

TORAS REB KALMAN



סיפורי צדיקים

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

Reverberations of Sensitivity

Rav Shalom Schwadron, the famed *Yerushalmi* maggid, taught by example that one wasn't lowering himself by being sensitive to the feelings of children, but that this was the way to propel oneself to greatness. He would go out of his way to make young children, especially orphans, feel special.

In the following story, Rav Kalman Krohn related a personal account of how Rav Shalom's sensitivity impacted him and his family.

My father passed away when I was nineteen years old, leaving my widowed mother to raise their children alone. I was already at the cusp of adulthood at the time of my father's passing, but my younger siblings were small children, and they grew up as orphans.

When Rav Shalom Schwadron would visit the United States, he would stay in our home. His

visits strengthened my mother, providing her with the fortitude to forge on alone.

I'll never forget the first Pesach without my father. We were freshly orphaned, and the thought of having a *seder* without our father leading it was heartbreaking. How would we ask the Four Questions with our father's chair empty? How could we say, "*Tatte leben, ich vill dir fregen,*" if there was no one to answer the questions?

Rav Shalom Schwadron was visiting from *Eretz Yisroel* at the time, and when he visited us as he always did, he quickly comprehended the situation. I was standing in the room with my mother and Reb Shalom when I suddenly heard him ask, in Yiddish, "*Rebbetzin, I would like to stay here for Pesach. Is that okay?*"

There were tears in my mother's eyes as she nodded her consent.

Rav Shalom was not a man without a family. He had seven daughters and a son, a veritable kingdom of his own, awaiting him in *Eretz Yisroel*. That Pesach, he should have been presiding over a *seder* in *Yerushalayim*, basking in the *nachas* of his beautiful family. Instead, he chose to spend the *seder* with a suffering family in New York, shattered over the loss of their beloved father.

And what a *seder* that was. Rav Shalom didn't just read the *hagaddah*, he brought it to life. He acted out the makkos in the most hilarious and entertaining way. I can still see him enacting the plague of *tzefardaya*, doubled over as though he had an ingested a frog that was now dancing in his innards. At that moment, our pain was forgotten and we were swept away with the story of *yetzias metzrayim*.

As a *Yerushalmi tzaddik*, Rav Shalom Schwadron was extremely scrupulous in the laws of modesty. In all the time he stayed at our home, he never looked at my mother or sisters and carefully referred to my mother as '*Rebbetzin*'.

Still, during that *seder*, he understood that my orphan sisters needed the concern and warmth of a father. “Tamar, Esther,” he called to them in Yiddish. “Did you drink a *revi’is*? Don’t take wine, you are too young. Use grape juice.”

Later, my sisters’ faces flushed with happiness, they told me excitedly, “Rav Shalom called me by my name!” Rav Shalom had been attuned to their needs, and he had provided the concern the little orphaned girls craved.

Who taught this to Rav Shalom? How did he become such a *gadol* in sensitivity to the feelings of others? Rav Shalom learned this from his *rebbe*, Rav Aharon Katzenellenbogen, who went above and beyond to treat children with sensitivity.

Rav Aharon Katzenellenbogen, too, acquired this trait from someone, internalizing it and passing it on to his *talmid*, who would go on to impact a family of orphans. Reb Aharon learned it firsthand when he was a child from a *tzaddik* by the name of R’ Zalman R’ Nosson’s.

What kind of a name is R’ Zalman R’ Nosson’s? Anyone who knew R’ Zalman R’ Nosson’s will smile fondly at this question. R’ Zalman was the son of R’ Nosson, a father-son pair that were extremely close. To differentiate between the different R’ Zalmans that they knew, people added the father’s name to the end of the son’s, hence the name R’ Zalman R’ Nosson’s.

R’ Zalman R’ Nosson’s was a tremendous *tzaddik* and a great *askan*. In addition to the thousands of dollars he raised for the poor of Yerushalayim and the myriad acts of *chesed* he performed, he was also extremely knowledgeable in the intricate *halachos* of *lulav* and *esrog*.

You knew *Sukkos* was coming by the long lines snaking down the block to R’ Zalman R’ Nosson’s house. Tens of Jews from the community, *gedolei hador* included, would bring their *daled minim* for him for inspection, trusting

his expert judgment on the halachic status of their *esrog* and *lulav*.

R’ Zalman didn’t charge for this service, though it costed him hours and hours in the hectic days before *yom tov*. He was happy to provide the service for any Jew who asked him.

