

# 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 story of the Bach with the Almana and the Meshumad***

The following story about the Bach teaches us that if one leans on Hashem, and fully trusts and relies on Him, he will soon see how Hashem will take care of him, even against all odds.

In the days of the Bach, there lived a cardinal, high up in the Catholic hierarchy. Ranking just slightly beneath the Pope, he lived in Rome in a large, antique mansion that had been utilized over the centuries by previous cardinals of his exalted status. He had lived in the mansion for much of his life, living a solitary existence, without many interests outside his religious obligations. Never having married, he had no children or grandchildren to speak of, and by the time he reached his old age, he was a bored, embittered man.

With no goals to work towards and nothing to look forward to, he needed something to fill his empty days with more purpose. He decided to have his current residence razed to the ground and

a new, modern mansion built in its place, equipped with the latest technologies of the era.

In his dreams, his new palace would be bigger and more beautiful than any existing structure in the world, and it would be eagerly visited by rulers and noblemen from around the world. It would be a project that would fill his days with renewed purpose.

However, in order to embark on such a large endeavor, the cardinal knew he would need funding, and a lot of it. He called a meeting with two young noblemen whom he knew from the city and explained his vision for his new mansion. "I would like the two of you to go from city to city, from country to country, to raise money for this project," He explained. "It is a special mission, and if you agree to undertake it, all your sins will be erased. You will receive eternal reward in Heaven!"

The two young men, Max and Peter, exchanged glances. Reward in Heaven was not enough for them, they wanted reward in this world, the sooner the better.

Seeing their hesitancy, the cardinal continued, "Of course, the mission is so important that in addition to the wonderful paradise you will merit, I will also grant you a monetary commission when you complete the job."

The promise of money was far more alluring for the two young men, but they asked for some time to think about the cardinal's proposal, as it would entail months away from home. The cardinal agreed to give them two weeks to decide if they were interested in his offer.

Two weeks later, the two young men returned with a positive answer. They weren't doing much with their lives anyway, and they figured this would be an enjoyable way to see the world while earning easy money. "We're in," Max declared

for the two of them. “How exactly do you want us to go about raising these funds?”

The cardinal instructed them to go the clergymen of each city they visited and show them a letter from him. They were to inform the priests that they would be in the city for a few days, and that each person in the city was required to donate at minimum a specific sum. Since the cardinal was well-known amongst all Catholics throughout the continent, the priests would honor the letter and do as his messengers asked.

“Sure, we’ll head out right away,” Peter agreed.

“Not so fast, not so fast.” The cardinal put out a hand, as if to hold them back from leaving the room. “There are some rules I want to tell you about. First, I need you to keep an organized and detailed accounting of each person who donated, the city he resides in, and his donation amount. As well, I would like you to make sure to correspond with me at least once per week. Since you will be on the go, it will be difficult for me to reach you, but I expect to receive a letter by mail every week from you describing how the mission is proceeding.”

“We’ll do it,” The young men promised.

“In addition, you will need to take on precautions to ensure that the money you carry with you remains secure from thieves who may try to loot you,” The cardinal continued. “When you are in each city, you will dress in your usual, noble attire as befits your stature as my messengers. However, as soon as you leave the city, I want you to stop and change into peasant garments. This way, no one who you pass during your travels will even dream of the great wealth you are carrying with you. You’ll remain attired this way until you reach the outskirts of the next city, when you will stop to change back into your noble clothing.

“Don’t keep the money in sacks of coins, as this will be hard to conceal. After raising money in

each city, exchange all the coins for paper currency, which can be rolled small and hidden. If paper currency is unavailable, exchange the coins for precious jewels. In that way, you’ll condense all the money into a small number of valuables which you will be able to easily conceal.”

With the cardinal’s instructions ringing in their ears, the two young men headed out on their journey. When they reached the outskirts of the first city, they changed out of the peasant garments they had received from the cardinal and donned their regular clothing. Then they rode on toward the residence of the city’s archbishop. They showed the archbishop the letter from the cardinal, explaining about the new palace that would be built for him.

The archbishop ordered his subordinates to assist the two messengers, and signs were hung around the city announcing a mandatory gathering. At the gathering, the archbishop gave an inspiring speech about the new palace and the importance of each person’s donation. At the end of the day, a tremendous sum was raised.

