TORAS REB KALMAN

סיפורי צדיקים

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

The Mekubal and the King Part I

Rav Shmuel Abuchatzeira was a student of the holy Rav Chaim Vital and was a tremendous tzaddik and *mekubal* in his own right. He was a *kadosh v'tahor* who saved countless people from death through kabbalistic means. Even regular *mekubalim* were not aware of the methods he used to perform his wonders.

Rav Shmuel Abuchatzeira was an ascetic, one who distanced himself from worldly pleasures. He lived in an old, ramshackle home that looked more like an abandoned ruin than a dwelling place for a family. Even the ceiling wasn't complete, and whenever there was a storm, it rained right into the house. The family tried to cover the gaps in their roof, but each time they did so, a new crack formed. They realized it was a Divine intervention ensuring that Rav Shmuel, who didn't want to benefit even slightly from This World, didn't have the pleasure of a warm and dry home.

The study of Kabbalah needs to be done in solitude, and Rav Shmuel, who had many children running around, found it difficult to concentrate properly at home. With his wife's full backing, he decided to spend most of the day and night in shul, immersed in learning. With this plan in mind, he approached the gabbai of the local shul to request permission to utilize the vacant women's section.

"I'd like to pay for the room by serving as the shamash here," Rav Shmuel told the gabbai. "I'll clean up every day, and for that, I'll receive the key and permission to use the shul as much as I wish."

"You can certainly use the Ezras Nashim," the *gabbi* agreed. "But you are a great *mekubal*! It is not fitting for a man such as yourself to clean the shul. It's disgraceful."

Rav Shmuel shook his head. "I disagree. The shul is Hashem's home, and there is nothing more honorable than being able to serve Hashem in this manner. It would be my greatest honor to clean the shul."

The gabbai shrugged, understanding that this is what Rav Shmuel wanted. They wrote up a contract detailing the terms of their agreement, and Rav Shmuel received a key to the shul along with permission to use it whenever he wanted. In return, he pledged to keep the shul neat and clean.

Rav Shmuel was very humble, and he always dressed in pauper's attire as opposed to rabbinical garments. As shamash of the shul, he sat in the very back of the *bais medrash*, amongst the other paupers. However, despite his desire to appear

simple and not stand out, he was still given the most distinguished *aliyos*, because the fact that he was tzaddik and *mekubal* was well known.

During the day, Rav Shmuel would learn upstairs in the silent Ezras Nashim, swathed in his tallis and bent over his *seforim*. At night, after the shul emptied, he would wrap himself in his cloak and descend downstairs to the main *bais medrash*. Candle in hand, he would stand by the bimah and continue learning until *chatzos*. Rav Shmuel had a beautiful voice, and great tzaddikim would gather outside the windows of the shul to soak in the melodious *kol Torah*.

It seemed that Rav Shmuel never slept, because when *chatzos* arrived, he would stop learning to sit on the floor and recite *tikkun chatzos*. After that, he would learn Kabbalah until shortly before sunup. His face glowed like beacon as he studied the hidden secrets of the Torah by the feeble candlelight.

Shortly before the sun rose, he would stop learning to perform his duties as a shamash, cleaning up the shul and putting away the *seforim*. If it was cold, he would ignite the fireplace to warm up the shul in time for the first congregants. By the time he was done, the shul was ready for another day, and the people would begin streaming in for Shacharis.

Everyone knew that if someone needed a *yeshuah*, Rav Shmuel Abuchatzeira was the go-to address. His *tefillos* on behalf on those in need had a powerful effect on hastening the salvation. Beneficiaries of his *tefillos* tried many times to pay him, seeing how poor he was, but he refused to accept even a cent. He didn't want to reap any enjoyment from This World.

At that time, there was an antisemitic king who took reign. While most gentiles in that time period were not favorably inclined toward Jews, this king nursed a special hatred against the Jewish people. Immediately after ascending to the throne, he called for the eviction of the Jews from five border towns under his domain.

The Jews living in these towns were devastated, and they tried everything in their power to have the decree repealed, but all their pleas fell on deaf ears. The king didn't want to hear about the difficulties they would endure when they were homeless. He didn't care about the fact that thousands of families would be losing their property, their businesses, and the roof over their heads. It didn't bother him that thousands of little children, including infants, were being displaced.

