

Under Arrest

[This is Yochanan Abraham's account of what happened when policemen came to Tabitha's Place to arrest him during the Spring of 1998. Yoneq wanted us all to hear this account so that we would know what our brothers in Reuben are going through and also benefit from the wisdom our Father gave him in responding to the policemen who arrested and interrogated him. This should be read in every household.]

One morning while I was washing dishes, Anavah stuck her head in the dish area and told me that the police were here. I told her to keep her peace, and go about things as usual. A few minutes later Nathanael came to the dish area to tell me that the police want to see me. He said that there were many of them. I prayed that I wouldn't lose my peace.

I went out to see the policemen, greeting them warmly. There were quite a few standing in a circle, looking at me seriously. As I extended my hand to shake hands with them, two policemen took me quickly aside, and speaking very briskly and tersely, they told me that I was under arrest, and under suspicion in the case of the death of the son of Michel and Dagmar Ginoux. I asked them, very surprised, if they were saying that I killed the baby. They irritatedly said no, but that I must be questioned concerning the whole affair. They then told me that I would be in their custody until further notice, and that I could speak to no one except by their permission. They told me that I could have a lawyer after twenty hours.

They placed me in their van while they went through Servants' Quarters, because they heard that I lived in that house. Two policemen were stationed to guard me in the van.

The first two who were from the special investigation department came back out to tell me that they wanted to search my room. Knowing how the French system is here, I didn't bother to ask whether they had a search warrant. I prayed that our Father's will would be done and led them to my room. They asked Mithkah to leave with Moshiah, then they went through every corner of my room. They told me that they were looking for any evidence of medical practice. They found several books on pregnancy, and asked why we had them. I explained to them that it was only natural that my wife would be interested in her pregnancies, having been pregnant seven times. They understood.

They asked me whether I give my children medicine. I told them I do if they need it. They asked where is the medicine. I told them I didn't have any. They said that it's impossible that I have five children and there is no medicine in my room. I told them that my children are healthy. They asked what do I do when my children have fever. I told them I put them to bed, give them plenty of liquids, good food, and wait until it goes away. They asked what if the fever is serious. I said I take them to the doctor. They said nothing.

They told me that their report would be that nothing incriminating was found in the room. I thanked them. They escorted me out of the room where we met Mithkah in the hall. There they told me that I could inform my wife that I was under formal arrest, and that they were taking me to the police station. Mithkah looked at them and said, "But he's a good man!!!" The policemen smiled and made a motion with his hands that meant "maybe".

We got into the police van and drove away, with the other cars following behind. It was difficult to absorb the reality of what was happening. It was like a dream. I have never been taken in a police car in my whole life, not to mention being suspected as a criminal.

As we drove along I experienced peace as I prayed to our Father and asked for His Spirit to be upon me. I was so thankful that I had nothing in my conscience accusing me.

The Interrogation

We arrived at the police station, where we entered a room with three chairs and a computer. One officer went out while the other put routine questions to me. At one point he asked how I came into the community. It was a marvelous opportunity to share my heart with him. For several moments he lost his hard composure and listened intently, asking questions which seemed outside of his investigation. He didn't write down my answers, but listened intently. When the other officer came back, he started being hard again, and writing everything down that I said.

The other officer sat down. He was obviously the head of the team. They both were from Orthez, and are part of the criminal investigation team. At this point began ten hours of grueling,

unrelenting questioning, searching for just one point of incriminating evidence, proving that the community was responsible for the death of that baby.

In their questioning it was obvious that they want three men: Yoneq, Haggai, and myself. They set out to prove that we influenced the couple to neglect their baby and just allow it to die, as a part of some kind of religious doctrine which refuses medical attention to those who are in the community and are in need.

They spoke with venom at times. Our Father gave me grace to keep my peace, and to speak to them as two men who have heard the wrong information.

The leader said that we don't allow our children any freedom of choice. I answered him the same way that we answered the education inspector when he made that same accusation. I asked him whether he had any children. He said that he had two. I then asked whether if his children wanted to come here to hear all that we have to say and learn from us, would he allow it. He said of course not. I just looked him right in the eye and said nothing more. He cleared his throat and told the other officer to not write all that down, and to go on to another question.

