

Re'eh 5782  
August 26th 2022

# NAGEELA SHABBOS

Have-a

SEASON 6

EPISODE 40

a kid friendly publication of Nageela West Coast Joyfully Jewish Experiences



## Fail Harder

by Rabbi Dani Locker

Epic Fail.

When you see an epic fail, does it make you want to try the same thing? Not me.

If someone tries something and it crashes and burns spectacularly, my knee-jerk reaction is to get as far, far, far away from it as possible. Don't do anything with a chance of the same failure. So you can imagine that when the Jews came to Israel after leaving Egypt that would be their reaction, too. Let's look at it this way. The peoples who lived in Israel at the time (yes, 'peoples' is correct grammar for describing more than one nation-stop bothering me) all worshiped strange, multiple gods in a variety of strange ways. They threw rocks at one type of god, did headstands in front of another, puffed out their cheeks and made raspberries for yet another. I made up a couple of those,

but it's not so far off. There were many very odd and sometimes disturbing ways they had of serving their idols. Oh, did I forget to mention sacrificing-their-first-born-children version of worship? Yeah. These people were pretty messed up. Yet they thought their gods would help and protect them. Boom. Didn't work out well for them.

The Jewish people (after our victory lap of the ten plagues and the Red Sea) conquered the entire land with miraculous victory after victory, showing quite conclusively that our one true God is literally the Boss. After seeing all this, there's NO WAY any Jew would be like, "Oh, let me go worship those wonderful, successful, sensible gods." I think you'd have to be really dumb to do that. Which brings us to my question. The Torah tells us (12:30-31) that in case we might say, "How did these nations worship their



Candle lighting

- Honolulu 6:34
- Scottsdale 6:42
- Henderson 6:57
- Las Vegas 6:58
- San Diego 7:02
- Irvine 7:06
- Los Angeles 7:08
- Reno 7:21
- Oakland 7:28
- Park City 7:49



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gods? I will do that, too!” We should not do so. Really? Why is that a challenge that has to be mentioned? “You see those truly unintelligent, unsuccessful people who YOU just defeated thoroughly? Don’t try their tactics.” Duh.

The commentaries give different approaches to exactly what the Torah is warning us about. According to Nachmanides, there wasn’t much concern that the Jews of that time would actually worship false gods. The worry is that the Jewish nation, looking for ways to connect to Hashem might try using the idolaters’ false techniques to serve Him. So instead of focusing inward and speaking to God from our hearts, or using the clear instructions of how to bring offerings in the temple, Jews might have used all kinds of warped and weird techniques to serve God. The truth is that even in our time, many confused Jews borrow tools from other religions, incorrectly assuming it will benefit their connection to Hashem.

Other commentaries say that the worry is wayyyy down the line, hundreds of years later. Sure, right after our ancestors beat up the Canaanites, it was unlikely they would jump into

the losing team’s ways. But knowing that they existed, and having had a history in the land, it could become a reality for future generations. In truth, many Jews DID fall prey to the attraction of idolatry years later.

There are a couple of lessons to be learned here. First of all, if you want to know how to get close to God, ask God. Let’s make sure we don’t fall into the trap of assuming what God wants based on what other people do, say or think. The Torah has instructions for how we can best connect to Hashem, and those are the paths and tools we should use. Secondly, even things that we look at as being very wrong and baseless, can creep in and slowly make themselves comfortable, just by existing. We’ve got to work extra hard to clarify to ourselves and others what is right and what is wrong, based on the guidance of the Torah’s moral perfection. We certainly can’t rely on Hollywood or the rest of the world to tell us what’s real and what is right.

*continued from page 1*

# PICKLE JEWS

**GALACTICALLY SYNDICATED  
COMIC STRIP**

by Dani Locker, 2022



Stump the Rabbi is a forum where kids can ask ANY Jewish question.

Have a question? Please send it in to [stump@nageelawest.org](mailto:stump@nageelawest.org)

Questions here are real. Names and some wording have been changed.

**Note:** We call this 'Stump The Rabbi' for fun, but that's not really the point. The goal is to learn something important in an interesting way.

