



### LAST MONTH I MET A VERY WISE MAN.

I had never met him before and it is likely that we will never meet again. I doubt that he would remember me – over a hundred people came to meet him – but I will remember him for a long time.

The invitation came by email – unpretentious, simple, business-like. “Invitation to a meeting with the Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel”, it read, “RSVP required, conservative business attire suggested” and, seeing this is Los Angeles, “There are several parking lots nearby and some street parking”. It was addressed to “Key Christian pastors and leaders” from the hosts of the meeting, Israeli Consul General, Ehud Danoch and my good friend and mentor, General Shimon Erem, who is heading up the very successful campaign to make Christian support of Israel even more strong and effective than it is.

I don’t know what I expected – I had never met a Chief Rabbi before – but I thought that there wouldn’t be all that many people present – the Israeli Consulate where the meeting was held isn’t large and I didn’t think that all that many “Key Christian pastors and leaders” would show up, on a weekday, to meet with him. I thought that it would be interesting to see and hear rabbi Amar. I also saw a chance to distribute some of my newsletters and maybe make some new Christian friends.

So I RSVP’d, put on conservative business attire and went. I took 10 or 12 newsletters with me - more than enough, I thought, for the handful of people that will show up. I thought wrong. Once again I had underestimated the Christian friends of Israel.

After everyone sat down I surreptitiously counted the house. There were 87 pastors and 14 Jews, including myself. Some of the pastors had come from as far as Sacramento, Bakersfield and San Diego to meet the rabbi. They came to listen, to share, to learn. They came to express their support and, yes, their love, for Israel and for the Jews. And much more than just love was involved – an evangelical conference in Dallas had just a week ago raised \$ 7 million for Israel!

Rabbi Shlomo Amar wore a long black robe embroidered in an intricate white pattern. On his head, a black round hat resembling a small turban or a larger version of what bellhops used to wear. The round top of the hat was dark velvet. Luxurious grey beard, glasses that didn't hide the twinkle in his eyes and a kindest, sweetest smile - it rivaled the smile of my angelic one-year old granddaughter.

He spoke in Hebrew, pausing for the English translation and listening intently to the English – I think he understood every word.

He spoke for about a half hour. I took notes as best I could and here is what I managed to decipher from my scribbles. It is far from an exact transcript, just a small part of what he said.

“Thank you for coming”, he said. “You are all pursuing the truth of the Bible. The words of the prophets are relevant today – they speak to all of us. Prophet Ezekiel saw the dry bones and God asked the prophet whether the bones would gather and live again. This is the message – the bones are the symbol of dead beliefs of long ago. It is up to you to bring the dead back to life.

“There is much that happens in our lives that we do not understand. Some of what we don't understand is history and its lessons and its message. Not everyone can hear it or see it, or have the wisdom to understand. We all have wisdom but not all of us use it – the worst laziness is that of the brain.

“It is a wonderful and rare opportunity for me to speak before smart people. Tremendous things are happening at present but we can't recognize them – we are within the structure. But soon we will be able to see the beautiful structure that is being built.

“Today's Torah portion is Noah – a direct connection with our lives. The Lord had decided to destroy and rebuild the world – we all are children of Noah – all humans and animals. Now here is a question: If God is almighty, why did He need an ark? Why didn't He just save Noah and his family? Just try to envision Noah being asked by people, ‘What are you doing?’ Noah built and explained for years that a flood was coming - our sages suggest that it took 120 years. After just 20 years the people were convinced that Noah was just nuts or maybe drunk. And then, after 120 years, there was the flood.

“Words of prophets will come true for us as well. May God give us wisdom to see and understand when evil is being done. May love increase in the world. And may God give us the patience to wait for the fulfillment of His promise.”

Later, there were many questions. I kept looking at the rabbi as he handled them all, with wit, patience and wisdom.

I knew that I had met a very wise man that day.