**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Tzav 5774**

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**One Tragedy Averted:**

**A Chilling Malaysia Air**

**Flight 370 Story.**

**By** [**DansDeals.com**](http://www.aish.com/authors/249412091.html)



 The whole world’s eyes are on the Far East, wondering how a Boeing 777 can just disappear without a trace. Malaysia Air Flight 370 took off from Kuala Lumpur at 12:43am this past Saturday morning and has yet to be located. Flying is the safest mode of transportation that exists today, so the disappearance of an airplane like this is really sobering.

 I heard the following story firsthand from the travel agent involved. He is an avid DansDeals follower that I’m friends with. He sent me the unedited exchange that follows and I made the necessary edits to protect the privacy of the parties involved.

 The saying goes, “More than the Jews have kept the Shabbos, the Shabbos has kept the Jews.” When I think of that saying, I picture my life if I were constantly wired 7 days a week. As it is, I feel like a slave to my digital devices, but the knowledge that *Shabbos* is right around the corner keeps me going. From sundown Friday evening until when the stars come out on Saturday night it’s 25 hours spent completely offline and it’s blissful. It’s 25 hours spent praying to G-d and consuming obscene amounts of calories eating scrumptious meals with family and friends. It’s perfect. Sure anyone can always disconnect, but there’s something awesome about the forced routine that can’t be properly explained to one who hasn’t experienced it.

 But the saying goes much deeper than that in this story.

 *On 01/13/14 Andy emailed his travel agent his desired itinerary:*

 Hi. Hope all is well.

 Greetings from Hyatt Regency Boston. Thanks for booking up, it's a pretty nice place.

 Let me know if there are any changes to my flight back to Sydney tomorrow.

 Need to do the following trip in March:

 Mar 1: Sydney – Hong Kong

 Mar 3: Hong Kong – Kuala

 Mar 8: Kuala – Beijing

 Mar 12: Vietnam – Melbourne…

 Thanks

 Andy

 *The travel agent, an Orthodox Jew, proposed the following business class itinerary, slightly altering the Kuala Lumpur-Beijing flight from Saturday to Friday.*

 Andy,

 Thanks for the inquiry and your continued business.

 I know you're a fan of direct flights.

 Here's the most direct option I can offer you.

 The price will be $3850 ($3050 for the long hauls, and the rest for domestic flights)…

 *Andy loved the price, but again requested the Saturday morning flight from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing:*

 Thanks for the prompt reply.

 Price is fine…

 One amendment, I need the KUL-PEK fight a day later. I need the extra day in Kuala. Once that is set you can lock in.

 *The travel agent responded that he would not be able to book travel for him over the Sabbath, but that he was free to book that flight by himself:*

 Andy,

 I wish I can give you a day later, but you I just don't flying Jews on Shabbat.

 I can take out that leg and you can book yourself. The price drop $380.

 *Andy agreed with that and planned to book the flight by himself:*

 I guess I'll just book that myself. Lock in the rest.

 *And the travel agent noted that if he changed his mind to just let him know:*

 Ok will lock in. Ticket will be sent in 24 hours as usual.

 If you reconsider the KUL-Pek please advise.

 *Shortly afterward Andy did just that:*

 *Hey*

 *Greetings from LAX airport. Will board my Delta flight in 55 minutes.*

 I reconsidered, you are right I should be more observant, I'll manage without that day in Kuala. Since I'll have an extra night in PEK any recommendations for a good Friday night dinner in Beijing?

 *The travel agent recommended a place to get a nice kosher meal and booked him the originally proposed itinerary, flying from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing on Friday early morning instead of Saturday.*

 Ok, glad to hear.

 Try this: <http://www.chabadbeijing.com/>

 *Fast forward to 2 days ago. The travel agent is in Israel and reads this email once Shabbos is over. The email was sent after Shabbos, at 7:15pm Beijing time/1:15pm Israel time:*

 Holy G-d,

 You sure heard what happened to MH370

 I cannot stop thinking about this.

 This is a true miracle for the books. You are a true life saver…

 I cannot think anymore! We'll talk later this week. Don't know how to thank you enough.

 Now please change my return. I am not stepping on a Malaysia flight in my life.

