**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas bechukosai 5771**

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**Chassidic Story #703**

**The Whisper Cure**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000UEW0:001DmbPV00001oAa&count=1305119721&randid=1391970135&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=1391970135##)

 In the town of Plitz, a wealthy resident stood in his aristocratic house, broken-hearted and depressed. His beautiful, good natured, intelligent, beloved only daughter was seized by severe mental illness, and life in the home had become virtually unbearable for the whole family.

 This sad event occurred during the early years after the Baal Shem Tov first became revealed (in the end of 5494 [1734] at age 36) as an inspired holy man. Word of his wonders and miracles had already spread throughout that region of Eastern Europe, and the rich man hoped that the Besht (acronym of Baal Shem Tov) would somehow be able to rescue his daughter from her bewildering plight.

 Because of her situation, she would not be able to travel with him to the Besht, so he decided he would go alone and do everything in his power to get the Besht to come with him.

**Visiting His Mother in Talust**

 At that time the Besht was staying in Talust, the village of his birth. He had returned there to visit his mother. The villagers respected him greatly and delighted in his residing among them, all the more so as they realized that many difficulties in village affairs had already been resolved as a result of his wondrous presence.

 The wealthy Jew arrived in his ornate carriage and requested the Baal Shem Tov to make the long journey with him back to Plitz, to try to cure his daughter. The Besht agreed.

 Word spread quickly in Talust of the Baal Shem Tov 's imminent departure. Delegations of upset Talusters came to the Besht and pleaded with him not to leave. How can the tzadik give preference to the healing of a solitary individual over the welfare of an entire village?

 The Besht responded gently that he wasn't going in order to help just one person, but for the benefit of many. But he added no explanation to his words.

 Early the next morning the Besht boarded the carriage together with his host. The coachman urged the horses on. All three were sure that before the end of the day they would reach their destination. However, various unforeseen problems arose which slowed their trip considerably. Darkness descended and thickened about them until they were forced to pursue lodging for the night in the nearest village, which was Pistine.

**Discovered a Very Serious Problems**

**Facing the Jews in Pistine**

 As soon as they arrived and saw the sad faces of the locals, they knew a serious problem must have overtaken the population. The rich man halted the carriage so that he could query a passerby as to what was going on.

 The man responded that the village was part of the domain of a certain poritz (titled landowner, most often a Count), an evil man who hated Jews and made every effort to oppress the ones in his jurisdiction. Now he had unleashed a new horror.

 It turned out that the nobleman's daughter had suddenly gone insane, and her father immediately concluded that it must be because the Jewish population ----who he knew hated him--had prayed for it to happen to her. He informed the Jewish leaders that if she didn't recover within three days, he would expel the entire community from his lands, after first seizing all of their property, of course.

**Recognizing the Hand of G-d**

 The wealthy Jewish visitor was spiritually sensitive enough to realize immediately that the Hand of G-d was directing all of these events “the two mental illnesses, the obstacle to their travels and the forced overnight stay, his involvement with the Baal Shem Tov “in order to relieve and succor the oppressed Jewish community. He asked several people to inform the Jewish leadership that he was accompanied to their town by none other than the great Baal Shem Tov himself, the famous doer of wonders.

 The unexpected good news raised their spirits and lifted their hopes. They hurried to the Besht to ask him to somehow cure their landlord’s daughter. When he agreed to their request, they ran to the Count to inform him that a great and holy man had arrived in their humble village and that they knew he would be able to cure the ailing daughter.

 The Count ridiculed their suggestion. The best of doctors had already thoroughly examined her, and pronounced that it was forbidden to give her any form of medicine, because in her bizarre state they couldn't be sure that the treatment wouldn't damage her further.

 It was certain they would not permit any potions to be administered to her by someone, a stranger, who wasn't even a doctor.

**Promises to Cure the Daughter**

**Without any Medicine or Potions**

 They dutifully reported the nobleman's response to the Besht. He instructed them to return to the Count and tell him that he, the Baal Shem Tov, Master of the Good Name, would heal the girl without any medicine or potions, but simply by whispering in her ear.