# Stump the Rabbi

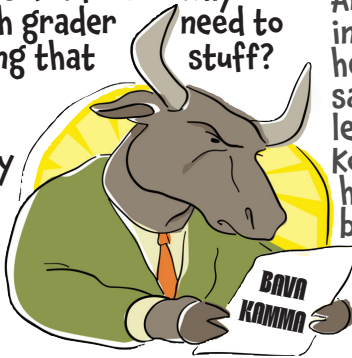


## #211 Tall and Moody

Hi Rabbi,

I am excited that I just transferred into a Jewish school for the first time. It's challenging, but I'm learning quickly. I enjoy all the subjects, but I'm also a little confused. I get that there's a lot to learn, and it's great that in class we're learning about how to say blessings and stuff. But like half of what we're learning doesn't seem to be important for me to know. We're studying details about cows and people damaging other cows and people. Isn't that what police and courts are for? Why does a 7th grader be learning that need to stuff?

Thanks  
Tal Moody



Dear Tal,

First of all, congrats on the new school! If you are having any trouble or need some help, please let me know! Your question is a good one, and not new. In virtually every yeshiva, there's a lot of time spent learning portions of the Talmud (gemara) that don't seem to be practical. I'm gonna give you two answers, and hopefully they'll help you appreciate how awesome it is to be learning such valuable subjects!

Did you know that many schools in South Korea teach Talmud?

In 2011, the South Korean Ambassador to Israel was interviewed on Israeli TV. He held up a copy of the Talmud and said, "Each Korean family has at least one copy of the Talmud. Korean mothers want to know how so many Jewish people became geniuses." Looking up at the surprised host, he added, "Twenty-three percent of Nobel

Prize winners are Jewish people. Korean women want to know the secret. They found the secret in this book."

You see, there are many reasons we study Talmud. One important one is that it's the ultimate brain training course. Those who study Talmud diligently (not, that's not a misspelling of 'diligently' - it means to study with dill pickles, gently) learn problem solving skills, develop memory tools and practice logical debate. More than just logic and intelligence, it teaches us to think 'like the Torah.' This is really the heart of it. The Torah is supposed to be our guide for life. Yet it's sometimes very difficult to understand. Studying Talmud on the deepest levels helps us become experts on the language and logic of the Torah. We speak 'God's language' and therefore are able to best understand and apply the Torah's lessons. Want to understand why Abraham said something? Confused about why Rashi and Ibn Ezra disagree about how to interpret something Moses did? Being an expert in Talmud

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(even in areas that have NOTHING at all to do with what you're currently concerned about) will help guide you to an understanding.

One more thing. Respect for other people and for other people's property is a big deal in how Jews view our lives and responsibilities. If you spend



time every day learning the details of how to treat other peoples' stuff (returning lost items, responsibility for damages, property disputes), you can't help but be more careful about how you treat

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others!

So even though the subjects you're learning might not be super practical (unless you plan on getting a pet ox), they are calculated to give you real benefits in how you live.

Have a Nageela Shabbos,

*the Rabbi*

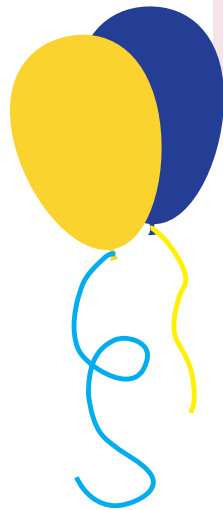
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## MAZEL TOV!

to veteran Nageela West counselor  
 Yonah Darrison upon getting engaged!

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

- Brody Beery
- Naamah Rose
- Julian Weiss
- Sasha Weiss
- Noah Elgerabli
- Tehilla Ben Shimon
- Yaniv Ben-Shimon
- Nochi Locker
- Royce Rozea
- Yoni Stein



deep thoughts

**IF PIZZAS ARE ROUND, AND CUT INTO TRIANGLES, WHY ARE THEY ALWAYS DELIVERED IN SQUARE BOXES?**



I was nervous about singing karaoke together with a friend.

Then I decided to just duet.

**OUCH! GROAN!**  
 Why do bad jokes happen to good people? Find a better joke. Send it to [dlocker@nageelawest.org](mailto:dlocker@nageelawest.org)

## Nageela West Coast

breaks the mold of old school Jewish outreach by providing out-of-the-box social and educational programs for Jewish children across the West Coast. Through afterschool activities, weekend retreats and our signature summer camp, we engage elementary and middle school children in a fun and meaningful experience.

Our "questions encouraged" mindset makes Nageela a comfortable learning and growing environment for Jewish children of all backgrounds.



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