**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Mishpatim 5775**

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**Recognizing the Source**

 A poor man had to marry off his daughter and came to ask Reb Menachem Mendel of Kotzk for assistance. The tzaddik gave him a letter to deliver to Reb Moshe Chaim Rothenburg, a wealthy Jew, asking for monetary aid. The poor man trudged from town to town until he reached the home of Reb Moshe Chaim, where he was graciously welcomed.

After having rested, the poor man handed the letter to his host, and to his astonishment, he received a miserable sum. After all it had taken to reach here, especially with the letter he had brought from the Rebbe himself, he couldn’t believe that this was all he was going to get! How would he cover the expenses for the chassuna?

With no choice, the poor Jew exited and began his long trek home No sooner had he left than Reb Moshe Chaim hurried out to buy clothing, dishes and whatever else a couple might need, quickly loaded it unto a few wagons, took along an additional sum of money, and set out to catch up to his visitor.

Seeing his host with all his baggage, the poor man asked in amazement, “If you were planning to give all this to me, why did you have to put me through all that anguish?”

Listen,” Reb Moshe Chaim explained. “When you arrived with a letter from the Kotzker Rebbe you were sure you’d receive all you needed and forgot that we have an Eibershter on Whom we rely upon. I simply wanted to remind you where to place your trust.”

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An epileptic traveled to Reb Yitzchak of Neshchiz to ask for a bracha to be cured. Reb Yitzchak declined, but the sick man continued to plead, until the tzaddik told him, “It is possible for you to be cured, but I can’t give you this promise. It’s your fault, for you have heard there is a great man in Neshchiz who can perform miracles and you have placed your trust in him instead of in Hashem. When you place your trust in Him, you will be cured.

Reb Yitzchak then told him about a villager and his wife who were robbed and approached the Maggid of Koznitz for assistance. The Maggid protested that he had not stolen their money. They continued to beg for his help and gave him a gold coin to be given to tzedaka as a pidyon.

“But I want more,” countered the Maggid, so they handed him another two, but he was not satisfied. They kept adding, until the Maggid said he would not agree unless they gave him 60 coins for tzedaka.

This was too much for the woman, who gathered up all her coins and turned to her husband, saying “Let’s leave! Hashem can help us without all this.”

Hearing this, the Maggid told them, “Your request was hard to fulfill because you had placed your trust in me and not in Hashem. But now that you have thought about Him, your salvation is near. And if you don’t mind, can you please give me back that first gold ruble you had given for tzedaka?

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During the first few years of his marriage, the, Yismach Moshe, Reb Moshe Teitelbaum of Ujhely was supported by his father-in-law so that he could study Torah undisturbed. When his father-in-law passed away, he realized that he would need to find some way to support his family.

He had an idea: he would procure ten thousand silver reinish, entrust it to some merchant for business purposes, and from that he would have the means of support. There was only one problem: he had no way of securing such a sum.

One day, while trying without success to concentrate on his Gemara, Reb Moshe began to cry over his situation, and soon fell asleep over his open sefer. In his dream, he entered a great hall in which sat a venerable sage, who motioned to him to go into a side room.

There Reb Moshe saw another man who asked him if he knew who the scholar was. When Reb Moshe replied in the negative, the man exclaimed, “That is Reb Yitzchak Luria, the holy AriZal!”

When Reb Moshe returned to where the tzaddik was learning, the AriZal said, “Young man, if a person does have ten thousand silver reinish, is he no longer dependent on the favors of Hashem? Either way, he is dependent – in order that he should be able to eat, talk, walk and live.

“And just as Hashem will grant you these favors so too will He grant you a livelihood, even without ten thousand silver refinish!”

Reb Moshe woke up and felt at ease.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of “Sparks of Light,” a publication of The Baal Shem Tov Library in Flatbush.*

**SHORT STORY OF THE WEEK**

**No Questions Asked**

During the Pesach Seder, we perform thought-provoking actions to catch the children’s attention and inspire them to ask questions. One year, the Belzer Rebbe, Rav Yissochor Dov, of Blessed Memory was doing just that: extra activities not required by Torah law. He wanted his son, Arele (who would later become the Belzer Rebbi himself and the uncle of the current Rebbe) to be stimulated enough to raise questions.

However, Arele didn’t ask any questions and only watched with a blank stare. After a long while, Rav Yissochor Dov asked his son: “Did you see anything that should bother you enough to inquire?”

Arele answered that his father had previously trained him not to ask any questions on Hashem. The boy said he relied on the trust that everything a father does is calculated and is meant for the best, so no questions were necessary.

