

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 Mordchele Oshmina

Rav Pinchos Michael Grossleit was a great *rov* in Antipulia in Eastern Europe, in the nineteenth century. One blustery day, shortly before Rosh Chodesh Adar, he received a letter from Rav Mordechai Veitzel-Rosenblatt, who was then serving as *rov* in the distant town of Butten. He is more famously known as Rav Mordchele Oshmina, after the town which he later served as *rov*.

In the beginning of the letter, Rav Mordchele requested that he keep the contents of the letter completely private. He preferred the letter be destroyed rather than be read by other eyes. Somehow, with the passage of years, the letter was discovered and publicized for all, which is how we know its contents.

The letter contained the following story.

On the night of erev Yom Kippur, Rav Mordchele Oshmina suddenly had a dream. A handsome man in a flowing white beard appeared in his dream,

his tall frame towering over him and holiness radiating from his face. “*Mah licha nirdam- why are you sleeping?!*” He demanded of him. “Get up, and go straighten out your wrongdoing!”

Rav Mordchele awoke from the dream, shaking, but told himself that it was only a meaningless dream. He was sure it was the work of the cunning *Yetzer Harah*, trying to distract him before Yom Kippur. Determinedly, he pushed the dream out of his mind and continued on with his usual *erev* Yom Kippur routine.

The next night, Yom Kippur night, as he lay sleeping in bed, Rav Mordchele was one again visited by the same man in his dream. This time, he was accompanied by another individual. “*Mah lichah nirdam?!?*” They both shouted at him, trying to prod him awake. “How can you sleep now? Tonight is Yom Kippur! When are you finally going to rectify your misdeed if not for now? Get up and do *teshuvah!*”

When Rav Mordchele awoke on Yom Kippur morning, he was very unsettled from his dream. In middle of davening, still thoroughly troubled, he suddenly burst into sobs. Tears rolled down his cheeks and fell into his *machzor* as he wept and wept, pleading to Hashem to forgive him for his unknown sin. Losing control of himself like this was completely not his style, and he was surprised as the intensity of his own response to the dream, yet his tears kept coming.

The next few nights were calm ones for Rav Mordechele, and his dreams were not interrupted by visits from the anonymous elderly man. However, as he slept on Shemini Atzeres night, he dreamt of the man a third time.

“You should know that had you not cried so hard on Yom Kippur, you would not have made it through the year,” The elderly man informed Rav Mordchele in his dream. “Because of your tears, you were granted more time to atone for your misdeed before you are punished.”

“Please, tell me, what did I do wrong?” Rav Mordchele asked desperately. “I have no idea what *aveirah* I have done that needs to be corrected! Help me understand what I need to rectify!”

However, the man disappeared, leaving his question unanswered.

Rav Mordchele woke up with a start and sat up in his bed, his heart pounding in fear. By now, he was sure the dream was not nonsense, and he knew that he needed to atone for his sin immediately. However, no matter how much soul searching he did, he could not think of anything that he might have done wrong, and he felt extremely unnerved.

The following night, in his dream, he saw the same man. This time, Rav Mordchele was proactive. “You must tell me what my *aveirah* is!” He begged. “I’m asking you, in the merits of all the *tenoim* and *amoraim* whose Torah I learn, to please tell me what I did wrong!”

The elderly man nodded. “Do you know who I am?” He began.

“No,” Rav Mordchele responded honestly. “Who are you?”

“I am the Mahari ben Lev,” The man responded. Who was the Mahari ben Lev? The Mahari ben Lev was a great *posek* who lived in the sixteenth century in Turkey. His rulings are often brought down in the *Poskim* and studied until today.

“In one of the *dinei* Torah that I presided over,” The Mahari ben Lev continued, “I issued my ruling, which was against a very wealthy and powerful person. He tried to bribe me, to convince me to change my ruling in his favor. However, despite his intense pressure, I did not waver and ruled according to halachah.

“Shortly after the *din* Torah, I was walking in the street when I encountered the wealthy man whom I had ruled against. In front of all the passersby, he approached me and delivered a ringing slap to my cheek. This was a terrible disgrace for the Torah, since as a *talmid chacham*, I represented the Torah.

“Degrading the Torah is a serious offense, and once he committed this *aveirah*, it was molded into the wealthy man’s very DNA. This faulty DNA was then passed on to all of his offspring forevermore. Each of his descendants was born with a blemished *neshamah*, and they all suffered in their lifetimes because of it.” The Mahari ben Lev grew silent for a moment and then continued. “You, Rav Mordchele, are a descendent of that wealthy man.”

“Who, me?” Rav Mordchele sputtered. “I’m a descendent of this man?”

