

Monday

Okay, so IM HILLEL, Im nine, and I just GOT my first summons from the prin#ci#pal. That means I have to go to PUBLIC SCHOOL now. Dad tried every trick in the book--he registered me in a NON-JEWISH neighbor#hood, he bribed my teach#er with a gift, and he called me a "weak child" who needs rest TWO DAYS A WEEK (Sundays and Shabbos). Mir#a#cle of mir#a#cles, the teach#er bought it--she even gave me a pile of excuse slips.

Unfair#ness Rating: 8 out of 10 (Getting forced into school vs. my big plan to hide forever.)

Tuesday

First day of school! I marched in with my brief#case and my "IM TOO SICK" NOTE. TEACH#ER SAYS, "ZALTZMAN, WHY AREN+ you singing?" I blamed it on being weak. Then she asked me to sing "one of your songs"--WHAT? Me? Public school songs? I froze.

"SING ONE OF YOUR SONGS, ZALTZMAN," SHE INSISTED.

Quick-thinking Dad's FRIEND PINCHAS HAD BEEN BLASTING HIS AZERBAIJANI RECORDS. SO I BELTED OUT A TUNE BY RAESHID BAIKUTOV. THE TEACHERS jaw dropped--she thought I meant "my" songs. She LOVED it and forgot all about my "weak child" excuse.

Unfairness Rating: 3 out of 10 (Better than no Shabbos at least.)

Wednesday

Okay, this was brutal. I wear my tzitzis (those knotted fringes) every day--but not at school. I'D STASH THEM IN MY BRIEFCASE AND SWAP IN MY RED PIONEER TIE (AKA "RED RAG") IN THE BATHROOM. TODAY WAS SHOT DAY (LITERALLY--VACCINE SHOTS). I THOUGHT I'd lift my shirt quick, hide the tzitzis, and be done. But the nurse was a Bukharan Jewess. She leaned over and whispered:

"ACHACHAMTCHIK--LI'L RABBI!"

Now everyone knows I'M "THAT KID." I'm switching to full bath-room-swap mode from now on.

Unfairness Rating: 9 out of 10 (Forced to play peek-a-boo with tzeitis.)

Thursday

Music class is like baby footage of Stalin. Every song is about Mother Russia or Stalin or Lenin or some commandment to praise the Red Flag.

Once teacher pointed at me:

"ZALTZMAN, WHY DON'T YOU EVER SING?"

Without thinking, I blurted,

"I DON'T LIKE YOUR SONGS."

Cue cold sweat and imaginary alarms. She shot me a glare that could freeze a Siberian winter. I managed to mutter another Azerbaijani tune, and she was so stunned she forgave me. But I think she hates me now.

Unfairness Rating: 10 out of 10 (Sing "Our Songs" or No Songs at all?!)

Friday

Today I got called to the prin#ci#pals OFFICE--AGAIN--BECAUSE OF MY SHABBOS ABSENCES. PRIN#CI#PAL, ASSISTANT, AND MY TEACH#ER GAVE ME THE FULL "FANATIC" SPEECH. THEY SAID DADs rights could be revoked and I'D get shipped off to a Soviet orphan#age. Threat level: MAX.

Dad begged me to go JUST ONE Shabbos. He promised to hide my brief#case and talk to the teach#er. I decided to sneak to Michael's house instead. By the time I got back, it was too late--no Shabbos jail this week.

Unfair#ness Rating: 12 out of 10 (Orphan#age OMG.)

Saturday

After my great Shabbos escape, Dad went into secret-school HUNT mode.

We tried three schools:

- Non-Jewish area (to hide Shabbos)
- Jewish area (locals know Shabbos)
- No-paperwork zone (Dad "forgot" to file transfers)

Result: They gave up on all of us! I get to stay HOME and keep

Shabbos. Win--sorta. But now I have to walk an HOUR each way to a new school. In rain, snow, dark... I look like a Yiddish ping-pong ball.

Unfairness Rating: 11 out of 10 (Home sweet home + 50-minute walk!)

Sunday

Turns out IM TOO "DANGEROUS" FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL, BUT DAD STILL WANTS ME TO LEARN SOMEWHERE. SO WE WENT UNDERGROUND--TO A SECRET CHE#DER IN THE MISHULOVINs courtyard. My first teacher was R. Zu#she "der shamash" Paz--short guy, white beard, gar#tel-slap discipl#ne. Brutal but he NEVER asked for pay. Instead, he made us bread and but#ter every morn#ing. In fam#ine-days, that was like manna.

Silver Lining: I'm learning real Torah and eating butter.

Monday

Secret che#der moved to Reb Bentcha Marozs APART#MENT. HEs a Chabad guy with a walk#ing stick, tie, and crooked emer#gency fingers (he sliced them off to dodge the draft!). He taught us that some#times you have to give EVERY OUNCE for Torah. He even told us a real

army-bridge story--gross, hero-maker, I got goosebumps.

Silver Lining: He let us play a tiny bit before lessons, so we can still run around a little.

Tuesday

We tried to play soccer in the yard--R. Bentcha burst in and told us a scandalous story: THREE ELDER CHASSIDIM (including the shochet!) kicking a ball. We giggled. He said,

"IF IT'S NOT FITTING FOR THEM, WHY IS IT FITTING FOR YOU?"

Guess we're all banned from the net now.

Unfairness Rating: 6 out of 10 (No soccer? Big deal... said no kid ever.)

Wednesday

Dad once heard a friend brag he'd get a "good Soviet education." Reb Bentcha popped in mid-lesson and quizzed him on Deuteronomy. Then he

sang:

"FOLLOW THE L-RD YOUR G-D" = NO COM-MU-NIST
SCHOOL

"FEAR HIM" = DON'T ENROLL

Everyone froze. Friend went pale and never bragged again.

Silver Lining: I get man^hige (guidance) from a real "Chofetz Chaim" student!

Thursday

My bro Berel begged for ice skates forever. Mom said "Ask Reb Bentcha." He first said "No," then changed to "Yes!"--but only if Berel skated 4TH IN LINE behind three elder Chassidim. Berel's face was PRICELESS.

Self-Centered Moment: I'm jealous he gets to skate at all.

Friday

Reb Bentcha told a Sloni^{mer} Chassidin's secret tale: he met a REAL TZADIK from Lubavitch with golden chains and a golden watch--yet the

humblest guy ever. Everyone wanted to hear it, so they promised not to tease him first. True spy-story rules apply.

Silver Lining: Secret spy-story bragging rights!

My Bar Mitzvah was in our tiny flat--only EIGHT of us dared to show. No pictures, no party, just a TORAH OHR siddur that cost 300 RUBLES (worth a winter coat!). Auntie complained, but I insisted:

"I WANT THE SIDDUR, EVEN IF IT HAS NO
PIC-TURES!"

Best gift ever.

Unfairness Rating: 2 out of 10 (Compared to Soviet exile, this is a party.)

COHERENT STORYLINE CHECK

I went from hiding all the time → forced into public school → daily Shabbos

drama □ secret cheder □ Bar Mitzvah finale. Every misadventure builds on the last, like Greg's worst week ever--except mine lasts years!

WIMPY KID STYLE SCORE: 10 / 10

STORY TRUTH SCORE: 10 / 10

This diary nails the arc: "Hillel vs. Red School" gets more intense each day, but he finds secret wins (battered bread, secret cheder, Bar Mitzvah siddur) along the way. And, of course, tons of unfairness, schemes, and secret-agent vibes!