

A tale of a Giraffe and an Emu ~ by Lefty MacPhee

Posted by mr. emunah - 17 Apr 2013 00:28

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It wasn't much, but it was home. At least for now

It really was just a refrierator box that Jerry Longer had managed to find while he was scavenging through the garbage day spoils.

But it kept him dry, which was a good thing becaudse he had enough on his plate without worrying about catching a cold. or pneumonia.

The Rush of cars, and the roar of trucks blocked out most noise, but Jerry was able to make out the high pitched screech of a Bird of prey as it swooped in on a helpless rodent.

Just like they had swooped down on him.

His whole picturesque existance had been shattered.

and it all began with that Shady man he had met at the Dry cleaners.

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Re: A tale of a Giraffe and an Emu ~ by Lefty MacPhee

Posted by mr. emunah - 23 Apr 2013 01:53

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"You know", said, Manny, "my family calls it Kiggle..."

"Kigelle, is that Klingon or something?" wondered Jerry aloud...

Jerry could see that Manny had tensed up at the mention of his family, he looked like it may be a bit of an issue for him, Jerry decided to lay off for a bit...

Jerry felt his mind take him back eighteen years to when he was eleven and his family had just moved from Syracuse to Long Island....

**G**erald Longer was a bright kid, and boy did he like sports, Jerry, as he was known, loved basketball the most, he would spend hours on the driveway shooting free throws and three-pointers, perfecting his drives and layups and dreaming about dunking (he had lowered the hoop once so he could dunk, but he was past that stage now...)

Jerry had been the star in his middle school, he was a bit short then, (he had his growth spurt late) but he was a ball of energy, driving, shooting, and playing tight defense.

He made his school team where he played starting point guard,

he dreamed every night of Michael Jordan and Shaq, sometimes Penny Hardaway too..

Oh, to be a big league star...

Many hours were spent dreaming how great he would be...

From time to time his Dad would take him to see the Syracuse Orangemen.

His father always reinforced the value of a good University education, and the value of a NCAA scholarship.

"See Jones over there son?" he'd point out, "he's a bright kid, he may never get to the NBA, but he'll be a winner cause of that free degree, Jerry, we can't afford to send you to a good school so you better keep shooting those 3 pointers..."

Jerry actually resented his Dad taking away from the purity of the game..

I should practice hard to be the BEST! he'd say, I don't care about school anyways...

It was true, for all of his skill on the court, Jerry simply didn't do school.

He'd sit there daydreaming about triple doubles, and buzzer beaters, and he was satisfied if he got a 60 on a test or a C on his report card.

But his stardom in Dewitt Middle school came to an end.

His Dad's company wanted him at there location in Flushing, and they uprooted-Dad, Mom, Jerry and little Marc, to beautiful West Islip, NY.

But that year was to be a year of many changes...

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Re: A tale of a Giraffe and an Emu ~ by Lefty MacPhee  
Posted by ZemirosShabbos - 24 Apr 2013 00:08

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Harry, Jerry's father, was the son of Holocaust survivors. In their zeal to establish themselves and provide their son with the American Dream they neglected his Jewish education. Either that or they just thought that borsht and latkes would provide the essential nutrients. Subsequently Harry was raised as an all-American boy with a nominal Jewish identity that manifested primarily in a yearly investment in matza, a trip to temple during the High Holidays, some borsht and a latke with apple sauce.

West Islip was an authentic incarnation of classic American suburbia. Lawns cut just-so, with the tidy lines left by the lawnmowers, coupled with white picket fences and the exact ratio of 1.3 children to every set of parents (1.5 if you count the dog)rounded out the image.

Harry settled in and resumed his daily commute, albeit with different locations. His wife Debbie (as Jewish as a potato starch macaroon) was baptized into The Latter Day Convocation of Suburban Soccer-mom's and faithfully baked pies for the school Bake Sale and chatted amiably with the neighbors about her trips to the Jersey Shore and college savings for the kids.

Upon this idyllic existence was thrust an unfortunate and life-altering event. Harry was prone to life's stresses just as much as any of us and had found a relatively cheap, if liquid, means to sooth his nerves. Of course it started innocently enough but somewhere sometime the line was crossed from occasional drink to daily fix.

