



LETTERS

FROM

GRANDMA

By

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Illustrated by

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My Darling Grandchild, (letter 1)

Grandpa and I miss you terribly since we moved to Eretz Israel. The plane ride was, Baruch Hashem, uneventful. When the plane's wheels touched down on the runway at the airport, our eyes filled with tears. Though we had a wonderful life in the United States, for a Jew, there is nothing like being in Israel. We are home! And we can't wait for you to visit.

I must say, I am quite pleased with your class project. I will be more than happy to write any "memoirs" of my past that I can recall. Getting to know your ancestors and connecting with the past is the best way of ensuring a future filled with our Jewish tradition.

The first recollection I have is of my own grandmother. I had the best role model in the world. I can only hope that you feel towards me the way I felt towards her.

This story is from my cousin Rachel's point of view. I had my wonderful grandmother until I was an adult, but Rachel was eleven when we lost Grandma Rose. This is her story.

Love,
Grandma & Grandpa

P.S. Do you like the outfits I made you?

Grandma Rose (story 1)

Rachel sat in her room crying. Her grandmother, who meant everything to her, had just died. She was eleven years old and she did not know what she was going to do without her beloved grandmother.

The first recollection Rachel had of Grandma Rose was when she was three years old. Grandma would let her ride her tricycle in the house. Mom would not let her do that. Neither would anyone else. Just Grandma Rose! Grandma also let her roller skate in the house. As a matter of fact, nobody else's grandmother let them ride a tricycle or roller skate in the house, for that matter!

Rachel was somewhat comforted by these thoughts. She let her mind wander. She remembered many other things about this very special lady whom she was fortunate enough to have as part of the first eleven years of her young life.

When she slept at Grandma's house for Shabbos, Grandma would let her stay up as late as she wanted. When she was little, she would fall asleep on Grandma's lap and then Grandma would carry her to bed and gently put her down on the soft mattress and cover her with the softest, warmest blanket she, herself, had sewn.

In the summer, when they sat down to read together on the porch, Grandma would give Rachel some big, red grapes. Back then, the red grapes were not seedless, and Grandma would open them, take out the seeds, and then give them to her beloved granddaughter. At times like these, Rachel felt that her heart would burst with love. She was too young to realize at the time, that Grandma felt the same way.

For breakfast on Sunday morning, Grandma would make Rachel a "pancake egg", as Rachel called it. Grandma beat the egg and then put it in a frying pan, and, mind you, there were no non-stick pans back then, either. When the bottom of the egg was cooked, Grandma slid the egg onto a plate and flipped it over and back into the frying pan. When the second side was cooked, Grandma slid the egg back onto the plate and served it to Rachel. The egg always came out perfect! It was completely cooked. Rachel didn't like any part of her egg to be uncooked and loose. She also didn't like any brown spots on her egg. And there never was one! Not one brown spot! Grandma then cut the egg in squares, like a checkerboard.

Next, Rachel would get a fresh cut, thick slice of rye bread from the bakery. Grandma then spread cream cheese on the bread as carefully as she made the egg.

Rachel always wondered if she would be able to cook an egg like her grandmother when she grew up. I'm sure she can but, I'll bet it doesn't taste the same!

Cold milk was also on the breakfast menu. While Rachel drank her cold milk, Grandma drank hot water. Rachel wondered why Grandma drank hot water, but for some reason, she never asked.

Rachel's tears fell on her dress. One of the dresses Grandma had made her, of course. Rachel loved to watch Grandma use her sewing machine. It was a very old machine and did not use any electricity. Instead, it had a foot pedal and Grandma would get the machine to work by pumping her feet back and forth on the pedal. Rachel loved to help Grandma pump the pedal. Now, she would have to get her dresses at the store, like everyone else.

There was a knock on the bedroom door.

"Come in," said Rachel.

Mom walked into Rachel's room and sat on her bed.

"I have something for you," Mom said. She then showed Rachel a gold chain with a heart shaped citrine stone on it.

"This belonged to Grandma. I think she would want you to have it," Mom said, and then put it around Rachel's neck.

"I'll never take it off," said Rachel. That way, Grandma will always be with me." Rachel never did take off the necklace. She also has Grandma Rose's old sewing machine in her own home. It doesn't work but it will always be a part of her.

My Dear Grandchild, (letter 2)

I hope you enjoyed the story about my grandmother, who, by the way, was your great, great grandmother. There is a story I remember about my cousin Danny. As you know, he has two older sisters. Well, cousin Danny never liked being the youngest child. He always felt that everyone babied him, especially since he was the only boy. But one day, Danny's father was able to show Danny what a special place he had in the family. I hope you enjoy reading the story as much as I enjoyed remembering and writing it.

Love,
Grandma & Grandpa

P.S. Do you like the doll we sent you?

Danny's New Doll (story 2)

Danny was the youngest of three children. He had two older sisters. He wouldn't have minded having two sisters if he were the eldest, or, if he also had a brother. He wouldn't even mind being the middle child. But being the baby of the family was hard. Although he was adored and spoiled by his parents as well as his two older sisters, Danny did not like being treated like a baby. After all, he was four years old! He would be in kindergarten next year. Ah, then he would really be big!

Danny also had a cousin, Allen. He especially liked it when Allen came over to play. Allen was four years older than Danny, but he didn't treat him like a baby. No, sir! They would play Cowboys and Indians and Allen would let Danny pick which one he wanted to be. They would play baseball and basketball, cars and trucks, and even wrestle.

Allen was in third grade and he already knew how to read. When they got tired of playing, Danny's mom would give the boys cookies and milk, and Allen would read to Danny. Not the baby books his sisters would read but real adventure stories about pirates and treasures and boys who were detectives and solved lots of mysteries. Allen even recorded these books on tapes so that Danny could play them when he wasn't there. Danny would close his eyes and pretend that Allen was right there reading to him.

