



Dvar Torah at the home of Estelle & Zev Bari, Friday 3rd of Elul, August 9, 2013

It is always a pleasure to spend Shabbat with our good friends, Estelle and Zev Bari, together with all of you here this evening, the 3rd day of Elul, Parshat Shofetim.

I hope you will excuse me for not focusing on the Parsha of the week. I chose to review an unusual experience I had about 64 years ago, which I will call The Niggun In The Air.

The 6th chapter of Shir HaShirim focuses on loving ones family. We recently welcomed the month of Elul which is spelled, Aleph, Lamed, Vov, Lamed. The Rabbis centuries ago, translated this passage as "I am my beloved's husband, and she is my beloved wife". The sentence is "Ani L'Dodi, V'Dodi Li".

Now as to The Niggun In The Air.

In 1949 my mother had a heart attack which killed her within 24 hours. She was 57, the mother of 6 children, I being number five. My mother had always wanted to be buried in ISRAEL, where she was born, a sixth generation Sabra, and a direct descendent of the Bal HaTanya, founder of the Chabad movement and author of the Rav's Shulchan Aruch.

My family designated me to fly from New York to ISRAEL to await the arrival by boat of my mothers body and to see to the details of the burial.

I was seated on an EL AL plane, next to a Hasidic Jew, who was engaged through most of the trip in reciting Tehilim, the Book of Psalms. My heart was weighted down with grief and tears. I could not hold back my sadness. The Hasid interrupted his quiet recitation, turned toward me, and said in Yiddish: "You are in deep pain, young man. You have lost someone, is that not so?" I replied, I lost my mother, and am on my way to Eretz Yisrael to see to her burial. After a few moments of silence, he said, you see, I'm reciting Tehillim. I am at Psalm Twenty-Seven. If you do not regard it as inappropriate, I would like to sing you a bit of a "niggun" for the passage, "Though my father and mother abandon me – HaShem will take me in. Show me your way HaShem, and lead me on a level path".

I nodded my assent. Then I heard the "Niggun" of my life-soft and plaintive, ethereal and calming, tearful and mending – all at the same time. The Hasid hummed it several times at my request and then I sang along with him. He said "Young man, the pilot said we are 32,000 feet above ground. The angels are carrying our "niggun" much higher, to the Throne of HaShem, to where your mother's neshama is now at rest".



I was at rest for the balance of the trip. My mother o"h was buried in the family plot of the Nachalat Yitzchak Cemetery in Tel Aviv. My eulogy at her graveside was given while tears were falling from my eyes.

Some time later, while I was still in Israel, I read in the morning newspaper that Rabbi Shaul Taub, the leader of the Modzhitz Chasidim, had died. I looked at the picture of the deceased and recognized the man who bequeathed his Niggun to me. It was the closest I have ever come to meeting an angel face-to-face.

This is the first time I have shared this true story with anyone outside of my family.

Have a wonderful Shabbat.

Israel Maegolies