

TORAS REB KALMAN



סיפורי צדיקים

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

The Doctor who sold his Oilam Habah for a ruble

The Ridvaz, Rav Yaakov Dovid Vilofsky, was the rav of the town of Slutzk. He was a man who utilized every single moment of his time and was careful not to let his concentration in learning waiver for even a fraction of a second. Therefore, whenever he found himself out of the bais medrash, even just for the short walk home, he made sure to always be surrounded by students who would talk to him about various Talmudic subjects. This ensured that his mind was continuously occupied with Torah.

The ritual slaughterer and butcher in Slutzk was a man named R' Yisroel. While not a particularly learned man, he was the quintessential 'simple' Jew of yore; a man who lived with pure faith and divided his days between earning an honest living, davening, and attending a daily shiur. Since he worked with animals, often a messy and dirty occupation, he had multiple sets of clothing to ensure that he would always be able to appear before his Creator to daven in clean clothes. Each morning, he would awaken at dawn and don a

fresh shirt, hurrying to the first morning shacharis in town. After toiling all day in his butcher shop, slaughtering, koshering, skinning, and selling cuts of meat, R' Yisroel would scrub up and change his clothes so that he was dressed pristinely for minchah. Once he closed up shop for minchah, his butchery would remain closed for the remainder of the day, since he utilized the time after minchah to attend a shiur, after which he would daven maariv.

Thursday was the only day that he would reopen his shop after maariv. Being that it was erev Shabbos, there was a much greater demand for chicken and meat. R' Yisroel would stand on his feet, serving his customers until very late Thursday night. He would finally close a mere few hours before dawn and hurry home to catch a few winks before Friday dawned.

There was a doctor in Slutzk, an unaffiliated Jew with a university education who charged a fortune for his healing services. Dr. Abramovitch was a haughty man who scorned Slutzk's population of frum Jews, who were sincere in their avodas Hashem. One Thursday afternoon, Dr. Abramovitch was walking down the cobblestone main avenue when he passed the kosher butchery. There was a small crowd of shoppers reluctantly exiting the shop at the behest of the butcher. Ignoring their protests, R' Yisroel continued sending everybody out. "Minchah, minchah!" He called from behind his bushy beard, waving his arms to shoo them away. He pulled his short frame up carefully onto tiptoes and began to pull down the iron gates that would lock the shop. To the disappointed hum of shoppers, he called, "Yidden, I'll be back after maariv! Have a good day!"

Dr. Abramovitch observed the scene, amused. His back erect as always, he held out his hand to the butcher as if to stop him from locking up. "Wait a minute here," He said importantly, the scorn evident in his voice. "What exactly is going on here? You can't just close your store in the middle

of the afternoon. Look, there's a whole crowd of people who need to buy things."

R' Yisroel sniffed, unimpressed by the doctor's standoffish performance. "Excuse me," He huffed. "I'm also a person with needs, and I need to daven minchah and maariv. I'll reopen later for the customers who still need to make a purchase." The doctor snorted. "Come on, minchah? maariv? That's what this whole fuss is about? It's not like you're not doing anything right now. You're in the middle of business! You can't just pick up and run off for minchah!"

"Excuse me, Mr. Doctor," R' Yisroel retorted, already halfway down the street on his way home to change his clothing. He stuffed his hands into the stained pockets of his overalls and pulled himself up to his full, though not very tall, height. "Business is not everything. It's not like I'll be here forever. Minchah and maariv and my shiur in between... those are investments for the future, for my Olam Haba. I'll be back to serve you after maariv if you need. Good afternoon!"

Dr. Abramovitch strode after him, his lips twitching in amusement. "Oh, please, do you really believe in Olam Habah? Ask any educated person; it's clear that once a person dies, that is it. There's nothing more."

R' Yisroel turned around, his face flaming. "Aren't you a Jew? You really don't believe in Olam Habah?"

"I absolutely do not," the doctor replied, smirking. "But since you seem to be taking it very seriously, how about we make a deal? I'll sell you my Olam Habah for the sum of one ruble. I'll be a ruble richer, and you'll get more Olam Habah!" "Olam Habah is worth a whole lot more than just one ruble," R' Yisroel said uncomfortably, not wanting to take advantage of the doctor's ignorance. "It's worth more than a million rubles! Olam Habah is priceless."

