

Good Shabbos Everyone. This week we will read an incredible story of how a parrot brought a Jew and his family under the wings of the Shechina - Hashem's holy presence.

Yossi Wallis is one of the founders of the famous organization Arachim, which has worked to bring thousands of Israelis and Jews around the world back to Judaism. Yossi happens to be fond of parrots. In fact, the Wallises had for many years a parrot in their house. The parrot was very smart and learned several expressions in Hebrew, which of course is the language spoken in the Wallis household.

One day, a member of the Wallis family mistakenly sprayed water on the parrot. Now, at the time, the parrot was not in his cage, as his wings were clipped and it was considered safe to let him roam around the house. In any case, by this time, unbeknownst to the Wallises, the parrot's wings had grown back considerably. To make a short story long, the parrot was spooked by the spraying of the water and he flew out of an open window.

Yossi was obviously extremely distraught at this mishap and he and other members of the family went outside immediately to search for the lost parrot. Unfortunately, even after looking high and low, they could not find the parrot. Soon after, Yossi's mother called him to tell him that she thought that she was hallucinating, because she thought she heard Yossi's voice emanating from a tree next to her house. Thankfully, she was not hallucinating; it was Yossi's parrot in a tree. The parrot had learned to parrot Yossi's voice and was doing so quite nicely outside of Yossi's mother's house.

Yossi rushed over to his mother's house but to no avail; the wayward parrot had escaped once again. Yossi and his family did not give up. They posted signs in the adjoining neighborhoods and even put ads in the newspaper. But... there was not a hide nor hair nor feather of the parrot. The Wallises sorely missed their parrot and, seeking a replacement, they bought a new one.

Fast forward six months... One day, someone in the Arachim office told Yossi about a "fresh" Baal Teshuvah (retrunee to Judaism) who had a fondness for parrots. Being that Yossi was a parrot aficionado, the staff thought it was a good idea for Yossi to contact the man to discuss parrots (and Torah).

Soon after Yossi found himself driving from Jerusalem to Bnei Brak on his way to bring his son to a shidduch (a formal introduction). Suddenly, Yossi's cellphone rang and it was "Moshe" (not his real name), the Baal Teshuvah who was interested in parrots.

Yossi and Moshe got to talking and Moshe began to tell his amazing story of how a parrot made him a Baal Teshuvah. One Shabbos afternoon, Moshe, who was not observant at the time, was playing soccer on a field with a bunch of his friends. Suddenly, they noticed a parrot nearby. The parrot appeared to be sickly. Moshe had pity on the bird and brought it home, intending to nurse it back to health.

As soon as he brought the parrot into his apartment, the bird said "Yom Ha'Shishi.." (the opening words of kiddush said on Friday nights). Then the bird said "Boruch Hashem." Moshe and his family were shocked. They had never heard a bird speak so much, let alone say such things. Moshe got to thinking. "If a bird can sign Hashem's praises, why can't I?" Little by little he began to investigate Judaism and soon after, he and his family became fully observant!

Yossi listened to the story. He mentioned some identifying characteristics of the parrot and Moshe confirmed that it was his bird. Yossi immediately diverted his car to drive straight to Moshe's house. Yossi positively identified the parrot and it was returned to its rightful owner. (Heard from Reb Label Lam, who heard it from Yossi Wallis himself.)

Hashem commands us this week saying "Make for Me a sanctuary and I will dwell among them." (Shemos 25:8) The commentator Ohr HaChayim points out that the verse states "Make for Me a sanctuary and I will dwell among them" It would seem to make more sense if the Torah had said "Make for Me a sanctuary and I will dwell in it" Explains the Ohr HaChayim, when the verse says "them" it is referring to the Bnei Yisroel. Hashem feels at home where there is holiness.

The Medrash says the following about the verse "...I will dwell among them" "If they (the Jewish People) will do My will, my Shechina - holy presence will never leave them." (Tanchuma parshas Bechukosai 3)

If a Jew opens up his soul just a little for Hashem, then Hashem will shower him with an infinite amount of goodness and he will merit to have the Shechina - Hashem's holy presence, rest upon him.

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