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**A New Link in the Chain**

Ann Goldberg



Jerusalem was just beginning to close down on erev Yom Kippur as my husband and I made out way to the hospital to see our daughter and her newborn son. The food for our seudah mafseket (the meal before the Fast) was in the oven and we wanted to give our daughter and new grandson the traditional pre Yom Kippur blessing. For the first time since her Bat Mitzvah (not so long ago!) she would not be fasting, as the Halacha, Jewish law, prohibits women who have given birth just before Yom Kippur from fasting. As much as we were commanded to fast, she was commanded not to.

After the Fast she was discharged, but her baby stayed in overnight to receive ultraviolet light treatment intended to reduce his bilirubin count to enable him to have his Brit Mila on time – the first day of Sukkot.

Hoping and praying for the best, we went ahead and made arrangements for a Brit on time. Phone calls around our neighborhood of Ramot yielded the usual ‘ only in Israel’ warm response and apartments and rooms were found for as many visiting family members on our and our son-in-law’s side as were able to come.

Early Friday morning we were on our way to the large supermarket to stock up for a Shalom Zachor that night (for sure) and a Brit (maybe). As we left the house another daughter called out “ Have you got the shopping list?” to which my husband replied “Who needs a list – whatever we see, we need to buy ten of them.”

By Friday afternoon the baby's bilirubin count had dropped considerably and he was released from the hospital. But it wasn’t low enough to ensure a Brit on the eighth day.

On Sunday morning hubby and son-in-law took newborn for another blood test and rushed the sample off to the lab for an immediate result. But immediate turned out to be a relative word. Hours later – still no result. Calls every 10 minutes didn’t help nor did enlisting the assistance of the family doctor. The blood sample seemed to have vanished into thin air.

Next morning, Monday, day before potential Brit, they called the Mohel and asked if he could maybe decide without a further blood test as his bilirubin count was definitely going down.

The Mohel arrived and examined the baby all over for several minutes under natural sunlight …… and declared he was …….borderline.

He needed another blood test.

Hubby, son-in-law and baby rushed off to the hospital – leaving wife, and remaining children and children-in-law (not to mention grandchildren) to finish off the Sukkah, and make headway into the cooking. Even if there was no Brit – the visitors were on their way and would need to eat over the Chag.

Hubby returned minus baby and father. They had to wait for the results.

Although the suspense was nerve-wracking I suddenly found myself praying hard that we should be given the zchut , the special honor of having the Brit in our Sukkah. What had at first seemed daunting, now seemed wonderful. Friends had wondered how on earth we’d have room for a Brit and seudah, the special post—Brit meal, in our Sukkah. But on the contrary, as our Sukkah leads off from our dining room, I looked on it as having our dining area doubled. After all I would never normally have had guests eating in the garden in mid October but now I had the perfect excuse. The thought of using one mitzvah, the Sukkah itself, for performing the mitzvah of the Brit seemed a chance not to miss.

But the decision wasn’t mine.

Our son-in-law called in - the bilirubin number was right down. The Brit was on.

Emails were sent, phone calls made and notices put up in local shuls.

The following morning after prayers finished in most of the local shuls, relatives, friends, neighbors and acquaintances gathered to witness our grandson entering into the ancient covenant, as my husband, the Sandek, sat on the large chair that had held pride of place in my father’s childhood home.

As is the custom, his name was unknown to all except his parents until it was declared at the Brit. Yaacov – after my father.

As I heard the name called out my mind spun back to Sukkot 31 years ago, in England, when my father collapsed suddenly and passed away within a few hours. As tears clouded my eyes I could picture him clearly smiling in his Eternal home as we came full circle and brought the simcha, the happiness, of Sukkot back with his namesake, blessed with a Brit in a sun-filled sukkah in Jerusalem our eternal home.

A bright new link has been forged in the family chain.

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