

The preparations were in full swing. The *chevraya kadisha* were all gathered in Mezibuzh, getting ready to spend Pesach with their holy master, the Baal Shem Tov. As with all mitzvos, this too was done with great joy; joy in fulfilling the mitzvah, and joy that they were in the presence of their teacher and master. The Baal Shem Tov too, was conducting himself with joy and happiness.

During *bedikas chometz*, the *chevraya kadisha* noticed a change in the Baal Shem Tov. Gone were his joyful face and the uplifted mood, replaced instead by a pensive and withdrawn demeanor.

Bedikas chometz was done quickly and quietly, and immediately afterwards the Baal Shem Tov secluded himself in his room.

The *talmidim* knew that something was amiss. What could have caused the Baal Shem Tov to stray from his usual way of happiness and good spirits, especially at a time like this, *erev Yom Tov*? Something terrible must be happening; trouble must be approaching.

Hours go by and the Baal Shem Tov is still alone in his room. Late at night, the Baal Shem Tov emerged, and selected a minyan of *talmidim*. They were to stand next to his room and say *tikkun chatzos* with the special *kavonos* that he taught them. The Baal Shem Tov left them with these unusual instructions: He too, will be saying *tikkun chatzos* in his room. If at any time during the night, they stop hearing his voice, it is a sign that they must put all their concentration and *kavono* in saying a few specific *kapitlach* of Tehillim, until they hear him again.

The *talmidim*, fearful and trembling, did as they were told. They went to the mikveh, and then gathered next to the Baal Shem Tov's door to say *tikkun* and daven. From the other side of the wall they heard the voice of the Baal Shem Tov, joining them in reciting *tikkun chatzos*.

Suddenly, the Baal Shem Tov was silent. They understood that the situation on High was not good, and they began saying the Tehillim. A few minutes later one of the *talmidim* ran in to the room where the *talmidim* sat, and informed them that the Baal Shem Tov was now lying on the floor, completely lifeless.

The situation must be even more serious than they thought; frightened, they increased their intensity in saying Tehillim.

Early the next morning, the rest of the *talmidim* arrived and quickly learned about the situation. The Baal Shem Tov is on the floor, without a breath of life or any sign of movement. A great outcry arose, and the *talmidim*, each one a great tzaddik in his own right, began crying begging for mercy from Above. Finally, the Baal Shem Tov opened his eyes.

Still weak from the ordeal, he was carried to the mikveh. For shacharis, the Baal Shem Tov himself davened at the *omud*, and he gave the members of *chevraya* the *kavonos* of Rosh Hashono to daven with.

After davening, the Baal Shem Tov said a Torah on the idea of *bitachon*. As long as there exists a possibility of salvation, he said, one's *bitachon* is not fully utilized. Only when all is seemingly lost, when even the *teffilos* and greatest *kavonos* of all the tzaddikim cannot help, only then is there true *bitachon* that Hashem will help.

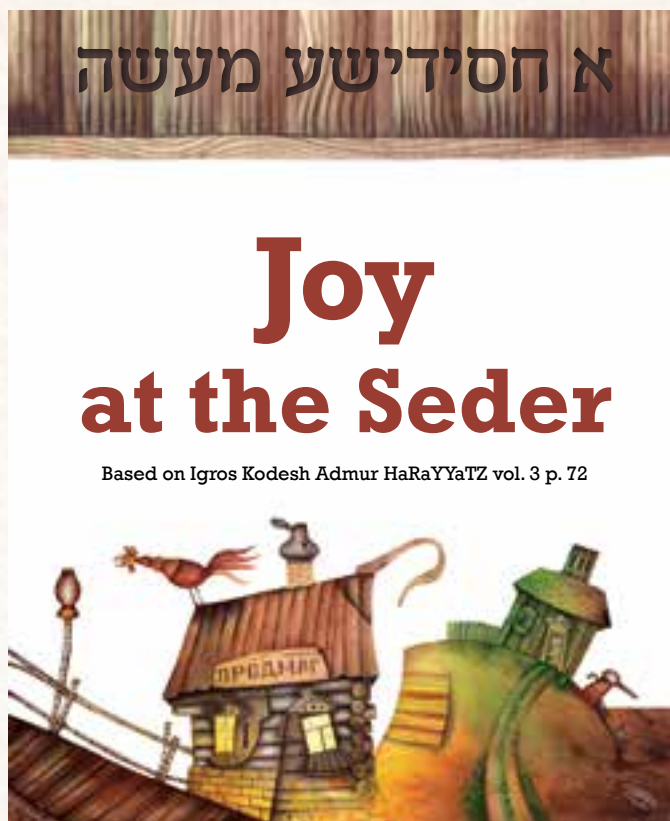
Upon hearing these words, the *talmidim* were even more saddened. Was it that bad? Is the situation so hopeless that even the Baal Shem Tov himself can't help?