 *And the travel agent wrote back, equally in shock at the realization of Shabbos saving his client’s life:*

 Andy,

 I am so happy for you!

 Not I am the life saver. G-d and Shabbat were your lifesavers. You owe them something.

 *Indeed, due to the travel agent worrying about the religious observance of a fellow Jew, Andy was persuaded into flying on Malaysia Air 370 exactly one day prior to the ill-fated flight he wanted to take.*

 *It’s not often we hear a story like this. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families of those still missing.*

*This article originally appeared on dansdeals.com where you can see the actual emails.*

*Reprinted from today’s email from Aish.com*

[**United Hatzalah Treats Chosson Injured Breaking Glass Under Chupah**](http://matzav.com/united-hatzalah-treats-chosson-injured-breaking-glass-under-chupah)



 Yerushalayim - Guests at a wedding in Petach Tikvah Tuesday night were shocked as the chosson did the unthinkable. Towards the end of the chupah, he stamped on a glass in the traditional manner, but before his friends and family could shout mazel tov, it became apparent that a shard of glass had gone through his shoe and seriously injured his foot.

 United Hatzalah volunteers were just a phone call away and arrived on the scene in minutes to provide first aid.

 The volunteers offered a comprehensive treatment to solve the problem from start to end: they escorted the chosson to the nearest emergency room in an ambulance, expedited his treatment there so he was released in fifteen minutes, and took him back to his kallah, friends and family, where he delicately but defiantly danced the night away.

 United Hatzalah President Eli Beer said: ” We were happy to be the first on scene to help this man to get back on his feet on his wedding day. We wish the family a hearty mazel tov and hope they will never need our services again in the future.”

*Reprinted from the March 6, 2014 website of Matzav.com*

**A Shabbat Miracle Story**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

 The previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, lived his last ten years in the U.S.A. where he laid the groundwork for the massive, worldwide Chabad outreach movement that is serving the world today.

 Even in those days his son-in-law and future successor, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (nicknamed 'The Rama'sh) began to reveal supernatural qualities of intuition and leadership.

 For instance, one Shabbat afternoon he was sitting with a group of some twenty Chassidim in a 'Farbrengen' (informal Chassidic gathering) speaking of the importance of loving all of G-d's creatures – beginning with each and every Jew.

**Our Job is the Help Every**

**Jew Realize His Potential**

 "Each Jew" he explained" no matter what he/she does or thinks, is a Holy Temple with the potential to reveal the Creator by observing His Torah. And it is our job to get every Jew out there in the street to realize this."

 It was obvious that he was implying that drastic action must be taken and his words made a deep impression. In those days (the early 1940s) 'invading' the world of non-observant Jews with Torah was completely unheard of. There was no such thing as 'outreach' Judaism.

 So it was no surprise that one of those present expressed his wonder and asked, "What, do you mean? We should stop strangers in the street, ask them if they're Jewish and tell them to do the commandments!? They will think we're crazy! Who would do such a thing? How can it be done?"

**The Ramash Offers**

**To Show the Way**

 The Ramash stood up and said "Come, I'll show you".

 He stood up and walked out of the synagogue and they all followed him.

 They stood there outside on the sidewalk in front of the synagogue for a while and watched as people passed by or crossed the busy street. Then the Ramash noticed a woman crossing the street carrying several grocery bags and he walked toward her followed by his small entourage.

 He smiled and cordially said good afternoon. When she replied, he politely excused himself for being so forthright and asked if she was Jewish.

 She replied to the affirmative and he, in the same friendly tone, asked her if she knew that according to Jewish law it was not permissible to carry on the Sabbath day.

 She replied that she once heard something like that but she was not, nor had she ever been, nor did she have any intention of becoming religious. So it didn't really matter to her.

**Showed No Sign**

**Of Being Disturbed**

 But she showed no sign of being disturbed by the conversation. In fact she seemed to enjoy speaking to someone who seemed to be genuinely interested in her welfare.

 So the Ramash began to explain the great benefits in observing the Shabbat. How really enjoyable and meaningful it is. How it is a special gift to the Jewish people attaching them to the purpose of creation. How it is a day of rest and rejuvenation. How the Jews have been keeping the Shabbat against all odds for over three thousand years and finally, how the Shabbat protects those who observe it.

