if I had enough money to pay for our accommodation, so I finally asked Sister Ruth how much the rooms would cost. She told me a price that I knew was much lower than usually charged.

"Are you sure you're charging us enough?" I asked, amazed. The total bill for room and board came to 210 Swiss francs—and on my last day there, a gift was given to me of 200 Swiss francs—so our entire time in the mountains, including meals, cost only 10 francs! It was hard to say goodbye to Mike at the Zurich airport. But all in all, the Lord had made this farewell holiday such a marvellous time. Joe and I spent the following two days in the city before heading for home once again.

People are usually surprised enough when I tell them the general ways of obedience and testimonies of the Lord's faithfulness, and rightly so, for each and every touch of His love is something to treasure. However, most people would never imagine the degree to which He wants us to relinquish our lives into His all-knowing and all-sufficient care. If we could only truly relinquish control over our lives to Him, we would quickly learn the very depths of His care for us as His children. I'll share a few examples of what I mean, touching levels of obedience that I normally don't discuss publicly.

Before I came to know the Lord, I was a terrible grouch in the morning. I also sleep very soundly, so it used to take me a very long time to truly wake up. I'm relaxed by nature, so that when I sleep, I'm almost unconscious! When I wake up in the morning, my bed still looks like it had just been made. My college roommate was not just an early riser, but a *cheerful* early riser, and her cheeriness really grated on my nerves. I never understood what a grouch I was, however, until the day when I heard her coming down the hallway singing. As soon as she turned the corner and spotted ogre me, the singing stopped immediately!

Shortly after the Lord called me to a life of faith, He dealt with this early-morning problem. He instructed me to throw away my alarm clock, that from that day on *He* would awaken me at the correct time each morning. When *He* awakened me, I found that I was totally alert and awake, not my old groggy, half-conscious self—and, wonder of wonders, I even awakened with joy in my heart at the beginning of a new day! It only worked, however, if I *stayed* awake. If He awakened me and I went back to sleep, I woke up later in even worse condition than usual! The other problem was that I had to agree to wake up at the time *He* desired, which I've discovered is usually quite early in the morning! (It has always given me a quiet hour each morning to read the Bible, to pray or just to read in general, and by now I really appreciate it.) It called for a depth of trust that was new to me, however. When asleep—especially as soundly as I always sleep—it made me totally dependent on Him! And I must admit that when I've had middle-of-the-night planes to catch, in the beginning it cost me a bit of anxiety. But He longs to be in control of *every* area of our lives, not just in the major things—and I've had some meaningful lessons of His faithfulness even in this area as well.

A few years ago, in the old communist days, I was travelling on a train from Holland bound for Warsaw with my Dutch friend, Corrie. We were awakened in the early morning hours, not by the Lord, but by the Polish border guards. It was the first time in years that I had been awakened without the Lord's help, and I sat there in a sleepy stupor for over an hour. Finally I explained the situation to Corrie, silently thanking the Lord that I didn't have to wake up like that every morning! Corrie saw what a spacey grouch I was, so the next morning in Warsaw, she had a little dialogue with the Lord.

"Lord," she said, "I don't really believe that you wake Esther up each morning. But in case what she said is true, I want to get up at 7:30. It's now 7:20. If You do wake her up like she said, please do it at 7:30. Otherwise, I'll have to awaken her myself!" Needless to say, at the very dot of 7:30, the Lord woke me up, bright, alert and cheery!

Once when Joe returned to Israel after having spent a year studying in the States, his plane was due to arrive at Ben Gurion airport at 2:00 a.m. That meant that I would have to leave for the airport to meet him at 1:30 and wake up at 1:00 a.m. However, the Lord awakened me at midnight—an hour early! After by then having had years of experience in His perfect timing in this area, you would think that I would simply trust Him and get up and leave for the airport! Sometimes I wonder just how dense I can really be. Instead of getting up, knowing He had a *reason* to awaken me early, instead I just grumbled and went back to sleep. I awoke at 1:00 to the insistent ringing of the telephone. It was Joe!

"Mom, where are you? I'm at the airport already! My plane was over an hour early!" I dashed off to fetch him, feeling so ashamed and foolish. Why oh why do I ever doubt, I only can ask again?

A few weeks later, Joe had to be at the central bus station to meet someone named Zipporah at 7:00 a.m. They were planning to travel to Tel Aviv for a day of dubbing for a U. S. television show, so he asked me to wake him up at 6:00 a.m. However, the Lord didn't wake *me* up until 6:30! Joe was upset and asked, "Why didn't the Lord wake you up on time?"

Remembering the last experience, I replied, "I don't know. But, I *do* know that it always works out all right!"

So Joe arrived at the bus station at 7:15 instead of at 7:00. When he returned home that evening, I asked him if Zipporah minded that he was fifteen minutes late. He replied a bit sheepishly, "Well, she didn't actually *know* I was late, since her watch was fifteen minutes slow!"

I learned a great deal about the Lord even during my many years of public speaking. Truly being a hermit at heart, it was nothing I ever would have chosen for myself. Preferring always to be alone with the Lord, I avoided meetings and conferences like the plague. And even when I did attend, I was always a back-row-corner type! So when the Lord first called me to begin to share His testimony in my life, it was an extremely difficult thing for me to do. And even when my first book was completed, after almost a decade of work on it, I was horrified at the thought that people would actually *read* it! Even until now, every time I need to meet new people, or speak publicly, I have to depend on the Lord for all I'm worth, as it's very much against my private nature. Learning obedience in the field of public speaking involved a whole long learning process. In the end, the Lord finally brought me to a place of caring more what

He thought than what people would think. That was the first time that I was really free, when my greatest desire was to please the Lord and leave the consequences to Him. From then on I could put a meeting in His hands, and be available to share whatever He put on my heart, leaving the results to Him. I wish it had happened in as simple a way as it sounds, but at least by now I can face each situation in public with the assurance of His love. It's still not easy! But like anything else, I learned that when I *did* place each meeting in God's hands, I could never know exactly what to expect—as the following examples illustrate!

One time some years ago, when speaking in public was still fairly new to me, a friend brought me to a Christian radio station in North Carolina. When we were introduced to the disc jockey, he said quite an amazing thing.

"I don't know you," he said, "and I don't know anything about you. But the Lord has clearly shown me right now to make the entire rest of the day available for you to share. We'll have to take breaks for music and commercials, but basically the next seven hours belong to you if you want 'em!"

We were so blessed! I only managed to speak for about three hours, but I was able to give my testimony and share so many other things besides. It really encouraged me, for in so many of the places in which I have spoken over the years, the one thing people refused to give was time. Most meetings were limited to an hour or twenty minutes or whatever, and people then fully expected the meetings to end on time so they could get on with their lives! So often I yearned for the time of Paul, when people had such a thirst for the things of God that they were willing for meetings to go on all through the night!

Every so often the disc jockey would mention that I would be speaking at a certain church that night in a town nearby, and that everyone was welcome. We found the church full of people when we arrived that evening, many of whom had heard me speak on the radio. When it was my turn to be called to the front, I prayed aloud, as I always do, for God's wisdom and for a touch of God's love on the people present. Most of the time God *has* touched people with His love as I've spoken, and I wanted to be certain people knew it was *Him* and had nothing whatsoever to do with me. My only responsibility was to truly give the time to the Lord and to say only that which He gave me to say. Usually He would give me the message right away so that most people never realized that I literally waited before Him, often with no idea whatsoever what He would have me say. There were occasional surprises, however, and this night in North Carolina was to be one of them!

That night, after I had prayed for God's wisdom, I waited; but He didn't give me a single word to say. The temptation was there to speak anyway. No doubt I could have thought of lots to tell to fill the time. But I knew at once that if I tried to speak without His anointing, it would only be words and wouldn't bring a blessing to anyone. So I finally explained to the expectantly waiting people, "As you heard, I just prayed for God's wisdom. But He has not as yet given me anything to say! Would you please bow your heads in prayer and just wait with me?"

I waited for what seemed like an eternity, but still nothing came. Finally I grumbled silently, "Boy, this is embarrassing! All these people heard on the radio that I



was supposed to speak tonight, but now You won't give me a thing to say to them!" But the silence continued.

At long last, the Lord said to me, "Most of the people here have no concept whatsoever of listening to Me or of waiting quietly in My presence. For most of them, this is the first time that they have ever done it. That is what I wish for you to teach about tonight..."

Another time, in Moultrie, Georgia, I had once again been invited as the guest speaker, this time at a meeting held in someone's home. Friends, a pastor and his wife by the names of Sid and Betsy, had driven me to the meeting, and Sid was asked to give a few words to the group before I would be called on to speak. He spoke for 45 entire minutes, and the whole time I was fuming!

"Lord, he's taking up the entire time. *I'm* the important speaker, and by the time he's finished, no one's going to want to hear from me at all. Why doesn't he stop?"

When Sid finally sat down, and it was finally *my* turn to speak, as always, I placed the time in God's hands, asking for His wisdom. However, this time as well, the Lord was silent. Since it had happened to me already once before, I asked everyone to wait with me before the Lord. This time when He finally spoke to me, I kind of wish He hadn't. "First," He said, "I want you to apologize to *Me* for what you were thinking. Then I want you to apologize to Sid in front of everyone!"

"Oh, no," I groaned. But I did as he instructed. I was sure that He would then give me a message to share. But He didn't, not even one single solitary little word. Finally, fighting back the tears, I simply said, "In the beginning, I prayed for God's wisdom, and for His love to touch each one of you. When I placed the meeting in His hands, I then had the responsibility to truly wait before Him until He gave me something to say. Otherwise it wouldn't bring a blessing to anyone. But He hasn't given me anything to say, so I'm just going to sit down..." Wow, was it hard not to cry! Pride is such a battle.

I had no way of knowing, of course, that by saying nothing, I had delivered exactly the message the Lord wanted them to receive. As they explained later, they had all been guilty of busying their lives with many activities, all having little to do with genuine obedience to His guidance. Even meetings and speakers could be a distraction if their hearts weren't open to the Lord. What they had learned from the Lord that day was that if something didn't truly come from Him, it was not in any way going to bless their lives. They therefore began to pray that God would enable them to walk simply and humbly beside Him. It made me so ashamed for not having trusted God's wisdom!

Some years later I had a similar experience in a women's meeting in New Zealand. Once again after prayer the Lord gave me nothing to say. So I asked the women gathered there to close their eyes, join me in prayer, and then wait with me before the Lord. After a few minutes of silence, the Lord said to me, "Now I want you to get up and to leave the room..."

"Leave the room? But, Lord, I'm the *speaker*! It's going to look like I'm sneaking away while all their eyes are closed!"

The Lord repeated again, with emphasis, "*Leave the room!*" And so I left the room, tiptoeing out while their eyes remained closed.

I went into a room in the back, feeling mortified. Finally the Lord said, "What are they doing?"

"Lord, they're waiting in Your presence."

"That's your only purpose—to bring others into My presence, and then to leave..."

It taught each of them to look only to God, and not to people—but it taught me the most of all. I knew that in no way were people ever to look to me, but that I was simply to point the way to the Lord's heart full of love for them.



Hermann & Heidi help me to settle in the little chalet where part of this book was written.

The view from my apartment.







In the Alps...

My apartment was on the  
top floor of the chalet.



# CHAPTER THREE

## *Let's Just Talk About It*

The previous two chapters dealt with basic guidelines for a genuine, day-by-day walk with the Lord. In this chapter, I'd like to simply share some of my own personal feelings and observations following almost a quarter of a century of experiences in His faithfulness. As you know from my previous book, enough has happened to me to fill a book of over 500 pages. But as John so poignantly wrote, at the end of his testimony:

"And there are also many other things which Yeshua did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written..."

I can well imagine what he meant, for I could fill at least a hundred books the size of "*I Am My Beloved's*" and not even begin to tell the experiences I've had in the years that I've served Him.

The Lord can pack more into a single day than could ever be imagined, and so much can happen in a single week that it's hard to even remember your own name. I've always had a bit of fun with the organized, "I'm-in-control-of-my-life" types who have visited me over the years. I tell them upon their arrival that within three days they won't be able to tell me what day it is, nor will they be able to remember what happened to them two days earlier, because of the overwhelming number of things that they will have experienced in that time. By the third day, I always casually ask, "What day is it today? What happened yesterday morning?" It has never failed to amaze me to see the befuddled look on their faces, for not one person has yet been able to answer those questions without a great deal of thought.

Most people, when in charge of their own lives, have a definite organizational pattern to their existence. For example, it is generally predictable that Monday morning (Sunday in Israel) heralds the beginning of a workweek, ending by Friday for a day or two of rest from the workplace. At home, people also in general have specific tasks to do in a fairly predictable manner. As a result, because of the order and overall sameness of the days, it is easy to "keep track" of time. When, however, someone places his or her life totally in the Lord's hands, as did John and the other disciples, *they enter into a whole new realm of living*. There is not one single day that is anything like any other, and even within a *single* day, hour by hour things can drastically change. The experiences become so overwhelming and interesting that it is impossible to keep any type of a logical frame of reference. And so the days simply blend into one another, until it truly becomes almost impossible to remember what happened on a certain day of the week before. A walk with the Lord, a genuine one, is certainly uncertain. You can depend upon His help and His grace and His love. Those are the certainties. But other than that, you have to be willing to relinquish control over your life in almost every other

realm of existence. Take the life of Peter, for example. He had a very predictable existence as a fisherman, earning his living and caring for his family by the Sea of Galilee. He had partners that he worked with, and his life was as routine as a life can be that depends on the elements for its existence. And then, one day while fishing, *he was challenged by the Son of God*. He heeded that challenge, left his nets and his boat, and never looked back. *And his life was never the same again.*

The Gospels tell some of the things that Peter experienced in the three years of Yeshua's public ministry that followed. Peter had the courage, not only to *follow* Yeshua, but also to try astonishing acts of faith like walking on the water. He sounded so exuberant and heartfelt in his faith. But even Peter discovered that his "faith" only worked when he refused to consider the "practical" implications that the world without the Lord is so concerned about. He stepped out on the water, and it worked—he was able to literally walk upon the face of the sea on which he had spent his adult life fishing. It must have been with such a feeling of wonder and awe. It worked wonderfully—*until he began to regard instead the practical considerations*. When he took his eyes off the miraculous and began instead to consider the wind and the waves, fear entered in and he began to sink, needing to cry out to the Lord for help. *Nothing changed except his focus*. When he stepped out of the boat full of faith, the wind was still blowing and the waves were rolling. But he was indeed able to walk—until he let the doubts and the fears enter in, and then the miraculous moment was over.

To me, the practical world never made sense, and so I was a perfect candidate for a life of faith. While visiting in the States particularly, I've heard a great many excuses why someone should not serve the Lord full-time. I agree that a call to serve Him must come from the Lord directly. But I'm not going to deal with any of the excuses, for that is exactly what they are. The excuses encourage people to trust more in the structure of society than in the God of Israel. People *give* excuses because they *want* them, to justify living their own self-absorbed, independent lives. So there is no point in trying to answer all the excuses I've heard throughout the years. I simply wish here to ignore that level of thinking totally, and to help those reading this book to reach out beyond it all, to somehow challenge them to capture infinity, to help people to look beyond the obvious to the divine. *God is everything that the world never can be and never will be, and there is no other Person that can better take control of our lives if only we will relinquish them to Him*. For those looking for certainties in life, *His love is the greatest certainty of all*.

I've tried many times to analyze why a walk of faith makes so much more sense to me than the ways of the world ever have. Perhaps it does have something to do with a genius IQ, for it does mean that I have a very different way of processing information, and that is a part of my life I've had to accept and deal with. However, I think the answer is much less complex than that.

"At the same time came the disciples unto Yeshua, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

And Yeshua 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..."

Matthew 18:1-4

But Yeshua called them unto Him, and said, Allow little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter in."

Luke 18:17

The key for me is that I've always had a child-like faith in our great heavenly Abba. I've constantly seen the world of God's creation with eyes of wonder, and have never been able to imagine how He ever managed to create it all. It began for me in the vegetable garden when I was a child. It seemed like the most magical, thrilling place I'd ever seen. The seeds that had been planted into the ground—hard and small and unyielding—turned miraculously into the most incredible things my small little life had ever seen. Even as an adult, I've always been shocked at the complaints at the prices of food without it being balanced by wonder at the creation of it all. The Lord could so easily have created food tasteless and gray, like the manna that fell from heaven as the Israelites wandered in the wilderness. But instead, He created such an incredible variety in terms of taste and texture and colour, each growing in such a wondrous way—some simply hanging from trees, while others pop up from the ground. Some are peeled. Other foods are eaten just as they are. But everything is so beautifully perfect and a true reflection of both His creative genius and His love for us. How *did* He ever think of it all?

In my years of service for the Lord, I've done a great deal of travelling and I've seen a great many places on this earth. I therefore have a greater grasp of the enormity of this earth than people do whose travel experiences have been limited. And without fail, in whatever new nation I've found myself, I would look around at the crowds and crowds of people. And always, I would think with wonder, "The Lord knows every single one of those people. He knows everything that they've ever thought and everything that they've ever done. He even knows the number of hairs upon their heads. Who can even comprehend with the finite mind the limitlessness of the mind of God? How can people *not* trust Him?" It would happen to me without fail, and it would always increase my sense of wonder and awe. It would increase as well my gratitude that I could serve the creator of it all. It was always a humbling experience.

Because I've had the ability to see it all with childlike faith, I've also had the ability to see the utter simplicity of it all. The secret to a walk of obedience to the Lord was summarized in one sentence by His mother at the scene of His first public miracle, when she said to the servants:

"Whatsoever He saith unto you...do it..." John 2:5

And that is the essence of a walk in faith—simple, unquestioning obedience to His commands.

When we have truly begun a life of listening and obedience, when our wills have been united with His, and when the prayers on our hearts come from Him and not from

our own desires, we will discover more and more each day the amazing ways of our Lord! We can never know what to expect next, nor can we in any way imagine how He will choose to answer the prayer burdens He has placed on our hearts. Hopefully, the closer we come to Him, we will see more and more the futility of our own plans and wills and aspirations. *When we are able to view life from God's eternal perspective*, then we begin to understand in our very depths the real importance of obedience. For when we stand before Him one day, as every living soul will do, we will understand in a second that apart from obedience, nothing that we've done with our lives will really have any significance! It is a privilege to serve Him; and to reach out to others in His love is our main job upon this earth.

It is often a danger to get so involved in our "Christian activities" that it almost becomes a sub-culture. We're meant not just to have fellowship with one another, but to be available to the Lord as vessels of His love to a world of darkness. He spent His time on the earth with the unsaved (apart from His twelve disciples), and poured out His life to minister in love to them. And He also sent the apostles out, two by two, to minister to His people! We therefore have to put aside any pre-conceived ideas about Him (that stem from anywhere other than His Word) and what a life of faith will entail, and simply *obey*. It's the beginning of a great adventure! We never know where His will may lead us, but we can always be certain of *Him*—of His love for us, of His love for others, of His sure hand upon our lives.

I'm reminded of an experience that I had a few years ago in New York City. I had just arrived on a flight from Israel and was extremely tired. At the time that the flight landed, it was early evening in the States but already 3:00 in the morning Israeli time! I needed to find a room in an airport hotel, as I had a flight to catch early the next morning. I went to the hotel reservation desk at JFK airport to arrange for an overnight accommodation. "We have a special at one of the hotels for \$59.00," I was informed. I took it and was picked up a few minutes later by the hotel transportation van. Once inside, I noticed that all the other passengers were Arabs! And when I arrived at the hotel itself, there were Arabs everywhere! I had to blink and pinch myself to be sure I wasn't dreaming. Was I really in New York City, or Saudi Arabia?

I paid for a room, but when I actually saw it, I returned immediately to the desk to demand my money back. Wallpaper was peeling off the walls, the carpet and blankets were dirty, and they didn't even have telephones in the room! But, alas, they would not give me back my money, so I had no choice but to return to the unpleasant room. On the elevator on the way up, I was alone with an American woman, and I couldn't help but ask, "What kind of hotel is this? I'm from Israel, and it looks like everyone else here is Arab!"

She laughed, explaining that this was the hotel that was used by Jordanian Airlines. So that explained it! But then she said, "I'm Jewish, but my husband works in Saudi Arabia, so I have to hide my Jewish identity. But I'd love to talk with you further, especially about Israel. Will you join my husband and me for a drink in the bar?" By then I was bone weary and dying to go to bed, even with the dirty blankets! Also I could imagine traditional Christians saying, "What? To a bar? For a drink?" But the Lord's voice was clear—"Go." So I arranged to meet them there in twenty minutes.



The bartender was from Iran, so it still felt like a dream from Arabian Nights. I ordered a pina colada. We talked for quite a while, and in the course of our conversation I told her that I was a Jewish Believer in Yeshua as the Messiah. The minute I said that, tears filled her eyes!

“Are there many that believe like you do?” she asked.

“Yes, by now many thousands have come to recognize Him as Messiah of our people.”

“Well, some years ago I told the Lord that if other Jewish people believed in Jesus, I would accept Him, too...” And right there, in that grimy bar with the Iranian bartender, she bowed her head and gave her life to the Lord as we prayed together! And then I understood why I had been sent to such a strange hotel—and forced to stay! All of heaven rejoiced as she opened her heart to God’s love—and once again I was so grateful to the Lord that He had helped me to obey His quiet guidance—instead of giving in to fatigue and doubts!

It’s always a struggle to reach out to people when He tells me to, especially since I’m a hermit at heart and don’t naturally like to talk with people. But I always try to be firm with myself and do it none-the-less, primarily because I trust His love and wish to be obedient. One time, in a village in Western Galilee, the Lord prompted me to reach out to the elderly father of a believing friend of mine. Always when I’ve felt that prompting, the person’s heart was already prepared and they have given their lives to Yeshua. By His grace, it has happened so many times in my travels that I’ve no longer been able to keep track—so you would think that obedience in that area would become easier! But for me it never has; it is always a struggle with the flesh. Instead of speaking with this dear old Jewish man, I allowed the enemy—and my own selfishness—to talk me out of it. He died that week and I know that God has forgiven me—but it is something that I can never forget. Once again I understood in even a deeper way that we have no right to say “no” to Him! We have to trust that no matter what it is He asks us to do, He has a purpose in mind for it!

Once I was speaking on Easter Sunday in a huge church in New Orleans, Louisiana. The pastor of that church usually never shared his pulpit (a strange habit) especially on Easter, but when he prayed, the Lord very clearly let him know that he was to give me time to speak. It was a church with 5,000 members. Just before I was invited forward to share, an offering was collected. The Lord told me to put into the offering plate all that I had in the world, which amounted to 10 cents and two postage stamps. “Postage stamps? You want me to put *postage stamps* into the offering?” I asked Him, clearly embarrassed. I didn’t need to ask. I knew that was exactly what He wanted me to do, and so into the basket went my last 10 cents and two postage stamps. After having spoken, the church gave me a gift of \$200, so I had money once again! (Incidentally, the pastor received such a deep touch of God’s love through His anointing on my testimony that he never was able to speak that day at all! He could only weep. The Lord truly blessed Him! It was awesome to see).

Four nights later, my hostess in New Orleans said, at around 10:00 p.m., “I’d like to treat you to a New Orleans custom! At about this time of night, many go to cafés for French pastries and coffee. So let’s go!”

We went to the café of her choice and discovered that quite a few from her church were there as well. With a church of 5,000 members, I guess it would be bound to happen from time to time! Anyway, they invited us to join them. While sitting there, the Lord prompted me to tell the story of the 10 cents and two postage stamps, as they were asking me to share more about obedience. It certainly wasn't the story that *I* would have chosen to tell, but once again I was grateful that the Lord helped me to simply obey. When I completed the story, the man sitting right next to me literally began to sob!

"I'm one of the elders at the church," he finally explained, "and it's my job to count the offerings. When I saw the postage stamps, I asked God to help me to know who had put them into the plate. And now I feel His love so strongly—because He answered my prayer!"

When we obey, it's impossible to ever know in advance the result of our obedience. And when we pray, it's also impossible to know how our prayers will be answered. Once I had given a copy of my book to a pastor in Pennsylvania who was just beginning to really open his life to the Lord in a genuine way. He wrote me a letter later, explaining that he had not at all wanted to read my book.

"But I prayed," he wrote, "that if God indeed wanted me to read it, He would show me. I placed your book on the coffee table next to the book *I* had wanted to read, and drove to town to do some errands. When I returned home, *it was to discover that my dog had completely eaten the second book!* And I couldn't even get mad at him, since I had asked the Lord to clearly show me His will in the matter!" He went on to explain that my book, which of course he did then read, brought him a real touch of love from the Father's heart. He received quite an unexpected answer to his prayer, that's for certain!

Recently in Jerusalem I was preparing a "prayer update" newsletter for those committed to pray for me. In that newsletter, I told the following story:

"It was a strange time for me as well; for once again there has been almost no money to pay bills. During the ICEJ Christian Celebration, attended by 5,000 Christians from many nations, I did not even have the bus fare (4 shekels, 30 agorot, about one dollar) to get to the convention centre! On the third day of the celebration, however, the Lord prompted me to begin to collect agorot coins from around the house. When I put them all together, I had enough for two bus fares! I separated the coins into two little plastic bags. About an hour later, I received a phone call from Sara, an Israeli friend.

'Why weren't you at the Christian Embassy celebration?' she asked me.

'I didn't have a ticket,' I told her.

'Meet Zvi (her husband) by the front entrance in an hour. You can use our daughter's ticket for the week, for she will not be attending...' Then I knew what the little bags of agorot were for and that it was the Lord's will for me to go! At the bus stop a pastor from South Africa was waiting by the name of Malcolm. (He gave a very strong message that night at the conference on the soon-salvation of Israel.) On the long bus ride through town, we had a chance to really share. I told him the story of my agorot coins and then the miracle phone call from Sara. He felt to give me his bus ticket that still had eight rides left, as he would be leaving the country and therefore wouldn't need it. A collection was taken that night for people attending the Feast who had difficulty meeting the expenses. It almost made me laugh out loud, for no one would imagine being so



poor as to not even be able to afford to attend the meeting from Jerusalem! At any rate, I put my second bag of agorot coins into the offering, a true widow's mite, for it was all the money I had in the entire world. That night I met lots of old friends from different countries, and received a great deal of needed encouragement from many.

The next morning Sara phoned. 'Come visit us if you can,' she said. I was able to—only because of Malcolm's bus ticket, my 'bus stop angel'! She made a special lunch, and I thought that was the reason for her invitation.

But, just before I was ready to leave, she said, 'Esther, last night the Lord told me that you didn't have any money, and so we want to give you this cheque...' And it was for 1,200 shekels! I therefore had enough for food once again and even for a few bills. What a blessing! But even more important, it was a definite sign that the Lord had not forgotten me at all. He always has a way to make the impossible *possible*. It made me feel so loved and cared for, and to be honest, I wouldn't want to trade a genuine walk in faith for all the money in the world..."

A few days later, the Lord prompted me to stop at the "Torch Bookstore" on Jaffa Road. While there, He showed me a book by George MacDonald that He wanted me to read. As I was almost penniless at that time, but still wishing to be obedient, I asked if He wanted me to purchase it. However, even though I had the sense to *read* it, I had the feeling not to *buy* it! It didn't exactly make sense, but having walked with the Lord these many years, I know he never asks me to understand. He only asks me to obey!

The next day, He instructed me to look in my own bookshelf in my living room. Much to my surprise, there was a book there entitled "*The Heart of George MacDonald*", a book I had forgotten that I had purchased while in the States. Inside of *that* book was the very book that the Lord had shown me at the bookstore the previous day! I commenced reading it at once, and as I did so the Lord underlined the following in my heart:

"How should it be, madam, that a grand lady like you should take notice of a poor man like me?" said Peter, humbly, but more foolishly than he could then have understood...

The lovely lady laughed, and her laugh was a lightening of delight in their souls.

'Yes,' she went on, 'you have got to thank me that you are so poor, Peter. I have seen to that, and it has done well for both you and me, my friend. Things come to the poor that can't get in at the door of the rich. Their money somehow blocks it up. It is a great privilege to be poor, Peter—one that no man ever coveted, and but a very few have sought to retain, but one that yet many have learned to prize. You must not mistake, however, and imagine it a virtue; it is but a privilege, and one also that, like other privileges, may be terribly misused. Hadst thou been rich, my Peter, thou wouldst not have been so good as some rich men I know.'"

With lots of money, especially if someone had the sense that the money belonged to *them*, it would be so very hard to see the Lord's love in the smallest things. And so when I had typed the comment in my newsletter some days earlier that I wouldn't trade a walk in faith for all the money in the world, I had meant it with all of my heart. There

have been numerous times in my walk with the Lord when I have asked Him to provide daily bread, rather than riches; for then I would know in such a deeper way that His hand was upon my life. So I understood completely this word from George MacDonald, and it really brought a joy to my heart. (Of course, if a person has indeed received earthly riches, and recognizes that they belong to the Lord and not to himself, then he or she could participate in the same adventures of faith, *being obedient to Him in giving*.)

After having read the passage from MacDonald's book, I left for town to pick up the photocopied newsletters, which by His grace I could afford, and was dismayed to discover that all of the pages with pictures that I had included in the letter had been stapled in reverse. So I set about unstapling them, putting the pages in order, and stapling them again. It was in the evening when I began the work, and I opened the stapler to see how many staples were left. I was dismayed to discover only about 20 staples left inside. It is quite a hike to the bus stop from my apartment, plus I didn't have bus money enough for a ride to town and back just to purchase *staples*. And at that very moment one of the "treasures of poverty" arrived. The Lord said, simply and clearly, "If you don't open the stapler, it will continue to staple..." I'm sure none of the recipients of that newsletter would ever imagine that each letter was sent with a little bit of Heaven—for it was God alone who provided the little staple on each and every letter! It stapled and stapled and *continued* stapling until the very last newsletter, and then it stopped! Every time I used the stapler it was an affirmation of faith, and I felt His love so strongly that some days it made me laugh out loud!

There have been comments in this chapter (as you no doubt have noticed) that I was "almost penniless," or that I "put into the offering all the money I had in the world". These comments were made with a sense of joy, and not with any kind of desperation—for I trust the Lord for *daily* provision. Therefore I have given away my "last cent" about ten thousand times—but you can never, ever "out-give" God—so therefore He has always provided even *more* for me to give! It's as though He holds it in His heavenly bank, and gives it to me as the needs arise. There is a wonderful freedom in that kind of trust, for I know that *whatever I receive belongs to Him, and not to me at all*. And therefore I'm free—*totally* free—to give it whenever He prompts me to—and to use it for whatever His purposes may be. It's hard to explain, but it makes having money such a delight—for the Lord so often has me give it with such tenderness and love for the recipient! Many times when He's prompted me to give away all the money that I had, I would say laughingly to myself, "Well, if I have *that* little—I might as well have none!"

Obedience in giving in the financial area seems to be the hardest thing of all for people to do. Since I will also be preparing a handbook on giving from the many lessons I've learned from the Lord in this area, I will not dwell on it in any length in this book. All I will say here is that if the Lord does indeed prompt you from time to time to give of your finances—*especially* if you feel that it is the worst possible time for Him to ask you to do it—I only can assure you *that you do not need to be afraid to trust Him*. He knows the blessings He has planned for you following your obedience to Him, and so you do not need to fear. He knows your situation even better than you do, and He wants you to give as an obedient child—but be sure that He will bless you for it, often in ways you would never imagine. Again, it is the same issue of simple, child-like trust in our heavenly

Father, with the basic understanding that everything we have belongs to Him anyway. What do we truly have in this world that isn't His already? It is therefore a *privilege* to be able to use our possessions and our lives for the service of His kingdom rather than for the service of Satan's kingdom of self-satisfying greed. It is once again an issue of very basic trust. And how can we not trust the Creator of the entire universe? The Lord can help us most of all to value *Him*, and then our hearts will echo the words of King David when he said:

"It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes.  
The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver..."  
Psalm 119:71-72

#### FAITH

"Without faith, it is impossible to please Him."  
Hebrews 11: 6

"Faith in antagonism to common sense is fanaticism, and common sense in antagonism to faith is rationalism. The life of faith brings the two into a right relation. Common sense is not faith, and faith is not common sense; they stand in the relation of the natural and the spiritual; of impulse and inspiration. Nothing Jesus Christ ever said is common sense, it is revelation sense, and it reaches the shores where common sense fails. Faith must be tried before the reality of faith is actual. 'We know that all things work together for good,' then no matter what happens, the alchemy of God's providence transfigures the ideal faith into actual reality. Faith always works on the personal line, the whole purpose of God being to see that the ideal faith is made real in His children.

For every detail of the common-sense life, there is a revelation fact of God whereby we can prove in practical experience what we believe God to be. Faith is a tremendously active principle which always puts Jesus Christ first—Lord, Thou hast said so and so (e.g., Matthew 6:33), and it looks mad, but I am going to venture on Thy word. To turn head faith into a personal possession is a fight *always*, not sometimes. God brings us into circumstances in order to educate our faith, because the nature of faith is to make its object real. Until we know Jesus, God is a mere abstraction, we cannot have faith in Him; but immediately we hear Jesus say—"He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," we have something that is real, and faith is boundless. Faith is the whole man rightly related to God by the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

Oswald Chambers  
My Utmost for His Highest

To be honest, there is a secret to my walk of obedience with the Lord, and that secret is that I treasure my relationship with Him above all else. It is not so unusual, for it is the first commandment in both the Old and the New Covenants—that we must love the Lord our God with *all* our hearts. The Scriptures also tell us that where our treasure is, so will our heart be also. Therefore I am firm about the influences I allow into my life and into my home and into my spirit. A life with Him is so thrilling and unpredictable and interesting and funny and altogether dear that I don't want to be separated from it for a minute. So there are things that I do not do that fill the lives of so many others. First of

all, I do not have a television. Most people will not be happy with my next comment, but television is one of the greatest weapons of satan in this end of days to rob people of time for the Lord and for the Lord's purposes on this earth. The Internet is becoming a close second. Next in line are health and exercise fads. They all rob believers of time with the Lord—and of time with their loved ones and fellow believers as well. Who would have had time to write the Gospels if a television had been handy in those days long ago?