*Comment: When the Talmud (Kiddushin 30b) says that the respect one has for his parents should be similar to his respect for Hashem, some people take that teaching literally.*

*Reprinted from last week’s email sent by Mendel Berlin.*

**The Surviving Tree**

**Fanny and Jerry Goose’s Story**

**Of Surviving the Holocaust.**

**By Menucha Chana Levin**

On the day Fania was born to the Stenbock family in the small Polish town of Skalat, her father planted a tree in their garden to celebrate her arrival. Little did he realize on that day in 1922 that Fania and the little tree would become the only living remnant of his family.

Fania had a happy childhood, growing into an energetic teenage girl. Then the [Nazis](http://www.aish.com/ho/) invaded Poland and Fania’s joyful life came to an abrupt end. The Jewish community of Skalat was eventually destroyed but through one miracle after another, Fania managed to survive. While many Polish people helped the Nazis achieve their murderous aims, a Polish priest and nuns risked their lives to save her, hiding her in a monastery where she was dressed in appropriate clothing to disguise her Jewish identity.

She was determined to live as a witness to this horrific era for the sake of the Jewish people.

When the war finally ended Fania returned home only to be devastated to find her family and the entire town destroyed.

Fania describes her shock discovery in her autobiography, *Rising from the Holocaust,* “They were gone. Each and every one of them. My family, the whole district, my entire community. Gone! Where could I turn, where could I go? I am alone, I thought, alone in the world with no one. A numbing coldness settled on my heart...”

At that heartbreaking moment, she found the small tree planted by her father growing where her family’s home had been. Among its roots, she discovered hidden heirlooms deep in the earth, buried by her vanished family.

Despite her feelings of solitude, the discovery of her tree and the heirlooms gave Fania the courage to rebuild her life. Her determination and faith in G-d provided her with hope for a better future.

Not long afterwards, Fania met Jerzy Gusz, a hero from the [Jewish underground](http://www.aish.com/ho/p/48945496.html), the man who would soon become her husband.

Born in 1919 in Berezno, Poland, Jerzy was the youngest of 11 children. His father was a successful butcher who supplied the military and they lived in a large house. When the Germans invaded Poland in 1942, their home was bombed. The parents, sheltered in the basement, survived. Jerzy and one nephew also survived but all the rest of the family were killed in the bombing. They were eventually sent to the Berezno ghetto until the Nazis rounded up most of the Jews for transport to the various death camps. Jerzy’s parents were killed on the spot.

Jerzy fled to the forest and joined the Ukrainian Partisans. In an interview with the Shoah Foundation, Jerzy described what happened to him. “I hid my Jewish identity and they welcomed me because I could butcher their meat. After a year, they lost many skirmishes against the Germans and they disbanded. I escaped to another forest in Western Poland and when I heard people speaking Yiddish, I joined them and we created a Jewish Partisan Group.

“We had nothing to lose – we lived like we were dying tomorrow. We were liberated by the Russians in March, 1944. Then I was taken into the Russian Army in their Polish division and sent to the front. Ukrainian Nazi sympathizers attacked my division and I was shot in the hand. I lost two fingers and was taken to a hospital in Kiev. In October, 1944, I was released and sent to a rehabilitation hospital in Russian-occupied Germany.”

Jerzy described how he met his wife. “While changing trains at a train station in Skalat, a young bookkeeper by the name of Fania, who happened to be at the train station paying some company bills, glanced at me and thought I looked Jewish. I have no memory of her, but a few months later I happened to be in Skalat for a day and went into the bank where Fania worked and she recognized me right away. She knew that a soldier had freedom of movement, and she asked if I could help get her to the American zone. I told her that I couldn’t take her unless she was my sister, or my wife. She said ‘Okay, I can be your wife.’ I agreed and we made the arrangements.

Like many other Shoah survivors whose families had been wiped out, they were both eager to marry and start a new family. On May 15, 1945, Fania’s cousin Rabbi Moshe Shechter performed the Jewish marriage ceremony.

“Our son, Martin, was born February 21, 1946. We travelled throughout Germany until 1949. In Hamburg we got papers to travel to either the US or Canada. My maternal uncle, Abe Raybur, guaranteed me a job in his leather factory in Winnipeg so we boarded a boat to Canada. In August, 1949, we went to Toronto to see Fania’s aunt before we travelled to Winnipeg. Her aunt went to the Jewish Congress and found out that Rabbi Kirshenbaum from the town of London, Ontario could arrange a butcher job for me. In 1950, we bought a panel truck and started J. Goose Family Clothing. Our son, Steven, arrived in 1954."

