



Escalator

by Kobi Oz

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Lying on some rock during a school trip
My teacher forgot me with
my kova tembel hat
I was a little sleepy with
an empty water bottle
Then I saw an escalator going
down and up and down
Up to the heavens
And there were angels with shiny pretzels
I counted two

1

בשוכבי על איזו אָבן בְּטיוֹל שְׁנָתִי
מורתי עם כּוֹבַע טֶמְבֵּל שְׂכָחָה אוֹתִי
קֶצֶת הַיִּיתִי מִנִּמְנָם עִם מֵימִיָּה רִיקָה
אִז רָאִיתִי מְדַרְגּוֹת נְעוֹת יוֹרְדוֹת עוֹלוֹת
יוֹרְדוֹת עוֹלוֹת עַד הַשָּׁמַיִם
וְהָיוּ שָׁם מְלֹאכִים עִם פְּעֻכִים מְצַחֲצָחִים
אֲנִי סִפַּרְתִּי שְׁנַיִים

One enlightened,
the other seeing the light
One with a rope around his neck
One seeing the light , the other
enlightened
Seven-stick candelabra, the other a
spotlight

2

אֶחָד נְאוֹר שְׁנֵי מוֹאָר
אֶחָד עִם חֶבֶל עַל צְנָאָר
אֶחָד מוֹאָר שְׁנֵי נְאוֹר
שְׂבָעָה קִנִּים שְׁנֵי זְרָקוֹר

The one seeing the light said "Follow me
To a world of noble magic
And if you don't come, whoah
We'll stick you on the grill
And I felt a kind of awe
that locked my knees
The angel left, head-butted the pretzel,
kissed the bible,
drilled a mezuzah with his eyes
Thus they went up and down, up and
down, the angels from heaven

הַמוֹאָר אָמַר לִי "בּוֹא אַחֲרַי
לְעוֹלָם שֶׁל קֶסֶם אֲצִיל"
וְאִם לֹא תָבוֹא וְאִהְיוּ
נָשִׁים אוֹתְךָ עַל הַגְּרִיל
וְהִרְגַּשְׁתִּי מִן יְרָאָה שֶׁנִּעְלָה לִי תִּבְרֻכִים
הַמְּלֹאךְ הַלֵּךְ בְּכַעַךְ נִגַּח וְנִשְׁקַת תַּנְ"ךְ מְזוּזָה
קָדַח עִם הַעֵינַיִם
כֵּן עָלוּ יָרְדוּ עָלוּ יָרְדוּ עָלוּ יָרְדוּ הַמְּלֹאכִים
אֶל הַשָּׁמַיִם

One enlightened, the other seeing the
light
One with a rope around his neck
One seeing the light , the other
enlightened
Seven-stick candelabra,
the other a spotlight
One defined the other defines
One from village the other from city
One ancient, other progress
One promo, the other holiness

אֶחָד נְאוֹר שְׁנֵי מוֹאָר
אֶחָד עִם חֶבֶל עַל צְנָאָר
אֶחָד מוֹאָר שְׁנֵי נְאוֹר
שְׂבָעָה קִנִּים שְׁנֵי זְרָקוֹר
אֶחָד מְגִדָּר שְׁנֵי מְגִדִיר
אֶחָד מְכַפֵּר שְׁנֵי מַעִיר
אֶחָד קְדָמוֹן שְׁנֵי קְדָמָה
אֶחָד קְדִימוֹן שְׁנֵי קְדָשָׁה

The enlightened said "Friend,
 There's no magic in the world, only
 money
 And the light of the one who saw the light
 is a black hole dressed up as a flash
 He smiled a million dollar smile
 Like a gourmet of teeth
 He said
 Everything is a dream buddy
 I'll clap my hands and you'll wake up
 And hop!
 All was gone
 The escalator no longer went up and
 down up and down up to the heavens
 And the angels disappeared and I was left
 with an empty water bottle

הנאור אמר "חבר
 אין קסם בעולם רק כסף יש
 והאור של המואר חור שחר שהתחפש
 לפלאש
 הוא חיד חיד מליון דולר
 כמו גורמט מהשנים
 הוא אמר הכל חלום חבר
 אמתא כפי ותתעורר
 והופ
 הכל נגוז
 המדרגות כבר לא עלו ירדו עלו ירדו עלו
 ירדו עלו אל השמים
 ונעלמו המלאכים ואני נשארת מיימיה
 ריקה ממים

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אחד נאור שני מואר
 אחד עם חבל על צנאר
 אחד מואר שני נאור
 שבעה קנים שני זרקור
 אחד מגדר שני מנדיר
 אחד מכפר שני מעיר
 אחד קדמון שני קדמה
 אחד קדימון שני קדשה

1. Kobi is short for Yaakov – the Hebrew name for Jacob. Here Kobi is playing with the Biblical tale of Jacob's ladder. In Genesis 28:11-19 we read: "Jacob left Beersheba, and went toward Haran. He came to the place and stayed there that night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it".
2. "Enlightened" – Here the word is being used in its European historical context, not in the context of Eastern philosophy! Referring to the period of the Enlightenment, the 'enlightened' angel is wedded to the rational, the provable, the material.

In his dream, Kobi would seem to be faced with a choice: Either commit to the world of the spiritual ("seen the light"), or commit to the world of the avowed materialist ("enlightened"). In the end no real choice is offered, as the layers and layers of unreality folds in on themselves leaving Kobi awake once more with his empty water bottle.

The angel 'seeing the light', the angel of faith, is presented as slightly threatening, even violent.

- Is it your experience that the spiritual 'miracle-believing' side of religion is threatening or coercive?
- Have you ever asked an Israeli the same question?
- What do you imagine might be their answer?

In the dream Kobi is paralyzed by this angel. When you meet advocates of this approach to religion, are you paralyzed, or energized?

The angel of the Enlightenment would seem to be the enemy of beautiful illusions.

Is it your experience that the more materialist one's approach to life, the less beauty plays a role?

Kobi teaches that the two opposing angels are, for him, also representative of two religious approaches in Israel. There are, on the one hand, the followers of R. Ovadia Yosef, who is famed for his rational, legalistic, practical approaches to halacha and religious interpretation. On the other hand are the followers of the traditions of R. Kaduri, which places far more of an emphasis on kabbalah, lucky charms, and grave-side miracles.

Does your Judaism present you with such a dichotomy between the practical and the spiritual?

Are you, like Kobi, left stuck in between, lacking inspiration?