



The Beam Parable

By: Marsha Van

I was dressed in a long gown that was wrapped in a tallit. I walked out the door of my father's house to speak to three people I had seen walking in the garden at the edge of the fields. There was one woman and two men. They were dressed similar to me but did not have tachelet strands in their tzitziyot and one of the men wore a coat with many colors in it. I had not seen them in the garden before. They asked me to join them in prayer but stated that I must balance on the balls of my bare feet on a 1 by 4 while *davening*. I watched them as they wobbled and swayed while *davening*. They were all able to stay on the beam even though it was with obvious difficulty. I tried but could not seem to keep my balance on the beam for it was narrow and hurt my feet. I fell off several times and laughed. They were offended by my laughter but still allowed me to be in their company. I complimented them on their ability to stay on the beam. I wondered how they could pray, having to put so much attention on staying on the beam.

Because they had been courteous to me, I asked them if they would like to meet my father and come to our home. They gracefully accepted the invitation, insisting that they must bring their board with them. We made our way through the gardens to the house. We came to a mansion with many shining windows glistening through dense beautiful foliage that clung to trellises on the walls of the structure. We entered through a huge double door with olive trees, and doves ornately carved on its borders. In the center the doors was a great menorah cast in gold that gleamed with an intense brightness.

We entered and I led them into a large sanctuary. There were many chairs spread throughout the sanctuary. A fountain bubbled up from the center of the room and wound its way all through the house. The room was brightly lit with a light that seemed to have no apparent source. There were many books and scrolls spread out on tables and there were many tall shelves containing many more. The visitors walked into the room and took notice of the four large scrolls laid out on the *bema* along the back wall of the room. They approached the scrolls and as they read the words they gasped. They quickly turned from the scrolls and moved to a corner stepping up onto their board, and began to daven. They repeated the word *forbidden* over and over as they worked to balance on the beam they had brought with them. I noticed

then that the beam seemed larger than when I had first encountered it and now had pointed growths protruding on all sides.

I was surprised at their actions and explained that these were my father's books and that if they had any questions about them I was sure that he would be glad to answer. They agreed to talk to my father and I led them down a hallway to a gathering area. There, my father and brother were sitting with servants engaged in a lively joyous conversation. As we entered the room, their attention turned to the visitors. My father and brother rose to meet them and gave them vessels of water. The visitors did not know what to do with this water and seemed very confused. They were also having trouble holding the water and the beam and the same time.

My father asked if they knew of their needs. The visitors shook their heads *yes* and said *no*, and then they spoke the word *forbidden*. They continued to wrestle with the beam and the water but could not figure out how to carry them both. After some time of struggle they handed the water back to my father.

My father suggested that his son would gladly carry the beam for them. They replied that they did not know how to put it down and when I looked again at the beam, I saw that the growths had become gnarled branches that had become entangled in their garments. It was fast becoming a heavy tree that required all their strength to hold.

Then I told the visitors that my brother could carry the tree, saying that he would take it from them and they would only have to release their grip to be freed from its burden. They groaned under the heaviness on their beings and I watched and saw the tree growing before my eyes. It was now so large that the visitors could barely reach around its girth, and yet they struggled to hold onto it.

It was then that my brother spoke. His voice filled the air. He told the visitors that he would be honored to carry their tree and they soon relented. As my brother reached to take the tree it began to shrink and soon became dust in his hands. The visitors stood in awe at this sight. My father then poured out the water upon them. They were astonished as their thirst was quenched. They did not realize they had been so thirsty. They rejoiced and asked if they could share this water with their people. My father gave them vessels of water to take with them and they departed, going back through the gardens, out to the fields where they had come from, filled with joy and eager to share what they had been given.