

TORAS REB KALMAN



סיפורי צדיקים

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

Prompt Payment

Rav Yosef Shaul Nathanson, a contemporary of the the Chasam Sofer and author of the Shoel Umeishiv, was considered one of the foremost gedolim of his generation. His chavrusah and brother-in-law, Rav Mordechai Zev, was equally brilliant, and the two of them learned together for many years. They each wrote many seforim, some together and some on their own, disseminating to klal Yisroel a tremendous amount of Torah.

While Rav Mordechai Zev was a tremendous masmid and a brilliant scholar, he also devoted much time to raising money for tzedakah. Somehow, between his learning sedorim and a few winks of sleep at night, he managed to run around to wealthy philanthropists to plead the cases of widows and orphans, local paupers and the poor of Eretz Yisroel.

Rav Yosef Shaul, on the other hand, wanted to devote himself completely to learning. "If someone else can do it, then let him do it," was his common refrain whenever a needy cause came

up. The only fundraising that could tear him away from his Gemara was rescuing someone from jail. Otherwise, he could be found in front of his shtender at all hours of the day and night, doing nothing else but learning.

Reb Nachum the Shadchan was a well-known figure in town. He was a popular fellow who knew everyone and had his fingers in practically every pie. He was a great salesman, hence his success in brokering both shidduchim and business deals. It was well known that if Reb Nachum was involved, both parties would walk away from the transaction happily.

Reb Nachum was a kindhearted man who enjoyed helping others. His pay for a successful business deal was the satisfaction he felt by assisting a fellow Jew. He always refused monetary payment.

The mayor of the city soon took notice of Reb Nachum's success and the popularity he enjoyed amongst his brethren. The mayor owned a forest, which he desperately needed to sell in order to pay up an outstanding loan that was due shortly. Having no success selling the land on his own, he decided to approach Reb Nachum the shadchan.

Reb Nachum agreed to give it a try, but stipulated that he could not guarantee to find a buyer for the property. The economy had been doing poorly for some time, and a raw forest in the middle of nowhere did not have much immediate potential. There were few buyers with the means and liquidity to sink so much money into such a venture.

For the next few weeks, Reb Nachum the Shadchan worked fruitlessly to find a buyer for the property. He traveled extensively, used his networking abilities and best sales pitch, dangling the offer before potential buyers like the prize it could become with the proper investment, but there were no takers.

It was with quaking knees and a quivering voice that Reb Nachum returned back to the mayor to report his lack of success. He knew that the mayor would not take the news sitting down, and he silently prayed that he emerges from the mayor's office safe and sound.

To the disbelief of the entire Jewish community, the enraged mayor seized Reb Nachum and had him bundled off to prison like a common thief. A sham trial was scheduled for later that week, where Reb Nachum was expected to be convicted of false charges and sentenced to underground confinement.

When the Jews found out about this, they were up in arms. Reb Nachum was innocent, and he was to be given the harshest kind of prison sentence possible! No one ever emerged from underground confinement alive.

Hurrying to the bais medrash, they interrupted the two gedolim, Rav Yosef Shaul and Rav Mordechai Zev, in the midst of a heated Talmudic discussion. Briefly, they described the circumstances leading up to Reb Nachum's arrest and the subsequent sentence that was being discussed. "We tried to bribe the mayor, but he refuses to be swayed by money. He wants to take his revenge on Reb Nachum, and that's that."

Both gedolim were quiet for a few moments, thinking hard. "I know this mayor," Rav Mordechai Zev finally said. "Here's what I think you should do. Choose one man, not a delegation, but one representative to approach the mayor. Ask the mayor how much of a profit he had been expecting from the deal that he wanted Reb Nachum to broker and offer him double that amount. That should do the trick."

"Is rebbi certain?" one of the men asked hesitantly. He had been on the receiving end of the mayor's tirade the first time they had tried bribing him, and he was not all that eager to try it again.

"Yes, I'm certain," Rav Mordechai Zev confirmed. "It says in the Torah that Yaakov bribed Esav, and then Esav left him alone. We learn from this that the gentiles can always be bribed; it's just a matter of how to present it and how much to give."