The rest of the day was spent in davening and preparing for Yom Tov. The Baal Shem Tov encouraged his *talmidim* to be joyful, and he himself behaved in a joyful manner, although still serious and worried.

The seder, which was usually accompanied by stories and Torah, was conducted quietly. The *chevraya kadisha* were all gathered around the table, each one immersed in his own thoughts. Suddenly, a powerful exuberant laugh was heard. Startled, they looked up, and the Baal Shem Tov was sitting up, his eyes burning with a holy fervor, and laughing without letup.

With the *talmidim* looking on expectantly, the Baal Shem Tov began to speak:

Mazal Tov, Mazal Tov! Even the *poshute* Yidden are Hashem's people Yisroel. They can accomplish what even Yisroel Baal Shem Tov cannot.





Know my *talmidim*, that *lima'ala* there was a terrible *gezeira* on an entire village of four hundred Jewish families. I tried everything but nothing could prevent it, their fate was sealed.

In a small village, there lives a simple unlearned Jew. He lives alone with his wife, and Hashem never blessed them with children. Tonight, they sat down for the seder, just this Yid and his wife.

After kiddush, they began to say the Haggadah. He started to tell her about the *tzaros* and hardships that the Yidden had in in *Mitzrayim*. When he came to the *gezeira* that all newborn boys must be thrown into the Nile, the wife burst out crying. Don't cry, he told her, everything works out in the end; Hashem saved the Yidden and brought them out of *Mitzrayim*.

How can Hashem treat his children that way? She cried. If I had a child, I wouldn't behave like Hashem does with his people. How does Hashem let His children suffer in *golus* until today? Why does He let the *goyim* cause them so many problems? Does He like the *goyim* more? Why don't Yidden have *parnossoh*? Are they not Hashem's chosen people, His children? Who treats their children like that?

Don't speak that way, her husband answered. Hashem's ways are hidden from us, we can't understand everything He does. Who are we to question? Hashem is righteous in all His actions.

What does that matter, she cried. Nothing can justify acting with your own children like that! Hashem must put an end to all the *tzaros* that Yidden experience immediately!

The pure women's words caused a big commotion *lima'ala*. The good *malochim* seized her words and lined up excitedly, clamoring for salvation for *Klal Yisroel*. Opposite them lined up the prosecuting *malochim*, and a great battle ensued. The intensity increased, both sides were using all their strength to argue their side.

I became very afraid, said the Baal Shem Tov, as it was unclear which side would prevail.

Meanwhile, in the village, the husband and wife were finishing up their seder. They were tired out from the long discussion, and under the influence of four cups of wine. They were so caught up in discussing the miracles that Hashem performed for the Yidden, that at the end of the seder they jumped up and started dancing. They danced with pure simple joy, happy that the Yidden were saved and released from *Mitzrayim*.

At that moment, there was a wave of *simcha* on high. The opposing *malochim* were silenced, and all the decrees against the Jewish community were abolished.

When I saw the affect that this dancing had, I couldn't contain myself, and I burst out laughing.

Saying this, the Baal Shem Tov put his handkerchief on the table, and told the *talmidim* to put their hands on it. They held on and closed their eyes, and saw the simple couple dancing in their home. **D**