

HILLEL'S SECRET DIARY

Chapter 1: Registration Week (AKA The Worst Week Ever)

Monday

Today the government's 'registration' began—aka Hunting Season for Hidden Kids.

Teachers with clipboards marched around the block asking Mrs. Stein, Mrs. Goldberg, even Old Man Fishman, 'Are there any school-age children here?' My heart beat so loud I thought they could hear it through the walls.

Unfairness rating: 9 out of 10 (10 is 'getting stuck in maaser every week forever').

Scheme idea #1: I tried to hide in the laundry basket. It sort of worked until my elbow popped out and the basket tipped over. Mrs. Stein saw my shoelace and shrieked. Daddy swooped in, 'Just Rivka's sock.' Crisis averted—barely.

Tuesday

BIG NEWS: We got a 'secret knock' code today. It's:

- knock-knock
- pause (count 1-2-3 secretly)
- knock-knock-knock
- pause (1-2-3)
- knock-knock

If you get it wrong, everyone freaks out. I almost answered the door in my pajamas.

Yikes.

Also, Mr. Daniel 'the Yevseksia escapee' came over to practice the code. He's the guy who used to work for the three-letter police (NKVD, KGB - a real 'button' on his coat). He told us how they tricked parents by switching all the Jewish teachers with their own people - like replacing your chocolate pudding with pea soup. Then they tried to force-feed kids treif on Pesach!

Unfairness rating: 10 out of 10. Those brave kids who kept their mouths shut were

real heroes. I just get stuck in laundry.

Wednesday

Today I had to sneak to the shul to slip Reb Mendel a note about our secret cheder.

Of course, Chaim Tchernovitzer the KGB's #1 friend was there, flashing his ID and scaring everyone away. He tapped his watch and growled, "No children allowed here."

I tried hiding behind a pew (my best hiding spot so far), but my kipa stuck out.

Chaim spotted it, so I ducked even lower. My knee still hurts from bashing into the wood. Silly me! Pew wood is harder than a brick wall.

Scheme idea #2: Next time, bring kneepads.

Thursday

Reb Mendel arrived at night and did the secret knock perfectly. In came the world's whisperiest melamed. He taught us alef-beis by lamp-light, like real Torah spies. My brother Yankel and I mouthed the letters so quietly our own shadows sounded loud.

Silver lining: Learning in whispers is kind of awesome. I feel like a super-secret agent, but instead of stealing cookies, I'm stealing Torah. Best. Mission. Ever.

Friday (Erev Shabbos)

Registration Week ends tonight. Parents can finally breathe if you ignore the 100 other ways we could get caught. Mommy and Tatty hugged us extra long when Shabbos started. I guess hiding is more exhausting than I realized.

Unfairness rating: 8 out of 10 (because at least I'm not the one teaching without kippah in public school).

What I learned this week:

- Adults always whisper about the net is tightening! I thought they were fishing for kids with actual nets!
- Laundry baskets and pews are NOT great hiding spots.
- Secret cheder = the most thrilling thing ever (Torah spies rule!).

- My elbow still hurts, but next week I'm bringing kneepads.

Next up: Shabbos chills, challah, and plotting Scheme #360 Operation Disguise: Fake

Mustache Edition. Stay tuned!