

# 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 Sheikh's Secret***

Rav Moshe Galanty, a disciple and successor of the Bais Yosef, was a *gadol hador* who lived in Tzefas. He was intimately familiar with all aspects of Torah, including Kabbalah, and was well-versed in the seven wisdoms of the world.

While over the centuries, the world has produced great astronomers and mathematicians, biologists and physicists, chemists and medical doctors, rare is it that all seven of the world wisdoms are known by a single person. In Jewish history, however, many of our greatest leaders, including *tanaim*, *amoraim*, *rishonim*, and *acharonim* were versed in all seven wisdoms of the world, and Rav Moshe Galanty was one of them.

Living not far from Rav Moshe Galanty was a wealthy and brilliant Arab sheikh by the name of Ahmed, who was also knowledgeable in a broad variety of wisdoms. Unlike Rav Moshe, however, Sheikh Ahmed also possessed an uncanny ability to predict whether someone was going to live or die.

People who were ill would flock to him from far and wide to ask him to pray for them and to beseech him to bestow his blessing upon them. After hearing each petitioner's diagnosis and circumstances, Sheikh Ahmed would withdraw to an inner room to pray. He would emerge a half-hour later, and let the waiting petitioner know whether he would succumb to the illness or survive.

And he was never wrong.

Those who were told that they would live indeed ended up pulling through, and the ones who were told that they would die were, indeed, doomed for death. The sheikh's track record was perfect; he never made a mistake.

Rav Moshe Galanty heard about Sheikh Ahmed, and he was curious about the secret behind the sheikh's seemingly supernatural ability. Was he using spiritual strengths to help him determine whether or not his petitioners would die? In that case, Rav Moshe was interested in understanding what he did and how he did it. If the sheikh was using impure forces to make his predictions, however, then Rav Moshe wanted nothing to do with it.

He sent his *gabbai*, a tall, thin man named Nissim, to do some basic research on the sheikh and his lifestyle. Obliging, Nissim set out to find out as much as he could about the sheikh, and he discovered that Sheikh Ahmed, like sheikhs tend to be, was very wealthy.

“He lives in a huge mansion with many, many rooms and a tremendous courtyard,” Nissim described, his voice slightly breathless. “It seems that he never leaves his home. People flock to his house from all over the country and beyond, bringing him gifts and asking for advice. Most of his day is spent on receiving petitioners.”

Rav Moshe took a piece of paper and jotted something on it. “I want you to give this to the sheikh,” he told Nissim, slipping the paper into an envelope, sealing it, and handing it to his assistant.

Nissim took the envelope, his jaw hanging open in disbelief. “Give this... to the sheikh?” he echoed. “As in, stand on line in Sheikh Ahmed’s mansion together with the other Arabs?”

“Exactly,” Rav Moshe Galanty replied. “Tell them you have a message from the leader of the Jewish rabbis. Hopefully, they’ll let you in quickly.”

“And... the letter...” Nissim stammered. “If I may, what kind of letter am I bringing to the sheikh?”

Rav Moshe gave him a reassuring smile. “Don’t worry so much! There’s really no need for you to know what the letter says.”

Nissim left the room, a hundred nervous butterflies competing with tens of curious fireflies in his stomach. With jellied knees, he made his way across town back to the Arab sector. As he’d predicted, there was a long line of Arabs snaking along the courtyard of Sheikh Ahmed’s home, a mixture of worry and hope written across each face.

He summoned all his courage and bypassed the line, waving the *rav*’s envelope like a white flag as he excused himself to the grumbling and weary petitioners. “A letter from the rabbi, a letter from

the rabbi,” he mumbled apologetically, making his way to the very front where the sheikh’s assistant stood, leaning against the wall, waiting for the sheikh’s current audience to be over so that he could summon the next petitioner.

The assistant looked up as Nissim approached, his expression darkening at the sight of the Jew. “Yes?” he asked severely.

“I have a message from the rabbi, from the leader of the rabbis,” Nissim explained, holding up the envelope. “The great Rav Moshe Galanty sent me this message for the honored sheikh.”

The assistant uncrossed his arms. “Very well,” he said. “You may go in next.”

The door opened from the inside and an Arab emerged, his head bent, his forehead creased in worry.

“You’re next,” the assistant announced, holding the door open for Nissim. “Go inside. He’s seated at the far end of the hall. Bow.”

Nissim stumbled through the doorway and the door swung shut behind him. He looked around the cavernous room in awe. Sure enough, the sheikh was seated at the far end of the room. Clutching the envelope nervously, he slowly crossed the room until he was standing before the sheikh. But he didn’t bow.

