

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 Power of Ahavas Yisroel

The *rebbe* Reb Meilich was from the greatest *tzaddikim* of his generation. He was an expert in *halachah*, in *aggadah*, and in *gemarah*. In addition, he had a heart wide enough to encompass any broken Jew who poured out his troubles, and he would go out of his way to assist them as much as possible.

In his time, the Kaiser of Austria, a vicious anti-Semite who constantly sought to embitter the lives of the Jews, decreed that any Jew who would marry off a daughter would be subject to a tax of four hundred golden coins. The abject poverty of the Jews of the time was such that majority only ate fish on Shabbos. Eggs and meat were unheard of luxuries. It was difficult enough to save for a decent dowery; there was absolutely no way they could afford such an astronomical tax to marry off each daughter. The decree hovered above the heads of the Jewish communities throughout the country.

R' Meir was a poor man who had one daughter, a girl of high caliber and sterling *middos*. At

seventeen years old, she got engaged to a true *ben Torah* and a wedding date was set.

The custom at the time was that the girl's side would provide a dowery for the young couple. R' Meir was too poor to provide a dowery, but the *chassan's* side assured him that they didn't need one. They were thrilled with the *kallah* just the way she was, and they were happy to provide for the young couple once they married. In addition, they informed R' Meir that they would shoulder the costs of the wedding itself.

In those times, if a person was too poor to provide a dowery, his daughter was likely to remain single for many years, or else be forced to marry someone who had previously been married, likely with children from the previous marriage, and possibly years older than she. R' Meir was tremendously grateful that despite his poverty, his daughter received a deserving *shidduch* who agreed to cover much of the finances.

However, despite his *mechutanim's* largesse, there was still one large financial responsibility looming above R' Meir's head. This was the tax of four hundred golden coins that he would be forced to pay to the Kaiser upon marrying off his daughter. He went around from house to house, from city to city, straining himself to the limit to try to collect the astronomical sum. However, despite his intense efforts, the wedding date was nearing, and he still hadn't collected nearly enough. There was no choice but to push off the wedding.

Desperate, he decided to undertake the long journey to the *rebbe*, Reb Meilich to pour out his heart. He felt so depressed, so broken, so worried, that when he reached the *rebbe's* home and the *gabbai* asked him what he needed, he lost control of himself. "I'm here for a *din Torah* with the *Eibishter*," He responded.

Immediately after uttering those words, he regretted them. Though he had spoken out of intense despair, he knew he had stepped out of

bounds. How could he have had the audacity to say he was taking Hashem to *din* Torah? His cheeks reddened, and he began apologizing, backing away from the door in shame. The *rebbe*, however, had already heard him.

“If you’d like to take Hashem to *din* Torah, then you may,” Reb Meilich said. “However, I am only one *dayan*, and I cannot *pasken* alone. Go bring the two big *dayanim* in town, and we’ll have a *din* Torah.”

Although he deeply regretted his words, R’ Meir knew that it was too late. He had dared say that he wanted to take Hashem to *din* Torah, and now he would have to pay the price for losing control of his mouth. Dragging his feet, he went to tell the big *dayanim* that the *rebbe* wanted them. It was humiliating that he had even had such thoughts, and now he was forced to let more and more people know about it.

When he returned to the *rebbe* with the two *dayanim*, Reb Meilich was already wrapped in his tallis. He instructed the other *dayanim* to don their *talleisim* as well, and then the three sat down to begin the *din* Torah.

“You said you have complaints against Hashem,” The *rebbe* began. “Stand up, and tell us what they are.” R’ Meir stood up, his cheeks flaming. “I didn’t really mean to say that I have *taanos* against Hashem, *chas v’shalom*,” He tried to say.

“No, no,” The *rebbe* replied. “You can feel free to say whatever is on your heart. We have a *bais din* here, and we’ll judge this case.”

R’ Meir swallowed hard. “I’m a broken man,” He began. “Hashem gave us the Torah, and in the Torah are the *mitzvos*, each one a precious gem. Although I’m not a learned man, I do recognize that each of the *mitzvos* is a treasured gift. The first mitzvah in the Torah is that a person should get married and have children. I fulfilled this mitzvah; I married and had a daughter. Now, I am trying to help my daughter fulfill the mitzvah by

marrying her off. Everyone knows that the Kaiser can’t make a decree unless Hashem allows it. Therefore, Hashem is the one who enabled the Kaiser to decree that Jews cannot marry off their daughters. Due to this decree, they cannot keep the first mitzvah in the Torah. Why was this mitzvah taken from us?”

