

TORAS REB KALMAN



סיפורי צדיקים

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

Tomorrow May Be Too Late

Rav Yonasan Eibshitz was a great *tzaddik* who lived in Prague. He authored the *Urim V'tumim*, *Yaaros Dvash*, and myriad other *seforim*. He was a brilliant *talmid chacham* and a leader of *klal Yisroel*.

After the terrible spiritual devastation wrought by Shabsai Tzvi on *klal Yisroel*, the global Jewish community was in turmoil and confusion. In an effort to weed out the last remains of Shabsai Tzvi's followers and to immediately stamp out the embers of a potential resurgence, the *gedolim* of the time were uncompromising in their stance against what they considered suspicious behavior by other *rabbanim* and leaders.

These mistrustful circumstances led to the famous *machlokes* between two of the generation's greatest spiritual leaders, Rav Yonasan Eibshitz and Rav Yaakov Emden. Rav Yonasan Eibshitz once wrote a *kamaye*, an amulet of parchment created by utilizing kabbalah and tremendous

kedushah, which can protect a person from danger and tragedy. His use of kabbalah was brought to the attention of Rav Yaakov Emden, who grew immediately suspicious. This sparked the famous *machlokes* between two lions defending Hashem's name.

Both of these tremendous *gedolim* harbored the purest of intentions, with the clear goal of strengthening genuine *yiddishkeit* through uncovering those who sought to utilize it for nefarious purposes. They waged war against each other completely for the sake of Hashem. With time, the battleground expanded to include many more soldiers on both sides, comprised of the hundreds of distinguished *talmidim* of both Rav Yaakov and Rav Yonasan.

One of Rav Yonasan's primary disciples, whom we'll call Chaim, was in the midst of sitting at the table, listening to Rav Yonasan's shiur when he had a change of heart. Despite the fact that Rav Yonasan Eibshitz was his *rebbe*, he suddenly began to feel that Rav Yaakov Emden's position was correct. This made him uncomfortable, since Rav Yonasan had taught him worlds of Torah, and he truly held him in the highest esteem. Confused by his own thoughts, he went through each aspect of the *machlokes* in his head, yet he reached the same conclusion.

Not having the nerve to speak to Rav Yonasan about his doubts, Chaim instead turned to his fellow students after the shiur and explained his thought process, asking for their opinion. "Are you crazy?" His friends yelled at him. "How can you take sides with Rav Yaakov Emden? You are supposed to listen, unquestioningly, to your own *rebbe*!"

Since Chaim was one of Rav Yonasan's top *talmidim*, news of his defection spread quickly throughout the *bais medrash*. Soon, it reached the ears of Rav Yonasan Eibshitz himself. At first, it was impossible for Rav Yonasan to believe the gossip, but after doing his own investigating, he

discovered that it was indeed the truth. “How could he go against his *rebbei*?” Rav Yonasan cried out in pain. “He should not have any *yishuv hadas*, no peace of mind!”

Rav Yonasan’s pained utterance traveled back along the grapevine and soon reached Chaim. Hearing that his *rebbei* had cursed him with unsettledness was enough to destroy his peace of mind. The fact that his *rebbei* had cursed him caused him tremendous anguish, to the point that he could no longer concentrate. The words of the Gemara swam before him, and he could not make out a single letter. Slamming the volume closed, he stood up and went home. However, even at home, he could not settle down. He paced from room to room like a wounded lion, his emotions roiling. Unable to sit still, he left his home and wandered from city to city, searching for peace of mind. He was too disconcerted to remain in any place for more than a few hours. Instead, he would hitch rides from one place to the other, begging for coins to purchase food and sleeping restlessly on shul benches for a few sparse hours each night.

One evening, Chaim arrived at a small town, cold and hungry. He asked some passersby for directions to the shul, hoping to find some warmth and perhaps something to eat. When he entered the *bais medrash*, he was greeted by a blast of warm air, and he rubbed his frozen hands together, enjoying the pleasant temperature.