The doctor rolled his eyes. "Alright, then, I'm offering you the bargain of the century. Are you in?"

"I'm in," R' Yisroel responded, pulling out his worn wallet. A single ruble, worth approximately five cents, for the doctor's portion of Olam Habah was truly a good deal. He handed Dr. Abramovitch the ruble, who pocketed it. The two men shook hands.

"You have my Olam Habah," The doctor said jubilantly, certain that he had received a ruble for free.

R' Yisroel, equally certain that he had received the bargain, waved to the doctor before hurrying home to change his stained clothing into something more presentable for minchah. Standing in shul in his fresh clothing, he opened his siddur and began davening, promptly forgetting about the bizarre exchange.

A few years passed. One morning, R' Yisroel was in his shop, trying to create some semblance of order before the first customers would arrive for the day. The early morning was quiet, the shop was locked, and he hummed quietly as he cleaned his equipment and set up the glass meat display. Suddenly, there was sharp knocking on the door. Annoyed, he fished out his pocket watch and glanced at it. As he had thought, it was too early for customers. He continued straightening up the display, ignoring the knocking. It was too early; for the next half-hour, he was still closed.

The knocking persisted, and he soon realized that whoever was banging on his door was also crying. It was a woman's voice, and the tears were evident in her voice as she pleaded, "Please, open up! Open up!"

Worried, he went to open the door. An unfamiliar woman stood there, her cheeks stained with tears.

"How can I help you?" He asked in concern.

The woman looked at the floor. “Do you know my husband, the doctor?”

“A doctor?” R’ Yisroel echoed in surprise. Doctors were expensive professionals, and their services were utilized only by the wealthiest or the most desperate. “I’m a healthy man. I’ve never been to a doctor in my life!”

“Are you sure?” The woman asked, her voice tinged with hope. “You don’t know my husband, Dr. Abramovitch?”

“I’m so sorry, but I don’t,” R’ Yisroel said apologetically, wondering where all this was leading.

The woman refused to back down. “You never spoke to a doctor, who sold you his Olam Habah for about five cents, or something like that?”

R’ Yisroel scratched his forehead. “I have no clue what you are talking about!” He said firmly. “If you’d like, you can buy meat here, or chicken, but there are no transactions regarding Olam Habah in this shop.”

The woman began weeping. “My husband, Dr. Abramovitch, passed away recently. He appeared to me last night in a dream, where he recounted his horrifying judgement in the next world. Since he stems from religious parents and had received a full Torah education, he should have lived a Torah lifestyle. Instead, he went to Berlin and pursued a medical degree. He kept absolutely no mitzvos. It was decreed that he would be placed in the deepest bowels of Gehinom.

“In my dream, my husband recounted how he had protested,” Mrs. Abramovitch continued, sniffing into a tissue. “He told the Bais Din Shel Malah that there was indeed one mitzvah that he had done. Often, people approached him for medical care, yet they could not afford to pay for his services. Countless times, my husband donated his time and efforts to these unfortunate

individuals, and treated them for free. He saved many lives with the medicine and care he dispensed with no charge. ‘Doesn’t it say in Chazal that one who saves a life saved an entire world?’ My husband argued. ‘In that case, I’ve saved many worlds, and I deserve Olam Habah for that.’

“Upon hearing my husband’s argument, the malachim opened their records and perused them carefully. They began weighing all the good deeds that had been committed by Jews whose lives my husband had saved. They looked at all the generations that came forth from each of these Jews, and the merits my husband earned began adding up significantly. However, before they could reward my husband for these countless merits, one malach noted that my husband had once sold his portion in the World to Come to someone else. ‘We can’t award you your share, since it is no longer yours,’ The angel said. ‘You sold it to R’ Yisroel the butcher for the price of one ruble’.

The woman swallowed, cleared her throat, and continued with difficulty. “In my dream, my husband instructed me to give you a ruble and buy back his Olam Habah immediately. Can we take care of this right now?”

“You’re right!” R’ Yisroel cried out, suddenly recalling the irreligious man who had sold him his portion in Olam Habah one busy Thursday before minchah. “I remember your husband! I remember the story. He did sell me his Olam Habah.”

