

# A Day Out In Palestine

19/05/2008



Entrance To Bethlehem



Myself with Abdel Moti (right of picture)

So much has happened since I last wrote, that I thought I would bring you all up to date. Also, I forgot to mention one or two very interesting events in my last update, or perhaps there was no room to mention them!

This morning I woke around 6 pm, having gone to sleep around mid-night. As my mind reflected on the events of the day before, I found myself crying. I was obviously in some kind of delayed shock, asking myself if it really happened, or was it all a dream? I reached out for my camera, and yes, there it was, documented on film, as well as firmly implanted in my heart and soul.

A few days' ago, I had needed a small set of shelves to tidy up the mound of CDs and videos, which were piled about 4-5 feet high, (one and a half metres) on my sitting room floor. To say the least, it was a mess. I knew where I could get such shelves, but the store was two hours away by car. So I prayed. The following day, I realised that my son David had gone to Tel-Aviv, and would pass by the store on the way home. He is not known for his excess of patience, but I plucked up courage and asked him. He said he could not promise but would try, and if he couldn't, he would donate me his! The next day he arrived with these beautiful wooden shelves, put them together and then arranged all the Cd's for me, and said it was a gift! "Well", I thought, "That was a speedy answer to prayer, but Lord, I have tried to go twice to see Abdel Moti, and the situation was impossible. Please answer this prayer too."

On Shabbat we had a packed house again, as many came to the meeting, including about 7 non-believers, one of whom asked us to hold the next meeting in her house, and even offered to provide the lunch! We are going to take up her offer on the next Shabbat meeting on 31st May. About 10.30 that evening, there was a phone call from Pastor Najeeb. He was travelling to Bethlehem on Monday, all the barriers were now open, and would I like to come?!

I did not sleep too well on Sunday night, and felt quite unwell on Monday morning, never the less I was on the 8.06 train to Haifa, where I was picked up by Pastor Najeeb, and we were on our way. Israelis are not strictly allowed to go to Bethlehem, and the situation can turn volatile at any time. Then there was the little question of getting over the border and past the Israeli check points, never mind the Palestinians. Abdel Moti had left Jenin at 6 am, and his journey through the check points

was, as we were to learn later, horrendous, apart from the fact that Israeli soldiers confiscated 4 bottles of Olive Oil and 10 kilos of cheese which he was bringing for us. They kindly left him with two bottles of Oil. Before leaving Jerusalem, we picked up a recovering Arabic drug addict from an Arab village inside of Jerusalem.



Abdel Moti In The Bedouin Tent



My Birthday Cake

We entered Bethlehem through Bet Jalla, going the back way in. To our surprise, the Israeli soldier just waved us in, and before long, there was the Palestinian flag waiving in the breeze! Not far down the road, I spotted trucks with Palestinian flags and men sitting in the backs. I wondered aloud what that could be. "It's the Palestinian army", said Najeeb. "They are keeping order here". We passed by, and they did not stop us on this occasion. It was reminiscent of scenes we see on the TV depicting the fighting in Beirut However, it was otherwise very peaceful. We called in at the Christian Book-store, where we were served a delicious cup of mint tea, and waited for Abdel Moti to arrive. Here also another brother was waiting to see Pastor Najeeb. The wife of this gentle Palestinian brother, who was a preacher of the Gospel, had left him and their five children, to go and live in Sweden, and though he begged her to come back for the children's sake, and went to Sweden to try to win her over, she refused, and he is absolutely broken. My heart went out to him, and I promised that I would pray for him.

After a while, Abdel Moti arrived, and we were happy to see each other. We then all went out to lunch in a Bedouin tent. We had a super meal, as the Arabs know how to cook. Abdel Moti was looking very thin, and had obviously lost a lot of weight. Life is difficult for them. There is little to no work, and little to no hope for their future. Through Elias, the former drug addict, I was able to talk to Abdel Moti while Najeeb comforted the other brother. Abdel Moti related how his brother's stay at Rambam hospital had given him a new perspective on life, and he learned things that he had never known before, that Jews and Arabs could love each other instead of hating. It was then that he began to read the New Testament. He is still amazed that we could care for him. He joined hands with us in prayer for the afflicted brother and his family. It was difficult to imagine that Abdel Moti was once a Hamas sympathizer, while his brother was an active fighter. Such are God's ways. We went to the home of the brother whose wife left him, and met some of his lovely children. His home was set in its own grounds, and very beautiful and well kept, but his sadness was palpable. Before we left, he gave each one of us a bottle of perfume made from Nard (New Testament "Spikenard" )

From here we went on to see Pastor N. and his beautiful wife . They knew it was my birthday, so they ordered a delicious chocolate gateau with the words "Happy Birthday, Roote".It also had candles, which I had to blow out, and they all sang "Happy Birthday". The first piece of cake was given to me, and I gave it to Abdel Moti. I never in my life imagined that I would ever spend a birthday inside the Palestinian territories, as a guest of honour, with a former Hamas man, and such lovely Palestinians Christians. They too have sat through cross fire, sandbagged their homes, and hoped for better times. We resolved to go on praying for each other and stretching out our hands in friendship.

All too soon, it was time for Abdel Moti to return to Jenin. A final hug, and he was gone, leaving me two bottles of olive oil and some plums that look like cherries. I then sat and chatted to Selwa, the Pastor's wife, and we both could feel that the Lord had brought us together for a purpose. It was two hearts united.



In Pastor N's House



With Pastor N's Wife Selwa

We made our final farewells, and set out for home. On the way, seeing our Israel License plates, we were stopped by four Palestinian soldiers.”Where are you from?” Pastor Najeeb greeted them cheerily in Arabic , and told them that we are from Haifa. “.Where are you going?” “Just to visit friends.” They waived us on, and later we came to a bakery. As Najeeb disappeared into the bakery, two soldiers stationed themselves at the back and the front of the car, while another was seated on the opposite corner.. I did not know whether to laugh or cry. They did not look at us, but their guns were at the ready. I was happy when Najeeb emerged from the bakery, entered the car, and we drove off! A few minutes later, we passed an Israeli checkpoint, and after a brief question, we were allowed to move on, and within seconds we were back in Israel.

We do not know how long the situation will remain calm, but it was good to visit our brothers and sisters over there and to get to know some of these other sheep, who are not of the Jewish fold. Somehow I felt as though I had left part of my family over there and yet they were buried in my heart.

We had much more to tell you, but that can wait for next time. Please keep us all in your prayers that we may be found busy about the Master's service, and please don't forget Abdel Moti, that he may make a total commitment with his wife, as well as his brother, and remember also our Palestinian brothers and sisters, as well as our work with our Jewish friends.

May God bless you all.

In Messiah's love,

Ruth