

# TORAS REB KALMAN



## סיפורי צדיקים

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

### ***Meshaneh Makom Mishaneh Mazel - Part I***

Living in Yerushalayim in terrible poverty, Akiva earned his livelihood by chopping trees for firewood. His was a backbreaking, laborious occupation that brought in very little money, not nearly enough to support a wife and six children.

In the winter, the work was harder due to the harsher weather conditions, but at the same time, there was a greater demand, which meant more income for Akiva. In the summer, people had less use for firewood, and he could count his weekly customers on his fingers.

Despite the hours of sweat and toil Akiva put into his work, he never seemed to have enough money to give his wife at the end of the week. With no money for new clothes, his children wore clothing that had more patches than original material, which they were very ashamed of. With little money for food, they often went to sleep with empty stomachs.

Although he was a woodchopper, his own home was usually freezing since he could not afford to keep any of the firewood he had chopped. Besides spending money on basic food necessary to keep his family alive, he also needed to pay tuition to the local melamed, so that his children would grow up with a proper Jewish education. Once, one of the children fell ill and needed a doctor, and almost all the income they made that winter went directly to pay the doctor's fee.

To top it all off, the lack of finances and food caused tremendous strain between Akiva and his wife, Leah. The gemarah teaches that when there is enough money in a home, peace will reign. Akiva's home was proof of that in the opposite. Although in its infancy their marriage had been harmonious, it now consisted only of bickering and bitterness.

"I can't continue like this!" Leah complained one morning as she sliced an old loaf of bread as thinly as she could. "You are working from morning to night, and we are still not making ends meet. Something has to change!"

"What should I do differently?" Akiva challenged her heatedly, ignoring the cries of his own stomach. There was not enough bread for all of them, and so he would have to skip breakfast so that the children all had what to eat. "I'm doing

everything I can. If you have a better idea, tell me!”

“The children are embarrassed to go to yeshiva in their torn clothes, and I don’t blame them,” Leah continued. “We’re always cold and there’s never enough food. Soon we’ll have to marry off our children. How exactly will we afford that?”

Akiva felt the heat rising to his cheeks. He worked overtime to bring in the little money they did have; how dare she blame him for all their problems! “I’m not blind,” he said icily. “There’s no reason for you to list your grievances about the terrible life you have. I can see our problems for myself, thank you.”

“Then do something about it!” she screeched, disregarding the frightened faces of the children, who were in the room and listening to every word. “Something, anything! We need to get out of this cycle of poverty. Let’s move and start over somewhere new.”

“Move?!” Akiva’s voice held a mixture of amusement and scorn. “Don’t you realize what kind of expenses moving would entail?! And what about the income we would lose if I gave up my steady clients and needed to reestablish myself from scratch in a new city? It makes zero financial sense to move.”

She turned her back to him. “Here we go again,” she sang sarcastically. “Back into the monthly cycle of work, debt, work, debt with splashes of hunger and cold and shame sprinkled on top for a good measure.”

Akiva didn’t bother responding. He grabbed his axe and stomped out of the house to the forest. It

was a satisfying day at work. He managed to fell a few trees, plus chop up some dried logs and tie them into bundles ready for sale. Weary but contented, Akiva left the forest at the end of the day and went to shul to daven.

When davening was over, the good feeling of his satisfying day evaporated as he thought of Leah’s sullen face that was sure to greet him when he got home. There would be verbal attacks, shouting, and blaming, and he would bear the brunt of it. *What do I need this for?* he thought to himself. *If she doesn’t appreciate me or my hard work, what use is there to go home? I might as well run away.*

The thought emboldened him and gave him strength to return home. *There’s nothing binding me here,* he reminded himself when Leah greeted him at the door with a barrage of biting comments. This gave him the courage to accept the barb without tossing back a poisoned rejoinder. *I need a few hours to work out my plans, and then I’m out of here.*

Leah brought a bowl of watery soup to the table and set it before him, keeping up the steady stream of complaints about the difficulty of her life as she sat across from him at the table. Akiva kept quiet, his little secret giving him the strength to bear her grievances in silence. Tomorrow, he would be far away.

But then Leah dropped a bombshell that pulled the rug from under his feet.

“I’ve had it,” she announced as Akiva finished the last dredges of soup in his bowl. “I’ve had it with this life. I’m forced to feed and watch the kids, and keep house, under impossible condition. I simply refuse to continue this way. If you’re

unwilling to change the status quo, then I will. I'm leaving, leaving for good. I'll start over, create a new life for myself and our unborn child. Let's see how you manage the house and the kids without me."

Akiva's spoon clattered to the floor with a loud clang. He stood up, both shocked and enraged. How could Leah even think of abandoning the family? And how was he supposed to make an announcement regarding his own plans after she'd just informed him of those exact same intentions?

Leah watched the emotions blinking rapidly across his face. Confusion. Shock. Bewilderment. Betrayal. Anger. And then, a terrible sadness. She waited, bracing herself for his response.

