



THE POWER OF PERSEVERANCE:

Lessons from My Grandfather's Life and Marriage

By: Sara Freed

In a world often defined by hardship, my grandfather's life stands as a testament to the power of the human spirit. His journey—marked by profound loss, unyielding resilience, and the courage to rebuild—offers enduring lessons not only in strength but also in the unwavering commitment that sustains a marriage through life's trials.

Surviving the Holocaust: Loss and Resolve

During the Holocaust, my grandfather's life was shattered when he lost his beloved wife and six children. The weight of such a tragedy is unimaginable, yet he refused to be consumed by despair. Instead, he carried their memory with him, allowing grief to become a source of resolve. Rather than retreating from life, he chose to move forward, determined to find purpose once more.

In marriage, we inevitably face storms—some expected, others sudden and life-altering. My grandfather's resilience teaches us that even in the face of profound pain, it is possible to keep going. When

a couple experiences loss—whether through miscarriage, financial hardship, or personal struggles—the choice to persevere together, to lean on each other rather than break apart, is a testament to the power of love and commitment.

Choosing to Rebuild

After the war, my grandfather remarried. His decision to open his heart again was not a betrayal of his past but a declaration of hope—a belief that love, even after devastation, was still worth pursuing. With his new wife, he dreamed of a future untainted by the horrors of the past.

But life had more trials in store. When their first child was born, they were aboard the Rafiach boat en route to Israel. Tragically, the vessel sank off the coast of Greece. Amidst the chaos, his wife gave birth. In the same moment they welcomed new life, they faced death as their newborn child perished in the tragedy.

Such a loss could have easily torn them apart. Instead, they clung to each other. Their shared grief became a bond rather than a barrier. They chose to

mourn together rather than in isolation—a powerful lesson for any marriage. When pain strikes, couples often face the temptation to withdraw or to blame. But my grandparents' story shows that in moments of darkness, holding on to one another, even with trembling hands, can be the very thing that carries you through.

A New Chapter in Israel: Building Through Adversity

After the tragedy at sea, my grandparents made their way to Israel, deter-



mined to rebuild. They created a new life, raising three daughters—including my mother, the eldest—who grew up surrounded by the quiet strength of their parents.

Their home was not marked by bitterness, but by love. Despite their losses, they found ways to nurture joy. This is one of the most powerful lessons for marriage: the ability to build a life that is not defined by the wounds of the past. Their relationship demonstrated that true partnership is not about avoiding suffering but about finding ways to infuse love and light into the cracks of sorrow.

In marriage, challenges—whether large or small—are inevitable. But the couples who thrive are the ones who choose to keep building, brick by brick, even when life tries to tear them down.

Unwavering Devotion: Love in the Face of Alzheimer’s

In their later years, my grandmother was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s. By her 70s, the disease had robbed her of her memory and her ability to recognize the people she once held dear. Eventually, she required full-time care in an assisted living facility. Yet, even as her mind faded, my grandfather’s devotion never wavered.

Already in his late 80s, he would trek up three flights of stairs every Shabbos afternoon just to be with her. Despite his frailty, he brought her special treats, always wanting to bring her joy. On every Yom Tov, he bought her a beautiful new article of clothing, even though she could no longer appreciate the gesture. His giving was pure—an expression of selfless love that asked for nothing in return.

Though my grandmother no longer recognized anyone, the moment my grandfather entered the room, she would light up. Her eyes, once vacant, would suddenly sparkle with life. She would jump with joy and murmur his name—the one person her heart still remembered.

Their bond was a profound reminder that love is not about being seen or acknowledged—it is about showing up, giving, and being present, even when nothing is given back. It is a commitment to the other person’s soul, beyond memory or cognition.

A Legacy of Strength and Partnership

My grandparents’ love story was not perfect—it was real. It was forged in fire, tested by tragedy, and strengthened by unwavering devotion. Their bond reminds us that lasting marriages are not sustained by the absence of struggle but by the commitment to overcome it together.

Their legacy continues through the generations. It lives on in the lessons they passed down: that marriage requires tenacity, that love must be continuously renewed, and that even when it seems one-sided, true love gives without condition.

Carrying Their Spirit into Our Own Marriages

When I think of my grandparents, I am reminded that love is not just about romance—it is about resilience. It is about standing side by side, weathering life’s storms, and continuing to give, even when nothing is given back. Their story encourages us to fight for our marriages, to choose connection over distance, and to remember that love, at its core, is not about what we receive—it is about what we give.

May their legacy inspire us to nurture our marriages with the same perseverance and devotion—choosing, again and again, to love through it all.

Sara Freed is a professional relationship and marriage coach based in Monsey, New York, with over a decade of experience helping couples strengthen their relationships. Combining the timeless wisdom of Judaism with her life experience and advanced training in evidence-based coaching modalities, Sara empowers couples to move from conflict to connection. Her compassionate, practical approach equips clients with the tools and skills to transform struggling relationships into thriving partnerships. Sara is passionate about helping couples foster more profound understanding, rebuild trust, and create lasting harmony in their marriages. Website- www.sarafreed.com



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