

A Chassidic Story (#5)

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Shivchei HaBaal Shem Tov #65

{This story was also told by Reb Zelig to the compiler of Shivchei HaBaal Shem Tov. Even though it is not about the Baal Shem Tov, it is included because it teaches some important lessons. The one whose dream-vision it is, is assumed by many to be Reb Yaakov Yosef of Polnoye, the author of *Toldos Yaakov Yosef*, the first printed collection of the Baal Shem Tov's teachings. Although this is not 100% certain, for convenience sake we will assume that here. On with the story!}

Reb Yaakov Yosef dreamt that he was in a beautiful chamber in Heaven's Garden of Eden. He was astounded by the beauty of everything that he saw and could not stop looking. Then he sees that the Satan, in the form of a dog, has entered and there is a beit din (judicial tribunal) seated, awaiting cases. Satan-dog lodges a complaint with the beit din. "There is a Jew who works as an overseer of a feudal lord. Though it is true that he diligently studies Torah, like clockwork, and he is very generous in giving charity, I still have a complaint. He's been the village overseer for years and every year he overtaxes the local goyish serfs."

The Satan-dog then presented the beit din with a bill of how much the Jewish overseer had cheated the goyim. The beit din

raised their voices and yelled at him the way people yell at a dog. He fled.

When Reb Yaakov Yosef heard the complaint, he was concerned. He decided to not leave till he would see what the outcome was. About a half hour later, the Satan returned and repeated his complaint. The beit din responded as they did previously. Again the dog fled.

The Satan-dog came a third time and stood in front of the beit din. "Master of the Universe! I came with a complaint to the court and they've ignored me!" An announcement was made informing the beit din that they were to offer a judgment. They wrote down their verdict. One of the following was to happen. Either [a] the feudal lord would confiscate everything the Jewish overseer owned and put him and his family in debtors' prison; or [b] one of the overseer's descendants would convert to Christianity. The choice was the overseer's. The dog took the verdict in its mouth and went on its way.

Reb Yaakov Yosef awoke. He was very frightened for the overseer. One, he liked him very much, and two, even the Satan had praised him. He sent for the overseer and told him the story. The Jewish overseer decided that he and his family should be put into prison and that all their possessions should be confiscated. God forbid that any of his descendants should convert!

The feudal lord did in fact confiscate everything and put them into jail. Reb Yaakov Yosef had to raise funds to have the family released from debtors' prison.

The moral of the story? Don't even think of stealing from a goy. The Satan will just collect it all from the kedushah (holiness).

(The careful reader will find that the story has other morals,

as well.)

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