

# 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 Butcher Next Door***

The following story is recorded in a sefer written by Rabbeinu Nissim Gaon.

R' Eliyahu was an elevated and noble Jew, an outstanding talmid chacham who devoted his every moment to Torah and mitzvos. He constantly strove to better his service of Hashem, to stretch himself further, to grow closer to his Creator. R' Eliyahu sensed that his neshamah was rising along with his efforts, yet he wanted to determine that he was on the correct course. Was Hashem truly happy with his actions?

He fasted for a few days, purifying his body and soul. Then, before going to sleep, he pleaded with Hashem to reveal to him who would be his neighbor in Olam Habah. Knowledge of the company which he would keep in the World to Come would be a very telling indicator of his

standing in Heaven. It was with these entreaties on his lips that R' Eliyahu drifted off into a deep sleep.

As he lay there, his chest rising and falling rhythmically, he began to dream. Hashem had decided to grant this tzaddik his wish and sent angels to reveal to him who would be his neighbor in the World to Come.

“You will sit beside Moshe, the butcher,” he was informed in his dream.

R' Eliyahu awoke with a start, his heart pounding. Moshe, the butcher? That was all?

He spent the day in a state of introspection and grief. Why would he only merit to reside next door to a simple butcher in Olam Habah? Were his actions deemed so insignificant? What more did Hashem want from him?

True, Moshe was an honest man who conducted his business in strict accordance with Halacha. He was responsible for providing all the Jews in the area with premium kosher meat and poultry. He was a good, if simple, man.

However, R' Eliyahu had been certain that he would merit to reside beside the tzaddikim of previous generations. The knowledge that he would earn the same level in Olam Habah as a humble butcher left him heartbroken.

Once again, he fasted and did teshuvah. He begged Hashem to reveal to him the identity of his neighbor in Olam Habah. Perhaps he had misunderstood?

In his dream that night, he was scolded for asking the same question twice. “If not for the fact that you are a great tzaddik, you would have been punished for impudently asking this again. We’ve already told you who your neighbor will be in the

World to Come. It will be Moshe, the butcher, and that which he has done is something you will never do!”

When he awoke, R’ Eliyahu had a burning desire to meet with the butcher. Things were not as straight-forward as they had appeared the day before. Who was this butcher really, and what had he done to merit such a lofty place in Olam Habah?

That very day, he set out to the town where the butcher resided and headed to the butcher shop.

“Tell me,” he urged the man behind the counter.

“What do you do?”

“Me?” Moshe asked, wiping his hands on his stained apron. He waved at the meat display and the drying cuts of beef hanging from the ceiling.

“As you can see, I am a butcher.”

“Yes, I understand,” R’ Eliyahu replied. “What I meant was... is there a special mitzvah you perform, some kind of merit...”

The butcher shrugged. “I’m really a very simple person,” he admitted. “I work for a living. I daven three times a day. I try to do all the mitzvos.”

“But you must have some special mitzvah,” R’ Eliyahu pressed.

The butcher lowered his eyes uncomfortably. “I give half my earnings to tzedakah, and my family lives off the other half,” he said quietly, embarrassed.

R” Eliyahu thought for a moment. True, giving away a full fifty-percent of one’s earnings to charity was noble and virtuous deed, but there were those who gave far greater sums to tzedakah.

“Are you sure there’s nothing else?” he urged.

“Perhaps you once did something extraordinary, something that required great sacrifice?”

Moshe cleared his throat. “Well, there is something...” He swallowed and motioned to R’ Eliyahu to follow him to the back of his store, where they sat down on some chairs.

“I rarely talk about this,” Moshe began. “But now that you’re asking, I’ll tell you a story that happened many years ago.”

R’ Eliyahu leaned forward eagerly and the butcher began his story.

“One day, many years ago, I was walking on the street and I witnessed a group of people being led down the street in chains. It was obvious that they were captives who would soon be sold on the market as slaves. As I watched them pass, I noticed a young girl at the end of the line, weeping quietly. It was heartbreaking to see such a young girl being led off to slavery.

