

# SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS VAYEIRA 5781

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## The Legacy of Nachshon Waxman, Hy" d



**Nachshon Waxman, hy" d**

On Motzei Shabbos, October 8, 1994, Nachshon Waxman left his home in Yerushalayim to attend a special one-day course in Northern Israel, for select IDF soldiers. He had been home for Shabbos, and told his mother that he would return on Sunday night.

Nachshon never came home. On Monday, word of the kidnapping of Nachshon by Hamas terrorists spread throughout Israel and the world. Nachshon's parents, Yehuda and Esther Waxman, spoke with powerful emunah as they stressed repeatedly in interviews, broadcast throughout Eretz Yisrael, that only

Hashem could save their son. They beseeched the entire nation, religious and secular alike, to pray that their son be saved.

Throughout the week that followed, Mrs. Waxman told the people of Israel that all world leaders involved in trying to secure her son's release were but messengers of Hashem; one could only pray that Hashem grant them the wisdom to take the steps to ensure her son's survival.

In an unprecedented show of unity, secular and religious Jews united to pray together for Nachshon Waxman. The feeling of brotherhood was intense, tangible. Schools across the spectrum recited Tehillim; small children at home organized groups to say Tehillim.



### **100,000 Jews Gather at the Kosel (the Western Wall)**

On Thursday of that week, 100,000 people assembled at the Kosel for heartfelt Tehillim on behalf of 19-year-old Nachshon, with Jews from all spectrums standing shoulder to shoulder, pouring their hearts and tears out in prayer.

That Friday night, in a tragic failed attempt at his rescue by IDF forces, Nachshon was murdered by Hamas terrorists. When news of his murder became known, all of Eretz Yisrael, and Jews throughout the world, felt as if they had lost a brother, a son.

Before the funeral on Motzei Shabbos, Nachshon's father spoke to his son's rosh yeshiva, and told him an important message he wanted conveyed at the massive funeral: One thing worries me. Nachshon succeeded in raising the Jewish People to a high level of emunah and tefillah. Now we have the responsibility to maintain this heightened level.

People will ask, "How is it that we were not answered from Above in spite of all the countless prayers?"

But, you know, I asked Hashem for many things in my life, and He always granted them. I asked Him for good health... for a family such as I have merited, and He gave them to me. Now, if they will ask why our prayers did not earn us the reply we sought from our Father in Heaven, I will tell them, "We did receive a response, we did get an answer.



**Yehuda and Esther Waxman, a'h**

The answer was 'No.' Because sometimes a father can answer, 'No.'"

In an interview following the funeral, Mr. Waxman relayed: The cruel and vicious band of thugs who kidnapped my son was a group that did not care even for its own lives – they were barricaded behind booby-trapped steel doors while holding Nachshon in captivity. It is clear that the prayers for my son were not in vain.

Many more soldiers could have lost their lives [in the rescue mission]. The many prayers were a factor in sparing their lives. I'm telling you again, most of the time when I have asked Hashem for something, I received 'Yes' for an answer. This time, the answer to me personally was, 'No,' but the answer to the prayers in general was a positive one.

Mrs. Esther Waxman added: We are an ordinary family... We aren't special. This could have happened to anyone. The only thing that kept us sane and functioning through all this was our faith. We believe that our years are numbered.

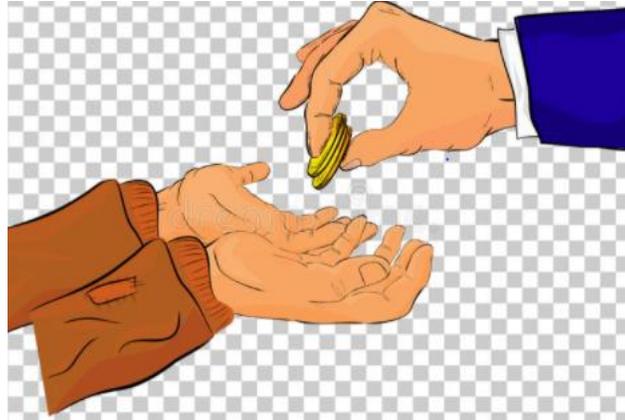
When a person fulfills his mission, then that is the end... Our faith tells us that these were the years allotted to our son and he fulfilled what he was supposed to fulfill. Our faith is what kept us going... The *yahrzeit* of Nachshon (ben Yehuda) Waxman *hy*"d is on 10 Cheshvan (1994). (More Shabbos Stories)