Danny did love his sisters, but they mostly wanted to play with their dolls, especially Linda. But Debbie would sometimes play basketball with him. She was a very good player but she always let Danny win. Danny knew this and knew that she let him win because she loved him. But Danny still wished he could win on his own.

"Time for bed," Mom called out as Danny and Debbie were finishing their basketball game.

Danny, Debbie, and Linda all took baths, put on their pajamas, and climbed into bed. The girls shared a room. Danny had his own room and sometimes felt lonely when he heard his sisters chatting and giggling before falling asleep.

Mom and Dad came in to say good night to Danny. Both hugged him and kissed him and told him how much they loved him. Then, Dad pulled his hand out from behind his back and handed Danny a doll. This was no ordinary doll! It was a boy! And it was wearing a baseball uniform, including a shirt with Danny's favorite team written on it.

"Oh Daddy," cried Danny, "I love him." I will call him "Ichabod Sojeph". "Thank you."

"Ichabod Sojeph," thought Danny's father. Where did that come from?!

Danny hugged his doll, closed his eyes, and fell asleep thinking, "Maybe it's not so bad being the baby of the family. Everyone loves the baby!"

And, indeed, they did!

My Precious Grandchild, (letter 3)

It was good to hear your voice on the phone. I'm glad your school project is coming along well.

Grandpa and I went to the Western Wall (Kosel) yesterday. I can't explain how we felt when we were there. It is something you have to experience for yourself. It defies description. While we were in Jerusalem, we decided to take a long walk. As you know, the people in Israel don't have many of the modern conveniences that we Americans take for granted. This also includes the children. We saw a boy on a scooter while we were walking along the street. The scooter he was riding was not like the motorized ones you children have back in the states. This scooter reminded me of the one my grandfather made for my cousin, Joey many years ago. I think you will enjoy hearing about it and you can also use it for your school project.

Love,
Grandma & Grandpa

P.S. We miss you and want you to scoot out and visit us. (Get the joke)?

Joey's Scooter, or, Recycling is Nothing New (story 3)

Joey's family didn't have much money. Like all the other families on the block, they tried to make do as best as they could. Things were very different then, back in Brooklyn, in the 1950's. Very few people owned cars and some didn't even have a telephone. In Joey's building, there were only one and two bedroom apartments. Sometimes, three or four children shared a bedroom.

Joey was an only child. He slept in a little bed in a corner of his parents' bedroom.

Soon it would be Joey's seventh birthday. He wanted an orange crate scooter more than anything else in the whole world. Most of his friends already had one. Tomorrow Joey was going "shopping" with his grandpa to get one. Or rather, they were going to hunt for the parts so Grandpa could make one for him. He could hardly sleep that night. When he finally did fall asleep, he dreamed of scooters in all different colors; red ones, blue ones, green ones, and yellow ones. Ah, the young child's imagination! When I close my eyes, I can picture Joey's scooter to this day.

As soon as the sun shone through the bedroom window, Joey was awake. He brushed his teeth, got dressed, and had a bowl of cereal for breakfast. He was very quiet so that he would not disturb his parents. They liked to sleep late on Sundays. When he was done, he put on his jacket and went outside. Grandma and Grandpa lived across the street. He would go and see if Grandpa was ready. By now, it was seven o'clock. When he got to his grandparents' apartment, Joey was greeted with a smile, a hug, and the smell of hot cocoa, one of his favorite things.

"Did you have breakfast?" asked Grandpa.

"Yes," said Joey. "I had cereal."

"Well, come have a cup of hot cocoa while I have my toast and tea," Grandpa said.

It was nice and warm in the apartment and, oh, so cold outside. Grandfather and grandson finished their drinks, bundled up, and set out to get the long awaited scooter.

They went down Main Street where all the stores were. First they found an empty crate that would be perfect for the body of the scooter. Then, Grandpa noticed a discarded board that would do fine for the footrest.

"I'm cold," said Joey. "Can we find a fire so I can warm up?"

Back then, there were big metal barrels along the sidewalks that burned wood and coal so the outdoor store owners could keep warm. The shopkeepers also cooked chestnuts and sweet potatoes for those who wished to get warm from the inside, out.

Grandpa and Joey walked past a few stores and then came to a man who was selling fruits and vegetables. He had a nice fire going in his barrel because he had gotten up very early that morning and immediately opened his "store". As Grandpa and Joey warmed their hands over the fire, Grandpa started talking to the shopkeeper, who was a friend of his.

"What brings you two out so early, Mr. B.?" asked the shopkeeper.

"We're looking for parts so I can build my grandson a scooter," said Grandpa.

"Have you found any wheels yet?" asked the man, "Because if not, I have just the right thing for you. My grandson just got a new pair of roller skates. I am using one old skate as wheels for the scooter I am building for him, and you are welcome to the other one. I have it right here in my shop. I'll get it for you."

When the man came back with the skate, Joey was practically jumping for joy.

"That's perfect! Let's take it."

"Yes," said "Grandpa. "That will do very nicely. Thank you, my friend."

All that was left to find were two pieces of wood to use as handlebars. As the pair continued walking down the street, they noticed a broken crate in another sidewalk store.

"Do you mind if we take a couple of pieces of wood from this crate?" asked

Grandpa.

"My grandfather is building me a scooter," Joey boasted.

"Of course you can have the wood," said the shopkeeper, and good luck with your scooter."

Grandpa and Joey thanked the man, and were on their way.

"Well, yingalah, "(little one), said Grandpa, "we have everything we need. I think it is time to head back home."

"But, Grandpa," Joey said, "We need paint."

"You let me worry about the paint," said Grandpa.

When they returned home, they showed my aunt, uncle, and grandmother what they had gotten and then disappeared into the basement of Grandpa's building. By nightfall, the scooter was done. Joey had to go home, bathe, eat supper, and go to bed. Tomorrow was Monday, and back to school.

