

TORAS REB KALMAN



סיפורי צדיקים

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

Buried Treasure

Other than his utter poverty, Dovid had everything going for him. He had a beautiful marriage, wonderful children, good health, and a sharp mind. Blessed with pristine middos, genuine fear of Heaven, and a quick grasp of Gemarah, he was a talmid chacham of the highest caliber.

However, the shadow of poverty hung over his head, casting darkness over his life. He had nothing to feed his children, nothing to heat his home with, and any business venture he touched turned instantly into dust.

“We can’t continue this way,” his wife told him tearfully one evening as she wrapped her arms around their frail, whimpering baby. She hugged the infant close, trying to keep his body warm with her own as he moaned weakly for food. “If it was only me, I could survive like this, but what

will be with the children? They need food, they need fuel, they need new clothing.”

Dovid’s heart bled for his family, but he could offer no response. It was not for lack of trying that they were so poor. “Hashem will help,” he told his suffering wife. He hurried to shul and poured out his heart before the aron kodesh. “Hashem, please grant me parnasah,” he pleaded. “Please help me feed my family!”

Still, despite his tearful prayers, salvation did not arrive. He managed to procure some stale bread, enough to feed his family for a few days. Then he succeeded in borrowing a few pennies, and that kept them going for another few days. But these were temporary measures, nothing that brought financial stability and permanent relief from the starvation and cold.

“Please go speak to the Baal Shem Tov in the next town,” his wife pleaded with him. “Perhaps the holy rebbe will agree to give us a blessing for parnasah. Perhaps in his merit, we will finally have what we need.”

“Alright,” her husband agreed. “I’ll leave to the Baal Shem Tov immediately.”

Having only one set of threadbare clothing, and with barely any food in the house, there was nothing to pack. Waving to his children, Dovid set out on the day’s journey by foot to the next town. Weary from the long walk, Dovid knocked on the Baal Shem Tov’s door. A student let him in and led him to the rebbe’s study. When he entered, the Baal Shem Tov stood up, out of respect for the talmid chacham.

“Please sit down, Reb Dovid,” the Baal Shem Tov said warmly. “How can I be of assistance?”

“Rebbe, I’ll admit that I am slightly embarrassed to have to speak to you about this,” Dovid said sheepishly. “I know that everything is destined

from above, and it seems that poverty is my destiny. Other than my lack of wealth, I have so much blessing in my life, and I am incredibly grateful to Hashem for each one of them.

“However, as a father of young children, the poverty is unbearable. It’s so difficult to watch my children suffer. What will be with my starving children, growing thinner and weaker by the day? Please, rebbe, can you help me?”

The Baal Shem Tov looked at him, a hint of a smile playing on his lips. “I’m sure you know that there is a tremendous reward awaiting you for every tiny bit of suffering you endure,” he reminded him. “Still, if you’d like, I can give you a little tip on how to improve your finances.”

“I will do whatever the rebbe advises,” Dovid agreed.

“There is a town about a three-day journey from your home,” the rebbe began, giving him the name of the town. “There is a bridge running over a river at the outskirts of the town. I’ll let you in on a little secret. Buried underground beside that bridge is a hidden treasure. Don’t tell anyone about this, but if you go there and dig, you will find a tremendous amount of money and valuables waiting for you.”

Dovid’s eyes widened. It was well known that the Baal Shem Tov possessed ruach hakodesh, and if he was saying there was a buried treasure, then that must be the fact. “Thank you, rebbe,” he said emotionally. “I can’t thank you enough.”

Placing his right hand over Dovid’s bowed head, the Baal Shem Tov blessed him with success, and Dovid departed.

Dovid’s wife greeted him eagerly upon his return home. “Was he able to help you?” she asked breathlessly, serving him a bowl of hot water that

was supposed to be soup. “Did he give you a blessing?”

“Baruch Hashem, he gave me both a blessing and a suggestion,” Dovid replied, warming his hands around the bowl. “I’ll need to travel tomorrow for a few days, but with Hashem’s help, our salvation will hopefully arrive soon.”

The following morning, Dovid set out again, by foot, on the long journey to the bridge. Equipped with just a thin sandwich and a few coins, he walked most of the way, stopping to rest every few hours under shady trees. He managed to hitch some rides for a few kilometers of the journey, but by the time he staggered up to the bridge, he was completely worn out.

The ground beside the bridge was cold and tightly packed. After clawing at the mud with his fingers for a moment, Dovid realized that he would need a better alternative. His fingers were no match for the frozen earth.

The afternoon sun was waning in the sky, and he was simply too weary to continue. I’ll buy a shovel in the morning, he thought to himself as he settled down under a nearby tree for the night.

When morning dawned, he davened Shacharis and then hurried to the marketplace to purchase a shovel with his coins. To his dismay, shovels were selling for a lot more than the measly sum he had. Shrugging, he left the market and returned to the bridge. He found a sturdy branch and began to scrape at the ground with it. A small hole began to form.