And so, the decree was carried out. With brutal efficiency, all five towns were emptied out of their Jews. They could only take along whatever they could carry on their backs, and anything left behind was requisitioned for the army's use. The homes were torn down and the towns were rebuilt with fortresses protecting the country.

Hundreds of families were uprooted from the homes and communities, becoming refugees at the mercy of their brethren in other cities. With time, they were absorbed into the larger cities, where kindly Jews helped them rebuild their shattered lives and start over.

The king, following the progress of the evicted Jews with a greedy eye, began to wonder just how wealthy the city Jews were. So many of them had taken in homeless refugees that had been evicted from the border towns, and they seemed to be managing just fine with feeding additional mouths. To his mind, already twisted with hatred against the Jews, it seemed that they had plenty of extra money to spare.

Within weeks, he announced a new protection tax that the Jews of the city would be required to pay toward the king's coffers in exchange for the

protection they received from the army. This protection tax was an enormous sum of money, equal to half of the entire Jewish community's combined yearly earnings, and it was due in just two weeks' time. Needless to say, the Jews did not know how they could possibly come up with the required sum in time.

However, they realized that if they didn't come up with the money, the king would immediately withdraw his 'protection', which was akin to sending out an open invitation to the gentiles to kill all the Jews. They needed to come up with a plan to raise the money or all their lives were in danger.

The leaders of the community called a large gathering in shul to see how much money they could put together from all the members. However, even when they tallied every last available penny, it was not enough to cover the astronomical tax bill.

It was decided that they would send letters and representatives to the Jewish communities of towns all around the country, requesting donations. Hopefully, the generosity of their brethren would enable them to raise the full sum.

The problem with this plan was that it was impractical to complete it in just two weeks. By the time the letters reached the towns, it would already be more than a week. Then the people in those towns would need to spend the time collecting donations and sending the money back. By the time they raised the required amount, the king's 'protection' would long be lifted.

A group of representatives were sent to the king to request an extension of the deadline. "It's not that we don't plan on paying the tax, but we need more time in order to raise the necessary funds. We simply don't have the ability to raise it in such a short time. Please, Your Majesty, grant us another few weeks."

"Impossible," the king snapped. "I need the money immediately."

"Your Majesty, have pity on a poor and downtrodden people," the representatives pleaded. "So many of us were forced into exile, and all the Jews in the country are already subject to a tremendous tax. It is simply not feasible for us to raise even more money in just two weeks. If we had five weeks, we would be able to put together the sum."

The king's eyes hardened. "I'll give you five weeks," he said curtly. "But consider yourselves warned that if I do not have the money in five weeks, I am removing my army's protection and your lives will be bitter indeed."

"Thank you, Your Majesty," the representatives responded gratefully. "We'll have the money by then."

It was with an unsatisfying sense of accomplishment that they returned to the city with the bittersweet news that the king had agreed to extend the deadline. Now it was time to roll up their sleeves and get to work, collecting the money as fast as possible.

The *rabbanim* of the city gathered together with the *askanim* of the community to write the letter that would be shown to Jews all over the continent, depicting the harsh decree that hovered over their heads and asking for financial assistance to rescue an entire city of Jews from a terrible fate. They also tried brainstorming for additional ideas of how to raise the fantastic sum.

Suddenly, one of the *rabbanim* said slowly, "I'm remembering now that I once read about a great *mekubal* named Rav Shmuel Abuchatzeira. He's

a tremendous tzaddik and is known for his kabbalistic wonders."

"Rav Shmuel who?" the *rav* seated opposite him asked, obviously never having heard the name before.

"Kabbalah?" another *rav* responded skeptically. "Rav Chaim Vital was known to use kabbalah to create miracles, but I've never heard of anyone else who does it."

"Believe me, Rav Shmuel Abuchatzeira is a holy and elevated *mekubal*, and I heard many stories about miracles he performed," the first *rav* insisted. "Any time people are in need of a salvation and they turn to him, he's able to help them. We're sending out representatives to raise money anyway. I think that we should send a messenger to Rav Shmuel to ask him to daven for us that the decree be abolished."

"Not a bad idea," the other *rabbanim* agreed.

They worked on an accounting of all the towns they wanted to reach, and how much money they needed to collect in each town in order to raise the required sum. A large group of representatives were selected from within the community, and armed with the letter, groups of three were sent out in different directions to go from town to town and raise the money.

