Dreaming in Arabic

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Prologue

In 1992, when I was 21, I was blessed to find myself in the Middle East. And blessed is the right word. What struck me most about the Middle Eastern world is how God is part of everyday life and conversation. In Canada, if I started talking to someone about God, I'd be considered at best, mentally unbalanced, at worst, maybe dangerous. But in the Holy Land, God is real, or at the very least, he's a legitimate historical concept.

My talks with people in the Holy Land were restricted to people who could speak English. In fact, they were mostly with fellow tourists. My knowledge of Hebrew was limited to a place-mat from a lunch at the HolyLand Hotel and whatever few words the tour guide thought might be useful. *Boker tov.* Good morning. *Laila tov.* Good night. *Ken.* Yes. *Lo*. No. *Toda.* Thanks. *Toda raba*. Thanks very much. *Shaalom*.

My Arabic was limited to *Sala'am*.

I was only vaguely aware that all around me Semitic conversations were taking place. I was with a group of college students and there were enough conversation in our own group to fill in a lot of the time.

Some people go on whirlwind tours of the Holy Land doing Dan to Beersheba in two weeks. But our stay was for the whole summer. So there was time to talk.

There's something about travel that makes talking to strangers acceptable. Or maybe it's just Jerusalem. I don't know. I just know that on the subway back home, talking to strangers would make people uncomfortable, whereas, in Jerusalem there was a sense of connection with people. And if a person makes the effort to go to Jerusalem, they probably believe in the one true God. And since I believe in the one true God, I felt there was agreement and understanding.

So I talked. I talked in English. Had I been in Quebec, I would have talked in French. Had I been in Spain, I might have managed to say a few words drawing upon a semester of Spanish. But in Jordan and Israel, the whole time I was there, I never said a single word in Arabic or Hebrew. Not a one.

CHAPTER ONE

IN THE BEGINNING

I grew up in the Worldwide Church of God, an organization labeled “cult” by most of mainstream Christianity. At the head of it, was Herbert W. Armstrong, a forceful personality, with a unique interpretation of scripture. I grew up believing that we in the Worldwide Church of God were the only true Christians in the world. My mother told me a story of how when I was a toddler in the stroller and we were passing by a large old church, I pointed and said “Man's way.”

The Worldwide Church of God took a lot of their beliefs from the Old Testament. Being young, I never really understand why some of the ancient laws were kept and some were discarded. I'm sure there was a reason and I'm sure it made sense to the adults. At least, I hope it did. I've never felt bad for being part of a group that taught Biblically unsound doctrines. I was a child and a child will believe in Santa Claus if you tell them with enough conviction. But I do wonder about the adults and why they were so quick to let someone interpret the Bible for them. My husband, who is eight years older than me, said that it wasn't so much the doctrine that attracted him as much as the emphasis on righteous living. And there *was* an emphasis on righteous living. But unfortunately most people were not living up to the high standards we taught.

I think another draw for a lot of people was the emphasis on prophecy. I grew up believing that someday, before a great tribulation fell upon the world, we believers would be taken to a place of safety where we would be hidden from the wrath that fell on everyone else. Herbert W. Armstrong had a radio show and a television show called *The World Tomorrow* where he preached out of Daniel and Revelation and gave his own unique interpretations. I think there were quite a few people who joined the church to escape the great tribulation.

It was believed that the place of safety was Petra, in Jordan. Mr. Armstrong would travel around the world as an “ambassador for peace” and one of the people he met was King Hussein of Jordan. The church had some sort of outreach to handicapped children in Jordan. Since Petra was in Jordan and Mr. Armstrong was a “friend” of King Hussein, it was taught that we would all fly to Jordan and stay in Petra for the duration of the tribulation. I have some vague recollection that at some point, soldiers of the world would surround Petra and threaten us all, but that heavenly retribution would strike them down. What was more critical to people was what they would bring to survive the years in Petra. One woman said she was going to bring two suitcases of maxi pads.

As a child, I once packed a small briefcase full of my favourite books and then carried it around with me, even if we went across the city on the subway, because it was said that we could be called to flee at any moment. One of my childhood fears was that I would come home from school and find my mother and younger brothers gone and that I would somehow have to make my way to the airport (by taxi, I

suppose) or else I would miss the flight to safety. Contacting my dad at work was not an option. He wasn't a member of the Worldwide Church of God and therefore would have to face the tribulation. When it was preached from the pulpit that during that horrible time the guillotine would probably be restored as a form of punishment I resigned myself to my dad's inevitable fate. You see, my dad knew too much. He had lived with a believing wife and would therefore have to stand up for the truth in the future time of persecution and would be punished for his belated realization that everything the church taught was true.

The Great Tribulation would be followed by the Wonderful World Tomorrow. It would be a time of peace and prosperity on the earth with the members of the Worldwide Church of God in positions of leadership. There would be a resurrection of the righteous and great Biblical men like Daniel and Noah would have important jobs. King David would be the king, but under Moses. The twelve apostles would be under David. Below them would be rulers of smaller bodies of land.

Daniel would be in charge of the Gentile nations because he had had all that experience in King Nebuchadnezzar's court. Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, would be immediately under Daniel.

Noah would be in charge of relocating the races to their designated lands. Joseph would administer the world's food supply. Job would head up a worldwide rebuilding program, something much needed after the devastation of the Great Tribulation. His assistant would be Zerubbabel, a man who had helped to rebuild Jerusalem after the Jewish captivity in Babylon.

The world would be educated in the way's of God. Christ would rule the world from Jerusalem. All animals would be tame and as a child, I heard the question, “Wouldn't you like to have a lion as a pet?” In anticipation of all of this, the Worldwide Church of God had a lion and a lamb with a little child in front as its ubiquitous logo.

When it came to practicing the laws of the Old Testament, we didn't eat pork or any kind of shellfish so pepperoni pizza never passed my lips, nor did lobster or shrimp. We kept all of God's commanded Feast Days. People took the days off work and kids took the days off school to attend church services. Feasts were a social time. The Feast of Tabernacles meant a trip somewhere and a tithe was saved all year to fund it. Church services were held in convention centers and other rented halls or rooms all around the world.

In Toronto, our local Feast of Tabernacles site was Niagara Falls but my parents favored the sites in Florida. Florida had the attraction of Disney World and Busch Gardens and the beach and the plane trip. But it didn't have my friends so I always felt edgy, like I was missing something and that when I got back, my best friend, who had gone to Niagara Falls, would have had a funner time. “Feast flings” were common and many single adults used the time to try to find a mate. (Naturally, we weren't allowed to marry outside the church.) There were lots of officially organized activities as well as countless hotel room parties.

Alcohol was never prohibited by the church so our Feasts were truly festive. I remember one Feast when I was in my early twenties and the first place my best friend and I went to when we got to Niagara Falls was the liquor store. Nothing delicate for us. It was tequila and gin and vermouth and we mixed some pretty mean martinis! I remember one young man commenting on the strength of our cocktails, half-impressed, half-alarmed.

There were also stories of the ministers and their hotel room parties. Lots of drinking, but more along the lines of wine and champagne. They were pretty exclusive, not too much mixing with the regular folks, so they were talked about with a tone of awe. The official teaching was that the ministers had an extra-measure of God's spirit.

There was an even more sordid side to the Feast which it took me til my mid-twenties to become aware of. The worst thing a WCG kid could do was fornicate. I mean, murder under certain circumstances might be understood, but fornication was unforgivable. The Feast, which was supposed to picture God's future millennial kingdom on earth, was often the place most likely for WCG teens and singles to commit the unpardonable sin. Something about new people and hotel rooms and lots of booze and money flowing. It just seemed to happen a lot.

There was such an emphasis on rules that I think most of us never got to the essence of the big things like faith and love and obedience to God. The only rule was, don't get caught. It's only since leaving that whole culture behind that I've begun to love God and His ways and find beauty in the teachings of a man who walked in Galilee nineteen hundred years ago.

But even as a bratty, self-centered 21 year-old, something stirred my soul when like so many pilgrims in the past, I found myself on the road to Jerusalem. Granted it was in an air-conditioned bus surrounded by college students that I entered into the ancient land of Palestine, but when I saw that Star of David flag blowing in the breeze, I found myself clutching the hand of the girl beside me and something in my heart was saying, “I've come home.”

CHAPTER TWO

THE HOLY LAND

In 1989 I got accepted to one of the church's college's, Ambassador College in Big Sandy, Texas. (Don't try to find it on a map. The college has long since closed. The church went through doctrinal changes that caused a serious split that in turn caused a dramatic drop in funds which in turn led to the closing of the college. More about that later.)

What I was part of was a Southern Bible College, but I didn't know that at the time. I was at God's College. The purpose of the college was to train future pastors and then to enable those young men to find Godly wives. The rest of us would have lesser positions such as deacons and deaconesses. Basically, the guys were being trained to give sermonettes (20 minutes messages) and lead the hymns and do the opening and closing prayers. The girls were being trained to organize church teas and socials.

I wasn't deaconess material and no future pastor seemed to want to marry me, but my years there weren't fruitless. It was a social time and there was a sense of camaraderie that I wouldn't have experienced had I gone to a university or college in Toronto. One of our mottoes in the church was "We are Family" and there were enough people trying to live up to it to make my four years at "God's College" pleasant.

Another benefit was that I met some free thinkers – people who didn't read the Bible with church literature there to interpret it for them. As a result, I came to understand that Jesus lived in me, lived in *me*, and that he wasn't just God's son, a vague shadowy figure who had atoned for our sins and was now mostly forgotten about as we struggled to perfectly obey God's law. (We were taught that the Israelites had failed to keep the law because they didn't have God's spirit. But since we did, it was now possible.) I was comfortably assured of my salvation because I didn't watch TV on the Sabbath and I didn't eat pork. But there were a lot of people who were less smug and assured about their faith. After a Feast of Tabernacles many would say bye to one another and add "See you next year, or see you in the kingdom, if I make it."

At Ambassador College I also became aware of a scripture in the first letter of John that says that we have no need of any man to teach us because we have God's spirit. (It was pointed out to me in the same way the French Resistance must have felt when they passed on information to each other that would undermine the Vichy Government.) Obviously this was intriguing considering that the whole Worldwide Church of God power structure rested on our need to have scripture explained to us. It was the beginning of a change of thought...

There was one Jewish professor at the college. He had a doctorate and was my Old Testament Survey

professor. I was told that he had been a rabbi before coming into the church and that was supposedly why he never made eye contact with the female students. I sat across from him once in the dining hall but my nerves were too shaky to properly assess whether or not he ever looked at me.

Naturally, a Jew was everything we wanted to be.

We were drawn closer to the inner circle of God's chosen people by the teaching that the United States and Britain were direct descendants of the Israelite tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim. The smaller countries in Europe were descended from the other Israelite tribes who had been taken captive by the Assyrians some 700 years before the birth of Christ and then supposedly lost in history until they emerged as the countries of France, Denmark Holland, Sweden, Norway and all the rest.

France was associated with Reuben who had lost his birthright when he went into his father's concubine. Denmark was associated with Dan because the names were similar. In fact, any place with D-vowel-n at the beginning had been settled by Danites, which included towns all over the British isles.

Links were made between Jacob's prophecies over his sons and the national characteristics of the Western European nations. I think Asher was associated with Belgium because Jacob said that his food would be rich and that he would make royal delicacies, obviously a reference to Belgium chocolates and other sweets.

The ideas weren't unique to the church. British Israelitism had been around in many forms, particularly with the rise of the British Empire.

Germany was notably absent from the list of the descendants of Israel. Germany was said to be descended from the Assyrians, the destroyers of Israel. Naturally the Germans, with their penchant for taking over the world and destroying the Jews were the Assyrians. I don't remember ever questioning it.

But my future father-in-law, a German, did. He and his wife had been doing Bible studies with the church's literature but when he came to the lesson about Germany's true heritage, he stopped and forbid his wife from having anything more to do with the church. (For many years she did although I think church literature still made it into their house. Slowly, my husband, his mother and his two sisters drifted into the church and started regularly attending the services.)

But the professor of Old Testament Theology was a “real” Jew. He was a modest, unpretentious man who seemed to be in his own world. His lectures were always on a higher level than most of us students could absorb. On the first test in the class, the average grade was about 15%. I still remember him at the front, somewhat bewildered and thinking out loud that perhaps it had been a bit difficult. It was agreed that there should be a grade curve and that 10% would be considered passing.

The college had many projects overseas. There was something to do with Buddhist monks in Thailand. I'm not sure what exactly Ambassador College was doing over there, but in our annual yearbook, the *Envoy*, there were always pictures of our students with the monks that wore the bright orange robes. As mentioned earlier, one project involved helping handicapped children in Amman, Jordan. This was another reason why King Hussein of Jordan would be thrilled to have over 100,000 people flock to his country to escape the great tribulation.

There was also a summer archaeological dig in Hazor, Israel and a few smaller digs in Jordan and Syria. On a whim, I applied for the one to Hazor. There was an archeology class to be taken if one wanted to increase ones chances of being accepted. I didn't take it.

Much to my surprise, I was accepted for the dig.

So, on June 10, 1992 I was standing outside of the dining hall of Ambassador College with clusters of smiling students, heaps of luggage and cameras already out recording the trip The first part of our journey was a bus to Dallas, then a flight to New York's La Guardia Airport. Then finally another plane to Amman. The exoticness of the journey began on the Royal Jordanian flight. Most of the people were Middle Eastern. The men looked like they'd stepped out of a European fashion magazine. Maybe I'm biased towards the tall, dark and handsome type, but one of my overriding impressions of the Middle East was the number of attractive people.

I was used to flights to Florida as well as to Dallas, but this flight had a different feel to it. For one thing, people let their kids play in the aisle. And the flight attendants didn't seem to mind. I've since read that Arabs love children and are less likely to discipline them for things that would annoy us in the West. Just this fact alone has caused me to rethink my child-rearing. How much of it is cultural? How much of it is done just for our convenience as parents?

I digress, but the Worldwide Church of God expected parents to keep their small children quiet for the two hour church service and there was to be no childish behavior afterwards, like running around. People often stayed for an hour after church to fellowship and children were expected to play quietly with one another or stand quietly by their parent's side. My own children have next to no experience sitting through a church service and I have to put them on a leash if I want them to stay by my side. I'm not proud of having rambunctious children, but I'm not ashamed either.

Anyway, back to the plane. The most significant memory is that I was seated in the middle seat which is claustrophobic enough, but then the guy who was sitting behind me (one of the A.C. students) requested that I don't recline my chair since it was squishing his long legs.

“Just my luck to sit in front of Daddy Long Legs,” I muttered to myself and so I sat, upright for nine hours, from New York to Amman. I understood why it qualifies as torture to make prisoners sleep in an upright position.

The meal was luxurious by comparison to the North American flights that tended towards small portions of meat with a salad or a few vegetables. Middle Eastern hospitality was already proving to be generous.

It occurred to me at some point in the flight that my deodorant would probably only be effective for 12 hours, unlike the one that advertises that it can go for a full day and night.

My first impression of Amman was, of course, the airport. The people on our flight were greeted by throngs of families obviously thrilled to have them back home. It made me feel lonely even though I was in a group.

My first need was to use a bathroom. I'd never seen a Middle Eastern bathroom with its tiled floor and hole in the ground. Another girl came with me and we were slightly taken back but necessity required that we just go with the flow, so to speak, so we squatted and did our thing. All in all, I think it's a far cleaner system and speaking now as a housewife, I would rather mop a tiled floor than clean the nooks and crannies of a toilet.

The church had living quarters for its students in one of the garden suburbs on the hills of Amman and so that's where we stayed. It had the feeling of a diplomat's apartment. There was red carpet and white furniture with framed photos of Herbert W. Armstrong, and the present leader of the church, Joseph W. Tkach. (Tkach meant "weaver" in Russian. It was said that he had been called to weave the people of God together.) I got the feeling that this apartment was like an outpost of civilization with its Western toilet and toilet paper unlike the tiled hole in the ground back at the airport.

We received one very important instruction upon arriving, do not flush toilet paper in the toilet. Put it in the garbage pail. Otherwise, we'd clog the pipes all the way up to King Hussein's palace. That was an intriguing thought. In Canada we have very little power over our rulers, but in Amman the people have the power to clog their King's pipes. Maybe it's different now.

Most of the students wanted to rest after the trip but another student, a girl from France, MA, and I wanted to get out and look around. Without knowing it, we were doing the best thing to alleviate jet lag, just go with whatever time it is when you arrive and carry on. But we had been given the instruction that if we girls wanted to go out, we'd have to have a male escort. The only male we could convince to take us out was a large Texan with a t-shirt that proclaimed his home state. And nobody messed with Texas as we wandered around the suburbs, being stared at, of course, but just enjoying the feeling of being in another country. I mean, just the way people hang up their laundry is more interesting on the other side of the world.

Jordan is a hilly city. Geometrical white boxes for homes are built on the hills. The signs were all in Arabic, of course, although here my memory may fail me because now when I look at pictures of Amman on the internet there's English on the signs too. But the Arabic on the signs was what made Amman seem the most exotic. Then we would be walking down a road and things would start to feel ordinary and we'd turn and suddenly there'd be a Bedouin man with his sheep in a pen by the side of the road and things would feel exotic again. A lot of the men seemed to just sit on benches along the road.

Sadly, much of the subsequent touring was lost on us students. What I wouldn't give to go back! Organized tours mean only one thing, historical sights. And in Jordan, historical sights mean only one thing, ruins. Part of me would love to be an archaeologist-type, poking around in ruins and coming to marvelous and thoughtful conclusions about its previous inhabitants. But the honest-to-God truth is, I'd rather talk to a person who's alive now. My favorite part of the first day we were there was when we got out of the bus and walked through the crowds to the Roman amphitheater. I wanted to join the crowds.

It all kind of reminded me of Toronto's Nathan Phillips Square at lunch time, except that there were more men than women out in Amman and far more children just milling around than you'd ever see in downtown Toronto.

My photos were dumb. They didn't capture the spirit of the people. It would have been like going to

Toronto and taking pictures of Old Fort York and the CN Tower. The Canadian spirit is more subtle than the CN Tower. One would have to sit down and have a lot of coffees (or beers) before starting to realize who we Canadians are. For one thing, we're not American. That's one thing some of us are very proud of. I like being an autonomous nation that doesn't have to go to war with Iraq just because the United States decides to. God bless Jean Chretien for keeping us out of America's conflicts!

Another part of the Canadian psyche is our awareness of the size of our country. As a Canadian, I have little desire to go live up north among the bears and the moose but I'm happy to know that it's there and part of Canada. It's like the last frontier to run to in case the world gets too crazy. I was the only Canadian female in the group. The other Canadian, Paddy, was interestingly, from Newmarket, Ontario which was where my future husband was living at that time. Paddy and I had known each other back from the days of both attending the local church in Toronto, he in the East congregation, me in the West, although we had always moved in different circles.

Just like how visiting the CN Tower in Toronto wouldn't bring a tourist closer to the average Canadian, our organized tour of Jordan didn't allow us to share everyday life with the Arabs. The natives of a country are usually not found at their historical sights. When I got back to Texas, I picked up a book about Jordan and read a practically verbatim account of everything we heard while in Jordan, plus photos of all the ruins we saw. The only difference was that now I had my own photos of the ruins.

For me, traveling had always been a sort of a sense of, if only I could be somewhere else, life would be more interesting and meaningful. But traveling wasn't making me happy. It was just a suspension of my own life to come across the world to watch from a distance how other people lived.

Had I been allowed to participate in the life around me, I probably wouldn't have felt that sense of futility. The heart of Christianity is to love other people as we love ourselves. But to make it worse, we females had been firmly instructed not to talk to the Arab men, not even to smile at them. (I couldn't help myself, I smiled at a young teenage boy who was smiling at me.) Back in Texas, I had read an article about the Arab mentality, about their passion, heart-first approach to life. But clearly we were not to be permitted to discover these things for ourselves.

The instruction was ludicrous. (It was never given with regards to the Jewish men in Israel.) The men in Jordan were no different from the men of East Texas and even though our church always had an "us vs. the world" mentality, no one had every explicitly forbidden us to talk to the people of East Texas. So clearly, the Arab men were in a special category.

In fact, the more I thought about it, the more it irked me. The college never banned *Glamour* or *Cosmopolitan.*. But apparently smiling at an Arab could lead to fornication. Had our trip taken place after 9/11, no doubt we would have been warned about acts of terrorism as well.

So our little group remained introverted. It was like a mini Ambassador College on the move. With my short brown bob, I couldn't share the other girls' interest in keeping their hair curled. (Apparently American curling irons don't plug into Middle Eastern sockets.) So my only real female friend was the other non-American girl, MA, and we hung out for most of the trip. As I recall, we fell into a steady sort of arrangement that started to feel like marriage after awhile.

We spent a week in Jordan. We took a day-trip from Amman to Jerash and even today, I remember it

being intensely hot. We were given water bottles and told to drink a lot.

Jerash is a Roman city, one of the Decapolis of Jesus's day, that was being restored. It took a bit of concentration to shake the feeling that it was a museum replica somewhere in the States. It would have been a cool (not referring to the temperature) place for a fashion shoot or a movie. I could almost feel what it would have been like to live in a Roman city, probably a lot of fun, though granted, this would be an outpost of civilization to the Romans who ended up there. And now we dazed tourists stood around in our hats, holding our water bottles and staring stupidly at the columns, paying more attention to the architecture than the average Roman did in his lifetime.

I discovered one interesting fact about drinking lots of water in the heat – one sweated it out long before one needed to use the bathroom.

That evening, we went out and walked along the street near our apartment. I was egotistical enough to expect that all the locals would stare at us, but observant enough to note that it wasn't with contempt or lust. It was just the same kind of curiosity I would have had if a group of Arabs were walking down Queen Street back home.

I hated being part of a tourist group that charged out of the bus to snap photos of Hadrian's Gate but never met a single Arab apart from the tour guide. We would stop at some piece of ruins, stand in the blazing sun for fifteen minutes listening to the entire history of a restored Roman arch, with me wondering if this was worth getting heat stroke for.

I believed that people should travel for the details, not for the generalities. Like, the guard who was outside our apartment who was often looking at us as much as we were looking at him. He was more interesting to me than driving around the country in a bus.

The children in Jordan were adorable. They would wave at the bus and I really wished we could get out and talk to them, learn a little bit about their lives and devote the same amount of time to them as we did to the restored mosaic tiles.

Looking at my face in the mirror of a Rest House, I had the freaky sensation of not recognizing myself. I had gotten so used to looking at darker complexions that I looked even paler than usual by comparison. I decided that I wasn't attractive, but that I wasn't boring-looking.

More and more I was deciding that the way to see a country was not to be lectured all the way through it. (Thousands of years ago, Manasseh, Gad, and Reuben had tramped through this land complaining all the way and now I'd returned to do the same.)

The whole thing was Ancient History, anyhow. Our church taught that the works that had begun here thousands of years ago were now being done in Big Sandy, Texas, and at the church headquarters in Pasadena, California. Spiritually, according to Worldwide Church of God theology, the land we were traveling through was barren.

I decided that when I got home, if anyone asked me what I thought of the Holy Land, I would be clever and say, “the book was better.” Characters like Moses stood larger in my mind than they did on Mount Nebo when we all got out to stare at the spot that Moses supposedly saw the Promised Land from. We

even looked at the stone that he struck when he should have spoken to it so that the Israelites could have their water.

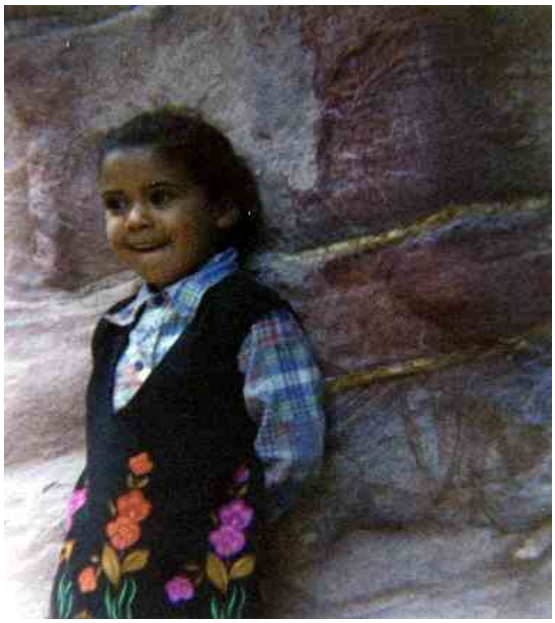
While in Jordan, we ate a lot of falafels and drank a lot of bottled water. There was an ancient tile map of Jerusalem in a church in Madaba which we all stood around and looked at.

The highlight was Petra. Unlike travelers in the past, we arrived in our air-conditioned bus and walked through the high narrow passageway of red rock that guards the entranceway to the ancient city. Coming out into the opening and seeing the famous Treasury was like finding myself on a movie set. It was a familiar sight and at the same time felt unreal.

I bought a rustic Bedouin bag from a man with a camel selling souvenirs to the tourists. People could ride the camel but our group was scheduled for an intensive tour and so there was no time for dallying.

Naturally, Petra was special to our group. This was the place we'd all be coming back to, perhaps soon, to be protected from the coming world tribulation. But I couldn't help noticing a lot of problems with that theory. For one thing, Petra was already inhabited. Bedouins had caves with their bedding in them and we saw their children running around like mountain goats on the top of the rocks. Our tour guide told us that if we sent a letter to one of them, all we'd have to do is write a name on the envelope and Petra, Jordan and the letter would get to them. Were we going to be heartless enough to push these people out of their home in Petra to the horrors of the tribulation?

Another thing that struck me was that it wasn't just a group of rocks waiting for us to inhabit them. It was a tourist destination with a lot of people interested in it and I doubted that the world would just let us move in. After all, nobody had had the audacity to move into the Colosseum in Rome or to claim Ayer's Rock as their own personal campground. Of course, if the world was in turmoil, maybe no one would care. But it was unsettling and I felt it wasn't as simple as I had been led to believe.



A little girl who lived in Petra

In addition, there was a restaurant and rest station in Petra, a modern building that we all stopped in to to use the bathrooms. This was the most unsettling feature. No minister had ever mentioned this restaurant in their sermons about Petra. We had been taught that we would live in caves and God would probably provide food for us like he did for the Israelites in the Wilderness. But here was this restaurant.

Who would get to eat in it? I wondered. Who would get to use the bathroom facilities? Obviously it could not service the 144,000 people that we expected would live here. (The number was taken from Revelation, the number of Israelites that God had put his seal on.)

I imagine that had our church really ended up at Petra, the restaurant and its facilities would have been the domain of Herbert W. Armstrong and the men who surrounded him. But it's presence there in the rose red city half as old as time raised questions in my mind and made me wonder if the men who preached the sermons about our future Place of Safety really knew what they were talking about.

Then it was onto Israel. We were told to refer to it as the "West Bank." I never really figured out what part was the West Bank and what part was Israel. It didn't matter either way since in the end we never talked to any Arabs who might be offended.

Our conversations with Arabs were limited to things like "How much American?" and they would say things like "Is good price" or even, "You from where?" Their ability to communicate and connect far exceeded ours.

Israel was our main destination since that's where the dig was going to be. As a result of my upbringing, I identified with the Jews. After all, I kept their holy days, I didn't eat pork or shellfish and once a week, on the seventh day, I rested from sunset to sunset. We were Jew wannabes in the Worldwide Church of God, in some ways, more Jewish than the average Jew. So it came as a sad surprise that the Jews didn't identify with us. They didn't recognize our group as being practically Jewish.

In fact, our tour guide seemed to be making fun of us a lot of the time. He was a short squat casually-dressed man named Schlomo (I remember him especially for his hairy feet in leather sandals). He was waiting for us as we arrived in Israel and the first thing he told us was that we could not take photos since this was a military zone and our cameras would be confiscated if we tried to photograph anything.

Of course, he added, they wouldn't put anything they really wanted to hide out in the open for us to see.

As I said, he had no respect for our group. Our group was being accompanied by a faculty member, Dr. Germano (His doctorate probably wasn't in theology since all theology learning had to take place at Ambassador College and they only issued B.A.s) Dr. Germano asked Schlomo to dress up a bit more. I can't remember the exact details but there was a continual friction between the two men. Schlomo was eventually fired by the Doctor. But before he was replaced, when we were in Tiberius, a lakeside town in Galilee, he took our group out to a strip of cafes down by the waterfront that was known as pick-up spot. It was his revenge on the Doctor. At least, that was the story going around among the college students.

In fact, two girls in our group did get picked up by two Israelis. I was hanging out with Justin, one of the guys in our group, and in between wandering around downtown Tiberius and drinking shandys at the Hard Rock Cafe, we managed to rescue the two girls in our group who were letting the Israelis buy them drinks and play pool with them. The Israelis didn't seem pleased when we wandered at a close pace behind them the whole evening. It was kind of like being a private investigator. We didn't actually hang out with them but our persistent presence prevented them from going somewhere more private with the girls. There was only one sin that we could commit on this trip and that was fornication. We were warned at some point that any transgression in this area would result in the whole group going home.

I had a few encounters with Jewish men that were more innocent, both at the springs where Gideon's men are said to have either drank with their hands or put their heads right down to drink right out of the pool.

I hate swimming and I burn easily, so while the rest of the group was off in the water, I was sitting under a tree. On the other side of the shore was a group of Israelis, laughing and showing off as they jumped into the water. They were handsome, muscular, and made me think, who needs Greek gods? These Semitic gods were unlike any Jew I'd seen back home.

All of a sudden, one broke away from the group and began to swim toward me. I had actually caught his eye a few times while he was yelling and showing off for his friends on the other side. My heart almost stopped beating. Why was he swimming towards me? He got closer and called out to me in Hebrew. I lamely replied that I only spoke English. He held up his wrist and in broken English asked me what time it was. I looked at my watch and called out “ten-to-three”. That was the anti-climactic conclusion of the encounter and he swam back to his crowd.

But there was a lengthier interaction a little bit later that day. Three young men came over to me, wet and practically dripping on me. The leader asked me why I was under the tree. I said I was from Canada and that I burned very easily. He asked me, don't they have sun in Canada? I laughed.

They were friendly but young. Next week they were going in the army and they were trying to have a last week of fun. They didn't have a whole lot of fun with me but I enjoyed meeting them.

That's one of the few memories I have of an Israeli being friendly to me when we were touring. Most of them ignored us. Even in a store when I went in to buy a menorah to take home, I had a hard time getting the attention of the man behind the counter who was reading a book. I was the only customer but he seemed barely interested in selling me anything.

The Arabs on the other hand were wonderfully charming. They often had an arm around my shoulder or waist as they pointed things out in their store to me. Be cynical if you want. Say whatever you like. But they were warm and friendly and said marvelous things like, “for a beautiful woman like you, fifteen shekels.”

I knew next to nothing about the Arabs. We were allowed to explore Jerusalem on our own and told only one thing, do not go to the Muslim Quarter of the Old City. But I don't think anyone actually told us where it was, so when a couple of us found ourselves in the Muslim Quarter, it was disconcerting.

The feeling was different from the Christian Quarter. For one thing, I didn't see any women in my brief visit there. And I didn't see any Westerners. So we stuck out. And we seemed to find ourselves in some kind of a surge of people. Under any other circumstances we would have felt silly, but instinctively, we all held hands to stay together. I don't know how we found our way out, but we did and all I'm left with is an impression. Just one day, for five minutes. So I don't draw any great lessons from it or say that it represents a greater truth.

But the Arabs were friendly and interested and liked to talk and drink coffee. All things that were held in high esteem by me. A vague sense began to form in me, but like a lot of Christians, I believed that God had brought His people, the Jews, back to Their Land and the only problem was that the Arabs seemed to think they had a claim on it.

The Jews return to the Land was all part of God's greater plan, though if you had asked me why, I wouldn't have been able to say.

While visiting Jerusalem, we staying in a hotel on the outskirts of the city called Ramat Rachel. The hotel was run by a kibbutz and we were told that the manager of the hotel got paid the same wage as the women who washed the bed-sheets.

Everyday there was a breakfast buffet of tomatoes, cucumbers, pita bread, eggs, humus and a large variety of Middle Eastern salads. It wasn't the typical American or Canadian breakfast but I loved it for it's lightness and flavor.

As we drove through the streets of Jerusalem we were told that the reason there were so many white-stoned buildings was because the British had passed a law that all new buildings had to be finished with the indigenous stone of the area in order to preserve the look of the city. I didn't know why the British would have had the authority to pass such a law although I may have had a vague sense of the Balfour Declaration.

One of the liveliest places to hang out in the new city was Ben Yehuda Street with it's cafes and shops. The street was for pedestrians only and we were told that it was named after the father of modern Hebrew. We were allowed to come back and explore more of it at night. (I think our chaperons liked to go to bed early.) There was a bus near the kibbutz and we took it in straight to the heart of the new city.

Since both drinking and dancing were acceptable recreation by our church we naturally ended up at a nightclub. I've been to nightclubs in Toronto. This club was different. It was real. There were people from all over the world and the drinking and dancing wasn't self-conscious. It was a place to just party and have a good time. A lot of soldiers were there and the feeling I had in Jerusalem was that you had a good time because tomorrow you might be shot at.

The Israelis were good-looking, but not so self-conscious about it. I saw so many guys who could have easily been on Beverly Hills 90210.

The feeling in Jerusalem was one of being alive. Toronto has a large Jewish community, so at times, Jerusalem just felt like a limestone version of Bathurst Street, but the air in Jerusalem was charged with an energy that made a city in North America feel half-dead by comparison. Amman felt relaxed and

Eastern. Jerusalem was purposeful and Western. People barely looked at us.

I felt safe in Jerusalem. Even soldiers off-duty carried their guns on their backs and it was hard to imagine petty crime with so many of the citizens armed. Whenever I was back home in Toronto and found myself out after dark, I was always looking around to make sure no one was lurking down an alley or behind the bushes waiting to ambush me. But Jerusalem didn't have that feeling.

What had happened to me was that I had come home. And I felt safe at home.

It was a completely unexpected feeling. I had applied to come to the dig in Israel on a whim, not really caring whether I got accepted or not.

But then upon arriving, I was like that Reformation churchman who scorns the Catholic proclivity to bring home water from the Jordan and dirt from the Holy Land, only to end up hurrying off the ship and falling to the ground to kiss it so profusely that it results in a nosebleed.

And having come home, I wasn't afraid. Death in Jerusalem would be sweeter than anywhere else.

I also fell in love with the Old City. The old stone streets bustling with people. The stores full of their leather and brass ware. The piles of fruit. The confectioneries like Turkish Delight. The outdoor cafes with the older Arab men who seemed to have all day to smoke their water pipes and drink their coffee. The exotic mix of East and West. Young Arab men in Western sweaters and slacks. Older Arab men in Western suit jackets and pants but with a keffiya and agal on their head. The Arab women in black. The Christian priests in their long robes. The Orthodox Jews in their Homburg hats and black coats. It's easy to imagine Jesus walking along the ancient streets. I didn't know it at the time, but the Romans plowed the whole city over and built their Aelia Capatolina on top of it so the original roads would be buried underground. In fact, I've read that underneath one convent is the remnants of an original Roman road with scratches where bored soldiers played dice games on it.

The Old City was where I discovered the friendliness of the Arab and the indifference of the Jew.

After buying a leather knapsack and a few souvenirs for my family, I entertained myself by handing out small coins to the little Arab children that were always hovering around us in hope of a treat. Or maybe they were just watching us. I don't know. But it was amusing to see how quickly I could generate a crowd by handing out my agorets. The tour guide was annoyed.

There were a lot of Arab men walking through the streets, holding hands, which Dr. Germano had to explain was perfectly normal in this part of the world and did not mean...you know. It still bothered some of the guys in our group though.

As a woman, I certainly realized that the Arab men were not...you know. I could have had an Arab postcard seller visiting me in my hotel room one night. He was so persistent I had to pretend I couldn't remember the name of our hotel. We had gotten out of the bus on the Mount of Olives to take pictures of the panoramic view of Jerusalem.

The man came up to me and said something.

I just said “No, thanks” and turned away.

I realized he was still standing there. “No thanks,” I said again.

“I not ask you to buy,” he said. “I ask you, how are you? Now I really hurt. You break my heart.”

I laughed. He looked so sad but in a comical way. The other students were scattered all over, either buying postcards from other sellers or taking photos.

The man asked me where I was from and I said, “Toronto.” He said he had relatives in Alberta. So we made small talk for a bit until he placed his hand on mine, which was resting on the stone wall, and started caressing the top of it. It was so startling that I almost laughed again, especially when he said, “I love you. I love you. Where are you staying? I want to talk more to you!”

I said I wasn't sure where we were staying and that we were only here for a few more days anyhow. I added that if he wanted to talk to anybody about Canada, there's another Canadian over there, and pointed to Paddy.

“No,” he said in his sweet intense way. “I want to talk to you. I love you!”

“Well, I must be going over there,” I said, starting to walk towards where the bulk of the group was milling around. Although there was a male student only a few feet away, he seemed completely indifferent to what was going on. He was involved in checking out the 20 postcards he had just purchased for $1. The man was still holding onto my hand which I had to drag off the wall.

“Oh please! Don't go without a hug!”

I managed to only have my shoulders hugged and not to be kissed too. I was starting to worry that Dr. Germano would blame me for this whole thing. I hurried back to the bus.

My ego wouldn't let me take the whole thing too seriously though because a couple of days earlier in a rest house, a man had asked MA where she was from. She had told him France. He said he wanted to marry someone from France, would this be possible?

We did the usual stops in the Old City.

At the Western Wall, there was time to go up to the Wall and pray if we wanted to. I got as close as I could without interfering with the Jews but I found myself disappointed. There was no feeling of reverence in the place. No feeling that I had found a portal to God. It was just a nice big old wall. Watching the Jews was more interesting.

The garden tomb was a little more satisfying although it's hard to imagine that the tomb of Christ has actually been preserved for two thousand years. There was a wooden sign on the entrance to the tomb that said “He is not here. He is risen.” It's a moving sentiment but it detracted from the feeling of authenticity. Another moving sentiment was a small sign in the garden that said “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem”.

The Holy Sepulchre, also said to be the authentic burial place of Jesus, felt even less authentic than the garden tomb. It had all the splendor and trappings of an Eastern Orthodox church, none of which was familiar to me. In fact, I didn't even fully realize the significance as to why we were there until much later. We were escorted through the whole building and things were pointed out to us, none of which I remember. Then we stood in line to go through a little cave that was either supposed to be where Christ was crucified or where he was buried. It made no difference. If if it were the correct location it bore no resemblance to Jerusalem in the 30's. So now when I read about the Holy Sepulchre and how it's Christendom's most important shrine it strikes me as trying to conjure up some sentiment in us that is non-existent for me and certainly not universal to all Christians. The fact that the Church was occupied by five denominations who couldn't agree on anything didn't say much for organized religion. But the Holy Sepulchre does represent something significant to me, the Christian presence in the Holy Land, and our undeniable interest in the city that our Saviour wept over and loved. Outside of it, he died for our sins. And most compelling of all, for me, going further back, is that it was once the city where God's glory lived.

The Haram esh-Sharif is undoubtedly the most beautiful of the three faiths' holy spots in Jerusalem. There is a sense of space and beauty, both which inspire rather than detract from one's faith. We saw inside the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque and then had a group photo on the steps leading up to the Haram.

In front of the Haram esh-Sharif
I'm in the front row, sixth from the right

We were led around the Old City and an old wall was pointed out to us that dated back to the kings of Israel. It was a hot day and I recall being struck by the desire not to be a tourist. I felt like we were wandering around just observing other people's lives and I wanted to go back home and live. I just wanted to drink coffee and talk and do everyday things.

CHAPTER THREE

SIFTING THROUGH THE SANDS OF TIME

Our trip to the Holy Land was starting to feel like a trip to Disney World. Every ruin was an opportunity to strike a playful pose and snap a few pictures. Plus, the continual quest for a clean bathroom and a can of Coke made me wonder why Americans travel at all. But we got back to a kind of everyday living at Hazor.

Digging at Hazor was like playing in the sandbox. We were assigned to locus's, given our little piks, and then we basically dug in the sand all day.

To pass time, MA and I played Twenty Questions or a game of our own creation, Who Am I? Who Am I was where one of us would think of a Bible character and then give clues to the other person until she guessed who it was. Obviously, the longer it took her to guess who it was, the more successful the other one of us had been. So the trick was to either come up with an obscure character in the Bible or if one had to use a more popular character, like David, to come up with obscure points about his life. It would go something like this:
"Who am I? I had a husband."
"Eve?"
"No. I took care of sheep."
"Zipporah?"
"No. I said to my husband, give me children or I die?"
This clue would sound extremely familiar but it still might not be enough to guess the identity.
"I had a sister."
And it this point, the person would usually guess, Rachel.

For anyone who hasn't been on a dig the whole thing runs roughly as follows. We were woken up ridiculously early, 4:00 a.m. Since the bus left at 4:40, there was no time for make-up or special attention to hair, something that was important to me at the time. By 4:30 we were in the dining hall having some hot cocoa and a bit of bread with jam or Nutella. For the first few days it made me nauseous to eat so early.

