

Root Entry  
MatOST  
MatOST  
Microsoft Works  
MSWorksWPDoc  
LEO

by Michelle Broder & Max Kenol

Scene: Leo's apartment in Forest Hills, Queens, NY. CS is a kitchen table with a teacup and bowl of fruit: oranges, apples, bananas, a pack of cigarettes, bottles of vitamins. US is a counter & small refrigerator. On the counter is a tea kettle, a cup and saucer for tea, spoons, a box Lipton tea bags. In the refrigerator are a bottle of Coke, apple juice, seltzer and water. DSR is a chair and side table. On the table are phone, a Jewish bible, and a yamulke. SL is the door to the apartment.

Leo enters, with a Daily News. He is in his 70s, wears gray. Tries to be dapper but is a little schlumpy. He unlocks his door, enters, tries to close the door, but it doesn't quite shut. He gives up, comes in, takes off his jacket, lays the paper on the table, makes himself a cup of tea, and sits down at the table. Opens the paper. Leo speaks with a heavy Polish/Yiddish accent.

Leo

Let's see if it's the crap today as yesterday. That's (dat) nice. Muggings...different names. Dope dealers...different names. Train problems...different trains. And it's the same crooks in the government getting rich while they sit on their tuchises.

Oy, Mayor Giuliani, (add some current complaint about Giuliani and money). So what's news? And the subways going up to a dollar and me living on social security (Joke can be modernized). Ayyyyy. Koch was no angel but at least he was Jewish.

So what we got for jobs today? McDonalds still wants the altakockers to serve the morning egg McMuffins. Nu, there's good money in being a security guard (pause) What

am I gonna do, sit and stare at a door all day? (reads) Garment workers needed. No thanks. I been a furrier for forty years. (reads) This might be something. Messenger needed to deliver packages in advertising district. No bike necessary. Sounds good.

(phone rings. Leo waits for 4 rings before he picks up.)

Hello, whoís this? TV Guide? Listen, I donít want no subscription. Iíve had my TV since 1989 and maybe Iíve watched 60 minutes 3 or 4 times. Other than that Iíve got to use, the what do you call it, yeah, the pliers, to switch the channel. Why get cocksited, I donít watch TV. Thanks for calling.

(Hangs up. Goes back to paper. Reads. Long pause. Phone rings again. Leo goes over, sits, waits for the 4 rings, picks up.)

Hello, whoís this? Ooohhhh, Metropolitan Opera House. What can I do for you? Nesure, I go to the opera..in my neighborhood (pause) La Boheme? La Traviata? How much? (puase) Four hundred dollars a year!?!? You got a discount for senior citizens? (pause) Alright, alright, what fine opera should I support? (pause) Ring Circle and Parsifal!?!?!? You want that I should go see Wagner???? (slams phone down).

- 2 -

(goes back to paper, rips out the teeny tiny ad, brings it back to phone, sits)

Alright, whatís the number? (dials)

Hello? can I speak to the person in charge of hiring the messenger? Thanks. (waits). Hello, my name is Leo Broder and Iím interested in being a part-time messenger. Nesure I got experinece. I got two feet, I walk fast, Iím always twent feet ahead of my daughter. Rockefeller Plaza? 3:30? Itís 2:00 now. Right. Eh, who do I ask for? George. Thanks.

(goes back to table. Takes out a cigarette. Lights it. Starts coughing. There is a knock on the door. Leo jumps up)

Who is it? Who is it? (sees Mr. Johnson. Jumps back afraid)

(At the door is Mr. Johnson, a very well-dressed African-American man, who is of an evangelical religion. He is carrying an attache case full of religious literature).

Mr. Johnson

(sticking head in apartment)

Hello?? Hello???

Leo

(going to door)

Who are you? Who let you in? (opens door a little wider)

Mr. Johnson

(tries to get a word in during Leo's talking)

Leo

What, is my door open again? The guy came here last week to fix it because the hinge got

stuck. Nu, I gotta call him again. (sees Johnson's papers, motions him to enter.) Oohhh, you're from the tenants' association. Come in. It's been a month since the upstairs neighbors flooded their bathroom. The plaster from the ceiling is still falling down. I call and call the super, nobody returns my phone calls, I don't know what else to do...can you do something about it?

