

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 Power of Tehillim

One afternoon, the great Tzemach Tzedek of Lubavitch put on his overcoat and left his house alone, walking purposefully to his destination. The passersby in the street, noticing their revered *rebbe* walking alone, raised their eyes in astonishment. It was well known that the Tzemach Tzedek was always accompanied by his *gabbai* whenever he went someplace. It was strange to see him alone.

Curiously, they watched as the *rebbe* knocked on the door of Shmelke the moneylender. Shmelke's young son, Leib, answered the door, his younger brother Berel peeking out from behind him. The

Tzemach Tzedek entered the house and the door shut behind him.

Disappointed, the curious townspeople returned to whatever they had been in middle of doing. Whatever their great *rav* was up to, it was going to take place behind closed doors.

Shmelke's two little boys, ages eight and six, almost fainted at the sight of their illustrious visitor. They were alone in the house, waiting for their mother to return from a short errand, and when the knocking had sounded, they had never dreamed that the holy Tzemach Tzedek himself would be on the other side of the door!

"My parents aren't home," Leib stammered out.

"That's okay," the *rebbe* said kindly. "May I come in?"

The two boys hastily stepped away from the door to allow the *rebbe* in. When the door closed behind him, they led him into the main room of the house.

"Come here, *yingelach*," the Tzemach Tzedek said warmly. "What are your names? And where are you holding in your Torah studies?"

"I'm Leib," the older of the two boys said bashfully. "I already learn *mishnayos*."

"Ooh, *mishnayos*!" the *rebbe* exclaimed, and a huge smile bloomed on the boy's face. "Wow, you are already learning *mishnayos*! Wonderful! What about you? What is your name?"

"Berel," the six-year-old whispered shyly. "I learn Chumash."

"Ah, the *heilige* Chumash!" the Tzemach Tzedek cried, pecking the boy on his cheek. "*Yingelach*, I want to tell you something special. Do you know what Hashem loves most? He loves when young children say *tehillim* with their entire heart. The

tehillim of pure, untainted children is so beloved to Hashem!”

Both boys nodded. It was kind of strange that the great *rav* of their town had come to their house to tell them this, but who were they to argue with the *rebbe*?

“Perhaps we’ll say some *tehillim* together,” the *rebbe* suggested. “Please bring a *tehillim*, Leib.”

Leib hurried to fulfill the *rebbe*’s bidding, returning moments later with the sacred volume. The Tzemach Tzedek sat down and put an arm around each boy’s shoulders. He opened the *tehillim* to the first *perek*, and together they slowly recited word after word.

The sweetness, the innocence, of the two little boys chanting the timeless words of Dovid Hamelech brought tears to the *rebbe*’s eyes. When they finished the first *perek*, he wiped the tears away. “Let’s say another *perek*,” he said in a choked voice. “But this time, with real concentration. Remember, we are praying to the King of kings.”

Leib, the older of the two boys, peeked up at the *rebbe*, thoroughly confused by what was going on. Why was the Tzemach Tzedek in their house, and why was he insisting on saying *tehillim* with them? But the *rebbe* began the second *perek*, so he continued reciting it along with him, putting all thoughts out of his mind as he concentrated on speaking to his Creator, just as the *rebbe* had asked.

It took five minutes for them to get through the entire paragraph, savoring each word slowly. When they finished, the *rebbe* closed the *tehillim* and gave it a kiss. The boys, too, kissed the *sefer* before putting it down.

The Tzemach Tzedek stood up and blessed them before heading toward the door.

Question marks danced all over Leib’s eyes as he watched the *rebbe* pull open the door. He waited patiently for the Tzemach Tzedek to would leave so that he could explode, going over the strange visit with his little brother.

But then the Tzemach Tzedek turned around, shut the door, and walked back into the house. He wore a very serious expression on his face and stood there for a few minutes, lost in thought. Leib nudged his brother and Berel looked up at him with an equally confused expression. What was going on?

“Let’s say some more *tehillim*,” the *rebbe* said suddenly, coming back to sit down at the table. He beckoned to the boys to join him and opened the *tehillim* to a specific *perek*. “Before, you said the *tehilim* beautifully, but this time it has to be even better. You must feel that you are standing before and speaking to your loving Father in *Shamayim*!”

With an intensity they’d never felt before, the boys fervently recited the *perek* together with the Tzemach Tzedek. They felt the warmth and security of his arms around their shoulders as they carefully recited the words. When they finished, they kissed the *tehillim* and looked up at their holy visitor.

“Thank you, yingelach,” the *rebbe* said softly. “Thank you. Hashem always loves *tehillim*. When a Jew is in trouble and cries out to Hashem to help him, it testifies to his *emunah*. A Yid must always be close to his *tehillim*.”

