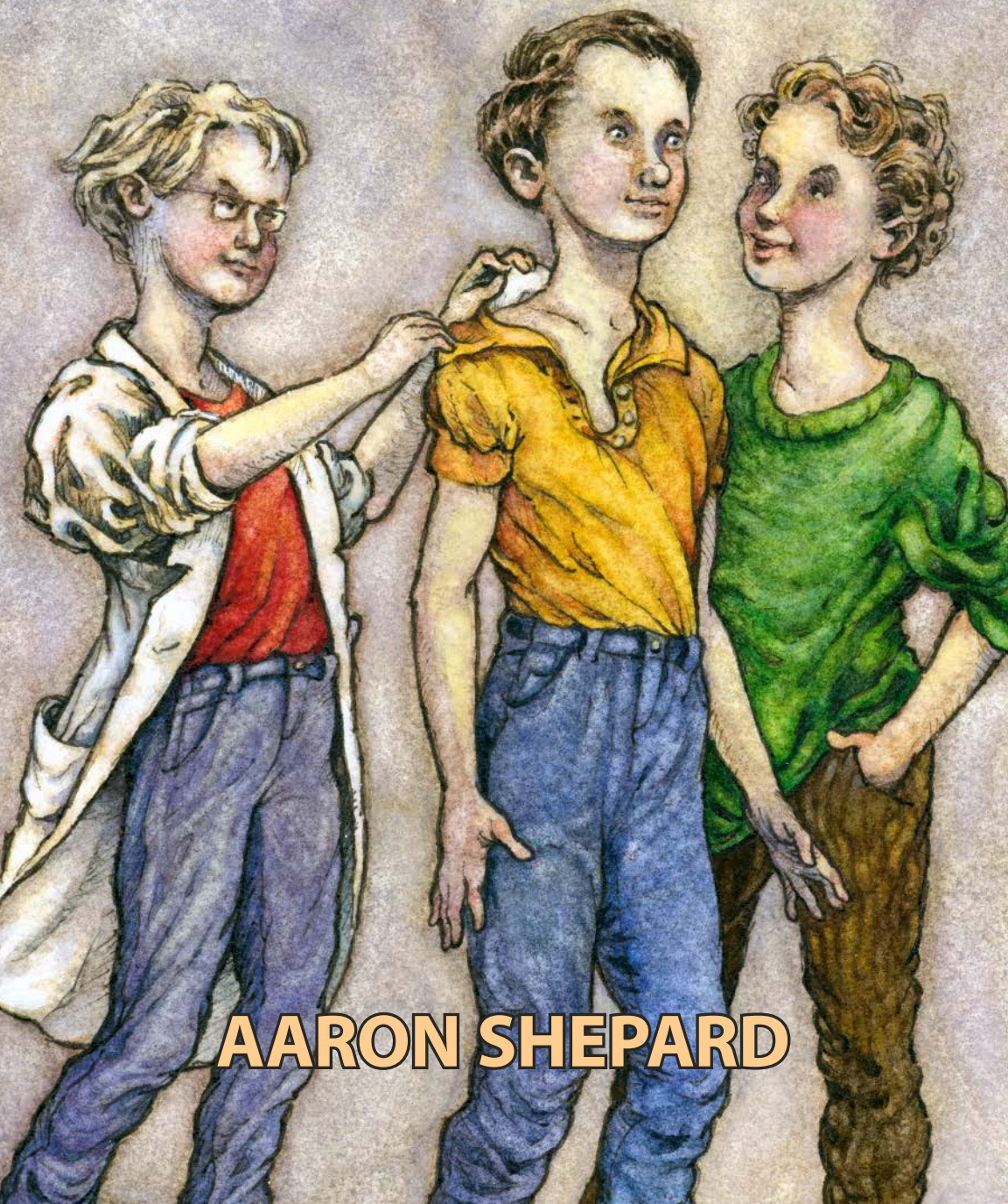


# TIMOTHY TOLLIVER AND THE BULLY BASHER



AARON SHEPARD





# Timothy Tolliver and the Bully Basher

— Aaron Shepard —

Arnie walked all around the robot, admiring it. “You know what this reminds me of? The Golem.”

“The Golem?” said Timothy. “What’s that?”

