**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Beshallach 5774**

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**The Rabbi’s Motorcycle Accident**

**By** [**Hershy Drukman**](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/14997/jewish/Hershy-Drukman.htm)

It’s Friday afternoon in central Paris.

It’s close to Shabbat, so I get on my motorcycle and head home.

I live in France, serving as a Chabad emissary in S.-Maur-des-Fossés, a small city [about 20 kilometers] south of Paris.

It’s raining heavily, and the pavement is slippery. I slow down, adjusting my helmet.

Suddenly I notice a sports car entering the intersection. The driver hasn’t noticed me approaching at high speed.

The situation is dangerous, and my heart races. What to do? Brake on wet pavement at 80 km/h? I am in danger of rolling over. To continue? A collision is unavoidable.

I brake quickly. The motorcycle skids, and I fall to the ground. I am waiting for the approaching cars. Are these my last moments?

Silence. One car stops and blocks the road. I check myself for injuries. Thank G‑d, I’m fine. I try to get out the street.

A woman runs toward me. “Are you all right?” she asks in French. “Can I help you?”

“I think I’m all right,” I answer, removing my helmet. She looks surprised—perhaps not expecting a bearded man. There are not many in Paris.

“Is everything all right?” she asks again, this time in Hebrew. Now I am taken aback.

She introduces herself as Madame Katia Dahaan. “I live nearby, and happened to be passing,” she says. “I didn’t expect to see a Jew, never mind a rabbi.”

“And the Hebrew?” I ask.

“Oh, that’s from trips to Israel years ago,” she says.

Katia wants to talk, but I apologize and explain, “It’s almost Shabbat, and I need to get home.”

Katia is surprised to hear Shabbat is coming. Her reaction puzzles me. Almost 400,000 Jews live in that neighborhood; it’s hard not to know today is Shabbat eve.

“Do you light Shabbat candles?” I ask.

Katia gives me another strange look. She mutters, “No, I don’t.”

“Can I invite you to our home for Shabbat?” I offer.

“Which Shabbat?” she asks with surprise.

“Tonight,” I answer.

A smile emerges. “I don’t think I can come tonight, but I will be happy to come another Shabbat,” she says. We exchange phone numbers, and part.

Katia didn’t come that evening, nor the next Shabbat. And I couldn’t find her number, though I tried hard to locate her.

Four months pass. One morning I received a text message from an unfamiliar number.

Moments later, my phone rang.

“Rabbi? It’s Katia Dahaan. Do you remember me?”

“Of course! We are still waiting for you to come for Shabbat.”

“When can I come?”

“Please, this coming Shabbat!”

That Friday night Katia was one of our guests. She was very emotional throughout.

Others asked me who she was. I told them the story about the accident. I said, “You can say that she was a messenger from Above to help me during those scary moments.”

Katia looked at us with a smile and said, “I think it’s time for you to hear my version . . .

“I am forty-five years old and live alone. I have a sister and mother, but I haven’t spoken to them for over twenty years.

“It’s hard to be single, especially for a Jewish woman. My parents were traditional; we made *kiddush*, celebrated holidays and fasted on Yom Kippur. But since I’ve been living alone, I stopped observing.

“When you live alone, it’s hard to make *kiddush*, because there is no family to have a meal together. It’s hard to go to synagogue alone. I didn’t even have Jewish girlfriends.

“About two years ago, after years of being disconnected from Judaism, I wanted to come back to my religion. I decided to find a job in a Jewish environment. This way I’d make friends, and maybe get invited for Shabbat and holidays.

“I found a job in a shoe store in the Pletzel. All the local workers were Jewish, and I made friends.

“But there was one problem—Shabbat. On Fridays they would wish one another ‘Good Shabbat,’ and on Mondays, ask each other how Shabbat went. But no one paid attention to me. Every week I hoped for an invitation, but every week brought more disappointment.

“Almost a year passed . . . ‘Can it be that Jews don’t accept you anymore?’ I asked myself. ‘How can they be so inconsiderate?’”

Katia’s voice became choked with emotion. “I became very angry with Jews and Judaism. I decided it wasn’t for me. I left that store and found another job.

“But there still was one problem—Shabbat. Every Friday night I would remember the Shabbat of my childhood—the candles, *kiddush*. I thought, ‘How can I stop these memories?’

“I decided to find something to do on Friday nights. I found an advertisement for a church choir looking for singers on Friday nights.”