*Reprinted from the Parshas Lech Lecha 5781 email of The Weekly Vort.*

## A Rav Zusha and the Miser

Once, Rav Zusha of Anapoli, *zt*"l, went to collect Tzedakah with another Rav. They went to visit a certain miser whom the Rav knew never donated to any cause, no matter how worthy it was.

When the two were invited into the wealthy miser's home and he refused to donate a penny, Rav Zusha asked him why he wouldn't donate anything. The man asked, "I learned this from a Gemara in Bava Basra (9a).



The Gemara says that one who gives Tzedakah receives six Brachos, and one who speaks kindly to the poor gets eleven Brachos. Isn't it better to honor the poor man without giving him a cent? After all, one who does so is granted almost double the Brachos, so obviously, he is doing the main Avodah!"

While the Rav who had accompanied Rav Zusha stood speechless at the man's callousness to the plight of others, Rav Zusha replied, "You have not learned the Gemara correctly. Why would the one who honors the poor get greater Brachos when the actual money will feed him and literally save his life?"

The root of your error is that you think that the money you give the poor is a gift from your resources, but the truth is that this is not so. We find in many sources that the money that the wealthy man gives the poor is actually the poor man's money, but it has been deposited with the wealthy man for the express purpose of him returning it to the poor person.

One who gives the deposit back to him is Bentched, but someone who refrains from donating to a worthy cause when he can well afford it, is nothing less than a thief. In addition, besides giving a donation, if a person also speaks kindly to the poor man, he is Bentched with extra Brachos, since in this way he is also giving the poor man from himself. He has gone beyond merely returning the poor man's property that has been entrusted with him from Shamayim, and he has given to him by speaking kindly to him."

The man realized his errors, and gave a nice amount of Tzedakah to their cause!

*Reprinted from the Parshas Noach 5781 email of Torah U'Tefilah as compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.*

## The True You!

There is a story with the Netziv that shows this idea of conquering the Yetzer Hara. The Netziv, Rav Naftoli Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, zt"l, lived in Lithuania a few hundred years ago. He was the most famous Rav of his generation, and it's said that in the forty years he headed the Yeshivah in the town of Volozhin, some 10,000 students studied under him.

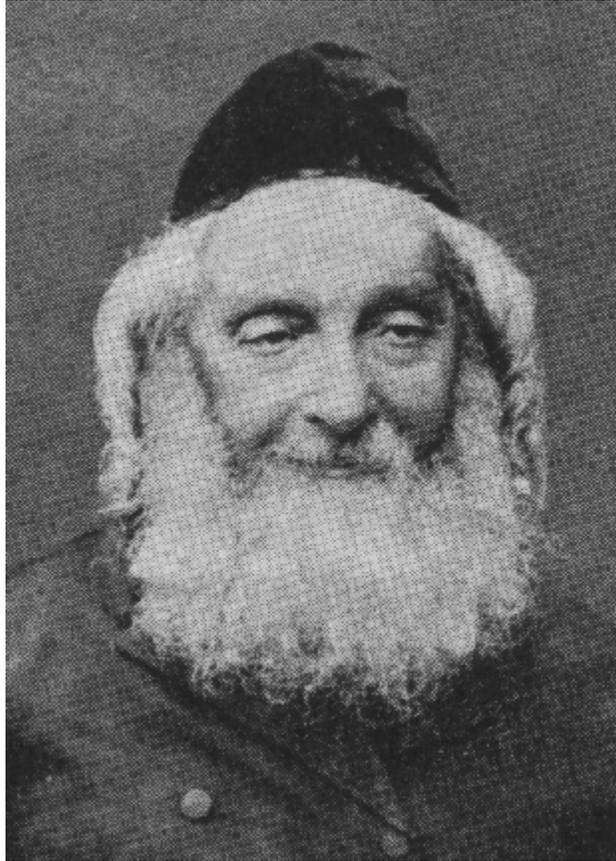
The Netziv wrote commentaries on all parts of the Torah, and once, when he had published a particularly difficult work called HaAmek She'eilah, he called together his friends for a special celebration, where he told them the following story:

