

# TORAS REB KALMAN



## סיפורי צדיקים

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

### ***A Giant in Torah, A Giant in Sensitivity***

The *gadol hador*, Maran HaRav Shach, was *niftar* over twenty years ago, yet the effects of his eternal legacy, that of remaining true to our *mesorah* despite the myriad changes in the world around us, have not waned at all. After his passing, hundreds of stories were told and retold, snapshots of his 107 years of life, depicting in vivid color what it means to be a true *gadol*.

Rav Shach was a giant in Torah, a giant in wisdom, and a giant in *askanus*. Yet despite being so involved in the bigger picture of *klal* Yisroel, he also noticed the finer details making up that picture.

Following are three stories of the *gadol hador's* sensitivity and kindness to children and young *bachurim*.

## Questions Resolved

Rav Shmuel Deutsch, today a *rosh yeshiva* in Yerushalayim, once had a *talmid* who was grappling with questions in *emunah*. This was a boy with a sharp mind, yet he had fallen into depression, causing him to struggle in *emunah*.

Rav Deutsch knew he needed to help his student, and so he took him to see Rav Shach. The Ponevezher *rosh yeshiva* gave the struggling boy twenty minutes of his time, discussing his questions and doubts. When they finished, he blessed him warmly and then dismissed him.

When the boy left the room, Rav Shach turned to Rav Deutsch. "We had a good conversation, but it was not enough," the *gadol hador* said. "I need to speak to him a few more times at least. Please make sure he comes back."

Stepping outside into the warm Bnei Brak sun, *rebbe* and *talmid* were met with the sight of *sukkos* being constructed on balconies all around them. They could see people hurrying in the street with boxes of *esrogim* and could hear the sound of hammering. It was, indeed, just a day or two before the *yom tov* of Sukkos.

As they walked, Rav Deutsch told his student what the *gadol* had said. "Don't forget to go back to him to continue your discussion," he reiterated a few times.

The boy nodded, a small smile on his face. It was not every day that one was given an open invitation to visit the *gadol hador*.

After Sukkos, when yeshiva resumed, R' Shmuel Deutsch called his student over to find out if he'd take Rav Shach up on his invitation.

The *bachur* looked surprised at the question. "Me? Go to Rav Shach?" he echoed questioningly. "You know I live in Tel Aviv."

Though he didn't say it out loud, his meaning was clear. *I couldn't be bothered to make the trip from Tel Aviv to Bnei Brak to speak to Rav Shach.*

Rav Deutsch opened his mouth to respond, but the boy wasn't finished talking.

"But I must tell you what happened on *Chol Hamoed!*" the *bachur* continued. "There was a knock on the door, and my mother answered it. Guess who was standing there? Rav Shach! Rav Shach came to speak to me twice on *Chol Hamoed* Sukkos, to discuss all my questions."

The *bachur* looked up at his *rebbe*, his eyes lit up with contentment. Gone was the worry, the doubt, that had shadowed him the previous *zman*.

"Rebbi," said the boy earnestly. "When I saw how an elderly *rosh yeshiva* troubled himself, twice in three days, to take a cab from Bnei Brak to Tel Aviv just to help an anonymous eighteen-year-old *bachur*, all my questions and doubts disappeared in an instant. How can I question anything in *emunah* when the Torah can produce such a giant, a giant who can lower himself to understand the feelings of a peasant?"

This *bachur* went on to become a successful ben Torah.

### **Important Interruption**

Rav Shach was once walking on the street when he encountered a little girl, no older than ten years old, whimpering quietly. Concerned, he approached her to see if he could help.

"I need my father," the girl explained between hiccups. "He's learning, and I'm embarrassed to go inside where there are so many men, to get him. But it's important that I get him. I don't know what to do!"

Rav Shach asked her for her father's name, which she supplied. "Wait here," the Torah giant told the little girl. "I will get your father."

Leaving the girl at the entrance of the building, Rav Shach entered the *bais medrash*. Rav Dov Landau was in middle of saying a *shiur*, but as soon as Rav Shach entered, everyone instinctively stood up. It was unheard of for the *rosh yeshiva* to appear in their *bais medrash*, and everyone, including Rav Landau, steeled themselves for the news he had brought. Did something terrible happen? Did *Mashiach* come?!

"Where is Rav Stern?" Rav Shach called out.

A bearded man stood up hastily, hurrying nervously over to the *gadol*.

"Your daughter is waiting for you outside," Rav Shach said simply.

A *shiur* was taking place, but a little girl was crying! And Rav Shach's giant heart, the heart that carried *klal* Yisroel, had a place to carry her needs as well.

### **Not Just a Blessing**

For the first half of Rav Shach's life, he was completely immersed in the sweet world of Torah. He learned day and night, and imparted Torah to his *talmidim*. The mundane matters in the world around him were not something he was involved in.

Eventually, however, Harav Ahron Kotler pushed him into the world of *askanus*. Jewry needed him, not just for his *chiddushim* in Torah, but also for his wisdom and guidance in worldly matters.

