

TORAS REB KALMAN



סיפורי צדיקים

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

Chametz B'bayis

Rav Kalman Krohn related this story from a sefer called עושה פלא.

Back many generations, klal yisroel was zoche to be headed by great mekubalim, tremendous spiritual giants who possessed a penetrating knowledge of all aspects of Torah, including a genuine understanding of the deep mysteries of kabbalah. With their exalted and elevated level, they were capable of utilizing the secrets of kabbalah to demonstrate the greatness of Hashem and perform wondrous miracles for the survival of Yiddishkeit against those who sought to annihilate it.

The city was decorated with patriotic flags and colorful flowers, the streets freshly paved and the buildings newly painted. Excited schoolchildren crowded the sidewalks, carrying flaming torches, their parents hovering nearby, dressed in their finest attire. In the distance, they can hear the faint clip-clop of horses and the drumbeats of the marching band. They jostled eagerly for a better

view, straining to see the approaching parade and the gilded chariot bearing their brand-new king. This was Rome, and it was inauguration day.

The king had passed away a few weeks earlier, and the citizens were enthusiastic about the crowning of their new ruler. As the approaching procession neared and they caught glimpse of the man wearing the royal crown riding straight-backed in his chariot, shouts of “Long live the King!” echoed repeatedly. With joyous admiration for their newly appointed leader, the townspeople showered the king and his entourage with gifts and packages, hurrying after the parade to try to keep him in the view for just a bit longer. For seven full days, the country celebrated. All were invited to partake of the festivities in Rome’s capital, and all were eager to do so, to prove their loyalty to the new rulership.

On the seventh and final day of the celebrations came the climax of the entire inauguration. Following with the tradition of the land, the entire population would gather outside of an ancient tower on the outskirts of the capital city, in a desolate area surrounded by wasteland. The tower was many stories high, tall and imposing, made of large rock. Mildew and grass grew amongst the crevices, attesting to the structure’s age. At the base of the tower were doors, seven large, heavy, rusted doors. All seven doors were bolted with padlocks of all shapes and sizes.

When all the citizens had gathered, the new king would arrive, amid much pomp and ceremony, and perform the ancient ritual that had been part and parcel to Roman inaugurations for too many generations to count. This custom called for the newly inaugurated king to put yet another lock on one of the doors of the ancient tower. No one could recall exactly what was in the tower, or the reason for adding new locks, yet they faithfully followed their tradition.

And so it was for hundreds of years. Each time the king died and his heir was crowned, another lock

would be added to the mysterious tower after seven days of festivities.

Until the day when the departed king did not leave over an heir.

The 70 ministers of the land's high council knew they needed to find someone to take over the kingdom. They spread out over the land to search for someone strong, someone wise, someone brave. Someone great enough to lead their mighty kingdom.

And yet they could not find anyone worthy of being their king.

It was dangerous for the kingdom to be left without a king, as it gave an opening for their enemies to try to attack. Desperate, the ministers decided between themselves to give a significant reward to the one who finds an individual worthy of wearing the crown.

After many weeks of searching, one minister chanced upon a man who answered the description of what they were looking for. He was an individual of many talents. He spoke many languages, was well versed in the arts of music and science, math and astronomy. He was tall and strong, a natural leader, and he was both wise and modest.

After the minister notified his colleagues about his discovery, they sent down a delegation to speak to the man in person. They also made inquiries and investigated his personality, his reputation, and the way he dealt with challenges. They sent people to test him in many ways, and he impressed them with his calm demeanor and strength of character time and again. Unanimously, they agreed that this man had real potential to be their king.

Alberto was sitting in his simple home, eating his midday meal, enjoying the peace and solitude, when there was a knock at his front door. Setting down his spoon, he stood up to answer it. To his surprise, a group of elegantly dressed men stood outside and requested entry.

With a calm nod, he invited the delegation inside, expressing no surprise, as if having his lunch interrupted by a group of nobleman was a common occurrence. "How may I help you, gentleman?" He asked after they were seated.

Wordlessly, they handed him a rolled parchment. Alberto accepted the scroll and broke its seal. He began reading,

After much investigation, it is our view that you may be an eligible candidate for the kingship. We respectfully request that you come down to the capital for an interview. Signed, the Seventy Ministers of the Roman High Council.

