

# Tom and the Hebrew Letters

by Jim Gold

**T**om, a seven-hundred-foot giant, born with feathers on his legs, couldn't fly because he suffered from stupidity.

Ashamed of his condition, he looked for a teacher to guide him up the Smart and Self-Improvement Ladder. Deep in his undeveloped brain, he knew he could use his massive body as a springboard to a higher state. The only question was how.

On Monday morning he visited Mrs. Dolan's Landslide Academy of Torah, Talmud, Calligraphy, and Hebrew Letters. The smartly dressed, gray-haired teacher took him by the hand, smoothed his ruffled leg feathers, and taught him how to draw the Hebrew letter aleph on the school yard using a hundred-foot Bentworth shovel-tipped pen. Tom towered above the Academy as he drew the first diagonal line of aleph, then added hooked curves on its upper right and lower left.

Suddenly, his aleph burst into flame! Smoke and fire shot out in all directions. The entire letter rocketed into the sky, zoomed in concentric circles around a cloud before turning back and, in a paralyzing line descent, headed straight for Tom's head! In a flash of blinding light, it entered his left ear, burned the center of his brain, inflamed his cerebellum, cerebrum, and medulla, and lit his eyes with a fiery passion.

"Good for you, Tom!" Mrs. Dolan chortled. "Now you understand the nature of aleph!" She loaded three cookies on a derrick and hoisted them up to his eager mouth. "These sweets are your temporary reward, a small pleasure. But no pleasure can compare to the joy of learning a Hebrew letter! Next we'll try beth."

Tom painted beth on the schoolyard pavement. When he finished, beth burst into flame and rocketed into the sky. Tom gaped in amazement as beth somersaulted over a United Airlines air path. Suddenly, it turned around and, in a paralyzing line descent, headed straight for Tom's head! Splat! Beth landed in his mouth! It burned his tongue, singed his esophagus, charred his throat, and peppered his stomach with

burning ash before heading back to his brain, where it vibrated next to the aleph. His eyes shone with beth light of white letter-learning passion.

Next came gimel. Tom painted it in the schoolyard with his Bentworth shovel-tipped pen. But gimel didn't catch fire. It froze in place, hardened into iron, and sank through the concrete. He watched it disappear under the schoolyard.

And then he heard the rumble of an earthquake! The schoolyard burst open, and gimel, covered with molten lava, shot skyward. It rocketed through the sky, searching for a landing place. It spied Tom. Like a falling star, gimel shot straight down and zinged through his right eye, filling his brain with molten lava, electricity, and magnetism before nestling next to aleph and beth.

Every day Tom painted another Hebrew letter. After twenty-two days, he had mastered the entire alphabet. At night, fire from the Hebrew letters in his eyes lit up the town. Like a lighthouse, it shone for miles around.

Mrs. Dolan was pleased with her student's progress. So was Tom, who had gone from dumb to smart in twenty-two days. On the twenty-third day the feathers on his legs moved to his arms. He flapped them like wings, and his giant body began to soar. Ascending skyward, he flew through space, towards a higher cloud of Hebrew sentences.

*from Carlos the Cloud*

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