 To this the Count agreed, albeit with a large dose of skepticism.

 The Besht came to the castle accompanied by the rich man of Plitz and the leaders of the Pistine Jewish community. He politely asked that the disturbed girl be brought into a room that had no [idolatrous] statues or images. He also directed that they tie her to her chair so that she could not run off.

**Reading the Story of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai**

 After his requests were fulfilled, the Besht entered the room, opened the holy book he had brought with him, the Talmudic tractate called Me'ilah [17b], and began to read aloud the story featuring Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

 The Roman emperor once decreed upon the Jews of Israel that they would no longer be permitted to observe the commandments of the Torah, such as Shabbat and circumcision. The Sages immediately appointed a delegation to travel overseas to Rome to try and nullify the decree. They also appointed Rabbi Shimon to be its leader, because he was "accustomed to miracles."

 Rabbi Shimon boarded the ship. At that same time the Al-mighty arranged for an evil spirit to enter the Caesar's daughter and drive her insane. The name of this demon was Ben Tamilyon. The princess began to scream incessantly: "Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai should come and heal me!"

**Escorted Immediately to**

**The Palace of the Caesar**

 Shortly thereafter, Rabbi Shimon and his delegation arrived in Rome. Upon learning his identity, the Roman soldiers immediately escorted him to Caesar's Palace, so that he should heal the princess.

 Rabbi Shimon entered her chambers and called out, "Get out from her, Ben Tamilyon, get out from her!" The spirit did so and the princess was instantly cured.

 The emperor couldn't stop thanking and praising Rabbi Shimon. Finally he said to him, "Please, sir, go into all the royal rooms and treasuries, and with my blessing take for yourself whatever you most desire."

 Rabbi Shimon accepted with alacrity and went from room to room, carefully searching. Finally he found what he was looking for: the scroll in which was engraved the decree against the Jews and their religion. He took it, showed his selection to the Caesar, and ripped it up. Shortly thereafter he departed to return to Israel.

 As the Besht completed this Talmudic passage, he turned to face the Count, who had been staring at him in amazement the entire time.

**Demands an Oath from the Count**

 "Are you prepared to swear that after your daughter is cured you will no longer persecute the Jews in your domain, but will treat them well and to their benefit?"

 Nothing was more important to the landlord than the welfare of his precious only daughter. He agreed, and promptly swore on his own life and that of his daughter's. The Baal Shem Tov then turned towards the deranged daughter and whispered in her ear, "Just as Rabbi Shimon decreed on the invading spirit that it must depart from the daughter of the Emperor, so I, Israel Baal Shem Tov ben Eliezer, decree upon the spirit here that it depart from the daughter of the Count. And may the One who healed the daughter of the Caesar of Rome heal also the daughter of this nobleman."

**Orders that the Restraining**

**Ropes Be Removed**

 Utter silence pervaded the chamber. The Baal Shem Tov signaled for the restraining ropes to be removed from the landlord's daughter. The tension in the room sharpened. But then the girl rose and began to speak, and it was immediately clear that she had returned to normalcy!

 The Jews of Pistine laughed and cheered for the great miracle; their rabbis declared it to be an official day of thanksgiving and singing the Hallel prayer.

 The rich man from Plitz could not conceal his astonishment. He right away sat down and composed a letter to Reb Ephraim, the president of the Jewish community in Talust. He filled it with praise of the Al-mighty for His kindness and His supervision of the unusual chain of events, and for the extraordinary wonders performed through the Baal Shem Tov, who was clearly the tzadik of their generation.

 He also wrote that only now could be understood the Besht's mysterious words before his departure from Talust: "It is not for the sake of an individual I am leaving you, but for the good of the many." By "the many," he clearly meant the entire Jewish population of Pistine, who had been rescued from poverty and banishment by his intervention.

 The next day the Besht travelled with the rich man to Plitz. Many Jews from Pistine escorted them all the way there. Upon entering his host's home, the Besht immediately turned to an eastern wall and began to pray. In his prayers he requested intensely that the sick daughter be cured. When he stepped back from his prayer, he found her already completely healthy, with her parents and all the other members of the household amazed and delighted.