Three *rabbanim* set out in the direction of the town where Rav Shmuel Abuchatzeira lived. Along the way, they stopped off at every Jewish community and showed their letter. The Jews in the outlying towns responded generously, contributing funds to the very important cause, but the work was not easy. By the time they reached the town where Rav Shmuel lived, after many days of traveling and collecting, they were thoroughly exhausted.

It was nighttime when they pulled into the city, so they went to the shul to daven Maariv. Having no place to stay, they lingered at the back of the shul after Maariv, hoping that someone would invite them. As people passed them on their way out of the shul, most just walked right by without even noticing them. Even those who took the extra moment to greet them did not think to invite them for the night.

The shul emptied out, and they still had nowhere to go for the night. "We have some bread in the wagon," one of them remembered. "I'll go bring it in, and we'll have what to eat. Then we can sleep here in the shul for the night. In the morning, we'll find out who the *rav* is and take it from there."

The others agreed to his plan, and they ate their meager meal in the silence of the empty shul. All three were extremely tired, and they hoped to fall asleep right away on the hard benches of the shul.

Suddenly, they heard the creaking of stairs. Someone was coming down the steps from the upper floor of the shul! The three *rabbanim* looked at each other, fear in their eyes. They had thought they were alone. Who knew what kind of character had been hiding out upstairs?

Holding their breaths, they watched as an elderly pauper came into view, holding a candle in his hand. He noticed them immediately. "Hello. Can I help you?"

"Um, we just came to town, and we're looking for a place to stay," one of the *rabbanim* stammered. "We didn't have anywhere to go, so we thought we would sleep here."

"Can I ask why you came to town?" the beggar asked curiously.

They told him the entire story, concluding with the campaign that the community had embarked on to raise the money from Jews in other towns. "We're looking to meet with the *rabbanim* of the town," they told him. "Perhaps you can direct us to them."

"But first, you need a place to sleep," the pauper reminded them. "I would say that the best place for you to go is to the home of R' Nissin, the president of the Jewish community. He's a very distinguished man, and wealthy, and he'll take care of you. He'll give you a place to sleep, he'll bring you to *rabbanim*, and he'll help you raise money."

"But he doesn't even know us," the *rabbanim* protested. "Are you sure he'll agree to take us in? No one offered us a place to sleep before, after Maariv."

"Don't worry about that," the poor man responded. "Just tell him that Shmuel Abuchatzeira told you to come. He'll let you in."

"How will we find his house?" one of the *rabbanim* wondered.

"I'll take you there," the elderly beggar offered. He put on his torn coat and walked them through the darkened streets until they reached the block where R' Nissin lived. "You see that house, with the windows still lit up? That's where R' Nissin lives. Tell him Shmuel Abuchatzeira sent you."

The *rabbanim* watched as their elderly benefactor turned around and hurried back in the direction of the shul. Then they walked up to R' Nissin's front door and knocked.

The door was opened immediately by the man of the house himself. "How can I help you?" he asked pleasantly.

"We're sorry that we're here so late," the *rabbanim* responded. "But Shmuel Abuchatzeira told us to come here."

R' Nissin looked at them strangely. "You must mean Harav Hagaon Hatzaddik Rav Shmuel Abuchatzeira," he corrected them. "In this town, we don't call him by his first name. He's a tremendous tzaddik!"

The *rabbanim's* faces registered surprise. "We… we had no idea," they stammered. "He looked like a beggar. We didn't realize who he was."

"Come inside," R' Nissin said, opening the door wider. "Let's sit down, and you'll tell me what is going on."

They handed him the letter, and then, for the second time that night, the three *rabbanim* repeated the entire story of the tax. "We're in a very precarious situation. If we don't come up with the money on time, the lives of thousands of Jews will be in danger. We also have a letter that we are supposed to give to a great *mekubal* who lives in this town by the name of Rav Shmuel."

"Rav Shmuel Abuchatzeira!" R' Nissin cried. "That's the *mekubal* who sent you here. He's the one you need."

Their faces turned white. "We need to ask him for forgiveness," they told their host. "Can you please come with us to apologize? We didn't realize who he was, and we didn't accord him the respect he deserves."

R' Nissin just smiled. "Don't worry about it. You don't need to ask him for forgiveness. He's very humble, and he likes to act like he's a simple shamash. I'm sure he wasn't offended in the slightest. And if he sent you here, that means he is already aware of the situation. You can rest assured that everything will be okay."