Akiva sat down slowly, creakily, like a very old man, the tortured look still haunting his eyes. "Leah," he said, his voice surprisingly soft. "I know exactly where you are coming from. You might not believe me, but I, too, was planning on running away. I was in middle of making my plans."

Leah opened her mouth to interrupt, but Akiva held her off. "Just listen to me," he pleaded. "I want to say something, and listen quietly until I'm done. You'll say your piece when I'm finished."

His wife nodded.

Akiva continued. "We once had a happy marriage, a happy home. We were not blessed with wealth, but we merited many other beautiful things, like peace and contentment, and six wonderful children, with a seventh on the way. But then the poverty led to strife, stress, and

dissatisfaction. We allowed the one thing we are missing, financial security, to invade every part of our lives and destroy the other gifts we were blessed with."

Leah was sobbing openly now, her head in her hands.

"At this point, we've hit rock bottom," Akiva forged on. "Two adults in a household both willing to give up and escape the hardships, abandoning their family—there can be no lower bottom than that. We've reached the worst, and it's uphill from here. In a few months, with Hashem's help, we will have a simchah here. Let's give the child the gift of peace and stability, which we can still afford."

Akiva's voice cracked, but he pulled himself together. For his wife's sake, for his marriage's sake, he needed to be strong. "Leah, instead of fighting with each other over our challenges, let's fight our challenges together. We may or may not solve our financial issues, but we will gain other, priceless gifts in the process. Are you willing to work along with me to enjoy the blessings that are readily available to us instead of wallowing in misery over what we are lacking?"

"Yes," his wife replied in a choked voice.

"I need you to know that I am doing my very best to bring in parnasah," Akiva said earnestly. "And I will try hard to put myself in your shoes, too, to appreciate the difficulties you live through every day. Let's both increase our prayers and ask Hashem to send us more adequate parnasah."

There wasn't much else they could do, other than pray, to improve their situation, and despite her

earlier bravado, Leah was inwardly terrified of starting a new life alone. “Okay,” she said in a small voice. “I’m willing to try.”

They prayed and prayed, and most of the time, they fasted too, since there was barely anything to eat in the house. Still, their finances did not improve. There was still no money for basic nourishment and firewood, let alone new clothing for the children and money to pay their skyrocketing tuition bill. What did improve, however, was their ability to cope with the difficulties. With harmony in the home and a close relationship with Hashem, even an empty stomach was easier to bear.

The impending arrival of their new baby grew nearer and nearer, and Akiva became more anxious with each passing day. How would they feed another mouth? How would they get enough food for Leah to regain her strength after birth? Would they be able to keep the house warm enough for the newborn to survive?

One morning, without telling his wife, Akiva decided to set out on a short journey in search for a more viable source of income. Without waiting for his brain to catch up, his feet led him across Yerushalayim to the hitching spot, where he hoped to catch a ride out of the city. He had only his tefillin with him and no money, but he hoped to be back before long.

He was only two blocks away when he noticed a young child wandering the streets without any parents in sight. *Irresponsible parents*, were his first thoughts. This was quickly followed by, *I hope he’s okay. He’s kind of lonely looking, wandering alone with his hands in his pockets.*

Then recognition struck. “Shloime!” he cried in a horrified tone of voice. The boy was his own son! How did he get to this side of town, and all alone! “What are you doing here? You’re supposed to be in cheder!”

“The rebbi doesn’t let me in,” Shloime said woodenly. “He said that you haven’t paid him at all this year, and he can’t teach a child for free for so long.”

He was right. There hadn’t been an extra kopek to pay the rebbi; doing so would have meant certain death from starvation. Still, Akiva hadn’t imagined the rebbi would refuse Shloime the opportunity to learn a little Torah because he came from a destitute home.

“Go home,” Akiva instructed his son. “You can’t wander the streets of Yerushalayim alone. If you are not in cheder, you should be at home.”

His son nodded and walked away. Akiva waited until he was out of sight before breaking down in tears. There, on the side of the road, he wept and wept like a baby, crying for salvation. His children were suffering, his wife was suffering, and the solution to their troubles was nowhere in sight.

After a good, long cry, Akiva stood up, feeling lighter somehow. *I’ll go speak to R’ Zevulan*, he suddenly decided. R’ Zevulan had been his own rebbi when he was a child in cheder. He was elderly already and no longer a teacher of young children, but he was knowledgeable and wise.

*Everyone needs a rebbi*, Akiva realized as he walked to R’ Zevulan’s old, decrepit cottage. *Everyone, including myself. I may be an adult, but*

*I can't be above guidance. I'm floundering on my own.*

When he knocked on R' Zevulan's door, his rebbi called for him to enter. Akiva twisted the doorknob and walked in. He found the elderly talmid chacham sitting at the table, learning.