**Accompanying the Besht Back to Talust**

 The wealthy father immediately set out on another trip to Tolust. This time it was in order to return the Besht, now even more famous and praised as a bringer of salvations to the Jewish people, to the loving embrace of his mother and hometown.

 [Source: Translated-adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the Hebrew weekly, Sichat HaShavua, #1166. You may distribute this e-mail as long as full attribution is given, including Ascent’s email and internet addresses. Yerachmiel Tilles is director of www.ascentofsafed.com and www.KabbalaOnline.org He has hundreds of published stories to his credit, and many have been translated into other languages. His weekly mailing of chasidic/kabbalist stories (700+!) goes to thousands of subscribers.

 **Connection:** Seasonal Lag BaOmer

 **Biographic Notes**: Rabbi Yisrael ben Eliezer (18 Elul 1698-6 Sivan 1760), the Baal Shem Tov ["master of the good Name"], a unique and seminal figure in Jewish history, revealed the Chassidic movement and his own identity as an exceptionally holy person, on his 36th birthday, 18 Elul 1734. He wrote no books, although many claim to contain his teachings. One available in English is the excellent annotated translation of Tzava'at Harivash,

published by Kehos.

**Most Sublime Secrets of the Torah**

 Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, one of the most important sages in Jewish history, lived over 1800 years ago. Teachings in his name abound throughout the Mishnah, Gemorrah, and Midrashim, while the Zohar, the primary source text of Kabbalah, is built around Rabbi Shimon's revelations to his inner circle of disciples. During the hours before his passing, on Lag b'Omer [this year: Sat. nite-Sun, May 22], he disclosed the "most sublime" secrets of Torah, in order to ensure that the day would always be an occasion for great joy, untouched by sadness because of the Omer period and mourning for him. The seminal importance of the Zohar in Jewish thought and the annual pilgrimage to Meron on Lag b"Omer are testimonies to his success.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed* [*www.ascentofsafed.com*](http://www.ascentofsafed.com)[*ascent@ascentofsafed.com*](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000QjG0:001Di0iB00002fPy&count=1303909652&randid=994478574&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=994478574##)

**From the Wonders of Creation**

**The Amazing Machine**

**Called the Ear**

 The ear contains three parts: the hammer, anvil, and stirrup. Every sound which enters the ear is amplified by the hammer which beats on the eardrum. If every single sound would actually reach a person, he would become deaf from the noise of the drum.

 Therefore, the Almighty provided the ear with the Eustachian tube which is full of fluid which moderates the force of the sound. It also contains a pipe which brings air to the inner ear. The drum can function only when there is a balance of air pressure between the two sides of the ear, and, in effect, one would not be able to hear properly otherwise.

**20,000 Tiny Fibers Acting Like Strings on a Guitar**

 Inside the air lies the snail-shaped cochlea which contains up to 20,000 fibers, ranging in size from 1/20 to ½ of a millimeter. They act like the strings on a guitar, which receive the sound waves and result in what we hear as sound.

 These chords can distinguish between 40,000 different sounds. If they are even the slightest bit damaged, the person’s hearing is impaired. Think for a moment how smart it is that a person has two ears, one on either side of his head, so that he can identify from which direction a given sound is coming.

**Appreciating the Gifts of the Ear**

 We won’t even get into the details of the inner ear which affords the person the ability to discern weight and maintain his balance. If this part of the ear does not function properly, the person gets dizzy and could even faint.

 For us, all we can do is pray that we will know how to properly use our ears, so that we never reach the state where halachah, mussar, or wonders of nature reach our ears with no subsequent effect. The ears must never be forgotten or left on a passive mode. They should be transformed into an integral part of Jewish existence, guiding us to follow the Word of Hashem, and then will our ears have fulfilled their ultimate function.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the Aram Soba Newsletter printed by Bnai Yosef Congregation in Brooklyn.*

**It Once Happened**

**A Mother Challenges**

**Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai**

 This story took place over 60 years ago and was recorded in the book Hilula D'Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai by the author who witnessed the scene with his own eyes.

