

BS"D

Acceptance Speech – Stairway to Heaven

Bar Ilan – June 2022

Mois Navon

First of all, thank you for this honor. But before I forget I want to thank God for the *siyata dishmaya* and I want to thank my wife for her support through out the years of my Torah learning.

((My name is Mois Navon, I am a doctoral student here at BIU in the dept of JP.)) I was asked to say a few words about how I got here and how I got to my midrash on Stairway to Heaven.

So lets start at the beginning – briefly (*bekitzur Nimratz*). I grew up a completely secular Jew in LA. I mean not completely secular – I had a Bar Mitzvah, we made kiddush on Friday nights and then went to the movies, we of course didn't eat on YK, but we went to the beach to fast. I grew up surfing the beaches of CA. I was on the surf team at UCLA. In my 2nd year at UCLA studying Computer Engr. I got a student internship (*misrat student*) at NASA's JPL. My boss was a friend of the family and a religious Jew – he taught me engineering and he taught me Torah, Hassidut, Kabbalah. The most important thing he taught was that the Torah is not a bunch of kiddy stories (*sippurei yeladim*) but is written in many layers (*revadim revadim*) of meanings (*mashmuyot*). The text is told in symbols. I might not have been so open to the idea, but I had just been taking a class in Italian Cinema (*cinema Italikit*) where everything is written in many layers (*revadim revadim*) of meanings (*mashmuyot*) – a flower means love, water means rebirth (*techiya mehadash*). And so I began to learn Torah and Hassidut and Kabbalah.

Around that time (*betekufa hazot*) I went surfing my friends on the 4th of July (*yom haatzmut*) and the radio was playing (*menagnim*) the firecracker 500 (*zikukei hamesh meot*) – the top 500 songs (*shirim hatovim*) for the year. And they got to the number one song – Stairway to Heaven. My friends and I all looked at each other and said: HOW CAN THIS BE?! Every year for decades – Stairway to Heaven is number 1 – even though many many different music genres (*disco, punk, funk, etc.*) have come and

gone since then. This got me thinking that maybe there is something deeper here, maybe this song is written in many layers (revadim revadim) of meanings (mashmuyot).

I started to do research and I found an interview with the songwriter (meshorer) Robert Plant. They asked him how he came up with the lyrics of this eternal hit song, which by the way NO ONE has been able to EXPLAIN!!! He said, and I quote,

“It was done very quickly. It was a very fluid, unnaturally easy track. There was something pushing it, saying ‘you guys are okay, but if you want to do something timeless, here’s a wedding song for you.’”ⁱ

”זה נעשה מהר מאוד. זה היה מאוד זורם, קל בצורה לא טבעית. היה משהו שדחף את זה, ואמר ‘אתם בסדר, אבל אם אתם רוצים לעשות משהו נצחי, הנה שיר חתונה בשבילכם.’”

So I said to myself: this is a wedding song??! What kind of a wedding is he talking about. But then I remembered the wedding of God to the Jewish People and I said, yes, that makes perfect sense – that is why the song is called Stairway to Heaven – it is a wedding song, of the Jewish People, and really all of humanity, connecting with their creator.

So that is what it is about, the history of humanity, a history of striving to connect with our creator. It’s the history that starts with us disconnecting from God in the Garden of Eden till we reconnect with the coming of the Mashiach, BBY.

ⁱ R. Godwin, *The Making of Zeppelin IV*, p.48.