Alberto reread the letter and then looked up at the men, his disciplined face showing no signs of shock or joy. "I need some time to think," He told them. "I'll come down to the palace in three days."

The delegation left before his family returned, and Alberto decided not to tell them about the visit. Would he be offered the crown after the interview? Would he accept it if he was? Was he ready to give up his happy and peaceful life to bear the weight of the entire kingdom upon his shoulders? There was too much to think about, too much uncertainty, and he had no desire to shake up their world until he had something conclusive to share with them.

After three days of constant deliberations, he came to the conclusion that he was ready to become king. He traveled to the capital and was admitted to the palace, where he was treated with tremendous honor, as befits a man who is to be the king. For many hours, the ministers stood

around him and subjected him to a long interview process, during which they monitored his responses and the way in which he delivered them.

After the entire process was concluded, all seventy ministers were more than suitably impressed. They knew they wanted him as king. But after listening to him speak and learning about his sterling character and values, they weren't all that certain that he would be willing to accept the crown. Would they be able to persuade him?

Alberto, once a common citizen like any other, understood the magnitude of what the ministers were offering him. He had deliberated for days, and he had reached the point where he thought himself capable of accepting the kingship. However, he hinged his acceptance upon one condition. "I am willing to accept the responsibility of the kingdom," He said in a steady, firm tone. "However, in order to do so, I will need all seventy ministers to sign a contract that my word will be the final say in this land. You may have chosen me, but once you have done so, you will be under my command just like any other citizen. Once I am crowned, you will be unable to backtrack and remove the kingship if you are unhappy with a decision I make. Making my rule final and unretractable is the only way I will be able to truly assume the mantle of leadership." His eyes roved over the group of ministers. "If you are unable to accept my terms, then I will decline the kingship."

The ministers all looked at each other, unsure. "We need to think about this," They told him after a few moments of silent deliberation.

After Alberto left, they gathered in heated discussion. "Do you think he is referring to something specific, that he will try to get his hands on after he is crowned?" A short, balding minister asked.

"He must have an interesting plot up his sleeve, but what?" A tall, heavysset man agreed, frowning. "I disagree," A third minister chimed in. "The man just needs to ensure the security of his rule." For three days, they argued and discussed, until they determined that Alberto had nothing sinister in mind. "He's a man of great integrity, we've seen that," One of the ministers declared, to the agreement of his colleagues. They decided to accept his condition.

Again, they interrupted Alberto in the midst of a meal, shocking his wife and children with the announcement that they had come to crown him as king. With much festivity, the family was dressed in royal garments and transported to the capital on the chariot reserved for the king of Rome.

Word got out that a new king was to be inaugurated, and the citizens rejoiced. They began preparing themselves and their cities for the week-long inauguration festivities. There was a grand parade through the streets of Rome as the people came out to hail their new King Alberto. The capital was flooded with citizens from all over the country and the people celebrated for seven days with much joy and excitement.

Everything proceeded normally until the seventh day of the inauguration.

In the morning, just a few short hours before the procession to the ancient tower for the padlock ceremony, King Alberto commanded that all seventy ministers be brought before him for a meeting. As his behest, they soon arrived, bowing deeply.

"I wish to remind you, my dear ministers, that upon placing this crown above my head, you have consented to provide me with unquestioning support," King Alberto said quietly.

“Certainly, Your Majesty,” The ministers affirmed. “We will stand behind your ever decision.”

The king’s eyes roved slowly over each minister, making eye contact with each man. “I have decided not to follow the custom of adding a lock to one of the doors on the ancient tower,” King Alberto said firmly, his voice low and clear, as the ministers strained to hear him. “Instead, I wish to break open the doors and discover what is inside.” A stunned silence greeted his words. Then there was a babble of voices.

“If I may...” The balding minister began. The king nodded, motioning to him to continue. “Your Majesty desires to break a sacred tradition that we have faithfully observed for hundreds of years. It would be incorrect, foolish even, to destroy a custom that is centuries old. If tens of kings have agreed to keep the secret securely inside, it must be for a good reason. Is His Majesty really willing to bear responsibility for freeing the secret from its centuries of storage?”