We *live* in this world, but in a way we are really not meant to be a part of it. As George MacDonald explained so perfectly in a condolence letter to a friend:

"What is all this life but a waiting? You who have suffered so much, must know that better than most! For myself, I have never been content with this world as a place to live in. I mean it has always, more and less, had the feeling of a foreign land. The feeling has not been caused by much suffering, neither by any sense of outside failure. No doubt the world has been less satisfactory because of my own evil and great lack; but allowing for all that, there remains a something that indicates that it was never intended to be our home, and we were never intended to feel at home in it..."

And Yeshua Himself said:

"He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will My Father honour."

John 12: 25-26

As I've served the Lord throughout the years, He has helped me to understand that everything we are and everything we own belongs to Him, and He desires our obedience in all areas of life. It has been a grand adventure, but it does require flexibility and a willingness to allow His will to take precedence over our own particular desires. It's not quite as simple as it sounds, for we will always have a battle with the flesh. However, when we can truly release our lives into His hands, life becomes a fascinating experience. Obedience in all areas also meant allowing Him to choose the homes in which we were to live. Of course, that meant a willingness to move at almost a moment's notice and relinquishing the choice in homes to Him. But since He knows us well, I discovered that each and every home was special in its own way and often there were lessons to learn as well. I'll therefore share with you this part of my "by faith" adventures.

Our first home in Israel when I made aliyah in 1976 with my two small sons was a tiny apartment in an immigration centre in the seaside city of Ashdod. It was a fascinating experience, for within that one centre were people from many countries and cultures. All of us were there in fulfillment of the words of the prophets of long ago that the Lord would bring us home to Israel from all the nations. The immigration department gave each family or individual new immigrant six months free living in this centre with a stipend for food and expenses to enable us to participate in an intensive course in the Hebrew language. We were also taught about life in Israel and about Jewish traditions

and customs, especially important for those immigrants having arrived from the Eastern-bloc nations where religion had been forbidden. We went on field trips around the country, had lectures, films, parties, celebrations and speakers, and in general received a very warm welcome to our new nation.

From there, I lived in a lovely apartment on the beach in the city of Nahariya, on the northern coast close to the Lebanese border. I would be lulled to sleep at night by the sound of the waves, and I loved the relaxed, laid-back attitude of this small Israeli resort town. From there, quite surprisingly, I moved in obedience to the Lord—with one day's notice—to a one room apartment on King George Street in Jerusalem, a small dingy little place with one window facing an alley. It was behind a pediatricians' office, and a few afternoons a week little children had to use my bathroom! The apartment had only a small refrigerator and a hot plate with no kitchen, and hot water was available only two nights a week. It cost \$35.00 a month and was in the heart of downtown Jerusalem. It was in that tiny apartment that I learned the most important housing lesson of all—*that it is not where we live that is important, for it is the Lord and His presence and love alone which makes a house into a home...* His love made that small dingy room a true haven, and even when He moved me to a much larger, nicer place, I cried when having to leave the tiny room. Finally He reminded me that He would be moving *with* me—and that made all the difference in the world.

The larger apartment to which I moved had a view of a lovely new area on the outskirts of Jerusalem called "Ramot". In those days, Ramot consisted of a few clusters of buildings, an old windy road, and bus service only once an hour. (No one would imagine Ramot's humble beginnings, for it is now an extensive residential area which sprawls over the hillsides in all directions; has four regular bus lines to service the various sections of the suburb—with three lane highways to get there!) One day, quite unexpectedly, the Lord moved me to an apartment in my view! It was to the very suburb of Ramot that the Lord brought my son Joe back home to live in 1984 after a seven-year separation, and there our sweet little dog, Marike, also came to be a part of our family.

After having lived together in a Ramot apartment for a year, one morning, upon awakening, the Lord gave me the following Scripture quotation: "I will move you to a larger place..." I knew it was a message from the Lord to be prepared to move again, but what it meant exactly I had no idea. That very evening I attended a local fellowship meeting when the Lord suddenly prompted me to hand a \$100 bill to the Arab believer sitting in front of me. It happened to be all the money I had in the world, but, as you can imagine, I've gone through this a few thousand times and have never yet been able to "out give" the Lord. And so in obedience, I tapped Ibrahim on the shoulder and slipped the money into his hand.

After the meeting Ibrahim came to thank me for the money, explaining that his wife had asked him to bring home medication for their ill son and food to feed their large family. "I had just been praying, 'Lord, how can I go home and tell my wife I don't have the money for the medication or for food? Please help us!'"—when at that very moment you handed me the \$100!" he explained. "Thank you so much!"

Since there were many people at the fellowship that night, probably Ibrahim would not have spoken to me if I had not been used by the Lord to answer his prayer. It



was another time of reiterating just how important obedience can be, for we never know what the Lord has planned just by our simple step of obedience. For then, Ibrahim asked a most astonishing question. "By the way," he queried, "do you know anyone who would like to rent a large house?"

Remembering the Scripture I had received from the Lord that very morning, I replied, with a look of astonishment on my face, "Well—maybe me!"

We agreed to meet the following afternoon, and he directed me to the house he was talking about. First of all, we drove up to the centre of the Mount of Olives, and then turned into a very narrow passage with walls on both sides and with barely enough space for a single car to fit. Halfway through this constricted pass, Ibrahim commented casually, "By the way, this is not a one-way street." I'm glad that I'm calm by nature! (Of course, I couldn't have turned around even if I had wanted to!) We came out of the pass onto a narrow road with a steep drop on the right-hand side. Since this was a totally Moslem area, the roads were rutted and full of people, donkeys, and children. We turned left at the church of Bethphage, a tiny church commemorating the start of Yeshua's triumphant entrance on the back of a donkey into the city of Jerusalem through the Eastern Gate so many centuries ago. Then, just before a pathway leading to Bethany, we took a sharp right turn, and drove up an almost perpendicular hill where I almost expected to topple over backwards at any second. When the hill leveled out, there in front of us sat the biggest house I had ever seen.

The house sat on one of the highest points in Jerusalem, and the view was literally breathtaking. It's the very spot where most believers feel that the Lord ascended to heaven—and the very place where He will one day soon return. But the house itself—it was gigantic! It had three floors, with 14 rooms, five bathrooms, and a rooftop with a view of the Dead Sea and the mountains of Moab. It was built by Ibrahim's cousin, a spiritual leader on the Mount of Olives and a wise and very dear man. The rooms were huge. The floors were done with beautiful marble, with a sweeping staircase from the second (and main) floor to the bedrooms above. It truly looked like a palace! The rent wasn't terribly high, but I wouldn't consider living in such a place, not for a minute! It was smack dab in the middle of the Moslem area of town. There were no Jewish people living on the Mt. Of Olives whatsoever, and the house was gargantuan! But, still remembering the Word the Lord had underlined the previous day, I told Ibrahim that I would pray about it. And I did, very reluctantly. The Lord, when I brought it before Him in prayer, clearly confirmed that it was indeed His will for us to move to that huge house on the backside of the Mount of Olives! I named the house "Beit Tsiptot Hashiva", the "House of Awaiting the Return."

A few months after we moved in, my son Michael also came home to live with us in Jerusalem, and so the Lord knew that the small apartment in Ramot would not have been big enough. Plus He arranged this grand adventure for purposes of His own!

From the very beginning, I felt to be friendly to our Arab neighbours and in a very short time they truly opened their hearts. We would sit outside on the patio off the kitchen in the summer evenings, and all of the neighbours would stop by to chat. We were invited to each family's home for dinner, and became especially close to the family living next to us. The mother would always send us some of the special Arabic food that



she made so well! There was a daughter of another family, quite a poor one, who really “adopted” me—and called me “Mom”! Summertime there was something wonderful, with the beautiful view and a soft breeze always blowing. We planted flower gardens and they thrived! I hung chair swings off my upstairs bedroom balcony. It was a great place to sit with my sons and share our dreams as we looked off at the lights twinkling on distant hills.

Living on the Mt. Of Olives are three family clans, with each family represented on our little hilltop. Therefore, in a short time we became known to most of the residents on the Mt. of Olives and they all knew our car as well. This was important for security reasons and surely offered a measure of protection from stone throwers, etc.! A dear Arab woman from Bethlehem, by the name of Hannah, came to help us during those days, and has been a part of our family ever since. Our sweet little dog adores her!

At Christmas time every year, I invited all the neighbours to come for a celebration. Between fifty and sixty came each time, bringing gifts such as Sabbath candles and a Seder plate for the Passover! We would sing Christmas carols, and then they would bring their traditional drums and the girls would dance.

It was amazing, but I felt perfectly safe there, and seldom even locked the doors except when we went to sleep. On the other hand, it almost felt like I was living in exile in my own country! To be living in Israel at last—but in a completely Arab environment felt really strange! But in many ways it enriched our lives, and I’m grateful for the experience. It was also a big help in a future adventure that the Lord had arranged.

And then, suddenly, almost from one day to the next, the entire situation changed. The intifada (or Arab uprising) began—and there we were—living on the Moslem side! I had already sensed, after having lived there for more than three years, that it soon would be time to move back to West Jerusalem, especially for the sake of Mike and Joe. So the start of the intifada gave us an excuse to leave. The neighbours were extremely upset, however, and all of them begged us to stay.

“You’ll be safe here! If you’re afraid, we’ll take turns guarding your house at night! Please, we love you—don’t leave us!”

However, I knew it was an impossible situation, and so I explained, “I know that we would be safe with you.” And that was the truth! “However, our families in the United States are extremely worried, and I promised them that we’d move as soon as possible.” And so the Lord moved us once again.

The friendship with our old Arab neighbours has continued even until now, however. Two of the daughters from the family next door worked with me in my little office for a few years after we moved away, helping to address labels for mailing books, etc. When one of them got married, Joe and Mike and I were invited to the wedding—even in the middle of the intifada! The wedding was supposed to be held on a Monday. That Saturday night, the bride-to-be telephoned me.

“I discussed this with my parents, and they agreed,” she said. “We want you to have the place of honour at my wedding!” I was amazed and deeply touched!

On the morning of the wedding, I was expected at the bride’s home bright and early. We all trooped off together with her sisters to the hairdresser’s in East Jerusalem to have our hair done. I then helped the bride into her wedding gown and we returned

together to her home. She and I had a meal together in the kitchen, and then I went with the bridal couple while their wedding pictures were being taken at scenic spots in Jerusalem. Meanwhile all the guests were gathering at her parents' home. I was given a place of honour to sit. At the end of the celebration, it is a custom at Moslem weddings for the bride to dance in each of the outfits her husband's family had provided. It was my job to help her change from one dress to another. It was a special experience, and really meant a lot. The other girl who called me "Mom" asked me to have the place of honour at her wedding as well.

Even during the Gulf War, my Moslem friends called often to be sure we were all right, as they knew my son Joe was in the Israeli army at that time. I'm quite sure they cheered on their rooftops as scuds landed, but nevertheless it was kind of them to phone. And the grand old house is now being used as a house of prayer for believers around the world and therefore has been kept ever since for the purposes of the Lord.

From there, the Lord moved us to a house in the village of Ein Kerem. Ein Kerem is a lovely little town hugging a hillside, the birthplace of John and the place where Miriam ("Mary") went to visit Elisheva ("Elizabeth") so many centuries ago.

Our first home in the village resembled a horse ranch. We even had a "square dance" in our garden that was written up in the society column of the *Jerusalem Post*. The blurb said, "Ein Kerem resident Esther Korson hosted an old fashioned square dance. At one point when the caller announced that the next dance would be the 'Virginia Reel,' one exhausted guest commented, 'How about a South Carolina Sit Down?'" In that home three of my son's friends came to live with us, and the house was always full to the brim with their friends. We had a great time!

And then, once again, the Lord had us move. This time, it was to the house of my dreams. It was on the other side of the village, and sat high on the hillside with the most breathtaking views of the valley below looking off into the hills of Judea. The house had two floors, with beautiful, totally private and peaceful gardens, and I loved it. Each bedroom had it's own private balcony, and it was truly an oasis. It came with a huge family kitchen, and once again the house was always full of life. One time a young man from Australia came to visit, and there were only four people in the house at the time. He wandered around as if in a daze. "Where is everybody?" he asked, being used to my sons and all their friends! In this house, as well as all the others, we had no television, and had fun playing games such as "Pictionary"; having "mystery" drama dinners; etc. etc. We were also next to a lovely forest, as the house was at the end of a little country road, and to be sure, it was my very favourite house of all.

One winter, when Joe was studying in America and Mike and I were living alone in the house, Israel was experiencing a severe drought. It had not rained at all that year, and the season for even the latter rains was quickly drawing to a close with nary a drop. Finally, the rabbis called for prayer, and the nation beseeched the Lord to bless Israel with rain! And then, suddenly, the miracle began to happen. It rained, and it rained, and it rained. And then it snowed and it snowed and it snowed! All of the reservoirs began to fill! The Sea of Galilee, the main source of drinking water for the whole nation that had gotten dangerously low—almost flooded out the town of Tiberias! It was totally

miraculous, and everyone felt in awe at the hand of the Lord. However, almost everyone had problems as well, primarily from flooding, leaking, or power outages.

There were many problems even in our little village. Our home was on the side of a hill, and early one morning we heard a terrible rumbling sound as the hillside next to our home collapsed, sending boulders crashing down the hill. Fortunately the house of our neighbours below us wasn't damaged, but the most beautiful part of our garden had disappeared. It also cut off our power lines, so we were then without electricity or heat. The temperature was minus 2 degrees Centigrade, with 70 kilometer per hour winds. The Israeli stone houses take two or three days to turn from warm to cold, but when they turn, it is like living in a refrigerator. A neighbour kindly offered us the use of an office to sleep in, so we moved in with our dog, our canary, electric heaters and blankets.

The first morning huddled in the office, the Lord awakened me with a surprising instruction: "I'm moving you to a new place." It was a total shock, for we had permission to live in the Ein Kerem house forever if we wanted to. It was such a wonderful house, I never even thought of the possibility that we would have to move! The extreme circumstances gave me the grace to be able to accept His will in this matter, for I loved that house so much. However, I must admit that the Lord's timing was rather perfect! I glanced over at still-sleeping Mike, and then hesitantly picked up the Friday *Jerusalem Post*. I knew from past experience that when the Lord wanted me to move, a place would already be available. As I read the ads, I found the one I knew He wanted me to check. It said "Moshav Ora, 5 rooms, garden..." When Michael awakened a bit later, I informed him that it looked like we were going to be moving soon. He was surprised as well!

I called for an appointment, and that afternoon we went to see the place. It was the first floor of a two-family house, much smaller than the home in which we were living, but it even had space for a book-distribution office in one of the bedrooms. There was a brick fireplace in the living room and a large kitchen. I was still in shock and Mike certainly was as well, but we talked with the owners—and they agreed to rent it to us! It turned out to be very much in God's wisdom, which should never surprise me! A few days later Michael informed me that he had decided to leave Israel to study in the United States. The Ein Kerem house had been quite large and rather isolated, and not a place to have to live in alone. It was too much of a family house.

Mike, with the help of a friend, painted the inside, and a week later we moved in—just two days before the biggest snowstorm of all. We were completely snowed in for four days! It felt like a chalet in Switzerland, sitting in front of a fireplace, playing Scrabble and drinking hot chocolate with the snow swirling outside! And then, two weeks later, Mike left for America. It was a big adjustment for me to make, after having had a house full of young people for seven years, to suddenly find myself alone in a new and still strange-feeling house.

The moshav was located outside the boundaries of Jerusalem, and this had saddened me as well. After having lived by then in Jerusalem for fifteen years, I hated the thought of not being a part of that city any longer. We had moved in on a Friday, and the following Wednesday I was amazed as I listened to the early morning news broadcast. The city council had voted to extend the boundaries of Jerusalem—to include our moshav! So I was part of Jerusalem once again! (Incidentally, a moshav is similar to

a kibbutz. It is an agricultural settlement, but, unlike a kibbutz, each family owns their own land and farm, but share harvesting and other equipment). Moshav Ora was a Yemenite moshav and is located adjacent to the Kennedy Memorial Forests. I adore the hills of Judea and I love walking in the woods as well. Almost every night wolves or jackals could be heard howling and deer tracks were everywhere. Joe returned later in the year, so our moshav house in the country was full of life once again.

Each move was accomplished with the deep knowledge that it is the presence of the Lord alone that makes a house into a home. Therefore, I needed only to be certain of *His* will—and then could move knowing that His love would be with us. It meant having to move often, at almost a moment's notice; but each move was an adventure with lots to learn and new friends to make in each location!

Our last move was to an even smaller house in the wonderful old neighbourhood of Yemin Moshe, close to the centre of the city and directly across from the Old City walls. If I had to live in the city itself, Yemin Moshe was indeed my favourite neighbourhood! The little homes are quaint and lovely and it is surrounded by parks and gardens. We moved there to be closer to the job the Lord was soon arranging for me—but that story belongs to the *next* chapter...

In this chapter especially, I've explored various levels of faith, to help give an initial sense that simple obedience to what He asks us to do is only the beginning. There are ever deepening levels of faith possible to a soul truly seeking the heart of the Lord, and no doubt it will continue thus even throughout eternity. That the Lord desires a relationship with us at all is a wonder, but the closer we come to Him the more treasures of His heart are revealed to us.

Sadly, one of the main things believers are unwilling to give to Him is time. When we look at the life of our Lord, in His brief period of ministry upon this earth, one thing is clear. Though He was without a doubt the most important man who ever lived, *He had time for everyone*. He had time for the little children; for His disciples; and for all those along the way who were so anxious to know Him. He had time to heal and to teach, to visit friends, to spend time alone with the Lord. His life had an incredible sense of leisure about it. And truly, when we place even *time* in His hands, it will amaze us what He can accomplish; but yet it is all done without a sense of frantic haste.

I recently spent an unexpected two years in the United States, speaking in many messianic congregations and churches. Most people gave token time to the Lord—a meeting here, a brief Scripture verse there. But most people had filled their lives to the brim with meaningless activity. I saw a woman in a mental hospital recently. She was walking with a sense of self-importance, rushing and rushing—but the poor soul was only walking in circles. And many people seemed like that to me. They felt and acted so full of importance—but they, too, were walking in circles, for most of their activity was also meaningless. Perhaps that sounds harsh, but people need to take an honest look at what fills their lives from early morning till the end of the day. Looking at it from God's perspective, people should ask themselves, activity by activity, the crucial questions: Does this activity bring me or anyone else closer to the Lord? If not, of what use is it really? An exercise class here, a television program there, a movie or video the next night, all conspire together to fill our lives—but with things that are utterly bereft of



meaning. The Internet, computers, television programs, health fads, and exercise; newspapers and secular courses; and on and on and on; will any of it make an eternal difference at all? People get so agitated and upset when their homes are robbed of material possessions; and yet, they rob *themselves* of the most valuable things that the world has to offer, and never even know it at all—and *those are the treasures of the Father's heart...*



The day we got the key to "Little Mama Mia's"  
1 November, 1992  
(See story, Chapter 5)





The transformation to "Ye Olde English Tea Room"  
Dorot Rishonim Street, Jerusalem

Mike in the restaurant one night  
after closing.





# CHAPTER FOUR

## *A Cup of English Tea*

It may seem a little strange to include in a book about obedience the story of a business experience of mine in Jerusalem. But this business venture was done in obedience to the Lord, and followed *His* principles, not the principles of the world. Since I lived by faith, thereby trusting the Lord alone for my own personal daily needs, I did not need the profits from a business for my own support. I also knew, after many years of experience in living by faith, that the Lord's kingdom is based on giving, while the system of the world is based on saving. So this business was quite different from any you may have ever read about, but—since it was a total exercise in obedience and faith—it is therefore relevant for a book on obedience! It's a wonderful story, and I trust that as you read the pages to follow, it will encourage you to trust the Lord at an even deeper level.

The adventure began one day, when the Lord said, quite unexpectedly, "Soon you will be involved in life in Israel in a deeper way..." I had no idea in the world what that meant, and truthfully, if I had had any inkling of what was coming—I probably would have run for the nearest whale and begged it to swallow me! For the Lord was soon to put together in one job every single thing that I hate in life. First of all, since I'm a hermit at heart, I don't easily deal with people. I adore animals and children, but would prefer to live alone on a forested mountaintop somewhere with a nice stack of books! Secondly, I hate schedules of any kind, and love the adventure of not knowing what is going to happen tomorrow. I also do not like the practical details of life, and I'm not very good at them, either. I'm almost as bad as Einstein was! As the story is told, he moved to America and began to work at Princeton University. About a week after he had arrived, the president of the university received a telephone call:

A small little voice said, "Please, would you be so kind as to give me Dr. Einstein's address?"

To which the university president replied, "I'm sorry, but that is classified information that we don't give publicly."

There was a pause, and finally the small voice continued, "Well, this is Dr. Einstein, and I've forgotten my address..."

I could relate to that story so very, very well, for the Lord alone knows the incredible number of things I have *always* forgotten! When the Lord put everything together in one job, none of which I had an affinity for in the *natural*, it simply meant that I therefore would have to trust Him and depend upon Him in a deeper way than I ever imagined. For there would be nothing within myself that would even want to *be* there. As it turned out, as time passed in this new venture, God not only gave me the strength and the wisdom to deal with it all—somehow He even made it fun! The first hint of what it would all be about arrived a few days later. I was walking down the street when a young woman stopped to speak to me.

“Esther, you don’t really know me, but a few days ago the Lord gave me the idea to open an English restaurant in Jerusalem—and then He told me to tell that idea to you! So I’m simply being obedient...”

To which I replied, “An *English* restaurant?! Who in the world would ever *eat* there? English food is so bland!” I’m sure that at that point she must have wondered, “Lord, why did you ever have me tell my idea to *her*?”

I didn’t give it another thought, but that was far from the end of the story! When our lives belong to the Lord, and we are walking in His will, we can be *sure* that nothing ever happens by mistake. The very next day, as I was sitting quietly in the garden in our home in Ein Kerem, suddenly, as if dropping from heaven, the Lord gave me the idea—not for an English restaurant—but for an English *tea* room—quite a different venture entirely! In a moment’s time He presented the entire format—from the décor (dark wood, cushions on the seats, soft lighting, flowers on the table, lots of plants, quiet music); to the menu (Devon Cream Tea, Welsh Rarebit, etc.); to the way to serve the tea (on a tray with a doily, a tiny teapot covered with a tea cozy, a hot water pot, cream and sugar containers, and a candle). It was incredible! I was so amazed and astonished that I ran for the phone to contact the young woman I had met on the street just the day before. “Here’s the idea for your restaurant!” I told her breathlessly as soon as she answered the phone. (She never actually opened a restaurant, however). When I had received the Tea Room idea from the Lord in its entirety, I sensed that the information had been given to me for a reason. I thought about it from time to time and even received some incredible new ideas from my mother, who was still alive then. However, more than a year went by before anything really happened at all.

By the end of August 1992, my son Joe returned to Israel after having spent a year studying at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. One morning in prayer we asked the Lord to help him find a job to sustain him in between acting opportunities. As soon as we had finished praying, the Lord said, “Go to ‘Mama Mia’s’ for lunch...” Since it was our favourite restaurant in Jerusalem, it wasn’t too difficult to obey! While there, Monique, one of the owners and a friend for many years informed us that their restaurant would soon be moving to a new location. Suddenly Joe, (remembering the English tea room idea I had shared with him some time ago), jumped up to follow her, exclaiming, “I wonder who is going to rent the place that they’re vacating?”

“No one’s renting it as yet,” Monique replied to Joe’s query. “Why, what did you have in mind?” At that moment the Lord reminded me of the English tea room idea that had dropped from heaven more than a year ago. “Maybe an English tea room,” I replied, sounding as surprised by the idea as she looked!

“That sounds terrific!” she exclaimed. “Jerusalem needs something like that!” We couldn’t help but catch her enthusiasm. She then explained that the building her restaurant would soon vacate was terribly expensive, as it rented for \$5,000 per month. Joe and I both knew that for a new enterprise, it would be impossible to pay such a high rate. In addition, it was in quite an out-of-the-way location. We couldn’t help but feel disappointed. Monique returned a few minutes later, however.

“I was just thinking,” she said. “We *also* own a smaller restaurant called ‘Little Mama Mia’s’, a pizza parlour/espresso shop.” Joe and I both knew it, and nodded. “I’d

like to give that one up and just concentrate on our new place. I'd have to talk it over with my husband and our business partner there, but if you're interested, I could let you know in a few days."

"We'd be interested!" Joe informed her. We exchanged phone numbers and finished our dinner in a bit of a shock. Feeling somewhat overwhelmed by the speed at which things were developing, Joe and I returned home for some serious prayer. We prayed that if it was indeed the Lord's will for us to begin this venture, that they would agree to let us lease the other building. Could it be possible that my obedience in simply going to "Mama Mia's" could result in our opening a restaurant of our *own*? It was an intriguing possibility.

A few days later Monique called with the news that we could indeed lease the other building and would be given the keys on the first of November 1992—Joe's 25<sup>th</sup> birthday! The rent would be \$2200 per month, a bit high but still reasonable for its location in the very centre of downtown Jerusalem on the pedestrian mall near Zion Square. The property came with a complete kitchen, replete with three baking ovens, refrigerators, exhaust fan, stainless steel counters, racks, etc. We were able to rent all of the supplies in the restaurant for only an additional \$100 per month! This was a tremendous help, for we would never have been able to afford to purchase all that equipment, worth thousands of dollars.

The very day following the news that the restaurant was indeed available, Joe discovered a fantastic, informative book on the complete guide to restaurant management! We began to read it aloud to one another chapter by chapter, trying hard to imagine actually owning a restaurant of our own! It was an amazing book, however, covering every aspect of restaurant ownership and development. In the book, stories were told of restaurants that had become successful, and we couldn't help but wonder what would happen with our own.

I still had no idea, if this were indeed the Lord's will as it seemed to be, how we would obtain the English china and teapots necessary for an authentic tea room; nor even how to obtain financing for the renovations and equipment that would be needed to transform a pizza parlour into an English tea room! But, as with all things, God deals with each one separately and in His own special way.

First of all, the Lord told me to contact a friend in Germany by the name of George (not his real name). The Lord had deeply touched him as he had read my book and had given him a love for the Jewish people as well. I felt to request help of an initial investment of \$10,000, as he had said many times that he would be happy to help me if ever he could. Having lived by faith for so many years, I didn't actually *own* anything. I didn't own a house, or any property; I had no savings accounts or credit cards; plus by then our little car had been sold. So with no assets whatsoever, it would be impossible to obtain a loan in the conventional, bank-with-collateral, way. It was scary writing the letter asking for help, but I knew I had to obey the Lord. He also impressed upon me very strongly to *fax* the letter and not to mail it! So I did and spent the next day in prayer and fasting. Early the following morning the phone rang. It was George phoning to tell me that he had received the letter and would be transmitting the money we had requested that very day! "As a matter of fact," he said, "it's a good thing you informed me of all of

this by fax, for tomorrow morning we're going on holiday for two weeks!" It made it all seem so real to know that someone believed in our venture enough to *invest* in it, and I could hardly wait to tell Joe.

Another answer was soon to follow. The very day after we knew the restaurant would be ours, I went to my local grocery store. This is the same store I had shopped in since 1978 in the suburb of Ramot, primarily because of a dear man who worked there as a butcher by the name of Zvi. His greeting each time was worth the trip even when I eventually moved away from that neighbourhood! And in all the years I had been going to that store, I had never once seen anything like what greeted my eyes as soon as I walked in the door! For there, in the corner, sat boxes and boxes of English ironstone in the Blue Willow pattern! Each set was on sale—six dinner plates, dessert plates, cups, saucers and bowls—all for only 99 shekels! (Approximately \$35.00). There were also smaller sets for 69 shekels. I was also amazed to discover that day little white individual teapots—exactly how the Lord had shown me to serve tea to our clients—and with the teapots, matching cream and sugar sets were also for sale. I couldn't hold back the tears, for I knew this was surely a sign of God's love and His direct provision. I had never before seen English teapots and dishes here in Israel! When I pulled the overflowing carts up to the cash register, the cashiers, whom I've known for years, asked what all those sets of dishes were for. When I explained, everyone congratulated me with "mazel tov's", and the store manager brought me a celebratory bottle of wine. It was fun! The next week, when I entered the grocery store, I was amazed to find beautiful large teapots—and the week after that sweet little hot water pots for topping up the tea—and then they had serving platters the week after *that*! Later they had matching mugs—just what I had wanted for hot chocolate and a special honey lemon drink—and lovely little espresso cups. And so, from my local grocery store, I was able to furnish the entire restaurant with dishes! It was truly a miracle.

By this time I had already moved from the house that I had loved in Ein Kerem to the Yemenite Moshav. On Shabbat, four Irish ladies came over for a visit. I had met two of them when I had spoken some years earlier at the Rostrevor Retreat Centre in Northern Ireland. One of the ladies hadn't planned to come for the visit at all, but decided to do so at the last minute. When I told them that we were soon to open a tea room in Jerusalem, the woman who had *not* planned to come informed me that she had just visited a famous tea house in England. I begged her to describe it to me before I told them anything about the one *we* had planned. She said that the tea house in England had parquet floors, plants between the tables, uniforms for the waitresses, a place where tea equipment and chocolates were for sale, soft music playing, and the furniture was a dark wood with cushions on the seats. I was so astonished, because almost word for word she described everything we had envisioned!

When I showed them the dishes and teapots and serving platters and mugs, their enthusiastic response delighted my heart. They also gave me some new additions to the menu, and Margaret, one of the ladies who had served as the cook at Rostrevor for many years, offered to send me some recipes when she returned to Northern Ireland...but she did better than that! She arrived in Israel in December to prepare the English specialities

for the restaurant and worked with us for an entire year! Her scones became famous in Jerusalem, made from her Irish grandmother's family recipe. (Come to try some!)

On the moshav where we lived was a carpentry shop owned by a believer from South Africa. The next day I spoke with him, and he agreed to do the interior furnishings for the tea room—three wooden booths, a bench and three tables along the second wall, a cupboard needed for storing the items we would have (I measured everything), a new wooden front to the building with window boxes for flowers, three wooden planters for the walls, and a wooden bookcase for selling items. They did beautiful work and the price was reasonable. I knew it would help the tea room to look really lovely. They also agreed to make a swinging signpost for the outside.

One week before we were to receive the key to the restaurant, we still had not found anyone to do the interior construction work. But at last we did—just in time! Having had no idea what it would cost to set it all up, when I had asked George for \$10,000, to me that had seemed like a fortune—and it truly had been a help. However, since I had never opened a business before, much less a restaurant, I had totally underestimated the sum of money necessary to begin operations. Therefore we needed additional finances almost immediately! By then, just days before the work was to begin, we had almost no money left whatsoever. Not for anything. We had already paid two month's rent as required in the contract. We had paid for all of the dishes; a portion of the carpentry and renovation; the accountant; interior lighting and preliminary insurance; but so much more was needed! We still needed to pay the attorney's fees, renovation, wallpaper, flooring, kashrut license, printing, advertising, kitchen utensils and cutlery, pots and pans, cleaning supplies, and the initial order from suppliers for the actual food preparation. Without additional help from somewhere, it was impossible for the work on the premises to begin.

I had felt so strongly that this little tea room would become a place where the Lord's love could be shared. Perhaps that is why the battle seemed so fierce! Once again I prayed and fasted. The only answer I received was to request an extension on the initial gift! So I sent, again by fax, a list of all that had already been purchased with the initial \$10,000, as well as a list of all that would be needed before we would be able to open the restaurant early in December. I sent this second fax, and some days went by and no answer arrived. But I still sensed from the Lord not to give up, that it was indeed His will for the work to proceed.

As promised, we received the key to the premises on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November, Joe's 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. On that day, the staff from "Mama Mia's" came to take everything belonging to them from our restaurant. When the last item had been removed, Joe and I stood there a bit dumbfounded. The place was now ours... whatever were we going to do?

By the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November, there was truly no money left at all—only enough for me to take the bus to town the next day and back home again. The situation was so ridiculous all I could do was giggle. Here we were, with the keys to a new restaurant, and not a single shekel to our names!

On the 4<sup>th</sup>, at around 11:00 a.m., I was walking from the moshav down to the main road. As I passed the orchards, I suddenly felt the oppression of the enemy so



strongly in terms of finances. I said to the Lord, “We must be close to the last bend in the road,” (as I turned the final bend in the *natural* road towards the bus stop), “so close to the victory, or the enemy wouldn’t be fighting so hard. I can’t see around the *spiritual* corner like I can around this one, but, dear Father, *I know you are there.*” Still no news arrived.

On the 5<sup>th</sup>, the work on the renovation continued, as I had no sense from the Lord to stop it. I went to the bank to see if any money had come, but nothing had. However, a gift of 100£ had arrived in the mail, sent faithfully by friends in England, so we had enough for food for everyone.

