

The Best Offer

There was a city in Texas, Tikvah. It was a big city and had a lot of synagogues. Some big and some small. For as long as anyone could remember there was a tradition in Tikvah that a mysterious and legendary Rabbi L and Cantor V had a standing offer to Tikvah that whichever Temple made the best offer would get to have them lead their High Holy Day services that year. Everyone agreed that their sermons and music were the best so everyone wanted them.

And every year was the same. The big Temples would make increasingly bigger and bigger offers, yet Rabbi L and Cantor V always ended up doing High Holy Days at Temple Bat Tikvah, the smallest Temple in Tikvah.

Finally, Rabbi Chai, the head Rabbi of the largest Temple in Tikvah had had enough. He decided he had to find out how little Temple Bat Tikvah could always afford to make the biggest offer. He knew that Temple Bat Tikvah could not even afford a full time Rabbi and estimated that their annual operating budget was no more than \$ 100,000. His own Temple had actually hired a Big Four CPA consulting firm to help with their bid this year, and they came up with an offer of \$ 500,000 directly to Rabbi L and Cantor V and another \$ 500,000 to the charity of their choice. Yet, as always, Rabbi L and Cantor V accepted the offer from Temple Bat Tikvah. Enough! It was driving him meshugah.

So on the day before Yom Kippur he called in sick. “I have laryin...”, I mwea, cough, hap, rasp, laygenius”. One of the Assistant Rabbis would lead the service. He then purchased a ticket on H-EBay for the Yom Kippur service at Temple Bat Tikvah.

The Service was everything he thought it would be. The Sermon was the best he ever heard. Rabbi L explained that all year long we read God’s stories (Torah). Stories about feeding the hungry and sheltering the poor. But on Yom Kippur, everything is *reversed*. On Yom Kippur God reads our story. Did we feed the hungry? Did we shelter the poor? The music was just as good. Cantor V did a rendition of Ringo Star’s “It Don’t Come Easy” but changed the lyrics a little bit. “Got to pay your dues if you want to be the Jews”. Entertaining but still quite serious. At the end of the service he just stood up and closed his eyes, savoring the moment.

When he opened his eyes he saw Rabbi L leaving the Bimah. This was his chance. Part of the agreement between Rabbi L and the Temple was that no one was to talk to him after the Service. Rabbi Chai went up to Rabbi L and said “I’m Rabbi Chai”. Rabbi L was silent but the look on his face told Rabbi Chai that he already knew who he was. Rabbi Chai thought that strange since he was sure they had never met but he continued, “I just have to ask, every year my Temple makes a huge offer for your

services yet every year you choose the offer of the smallest Temple. Our offer has to be much bigger than their offer. Why don't you choose the best offer for High Holy Days?" Again, Rabbi L was silent but the look on his face seemed to say that did not necessarily agree that he had not picked the best offer. Rabbi Chai, continued, half to himself, "how could the best offer not be the biggest offer?". Now Rabbi L had a "think" look on his face. So Rabbi Chai closed his eyes and thought.

Hmm. Let's back up. Best offer for High Holy Days. What is the main theme of High Holy Days. Repentance/Charity. So what is the best charity...The best charity.. is to give it.. to whoever.. needs it the most. So likewise, the best offer for High Holy Days...is whoever needs it the most. So the best offer for High Holy Days is from whoever needs it the most. Because. Their offer is the smallest one. And when he opened his eyes, Rabbi L was gone. Poof.

At Temple Bat Tikvah on Yom Kippur of the following year the Rabbi gave a sermon about how Repentance was Charity. When we forgive someone we are giving away our worst qualities, our pride and anger. But we are not giving it to someone, we are throwing it away like bread on Taschlich. We are also giving away our best qualities, our understanding, sensitivity and compassion. Those we are giving to someone.

The sermon was given by Temple Bat Tikvah's new full time Rabbi, Rabbi Chai. And it was the best sermon he ever had given.