Silence prevailed around the table. “I was accepted into the choir, and it’s been a year that I’m singing in church on Friday nights. With a sad smile she added, “I come home so tired that I don’t have time to think about Shabbat.

“Everything went smoothly until that Friday,” continued Katia, “when I saw the motorcycle rolling over on the road. I ran to help the rider, and was shocked when he reminded me that it was Shabbat eve and invited me! And he didn’t even know me!

“You think that I was sent to you?” Katia concluded. “I think it was you who was sent to bring back my soul.”

Katia doesn’t sing in the church anymore. She spends every Friday night with us or other Chabad families.

So, it wasn’t just a motorcycle accident after all.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Chabad.Org Magazine.*

**Seeking a Buyer for a Home Full of Creatures From**

**The Time of Noah**

**By Sharon Otterman**

The first thing prospective buyers should know about the two-story rowhouse for sale in Borough Park, Brooklyn, is that its glassy-eyed menagerie of taxidermied tenants, from the family of lions to the fluffy-feathered emu, will be removed before the closing.

The next thing is not to expect perfection. Perfection, according to Jewish law, is something reserved for the world beyond, its seller stressed. So if the walls are unfinished and bent nails curve from the ceiling rafters, it should not be a big deal.

It is an unusual sales pitch, to be sure, but this is no regular listing. The building houses [Torah Animal World](http://www.torahanimalworld.com/), a collection of hundreds of taxidermied and otherwise preserved animals that represents the wide range of creatures depicted in the Old Testament. It is famous in the neighborhood, and for some of the thousands of ultra-Orthodox Jewish children who have come on tours, it is the closest they have ever been to a natural history museum.

Rabbi Shaul Shimon Deutsch, the exhibition’s creator, is ready to consolidate the collection with a biblical antiquities museum he runs a few doors away, and with two smaller collections he has in upstate New York and in New Jersey, because the operating costs of running all the locations have gotten too high. So though Torah Animal World will for now leave Brooklyn, he said he hoped the animals would soon migrate to larger quarters there.

“My real goal was to create a zoo in Brooklyn,” Rabbi Deutsch, 47, said on a tour last week, after pointing out the ibex and orex, the African Cape buffalo and the kudu in the house’s teal exhibition space. “But we didn’t want any wild lions getting loose in Borough Park, so we did the next best thing and used taxidermy.”

The property, at 1605 41st Street, has been on the market for several weeks, and given its contents, people have noticed. Poking fun at the listing’s police-lineup-style photographs of grazing animals in the living room and the rundown state of the property, the real estate blog Curbed called it “[the funkiest listing](http://ny.curbed.com/archives/2013/12/20/this_1_million_brooklyn_house_is_filled_with_dead_animals.php) in recent memory” and pronounced its asking price of $995,000 absurd.



The rowhouse containing Torah Animal World is for sale in Brooklyn, but the contents of the museum will not be included. (Photo Robert Stolarik for The New York Times)

Yet even though Rabbi Deutsch did not try to stage the 1,900-square-foot building, there has already been an offer from a man on the block, if below asking price, said the broker, Menachem Trietel of Weichert Realtors. “When I took pictures of the property, I tried to do as little animals as possible,” he said of the listing’s offbeat snapshots. “But obviously, it’s impossible.”

It may not matter. With the exponential growth of the Orthodox Jewish community, and young families being priced out of Manhattan and trendier parts of Brooklyn, the quiet enclave of Borough Park has become an unlikely hot neighborhood, several brokers said. Houses generally sell as is, because the inventory of homes is so low, and most end up being gut-renovated, anyway.

“I mean, the front of the house has a big giraffe on it, so it’s a pretty tall and wide house,” said Charles Fabbella, an owner of Ben Bay Realty, in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, when asked to consider the property’s price. “It’s going to go. It’s a house in a prime neighborhood.”



Rabbi Shaul Shimon Deutsch is selling the rowhouse. (Photo by Robert Stolarik for The New York Times)

The first floor is an open, barnlike space, with rows of taxidermied animals and simple wooden benches for visitors, who pay a suggested donation of $10 each. All the windows are boarded up, so rooms are cavelike. Outside, a 10-foot-tall image of a giraffe looms over the doorway, next to a fiberglass moose head.

“We didn’t want it to look perfect,” Rabbi Deutsch said. “We wanted it to look like you were going into an animal kind of environment.”