He served them a hearty meal and then showed the exhausted travelers to their beds.

In the morning, they joined R' Nissin when he went to daven Shacharis. When they arrived at the shul, they saw Rav Shmuel straightening up the chairs and putting away stray *seforim*. The three *rabbanim*, now aware of Rav Shmuel's true greatness, were in awe of his humility.

After Shacharis, they approached him to apologize for not treating him as respectfully as they might have had they known who he was. "Please forgive us," they requested.

"I never had any hard feelings against you," Rav Shmuel told them. "If it makes you feel better, then I'll tell you that I forgive you, but I truthfully didn't feel even the smallest grudge against you."

"Rebbi, please help us," they pleaded. "Our entire community is in terrible danger." They handed him the letter and waited to hear his response.

Rav Shmuel took the letter and read the entire thing slowly and carefully. He was silent for a long time, lost in his thoughts. Finally, he said, "Come back here tonight at ten o'clock. The door will be locked, but if you knock, I'll open it for you."

As soon as they left, Rav Shmuel ran out of the shul. His face was extremely serious, and he ran with a sense of purpose as fast as his legs could carry him. Soon, he reached the forest, where he knew of a well that kept refilling itself. Such a well, called a *maayan*, is even more pure than a *mikvah*, and he immersed himself in it once, twice… three hundred and ten times. While he was immersing, he had no thoughts on his mind other than the name of Hashem.

For the rest of the day, he remained in the forest, davening to Hashem to bring a *yeshuah*. He didn't eat, he didn't drink, he didn't sleep. When the time for Minchah arrived, he threw himself on the forest floor and began crying and screaming to Hashem, begging for permission to use Hashem's name through kabbalah. He immersed himself again and then he returned to the shul.

During Maariv, the other participants in the minyan were shocked when they observed Rav Shmuel daven. Instead of standing or sitting as usual, he threw himself to the floor every time he said Hashem's name. It was frightening to watch.

When Maariv was over, the people left the shul, saying their goodbyes to the holy shamash as they filed passed him. Rav Shmuel responded in kind, but didn't look at anyone as he spoke to them. As soon as the room emptied out, he closed and locked the doors and hurried upstairs to the *ezras nashim*. Opening his holy *seforim*, he began to be *meyached yichudim,* which is a kabbalistic ritual.

At ten o'clock, there was a loud knock on the door of the shul. It was the three *rabbanim*, who had come as instructed. Rav Shmuel went downstairs and opened the door, keeping his gaze averted from their faces.

"I asked you to come here because a few minutes before twelve o'clock, the king himself will be here in this *beis medrash*," Rav Shmuel told them, his eyes closed. "If you are strong, you'll be able to see him. If you are afraid, you won't have to see it."

The *rabbanim* grew frightened, realizing that the power of kabbalah was at play. "What do we have to do?" they asked.

"You can stand in the back of the *bais medrash* and watch," the holy *mekubal* said. "But under no circumstances may you scream or cause any disruptions. If you think you're strong enough to handle watching everything without making a

sound, you are welcome to stay. You are respected *rabbanim*, and I want to show you the power of holiness of the *shem* Hashem. But if you are not strong enough to handle it, then make sure to leave soon because he'll be here shortly before twelve."

With that, he went back upstairs to the *ezras nashim* to continue being *meyached yichudim*, leaving the three *rabbanim* to make their own decision. At eleven thirty, he began the final *yichud*, setting into motion a kabbalistic wonder.

Four angels descended in a pillar of fire, and they took on the guise of fearsome people. Using the *shem* Hashem, the angels grabbed the king from his palace and brought him to the shul. As soon as Rav Shmuel finished his *yichudim*, he saw the four angels holding the king, whose hands were bound.

