

The Jewish Weekly

The Story of Sam, Who Gives Out Blue Bracelets and Bike Helmets

By Sori Block-Gordon

His name is Sam. Sam Cohen, the son of Reuven. And this is his story:

My father was born in Jerusalem and around 1930, he moved to the southern part of Tel Aviv. He never drove a car. His mode of transportation was his bike. He was 87 when he was hit by a motorcycle on December 21. Unfortunately, he wasn't wearing a helmet. They immediately transferred him to the trauma unit in Tel Hashomer Hospital outside of Tel Aviv.

At the time, I was living in New York. I got a call from my sister that my father wasn't home and she couldn't reach him.

We were both worried, and then we heard on the news that there had been a bicycle-motorcycle accident, with the man on the bike in critical condition. I immediately called the hospital trauma unit.

I asked the nurse to please describe the victim, since he could be my father. She was unable to, as his head was encased in a metal piece and his whole body was bandaged up.

I then asked her if the man was wearing a black onyx ring with the initials R.C. for Reuven Cohen. The nurse replied that she herself had taken the ring off his finger when he entered the hospital!

She then told me to hurry up and come. It would take me 16 hours, as I was flying in from the United States.

When I arrived, the doctor told me that with my father's age, he might survive a few days at the most, but not much longer.

"Doctor," I said. "You forgot to mention two things: prayers and faith! There are a lot of people praying for my father's recovery." The doctor smiled but did not respond.

I stayed by my father's bedside day and night for three weeks, talking, singing and praying, but there was no movement.

On a Shabbat morning, at around the three-week mark, I was reciting the Shema aloud.

Although not an observant Jew, my father had always said the Shema every single day.

I got to the part, "And you shall love Hashem, your G-d," and my father opened his eyes!

I said, "Abba! Abba! (Father! Father!)" But his eyes closed again.



I screamed for a nurse. But by the time she came, his eyes were closed. They did not believe me.

I repeated the Shema prayer and again he opened his eyes. The nurse was shocked and tried to resuscitate him, but it didn't work. The good news was, that I knew my father could hear me.

I stayed in Israel for another three weeks, but my father's condition remained unchanging. The doctor told me to go back to New York and my family. They would call me if things got better, or G-d forbid, worse.

By mid-February, I got a call at my store. It was Dr. Ben-Simon. "Hello Sam," he said, "I have one word for you: a miracle! Your father woke up and guess what he's doing? He is mumbling the Shema prayer and pedaling with his feet as if he is riding a bicycle!"

"I'll be there by tomorrow," I told the doctor.

After spending a week in the hospital, I was finally able to take him to an assisted-living facility. It was a long and arduous process, but thank G-d, he lived. He turned 88, then 89, and he even got to his 90th birthday. His birthday is in March, on Purim day, so I came from New York and spent the month celebrating life with him.

Thank G-d, my father healed better than the doctors expected. He recovered and retained his brain function. He could still speak five languages: Yiddish, Hebrew, Spanish, Aramaic and English. But unfortunately, he had lost his memory. He could not remember my name.

One night, right before Purim, I came to visit him, and he said my name. "Sam," he said. "I'm soon going to heaven." I felt like it was a spiritual moment. I was in shock and said, "Father, do you know who I am?"

He replied, "Sure, I know; you're my son, Sam." I then told him what had been going on for the past two years.

As we were talking, an airplane flew by in the sky, and he pointed up and said, "Soon I will be going to heaven."

"Not yet, Abba," I said.

After Purim and all the celebrations, I returned to New York. At 4 a.m. on May 3, 2013, I got the dreaded phone call. Abba had passed away.

In his memory, I decided to make these wristbands with the Shema prayer. I felt that the Shema is what roused him from his coma. Also, he loved saying it every day.

It Once Happened...

I travel a lot for business, so I gave out these wristbands all over the world. I was in Israel one week and I gave a man a lift from Kfar Chabad. I kept count of each bracelet I gave away, and I was up to number 770. I decided to give this man a bracelet and told him that it was my 770th. He told me he would be traveling to 770 (Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn, N.Y., headquarters of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement). I love Chabad and was so delighted. G-d was smiling down at me.

G-d continued to smile His countenance upon me. I wanted to do something else in his honor but couldn't come up with the right project. I rented a bike and rode the streets of Tel Aviv, with my helmet on, where my father used to ride every day.