Sheikh Ahmed gazed at him with open curiosity. It wasn’t an everyday occurrence that he was visited by a Jew and he noted that the Jew didn’t bow to him, as was customary. He pursed his lips and waited.

“Rav Moshe Galanty, the holy and wise Jewish rabbi, sent this message for the honored sheikh,” Nissim said carefully, placing the envelope on the small table beside the Arab leader.

“I see,” the sheikh murmured, slitting open the envelope and removing the paper. “Thank you.” He skimmed its contents quickly and then looked up. “Do you know what the rabbi wrote in this letter?” he asked.

Nissim shook his head. “I don’t,” he responded truthfully.

“Alright, then,” the sheikh said, returning the letter to its envelope. “Please tell the rabbi that I said, ‘tomorrow.’ You got that? Tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow,” Nissim repeated.

“That’s right. Tomorrow. You are dismissed now.”

Mystified, Nissim returned to Rav Moshe Galanty. “He said, ‘tomorrow.’”

“Tomorrow?” Rav Moshe echoed. In his letter, he’d asked the sheikh when would be a good time for them to meet, and the sheikh had responded that he wanted to meet the following day. “Excellent. Tomorrow it will be.”

After Nissim left the room, Rav Moshe’s thoughts returned to Sheikh Ahmed’s mysterious ability. *What does he know that I don’t know?* he wondered to himself for the umpteenth time. Even though he had a meeting scheduled with the sheikh for the following day, he was sure that the sheikh would not agree to spill his secret after just one meeting, but he felt it was his duty to try. He opened his *tehillim* and began to *daven* for success.

The next morning, Rav Moshe went into his wagon and drove himself to the home of the sheikh. This time, the sheikh was expecting him, and there were three servants standing at the entrance to welcome him and escort him directly inside.

Sheikh Ahmed had heard about Rav Moshe Galanty’s wisdom, and when the *rav* was led into the room, he stood up respectfully to greet him. “It is an honor for me to meet one of the wise leaders of the Jews,” he said warmly, offering his guest a chair. “I hear that you are well acquainted with all the various wisdoms of the world.”

“Somewhat,” Rav Moshe replied modestly.

The sheikh began to ask him questions, just to test his knowledge and witness his wisdom, but he quickly came to understand that Rav Moshe Galanty was far wiser and more knowledgeable than he was. He quickly changed his line of questioning from testing the *rav* to trying to resolve difficulties that had been bothering him for a long time. His respect for the *rav* grew greater and greater as Rav Moshe proceeded to clarify all the discrepancies that had been troubling him.

“I thought you were coming to me because of my wisdom,” Sheikh Ahmed finally admitted after a fascinating hour of mind-boggling responses, his tone awed. “But now I see that you are far wiser than I am. Thank you for coming! It would be a big honor for me if you could come back every week.”

“Of course,” Rav Moshe responded agreeably. “I, too, have met few people with your brilliance, and it is a pleasure to discuss complex topics with a learned and wise man such as yourself. I’ll be back next week, if Hashem wills it.”

The following week, when Rav Moshe returned to the sheikh’s mansion, there weren’t three servants waiting at the entrance in welcome, but the sheikh himself. He hugged his guest warmly. “Please, come inside! Having you come here is an incredible honor for me!”

“Likewise,” Rav Moshe responded. “It is an honor for me to come here.”

The sheikh was fairly vibrating with questions he wanted to share with the *rav*. He managed to wait until they were seated, but then the questions burst out of him, one after another. Rav Moshe, once again, dazzled the sheikh with his brilliance and clarity. After all, all his knowledge was drawn from the Torah, the source of all wisdom, and this enabled him to provide the sheikh with satisfying responses.

He couldn't help but wonder, however, where the sheikh had his own knowledge from. Although his wisdom was levels beneath the *rav*'s, from their conversations, the *rav* saw that the sheikh, too, was extremely wise and knowledgeable. Who had taught him? Which books had he studied?

When the sheikh reluctantly wined up their conversation and walked Rav Moshe to the door, he turned to his guest with a sheepish look on his face. “I know we discussed that you would come here once a week... and I know you are a busy man... but do you think you can come back in two days? I can't bear to wait a full week before we meet again!”

“Alright,” the *rav* agreed, silently thanking Hashem for causing him to find favor in the sheikh's eyes.

Over the next few weeks, the Rav Moshe Galanty went to visit the sheikh every two days. Slowly, they went through each wisdom in depth, only moving on to the next wisdom when all Sheikh Ahmed's questions were fully clarified. In the process, a close relationship blossomed between the unlikely pair, and the Arab sheikh began to feel very close to his new mentor and friend, the *rav*.

