

TORAS REB KALMAN



סיפורי צדיקים

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

Beehive Booty Part I

Rav Meir'l Premishlan was a famous Chassidic tzaddik who lived in the late eighteenth century. He was so great that he could tell, from looking at a person's forehead, everything that was going on in his mind. He could see the person's history of mitzvos and aveiros, and even the gilgulim that the person's soul had previously lived.

Rav Meir'l Premishlan was named for his grandfather, also a great tzaddik. The following story is about R' Meir'l's, namesake and grandfather of Rav Meir'l Premishlan.

R' Meir'l worked as a middleman, brokering deals between buyers and sellers and earning a commission on both ends. His success in his field could be attributed to his trait of honesty, which marked every aspect of his dealings.

People trusted his word implicitly. If he told a seller that his merchandise was worth a certain amount, the seller would trust that his word was true, to the extent that he would sell him the merchandise for that sum without doing his own research into the value.

When he told a potential buyer that a stock of merchandise was good quality, the buyer knew that it indeed was so. They could trust him on whether they were getting a good price or if there was indeed a demand for the item. R' Meir'l's word was as good as gold.

His reputation was so impeccable that people lined up to do business with him. He didn't have to seek out sellers or buyers; they came to him, begging him to broker deals on their behalf. Even gentiles understood the value of doing business with him. With R' Meir'l, there was no funny business or underhanded maneuvers.

Due to the volume and scope of the deals he brokered, the small percentage he charged as commission for his efforts enabled him and his family to live comfortably. Since the work was pleasant and came naturally to him, he did not even have to work very hard. It seemed that he had found the perfect niche for parnasah: providing an in-demand service that was pleasant, enjoyable, and paid extremely well.

One day, however, R' Meir'l realized that although he did have a dream job, he didn't want to devote so many hours of his day toward mundane activity. "I only get to learn at night," he

reflected aloud. “Was this why I was put into this world? To negotiate over wagonloads of lumber or cattle?”

Although it would slice into his profits, R’ Meir’l made a firm decision to cut his hours. He was earning enough that he could support his family very comfortably off of only half a day’s work, and he wanted to spend more time in the bais medrash. He established a morning learning seder that he stuck to consistently, spending only the second half of the day in the marketplace brokering deals.

Once R’ Meir’l began learning half a day, the tug of his gemara made it harder and harder for him to return to the marketplace. He couldn’t bring himself to leave his beloved pursuit of Torah for the pursuit of money. He lengthened his seder another hour and then another until he was working for just one short hour every day.

“I really don’t see any reason for me to continue to remain in the business world,” he confided in his wife one day. “I didn’t come down to the world to be a broker; I came down to serve Hashem. What better way is there to serve Hashem then to learn Torah the entire day?”

“But if you learn the whole day, what will we eat?” his wife wanted to know.

“Hashem will help,” R’ Meir’l said confidently. “Hashem will send us food, don’t worry. All we need is a little bitachon.”

His wife still looked doubtful. “Meir’l,” she said slowly. “You truly are a tzaddik, and you are surely on the level that can merit Hashem providing for you without work. However, I am not a tzaddeikes, and I am not worthy of such a thing. Do you want us to starve?”

“You’re looking at it from the wrong perspective,” R’ Meir’l responded earnestly. “I only used to work because I thought that was what I needed to do in order to serve Hashem. But today I know that there’s another way to serve Hashem, a better way, and that is through learning Torah and trusting that Hashem will provide for us.”

His wife bit her lip. “Does that mean you will not be working anymore?” she asked, very quietly. She was upset, but she knew that there was no point in trying to change her husband’s mind once it was made up.

R’ Meir’l smiled. “You need to work on trusting in Hashem,” he said gently.

The next day, R’ Meir’l went to learn in the morning and remained in the bais medrash the entire day. It felt so sweet to remain immersed in the waters of Torah, without a care or worry in the world. Although his wife was not too happy, R’ Meir didn’t share her fears. For the time being, they had some savings, and when they used it up, he was certain that Hashem would send them more.

In the marketplace, news got around that R’ Meir’d had stopped working, and people had a hard time accepting this. Even with his reduced work hours, R’ Meir’l had been king of the marketplace. Everyone needed him; buyers and sellers alike flocked to ask his advice and utilize his services. It seemed certain that without R’ Meir’l involved, deals would be less profitable and more difficult to conclude.