The couple chose new Anglicized names for themselves: Fanny and Jerry Goose. Like the small tree her father had planted continued to survive and grow, Fanny and Jerry rebuilt their lives after the war. From the difficult beginning of selling clothing to farmers from their panel truck to opening the first J. Goose Family Clothing store, Jerry and Fanny worked hard to build a well-known retail business in London, Ontario and they prospered.

Becoming respected members of their community, Fanny even became politically influential. She assisted many other refugees and immigrants, happy that her position as storekeeper enabled her to play that role. Doling out advice to immigrants, she had a pay-when-you-can attitude toward those less fortunate. Her compassion earned her the nickname ‘Mother Goose.’ "Every day I found happiness. Every day I could do something good for someone," she said.

"Fanny and I have created a beautiful family,” said Jerry. They had two sons, Martin and Steven, three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. “All have gone on to build families of their own. We built a successful business.”

Jerry attributes his steadfast belief to surviving. “I remain a deeply religious man, who put on tefilin and davened every day and made the shul and Judaism the center of my life. Hitler took away most of my family, he took away my freedom, and he took away what should have been the best days of my young life. But he did not take away my faith, and that is why I remained a survivor."

Jerry and Fanny were participants in Steven Spielberg’s Shoah Foundation where they gave video testimonydocumenting their personal account of the Holocaust. In 2004, Jerry and Fanny were honored by the Jewish National Fund for their dedication to their community of London, Ontario.

Jerry died in 2012 at the age of 92. He and Fanny had been married for almost 67 years. In tribute, one of the many people touched by the family’s kindness, wrote: “I remember Jerry's deep and penetrating eyes, the kind of eyes that have seen too much in one lifetime. Such kindness, patience and gentleness. He was the perfect balance for Fanny’s outgoing, spirited personality.”

Another one of their generous legacies is the Jerry and Fanny Goose Library in Toronto with thousands of books in five languages.

Fanny finally retired from business after many years, wrote her autobiography and keeping up with the times, she even has a Facebook account.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Aish.com*

**As Heard from Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l**

**“You Shall Not Murder”**

**(Shemos 20:13)**

This command is an essential corollary of the First Dictum “I am Hashem.”  “He that shed the blood of man, by man his blood must be shed, for G-d made man in His image” (Beresheet 9:6).

Included in this Dictum is the duty of rescuing a fellowman’s life, and also the necessity to guard one’s own life in safety and in health. Thus the Rambam includes these matters under one heading: “Laws of Murder and of Guarding Life” in which he deals also with the law of Maakeh (a fence on the roof) and similar admonitions of safety.

 “You shall not kill” even unintentionally.  The entire tractate of Makot is here included. And especially today all rules of traffic safety for drivers and pedestrians are certainly intended by this Commandment.  The precautions against fire in the home and in public institutions, and the building codes for prevention of fire or collapse, are without question included in this Dictum of Hashem. Parents are here admonished by Hashem to protect children from open windows, burning candles and stove fires and from contracting avoidable illness.

When a husband or wife afflicts a mate so seriously that illness and death are caused, this Commandment has been transgressed.  Killing by embarrassment or by depriving of a livelihood is another form of bloodshed. Suicide is also hereby forbidden.

Thus “You shall not kill” includes, You shall not cause death, or premature death, by neglecting your health or your safety; or by endangering the health or safety of others.  One who shortens his own life or his fellowman’s life is a transgressor of this Dictum.  Even killing a dying man is included here because even one minute of life is sacred.

Therefore when one wastes his life without purpose, or even part of his life, it is a form of transgression of the intent of this Commandment.

Quoted by Sam Gindi from "A Nation is Born” by Rabbi Miller ZT’L

*Reprinted from last week’s email “As Heard from Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l”*

**Took the Road Less**

**Traveled — and Stayed There**

**By**[**Jolie Greiff**](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/13895/jewish/Jolie-Greiff.htm)

“You’re going to sit home ALONE instead of driving to *shul* to be with other Jews at Shabbat services?!” my parents demanded.

I was twenty years old, and had come home from a year in Israel as a different person—one who was now*“shomer Shabbat,”* Sabbath observant. That meant not turning on or off lights, not shopping, and not even driving with my parents to services on Shabbat.

"You’re going to sit home ALONE?!" The previous year, while I was studying at Hebrew University, I had decided to re-claim the observance of past generations. I had committed to not desecrate the Sabbath. This included not doing any of the thirty-nine prohibited *melachot*, categories of creative activities derived from those used to build the Tabernacle.

In fact, it was the restrictions observed on Shabbat which drew me to observance.

