

MONDAY, OCTOBER 1

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FEELING ILL--RESTING--CLEANING UP FRONT YARD

BEING A SERVANT--PRIORITIES

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FEELING ILL--RESTING--CLEANING UP FRONT YARD

Because I awoke with a headache and indigestion, I decided to spend a quiet day at the apartment. Hannu left to make a special delivery of a gift on behalf of a friend in Toronto to somebody that lived in *Be'er Sheva*. About 70 kilometres south-west from Jerusalem, this modern industrial town was called "Beersheba" in the Bible and was the southern limit of Old Testament Palestine.

After breakfast and a good rest, I felt somewhat better and went outside to help Sylvie rake up fallen leaves and litter in the small yard in front of her apartment building. Large grey clouds that occasionally blew in from the west seemed so out of place, since the sky over Israel had been almost entirely cloudless since our arrival.

While Sylvie was gone on an errand, two ladies came out to help me. Hearing my limited fluency in Hebrew and my foreign accent, they figured I must have been a new immigrant. When I explained that I was visiting from Canada, they expressed their curiosity very directly and asked why I was working there and not travelling around. They seemed satisfied with my explanation that I had not felt well that morning and was taking it easy for the day.

BEING A SERVANT--PRIORITIES

As I worked slowly, I did some serious thinking about serving being an integral part of God's love. As a tourist, I had to depend on service from bus drivers, guides, store clerks, and so on, and found it difficult at times to keep in mind that loving the person serving me was more

important than how much the quality of the service suited me. I thought about what Jesus said about following Him and about serving others and realized more deeply that being a simple servant was obviously more important than whether or not I retraced His actual steps along the Via Dolorosa or up the Mount of Olives. I reckoned that if I was becoming more like Him, then the work I was doing to help Sylvie and the neighbours could be more "holy" than a pilgrimage to a shrine; the raking of leaves, more "spiritual" than reciting prayers at a church built over a holy site. My trip to Israel would be worthwhile only if it helped me to express Messianic love, and that included having the heart of a true servant.

I reflected also on my health and how I had felt some discouragement because I lacked the adequate energy to do all that I had intended. However, I was also aware that God had a purpose in all things that came across my path, and that His love was to be found in all situations. Perhaps, the most important value of this sickness was to challenge me on my priorities. My love for travelling and my fascination with experiencing other cultures were still strong, but exploring God's spiritual kingdom was becoming increasingly important.

Along with my reflections on serving and Messianic love, came the exciting thoughts of the glorious shalom that would result if many Jews and Arabs related with each other as true servants like Jesus. They would not be concerned with their own desires but interested in God's purposes for each other and willing to serve their former enemies sacrificially.

Hannu returned disappointed that he was not able to find the bus to Be'er Sheva, and we went to our usual place at the local mall for supper. By that time, I had a good appetite and enjoyed an interesting vegetarian meal--an egg roll filled with carrots, bean sprouts, and other vegetables, and covered with mushroom sauce.