 The woman listened attentively and even seemed to agree. But she glanced at her bags, smiled and raised her eyebrows as though to say, "Very nice Rabbi, but what do I do with these?"

 He replied "There is no need to worry about your groceries or your purse. You can leave them here and we will stay and protect them so they will be secure. Then, in a few hours when Shabbat is over you can come back and get them."

 "Oh no Rabbi!" She replied "I couldn't do that. I wouldn't want to trouble you. And I don't really know who you all are. But thank you for your concern. Good Shabbos." And she began to leave.

**A Protection for**

**One’s Family**

 "Excuse me" he said to her quietly. "When I said that observing the Shabbat protects us I mean not only those who observe it but also their families as well."

 The woman stopped, became very serious and she looked at the Rabbi with tear-filled eyes.

 "Rabbi" She said "I have a son in Germany in the army and I am terribly worried about him. It is very important to me what you just said. Do you mean that if I keep the Shabbat G-d will protect him?"

 The Ramash replied, "I'm sure that G-d will protect him whether you observe the Shabbat or not, but certainly your observance will help."

 "And you will stand here and watch my things?"

 "Yes" he replied, "You have nothing to worry about. After the Shabbat just go into the office of that Synagogue and your things will be waiting for you."

**The Woman Put All**

**Her Bags Down**

 The woman thanked him, put all her bags down, turned to the other young men, thanked them as well, said "Good Shabbos" and left. A few hours later she returned, took her things from the Synagogue office and the story ended.

 The Rebbe demonstrated how all Jews really want to hear about Judaism if we just to go 'out' of ourselves a bit and present it to them in a caring way.

 But there is more.

 Several months later the woman returned to the office, told the secretary what had happened that Shabbat and asked if she could speak to the Rabbi that spoke to her back then; she wanted to thank him.

 When the Ramash appeared she became very emotional.

 "What you did that Shabbat was a miracle, Rabbi. I don't know how it happened but it was a miracle! Just look!"

 She produced an envelope from her pocket, took out the letter and said, "It's from my son in the army in Germany. He wrote it the day after that Shabbat. Listen to what it says" and she began to read:

 "Dear Mom. You don’t know what a miracle it is that I am alive, writing this letter. I am still shaking and can't believe it myself. Yesterday about twenty five of us were sent out on a 'simple' expedition. The area was supposed to be clear of enemy forces but when we were about an hour from the base an entire battalion of Germans surrounded us and bullets and mortars were flying and exploding everywhere.

**Nowhere to Take Cover**

 “They had heavy machine guns and it was hell on earth. There was nowhere to take cover and we were sitting ducks. I saw my buddies, Joey, Sam, Mickey, being blown to pieces, bleeding to death, screaming for help. It was terrible. I figured that I would never see you again. I even said Shma Yisroel and waited to die. But the bullets and bombs kept missing. I just covered my head and prayed, then suddenly from nowhere came our reinforcements! I was saved!!

 “Mom, all our men were killed! Everyone except for me. It was a miracle! I thank G-d that I am alive and hope to G-d this war will be over soon and I'll be home."

 The Ramash just smiled and said "I am sorry to hear the others died but am happy to hear that your son is well. And I hope that the both of you will continue keeping the Shabbat and bring more blessing into the world."

*Reprinted from last week’s email from Yeshiva Ohr tmimim in Kfar Chabad, Israel.*

**An Evacuation of Jews, With Help From Japan**

**By James Barron**



*Akira Kitade with the scrapbook of Tatsuo Osako.Credit Hiroko Masuike/The New York Times*

 It is not the usual subject for a tourism video: how Japanese officials — including a Japanese diplomat in Lithuania and an employee of a tourist bureau — helped Jews flee the Nazis just before World War II.

 The [Japan National Tourism Organization](http://www.jnto.go.jp/) plans to show the 10-minute video at Grand Central Terminal on Thursday, the first day of [Japan Week](http://japanweek.us/), a celebration of Japanese culture and tourism from the past 100 years. Through Saturday in Vanderbilt Hall, the organization will operate a replica of a bar from Japan’s Taisho period, named for the emperor who reigned from 1912 to 1926. Attendants in traditional dress will serve sake from different regions of Japan.