I was a study-aholic. Before I went to Israel, I attended UC Berkeley. I used to head for the university library at 10:00 a.m. Saturday mornings, right after breakfast. I would sit and study until 5:00 p.m. My mother would say, “Jolie, if you’re going to spend a long time studying, take out ten minutes every hour. It will make your studying more effective.” I responded, “But if I did that, I’d lose more than an hour of study time!”

So the idea of having a day off when I could put down my pen and leave the library behind was liberating for me beyond belief.

Before I went to Israel, I’d heard that all Orthodox girls were clique-y and snobby. I thought it would be best to keep away from them, if I did meet any. But then on a school trip in the Sinai desert, I heard someone say, with a strong New York accent, “I need a milkshake! Where’s the nearest McDonald’s?!” The girl behind the voice, I was to learn, was an Orthodox girl from Manhattan, who was not only *very* funny, but also friendly, kind, and accepting. She didn’t meet that stereotype at all—and neither did the other Orthodox girls I met.

The non-observant kids spent Friday nights at the disco on campus, or studying in their rooms. Not the religious kids. They got together for potluck meals for Friday night dinner and Saturday afternoon lunch. One brought the grape juice for Kiddush, another brought the challahs. Some made a salad, another two brought grilled chickens from the market on campus. Usually there was fruit salad and cake for dessert, and different side dishes—a feast!

They sang Shabbat songs, and exchanged stories and jokes. Best of all, they accepted me into their group, even though I was not Sabbath observant.

After a few months of sharing in the Shabbat fun, I thought I would just *try* keeping Shabbat in the traditional way. I didn’t really want go all out—I needed to listen to my music, of course. I needed to be able to write letters home. And, of course, I needed to write papers for school. Indeed, I had a term paper due on Sunday—a regular school day in Israel.

So that week I stayed up late Thursday night working on my paper, and I spent hours on Friday finishing it. When the sun set Friday afternoon, I put down my pen and lit Shabbat candles.

My non-observant friends were busy working on their papers. I relaxed and enjoyed Shabbat. It was a freedom I had never experienced. I was free from schoolwork, and I didn’t have to feel guilty! I was free from the telephone, free from worrying about weekday concerns. I never picked up a pen on Shabbat after that.

But the trouble started when I got back home. My parents, who kept a kosher-style home and went religiously to *shul* on Friday nights, felt I had rejected their values.

How could I not drive with them to *shul*?! How could I? Actually, one time I did walk to *shul* and back, as they drove slowly beside me. It was tricky for me, trying to bend but not break.

Then, after the summer, I returned to Berkeley. I had a non-Jewish roommate, who I’d made up to share an apartment with before I became observant. I didn’t think that she would mind my religious observance so much, since I wasn’t rejecting *her*values. But I only told her after we’d moved into the apartment that I wouldn’t be turning on or off lights on Shabbat, and would need the bathroom light left on. And by the way, I kept strictly kosher now, and that would mean some adjustments in our kitchen. Nelly had wrangled herself a job at the local donut shop, and she’d be working all day Saturday, so the Shabbat thing didn’t seem to faze her too much.

But I wondered how I would hold fast to the commitments I made to keep Shabbat. It would be so hard away from that community of fun and welcoming kids I’d met in Israel. Indeed, a few of my friends had become Sabbath observers during that year in Israel, and over time they slid back to their secular lifestyle.

But thankfully, I found my way to the Berkeley Chabad House, not far from my apartment, right in the middle of “fraternity row.” There, I could again be swept up in the Shabbat spirit, with services, lively singing and delicious food. But at Chabad House it wasn’t potluck. Every week the cook prepared delicious homemade meals—for free! And everyone was invited.

I didn’t just hang on to my religious observance. My anchor of Chabad, and the friends I made there (several of whom I’m still friends with today, decades later), buoyed me. I grew in my Jewish observance and knowledge, and I felt, again, part of a special, accepting community.

Someone asked me recently how I managed to “stay *frum*”—to keep up religious observance—after I’d come back from living in the bubble of a Jewish university in Israel where it wasn’t hard to keep Shabbat. My answer: staying connected to a Jewish community. It was those connections which helped me stick to my commitments and deepen my understanding and love of Jewish life and observance.

It’s been a long time since I was at the Berkeley Chabad House. But if I close my eyes and concentrate, I can conjure up the smell of a delicious *cholent* simmering on the stove, and the memories of camaraderie and deep discussions which helped keep me on the path I chose, and continue to choose every day.

(Jolie Greiff is a journalist and a mother. She lives with her husband and two children in Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel.)

