

RUNNING FOR THE MONA LISA...
A HIGH HOLIDAY CHILDREN'S STORY
By Rabbi Robert B. Barr

I want to tell you a true story— well sort of a true story— about a very famous and very large museum. This isn't just any museum; it's a museum that has some of the most well-known pieces of art anywhere in the world.

Because the museum is so big with so many pieces of art to look at, most people don't have the time to really look around and enjoy all of the art. Instead, what they wind up doing is running into the museum and seeing only one or two of its most famous works of art.

Recently, I happened to meet two kids who visited that museum. They did what almost every other person did...they ran and saw the two most famous pieces of art and then they left. But there's more to their story.

When those kids (their names were Ellen and Jonathan) returned to their hotel room after a quick trip to the museum, they realized they were missing something. It was a piece of their camera – the memory chip had fallen out.

Jonathan said, "it must be at the museum."

"Uh oh," said Ellen, "we have to get it – we're leaving for another city tomorrow and our parents will be very upset if it is lost!"

Jonathan came up with a plan, and announced "we'll sneak in to the museum."

The kids headed back to the museum, climbed up some stairs and through a window... They figured that they probably dropped the camera chip at one of the paintings they had looked at, so they began running in the direction of where they had been earlier.

They tried running as quietly as possible, but then they heard a voice— or at least they thought they did. A voice saying "hey kids, over here!"

"Umm, did you hear that, Ellen?" Jonathan asked.

“Yeah, I did...but we’re here all alone...we must be hearing things.”

“Both of us hearing the same thing? Can’t be! Something’s up!”

But they kept walking, and the next time they heard a voice saying “hey kids! Over here!” they stopped, and they looked around, and they both asked at once “who said that?!?”

“I did!” said one of the figures in a painting.

“I didn’t know paintings could talk” said Ellen. Jonathan added, “why are you calling us?”

“Well...” answered the figure in the painting, “I am speaking on behalf of most of us here. We are really tired of people running by and ignoring us because they’re only here to see the one or two famous paintings they know. Each of us, each and every painting in this museum, is special and unique! Each painting was created by someone who cared and had something to share. If you and the others who come to this museum would just slow down and look around – you might find that there are a lot of very special paintings here.”

“Sure,” said one of the kids, “but we really don’t have time to listen to you right now. We are in a hurry!”

“That’s too bad,” said the figure in the painting. “It seems that even when people come to a museum— a place that they are supposed to relax— they are always rushing.”

“It’s something to consider,” said Jonathan, “but we’ve got to go and find the missing piece to our camera.”

“Before you go, I want you to keep something in mind,” said the figure in the painting. “If you slow down and look around, not only are you more likely to find what you are looking for, but you may even find things you weren’t looking for— and that can make all the difference.”

Just as the kids were about to run off, the painting called to them... “Here! Isn’t this what you’re looking for?” Ellen and Jonathan could hardly believe

what they saw, but the figure in the painting tossed them the memory chip they were missing.

“How’d you get it?” asked Jonathan.

“You dropped it as you ran by this morning,” said the figure in the painting. “Lots of people lose stuff around here. They’re in such a hurry they don’t notice me or even that they have dropped something.”

“Wow,” said Ellen, “maybe we have this all wrong. Maybe rushing isn’t the best way to go through a museum.”

“It’s not the best way” added the painting. “It’s better to slow down a bit. You’ll see more and you’ll probably even enjoy it a little more.”

“Thanks,” said Jonathan, “but it’s time for us to go.”

“I know,” said the painting, “but try to remember what I’ve told you. And, it’s not just in museums that it’s good to slow down once in a while. It’s a good thing to do in lots of places at lots of times. And do me a favor,” continued the painting, “would you pass this advice along to your parents as well? Let them know that is good for them to slow down, because you children aren’t going to be children forever.”

“We will,” said the kids together, and with that they turned and left.

THE END

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