Upstairs, taxidermied ducks and geese swoop over tall birds, like an ostrich. In the back, visitors can sit among animals that appear in prayers, including a white-tailed deer.

“Like a deer that stands on a mountain thirsting for water, so, too, my heart thirsts for you, G-d,” Rabbi Deutsch said, providing an impromptu translation of Psalm 42.

There, the expensive relics, amassed through donations and visits to antiquities dealers, sit in niches meant to resemble walls in ancient Jerusalem. “This here is an original signet ring that belonged to the minister of a pharaoh,” Rabbi Deutsch said, sliding open a glass case and pulling out a gold ring with a scarab. “Would you like to try on a $165,000 ring from ancient Egypt?”

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| APPRAISAL3-popup |  |
| Amish groups have visited, as well as senior rabbis, to mull over displays, like the one that shows 30 kosher birds (a peacock is among them). Photo by Robert Stolarik for The New York Times. |  |

“You see, I got sick and tired of kids sitting in class and thinking history was boring,” he said, explaining how his life’s work began. “We are the only museum in the world that lets its visitors touch ancient items. And I do it so that it becomes more real to them.”

Rabbi Deutsch’s home is between the two museums, and accessible through a connecting room from Animal World’s main floor. Because he owns three buildings, he has been advised by brokers to sell them as a lot, so that a cluster of million-dollar condos could be built at the site.

But according to Jewish law, he cannot, he said, because the synagogue he runs on the first floor of the antiquities museum must first have somewhere to go. So the building that houses Animal World is on the market first, to provide capital for the future move.

His dream, he said, would be to find a 40,000-square-foot warehouse with plenty of space for the animals, the antiquities, the 50-family Liozna synagogue and the charity food pantry the synagogue runs from the basement.

The ideal buyer of the house containing Animal World, he said, will be someone who wants to start from scratch. “You can do a tremendous thing; you can do your vision in this building,” he said.

*Reprinted from the December 31, 2013 edition of The New York Times.*

**Chassidic Story #841**

**Laws of Promising**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000pHG0:001Imxw800001qC8&count=1389104003&randid=1957232658&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=1957232658##)

The financial situation in Yeshivat Tomchei Temimim, the central Lubavitch/ Chabad yeshiva founded in Rostov, Russia, in 1897, was very difficult in the years of Bolshevik and Communist oppression. There was never enough food for the students let alone money for other necessities.

One time, in the early 1920s, one of the directors of the yeshiva approached a very wealthy Jew in Rostov and asked him for help. At first the man refused, but after much prodding he finally agreed to contribute some of the much-needed funds. He would only give the money, however, on one condition: He and his wife had been married for many years and still had no children. If the rabbi would promise them a son, the man would help the yeshiva.

The yeshiva desperately needed the money. Feeling he had no choice and trusting in the Al-mighty, the rabbi promised the wealthy man that in the merit of his tzedaka (charity) he would have a son. The man gave the money and the crises lessened.

A year passed but no celebration for the birth of a child took place in the wealthy man's house. He went to the director of the yeshiva and said, "You promised me a child. I kept my part of the deal but you haven't kept yours." The rabbi encouraged the man to have faith and to wait patiently. He was certain that in the merit of the donation the couple would have a child.

Another year passed and still no child was born. This time the wealthy man approached the rabbi angrily. "You deceived me. You promised me a child and we do not have any children!"

The rabbi went to the ***Rebbe Rayatz*** and told him the whole story.

"Who told you that you could promise someone that they will be blessed with children when you cannot keep your word?" the Rebbe asked sternly.

"But Rebbe," the rabbi replied, "the *yeshiva* was in dire straits and I was certain that in the merit of his donation that would enable hundreds of students to study Torah that he and his wife would be blessed with a child."

"Still," said the Rebbe, "it is forbidden to make a promise that you cannot personally keep."

A few years passed. The man began harassing the rabbi on a daily basis. Day after day he confronted him, crying bitterly, "Where is the child you promised me?"

The rabbi went again to the Rebbe. "He will not leave me alone. He does not let me live," the rabbi told the Rebbe.

"Go to the man," said the Rebbe, "and tell him in my name that he will have a child this year. And never again make a promise that you can't keep."

The following year the man and his wife made a festive celebration upon the *brit* (circumcision) of their son.

**Source**: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the rendition on *Living Jewish* a weekly publication in the Jerusalem area, based on *//LchaimWeekly.org*.

