



Exonerated by the Torah
Parshas Toldos

All were long asleep late at night, but the lights were still blazing at the home of Rabbi Moshe of Swarren.

A few months ago, one of his community members was caught by the tax authorities who charged him with smuggling goods without paying taxes for them.

He was put on trial, during which he denied all the charges and even agreed to swear on his statements.

The court sentenced him to death, but said it would set him free on one condition - that Rabbi Moshe and his colleague Rabbi Refael of Barshad, the leading Torah authorities in the area, testify to his innocence.



The man's family beseeched Rabbi Moshe and asked him to testify on his behalf and save his life. Rabbi Moshe was shaken by the request - on one hand, he knew the man was not innocent and he did not want to give false testimony on the man's behalf.

On the other hand, the family was counting on him to save their father, who would face certain death if Rabbi Moshe turned them down. Should he not save a Jewish life, even at the expense of breaching another Torah commandment that forbids lying?

In our weekly parsha we read that Yitzchak sent Yaacov, and he Yaacov "went to Padan Aram, to Lavan the son of Betuel the Aramean, the brother of Rivka, the mother of Yaacov and Esav."

On the words "**the mother of Yaacov and Esav**" Rashi writes "I do not know what this teaches us," as we already know that Rivka was their mother.

Another look at the verse exposes a serious delima Rivka was facing. Rivka wanted her son Yaacov to escape Esav and run to Lavan.

On the other hand, if Lavan learned that Yaacov was escaping from Esav he would have turned him over to his brother. Rivka did not know what to do.

Yitzchak provided the solution by ordering Yaacov not to tell Lavan the real reason he had arrived. Instead, he should convey the general sense that "the mother of Yaacov and Esav," that all is well.

Sometimes, for the sake of survival in a menacing environment, one can give the reality another appearance. Thus, one can save himself and those around him.

This is the message here.

Rabbi Moshe knew he would be forced to commit perjury, and he was upset by this prospect, but he knew that he would be saving a fellow Jew

from the gallows.

He decided to act on the teachings of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditshev and find a way to provide a mitigating argument.

Speaking out loud to the family he said: "Who convicted him and sentenced him to death? A non-Jewish judge. However, according to the Torah's law he should have been exonerated, and therefore, for the sake of saving a Jewish life, I will go and testify on his behalf."

Rabbi Moshe approached the problem from another angle and shed new light on the conundrum, and by doing so saved a Jewish life.