

**Good Shabbos Everyone.** Last week we began the riveting story of how a Jewish girl Tovah Esther Himmel was saved from the German war machine only to get swallowed up in non-Jewish culture in Holland. Tova Esther married a non-Jew and for all intents and purposes, lived like a non-Jew as well. After Tova Esther died, her son Gijsbert, who had only an inkling of his Jewish status, somehow made his way to Eretz Yisroel. Would Gijsbert redeem his Jewish heritage which was teetering on the brink of disappearance? This week we will read the exciting conclusion of this amazing story:

While in Israel, Gijsbert registered at an ulpan in order to learn Hebrew and applied for work at the Israel Museum. "If any body needs ancient paintings restored, just send him to me," he said. The personnel department at the Israel Museum wasn't looking for anyone with such talents, but they took down his name for future reference.

Soon after, someone for the Lomzhe Yeshiva in Petach Tikvah called Gijsbert telling him that several old murals in the Yeshiva needed restoration. The walls of the yeshiva were decorated after the fashion of Jerusalem synagogues a century earlier. The pictures were fading and beginning to peel. For two years now, the yeshivah had been searching for a restoration expert. Recently, someone suggested that they turn to the Israel Museum. Perhaps they had the name of someone in the field. The museum, in turn, gave the yeshivah the name of the young expert from Holland.

Gijsbert worked on the yeshivah's murals for a year. For twelve months, he saw a minyan gather for shacharis, mincha and maariv (the three daily prayers.) He saw Jews laboring over their volumes of Talmud, gathering for Torah lectures. He understood that he had been mistaken. Israel did indeed have a faith, and Israel had a heritage, and commandments. During the course of his work, Gijsbert introduced himself to an artisan who was working to restore the windows. When the worker - a Jew - discovered that Gijsbert had been born to a Jewish mother, he was determined to convince him to have a bris milah. Boruch Hashem, Gijsbert agreed.

When Gijsbert entered the Covenant of Avraham Avinu, he changed his name from "Chizbort" to "Chai," life. From there, the path to an [Arachim Seminar](#) was short. He adopted a new surname "Keshet," and joined a Torah study circle. Soon afterward, he met Avital. Avital's grandfather had been the chief rabbi of Luxembourg, where she was born. Her parents made aliyah to Israel. The secular milieu suited them. After completing army service, Avital studied acting, eventually starring in an original screenplay. She then turned to teaching the art of acting.

Avital had a brother, also secular, like herself. While serving in the army, he had been assigned to guard the Tomb of Rachel Imeinu, outside Bethlehem. The prayers resounding at the tomb tugged at his heart, the Torah studies there interested him, and most importantly, those who learned there treated him with respect and friendship. He became a ba'al tshuvah. Conversing with her brother, Avital became interested in the topics he discussed. Then she attended an Arachim Seminar, and the rest is history... she also became religious.

With a full heart and trembling hands, Chai displays an old siddur with yellowed pages. When his mother, Tova Esther, passed away, the siddur was found under her pillow, soaked with tears. It had been the only possession that connected her to her former life, her last link to the past and her people. She had been certain, that with her passing, the siddur would be discarded. How she must rejoice now that her son and grandchildren pray from a siddur three times a day!"

Hashem tells us this week in Parshas Re'eh, "For you are a holy people to Hashem, your G-d and Hashem has chosen you for Himself to be a treasured people, from among all the peoples on the face of the earth." (Devorim 14:2) One of the definitions of the word "holy" is "separate, set apart." Thus, if we really want to be a holy nation, we must set ourselves apart from the nations, by, for example, eating kosher food, keeping Shabbos and dressing and speaking differently than the non-Jews. Through doing so, we will demonstrate to the world that we are truly "a holy people to Hashem."

**Good Shabbos Everyone.**

A Refuah Shleimah to Shusha Malka bas Golda

*"Anyone who brings merit to the masses, no wrongdoing will come into his hands."* Avos 5:21

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