"And where will we get the money from?" someone else asked.

"Don't worry about that," Rav Mordechai Zev assured them. "Find out how much we need to pay him, and then we'll take care of raising the money."

Hersh, a capable and serious young man with a respectful and endearing personality was chosen to represent the Jewish community in its second attempt to bribe the mayor. Tall and dignified, he entered the mayor's office.

"Jew!" the mayor called to him from across the large room. "What do you want? I already turned your friends down. There's no way I'm letting that conniving swindler Nachum out of jail!"

Hersh approached him with measured steps. "May I sit down?"

"Go ahead."

"I understand that your honor had placed a lot of hope and expectations on the sale of his property," Hersh began carefully. "Dashed hopes are frustrating, but even more so, they can be extremely painful. I can't even imagine the depths of the mayor's anguish over this non-sale."

The mayor looked like he was about to angrily interject, so Hersh forged on quickly. "On behalf of the Jewish community, I'd like to present you with a gift, a token of our appreciation to your honor for being such a fair and devoted ruler."

Now the mayor began to look interested. "Continue," he said.

“We would like to offer you double the amount you would have earned on the sale of the property,” Hersh said slowly. “A gift from the Jewish community to our distinguished mayor.”

“Double!” the mayor’s eyes were round. “We’re talking about twenty-thousand coins. Are you certain?”

“Certain,” Hersh confirmed. “This way, you can keep the property and earn double the return that The mayor looked at him searchingly. “And for this generous gift, I suppose you expect me to free that Nachum, hmm?”

“Well,” Hersh said cautiously. “It would seem that Nachum did get you a deal in the end, a far better deal than you could have ever dreamed of. Wouldn’t it be fair if he was released?”

“Alright,” the mayor agreed, shaking Hersh’s hand. “Bring me the money, and the Jew can go free.”

Hersh left the mayor’s office and ran all the way to the bais medrash to report his success to the two gedolim. “He agreed,” he said breathlessly. “Now we need to raise the twenty-thousand coins.”

Rav Yosef Shaul stood up and closed his Gemara. His brother-in-law at his side, the two sages left the bais medrash and flagged a passing cab.

“Please take us to the home of Zanvil the banker,” Rav Yosef Shaul instructed the driver as he and Rav Mordechai Zev climbed into the wagon. The driver whipped the horses and they were off.

The wealthy financier, coming to the door to greet his guests, was shocked to see two of the leading sages of the generation at his doorstep. “Come inside!” he invited graciously, hiding his shock.

“What can I do for you, rebbi?”

“We need to discuss something very important,” Rav Yosef Shaul said urgently. “As you may have

heard, Reb Nachum the Shadchan is languishing in the mayor’s prison. For twenty-thousand coins, the mayor will let him free. We are trying to raise money for this tremendous mitzvah of freeing a Jew from prison.”

Zanvil looked from one gadol’s holy face to the other. “I can give a hundred,” he offered after a moment. While just a fraction of the total cost, it was a very respectable sum.

“Can you give a little more?” Rav Yosef Shaul pressed.

“I’m sorry, but my money is tied up now,” the banker said apologetically.

Waiting patiently by the horses, the driver eyed them expectantly as they boarded the wagon. “Where to next?”

“Berel the textile merchant,” Rav Mordechai Zev instructed.

At Berel’s home, they did slightly better. Another two hundred coins joined Zanvil’s hundred, for a total of three hundred. The goal seemed a long way off.

“A grand total of eight hundred,” Rav Yosef Shaul announced after they’d gone to another three homes. “I don’t want to complain when these people are giving so generously, but at this rate, Reb Nachum won’t be freed for another year at least. We need someone who can give us a larger percentage of the full amount.”

“I was thinking...” Reb Mordechai Zev said slowly. “There is one person whom I think might be able to give significantly more, but I was planning on going there last.”

“Let’s go there right away,” Rav Yosef Shaul urged. “There’s no time to lose.”

“His name is Reb Aron, and he lives in the next city,” Rav Mordechai Zev said.

“Let’s send someone before us to inform him of our impending arrival,” Rav Yosef Shaul suggested. “I want this Reb Aron to be ready and prepared. Reb Nachum’s life depends on this.”