Not willing to lose R’ Meir’l’s keen negotiating experience, the people went to his house to consult him regarding the value of their merchandise and his opinion on current trends.

They begged him to help them out with just one more deal, but no matter how strong the pressure, R' Meir'l held firm.

"I'm sorry," he would repeat, over and over. "I wish I could help you, but I'm not in that line of business anymore. I'm sorry."

The weeks passed pleasantly for R' Meir'l. He relished each moment in front of his gemara and did not, for a second, regret his decision. At home, however, his wife was not feeling exactly the same way. Although they had rationed their savings carefully, they were slowly burning through the money on food and firewood and other essentials.

"The children are hungry, Meir'l," his wife complained one day. "Why are you doing this to us?! What will happen when the money runs out? You must go back to work!"

"Hashem will provide even if I don't work," her husband replied, soothingly. "Hashem can do anything, and He will surely help us."

Igor was a lumberjack by profession. Tall and powerfully built, with broad shoulders and bulging muscles, he was capable of felling trees swiftly and ably, one after the other, without running out of breath. When he used his massive saw to chop the fallen trees into logs, it looked like a sharp knife slicing through a block of butter; quick, neat, and easy.

Wood, in those days, was an important commodity. Besides serving as the primary material necessary to build houses and furniture, it was used to heat homes during the winter, providing warmth, and thus life, in the harsh winter climate.

Igor was more than a competent woodcutter; he was one of the best in the region. But with his gruff, somewhat threatening demeanor, he found it difficult to form business relationships and deal with customers.

That was where a broker came in.

Having a middleman in the picture made everything easier. Using a broker enabled Igor to sell huge shipments of lumber at one time, without having to deal with each individual customer. It meant he was able to deal with just one person, who in turn was responsible for selling the shipment.

The small percentage of the profits that the broker took was worth every penny of his services. Especially considering that Igor's entire business doubled its profit since he stopped having to deal with customers. And even though the Jew Meir'l, whom Igor trusted completely, had recently started working very few hours a day, he still managed to negotiate successful deals that brought Igor a nice profit.

Igor didn't see R' Meir'l on a daily or even weekly basis. Most of the time, he was in the forest, logging. He only utilized R' Meir'l's services once every two or three months, when he amassed a very large quantity of wood and was ready to sell it.

One day, a few weeks after R' Meir'l stopped working altogether, Igor drove into town on his large wagon, which was pulled, as usual, by two strong oxen. He drove into the market square and jumped over the side of the wagon. "Hey," he called, and someone turned around. "Where's Meir'l? I need him for something important."

The man, a short, meek-looking fellow, blanched at the sight of the giant addressing him. "Uh," he

stammered. “Um...Meir'l doesn't work anymore.”

“What do you mean?” Igor boomed. “Meir'l doesn't work anymore? What in the world does that mean?”

“It means exactly that,” another man chimed in. With his fur-trimmed coat and self-assured manner, he looked to be the picture of a successful merchant. “It's terribly disappointing, and frankly, I still haven't found someone competent enough to take his place.”

“You mean, he's really not working?” Igor asked, dumbfounded. “But I need him!” He gestured at his wagon. “I have a beehive, a very large and heavy beehive. I found it when I was chopping down a tree, and believe me when I say that it was heavy. I needed two men to help me carry it to the wagon.”

The merchant glanced at the large mound in the wagon. It was a messy looking thing, with mud and branches clinging to it, but judging by the size of the lumberjack's muscles and the fact that he needed two people to help him carry it, the merchant could imagine just how heavy it was.

“Where can I find Meir'l?” Igor asked. “He's the only one I trust with the sale of this beehive.” Having no experience with honey harvesting, he really had no idea how much he could sell the hive for and had been hoping R' Meir'l would help him.

“He's *really* out of business,” the merchant in the fur-trimmed coat said, somewhat darkly. “He quit his job and I'm telling you that no matter how much I begged him, he refused to broker any deals for me, or for anyone.”

“Let me speak to him myself, thank you,” Igor retorted, his voice somewhat threatening. “With all due respect to you, I'd like to hear that from Meir'l with my own ears. Where does he live?”

The merchant recoiled in fear of the giant woodcutter. He mumbled R' Meir'l's address and hurried away before he got into further trouble with the huge man.

