

TORAS REB KALMAN



סיפורים צדיקים

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

The Pnei Yehoshua Ameilus B'Torah

When Rav Shiyele Frankfurter, famously known as the Pnei Yehoshua, was a young man, he once found himself in a burning home. As the room filled with smoke and the flames crept closer, he offered a desperate promise to Hashem. “Ribono Shel Olam!” He cried out. “If you save me from this fire, if I get out alive, I promise I will dedicate my life to You and to Torah!” Through incredible miracles, he was rescued from the blaze, and he indeed devoted his entire life to Torah.

The Jewish community of Frankfurt was looking for a *rov*, and they invited the Pnei Yehoshua to their city to deliver a probationary shiur so that they could test his abilities and decide if he was the right man for the job. It wasn’t easy to deliver this pilot shiur, as the potential *rov* also needed to contend with difficult questions on the subject matter posed by *talmidei chachomim* who were in the audience to ascertain his level of aptitude.

The Pnei Yehoshua prepared a brilliant discourse and was geared up for a variety of difficult

questions. Indeed, as he delivered the shiur, the learned audience began debating him from all different angles. The Pnei Yehoshua was not afraid of their questions, and he began to dissect them one after the other. Each answer he gave led to another question or supposed contradiction, and soon the *bais medrash* was roaring with the sweet contention of Torah. The Pnei Yehoshua continued to calmly answer each difficulty as more and more members of the audience began to realize in amazement that he was correct.

After a while of intense debate, the Pnei Yehoshua managed to show everyone in attendance the validity of his position, except for two people who refused to back down. They continued firing one question after the next, unwilling to accept his understanding as truth. Eventually, the shiur ended with mostly victory for the position of the Pnei Yehoshua, but a stalemate with these two men. Each continued to maintain his opinion, and they left it at that. The community, impressed by the Pnei Yehoshua’s capabilities, unanimously crowned him as their *rov*.

Many years passed. The Pnei Yehoshua had stood at the helm of the community for long, fruitful years, and he was now old and frail. He lay on his deathbed, drifting in and out of consciousness, with the dignitaries and *talmidei chachomim* of the city gathered in the room, unwilling to forfeit their last precious moments with the *rov*. They stood around, crying over their *Tehillims* as the Pnei Yehoshua spent his final moments in this world.

Among the assemblage were the two learned men whom had disagreed with the Pnei Yehoshua during his trial shiur before he became *rov*. They now squeezed their way through the crowd to get a closer glimpse of him, and they noticed that whenever he drifted back into consciousness, the Pnei Yehoshua would begin to whisper something inaudibly.

They were not the only ones who witnessed this, yet no one else was brave enough to ask the Pnei Yehoshua what he was saying. These two men, however, lions who fiercely continued to defend their position against the potential *rov* so many years earlier, did not have such qualms. One of them bent forward and asked, “*Rebbi*, please tell us. What is *Rebbi* whispering?”

The Pnei Yehoshua opened his eyes. “I was told from *shomayim* that in a short while, my *neshamah* will be summoned up to the Next World,” He began. “Because I labored in Torah for so many years, I was told that I will be obliged to say a *dvar Torah* when I come before the *beis din shel maalah*. Not just any *dvar Torah*, but something that I conceived while fighting in learning. I was trying to decide what to say, and I realize that there is nothing sweeter, nothing greater than the *dvar Torah* that originated from my shiur before I became *rov*. The intense arguments between me and the two of you as we struggled to get to the truth in Torah are precisely what makes this *dvar Torah* most precious to Hashem. This is the *dvar Torah* I will say over to the *beis din shel maalah*.”

He closed his eyes, and a few short minutes thereafter, the holy *neshamah* of the Pnei Yehoshua ascended to the heavens. He had spent his last moments on earth refreshing and reviewing the *shtickel* he had fought so intensely for in his lifetime, as this is what he wanted to accompany him to his din.

This concept of saying a *dvar Torah* before the *beis din shel maalah* is not new. *Tzaddikim* who pass away are honored with giving over a *dvar Torah*, and we indeed see that many great sages worked on preparing this *dvar Torah* during their lifetimes. In the *sefer Chut Hameshulash*, it is written that there was one particular *sugya* that Rav Akiva Eiger would toil over more than any other. When he was asked about this, he responded, “When I go before the *beis din shel maalah*, they will tell me, ‘Akiva, say a *shtickel*

Torah’. I am spending a lot more time and energy on this *sugya* so that I’ll have a *dvar Torah* to say.”

However, with this story, the Pnei Yehoshua is teaching us which kind of *dvar Torah* the *beis din shel maalah* is looking for. They specifically want something that was created through immense effort and toil, through fierce dispute, through hand-to-hand combat. What is most precious to Hashem is the piece of Torah that is attacked from all angles, that needs to be defended with blood and tears to ensure that it is solid.

Moshe Rabbeinu brought down the Torah through fighting for it- *oliso bamarom shoviso shvei matanos*- it was war booty. We are Yisroel, fighters by nature, and we have to acquire Torah by fighting for it. Yet it is this intense effort, the fight we go through for Torah, that will accompany us to the next world.

Have a Wonderful Shabbos!

This story is taken from tape # A25a.

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Toras Reb Kalman
Lakewood New Jersey
609.807.1783
torasrebkalman@gmail.com

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