"When I was a child, I never paid attention in school. I was lazy and did not want to concentrate. I would busy myself with things that wasted time, and I spent my days engaged in mischief with my friends.

"Then one day when I was eleven years old, I came home from school and heard my parents talking. My father was explaining how he'd spoken to my Rebbe, and together, they had concluded that I would never amount to anything in terms of Torah learning. So, my father explained, he was arranging to enroll me to become an apprentice shoemaker as soon as I became Bar Mitzvah.

"I was so shocked by this conversation that I ran to my parents and exclaimed, 'I'm sorry I've been so negligent with my learning! Please give me one

more chance to prove that I'm a good student!' And from that day onward, I applied myself to learning Torah with tremendous strength and dedication. Since then, I have not wasted a moment and it is that devotion which has enabled me to write the Sefer that we are celebrating today."



The Netziv then continued, "But just imagine what would have happened had I not overheard my parents' conversation. I'd probably have ended up as a shoemaker. And I'd probably have been a pretty good shoemaker! But think of what would have happened at the end of my life when I'd get up to the Heavenly Court in Shamayim, and they would ask me, 'Naftoli, show us what you've done with your life.'

And I'd proudly show them my beautiful shoes, with the fine workmanship, the quality leather, and the fancy design. And then they would ask me, 'But Naftoli, where are all the Sefarim you were supposed to publish? Where are your 10,000 students?'"

The Netziv looked at them and said, "And what would I possibly respond??"

*Reprinted from the Parshas Noach 5781 email of Torah U'Tefilah as compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.*

# She Never Knew Her Great-Great-Grandma Was Jewish

By Sofya Sara Esther Tamarkin



**Walking down the railroad tracks to Auschwitz-Birkenau.**

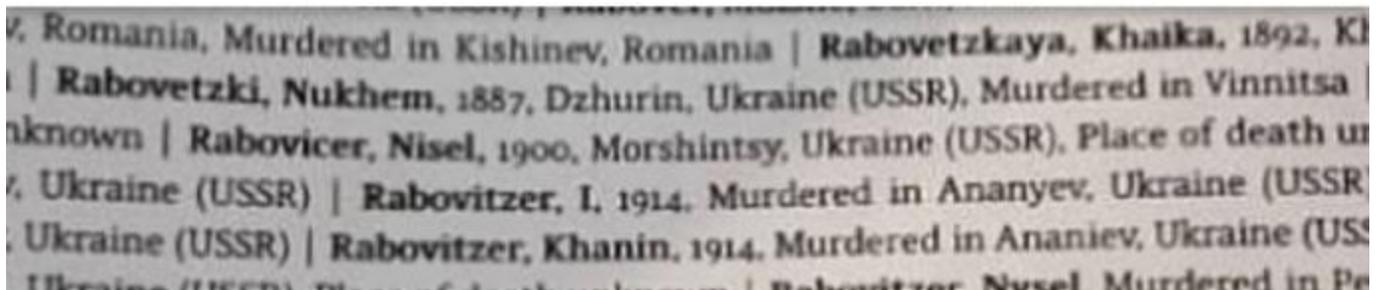
In July of 2018, my husband and I joined the Heritage Retreats on an emotional journey to Poland. As our group traveled from Majdanek to Auschwitz-Birkenau to mass graves hidden in the forest, we cried, prayed and said Kaddish for the dead.