Finally by that afternoon I couldn’t stand the suspense any longer and I called George’s office. He wasn’t in, but his secretary informed me that he had not received my letter until the previous morning. It was a relief—but there was still no answer! Finally I put it all on the altar. At that moment the Lord said to me, “He’s My friend. I can say to you, ‘Ask him for help...’ I know his heart. He’ll say yes...”

At 8:30 that evening Mike phoned to tell that he’d be able to come to Israel to visit for three weeks in January. *That* news brought tears of joy! And then, at 8:45, the answer came. George and his wife had been planning to send a gift of \$6,000 to a charity in Israel, but felt instead to divert that money to us. Help was once again on its way! This was one of the very first times that the Lord had ever told me to *ask* someone for help. But from years of experience, I knew that God expected me to be obedient in whatever it was He asked me to do. And I know that if He had especially *chosen* someone to help, He wished in a really special way to *bless* that person! So it might not *sound* like faith, but believe me, it was. In terms of pride, it’s much safer to ask the Lord alone—rather than to openly have to ask the person of His choice!

Now back to the restaurant itself! Joe was fantastic in handling all of the practical details. He made initial contacts with all the suppliers, licensing agencies, the Rabbinates for a kosher certificate, etc. Everyone loved him! For me, dreaming up the menu and the décor were things I loved to do, so we were a well-matched team. When the additional money arrived from Europe, we were able to pay for all the other various and sundry items needed for a restaurant to function properly. We followed the advice of the owners of “Mama Mia’s”, chose a day to open, and planned to open on that day no matter what. However, the carpentry was not completed in time, so we delayed the opening until the 7<sup>th</sup> of December 1992. In a little over a month, we had been able to do it all, and the transformation from a pizza parlour to a tea room was almost complete. We had received all of our operating licenses and kosher certificates and everything was ready to begin. The day before we opened, the cupboard/coffee bar was supposed to be delivered, needed for the storage of all the cups, teapots, linens, espresso machine, cutlery, etc. However, that was the day that the carpenter’s wife went into labour and had a baby! We waited until 11:00 at night, but the cupboard still didn’t arrive. Finally they phoned, promising to work all night and deliver it early the next morning. So we left all of the dishes, cutlery, cash register, and supplies piled haphazardly on and around the corner booth. Joe and Margaret had by then wonderfully prepared most of the food for the opening day, and we went home for the night wondering what the following day would bring.



All of the staff arrived at the restaurant bright and early that first morning, to attend to all of the last minute details. We were due to open by 11:00 a.m., but still the cupboard had not arrived! The menus also had not made it back from the printers, so that morning someone from the printers' office dashed over with temporary menus that had been quickly photocopied. A Dutch girl whom we had met in the summertime in the Alps designed the menu for us, as well as our logo, and then came to Israel for a month to help in ever so many ways. The artistic work Anne-Mieke did is so lovely!

At 11:00 a.m. friends had already gathered for the opening of "Ye Olde English Tea Room", as we called it, and the first few hours were a bit of a nightmare. The cash register was set amidst the jumble of supplies on the table, with a cord stretching across the aisle. (By opening morning all of the money had been used up, so the cash register was totally empty! We had begun our new business on opening day without even one shekel!) But somehow we had to fill orders as they came, searching frantically through the piles of supplies for the things that we needed. Finally, after the Tea Room had been open for two hours, the long-awaited cupboard/coffee bar arrived at last. We had to close the restaurant for two hours to enable them to install the cupboard and to organize all the supplies. Wow, was that cupboard appreciated when it was finally ready!

The restaurant opened with much of the carpentry work still not completed. The booths and bench had been installed, but there was as yet no door to the kitchen, the new front to the restaurant and our sign were not ready, we had to borrow three chairs, the inside flower boxes weren't done, nor was the wood facing on the counter to cover the concrete. Nevertheless, we received wonderful comments from so many friends who came that day, as well as from new customers. Our landlord gave us a beautiful big plant, many brought flowers, and Joe and Margaret had done a magnificent job in the kitchen preparing everything! On the second day, we had to close early—for we completely ran out of food!

The building that we were renting was tiny, with room inside for only three booths and three tables. It was cozy and sweet, however, but not anything like the place I had pictured when the Lord had given me the initial idea. We had soft music playing, and most important of all, His love and presence could be felt there. I knew that it was being set up for His purposes, but I never dreamed of all the incredible and wonderful things that would happen, or of the intensity of the spiritual battle. I'll share some of the experiences, just to give a sense that a business set up by the Lord can definitely be used for His purposes. Through it all, His love for His people could always be felt. The purpose of the restaurant therefore was not just for the sale of food. It was especially meant to be a place where people could sense the Lord's love. And even in that very first week, enough happened to let us know that God indeed would use our little place for His greater purposes!

On our third day, an English woman came to the restaurant. She seemed to love our little place, and I talked with her for a while. She said that the interior décor reminded her of Cape Cod.

"I grew up in Massachusetts," I told her, "and I always adored the Cape, so no doubt you're right!"

She later commented to a friend of ours who was helping that day, that there was a special feeling of peace to the restaurant, and that I had some joy—or something—that she didn't have. Our friend explained to her that I believed in Yeshua as the Messiah, and that the peace came from the Lord's presence. She gave her a copy of my book to read.

Later two sweet Russian ladies came into the restaurant, telling that they had tried so hard to locate me. They requested 20 of my books in Russian, sharing what an incredible impact God's love through the book was having in the Russian Jewish community. That made me feel all the more encouraged, and gave a deeper understanding of why we were sure to face a spiritual battle.

That same week a couple came and sat in the back booth. "We came all the way from Tel Aviv to visit you," they happily informed me. They ordered a large sandwich platter, but a few minutes after it had been served, I noticed that the husband had leaned to the side, his face was ashen coloured, and he had his hand over his heart. With alarm, I asked if he needed help. His wife assured me that he was fine, he just needed some water; but she then mentioned as if in passing that he has had heart problems. I didn't want to alarm them, so I slipped quietly into the kitchen and told Joe that he needed to call an ambulance at once. The ambulance crew arrived a few minutes later with adrenaline and oxygen, and they whisked him away to the hospital with the diagnosis of cardiac arrest. His poor wife looked so forlorn, explaining to me that their car was in a parking lot that would soon be closed for Shabbat, and that she didn't know how to drive. They were Holocaust survivors, and I could only imagine the panic she must have felt as her husband was lifted onto the stretcher and taken away. Knowing that my main job in this restaurant was to serve God's people with His love, I said to her, "Come, I'll be glad to drive you and the car to the hospital, and then I'll help you to locate your husband."

On the way there, I told her not to be afraid, that God truly loved them both and would really help. At that, she began to cry, stating that she had especially *felt* His love. "I'm so glad we came to your Tea Shop," she said. "Whatever would have happened if we hadn't?"

Upon arriving at the hospital, we found her husband in the emergency room, all wired up with a heart monitor and an IV, sitting up in bed with a big smile on his face. "You saved my life," he told me gratefully. It was quite a beginning!

That evening, a friend from England, Jean, left for home after having helped us for three weeks in the preparations for opening. She left this little note, and it brought a real encouragement:

"I have watched you still vulnerable, and a little sore, from the lean years that you have been led through—yet still accepting God's will without question—acting on what would seem to be the strangest of instructions—not hesitating to make decisions—to go into overdraft—never losing the vision for a moment. In honesty, I have to admit that I doubted the success of such a venture—none of you had any experience and the notion of an 'English' tea shop seemed the least likely to succeed—yet I have watched it happen and been proved wrong! The enemy has attacked, and no doubt will go on trying, but you have not been overcome. Already, just three days, the Lord has shown His faithfulness and

wisdom—people, the people He desires to come—are coming, and already your book is being given out. Praise His name!

You have a whole new book to write, and I feel privileged to have been a witness to this part of it—I shall never be the same again. Israel has become real to me and Jerusalem, because of you, a place where my heart desires to be.

Watching you has taught me that I must 'listen' and respond without question—I leave Israel today open to whatever God desires of me—to live out what remains of this life waiting on Him—to sit peacefully at His feet or to act at His direction, providing I am in His will for me. Thank you so much..."

One day an Orthodox Jewish customer, a regular at the Tea Room, noticed me handing two visitors from Germany copies of my book in German. "What is that?" he inquired.

I knew that if I gave him a copy without some kind of explanation, he would probably just throw it away in the end. So I said, "It's the story of my life, but also about my faith in Jesus as the Messiah..."

His countenance changed totally as he snarled, "That's a *disease*..." to which I cheerfully countered, "Well, in that case, then I hope it's not curable!"

The very next day found him standing in front of the restaurant, loudly warning customers not to enter. "It's not kosher! Stay away! It belongs to a missionary!" (Jewish people don't as yet understand that when a Jewish person accepts Yeshua, they become fulfilled as Jews—they don't "convert" to a Gentile faith. That is why he saw me as a "missionary", a very negative term to Jewish people, representing someone who is trying to snatch people away from Judaism).

My son Joe, ever since he was a child, has known instinctively how to handle most situations and therefore he went outside to speak with him. The orthodox man did not stand in front of the restaurant again, but tried other tactics instead, beginning with reporting us to the Jerusalem Rabbinate. A few days later, the rabbi in charge of our kashrut license entered the Tea Room.

"I understand that you believe in 'Yeshu' (a Hebrew acronym meaning 'may his name and memory be erased' and the name used to represent Jesus) and that you give away books in the restaurant," he said in Hebrew.

"Well, yes, I do believe that Yeshua is the Messiah and the fulfillment of the story of Abraham and Isaac, the fulfillment of the Passover as He became the final sacrifice for our sins," I answered, also in Hebrew, trying to get in as much "testimony" as possible. "And yes, I do give out copies of my book in the Tea Room. But I don't understand what my personal beliefs have to do with whether or not the restaurant is kosher!"

"The Jerusalem Rabbinate does not want me to renew your kashrut license," he went on to tell me. "But, if you would write a letter to them, stating clearly that you would be willing not to give out your book in the Tea Room"—and then he leaned closer to whisper—"you could give it outside—I'll be glad to renew your license!"

"Yes, that would be no problem," I told him, and wrote the letter. He did not ask me to deny my faith or to never share the Lord, as I would not have been able to agree to that. But I had no problem with giving my books away to people outside of the restaurant! Even knowing what I believe, *he renewed our kashrut license.*

That week as well the carpenters were able to complete their work, installing a door to the kitchen, planters, a new front, an outside sign, matching chairs, the wooden covering for the counter, and a bookcase. It really looked lovely and all of it arrived just the day before Mike's visit! He loved the restaurant, and said he planned to come to work in it for the summer from June until September. That was very welcome news.

While he was visiting we were heading for another financial crisis, where without supplementary funding we would once again not be able to operate. It was still a result of my having so terribly underestimated the cost of opening and maintaining a restaurant. We found ourselves in January simply unable to pay the suppliers or the salaries. In the middle of the crisis, Mike left one morning on his way back to the USA. It was a terrible-feeling day, but I placed everyone and the restaurant on the altar and received the following verse from the Lord:

"O satisfy us early with Thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days...

Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children.

And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it."

Psalm 90:14; 16-17

The situation continued to worsen, however. In addition to financial pressures, lots of little things went wrong as well—one of our waitresses was sick, one of our Arab workers had his papers stolen, etc. etc. But the worse things got, the more encouraged I became. I decided that if the enemy were fighting *this* hard, then it was a definite sign that God had wonderful plans for our little Tea Room!

In the exact middle of this crisis, I received my January 1993 edition of "Guideposts" magazine, and inside found an article that was such an encouragement not to give up. The article was entitled, "*Failure was not on the Menu...*" and I quote a portion of it below:

My whole dream seemed to come crashing down one hot August evening four years ago as I slumped, dejected, at an old picnic table in the middle of the construction site. Dark steel structural girders loomed over me, seeming to overshadow any hopes I had for making a go of the cafeteria I was building.

I had been in the restaurant business most of my life, and for years I had dreamed of building the best cafeteria in the world. Yet now many people were predicting it would fail. Why? Because I did not plan to put alcohol on the menu. It wasn't that I had anything against other restaurants doing this; I simply felt God didn't want me to do it....

A business friend advised, "If you won't serve liquor, why, you're writing your own ticket for bankruptcy."

When I explained that I felt the banquet rooms would be used by church groups, he snickered. "You probably won't make enough money off *them* to pay your light bill."

"Well," I said, "I guess I'll have to leave that in God's hands." God hadn't failed me in my 36 years. But that didn't mean life had been easy...

I loved the restaurant business. It touched me to see folks enjoying good food the way I did. I was impressed by how many significant biblical events involved people eating together: Jesus feeding the 5,000; His grilling fish on the beach for the disciples; and that most intimate gathering of all, those awed men sitting down to a meal on the eve of Jesus' crucifixion...

On March 12, 1987, in a dedication service, we turned our first spadeful of dirt on what would be a colonial-style building covering one acre of ground. But from then on, it seemed every worldly thing set out to stop us. We figured on spending \$25,000 for permits; they ended up costing 10 times that. Then we had to truck a huge load of dirt off the site to bring it to proper grade. This cost another \$86,000. The contractor advised me to cut back on the quality of materials, such as the raw oak trim throughout the vast dining room. But I felt to do it right.

The concrete was poured, the structural steel erected, and the walls started going up. But a big storm hit us in July and blew down most of the roof trusses.

Then, in August 1988, came the worst day of all.

My pastor showed up at the work site and passed on a prediction from a fellow church member who was in the restaurant food distribution business. "He is terribly worried about you, Jonathan, and so am I," he said. "He says you'll go broke in six months, and I thought I'd better come down and warn you."

As he drove away, I sat down at the splintery old table and began calculating my costs. By now I was \$500,000 over budget.

Early dusk had fallen as I sat alone in the tomblike silence of the unfinished restaurant. Then other headlights flashed across in front and a car door thunked. A man in a dark business suit strode up the wooden plank into the building and began peering around. I rose and approached him. "Can I help you?"

The man eyed my old work clothes. "Oh, just looking around," he said. "I own a chain of funeral homes, and I hear the owner of this place isn't going to serve alcohol." He cocked his head. "He'll be bankrupt in six months. With all this space, I figure this could be the biggest funeral home in the Midwest." He shot me a quick smile. "I just wanted to see it now because I figure I'll be buying it from the fool who's building it."

After he left I slumped down at the picnic table and put my head on my arms. An evening breeze blew an old newspaper around my feet. "Oh, Lord," I groaned, "is there any *good* news?"

At that another car pulled up. *Oh no*, I wondered, *now what?* Two men and two women stepped out of the car. One man began telling the others, "There will be a dining room seating five hundred, an eighty-eight-foot cafeteria line, and some beautiful banquet halls seating six hundred..."

He stepped around the corner, and his face lighted up. "Jonathan! I'm just showing my friends your place." It was Dr. Gene Hood, pastor of the Nazarene church in nearby Beech Grove. "What's the matter?" he asked. "You look down. Had a tough day?"

"Well, you kind of picked the worst day of my life." I recited my troubles, ending up with the "funeral" the local undertaker had just conducted.



He laughed at the story. "Well, I'm excited about your plans," he said. "I can just see all the Southern gospel singers in your banquet halls." Gospel singers? What was he talking about?

Dr. Hood leaned across the table. "If you have enough faith to build this place, I have enough faith to help you keep those banquet halls filled with great gospel singing groups."

That was the encouragement I needed. Three months later, on November 7, 1988, we opened our doors. Customers began streaming in, and they have been crowding our Cafeteria and Banquet Hall ever since. Dr. Hood was true to his word; every six weeks our function rooms play host to gospel concerts. And even without liquor, our banquet rooms were quickly booked up, and churches began reserving them far in advance.

So the naysayers were wrong. We're thriving. All of which, I guess, proves that if you count the cost, stick to your principles, and leave everything in God's hands, you'll have a menu that can't fail...

Jonathan Byrd, Greenwood, Indiana

That little article brought such an encouragement to me as well! I had also greatly underestimated the cost of opening a new restaurant. The initial \$10,000 had been far less than the actual amount we had needed. Even the *additional* amount graciously sent by George only helped to meet the most basic necessities. But all of it had cost far more than I had ever imagined! There were costs that we never would have even *thought* of until we really got into the business. But of course, our costs were not in Jonathan's category at all, and even *he* had been able to open—and his restaurant was a success! It also gave me faith to know that if I continued sharing the Lord's love, His help would also continue. And it did, in some rather amazing ways.

Since we truly were in a crisis, I called various friends for prayer, as I needed reinforcements in this spiritual warfare! And then I began to pray and fast. While in prayer, I said, "Oh Lord, isn't there someone *somewhere* who can help us?" On the third day of the fast, on a Wednesday morning, I felt to call a friend of mine in Europe, Sarah, to ask her if I could borrow ten thousand dollars. That was definitely the amount we needed in order to survive, but His direction shocked me to bits. I had never asked her before for anything in all the years that we had been friends. It was scary to think about, but God's instruction had been firm. It was so hard to make myself do it. Pride seems to be my never-ending struggle!

"But Lord," I responded, (mostly since I was looking for a reprieve), "You told me never to *ask* anyone for money!" For years I had indeed lived by faith, telling Him alone of my needs and trusting *His* prompting of others to help or for help to come in some way. So this direction from Him to literally *ask* someone for money once again came as a complete surprise!

"I told you never to ask anyone else for help...unless I *tell* you to ask someone for help..." was the Lord's immediate reply.

One more time the answer was clear. It was *obedience* that mattered—not some arbitrary rule! As I didn't have Sarah's phone number, I sent her the following telegram:

*"Have something urgent to ask you. Please phone me on Friday evening..."*

Friday evening arrived all too quickly, and my heart was beating like crazy when the phone actually rang. (Pride, to be sure).

"Esther! I'm so interested to hear what you wish to ask me!" she exclaimed. "However, as you know, I'm a bit hard of hearing, especially when it comes to telephone calls. So I'm going to put my husband on the phone..."

That information *really* made me cringe, for her husband was a very formal person, and I was embarrassed enough as it was! However, when I heard his voice instead of hers, there was nothing in the world to do but explain the reason for my call. I told him about the Tea Room, that it was a special place where God's love could really be felt. I then told him of the financial situation and the result of my time of prayer and fasting. "And so," I concluded, "out of all the people I knew in the world, the Lord told me to contact your wife...and, um, ask her if I could, um, possibly borrow ten thousand dollars..."

The pause that followed made me want to sink through the floor and disappear. "Our money is tied up in financial institutions," he replied at last, "and even if it were possible to send it...if something were to happen to the Tea Room, how would we be able to get the money back?" he asked.

Before I had a chance to answer (although there was nothing I could have said anyway), Sarah said something in the background.

"Oh, my wife wants me to tell you," he said, "that on Wednesday (the very day that the Lord had prompted me to contact them), with my permission, and as a gift, not as a loan, she already felt to send one thousand dollars to your account in Jerusalem..."

At that point I could hear Sarah once again in the background. "Oh, pardon me," her husband added. "It's simply my poor English. On Wednesday, as a gift and not as a loan, she felt to send to your account in Jerusalem *ten thousand dollars*..." (Perhaps he thought I already knew that and was still asking for *more*!) I was so amazed! Even then, at the moment when I was talking with them, the money had already arrived in my account—and I hadn't even known it was there! The Lord had me contact them, knowing she had *already obeyed Him and sent the \$10,000*—just so that her husband would know that it was indeed an emergency—and that she had indeed heard from the Lord when she had felt to send the money. "And it's a gift," he added. "It's not to be returned."

Once again, I was astonished. Out of all the people I knew in the world, the Lord had told me to contact this one particular friend. I had obeyed, even though it had been extremely hard for me to do. But the Lord knew that even *before* I had sent the telegram—the money was already on its way! He had wanted me to speak to them (without my knowing that the money had been sent), just as a special confirmation to *them* that the gift was indeed urgently needed—and to confirm as well that she had indeed heard from the Lord in having sent it! She later wrote me the following letter:

"It encouraged me a lot that my gift was so right in time and that the Lord's voice was heard by me in such a nerve-racking time." (Her husband had recently been hospitalized and was just then recovering). "May He continue to speak to me and I...to hear His gentle voice and obey Him..."

Since our restaurant was kosher, we closed during the week-long Passover festival. It gave us a good chance to reorganize and clean and do some additional work on the restaurant. One day I planned to spend alone there, to re-organize the counter area, to clean, but most especially simply to pray. There were still some unexpected difficulties, and I was feeling discouraged and worn down by it all. I didn't have much money with me that day, but I was hungry, so at the Lord's prompting I went to a little Chinese restaurant a few doors down from ours. I had never been there before, but the food was good! Just before I finished, a believer I knew came by. "I was just coming here myself," he said. "Save me a seat!" While he went in to get his food, my almost-empty plate blew in the wind—into the bag he had left on the chair! It really made me laugh, as it was so silly. I cleaned as much of the rice out of it as I could.

He asked how things were going, and I told him I was feeling a bit discouraged, as it was still such a battle.

He told me about a Bible study he had been to the night before. "They were talking about Jacob," he said. "He had received the news that his beloved son Joseph had died in a pit. He immediately forgot all of God's promises to him, and refused to be comforted. Instead he allowed blackness to enter—for years, vowing he would go to the grave mourning for his son. Esther, give the problem to God. Don't be discouraged!" Then he told a testimony of something that had happened to his wife and how the Lord had helped. How glad I was that I had obeyed the Lord and gone to the Chinese restaurant, for I returned to the Tea Room with a song in my heart.

After a year the Tea Room moved to a much larger premise, a beautiful old building with thick stone walls and a lovely courtyard garden. This building was so much like the vision I had seen on the day that the Lord had initially given me the Tea Room idea. The Danish architect Conrad Schick, who also built and designed other historic buildings in Jerusalem, such as the Anglican School, Christ Church, and the Swedish Institute, built it in the last century. It had an old-world charm of its very own! The little Tea Room we were moving from helped us to really appreciate this larger building in every way! By then we already had regular customers, and word began to spread. Primarily, people felt the peacefulness of the Lord's love, and that is what made the restaurant so special. So many lovely things happened, all ordained by the Lord, that there would never be space to tell them all. However, I'll share a few of the stories, just to give you a sense of why the battle was so great.

The very day that we were moving, someone we knew well came into the restaurant with a young man who lived in an Arab village across the green line. "He's looking for a job, and I thought you might have an opening for him," I was told immediately. I silently asked the Lord, who answered that not only was I to hire him on the spot, but that he was to be a part of the waiting staff. This was a shock, for the help that we needed was in the kitchen! However, I obeyed the Lord, and David began to work that very day. He seemed so much at home in the Jewish section of the city, even though he had come from a completely Arab background and had been a child of the intifada, the Arab uprising against Israel. I soon discovered, however, that he was from an Arab Christian background, and truly knew the Lord. It was a blessing to have him as part of the staff. There is an incredible addition to his story coming later in this book!

The week following the move to the wonderful new premises, I actually had to leave for a speaking tour in Germany! So a few days after we were settled and functioning again, I left for two weeks. The Shabbat just before my trip abroad, the telephone rang as we were sitting down at the table for Shabbat dinner. It was someone from Germany by the name of Joachim Bussman. He called to tell me that, as he was blind, his wife had read my entire book to him in German and that both of them had been so blessed by it. He found an amazing way to track down my telephone number, and therefore called!

This was one of those great moments in life where disobedience or insensitivity to the Lord due-to-the-pressures-of-dinner-on-the-table-or-whatever, could have made me miss something that was meant to be a precious part of my life from then on. For as I was speaking with him, the Lord said, "Visit them on your trip to Germany next week..." To do this meant two things. First of all, I had to ignore the complaints of my sons and their friends, who were waiting to bless the wine and the bread and to EAT, while I obtained the necessary information. And secondly, it meant I would have to convince the people I would be travelling with in Germany to drive a long distance from any planned itinerary—people who did not like to do seemingly impractical things. But I ploughed ahead, took Joachim and Elizabeth's telephone number, received simple travel instructions, and arranged to see them the following week. This little step of obedience became such an integral part of the Tea Room story even until now!

When we arrived at last at their home in a small town in northern Germany, we shared a lovely meal with them, and as we spoke together a most amazing story unfolded! Joachim received monthly a sum of money from the German government due to his disability as a blind person. He and Elizabeth had strongly felt from the Lord that whatever money they received from this fund was to be used in some way to bless Israel and the Jewish people, stemming from their deep sadness over what had occurred during the Holocaust. However, a few years ago, the Lord had told them to begin to save that pension, and that one day He would let them know what the funds were for. So they saved and saved, and some years passed. Just before they discovered my book, Germany was soon to change some banking laws, and they knew that a lot of the money would therefore be lost to taxes. So they began to pray in earnest for the Lord to show them quickly where the funds were meant to go. At the same time, in Jerusalem, we were praying like crazy for help to keep the Tea Room functioning so that the testimony of God's love could continue—and then, on that day, *the Lord brought us all together!* To begin with, after serious prayer, Joachim and Elizabeth felt to cover some outstanding debts that the Tea Room had accrued, plus—wonder of wonders—to purchase me a car! This helped to meet such an incredible need, for the moshav on which we lived was quite a distance by bus from the centre of town. The buses ran infrequently to such an out-of-the-way place with transportation for the day ending at 9:30 p.m. Since I had to bring many things back and forth between the Tea Room and home daily, it was a really difficult situation. A car would also enable me to store a great many books, making it easier to give them away in larger numbers. A short time following my return to Jerusalem, I was actually able to order a brand new 1994 Toyota Corolla! I had told them that I would have been satisfied with a much smaller car; but Joachim, on a previous visit to Israel, had experienced the hilly driving and therefore insisted that a stronger car was

definitely needed. The enlarged trunk and storage space made such a difference. Plus when we went to the car dealership, neither of my over-six-foot-tall sons even *fit* into the compact cars!

Elizabeth was quite ill at the time with leukemia, and was therefore in a great deal of pain and tired easily. She had such a sweet and caring spirit, however, and a very strong faith! I told her that her name in Hebrew was actually Elisheva, and that is what I called her from then on. As the months passed they both became such special friends.

Almost a year later I received a telephone call from their son to inform me that Elisheva had just died. As there was still time before the funeral, I found out directions to the funeral parlour, asking him not to tell his father that I would be coming. I had wanted it to be a special encouragement to him on a day when he would be feeling so lost, for him to know that I truly cared about them as people and as friends—totally apart from the gifts they had given! When people went up to Joachim to give condolences following the service, he was indeed amazed to find out that *I* was one of those people!

In the years following, whenever there was a crisis or a need at the Tea Room, due to his beautiful sensitivity to the Lord, the phone would invariably ring and he would ask, “What’s the problem?” What blessed me so much about Joachim, and Elisheva when she was still alive, was that they had such a *joy* in giving. Their delight in helping made the Scriptures on giving come to life and taught me so much about what it *truly* meant when Yeshua said “it is more blessed to give than to receive...” Of all my friends, Joachim especially understood the spiritual warfare of this open witness in Jerusalem, and therefore he understood why the problems and the battles were never-ending. He didn’t weary of hearing of difficulties, and his hallmark comment would soon become, “Well, at least you’re still laughing!” He helped in every way possible with his little fund. One time we needed a new baking oven and stove, and he happily sent the money. He typed out the following letter of encouragement to send with the cheque:

Dear Esther,

Enclosed I send you the stove. I am curious what it will look like. Do not be scared by the difficulties. We are transparent in the Truth of His Light, for we are walking already here in Heaven. Those who challenge us contradict the Lord in us and must surrender before long. So keep a stiff upper lip and do not yield to their pressure. It is His world and not theirs. Yeshua loves you and He is faithful...

He was referring to a number of well-meaning friends who somehow couldn’t grasp the fact that this restaurant was not set up like a business in the world and therefore somehow blamed me for the continual difficulties. The primary purpose of the Tea Room was as a venue to share God’s love—and *not* to make a fortune. I trusted the Lord for daily bread, and trusted Him as well to keep the restaurant operational and the bills paid as long as it was His will to do so. The never-ending battles occurred because the spiritual opposition was fierce. But if someone looked at it all from a simply *practical* viewpoint, it would be impossible to grasp. To them, it would look like a complete failure, for they looked at it only in worldly terms. I guess when Yeshua died on the cross it also looked like a failure. But since I knew the incredible *spiritual* fruit, and Joachim knew it as well, what happened in the natural realm was inconsequential. I’m



sure that, too, was the only way Paul was able to keep his perspective in the far more adverse circumstances that *he* had faced. I had not been imprisoned, beaten, let down a wall in a basket, shipwrecked, etc. etc. Yet no matter what happened to Paul in the natural realm, *his faith and his resolve to continue were unshakeable*. When people judged it superficially, I'm afraid I wasn't as magnanimous as Paul had been. It hurt. As I said, I worked hard, many hours every day, at a job that didn't suit me temperamentally in the least. As a matter of fact, the Lord had combined in one job all the things that I hate the most in life. But I did it because I had seen the beauty of God's love there. When I was judged quite severely by people that I cared about, I tried so hard to make them understand the *real* issues. But they never could quite grasp the spiritual dimensions of it all. That is why Joachim tried to console me in his letter that day as he dispatched another provision of God's miracle help in the finances for a new stove. Too bad I'm not perfect, then it wouldn't have bothered me at all. (I wouldn't *really* want to be perfect, however. It sounds too boring!)

In the spring, I left Joe in charge of the restaurant and travelled to Arizona to visit with my mother. During that time Joe phoned to tell me that the restaurant faced another financial crisis, due to having to close a number of days for Memorial Day, Holocaust Remembrance Day, and Independence Day, as well as to other factors. Being over 10,000 miles away, I had no idea what I could do except to pray! I had a wonderful visit with my mom, rejoicing over and over again that she had indeed come to know the Lord and we could share in His love together. Even now, some years after her death, I still can feel the wonder of it all.

On my way back to Israel, I had a two-hour stopover at BWI Airport in Baltimore, and so it was a great opportunity to have a meeting with Sid and Betsy Rigell. They were a couple I had met in 1977 by the shores of the Sea of Galilee at Capernaum. Someone I knew from their tour group introduced me to them. At the moment that they met me, the Lord spoke to them, saying, "She is my servant. Help her in any way that you can..." They took His commission to them seriously! When I was later speaking in the States, they invited me to their precious little church and arranged for me to speak in a number of other places. As we travelled together then, the Lord truly established "a three-way bond that cannot easily be broken..." and they became my spiritual mom and dad. We shared a lot of adventures together over the years! But we were later to discover just how amazing our meeting by the Sea of Galilee had truly been, as the following story from "*I Am My Beloved's*" illustrates:

While visiting with my parents in the summer of 1984, I happened to mention to my mother, "Mom, do you remember on the 'Monopoly' game the hotels on the corner of Boardwalk and Park Place, the best property on the game board? Well, the game is based on Atlantic City, and it just so happens that at one time Betsy's family owned two hotels on that very corner! I can't remember the name of the hotel, though," I said.

Surprisingly, my mother asked, "Could it have been the Marlborough-Blenheim?"

"Yes, I think that's it! Why?" I asked her.

"Well, it just so happens that every year that I can remember, from the time that I was a small child until around 1941, my parents, my three sisters and I spent every February holiday at the Marlborough-Blenheim in Atlantic City! It was

a lovely hotel,” she went on to say. “I even remember that the bathtubs had hot salt water if you wanted it!” My dad added that he and my mom had also stayed at the hotel in later years after their marriage. I was so amazed!

A few weeks later, when I was visiting Sid and Betsy in the States at Betsy’s father’s lovely home near the Chesapeake Bay, I asked her father, “Pappy, do you remember a Jewish family from Connecticut who visited your hotel every year in February for quite a few years? They stopped coming as a family around 1941, I think.” (Since the hotels were huge, it wasn’t too likely that he would remember).

“Yes, seems like I do remember a family...from a department store.” My eyes opened wide, as my grandfather had been on the managerial staff of ‘G. Fox & Company’, an excellent old-time Hartford department store. Pappy continued, “I remember them because they especially liked little Betsy. They always brought gifts to her—and she kept them!” (She had been five or six years old at the time).

How we all felt the Lord’s love at that moment! We were so amazed with this news! To think that my own grandparents had been a part of Betsy’s life so many years before! And Betsy still remembered the gifts that she had received—gigantic dolls and matching furniture, chiffon dresses and silk pajamas, etc. (When we later shared this with my mother, she also remembered little Betsy and the gifts!) The Scriptures tell us so beautifully:

“Cast your bread upon the waters: for thou shalt  
find it after many days...”

Ecclesiastes 11: 1

To think that my very own grandparents had especially reached out to Betsy all those years ago—and then, 45 years later—Sid and Betsy met their granddaughter in Capernaum, in Israel, with the instant instructions to help her in any way possible! We knew then in an even deeper way that the bond that the Lord had given us was truly a gift from Him, that there was no mistake about it whatsoever. It had been quite a testimony to my own parents as well. To think that our lives had been knitted together even before I was born!

As we sat together that day in the BWI airport, I told them about the visit with my mom and many of the events concerning the Tea Room. Just before I was set to board the plane, Sid, or “Abba”, as I called him, said to “Ema” Betsy, “I sense from the Lord that there’s still a real financial need, and I think we should help. What amount do you think?” he asked her, with a twinkle in his eyes. My eyes must have become as big as

saucers, for I had prayed so hard to be able to return to Israel with help—but I couldn't imagine how it would happen! And here it was, just a few minutes before the deadline!