“I approached her, and discovered that she was a Jewish orphan named Leah. She had been forcibly taken from her family and was miles away from her hometown. ‘They’re going to sell me to non-Jews!’ she wailed. ‘I’m only twelve years old! How will I manage to retain my yiddishkeit?!’

“I could not just sit and watch this tragedy occur, and so I promised the girl that I would find a way to redeem her. When I went to the slave dealer to inquire about her price, however, I was informed that due to her youth and resilience, he was charging a fortune of money for her. The figure he named was far beyond my means, but I was determined to rescue her. I sold my possessions one by one until I put together the full amount. Then I redeemed her.

“I brought her home with me that day. With her pleasant personality and good nature, Leah was a true blessing to have in the house. She had a special aura of purity and beautiful middos. As we got to know her better, my wife and I realized that we could not have wanted a more perfect kallah for our son, Yisroel, who was twenty-one years old at the time.

“Yisroel, who was rarely home, did not know Leah at all, but when I expressed my feelings about the match, he agreed. He trusted us to choose for him a suitable wife. I was perhaps the most excited about the shidduch, as I had sold most of my valuables to redeem Leah from slavery. Not only had I saved her once, but I would now have a hand in securing her future as well. It felt invigorating to come full circle.

“The engagement was announced, and the wedding preparations began. Being that my wife and I represented the sides of both the chassan and kallah, we were responsible for every detail and expense. We set up Leah’s trousseau as we would for our own daughter, from linen to housewares, buttons to shoelaces. In the weeks leading up to the wedding, the frenzy of the preparations increased along with our excitement and overwhelming joy.

“We sent out invitations to the entire city, inviting rich and poor and everyone in between to join our simchah. There was to be a festive meal followed by the chuppah and then sheva brachos. I worked hard on the seating arrangements, mixing the wealthy with the poor, trying my utmost to ensure that everyone would enjoy the evening with us.

“After months and months of preparation, the joyous day finally arrived. I stood in the courtyard where the meal was taking place, circling between the guests. A smile stretched my face in two as I greeted my neighbors and friends, mentally preparing for the moment when I would walk my son to the chuppah.

“As I walked in between the tables, shaking hands and showing people to their seats, I noticed that on one specific table, the guests were not eating. Instead, they wore melancholy faces and looked away when I approached. Puzzled and concerned, I addressed the men at the table, reminding them that this was my son’s simchah, that I wanted them to partake of the joy.

“One of the men turned to face me. ‘We’re thrilled with your simchah,’ he said in a low voice. ‘It’s just that...’ His voice trailed off and I followed his gaze to a man sitting alone nearby, sobbing profusely. ‘We can’t just eat and enjoy ourselves with someone so obviously miserable,’ he concluded glumly.

“I walked over to the weeping man and placed a hand on his shoulder. He jumped, looking up at me with swollen eyes. He was a stranger, someone I had never seen before. ‘What’s bothering you?’ I asked softly. ‘Today is a happy day for me, but I see that for you, all is not well.’ ‘The man tried to speak, but his words were lost in a fresh torrent of tears. I led him out of the noisy courtyard and waited with him patiently until he calmed down. When he finally spoke, his words stunned me to the core.

“‘Leah is my kallah,’ he said between hiccups.

‘Years ago, when she was just a small child, my parents and hers arranged a commitment of marriage between us. A tenaim was signed, and we parted ways until she would grow old enough to become my wife.’

“My face drained of all color. ‘I don’t believe you,’ I managed to say. ‘Who says this is all true? This can’t be happening!’

“‘I have proof,’ the man said, withdrawing a fraying document from his pocket. He opened it carefully and held it in front of me. I read it with a growing dizziness. ‘But perhaps this is forged,’

I tried to argue. ‘Or maybe this marriage certificate refers to a different Leah bas Yonasan?’

“‘I’ll tell you a siman,’ the man suggested. ‘She has a star-shaped birthmark behind her left ear.’