Following the cardinal’s directive, the two young men exchanged the coins for paper currency and gems, which they sewed into their clothing. They rode out of the city, drunk with success, and did not neglect to change back into the peasant attire soon thereafter.

And so it went. In similar fashion, they traveled through Europe. From city to city, country to country, they succeeded in raising enormous sums, carefully recording each donation, and following the cardinal’s instructions for security. After visiting many of Europe’s cities, they eventually arrived in Cracow. It was the middle of the night, and they rode through the silent streets, over dark shadows of the stone buildings cast by the moonlight. Cracow, home of the great Bach, had a thriving Jewish community, with shuls and *yeshivos* dotting the streets. This influx

of holiness was matched with its *tumah* counterpart as the city also boasted a bustling Catholic community complete with large, imposing houses of worship.

The two messengers pulled up at Cracow's main Catholic center and rattled loudly on the iron gates, yet no one heard them. The priests were sleeping, the gates were locked, and they would not be able to gain access to the building until morning. Defeated, they returned to their carriage and pondered their next steps.

"Maybe we should try knocking on doors of private homes," Max suggested, itching to get out of the dark and cold into a warm bed.

Peter turned up his nose. "Don't you know that Cracow is a Jewish city?" He asked in disgust. "Most of these houses are probably occupied by Jews, and there is no way I am sleeping in a dirty Jewish bed tonight. I rather sleep in the carriage." "Alright, then," Max said, too tired to argue. "Let's head back outside the city and find somewhere to tie the horses so that we can get to sleep."

Whipping the horses to get them begin moving, they started back in the direction where they had come from. Suddenly, in the distance, they noticed a fire burning. "Look there!" Max called, his arm outstretched in the direction of the flames. "Isn't that a fire burning? That means there are people! Let's go check what is going on. The sun will rise soon; maybe we'll actually see a bed before that!"

Pointing their horses in the direction of the fire, they rode up the hill. As they neared, they saw that the fire was burning in two massive ovens, and it was being stoked by a young woman.

Who was she?

This woman, whom we'll call Rochel, was a young widow who had tragically lost her husband

a year earlier, just a few short months after they married. She lived alone at the far end of the city, too heartbroken to consider remarriage.

She supported herself by operating the business left to her by her late husband, which sold tar and cement. She had two massive ovens, one for making tar and the other for making cement, and people would come from around Cracow to purchase these items from her. Since mixing and hauling cement and tar was too difficult for a petite woman like herself, she hired two frum men who did the actual work while she oversaw the operations.

This fateful night had been an especially difficult one for her. As a woman living alone, she double locked her door to secure herself against unwanted intruders before heading into bed. She lay awake for much of the night, weeping from the depths of her broken heart, until she finally cried herself to sleep.

She awoke after a brief, uneasy slumber and saw that it was only an hour before dawn, when her two employees would arrive to begin the day's operations. Unable to fall back asleep, she got out of bed and got dressed, deciding to get a head start on the day's work by getting the fires going in the two ovens.

As she stood outside her home, stoking the flames in the stone ovens, she noticed a horse and buggy coming toward her isolated home. Tensely, she watched as two men dressed in tattered garments disembarked from the wagon. She could not tell if they were Jewish or not, but just that fact that there were two men approaching her at this unearthly hour was enough reason to fear. She bit her lip nervously and began whispering fervent Tehillim under her breath, beseeching Hashem to save her.

"Excuse me, madam," Peter called to her. "We just arrived in the city. We were supposed to stay with friends, but they aren't answering their door

now. We are hungry and weary from our journey. Would you be able to give us something to eat?"

"My brothers will be here any minute to help me with these fires," Rochel stammered in response, steering clear of *yichud* issues, and forming a cover of protection for herself. "In the meantime, you can wait outside, and I'll bring you something to eat."

She turned on her heel and fled into the house, her heart pounding. Opening up her cupboards, she threw together a quick meal with whatever ingredients she could find and went to bring the food to her two unwelcome visitors. She hoped that after eating their fill, they would leave as quickly as they had arrived.

Max pulled out some coins to pay her, but she refused to take the money. "I'm not a hotel," She explained, eager for them to finish their meal and get moving.

"Is there a stream nearby where we can bathe?" One of them asked.

Moving a little behind her little cottage, she showed them that behind some trees, beyond the slope, there was a river. "It's a little windy today," she said doubtfully as she pointed the way. "The water might be a little wild."