Then it was onto the bus. Everyone was expected to help with the large plastic water jugs that looked like they'd been on countless camping trips from about 1976 onward. Their age accounted for why water spewed out of the spouts every time we made a sharp turn, of which there are many on the hills of Israel. The bouncy unpaved roads didn't help either.

A snooze was impossible with the radio cranked up playing Hebrew folk songs. After a short drive, we arrived at the Tel. That's when a great song by Roxette came on the radio but it was time to get off the bus.

Time to get tools from the shed. Once we had our pik or pottishane, we'd head to our locus.

Then our supervisor came over to tell us what we were going to do for the day. It was usually the same each day. Dig. At one point, my locus partner was Veronica, a 60 year-old woman from South Africa and I was the one who did the digging while she sat in the corner and made a hole. There was only one law for us unpaid laborers, *keep it level*. So I had to level the whole floor at the rate that she dug her hole.

At 7:00 a.m. we had a coffee-break, the strong sweet Turkish kind. Sometimes I would just lie down on top of our bulk and try to sleep. The breaks started off at ten minutes and a week and a half later they were about twenty. At that rate, by the end of the dig, the break and breakfast would just blend together.

Breakfast was at 9:00 and was wonderful. Tomatoes and cucumbers unlike the ones here in North America. These ones actually had flavor. There was also rye bread, hard boiled eggs, green pepper, onions, and cottage cheese. I just turned it all into a sandwich and for the first week felt incredibly healthy. After awhile, I would have liked some pizza and beer.

Then it was back to the locus for more digging until about one o'clock. Then back on the bus. Nobody took a shower until after lunch, otherwise lunch would have been too late.

In Israel I learned to love eggplant. The meals are glorious, sweet potato, couscous, I can't even remember them all, just that there was a lot of variety and since we were especially hungry, they were especially good. I thought it was funny how you could count on raw onions and Nutella every day at breakfast but I never saw a Fruit Loop the whole time I was there.

In Israel I also learned to love lamb. Lamb had always been served to me in the English manner of lightly roasted and accompanied with mint jelly. But in Jericho we had stopped to look at the famous walls and have lunch at a nearby Arabic restaurant. There we had been served delicious incinerated meat kebabs of beef and lamb. (I later married a man who loves lamb and doesn't mind that I load it up with garlic and cook it twice as long as the recipe calls for.)

After lunch, everyone washes the pottery they found that day. That can take a half hour then everybody goes their way, to shower and spend the afternoon talking or reading, while the top guys look over the pottery and try to piece it together.

Dinner is light and most sensible people go to bed early. Later on, there was a group of Spaniards at Hazor that went up the road at night to a small outdoor cafe that served beer. They yawned a lot on the dig site.

We were staying at Gesher House. Up til that point I had always shared a hotel room with just MA. Now we were four to the spartan room. We spent very little time in it because the late afternoons were usually spent hanging out in the communal dining hall or the inner courtyard of the Gesher House. I got to know some Christian ladies from South Africa while I was hanging out in the courtyard. They liked to talk about God and I found it intriguing that they almost sounded like “one of us”. I had been taught that all the true believers were in the Worldwide Church of God, but these women sure sounded

like believers and they had nothing to do with WCG. They talked about God leading them in their life decisions. But I had been told that the world (anyone outside of the church) was hostile to God. It was a thought that lingered in my mind.

There was even time to get bored. Dr. Germano's wife had had the foresight to bring along some novels. Her medical thrillers ended up being passed around to all the students. I had had the romantic idea that traveling to a foreign country, particularly the one walked upon by Jesus, that all my spare time would be spent gazing at the hills and taking in the scenery. But I ended up reading the novels too.

On the dig-site, MA and I absolutely loved the Israeli student leader who was over our area. His name was Amos. I could imagine him as dark-haired cute Israeli boy who'd only gotten bigger over the course of twenty years. Archeology was his profession, not quite as Jewish as being a doctor or lawyer, but certainly far more Hebrew. Tolerant, easy-going, but committed to his work, he was the ideal supervisor. I was told he could read pottery as well as he could read the Torah. His clothing consisted of cut-off jean shorts, a t-shirt, and the standard Israeli sandals. Amos always had to be called over if we found some pottery since it had to be measured in its spot to know what level it was at. Sometimes he would warn us that we might get moved to another area since they needed more people over there and we'd say, "No, Amos! We want to be with you!" And he'd smile modestly and say in his thick English, "Better the devil you know, yes?" And he'd go away shaking his head.

You pay to come dig at a site. (Or in our case, the college paid.) It's pretty funny considering that under different circumstances, the work could be considered manual labor. It took my body a few days to get adjusted. For one thing, on the first day I went for 9 hours without using the bathroom despite that I was drinking water all day. The same thing happened on the second day but then at some point I got back to normal and started making frequent visits to the Johnny-on-the-Spot.

I was managing to make friends on this trip, particularly now that we were more settled down. Justin, from our group, worked in the locus kitty-corner to me and we liked to sit at the same table for breakfast everyday, unlike MA who liked to move around and meet new people. Another guy, Josh, was a bastion of conservativeness, something I found attractive because conservative people are a mystery to me. We'd occasionally had those long conversations that cause people to smile knowingly at each other the next day.

We were all pale and light compared to the dark skin and dark hair that was all around us. Even with it's energy, Israel had a more relaxed feeling than America despite that it was surrounded by enemies. You could take a shower every other day if you wanted to. You could go out in public wearing an over-sized t-shirt and cut-off jeans. You could brush your hair once in the morning and then forget about it if you wanted to.

In our little room of four girls, we even got into the habit of keeping the bathroom door open. The reasoning was that the bathroom had both the toilet and the mirror and sink, so it wasn't fair to hog the bathroom if you wanted the toilet when someone else wanted the mirror. (I embraced the relaxed Israeli culture and just brushed my hair once in the morning and forgot about it, but I think a lot of girls in our group were still maintaining higher standards.) The shower was in a whole separate room.

If we started to get on each other's nerves, there was certainly plenty of opportunity to meet other

people outside our group. The lady in the locus beside me, Minka, taught ancient Hebrew at a seminary and rolled her own cigarettes. We talked extensively about religion. She had had a calling about ten years earlier when in her 30's and was down-to-earth and devout. I had done a paper on the New Age movement back at Ambassador and was impressed to find out that she had been on a panel with Margot Adler and Starhawk. A South African lady, Jill, and I got into a conversation that covered everything from AIDS to apartheid. A Hebrew University student, Mariam, and I talked about the Gentiles' conversion to Christianity in the first century. It was unusual for me to have those kinds of conversations with people outside of our church. Once at the dig-site, we had been warned by our college chaperon not to get too close to anyone of the opposite sex outside our group. Any of my conversations with older women would have gone unnoticed. But they were the beginning of my doubts that we were the only Christians in the world.

I had always felt like an oddball in the church. Even though I unquestioningly went along with church doctrine, I was usually the one person in a group that managed to make people uncomfortable whenever I opened my mouth. So I found that it was only the brave people who were willing to really talk to me, the kind of people who didn't care too much what other people thought.

But these older women at the dig-site were both religious and free-thinking, and so, with them, I found myself feeling like the swan that discovers it's not the ugly duckling after all. The topic of, say, witchcraft didn't horrify them. What people at Ambassador College didn't always understand was that I wanted to talk about something like Wicca without it actually meaning that I wanted to be a witch. Any one who showed an interest in theological ideas outside of church doctrine usually got labeled a heretic, even if the term was only used jokingly.

Ironically, most young people in the church didn't talk theology. They talked about movies and music. Nothing was really off-limits to us in terms of the world's entertainment, although there would be the occasional Bible-study with a pastor playing excerpts of popular music to demonstrate how inappropriate contemporary music was. Some pastors wanted the youth to be listening to classical music, if they had to listen to something. But for the most part, we teens were left alone to buy whatever CDs we wanted to. What would have been bad would have been to listen to contemporary Christian music or to see any of the movies produced by Christians or even to read a book put out by another “so-called” Christian organization. I remember the slightly risqué feeling I had if my mother and I went into a “Christian” bookstore so that she could buy a new Bible. I barely looked at the books on the shelf. On the other hand, I would go to the library and take out half a dozen murder mysteries as well as the contemporary novels. Our TV life wasn't censored either and the only no-no was watching it on the Sabbath. As a result, most of us were up-to-date with the world's culture but had no awareness of what was going on in contemporary Christendom.

Minka and I had a talk about magnetism between men and women. She said that she had had a soul-connection with an 11 year-old, a 21 year-old, and a 72 year-old. She was 47. The 21 year-old was gorgeous so she said it had nothing to do with her looks, but with the energy they created together. I liked that theory.

She may have startled some of the other college students with her ideas but she had a way of putting things into words that I'd thought but had never really said. With her 36 year edge on me, she said them more dynamically than I ever could have. Regarding accepting yourself for who you are, she said, “we may be dust, but we're stardust.”

One day, what seemed like a hundred tourists, got out of buses and just watched us as if we were kangaroos on display in a zoo in a re-creation of our natural habitat. Although the Hazor site was large, our loci were right on the edge so Minka, MA, Justin and I and a Jewish couple originally from Yemen were the logical choice for observation. Just like animals in a zoo, we stared back. So, there we were, six archaeological grunt workers staring at one hundred tourists. We speculated sbout what nationality they might be. MA and I thought the Netherlands.

Since I kind of had to go to the bathroom, I volunteered to be the one to go and talk to them. Since they were starting to walk slowly towards the bathroom anyhow, it was convenient to catch up with them and ask the first nice-looking young man where they were all from.

"Austria," he said, smiling.

Before I knew it, I was surrounded by beaming Austrian tourists and a leader emerged and started asking me questions.

I told them how we were digging at the Bronze level and did my best to parrot Dr. Amnon Ben-Tor, the director of the dig. But I also admitted I really didn't know anything about it all.

"Are you an archeology major?" asked the leader.

"No, theology."

"So are we!"

So from there, I found myself lecturing about a hundred Austrian theology majors about Hazor and what we did each day. They laughed a lot, particularly when I told them, with all sincerity, that it would take 700 years to excavate Hazor.

When I returned to the locus, Justin said that I should have said, "OK, folks, follow me. Take your cameras," just like our guides. I said that considering that I was ultimately heading for the bathroom, that would have been inappropriate.

On the same day, there was a locust the size of a small horse on the wheelbarrow path. Justin, who up to this point I had considered to be a sensitive New-Age guy, said we should kill it. He and another guy got behind a wall to throw stones at it, ready to duck in case it jumped in their face. Minka got mad at them and commanded them to stop. She went over and peered down at the beast proclaiming it beautiful, and called over some of her friends to have a look. When her two friends showed up, the locust ceased to be as interesting for us college students as the three older women watching it crawl slowly up a wall (it looked injured) and making concerned comments about it's slow movements. They also touched upon its eating habits.

The whole thing ended for me when Amos came over and called out to me, "Uh, Jenny, what are you doing?" in that cute Hebrew way of his and I said, "Watching a locust. Do you want me working?" And he said (after coming over and looking at it), "Uh, yes." But the whole thing really ended when one of Minka's friends walked away carrying it since, as it turned out, she was doing some sort of

research paper on locusts.

I was probably in the best shape of my life at that time, but my body still felt thrashed. My whole body was numb with various ailments – cramps sore muscles, bug-bites that felt like they were on fire. Even after taking a shower I felt like one of the pieces of pottery I had washed – half-scrubbed. My legs still showed signs of the streaks of dirt. My watch line was paler than the rest of my body. On most people that would be the sign of a tan, but considering that I wore no. 30 sunblock, it just meant that I hadn't lathered and rinsed my arm enough and I still had dirt on it No part of my body was free from dirt. My hairbrush, only used on clean hair, still had dirt in it. When I blew my nose, dirt would come out.

Underneath the dirt were the scratches and scrapes from the rocks and the bug-bites. The final layer was skin so dry that Extra-Strength body cream couldn't heal it. It needed exfoliation, something I'd read about in fashion magazines, but had never actually considered up until then. Applying lotion to skin that felt like sandpaper only made the skin feel like leather. With all the money that the college was spending on this trip I thought an extra day where we could all go to Elizabeth Arden's back in Texas wouldn't break the budget too much.

The aches made sleep hard which added to the exhaustion. When I can't sleep well, I usually end up going to the bathroom a few times in the night, but every time I flushed our toilet, it sounded like a jumbo jet was landing in the room.

The upside was that my theology was taking on a broader scope now that I was talking to Christians outside "the church." They all believed that Christ was involved in their lives. The South African lady sounded like a Worldwide Church of God member when she said things like, "God spared me from that marriage." The Hebrew University student was practically a prototype of the Jewish convert in the first century. I began to believe that God worked with individuals. We had been taught that the Catholic church and the Protestant churches did not resemble the first-century church, but I no longer felt comfortable slamming the individual sincere Christians as heretics. If offenses were going to come, I didn't want them to come by me. One of the other college students had an interesting theory that still maintained our exclusive understanding of God's word. When I shared some of my thoughts with her and asked her what her opinion was, she said that we couldn't claim to have exclusive rights to God's blessings. God's laws are structured in such a way that to keep them brings blessings.

But I was starting to lose faith in the whole idea of having to follow certain rules in order to obtain God's blessings. Some of the people I had met had a different philosophy. Life should be devoted to love, considering the needs of others. This is what the law and prophets were all about.

CHAPTER FOUR

A BABEL OF LANGUAGES

The new arrivals announced their presence by trumpeting on their balconies.

We had been told that there would be some Spanish students arriving at the Gesher House today. Previously I had thought the Americans were a nation that desired to be noticed, but when the Spaniards arrived I immediately knew that our group would seem quiet and awkward next to these loud college students who seemed to come straight out of a low-budget summer fun movie. When the Spanish students streamed by in a line outside of our room, talking in a continuous flow, the four of us remained quiet, as if in hiding, not sure how to feel about the new people.

Over the next few weeks, some people in our group would continue to treat the Spanish students with reservations. Others in our group would all but assimilate and make new friends. I was in the former category.

The Spaniards brought a new frenzy to the morning routine of getting tools from the tool shed. People now rushed the shed as if it held the last few loaves of bread in the Middle East. I just stood back because I didn't want to get a pik in my knee or a cigarette burn on my face. A pottishane is not something to be permanently scarred for. What I didn't understand was, there were always tools leftover. The frenzied college students didn't seem to realize this. After the tohu and bohu of getting tools, it was time to go and sit on the edge of the locus and have a smoke. The no-smoking craze was a uniquely North American trend . Each morning these unofficial breaks got longer and longer as the Spaniards' nights get later and later. I partook of the break even though I'd gone to bed at 8:30 and didn't smoke.

There were so many languages now being spoken at the dig site. The effect on me was that I was turned off the idea of learning other languages. I found it maddening listening to other people talk in their mixed English and Spanish or French and Spanish, using all sorts of hand gestures and taking ten minutes to convey something that two English speaking people could say to each other in thirty seconds.

I almost started speaking broken English. “Where is the...,” I would say and then pause as if to translate the word in my head. In fact, it was just an imitation of so many people around me. It struck me at that time that English was considered the standard language of the dig-site. The Israelis may have talked Hebrew amongst themselves but they all talked English to us, as well as to the Spaniards. I wondered if the Israelis and Spaniards resented that they had to learn English. As far as Spanish went, all I could manage was “si” and “yo soy Jennifer.”

MA did fine since she was fluent in four languages. Her ability to move freely through our multi-

cultural world was a hint of how people may have learned English to get by, but they'll open up to someone who speaks their own language.

I tried to tune out all the multi-lingual conversations and just listen to Minka and one of her friends who was also a Theology Major from a university in New York City. It was on a totally higher plateau all together. None of this, "Tu es loco, crazy, you know (twirl finger around tempo)." "Si, loco."

I decided that focusing only on English would mean I could obtain a higher level of thought, whereas to learn a new language would bring me back down to the basic phrases and concepts such as, "you are going to the theater" or "you are crazy'.

Now, over fifteen years later, married with children, I find most of my life is basic phrases. "Would you like something to drink?" "I am going over there." "I need money" "I want to buy something." "Would you like to eat now or later?" "Do you have children?" "My husband is over there." "We bought some sweets." "We ate at a restaurant." "How much does it cost?" "You have too much work." These are all things I've learned to say in Arabic and they are most relevant to my everyday life.

On some days we'd have lectures in the afternoon. One of them was a two hour lecture on the history of Hazor. I remember one of the college guys was really into it and asked a lot of questions. My thought process was something like this:

Mari. [Written on the blackboard.] Sounds like Mata Hari. She was an incredible woman. Got fat though. If she had stayed slim she wouldn't have looked so bad with her twenty-year old lover. I wonder if [guy beside me] realizes our shoulders are pressed together? Whenever we sit beside each other, our bodies touch. Last time it was our thighs. Milah. [Written on blackboard.] Micah. Yeah, he was exceptionally attractive. [Man from my home church.] Something about his eyebrows. Wow! I remember when he turned 22. I'm turning 22! He was 21! So young! Same age as me...

Some afternoons we'd walk up the road to Dubi's, an outdoor cafe that had the feeling of being an outpost of civilization. It was where the Spaniards usually went to drink beer in the evenings. If we stayed at Gesher House, there was a small TV in the room where we had our lectures, but it was usually tuned into Hebrew kids' shows. One time Beverly Hills 90210 was on though.

Minka left for some mysterious reason and was replaced by Barry, a cardiologist from the States. He was Jewish, all-American and had a wife and some sons and a house and a mortgage in Connecticut. It was at this point that Veronica became my locus partner. She was large and basically just sat in a corner like a young child in a sandbox. We connected on no level. But ironically, she had a second cousin who had attended Ambassador College and she used the church's *Youth* magazine in her Sunday School classes in South Africa. Again, someone else who seemed to be a Christian without actually being a member of "the church."

Not all encounters with people outside our group were pleasant. There was a girl from Montreal, Lyddia, who, when she found out I was from Toronto, put her arm around me in a patronizing way and said, "Well, that's a different universe." And from that point forward, nothing I could do was right. When we ended up on k.p. duty together, I couldn't put out the knives and forks fast enough for her. Encounters with her made me temporarily hate Canada. Back at Ambassador College, we Canadians

were used to acting like Canada was the Promised Land compared to the States. But Lyddia was a reminder that nationalism is fragile. There will always be tension between the English and the French, or in my case, between Toronto and the rest of Canada. In the U.S. it was the tension between North and South. In Israel it was between Jews and Arabs. Even the Jews didn't all get along, I was noticing.

Encounters with Lyddia made me resolve not to be intimidated and not to let her change who I was. Not talking much helped too. She was the type who didn't want to share ideas, just assert her own.

There were even tensions amongst the workers at the dig-site. My view of the older women was that they formed a homogeneous sort of group with a similar world view but I found out how different they all were when I sat with them one day at lunch. The woman beside me, L.D., was a vegetarian. She referred to the veal as "baby cow" and then said an obscenity when she discovered leftover meatloaf in the eggplant parmigiana. On the other side of me was Joan, from New York, who was loudly proclaiming how good everything was as she heaped more veal on to her plate. I don't think she was tuned into the conversation on the other side of me where L.D. was complaining that ignorant food manufacturers make vegetarian foods that look like meat.

"I don't like meat. I don't want to see meat. I hate meat."

Progressive Joan, now tuned in, was nodding sympathetically. (I could tell she was progressive because of her short blond hair. We females in the church were instructed to have our hair at least shoulder length.) Veronica also loudly supported L.D. with some remarks about food manufacturers having no idea about the theories behind vegetarianism, while she selected another piece of veal from the communal plate.

One afternoon we went to Safed. My journal records that it contained two synagogues and streets that were a cross between the Jewish Quarter in Jerusalem and Joppa. One tourist strip was like a mini Ben-Yehuda Street. I decided that if I couldn't live in Jerusalem this would be my second choice.

Another afternoon we went to the Hazor museum. While we wandered around the exhibits, my mind wandered too. My journal records that I decided that the dig site was really just a weight room inside a sandbox. I came to the profound conclusion that I wasn't so worried about getting fat as I was about not being toned.

But most of our afternoons were spent hanging around Gesher House. The 4:30 coffee and cookies were greatly looked forward to by all the A.C. women, but at the same time dreaded because it brought out our greatest weakness – the inability to stop at just two. One of the girls, Vicki came into the little coffee room and despondently said, "oh great" as she looked into the box of cookies. "What kind?" asked Lisa, another girl, expecting no doubt, that it would be a box of crumbs. "My favourite," replied Vicki.

Sometimes I would take my journal into the small TV room that was bare except for brown cloth benches built into the walls around the room and a TV mounted high in a corner. One day I went in there when only Ishi, one of the student supervisors, was sleeping on a couch. Then a bunch of other Israelis came in and switched the TV on, turning it up to a level that I wouldn't have even listened to Erasure at. I decided that maybe the reason so many Israelis yelled wasn't so much because they were seeking attention as much as because they were deaf. I stayed long enough to watch a few music

videos and a few shots of the inside of the Knesset, usually half-full. I got excited when I thought a Nirvana video had come on. It turned out to be a Weird Al Yankovic spoof.

Since most non-Israelis didn't gravitate to the TV, there was a lot of talking. Most conversations were about things like friendships and relationships. When I returned to the dining room where there was a continual supply of coffee and cocoa, I passed Vicki and Lisa talking to two female Orthodox Jews from New York about whether or not you could hold hands with your boyfriend. (At Ambassador College you could only do so if you were engaged. Consequently, it was thrilling for a couple, after months of marriage counseling, to be able to walk around the campus holding hands.)

A lot of the conversations at the Gesher House were along the lines of, "Well, the quality I would look for in a friend would be the same as a husband..." and then everyone would put in their two cents worth.

One weekend was sombre because a girl from the States, Lily, received the news that her mom had died. I felt sorry for her because from what I could tell, she had surrounded herself with atheists who were only looking for excuses that God didn't exist and that's not much of a hope to offer someone who has lost a loved one. I already felt sorry for her because she had lost her Dad a few months earlier. Plus, one of the A.C. guys who worked with her, Matt, told us that she said that our group was so wholesome that it made her sick. (We weren't being wholesome on purpose. We just weren't allowed to be bad.) But at that moment I didn't mind being one of the "Shiny Happy People."

The one area that I could connect with other females over was food. We would go to Dubi's, up the road, some evenings. One night me and two other girls, Wendy and Joanie, split the Mt. Canaan, an elaborate ice-cream sundae. Ricki, one of the co-owners of Dubi's, was amazed. "I have families of 5 or 8 coming in here, splitting that, and still leaving some." It freaked her out even more when Lisa and Vicki wanted to split one.

Well, we all easily finished our Mt. Canaans. This made me question the Israeli view of portion sizes. It's probably quite balanced.

I think binge eating is a North American tradition. North American women have huge capacities for food because when they're not devouring an entire box of cookies and feeling guilty afterwards, they're not eating any. The idea of just eating 2 or 3 cookies a day with one's tea or coffee was not widely prevalent. (When I got married I discovered that the habit of eating 2 quarts of ice-cream in one sitting, or a whole box of cookies, was not exclusive to North American females.) Matt commented, "They say they're on a diet and then they walk away with fifteen cookies."

At around this point I was transferred to the pit beside me to work with Justin which, for me, was a big improvement over working with Veronica. Veronica, as I mentioned earlier, would sit in one corner with a pottishane and dig a hole while I would have to level out the rest of the floor on my own. It would have equaled out if we had connected, but we didn't. At the beginning of the day she would climb down into the pit and then ask me to pass her down some buckets. She would refer to it as "receiving her buckets." I wanted to say that "receiving" does not apply to buckets. It applies to the key's of a city or the Queen's presence. Later in the day, when I had gotten tired of doing the wheelbarrow, I said half-jokingly to her that it was her turn. She soberly informed me that she couldn't because her stitches might burst. I point blank asked her why she was on an archaeological dig. She

pertly informed me that she had been told that it was light labor. I said that after this I think we'd all be able to better relate to Italian construction workers a bit more. (Construction workers in Toronto are Italian. It came as a surprise to me when I traveled to England a few years later, to see pale, blond men working on the roads.)

In the locus with Justin

On our last day at the dig site, our group was quite lively. We were becoming more and more assertive as the dig progressed, and on this last day, we actually outsang the Spaniards on the bus ride to and from the site. Of course, we weren't spontaneous enough to carry it off with one continuous flow of songs and noise like the Spaniards. There were pauses between songs as people had to decide what to sing next. North Americans like a plan, an agenda, in order to get things done. Ideally, as we got onto the bus, we should have all received a photocopied sheet of the songs we'd be singing, plus maybe, a handout of the lyrics.

I had always thought of the Americans as loud and then when I encountered the Israelis, they made the Americans look demure and modest. But it was the Spaniards who lived life the loudest. One didn't get the impression that they contributed a lot of automobiles or nuclear warheads to the world, but they probably made excellent wine and had a great time doing it.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE REST OF THE COUNTRY

Now that we were back on the road, the Americans were back to taking photographs. It was like being royalty. You always had to stop and pose for the photographers. Group photos felt like being a rock band at a press session there were so many cameras going off, except that no one was yelling, “Hey Ringo, do you have a girlfriend?” or “John, what do you think of Israel?” One person, usually the guide, would be handed everyone's camera and there would be a pause after each photo as he tried to figure out how the new camera worked. The owner of the camera would be calling out instructions.

I had only used up two rolls of film in six weeks. I had some vague idea that once I got home I'd be so caught up in life that I wouldn't need any memories. The past is a stepping stone to the present which is only a day away from tomorrow, or something silly like that. (When I had my babies, I took about eight photos a day for the first year of their lives. My husband and I love looking at them, but if we ever have guests who won't go home when we want them to, we have our photo slideshow prepared.)

I had been counting down the days til we could give up the manual labor of the dig and become clean tourists again. But it didn't take me long to slip back into that torpor that takes over people when they see so many new things everyday that it all starts to seem the same.

Although I was keeping a journal, I record on one day that I had no motivation to write because “1. I am lazy and 2. All we do is ride around on the bus getting out frequently to look in caves, at old ruins, and significant fields.”

One of the significant fields was where David met Goliath. Despite my complaints, these stops did make the stories of the Bible richer for me, even if half the field was covered in an orchard now. It made David's act seem all the more courageous when I saw the riverbed where he selected the stones, realizing how close he must have been to Goliath at the time.

We also saw the plain that the ark was carried along by the Philistines when they returned it to the Jews. This was the land of Samson. But for the most part, I reached the point where I got an exhausted, heavy feeling whenever the bus would stop and the tour guide would announce, “OK, folks! Let's stop here. Bring your cameras.”

In between stops I slept on the bus since I had lost all my desire to drink in everything. The night we arrived in Jordan and the first few days after were the most enchanting where I was up against the window eagerly looking out for everything and anything that was different from North America. But I was at the point where I wouldn't have even cared if we had pulled up in front of the Grand Canyon.

Meals were highlights since I usually got hungry around 10:00 but we didn't stop for lunch until around 1:00.

One day in the bus we were stopped because of a traffic jam. A kid in a school bus beside us stuck his tongue out at me. I returned the gesture. Before I knew it, I was having a contest with these kids to see who could make the grossest face. One of the college students tried to capture the moment on film (of the kids, not me) but failed to set up his camera in time. Other people on my bus started noticing the kids and didn't realize I had anything to do with it. I took great satisfaction in a busload of Israeli students pressed up against their windows, sticking their fingers in their noses and wiggling their hands at us. They waved at me until we were out of sight.

Since there weren't any Biblical sites in Tel Aviv, we went to the beach. The beach was covered in tanned, toned bodies. I resolved to diet, work-out and be perfect by next summer. But in the meantime, I didn't want to burn and sat under one of the wooden shelters. There was a pale, slim guy sitting under one of the other wooden shelters and he kept looking at me. I decided that, no doubt, he was feeling like me and that perhaps next summer he would return to Tel Aviv a little more pumped up. I went swimming for a bit but away from the crowd. But the lifeguard started yelling at me in Hebrew so I figured I wasn't in the designated swimming area. It all contributed to the feeling that I was a stranger in the country.

That night I broke my diet resolution by having an eclair for dessert.

We also visited nearby Jaffa. Our tour guide told us it was a lot like Istanbul, which meant that I didn't have to travel to Turkey in the future.

In Tiberias we had a room with a view, overlooking the Sea of Galilee. I loved it even if the water tasted like it came directly from the Sea. Dinner was in the dining hall at 7:00. Dinner seemed to be getting later and later. It had started off at 6:15, then 6:30. Now 7:00. I wasn't the only one who got hungry. The guy with the Texas t-shirt ate three portions of spaghetti that night. After that our group checked out the waterfront. Per usual, we all drifted off to wherever interested us.

Two guys came up from behind me and MA and said “Honey bun, honey bun.” I was at a loss for words. I honestly stood there for a moment and thought, 'What should I say?' until MA grabbed my hand and swiveled us around. “No thank you,” I said to them finally deciding that that was the politest and firmest response. But they kept following us.

MA freaked out and threw herself at one of the guys from our college (with the assumption that he would defend us if necessary) while I turned to try to get a better look at these guys. Were they good-looking? It bothered me that they were eager to pick us up without even seeing our faces.

The region of Galilee included a boat trip on the Sea of Galilee with a fish luncheon on the other side of the lake. The fish still had its eyes in it, but as simple as the meal was, it was delicious. Up to that point, my experience with fish had consisted of tuna sandwiches and fish and chips. I could imagine Jesus, after his resurrection, while his disciples had returned to their fishing profession, starting a fire on the seashore, laying out some sticks and roasting his fish on them. Then as they returned from the sea, having caught nothing, he waves to them and tells them to lower their nets one more time. Like an earlier miracle, their nets are now bursting with fish. Peter is so happy to see the Teacher, that he strips

down and leaps out of the boat to swim ashore. The other disciples follow at a slightly more leisurely pace, making sure the boat is moored. Along with some village bread, they sit around the small fire and share the breakfast of the Master.

We finished off back in Jerusalem, to cover some of the things we missed the first time around. Hezekiah's tunnel, for one. Hezekiah's tunnel was cool, both figuratively and literally. It's narrow and the tourists go through it in a line. You're up to your waist in water in a dark tunnel until it opens to an outside pool.

Jerusalem was like coming home. The place where I could turn the TV and the radio on at the same time and just kick back. I was very comfortable there, even more than in Safed, Tiberius or Tel Aviv, or for that matter, Big Sandy, Texas where Ambassador College was located. I just wished Jerusalem were a little closer.

With only a week to go before we returned to the States, we were out and about doing tourist things from 7:30 to 5:30. It was easier on the dig. In the evenings, everybody was watching the Olympics on TV. They were usually on in mine and MA's room, with a couple of visitors on our beds, watching. I had never watched the Olympics in my life but with nothing else to do, I ended up in one of the chairs looking at gymnasts doing triple flips in the air merely by running across a mat. It was unreal.

The church had made a big deal about Mr. Armstrong donating some children's playground equipment to Liberty Park in Jerusalem. Some of us, including our faculty escort, went to the park one day to try to find the rock with the plaque that commemorated his donation. There were loads of plaques on rocks so we all spread out but none of us ever found one that mentioned Herbert W. Armstrong. The plaques were sturdy and the rocks were large, so it wasn't likely that it had been removed by a casual visitor.

Another day we visited the Israel Museum. Naturally we headed for the Hazor exhibit. I was already developing a sense of nostalgia for my days at Hazor. For the first time on the trip, I actually paid attention to the guide's lecture. I loved seeing the Hazor lion, the Hazor gates, the tablets, and all the photos of the ongoing dig. There was even a picture of my locus!

The next day, we went to Masada. I had thought we were doing Israel for Tourists, but that day was Israel for the U.S. National Aerobics Team or Israel By Stairs. When the tour guide asked us whether we wanted to go down and then back up 174 stairs in order to see some Northern Palace, I was amazed to see people immediately nodding their heads, as if to say, “Of course! Is there any doubt we wouldn't?” I would have liked to have sat down and weighed the pros and cons. Pros: A scenic view; good exercise. Cons: We've already seen many scenic views; we've already had a lot of good exercise. Just to enter Masada is a calisthenics work-out. And we still had the exiting part ahead of us which meant taking something called the Snake's trail (Serpent's trail would have been more fitting) which takes a half hour and has to be done in 230 degrees weather.

On our way back we were supposed to stop at the Dead Sea to float for awhile, but due to us also having to do Qumran that day, we only had time to wade. The water felt perfectly normal to me. Apparently it was oily, but since I was already covered in greasy sunblock, I didn't notice. We were practically forbidden to take a quick float in it because there wasn't time to rinse off, and without rinsing off in fresh water afterwards, our skin would supposedly peel off, or something. But it was

funny how our feet didn't begin to flake off.

At Qumran, we stood out in the extreme heat, looked at some ruins and then looked up at some caves while the guide told us all about them. Everything I've learned about Qumran has been since I graduated from college since I didn't learn anything that day.

August 2nd was my birthday and it was a desperately needed rest day. Most people took a public bus back to the Dead Sea for a real swim. I decided to stay at the hotel and just visit the pool, stopping in the gift shop to buy myself a bar of white chocolate as a birthday treat. It was the only day I spent entirely by myself, well, me and a whole lot of large older Israeli women who had no sense of shame in their bathing suits while I hid under a t-shirt and shorts. I didn't even swim. I just sat in one of the pool-side lounge chairs with my journal. The time to myself seemed to give me a chance to think because that day I wrote the following:

I realize that what I should be is an agnostic. I've grown up in a church that has fed me just as much speculation as truth, but the ridiculous thing is, we base our speculation on one or two scriptures that are taken out of context – in my opinion. For instance, we know next-to-nothing about eternity. Show me two scriptures that give me an idea. There are none. I also don't understand God's plan. Our church has acted like its unlocked the Book of Revelation, but its all speculation. We've been pretty smug about answering questions like, "Why Does God Allow Suffering?", tying it all in with His long-term plan of redemption for mankind, but that's something I need to study more since people in the church suffer sometimes as much as people in the world. And there are many God-fearing Christians in other denominations who are being blessed for keeping God's laws, it would seem.

I continued:

Our analysis of the end-time seems over-dramatic to me. Petra was totally blown out of proportion and I think a lot of other things are too. A lot of Matthew 24 is historical and whether or not it's "dual prophecy" is speculation. I'm starting from scratch now. If I can prove it from the Bible, like the Bereans, I'll go with it. But if it's speculation, I'd prefer to just say, "I don't know."

On August 4th, the Ambassador College Photo Tour of the Middle East was coming to an end, although there were still people snapping pictures at the Amman airport, despite the risk of not making it through security in time and possibly missing the flight home. On the plane, photos continued to be taken even if it meant contorting the body to get a decent angle.

Physically and psychologically, it was time to go home. We had had an uneventful border-crossing back into Jordan with only three suitcase undergoing a spot check and the rest of them staying on the bus. There was a two hour delay before our plane took off, but in the time vacuum of the plane, it seemed like fifteen minutes. There was a cute little boy ahead of me whose father handed him some sunflower seeds to eat. He took them apart, ate them and then threw the shells in the aisle. The best song on the "Royal Jordanian Pop Music Station" was "Breath of Life" by Erasure. I listened to it whenever its turn came, which was about 8 times at the time that I recorded this fact in my journal. The plane was like a nursery. The Jordanians had no qualms about trans-Atlantic flights with children.

Our ultimate destination was New York City, but we were passing over Quebec first. At that point I wanted to say, just give me a parachute, I'm going home. I still had a year of school ahead of me and it

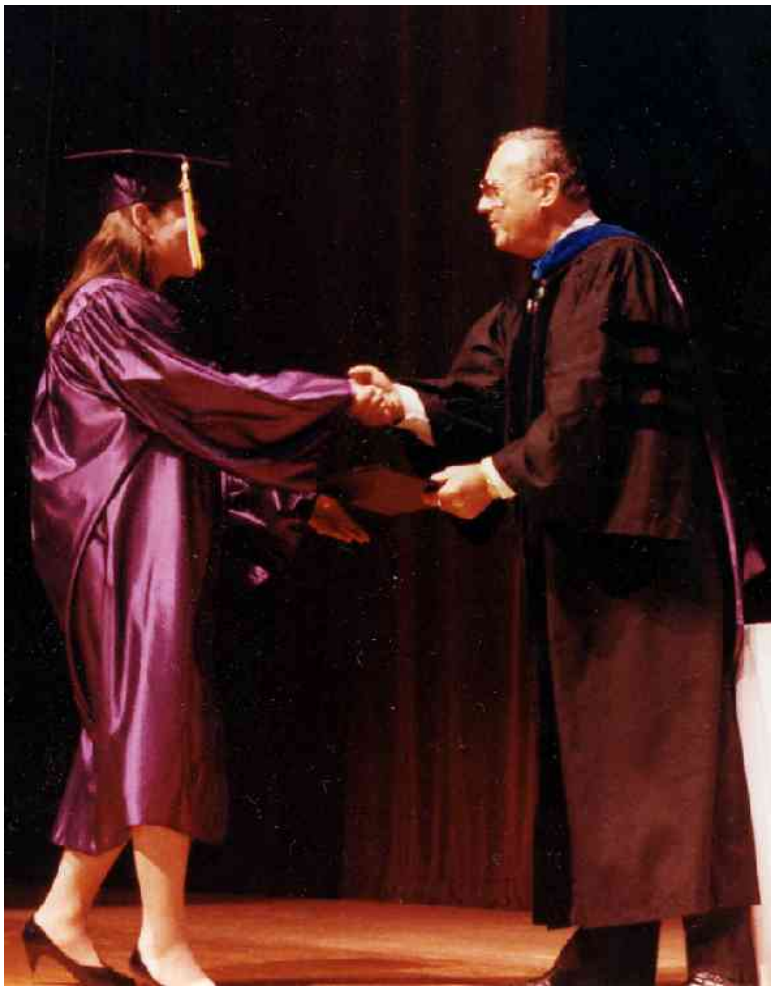
seemed long. I concluded my journal by recording that I was so bored that I was watching one of the A.C. students remove her contact lenses. And then finally:

I'm freaking out the sunflower boy by grinning and raising my eyebrows at him whenever he looks back at me. Most people on this flight have taken off their shoes and socks. Bare feet are a lot more acceptable in the Middle East, I think.

CHAPTER SIX

BIG CHANGES

Mr. Armstrong was in his 90's. For a lot of people, that increased their expectation that the end was near since they expected that Mr. Armstrong would live to see everything that he had taught about. But he died in 1986 and a man named Joseph Tkach was appointed his successor. There were all sorts of reasons given why this was God's will, but it seemed unusual that a man that nobody outside of the church headquarters had heard of was now head of the church. (Human head, of course. Jesus Christ was the head of the church.) We were told that Mr. Tkach's ministry had been in visiting elderly widows in the church and that's why he was unknown.



Shaking Mr. Tkach's hand at graduation

Then something happened which, apparently, has never happened in the history of Christendom. While still upholding the memory of Mr. Armstrong, we were told that some of the doctrines were being looked into.

One of the first things to change was the restriction on inter-racial dating. On the grounds that Israel was not allowed to intermarry with the nations around them, an edict against inter-racial dating had been strictly enforced in both the local churches and at Ambassador College. When I was at Ambassador College it was announced that we could date inter-racially as long as we had a note of permission from our parents. A black guy, Earl, who was a close friend, asked me out to an upcoming dance and so I had to phone my parents, or specifically my mother since she was a church member, and get her written permission. She refused to give it saying that it was my decision to make. Since it was only a dance and not a marriage proposal I was a little irked by the lengths I had to go to to get permission for this date. I had to book an appointment with the Dean of Students in the slightly intimidating Hall of Administration and explain the situation to him, fully expecting that I would end up going to this dance alone since I rarely had two people ever ask me to these functions. Much to my surprise, when I explained that my mother had left the decision up to me, I was given permission to attend the dance with Earl.

Even more surprising was the number of couples back in Toronto who were now announcing their engagements. It was usually between older people. One might have been European, the other Filipino. They must have had a long friendship before the policy changed.

Another doctrinal change was that of divorce and remarriage. It meant very little to me growing up since both my parents had only married each other and neither seemed inclined to get a divorce. But I heard some vague stories about people who had come into the church and been told they couldn't stay with their current spouses because they had had an unlawful divorce in the past. I think the only grounds for divorce were if a spouse was unfaithful or if the unbeliever (that is to say, non-church member) left the believer. When the change was announced, so many middle-aged couples split up in Toronto that it made me rethink my whole childhood. All these people who had come to church each week doing the deacon and deaconess things, in some cases. They had served at camping trips, at the speaking clubs, at the Holy Day festivities, at the dances. Had they been miserable the whole time? Even more amazing to me was how quickly many of them remarried. The whole thing bespoke of dramas that were unthinkable to me as a child. Parents weren't supposed to have feelings like that. The more disturbing part was how all these couples had put on a good show when at church and church activities.

The whole divorce/remarriage thing only affected me in a marginal way. I married a man who had been married before. In his case his “unbelieving” spouse left him, a “believer”. His membership in the Worldwide Church of God had very little to do with the disintegration of his marriage, but it was enough to fulfill the letter of the law and enable him to remarry, even under the old teachings.

