

# TORAS REB KALMAN



## סיפורי צדיקים

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

### ***Rashi***

Like many of the Torah giants of the previous generations, at one point in his lifetime, Rashi Hakadosh went into *galus*. During his wanderings, he chanced upon a non-Jewish individual, Johann, who lived a mystical life, separate from all materialism. He was an intelligent man, with a sharp mind, and from his initial exchange with Rashi, Johann understood that he was speaking to a brilliant person. As they travelled together in the same wagon, the two got into an intense debate regarding Hashem. Both sides had strong arguments, yet with his brilliance and clarity of mind, Rashi expertly won the debate and stunned his opponent into speechlessness.

During the course of the bumpy ride, Johann fell ill. He lay sprawled in the wagon, feverish and shivering, and it was clear that he could not continue the trip. The coachman detoured through a nearby town to drop off his ill passenger so that he could continue driving the rest of the travelers to their destination.

Since the two of them had been engaged in discussion for most of the journey, Rashi felt that it would cause a *chilul* Hashem if he were to abandon Johann at the small town and remain in the wagon to continue his wanderings. Despite the fact that Johann was an anti-Semite who had made no secret of his derogatory opinion of Jews, the great Torah giant disembarked from the wagon and personally helped the feeble non-Jew check into a hotel. Rashi then cooked some food for him and fed him, spoonful by spoonful. After helping Johann into bed, he left the inn in search of a doctor to procure medicine for the ill man. For the next two weeks, Johann drifted in and out of consciousness, and he was not even fully aware of the extent that Rashi cared for him. Yet for those two weeks, Rashi remained at his bedside, caring for the non-Jew with incredible dedication.

After two weeks, the fever finally broke, and Johann rapidly regained his strength. His voice trembling with emotion, he thanked his benefactor for devotedly nursing him back to life. “We only recently met, and yet you gave everything up to care for me,” He whispered tremulously. “I will never forget the favor that you have done for me.”

“You should know that it wasn’t my favor,” Rashi responded. “I am obligated by the Torah to assist a person who is suffering.”

“Nevertheless, I want to repay you,” Johann responded. “I am a wealthy man, and I would like to pay you back for restoring my health.”

Rashi shook his head. “Absolutely not,” He insisted. “I didn’t do this for payment. We became friends on the wagon, and I wanted to help you.” “Please, allow me to compensate you,” Johann begged. “Something, anything! What can I do for you? You, a Jew, sat by my sickbed for two entire weeks. Even another non-Jew would not have done that for me. Tell me what I can do to pay you back!”

Seeing that Johan would not back down, Rashi relented. “There is a way you can pay me back,” He said slowly. “If you ever come across a Jew in trouble, I want you to step in and help him out. That will be my payment.”

The two men shook hands and went their separate ways, Johann awed by Rashi’s good heart, humility, and selflessness.

Seven years passed. In the interim, Rashi had completed his stint in *galus*. His fame had spread throughout the Ashkenazic communities, where he served as the undisputed *gadol hador*. Rashi would always be accompanied by sixty *talmidim*, brilliant Torah scholars who were each unequivocal experts on a different *masechta* in *shas*. Each time he wrote a *peirush*, he would turn to the student who was an expert in that *masechta* to ensure that his new *peirush* did not contradict anything he had previously written.

One day, Rashi and his entourage of *talmidim* travelled to a certain city. The entire Jewish community, dressed in their Shabbos finery, came out to greet him to show honor for the Torah. The city’s *rabbanim* and greatest *talmidei chachomim* all came forth to welcome the *gadol hador* to their midst.

Watching the commotion and honor granted to Rashi, the Bishop of the town grew intensely envious. It was difficult enough that the city’s Jews mocked and scorned him. Seeing the same Jews who spat at him show their deepest respect for one of their own leaders was too much for him to bear. “What is the whole fuss happening in the town square?” He growled to his aide. “Who is that man causing such a disturbance to our city? Seize him, and throw him into prison. He needs to be kept locked up until we determine whether or not he is a threat to the citizens of this city.”

Without warning, amidst the celebrations of the Jewish community, the city police barged in and arrested Rashi. The entire community was in

uproar as they helplessly watched their venerated leader being dragged off to prison like a common criminal. Broken, they quickly organized a delegation to appeal to the bishop for justice. After denying to hear the delegation’s plea, the bishop callously announced that they were welcome to attend Rashi’s trial, which would be held a few days later.

When the day of judgement arrived, Rashi was dragged from his cell to the town square, where a panel of bishops and priests stood ready to preside over the trial. From the spectator benches, the Jews shed copious tears over their *sifrei tehillim*, beseeching Hashem to save the *gadol hador* from the cruel and unjust plot of the *sonai Yisroel*.

As the sham trial began, one of the priests on the panel suddenly jumped up from his seat, his face white with recognition. “The accused!” He blurted out. “I know this man! He is no criminal!” With tears in eyes, Johann recounted how he had debated Rashi for a few hours, and each of them had refused to accept the opinion of the other. Still, despite their differences, Rashi had devotedly nursed him back to health for two entire weeks, and refused to accept payment for doing so. Johann spoke strongly and convincingly, and by the end of his impromptu speech, he succeeded in acquiring Rashi’s freedom.

After the trial, Johann escorted Rashi back to the place where he was staying. As they walked through the streets, they came across a group of non-Jewish thugs who were unleashing their fury at the unexpected ending of the trial onto a few hapless *yidden*. Once again, Johann stepped in to display his gratitude toward Rashi by frightening away the bullies and rescuing the Jews.

Seven years earlier, Rashi hadn’t known that he would be saving his own life when he had given two weeks of his life toward the care of a non-Jew. It was only because he was so removed from worldly matters and so connected to Hashem that just knowing that he was doing what Hashem

wanted was enough to fuel Rashi with the patience to sit at a non-Jew's bedside and care for him devotedly for such a length of time. And indeed, he merited to see part of his reward in this world, when he was saved through the very man whom he had nursed back to life.

*Have a Wonderful Shabbos!*

This story is taken from tape # A46

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