Mr. Johnson

I'm sorry, sir, but I'm not from the tenants' association.

- 3 -

Leo

No?! (steps back) So who are you?

Mr. Johnson

My name is Mr. Johnson (holds out hand to shake Leo's hand.)

Leo

Mr. Johnson, nice, but what do you want?

Mr. Johnson

I've come to bring you the good news.

Leo

Ohhhhh, good news. Well, that's a nice change. Have a seat. (Mr. Johnson sits at table.)  
You gotta first name?

Mr. Johnson

Timothy

Leo

Timothy, we got apple juice, grapefruit juice, prune juice, seltzer and water.

Mr. Johnson

No, thanks.

Leo

Listen, Timothy, here you sit, you talk, you drink.

Mr. Johnson

Oh, in that case, I'll have some water.

- 4 -

Leo

(gets Johnson a glass of water, sits down at the table)

So talk.

Mr. Johnson

(ignores water)

What do you think about life on earth?

Leo

The world is nuts, you can't ask for intelligence from our leaders, and there ought to be

a law that all children should call their parents at least once a week.

Mr. Johnson

Do you believe in being that there are many wrong religions?

Leo

Nesure. But Judaism is the best. In fact, it is the oldest religion around, except for the Chinese.

Mr. Johnson

But do you believe in being saved?

Leo

Saved? You should save my ceiling.

(during the following speech, Leo starts cleaning and straightening up. Mr. Johnson becomes enraptured and stares into space).

Mr. Johnson

Do you believe in everlasting life? Do you believe in the kingdom of God? Oh, Lord, if a person does not have love, everything else is useless. Therefore.....

- 5 -

Leo

(overlapping)

What? Is there something on my wall? (checks it out). Nah.....

Mr. Johnson

...early Christians were often given such reminders as these....

Leo

.....Slow down, I don't understand your accent....You want a vitamin, a cup of tea?  
(makes a cup of tea for Mr. Johnson)

Mr. Johnson

.....Have tender affection for one another, welcome one another, slave for one another, become kind to one another, and tenderly compassionate to one another, continue putting up with one another, and forgiving one another freely, if anyone has a cause for complaint.....

Leo

(getting concerned for Mr. Johnson, putting tea on table)

Mr. Johnson

....against another, keep comforting one another, and building up one another, be peaceable with one another, love one another....and the Bible says.....(he opens his bible)

Leo

Oh! You're talking bible. I'll get mine. (he goes and gets his bible, puts on yarmulke, sits back at table close to Mr. Johnson)

Mr. Johnson

Matthew 10, verse 16, And God himself will be with them and he will wipe out every tear from their eyes and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry...pain will be no more!

- 6 -

Leo

In the book of Shimos, Parshas Shimos, Perek Yod Gimel, Pasook Yod Daled, it says,

ìAnochi, eloheyt ahvichah elohey avraham, elohey yitzchak, elohey yaakov. Anochi.  
Anochoî

I am the G-d of thy forefathers. I am that I am.

Mr. Johnson

Revelation 21, Verse 3 and 4. God is not partial but in every nation the man that fears him and works for him, righteousness is acceptable to him.

Leo

And in Yitro, Perek tet vav, Pasook hay, it says, Ooshmartam et breetee, vehayeetem lee sgoolah meechal ha-amin. That's Jethro 15, Verse 5: When you honor my covenant, you will be more precious to me than all the nations. The chosen people!!

(The following speeches of Leo and Mr. Johnson are spoken simultaneously)

Mr. Johnson

Timothy, Chapter 12, Verse 7. If you ever have some trouble with a fellow Christian, do not stop talking to him, do not hold resentment, but straighten out the matter in the spirit of love. And in Matthew 19, Verse 5,

Leo

Oobayahd chazakah, hatzee-aynu hashem me-emizrayem. That's Exodus. And with an outstretched hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt. And in Bamidbar, Parshas Masay, it says, You shall inherit the land of Canaan to dwell in her because I have given you the land to inherit. And if G-d repeats himself twice, then, nesure, Israel is ours.