When R’ Meir finished speaking, he began to cry, ashamed that he was even questioning the will of Hashem. The *rebbe* continued the *din* Torah. “I hear your side,” He said. “Please give me a few moments, and then I will present the *Eibeshter’s* side.” He closed his eyes tightly for a few moments and then opened them. “Do you know why Hashem brought this decree? It is because *klal* Yisroel did *aveiros*. And when the Jews sin, Hashem sends a difficult king to enact terrible decrees against them. This is supposed to inspire them to repent from their sinful ways.”

The *rebbe* began to summarize the two sides of the judgement. “You, R’ Meir, are arguing that Hashem is taking away a mitzvah from the Torah. Hashem’s argument is that this is your own fault. Since *klal* Yisroel was sinful, they deserve punishment, and this is the punishment.”

He turned to the other *dayanim*. “Now that we’ve heard both sides, it’s time for the *beis din* to issue a ruling. The halacha is that the *dayanim* are forbidden to come to a ruling in front of the litigants. Since Hashem is everywhere, there is no way for us to *pasken* without Him before us. However, R’ Meir, we ask you to leave the room so that we can decide on the case.”

R’ Meir got up and left the room.

After he left, the *rebbe* Reb Meilich closed his eyes. For fifteen minutes, his mouth moved and his face was aflame. When he opened his eyes, he asked for a *Maseches Gitin* and turned to *daf* 41. He asked the other *dayanim* to learn the *mishnah* together with him, as it would help them decide who was correct.

They began learning מי שחציו עבד וחציו בן חורין if there are two partners who own a slave together, and one partner frees him from the bondage of slavery while the other does not, then the man is half-slave, half-free. There is a problem here, since the man is partially a slave and partially free. -עובד את רבו יום אחד ואת עצמו יום אחד - *Bais Hillel* says that such a slave should work for his master one day, and the next day, be a free man. He should alternate daily between being a slave and being free.

Bais Shamai, however, does not accept *Bais Hillel*'s solution. -תקנתם את רבו - *Bais Hillel*'s solution solves the problem of the masters, since the one who did not free him still gets work out of him. -ואת עצמו לא תקנתם - However, there is still an issue with the slave himself. Since he is half-free, he is not allowed to marry a maidservant. And since he is half-slave, he is not allowed to marry a free girl either. The only option he has is not to get married. This is a tremendous problem, as getting married is not just a nice thing, but a mitzvah in the Torah. Therefore, according to *Bais Shamai*, the second master is forced to set the slave free so that he should be able to get married.

In the end, *Bais Hillel* agrees and gives in to *Bais Shamai*'s opinion, one of the few cases in *Shas* where it does so.

After reading the *mishnah*, the *dayanim* understood Reb Meilich's point, and they kept quiet. R' Meir was called back into the room to hear the *psak*.

"We discussed R' Meir's argument, and we discussed Hashem's argument," The *rebbe* Reb Meilich began. "So now, my fellow *dayanim*, let us read the *mishnah* aloud together." He closed his eyes, and once more his face became aflame as the three began reciting the *mishnah* together with great feeling.

When they concluded, the *rebbe* continued. "We learn from this *mishnah* that if a Jew is suffering

because he can't fulfill the mitzvah of marriage and having children, we can force his master to free him, to free him to get married. Even if he deserves to be bound in slavery, to be punished with a decree from the Kaiser, his right to fulfill the first mitzvah in the Torah overrides it.

"Since you, R' Meir, are bound and are in pain that you cannot marry off your daughter, although *klal* Yisroel is deserving of punishment, Hashem will soon set you free and remove the bondage of the tax."

R' Meir heard the *rebbe*'s words and calmed down immediately. If the *rebbe* said the decree would be annulled, he could rely on his word. Feeling relieved, he thanked the *rebbe* and began the long journey home.

When he reached his hometown, he found the townspeople in uproar. The news had just been released: the burdensome tax to marry off a daughter had been repealed.

Utilizing his tremendous *ahavas* Yisroel, the *rebbe* Reb Meilich had the power to use a *mishnah* to overturn a decree from *shomayim*.

There was a man, R' Sholom, who was arrested by the authorities on charges of swindling. Although there was no real proof that he had committed the act, he was a Jew, and the law always sided against the Jew. He was thrown into jail and forced to wait many long weeks until a mock-trial finally decided his fate. The verdict was handed down: death by hanging.

He was given an opportunity to be granted one dying wish, and R' Sholom requested to speak to his children. He wanted to bless them before he left this world. As well, he wanted to let them know that he was being hanged, so that they could ensure he would be brought to *kever* Yisroel, and so that his wife should be free to remarry.

It took two days for his wish to be carried out. A messenger went to inform the family of their father's impending sentence, and explained that they would be allowed to come to speak to him before he died.