"What about the paint," Joey asked again.

"I told you to let me worry about the paint," Grandpa said.

Joey could hardly sleep that night and hardly pay attention in school the next day.

When school let out, he ran to Grandpa's basement as fast as he could. Grandpa had just put the finishing touches on the scooter. Joey's eyes opened as wide as his mouth did. He would love riding his new scooter. It was his favorite color!

My Precious Grandchild, (letter 4)

What do you think of your Great Cousin Joey's scooter? It was nothing like you children have now-a-days but he and my grandfather had a wonderful time building it.

Now, I want to tell you a story about your father and your Uncle Jeffrey. I know that you know your Uncle Jeffrey is not quite like most people. He is developmentally disabled. That means that it was harder for him to learn in school and he can't quite do everything that other adults can do. Your father, my precious son, Eric, was a wonderful brother. The following story will show you what I mean.

Love,
Grandma & Grandpa

P.S. Uncle Jeffrey is sending you a check for \$25. To buy whatever you want. He is working in a very nice workshop, is very productive, and enjoys what he is doing. He also sends you his love.

Eric's Big Brother (story 4)

Once upon a time, there were two brothers. Their names were Eric and Jeffrey. Although Jeffrey was four years older than Eric, in many ways Eric was treated as the older child. That was because Jeffrey was developmentally disabled. Jeffrey's straight, golden hair was the color of the sun and his big, blue eyes were the color of the sky. Eric's hair was dark and curly and formed ringlets all over his head like halos, and he had the same beautiful, blue eyes as his brother.

Eric was always careful not to hurt Jeffrey's feelings. Sometimes, when Jeffrey saw the things that Eric did, he wished he could do them himself, but he couldn't. Eric was very smart and by the time they boys were five and nine, Eric was reading, spelling and adding and subtracting better than Jeffrey, although Jeffrey was able to do these things. But Eric kept telling Jeffrey that he, too, was smart and that he was also the big brother.

When Jeffrey turned six, his Grandma and Grandpa bought him his first two-wheeler. Then your grandpa taught Jeffrey how to ride it. Without training wheels! Eric was only two and had a tricycle. Then, when Eric turned six, his Grandma and Grandpa bought him the exact same bicycle as they had bought for Jeffrey.

As your grandpa and great-grandpa were putting it together for Eric, Jeffrey kept running into the house and asking,

"Is it a bike yet?"

Jeffrey was so excited for his little brother (your dad). When the bicycle was put together, Grandpa taught Eric how to ride, also. And from then on, they rode up and down the street together.

One day, when Eric was about ten and Jeffrey, fourteen, Eric had a friend come home with him after school. While they were having their snack, Jeffrey came home from his special education school. Eric's friend saw that Jeffrey's books were a little too easy for someone his age and then he looked at Eric. Eric did not want his brother to feel ashamed or embarrassed. He told his friend that his brother was in special ed. and said that he would explain what that was when they

went outside to play. I was so proud of your father that I made his favorite meal for supper that night. Is it still his favorite?

My Dear Grandchild, (letter 5)

I know you love your father but I bet you never realized just how special he really is. I hope you enjoyed hearing more about him. By the way, I remember when your father was a teen-ager we had such a hard time getting him to take a shower. I had to write a poem for him and send him back two or three times before he finally was clean. I found the poem, which I am enclosing, while unpacking another box.

Love,
Grandma & Grandpa

P.S. What did you buy with the money Uncle Jeffrey sent you?

A Lesson on Showering (story 5)

Go and take another shower
This time be sure and use the soap
Don't start giving me an argument
And don't just sit around and mope.

Go and take another shower
Put the bath mat on the floor
This time be a bit more careful
Make sure that you close the door.

Go and take another shower
Be sure to rinse off all the soap
Scrub until you're squeaky clean
Remember, I said not to mope.

Go and take another shower
But this time wash behind your ears
You certainly don't smell like a flower
Never mind those crocodile tears.

Now, go and take another shower!

My Precious Grandchild, (letter 6)

Thank you for sending us a copy of your completed school project. You did an excellent job and we are very proud of you. I can't believe the school year is almost over and we haven't seen you since Pesach.

You, who are the next branch of our family tree, may G -d give you everything for the good and may you always walk in the path of Torah.

Love,
Grandma & Grandpa

P.S. We are enclosing a ticket for you to come visit us in Israel. We are delighted that you want to spend your summer vacation with us. We can't wait to see you.

Dear Grandma & Grandpa, (letter 7)

Thank you so much for the plane tickets to Israel. I am so disappointed that I am not feeling well and can't come to visit you now. I will write soon. Mom and Dad send their love.

Love, Becky

P.S. I didn't know you like to write poetry. I also like to write poetry. I wrote this poem for a school assignment.

My teacher said to write a poem
And then I thought,
Boy, I would show 'em.
I wracked my brain,
Spent all my time,
Trying to get the words to rhyme...
When suddenly, it dawned on me...
A poet, I would never be.

My Darling Grandchild, (letter 8)

Grandpa and I were sorry to hear that you weren't feeling well, and hope you feel better soon.

I love your poem. I decided that while I am waiting for you to arrive, I would take a poetry writing class. The teacher is very patient and tries to encourage each of us to do our best. I hope you like my poem.

Love,
Grandma & Grandpa

P.S. Grandpa and I sent you a new pair of slippers. You must be sure to keep your feet nice and warm while you are sick.

FEET (story 8)

I hate feet. I don't think they're neat.
In all kinds of feet, the world is replete.
There are fat feet and skinny feet,
Hot feet and cold feet,
Wide feet and narrow feet,
These feet and those feet.
There are feet that get sweaty,
And those that stay dry...
I just can't seem to like feet
No matter how hard I try.
When I think of feet, I start in to twitch,
Which reminds me of feet that constantly itch.
When I go to the beach, or I go to the pool,
I see all those bare feet and I blow my cool.
Put on some sneakers or put on some shoes,
Or to be sure, your feet, you will bruise.
Most awful are toes, and goodness knows
I hate it the most, when through shoes, one shows.
Some toes are stubby and others are lanky.
Whenever I see them, I'm sure to get cranky.
The fact that I hate feet, and think they're the dregs...
Keeps me wishing that we could just walk on our legs!