"One?" she asked.

"Actually, I think it should be 'five'," Sid replied. "The Lord gave me that figure already three days ago..." And so I returned to Israel with \$5,000—just the amount we needed to meet *that* crisis!

The Tea Room itself was filled with plants and we always had soft instrumental music playing, such as Zamfir, Mantovani, Clayderman, etc. We also had a resident canary that sang along with all his heart, and my field spaniel, Marike, was a daily part of the restaurant scene. She is such a dignified dog and every true tea room has to have one! (Mike and I adopted a little homeless dog whom we named Motek and who would have thrown herself at customers demanding food—so needless to say not every dog would have been amenable!) In the garden area, I had installed a latticework fence to block out the parking lot behind the restaurant. I had planted jasmine and honeysuckle, which grew luxuriantly in a short period of time and gave off the most heavenly scents—especially in the early mornings and evenings. We also planted lots of flowers and rose bushes, and there was a little well in the centre of the courtyard that I filled with pansies. Two nights a week we had Balalaika music performed by a really talented family of musicians from Russia, and on Friday afternoons before Shabbat a Russian trio played from classical to jazz in the garden. Our Russian cook (his wife was our baker and their son a waiter) had also brought to us one day an extremely talented Russian artist by the name of Ilya Rubin. His work was breathtaking, and we were able to hold an exhibition to honour his talent and to help him to become known in Israel. We later opened a gallery adjoining the restaurant to exhibit and sell his beautiful oil paintings. So we were able to help a number of new immigrants from the former Soviet Union!

Many special, God-ordained things happened day by day, which demonstrated always His love and tenderness towards His people. For example, one day a former "Refusenik" wanted to celebrate his fiftieth birthday with a number of his cronies. (A "refusenik" was the term given to Jewish people in the communist days that applied for visas to immigrate to Israel and were therefore persecuted by the communist regime). We planned the menu and set the date. He especially loved the soft music we always had playing! At any rate, one winter's night his little party was held, and everything was going beautifully—until the electricity went out. That happens from time to time in Jerusalem, especially during the electrical overload that wintertime brings. It wasn't a problem, since we cooked with gas and had plenty of candles. He was disappointed that the music stopped, however, but there was nothing we could do about *that*! There was a very dear old rabbi who had come to give a message and to bless him. I couldn't understand the Russian, but he had such a precious spirit, I knew he must have been saying something wonderful. He concluded with a humble prayer, and at the very moment that he said, "Amen", the lights came on again! The timing was superb, and everyone cheered! We could truly feel the Father's love.

Another day a woman from England came in, sat down and ordered. As she was waiting for her food, she casually walked over to look at the large print of a summertime field that was hanging above the fireplace. Suddenly she shrieked, "The artist is my

sister!” Her sister lived in the United States, and she had never before seen her sister’s work. She was so happy and amazed! And a year later, the artist *herself* came to visit!

One evening, when we had all Russians on the serving staff, I dropped by the Tea Room for a few minutes. As I walked through the garden area towards the building entrance, I did a double take as I walked by. When I arrived inside, I whispered to the waiters, “That’s Benjamin Netanyahu and his wife sitting outside!” Because the serving staff that night were all new immigrants, somehow they hadn’t recognized him! And if I hadn’t “dropped by”, we never would have even known he had been there! It was so cute after that to watch the staff—including the kitchen staff—walk outside one by one, trying to act nonchalant, but definitely wanting to see him for themselves!

They ended up coming quite a few times, always accompanied by bodyguards, of course. Sadly, the last time they came, just before he was elected Prime Minister, it was on a Saturday night—the busiest time of all—and there wasn’t a single table to be had in the entire restaurant! We tried to arrange a special table for them all but because the restaurant was so full, the bodyguards advised against it for security reasons. It was fun, however—the restaurant was full of noise and life until they all entered, and then all the noise and activity momentarily stopped. (“Bibi” especially liked our summer gazpacho—my Aunt Henrietta’s special recipe.)

Another day one of our customers brought someone into the restaurant that was seeking God’s love and asked me to pray for her. When I mentioned in my prayer, “Please forgive her for everything she has ever done, and help her to become a new person in you,” she herself began to cry! She took home a copy of my book (from the car), and a few days later she returned to the restaurant.

“I read that book day and night, and I also want to know His love.” It was surprisingly quiet that afternoon, so we were able to pray together in the corner booth as she also placed her life in the Lord’s hands.

Yet another day, there was some minor crisis and when a believing friend stopped by the restaurant, I asked him to pray with me in the gallery for a minute. Our Russian cook overheard that remark, and quite surprisingly, he said, “May I join you?”

“But we’re going there to pray, Sasha,” I told him.

“I know,” Sasha replied.

When the three of us sat down together, Sasha said quietly, “I want to know the Lord. I have watched you for a long time, and I see His peace and love. I know that many times He has helped you, too, and by now I know that it is real. So please, help me to know what to do so that I can know Him, too...”

I explained it all to him, telling him that salvation was nothing that could be “earned”, but that it was a gift from the Father’s heart. And that very day, so unexpectedly, Sasha bowed his head and gave his life to the Lord through the atonement of his Messiah. It was an awesome, God-ordained moment, to be sure, and experiences such as that one always made the spiritual fight worthwhile.

There is yet another story that I feel to share. This occurred one morning when I had returned home to Israel from a trip abroad. En route, I had stopped in Germany to see Joachim and had received a very large financial gift from him to pay for the printing of my original book in Dutch. I had returned to Israel on a Thursday evening, and on

Friday morning I entered the Tea Room early. I was planning to deposit the money in the bank, as I had it in cash, and then do all the usual Friday morning pre-Shabbat errands.

Waiting for me as I entered the restaurant was someone I had known for many years. He was a waiter at a coffee shop in town where I have been going since 1978. Lots of times it was a family tradition to have breakfasted there on Friday mornings! On that particular day, he looked terrible.

"Esther, I heard that you were coming back today, and I have to speak with you. You're my last chance," he said, his voice shaking. He then went on to tell me that he was in desperate need of immediate, emergency heart surgery. The surgery was scheduled for Sunday morning, and that meant that he would have to be admitted to the hospital that very day, before the beginning of Shabbat, in order to be prepared for the surgery Sunday morning.

"I have 'kupat cholim'," he informed me, referring to the compulsory health insurance program. "However, through them I could not schedule the surgery for a number of weeks, and the doctors are clear that I would not survive that long, as this is a total crisis situation. Therefore I need to pay for the surgery and the hospitalization in cash, today," he told me. And then he mentioned the sum—\$20,000!

There is a well-known Jewish axiom that if you save a single person, it's as though you save the whole world. It stresses the high Jewish premium placed on human life. The amount that he mentioned was the exact amount that I had in my purse, in cash, at that very moment. Knowing the greatness of the Father's love for each of His children, I knew in a second that the money was in hand that very day to save dear Joseph's life. He was a Holocaust survivor, and Joseph and his sister were the only members of his family to have survived. There was not a moment to lose, and so, with the blessings of the Lord, I handed him the entire sum. Not only did it save his life *physically*, but for all eternity as well, for he later gave his life to the Lord. And a trust fund in Germany a year later provided the money for the Dutch book—with a special message from the German donators to the Dutch readers, asking their forgiveness for the pain caused to the nation of Holland during the Nazi regime. Even now, years later, Joseph's health—and his faith—remain strong.

Because of the court case so many years before, I was well known in Israel as a Believer in Yeshua, and in a way that truly gave me the freedom to be what I was! Someone could report me to anyone, and they would already know about me—from the Ministry of Interior to the orthodox *Jewish Press*, which always wrote about me with the sentence, "an already familiar name..."

Of course, we had other experiences as well. The campaign against us started by the orthodox customer in the little Tea Room never stopped. There are three major anti-missionary organizations in Israel, and they all had campaigns against me. For example, a three page article entitled "Tea Room Missionary in Jerusalem" was written in a publication called "Biblical Polemics", with my picture included! Even though it was meant to be negative, the author had included wonderful quotes from my book. Another organization plastered the city with the sign shown on the following page.

While again this was certainly meant to dissuade people from coming, in many ways it had the opposite effect. Articles and signs simply gave my faith and me, the Tea



Room and my book, incredible free advertisement. A number of people asked questions and took home books as a result, and some reported that they had come to know the Lord's love through the anointing of His love upon the books. There was even an orthodox group who at one time campaigned against us—but who later liked the Tea Room so much that they used it for their dating service!

# **NOTICE**

**Esther Korson**  
proprietress of  
**Ye Olde English Tea Room**  
(68 Jaffa Road, Jerusalem)  
in her book

**I Am My Beloved's**  
makes the following statement:

**"I am a Jewish Believer in Jesus"**

**"As I stood gazing at this tiny cross...it helped me  
to understand that when we as the followers of Christ..."**

**"And as for my Jewish friends...I can feel in the very depths  
of my heart Jesus' longing to gather you to Himself..."**

**"What has happened in and through rabbinical Judaism is that  
the rabbis have usurped the authority of G-d's Word, the Tanach,  
and have replaced the source itself with countless opinions, interpretations,  
definitions and conclusions which are totally in disharmony and disagreement  
with the very teaching of the Tanach."**

**It may be a nice restaurant, but do you wish to support  
someone who seeks to convert Jews to Christianity?  
Ask your Rav for his opinion.**

**Shmuel Golding, Director, and Israel Silverberg, Coordinator, Anti-Missionary Task Force**

One of the main rumours started was that all of the profits from the restaurant went to support the "Jews for Jesus" organization. This one had an impact only throughout the English-speaking Jewish community, of course, for Sabras (native-born

Israelis) would have no idea to what they were even referring. But believe me, that rumour spread even internationally! Many people asked me directly, however, which is what I appreciate about Israeli life. For example, one woman called, a regular customer, telling that she had heard that rumour.

“First of all,” I responded, “*what* profits?” We both laughed. Then I said, “Jews for Jesus is a small organization based in California, and I honestly don’t know a single person from it! However, I do believe personally that Yeshua, Jesus, is the Messiah of the Jewish people...”

“Thank goodness! I’ll be back!” was her instantaneous reply. And, strangely enough, that was the response of most. They didn’t mind what I *believed*—as long as I didn’t support Jews for Jesus!

We had customers by then that truly felt like family. There were even a few couples who had either met at the Tea Room, or gotten engaged there, and came to celebrate all their milestones in life. But because of the spiritual dimensions to it all, the difficulties were never-ending. On the other hand, for every problem the Lord had a solution, so truly we had nothing to fear. Two additional examples will suffice to let you know what I mean!

One day a tour group from Germany was visiting in Jerusalem led by a pastor and his wife who had been so encouraging and supportive of the Tea Room ministry. I had been invited to address the group at their hotel early one morning to tell the Tea Room story. At the end, someone asked if there were any particular needs for prayer.

“Well, the main way that the enemy has attacked this enterprise has been through the area of finances. I’m not telling you this as a request for money,” I told them, “for I continue to trust the Lord. I’m telling it because the battle is *real* and on going and prayer can make such a difference...”

That very day, the thirty-five members of the tour group came with their hosts, the Lohmann’s, for lunch at the restaurant. It was a blessing to have them visit! A short while after they arrived, as we were busy preparing and serving their orders, a policeman entered the restaurant—replete with handcuffs—accompanied by someone from the government. Just a few hours after I had requested prayer against financial difficulties, they had come to arrest me!

It turns out that my accountant had forgotten to tell me that I needed to pay National Insurance (called in Hebrew “B’tuach Leumi”) for the staff, and therefore the bill had accumulated for over a year to the total of 14,000 shekels! (At that time it equaled more than \$4,000 US dollars). This was quite a shock, as I had *hired* an accountant simply as a guarantee that just that very thing would never happen! Since I had never been in business before, and especially not in Israel, I knew nothing of the rules and regulations in existence here. So I had trusted the accountant to be certain that everything was properly accounted for and paid!

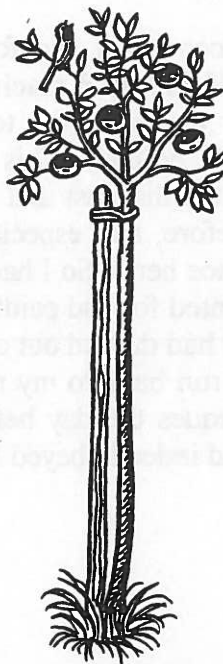
That very morning, as I had dashed out of the house en route to the hotel to speak, the Lord had prompted me to run back to my room to stick a new chequebook into my purse, as I had run out of cheques the day before. I had hesitated a minute, as I was already late, but in the end I had indeed obeyed His gentle urging.

When I explained to the police officer and the government representative that I had known nothing about the bill until that very moment, the government employee called his supervisor. He then reported, "Well, if you can write me a cheque right now for the entire amount, the B'Tuach Leumi office will give you ten days to come into the office and work out a payment schedule, and then they will return the cheque for the entire amount to you."

Can you imagine that my simple obedience in grabbing a new chequebook saved me from going to *jail*? The members of the tour group certainly saw for themselves the reality of the battle, and one member of the tour felt from the Lord to pay the bill. Isn't that incredible?

Another day an equally unexpected catastrophe occurred, this time from the water department. Right in the middle of a busy business day, someone came rushing in to inform me that our water had just been disconnected. There is no way a restaurant can function without *water*, so this was serious news indeed. There were two other small businesses attached to the outside end of our building, and it seems that one of them kept getting water bills for all three businesses combined, but never did anything about paying them or notifying us of the need to pay them either. The bills had accumulated until over 12,000 NIS were due, and the company simply cut the water supply. As it turns out, most of the bill was ours, since we certainly used the greatest percentage of water. It took a day to work *those* payments out, and in the meanwhile we lost an entire day of business. The day *that* happened Joachim called to say, "What's going on? I had a sense from the Lord to contact you today!" and that dear man helped us once again.

The spiritual warfare was real with the enemy trying without fail to close us down—but he never succeeded, as the Lord was ever faithful to help us. All went well until 1996...



## CHAPTER FIVE

### *"The Jerusalem Tea Party"*

The owner of the building in which the Tea House resided, who I'll call "Mr. B." was a 92-year old multi-millionaire from Egypt who had purchased a great deal of downtown Jerusalem real estate during the days of the British Mandate. Even though he was so wealthy, he lived like a pauper in a dingy old office on Jaffa Road, and was known as a modern-day "Scrooge" like the character in Charles Dickens' famous old story. Mr. B. handled his dealings with tenants the Arab way, refusing to give leases lasting more than a year at a time and renewing each lease with a ceremony over coffee.

We had been required each year to pay the shekel equivalent of \$7500 in advance, and then an additional percentage of the total sales at the end of the lease. For such a lovely old building, the rent had always been reasonable. In February 1996, the lease was again up for renewal. By God's grace I had the requisite \$7500, and met him one morning in the Tea Room with expectations of another renewal.

He arrived, sat down, and then said, so unexpectedly, "I've decided that I will not renew the lease unless you agree to pay more. By now you should be able to pay at least double the previous amount, and I want the entire amount paid today one year in advance." He paused, and I'm glad I didn't have a mirror to see the expression on my face. After catching his breath, he continued, "I want \$26,000 right now."

"But all I have is the \$7500 that we had previously agreed upon!" I exclaimed.

Like most misers, he had a paranoia that people had huge caches of money they were hiding from him, and I could tell that he clearly did not believe me, and furthermore, didn't care.

"Whatever shall I do?" I asked him.

"Well, if you don't have the \$26,000, you'll simply have to leave the premises by tomorrow when your current lease expires," he advised, as though it were the most natural thing in all the world.

I looked around at the loveliness of the Tea Room, thought of all the hours and hours of hard work that had gone into it, all the prayers, all the miracles, and handled the entire situation in a totally mature and dignified manner. I burst into tears!

He finally agreed to take the \$7500 as a down payment, and he then gave me a month to come up with the remainder of the money. But he insisted that I sign the new lease at once in order for the restaurant to remain open. As I sat there that day, feeling so tired and discouraged, I reviewed in my mind many of the miracles of God since the Tea Room had come into existence, and it just didn't seem as though it was meant to close the very next day! It had become such an oasis for so many in the centre of Jerusalem, and it was the sweetness of the Lord's Spirit that made it such a special place. And so I signed the lease, somehow trusting that the Lord would find a way to help us once again.

If things had continued normally, we would have indeed been able to pay the remainder of the rent within a relatively short period of time. By then we were very

popular with Israelis, and many celebrations were held there—bar mitzvah dinners, brit's, birthday parties, and even a wedding. Believers came as well from many nations. The restaurant by then was also known internationally to the Jewish community, as many customers would tell us that they had heard of us from friends in their country of origin who had also visited us upon their visits to Israel. We were also included in *Fodor's Travel Guide* and *Links*, Israel's business magazine, had written an incredible article as well. Articles especially featuring the gallery were included in the Israeli Russian press. It all helped, to be sure!

However, life in Israel is never quite normal, and just two weeks after the signing of the new lease a great tragedy occurred in the centre of the city, just two blocks from where the Tea Room was located. A #18 bus was bombed by Arab terrorists, killing a number of people and injuring many more. Two weeks later, a second #18 bus was bombed, also on Jaffa Road a few blocks from the restaurant in the opposite direction. The #18 bus route passed directly in front of our building. (Joe heard the second bombing as he was at the restaurant at the time. He ran to the scene to try to help minutes after the explosion occurred. He said it was such a terrible sight, with body parts on the buildings and destruction everywhere).

Jerusalem is a very emotional city, and people took these terrible attacks very much to heart. It was frightening that the terrorists had been able to penetrate to the very heart of the city, not just once, but twice. Following the tragedies, people were too depressed and afraid to come to town for quite a while. People also did not have the heart to go out to eat or to other places of entertainment. As a result, all of the businesses in the centre of town suffered, with some having to close. It of course adversely affected us as well, as business dropped off radically. We barely had the money to pay salaries and suppliers, with nothing whatsoever left over to pay the landlord his demands. When I spoke with him about it, he agreed reluctantly to extend the time for the remaining payment to be made.

Some special things happened even during that difficult time, however. For example, when business was so poor following the bombing, I called our advertiser at the *Jerusalem Post* to tell him that for the first time I could no longer afford to advertise the Tea Room in the newspaper, at least not until the situation improved. He called me back a few days later to tell me that a long-standing member of the staff was due to retire and they wanted to honour him with a farewell party.

"Why don't you fix us a four-course dinner for twenty, and we'll exchange it for advertising?" he suggested. So we fixed them a special dinner including our by-then famous three-layer cake, and told them that in cash it was equivalent to two bi-monthly advertisements. A few days following the celebration, he phoned to tell us that the staff had such a wonderful time, they were giving us *five* advertisements instead!

A few weeks after the second bus bombing, we were still having a financial struggle, as were most of the inner-city businesses. Just then one of the Lord's unexpected times of testing arrived, where once again He proved that logic and practicality had nothing whatsoever to do with *His* solutions and will! One afternoon I received a telephone call at the Tea Room from a young woman whom years earlier had been a fairly regular guest at our Shabbat dinner table. She had had a lifelong struggle



with severe drug addiction, and had recently participated in a Christian rehabilitation program, which had a rather harsh and judgmental approach. However, toward the end of the year of rehabilitation, she again began to take drugs. This resulted in her immediate expulsion from the program and rejection by many Christians in her community. The judgment and condemnation she received simply fed into her own feelings of self-rejection and inadequacy by making her feel guilty and worthless and more miserable than ever. Of course, at the moment that she called, I knew none of this. She simply called to ask if I possibly had a job available for her at the restaurant.

Throughout the years, I've been trained in obedience by the hand of the Lord, and I have come to recognize that nothing happens by mistake. I have also become cognizant of my own human inadequacy in dealing with any circumstance, and so I have also learned that decisions are not to be made on my own without consulting our all-knowing and deeply-caring Father. The logical, very "human" reaction would have been to tell Marit (not her real name) that due to severe financial difficulties and no new job openings, it would not be possible to hire her at the present time. That would have made "good business sense". But instead, I asked her to hold the line a minute, as I stood there and prayed, asking the Lord what *He* would have me to do. His answer was immediate and clear. "Tell her that you do have a job for her, and tell her that you need for her to begin *immediately*..."

"Marit, I'd love for you to work for us. Can you come right away?" was therefore my reply. There was always work for someone else to do, and I also trusted that the Lord would help us to pay her a salary. What He knew that I didn't, of course, was that minutes before she called me she had felt so desolate *that she had literally tried to hang herself*. At the last moment the rope had broken, and she then had a very strong urging from the Lord to phone me and request a job. If I had said no, *she was determined to fix the noose and try again*. She actually arrived at the restaurant with the marks from the noose on her neck.

A day or two later we sat together in the Tea Room garden and her story unfolded. I felt immediately to welcome her to live with us, and tried to reach out to her in acceptance and love in every way possible. Dependency on alcohol or drugs is always a cry for help! She told me that she was at that time no longer taking drugs. However, about a month later, one morning the Lord let me know that not only was she still taking drugs, He told me where she was purchasing them! "But," He advised me, "don't say anything to her about it at all."

About two weeks later, the Lord instructed me to speak with her again. "Marit," I began gently, "about two weeks ago the Lord let me know that not only are you still taking drugs, but He even told me where you are purchasing them." I then told her the place, which totally amazed her. "I've known this for two weeks already, but may I ask you something? Since that time, have I treated you any differently?"

"No," she replied.

"That's because I still really care about you, and the Lord still loves you so very, very much. The fact that you are still taking drugs is hurting *you* more than anything and for that reason alone the Lord wants to help you to be free from this terrible scourge upon your life. He *can* help you, and *His* love and strength will help you to be free."

Shortly thereafter, she felt encouraged and strengthened enough to sign herself into an Israeli drug rehabilitation program. They offer very strong, caring support with intensive follow-up, and in time she was truly free—the first time after a very long and very powerful addiction. What touched me so deeply was that the Lord didn't judge her at all. He knew all the tragic details of her life that had led her into addiction to begin with. He simply loved and accepted her, always prompting me to offer encouragement and support. So then, in the end, the deliverance came—not to prove something to those sitting in judgment—but to free her to become all that God wanted her to be as His beloved child.

The financial difficulties continued. One day, I sat down to talk with regular customers, an Italian couple from Canada with a great love for Israel and the Jewish people. When they asked how things were going, it was with such kindness and genuine concern that I began to cry! I shared with them the true situation, asking them to please pray for me! They then told me a bit of their own experiences. At one time they had owned a number of Italian restaurants in Canada, when suddenly, due to unexpected circumstances, they lost everything except for one small restaurant. They suddenly found themselves so poor, as a matter of fact, that they had to secretly live in one of the basement refrigerators (with the cooling systems disconnected, of course) since they had also been forced to move out of their home. They had to dress their children and be totally ready by the time the restaurant was due to open, for it would not have been legal for them to be living there.

"But we recovered," they told me, "and you will, too." This was followed by an invitation to a wonderful Italian feast at their home—and a gift of \$5,000. From customers! A while later, yet another dear customer, someone who came every single morning for Marmite toast and tea, extended a loan for \$8,000, for, as he said, "I would be so very, very sad if the Tea Room were to close."

In June, following Netanyahu's election as Prime Minister, people somehow felt "safe" again, and business for everyone in the centre of town returned to normal. It was the best month we had in the history of the restaurant, and in a very short time we would have been able to pay the landlord the money he requested. We were full a good deal of the time, with people waiting in line on Saturday night. In addition, we had many parties and celebrations. Seventy Israeli teachers came to celebrate the end-of-the-school-year with a festive dinner. We had a Bar Mitzvah celebration, plus the Ministry of Education had their annual dinner at the Tea Room. The "Tower of David Museum" brought a large tour group by for an end-of-the-tour snack. So in many ways, it was an amazing month.

In July, I had been invited to give a morning seminar at "Messiah '96", an annual conference of Messianic Jews held on a small college campus in rural Pennsylvania. The Lord definitely confirmed that I was to attend, so early July found me en route to the conference for a hurried 6-day trip to the States. It was special to have time to spend with my sister Goldie and her husband Dave, and to meet many of their friends. Almost nobody knew me at the conference, since I have spoken in the States only rarely and never before to the Messianic Jewish community. However, after my message in the morning seminar, I mentioned, (as I had a sense from the Lord to do so), that I would be in the States and available to speak sometime in the future. As a result of the meeting



and from copies of the tape of the meeting, many invitations were given for me to speak at congregations in many parts of the country as well as in Toronto.

A few days after my return to Israel, I drove into the parking lot behind the restaurant and left the car to be washed at a small car wash in the corner of the lot, as I was wont to do from time to time. I would always leave my keys with the car, and the car wash attendant would deliver them to me later. Both the parking lot and the car wash are owned by Mr. B., the owner of the building in which the Tea Room was housed. So it was clear that what transpired next had been pre-arranged.

I had been working in the Tea Room for about an hour when a man walked into the restaurant with my car keys in his hand, but he was not the car wash attendant!

"I'm from the court," he informed me, "and I have a court order to take your car, the paintings in the gallery, and every single item in the restaurant itself," was his shocking announcement. It turned out that Mr. B. had put a lien on everything I owned in the world since I had until then been unable to meet his demands for the payment of \$26,000 (minus the \$7500 already paid). While I had been in the States for those few days, Mr. B. had taken a complete inventory of every single item in the restaurant, including stoves, refrigerators, deep fryer, espresso machine, down to the last spoon, little teapot and grain of tea.

That day, however, they took only my car and some of the art work from the gallery, as the landlord had told them for the time being not to take anything that would seriously disrupt the running of the restaurant. At that moment, they told me to follow them outside and take whatever belonged to me from inside the car. On the back seat ledge I had kept a sweet teddy bear that had always been in my mother's car. So five minutes later I found myself in the parking lot with only the teddy bear and my dog as the car drove out of sight.

The next morning I went to the court to investigate the situation. They began by apologizing, saying that they knew that Mr. B. was not a kind person and that they were sorry to have to carry out his orders. But they also informed me that within ten days, he had permission to take all the rest. It was such a shock!

I went home immediately to pray, as I desperately needed to know from the Lord what to do. *His* answer shocked me even more!

"You must leave the country within five days," He told me. "Tell no one that you are going, and arrange with B'dran (one of our waiters and a trusted friend) to have the Tea Room close some hours *after* you have left the country..."

Life can be strange sometimes. At the morning seminar at "Messiah '96", I had shared like I almost always do about the meaning of a total commitment to the Lord. I had reiterated how it is the first commandment in both the Old and the New Covenants—that we must "love the Lord our God with all our heart..." And, as always, I had said, "If we place Him first in our lives, we have nothing left to fear. Everything we have and everything we are belongs to the Lord already, and there's nothing that we have that He can't take from us in a second. So we need to entrust it all to Him, knowing that He loves all that we love even more than we do..." The Lord tested that commitment for me personally very early in my walk by His side, when I knew that if I followed His will, I would have to literally place my two small sons in His hands. Somehow I never expected



a similar test again, but I guess the Lord wanted to see if I could practice what I preached!

At any rate, during those five days I was confronted with leaving the Tea Room and the customers, staff and suppliers that had become such special friends in the years of the Tea Room's existence. It meant we had to give up our lovely apartment with a view towards Mt. Zion and the Old City walls in the section of the city I love the most. It meant Joe and our dear 12 year old dog and 10 year old canary would have to move to a small apartment somewhere else, and we would be separated by more than 10,000 miles from my new destination of Arizona (to be close to Mike). And of course, it meant saying goodbye to Jerusalem.

On the fifth day, I was standing sadly on the street waiting for the taxi to take me to the airport. I had just said farewell to Joe and our sweet dog and a dear friend, Hannah, who had come to say goodbye when the phone rang. It was a call from the States from Betsy, telling me that Sid had just died. Dear Abba, as I called him, arrived in heavenly Jerusalem on the very day that the Tea Room closed and I left earthly Jerusalem, the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July, 1996.

On that day the losses felt very great. I cried and even felt in shock a while later when it all truly registered. But before continuing, I have to insert at this point that what I have always shared is true. For even though at that moment I lost so much on this earth that I loved, *I was still okay*. I arrived in the States with nothing more than two suitcases full of clothes. I had no home, no business, and no money. My spiritual father had just died, and family and friends and twenty years of life in Jerusalem were being left far behind. In addition, people who had written, prayed and supported me for many years stopped contact completely once they heard what had happened to me. As Sid and Betsy and I used to sing, "When you're in the valley deep and low—friends so true and blue—where do they go?" And yet, in spite of it all, *because I had the Lord's love in my heart, I was still okay*. It spoke so much to me of the genuine grace and goodness of the Lord! For as Paul said, whether I have everything or whether I have nothing, it's all the same to me as long as I can serve the Lord. And it's true! His love *is* everything! And that comfort meant more to me than words could ever tell.

I arrived in Baltimore just in time for Sid's funeral. The service was held at the little church he had pastored for so many years in inner city Baltimore, and later the family and a few friends attended the burial in a lovely country cemetery some distance from the city. I was able to stay for a few days with Betsy following the funeral and after all the family had left. After 50 years of marriage, I could hardly imagine the loneliness she would be feeling.

The Lord, in His kindness, had a special "Jerusalem reunion" planned for the funeral and for some days afterwards. Visiting with us for those first few days were two Jerusalem pastors, one with his wife, from the fellowship that Sid and Betsy had attended in the eight years that they, too, had lived in Jerusalem. It was a bittersweet time, to be sure.

One of the pastors, who didn't really know me very well or my immediate situation, came up from his basement room one morning with a special word for me from the Lord. Many times "words" are given by people so hastily and so easily that you know



they aren't truly from the Lord at all. But this one was different. I knew it had indeed come to him truly from the Lord Himself, and it brought such a comfort to my heart.

"Thus saith the Lord; Refrain thy voice from weeping and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.

And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border..."

Jeremiah 31: 16-17

"Esther, the Lord shall reward thee, the Word of the Lord comes unto me this morning as I was praying about you. Suddenly I saw you in a glass greenhouse. The floor was sand and you were sitting comfortably with your Bible in your hand..."

That comment made me really smile and helped me to know that this Word was indeed from the heart of the Lord. Daily Bible reading has been a part of my life for a quarter of a century, and I never miss a day. However, *the Lord alone knew that since my arrival in Baltimore, I had not unpacked my Bible*. So when I read the prophecy myself later, it's as though the Lord said teasingly, "with your BIBLE in your hand..."

"...Suddenly all around you and completely filling the glass greenhouse, flowers began to spring up all around you, growing two and three and even five feet high, with much greenery and many blossoms surrounding you. And the Word comes unto me saying; 'I have set you apart for this time, saith the Lord, and I will surround you with many flowers and you shall take your rest. I will give you rest and restoration to your soul and to your body. I will cause My sun to shine upon you and the face of My Son and His countenance shall shine upon you and My eye shall fall upon you and My favour shall come upon you. You shall have rest to your soul. I will bring you back into the land in My timing, and you shall come back with a full measure of all that you need, with plenty of strength, you will have fresh vision, you will be renewed in your mind. Mighty warrior, mighty warrior, though there has been a great battle and you have been in the arena with mighty forces of hell, the war is not over, and I will send you back into the battle and you will see the Victory..."

28 July, 1996

Baltimore, Maryland

When I arrived in Arizona, following a month of visiting friends and relatives en route, I stayed with Mike and his friends for a time and then found an apartment of my own. As soon as I walked into a grocery store that would be in my new neighbourhood, I took one look at it and simply burst into tears. First of all, it was the most mammoth store that I had ever seen. I knew I could shop there for a million years and no one would ever know that I even existed. It made me so much miss dear Zvi the butcher back in the supermarket in Israel! But even more than that, the reality finally hit that I would be

*living* in Arizona, that I truly at that time would not be returning to Israel. That was when the shock of all the losses really registered, and I could do nothing but cry.

The first week in September, two weeks before I was scheduled to move into the new apartment, found me en route to Switzerland for what I thought to be a speaking tour, planned before all the doors in Israel had closed. Sister Ruth (the dear friend who had arranged the little chalet in the Swiss Alps for me where I wrote a good portion of this book) would be spending the time with me. We went to visit close friends of hers, a pastor and his wife by the name of Martin and Vreni. Goodness, what an impact they were soon to have upon my life as well!

As I had by then found my apartment in Arizona, I was trusting that the Lord would provide the rent and other expenses—phone, electricity, etc.—during this Swiss tour. Therefore I was a little shocked to discover that I would be speaking in only one small church in a little town in Switzerland, and that the remainder of the time had been planned as a rest for me. I needed it, to be sure, and I could only trust that somehow the Lord would help with my own expenses. In addition, I felt burdened, as much money was still owed in Israel. As I had left towards the end of a busy working month, I still had not paid July salaries, suppliers, National Insurance, taxes, etc. As it turned out, however, it was totally the Lord's wisdom for me to have left Israel so quickly telling no one about my imminent departure. Unknown to me but not unknown to the Lord, *Mr. B. had been in the process of obtaining orders preventing me from leaving the country.* The orders would have gone into effect a mere two days after I had left! And from Israel, *I would have had no possibility to re-pay the debts.* To leave within five days telling no one seemed extreme at the time—but as always, I'm VERY glad that I obeyed!

At any rate, it was a blessed and quiet time that we spent together in Switzerland, and it was special to have been able to share at that church. Martin and Vreni had a love for Israel, and I sensed even then that the Lord meant for us to become friends. And then—a week or so after my return to Arizona, I received a letter from them informing me that they had sent to Israel *enough money to pay almost all of the debts.* Isn't that incredible? And in addition, they sent to me in the States exactly the amount I had needed to pay the rent and other bills. It was such a miracle that so very soon following my departure from Israel, so many of the bills could be paid.