A teenage boy was sent on horseback to Reb Aron’s home while the gedolim traveled by carriage a short distance behind. As expected, Reb Aron was stunned that such exalted sages were coming to him, and he hurried to prepare his home for them.

When the gedolim arrived, Reb Aron was waiting outside for them, wearing his Shabbos finery in their honor. Running toward their wagon, he kissed their hands. “Shalom aleichem, my teachers and leaders,” he cried emotionally, leading them into his house.

His expression grave, Rav Yosef Shaul explained the situation. “It’s been two days, and we have thus far raised a few hundred coins. A Jew is languishing in prison this very moment! We can’t continue this way, raising bit by bit. The entire sum is needed!”

“Rebbi, I will give you the entire sum,” Reb Aron promised. “Please, join my family for lunch and then I will give you the entire amount.”

The two gedolim looked at each other, their spirits rising. “Thank you,” Rav Yosef Shaul told their host. “We’ll certainly eat the meal with you.”

They washed and sat down and the long dining room table together with Reb Aron and his family. “Will rebbi please honor us with a dvar Torah?” Reb Aron requested.

Rav Yosef Shaul spoke first, delivering a beautiful lecture on the importance of pidyon shevuyim. His brother-in-law, Rav Mordechai Zev, followed with a dvar Torah on the beauty of performing mitzvos with zerizus. “You, my dear Reb Aron, embody both of these values,” Rav Mordechai Zev concluded. “With your generosity and immediate willingness to undertake this

mitzvah, I envy your merits in the world to come!”

Reb Aron cleared his throat, clearly uncomfortable with the praise. “With your permission, I’d like to relate a story that occurred when I was young, to help you understand why I am willing to give you the money you need.”

The gedolim nodded.

“When the match between myself and my wife was arranged, my father-in-law pledged to support us for the first few years,” Reb Aron began. “And for the first five years, that’s exactly what he did. My wife and I were given a room in my in-laws’ home, and they provided for all of our needs, including meals.

“At the end of the fifth year, my father-in-law gave me four hundred coins with which to start life, and then we were on our own. Apprehensive about our finances but understanding that the time had come, I thanked him graciously and we moved out into a tiny rented cottage at the edge of town.

“We needed income in order to pay the rent and purchase food and firewood, so I decided to go to the marketplace and try my hand at business. I hoped to invest the sum from my father-in-law into a profitable venture and use my earnings to support my small family.

“‘Don’t put all your eggs in one basket,’ my wife cautioned as I left the house.

I came to the marketplace and was immediately hit by the dizzying scene of vendors and buyers haggling over all types of goods. I looked around, terribly overwhelmed, trying to decide which stand to approach first.

“Suddenly, I noticed a Jewish woman standing in the middle of the square, tears running down her scrawny cheeks. I approached her and asked after her welfare.

“‘I’m a widow,’ she told me through her tears. ‘I lost my husband when I was a young wife with one small child. Now, my daughter is grown, and in fact, she is a kallah. I promised a dowry of four hundred coins, but I don’t even have one cent to give! The menchutanim are demanding the dowry by next week or they will break the shidduch!’

“I watched helplessly as she burst into fresh tears. Pained by her story, I impulsively reached into my pocket and withdrew the sack from my father-in-law. It took much strength, but I knew that a livelihood is from Hashem. ‘Take this,’ I told the widow, giving her the entire sum I had come to invest. ‘It’s four hundred coins, exactly what you need.’

“The woman stopped crying and looked at me, her eyes burning intently. ‘Thank you,’ she said emotionally. ‘From the depths of my pained heart, I give you a blessing that you should become a wealthy man one day.’

“I thanked her for her blessing and walked away aimlessly. For the next few minutes, I pondered how to break the news to my wife that I had given away the only money we had to tzedakah. Afraid of her reaction, I wandered from stall to stall, examining the merchandise, although I knew I had no money to pay for it. Hopefully, by the time I would go home, I would think of something to tell her.

“At the edge of the marketplace was a luxurious hotel, and I watched people coming in and out. It seemed like some sort of business was being conducted in the hotel lobby, so with nothing better to do, I decided to check it out.