 The outer yard surrounding the room where the graves of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai (also known as the Rashbi) and his son were buried was jammed with Jews from all over Israel. They had come to Meron on Lag B'omer, the 33rd day of the counting of the omer.

**Cutting the Hair of Three-Year Old Boys**

 Lag B'Omer is the anniversary of the passing of the Rashbi, who had enjoined his disciples to celebrate, rather than mourn, on the day of his passing. Today, all of those gathered in Meron would cut the hair of their three-year-old sons for the first time, leaving only the side-locks.

 The voices of hundreds of Jews could be heard as they recited Psalms. There were Jews of all types, whose ancestors had come from all over the world. All were praying and begging G-d to help them raise their children in Torah and good deeds in the merit of Rabbi Shimon.

 It was already after mid-day on Friday and time to get ready for Shabbat. The visitors from Tiberias, Tzfat, Haifa and the residents from other cities and towns in the Galilee started to leave for their homes in order to arrive before the commencement of the Sabbath.

**Many Visitors Came from Jerusalem**

 Many of the visitors though, especially the ones from Jerusalem which is quite a distance, chose to remain in Meron for Shabbat.

 On Friday night, the beautiful melodies of the various groups praying reached the heights of the nearby mountains. Their hearts were overflowing as thousands of Jews joined together to dance and sing.

 Shabbat morning arrived and the men gathered in large groups to descend the valley to the small Meggido Lake where they immersed themselves to prepare for the morning prayers. When the morning prayers had finished a scream pierced the Sabbath atmosphere. A woman who had brought her son just yesterday for his first haircut was crying hysterically.

 Her son had suddenly become sick and had died. Doctors who were sent from the British government to the area immediately put the entire section under quarantine. No one could come and no one could leave.

**Mother Brings Her Son to the Rashbi’s Grave**

 Suddenly, the mother gathered the boy in her arms and went into the room where the Rashbi was buried. She placed the dead child on the Rashbi's grave and started crying out, "Oh great tzadik (righteous one). I, your servant, came in your honor to cut the hair of my child. I came to make my son, my first and only child, into a good Jew. I kept my promise to come here on Lag B'Omer. Only yesterday I held him here and cut his hair in song and joy. Now, great tzadik, how shall I return home without my child? How can I show my face in my home?"

 In the midst of her prayers, the mother arose and said, "Tzadik, Rabbi Shimon, I am laying down my child on your grave as he is. I beg of you, with tears, do not shame me. Give me back my child just as I brought him here. Let the holy name of G-d be exalted along with the name of the great tzadik. Let everyone know that there is a G-d ruling over this world."

**The Woman Concluded Her Prayers**

 The woman concluded her prayers and left the room, leaving her son on the grave of the Rashbi. The doors of the room were closed as everyone left the room.

 A few moments later a child's scream was heard from behind the closed door. The mother ran into the room and to her great surprise she saw her son standing on his feet and crying for a glass of water. Happiness and commotion filled the room. The local doctors examining the child announced in wonder that this was not a natural occurrence or a normal incident, but rather a miracle which must have happened in the merit of the great Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai.

 The government agents immediately reopened the gates and the masses once again poured inside. Everyone seeing the revived child pronounced the blessing "Blessed be G-d Who revives the dead."

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

**Two Women at Meron**

 Around 130 years ago, Rabbi Shemuel of Selonim, who was then a young man, visited Eress Yisrael and went to Har Meron, the grave site of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai. As he approached, he encountered two women standing near the holy site. One was poor and embittered, whereas the other seemed well off.

 The impoverished woman cried, and poured her trouble-stricken heart out to the great “Tanna.” Her husband was unemployed and her children were hungry. Her daughter had reached adulthood but the mother cannot afford to marry her off. When she finished her prayers, the wealthy woman turned to her and asked, “Tell me, my dear friend, how much money do you need?”