 The video, made by faculty members of the [New York Film Academy](http://www.nyfa.edu/), explains that as German forces moved across Europe, time was running out for Jews seeking to flee when help came from an unlikely source: Chiune Sugihara, the Japanese vice consul in Kovno, the second-largest city in Lithuania.

 Defying his superiors in Tokyo, he issued transit visas to Jews, making it possible for them to travel by train to Vladivostok, Russia, and then to Japan aboard an aging ship. Mr. Sugihara’s story was documented in “The Fugu Plan,” a 1979 book by Rabbi Marvin Tokayer, who was an Air Force chaplain in Japan in the 1960s and later spent 10 years as the only English-speaking, university-trained rabbi in Japan. Some Holocaust scholars believe that Mr. Sugihara may have saved as many as 10,000 Jews.

**The Tourist Bureau Employee**

 Less well known is the role of Tatsuo Osako, the tourist-bureau employee. For nine months in 1940 and 1941, he was the shipboard escort on the trips from Vladivostok to the Japanese port of Tsuruga. He kept a scrapbook with a poem he composed — it said the ship carried “people without nations” — and photographs of passengers.

 “He said he did a diplomatic role as a civilian person,” said Akira Kitade, 70, a retired tourism executive who has written a book about Japanese whose behind-the-scenes assistance helped Jews escape the Nazis. “He was not really a diplomat, but what he did was a diplomatic role. He and Mr. Sugihara helped Jewish people. We really have to be proud of that.”

 As it happened, Mr. Osako was Mr. Kitade’s boss in the 1960s, but Mr. Kitade said that Mr. Osako never mentioned his work on the ship. Mr.

Kitade only learned of it years later from a commemorative volume published by the Japan Tourist Board, which during the war was a quasi-governmental agency.

 Eventually, he asked Mr. Osako about the Vladivostok-to-Tsuruga trips and read an essay Mr. Osako had written about them. Mr. Kitade also did research that showed the Japan Tourist Board had received money from Jewish organizations in the United States and from Japanese government agencies, and had promised to transport the refugees to Japan.

**Ordinary Japanese Had a Different Agenda**

 Mr. Kitade has said that many in the West assume that Japan, as a German ally, was anti-Semitic. But Rabbi Tokayer said in a phone interview

**Ordinary Japanese Had**

**A Different Agenda**

 Mr. Kitade has said that many in the West assume that Japan, as a German ally, was anti-Semitic. But Rabbi Tokayer said in a phone interview this week that ordinary Japanese “had a different agenda from the government.” The government, he said, “could do whatever it wanted vis-à-vis Germany.”



Photo of Mr. Osako on a ship. As an employee of a tourist bureau, he and Chiune Sugihara, a diplomat, helped Jews flee the Nazis.

 “The person in the street was kind and friendly and supportive” of the Jews who arrived in Tsuruga, Rabbi Tokayer said. He added: “When the refugees got off the ship, each got a gift. The gift was an apple. They went to school to learn basic Japanese for free. They got free medical care. Farmers brought them free food.”

 Some Japanese and Jewish scholars refer to Mr. Sugihara as the “Japanese Schindler,” a reference to Oskar Schindler, the German manufacturer who saved Jews from the Nazis. Some say Mr. Sugihara’s diplomatic career ended because he had issued the visas. When he returned to Japan after the war — after postings in Czechoslovakia and Romania and 18 months in a Russian prisoner-of-war camp — he resigned from the diplomatic corps. He later worked as an oil exporter in Moscow. He died in 1986.

 “Mr. Sugihara struggled a lot with what he could do,” said Yuki Tanaka, the executive director of the Japan National Tourism Organization’s office in New York. “It was really a hard decision. And for Mr. Osako’s part, I think the first hard decision was made by J.T.B. itself.”

 The Japan Tourist Board’s New York office had received a call asking if it could help with the evacuation of Jews. The officials in the New York office “knew it was kind of contradicting the thinking about the relationship between Japan and Germany,” Ms. Tanaka said. “This might cause some trouble.”

**A Hard Discussion at**

**Headquarters in Tokyo**

 “They reported it to the headquarters” in Tokyo, she added, “and the headquarters had a really hard discussion, and finally they thought they should save Jewish people based on a humanitarian point of view.”