"We've been traveling for days, we really need to freshen up," Max said, waving away the danger.

Rochel shrugged, not really caring if the strangers exposed themselves to the dangerous waters of the raging river. After watching the two men sprint down the slope, she turned back toward the ovens. She hoped that by the time the men returned from their swim, her workers would already be there.

At the riverbank, the two men threw off their tattered garments, the clothing that concealed an incredible fortune within its seams, and jumped

into the cool waters. However, while the water had appeared calm and placid from above, they had underestimated its strength. Soon, they found themselves carried away by a strong current, and they tried with all their energy to fight the rapids. However, it was a lost battle. They were no match for the stormy river, which soon claimed their lives. Their bodies, carried miles away by the current, drifted downward to the bottom of the riverbed, never to be seen again.

Up the hill, working at her ovens, Rochel wondered nervously about the two men. Their horse and wagon were still parked on her property, but an hour had passed and they had still not returned. When her employees arrived, they inquired about her welfare, and she responded vaguely, unsure if she should tell them about the two men who had disappeared. Eventually though, she grew seriously worried that something had occurred, and she would be to blame. She quickly explained the situation to her employees and asked that they go down the hill to the river to see what was happening.

The two Jewish men agreed to assist her, and they made their way down to the river. On the shore, they found a pile of torn peasants' attire, but no sign of any people. They returned to Rochel to report their findings, and she turned white with fear. "Something must have happened to them," She whispered, the terror in her voice obvious. "What if someone saw them coming to my house?! They said they had friends in the city; those friends were surely expecting their arrival. I am so afraid!"

The two men, feeling sorry for the predicament she had gotten entangled in through no fault of her own, agreed to go down to test the waters and see how dangerous they were. Securing themselves to the shore with a long rope so that they would not get pulled away by the current, they jumped into the river. When they emerged, they reported that the waters were especially stormy and quick-moving. "If they drowned, their bodies are miles

away by now,” They assured a shaking Rochel. “Take their clothing, and let’s get out of here. Even if their bodies are found, there is no way they can trace it back to you. Of course, we’ll be careful not to leak the story either.”

Rochel grabbed the pile of garments, which were surprisingly heavier than they appeared, and she followed her employees up the slope. She went down to the cellar of her small home and carefully hid the clothes behind a stack of wooden barrels. When she came back outside, she asked the men to get rid of the horse and wagon. One of them untied the horse and allowed it to gallop away to freedom while the other dismantled the wagon into a pile of wooden boards.

After all the evidence connecting her to the missing men were hidden or destroyed, Rochel tried to calm down, but found she couldn’t. A few days passed, and still, she found herself haunted by fear. What if they were discovered dead and somehow linked to her? What if they were alive and would return, demanding their horse, wagon, and possessions? She hadn’t committed a crime, but she was aware that as a Jewish woman, she did not need to commit a crime to be prosecuted. Circumstantial evidence would be enough to convict her.

Back in Rome, the cardinal would eagerly await the correspondence he received from his messengers. Every letter brought news of more and more money raised, far beyond his original calculations. He began eagerly planning his new palace, dreaming of the details and anticipating the day when it would finally be built. Since the postal service was slow and unreliable, he did not receive a letter every week. Sometimes, he could wait two or three weeks between letters, and as the men traveled further into Europe away from Rome, the letters took even longer to arrive.

Sitting alone in his living room one evening, he suddenly realized that it had been over two months since he had received any

correspondence. Acknowledging that the mail was unreliable, he waited another month, then two, then three. After six months had passed without a single word from the two messengers, he began to fear that something had happened to them. Since they were handling a tremendous amount of money, it seemed logical that they had been followed, kidnapped, and killed so that a band of thieves could lay their hands on the vast fortune they carried.

The cardinal called in a team of police detectives and instructed him to follow the trail of the two men from city to city, to try to discover their whereabouts. The team set out on the search, asking at each city where the men had been to next and following their path to the next place. Eventually, they determined that the messengers had headed for Cracow. However, the bishop in Cracow insisted that they had not been to see him. Noting that Cracow was a city with a sizable Jewish population, the anti-Semitic search decided that the crime must have been perpetuated in that city. The Jews insisted that they had not seen the men, and they agreed to have their homes searched for evidence. Not convinced, the police organized a massive house-to-house hunt, yet they turned up no evidence. At this point, the police were doubtful that the pair had ever reached Cracow since no one in the city claimed to have seen them. They began to focus their search on other towns, and the Jews breathed a sigh of relief at having been spared a libel or worse.