Leib nodded quickly, and Berel followed suit. They walked the *rebbe* to the door and watched as he walked down the street. When he was gone, both boys looked at each other. They may have been young, but they understood that something significant had happened. But what?

When their mother walked in ten minutes later, arms loaded up with packages from her successful trip to the marketplace, both boys jumped all over her, the story tumbling out.

“Hold on, hold on,” she cried. “I can’t hear you when you shout over each other like this. Let me put down the packages and then I’ll be ready to listen. Leib, you go first. What exactly happened?”

“The *rebbe* came,” Leib said. “And he said *tehillim* with us, and he was crying. And then he started to leave, and then he came back and said more *tehillim* with us.”

“He asked us our names,” Berel added. “And he said that Hashem loves *tehillim*.”

“Wait a second, wait a second,” their mother said, holding up her hand. “I don’t understand what happened. Which *rebbe* came?”

“The *rebbe*!” Leib said urgently. “You know, the *rebbe*. The rav of the city!”

“The Tzemach Tzedek? Are you sure?” It was hard not to be skeptical. “Leib, it’s important that I get the facts properly.”

The eight-year-old boy nodded. “Yes, the big *rebbe* came here! I know, it’s strange, right? I don’t know why he decided to come and say *tehillim* with us!”

His mother’s face paled, recognizing that her son was saying the truth. She was not about to go to the great Tzemach Tzedek and verify the story, but if she understood things correctly, something was very, very wrong.

“Come, children,” she said shakily, sitting down at the table. “Let’s say some more *tehillim*, just like you did with the *rebbe*.”

For the third time that day, the boys said *tehillim*. Their mother recited it along with them, a terrible sense of foreboding flooding her being. They finished a *perek* and moved on to the next, and then the next, and soon her tears came, hot and heavy.

By now, even little Berel realized that something was amiss. His clear, piping voice trembled a bit as he uncomplainingly continued chanting the words.

The minutes ticked by, and it got dark outside. Berel and Leib went to sleep, and their mother sat by the table with her *tehillim*, waiting for her husband to come home. It was worryingly late; Shmelke was always home before dark. Had something happened to him?

Soon, the *tehillim* was thoroughly drenched with her tears as she prayed for her husband’s safe return. *Hashem, save him in the merit of the children’s tehillim*, she pleaded silently.

Another hour passed, then two. When the door finally creaked open, she jumped up from her seat. Shmelke staggered through the door, his face a ghastly white, and collapsed into a chair.

His wife was still clutching the *tehillim* with white knuckles. “What happened?”

“I went today to collect money that is due from some of my debtors,” Shmelke began, breathing hard. “You know how I try to avoid collecting on the loans even when they are past due. It’s preferable for me to wait until the non-Jews have the money to repay me peacefully than to try to force them and suffer the consequences.”

His wife nodded, waiting for him to continue.

Shmelke gave a small sigh. “This time, I had no choice. I already lent out everything I have, and unless I get paid back, we’ll soon starve. I lent

Janek a large sum of money a year ago, which he was supposed to repay over the last six months with interest. He paid some of it, but I haven't received a penny from him in four months. I knew he wouldn't be able to pay me the rest of what he owes me, but I hoped he would give me at least some of it.

"It was a terrible mistake. As soon as Janek saw me, he went purple with rage. He ranted and raved and cursed about how much the Jews cause him to suffer, and vowed never to return the money. I began to back away, realizing that I would be lucky if I escaped with my life, but Janek was stronger and quicker.

"The next thing I knew, I was flat on the ground, with the menacing peasant delivering painful blows all over my body. When he was finished beating me, he tied me up and left me powerless on the ground. No amount of pleading or crying could get him to release me, not even a pledge to tear up his promissory note. Telling me he would be back later to cut off my head, he left."

Shmelke paused for breath and looked up at his wife. She looked ready to pass out. "So what happened?" she whispered. "How did you escape?"

"As I lay there on his empty wheat field, a woman passed by," Shmelke continued. "I called out to her, asking her to cut the ropes and set me free, but she was terrified of Janek. 'He'll kill me if he realizes I freed you,' she explained apologetically. I begged and pleaded until I succeeded in arousing her compassion.

"When she was sure no one was watching, she quickly knelt down and sliced through my ropes with a knife. 'Quick,' she instructed me. 'Run hide between the bushels of shocked wheat.' Then she sauntered casually away with an innocent look on her face.

"I took her advice and crawled to the middle of the field where tens of bundles of wheat were waiting. I pushed myself into one of the bundles, ignoring the stalks scratching my skin as I tried to conceal myself. Moments later, I could hear Janek cursing roundly as he returned to the field.

