

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 Blind Man's Vision

Rav Shalom Schwadron was of the greatest maggidim of the previous generation. He would travel around the world and give fiery shmuessen that inspired and uplifted and spurred Yidden to change for the better. I merited to have a personal relationship with Rav Shalom, and I heard the following story directly from him.

Rav Shalom Schwadron began his career as a maggid at the age of twenty-one. Already at this young age, he had the drive, the confidence, the charisma to inspire others, and he used it. He wasn't famous yet, not even very-well known, but he would say *shiurim* in *Chayei Adam* and *Mishnah Berurah* in the Shaarei Chessed

neighborhood in Yerushalyim, where he soon attracted a following.

When he was about thirty years old, some ten years into his *maggidus*, he was once sitting and learning when it suddenly hit him that he was wasting a tremendous amount of time being a maggid. Instead of spending every moment immersed in his Gemara, he had to go to shul to give speeches. What would be with his own *ruchniyus*?

Rav Shalom was a grandson of the famous Maharsham (Rav Shalom Mordechai Hakohen Schwadron), whom he was named after. The Maharsham was a tremendous *masmid* who would learn so diligently that he barely slept. It wasn't that he wasn't tired; he just loved Torah so fiercely that he figured out a way to keep himself awake so that he would be able to learn through the night.

He accomplished this by banging a nail into the ceiling and tied his *payos* to the nail. Then, he would learn and learn while standing under the nail, attached by his *payos*. If sleep would overcome him and he would start to drop into his chair, the tugging of his *payos* would painfully snap him back into alertness.

Rav Shalom was great at inspiring others, but now he began to worry what would be with his own Torah. How would he be able to become a *talmid chacham* if he spent so much time on the road and in front of lecterns? He desperately wanted to broaden his horizons in Torah, to be a *masmid* like his grandfather.

On the other hand, what about the Torah of the masses? If he abandoned his *maggidus*, what about all the Jews he could have inspired but didn't have the opportunity to hear him? Was it selfish of him to abandon the *klal* for the sake of his own learning?

He debated inwardly, unsure what to do. To immerse himself in Torah full time, or to continue as a *maggid*? His strong desire to become a bigger *talmid chacham* was weighing more heavily, and he was strongly tempted to give in to it.

There was a small eatery in Yerushalyim, run by a pious Jew, where Rav Shalom would eat lunch every day. As he walked to the eatery for the midday meal, his brows were still furrowed in thought. He arrived at the eatery and took his food to his usual table in the back. Concentrating on his dilemma, he barely noticed what he was eating.

The door of the eatery squeaked open and the blind Reb Tzemach entered. Everyone in town knew Reb Tzemach. At ninety years old, he was a fixture in the community. Completely blind in both eyes, he would walk down the streets by feeling the walls of the houses and buildings he passed. It was a common sight to see him cross the street, hand in hand with whichever kindly Jew was passing by at that moment.

Rav Shalom hastily stood up and went to take Reb Tzemach's hand. Patiently, he guided the elderly blind man to his table in the back and begged for the opportunity to sponsor his lunch. As they sat together, Rav Shalom decided to bring up his dilemma. Reb Tzemach was a fountain of wisdom and life experience, and the young *maggid* wanted to hear his take on the matter.

Reb Tzemach listened carefully, his mouth growing round with incredulity as Rav Shalom explained his doubts about remaining as a *maggid*. "Stop saying *shmuessen*?" he asked in shock when Rav Shalom was done. "Why would you want to stop saying *shmuessen*? Don't you realize the power of your words? You even saved my life with your *shmuessen*!"

Now it was Rav Shalom's turn to be shocked. "What do you mean?" he asked

uncomprehendingly. "My *shmuess* saved your life?"

The blind man nodded. "I'll tell you how," he said simply. "I was once walking down the street, groping along the buildings. I was feeling cold and alone and just very down. I have no family, and I am elderly, and I cannot see. I kept thinking to myself that if only I was able to see, I would be much better off!

"As I groped along, I suddenly heard your voice coming out of the *beis medrash* window. I stopped under the window to listen to your words, and you related the following from the Chofetz Chaim;"

There was once a man, a *talmid chacham*, who lived a long and fulfilling life. His days were filled with Torah and *chesed*, and he was a renowned *baal middos*. When he passed away, it seemed obvious that he would receive *Gan Eden*. He truly was a *tzaddik*, and each of his deeds was noble.

His judgement before the *beis din shel maalah* proceeded as expected. One by one, pristine white *malachim* marched onto the scale, weighing it down. When the judgment was over, these angels prepared to transport the *tzaddik* straight to *Gan Eden*.

At that moment, however, a big angel shaped like a hand marched in before the *beis din*. "Stop!" he cried. "This man hit a different Jew and he never did *teshuvah* for it! He was seventeen years old when he hit his friend, and he forgot about it before repenting!"

