



LEARNING FROM MY PARTNER

By: Bracha Goetz

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I live in Baltimore, Maryland. Wendy lives in Santee, California. So even though we've loved being Partners in Torah for almost five years, I really didn't think we'd ever get to meet. But it was Wendy who kept the faith. As she often reminded me, God can make anything happen.

So when my oldest son and his family moved to Phoenix recently, we went to visit them. It was the day before Rosh Hashanah and everybody was busy getting ready for the holiday when I went off into a quiet room and gave Wendy a call. Upon hearing that I was in Phoenix, she decided, on the spot, to book a flight from San Diego for the next morning and come join our family for Rosh Hashanah!

We gave Wendy instructions on the kind of clothes it would be appropriate to bring (even though the temperature was in the nineties - no shorts, and no sleeveless tops) and we picked Wendy up when her flight arrived, two hours before Rosh Hashanah.

Then suddenly there she was - materialized - and we were no longer just two voices reaching across the continent. She told me that I was shorter than she had thought. My first reaction? Just amazed at her calmness - and her courage.

I have got to admit, I was more than just a little nervous about how things would turn out. I mean, Wendy wasn't observing Shabbos, and here she was about to immerse herself in two full days of her first real Rosh Hashana. So while we were still driving back from the Sky Harbor International Airport, I told her that I had escaped from my first real Shabbos, and she could feel free to go on a long walk away from the scene if at any point she felt like the experience was getting to be too much for her.

But that never happened. Wendy loved every minute of it - she really didn't even want to leave when it was over. And, she immersed herself alright - Wendy loved helping my daughter-in-law chop up vegetables, rocking my new granddaughter to sleep, and reading books to my grandsons. She loved clearing the table from the many interesting guests my children had for the meals, she loved the divrei Torah discussions, and she even loved the services.

We attended what was called the Learner's Minyan that my son was helping to lead at the Phoenix Community Kollel, and it was such a clear and wonderful prayer service. On the second day, a woman standing near us started sobbing after one particularly moving part. I turned to offer the woman an understanding smile, and I saw that Wendy had already gone over to the woman, and she was hugging her. For about a minute, they just stood there like that, total strangers no longer, and tears were already streaming down Wendy's face as well.

And the questions Wendy kept asking! Oh boy, did she get us all scrambling for good answers! Some of the answers weren't all that terrific either, which helped each one of us to see where our clarity gets a little fuzzy. And that helped each of us probe deeper, to seek the truth more sincerely.

Over the past four years, Wendy and I have been learning, over the phone, a couple of works on the parsha and several of Rebbetzin Jungreis's books, and we have shared many hours of the best kind of joy. I originally became a Partner in Torah as a zechus for one of my daughters to find her soul mate, and today that daughter is now blessed with two little children, in addition, thank God. We have also each gone through our own personal tragedies during this time period, and it was Wendy who helped me see God through the tears, repeatedly.

So, days after Wendy left Phoenix, my two-year-old grandson was still asking, "Where'd Wendy go?" She left an indelible impression on all of us.

Yep, Wendy, you've taught me so much through these years. And now you've taught me how to really "wing it". My admiration for you just keeps soaring.

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