"Akiva!" R' Zevulan greeted him warmly. "I haven't seen you in years! How are you? How are you doing? How is your family?"

"Rebbi," Akiva burst out. "Rebbi, I need your help!" As though he had turned on a faucet, his eyes began to run. "Rebbi! Please help me!"

R' Zevulan's eyes misted over in concern and he helped his weeping visitor to a chair. "Akiva, I still picture you as a sweet little boy just starting to learn Gemara. It's hard to believe that you are all grown up, a husband and father. Tell me what's bothering you, and I will help you if I can."

"Rebbi, I have such a bitter life," Akiva said, peering up at R' Zevulan with red-rimmed eyes. "I have six children and barely any income. I can't feed them, clothe them, or warm the home. My marriage is extremely fragile, and the stress is taking a toll on my health. My wife is due to give birth shortly, a seventh child to provide for! I don't know how I'll manage!"

R' Zevulan was quiet for a few moments, his hand stroking his former student's fingers soothingly. When he spoke, his voice was full of compassion and concern. "Akiva," he finally said. "You are carrying a heavy burden on your shoulders, and there isn't much I can do to help you. I, myself, barely have any money. However, I do have one thing I can tell you, something that I learned from

my rebbi, who learned it from his rebbi, who learned it from his own rebbi, tracing back to Rav Chaim Volozhin, who heard it from his rebbi, the Vilna Gaon. Perhaps this will give you direction."

Hope bloomed in Akiva's eyes. He waited.

"When a person has an issue and doesn't know what to do," R' Zevulan continued, "He should learn Gemarah for five hours straight. For five hours, nothing should be on his mind except for the Gemara. After five hours of learning, the first thought that comes to his mind is daas Torah. This is a kabbalah that I have from my rebbi tracing back to the Vilna Gaon."

Akiva's shoulders sagged. "I don't think it will work for me."

"Just try it," his rebbi urged. "Why don't you think it will work?"

"Because I don't have the power of concentration," Akiva said in a defeated voice. "I can't even learn for five minutes without thinking about my children, my wife, my wood chopping business, my suffering. I can't concentrate for five minutes, let alone five hours."

"I could do it for you," R' Zevulan said slowly.

"Really?" Akiva asked eagerly. "Would you really?"

His rebbi gave him a small smile. "I will do it, but I won't be able to do it today. There's someone coming to speak to me in an hour, and then I'll need to daven Minchah and Maariv. I'm too old to stay up late to learn. Tomorrow morning, however, after Shacharis and breakfast, I will

learn for five hours straight and let you know the first thought I have when I'm done."

Akiva's eyes lit up. "I don't know how to thank you," he said emotionally.

"I'll need your help," R' Zevulan told him. "People are often coming by to speak to me in learning or to ask for advice. If I am disturbed in the middle, I'll need to start the five hours over. Therefore, I'll need you to guard the door and send everyone away so that I am not interrupted."

"Certainly," Akiva agreed. "I'll be there the entire time."

He left his rebbi's home with a spring in his step. For the first time, he had entrusted his burden into the hands of someone older and wiser than he, and it was a liberating feeling. Humming a tune, he headed to the forest to begin chopping trees.

The following morning, after Shacharis, he hurried to R' Zevulan's home. He found his rebbi, who had davened vasikin, refreshed and ready to begin. Akiva dragged a chair to the doorway and closed the door behind him, leaving R' Zevulan to learn in peace.

The first person he chased away was a young man with a scraggly beard who bounded in excitedly with a chiddush he wanted to share with the elderly talmid chacham. Akiva asked him to return in the evening, and he graciously left.

When two grandchildren showed up an hour later to see how their grandfather was faring, Akiva explained that he was learning and did not want to be disturbed. They understood and gave Akiva

a small pan to give him, presumably something their wives had cooked for him.

Another half hour passed, and a stooped man with a greying beard came to return a sefer. Akiva took the sefer from him and promised to return it to R' Zevulan. An hour later, a pair of chavrusos appeared, having a thorny question on a Tosafos they wanted to discuss with R' Zevulan. They, too, were sent away.

Akiva waited with baited breath, counting the minutes until he would finally have some guidance on what to do next. When five hours passed and R' Zevulan did not appear, he waited some more, afraid that his calculation of the time was inaccurate. He did not want to disturb R' Zevulan in the final minutes of the five hours and mess up the whole thing.

Inside, R' Zalman learned with the vigor of a man significantly younger. He hummed a poignant Gemara niggun as he worked through difficulties in the Gemara. The hours passed enjoyably without him noticing. When he finally realized that he had been learning for more than five hours, his thoughts turned to Akiva's predicament.

The first thing he thought of was *meshaneh makom meshaneh mazel*. If one is having a lot of difficulties, instead of sticking around for more, he should move. If it doesn't work out in one place, it might work out in the next. He stood up and went to the door, where Akiva was waiting restlessly.