Time moved on. Rochel had been widowed for over a year, and she began to feel ready for marriage again. There was a distinguished *talmid chacham* who lived in town, R’ Naftali, who had recently lost his wife. In addition to his Torah knowledge and fine *middos*, he was a wealthy man, and he had a houseful of young children. From what she heard about him, Rochel began to feel that he would be an ideal match for her. She approached a shadchan and asked him to mention her name to R’ Naftali. As a young widow

without children, she was ready and willing to become a mother to his children.

The *shadchan* whom she had approached smirked when he heard her request. R' Naftali was wealthy, highly regarded in the community. The *shadchan* was sure he could do much better for himself than Rochel, a nice girl from a simple family. "I'm sure you are a very special person," The *shadchan* told her, trying to have patience. "But I think R' Naftali is looking for someone more... someone from a wealthier background." "Who says I don't have money?" Rochel challenged him softly. "As it happens, all his money does not equal to even a tenth of my own wealth."

The *shadchan* burst out laughing. "Really, now," he said scornfully. "Don't think I don't see you sweating before your ovens all day, groping around in the coal for *parnasah*. You think you have more than ten times his wealth?"

"Please, just mention my name," Rochel insisted in the same soft voice, not letting him get her down. "And if he asks about money, you can tell him what I said."

To humor her, the *shadchan* agreed. He approached R' Naftali and tentatively broached the suggestion.

To his surprise, R' Naftali was immediately agreeable. "You mean the one who runs the tar and cement business with the two ovens?" He asked in recognition. "I've passed by her business many times with my late wife, and we used to say hello to her, to try to give her *chizuk*. I actually think it would be a wonderful idea." Then his eyes dimmed, and his face grew sad. "The truth is that my wife passed away just recently, and I haven't really considered remarriage yet. At the same time, my children are desperate for a mother, and the *shidduch* you are suggesting sounds just right."

The room grew quiet, and the *shadchan* waited patiently, giving R' Naftali the space he needed to think.

The widower combed his fingers through his beard, his mind deep in thought. "I'm willing to meet her," He said finally. "But I need some time to get used to the concept of moving on. It's hard for me to leave the house because of my children, but why don't you ask her if she could come over in three days, after I've had a little time to process the idea of remarriage?"

The stunned *shadchan*, who had expected the idea to be nixed immediately, nodded enthusiastically, anticipating the hefty *shadchanus* fee he would earn if the match was successfully arranged. "By the way, she mentioned that she is a wealthy woman," He said as he parted from R' Naftali at the door. "I'm not sure exactly what she meant, as we both know that she has no money, but I figured I'd pass on what she said."

After the door shut, the *shadchan* almost skipped down the street back toward Rochel's small home to give her the news that, against all odds, R' Naftali was interested in meeting her later that week.

Three days later, as planned, Rochel made her way to R' Naftali's large and beautiful home. They discussed moving on after losing a spouse, and R' Naftali's need to find a mother for his children. Rochel expressed her desire to be that mother, and the two of them saw that they were indeed on the same page. Before the *shidduch* was finalized, R' Naftali broached the topic of the money. Rochel affirmed that she did indeed own a vast fortune, many times the size of his assets, yet she refused to say how it had come into her possession.

Shortly thereafter, the *shidduch* was finalized and the new couple got married. Rochel moved into R' Naftali's home and lavished her attention on his little children, who accepted her with open

arms. The couple was blessed with two children of their own in quick succession, and harmony reigned in their home.

As she had insisted, Rochel did indeed have a vast sum of money, and she gave it to her new husband to invest. Within a short time, R' Naftali became one of the wealthiest men in Cracow. Still, Rochel never divulged the origin of the money, and R' Naftali never asked.

Years went by in this fashion.

