

My Father's Laugh

BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE

When I was a fifth grader in Yeshiva in Harrisburg, PA, on a dare, I crawled under the sink in the boy's bathroom and turned off the water, so that anyone washing their hands would find the spigot dry. As I did this, the principal Rabbi Goldberg walked into the bathroom. I don't doubt that Rabbi Goldberg was a kind man, but as children we were terrified of him.

He was not pleased. He brought me to his office and insisted I call my father, a fellow rabbi, and tell him what I had done. I dialed the phone with trembling fingers. When my father answered I began the conversation by saying, "Oh, Dad — am I in trouble."

My father burst out laughing.

I no longer recall what, if any, punishment resulted from my mischief. I can reliably report, however, that my aspirations as a saboteur were quashed forever.

I recount this trivial tale as a reminder the next time you are tempted to severity. It all happened many years ago. Rabbi Goldberg and my father are gone. But the sound of my father's laughter continues to lift my heart.