

# TORAS REB KALMAN



## סיפורי צדיקים

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

### *Oil and Water*

The Ben Ish Chai was a great Sephardic mekubal who was fluent in all aspects of Torah. He authored many seforim in Halacha, agadah, mussur, kabbalah, and drush. He also published a volume with stories, since often a story is the most effective way to give over a message. The following story was published in his sefer.

A group of men were sitting together at a table, conversing lightly about the various customs of Jews in different parts of the world.

When the conversation turned to the customs of the European Jews, Shimon spoke up. "What can I say?" he said with a righteous air. "You think all Jews are righteous? Just look at our brethren in Europe. So many of them eat non-kosher food and desecrate the Shabbos. There are countless European Jews who violate Halacha on a daily basis."

The other men were silent for a moment following his remarks, unsure how to respond.

"You know, Shimon," Yehoshua finally said. "You are like a fly."

Shimon's eyebrows shot up. "Excuse me?"

"You are like a fly," Yehoshua said again. "Imagine you have a beautiful garden with lush green grass and vibrant flower beds. At the edge of the garden is a trash bin, where people throw out their garbage so that it doesn't litter the beautiful garden. A fly enters the garden, and instead of flying from flower to flower, enjoying the trees and the grass, it heads straight for the garbage."

"We know that klal Yisroel is a beautiful people," Yehoshua continued. "There are so many beautiful parts to our nation. You, however, seem to gravitate toward the faults of our people, like a fly attracted to trash."

"I didn't mean to only point out the faults," Shimon said defensively.

"We were talking about the different customs of Jews from around the world," Yehoshua reminded him. "And you said that the Jews of Europe desecrate the Shabbos and eat non-kosher food. Couldn't you have pointed out some of the good regarding the Jews of Europe?"

"You're right," Shimon said quietly, accepting the rebuke. "I should not have pointed out the flaws in a group of Jews."

"To rectify this, why don't you tell us something nice about the Jews of Europe?" someone suggested.

"Alright," Shimon agreed. "I'll tell you a story of an assimilated Jew in Europe. Despite being part

of the gentile culture his entire adult life, this man understood the value of his Jewishness.”

And this was the story he relayed.

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There was a country where the king invested tremendously in his relationships with his neighboring rulers. He knew that peace between the neighboring countries was the smartest thing for the security of his own territories, and he worked hard to cultivate a friendship with the kings who ruled over the two countries bordering his.

In order to keep the lines of communication open, the three kings would meet every few months, alternating between their countries. They would discuss how to improve their economies and how to deter their mutual enemies. These meetings strengthened the friendship between the three kingdoms.

In one of these kingdoms lived a wealthy, assimilated Jew named Emanuel. He had been born into a frum home, but had gradually left the Torah path in his pursuit of wealth. He was a brilliant strategist who had the real estate market under his thumb, and his brilliance finally attracted the attention of the king, who made him a close advisor.

One day, the king sent out invitations to the neighboring monarchs, inviting them for another meeting at his palace. The hosting king informed the other two that his wise Jewish advisor would be joining their meeting, since he wanted Emanuel’s opinion on the topics they would be discussing.

When the other two kings got the invitation, one of them was very upset to read that a Jew would be joining their private meeting. He could not

picture himself, a royal king, sitting beside a lowly Jew as though the two were equals.

Since it was too late to stop the Jew from joining their meeting, this king cooked up a plot to shame and degrade Emanuel as he arrived to the meeting, just to remind him of his lowly origins. He set his plan into motion and then headed out with his entourage for the journey to the neighboring kingdom.

He met up with the other visiting king some distance away from the host king’s capital city and they traveled the rest of the way together. Red carpets had been set up and crowds lined the streets, craning to see the royal entourage. Trumpets were blown and cymbals were played as the kings made their way through the streets to the palace.

Emanuel, too, left his home and headed toward the palace. He was wearing his finest clothes and riding in a gleaming carriage, which was harnessed to the most handsome horses in his stable. His mansion was just a few short blocks away from the king’s palace.

The carriage slowly climbed the incline to the top of the hill. From the top of the hill, the palace was already visible. The six white horses began galloping down the hill when the carriage driver tugged at the reins. Something was wrong.

Emanuel poked his head out of the carriage window worriedly. He saw a band of youths blocking the wagon defiantly. “Jew, Jew, Jew!” they chanted, refusing to move.

Emanuel let the teens continue chanting for a few more moments before handing his driver a heavy sack containing a thousand gold coins. “Scatter the coins,” he instructed. “When they see the money, they’ll move aside to gather it up, and we’ll be able to move on.”

“Ho, boys, here’s a present from my passenger,” the driver called out, sprinkling the gold coins on the ground.

The youths, who were jeering loudly, couldn’t hear him, but once they saw the coins, they began scrambling over each other to collect them. Emanuel watched in amusement as they filled their pockets with gleeful shouts.

“Ready to go?” the driver asked, turning around to Emanuel.

At his passenger’s nod, the driver whipped the horses and the carriage continued moving as the boys shouted their thanks after it.

There was a red carpet stretched out before the king’s palace, and uniformed trumpet players lined the two sides. The crowd began cheering as Emanuel’s carriage rode between the two columns.

The three kings had already entered the palace a few minutes earlier, and now Emanuel dismounted from his carriage and was ushered in after them. As he followed the guards down the long corridors, people stopped and bowed to him. It was an incredible honor not granted to most.