*Reprinted from the website of Chabad.Org Magazine*

**Story #897**

**A Shabbat in the Park**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

editor@ascentofsafed.com

In the early part of the 20th century, before WWI, a young girl stood near her father on the quay of a Polish harbor, a steamer trunk at her feet. Out of her nine siblings, twelve-year-old Rose was the child chosen to be sent to the "golden land," America. Life in Poland was hard, hunger a constant visitor in her home. After much scraping and pinching, her family saved enough for a single one-way ticket to the United States. And Rose, the youngest of the nine, was the lucky one chosen to go.

Her father hoisted the trunk on his shoulder and walked silently, his coattails flapping behind him. Rose could see the effort he was making to keep his emotions in check. The weight of living was apparent on the lines of his face, in the burning sadness of his wise eyes, and in the gray in his beard. His back, however, was ramrod straight, in seeming defiance of his tribulations.

With an involuntary sigh, her father dropped the trunk on the deck and turned to his daughter. A gray head bent over an upturned innocent face, as the father gazed deep into his daughter's unclouded eyes. He felt an urge to scream, to protest the cruelty of fate. How he longed to snatch Rose back home, to hold her as he had held her when she was a mere infant. Instead, he laid a trembling hand on her cheek.

"Rose, my child, remember: G-d is watching over you every step of the way. Remember His laws and keep them well. Never forget that more than the Jews have kept the Shabbat, the Shabbat has kept the Jews. It will be hard in the new land. Don't forget who you are. Keep the Shabbat - no matter what sacrifice you must make."

Rose buried her face in the scratchiness of her father's coat, her slender arms wrapped tightly around him as if to anchor herself to all that was familiar in Poland. Tatte gave another heaving sigh. His straight shoulders bent over his daughter as his tears mingled with hers. A blast from the ship tore the two apart. *Tatte* bent down and hugged Rose again, squeezing the breath out of her in a hug meant to last a lifetime. Then he turned and walked down the gangplank, a stooped man, finally defeated by life's hardships. As the ship steamed away from the *shtetl* life of Poland, a fresh sea wind blew on the passengers preparing to start life anew.

For Rose, the journey was crammed with questions and uncertainly. Would her relatives really extend a welcome to her, or was she to be all alone in the new land? How frightening was the thought of a new life without her loved ones. As the ship made its entrance into New York harbor, the passengers stood plastered against the railing, shouting and clapping as they saw the "new land." Rose stood aside, shy and unsure. Would the new land fulfill its promise of hope, freedom, and riches? Would her relatives meet her here - or was she now homeless?

Rose did not have long to worry. Her relatives were waiting for her, solicitous of their "greenhorn" cousin. She was soon safely ensconced in their home.

Life in America was new and strange. Polish mannerisms were quickly shed - along with religion. Modesty, keeping kosher, and Torah were abandoned, together with the outmoded clothing and accent. Rose's relatives insisted religion was "old-fashioned": an unnecessary accessory in America. Rose, however, never forgot her father's parting words. She put on the new clothes her relatives gave her, cut her hair to suit the fashion, but never gave up on the Shabbat.

With her mature appearance and demeanor, it was not long before Rose found a job as a sewing machine operator. But what would she do about Shabbat?

Every week without fail, Rose devised a new excuse for her boss to explain why she did not come to work on Saturday. One week she had a toothache, another week her stomach bothered her. After three weeks, the foreman grew wise. He called her over. "Rose," he said in a tone that indicated he had only her welfare in mind. "I like your work, and I like you. But this Shabbat business has got to stop. Either you come in this Saturday, or you can look for a new job."

Upon hearing this development, Rose's relatives were adamant. Work on Shabbat, she must. They applied pressure; they cajoled, pleaded, and enticed. Rose felt like a leaf caught between heavy gusts of wind, pushed and pulled with no weight or life of its own. She was so young and vulnerable. She wanted to please her relatives. But her father's words kept echoing in her head. What should she do?

The week passed in a daze for Rose. Her emotions were in turmoil. On the one hand, *Tatte* is not here to help me be strong. I do want to please my new friends. I want friends. I want to fit into this new land, she reasoned. And then just as quickly came another thought: On the other hand, how can I forget Shabbat? How can I give up the beauty *Tatte* taught me?

"Rose, sweetheart, listen to us. It's for your own good." On and on went her relatives, until Rose's determination wavered.

On Friday, Rose walked to work, lunch bag in hand and head stooped in thought. She sat at her machine throughout the day, listening to the humming of the other machines as she absentmindedly went about her job of mass-producing. Would it be so awful to do this tomorrow as well? Decision time was nearing.

*Whirr, bzzz, whirr, bzzz*. The machine kept tune to Rose's troubled thoughts. What should she do - or was the question, what could she do? As the sun slipped over the parapets of the Lower East Side, Rose knew there was really no question. She was Jewish, and she would keep the Shabbat.