My Dear Grandchild, (letter 9)

Grandpa and I are sorry to hear that you are still not feeling well.

I know it is hard to stay inside for so long, so I am writing another poem for you. In it, we will pretend to visit China and Russia for a school project. I want my teacher to look it over and then I will send it to you.

Love,
Grandma & Grandpa

P.S. Put on your seatbelt. We're ready to take off

Junior Travelers (story 9)

As part of our studies, we went round the world.
From China to Russia, we met boys and girls.
Our first stop was China; their chopsticks are nice.
With them they love eating their noodles and rice.
Many are farmers, many catch fishes.
With them they make many wonderful dishes.
The Great Wall of China protects them from foes.
Hats protect them from sun, when in fields they go.
They travel on bikes; there's no money for vans,
And when they get hot, they all wave their fans.
The capital city is known as Beijing, and
On the continent on Asia lives a panda named Ling-Ling.
If you should meet someone you thought that you knew,
You would say, Nay-ho-ma, which means, hi how are you?
The flag of the People's Republic, it's said,
Has six yellow stars on a background of red.

I hope you've enjoyed our vacation, so far.
Now on to a place that was once ruled by czars.
Our next stop is Russia, they say nyet, not nope.
It's so big it covers Asia and Europe.
It's so very cold in Moscow's Red Square,
Of ice and of snow, they get their fair share.
Siberia is colder and to travel, of course,
You always must have a sled and a horse.
I saved all my rubles in my little pushka,
And went out and bought a nice warm babushka.
When Russians are hungry, they eat some black bread,
And with it, borsht soup, that is really quite red.
The Kremlin is where laws are made or rejected,
Making sure that all its citizens are protected.
A favorite pastime in Russia is Chess.
Their players are among the world's very best.
Our journey has ended with fun and with toil.

It's good to be back on American soil.
Please, with G-d's help, soon better you'll feel,
And ready to travel to Eretz Israel.

My Precious Grandchild, (letter 10)

I'm glad you're feeling better. Please don't feel bad about not being able to visit us. I know you're registered for camp and Grandpa and I would not want you to miss out on all the fun you will have there.

I am busy with a computer course I am taking. I know you can already use a computer, but I am finding it difficult to learn. As a matter of fact, I became so frustrated that I wrote a poem about it, which I am sending along with this letter.

Love,
Grandma & Grandpa

P.S. We will be coming to America for the High Holy Days. I can't believe it is almost Rosh Hashanah. We will be arriving Erev Rosh Hashanah and will stay with you until after Succos.

WWW.HELPME.PLEASE (story 10)

I'll learn to work computers
If it takes a year or three
The do's and don'ts
Of DOS and FONTS
Won't get the best of me.
I sit down really anxious
To apply what I have learned.
The dam thing is obnoxious
And "on" it can't be turned.
My frustration builds as I do pore
And more knowledge I do seek.
Perhaps, I'll learn a little more
At my lesson next week.
Your grandpa reassures me
The computer can't be broken
And yet he must be sure to see
That it, I do stop pokin'.
"What do you fear? Why stay up all night?"
"The problem's only slight."
Said I to him, "Now listen, dear,
The problem is, it bytes."
"I see," he said. "Now come to bed.
It's the middle of the winter.
The mouse slid through the window
And is hiding in the printer.
There is no need to dread," said he.
"Though you'll never learn to hack.
But mark my words, the day you'll see,
When at it, you'll get back!"

My Dear Grandchild, (letter 11)

I am glad you had such a wonderful time at camp. But I am worried about your friend Mindy. It was very nice of you to become her friend. When I was a girl, I had a friend named Karen. My parents helped Karen just as your parents are helping to tum someone's life around. Isn't it wonderful how G-d sends us an extra helping of love with each new person who comes into our lives. It reminds me of the extra helping of Manna that G-d gave us for Shabbos (The Holy Sabbath), when we were in the desert. We are very proud of you.

Love,
Grandma & Grandpa

P.S. We already have our tickets for the states. We can't wait to meet Mindy.

Karen's New Family (story 11)

Karen was a beautiful girl. Her hair was the color of the sun and her eyes were the color of the sky. When she smiled and her eyes sparkled and her hair shone like spun gold, she looked like an angel. But Karen didn't smile too often. She was a very unhappy girl. She had very few friends, felt unloved, and cried herself to sleep most nights.

You see, Karen was an orphan and she was sent to foster home after foster home. Most everyone was nice to Karen but she didn't have anyone to bring cupcakes to school for her birthday, or make her a costume for Purim. There were too many other foster children living in the home and no one had the time to help her with her homework or practice all the prayers with her. And although Karen shared a room with three other girls, she felt lonely and empty inside. The other girls were older than Karen and would take her toys away from her and tease her. It wasn't even that they wanted to play with Karen's toys; they just seemed to get pleasure out of her misery. These girls were also orphans and also felt lonely and unloved and, getting together and teasing Karen seemed to give some purpose to their empty lives.

Only Karen's Grandfather made her feel happy and loved. He would visit once in a while and give her big hugs and kisses, and lots of neat presents. Karen desperately wanted to live with Grandpa, and as much as Grandpa would have loved to have Karen come and live with him, he was just too old to care for a little girl. So Karen remained unhappy, in foster care, throughout her childhood.

When she turned eighteen, Karen decided she did not want to live in foster homes any more. She came to my house where she stayed for two months, sleeping in a sleeping bag on the floor in my room. Even though she slept on the floor, Karen couldn't remember when she felt so comfortable and secure. But, we lived in a very small apartment and there was really no room for Karen.