To be continued…

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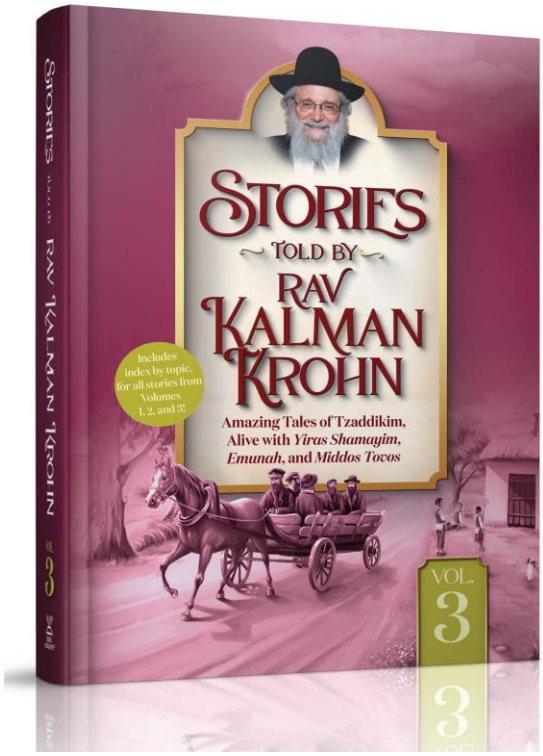

TORAS REB KALMAN

סיפורי צדיקים

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

The Mekubal and the King Part II

RECAP: *The antisemitic king imposed an impossibly high tax on the Jewish community, threatening them with a terrible pogrom if they didn't pay it. Three rabbanim went to ask the mekubal, Rav Shmuel Abuchatzeira, for help in saving the community. Rav Shmuel agreed to help, and after immersing himself in holiness the entire day, he used the forces of kabbalah to bring the king from the palace to the shul.*

Rav Shmuel Abuchatzeira went back upstairs to the *ezras nashim* to continue being *meyached yichudim,* leaving the three *rabbanim* at the back of the shul. At eleven thirty, he began the final *yichud,* setting into motion a kabbalistic wonder.

Four angels descended in a pillar of fire, and they took on the guise of fearsome people. Using the *shem* Hashem, the angels grabbed the king from his palace and brought him to the shul. As soon as Rav Shmuel finished his *yichudim,* he saw the four angels holding the king, whose hands were bound.

The three *rabbanim* were standing silently in the back of the room, quaking in fright as they witnessed the scene. One of them couldn't handle the tremendous holiness in the room and passed out. The others managed to stay awake but were trembling uncontrollably.

Rav Shmuel knew that the *malachim* only work until *chatzos*. He only had a little more time left before they wouldn't be able to help. Turning to the four angels, who were dressed as people, he instructed. "Take the king outside to the courtyard of the shul. There's a well there, and a bucket. He should keep filling up the bucket until it's full to the top. If he stops, you should beat him until he continues."

The angels took the king outside to the well. A bucket rested beside the well, and they ordered the king to fill up the bucket cup after cup.

"What do you mean? I am the king!" the king responded angrily, unwilling to perform such menial labor. "Where am I? What is going on here?"

"Take this bucket and fill it up," the angels commanded. "And if you don't obey, you will suffer."

"I'm a king," the king protested. "I can't!"

One of the angels picked up a stick and whacked him on the back. The blow was so powerful that it nearly knocked the king senseless. Realizing he had no choice, the king filled the cup in the well and poured it into the bucket.

To his chagrin, he quickly realized that the bucket had a hole. Whatever he poured in immediately came dripping out. He kept on refilling the cup and pouring it into the bucket, but he was making no progress. He was getting exhausted, and he stopped for a moment to rest his weary hand, but one swift reminder from

the angel's stick had him quickly resume his pointless task.

He kept pouring cups of water into the bucket as his hand cried out in pain from the nonstop motion. He continued until he couldn't any longer, but each time he took a break, he was beaten by the angels. Bloody and aching, he was a sorry sight and bore little resemblance to the well-groomed king he'd been just a few hours earlier.

It got closer and closer to twelve o'clock. About three minutes before the clock struck twelve, Rav Shmuel instructed the angels to take the king back. It was *chatzos*.

All of the sudden, there was a huge storm. Thunder roared outside, shaking the *bais medrash,* and lightening streaked across the sky. The king and the angels disappeared.

Rav Shmuel finished being *miyached* the *yichud.* He was sweating profusely, having spent a tremendous amount of mental energy. He turned around to face the three *rabbanim* at the back of the room. One of them was sitting on a chair, while another was sprawled out on the floor in a faint. He slowly came back to himself and sat up.

"If you don't have the strength, you shouldn't watch," Rav Shmuel cautioned him.

"Was that the king? How did *rebbi* do it?" one of the *rabbanim* asked, his voice still shaking from the frightening scene he had witnessed.

"It was the king," Rav Shmuel confirmed. "And I did it through Kabbalah."