One thing that happens in a closed community is that people spend a lot of time talking about each other. My mom and I mostly talked about church people. When I would get together with a group of singles, we would go to a Tim Hortons (doughnut shop chain in Canada) and sit around drinking coffee and talking about people. When I went on dates and we would go to a pub, we would sit around drinking beer and talking about people. The doctrinal changes started to happen at a slow but steady

pace and they provided a lot to talk about. But I didn't realize at the time how much they would change the composition of the church. We were still family, still all connected by being part of God's true church. At some point it was acknowledged that the Holy Spirit could work with individuals outside the church. It reinforced what I had learned in Israel.

I think there had always been scandals and uproars at the Headquarters in Pasadena, but they had never made it as far as Toronto. I was back in Toronto at this point and every couple of months, a new change would be announced. It was OK to wear make-up. (Mr. Armstrong had equated it with Jezebel.) Tithing was no longer essential. (Contributions to the church plummeted. Eventually it led to the closing of Ambassador College.) The idea that white people were descended from the lost tribes of Israel was being looked into and then eventually, phased out. Prophecy wasn't emphasized as much. So far, so good. There was a commitment to "Speak where the Bible spoke and be silent where it was silent." Had the church continued with that motto, my husband and I would still be there.

But soon it wasn't just a case of letting go of the old, it was adding on a lot of new stuff. Christians were encouraged to give up the Feast Days and celebrate Easter and Christmas instead. With no significant childhood memories of Easter or Christmas, my husband and I weren't interested in painting eggs or putting up a tree. Any encyclopedia explains the pagan origins of both holidays and we didn't want to celebrate them just to be like everyone else.

That was what was happening. We were becoming just another evangelical denomination. Mr. Tkach Sr. had died and the church was now headed up by his son, Joseph Tkach, Jr. He was getting a lot of attention from the Christian community for pulling the Worldwide Church of God into the mainstream. Of course, there were too many breakaway groups to keep track of them all. All the splinter groups saw themselves as the guardians of the teachings of God's apostle, Herbert W. Armstrong.

We were trying to be like an evangelical denomination with it's rousing music and it's passionate worship, and we weren't very good at it.

Everybody in W.C.G. was used to standing around, holding their burgundy hymnals and singing somberly that "God speaks to us, by his great power we're led..." We didn't close our eyes and wave our hands around. In fact, one of the first questions I asked my husband when we met was, "What do you think about the hand-wavers?"

My husband decided there was no point in driving an hour every week to Toronto to go to church if it was just going to be like every other church in our town.

At one time, leaving the church would have meant that upon death, one would have been going straight to the lake of fire. Growing up, leaving the church was unthinkable. Now I left with barely a backward glance. The church I had grown up in didn't exist anymore and I wasn't even sure I believed everything I had been taught anyhow.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE BIRTH OF A CULT

After leaving the Worldwide Church of God, we took three weeks off from church, something I 'd never done in my life. Women could take a few weeks off for childbirth, certainly, and communicable diseases might keep you away for a week or two, but to just sit home on a Saturday was unthinkable.

I was edgy to get back to church, any church. We live in a small town that has about four different churches, but they were all the big denominations like Catholic, Baptist, Pentecostal and Anglican, none of which we identified with. We decided to check out a church in the larger town that is twenty minutes south of us. It was an Alliance church, the same denomination that another couple who was drifting away from W.C.G. had started attending, so we figured it would be safe enough.

It was all new to us, but it was a typical evangelical church. Lots of praise and worship with an overhead projector so that the words were up on the wall and no one had to hold a hymnal. I remember one strange sermon about how brave Joseph was for resisting the seduction of Potiphar's wife. Supposedly, had he given in it could have meant a job promotion or some other perk. I was under the impression Joseph had already gone as high as he could in Potiphar's household. I don't remember any of the other messages so the sermons weren't too impressive.

I spent a lot of time walking around in the lobby anyhow. I didn't want to turn over our four month old daughter to the nursery. One of the purposes of nurseries and Sunday Schools during church is, of course, that the service itself be peaceful, so every time our daughter fussed I was out walking around . As a result, I met a lady sitting in the lobby who told me that we came from the same town as her brother. Her brother attended an evangelical church, Congregationalist as it turned out, in our town. We weren't even aware that such a thing existed. The next week, we attended.

Despite the subsequent negative experiences we were to have at the Congregationalist church, I have to think it was all meant to be. For one thing, it was strange that a woman, young and in good health, would be out sitting in the lobby during the middle of the service. She told me the name of her brother but I never met anyone by that name when we did attend the church.

Like many things, it started well.

Having a four month old baby, we had no problem meeting people. My grandmother, who had moved around a lot in her life, had told me that when you have children you have no problem making friends. The church was full of young families.

Enthusiastically, we invited people over to our small cluttered house. It was a novelty to meet

Christians that were within ten minutes of our home. We were used to driving over an hour to church and getting together with people who had done the same. Consequently, there could potentially be a two-hour drive home once the socializing was over.

A pattern emerged. We had a family over and then a few weeks later we'd get a return invitation to their home. After that, the debt being repaid, relations were cordial but although everyone was friendly, it was hard to make friends.

But things picked up when I was invited to come out to a small weekly Bible-study led by an older woman, Caroline, and steadily attended by about six or seven other people. Caroline was a firm believer in being led by the Holy Spirit and her Bible-studies were exactly what I needed after a lifetime of being led by rules. Her teachings on faith and being led by God gave me the courage to live the life that was to come after the church.

I was also asked to run the small library that had been started. The woman who was in charge of the ladies' ministry had been inspired to start up a library. It sat, quiet and unused in a corner. It had a small collection of videos as well as some children's books.

There was coffee after church and I remember casually remarking to my husband that what that library needed was more videos. That's what people really wanted.

A few weeks later, the lady who had started the library came to me and said she was looking for someone to maintain it. God had given my name to her.

I was a little scared about the responsibility but when I told her that I had worked in the library at college and then later in the medical library at Bayer, we agreed that it could only be of God. The next week, I was called up in front of the church, a prayer was said over me, and filled with the power of the Holy Ghost (OK, I'm being silly, but it really made a difference, that prayer), I went forth and took over the library.

The first thing I did was ask the pastor how much money I could spend. He went to the board and they told me something like $300 and that there was an account set up at the local Christian bookstore. I immediately went and bought $300 worth of kids' videos. From that point forward, the library thrived. Kid's flocked to it after church and my budget was increased and things got so busy that the pastor's daughter volunteered to help me. By now I had two kids and by the time I had three kids, the pastor's daughter was nearly running the whole thing.

We expanded into adult Christian videos and my husband and I had many enjoyable Saturday nights previewing the films that were to go into the library. Any Christian feature film, we purchased. I admit, we catered to people's desire for entertainment, but videos about evangelizing the lost of India just sat on the shelf.

But while kids were watching Veggie Tales and the adults were watching end-time thrillers, other events were taking place. I think it started with the pastor reading a book.

The book that we were to hear so much about was Gail Riplinger's *New Age Bible Versions*. She puts forth the allegation that while the King James Version of the Bible is God's word, all other modern

translations are of the devil. It convinced our pastor. My husband and I thought that we were in a mainstream church. We had no idea that we were about to witness the birth of a cult.

The pews contained New International Version Bibles when my husband and I began to attend the Congregationalist church. Most people weren't ready to hear that their beloved modern versions were part of a Satanic plot so the pastor gradually eased people towards his new way of thinking.

Although I had a degree in Theology, it was really a degree in Worldwide Church of God doctrine. When the pastor started talking about corrupted manuscripts that were the basis of the new translations, I knew next to nothing about it. I had had a couple of classes about how we got the English Bible but nothing to refute what the pastor was now saying. He only dropped a few comments here and there but in a board meeting, he got them to agree to add the King James Bibles to the pews. Naturally, that necessitated getting rid of half of the NIVs. I always wonder what happened to those Bibles. Garbage, most likely.

The focus on the corrupt modern translations resulted in a shift to a more conservative Christianity. Because the other churches in the area didn't use the KJV, they were suspect. The pastor met regularly with the other pastors in the town, but they all refused to read Gail Riplinger's book. The pastor may have been on his own in the community, but he was slowly winning converts in his own church. The arguments sounded convincing:

There were thousands of changes made to the new versions.
The modern versions were based on late, corrupted manuscripts.

My husband and I threw ourselves into a study of the issues. I learned about Codex Vaticanus, Codex Sinaiticus, Erasmus, textual criticism, textual transmission, all sorts of things a theology major should already know about but didn't. For awhile, it was a big topic in our house with my husband and I sitting down and having scholarly discussions over tea, books spread out all over the couch, passing on all new information to each other as we discovered it.

We had a charmingly naïve idea that the pastor was simply ignorant of all this wonderful material that refuted the King James Only argument. In fact, despite all our efforts he never wanted to hear it. Or if we managed to make what seemed like a devastatingly good point, he shot it down with an unrelated attack on the new versions. Soon, other things were being attacked from the pulpit. Immodest clothing. Wine. Contemporary Christian music. It caused a scandal when it was found out that the pastor's son and a deacon had gone to a Newboys concert.

Another thing that was taken seriously was end-time events. The Rapture was not a theory, it was a fact just waiting to happen. While I sat in Sunday School with my kids, my husband attended the adult Bible studies. He put forth the idea that the resurrection and the rapture were the same thing and since the resurrection happened at the last trumpet, it sounded like we'd be around for all the things that would come on the earth in the end days. Nobody was interested in discussing it.

I had a bulletin board for the library and I liked to put up a joke with all the other notices. One week I posted the following joke that I had found on the Internet:

Thought I'd pass on a revelation of who 666 really is.

666 refers to BARNEY, the Cute purple Dinosaur, I'll prove it:

The Romans had no letter 'U', and used 'V' instead for printing, meaning the Roman representation for Barney would be: CVTE PVRPLE DINOSAVR

CVTE PVRPLE DINOSAVR

Extracting the Roman numerals, we have:

CVTE PVRPLE DINOSAVR

CV V L DI V

And their decimal equivalents are:

CVTE PVRPLE DINOSAVR

CV V L DI V

100 5 5 50 500 1 5

Adding those numbers produces: 666.

666 is the number of the Beast.

Proved: BARNEY IS THE ANTI-CHRIST!

The same day, the pastor asked me to take it down and made some corrective remarks. Apparently, prophecy was a serious topic and not something to have fun with. It made me slightly nervous.

But despite my gaffe, we still fit in. We had decided to home-school our children. The pastor and his wife home-schooled their children, as did one of the families of a man on the board. Our reasons for doing so were different, but no one knew that. The other families used a conservative Christian curriculum whereas I just bought books that looked interesting from Amazon.

Another point of commonality was that we had no TV. We had a VCR and DVD player, but early on in our marriage, frustrated at how much time my new husband spent watching television, I had demanded that it be gone from our life. After twelve years of marriage, a little TV in the evening doesn't seem like a bad thing so it's back now, but we still had the no-TV policy for our time in the Congregationalist church. Since everything in the world was considered evil, we were one of the ultra-righteous. The pastor said he just kept his TV for hockey and the news. At one point I smugly told him that I didn't watch the news because it was a violation of Paul's admonition to only think pure and lovely thoughts.

The church we were in was now judgmental and completely lacking in love. Most people remembered the church the way it was and when the pastor proposed a break from the parent Congregationalist church there was a reaction. The pastor and the board were asked to step down. But the pastor was able to turn it around and called a church meeting to disfellowship all the people who had asked him and the board to resign. The result was my husband and I, along with about eighteen other people, lost our membership.

One of the people who lost her membership, Nancy, was an older lady who hadn't even been present when the pastor was asked to resign. She had simply given her proxy vote to my husband.

I felt bad that we were the cause of her losing her membership in the church. But as it turned out, Nancy was happy to be out of there and immediately found a small evangelical house church to attend. She wanted to be some place where she could use her gifts and the church we had just been evicted from had, at some point, started to only give responsibilities to people who shared the same doctrinal convictions.

We kept in touch with Nancy. She didn't have Internet access and I introduced her to the pleasures of www.amazon.ca so occasionally I would order something for her. One time she wanted a DVD but it didn't come near to the $39 that it would take to get free shipping, so I decided to fill out the order with a book about something I had always wondered about. What had happened to the Holy Land after the Jews were evicted from Jerusalem in 70 A.D.?

I found a book called, *A History of Israel and the Holy Land,* which was exactly what I was looking for. When it came, I kind of glazed over the earlier stuff because if there was one thing I was thoroughly familiar with it was Old Testament history. The history of the Maccabee family was only vaguely familiar and the Roman occupation of the land came sooner than I realized. I only knew of Herod as a guy who had had all of the babies of Bethlehem killed. There was far more to him, I discovered. He had been a governor of Galilee with close links to Rome. He wasn't a Jew, but a Nabatean, in other words, an Arab from the Trans-Jordan region. This was all in the days of Julius Caesar and Mark Antony. Brutus and Cassius murdered Caesar and Mark Antony and Octavian subsequently defeated Brutus and Cassius. Then Octavian and Mark Antony vied for power with Herod initially backing Mark Antony and then at the last minute, switching to Octavian. Octavian won and Herod became King of Israel. His building projects are remarkable. Of course there was the refurbishment of the rebuilt temple. Solomon's temple was destroyed by the Babylonians but the exiles in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah had returned and built on the spot where they original temple stood. Herod was also responsible for Caesarea built in honour of his Roman friends. He fortified Jerusalem and added several towers to the walls. He built fortresses at Antonia, Herodium, and of course, the most famous, Masada. He also built a structure over the cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron that still stands intact today.

Most of my theological education was happening *after* I had my degree in Theology!

But what was really fascinating was the unbroken line of habitation in the land of Israel. The Romans held the land until they lost their power, then the Byzantines stepped in and started building Christian churches all over the Holy Land. The Persians briefly took the city only to lose it again to the Eastern Christians. Then came the Muslims, fresh from the teachings of Muhammad. Different factions dominated at different times until the Crusades. But the Crusades were short-lived in the long run and had to defer to the greater strength of the Arabs. The Muslim hold on the Holy Land continued with the rise of the Turks and their Ottoman Empire. It took four hundred years for power to once again change hands in 1917 when the British took Jerusalem. The British Mandate period was but a blink in a long, rich history. Then came Israel.

The front jacket of Meron Benvenisti's *City of Stone: The Hidden History of Jerusalem*, is an elegant summation of both the land and the city:

Jerusalem is more than a holy city built of stone: it is a battle cry, a magic spell, an act of defiance, a claim of sovereignty. The scramble for the soul of Jerusalem began three millennia ago. Only in the

past century did the battle between distant empires and warring sects of believers evolve into today's deadly struggle between the people for whom Jerusalem is now home: Jews and Arabs. To justify their rival claims, each faction has written extensive but partial and politically motivated chronicles of the city's ancient and contested history. In *City of Stone*, Meron Benvenisti overcomes this legacy of self-interest to write an unofficial history of the city, a many-sided story without victors or vanquished. He describes with unparalleled depth, vividness, and compassion the triumphs and defeats of all the city's residents, from those who walk its streets today to the meddlesome ghosts that still inhabit the Holy City. Benvenisti focuses primarily on the twentieth century, but, as with everything in Jerusalem, ancient history and ancient hatreds are constantly discovered just below the surface. These age-old hostilities have created not segregation but rather intense social, cultural, and political interactions. This bond of life in the city has produced a compelling human story, full of both tragedies and ironies. One of the city's native sons, Benvenisti knows the streets of Jerusalem and the shadows where each group has buried the truth of its past. In graceful and flowing prose, he unearths this hidden history to demonstrate what all of its rival groups would like to forget – that all of its citizens have enriched the Holy City and no one group can use the past to justify the future.

The Bible talks about growing in grace and knowledge. My relationship with God didn't diminish when we stopped attending a church. In fact, with four kids to raise, I leaned on Him far more heavily than I ever did in the past. My knowledge was certainly increasing along with my faith.

But there didn't seem to be a place for me and my husband in mainstream Christendom.

CHAPTER EIGHT

MANDATE DAYS

I've been writing since I was six.

I started my first novel, wrote about three lines, and then showed it to all my friends who seemed impressed at my achievement, as well as my ambition.

I suppose I dreamed of writing the great Canadian novel. But at some point I switched over to short stories because it was more satisfying to have a completed work than some ongoing project. I won a short story contest that appeared in our local paper. Thanks to a friend at church, a few of my poems also got published in a small Toronto newspaper.

My ambition was to have short stories published in the big magazines. At that time a lot of fashion magazines had a short story. I sent a few of mine out. They were always relationship-oriented. I don't know if they were well-written or not. But they never got published. I noticed that all the people that did get published had written a novel.

So I was back to the novel.

Thankfully I had a story to tell. I was at Ambassador College and wildly in love with an intense Theology major, who unlike the majority of students there, was a first-generation Christian, as we called them. Most of us were second-generation Christians who were there because of our parents. But there were a few first-generation Christians who had come into the church on their own. Usually these people faced a mild persecution from their families who didn't understand why they wanted to join a cult.

From my viewpoint, the first generation Christian was far more intriguing. He really wanted to be there and wasn't just there to keep his parents happy. When I was younger, my friends were second-generation Christians, but as I grew in my faith I gravitated towards the first-generation Christians until finally I married a man, who although his mother and sisters attended the church, he was the first of his family to actually attend a church service.

So, I told my story of intense unrequited love. It wasn't entirely unrequited. There was enough happening in the relationship to turn it into a short novel. In the end, I did so much editing and rewriting, that I have to say, there's very little resemblance between my character and the man who inspired him. But in any case, the result was *The Society for the Betterment of Mankind*.

So now I had a novel. But it was just as hard to find someone to publish my novel as it was to find someone to publish my short stories.

But I kept writing. I discovered that writing kept me sane. Love is hard in real life but it can make a great story and the story lasts long after the person is gone.

I met my husband when I was twenty-six. It took us about 24 hours to realize we wanted to be with each other. At that point I had an epiphany. If you want to get into a relationship, get involved with a man who wants to be in a relationship.

I was used to passion and rejection. Now I had passion and acceptance. It killed my writing (for the time being) but it was blissfully wonderful and felt like it was happening to someone else. Even months after I was married, I had to tell myself, "You're married now. It's real!"

There were even greater benefits to being married than just being able to call myself Mrs. Somebody. My husband is a computer geek. The Internet was taking off and he wanted to have a go at creating a web-site, he just didn't have any content. I had a disk full of unpublished novels. It was truly a match made in heaven.

The result was http://www.free-online-novels.com/

I suspect the success of the site is largely based on the fact that there are a lot of bored office workers in North America and a lot of people who want to practice their English in the rest of the world. The end result was, my novels were getting read. My husband's idea to include links to other novels has been the key to its success. The list keeps growing, as do the number of visitors, and having gone through the frustration of not being able to get my novel published in the traditional way, I'm very pleased to be part of a process that brings readers to the novels published online.

After we had our girls I took up writing again. I wanted to write them an adventure series that would have two girls who were home-schooled like them and who traveled around the world with their Christian archaeologist father. That turned into the Kent Family Adventures, something I hope to keep on doing, but which at this point, has five stories.

I had two more children, boys, and life became busy and crazy and continually testing my patience though my heart was in the job. Children can be completely unreasonable and I very quickly realized that although they could be charming and adorable, the bottom line was, they wanted their own way and would have it any cost. Murdering a sibling, if necessary. I felt like David who wrote a psalm about how he had long lived among those who wanted war when all he wanted was peace.

Somehow I managed to find time to write. I created something called "Quiet Time" from one o'clock to two o'clock. The "time" part my kids understood, inasmuch as they liked to ask me when it was going to be over. But they never grasped the "quiet" part. I had a vision of us all sitting around reading and writing and quietly pursuing our individual interests for this hour. I eventually realized no one shared my dream and just decided that the most important thing was that *I* get some quiet time and started putting DVDs on for that hour.

I had an idea for a more adult novel that I wanted to write and I needed a scholarly leading female character who was Jewish. The question was, what should she major in? I decided, capriciously, that her area of expertise would be the British Mandate period in Palestine.

Obviously, I needed more information than what was found in the survey of the Holy Land that I had read. So I checked Amazon and ordered Tom Segev's *One Palestine, Complete*. The book focuses on the experiences of the Jews and Arabs under the Mandate and I couldn't have asked for a more engaging book. The survey of the Holy Land had stuck to dates and events, but this book, to use the cliché, brought the people to life. I decided that I should also read a book about the British experience in Palestine and bought A.J. Sherman's *Mandate Days*.

Mandate Days draws upon the diaries and letters of the British. And suddenly I found myself among my own kind.

When I had been in the Middle East, I had longed to be part of the land. Where did I fit into it? I was neither Arab nor Jew. I had no claim to the land. But I knew the names of the villages in Israel as well as I knew the names of the towns in Ontario, maybe better. I could name more Kings of Israel and Judah than I could Prime Ministers of Canada.

And in *Mandate Days*, I found people just like myself. People who had grown up on the Bible and came to the land and though not indigenous to it, nonetheless, felt connected to it. They didn't go to mosques or synagogues, but had their own church services. They weren't the mysterious Orthodox church services, but the familiar non-Conformist kind, or if Church of England, more like an Anglican or United Church service.

But what affected me most in my readings was one government official's rant about how he was constantly in the middle of the two warring factions, Arabs and Jews. How he worked for them both all day and half the night without appreciation. Each side accused him of favoring the other side. And tears came to my eyes because he wasn't just describing his life as a British official in the Palestine Mandate, he was describing my life with my four children. In that moment, I had not only found a description of my life, but I had found my place in the Middle East.

I was neither Jew nor Arab. This may be an obvious point. But my whole life I had been identifying with the Jews. I kept their food laws. I kept their holy days. I kept the Sabbath. I was even told that our family came from the tribe of Ephraim. It was unsettling to go to Jerusalem and not be recognized as a fellow Israelite but just to be treated like another tourist.

I loved the New Jerusalem. I loved Ben-Yehuda Street with its outdoor cafes and it's vibrant people. I loved the mix – European, Eastern, Western, it all met in Jerusalem. I so badly wanted to fit into this land that lived with an almost supercharged energy in its air.

At the same time, I loved the Old Jerusalem. The stone streets and the friendly Arabs in their ancient shops. It gave me a feeling of strength and security to walk on streets that had been around for so long. (Especially compared to the streets of Canada.) I loved the old walls and the historic gates that surrounded the city. I didn't know who Suleiman the Magnificent was but he sounded wonderfully romantic. I just as badly wanted to fit into this world.

And I could fit into neither.

But there were a people I *could* identify with who had recently lived in Jerusalem, who had in many

small ways, left their mark. Ronald Storrs, the first Military Governor of Jerusalem had passed a law that all the new buildings would have to have the local white stone as a front. He was also responsible for the beautiful tile street markers in English, Arabic, and Hebrew. Under him, local arts were encouraged and promoted. The British were like me! The loved the local art and the local color. But they also had their tea and their Western mindset. So my people had had their place in Jerusalem history, their moment at the center of the world, center of the universe maybe even.

And it sounded like life was as busy for them as it was for me!

In *Mandate Days*, Sir Henry Gurney, last Chief Secretary of the Palestine Government, describes one "desperately busy" Saturday morning where"...an insoluble problem came in every half-hour." The problems included:

the evacuation of German and American citizens; the removal of Hadassah Hospital staff from besieged Mount Scopus; a breakdown in the water supply; clearing the railway of a bombed locomotive to permit the passage of essential oil trains; deciding the future of Lydda airport and its foreign services; the maintenance of currency supplies and banking services; and urgent requests by both Arabs and Jews to rescue beleaguered units of their respective forces. Sniping and mortar attacks went on all day; yet another British official had his car stolen while breakfasting in the Club; more deaths by random fire were reported in the Zone.

My children were experts in creating insoluble problems, and though they hadn't heard of sniping and mortar, they had certainly heard of slapping and hair-pulling. My problems were on a slightly smaller scale. But nonetheless, I had found a soul-mate.

As I said earlier, the British Mandate period was but a blink in the long, rich history of the land. But in that blink, I found myself.

CHAPTER NINE

DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO DECLARE, MR. BALFOUR?

Israelis don't share the evangelical Christian belief that their presence in the Holy Land is hastening Christ's return. It is enough that they continue to receive North America's unquestioned support, as well as their tourist dollars. But what if the whole Christian end-time paradigm is wrong? What if the Jewish return to the land of Israel isn't part of some greater prophetic scenario that will unfold in a few years?

When the Jews declared the State of Israel in 1948, many Christians thought it signified the countdown to Christ's return. The events would happen, according to Jesus, within a generation. Since in the Old Testament the Israelites had wandered in the wilderness for forty years waiting for the older disobedient generation to die out before they could enter the Promised Land, a generation must be forty years. Therefore, Christ would return by 1988. When the generation that had seen the State of Israel established started dying out, a new date was set. It was decided to count a generation from when the Jews took East Jerusalem in 1967. Count forty from that and Christ would return by 2007.

Despite these failures, Christians continue to speculate.

According to many, soon a third temple will be rebuilt. Then an anti-Christ will be able to stand up in it and declare himself God, a reference to an enigmatic character mentioned by the apostle Paul in his second letter to the Thessalonians.

It's exciting to talk about and speculate how these events might come to pass. But what if it doesn't have Divine backing? What if it's just a misinterpretation of scripture and it never happens? Or what if there is an attempt to make it happen and it sets off World War III?

I discovered from *A History of Israel and the Holy Land* that any time there is a new ruler in Jerusalem, it's because one people conquered another. And then someone else comes along and takes it, or takes it back, depending. Just looking at it historically, if the Arabs are determined enough, they'll take Jerusalem back. They've done it in the past. The Crusader's Latin Kingdom lasted longer than the State of Israel has.

Maybe the State of Israel will just become another chapter in a book of the overview of this busy land.

It was said that when Mr. Balfour visited Palestine in 1925, he was asked at Customs, “And do you

have anything else to declare, Mr. Balfour?"

The Balfour Declaration was partly inspired by a desire to hasten the return of Christ by gathering all the Jews back to Palestine first. I'm more than familiar with how a belief in the imminent return of Christ can change lives.

Throughout the years, the Worldwide Church of God under Herbert W. Armstrong predicted many dates for the return of Christ and people made life decisions based on these predictions. Not to buy life insurance. Not to go to university. I read on the Internet that one lady even decided not to have children.

When I was pregnant with my second child, I read an article about the length of time between the Creation and the present day. The year that my child was to be born was exactly six thousand years after Creation! What horrified me about this was that I had heard a convincing argument that just like the week is made up of six days of work and then a seventh day of rest, so God would allow man to do his work for six thousand years and then God's kingdom would be established on earth for a thousand years of rest.

But before that would come world tribulation, even for believers. Jesus had said, woe to them who are nursing or with child! And that was exactly the state I'd be in!

Nothing seemed more important to me than knowing the truth about end-time events. I begged God to open my eyes to His truth and then I sat down with a pencil and opened my Bible to Revelation. Immediately I saw something I'd never noticed before. Over and over again I read the same thing.

"...the time is near."
"Therefore, write the things that you have seen, the things that are and the things that are to take place after this."
"Do not fear what you are about to suffer."
"Repent, or else I will come quickly to you and will fight against them...."
"Hold fast to what you have til I come."
"If you aren't watching, my coming will be like a thief."
"I am coming quickly!" (This is repeated at least three more times.)
"...the Lord God...sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place."
"Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book because the time is at hand."

A new paradigm began to form in my mind, particularly when I combined it with Matthew 24. Matthew 24 outlines all the traditional end-time events, including Jesus' coming on the clouds. After that, Jesus said that this generation would not pass away until all these things had taken place. Not some future generation. The generation he was talking to.

Clearly, these prophecies had to be understood in a first-century context and linked to the fall of Jerusalem and the temple, not some future apocalypse. Peter talked about the heavens and the earth being destroyed by fire, but after Noah's flood, God had promised that he would never again destroy every creature, so that ruled out a literal worldwide judgment. It made more sense to look for a fiery incident in the first century. Josephus described the destruction of the temple by the Romans in 70 A.D. "The Temple Mount, enveloped in flames from top to bottom, appeared to be boiling up from its

very roots; yet the sea of flames was nothing to the ocean of blood."

The more I studied into it, the more I realized it was a reasonable stand to take regarding prophecy. The other authors of the New Testament also made it sound like end-time events were about to take place shortly. John, in his first letter, said it was the last hour. Peter said that the end of all things was at hand. Paul said that there would still be people alive among the believers that he was writing to. To the church in Thessalonica, he says, "...we who are alive and remain until the Lord's coming..." At the end of the letter he blesses them by saying, "..may your whole spirit, soul and *body* be blamelessly preserved at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

For those who say there's no historical evidence that Jesus returned in 70 A.D., Josephus reported that a heavenly army was seen above Jerusalem at the time and a voice was heard to say, "Let us remove hence." Josephus also wrote about other heavenly signs and events happening in Jerusalem at the time which convinced me that the apocalypse was a first-century event.

Better people than me have made a case for preterism (the view that end-time events have already happened), and it would take an entire book to lay out the case in a satisfying way so I won't go on about it except to say that since I sat down with God, a pencil, and the book of Revelation, I have been comforted by the thought that even if I don't know exactly *what* happened in Revelation, I know *when* it happened.

I had taken a Daniel and Revelation class at Ambassador College. Everything I'd learned there was now meaningless. Nine years have passed since the year the world might have ended. I've since had two more children.

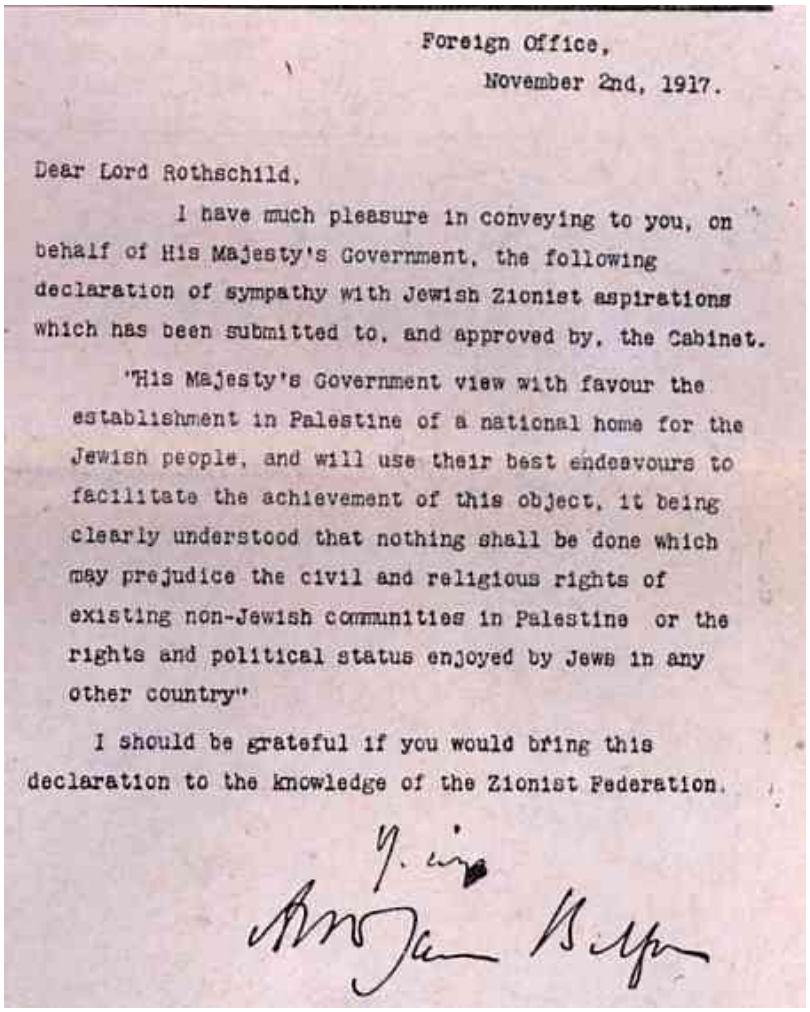
A belief that Christ is not going to return in my lifetime hasn't lessened my faith. It disturbs me when I hear a Christian say about something, "Oh well. Christ will definitely be back five years from now so it won't matter." Christians have eternal life in God's kingdom to look forward to. They don't need television evangelists pumping them up with an artificial excitement that they could be raptured at any moment.

If the television evangelists truly believed their own message, they'd put all of their money into preaching the gospel instead of into their homes and wardrobes. Their books would be sold at a nominal cost instead of at great profit and any book that put forward the idea that Jesus is coming at any moment would be given away for free. What good is the money going to do for the author?

In the early twentieth century, some of the British thought they were aiding the return of Christ, but they were in fact giving away land that wasn't their's to give. The more I read about the Mandate period in Palestine, the more convinced I became that the Palestinians had been outrageously treated. When has a country ever stepped in and announced that they would permit the establishment of a National Home of a second party in a third party's land?

It would be like Britain announcing that we Canadians had to give our land back to the Native Indians. I'm a fifth generation Canadian, but even some second-generation Canadians would object. We have homes here. We have lives. And we have no other place to go. But we have been here for a far shorter time than the Palestinians have been in their land. The Balfour Declaration declared that the Jewish National Home shouldn't interfere with the rights of current inhabitants, but it was unrealistic. The

Zionist objective wasn't a home. It was a state.



Foreign Office,
November 2nd, 1917.

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet.

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country"

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

Yours sincerely
Arthur James Balfour

The Balfour Declaration

I had grown up fully convinced of the Jewish right to the land of Israel. It was given to them by God, they were back in it, end of discussion. The Palestinians were just in the way of God's will.

The fact that a lot of people feel this way is probably what obscures the simple justice of the Palestinian cause.

The Holocaust also puts an emotional spin on the whole argument. But just because a European Christian country attempted to exterminate their Jews doesn't mean that the Palestinian Arabs should have to give up their land. Ibn Saud had it right when he said the Jews should be given the choicest parts of Germany.

At the time of the Mandate, a prominent Arab nationalist asked, where would we all be if we turned the clocks back two thousand years? The Jews wanted to come back after nearly two thousand years and make a nation in Palestine.

I started to think about where I'd be if I decided to go back that far in time. I'd be laying claim to some ancient Angle or Saxon village in Germany, or perhaps some Celtic ruins in Middle Europe. My paternal grandfather was English and when I visited England in 1995, I felt no sense of having come home. It was nice to go to a beach and be surrounded by people as pale as me, but I couldn't envision myself living in England. I'm a Canadian.

As I child I always heard the argument, why do the Arabs have to have Israel? They have so many other places they can live. The Arab world was seen as one large homogeneous entity, rather than a loose association of nations. It was as if an Arab of Bethlehem could just pack his bags and move to Riyadh if he really wanted to. It would be like somebody telling me, why do you have to live in Toronto? Just pick up everything and go to Pittsburgh. They're your own kind there.

James Morris did a survey of the Middle East in 1956, *Islam Inflamed*, and he comments on this perception of the Arab world as a uniform region:

It is often conceived as a vast expanse of barren uniformity, a big, sandy, indeterminate blotch upon the map. It is true that one language is common to all its capitals, that cultures are honored more or less in common, that the hero of one Arab people is the hero of most of the others, that the Arabs of any state will feel reasonably at home across the frontiers of its neighbours – as much at home, say, as the Englishman will feel in Massachusetts, or perhaps Texas. But it is a region, nevertheless, of great variety, of innumerable minorities and persuasions.

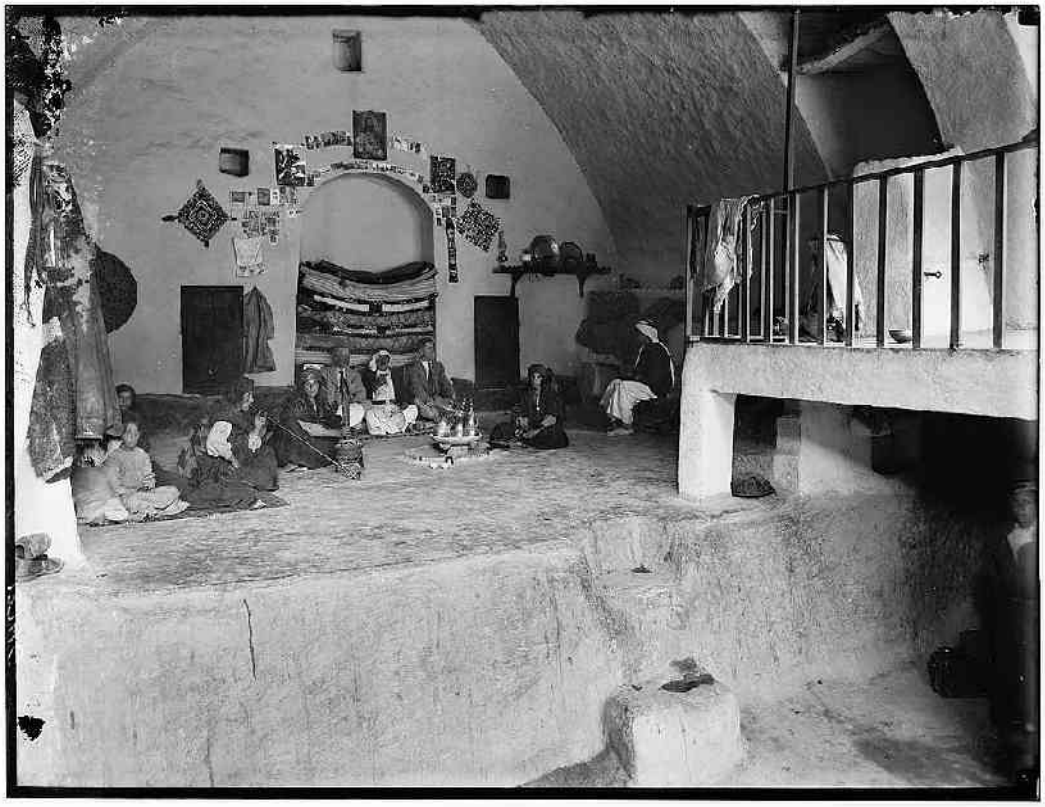
But there was an even greater issue when it came to my Christian faith. My fellow believers in Palestine. The fact that many Arabs were Christians was never discussed. Arabs were Muslims. Even when we were in Bethlehem and Nazareth only the Christian sites were emphasized, not that we were amongst fellow believers.

As I read about the Mandate period, an ugly truth emerged. Some Arabs lost their livelihood when their absentee landlord sold the fields they worked in. But even worse, in 1947 and 1948, many of the Arabs had been driven from their homes by fear or intimidation. Some of the intimidation was as simple as zealous Zionists making phone calls to Arab houses and threatening them if they didn't leave. It sounds mild, but if I were to receive such a call, I would be shaken up perhaps even to the point of considering leaving, particularly if I had small children. But I did read a humorous story of how no one was every able to get through to Arab socialite, Katy Antonius (wife of George Antonius, author of *The Arab Awakening*) because her phone was always busy.

Other acts of intimidation were more serious. Bombs. Personal assault. And then the ultimate, Deir Yassin, the village that was massacred by Irgun. That set of an exodus that took the Arab people as far as Damascus and Amman, in the hope that they could wait it out while their warriors drove the Jews into the sea once the British left.

It never happened.

And many an Arab continued to wear the key to his home on a chain around his neck while he finished off his life in a refugee camp.



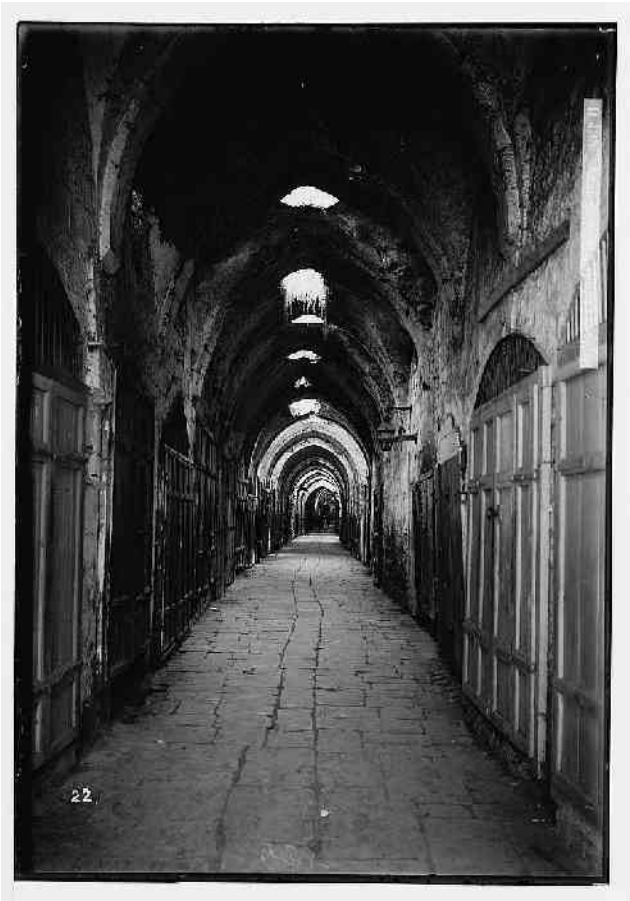
Arab Christian home during the Mandate.