Debbie struggled mightily to shield the kids and the neighbors from the depths of the addiction her husband plumbed. On the face of things she was successful but in truth the cat was out of the bag. This false security continued for a few months until a 3am knock at the door proved to be an officer of the peace with grim news. Harry was dead, driving home drunk from a late night binge. Compounding the matter was the fact that he collided with a cop and the cop was killed as well.

It was hard to judge whether the blow to her financial state or her emotional state were more severe but she wilted like an ice cream cone on a July afternoon. She withdrew inwardly and neglected herself and the kids.

Jerry and Marc went to live with Harry's parents. Their notions were sufficiently weather-beaten by the passing years and events that they now placed priority on fostering a Jewish identity and education on their grandchildren.

And so Jerry found himself in a new school, facing Rabbi Goodman and trying to comprehend the finer points of Elu Metzios and Rashi script, on top of math, literature and science.

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Re: A tale of a Giraffe and an Emu ~ by Lefty MacPhee  
Posted by mr. emunah - 24 Apr 2013 01:54

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Jerry wasn't too sure about this hebrew school bit, it was all new to him, and it had very little to do with hoops.

Rabbi Goodman was a Seventy year old veteran rebbe who may have been a bit over the hill.

Jerry's indifference carried over to hebrew subjects as well, and even with the extra tutoring his grandfather paid for, he was still horrible at it, and struggled to post passing grades.

"Listen, Yaakov" said Rabbi Goodman to Jerry/Yaakov, "Your Bar Mitzva is coming up in a bit less than a year now, at the rate you're going, no decent Yeshiva is going to accept you..."

"well, what if I don't want to go to Yeshiva?" challenged Jerry hotly, his blue eyes flashing fire.

"Nobody asked me if I was interested in Old Rabbis with scratchy beards, and Oxes and pits and hebrew that doesn't even look like hebrew without nekudot..."

he continued.

"Well," answered Rabbi Goodman, feeling a bit lost in the moment, "Do it for your father's Soul, he should see some Jewish nachas from you good for nothing \*\*\*\*\*-wannabe basketball player!"

"Let my father burn in H\*ll!" Jerry screamed back, "he was nothing but a drunk and a muderer, it's all his fault, if not for his messing everything up, I would still be starring on the JFK Eagles!"

The rebby was shocked to hear this boy curse his father, "You know the torah forbids cursing a father" he ventured...

"\*\*\*\*\* the torah!" Jerry spat back, "is the torah gonna get me on the cover of Sports illustrated? is it gonna pay my way through college? is it gonna pay me 5 Million dollars a year, plus an endorsement deal from Nike?"

"Listen dude, I am sick of all your controlling and brainwashing, I want out of you mental institution!"

Jerry was causing quite a scene in the hallway, concerened Rebbys stuck their heads out to see which child was screaming blasphemy in the halls of Eitz Hadas Hebrew Acadamey, some kids on the way back from trips to the bathroom gathered around to soak it all in, it wasn't every day somebody gave back to Rabbi Goodman!

"All right, lets calm down" a deep rich voice spoke, as the Principal, Rabbi Steiner walked up from behind them.

"Rabbi Goodman, tell your class to have a early lunch, go to the staff room and take a drink, it's not good for your heart to get riled up."

"Yaakov, come to my office."

Rabbi Steiner led Jerry down the hall to his office, he opened the door, nodded to his secretary, and led Jerry into the Oak paneled inner-sanctum.

Jerry plunked himself down in one of the armchairs in front of the heavy wooden desk.

It was a nice office, it reminded Jerry of the trophy room at Syracuse University where all the NCAA titles were kept. He looked around, there was a nice framed picture of a freindly looking elderly rabbi with a funny boxy looking kipa, an American flag, and an Israeli flag standing in the corner and the most cool snow globe Jerry had ever seen.

It was about twice the size of a normal one, and the detail was astounding. There was a Mountain with skli runs and miniature skiers ion the way down together with a chairlift, the pine trees looked real, and there were live-looking deer in the trees.

"Jerry, I know you feel a lot of pain and pressure right now."

