

# TORAS REB KALMAN



## סיפורי צדיקים

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

### ***The Fortunate Unfortunates***

Rav Chaim Yosef Dovid Azulai, better known as the Chida, was a tremendous talmid chacham who lived in the eighteenth century. The Chida was extremely well versed in all aspects of Torah, both hidden and revealed, and authored well over one hundred seforim.

The Chida would learn in his bais medrash, surrounded by tens of talmidim. The fire of Torah filled the room as these great scholars would argue in learning at the feet of their holy rebbi.

One of the Chida's disciples, whom we'll call R' Gavriel, was an unfortunate man challenged with difficult life circumstances. He was a sickly man, with no real source of income and little harmony in the home. He didn't allow these difficulties to hold him back, and was a great talmid chacham and masmid despite his circumstances.

When it came time to marry off his eldest child, he quickly came to the realization that this was a nearly impossible feat when working with an

empty bank account. This understanding was the final straw to his already raw heart. He was already suffering from issues with his shalom bayis, health, and finances. And now this?!

A sudden depressing wave washed over him and he decided to stay home from the bais medrash. It was enough that he had so many problems; the last thing he needed was to see the smiling happy, faces of the other men in the bais medrash.

The hours ticked by with R' Gavriel roaming his house aimlessly, not feeling any better than he'd felt when he had awoken that morning. "That's it," he said aloud, making a snap decision to go to the bais medrash. If he hurried, he would make it in time for the Chida's shiur. He hoped that after the shiur, he would be able to ask his rebbi for guidance and a blessing.

Tugging his thin coat tighter around himself, he stepped outside into the freezing rain. Without boots, his feet tensed up as they made contact with the icy puddles and a terrific shiver went through his body.

Entering the bais medrash a few minutes later, R' Gavriel was hit with a blast of warm air and the scene of 150 men arguing over the Chida's shiur. Thoroughly drenched from the frigid rain, he sat down on the side near the oven and tried to warm his bones. He didn't have the head to join the vociferous arguing over the sugya, so he just sat and watched. Soon, the hub of the kol Torah gently lulled him to sleep.

As he slept beside the fire, he had a dream. In the dream, he saw himself living his dreary, unfortunate life full of troubles and suffering.

Suddenly, he watched himself grow ill. He saw himself visiting doctors and heard the grim prognosis that he had little time left to live. Just a short while later, he watched his dream-self die. He saw his family weeping bitterly, he watched his friends eulogize him, and he observed as he was lowered into a freshly dug grave.

In his dream, R' Gavriel watched his family and friends sadly leave the cemetery, leaving him alone. Suddenly, two angels appeared and dragged him out of his grave. "What did you think, that now is a time to rest?" they asked him as they led him away. "Quite the contrary. We are taking you now to your judgement."

R' Gavriel watched himself fly to shamayim with one angel on each side of him. Time for my din v'cheshbon, he heard himself thinking. I just heard those wonderful eulogies. So many great things were said about me! Surely my judgement will be just fine.

He saw the angels place him down on a platform. "Alright," they told him. "Now, as you walk toward your din, is time for you to think of any defenses you may want to make on the sins you have committed."

They began walking down the endless platform. R' Gavriel had already been through the process of dying, purification, eulogization, and burial. Frankly, he was exhausted and didn't have the strength for such a lengthy trek. "I'm getting tired," he told the angels pointedly.

"I'm sorry," was their response. "In this world, there is no such thing as fatigue. You need to march. And think of all your deeds."

They walked another mile before he stopped again. "I have no more strength," he informed the angels. "Please can we rest for a while?"

But the angels refused. "No resting," they said firmly. "Continue to march."

In his dream, R' Gavriel saw himself marching and marching, his legs nearly buckling under him. Suddenly, he saw a wagon riding nearby on the platform, and he perked up. Perhaps he would be able to hitch?

He stuck out his thumb and stopped the wagon, but then shrank back in fear. The wagon was full

of giant angels, larger than he'd ever seen, and colored completely black. They began pointing at him and whispering amongst themselves and his apprehension grew.

Turning to the two angels still standing protectively on either side of him, he asked, "Who are these black angels and why are they pointing a finger at me?"

"Don't you know who these angels are?" came the response. "These angels belong to you! You created them when you did aveiros."

"I don't understand," the dream-R' Gavriel said slowly. "Where are they riding to in that wagon?" The angels pointed ahead. "Same place as you are, to your judgement. They will be weighed on the scale against the malachim created by your mitzvos."

As he spoke, another wagon full of black angels passed by. Then came another, and another, and another. Wagon after wagon of dark, foreboding angels came riding down the platform, all pointing at him accusingly.

He felt very heavy. This wasn't looking good.

"Come on, let's go," the angels prodded him. "March. We'd better hurry."

His legs felt like led, and each step toward his judgement was torturous, but the angels continued pushing him forward.

Suddenly, there was another rumble of a passing wagon, but this time, it was filled with pristine white angels. They waved as they passed, "Hello, Gavriel! Hello!"

