

**Good Yom Tov Everyone.** Last week we began the amazing true story Matt Drebin, a non-Jew who wound up learning in a Yeshiva in Jerusalem. When we left off last week, Matt called his father who lives in California, to tell him that he was learning in a Yeshiva. Matt heard a silence on the line when he told his father what he was doing in Eretz Yisroel.

"Yeah ... I'm ... here. I just dropped the phone for a minute," said a voice that had gone suddenly dry.

"Now tell me, how did you know? Who told you?"

"Told me what? What are you talking about, Dad?"

"We never wanted you to know you were Jewish," Matt's father stated quietly. "It's nothing but hardship and grief. Your mother and I know this firsthand. The war taught us what it means to be a Jew in this world, and we never wanted our children to suffer the way we did. Drop it, Matt. Enjoy your freedom. Enjoy being part of the rest of the world. Please, just drop it."

"Listen, Dad. I'm sorry you feel this way, but I found something here that I've been looking for and I'm not going to give it up. Not now. I'm just getting started."

"Matt, I hate to say this, but I absolutely insist that you walk away from this yeshiva and get on with your life. If you don't listen to me, I'm cutting you off from this family. This is not a Jewish family and it's not going to be one. Do you hear me?"

It was clear to Matt that his father was not able to speak rationally on this subject, which obviously opened a deep and painful wound within him. There was nothing more to say.

"I'll speak to you in a couple of weeks, Dad. Good-bye," Matt said. He hung up the phone and returned to yeshiva. There he remained. His studies were going ahead full-force. Although his learning skills were still at the elementary level, his mind was sharp and mature. He worked hard to build a solid foundation and at the same time, with the help of his rabbis and teachers, he enjoyed plumbing the depths of the Torah's wisdom.

A few months passed. Matt's father gradually gave up hope of forcing his son to leave yeshiva, and their relationship, although strained by the new circumstances, resumed.

One day, Matt received a package from home. He ripped it open eagerly, wondering what his father could have sent him. Inside, he found a worn document written in Hebrew, along with a tattered Hebrew book. His father sent an explanatory note along.

*"Dear Matt, It seems that you insist on remaining a Jew and holding onto your beliefs. Therefore, I am giving you the only Jewish possessions that I have. They are the two things that my father passed down to me before he died. I have never shown them to anyone, but I think they are better off in your hands, since I have no use for them. Love, Dad"*

Matt packed the book and the document into his knapsack and went to find his rebbi (teacher) in Yeshiva. Although Matt was able to make out some of the letters, he had not yet become fluent enough in Hebrew to make any sense of either item. He was burning with interest to know what they said. What message had come down to him from his Jewish ancestors? Matt found his rebbi.

The questions he wanted to ask would not be so simple, because the entire context had to be related. He told his rebbi all about his parents' secret, his discovery of the secret, and the rift it had caused between him and his father.

"I guess he's made peace with it now," Matt said. "And he sent me these two things, which he said were the only Jewish possessions he had. I want to know what they are."

His rebbi took the old document into his hand with care, studying the faded words. "This sheet of paper here is a kesubah, Matt, a marriage contract between Dovid Meyer ben Mattisyahu and Chana bas Yitzchak."

"Hey, that must be my grandfather and grandmother, because I know I was named after my great-grandfather whose name was Mattisyahu. My father told me that recently. But what about the sefer? What is it about, and who wrote it? The rebbe opened the sefer to the front page and read aloud, "By Reb Mattisyahu Drebin. Your great-grandfather, whom you were named for, wrote this."

"Amazing!" Matt gasped. He stood stunned. It was a direct message from Hashem, delivered after a long, tortured delay of three generations, but delivered nonetheless to the precise address for which it was intended.

As Matt stood pondering this incredible turn of events, his rebbi was reading through the sefer's preface. "If you think that's amazing, I want you to read the preface to the sefer with me. You're not going to believe it." They sat together over the sefer. Matt's rebbi pointed out the words as he translated the message.

*"I did not write this sefer because I am a great scholar, nor did I write it for fame or to make money. I wrote it with one thought in mind. The winds have begun to change in Europe and the new movements have made a very dangerous breach in Judaism. People have been drawn away from the holy Torah's ways and have been swallowed up among the nations of the world. The Torah sits in sackcloth waiting to be redeemed. There is no way for me to know whether my grandchildren will know anything about Judaism and I don't know if my great-grandchildren will even be Jewish. Therefore I am writing this sefer as a legacy for our family, so that if G-d forbid my descendants leave the path of Judaism, they should know who their forefather was, that he was a G-d-fearing Jew who kept the Torah and its mitzvos and always prayed that his descendants would follow in his footsteps. I am hopeful that, girded with this knowledge, they will make their way back to a Torah lifestyle and fortify the Torah legacy of our family."*

Matt, who became known as Mattis (short for Mattisyahu) has faithfully fulfilled the wishes of his great-grandfather, by going in the way of Torah. (p.74 Stories for the Jewish Heart II, R. Binyomin Pruzansky).

One of the purposes of the Sukkah is to remember that Hashem enveloped the Jewish people with protective clouds as they left Egypt. So, as we sit in our Sukkos enjoying this beautiful yom tov, let us reflect on the fact that Hashem runs the world and although parts of the Jewish Nation may fall away, the Jewish Nation remains strong and intact. **Good Yom Tov Everyone**