

Good Yom Tov Everyone. As Gavriel Schwartz was skimming through a Jewish newspaper, an advertisement caught his eye. The ad was for a forum, composed of various halachic questions posed by people from all walks of life. Any rabbi or layman of any affiliation was free to post an answer.

One answer intrigued Gavriel. It was from a Jerry Kornblatt of Oklahoma. The answer was good, with one slight flaw. Gavriel felt compelled to contact the man, "He will want to know the correct answer," Gavriel reasoned to himself. But Jerry was insulted. "I was ordained by an outstanding Reform institution. And who are you? You're a layman, not a rabbi."

Despite their different backgrounds and opinions, Gavriel continued to correspond with Jerry. Pesach was just around the corner, and the two unlikely pen pals discussed their plans for the holiday. "How about a few pounds of hand shmurah matzah for Pesach?." Gavriel offered. "I'm a traditional Jew," Jerry responded. "I buy my matzos in the grocery store." Gavriel sent him a box of matzos anyway. But he didn't receive any thanks in response. "They were hard and broken," Jerry complained.

Gavriel did not give up. He continued to be in touch with Jerry, exchanging personal experiences and ideas with his pen pal. And as the second Pesach rolled around, Gavriel once again shipped a box of matzos to Jerry Kornblatt in Oklahoma. Still, Jerry was unmoved and unappreciative.

Shortly after Pesach, Jerry began to bemoan his daughter who "just won't listen to anything I say!" Gavriel sympathized with Jerry to the best of his ability. The summer months passed, winter set in, and still Jerry complained about his daughter, though this time to a different tune. "She hooked up with a bunch of friends and joined an orthodox religious seminary!" Jerry wrote to Gavriel. "I cannot believe she's doing this to me." "It is not so bad," Gavriel reassured him.

But Jerry remained impervious to any attempt of consolation. Orthodox Judaism was not for any member of his family, and certainly not for him! The cold thawed, and Pesach was around the corner again. Gavriel sent yet another box of matzos to his friend, the Reform rabbi, despite the discouragement of his family, "The man is a Jew. It is not his fault that he was not educated in the Torah way. He deserves kosher matzos for Pesach," Gavriel declared.

And so a box of matzos, along with Gavriel's best intentions for a fellow Jew, arrived at the Kornblatt home in Oklahoma that year. It was a year later. Gavriel was visiting Eretz Yisroel, and he wrote to Jerry to ask for his daughter's phone number. Jerry had told him that his daughter had stayed in seminary in Israel, and had finally married and settled down in Yerushalayim.

Gavriel was interested in finally meeting the daughter, and her husband, whom he had heard so much about. After calling for directions, Gavriel found the right apartment and knocked on the door. It was answered by a young married woman, her hair covered modestly with a tichel (head covering.) "I'm Gavriel Schwartz," the visitor introduced himself to his hostess. "You must be Kim, the wayward daughter your father has been complaining about for so many years. It's nice to finally meet you." Kim smiled. "That's me! Please come in. I'm happy to meet you, too." She opened the door wide, motioning her hand toward the dining room where a man sat over an open sefer. "And this is my husband, Shlomo."

As Gavriel sat down next to her husband, Kim remarked, "You know, you were the one who made me religious." "Me?" Gavriel was surprised. "What did I have to do with it? I never even met you before!" "Well, when I first became interested in Orthodox Judaism, I was studying here in a seminary. The teachers were inspiring, but I wasn't sure if I could make the commitment to a religious life. When Pesach break rolled around, I decided to go back home to Oklahoma. I had been away for a few years, it was time to see my parents anyway."

Kim knew that her teachers would be concerned about her decision. They realized Kim would be going home to face fierce parental opposition, and they sensed that she was unprepared to fight the tide against her father's objections. Kim knew that they were right, but at the same time, she was feeling a bit unsure about this whole religion thing. She felt that she was being pressured to make a decision and she just wasn't ready for that yet. "I understand your need to go home and see your family," Rebbetzin Friedman said when Kim came to say goodbye. "But what are you going to do about Pesach?" "I know my father's Reform, but we do celebrate Pesach, you know," Kim answered defiantly.

Rebbetzin Friedman sighed. "Here," she said, pulling a brown cardboard box from on top of the bookcase behind her. "At least take these matzos with you." "If G-d wants me to have matzos, rebbetzin, G-d will give me matzos." Rebbetzin Friedman hugged Kim in parting, hoping the warmth would rekindle the smoldering spark in her soul. Kim did not respond. "By the time I got on the plane," Kim went on, "I started feeling guilty. But it was too late. You can't buy shmura matzah in Oklahoma. "It was erev Pesach when I got to my parents' house. And when I walked through the door, there it was, on the table," Kim paused, smiling at the memory. "a box of shmurah matzos," Gavriel concluded. "That's when I decided I was definitely going to lead an observant life. So even if my father didn't appreciate those matzos, I did," Kim finished. "Thank you."

Gavriel looked around the couple's small apartment. Sefarim filled the shelves. Shabbos candlesticks gleamed from the sideboard. Pictures of Gedolim – Torah leaders adorned the walls. The matzos didn't manage to connect to one Jew, Gavriel thought to himself, but they had definitely created the connection for another.

Pesach is special time which has the power to uplift every Jew. By dedicating ourselves to observing Pesach, we can all take advantage of this Yom Tov. Let us use the last days of Pesach to tap into the spiritual goodness which Hashem showers down upon us. **Good Yom Tov Everyone.**