If Christians were being driven out of their homes by unbelievers now, it would be reported to the western church as an outrage and something we shouldn't ignore. At the very least, a collection would be taken up. But not once growing up did I ever hear anything about the outrage of the Christian Arabs being driven out of their homes by the unbelieving Jews.

The huge majority of Zionist Jews are not Messianic. They don't share our belief that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, yet we stood behind them when they fought our brothers and sisters to establish the State of Israel. There's something wrong with that.

A British official, quoted in *Mandate Days*, had similar feelings:

I'm awfully fond of the fellaheen – but more & more I'm realizing that I'm violently anti-Zionist (I'm not anti-Jewish) & that is why I feel I shall not be able to stay over long in this country. To my way of thinking the writing on the wall is plain: the Jews are going to get their country sooner or later – which I think is morally wrong & imperially unwise – nevertheless it may now be inevitable after 25 years of drift & pious & rather ineffective well-meaning! One must wait till the new Commission reports; but I'm unhappy about the future of Palestine & cannot but feel that merely through charity of heart coupled with woolly thinking (a fateful combination!) we have made a most tragic mistake – with untold consequences – in the Middle East.



Arab shops closed in protest of the opening of the Hebrew University and visit of Lord Balfour, 1925

Here I will admit to an inconsistency. I don't think Britain should have gotten involved with politics of Palestine, but at the same time, I wish I'd been there!

Frances Newton, a British missionary, reports that when it was announced in England in December 1917 that Allenby had taken Jerusalem, there was a moment of profound silence and then spontaneously everybody stood and sang the Doxology. I'm sure many people had tears in their eyes.

For people who have grown up in the Bible, and even more so for people who love the Bible, there is a profound attraction to Jerusalem.

Again, I'll confess to another inconsistency. Jerusalem is the city that killed my Lord. Jerusalem is the city that the apostle Paul associated with the Old Covenant whereas, the church was in the New Covenant and therefore the New Jerusalem. Slavery versus freedom, as he described it. And yet, ever since I've been to Jerusalem and then had to leave, I've felt like an exile. Jerusalem *feels* like the center of the earth.

It was never the British objective to take Jerusalem They weren't modern crusaders who set out across Europe to capture it for their glory. It was a by-product of her struggle against Germany and Germany's ally, Turkey. But having taken it, it was hard to just walk away.

It could easily be argued that they did a lot of good in practical ways. Earlier travelers to Jerusalem reported the streets full of garbage and human waste. The British cleaned things up and organized things in the vacuum created by the retreat of the Turks who had formerly run the city. Had they stopped there they would have probably maintained friendly relations with the Palestinians. But they took on the contradictory responsibilities of the Mandate and spent the next thirty years trying to resolve unresolvable problems.

Early in 1939, a conference was called in London to try to solve some of those unresolvable problems. At this point, the Arab and the Jewish delegations could barely stand to be in the same room together. Very little, if any, progress was made.

The Arab delegation moved onto Cairo for further discussion. This Conference was attended by Arab leaders outside of Palestine and representatives of the Muslims of India. Together they came up with some terms. They requested the "immediate appointment of a National Government of Palestinian Ministers, with British Advisers, and a National Assembly at the end of three years to draw up a Constitution of an independent Palestinian State."

Frances Newton, a British citizen living in Palestine at the time, points out that, "This request, one would think, went no little way towards bridging the gap, since Palestinian Ministers and a National Assembly obviously must include Jews who had acquired Palestinian citizenship, and who would therefore share in the administration of a Palestinian State."

World War II prevented any further discussion but before the war broke out the British issued a White Paper saying that 100,000 more Jews would be permitted to come to Palestine, after that all further immigration would have to have the permission of the Arabs.

The White Paper promised the following:

...in framing these proposals His Majesty's Government have sincerely endeavoured to act in strict accordance with their obligations under the Mandate to both the Arabs and the Jews...His Majesty's Government cannot hope to satisfy the partisans of one party or the other in such a controversy as the Mandate has aroused. Their purpose is to be just as between the two peoples in Palestine...who, since they live side by side, must learn to practise mutual tolerance, goodwill and co-operation. In looking to the future, His Majesty's Government are not blind to the fact that some events of the past make the task of creating these relations difficult...Each community has much to contribute to the welfare of their common land, and each must earnestly desire peace in which to assist in increasing the well-being of the whole people of the country. The responsibility which falls on them, no less than on His Majesty's Government to co-operate to ensure peace, is all the more solemn because their country is revered by many millions of Moslems, Jews, and Christians throughout the world who pray for peace in Palestine and the happiness of her people.

But the White Paper was not well received. As far as the Arabs were concerned, that was 100,000 too many Zionists coming to their land. As far as the Jews were concerned, with the persecution of Hitler in Germany, it wasn't nearly enough. The war temporarily stopped any further discussion because the Jews and the British both agreed, Hitler had to be stopped. David Ben-Gurion, already a long-time prominent leader in the Zionist movement announced that the Jews would "fight the war as if there was no White Paper and fight the White Paper as if there was no war." (The Arabs didn't necessarily share

the sentiment, but most of them at least remained neutral. As the German General Rommel headed east across the top of Africa many Arabs planned for German victory while the British prepared to fall back to Iraq if necessary. The Jews planned to fight to the death. El Alamein, when British General Montgomery pushed the Axis line all the way back to Tunisia, put an end to any dreams of German dominance in Middle East.)

In November 1942 there was an exchange of civilian detainees between Nazi Germany and the British which resulted in the first credible information about the death camps in Europe. The Palestinian Jews were frantic. Most had family back in Europe and overnight, illegal immigration became an issue for all the Jews of Palestine. Gun-running increased. Hatred of the British was no longer something felt by a few extremists. As many as could, did their share to bring the Jews of Europe to Palestine. It continued after the war as surviving Jews remained in displacement camps.

The British reverted to their White Paper issued in 1939.

Mandate Days sums up the state of things at the end of World War II, near the end of the British administration:

By this point, all parties to the Palestine conflict were enraged: the Jews because it was clear that the 100,000 might not be admitted after all; the Arabs, who felt that they were unfairly being forced to compensate for the massacres European Christians had perpetrated on the Jews; and the British, incensed at what they perceived as the ingratitude of both Jews and Arabs, and fearful that any gesture to one or the other would embroil British troops in a squalid endless guerrilla struggle with no certain outcome.

It's a shame it had to end that way because it had all started so gloriously.

CHAPTER TEN

FAISAL'S FRANKINCENSE

It had all started so gloriously.

T.E. Lawrence wasn't the only British soldier sent out to aid the Arabs in their revolt against the Turks. He was just the one to record it with the greatest eloquence.

T.E. Lawrence, unlike Peter O'Toole, was short. He had a large head. It was said he had a strange giggle. One of his tasks was to establish contact with Emir Faisal, the charismatic leader of the Arab Revolt. Emir Faisal, unlike the character played by Alec Guinness, was tall, young and had a sense of humor.

In actuality, Emir Faisal was not the head of the Revolt. His father, Hussein, the Sherif of Mecca, had decided to break away from the Ottoman Empire and his ambitions to have a Kingdom in the Hijaz were made possible by Britain's need to have men fighting the Turks. The Turks, previously friends of Britain, had come into World War I on the side of Germany.

Faisal had two older brothers, Ali and Abdullah, both who achieved distinction after the war. Abdullah became first, the Emir of Trans-Jordan and then later, the King of Trans-Jordan. His great grandson is King Abdullah of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Ali, the oldest son, inherited his father's throne in the Hijaz but was shortly afterwards defeated by Abdul-Aziz Ibn Saud. The Hijaz is the strip of land that runs beside the Red Sea and contains the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina and are now, of course, part of Saudi Arabia.

But it was Faisal who had the natural grace and charm to weave the tribes together into a cohesive fighting unit and to drive the Turks out of the Hijaz. His ability to patiently hear everyone's problems and persistently solve each one of them, or assign it to one of his deputies to solve, was an inspiration to me. As a parent, quite often I didn't care about justice or how anyone felt. I just wanted everyone to settle down. But Faisal was a remarkable peace-maker, resolving the conflicts between the Arabs rather than just forcing his way on things. His tent was open to everyone and he sacrificed sleep to give every man who wanted a chance to speak to him. Like Moses, he must have felt like a nursemaid to his people, but he seemed to have a deep well of patience for their problems and concerns.

When Lawrence, with a lot of help from the Arabs, took Aqaba, the nature of the Revolt changed. Faisal's army became General Allenby's eastern flank in the push north to drive the Turks out of Palestine. While Allenby fought in Gaza and captured Jerusalem, Faisal's goal was Damascus, the heart of Arab nationalism.

Lawrence blew up train tracks, Faisal held the army together. Tribal disputes were settled, enemies temporarily put aside their feuds to fight in the common battle for an Arab Kingdom.

On the 30th of September, 1918, the Arab flag was raised over the Damascus City Hall. A few days later, Faisal rode into Damascus on a horse followed by 1500 Arab horsemen, amid jubilant and enthusiastic crowds. Shortly after, he was declared by the Syrians, the King of Syria.

Emir Faisal in Damascus, 1918

Syria at that time consisted of what we call Syria today, as well as Palestine and Trans-Jordan. So Faisal, was also the King of Palestine.

Despite being a direct descendant of Mohammad, King Faisal was an Arab nationalist. The issue wasn't about religion, it was about the Arab language.

The Turks had tried to Turkify the Arabs. They had forced the Turkish language on the Arabs to the point that writing a poem in Arabic and publishing it was an act of subversion. Before the revolt, Faisal had visited the nationalists in Damascus. He had not wanted to simply exchange one master for another, knowing that driving the Turks out would leave room for the Europeans to come in. But when he had to stand beside his Turkish hosts and watch Arab nationalists be hanged he had thrown himself fully into the Revolt. The story goes that once he was able to excuse himself from his Turkish hosts and was back amongst fellow Arabs, he had torn off his keffiyah and cried, “Death is sweet, O Arabs!” A call to battle.

Arabic once again became the language of the Arabs.

Faisal's branch of descendants of Mohammad, the Hashemites, were traditionally tolerant of Jews. Faisal had already met with Chaim Weizmann near Aqaba. He had no hostility towards the idea of Semites sharing the land although he was very clear throughout his life that while he liked Jews, he did not like the Zionism that meant the loss of Arab rights to their land. His understanding of Zionism was a respect for the Jewish desire to return to a land so important to them.

After World War I, he was sent by his father to represent the Arab people at the peace talks in Versailles. Despite his picturesque appearance and all the efforts of Lawrence, the Arabs did not receive the kingdom they had been promised. Before the war, Sherif Hussein had exchanged letters with the British High Commissioner in Egypt, Sir Henry McMahon. The Arabs were promised that any land they liberated from the Turks would be theirs with the exception of the districts of Mersina and Alexandretta. Since the districts west of Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo, were not considered purely Arab, they were also excluded.

If there was to be a Mandate power in Syria, Faisal desired that it be the British, his allies in the Arab Revolt. He had had time to evaluate the British and had had many advisors apart from Lawrence.

In *Paris 1919*, Margaret McMillan provides the following description of his presence at Versailles:

At the end of November 1918, a dark handsome young man who claimed with some justification, to speak for the Arabs boarded a British warship in Beirut bound for Marseille and the Paris Peace Conference. Feisal, descendant of the Prophet and member of the ancient Hashemite clan was clever, determined and very ambitious. He was also dazzling. No matter that he had been brought up in Constantinople; he was everyone's image of what a noble desert Arab should be. Lansing, normally so prosaic, thought of frankincense and gold. “He suggested the calmness and peace of the desert, the meditation of one who lives in the wide spaces of the earth, the solemnity of thought of one who often communes alone with nature.”

Emir Faisal

Janet Wallach, in *Desert Queen: The Extraordinary Life of Gertrude Bell, Adventurer, Adviser to Kings, Ally of Lawrence of Arabia*, includes more of the quotation. Faisal's “voice seemed to breathe the perfume of frankincense and to suggest the presence of richly coloured divans, green turbans and the glitter of gold and jewels.”

Shortly after becoming king, Faisal delivered the following speech:

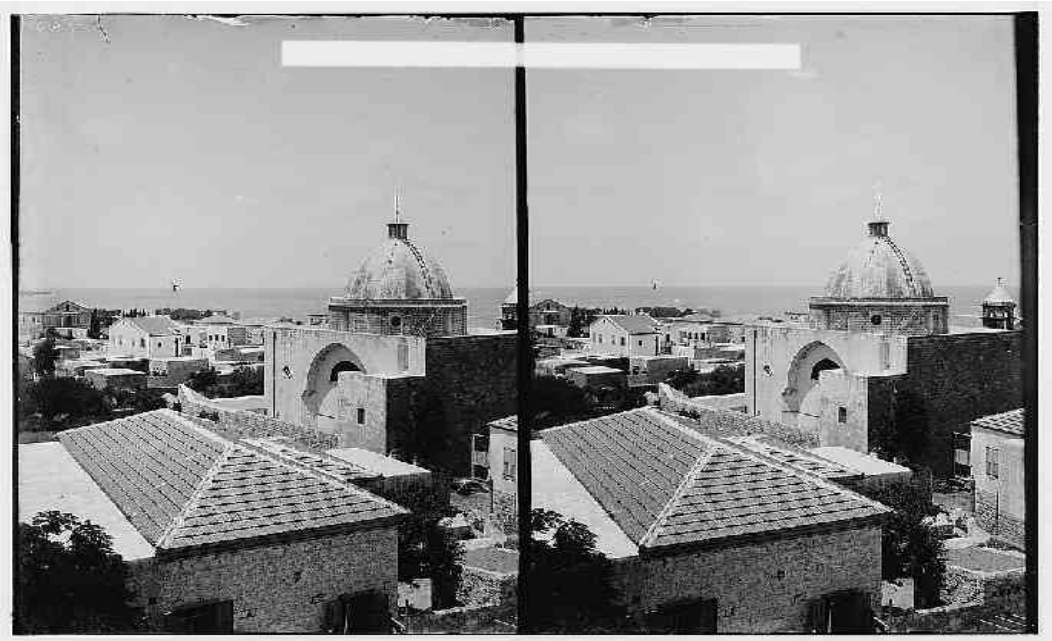
"I make no distinction between members of the Arab nation of whatever creed or religion. I reckon myself one of you. I am as a brother to the man who extends to me the hand of friendship, and I am impartially severe to those who revolt and disobey the government. I shall never betray the Arabs and I trust that the Arabic language will attain the position it deserves. Everyone must respect the rights of others. This day has been brought about by the sufferings of the Syrians and the atrocities which they have endured at the hands of the Turks. This is the reason for our alliance with Great Britain, France, Italy and America, which we have made in order to destroy our enemies and to attain freedom. The Arabian nation does not only consist of the Hijaz and Syria; there are other regions such as Aleppo which must yet be saved from slavery. I trust that the sword of the Arabs will never be sheathed until they are free."

His willingness to be friends with anyone of any religion was not just rhetoric. Many Christian Arabs had positions of authority in his new government. He received the support of the Palestinian Arabs who wanted to remain a part of Greater Syria.

Unfortunately, the new Arab kingdom was short-lived.

Britain and France had divided up the post-World War I Middle East into spheres of influence. Syria would go to France. France didn't want an Arab king in Damascus and used force to drive Faisal from his elected position.

At this point Faisal headed south to Palestine before eventually heading to Europe for a brief exile. While he was in Palestine, he stayed in Haifa in a house lent to him by the Christian missionary, Frances Newton. When he left he wrote a note to her that ended with the words, "and know, O virtuous lady, I shall ever be your friend." Again, Faisal included Christians among his friends.



Christian Missionary Society school in Haifa, the organization Frances Newton was associated with.

Britain had received Iraq as part of her booty and with a little encouragement from Lawrence and a good friend of his, Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill, they invited Faisal to have the throne in Iraq. He accepted.

Under Faisal, the Jews in Baghdad thrived. Two Jewish brother, Saleh and Daud al-Kuwaiti, were Faisal's favorite musicians. It wasn't until the establishment of Israel that life became unbearable for the Jews of Baghdad. It was something that many British Jews had feared after the Balfour Declaration, that their position in the countries of their birth would be jeopardized by a Jewish nation in the Middle East. The Balfour Declaration explicitly said that "nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

If establishing a State of Israel didn't count as prejudicing the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, the Jews in other countries certainly had good reason to fear the loss of their rights and political status!

When General Allenby took Jerusalem from the Turks in December of 1917, the area became under military occupation. The British were required to operate according to the Manual of Military Law which included the statement, "It is no longer considered permissible for the occupant of enemy territory to work his will unhindered, altering the existing form of Government, upsetting the Constitution and domestic laws, and ignoring the rights of the inhabitants."

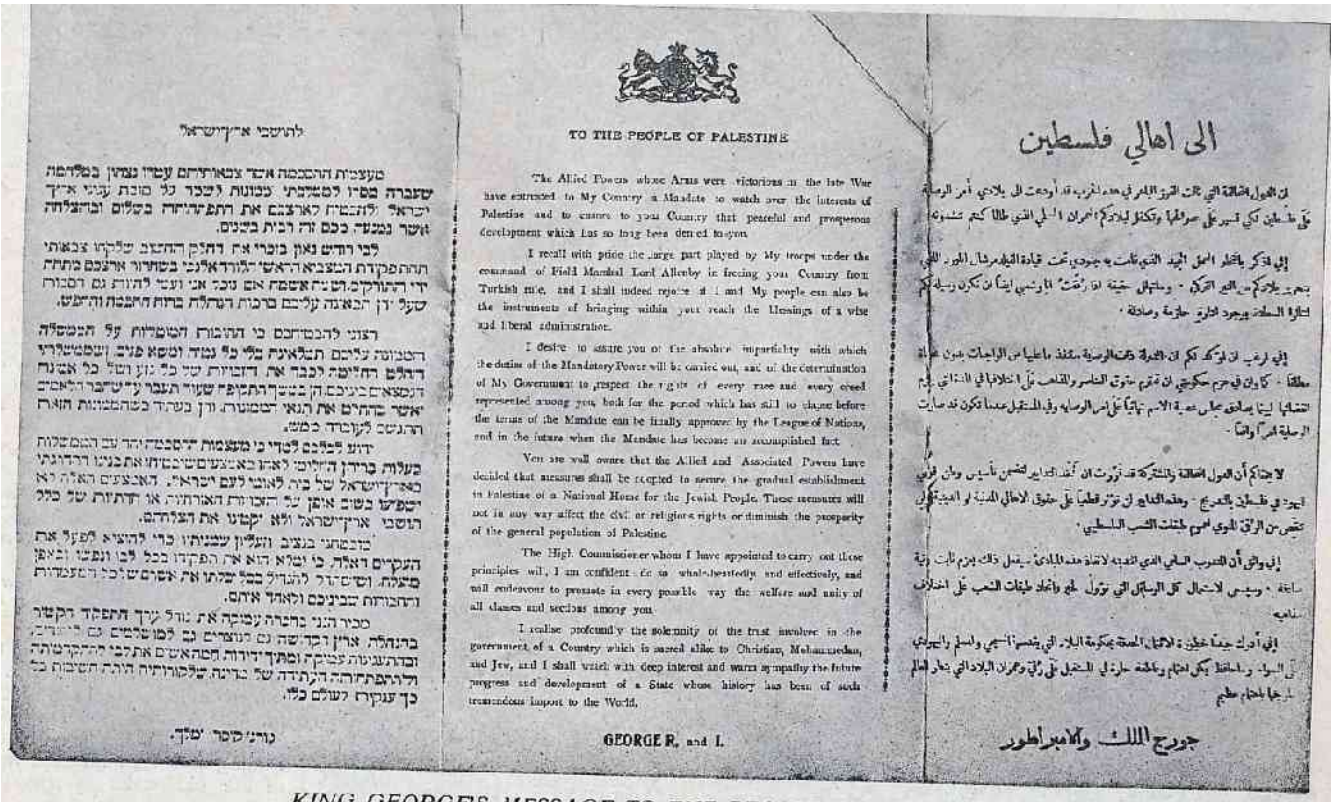
Frances Newton described how it worked at first:

When I returned home in 1919 I found this form of Government in operation. British officials in khaki controlled the land and were proving themselves as great administrators as they had been soldiers. The usual Government Departments were reorganized – the Judiciary, Treasury, Post Office, Police, Public Works, as well as Public Health and Education, were all functioning to the benefit of the people. One item of special benefit I must not fail to mention. Jerusalem had always suffered from lack of proper water supply; all that existed in Turkish days was rain water collected in cisterns underground. It was never sufficient to meet the needs of the population. British military engineers did in six weeks what the Turks had not done in six centuries; a splendid supply of fresh water was brought into the city from springs several miles distant on the road to Hebron, for the military occupation could not carry on without it. As one who knew the city under the old regime I am not ashamed to confess that it made a lump come into my throat when I saw the streets being swept really clean; the meat in the butchers' shops covered with muslin to keep off the flies; British Police under large umbrellas controlling the traffic; and not least, when I saw the very poor filling their jars and tins from taps in the streets instead of having to buy water wherever they could.

When General Allenby had entered Jerusalem on foot, he had said two words, "Status Quo." At the same time, the Balfour Declaration was having an unsettling effect on the status quo. A Royal Commission in 1937 describes those early days of the British in Palestine:

The arrival in Palestine of a Zionist Commission authorized by the British Government to travel, investigate and report on the prospects of a National Home as well as to help in establishing friendly relations with the Arabs and other non-Jewish communities, aroused the Arabs to the realities of the

situation. No steps were taken to represent the Arab side of the case. Doubtless, enthusiasm for the Zionist cause led to the disregard of other people's feelings at a time when the greatest tact and discretion were necessary. The subsequent efforts of Dr. Weizmann were unsuccessful. Many of the demands put forward by the Jews provoked resentment. It was urged that they should at once participate in the military administration; and that there should be a Land Commission, with experts nominated by the Jewish Organization, to ascertain the resources of Palestine. It was contended that under the Balfour Declaration, Jews in Jaffa should be allowed to provide their own bonded warehouses; that the Anglo-Palestine Bank, a Jewish company, should advance the loans required for agriculturalists. They desired to select and supplement the pay of Jewish candidates for the police. They demanded, and began to train, their own Jewish Defense Force. Hebrew should be recognized as an official language. All this during the prolonged period of military government designed to carry on temporarily and to preserve 'status quo.'



לתושבי ארץ־ישראל

TO THE PEOPLE OF PALESTINE

The Allied Powers whose Arms were victorious in the late War have entrusted to My Country a Mandate to watch over the interests of Palestine and to ensure to your Country that peaceful and prosperous development which has so long been denied to you.

I recall with pride the large part played by My troops under the command of Field Marshal Lord Allenby in freeing your Country from Turkish rule, and I shall indeed reject it if I and My people can also be the instruments of bringing within your reach the blessings of a wise and liberal administration.

I desire to assure you of the absolute impartiality with which the duties of the Mandatory Power will be carried out, and of the determination of My Government to respect the rights of every race and every creed represented among you, both for the period which has still to elapse before the terms of the Mandate can be finally approved by the League of Nations, and in the future when the Mandate has become an accomplished fact.

You are well aware that the Allied and Associated Powers have decided that measures shall be adopted to secure the gradual establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish People. These measures will not in any way affect the civil or religious rights or diminish the prosperity of the general population of Palestine.

The High Commissioner whom I have appointed to carry out these principles will, I am confident, do so wholeheartedly and effectively, and will endeavour to promote in every possible way the welfare and unity of all classes and sections among you.

I realise profoundly the solemnity of the trust involved in the government of a Country which is sacred alike to Christian, Mohammedan, and Jew, and I shall watch with deep interest and warm sympathy the future progress and development of a State whose history has been of such tremendous import to the World.

GEORGE R. and I.

الى اهالي فلسطين

جورج الملك والامبراطور

KING GEORGE'S MESSAGE TO THE PEOPLE OF PALESTINE
read by the High Commissioner at the Government House on July 7, 1920.

King George's Message to the People of Palestine, July 7, 1920
Note his message that "I desire to assure you of the absolute impartiality with which the duties of the Mandatory Power will be carried out, and of the determination of My Government to respect the rights of every race and every creed represented among you, both for the period which has still to elapse before the terms of the Mandate can be finally approved by the League of Nations, and in the future when the Mandate has become an accomplished fact.

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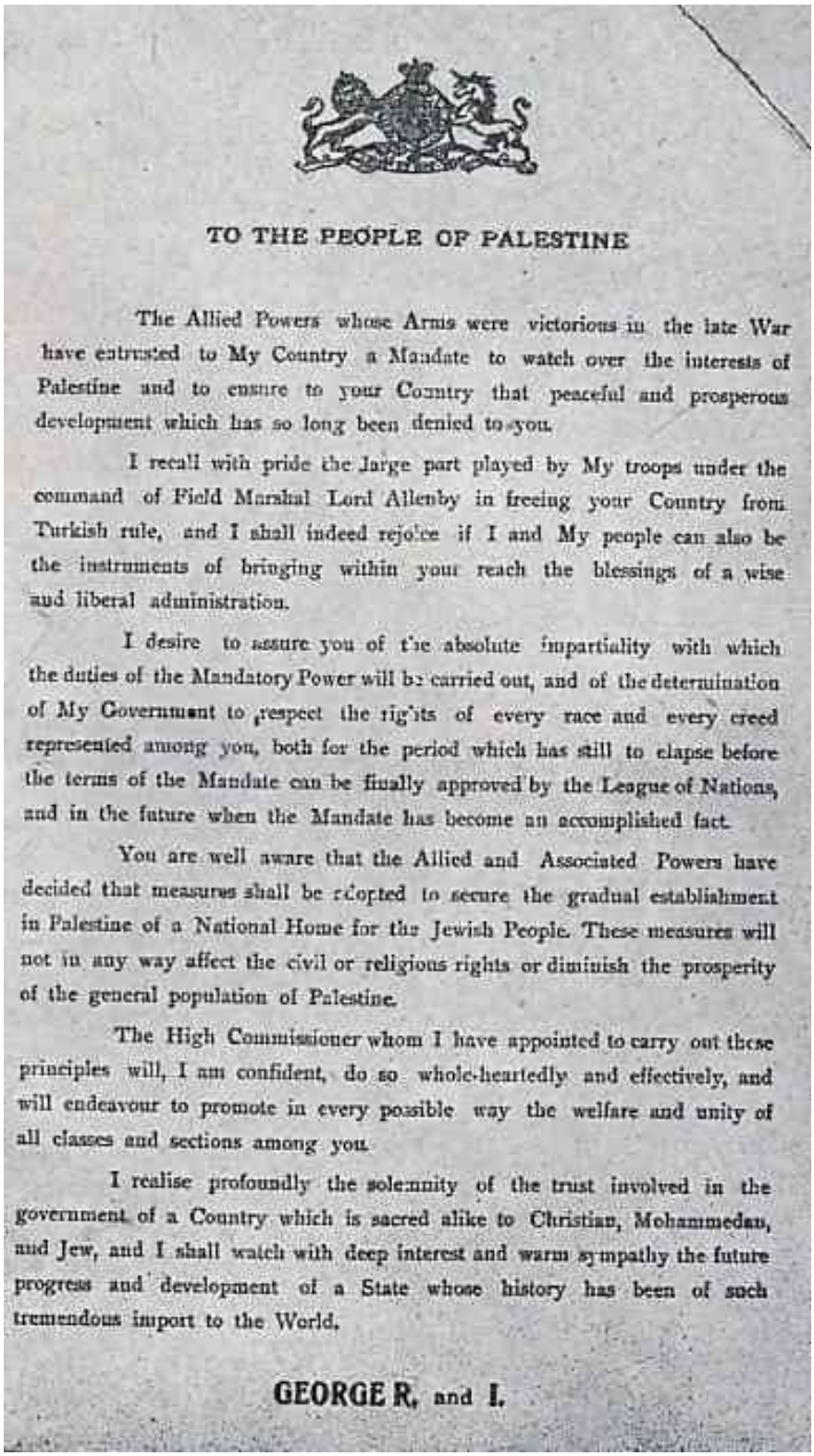


TO THE PEOPLE OF PALESTINE

The Allied Powers whose Arms were victorious in the late War have entrusted to My Country a Mandate to watch over the interests of Palestine and to ensure to your Country that peaceful and prosperous development which has so long been denied to you.

I recall with pride the large part played by My troops under the command of Field Marshal Lord Allenby in freeing your Country from Turkish rule, and I shall indeed rejoice if I and My people can also be the instruments of bringing within your reach the blessings of a wise and liberal administration.

I desire to assure you of the absolute impartiality with which the duties of the Mandatory Power will be carried out, and of the determination of My Government to respect the rights of every race and every creed represented among you, both for the period which has still to elapse before the terms of the Mandate can be finally approved by the League of Nations, and in the future when the Mandate has become an accomplished fact.

You are well aware that the Allied and Associated Powers have decided that measures shall be adopted to secure the gradual establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish People. These measures will not in any way affect the civil or religious rights or diminish the prosperity of the general population of Palestine.

The High Commissioner whom I have appointed to carry out these principles will, I am confident, do so whole-heartedly and effectively, and will endeavour to promote in every possible way the welfare and unity of all classes and sections among you.

I realise profoundly the solemnity of the trust involved in the government of a Country which is sacred alike to Christian, Mohammedan, and Jew, and I shall watch with deep interest and warm sympathy the future progress and development of a State whose history has been of such tremendous import to the World.

GEORGE R. and I.

Before Britain had even officially received the Mandate for Palestine from the League of Nations (now

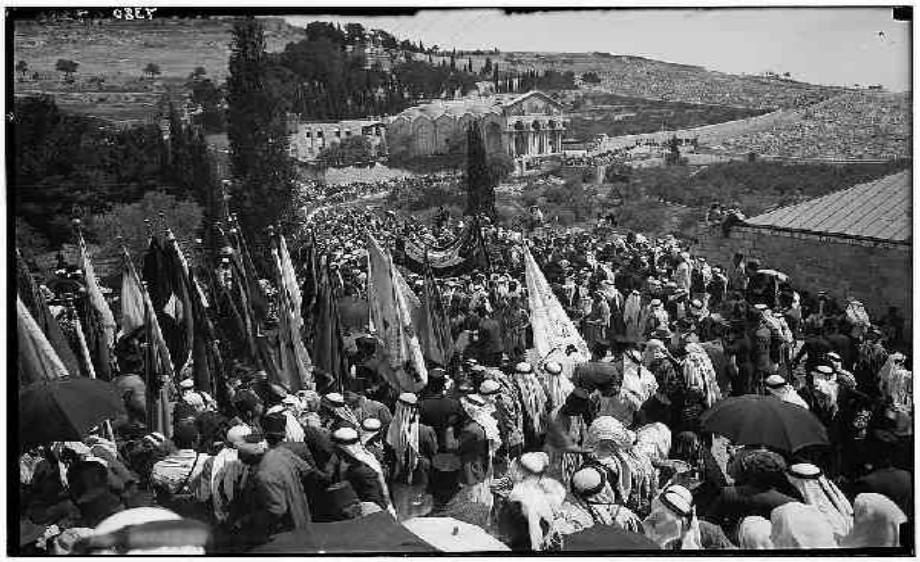
the United Nations), there were Arab riots in the spring of 1920. The Commission's report summarizes the hopelessness of the situation that was evident even at this point:

The Arabs, as we have already stated, considered that they had been betrayed. The Jews in 1920 regarded the Military Administration as anti-Zionist, and perhaps anti-Jewish. Arab fears and Jewish hopes may alike have been extravagant, but the cleavage which was, in the future, to make every act a political issue had begun. The flames of racial hatred which broke out at Easter, 1920 in the Holy City might well have drawn attention to the volcano underneath...

In March 1921 when Winston Churchill visited Palestine as Colonial Secretary the Arabs delivered a warning Churchill. The Executive Committee of the Haifa Congress of Palestinian Arabs were organizing their thoughts in response to the Zionist presence and their desperation can be felt in the following message: "The Arab is noble and large-hearted. He is also vengeful and never forgets an ill-deed. If England does not take up the cause of the Arabs, other Powers will. From India, Mesopotamia, the Hedjaz and Palestine, the cry goes up to England now. If she does not listen, then perhaps Russia will take up their call some day, or perhaps even Germany."

In all fairness, Jerusalem, being a center of interest for three major religions, had never been tension-free. The previously mentioned Easter riots came about as a result of an earlier tension between Christian pilgrims and Muslims. Frances Newton describes the background of the riots of 1920:

The Easter riots were, alas, only the first eruption of the volcano. It happened at Easter because in pre-war days the Holy City was always thronged with many thousands of Christian pilgrims, many of them Russians, who came protected by their Government. To counteract the influence of this Christian influx, the Turkish Government encouraged the holding of a Moslem Festival (known as Nebi Musa) to coincide with the Festival of the Resurrection, as the Arabs call our Easter. Thousands of Muslims pour into the Holy City from all parts of the country, and meet in the Haram es Sharif for prayer. They then form a vast procession with sacred banners waving, swords brandishing, rifles firing into the air, and with dancing and singing they proceed down along the road to the reputed Tomb of Moses, a Mosque by the Dead Sea.



Nebi Musa during the Mandate.

From early on, the British experience in Palestine was complicated and difficult.

I started to wonder what would have happened if Faisal had been left to be King of Syria. By right, he was also King of Palestine. He was an elected leader. He was tolerant of a Jewish presence in Palestine. More importantly, from my perspective as a Christian, he included Christians in his government and in his circle of friends. I think an opportunity was lost there. One of his greatest skills was as a peace-maker. He had proven his ability in the Arab Revolt when he had had to negotiate between rival tribes to weave together an Arab army. To me, he sounded like the perfect man for a situation that needed diplomacy. He had both graciousness and strength.

Maybe the Zionists were too determined to have a State and would have never accepted anything less than the complete freedom to determine their own affairs. But 1919 was a long time before Hitler. The desperation that created Irgun and the other Jewish terrorist groups may have never happened under Faisal and his descendants. With the rights of the Arabs solidly protected, more Jews may have been able to get to Palestine before the Holocaust than they did under the British who tightly controlled immigration in an effort to keep the favor of the Arabs. The British had to protect their oil interests and they couldn't risk offending the Arabs. But with an Arab king of Palestine, the situation could have been very different for the Jews.

There's no guarantee that Faisal's dynasty would have carried on with his tolerance. But for the French to evict him from his own country before he could establish himself and his philosophy was something that to me, seems like one of the greatest lost opportunities in the Near East.

That the British stood by and let it happen is inexcusable. T. E. Lawrence went home and wrote angry, eloquent, but ineffective letters to newspaper editors. His conscience was relieved when Faisal ended up as King of Iraq. He declared it an honourable ending. But it didn't stop him from changing his name to John Hume Ross, joining the Royal Air Force, and spending the rest of his life disassociating himself from his 'Lawrence of Arabia' persona.

Lawrence of Arabia

CHAPTER ELEVEN

SCRIPTURES COME TO LIFE

The Jewish immigration to Palestine during the Mandate period depended on the ability of the land to economically absorb the new immigrants.

Although some Jews worked on the kibbutzim and farmed the land, more preferred town life. Part of the Zionist's plan was to launch a program of industrialization, not only to boost the standard of living, but to give more jobs to Jews which in turn, increased the ability of the land to economically absorb more immigrants.

On the surface, this may have improved life for the Arabs, electricity in the towns, new consumer goods. But overall, the industrialization increased the cost of living and threatened the self-sustaining lifestyle of the Arabs.

Frances Newton quotes from an earlier book called, *Palestine, the Reality* by J.M.N. Jeffries, published in 1939 when the Mandate was still in effect:

The Western State had no business whatever to try and force upon the Arabs the Western style of existence, which roughly is the making of profits in order to spend them on alleviations of life. The Eastern idea, that ingrained in Palestine, is the making of a subsistence ensuring life itself.

He continues:

Merely to keep himself sounds a doleful lot for a man in the West, and perhaps it is, since in the West nearly all relaxations have to be provided for the population and therefore must be bought. For three-quarters of the year, within their homes, the British people have to pay the coal merchant and the gas company and the electric company for their very climate. But in a country like Palestine, with its short winter and abundant sun, all that the population asks as a whole is to be freed of debt and then to work, gossip, and savour the warmth peacefully.

Jeffries had a different vision for Palestine than what the Zionists had in mind:

Under a properly conceived system of Government, Palestine would have conformed to the simple ideas of its people with a reasonable modicum of development. The population would have grown, since the youth of the country would have escaped the murderous Turkish military service which every year had destroyed them in their thousands. The seaward pressure of migration too, would have brought in numbers escaping from the desert to become cultivators. Malaria and other diseases would have been extirpated; medical progress – a necessity in a world wherein we keep our health but share out illnesses - would have been constant, and would have been welcomed by the population. More

land would have been reclaimed, and irrigation would have made more of it cultivable. The obvious destiny of Palestine was to become a nest of small holdings, of which the smallest external wants would have been supplied by the coastal towns.

Jeffries, who lived at the time, felt that:

This was a simple and thoroughly native prospect. It connoted a Palestine suited to the feelings and customs of the population. It connoted too – this being a point never enough raised – a Palestine in complete accordance with its other transcendental self, the Holy Land.

This was, of course, a rural perspective of the Holy Land. Frances Newton notes that there were many "progressive-minded, educated Arabs" in the country. They may have envisioned a slightly different Palestine but its unlikely that it would have been one where any Arabs were at the economic disadvantage that they face in Israel today. Certainly it wouldn't have led to the vast displacement that Palestinians experienced with the establishment of Israel.

Frances Newton highlighted the responsibility of the Christians with regards to preserving the Arab way of life at the time:

British officialdom apparently views with complacency the rapidly changing situation in Palestine, which has far wider implications than the mere preservation of sites and scenes, however sacred they may be. Readers of earlier chapters describing the life in the Galilee villages, will perhaps have realized that the humbler industries carried on by Arabs in their homes, and in their fields, interpret passages of Scripture obscure to Western minds. Are these ancient manners and customs, which illuminate readings of the Bible, to go by the board too? Already scores of Arab villages have disappeared, and thousands of villages have been deprived of their traditional mode of life. It is surely we Christians who should see to it that the Arabs are granted their right to live their own lives in their own way, for, though it only means something to us, it means everything to them. Christian principles no less than Arab interests are at stake in Palestine.

In *Fifty Years in Palestine*, Frances Newton records the life of the rural Arab as it relates to scriptures. Because her book is now out of print and extremely scarce and her observations are so valuable, I will pass them on in her own words for the remainder of the (lengthy) chapter:

Description of a Village Home

The homes that these village children lived in are typical still of what most of the peasant homes in the Galilee villages must have been like in the time of our Lord. They consist of one room, the walls of which are built of wattle. The roof is of the same material laid across the trunks of trees. If the house is a large one, an arch from the middle of the walls on either side will carry the ends of the tree trunk. The floor, also of mud, is divided into two sections, two-thirds of it being raised above the other third. This larger portion is called "the Mastaba", and is occupied by the human element of the family. The lower half is devoted to the use of the non-human element. Cows and camels, horses, donkeys, cocks and hens, even pigeons, are all part of the family, and are housed under the one roof. This is for protection against thieves. Along the edge of the raised part of the floor a line of shallow depressions, or mud troughs form the mangers for the cattle standing on the lower level. This does not result in any unpleasant conditions for the household, as the lower level is swept daily, and in most cases is kept

spotlessly clean. The animals are all turned out to pasture or to work, during the day.

Looking up, one may see a gap where the wall seems to come to an end several feet below the roof. This is caused by the fact that, ranged along some portions or other of the walls, there are excrescences built up against, and forming part of them. These are storage bins for wheat or some other cereal. A peasant's home is supplied for the year with such provisions garnered from his own threshing floors. He does not run round to the baker and buy a loaf of bread! It is all home made. Each bin stands on an arch a few inches high. Above the arch is a smallish round hole stopped up with cotton or print rag. To draw off the grain the rim of a basin is placed under the arch, the rag is withdrawn, the wheat falls into the middle of the vessel set to receive it, and every grain is saved. By this arrangement whatever may be added subsequently to the contents of the bin takes its rightful place at the top, so that whatever goes in first is used up first.

Bedding, and Cooking Utensils

A recess in the wall of the upper part of the floor contains the bedding, and a spotless curtain, with perhaps a deep crocheted edging covers the opening. Tidy little mud shelves will hold articles for household use. Here and there will hang the large round home-made straw mats, used as trays, woven in coloured patterns. These are for carrying the pats of dough to the ovens, and for bringing the baked loaves back again. Large jars containing the year's supply of oil will be standing somewhere against the wall.

On the floor there is a hand-mill, generally of black basalt, with its upper and nether millstones. Copper vessels for cooking and small pottery jars with a handle and a spout, hold oil or water. An inevitable item is a four-gallon tin of Russian petroleum for the small one-wick lamp, the primus, and the lantern for use outside the house. These homes seldom have more than one door and one window. They open on to a courtyard with a surrounding wall. It, too, has only one door in it. The sheep and goats, being in herds, are left out in this courtyard at night. Some cooking is done out there over a fire of branches or thorny shrubs, or even of dry thistles gathered often from a great distance by the women. The oven for baking bread stands also in the corner of the courtyard.