“It’s from an old legend we heard in Hebrew school. A few hundred years ago, a lot of Jews in Europe were getting killed by mobs, all because of some stupid rumors started by their enemies. This one rabbi wanted to protect the Jews of his city, so he made a man of clay and brought it to life. It was so strong, nothing could stand against it. They called it the Golem.”

“Kind of like Frankenstein?” said Timothy.

“Yeah, but the Golem came first, and that was probably where the idea for Frankenstein came from.” Arnie grinned. “Wouldn’t it be cool if this robot could protect us from the Stinks, like the Golem protected the Jews?”

Timothy grinned too. Then they both stopped grinning and looked at each other.

“You don’t think . . .” started Arnie.

“I don’t know,” said Timothy. “I don’t see why not.”

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Timothy Tolliver and the Bully Basher

Timothy Tolliver  
and the  
Bully Basher

Aaron Shepard

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Ages 7–11

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For Danny Dunn





# 1

“Uh-oh,” said Timothy Tolliver as he rounded the corner onto his street. “Looks like trouble.”

“You call that trouble?” said his best friend, Arnie Rosenberg. “I call it fatal disaster!”

It was after school, and they were on their way to Timothy’s house to look at his project for the science fair. But standing between them and the house were Buzz, Grub, and Spud, the gang of sixth-grade bullies called the Stinks.

“Just play it cool, OK, Arnie? Maybe they won’t bother us.”

“Yeah, right,” said Arnie. “Maybe they’re tired from beating up the last few kids.”

As the two got closer, the Stinks turned to face them, making a row across the sidewalk.

“Hi, guys,” said Timothy nervously.

“Gee, guys,” said Arnie, “it’s great to see ya. Sure is a nice day for blocking sidewalks.”

“Well, look who’s here,” said Buzz, the gang’s leader. “If it isn’t our two favorite fourth-grade nerds.”

“Nerds?” said Arnie, his face turning red. “Nerds? Gee, Buzz, that’s an awfully big word for you. Did you just learn that one?”

“Arnie,” whispered Timothy in alarm, “cool it!”

“Oooh,” said Spud. “Buzz, I think the little nerd-face is making fun of us.”

“Really?” said Arnie, his eyes wide. “How can you tell, Spud? Say, I hear they’re letting you guys out of sixth grade so you can start over in kindergarten.”

“*Arnie!*” muttered Timothy between clenched teeth.

“Spud, I think you’re right,” said Grub. “You know, Rosenberg, you got an awful big mouth, for a little kid.”

“Yeah, well, maybe,” said Arnie. “But at least I’ve got a full-size brain to go with it.”

“That does it,” said Buzz. “Come on, guys. Let’s teach ’em a lesson.” The gang started toward them.

“Wait!” screamed Arnie.

They stopped. “Yeah?” said Buzz.

Arnie just stood there. Timothy could practically see his brain churning. Then Arnie pointed past the gang and screamed, “Look!”

Timothy could hardly believe it. The oldest trick in the world, and the Stinks fell for it. They all turned and looked behind them.

Arnie grabbed Timothy’s arm and they started to run, right past the Stinks.

“Hey!” yelled Buzz behind them. “Let’s get ’em!”

“Are you nuts?” Timothy said as they ran. “Why did you have to spout off like that?”

“Talk later,” said Arnie. “Run now.”

They got to Timothy’s house barely ahead of the gang. As they opened the door and piled through, Buzz shook his fist from the sidewalk.

“We’ll get you guys. Just wait.”

## 2

“That was close!” said Arnie.

“Too close!” said Timothy as they flopped down on his beanbag chairs.

They were down in Timothy’s basement laboratory. Timothy loved to invent things, and his parents had always encouraged him. When his equipment had overflowed his bedroom, they had let him move it down here, in what had been the rec room. Now it was Timothy’s private place.

The whole room was crammed with things for inventing. There was lab equipment for physics, chemistry, biology, and electronics. There were hand and power tools for making parts. And there was Timothy’s own special computer that he’d hacked together from a Mac and a PC. His father, a computer engineer, had helped him write the software.

Sitting there safe, Timothy remembered why he almost wasn’t. “Arnie, you have to be out of your mind, getting them angry like that.”

“Aw, Timmo, I was just having a little fun. If they can pick on us for our smaller muscles, the least we can do is pick on them for their smaller brains.”

