

**Good Shabbos Everyone.** In this week's parsha Vaera, the Torah tells about the beginning of the exodus of the Bnai Yisroel from Egypt. The Jews had suffered terrible persecution in Egypt before the redemption. The Jewish nation has experienced horrible suffering during this latest exile. Before Hashem let the Bnai Yisroel out of Egypt, He showed many "signs and wonders" with the 10 plagues. So too when Hashem lets us out of this Exile, will he do it in a wondrous fashion. The following true story as told by a Holocaust survivor demonstrates some of the miracles which happened during the darkest hours of Jewish history.

"It was August, 1942 in Piotrkow, Poland. The sky was gloomy that morning as we waited anxiously. All the men, women and children of Piotrkow's Jewish ghetto had been herded into a square. Word had gotten around that we were being moved. My father had only recently died from typhus, which had run rampant through the crowded ghetto. My greatest fear was that our family would be separated. "Whatever you do," Isidore, my eldest brother, whispered to me, "don't tell them your age. Say you're sixteen." I was tall for a boy of 11, so I could pull it off. That way I might be deemed valuable as a worker. An SS man approached me, boots clicking against the cobblestones. He looked me up and down, then asked my age. "Sixteen," I said. He directed me to the left, where my three brothers and other healthy young men already stood. My mother was motioned to the right with the other women, children, sick and elderly people. I whispered to Isidore, "Why?" He didn't answer. I ran to Mama's side and said I wanted to stay with her. "No," she said sternly. "Get away. Don't be a nuisance. Go with your brothers." She had never spoken so harshly before. But I understood: she was protecting me. She loved me so much that, just this once, she pretended not to. It was the last I ever saw of her. My brothers and I were transported in a cattle car to Germany. We arrived at the Buchenwald concentration camp one night weeks later and were led into a crowded barracks. The next day, we were issued uniforms and identification numbers. "Don't call me Herman anymore," I said to my brothers. "Call me 94983." I was put to work in the camp's crematorium, loading the dead onto a hand-cranked elevator. I, too, felt dead. Hardened. I had become a number. Soon, my brothers and I were sent to Schlieben, one of Buchenwald's sub-camps near Berlin.

One morning I thought I heard my mother's voice. "Son," she said softly but clearly, I am sending you an angel. Then I woke up. Just a dream. A beautiful dream. But in this place there could be no angels. There was only work. And hunger. And fear. A couple of days later, I was walking around the camp, behind the barracks, near the barbed-wire fence where the guards could not easily see. I was alone. On the other side of the fence, I spotted someone - a young girl with light, almost luminous curls. She was half-hidden behind a birch tree. I glanced around to make sure no one saw me. I called to her softly in German, "Do you have something to eat?" She didn't understand. I inched closer to the fence and repeated the question in Polish. She stepped forward. I was thin and gaunt, with rags wrapped around my feet, but the girl looked unafraid. In her eyes, I saw life. She pulled an apple from her woolen jacket and threw it over the fence. I grabbed the fruit and, as I started to run away, I heard her say faintly, "I'll see you tomorrow."

I didn't believe she would come back. It was much too dangerous. But I returned anyway, the same time the next day. And there she was. The same girl. She moved tentatively from behind the tree, and once again threw something over the fence. This time, a small hunk of bread wrapped around a stone. I ate the bread, gratefully and ravenously, wishing there had been enough to share with my brothers. When I looked up the girl was gone. I returned to the same spot by the fence at the same time every day. She was always there with something for me to eat - a hunk of bread or, better yet, an apple. We didn't dare speak or linger. To be caught would mean death for us both. I didn't know anything about her - just a kind farm girl - except that she understood Polish. What was her name? Why was she risking her life for me? Hope was in such short supply, and this girl on the other side of the fence gave me some, as nourishing in its way as the bread and apples. Nearly seven months later, my brothers and I were crammed into a coal car and shipped to the Theresienstadt camp in Czechoslovakia. "Don't return," I told the girl that day. "We're leaving." I turned toward the barracks and didn't look back, didn't even say goodbye to the girl whose name I'd never learned, the girl with the apples. We were at Theresienstadt for three months. The war was winding down and Allied forces were closing in, yet my fate seemed sealed. On May 8, 1945, I and others were scheduled to be sent to a certain section of the camp at 10:00 A.M, which we knew meant our deaths. In the quiet of dawn, I tried to prepare myself. So many times death seemed ready to claim me, but somehow I'd survived. Now, it was over. I thought of my parents. At least, I thought, we will be reunited.

At 8:00 A.M., there was a commotion. I heard shouts and saw people running every which way through camp. I caught up with my brothers. Russian troops had liberated the camp! The gates swung open. Everyone was running, so I did too. Amazingly, all of my brothers had survived; I'm not sure how. But I knew that the girl with the apples had been the key to my survival. In a place where evil seemed triumphant, one person's goodness had saved my life, had given me hope in a place where there was none. My mother had promised to send me an angel, and the angel had come.

Eventually, I made my way to England, where I was sponsored by a Jewish charity, put up in a hostel with other boys who had survived the Holocaust and trained in electronics. Then I came to America, where my brother Sam had already moved. I served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War, and returned to New York City after two years. By August 1957 I had opened my own electronics repair shop. I was starting to settle in. One day, my friend Sid suggested a shidduch for me. I met the girl "Roma" soon after. As European Jews who had survived the war, we were aware that much had been left unsaid between us. She broached the subject. "Where were you," she asked softly, "during the war?" "The camps," I said, the terrible memories still vivid, the irreparable loss. I had tried to forget. But you never forget. She nodded. "My family was hiding on a farm in Germany, not far from Berlin," she told me. "My father knew a priest, and he got us Aryan papers."

I imagined how she must have suffered too, fear a constant companion. And yet here we were, both survivors, in a new world. "There was a camp next to the farm," Roma continued. "I saw a boy there, and I would throw him apples every day." What an amazing coincidence that she had helped some other boy. "What did he look like?" I asked. "He was tall. Skinny. Hungry. I must have seen him every day for six months." My heart was racing. I couldn't believe it. This couldn't be. "Did he tell you one day not to come back because he was leaving Schlieben?" Roma looked at me in amazement. "Yes." "That was me!" I was ready to burst with joy and awe, flooded with emotions. I couldn't believe it. I told her that if she agreed to the Shidduch that I did too. For many months, in the worst of circumstances, she had come to the fence and given me hope. Now that I'd found her again, I could never let her go. Boruch Hashem, she said "yes," and our Chasuna was soon after. And I kept my word: after nearly 50 years of marriage, two children and three grandchildren, I have never let her go! (as told by Herman Rosenblat, from the "The Apple Angel" The Ascent Newsletter 9 Teves 5768) **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."**

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