My heart went out to these two men as they went from one accusation to another. Their only contact with us was through the death of a child, and that surrounded by all the media frenzy, and the huge compilation of lies from ADEFI and from people who left us. They had a hard task in front of them to find guilt where there was no guilt. Now they would have to hear from what they could discern in their heart, as they spoke to me. They would have to judge my character and spirit.

They read to me lies about Yoneq, and about Haggai, and about myself, then asked me what I thought. I told them quite calmly that those were all fabricated and just blatant lies. The leader got furious and said that he was not lying and that he had the evidence right in front of him. I told him that I was not saying that he was lying, but that the material that he was reading was totally a lie. He then showed me the material. I asked if they were from news journalists. He said yes. I told him that they are out to sell newspapers, they are not interested in the truth. What they had written was fabrication.

At one point the leader put his face close to mine and said that we (Yoneq, Haggai, and I) prey upon the weak, and only the strong survive in our communities. I felt sorry for him somehow, and told him very gently that that was not the truth. He didn't insist, as he sat down to look through his papers for more accusations.

In the middle of all the questioning they suddenly had to go with all the other officers, leaving one policeman in charge of me. They were gone for an hour. The lone policeman turned on the television and sat to watch it. I started asking him questions about his life. We had the best conversation for an hour. He really has the heart of the nations. He told me how he felt that it was really bad how we are being treated. May our Father bless that man. The others returned, and he got real serious, going back to his work. I had to resist smiling.

My interrogators came in, and we got back to work. Somewhere around eight or nine hours later the leader slumped on his desk next to the other officer and said that I bother him. When I saw him do that, I couldn't help but reach out to touch his arm and tell him that I was sorry if I was making it difficult for him. He took me seriously and waved it off as being nothing to worry about. I was glad. The questioning continued on as usual, but I noticed that the venom had left. The hardness was appearing to be more an act than reality. They had to keep asking each other what to ask next. They looked tired and worn out.

I felt that they knew in their hearts that we are innocent, but they had to make it look good so that the judge wouldn't think that they didn't do their job.

After ten hours they told me that I was free to go. They called Tabitha's Place and asked for someone to pick me up. Haggai and Marc came to get me. They looked like beautiful angels. My head was hurting terribly as we drove home. I was so thankful for the grace of our Father.

Social Services

I received a paper stating that a social service worker has been appointed for my family, and that I was to appear before the judge for children. I went before the judge, who is not the judge for Michel and Dagmar, but they work together in conjunction with the case.

The judge told me that I was guilty of breaking the law because I refuse to vaccinate my children. He then had me meet the social worker and very coldly told me that he would do all that is necessary, based on her report, if there is any sign of neglect or deprivation concerning my children. He followed by telling me that I could have a lawyer if I wished. He asked if I had anything to say. I told him no. He dismissed us and shook our hands as we went out the door. I thanked him. He did not try to hide his distaste as he looked me in the eye. I prayed that he would be objective if it is at all possible. He wears an earring in one of his ears.

The social worker came to visit twice. She was nervous and strictly business. On the first visit she wanted to see all my children. They were wonderful, unintimidated, frank, open, smiling, and looked her right in the eye. She refused any coffee or cookies, and set the date for the next visit. The judge told me that she would be coming for the next three months until June 30th.

On the second visit she drank a bit of coffee and ate one cookie, but she adamantly refused to take a loaf of fresh, hot bread, saying that they were not allowed to receive gifts. The other social workers took bread, cookies, and coffee without hesitation when they visited the other families. I think she is new on the job and is strongly affected by the media reports.

I encouraged my children and Mithkah to be extra kind to her. She might have a sensitive heart.

We have to go to Pau the first week of May to visit the psychiatrist and psychologist appointed by the court.

They want to prove that there is danger to our children, therefore justifying their being taken from us and given to foster parents. That's where we are at the moment. I'm just waiting for the date of the visit in Pau.

All I know is that our Father is with us.

Yochanan Abraham