

have a

Nageela Shabbos

A weekly publication of **Nageela West** Joyfully Jewish Experiences

Dusty Stars

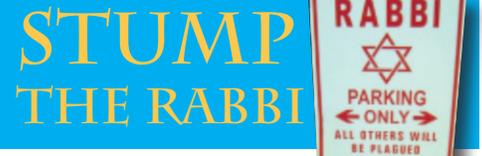
by Rabbi Dani Locker

I'll just say it. I love Harry Potter. The books, the universe, the whole picture. Of course, I'm not the only one. 400 million HP books have been sold worldwide, that's even more than "Knitting with Dog Hair" (yes, that's a real book. No, I haven't read it) and "The Book of Marmalade!" What is so exciting about the series? Sure, the overall excitement of magic and flying is exhilarating, but I think there's something more. Harry starts off (and continues during his vacations) as a completely abused, stepped on, beaten up kid whose unfair treatment makes us feel angry. Then we get excited because he doesn't just get out of his bad situation, he flies high (literally). He goes from the lowest cupboard under the stairs to the top of the quidditch pitch. It's this contrast that makes us, especially Jews, love him.

In this week's Torah reading, we get to know the very first

Jew, Abraham. After he's done some pretty cool stuff, G-d presents this awesome vision and promises to make his kids into a great nation. He shows Abraham the stars and asks if he can count them (not dance with them). "If you can count the stars, then your children will be counted." In English, G-d was telling Abraham that his nation would be so big, it would be impossible to count them. That sounds cool, we're stars, yeah! What's funny is that G-d makes almost the same promise later on, but uses a different analogy, saying that Abraham's children will be as numerous as the dust of the Earth. Which one are we? Dust? Stars? Dusty stars?

The ancient wisdom of the Midrash explains that both are true. When we rise, we shine like the stars. When we fall, we are as lowly as the dust of the Earth. The Jew, the descendant of Abraham has the potential to



Hi Rabbi,

I heard about that G-d tests us. I don't really get it. Doesn't He already know if we're gonna pass or fail? What's the point of the test? And I don't really like tests, they get me nervous.

Thanks,
Anxious Test Taker

Dear Anxious,

Quick, what's the square root of a cucumber? Still don't like tests? Oh well...

Here's the thing. One of the purposes of a test, as you mentioned, is for the tester to find out how much you know, and how well you know it. But there's another really important reason. Imagine you have a really good teacher (you probably have at least one) who already knows from classroom conversations and observations how much you know. Is there still a reason for her to give you a test? There sure is! Tests motivate you to study, grow and learn more. Frankly, most kids would barely learn anything if not for the time spent studying for tests. Imagine if there were no grades in school at all. Sure it would be much more fun (for a while), but we'd probably all end up learning a whole lot less.

Tests are made to challenge us and help us become stronger, smarter,

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be the lowest of the low, or the greatest of them all. Which one we become is up to us. We can be hot, or we can be cold, but one thing Abraham's children can never be is room temperature. The Jewish people are made for excellence. Let's get on those broomsticks and fly.

VERY PUNNY

HOW DO YOU KNOW ABRAHAM WAS SMART?

HE KNEW A LOT!

HAVE REALLY CORNY PUN? EMAIL IT TO DLOCKER@NAGEELAWEST.ORG

Have A Nageela Shabbos

Rabbi Dani Locker



stump continued

awesomer (there's that word again. I'm making a habit out of it).

G-d knew exactly what Abraham was capable of. The purpose of His tests weren't to find out. His tests (in fact, I'd much prefer to use the word 'challenges')- his challenges were made to stretch his abilities. To make Abraham struggle, and from the struggle become stronger. When we lift weights, we're not just seeing how much we can lift; every lift gives us the ability to lift more next time. It's a pretty cool perspective to have, because when we struggle with stuff, we can try to realize that G-d is helping us get stronger.

So maybe the very best teachers are the ones who give more tests... (teachers, please don't try this at home) :)

Have an awesometastic Shabbos,

Rabbi Locker

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

Have a question? Please send it in to stump@nageelawest.org

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