



Mysterious Messenger

In a town in Eastern Europe lived a wealthy man. His immense fortune, while providing him with a comfortable life, could not buy what his heart desired most: a child.

He journeyed to the Baal Shem Tov and pleaded that the great miracle worker *daven* for him that he be granted offspring. To this the Baal Shem Tov acquiesced, promising him a son, but with one condition: until the child reached the age of four, he was not to be allowed to touch the ground—he was to constantly be held in arms.

Money was no object, so the man readily agreed to this condition.

A son was born to him, and he hired a staff of workers whose duty it was to ensure that the child never touch the ground. The boy grew quickly, outpacing his peers, and the task of

holding him was quite difficult. Still, they persisted, keeping a close watch to ensure he never touched the ground.

After some time, the Baal Shem Tov passed away. His instructions remained sacred and continued to be upheld.

As the child's fourth birthday approached, the family prepared a lavish feast to celebrate. The guests began to arrive, and the child's mother was busy preparing the exquisite spread. A hired hand held the child in her arms, as he screamed to be let down.

One of the invited guests told the worker, "Put him down; nothing will happen to him." The child's mother wasn't there to stop her, and the worker put the child down upon the ground. Instantly, he vanished, as if a hand had plucked him up.

The ensuing panic was a fright to behold, as the

desperate parents rushed to Mezhibush, where the Baal Shem Tov's daughter, Rebbetzin Adel, still resided. Her father had instructed her that in every pressing matter, she was to visit his resting place and inform him. She now went and told her father what had occurred to the child, and returned and relayed the Baal Shem Tov's instructions: The father of the child was to undertake a 12-month period of exile. Wherever he spent the day, he was not to remain overnight, and he was to tell and retell the entire story to everyone he met, even if he met the same person many times. Each day, he was to say, "Today is one day of my exile, today is two days," and so on. "Today is one month, today is a month and a day," until the year's conclusion.

The father agreed to everything, journeying from

place to place and retelling his tale of woe to onlookers who often thought he had lost his mind.

Eleven months after his exile began, the man reached a village and visited the home of an old woman. Upon hearing the story, she told her children, "This is him."

Shocked, the man asked for an explanation. She told him, "The local baron had no children, and had been told by doctors that there was no hope of his ever having any. Sorcerers came and told the baron that they could procure a son for him. Around eleven months ago, a rumor traveled around town that sorcerers had indeed conjured up a child for the baron."

The woman now suggested to the child's real father that he go to the baron's courtyard. He did so, telling his story as he had so many times before,

לזכות
החתן הרה"ת ר' שניאור זלמן שיחי אבענד
והכלה המהוללה מרת אסתר תחי' העכט
לרגל חתונתם בשעטומ"צ
י"ד סיון ה'תשע"ח

נדפס ע"י הוריהם
הרה"ת ר' אהרן מרדכי וזוגתו מרת שרה מאשא
ומשפחתם שיחיו
אבענד

הרה"ת ר' יהושע וזוגתו מרת פריידא
ומשפחתם שיחיו
העכט



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and once more, people assumed he had lost his senses. He did this again and again, day after day, asking the guards to allow him into the courtyard. Eventually, they relented. Again he told them his story and again he was their laughingstock. But he didn't mind, for each day, he was able to enter a little bit further, until, from a distance, he caught a glimpse of his beloved son.

He returned and told the old woman this, to which she replied, "It's been nearly 12 months, and I heard that one of these days, the bishop is going to arrive to baptize the child. I heard that this bishop is a good man; ask him to help you get your son back."

The woman described the bishop, and how he would come to town in a carriage drawn by eight white horses, and the route he would take.

The desperate father stood on the side of the road until he saw a carriage drawn by eight white horses. As it approached, he lay down across the highway, refusing to budge. The bishop instructed his driver to stop, and that the man be brought to him. The father told his story and begged the bishop to intercede.

The bishop said, "The baron's mansion has a large window on one side. Stand beneath this window."

The father did as instructed. When the bishop arrived at the baron's house, he asked the guards, "Who is that man, standing outside the window?" They told him, "He's a deranged person who keeps coming here and telling the story of his son who was snatched from him." The bishop said, "Bring him into the house; I wish to hear his story from him myself." The man

entered, retold his story, and once again pleaded with the bishop for the return of his son.

The bishop told the baron, "This is not your son. Why should you raise a Jewish child; it's better to raise one of our faith. Return him to his father, please."

The bishop had the baron stand facing the Yid, placing the child between them. The bishop asked the child, "Whom do you wish to have as a father; the great, wealthy baron, or the poor, downtrodden Jew?" The child was silent. The bishop asked again and again, urging the child to answer. Finally, the child burst into tears, turning to the Yid and embracing him, saying, "I want you to be my father."

The bishop told the man, "Take your son and go home" and they banished

the father and his son from the baron's home.

The father now ran to tell the old woman that her advice had worked, and then continued homeward.

As he was traveling, he again encountered the bishop's carriage, and the bishop turned to him and said, "Know that the Baal Shem Tov can save even after his passing." With those words, the bishop and his carriage vanished. They were divine emissaries of the Baal Shem Tov, sent to save this man's son.

Some days later, the real bishop arrived to the baron's home, and then the baron, too, understood the greatness of Hashem's miracles, brought by His loyal servant, the Baal Shem Tov. **1**

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