One day, R' Naftali approached his wife, and for the first time since before their marriage, brought up the mystery of her wealth. "I know you don't like to discuss it," He began hesitantly. "But the mysterious origin of the money has really been bothering me. I remember your first husband, and he was not a wealthy man. That is why he had to work so hard with the cement and tar business. Your father doesn't have money either. I can't help but wonder where you got the money from." Rochel bit the inside of her cheek, hesitated for a moment, and then began recounting the whole story. She began with the early morning visit by the two unfamiliar men and continued until she got to the great house-to-house search that had taken place in Cracow. "When I heard they were coming, I knew I needed to get rid of the clothing I had hid in my cellar," she said. "I went down to retrieve the clothes, and before throwing them into the fire, I checked first to see what was in the lining that was making them so heavy. You can imagine my shock when I discovered a huge cache of gems and bills. I removed the money, burned the clothing, and when the police searched my home, they found no evidence that the men had been to my home. I have never told a soul, not even my two employees who were aware that I had been visited by these men, regarding the money I found."

Her husband listened closely, stunned by the story. "I think we should go to the Bach," he said

thoughtfully. "I just want to make sure there is nothing to worry about using the money."

Rochel frowned. "Are you sure? I'm still worried about being charged with killing these men, even though I had nothing to do with them. I rather not risk the story leaking further."

"We can't do anything without asking the *gadol hador*," Her husband said softly. "It's worth the risk."

Feeling especially nervous, Rochel obeyed her husband and went to the home of the Bach. The Bach had a large yeshiva, and a few of the students would stay at his home. When she knocked on the door, one of these students answered and explained to her that the Bach was busy giving *shiurim* and wouldn't have time to speak to her for the next long while. "Why don't you try another *rov*?" He suggested, seeing her fallen face. "There are no shortage of *rabbonim* in Cracow, and the Bach is terribly busy."

"I can't," She responded. "I must speak only to the Bach. It's a personal matter, a matter of life and death. I can only speak to the *gadol hador*."

Hearing the commotion, the Bach came out and told his students to allow her to enter. Rochel gratefully followed the student into the Bach's study, where he sat at the table surrounded by students. When the Bach asked her how he could assist her, she explained that she could not speak in front of all the students. Seeing that the matter was serious enough, the Bach asked all the *talmidim* to leave the room, except for one, who would remain inside to prevent *yichud*. He explained to the distraught woman that the student needed to remain but would not repeat a word of what he heard.

Rochel felt uneasy telling her story, and especially since there was an extra pair of ears in the room, but she had no choice but to trust that the student would keep everything to himself. She

recounted the entire story, ending with her fear of being caught.

“You don’t have to worry,” The Bach assured her. “Hashem granted you this gift of wealth since you suffered so much in your life. However, if you are nervous, you should donate a fifth of all your assets to Torah causes. Assist *talmidei chachamim*. Support *yeshivos*. In the merit of tzedakah and supporting Torah, you will be protected.”

Rochel thanked the Bach for his advice and returned home. She and her husband gave twenty percent of their assets toward supporting Torah, and they felt relieved, shelving the burden of worry Rochel had been carrying for so long.

Life moved on and they were blessed with a few more children. Then, they merited to marry off the children from R’ Naftali’s first marriage and then the first two children that they had together. They lived peacefully, with happiness, success, and nachas.

Back in Rome, the old cardinal grew sick and passed away. As one of the highest positions within the Catholic hierarchy, finding a successor to replace him was not an easy task. They sought a person who was extremely well-versed in all the tenets of their faith, someone who was bright and talented and would be respected and accepted by all.

Eventually, their search led them to one especially brilliant clergyman, Joseph, a man knowledgeable in many languages and sciences, in addition to his vast knowledge in religious areas. Alas, he was born a Jew who had lived a *frum* lifestyle in his youth but was now an outspoken anti-Semite. He had converted to Christianity and later became a priest, his natural brilliance enabling him to quickly rise through the ranks. After interviewing him and investigating his qualifications, he was chosen as the next cardinal.

As cardinal, Joseph received extraordinary honor wherever he went, and all doors were open before him. A deep hatred for his former Jewish brethren frothed inside of him, and he was eager to use his new position of power to humiliate and harm them as much as possible.

Shortly after he was made the cardinal, Joseph made an announcement to the citizens of Rome. He declared that he was privy to an enormous secret regarding the terrible Jews that he would reveal on a specified date at a gathering in Cracow. All Catholics were invited to join him in Cracow, where they would learn something astounding, and they would then be allowed to take revenge on the Jews.

