



YOU NEVER WOULD GUESS

Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita

I know its not only me, the twists of life seem to pop up at the strangest of times. Moments spring up and without fanfare become threads in the tapestry of ones being. Take this past Erev Rosh Hashonah for instance. After davening Shacharis I set out to drive to the cemetery where my late Rebbetzin Chaiky A'H is. Visiting the final resting places of departed loved ones before Yom Tov is a cherished custom, one that brings me great chizuk. Just as I was leaving my daughter's home, I received a message that some flowers had been dropped off at my old address and left with a neighbour. Now, allow me to colour in with some background. Some fifteen years ago when moving to the North of Manchester and opening up the Aish Kodesh Shtieble, we had the mazel to move onto a lovely cul-de-sac which is peopled by friendly neighbours of various backgrounds. This street was very cherished by the Rebbetzin, it suited her outgoing personality to a tee. Sometime after her passing, I took up my daughter's kind invitation and moved to her home. (I mean no disrespect to my son in law, the well regarded Sofer Rabbi Schreibhand, but I'm a Dad and she is my only daughter, so she gets top billing.) I still use my house as an office and a place where the constant traffic of visitors doesn't get in anyone's way.

So, back to the flowers, I went to the neighbours and rang their bell. These kind folk are new to the area, having moved in after the Rebbetzin Chaiky's passing. "Hello, I'm Rabbi Rubin from next door". I cheerfully announced. The young lady who answered smiled and said, "I'm Chaiky, nice to meet you." I took a long breath, "excuse me did you say your name is Chaiky?" "Yeah, we just moved in". I started to garble something about my Rebbetzin's name and it being a strange coincidence. The name isn't all that used and to have two in one street is, well, (in truth I can't remember my exact words, I was in a bit of a daze) Things soon got stranger:

"Where are you from Rabbi you sound American?" "Well, I am from the states but we have been here close to forty years"

בס"ד



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“Really! I’m from the states as well!” (Told you things would get stranger) “Where in America are you from?” (Here it comes, wait for it) “well I was born in Crown Heights but I grew up in Boro Park.” This was really getting weird, the Rubin’s first few years of marriage were spent in Crown Heights, and then we moved to Boro Park where my children were raised. I couldn’t get my head around all this. You can’t make it us. Here I was going to visit the kever of the Rebbetzin Chaiky, its erev Rosh Hashonah and I want to Daven at the resting place of Chaiky, my life partner, the one whose soul was and is intertwined with mine. I’m stopping on the way to pick up some flowers, nothing to see here folks, well then, the script does a turn. A young frum Vieble, opens the door, the very one next to mine, and tells me her name is Chaiky. Erev Rosh Hashonah, all the memories are swirling around me, Yom tov is always hard, and the last thing I need is this strange confluence of events. I gaze passed the open door and see a kitchen table filled with fresh challahs. My heart is gripped, can this be real? The confused Chaiky tells me her grandfather was a Chazan in Boro Park, Gevalt! So was the Rebbetzin’s father. By now I wanted to grab the flowers and run. So much was flaying about in my mind, all the coincidences, what did it all mean? All I wanted was the flowers, and instead I was getting these jolts of remembrances from a total stranger. I bid farewell with brochos for a kesivah vechasima tova, somehow fumbled with the keys of my car and drove off with a frazzled head. When I reached the Bais HaChaim, I was a bit more settled, and as I stepped over to the Rebbetzin’s headstone my eyes were wet with tears. I had been speared with a flash reminder of Hashem’s kindness for His children. I have lived the roll of an Almon (widower) for almost five years. Life goes on, children carry her name and smile as I offer them too much chocolate. Yom Tov with the Rebbetzin was an experience of a Yiddishkeit lived with capital letters. Her cooking, her cleaning, the vast care she gave others, the love she showered on her dear ones. It was so intoxicating; you just couldn’t catch your breath. Now, her home, (I was just an honoured guest) lays silent and chilled as the days grow shorter. Yet, Hashem taps me on the shoulder, whispers that I have to pick up some wayward flowers, only to lift me up with events I could never make up.

My whole family reveled with this story as did friends who I met over yom tov.. Chaiky would have loved my nonplussed face upon hearing her name in a new accent, and I relished this fabulous reminder of her light and love of life.

I share this story with no direct purpose, make of it what you will. Hashem sends us all messages daily, and we should take them and bask in the knowledge that our Father cares.

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