

# TORAS REB KALMAN



## סיפורי צדיקים

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

### ***Rich with Bitachon***

Meir was a pauper, in every sense of the word. The only thing he owned was a horse and wagon. The horse was painfully thin, just some skin, bones, and a sad looking tail. The wagon was old and rickety, not much more than some slabs of faded wood nailed together and mounted on rusty wheels. When you began to hear the loud groaning of rusty metal, you knew that the Meir's frail, skinny horse was schlepping the cranky wagon a few blocks away.

Meir earned a livelihood by selling firewood. He would traverse the forest in search of fallen branches which he would then chop into smaller logs. Shortly before the market closed for the day, he would load up his wobbly wagon with the firewood, which he would bring into town to sell. It was backbreaking and dangerous labor, especially considering that his tools were old and rusty. The work was done in the open forest, leaving him at the mercy of the elements. After scavenging, chopping, hauling, and then haggling in the market, Meir would return home with but a few pennies to show for his efforts. Often, his

earnings were just enough to pay his sons' *melamed* and purchase some bread and onions.

Despite his difficult life, Meir was a happy man. He walked around humming and only saw sunshine in the bleakness surrounding him. His children would sit at home in tattered garments, hungry, and although he worked from morning to night, he was not able to earn enough to satisfy them. Instead, he taught them that happiness did not depend on the size of their supper portions or their ratio of clothes to patches. He himself owned one threadbare set of clothes that was too thin to provide much warmth in the winter, yet he was grateful to have what to wear and didn't feel the cold.

Like a magnet to metal, his infectious happiness would attract him to others. In shul, there were separate tables for the poor, the middle class, and the rich. The wealthy men would often request that Meir join them. They wanted to bask in the pure joy that he radiated. He would turn them down, since he was happy enough without money, and he didn't want to mislead anyone into thinking he desired to be wealthy. In his eyes, Hashem gave him plenty, and he was grateful for everything he had.

He would awaken before dawn each morning to say *tehillim* and learn some *mishnayos* before heading to the forest. One morning, as he sat before his *mishnayos*, humming softly and pulling absently at his sparse beard, he mused ruefully that he wished he could spend the entire day learning. How he longed to skip the cold forest and chafed hands and instead spend his days in peaceful contentment, learning Torah!

Suddenly, he dropped his hands and sat up straighter. The only reason he worked at all was to feed his family and pay his children's tuition. For the moment, however, there was still enough bread in the cupboard to feed the family that day, and he did not owe the *melamed* anything until the next week. He would worry about tomorrow

when tomorrow dawned, but at present there was no need to work. “That’s it!” He exclaimed out loud. “I’m staying home today!”

That day found Meir in front of his *mishnayos* from morning to evening, his expression one of unadulterated delight. Ah, this was what he truly enjoyed doing! Torah, that was pure happiness! His wife, however, did not share in his joy. “How could you have not gone to work today?” She asked pensively as they prepared to retire for the night. “There’s nothing for the children to eat in the morning.”

“Did you live happily today?” Meir asked in response. “Were you hungry? Cold? Hashem provided for us today, even though I did not work, and He can easily do the same for us tomorrow.”

“I can’t,” Meir’s wife said despairingly, her eyes lowered. “I just can’t live this way. What are we going to do tomorrow? Think about the children, think about me! How can you even contemplate staying home if it means we won’t have what to live on?”

“We’ll have what to live on,” Her husband promised confidently. “Hashem will take care of us. There is really no reason to worry.” Indeed, Meir was not worried in the least bit. He fell asleep soon after his head hit his pillow, a calm expression on his face.

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The night was cold and dark. A lone thief crept stealthily along the winding roads in search of a victim. Finally, he spotted his prey. In front of a worn cottage stood an equally worn horse and wagon, harnessed to a tree.

The thief straightened his back and smoothed down his patched coat self-importantly. Tiptoeing quietly up to the wagon, he could see that it wasn’t in the greatest shape. The wheels were bent and rusty and would probably make a great

deal of noise if he tried to make off with it. He was not too keen on alerting the sleeping family or their neighbors to the crime he was in the act of committing.

Scratching his head, he moved on to Plan B. Instead of taking the horse and wagon together, and waking everyone up in the process, he would disconnect the horse from the wagon and walk with it into the forest. After tying it to a tree, he would return to take the wagon. In the event that the owner would awaken, he could always abandon the wagon and disappear into the forest. The advantage of this plan was that even if he were to lose the wagon, he would still have the horse.