When R' Sholom's wife heard the news that her husband was scheduled for hanging, she lost her mind. His sons, who were teenagers, prepared to go see their father one final time. A friend persuaded them to go to the *rebbe* Reb Meilich on the way. Perhaps the *rebbe* would succeed in overturning the terrible decree hanging above R' Sholom's head. They asked the police officers who were accompanying them if they could detour through the *rebbe's* home, and the officers agreed to remain outside while they paid a quick visit to the *rebbe*.

Cutting the line, the boys rushed into the *rebbe's* study and told him their heartbreaking story. They were terribly afraid that their father would be killed, and they pleaded with the *rebbe* to daven for him.

Reb Meilich saw how broken they were, and his heart went out to them. Covering his eyes, he sat that way for a few minutes. When he opened his eyes, he gazed kindly at the boys. "Don't worry," He assured them. "Your father will come home. He will not be hung."

The *rebbe's* words calmed the boys down tremendously. With tremendous faith that Hashem would fulfill the words of the *tzaddik*, they left the house and rejoined the policemen waiting outside. Together, they journeyed to the main jail that housed R' Sholom.

When R' Sholom saw his children, he was overcome with tremendous emotion. He could not contain his tears as he told his children a final goodbye.

"Tatte," One of his sons said softly, "We stopped off at the *rebbe* Reb Meilich on the way here. He

told us that you wouldn't be hanged and you will come home soon."

"Amen," His father replied fervently. "May Hashem accept the *tefilllos* of the great *rebbe* Reb Meilich."

The boys were then forced to part from their father as he was dragged to the gallows.

A tremendous crowd had gathered and they cheered appreciatively as the Jew was brought to the gallows. R' Sholom's eyes were shut and he recited *vidui* fervently. His sons, who were standing nearby, were forced to watch their father's final moments of degradation.

R' Sholom was placed on a raised platform. A noose was placed around his neck and a countdown began. When the time came, they would pull the platform away, and R' Sholom would plummet below, choke on the noose, and ultimately die.

Before pulling the platform from under R' Sholom's feet, protocol indicated that the verdict be read. Someone was called up to the platform beside R' Sholom, and he was supposed to begin reading aloud from a set of notes, describing what R' Sholom was being accused of, who the witnesses were, who the judge was, when the verdict was rendered, and what the verdict was. However, as he glanced at the notes, to his horror, he realized that he was holding the wrong set of papers.

He got flustered and quietly explained to his superiors that he had the wrong set of notes. There was no way he could recite it by heart. His superiors huddled to discuss the turn of events, and decided to call the witnesses up instead. However, the witnesses weren't present. With no other choice, they paused the proceedings so that someone could go down to the courtroom to find the correct notes.

When R' Sholom's sons saw what was going on, a feeling of warmth and hope washed over them.

It was clear that their salvation was already on its way; the *rebbe's brachah* was coming to fruition. When the messenger finally returned from the courtroom, he was empty-handed. He had searched and searched, but found nothing. The papers were gone.

It was decided that the noose would remain around R' Sholom's neck as a new verdict would be written out once more. They left R' Sholom on the platform, heavily guarded, and summoned the witnesses to return to court. However, when they tried to write up the verdict, the presiding judge could not recall what R' Sholom's offense had been. No matter how hard he searched his memory, he simply could not recall why R' Sholom had been sentenced to hanging. The witnesses, too, could not say what they had supposedly witnessed. They, too, had completely forgotten what R' Sholom's offense was supposed to be.

Although the original trial had been a sham, there had at least been some offense that they had used to convict R' Sholom. Now, though, they could not think up a single offense, and they could not kill someone without reason. Heading back to the gallows, they informed the impatient crowd that due to a complication that arose, the hanging would be postponed to a later date. The noose was removed from R' Sholom's neck and he was told he could go free. R' Sholom needed no second invitation. Together with his sons, he fled the area as fast as possible and headed straight for the *rebbe* Reb Meilich. They fell down before him and kissed his feet in gratitude. "*Rebbe*, please tell us what you did," They pleaded. "How did you arrange such a miracle?"

The *rebbe* explained that the decree on R' Sholom was indeed terrible, and the only way out that he could find was by asking the Angel of Forgetfulness to ensure that the court would forget everything.

From where did Reb Meilich get the power to get angels to work for him, to tear up decrees from *shomayim*?

When the *rebbe* Reb Meilich saw a Jew who was brokenhearted because a heavy tax was not allowing him to marry off his daughter, when he saw a Jew in pain, he took the power of his tremendous *ahavas Yisroel* and used it to break the decree. His love of his fellow yid was so genuine, so real, that it had the power to upturn decrees from Above.

Every mitzvah, not just *ahavas Yisroel*, when done properly, has power to accomplish tremendous amounts in *shomayim*.

Have a Wonderful Shabbos!

This story is taken from tape # A04 - 1991

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