One day my mother approached Karen and said,

"Though we love you very much, our apartment is just too small for another person. But, our best friends, the Jacobs, have a big house and were unable to have children. They would love to take you in."

Karen was a little scared but since she trusted us, she agreed to meet the Jacobs. She liked them immediately. Mrs. Jacobs was a petite woman with kind eyes and a ready smile. Mr. Jacobs has a round, red face, and no hair. His eyes twinkled like the stars. He was always laughing about something and he told Karen that we are here to laugh, not cry.

After two weeks, with the Jacobs, Karen began to feel like she had known them all her life. They were easy to talk to and were very interested in what Karen had to say. Karen settled into a routine where warm hugs, warm meals, and warm conversations were on the daily menu. She felt loved and wanted.

It has been thirty-nine years since that fateful day when Karen found her new family. She is now a mother and grandmother herself. Karen and her husband are always hugging and kissing their children and grandchildren and telling them how much they are loved. Friends and relatives are always visiting Karen and her family. As one friend put it, "When you're here, you're home and surrounded by love."

Karen became the mother and grandmother she wished she had had as a child, and in doing so, has brought love into the lives of everyone she touches.

My Darling Grandchild, (letter 12)

What a wonderful time we all had during the holidays. This year your father outdid himself with the Succah and the decorations you made were spectacular!

Words from the heart do, indeed, enter the heart. I think Mindy felt really comfortable with all of us. Though she was a little shy at first, she really warmed up to us towards the end of our visit.

Your parents' and your decision to adopt Mindy is wonderful. You know, of course, our feelings for you will never change. And surrounded by a loving family, I know Mindy will blossom.

I spoke with my friend Karen the other day. It was her grandfather's yahrzeit. Remember, I told you how much her grandfather meant to her. Well, she told me a story about him that I thought would interest both you and Mindy. I hope you like it.

Love,
Grandma & Grandpa

P.S. I forgot to give you our remaining American money before we returned to Israel, so we went it special delivery. You'll notice that we have a lot of left over quarters. What a coincidence!

Karen's Grandpa (story 12)

Karen's Grandpa Abe was always very special to her. She didn't see him too often because he lived in a city far away from where Karen lived. But, when he came to visit, he always showered Karen with lots of hugs, kisses, presents, and quarters. Karen loved the presents and those wonderful quarters, and Grandpa's hugs and kisses made her feel really loved and special.

One time, Grandpa brought Karen a doll. Another time he brought her a bicycle. And yet another time, he brought her a pair of roller skates. Grandpa taught Karen to ride the bicycle and how to roller skate. Karen, Grandpa, and her special doll, whom Grandpa named Miranda, for some reason, would have tea parties with her little tea set. Grandpa always asked for three lumps of sugar, because that was how he drank his tea in the old country.

But, best of all, were the quarters! Grandpa would put away a quarter for Karen each week and when he came to visit, he would reach deep into his pants pocket, take out all the quarters, and spill them onto Karen's lap. Karen and Grandpa would count the quarters and then count how much money they equaled. Karen was always amazed at how Grandpa knew how much money there was even before they finished counting it. When they were done, the pair would go shopping and Karen would buy whatever she wanted.

Oh, how Karen missed Grandpa! Even now! When they would go to the store and Karen would pick out something to buy and then ask Grandpa for her quarters, Grandpa would pretend he did not know what she was talking about. Karen would then pretend to cry and Grandpa would slowly take out one quarter at a time, until there were enough quarters to buy what she had picked out.

Now, every year, at Grandpa's Yahrzeit, Karen would gather up all the quarters she had saved since the last yahrzeit, and bring them to the local, kosher nursing home for tzaduka (charity). Karen would also visit with the residents of the nursing home and read to them and listen to their stories of long ago and far away. When she left the nursing home, Karen had a lump in her throat and tears in her eyes, but she also had a smile on her face. Grandpa would be proud! She just knew it!

Dear Girls, (letter 13),

I'm glad the two of you are getting along so well. As sisters, you will establish a bond that is like no other. As you know, I was an only child. However, I was very close to my parents, and with my cousins, who lived across the street.

I find it interesting that although you enjoy playing with your dolls, you feel you are too old to push them around outside in a doll carriage.

When I was little, I had a doll carriage that was always giving me trouble and making me cry. I will explain in the story I sent you.

Love,
Grandma & Grandpa

P.S. If you decide you would like doll carriages, Grandpa and I would love to buy one for each of you.

The Doll Carriage (story 13)

For one birthday, I can't remember which, but I think it was my sixth, my parents bought me a doll and a doll carriage. The doll had long, dark wavy hair like mine, and sparkling blue eyes. I named her Esther and played with her all the time.

The carriage was made out of straw; it was a summer carriage, as I was born in the summer. It had a soft mattress in it and my grandmother knitted a blanket for me to cover Esther. The blanket was a soft pink color and had fringes all around it. I suppose the fringes tickled Esther's chin but, being a child, I didn't think of folding the blanket over. Fortunately, when I became a mother, and had real babies, I did think of this.

Anyway, I had one serious problem with the carriage. The handle kept falling off. And every time it did, I went to my father and he put it back on.

One day, while I was outside pushing Esther in the carriage, it happened again. I, of course, went inside to ask my father to fix it, but not before there were tears streaming down my cheeks.

When I went inside, and my father asked me what was wrong, I told him that the handle had fallen off the doll carriage again and I asked him to fix it. Now, my daddy was busy working at the time, as he had brought some important work home. I was not allowed to disturb him when he was working.

"I'm sorry, Daddy," I said between sobs, "I didn't know you were working."

"Shayna maidel," my father said, as he took my face in both his hands.

"Pretty girl, you are more important to me than any work. What is wrong?"

"It's my doll carriage handle again."

