

# Teach What You Know...

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## Teach What You Know: The Story of Clarence the Violin Player

I am a newly observant Noahide, and feel that I have much to learn. I hadn't felt comfortable in teaching anybody about these laws, because I felt insecure in my knowledge. Recently, I had made a first visit to a weekly class about living in accordance to the Noahide laws. The rabbi who led the class gave me a hearty welcome and asked me if I had friends that were interested in the Noahide laws. I replied that I didn't have any friends who were interested, or any friends who even knew about the Noahide laws. The rabbi then looked me in the eyes and said, "Why don't you teach them about the laws?"

I was dumbfounded and my mind scrambled for a rationalization. Surely, I need some sort of certification. I thought to myself. I don't know the laws that well. I replied, thinking that this would excuse me. The rabbi then said, You should teach what you know about the laws, and by teaching about them, HaShem will bless you with a far greater understanding I neatly filed it away in a corner of my brain, but I was not really convinced by what the good rabbi said.

The following week, I decided to gather up my tzedakah money that I had saved for almost a month and decided to leave my home on Staten Island to travel into Manhattan to distribute

it. I distributed some to a Chabad house, and decided to head back towards the South Ferry station to go back home to Staten Island. There were often people who sat down along the sides of the entranceway to the station, soliciting money from passersby. I figured I would be able to give the rest to them. While I was waiting for the 1 train to South Ferry station, I saw a man on the platform who was holding a violin bow. Seeing the violin bow immediately brought me back to my own elementary school violin lessons, and regrets for not having continued to play. Oh if only I hadn't stopped playing the violin! I thought. I would love to be able to try to play the violin, even if just once, so I could see what I still remember.

When I arrived at the station, I walked through the entranceway and saw a man to my right playing a violin. I started to listen to what he was playing, and noticed that he wasn't playing any song at all! He was quickly drawing the bow against the strings, as if he were practicing fiddling. He doesn't play very well. I thought to myself. He is not even playing a song. Still I took out some money and placed it in his opened violin case.

The man's eyes lit up. Here, try it! he exclaimed as he handed me his violin. I was shocked and excited at the same time! HaShem heard my thoughts and answered them through this man. When I picked up the violin, I noticed that there was no tape on the fret to guide my fingers to the correct positioning. I fumbled with the correct placement of my fingers. No, no, no. the man said, like this as he guided my fingers. I kept misplacing my fingers, but he was patient while he instructed me to play the scales of G and D. Try it again, he would insist, and I marveled at his devotion in teaching me this instrument. In fact, I had forgotten about my earlier evaluation of his ability. When the lesson was over, he said to me, If you buy a violin, I will teach you. I let him know that I wasn't able to afford to buy a violin now, but

when I could; I would buy one and take up his offer. He then further explained to me: I am just learning to play too. Other people walk by and want to play my violin.

They play the violin and teach me new things. Since they taught me how to play, I want to teach other people how to play.

Touched by his generosity of spirit, and moved to know him better, I asked his name. Clarence, he replied. I gave him some more money for the lesson he had given me, and left to get on the ferry. Reflecting on this blessed and wonderful encounter, I remembered the words of the rabbi, teach what you know. It was an ah-ha! moment. Clarence may not have known much about playing the violin, but he knew more than I did. In gratitude for the knowledge he gained, he joyfully shared his violin and taught me.