

## Story Pesach 5783

A story for פסח. One day, the נודע ביהודה was walking down a street in Prague and saw a little שייגעץ, a young Gentile child, standing there crying with a basket. He went over to him and asked, "Little child, what's wrong?" The child responded, "My father is a baker. They send me out every day to sell rolls. I sold all my rolls, but I dropped my money - I lost it. If I go home, my father will punish me." The נודע ביהודה asked, "How much did you lose?" The boy told him, and the נודע ביהודה gave him the amount, saving him from punishment.

Fast forward many, many years later, around this time of year, in the era of פסח - perhaps in ניסן, or maybe it was אדר. [By the way, while we're talking, don't forget אילנות ברכת!] They were preparing for פסח when, late one night, there was a knock at the door of the נודע ביהודה's home. His wife answered and saw a young man, clearly not Jewish, standing there. He said, "I must speak to the rabbi." She was hesitant, but after thinking it over, she let him in. The man turned to the נודע ביהודה and asked, "Do you remember me?"

The נודע ביהודה looked at him and said, "No, I don't." The man continued, "I was the little boy to whom you once gave money and saved me that day. I have come to warn you. My father is not a good person, and he is involved with a group of people - the local authorities, the priests - and they have devised a plan. They intend to poison all of the bread that they will sell right after פסח because they know that you will be coming to buy from them. I wanted to let you know so that you can take care and protect yourselves." And with that, he left.

Now, the נודע ביהודה faced a terrible dilemma. He could not publicly accuse the bakers - they had not yet committed the crime. He could not cause mass panic. And he certainly could not let them know that he was aware of their plan. What was he to do? He made an announcement, sending out a proclamation in the middle of פסח: "Everyone must come to shul for a special דרשה. I have an urgent announcement." The entire community gathered, and the נודע ביהודה stood before them and declared: "מורי ורבותי, I must inform you that we have made a terrible mistake in the לוח. This year, we miscalculated, and פסח is actually one day longer than we originally thought. You must keep פסח for an additional day, according to my פסק." His authority was so great that no one questioned him. No one argued. If the נודע ביהודה said this was the הלכה, then this was the הלכה. And so, the Jewish community observed an extra day of פסח.

Meanwhile, the bakers were waiting for the Jews to come purchase bread - but no one came. They went to investigate and were told, "The rabbi announced that we made a mistake, and we cannot eat bread today." Furious, the bakers exclaimed, "He only did this to rob us! He is trying to cheat us out of our hard-earned money. We worked hard to bake this bread for them!" So they decided to take the נודע ביהודה to court. In those days, this meant standing before the king or the royal minister of the city. In court, the bakers accused the נודע ביהודה of trying to ruin them, of making them lose their money and their business. The נודע ביהודה turned to them and said, "You claim I did this to deceive you? Bring me some of your bread." They agreed and presented him with the bread. The נודע ביהודה then requested that an animal, a dog, be brought in. They brought a dog, and the נודע ביהודה said, "Feed this bread to the dog." The bakers hesitated, but they had no choice. They gave the dog the bread, and the dog dropped dead on the spot. At that moment, everyone saw the truth: the נודע ביהודה had saved the entire Jewish community through his חכמה and שכל, and that is the famous story of the year that פסח was nine days long. Good Yom Tov!