Shabbat in America was not the warm day Rose had known at home. This week was the worst yet. She lacked the courage to face her relatives and tell them of her resolve. Instead, she left the house in the morning, pretending to be headed for work. Back and forth through the streets of Manhattan she paced.

Later in the day, she rested in Tompkin's Square Park, together with the city pigeons. "*Tatte*, this song is for you," she whispered. The pigeons ruffled their feathers. *"Yonah matza bo manoach"* ("On it [the Shabbat] the dove found rest."). There she sat among the pigeons, singing the traditional Shabbat songs, with tears in her eyes and sobs between the verses.

When three stars finally peeked out from the black sky announcing the end of Shabbat, the moon shone down on a weary girl and bathed her face in its glow. Rose had triumphed, but her victory would cost her dearly. She had no job and had alienated her family.

*"Baruch HaMavdil"* (the blessing said upon the departure of the Shabbat). It was the time to face the hardness of the world. Rose trudged homeward, dreading the nasty scene to come when her relatives learned that she hadn't been at work.

As she neared home, a shout broke into her reverie. "Rose! What…¦what I mean, how are you here? Where were you?"

Rose looked at her cousin Joe, her expression woebegone.

"Joe, what will become of me? I kept Shabbat and lost my job. Now everyone will be angry and disappointed with me, and oh, Joe, what will I do?" The words tumbled out together with her tears.

Joe looked at her strangely. "Rose, didn't you hear?" he asked gently.

"Hear what?"

"There was an awful fire in the factory. Only forty people survived. There was no way out of the building. People even jumped to their deaths." Joe's voice was hushed, and he was crying openly. "Rosie, don't you see? Because you kept Shabbat, you are alive. Because of your Shabbat, you survived."

Out of 190 workers, Rose Goldstein was among the minority of those who survived. The infamous Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire on Saturday, March 25, 1911, claimed the lives of 146 immigrant workers present. Because it had been Shabbat, Rose Goldstein was not there. As her father had said, more than the Jews keep the Shabbat, the Shabbat keeps the Jews.

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Source: Adapted from "The International Moshiach Campaign" (//moshiachcampaign.com).

Connection: Last week we read and studied the Ten Commandments. Do you know #4?

*Reprinted from last week’s email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed.* [*www.ascentofsafed.com*](http://www.ascentofsafed.com) *ascent@ascentofsafed.com*

**Can I Give You a Ride Home?**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

“And I carried you on the wings of eagles.” (*Shemot* 19:4)

            Before Hashem gave the Jewish people the Torah He spoke about the Exodus from Egypt.  Hashem said that He carried us out on wings of eagles.  *Rashi* explains: This refers to the day that Israel came to Raamses, where the nation had gathered for the Exodus from Egypt. For Israel was scattered throughout the land of Goshen and in a very short time, when they were about to travel and depart, they were all gathered to Raamses. So in order to ease their departure Hashem Himself gathered them up quickly to Raamses.

            Rabbi David Kaplan tells a heartwarming story of another carrier of people.  As the Saltzmans exited the Gutnick wedding Hall in Jerusalem, a man standing a few feet away gestured towards them and simultaneously pointed to a van.  “Where do you need to get to?” he asked.

“It’s okay.  We’re taking a bus,” Mr. Saltzman said.

           “Don’t worry.  I don’t charge.  I’m not a cab, but maybe I can give you a lift. Where are you headed?”

 “We’re going to Ramot.”

           “Great.  That’s in my direction. Get in.”

The seven Saltzmans clambered in and settled in the seats, noticing another family of three already in the can.

“I’m just dropping them off in Givat Shaul and then we’ll head up to Ramot.”

            The Saltzmans figured the man lived in Ramot and were very appreciative of the way he went out of his way to find someone to give a ride to.  Only when they were getting out in front of their home did they realize there was something out of the ordinary going on.  As they thanked the driver, they asked him where he lived.

“In Ezrat Torah,” he answered.

          “So why did you take us so far out of your way?  We though you lived here.”

            The man smiled.  “Each night I hang around the Gutnick Hall, because I know people are coming out of weddings late and public transportation is not great at that hour.  An entire enjoyable evening can be ruined by the hassle of trying to get home.  So I drive people home from the weddings and then come back looking for more.  Hopefully, it’ll be a merit for me and my family.”

            This story really gives us a lift.  It’s another reminder of how it’s so true that *hesed* is one of the things about which our Sages say there is no limit. A person who truly wants to do *hesed* will find a way to do it.

