

When I heard on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered" (May 3) about the terrorist attack in Jerusalem, I was at once outraged and worried. NPR's story went something like this: Israelis had to be prevented from lynching a 25 year-old Arab who just killed two elderly men and police reinforcements are patrolling Jerusalem in order to prevent any attacks on Arabs. The tone set by your report legitimized this despicable and cowardly attack—even before it was described—by the intimation of a possibility of random retaliation by Jewish citizens. Never mind the fact that never in the history of the State of Israel had any Jews lynched any Arab, this incident included.

I was worried, too. Although no names were given, I knew that the main Jerusalem post office, where the murders took place, was one of the regular "stops" on the daily routine of my ninety-one year old great-uncle, Nissim Levy.

Uncle Nissim was born in the Old City of Jerusalem in the late 1800s. His family—my family—moved outside the city walls after the Arab pogroms of the 1920s. I enjoyed so much meeting my uncle around the "Meshulash"—a triangle of streets that forms the heart of modern Jerusalem—where he always walked, keeping himself busy. He would tell me little stories about life in the Old City, such as where his father's barber shop was, next to which luggage shop their house used to be, and the wonderful treat it was to be sent to cut the rabbi's hair when he was twelve years of age, and how he would receive a very generous tip.

Though I often tried, I never did succeed in convincing my uncle to visit us at our Old City home. Though Jerusalem has been in Israeli hands since 1967, he never went back. Behind all the excuses lay the loss of his only son, Yosi, killed in the Six Day War, defending Jerusalem, the city to which his family traces its roots back 9 generations. Yosi had rushed back to Israel from the U.S. to defend his country. There he volunteered to join his unit, though (in the Israeli Defense Forces) only-sons were not supposed to be on the front. Yosi was a noble, brilliant and promising young economist, a good friend of George Schultz, from their days at the University of Chicago. Yosi's only son was born after the war. He, too, is a young soldier now.

Hearing the NPR story, I tried to tell myself that my uncle would normally walk, not take the bus. But he was advancing in age, and the fear kept gnawing. The telegram arrived the next day.