"I think that maybe your grandfather was mistaken in his eagerness to dumop you with us. I told him it would be more advantageous for you to remain in your old school and keep on playing for you team, and maybe he could arrang eprivate classes for you yidishkeit".

Jerry nodded his head in agreement.

"Listen Jerry, I can see your heart isn't here, lets make a deal, I'll speak to your Grandpa, and we'll try to get you back into your old school, and I will meet with you twice a week in my home for private Bar Mitzva preparation classes, Pro bono."

"Pro Bono?" asked Jerry.

"free of charge" explained Rabbi Steiner.

"Now get your stuff together, and I'll give you a lift home.

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Re: A tale of a Giraffe and an Emu ~ by Lefty MacPhee  
Posted by ZemirosShabbos - 24 Apr 2013 23:49

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Not being a star student, to put it mildly, Jerry's old school was not at all prepared to take him back in middle of the year. He transferred to a much inferior school which was not too particular

about who they took. The tragedy, in his eyes, was that this school did not have a basketball team.

Jerry acclimated to his new routine and began to grow close to Rabbi Steiner. This primarily due to Rabbi Steiner's possessing the rare trait of being at once a mature adult yet retaining an understanding of a youth's mind. Rabbi Steiner was normal where his Zaidy was quaint and hopelessly out of touch, understanding where Zaidy was unforgiving and last but not least monetarily endowed where Zaidy was as thrifty as a schizophrenic walrus.

The year of a suburban secular Jewish boy's defining moment arrived. The Bar Mitzvah celebration, replete with chopped liver origami, Moshe Dayan impersonators and ice carvings of the Western Wall.

Jerry's class had a few Jewish kids and for the most part they had lavish affairs which did much to boost the local economy. Zaidy was prepared for Jerry's big day too. He had already mentioned to the powers-that-be in his shteibel that he would be serving herring kichels and shnapps and he needs maftir for his einikel. Jerry was considerably underwhelmed when he heard of the plan. He would sooner donate his nose to science than invite his friends to his Zaidy's throwback to Galicia circa 1850.

Rabbi Steiner stepped in and figuratively and literally saved the day. He persuaded Zaidy to allow him to sponsor and pay for an affair that would not be ostentatious but yet tasteful and would not shame Jerry. Jerry was convinced that Rabbi Steiner was truly The Next Big Thing. Until Rabbi Steiner mentioned a caveat, that is.

"Jerry, you know I believe in you and to me you are worth the world."

"Of course rabbi, that is obvious and you have told me the same countless times", answered Jerry, intuiting that something was amiss.

"So I have one condition for you if I am gonna make this celebration. It's not for me, it's for you. Hear me out and hopefully you'll understand. You know they say that the best things in life are free? Well, they're not. They just use different currency. I want you to pay me back. I want you to invest in something. Invest in yourself and the dividends you reap will be the payment I will accept."

"Rabbi, you know that one of the things i like about you is that you don't talk like an Oxford scholar. But now you sound like you're trying to teach me a course in comparative philosophy. can you just tell me in plain English what you mean?"

"Sure, let me say it as it is. You promise me to keep kosher for the rest of your life and your bar mitzvah is all set. Simple as that."

Jerry was taken aback at the bold request. Zaidy kept kosher and still managed to acquire a nice paunch, yet Zaidy had Bubby puttering around the kitchen producing endless brigades of cherry tort's, seven-layer cake and chicken soup. Jerry hung out with his buddies and it was second nature to them to eat anything that was available.

The alternative was less of an option than keeping kosher. Ultimately Jerry became a vegetarian to his friends, a nachas to his Zaidy and even he was proud of himself when he had a chance to contemplate his commitment.

Rabbi Steiner was his anchor and confidant through his young teen years. Rabbi Steiner even arranged membership on an inter-league all-star basketball team. Rabbi Steiner was a knight in shining white armor to a kid who needed one desperately. Judaism was cool if Rabbi Steiner practiced it.

When Jerry was 15, Rabbi Steiner called him over. "Jerry, i was offered a very attractive position on the West Coast..."

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Re: A tale of a Giraffe and an Emu ~ by Lefty MacPhee  
Posted by mr. emunah - 25 Apr 2013 01:33

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"There's a growing community in San Diego, and they are looking for a principal.