Timothy had to chuckle at that.

“I mean,” said Arnie, “you have to be pretty dumb if your idea of fun is to push other people around.”

“Well, they may not be the smartest kids in school,” said Timothy, “but maybe there’s more to it than that.”

“Like what?” said Arnie.

“Maybe someone bigger is picking on *them*—an older brother, or their parents, even—and they feel like they have to take it out on someone else. Or maybe no one’s ever been nice to them, so they just don’t know how.”

“Hey, Timmo, don’t go all mushy on me, OK? I mean, the next thing I know, you’ll be sending them flowers—with a little note saying, ‘Thanks for being such great bullies. Love, Timothy Tolliver.’”

Timothy grinned. “Come on, Arnie. You know what I mean.”

“Yeah, I know. But I also know those bullies almost bashed us today. And it wouldn’t bother me if someone bashed the bullies.”

“OK, Arnie, whatever. But, listen, are you ready to see my science project?”

“I sure am. Stun me with your smarts, Mr. Inventor Man.”

Timothy went to the corner, where a bed sheet was draped over something as tall as Timothy himself.

“Here it is, Arnie—the Artificial Robotic Life-Simulator.” He whisked away the sheet.

“Awesome,” said Arnie, getting up to see better. “No, ‘awesome’ doesn’t say it. Stupendamazing. Timmo, you’ve outdone yourself.”

In the corner stood a boy—or what looked just like a boy.

“How did you make it so real?”

“It’s the molded polymerized closed-cell urethane. My own formula. It looks like skin, and it’s very tough too.”

“So, show me what it does.”

Timothy grinned. “Just watch.”

He reached inside the robot's shirt collar and flipped a switch. Then he picked up a remote control and pressed a button.

The robot turned around in a circle. Timothy pressed another button. The robot lifted its arms.

"It's really strong, too. Watch this."

Timothy pressed a couple more buttons. The robot walked slowly forward, tightened its arms around Arnie, and lifted him like a feather.

"Hey!" yelled Arnie. "Put me down, you heaping hunk of hardware!"

Timothy grinned. "You can't tell it like that, Arnie. It only acts by remote control. OK, I'll let you down now." He pressed another button, and Arnie dropped to the floor.

"Wow," said Arnie, catching his breath. "That is more than stupendamazing. That's fantastincredible!"

"Thanks," said Timothy modestly.

Arnie walked all around the robot, admiring it. "You know what this reminds me of? The Golem."

"The Golem?" said Timothy. "What's that?"

"It's from an old legend we heard in Hebrew school. A few hundred years ago, a lot of Jews in Europe were getting killed by mobs, all because of some stupid rumors started by their enemies. This one rabbi wanted to protect the Jews of his city, so he made a man of clay and brought it to life. It was so strong, nothing could stand against it. They called it the Golem."

"Kind of like Frankenstein?" said Timothy.

"Yeah, but the Golem came first, and that was probably where the idea for Frankenstein came from." Arnie grinned.

“Wouldn’t it be cool if this robot could protect us from the Stinks, like the Golem protected the Jews?”

Timothy grinned too. Then they both stopped grinning and looked at each other.

“You don’t think . . .” started Arnie.

“I don’t know,” said Timothy. “I don’t see why not.”

“Come on, Timmo,” said Arnie. “Let’s take it for a spin.”

### 3

“You really think they’ll be around?” said Timothy, looking out from behind the bushes.

“Sure,” said Arnie. “They’re always walking through the park, looking for kids to pick on.”

From where they hid, they could see the robot boy over by the playground.

“Shouldn’t you make him move or something?” said Arnie. “He looks kind of funny, just standing there.”

“Good idea,” said Timothy. He pressed some buttons on the remote control, and the robot started walking up and down.

“There they are!” said Arnie.

The Stinks were coming through the park, laughing and joking. Then they saw the robot boy and started nudging each other. Timothy stopped the robot as the gang got close.

“Looks like a new kid in the neighborhood, guys,” said Buzz with a smirk. “Let’s show him how we welcome new kids.”

In his hiding place, Timothy muttered, “No, you don’t.”

He pressed two buttons. The robot lifted its arms and walked slowly toward Buzz.

“Hey, Buzz, he wants to hug you!” said Grub.