**Connection:** Yud Shefat, the tenth of the month of Shevat (2014: Shabbat, Jan11), is the 64th yartzeit of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe. (That same date is also the day on which the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, assumed leadership of Lubavitch a year later.)

Biographic note: **Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn** (12 Tammuz 1880-10 Shvat 1950), known as the ***Rebbe Rayatz***, was the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, from 1920 to 1950. He established a network of Jewish educational institutions and Chassidim that was the single most significant factor for the preservation of Judaism during the dread reign of the communist Soviets. . In 1940 he moved to the USA, established Chabad world-wide headquarters in Brooklyn and launched the global campaign to renew and spread Judaism in all languages and in every corner of the world, the campaign continued and expanded so remarkably successfully by his son-in-law and successor, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

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**Kippa Scores Point in**

**Big Ten Hoop Games**

**By the** [**JTA**](http://www.jewishpress.com/author/jta/)

[](http://www.jewishpress.com/news/breaking-news/kippa-scores-goal-in-big-ten-hoop-games/2014/01/06/)

Northwestern University basketball player Aaron Liberman in his blue and white unifrom and matching kippa.

Aaron Liberman of Northwestern checked in for the final minute of action against Michigan in the Wildcats’ 74-51 men’s basketball loss in Ann Arbor on Sunday and.in the process, the red-shirt freshman made history twice:

According to the Big Ten News Network, Liberman was the first player to wear a yarmulke in Big Ten Conference history.

Also, Michigan became the first NCAA Division I basketball program to host two kippa-wearing players on its court

On Dec. 27, 2000, the first night of Hanukkah, Tamir Goodman of Towson University recorded 9 points, 5 assists and 4 rebounds in 34 minutes in the Tigers’ 73-71 loss to the Wolverines.

In his first season of college ball, Liberman’s stat line reads 2 rebounds in 4 games. But the yarmulke angle has made his celebrity star shine brighter.

“Liberman was invited to speak after a home game last month about what it’s like for him to be an Orthodox Jew playing major college hoops,” *Yahoo News r*eported. “The school handed approximately 200 purple yarmulkes with an N printed on them to people who attended.”

*Reprinted from the January 7, 2013 email of The Jewish Press. The article was written by the Jewish Telegraph Agency (JTA).*

**Does G-d Love Dogs?**

**Some Jewish Insights on Animals.**

**By** [**Rabbi Levi Welton**](http://www.aish.com/authors/232496271.html)



As a boy growing up in the foothills of Berkeley, my parents encouraged me to have pets. From guinea pigs to parakeets to even a pet chicken named Fwedwika, my home was full of little critters throughout most of my childhood. By encouraging me to be a caretaker for my pets, my parents taught me the meaning of responsibility, consistency and perhaps even love. So I've often wondered if the Bible supports animal activism and what exactly G-d would say if I posed the question, "Do You love dogs?"

Dogs are the only animals in the Torah that receive a reward for their actions. When the Jewish slaves flee Egypt, it states "not one dog barked” (Exodus 11:7). As a reward for that, G-d said, "…and flesh torn in the field you shall not eat; you shall throw it to the dog[s]" (Exodus 22:30; Mechilta). However, G-d’s affection for animals doesn't end with affable companions such as dogs. This affection even extends to insects. King David had to learn this lesson when he questioned the purpose of such "vile creatures" as spiders. Subsequently G-d created an event whereupon a spider’s web saved his life, thereby impressing upon Judaism's mightiest king that every creature has purpose (Midrash Alpha Beta Acheres d'Ben Sira 9).

The Talmud teaches that the reason the Almighty created animals before humans on the sixth day of creation was to teach humans humility so much so that "even a lowly gnat" may be more deserving of life (Sanhedrin 38a).

**G-d Does Indeed Love Dogs and**

**All the Rest of His Creatures Too**

So one may infer from here that G-d does indeed love [dogs](http://www.aish.com/tp/b/app/48948781.html)…and all the rest of His creatures too. But does this manifest itself into practical animal activism or does it remain a more generalized and undefined value in Judaism?

Jewish law is replete with requirements for the caring of animals. Examples include laws prohibiting inflicting [pain on animals](http://www.aish.com/jl/i/mn/Animal_Suffering_The_Jewish_View.html) (*Kesef Mishneh*, *Hilkhot Rotzeah* 13:9), requiring one to feed animals in a loving manner (*Igg'rot Moshe, Even haEzer* 4:92), and protecting animals from being overworked (*Hoshen Mishpat* 307:13). We see from these and more, the extensive lengths to which the Torah goes in order to ensure the proper care of animals.