The thief moved closer to the horse and began to undo the knots binding it to the wagon. Then he stopped short. If he took the horse without the wagon, he would need to return afterward to haul the heavy wagon himself. Not only would it be exceptionally difficult, it would also take much longer, which would give more time for the noise of the wheels to alert the owner. There was no guarantee that he would be able to outrun the owner in the event that he awoke, and with the horse missing, the thief could not expect to be exonerated if caught.

Plan B was hereby scrapped, and he moved on to Plan C. He would reconnect the horse and wagon and risk the sound of the noisy wheels waking up the family. If that did happen, he would have the advantage of being on the wagon. Surely, the owner would not be able to outrun the horse on foot, and until he got hold of another horse, the thief would be long gone.

Chuckling to himself, he set to work putting his plan into motion. His fears were realized when he whipped the horses and the wagon wheels groaned loudly as they began to roll. However, to his immense relief, the house remained silent. The thief, bolder now, whipped the horses harder and

they broke into a run, carrying him further and further away from the crime scene.

Behind him, Meir and his family slumbered on.

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Meir awoke to bright sunshine streaming in from cracks in the wall. He wished his wife a cheery good morning as he went to collect his *tallis* and *tefillin* before heading out to *shacharis*. Her troubled face caused him to pause.

“You really are very worried, aren’t you?” He asked kindly. “You know Hashem is in charge, Dina. He is the One who provides our every meal. Still, I’ll head out to the forest right after *shacharis* and work twice as hard as usual to make up for yesterday, okay?”

His wife nodded gratefully, and Meir left the house, clutching his worn *tallis* bag. To save time, he decided to take the horse and wagon with him to shul, since he wanted to head to the forest straight after *davening*. To his shock, the horse was not where it should have been, and the wagon, too, was gone. It took him a minute to realize they were stolen, and with them, his entire source of livelihood was gone.

His joy did not diminish in the slightest bit. After all, if Hashem had orchestrated events so that his *parnasah* was taken away, then that was the very best thing that could have happened to him. I hope the thief gets good use out of the horse and wagon, he thought to himself. If I can’t enjoy it, at least he should.

With that, Meir turned and made his way to shul. As he walked, the bounce in his step increased. Hashem took away his *parnasah* so that he should be able to sit and learn, he suddenly realized. Hashem would take care of providing for his family, but for now, he was free to learn the whole day. After *davening*, he lingered in shul and spent a few blissful hours immersed in Torah.

When Meir returned home for lunch, his wife greeted him with a puzzled expression on her face. “What’s going on?” She asked. “You didn’t come home for breakfast after *davening* like you usually do!”

Meir smiled. “Didn’t you hear the great news?” He asked excitedly. “Hashem sent a wonderful thief to take away our *parnasah*. Our horse and wagon are gone, and now we have no other recourse but to rely fully on Him.”

His wife’s puzzlement turned to disbelief, anxiety, and pleading all at once. “Meir,” She cried. “Are you crazy? Is the horse really gone? It was stolen and you’re happy about it? You did not provide for our family yesterday, and now you won’t be able to do so again, at least not in the near future. What will be with us? How will we feed our children?”

“Dina, Hashem loves us. He will never allow us to starve. We need to rely on Him that He will take care of us, and He will,” Meir said soothingly. “Why don’t we say some *tehillim*?” Instead of responding, Dina just put her head in her hands and began to cry. The children, frightened to see their strong mother break down, joined her in her tears.

As their husband and breadwinner, Meir knew it was his responsibility to feed them. And so he set out to accomplish this in the best way he could: with his *tehillim*. His faith was unshakable, and he knew that Hashem would not abandon his family. He took a chair out to the front lawn and began humming *pesukim* from *tehillim* in the crisp afternoon air. His family continued wailing inside, and Meir continued *davening*.

Soon, he knew, his family would share his solid trust in Hashem. Their devoted Father would take care of them. Meir was sure of it.

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As the thief entered the cover of the forest, he tugged on the reins to slow the speed of the aging horse. They trotted at a leisurely pace through the winding trail as dawn broke. The thief knew that he had to get rid of the horse and wagon as soon as he reached the next town. He would sell it and use the money to purchase a different horse, or perhaps something else.

As the sun's rays penetrated the dense forest, he was able to get a better view of the horse and wagon that he had stolen. The wagon was in much poorer condition than it had appeared in the dimness of the night. There was an ancient-looking axe on the floor.