Igor parked his wagon and hired someone to watch over the beehive while he went to see R' Meir'l. Then he rented an agile mare and rode off in the direction of R' Meir'l's home.

At the sound of knocking, R' Meir'l's wife wiped her hands on her apron and rushed to answer the door. She found a very tall, very broad gentile looming over the doorway and shrank back, intimidated by his threatening figure.

The gentile, however, did not seem to notice how afraid she was. “My name is Igor,” he said, politely. “Your husband brokered many deals for me in the past. Is he here?”

“My husband is not in that line of business anymore,” R' Meir'l's wife responded, and a trace of worry seeped into her words. “Believe me, I am just as disappointed as you are, but Meir'l wants to devote his life to Torah study and there's nothing I can do to change his mind.”

“Don't worry, this won't take up too much time,” Igor assured her. “I just need him to help me sell a beehive that I found. It's a completely new market for me, and I need him just this one last time.”

“You can try if you'd like,” the wife said, shrugging. “But I have to warn you that you aren't

the first person asking him to broker a deal ‘just one last time’. He’s not going to do it.”

“He *must* do it for me!” Igor suddenly roared. “I insist!”

R’ Meir’l’s wife eyed the giant nervously. “Um, if you want you can come back at noon,” she said carefully. “My husband will come home then for lunch, and maybe he’ll agree to help you.”

“I’ll stay here until he gets back,” Igor conceded, leaning his massive frame against the doorpost. “He *has* to help me. He must!”

She disappeared into the house, keeping a careful vigil on the gentile from the window, where he could not see her. Both of them waited impatiently as the minutes ticked by. And both were extremely relieved when R’ Meir’l walked up the path to the house.

R’ Meir’l, his thoughts still very much in the *bais medrash*, didn’t notice his visitor until the lumberjack called out to him. He looked up, startled to see the gentile on his doorstep. “Igor!” he called back. “How are you? What brings you here? Didn’t you hear that I’m not in business anymore?”

“I did hear,” Igor admitted, following R’ Meir’l into the house. “But I really need you. Please, rabbi, you’re the only one that I can trust. I’ll figure out how to sell the wood myself, but you must help me with the beehive! I found a beehive and I am clueless about how the honey market works. I need you to tell me how much you can sell it for.”

“Igor, I feel bad, but I really don’t do this anymore,” R’ Meir’l reminded him.

“You don’t do it for other people,” Igor corrected him. “But you *will* do it for me. I need you to help me, rabbi!” He stood towering over R’ Meir’l, his brute strength suddenly menacing.

To be continued...

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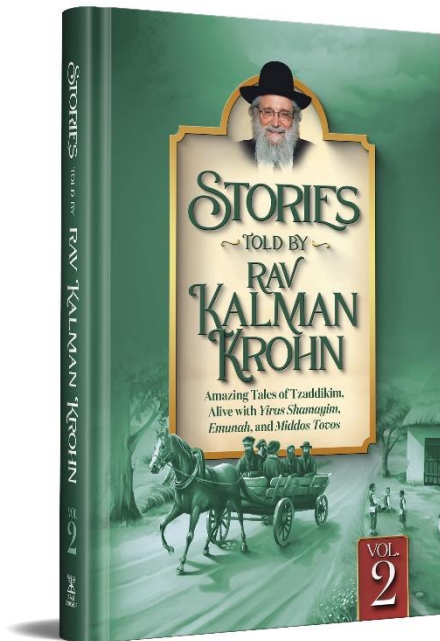
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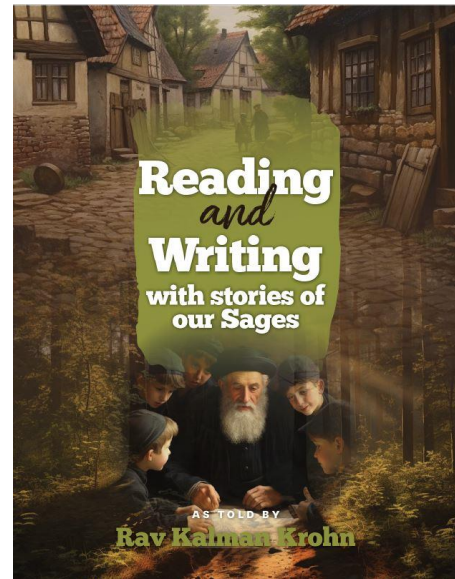
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Captivating stories full of Yiras Shamayim taken from Shmuessin that Reb Kalman Krohn z'tl gave in Adelpia Yeshiva

Beehive Booty ***Part II***

Recap: R' Meir'l (grandfather of R' Meir'l Premishlan) was a successful middleman, but he left his flourishing business to immerse himself in Torah, confident that Hashem would support him. A former client, Igor, came to his house insisting that R' Meir'l help him with one final deal, selling a beehive.