The other ministers nodded, yet King Alberto refused to be persuaded. “You have pledged to grant me full power,” He said firmly. “Perhaps the kings before me knew what was inside the tower, a secret passed down the monarchy to each Crown Prince. However, I do not know what the secret is, and I intend to find out today. I will have the strongest of our warriors dismantle the door so that we can enter and discover the mystery of the ancient tower.”

The ministers saw that their king was serious, and there was nothing they could say to change his mind. To be honest, many of them were very curious about the secret of the tower. They had grown up with the legend of the locked tower, and wondered what was inside. If the king insisted on knowing, then they would finally be able to satiate their curiosity.

The news got out quickly that the new king had no intention of placing another lock on the tower and would instead open it to plunder its secrets. The citizens were even more interested in participating in the ceremony, and they all gathered in the fields outside the ancient tower, vibrating excitedly like small children.

When King Alberto’s impressive chariot rode into view, the trumpets blared and the people bowed deeply. “Long live King Alberto!” At the king’s nod, the citizens stood up and watched with interest as he approached the tower. Would he really defy tradition and break open the door? The silence was tangible. Not a bird chirped. Everyone held their breaths as the king ordered the doors to be taken down. Ten of the kingdom’s strongest warriors came forth with axes and hatches, ready to do battle with the mighty doors. They worked for some time until the doors gave way and then entrance to the ancient tower lay open.

There was a nervous air as all the men tried to avoid being ordered to enter. No one had been in the building for centuries, and they were afraid at what they would find. The king sensed their fear, and waved them off. “I’ll be first to enter,” He said, his voice strong and brave. He asked for the warriors to remain in sight, lest his entrance to the tower trigger a war or worse.

And the King Alberto entered the tower.

With the light of the lanterns held by guards behind him, the king could see that the entire tower was one large room, empty and silent. There were cobwebs and bats and a few roaches, but otherwise it was completely empty.

King Alberto asked the men to clean the room out until it was pristine. Then he walked slowly over the stone floor, looking for a loose rock. After a few moments, he discovered one stone that was loose. A soldier pried it out and lowered his lantern to see what was beneath.

It was a staircase, leading to a hidden lower level. Bravely, the king descended the staircase first, his bodyguards close behind. Inside, his heart was hammering in fear, the child in him still afraid of a ghost or monster coming out to grab him. He set his lips and held the lantern before him as he continued his descent.

At the bottom, he discovered a room similar in size to the one above. However, in this room, there were ten large chests, all surrounding another chest in the center. The chests were old and rusty and it took many soldiers to get the lids to yield. They opened the first. Gold. They opened the second. Silver. The third held precious stones.

A general remarked to the king, “Your Majesty, this must be the treasure that was hidden all these years. We’ve discovered it!”

King Alberto look around the musty room and shook his head. “No,” He said. “It doesn’t sound right that they would leave so much riches locked in this underground vault, completely inaccessible. There must be something else hidden here. Open all the chests.”

The next few trunks all yielded similar findings; they were filled with rare jewels and precious metals. It was only after all the outer chests were opened that the guards reached the one in the center. They worked industriously for a while until they succeeded in lifting the cover.

A lantern was lifted over the aging box to provide light, and a few pairs of eyes looked inside. But all they saw was clumps of grass.

Grass?

They poked and prodded, sifted the grass between their fingers and smelled it, but it appeared to be ordinary blades of grass. What was grass doing in a large treasure chest, stored in an ancient tower

along with other chests of riches, under the protection of many locks?

King Alberto, mystified, ordered the trunks to be removed from the tower and brought to his palace. Then he traveled back to the capital to sort through the discovery.

When the loot was spread out in a large, airy hall within the palace, the treasure looked larger and more astounding than it had in the underground vault. The king had a team of goldsmiths and jewelers clean and polish his finds to remove the centuries-long grime and dust that had accumulated on them. When the professionals were finished, it was clear that they had discovered a treasure of unparalleled value.