Outside the House – The Roof

The roof is made of mud mixed with crushed straw, and this is naturally full of seeds. The winter rains come on; the seeds germinate, and the surface becomes one green sheet like the ground below. Grass grows on the rooftops. The wattle of the roof is laid over the trunks and heavy branches of trees. It is easy to see why, when the palsied man could not be taken through the door, he was taken up on to the roof. A hole dug through the mud, and the branches moved to one side, would allow of the bed being lowered from above into the house.

The Outside Staircase

Each house has an outside staircase built into one of the walls. “Let him that is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house.” (Matt. 24:17.) This spoke of hasty flight, for to turn aside to the home after running down the stairs would mean delay of several minutes at least.

The Nail in the Sure Place

“I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place, and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house, and they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house.” (Isaiah 22:23.)

The nail spoken of in this passage is not one such as we of the west know it. It is not one driven into the wall after the house is built. On the contrary, it is actually built into the wall. When the wall has reached a certain height, the “nail” consisting of the forked branch of a tree, is placed in position, the fork jutting out on the inside. The building is then carried up on to the height chosen for the roof to rest upon the top of the wall. The “nail” is therefore “in a sure place.” It cannot be removed except by pulling down the house itself.

On this “nail” the single-handed wooden plough is hung when the ploughing season is over. The “glory” of a peasant's household depends upon his diligence with his plough. His whole economic position is determined by the harvest he brings to his threshing floor. The plough to a peasant is the equivalent of the office to a commercial firm in the west!

The Interior – The Dwelling House

“There was no room for them in the Inn.” (St. Luke 2:7.) The word for “inn” calls for explanation. The Greek word, here translated “inn,” is used in only one other verse in the whole of the New Testament. “The Master saith, 'Where is the guest-chamber?'” (St. Luke 22:11.) The correct reading of verse seven should therefore be: “There was no room for them in the guest-chamber,” that is to say, on the raised section of the floor space of the mastaba already referred to. This being the part of the house reserved for the use of the family, any guests would, of course, share it.

Joseph and Mary would naturally have expected to be received by relations in Bethlehem. Many other relations had, no doubt, already arrived, and received accommodation. Nothing therefore was left to Mary (since labour was perhaps already beginning) but to find herself obliged to lie on the lower floor. The manger above her head was a safe cradle for the Holy Child.

Some may say the word “guest-chamber” denotes an upper room, i.e., a room built on the roof, or a second storey room set aside for guests. This is suggested by the second verse quoted. Since Bethlehem was a town rather than a village, this may have been so. Even if this were the case, the room would have already been fully occupied. The census would have caused an influx of visitors. But, apart from this, the word “manger” implies something of a stable. It is impossible to imagine cattle being taken up an outside staircase to an “upper room.” Therefore the words “upper room” cannot apply, whereas the version here given meets the case in every detail.

Corn Bins and Oil Jars

When the prophet Elijah asked for a drink of water and a morsel of bread (I Kings 17: 10, 11), the widow of Sarepta replied (with an oath to assure him of her truthfulness), “As the Lord thy God liveth (not '*my* God' for she was a pagan) I have not a cake (i.e. a loaf) but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruise.” By this she meant, “My store of wheat is finished and so is all but my last drop of oil.” With true Oriental hospitality, she substituted oil for the water asked for. Bread, dipped in oil, is a meal in itself.

The “barrel” referred to was the corn bin, one of the large receptacles built as part of the wall which are used for the storing of wheat and other cereals. The wheat is drawn from the storage bins and is either ground in a handmill or put into a sack or two and carried on a donkey to be ground at the village mill. In the first case, only enough wheat is ground to make the day's batch of bread. In the second, the flour is emptied into the small bin and drawn upon as required.

On a broad shelf there will be several large pottery jars containing the year's supply of olive oil for the household. From there a supply is drawn off into a smaller jar with a handle and spout. This stands anywhere on the floor ready for use. Without a knowledge of these household arrangements, the answer given by the widow to Elijah cannot be fully understood. Her faith in the promise given by the prophet was rewarded, for she never went without food again.

Here ended the first lesson! But the second follows in the schoolboy howler (already known to many) when, to the question “Tell all you know about the prophet Elijah,” the answer given was, “The Bible tells us very little about this holy man of God. All we know is that he went for a cruise with a widow.” Another delightful answer was given in a written Kindergarten examination on the same subject. To the question, “What did the Prophet say to the Children of Israel?” one small laborious hand wrote the following astonishing reply: “The Profit said, 'I am Eliza, the Titbit, clothed with a camel's hair'.”

Sleeping Arrangements

“Man goeth forth unto his toil and his labour until the evening.” (Psalm 104:12.) So, for the matter of that, though the Bible does not say so, do the women. Both start their long and arduous day's work at sunrise. It ends at sunset for the men, but only when all retire for the night for the women.

The evening meal finished (the only meal cooked during the day), the family sit up for a short while before going to bed. The bedding is then withdrawn from its recesses in the wall. A thick mattress is laid on the rush mat already on the floor. A heavy cotton “laharf” or quilt is laid over it, one for each person, with the sides folded in towards the middle. When the cotton pillows are placed in position, all is ready. Side by side, removing only their outer garments, the family retires for the night.

In this connection it is interesting to read the two following quotations: “Trouble me not, the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed.” (St. Luke 11:7.) “Jehoshaphat took Joash, the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the King's sons that were slain, and hid him and his nurse in a bedchamber.” This account of the recess for the bedclothes, and the simple bedding rolled out on the floor, makes it also easier to understand our Lord's command to the palsied man, “Take up thy bed and walk.” (St. Matt. 9:6.)

School life in Nazareth

My daily life in Nazareth consisted in superintending the work of ten schools and eighteen teachers. The day-schools, started by their founder, Miss Lee, were supported by funds which she had collected from friends in England. The salaries paid to the teachers being very small, there was enough money to provide many extra things, such as free books, slates, etc.

It had become, too, the practice of the schools to provide a gift of a printed frock to each village child once a year. It encouraged good attendance, for village life makes demands on a child's time. For

instance, when asked why she is so late coming to school, the answer will be, “O my teacher, I had to sweep out the droppings from under the cattle,” or perhaps, “My mother is ill, so I had to fetch the water from the spring.”

When the C.M.S. [Christian Mission Society] took over the work of the F.E.S. [Female Education Society], it could only supply funds for the teachers' salaries. Money had to be raised somehow for the other needs of the schools. How was this to be done? After much thought I hit upon a plan which, while it brought in funds for the schools in Galilee, also supplied a useful educational asset to Sunday Schools in England, America, and elsewhere.

I had noticed that the tourists eagerly bought up small wooden models of the native plough, and of the pottery jars in which the women fetched water from the Virgin's fountain. I expanded the idea into a series of models, and other articles, illustrating and explaining references in the Bible. By so doing, their inner meaning was unveiled to the eyes and minds of the Europeans. Apart from its commercial aspect, the study and research provided me with a fascinating recreation. I built up quite a good business, with instincts inherited from my banker father.

Models were carved in wood, or in soft white limestone, by an invalid Nazareth carpenter, his sole tool an ordinary pocket knife. A peasant's home, a few inches in size, illustrated some thirty or more Scripture references, such as those I have already mentioned. Its roof, painted green to show the grass, lifted off, revealed the interior arrangements.

A pair of tiny cows with their yoke across their necks, and a little man in the appropriate dress of their driver, with his hand on the plough, was a delightful study. “Take my yoke upon you,” lights up with fresh meaning when (as the model showed) it implies working in partnership with the One who spoke those words. “My yoke is easy,” in contradistinction to the rough-hewn one which galls the neck beneath it. The yoke is a yoke for all that it implies of discipline and control. Yet it can be borne when one is in the company of Him who shares it.

Ploughing

The plough itself is a very simple wooden affair with one handle. The ploughing season begins with the “early rains” due about the middle of October. The peasant takes his plough down from where it hangs inside the house on the “nail” in the wall. He sharpens the triangular iron share in the blacksmith's forge. He makes any repairs to the wooden part, and the yoke, that may be necessary. Then, driving the pair of oxen before him, and riding on a donkey with the plough, he sets off for the “field” or portion of the village lands alloted to him. These communal lands are apportioned by the drawing of lots each year at the beginning of the ploughing season. The element of chance decides whether a man's land is good or bad for the coming year. Hence the words of the psalmist, “Thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.” (Psalm 16:5.)

On arrival the peasant discards his heavy outer garment or clock, which he lays on the ground beside the donkey, together with his midday meal of bread and olives or cheese tied up in a coloured handkerchief. The yoke is then fixed on the neck of the animals, the end of the plough is attached to it, and with his goad in one hand, and the other on the cross-bar handle of the plough, with a shout of encouragement to his beasts he moves off. Up and down the long furrows, only a few inches deep, he

toils till the sun tells him it is noon-time. Leaving the oxen yoked to the plough to chew the cud and rest, he walks back, maybe quite a long distance to where he started from. "Let not him that is in the field turn back to take his clothes," is another reference to sudden hurried departure.

With heavier rain a second ploughing is carried out. This is to the accompaniment of sowing the seed. This may be done either by scattering it broadcast and ploughing it in, or by a second person, often a woman, following the plougman and dribbling the seed into the furrow through a long-necked tin funnel.

Eagerly and anxiously the peasant follows the course of the rainy season, and prays for a good "latter rain" in April to swell the ripening corn. "Rain in April equals in value the plough and the oxen that draw it," according to the Arabic proverb. Rain seldom falls in May, and if it does it is not welcome; it comes too late to be of use. The ploughing is all done by men, but when the seed has germinated, and the good brown earth is covered with the green velvety sheen of its growth, the women go out in parties to weed out the obnoxious intruders.

A not uncommon sight is a woman walking to the fields carrying a cradle on her head with the baby in it, which has to be fed at intervals during the day. In the hill districts one may often see a picturesque little group of donkeys, waiting patiently under the olive trees, while babies sleep peacefully in small brightly-coloured carpet hammocks slung from the branches. The rain also brings out multitudes of wild flowers, notably the anemones, whose brilliant scarlet and purple and white makes another carpet under the trees.

The story is told of a high British official in recent times who was motoring across a plain where women were at work at some distance away in the fields. Curious, as always to know what work the peasants did, he stopped his car and enquired of the local District Officer who was with him, "Who are those people?" He was told, "Women." "Women?" said the official. "What are they doing?" The Englishman was unable to enlighten him. The enquirer, determined as ever, sent the District officer and an Arab official across the fields to find out. Seeing men approaching swiftly towards them the Arab women, as virtuous wives, fled shrieking in all directions! Crestfallen, the messengers returned. "They were planting tomatoes," said the Englishman. "They were weeding," said the Arab. Being of somewhat irascible temperament, the impatient enquirer bellowed, "Fools, both of you! You neither of you know anything about what it is your business to know! Get in!" and, to the driver, "Drive on!" Silence reigned in that car for a very long time!

The Harvest Season

Harvest season begins in July as a rule. This is the most important moment of the year to Nazareth peasants. Whole families leave their village homes and camp in the plains for weeks at a time.

Bedding and kitchen utensils are loaded on to donkeys, with the youngest children sitting on the top. The cradle with the baby in it goes on to the mother's head, and the other children toddle along as best they can. The oldest woman of the family is left to clear up and follow. She packs the cocks and hens into a large copper dish at the last moment. Then, winding a cloth to form a pad for her head under the heavy dish, she closes the outer door of the courtyard. She tucks the large wooden key into her belt, and strides away alone to rejoin her family. It is reckoned safe for *her* to go alone as she is an old woman.

The men do the reaping. With a slender rod tied to the left wrist for protection, the reaper thrusts an arm into the ripe corn. With the right hand he wields the tooth-edged sickle. He severs an armful and throws it down. The women following in his wake, gather up these armfuls and pile them together. They are then tied on to either side of a hinged wooden framework, formed in the shape of an arch. The donkey is brought forward, one side of the arch is lifted and dropped across its padded saddle. The animal looks like a walking corn stalk, its head hardly visible. Only its slender legs can be seen as it bustles off to the distant village threshing floor.

"He that goeth forth weeping, bearing his precious seed, shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." (Psalm 126:6.)

The Threshing Floor

A village threshing floor is one of the most fascinating and informative scenes to a Bible student. It opens up the meaning of many references which are obscure to the western mind.

Great golden mounds of straw stand at intervals, separated from each other. Each belongs to a given owner. The first step taken is the threshing out of the corn from the straw. This is done by means of a heavy, flat, wooden sledge-like implement which has an upward sloping front portion. It is called a "Mowrej." A donkey, a horse, a cow, or even a camel, attached to it with ropes, draws the sledge round and round the lower edge of the mound of straw, which is loosened and spread out for the purpose. A man, or a lad, stands on the wooden sledge to add weight to it, and also to drive the animal forward. (A tin vessel or tray is always to his hand to catch the animal's droppings lest they fall among the threshed-out corn.)

On the under side of the sledge deep holes are bored, varying in size from half an inch to perhaps two inches. They may be either round, or square. Into these depressions blocks of black basalt are fixed, rough-hewn, with sharp edges. As the "mowrej" is drawn over the straw, the friction caused by the basalt breaks up the straw and releases the seed corn from its containing ears. The final result is that of a mound of crushed and broken straw, with loose corn mixed up in it.

The Latin name for this sledge is "tribulum," from which comes our word "tribulation." The "mowrej" may well be regarded as typical of the grinding crushing weight of grief or illness, or some other great misfortune. A process which, if accepted in the right spirit, may lead to glorious character training. Thus, may we not say, the pure grain of the "overself" emerges from heavy tribulation, and the human soul, the Divine element, is released and enriched for service in the world.

"I beheld a great multitude which stood before the throne ...One of the elders said, 'These are they which came out of great tribulation...therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple...They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them into living fountains of water and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes'." (Rev. 7:9-17.)

Winnowing

Next comes the process of separating the corn from the mass of crushed straw in which it lies hidden.

The models made for me by the carpenter showed the three implements used in the process of winnowing. These are the fork, the fan and the shovel. The first is simply a wooden pitchfork, used to level down the mound of straw before it is threshed out. The fan is a large wooden fork with five broad, flat prongs. The shovel is just an ordinary wooden shovel.

The process of separating the corn from the heap of crushed straw must be done when there is a good strong breeze blowing across the threshing floor. By means of the "fan" a mass of crushed straw is thrown high into the air. The wind blows through it, carrying the particles of straw away, while the corn, being heavier, falls down at the feet of the winnower.

The words "straw" and "chaff" stand for three quite distinct things, known to the Arabs as (1) tayyar, (2) tibn, and (3) Kasal. The first of these is the very finest and lightest part. The Bible refers to it when it says, "The wicked are like the chaff which the wind bloweth away." The second, "tibn," is of middle weight, and is used for many purposes. It takes the place of our chopped hay and mixed with barley, is used for feeding horses, donkeys and cattle. Mixed with earth and water this same "tibn" forms wattle for making the bricks in Egypt. The women also mix it with a fine white earth to make ovens and portable braziers in which charcoal is burnt. St. Luke speaks of a fire of coal being in use on the night of our Lord's trial. Coal as we know it being unknown in Palestine, a brazier of charcoal is referred to.

Kasal is the heavier part of the straw which has knots in the stalk, or roots adhering to it. Being unusable for any purpose it remains on the threshing floor after the corn, and the "tibn" is carried away. The whole area is then cleared up into one mound of "kasal" with the shovel and swept with a broom made of the thorny burnet shrub. Late in the autumn blazing fires may be seen from a great distance, when all this rubbish is set alight. "But the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable." (St. Luke 3:17.)

The Seal

Another model which aroused deep interest was the "Seal." I discovered this implement quite by chance. One day I was sitting with my school teacher in the lunch hour on the threshing floor of the village of Mujeidel, watching the busy scene. Suddenly a tremendous commotion arose among the men working at the far end. Loud voices, and cursings, and fierce oaths were about to end in a real fight. Then above the uproar I heard the words, "We'll ask the lady," and the crowd rushed to where I was sitting. "She won't lie, we can believe her word," they said. I was asked, "Did you not wander among the mounds of corn over there?" "Yes. Why do you ask?"

They turned to one among them. "You see,"they said, "we told you so but, you son of a dog, you would not listen."

"What is it all about?" I questioned.

"Well, you see, O honoured lady, there is a strong wind blowing and, as you passed, it carried your skirt against my pile of corn and disturbed the writing."

"Writing?" said I, "what do you mean?"

"Come and see," was the answer. So I rose and went with them.

They showed me a pile of corn. On it I could read the words, “Ya Karim” (O Merciful One!) clearly standing out round the bottom edge. In one place the lettering had been obliterated and this was the cause of the hubbub that had arisen. Puzzled and intrigued, I enquired what it all meant. One man, chosen as spokesman, then explained the matter to me. He said, “It's this way, O Lady. When the winnowing process is complete, as mine was, the corn is all piled up in one heap. Before I can take any part of it for myself, the tax-collector has to take his portion. So, to make sure that none is removed before he does so, the pile is sealed all round at the bottom. This ensures that not a grain can be taken because, if it were, the lettering would be disturbed by the falling down of the corn above it. Your skirt had obliterated the word, and the 'Simsar' (the tax collector) said I had robbed him by taking some of the corn myself. Now he has heard the truth from your own lips, and he knows I spoke the truth when I denied his charge.”

So the matter was settled in peace with the re-sealing of the pile. I asked to be shown the “seal.” It was a heavy block of oak, black with age, about a foot long, twelve inches broad and some two inches deep. A curved piece of wood formed the handle on the upper side. Cut deep into the underside, backwards, were the words, “Ya Karim.” When pressed into the corn the words stood out the right way round. I begged to be allowed to buy it, and did so at a price which would supply a dozen new ones to takes its place. “It has had its day, its life is done; take it, O Lady!”

The Implications of Sealing

Studying the subject of “the seal,” I realised that, translated into the spiritual sphere, it unveils the inner meaning of the word, “The Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” (Ephesians 4:30.)

The seal may be taken to typify the claims of an owner other than the labourer. The pile of corn may represent the peasant himself. Before he can reckon to be in full possession of his property, he acknowledges, by the act of sealing, his recognition of the fact that he owes allegiance to a higher authority, that of his overlord, the Government which takes the taxes. The verse quoted above may be read in connection with the passage in I Corinthians 6:19 : “Ye are not your own...therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's.”

Where the incarnate Lord Jesus was in touch with men through His human personality, His death broke the physical relationship. The link nevertheless was not severed by His Death. It was kept united by the coming of “that Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed.” That is to say, we are claimed as being possessed by, and as being the property of, the Divine Overlord of the universe. The spirit or soul in man is but an infinitesimal fraction of the true, universal Life Force “in which we live and move and have our being.”

What a glorious inheritance is ours did we but recognize it! No wonder the Great Teacher said, “Ye must be born again!” A new life comes to birth with the realization that within each individual item of humanity there lies enshrined the germ of the spiritual ego, in other words, the Divine Overself. The world is but a hecatomb of dormant souls until it recognises that “Ye are not your own.” Re-birth comes when the soul of man is quickened and vitalized by a recognition of its Divine Origin. Then, awake to the claims of its Divine Overlord, it yields its allegiance to Him. The soul knows it is “sealed.” The material ego ceases to hold sway, the soul abandons itself to the dynamic Life Force of

“that Holy Spirit of God” and knows itself a true “child of God.”

“Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”

Before leaving the subject of the village threshing floor, I must put down a story relating to it.

The Hornet and the Blind Bird

An old sheikh from the village of Tireh, near Haifa, came to me one morning with some grievance of his own. We chatted on. In the course of our talk I mentioned how grievous it was that the rain had been so long delayed. It was about the middle of December, and none had fallen. The sheikh said, “The Creator is angry with us for our many misdeeds, it it true, O honoured lady, but listen while I tell you a story.”

“Some years ago I was sitting with a party of my friends on our own threshing floor. As we talked I noticed a hornet. It came buzzing round several times. Each time it came I saw that it picked up a grain of wheat in its mouth and flew away with it. I drew the attention of my companions to it. Puzzled as to what a hornet wanted with a grain of wheat, for a hornet does not eat corn, we all watched for it to reappear. At last curiousity overcame us, and I sent forth my son to find out where it went. It took time for him to follow if, as he could only go a certain distance before the hornet flew out of his sight. It always went the same way. So at last he reached his journey's end. After some hours he came back. 'O my father,' he said. “You won't believe what I tell you. When the hornet got to a certain bush it flew round and round it. Then suddenly it darted into the middle of it. I watched carefully to see what it did. There, O my father, under the bush was a young bird. When it heard the hornet buzzing above it, it opened its mouth and the hornet dropped the grain of wheat into it. Then it flew away!' 'Don't lie to me, O my son!' I said. 'You only say that to cover up your own laziness in not doing what I told you to. You did not follow the hornet all the way!'

'I did, O my father, and I have brought with me the proof of it!' He opened his hand. On it was the little bird, and when I looked at it I found it was blind.

Now, O lady, if the Creator can change the habit of a hornet to make it feed a blind bird, will he not take care of the sons of men, and send the rain in His own good time? Allah is merciful, O lady, and we must trust him.”

I sat rebuked, but unbelieving that his story could be true. I took much trouble to find out about it. It was vouched for by many peasants of the same age as the sheikh. All confirmed it. One of them said, “It is a well-known fact among us, we all know it is true.”

Women's Work in connection with Wheat and Straw

In the agricultural life of a village the women have played their part in weeding and helping to gather the sheaves together in the fields. The men's work ends when the corn is finally stored away in the house. But here the women's special work just begins. The very poor go out to glean in the fields. They may be seen when the harvest is gathered in, coming home with, sometimes, a pitifully small sheaf, carried on the head. This they will beat out with a wooden mallet. “It will provide an extra loaf

or two, O lady!"

On the threshing floor itself, though women have no share in the actual work carried on there, they may be seen carefully selecting lengths of straw. These must be as long as possible and free from knots.

Domestic utensils are few in a village home and no such thing as a tray is available. The women therefore make its equivalent from the straw they have gathered on the threshing floor. Natural straw, dyed in vivid colours, is, during the ensuing months, worked up into baskets and round "trays." These "trays" known as "tabaks", often as large as a yard in circumference, are strong and capable of carrying fairly heavy loads. The craft is very ancient one. In old days vegetable dyes for the straw were made at home, but now horrible aniline dyes can be bought very cheaply, and save time as well as trouble.

The skill of the women is inherited, as are also the intricate coloured patterns they weave into their work. The start of the tabak is made with a few lengths of straw, held together by being tightly bound round, and over, with a single straw, which flattens itself out in the process. This operation continues in ever-widening circles, each of which is sewn to its neighbour with a stitch of straw, until the beautiful round tray is finished. It is neither frigidly stiff, nor floppy. Its chief, though not exclusive, purpose is to carry the small cakes of dough to the oven where they are baked into loaves of bread, and to carry the finished bread back to the house. In bridal processions, the women carry the bride's trousseau on their heads on these trays that all may see what beautiful clothes she has. As they go they utter loud cries and trills of joy! Our English Bible says that when St. John the Baptist was murdered his head was brought to Herodias "on a charger." The Arabic word used is "tabak," a straw tray.

Although they are made exclusively by the village women, these trays are also used for carrying the dough to and from the ovens by the women in the towns. A loop, woven into the outer circle, enables the tray to be hung up when not in use. A row of these artistically coloured and patterned tabaks adorn the walls like pictures in an English home.

The Baking of Bread

Ovens in the villages are primitive affairs, built in different styles in different parts of the country. One type has already been mentioned; another is that of a yard-deep circular pit. The sides are of very smooth clay. These ovens are heated by means of burning branches of the shrub which covers the hill sides. It is of the pistachio tribe, and is very resinous. This shrub is mentioned as "the grass of the field, which today is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven." (St. Matt. 6:30.)

Ovens in the towns are stone built, with a vaulted roof, and a floor of red bricks. They are heated by these shrubs which are burnt on the floor itself. When this is sufficiently heated the ashes are brushed to one side. The lumps of dough, three or four in number, are placed on a broad flat tongue of wood with a long handle. The baker introduces this into the heart of the oven. He withdraws it with an expert jerk, which leaves the dough on the hot floor. When baked, the loaves are withdrawn by placing the tongue under each in turn, and lifting them on to the straw tray waiting for them.

An interesting feature of this type of oven is, that in order to retain the heat a thick bed of salt is laid under the tiled floor. After a certain length of time the salt perishes. The tiles are taken up, the salt removed, and thrown into the road outside the door of the oven. "Salt is good," said Jesus, "but if the

salt has lost its savour wherewith shall it be salted? It is fit for nothing but to be trodden under foot of man." I remember on day seeing what looked like a snowy patch in the road as I passed an oven door. "What's this?" I asked. "That is the salt from under the floor; it is old and has lost its power to heat the tiles, so it has been thrown out, and new salt put in its place."

We, who get our bread delivered at our door, or buy a loaf at the shop round the corner, know nothing of the labour that has gone to produce it. To the Arab housewife a batch of bread is the last of a long series of toilsome efforts.

Swept up off the threshing floor the wheat is full of extraneous matter, such as small stones, lumps of dry caked earth, etc. It must be cleansed, and these impurities removed. To do this, the woman sits down with her large round sieve held in her hands, and her elbows resting on her knees. A small pile of grain is placed on the sieve. With dexterous jerky movements of the sieve, up and down, round and round the corn is driven to one side, the dirt to the other. The clean corn is gathered together by her hands and piled to the left of her, the unwanted remainder is thrown off to the right of her.

This process is referred to by our Lord in His words to St. Peter, "Satan hath sought to sift thee as wheat." When the corn has been sifted, it is stored in the bins. Then after it has again been picked over it has to be ground into flour.

In Bible times this grinding was done by women in a handmill. Later on mills driven by water relieved the women of grinding. Nowadays the puff-puff of the oil-driven mills resounds through the length and breadth of the land.

When a family has a quantity of wheat ready to be ground, it is put in a sack, tied to a donkey's back, and is driven to the mill by one of the men. When ground, it is stored in a small bin, from which it is the housewife's duty to prepare the dough for baking in the oven.

Breadmaking for the family is a very laborious task. First water must be fetched from the fountain. The empty pottery jar placed sideways on her head, the woman sets out. The spring may be some distance away from the house. It often takes an hour or even more before, with her full jar carried erect on her head, she arrives again at her own door. The time taken is not always due to the distance traversed. The well-head is the "salon" of the village women. These, no less than their more aristocratic counterparts, love to be busy over other women's affairs. "Have you heard?" "Do you know?" is as common at the Virgin's Fountain in Nazareth as it is in Mayfair.

Superstition has it that if, on setting out for a journey one meets a woman with an empty jar, ill luck will follow. On the other hand, if the water jar be full it denotes good fortune.

When the woman returns, she will soon start the bread-making. Water ready, flour to hand, a lump of old dough for yeast, is all that she requires to begin the kneading, which goes on till the dough is ready in the large wooden bowl. "For a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." With a sigh of relief the woman pats it smooth, and says a prayer over it as follows: "I've leavened you, and toiled over you, may the Lord of Heaven plant a blessing in you. From you comes the bread to eat at midday, and at the evening meal, and also from you comes provision for the road." With this blessing a cross is then made upon the white cushion in the basin, and its contents are taken out, a handful at a time. These are patted flat with the palm of the hand, or with a rolling pin, and the dough, in many cases about a quarter of an

inch thick, is then set to rise under a warm covering.

Entering a house in Cana one day, I was about to sit down on bedding laid down over the rush matting. "No, not there," said the mother, "the bedding is keeping the dough warm for it to rise before I bake the bread."

The medicinal property of yeast is well known to the Arabs, especially with regard to the cure of boils. A crop of them had worried a friend of mine for some time, without yielding to the doctor's treatment. Old Handoomy, the midwife of a village, came to see her one day. "Oh yes!" she said, "I know all about boils. The father appears first, then he takes to himself a wife, and they bring a family of children to birth! I will give you a remedy." She brought some pellets of yeast and the boils disappeared like magic.

Another form in which wheat is used is that of "Burghul." The wheat grains are first boiled, then spread out to dry in the sun. This is mostly done on the roof to prevent the depredation of the cocks and hens down below. When dry, the boiled wheat is ground in the mill. It may be either coarsely or finely ground, and is served like rice.

In ancient times, before mills for grinding were known, whole wheat was first pounded in the mortar in order to separate it from its outer husk. The whole art of doing so lay in bringing the pestle down at exactly the right angle, and with exactly the right amount of force, otherwise the grain would not remain whole but would become crushed with the husks. The verse in Proverbs 27:22 takes on a fresh light in this connection. "Though thou shouldest bray (crush) a fool in mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him." The meaning of the words may be translated thus: "Though thou put a fool in a mortar, and pound him with a pestle, his folly is such an integral portion of him that you will not separate it from him." This pestle and mortar was also copied as a model in white stone, and I used to sell it to travelers in Nazareth.

The day's work in the villages begins at dawn. For a man it ends at sunset, when he comes home to find the one hot meal of the day awaiting him. For a woman, however, her day's work ends only when, the beds laid out in rows on the rush matting, she is the last to lay her weary self down alongside her husband and the children she has borne to him.

The Holy Incense

The three years I spent in Nazareth were happy ones on the whole. To awake each morning with a sense of what that one little town stands for in the history of the world was in itself an inspiration, and a call to try and follow in the footsteps of Him who trod those "holy fields in Galilee."

My job was a responsible and congenial one. The rides out to the villages broke the monotony of town life to a country-bred woman. The need for money for the schools becoming ever more urgent, I set to work to think out other models and fresh examples to illustrate the Bible, and found they all sold well. One of these new contents of my "shop" drew an enquiry from the Kew authorities. They asked me how I had arrived at a statement I had made, and I think I was able to satisfy them as to its accuracy. This concerned specimens which I had prepared of the ingredients of the "holy incense," used only on the special altar for burning incense which stood before the ark of the testimony in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle. In Exodus 30:34-38, "The Lord said unto Moses, take unto thee sweet spices, stacte

and onycha, and galbanum. These sweet spices, with pure frankincense of each shall there be a like weight. And thou shalt make it a perfume, a confection after the art of the apothecary, tempered together, pure and holy. And thou shalt beat some of it very small, and put it before the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with thee. And it shall be unto you most holy."

It was a matter of real research to identify these four spices, but I finally succeeded in doing so.

Stacte

This is a thick gummy substance expressed from the fruit of a large bush which grows wild in profusion , especially in Galilee. It bears flowers like a syringa, but much smaller and equally fragrant. The fruit is a berry about the size of a hazel nut, green at first but turning to a russet brown when ripe. Its identification was not difficult for it is well known among the Arabs as a remedy for a cough. They burn the gum also in a sick room for a purpose better imagined than described.

I arrived at this conclusion through the Arabic word "abhar" which means perfume. An oak forest in which the stacte shrub grows abundantly takes its name from it – the "abhariyeh." This is the forest through which we often drove on the road from Haifa to Nazareth.

Onycha

This item was most difficult to track down; it took me nearly two years to do so. Enquiries in Palestine proved futile, but at last I found it in Damascus.

Sitting on the platform of his tiny cupboard-like shop, in the Street of the Perfumers, was a veritable "Ancient of Days." I asked for what I wanted. "Oh, yes, I have it," he said, and he reached up his emaciated brown hand to a shelf above his head. He drew from the top shelf a small oval wooden box, begrimed with dust and brown with age. Opening it with deliberate care he said, "These are what you seek, O lady." He let trickle through his fingers a small quantity of the weird-looking contents of the box. I understood at once the implication of the Arabic word I had used without any apprehension of its significance. The word was "Dhafaigh," which means finger nails. For what lay before my eyes had the exact appearance of dried and shriveled up finger nails.

"Can these have a fragrant scent?" I asked in amazement. The old man replied, "There is nothing which throws off a sweeter perfume when put on a brazier of hot charcoal."

"What is their origin?" I enquired, still unbelieving. "They surely are not human finger nails?"

"Indeed not, honoured lady. Let me explain to you. You have no doubt often seen, and perhaps eaten, the big brown snails that come out after the rain? These are the caps which seal the opening after the animal has withdrawn into its shell. These, and nothing else, are what you are seeking."

I thanked him and bought all he had. He little knew that he had solved a mystery that had puzzled me for so long.

Galbanum

This ingredient is the only mineral substance in the whole of the incense. When dry it is sold in lumps of hard, sun-baked clay, of a mustard colour. It is found in Arabia and the Sinai peninsula. Unlike its fellow components, it gives off a harsh, acrid smell when laid on hot coals.

Frankincense

This is the fragrant gum which exudes in glistening drops from a tree of the conifer tribe.

The incense thus ordered to be made was sacred. "Ye shall not make to yourselves any according to the composition thereof, it shall be for thee holy for the Lord. Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people. (Exodus 30:38.)

The expert knowledge of the chemist was required to temper the ingredients into one complete blend. It was for use only in "the place where I will meet with thee." In Mosaic days the Lord promised to "meet with His people" in "the tabernacle of the congregation." In terms of modern speech, this would read "in places where people meet for public worship."

In certain Churches to-day incense is still offered during the service as a symbol of acceptable prayer and praise. "The smoke of the incense," says St. John, "ascended up with the prayers of the Saints before God." (Rev. 8:4.)

The smoke of the incense rising before God is a truly beautiful symbol. I should like to suggest that it bears a deeper significance when studied in relation to the several ingredients of incense. The smoke which ascends before God is nothing more or less than the emanation of its component parts. What are they? Three of them are sweet spices, and the fourth is different; it is acrid and harsh. May these four items not be typical of the essence of true prayer, whether offered in public or in private? "The place where I will meet with thee," need not necessarily be a place of public worship. It may equally be in the privacy of one's own room, or under the open vault of heaven. Yet, wherever true prayer ascends before God it seems to have four special attributes. The sweet spices may be taken to represent the three graces in prayer: petition, praise and adoration. But unless accompanied by the bitter ingredient of humiliating confession and repentance, there can be no true prayer. "God be merciful to me, a sinner," was a prayer acceptable to God.

-Part Two-

الليلة الثانية وثلاثون من حديث
ألف ليلة وليلة

الليلة الثالثة وثلاثون من حديث
ألف ليلة وليلة

CHAPTER TWELVE

GOING BACK

I always felt that I'd go back to the Holy Land. And when I returned, I wanted to have two things. The first was long hair. When I went in the early 90's all the women seemed to have long hair. I had a short, brown bob, reasonably fashionable at the time in North America, but the long hair stirred up something inside of me, a jealousy. Apart from an occasional trim, I haven't had a serious haircut since.

The second thing was I wanted to be able to speak the language. The languages being Hebrew and Arabic, a few years ago, shortly after I'd discovered the British Mandate in Palestine and my place in the Middle East, I bought two sets of CDs, one Conversational Hebrew, the other Conversational Arabic. I don't know why I picked Arabic to do first. Maybe because A comes before H. More likely it was because they both came in a simple unlabeled black case and I didn't know what I was picking.

I planned to rush through it in my usual slipshod way, but something about Arabic slowed me right down. I *had to* slow down. Everything was new. It was nothing like English or French. It had sounds in it that don't exist in the English language, things like a gargle, a gag and even something that sounds like one is being choked to death. It's never dragged out. They can make these sound so quickly that it's barely discernible to the English ear and so when we say *Baghdad*, we don't gag in the middle.

I would sit on the couch and sound like I was trying to cough up phlegm and my husband would ask me what I was saying in Arabic.

How could such a language enchant me? Well, of course, it wasn't my pronunciation that was enchanting, it was the language itself. Each new word I learned was a glimpse into the real world of the Arabs, a portal to their culture.

Arabic is different from English in that it has two forms, the written and the spoken.

If I chose to learn the Modern Standard Arabic, I'd be learning the language of newspapers, books, and news broadcasters. I would sound formal to any Arab listener but at least I would be understood across the Arab world.

I chose to follow my heart and concentrate on the colloquial Arabic of Syria, Palestine and Jordan. I started listening to the language CDs and while my children rampaged around me, I learned to carefully say, *anna baraf shwayet Arabee, mo neeh k'teer.* I know a little bit of Arabic, but not very well.

I was thrilled when I bought *West Beirut*, a thoroughly engaging movie set in the civil war in Lebanon,

and actually understood some of the things that were being said. But I still had to fight the fear that if I ever actually opened my mouth and spoke to a real Arab, everything I'd learned would be forgotten or even if I could mutter a few words, they'd be incomprehensible.

I was pretty sure that a small family value store in my town was run by two Arab brothers because I thought I understood a couple of words when they were speaking to each other. But I was too chicken to say *Takee Arabee?*" Do you speak Arabic? What if they didn't like me "understanding" what they said? (All two words of it.) What is they weren't even Arab? What if they were speaking Farsi or Kurdish?

I was also pretty sure my dentist was Arabic. His name was Dr. Salaama. *Ma salaamee, Dr. Salaama* would run through my head before a dentist appointment but I never actually had the nerve to say good-bye in Arabic to him.

Malish. Never mind. My time would come. A real emergency perhaps. Maybe I would be on the subway and encounter a whole group of lost Arab tourists. I could point on the map and say *Nehnu hon*. We are here. If they asked me about *Mahata Union*, Union Station, I could point on the map and say *heneek*, there. Perhaps I could even accompany them to the station and we could all drink *shwayet qahway,* some coffee. It would be a glorious moment of human connection.

But not likely to happen since most Arabs speak English.

If most Arabs can speak English, why on earth would I bother to learn Arabic?

The language itself is beautiful. I just love the sound of it. I also love how it looks. At the same time I was learning to speak it, I was trying to find time in the afternoon to learn the alphabet.

I decided that one way of practicing my Arabic would be to buy two copies of a Tintin book, one in Arabic and one in English. That way I could learn useful expressions like "blistering barnacles". (Any expression can turn out to be useful. In *The Lion in the Sand*, Gerald Butt talked to a man who learned Arabic in Lebanon at the Middle East Centre for Arab Studies, known as MECAS, that was established by the British in 1944 and closed down in 1978 due to the civil war. One of the former students reports that "they had to learn fifty new words every night including, mysteriously to me, such things as the word for having six fingers on the right hand. An Arabic word which you wouldn't have thought was essential for anybody." But one day, while still in Lebanon, another former student "came bustling into my office one morning saying he'd just been visited by an Imam from Tripoli in northern Lebanon who had six fingers on the right hand and he was able to use the word. He thought this was the greatest triumph that MECAS had ever had.")

The plan wasn't as good as I thought. The Tintin script was a bit different from the Arabic script I had learned, in the same way, I'm sure, that a different font can alter English letters. So "blistering barnacles" completely confounded me the first day I went through the Tintin books. I hunted through my Hans Wehr Arabic-English dictionary and never found anything that resembled "blistering." I did manage to learn "good idea", *fikr tayyib*, which would probably be more useful anyhow.

Every session where I was able to learn a little more Arabic left me feeling refreshed. It was like collecting words and lining them up on a shelf in my mind. I was proud of each one.

Plus, it kept my brain busy with a grown-up activity, something a mother of four children desperately needs. My kids came in handy because I could practice on them. My older more sophisticated pre-teen daughters weren't too keen on being spoken to in a foreign language, although my younger daughter (*bintee zareeray*) liked shouting "*Uskut!*", hush, shut up, at my older daughter (*bintee kebeeray*). So it was my sons who became *ibnee kebeer* and *ibnee zareer.* In fact *ibnee zareer,* my youngest son, was the most fluent in Arabic. His pronunciation was exquisite. "*Ibnee zareer tukkee Arabee, neeh k'teer,*" I might be able to proudly say to someone someday. My younger son speaks Arabic very well. My husband encouraged me to speak Arabic to the boys. Who knows when it could come in handy?

"*Behteb tishrub she?*" I would ask them. Would you like to drink something? "*T'fuddal*", here you go, I would say when I gave it to them.

Shukruun, thank you, became part of my everyday language.

I often said "*Ba'a dane. Ba'a dane*." Later, later.

" *Al-hamdulillaah*!" I would shout every time my husband got home from work. Praise be to God. I'm sure anyone with children can relate.

Insh'allah, God willing, by the time I made it back to a genuine Arab souk, speaking Arabic would be second nature to me. In any case, I decided fear was silly. Better to speak it badly than not speak it at all. But I could totally sympathize with the man Gerald Butt talked to who had been through the MECAS school. "Of course we practised Arabic, but it was Lebanese Arabic, and when you got down to the Trucial Oman, they mocked our Arabic and I was very shy about using my Arabic there, so reverted to a few very basic words."

I continued to read about the British experience in the Middle East. My interest had extended to their involvement in Egypt and Iraq, as well as Palestine. Now that I was learning Arabic, I found myself more sensitive to the Arab experiences. Because clearly, had I been there, they would have been the people I would have been able to communicate with. (OK, OK, not exactly communicate, but at least be able to say *Sabaahl khayr,* Good Morning to. I would have joined the ranks of the many English ladies that one British official commented on, the ones who fancied themselves Arabists because they could do a bit of bartering in the souk. Does pointing at objects one would like to purchase count as speaking?)

So my sensitivity was now to the Arab cause. And I couldn't help noticing the justice of it. In fact, it was so obvious that I couldn't understand how it had happened. How had the Palestinian Arabs lost their land?