The message was spread throughout Europe, inviting all to join in the momentous gathering in Cracow. Temporary hotels popped up all over Cracow and its neighboring towns in anticipation of the huge crowds. Peasants from all over Europe streamed toward the city, anticipating the bloodthirsty revenge they would take against the hated Jews after hearing the cardinal’s secret. While thousands of peasants converged upon Cracow, the more elite, literate members of society- the priests and bishops- snubbed the event. They didn’t appreciate the cardinal’s drama and had no interest in traveling so far just to hear a little secret he could probably tell them at home as well.

Two days before the grand event, the cardinal’s carriage, led by two magnificent horses, pulled into Cracow. A huge crowd came out to greet him, cheering and bowing. The Jews of Cracow stayed in their homes, out of sight. A mass gathering of non-Jews did not bode well for them at all, and they davened that the event should pass peacefully with no pogroms or attacks.

In R’ Naftoli’s home, he was in the midst of conversing with his wife when there was a knock on the door. When Rochel opened it, she was greeted by the cardinal’s aides, who explained

that as one of the wealthiest households in Cracow, they had been chosen to host the cardinal during his stay in the city. This honor was not something they desired at all, yet R' Naftoli and his wife knew they had no choice. They agreed to provide the cardinal with gracious hospitality and provide for all his needs while he resided in their home.

Shortly thereafter, the carriage pulled up, and the cardinal, wearing his black robes, disembarked. As he entered the luxurious home with his entourage, Rochel suddenly recognized him. He had once been a student of the Bach! And not just any student, but the one who had remained in the room to prevent *yichud* when she had revealed the story of her two early-morning visitors and the wealth they had left her. The room began spinning before her and she staggered, her face white, out of the room.

After showing his guests to their quarters, R' Naftoli went to find his wife. He discovered her sitting on a chair, her face drained of all color, her eyes wide with terror. "What happened?" He asked in concern.

"The cardinal," She managed to say through pale lips. "I recognize him. He's the one who was in the room with the Bach when I told him the story of the money!"

"Are you sure?" R' Naftoli asked, paling as well. "Certain," She responded shakily.

"We must speak to the Bach immediately," Her husband said. "I don't think I should leave you here alone with the cardinal. Are you up to going to the Bach, while I stay here in case the cardinal needs something?"

Rochel nodded and stood up to go. She hurried through the streets toward the Bach's home, hoping there would be no students standing in the way of her meeting the Bach. To her good fortune, the Bach himself answered the door, and

he listened carefully as Rochel explained the situation.

"Oy!" The Bach cried after hearing the story. "I did have a *talmid* who strayed from the Torah path, but I did not know he became a cardinal." He fell silent and pursed his lips, deep in thought. After a few minutes, he continued speaking. "Go home, and pretend you did not recognize him," He instructed. "I'll take care of it. You daven and have *bitachon*, and you will see that in two days, he will have a greater downfall that you could have ever dreamed of."

Rochel thanked the Bach and hurried back home to tell her husband what the *rov* had said. The two of them did as the Bach instructed, davening, working on their *bitachon*, and pretending not to recognize the cardinal.

When the day of the gathering finally arrived, the cardinal was drunk with excitement. He could not wait to expose the secret of one of the wealthiest Jewish families in Cracow, how they had made their wealth by stealing it straight out of the hands of Christen donors who had believed they were donating toward a cause of the cardinal. A native of Cracow, he was especially eager to see the Jews of his former city suffer.

He stood at the podium, smiling at the massive crowd assembled as he prepared to begin. Suddenly, he realized that there was not a single priest in attendance. The entire audience, though large in number, was made up of illiterate farmers and peasants. His ego took a beating as he realized that only common men had chosen to attend the gathering; no one of superior mind or stature deigned to attend.

"They think I'll speak to a crowd of farmers, huh?" He muttered angrily to himself. Well, they would be wrong! He was not speaking at this event for peasants. The evening was canceled!

Controlling his outrage, he managed to tell his aide to instruct the crowd to disburse, as the event was canceled. Then he stalked off the stage and returned to R' Naftoli's home to collect his belongings. He was done with Cracow, with the thousands of boors who attended his gathering while the priests boycotted it. He was going back to Rome.

The entire way home, he cursed loudly at everyone and everything, and plotting on how to take revenge against the boorish peasants who had dared attend the gathering. Eventually, he calmed down, and instead began to scheme how he could carry out his original plan of exposing Rochel's secret. After thinking for a while, he finally came up with a new plot.