“Too bad that’s not what I meant,” said Buzz, grinning and stepping back.

Spud stuck out his foot, and the robot went sprawling. But its legs kept moving.



“Get him up! Get him up!” said Arnie.

“I can’t!” said Timothy. “I don’t have a button for that!”

The Stinks were laughing. “Afraid to get up?” said Spud.

“Looks that way,” said Buzz. “Guess we’ll have to be real nice and help him.”

He lifted the robot, its legs waving in the air. Then he carried it over to a trash barrel and stuffed it in, head first.

“Welcome to Summerville!” said Buzz, as Grub and Spud roared with laughter. “Come on, guys, let’s go downtown. Maybe we can find a little kid who wants to share his money.”

Timothy and Arnie scrunched into the bushes and tried not to breathe as the Stinks walked past. When the gang was out of sight, they rushed over to the trash barrel and pulled out the robot.

“*That* was a big help,” said Arnie.

Timothy sighed. “I guess it was worth a try. Anyway, we’re no worse off than before.”

“Yeah, but that’s pretty bad,” said Arnie. “I bet those guys come after us at recess tomorrow. We could be the first martyrs of Summerville Elementary.”

## 4

They started walking the robot back to Timothy's house.

"Arnie, you said that rabbi brought his clay man to life. How did he do that?"

"He walked around it and said some kind of spell. They didn't give us the details in Hebrew school."

"Where could we find out more?"

"Beats me. I don't think the encyclopedia has that kind of thing."

When they reached the house, Timothy stuck his head into the front hall to listen. He could hear his parents back in the kitchen, making supper. His seventh-grade sister, Tina, was upstairs practicing her flute.

"All clear," he whispered back to Arnie. They got the robot to the basement stairs and down into the lab without anyone seeing them.

"Why the big secret?" said Arnie.

"I just want it to be a surprise," said Timothy. "For the science fair."

He guided the robot back to its corner and studied it a moment. "I wonder," he said. He went across to the computer and turned it on.

"Looking for something?" said Arnie, as the computer booted up and went online.

"Sure am," said Timothy.

A Web page appeared. He typed in the search word "Golem" and hit Return.

“Wow!” said Arnie. “All those links for ‘Golem!’”

Timothy skimmed over them. “Looks like they’re mostly for things named *after* the Golem—like software and games. But here’s one that might help.”

He clicked on a link for “The Golem Page,” and it came to the screen.

“Holy Hanukkah!” said Arnie. Halfway down the screen was a blinking link that said, “Make Your Own Golem!”

Timothy clicked on it and they started reading.

The most famous Golem was the Golem of Prague, said to have been created by Rabbi Judah Loew in the sixteenth century. But Jewish tradition says there have been many Golems through the ages. Most have been created by students of Kabbalah, the ancient system of Jewish mysticism and magic.

The procedures for making a Golem are found in a brief but prominent Kabbalistic text called the Sefer Yezirah, or *Book of Creation*. Its secrets, however, may be unlocked only by years of persistent study.

“Click on ‘*Sefer Yezirah*,’” whispered Arnie.

Timothy did. A page of numbered paragraphs came to the screen. A minute later, Timothy and Arnie looked at each other in total confusion.

“Come on, Arnie, you’re Jewish. Tell me what it means!”

“Hey, Timmo, this ain’t just plain *Jewish*. This is pain-in-the-rear-*mysterious* Jewish. They’re like riddles. Look at this one,” he said, pointing.

1-4. Ten Sefirot of Nothingness: Ten and not ten; ten and not eleven. Understand with Wisdom, and be wise with Understanding. Examine with them and probe them, make a thing stand on its essence, and make the Creator sit on his base. He alone is the Former and Creator. There is no other. His attributes are ten and infinite.

“Or this one,” said Timothy.

2-2. Twenty-two letters: Engrave them, carve them, weigh them, permute them, and transform them, and with them depict the soul of all that was formed and all that will be formed in the future.

The voice of Timothy’s mother came down the stairs. “Arnie, are you down there with Timothy? Your mother called, and she wants you home right away.”

“OK, thanks, Mrs. Tolliver,” Arnie called back. “Sorry to leave you at a time like this, Timmo, but family calls.”