But what was the grass? Even in the spacious, light-filled palace hall, it appeared that the center chest contained ordinary grass. Was it medicinal herbs? Was it a kind of spice? It was clear to the king that the grass was the real treasure, the reason for all the secrecy and security surrounding the ancient tower. However, for all his power and brilliance, he could not fathom what the grass really was.

King Alberto called another meeting with his seventy advisors. “It is clear that this grass is not ordinary grass,” He told them. “I am relying on you to discover the secret it contains. You have been part of the High Council since the previous king, and I therefore believe you have the ability to unearth the secret. I am giving you thirty days to investigate and inquire throughout the kingdom and the entire world.” He didn’t need to add what their fate would be should they fail to find the answer after their allotted time were up. It was abundantly clear to all the ministers that their very lives depended upon their discovery of the grass’s secret.

Despite the king’s opinion, the ministers were in no better position to find the answer to the mystery than he was. None of them were privy to

the secret, and despite their continuous investigations and far-reaching probes, the general population was no wiser than they. Ten days passed, then twenty, and the ministers knew that their days were numbered. They had absolutely no leads, and they would not have an answer for their king when Day Thirty came.

With the desperation of someone who knows his life is hanging in the balance, they redoubled their already considerable efforts, but to no avail.

The thirtieth day arrived, and the ministers awoke with heavy hearts. They knew they would likely be executed for failing to discover the secret of the grass, and they had no power to do anything to help themselves.

Amongst the ministers were seven men who were brothers. Each morning, before heading to the king's palace to begin their workday, the brothers would stop off at their elderly father's home to wish him good morning and assist him with his needs. On the morning of the thirtieth day, they came to visit their father as usual, having decided amongst themselves to hide the terrible news of their impending death sentence.

They entered their father's home and pasted fake smiles on their faces, greeting him as usual.

The ninety-eight-year-old man was still sharp, and he knew his sons well. "What is wrong?" He demanded. "What are you all so worried about?"

The brothers conferred quietly amongst themselves. "Father is a wise man," The eldest brother whispered to the others. "Maybe he can help us with a solution to our problem?"

They realized that the way things stood at that moment, their father was going to lose all seven of his sons on the same day. They really had nothing to lose by asking him if he knew the secret of the grass.

"We're in grave danger, Father," One of the brothers explained as they sat respectfully around him. "The king found a chest full of grass in the Locked Tower, and he is demanding that we discover its secret by this afternoon. We have not managed to figure out the mystery in time, and all seventy of us ministers are expected to be executed later this afternoon."

The elderly man's wizened eyelids opened wider. "The secret of the grass from the Locked Tower?" He echoed. "Why didn't you tell me earlier? Of course I know the secret. Transport me to the palace, and I'll tell the king the secret, sparing your lives."

The old man was too weak to walk, so his grateful sons carried him on his chair all the way to the palace gates, where they stated the purpose of his visit and requested an audience with the king. They were ushered into King Alberto's chambers. "I know the secret of the grass," The elderly man told the king.

King Alberto had his servants settle the old man on a comfortable chair at his side and ordered that everyone leave the room. When the two men were finally alone, the king indicated to the elderly man to speak.

"Your Majesty, I will tell you the undisclosed secret of the grass that you discovered," The elderly man began. "It's an ancient and valuable secret. From the time of Elifaz, the son of Esav, it became clear to the nations of the world that the Jews were a force they would be unable to overcome. The power of the Jew was such that he had the ability to withstand Amalek, to withstand every kind of enemy and plot. Bilaam prophesized that the Jew will outlive all the nations, and there was nothing to be done to stop them.

"The star pupils of Bilaam, great sorcerers who wielded tremendous knowledge in the field of witchcraft, banded together to come up with a plot

to undermine the Jewish nation. They understood that there was a tremendous amount of tumah, impurity, that came into the world each time a Jew did an aveirah. Using witchcraft, they concentrated these forces of impurity onto 600,000 blades of grass, one blade for each man who left Mitzrayim. They placed these blades of grass, now deeply entrenched in impurity, into a large chest, to wait for the right opportunity. Once the tumah in the grass was activated, the non-Jews would have the power to destroy the Jewish nation.”