"Come inside," he invited his former talmid. "I finished learning five hours. I must thank you. I haven't had such a wonderful, uninterrupted

learning session in a long time. I learned through Meseches Ksubos.”

“And?” Akiva asked, his mouth completely dry. “What daas Torah did you have when you were done?”

To be continued...

*Have a Wonderful Shabbos!*  
This story is taken from tape # A368

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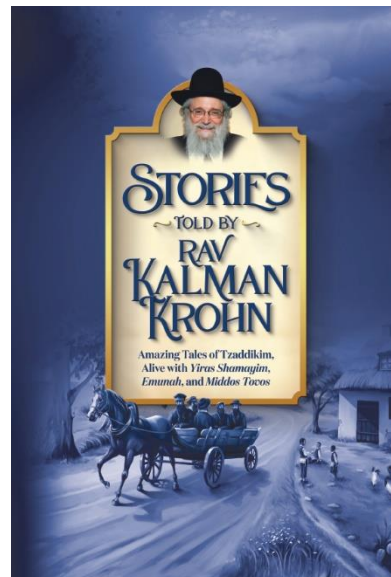
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*Captivating stories full of Yiras Shamayim taken from Shmuessin that Reb Kalman Krohn z'tl gave in Adelpia Yeshiva*

### ***Meshaneh Makom Mishaneh Mazel - Part II***

*Recap: Akiva, a pauper in desperate straits, went to his rebbi, Reb Zevulan for advice on how to improve his financial situation. Following a tradition from the Vilna Gaon, Reb Zevulan learned without distraction for five hours straight to be able to give his talmid advice that was pure daas Torah.*

“The first thought I had when I finished learning was meshaneh makom meshaneh mazel,” Reb Zevulan said slowly. “If you move, your mazel will surely change as well.”

“Then that’s what I’ll do,” Akiva declared. “Rebbi, I can’t thank you enough. I will follow your advice, the advice of the Torah, and we will move as soon as possible.”

“My dear talmid,” R’ Zevulan cautioned. “You mentioned that your marriage was very fragile. Don’t forget to treat your wife well during the move. Moving is never easy, especially not in her condition, and you must treat her properly.”

Akiva bent down and kissed his rebbi’s hand. “I will try,” he pledged. “Thank you, rebbi.”

When he returned home, it was early afternoon. Leah was surprised to see him home so early, but conscious of their decision to work on their marriage, greeted him cordially. “It’s nice to see you in middle of the day, Akiva.”

“Leah, I must discuss something important with you,” Akiva said urgently. “We need to move, and I think the best place to go would be Teveriah.”

Leah put down the broom. “Move? Teveriah? What’s gotten into you, Akiva? We’ve lived in Yerushalayim all our lives. We can’t just move to the other side of the country.”

“We must,” Akiva insisted. “I spoke to my rebbi this morning, and he told me that if we move, our situation will improve. We live in a one-room shack here, nothing you’ll miss. I’m sure you’ll like Teveriah and make new friends there.”

His wife folded her arms across her chest. “Akiva. We’re not moving to Teveriah. We have a life here! We know everyone, we know everything!”



We're having a new baby soon! We're staying here, and that's that."

"That's that for you, maybe," Akiva responded. "I, however, will be listening to my rebbi. I urge you to join me, but if you refuse, I will pack up this house and go without you."

Leah gave a snort. "Akiva, try to be fair and understand that it is wrong to spring this upon me so suddenly. Moving is ridiculous, especially now."

Her husband, however, didn't seem to hear her. He had opened their faded trunk and was cramming it with all their belongings, humming as he worked.

When the children came inside, they found their father closing the full trunk, the house looking very bare without any of its possessions. "What is going on, Tatte?" they wondered out loud.

"We're moving," Akiva told them, his voice lilting. "We're moving to Teveriah!"

"Hurray!" Shloime whooped excitedly. "We're moving to Teveriah!"

Akiva laughed and swung his son around. "We're moving to Teveriah!" he repeated, as excited as his young children.

Leah watched the scene in befuddlement. How had this happened? Was Akiva really planning on moving even if she was firmly against it? There was something strange about the whole thing, but she couldn't put her finger on it.

Akiva was dancing with Velvele now, twirling him around the room. He lifted the little boy onto his shoulders and paraded him past his cheering siblings. "We're moving! We're moving! We're moving to Teveriah!"

He's happy, Leah realized with sudden clarity. Akiva has never acted happy, and certainly not like this! He's usually moping and moaning about his troubles. "Why are you so happy?" she asked him.

"Things are about to change for us," Akiva said earnestly. "A rebbi is a messenger from heaven. As the one who taught me Torah, R' Zevulan is Hashem's messenger, and he was the one who advised us to move. I am certain that if this is the daas Torah he imparted, this will be our salvation."

Despite herself, Leah found her hopes rising. "Let's do it," she said. "I'm with you."