"Igor, I feel bad, but I really don't do this anymore," R' Meir'l reminded him.

"You don't do it for other people," Igor corrected him. "But you *will* do it for me. I need you to help

me, rabbi!" He stood towering over R' Meir'l, his brute strength suddenly menacing.

"I would love to help you, too, but I can't get started in this business again," R' Meir'l started to say. "Once I do it for you, I'll never be able to –." He caught sight of the anger on the woodcutter's face, and he began to reconsider.

He knew that if he agreed to help one person, even just one time, no one would ever leave him alone. They would nag and nag until they dragged him back into business. At the same time, Igor was looming over him dangerously, and he was truly afraid of what the giant was capable of doing if he didn't get his way.

"Listen, Igor," R' Meir'l said reluctantly. "I'm willing to help you, just this time. Just this time! Don't come back to me next week with the same story."

"I won't," Igor promised. "Thanks to you, I already have good contacts within the lumber industry. This is not a regular thing, this massive beehive."

"And this has to remain a complete secret," R' Meir'l warned. "I'm not going back to the marketplace, not to appraise the beehive and not to sell it. The last thing I need is for people to see me negotiating a deal. I'll never hear the end of it. If you want, you can bring the beehive here and I'll look at it. If you agree to my price, I'll buy it from you and figure out how to sell it further afterward."

"Rabbi, trust me, this is not an ordinary beehive," Igor said. "It's really heavy and it's huge. I've never seen such a large hive, ever. Wait here; I'll go back to the marketplace, where the hive is waiting for me on my wagon."

R' Meir'l sighed heavily when the lumberjack left. The last thing he wanted was to get involved in brokering a deal, but it was simply too dangerous to fight with a man as huge as Igor.

An hour later, Igor's deep voice sounded outside. "Rabbi!" he shouted. "Rabbi?"

R' Meir'l jumped up and hurried outside. Igor's wagon was standing on his front lawn, harnessed to two strong oxen. In the wagon was a tremendous beehive, covered in mud and branches.

R' Meir'l looked at the mini mountain on Igor's wagon with awe. "You cut this down?" he asked the giant. "It's completely yours?"

"One hundred percent," Igor replied firmly. "It's actually a crazy story, how I found the beehive. My oxen ran away, and I found them near a tree, a very solid looking tree. I decided to cut down that tree, and I found the beehive when chopping the tree into logs. It was as though the oxen knew there was a beehive in that tree!"

He gave a throaty laugh. "Tell me how much this is worth, rabbi, and I'll sell it to you."

R' Meir'l began removing the branches and mud clinging to the outside of the beehive. He could see the honeycomb and sticky honey from the outside of the hive, but it would be a huge job to get rid of all the junk and actually get inside the hive to see what it was worth.

In all honesty, he had no patience for the job and was not interested in getting involved. All he wanted was to get Igor off his back so that he could return to his primary occupation, learning Torah. He poked around a little before giving up.

"Igor, I don't really have time now to start taking the hive apart," R' Meir'l said, looking up. "With

all the mud covering it, it's nearly impossible to know how much honey there is inside. If you want, I can give you a fair price of what I think it's worth, judging from the outside. We'll both be taking a risk, because there's always the chance that my judgment was wrong, in which case I'll either have spent too much money or too little honey, or you'll have sold me a very valuable hive for a cheap price."

"How much would you be willing to pay, without looking inside?" Igor asked.

R' Meir'l looked at the beehive again. Based on the visible honeycomb, he made a quick calculation of how much honey was inside and named a price.

Igor jumped on it. "That's fine," he agreed. "That's a lot more than I had thought I might get for this. I'm comfortable selling it to you for that price even without knowing exactly what's inside. It's a risk that I believe is worthwhile for me to take."