Oh, I understood the mechanics of it. Absentee landlords had sold their fields to Zionists who were willing to pay outrageously high prices and then who wouldn't sell the land for anything. And I understood the desperation of the Jews running from a Europe that had tried to exterminate them. But why had the West stood by and let a whole people be displaced? Why did the Palestinians have to lose their home to atone for Germany's massacre?

The answer was obvious to me. Bad theology. Bad theology led to the Balfour Declaration, where a

third party could give a first party's land away to a second party. Bad theology usually screws someone. In fact, I had been surrounded by bad theology all my life so at this point, I should be pretty good at spotting it.

There was nothing offensive about Britain driving the Turks out of Palestine. It was the will of Arab nationalism that the Arabs be master in their own home. There was nothing wrong with cleaning the garbage and establishing some basic order in Jerusalem once they'd taken it. The Turks had abandoned the government and there was an obvious void. But there were also a lot of capable Arabs ready to fill the void.

The British encountered Arabs in Jerusalem who were educated, lived in homes filled with books, and had the resources to throw parties that the British enjoyed attending.

But bad theology had already been applied, and the British had to live up to their promises to the Jews. They paid for it in the blood of their soldiers who got caught between irreconcilable promises.

Frances Newton describes how the Arabs felt after World War I:

...it was inevitable that the Arabs in the 1920's saw a portentous future ahead, and steeled themselves to meet it. They found themselves confronted with the forces of organised Jewry...backed by the Press and the Governments of two hemispheres, with Great Britain in the front rank. What weapons had they with which to meet this Goliath? Powerless and voiceless, they had but one stone in their sling – the righteousness of their stand against the invasion and domination of their homeland by the gigantic forces arrayed against them.

Frances Newton describes how right from the start, the Arabs protested to the British administration in Jerusalem as well as to the government in London. She says:

Everything the Arabs could peacefully do they did in those early days. They formed National Committees of Moslems and Christians in the principal towns, conferences were held at which village sheikhs were as prominent as Effendi townsmen. Resolutions of protest were sent to Jerusalem and cabled to London. A striking symbol of unity was adopted – a badge with the Crescent and the Cross inside it...

I had heard at some point that the Arabs missed their opportunity when they rejected the Partition of Palestine by the United Nations. But what actually happened was that the Arabs didn't want to give away half their country and planned to fight to keep it all. Under any other circumstances, the British would have probably supported the efforts of the Arabs. In fact, many individual Britons did. The famous Arab Legion of Trans-Jordan was filled with British officers.

The British relationship with the Jews had become increasingly complicated. They had fought to get rid of Hitler, but they had then prevented the remaining Jews who wanted to from getting to Palestine. This change of heart toward the Zionist cause had come about partly because some were sympathetic to the cause of Arab nationalism, but mostly because the British had to try to maintain friendly relations with the other Arab nations who since the 30's had been producing much of the world's oil supply.

The Balfour Declaration had involved them in the Zionist movement. But the Zionist movement was

born in the late 19th century, well before the Balfour Declaration. There were already communal farms in the land before the British came. How would things have evolved if the British hadn't tried to hasten the Second Coming?

In *Mandate Days*, a Sergeant Denley describes his relationship with Dov Gruner, an Irgun member in the Acre gaol. Gruner had been "hounded all over Europe" and had decided that "once he had arrived in Palestine that":

this is where I stop running. I'm not going to run any further...This is our place and this is where we will stay...and at that time I [Sergeant Denley] thought to myself we've got no chance, no chance to beat people like this, because most of – lots of the Police had no real dedication and were merely doing their job, and doing very well mind you because it was an excellent police force, but to dedicated people like this, I thought we didn't have a great deal of chance to make any solution, it would have to be a government solution and not a solution by force.

When Dov Gruner's death sentence was confirmed, the two men met to say goodbye. Sergeant Denley describes it:

I put my hand through and he took both my hands in his, and said in different times you and I would have been great friends, and I walked out into the sunshine and Grant said something to me, oh I don't know what he said, I didn't take notice of him, I was – tears were running down my eyes, very upset – that upset me because I don't think he – something was in his personality so much impressed me, that was the point, it has never ever left me, and 29 years later I still remember it.

Before I had read the survey of the Holy Land, I sort of imagined a land of smoldering ruins left behind by the exiled Jews. I could almost see the smoke rising from the remains of their villages, a land just waiting for the return of her people. What I had discovered was an unbroken chain of human habitation and the universal rule that the conqueror takes the spoils. The land had not languished but had been a backdrop for countless human dramas.

For those willing to fight, the land had been willing to be taken.

When the United Nations partitioned Palestine in 1947, Jerusalem was supposed to be an international city with a corridor to the sea. It never happened. With the Jews on one side and the Arabs on the other, the battle for Jerusalem was intense and the United Nations never had a chance to stake a claim. Even worse, the United Nations negotiator, Count Folke Bernadotte, was assassinated by a member of Lehi, a Jewish extremist group that had broken away from the Irgun when Irgun had decided to temporarily halt their acts of terror against the British during World War II.

The greatest reason that the Jews won their War of Independence in 1948 was desperation. They had no other place to go. The great miracle, according to evangelical historians, was how little Israel took on the entire Arab world and won. But the entire Arab world didn't have the motivation that the Jews did. The Arab Legion from Trans-Jordan, neighbours to the new state, fought well and when the fighting was over, held onto East Jerusalem and what was then called the West Bank. But many of the other Arab nations that didn't share a border with Israel but had sent men to fight, ended up deciding to go home rather than be killed by the determined Jews.

One thing that had irked me was how Harry Truman had bugged the British to let more Jews into Palestine after World War II. The British, who still had to patrol the streets of Jerusalem and the rest of Palestine, didn't want to antagonize the Arabs anymore than they had to. Why didn't America let in the more Jews? Even before Hitler had carried out his genocide, President Roosevelt had been concerned about Jewish persecution in Europe. He had organized a conference of the Western nations to address the problem. Although the speeches were eloquent, only the Dominican Republic actually offered to allow more Jews into her country.

An evangelical Christian would say it was God's will that the Jews go to Palestine. Maybe so, but I think a lot of the concentration camp survivors would have rather headed to America to try to recover rather than to arrive on the shores of Palestine and immediately be handed a gun and told to go fight for their new country.

I'm ashamed that Canada didn't offer the Jews a new home. God knows we've got the room. Instead, it was easier to let them fight their way into Palestine and then be surrounded by hostility for the next 60 years. Was it all part of God's greater plan or was it just another proof that the teaching of Jesus Christ, to love your neighbour as yourself, is practiced only by a tiny minority of people?

History made me think the latter was more likely.

Karen Armstrong's *Jerusalem: One City, Three Faiths*, includes the fascinating account of Saladin taking Jerusalem during the time of the Crusades. Baron Balian of Ibelin was one of the survivors of the Battle of Hattin and asked Saladin if he could return to Jerusalem to get his wife and family and take them to Tyre. The Christians of Jerusalem, knowing that Saladin would be coming soon, begged him to supervise the defense of the city. Balian returned to Saladin and the Sultan agreed to let him take charge of the defense of Jerusalem.

With very little to work with, once the outer walls fell, Balian approached Saladin for terms of peace. Initially, Saladin said that he would treat the inhabitants of the city the same way the Crusaders had treated the Muslims, slaughter and slavery. Balian said that before that happened, the Christians would kill their wives and children, burn their houses and "pull down the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa before coming to meet Saladin's army." Saladin consulted the religious leaders and there was agreement to take the city peacefully. The Franks would not be permitted to stay, but as prisoners they could be ransomed for a reasonable sum. The story carries on:

Saladin and his troops entered Jerusalem as conquerors. The sultan kept his word. Not a single Christian was killed. The barons could easily afford to ransom themselves, but the poor people could not, and they became prisoners of war. Large numbers were released, however, because Saladin was moved to tears by the plight of the families who were being separated when they were taken into slavery. Al-Adil, Saladin's brother, was so distressed that he asked for a thousand prisoners for his own use and released them on the spot. All the Muslims were scandalized to see the richer Christians escaping with their wealth without making any attempt to ransom their fellow countrymen. When the Muslim historian, Imad ad-Din saw Patriarch Heraklius leaving the city with his chariots groaning under the weight of his treasure, he begged Saladin to confiscate this wealth to redeem the remaining prisoners. But Saladin refused; oaths and treaties must be kept to the letter. "Christians everywhere will remember the kindness we have done them." Saladin was right. Christians in the West were uneasily aware that this Muslim ruler behaved in a far more "Christian" manner than had their own

Crusaders when they conquered Jerusalem.

Rather than accept Saladin as the noble enemy and acknowledge that perhaps not all people who call themselves Christian, actually are Christian, the Western Christians "evolved legends that made Saladin a sort of honorary Christian; some of these tales even asserted that the sultan had been secretly baptized."

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre with its Crusader facade, was not my style of Christianity but it did represent something I could relate to – Western Christians coming to Jerusalem and trying to belong to it. Unfortunately, the results could be brutal as in the case of the Crusaders who went on a rampage, killing all Muslims and Jews in the city. For that matter, the Crusaders didn't even like the Eastern Christians. It took awhile for the East to soften the hardened barbarians but in the end many of them came to love the comforts of their new home. They even started taking baths.

Bernard Hamilton, in *The Leper King and his Heirs* describes the Franks who had adapted to the local culture:

Many of them lived in stone-built houses and could afford to dress in fabrics such as silk and cotton, which were prohibitively expensive in the West. They made regular use of the public baths which existed in all the main cities and they ate the more varied and exotic foods which the land supplied, although there were limits to their adaptability – they were, for example, unwilling to eat rice.

Once they had settled down they even took Eastern wives, so long as they were Christian or converts to Christianity.

The Franks held onto Jerusalem 88 years, longer than Israel has so far. Like the Israelis, they were continually surrounded by enemies. The rulers in the Holy Land have changed many times going back to the days of the Jebusites.

Evangelicals look to the Old Covenant for promises that Israel will return to their land before the end of all things. They point to prophecies that they say have yet to be fulfilled. But Jesus himself said in Matthew 11, "...all the prophets and the law prophesied until John", (the Baptist). It's repeated in Luke 16, "The law and the prophets were until John."

So don't look to the Law or the Prophets for any future events. Look to history. Josephus is packed with stories that most Christians don't realize happened in Israel and can be applied to some of the prophecies that appear to be unfulfilled. The New Covenant doesn't touch on the topic of the Jews returning to their land. The Jews were already back in the land by then. The prophecies that talk about a restoration were written around the time the Jewish people were taken to to Babylon as captives of King Nebuchadnezzar.

The land of Israel was promised to Abraham and his descendants by God, but then the writer of Hebrews forces us to rethink what this means when he says that Abraham was looking for a city that was built by God. Later, the writer of Hebrews announces that we have come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.

Jesus announced to anyone who was listening that his kingdom wasn't of this world.

It's just as well our kingdom is not of this world. The Holy Land has been a bloody place for Christians. When Christianity was under the patronage of Rome, Palestine was dominated by Christians. This continued when the power shifted to Constantinople. Shortly before Islam conquered the region, the Persians threatened Palestine. Again, the end of the world seemed imminent. In *God's Crucible*, David Levering Lewis writes:

Crisscrossed by dislocating armies, already ravaged by drought and famine, and bereaved by the loss of Antioch and Damascus, the Christian world shuddered at the seeming fulfillment of the Apocalypse when Jerusalem fell in 614...Steadied by its patriarch, Jerusalem's populace withstood two months of siege by Iranian sappers and Jewish auxiliaries before accepting what by some accounts were Shahrbaraz's generous surrender terms. For the first time since the destruction of the Second Temple and their expulsion by Titus in 70 CE, the Jews won the right to occupy Jerusalem. The horrific sequel is so overlain by partisan hyperbole that little more can now be said other than the holiest city in Christendom was left a charnel house of smoldering ruins after several days of rape, pillage, and massacre. By one count, graves were dug for thirty-three thousand bodies.

But Jerusalem has always been a city of vicissitudes, and what seems like an end is usually another power shift. The Jews had briefly been on the verge of regaining Jerusalem, but, as Lewis reports, "Their loyalty at Antioch and Jerusalem was repaid by the order to leave Jerusalem so that the Gentiles could speed the holy city's reconstruction undefiled." The Persian conqueror, Khosrow, decided he wanted to please his new Christian subjects, as well as his Christian wife.

But the Eastern Romans and Persians continued their battle for power in the region and with the subsequent famine, disease and death that was the inevitable outcome, the survivors must have thought the four horsemen of the Apocalypse were galloping across the land. Eastern Rome took back Jerusalem, mainly because Khosrow was murdered and the top men of the Persian Empire were too busy fighting each other to hold onto the recent war prizes. A hundred years later, Lewis reports, an "Arab jihad swept aside kingdoms and empires with a speed that the bewildered clergy and chroniclers living at that time sought to explain as the consequence of moral transgressions visited by divine wrath."

The Christians returned in 1099 to retake Jerusalem. They had a presence in the Holy Land from 1099 to 1291, substantially longer than the current State of Israel. In that time, the Arabs never forgot that they were the intruders. With that spirit, all that was necessary was a strong man like the Kurdish Saladin who could unite the factions into one concerted push against the Western Franks. It doesn't take too much imagination to think that another Saladin could appear in the Arab world in the future.

When the Crusaders weren't fighting the Muslims, they were fighting each other, which ultimately weakened the Latin Kingdom to the point where the Egyptian Mamluk, Baibars, could drive them out of their last significant stronghold in Acre. Like the Muslims, the Crusaders were at their best when they had a strong leader to keep them unified. Ultimately, the chiefs of each city put their own interests ahead of the needs of the kingdom as a whole. Even families were fragmented. (I noticed the same quality in my own children who would rather have their own way than have peace. It's probably this quality of family life and my continual efforts to promote peace among the "factions" in my home that makes history feel so personal to me. I relate to the struggles.)

The more I read, the more I started thinking that maybe the Jews won't always be able to hold onto Israel and will once again renew their membership in the “We Used to Rule Jerusalem” club. Palestinian passion has not diminished with time, and as Maclean's magazine pointed out in its April 23, 2008 issue in the article, *Why Israel Can't Survive*:

Within one or two decades, the number of Muslim and Christian Arabs living under Israeli control (including in Gaza, the West Bank and Israel itself) will surpass the number of Israeli Jews. When that happens, if there is still no Palestinian state (and in the absence of large-scale ethnic cleansing), Israelis will be forced to choose between two futures. Their country will either be Jewish, but not democratic — in other words, a Jewish minority will control a land mostly inhabited by Palestinians — or Israel will be democratic, but not Jewish, because Arabs will form the majority in what will become a bi-national state.

Malish. Never mind. It won't be a cataclysmic end-of-all-life-as-we-know-it. The end of the world has already come and gone. Life goes on.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

FRANCES' PASSION

"I am...so wildly interested in Arabic that I can think of nothing else." Gertrude Bell
(From Leslie McLoughlin's *In A Sea of Knowledge*.)

I am in awe of Gertrude Bell. I would like to say she's a hero of mine and someone who led me to a love of Arabic but it wouldn't be true. Gertrude Bell did far more in her life than live among the Arabs. For one thing, she mountain-climbed the Matterhorn, something that has never been an interest for me. She learned languages other than Arabic – Persian, Turkish, French, German and Italian. I have no interest in anything but Arabic. She was an accomplished horse-rider but all my experiences with horses have been negative.

The biggest point of disagreement was that she was an agnostic, perhaps even an atheist. Consequently, she had very little regard for the role that Islam played in the everyday life of Arabs and ignored that whole aspect of their lives.

Arabs are people of faith in a land of faith. It's one of the things that drew me to their land and made me feel at home. From what I've read, Muslim Arabs can understand that other people have different religious beliefs but it's harder for them to understand someone who has no belief in God at all. When they resist the Western world, they are not resisting our traditional Christianity. They have nothing to fear from Christianity. The revelations to Mohammad render Christianity an incomplete faith in the same way that the Jews rejection of Jesus make their faith inferior in the eyes of Christians. What many Arabs are resisting is the marginalization of faith. Religion is pushed to the side in North America and our everyday life is about money and houses and entertainment and not about God's will.

But despite her lack of personal faith, I love reading Gertrude Bell's letters, particularly when they describe her relationship with King Faisal. He charmed her by greeting her as "my sister." But that, of course, is part of the charm of Arabic. One of the first things I learned to say was *Sabaahul khayr, ya uch.* Good morning, brother.

But it wasn't until I acquired Frances Newton's *Fifty Years in Palestine* that I found a woman I could identify with.

Frances Newton's fifty years in Palestine were from 1898 to 1948. She was in Palestine while the Turks still ruled, lived through the British Mandate, and witnessed the birth of the State of Israel.

Unlike Gertrude Bell, she never went to Oxford and freely admits that her math education consisted of little more than converting pence to pounds. Her mission required her to handle finances and in her book she describes how she was handed a cheque in French francs, to be cashed into Turkish coins and then accounted for in English pounds. "It had to be done, and – by the Grace of God – it was done!"

Initially, she was a Christian missionary to the Arabs but although her Christian faith remained strong, she left the mission society and her work extended to helping people who had gotten into trouble with the authorities. Her obvious assets in this department were that she was fluent in Arabic and that she was a British citizen in a country that was under British mandate. The lower floor of her home on Mount Carmel was full of Arabs needing help. Whether they were physical needs or moral support or political assistance, she helped. She kept busy helping the Arab women and girls for whom life was rapidly changing under a Western, rather than Eastern, administration. She also involved herself with the Arab national struggle. At a time when the Arab flag was forbidden to fly, she flew both the Union Jack and the flag of the Arab Revolt from her home.

Early on she was concerned about the effect that the Balfour Declaration would have on the Arabs of Palestine. She saw their frustration. She worried about their future and wrote:

In other lands, such as Egypt and America, where they have had equal opportunities to establish themselves in commerce or in the professions, they have shown that they could hold their own with the best. But can anyone honestly believe that in Palestine the Arab will have an equal opportunity to advance in any career he may choose, when all the advantages ... are on the side of the newcomers to his land?

Her fears were justified. Today, in Israel, the Arabs generally do the manual labor and are discriminated against in most areas of everyday life. A BBC web-site headline describes them as "unequal citizens."

Regarding the Arab riots in the spring of 1920, Frances Newton wrote:

I cannot close this tragic story of what happened at Easter 1920 without calling attention to one undeniable fact. Contrary to what has been alleged, the riots were utterly unpremeditated. They were due simply and solely to a spontaneous ebullition of Arab resentment against the policy of the National Home, a resentment gradually growing more bitter as it impinged in greater measure upon their homes and daily lives. Everyone knew, of course, that the volcano was smoldering ; it might have gone on doing so for some time longer had it not been stirred into activity by the incident at the Jaffa Gate during the Nebi Musa procession, which caused it to erupt.

The incident at the Jaffa Gate was a disparaging remark by a Jew watching the parade. A few people even reported that the Jew had spit at one of the banners.

The British always had a hard time keeping the peace in Palestine. But Frances Newton talked to a British Constable one day and he elaborated on why it was so hard for the average British policeman. Frances Newton relates the conversation:

...we were travelling down in the train from Jerusalem to Haifa. By way of starting a friendly talk, I remarked, "I hope you like life in Palestine?" He replied, "Oh, it's all right. I'm not here for my health,

I'm here to earn my living. It's not all beer and skittles here any more than it was in Ireland." (He had been one of the Black and Tans.) Said I, cheerfully, "More beer than skittles, I hope." "Well," said he, "it's how you look at things, you see. What I'm finding is that if I do what is right from the police point of view it's sure to be wrong from the political point of view; and if I do what is right from the political point of view, it's sure to be wrong from the police point of view, and so I get it in the neck either way." "But surely," said I, "politics don't enter into your job as a policeman?" "Oh, don't they!" replied he. "I have to look twice to see if it is an Arab or a Jew I've got to deal with!" Other people came into the carriage then, and our talk ended.

The Chief Adminstrator, Sir Louis Bols, also recognized the complications that were developing in Palestine. The Zionist Commission in Palestine was already having an effect on the life of the Arabs which he described in the following report to London:

It will be recognized from the foregoing that my own authority and that of every department of my Administration is claimed or impinged upon by the Zionist Commission, and I am definitely of the opinion that this state of affairs cannot continue without grave danger to the public peace, and to the prejudice of my Administration. It is no use saying to the Moslem and Christian elements of the population that our declaration of the maintenance of the status quo on our entry into Jerusalem has been observed. Facts witness otherwise; the introduction of the Hebrew tongue as an official language; the setting up of a Jewish judicature; the whole fabric of government of the Zionist Commission, of which they are well aware; these have absolutely and firmly convinced the non-Jewish elements of our partiality. On the other hand the Zionist Commission accuses me and my officers of anti-Zionism. The situation is intolerable, and in justice to my officers and myself, must be fairly faced.

He concluded:

The Administration has loyally carried out the wishes of His Majesty's Government, and has succeeded in doing so by strict adherence to the laws governing the conduct of the Military Occupant of Enemy Territory. But this has not satisfied the Zionists, who appear bent on committing the temporary Military Administration to a partisan policy before the issue of the Mandate. It is manifestly impossible to please partisans who officially claim nothing more than a 'National Home', but in reality will be satisfied with nothing less than a Jewish State, with all that it politically implies. I recommend, therefore, in the interests of peace, of development, of the Zionists themselves, that the Zionist Commission in Palestine be abolished."

Frances Newton pointed out the unlawful basis of the new government in Palestine. With regards to the Mandate for Palestine given to the British by the League of Nations she wrote:

The Council ratified it in 1922, and the General Assembly promulgated it in 1923. Is it not clear, therefore, that to set up a Civil Government in 1920 with the avowed intention of executing a Mandate which did not legally exist was an unlawful act? It is true that the delay in the issue of the Mandate was due to the intervention of France and America on matters which had to be settled before the Mandate was in force, and these were circumstances over which we had no control. That, however, does not alter the fact that the terms of the Hague Convention were as binding on the Civil Government as they were on the Military Administration, until the Treaty of Peace with Turkey was signed. Till that was done, Palestine and its people remained under Turkish Sovereignty, which was suspended but not eliminated. We were not free "to alter the existing form of Government" nor to treat the people as "our

lawful subjects." The appointment of a High Commissioner with an Executive Council of British Officials did alter the form of government. In the first year of its existence the Civil Government put into effect thirty-eight new laws (in the form of "Ordinances") some of which – notably that of the Immigration Ordinance – were resented by the Arabs. Thus we *did* treat the people as "our lawful subjects: and "ignored their rights." The circle of illegality is complete.

She went on to say:

Some may plead that despite any illegality the 1920-23 Government did much good work in the country. No one who knows the facts will deny it. But this plea simply ignores the point at issue, which is that the Home Government, by instituting a Civil Government in Palestine, broke not only the laws it was pledged to uphold, it also broke the law of honour and integrity which is the proud heritage of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Having grown up with the idea that the Jews had a God-given right to return to Israel, it was fascinating to read the perspective of a Christian woman living in Palestine at the time of the Jewish return to Israel. I agreed with her completely but had the niggling feeling that I was going against God's will to side with the Arabs despite the logic of their claim to the land.

I decided that a safe measure of whether an eschatological paradigm is true or false could be whether it was in sync with the teachings of Christ. Christians don't always agree on doctrines but Jesus' measure of whether we are his disciples isn't whether we agree, it's whether we love one another.

Would it have been loving my Christian Arab brothers and sisters to give their land away? Would I have wanted someone to give my land away to the Jews? Of course not.

As far as the Jews went, was it loving to push them towards Palestine after World War II? After surviving the death camps, they would arrive in a rough land, be handed a gun, and told to fight for their new home. Why didn't North America at least, offer them a home here? Not every Jew was a Zionist and for those who just wanted to be out of Europe, North America would have been a far more comfortable choice.

It all reminded me of the fear of a Y2K crisis that took over North America in late 1999. Thousands of North American Christians had prepared for the upcoming meltdown of civilization. They hoarded canned goods and bottled water and stashed away rifles for the pending anarchy while ignoring that for millions of people in the world everyday life is like the world they were dreading. The more Christian thing to do would have been to send the money that was spent on hoarded food to Feed the Children and live by Jesus' admonition to not be anxious about tomorrow but to pursue the righteousness of God instead. We pray for our daily bread, not a year's worth. The righteousness of God is treating others the way we want to be treated.

North American Christendom openly supports Israel and then occasionally I see a banner at the top of a Christian website saying "Bibles for Palestine." It horrifies me. As a whole, Christendom is supporting the loss of these people's homes but sending them Bibles as if they need salvation. Palestine was the birthplace of Christianity. Some people can trace their roots back to the first-century church.

A written constitution for Palestine was published on September 20, 1923. Frances Newton described

it as having the political Zionist for a father and the British for a mother. No longer was Palestine a trusteeship, something that would be nurtured until it could govern itself. Now it was "under obligation to facilitate the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish People." It stated that "Recognition has been given to the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine" without acknowledging an unbroken chain of habitation by the Arabs. The Arabs were only referred to as "non-Jewish communities."

There are many Christians who would say that it was God's will that the Jews return to the land. It's part of the end-time scenario and it's inevitable. But, even if someone believed this, the truth was, at that time, there was no need for any further Christian effort.

While the Balfour Declaration is treated as an act of God, what rarely gets mentioned is that Palestine had a king who supported the Jewish return to the land. Christians in the West didn't need to interfere in order to facilitate God's will. On March 7, 1920, Emir Faisal had been elected King of Syria (Syria at that time including what is now Jordan and Israel) and he had always been tolerant of a Jewish presence in the Arab world.

Long before being elected King of Greater Syria, while still engaged in the Arab Revolt, Emir Faisal had met with Chaim Weizmann, a prominent British Zionist, and assured him of his desire to see the Semitic nations prosper. He said the following:

The two main branches of the Semitic family, Arabs and Jews, understand one another, and I hope that as a result of interchange of ideas at the Peace Conference, which will be guided by ideals of self-determination and nationality, each nation will make definite progress towards the realization of its aspirations. Arabs are not jealous of Zionist Jews, and intend to give them fair play and the Zionist Jews have assured the Nationalist Arabs of their intention to see that they too have fair play in their respective areas. Turkish intrigue in Palestine has raised jealousy between the Jewish colonists and the local peasants, but the mutual understanding of the aims of Arabs and Jews will at once clear away the last trace of this former bitterness, which, indeed, had already practically disappeared before the war by the work of the Arab Secret Revolutionary Committee, which in Syria and elsewhere laid the foundation of the Arab military successes of the past two years.

In addition, Faisal wrote the following letter to Felix Frankfurter, the President of the Zionist Organization in America:

Delegation Hedjazienne
Paris, March 3, 1919.

Dear Mr. Frankfurter:

I want to take this opportunity of my first contact with American Zionists to tell you what I have often been able to say to Dr. Weizmann in Arabia and Europe.

We feel that the Arabs and Jews are cousins in race, having suffered similar oppressions at the hands of powers stronger than themselves, and by a happy coincidence have been able to take the first step towards the attainment of their national ideals together.

The Arabs, especially the educated among us, look with the deepest sympathy on the Zionist movement. Our deputation here in Paris is fully acquainted with the proposals submitted yesterday by the Zionist Organization to the Peace Conference, and we regard them as moderate and proper. We will do our best, in so far as we are concerned, to help them through: we will wish the Jews a most hearty welcome home.

With the chiefs of your movement, especially with Dr. Weizmann, we have had and continue to have the closest relations. He has been a great helper of our cause, and I hope the Arabs may soon be in a position to make the Jews some return for their kindness. We are working together for a reformed and revived Near East, and our two movements complete one another. The Jewish movement is national and not imperialist. Our movement is national and not imperialist, and there is room in Syria for us both. Indeed I think that neither can be a real success without the other.

People less informed and less responsible than our leaders and yours, ignoring the need for cooperation of the Arabs and Zionists have been trying to exploit the local difficulties that must necessarily arise in Palestine in the early stages of our movements. Some of them have, I am afraid, misrepresented your aims to the Arab peasantry, and our aims to the Jewish peasantry, with the result that interested parties have been able to make capital out of what they call our differences.

I wish to give you my firm conviction that these differences are not on questions of principle, but on matters of detail such as must inevitably occur in every contact of neighbouring peoples, and as are easily adjusted by mutual good will. Indeed nearly all of them will disappear with fuller knowledge.

I look forward, and my people with me look forward, to a future in which we will help you and you will help us, so that the countries in which we are mutually interested may once again take their places in the community of civilised peoples of the world.

Believe me,

Yours sincerely,
Faisal

The reply was cordial:

5th March, 1919.

Royal Highness:

Allow me, on behalf of the Zionist Organisation, to acknowledge your recent letter with deep appreciation.

Those of us who come from the United States have already been gratified by the friendly relations and the active cooperation maintained between you and the Zionist leaders, particularly Dr. Weizmann. We knew it could not be other wise; we knew that the aspirations of the Arab and the Jewish peoples were parallel, that each aspired to reestablish its nationality in its own homeland, each making its own

distinctive contribution to civilisation, each seeking its own peaceful mode of life.

The Zionist leaders and the Jewish people for whom they speak have watched with satisfaction the spiritual vigour of the Arab movement. Themselves seeking justice, they are anxious that the just national aims of the Arab people be confirmed and safeguarded by the Peace Conference.

We knew from your acts and your past utterances that the Zionist movement - in other words the national aims of the Jewish people - had your support and the support of the Arab people for whom you speak. These aims are now before the Peace Conference as definite proposals by the Zionist Organisation. We are happy indeed that you consider these proposals "moderate and proper," and that we have in you a staunch supporter for their realisation. For both the Arab and the Jewish peoples there are difficulties ahead - difficulties that challenge the united statesmanship of Arab and Jewish leaders. For it is no easy task to rebuild two great civilisations that have been suffering oppression and misrule for centuries. We each have our difficulties we shall work out as friends, friends who are animated by similar purposes, seeking a free and full development for the two neighbouring peoples. The Arabs and Jews are neighbours in territory; we cannot but live side by side as friends.

Very respectfully,
Felix Frankfurter

In one of the strangest twists of recent history, the Western nations pushed Faisal out of Syria (or stood by and allowed it) and assumed responsibility for his former Kingdom. The British were then forced to deal with irreconcilable promises and face the wrath of both the Jews and Arabs.

Frances Newton writes:

The Arabs' revolt against the policy of the National Home, which tends to deprive them of their native patrimony, was met by measures of harsh repression. I venture to say that few incidents in our long island story have brought more discredit to our good name than those which preceded and followed on the promulgation of that disastrous document [the constitution of Palestine issued on September 20th, 1923]. Over these measures it is best now to draw the veil of silence, but so serious had the situation in Palestine become in 1936 that a Royal Commission was sent out to investigate the causes of it. Their report says: "A conflict was inherent in the situation from the outset. The terms of the Mandate tend to confirm it." It goes on: "We are convinced that peace, order and good government can only be maintained for any length of time, by a vigorous system of repression ... the moral objection to maintaining a system of good government by a constant system of repression is self-evident..."

After World War I, the Arabs of Palestine, some who had so recently participated in the Arab Revolt, now had to face the reality that the land and heritage they had fought for was being handed to someone else by their allies. For the British military, their sense of fair play was offended.

Frances Newton describes the effects of the betrayal:

With the arrival of the first High Commissioner the Arabs were obliged to recognise that the avowed policy was to be a Zionist one. They saw Jewish officials appointed to key positions in Government. The post of Attorney General, of Chief Immigration Officer, and of Land Registry, were all filled by

Zionist Jews. The law laid down by the Hague Convention was set aside in favour of the Zionist policy outlined in the Balfour Declaration. Many of the soldiers who had served under the Military Administration became Civil Officials. To several of them, as it was to an onlooker like myself, the metamorphosis was sad to watch. The normal straightforward conduct of administration was made subservient to Zionist political aims. Impartial devotion to "the well-being and development" of the population as a whole was not their first and foremost obligation. The sword of Damocles hung over their heads in the form of unpleasant consequences should anything be done, or even said, displeasing the Zionist Commission.

She gives several examples among her acquaintances including the following:

An official holding a high position resigned. When I expostulated against this, saying that he was greatly respected by all in his district, he answered: "Do you supposed I want to go? I am getting old, and this is probably the last job I shall get. But I would rather starve, and what is more I would rather even see my wife and daughters starve at home, than stay in this office and tell the lies I have to tell to these poor Arabs every day I am here." He went soon afterwards.

So clearly there was a difference between the Military Government and the subsequent Civil Administration. The Military Government favoured the status quo and ruled with an understanding that a Jewish home wouldn't jeopordize the existing rights of the Arabs and certainly wouldn't evolve into a Jewish State. The Civil Government, however, went way beyond the Balfour Declaration.

Frances Newton told how candid the civil administration was about its intention:

Many of those who took office under the Civil Government did so, perhaps, unaware of the extent to which they would be called upon to further the Zionist aims of the Government. One of the officials who had served under the previous Military Administration, however, felt he must make some enquiry before becoming a Civil Servant. He therefore asked Sir Herbert Samuel [first High Commissioner of Palestine] whether he could assure him that the National Home policy did not mean that the Jews would rule over the country either soon or in the future. The answer he received from the High Commissioner was perfectly honest and straightforward; he said, "I regret I cannot reassure you about this. The policy of His Majesty's Government, which I have come out to execute, is to encourage the immigration of Jews until a majority will be reached – it may be fifty or a hundred years hence – at which time their interests shall be sufficiently predominant to warrant the establishment of a Jewish Government in Palestine."

Now, nearly a hundred years later, though a Jewish State was established sooner than Sir Herbert Samuel anticipated, it is the Arabs who are getting closer to being a majority in the land and perhaps soon "their interests shall be sufficiently predominant to warrant the establishment of" an Arab Government in Palestine.

Circumstances in Palestine compelled Frances Newton to put together a pamphlet for the British public and press, called "Searchlight on Palestine." With her first-hand experience in Palestine, she was in a position to see the injustices that were taking place. She did so with reluctance because as she said:

...any sort of discredit on one's people is a very grievous matter. I did so only because I felt that it is the bounden duty of one who knew that in this matter the honour and good faith of the British

Administration were at stake in the eyes of the world. My intention was to throw some light on what is well known to the world at large, but is still unknown to our own British public – namely that we were using methods of terrorism and intimidation in Palestine in order to coerce the Arabs into submission to the policy of the creation of a Jewish State in Arab territory. My aim in doing so was not to embarrass the Government, but to reveal the incredible departure in Palestine from the sense of fair play which has always been the instinctive basis of British methods of rule, and thus to help forward a speedy return to government along the lines of our great tradition of justice in dealing with native peoples, which shall vindicate Great Britain's continued ability to govern righteously.

While in England in 1938, promoting the Arab cause in London, she continued to receive letters from English friends. She planned to return to Palestine later in the year. An English friend wrote:

You will find Palestine very nerve-racking as indeed it is to all of us here. The savagery of the authorities who have apparently embarked upon a policy of out-terrorising terrorism is a matter upon which few of the British civilian population generally can trust themselves to speak or write. After the assassination of a British policeman they 'savaged' the little town of Jenin by blowing up a large portion of it to smithereens. The official statement said '150 houses' had been demolished, an estimate not erring in exaggeration. Certain persons were 'shot down in attempting to escape' in true Nazi fashion. Some of the means resorted to in order to obtain information from the population will not bear repetition...It was done to strike terror into the people, not to punish the guilty. Not only were houses demolished, but I am sorry to say many of the population were robbed of money, jewellery, etc., including the safe and contents belonging to the Standard Oil Company of New York, concerning which the American Consul has had something to say.

The letter continues:

It is impossible to tell you everything that is going on here! I know of amazing cases. Government employees, 'loyal and brave Arabs' engaged, for instance, on repairing the sabotage of telephone wires for which they may be shot at any moment by the rebels, have returned to their villages after a day's dangerous work to find their homes blown up the British Army and their wives and children sitting homeless upon a heap of rubble. From such incidents it is that the rebels are now gaining not merely reinforcements, but is more serious, an ascending of morale.

The letter concludes:

On Saturday here in Jaffa the troops were merely shooting at sight anyone who they had a mind to aim at. A Government surveyor, English-speaking and an educated man, was returning home from his duties and was shot dead here in the street, also a little girl of seven on the same day. This morning a cheerful little newspaper boy who brings my paper did not arrive. I enquired, and am told he is shot. This is the first time the Holy Land has been administered by a Christian Government since the days of the Crusades. God forgive us.

James Morris in his survey of the Middle East in 1956, *Islam Inflamed,* remarks, “Whatever the subject of your conversation in the Arab world, the British and the French can nearly always be blamed for something or other; and, if you believe the Arab nationalists, there is scarcely an injustice or vexation in the Muslim East for which those two old sinners are not ultimately responsible.”

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

STILL A CHANCE

For the British, the division wasn't just between Arab and Jew. One official discreetly reported, “There was unease and criticism within our own ranks.”

This unease was to continue right through to 1948 when some British soldiers chose to fight with the Arabs in the Arab Legion. Some even participated in terrorist acts such as a car bomb that went off in Ben-Yehuda Street in February of 1948, killing 52 people and injuring more than 100. On the other hand, some British fought for the Jews in their War of Independence. Both sides received arms and supplies from disgruntled soldiers. The Mandate was in a state of anarchy for the last eight months, with Haifa being the only quiet place. Haifa was the British evacuation point.

As much as the division was external, the Briton himself was in a state of internal division. Frances Newton summed up the British state of mind. “...I think that the moral tragedy lay in the fact that this policy obliged administrators to consider every decision from two irreconcilable points of view before taking action. Not one of the officials to whom I have dared to say it has attempted to deny its truth...”

Some Britons were ready early on to admit their mistakes.

Promises of Arab independence had been made to the Sharif of Mecca in 1915. The only land excluded from the promises were those of some of the areas west (though not south) of Damascus and the areas that had a sheikh who was already in a treaty relationship with Great Britain.

The Balfour Declaration came two years later.

Sir Edward Grey, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in 1915, was the man responsible for the promises made to the Arabs. On March 27, 1923 he expressed his feelings about the conflicting promises. Frances Newton records part of what he said:

A considerable number of these engagements, or some of them, which have not been officially made public by the Government, have become public through other sources. Whether all have become public I do not know, but I seriously suggest to the Government that the best way of clearing our honour in this matter is officially to publish the whole of our engagements relating to the matter, which we entered into during the war. If they are found to be not inconsistent with one another our honour is cleared. If they turn out to be inconsistent, I think it will be very much better if the amount, character, and extent of the inconsistencies should be known, and that we should state frankly that, in the exigencies of the war, engagements were entered into which were not strictly consistent with each other.

The pledges to the Jews and Arabs were both made privately. The Balfour Declaration was from the Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour to a prominent British Zionist, Lord Rothschild. The earlier promises to the Arabs came in the form of letters exchanged between the High Commissioner, Sir Henry McMahon, in Egypt, and Hussein, the Sharif of Mecca. Sir Edward Grey continued:

I am sure that we cannot redeem our honour by covering up our engagements and pretending that there is no inconsistency. I am sure that the most honourable course will be to let it be known what the engagements are and, if there is inconsistency, then to admit it frankly and, admitting the fact and having enabled people to judge exactly what is the amount of the inconsistency, to consider what is the most fair and honourable way out of the impasse into which the engagements have led us. Without comparing one engagement with another, I think we are placed in considerable difficulty by the Balfour Declaration itself ... It promised a Zionist home without prejudice to the civil and religious rights of the population of Palestine. A Zionist home, my Lords, undoubtedly means, or implies, a Zionist Government over a district in which the home is placed, and if ninety-three per cent of the population of Palestine are Arabs I do not see how you can establish other than an Arab Government, without prejudice to their civil rights. That one sentence alone of the Balfour Declaration seems to me to involve, without over-stating the case, very great difficulties of fulfillment.

Lord Buckmaster was the next to speak that day and he said the following:

I do not profess to have any knowledge of foreign politics. I have always believed they can be summed up in two sentences. I believe we ought to say what we mean, and I think we ought to do what we say ... We certainly meant what we said in 1915. We did not do what we said in 1918. I would ask the Government even now to retrace their steps at the earliest moment, and go back to obedience to the promise that we gave at a moment when we were gravely beset by difficulties, to the relief of which the Arab help in no slight degree contributed.

The relevant documents were not published by the Government and did not become available to the public until 1938 when George Antonius wrote his now classic, *The Arab Awakening*. He wrote at a time when nothing was written in stone yet. The British still had the Mandate. The Jewish presence was not yet a State.

The 1930's had been a violent decade in Palestine. Riots had turned into armed revolt. As Jewish immigration, legal and illegal, increased, so did Arab frustration. It was rightly feared that with a Jewish majority would come Jewish rule.

The British reacted. Frances Newton pointed out, "...British Crown Forces totaled some 30,000. By comparison the Arabs in armed revolt numbered some 12,000 in all."

Regarding the British rule, she writes:

That no Government can condone lawlessness goes without saying, but since the Palestine Arabs never revolted against Turkish misrule there must have been some ground for a revolt against an Administration welcomed with joy and happy anticipation as being renowned for its reputation of just rule over people under its control. It stands to reason therefore that there was some element in the yeast which caused the good bread of British rule to ferment and bring about intractability on the part of the

law-abiding peaceful people like the Arabs of Palestine.. The Bible says, "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." What was the leaven in British statesmanship which turned the bread sour?