They finished packing up the house together and loaded everything onto the wagon. The kids climbed in between the boxes and Leah took her seat on the bench. Akiva jumped into the driver's seat, and just like that, they were off to Teveriah.

The road to Teveriah was not a smooth one. The wagon jostled back and forth as it rolled over the bumps. While it was uncomfortable for all of them, it was especially difficult for Leah, who was shortly due to give birth. Every bump in the road was torture for her, and she cried out in unspeakable pain.

“I don’t know if I’ll be able to make it to Teveriah,” she gasped. “I think I’m going to give birth very soon.”

“We’ll try,” Akiva said as soothingly as he could. “I’m driving as fast as I can.” To calm her, he began to sing, and the children joined in. Leah closed her eyes.

They traveled through the night and reached Teveriah in the morning. Leah was still in excruciating pain and Akiva knew he needed to find a place to stop. He had no idea who to turn to or where they could find a place to live.

As they drove through the marketplace, he noticed a small crowd milling around a Jew who appeared to be auctioning something off. “Fifty-five thousand liras going once!” the Jew was calling, and someone else cut in “Sixty thousand liras!”

“Sixty thousand liras going once—.”

“Seventy thousand!”

“Seventy-five!”

“What’s happening here?” Akiva asked one of the spectators.

“That Jew, Simcha, works for the well-known wealthy magnate Yechiel. You know, Yechiel, the one who owns real estate all over Teveriah,” he was told. “Well, Yechiel recently bought himself a mansion in Yerushalayim and will move there, and so Simcha is trying to sell his mansion here.”

“Ninety thousand liras!” someone yelled.

“How much is the mansion worth?” Akiva asked the spectator.

“Over two hundred thousand, but he’s not going to get that much,” the man said with a shrug. “No one has that kind of money, and he’s willing to sell it for below its value if it’s a quick sale.”

“One hundred thousand liras going once!” Simcha cried out. “One hundred thousand liras going twice!”

“One hundred and ten thousand liras!” Akiva heard himself call. Seconds later, he berated himself for his slip of the tongue. He didn’t have a lira to his name and could not afford even a tenth of the sum he had put in a bid for. He himself did not even understand how the bid had slipped out of his mouth.

Tens of pairs of eyes were suddenly upon him. Simcha jumped off the box he had been standing on and approached him. “Were you the one who bid 110,000 liras?”

“Yes,” Akiva said meekly.

Simcha gave him a slap on the cheek the back of his palm. “What do you think this is, a game?” he hissed. One sharp kick, and Akiva was sprawled on the floor. “You’re a beggar!” Simcha shouted at him from above. “A helpless pauper! I’m auctioning off a mansion here, to wealthy people who can afford it, not someone like yourself!”

He walked off in disgust to continue the auction, leaving Akiva to stand up and brush himself off, his cheeks flaming. The people laughed at the foolish pauper as he slowly walked back to his wagon.

“Tatte, why did you bid so much money if we are not rich?” Shloime wanted to know. From their perch on the wagon, the children had all witnessed their father’s humiliation.

“To be honest, I’m not sure myself,” Akiva said. “I know that my rebbi advised us to move, and that our fortune would change with the move. Something inside me pushed me to offer a bid. Maybe subconsciously I felt this might be the change of fortune we are waiting for? I’m not really sure myself.”

“Akiva,” Leah moaned weakly. “Akiva, we need to find somewhere to stop off immediately.”

Akiva looked over his shoulder at his wife, who was hunched over the bench in obvious pain. As much as he loathed to approach the people at the auction who had humiliated him, he had no choice. Leah was about to give birth, and he needed to get her off the wagon into someplace warm and comfortable.

Just as he stepped out of the wagon a second time, the sky opened up. A torrent of rain was let loose over the entire city, drenching the wagon, the children, Akiva, and his wife. “Akiva!” Leah continued whimpering. “Help me! Akiva!”

“I’m trying, Leah,” Akiva promised earnestly. “Hold tight, and I’ll be back in a moment.” He dashed through the pouring rain back to the dispersing crowd. To his surprise and relief, someone was running toward him, his face twisted with remorse.

“Reb Yid!” Simcha cried as he reached him. “I’m so sorry! I don’t know what got into me! There is

no excuse for my behavior, for shaming someone publicly. I want to try to right the wrong. What can I do to help you?”

“My wife is about to give birth,” Akiva blurted. “I need somewhere, anywhere, to stay. Fast.”

“Okay, I will help you,” Simcha said. “Can I drive your wagon?”

“Please.”

He jumped up onto the driver’s bench with Akiva and began steering the wagon in the direction of the mansion that he had been trying to auction. “Listen,” he said to Akiva. “Tomorrow, my boss is coming and I will need to close the auction with the highest bid. You are welcome to stay for the night, but you will need to leave in the morning.”

They pulled up before a beautiful gated estate, with a house larger and more breathtaking than anything Akiva and his family had seen before. Simcha hesitated for a moment, glanced at the dirty, disheveled children, and then directed the horses to the back of the large mansion, to the servants’ quarters.