They went through six of the wisdoms in this manner, and then it was time to move on to the seventh.

“I'll be honest,” the sheikh admitted. “I'm the weakest in this specific subject. I haven't acquired this wisdom nearly as much as I have the other six. I don't even feel qualified to ask you any questions; I feel like I'm still on the basics.” He looked up at his guest with pleading eyes. “Would you be willing to teach me the seventh wisdom, from the foundation up?”

Rav Moshe's eyes lit up. This was his chance! “Well,” he said slowly, monitoring the sheikh's reaction as he spoke. “I can certainly teach it to you, but I would like to be compensated.”

“Of course! Of course!” Sheikh Ahmed cried agreeably. “How much do you want? I'd gladly pay any amount of gold or jewels that you think is fair.”

“Surely you don't believe that any amount of gold or precious stones can pay for wisdom,” the *rav* chided gently. “Wisdom is worth more than all the money in the world!”

“Well, then, how can I possibly pay you?” the sheikh asked.

“Wisdom and knowledge can be paid for with other wisdom and knowledge,” Rav Moshe said carefully.

“Okay,” the sheikh responded, just as carefully. He waited.

“They say that when someone comes to you and you pray for them, you can then tell them whether they will live or die,” the *rav* said quietly. “I want to know how you do it. What is your secret?”

The priest's face fell. “No,” he said shortly. “I'm sorry, but you'll have to think of another form of payment. This is something that I have learned

from my grandfather, who learned it from his grandfather. It's a family secret that I am simply unable to disclose. I'm sorry."

"Don't you want to know the seventh wisdom?" Rav Moshe reminded him. "I apologize as well, but in order for me to teach it to you, this is what I need as payment."

"I would gladly trade my secret for the seventh wisdom," the sheikh said, distressed. "But I swore to my grandfather that I wouldn't disclose the secret."

"You swore because you thought that nothing in the world was worth as much as the knowledge of the secret," the rav explained to him. "That reasoning was faulty, because now you see that there is something worth as much as the secret. I will teach you the seventh wisdom in exchange for the secret."

Sheikh Ahmed was silent for a long moment, clearly conflicted. He sighed. "Alright. I will teach it to you. You are a holy man, but still, that's not enough. In order for you to absorb this, you will need to fast for two days, going to the *mikvah* both days in the morning and at night. After two days, when you are weak from fasting, come to my house and I will tell you the secret."

Rav Moshe went home and undertook a fast of two days. As the sheikh instructed, he immersed in the *mikvah* in the morning and at night, all the while *davening* to Hashem to save him from stumbling into something improper. After all, he had no idea what the sheikh's secret was, and he hoped it wouldn't involve anything impure.

At the end of the two day fast, Rav Moshe Galanty was weak with hunger. A burst of adrenaline flooded his veins as he went to the sheikh's mansion, giving him unexpected

strength. A small tremor traveled down his spine. He was about to uncover the sheikh's secret.

Sheikh Ahmed was waiting outside for him. "Come with me," he called, leading his guest past the mansion to the vast property that lay behind it. Rav Moshe saw a small river protected by a manmade fence. Behind the river stood a small house.

"In that house, lies the secret," the sheikh suddenly said. "But the only way to go into that house is to first immerse in the river. When you are done, I will give you new clothing to wear." He showed the *rav* a small pile of white garments in his hand.

Rav Moshe Galanty recoiled. "I am a Jew," he said, his heart beating so fast that he was afraid it would burst. "I am not allowed to wear wool and linen mixed together. What are these clothing made out of?"

"I assure you that it is not made of wool and linen together," the sheikh promised.

"Is it *avodah zarah*?" the *rav* asked suspiciously.

"No!" the sheikh declared.

Rav Moshe hesitated. Then he walked through the gate and immersed in the river. When he was standing on the other side, dressed in the white garments, he saw the sheikh immerse himself in the river as well. Rav Moshe blinked. What was going on?

The sheikh came out of the water and donned an identical set of white clothing. Rav Moshe blinked again.

"Follow me," the sheikh said, withdrawing a key from his pocket. He unlocked the door of the house. "In this room, you are not allowed to say a word."

Rav Moshe followed him into the house, treading carefully on the gleaming white marble floor. All around him were gold and precious stones, and a white curtain hung down in the middle of the room, blocking the back half from his view.

The sheikh threw himself to the floor, bowing before the curtain. Then he stood up and pushed it away. Rav Moshe's breath caught in his throat.

