

# CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
PREFACE .....	9
SHALOM AND BLESSINGS .....	15
Chapter One [FAITH]	
PERFECT FAITH.....	17
Chapter Two [CHARITY]	
THE MEANING OF HOSPITALITY .....	21
Chapter Three [PRAYER]	
THE WAY YOU HAVE BEEN PRAYING IS JUST FINE .....	27
Chapter Four [HEALING]	
DISBELIEF .....	33
Chapter Five [LOVE]	
PERFECT TRUST.....	39
Chapter Six [SHABBOS]	
SHABBOS JOY .....	45
Chapter Seven [BLESSINGS]	
THE WEDDING BLESSINGS .....	49

Chapter Eight [REPENTANCE]	
TWO CANDLES ARE ENOUGH.....	61
Chapter Nine [MONEY]	
FERVENT PRAYER .....	67
Chapter Ten [TORAH STUDY]	
THE BOOK .....	75
Chapter Eleven [TEACHER]	
TEACHING KABBALAH .....	83
Chapter Twelve [STORY TELLING]	
THE STORY TELLER.....	91
APPENDIX .....	105
THE EPISTLE .....	106
GLOSSARY .....	117
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	123
SOURCES OF THE BAAL SHEM TOV STORIES.....	127
DEDICATIONS.....	131
ABOUT THE AUTHOR.....	139

## Chapter One

### FAITH

The Baal Shem Tov taught that the power of faith is so great that even if a person believes in a physical impossibility, faith can accomplish miracles.

### PERFECT FAITH

**And** then there was the time that Rabbi Dovid Leikes, one of the *Chevrayah Kadisha*,<sup>1</sup> was speaking with several followers of his son-in-law, Reb Mottel of Chernobyl (also known as the Chernobyler Rebbe).

Reb Dovid asked the followers of Reb Mottel, “Tell me. Do you have perfect faith in your *Rebbe*,<sup>2</sup> Reb Mottel?”

None of the men responded.

After a pause Reb Dovid persisted, “So nu?”

Finally, one of Reb Mottel’s adherents came back with, “Who can say he has perfect faith?”

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<sup>1</sup> The inner circle of the Baal Shem Tov’s closest followers.

<sup>2</sup> Yiddish term for a Chassidic Master and leader of a Chassidic sect.

Reb Dovid nodded and continued. “My friends, let me tell you a story about faith. Once, several of us in the Chevrayah Kadisha spent a *Shabbos*<sup>3</sup> at an inn with the *Rebbe*.<sup>4</sup> As usual, *Seudah Shlishit*<sup>5</sup> went late into the night.”

“The Baal Shem Tov told us of the mystical insights he had received while meditating, praying, and studying *Torah*<sup>6</sup> during that Shabbos. When he finished speaking, we *Benched*,<sup>7</sup> said *Maariv*<sup>8</sup> and then *Havdalah*.<sup>9</sup>”

“Immediately afterwards,” Reb Dovid continued, “we sat down together with the Baal Shem Tov for *Melava Malkah*.<sup>10</sup>”

“After a few minutes, the Baal Shem Tov turned to me and said, ‘Reb Dovid, reach into your pocket and take out a gulden, please, and buy us some mead (honey wine) from the inn keeper.’”

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<sup>3</sup> Sabbath.

<sup>4</sup> Here, the Baal Shem Tov.

<sup>5</sup> The third meal, traditionally eaten on Shabbos before sunset.

<sup>6</sup> Twenty Four canonized scriptures of traditional Judaism. It consists of the Five Books of Moses, the Prophets, and the Writings. The Torah can also mean any spiritual text or idea that is connected to Torah Judaism.

<sup>7</sup> Grace after meals.

<sup>8</sup> The evening prayers.

<sup>9</sup> A ritual prayer recited at the close of Sabbath and other holy days that marks the separation between holy days and the ordinary days of the week.

<sup>10</sup> A meal eaten after the conclusion of the Sabbath that celebrates the return of the Shabbos Queen to heaven, where she dwells until the next Sabbath, when she returns once again.

“I was still wearing my Shabbos clothes and of course I never carry money on *Shabbos*.<sup>11</sup> Yet, without thought or hesitation, I reached into my pocket to take out the gulden, as my Rebbe had requested. And — the most amazing thing! I found a gulden in my pocket.”

The disciples of Reb Mottel, after hearing this story, commented to Reb Dovid, “You know, that is really not that amazing. It’s just another miracle story about the Baal Shem Tov.”

“Yes. That is so,” said Reb Dovid. “But the point of my telling you the story is not to show that the Baal Shem Tov does miracles. My point is that my faith in my Rebbe, the Baal Shem Tov, is so great that I didn’t even think to question his request. I just reached into my pocket for the money. That it was there is secondary.”

And so it was.



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<sup>11</sup> It is a transgression of Shabbos to carry money on one’s person.