He was led into the room where the three monarchs were sitting, and the hosting king greeted him with great honor and respect. “My dear Emanuel,” he said, taking him by the arm. “Let me introduce you to the neighboring rulers.” After the introductions were made, the king motioned to Emanuel to take a seat at the golden table alongside the others.

The anti-Semitic king couldn’t hold himself back. He hadn’t been there to personally witness the hooligans he’d hired harass the impudent Jew, but he wanted to see the Jew’s second reaction when he brought up the topic.

“You know, Jew, we heard the report that there were about fifty young rascals waiting for you at the bottom of the hill, taunting you. You know, they should really be punished, but they are only young children. I heard you gave them some money, too. I’m not sure I understand what happened there.”

Emanuel realized immediately that this king had hired the youths to stand there and block his way.

“Oh, those boys?” he asked. “They didn’t embarrass me. They gave me such a beautiful gift.”

The kings were surprised by this answer. “What do you mean?”

Emanuel smiled. “May I relate a brief story?” he asked respectfully.

“Go ahead.”

“There was once a wealthy man who possessed the largest, most beautiful diamond in the world. When he died, he left over a tremendous inheritance for his only son, including the diamond.

“Unfortunately, however, his son was reckless and immature, and he had a terrible gambling habit. Within a matter of months, he succeeded in losing the entire inheritance on the gambling table. The only thing that remained was the diamond. He couldn’t gamble with the diamond. It was much too big.”

The kings nodded and waited for Emanuel to continue. “Well,” Emanuel said slowly. “He took the diamond to the bank and asked to borrow \$50,000 against it. The bank agreed and took possession of the diamond as collateral for the loan. The reckless son, however, had not learned his lesson. Within a week, the entire sum he borrowed was lost on the gambling table.

“He returned to the bank and took out an addition \$50,000 against his diamond, but only ten days later, he was again out of funds. Like all gamblers, he was sure the next game would win him back all the money he lost, and so he went back to the bank to borrow more money against the value of his diamond.

“The bank manager, who had known his father, tried to talk him out of it. He pitied the young man and did not want to see him gamble away his entire fortune. The son, however, refused to listen and insisted on withdrawing an additional \$50,000. Predictably, he lost the money within a few days.”

Emanuel stopped for breath and noticed that the kings were listening intently. He continued. “He proceeded to borrow and lose another \$50,000, but then the bank manager took matters into his own hands. When the son came around a fifth time to borrow money against the diamond’s value, he categorically refused.

“The son begged and pleaded, sweet-talked and threatened, but the bank manager refused to relent. Despite the fact that he had only withdrawn forty percent of the diamond’s value, the bank refused to lend him another cent.

“Enraged, the son vented to a friend. ‘I only borrowed \$200,000, and that diamond is worth at least \$500,000,’ he complained. ‘That stubborn bank manager! I’ve tried everything! How can I get him to lend me more money?’

“The friend thought for a moment. ‘Why don’t you sell the diamond to the bank outright, instead of borrowing against it?’ he suggested. ‘You’ll recoup the remaining \$300,000 and be able to spend it as you see fit.’

“The son whirled on his friend, a horrified expression on his face. ‘Sell the diamond?’ he

asked, disbelief coloring his voice. ‘Sell the diamond?! How could I sell my diamond?’

“The friend didn’t seem to understand what the problem was. ‘Why not?’ he countered. ‘You’ll get the money you need.’

“The son shook his head. ‘You don’t understand. My diamond is not just about money. It’s my entire identity. Wherever I go, people point me out as the owner of the largest diamond in the country. That’s worth much more than money!’

“His friends stamped his foot in frustration. ‘But you gambled away almost half the diamond’s value anyway! What good do you have from a diamond that’s sitting in the safe of the bank?’

“‘True,’ the son responded. ‘Right now, the bank is holding my diamond. But as long as I didn’t sell my diamond, I know that one day I can pay back the bank and redeem it. The bank may be holding my diamond, but I am still pointed out as the owner of the diamond. And that is priceless.’”

Emanuel stopped speaking and let his words settle for a moment. “Your royal Majesties,” he said in a trembling voice. “I am a Jew, and my Jewishness is a diamond. It is the most precious treasure I own. Alas, I’ve traded my diamond for money, gambling away my most precious asset for riches and fame.

“Still, I am a Jew! Despite the fact that I have given up Torah and mitzvos, I will never sell my Jewishness. When someone points at me as a Jew, they are pointing me out as the owner of the diamond! What a priceless title!

“Today, as I rode here to this meeting, I was accosted by not one, but fifty youths calling me the owner of the diamond. They were reminding me and all how lucky I am to have such a heritage. I am a Jew! This was not an embarrassment; it was a gift! That is why I gave

them a thousand gold coins. In fact, had I had ten thousand coins with me, I would have given them that amount!”

The anti-Semitic king backed off, respecting the Jew who respected his origins.

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Shimon looked around the table at the other men, who were hanging on to every word. “Emanuel was a Jew who strayed from the Torah path. But even a Jew like this, who abandoned all mitzvos, understands that Yiddishkeit is the most precious thing he has.

“This was a man who understood that his greatest asset was not his assimilation among the nations, but that which keeps him separate from them. This is the extraordinary quality of a Jew.”

In his sefer, the Ben Ish Chai concludes by explaining that this is what the posuk means by הן עם לבדד ישכון ובגוים לא יתחשב. We are a nation apart from the gentiles. Even if we try to mingle, we are immediately separated. Either the gentiles prod us to separate through pain, or we come to the understanding on our own. Like oil to water, we are a nation that rises above, separate and holy.

*Have a Wonderful Shabbos!*  
This story is taken from tape # A94

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