“That’s OK, Arnie. There are links here to some notes. I think I’ll follow them and see if I can make any sense of this. Can you come by here tomorrow, before school?”

Arnie groaned. “You want me to get up early? Why? Do you have some kind of plan?”

“Maybe,” said Timothy.

“Well, all right, if it’s in the cause of saving our lives. See ya then.”

“See ya,” said Timothy. He turned back to the screen, clicked on a link, and started reading.

He soon had to break for supper, but then Timothy was back on the computer, clicking and reading. Then calculating. Then processing, permuting, transforming.

He had just finished when his father called down. "Come on, son. Time for bed."

"OK, Dad."

He ejected a disk from the computer and held it up proudly.

"Got it," said Timothy Tolliver.

## 5

“This is it,” said Timothy, holding up the computer disk.

“This is what?” said Arnie.

“This is what’s going to make our Golem come alive.”

Arnie looked at the disk, then at the robot in the corner, then at Timothy. He sighed. “The great inventor has finally flipped his noodle. I knew it would come to this, someday. Timmo, we’d better go tell your parents.”

“No, listen, Arnie, I’m serious!”

“I know you are! That’s why I’m worried!”

“But, Arnie, I figured it out. After you left. From the *Sefer Yezirah*.”

“From the . . . ! Timmo, you read what it said. It takes years of study to figure that thing out. Are you saying you did it in a few hours?”

“It was kind of an emergency,” said Timothy.

Arnie sighed again. “OK, tell me about it.”

Timothy grinned and picked up a printout. “The key is in this section. Listen.”

Weigh them and transpose them, Aleph with each one, and each one with Aleph; Bet with each one, and each one with Bet. They repeat in a cycle. Therefore, everything formed and everything spoken emanates in one name.

“Hold it,” said Arnie. “I know *aleph* and *bet* are Hebrew letters, but you lost me after that.”

“It’s saying to pair up letters of the Hebrew alphabet in a pattern,” said Timothy. “The first letter with all the rest, then the second letter with all the rest, and so on. But there’s more.”

“I’ll bet there is,” said Arnie.

Timothy went on. “The notes said that each of the Hebrew letters has a number value, and you get the value of a pair by adding the two numbers. So I entered the values of the twenty-two letters into the computer and had it calculate the values of the 231 unique pairs. Then I translated the data into computer binary code.”

He held up the disk again. “That’s what’s on here. Once I feed the code into the robot’s circuits, the code will keep looping in a cycle. That should start the life process, and it shouldn’t stop till I switch off the robot.”

“Oh, I get it,” said Arnie. “What you’re telling me is you’re even crazier than I thought you were.”

“Arnie!”

“OK, Timmo, I’ll let you prove it to me. But you only have a few minutes, because we have to get to school.”

“That’s all I need,” said Timothy. “There’s a disk drive in the back of the robot so I can reprogram it quickly.”

He walked behind the robot and pulled down its shirt collar. “Here goes,” he said.

He pushed the disk into the slot, and they heard the brief hum of the drive.

Then nothing.

“Well?” said Arnie.



“I don’t understand it,” said Timothy. “I know it’s not just how they did it in the sixteenth century. But I was sure it would work anyway.”

“Don’t feel bad, Timmo. I’m sure you’ll get it right in a few more years. Meanwhile, let’s go get our heads bashed in.”

Timothy sighed. They picked up their books and headed for the stairs.

“Mummf.”

“What did you say?” said Timothy.

Arnie turned white. “That’s what I was going to ask *you*.”

They turned around slowly and stared at the robot.

“Ngonngg.”

“Holy Hanukkah,” said Arnie.

## 6

“Olllllllbaaaaaaaah. Ploop.”

Timothy and Arnie stared into the robot’s face. The robot blinked and stared back.

“What’s he saying?” said Arnie.

“I think he’s just making sounds,” said Timothy. “You know, just trying it out.”

“Oh,” said Arnie. “So, what do we do now?”

“I guess we should introduce ourselves,” said Timothy. He said slowly, “Hello. This is Arnie Rosenberg. And I’m Timothy Tolliver.”

“Timm-ohh-thee. Timm-ohh-thee.”

“Hey!” said Arnie. “His first word—the name of his dada!”

“I guess we should give *him* a name,” said Timothy. “What did they call that Golem in the legend?”