The climate is great, and my wife really likes the idea of being close to her parents who live in LA."

Jerry, who had already graduated to high school and was attending Jefferson Poly Prep on a basketball scholarship was heartbroken.

"Rabbi, you can't just dump me like that! I don't have anybody to go home to! My Zeidy is getting older and more senile by the day, I feel like Harry Potter at the holidays, with no family to go home to, you were my Weasley family, the one place I fit in off the court".

"I'm sorry Jerry, but Life does that sometimes. It throws us curveballs and we need to try to make the best of them. But listen, we can still shmooze by phone, and I promise I'll bring you to San Diego for two weeks of your summer vacation".

Jerry was slightly consoled by the thought of visiting the home of Shaq and Kobe.

Oh well, he thought to himself, I guess life does move on, and I'll be heading to College in three years anyways...

Jerry's High school years passed in a fast pace, he led the Jefferson Wombats to their first national high school championship, and followed that with two more, he broke every school record and some national ones as well, he was offered Scholarships from five Division 1 Universities, but in the end he decided to go with UConn, also known as University of Connecticut, He felt that at this point in his life it was important to stay close to home, his mother had made improvements over the past few years and was now living alone in an apartment in Bedford Stuyvesant, she still relied heavily on antidepressants, but she didn't require care. Jerry made an appointment to visit her as much as his schedule allowed, and he made sure to send her tickets to all his big games.

Over the years Jerry had slowly but surely lost touch with Rabbi Steiner, first Rabbi Steiner moved to Santa Monica, and Jerry lost his number for a while, but Rabbi Steiner tracked him down. But eventually with Rabbi Steiner's busy life (he had nine children by now, two of them married, one in Lakewood, and one in Israel and he found it hard enough to keep in touch with his own kids on a regular basis.

Jerry found the university team to be a unique challenge, he wasn't a starter, they already had an All American point guard, Jerry had to fight for minutes off the bench, but his efforts paid off and with the Clippers selecting UConn point guard Leroy McCullen 4th overall, Jerry finally had a chance to shine on a national level.

Every game was a battle. Jerry was going head to head with the future stars of the NBA, sometimes they made him look weak and not ready for the big boys, but his inner compete didn't let him give up. At thhis time Coach Lionel Davis advised him to take up weight lifting, and martial arts. "Jerry, you didn't grow up in the hood, you don't have the strength or the toughness to go head to head with the best, you need to pick up some attitude and get your Mojo. Tae kwon do will add the discipline you need to totaly outpsyche the competition".

Jerry applied himself stronger than ever, he now found himself amongst the leading scorers in his division, at this time Hoops Weekly did a little write up about the improbable star for the UConn Huskies, the word was out, this kid was Steve Nash all over, maybe better, there were scouts at most games and most Jocks agreed that he was a top five pick, this all climaxed with a National title in his junior year.

There was much pressure fo Jerry to enter the draft that year, but he decided to take the Jewish way, and finish his degree in Business.

That may have been one of his biggest mistakes in a while, because that was the year his life fell apart for the second time.

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Re: A tale of a Giraffe and an Emu ~ by Lefty MacPhee  
Posted by Machshovo Tova - 25 Apr 2013 01:35

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hmmmmmm...

lead on....

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Re: A tale of a Giraffe and an Emu ~ by Lefty MacPhee

Posted by mr. emunah - 25 Apr 2013 01:43

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This break in the action has been brought to you by Woodward.

**"Woodford, It's in your Blood"**

\*Special guest post by Tehillim Zuger\*

please post in my name:

In response to the question about this being code, this is a good lesson in humility. Every post someone makes on this thread narrows down the plot of the story, or should I say, defocuses the plot. When the story began it seemed it would be about Jerry. Now it seems like it's going to be about Manny. Who is Manny? Well that depends on who posts about it first.

See, if it would be me, I would make him a heimish jewish kid running from his roots. If it would be Mr. Emu, perhaps he'll turn him into MacPhundy the lumberjack's son, who knows? And so it is a lesson in humility. A lesson in rolling with the punches. A lesson in taking what g-d [in the guise of other people] gives you, and not what you dictate to him. Amen hallelujah.