Even when one must slaughter an animal to feed ones family, there are numerous Jewish laws set in place to guarantee that the animal's death is quick and painless (*Guide of the Perplexed* III:48). One insight we can glean from the Torah about why G-d may have made animals, is that they were created to express the "glory of the Creator" (Pirkei Avos 6:11). The sheer diversity and beauty of animals leads one to appreciate the Creator even more, thereby leading one to proclaim, "How great is Your work, O L-rd" (Psalm 92:5).

**Placed to Be Caretakers of “G-d’s Garden”**

One might also say that the Creator has placed us, the descendants of Adam and Eve, in His beautiful garden to be the "caretaker" of "G-d's garden" and all the animals therein (Genesis 2:19-20).

Mankind is created last in the days of creation because humans are the [pinnacle of creation](http://www.aish.com/jw/s/48894162.html); we are the beings created in G-d’s image (Genesis 1:27). When we use our free will responsibly, acting with compassion and sensitivity, we become like G-d, as it says, "Just as He is compassionate, so should you be compassionate. Just as He is righteous, so should you be righteous" (Midrash Sifre Deuteronomy 49). When we develop ourselves to be spiritually refined, we fully realize the title of "caretakers of the world."

We are the caretakers of G-d’s beautiful world and all the animals in it.

Imagine what message it sends a child when Daddy and Mommy teach that G-d wants all our animals to be fed *before* we feed ourselves (Talmud, Brachot 40a). Imagine what message it sends our child when Daddy and Mommy teach that G-d watches us to see if we are being compassionate to the animals in our midst (Talmud, Bava Metzia 85a.).

**The Benefits of Cultivating a**

**Sensitivity Towards Animals**

And imagine what message we bequeath to our children when we say that to become truly righteous and spiritually fulfilled, we must cultivate a sensitivity towards animals, as it says "A righteous person knows the needs of the animal" (Proverbs 12:10)!

Perhaps this is why G-d specifically made Noah build an ark to save all the animals during the Flood. After all, G-d could have easily made a miracle where the animals were saved without Noah needing to slave away for 40 days and nights meticulously tending to the care of each animal in the ark and even sharing his own table with them (Malbim, Genesis 6:21).

One could answer that this was precisely to highlight that the concept of being the "[caretakers](http://www.aish.com/ci/s/48916842.html) of the Garden" didn't end with Adam and Eve but is an essential responsibility of mankind for all time. Additionally, one can also say that the way we treat animals is a reflection of the way we treat people.

**G-d’s Selection of a Loving**

**Shepherd to Lead His Spiritual Flock**

In the Bible, we observe the repeating story of how a loving shepherd is chosen by G-d to lead the spiritual flock of the Jewish people after previously demonstrating his dedication to a flock of sheep (Midrash, Shemot Rabah 2:2). A barometer for one's sensitivity towards other people can be seen in how we treat the animals in our midst. This emphasis on caring for animals can be a way to further those feelings of sensitivity that may eventually lead to goodwill for all mankind.

There is a final fascinating perspective that the Torah is teaching us. Animals can serve as our teachers. There are G-d-given qualities inherent in the instinctual habits and mannerisms of the animals around us that can actually serve to inspire humans to achieve greater heights of spiritual fulfillment. For example, the very first law in the Code of Jewish Laws is, "Rabbi Yehuda ben Taima said, 'Be as bold as a leopard, light as an eagle, swift as a deer and strong as a lion to do the will of your Father in Heaven'" (Avos 5:20).

**Learning Lessons from the Animals**

Poignantly, this is placed as the *first* law in a book of Jewish legalities. This idea is most evident in the statement of Rabbi Yochanan, "If the Torah had not been given we could have learnt modesty from the cat, honesty from the ant, chastity from the dove, and good manners from the rooster." (Talmud, Eiruvin 100b). Perhaps we can learn from a dog the power of devotion, loyalty or even having a positive attitude.

I will conclude with a teaching about man's best friend, the dog. The notable sixteenth century Jewish leader, the Maharsha, says that a dog is a creature of love. Hence, the Hebrew name for a dog is "*kelev*" which is etymologically derived from the words "*kulo lev*" or "all heart" (Rabbi Shmuel Eidels, Chidushei Aggadot, Sanhedrin 97a).