King Alberto had never been a virulent anti-Semite, yet he was not either especially fond of the Jews. The power that the chest of grass contained seeded a spark of desire within him, and he suddenly found that he was very interested in using its power. “How is the impurity activated?” He asked curiously.

The elderly man nodded. “Yes, yes, Your Majesty. I assumed you would wish to know that. The answer is two-fold. Firstly, the forces of impurity contained within the grass can only be activated when the Jews sin. When the Jews are righteous, and perform the mitzvos properly, the grass in the chest is moist, indicating their strength. However, when they sin, the grass shrivels and dries, and it becomes possible to try to overcome them by activating the tumah.”

“And how is the impurity activated?” The king asked again, impatience in his voice.

“All forces of tumah can only survive when they feed off of forces of holiness,” The old man responded. “This is a basic tenet of sorcery. The greatest mitzvah of the Jews is retelling the exodus from Egypt. Therefore, having a Jew recount sippur yetzias mitzrayim over the chest of grass will provide the measure of holiness that will activate the forces of impurity. Once the impurity is activated, it will engender a chain reaction amongst the Jews to commit one sin after

the next, until they will lose their special protection and we will be able to destroy them.” King Alberto thanked the elderly man for disclosing the truth behind the ancient chest of grass. Before sending him home, he swore the man to secrecy, forbidding him from revealing the mystery of the grass to anyone else.

After the elderly man departed, the king, without a word about their conversation to any of his ministers, sent a dispatch to the rabbi of a nearby city, ordering him to appear at the palace.

It was shortly after Purim, and Rav Moshe was sitting and learning in his small study, concentrating intently on the gemarah before him. Sharp knocks at the door caused him to lift his head in wonder, and when the knocks persisted, he rose from his place, tucked a small bookmark in his gemarah, and went to see who it was.

A royal messenger stood at the threshold and handed him the missive ordering him to appear before the king immediately. Rav Moshe thanked the messenger and went to prepare for his audience with the king.

Rav Moshe had never met the new ruler, King Alberto, yet he knew from experience that urgent summons from the king did not bode well for the Yidden. With a tefillah on his lips, he dressed in his finest garments and procured a generous gift to present to the new ruler. Then, he set out for the capital.

At the palace, the terrified rabbi was brought before the king. He bowed deeply, his heart pounding nervously. The young king, however, appeared to be in a pleasant mood, and he greeted the rav with a friendly smile.

After asking that he be left alone with the rabbi, King Alberto invited the rav to come sit down at

a corner table, and then he descended from his throne and came to sit beside him.

Rav Moshe was no fool, and he was worried about the great honor and respect the new king was showing him, waiting tensely for the moment when he would be asked to pay the price for it. Yet King Alberto really did seem to feel much respect for the venerated Jewish leader.

“I called you down here because I know that the Jews are a wise nation,” The king explained. “As you know, I am not the natural heir to the throne. I fear that there may be an uprising in the future, and someone may wrest the throne from my hands. Therefore, I wish to place some of my fortune in outside hands, so that my wife and children will have what to live off of if I am forced into exile or killed in a coup.” The king rose and motioned to Rav Moshe to follow him.

“Look at this chest,” King Alberto told the rabbi, using his strength to lift the heavy lid. Both men peered inside. “As you can see, it is full of gold, silver, and jewels. I will seal this box, and I would like to store it in your home, lest the day come where my family will need to live off the riches stored inside.”

Rav Moshe bowed deeply. “Your most Exalted Majesty,” He began carefully. “I am the rabbi of a large community. My home is open to all, and all sorts of individuals roam freely around my residence. I will be unable to guarantee its security. Therefore, I believe it would be an unwise and unsecure place to hide a treasure of this magnitude.”

The king waved a hand dismissively. “We’ll disguise the chest as a table,” He said. “I’ll have my men add a wooden board to the top of the chest, and they’ll transport it to your home. You’ll eat on it, work on it, and use it just as you would your regular dining room table. And don’t worry about keeping it secure. I’m certain that no one will dream that there’s a treasure hiding in the

rabbi’s dining room table, but even if someone does discover the secret and comes to steal it, I will give you this letter here which states implicitly that you will not be held responsible for anything that occurs to treasure while it is in your care.”

