

Behar 5782  
May 20<sup>th</sup> 2022



*a kid friendly publication of Nageela West Coast Joyfully Jewish Experiences*



## Not Luke Skywalker

by Rabbi Dani Locker

The importance of living in Israel is highlighted in the week's Torah portion:

"I am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, to be your God." Leviticus, 25:38.

To give you the land... to be your God. This seems to say (according to Mirdash Toras Kohanim) that if a Jew lives in Israel, then He is our God and if we live outside of Israel, then it is as if we have no God.

Uh oh. I think I live outside of Israel. Like millions of Jews, we have established homes, communities and Torah institutions all over the world. According to this Midrash, it seems that we should all drop everything and move to Israel. Quick, book your flights before the prices go up! There are many who would say, "YES! This is exactly what all Jews should do.

There is no committed Judaism outside of Israel." So why do so many great people stay out of Israel?

Have you ever heard of Ezra? Ezra the Scribe was one of the main people responsible for the construction of the second Holy Temple (shortly after the Purim story), and the move of many Jews up to the land of Israel. He was a prophet and a Kohein. In the fact, the Talmud says that had he come back to Israel earlier, he would have been the most worthy choice for Kohein Gadol- high priest. But Ezra didn't come to Israel right away. While some of the great sages of his time traveled to the holy land as soon as it was possible, Ezra stayed back. You see, Ezra was a student of Baruch Ben Neriyah (who was a student of the prophet Yirmiyahu), who was too old to travel. Ezra, great a leader and scholar as he already was, felt he



- Honolulu 6:46
- Scottsdale 7:06
- Henderson 7:25
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needed to polish his knowledge- to complete his learning. As opposed to Luke Skywalker who ran off before completing his training, Ezra stayed with his great teacher until the end, thereby delaying the great mitzvah of re-building the temple (in addition to the mitzvah of living in Israel).

Jews don't do anything 'just because.'

The Talmud (Megillah 16b) concludes from here that the study of Torah supersedes the building of the Holy Temple. Wow! Surely Ezra would have and could have studied plenty of Torah in Israel, but he felt his studies would be better, more complete, staying with his aging mentor. Even just an improvement in the study of Torah is more important than the mitzvot of living in Israel and building the temple. Double wow!! If a Jew living in the USA, London or any of the other places Jews have settled will thrive in their Judaism and Torah study more in their native country (think about language barriers, cultural differences and other things), then it seems appropriate to act like Ezra- not Luke- and live where you'll study best.

It also follows that if a person is a teacher

of Torah, and they'll be able to teach Torah more effectively in their native country, that would be a legit reason to stay. This explains why so many Jews and indeed, so many truly great Rabbis have elected to live outside of Israel. Just another thing to think about. A committed Jew doesn't do anything 'just because.' Judaism promotes thinking about and considering everything we do; even where we live.

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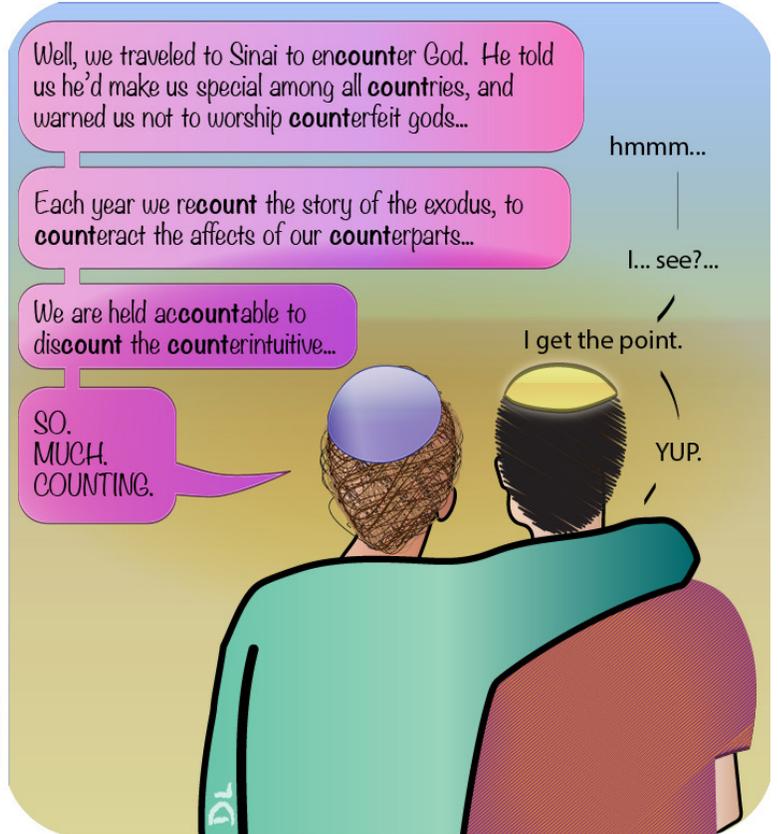
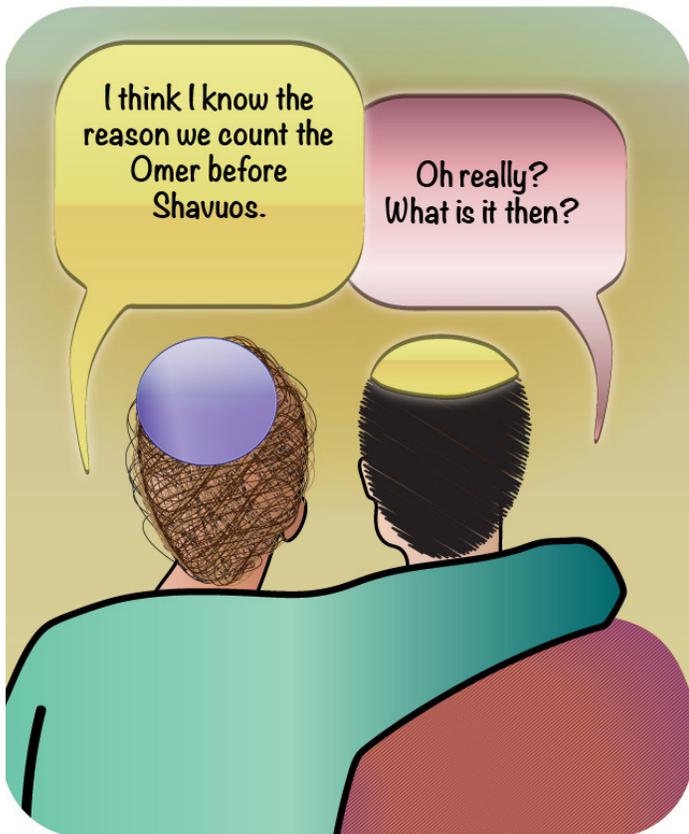