Spiritually, I must have been carried off the spiritual battlefield of Israel, for God so incredibly simplified my life and gave me such a stress-free time it was hardly to be believed. I lived in an apartment with nothing whatsoever in it but a mattress on the floor. When Mike came over for dinner, we sat on the floor and used a turned-over laundry basket for a table. No one had my phone number, and it was therefore a time of total, absolute *rest*. All that had happened in and through the Tea Room had been so traumatic that I told everyone, "From now on, take the letter in the alphabet that follows the letter 's' and pretend it doesn't even exist." I made them call tea "that other drink", for truly, I didn't even want to hear the *word*. The Lord literally gave me a time of rest, and later, He moved me from that apartment to a wonderful house with a private, hidden garden—a garden that was truly surrounded by flowers 'as high as the sky'—a *literal* fulfillment of the prophecy given in Baltimore of flowers "even five feet tall..." But even

during those blissful months of rest and restoration, the Lord Himself never let me totally forget the Tea Room.

One day, when I was on an “America West” flight about to depart from Phoenix, I spotted two families that somehow looked familiar. They noticed me, too, and finally called me over, asking if I lived in California.

“No,” I replied, “but I have lived in Jerusalem for the past twenty years...” When they informed me that they also lived in Jerusalem, I told them that I had owned the English Tea Room.

“Wow! We loved it there!” they exclaimed. “That’s how we know you! We went there lots of times!” And then one of the wives said, “Wait a minute...did you say *owned*?” They were so disappointed to know that the Tea Room had closed; and I was so amazed to have met former customers on a plane in Phoenix!

Well, a few weeks later my cousin Lois, her husband and daughter came to visit me in Arizona for several days. Lois and I had grown up together and had always been close friends. I was telling them about the restaurant one day as we were driving home from Sedona, and I happened to mention the former customers I had met on the plane. We were hungry and started looking for a restaurant. We finally passed a little town in the middle of nowhere called Dewey with a sign for Farmer Young’s restaurant. It didn’t look too great, so we drove further until we again saw signs to a restaurant. We followed a windy dirt road for quite a while—only to find ourselves back at Farmer Young’s—through the *back* way! So, needless to say, we went inside for a bite to eat. After having placed my order, I left the table for the restroom. When I came out again, there in Farmer Young’s restaurant, in the little town of Dewey in the middle of nowhere, *stood a customer from the Tea Room*. My cousin had overheard my name being mentioned a number of times, and finally had walked over to the table to ask, “Do you know Esther?”

Was she surprised when the woman answered, “Yes! I used to go to her Tea Room in Jerusalem all the time!”

When those two incidents occurred, I spiritually blocked my ears—for the Tea Room was nothing that I wanted to deal with at all at that point in my life!

After I moved into my Arizona apartment following my return from Switzerland, the Lord gave me a month of total rest. At the end of that first month, I left on a speaking trip to messianic congregations, the door that had opened following my morning seminar at “Messiah ‘96”. I was to speak first at the congregation in Atlanta, Georgia, and then travel on to Florida where I was scheduled to speak in seven congregations and two churches.

Earlier in this book I mentioned a young man by the name of David who worked with us in our restaurant in Jerusalem. By this time he had married a lovely believer from Georgia and they were both living in the Atlanta area. I stayed with them while in Georgia and they both came to hear me speak at the messianic congregation. Surprisingly, the next morning David said, “The Lord has shown me that I’m supposed to quit my job and join you on your speaking tours in America.” The Lord reminded him that he had been through a lot and that it wasn’t just for him to have a comfortable, quiet life in Atlanta!

"It makes sense," I said. "But what will you say when you speak?" It was at that point that David realized that even though he had been like part of our family for four years—I had never heard his testimony! He then told me the following story:

"I was born in Bethlehem to a traditional Christian Greek Orthodox family. When I was around 11 years old, my mother, who had been ill for many years, received a divine healing from the Lord. She came to know Him in a real way, and both my father and I also gave our lives to the Lord at that time. As a result, for the very first time in my life I read the Bible.

As I was reading, I was amazed to discover that everything was Jewish! This was especially shocking since I grew up during the time of the Palestinian uprising against Israel, the 'intifada', and had been taught that the Jewish people were our enemies. This discovery of the Jewishness of it all really surprised me, and one day I decided to share that news with my religion teacher. I was attending at that time a Catholic school, as it was a good school.

Trying to be diplomatic about it, I asked him, 'What was Mary *before* she became Catholic?'

'What do you mean?' he demanded, clearly irritated. 'Mary was always Catholic!'

'No, sir, it says in the Bible that she was Jewish...' At that moment he grabbed me, shouted at me never to say such a despicable thing again, and brought me at once to the principle's office. I was therefore suspended from school for 10 days because I had said that Mary was Jewish.

A few days later, I thought I would talk about it with my grandmother, as I thought that she was such a religious person. As soon as I mentioned that Jesus was Jewish, she slapped me in the face! Finally my parents came to me and said, 'David, we know that what you're saying is true, of course. But for your own sake, you simply have to stop talking about it!' As there were many Moslems and members of the PLO in Bethlehem, it could have been very dangerous for me, and my parents knew that.

A number of years later, following my graduation from high school, I was invited for a year of study at a Bible school in Sweden called 'Word of Life'. It was extremely pro-Israel, but I decided to ignore that completely and simply enjoy my studies. However, after about six months at the school, I noticed that the Lord's spirit was no longer with me. Finally it got so bad that I spent time alone with the Lord to discover what was wrong.

Finally He asked me, 'David, if I ask you to do something, will you do it?'

'Yes, Father, you know how much I want to be close to you again. I'll do whatever You want me to do!'

'I want you to bless the Jewish people, to forgive them and to love them,' He told me that day, to which I immediately replied, 'No, I'll do anything, but not that. There are 5,000 students here who love Israel. That's enough, you don't need me as well!' And I didn't want to deal with it at all. I asked the Lord lots of questions, but He wouldn't answer them. All I sensed was this separation between us.

Somehow I knew that it was not a light thing that God was asking me, that somehow if I did it my life would change. But I hated this distance between myself and Him, so one day I finally said, 'Okay, I do...'

'You do *what*?' He asked me.

Trying to avoid a real confession of the words, I said, 'I do what You asked me to do...'

The Lord said to me, 'No, son, it doesn't work that way. You have to say it from your heart...'

So finally I said to the Lord, 'Father, I forgive the Jewish people, and I bless them, and I hope that one day we can live together in peace...'

The moment that I had said the words, I felt His love so strongly that I could hear angels clapping in heaven! As a result, I kept repeating it over and over again all night long! It was incredible! The Lord told me a great many things that night, but one of the things He said to me didn't make any sense at all since in Israel I lived in a totally Arab environment. But He said to me, 'David, My people will take care of you and protect you and you will never feel like a stranger among them.'

A short time later, the leader of the school introduced me briefly to a Jewish believer from Israel and we exchanged telephone numbers. When I returned to Bethlehem following my year of study in Sweden, I found that living in an Arab, virulently anti-Jewish environment was irreconcilable with the new love that the Lord had given me for the Jewish people. Not knowing at all how to deal with it, I suddenly remembered the phone number I had been given in Sweden, and phoned the Israeli believer.

'Do you happen to know of any jobs available in Jerusalem?' I asked him. It had always been my dream to work on Jaffa Road in the centre of the city. That very day, the Tea Room was moving from the little restaurant to the much larger building, and so he replied, 'Yes, I think so. There's a possibility of work in a restaurant on Jaffa Road. How soon can you meet me in Jerusalem?' he asked.

I was there 12 minutes later! I began working with Esther at the Tea Room that very day. Everything went well until there was a terrorist attack and Israel closed the territories. I told Esther that it would no longer be possible for me to continue working at the restaurant since it would be impossible to get permission from the military authority in Bethlehem to work in Jerusalem. After she prayed about it, she said, 'Let's meet for lunch at McDonald's. I have something I want to talk with you about!'

After we ordered, she said, 'When I asked the Lord what to do, He told me that it was very special to Him that we were sharing this ministry of love to the Jewish people *together*, as a Jewish believer in Jesus and as a Palestinian Arab believer.' And then she said, 'Why don't you come live with us in Jerusalem?'

My first reaction was shock. I thought to myself, 'This lady is crazy! Doesn't she know that I'm supposed to be the enemy?' But then I remembered God's promise to me all those weeks ago in Sweden and in a moment it all made sense. He had told me that the Jewish people would protect me...and that I would never feel like a stranger among them. And as I remembered that, I knew this was indeed God's will..."

We spoke together at a total of eighteen messianic congregations and at a seminar at "Messiah '97". David also requested prayer for the Arab Christian community in Bethlehem, now under terrible oppression and repression since the PLO took over the city. Most people didn't even know that Arab Christians existed, and therefore their



prayer needs were very great. It was also special that the Lord arranged for these prayers to come from primarily Jewish and pro-Israel groups!

At one congregation in Baltimore, a young man was called up to the bimah to read the Scriptures. We could tell by his accent that he was an Israeli believer! “I wonder what he’ll think of my message?” David whispered to me, and I could imagine that it would be an anxious moment for him.

At the end of the meeting, the Israeli came to David and told him that he had served in the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) in southern Lebanon, and that many of his friends had been killed and that he had had to kill Arabs as well during the war. They ended up hugging, forgiving, blessing and crying together, and it was a beautiful moment on God’s earth.

In a very roundabout way, we later heard a beautiful follow-up to that story a year later! Betsy, who now lives in Israel, had guests over for dinner one night. One guest happened to mention that she had friends in the States.

“They’re believers, and the wife is American and the husband is Israeli. He used to be troubled with terrible nightmares following his experiences in Lebanon—but one day a Palestinian Arab came to speak at the congregation they attend...”

Well, you guessed it—it was David she was referring to—and she said that from that day on the Israeli was totally free from the nightmares he had experienced for a number of years! It’s a big world out there, so it is just awesome to see how the Lord works when we trust in His kingdom. Of all the people on earth, someone came to Betsy’s for dinner who *knew* that Israeli young man—and Betsy had been at the congregation the day it all had happened! It even brought a special encouragement to David when I reported the news to him.

Since I have lived by faith for so many years, I have never had a credit card (or a savings account or insurance or any of the other things that people depend on. As I have always told people who seem shocked by it, “Well, what do I need insurance and all those other things for? I have *assurance*, based on God’s Word that He would take care of me. What else in all the world do I need apart from *that*?”)

However, during my sojourn in the States, it was not possible to rent a car without a credit card. Since public transportation in the States, especially from city to city, is almost nonexistent, there would be no way that I could travel without access to a car. So upon my arrival in the States, my long-time friend Marcia co-signed for me for a credit card. It was not possible to apply for one myself, since I had no credit rating whatsoever after an absence from the States of more than 20 years. We applied in August, but even by October, no credit card had as yet arrived. I spoke at the Atlanta Messianic Congregation on Friday night and again on Saturday morning, and was also asked to share at a small home group Bible study on Tuesday night. My plane was due to leave Georgia at noon on Thursday, where I would be en route to Florida. In Florida, I had been invited to speak at seven different congregations around the State, plus I had planned to visit dear friends and relatives. If the credit card did not arrive by 10:30 on Thursday morning, then the Florida trip would have to be cancelled. I asked the Bible study group that Tuesday night to please pray for a miracle! “When I return to David and

Lisa's home tonight, there *has* to be a message on their answering machine from Marcia that the credit card has arrived at last. Otherwise the trip is off!"

We dashed home after the meeting and raced for the answering machine—to hear Marcia's voice with the message that the card had arrived that very day! However, she lived in Pennsylvania, and we were in *Georgia*; and she would not even be able to send the card by overnight mail until Wednesday morning. The postal authority therefore could not guarantee at all that the card would arrive in time for my 10:30 departure for the airport on Thursday.

When I awakened on Thursday morning, I asked the Lord what I should do about the Florida trip. "Pack," was His only answer. And so I packed!

At 10:15 a friend arrived to drive me to the airport and by then, the credit card had still not appeared. However, at 10:22, a Federal Express truck pulled up to the apartment complex with the overnight letter for me! When I opened the package, I got tears in my eyes, for inside was the loveliest credit card I had ever seen. It had a picture on it of two baby deer in a forest, and I felt blessed once again by His love.

Something similar had happened, again upon my arrival in the States. When I was about to rent an apartment in Arizona, there was no way I could live in the States without a car, as public transportation was almost nonexistent. Again, since I had no credit rating, there was no way that I could purchase a car with payments, and I had no cash with which to buy one. After prayer, I felt to travel to a little town and apply for a lease at the Ford Company where my mother had always leased her cars. The representative who had known her no longer worked there, but I felt to apply for a lease nonetheless. I explained to the salesman that I had been absent from the country for more than twenty years and so would have no credit history whatsoever. When the Ford motor company later did a check, they confirmed that credit records were only kept for up to seven years, and I was therefore considered a "ghost". I had asked to lease a compact car, but that month they had a special on a much larger, nicer car for the same price! So I put in my application for a two-year lease.

This was the middle of August, and I explained that I would not have the money for the required first payment and security deposit (totaling \$1200) until I returned from Switzerland in the middle of September.

"Well, how much can you put down right now in order for us to hold the car for you?"

It was really embarrassing as I had to answer, "Not too much. One hundred dollars!"

Can you imagine that they *approved* the application? With no credit rating whatsoever, and with only \$100 as a deposit? As I left, they told me to come with the \$1200 security and rental payment in a month, and I could then pick up the car.

The very next morning I received a phone call from the same representative. "Listen, we thought about it, and we know that you really need a car *now*. Come back tomorrow and we'll let you take it..."

So I returned the next day, and as I was sitting with the representative for over an hour working out the insurance and papers, I was really able to share with him about the Lord's love. He was so open I knew that it was a God-ordained experience. And then,

an hour later, I drove off with a brand new 1996 Mercury Sable for which I had paid only \$100! I teased them as I prepared to leave, saying, "Wow, thanks! Have a good life! This is the cheapest car I ever bought!" It was fun, but just another example to help people to widen their horizons and to know that *the Lord indeed cares about every single detail of our lives*. And that, *if we entrust it all to Him*, He will help! When our Israeli dog came to us as a puppy, the Lord told me that first day, "By the way, she loves cottage cheese mixed with her dog food." He even cared what a little puppy liked to eat! Don't we serve a truly wonderful Father?

My time in the States was a marvellous time in terms of family and dear old friends. We had a deeper connection than what was possible when separated by thousands of miles. I even got to attend my favourite Uncle Harry's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration! The house I rented in Arizona was near a lovely apartment complex, and Mike and his friends eventually moved into the neighbourhood. It was so special to have them nearby, to pop over for breakfast, to share Shabbat dinners and weekends together, and to take family trips. After my first year in the States, wonderful news arrived from Israel. Joe had at last given his life to the Lord and the Lord freed him from the tyranny of drugs. He came to visit us in Arizona, and ended up not being able to leave due to lack of finances! While "stranded" there, he was offered an excellent job and also moved into a small apartment in the neighbourhood. We all had such lovely times together!

Following two years in the States—the longest I had been away from Israel in over twenty years—the Lord unexpectedly sent my son Mike and myself to Israel in April 1998 to celebrate Israel's Jubilee, her fiftieth year as a nation. When the plane landed at Ben Gurion airport, I literally kissed the ground! After two years in the States, I missed and appreciated Israel more than ever. I was so thrilled to be home again that I wept all the way up to Jerusalem! The depth of my feelings surprised even me! The celebration itself was wonderful, and we had such a special time. Israel has a quality of life that I found lacking in the States and had missed so very much. People *care*, and we got welcomed back by people everywhere we turned.

While on this trip the Lord confirmed that I would indeed be able to return to live in Israel once again in August, and on my very first day back He found me an apartment in which to live. When Mike and I arrived in Jerusalem to celebrate the Jubilee last April, we spent the first night at the King Solomon Hotel, as the little apartment we had rented for our stay would not be available until Pesach ended the next day. That first evening back in the city, we took a walk through the neighbourhood across the street from the hotel called "Yemin Moshe". An Englishman by the name of Montifiore had built the neighbourhood in the last century. It was the first settlement to be built outside of the Old City walls. The buildings are therefore quite old with high ceilings and thick stone walls, although many have been renovated in recent years. Until 1967 it was a dangerous place in which to live, for snipers could shoot at the buildings from the Old City conclave under Jordanian control just across from Sultan's Pool. At any rate, it was from a small apartment in Yemin Moshe that I had to move so unexpectedly two years ago when the Lord closed all the doors in Jerusalem. So we took a walk through our old neighbourhood, remembering the many happy times we had experienced in our small

apartment there in the past. Mike wanted to walk longer, but as I was tired from jet lag, I planned to return to the hotel instead.

On my way back, I noticed a sign advertising a local bank at the bus stop right next to the hotel and directly across the street from the Yemin Moshe neighbourhood. It said, and the Lord underlined it as I read it, "*Your new home in Israel is closer than you think...*" Somehow I just knew that was the Lord's answer to me, and I had Mike take a picture of me next to the sign the following morning. I immediately purchased a newspaper to see if any apartments were listed for rent in Yemin Moshe, but there were none. However, I still felt a prompting from the Lord to phone the neighbourhood realty office nonetheless.

"Are there any apartments for rent in Yemin Moshe?" I queried.

"Why did you call, since we had no places advertised?" she asked me. "As a matter of fact, we do have one—it just became available three days ago. Someone had planned to rent it and changed their minds at the last minute..." So that very day, we made an appointment to see an apartment in the very neighbourhood I had left two years earlier. It was an even *nicer* apartment than the one I had left, with room for a home office as well. It had a breathtaking view of Mt. Zion and the Old City walls with a sweet little balcony, and a hidden staircase up to a miniscule rooftop terrace with an even *more* beautiful view.

When I prayed about it, I felt from the Lord to tell the realtor that it was \$500 a month too expensive for me, and that I would not want the apartment until August. I knew that if the owners agreed to drop the rent by \$500 a month—a lot! —and also agreed to hold it empty from April until August, that it was indeed the apartment that the Lord had chosen. The realtor informed me that evening that the owner wished to meet me later in the week. I thought it would be for an interview—but it was so that I could design the kitchen, as there was only a sink at that time!

Even until then, I had continued to avoid the Tea Room issue, still not being able to deal with any possibility that it might re-open once more. When you are living through experiences on a day—to-day basis they are bearable, especially in God's grace. But when we find our situation to be changed, the memories of what we went through can somehow feel overwhelming in retrospect. However, even a week before the trip to Israel, the Lord let me know that I still could not so easily dismiss the Tea Room!

One morning I received a phone call in Arizona—from a former Tea Room customer named Clyde. "The other day I went to the 'Kinko's' office near my home to do some photocopying, when suddenly I heard someone say, 'Hi, Clyde, remember me?' Imagine my astonishment to discover that it was David from the Tea Room in Jerusalem!" And they had met in a shop in Marietta, *Georgia*! There was just no escaping it. (I don't always like the Lord's sense of humour!)

While in Israel, Michael needed permission from the IDF to leave the country, so at his request I accompanied him to the army offices one morning. Even *there*, on the fifth floor of the army induction building, we met a former Tea Room customer! He said that he was still dreaming about the Welsh rarebit, triple-decker tuna sandwiches, chutney and Marmite. That very same day, I met former customers *everywhere*. Some of the comments were:

"It was an oasis, and there's no place like it that we can go."

"If you open the restaurant again, we promise that we'll never again take it for granted and we'll come every single week."

"People in this city are still lamenting over the closure of the Tea Room."

"If you open it again, all of Israel will come to you..."

The earnestness of their remarks really touched me. Of course, it is the presence of the Lord that they miss, even if they don't know it, because it was His love and presence that made it such a special place. It was amazing to see the impact it had on the city, however. Whenever people mentioned their longing for it to re-open, I continued to block my spiritual ears. However, I shared the following with the readers of my newsletters immediately following my return to the States after the Jubilee celebrations:

"Of course, I want to do the Lord's will, whatever it is. And so if that is also a part of my return to Jerusalem, then He will provide the finances, the grace, and it will happen again. It was a ministry set up by the Lord, an open witness in Jerusalem, and it did truly have an impact. The Lord's love made it such a special place. However, it was also under severe spiritual attack, for the enemy hates any open witness in Jerusalem especially. So it was a very blessed and very tough few years!"

There was no way to know what lay on the pathway before me.







*Ye Olde English Tea Room*  
 "Habustan"  
 Jaffa Road, Jerusalem



# CHAPTER SEVEN

## *"Your Cup of Tea in Jerusalem"*

Long ago the Lord helped me to understand that all that I own and all that I have was to be held lightly. As a matter of fact, I never considered anything to actually be *mine*, for I know that all truly comes from the Father's hand. Therefore, I knew that what mattered most was *not* the outward circumstances of my life, *but the love of God*. The Lord strongly tested that commitment in my life on a number of occasions. Each time things of this world were taken from me, it was always a bit of a shock. But because I still had His love and still could serve Him with my life, basically I was fine. *It was the Lord, and my relationship and my friendship with Him, that I treasured the most*. And then came one of the greatest tests of all.

Recently, in Jerusalem, something happened that to me was far, far worse than any other loss (apart from the separation from my sons years ago). *It no longer felt like the Lord was with me at all*. In my book, *I Am My Beloved's*, I describe an experience in my very beginning walk with Him when I suddenly lost the *physical* sense of His presence. It took a long time for me to learn that He was indeed still with me even though His love could not be felt as it had in the beginning. That's where faith in my relationship to Him truly began, as previously His love had been a tangible reality. But this Jerusalem experience was at a much deeper, even more agonizing level. Please be sure that I don't judge my walk with Him by *feelings*, for they can often be deceiving. I have always had the faith to know that He is indeed by my side no matter what the circumstances of my life have been. But this was something different, a total silence in every way whatsoever. There simply was no sign in any way that I still belonged to Him. I prayed, fasted, repented (for we always have need of that), but all was to no avail. There simply was no assuring answer from heaven. There was nothing but this terrible emptiness inside my heart. It felt like I had somehow gone irrevocably astray, that my life could no longer be used for the service of the King. I contemplated returning to a career in Social Work again. But it seemed so empty compared to the wonders of His love that I knew, in the very depths of my being, *that there was no where else that I could go*. Life without Him was empty and meaningless to me. It was a desperately alone time. The "world" apart from God has no appeal to me.

An experience so deep and personal can never be described, but it was terrible. The emptiness was palpable, and I knew in my heart of hearts that there was no other place in all the world to turn. And then, inexplicably, one morning it was over—and I knew that He was indeed with me and had indeed been with me through that terrible time. A few days later I met my dear Dutch friend Constance. She was staying for 10 days at the Christ Church Guesthouse inside Jaffa Gate. (I met Constance at a Catholic Charismatic Conference of 20,000 in Dublin way back in 1978. She had read about my court case in a Dutch newspaper, had cut it out, and had prayed for me daily for six months. And then the Lord had us meet in Dublin, of all places! We've been friends ever since). Constance has such a beautiful sensitivity to the Lord, I was happy for the

gift of some hours to enable us to share together. We were sitting one lovely afternoon in the little hidden garden behind the church when I described to her my experience.

She answered at once, "Now you know what Yeshua experienced in Gethsemene, and again on the cross..."

I knew in a second that she was right, for I recognized in a way I never could have fathomed before the depths of His agony when He felt, at such a vulnerable moment in His life, *that the Father had forsaken Him*. I knew the void; the terrible soul-and-heart-wrenching agony that experience must have been for Him. Nothing in the entire world could have mattered apart from that. What He endured upon the cross for us was physically excruciating, *but nothing in comparison to the loss Yeshua must have felt at the moment when He thought the Father had forsaken Him*. Trust me. Nothing that happens to us in this earthly life can compare to losing the Lord in our lives. And so the Lord, during those dreadful days in *my* life, gave me a treasure that can never be valued for the utter greatness of its worth—for *He entrusted me with a glimpse of His suffering*.

Constance went on to explain that she had experienced the very same thing, and that it reminded her also of Peter. "The Lord allowed Peter to deny Him," she reminded me, "and Peter experienced the agony of it later as he wept bitterly. But such an experience only made his renewed fellowship with the Lord sweeter and more precious than ever..."

If we are truly united with the Lord so that we are also able to echo the words of Paul—"whether I abase or abound, it is the same to me"—then we understand that whatever life has to offer, it comes to us directly from the Father's hand. Even difficulties and problems, deaths of loved ones, all of it can be transformed in the light of His love. In the same George MacDonald book mentioned earlier, I read the following quote, a letter to a friend who had just suffered the death of his wife:

"We are all just children in our Father's nursery. Some of us are taken before others away from it, and we are left without our playmates. But we know the Father has them, and though we must miss them constantly, we must remember that we shall be sent for by and by, and must by patient waiting be ready to go. You know all this as well as I do, but let us think it together..."

We must not then be unhappy when one of us goes to make the others happier who have gone before, and were waiting for them, and are now waiting for us to join them! The very notion of heaven is to have all we love with us, and God is just carrying out that notion for us, by gentle recurrent removals, as we are ready to go. It seems so commonplace when said to a sore heart—missing heart—but surely what you and anyone like you, and in such sorrow, needs is 'to have your pure mind stirred up by way of remembrance.'

But God has a marvellous bliss, and yet a very homely one, waiting for us. Be sure it will run in the old grooves, but the grooves will be of gold and gems, not of iron and clay. I think we shall talk of all the old times with the hearts of divinely glad little ones—and sometimes wonder that we made such a work about certain things. We shall have everything, for the Father who loves us, and is Himself, as Dante calls Him, "the glad creator", will see that His dear little ones are happy indeed, and have all they want. It will be safe then to give us all we want, for we shall not forget Him, or forget that He gives us EVERYTHING.

And then what a thing it will be to feel our bodies as free, as little held down and oppressed, as our better part! Of course the great joy of heaven will be the same as that of this world—to know God and to be what He is; but we shall know Him so much better then, and know how foolish it was of us to be troubled about anything when HE was looking after everything! There will be no question whether life is worth living to those who know what life means.

Things are just as right as they could be, so far as God is concerned, for the making us capable of His own joy in life. The only thing amiss is that we put our hope in other things than God, and wish things that are not worth giving us, and which therefore He does not care to give us, and so we do not work along with Him for what He wants us to be and thereby delay the success of His work with us. For there is nothing good but being one with Him in every desire and hope and joy.”

I love MacDonald’s description of Beatrice, the person who had just died:

“So you must love Beatrice more than ever, and more yet, and wait in strong expecting patience: she will be more lovely still by the time we see her again—though that cannot be very long. Day runs so swiftly after day, and our ‘salvation’ is nearer than when we believed...”

There are treasures to receive *especially* through trials, tribulations and sufferings, for each experience comes with a glimpse into the Father’s heart. Our purpose on this earth—and this is true for all of mankind—is simply to choose our place for eternity. And so what can it matter what happens to us on our pilgrimage through this world? The important thing is that we keep our eyes upon heaven and the goal set before us, *to dwell with our Creator for all of eternity*. Constance told me of a priest in Holland by the name of Father Frans Horsthuis. He also lives totally by faith, but so deeply that he doesn’t even use money! When he *had* to use money—such as on his trips to the former Soviet Union, where you couldn’t enter without some—often even *that* money would be stolen! In his own book, Father Frans also prepared to answer the question, “How do you hear from God?” As he was writing, the Lord said to him, “*For I AM the Word of God. Shouldn’t I want to speak to My people?*”

#### Ye Are Not Your Own

*“Know ye not that...ye are not your own?”*

1 Corinthians 6:19

“There is no such thing as a private life—‘a world within the world’—for a man or woman who is brought into fellowship with Jesus Christ’s sufferings. God breaks up the private life of His saints, and makes it a thoroughfare for the world on the one hand and for Himself on the other. No human being can stand that unless he is identified with Jesus Christ. We are not sanctified for ourselves, we are called into the fellowship of the Gospel, and things happen which have nothing to do with us, God is getting us into fellowship with Himself. Let Him have His way; if you do not, instead of being of the slightest use to God in His Redemptive work in the world, you will be a hindrance and a clog.

The first thing God does with us is to get us based on rugged Reality until we do not care what becomes of us individually as long as He gets His way for the purpose of His Redemption. Why shouldn't we go through heartbreaks? Through those doorways God is opening up ways of fellowship with His Son. Most of us fall and collapse at the first grip of pain; we sit down on the threshold of God's purpose and die away of self-pity, and all so-called Christian sympathy will aid us to our deathbed. But God will not. He comes with the grip of the pierced hand of His Son, and says—'Enter into fellowship with Me; arise and shine.' If through a broken heart God can bring His purposes to pass in the world, then thank Him for breaking your heart."

*My Utmost for His Highest*  
Oswald Chambers

The prophecy that I had received in Baltimore in 1996 had said clearly that the battle was not over, that the Lord would indeed send me back to the warfare, but that the victory would be seen. In actuality, the battle began the very day I arrived back in Jerusalem to the apartment of the Lord's provision in Yemin Moshe in August of 1998. I had rented a car from the airport and had planned to use it for my first week back in Jerusalem to enable me to bring home some supplies. After getting through customs and collecting my luggage and the car, I didn't arrive home until 2:30 a.m. I arrived smack in the middle of the biggest heat wave in Israel's recent history. On some days the weather bureau would not even give the temperatures, they were so dreadfully high! And Jerusalem was humid for the first time ever! The apartment had been closed up, which gave the thick stone walls plenty of time to thoroughly heat. And so I arrived in the middle of the night to a mosquito-filled oven. It was impossible to sleep, and the next morning I walked down to the parking lot to discover that the car had been broken into and the rear window was smashed. Later that morning, as I was driving home from town, a motorcycle began to pass me on the right. At that very moment, a car door next to the curb began to open. The motorcycle, in order to avoid the car door, swerved and smashed into the *other* side of my car, causing quite a bit of damage. By God's grace the driver was not badly injured, but the minute we finished exchanging driver and insurance information, I dashed the car back to the rental office and turned it in.

I returned home to my totally empty apartment feeling quite dazed from the lack of sleep and from all that had happened. As I was standing there, suddenly there was a loud knocking at the door. It turned out to be someone from the government theoretically coming to collect my television and video in partial payment for a bill to the National Insurance (B'tuach Leumi) that I didn't even know I owed! It was almost laughable, since I not only had no television or video, I didn't have *anything*. The only thing in the apartment at that moment was *me*! I explained to the official that I had just returned to the country and knew nothing about the bill. He said, "Don't worry, don't worry..." but suggested that I go as soon as possible to work it out with the B'tuach Leumi offices in town.

The next morning found me waiting in the offices of B'tuach Leumi, confronted with an unexpected bill of 156,000 shekels (close to \$40,000!) They explained, not unkindly, that, while I did indeed pay B'tuach Leumi for all of my employees, I should have been paying this for myself as well since the Tea Room originally opened. I had



hired a professional accountant who, I believed, had handled all the necessary governmental bills and payments. However, somehow he never had paid this one, nor even *told* me of the need to pay it! It had therefore accumulated for a number of years. It was a shock on my first day home. The battle had indeed begun!

On my way back home from the offices of B'tuach Leumi, I walked down a nearby side street and noticed a "for rent" sign on a building. I jotted down the phone number and continued on my way.

During my two years in the States, I had been able to purchase some furniture in the country style that I love and it had been shipped to Israel. As a returning resident who had been out of the country for more than two years, I was entitled to bring everything into the country without paying customs. (Israel adopted this policy to encourage Israelis abroad to come back home again!) The shipment was due to arrive within the month of August, and in the meanwhile I used a small mattress on the floor as a "sofa" and slept in the upstairs bedroom on a Coleman air mattress.

After I had been in the apartment for 10 days, Pascale arrived to prepare for her wedding to Joe, scheduled for the 10<sup>th</sup> of September 1998. Joe and Pascale had met years earlier in the desert at Qumran, where Joe was a security guard for the Christian Embassy's celebration there. The Lord had told her at once that Joe was His choice for her, but she had many years to wait—until Joe finally opened his heart to the Lord and was transformed by His love. Their wedding was totally arranged by the hand of the Lord, and it was awesome to see. It was done totally by faith! Through a whole series of circumstances, they learned that it was possible to have wedding celebrations in the beautiful gardens inside David's Citadel within the Old City walls—and the Lord confirmed it as His choice. From the musicians to the caterer to the smallest of details, the love of the Father could be felt through it all. My sister Goldie attended the wedding, as did Mike, my ex-husband (who gave such a moving speech at the wedding that he had almost everyone in tears) as well as Pascale's family and many from the church in England pastored by her father. And of course, lots of our Israeli friends were also in attendance. The musicians led the bridal party out, and when it was the time for the bride to enter—in such a lovely spot highlighted by the lights on the Old City walls—it was to the tune of "Sunrise, Sunset" from "Fiddler on the Roof". Jewish weddings are always so full of joy. It was a marvellous, blessed and memorable occasion indeed!

Following Joe and Pascale's beautiful and anointed wedding, I sent out a prayer update to all those dear people who were committed to covering me in prayer. Prayer helps more than you could imagine so each one of them is so precious to me! The very day that the last newsletter was posted, that very day, I sensed that the Tea Room would, indeed, open again, and that I should contact the owner of the building I had initially found in early August to see if the space was still available. However, there was no money for the necessary renovations, nor even for the rent. I asked the Lord for a confirmation, to know if it was really His will for the restaurant to re-open. Many, many people asked about it upon my return to Israel. A few days later I met a former Tea Room customer, and introduced myself as the previous owner of the English Tea Room.