"As expected, he went berserk when he discovered that I had escaped. 'I'll find you, Jew!' he shouted over and over, combing through the bushels of wheat. 'And when I find you, I'll tear you apart limb by limb!' He was so close to me that I could hear the heaviness of his breathing, and I was sure I would soon be discovered. I lay as silently as I could, not even daring to breathe, and prayed for salvation. To my utter relief, he simply passed over the bundle I was hiding under and continued to the next bundle.

"After he'd unsuccessfully searched the entire wheat field himself, he brought over his dogs. The ferocious beasts, loyal to their master, began stomping through the wheat, barking and sniffing. With their keen sense of smell, I was sure the dogs would find me in no time. I began reciting *vidui*, sure that my end was certain, but suddenly the dogs went away.

"I remained hidden within the wheat until the sun went down," Shmelke concluded. "Once I was certain that the darkness would conceal my movements, I quietly crept away from the field to safety. I'm still shaking in total awe over the three incredible miracles I merited: being freed from the ropes, Janek skipping over me, and the dogs not finding me."

A sudden understanding dawned on his wife's face. "Do you know who was in our house today? The Tzemach Tzedek. He came and recited *tehillim* with the boys. And then, when you didn't come home, I realized something was wrong and

recited *tehillim* again. The *tehillim* we recited must have saved you.”

Shmelke’s eyebrows disappeared into his hairline. There was no reason to ask how the Tzemach Tzedek had known; he was a tremendous *tzaddik* with knowledge of the heavenly spheres. But it was truly astounding to realize the enormous power of *tehillim*, which evoked enough *rachamei Shamayim* to save him from near-certain death three times in under an hour.

Once he calmed down somewhat from the trauma, Shmelke went to see the Tzemach Tzedek, to thank him for his *tefillos*, which had saved his life.

As soon as the holy *rebbe* saw him, he exclaimed, “The *tehillim* of young children is extremely beloved to Hashem! Look what this *tehillim* accomplished!”

“How can I thank the *rebbe* for what he has done for me?” Shmelke responded emotionally. He began recounting the entire story, beginning with the tremendous debts he was owed. The Tzemach Tzedek just nodded along. None of it was news to him.

“When you were bound hand and foot, unable to escape, that was when your sons and I recited *tehillim* the first time. Hashem made the woman decide to free you, despite the very real danger to herself in doing so,” the *rebbe* explained after Shmelke described how the woman had sliced through the ropes around his wrists and ankles.

“I hid between the bundled wheat stalks,” Shmelke continued, his entire being trembling at the memory. He went on to recount how the murderous gentile had poked through each bundle in search of him but completely missed the one concealing Shmelke.

“That was when we said *Tehillim* a second time,” the Tzemach Tzedek said.

“And then he set the dogs on the wheat,” Shmelke picked up the thread of his story. “And still, they didn’t find me. It was a complete miracle.”

The Tzemach Tzedek inclined his head. “At that point, your wife, along with Leib and Berel, recited *tehillim*, with true sincerity and real tears. It was in the merit of their *tefillos* that you were saved once more.”

Shmelke left the Tzemach Tzedek’s home, overwhelmed with gratitude to Hashem for the miracles he had experienced, and simultaneously overawed by the power of *tehillim*.

Reading this story had a profound effect on me, and I began to recite tehillim on a consistent basis. Although I am no longer a youngster and cannot qualify as a member of the tinokos shel beis rabban, my tehillim, too is beloved by Hashem.

We all experience miracles, even open miracles. How many times have we been in near-accidents while driving? How many times have we skirted death, knowingly or unknowingly? It is the tehillim we recite, the tefillos we say, that unleash Hashem’s protection, safeguarding our very lives.

Have a Wonderful Shabbos!
This story is taken from tape # A326

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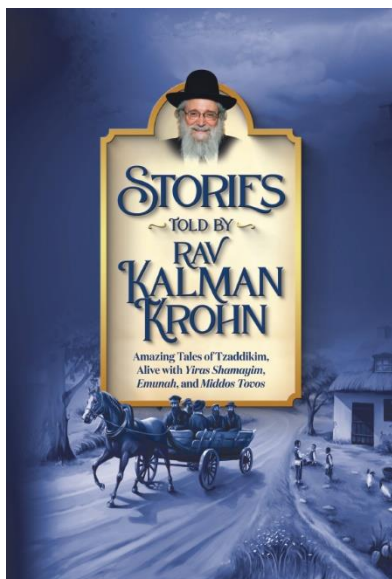
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