 Asked whether she would have done what Mr. Osako did if the occasion had presented itself, Ms. Tanaka said: “I really hope I could. It was really a great thing, what he did.”

*Reprinted from the March 6, 2014 edition of The New York Times.*

**The Skiing Rabbi**

**Raphael Leban - Age 44**

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“I was born and raised in Virginia and graduated from the University of Virginia with a BA in English Language and Literature. I first visited Ohr Somayach [a yeshiva for English speaking men from assimilated backgrounds] two days before Rosh Hashana in the fall of 1995. I was in the

midst of traveling around the world and had been out of the United States for two years.

I spent many months working in Europe, traveled through Greece and Turkey, and eventually made my way through Syria to Jordan. I took a bus across the Jordan River over the Allenby Bridge and made my way to the Arab Quarter of the Old City.

**From the Kotel to Ohr Somayach**

Within hours of entering Israel I found myself at the Kotel. I was directed to Ohr Somayach and heard three classes that day, from Rabbis Schiller, Tatz and Gottlieb, all talking about *teshuva* as Rosh Hashana was approaching.

“I was sufficiently intrigued and inspired to stick around and those first few days stretched to seven years, during which time I progressed from a less than rudimentary knowledge of the *aleph-beit* to completing

the Ohr Lagolah Program, receiving *Semicha* in the process.

Today I live in Denver,Colorado where I give a Daf Yomi shiur and

work as the Managing Director of the Jewish Experience, a busy local outreach organization where I try to pass on everything that I was blessed to receive from my beloved mentors and Rabbeim at Ohr Somayach.

Although I am allegedly referred to as the world’s extreme skiing Rabbi, I prefer the quiet life with my wife Ita and our three children.”

*Reprinted from last week’s email of OHRNET, the Ohr Somayach Torah Magazine of the Internet.*

**It Once Happened**

**The Night After**

**Purim 1953**

The early 1950s was an especially terrible time for Jews in the Soviet Union, a period filled with terror and dread. Joseph Stalin's infamous "Doctors' Plot" was at its peak, and Russia's Jewish physicians were disappearing rapidly. People were being purged left and right, never to be heard from again. Around the world, Jews wept and pleaded with G-d, but there was no salvation in sight.

**Many of the Participants Had**

**Suffered Because of Stalin**

It was the night after the holiday of Purim, 1953. In Brooklyn, New York, a large crowd of Jews had gathered to celebrate with the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Many of the participants had themselves just recently escaped from the behind the Iron Curtain. A good number had personally suffered the wrath of Stalin's tyranny, wasting away for years in Russian prisons. Still, many such Chasidim could not forget their oppressed brethren across the sea.

That year at the Purim gathering the Rebbe delivered a Chasidic discourse on the verse, "And he brought up Hadassah, who is Esther." As always, the Rebbe's holy countenance underwent a visible transformation before beginning the discourse, his elevated state of attachment to G-d. Indeed, a few minutes later the Rebbe delivered his discourse.

The gathering continued for the next few hours, during which the Rebbe gave several informal talks, Chasidic melodies were sung, and numerous glasses were hoisted in "l'chaim."

**It Was Almost Dawn When**

**An Unusual Thing Occurred**

It was late at night - almost dawn, in fact - when an unusual thing occurred. For the second time that evening the Rebbe's holy face began to radiate with that special solemnity and earnestness that meant that he was preparing to deliver a Chasidic discourse. The Chasidim could barely believe what was happening. The Rebbe had never delivered two discourses at the same gathering!

The room was still. No one uttered a sound. The Rebbe began to speak: "After the Czar fell in Russia, it was announced that the government would be holding elections. The Rebbe Rashab [the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe] went word to the Chasidim that they were to participate in the voting process. There was one particular Chasid who was completely removed from worldly affairs; to him the political arena was foreign territory.

"Nonetheless, having received an explicit instruction from the Rebbe, he set out to fulfill his command. With a sense of awe and reverence he immersed himself in a mikva, donned his gartel (sash) and set out for the polling booth.