"How wonderful to meet you!" she replied, warmly shaking my hand. "My husband and I loved your restaurant." I told her that it might open again.

"Will it be kosher?" she asked.

"Yes," I replied.

"Well, then, please do be sure to notify us when it opens, for we will definitely return."

So you might ask, "What's so special about meeting a former Tea Room customer in *Jerusalem*?" Well, she was Sara Netanyahu, Prime Minister "Bibi's" wife! Even if it *doesn't* open again, it was still a great encouragement!

It was late October when I phoned the owner of the building again and was told that the building was still empty. I informed him of my desire to rent it for a restaurant, and then simply left it all in the hands of the Lord. The location puzzled me a little, as the portion available for rent was on the second and third floors of an old building and would definitely need a great deal of renovation. It had a lovely rooftop garden, however, and I knew that anything was possible.

A while later I sent a "prayer update" out once again, and the following is a quote from that letter:

"A few days later I had an appointment myself with the owner of the rooftop garden. He invited me for lunch at a little Korean restaurant that he also owns. I told him of the amazing phenomenon that not a day goes by without meeting a former customer who invariably asks, "Will the restaurant open again? We've missed it so much!" When we finished lunch and stood up to leave, there in the corner were sitting former customers of the Tea Room, and they said, "Will it open again? We've missed it so much!" We all had a good laugh over it, but it is quite amazing that the Lord has kept that longing alive in so many people's hearts. That little place on God's earth had a real impact on this city. The reason for the impact was, of course, the sense of God's love that could be felt there. As one person recently said, "It was truly anointed with His love..." So as I'm making plans to open the restaurant again, it is with a sense of wonder and awe, almost like building the Temple must have felt like, for it will indeed be a place where the Messiah's love can be *felt*. It is therefore something holy and special and a bit scary as well, for I know the opposition will be fierce. But what a *privilege* to be able to serve His people in this way!

The new Tea Room will change my life in many ways, but somehow the Lord has changed my heart and made me willing to do it. I *am* now willing to serve the Lord there, a commitment that will involve many hours each and every day. It will drastically change my life and will therefore cost me a lot, especially in terms of the privacy that I love. But, more than anything on earth, *I want to be as close to the centre of His will as is humanly possible*. Furthermore, it is such a privilege to see the beauty of His love touch and transform another person's life, so I know it will be worth it in countless ways. To quote Oswald Chambers yet another time: 'God never coerces us. In one mood we wish He would make us do the thing, and in another mood we wish He would leave us alone. Whenever God's will is in the ascendant, all compulsion is gone. When we choose deliberately to obey Him, then He will tax the remotest star and the last grain of sand to assist us with all His almighty power.'

Great things are coming..."

Following the meeting with the owner of the rooftop, still somewhat amazed by my own change of heart and willingness to forge ahead, I began to write the Tea Room chapters to include in this book. To begin the writing was an affirmation of faith in the restaurant's resurrection, and I worked on the chapters for many days.

One morning, I went to town to do some errands and stopped at a little hairdressing shop owned by new immigrants from Russia to receive a manicure and pedicure. During the pedicure, the pedicurist caused a deep cut on the bottom of my heel. It bled and bled and was really painful. As I was sitting in that little shop waiting for the bleeding to stop and feeling overwhelmed by the battle and close to tears, I finally said to the Lord, "I'm simply not willing to be a punching bag for the enemy any longer!" And it felt as though there was a special transaction between the Lord and myself. It doesn't mean, of course, that there will never be problems. But I sensed that special victories were on their way as well.

It was painful and difficult to walk, but I hobbled out to the bus stop. At that point the Lord prompted me to take the bus to a different part of town, get some money from the bank, and go to lunch at a little restaurant near my home. It was hard to obey that day because of the pain, but I did as He told me to do. I sat down at a little table in the corner (as I am a total back-seat-corner-type), and looked up to see two dear friends sitting across the garden. One of them, Dola Wittman, is the last living daughter of Eliezer Ben Yehuda, the father of the Hebrew language, as I told earlier in this book. I was so happy to see Dola and another friend, Irene, that morning!

When I finally returned home, it was to find the following letter in my post box:

"I read a book early in my walk with the Lord entitled *The Adventures of Living*. That title really sums it up. And it reflects what I have always felt our walk with the Lord was supposed to be. It really addresses the bottom line of our relationship with Him; and whether or not we're operating according to force-fitting things (of life) into our own mold of things; or whether we're really extending to our precious Lord the right to be Lord of our lives, to lead us, to guide us. I mean, it really comes down to the degree with which we're willing to trust. I know—I'm preaching to the choir here. Esther, all of that went into saying, that it was a blessing to get to know someone who is out there on the edge—out there with a real understanding of what that 'adventure of living' is really all about.

We enjoyed getting to know you also through your manuscript. You've got an absolutely wonderful writing style. It's real. It's articulate. And when you are sharing your life and the stories of what the Lord has done in your life, it is absolutely gripping.

Esther, I had this distinct sense that your teahouse/ restaurant (former and future) should be the pivot point around which your more comprehensive story in this book is told. I sure don't want to jump in the way of what the Holy Spirit may be speaking to you relative to this book, but it simply seemed that so many people know you—and will get to know you—through your teahouse/ restaurant. That's common ground. It's common ground that will attract a broad readership.

And the stories revolving around your teahouse/ restaurant are and I believe will continue to be an absolutely amazing story. An amazing story with

many wonderful anecdotes and personal tales of the Lord's wonderful ways making this world, that is constantly squeezing us into its mold, into something not only very meaningful, but into what can become a very exciting ongoing adventure. An adventure when we are willing to cross the gap of our comfort zones and truly trust Him with our future. As I pray about this book, I keep seeing the teahouse story and anecdotes, to flashbacks that provide more depth in terms of how you got to where you are—your background growing up; etc. etc.

But Esther, there's another dimension to your story. And if I'm wrong on this point, let me know (I'm sure you will!) But it strikes me that your story is one of a search for love and acceptance, in the context of a life and world filled with preoccupied relationships and rejection. Your story illustrates that unconditional love only the Lord can really give us. But there is still more, because when we tap into His unconditional love and acceptance, in this very self-centered world; only then can we really come to a place of really accepting ourselves; and in so doing, of finding out *who* He really created us to be. That realization is really the only thing that will ever bring wholeness, peace and real meaning into our lives.

All that to say in conclusion, that as a new friend of yours I am very excited about the way the Lord is using you—especially as it relates to your new book, and especially as it relates to reopening your teahouse. I can't help but sense afresh, what I sensed when I first prayed for you—that you are transitioning (maybe about to be catapulted) into not just a new phase of ministry, but a newness and freshness in your very walk and relationship with Yeshua. A genuine reflection of what a true adventure of living is designed by Him to be."

It was written by a believer from Colorado by the name of Morris Ruddick, and it felt like such a strong confirmation from the Lord—on that day especially—that it was indeed His will for the Tea Room to open once again. When Morris and his wife Carol had visited me in Jerusalem, they had walked through the restaurant premises, claiming them for the Lord and for His purposes in this city. It was done truly with the anointing of the Father, and we were all amazed at the sense of His presence that we felt that day.

Things continued to happen without stop. First of all, Joe and Pascale had left Israel following their wedding to live in Arizona. Joe had a job there with a two-year commitment. However, upon returning to the United States, he was informed by a new manager that he was released from that commitment! It made them both happy, and when they asked the Lord what He would have them to do, His answer was clear. "Go to Jerusalem *now*..." The Lord soon confirmed that he was sending Joe back at this time to help set up the Tea Room—a job he did so well the first time! And so upon their arrival in the country, we prayed and waited for the door to open.

Other things happened as well. One day the Lord told me to go to the King David Hotel swimming pool. It's in my neighbourhood, and it's peaceful and lovely and I went there from time to time on hot summer days. This was the end of November, however, but I obeyed nonetheless!

The manager of the pool, who I had known for a long time, informed me that the pool was closing for the winter that very day! And then he mentioned, "By the way, if you need to have any work done, I have three months off before the pool reopens, and we can do any kind of construction or repair work that there is."

I told him that I might soon be opening a restaurant, and a great deal of work would indeed need to be done. He gave me his phone number, and I left the pool that day amazed. Until we received the finances and the building, there was nothing I could do about it, but the Lord wanted to be sure that we didn't lose touch. About two weeks later, the sink in my bathroom blocked up totally, and there was no electricity at all in the rooms that Pascale and Joe would use on their soon-return to Israel from the States. I used another little bathroom in the meanwhile, and happened to notice water dripping from the ceiling! So I *had* to call him! The work that they did was so thorough and caring and inexpensive, I knew why the Lord had chosen them for the renovation work ahead!

Shortly after Joe and Pascale returned—with the wonderful Chanukah news that they were going to be parents—with the due date of August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1999—my sister Cathy and her son Daniel came for a visit as well. One day Cathy and I took a walk across the valley to the Old City. We had Chanukah latkes at a little restaurant in the Jewish Quarter overlooking the Western Wall, and then walked along the inside of the wall past Zion Gate. There we spotted a small Armenian pottery shop. The work that the owner did was unusually beautiful, and I knew at once that he would be the Lord's answer for all of the dishes to be used at the new restaurant.

"As a matter of fact," he told me, "the new Hilton just ordered dishes using English 'Churchill' heavy ironstone, dishes that will really hold up to hard use. We can design them even with your logo if you wish!" So step by step, it seemed to all be falling into place.

As I was typing and working on the Tea Room chapters and the completion of the book, reviewing all the testimonies again left me feeling a bit overwhelmed, especially with the prospect of it all beginning once again—or *continuing*, I guess, would be more appropriate. Especially since so much of the finances were still needed! But the Lord reminded me first of all that one of the basic principles of a life of faith was the tenacity NOT to look at the natural circumstances. He gave me the Scripture in Nehemiah, when he was busy building the walls of Jerusalem. Friends came to him and asked him to stop working so that they could discuss with him the building of the walls. To which he so wonderfully replied, "I'm too busy building the walls." And that's exactly what the Lord was having me do, to continue to forge ahead with this work for His kingdom no matter what. But the Lord has some special encouragement's when we are determined to follow His will at all costs. For last week, in the mail, came a treasure from the Father's heart.

It was a translation from the Dutch of Frans Horsthuis' book, found for me by Constance, entitled "*The Royal Way*". There's no possibility to describe the joy and the encouragement that this book has brought to me from the heart of the Lord. I'll try to explain it as best as I can, although only the Lord's Spirit would be able to truly help you to understand what I'm trying to share in all its depth.

My primary experience as a believer has been in Israel. Here there are others who live their lives according to the Gospel, trusting the Lord for everything and serving Him day by day. It never seemed strange here, but rather a natural expression of our trust in our heavenly Father's care for us as His children. I noticed in my travels throughout the world that there were not very many people who lived similar lives, and for the most part



the Lord sent me out to teach on His faithfulness. But my last two years in the States brought me into an almost crisis situation, for almost nothing in that society lent approval to the way that I live. I remember commenting to a New York taxi driver, for example, the simple fact that I chose not to have a television. He turned right around and said to me incredulously, “What? You don’t have a *television*?” as though he had just discovered that he was transporting a passenger with the bubonic plague. It was only a miracle that the car stayed on the not-being-watched-at-all road. It almost made me want to add, “No, and I don’t have a microwave, savings account, the Internet, or insurance, either... And as a matter of fact, all I have to my name at this moment is \$40.00 in all the world, and it doesn’t worry me one bit.” But of course, I didn’t say any of it, and his comment left me feeling different and strange.

To my way of thinking, following the Lord is the most incredibly wonderful thing that we can do with our lives. I have literally served Him for almost a quarter of a century. The more we come to know Him and His unpredictably wonderful ways, the less the world has any appeal whatsoever. That is why, in obedience to Him, I have greatly simplified my life. I treasure His kingdom above this earthly one, and therefore much of the “world” doesn’t interest me—TV, movies, most secular books etc. It all seems like a distraction from *His* ways—and not very interesting at all compared to a walk by His side. So it was totally thrilling to read as Frans was led through the same process.

The Lord brought him through various revelations of the meaning of a real and a total relationship to Him, and at one point, when he was a parish priest, he was preparing a sermon on the Beatitudes, particularly the theme, “Blessed are the poor...” He had wanted to develop the idea that “in the present materialistic time we should put more trust in God than in the apparent worldly and materialistic certainties of money and possessions.” After he was satisfied with the sermon, a challenge came from the Lord: “Fine words there. You are not married and your life is a bed of roses... Go and live it out yourself first, or don’t talk about it.” The Lord then challenged him to announce at the end of the sermon that he was giving up his salary. He struggled with it for many days, but finally decided to put his trust in the Father’s care.

“The Gospel is practical, it is true and relevant...if only we follow it. Therein is the rub. There is enough talking and preaching, including talk about the church of the poor, but that in itself is not going to change anything.

So eventually I gave that sermon, and I added at the end, ‘And so you do not need to give me a salary in the future.’ When I had got the words out, a great weight fell from me and I breathed as if with a new freedom.

Some time about then, there were about five of us sitting around after a committee meeting, having a chat. Then someone said: ‘Father, I would like to ask you something. It says in the Gospel: “If you want to be perfect, sell what you own and give it to the poor, then come and follow Me.” Imagine that I were to do that today. Tomorrow my neighbour followed suit, then another, and eventually the whole street, and so on. What would happen if everyone did that? That could never happen, could it? The whole of society would collapse.’ Somewhat triumphantly the good man looked at me.”

This dialogue really made me smile, for I cannot tell you how many times in my travels throughout the world that I have heard the same arguments. People always gave them so smugly, satisfying themselves that the Gospel is not for everyone, that everyone is certainly not meant to be obedient, etc. etc. I always felt so sorry for them, for they will never know what it is that they are missing. No, they will never, ever know...

"How often does the Lord give you wisdom when you have no answer as a human being. I said to him: 'Look, you are doing now exactly what almost all Christians do. You are asking, "What would happen if..." Then the arguments follow: "I cannot just give up my business"; "I cannot forget about my family"; "These words belong to another age. It was possible then, but not now." "Anyway, you should not follow the letter of the Gospel but the spirit," and a whole series of other arguments until we have again made another part of the Gospel disappear in a game of theory. Christians have been doing that for years. No wonder so little happens. But now—another question: Why are you asking me anyway? Were you planning to do something along those lines?"

He chuckled a bit and made a few noises in his throat.

I said: 'Don't beat about the bush—be serious for a bit. Were you really thinking about such a course of action?'

'No, of course not,' was his answer.

'Exactly, and that is the problem!' I said. '*Of course not*. That's where the difficulty is for us Christians. We want to talk about these things, without committing ourselves. And that is where it stays. But if you really wanted to know what would happen if...then you'd better try it out. Then you would see for yourself what would happen. But one thing I can guarantee you: your neighbour would not follow suit the day after, and the other neighbour would not do the same one day later. But everyone would tap his finger on his head and say: 'This chap has gone mad.' That's the way it is with the Gospel.'

Giving up his salary, as it turns out, was only the beginning. The Lord then challenged him to give up most of his furnishings and personal possessions. Everything was easy for him to part with until it came to a special old antique clock. That made me smile as well, for it reminded me of an experience I had in my first year as a new believer.

I had been living in Connecticut in an apartment with my two little sons, just a few months before our departure to Israel in 1976. I went to visit a neighbour, and found there a friend of hers from Columbia named Claudia also sitting at the kitchen table. She was pouring over the classified ads in search of an apartment, as her husband had thrown her out of her home with her two children and they had nowhere to stay. She was determined to file for a divorce and find a better life. Her two children were close in age to Joe and Mike.

"Why don't you come stay with us until you find an apartment of your own?" I offered at once. So later that day the three of them moved in. I noticed that she had very few clothes, and suddenly the Lord prompted me to give her some of *my* clothes—including my very favourite pair of jeans. They had an embroidered sunset on the back, and I didn't want to give them away at all. It seems astonishing to me now that such an

insignificant thing was such a struggle for me, but alas, it was. I did give them to her in the end, never dreaming that less than a year later I would also be giving to the Lord my very own two little sons. Everything is a process! And so it continued for Frans as well. Here is his description of the process after he had been asked by the Lord to give away his savings account:

"That was a beginning. I have never regretted this beginning, nor what followed it. Now the Lord had pushed aside the pedestal that I had been standing on. He began to sort out a lot of other matters...Once He has His grip on you, He always takes you farther.

What does the Lord really want from us? Is He against us having our possessions, our friendships? Oh, all the objections and complaints which people make, I have experienced them all myself. I already know from the depth of my own experience all these counter-arguments.

If He did not want us to have them, why would He have given them to us? But He wants to give us lots more. There is no one so poor as our Father: everything that He has, He gives away again through Jesus, and keeps nothing for Himself. He has even given His Son.

Jesus is just the same: 'Everything I have received from the Father, I have shared with you.' He even gives Himself. And this is a source of joy for Him. His nature is simply 'give, and pass it on'. He squanders everything, just like the sun, which gives light and warmth without expecting anything in return.

And the Holy Spirit? He is a pure Gift, Who cannot resist being given. It is only we human beings who want to possess, to control: 'This is mine. Stay away! Private property!' This is our misery, our poverty. Surely God finds all this business vexing: 'How poor you are!' Just hoarding things, without passing them on. There is no joy in that.

Jesus wants to give us a royal lead, by teaching us to rise above this situation. But first you have to distance yourself, in order to become as free as He is, and...as rich as He is. Don't talk about it, simply try it out: a new world will open up in front of you...

This, then, was the fruit of that period: the Lord first wanted to give me a new and solid foundation for my life; His Word, the Bible, which was no longer to be just a devotional book to browse in and to satisfy my religious needs, but it was to be a guide to my life, to make me go out and do things.

And yet...even now Jesus was not satisfied. It was not to be the Bible, but Himself; He was to become the foundation of my life."

The next step for him was to give up his parish appointment by resigning, and then his apartment, causing him to live in his car. Then the Lord had him give up his car and use only a bicycle! And so the lessons of obedience and God's faithfulness deepened for him as well. He then described a "desert" experience similar to the one that I had just been through, as I described earlier, when the Lord seemed so very far away. And finally came the battle, when all the desires for material comforts and monetary things were severed, when God began dealing with his thoughts as well.

This is a lesson the Lord gave to me many years ago, that with His help *it was possible to even be free from the tyranny of thoughts that so often occupy our minds and*

prevent us from hearing and obeying the voice of the Lord. Oswald Chambers explained it in the following way:

*"When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and...  
pray to thy Father which is in secret."*

Jesus did not say—Dream about thy Father in secret. Prayer is an effort of the will. After we have entered our secret place and have shut the door, the most difficult thing to do is to pray; we cannot get our minds into working order, and the first thing that conflicts is wandering thoughts. The great battle in private prayer is the overcoming of mental woolgathering. We have to discipline our minds and concentrate on willful prayer.

We must have a selected place for prayer and when we get there the plague of flies begins—This must be done, and that. 'Shut thy door.' A secret silence means to shut the door deliberately on emotions and remember God. God is in secret, and He sees us from the secret place. He does not see us as other people see us, or as we see ourselves. When we live in the secret place it becomes impossible for us to doubt God, we become more sure of Him than of anything else. Enter the secret place, and right in the center of the common round you find God there all the time. Get into the habit of dealing with God about everything. Unless in the first waking moment of the day you learn to fling the door wide back and let God in, you will work on a wrong level all day; but swing the door wide open and pray to your Father in secret, and every public thing will be stamped with the presence of God."

As time went by in my earlier walk by His side, the Lord took it one step further. He instructed me that I must live my entire life—not just a few quiet morning moments—in an attitude of prayer and of listening, and that means an almost total victory over thoughts. When we have silence in our minds, then we are free to listen to the gentleness of His instructions when they come. The channel is open and it is clear.

Often people have asked me how it is that I hear from the Lord so clearly, and occasionally I have shared with them this special discipline that the Lord had taught me. They would invariably reply, even as I did when first confronted with this principle, "What? You mean to tell me that God wants us to stop *thinking*?"

However, when we compare the greatness of His thoughts to the self-centeredness and smallness of our own, it is not so much to give up after all! It was something I had been able to do for many years, but somehow I had lost that grace in recent months. Finally, one Shabbat, I simply locked myself in my room; and from Friday afternoon until Saturday night, I cried out to the Lord for His help in acquiring this special grace once again. And, even though it is still a struggle, the victory over thoughts is happening more and more each day. For you see, when we do not busy up our lives with superficial, artificial things—and when we clear our minds of thoughts, doubts, criticisms, and questions—then we can truly live our lives waiting for His guidance and His direction. It is so beautifully simple when we let it be!

What blessed me so much was to read of another life guided by God so similarly to mine. Frans has such a wonderful friendship with the Lord because he also values it

above all else. Just before the Tea Room opens it was a reaffirmation of all the principles of faith that I had always known—but which I had somehow lost confidence in during my sojourn in the United States. And that is why that little book encouraged me so very much.

Frans told about the time when he was still teaching courses in college and had given a lecture on the life of St. Francis of Assisi. He shared how Francis had been taken hold of by Christ, had taken the word of the Lord literally, gave away all his possessions, went to live in utter poverty, *and brought about a renewal in the church of his time*. After the lessons, two students asked if it would be possible to live as Francis did in our time.

“I realized that this was a serious question, not just asked to draw me. ‘Certainly,’ I answered, ‘the Gospel is for all time and for everyone. So it is also possible in our time.’ ‘But how?’ they asked me. ‘I can’t give you an answer in a couple of minutes. But come and see me at home and we can talk about it quietly.’

Other students joined the discussions, and that is how it began. On one occasion I said to them: ‘We want to follow Jesus, just as Francis did, as He told us to—in the Gospel. But how can we do it? By studying the Bible? You already get enough on the Bible from me at college. Shall we go on talking about it? I am not in favour of that; there are far too many talk and discussion groups. Everything is talked about and discussed, without any commitment. Let’s do what Francis did. When he had a couple of people prepared to live as he did, he said: “What kind of life shall we choose? We are simple, uneducated people. Let’s go and ask the Lord Himself.” Then they went into a church, saw the book of the Gospels lying on the altar, and opened it three times during their prayer. The first line that they saw was: “If you want to be perfect, sell everything that you have, give it to the poor and come follow Me,” Jesus’ words to the rich man. The second text was, when Jesus sent His disciples on their mission: “Take nothing for the journey, no money, no bag, no spare clothes.” When they opened the Gospels for a third time, they found: “If someone wants to be My disciple, let him deny himself, pick up his cross and follow Me.”’ I continued: ‘In our time people would probably join a discussion group in order to talk about what Christ could have meant by this, and how we should interpret it in our own age. Not Francis. He closed the Bible and said: “Friends, the Lord has spoken. We will start today...”’

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 1999, the Lord confirmed that the Tea Room would indeed open its doors once again in the spring of 1999. He told me this the minute I had completed the manuscript for the book, at least with as much as had happened by then. He gave me the idea to begin with a “Welcome Home Party” for all of our dear customers, with the official opening some time later. But since this is an on-going adventure, more was soon to follow!

On Sunday, the 10<sup>th</sup> of January, I received a telephone call from the owner of the rooftop informing me that they would be meeting together on that Tuesday afternoon to arrange for the rental agreement contract. The owner of the building requested an extension for the beginning of the leasing period until the 15<sup>th</sup> of February, and so I was



finally scheduled to meet in my lawyer's office on Sunday, the 31<sup>st</sup> of January. On that day I needed to have the first month's rent of \$1850 as a deposit and the contracts were then to be signed. As I have shared in previous chapters, the main battle has indeed been in the financial arena. It seemed like a minor thing to arrive in my lawyer Matiyahu "Mati" Atzmon's office on that Sunday morning with \$1850—but once again the spiritual battle started in earnest!

First of all, I had a bank account in Arizona that I had used during my time in the States. Money had recently been transferred to the account to enable me to pay some bills, plus there would have been just enough to pay the \$1850 rental as well. But that very week the strangest thing happened! I was informed that the Wells Fargo bank had "lost" my account. The cheques that I had written to pay the bills had all been returned, "unable to locate account..." and the money that had been transferred to *pay* the bills had also been returned to the sender with the same notification. Fortunately I knew people at the branch in Arizona, so I phoned them to find out what had happened.

Dottie, the person at the bank who knew me the best, said, "No problem. Give me your social security number, and I'm sure we'll be able to locate your account with that." Was she ever surprised to discover that—even with the social security number—the computer had no record that my account had ever even existed! The account had totally disappeared! She couldn't imagine how it had happened!

She assured me that she would open a new account for me at once and would issue new cheques and a new ATM card—but even if money *had* been there—I would not have been able to access it in any way whatsoever until the new cheques or the ATM withdrawal card arrived! And that would take a minimum of three weeks. So it was clear that no money would be available for the rental of the new Tea Room from my American account. The battle was on.

The very next day while my son Joe was in the centre of town, I asked him to cash a cheque for me at my *Israeli* bank. "They wouldn't cash the cheque, Mom," he informed me later that day.

If you can imagine such a thing, I was notified that my *Israeli* bank account had been taken over by someone—and so I could not withdraw anything from that one as well! I needed to receive from the bank the file number of the closure in order for my lawyer to investigate the cause of the lien. The woman at the bank began rifling through a *huge* stack of those papers!

"See, it's not just you that this happened to," she told me reassuringly. "It's half of Israel!" (When my attorney later investigated it, he discovered that I had owed some obscure bill to the City of Jerusalem from April 1996—and because of that they had put a lien on my account! Of course, we sorted it out, but it also took some weeks). So *both* accounts were inaccessible!

By Friday afternoon, when no money had arrived from the post or from anywhere else, and the Sabbath was approaching, it certainly seemed totally impossible that money could appear—in *cash*—in time for the Sunday deadline!

We were expecting two guests for Shabbat dinner that night. One of the guests, Dermot, an Englishman living in Germany, had visited the Tea Room on a number of occasions and had actually been there the night before it closed in 1996. After dinner that evening we had a time of prayer, and he asked how the Tea Room situation was going—

and then told us that on Thursday night, the Lord had prompted him to give me a gift of \$2000—so the impossible had happened! I had the money in cash to bring to Mati's office on Sunday.

When I arrived at Mati's office that morning, another lawyer, a friend of Mati's, "happened" to be sitting there as well. Mati immediately phoned the owner of the building to inform him that we had the money and the contracts and were ready to sign. It should have been a routine matter, but I could tell by the look on Mati's face that something unexpected had happened.

When Mati hung up the phone, he told me and his lawyer friend, "As soon as I informed the owner of the building that we were ready to sign the contracts, he told me he was sorry that I had not been informed—but that he had sold the building on Friday! So it is no longer available for rent!"

We were all a bit dumbfounded, and it certainly appeared as if the enemy had won at last. Both bank accounts were tied up and the very building that we had been planning to rent had been sold. But of course, the Lord is *always* the victor, and so I sat there in His perfect peace waiting to see what would happen next.

Mati's friend finally said, as he took out a pen and some paper, "Listen, with my recommendation," and he wrote down his name, "and with Mati's recommendation, go to 6 Ben Hillel Street. It's the same building where I have my office. There you will find a small realty office. Perhaps they have a restaurant to rent that is even *better*!" And at that moment I knew that it was by the Lord's hand that this particular lawyer had been sitting in Mati's office to overhear the whole dilemma—and to hand to me the location of the very place to which the Lord Himself wanted me to go. It was something that I just *knew*; so I thanked them both, told Mati I would let him know what happened, and left with the slip of paper in my hand. I could tell that a new adventure had just begun.

I followed the lawyer's directions and arrived five minutes later at 6 Ben Hillel Street. I entered the miniscule office and asked the realtor sitting there if he had a restaurant to rent.

"What kind of a restaurant?" he asked me.

"A large one with a garden," I told him at once. He then opened his desk drawer and began rummaging through many sets of keys until he finally extracted the set for which he was searching. "Follow me," he said. His office was on the inner city pedestrian mall, so we simply crossed the road and went down a short set of stairs. And there, on a little pedestrian alley connecting Ben Hillel with Jaffa Road sat a recently vacated restaurant that was 100 times better than the one that had just been sold!

It was a charming old building, built 150 years ago, with soaring ceilings, thick stone walls, and beautiful tall windows. It needed cosmetic work, but none of the major renovations that the first building would have required. In addition, the first building was on the second and third floors, which would have made it difficult for many people—including our staff! This newly found building was much bigger than the original building, all on the ground floor, with a lovely-enclosed garden. It had everything inside that we needed—a reception area and room for the coffee bar; a beautiful, spacious room for general seating; a separate smoking-and-private-party-room; space for an individual baking centre; a storage room; a spacious kitchen; space for an office, etc. It was located

on a small pedestrian alley in the heart of downtown Jerusalem, and even though it was in the very centre of town, it was incredibly quiet—with no sounds of traffic! It was truly a haven, and I knew in a second that it was the very place that the Lord had in mind all along. Compared to the first location, we could *really* appreciate this one! And, *it had just become available after having been rented by the same tenant for 14 years.*

I told the realtor that I definitely wanted to rent it, and we made arrangements to meet with the landlord the following day. Ten minutes after the news that the building had been sold—the Lord showed me the wonderful building He had planned for us all along! I raced home to tell Joe and Pascale. It was quite an eventful hour since I had last seen them, and they were thrilled with the news and with the building itself! We couldn't help but feel the Lord's love.

We met with the owner of the building the next day. He was asking \$3000 per month rent, which truly wasn't terribly high for such a large building in the very centre of the city. But I told him it was a bit high for me, and so he agreed to a five-year lease with a rental of \$2500 per month. I gave him a deposit (from the \$2000 the Lord had provided) and he agreed to hold the building for me until I returned to Israel in three week's time. I would be leaving the very next day for New York City for a visit with Mike. I would then be visiting for a week in the town where he lives in upstate New York before leaving for another week in Switzerland. In the meantime, Chaim and Nadav (from the King David) would bring in all the workers and technicians to obtain estimates and to have everything prepared for the work to begin upon my return to Israel on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February. All that I would need by the time I returned would be the money for the rent and for the work! But we could feel the Lord's love so strongly that we knew that somehow, from somewhere, the necessary finances would be there on time.

I left the very next morning bound for New York City. I had pre-paid the New York City hotel room through my Jerusalem travel agent, but I had very little money for



The main seating area in the new building before the renovation and decorating.

food during our four days in the city. I arrived the day before Mike, and so checked into the hotel and the next morning took a walk to find a small restaurant for breakfast. Was I ever shocked to turn the first corner and to see directly in front of me, written in Hebrew and in English on a synagogue undergoing some reconstruction, the following quote from Nehemiah:

“Let us rise up and rebuild...”

Nehemiah 2: 18

(I love the Hebrew for this Scripture. Here’s the transliteration: “Nahkoom oobahneenoo”).

As you may remember, it was the word from Nehemiah that the Lord had previously given me in regard to the new restaurant—to begin to rebuild, no matter what the circumstances looked liked. (Actually, it was an old/new word, for the Lord had originally given it to me in December 1995, a time fraught with problems and difficulties at the previous Tea Room).

“The God of heaven, He will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build...”

Nehemiah 2: 20

Of course, I had no way of knowing then that the Tea Room would soon close and that more than three years would pass before that word would indeed be fulfilled—at the *new* Tea Room! When Nehemiah became aware of their enemies’ plot to ambush and attack the workers on the wall in an attempt to stop the rebuilding of the walls, he said to the nobles, the rulers and the people:

“Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.

And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work.

“And it came to pass from that time forth, that the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows...”

Nehemiah 4:14-16

This, of course, is where the work of my dear partners in prayer would be so vitally important—to cover us so that the rebuilding could continue, first in the physical sense and later in the spiritual rebuilding as well.

Just before I left for New York, I received *“Watchmen on the Wall”* by Hannah Hurnard in the mail, from a believer in Florida who had graciously sent the book in obedience to the Lord. While in New York I read a portion of that book each day. It told the story of the physical restoration of Israel during the year of actual rebirth, 1948. Hannah was living in Jerusalem at that time. It was of course the literal fulfillment of Ezekiel’s vision of the dry bones, (symbolizing the remnant of Israel following the

Holocaust)—for indeed they were coming together and were given life. But she was also looking forward to the rest of the fulfillment of Ezekiel's vision, *when the Lord would put His spirit within them.*

In *"I Am My Beloved's"*, I told the story of how, way back in 1979, three of us went away for a week of prayer and fasting to seek an answer from the Lord as to what I was to do. (This followed my case before the High Court of Justice concerning my residency in Israel as a believer in Yeshua—quite a story in itself!) The Lord didn't answer us directly, however, but instead gave us an incredible word of hope:

*"One day there will be an outpouring of the Spirit of My Holiness upon Israel, and you will each have a part to play—after 'self' has been dealt with by Me..."*

Twenty years have passed since then (I guess I had a LOT of "self" to deal with)—but now I sense more than ever that the spiritual restoration of Israel is very, very close. I know as well that the Tea Room will have a small part to play in it all.

