

bs"D **From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles** < editor@ascentofsafed.com >
Story #1329 (5783-36) 9 Sivan 5783 (May 29, 2023)
Discover! the "*TillesTells Saturday Night Stories*" [WhatsApp group](#)

THE RABBI'S MOTORCYCLE ACCIDENT

It's Friday afternoon in central Paris. It's close to Shabbat, so I (**Hershy Drukman**) get on my motorcycle and head home.

I live in France, serving as a Chabad emissary in S.-Maur-des-Fossés, a small city [about 20 kilometers] south of Paris.

It's raining heavily, and the pavement is slippery. I slow down, adjusting my helmet.

Suddenly I notice a sports car entering the intersection. The driver hasn't noticed me approaching at high speed.

The situation is dangerous, and my heart races. What to do? Brake on wet pavement at 80 km/50 miles an hour? I am in danger of rolling over. To continue? A collision is unavoidable.

I brake quickly. The motorcycle skids, and I fall to the ground. I am waiting for the approaching cars. Are these my last moments?

Silence. One car stops and blocks the road. I check myself for injuries. Thank G-d, I'm fine. I try to get out the street.

A woman runs toward me. "Are you all right?" she asks in French. "Can I help you?"

"I think I'm all right," I answer, removing my helmet. She looks surprised—perhaps not expecting a bearded man. There are not many in Paris.

"Is everything all right?" she asks again, this time in Hebrew. Now I am taken aback.

She introduces herself as Madame Katia Dahaan. "I live nearby, and happened to be passing," she says. "I didn't expect to see a Jew, never mind a rabbi."

"And the Hebrew?" I ask.

"Oh, that's from trips to Israel years ago," she says.

Katia wants to talk, but I apologize and explain, "It's almost Shabbat, and I need to get home."

Katia is surprised to hear Shabbat is coming. Her reaction puzzles me. Almost 400,000 Jews live in the Pletzel neighborhood; it's hard not to know today is Shabbat eve.

“Do you light Shabbat candles?” I ask.

Katia gives me another strange look. She mutters, “No, I don’t.”

“Can I invite you to our home for Shabbat?” I offer.

“Which Shabbat?” she asks with surprise.

“Tonight,” I answer.

A smile emerges. “I don’t think I can come tonight, but I will be happy to come another Shabbat,” she says. We exchange phone numbers, and part.

* * *

Katia didn’t come that evening, nor the next Shabbat. And I couldn’t find her number, though I tried hard to locate her.

Four months pass. One morning I received a text message from an unfamiliar number.

Moments later, my phone rang.

“Rabbi? It’s Katia Dahaan. Do you remember me?”

“Of course! We are still waiting for you to come for Shabbat.”

“When can I come?”

“Please, this coming Shabbat!”

That Friday night Katia was one of our guests. She was very emotional throughout.

Others asked me who she was. I told them the story about the accident. I said, “You can say that she was a messenger from Above to help me during those scary moments.”

* * *

Katia looked at us with a smile and said, “I think it’s time for you to hear my version.

..

“I am forty-five years old and live alone. I have a sister and mother, but I haven’t spoken to them for over twenty years.

“It’s hard to be single, especially for a Jewish woman. My parents were traditional; we made *kiddush*, celebrated holidays and fasted on Yom Kippur. But since I’ve been living alone, I stopped observing.

“When you live alone, it’s hard to make *kiddush*, because there is no family to have a meal together. It’s hard to go to synagogue alone. I didn’t even have Jewish girlfriends.

“About two years ago, after years of being disconnected from Judaism, I wanted to come back to my religion. I decided to find a job in a Jewish environment. This way I’d make friends, and maybe get invited for Shabbat and holidays.

“I found a job in a shoe store in the Pletzel. All the local workers were Jewish, and I made friends.

“But there was one problem—Shabbat. On Fridays they would wish one another ‘Good Shabbat,’ and on Mondays, ask each other how Shabbat went. But no one paid attention to me. Every week I hoped for an invitation, but every week brought more disappointment.

“Almost a year passed . . . ‘Can it be that Jews don’t accept you anymore?’ I asked myself. ‘How can they be so inconsiderate?’”

Katia’s voice became choked with emotion. “I became very angry with Jews and Judaism. I decided it wasn’t for me. I left that store and found another job.

“But there still was one problem—Shabbat. Every Friday night I would remember the Shabbat of my childhood—the candles, *kiddush*. I thought, ‘How can I stop these memories?’

“I decided to find something to do on Friday nights. I found an advertisement for a church choir looking for singers on Friday nights.”

Silence prevailed around the table. “I was accepted into the choir, and it’s been a year that I’m singing in church on Friday nights. With a sad smile she added, “I come home so tired that I don’t have time to think about Shabbat.

“Everything went smoothly until that Friday,” continued Katia, “when I saw the motorcycle rolling over on the road. I ran to help the rider, and was shocked when he reminded me that it was Shabbat eve and invited me! And he didn’t even know me!

“You think that I was sent to you?” Katia concluded. “I think it was you who was sent to bring back my soul.”

Katia doesn’t sing in the church anymore. She spends every Friday night with us or other Chabad families.

So, it wasn’t just a motorcycle accident after all.

~~~~~

*Source:* Excerpted by Yerachmiel Tilles from an article in an email of *Chabad.Org Magazine* (first week of January 2014) as posted on *ShabbosStories.com*.

*Connection* -- Weekly Torah reading of *Beha'alotecha* (Read this week in Israel but next week outside Israel): Num. 9:15-25 (Divine signs); 11:25-26 (Divine messengers).