"And what of the decree?" the *rabbanim* asked breathlessly. "Were you able to have it annulled?"

Rav Shmuel gave a slight shake of his head. "No, not yet. If you'd like, you can return here tomorrow at the same time. The king will be back, and this time, he'll go through even more. However, only come if you will have the strength to bear it. And you may not tell anyone about this."

With that, he bid the three *rabbanim* good night. Still trembling, they made their way through the dark streets to R' Nissin's home, where they were staying, and tried to get some sleep.

The following day, Rav Shmuel returned to the forest. He repeated the same procedures as the previous day, throwing himself onto the earthen ground and davening fervently for Hashem's salvation. Then he immersed himself in the well 310 times and concentrated on *yichudim* until nightfall, when he returned to the shul.

At ten o'clock that night, two of the three *rabbanim* knocked on the door of the locked shul. The third *rav*, who hadn't had the strength to watch the events the previous night, did not return.

Rav Shmuel let the *rabbanim* in and directed them to the back of the *bais medrash* to await the king's arrival. His eyes were screwed shut in concentration as he focused on his kabbalistic thoughts.

Just as he finished his final yichud, the king suddenly appeared in the *bais medrash*. He stood right in front of Rav Shmuel, flanked on both sides by angels in the guise of people.

"Take him out to the well, just as he did yesterday, and have him fill up the bucket," Rav Shmuel instructed the angels. "And if he pauses for even a moment, give him a beating twice as intense as yesterday."

"I'm the king!" the king protested, angry blotches appearing on his cheeks. "Who are you? What are you doing to me? How did I even get here?!"

His cries were completely ignored. The angels marched him outside and handed him the cup and bucket. Having no choice, the king began the

pointless task of pouring one cupful of water after another into the bucket, only to watch it all stream out. Whenever he paused for a break, he received a vicious lashing from all four angels.

As his strength waned, the only thing that kept the king going was the painful memory of the previous beatings he'd received. It pushed him to continue drawing cup after cup from the well and depositing it into the bucket even as his hands became numb from the nonstop work. But memory alone wasn't enough to force his hands to work when they simply got too tired, and soon every inch of his body tasted the brutality of the angel's whips.

Just before the clock struck midnight, Rav Shmuel suddenly cried out, "Enough! Take him back!"

A huge flash of lightening streaked across the sky, accompanied by thunderous booms. The king and the four angels disappeared.

A sweaty Rav Shmuel turned to the two *rabbanim* who were still standing in the back of the *bais medrash*, shaking in awe. "Did you see what the name of Hashem can do?" he asked them. "When one is close enough to Hashem, anything can happen."

Meanwhile, the king was brought back to the palace and placed gently in his canopied bed. The next thing he was aware of was the fact that many of his bones were badly broken and that he was bleeding all over. He began screaming, and his loyal guards came running.

"Why didn't you watch over me?" he demanded angrily of the guards. "I told you yesterday what happened, that I was abducted from my bed. And tonight the same thing happened! You are to blame for my injuries. You should have been protecting me!"

"Your Majesty," the boldest of the guards said carefully, bowing. "We were standing right outside your room. We did not see you leave, and all we know is that now you are here. We did not allow any intruders in the entire night."

"It's your responsibility to ensure that nothing happens to me," the king retorted coldly. "And if such a thing ever happens again, I will kill all of you. From now on, I want twenty-four-hour protection, right at my side. I need a full security detail surrounding me at every moment of the day and night. Is that clear?"

It was clear, and the guards took their new orders very seriously. They arranged round-the-clock security for the king to ensure that he was always physically surrounded by the ablest body guards.

For the next twenty-three hours, nothing out of the ordinary occurred. The king went about his daily schedule almost normally, with his new security detail filling the space around him no matter where he was.

When night fell, he prepared for bed and went to sleep, a full crew of guards surrounding his bed. As he lay on his pillow, he thought about his experiences the previous two nights and tensed, wondering what was in store for the coming night. Then he saw the guards lining both sides of his bed and relaxed. He was safe for now.

All of the sudden, the king felt himself being lifted out of his bed, and before he could process what was happening to him, he was back in the Jewish synagogue facing the wizened face of the old pauper whose face haunted his nightmares. He gritted his teeth in rage. Why hadn't the guards stopped his abductors? Why had they allowed this?!

