**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas DEVORIM 5780**

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**The Chassidic Rebbe**

**And the Guinea Pig**

**By**[**Rabbi Levi Welton**](https://www.aish.com/authors/232496271.html)

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**Many stories of Chassidic Rebbes involve miracles.**

**Mine involved guinea pigs.**

As a child, my mother forbade me from having a dog. It’s not that she, a Chassidic woman and PhD in microbiology, was religiously pet-averse. On the contrary, she’d often quote the Talmud (Avodah Zara 3b), which attests that the Creator is an enthusiastic pisciculturist who plays daily with His pet fish.

Her reason was simple. Behind our modest home, nestled in the foothills surrounding U.C. Berkeley, was the community mikvah, a quaint redwood cottage housing the Jewish ritual bath used primarily by women.

As the volunteer director, my mother didn’t want the spiritually serene “mikvah experience” to be spoiled by the barking rants of an overzealous pooch. So, in an effort to satiate my zoological curiosity, she allowed all other kinds of indoor pets.

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***Me with the hutch, designed by Andy Grant***

Salamanders from the backyard. Frogs from Boy Scout camp. Hamsters. Parakeets. Guinea pigs. Even a chicken named Fwedwika. Through encouraging me to be a caretaker for my little critters, my mother taught me the meaning of responsibility, reliability, and perhaps [even love](https://www.aish.com/sp/ph/Does-God-Love-Dogs.html).

But the guinea pigs were proficient at producing exorbitant amounts of excrement and they had begun to breed. As soon as I began to smell like them, I was told I needed to figure out an “outdoor solution.”

Our neighbor, a kind and skilled architect, fashioned an outdoor guinea pig hutch for me, adjacent to the flower garden in front of the mikvah. I presume my parents agreed to it for easy access to the self-perpetuating, 100% organic, guinea-pig fertilizer.

I was covered with guinea pig feces when I saw the entourage of Yiddish-speaking men coming my way.

One Friday afternoon, I was out cleaning the hutch in preparation for Shabbat. My T-shirt was splattered with guinea pig feces from my vigorous scrubbing. My hands were caked with a multicolored malodorous muck, from changing their newspaper bedding. But I loved it, because I loved seeing the guinea pigs squeal with excitement and purr with contentment when being let back into their freshly cleaned home. I was so engrossed in the task at hand that I didn’t hear the crowd speaking Yiddish until they were already upon me.

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***Rabbi Hershel Yolles, of blessed memory ©David Spieler***

I looked up and saw an entourage of men walking down the path, headed toward the mikvah*.*At their center was a Chassidic Rebbe, Rabbi Hershel Yolles, who regularly visited the Bay Area. (Many Chassidim immerse in a mikvah daily, especially before Shabbator Jewish holidays). Like a startled guinea pig, my head jerked from side to side looking for an escape route. But it was too late. The path to the mikvah snaked right by my location. I froze. I felt so embarrassed.

*Oh no, what is the Rebbe going to say to me?*

I may have only been in elementary school but I knew enough to know that there were more appropriate ways to prepare for Shabbatthan being caught knee-deep in rodent excrement. And from an animal called a “pig” no less.

As Rabbi Yolles’ sharp eyes flitted in my direction, I felt the heat of shame flush onto my face. I wished the ground would just open and swallow me up. *Please, Hashem, please,* I thought, *make them not notice me. Please make them walk straight by me.* But the Samborer Rebbe, royal descendent of the Baal Shem Tov, Reb Elimelech of Lizensk and the Sanzer Rebbe, stopped right in front of me.

“*Yingeleh*(young boy), what is your name?” he asked.

I felt my face go red as I answered, “Levi. Levi Yitzchok Welton.”

“Ah,” he said as he stroked his pure, white beard. “You’re the son of Rabbi and Rebbetzin Welton?”

“Yes,” I muttered, desperately wanting the interrogation to be over. His followers stood in respectful silence but I could tell they were restless, confused as to why the Rebbe had stopped to converse with a child.

**He Asked the Question I Had Been Dreading**

Then he asked the question I had been dreading, “And what are you doing here?” He pointed one of his fingers toward the guinea pig hutch. Fingers, I knew, which only touched the soft pages of the Torah or the tear-soaked lines of his *siddur*(prayer book). I felt mortified.

