

TORAS REB KALMAN



סיפורי צדיקים

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

The Sdei Chemed

The following story was told over by Rav Sholom Schwadron.

The Sdei Chemed was one of the great Sephardic *rabbonim*; a tremendous *talmid chacham* who was well versed in the entire Torah.

One Sukkos, the Sdei Chemed was sitting in his *sukkah*, radiating unadulterated joy. He was asked what was causing his tremendous happiness, and he explained that he was in the midst of recalling an episode that had occurred years earlier. He agreed to relay the following story, cautioning that it not be repeated during his lifetime.

When the Sdei Chemed was eighteen years old, he studied in an elite *kollel* comprised of gifted *talmidei chachomim*. The *kollel* was supported by an affluent fellow who was involved in all the technical aspects of the institution. He hired a brilliant scholar, whom we'll call Rav Nosson, to serve as *rosh kollel* and head the learning. There were around twenty exceptional scholars learning in the *kollel* at the time. Even among such elite

company, the Sdei Chemed was head and shoulders above the others, causing Rav Nosson to grow envious of the brilliant young man.

Whenever the wealthy sponsor traveled away on business trips, he would entrust the care of all aspects of the *kollel* into the hands of his *rosh kollel*. Rav Nosson's jealousy of the Sdei Chemed completely clouded his sensible judgement, and on one occasion when he was left in charge of the *kollel*, he decided to utilize the opportunity to destroy the young scholar.

The *kollel* employed an Arab girl to clean and maintain the building. Rav Nosson approached her one day to institute his plan. "Here is what I want you to do," Rav Nosson told her, handing her a small bundle of coins as payment. "There is a young man who learns in the *bais medrash* until very late every night. I want you to come to the *bais medrash* this evening, after everyone besides the Sdei Chemed is gone."

"Okay, sure," she replied, happy to earn some extra coins. "That's all?"

"When you arrive, begin screaming for help as loud as your voice carries," Rav Nosson instructed. "Run out of the building and continue shouting for help. When people come to see what has occurred, you should tell them that the young man in the *bais medrash* was trying to force you to sin together with him."

"No problem," she said agreeably, tucking the bundle of coins into the folds of her apron.

Later that evening, true to her word, the Arab cleaning girl returned to the *bais medrash*. She noticed the Sdei Chemed, concentrating intently on his Gemara in the empty study hall. She took a deep breath and at the top of her lungs began yelling, "Help! Help me! Help, help!"

The neighbors living nearby raced over and found the young woman screaming hysterically,

pointing at the Sdei Chemed. “He tried to force me!” the Arab girl shrieked. “He was trying to get me to sin with him!”

Sitting at his *shtender*, the Sdei Chemed looked up to see what the commotion was all about, but when he heard her accusations, he shook his head. *She must be a crazy woman*, he thought to himself, blocking out the ruckus and focusing on the Gemara before him.

Soon, a small crowd gathered at the *kollel* as the cleaning girl continued to scream in pretend terror. The allegations against the Sdei Chemed spread throughout the town, and they were quite severe. In the absence of the *kollel's* patron, the *yungeleit* turned to the *rosh kollel*, Rav Nosson, with the terrible rumors regarding the Sdei Chemed.

Rav Nosson had instigated the entire plot, and he now tried to finish the story the way he had intended. “We’ll have to suspend him, permanently, from the *kollel*,” he told the other members. “Someone who has been accused of something so abominable has no place in our upstanding *kollel*.”

There were other senior members who disagreed with him. “We can’t serve as judge, jury, and executioner. All we know is that there are allegations against him. We can’t just kick him out on the word of a poor Arab cleaning girl.”

“Let’s ask the *rov* to *pasken*,” someone suggested.

The *rov* heard them out and then went to the *bais medrash* to see the situation for himself. A crowd was still gathered in the *kollel* building, exclaiming and gossiping and gesturing animatedly. In the midst of the hubbub, the Sdei Chemed sat learning, completely oblivious to the commotion surrounding him. His diligence impressed the *rov*, who decided that the best course of action was to ignore the allegations for a time and wait to see how the story would unfold.

Two weeks passed, and the sponsor of the *kollel* returned from his business trip. He was bombarded by various residents of the community and members of the *kollel*. Everyone wanted to hear his opinion on the alleged scandal concerning the Sdei Chemed. He, too, decided to visit the scene of the supposed crime.

From the entrance of the *bais medrash*, he observed the eighteen-year old scholar learn. He shook his head. *It cannot be*, he thought to himself. *This young man is kodesh kedoshim. It is impossible that the rumors are true.*

Feeling relieved that the suspicions against the Sdei Chemed were false, he decided to fire the Arab cleaning girl. She was much too embroiled in the foul story, and he felt uncomfortable having her in the *kollel* building. His decision made, he informed her that her job was terminated, effective immediately.

For a small bonus from Rav Nosson, the young woman had now lost her steady income. She tried to obtain a position cleaning other institutions or homes, but no one wanted such a girl working for them. Whether the story was true or not, she was involved in it, and they preferred to stay away.

Her financial situation, which had been poor to begin with, became dire, and she was desperate to find a job. She approached the Sdei Chemed in tears. “Please forgive me,” she cried. “We both know that I framed you, that it was all a lie. I did it for a few dollars, and I’m terribly sorry! Please, can you help me get a job? No one wants to hire me now, but I need a livelihood!”

Despite being wronged so badly by this non-Jewish girl, the Sdei Chemed promised her that he would try to help her. Right then and there, he left the *bais medrash* and went to the home of a wealthy Jew in the community to try to help her obtain a job. After hearing the entire story, the man agreed to employ her in his home.

“When I walked out of the wealthy man’s home,” the Sdei Chemed concluded, “I felt my head opening up. A new, stunning clarity entered my mind, and I began to understand the entire Torah in ways I hadn’t experienced earlier. I withstood the *nisayon* to take revenge on the Arab girl, and I was rewarded with a renewed clarity in Torah.” Humiliation is one of the most difficult and painful feelings humans contend with. Still, the Sdei Chemed found the strength to avoid avenging the humiliation of the non-Jewish girl who had caused him, even going so far as to assist her in her time of need. How much more is it incumbent upon us to do the same, despite the difficulty, when dealing with aggressors who are our own brethren.

Have a Wonderful Shabbos!

This story is taken from tape # A436

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

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