“A long table had been set up in the middle of the lobby, and people were standing around it with loupes, examining and haggling over the prices of exquisite jewelry. Someone was holding a string of stunning pearls. Noticing me, he called me over. ‘Would you like to purchase this? These are extremely rare—.’

“‘I wish,’ I responded truthfully. ‘But I don’t have any money. How much are you selling it for?’

“The man ran a suede cloth over the strand of pearls, polishing them to a sheen as he spoke. ‘These are worth twelve hundred, but I can give them to you for six,’ he told me confidently. ‘In fact, you can probably sell it right now outside for twelve.’

“I sighed, recognizing that it indeed was a beautiful strand of pearls. ‘I don’t have six hundred to give you,’ I told him.

“The man scrutinized my features carefully. ‘Aren’t you that man who just gave the widow four hundred coins?’ he asked suddenly. ‘If you could be so generous with a widow like that, I’m convinced that you are honest, too. Take the pearls, sell them, and bring me the money afterward.’

“Gratefully, I took the pearls out into the marketplace. Potential buyers who examined them agreed that they were beautiful, offering me eight or nine hundred for the strand, but I continued looking until I found a buyer willing to pay me twelve hundred coins for the necklace.

“An hour after I walked out of the hotel with the pearls, I was back again to give the vendor his six hundred coins. I had brought four hundred to the marketplace and now had six. Not a bad return for one day, I commended myself.

“The vendor pocketed his cash. ‘You seem to be a talented salesman,’ he complimented me. ‘Are you interested in another deal?’

“‘Of course,’ I replied enthusiastically. ‘But why don’t you sell them for the full profit yourself?’

“‘I’m a wholesaler, not a retail salesman,’ the man told me. ‘I don’t have the patience to haggle with buyer after buyer. Here, do you see this set of jewels? I’ll give it to you for ten thousand coins. You’ll get eighteen for it for sure, possibly even

twenty, if you manage to sell them all for the highest price.’

“I looked at my six hundred coins. ‘I have six hundred, not ten thousand,’ I reminded the vendor.

“‘No worries,’ the man assured me. ‘You’ll pay me back after you sell the jewels.’

“I spent the rest of the day haggling with buyers until I had managed to sell every last jewel. Tallying up the amount I had earned from the entire deal, I realized that I had netted twenty-two thousand coins. Even after paying the vendor back his ten-thousand, I was a rich man. The widow’s blessing had been fulfilled.

Excitedly, I returned to the hotel to pay my supplier. To my surprise, his place was empty. ‘Where is the jewel merchant who sat here?’ I asked someone.

“‘Gone for the day,’ came the reply.

“I was stunned. ‘But I owe him money, a lot of money,’ I exclaimed.

“‘Come back tomorrow,’ he advised. ‘Hopefully he’ll be here tomorrow.’

“The next day, however, my supplier was not in the hotel with the other jewel merchants. I continued visiting the marketplace every day for a long time, but it was as though he had vanished. People tell me he may have been Eliyahu Hanavi, and I guess I’ll never know for sure.

“In the meantime, I’m still keeping the ten thousand coins, hoping to one day be able to return it to the man who had served as Hashem’s messenger to make me wealthy.”

Reb Aron finished his story and turned to the two gedolim. “Experience has taught me that Hashem always repays those who take care of His children,” he said with a smile. “Let me go and

prepare the money for you. And if you ever need money for any other worthy cause, please let me be a part of it. It is my honor and pleasure to participate in this incredible mitzvah.”

Hearing his words, Rav Yosef Shaul Nathanson began to cry. “Can you imagine?” he asked introspectively. “Reb Aron’s story teaches us that when a person does a mitzvah with zerizus, Hashem rewards him immediately. He didn’t hesitate for a moment, giving away his last coins to the widow, and just like that, Hashem rewarded him with great wealth.”

Rav Yosef Shaul continued, “What happens when we hesitate to do a mitzvah, pushing it off and thinking about it first before actually going ahead with the good deed? When a person delays performing a mitzvah, the reward, too, will be delay.”

Have a Wonderful Shabbos!

This story is taken from tape # A94

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