"Let me get you the money," R' Meir'l said, disappearing into the house. There was not much money left from their savings, just barely enough to cover the cost of the hive, but R' Meir'l scooped up those coins.

"It's an investment," he told his wife. "Either we'll sell the hive, or we'll sell the honey."

"Great," she replied chirpily, grateful that her husband was finally doing some sort of hishtadlus for parnasah.

When R' Meir'l came outside with the agreed upon sum, he found Igor and two other gentiles struggling with the beehive. "Where do you want us to put it?" the lumberjack panted.

“Here, on the back porch,” R’ Meir’l said, taking them around the house. “Thank you. Just put it down here. Perfect.”

He handed Igor the money and they shook hands. “Thank you, rabbi,” Igor said gratefully. “No worries; I don’t plan on bothering you again. We had a deal!” He jumped onto his wagon and waved.

Relieved to be finished with the matter, R’ Meir’l watched Igor drive off and went back inside. “I really don’t want to have to do such a thing again,” he remarked, sitting down at the table for a quick lunch before he had to return to the bais medrash. “I was just afraid of him, and I figured that this was the easiest and fastest way to get rid of him.”

His wife gave a small, relieved laugh. “I’ll take care of selling the honey,” she offered. “And once we clean out all the honey, I’ll take care of selling the honeycomb as well. We can make a nice profit from the beeswax, can’t we?”

“If Hashem wills it,” R’ Meir’l said, standing up. “Thank you. I’ll see you later?”

“Sure, go learn,” his wife said agreeably.

After R’ Meir’l left, his wife gathered the children to help her carry the beehive into the house. That proved to be an impossible task for one slight woman and a handful of children. As much as they heaved, the beehive wouldn’t budge.

“Run call the neighbor,” she advised one of her sons. “And his grown sons. This thing will take a lot of adult muscles, that’s for sure. There must be a lot of honey in here.”

When the boy returned with the kindly neighbors in tow, they, too, struggled with the heavy hive. Finally, they managed to drag it inside and left it

standing in the middle of the room, a mass of mud and stickiness. Waving sticky hands, the neighbors left, leaving R’ Meir’l’s wife and her children to begin collecting the honey.

The two older daughters began collecting jars from around the house and emptying them out, preparing them for the honey. Meanwhile, their mother began to clean off the outside of the hive. Mud and leaves and twigs came raining down, and then bits of honeycomb... and then stones.

The more she dug around the ‘hive’, the more mud and stones she discovered. “We were conned,” she exclaimed out loud. “Besides the stick drops on the outside, there’s barely any honey left in this thing. It looks like someone got to the honeycomb first, emptied it out of honey, and then filled it up with stones!”

Her heart fell as she realized that her husband has spent the last of their savings to purchase the worthless hive. Weakly, she dropped into a chair, her eyes roaming dejectedly over the sorry mess created by the useless beehive.

“Mama,” one of her sons said quietly. “There’s nothing we can do about it now, is there? We have to accept that this was a decree from Hashem. Our parnasah will come from elsewhere!”

“You’re right,” she realized, as his words penetrated somewhere deep within her. “Parnasah is from Hashem. If it wasn’t meant to come from this beehive, it will come from somewhere else. In the meantime, let’s figure out how to get this thing out of here. At least we should have a clean house!”

“I’ll break it with a hammer,” her son offered. “It’s not like there’s anything in there that we have to be careful not to ruin, right? We’ll break

it up into pieces, and if we take out one piece at a time, it won't be so heavy."

He brought a hammer and began knocking at the beehive as large chunks fell away. The rest of the children began carrying the pieces of junk out of the house and their mother swept the dirt into a small pile. The massive hive was reduced almost to the bottom, with chunks of mud and rocks strewn about, when the hammer made contact with metal.

Clang!

"What was that?" R' Meir'l's wife called.

"I don't know," her son responded, bottom lip between his teeth as he peered into the tangled mess of mud and twigs. He picked up the hammer and hacked some more at the hive.

CLANG! This time, the sound of metal hitting metal was unmistakably louder.

"It's a coin!" he cried triumphantly, pulling out a dirty, round object from the hive. "And another coin! And another! It looks like... it looks like..."

His siblings joined him on the floor, pulling out one coin after the next. "It's a miracle, a miracle!"