Daddy gently wiped my tears, replaced the handle on the doll carriage, and we both went about our business.

When I reminded my father about the incident, after I was all grown up, it was he who had tears in his eyes.

Dear Girls, (letter 14)

It was wonderful meeting you, Mindy. We are so glad you are now a part of our family. Becky can fill you in on our family history with all the stories I wrote her.

We would like you to think of us as your Grandma and Grandpa and, whenever you are ready and feel comfortable with the idea, we would like you to start calling us Grandma and Grandpa.

I know you've had a rough life so far, but those days are over. You are pretty, smart, and loved. I know G-d has wonderful plans for you, as you are a very special person.

Beckala, we are very proud of you. There is a lot of love in our family to go around.

Be sure to buy something nice with the Chanukah gelt we are sending you.

Love,
Grandma & Grandpa

P.S. I hope you enjoy Grandpa's Chanukah story. One day, the menorah will belong to both of you.

The Menorah's Light (story 14)

Dear Ainachlach,

When Grandpa and I were first married, we naturally, had to be sure we had everything necessary to set up a proper Jewish home. Some things were given to us as gifts, and other things we had to go out and buy with the money we were given. In addition, some very special things were passed down through the generations.

When Grandpa's father, Max, had his upshiren (first haircut) at age three, right before Chanukah, his mother gave him a menorah as a gift. I think you know the one I am referring to; the silver one with the Star of David on it. This menorah was very special to Grandpa, as he took over the job of polishing it every year before Chanukah until it sparkled. This tradition has been passed down from father to son, since. I will now tell you the story behind the menorah.

As you know, Grandpa's parents, Miriam and Max, were from Europe. When the Nazis came and arrested the family and took them to a concentration camp, they stole all of their possessions, as they did with every other Jewish family (may their blood be avenged).

Grandma Miriam and Grandpa Max were told to pack a few things and be ready to leave in one hour. They did not know where they were going or what they should pack. Did they need clothing for warm weather or cold weather? Could they take any of their paintings, crystal, china, silver? They had no children yet, but they wanted to pass along some of their prized possessions, should they somehow, manage to survive the war and have a family. Grandma Miriam decided that the paintings were too big and the china and crystal could break. She very carefully wrapped the menorah that Grandpa Max had gotten for Chanukah when he was a child in a dress and stuffed it into her bag, along with a few other things.

They suffered for many long years in the concentration camp. But, every Chanukah they sneaked out the menorah and pretended to have candles to light. This brought hope to many prisoners.

Finally, the war was over and, through many miracles from Hashem, most all survived and came to America. Grandpa Max's father did not survive, however, and your grandfather, Nathan, is named after him.

Now it was Nathan's job to polish the menorah every year before Chanukah. But, one year, Nathan was very sick and he didn't have the strength to polish the menorah. Grandma Miriam tried to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. He had the flu and was running a high fever. The doctor said he had to stay in bed but, your grandfather kept saying, "I have to polish the menorah. Chanukah starts tonight."

When Grandpa's father, Max, came home from work, he looked in on his son. Nathan was burning up with fever.

"Don't worry," his father said. "I will polish the menorah this year. You just rest and get well."

And polish it, he did! He could see his own reflection in it.

"Well," said Max, "The menorah is ready. Please, Hashem, make Nathan well so he can light the candles tonight."

About five minutes before it was time to light the menorahs, Nathan walked into the living room.

"What are you doing out of bed?" said his mother.

"I feel much better," said Nathan.

Grandma Miriam went over to her son and felt his forehead and, what do you know? The fever was gone and he was able to light his menorah.

There are stories of very many Chanukah miracles. And this year, we had one in our very own family!

Dear Granddaughters, (letter 15)

What do you think of Grandpa's Chanukah miracle? Now you know why he must always light his special menorah every Chanukah.

It is amazing how we can experience miracles when we are open to them and have the faith to believe in them.

My next story will prove this point. It happened at the school where I worked and five students were involved. It is one of those stories that proves there are no such things as "coincidences".

Love,
Grandma & Grandpa

P.S. Thank you for the beautiful Chanukah candles. As I watched them glow, I thought of your glowing faces.

The Guardian Never Sleeps (story 15)

It was lunchtime at the special education school where I worked. It was also Wednesday, and on Wednesdays the children had meat for lunch. Every other day was dairy, but Wednesday was meat.

After lunch the students got a special treat, or so we thought. Aaron's mother brought in pareve ice cream (ice cream that does not have any dairy in it) in honor of her son's birthday. She started serving the ice cream to the boys after they had finished their turkey roll sandwiches.

Only Josh hadn't eaten the meat, as he didn't like turkey. He was given a peanut butter sandwich, instead. When he finished his sandwich, he started eating his ice cream.

All of a sudden, the principal came running down the hallway, yelling, "Children, don't eat the ice cream. It is not pareve. It is DAIRY!" And, as you know, observant Jews must wait six hours after eating meat, before they can eat dairy.

None of the other boys had touched their ice cream yet! Not one boy ate dairy after eating the meat!

Aaron's mom didn't notice the label on the ice cream, but G-d notices everything. Oh, and they did serve the ice cream on Thursday, so all the children got their treat.

My Dear Girls, (letter 16)

First let me tell you that, Thank G-d, Grandpa is feeling fine. He had some chest pains, so we went to the doctor. After a careful examination by the doctor it was determined that Grandpa had some clogged heart arteries. He needed to undergo what is called an Angioplasty. In this operation, they take out all the plaque that is clogging the arteries so the blood can flow to and from the heart without any problems.

Grandpa is home now and must watch his diet and exercise regularly.

Yesterday, I caught your grandfather trying to sneak an extra piece of corned beef. Naturally, I was very upset and told him that he needs to follow doctor's orders, and not eat too much beef. Grandpa promised me he would not eat anything he was not supposed to.

This reminded me of something that happened to me when I was a girl. Naturally, I have written a story about it and will send it to you.