Still, Rav Shach was reluctant to give up his packed learning schedule, and so he allotted just the time that he walked home from his Tuesday *shiur* to speak to the people standing outside his

door, about an hour a week. Later, when the needs of the community demanded more, he agreed to devote his entire afternoon and evening each Tuesday to *askanus*, often until late at night, but that was all. The rest of his time was his, for learning.

One Tuesday afternoon, there was a very important meeting scheduled in Rav Shach's home after the *shiur*, with eight wealthy philanthropists from overseas. The wealthy men gathered around the table at the appointed time, waiting for the *rosh yeshiva* to come back from giving *shiur*.

When Rav Shach gave a *shiur*, he did so with his whole being. For hours beforehand, he would immerse himself in the material, preparing for the *shiur*. Then he would say over the *shiur* with tremendous vigor and enthusiasm. Afterward, he would fight with his audience, defending his positions as they tried to dismantle his thesis. In his later years, the effort of giving a *shiur* would weary him considerably.

On the day of the meeting, after the *shiur*, he walked slowly home, supported on either side by a *talmid* and a grandson. He leaned heavily on his grandson as he entered the apartment and collapsed onto a chair.

The millionaires all rose respectfully as soon as the *gadol hador* entered. They each had a tall pile of papers prepared, questions and charts and advice they needed to ask the *rosh yeshiva*. They waited eagerly for a chance to bring up their questions to the aged *gadol*, but Rav Shach was just too weary.

The grandson went into the kitchen and prepared his grandfather a tea. He indicated to the men around the table that the *rosh yeshiva* just needed a few moments to rest up from the *shiur* and then the meeting could begin.

Rav Shach thanked his grandson for the tea, made a *brachah*, and began sipping it slowly, obviously very weak. He was still sipping the tea when his grandson entered the room again.

“Zaide, there is someone at the door. It is a brokenhearted father who wants a *brachah* for his son. Do you have a minute, before you start your meeting?”

The *rosh yeshiva* looked questioningly at the wealthy men sitting around the table. They had already been held up for a while, and he couldn't make them wait longer without their permission. The men nodded their agreement. They could see that Rav Shach didn't want to turn the father away, and in any case, he was clearly not up to conducting their meeting yet.

The grandson returned moments later with the man, who asked Rav Shach for a blessing that his son find enjoyment in learning. “Nati is seventeen years old, and he has no interest in learning,” the man explained.

“Is Nati here?” Rav Shach asked.

“He's outside,” the father replied.

“Please bring him in,” the *gadol* requested. “I'd like to speak to him.”

The father nodded and left the room to summon his son. Understandably, Nati was a little embarrassed to come in, but he obeyed his father, trying to avoid the curious glances of the American philanthropists as he stood facing Rav Shach.

“My son, do you like learning?” Rav Shach asked him.

“No,” Nati admitted.

“When your rebbi says a *shiur*, do you understand it?”

“No.”

“Are you interested in understanding what you’re learning?”

“Honestly? No.”

Rav Shach looked into the boy’s eyes. “What are you in middle of learning?”

“We are in middle of *yiush shelo m’daas* in *Eilu Metzios*,” Nati replied. “We’ve already finished the first *amud*, and it’s just not interesting. I want to leave yeshiva and go to work.”

“I hear you, but first let’s learn together,” the rosh yeshiva said. He turned to his grandson. “Please, bring me a Bava Metzia.”

When the grandson returned with the Gemara, Rav Shach moved the papers that were on the table in front of him, the papers of the meeting he was supposed to be having, to the side and opened the Gemara.

Rav Shach, the giant in Torah, brought himself down to the level of the young *bachur* and began teaching him the Gemara, line by line. “What’s Rashi saying here?” he prodded. “Do you see there’s an extra word here? Rashi’s wording is very precise. Why is there an extra word?”

Although at first, Nati responded with shrugs and monosyllables, soon, Rav Shach succeeded in winning his cooperation. For the next hour and half, the two of them sat together and learned the entire *amud*—Gemara, Rashi, and Tosafos. As they made their way through the Gemara, Nati grew progressively more drawn in until his face was heated up and he was completely involved in the *sugya*.

His stunned father watched in disbelief. He had come for a *bracha*, and instead his son had received a therapist and *chavrusah*.

“Nu,” Rav Shach said to Nati with a smile when they finished the first *amud*. “Do you like learning?”

“Rosh Yeshiva,” the boy said softly. “I wish... I wish that I’ll always, forever, experience the feelings that I feel now.”

Rav Shach gave Nati a kiss and blessed him warmly with success in his learning. A tearful father and son slowly walked out of the room, astounded by the depths of the *gadol hador’s* concern for them.

The wealthy men, too, were touched and amazed by what had happened. These were millionaires, men who commanded, and received respect from all those around them. Yet Rav Shach, with his actions, demonstrated that he valued a potential *talmid chacham* exponentially more than the largest bank account in the world.

*Have a Wonderful Shabbos!*

This story is taken from tape # A154

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