Born in the former Soviet Union, I grew up with stories about my great-grandparents, Nochum and Chaya Rabovetsky. At the beginning of World War II, my great-grandparents, together with their 11-year-old youngest son, evacuated their home in Vinitzsa, a small city in Ukraine, to escape the incoming German army. Tragically, Nochum was killed on the way. His wife and son were sent to the ghetto, where Chaya met her end. They have no graves.

In Auschwitz, I was astonished to see the names of my great-grandparents in the archive room, among millions of those who perished in the Holocaust. After crying for the Bubby and Zaidy I never knew, I promised myself to be a living legacy as I recommitted myself to a life of Torah values.



**Finding the names of my great grandparents, Nachum and Chaya Rabovetsky, in the Auschwitz archives.**



On the last night of our trip, one of the other participants, Rayanne, opened up about her own story of return.

Rayanne was born in Colorado Springs, Colo., in November of 1988. Living as a traditional Christian family, her parents weren't aware of any Jewish connection in their heritage. Rayanne was raised with a strong work ethic and

family values. When she was in high school, her uncle researched their history and discovered that Rayanne’s great-great-grandmother, Catherine, on her mother’s side, was Jewish.

Apparently, in the late 1800s, this young girl fell in love with a German boy and wanted to marry him. The German family was very well-off, and to avoid conflict and public scrutiny, they sent the couple away to the United States. Catherine and her husband had a daughter, Marie, who grew up and married a Christian. Marie also had a daughter, Mary, who was not familiar with her Jewish roots and also married a non-Jew. Mary is Rayanne’s grandmother.



**Rabbi Dovie and Rebbetzin Chaya Shapiro**

After her uncle shared his discovery, the family continued living the same life as before. There are very few Jews in Colorado Springs, so learning about Jewish traditions wasn’t simple.

We were listening to Rayanne’s story with curiosity. She was celebrating Shabbat with us, so I was eager to find out how she found her way back to the Jewish people.

Her uncle’s news lay dormant for a few years, until Rayanne was ready to leave for college. Shortly after she arrived at the Northern Arizona University, she began to look for a job. She saw an advertisement for “event help, house work, help with kids” and scheduled an interview.

When she arrived at the house, “The door was opened by a guy with a long beard dressed in mostly black. I was confused because the two-and-a-half-year-old boy who was running around looked like a girl with his long curly hair.”

Rayanne had found the Chabad House on the campus of her university, run by Rabbi Dovie and Chaya Shapiro.

“At the interview, I sat down with the lady of the house, Chaya. She explained that they were the rabbi and the rebbetzin, and they needed help with events on Shabbat.” They were looking to hire a non-Jewish person to help with the things that a Jew was not allowed to do on the sacred day.

### **Informed the Rebbetzin of Her Jewish Background**

At the time, Rayanne had no idea about these things but felt that it was important to share that she was Jewish. At that, Rebbetzin Chaya invited Rayanne to the Chabad House dinners and events. Rayanne was intimidated by this offer, clarifying, “I don’t know any rules.”

A short while later, she received a call from Chaya asking her to help with the children and some housework three days a week. She explained that as a Jew, Rayanne wouldn’t be able to perform any work that would violate Shabbat, but she could help the family and the Jewish students at the Northern Arizona University.

Chaya remembers, “I always ask the people I interview if they’re Jewish, so I know what I can ask of them on Shabbat and holidays. When I asked Rayanne if she was Jewish, she said she had found out that she had Jewish ancestry but didn’t really consider herself Jewish.

“I asked on which side of the family and she said her mother’s side. That’s when I told Rayanne that this makes her 100 percent Jewish and invited her to our Chabad events. We liked her so much, and it seemed like she would be great with the children, so we offered her a job, and found someone else to help out on Shabbat and holidays.”

### **The Chabad House Became Her Second Home**

Over the next five years, the Chabad House became Rayanne’s second home. Every week, she joined Shabbat meals with another 20 to 40 people, growing in her knowledge and observance. She attended Torah classes and learned the prayers.