It then hit me that too many Israelis were not wearing helmets! I would make helmets and give them out in my father's memory. On the helmet, I would write: 'Wear a helmet. Save your life.'

As soon as I got to New York, I had 350 helmets made, and on my next trip to Israel, we gave out the helmets, T-shirts, pamphlets and stickers. We drove around Israel giving them out. It felt cathartic.

One Sunday, my wife and two daughters joined me to give out the helmets. We came to Masada and decided to climb to the top where there is a small synagogue. There was a sofer there, a scribe, writing a Torah scroll.

As I got closer, my daughter pointed out that the scribe was writing my father's name. I was shocked and took a closer look.


Indeed, the scribe was writing this verse from the Torah portion of Matot: "The descendants of Reuben and Gad had an abundance of livestock." I was there with my wife and children, and I felt G-d had shined His light on me once again. The scribe was so touched that he dedicated the verse to my father.

I could feel my Abba's pride in me, the family that I've built and the project I was doing in his memory. It was a glorious moment.

Giving out these helmets could save one person's life, and as we know, "He who saves one life is as if he has saved the entire world!" I felt I had made my father and G-d very proud.

May G-d keep shining His light and His miracles on me, my family and all of Israel!

Reprinted from an email of Chabad.org.



Shabbat Times – Parshat Matot-Massei

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	7:11	8:28	9:03
Tel Aviv	7:26	8:30	9:01
Haifa	7:19	8:32	9:04
Be'er Sheva	7:27	8:29	9:02

The Soul in Charge

By Rabbi Yitzchak Shlomo Unger

The rumor was extraordinary: for the first time there was a real threat to the rights of the Moscovitz family to be in charge of the centralization of the alcoholic beverages business in Hungary.

Once every three years the government put the rights up for bidding. The rich family Moscovitz had always been the only contestant, and submitted a reasonable price, that enabled them to enjoy a handsome profit. Now a group of gentiles decided to take the rights away from the Jews and to submit a higher bid.

The family was very concerned. Their rivals were determined to expropriate the rights from them, at whatever price would be necessary.

Distressed, the family decided to turn to the Tzadik Rabbi Mordechai of Nadvorna, even though they were not Chasidim and were not in the habit of visiting the Tzadikim. Because of this they preferred to send a messenger to the Tzadik with their request for a blessing.

They chose the chasid Reb Avremele Birnbaum as their messenger. He was an innkeeper whom the Moscovitz family supplied with the alcohol he sold. Over the years he accumulated a debt to the family, but they were kind to him and didn't pressure him. He was glad to now have an opportunity to do them a favor and to represent the family to the Rebbe.

Rebbe Mordechai scrutinized the kvitel (note with a request for a blessing) for a long moment and asked: "Where does the family Moscovitz live?"

"In the city of Potik", replied Reb Avremele.

"Potik?" The Rebbe frowned. "Where is Potik?"

Reb Avremele was surprised. He knew that the Rebbe used to travel every year through the country and he certainly must know the towns and villages in the surroundings.

"Maybe you can tell me the name of the city close to Potik?" the Rebbe asked.

"Serentz," replied the chasid.

"Mordechai doesn't know where Serentz is", said Rebbe Mordechai. "Maybe Kerestir is close by?" he asked.

"Indeed", Avremele said, pleased.

The face of the Tzadik lit up. "That's why I didn't know," he said joyfully. "What I need to know, I know" As explanation he described the house of Avremele in all its details even though he had never been there. "But I do not know the city of Potik because it falls under the 'ownership' of the Tzadik Rebbe Yeshaya of Kerestir."

The Rebbe took his watch out of his pocket, looked at it and said: "Go, you will still be in time to reach Rebbe

Shayaleh and receive his blessing before the auction begins."

When Reb Avremele left the Rebbe he was quite upset. He knew Rebbe Shayaleh very well. They had both been the attendants of Rebbe Hirshele of Liska. Not only that, but Reb Avremele was the main attendant and Rebbe Shayaleh was his assistant... Now he felt embarrassed, how would he present himself to Rebbe Shayaleh as a chasid coming to his Rebbe?

Rebbe Shayaleh sensed his visitor's discomfort. He served him coffee and wished him success with the rest of his trip. Reb Avremele didn't know what to do, he had to carry out his mission but he was incapable of doing so.

With a heavy heart he climbed into the carriage to continue his journey. A moment before he could do so the Tzadik told him: "Go in peace and health, everything will be well with the Moscovitz Family!"