 The poor woman could not even speak. The stranger continued, “How much money do you need to marry off your daughter? How much do you need to feed your family for a year, or to pay your rent?” The woman was shocked and began listing her needs. The wealthy money made the calculation, opened her wallet, took out some gold coins, and gave her the complete amount, generously adding more to the final total.

 The poor woman could not find the words to thank her benefactor, offered her an emotional blessing, and left. The wealthy woman then turned to the great Tanna and said, “This woman who was here, she turned to you for salvation, she pleaded that you beg before the Almighty on her behalf. But I was in a position to help her, and I did. I have no children. I know that you can help me, that you can plead my case in the heavens. Therefore, just as I did what I could for that impoverished woman, please, do what you can to help me!” The woman then burst out in tears.

 Rabbi Shemuel said that he has no doubt that the woman’s wish was granted. She asked properly, and, in truth, she deserved to be answered. If she helped another, she deserves to be helped, and, indeed, whoever shows compassion on others - Hashem will have compassion on him. May each individual do what he can on behalf of others, be it financially, offering a loan, or simply encouragement and sound advice.

 Give a helping hand when there are difficulties in someone else’s home, take more of interest in the children, and take care of parents. If everybody does what he can to help others – he will be assisted many times more from Hashem, with an abundance of berachah and salvation.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the Aram Soba Newsletter as published by Bnei Yosef Congregation in Brooklyn, NY.*

**The Rooster That**

**Did Not Crow**

**By Nissan Mindel**

 Shmuel was a religious, G‑d-fearing Jew. He was a Torah scholar and was much admired and greatly respected by everyone.

 There was a squire who owned the entire town where Shmuel lived. The squire heard of Shmuel’s wisdom and honesty, and appointed him as his business manager.

 The squire had complete trust in his Jewish manager. Shmuel was the only person to whom he gave the keys to his safe, knowing that Shmuel would never touch a thing that belonged to another person.

 In the squire’s court there was another person who worked as Shmuel’s assistant, who was extremely jealous of his Jewish boss. He was looking for some way of making trouble for Shmuel, hoping to take his place.

**A Big Party Celebrating the Squires Return**

 Once, when the squire returned from a trip, he made a big party, inviting many guests. He related to his guests the virtues of his Jewish business manager, who was also one of the invited guests, though he could not partake of any of the food served at the party.

 The squire then asked Shmuel to bring from his safe the famous diamond he had inherited from his parents. The diamond was known to be one of the largest diamonds in the world, and it was priceless.

 All the guests waited breathlessly to behold this rare, precious gem.

A few minutes later Shmuel entered, bearing a golden box decorated with many beautiful gems.

**Guests Move Closer to Look**

**At the Remarkable Diamond**

 The guests moved forward to get close to the squire and to get the best possible view of this remarkable diamond. But the squire seemed in no special hurry to open the box. First, he gave a lengthy talk on the history of the diamond, and then, finally, he opened the box.

 To the horror of all present, the box was empty! The squire was speechless and looked ready to break into tears.

 Some of the guests began to shout, “Hang the Jew!”

 But the squire could still not believe that Shmuel was guilty of such an act, especially to steal something so precious belonging to his employer. Yet, if Shmuel was the only person who had the keys to the safe, who else could have been the thief?

**Squire Accuses His**

**Jewish Business Manager**

 Turning to his Jewish business manager, the squire said: “It is true that you have served me honestly and devotedly for many years, but it appears that you were not able to resist temptation this time, when you saw this unique gem. Because of your past loyal service, I promise you I will not punish you if you confess your guilt and give me back my precious diamond.”

 “Heaven forbid,” called out Shmuel. “I would never steal anything, especially anything belonging to you, my kind and generous employer. I can see that, under the present circumstances, you cannot believe otherwise. But please, I beg you, give me an opportunity to clear myself.”

 Shmuel asked the squire to keep all the guests in the hall, for the real thief was present there. Then he asked for permission to go home and bring something which would reveal the identity of the thief.

**Returns With a “Remarkable” Rooster**

 A short while later Shmuel returned, and, to everyone’s astonishment, he had a black rooster in his hand.