One year, it was two hours before *yom tov* when he finally finished checking the very last *esrog*. Glancing hastily at his watch as the last person left his study, he realized he needed to hurry if he wanted to make it to the *mikvah* and get ready for *yom tov* on time.

As he hurried down the street to the *mikvah*, R’ Zalman heard his name being called. Turning, he saw a young boy running after him with a small box.

Eight-year-old Ahron Katzenellenbogen held out his box breathlessly. “R’ Zalman, please, can you look over my *esrog* to see if it is kosher?”

R’ Zalman wavered for a split second, torn between his desire to help the young boy and the reality of the late hour. He looked at the eight-year-old, who was the son of R’ Avrohom Moshe Katzenellenbogen, one of *Yerushalayim*’s most distinguished.

“Listen, I am in a tremendous rush,” R’ Zalman told the child. “Your father is a true *gaon*. If he bought you this *esrog*, you can be assured that it is the best *esrog* possible. There’s nothing to worry about.”

Ahron blinked, tears pricking at the corners of his eyes, but R’ Zalman didn’t seem to notice. Disappointed, he walked home, clutching his prized *esrog* box dejectedly.

Early the following morning, on the first day of *yom tov*, R’ Avrohom Moshe Katzenellenbogen woke up early to learn before *davening*. He was sitting in his *sukkah* with an open *sefer* when there was a soft knock on the flimsy wooden door.

“R’ Avraham Moshe?” a voice called. “May I come in?”

R’ Avrohom Moshe quickly got up and opened the door. “Of course, R’ Zalman, come inside,” he said warmly. “Is everything okay? It’s quite early in the morning.”

“To be honest, I came for your son, Ahron,” R’ Zalman said. “Is he awake?”

No further explanation was necessary. R’ Avrohom Moshe immediately understood why his guest had come. “Just a moment, please,” he said, hurrying into the house. “Ahron, Ahron, wake up fast! You have distinguished visitor!”

The child opened his eyes groggily and then jumped up at the excitement in his father’s voice. Sleepily, he washed *negel vasser* and donned his slippers, shuffling into the sukkah after his father in his rumpled pajamas. Seeing R’ Zalman, he shrank back shyly.

R’ Zalman bent down to meet him at eye level. “My child, let me look over your *esrog*,” he said warmly. “I want to see if it is a good one or not.”

Ahron’s face lit up and he ran to retrieve his precious *esrog* from its box. Bashfully, he handed the bumpy yellow fruit to his guest.

R’ Zalman took the *esrog* and examined it carefully, turning it this way and that. He brought it close to his eye and then held it away from his face, eventually stepping out of the sukkah to get a better view in the sunlight. After scrutinizing the *esrog* with great care from *pitum* to *uketz*, he turned to the young boy with a smile.

“Beautiful *esrog*,” he declared, cradling the *esrog* lovingly. “Really, magnificent. Would you be willing to trade with me? I would love to make the *brachah* on such a gorgeous *esrog*.”

Ahron carefully took his *esrog* back from R’ Zalman, his entire being glowing. “I’d rather not trade,” he said, his eyes shining.

“Please,” R’ Zalman pleaded. “I told you yesterday that your father is a *tzaddik*, and he really has a knack for choosing the best *esrogim*. Please, can you do me a favor and trade?”

Ahron’s fingers tightened their grip on his cherished *esrog*. “I’m sorry, but it’s mine,” he said proudly.

“True, it’s yours,” R’ Zalman agreed. “Nu, this year I won’t merit to shake the most beautiful *esrog* in Yerushalayim. It is your right; after all, it is yours.”

It was with tremendous gratification and pride that Ahron went to *shul* that morning, clutching his precious *esrog*. Secure in the knowledge that even R’ Zalman, the *esrog* expert, envied his *esrog*, his *simchas yom tov* was complete.

It was this story that Rav Ahron Katzenellenbogen, *rebbe* of Rav Shalom Schwadron, would relay to his *talmidim*, pointing out how lowering oneself toward a child with sensitivity is the sign of true greatness. Through hearing the story of R’ Zalman’s sensitivity, Rav Shalom, too, acquired this special trait.

The Mishna says, *Baruch shebachar b’hem uv’mishnasam*. When we read stories of *gedolim* such as R’ Zalman and R’ Shalom, we will begin to imitate the actions of these great men, connecting us to the previous generation and reverberating for generations to come.

Have a Wonderful Shabbos!

This story is taken from tape # A113

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