I felt overwhelmed with guilt. How often did Chassidic Rebbes make pilgrimages to Berkeley, California? I should be inside, studying Torah in preparation for Shabbat. Or helping my mother prepare the Shabbat candles. I wish he would have caught me in the midst of *davening*(praying) or something like that!

Mumbling and fumbling, I told him, "Um. These are my pet guinea pigs. I'm cleaning their hutch for Shabbos." My eyes locked onto the tips of my feces-covered sneakers as I awaited the beratement I was sure would ensue.

Instead, I heard him laugh.

**His Twinkling Eyes Grasped My Soul**

I looked up. The California sun glinted off of his wrinkled face. His laugh was quiet, warm and musical. Then he leaned towards me, his eyes twinkling as they grasped my soul.

“*Yingeleh*, I can think of nothing more G-dly than for you to take care of all your animals as you prepare for Shabbat.”

“*Yingeleh,”*he whispered, “*Der* *Beshefer* (The Creator) made the world in six days and on the seventh day, He rested. Almighty G-d took care of all His animals before He entered Shabbat. I can think of nothing more G-dly than for you to take care of all your animals as you prepare for Shabbat.” He paused and said, “May *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* bless you to always be a loving caretaker of the beautiful creatures in His beautiful garden.”

I was shell shocked. No words came out of my mouth. The Rebbe smiled. Then, just as unexpectedly as he had appeared, he disappeared down the path with his entourage and into the mikvah*.* I ran into my house to proudly tell my mother and father what had happened.

As I grew up, I learned many stories of Chassidic Rebbes. Quite often, the tales recorded pop off the pages with more vivid authenticity than Broadway's award-winning all-Yiddish rendition of "Fiddler on the Roof." Many of those tales involve miracles of supernatural scale.

Mine involved guinea pigs. And that’s kosher enough for me.

Rabbi Welton is an educator-turned-writer passionate about sharing the values of Torah with a global audience. Raised in the San Francisco Bay Area, he holds degrees in medicine, education, and film. Currently, he works as the spiritual leader of Lincoln Park Jewish Center and a healer for low-income patients in NYC. Additionally, he serves as a chaplain in the United States Air Force. When he isn't working, you'll find Rabbi Welton promoting the Jewish homeland, cultivating cultural relationships for the *Charadei* community, and interviewing extraordinary people for his monthly newsletter. For more info, visit [www.RABBIWELTON.com](http://www.rabbiwelton.com/)

*Reprinted from the Parshat Pinchas 5780 website of aish.com*

**The Rabbi and the King**

**By [Asharon Baltazar](https://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/22307/jewish/Baltazar-Asharon.htm" \o "Browse more articles by Baltazar, Asharon)**

As a devout chassid, Rabbi Shmelke stood out in Mikulov (Nikolsburg), the center of Moravian Jewry, many of whom had yet to be exposed to the Chassidic movement. Even though he served as the head rabbi of the city, the Jewish population considered his customs strange.

This bothered the Nikolsburg council. Convening for a short meeting, they determined it was time to finally remove Rabbi Shmelke from his post. The beadle was called in, informed of the decision, and ordered to deliver the news to Rabbi Shmelke. Though simple, the beadle was also honest. He raised an eyebrow.

“But what has he done?”

His question immediately prompted a ripple of exasperated looks from the council members. “This has nothing to do with you. Just do what you’re told.”

Undaunted, the beadle politely pressed them for an answer.

“It’s the way he acts,” someone explained. “He isn’t fit to lead Nikolsburg if his customs are so bizarre.”

“I disagree,” said the beadle. “In fact, I happen to know that he is a righteous man.”

This was a remark that would've been overlooked, but the beadle, never having said an untruth, had piqued the interest of the Nikolsburg council. There was a silent pause as they all regarded the simple beadle.



**Illustration by the Rivka Korf Studio**

“But how would you know?”

The beadle smiled. “At the hint of dawn, as you probably know, I’ve always gone around knocking on people’s doors to rouse them for the morning prayers. Whenever I passed by Rabbi Shmelke’s house, despite the hour, the window to his study was lit up, and he would be inside, swaying over an open book. Another man, whom I didn’t recognize, sat opposite him, learning with him.

“‘Who is this man studying with you?’ I asked Rabbi Shmelke, once my curiosity no longer allowed me to hold my tongue.

“He replied with a name I never expected. ‘Elijah the Prophet.’

“One time, I was slightly behind schedule, which meant I didn’t pass Rabbi Shemlke at my usual time. When I finally did, Rabbi Shmelke was outside, holding a pair of candles as he escorted out two men: one was the individual who studied with him nightly, Elijah the Prophet, and the other wore a golden crown. They bid Rabbi Shmelke farewell and soon disappeared from view.

**The Man with the Golden Crown**

“I immediately asked, ‘Who is the man with the crown?’

“‘That is Menashe ben Chizkiah,’ answered Rabbi Shmelke, referring to the evil king who caused the people of Israel to serve idols.

“My eyes must’ve widened to the size of saucers. ‘But what business does *he* have with you?’

“‘Well, he wanted to settle a question that involved him,’ explained Rabbi Shmelke, furrowing his brow. ‘You see, his question came to me as a result of a recent incident that occurred in a small town. Some man there walked into a church and proceeded to wreck the entire place, with no justification. He was imprisoned and swiftly sentenced for hanging.

“‘Usually, when a man suddenly passed away, the [Jewish] townspeople would put together funds for his wife and children. However, in this case, even though the man’s widow came begging, they turned her away. Self-endangerment, they claimed, wasn’t covered, and her husband’s reckless actions were nothing short of that.

**Why King Menashe Appeared**

“‘This heated dispute was sent right to the town’s rabbi, who, in turn, referred it to me. It was, indeed, an interesting case. I deliberated for a while, yet couldn’t issue a verdict—each side had a reasonable claim. So, Menashe appeared in my dream and revealed that his soul was reincarnated in that man’s body. This man’s unusual actions and death were needed for the ultimate cleansing of his soul. The widow deserved the money.’”

Upon hearing the beadle’s story, the council members conceded that their rabbi was a pious and holy man, whom they would continue to engage with honor.

Rabbi Bunim of Pshischa, who retold this story, would end off by commenting on the righteousness of the beadle. “This simple beadle merited to see Elijah the Prophet every single night—never once did he boast about his own experiences. Instead, he lauded Rabbi Shmelke’s worthiness.”

***Reprinted from the Parshat Pinchas 5780 email of Chabad.Org Magazine.***

**Building Worlds with Words**

**By Jack Cohen**

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**Dr. Jack Cohen, world renowned dating coach**

Allow me to share with you the words of an elderly woman who related how her younger brother went on to become an extremely well-liked and well-respected entrepreneur in Israel:

This is the story of a very special person, my younger brother. My parents moved to Israel in 1952 with five children, and were blessed to have another four over the next number of years. We lived in a rural area and were very poor as my father never fully adjusted to life in Israel and struggled to make a living. I was the second child in the family, after which there was another girl and boy, followed by another boy, named Tuvia. The following story is about Tuvia.

He was born as a premature baby in the 1950s. Diagnosing a person with a mental health illness was not commonly done in those days, although Tuvia was visibly developmentally delayed. In school, he was slower than the other kids and less focused, and would sit in the classroom and struggle to grasp the material. But, although he wasn’t the brightest student, he was very warm and kind. He would help get the ball during recess if it got tossed aside and return it to the other kids.

Thankfully, he wasn’t taken advantage of by his friends. They were considerate and sensitive to him. When he finished eighth-grade and his friends began deciding which high school to move on to, Tuvia was left alone. He was not accepted into any yeshiva and instead remained at home.

But Tuvia did become disheartened. He would help my mother around the house and go shopping when needed. He as well played with his younger siblings and made them feel loved.

**Missed the Last Bus Back Home that Night**

On one occasion, when Tuvia was sixteen, I accompanied him to the supermarket to purchase some food for the family. After we finished getting everything we needed, we quickly headed out, hoping to catch the last bus back which would take us home. But we missed it. With no other bus on schedule later that night, we were stuck. We were both carrying a few heavy bags and walking three miles to our home did not seem like an option. Neither did we have a phone to call home.

“What if we would take a taxi?” said Tuvia. In those days, only those who were relatively wealthy would take a taxi.

“A taxi?” I said to Tuvia.

“Yeah!” he enthusiastically said. “I know it costs a fair amount, but I think Abba would be okay with it.”

And so, I complied and we called for a taxi.

As we entered inside, we were met by a frustrated and angry driver. Something was clearly bothering him. But Tuvia had something to tell him.

**Compliments the Taxi Driver**

“You know,” Tuvia said, “you’re a really good driver!”

“Is that a joke?” the cabbie asked.

“No, I am very serious,” Tuvia replied. “I noticed that you know how to maneuver smoothly and quickly from street to street. You are an all-star driver!” As Tuvia said this, I looked over at the driver to catch his facial reaction. He was beaming with a huge smile.

“I don’t think I was ever given a compliment like that in ten years!” he said. “Well,” added Tuvia, “I guess a lot of folks don’t know what it really means to be a good driver, because you certainly are.”

By the time we reached close to our house, I asked the driver how much we owed him.

“Nothing,” he said with a smile. “It’s been my pleasure. For this sweet boy and you, the ride is free.”

Tuvia became all excited as he heard this. “I never met such a professional driver with such a good heart!” Tuvia exclaimed. The driver just kept on smiling. He even offered to carry our bags up to our house. That was one incident with Tuvia.

**Mezmerized by the Construction Workers**

A week later, one of my other brothers was out and about with Tuvia. As they walked down the street, they noticed a tall and plush building under construction. Four men stood working away, prompting Tuvia to stop and begin to stare. My brother tried encouraging Tuvia to continue walking, but Tuvia was mesmerized by the construction workers.

“Have a good day!” Tuvia yelled out, as he waved his hand in the direction of the workers. “You are doing an amazing job!”

The workers, taking note of the young boy’s sincere compliments, were flattered. They, in fact, momentarily stepped down from where they were working and began talking to Tuvia. For a few minutes, they told him all about how they organized the building materials together and what skills were necessary to construct such a building. As my other brother later related, the workers seemed to feel extremely good about the attention Tuvia gave them.

This was how Tuvia behaved whenever he encountered other people, which was quite often. He was very sociable and friendly, and always made a point of complimenting others and making them feel appreciated and important. His words were soothing and uplifting. And especially at home, he always offered us heartening and encouraging words, making us feel good about ourselves.

**Finally Meets a Girl Who Wants to Marry Him**

Over the next several years, all the kids in the family got married, except Tuvia. He of course wished to get married too, but it wasn’t the easiest to find someone suitable for him. Finally, though, he met a girl who saw something special in him despite his developmental delays. He happily got married.

While Tuvia did not have a steady job and source of income, he never lost that special dynamic and magnetic personality which everyone loved. It was not uncommon to find him complimenting and praising friends and even strangers he would meet on the street, making them self-reflect on their strengths and positive qualities. It was something special to see.

As time progressed, Tuvia became friends with many people. He knew just about everyone you could imagine. And it was all due to his congenial and warm personality which constantly sought out the good in others and offered laudable praise.

Considering that he knew so many people and made so many friends, he became akin to a broker, essentially serving as a middle man between people and businesses. If you needed to receive a certain service or supply, you would come to Tuvia and he would help arrange it. As it turned out, people would graciously give him a portion of the profit, in lieu of making the connection and putting in the necessary time and energy.

Tuvia soon became the liaison between employers and employees, suppliers, offices, newspapers, advertising agencies and more. And it all began because he would recognize others and genuinely compliment them.

**A Surge in Business Dealings**

Quite quickly, Tuvia began seeing a surge in business dealings and brought in quite a nice income. His wife, who was also skillfully adept in marketing and management, began investing in real estate. As Tuvia’s earnings increased, his wife would put each penny to good use. Property would be bought for cheap, and then renovated and turned over to sell for profit. Tuvia as well, with his many connections, helped find jobs for his siblings and nieces and nephews.

Tuvia became, what is called in Yiddish, a *macher*. His entrepreneurial skills skyrocketed and earned him considerable recognition and respect across the board.

And that is Tuvia’s story.

Think about it for a moment. Here was a boy who ostensibly looked different and was disadvantaged. He was the child who was turned away from school because he was challenged and slow. But he was also someone who made a tremendously successful life for himself and climbed out of poverty and a potentially bleak future. And why was that so? Because he complimented others and made them feel good about themselves. It was that simple.

**Living Up to His Name – “G-d is Good”**

Tuvia truly lived up to his name, meaning “G-d is good.” He understood that although life may present us with numerous challenges and seem dark and gloomy, we can turn it around and make it better than we imagined. Tuvia became an immeasurable source of goodness to others, and in turn, paved a life of goodness for himself.

Never tell yourself that life is over and all hope and potential is lost. No matter your circumstance in life, you can achieve one of the greatest things possible: helping others and making them feel valued and appreciated. And, just as Tuvia had done, it all starts with your mouth. Share with another person a kind, encouraging word and wish them a good day.

We can all start living with this attitude and approach right now. Turn to your grandfather, grandmother, mother, father, brother, sister, friend or neighbor and wish them… “May you be inscribed and sealed for a good year.”

*Reprinted from the Rosh Hashanah/Parashat 2017 email of the TorahAnytime Newsletter as compiled and edited by Elan Perchik.*

**Judging Favorably #94**

**The Stolen Pocketbook**

I was going back to Yerushalayim after spending a few months in Tzfas. I left my bags with the Golds, a wonderful family I had met while studying there. They happened to be away just then, but they gave me the keys to their house, so that I could come in the morning to get my luggage.

I was late and ran into the house, knowing that the taxi I had ordered would be there soon. As I dropped my pocketbook down in the kitchen, a girl who had just come to Tzfas a few days earlier walked in. I had been introduced to her – she was a traveler, out to see the world. She had a lot of energy, but few resources.

She had just come by to say hello to the Golds and was sorry they weren’t home. She asked me for a glass of water and I quickly gave her one, and then ran to the back of the house to gather my things. I came back and she was gone – and so was my pocketbook!

**The Front Door was Wide Open**

The front door was wide open. A few seconds later, my taxi arrived. I had to postpone going back to Yerushalayim and report the theft to the police. I also had to cancel my checks, and report the missing passport and ID card. Imagine the audacity of that girl, walking off with my purse right from under my nose!

The next morning, I looked around the area with the hope of at least salvaging my bag with whatever the thief had chosen to leave in it. I did find the pocketbook – across the street, by the garbage bin, barely recognizable since it was covered with mud. I looked inside, and to my astonishment everything was still there – my money, passport, checks; not a thing was missing.

Now I was perplexed. I tried to imagine the scene: She must have made a dash with my bag and as she was rummaging through it, she saw someone watching her. She probably got scared, dropped it and ran. Such an ending to all crooks, I thought. And a happy ending for me.

But that really wasn’t the ending. When the Golds returned, I told Mrs. Gold show someone had made off with my bag. But before I could give her any details, I saw her chuckling. Now what’s so funny about a theft? I wondered. Seeing my confusion, she told me that she should have warned me to keep the front door closed because she has constant problems with cats coming in and running off with things.



My pocketbook has a long, thin shoulder strap, and obviously it was a fun toy for that cat, who dragged it through the mud and played with it until he found something more interesting to do. I hadn’t really wanted to accuse that girl, but how could I have thought otherwise? The thief – a cat? Come on! (“*The Other Side of the Story*” by Mrs. Yehudis Samet.)

*Reprinted from the Parshas Mattos-Masei 5780 email of The Weekly Vort.*

**Story #1179**

**Superior Milk and Butter**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](https://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=00013M00:001V3hHA00001Y%5eU&count=1594821928&randid=1305407955&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=2&randid=1305407955)



Many of the Baal Shem Tov’s ways might have seemed strange, even questionable, to an outsider. Rabbi Zev-Wolf Kitzess, the Baal Shem Tov’s constant companion, however, had enough confidence in his rebbe never to doubt his actions. He knew that in the end, even if it took years, all would be for the best.

Reb Wolf accompanied the Baal Shem Tov one time when the latter visited a certain village Jew. The villager welcomed the Besht into his home which was sparsely furnished and showed evident signs of poverty.

“I want a pidyon (redemption donation) of eighteen rubles, the Baal Shem Tov requested from his host.

**Eighteen Rubles was a Considerable Sum**

Eighteen rubles was a considerable sum and the poor man did not have it. However, since the Besht insisted upon that sum, he took some of his furniture and his cow and sold it in the market, returning with the necessary sum which he gave to his important guest.

Reb Zev Wolf looked on silently while the Baal Shem Tov took the money and departed without further comment. It was only many years later that he understood what the Besht had done and why.

The villager’s rent was due several days after that incident. Naturally, he could not produce the sum required and the landlord was forced to evict him and his family from their home. He saw no future for himself in that village and decided to settle down in another village belonging to a different landlord.

He found himself a tiny hut to house his family and by selling some more of his belongings managed to scrape together enough money to buy a cow. This cow provided him with his only source of income; each day he sold the milk she produced and managed to eke out a bare existence for his family.

**The Landlord’s Cow Took Sick**

Sometime later his landlord’s cow took sick and their milk was non potable. The landlord sent his servants to the surrounding villages in search of a new supply of milk. They came upon the new tenant and bought some milk.

When the landlord was later served some of his milk, he could not help commenting upon its quality. “I want you to buy all the milk that his cow produces,” he told his servants. “Tell the owner of the cow that I will pay handsomely for the privilege of being his only customer. This milk and butter is most superior to what we have been using until now.”

It was this incident that turned the tide of the villager's fortune. Each day he would deliver milk to the manor and each day the landlord would comment on the quality of the milk and milk products derived from it.

As time went by, he grew fond of the Jew and began to consult him about his business, slowly turning over to him many responsibilities. He trusted him implicitly and paid generously in appreciation of the Jew’s honesty, reliability and faithful service. The landlord respected him so much that being childless, he transferred ownership of that village and the nearby city to the Jew. Feeling that now everything was in good hands, the landlord took leave and went abroad after giving the Jew legal title to that area.

**Did Not Recognize the Former Villager**

The next time Reb Wolf set eyes upon the former pauper was several years later. This time, however, he did not recognize the former villager.

The occasion of Reb Zev Wolf’s visit was an appeal on behalf of Jewish prisoners and captives. The Besht had sent his talmid on a countrywide tour of villages and cities to raise money for the many Jewish tenants who, through lack of funds, had been indefinitely thrown into jail until someone came to their aid. Reb Wolf had done well in his travels and lacked three hundred rubles for the allotted sum which his rebbe had designated.

Reb Wolf had arrived at the city which belonged to the former villager and had come to stay by the rabbi of the city. He was received cordially by the rabbi who was an acquaintance of his.

“Why are you so festively attired?” Reb Wolf took the liberty to ask. “Is there some special occasion for this delegation of communal dignitaries whom I see coming to fetch you?”

“Yes,’ he replied. “We are all going to greet the landlord of this city who will be paying us a visit today. Why don’t you come along with us? He is a Jew and will most probably be willing to contribute to your cause.”

Reb Zev Wolf agreed to accompany the rabbi and his companion to greet their guest in his townhouse. The landlord greeted the delegation warmly, paying special attention to the newcomer, Reb Zev Wolf, whom he recognized. When he had finished exchanging greetings with his guests and dealing with the necessary matters which they had come to discuss, he took Reb Zev Wolf aside.

“You don’t remember me, do you?” he began. Reb Zev Wolf scrutinized the wealthy man but could not place his face.

“No,” he admitted.

**Pressing the Three Hundred Rubles in Reb Zev Wolf’s Hand**

The landlord went on to explain how his change of fortune had come about. Then pressing the three hundred rubles still lacking into Reb Zev Wolf’s hand, he bade him goodbye.

It was only when he returned to Mezibuz that Reb Zev Wolf understood the entire story. Reb Zev Wolf presented himself to the Baal Shem Tov and handed over all the funds that he had gathered during his travels.

“The last three hundred rubles were donated by the village Jew whom you once asked for a pidyon of eighteen rubles, many years ago. Today he is a wealthy man.”

“Yes, I know. Let me now tell you why I extracted that large sum from him when his circumstances were so difficult.

“I saw at the time that a change of fortune was awaiting him in the future but not in that place. I found it necessary to bring him to the end of his tether so that he would be forced to leave and settle elsewhere. Which is exactly what happened! The rest you already know for yourself.”

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**Source** :Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from Tales of the Baal Shem Tov by Y. Y. Klapholz (English translation by Sheindel Weinbach), who based it on â€œEmunas Tzadikim.

**Connection** : Weekly Torah Reading of [Mattot-] Massai [42] Stages of Life

Biographical note: Rabbi Yisrael ben Eliezer [of blessed memory: 18 Elul 5458- 6 Sivan 5520 (Aug. 1698 - May 1760 C.E.)], the Baal Shem Tov [Master of the Good Name often referred to as the Besht for short], a unique and seminal figure in Jewish history, revealed his identity as an exceptionally holy person, on his 36th birthday, 18 Elul 5494 (1734 C.E.), and made the until-then underground Chasidic movement public. He wrote no books, although many works claim to contain his teachings. One available in English is the excellent annotated translation of Tzava'at Harivash, published by Kehos.

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