Through Chabad, Rayanne joined the Sinai Scholars Program that concluded with her trip to Israel, where she received a scholarship for Israel Links. She also went to a Campus Shabbaton weekend in Crown Heights.

“For the five years that I was at the university, I worked and learned from Chaya and Dovie. Without any prior Jewish education, I learned how to run a Jewish household. It was the best informal Jewish education. I learned the laws of

koshering, about the holidays, the prayers, and even cooked the traditional Shabbat cholent with Dovie. Yet, I wanted to learn more.”

We were listening to Rayanne avidly. As a group, we had witnessed so much destruction and horror on this trip. Yet Rayanne’s story assured us that nothing was lost forever.



**Rayanne at the Western Wall in Jerusalem**

Every human being is an entire universe. By extending kindness to one person, we change the world. This selfless Chabad couple that embraced this Jewish girl could not envision the effect they had on us, sitting at the Shabbat table on our trip thousands of miles away in Poland. We can count the number of apples on an apple tree, but we can never know how many trees will grow from the seeds hidden in each apple.

Rayanne continued, “Chaya and Dovie gave everything to the students, and they did it with a smile. After graduation, I did a three-month summer program at Mayanot Women’s Seminary in Jerusalem. I really embraced my heritage with

love and commitment. My parents and siblings supported my decision to return to our roots. I am so grateful for that.”

Rayanne appreciatesBy extending kindness to one person, we can change the world that her mother lit Chanukah candles when she was home. During the holiday of Passover, the family designated a shelf in the refrigerator for Rayanne’s kosher needs, making sure that nothing would touch her food.

At first, Rayanne was hesitant about sharing her journey for this interview. Yet when she realized that her story would honor Chaya and Dovie, along with hundreds of other rabbis and rebbetzins who give their lives to the Jewish people, she readily agreed. “The most beautiful thing is to know that no matter where you are in the world, there is always the same Shabbat table. When you move, you have an instant community. I pray that there will be more people like Chaya and Dovie to spread love and make positive change in the world.”

Our journey as a group was coming to an end. We walked out of concentration camps, singing and looking toward the future. We were ready to reconnect to our G-d, our people and our eternal heritage. By teaching, guiding and embracing their fellow Jews, people like Chaya and Dovie show us how to honor those who perished by unconditionally giving and loving every single Jew, six million times more than yesterday.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Lech Lecha 5781 email of Chabad.Org Magazine.*

## Story #1194

# Unintended

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**  
**[editor@ascentofsafed.com](mailto:editor@ascentofsafed.com)**

When he was a youngster, **Rebbe Naftali Katz**, who would become the head of the Rabbinical Court of Posen, was once playing outdoors with his friends. They were throwing rocks, and Naftali accidentally hit the passenger of a fancy carriage that was nearby. Unfortunately, that passenger was none other than the High Prince of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The prince's guards arrested the boy for this act of "rebellion." He was brought to court and found guilty. His sentence: public execution.

Naftali was to be escorted by a guard to the empire's capital, where his sentence was to be carried out. It was a difficult journey, and the stormy weather

they encountered made traveling almost impossible. At one point they stopped at an inn that was owned by a Jew.

While the guard made himself comfortable in a corner by the stove, young Naftali sat and listened to the innkeeper's sons studying Talmud with their tutor. Naftali knew this tractate by heart, and when the boys and their tutor were stumped by a question in the tractate, Naftali supplied them with the answer.

### **The Innkeeper Realized the Brilliance in the Boy**

The innkeeper realized that this was a brilliant boy, and when he found out why Naftali was being kept in custody, he thought of a plan to save the boy's life. The innkeeper offered the guard free food and drinks, thus convincing him to stay at the inn for a few days until the weather cleared up.

After a while the innkeeper approached the guard casually: "What would happen if a prisoner was to die in custody as he was being escorted from one city to another?" he inquired.

Replied the guard, "The escort would simply have to present a document testifying to the prisoner's death, signed by the local authorities."