Love,
Grandma& Grandpa

P.S. Becky, you look beautiful in the pictures you sent. Your cheeks are so nice and rosy. I am glad you decided to forget about the junk food and eat healthy snacks.

A Lesson Learned (story 16)

When I was about thirteen years old, a non-Jewish family moved into the neighborhood. They were very nice people, and I became friendly with one of the daughters, Susan, who was my age. We were in the same class at school (there were no Jewish day schools when I was a child). All my other friends came from observant Jewish families, just as I did and, while my parents allowed me to play with Susan, they preferred that we play at our house instead of her house, which is what we usually did.

One day, when I came home from school, my mother was not there to greet me. I knew she had gone shopping with her friend and figured it was just taking her a little longer than usual, so I sent over to Susan's house.

We did our homework and then we played Scrabble. By dinnertime, my mother had called Susan's house looking for me. Apparently, her friend's car had broken down and they were waiting for it to be fixed. It would take about another hour, which was when my father was also due home.

When Susan's mother invited me to have dinner with them, I explained that I was kosher and could not eat at her house. Susan's mother offered me salad on a paper plate with plastic utensils, which I accepted because I was hungry.

While we were eating our salads, Susan's mother had broiled some steaks. It smelled so good! And I was so hungry!

"Maybe I could have just a little piece of steak," I said.

"Are you sure?" asked Susan's mother.

"Yes, thank you," I said. "I am really quite hungry."

"Okay," said Mrs. Taylor, and she put a steak on a plate and served it to me.

The delicious aroma penetrated my nostrils and I immediately cut a piece of meat and put it to my mouth. I hesitated for a few seconds, and then let my hunger win out.

No sooner had I put that piece of steak in my mouth, when I heard a crunch. I had bitten into a piece of bone along with the steak. The steak bone cracked my front tooth right in half and part of it fell out of my mouth. The remaining part of the tooth had to be pulled and replaced by a false tooth. Here I was, thirteen years old, and I had a false tooth!

Now, dear grandchildren, you know why I don't eat steak. Every time I see a steak, I relive that horrible moment. G-d taught me a lesson I will never forget and I don't miss the steak one bit and I am happy to smile!

My Dear Granddaughters, (letter 17)

What a wonderful world we live in. There is a place for everyone and everything, even a quarter (which, you remember, my friend Karen is particularly fond of).

An incident involving a quarter occurred at work last week. I am sending you the story.

Love,
Grandma & Grandpa

P.S. We will call you tomorrow night. We miss the sound of your voices.

Got A Quarter? (story 17)

We were collecting money to buy a wedding present for one of the teachers at work who was about to be married. Everyone likes this teacher and was more than happy to contribute as much as they could afford. Some people gave checks and some gave cash (bills and coins). When all the collecting was done, Hannah and I counted out the money. We had exactly \$100.25. We decided to buy a gift certificate for the mall in the amount of \$100.00, so the chossan and kallah (bride and groom) could pick out whatever they wanted. Hannah and I decided that after work, we would go to the mall and buy the gift. In the meantime, we put the money in a safe place.

"What are we going to do with the quarter?" asked Hannah. "It seems silly to buy a gift certificate for \$100.25. Why don't you just take it," she said.

"I can't take the quarter," I said. "It doesn't belong to me."

"Well," said Hannah, "I'll give it to tzedukah (charity) the next time I am in the store. I'll just put it in one of the pushkas (cans)."

"That sounds like a perfect solution," I said. "It will be the chossan and kallah's contribution."

Just then, another teacher walked into the classroom and said,

"Does anyone have a quarter? I need to make a phone call." (This was, of course, pre-cell phone days).

Hannah and I looked at each other, started laughing, and gave the teacher the quarter.

You see, G-d makes a place for everything in this world, even a quarter!

Dear Mindy, (letter 18)

Grandpa and I were so happy to hear that things are working out so well for you. You are, without a doubt, a source of pride and joy to your new family.

We were also proud to hear how you went through all that trouble to return the Tehellim (Book of Psalms) you found, to its rightful owner. I can't imagine how the person must have felt to have such a prized possession returned to her. You are, indeed, a Bas Melech (princess).

Love,
Grandma & Grandpa

P.S. The \$5.00 reward you were offered and graciously refused cannot compare to the reward you will get in the World to Come!

Stick to Your Principles, Not to Your Gum (story 18)

When I was about eight years old, super markets started making their way to Brooklyn. Before supermarkets came, we would walk down the main street and buy bread at the bakery, fruits and vegetables at the green grocer, meat at the butcher, and other items at the small, privately owned, grocery stores.

When the first super market opened, my mother decided to do her shopping there. The store was huge! My father drove us there because it was too far to walk. We got a shopping cart and started going up and down the aisles to select our items, while my father waited in the car. Mom did not bring her own shopping cart to the store, as she did when we went to all the small stores. (Before super markets, women brought upright shopping carts with two wheels with them, so they would not have to carry their entire packages home).

As we walked down the candy aisle, I asked my mother if I could have some gum. She agreed, and I put the gum in the shopping cart. When we went to check out, I could not find the gum.

"You'll have to wait till next time," my mother said. "Dad is waiting for us and he has to go to work."

I was disappointed, but I knew not to argue with my mother. When we were all done, my mother paid for the groceries, and we went to load up the car. When we were done, I happened to look into the empty shopping cart.

Right there, in the cart, was the gum I had picked out. We all looked at one another.

My dad took my hand and said, "We have to go back into the store and pay for the gum. We will explain what happened. If I am late for work, I will explain what happened to my boss."

We then went back into the supermarket and paid for the gum.

I learned a lesson that day, by example, that has stayed with me all my life. And, by the way, my father was not late for work.

