

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 Meshulach who changed Vienna

Many years ago, a *meshulach* came to the city of Vienna, capital of Austria, to raise funds from the Jewish community. Over the course of his stay, he discovered something shocking. The community was made up of a good, pious Jews. They were involved in *chesed* and *tzedakah*, they scrupulously observed the *mitzvos*, and they celebrated Shabbos and *yom tov* with utmost honor and respect. However, despite their piety in almost all areas of *yiddishkeit*, they did not engage in Torah study.

While there was a *rov* in the city who served as the community's *posek*, there was no true leadership, no influential guide to direct the Jews toward achieving more spirituality. There was no one looking to change the status quo. Instead, the shuls were utilized exclusively for *tefillah*, with *talmud* Torah practically extinct in the city.

The *meshulach*, hailing from a community with vibrant *botei midrashos*, could not fathom this phenomenon. On Shabbos morning, he entered

the largest shul in Vienna and requested permission to speak after *davening*. Seeing his eyes blazing with passion, the *rov* agreed to the unusual request.

After *kriyas haTorah*, instead of saying a *dvar* Torah on the week's *parshah*, the *rov* banged on the *bimah* and introduced the guest to the community. Eyebrows were raised, and fierce whispering began, as this was extremely rare, but they soon quieted down as the *meshulach* began to speak.

“*Rabbosai*,” he began. “I would like to tell you a true story, a story that happened to someone I know personally. This story impacted me tremendously, and I hope it will have an indelible effect on you as well.

“There was a man, whom we’ll call Avrohom, who was blessed with three sons. They were each a successful *talmid chachom*, and they lived in three different cities, some distance away from their parents. The years passed, and Avrohom slowly aged. He lost his wife, he grew stooped and wrinkled, and suddenly, the end of his life didn’t seem so far away any more. He was nearing eighty years old, and thoughts of what would happen when he passed on were never too far from his mind. He would leave behind sons and grandchildren, his pride and joy. And what did he have to take along with him? Did he have enough *mitzvos*? Enough *limud* Torah? The thought of his future judgement made him shiver.

“One day, he decided to visit each of his sons and ask them to assist him in accumulating merits once he was no longer able to do *mitzvos* himself. He packed up for a journey and hitched his horse to the buggy, ready to travel. The journey was full of difficulty, but he finally made it to the home of his eldest son. Father and son embraced joyfully. They hadn’t seen each other in many months. Conscience of the fact that his time on this earth was running out, Avrohom wasted no time getting down to the reason for his visit.

“As you know, I’m not getting any younger,’ he told his son earnestly. ‘In a short time, I will be summoned before the *bais din shel maalah*. I need you, my son, to be there for me once I am in a place where I may no longer accumulate merits. What will you do for me after I pass away?’

“His son looked at him and frowned. ‘That is the reason you traveled so far?’ he asked, concern evident in his voice. Avrohom nodded and repeated his question. ‘Tell me, my son. What will you do for me after I pass away?’

“Tatte, I promise to go to shul every day and recite *kaddish* in your memory,’ his son responded. ‘Not only that, but I will learn a *perek of mishnayos* for you every single day.’

“When Avrohom heard these words, his eyes filled with tears. He approached his son and kissed him tenderly. ‘I want you to know that I appreciate your pledge tremendously,’ he said, his voice laced with emotion. ‘Every *kaddish* is an awesome merit for the *niftar*. It provides incredible protection from Gehinnom. That alone is enormous! And you are also pledging to learn *mishnayos* for me on a daily basis... I am reciprocating by promising to serve as a *meilitz yoshor* for you. You should be blessed!’

“Avrohom stayed in his eldest son’s home for a few days. As he prepared to depart, his son thanked him for coming and offered to accompany him back home. His father waved away the offer, explaining that he was well enough to make the trip alone. He stood at the foot of the wagon, ready to board, and thanked his son once more. ‘You’ve given me a gift, my son. I know now that I can lean on you.’ With those words, he entered the buggy and began driving off.

“The way to his second son’s home was treacherous. He had to navigate winding roads through dense forests, and the weather was not cooperating. After a very difficult journey, he

finally pulled up before the home of his second son.

“Tatte!’ His son exclaimed excitedly when he saw him. ‘What a surprise! Children, Zeidy is here!’ He took his father’s luggage and grasped his arm, helping him into the house. The children clamored around their beloved grandfather, who dispensed kisses and attention to each of them. When the commotion died down, Avrohom and his son sat down at the table together. ‘Why have you come, Tatte? The journey is so difficult at this time of year!’

“Avrohom nodded. ‘True, it wasn’t easy,’ he admitted. ‘But I have something important to discuss with you, something that could not wait.’ “Across the table, his son’s face grew serious. ‘I’m listening, Tatte.’ He said respectfully.

‘What’s the matter?’

“As you know, I am already in my late seventies,’ Avrohom began. ‘I’m going to leave the world soon, and I need to know that I’m leaving behind children who will send up *zechuyos* for me. Your older brother pledged to say *kaddish* for me, to learn *mishnayos* in my merit. I can’t thank him enough! And now, I am asking of you, my son: what will *you* do for me?’