The rav wanted to protest. He had always avoided political intrigue and was worried about the responsibility, but the king gave him no choice.

“I’ll have my men transform the chest into a table,” The king said again. “We’ll deliver it to your home by way of a simple servant, so that onlookers do not realize something valuable is being placed in your home. I ask that you inform no one, not even your wife, about the chest beneath your new dining room table.” Seeing the reluctant look on the rav’s face, the king added, “If something does happen to me and no one in my family comes to claim the treasure, then it will rightfully belong to you.”

Trying to conceal his unwillingness, Rav Moshe took the king’s proffered hand and they shook on the deal.

The rav left the palace and returned home. As he had promised the king, he was silent regarding the details of their conversation. He informed his wife that he had found a dining room table selling for a bargain price in the capital city, and that it would be delivered later that week. The rebbitzin, who was accustomed to a simple lifestyle, was excited about receiving a new table to replace the rickety one they owned.

After the rabbi left the palace, the king took the chest of grass and had stones added to it to simulate the weight of gold and jewels. The lid was screwed shut, a tabletop was fashioned above it, and the entire chest-table was loaded onto a wagon and delivered to the rabbi’s house.

Shortly before Pesach, the table arrived. The rebbitzin and her children examined it eagerly,

excited about their beautiful new Shabbos table. Rav Moshe, however, could not stifle his feelings of discomfort. Although the king has signed off on his responsibility to ensure the safety of the treasure, he felt uncomfortable being the keeper of the king's emergency fortune.

The night of bedikas chometz arrived. The rebbitzen had spent many days cleaning her home until not a crumb of chometz remained. During the bedikas chometz ceremony, Rav Moshe inspected each room thoroughly with the aid of a small candle. The next day, he burned and sold any remaining chometz. After the home was entirely chometz free, he retired to his study to immerse himself in the Haggadah in preparation of the seder.

Shortly before yom tov, he went to the mikvah. Rav Moshe was a great kabbalist, and he put tremendous thought into purifying himself for the great mitzvah of sippur yetzias mitzrayim. When he walked to shul with his sons for Maariv, he was encased in a glow of holiness.

Rav Moshe returned from shul, his face alight with kedushah. He glanced around the table at his sons and sons-in-law, children and grandchildren, dressed in their yom tov finery, standing around the new table, set beautifully with their royal Pesach dishes. Screwing his eyes tightly shut, he concentrated on his mental preparations, getting ready to begin the seder with the brochah of Kiddush. When he felt sufficiently prepared, he reminded his family quietly to have in mind that they are making the brocha on the mitzvah of sippur yetzias mitzrayim. He lifted his glass, filled to the brim with a rich wine. "Savri –"

Suddenly, a voice cried out, interrupting the rav's concentration. "Chometz babyis! There is chometz in the house!"

What? Chometz babayis? The family looked around in fear. Who had let out such a scream? There was no one else present. The rav peered out the window. Perhaps a gentile neighbor sought to disturb them? Yet he did not see anyone outside.

Shrugging, the family turned back to the table and renewed their kavanos. Rav Moshe shut his eyes tightly in concentration and lifted up his glass. "Savri –"

The high-pitched shriek interrupted him a second time. "Chometz babyis! There is chometz in the house!"

This time, the rav decided to conduct another bedikas chometz. They took candles from the table and searched the house thoroughly. Perhaps they had missed a room, a corner, a stray piece of bread? The search turned up nothing. The house was clean. There was no chometz anywhere.

When the second bedikas chometz turned up nothing, the rav felt ready to attempt kiddush for a third time. This time, all he had to do was lift up the glass. Before he even uttered a sound, the voice let out a scream. "Chometz babayis! There is chometz in the house!"

After the third occurrence, Rav Moshe knew something deeper was at play. He instructed his talmid go quickly to the homes of a few different mekubalim and request that they come over. Soon, the dining room was full of great kabbalists, each dressed in his pristine white kittel. Rav Moshe requested of his family to move away from the table, and the mekubalim gathered around it to be meyached yichudim, a kabbalistic ritual, to try to discover what was taking place.

