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IT'S PESACH! The Powerful Chain of Tradition

By: Dena Torgeman



Okay, Mom, it's all there," Sarah called out in a bored voice, to her mother who was busy in the kitchen.

"Everything? You got the glasses and the napkin rings and the...where's the pepper?" Sarah's mother answered back frantically, her voice trailing off as she rummaged through the spice rack.

"Yes, Mom," Sarah answered, letting out a long sigh as she headed to

the living room and plopped down onto the sofa.

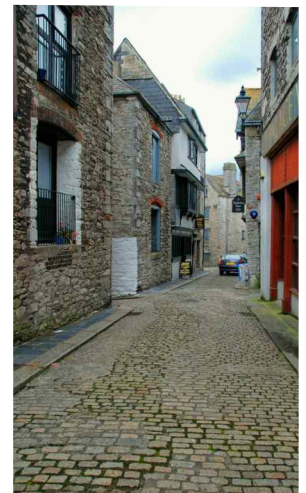
Sarah's house was nearly flying with everyone getting ready for the family Seder that night. She was exhausted from all of the cleaning and cooking and arranging, and welcomed the quiet moment she had to herself, sitting there alone in the living room. As her eyes drooped, she began to drift off. All of the items she had just set on the table seemed to swirl above her head in a haze. The Seder Plate that Grandma had given Sarah's family the first year they had hosted the Seder. The Elijah's Cup that had been in Dad's family for eight generations. The silverware that had belonged to Aunt Rivi, and the tablecloth that Uncle Ike and Aunt Ida given to them from their travels to Russia. Sarah picked up a small picture frame with an old black and white photograph of Aunt Ida back from her childhood in the Soviet Union. The little girl in the picture was dressed elegantly in a handsewn, lace and taffeta dress. The pincurls on her head delicately framed her angelic face. Then Sarah turned head back towards the Seder table. The metallic and vibrant colors of the table setting took over Sarah's mind as her eyes drooped and she fell into a trance.

All of this craziness for a holiday? she wondered. Yet, her mom's words echoed in her head: "This is tradition. Our ancestors did it, as do we. Our neighbors, our people, our communal brothers and sisters. All the Jewish people..." It was a deep thought for Sarah to take in, but for some reason it had stuck with her.

Suddenly, Sarah felt chilly. Her eyes flashed open, her body jerking upright. Looking around her, she quickly realized that she was no longer in her New Jersey living room; she was in Eastern Europe! Street signs were written in Russian, people walked the blocks wearing bulky coats, scarves, hats, and mittens.

"How on earth..." Sarah was in shock. Just then, a little girl, just a bit younger than Sarah, tapped her on the shoulder. "Sarah," the little girl said in a heavy Russian accent, "I'm glad you're here. Come with me." Unaware of what was going on, Sarah confusedly followed the familiar looking girl. Where have I seen her face before? Sarah wondered. Wait a second...that's the girl in the picture! That's Aunt Ida!

The two girls walked through the cobblestone streets until they got to a small house towards the end of the town. As the little girl opened the door, the heat from inside hit Sarah's face, warming her skin and her heart immediately. Everyone inside was hustling and bustling. "We have a lot to do," the little girl excitedly explained to Sarah, "for Passover begins tonight!" There was a special energy in the small home despite the rushing and hastiness of each person preparing for the upcoming holiday. Sarah noticed



something familiar about the holiday table that was being set, and then it hit her. It looked similar to the tablecloth that Ike and Ida had given to her family. It was the same Spring yellow color. Sarah felt something good inside, but what was it?

Just as she blinked, Sarah began to feel dizzy. Suddenly she was now somewhere else. She was inside another small house, but this one was made of concrete and marble. "Where am I?" Sarah asked befuddled. She found herself standing in a tiny kitchen that was about the size of her family's coat closet. There were pots and pans steaming all around, the aroma of fresh herbs and broths stewing enveloped her.

"You're in Eretz Yisrael, my dear," an older woman answered her, turning around from the potatoes she was chopping. "You are in the land of Israel," she said with a smile. Sarah was in shock. In disbelief, she slowly walked from the kitchen into the connecting



room - a dining room - and there she found a table that looked similar - almost too similar - to the one in her home back in New Jersey. What was it? And then she spotted it: the Elijah's Cup that stood prominently in the middle of the table had the same welding work as the one on Sarah's family's table. Just then, Sarah noticed something else. It was a

handwritten calendar dated 1826. 1826? she thought. She vaguely remembered her dad mentioning that year when he spoke about his family tree which traced back to Israel. Sarah was overcome with a certain sense of pride as she thought to herself, "This is where I come from, and they are doing exactly what we are doing today."

Just as Sarah went to turn to the older woman she found herself feeling very, very hot. Within the blink of an eye, there was nothing but sand all around her. When she looked behind her,

she saw a seemingly never-ending trail of people. Many of them were holding none other than Matzah! "But how did I..." Sarah questioned in complete shock. The crowd drew closer and closer to where Sarah was standing, frozen in awe.

And then it dawned on her. These were the Jewish people, leaving Egypt with Matzah in tow. The Matzah, the Seder table, the bitter herbs, the tablecloth. What an incredible journey. It had been quite a journey for not only her ancestors, but for Sarah, herself, as well.

Just as Sarah's eyes drooped once more, she jumped up, looking all around, finding herself in none other than her very own family's living room on the sofa, just where she had started. "Wow," she said under her breath. It was all coming together.

Generation after generation, her people, her family, her own. They had all prepared and experienced the holiday of Passover. Finally, Sarah understood what she had been feeling at each stop along her mystical journey. She felt connected, she felt as if she was a part of something great. And she was. Filled with a sense of pride, Sarah headed to the kitchen to where her mother was still frantically searching high and low for something.

"Mom, may I help you some more?" Sarah asked her mother. Her mother paused what she was doing. "You want to help some more?" she asked Sarah with a look of surprise plastered onto her face. "I thought you didn't want to help out anymore. You didn't seem very into it before." "I changed my mind," Sarah answered. "I want to be a part of it. A big part of it. After all, this is tradition. Right, Mom?" "That's right, Sarah," her mom replied, and together they finished preparing for the Seder meal that was to take place that very night, just as it has year after year after year.