**The Chasid Had No**

**Idea of What to Do**

"Of course, when he got there he had no idea what he was expected to do, but some of the more worldly Chasidim helped him cast his vote. Adjusting his gartel, the Chasid did what everyone else was doing. When the votes were cast, everyone cried out 'Hurrah!' Taking his cue from those around him he likewise cried out, 'Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!' "

As he uttered these words, the Rebbe's face burned with a holy fire. The Chasidim were astounded; they realized that more was going on than met the eye, but they did not understand the significance of what had just occurred. Swept up by the powerful emotion that filled the air, the crowd spontaneously rose to its feet and shouted, "Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!" three times.

After this strange preamble the Rebbe delivered his second maamar, based on the verse in the Megila, "Therefore they called these days Purim, after the name of Pur."

[In the introduction to a different Chasidic discourse published almost 50 years later, reference is made to that second maamar: "...It was obviously connected to the events that were then taking place in 'that country,' the fall of its dictator, an enemy of the Jews. This was understood from the story the Rebbe told right before the discourse about the Rebbe Rashab's directive to the Chasidim during the Russian Revolution, after the Czar was toppled."]

**Moscow Radio Made a**

**Startling Announcement**

In 1953, March 4 coincided with 17 Adar. On that fateful day the Russian state radio in Moscow made the startling announcement that two days previously, the night after Purim, Joseph Stalin had fallen gravely ill and had lost consciousness. The next morning, 18 Adar, the whole truth was finally revealed: Stalin was dead. The brutal dictator had collapsed the night the Chasidim were shouting "Hurrah" in Brooklyn at the Rebbe's gathering. [The Hebrew words "hu rah" mean "he is evil"]

Jews throughout the Soviet Union breathed a collective sigh of relief, tempered, of course, by a realistic apprehension of the future. No one, however, could have imagined in his wildest dreams a more miraculous end to Stalin's reign of terror. At long last the "Doctors' Plot" was over, and countless prisoners were set free. In the wake of Stalin's death the oppressive atmosphere in the Soviet Union was greatly lightened, and so ended one of the grimmest chapters in the annals of Russian Jewish history.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY.*

**Chassidic Story #850**

**Purim Repeated in Persia**

**From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000pHG0:001Imxw800001qC8&count=1389104003&randid=1957232658&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=1957232658##)

Five hundred years ago there lived a king in Persia who was a descendant of King Achashverosh. He took interest in the history of his family and found out that the Jewish people had in its possession an old handwriting called "The Scroll of Esther". This scroll describes in detail the origin of his ancestor's royal dynasty.

**The King Researched**

**Details of the Scroll**

The Persian king researched the details of the scroll. Among other interesting facts he found out that is said in the scroll that Haman had offered to pay King Achashverosh 10,000 silver ducats in order to do whatever he wanted with the Jews. In the end the money was not paid. Smiling, the Persian king worked out a smart idea.

He summoned the rabbis and the leaders of the Jewish community and asked them:

"Tell me - is everything written in the Scroll of Esther true?"

The Jews did not understand the intention of the king, but they of course assured him that everything written in *Megillat Esther* is true.

"If that is the case", said the king, "I command you to pay the 10,000 silver ducats you owe my ancestors!"

**Demands Exorbitant Amount**

**Of Money Within the Month**

The Jewish rabbis tried to explain to the king that King Achashverosh remitted the money to Haman as it says: "The money is given to you", but the Persian king did not give in: "I am a descendant of King Achashverosh and you are the descendants of the Jewish people. I want the money within a month. If not, you will be expelled from your homes!"

The harsh decree shocked the Persian Jews. All over Persia the Jewish leaders proclaimed days of prayer and fasting. The synagogues were full of people reciting Psalms day and night, and large sums of charity were distributed.

The Jewish leaders started estimating how much money they would be able to collect. Within a few days they reached the conclusion that even if they were to sell all their properties, they would not reach the sum that the king requested. Since time was short, they were unable to send emissaries to the whole Jewish world in order to collect money from Jews outside of Persia.

**A Messenger is Dispatched**

**To the Holy Ari in Tsfat**

In their plight, they decided that the best thing to do was to send a messenger to Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, the Holy Ari who resided in Tsfat in the Holy Land in order to ask for his blessing and advice.

The messenger set out on his trip on a fast camel and shortly arrived in Tsfat. He handed over the letter written by the Rabbis of the Jewish community in Persia and pleaded in tears for help, asking the holy Ari to pray on their behalf to our Father in Heaven.

The Holy Ari went into his private study for a while and then returned to the messenger, holding a small box in his hand.

