



# An Arm for an Arm

“I can’t move my hands, help! They are paralyzed.”

The hysterical cries emanating from Dina, the wife of one of the country’s wealthiest Jews were indeed heart wrenching. Meir searched far and wide throughout the entire province of Wallachia for some type of cure for his wife, someone who would be able to restore movement to her arms; but to no avail.

Distraught and desperate, they began travelling from city to city in the hope that along the way, something would present itself as a remedy for Dina’s shocking condition. They tried everything. Doctors with elaborate credentials were consulted, potions from exotic lands were suggested, but still nothing seemed to help.

At long last there seemed to be some light when they heard of the Baal Shem

Tov and his miraculous powers. Without hesitation the couple travelled to Mezibuzh. Upon hearing their story and situation, the Baal Shem Tov simply told them to remain in the city. This repeated itself a number of times, each time they were told to remain in Mezibuzh.

After some time passed in this manner, they once again came to the Baal Shem Tov and this time he had something else to say. He informed them that he would be going on a journey to a certain village and that they should follow behind him.

The horses were prepared and the wagons were hitched. Along the way, the Baal Shem Tov stopped at an inn, operated by one of his Chassidim.

When the innkeeper greeted him, the Baal Shem Tov asked if it would be okay to stay overnight. The

man was quite taken aback by the question, because he considered it an honor that such a righteous man would choose his tavern to spend the night and he readily agreed. However, the Baal Shem Tov had one request that would have to be met. Nobody should be allowed in during his stay and all doors and windows should be tightly sealed. No

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matter who came knocking, they were not to be granted entry; no exceptions even for a great minister or individual of high rank.

It was up to the innkeeper to keep the door locked and if anyone insisted on entering he was to tell them that they could not come in because the Baal Shem Tov is staying here.

The innkeeper took care of all the details and prepared dinner for his guests.

The night grew late and everyone retired except for the Baal Shem Tov who stayed awake learning from a *sefer* at the table. Not too far away, in a back room of the house, lay the despairing Dina.

Meanwhile in another part of town a drunken party was taking place. Two brothers had finally met up after more than twelve years of not seeing



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each other. They were taking full advantage of this time together and were making merry. One of these brothers happened to be a great minister and the owner of the inn in which the Baal Shem Tov, Meir and Dina were staying.

As the wine kicked in and their minds began fogging from the alcohol, the owner of the inn began bragging and boasting about the beautiful tavern he owned not too far away. Eventually his guest, his brother, was convinced and he asked for a swift horse to go and see the place for himself.

Thinking that it was only a short distance away from his brother's estate, he didn't bother taking a coat or jacket, but made do with the shirt he was wearing.

Unfortunately for him, as soon as he began galloping away, the weather turned nasty and he was caught in a freezing and bitter blizzard. The supposedly short trip, instead took many hours.

As soon as he reached the inn, he jumped off the horse and began pounding strongly on the door waiting for someone to open and allow him in to warm his frozen bones.

Putting his ear to the door, the only sound he

heard was of his pounding heart but not the footsteps or voice of somebody inside he was so desperately waiting for.

Standing outside, his knocks became louder and more aggressive as the cold penetrated his very bones. Finally he heard a voice call to him, but not what he wanted to hear. "Sorry", the man called. "We cannot let you in, the Baal Shem Tov is here and he won't allow anyone to enter."

This repeated itself a number of times, until the Baal Shem Tov signaled to the innkeeper that he could now go ahead and let him in.

The visitor hurried through the entranceway and warmed himself by the fireplace.

After a few minutes, his breathing became steady and the numbness dissipated. Feeling returned to his hands, legs and entire body.

He now wanted to know who this 'Baal Shem Tov' was who had the nerve to leave him in the stormy night and almost freeze to death.

The innkeeper pointed to the table at which the Baal Shem Tov was learning and said he is the one. The man's rage boiled over and he

screamed and cursed again and again. When his anger had reached its breaking point he ran over to the table while brandishing his sword and was about to give a mighty swing. Just then the Baal Shem Tov called out to Dina, "Quickly raise up both your hands."

Suddenly, the most amazing thing happened.

Dina raised her hands with ease and comfort as if nothing had been wrong and the sword wielding visitor was now standing near the Baal Shem Tov with his hands frozen in place. Dina had taken his power of movement, and she had given him, so to speak, her paralyzed arms.

Realizing the gravity of the bizarre exchange that just occurred to him, the haughty visitor begged for mercy and forgiveness; if only he would have strength in his arms once again.

The Baal Shem Tov gazed at him and replied, "The exchange already took place, there is nothing more I can do to reverse it!"<sup>1</sup> **T**

1. This story has been adapted from the sefer שבחי הבעש"ט. Please note that the names don't appear in the original but were added in our English translation for the sake of clarity.