 “Honored guests,” called out Shmuel. “I have here a remarkable rooster. It will allow any honest person to stroke it, but no sooner would a thief do so than it would flap its wings and burst out in a cry of *cock-a-doodle-doo!* And, as the real thief is among us here today, I shall ask all present to come forward, one at a time, and stroke the rooster with their right hand. When the rooster starts to crow—you will know who the thief is.”

**Guests Shout Because of the “Silent” Rooster**

 Breathlessly and eagerly, the assembled participated in this strange procedure. But when the last of the guests had stroked the rooster and it still remained silent, all the guests began to shout:

 “How dare the Jew make a laughingstock out of us with his crazy suggestion!”

 “Patience, dear guests. Don’t get excited. I haven’t finished yet,” said Shmuel calmly. “You will soon know who the real thief is.”

 Thereupon Shmuel asked the guests to lift up their right hands. They did so, and what the assembled saw were black hands except for one white hand. The white hand was that of Shmuel’s assistant.

**The Real Thief Confesses**

 “There is the thief,” called out Shmuel. “The rooster I brought is a rooster like any other. All I did was smear its back with soot. I knew that the real thief would be afraid to stroke the rooster, in case it would begin to crow. So he just *pretended* to stroke the rooster’s back, but didn’t really touch it. So you see, the hands of the innocent guests were black, while the hand of the thief remained white and clean, though in truth, it was the dirtiest in the entire hall.”

 “Bravo!” cried all the guests, and made a rush to grab the thief. The culprit had no choice but confess that he had managed to get copies made of the keys to the squire’s safe. He had been quite sure that the Jew would be blamed for the theft. The thief received his just punishment, while Shmuel was reinstated in his important trusted position.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Chabad.org Magazine.*

**Good Shabbos Everyone.**

**Special Ops: Part One**

 The Torah tells us this week "You shall perform My statutes, keep My ordinances and perform them then you will live on the land securely."  (Vayikra 25:18)  We see here that the Torah promises us security if the Jewish people keep the Torah.

 The following story is one of the most amazing stories we have ever printed. This story demonstrates how Hashem is with those who keep His Torah.

**A Prestigious Position with**

**The U.S. State Department**

 Avrohom Walters hoped to ease his family's transition into their new life. An experienced education professional, Avrohom had accepted a prestigious position with the US State Department. The year was 1973, and Avrohom was sent with his family to his first assignment in Jerusalem. Avrohom's work involved supervising the distribution of American aid money to foreign institutions in the Middle East where American students learned.

 Soon the neighbors came by, greeting the new family and offering their help. The conversation naturally turned to questions about what had brought the Walters family to Eretz Yisroel. But their curiosity had to remain unsatisfied. Avrohom's job for the State Department was considered a top-secret position. After all, he had been entrusted with 880 million dollars worth of funding—and nobody wanted news like that to leak out! So whenever the topic came up, Avrohom adroitly changed the subject. Even his wife and children had only a vague idea of what he was doing in the Holy Land.

 The State Department had assigned John Williams, as Avrohom's liaison in the Middle East. It was up to John to do all the legwork — working out the schedule, arranging the transportation, and making the calls to smooth the way for Avrohom's research into the various schools in the region.

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**The Baba Sali, zt”l Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, zt’l**

**Travelling to Netivot and the Baba Sali**

 One day, Avrohom had reason to go to Netivot. Avrohom remarked to his non-Jewish American State Department co-worker John, that he wished to see the great Rabbi the Baba Sali while they were in Netivot. After the pair arrived in Netivot, John busied himself with fixing the car which had broken down, and Avrohom took the opportunity to go to the home of the great sage Rav Yisrael Abuchatzeira, zt"l (1890-1984), affectionately known as the Baba Sali.

 Avrohom stepped into a hallway at the Baba Sali's home. It was filled with people, all there for the same purpose. He glanced around the room, trying to calculate how long it would take for his turn to arrive. Resigned to a long wait, Avrohom leaned back against the wall.