WHY IS THERE SECURITY EVERYWHERE IN THE AIRPORT, UNTIL YOU GET TO BAGGAGE CLAIM? THEN IT'S LIKE, "TAKE WHATEVER YOU'D LIKE!"

# 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.



## #205 Cape with Strings?

Hi Rabbi,  
I see people with a lot of different styles of kippah. There's the typical kind, you know, with black velvet, and there's the thin satiny kind, and the knitted kind. Recently I've seen a lot of them with sports logos, school logos, bar mitzvah logos. Is that OK to do? Are there rules about what a kippah has to look like? For that matter, what about tzitzis?

Thanks,  
Tony Shtark



Dear Tony,

You just like getting me in trouble, don't you. I might have an unpopular opinion on this, but I need to give a little background first. Wearing a Kippah and wearing tzitzis have slightly different purposes, but they're both used as physical reminders to us to focus on certain things.

The word Kippah, literally just means covering or hat. It's a word that's used to describe head coverings in all situations, not just the religious context. Another word we use is "yarmulka" which is an Aramaic conjunction that means "Fear of the King." The main goal of a yarmulka is to remind us that we have someone above us. In Jewish law, as far as I know, there are absolutely no restrictions on what a yarmulka should look like or it should be made of. Therefore, according to law, it can be a leather yarmulka, a baseball cap, a viking helmet, a turban, bucket

hat, propellor beanie, medieval knight's chainmail cowl, wig, cowboy hat or little red riding hood. As long as it covers your head (so I guess visors are out).

Tzitzis, we mentioned a few weeks ago, are meant to keep us focused on the commandments. There are some customs that recommend stripes and some that prefer the tzitzis to be wool. Nevertheless, the only absolute rules are that it's got to have 4 corners, be big enough to cover a small child and have the specialized string tied at the corners. Aside from that, a tallit or tzitzis could theoretically be made from many different materials and can have just about any design. As a matter of fact, if you look online or visit judaica stores you'll find tons of both tzitzis and yarmulkas with heroes from the Marvel or DC universe, or popular sports franchises (Portland Pickles anyone?).

Here's my take, though. Since both of these beautiful observances are meant to help us focus on God and his commandments, doesn't it seem almost like a little betrayal to put the picture or the logo of

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something unimportant, that you enjoy? It's a little like going to Coffee Bean, asking for a drink, then asking the barista to pour your drink into your Starbucks cup because you want people to think that's what you got. Insulting, right? Tzitzis are meant to raise our appreciation of God and his commandments. Kippah is designed to become more aware of Him. Slap a Lakers logo on it, and you will still technically get the mitzvah, but are you getting the POINT?

If you're a kid and you're not excited about wearing a yarmulka or tzitzis, then I view it differently. If having Superman will make you want to do the mitzvah, then go ahead and do what motivates you. Just realize that the goal is to get to the point when these things don't matter to you. Your focus and awareness makes you more powerful than any Avenger. Besides,

having pictures on your tzitzis might make them hard to iron, man.

Have a Nageela Shabbos,

*the Rabbi*

ASK MORE QUESTIONS AT [STUMP@NAGEELAWEST.ORG](mailto:STUMP@NAGEELAWEST.ORG)

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