One who lifts his hand to hit another Jew is called a *rasha*, as learned from Moshe Rabbeinu's query to Dasan and Aviram, "*Lamah sakeh es*

rayecha?” The *halachah* rules that a Jew who hits another Jew is deserving of tremendous punishment. The Baal Hatanya brings down that in order to atone for such a sin, the hitter must stand before three people with his shoes off and they have to tell him, “*Mutar lach, mutar lach, mutar lach.*”

In the case of the *tzaddik*, he had once used his hand to hit his friend, back when he was just a teenager. The passing years turned him into a great *tzaddik* and the one-time deed was completely erased from his memory. But in Heaven, nothing is forgotten, and since he had not done *teshuvah* in his lifetime, the angel created by this deed had shown up at his judgement to ensure that he received his just desserts.

The *din*, which had already concluded, was opened again. The *tzaddik* was given the opportunity to respond to his accuser, and he did so with tears. “What do you want from me?” he begged. “I fulfilled the entire Torah!”

“True, but you hit a Jew and never did *teshuvah*. He never forgave you, and therefore you can’t receive *Olam Haba.*”

“But what about all the *mitzvos* I did?” the *tzaddik* protested. “One misdeed in my youth can’t just take away all the merits I’ve earned after years and years of complete devotion to Torah and *mitzvos.*”

“You are still deserving of your reward,” he was told. “However, we cannot give it to you until you atone for the time you hit your friend. You will go back down as a *gilgul*, and once you atone for your sin and return here, you will receive the *Olam Haba* that is rightfully yours.”

“Not *gilgul!*” the *tzaddik* cried. “No! I’m afraid that if I go down again to the world, I will ruin everything instead of fixing the one thing that I

did wrong! My life until now was perfect save for this one sin. But if I go down as a *gilgul*, I might end up doing many sins!”

“You don’t have much of a choice,” the angels told him. “You cannot receive your reward unless you go back down and atone for your sin.”

“What if I don’t have a hand in my second *gilgul?*” the *tzaddik* asked. “All my *ruchniyus* will remain up here, with the hand, where it cannot be lost and undone. I’ll be sent down again to the world to live without a hand, to atone for hitting my friend. In that way, I’ll be unable to spoil what I’ve thus far accomplished, so that when I finally achieve atonement for the one sin, I’ll return back up here to all the *ruchniyus* I’ve left here.”

The *beis din shel maalah* agreed. All the Torah and *mitzvos* were removed from the *tzaddik’s* soul, which was sent back down to the world and born to a baby without a hand. It was a tremendous relief for the *tzaddik’s* soul, for he knew he would not lose the accomplishments of his previous *gilgul*.

But down in This World, things didn’t look as rosy. A mother gave birth and was devastated to discover that her newborn was missing a hand. A deformed baby! A terrible tragedy! Cradling their deformed child, both parents cried and cried. They envisioned the baby’s difficult future, a future fraught with challenges and suffering, and their hearts bled for their poor infant.

But inside the deformed baby, the soul of the *tzaddik* was at peace. The newborn would grow older and he, too, wouldn’t understand the hidden reality. He, too, would cry over his plight. But when the time came for his soul to return to the World of Truth, it would become evident the lot that looked so pitiful was really something to be envied.

Just seventy years without a hand, and the soul of the *tzaddik* would enjoy *Olam Habah* forevermore.

Reb Tzemach gave a small smile. “I stood outside the window, and I heard you say this story. You had no idea I was listening, but what you said next turned my life around. ‘The Chofetz Chaim says that whenever a baby is born with an issue, it is sign of a holy *neshamah*. Let’s say a baby is born blind. It looks like a terrible heartbreak, but in truth, it’s a cause to rejoice. Perhaps the soul of the baby is a righteous *tzaddik* who once fell prey to a *nisayon* and looked at a woman, or other forbidden sights. He never did *teshuvah*, and so this is how he atones, by being born again into a blind body. This is not a tragedy, it’s a gift, an opportunity enabling him to reap his just reward forevermore.’”

Reb Tzemach could not see Rav Shalom, but he turned his face toward him. “Rav Shalom, look at me. I have no eyes, and I was so downcast. With your words, you breathed new life into me. I’m not a cripple, but a holy *neshamah* atoning for a sin done with the eyes!”

A serious expression came over his wrinkled face. “How can you stop giving *shmuessen*?” he demanded. “How can you deprive Jews of inspiration, of life?”

“You, too, changed my life,” Rav Shalom told the elderly Reb Tzemach. “I was so sure that Hashem wanted me to abandon *maggidus*, to submerge myself completely in Torah, but you opened my eyes to a different reality.”

Indeed, Rav Shalom continued in his role as a *maggid*. Throughout his long life, he gave thousands of *shmuessen* that inspired thousands of people, all to Reb Tzemach’s credit. He’d

inspired an elderly man, and merited for that inspiration to be returned by the blind man’s clear vision.

Have a Wonderful Shabbos!

This story is taken from tape #A436

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