

The Tree That Saved My Life

By Aharon Botzer

When my children were young, they would race down from our home in the Old City of Tzfat to the Nachal Amud valley below. Their record was 28 minutes. That was our backyard – the sloping descent of the mountain, the streams and the springs, the trees, stones and all the great hiding spots.

As I drank my morning cup of coffee and studied the sun's rays reflecting on the mountain, I would discern yet another hidden golden path that would be our Friday morning excursion through the valley up to Har Meiron. My children have all married and left home now, but when I look out of our window, and when I hike down to the valley, it brings back some very sweet memories.

I've hiked through Nachal Amud thousands of times. Sometimes I lead groups or go with my wife, my children and grandchildren; other times, I go alone. I see G-d in the nature around me, and the quiet serenity allows me to open my heart to Him.

But one time, it was anything but quiet serenity.

Five years ago, I was leading a group of American students and tourists on a three-day hike from the Mediterranean to the Kinneret.

I should have known something was wrong.

I'd been diagnosed with diabetes some years earlier. One can suffer from either high blood sugar – hyperglycemia, or low blood sugar – hypoglycemia. Either one can be life-threatening. That day, I

wasn't feeling well, so I stopped to rest, had a bite to eat, and felt a bit better.

I was suffering from low blood sugar. I should have recognized the signs.

One of the participants was also not feeling well, so we stopped again at a path that led up to where the bus was. I stayed back to make sure she got there alright while the rest of the group continued with another guide.

But when I got up to continue walking, I felt my leg freeze.

I knew immediately. I was suffering from diabetic shock.

I was alone among the trees. I had my phone with me, but there was no service.

I tried to walk but very soon I couldn't walk at all.

My head began to spin, and I knew if I didn't manage to raise my blood sugar soon, I would lose consciousness.

But what could I do? I couldn't move.

There would be nobody to save me, nobody to find me. I sunk down onto a stone. My mind began to fill with thoughts of death and despair...

Until I did what every Jew does when they are in need of help – I turned my eyes toward the Heavens.

And as I looked up, I saw a branch right above my head. I was sitting under a carob tree. Hanging there, just within reach, were three large, fresh carobs, not the dry kind you sometimes find, but high in natural sugar. I quickly picked one, gnawing its chewy flesh as fast as I could. I picked the next one, and then the third until I finally felt my leg return to normal and I could catch up with the group.

I collected some dried carobs from around the tree and brought them home as a reminder of my personal miracle.

I like to tell this story to my grandchildren, to guests at my Shabbat table, and to the groups I lead down to the valley. I tell them it's not really

the tree that saved me. It's the

One Who created the tree that bore the fruit that saved my life; the One Who answered me when I turned my eyes in prayer to the Heavens.

When life pulls you down, I tell them, look up.



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