

Shalom Bayis Newsletter - Issue 7

Just Watch the Show



The third wealthiest author in the world is the creator of the Garfield comic strip about the oversized, lazy, lasagna-loving cat who is far more feline than funny.

Jim Davis started creating comic strips in the early 1970's, but his sarcastic bugs like Gnorm Gnat and Dr. Rosenwurm were getting him nowhere. Davis is quoted as saying that, over the course of that decade, "I got so many rejection slips, I could have papered my bedroom wall with them!"

Finally, one newspaper editor – who was amongst the myriad who

rejected him - revealed to Davis the secret of his non-success. "Your art is good, your gags are great, but bugs?! Nobody can relate to bugs!"

That got Davis to do some serious thinking. He studied the hugely popular comic strips of the time and realized that some of the very best featured dogs.

But there was a gaping hole in the market. No-one had caught on yet to cats.

Enter Garfield, named, and to a great extent patterned after Davis's grandfather – James Garfield Davis – who was made with the distinct intention to be relatable, easily repetitive, and eminently marketable.

Whether he did or didn't know it at the time, Davis had hit comic strip gold; eventually winning the Guinness World Record for most widely syndicated comic (in over 2,500 newspapers worldwide) and generating roughly one billion – yes, billion – dollars of yearly revenue from a wide range of merchandise and licensing vectors.

Of course, there is a major question in the history and currency that is Garfield. How did Davis keep it up? How did he not run out of ideas? Davis himself addressed this billion-dollar-question.

Listen carefully, please, to what he said, because I believe that it carries a golden lesson for life in general and shalom bayis in particular that is worth far more than the billion-dollar Garfield yearly revenue.

"I've never worried that I would run out of material because I've never written the material. I just watch Garfield. I put him in my head like a TV screen and watch him. I ask what he would do, what he would say. It's almost like a working meditation. I just edit the

he would say. It's almost like a working meditation. I just edit the material."

Davis happened to have grown up on a farm in Indiana with a couple dozen cats. So he was intimately familiar with the flukes and foibles of his feline friends. This certainly must have helped him to be able to pick up the remote control of his imagination and flick on the cat channel.

It's a profound piece of advice if you think about it.

So many of life's vexing problems – negotiating marital conflict being a prime example – cause many a brain to experience "writers block".

You feel stuck. Sometimes completely so. You're wracking your brain to figure out a solution to the problem, and the screen of your mind is showing nothing but static!

But perhaps that is precisely the problem. You and I, and just about every human being that walks planet Earth, are so often trying to **write** the next act in the play when really all we need to do is **watch** it unfold as it ought to in our mind's eye, and then just add whatever editing is necessary to our individual situation.

There is an argument going on. A conflict. Or perhaps just a lack of verve and vigor. Things feel stuck or stale. And you don't know what to do.

Or do you?

Because, really, you do know, don't you?

After all, as Koheles (7:29) so eloquently puts it, "The Almighty made man straight, just they have sought out multiple

machinations”.

We all know – more or less – what a successful married life is supposed to look like. It’s pretty straightforward, isn’t it? We know what really **ought** to happen when there is a conflict that needs resolution, or when there is a seemingly dead-end of rote and ritual that is in desperate need of revitalization; just we so often get stuck because, instead of allowing ourselves to see the straightforward solution as it is, we feel like we have to make our own varied and sundry *cheshbonos* to manipulate things according to how we may feel in the moment.

So perhaps the best thing to do in such situations when we’re feeling hopelessly stuck is to stop trying to create the script – stop with the *cheshbonos rabim* – and instead pretend that we are watching a show wherein the resolution plays itself out as we know it should.

To just see things *yashar* as they are.

You got into a fractious argument with your spouse and there’s terrible friction and you’re feeling this awful pit of “now what!”? Ok, take a breath or two, find a quiet corner, and turn on the screen of your mind to the shalom bayis channel. Watch the straightforward resolution take place – as you well know it should – before your imagination’s very eyes. Add your editorial tweak here and there to fit your individual personality and situation, and then go ahead and put it into practice!

No need to **create** the resolution, for it is right there already waiting for you. Just tune in and watch...

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Do you have a question you'd like to see addressed in a newsletter? A comment to share with the SBN community? Please do email it to me at [rbsa613@gmail.com](mailto:rbsa613@gmail.com).