**Adam and Eve Gave Special**

**Hebrew Names to all the Animals**

Now remember that Adam and Eve were instructed by G-d to give all the animals of the world their Hebrew names (Genesis 2:19-20). When they made this personal connection with the beasts of the world, the names they chose were prophetically accurate so as to encapsulate the essence of each animal into a name that truly revealed its soul. (*Bereishit Rabbah* 17:4). Thus, one may extrapolate from this that the Hebrew name for a dog was precisely chosen to be indicative of the loving soul of this marvelous creature.

So yes, G-d loves dogs. And we should too.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Aish.com*

**Ask the Rabbi**

**Envious Acquaintance**

**From: Anonymous**

***Dear Rabbi,***

*I have a friend who seems to have everything go right for him, whereas for me it seems that everything that could go wrong does. Quite frankly I’m jealous of him and it’s affecting our friendship. What should I do?*

**Dear Anonymous,**

I think everyone can relate to having these types of feelings to various degrees over varying periods of time, either towards others in general, or toward a specific person. So don’t get down over it.

**Only G-d Knows What is True**

**Success for Each Person**

We have to realize that G-d runs the world, and He decides who will “succeed”, to what extent, and for how long. He also knows what true success is for each and every person, and it’s not the same for all.

You have to try your best within normal means to secure your needs and attain your aspirations. This involves defining acceptable and realistic goals. Then rely on G-d to send you what’s right for you at the right time.

What seems good for someone else is not necessarily ultimately good for him; and even if it is good for him it might not be good for you, or at this time. Therefore there’s absolutely no room for comparing yourself with others.

**A True Story Before the**

**Second World War**

This reminds me of a true story I heard from the descendant of a man who left Europe for economic reasons a few years before WWII. He ended up in Columbia with another Jewish friend, and together, they eked out a meager living by peddling in the streets of Bogotá.

After a while, in desperation, they decided to buy lottery tickets. When the friend saw the number on his ticket, he decided he didn’t like his – it was an “unlucky” number. The first young man then offered to swap tickets if it would make his friend happy.

They switched tickets and, lo and behold, the friend wound up with the winning number, while first young man ended up with the “unlucky” number which he got from the friend.

**The Winning Number Caused**

**The Winner Misfortune**

The friend with the “winning” number used the money to return to Europe, but unfortunately lost his life in the Nazi invasion of Hungary. The young man who relinquished the “winning” number in lieu of the “losing” one initially remained poor and stranded in Bogotá, but eventually became quite successful, and in the meantime he was able to provide for the rescue of most of his family to Columbia, and eventually to the U.S.

This is an example of a seeming winner turning out the loser, while the loser is actually the winner. We certainly don’t want your successful friend to stumble, but rather hope for a win-win scenario for the both of you. The point is just that one never knows. So you just have to try your best, without comparing or competing, and count your blessings while praying that you receive from G-d what’s right for you in the right measure at the right time.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of OHRNET, the Ohr Somayach Torah Magazine of the Internet.*

**From Berlin to Jerusalem**

**By Land**

**By Daniel Keebler**

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**Michael Selutin - age: 35 - Jerusalem**

**Schiller’s School in Germany**

**Journalist**

**Mechina**

“Suddenly the 50-year old drunk Croatian truck driver said to me, You know, Hitler was not so bad after all…. And I thought, What am I doing with this guy in the middle of nowhere?! No one will hear me screaming!”

Life as an atheist in Berlin, Germany started to get boring and meaningless by age 28, says Michael Selutin. That’s when he decided to leave his job in software to hitchhike, bus, and train his way from Berlin to Jerusalem in search of wise men who could answer life’s questions.

**Encountered Startling and**

**Candid Anti-Semitism**

Michael says that in all his travels he never actually met a wise man — but he did encounter some startling and candid anti-Semitism, since no one knew he was Jewish: a drunk Croatian truck driver confessed praise for Hitler, a Turkish man called Israelis inhuman warmongers out to destroy Muslims, and a Jordanian swore the Holocaust was a big hoax.

Finally in Jerusalem, Michael spent a year in yeshiva asking rabbis his long list of questions and soaking up their answers. He then entered Ohr Somayach’s Mechinah program for a year. “Ohr Somayach became my new Torah home where I could learn every day.” Michael and his wife got married last August with Rabbi Weiner as their *mesader kedushin* (rabbi who officiates the wedding). They both write for a German newspaper and share immense fulfillment at Michael’s continued Torah studies in Mechinah

every afternoon

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