So now—back to the story! When I arrived in Switzerland, I needed to travel to the town where Martin and Vreni live. I would be meeting Sister Ruth there to read my new book to her (as her eyesight was by now limited) and to tape the book at the same time for Joachim in Germany. That morning I had almost no money left whatsoever, but when I arrived at the main train station in Zurich, a farmer's market was in session. I was able to purchase a small box of chocolates and a small bouquet of spring flowers as a gift for Martin and Vreni, and I had just enough money left over for a delightful little picnic on the train—two Swiss sandwiches and a small bag of Greek olives from the market. I rejoiced as always in the Lord's daily provision. Trusting Him for means day by day, as the little sparrow, always felt like such a grace in my life; for it truly enabled me to be grateful for the little things in life that can be so special and that are too often overlooked or taken for granted. I arrived at Martin and Vreni's home with one franc left! *And it was only one week before the deadline when all of the Tea Room money would be needed.*

The reading of my new book went well. It was truly gracious of the Lord to enable me to share it with Sister Ruth, for she had been such a special part of the *beginnings* of the book in the alpine village. We filled five 90-minute cassettes for Joachim! Wow, I'm surely glad I didn't have to read *"I Am My Beloved's"* to anyone, since it is five times bigger than my new book!

I was scheduled to leave Martin and Vreni's on Saturday afternoon, and would then be on my way to visit Hermann and Heidi before I returned to Zurich for the flight home. We had just finished lunch and would soon be leaving for the train station when Martin asked how things were going with the Tea Room in the financial area. He said that they would pray about whether or not God wanted them to help, and if so, what amount would I need? Math has never been my strong point, but I came up with an estimate that I thought would be more than sufficient! On the way to the train, I said to Martin, "If you do indeed pray about it, and if you are able to help, please don't be surprised if the Lord says 'yes'! This is not money for me personally—it is for the Gospel to the Jewish people in Jerusalem, and it is close to the Father's heart..."



Since I had arrived there with a single franc, I did not have the money for the train fare. However, dear Sister Ruth, who knows me well, understood as soon as she saw the *small* bouquet of flowers and the *small* box of chocolates that it meant that my finances had run low. That day 100 Swiss Francs arrived in the mail, and she knew that the Lord wished for her to pass it on to me. It's such a strange phenomena amongst those who truly live according to the Father's care—for somehow, when we have little and know that all that we *do* have is His already—it is so easy to *give* the little that we have. Yeshua clearly stated that we were not to worry about the following day, and therefore we can give knowing that day by day our needs would be taken care of by our Father in heaven. Her precious gift brought tears to my eyes.

I had a lovely visit with dear Hermann and Heidi as well, and we prayed earnestly for the Lord's provision—from wherever it was meant to come on this earth. Every person God chooses has a part to play, whether large or small! It is, after all, obedience that counts.

On the morning of my departure for Israel, I phoned Martin and Vreni to give them some phone numbers at their request. At the end of the conversation, Martin said, "By the way, the money is already on its way..."

He said it so casually that I wasn't sure that I heard him correctly, so I stammered, "Would you repeat that?"

It wasn't a trick of my hearing—the finances needed were indeed already on their way! I felt God's love for them so much at that moment, as I have for every person whom God has chosen to help in this project in whatever measure they were able. And so I returned to Israel that day—in the victory! I had the money for the rent and for the renovation work to begin. Hallelujah!

The weather in New York City, upstate New York, and Switzerland had been interesting, to say the least! Just before I left New York, one of those magical snowstorms occurred that sticks to the trees and turns everything into a white wonderland. It was breathtakingly beautiful! In Switzerland there were avalanches and floods due to an unusual amount of rainfall and snowfall, especially during the time that I was there. It rained or snowed almost constantly, and I couldn't quite believe that so much moisture could possibly fall from the sky day and night! Since I've lived in the desert for almost 24 years, it really amazed me. I didn't see sunshine for almost three weeks! Life in Israel is geared primarily to bright sunny skies, and therefore it felt so oppressive to me in the end. Was I happy at last to return home to the smell of orange blossoms in the air; to see the almond trees in bloom; and to hear the songs of all the returning springtime birds, as Israel is now a sanctuary for migrating birds.

Pascale and Joe met me at the airport, and on the way up to Jerusalem I told them the whole story. They were so thrilled and blessed! I also mentioned that I had the strongest feeling from the Lord that the "Welcome Home Party" for our customers should be filmed with a video camera, but since we didn't have one, I couldn't imagine how it would happen! The very next day, when I went to check the post, a letter was awaiting me from friends in Colorado, David and Candice Talbot, from which I quote the following:

"Dearest Esther,

We are so excited about your grand opening and see that the Lord is in it and are anxious to bless you. Is there any idea when this may happen? I understand things really get in the way and try to mess up the plans of your heart. But the reason I ask is that we want to come over and videotape the place and people at the party, and do interviews and photographs. This is historic and important and would bless people who cannot come. We are professional photographers/videographers, and would do this for the Lord and for you.

Our schedule is in the Lord's hands, but as we see it now the soonest we could come is May 2<sup>nd</sup>..."

That was so exciting as well! We set the date for the "Welcome Home Party" for our former customers and friends for the 6<sup>th</sup> of May, with the opening of the Tea Room itself tentatively scheduled for a few days later.

We received the keys to the building on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March, just before the celebration of "Purim" in Israel. That week the animated film, "Prince of Egypt", opened in Israel. It told the story of Moses and of Israel's deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. It was awesome to see it here in Israel, where once again God's mighty power of deliverance has been manifest in our generation. And there we were, sitting as a part of the *modern* state of Israel, a people once again greatly blessed by the hand of God. His love could be tangibly felt in that theatre, and the film is bound to have an impact on this little nation.

There is a very poignant scene in the movie where baby Moshe (Moses) is in the basket, holding on to his mother's hand. Then, as she places the basket in the river, she must release his hand and let him go, entrusting him to God. Since I literally experienced something so similar when the Lord also asked me to place my little sons in His hands so many years ago, I could not possibly watch that scene without weeping. I knew in my mother's heart just what kind of faith it took—and just what kind of pain she would have felt at that moment. In a way it was a reminder to me of the "cost", somehow something the Lord has always used as a "grounding balance" when He is about to do some pretty amazing things. So in a bittersweet way, it gave me the expectation to know that some special things are ahead in this new/old resurrected Tea Room venture!

On my second day back in Israel following my trip abroad, I met with the landlord and signed the contracts, rejoicing in the goodness of the Lord in it all. However, I was a bit horrified to discover that the rentals alone—the first three months' and a security deposit of three months' rent, plus one month's rent for the realtor—took almost half of the money that Martin and Vreni so graciously sent. I knew that the remaining amount would be enough to begin the work—but that before too long we would again be out of finances. After some days of prayer, the Lord confirmed that I needed to write to them and tell the situation as it happened. And simply to ask that if, on the day that they had asked the amount needed, I had figured it properly—would they have been able to send that amount? And if so, could they *still* send it? I really struggled before dispatching that letter, due to a combination of pride and not wanting to damage the precious friendship the Lord has given us. But the Lord finally told me that my reluctance was based on pride *and* fear—that I needed to be obedient to Him—and to entrust the results to Him as well. And so the letter was duly dispatched.

By Friday, the 12<sup>th</sup> of March, we did indeed run out of money. Until then we had exactly the amount we had needed to pay everything, step by step, but a great deal was still needed. So I said, “Well, Lord, I guess You know that we’re out of money!”

To which the Lord replied, “Yes, but it’s almost Shabbat—and you don’t need any money for Shabbat!” That made me laugh and relax, for truly—He was right! And then, on Sunday morning, *the rest of the money from Switzerland arrived*. It’s rather amazing that the Lord has entrusted so much of this new Tea Room to Martin and Vreni, for surely they will be a part of all of the spiritual fruit to come—as will each one who contributed as well. And by that I’m not speaking only of *financial* contributions—**for prayers are also important**. Each person who helped in whatever way surely will be a part of the blessings to come—and a part of His promise as well:

“I will bless those who bless My people...”

Genesis 12: 3

The Lord had given the word from Nehemiah to just keep building—and so we did. Prayers could surely be felt and every single thing was paid for in cash. And then—in the first week of April—we ran out of finances once more. However, first there was a six-day Moslem feast, and so work at the Tea Room was suspended ‘til the end of their celebrations. Then came the festival of Passover, so once again nobody could work. Even though we had no money, we really didn’t *need* any until Thursday, the 29<sup>th</sup> of April. On that date we had to pay the bill for all of the electrical installation—or the electrician threatened to pull out all of the wiring (this is the Middle East, after all!)—and other, less dramatic bills were due. In all, it turned out that a great deal of money was still needed.

After praying, I still had no idea how help to finish the Tea Room work *would* arrive—never dreaming the drama that was soon to unfold! On Sunday, the 25<sup>th</sup> of April, the Lord instructed me to send the following fax to Martin and Vreni in Switzerland. The letter itself tells a good part of the story that ensued:

“Dear Martin & Vreni,

This is the final week of the major work on the restaurant, and in the two weeks left until the celebration, the cosmetic work (light fixtures, furniture, gardening, etc.) and the setting up of the kitchen, coffee bar, and serving areas, staff training, etc., must be accomplished. The Lord helped us in incredible ways to keep the costs as low as possible! For example, we purchased the major kitchen equipment from the old city of Jaffa, at a place recommended to us by the owners of Mama Mia’s restaurant. We were able to get used kitchen equipment in excellent condition, some even still under warranty (from restaurants that had closed) for a total of only 48,000 shekels or \$12,000. That price included a heating oven, range and griddle, refrigerated salad bar, deep fryer (new), triple milkshake maker, industrial blender, baking oven and dough riser, refrigerator for the coffee bar, freezer for the coffee bar, and refrigerator for the bakery, plus stainless steel shelves for the kitchen. If this equipment had been purchased new, it would have cost many thousands of dollars!

We travelled to a little village near Bethlehem to cousins of David’s to purchase tiles for the kitchen and the bathroom and for the exhaust system for

the kitchen at a cost much lower than possible in Jerusalem. The friends in charge of all of the construction and electrical work also managed to keep the prices incredibly low as well. But even with all of that, in this last week we were still short \$50,000. There were just so many small details, additional expenses that you could never imagine in advance, and so last week I began to pray in earnest. All of the money has to be here by the end of this week, or we will not be able to open in time and all of the finishing details will not happen—dishes, kitchen equipment, etc.

On Wednesday I was speaking with the owner of the building who owns a great deal of property in central Jerusalem, including buildings which also have restaurants. I commented to him that it all cost so much more than I had imagined. He replied, 'It's always like that. I don't know a single restaurant that hasn't gone 50% over their budget!' So it's a common phenomenon, like the story of the cafeteria owner in my new book whose restaurant cost \$500,000 more than he had planned on.

On Thursday, I phoned Joachim in Germany for prayer, for he understands best the depth of the spiritual warfare involved in any open witness to the Jewish people in this end of days. He said, 'Esther, be sure that the Lord will not leave you in the lurch. Jerusalem is waiting for the Tea Room!' It was such a word of hope and such an encouragement!

Ten minutes later the phone rang. It was my bank in Jerusalem informing me that someone had just sent me 4500 Euro dollars! So the first \$5,000 had arrived! I went to the bank to get the money, as a bill for that amount was due that very day. I felt a real urgency from the Lord to get to the bank as quickly as possible. It should have been a simple matter, but the warfare is real! I transferred the dollars from my foreign currency to my shekel account and then went to wait in line to withdraw the money in shekels. When it was finally my turn, the teller said, 'But there is a closure on your account, and we cannot release the money.'

This was the 'closure' that I had already paid through my lawyer to the City of Jerusalem for a bill from April 1996—but somehow the bank had not been notified by the city that it had been taken care of! So what happened next I will tell quickly—but the whole process took 4 ½ hours!

I went to another person in the bank, who informed me that I had to get the paper from my lawyer confirming that the debt had been paid. He had to receive a paper from the city's legal department confirming the payment. So we phoned my lawyer, and an hour later Joe was able to go to the lawyer's office to receive the proper document. He returned to the bank with the paper from the lawyer for the City of Jerusalem.

'But this doesn't have the proper stamp!' the bank teller told us. 'You have to go to the court near the Russian Compound and get it stamped by them as well before we can release the money!' And so we left, traipsed to the court, waited in line there, returned to the teller at the bank, and then waited in line once again to receive the money—which we did indeed receive five minutes before the bank closed for the afternoon!

The very next morning, I received notification in the mail that that very account had just been taken over by the National Insurance for the bill that they 'invented' while I was out of the country. So I received the money *just in time*, and now there are no accounts open until the situation with the National Insurance and income tax authorities are dealt with. It is all being worked on, but will take some time.

On Shabbat morning—yesterday—the Lord let me know that I would need to travel to Europe on Monday, returning on Wednesday, in order to save the Tea Room, that money in Europe would be available! And that it would be worth the cost of the airfare to return with the money that is needed for the work to be completed in time. The Lord reminded me that in warfare people take extreme measures—and nothing is more crucial than *spiritual* warfare! There would just be no other way to receive the finances in time. I phoned Joachim to tell him this strange instruction. He said, 'Oh, how I wish I had the money! But we will pray...'

An hour later the phone rang, and it was Joachim. 'If I get down to my last mark, I can give you 15,000 DM (almost \$10,000). And I'm happy to do it!'

So, as of this moment, \$15,000 has been provided and \$35,000 is still left. Please, please pray, with an open heart, and ask the Lord if it would in any way be His will for you to provide this last amount as well. I'm writing only because He told me to, and so I can only trust in His great love for you once again. I asked Him to tell you Himself of this need, but somehow He never gives me the easy way out!

At any rate, if God confirms this as His will and you are able to do it, I can come to the Burgdorf train station on Tuesday to collect the money—and perhaps have an hour or so to show you pictures, and to share in person all the wonderful things that have happened as this new Tea Room is being formed by the hand of the Lord.... At any rate, if you do feel from the Lord to help, could you phone Joachim and let him know? I'll be out of the house most of the day until this evening, and then tomorrow I leave for Germany on this 'rescue mission.' I leave this all in the hands of the Lord, praying only that whoever is indeed meant to give this last of the money will be obedient and will also be greatly blessed by the love of the Lord.

Must dash to get this faxed to you. I'll be very, very much in prayer! And possibly—I'll see you soon!"

On Monday morning, as I was ready to pick up my ticket, which I had booked to Germany alone, the Lord said, "You must change the ticket to include Switzerland as well. When Martin and Vreni pray for My will, I will not tell them 'no'..." So I changed the ticket and left that afternoon for Germany. Sadly for me, I would be leaving Israel just as the sun was setting on the beginning of Memorial Day—followed the next evening by Independence day, the celebration of Israel's 51<sup>st</sup> anniversary, my very favourite celebration of all. I hastily purchased a memorial candle to light in Germany in memory of the 20,000 young men killed in Israel's wars since 1948— and an Israeli flag and a plastic hammer to bonk everyone for Independence eve.

Joachim and a friend were awaiting my two-hour late arrival at the Hanover airport, and Joachim greeted me with the news that Martin had phoned him that day. Joachim was the best person for Martin to speak to, as the Lord knew, for Joachim understood better than anyone the intensity of the spiritual battle in the *old* Tea Room. Martin had said that they surely would pray about whether to help or not.

On Tuesday morning I had a lovely visit and a time of prayer with Joachim, and then it was off to the Hanover airport once more for a quick flight to Zurich. I arrived in Zurich with just enough time to race for the train to Burgdorf—the only one that would get me there in time to meet with Martin and Vreni together before he had to leave for an



appointment. They had saved me some lasagna for dinner, and I was able to share with them many of the wonderful Tea Room stories since we had last met in February. And then, just as the sun was setting on Israel's year of jubilee, and a new year was beginning—they handed me the last amount of cash that equaled the \$50,000 that we had needed. And do you know what? They added even an *extra* \$5000! It was such a special gift from the Father's hand! And I know that He will bless them as well. It had been quite an eventful, travel-full three days—but I returned to Israel with the victory once again! And yet another time, all of the bills could be paid. As the Lord had shown from the beginning with His Word to us from Nehemiah—we were to just keep building the walls...

Since this is indeed a book about obedience, I have to interpose a small background story. The adventure I am about to relay was a very deep lesson in obedience for me personally. If I had not obeyed the Lord in it all, it is quite possible that the new Tea Room never would have come about. It truly underlined in my heart the importance of doing exactly what the Lord asks of us, even if it does not make sense and even if it does not suit us personally—for *we never know the end result that He has in mind through it all*. Perhaps this further quote from Oswald Chambers will help to underline in yet another way the utter futility of disobedience when we truly serve the King. (Incidentally, I have quoted Oswald Chambers innumerable times simply because he had such a wonderful grasp of a life of faith and all of the principles involved in serving the Lord—from *God's* perspective, and not from the perspective of the "world").

"The Big Compelling of God"  
"Behold, we go up to Jerusalem."  
Luke 18:21

"Jerusalem stands in the life of our Lord as the place where He reached the climax of His Father's will. 'I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me.' That was the one dominating interest all through our Lord's life, and the things He met with on the way, joy or sorrow, success or failure, never deterred Him from His purpose. He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.

The great thing to remember is that we go up to Jerusalem to fulfill God's purpose, not our own. Naturally, our ambitions are our own; in the Christian life we have no aim of our own. There is so much said today about our decisions for Christ, our determination to be Christians, our decisions for this and that, but in the New Testament it is the aspect of God's compelling that is brought out. 'Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.'

We are not taken up into conscious agreement with God's purpose; we are taken up into God's purpose without any consciousness at all. We have no conception of what God is aiming at, and as we go on it gets more and more vague. God's aim looks like missing the mark because we are too short-sighted to see what He is aiming at. At the beginning of the Christian life we have our own ideas as to what God's purpose is—'I am meant to go here or there'; 'God has called me to do this special work'; and we go and do the thing, and still the big compelling of God remains. The work we do is of no account, it is so much scaffolding compared with the big compelling of God. 'He took unto Him the twelve.' He takes us all the time. There is more than we have got at as yet."

The story began back in 1996 some months after the old restaurant had closed. I was living in Arizona in my apartment with the mattress on the floor. It was two weeks before Christmas, guests were coming, and I had neither furniture nor money for food. It shocked me to discover on my speaking tours in the U. S. that very few people had any concept of giving *in obedience to the Lord*. They followed the Old Covenant commandment to tithe to their churches or congregations, but had no concept of using their resources in direct obedience to the Lord. This was in such contrast to all the other nations I have visited. Even the very concept of living by faith seemed foreign to most, and therefore we received very little money—barely enough to travel from place to place, with almost nothing left over for our own personal bills and living expenses. It was an extremely difficult time! By December, I was down to \$10.00 per week for food. In the abundance of an American supermarket, it was almost unimaginable! My Israeli dog, Marike, was still in Jerusalem with Joe, so in Arizona I had adopted a sweet old dog. With my ten dollars I would buy ingredients to make a watery chicken soup. I would give the chicken to the dog and drink the broth myself, but I was barely surviving.

Finally one morning I decided that I desperately needed additional prayers. While living in Israel, I had an extensive list of prayer partners around the world. However, when my letter was dispatched telling of the demise of the Tea Room and of the resulting difficulties, I never heard from 95% of the people again. So there were very few left to whom I could turn for prayer! I also never liked discussing finances with anyone but the Lord, so almost no one knew the reality of my situation.

I phoned Joachim in Germany, and also phoned Martin and Vreni in Switzerland, asking them to also inform Sister Ruth of this need for prayer. I normally would have phoned Sid and Betsy, but of course, since Sid had died, I didn't want to burden Betsy with it. Since Martin was a pastor and they were the only people who knew of the extent of the financial difficulties following the closure of the Tea Room, I felt before God that it was indeed all right to telephone requesting prayer.

The very next morning Joachim phoned to tell me that help was already on its way. I therefore called Martin and Vreni at once to tell them the news and to thank them for their prayers. I was able to get some furniture with Joachim's gift, as well as pay my bills and purchase some dishes and basic food. It was such a relief, and I don't think I will ever take the simple purchase of food for granted again. But just two days before Christmas there was still no money to feed the guests who were due to arrive and many things were still needed in my little apartment. That very day a letter arrived from Switzerland with 4000 Swiss francs. However, I could tell by the tone of the letter that Martin and Vreni had felt that I had phoned to "hint" for money, and they indeed had sent some—but not in obedience to the Lord but rather because they felt obligated to do so. As soon as I read the letter, I grabbed an envelope, preparing to send the money back at once.

Just then the Lord interjected. "At this moment, you need this money a little more than they do," He told me, not unkindly. "Write to them and explain your feelings, and tell them that you will return the money to them as soon as you are able to do so..." I therefore used the Swiss francs for food and supplies and explained in my letter to them that I had truly phoned for *prayer—not for money*—and that I would return it to them soon.

Following our next speaking tour of six weeks, I was able to make the first payment of \$200 towards the amount that I needed to return to Martin and Vreni, and I was determined to do so at once. However, when I returned to Arizona, a letter was awaiting me from Sister Ruth. She had visited with Martin and Vreni, and had clearly explained to them that my phone call was a genuine call for prayer, *not* a hint for money. Then she said, "Please don't return the money to them, as they don't want you to do so... They now understand it all."

As soon as I read her letter, I truly felt the Lord's love for Martin and Vreni. Sr. Ruth explained that many people ask them for money and that is why they misunderstood. When you are poor and going through difficulties, it is easy to know who your *true* friends are—as I sadly discovered following the closure of the restaurant when most people never contacted me again. But when you have lots of money, it must be harder to know who really *cares* about you, or who simply wants money! So I sat down at once and wrote Martin and Vreni a letter. As I told them, "After you had helped so wonderfully in September with the Tea Room bills, I never would have presumed upon you to help again. I phoned simply because you already *knew* of the difficulties, and therefore I felt comfortable in asking for prayer. I was therefore horrified when you thought I was phoning as a 'hint' for even *more* money!" I apologized to them for my overreaction, sent them best wishes and prayers, and mailed the letter. That should have been the end of the story, but in actuality it was all just about to begin.

That very day, a few minutes after I mailed the letter, a letter from Martin actually arrived in the mail! He admitted in the letter that the 4000 Swiss francs truly had not been sent in the Lord's love, and that they learned from it all the very important lesson not to send money unless the Lord has told them to do so. I really felt God's love for them both as I read that letter! And then, so unexpectedly, which seems to be the hallmark of a life of faith, the Lord said, "On Friday you need to travel to Switzerland to visit them, to show them that you really care about them as friends..."

When I had visited Switzerland in September, I had a return ticket back to Switzerland that was about to expire. The Lord prompted me to phone Swiss Air to see if the ticket was indeed still valid. "Yes," the airline representative informed me, "It is valid until Friday, and yes, there is one seat still available on that day on our flight to Zurich..."; and so, five minutes later, I was booked on the flight!

You have to imagine that I had just returned home again after a grueling six week trip by car and by train in New England and Canada. It was in the middle of winter and the weather had been extremely cold—especially in upstate New York and Canada. Because we had very little money, David and I travelled to Canada by train, which meant dragging heavy suitcases on cold train platforms, etc. etc. It was such a relief to arrive home again to sunny Arizona, to my sweet little dog, and to Mike and his friends! I had just unpacked the day before—and the very next day I would have to travel again! From the West Coast of the United States it would be a very long trip, plus I had only a one-way ticket and almost no money! But in obedience to the Lord, I phoned Sr. Ruth to tell her of my plans. I was rather surprised to learn that on the very day of my flight, Vreni would be entering the hospital for minor surgery, and Sr. Ruth therefore gave me

directions to the town in which she would be hospitalized. She promised not to tell them that I was coming, and the very next day I left on a 10,000 mile surprise hospital visit!

As Mike drove me to the airport once again, he said sarcastically, "Well, Mom, it's really nice to have you as a neighbour in Arizona!" And I knew what he meant. I surely did not want to be leaving on yet another journey after having been home for only three days! But as my life is *truly* in the Father's hands, He can do what He wants with it—even if sometimes it does not agree with *my* preference for a quiet time at home.

The flight took all night, and then I had to travel by train to the small town in which the hospital was located. I checked into a hotel room that I had reserved through my travel agent and slept for a few hours. The Lord then told me to have some lunch, buy a big bouquet of flowers, and arrive at the hospital at 4:00 p.m. By then it was more than twenty-four hours since I had left home, and at the hospital reception desk I said, "Please, may I have the room number for Vreni Muller?"

After checking a long list, she finally replied, "We have no one here by that name." I stood there totally dumbfounded. Can you imagine travelling halfway around the world to visit someone—and to be told that they weren't even *there*? However, at just that moment, the Lord interjected, "You didn't pronounce it right. Write her name on a piece of paper..." And, sure enough, the receptionist said, "Oh, yes, Vreni Muller..." and then gave me the room number. I arrived outside the door to her room with the big bouquet the same minute that Martin arrived. Of course, he would never dream in a million years that I would be the one standing there behind the flowers... so I just casually said, "Hello!" When we entered the room at the same time, Vreni thought the whole thing had been pre-arranged! Of course it had been—by the Lord!

I hope that my visit brought an encouragement to them both, for I had sensed before travelling that great distance that they had both been feeling discouraged. We had a wonderful talk that day, and the next morning I went out to dinner with Martin and their two sons before visiting Vreni in the hospital again in the afternoon. I just so much wanted them to know that I cared about them as people. That evening I left by train on my way to visit Sr. Ruth.

They never would have imagined that I had only just enough money to arrive at Sr. Ruth's—and did not at all have the money for my return ticket to the States! I had a lovely, prayerful visit with dear Ruth, and just before leaving two days later, she handed me some Swiss francs that she felt from the Lord were for me. I then told her that they would be used for the next stage of my journey—to visit Herman and Heidi and then to travel back to Zurich once again.

When I arrived at Herman and Heidi's home, another believer was there as well who told me the most amazing story! She explained that she had found the Lord while in prison, and had read my book sometime later. She had truly felt the Lord's love through the book and had told Him one day, "Lord, if I ever again receive an inheritance, I would like to give it in it's entirety to Esther..." She explained that she had received an inheritance years ago which she had totally squandered and wasted on her past life. And then she told the most amazing thing—on the very day that the Lord had instructed me to travel to Switzerland, on that very day—she had indeed received another inheritance!

She had phoned Herman and Heidi at once with the news, asking if they knew how to contact me. To which they replied, "Why, she'll be here next week!" And so, when I arrived almost penniless at their home, the gift was awaiting me—4000 Swiss francs! The Lord told me that I was to return 500 Swiss francs to her at once. When I handed her the money, clearly explaining it was from the Lord, she felt His love so strongly. She had been praying for money for bills and for food for herself and for her sweet dog! So God honoured her faithfulness in giving the entire amount to me in spite of her own needs. "I think an accountant for the Lord would go crazy trying to keep track of it all!" I said laughingly.

But there was yet another blessing to come. My son Joe had informed me some days before that he would be leaving Israel for a job in Russia—and no one wanted our poor old Israeli dog, Marike. We were so sad about it, for we truly didn't know what to do! And guess what? The inheritance money was enough for my return trip to the United States—plus it was also enough for Marike to travel to the States as well! I met her flight at the El Al customs department in New York City, and she travelled back to Arizona on my flight. All in all it was a blessed journey, and I hate to think what could have been lost if I had not obeyed the Lord in taking that impractical-sounding trip! If there had been no further contact with Martin and Vreni, it could very well have been that the Tea Room would never have opened again. People could say so glibly, "Well, surely God would find someone else to help..." But people say that primarily as a justification *not* to obey and because they have a limited sense of His holiness and of His right to sovereignty in our lives. For God *has* a will in people's lives, and if that will is not fulfilled, we'll never know until we stand before Him one day what we have missed through our disobedience.

Living by faith is a fascinating experience. I'm sure you remember Paul's statement, "Whether I abase or abound, it's the same to me..." He truly learned that it didn't matter whether he had everything or he had nothing, for he had reached that soul-releasing point of becoming totally unconcerned about the conditions of daily life due to his total absorption in a life of obedience and faith. What he didn't explain exactly, however, is that the "abasing and abounding" can fluctuate from day to day! The Lord provides exactly what is needed when it is needed. One week I received \$55,000 to pay the bills that were owed. The very next day I was thrilled to receive \$25 for food! So each person's obedience in giving met a need, and there is no such thing, really, as "large" or "small" in a life of faith, as Yeshua so poignantly told in the story of the "widow's mite". The Lord entrusted the major part of the Tea Room to dear Martin and Vreni. It was no chance thing, for He knew their hearts and the plans He has for them. Their obedience was a pure gift to the heart of the Father. However, I'm sure the Lord felt the same about every single act of obedience in giving that made this Tea Room possible—both through finances and through prayers.

When I had arrived in Israel from the U.S. in August of 1998, I had been able for the first time to send a shipment of furniture, from my Arizona house to the apartment in Jerusalem. The furniture and accessories were "country style", things that I loved! And then, just before the Tea Room opened, the Lord let me know that part of the furniture from the shipment—most of my very favourite things of all—were meant for the Tea



Room, and not for me at all. And so off they all went, leaving my apartment looking quite bare and funny! But oh, did the Lord ever have a wonderful plan in mind in exchange for my obedience! The story follows.

On Saturday, the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 1999, Joachim was due to arrive at Ben Gurion airport with three friends from Germany to attend the “Welcome Home Party”—Carola, Jurgen, and Elke. Earlier that day my sister Cathy arrived as well, all the way from California, to share with us in the celebration. On the day that Cathy arrived, we had rented a car for the week of the party (six round trips to the airport alone!) and drove my favourite way up to Jerusalem, through the Judean hills, entering the city through the village of Ein Kerem. Since Cathy had never visited us in the years that we had lived in Ein Kerem, on the way home we stopped to show her our best loved house of all. It was located on a country lane, really isolated, with a heavenly garden and view and a short walk to the forest. When we lived there, three of Joe and Mike’s friends lived with us as well. It had been a wonderful family home, totally bursting with life. That house had truly tugged on my heartstrings when the Lord let me know some years ago that it was time to “move on”.

The day before Cathy’s arrival, the invitation to the Welcome Home Party appeared in the *Jerusalem Post*. It was a miracle in itself! We had wanted to advertise in the main part of Friday’s paper, which circulated throughout the whole country. However, those ads were prohibitively expensive, so we had to settle for a small advertisement in “*In Jerusalem*”, the local Friday addition to the paper. However, after arranging for the ad, a few hours later Joe received a phone call from the *Post*.

“We’re very sorry,” he was informed, “but ‘*In Jerusalem*’ was prepared for printing—and somehow they forgot to put your ad inside. So it will have to go in the main part of the *Jerusalem Post*—at no extra charge!”

On that very day, I had noticed an advertisement for a “country house with a view” in Ein Kerem, and had inexplicably felt from the Lord to telephone for information about it. I had indeed called, but had only gotten an answering machine with the message, “Right number, wrong time...” Cathy encouraged me to try again when I had told her about it, and so I did. I picked Goldie up at the airport the following morning. Goldie had no idea that Cathy was coming, as we had planned it as a surprise, so Cathy was waiting at home. It was fun! And then, the next afternoon, Goldie, Cathy, Pascale and I drove out to Ein Kerem to see the house for rent. As the owner of the house was late, the realtor took Cathy and Goldie up the hill to see the church. Pascale went to get a snack and I took a walk with our dear old dog along a pathway where I guessed the house for rent might be judging by the description in the paper. I had loved Ein Kerem, a tiny village tucked in the Judean foothills, but I hardly could imagine a single house there in which I would like to live—apart from the one I had loved so much! I put it all in the Lord’s hands, however, telling Him that of course I would be willing to move once again if that was indeed His will. Our dog was happy to be back in the village, that I can tell you! At any rate, was I ever surprised when the owner of the house informed me that his house was directly below the one that I had loved so very much! It was even *more* private; has the same wonderful view with lovely small gardens; and a brand new family

kitchen with a door leading to a veranda overlooking the Judean hills. It was available on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, exactly when my lease in Yemin Moshe would expire!

As I've said many times, I'm a hermit at heart. That dear little house was such a gift to me because of its privacy, gardens, view, and wonderfully homey feeling. As the Tea Room gets busier, this little place of retreat will surely be a great help as a balance to the intense days ahead. What a delightful exchange for some furniture—that wouldn't have fit in the new house anyway!

Now back to the "Welcome Home Party". Joe had put an advertisement in the Hebrew press for a baker, as well as for other staff. The first miracle occurred when a real, honest-to-goodness baker came to apply for the post. She had worked for eleven years at the Moriah Hotel and for the past four years at a popular Jerusalem restaurant. She had even lived in England for a time and was an expert baker. She had quit her job just days before the ad appeared, having been discouraged by her previous boss' lack of appreciation for all the extra hours she put in to make sure everything was successful. She is really sweet, and a wonderful asset to the team!

Under *very* primitive conditions, since all of the construction was not completed and all of the equipment had not as yet arrived, our baker and the kitchen staff proceeded to prepare in two days the most incredible buffet you ever saw. It was truly a work of art, tasted wonderful, and totally amazed us all! But I'm getting ahead of myself here!

The week before the party, as we were working in the restaurant trying to arrange it all, one morning—in walked Dermot from Germany! He came as a surprise to help us celebrate the opening! He worked hard, too, in the days to follow, scrubbing and cleaning and arranging and helping in ever-so-many ways!

Cathy, Joachim and his friends, Jurgen, Elke and Corola, all arrived on Saturday, the 1<sup>st</sup>. Goldie arrived on Monday, and David and Candice arrived on Tuesday, the friends from Colorado who were coming to film the celebration. It was the first time that

The main seating area just before the "Welcome Home Party"



Cathy, Goldie and I had been together since the Thanksgiving after our mother had died when we closed up Mom's house in Arizona in 1995.