**Calling Out for an Avrohom**

 Just then, a man opened an inner door and stepped into the hallway. "Is there anyone here named Avrohom?" he called. Avrohom knew the man wasn't referring to him. He had just come and signed- in a few minutes ago—it couldn't possibly be his turn yet! When no one responded after several minutes, the man called again. "Is there anyone here named Avrohom?"

 Feeling somewhat sheepish, Avrohom stepped forward. "My name is Avrohom." "Come with me, please." Avrohom followed the man into a room. There was Rav Abuchatzeira, sitting near a table. The man motioned Avrohom to a seat right next to the grea7t sage. "Please, make yourself comfortable," Rav Abuchatzeira said warmly. "Have something to drink!" Avrohom sat there awkwardly. What he really wanted was a blessing. But he couldn't ask for anything until Rav Abuchatzeira explained why he had called him into the room, ahead of all the others who were waiting their turn.

 A humming sound in the distance abruptly became a deafening beat. Avrohom listened in puzzlement, then realized that a helicopter must be landing nearby. The whirling rotor blades generated enough noise to make conversation all but impossible. The sound diminished slightly.

 The door opened—and in walked Rav Ovadiah Yosef - one of the leading Sefardic Rabbis in the Jewish world. Avrohom stared as the two greeted one another and began talking in rapid Arabic. Most of the conversation was indecipherable to him, but he did manage to make out one word—Suriya, which means Syria.

**A Request to Ask for Information in Syria**

 Rav Ovadiah Yosef suddenly turned to Avrohom. Speaking now in Hebrew, he said "Rabbeinu [Rav Yisrael Abuchatzeira] says there is a lady named Daadba who escaped from Syria, but her husband never made it out. Right now she is an *agunah*, (a woman who doesn't know if her husband is dead or alive, and is therefore forbidden to remarry.) If you ever go to Syria, please try to find out what happened to him."

 Avrohom couldn't believe what he was hearing. Neither rav had any idea who he was! Certainly they did not know why he was in Israel — that information had been kept completely secret. Why would they even imagine that he would be going to Syria? And how had they known that he would be coming to see them that day?

**Receives Blessing and Good Wishes of Rav Abuchatzeira**

 Gathering his wits together, Avrohom managed to give Rav Ovadiah Yosef his private number. He took leave of the two rabbanim after receiving Rav Abuchatzeira's good wishes and blessing. Less than an hour had passed since Avrohom had set out on his visit.

 Stepping out of his taxi in front of the auto mechanic, Avrohom was surprised to see John driving their car out of the garage. John noticed that Avrohom was noticeably shaken by his encounter with the Baba Sali. But, for obvious reasons, Avrohom did not tell John about the conversation.

 To Avrohom's surprise, John picked him up the next day and announced that the day's plans included flying via Cyprus to Syria! (Where the Americans had supported schools at the time.) Avrohom was shocked. Soon after, they were on a helicopter on their way to Syria, when the helicopter began to experience problems.  The pilot told the passengers to hold tight, as they would need to make an emergency landing... *to be continued.*

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Good Shabbos Everyone.*

**President Obama Declares: “The Jews Built Our Cities, Cured Our Sick”**



 On Tuesday afternoon (May 17th), President Barack Obama opened the official "Month of Jewish Heritage" at the White House.

 President Obama welcomed some of the most influential Jews in the U.S. to the White House, from Members of Congress and Supreme Court Justices to Elie Wiesel, whom he called "a dear friend of mine and an inspiration to the world."

 "This month," said Obama, "is a chance for Americans of every faith to appreciate the contributions of the Jewish people throughout our history –- often in the face of unspeakable discrimination and adversity.  For hundreds of years, Jewish Americans have fought heroically in battle and inspired us to pursue peace."

 The president acknowledged the many contributions of Jews to the United States. "They’ve built our cities, cured our sick. They’ve paved the way in the sciences and the law, in our politics and in the arts. They remain our leaders, our teachers, our neighbors and our friends."

 "Not bad," concluded Obama, "for a band of believers who have been tested from the moment that they came together and professed their faith. The Jewish people have always persevered. And that’s why today is about celebrating the people in this room, the thousands who came before, the generations who will shape the future of our country and the future of the world."

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