My Dear Girls, (letter 19)

I'm glad you decided to tell me about your friend Nancy and I think, if you have not already done so, you should also tell your parents. No matter how bad you think something is, or how scared you may be about something, your parents will always stand by and protect you. They will always love you and teach you to do the right thing.

Whenever I had a problem, I would always go to my parents. Just telling them my problem would make me feel better. We would discuss the matter and they would help me find a solution. It's funny how things work out. The problem was never as bad as I thought it was.

You may also be mistaken about Nancy. The teacher may have given her the pen. It is not fair to assume she took it without permission. We must always give the benefit of the doubt.

I have a story about your father that I think will interest you.

Love,
Grandma & Grandpa

P.S. Please let me know the outcome of the situation.

Nothing Up My Sleeve (story 19)

When your father was three years old he went to nursery school two afternoons a week. This worked out very well because a car pooled with another mother and we each drove one day a week.

Your father's teacher would always tell me how smart and well behaved he was.

On this one particular day when I was waiting for him to come home, he walked in the door, took off his jacket, and hung it on a hook that Grandpa had put in a corner where he could reach it. He then turned away from me and pulled a long, narrow, navy blue block out of each of his shirtsleeves.

"What have you got there?" I asked.

"Nothing," he said.

"If it's nothing, why are you hiding it from me? Let me see what you have."

Your father turned around and showed me the blocks.

"The teacher said I could borrow these," he said.

I took your father's face with my two hands and looked directly into his eyes.

"Are you sure you asked permission to take them home?" I said.

He immediately started crying and shook his head, "no."

"What you did is called stealing," I said, "And it is a very wrong thing to do. We must return these blocks to school and you must never take anything without asking for permission first. Even though no one at school saw you take the blocks, G-d did."

"I'm sorry, Mommy," he said.

"You must apologize to the teacher, and promise never to do it again" I said.

I took your dad back to school, where he returned the blocks and apologized to the teacher. The teacher was very nice and explained that it was okay to borrow something but you must ask permission first.

I told your father that he must tell his father what happened at school earlier in the day, when he came home. When Eric told your grandfather what happened, your grandfather hugged him and told him that he was a good boy and was sure that he would never do anything like that again; that he must always make G-d and us proud of him. Eric promised he would and has always kept his word.

My Dear Granddaughters, (letter 20)

I am glad you spoke to Nancy about the pen. It was very nice of the teacher to let her borrow it, since she had lost hers. It was wise of you to seek out advice before accusing someone of wrongdoing. I don't know how the teacher came to believe that you had spread the rumor that she took someone else's pen without asking.

Becky, dear, if you think you are being treated unfairly, you must tell your parents. Teachers are usually wonderful but once in a while a teacher can be mistaken about something. Perhaps the teacher is having problems and needs help or else she just misunderstands the situation. Remember, I told you that you can always tell your parents anything. In this case, I really feel that they need to know what is going on. However, even if you feel you have been unfairly judged, you must never, ever, be disrespectful to a teacher or any other adult. I think if you sit down and discuss the matter with your parents, things can be resolved and everyone will have a better understanding of one another.

Love,
Grandma & Grandpa

P.S. I don't think I ever told you the story about my first grade teacher. Naturally, I will now.

My Darling Girls, (letter 21)

I understand you both want to baby-sit, but I agree with your mother. I think you are both still too young. Being in charge of someone else is a huge responsibility. Don't rush to grow up too fast. Your tum will come.

Did I ever tell you the story about your Uncle Jeffrey and his kitten? If not, I will of course, tell you now, as I am sure you suspected.

I think it will make you smile and show you how careful you must be when taking care of another living creature.

Love,
Grandma & Grandpa

P.S. There are many cats in Israel. When you visit, you can put out some milk for them.

Here Kitty (story 21)

When your father went away to college, Uncle Jeffrey missed him terribly. So, Grandpa and I decided to get him a cat so he wouldn't be so lonely. We also thought it would teach him some responsibility and help him appreciate what it is to be in charge of someone else's care.

We went to the local animal shelter and adopted a five-week-old kitten that weighed one pound. Uncle Jeffrey named him Muffin.

Uncle Jeffrey was showing Muffin her new home until it was time to prepare dinner. Since it is Uncle Jeffrey's job to make the salad, he had to put the kitten down somewhere. So, he found a box that Muffin was too small to climb out of and put her in the box so she wouldn't get lost or into trouble, much like a mother puts her baby in a crib or a playpen.

Once again, Uncle Jeffrey showed us what a special neshama (soul) he has.

My Dear Grandchildren, (letter 22)

Believe it or not, the other day I found some boxes that still were not unpacked! While unpacking them, I found a story I had written about my grandmother when I was in school. It was not written for someone your age but I think you will be able to understand and appreciate it. I hope you enjoy it.

Love,
Grandma & Grandpa

P.S. I have enclosed a picture of my grandmother. Do you see any resemblance?

I'm My Own Grandma (story 22)

When I look at the photograph, I see myself. The resemblance is uncanny. I've been told that I look like my maternal grandmother but, when I see the picture of my grandmother at my age, hanging on the dining room wall, it seems as though I am looking into a mirror.

"I'm My Own Grandma", my mother used to sing. The words ring clear and true. Had I not known my grandmother, I would sincerely have believed that statement.

The deep-set eyes, the thin, aristocratic lips, the strong, prominent nose all seem to define my existence. She had the strong-willed look on her face of someone who is determined to succeed. But, a young, Jewish girl, if she intends growing old, must escape the pogroms of Czarist Russia. Being beaten or killed was not in my grandmother's plans for her future.

I try to transform myself back in time and become the young woman in the picture. What was it like to be a young girl with determination in your mind and fear in your heart? All the clues are not read easily on the face string back at me. Who was she really? What was she thinking? How did it feel to be her? She is no longer with us, so I can only guess at the answers, and only one thing comes to mind.

She will follow G-d's plans for her to come to America, build a new life for herself, and have a granddaughter who looks exactly like her.