**"In My Opinion It's the Sabbath That Saved Us"**

Zarie is 22 years old. She is the famous cashier at the Hyper Cacher super market located in Porte de Vincennes and one of the hostages in the bloody attack that unfolded on Friday, January 9, 2015. In an exclusive interview with Paris Match, she agreed to recount her four-hour nightmare spent under the threat of the terrorist, Amedy Coulibaly. She showed an unfailing composure, without ever renouncing the faith that allowed her to remain strong during that tragic event. She offers a heart-stopping statement.

Paris-Match: Zarie, you work at the [Hyper Cacher](http://www.parismatch.com/Actu/Societe/Amedy-Coulibaly-Les-images-de-videosurveillance-a-l-interieur-de-l-Hyper-Cacher-690872) supermarket in [Porte de Vincennes](http://www.parismatch.com/Actu/Societe/La-nationalite-francaise-pour-le-heros-de-la-porte-de-Vincennes-690984). How did the attack begin?

Zarie: It was between 1:00 and 1:30 p.m. A father with a two-year-old child was going through my line when I heard the gunshot fired at Yohann (Cohen, ed. note), the young man who works with me, and the first to be hit. He cried out the name of the owner who, wounded, managed to get out of the store. I did not understand right away that it was a real gunshot.

You were not hit.

No. I heard gunshots and screams, then steps that were coming toward me. I heard the killer’s voice that said to me, “You – you’re not dead yet?” And the sound of a gunshot in my direction.

How many people were in the supermarket?

There were 25 of us at the beginning, but after the shots, no more than six people remained next to me. I figured out that the others were hiding. The terrorist ordered me to help him and I asked him not to kill anyone else. When I went into the office where he herded us, I saw a man lying in a pool of blood (Philippe Braham, ed. note). For the first time I saw the terrorist’s face and his weapons.

What did he say to you?

He told us about his “plans.” “I want to die a martyr and avenge the name of Allah. The difference between us is that for you Jews, the most important thing is life, while for us, it is death.”

Then he told us to put all our things and our pieces of identification on the desk. He told me to close the glass door of the store. I was getting ready to do that when I saw a man who was trying to come in. I begged him to leave in a panicked voice. But he thought I was just closing up the store. He told me, “I only need a challah for Shabbat!” I could not stop him or warn him that there was a killer right behind me.

Was it François-Michel Saada?

Yes. He headed toward the challah bread, and thus, without realizing it, toward the terrorist. When he realized that there was an armed man there, he turned around to leave, but the killer shot him in the back.

So at this point there were two people dead?

Yes.… And Yohann was suffering horribly. He was moaning and there was nothing we could do for him. In fact, he had taken a bullet in the cheek that completely tore up his face. He lay dying for three quarters of an hour. It was absolutely horrible. He bled to death.

And the killer did nothing?

Yes, he wanted to finish him off because of his moaning, but we stopped him from doing it, thinking that he might pull through. The terrorist was armed with two kalachnikovs and a machine gun slung over his shoulder, explosives, tons of ammunition, and a knife. He ordered me to go down and look for the other customers, giving me 20 seconds to do it or else he would kill two women he had designated.

Did you go down to the cold storage rooms?
Yes, some had hidden there, but didn’t want to come back up. I went to tell him and he asked me to call the police, putting us on speaker phone. By dialing 17, we got connected to the central telephone office. We waited a long time, which was crazy, in light of the situation. Finally, he explained that it was a hostage taking and the policewoman told him she had to report it to her superiors. The conversation was interrupted because customers were starting to come back up.

Did the killer explain his motives to you?

Yes, he explained that his commando had been split in two: the Kouachi brothers to wipe out Charlie Hebdo and him to take care of the police and us.
He sent someone else who went down to get the customers hidden downstairs and two or three people came back up with one of them, Yoav (Hattab, ed. note). Yoav began to analyze the situation, in order to act. He did not see the dead and did not really realize what the situation was.

At that moment, I drew back. Yoav started to talk to the killer, who had set down one of the two kalachnikovs, and tried to grab one from him. But the terrorist was quicker and shot him twice in the head. I was a few meters away and someone told me to raise the metal shutter, something that takes several minutes. The terrorist started to shout in my direction. Yoav fell, doubled over, and there was an enormous amount of blood, I have never seen so much. I thought the terrorist was going to kill me, but he told me to follow him into the office. I had to push the shopping cart that was supporting Yoav, who then collapsed.

How many hostages were there?