“Yes,” The Mahari ben Lev affirmed. “It is only because you are such a great *talmid chacham* that I received permission to inform you about this stain on your *neshamah*, so that you can do *teshuvah* before you, too, are punished for the deed of your forebear.”

Rav Mordchele began to cry. “But how can I atone for such a thing?” He asked brokenly. “I don’t know how to do *yichudim* (a kabbalistic ritual)! How can I do *teshuvah*?”

“*Yichudim* would indeed be the proper way to atone for this *aveirah*,” The Mahari ben Lev agreed. “However, I’ll give you a different path to *teshuvah*. You must learn my *sefer*, Teshuvos Mahari ben Lev. Learn it until you know every *psak*, every *pilpul* backwards and forwards, inside out. Once you are an unequivocal expert on my *sefer*, then you will have a *kaparah*.”

“Where can I find a copy of your *sefer*?” Rav Mordchele asked.

“You can purchase it from Rav Pinchos Michoel, *rov* of a distant town,” The Mahari ben Lev said. “Buy off his copy of the *sefer* and delve into it for four years, until you will know it by heart.”

Rav Mordchele awoke from this dream feeling calmer than he had in a while. He now knew what he needed to atone for, and he had a clear path to get there.

After *yom tov*, he sent his assistant to go purchase the Mahari ben Lev. The assistant dutifully obeyed, and managed to obtain a copy of the *sefer*. However, the copy he purchased was not from Rav Pinchos Michoel; it was simply something he had found for sale.

Rav Mordchele wasted no time and began learning from his new *sefer*. However, that night, he received a fifth visit from his nocturnal visitor, the Mahari ben Lev.

“Why didn’t you listen to me?” The Mahari ben Lev demanded in the dream. “I gave you an opportunity to correct the misdeed of your grandfather, and yet you didn’t take advantage of the opportunity!”

“But I did,” Rav Mordchele protested. “In fact, I began learning the *sefer* today.”

“Maybe, but you didn’t purchase it from Rav Pinchos Michoel,” The Mahari ben Lev explained. “I explicitly instructed you to buy it from him.”

“I didn’t realize you wanted to me to purchase only from him,” Rav Mordchele replied. “Why him specifically?”

“Rav Pinchos Michoel wrote a *sefer* on *Temurah*,” The man in his dream responded. “Due to a lack of funds, he never published his work. However, *klal* Yisroel needs his *sefer*! Therefore, I am requesting that you buy the Teshuvos Mahari ben Lev from him for a nice

sum of money so that he has the means to publish his *sefer*.”

Although Rav Mordchele planned on following the Mahari ben Lev’s instructions immediately, he was *rov* of a city, and he was very busy with his obligations toward his *kehillah*. Somehow, between fulfilling his duties as *rov* and learning his usual *sedorim*, he never got around to contacting Rav Pinchos Michoel to buy the Teshuvos Mahari ben Lev from him.

As the weeks passed, Rav Mordchele’s wife suddenly took ill and grew progressively weaker. It appeared that she had limited days on this earth. Sitting at his wife’s bedside, Rav Mordchele suddenly recalled the Mahari ben Lev and his dire predictions of punishment should Rav Mordchele neglect to atone for the sin of his ancestor.

With this sad ending, Rav Mordchele concluded his letter to Rav Pinchos Michoel. He also included a postscript requesting that Rav Pinchos Michoel daven for his wife’s speedy recovery.

After Rav Pinchas Michoel finished reading the letter, he understood that he had received a sign from *shomayim* that he was obligated to publish his *sefer* on *Temurah*. He was also awed by the greatness of Rav Mordchele Oshmina, who had merited to have the Mahari ben Lev revealed to him in a dream numerous times to amend an *aveirah* committed by his forbear.

The messenger whom Rav Mordchele had sent to deliver the letter also came equipped with a large sum to purchase the Teshuvos Mahari ben Lev from Rav Pinchos Michoel, who agreed to sell it to him. With the money from the sale, Rav Pinchos Michoel printed his work on *Temurah*, for the benefit of *klal* Yisroel.

And Rav Mordchele studied the Teshuvos Mahari ben Lev for four years, until he became a true

expert on all of its rulings and succeeded in finally atoning for the terrible sin of his ancestor.

From this incredible story, we learn the just how severely the offense of *kavod haTorah* is considered in *shomayim*. It is incumbent upon each individual to be exceedingly careful not to disgrace the honor of a *talmid chachom* or a *rebbe*; they represent the Torah itself. We must learn to value the precious *talmidei chachomim* in our midst so that we show them but the utmost respect.

This story can be found in the sefer Hadrass Mordechai published by Machon Mishnas Rav Aharon.

Have a Wonderful Shabbos!

This story is taken from tape # A45- 1993

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