

Then Yisrael said to Yosef, “Now I can die, after my having seen your face, because you are still alive.” (46:30)

With these words ends the saga of Yosef’s “disappearance” from home. After many years of bitter longing, Yaakov *Avinu* was finally able to once again embrace his son. We read about it, but unless one has undergone the travail of almost losing a child and then finding him alive and well, it is difficult to fully grasp the overwhelming joy that both Yaakov and Yosef experienced. *Baruch Hashem*, this experience is something that is a rarity. There was a time, not so long ago, during World War II, when families were separated, when children were torn away from their parents, when siblings were severed from one another, when the Jewish People as a family unit became something of the past. It took years after the war until news of loved ones became known and confirmed after much searching, and some remnants of families were finally reunited. There were also those cases where clearly it was *Hashgacha Pratis*, Divine Providence, that steered events and people to reunite with one another. The following is one such moving story:

Young Private Goldberg was a soldier in the U.S. Army as it marched through war-torn Europe at the end of World War II. His unit was assigned to a European village, with orders to secure the town, search for any concealed Nazis, and assist the villagers in any way they could.

One night, Private Goldberg was on patrol when he saw a figure darting through a field just outside the village. “Halt or I will shoot!” he exclaimed. The figure ducked behind a tree and hid. Goldberg saw this and patiently waited. Eventually, the figure came out and began digging. Goldberg waited until the figure had completed his digging and once again shouted, “Halt or I will shoot!” The figure ran. Goldberg decided not to shoot. Instead, he gave pursuit. After a few minutes, he succeeded in tackling the figure to the ground.

To his surprise, he discovered that he had caught a young boy. During the scuffle, an ornate *menorah* fell from the boy’s hands. Goldberg lifted up the *menorah* and stared. “Give me back my *menorah!*” cried the boy. “It is mine,” he pleaded. “Do not worry,” responded Goldberg. “I am also Jewish, I will help you.”

Regrettably, the boy had been the victim of the infamous ghettos and concentration camps of the Holocaust for several years, so he was mistrustful of anyone in uniform. He had been forced to watch the execution of his father. He had no idea what had become of his mother. He was all alone in the world, with nothing but his little *menorah*.

The Jewish people are *rachmanim bnei rachmanim*, compassionate sons of compassionate fathers. Private Goldberg slowly took the boy, whose name was Yaakov, under his wing. Goldberg took a strong liking to Yaakov and convinced him to return with him to America. After going through the necessary paperwork, Goldberg officially adopted Yaakov.

Goldberg was active in the Jewish community. One day, he met one of his friends who happened to be a curator of the Jewish Museum in Manhattan. He showed his friend the unique *menorah* that Yaakov had saved from the fires of the Holocaust. The curator told Yaakov that the *menorah* was a rare piece of art, and he immediately offered him \$50,000 for it.

Yaakov was young, but very attached to the *menorah*. "I will never sell it," he said. "This *menorah* has been in my family for over two hundred years. I am not selling it to a museum. No amount of money can replace my feelings toward this *menorah*."

When Chanukah arrived, Yaakov lit the *menorah* and placed it in the front window of his newly found home. Tears streamed down his face, as he stared at the beautiful lights. This *menorah*, an ember from the past, symbolized hope – a hope for a better tomorrow.

Yaakov went upstairs to his room to read, while Goldberg remained downstairs with the *menorah*. A few minutes later, there was a feeble knock at the door, and Goldberg got up to answer. A woman with a heavy German accent stood at the door. She said that she had been walking down the street, when she had suddenly noticed the *menorah* in the window. She said that she had such a *menorah* in her family for many years and had never seen another one like it. Could she please come in and take a closer look at it?

Goldberg was happy to invite her to enter, saying that the *menorah* actually belonged to his son, who could possibly tell her more about it. Goldberg went upstairs and called Yaakov to talk to the woman – who was his long-lost mother! The little *menorah*, which Yaakov refused to give up, became the catalyst for helping him to piece his family back together. What a moving example of *Hashgacha Pratis*.