"Take him to the well!" the elderly beggar instructed the four men who were now flanking him, and they dragged him outside to continue the job of filling the bucket with the hole.

This time, his tormenters seemed to gloat even more in his suffering, if that were at all possible. They forced him to work faster and faster, and if he faltered momentarily, their sticks were not at all shy about

giving him a rigorous whipping. No matter how quickly he worked, it was not enough to satisfy the four men, who seemed to be looking for more excuses to beat him. The torture was indescribable.

After what felt like an eternity, the old beggar finally gave the order to stop. The next thing the king knew, he was back in his bed, his entire body yelling out in pain. Strangely, his guards were still surrounding his bed, weapons drawn, seemingly oblivious to what had happened to him.

He whirled on his guards furiously. "You are all worthless!" he roared. "You were standing right here, and you couldn't even protect me! Thanks to your incompetence, I went through another nightmarish experience, and you didn't do anything to stop it from happening!"

The guards gaped at him, openmouthed. They could see that the king was in terrible pain, and he was obviously suffering from physical injuries, but they had no idea how he sustained such blows. They had been guarding the monarch devotedly the entire time, and they hadn't seen him leaving or returning.

Grunting in pain, the king dismissed the entire guard detail, vowing to deal with them later. Then he summoned his closest advisors. "I don't care that it's still the middle of the night," he snapped at his servant. "I need them *now*."

When his advisors arrived, the king related the entire story, describing the events of the previous three nights. "My abductors are somehow able to overcome the guards," he grumbled. "I need a different idea. I will die if I am forced to continue this much longer."

His advisors were silent for a long moment, digesting the story and trying to come up with a plan to outsmart the wily intruders who managed to infiltrate the palace and kidnap the king night after night.

"Your Majesty," one of the advisors finally said. "If I may?"

"Speak," the king said tiredly, wincing from the pain of his wounds.

The advisor bowed. "Your Majesty, this is clearly a Jewish plot," he said carefully. "You were in a Jewish synagogue, and the old man who was giving the orders was Jewish as well."

"Correct."

"It seems to me that the Jews are utilizing a holy power to carry you from your bed to their synagogue without anyone noticing," the advisor continued. "It is well known that the Jews are a mystical people, and they must be practicing some sort of witchcraft to accomplish this feat. We don't have anything to counter the forces they are using."

"What are you trying to say?" the king growled. "Am I doomed to suffer nightly torture for the rest of my life?

"I believe that the power to stop these experiences lies in the hand of the old Jewish beggar you saw in the synagogue," the advisor continued, glancing at his colleagues for support. They all nodded in agreement. "Therefore, I would advise that, in the event that you meet up with him again, Your Majesty should take the opportunity to speak to the old man and ask him why he chose to do this. Ask him what can be done to ensure that it doesn't continue. Once more information is received, we can advise on how to proceed further."

"That means that in order to help myself, I need to go through at least one more night of horrific abuse," the king said despairingly.

His advisors looked away uncomfortably. "It happened three times, and perhaps that was enough for the old man," they suggested feebly. "Hopefully, the ordeal is over and Your Majesty will sleep peacefully all night. But in the event that it does happen again, it would be wise if Your Majesty utilized the opportunity to speak to the elderly beggar

to try to determine the best way to stop the experience from recurring."

The following day, Rav Shmuel Abuchatzeira returned to the forest. It was his fourth consecutive day spent in the solitude of the woods, immersed in holiness and kabbalah. He hadn't eaten nor slept in nearly four days, and by the time he emerged from the forest after nightfall, he was extremely weak from his extended fast.

Shortly before *chatzos*, the king once again appeared in the shul. "Take him out to the well, and have him fill up the bucket," Rav Shmuel instructed the angels that had appeared together with the king.

"Wait!" the king cried. "Please, tell me why this is happening to me! What did I do to deserve such torture, night after night? And more importantly, what can I do to make it stop?"

Rav Shmuel regarded him sternly. "*Rasha*," he uttered. "Evil man! Don't you know how many Jews you tortured? How many Jews are suffering as a result of your vicious decrees? You forced entire towns out of their homes, stole their possessions and their property, and razed their homes to the ground. You imposed exorbitant taxes that are designed to make every single Jew starve, and even with starving, it is impossible for them to come up with the kind of money you are demanding. On top of that, there's a threat of a terrible pogrom hanging over their heads! And you're not even sure what you did to deserve this torture?!"