The rav lifted his glass for the fourth time as the mekubalim stood around, performing the kabbalistic rite. As the rav uttered the word "Savri", the voice once again cried out, "Chometz babayis!"

The great kabbalists all heard the voice, and they were determined to check the entire house. At the rav's behest, they removed the tabletop and discovered a chest underneath. They pried open the lid, and there in front of them was a small creature sitting on some clumps of grass. One of the mekubalim took a knife and stabbed the creature, yet it continued moving around unharmed. They immediately understood that this was no ordinary creature, yet rather a live being that was created from the forces of impurity when it was activated by the holy Rav Moshe's utterance "Savri".

Following Rav Moshe's lead, they continued their kabbalistic rituals, uttering one possuk, then a second, being meyached specific yichudim, having in mind certain thoughts. As they concentrated intently on kabbalah, the creature shrunk slowly until it dissolved into nothingness. The grass didn't even shrivel; it turned immediately into dust. After removing the entire table from their home, the mekubalim departed and the family came in to finally begin their seder.

The rav realized that the entire occurrence had been an evil trick of their new king, yet another testimony of עשו שונא את יעקב. When the family got up to V'hi Sheamdah, the rav cried, thanking Hashem for saving them from the evil plot of the non-Jews on that very night. Long after their seder finished, Rav Moshe stayed up, delving into sippur yetzias mitzrayim with tremendous devotion until morning.

He was on his way to the mikvah the next morning before davening when he was apprehended by King Alberto's soldiers. "We were commanded to bring you before the king," The soldiers informed him, gripping him by the arm.

Although it was yom tov, Rav Moshe knew that his life was a stake, and he bid farewell to his family, beseeching them not to panic, but to storm

the heavens on his behalf. Then he allowed the soldiers to transport him to the palace.

When he was brought before the king, the rav could immediately detect that the king hadn't slept the night before, likely due to the fact that he was waiting to see how his plot would unfold. He forced himself to bow respectfully before the man who had been scheming to destroy the entire Jewish nation.

Once again, King Alberto asked for the room to be cleared and offered the rav a chair. "I hear you are in middle of a holiday," He said with a friendly smile. "Tell me a little bit about it. What did your family do last night?"

The rav looked directly into the king's eyes. "Your Majesty, I will tell you the whole truth," he said fearlessly. He began recounting the story of the voice that had interrupted him every time he tried to make kiddush. "On the night of Pesach, we speak about emunah, about Hashem watching and protecting us. Despite your plan to kill us out using the 600,000 blades of grass, Hashem has protected us in the end. Please understand, Your Majesty, that although we are in your hands, just as Hashem has protected us yesterday, and in the past, He will continue to protect us in the future."

The king listened quietly, his face a mixture of emotions. After a few moments of thought, he responded, "To be honest, I never would have thought that I would one day plot to do this. It was only upon discovering the secret of the grass that the hatred was ignited inside of me. You are a wise man, and you speak wise words. For two thousand years, this grass was waiting for the moment when it would be used to destroy the Jewish people. And yet one rabbi alone, with his holiness, was able to destroy what the forces of impurity have been working on for thousands of years. Although you have destroyed the kingdom's most powerful weapon, I will not harm your people."

The rav was unable to return home until after yom tov, so he remained in the palace, where he was treated with friendliness and respect until he could go home.

After yom tov, King Alberto handed in his resignation and left the country with his family. The amazing events he had witness convinced him that Yiddishkeit was the only truth in the world, and he set off determined to join its ranks as a ger.

We say in Hallel, “Hallelu es hashem kol goyim.” Why do the goyim praise Hashem? Because they are the ones who are aware of the plots they have attempted to weave against us. They are the ones who witness how Hashem thwarts their schemes time and again in the favor of the Jews. As yidden, we are busy with our lives, learning in yeshiva, and we are often completely unaware of the thousands of times we are saved and protected from potential dangers that the nations have plotted against us. Yet, we know Hashem is always with us, guarding and protecting us forever.

Have a Wonderful Shabbos!

This story is taken from tape # A380 1997

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Toras Reb Kalman
Lakewood New Jersey
609.807.1783
torasrebkalman@gmail.com

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