An axe. A wagon. A forest full of trees. The thief stopped the horse and jumped off the wagon. He would not be able to get as much money as he had thought for the sale of such an old horse and wagon, but he could maximize his profit by using it first for a different enterprise. Grabbing the axe, he swung it at the trunk of a thin tree a few times, knocking it down. Chopping the logs briskly, he loaded up the wagon with the raw pieces of wood. He would sell them at the market for a decent price.

He eyed the stocked wagon with satisfaction and banged the axe into the frozen forest floor, intending to leave it there and move on. To his surprise, instead of the dull thud he expected to here as the head of the axe made contact with the frozen ground, the clinking of metals rang out. There was something, something made of metal, a few feet beneath the earth.

Stepping closer to have a better look, the thief noticed some markings on a nearby tree, arrows pointing to the direction where he had just dug his axe into the ground. "A treasure!" He gasped gleefully, bringing the axe down forcefully a second time. The thief squatted down and used the axe to pry away more and more dirt, slowly uncovering a large metal chest. He began digging energetically around the box to free it from its

earthen encasement. The progress was slow and soon it began to rain.

The thief grasped the chest from both sides and struggled to pull it out of the ground, yet it refused to budge. It was not humanely possible to lift the box; it was simply too heavy. The thief wiped his forehead with the back of his hand and tugged at the front of his shirt. Despite the cold, he was sweating from his intense efforts.

Abandoning the plan to pull out the chest, he decided to open the box and see what was inside. Was it really a treasure, or just someone's sentimental junk that had no tangible value? He groped around the sides of the chest until his fingers reached an indentation in the metal. He sucked in his breath and pulled, hard. With a loud groan, the cover opened.

He was not disappointed. Gold bars in neatly stacked rows winked at him while piles of silver and golden coins glinted in the sunlight.

A treasure. A treasure! He was rich! But how was he going to get the box out of its grave?

He would have to do it slowly; there was no other way. First, he tossed the freshly cut wood out of the wagon. Then, with exaggerated patience, he removed the gold bars from the chest and stacked them carefully in the wagon. One row, then another, then another. When he finished with the bars, he moved on to the coins. Kneeling beside the ditch, he reached down into the box and grabbed fistfuls of coins, which he tossed in the wagon. When the box was finally empty, he stood up, dusted off his pants and nodded approvingly at the large piles stocking the wagon.

The thief set his jaw into a determined line and tugged fiercely at the now empty chest. Even when empty, it was surprisingly heavy, yet he managed to pry it out and set it on the wagon. Now, he began the task of transferring the riches back into the box, where they would be secure

during transport. The rain was coming harder now, and he worked quicker, filling the chest back up and closing the cover with a satisfied thud.

Before boarding the wagon and setting off, he noticed that some of the coins had fallen into the ditch. He got down on his knees and reached in to the pit to pull them out, but the falling rain made his grip difficult. All it took was a strong wind and the thief went tumbling into the ditch, head first. With a heart-stopping thud, his head made contact with hard stone and he blacked out.

And that's how the thief met his death- hanging upside down, his legs dangling in the air. At first, he was unconscious; then, as rainwater filled the ditch and submerged his head, he drowned.

The horse waited and waited and waited. At some point, it grew cold and hungry. It wanted nothing more than a warm barn and a large bale of hay. Neighing loudly, it gave one last look at the ditch and turned in the direction of the home it knew so well. Meir, it knew, would feed him when he got home.

The horse broke into a gallop and trotted quickly back through the trees, the wagon and its precious cargo bobbing up and down behind it.

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Meir sat in the frigid air, his heart warmed by the *pesukim* of *tehillim* he was reciting when the familiar screeching of wheels suddenly jolted him. Could it be? Inside their hut, his family, too, heard the familiar sound and came out to investigate.

From the distance, they saw their horse galloping toward them excitedly. They eyed it in disbelief. Their *parnasah* was returning, just the way it had disappeared! When the driverless horse and wagon reached them, they saw it was bearing a tremendous chest. With tremulous fingers, Meir opened the metal box to discover that it was full

of enough gold to sustain them for the rest of their days, and then some.

Meir was the only one who wasn't shocked. He had known Hashem would take care of them, and his Father had not disappointed him. His total and complete *bitachon* opened the gates of miracles for him and his family. When we train ourselves in *emunah* and learn to completely rely on Hashem, we too, can merit salvation.

*Have a Wonderful Shabbos!*

This story is taken from tape # A362 -1997

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