“The middle son stroked his beard thoughtfully. ‘May it be many more years, Tatte,’ He said quietly. ‘But I promise you that after one hundred and twenty, I will say *kaddish* for you as well. I’ll learn *mishnayos* daily, too. And on top of that, I promise to hire ten men to each learn a *perek of mishanyos* for you every day. Chazal say that when there is a group of ten Jewish men, the *shechinah* rests within it. I’ll put together a *minyán* to learn for you daily, and the *shechinah* will be with them.’

“Avrohom jumped up, tears streaming from his face. He hugged his son closely, trying to convey his love and gratitude in that one, tight embrace.

‘My son, you’ve made me so happy,’ He whispered hoarsely. ‘I can’t thank you enough. The merits I’ll receive from each amen *yehei shmei rabah* will be extraordinary! You cannot imagine what your *mishnayos* will do for my *neshamah*. And you are also pledging to gather ten men, with the *shechina* in their midst, to learn a *perek* of *mishnayos* every day for me? I am overwhelmed with gratitude. Thank you!’

“A short while later, Avrohom took leave of his second son and continued his journey to the town where his third and wisest son resided. All the traveling was beginning to take a toll on his elderly body, and he found the journey bumpy and uncomfortable. Still, he prevailed. One never knows which day is his last in this world, and so he needed to speak to his son as soon as possible. Day and night came and went as he painstakingly drove his horses through the countryside. Finally, he arrived at the home of his youngest son. As expected, his son welcomed him eagerly and invited him inside.

“‘I’ll tell you the purpose of my visit,’ Avrohom said to his son after he had eaten a meal and warmed his limbs by the fire. He repeated the same request he had made of his other two sons, adding that they had indeed agreed to assist him in accumulating merits for the World to Come. ‘Now I want to know what *you*, my son, will do for me when I leave this world.’

“His son was quiet for a long, long moment. ‘Yes, Tatte,’ He said. ‘I, too, am prepared to do a lot for you. I’d like to show you exactly what I will do for you. Can you come with me now?’

“Avrohom looked at him in puzzlement. ‘Where are we going?’

“‘I want to show you something,’ his son responded. ‘Here, let me help you into your coat. It’s cold outside.’

“Avrohom was a little confused, yet he agreed to don his coat and follow his son out into the wagon. His son whipped the horses and they were off. They drove together for half an hour when mountains came into view. ‘Tatte,’ the son said, jumping off the wagon and securing the horses to a tree. ‘Come, let me help you out. We’re going into that cave over there.’

“Avrohom looked at the dark entrance of the cave his son was pointing to and shivered. ‘It looks a little frightening,’ he conceded.

“‘It’s dark,’ His son agreed. ‘But if we have light, we’ll be able to see where we are going. Here, let’s take some candles from this box.’

“It was cold, and Avrohom was reluctant to remove his hands from his warm pockets. ‘You hold the candle for me,’ he instructed his son.

“His son shrugged. ‘If that’s what you want, it’ll be my pleasure,’ he said, taking two candles from the box and pocketing them. He linked arms with his father and began guiding him toward the mouth of the cave. At the entrance to the cavern, he lit a candle to provide light. They walked slowly, eying the cave with the aid of the candle. Bats were flying around and the cave stretched before them like a tunnel. After a few minutes of walking, the candle melted down to the bottom. The son quickly removed the second candle from his pocket and lit it. They continued their trek through the cave.

“‘How much longer?’ Avrohom asked his son, eying the circling bats suspiciously.

“‘Not much,’ His son responded as the second candle neared its end. ‘Tatte, do you have another candle? This one is about to go out.’ “‘No, I didn’t take any candles,’ His father said. ‘I told you to take one for me.’

“‘Oy,’ His son cried. ‘This is my last one, and it is about to go out!’ As if on cue, the candle

reached the bottom, and he dropped it to avoid burning his fingers. The cave was shrouded in darkness. ‘Tatte, you knew we were going into a dark cave. Why did you rely on me? How many candles can I carry for you? One candle, two candles?’

“Together, father and son groped their way back through the dark cave to their waiting wagon. The third, wise son did not need to say another word. His message was completely clear. Like his brothers, he too, would carry some candles for their father once he passed on. *Mishnayos, kaddish, chesed*. However, these would only provide temporary, fleeting light. The only way Avrohom could guarantee to have lasting, permanent light in the cave was to start filling up suitcases and satchels and trunks with as many candles as he could possibly carry.”

The *meshulach* stopped speaking and looked around the crowded shul in Vienna, a deafening silence hovering over those assembled. “*Rabbosai*,” He suddenly thundered. “What will be? We are all going to go to the dark cave! *You* have to prepare! There’s nothing for you to rely on! You must learn Torah, stock up on candles to take along to the cave.”

The *meshulach’s* message resonated with his audience, who immediately took upon themselves to begin learning Torah. Every individual agreed to return to shul nightly after work to study the timeless pages of Gemara. *Chavrusos* were arranged, *shiurim* were scheduled, and the whole of Vienna’s *frum* Jewish community began earnestly to prepare for their own trip to the dark cave.

Thus the influence of a lone *meshulach* changed Vienna forever.

Have a Wonderful Shabbos!
This story is taken from tape # A437

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