

## HOWe THINGS ARE...

December 2009

The morning of my first day in Jordan, we seem to be the only people up in the neighborhood. We're walking at a fast clip, following our leader, Wyn, to wherever it is he's leading us (I'm dubious about whether he has an actual destination). Eventually, he finds a suitable spot (not sure what the criteria is for suitable) and tells us this story:

*“A rabbi is walking on the road to his home town. As the sun is setting, the rabbi is absorbed in prayer and reciting scripture he’s memorized so he misses the turn to his home. Instead the road leads him towards a Roman fortress. A Roman guard, alerted to the rabbi’s presence, calls out loudly in a menacing sort of voice, “Who are you? What are you doing here?” In the dark, the rabbi is flustered and alarmed, now realizing that he’s arrived where he didn’t mean to be. The guard calls out again, “Who are you? What are you doing here?” The rabbi pauses, thinks for a moment and answers back, “If I paid you, would you come to my house every day and ask me those two questions: ‘Who are you?’ and ‘What are you doing here?’”* “

Wyn encourages us to think about the two questions, “Who are you?” and “What are you doing here?” And then, he leads our group in reciting this quotation, in Hebrew first and then in English. I'm alarmed to realize that EVERYONE in the group has apparently memorized this quote in Hebrew and English. I missed this particular memo. It's apparent that this quotation is going to be repeated regularly and I need to get this thing memorized real quick. I catch on to the English part, but the Hebrew's kind of elusive.

Twelve days later, I got it. And when I say I got it. I don't just mean I memorized the words in Hebrew and English.

*“Hear O Israel. The LORD is our God. The LORD alone. Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. Love your neighbor as yourself.”*

The evening of my second day in Israel (the fourth day of my trip), I'm sitting with my group on Mt Scopus overlooking the Old City of Jerusalem closing in on sunset. Together we read a blessing that says, “Blessed are you, God our Father, King of the Universe, who gave us life, created us, and brought us here to experience this moment”. Bear in mind, I am freaking looking at Jerusalem. Jerusalem, where God my Savior died for me. Right there. I'm right here. Looking right there. At Jerusalem. Right there in that moment, I believe I loved the LORD my God with all of it. With all my heart, with all my soul, with all my might. My heart was pounding as I read that blessing; my brain is repeating a little mantra: “I can't believe I'm here. God, I can't believe I'm here”. And I've got tears brimming in my eyes and one of those ridiculous dopey grins spreading across my face...

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