



"KE HABER?"

"ISTORIKOS"



Ester Touriel

MY SPECIAL STONE

A Children's Short Story
by Louise Chiprut Berman, M. Ed.

"Today, I will bring my special stone," thought Esther. Today is the day I will visit my Nona. She taught me how to make boyos de espinaka, my favorite Shabbat breakfast. She called them dizayuno. Nona had the best hugs and never got mad at me. She always smelled good and her house was always so clean.

We spent a lot of time with my Nona, since Papoo died. We would have Friday night dinners with her. "Don't forget the napkins Esther," she would say as I set the table. I loved the special way she said my name: Es-stair – rolling her r.

"It's beginning to get dark out, hija... time to light candles." We would sing the prayer together. My voice was always louder. "Le chad leek, shel Shabbat." Then we'd laugh as we sang, "There's no other day like Shabbat" and wave our fingers back and forth. I miss her extra special Shabbat hug.

Nona would give me some coins to put into the tedakah (charity) box adding, "Thank you for watching over us this week." or "This is for a healthy and happy Shabbat." Sometimes, Nona would say, "This is for my dear friend Betty. I hope she gets better soon."

Once each year, we would light a smaller candle and Nona would give me an extra coin or two. "This is for my dear husband, Morris. Ke repose en Gan Eden. May he rest in peace." I would give her an extra-long hug and pretend I didn't see the tear in her eye.

Then she would kiss me and we would sit to eat. We loved singing "Ya Comimos" after dinner. It was a festive tune full of "ruach" or spirit. It was like being at summer camp when we sang after meals. Singing is great way to show gratitude for all we have. Around our new year (Rosh Hashana), she'd sing. "Este dia por zahuth, damos vida i saluth." I don't remember all the words, but I can still hear that tune in my head.

"Giving to those less fortunate is a mitzvah, a good deed," Nona would say. My tzedakah box is the perfect place to keep my coins. When it gets heavy, I know it's time to give to those in need. Doing this gives me an extra warm feeling inside. Mitzvah.

Nona taught me many customs. "This is the way of our people," I remember she would say. "This is how we have done things for years. Remember that Esther." And I promised Nona I would never forget.



The handmade pillowcase and tablecloth were part of Ester's ashuar for her wedding to first husband, Baruch Capeloto. These embroideries (bordados) were donated to the Rhodes Jewish Historical Foundation Archives.

ISTORIKOS (cont.)

Some weekends, I spent the night in her guest room. That room had an old chest of drawers she called a ‘bourron.’ It had many framed pictures on top, all different sizes. One was when the whole family was together at a Bar Mitzvah. We were all dressed up. There was a black and white picture with the corner ripped. It was a picture of my great Nona and Papoo. They didn’t smile. I especially loved the one of just Nona and Papoo and me at the ocean. Looking at that picture, I pretended I was walking on the sand looking for seashells. Just for a moment, I could smell the ocean. Memories.

Other times, I got to see her play mah jongg with her friends. “Five crak,” one would say. “Two bam. Take.” And finally, “Mah Jongg!” They would all let out a surprised cheer. I learned to say, “Nice hand.”

Yes, Nona had many friends. “Today, Esther, we will take a rosca, round home-made bread, to Mrs. Cordova’s house. She has not been feeling well. Your little friend Sammy will be there.” I liked playing with Sammy. He was a good sport and let me win when we played cards.

Sometimes, Nona would tell me funny stories about some fellow she called Joha. Those stories were so incredibly silly, we had to laugh. She also told me stories about her parents and when they came to America. They didn’t speak English. I wonder how hard that must have been?



Ester’s parents & brother: Joseph Touriel & Rizula Alhadeff with son, Avner in Rhodes.



Ester with second husband, Morris Oziel.

I wish I could have met them. Nona said they live through us. They live through us as long as we follow the same customs they did. They live through us when we make the same foods and sing the same songs just as they did. They live through us each year when we remember to light a memorial (yartzeit) candle on the anniversary of their passing. And I suppose that is how my Nona will live through me. I will remember all she taught me over the years and I will think about how she loved life.

I will bring my special white stone with me today and place it on her grave as my way of letting her know I was there and I’ll take a moment to think of the special times I had with my Nona Esther. I will remember tzedakah and to light my candles each Friday. I will remember the words to Ya Comimos and never forget the importance of giving to those less fortunate. I promise to follow one of her most important rules of life: Never say anything bad about anyone, whether it’s true or not. Never. “Kitta buena de la boca,” she’d say. Most of all, I’ll hold onto that warm feeling when she’d call me “hija” as she hugged me and said, “Los hijos de mis hijos, dos veces mis hijos.” (The children of my children are two times my children.)

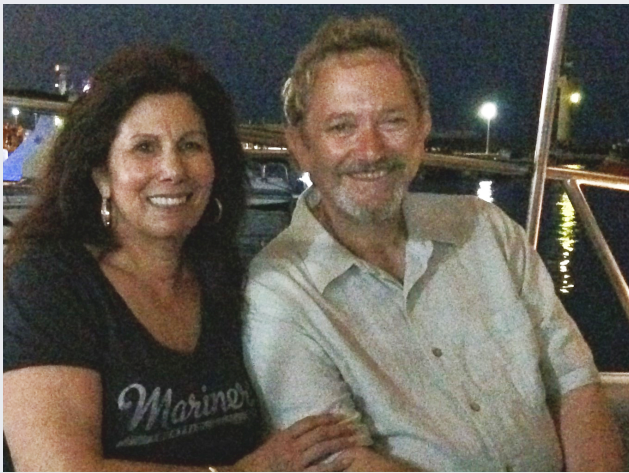
Most of all, I will remember to give thanks for having someone so special in my life. One day, when I have a family, I will tell my children about my Nona. Perhaps if I am lucky, I will have a granddaughter named for me. When the time is right, she will learn the meaning of a special stone, too.



Ester’s daughter, Susie Oziel with husband Morrie Chiprut.



Handmade tablecloth of Ester from Rhodes with initial E.



The author, Louise and husband Leonard Berman in Rhodes.

Louise Chiprut Berman is the granddaughter of Ester Touriel of Rhodes & Morris Oziel of Tekirdag and Behor Yehuda Chiprut of Tekirdag & Louise Azose of Gallipoli. Behor was one of the founders of Seattle’s Sephardic Bikur Holim Synagogue. Louise’s parents were Morrie and Susie (Oziel) Chiprut of Seattle. A retired elementary school counselor, Louise is currently a board member of SBH.

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