“Uh, Joseph, I think,” said Arnie.

“Well, we could call him Joe. Joe Jones.”

The robot smiled. “Jooooe Jooooones.”

“Will you look at that,” said Arnie. “He likes it!”

“Now, listen carefully, Joe,” said Timothy. “I brought you to life for a reason. Your job is to stop bullies. Do you understand? Stop bullies.”

“Buuull-eeeeezz,” said Joe, still smiling. “Buuull-eeeeezz.”

“Wait a minute,” said Arnie. “How’s he going to stop bullies from getting us while we’re at school?”

“We’re going to take him,” said Timothy.

“What . . . ! Are you out of your skull?” said Arnie. “How are we going to smuggle in a living robot with half a mind?”

“We’ll have to figure it out. Do you have a better idea?”

“No,” said Arnie quietly.

“Then we’d better get going, or we’ll be late. Come on, Joe.”

Joe got up and followed them up the stairs. But before they reached the front door, Timothy’s mother looked into the hallway.

“Have a good day, boys,” she called, as Timothy and Arnie froze in alarm. “Oh! Who’s your other friend, Timothy? I didn’t hear him come in.”

“Uh, this is a new kid in school, Mom. Joe Jones.”

“Jooooe Jooooones,” said the robot, smiling.

“Well, I’m glad to meet you, Joe.”

“Buuull-eeeeezz.”

“Excuse me?” said Mrs. Tolliver.

“Uh, he said ‘pleased.’ He’s pleased to meet you, Mom.”

“My!” said Mrs. Tolliver. “What a polite young man! Well, I’ll see you boys later.”

“Perilous Passover!” said Arnie when they were out the door. “I’m not sure I can go through with this.”

“That makes two of us,” said Timothy.

They walked quickly and got to school just in time. The last bell rang as they reached their class.

While Arnie took his seat, Timothy brought Joe to the teacher.

“Mrs. Matterhorn? My cousin here is visiting us, and I thought maybe he could come to school for a day or two. His name is Joe Jones.”

“Jooooo Jooooones,” said the robot.

“Hello, Joe,” said Mrs. Matterhorn. “I’m sure it won’t be a problem. He can sit in the spare desk in back. Where are you from, Joe?”

“Buuull-eeeeezz.”

“Where did you say?”

“He said he’s from, uh, Belize. You know, that country in Central America?”

“Imagine that! How rare to meet anyone from there!”

“Yes,” said Timothy. “But I’m afraid he doesn’t know much English. So he won’t be able to speak in class.”

“Really?” said Mrs. Matterhorn. “But I thought Belize was an English-speaking country.”

“Oh!” said Timothy. “Well, not the part he comes from. They speak a different language there.” Timothy prayed silently that Mrs. Matterhorn wouldn’t ask which one.

“That’s too bad. It would be so interesting to hear about his country. But I hope he enjoys visiting us anyway.”

“Buuull-eeeeezz,” said Joe.

“Yes, I understand, Joe,” said Mrs. Matterhorn slowly. “Welcome to the United States. Now, Timothy, why don’t you take him to his desk so we can start class.”

As the morning went on, Timothy and Arnie kept glancing back at Joe. But the robot seemed happy to sit there smiling.

At last the bell rang for recess. They took Joe and headed outside.

“Do you really think this will work?” said Arnie.

“I don’t know,” said Timothy. “Tell you what. Let’s stand behind the big tree. Maybe they won’t even see us. And if we get through today, maybe they’ll forget about it over the weekend.”

The boys eased their way along the fence till they reached the tree. But they’d barely gotten there when they were cornered by the Stinks.

“Got you now, nerds,” said Buzz.

“Hey!” said Grub. “They got that new kid with them.”

“Then we get to welcome him again,” said Spud, snickering.

“Oh, uh, hi, guys,” said Arnie. “Say, you didn’t think I actually *meant* all that stuff I said yesterday, did you?”

“We did kind of get that idea,” said Buzz.

“Oh, well, that’s all wrong. I mean, how could I say such things about cool guys like *you*. No, I was just, uh, practicing for a play. Yeah, that’s it. I was practicing my lines for a play. Isn’t that right, Timmo?”

“Oh, right!” said Timothy. “Arnie’s a great actor. You should come see him!”