Avremele was tremendously relieved. The Tzadik with his Divine Inspiration had understood the reason for his visit and with great sensitivity had given his blessing without embarrassing Reb Avremele.

The day of the auction arrived. Mr. Moscovitz considered which tactic to adopt. He knew that his rivals would offer higher prices than his. He saw no chance of his winning the bid in a natural way. "If the blessing of the Tzadik will help, I will win even with a low price," he thought.

The Jew presented himself before the governor and suggested a sum lower than the sum of previous years. The governor was stunned. He decided not to call out the sum loudly out of fear that the rival group would also lower the sum they were going to offer.

It was the turn of the spokesman of that group to offer an amount. He walked over brimming with self-confidence, cleared his throat and then... strange sounds started coming out of his mouth. The bewildered man tried again and again to speak but was only able to make incomprehensible sounds.

Questions posed him by the governor were met with grunts and croaks. The governor became furious. He regarded this behavior as extremely disrespectful. He immediately announced that the Moscovitz family had won the bid.

The group's spokesman returned to his allies pale and confused. "I don't know what happened to me", he mumbled. "A slender Jew with a white beard appeared before me, caught me by the throat and every time I tried to speak he choked me! I couldn't get even one word out!"

This story was told by Rebbe Yeshaya from Kerestir himself to the chasid Reb Shlomo Engel and concluded: "I was obligated to help the Moscovitz family. They were the ones who bought me my first pair of boots when I was a child and they paid the tuition money for my melamed (teacher of small children.)

Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org.



In Parshat Chukat, details are provided of the sad passing of Aharon HaCohen – Aharon the High Priest. But unusually, there is no date given for his death. In this week's Parsha - Massei - reference is again made to his passing and this time we are told that Aharon died "בחדש המשי באחד לחודש" – on the first day of the fifth month". Now, since Nissan is the first month of the year, the first day of the fifth month, is Rosh Chodesh Menachem Av, which is Wednesday, 19th July.

We know from here therefore, that every year we read about the Yahrzeit of Aharon on the Shabbat which is closest to that date – and I cannot think of a better time in the year to contemplate on the life of Aharon and his teachings. He died on Rosh Chodesh Av, the commencement of the saddest month of the year. As Chazal teach us in Mesechet Ta'anit "שמשנכנס אב – ממעטין בשמחה" – with the commencement of the month of Av, our joy decreases". This is on account of the fact that so many tragedies befell our people at this time, including the destruction of both of our temples.

Our second temple fell in the year 70 because of the sin of Sinat Chinam - causeless hatred. And when you think about it, the example that Aharon set provided the antidote to Sinat Chinam. Hillel, in Pirkei Avot, teaches us אהרן של אהרן - we should strive to be like the disciples of Aharon, אהב שולם ורודף שלום - like him we should 'love peace and pursue it', אהב את אהב את - and like him, we should 'love all other people and bring them close to Torah'

Aharon taught through his personal example that we should love peace, but that actually is not good enough. We need to ensure that there will be a peaceful environment wherever we are. We should love all other people and through our love for them, share with them the beauty of a life of Torah.

Tragically, שנאת חנם – causeless hatred is still very much in our midst. As we commemorate the Yahrzeit of Aharon we must transform שנאת חנם into אהבת חנם – causeless love.

So as we head toward Tisha B'Av, let's try to love every individual for who they are and let's pray for those suffering from the current situation here in Israel, as well as for our soldiers and healthcare professionals, and Chevra Kadisha members worldwide, for peace and for those who need healing, shidduchim, children and parnassah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual, sweet Shabbat and Chodesh Tov. *Yossi*

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

Parshat Matot	Parshat Massei
NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 2	NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 6
MITZVOT ASEH: 1	MITZVOT ASEH: 2
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 1	MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 4
NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 112	NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 143
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1484	NUMBER OF WORDS: 1461
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 5652	NUMBER OF LETTERS: 5773

HAFTORA:
Ashkenazim: Yirmiyahu 2:4 - 28 and 3:4
Chabad & Sephardim: Yirmiyahu 2:4 - 28 and 4:1-2
(The three Haftorot of the three weeks preceding the Ninth of Av, are called the "Three (Haftorot) of Punishment").

Shabbat Mevarchim Chodesh Menachem Av, Rosh Chodesh - Wednesday, July 19, 2023.

This week we study Chapter 2 of Pirkei Avot

מטות - מסעי

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