



Recap:

Sheikh Abdullah convinces little Yosef that he is his devoted uncle. He tells the shocked child that his parents died during a plague while Yosef — or Abdul, as the sheikh names him — was terribly ill. Yosef believes him completely, since his memory was wiped clean due to his traumatic experiences and his resulting illness. He is immensely grateful to his benevolent uncle and delights in his new life of comfort and prosperity.

While little Yosef was getting acclimated to his new life, his father worried about him every moment of the day. He had settled in a small town in Turkey, far from the clutches of the Yemenite government. Avraham wrote a letter to the Mori back in Sana'a.

To the revered Mori,

I'm writing to you from a distant land. I have found my bearings in the small Jewish community, together with my children — Yonasan and Mazal. But Yosef! My little, innocent Yosef! I fear that my heart cannot bear this burden much longer. His deep brown eyes haunt me with an earnest plea to save him from the evil clutches of those who have captured him. What has the sheikh done to my little boy?!

I beg you, honored Mori. Maybe you can find out what happened to Yosef? He's just six years old — a child barely out of babyhood! He must be shedding rivers of tears each day and no one is there to wipe

them away. Perhaps you can send me a tidbit of information about him? Is he alive?

Avraham gave his heartfelt letter to a reliable messenger who promised to guard it with his life. If the Yemenite government would discover that the Sharabi family had taken up residence in Turkey, they would stop at nothing to exact their revenge.

Several long months passed before the messenger returned, bearing a sealed letter from the Mori.

Don't worry, my dear Avraham. Your son, your little Yosef, will not be lost forever. He is no longer in the neighborhood, and all our attempts to discover his whereabouts have met with failure. No one in Sana'a knows what has become of him...but the Borei certainly knows. He is watching over your little boy and He will not remove His protection — now and forever.

Avraham, chazak! Stay strong! Your Yosef will come back home. He will return.

Avraham Sharabi was blessed with tremendous emunas chachamim and he knew that the words of the Mori were not just empty promises. He told his children, "We will continue davening for Yosef that he should stay strong wherever he may be. But don't worry. The Mori said that our Yosef will come back home. He will return."

With this promise engraved in his heart and mind, Avraham Sharabi found the strength to go on despite his fear and concern. He found employment at a local smithy, where his employers

were very impressed with his golden hands and his unshakeable integrity.

Yonasan was introduced to his new *melamed*, who greeted him the first day with a seemingly innocent question.

"Tell me, my child, what is the last thing that you learned before your escape?"

Yonasan looked down at the floor and tears sparkled in the corners of his deep brown eyes. "I learned the *parshah* of *Vayigash*," he replied softly. "I remember learning that Yosef Hatzaddik revealed himself to his brothers and said, 'Ani Yosef — I am Yosef.' That's what I learned."

The *melamed* looked at the tearful little boy and he was perplexed. He couldn't understand why the words of the *passuk* had evoked such a strong reaction.

"My child," the *melamed* said. "You don't have to be embarrassed. I'm sure that you will catch up to your classmates in no time."

But Yonasan merely shook his head and looked away. No, he was not embarrassed.

"I...I didn't learn on my own," he tried to explain. "I always learned together with my brother. My twin brother, Yosef. And when I would read this *passuk* and call out, 'Ani Yosef,' my brother always laughed and said—"

The *melamed* embraced the little boy and whispered, "Enough, my child. I understand that it is so, so hard for you to be here alone, without your brother. You will learn diligently and the *zechus* of your Torah study will protect your brother, back in Yemen."

Yonasan wiped his tears and mustered a shaky smile for his *melamed*. "I am ready!" he exclaimed. "I will learn with double the amount of diligence — half for me and half for Yosef!"

Months chased each other through the years as the Sharabi family became respected members of their Turkish community. In the ensuing 12 years, little Yonasan grew into an earnest young Torah scholar and his diligence was often discussed with awe and admiration.

Parents were known to encourage their sons, "Look at Yonasan Sharabi! He learns with such *hasmadah*. The *Borei* should help that you should

follow in his footsteps."

Avraham Sharabi was immensely proud of his son, yet he couldn't look at him without feeling pain that was as great and powerful as his pride.

"Who knows what my Yosef is doing nowadays?!" Avraham often wondered in the dead of night. "He is already 18 years old, just like Yonasan, but he hasn't learned any Torah. No one has taught him to serve the *Borei* with love and fear. He has a mere few grains of Torah that we managed to learn together before the sheikh snatched him away from us."

Yosef Sharabi, or Abdul as he was known by all the who's who in Sana'a, knew nothing of his father's angst. Far away, in Sana'a, Yemen, he indulged in the lifestyle of a rich, respected prince. Wherever he went, he was accorded honor as befit his noble lineage. He thrived in his uncle's shadow.

"Abdul, I have succeeded!" the sheikh informed him one sunny morning. "The Imam is so impressed with your brilliance. He heard that you are fluent in several languages and he therefore agreed to my plan."

"Your plan?" Abdul asked. "What plan are you talking about?"

"Abdul, my dear nephew, you will be appointed as a judge right here, in the courthouse in Sana'a!" Sheikh Abdullah exulted. "You're just 18 years old, but your brilliance has assured you a prominent position! You will bring fame and fortune to our entire family."

Abdul could not believe the astounding news. A judge at 18 years of age? It was unheard of! He allowed himself to imagine the scene.

Young Abdul, dressed in the solemn robes of a presiding judge. He marches into the courthouse, looking neither right nor left. This young man needs no prompting. He knows what he's doing and he knows where he's headed.

"Did you hear what I said?" the sheikh demanded, noting Abdul's dreamy gaze.

"A judge," Abdul replied, his voice trembling with the enormity of his new responsibilities. "I will be the judge. It's a dream, dear uncle! A dream from which I never want to awaken!"

To be continued...