The day before Goldie arrived, I had been earnestly in prayer, for once again we had run out of finances and an additional \$7000 was needed. We had no money for the food for the "Welcome Home Party" and other bills needed to be paid. Can you imagine four days before the party and there was no money for the *food*? I totally adore a life of faith, for it is such a grand adventure. And the Lord had an answer—to be SURE! Joachim had used all of his money in helping us already and in travelling to Israel—but he felt from the Lord to come with us to our main supplier, a grocery store called "Super Shuk", and charge \$1000 worth of food. All of the staff there are good friends, as we have worked with them over the years, and his gift to us touched them very much. And the other \$1000 came through gifts in the mail, each one greatly appreciated! But \$5000 was still needed immediately.

When I picked Goldie up at the airport in the wee hours of Monday morning, I clued her in on the adventure at once, telling her that we had needed \$7000, that the Lord had already provided \$2000, but \$5000 was still needed—that very day!

She said, "What? How much do you need?" And, wonder of wonders, she had a cheque in her purse *for that very amount*, given in obedience by Eric and Kathryn, a couple we had invited to share the Passover meal with us when they had been visiting Israel some weeks before! The Lord had told them to give that exact amount—and it arrived at the very minute that it was needed! Of course, every single gift that was sent from every single person was needed and arrived exactly when it was supposed to, no matter what the amount. As Corrie Ten Boom always said, if you need \$100 for a train ticket, and you have only \$99, the \$1.00 missing is just as important, for without it you still cannot travel! I somehow knew that the Lord would truly bless each and every person who had contributed to this "adventure of faith", for there is truly no such thing as a "small" miracle. Every act of obedience brings delight to the Father's heart.

By Wednesday, the day before the party, everything was in high gear! Baking, cooking, cleaning, decorating—what a lot of work! Even by 4:00 p.m. on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May, a mere two hours before the celebration was due to begin, it was hard to imagine that we would ever be ready! But, by 6:00 p.m., everything was in place as the first of the guests began to arrive. It was incredible, as friends and former customers came to share their happiness that their Jerusalem "oasis", as everyone called it, had been restored. All the old customers told how sad they had been when the Tea Room had closed—and how happy they were that we had opened again. Many of our suppliers sent congratulatory plants and flowers, and it was a celebration indeed. Between 450 to 500 people came that night, which was amazing for a restaurant that had been closed for almost three years! But of course, as I have said before, it was the sense of God's love that everyone missed, even if they don't know that as yet.

Beginning a few days before the party—alerted, I guess, by the invitation in the newspapers to the "Welcome Home Party", the ultra-orthodox anti-missionary groups began to stake out the restaurant. They had people standing shifts day and night, watching who entered the premises, and especially watching openly the night of the party. One member of the biggest organization, "Yad Le'achim", came to the party dressed in a T-

shirt and a baseball cap rather than his normal orthodox garb. Joe had a chance to speak with him a few days after the party, as he noticed that he had a copy of my book. As I have said so many times before, I totally understand the concern of the orthodox and I respect them for trying to do something. The Jewish people have been hated, killed and persecuted more in the name of Jesus than any other name. So until they know His love and *true* identity—hasten that day, Father dear! —they understandably look upon Jewish people who believe in Yeshua as traitors to Judaism and as real threats to the Jewish faith. It was just a little shocking to find them there *already*! Perhaps a comment that Dermot heard can help the concern of the anti-missionary groups to be understood a bit better.

Dermot has friends in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City, Chassidic Jews who own a jewelry shop there. He went to visit them after his arrival in Israel, and they said, after welcoming him warmly, “And what brings you to Jerusalem now?”

“Well, I’ve come to celebrate the re-opening of the English Tea Room,” he informed them quite happily. Dermot said that their countenance changed at once and they both became extremely agitated.

“Why is it opening again?” they exclaimed. When he asked why they were so upset, these Orthodox Jews replied with a vengeance, “She’s the biggest evangelist in the whole country!”

That was certainly a compliment—as well as a gross exaggeration, to be sure—but it also a sign that there will certainly be opposition in the not-too-distant future. The Lord loves them, and in time *all* of Israel will be saved. That knowledge is what gives hope for the future and strength for whatever lies ahead.

The 10<sup>th</sup> of May was the expected date for the opening of the restaurant. However, on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May, the date of the party, we knew that we would not be ready to open a few days later at all. A great deal of the work still needed to be done and much of the equipment was not there as yet. So we set the opening day for the 24<sup>th</sup> of May, and that is indeed when we opened!

Following the party, there were still some things that needed to be paid as well in order for us to be able to open on time. And once again the money had run out, so we began to pray in earnest. Joachim, Jurgen, Elke and Corola were still in Jerusalem for an additional week, so we got on our knees and began to intercede. It’s strange how sometimes the Lord makes *us* the answer to our prayers! For Joachim said almost immediately, “Well, I don’t have cash left with which to help—but I certainly can charge some of the things that are needed!”

So the very next day we trooped off to the restaurant supply store, and dear Joachim charged all of the supplies needed for the coffee bar, as well as some of the supplies still needed for the kitchen, even though most of the kitchen supplies had already been purchased. Two days later, with real joy in their hearts, Elke and Jurgen informed me that the Lord had confirmed that they were to help as well with *their* credit card—even though they had already paid for a large Tea Room bill. So on their last morning in Jerusalem, Jurgen and I went first to pay for the curtains and the cushions; then for the linoleum floor (that looks like parquet wood); and then for the designs on the dishes at



the Armenian shop in the Old City. Each of the suppliers was so touched by these gifts of help; it was truly a testimony in and of itself.

When the last guest had left, the work on the opening began in earnest. On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, half of the dishes arrived, so we were unloading boxes and boxes of dishes. That day the espresso machine was installed, curtains hung and cushions in place, sinks installed, and all of the decorative work completed. We finally dragged ourselves home at 2:00 am, and arrived back at the restaurant at 7:00 am to prepare for our very first day. By then the restaurant looked truly beautiful and the sweetness of the Lord's love could be felt there as in days of old. That is the greatest treasure of all! It fills me daily with such a sense of wonder and awe, for it is such a privilege to serve the Lord in such a place in His beloved Jerusalem.

We opened the Tea Room with a grand total of one shekel to our names in the entire world. On the very first morning, a believer from England said to me, "I don't understand this, but the Lord told me to press this into your palm..." as she handed me a single shekel. So the Lord doubled it! Many of our dear former customers came on the first day, and have continued to come ever since. All of them said the same thing—believers, orthodox Jewish, regular Israelis—"You'll never know how much we have missed the Tea Room and how happy we are that you are back. It was such an oasis!" The Lord's love in the old restaurants truly had an impact on this unusual city.

It was just so wonderful to see so many of our dear former customers and friends; it was almost like a gigantic family reunion! And a few discover us daily, so it's really a treat. Come visit us—then we can be *your* cup of tea in Jerusalem!

Now for some stories of another kind. One day someone came into the restaurant to sell us an alarm system, since the windows are large and not barred. It seemed logical to install one, as everyone did—but I knew the Lord's answer at once from experience in the *old* Tea Rooms. "No, thank you," I told him, "we're not interested in purchasing an alarm." As I explained to Joe and Pascale, "I'm trusting the Lord to protect the restaurant, and I know that He will..." It was the same answer He always gave me about insurance, which is based on fear of the future and which I have never had. "But I have ASSURANCE!" I would always say, and that is better than anything that the world has to offer. A few minutes later, when Ken, an old family friend came in, I told him about the alarm system, asking him what he thought about it. He then told me the following true story:

"One day," he said, "the owner of a lumber yard arrived at work late at night to discover thieves loading some of his lumber onto a truck. He was all set to do the normal, worldly thing and call the police. But the Lord said to him, 'Don't call the police. I want you to *help* them to load the lumber onto their truck.' So he began to help to load the lumber. Finally he asked the thieves, 'What do you want all this lumber for?' and they told him. To which he replied, 'Well, this is really not the kind of lumber you want. It isn't good enough. You need to exchange it for a better grade of lumber over there.' They began to load the better lumber when the thieves said, 'Wow, you're really quite a thief!'

'No, I'm not a thief,' he informed them.

'You certainly are!' they insisted.



‘No, I’m not,’ he said again. ‘I’m the *owner* of the lumber yard!’ In the end, they were so touched that both of the thieves gave their lives to the Lord!”

Of course, I recognized the Lord’s wisdom in that story so completely that it brought the assurance that I needed. It is all right to entrust all that we have to the LORD!

There are other things that the Lord taught me, based on *His* principles that always seem like foolishness to the world. For example, if someone wrote a cheque to pay a bill at the Tea Room, and that cheque later bounced, the Lord told me never to embarrass the people and demand payment. I have been through many times of poverty myself and I know what it feels like, and therefore I could totally appreciate God’s kindness in it all. And guess what? I was willing to honour His principles—and a cheque never bounced!

The concept of faith that I’m trying to express here is summarized so beautifully in this quote from Oswald Chambers in “My Utmost for His Highest”:

“Lord, I will follow Thee, but...”

“Supposing God tells you 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 worthwhile, 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 in the character of God.”

After the Tea Room had been opened for a week, the enemy attacked in the financial area with a vengeance, and it was a very scary time. I received the following Scripture from Joachim when I phoned him for prayer in this new, major crisis, and it was encouraging. Truly the Tea Room is the Lord’s, and I have released it to Him for whatever He wishes to do with it! (Yet another time, the provision of the Lord arrived exactly when it was needed as this crisis was met as well. But it was again a reminder not to look at the circumstances, but only at His heart of love).

“We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed...

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

2 Corinthians 4: 7-9, 17-18

Since the restaurant opened, there have been many adventures and further illustrations of the faithfulness of God. But of course, that is yet another story.

A new Tea Room chapter has truly begun...

# POSTSCRIPT

## QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

### Questions

One day two young people came to the restaurant. They were students at the Institute of Holy Land Studies, and were really seeking the Lord's guidance in their lives. "One thing we wanted to ask you," they told me, "was—how do you hear from God? There were so many examples of it in your book."

"It's interesting that you should ask, for in a few weeks I'm going away to write a new book on obedience and on hearing from the Lord!" I told them. "Do me a favour, okay? Take a few days and write down all of your questions, as well as ideas on why you think it's difficult for people to hear from the Lord. Then we'll make an appointment to talk together. I really want to be able to help people to draw closer to the Lord through this new book, and therefore I need to understand some of the reasons why it's so difficult for most people! I'll pray for God's help in answering your questions, and I know they'll aid me as well in formulating the new book!"

The questions, and the way they were answered, follow. I'm including our conversations only with the hopes that it will be helpful, and not to set myself up as an expert!

- 1) Why is it hard to hear God's voice? It isn't! We have to learn to listen, and we have to be willing to obey. When we place the Lord and His will first in our lives, then our relationship with Him will deepen. And He *will* communicate with us!
- 2) How do you know it's God's voice rather than yourself or satan? Like any relationship or friendship, our relationship with the Lord takes time to grow. But the closer we come to God, the more we will see that His voice is unmistakable. He does *not* sound like satan, and He does not sound like us, either! Doubts and confusion come from satan; and by nature we're too selfish and self-centered to sound like the Lord! Many times people use this question as an excuse because they don't really wish to be obedient to the Lord when He *does* speak.
- 3) How do we get over being afraid of following something that isn't God? Any fear is less than perfect faith. If we recognize God as our Father, and trust in His care for us, then we will know that He will not allow us to go astray. Even if we listen by mistake to the enemy, the Lord will be faithful to show us the error of our ways! Any fear that we have needs to be repented of and placed in the Father's hands.
- 4) How is it possible to find a balance in living by faith and living in the world? Again, we need to trust God for this balance in our lives. The root of this question is fear—the fear of making a mistake—and the root of fear is pride! We have to put our fear of failure, or of doing the wrong

thing, or of going to extremes, in the Lord's hands. We have to reach out past our pride and our fears and grasp the everlasting love of the Father for us—and come before Him in simple trust. When we truly place our lives in His almighty hands, we know we have nothing to fear!

- 5) What does it mean to live by faith? In general, it means to have simple trust in the Lord's love and in His guidance in your lives. Because each one of us is different, His relationship to each person will be different as well. What takes a lot of faith for one person will be easy for someone else. So "living by faith" simply means entrusting your lives to the Lord and doing what He asks of you day by day—whatever that may be! For me, "living by faith" has meant literally trusting Him for support, food, clothing, finances, guidance and direction in most areas of my life—but living by faith is different for each one of His children. It simply means trusting in *God* more than in the ways of the world!

- 6) Where do you find the balance between God's Work and His Revelation, spoken and written? Do they have the same authority? However God chooses to speak to us, whether through His Word, the Bible, or directly to our hearts, both are still *Him* and therefore have equal validity! When God speaks, He will never ask anything of us nor tell us something that will in any way contradict His written Word. But the two are inseparable! To worry about finding a "balance" is again an unwillingness to trust God in a simple way. We can never know how He will communicate with us—we simply have to recognize it as Him!

- 7) How do you listen for the Lord without striving to make it happen? You said it was easy for you—should it be easy for everyone? Or does it take a certain kind of personality? You first have to communicate with the Lord your real desire to hear from Him directly, and your willingness—with His help—to obey Him when you do. Then you have to simply trust Him, *without anxiety*, to speak to you in His timing and in His way. If it feels like striving, then simply bring it before the Lord in prayer, asking Him to help you simply to trust. No doubt for some people it *is* easier to follow the Lord than for others. Perhaps even Jewish people in general find it easier than Gentile Christians do, once they have recognized Jesus as the Messiah, for we have not grown up in the traditions of the church. Church tradition often has no concept that a direct relationship with God is possible, and God is put at a great distance. In all of the Jewish traditions and holidays, there is a sense of the nearness of God and many have a sense of joy as well. The Bible is our history! But no matter what background we come from, no matter what type of personality we may have, *God can reach through all of the natural barriers* and communicate with us! We simply have to be open and listening! It may not be easy for everyone in the beginning, but as we draw closer to Him, and as we open our lives to His love more and more, then our relationship to Him will become much more natural and relaxed, without any of the initial resistance and anxiety. It takes time. Be patient with yourselves.

- 8) How do we find the balance to be sure we're seeking Him and not just His voice? We have to ask the Lord to help us understand our *motives* for desiring to hear from Him. Is it only to prove that He's with us? Do we doubt His love? Or do we truly wish to hear from Him out of a desire to get to know *Him* better, and *not* to see what He will do in our lives? If our motives are wrong, if we desire to hear from the Lord for any reason

other than our love for Him, He will help us to understand this. If we repent, then our desire to hear His voice will be for the *right* reason! Again, the Lord and His love and wisdom are the answers to all of your questions!

- 9) *What happens when you think it's Him and you act on it and it turns out not to be Him?* First of all, you have to face the fact that from time to time that will happen, so don't be so afraid of it. In the beginning of my walk with the Lord, I made a number of mistakes, and I still do now, but much less frequently. But God can cope with our mistakes! As with any relationship, it takes time until we are more easily able to recognize His guidance in our lives! Even if we do indeed make a mistake, God knows we did it with the desire to please Him, and it blesses His heart anyway. When we *do* make a mistake, and the Lord helps us to see it, it always strengthens our walk with Him—and helps us to listen better the next time! Once again, *don't be afraid!* Trust the Lord and His love for you!
- 10) *What happens if it was the Lord and you run ahead or do it wrong and then question if it was Him or not?* In a relationship with the Lord, there are two very important rules to follow—do exactly what He asks us to, not more and not less. And secondly, never assume anything! When God gives a simple direction or command, it is always a mistake to try to reason out in our own minds how He will do it or to imagine what exactly He will want us to do. We have to understand from the very beginning that we can never think with the mind of God. Our human flesh and our own worldly ideas will always be at odds with His Spirit in our lives! So we never can assume that He will do such and such, based on our own wisdom, and we therefore need to have the patience to wait for *Him* to fulfill whatever He has spoken. The only help He needs from us is obedience—not our thoughts or actions based on what we *think* He's going to do! If nevertheless we do run ahead of Him, or make a mistake, then we have to at least be honest about it and place the blame where it belongs—with ourselves, and not with the Lord. He always forgives us, but it gets back once again to the same issue—we need to be simple, not complicated!
- 11) *Where do you get the discernment to know if it's what He wants us to do or if it's our own will?* Sometimes it's hard for me to understand that question, because I know that in me is no good thing! The closer we come to the Lord, the more aware we are of our own sinfulness compared to His Holiness. Therefore I know, if I'm honest with myself, that any time I have a sense to reach out beyond myself in any way, it is almost always the Lord who is prompting, and not me myself! To give a more general answer, however, we can usually tell by the fruit of it. Usually if God is asking us to draw someone closer to Him or even to draw closer ourselves, then we can be sure that it's Him. Again, as we come to know Him better, it will be easier to tell!
- 12) *Is it okay to ask for confirmations or fleeces? Are we testing Him or just seeking after signs?* As in all things, we need to trust the Lord to give us His discernment in this area. In the beginning, when someone is struggling to hear the voice of the Lord, and his or her desire to hear from Him is genuine, then it is certainly all right to ask for His confirmation if we're unsure of His direction. But we have to be honest, with ourselves and with Him, as to why we are seeking confirmations. There are people who have heard clearly from the Lord, but in their



hearts they're not truly willing, for whatever reason, to be obedient to Him. And in that case, requesting further confirmations is only used as an excuse *not* to obey. God knows our hearts, and in those circumstances, usually no further confirmations will be given. Once the Lord directed me to a cartoon showing a little monk looking up towards heaven saying, "Give me a sign! Give me a sign!" And, sure enough, a large sign fell from heaven—a STOP sign! I knew it was God's sense of humour, but believe me, I got the message as well! Occasionally, very crucial issues can be at stake, and in that case, we can simply say to the Lord, "Father, I believe this is Your will, and I'm willing to obey You if it is. Please just confirm to me that I have indeed heard from You!" Then we need to be patient and allow Him to answer us in His own way. But for sure, in those crucial circumstances, He will confirm His will to us. In that case we need to be really certain! For example, in the communist days, I sensed the Lord was calling me to travel to the former USSR Since making a mistake and travelling there out of His will could have endangered my life or the lives of others, I asked for confirmations. He gave them, and they were clear and direct.

- 13) *Is God's voice ever muddled? Is it ever not going to be crystal clear?* No, I don't think God's voice is ever muddled. He speaks clearly. If we are busy with our own lives and if our heads are filled with worldly thoughts, then we ourselves can muddle His voice—by not being open to listen. One important rule of faith, however, is this: If uncertain, *don't*. Because God *is* so clear, if ever we have genuine doubts as to His direction, then it is always best to do nothing unless we have that certainty. Again, we have to be honest, and not use anything as an excuse not to obey when He has indeed been clear.
- 14) *Do you have to do something to wake up to His voice or does it just happen?* We have to become attuned to listen, to put aside our thoughts and to have an attitude of waiting before Him. Other than that, there is nothing more that we can do—except to tell the Lord of our desire to hear from Him and to obey.
- 15) *Is it for everybody? Or is there something special you have to do to hear from Him?* Yes, it is for everybody. There's nothing special we have to do except to listen and obey! And He *will* communicate with you!

"Your questions have helped me to get some idea of why it is hard for many to trust the Lord. However, many of the questions you have asked are based on fear—and fear is far from faith. Therefore, my main advice to you both would be to be willing to put all of your questions aside along with all of your anxieties and doubts, because they can prevent you from moving forward in faith. And then, come to the Father in simple trust and faith. His love will never fail to amaze you!"

## Comments

*The following are excerpts from letters or snippets from conversations from different friends on the subject of hearing from God and obedience. We can always learn from one another, so I'm including these as well in the hope that they, too, will be helpful in your quest for a deeper walk with the Lord.*

Gloria Brighten, Australia: "Interesting news that you are bringing forth a book on obedience. Many years ago I asked the Lord, 'What is the key to unlock the very treasures of heaven?' And the answer came, 'Obedience...'"

Jeannie Sale, New Zealand: "How is the new book going? It hurts and puzzles me, too, that people find it so difficult to obey the Lord—though, of course, I make many mistakes and forget and so on. But it's the ones who seem to say 'Lord, do my will' who astonish me. It seems they do not know either how to love or revere the Lord. (My Anglican upbringing at least taught me awe and reverence and I'm thankful for that). We can easily get tainted by the world's mindset of 'What's in it for me?' It must hurt the Lord *so* much."

Di Black, South Africa: "The new book (to be) is really 'on the spot' and what so many of us need—how to hear the Lord clearly. I think we often get so distracted by all the demands around us that we don't LISTEN! It's as if people become (or have become) de-sensitized to hearing God's voice. 'In Him, we live and move and have our being' needs to become a minute by minute reality."

Lois Anderson, U.S.A.: "I'm looking forward to that new book of yours! How wonderful of the Lord to give you another one, and on obedience of all things. I wonder sometimes how far He's going to let us go before He lowers the boom on us. Not far. Those with vision can see that the church is under judgment at this very moment and if we fail to hear and repent, He has no choice but to turn up the heat even more. God help us to hear! God help us to see! God help us to listen! God help us to repent! Before it's too late."

Rosemary Neve, England: "I was reading in Numbers recently and Chapter 12 struck me quite forcibly. Perhaps the key verse is verse 7 '...My servant Moses, he is faithful in all My house...' I think that God places great store in our being faithful in all the little things in life—the big things will follow and we would then be able to cope with them! 'Ye are my friends...' said our dear Lord. How utterly wonderful! May we both be developing our relationship with Him."

Visitor to Israel: "If we can believe God against what we can see in the natural, it's the highest goal. Abraham was the father of faith. For Abraham to have a child was against logic. To believe that a barren woman at the age of 90 could give birth was simply not logical! Abraham was the first man of faith without logic. If God says there will be a flood, it's logical to build a boat. Noah was a man of faith, but with logic. Abraham, however, was on the other side. God told him to

do things totally without logic. Imagine if God told us to leave everything—our home, our church, and our country, buy a ticket, and I'll send you somewhere. That is what happened to Abraham—he was asked to leave his homeland for a strange new land. Yet, Abraham was willing to follow God. He left his homeland, followed God to the Promised Land—and found people living there! If God promised you an apartment, how would you feel to find people already living in it? But Abraham asked no questions. Abraham simply believed, and it was considered righteousness. Isaac was Abraham's special heir..."

Friend from Norway: "The atmosphere in the world disdains the things of God. The few hearts in the will of God can change the atmosphere. Those that know God must be stronger than the world. People generally don't have the courage to go with God, generally resting happily in their own lives. If those knowing God are strong enough, they can make a difference. But when God gives His direction, and I stop to think and consider, it's finished. When you hear from the Lord and the head is allowed to think—it is ruined. It's vitally important when God's will comes to obey and not to think about it!"

Sister Ruth, Switzerland: "I think in Europe people are taught that it is only through the Bible that we are able to hear from God. It is so difficult for people here to understand that a relationship with God is possible. People would say, 'It sounds wonderful, but it's certainly not for everyone.' But it is for everyone, and that's the wonderful thing!"

Friends in Europe at a discussion around the table: "In Europe, people so easily say, 'Lord, everything I have is Yours.' But when it comes to giving up a house or a job, people will say, 'No! God gave that to me!' and people think it's for life. When God does speak to people, they often say, 'No, this can't be the voice of the Lord. He has to speak more clearly.' They have a mentality of being 'sure'. They want at least three confirmations for everything."

"Some people have had a difficult time with their relationships to their natural fathers. Therefore it's hard for them to accept God as a Father of love. People have to be able to trust in God's love in a world of mistrust. In the world, there are so many difficult experiences. It was hard to trust people. God is completely different. You can't compare Him with others".

"We have to die to ourselves to obey God and it's so difficult. Everyone is so selfish by nature. We can't believe that if we give up things, He'll reward us..."

Marcia LaBonte, U.S.A.: "In the beginning, it's hard for people to distinguish between themselves and the Lord, or their own personal experiences in life and the Father's goodness. Many people don't find the world a very pleasant place, so it's hard for them to comprehend that anything can be better. Foster kids have come to us who have never experienced anything positive. It's hard for them to imagine that there's anything different unless they experience it. Many have known only a cycle of rejection, abuse, yelling and negativity.

Other people think that God talks to people only when He wants them to do big things, without understanding that He is concerned with the small things as well.

We have to help people to expect to hear from Him. The first things that people should notice are signs that He's around. We need to help them to notice that He's responsible for the things that are happening. Challenge them

to ask God directly, with the understanding that what happens after that is up to God.

Many people have pre-conceived ideas of what hearing from God is like. They have to realize that it's not usually an awesome experience.

We don't have control over how God answers us—but we do have control over whether or not we recognize it as God.

There are many different ways to know that we've heard from God. A thought can come in without the process of the thought growing. When I was concerned about the homeless, suddenly I just knew from Him what to do to help. The importance is not the outcome but obedience.

I used to be nervous when my son was younger and he had to come home over the mountains late at night. I would be worried, but suddenly God would help me to know that he was safe. That was another way He communicated."

Another visitor to Israel: "There are two entities—God is in the midst of one, people and the flesh and the world are in the midst of the other. There is always a conflict between the way of the world and the way of the Lord. In order to be reconciled, we must die to ourselves. It's a wonderful way, but without love it is simply not possible. We are therefore able to learn from Jesus and His death on the cross... 'A grain of wheat must fall to the ground and die...'

The language of love is immortal and comes when I have another in my heart. When meeting someone, there is usually a confrontation between both worlds—but when the Lord comes, there is no longer a confrontation, only love.

Daily things are as important to God as the big things are.

I have a desire to know a lot, but it's the opposite of the simplicity I need in order to follow the Lord. Most people follow after knowledge. The children of God know they are in the will of God, and this is the most important knowledge of all. In this way, all comes from the heart and the Holy Spirit—from love.

God is in me and with me. Many separate religion from life, but they cannot be separated. They must be together.

To me, it seems that it's easier for the Jewish people to know that God is with us now. But for Christians it seems to be much more difficult. It's a special gift to the Jewish people that God is deep in their hearts. Christians came from the world. In the Christian world, people study the Bible and go to meetings, but somehow they don't put it together with the rest of their lives.

If we have His love in our hearts, we don't need our own ears and eyes and mind, for we can see and hear and think with the heart of God; then we will delight to do His will. Without the Holy Spirit, we like to do our own will.

All things of God become good. If they're not good, then they're not finished.

Many Christians pray incorrectly. Not many really pray. Depicted in the Salvation Army flag is blood and fire. We need the fire of His love in our hearts. Only with this fire can we truly belong to God. Only with this fire will the way bring joy. Without our first love, this fire, we are always defeated and cold..."

Constance from Holland: "To begin with, until you are sure of His love and His faithfulness, it's natural to doubt and to request signs of His provision. But when a real and deep relationship has been established and you love Him,

your love for Him would leave no room for doubt and you wouldn't want to hurt Him by doubting."

Another writer is James. "There are two angles—God is in the mind of man, people and the flesh and the world are in the mind of the other. There is always a conflict between the world and the flesh and the mind of the Lord. In order to be reconciled, the world is crucified. It's a crucifixion, not a crucifixion, but without love it's not good. We are crucified to the world and the flesh and the world. A sign of love is crucified to the world and the flesh. The language of love is crucified and crucified when I have crucified my heart. While we're crucified, there is usually a crucifixion between both worlds—but when the Lord comes, there is no longer a crucifixion, only love.

Only things are important to God as the things are. I have a desire to know a lot, but the things of the world are not important to God. Most people follow after knowledge. The need in order to know the Lord, most people follow after knowledge. The knowledge of God, most people are in the will of God, and this is a knowledge of all, in the way all comes from the heart and the Holy Spirit—without love. God is in the end with me. Many separate myself from Him, but they can not be separated. They must be together. To me it seems that it's easier for the Jewish people to know that God is with us now, but for Christians it seems to be a much more difficult. It's a spiritual gift to the Jewish people that God is with them, but for Christians, it's a spiritual gift to the Christian world, people study the Bible and go to church, but they don't know God. They don't know God, but they don't know God. I've never the love in our hearts, we don't need our own eyes and ears and mind for we can see and hear and think with the heart of God, then we will be able to do His will. Without the Holy Spirit, we are to do our own will. All things of God become good. If they're not good, then they're not good.

Many Christians only know God. That many really say, "I decided in the Christian. Any way, God is good and His will is to be done in our hearts. Only with His grace we can believe in God. Only with His will the way bring us. Without our love, the will is not good and not.

Love is the heart. To begin with, until you are out of the love and His grace, it's hard to doubt and to reject. It's in the heart. But when a man and a woman have been established and you love Him,



To be honest, I have a great many more stories that I could tell, all stemming from a wealth of experiences in my over twenty years of living in obedience to the God of Israel. As I've tried to show in this little book, there is not a single area of our lives in which He is not concerned with all the love of a Father's heart. But all the testimonies in the world will not help another person to start on that pathway of obedience. It is an act of will, and a courageous one at that. At least, it seems courageous in the beginning. The longer one walks with the Lord, the deeper the realization becomes that it takes a lot more courage *not* to obey Him. I certainly wouldn't be brave enough to willfully and willingly place myself out of His hands by saying "no" to whatever He asked me to do. I'm by now too much of a coward for that—most of the time!

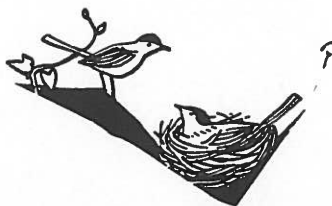
Hopefully all that I've written in this book will encourage you on your pathway towards His kingdom—to help you to understand the treasure of eternal life that He offers us—and to challenge you to begin that journey even now with your hand held firmly in His. He loves you with a love that no human mind can comprehend, and that no human heart could withstand in its intensity. All He asks of us is the simplest, most basic trust in His ability to care for our lives. The friendship that He gives us in return is the greatest treasure that this earth has to offer.

*Dear Father, I thank you for every single testimony in this book. I thank you for having given me the courage each and every time to obey the promptings of Your guidance within my heart.*

*I thank You for the greatness of Your love, especially for each and every person that You have chosen to read this little book. You dwell in the highest heaven, and You are holy and worthy of honour. And yet... You love us as Your own children. What a wonder to be able to call You—Father!*

*Please help each person who has indeed read these pages to trust You and Your hand upon their lives in an even deeper way than ever before—and then the great adventure will begin for them as well.*

*And Father, please hasten the day when all of Israel will know Yeshua as their Messiah and King, Amen...*



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Cathy's son Daniel  
with Joe & Mike



Dear Hannah  
with Marike

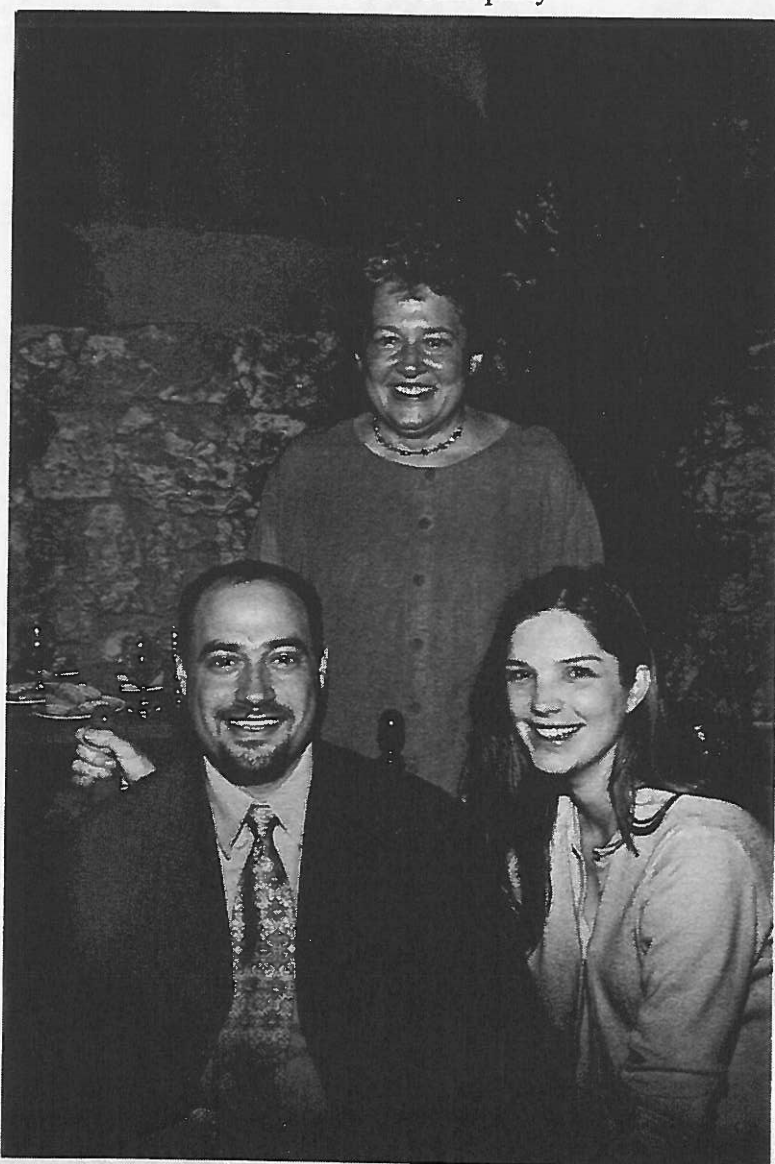
Cathy & Goldie on  
the evening of the  
"Welcome Home Party"





Springtime of '98 visit to Israel

With Joe & Pascale  
at the Tea Room party





The new  
*Tea Room*  
8 Ya'abetz Street  
Jerusalem