In the center of the *bais medrash*, there were people gathered around a large table. A distinguished-looking Jew stood at the head of the table, in the midst of delivering a shiur to his avid students. A feeling of regret and intense longing wormed its way into his heart. He, too, used to sit before his *rebbei*, drinking up the sweet words of Torah. How he missed those calm, peaceful days! Making a brisk decision, Chaim sat down at the table amongst the other men, eager to finally get a taste of Torah again. They were in middle of learning Bava Kamma, and the *magid shiur*

expounded upon a certain aspect of the *sugya*. Immediately, one of his students jumped up and fired back a brilliant question. As the rest of the students followed along, the *talmid* and his *rebbei* argued back and forth until the *magid shiur* emerged as the victor. The shiur continued. Another student jumped in with a difficult question, and once more, a heated discussion with the *rebbei* followed.

Chaim sat at the table, following the discussion, his mind and heart aflame. Finally, he was part of the Torah world again, and he was enjoying every minute. The *magid shiur* began saying an explanation that Chaim had once heard from his own *rebbei*, Rav Yonasan Eibshitz. Excitedly, he stood up and pointed out a difficulty that Rav Yonasan had commented on. However, despite the strength of his argument, the *magid shiur* did not respond. Instead, he pursed his lips and looked down at the Gemara. A moment later, he moved on. He had ignored Chaim’s question.

The other students looked at each other in surprise. Their *rebbei* normally relished in the give and take of his shiur, and it was highly unusual that he had completely disregarded the point the newcomer had made. Shrugging, they continued listening as the shiur continued.

For the duration of the shiur, this disturbing pattern continued. The shiur was interrupted numerous times when students challenged the *magid shiur*’s words, and each time, a lively Torah discussion ensued until the *rebbei* emerged victorious. However, although Chaim offered his own questions and difficulties, each time he was completely ignored.

After the *magid shiur* snubbed him three times, Chaim’s newfound excitement in learning disappeared. His terrible unsettledness came back with a force, and his head suddenly felt too heavy for his neck to carry. Putting his head down on the table, he broke down into bitter tears.

Seeing his grief, the other students moved away from the table to grant him privacy. Soon, Chaim was the only one remaining other than the *magid shiur*, who sat with his eyes focused on his Gemara at the other end of the table. Chaim lifted his tear-streaked face. “What did I do wrong?” He pleaded. “Why did the *rebbe* refuse to answer me?”

The *magid shiur* did not look up. “I feel that one of the *gedolei hador* bears a grudge against you,” He said, his eyes still on the page before him.

Chaim’s sobbing intensified. He explained that he was one of Rav Yonasan Eibshitz’s primary *talmidim*, but that he had recently come to the conclusion that Rav Yaakov Emden was correct. “I explained my opinion publically,” He said hoarsely. “Rav Yonasan was terribly hurt, and he cursed me that I should never have peace of mind. Since then, I haven’t had a moment of peace. I’m a tortured being, completely unsettled. What should I do?”

The *rebbe* kept his eyes averted, so as not to gaze upon the face of a wicked person. “I don’t know,” He said slowly. “Speaking out against one’s mentor is akin to speaking against the *shechinah*. It’s not easy to atone for such a terrible thing.” “So that should I do?” Chaim asked, his voice desperate.

“The only way out is to acquire forgiveness from Rav Yonasan himself,” The *magid shiur* said softly. “Go back to Prague as soon as possible. Hopefully, you’ll reach him in time to ask him for *mechilah*. But hurry, because I can’t promise you’ll get there in time.”

Being on the go for so long, Chaim could not afford to take a horse and wagon directly back to Prague. Still, the *magid shiur* was insinuating that time was not on his side, and neither could he afford to hitch his way slowly from town to town. Hearing his predicament, the *magid shiur* gave him money for his journey.

Chaim thanked him and raced out of the shul to go find a coach to bring him back to Prague. He traveled with all due speed, yet when he pulled up in Prague, he saw a large crowd gathered, bearing a casket to the cemetery. It did not take long for him to ascertain that Rav Yonasan Eibshitz had passed away just hours before.

He was so close, yet so far. He was but a mere few hours too late.

Yet still, it was too late.

The Brisker Rav would often relate this story, and at its conclusion, he would begin to cry. How important it is to do *teshuvah* right away! One never knows when it will be too late, when the opportunity will be lost forever.

An additional powerful message of this story is regarding the severity of speaking against one’s *rebbe*. A father brings a person into this world, but a *rebbe* brings him into the Next World. Our *rabbeim* are our tickets to *olam habah*, and it is up to us to treat them with proper respect.

Have a Wonderful Shabbos!

This story is taken from tape # A69

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

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