Carrying on with the bread analogy, she writes:

The answer is simple. The yeast which should have made the good bread provided for in the Covenant of the League of Nations had, in the years between 1915 and 1919, fermented, till, by the time the bread made with it was presented to the Arabs in 1922 in the form of the Mandate, it was rejected by every patriot among them as uneatable. Forced as they were to accept the sour bread, it in turn fermented in their stomachs. Now fermentation always creates gas, with the inevitable result of an explosion. This occurred in 1936.

With this vivid metaphor in mind, one can understand the ensuing revolt, a precursor to the modern Intifada. Frances Newton reports the events which led up to the revolt of 1936:

On April 19th, 1936, a couple of Jews while traveling from Haifa to Tul Karm were murdered not far from Nablus. The next night two Arabs were found murdered near the Jewish colony of Petach Tikvah beyond Jaffa. The culprits in neither case were identified, but, as was natural, the crimes were ascribed to Arabs and Jews respectively. Feelings on either side ran high, and when the funeral of one of the Jewish victims was held in Tel Aviv, angry Jews attacked Arabs living in an adjacent quarter of Jaffa known as the Manshiyeh. Arabs retaliated by assaulting Jews and, the same afternoon, spontaneously combined in shutting their shops, an example which was at once followed by Arab shopkeepers in other towns.

She continues:

The next day, April 20th, the Arab National Committee of Nablus met, and resolved that the action taken in Jaffa should be upheld, and a general strike of all Arabs be declared and maintained, till they secured from the Government satisfaction of their demands.

Frances Newton points out that this spontaneous reaction represented the feelings of the people and wasn't a case of the people being manipulated by their leaders, as some accused them at the time:

These demands were not, as so often represented, extravagant and unreasonable claims put forward by self-seeking Arab politicians with the Mufti of Jerusalem at their head. The strike was neither initiated nor fermented by them. It was from the start a clear instance of mass action. The masses started it, and their incredible endurance kept it going for 176 days from April to October. In addition to their endurance the Arabs showed amazing solidarity. The rich among them gave generously to the strike funds by which small shopkeepers and workers were supported on a weekly ration of flour. Much was said in the press about the strike being subsidized by foreign money, but *The Times*, in its issue of September 24th, 1936, admitted that, with the exception of small funds contributed from Iraq, Syria and Egypt, all the money was raised locally. Arabs there were, of course, who, caring more for their pockets than did the patriots, wished the strike to break down. But they were overruled and the strike went on, for it was the will of the masses that held the day.

Frances Newton concludes:

The strike was clear evidence of the mind of the Arabs. By the dislocation of normal life and trade in the country, it had far-reaching effects and caused considerable embarrassment to the Government. One of the most important results of the spontaneous strike in Jaffa is seen in the fact that leading Arab nationalists at once combined to create a central body empowered to co-ordinate the efforts of the hitherto local National Committees in various towns in order to present to the Government an expression of the united will of the mass of the people.

In 1939, a London Conference was called by the Colonial Secretary, Malcolm Macdonald, to study the correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon and the Sharif of Mecca. It was attended by both Arabs and Jews and its purpose was to study the correspondence, "as well as certain subsequent events and documents which either the Arab representatives or the United Kingdom representatives thought might shed light upon the meaning and intention of the Correspondence."

Sarcastically, Frances Newton comments, "On reading this one might imagine that the Committee had been called together to try to shed some light on some ancient document written in hieroglyphics of which no clue had as yet been found, instead of an official English document accepted by the British Government!"

Like all conferences related to Palestine in those days, there was no agreement. However, the final paragraph of the signed report states:

In the opinion of the Committee it is, however, evident from these statements that His Majesty's Government were not free to dispose of Palestine without regard for the wishes and interests of the inhabitants of Palestine, and that these statements must all be taken into account in any attempt to estimate the responsibilities which – upon any interpretation of the Correspondence – His Majesty's Government have incurred towards those inhabitants as a result of the Correspondence.

It seemed like a time when maybe amends could be made. Up til this point, Malcolm Macdonald was a Zionist but he came to the conclusion that "the Mandate did not agree with the Covenant of the League." The result was one of the more famous White Papers (Statements of Policy) issued by the British Government, the White Paper of 1939.

On May 18, 1939 the White Paper issued by the British Government said, "It has been urged that the expression *a National Home for the Jewish people* offered a prospect that Palestine might in due course become a Jewish State or Commonwealth. His Majesty's Government therefore now declare unequivocally that it is not part of their policy that Palestine should become a Jewish State." It went on to say that for the next 5 years, 75,000 Jews would be allowed (until June 1944) into Palestine then no more immigration without Arab approval. There would be no more land purchases for Jews. In ten years, Palestine would be given independence but there would be no Jewish state.

Many people in Britain thought it was inhumane. The Holocaust was still in the future but Hitler's policies were already being felt by German Jews. But this was the first official attempt to reconcile the two halves of the Balfour Declaration – the Jewish National Home without prejudicing the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine. The Jews called it the 'Black Paper'.

Even the Arabs rejected it, wanting an immediate declaration of an Arab state and end to Jewish immigration.

On May 18, 1939 there was rioting in Palestine at the Immigration Office. May 19, 1939 started off as a peaceful protest in Palestine and turned into a riot. Several hundred Jews gathered in Zion Square. Shop windows were smashed, telephone boxes and lamp-posts destroyed.

While street marches carried on for the next couple of days, Winston Churchill stood up in Parliament and called the White Paper "a plain breach of promise, a base betrayal, the filing of a petition in moral and physical bankruptcy, a new Munich and an act of abjection."

But Lord Halifax, the Foreign Secretary was pro-Arab and believed in stopping land sales to Jews and preventing the formation of a Jewish brigade. Along with Malcolm MacDonald, they both opposed Churchill over the issue of an eventual Jewish state in Palestine.

The Jewish Agency, due to Hitler, felt it had no choice but to help illegal immigrants and to stockpile weapons.

Ironically, on June 16 1939, the White Paper was unanimously rejected by the League of Nation's Permanent Mandates Commission as being a contradiction of Britain's trusteeship. The League Council was to meet in September but due to the outbreak of war, it never did and though the White Paper wasn't legally ratified, it was still carried out.

David Ben-Gurion called on the Zionists "to fight the White Paper as if there were no war and the War as if there were no White Paper." But once World War II was over and the White Paper of 1939 was being actively implemented, the result was a substantial increase in Jewish terrorism. British government servants, public institutions and utilities were all targets. The time for possibilities was over. Now the British just wanted to get out alive.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

DEUS LE VOLT
"GOD WILLS IT"

Although the population of Jews in England has never gone past 1% of the total population, Britain has had a long history of devotion to the Old Testament. At one point, she even engaged in an effort to bring more Jews to Britain in order to fulfill the prophecy that the Jews would be scattered among all the nations.

Jill Hamilton's *God, Guns and Israel*, traces the history of the British and the Jews that culminated in the Balfour Declaration. She writes:

The first call to restore the Jews to Palestine came in 1621, the year after the first Puritans set off for America. Sir Henry Finch, a Member of Parliament for Canterbury and legal advisor to King James I, published a small book entitled *The World's Great Restoration*, which urged that everything should be done to help the Jews return to the Promised Land: 'Out of all the places of thy dispersion, East, West, North and South. His purpose is to bring thee home again and to marry thee to Himself by faith for evermore.' Finch wrote at length and asked the English people and their government to support Jewish settlement in Palestine, rationalizing that it would fulfil biblical prophecy. Given that the whole of Syria had been conquered by the Turks nearly a century earlier his idea was theoretical. Finch was just one of a growing number of Christians who felt that the Bible promised the land of Israel to the Jews in perpetuity, and some restoration to them was needed if the Bible were to keep its promises. As Barbara Tuchmann points out, this was not for the Jews themselves, 'but for the sake of the promises made to them...The return was viewed, of course, only in terms of a Jewish nation converted to Christianity, for this was to be the signal for the working out of the promise. James I, however, was offended by Finch's remarks that rulers should pay homage to a Jewish king, so Finch and his publisher were imprisoned until an apology was forthcoming. But his actions initiated Evangelical support for the Jewish people to return to Palestine.

It might surprise people that Evangelical support of a Jewish homeland has been around for nearly four hundred years now.

When I was in college, I took a class on the books of Daniel and Revelation that only briefly covered the historical qualities of the works. Most of the class was applying the events in the two books to the future. It had a particular urgency since we all felt that the end was near. But, of course, the more I read, the more I realized, many other Christians had done the same thing.

Many Christians have thought they were living in the end of days, or the last days, or the end-times. But when Peter stood up and spoke to the people of Jerusalem, the same year that Jesus was crucified, he said, the people standing there were living in the last days. The second chapter in Acts describes how the church received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Peter said it was a fulfillment of a prophecy by the Old Testament prophet, Joel, who said that in the last days God would pour out His spirit on all people.

On July 15, 1840, the British Foreign Secretary, Viscount Palmerston, signed an agreement with the Turkish government. Although it was signed with the intent to keep the French from dominating in the region, Palmerston also put in a word for a pet idea, the return of the Jews to Palestine which was under Turkish control. He stressed the advantages that the Jews would bring to the land. Although the sultan wasn't convinced, Hamilton describes how on August 17, 1840, the "readers of The Times opened the newspaper at their breakfast tables to be faced with a long editorial telling them that 'the Jews, with all their faults must be regarded as among the first who essentially contributed to the civilization of the world, as the holders of a pure and simple faith...'"

The editorial goes on to "explain the benefits of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, which would be good for both the Jews and the people of the British Isles."

Just as politics and theology mix today, the Christians of Britain watched the unfolding events in the East in anticipation of something greater. The fact that the Jews had not lost their identity was pointed out, just as it is today. It's been said that other peoples have disappeared into history while the Jews have retained their identity. The idea is that God still has some prophecies to fulfill in the future and the Jews have to still be around in order for Him to do so. But any student of history and migration patterns of people can tell you, it's not too hard to trace the routes that people have taken and where they've ended up. In fact, some of them haven't moved around much. The Jews who have kept their religious traditions have continued as a distinct entity, but many have chosen not to and their descendants don't even know they have Jewish blood.

The British Protestants read Isaiah's prophecy that the Gentiles would bring the Jews back to their land, and rather than apply it to the time of Isaiah when the Jews had been taken from their land by Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar and subsequently returned with the the help of Persian King Cyrus, they saw it as for the future. Since they had influence in the East (or Orient, as it was called), theology and politics mingled. The goal, as always, was to speed up the Second Coming.

The British interest in the Holy Land had already involved them in one bloody war. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre was Christendom's great religious shrine, said to contain both the site of the crucifixion and the tomb of Christ. It was in the hands of several Christian denominations, all who had their jealously guarded domains and times of worship. Sometimes fights occurred between the different Christian denominations. Crucifixes and candleholders could serve as weapons. Muslim policemen had to guard the inside and the outside in order to keep the peace. And Jerusalem wasn't the only site of conflict.

Bethlehem was also a hot spot. In the Church of the Nativity there is a silver star that indicates the spot where Jesus entered this world. At one point, it was ripped from the floor and disappeared.

Much the way the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria set off World War I, the

theft of this star set off the Crimean War in 1853, a bloody conflict with Russia on one side and Britain, France, Sardinia and the Turks on the other side.

While British Christians were interested in a Jewish Return to Palestine, the Jews themselves were returning to the land, unaided by any official government policy. Zionism, the movement to restore a Jewish homeland, had become a force in the Jewish world by the late nineteenth century. The official, organized nature of it made some people nervous. Hamilton reproduces a letter written to the British Foreign Secretary by the British ambassador in Constantinople on March 7, 1911:

In 1909 the masses of the Turkish and other populations here began to notice the extent to which the influence of Jews and Salonica Crypto Jews were monopolizing finance, commerce and the machinery of State, while during the last year the conviction has been growing that this influence is being used to further the objects of Sionism...

Jews were free to live in and own property in the Ottoman Empire. Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire. But when Zionists became a force, the Turkish government imposed restrictions. Arabs were objecting not to the indigenous Jews, but to the foreign Jews, subsidized by Jewish organizations, who were making it hard for the local Arabs to make a living.

The British Ambassador rightly concluded that support of Zionist projects would offend the Arabs and since the British had interests in Egypt, it might be good to get the opinion of Lord Kitchener, their Agent in Cairo, about these matters.

But despite these early warnings, in 1917, there were still people in the British Government who thought very much like Christian fundamentalists do today. They wanted to help fulfil Bible prophecy.

However, in the course of my reading, I discovered that people's interpretation of Biblical prophecy has radically changed between the time Britain's Evangelicals first began thinking about the Jewish return to the land of David and now. In Jeffery L. Sheler's *Believers: A Journey into Evangelical America*, he describes the Christians in America before the Civil War. It was a church very interested in social reform, but for different reasons than today's church.

They believed that Christ would return *after* a millennium of peace and righteousness and they based their belief on the book of Revelation. The same book of Revelation has been interpreted nowadays by some to say that Christ will return before the millennium and that it will be a thousand years of Christ reigning over the world.

But the Christians who were postmillennial (Christ would return after a thousand years of righteousness) dedicated themselves to changing the world around them for the better in order to facilitate that time of righteousness. Charities to help the poor were established. Hunger, child-labour, slavery, were all addressed, in addition to souls being won for Christ. It started in Britain and carried over to the United States.

After the Civil War, a new way of interpreting the Bible emerged in the United States. It was known as premillennial dispensationalism. The idea of dispensations came from a nineteenth-century Englishman named John Nelson Darby who taught that history was divided into seven ages (dispensations). Rather than things getting better before the millennium, he believed things would get

worse. Using both Old Testament prophecies as well as Revelation, he concluded that the final dispensation would end with a judgment and an end to the world.

Sheler describes a paradigm that is familiar to evangelicals in America (and all over the world) today:

According to the dispensationalist script Christians one day will be snatched out of the world suddenly in a miraculous event called the Rapture, leaving nonbelievers behind to face the Great Tribulation, a seven-year period of turmoil and suffering, during which the world will be ruled by the Antichrist. At the end of that period the world's powers will be drawn into a Middle East war and face off in the Battle of Armageddon. At the climax of the battle Christ will return to defeat the evil forces and to set up his earthly kingdom of a thousand years – the biblical millennium. After that: the Final Judgment, hell for the wicked and eternal bliss for believers.

My experience has been that people in churches are now taught these ideas as if they are beyond dispute, that this is just the plain and obvious Bible teaching. When a movie like *Amazing Grace* comes out, evangelicals in North America feel connected with William Wilburforce, a fellow Christian, who fought to bring an end to the slave trade. British history at that time is full of examples of Christians who were committed to helping orphans and getting women and children out of the mines. But it sounds like they had a completely different way of viewing end-time events.

The library that I took care of at the evangelical church contained the entire *Left Behind* series and each new book had a long list of people who wanted to sign it out. Yet, I got the sense that despite this and the, Christ-could-return-at-any-minute messages from the pulpit, people didn't quite entirely believe it. After all, he was kind of taking a long time. The parking lot was gravel and the funds were raised to pave it. But one man stood up and said that if we really believed that Jesus could return at any minute, we'd be better off sending the money to the mission field. Other people argued that their shoes were getting muddy and that if the lot was paved, kids could skateboard on it. The parking lot got paved.

Maybe it was just as well. Though I now know that people trying to speed up the Second Coming have had a positive social impact as far as bringing an end to child labour in Britain, they've done nothing to actually hasten the event itself. And in the long run, good theology is always to be preferred over bad theology. Slavery and child-labour could have been fought against for the simple theology that Christians should treat others the way they want to be treated.

The British, of course, could not have fully comprehended the impact their policies would have on the Middle East. Hamilton writes:

For decades the conflict between the Arabs and the Jews has been so bloody that people wonder how the British ever agreed to increasing the Jewish population in Palestine. But the incessant Israeli-Arab struggle is not an extension of an old blood feud; such a feud never existed. The Arabs and Jews living in Palestine before the First World War were not at each others' throats. Large numbers of Jews were well established in other parts of the Ottoman Empire. Muslims and Jews had lived in the Holy Land together for well over a thousand years, since 636 CE when Mohammad's successor, the Caliph Omar, captured it from the Byzantines. The only interruption had been the Crusaders. Always at the mercy of the Arabs there had been problems and antipathy, but no riots interfering with the slow pace of life. Indeed, the absence of conflict or persecution in the Holy Land had attracted Jews from Russia to seek refuge there. Despite tensions Muslims considered Jews as a 'People of the Book', respecting their

religion while sharing their prophets and God. Resentment and objections began only towards the end of the nineteenth century, when immigration numbers increased. Sustained organized hostility did not begin until *after* the First World War.

Poor Britain. Hell in the Holy Land had started on her watch.

Would a Jewish State have been established in Palestine without the help of England? History shows that the land we call the Holy Land, and Jerusalem in particular, has been taken time and time again by those who are willing to fight for it. It's on that basis that Israel has a claim to the land that she now occupies. But she has to be continually vigilant if she wants to hold onto it.

I would have to think that the average Israeli has a better understanding than the average North American evangelical Christian of Israel's precarious state. When you take away the Messianic expectation, there are really only two ways for Israel to survive – to be stronger than the Palestinians or to make peace with the Palestinians. From what I've read of contemporary Israeli culture and seen on TV, most Israelis are either hawks or doves.

Christians hurried to get the Jews back to the land in the hope that it would speed up the Second Coming. Many of them still have that hope. So whatever happens in the future, Christendom will share in the blame. Bad theology always takes people to a bad place.

I'll leave the final words on the topic to Frances Newton.

"Instead of looking up to the Pole-star of the New Testament, and steering the ship by its light, we have used a compass of our own devising in the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate, and this has resulted in the stranding of the ship on the rocks. Ominous clouds gathering on the not-far-distant horizon give warning that a storm of considerable magnitude is again brewing in the Middle East, a storm which may involve the nations in yet another war."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

EVERYDAY LIFE

I had to overcome a feeling of awkwardness just asking my five year old son if he wanted to have a drink, *behteb tishrub she?*

But after awhile, there was no avoiding it, I had to start speaking Arabic to my husband and children. It was just inside of me bursting to get out and the phrases I was learning really applied to my life. *Andee shirl lazyadee*. I have too much work!

I knew how to say good morning, good bye, see you later, I need money...all the everyday things that wives say to their husbands.

My husband had always supported me in learning Arabic. He never belittled my sense that it was a God-given desire, in fact, he encouraged me to speak it to the children in the event that they might need it someday too. He had grown up in the same Israel-First culture and yet he let me rant about how the Palestinians had lost their land and how evangelical Christians had abandoned their brothers and sisters in the Middle East.

But at the same time, we kept many Jewish traditions. We never stopped keeping the Holy Days I had grown up with. The Worldwide Church of God had taught that Christmas and Easter were wrong because of their pagan origins. Jesus, of course, had never commanded anyone to keep his birthday, and the date of his birth wasn't known anyhow. Easter was a Christianized form of pagan fertility celebrations.

Even when we left the Worldwide Church of God and went to a mainstream church, we never started keeping Christmas or Easter. In fact, at the Congregationalist church, it was one of the ways we could out-fanaticize the fanatics, with our stand against Christmas. Even the most intense people who were willing to reject contemporary Christian music were not willing to give up Christmas.

My husband and I joked that we should walk by the pastor and say, “Happy Birthday, Pastor!” He would, of course, say, “It's not my birthday!” And we would reply, “It doesn't matter.” When it came to Christmas, he would preach that it didn't matter that we didn't know the date of Jesus's birth, we could keep it on December 25th. I was disgusted when my children's Sunday School teacher told the kids December 25th *was* Jesus's birthday. (It was his only fault, by the way. He was marvelously patient with the kids and I learned a lot from his style of teaching. He didn't rush through things and seemed to show no concern for time as he went through everything at a pace that worked for the kids. Other teachers were more like me, preoccupied with time and trying to pack as much as they could into

the hour. But kids just got overwhelmed by all the sheets given to them and all the information thrown at them. It was better to go away with one small story and a to sing a few songs than it was to try to cover the entire entire life of Joseph in fourteen colouring sheets.)

I hadn't grown up with Hanukkah but we added it to our repertoire. It celebrated the Jewish resistance to Greek culture and since God had said that we weren't to worship him like the pagans worshiped their gods, it was a noble feast.

So, while Christendom was eating its Easter ham we were having our Passover lamb and eating unleavened bread for a week. While Christendom was putting up their Christmas tree and exchanging presents, we were lighting our menorah and spinning the dreidel. We were really destined not to fit in.

In fact, most of our doctrinal beliefs doomed us to be outcasts. The biggest one was our rejection of the Trinity. God had said to the Israelites, he was one. Jesus had said that he and God were one. And yet, Christians came up with the idea that God was three in one, something I couldn't explain to my children, never mind to a Jew or Muslim.

My understanding of Jesus came from John's gospel that describes him as God's word made flesh. God had put his words in a man and Mary had given birth to the Word of God. It was a constant theme with Jesus, that he spoke on behalf of God. He *was* God in as much as our own words are a part of us. He was God's son in as much as he was the product of God's spirit joining with Mary.

But any deviation from the Trinity doctrine puts people outside of mainstream Christianity as the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons can tell you. (I talk to the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons whenever they come to my door. We even did regular weekly Bible studies with the Jehovah's Witnesses. But they were just as dogmatic as the Worldwide Church of God had been and weren't interested in any exchange of ideas. We had to agree with them in order to continue feeling their warmth. I finally blew up and told the Jehovah's Witness couple that they were committing the unpardonable sin of not recognizing that the Holy Spirit worked outside of their organization too. Adding the “too” part was just being diplomatic.)

We were definitely not interested in getting involved with any group that had an emphasize on rules and laws. The Worldwide Church of God had taught that since the New Covenant believers, unlike the Israelites, had the Holy Spirit they could keep the Old Covenant laws now. But in the book of Galatians, the apostle Paul repeatedly emphasized that the law was not for New Covenant believers.

So unlike my childhood, where I had kept the Holy Days for salvation, I was now keeping them for fun. It gave my children a richer understanding of the Bible. The Days were said to be shadows of things to come and so I think the Holy Days are giving us a deeper understanding of Christ and His Kingdom. Plus, they fulfilled our human need to celebrate at regular intervals. And they were meaningful celebrations. A lady at the Congregationalist church told me that Easter left her feeling empty. It was hard for me to imagine a holiday celebrating the sacrifice of Christ as leaving a person feeling empty. Passover was a deeply satisfying night for us as we remembered the body and blood of Jesus Christ. I think what makes Christmas and Easter less satisfying is that they include a lot of temporal experiences like the candy and the gifts. Soon the food and the gifts become the celebration. We had the candy and the gifts too, but for me, the heart of our celebration was a sense of entering into Holy Time and meeting God in these days and appreciating what they represented.

Although at that time I was reading books about the British in Palestine, I branched out a bit and read T.E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. It told the thrilling story of the Arab Revolt and Lawrence's adventures in Arabia. But long before Arabia, Lawrence had had a sense of destiny. While still in Oxford, he had practiced going without food and sleep, things that later were essential to the success of his missions in the desert. It put me to shame, not because I believed in self-mortification, but because I envied his ability to give up the pleasure of food. After four children, I'm sure putting on weight is normal, but I had the disturbing idea that if I ran into T.E. Lawrence (via some wormhole in time since he died in 1935) he would have a very low regard for my lack of self-control! Maybe books become too personal for me, but I tend to read history and evaluate myself in relation to the people I'm reading about. Where would I have fit into it all?

The problem was that I'd make myself a sandwich and think, I really should eat more fruit. Tomorrow I'll eat more fruit. And I'd make the sandwich as if it was an exceptional thing when really it was a daily habit.

Reading about T.E. Lawrence's determination to master himself, I realized that the battle would not be won when I lost the weight, it would be won when I decided that I would not be mastered by food. The weight coming off would just be a side benefit of winning that battle.

When I determined what I would eat each day and that I wouldn't deviate from it, the battle was won. Basically, it came down to the following routine: a cup of tea and one piece of toast for breakfast; fruits and vegetables during the day; whatever I wanted for dinner as long as it could fit on a salad plate. Coffee and tea whenever I felt like it.

Friday night was my only indulgence. We always had a special meal on Friday night to celebrate the Sabbath so it was the one night I had more than a salad plate of food because we had an appetizer and a dessert. But I found after while I didn't need much to feel full anyhow.

It was hell for the first six months. I went to bed hungry every night and I was tempted to go back to just eating whenever I felt like it, but I didn't. I would have been ashamed. I don't know if there has ever been another person who has lost weight using Lawrence of Arabia as his or her inspiration, but it worked for me. (Lawrence even mocked the Bedouin's passion for coffee but since the brave and picturesque Emir Faisal who led the Revolt drank coffee incessantly, I didn't mind having *that* addiction.)

Within a year I went from a size 16 pair of jeans to a size 9.

Although I had learned the amazing diet secret that you can't get fat eating fruits and vegetables, my life would have still been lacking if I didn't have Arabic. The pleasure that replaced food was learning Arabic.

It wasn't necessarily an equal substitute. I mean it wasn't like I started meditating on Arabic words when I wanted a sandwich. Although that would have been nice since there is an endless quantity of new words, the pleasure would be limitless. It was just that although I had given up the pleasure of eating whenever I felt like it, I now had a new interest in my life. So I had a cup of tea and a piece of toast for breakfast and then I sat down for a half hour with my Arabic before officially beginning the

day with the kids.

But if I was going to retain what I was learning it was necessary to use it in every day life.

I had fallen into a pattern of listening to the Pimsleur Conversational Eastern Arabic CDs in the mornings, during the week. But when I had first started out, I had also bought the Rosetta Stone Arabic software which teaches the Modern Standard Arabic. I did that on Sunday mornings. It was an appropriate time since we no longer had a church to go to. When we stopped attending church I had considered doing what the Arabs and Jews do and just treating it like any other day of the week, in this case, Day One. One of the things I admired about the Semitic languages was the way they simply numbered their days while we English used Roman and Norse gods for ours. But the North American weekend is a hard habit to give up and with my husband off work that day, it felt like a holiday anyhow.

The CDs provided instant gratification with the succinct everyday phrases. The Rosetta Stone software seemed to be going for the more holistic approach and gave me a sense of the fullness of the language. My journal entry for October 5, 2008 (a Sunday) records my enjoyment:

Even the numbers sound mysterious and breathy. Wahid, itnayn, talaata, arbaha, khamsa. My favourite is khamsin, fifty, because of the khamsin winds that I've read about that blow through Palestine for fifty days, horrible to live through I'm sure but wonderful to say. The khamsin caused weariness and headaches among some of the British and I'm sure I would have been one of the unlucky ones.

It also records my frustration:

The MSA (Modern Standard Arabic) seems more complicated than the conversational Arabic. The way the verbs change is frustrating. I learn how to say “he did something” and then the verb changes a bit when it's “she did something”. It changes some more when it's “we did something” but it becomes practically unrecognizable when it's “they (male) did something”. But the time it's “they (female) did something” it might as well be a completely different word.

In the conversational Arabic I was starting to recognize some patterns. When talking in the past tense, “I something” was usually the same as “he something”. Something talking about a man often started with a “y” whereas for a woman it was “t”. Example: *yishrub, tishrub*. Things for “we” always seemed to end in “na.” If I wanted to tell someone it belonged to me, I add “ee” to the ending. *Ibn* is son. *Ibnee* is my son.

But sometimes the Modern Standard Arabic didn't seem to be in sync with the conversational Arabic. The Conversational Arabic was giving me an intuitive feel for the language, the Modern Standard Arabic was giving me the feeling I was at school and failing.

One thing I couldn't figure out was why all the nouns I was learning with the conversational Arabic had an “un” ending in the Modern Standard Arabic. I had learned to say bread, *khubz*, but in the Rosetta Stone software, it was *khubzun*. I was deeply wishing that an Arabic speaking Jehovah's Witness would come to my door to explain it all to me. (A Russian speaking Jehovah's Witness did come to my door but that didn't help much.) Finally, I stumbled on the answer in an Arabic grammar book. The “un” ending was a Modern Standard Arabic feature that simply meant “a”. A bread (I presume a loaf of bread) rather than just bread. I preferred the simplicity of the everyday Arabic rather than the more

formal newscaster or newspaper Arabic.

But I persisted with the Modern Standard Arabic because even though I had no aspirations to speak it, I thought it would be good to at least have some familiarity with it. Many Arabs, I read, often slipped back and forth between the the two kinds – the more formal way of speaking and their local dialect. Gamal Abdel Nasser was said to have switched back and forth in the same sentence.

My journal entry for that day concludes:

When I can't pronounce a word, I find myself yelling into the microphone, as if that will help the computer to understand me. Now I know why people do it in real life even though it seems silly. I'm glad to be going deeper into the family relationships. I fear it will take me 20 years to understand the news but in the meantime, I want to be able to understand all the family relationships which is what everyday life is about anyhow.

My journal continues with its random thoughts for the day:

October 6, 2008 -- I was telling Paul about an Arab man I was reading about, a Mohammed al-Hijazi. I realized that meant he was from the Hijaz, where the Arab Revolt started.
"Isn't that strange?" I said. "Just having a name and a place."
"You mean, like Jesus of Nazareth?" said Paul.
In so many ways, the Arab way of doing things is closer to our faith. Queen Noor was Lisa Halaby before she married King Hussein and in Arabic Halab is Aleppo. I guess I'm Jennifer Torontoy.
In moments of duress, when the speaker prompts me to say something in Arabic and my mind goes blank, I find myself reverting to French, the only other foreign language I know.
Marto rifeetee – his wife is a friend of mine. I like the sparseness of the everyday Arabic. Extra information is added to the noun or verb itself.
Martee – my wife
Martek – your wife
Rifatee – my friends
Rifata – her friends
It speeds up communication but it's harder for a beginner because the words are packed with information. When I listen to the conversations at the beginning of each lesson, I have to really concentrate to understand it all.

October 8, 2008 -- Two days of migraine. I can gauge my health by whether or not I can do my Arabic in the morning. If I can't, then I should just climb back into bed.
I revert back to English when I'm sick. I'm sure reverting to ones native language when sick is universal. Today, half-way through the day, I said *T-fuddal* (here you go) to Hans when I handed him his juice and I realized my head was clearing up a bit.
Tonight Paul got his satellite dish up and running (actually, just running. The up part he did on the weekend.) So now I've got about 36 channels of Arabic TV. Sat and watched the Jordan channel because I actually recognized some of the words. Just people talking to each other behind one long curved table. Wouldn't have watched it if it were in English but was straining my brain trying to figure out what these three men and one woman were so seriously discussing.
They said *ya'ani* a lot. I looked it up and it means, "that is to say", or "it means".
Every time I recognized a word I announced it to everybody, even when I couldn't remember what the

word meant. But when Katie asked, “But what are they talking about?”, I couldn't actually answer her.

October 9, 2008 -- I must continually buy time or negotiate peace in order to do my Arabic in the morning. The boys were playing nicely then it turned violent. A half hour lesson takes an hour because I have to pause to stop the boys from throwing blocks at each other. Then there are the requests for juice, the trips to the bathroom, the pauses to spell a word for the girls.
In the afternoon, I took the kids outside to play on the front lawn. My inclination is to be lazy and grab a novel, but I overcame it and brought out my *Easy Arabic Grammar* instead.
I must continually push aside that laziness, that gravitation to read something easier, just for now, and say I will do my Arabic later, except that I won't. And then the day will come and I will want to actually be able to say something and I won't be able to.

October 10, 2008 -- Watched a bit of a Jordanian cooking show last night and recognized the word, khudar, vegetables. What was significant about that was, khudar is a word I learned from the dictionary. I've been concerned that I might not recognize the words I learn from the dictionary since sometimes I'll look up a word from the CD and it will sound slightly different than the way its transliterated. Even when I read the Arabic script, I could easily mispronounce something because the vowels marks aren't written down. Diacritical marks, I think they're called. And when I go through the dictionary, many of the words are so similar you'd have to a native speaker to pick up on the slight differences.
The good thing about having the TV and just listening to ordinary people talk is that maybe I'll be able to pick up on the words that people use the most frequently. Then I can just say, “*Shu yee ani?*” (What does it mean?) for all the lesser-used words.
Last night Paul asked me, “*Keef ache?*” (How are you?). I replied, “*Neeh-uh, lakun ana ... tired.*” (Fine, but I am ... tired.) He was tired too so I told him, “*Andek shirl lazya-day.*” (You have too much work.)
Today I think I actually pronounced the *qaaf*. A click came from the back of my throat. I've never made that sound before. Up til now, I've been saying it like a q, which is somewhere in front of the throat. This felt like it was actually coming from my throat.
It took me an hour and 45 minutes to do my Arabic today. I made playdough for the kids and thought that that would keep them busy for the 30 minutes. But at some point, Hans got bored and left the kitchen for the computer. Julie was still playing with Josh but she got bored and left. Then I had to periodically check on Josh to make sure he wasn't eating the playdough since he likes to do the most unlikely things.
Then Katie had to get started on her cake for tonight so I had to measure out her portion of the sour cream and while I was at it, I made the dip for the chips.
Got a little more Arabic in, but kept getting interrupted by Josh who wanted to show me things he made and by Katie who had questions about her recipe. Then Josh got bored and left the kitchen so I cleaned up all the playdough. In the meantime, Hans was having technical problems with his web-site. Sorted all that out but he decided he didn't want to play at that site any more but wanted to play at a site exactly like it. That stumped me.
Josh got a hold of a box and wanted me to turn it into a car by drawing a steering wheel and all the other car accessories.
Put Katie's cake in the oven for her and then she and Julie disappeared into their room.
Finally got my Arabic done by letting the boys watch Pingu.
Now it's time to start on lunch. I'm still in my pajamas.

October 11, 2008 -- I watched a newscast on Jordan TV that had a large segment on Queen Rania. She visited a *madrassa* (school) and afterwards, some Bedouins. They said "Canada" when looking at a box of potatoes. I didn't understand 99.99% of it, but it was very interesting.

October 12, 2008 -- Paul and I were talking about how English is such a mish-mash of languages whereas Arabic is a much purer language with its 3-letter root system. English lacks consistency and I'm always having to say to the girls, "I know it *should* be pronounced ___, but we actually say it, ___." I was doing the Rosetta Stone today and bombed on matching *el binata yaktubna* with its proper picture, thinking that since there was a picture of girls reading, that must be linked with k-t-b (book). But *el binata yaktubna* was "the girls are writing." "The girls are reading" turned out to be *el binata yakre-na*. Don't know what the root there is. I'll look it up later if I can coax it out of my Hans Wehr.

Nicholas Awde and Putros Samano describe the three letter root system in their book *The Arabic Alphabet* using the k-t-b example that I referred to above*:*

The three consonants, k, t, and b – combined in that order: k-t-b – connote the idea of writing. The simplest word based on those letters is kataba, which means 'to write.' That is the *root*. If you go to an Arabic dictionary and look up the root *kataba*, you will find, among many other entries, the following (the three letters of the root are printed in bold type so that they stand out).

ka**t**a**b**a to write
ka**tt**a**b**a to make someone write
ta**k**aa**t**a**b**a to write to each other
ista**kt**a**b**a to dictate
ki**t**aa**b** book
ma**kt**a**b** office
ma**kt**a**b**a library (also bookstore)
kaa**t**i**b** clerk
mi**kt**aa**b** typewriter
mu**k**aa**t**a**b**a correspondence
mu**k**aa**t**i**b** correspondent, reporter
ku**t**u**b**ii bookseller
ku**t**ayyi**b** booklet
ma**kt**uu**b** written (or letter)

I liked the idea of a root system right from the start. It sounded much easier than English which draws on so many other languages, Latin, Saxon, French... In addition to the obvious connections between words there are lesser obvious connections. Awde and Samano give an example of a lesser obvious connection. *Katiiba* means 'squadron' or 'military detachment'. So the word seems to come from the tradition of putting the battalions on paper before engaging in the actual battle.

This fascinated me because I'm the type of person who could read an Etymological Dictionary the way some people read mystery novels. I love knowing where words come from. Recently my girls asked me what 'cookies' meant and we looked it up. It's Danish for 'little cakes.' Just knowing that makes cookies more charming for me. (As if they don't have enough charms on their own.)

There are also patterns in Arabic.

Looking at the list above you see that *maktab* is a place where writing happens. Another root is d-r-s. *Darasa* means 'to study'. *Madrasa* is a place where studying happens, in other words, a school.

Despite the exceptions, the Arabic language is based on patterns. Another quality I appreciate is that the Arabic letters have one sound rather than how in English there's a soft *c* and a hard *c* and a soft *g* and a hard *g*. If English weren't my native language I can't even imagine how lousy I'd be at speaking it. I have only respect for the millions of people who speak it as their second language.

I was surprised to learn that many of our English words have an Arabic origin. *Arabic for Dummies* includes a chart of them in Chapter 1: You Already Know a Little Arabic. Some of them are admiral (*amir al-baHr*) which means ruler of the sea. Algebra (*al-jabr*) means to reduce or consolidate. Candy comes from *quand* which means cane suger. Sahara is just the Arabic word for desert.

It's also goes the other way. In the book, *Your first 100 words in Arabic*, there are some very English-sounding words. *Tileefizyoon* (television), *tileefoon* (telephone), *kumbiyootir* (computer). But for the most part, Arab is a language of mystery, each new word a glimpse into a different world. *Maa-ida* (table), *kursee* (chair), *baab* (door or gate). If there was a connection between the words, I couldn't make it. Each new word was an adventure.

Still, I was greatly comforted by a brief conversation in Patrick O'Brian's *Master & Commander* between two Captains, the French Captain La Hire and the English Captain Jack Aubrey. Shortly before a risky expedition, Captain La Hire wishes Captain Aubrey, “Good lucky.” “Merci, very much,” replies Captain Aubrey.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE LANGUAGE OF BLESSING

Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.
(Colossians 4:6, ESV)

I crave the blessings of the Arabic language and the well-wishes it incorporates into every day life. The Arabs easily speak about Allah and wish His blessings on those around them. Their speech is truly gracious and they have an answer for all significant occasions.

In *Understanding Arabs*, Margaret K. (Omar) Nydell writes:

Arabs use many beautiful, elaborate greetings and blessings – and in every type of situation. Most of these expressions are predictable – each situation calls for its own statements and responses.

She continues:

Situational expressions exist in English, but they are few, such as "How are you"/"Fine", "Thank you"/"You're welcome," and "Have a nice day." In Arabic there are at least thirty situations which call for predetermined expressions. Although these are burdensome for a student of Arabic to memorize, it is comforting to know that you can feel secure about what to say in almost every social context.

She elaborates and gives some examples:

There are formulas for greetings in the morning and evening, for meeting after a long absence, for meeting the first time, and for welcoming someone who has returned from a trip. There are formulas for acknowledging accomplishment, purchases, marriage, or death and for expressing good wishes when someone is drinking a glass of water, or has just had a haircut! All these situations have required responses, and they are beautiful in delivery and usually religious in content.

I was learning some of them already. When Arabs greet each other, the first person says, Morning the good. The second person replies, Morning the light. Saying good-bye involves wishing the person to go in peace and the person going wishes Allah's blessing on him.

But there were many more I didn't know about. When someone is working, you can say, "God

strengthen you." A person going on a trip can ask what should I bring you? The gracious reply is, "Your safety."

Nydell says that "Sometimes a ritual exchange of formalities can last five or ten minutes, particularly among older and more traditional people."

She continues:

The Arabs have the charming custom of addressing strangers with kinship terms, which connotes respect and goodwill at the same time. One Western writer was struck by the use of these terms with strangers in Yemeni society (they are as widely used elsewhere).
"Brother, how can I help?"
"Take this taxi, my sisters. I will find another."
"My mother, it's the best I can do."
"You're right, uncle."

The Muslim Arabic greeting we're probably most familiar with is *As-salaamu 'alaykum* (Peace be upon you) and it's reply, *Wa'alaykumus salaam* (And upon you be peace).

Instant Arabic by Fethi Mansouri and Yousef Alreemawi highlights some of the more frequently used expressions that Arabs exchange. *Al-hamdu lillah* means 'Praise belongs to Allah' and is used frequently, not only in reply to "How are you?" but also whenever the opportunity calls for it. Since I've started watching Arabic television, I've noticed how often I hear *Al-hamdu lillah*. A cyclist who wins a race says it. A man being interviewed says it throughout his conversation. A group of women sitting around a table at a social function say it.

Insh Allah, 'God willing' is another phrase I hear all the time on Arabic television. It certainly applies when the weatherman predicts the weekly temperatures. It's also said when announcing future events.

Al-hamdu lillah and *Insh Allah* are two expressions that have become so much a part of my everyday talk that I'll just say them automatically now.

When Jesus appeared to his disciples after the resurrection, he said, "Peace to you!". Before he ascended to heaven, he blessed his followers and they in turn returned to Jerusalem, to the temple, to bless God. A language of blessing is essential to a person of faith.