“Maybe we will,” said Buzz, folding his arms over his chest. “And just what’s the name of this play?”

“Uh,” said Arnie, glancing at Timothy in alarm. “You wouldn’t know it. It’s by Shakespeare. I mean, you *might* know it. If you like Shakespeare. Do you like Shakespeare?”

“Sure,” said Buzz. “I’m a big fan. So, what’s the name?”

“Oh, you wouldn’t know this one. Even if you like Shakespeare. It’s not one of his famous ones. I barely know it myself, and I’m even in it!”

“That’s too bad,” said Buzz. “Especially since the school’s not putting on a play right now. Let’s finish ’em, guys.”

“Wait! Look!” cried Arnie, pointing behind them.

“Nice try, kid,” said Buzz.

“Jooooe Jooooones.”

Buzz stopped. “What’d he say?”

“Joe Jones,” said Timothy. “That’s his name.”

“Like we really care,” said Grub.

“Hey, Grub,” said Spud with a grin, “it’s nice to know who we’re cremating.”

“Buuull-eeeeezz,” said Joe, smiling.

“Hey!” said Spud. “He called us bullies!”

“That does it,” said Buzz. “Kid, you die.”

Buzz launched himself at Joe. What happened next was so fast that Timothy and Arnie were never sure quite what it was. But the next moment, Buzz was flying upward, yelling. He caught a branch of the tree and held on.

“Buuull-eeeeezz,” said Joe. He was still smiling.

Spud and Grub gave each other one look, then turned and ran. But they’d only gotten a step or two when Joe caught them. Then they too were flying through the air, and when they came to a stop, there were three Stinks in the tree.

For a moment, Timothy and Arnie just stared. Then Arnie called up, “And let that be a lesson to you, you nitwitted blockheads. That’ll teach you to mess with Arnie Rosenberg and Timothy Tolliver.”

“And Joe Jones,” Timothy whispered to him.

“And Joe Jones,” called Arnie.

By now there was a crowd of kids around them, coming to see what had happened. They started cheering and clapping.

“Yay, Arnie! Yay, Timothy! Yay, Joe!”

“Hey, Timmo!” said Arnie. “Will you listen to that! We’re heroes!”



## 8

“Timothy,” came his father’s voice down the stairs. “I need you to mow the lawn, son.”

“OK, Dad,” called back Timothy. “Be up in a minute.”

It was Sunday, and he was in the lab, showing Arnie some things on the computer. Joe was just standing in the corner, smiling. He didn’t seem to mind staying wherever Timothy put him.

“Sorry, Arnie,” said Timothy.

“That’s OK,” said Arnie. “I have some homework to finish, anyway.” But as they started for the stairs, he said, “Hey, Timmo, why don’t you get Joe to mow the lawn?”

Timothy looked at Arnie, then at Joe. “I guess I could try. It’s sure not a chore I’m crazy about.”

“I’ll come watch,” said Arnie. “Come on, Joe.”

They went out to the garage, and Timothy rolled the lawn mower onto the front lawn.

“OK, Joe,” said Timothy. “Now, you’re going to mow the lawn. Do you understand? Mow lawn.”

“Mooooow lawwwwn.”

“That’s right. Here, I’ll show you.”

Timothy started the motor and mowed a couple of rows. “See?” he shouted over the motor’s roar. “Now *you* do it.”

“Mooooow lawwwwn,” said Joe. He took the lawn mower handles and started out.

“Hey, he’s doin’ it!” said Arnie. “Good work, Timmo. Let’s get back to the computer.”

“Shouldn’t we keep an eye on him?”

“Nah, he’ll be fine. Come on.”

They went back downstairs. But as they sat down, Timothy said, “You know, Arnie, I’m wondering how long we should keep him going like this.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean it’s a big responsibility, bringing something to life. Things could go wrong.”

“Timmo, you think too much. What could go wrong? He’s protecting us from the Stinks and he’s helping with your chores. Enjoy it!”

Timothy sighed. “I guess you’re right. Anyway, there’s something else I want to show you. . . .”

They turned back to the computer. An hour later, they were still glued to the screen.

Suddenly Timothy cried out, “Arnie, we forgot Joe!”

“Uh-oh,” said Arnie.

They dashed upstairs and out in front. