

# TORAS REB KALMAN



## סיפורי צדיקים

*Captivating stories full of Yiras Shamayim taken from Shmuessin that  
Reb Kalman Krohn z'tl gave in Adelpia Yeshiva*

### *Forever Cow*

Rav Meir Premishlan was a tremendous tzaddik and an unusually giving person. At his levayah, Rav Shlomo Kluger said in his eulogy that he never saw another human who gave as much of himself away as Rav Meir Premishlan. Rav Meir would give everything he owned away to others. His pockets were a train station; money never remained in his possession for long. His house was empty of all movable contents, and didn't have much other than a table and chairs, which he might have also given away if not for some restraint from his family members.

Rav Meir liked to quote the Gemara which says that "Rebbi mechabed es haashirim." We would think that this means that R' Yehuda Hanasi honored wealthy men, but the Gemara teaches

that in this context, the word 'mechabed' means 'sweeping out'. Rebbi would sweep the wealthy men out of his house, because he wanted only the poor present.

Similarly, Rav Meir did not honor wealth at all. Though vast sums of money passed through his hands to tzedakah, he did not take donations from the wealthy since he despised the honor they demanded when offering money to the poor. Instead, he vastly preferred the charity of one struggling man to another struggling more than him, from a pauper to those even more destitute than him. These donations, though miniscule, were priceless in their purity.

Every week, beginning on Sunday, Rav Meir would begin to collect money to distribute to the poor before Shabbos. He had a mission to ensure that every family in town would have meat to eat in honor of Shabbos.

One week, however, there was a large snowfall, which hindered his regular fundraising route. It was difficult to traverse the snow, ice, and subsequent mud to reach the homes of his regular donors, and there was barely anyone in the streets whom he could approach for a donation. Needless to say, although Shabbos was nearing, Rav Meir had collected but a few pennies; not nearly enough to purchase meat for all the paupers of the city.

Late Thursday afternoon, it became clear to Rav Meir that he would not be able to help the poor of his city the way he did each week. Unless...

Unless...

The only thing of value that Rav Meir and his wife owned was a cow. The cow would graze and provide them with milk, which served as a primary source of their sustenance. It was also a small source of income, since Rav Meir's wife would sell the extra milk from their cow and use

the money to purchase the basic necessities they needed.

But now, Rav Meir decided that the time had come to put the cow to a different use. Without any fanfare, he brought the cow to the local shochet to slaughter the cow and salt its meat. The poor of his city would enjoy delicious and bountiful beef over Shabbos.

But when Rav Meir returned home, grateful that he'd merited another week of bringing the splendor of Shabbos into so many poor homes, he found his wife completely frantic.

"Our cow has been stolen!" she cried. "What will we do? Our cow disappeared!"

"I know where our cow is," Rav Meir replied, so joyously that his wife immediately calmed down. "Our cow is in Shamayim. Most cows live for just a few years, but ours will continue providing us with 'milk' forever and ever in Olam Habah."

*Have a Wonderful Shabbos!*  
This story is taken from tape #TG92

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### *A Piece about Peace*

Someone once asked Rav Meir Premishlan, “I have an enemy who looks for ways to make my life difficult. He taunts me, he robs me, he bothers my children. He creates opportunities to shame me and destroy me. What can I do about him?”

“Go over to your enemy and make peace with him,” Rav Meir advised.

“How do I do that?” the man wondered. “He hates me. We’ve hated each other for years.”

“Let me tell you a story,” Rav Meir replied. “And the story will answer your question.”

This was the story he relayed.

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Rav Meir possessed ruach hakodesh, and he was not hesitant to display his heavenly knowledge. Unlike many other tzaddikim, who hide their ruach hakodesh other than on very rare occasions, Rav Meir would speak out exactly what he knew. This bothered both laymen, who were sometimes insulted by the things he said, and by other tzaddikim, who felt that ruach hakodesh was supposed to be kept hidden.

Despite the public opposition to his practice of speaking ruach hakodesh, Rav Meir was firm in his opinion that what he was doing was correct. He felt that he was doing it purely for the sake of Heaven, to bring people closer to teshuvah and Hashem, and that his actions were completely justified.

One of the sages who was staunchly outspoken in his disagreement with Rav Meir over ruach hakodesh was the great tzaddik Rav Yehudah Hersch. Rav Yehudah Hersch was a brilliant talmid chacham and a mohel, and he vehemently opposed Rav Meir’s standing on this matter. Needless to say, there were soon large teams of followers backing up both sides, escalating the conflict.

There was one man, whom we’ll call Pinchas, who desperately wanted peace, and he brainstormed for a way to lower the levels of friction and bring the two tzaddikim back together. When he had a baby boy, he decided to use the opportunity to bring his plan to fruition.

First, he arranged for Rav Yehudah Hersch to serve as the mohel. Then he asked Rav Meir to act as sandek. Both agreed, not dreaming that the other would be in the same room, and Pinchas promised to pick them up on his wagon to bring them to the bris. On principle, the two gedolim never spoke to each other, but now, thanks to Pinchas’s maneuvering, they would be at the bris together.

Figuring out the logistics proved to be a complicated task for Pinchas. For a long time, he deliberated about who he would pick up first. After a while, he decided to pick up Rav Yehuda Hersh first. He reasoned that with Rav Yehuda Hersh's stern, powerful personality, he might refuse to enter the wagon if he saw Rav Meir sitting there. Rav Meir, on the other hand, was full of smiles and good cheer, and he would surely agree to come along even with Rav Yehuda Hersh present.

On the morning of the bris, Pinchas drove by Rav Yehuda Hersh's house to pick up his mohel. "I'll just make another quick stop to pick up the sandek," he told the sage as he turned his horse in the direction of Rav Meir's home.

Rav Yehuda Hersh nodded agreeably, still completely in the dark about Pinchas's plans. But when the wagon pulled up in front of Rav Meir's home and the tzaddik emerged, he turned his face away. It was clear that he was displeased, even angry, at Pinchas's scheme.

Rav Meir entered the wagon and saw Rav Yehuda Hersh. The two had never been alone together, and he realized that this was an opportunity, once and for all, to make peace with the Torah giant sitting stonily in the wagon opposite him. Leaving the door of the wagon open, he took his seat and decided to say a story. Whoever wanted could listen, and if Rav Yehuda Hersh desired to tune him out, that, too was within his rights.

"By the Spanish Inquisition," Rav Meir began, "There were many challenges and much suffering. Anyone who did not betray his yiddishkeit and accept a foreign faith was expelled from the land. They had to leave all their riches, their money and land, their respectable professions and loyal servants. They were forced to start over as penniless refugees in a strange new country.

"There were those who were not willing to give up their powerful positions and comfortable lifestyles, and they resolved to live hiddenly as Jews while outwardly displaying themselves as Christians. While some of them managed to retain their Jewish practices, their children and grandchildren were lost to the Jewish people forever.

"In one case, there was a Jew who held a very influential position in the king's court. At the time of the Spanish Expulsion, he converted to Christianity while secretly clinging to his true heritage. After his conversion, he continued serving the king as a trusted advisor until the day when he took ill.

"The king was terribly afraid of losing such a dedicated and wise advisor, and he deployed the best doctors to the ill man's bedside, hoping they would manage to nurse him back to health. But alas, it seemed that the advisor would not make it, and the doctors informed the king that his end was near.

"With the advisor on the threshold of death, the bishop was summoned to perform dying rites at his bedside. As he performed his rituals, the bishop was astounded to note that the dying man, who was barely lifeless, turned his head away. At that moment, he realized that the advisor had not truly converted, as it had appeared, but had remained steadfast to the faith of his fathers.

After making sure that the room was empty, the bishop leaned over the dying man, tears rolling down his cheeks. "Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad," he whispered. "I, too, am a Jew. Just like you. And I will help you repent before you die."

With difficulty, the advisor managed to ask the bishop to ensure that he was brought to kever Yisrael after his passing. Then, together, the two

of them recited Shema, and with that, the advisor passed away.

Rav Meir turned to Rav Yehuda Hersh. “Like those two back in Spain, the two of us are here to serve Hashem. You serve Him one way, and I do it differently. But we are both flying under the same flag. If we both believe in Hashem, then we are on the same team. Let’s not oppose each other. Let’s serve Him together!”

Rav Yehuda Hersh turned around and gave Rav Meir his hand. “Shalom Aleichem,” he said warmly.

Together, the two gedolim went to the bris. Together, they brought another child into the covenant of Avraham Avinu. And together, they taught the entire assemblage the meaning of peace.

Sometime thereafter, Rav Yehuda Hersh’s daughter took ill. He sent a messenger to Rav Meir to request a brachah. In response, Rav Meir sent back his leftover Havdalah wine. “If she drinks it, she will have a refuah sheleimah,” he instructed, and indeed, that is what happened.

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Rav Meir Premishlan turned to the man who’d asked him advice on how to make peace. “You must live a life of joy and not allow the small things to damper your enthusiasm for life. That will enable you to love your fellow man, to be nice to your fellow Jews, even your enemies, which will ultimately lead to peace.

For those who are happy with themselves and happy with those around them will lead truly joyous lives.

*Have a Wonderful Shabbos!*

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Reb Kalman Krohn z'tl gave in Adelphia Yeshiva*

### ***Deceased Defendant***

Ahron was a wealthy businessman who saw success in everything he touched. He was involved in all sorts of business ventures, ranging from diamonds to imported rugs, and managed to increase his bottom line exponentially with each deal he closed.

As his business grew and his wealth increased, Ahron built up a large corporate empire, comprised of many employees. While he stood at the top of the tower, directing and deciding, his staff took care of the everyday aspects of the business, enabling it to run as efficiently as possible.

Working hand-in-hand with Ahron was his trusted assistant, Yaakov, who had been with him from the early days of his business activities.

Over the years, Yaakov had proved himself to be capable, efficient, and loyal, and his responsibilities grew along with the company. Eventually, Yaakov was promoted to a top finance position within the company, where he was responsible for handling tremendous sums of money. It wasn't the kind of job that Ahron could entrust to just anyone, but he was comfortable leaving

Considering the size and scope of the business deals that Ahron was involved in, whenever he closed a deal, there was a tremendous amount of money due as a down payment. One of Yaakov's roles, therefore, was to deliver the down payment safely. It was a job that involved travel, and it was even a little dangerous, but time and again, Yaakov proved himself, completed his missions faithfully.

One day, Yaakov was sent, along with a large bundle of cash, on a journey to a large city on his boss's behest. The trip was long and tiring, and by the time he and his weary horse trudged into the city limits, the sun was already high in the sky. Shabbos was fast approaching. He went directly to the hotel where he'd planned on staying and rented a room.

Realizing that there would be no time to hand over the money and complete the transaction before Shabbos began, Yaakov knew he had to find another place to leave the money over Shabbos. There were many Jews in the hotel lobby, and he approached one of them.

"Hi," he said, somewhat uncomfortably. "I was just wondering... is there someone I can trust with my money over Shabbos? I don't want to leave it unattended in my hotel room."

The other man nodded understandingly. "Of course not," he agreed. "Why don't you give your valuables to the innkeeper, Feivel? He is a pious

and honest Jew, and he has a safe. He'll put everything away for you until after Shabbos."

Yaakov's mouth curved upward in a small smile. It was a good idea. "Thank you for your suggestion," he thanked the man and then hurried to the innkeeper's room to catch him before Shabbos.

Feivel, it appeared, had been in middle of learning when Yaakov knocked on his door. He came to the door, a Gemara tucked under his arm and looked at Yaakov questioningly.

"I just came to town, and I have a lot of money on me," Yaakov explained. "It's almost Shabbos, and I don't want to leave it unattended in my hotel room. Would you mind putting it away for me? I'll come back for it after Shabbos."

"Sure," the innkeeper agreed kindly, accepting the heavy bundle from Yaakov. "I'll put it in my safe for you."

"Thank you, I really appreciate it," Yaakov said, relieved that the burden had been taken off his shoulders. With Shabbos nearly upon them, he hastily left to prepare himself. He did not even think of asking Feivel for a receipt.

But he never could have imagined what would happen next.

Over Shabbos, the hale and hearty Feivel suddenly became very weak. He went from being healthy and able to frail and deathly ill almost overnight. He lay, burning hot, in a feverish stupor, and his family rushed to ask the rav and mekubal, Rav Yitzchak Horowitz, what to do.

"You are allowed to desecrate the Shabbos to save his life," the mekubal ruled. "Do whatever it takes to nurse him back to health."

The desperate family tried whatever they could. They called doctors and tried remedies and sought any solution that might bring the innkeeper back to his former healthy self, but as the hours ticked by, Feivel slipped away more and more. Just a few hours after Shabbos, the innkeeper passed away.

The news shocked the entire city. Everyone knew and admired Feivel, the beloved and upstanding innkeeper. He had been a talmid chacham of the highest caliber, and with such a zest for life! He had been so involved in his family and the community, an energetic and capable doer, and it was difficult to believe that he was no longer alive...

The funeral was large and well-attended. The eulogies were lengthy but inspiring, punctuated by bouts of sobbing. The loss of the innkeeper was a tragedy for the entire community. Everyone felt the pain of the fresh widow and poor orphans. Yaakov, having found himself in the middle of this tragedy, was at a loss on how to proceed further. The entire outlay of cash that he'd received from Ahron in order to conclude the business deal was sitting in the innkeeper's house, and he knew that somehow, he would have to get it back. The other party was waiting to finalize the transaction, and his boss was counting on him.

When the levayah was over and the mourners returned to the innkeeper's home to sit shivah, Yaakov decided to go over and ask the widow to return his money. As intrusive as it felt to interrupt the family's shivah for his own needs, he didn't have much of a choice.

The innkeeper's wife, Gitta, was sitting on a low stool, her eyes ringed with red. Yaakov approached her, feeling decidedly uncomfortable. "I apologize many times over," he began. "I should not be speaking to you now about these matters, but I am here on business from a different

city, and I don't have the liberty of waiting until after shivah."

She nodded, so he continued. "I came to the city right before Shabbos, with a tremendous amount of money. I heard that your husband is a pious and trustworthy man, and I gave him the money to safeguard over Shabbos. Would you be able to return the money to me, please, so that I can conclude my business? The money is not mine; it belongs to my boss and I am conducting the transaction on his behalf."

"I am in middle of sitting shivah," Gitta responded, her voice raspy from weeping. "But if you say that you gave my husband money, as many people have, then I will return it to you. Did he write you a note, a receipt, when you gave him the money?"

Yaakov shook his head regretfully. "No. It was right before Shabbos, and I was in a hurry. I trusted your husband."

She looked at him strangely and shook her head. "I'm sorry. My husband never told me anything about this, and if you don't have a receipt, there's no way I can give you money. How am I to know if you are saying the truth? The money in my husband's safe is the inheritance for our children, and I can't give any of it away unless you can prove it is yours."

Yaakov sighed. She had a valid argument, but he had no way of proving that the money was really his. Why, oh, why had he not thought to ask for a receipt?! He wanted to argue further, but he did not feel it was appropriate to antagonize a fresh widow.

Instead, he walked to the other room, where Feivel's sons were sitting shivah, and repeated the same story. "I'm so sorry, I know that you are sitting shivah and that this is not a good time, but

I deposited a lot of money with your father before Shabbos. Can you please return my money?"

The boys exchanged glances. "We are sorry, too," they said apologetically. "But our father never told us anything about you. Do you have proof that you left the money with him? Otherwise, there is no way for us to confirm the validity of your claim."

Yaakov was at a loss. A tremendous amount of money, money that did not even belong to him, was sitting in Feivel's safe, and the innkeeper's heirs did not want to return it without proof, which he could not furnish. What was he to do?

With a heaviness in his step that had not been there previously, he made his way to the home of the gaon Rav Yitzchak Horowitz to seek his counsel. He poured out the entire story, including the responses of Feivel's mourners. "What can I do now?" he asked the rav. "The money is not mine; I have a responsibility toward my boss to retrieve it."

"Right now," Rav Yitzchak responded gently, "There is truly nothing you can do. They are sitting shivah, and you must allow them to complete their mourning period. After they get up from shivah, we can make a din Torah and discuss it further, but at this point, all you can do is wait."

There was a lucrative transaction on the table, a transaction that would not necessarily be waiting for the mourners to get up from shivah, but Yaakov realized that he did indeed have no other choice but wait. He might have to lose the deal, but hopefully he would recover the money.

The days seemed to crawl by with excruciating slowness. Monday passed, then Tuesday, then Wednesday. Finally, it was Monday again, and Feivel's family received their summons to bais din. Rav Yitzchak Horowitz presided over the



case, wearing his tallis and tefillin, he called Yaakov up to make his claim.

For the umpteenth time, Yaakov repeated his story. “I came here on the behest of the wealthy Ahron, my boss, to complete a business venture. He gave me a large sum of money to tie up the deal. I arrived just before the onset of Shabbos, and I asked around, looking for a trustworthy person who would be able to safeguard the money over Shabbos.

“Someone directed me to Feivel the innkeeper, describing his honesty and piety, and I followed his advice. I gave Feivel my money, trusting him to return it after Shabbos. Unfortunately, over Shabbos, Feivel became ill and passed away, but I need back the money. My boss’s money.”

It was Gitta’s turn to respond and she stood up. “I never heard anything about this from my husband,” she attested. “And neither did my children. This man barges and demands money from us, without anything to prove his story. Why are we obligated to give some of our inheritance to him just because he says so? For all we know, he just wants to take advantage of a poor widow and orphans to satisfy his own pockets.”

The bais din began to go through the halachos carefully to determine how to rule. They determined that because Yaakov had brought some weak proofs of his position, the family was obligated to swear that they knew nothing about the story if they didn’t want to give him the money he was demanding.

Swearing is something that the Torah takes very seriously, and it is only under very specific circumstances that swearing is required. But now the family was required to swear, obligated to swear, if they wanted to keep the money.

“We are ready to swear,” the family said.

Yaakov saw them get up and prepare to take the oath. He was a pious man, and he began trembling. He knew that his story was true, but how could he make another Jew swear? How could he put them in such a position?

“Don’t swear!” he cried out. “I see that you feel that you are saying the truth. I don’t want to obligate you to swear!” He turned to Rav Yitzchok Horowitz. “I don’t want them to swear. I can’t bear to see them swearing!”

“If you don’t want them to swear, then the case is closed,” Rav Yitzchak told him. “There is nothing more that I can do.”

“Even so,” Yaakov said. “I can’t make another Jew swear.”

The din Torah was adjourned and the family filed passed him, shaking their heads apologetically. And despite his pain, Yaakov understood them. It seemed to him that they were telling the truth, that they really did know nothing of Feivel’s agreement to safeguard his money, and they therefore did not want to give him the sum he had requested.

When the family left, he turned to Rav Yitzchak. “What can I do now?” he asked the rav.

“There’s nothing really that you can do,” the rav responded. “You took away their obligation to swear, and now there is no way that I can force them to give you the money you claim is yours.”

“But it really seemed to me that they were saying the truth,” Yaakov explained. “Why make them swear for nothing?”

“I hear you,” the rav said slowly. “I, too, go the impression that they were truthful. I can’t obligate them to give you any money.”

Yaakov felt trapped. He could not return home, to face Ahron, without the money. But there didn't seem to be any reason for him to stay in this city. What could he do? Where could he go? With no better options, he decided to stay put for another few days.

The following morning, after davening, he went to speak to Rav Yitzchak Horowitz again. "There must be some way you can help me!" he cried to the rav, tears creeping down his cheeks. "I can't go back to my hometown, where my boss will be waiting. He will never believe me that the money was stolen! I'll be fired, my children will be thrown out into the streets."

"I wish I could help you," the rav said sincerely. "But there's really nothing I can do."

Yaakov, however, did not give up. Each and every day, he went to see Rav Yitzchak, begging him for assistance. Until he managed to retrieve his money, his life was in limbo, and with each passing day, he felt more and more desperate. "Please help me!" he would beg the rav, over and over and over.

Rav Yitzchak Horowitz realized that if he did not find away to help the distraught Jew, the story would never finish. "You know what?" he offered one day, when Yaakov came again to beg for assistance. "We will make another dvar Torah."

"What will it help?" Yaakov sniffled. "I don't want to make them swear."

"Not with the family, but with Feivel himself," the rav clarified.

"But Feivel is not alive!" Yaakov exclaimed.

"Even so," the rav countered. "You are in a desperate situation. You can't return home, and you can't resume living until this story is behind

you. We'll make a din Torah with Feivel himself and hopefully arrive to a positive conclusion."

Yaakov had never heard of such a thing. Bringing a niftar to a din Torah was a concept he'd never stumbled upon.

"Normally, I wouldn't do such a thing," Rav Yitzchak said. "But this is not a regular case, and I can't bear to see you in so much pain. We will make the din Torah on Monday."

Gitta and her children were formally notified of the case, and it did not take long for word of the unusual din Torah to spread. By Monday morning, it was the only thing the city spoke about. Everyone wanted to witness the case himself, but only the two parties, along with Feivel's family, were permitted to attend.

When Yaakov silently entered the room for the din Torah, followed by Gitta and her family, Rav Yitzchak Horowitz was waiting for them. "The litigant will sit here, on this side," he said, nodding at Yaakov, who assumed the seat. "And the defendant will sit here, on this chair." He pointed to an empty chair opposite Yaakov. "The bais din will sit near me."

But instead of beginning the din Torah, Rav Yitzchak closed his eyes and remained utterly still for fifteen minutes, his face glowing a fiery scarlet. The, with his eyes still tightly shut, he told his assistant, "Go to the cemetery, and tell Feivel the innkeeper to that he is being summoned by Rav Yitzchak Horowitz, the av beis din, for judgement."

The shammas began trembling in anticipation of this mission, but he took the stick that Rav Yitzchak held out and hurried out of the room without a word of protest. At the cemetery, he used the stick to bang on Feivel's grave. "I am the shammas of Rav Yitzchak Horowitz, av beis din, and I command you to come with me to din Torah."

Having accomplished his mission, he hurried out of the cemetery and back to the bais medrash where the case was being conducted. He didn't want to spend a single extra minute communing with the dead.

The trip to and from the cemetery took another twenty minutes, but when his shammas returned, Rav Yitzchak was finally ready to begin the din Torah. His eyes were still closed and his face still flaming as he called to Yaakov, "The niftar is here. Litigant, please get up and state your claim."

Yaakov stood up, his legs wobbly beneath him. He looked at the empty chair, feeling a little foolish, and launched into his account. "I brought you money on erev Shabbos," he said, somewhat stiffly, staring at the vacant chair. "But you passed away before you could return the money to me. I need the money back. It doesn't belong to me."

When Yaakov fell silent, Rav Yitzchak spoke, his eyes still closed. "Defendant," he cried out. "You heard what the litigant said. What is your response to that?"

Everyone held their breaths, but all they heard was silence. A mythical voice didn't begin to speak, no flickers of fire rose up from the chair. Only silence.

But Rav Yitzchak Horowitz, it seemed, was able to hear what the invisible Feivel was saying. After a long silence, he said. "I hear you. I hear you."

Then he turned to Yaakov. "The innkeeper said that you are correct. He did take the money from you on erev Shabbos, while he was in the middle of learning hilchos Shabbos in the Shulchan Aruch. He said to tell you that the bills are still wedged between the last pages of the volume, where he absentmindedly left them."

A visible load lifted off of Yaakov's shoulders as a smile slowly crept toward his face.

"Additionally," Rav Yitzchak continued. "He thanks you for not obligating his wife and children to swear." With his eyes still shuttered, he added, "And now, R' Yaakov, please go to Feivel's house and look in his Shulchan Aruch. You should find the money there."

And indeed it was. Yaakov went to the innkeeper's home and found the money exactly as Rav Yitzchak had described. With tears in his eyes, he returned to the rav to thank him, from the bottom of his heart, for saving him from ruin.

Afterward, Rav Yitzchak Horowitz was asked about the story. "Why did the rav perform a miracle for Yaakov sake?" people wondered. "It is not the rav's style to perform nissim."

"True," the rav agreed. "I generally do not delve into the miraculous spheres. Bu here was a Yid who could not stop crying! How could I listen to the anguished tears of a fellow Jew and not do everything in my power to help him?!"

*Have a Wonderful Shabbos!*

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## סיפורי צדיקים

*Captivating stories full of Yiras Shamayim taken from Shmuessin that  
Reb Kalman Krohn z'tl gave in Adelpia Yeshiva*

### ***A Single Earring Part One***

In the era that our story takes place, the Jews were suffering from a double enemy. The Catholics, sworn enemies of the Jewish people, had banded up with the Muslims, also vicious anti-Semites, with the sole agenda to cause the Jews as much anguish as possible.

The joint and powerful influence of the bishops and ayatollahs spread throughout the land. From the hardworking peasants, who were eager for a scapegoat on which to let out their frustrations regarding their difficult lives, to the aristocracy, who didn't mind having their pockets lined in exchange for their cooperation, the religious leaders succeed in poisoning all minds against the Jews.

With the backing of the entire country, these vicious anti-Semites succeeded in passing law after law, restricting and constricting, and making it extremely difficult for a Jew to live his life. First, they were barred from one profession after the next. Then, they were subjected to terribly burdensome taxes, money that they usually did not have. Pogroms were encouraged, crimes against the Jews were overlooked, and a general sense of lawlessness prevailed when Jews were involved.

With the king solidly behind these measures, there was not much to do, but the askanim knew that it was imperative that they try anyway. If they would succeed in loosening the chokehold on their brethren even a centimeter or two, that in itself would be an enormous measure of success. But first, before any physical hishtadlus, came prayer. A yom tefillah was arranged. Throughout the country, Jews gathered in shul, fasting and crying and reciting tehillim. While all earthly methods of salvation seemed so remote and beyond their reach, they still had their loving Father pulling the strings from above, and they poured their hearts out to Him.

A few weeks later, word got out that the king was heading out on a month-long traveling expedition. It was a ripe opportunity to reach out to the queen, who would be remaining home. Perhaps they could appeal to her humane side through bribery and dialogue. It was certainly far more likely to win the queen over to their side than her rabidly anti-Semitic husband, and having such a powerful ally would hopefully, with Hashem's help, ease the Jews' plight.

The first step of the askanim was to begin an appeal to collect money for an expensive gift for the queen. From all corners of the country, Jews donated as much as they could: a few coins here, perhaps some gold there. Everyone was eager to give whatever they owned toward the effort to save their lives.

Once the money had been raised, the next step was purchasing the gift. Two representatives visited jeweler after jeweler, examining their wares and then discarding them, searching for the perfect piece.

And then, at one expensive jeweler, they found what they were looking for. It was a pair of diamond earrings, intricately designed. The large, expertly-cut stones caught the light from what seemed like hundreds of angles, casting numerous rainbows around the room. Tiny multicolored stones bordered each pair. Cushioned on soft velvet, the earrings seemed to have descended from a different planet. They were dazzling. They were exquisite. They were fit for a queen.

“We’ll take these,” the Jews told the dealer. They spent the next few minutes haggling over the price and then shelled out a fortune to pay for the jewels. With a prayer on their lips, the representatives left the jeweler’s home, beseeching Hashem that the earrings find favor in the eyes of the queen.

It was after the earrings had been purchased that the askanim hit a bump in the road. Travel was very dangerous for Jews, who would be forced to sleep overnight in completely non-Jewish cities, surrounded by hostile gentiles. In addition, it was illegal for a Jew to enter the capital city.

There were people who were ready to risk their lives to save the rest of their brethren, but the stakes were high that they would be putting themselves in the line of fire in vain. It was more likely than not that any Jew attempting to reach the queen would be discovered either at the entrance to the capital city, or on his way to the palace, and if not, at the palace gates. Death was likely to be the fate of the Jewish representative, even before he managed to meet with the queen.

“Perhaps the rov should go?” one of the askanim suggested.

“Absolutely not,” his colleague protested. “The rov would certainly agree to go, but there’s no chance they wouldn’t kill him on the spot. There’s no point.”

“Maybe Feivel the watercarrier would agree to go,” another man offered. “He’s simple and unassuming enough. No one would try to harm him.”

The askan sitting next to him pursed his lips. “I disagree. He’s too simple and unassuming. Even if he makes it in to see the queen, I highly doubt she’ll be impressed.”

The meeting ended in a stalemate, with no solution in sight. For the next few days, the topic was hashed and rehashed by the committee. They went to speak to the rov, but he did not feel he could choose which man should risk his life for the sake of the klal.

Time was running out. The king was scheduled to be back just two weeks later, and haste was of essence. Turning to the community, the askanim opened the floor for a volunteer.

“I’ll go,” a quiet man name Eliezer volunteered.

“You?!” his friends whirled on him in surprise.

“You?!” the askan who had approached the members of Eliezer’s shul after davening echoed skeptically. He studied Elazar, who was dressed very simply. “Are you capable of bypassing the bloodthirsty guards, speaking to the queen, and winning her over to our side?”

“I know I’m just a simple man,” Eliezer admitted humbly, though in truth, unbeknownst to even his closest friends, he was far from simple. In fact, Eliezer was a hidden tzaddik, a man who conveyed an ordinary appearance while hiding his extraordinary greatness from the public. “But I’m willing to go. I’m confident that Hashem will be

with me. All I need is the gift for the queen and a sack of cash.”

“Cash? What do you need cash for?” the askan asked.

“To bribe my way into the capital city and into the palace,” Eliezer explained simply.

“Let’s ask the rov what he thinks,” the askan suggested.

The rov, when he heard of Eliezer’s willingness to risk his life for the sake of his people, was very moved. “I will personally raise the money to finance your bribes,” he assured him. “May you go in peace and return in peace, and may Hashem grant you much success.”

Eliezer bowed his head. “Amen.”

The rov wasted no time in gathering the funds that Eliezer had requested. The following morning, the simple-seeming Jew was entrusted with the velvet sachet containing the magnificent earrings purchased for the queen, as well as the wad of cash. He pocketed the valuable items, accepted the well-wishes and fervent brachos from the askanim, and headed back home to get ready for his journey.

In his small, ramshackle hut, Eliezer opened the small pouch and removed one of the earrings. Its unparalleled beauty jumped out at him, contrasting every inch of his decrepit, decaying, leaking abode. Carefully, he wrapped the earring in a piece of faded cloth and tucked it under his homemade straw mattress.

Eliezer glanced out the window. The sun was moving high into the sky. Deftly, he sewed the pouch with the one remaining earring into the pocket of his jacket. Then he divided the cash amongst all the pockets in his pants, shirt, and

coat. After packing a small bag, he was on his way.

The journey to the capital city took two days. Dusty and weary, Eliezer rode up to the gates of the capital city, trying to look as unassuming as possible.

“Hey, Jew!” someone called out to him, even before he made it to the sentry at the gate. “Where do you think you’re going, huh? Don’t you know that our beautiful capital isn’t to be destroyed by the presence of someone such as yourself?”

“And a good morning to you, too, sir,” Eliezer said gallantly, keeping his voice calm. He slipped his hand into his pocket and removed a few bills, which he pressed into the gentile’s hand. “Have a great day, sir!”

Waving cheerfully, he continued on toward the city gates, the gentile still smiling gleefully as he counted the bills in his hand.

“What business do you have in the capital city?” the sentry asked in a bored voice, not bothering to peer at Eliezer long enough to realize he was Jewish.

“I have business with the queen,” Eliezer responded in a confident tone.

His response caught the guard’s attention, shaking him out of his lethargy. He peered at Eliezer in suspicion. “Wait a minute. You’re a Jew, aren’t you? What business do you have with the queen? I’m not even supposed to let you into the city. How do you plan on getting into the palace?”

“That’s my concern to worry about,” Eliezer said with a wink, sliding a large bill onto the sentry’s lap. He mounted his horse and rode into the city. The guard observed him silently as his fingers caressed the money, not uttering a word in protest.

The streets around the palace were swarming with soldiers and police, each another threatening obstacle standing between Eliezer and his mission. It took a great deal of charm, persuasion, and of course, cash, to get past them.

Eliezer knew that getting past the guards at the palace gates and securing an audience with the queen would be the most challenging of all his encounters thus far. His lips moved constantly as he prayed silently, concentrating on kabbalistic verses that the non-Jews become subservient to him.

Cautiously, he approached a high-ranking official lingering outside the gates of the tall, imposing palace. "I was wondering if you could do me a favor," Eliezer began quietly.

The man squinted at him. "A Jew?!" he cried in disbelief. "How did you manage to get this far into the capital?!" His curiosity aroused, he glanced around to make sure no unwanted ears were privy to their conversation and continued. "What is it that you need?"

"In just a few minutes, I will be meeting with the queen," Eliezer said confidently. "After we meet, she will be giving me not an insignificant amount of jewels and valuables. If you help me, I'll give you a share of them."

The man looked at him skeptically. "What do you need me to do?"

Eliezer pulled out a thick wad of bills from his pocket and fanned it out in front of the official. "For starters, this is for you," he said, shuffling the bills back into a neat pile and handing it over. "All I need is for you to get me an audience with the queen, and then you'll be getting a lot, lot more."

"She'll have me killed!" the official gasped, torn between his desire for money and his fear of the queen.

"Nonsense," Eliezer said confidently. "She'll be happy to see me. And, as added protection, I will give you a blessing. I am a holy man. Everything will be fine."

The man wavered for another long moment, debating whether or not to accept Eliezer's proposal or run far from the danger. "Alright, I'll do it," he said finally. "What did you want from the queen again?"

"Just a few minutes in her presence, that's all," Eliezer said, shaking the man's hand gratefully.

The official disappeared behind the imposing gates and Eliezer waited tensely for him to return. A half-hour passed before the man returned, smiling slightly.

"It's okay, you can come in now," he told Eliezer.

"The queen didn't want to meet you at first, but she finally agreed on condition that a curtain be hung between her and you so that she doesn't need to glimpse your Jewish face. Follow me."

Eliezer followed the official through the sumptuous corridors. They paused outside the queen's anteroom. As he had been warned, a curtain had been stretched across the room blocking his view of the queen on her throne.

"The Jew is here," the official announced.

The queen groaned, already regretting her previous agreement to let him in.

Eliezer turned to the official and whispered, "I won't even speak unless she asks me to."

The man looked at him like he was crazy. “She can’t see you, and you don’t need her to hear you either? How exactly do you plan on getting all those gifts you promised me?”

“Just watch and see,” Eliezer promised mysteriously.

“The Jew has proclaimed that he will not speak unless Your Majesty wills him to,” the official announced.

“Let him enter,” the queen said tiredly. “I don’t believe I shall have any reason to desire him to speak.”

Eliezer was led into the large room. Huge windows overlooking the sea lined one wall, allowing the shining sun to stream inside. The curtain hung down the middle of the room, blocking his view.

Silently, he withdrew an earring from his pocket and held it up toward the sun. A million colors reflected off the gleaming diamonds, casting brilliant rainbows throughout the room. Gently, he waved the earring back and forth as the colors danced on the floors, the walls, the ceilings.

From the other side of the curtain, the queen could not see Eliezer or the earring, but she did see the colors reflecting off every surface of the room. She stared at the beautiful display, mesmerized by its magnificence.

“Alright, remove the curtain,” the queen said.

“Let me see what he’s doing and hear what he wants.”

To be continued...

*Have a Wonderful Shabbos!*

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# TORAS REB KALMAN



## סיפורי צדיקים

*Captivating stories full of Yiras Shamayim taken from Shmuessin that  
Reb Kalman Krohn z'tl gave in Adelphia Yeshiva*

### *A Single Earring Part Two*

**Recap:** *Eliezer, a simple-seeming man who was really a hidden tzaddik, volunteered to bring a gift to the queen, despite the risk to his life, to influence her favorably toward the Jews. He managed to secure an audience with the queen and presented her with one single earring.*

The curtain was moved aside and the queen saw a simply dressed Jew standing before her, holding some sort of jewelry in his hand. "Speak," she ordered.

Eliezer held up the earring so that she could see it better. "This is a gift for Her Majesty," he explained respectfully, presenting it to the queen. "It is a gift from the Jewish community, who hold Your most gracious Majesty in the highest esteem."

A servant took the proffered jewelry from Eliezer and handed it to the queen who smiled appreciatively. It was truly a gorgeous piece, the likes of which she had never seen before. "Beautiful," she said, examining the earring from all angles. "Where is the second earring?"

"Your Majesty, these earrings are not just ordinary earrings," Eliezer explained. "This magnificent pair was discovered at the gravesite of Mohammed himself, the founder of Islam. As soon as it became known that Mohammed had these one-of-a-kind earrings, the Jews hurried to purchase one for our most esteemed queen. She is the only one fitting enough to wear them. We paid hundreds of thousands of gold coins to purchase this unique piece."

The queen was impressed. "From Mohammed?" she echoed in wonderment. "Wow! But where is the second one? I need the full pair in order to wear them."

"Ah, the second earring," Eliezer said, nodding sagely. "We were only able to purchase one, since Mohammed decided to keep the second to gift to the bishop."

"The bishop?" the queen was incredulous.

"Why is Her Majesty so surprised?" Eliezer asked. "It's well-known that the Muslims and the Christians are collaborating with each other. In fact, in this very country, they cooperate together on a constant basis, coming up with plots and ideas against the Jews, for instance."

"I hear," the queen said. "So you say that the bishop is in possession of the second half of this most exquisite pair of earrings?"

"No, I don't believe he has it yet, Your Majesty," Eliezer corrected. "However, Mohammed refused to sell it to us since he is reserving it for the bishop."

“And when does he plan on giving it to the bishop?” the queen wanted to know, already picturing herself wearing the beautiful pair of earrings.

“There’s a Christian holiday coming up,” Eliezer reminded the queen. “The bishop always gives a long sermon on the holiday, and afterward, he disappears for a few hours. Not many people are aware of this, but during these hours, the bishop flies over four hundred miles to the grave of Mohammed. They spend some time together and Mohammed reveals the future to the bishop. This year, Mohammed will be giving the bishop the second earring, for free.”

“Wow,” the queen breathed, her eyes wide.

“The Jews spent a lot of money to buy Her Majesty this earring,” Eliezer made sure to reiterate. “And of course, she deserves the full pair, which she can request from the bishop.”

The queen inclined her head. “I thank you and your community for this beautiful gift,” she said. “I can’t believe I was so wrong in my opinions of the Jewish people. You are a generous and kind nation, and I feel honored to have you as my subjects.”

Eliezer bowed. “We are not considered subjects, Your Majesty. My people are oppressed and taxed far beyond any other race. We are treated worse than the animals plowing the fields.”

“That must be corrected,” the queen declared. “When my husband returns, I shall discuss this with him. The decrees against you and your brethren must be repealed at once.”

“Thank you for your kindness, gracious Sire,” Eliezer said, bowing again. “We will pray for your success every day.”

“I would like to send you home with a parting gift,” the queen said suddenly. She ordered a

servant to pack up some expensive trinkets from the treasury for Eliezer.

“I hope that Her Majesty enjoys the gift given by the Jews,” Eliezer said in parting. “And of course, once you receive the second half of the pair from the bishop, it will be even more beautiful.”

“I will take care of that at once,” the queen agreed. Eliezer left the palace weighed down by the gold and silver granted to him by the queen. As promised, he offered a share to the official who had secured him the audience with the queen and returned the rest of the coffers to the Jewish community who had financed his mission.

The Jewish community breathed a sigh of relief, grateful that Eliezer had been graciously received by the queen. The only thing left for them to do was pray that the queen fulfills her promise and repeals the laws constricting them when the king returned.

In the meanwhile, the queen sent for the bishop. Eager to wear her new earrings, she did not want to wait for the bishop to approach her with the gift, and decided to ask for them immediately.

The bishop appeared in the queen’s anteroom and was announced to her. He bowed deeply, feeling smug and important that she needed him.

“Father,” the queen said with a smile, holding up the earring that Eliezer had given her. “Do you see this magnificent piece? It was given to me by the Jews, as a gift. They purchased it for a tremendous amount of money by the grave of Mohammed.

“As you know, next week will be the holiday,” the queen continued. “When you go to Mohammed’s grave after your sermon, you will be given the second earring. I would like you to bring it to me immediately, as I can hardly wait to wear this exquisite pair.”

The bishop felt his face drain of color. What kind of nonsense was the queen speaking of? Mohammed's grave? An earring?

Seeing the look of confusion on his face, the queen began speaking slowly and clearly, as if expressing herself to a young child. "I know that not many people are aware of the fact that you fly four hundred miles to Mohammed's grave after your sermon on the holiday," she said gently. "But I was made aware of this, and I know that he reveals the future to you when you go there. This year, he'll be giving you the second half of this pair of earrings. In fact, I will be coming to your sermon this year because I would like the earring immediately. That's how much it means to me."

The bishop bowed, trying to think of a response. "Certainly, Your Majesty," he said, trying to keep his voice steady. "I was not aware that Mohammed would be giving me this gift for you, but I will certainly be glad to pass it on if I receive it."

"The Jew told me," the queen explained. "The Jew who brought me this half of the pair told me that he purchased it from Mohammed's grave, but that Mohammed refused to sell him the second earring since he planned on giving it to you. Thank you, Father. We shall meet again at your sermon next week."

Dismissed, the bishop left the queen's chambers, fear and fury roiling inside of him like winds and rain in the midst of a tempest. "Find me that Jew who spoke to the queen," he ordered his personal assistant through clenched teeth. "Find me that Jew and send him straight to me! I'll make him pay for this!"

His assistant got right to work, interrogating the palace workers and learning Eliezer's identity. He succeeded in locating his whereabouts and went to report the information to his boss.

"Excellent," the bishop said. "Now, please send a messenger to his city immediately ordering him

to appear before me. I mustn't be too harsh on him, though there is nothing I desire more than to strangle that trickster with my bare hands! But unfortunately, he has placed me in the position of needing his help..."

A messenger was sent to Eliezer's home, but the hidden tzaddik ignored the summons. He heard out the message, thanked the messenger, and returned to his seforim. A second messenger was dispatched, and then a third, but Eliezer still did not return with them to the bishop.

Left with no other recourse, the bishop boarded a carriage and made his way to Eliezer's hometown, all the while fuming at the Jew's audacity. Eliezer had cornered him, and he knew it.

He found Eliezer's home to be nothing more than a ramshackle hut at the outskirts of the town. Gingerly, he rapped on the door.

Eliezer himself answered, a question mark on his face. "How can I help you?" he asked politely.

The bishop motioned to his servants to remain in the wagon and followed Eliezer into the privacy of his home. "What did you do to me?" he burst out, the panic evident in his voice. "What kind of nonsense did you tell the queen? That I fly to Mohammed's grave on the holiday?! You know that a human can't fly!"

"Of course I know that," Eliezer agreed.

"What were you thinking?" the bishop fumed, pacing the room. "Now, if I don't come up with the second earring, the queen will kill me!"

"Yes, she probably will," Eliezer said in the same agreeable tone. "Why does it bother you if you get killed?"

"What are you talking about?!" the bishop sputtered. "Of course I care if I get killed! And it

should bother you too, causing the death of an innocent man just like that!”

“And since when are you so concerned about causing the deaths of innocent people?” Eliezer countered. “As far as I am aware, it doesn’t bother you in the slightest if hundreds of young children starve to death because there is simply no money for bread and milk thanks to your decrees. Last I checked, innocent men were being slaughtered like cattle due to their inability to pay the taxes you demanded or to feed their families without engaging in trade that you prohibited. First show me concern for the deaths of thousands of innocents, and then demand that I care if you are killed without cause!”

The bishop’s face turned white, imagining the noose tightening around his own neck. “I’m finished then,” he said flatly. “Comes the holiday, no earring, and I am a dead man.”

“Aha, so you want me to give you the second earring?” Eliezer questioned softly.

“Yes!” the bishop practically shouted. “You have it? Where is it?!”

Eliezer gave a small smile. “Not so fast,” he cautioned. “I’m not about to give you the earring just like that. I want something in return.”

“What do you want?” the bishop asked, his voice laced with desperation.

“I want you to swear that for as long as you live, you’ll be good to the Jews,” Eliezer said slowly. “I want you to pledge to repeal all the decrees you passed against the Jews. I want it in writing that not only you, but your successors after you as well, will treat the Jews kindly and fairly, and I want that signed with blood.”

The bishop’s eyes widened and he swallowed, hard. The request was harder than anything else the Jew could have asked him for. Then he pictured the queen’s earnest expression as she

expressed her desire to receive the second earring and shook his head. He had no choice. “I’ll do it,” he said finally.

“You must change your entire attitude toward the Jews,” Eliezer said firmly.

“I understand, and I agree,” the bishop said hastily. “But how exactly will that work? I’ve been influencing the king to hate the Jews for years now.”

“I’ll tell you how,” Eliezer suggested. “After your big sermon, after you supposedly fly to Mohammed’s grave, you’ll return with the earring and present it to the king and queen. At that time, you’ll tell them that during your discussion with Mohammed, he told you that the direction you had been taking was wrong, and treating the Jews properly was the only correct course going forward.”

“Alright, I’ll do it,” the bishop said reluctantly. He accepted the paper that Eliezer offered and wrote up a document pledging to support the Jewish community. Pricking his thumb, he signed his name in blood and handed the page to Eliezer.

Without a word, Eliezer walked over to the straw mattress and pulled a small cloth pouch out from between the strands of straw. “Here you go,” he said.

The bishop took the cloth from him and peered inside. Indeed, a magnificent earring winked up at him. “Thank you,” he whispered in relief.

“Don’t forget that the Jews have done nothing wrong,” Eliezer said as he walked the bishop to the door. “It’s not as though you are letting violent criminals off the hook to save your own life. These are innocent people, victims of hate, who will finally be free to live their lives in peace thanks to your pledge.”

The idea was a difficult one for the bishop to digest, but simultaneously, he knew Eliezer spoke

the truth. He pocketed the cloth patch and hurried to his carriage, feeling calmer than he'd felt in days.

The days past quickly, and soon the holiday set in. A tremendous crowd gathered in the town square in honor of the bishop's holiday sermon. The king and queen sat up front, the queen squirming in impatient anticipation as she listened to the bishop drone on and on.

When his lecture was over, the bishop hurried off, disappearing into his house as the holiday celebrations continued in full swing in the town square. The queen retreated to her carriage to wait for his return, too excited to partake in the festivities.

An hour past, and the bishop returned to the square, riding a white stallion.

The queen descended from her carriage eagerly, three maids carrying the heavy train of her gown. The bishop dismounted his horse and bowed toward her deeply. "Your Majesty, I have just returned from the grave of Mohammed," he said, struggling to keep his deep voice even.

"Yes?" the queen asked breathlessly. "And did he give you anything?"

"What did you learn there, Father?" the king asked, coming up to stand beside his wife.

"Well, Your Majesty, we discussed a number of important topics, but mainly about the Jews," the bishop said. He opened his left hand. A small velvet box sat in the center of his palm. "And this is for Her Majesty, from Mohammed."

"The earring!" the queen breathed, opening the box. "Finally, the second half of the pair! Thank you, Father."

"Exquisite," her husband agreed, impressed by the beauty and workmanship. "You discussed the Jews?"

"It seems that I've been mistaken, Your Majesty," the bishop said apologetically. "Mohammed was upset with the way I've been guiding the government in regard to the Jewish affairs. It seems that I was not looking at the entire picture objectively, Your Majesty. Taxing the Jews and restricting them as we have done thus far is not in our best interests, according to Mohammed. If we are to be most successful, we need to take a different approach."

"I hear," the king said thoughtfully. "Set up a meeting with my chief of staff for later this week so that we can discuss this more thoroughly."

The following day, the bishop made the journey back to Eliezer's hometown to meet with him again. "I see that the One Above is taking care of your people," he admitted. "No matter how hard we try to destroy you, He will be there to protect you. You are a fortunate nation indeed."

And so it was that the simple-seeming Eliezer, a man whom most people overlooked but whose hidden greatness surpassed that of most others, saved his generation from danger and difficulty.

*Have a Wonderful Shabbos!*

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# TORAS REB KALMAN



## סיפורי צדיקים

*Captivating stories full of Yiras Shamayim taken from Shmuessin that  
Reb Kalman Krohn z'tl gave in Adelpia Yeshiva*

### ***Rav Zisha and the Shoemaker Part One***

The two tzaddikim, Rav Elimelech and Rav Zisha, were brothers, and each had his own path of greatness. Rav Elimelech was a famous rebbe, who dressed in silk bekeshes and presided over tishen attended by thousands of admirers. His greatness was well-known, his sefer Noam Elimelech widely studied, and legends of his ruach hakodesh ran loose like wildfire.

His holy brother, Rav Zisha, presented himself to the world as a pauper and a simpleton. He wore tattered garments and a small kasketel, and tried his best to keep his greatness hidden from the world. Nevertheless, he was a giant in Torah and chasidus, equal in greatness to his brother.

From time to time, their father, who had long passed on to the World of Truth, would visit the two holy brothers on erev Shabbos. We do not know whether he came in a dream or whether they

received his directive while they were awake. He would advise them on which Jewish communities throughout the country were in need of tochachah, and the two holy brothers would then travel together to convey the rebuke.

Rather than deliver fiery speeches rebuking their brethren, Rav Elimelech and Rav Zisha would use other methods to get their message across. They would stop off in a town and park their wagon near the marketplace or shul. When the target of their admonition was within hearing range, the two brothers would begin to shout at each other.

“Zisha, you thief!” Rav Elimelech would yell. “How could you have trimmed off even a drop of that customer’s order yesterday? You think Hashem didn’t see you? You want to come back to this world to atone for it? What’s wrong with you?”

“Elimelech, I must admit that you are right,” Rav Zisha would say humbly as a large audience eavesdropped on their public exchange. “I’ll apologize to that man and return what I stole from him.”

From somewhere within the audience, the man whom the rebuke had been intended for would begin to squirm, shame flooding his being. He’s right, the man would think to himself. For just slightly more profit, I am cheating my customers. I’m a regular thief! I’d better start rectifying my behavior immediately. Otherwise, I will pay a price for this one day...

“But what about you, Elimelech?” Rav Zisha would then demand loudly, ignoring the crowd that was curiously hanging on to every word. “You ate something that is treif, did you not? Don’t you know that you’ll burn in Gehinnom for it? Are you crazy? For just a little pleasure in this world you are prepared to undergo years of suffering once you pass on?”

“You’re right,” Rav Elimelech would say, his eyes downcast. “Oy vey, are you right. No, it most

definitely isn't worth it. Thank you for reminding me what life is all about."

Another man standing nearby would find himself silently agreeing with every word that Rav Elimelech uttered. I'll never taste any forbidden food again, he would pledge silently. Ribbono shel olam, I have sinned! Please forgive me!

It was in this manner that the holy brothers managed to reach hundreds of Jews and encourage them to repent in specific areas.

One Friday, Rav Elimelech and Rav Zisha were in a town far from home when their father came to them. He instructed Rav Elimelech to spend Shabbos with the town's rav. Rav Zisha was directed to the home of the shoemaker. Though no explanation was provided, the brothers knew that by the end of Shabbos, the reason for their father's directive would be crystal clear.

"You'll be spending Shabbos with the rav," Rav Zisha said, not a trace of envy in his voice despite the significantly better circumstances his brother had been set up with. "I'm sure you'll end up gaining much in Torah. Please, don't forget to share all your original thoughts with me after Shabbos."

"Of course," Rav Elimelech agreed. "And if our father is sending you to the shoemaker, there must be more to the story. You'll tell me what he tells you, after Shabbos?"

"Sure," Rav Zisha agreed. "Let's meet at the entrance to the town after Shabbos. Have a wonderful Shabbos!"

"You, too," Rav Elimelech wished him. Walking down the street, he approached a Jew and asked for directions to the rav's home. It was late in the day, and Shabbos was drawing closer. Walking briskly, he made his way to the rav's address and knocked on the door.

Some children, presumably the rav's, opened the door for him and immediately noticed that he appeared to be a respected person. "How can we help you?" they asked.

"Is the rav home?" Rav Elimelech inquired.

"No, I'm sorry, but he went to the mikvah," a young boy, looking about ten years old, responded.

"Alright, then, I'll wait for him outside," Rav Elimelech said agreeably.

"Please come inside," another boy invited him. "We'll give you something to eat and drink while you wait for our father."

Rav Elimelech smiled at him. "Thank you, but it's okay. I prefer to wait for your father here." He clasped his hands and began thinking in learning as he waited.

Coming up the walk, the rav noticed the man waiting for him by his front door. Immediately, he sensed the holiness emanating from his guest's glowing face. "Shalom Aleichem," the rav called out in greeting. "Who do I have the honor of addressing?"

"Aleichem shalom, my name is Elimelech," Rav Elimelech replied.

The rav nearly swooned. Elimelech! The rebbe Rav Elimelech himself! He fell to the floor in respect. "What can I do for the rebbe?"

"Would I be able to please stay with you for Shabbos?" Rav Elimelech asked.

"I am undeserving of this incredible honor," the rav replied weakly. "But of course the rebbe is invited to remain here."

The rav led Rav Elimelech inside and offered him food and drink before calling in his children for brachos from the holy rebbe. Rav Elimelech was

shown to the best room in the house, where he could stay in comfort and privacy. Leaving him alone to prepare for Shabbos, the rav hastily spread the word that the gadol was present in their town and that they would hopefully merit to have him address their community that evening.

While this was taking place, Rav Zisha attempted to locate the home of his own host. "Where does the shoemaker live?" he inquired of the first Jew he met.

"There's no shoemaker here," the Jew replied.

"What do you mean, there isn't a shoemaker?" Rav Zisha pressed him. "There has to be a shoemaker in town."

"Okay, there is a shoemaker if you insist," the man responded. "But I wouldn't advise you to bring him your shoes. He's more of a shlepper than a shoemaker, if you ask me. For a shoe repair, you're best off going to the next town after Shabbos. I can recommend someone excellent."

"Thank you, but where does the local shoemaker live?" Rav Zisha asked.

"All the way down that way," the Jew replied, shielding his eyes from the sun with one hand and pointing in the right direction with the other. "Keep going until you pass the cemetery. After the cemetery, on the very outskirts of the town, you'll see a lone dilapidated shack. That's the shoemaker. His name is Berish."

"Thank you for the directions. Have a good Shabbos," Rav Zisha wished him. Ignoring the man's scornful expression, no doubt in honor of the shoemaker, he began walking in the direction the man had pointed.

As he passed the cemetery, Rav Zisha kept his eyes peeled, looking around for the shoemaker's residence. He could make out a narrow rectangle building standing alone in the middle of a field. As he got closer, he realized that the ramshackle

building had originally served as a chicken coop, but was now occupied by human inhabitants.

He glanced around. There were no other dwellings within his range of vision. If the man's directions were correct, this must be the home of Berish the shoemaker.

As he stood outside the former barn, contemplating his next move, a woman emerged from inside. She glanced inquisitively at Rav Zisha. "Can I help you?"

"My name is Zisha, and I need a place to stay for Shabbos," Rav Zisha responded. "Would I be able to stay with you?"

"Are you making fun of me?" the woman asked, her face pale. "We are the poorest family in the entire town. I have nothing to serve you. We don't have what to eat ourselves. I have little children, and nothing to feed them."

As if to corroborate her words, two barefoot children came running out of the house. Dressed in tattered clothing and painstakingly thin, they chased each other around the long, narrow structure.

Rav Zisha glanced at them and turned back to the woman. "I don't need much," he assured her. "All I need is place to sleep and a kezayis to eat for each seudah. Shabbos will be here in a few minutes, and I have nowhere else to go."

She hesitated uncomfortably. "As a Jewish woman, I know it is my obligation to welcome a stranded Jew into my home. However, I can't do so without my husband's permission."

"Where is your husband?" Rav Zisha asked in surprise. It was very close to Shabbos. Why wasn't the shoemaker home yet?

"Out in the fields," she said, glancing past his shoulder at some unseen point. "I have no idea when he'll be home. To be honest, there's still



some time. I would advise you to try to find another host. We have no food here, and I can't promise my husband will agree to host you. It is in your best interest to find another place to stay." "I want to spend Shabbos here," Rav Zisha insisted.

"I need to prepare for Shabbos now," the woman said pointedly, turning to go back inside. "You can wait for my husband here."

As he waited, Rav Zisha decided to circle the former chicken coop that now housed the shoemaker's family. His father hadn't sent him to this place for no reason, he knew. Perhaps he would discover the reason through some basic exploration.

When he reached the back of the narrow rectangular structure, he noticed an open window high in the wall. A ladder was leaning against the wall, leading directly to the open window. This chicken coop has two floors, he realized.

"Hey," someone called, startling him. "Hey, mister. May I ask what you are doing here, snooping around on my private property?"

Rav Zisha whirled around. He saw a man of medium height and stocky build emerge from the forest. He was dressed in dirty, torn clothing with a rumpled beard and smudged hands. "Shalom aleichem, are you Berish the shoemaker?"

"That's me," Berish confirmed, a tad suspiciously. "And you are—?"

"Zisha," Rav Zisha supplied. "Can I stay with you for Shabbos?"

"Here?!" Berish began to laugh at the irony. "I am a pauper, poorer than any other pauper you have ever known," he informed his unwanted guest. "I am a shoemaker with barely any business and not a penny to my name. There's nothing for my family to eat, let alone a guest."

"I don't need much," Rav Zisha insisted. "Can I please stay for Shabbos?"

"Do me a favor and find yourself a different host," the shoemaker practically pleaded. "I'm not exaggerating when I say that we don't have any food."

Rav Zisha tried again. "I'm stranded in this unfamiliar town, and I need a place for Shabbos. Please, don't turn me away! Can you spare me a kezayis? That's all I need."

"Alright," the shoemaker said grudgingly. "I can spare a kezayis. But I do have to warn you that I work very hard all week and on Shabbos, I can barely stand from fatigue. I daven in the quickest minyan in town, and then we have a very brief seudah, after which I go to sleep until the morning. The same happens on Shabbos day. Quick davening, quick seudah, and then lots of time for resting and recouping my energy. If you need a place where you'll feel the Shabbos aura, I don't think this is for you."

Oh no, Rav Zisha thought, groaning inwardly. What did I get myself into? Why did my father send me here? He followed the shoemaker into his home with a tinge of hesitation.

Inside, the ex-chicken coop was large and spacious, though cold and drafty and practically bare of furniture. Rav Zisha could see a long corridor stretching across the length of the rectangular structure, with various rooms leading off of it.

He stood as unobtrusively as possible in a corner, watching as the shoemaker's wife set the lone table with what once was a white tablecloth and two small candles. Berish, meanwhile, went to hastily change out of his work clothes into something slightly more suitable for Shabbos. When he returned, wearing a creased white shirt and patched pants, Rav Zisha was surprised to realize that he was not a heavy man after all. When Rav Zisha had first met him, he had been

wearing layers of sweaters over his thin frame, giving him a stocky impression.

“Let’s go,” Berish said brusquely, stepping into his chunky work boots. “If we’re late to davening, we’ll miss the whole thing completely.”

Rav Zisha hurried after him, past the cemetery, until they reached a small house. “The minyan is in here,” Berish said, jerking his thumb in the direction of the door as he walked toward it.

Inside, about twenty other men were gathered, all simple laborers. There was the gravedigger, the water carrier, the farmer, the carpenter, and of course, the shoemaker. Minchah was over almost as soon as it began. Rav Zisha could barely get out the words fast enough, let alone engage in his usual fervent concentration of each word.

The chazzan began kabbalas Shabbos, singing off tune as the rest of the congregants bantered with each other catching up on a week’s worth of news. Rav Zisha buried his face in his siddur and tried to concentrate, reminding himself that he was there for a purpose and he would discover the reason eventually.

On the other side of town, meanwhile, Rav Elimelech was sitting in shul at the eastern wall, beside the rav. The two prayed with such intensity that the entire congregation actually felt the power of their tefillos. It was as if an electric current had gripped the room, a Yom Kippur-like aura enveloping the congregants, enabling them to daven like they had never davened before.

Back on the outskirts of town, the laborers finished turning enough pages in their siddurim. “Let’s go,” the shoemaker nudged his guest impatiently. “It’s late enough already, let’s not waste any more time.”

Rav Zisha walked alongside his host, his heart screaming in protest at the miserable excuse for a davening, but he calmed himself down. This was

where he was meant to be, even if he couldn’t understand it.

The seudah turned out to be just as disappointing as davening. Berish made Kiddush over a small piece of challah. He simply could not afford wine. After bite size chunks of challah were handed out, the hostess brought in a single, skimpy portion of fish, which she proceeded to divide between her husband, their guest, and all their children.

The miniscule portion sizes and lack of a filling meal were not a problem for Rav Zisha, who was used to living like a pauper. What bothered him was that after his host had finished eating his sliver of chicken, he bentched quickly and the seudah was over. No divrei Torah, no heartfelt zemiros, no family time together.

Berish excused himself to retire for the night, informing Rav Zisha that he would wake him up in time for Shacharis the following morning. With a curt nod, the shoemaker’s wife showed Rav Zisha to the room where he would be sleeping and disappeared.

Rav Zisha glanced around the small room. Other than a pile of rags in one corner, which he assumed was supposed to serve as his bed, the room was bare. Silently, he sat down on the mound of rags and thought about the whirlwind evening. Normally, he would probably still be in middle of kabbalas Shabbos, but the shoemaker, apparently, operated with the speed of lightening so that he could fit in as much sleep as possible over Shabbos.

Well, Rav Zisha thought, I don’t plan on sleeping tonight. Perhaps this simple-seeming shoemaker is not what he passes himself off as. Perhaps I’ll catch him learning or saying tikkun chatzos in middle of the night.

He began thinking in learning as he kept his ears perked for the slightest sound of movement. But the hours ticked by and the house remained completely silent. There were no footsteps, no

muted breathing, no sound of anyone leaving the house or their beds, for that matter.

He remained awake the entire night in vain. As he informed his guest, the shoemaker had gone to sleep immediately after the seudah and had remained sleeping the entire night.

*Alright, so he didn't get up at midnight to recite tikkun chatzos, Rav Zisha thought as he joined Berish on the walk back to the minyan on Shabbos morning. But there must be more to the story than I am picking up. Perhaps there is one mitzvah that he is especially devoted to? What could it be? Why did my father choose him as my host?*

*To be continued...*

*Have a Wonderful Shabbos!*

This story is taken from tape # A256

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# TORAS REB KALMAN



## סיפורי צדיקים

*Captivating stories full of Yiras Shamayim taken from Shmuessin that  
Reb Kalman Krohn z'tl gave in Adelphia Yeshiva*

### ***Rav Zisha and the Shoemaker Part Two***

*Recap: While away from home, Rav Elimelech was sent by his father to spend Shabbos at the home of the local rav, while his brother Rav Zisha was sent to the home of the local shoemaker. Rav Zisha spent the beginning of Shabbos trying to understand why he was sent to the home of an ignoramus who kept the mitzvos as minimally as possible.*

Shacharis was just as bad as davening the night before. When Berish and Rav Zisha arrived, there was only one other man present beside the baal tefillah, who was concluding Nishmas.

“What time did davening start?” Rav Zisha whispered to his host.

“Seven-thirty,” Berish replied.

“So where is everyone?” Rav Zisha asked. “And why isn’t the chazzan—?”

“The chazzan starts when davening starts,” the shoemaker explained. “We all begin from wherever he’s up to when we arrive. This is a minyan; we work together. Of course, if ten men don’t arrive by the time he’s up to Shemonah Esreh, the chazzan will wait.”

Without another word, Rav Zisha opened his siddur and began davening, wondering how he would ever catch up to the chazzan, who was racing ahead like an escaped horse.

Slowly, the room began to fill up with the same men from the night before, all yawning loudly as they joined in the davening at whichever point the chazzan happened to be at when they arrived.

When it was time for krias haTorah, Rav Zisha was honored by being called to the Torah. He walked slowly up to the bimah, wondering if the sefer Torah was kosher or not, and if he was permitted to say borchu es Hashem with Hashem’s name. It was getting tougher and tougher to keep his spirits up.

Back in the big bais medrash in the heart of town, his brother Rav Elimelech arrived in shul, bright and early, after a purifying dip in the mikvah. Shacharis was beautiful and uplifting. On a spiritual high, the entire shul began dancing as they recited Nishmas in a heartfelt singsong. The presence of the shechina was keenly sensed by all. After an inspiring davening, Rav Elimelech joined the rav at his home for the seudah. Over fluffy challah and steaming bowls of cholent, they discussed divrei Torah and sang gorgeous zemiros. When the seudah was over, the rav and Rav Elimelech sat down for a long, satisfying study session together, enlightening each other with their unique perspectives on the Gemara they were learning.

Rav Zisha’s experience at the shoemaker’s home could not have been more different. Just as he had

done the night before, Berish made Kiddush on a stale piece of bread, which was then divided amongst a dozen people. After a single forkful of fish and a few cooked beans which passed off as cholent, the meal was over. Berish went to sleep and the children went to play.

Retreating to the privacy of his assigned room, Rav Zisha spent the rest of the day learning from memory. He continued listening out for sounds of Berish waking up, but there were none. It seemed that the shoemaker was exactly who he appeared to be: an overworked, exhausted, and ignorant laborer.

As the sun began its descent on Shabbos afternoon, Berish knocked sharply on his guest's door.

"Yes?" Rav Zisha called.

"Minchah!" the shoemaker called back, his voice tinged with impatience. "Let's go, it's time for Minchah!"

"Coming!" Rav Zisha cried, scrambling to his feet and rushing to open the door.

"Let's go, it's late," Berish said, breaking out into a run. "We'll miss it if we tarry."

Shrugging into his coat, Rav Zisha ran after him. By now, he knew just what to expect, and indeed, Minchah was exactly the way he imagined. He struggled to keep pace with the chazzan, who seemed to be trying to break a world record for the most words uttered in one minute. Davening was over almost as soon as it had begun.

Rav Zisha's shemonah esreh took considerably longer than the rest of congregants, and by the time he finished davening, Berish was no longer beside him. Scanning the thinning crowd for his host, he did not find him.

Shrugging, he remembered the shoemaker's perpetual hurry through his obligations so he

could get back to sleep. He must have left without me, he realized, donning his coat and heading out of the shul back to the former chicken coop. I must have been davening for too long.

Knocking on Berish's door, he walked inside and squinted in the dim light. He saw his hostess, the shoemaker's wife, tending to her children, but there was no sign of Berish or the third Shabbos meal.

Hearing his footsteps, the shoemaker's wife turned around. "Can I help you?" she inquired.

"Where is your husband?" Berish asked.

She lifted her shoulders in a slight shrug, as if to say, "How should I know?"

Rav Zisha pursed his lips thoughtfully. "And what about shalosh seudos?" he asked slowly.

The woman visibly relaxed. "There's a small piece of challah left," she offered. "Take it and wash."

Rav Zisha washed his hands and ate the portion of challah, fulfilling the mitzvah of shalosh seudos. He sang a little and then bentched, feeling uncomfortable under the woman's scrutiny.

"Why don't you go wait for my husband in shul?" the shoemaker's wife asked him pointedly when he finished. "He'll surely be there for maariv."

"Alright, thank you very much," Rav Zisha agreed, getting up and walking slowly out of the dark house. A thousand thoughts whirled around his brain. Where was the shoemaker? And why was his wife so uncomfortable with his questioning?

Two of the children were playing outside when he emerged. "Good Shabbos!" they wished him sweetly.

“Good Shabbos, kinderlach,” he returned, deciding to try his luck with questioning them.

“Where is your father?”

“Tatte is on the roof,” one of boys informed him importantly.

“Shush!” the other one chastised him as they returned to play.

Rav Zishe recalled seeing a ladder leaning against the back of the chicken coop when he had explored the house before Shabbos. The sky was darkening steadily; there was little time to waste. Briskly, he rounded the long, narrow structure to the back.

The ladder was not there.

He must have pulled it up once he got onto the roof, Rav Zisha thought in dismay. He thought furiously. How else to get up there?

Sighing, he went back inside. His hostess regarded him frostily. “I believe I asked you to wait for my husband in shul,” she reminded him.

“Can I please wait for him here, in the dining room?” he pleaded.

She gave a long, drawn-out sigh. “Alright, if you must.” To avoid yichud issues, she pushed the front door open wide and disappeared into one of the many rooms lining the long hallway.

As soon as she left the room, Rav Zisha headed straight for the chimney. Sticking his head inside, he found that, like all chimneys, this one was black and dusty and full of soot. Choking and sputtering, he forced himself inside, climbing carefully up the notches in the wall and staining his fingers black.

At the top of the chimney, he lifted his head into the fresh night air and took a deep breath. Then he

jumped over the top onto the roof. Despite the child’s claims, it was empty.

Looking around, Rav Zisha noticed a flight of stairs descending down into what appeared to be an attic, with sounds floating up toward him. Carefully, he walked down the stairs toward the sound. There was a door at the bottom, and he twisted the handle gingerly, pulling the door open.

His head began swimming and he almost passed out.

The room was brightly lit with long-lasting lanterns that had been kindled before Shabbos. The shoemaker sat at the head of a long table. Thirty-five additional men lined the two sides. Someone was in middle of expounding a deep and complicated sugya, and he stopped short as soon as he noticed the intruder.

Rav Zisha blinked in the light. There were thirty-six men in this secretive room. Thirty-six men. Lamed- vav. Could it be?

The shoemaker looked at Rav Zisha with a small smile. “You are a smart man,” he noted. “We will allow you to stay on condition that you will never reveal to anyone what you have seen or heard here. Do you agree?”

Rav Zisha found his tongue. “I agree.”

“Have a seat, in the corner of there,” Berish instructed. “I apologize that you cannot join us at the table.”

Rav Zisha sat down, waiting curiously.

The shoemaker closed his eyes and the others began swaying. With tremendous concentration, they began reciting yichudim. Profound secrets of the Torah began emerging from Berish’s mouth, followed by equally astounding divrei Torah from others around the table.

Their words were almost too holy for Rav Zisha, a tzaddik in his own right, to bear. With dawning clarity, he understood that his father had not sent him to the home of a simple ignoramus, but to the home of the leader of the lamed-vav tzaddikim.

They continued in this manner until three stars appeared in the night sky. Concluding shalosh seudos, they bentched and recited Baruch Hamavdil. Then, the men stood for Maariv, and what a Maariv it was. The holy Rav Zisha had never participated in such an elevated davening before, and he found himself being raised to new levels just from that one tefillah.

When Maariv was over, they wished each other a good week and took an extra moment to caution Rav Zisha never to reveal what he had witnessed that evening. Then, they descended the ladder back down to Berish's backyard, reverting into the personas they were known by in their everyday lives; the baker, the watercarrier, the blacksmith.

Rav Zisha thanked his hosts and then began the walk across town to wait for his brother at the prearranged location. Rav Eliemelech had enjoyed an uplifting shalosh seudos with the entire community. The meal, replete with singing and divrei Torah, had continued well into the night, and they only made Havdalah long after Shabbos was over.

Finally, he joined Rav Zisha at the city gates. "How was your Shabbos?" Rav Zisha asked as they began walking.

"Wonderful," Rav Eliemelech replied, his face shining with holiness. "The rav is extraordinary, and he told me an amazing pshat..." With glowing eyes, he repeated the rav's divrei Torah, as well as his own, and his brother listened in appreciation.

"How about you?" Rav Eliemelech asked when he finished speaking. "How was your Shabbos at the shoemaker's?"

Rav Zisha's face shuttered immediately. "I'm sorry, but I can't tell you," he said apologetically. "What do you mean? We had a deal," Rav Eliemelech reminded him.

"I know, but I still can't tell you," Rav Zisha insisted.

"You can't do that," Rav Eliemelech said. "We made a deal that we would each tell the other about the events of our entire Shabbos. I kept my side of the deal, and now it's your turn to do the same."

"I can't," Rav Zisha continued to maintain. "I promised not to say."

"You shouldn't have promised," his brother chided him. "You promised first to tell me about Shabbos, so any promise contradicting that is null and void. Nu, tell me what happened over Shabbos."

"Alright," Rav Zisha said reluctantly, caving to the pressure. Against his better judgement, he began describing his Shabbos at Berish's home, ending with his astounding discovery at shalosh seudos.

Rav Eliemelech listened, openmouthed. "We should never have doubted our father," he commented when Rav Zisha grew silent again. "He knew exactly where to send us both for Shabbos. Let's turn back. I would love to meet the shoemaker myself."

"Absolutely not," Rav Zisha warned him. "It will cost us our lives."

From behind them, they heard the sound of approaching hoof beats and then a wagon came into view. The driver, a Jew with kind eyes, offered the two brothers a hitch to the next town, and they boarded the wagon.

In the next town, the two brothers entered an inn and asked for permission to remain there for the

night. They had no money and could not pay for their room, but knew they would freeze to death if they remained outside. "Please, have pity on us," Rav Zisha implored the innkeeper. "We are Jews, and it is so cold out. We don't need a proper room, just a roof over our heads to keep us warm and dry."

"Alright, come in, then," the innkeeper invited. "You can stay here in the lobby for the night."

The two holy brothers settled down on the lobby floor, Rav Elimelech in one corner and Rav Zisha in the second. Exhausted from their Shabbos experiences, they lay down and prepared for sleep.

A few moments later, an elaborate carriage pulled up outside the inn, and a high-ranking government official, flanked by two bodyguards, entered the building. "I'd like your most comfortable room," he requested.

"Certainly," the innkeeper hurried to agree. "Let me show it to you." He ushered the official through the lobby in the direction of his most palatial guestroom.

"Hey, what do you have here, homeless?" the official suddenly asked, noticing Rav Elimelech and Rav Zisha laying on the floor. "I don't like how this looks. Put them in a proper room, and add it to my tab."

Rav Elimelech and Rav Zisha were shown to a guestroom, replete with beds and linen and a small hearth. They sank gratefully onto the beds and slept deeply until vasikin. After davening Shacharis, they left the inn.

The trouble began when the government official began packing up his things to continue on his way. "I am missing a silver spoon," he informed the innkeeper. "It must have been those two Jews.

Where are they?"

"They left at dawn," the innkeeper said, trembling.

"Alright, then, we'll have to go find them," the official declared. "We'll be back soon for our things. Men!"

Accompanied by his guards and servants, the official boarded his carriage and ordered the driver to proceed with all possible speed. It wasn't long before they came across the two brothers making their way back home by foot.

The driver pulled up alongside the brothers and all the guards jumped off the wagon, blocking their way. The official descended the carriage slowly and came to face the two men. "You took my silver spoon," he declared accusingly.

"Chas v'shalom, we would never steal," Rav Elimelech protested. "We didn't take your spoon."

"Oh, really?" the official chuckled. "You expect me to believe that? Men, tie their hands to the back of the carriage."

Before they could continue to protest, Rav Elimelech and Rav Zisha were seized and their hands were bound tightly to the rear of the carriage. The official watched in satisfaction, checking to ensure that the knots were strong and secure.

"We'll be boarding the carriage now, and it will continue to travel," the official explained to the brothers. "If you'd prefer not to be dragged across these rocky roads, you'd need to run to keep pace with the horses."

"Please let us off," Rav Zisha pleaded. "We didn't take your silver spoon!"

The official just shrugged indifferently as the driver whipped the horses and the wheels began to roll. As the carriage picked up speed, the two holy brothers were forced to run like they had



never run before. Faster and faster, they forced their legs to keep pace with the wagon to avoid a terrible and painful death.

For fifteen long and painful minutes, the carriage rode, the two panting brothers bringing up the rear. Finally, they reached the next town and the official ordered the driver to halt in front of the police station.

A police officer came out to greet them, and Rav Elimelech and Rav Zisha began to speak at once, denying the official's charges and pleading for mercy.

"Alright, I'll deal with these two," the policeman told the official, who promptly untied their aching hands from the back of the wagon and drove off.

"I promise, we are innocent," Rav Zisha continued to insist. "We are observant Jews and we are forbidden to steal."

The police officer pushed back his cap. "Rav Zisha, do you recognize me?" he suddenly asked. Taken aback to hear the policeman address him by name, Rav Zisha searched the man's face.

"No," he said honestly. "Who are you?"

"I sat next to you in the shoemaker's attic," the officer said quietly.

Rav Zisha looked again. Could it be that this was the same man who he had sat near at the extraordinary shalosh seudos that he had intruded upon?

"Weren't you told that you were forbidden to reveal anything you saw in that attic to anyone?" the police officer rebuked him. "You promised, and then you went ahead and revealed the secret to your brother."

"I was wrong. I apologize," Rav Zisha said humbly, remorse flooding his being.

"Revealing the identities of the thirty-six hidden tzaddikim is one of the worst things a person can do," the officer continued. "If we are exposed, the protection that we afford klal Yisroel can be removed, and that would put the entire generation in grave danger."

"Since you revealed the secret to your brother, you were destined to die, but the suffering you endured at the hands of the government official, who by the way, is also one of us, will suffice as your atonement. It should serve as a constant reminder not to reveal that which you are not allowed to reveal."

With this lesson in mind, the two holy brothers continued home, ready to resume their holy service for klal Yisroel.

*Have a Wonderful Shabbos!*

This story is taken from tape # A256

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# TORAS REB KALMAN



## סיפורי צדיקים

*Captivating stories full of Yiras Shamayim taken from Shmuessin that  
Reb Kalman Krohn z'tl gave in Adelpia Yeshiva*

### ***Al Kiddush Hashem***

Harav Alexander Ziskind, known as the Yesod V'Shores HaAvodah, was a great tzaddik and yarei shamayim who lived in the city of Horodna during the era of the Vilna Gaon. During his time, a vicious blood libel was instigated against Eliezer ben Shlomo, an unassuming Jew in his city.

The story began when Eliezer was traveling on his wagon and noticed a deep ditch at the roadside. There was a gentile woman standing inside the pit, apparently trying to find something that had fallen inside. However, the earth around the top of the ditch kept collapsing on top of her. She coughed incessantly, trapped by the choking embrace of the dust clouds.

Seeing the woman's distress, and recognizing the danger she was in, Eliezer jumped off his wagon to try to rescue her from her premature grave. As he peered into the pit, he could see that the sand had already filled the space around her and was rapidly closing in, ready to bury her alive. Freeing her would be a struggle, but Eliezer was determined not to allow another human being to suffocate to death.

While he toiled unsuccessfully to free the woman from the ditch, more travelers noticed the commotion and stopped off to see what was going on. They took in the scene: a Jewish man leaning over a pit, his hands blackened with earth, and a gentile woman trapped inside, choking to death as clouds of sand billowed around her.

To the newcomers, the facts seemed clear. The Jew had clearly killed the gentile woman by suffocating her in the pit! Despite Shlomo's vehement assertion that he had only been trying to rescue her, they refused to believe him, unwilling to give up their more exciting narrative: that he'd been trying to kill her in order to use her blood for his Passover matzos. The fact that Pesach was just a few days away seemed to lend credence to their theory.

Eliezer continued to maintain his innocence, desperately trying to convince them of his noble intentions, but his words fell on deaf ears. The gentiles had found a scapegoat for their murderous hate, and they were not about to give him up. They dragged the poor Jew to the police station, where he was duly incarcerated to await trial.

When the Jewish community discovered Eliezer's plight, they hurried to do everything possible to secure his release from prison. It was clear to them, as it was to Eliezer, that his trial would be anything but fair and just, and its outcome was unlikely to bode well. They hoped to be able to

ransom him from prison before the story led to more heartache and grief, both for Eliezer individually and for the entire community as a whole.

However, their efforts were in vain. It had been a long time since the gentiles had last tasted Jewish blood, and they were eager to see the entire story through to the very end. All attempts at bribery and lobbying fell flat.

Between Pesach and Shavuot, a trial was held. From the start, it was obvious that the case had been rigged against the defendant. So-called 'eye-witnesses' were called to the stand, and they brazenly testified that they'd seen Eliezer throw the gentile woman into the pit. They described, in detail, how Eliezer had rained sand down upon her until he murdered her.

Eliezer, when called upon to defend himself, protested that this wasn't true, declaring his innocence and explaining that he'd only been trying to save her life. "I saw a woman struggling to free herself from the quicksand, and I couldn't leave without trying to get her out," he cried. "I tried my best, but unfortunately, I was not successful in saving her."

His passionate words did not succeed in moving the stone hearts of the jury. Unanimously, they ruled that he was guilty of murder, and the judge sentenced him to death by burning. "You will be burned alive, limb by limb, as your body screams out in excruciating pain," the judge announced coldly.

He looked at Eliezer, whose eyes were closed in fear. "However," he said in a softer, gentler tone. "I will give you a way out of this horrific death. With the murder of the woman, you caused the world to have one Catholic less. Now, I am giving you the opportunity to convert to our faith and become a Catholic in her stead. Doing so will

allow you to atone for your terrible deed, and you will be spared death."

Eliezer did not need any time to think it over. "No," he said firmly. "I will never renounce my faith and the faith of my fathers. I was born a Jew, and I will die a Jew."

With that, the guards seized the condemned Jew and threw him back into his prison cell, where he would await his sentence. It would take some time to organize the burning, which was to be a public affair attended by a large crowd of eager gentiles.

When the community found out about the Eliezer's sentence, they redoubled their spiritual efforts to try to save him. People soaked their sifrei Tehillim with tears as they pleaded before Hashem to save the innocent Jew. Gatherings were held and communal tefillos were recited. On the physical front, however, there wasn't much they could do for Eliezer. With the gentiles thirsting for Jewish blood, people were afraid to start up with them lest they become the next victim.

The Yesod V'Shores Ha'Avodah was the only one who was not afraid to venture into the lion's den and visit Eliezer in prison. Amazingly, the gentiles seemed afraid to start up with *him*, and they allowed him in to see the condemned man. Eliezer was sitting on the floor of his cell, chained, his face withdrawn.

With encouraging words, the Yesod V'Shores Ha'Avodah tried to uplift Eliezer's spirits. "We are still trying our best to get you out of here," he said soothingly. "But, in the event that our efforts are unsuccessful, I want you to remember that there is only one Hashem, and He is the one Who orchestrated these events just to lead up to this point. You, Eliezer, were chosen by Hashem himself to atone for the entire city. It is a merit that is not easily achieved."

Eliezer began to weep. “I don’t want to die,” he cried out. “But I know that the biggest thing one can do is to die al Kiddush Hashem.”

The Yesod V’Shoresh Ha’Avodah continued to encourage and strengthen Eliezer with words of chizuk and inspiration, and then he turned to something practical. With tears in his eyes, he taught Eliezer the berachah that one recites when he is killed to sanctify the name of Hashem. The imprisoned Jew memorized the blessing in a choked voice, subtly preparing himself for the day when he would merit his personal akeidas Yitzchak.

Then, he asked the Yesod V’Shoresh Ha’Avodah to bless him, and the great tzaddik did so. “I will continue to daven that you should not have any pain, and that you should merit to remain strong until the end,” the sage said in parting.

On the second day of Shavuot, while the Jews of Horodna were in shul for shacharis, a loud buzz went around the room. Word had reached them that Eliezer’s burning was about to take place, right then as they were davening, and a hushed commotion ensued. Eliezer was one of them, a neighbor, a friend, a fellow congregant. The news that he would now be put to death had a profound effect on the shaken Jews.

At the same time, they knew that it was an especially dangerous time for the entire community. The gentile bloodsuckers would not be content with one death, and any Jew that they encountered was likely to meet a grisly fate. The safest option was for the Jews to head home immediately and bar themselves in their houses, remaining out of sight until the danger passed.

The Yesod V’Shoresh Ha’Avodah, however, felt differently. “I will go to the burning,” he said, “Because I want to answer amen to the holy berachah Eliezer will recite. There is nothing

greater than giving one’s life for Hashem, and I want to merit responding amen to that blessing.”

The other Jews were astounded and afraid. They held tightly to his tallis, trying to prevent him from leaving and exposing himself to terrible danger, but the tzaddik shrugged off their fears. “The value of this amen is worth the risk. Hashem will be with me.”

And so, as the entire Jewish community of Horodna bunkered down in their homes, their shutters drawn and their movements silent, the Yesod V’Shoresh Ha’Avodah went to the town square to be present at the burning. Wearing his tallis proudly, he did not even attempt to hide his Jewish identity.

When the gentile crowd saw him coming, they instinctively parted, allowing him to walk to the front, where he would be visible to Eliezer. Eliezer, on his end, was crying profusely on the stage, terrified of the moment when his sentence would be carried out.

From his place just before Eliezer, the Yesod V’Shoresh Ha’Avodah was able to comfort him, reminding him of his lofty mission as a karban tzibbur for the entire community. “Every angel in Shamayim is waiting to welcome you warmly. You will not feel any pain!” He continued speaking words of comfort and inspiration until the priest stood up to begin the ceremony.

“Rise, Jew, and tell us the truth,” the priest roared. “Did you kill that gentile woman?”

“No, sir, I did not kill her,” Eliezer stated unequivocally.

“We have witnesses who testified that you did kill her,” the priest retorted. “And you will now be burned at the stake to atone for the murder.” He turned to the executioner. “Light the fire!”

A huge amount of wood and kindling had been prepared for this moment, and the small flame soon turned into a roaring bonfire. Each crackle of the fire caused another jolt to go through Eliezer as he envisioned himself burning painfully inside it, limb by limb.

“In another moment, you will be in the fire, roasting to your death,” the priest declared. “You will suffer unimaginable pain, just as you caused that woman to suffer. Now is your final chance to save yourself. Accept our faith, and you will be released. If not, you will burn to death in this very fire!”

“Eliezer! Strengthen yourself!” the Yesod V’Shoresh Ha’Avodah called out. “Go al Kiddush Hashem, and don’t forget to recite the berachah!”

Eliezer screwed his eyes shut and began to recite, in a loud and clear voice, “Baruch atah Hashem...” In a proud and confident voice, he declared his enduring allegiance to the One and Only One, ready to die to sanctify the name of Hashem.

The Yesod V’Shoresh Ha’Avodah lifted his hands. “Amen!” he cried out.

Eliezer was tied to a log and dropped into the fire. There was a small smile on his face, the contentment of one who knows that he has fulfilled his lofty mission. Not a sound was heard as the flames licked his body, not a single cry of pain.

The Yesod V’Shoresh Ha’Avodah waited for an entire hour, remaining with Eliezer until nothing was left of his physical body other than a pile of ashes. Then he walked out from between the jeering gentiles, completely unharmed, and returned to shul.

When he got there, the congregation was up to Krias Hatorah. The Yesod V’Shoresh Ha’Avodah walked up to the open sefer Torah and recited Kel Maleh Rachamim for the noble Jew who had given his life for Hashem with a smile on his face.

The Yesod V’Shoresh Ha’Avodah recorded this story in his sefer so that future generations would remember what it means to die al Kiddush Hashem.

And if you want to do a favor for this lofty Jew who served as a communal atonement for the city of Horodna, learn one Mishnah in Pirkei Avos for Reb Eliezer ben Reb Shlomo. Although he surely occupies one of the highest places in Gan Eden, learning in his merit is an unparalleled gift that he will surely repay you for.

*Have a Wonderful Shabbos!*

This story is taken from tape #A153

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