He worked for the entire day, digging deeper and deeper with the branch. Beads of sweat formed on his forehead despite the frigid weather. Still, no treasure. When dark set in, he was forced to stop. His palms were scraped and bloody, his muscles aching in pain, and other than a thin hole in the ground, he had nothing to show for his efforts.

Sitting down in fatigue, he took his sandwich out of his pocket and savored it slowly, feeling life slowly creep back into him. He rewrapped half of the sandwich for the next day and fell asleep immediately, not even noticing his stomach's hungry protests.

The following day, he awoke with renewed vigor. Strengthening himself with the promise of the Baal Shem Tov, he resumed digging with his wooden stick. As his strength diminished, he energized himself with thoughts of emunas chachomim and continued digging.

As the sun began to set again, with no treasure in sight, Dovid despaired. He simply did not have the physical stamina to continue fighting with the frozen earth. Perhaps the Baal Shem Tov's advice had been a challenge for him, not an actual treasure. In his state of complete exhaustion, Dovid knew he had completed his utmost hishtadlus. He hadn't succeeded in finding the treasure, but there was no reason for him to stay longer.

Just as he lay the branch back on the ground and prepared to begin the long trek home, a man called out to him from on top of the bridge. Wearing a tape measure around his neck and carrying a bolt of fabric, it was obvious that the man was a tailor. "Shalom Aleichem!" he called down to Dovid, waving from the bridge as he crossed it.

Dovid waited for the man to join him at the foot of the bridge, feeling slightly sheepish at the small hole in the ground before him. "Aleichem Shalom," he responded, shaking the tailor's hand.

"I'm Dovid."

"Menachem," the tailor introduced himself. "I see that you are digging here. Did you once bury something at the foot of this bridge that you're looking to uncover? Or perhaps someone else left

something here for you? I know, you must be looking for a hidden treasure!"

Dovid gave a small smile. "To be honest, yes," he said slowly. "I'm a very poor man, and I went to the Baal Shem Tov for a brachah. I live many kilometers away, but the Baal Shem Tov directed me here and said that I would find a treasure buried beside this bridge. I've been digging for the past two days, and as far as I can tell, there's nothing here. I haven't eaten properly in a while, and I simply have no energy to continue. I don't know what the Baal Shem Tov meant, but I assume he was giving me a test."

"You know, I had an eerily similar story recently," Menachem replied, joining Dovid on the ground beside the bridge. "Just the other day, I had a dream, and I saw an old man, dressed in tattered clothing. He had a glowing face and a long, flowing beard, and I knew that despite his poverty, he was someone special. Although I am a pauper myself, with almost no money to my name, in my dream, I offered the man all my money.

"However, the old man in my dream refused my donation. 'I don't need your money,' he told me. I want you to know that in this-and-this town is a man named Dovid ben Nechemia, and he has a big oven. If you would move this oven and dig four feet beneath the spot where it stood, you would find a treasure there.'

"When I awoke, I wasn't sure if it was worth my while to travel to the town that the man in my dream had specified," Menachem continued. "I mean, exactly what was I supposed to do, walk over to the man with the oven and demand that he give me his treasure? And besides, while I don't have much business, I can't afford to push off the few clients I do have simply to chase a fantasy."

Dovid's eyes widened, and a funny expression crossed his face. The town Menachem had

mentioned was his own, and the name he had mentioned- it was also his own! He stood up, slightly dazed, and brushed off his pants. Could it be that beneath his oven was a treasure?!

Menachem glanced sideways at him. “Weird story, huh?”

“Very strange,” Dovid agreed. “Well. I guess I’ll be going now. I have a long journey home.”

Somehow, the trek back home took much quicker than the way there, or so it seemed to Dovid. He didn’t feel the pain in his knees, begging for a rest, as he walked and walked through the night. At the highway, he was picked up by a kindhearted driver, who gave him a lift for a big part of his journey. He arrived back home just two days later, hope and excitement overshadowing his exhaustion.

Late that evening, after his wife and children were asleep, he moved the heavy oven and began digging beneath it. Slowly, a shallow pit formed, and he continued to dig deeper. About four feet beneath the surface, just as the old man in Menachem’s dream had depicted, he discovered a cache of gold coins.

With a shaking hand, he removed one of the coins from the pile and slipped it into his pocket. After replacing the heavy oven over the whole he had dug, Dovid went to sleep, his mind whirling with plans. He would use the single coin to stock his home with food and firewood the following morning, but he would have to carefully think over how to utilize the remainder of the money.

To keep away the evil eye, Dovid found it prudent to keep the blessing hidden, and he did not even disclose the secret beneath their oven to his own wife. Over the next few days, he did research on a few different business ideas, and soon invested the treasure into a profitable venture.

Within six months, his life and that of his entire family was transformed. They had food to eat, clothing to wear, and a warm home. No longer did they constantly worry about where their next meal would come from, or how to keep the torrential rains from leaking through their battered roof during the wet season. In the span of a few short months, they had gone from poverty to prosperity. One Shabbos afternoon at shalosh seudos, Dovid sat at the head of the table, looking around in gratitude. His children, festively dressed, were gathered around the table, set by a generous spread, singing together. His heart swelled in appreciation for the blessings that had been suddenly showered upon him.

