

(If reading to students, may need to explain Holocaust and Wailing Wall before telling the story)

The following story has been recorded as a miracle and it goes like this:

Joey was born to a privileged life but at the age of 19 he rebelled fiercely. Joey dropped out of college and announced to his father, Adam, that he was going to India to seek enlightenment. This was a blow to his father who was the sole survivor of his family from the Nazi Holocaust. He had withstood three years of unbelievable hardship and had vowed silently that the religion his relatives had died for would not die with them.

But Joey's next announcement was a BOMBHELL. He said he was leaving the Jewish religion. His father SNAPPED. He felt it was a BETRAYAL of all he had lived for. He screamed, you are not my son. Get out of my home and never come back. Joey screamed back, I never want to see you either and then he stormed off.

In India, Joey traveled from Guru to Guru seeking wisdom and spirituality. He wanted concrete answers to life's mysteries. During this time he met Sarah, his female counterpart. She also had dropped out of a religious Jewish home and was looking for a spiritual path. Three years later Joey ran into a boyhood friend, Sam. They embraced happily, then Sam's eye's clouded and he said, "I'm sorry about your father". Joey asked what he meant and was told his father had died three months earlier from a heart attack. Joey was devastated. He said, "Dad didn't die of a heart attack, it was from a broken heart and it was because of ME. Later, Sarah tried to console him but he was sure it was his fault. He had always thought in the back of his mind that one day he and his father would have a loving reunion and he would be forgiven. He desperately needed closure.

He told Sarah that he wanted to go to Israel. Sarah wrinkled her nose in distaste and asked why. Joey said he couldn't explain it. He just felt he had to go. After several days of arguing, Sarah agreed to with him. She asked Joey if he was getting "weird" on her but he said he only wanted to go to the Wailing Wall which was all that remained of the First Temple and is considered the Holiest site in Israel.

Joey and Sarah continued to argue all the way to Israel. Joey finally blurted out, "You don't understand, I feel I killed him. Sarah was furious and said, "I still love you but I have to leave. Joey was crushed.

Days later, Joey went to the Wailing Wall where he saw people from all over the world but he didn't know what to do. He approached a security guard and asked if he could get a prayer book and yarmulke. The guard pointed out a Rabbi selling these items. Joey clutched the prayer book and made his way to the wall. He saw what others were doing and followed their lead. He regretted the pain he caused his father as he prayed. He noticed people sticking pieces of paper into the wall and asked the man next to him about it and was told that these were petitions and it is believed that requests placed inside the wall would be especially blessed. Joey began to write. When finished he carefully placed the note inside the wall and as he did, he knocked another prayer out. Without thinking, he picked it up and read it. It read, "My dear son Joey, if by some miracle you should ever come to Israel and read this know I never stopped loving you and I hope you will forgive me." Signed, Adam Riklis, Cleveland, Ohio, Joey's father.

He was stunned. He turned to the young man next to him and told him what happened and the young man invited him home.

Three years later, Joey entered Jewish Rabbinical School to study.

Christ like Joey's father is always ready to welcome us home. Christ gives us his grace and when we regret our sins and accept that grace, all is forgiven.

Let us pray for God's grace to enter our lives this week.