He would make a new gathering right in the heart of Rome, where all the bishops and high-level priests resided. This way, they would have no excuse not to attend. Even if they would entertain thoughts of skipping the event, he would make attendance mandatory. He would also invite representatives from various communities throughout Europe, including the Bach from Cracow, and R' Naftoli and his wife.

This time, he spent a few months on the details so that everything should run perfectly. Invitations were sent out to the carefully selected guests, both to the clergymen of high standing, as well as to specially chosen representatives of a few large cities. Despite the magnanimous tone of the invitation, it was clear to all that they had better attend or risk their lives.

The three Jewish representatives from Cracow, the Bach, R' Naftoli, and Rochel traveled together to Rome. The couple was tense with fear the entire way, yet the Bach was calm and relaxed. He kept assuring them with the help of Hashem, everything would be okay.

R' Naftoli, his wife, and the Bach arrived at the large stadium where the gathering was taking

place and tried to remain inconspicuous in the back of the small crowd of invited guests. They watched as the cardinal strode onto the stage and took his place behind the podium. "Welcome, everyone," He began. "Before we begin, I'd like to make sure there are representatives from all religions present on stage with me." He called on some bishops and then, to the dismay of the terrified Jewish couple watching from the background, asked that they and the Bach get up on the stage.

Whispering Tehillim, R' Naftoli and Rochel followed the Bach onto the stage. They stood with the other representatives who had been called up in a semi-circle around the cardinal, who inhaled and prepared to begin his speech. Just as he opened his mouth to speak, however, he met the eyes of his former *rebbe*, the Bach.

The Bach took a step in the cardinal's direction and whispered just one word, his eyes never wavering from the cardinal's face.

When the cardinal heard what the Bach said, his face blanched, but he quickly recouped his natural poise and opened his mouth to speak again. "Um," He began. "Um. Um. Uhum." He stuttered and stammered, and despite his clear intentions to say what he had prepared for so many months to say, he could not get a coherent word out.

Those assembled exchanged confused glances. What was wrong with their cardinal? This was the second time he had tried to pull together a massive event, and for the second time, it appeared the gathering would end in failure. For the next twenty, tortuous minutes, they watched the cardinal stammer, trying to recall what he wanted to say. After twenty minutes, the priests had enough. They began to leave the arena, discussing amongst themselves that perhaps they had been wrong with their choice for cardinal.

“I’m beginning to think he’s crazy,” One of them confided in the other. “He’s been planning this for months now, and he couldn’t say a single word.” “He started stuttering right after the rabbi muttered something to him,” Another priest put in. “It’s no secret that he used to be Jewish. I’m willing to bet that he is still a secret Jew and was taking orders from that rabbi.”

“Ooh, that would make sense!” The others agreed. “He’s still a dirty Jew at heart, cooperating with them all this time, and we were foolish enough to make him cardinal!”

Angrily, they went to confront the cardinal, who was still sulking behind the stage, both upset and humiliated that he had failed a second time.

“We know you are really a Jew,” The highest-ranking clergyman accused him, gripping him tightly by the cuff. “We know you are cooperating with the Jews, and that is why you made a fool out of one of the highest positions in our religion.” “Absolutely not,” The cardinal tried protesting. “I hate the Jews as much, or more, than you do. I am not cooperating with them at all! I just forgot what I had planned on saying, that’s all!”

His words fell on deaf ears. Within the next few moments, he went from being one of the most powerful men in Europe to one of the most pitiful men in the world. He was stripped of his expensive clothing, of his money and possessions, and of course, of his title. He was thrown into a jail cell with the worst criminals and met his death on the gallows just a few hours later. His complete downfall had taken just a few hours at most.

When the news reached R’ Naftoli and Rochel, they were overwhelmed with joy and relief, and could not stop thanking Hashem for the wondrous miracle He had performed for them. They hurried to the Bach to express their gratitude for being the messenger to facilitate the miracle and asked him how he had done it.

The Bach’s reply was simple. “*Bitachon*,” He responded. “I trusted fully in Hashem that he would help and He did.”

The Bach explained that when someone is going through something difficult, and they don’t see any natural way out, they must relinquish control and give themselves over entirely to Hashem. As soon as we stop trying to control the steering wheel, as soon as we sit back in the back seat and allow Hashem to steer the course of our lives, He will show us the way out of the challenge or difficulty.

*Have a Wonderful Shabbos!*

This story is taken from tape # A09.

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