The Ari said to him: "The Jews have repented with a full heart and the evil decree has been revoked. There is no need to pay the ransom money.

"Instead, on the day of payment, the leaders of the Jewish community are to hand over this box to the king. The box must not be opened by anyone but the king."

In the meanwhile, the king was very satisfied with his plan. If the Jews would pay him the money - all the better. If they did not pay him, he would confiscate their property after the expulsion and would make a profit in any case.

**The King Did Not Sleep Well**

That night the king did not sleep well. He had a terrifying dream. In it a mighty storm was raging outside his palace. Suddenly the windows to his room burst open. A man clad in white with fiery eyes entered his room through the window. The king wanted to cry for help, but the words got stuck in his throat and he was unable to utter a word.

The white figure took him by the hand and led him outside through the open window. They passed houses and fields until they reached a forest. There was an open area between the trees.

The white figure turned to the king and asked him in a stern voice: "What do you see in the open place?"

"I see a high pole - and somebody is hanging from its top," the king said in fear.

They continued their walk another few steps, and again the figure in white asked the king what he saw.

"I see another high pole with somebody hanging from its top - and there is another one and yet another…."

**Asked About the Number of Poles**

"How many poles do you see?" the figure asked.

"I can see eleven poles with people hanging from the top - and over there is another pole - but nobody is hanging from it," said the king trembling with fear.

"The people hanging there are Haman and his ten sons," said the figure to the king. "The empty pole is meant for people who walk in their evil ways!"

A shiver went over the body of the king.

The white figure took the king by his hand and led him back to the king's palace. The figure made the king sit down next to his writing desk and said: "Give up all your claims against the Jews and sign the document with the royal seal!"

**The King Prepares the Document**

**With a Trembling Hand**

The king wrote the document with a trembling hand, signed it, and stamped the royal seal under his signature. He handed the document to the man in white who disappeared through the window.

Suddenly the king woke up from his nightmare. He found himself sitting next to his desk, shivering with fear and his face covered by cold sweat.

Outside there was a quiet summer night.

"What a strange dream I had," he thought and went back to sleep in his bed.

The following morning he still remembered the dream but dismissed it.

The messenger came back from Tsfat to the Jewish leaders in Persia with good tidings. The holy Ari had indeed helped! The Jews, however, correctly, did not rest the whole month. They studied much Torah, spent many hours in prayer every day, and took upon themselves to rectify everything that needed improvement. Especially they asked each other for forgiveness and increased dramatically in brotherly love.

When the designated day came, the leaders of the Jewish community took the box that they had received from the Holy Ari and approached the king.

**The King Demands His Money**

"Where is my money?" the king roared.

"Your majesty, we have been instructed to bring this box for you," said the spokesman of the delegation and handed the box to the king.

The king took the box in his hand, opened it and found a signed document inside. When he started to read what was written there, he suddenly screamed in terrible fear and fell in a swoon to the floor.

The king's doctors who immediately were summoned finally managed to wake him up. Immediately his body began trembling uncontrollably.

"Oh no, it was not a dream!" he whispered in panic. "The next hanging pole was meant for me because of my behavior towards the Jews."

**Gives the Document to the Jewish Leaders**

Nobody knew what he was talking about, but when he recovered somewhat he handed the document to the Jewish leaders and said, "Everything which is written in this document is hereby established in law. I give up all my claims regarding the debt. I promise not to harm any Jew from now on. You are released from all previous monetary claims."

"The Jews had light and joy and gladness and honor" (Esther 8:16). They immediately dispatched a special messenger in order to express their gratitude to the Holy Ari. All over Persia the Jews celebrated parties of thanksgiving to G-d for their wonderful delivery.

Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from "Chassidic Gems" by Tuvia Litzman (who cites Torah Thoughts as his source).

Biographic note: **Rabbi Yitzchak Luria** (1534-5 Av 1572), Known as "the holy Ari," revolutionized the study of Kabbalah and its integration into mainstream Judaism during the two years he spent in Zefat before his death at age 38.

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**FLASH! "Saturday Night, Full Moon" by the first of 3 books by Yerachmiel Tilles, the Ascent storyteller, featuring 33 of his best stories, will be available at Ascent starting March 11, 2014.**

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