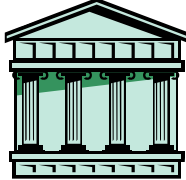




The Best Twenty-Dollars, Part Two

At the intersection, Maya informed me of something. "You can't say 'God bless you' unless someone sneezes."

"That's not true," I countered. "Of course, you can." We were quiet. I thought about explaining to her what I do for a living or about my title, rabbi. I opted not to. I thought I might explain about God to her in terms she would understand. Again, I opted not to. Her idea about God was probably better than mine. We continued our walk hand in hand.



We crossed the street, passing the Chase Bank. A man was sitting on the sidewalk. As we passed, he said aloud, "Sir, in the grand scheme of things, could you give me a dollar?"

I was intrigued and mulled it over in my head. "Say that again," I requested as, hand in hand, we approached him. He did, and I thought I could. I took out my wallet. I had three twenties-no singles. I thought, "In the grand scheme of things, can I give this man twenty dollars?"



The answer was again, yes. I handed it to him.



He shook my hand and told me his name was Lester. I told him that I was Uncle Brian and introduced Maya.

"God bless you, Brian. God bless you, Maya" he intoned. "You have a good uncle here."

"Lester?" I asked. "Yes?"

"Can you explain to Maya why you are allowed to say 'God bless you' whenever you want?"

Lester looked at Maya. It was the shining type of look you see when someone's true self comes from within. "Maya, my love," Lester told her slowly and deliberately, *"God loves you very, very much. Always know that."*



Maya squirmed a little. She squirmed like that the first time Aunt Jane and I did the "We love Maya dance." in Central Park a little over a year ago. She then reached into her diminutive pocket and pulled out a penny, handing it to Lester.



I choked up.

Lester took the penny in his hand. He reached into his pocket and removed a flattened one dollar bill. He unfolded it and gave it to Maya.

As we continued walking downtown, a tear came down my face.

Maya handed me the dollar. "Uncle Brian?" "Yes?"

"Would you put this in your pocket and give it to me later."

I taped that dollar to a piece of paper that reads, *"Maya's special dollar bill - With*