The family trooped behind Simcha into a large hall, more luxurious than anything they’d ever seen. “This is the servants’ quarters,” they were told. “Wait here.”

Simcha hurried to inform the servants about their temporary guests. A meal was served and then a few maids converged upon Leah. They brought boiling water and clean cloths, preparing for the impending birth. The children, whooping excitedly around, were banished from the room.

Left to their own devices, the children began exploring the mansion, chasing each other throughout the lavish rooms. Simcha, who was preparing the documentation for the house's sale, stomped out angrily to confront them. "Go downstairs immediately!" he ordered them.

"We can't," they replied innocently. "Our mother is giving birth."

*Why did I have to slap him?* Simcha berated himself in frustration, not for the first time. He had lost control of himself for one moment, and the repercussions were enormous! Yechiel, his employer, was scheduled to return the next day to finalize the sale of the mansion, and he would not take well to a hoard of dirty children romping about.

"Leave this room!" he roared at the children. "I don't want to see you! Just go!"

The children fled from the room in terror and found the kitchen, where they went through the many cabinets and gleefully raided the pantry. When Akiva came upstairs, he found them eating crackers in the kitchen, surrounded by puddles of water and piles of crumbs.

He took in the scene in dismay, wondering how he would clean it all up himself with Leah out of commission.

"Mazel tov," he said to the children. "You have a new baby brother!"

To be continued...

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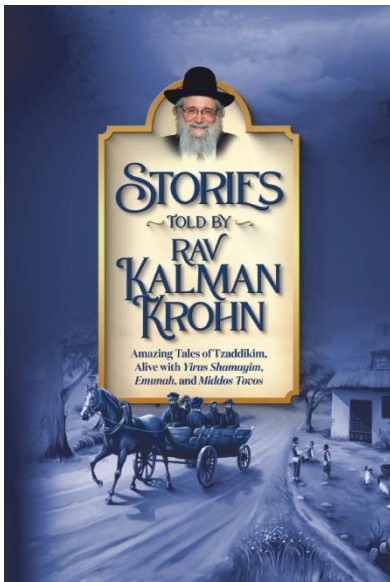
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# TORAS REB KALMAN



## סיפורי צדיקים

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

### ***Meshaneh Makom Mishaneh Mazel - Part III***

*Recap: Following the advice of his rebbi, Akiva and Leah picked up their family and moved to Teveriah, hoping their fortune would change. After being yelled at in the marketplace by a man named Simcha, Simcha allowed him and his family to stay in a mansion he was trying to sell, for one night only. During the night, Leah gave birth to a baby boy.*

“Mazel tov!” Shloime and Velvele broke into a spontaneous dance while the girls began pleading for a chance to see the new baby.

“Mamme is very weak now,” Akiva said gently, disappointed to have to turn them down. “But you’ll be able to see the baby in a few hours.”

“Akiva!” Simcha marched into the kitchen, his face the picture of rage. “I did you a favor and let you into this house, and look what your kids did to it! The entire mansion is in shambles, and we are supposed to be selling it tomorrow!”

Catching sight of his guest’s face, Simcha lowered his voice slightly. “I know, I know. I slapped you, and I was trying to make up for it. But you were an idiot, offering a bid you absolutely could not afford. And I did not have to do you such a big favor.”

“I’m sorry,” Akiva murmured, his cheeks going pink. “I really am. But children are children, and without adult supervision, this is how they behave. It’s not like I was taking a nap while they did this. My wife was in middle of giving birth!”

“You might be right, but that doesn’t change anything,” Simcha said, and Akiva could tell that he was very anxious. “Yechiel, the owner, is coming tomorrow. There is no way he can see the house like this. All the maids are busy with your wife now and can’t pitch in. I need you to make sure that this house is in tip top condition when you leave tomorrow morning.”

“I’ll try my best,” Akiva promised, wondering how exactly he would manage to do so. With a yawn, he went out into the pouring rain to bring the most essential luggage inside. The trunk was drenched from the downpour, and it tracked mud all over the house when Akiva dragged it in.

After putting his children to sleep on mattresses, he worked his way through the house, scrubbing

and mopping and putting things away. He hadn't slept the entire night before, and was thoroughly exhausted, but he had no doubt that despite the difficult circumstances, his fortune would soon change. After all, his rebbi had said so, based on daas Torah.

When he finally sank into his own mattress late that night, he fell into an immediate sleep. For the first time since he could remember, he was sleeping on a soft mattress in a warm room, with no drafts and no leaks. It was temporary, he knew, but it gave him a short reprieve from his difficult reality.

At eight o'clock the next morning, Simcha showed up to shoo the family out of the house. The children, sated from their delicious breakfast, greeted him cheerfully, but Simcha was in no mood for pleasantries. His boss was coming, and he needed Akiva's family to leave before he was accused of sheltering squatters.