There were then 18 of us. I know because he told me to take a count. He was talking to the police and announced that there were three dead and one wounded. We all sat down on shopping carts lined up in the last section of the store at the back. The killer sat down and started to talk to us. He asked us to state our names and religions. Everyone was Jewish except for one woman who was Catholic, and an elderly woman who said she was not Jewish.

He made fun of her, saying “If you’re not Jewish, why are you shopping at Hyper Cacher? I am from Mali and a Muslim. I came to avenge my brothers against the French State that you support by paying your taxes.” While loading his weapons, he told us that the French army was killing people in his country but that no one was talking about it. We thought that our time was up. In fact, he wanted his hostage taking to get media coverage.

He called BFM TV and left us free enough that I was able to call my father, who reassured me and advised me to pray. I then talked to my mother and that upset me a lot. I started to cry. She told me to find strength in emunah (faith). I then explained to Andréa (the other cashier, ed. note) that we were going to make it, but that we needed to find strength in mitsvot (commandments). Next to us, a woman was not at all stressed out and told us that everything was in the hands of Hashem (the divine providence), for the good. I recited the Psalm “essa enaï el heharim” (Psalm 121), this is the first one that came to mind. “I lift up my eyes to the mountains, to see where my help comes from. My help comes from the Eternal, who made heaven and earth.”

Did he leave you alone?

In fact, the hostage taking lasted almost five hours and a limited trust was established. He let us move around relatively freely and after telling someone to break all the store cameras, he suggested that we drink something. He started to give us another speech on the geopolitical situation and we were going along with him in order to appease him. At one point, he aimed his weapon at Andréa, who put her hands in front of her for protection. But he reassured her by saying, “I’m not going to shoot you!” He had just coldly killed four people, but he was surprised that we were frightened. Fortunately there was a number of us. We supported each other when one of us was breaking down. I encouraged the hostages to make good resolutions and to find strength in abiding by the Torah.

Was he violent with you?

His attitude was very strange. He went back and forth between the ruthless crime and a reassuring tone. He repeated that if he got what he wanted, he would not kill us. He wanted to make a statement to the media calling on the French army to withdraw from all the countries where it was carrying out operations and demanding the release of the Kouachi brothers hidden in the print shop. I thought we were never going to get out alive, in light of the terms of his demands. He said that if he was allowed to make his statement on television, he would let the two-year-old child go. In the meantime, it was Aviel, the security manager (who was not one of the hostages), who gave information on the situation to the police. He was the one who called the police and gave them the layout of the store, the location of the exits, etc. Patrice, the owner, who had managed to escape at the beginning, had been taken to the hospital in serious condition.

The terrorist talked to us at length about the media, Bin Laden, etc., and told us his background: he had just gotten out of prison for terrorism after four years, even though he had been sentenced to five years. We started to give people something to drink. He watched us while he made himself a sandwich. He was making jokes about the store giving things for free. The phonerang endlessly. When we answered, people asked us what the situation was. At one point, we got a call from a man who was incensed with the terrorist, who was making Muslims look like assassins. We disconnected the phone. It was the waiting. In the store, there was blood everywhere.

Were the police at the site?

We didn’t know what was happening outside. At the beginning, the killer had asked me where the emergency door was and ordered someone to block it. After his speech, he decided to pray. We were afraid that was the end for us. Then we heard banging on the barricaded emergency door. We took refuge on the other side, behind Andréa’s register. We didn’t know what else to do. It was total panic. We all got down on the ground, hands on our heads. We heard four gunshots, then banging on the door.

Was that the end?

There was a strong explosion and the police opened the metal shutter with a wrench. That lasted several minutes, an eternity in that situation and in light of the fact that the terrorist could have done away with us in a few seconds. It’s a miracle that he did not shoot at us. The police entered with shields. And then we heard some fifty gunshots, a deafening noise. We heard, “He is dead!” and everyone came out. I knew there were still people downstairs and they saw the carnage when they came up. We got into a bus, with the victims on our minds. We realized we had experienced a miracle because we were safe.

What message would you like to give after this terrifying attack?

For me, the central message is emunah, faith in G-d. The terrorist was armed to the teeth and we got out nevertheless. It was only emunah that allowed us to keep a semblance of normalcy, talking, moving around, doing things. I was able to pray throughout the hostage taking. I, who live most of the time in Israel, I pray that my relatives will very quickly be able to come to the land of Israel. Everything unfolded before the Sabbath and we were released less than an hour after the Sabbath began. In my opinion, our rescue is connected with the Sabbath lights. I hope people can light candles very soon, putting all their devotion there. In my opinion, it’s the Sabbath that saved us.

*Reprinted from a recent email of the AJOP (Association of Jewish Outreach Professionals. The article originally appeared in the French magazine Paris-Match.*