The atmosphere in the house changed completely from mourning to merriment. The children began dancing among the mud and leaves as their mother began counting the coins. She bent over the sticky remnants of the hive and realized that there were many more coins still inside.

The family continued cleaning up the mess from the hive, working efficiently together, but this time, there was a spring in their steps as they skipped between the house and yard, getting rid of chunks of earth and cracked pieces of hive.

When R' Meir'l returned home from Maariv, his children greeted him excitedly, clamoring for his attention. "There was a *treasure!* A *real* treasure!" one son exclaimed gleefully.

"Coins!" his sister clarified. "A lot of coins!"

"What are you talking about?" R' Meir'l asked in confusion.

"There were coins in the beehive!" the children cried together. "Come see, come see!"

R' Meir'l followed them to the center of the room, where the bottom layer of beehive was resting on the table. The mud and stones, leaves and twigs, had all been removed, leaving behind a large pile of gold coins, a veritable fortune.

He looked at the coins openmouthed. "It's a miracle!"

"A true miracle," his wife agreed, smiling. "Just like you said all along, Hashem has provided for us, and plentifully."

But her husband's next words shocked her to the core. "Every penny goes to tzedakah," R' Meir'l announced.

"What?!" Her voice came out strangled, shock and pain and worry all jumbling together in her vocal cords. "Here Hashem helped us with a miracle, and you want to give it all away? Everything?"

"It's better not to benefit from such a miracle," R' Meir'l explained. "But although it's a miracle for us, it's not a miracle if we donate money through regular channels to the paupers of the town. We'll donate the money to poor people, and they will enjoy it."

This was too much for his wife to hear. She was okay if R' Meir'l were to give most of the money to tzedakah, but it was hard for her to understand why their own family didn't count as much as the other paupers in the city. With their savings wiped clean with the purchase of the beehive, they had absolutely nothing to live off of.

While her husband went to get a sack for the coins, she quietly siphoned off a few coins from the pile and slipped them into her pocket. She didn't stop to think if what she was doing was right or wrong; it was an instinctive act of a mother caring for her young. After all, even her husband couldn't argue the point that they were also paupers and thus eligible for tzedakah money.

R' Meir'l gathered up the coins in a large sack and promptly donated the entire sum to tzedakah. The following day, he returned to his beloved gemara without another thought, supporting his family for the rest of his life with the small amount of money his wife had taken from the beehive treasure.

For the remainder of his life, he toiled only in Torah, secure in the knowledge that his Father was looking out for him and his family, and that He would never abandon those who remained steadfast in their emunah and bitachon.

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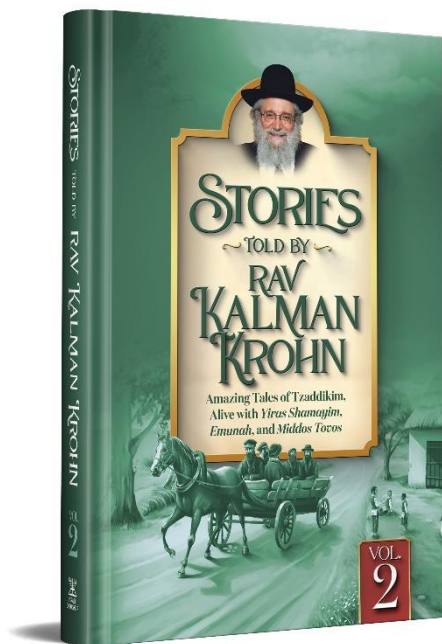
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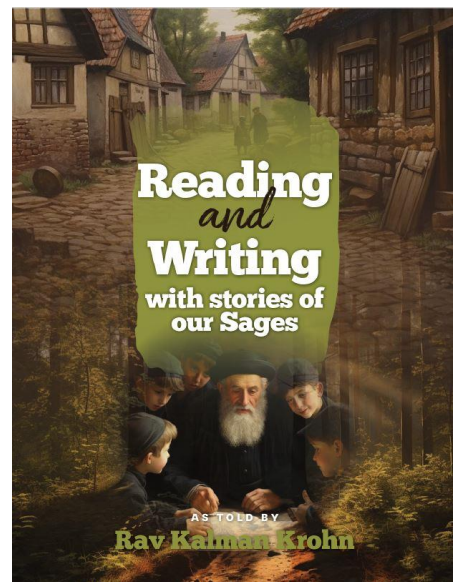
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