



## MAGIC SHOES

*Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita*

It was in the shoes. It really was.

I couldn't believe my eyes. With each step, those shoes flashed a brilliant rainbow of lights. It was nothing less than magic.

I had come to know those shoes at close quarters, for my two-and-a-half-year-old grandson was the proud owner of a pair. Let me explain. Grandchildren, like other children, have a strange growth pattern: right before every Yom Tov, their feet become larger. A week or so before the big day and shoe shops are deluged with harassed mothers and their cranky offspring. Little Chaim needs Shabbos shoes, Ruchele has her heart set on a pair just like Surale's — and Tatty wants anything that costs less than a down payment on a new house.

All this mayhem takes place in the precincts of what are usually brightly lit, plush-carpeted shoe showrooms where kindly disposed clerks try not to lose their temper while trying to cajole children into accepting the shoes their mother have chosen. Some of these salespeople have become quite expert in capturing the interests of their little customers. This is obviously a good thing for the economy, but not necessarily so for the poor hardworking parents. Case in point: one pair of electric shoes for a two-and-a-half-year-old Rabbinical scholar (did I mention he is my grandson?).

The family walks into the store. "I need a pair of Shabbos shoes for my little one," says the mother of my grandchild. "Fine, we have just the thing," chirps the energetic sales assistant. She measures the child's feet and walks into the cavern where all the stock is held. Soon she returns with about eight different boxes, each one holding the latest footwear for my precious little Talmid Chochom. Mother asks warily, "Why so many boxes? We only need one pair of Shabbos shoes." "It's only to make sure we get the size right," comes the disarming answer. "We don't want to put the little genius's feet into shoes that don't fit."

בס"ד



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Sure. On go a pair of fairly pedestrian shoes, albeit shiny. “How’s that?” asks the saleslady. The little boy looks at the total stranger with worried eyes. “Are they tight?” she asks him. The child has no idea what she is getting at. She leans over and starts to pinch the front of the shoe. The little boy is really getting upset. Through some kind of kabbalistic knowledge, the saleslady tells mom that “these aren’t right for his growth pattern.” Mom feels she has let her son down somehow. Perhaps she should be feeding him more fruit in the morning?

“Don’t worry. I’m sure we’ll find the perfect shoe for your little boy.” This is said hesitantly. Given the youngster’s pre-haircut locks she is not sure if the customer is in fact male or female. Out come more shoes, each to be shlepped on and given a measuring pinch by the expert “shoe lady.” Amid all this, out comes a pair that looks as far from Shabbos wear as a spacesuit. “Don’t worry,” says the saleslady. “It’s just to check the size.”

The mother’s face wears a look of apprehension that is quickly discerned by the saleslady. In rapid motion the shoes are firmly tied onto the little tzaddik’s feet. In mock surprise (as if she hasn’t already been through the charade ten times that day), the saleslady exclaims, “Loot at that! The soles are flashing!”

The little boy looks at his feet and shrieks in glee, “Flashing! Flashing!” (The speed with which he enlarges his vocabulary to include this new word is nothing short of amazing.)

The saleslady then astounds everyone in the store by grabbing the child’s hand and running up and down the carpeted area crying, “Flashing! Flashing!” She, too, was wearing a pair of these wonderous shoes, and as she ran through the store with the little boy, both their shoes gave off a pyrotechnic display of colours. It was absolutely amazing.

Don’t ask me how this friction-generated gimmick works — I’m only a Rabbi, not an electrical engineer. Suffice to say that after the saleslady finished her little duet with my grandson there was no way he was going to be parted from his “flash shoes.” My daughter was now faced with a double bill because there was no way she was going to allow her son to wear such gear on Shabbos.

Later that night I was treated to a firsthand demonstration of my grandson’s newly found talent. “Look Zaidy — FLASH!” This was said with an exuberant jump up accompanied by flashing lights emanating from his footwear. Such nachas, I thought to myself. We’ve got a little basketball player in our midst.

I regale you with this tale for a purpose greater than warning you of the dangers lurking beyond display windows. While watching my grandson jumping, I realized that the more he jumped and ran, the stronger the flashes of light were. The more movement, the more energy generated. It’s like Yom Tov! the idea flashed through my mind (pun intended). From Elul to the last days of Sukkos, it’s one big opportunity to store up spiritual energy for the winter and beyond. If we turn our mitzvos into excited jumps of holiness, the flashes of light can help us when things are dark.

There can be no Yid who doesn’t worry about what the next news report will bring. The media circus has ranged itself against us, no matter where we live, and no amount of explanation seems to help. We are in serious trouble, and only our allegiance to the Torah will give us the ability to persevere. This is nothing new; it has always been this way. Those of us who have the understanding in our hearts to turn to Hashem must do so and certainly are.

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The energy of our Yom Tovim will be the stuff of future flashes of light. Every Yid has some of this in him. We need but cultivate it now.

There is an old story of how a poor woodchopper named Moshe lived in a village next to a very successful magician named Ivan. Day in and day out, Moshe watched Ivan getting wealthier and wealthier. Poor Moshe was a simple soul and couldn't stand the utter poverty that seemed to be his lot in life. One day he walked up to Ivan's door and asked to be allowed to learn the black arts of the magicians. We speak here not of show business flim flam, but of stuff much darker. Ivan looked at his bedraggled Jewish neighbor and said, "To become my assistant you first have to undergo hypnosés in which you will be told to forget certain things." "No problem, just teach me." Ivan put our friend under a hypnotic spell. "You will forget your name." The name was forgotten. "You will forget your family." Family was forgotten. "You will forget that there is but One G-d."

With this Moshe jumped up. "No, I can't do that!"

"Why not?"

"Because I am a Jew!"

"So, forget you are a Jew!"

"How can I, when there is only One G-d?"

In these hyper-political times, some of us forget who we really are. We need the flashes generated from Yom Tov to give us light to see our way through the morass that surrounds us and hopefully merit to see the flashing lights of our total redemption.

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