The woman sighed in relief and began opening up her purse, but the butcher’s next words halted her in her tracks.

“I’ll be honest with you,” R’ Yisroel said slowly, tugging on his full beard. “I’m really just a simple butcher. I daven three times a day, I learn a little between minchah and maariv, I’m careful that my scale is accurate so that I don’t overcharge my customers... Other than that, I don’t really have

much time to do many mitzvos. My Olam Habah is really not that great. But your husband, well, it seems he had a big portion in Olam Habah. We made a deal, and now this Olam Habah is mine.

I'm sorry, but I can't afford to just give it up just like that."

Hearing his answer, Mrs. Abramovitch's sobbing renewed. "I don't know much about Olam Habah," She said between her tears. "All I know is that my husband needs this back. He got special permission to come to me in a dream just to beg me to reverse the deal. Without this Olam Habah, he will be thrown into the darkest depths of Gehinnom. Please, have compassion on my poor husband. Please let me buy his portion back."

R' Yisroel shrugged his shoulders and lifted his hands in a manner of helplessness. "I wish I could help you, but I also need that Olam Habah," He said gruffly. "A deal is a deal. I'm sorry, but the Olam Habah is not for sale."

Disappointed, distraught, and desperate, Mrs. Abramovitch pondered her options. She knew little about frum life, and she needed someone to assist her in helping her husband's soul. Resolutely, she decided to go to the Rav of Slutzk to discuss the issue. Her course of action decided, she left the butchery and made her way toward the main shul.

It was shortly after shacharis, and the Ridvaz was heading out of the shul, surrounded by his talmidim. As was his custom, he continued learning even as he walked, his hands gesturing excitedly as he discussed the intricacies of the sugyah. Mrs. Abramovitch, waiting patiently a few steps down the road, was suddenly approached by the Ridvaz's talmidim, who were clearing the way for him. "Excuse me," They called to her. "The Rav is coming. Please move over!"

"I need to speak to the Rav," She responded, trying to sound confident and not moving an inch. "I'm sorry, the Rav is a very busy person. Perhaps you can find someone else to speak to? Please move over and make way for the Rav."

"No, no, I really must speak to the Rav," She tried to explain, but her words fell on deaf ears. Seeing that it was very unlikely that she would get to discuss her predicament with the Rav, she burst into tears.

The Ridvaz, in middle of a fierce discussion with his students, noticed a woman standing in his path, sobbing quietly. He motioned to his talmidim to allow her to approach. "What happened?" He asked her kindly. Calming down slightly, Mrs. Abramovitch recounted the entire story, beginning with her husband's death and ending with the butcher's refusal to reverse the sale of his Olam Habah. "I have no children," The woman concluded brokenly. "The only thing I have left from my husband is my memories. Now I'm going to be forced to live with the knowledge that he is suffering unimaginably in Gehinnom!" Standing around, it was impossible for the Ridvaz and his talmidim not to feel sympathy for the pain of the anguished widow. "I think we should make a din Torah," The Rav said softly. "There is a dispute between you and another Jew. Come to the shul tomorrow at three o'clock, and we'll have a din Torah to see what to do."

The grieving woman thanked the Rav and left, feeling slightly hopeful. Someone was sent to the butcher to notify him of the upcoming din Torah. In middle of weighing a hunk of meat on the scale, R' Yisroel's bushy eyebrows lifted deep into his brow line. "A din Torah?" He quaked. "Before the Rav?" He was a simple man, and he had never been to the great Rav before, and he trembled at the thought of it. However, he knew there was no alternative; he needed to obey the Rav's command.

The next afternoon, R' Yisroel arrived in shul, trying to convey his usual no-nonsense demeanor even as butterflies danced a hora in his stomach. The shul was crowded with shopkeepers and laborers and businessmen... everyone had heard about the story, and everyone wanted to see for himself what the outcome would be.

A heated discussion broke out among the assembled. Roughly fifty-percent of the crowd sided with the doctor's widow. "How can you be so heartless?" Someone yelled at the butcher as he entered the bais medrash. "Have pity on the poor neshamah! Take back your nickel and let him have his Olam Habah!"