Mr. Johnson

When Jehovah God created man and woman, he joined them together to produce a family and they would make the earth into a holy paradise.....

- 7 -

Leo

....And after all the trouble G-d went to to get us out of Egypt, you want I should change religions?? Listen!!! (Johnson stops talking) We wandered in the desert for 40 years!

Mr Johnson

Before being born on earth as a man, the Lord has been in heaven as a mighty spirit person!!

Leo

We met G-d face to face on Mt. Sinai...!!!!

Mr. Johnson

He has a spiritual body invisible to man!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Leo

OH!! You're talking trinity! I don't want to hear about no holy families, no holy ghosts..There's only one G-d!!!!

Mr. Johnson

AMEN!!!

Leo

Amen is right! Now pack your bags because you're going. Thank you, but don't come back next Sunday!

(He bundles up Mr. Johnson's things and dumps them by the door. Johnson gets up to get his things. During the following monologue, he will try to get out the apartment, but the door won't open. Phone rings. After 4 rings, Leo picks up.)

Hello, who's this? Oh... Michele, nice to hear from you after 3 weeks. What do you want? You're moving in with the Irish shaygitz? That's nice. My opinion? After 10 years you're asking? Well, you don't act right, you dress like a boy... What? Your mother's getting married again? Also to a goy?..... Thank G-d. Listen, Michelle, you want to go to Atlantic City with me

- 8 -

Leo (cont'd)

this weekend? You're busy. Oh. There's someone at your door. Listen, why don't you call me at the end of the month when you're free. (He hangs up the phone slowly. To the phone--) I love you too.

(Leo goes back to the kitchen table and sits dejectedly. Mr. Johnson has stopped trying to get out and has been listening to the end of the phone conversation. He moves tentatively towards Leo.)

Mr. Johnson

Exodus 10, Verse 7. Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land that the Lord thy God giveth thee.

Leo

I thought I asked you to leave.

Mr. Johnson

I was going to, but the door got stuck.

Leo

Have a seat. (Johnson sits.) Here. Have an orange. You got children?

Mr. Johnson

Oh, yes.

Leo

Do they make you suffer?

Mr. Johnson

Oh, no.

- 9 -

Leo

So what are their names?

Mr. Johnson

Eve, Mary and Joseph.

Leo

Mary and Joseph. It figures. And they do what?

Mr. Johnson

They go to school and every Sunday they go to church.

Leo

And you have to drag them there with the leash, right?

Mr. Johnson

Oh, no, of course not. (He begins to read from his Bible)

Leo

(he gets more & more excited during this speech. Johnson tries to interrupt.)

I have to force my daughter. Every Rosh Hashanah for the past 10 years, I bought my daughter a \$75.00 seat for two days to hear the shofar and then another seat on Yom Kippur. What did she do two years ago? She didn't show up. Why? Because she was with one of her sheygitz friends. And this year she's going steady with some Irish guy and is too busy to go to shul. I buy her all these different vitamins, A, B, C, shmee. And what happens? She doesn't call. For 2 months I don't hear from her. (starts poking Johnson)

You know where she is? She's with one of her friends from Seattle travelling through the desert in Arizona looking for some Indians. I send her to Yeshiva for 11 and a half years so she can do rain dances? (slams cups, yelling at Johnson. He leaps out of his chair) I ask her, do you want a couch, some furniture, maybe a fur coat? She says no. What, is this normal? Other children accept apartments from their parents, she won't even take a fur coat.

(Johnson has been harassed and chased out of the apartment, barely escaping, slamming the door behind him. Leo looks at closed door.)

- 10 -

Leo (cont'd)

What? You don't want to talk? Fine! (walks toward table) For this tsoris I came to America, the land of opportunity. My daughter has plenty of opportunity to drive me crazy. Me, an old man, I should have some peace. Back in Poland, people did the right things. Children got married, they had children, and they had respect for their parents. Oy Got in himmel, alles es de meshungenah es ferayning mein kopf!!

(Leo sits in the chair. Big sigh. Looks at watch)

3:00. Time for the interview.

(He removes the yarmulke, puts on his jacket, exits the apartment).