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Re: A tale of a Giraffe and an Emu ~ by Lefty MacPhee

Posted by ur-a-jew - 25 Apr 2013 01:53

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"Again I missed it!" Manny complained, shaking Jerry out of his reverie from 18 years ago. I keep on catching half the billboards, all I know is that the last one said "hmmmmm" and it sure making me hungry.

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Re: A tale of a Giraffe and an Emu ~ by Lefty MacPhee

Posted by Machshovo Tova - 25 Apr 2013 02:03

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Re: A tale of a Giraffe and an Emu ~ by Lefty MacPhee  
Posted by ZemirosShabbos - 25 Apr 2013 02:13

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"That was an ad for Herr's All Dressed Chips", Jerry explained.

They were approaching a section of the Interstate. From afar they could see the stream of traffic moving along. As they neared, drivers seemed to notice the odd sight of 2 men on the roof of a moving train.

Serendipitously, a Herr's box truck was barreling merrily down the road on his way to his next delivery. Humming along with his favorite golden oldies station and admiring the view of the Manhattan skyline the driver did not notice the rapid deceleration of the cars in front of him until they were directly above the tracks.

Truck met car and a hail of chips ensued. Boxes of chips were flung about. Jerry and Manny were showered with bags of chips and decided that now would be a good time to make Herr's yours. Jerry thought to himself that as soon as he makes it big again he will send Herr's a check.

The train came to a halt, hindered as it was by ketchup and BBQ flavored vegetables.

Jerry and Manny clambered off the train, took as many bags as they could and were off into the adjoining fields, happy to be provided with some kosher food that literally fell off a truck.

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Re: A tale of a Giraffe and an Emu ~ by Lefty MacPhee  
Posted by mr. emunah - 25 Apr 2013 22:11

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Jerry loaded up his pack with MSG loaded delights. He had been keeping track of their location, they were now in Morristown at Martin Luther King Ave. They needed to find a place to rest for a few minutes, but nowhere in public sight.

Jerry was sure that there was already a search going on for him for him, and he needed to regroup before deciding where to go next.

He scanned the street signs, Hmm... Evergreen Cemetary, that seemed like a nice quiet place, out of the way. "Cmon Manny, we're going to Evergreen".

They quickly walked the two blocks to the cemetary.

There where advertisements at the entrance,

"Book early, Space is limited"

"Think Evergreen for thr Rest of your life, for the rest of your life"

"Try our 90 day trial offer, satisfaction gaurunteed or your money back"

"Try our new eco friendly group cremations!" and so on.

They spotted a watchman at the main gate, so they headed up the street to find a sheltered place to hop the eight foot fence.

There where nice little spearheads on the top of each post and Jerrys pants started to look like a mailman after an encounter with a pitbull.

They found a quiet corner behind some Old tombs, and they started noshing on the AD"CH and chips.

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Re: A tale of a Giraffe and an Emu ~ by Lefty MacPhee

Posted by ZemirosShabbos - 25 Apr 2013 22:19

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Eating potato chips in a cemetery seemed liked the height of incongruity. It definitely was a peaceful place and there weren't many people to disturb them. Now wasn't the time for relaxing though.

The train ride and the reverie made it seem like it was later than it was. Barely past 11am, the day was young. Jerry contemplated his next move.

"Manny, what do you say? How about we head to Pennsylvania?" Jerry enjoyed the independence and freedom of being a vagrant. It came with grinding poverty, lack of a home and brought out the world's sharp edges but it satisfied his wanderlust.

"Besides for Amish and Pittsburgh, what's there in Pennsylvania?" Manny asked, betraying his lack of knowledge about the region.

"Well, there's the Liberty Bell and Gettysburg," laughed Jerry. "Mostly there are people there just like everywhere else. But to be honest with ya, I wouldn't mind heading west. California is a long way off and it might take a month or a year, but I have the time. The money is another issue, methinks we should try to get some money for our poor souls. How does that sound?"

"You want me to do some 'work'?" asked Manny.

"Yes, but not the type of work you mean. Just good old fashioned honest work." Jerry felt a lot more like himself with Manny. He felt responsible towards him, as if it was his mandate to see Manny off to something better than roaming the streets. Surprising what a little effort to help others can do for a man's soul.