The Arab culture understands this. They would rather have your blessing than your envy. Whereas the Western person doesn't mind being on the receiving end of some jealousy, from what I've read, the Arabs don't appreciate it and associate it with the evil eye. Envy can bring harm, according to the Arab philosophy. It might sound superstitious to someone from the West, but I've come to see envy in a different light since studying Arab speech and culture. I don't want to be on the receiving end of it anymore. Instead, I'd rather receive a blessing from someone.

I think it would be wonderful if when someone got a new car, instead of looking for envy (and receiving it) people received comments like, "May you be blessed as you drive in it."

We are not in the habit of wishing blessings on people. Our material culture is more likely to express

appreciation for something by indicating a friendly jealousy. But in the long run, I think a blessing is more soul-satisfying.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

BRITISH ARABIC

Many a Briton learned Classical Arabic at university. They could read Medieval literature, but when they arrived in the Arab world, they found they weren't even able to do something simple like order a cup of coffee, there was so much of a gap between the Classical and the colloquial.

There's a story about a potential British official who is being tested on his Arabic. He's asked, how do you say, 'come here'? "Ta'al," he replies. Then he's asked, how do you say, "go there". He pauses, thinks and says, "Well, old chap. I supposed I'd just go where I wanted him to go and then say, 'ta'al.'"

The British were liberating the Arab world from Turkish rule so they were an ally, not an enemy. But even some of the Crusaders who had come as enemies ended up learning the language and settling down to Eastern ways. And in many cases, the Muslims proved to be better "Christians" than the Christians. It's already been shown how Saladin treated the conquered inhabitants of Jerusalem better than the Christian conquerors had. In *The Epic of the Crusades*, Rene Grousset writes regarding Saladin:

The instances of liberality of the great sultan are beyond counting. There were two old Franks at Jerusalem, both centenarians, who had known Godfrey of Bouillon. Saladin, moved by pity, ordered that they should be allowed to end their days in peace and provided for them. He provided a guard of honor to escort the three princesses, Sibylla of Jerusalem, Maria Comnena, and Stephanie of Transjordan, to the coast. He showed no less courtesy to the simple noblewomen. A delegation of those who had lost their families in the war came to see him. "When he saw them, he asked who they were and he was told that they were the wives and daughters of knights who had been slain or taken in battle; and he asked them what they wanted; and they asked him, in God's name, to have pity on them, who had their lords slain or in prison and their lands lost, and to give them aid and counsel. When Saladin saw them weep, he had great pity for them and told them to find out whether their lords were living, and all those who were in prison he would free and all those who were found were faithfully freed. After, he ordered largesse to be given from his own stores to the dames and damsels who were widowed or orphaned. So much were they given that they praised God and proclaimed to the world the good which Saladin had done them.

Their fellow Christians actually proved to be treacherous to the survivors of the battle for Jerusalem. Grousset continues:

It remained to conduct all this population to the coast, or rather to that part of the coast which was still in the power of the Franks, Tyre and Tripoli. Saladin divided the emigrants into three convoys,

faithfully escorted by his troops to protect them against the attack of the Bedouin. "When the Moslem horsemen of the rearguard saw a Latin woman or child exhausted by fatigue, they made them mount in their place and led them by the bridle." Part of the refugees were handed over to the barons of the Tripoli coast, who, unfortunately, were not slow to profit from their distress to exploit them. The luckiest were those to embark in Egypt. Continuing in this way from Saladin's protection, they were housed all under his care the winter at Alexandria. In March they were able to embark for the West. They owed it to the sultan's energetic intervention that they were able to do so, for the masters of the Genoese, Pisan, and Venetian vessels which put in to Alexandria at first refused to encumber themselves with a penniless crowd. To compel these heartless men to ship the fugitives, the cadi of Alexandria had to threaten the Italian captains with an embargo on their vessels. The Italian sailors then formed the project of getting rid of their pitiable passengers on some desert coast. Learning of this dastardly plan, the Egyptian officials made the Italians personally responsible for the lives of the emigrants; fearing the denunciation of their trade treaties, the Venetians and Genoese complied.

Reading about all of the Western interaction with the East over the years I noticed that in the midst of policy, there are has always been people. People making connections even when the circumstances might excuse violence. And the sweetest connections are when people who should be enemies in fact prove themselves more loyal or honourable than the people who should be friends.

During World War I, the British defeated the Turks in Mesopotamia, now Iraq. Although the British didn't arrive in Iraq as enemies, their policy of liking to run things behind the scenes soon made them the enemies of the nationalists. But for those who took the time to learn Arabic, there were also many chances for friendship.

Freya Stark was an English woman who lived in Baghdad during the days of British influence between the two world wars. She wrote for the *Baghdad Times* and her observations have been compiled in a book called *Baghdad Sketches*. Being single, she was able to ignore most conventions imposed on English women, many of whom limited their contact with the Arabs to their servants. Freya Stark, on the other hand, traveled, lived in an Arab neighborhood, and even signed up at a local girls' school to improve her Arabic. She describes how she came in to the classroom one day to find two-thirds of the girls sobbing, "their heads buried in their arms." The teacher explained that it was because this morning they had just gotten the results of their quarterly exams. Freya Stark describes a touching encounter:

Rather appalled to see learning taken so seriously, I sat down beside the little black girl from Basra whose desk I shared, and offered my handkerchief sympathetically. She was in a moist condition, having come down rather badly, since her facts, though confident, were always palpably wrong. She wore grey cotton gloves, with a glass ring outside them, and she continued to weep into them and my handkerchief while the teacher and I and the few who had come unscathed out of the catastrophe carried on the lesson as best we could.

Freya Stark's unorthodox encounters with the Arabs of Baghdad are charming. She describes one night when she was late for a dinner party:

My two watches lay side by side on the dressing-table...one said 7:45 while the other said 6:30, like the Christian sects, they were ticking away perseveringly, obviously convinced that each was right. But my dinner was at eight, and half an hour's drive away... A little path, I knew, though I had not been

along it, went on the river bank towards the lights and the clocks of Baghdad. As I stepped into total darkness, I felt myself seized in both arms by an Arab.

There are ladies whose fascinations are a constant worry to them when they travel. The most unsophisticated savage appears to fall in love at first sight. The Desert Chief no sooner sees them than he wishes to carry them off. As for me, being small and plain and insignificant, such dangers do not trouble me: unflattering as it may be, I wander about the East without being incommoded at all.

I thought, however, that this particular Arab might want my handbag on so very dark a night.

His object, as it happened, was merely to save my life; I was stepping over the edge into the river.

There is usually a lantern at this corner, but it had been blown in by the storm. The Tigris, empty of boats, was flowing in solitude and darkness below, not in the least like one of the Rivers of Eden. My rescuer held me by the arm and led me along what there was of a path, explaining its pitfalls in shouts between the gusts of wind. He was a railway employee, he said, and spent his nights patrolling this neighbourhood where there are depots: he was resting in the shelter of our gate when I stepped out to apparent suicide. Where was I going?

"Trying to get to dinner," I said. "And I must find out the time."

We had now left the region of utter darkness and turned inland, and he stopped under a lamp-post. He was a nice-looking man with black eyes and moustache under a flowing white kaffiyah. He drew aside his brown abba, opened a khaki coat, unbuttoned the neck of his long zibun or gown, and from the folds of the white shirt below drew out a red embroidered case with the button of which he struggled while I tried to be patient. Finally he pulled out a little flannel bag; inside this was a metal case which contained a watch. He studied it with an intent frown. "Two o'clock," he said unexpectedly. Arab time begins at sunset.

"By our time," said he, seeing that I looked doubtful, "it will be eight-thirty."

"Wallah," said I, "and I was invited for eight."

"Is that so?" He looked regretful and turned to his watch again. "It is now, I think, seven o'clock," said he. He was doing his best.

Distressed as I was, I could not help laughing, which puzzled him. "Let us make it seven-thirty," I suggested. "That will suit me better."

"Seven and a half," said he. "Good. It is possible." He put away his watch in its several cases with care and pride.

When the British took Mesopotamia, now Iraq, they had a freshly-published book to guide them through the spoken Arabic language. *Spoken Arabic of Mesopotamia* by the Reverend John Van Ess, M.A., "Oxford, printed at the University Press for the Administration of the Territories of Iraq in British Occupation." It had all the basic phrases and a lot of ones that I would have to say are unique for their time. As I was flipping through it though, I discovered that many of the words were the same as the ones I was learning. I don't know why this surprised me, but it did. I mean, even English hasn't changed too much in eighty years. It's not exactly the gap between Shakespeare's English and today's English. And the Arabs also have the steadying influence of the Qur'an to keep their language from evolving too rapidly.

But there was *ruh* (go), *hina* (here), *hinak* (there), *khubz* (bread), *shweya* (a little) *hatt* (put). Lesson One is geared for the imperative. Come! Go! I want...! Bring...! Take away...! When you combine the entire word list, you get things like, "Come here"; "Bring the bread and water"; "Put the water there"; "Remove the water"; "What is this?"

But that's just Lesson One. Van Ess is determined that the British will learn Arabic and that it will progress beyond the imperative commands. I find it intriguing that in Exercise 38, a substantial ways into the book, one learns to say, “I will never learn Arabic” because by then, one should be able to say things like “the boy is bigger than the girl”; “I was with your father”; “Have you read this book?” Even fractions were covered before Exercise 38. If being able to say 2 ¾ doesn't constitute being able to speak in Arabic, I don't know what does. Lesson 39, the final lesson, has the phrase, “I speak only English.”

Despite these inconsistencies, Van Ess doesn't molly-coddle his students. He doesn't live in an age of competitive language programs that have to produce friendly, easy programs to keep the student engaged. His was the only colloquial Arabic book on the market, hurriedly completed to meet the need of a British administration in Iraq.

The British were there in an advisory capacity. The government was an Arabic one. But nobody was fooled. British advisors were the real power. Keeping in mind that part of Muslim eschatology is the return of the prophet, Jesus, in her weekly letters to her father, Gertrude Bell writes:

There has been a good deal of chat about the position of advisors. Some of the ministers are merely stop gaps and notoriously incompetent and people not unreasonably complain that the British advisor is the seat of authority. The feeling is embodied in the following coffee shop anecdote. A. (over his narghilah) Men say that a certain Mulla has prophesized the immediate coming of the Mahdi. B. (grumpily) What good will that be? Christ will come too and he'll be the Advisor.

But Van Ess wasn't going to have an administration that didn't know the language of its people. In the first lesson, Van Ess expects his students to start learning and reading the alphabet. There are only 120 pages of lessons and instructions and the rest of the book is a Vocabulary list, but if a Briton diligently completed his Van Ess, he would have been more literate in Arabic than the average Iraqi of that day.

Someday, I'll brew myself a pot of coffee and sit down and really do Van Ess. When I'm done I'll be able to say:
It appears the ship will not come today.
The soldiers abandoned their guns.
Butter is not obtainable in the town.
Who built this bridge?
The donkeys were eating dates.
Inasmuch as you know Turkish why are you afraid?
Go straight ahead and after two hours go to the right.
I wish to become a clerk.
I have two eyes and two ears.
We have not three eyes.
He came the first day but did not come the second.
Put sugar in the tea.
Don't drink this water.
I wish to write a letter to Bombay.

And my favourite one of all:
Ana a'araf kull shay. I know everything.

إِقْرَئِي	Read (*imper. f.*)	aqra-i
إِقْرَأُوا	Read (*pl.*)	aqra-û
قَارِئٌ	Reading	qâri
مَقْرُوءٌ	Read	maqrû

Word List. Class III.

أَمَرَ يَأْمُرُ	He commanded	amar, ya-mur
أَخَذَ يَأْخُذُ	He took	akhadh, ya-khudh

Note.—The imperative of *amar* in colloquial is *âmar*, and of *akhadh* is *akhudh*.

WORD LIST

قَوِيٌّ ج أَقْوِيَاءُ	Strong	qawi, *pl.* quwai guwi, *pl.* guwai hudâr, *pl.* hudârin
ضَعِيفٌ ج ضُعَفَاءُ	Weak	dha'if, *pl.* dhu'âf
رَكِبَ يَرْكَبُ	He rode (mounted)	rekeb, yirkab
" "	He went aboard	" "
طَلَعَ يَطْلَعُ	He went up, out	ṭala', yiṭla'
صَحْرَاءُ او بَرِّيَّةٌ	Desert	chôl, barr
رَمْلٌ	Sand	raml
دُكَّانٌ ج دَكَاكِينُ	Shop	dukkàn, *pl.* dukàkin
رَخِيصٌ ج رَخِيصَةٌ	Cheap	rakhiṣ, *pl.* rakhâṣ
غَالٍ ج غَالِيَةٌ	Dear	ghâli, *pl.* ghâlia
نَزَلَ يَنْزِلُ	He descended	nezel, yinzal
غَسَلَ يَغْسِلُ	He washed	ghasal, yaghsal

A sample of Van Ess

Exercise 18.

1. I saw a strong horse. 2. He said, Where is your shop? 3. This is very dear. 4. I was sitting in the shop and the man entered. 5. Descend from your horse. 6. Why don't you (*f.*) wash the cups? 7. She washed the cups with (bi) hot water. 8. I wish to go to the desert. 9. These men are very strong. 10. What did you ask? 11. The cup has been washed in the river. 12. There is much sand in the desert. 13. He mounted his horse and rode to the desert. 14. When will you get aboard? 15. Books are cheap in Bombay, but (làkin) dear here. 16. The ship will leave Bombay to-morrow. 17. When did you leave Bombay? 18. He came out of his house and went to the bazaar. 19. This turned out very dear.

1. Ana shifet huṣân qawi. 2. Hûwa gâl, Wên dukkànek? 3. Hàdha kullish ghâli. 4. Ana kunet jàlis fid dukkàn wa deshsh er rejul. 5. Inzal min huṣânek. 6. Lêsh mâ taghsalin el fanàjin? 7. Hiya ghasalat el fanàjin bi mai ḥârr. 8. Urîd arûḥ ilal chôl? 9. Her rijàjil kullish quwai. 10. Êsh se-elet? 11. El finjàn maghsûl fish shaṭṭ. 12. Âkû raml hwâyi fil chôl. 13. Hûwa rekeb huṣânuh wa râḥ ilal chôl. 14. Yimta tirkab? 15. Kutub kullish rakhâṣ fi Bombay làkin ghâlia hina. 16. El markab yiṭla' bàcher min Bombay. 17. Yimta ṭalâ't min Bombay? 18. Hûwa ṭala' min bêtuh wa râḥ ilas sûq. 19. Hàdha ṭala' kullish ghâli.

١ شفتُ حصانًا قويًا. ٢ قال اين دكّانك. ٣ هذا غالٍ جدًّا. ٤ كنتُ جالسًا في الدكان ودخل الرجل. ٥ انزل عن حصانك. ٦ لماذا لا تغسلين الفناجين. ٧ هي غسلت الفناجين بماء حارّ. ٨ اريد ان اذهب الى الصحراء. ٩ هؤلاء الرجال اقوياء جدًّا. ١٠ ماذا سألتَ. ١١ الفنجان مغسول في الشط. ١٢ يوجد رمل كثير في الصحراء. ١٣ هو ركب حصانه وراح الى الصحراء. ١٤ متى تركب. ١٥ الكتب رخيصة جدًّا في بومبي لكنها غالية هنا. ١٦ المركب سيسافر غدًا من بومبي. ١٧ متى خرجت من بومبي. ١٨ هو خرج من بيته وراح الى السوق. ١٩ هذا صار غاليًا جدًّا.

Van Ess's *Spoken Arabic of Mesopotamia* is compact and gives the impression that having completed the course, one will easily be able to navigate through not only the souks, but also the cocktail parties of Baghdad. A lot of things have changed since the British were attending the horse races in Baghdad and using buffalo cream on their scones. But some things haven't changed:

Yesterday they shot guns in the bazaar.
There is much dust today.
The soldiers are between Zobeir and Basrah.

CHAPTER NINTEEN

BACK TO THE BEGINNING

When the English speaker on my CDs says, “I have a lot of work today”, I find myself repeating in English, “I have a lot of work today”, to stall for time. The problem is, I go blank. With Arabic, I can't always just do a word-for-word translation. I have to skip the 'I' part and go straight to the verb. Sometimes I'm still be searching my brain for the verb when the Arabic speaker is saying, *Andee shirl k'teer el yaum*. At least it makes sense when he says it.

The English speaker will say, “Do you know him?” Absently, I repeat in English, “Do you know him?” It's like, where to begin? My brain wants to start with 'do' and go from there but the answer is *tarrfo*. The 'you' part is indicated by the 't'. It would be *barrfo* for 'I know him.' The him part is indicated by the 'o'.

So basically, in order to do this, my brain has to start thinking in Arabic and not just translating word-for-word from English. It feels like skating (which I've never been good at) – gliding along recklessly, about to trip over a word and fall at any moment.

My journal for October 15, 2008 reads:

Being a perfectionist, it's a lot easier to feel like I'm failing. I know Arabic is a hard language to learn and that it takes years and years for people with bigger brains than me, but I get frustrated that I'm not fluent. It's beyond reason, it's just a feeling.
It's actually good for me to do something that causes my weaknesses to come out. I have to fight laziness every time I march over to the computer, turn it on and launch into a thirty minute lesson. I have to fight feeling inadequate when I carry on with something that is hard and that I will never fully master. But the bottom line is, I want to connect with the Arab world and all effort I make is vastly superior to having made no effort at all.

I started off excited that I could say *la* (no), *na'am* (yes) and *bhub ishrub shwa-yet chai* (I like to drink tea), which is more than most English-speaking people. As I get more into it, I start measuring myself against Arabic-speaking people because I'm past the point of feeling proud of knowing a few words. I'm able to painfully form a sentence, like, *Andee waqt ishrub chai bas ma andee shirl k'teer.* (I have time for tea because I don't have a lot of work.) But by the time I manage to form the sentence, the Arabic speaker on my CD is dashing ahead to things like, 'Would you like to go to the Spring Cafe?' and something about drinking green tea. And I'm sure that should I find myself surrounded by Arabs actually using words that I learned, I may miss out on the whole expedition to the Spring Cafe because

I can't put it all together in time.

But at the same time, I find myself muttering Arabic phrases when normally I might hum. Phrases I didn't even realize that I'd mastered. Encouraged by how far I've come, I'm equally discouraged by how far I have to go.

But my commitment to learn the language, even if it takes me twenty years, has never lessened. I have no desire to give up. All I desire is a clearer brain to take it all in. I'm surrounded by distractions – requests for popsicles, fights over a toy car when we have about a hundred toy cars, questions about what we're having for lunch when lunch is still four hours away – until finally I just put on a kids' DVD so I can finish my 30 minute lesson. But then I have to go into a mental tunnel just to stay focused on the Arab words and not be distracted by all the singing and noise from the video.

There was only one time when I felt completely discouraged about learning Arabic. I was reading the *Baghdad Burning* blog by Riverbend and I got to the part about the Abu Ghraib prison horrors where American soldiers humiliated Iraqi prisoners and took photos of it which made it to papers around the world. I'm so cut off from world news that I didn't know anything about it until I read Riverbend's blog. She pointed out that so many fathers and and husbands and brothers were in prison on false charges, so the pictures were devastating to the Iraqis. As I read about the whole scandal, I had a crushing, panicky feeling. The things that were being done to the Iraqis were horrific. Would anyone from the West ever be received in friendship again?

Suddenly, learning Arabic seemed childishly naïve. With all my heart I didn't want to give up on Arabic, but at the same time I lost hope that I would ever actually find an Arab who wanted to talk to me.

You have to love a people to learn their language. I know there are exceptions. Some people learn a language to do business in a country. And schools teach languages from an early age. But for the most part when an adult undertakes to learn a new language, it's because of a love for the culture, for the people, or for a particular person. And unless someone is gifted, the whole process takes time and the challenges test a person's commitment. There have been many things I thought would be cool to learn – to fly a plane, to learn how to knit a sweater, to read the writings of the Early Church Fathers – but my whimsical initial enthusiasm petered out in the reality of actually having to *do* something. Arabic may have started off as a whim, but it has become a passion. I still get sick and unsettled whenever the Abu Ghraib photos are mentioned anywhere. They're the only time when my passion seemed silly. Not because I had stopped loving Arabic, but because I felt like, how could Arabic ever love *me*.

But at the same time, in the midst of my sick misery, I started to think about all the people of faith caught up in the mess of America's involvement in Iraq. The world has sadistic, thoroughly incompetent people, but why should they keep me from doing something I love? People of faith stay connected regardless of the evil that goes on around them. God knows there are a million reasons, a million injustices, that could keep people from reaching out to one another. But the command to love your neighbor as yourself is something that is practiced in a day-to-day, one-to-one way. In fact, one of the most inspiring aspects of the interactions between East and West over the last two thousand years is how individuals can connect even when their governments are messing things up. A Roman centurion asks Jesus to heal his servant. A Crusader settles down, marries a Christian Arab and lives like a Palestinian. Freya Stark takes Arabic lessons in the local school.

And the tensions can get very close to a person's life without ruining friendships. Freya Stark had an Arab friend who came to tea in her home and often complained about the British rule of his country. But it didn't keep her from living in an Arab neighbourhood and learning Arabic.

I'm addicted to buying those books with titles like, *Easy Arabic: A Complete Course for Beginners; Learn Arabic in One Easy Book; Arabic is Easy.* I'm drawn to the word, 'easy.' (What would be ideal would be *You Already Know Arabic, You Just Didn't Realize It.*) But the truth is, I learn the most when I just sit down everyday and do one program. Not that the wild hodge-podge approach doesn't work too. I have about three books I grab to take out on the front lawn when the kids are playing outside. That way I can pick up bits and pieces that I haven't learned anywhere else. Learning Arabic is a mix of diligently studying combined with picking up whatever else I can here and there. I learned the whole alphabet in a bits and pieces kind of way although *The Arabic Alphabet* by Nicholas Awde and Putros Samano was my main source and the one I referred to the most.

I'm learning concentration. I'm so used to tuning into everything around me, kind of like a radar looking for any abnormalities on the horizon. But every time I let other thoughts creep in, my Arabic starts drifting. So I have to completely focus my mind on the Arabic and ignore the TV and the household noise around me. No need to worry about the kids, They scream anytime they want my attention. What I have to tune out is the miscellaneous background noise of a busy house, like following along with a TV show or a conversation in the living room, or even my own thoughts which often wander to planning what I'm going to make for dinner. Another thing that throws me off is thinking, 'I'm doing well! I'm really getting this!' From that point forward I bomb.

With my husband's satellite system I can watch soap operas on Jordan TV. One Sunday we were watching one that must have been Egyptian because I couldn't understand a word. I'm learning the Eastern Arabic, spoken in Syria, Jordan and Palestine. But I liked that this soap opera had a lot of music and scenes with people just standing by their windows, staring in the distance with no dialogue. At least those parts put me on an equal level with the Arabic-speaking people also watching. Paul was way better at guessing what was going on in the show. I thought it was a crime show where the fisherman was fixing up a hut in the woods to use as some sort of a hideout. Paul said he was going to take himself a bride. And in one of the next scenes, the fisherman was sitting around a table, eating with an older man and woman and a young woman who he kept smiling at. It was obviously a romance. Then there was some big storm when the fisherman was out in the boat (no dialogue). But then Paul and I had to go so we never saw how it ended.

Then in the car, Paul asked me what the word for 'look' is because he wanted me to look at a helicopter. I told the word for 'what' instead. ('Look' is *shaaf*. 'What' is *shu*.) So I made a *ralta* (mistake). But Paul said I should just incorporate every word I know into my conversation with him and the kids and even if I had to translate for everyone at first, they'd all pick it up soon enough.

It's obviously the best way to retain what I learn, but my big fear is that I'll be mispronouncing words and that my family will end up speaking a corrupted Arabic. Of course, I realize the silliness of this fear. None of them are applying for jobs as U.N. Translators and Arabic is a hobby for me. But it seems like as long as I just keep learning it and not actually applying it, I'm in a safe place. As soon as I open up my mouth and start using it, it gets risky.

So I have to be brave. I *will* make mistakes. My family may learn some strange new words that don't actually exist in Arabic. But someone once said, “If you don't know how to say a word, say it loud!”

It shouldn't be a surprise if I mispronounce a word now and then. Usually just when the speaker on my CD is saying a new word, one of the kids will let out a sudden shriek or in one case, let out a shriek and then start banging a door over and over again.

So I carry on. I'm learning not to get stressed even when a kid is having a temper tantrum and attempting to destroy a computer. (Which is what Josh was doing one day. He said his computer was “crashed” so his solution was to hurl himself at the monitor and start shaking it. Actually, his foot had just hit the on/off button. So I paused my lesson to help him reboot and get back to his website.) I usually give myself forty-five minutes to do a thirty minute lesson, so interruptions must be limited to essentials. Sometimes I have to keep it going while I help a kid which really tests my concentration. Though, it's probably not an unreasonable thing to learn a language in the midst of chaos since most human encounters are slightly chaotic. So much of staying calm and clear-headed as a parent is just about not getting caught up in the tornado of a child's emotions. I have to stay focused for my brain to be able to think in Arabic. Of course, the true test of my abilities will be when I can be in the middle of a tornado and still be able to say in Arabic, “I will take the bus to town and return on foot.”

Sometimes it's just hard to get on the computer. Josh went berserk on me one day when I told him it was my turn on the computer. After attempting to destroy the computer in the spirit of if-I-can't-have-it-no-one-will, he then started to throw things at me. But he was sensitive enough to either throw small hard things or large soft things, but not large hard things like the toy house on the coffee table. Despite the hurricane in my living room, I managed to make it to the bookshelf to get his Story Reader, only to discover that the batteries were dead. I was actually able to find a screwdriver that matched the Story Reader. Josh insisted on opening it up himself so I taught him the dangerous skill of unscrewing screws. (I look around the living room and see that screws are everywhere. I could come out one morning and find the front door off its hinges.) Then I discovered that the Story Reader runs on three triple A batteries. There were only two triple A batteries in the 'Recharged' jar. I had to scrounge around and find one that hadn't been recharged. A minor miracle resulted in the Story Reader actually working. I started up my Arabic once the screwdriver was safely put away and Josh was busy singing and dancing with his books.

But of all my kids, Josh, my four year-old, is most likely to pick up on the Arabic and actually use it back. He can ask for *zum* (juice) and *haleeb* (milk) and say *shukrun* (thank you) as easily as if he's doing it in English. His capacity for picking up a new language makes me want to be extra careful that I'm not making mistakes. It's so easy to make a little slip. Doing my CD, I was trying to say, 'We can have a glass of tea at my place,' *mumkin ishrub glasset chai andee*, but I said *mumkin ishrub glasset chai anduk*, which is, 'We can have tea at your place.' If I'd said it to an Arab, I would have just invited myself to his place for tea!

“What is this finger tayyib,” Josh asked me after I said to him, *fikr tayyib*. (Good idea.)

The girls usually let me have half an hour to do my Arabic but the boys continually interrupt me with their requests. And sometimes they even get involved with my lesson.

The speaker on my CD said, “I don't want your car today.” Josh replied, “I don't want a car. We have

to go too far. We have to take a plane."

Sometimes on the days when chaos reigns – Julie riding through the house on her roller-skates, the boys fighting, continual requests – I just go through the motions. The lesson plays. I barely answer. But it seems important to just let it play rather than switch it off. I have to do each lesson three times just to get it all anyhow. It's too easy to get things mixed up, like *a'yanen* (sometimes) and *adatan* (usually). The CDs are really good about reviewing things, but I think they're expecting that adults will be learning in a quiet, uninterrupted environment.

Considering my plan to incorporate Arabic into my daily life, I was learning some important phrases when communicating with Paul. *Wayne rihay?* Where are you going? He has a habit of just heading out the door without telling me anything and next thing I know, I see the van driving by the living room window. But to help me with my Arabic, he actually stops and answers me now. Another useful phrase, *shur rye ache en roh saw-wa*, we can go together.

Although I started out doing the Rosetta Stone on weekends, I found I got more out of it if I did it every other day during the week. That way, I'd have one day of the colloquial Arabic and the next day I'd be doing the Modern Standard Arabic. The colloquial was easier. For example, with the Pimsleur CD I've learned to say, "Americee-ya" for American. With the Rosetta Stone's MSA, they teach the way of saying "United States of America" which is something that for me is unpronounceable. The conversational Arabic calls a doctor, *ductur.* The MSA is *tabeeb*. With the Pimsleur conversational CD's I concentrate on speaking, with the Rosetta Stone software, I'm content if I can understand what's being said. Sometime success has to be measured in different ways to avoid frustration. And since my goals are to be able to both speak and understand Arabic, both programs work well for me.

If the kids are hogging the computers, or I just have a few minutes to myself, I pick up my Olive Tree Dictionary and flip through it for some useful phrases. I gravitate towards the imperatives which are useful with kids. Some good ones:

Fut! Come in!
'Ala mahlak! Slowly! Take your time! No hurry!
*L**a**zem (e)tk**a**mal! Mafhum?* You've got to finish! Is that clear?

I also read about *m**a**greb,* sunset or evening. I was charmed to learn that the North African countries are literally 'the sunset countries', and Morocco being the furthest west is 'the sunset the furthest.' I think it would be picturesque if in Canada we called British Columbia the Sunset Province and Newfoundland the Sunrise Province.

Collecting useful phrases has become a hobby. If I'm going to speak Arabic I have to have a handy list of everyday phrases. One Wednesday, my list was as follows:

Shuufee? What's going on?
Wainak? Where are you?
Keef qu'lt? What did you say?
SaHeeH. True.
Ha-nedreda. We will have lunch.
Biduk...? Do you want...?

Zoom. Juice.
Ba'd shwaiyi. Soon. (Literally, after a little.)
Ba'd bakkeer kteer. It is yet much too early.
Yaum al arb'a. Wednesday.

I didn't use all the words on my list that day but I did say some that weren't on it, like, *Hanatosha hella*. (We will have lunch now.) I also said *Mabrook!* (Congratulations!) when Paul came home with the Wii Fit. (It was sold out everywhere in our town and Shopper's DrugMart had people on a waiting list to buy it.)

One day my journal records that I felt like I was in a maze of befuddlement. I was doing my lesson with two computers and a TV all going, each with their respective noise levels. Plus, there was the language itself. I know more than I did a month ago, but it still feels like a muddle some days. The speaker says, 'I will take a taxi downtown' and the only word my brain can do is taxi, which is *taxi*. By the time the speaker gives the answer I've managed to dredge, downtown, *balad*, from my mostly blank mind. It goes without saying that I'm probably screwing up all the little connector words like of, to, and from. I'm probably saying things like, 'I will take a taxi until downtown.' (Which, come to think of it, sort of makes sense, providing that is truly what I want to say.) Hopefully a waiter will understand me if I say, 'I like to be a coffee' and there will be compassion when I tell someone that 'I'm going there yesterday.' At least I know I'll be amusing to the native speakers, which is way more interesting than someone who speaks the language perfectly.

Coincidently, on that particular day of befuddlement, I learned that there is an Arabic word, *befuddal*, but it means, 'he prefers.' (Useful for when I meet an Arabic person and want to tell her things about my husband.)

During one of my lessons, my daughter (*bintee*), Julie, asked me how to spell the word grass. My brain went, 'Grass? Grass? I can't remember learning that in Arabic.'

I could lock myself into the bedroom and do my lessons there, but I'd come out a half hour later to discover one of my kids has murdered another. That is, if they didn't spend the whole time banging on the door requiring my mediation skills. (I want to mediate. They just want me to pass judgment on all those that oppose them.) I could wait til Paul comes home but what little brain I have is at it's best in the morning.

I continue to watch Arabic TV. It's both beguiling and agonizing. Even though I'll recognize about three more words since that last time I turned it on, I don't understand most of it. But I feel like I should. It sounds so familiar. I feel like I should understand it because I'm getting so used to the cadences of Arabic. I can understand words like 'always' and 'of course' and 'that is to say' but most of the time I don't even know what the subject is. Movies are better than people just sitting around and talking because at least there I can get a sense of plot. (Or at least, I can think I have a sense of the plot.) But I really annoy myself when I recognize words from my CDs and I can't even remember what those mean! I'll grab my handy little Romanized dictionary to look it up, but then I usually get distracted by other things. One night it was meat. *LaHm*.

LaHm 'ijil. Veal.
LaHm baqar. Beef.

LaHm Dani. Mutton.
LaHm khanzir. Pork.
LaHm kharuf. Lamb.

By the time I was done with boiled meat, fat meat, roast meat...I had forgotten what word I was looking up and it didn't matter anyway because the show had moved on. At least I knew what this show was about. *Filastin*. Palestine. There was a lot of footage from the Mandate period so it was easy to follow along with the history.

But if I'm going to understand the TV I'll have to spend more time in the dictionary for the nouns. I've tried to get some Arabic in in the afternoons, especially to get into all the books I've bought, but afternoons are so full with doing laundry and a work-out and dinner that it's nearly impossible. No, that's not entirely true. When I go outside with the kids I usually take a book out and I've got time when I watch them in the bath. It's just that by the afternoon I'm usually either lazy or feel like an escape so I grab a book to read. It wouldn't hurt to grab a dictionary and just go through it for fifteen minutes. It would be better than nothing. There, I've convinced myself.

Paul is right about the only way to learn Arabic is to put what I've learned into practice. Words like *t'fuddal* (there you go, when handing something to someone) which I say to my sons all the time are second-nature to me now. Josh is *ibnee zareer* (my little son) whenever I call him. I'm learning to tell the time, I'm learning to ask basic questions, I'm learning to talk about lunch and dinner and all the little everyday things people do and talk about doing. It's only laziness that makes me say the time in English rather than Arabic.

Having committed me to this method of learning, Paul is now obligated to help me actually do it. As I mentioned earlier, he'll be heading out the door but he'll have to pause and patiently wait while I call out, "Wait! Wait! *Enta truh?* No, no, that's not right. *Shu riha?* Or is that, *shu truh?* No, no, it's w*ayne rihay?* Yes, yes, that's it. *Wayne rihay?* Where are you going?" To carry on the dialogue, he'll say, "What's Arabic for bank?" Then he'll disappear out the door while I run to my dictionary to look up a new word.

I'm now at the point where I can say things like, 'Her husband prefers to stay at home but she likes to travel.' But if I actually had the opportunity to use it, it would give the impression that I'm quite fluent in Arabic. The Arab-speaking person would probably burst forth with a whole conversation, expecting me to understand just the way I would expect someone who could say something like that to be fluent in English.

Of course (*taban*), this is a silly fear. I'm not going to meet any Arabic-speaking people for awhile and by the time I do, I'll have learned a lot more. Even then, I'd probably start slowly. *Marhaba*. (Hi.) *Keef il hal?* (How's it going?) And it's unlikely that we'll work up to 'Her husband prefers to stay at home but she likes to travel.' I don't even know anyone whose husband likes to stay at home while she prefers to travel. It's something I can imagine saying in a Syrian coffeehouse about someone I'd just met to someone else that I'd just met, all of us perhaps staying at the same hotel. I usually (*adatan*) find myself applying these conversational phrases to exotic settings in the Syria-Jordan-Palestine triangle. Dusty roads dividing and me asking some passerby, *Hada torree Esh-Sham?* This is the Damascus Road? OK, so the road would probably be paved, but the passerby would point and say, *Khudee torree al yee a meen.* Take the road to the right. It sounds mundane, perhaps, but set in Syria it

seems more romantic to me as I drift off into a world of all sorts of encounters in far away lands, all a result of me being so wonderfully fluent in Arabic...

Learning Arabic inadvertently served an unanticipated purpose. Can learning a language keep one sane? I think so. I have a horrible habit of imagining every worse-case scenario imaginable. My mind goes down every negative road, not just once, but at least five, six, maybe seven or eight times until I'm so worn out by something that has never actually happened and as time will eventually prove, never will happen. My faith tells me I should think thoughts that are pure, lovely and of good report. Chanting the Psalms of David helps. But I find I need a lot of filler to get me through the day and keep my thoughts positive. My Olive Tree Dictionary, full of everyday Arabic phrases, provides loads of filler for my mind. As soon as a negative thought starts to invade, I grab a phrase and put it there instead.

And the more I know, the more satisfying it is for me to switch on Jordan TV (my favourite station) and understand more words that the people are saying. The most delightful experience I had was when I switched on the TV and watched a couple of women examining Christmas decorations. Since most of what they said were words like *hellu*, nice, and *hellwi*, beautiful, I really felt like I was getting it. I could understand a lot of what they were saying. It was a joyful experience. I was ***connected***.

Arabs justifiably feel that no one can truly learn their native language with fluency. Thankfully, my ambitions are modest. I'm interested in local dialect, not the university level Classical Arabic. I also want to have a good grip on the alphabet, to be able to read Arab words without long, painful pauses. In fact, my goal is to be what Margaret K. (Omar) Nydell, in her book *Understanding Arabs*, describes as "functionally illiterate". I want to be able to write my name and read the street signs. That would place me at the level of an Arab who has had a sixth-grade education.

Everyday Arabic is different from the Arabic that is studied in schools. Apparently, spoken Arabic isn't even written down, except perhaps as dialogue in a novel. When a foreigner studies Arabic, it's often assumed he wants to focus on the Classical or Modern Standard Arabic. It's a more academic focus. But it might not help you if you want to understand what the Palestinians are saying while they have their coffee.

Nydell remarks that "Learning Arabic is indispensable for gaining a real insight into Arab society and culture." That pretty much sums up my desire. She recommends that one choose the type of Arabic that suits ones needs best. Well, for me, that would be the language of the souk. I like being able to understand what the Palestinians in Hebron are saying when they are interviewed by reporters. It thrilled me to be able to understand some of the dialogue in the movie, *West Beirut*.

Nydell writes that:

When you speak Arabic, you will find that your use of even the simplest phrases, no matter how poorly pronounced, will produce an immediate smile and comment of appreciation. I have had literally hundreds of occasions on which my willingness to converse in Arabic led to a delightful experience.

Very hopeful for someone like me who has noodles-for-brains but still wants to learn Arabic! She continues:

Arabs are flattered by your efforts to learn their language (although they are convinced that no foreigner can ever master it), and they will do everything to encourage you. Even just a little Arabic is a useful tool for forming friendships and demonstrating goodwill.

Reading this was, of course, marvelously good news for me and summed up every objective I had for learning the language – forming friendships and demonstrating goodwill.

I decided that I would worry less about forgetting everything I knew and instead, concentrate on thoroughly enjoying the journey into Arabic.

The End

PALESTINE FOR THE ARABS
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Agreement Between the King of Hedjaz and Khadim al-Haramayn as-Sharifayn, Emir Feisal Ibn al-Hussein al-Hashemi, and the President of the World Zionist Organization, Dr. Chaim Weizmann.

January 3, 1919

His Royal Highness the Emir Feisal, representing and acting on behalf of the Arab Kingdom of Hedjaz, and Dr. Chaim Weizmann, representing and acting on behalf of the Zionist Organization, mindful of the racial kinship and ancient bonds existing between the Arabs and the Jewish people, and realizing that the surest means of working out the consummation of their national aspirations is through the closest possible collaboration in the development of the Arab State and Palestine, and being desirous further of confirming the good understanding which exists between them, have agreed upon upon the following Articles:

ARTICLE I

The Arab State and Palestine in all their relations and undertakings shall be controlled by the most cordial goodwill and understanding, and to this end Arab and Jewish duly accredited agents shall be established and maintained in the respective territories.

ARTICLE II

Immediately following the completion of the deliberations of the Peace Conference, the definite boundaries between the Arab State and Palestine shall be determined by a Commission to be agreed upon by the parties hereto.

ARTICLE III

In the establishment of the Constitution and Administration of Palestine all such measures shall be adopted as will afford the fullest guarantees for carrying into effect the British Government's Declaration of the 2d of November, 1917.

ARTICLE IV

All necessary measures shall be taken to encourage stimulate immigration of Jews into Palestine on a large scale, and as quickly as possible to settle Jewish immigrants upon the land through closer settlement and intensive cultivation of the soil. In taking such measures the Arab peasant and tenant farmers shall be protected in their rights, and shall be assisted in forwarding their economic development.

ARTICLE V

No regulation nor law shall be made prohibiting or interfering in any way with the free exercise of religion; and further the free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship without discrimination or preference shall forever be allowed. No religious test shall ever be required for the exercise of civil or political rights.

ARTICLE VI
The Mohammedan Holy Places shall be under Mohammedan control.

ARTICLE VII

The Zionist Organization proposes to send to Palestine a Commission of experts to make a survey of the economic possibilities of the country, and to report upon the best means for its development. The Zionist Organization will place the aforementioned Commission at the disposal of the Arab State for the purpose of a survey of the economic possibilities of the Arab State and to report upon the best means for its development. The Zionist Organization will use its best efforts to assist the Arab State in providing the means for developing the natural resources and economic possibilities thereof.

ARTICLE VIII

The parties hereto agree to act in complete accord and harmony on all matters embraced herein before the Peace Congress.

ARTICLE IX

Any matters of dispute which may arise between the contracting parties shall be referred to the British Government for arbitration. Given under our hand at London, England, the third day of January, one thousand nine hundred and nineteen.

Chaim Weizmann
Feisal Ibn al-Hussein.

Chaim Weizmann and Emir Faisal...What might have been...