

Good Shabbos Everyone. In the 1920's, a secularist leader in Eretz Yisroel, who was known for his outspoken criticism of the Torah community, suddenly became critically ill. He was brought to the British Missionary Hospital in Jerusalem which, as its name indicates, was owned and operated by Christian missionaries. The hospital was open only to Jews, for its real purpose was not to heal the sick but to introduce Jews to gentile beliefs. Near every bed was a copy of the "New Testament" and the walls of each room were decorated with religious proclamations. Jerusalem's rabbinate had issued a strict ban against even setting foot into the Missionary Hospital.

After being in the hospital for four weeks, the secularist's condition had deteriorated to the point where doctors declared that there was no hope for recovery.

The man's family realized that the only ones who could help them at that point were the doctors at Shaarei Zedek Hospital. Shaarei Zedek had been founded by Jerusalem's Torah community; its staff, headed by the legendary Dr. Moshe Wallach, was known to be the best in the country. The family feared, however, that the patient would not be granted admittance into Shaarei Zedek, since he had ignored the rabbinate's ban and was known as a forceful opponent of the Torah community.

The family concluded that their only hope was to speak to the city's revered Rav, Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, who was known for his kindness and love toward every Jew. Someone was chosen to represent the family, and he went to R' Yosef Chaim's humble home in the Old City.

As the man made his way through the streets of Jerusalem, a terrific thunderstorm struck. Wet and shivering, the man entered the Rav's home and found him deeply immersed in study. The visitor apologized and related the entire story.

R' Yosef Chaim promptly closed the sefer before him, donned his coat and prepared to leave for the hospital. Outside the thunderstorm was still raging, so the visitor blocked the door, refusing to allow the Rav to go out in such treacherous weather. "I only asked for a letter, not that the Rav should go out in the storm," he said. To this, R' Yosef Chaim replied, "When a Jewish life is in danger, a letter is not enough. I must personally attend to fulfilling this great mitzvah." As the visitor later related: "Still speaking, the Rav dashed out of the room and in a moment he was up the steps. Young as I was, I had trouble keeping up with this seventy-five-year-old man. No sooner had we set out than the rain became torrential. I advised the Rav to wait until it let up a bit. In response, he only quickened his pace, exclaiming, 'Can a few drops of rain deter a person who is going to save a Jewish life?'

"I breathlessly followed the Rav until we reached the Jaffa Gate. There we boarded a carriage and ordered the driver to get us to the hospital as quickly as possible. The Rav drew his worn Tehillim from his pocket; I sat transfixed by the glow on his face as he quietly prayed."

As soon as they arrived at the hospital, R' Yosef Chaim wasted no time in arranging for the patient's immediate admittance. Two weeks later the man was released from the hospital having fully recovered. Knowing how agitated the man became whenever the Torah community came under discussion, his friends decided not to tell him of R' Yosef Chaim's involvement in his case.

During a speech at a groundbreaking ceremony one year later, this secularist declared, "We will build the land in our own way and with our own strength. We will build this land by waging a fight to the death against the black arm of Rabbi Sonnenfeld and his cronies!"

Seated in the audience was the messenger who had come to R' Yosef Chaim on that stormy day to seek his help on the man's behalf. Upon hearing the man's terrible remarks, he jumped up and shouted, "How dare you! Have a little respect for the saintly rabbi to whom you owe your very life!" The messenger then made his way to the podium and spoke at length about the efforts of R' Yosef Chaim to save the speaker's life. (Shabbos Stories, Reb. Shimon Finkelman, p. 122)

It states in the parsha, "and Bnai Yisroel had done everything that Hashem commanded Moshe, so did they do." Is it not redundant that the verse states, "so did they do?" The Torah is perhaps hinting to a basic principle in Jewish belief: we are obligated to follow the advice of our Torah leaders. The Ramban explains in parshas Shoftim, that it is crucial that every Jew listen to his Rabbi. Because, we are a society of laws, and the Rabbis are our judges. A society which does not heed its judges, is doomed to chaos.

We see the greatness of our Torah leaders from the inspirational story we told this week. R' Yosef Chaim was truly a Tzadik, a righteous person who lived an exemplary lifestyle which we can all emulate.

Good Shabbos Everyone.

A Refuah Shleimah to Shusha Malka bas Golda "Anyone who brings merit to the masses, no wrongdoing will come into his hands."