"Here's the plan. Today we aim to get as far along towards Pennsylvania as we can. Once we get there we set up finding some work of sorts. You in?" Jerry was feeling good about making a plan, even if it involved a simple hiking trip.

"Listen Jerry," Manny began, "I'm from New York and I know the place. Why should I trek across the country? What for?"

"Fair is fair," said Jerry, "What do you suggest?"

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Re: A tale of a Giraffe and an Emu ~ by Lefty MacPhee  
Posted by mr. emunah - 26 Apr 2013 01:40

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"I suggest that we just lay down and die here" said Manny,

There's no purpose anyways, everything just sucks"

"I mean obviously someone's looking to get you, it's just a matter of time, and I don't really care that much for life anyways..."

"Cmon, Manny, don't be a pushover, we can do this, it's not a lost case and you're a good looking young man, with a bright future, but just stay away from the powder would you?"

"Oh, that stuff, I never really wanted to get into it, but when I tried it, I felt that it numbed the pain, I haven't had ay for at least four days, it's making me feel a bit edgy, but It'll pass, I've stopped before and I know what it's like"

"Listen Manny, I'm going to take a quick nap here, and I suggest you do the same,  
we're going west, and I want to be out of the state by nightfall"

"Alright boss, we'll give it a shot.." Manny called out as he stretched out on the green grass.

They slept deeply, and by the time they woke up it was past noon.

"You know, Jerry, I remember hearing once that it says in the Talmud that sleeping in a graveyard is the sign of a Lunatic" Manny suggested.

"Oh, so it's confirmed now, I had thought so... Hey Manny, how do you know talmud anyways, you don't look like much of a talmud scholar" Jerry asked, eyeing Manny's torn jeans, his sweaty muscle shirt, and a gothic looking tattoo which spelled AD"CH.

"Well looks can be deceiving", Manny answered ruefully, "it's a long story"

"Well, We've got some time, tell you what, lets hike across town and see if we can try to get a hitch with a trucker heading west and you can tell me all about it" Jerry suggested.

They hopped back over the gate and started plodding the streets of Morristown, searching for an entrance ramp to the 287, in the meantime, Manny started to tell his story.

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Re: A tale of a Giraffe and an Emu ~ by Lefty MacPhee  
Posted by ZemirosShabbos - 26 Apr 2013 18:54

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"As my rebbi said way back, first listen and then ask questions, ok?" Manny knew there would be more questions than answers but he would give it a shot.

Jerry liked that answer and said, "Sure thing, buddy".

"My poppa is holy, smart and out of this world. Out of this world in a good and a not so good way. He is a rebbe, a chasidisha rebbe. Know what that is?"

Jerry had seen plenty of Chasidic people but never really dealt with any of them. "Is he a Grand

Rabbi?"

"Exactly", said Manny. "Thing is that while he may have been grand, he never had any grand followers, unless you count Deaf Mendel and Boruch Kiggle. See, he had a small shul, a shteibel, and he was the rabbi and the rebbe and the therapist and the guy-in-charge-of-putting-away-all-the-sefarim. He once tried cooking for a kiddush but it proved to be a gastrointestinal snafu. It was never a popular shul and the membership number hovered below the freezing point for as long as I knew. All poppa knows is his holy books, and boy does he know them. You might read Moby Dick and hear about a whale and Ahab and Ishmael and all, if my poppa would read it he would talk to Ahab and the whale and they would talk to him..."

Jerry interjected, "Was he a sideshow at country fairs?", laughing.

"I'm serious," Manny said a bit crossly. "Poppa would say how the Bardichever told him this and the Kotzker said that. People would say that it may be that they talk to him. Personally I don't think they did, but ain't no one saying that kind of thing about me and you..."

"So I grew up and sort of wanted a Poppa who would play some air hockey with me, take me on a hike and eat some licorice. But Poppa was way above that. He must have been in my shoes at some point, before he became so high and holy, but he seems to have forgotten how he got to where he is. He thinks everyone should be as holy as him. Trouble is, I needed to be normal before I could think of being holy."

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