



The following is an amazing true story, as heard on the “Hashgacha Pratis” hotline from the son of the protagonist:

R’ Chaim* is the busy principal of an elementary school for girls in Bnei Brak. One day, he got a letter from the Israeli Government, charging him with fraud. They claimed that he intentionally falsified his documented expenses so he could pocket government money. They wanted him to pay a forty thousand shekel fine and close down the school!

As R’ Chaim read the accusations, he realized that they had a strong case against him. He also realized that the only recourse he had was to strengthen his *emunah* and daven. He even hung plaques in his office and home that said “Ein Od Milvado.”

The day of the court case arrived. R' Chaim drove to the imposing Tel Aviv courthouse where his case would be heard. He looked at the signs and saw that the room of the judge appointed on his case was on the sixth floor.

Being in the summer, the *pritzus* of the people surrounding him didn't make R' Chaim comfortable taking the public elevator. He considered climbing the six flights of stairs instead, but he was not young and didn't think he could make it. Left with no choice, he went in the elevator with the rest of the crowd and guarded his eyes as much as possible.

When he got off on the sixth floor, R' Chaim saw a sign that read: "Due to construction, all offices on this sixth floor are temporarily relocating to the seventh floor."

Well, R' Chaim thought to himself, I couldn't climb six flights of stairs, but one flight of stairs I can do. This time I will be able to avoid all the pritzus in the elevator.

The stairwell seemed empty and R' Chaim, feeling relieved, started to climb. But before he got very far, he came across two women talking to each other, standing right in his path. The women were standing on opposite sides of the staircase. R' Chaim obviously did not want to walk between them, as the Gemara and *poskim* rule that a man may not walk between 2 women (just as a woman may not walk between 2 men).

What should he do? He was holding a sefer (which, can *b'di'eved* serve as a *heter*), but he did not want to rely on *heteirim*, even if the other choice was

uncomfortable.

“Excuse me, would you mind moving to the other side of the staircase so I can pass?” he asked politely.

“What’s the problem with going between us?” they asked indignantly. “Are women some sort of *tamei* (impure) object?”

“Not at all,” R’ Chaim explained, “Women cannot pass between two men either. It’s simply more refined and modest for men and women not to mingle and be between each other.”

The women understood and moved aside.

Finally, a few minutes later R’ Chaim pushed open the door to the correct courtroom. The judge and court stenographer, who were both female, were sitting up front. To his surprise, they greeted him warmly.

As it turned out, the judge and court stenographer were the same women R’ Chaim had encountered in the stairwell. They had been using the empty stairwell as an informal meeting room because their usual office was under construction. Even before the hearing started, they were impressed by R’ Chaim’s strong values and his commitment to those values, even in private.

The prosecutor ended up being unable come that day and sent a new prosecutor, who was not familiar with the case, in his stead. After the replacement prosecutor stated his case, the judge responded, “I know this man. He is an honest and moral person. I don’t believe he would steal, because I’ve seen how moral he is, even out of the public eye.”

In the end, R' Chaim was charged a fine of only 2,000 shekel (as opposed to the original 40,000), and his school was allowed to remain open. The prosecutor was in shock.

“I don’t know why the judge was so favorably impressed by you,” he told R’ Chaim.

R’ Chaim, on the other hand, was not surprised in the least. He knew this was the result of his commitment to the *halachos* of *shmiras einayim* and *tzenius*!

**Names have been changed*

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