"These are the angels you created with your mitzvos," the angel who was escorting him explained.

"Why is that one missing it's heart?" R' Gavriel asked, pointing to a crippled angel on the wagon.

“Well, that one was created through a mitzvah you performed without your heart,” was the angel’s reply.

“And what about that?” R’ Gavriel asked, pointing to a white headless figure with just arms and legs.

“That was created through a mitzvah you performed without thought,” the angel replied.

“And that one, with the missing leg?”

“Well, you mistakenly kicked someone during the mitzvah, so the angel was created without a foot.

The next wagon that passed had one angel that was particularly small. “Why is that angel so tiny?” R’ Gavriel wondered.

“That was created from a very small mitzvah that you performed,” the angel explained.

As they continued walking, they observed tens of wagons passing, filled with white malachim. Many were full and complete, but many were crippled. R’ Gavriel began to fear the outcome of his judgement.

Finally, finally, they reached the end of the platform and R’ Gavriel looked down. He saw a tremendous scale stretching before him as far as the eye could see. Two giant trays were suspended from the scale.

Suddenly, a bas kol called out, “Everyone, up on the scale!”

The angels on either side of R’ Gavriel tightened their grip on him as rows and rows of black malachim filed onto one of the trays. They weighed the scaled down deep into the mud. That’s it, R’ Gavriel thought to himself. I’m done.

“Any more sins?” the bas kol asked. When no more black angels were forthcoming, the bas kol

called up the angels who were created from R’ Gavriel’s mitzvos.

R’ Gavriel watched as scores of white angels streamed to the other side of the scale. The side weighed down by the black angles began to lift slightly, and then a little more, as they were counterbalanced by the weight of the positive angels.

Then there were no more mitzvos and the verdict was clear. The side of the black angels was significantly heavier. R’ Gavriel’s head began to swim. Gehinnom was beckoning.

“Is there anything you would like to say in your defense?” the angels asked him.

R’ Gavriel couldn’t speak. There was nothing to say. The scale spoke for itself.

“This is your scale,” the angel declared. “You had your chance to change the balance of this scale. For many years, you were down in the world and were able to do mitzvos and good deeds. You had a chance to rectify your sins and destroy these dark angels with simple teshuvah. You squandered those opportunities, and now it is too late to fix it.”

He was right, and there was nothing R’ Gavriel could do to change things. Intense regret and deep remorse flooded his being, but it was too late to rectify the deeds of the past. It seemed that he was about to be sentenced, and the outcome would not be gentle.

“To Gehinom!” the angel declared. “March!”

But before R’ Gavriel could take even one step toward his fiery destination, another angel stopped him. “Just a moment! Hold it! This man suffered tremendously in his lifetime. Hashem gave him a wife who embittered his life on a constant basis. Let these marital challenges take a stand alongside the white angels. Perhaps this will help tip the balance.”

All the years of suffering and pain and anguish R' Gavriel suffered in his marriage went onto the scale, weighing it down slightly more. Still, it wasn't enough to counterbalance his sins.

"And what about his health issues?" the angels continued. "What about the stomachaches and toothaches and headaches? Where are his limp and his asthma? Bring on all the minor ailments, all the major ailments, all the medical problems he suffered in his lifetime. Let them be weighed and measured against his sins!"

The side with the mitzvos was tugged down a little further, but still not enough.

"Bring on his monetary challenges!" the angel commanded. "The difficulties he had finding a livelihood, the misery he suffered from having too little money."

The financial pain joined the scale, and now the balance between the two sides was almost even. Still, the sins were still heavier.

"Aren't there any more yissurim?" R' Gavriel dared to ask. Just a little more suffering, just a little more anguish, and he would be spared a terrible Gehinnom!

"Yell," the angels instructed him. "Yell as loud as you can! Beg for more yissurim! Perhaps there is more suffering that can come to your aid."

"Yissurim!" R' Gavriel yelled at the top of his lungs. "Yissurim! Please give me more yissurim!"

The deafening sound of his own yelling finally propelled R' Gavriel awake from his dream. He looked around, blinking in confusion. He wasn't in heaven, in the midst of his final judgement, but in the bais medrash of the Chida.

The talmidei chachamim in the crowded bais medrash turned to the sound of the disturbance. They looked at R' Gavriel as though he were mad.

More yissurim? Didn't he have more than enough?

The Chida rose from the front of the room and walked over to his student. "Is everything okay?" he asked quietly.

Comprehension of the message in his dream dawned on R' Gavriel and he smiled. "Excuse me, I apologize," he said, the smile still stretched across his face. "I didn't mean to make a scene."

"What is going on?" the Chida pressed him.

R' Gavriel was hesitant to speak in front of the entire crowd, but later, when the bais medrash emptied, he shared his dream with his teacher.

When the Chida heard the story, he too, smiled broadly. All suffering in this world is a blessing, not a curse. It is those who appear unfortunate, beset by problems and anguish, who are truly the most fortunate, for they merit a kaparah on this world.

*Have a Wonderful Shabbos!*

This story is taken from tape # A280

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