The king bowed his head, but Rav Shmuel wasn't done. "You must give the Jews back all their money, and I mean *all* their money, which you stole through excessive taxes. And you must build back the Jewish homes that you destroyed, return all stolen property, and allow the Jews to return to their native towns. For the next ten years, you must waive all taxes for the Jews, even the regular ones that gentiles are required to pay.

"If you don't," Rav Shmuel continued, his voice tougher than steel. "If you don't do all these things, then you and your entire family will die a gruesome death. Consider yourself warned."

The king jumped at the opportunity. "Of course!" he exclaimed quickly. "I promise I will do everything you just said. I will never try to harm the Jews again, and I will make everything up to them. I swear that had I originally understood the holiness of the Jews, I would never have tried to harm them in the first place. Please forgive me!"

Rav Shmuel didn't accept his platitudes so quickly. "I'll need you to sign a document overturning the decrees and committing to everything I've said."

"But I don't have my signet ring," the king said, waving his bare hand.

"That's not a problem," Rav Shmuel informed him. "I will have your signet ring brought here to you." He said a certain *shem* Hashem, and within seconds, the king's signet ring was resting on the bimah nearby. He said another yichud, and an angel brought them the ring.

They carefully wrote out an edict, enumerating all the actions the king agreed to take to rectify his harsh treatment of the Jews residing in his territories. When everything was stipulated in clear, unambiguous phrases, the king signed his name on the bottom. Rav Shmuel added his own signature beneath the king's, and then the king stamped his signet ring on the document.

"Remember what I told you," Rav Shmuel warned as the king slipped his signet ring onto his finger. "If you don't abide by the terms of our agreement, you and your entire family will be destroyed off the face of this earth."

"Rabbi, I promise you that I will fulfill everything I agreed to here," the king pledged, gesturing at the signed document. "And please bless me with renewed

health. My entire body is broken and bruised thanks to my nightly excursions to the well, and I am in a lot of pain. Please bless me that I recover quickly."

"If you are good to the Jews, then you will be fine in no time," Rav Shmuel told him.

Then the angels grabbed the king, and in another burst of thunder and lightning, they all disappeared.

The three *rabbanim* were overwhelmed with gratitude to Hashem and to His messenger, Rav Shmuel Abuchatzeira, for saving their community from complete ruin. The salvation had been brought about through Rav Shmuel's elevated kedushah, a level of holiness that few others have merited to reach.

After thanking the *mekubal* from the bottom of their hearts, the three *rabbanim* left on the journey back to their hometown to report the good news that the decree was going to be repealed.

Indeed, it was so. The exorbitant tax was rescinded, and the Jews were reimbursed for all the excess taxes they'd already paid since the time the king had ascended to the throne. The refugees were allowed to return to the towns where they'd been banished from, their homes were rebuilt, and their assets returned.

From then on, the king always treated the Jewish community with utmost respect, and for the rest of his reign, his country served as a haven for Jews.

Have a Wonderful Shabbos!

This story is taken from tape # A360

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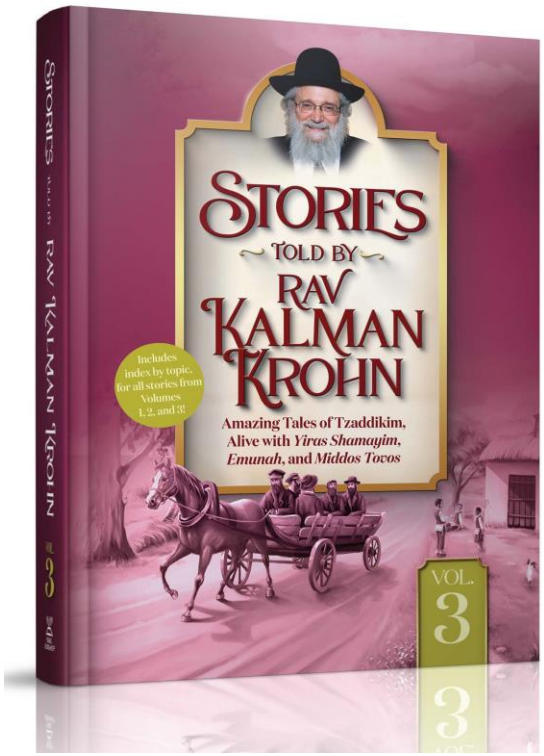
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