There was a huge sign, its presence engulfing the entire room. On the sign was written the words, *Shvisi HASHEM l'negdi tamid*. The four letters of Hashem's name were very large, larger than the rest of the words, and they had been formed with diamonds.

Rav Moshe Galanty stared. He didn't dare utter a word. The sheikh ushered him out of the house, and only once they were out under the open sky did he finally dare to talk. "I don't understand. What is going on here? Are you really Jewish?"

"Jewish? I'm not Jewish, I'm an Arab!" Sheikh Ahmed responded. He might have smiled, but the sanctity of the room they had just left prevented him from doing so.

"Please explain to me what I just saw," Rav Moshe Galanty pleaded.

"I have a tradition from my grandfather that if someone purifies himself and prays to the Almighty, then he will be able to detect, based on the brightness of the gems that make up the letters *yud-kay-vav-kay*, whether the person he was praying for will die or not. When the stones shine brightly, then I know the person will live, but if it is dimmer than usual..." his voice trailed off.

The *rav* stared at him in astonishment. "Do you know what those words say?" he asked the Arab sheikh.

Sheikh Ahmed shrugged. "I'm not sure exactly," he said. "But it has something to do with Hashem." They walked back toward the mansion slowly. "Will you teach me the seventh wisdom?"

"I will," Rav Moshe Galanty promised. He knew he would later keep his side of the deal, but right then his mind was occupied with weightier matters as he tried to digest the enormous lesson that the Arab sheikh had just taught him.

The *shem* Hashem is everywhere, in every siddur and in every bencher. We say it tens of times a day. Do we realize the enormous power of the syllables we are uttering? Do we pay attention to what we are saying? And, as we go about our hectic lives, can we remember to treat the *shem* Hashem with utmost *kavod* and respect?

*Have a Wonderful Shabbos!*

This story is taken from tape #A123

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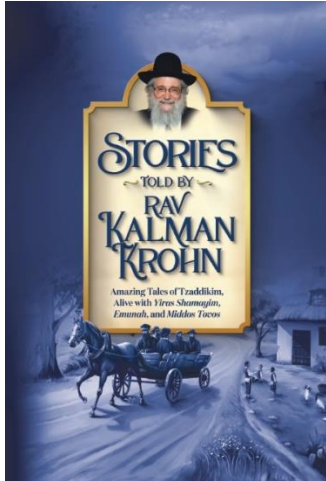
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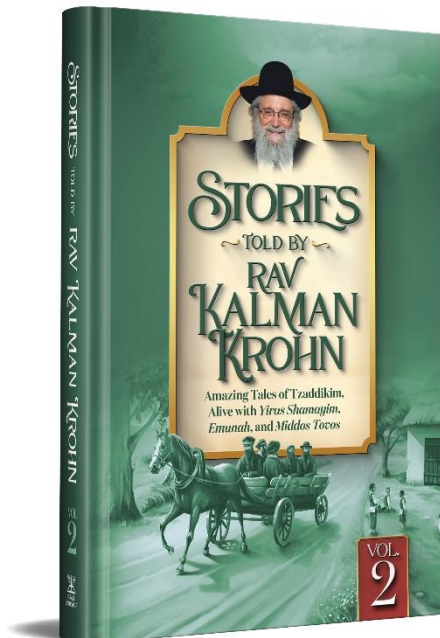
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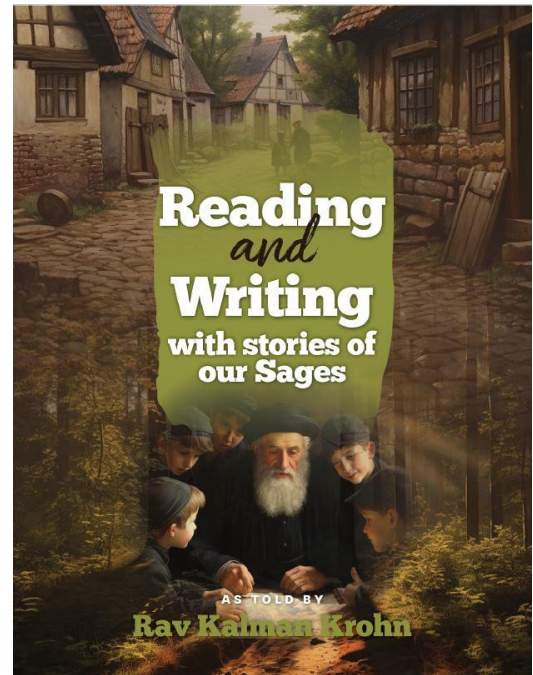
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