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Author ~ Public Speaker ~ Educator

Abuse Prevention ~ Shalom Bayis ~ Adolescent Issues

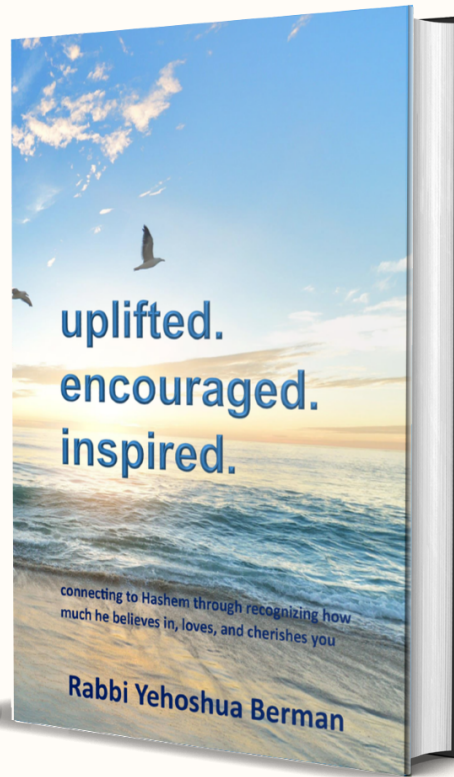
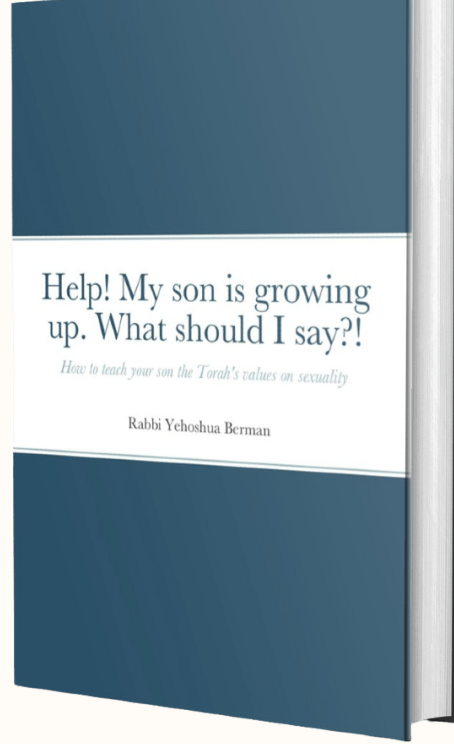
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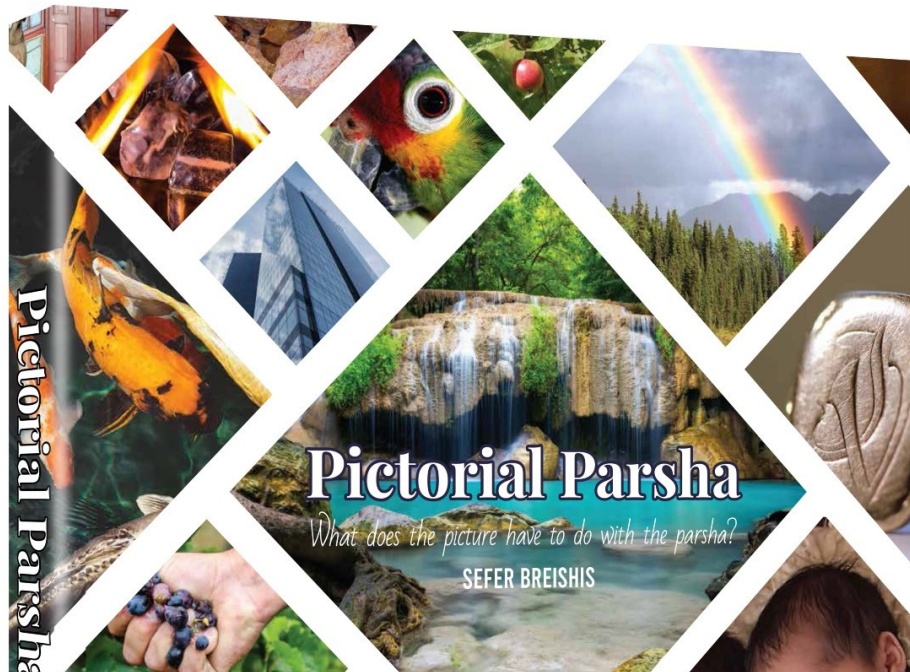