As he basked the joy, icy fingers of guilt suddenly began to gnaw at his conscience. How could he have been so selfish?! Here he was, enjoying wealth thanks to the dream of Menachem the tailor, while poor Menachem himself was probably still sitting in a leaky cottage, eating dry challah and shivering in the cold.

For the remainder of Shabbos, he could not shake the thought of the tailor out of his mind. By the time Havdalah was made, Dovid knew what he had to do. He packed a sack full of precious stones and prepared his wagon for a journey. Bidding goodbye to his wife, he set out immediately, that very night, to right the wrong he had committed toward Menachem.

He traveled through the night, intent on getting to his destination as quick as possible. When morning dawned, he stopped briefly to daven and then continued on, nudging his weary horse onward. By the end of the day, halfway through his journey, he was too drained to continue without a break. Tying his horse to a tree, he fed it and then settled down under the relative shelter of the tree’s willowy branches.

He had scarcely dozed off when the sound of approaching hoof beats jolted him awake. Dovid

opened his eyes to see a man jumping off the newly-carriage and tying his horse to an adjacent tree. From his dress, it was clear that he was a fellow Jew.

“Shalom Aleichem,” Dovid called out. The man turned toward him, his facial features illuminated in the faint moonlight. It was Menachem, the tailor from the bridge. “Menachem?!” he cried incredulously.

“I don’t believe it!” Menachem exclaimed. “You’re the man from the bridge a few months ago, right? I’ve been searching for you!”

“I was actually on my way to find you now,” Dovid admitted. “I have to tell you something important.”

“Me, too, but you go first,” Menachem offered.

“I’m listening.”

“When I met you at the bridge and you told me about your dream, I was very shaken,” Dovid said quietly. “My name is Dovid ben Nechemia, and I live in the town that you mentioned. When I returned home, I moved my oven, and indeed, just as you dreamed, there was a valuable treasure hidden inside. I invested the money and was baruch Hashem very successful.”

Reaching into his valise, Dovid withdrew the sack of precious stones. “You were the one who brought about my wealth, and I am forever grateful for you. I don’t want you to continue wallowing in poverty after what your dream has done for me. I brought this for you, your share in the treasure beneath my oven.”

Menachem started laughing incredulously. “Wallowing in poverty?” he echoed in amusement. “Dovid, I’ve been trying to find you since that day at the bridge. After you left, I thought to myself that if someone as holy as the

Baal Shem Tov had directed you to the foot of the bridge, surely there was a treasure there. I began digging a few feet away from where you had begun, and within a short time, I discovered a chest of golden coins.”

He leaped onto his wagon and returned moments later with a heavy sack. “I brought this for you, the man who directed me to the tremendous wealth. I have been searching for you for weeks now, feeling guilty that you left the bridge before discovering your rightful treasure.”

The two men fell onto each other in a wordless embrace, dumbfounded at the joint miracle that had brought their destinies together. For a long, silent moment, they contemplated the incredible happenings.

Menachem spoke first. “Here I am, bringing you riches, while you came to do the very same thing!” He chuckled. “We merited this amazing miracle. Now what? Where do we go from here?” “It seems to me that perhaps we aren’t supposed to go on living our separate lives again,” Dovid said slowly. “I have a daughter of marriageable age... do you, perhaps, have a son?”

“I do,” Menachem said, his eyes crinkling happily. “I hear what you are saying. We merited a joint miracle, and now perhaps the time has come for our families to connect through marriage. I would gladly take your daughter for my son.”

Mazel Tov! The two happy fathers discussed further details of the match well into the night.

In the morning, Dovid suggested that they travel to see the Baal Shem Tov before heading back home. “He’s the father of our miracle, after all,” he reminded Menachem, who agreed immediately.

When they arrived at the Baal Shem Tov's home, the gabbai showed them into the rebbe's study. The Baal Shem Tov stood up in honor of the two talmidei chachomim. "Mazel Tov," he wished them warmly. "Mazel Tov on your wealth, and on the shidduch of your children. Hashem should continue blessing you both!"

The Baal Shem Tov revealed to them that the reason they had merited this wealth was since they had both lived with plenty of suffering. They had passed their nisayon of poverty and thus merited miraculous wealth.

"However, you must never forget how poverty feels," the rebbe cautioned. "If you would like the wealth to remain with you and then your children, you must continue to behave with the sensitivity and empathy of a poor man who knows pain and difficulty. It won't be as easy as when you were truly cold, hungry, and desperate, but if you neglect to feel these important emotions toward others with less than you, you will lose the wealth you've received."

"Perhaps, as a starting point, you should use the precious stones and gold that you had brought along as gifts for each other to finance the weddings of orphans," The Baal Shem Tov suggested. "This would be a great merit for you." The two men accepted the Baal Shem Tov's words solemnly, resolving to always remember the pain of those less fortunate than them. Before parting ways, they discussed setting up a fund to marry off orphans with joy and dignity. For the remainder of their days, Dovid and Menachem used their wealth to care for the poor as though they were their own relatives.

Have a Wonderful Shabbos!
This story is taken from tape # A114

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