"Absolutely not!" The other half of the assemblage disagreed. "This is not just business, this is Olam Habah. This is the real world! Why shouldn't R' Yisroel enjoy what is rightfully his?!"

In the middle of the thick commotion, the Ridvaz entered the room accompanied by two other rabbinical judges. All three wore a tallis and tefillin. The crowd swiftly fell silent as they stood up respectfully. The din Torah began.

First, the Rav called upon the widow and asked her to state her grievance.

Trying to control her tears, Mrs. Abramovitch recounted her story for the third time. She reached its conclusion and the audience was silent. Her pain was palpable.

The crowd began murmuring, and the Rav quickly called R' Yisroel up to the bimah to refute her claim.

"I know I will not live forever," The butcher began simply. "Soon, I will move on to the next world. What do I have in the next world? Almost nothing! I am like a pauper there! I spend all my time with chickens and cows. I barely have any mitzvos to my name! I bought the doctor's Olam

Habah, and now it is mine, fair and square. I need it! I can't afford to sell it!"

When he finished speaking, the crowd erupted. People were yelling, people were accusing. Everybody had some opinion on the case. The Ridvaz held up his hand for silence and then announced that the dayanim would confer quietly in a side room and would render the judgement a half hour later.

As soon as the rav and the dayanim left the main bais medrash, the ruckus continued. The butcher found himself under attack from all sides. A feisty character, he fielded their spirited retorts with ease, refusing to back down on his stance. For the next half-hour, the decibel level in the bais medrash was such that it was impossible to hear what anyone else was saying.

The Ridvaz reentrance to the room had an almost magical effect on the crowd. The noise immediately died down. "During the din Torah we just had previously, the widow accused the butcher of refusing to sell back her husband's Olam Habah. The butcher insisted that they had made a deal, and he was now the rightful owner of the doctor's Olam Habah." The Rav finished this summary, and the crowd waited with bated breath for the verdict.

The Ridvaz continued, "The beis din has paskened that the original sale of the Olam Habah was invalid!"

A stir came over the crowd, and the Rav continued. "Imagine someone worked in the forest for hours a day until he built up his muscles. Imagine if another individual would request to buy off his muscles. He can't sell his muscles! They are a part of him! They grew and were strengthened due to his work, and it is impossible to transfer this to someone else. When a person does a mitzvah, he is creating muscles," The Rav explained. "There's no way to transfer those muscles to another person. They are not sellable."

Half of the crowd congratulated each other jubilantly over the Rav's words.

However, he wasn't done speaking. "That fact that the sale is invalid is only the first part of the psak," The Ridvaz continued. "The second part of the ruling is that the doctor lost his Olam Habah." The stir quickly snowballed into a full-fledged discussion. The sale wasn't valid, but the doctor still lost his Olam Habah? Why?!

"Even though the sale cannot be considered a sale, the fact remains that the doctor was willing to exchange his Olam Habah for a mere ruble," The Rav said quietly, and the crowd silenced immediately as they strained to hear his words. "By equating his portion in the World to Come to five cents, the doctor disgraced Olam Habah. To him, it was worthless. And therefore, for him, it will be worthless. There is a braysa in Sanhedrin that clearly states that one who doesn't believe in Olam Habah will not receive a portion in Olam Habah."

He gave the assembled just a few minutes to digest this before continuing. "There is one final clause to the ruling. The entire town has come out to hear the outcome of this din Torah, and a profound lesson was surely learnt by all regarding the terrible consequences of belittling or disbelieving in *schar v'onesh*, one of the principles of *emunah*. The doctor, therefore, has been the catalyst for a tremendous *kiddush Hashem*. In the merit of this incredible *kiddush Hashem*, the doctor will receive Olam Habah."

"Honored Rav," The not-so-simple butcher cried out. "But what will be with me? I was also a catalyst in this *kiddush Hashem*. I also want a cut of the profits in the Next World."

Smiling, the Ridvaz blessed R' Yisroel that he, too, merit an eternal portion in the world to come, and both parties of the din Torah left their judgement satisfied. Yet the eternal message of their story continues to resonate, teaching the

danger of disgracing one of the thirteen principles of *emunah*.

Have a Wonderful Shabbos!

This story is taken from tape # TB86b 2005

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