It was still raining when Akiva left the mansion to load the trunk back onto the wagon. He had no idea where he would go next, but he had absolute faith that Hashem would take care of him.

"What should I do with all this garbage?" he asked, pointing to the large pile of trash that had accumulated from his thorough cleaning the night before.

"Take it to the forest," Simcha said. "The last thing I need is for the boss to realize that I let someone stay here."

Akiva looked doubtfully at the large pile. "Alright," he conceded. "But I'll have to leave my wife and children here until I'm done. There's no

way we can shlep all this, plus our boxes, plus the whole family, in the rain."

Simcha gave a frustrated nod. "Fine," he said shortly. "Just hurry, please. My boss will be here very soon."

Akiva grabbed a huge armload of garbage and loaded onto his wagon, trying not to pay heed to the continuously falling rain. He returned for a second armload, the end of the garbage pile, and stuffed that into his wagon as well. Shivering in his thin, wet shirt, he climbed up behind the horses and drove off to the forest.

*I wonder where we'll find ourselves next?* he thought as he steered the wagon through the trees. He thought of his wife, laying weakly in bed, resting up from the difficult birth. He thought of his newborn son, so perfect and tiny, but so helpless and reliant on his parents' protection. He thought of his six rambunctious children in their tattered clothing, their hopeful expressions waiting to hear where their father would take them next.

*Mishaneh makom mishaneh mazel*, he reminded himself when his thoughts turned sour. *I'm following my rebbi's direction, and that will surely be my salvation.*

Once somewhat protected from the rain under the relative shelter of the thick, leafy branches overhead, Akiva found a sharp branch and began digging a hole with it. This proved to be extremely tedious and tiring. "At the rate I'm going, it will take until next year to get a hole big enough for all the garbage!" he cried out loud.

Frustrated, he dropped the stick and continued enlarging the hole with his shoe. The hole began

to form, wider and deeper with each circle of his leg. "Ouch!" Akiva suddenly yelped as his shoe contacted something metal. He collapsed onto the floor, holding his bleeding foot with both hands. Waves of pain shot up through his leg.

From his position on the cold forest floor, he began to feel around in the soil to find the metal object that had caused him so much pain. Moving the dirt with his bare fingers, he found a rusty metal ring. With shaking fingers, he tugged at the ring with all his strength, detaching it from the ground.

It must have been a clasp, because as soon as Akiva pulled the ring off, a large metal sheet popped open, exposing a staircase leading deep into the earth. His eyes widened. Stairs! Stairs in the middle of the forest! He rubbed his eyes to make sure he wasn't dreaming, but when he took a second look, the stairs were still there.

From the appearance of the trapdoor, the stairs, and the metal ring, it was clear that these had been hiding in the forest floor for many, many decades, possibly centuries. Akiva hesitated for a moment, unsure if it was dangerous to go down without a candle to provide light. But then, before he could stop himself, he made his way down the creaky stairs.

It was dark, extremely dark, and Akiva couldn't make anything out on the bottom of the steps, not even shapes. Putting out his hands, he began feeling around until he made contact with cold, round circles that made a clanging noise when he shuffled them around. Coins?

He put a massive handful into one pocket and then felt around some more. His hand closed around small and smooth stones. Precious stones? In the

dark, he could not be sure, but he put a big handful in his other pocket. Laden with the weight of the treasure, he made his way back up the ancient staircase.

Blinking in the dim forest light, Akiva realized that he was now a rich man. Gold coins winked out at him from his tattered coat, and the smooth stones in his other pocket glinted like precious diamonds. His rebbi's words were coming to fruition!

With a spring in his step, Akiva closed the heavy metal door and began piling the garbage from his wagon into the pit. He covered the garbage with soil and made a small sign in a nearby tree to remind him of the treasure's location.

As he drove back to the mansion, dirty and wet, he could not get over his extraordinary find. His fortune, it seemed, was changing for the better, just like his rebbi had advised. Overwhelmed with gratitude toward Hashem, Akiva sang tehillim joyfully as he drove. Even the sun, finally appearing from behind the clouds, seemed to be smiling along with him.

Simcha was waiting for him outside the mansion, his arms crossed. "Did you get rid of the garbage?" he demanded.

"Yes," Akiva responded with more confidence than he'd felt in a while. "Simcha, do you remember that yesterday, at the auction, I wanted to buy this mansion for 110,000 liras?"

"Don't remind me," Simcha said, shuddering.

Akiva held out his palm. A beautiful stone was nestled inside, reflecting the sunrays in a



breathtaking spectrum of colors. There was a moment of absolute silence.

“I want you to sell this diamond for me,” Akiva said quietly. “I’ll pay you commission, of course. The profits from the sale of this diamond should be more than enough to purchase the mansion.”

“But... but...” Simcha sputtered.

“Are you willing to sell it for me?” Akiva asked, his fingers closing around the gem.