“My dizziness intensified, and I worried I would pass out. I held on to the pole of a nearby fence to steady my swaying body and closed my eyes. Breathe. In, out. In, out.

“The man, oblivious to my condition, continued speaking. ‘A few years ago, after she lost her parents, she was kidnapped by a slave dealer. I’ve been searching for her ever since, spending days and weeks on the road. I’ve wandered from city to city across the continent searching for her. This afternoon, I arrived here in town and finally found her. Yet at the same time, I discovered that she was preparing to marry someone else!’

“I pulled myself together. ‘Stay right here,’ I told him. ‘I believe your story is true, and if that is so, I must hurry to fix this right now.’ At this point, it was a mere few minutes before the chuppah was scheduled to begin. I went into the room where Yisroel, the chassan, was sitting, davening fervently for his future.

“I sat down beside him and took his hand into my own. ‘My son, you know how much you mean to me. You know how much energy and love I’ve invested into your upbringing. You know how much I sacrificed for Leah, too, first to redeem her, and then to marry her off. I put my heart and soul into this wedding, and I was sure this shidduch was perfect.’ Yisroel looked at me with trusting eyes, and I had to force myself to continue. ‘In a few minutes, you were supposed to get married. However, I just discovered that your kallah is really engaged to someone else.’

“Yisroel’s face turned grey. ‘W...what? How? How can that be?!’

“I retold the story the man had told me in a few brief sentences. ‘My child, this girl is destined for another. She is forbidden to you, and there is no way you can marry her. Despite our tremendous pain, let us seize this moment and marry off this orphan in dignity. Her true intended is outside, dressed in dusty rags. Let’s give him your beautiful attire so that he can get married with self-respect.’

“My precious Yisroel didn’t need any time. ‘Tatte,’ he said, his eyes filled with unshed tears. ‘If that is the right thing to do, then that is what I will do.’ Just moments before the chuppah, he and the stranger switched clothing. Yisroel gave the new chassan his brand-new suit and freshly shined shoes and donned the man’s dusty and disheveled garments.

“Once the other man was properly outfitted, we brought him before the kallah. Leah gave a shriek when she saw him, and her face turned white. ‘This is the man I was supposed to marry,’ she admitted quietly. She had been just a young girl when her parents had made the arrangements, and over the course of her difficult life, she had forgotten all about it. Now, standing before the man her parents had chosen, she felt a sense of joyous relief wash over her.

“The chuppah took place immediately after that. Instead of my son Yisroel, I walked a stranger to the chuppah. Instead of the girl I rescued becoming a part of my family, I watched as she became the wife of another. The meal I prepared, the money I spent, the trousseau I sponsored- all of it went to marrying off this orphan girl- to a man who was not my son.

“When shevah brachos were recited and the chuppah was over, there was dancing like you have never seen before. The chassan’s face glowed and the courtyard pulsated with energy. I danced and danced, putting my heart and soul into the simchah that should have been mine. Though

I was giving it up, I was determined to give it everything I had. I would do this mitzvah in its entirety.

“After the wedding, the young couple came to live in my home, and I supported them financially. After a few months, they decided to travel back to their hometown. I sent them off with many gifts and a large sum of money, enough that they would be able to establish themselves comfortably.”

Moshe the butcher finished his tale and grew silent.

R' Eliyahu jumped up. With tears in his eyes, he embraced the butcher and kissed him warmly. “I want you to know,” he said emotionally, “that in a dream, I was told that you would be my neighbor in Gan Eden. How I wish! How I wish I was on the level to merit residing next door to you in the World to Come!”

Being mevater and giving up for another is one of the most difficult acts an individual may commit in his lifetime. However, like Rochel Imainu, who will bring about the entire geulah in the merit of giving up her intended husband for her sister, the reward for someone who is mevater is priceless.

*Have a Wonderful Shabbos!*

This story is taken from tape # A137

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[torasrebkalman@gmail.com](mailto:torasrebkalman@gmail.com)

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