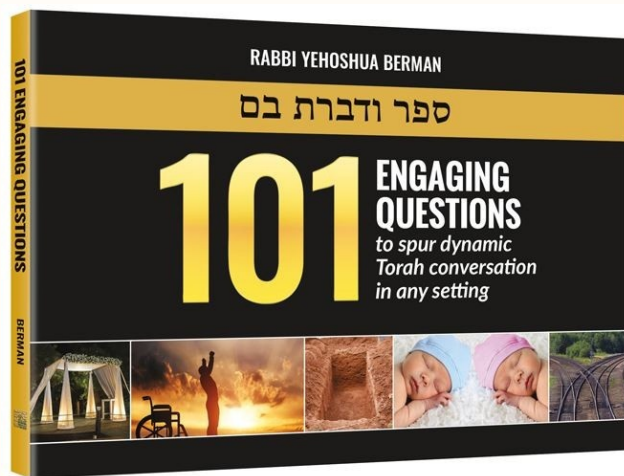
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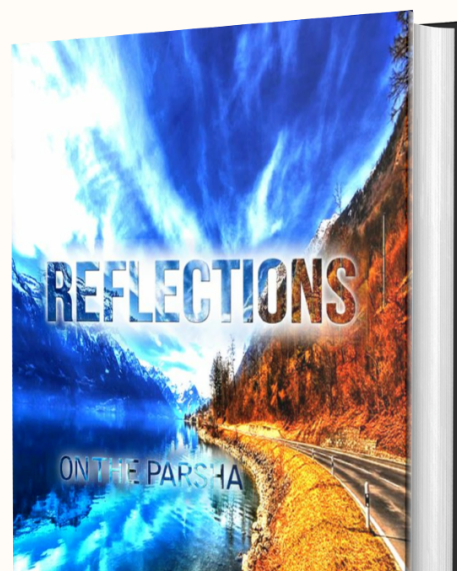
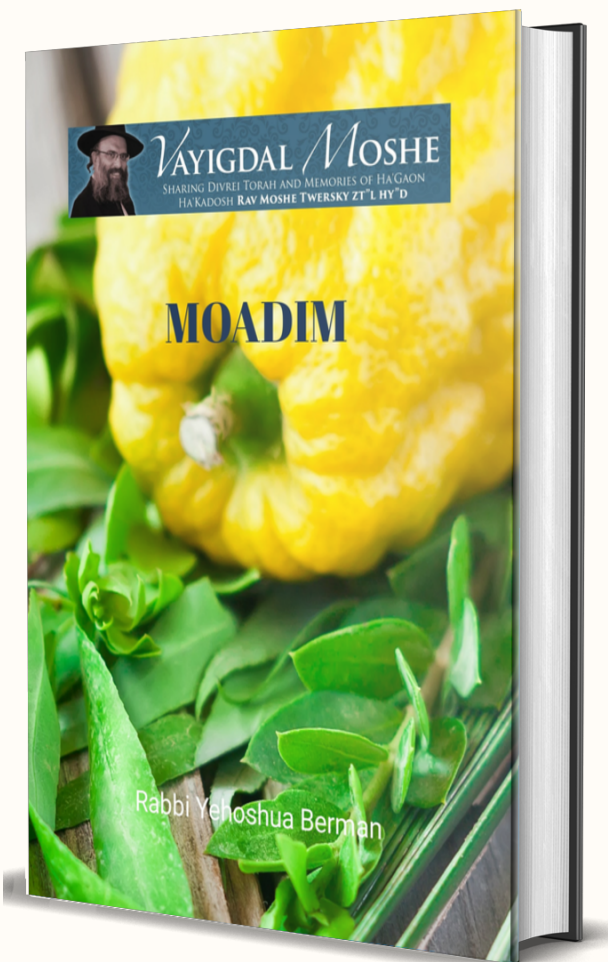
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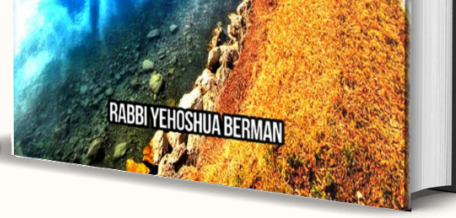












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