Using his connections, the innkeeper obtained the required document and handed it to the guard, along with enough money to bribe him. The guard left Naftali with the innkeeper, who took the boy in and raised him as if he was a member of his own family.

### **Naftali Became of Marriageable Age**

Years passed. Naftali had become of marriageable age, as had the innkeeper's daughter. The innkeeper proposed a match between the two young people and they both agreed. The wedding date was set.

One night, some time later, the innkeeper passed by Naftali's room and heard him talking. He peeked through the keyhole and saw Naftali sprawled on the floor, begging and pleading. "What can I do?" Naftali was saying, "these people saved my life."

The scene repeated itself the next night. The innkeeper could not contain his curiosity, as he knew no one was in Naftali's room, and he asked Naftali for an explanation. "My parents keep appearing to me and telling me that your daughter is not my intended mate."

The innkeeper, realizing that a Heavenly hand was guiding the young man, told him to obey his parents' wishes, and that he bore Naftali no ill will.

Before Naftali left, he requested that the innkeeper give him a written account of the money paid on his behalf to bribe the guard so many years before. "I have merited to fulfill the commandment of redeeming a hostage, and seek no reimbursement," exclaimed the righteous innkeeper.

Naftali insisted and the innkeeper finally gave him a paper stating the sum paid to the guard. Naftali left and became famous for his exceptional qualities. He married and was appointed the rabbi of the city of Posen .

### **Kidnapped by a Wealthy Landowner**

The innkeeper's daughter married a storekeeper, and settled in a town near Posen. One night, as she was walking home from the store, she was kidnapped by a wealthy landowner and brought back to his estate with obvious intentions. Despite the dangerous situation, the young woman maintained her composure. "I will go along with all your wishes," she told the landowner, "but first you must go to town to purchase some fine liquor for me." The landowner readily agreed.

While he was in town, the clever woman looked for a means of escape from the mansion. The only window she found unbarred was very high up. Realizing the jump was dangerous, she looked for something to cushion her fall. She found the landowner's heavy lambskin overcoat and, wrapping herself in it, offered a prayer and leaped out the window. Miraculously, she was not hurt. She fled home, still wrapped in the coat.

The husband was thankful for his wife's narrow escape. He related the entire incident to the rabbi of Posen.

Rabbi Naftali told the husband, "Your wife is a righteous woman and her level-headedness is admirable. G-d is truly with her. Open the seam of the landowner's coat, and you will find money that rightfully belongs to you and your wife."

### **The Husband Returned to Rabbi Naftali**

A few days later, the landowner came into the husband's store to make a purchase. He complained about "some Jewish woman" who had not only outwitted him, but had managed to steal his overcoat that had a large sum of money sewn inside it. The husband returned to Rabbi Naftali and told him what the landowner had said.

"This finally concludes a much longer story," Rabbi Naftali replied, and proceeded to tell the husband the whole story of his arrest and ransom. "That landowner," he concluded, "was the guard who had escorted me. The amount of money in the coat is the sum that your father-in-law paid for my release. Wait, I will show you a bill which confirms the figure exactly."

**Source:** Supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from the rendition on //LChaimWeekly.org (#1010), with permission.

**Connection:** Weekly Reading of *Lech Lecha* (Gen 14:10-17 -- Abraham rescues from captivity his nephew and brother-in-law).

*Biographical note (from: Rabbi Naftali HaKohen Katz: His Life & Legacy & Ethical Will) Rabbi Naftali HaKohen Katz [c. 5409 - 5479 (c. 1648-1719)], an important sage and kabbalist, served as Head of the rabbinical court and the yeshiva of Ostroh (Ukraine), Posen (Poland) and Frankfurt-am-Main (Germany), and at a certain time was also appointed as head of the Va'ad Arba Aratzot ('the Council of the Four Lands'). At the end of his life he accepted an invitation to become the chief rabbi of Safed, but unfortunately he passed away on the ship to the Holy Land.*

*Reprinted from the Parshas Lech Lecha 5781 email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed.*