“I don’t understand,” Simcha blurted. “If you are so wealthy, why are you traveling around like this, dressed like a poor man?”

“Do you think it would be wise for me travel from Yerushalayim to Teveriah with a large sum of money, dressed as a wealthy man?” Akiva asked rhetorically.

“I’ll sell it for you,” Simcha said wonderingly, taking in Akiva’s mud splattered clothing with fresh eyes, a newfound respect written across his face. He took the diamond gently and left with it.

Akiva’s children, peeking out from behind the door, heard their father’s words and began dancing around excitedly. Shloime grabbed a pillow off the couch and tossed it playfully at his sister, who promptly threw it back. A boisterous pillow fight ensued, and soon, the elegant living room was in shambles.

At precisely that moment, Yechiel, the owner of the mansion strode into the room, looking for Simcha. His face registered disbelief, then rage, as he took in the chaos in his living room. “Who are you?!” Yechiel bellowed at the children. “And what are you doing in my house?”

Terrified, the children began to stammer, scampering around to pick the cushions off the floor and pile them haphazardly onto the couch.

“Simcha!” Yechiel’s tone was angry, dangerous even. “Simcha! Get over here right now and tell me the meaning of this. There better be a good explanation for this.”

Simcha stepped through the door just in time to hear his boss’s furious call. It had taken him some time to locate a diamond dealer willing and able to purchase such an expensive stone, but in the end, he had managed to sell the diamond for 150,000 liras. After purchasing the mansion and paying his commission, Akiva would still be left with a fortune in change.

“Yes, sir!” he called back hastily to Yechiel. “I’m coming, sir!”

Hurriedly, he collected Akiva and walked with him to the living room, where Yechiel was still stewing. “Sir,” Simcha began. “Let me introduce you to Akiva, the buyer of the mansion. You’ve come just in time to sign the paperwork and finalize the sale. These are Akiva’s charming children,” he added, glowering at the children when his boss wasn’t looking.

Yechiel’s anger deflated and he pumped Akiva’s hand vigorously. “Well, well. The buyer himself! You’ll be very happy here, I assure you.”

Over a pile of paperwork, they sat and spoke, with Simcha explaining the ins and outs of the house and Yechiel throwing in a comment or two. They went through the sales contract, line by line, and scrawled signatures where necessary. And then, when the last of the papers were signed, Akiva was officially declared owner of the mansion.

For the first time in their lives, his children slept in comfortable beds that were their own. They received new clothing, warm and whole, with no patches. Leah was able to cook nourishing meals with ample ingredients and Akiva was able to devote his time to learning Torah.

Akiva lived every moment in conscious gratitude to Hashem for the unbelievable miracle He had performed for him, raising him up from rags to riches. He treated the poor with incredible kindness and went out of his way to assist the needy. To instill in his children sensitivity for the plight of those with less than them and gratitude for their comfortable life, he constantly reminded them of their days of poverty.

One day, Akiva was walking in the streets of Teveriah when he encountered his old rebbi, Rav Zevulan. With tears in his eyes, he approached the elderly man and kissed his hand. "Rebbi," he cried. "Thank you! I followed your advice, and Hashem has blessed me with wealth. I am no longer mired in an endless cycle of poverty. I don't know how to thank you! Because of you, my entire life changed."

"It wasn't me," Rav Zevulan told him. "I'm so happy to hear that your fortune has turned for the better, but it wasn't my merits that enabled this to happen."

"Then how?" Akiva asked, confused.

"It was in the merit of your own emunas chachomim," his rebbi explained. "Your pure and untainted belief in the words of your rebbi that harnessed the siyata dishmaya needed to bring about this incredible brachah."

Often, when someone has a problem, they will try to go through it alone, to deal with it themselves in the hopes that things will get better. However, we should know that there is a very powerful avenue of salvation open to us, and that is the assistance of a mentor. As Hashem's messenger to teach us Torah, our rabbeim have a special siyata dishmaya to assist us, and that, coupled with emunas chachamim, will surely lead to salvation.

*Have a Wonderful Shabbos!*  
This story is taken from tape # A368

### **TORAS REB KALMAN HOTLINE**

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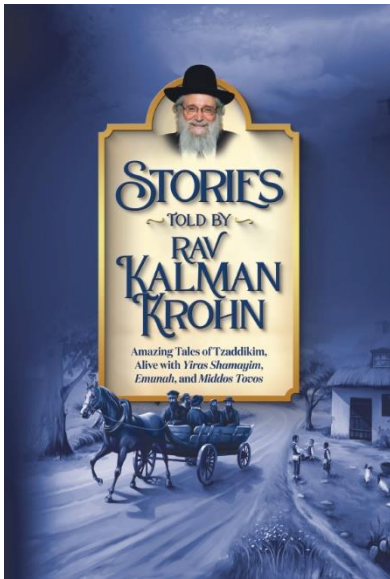
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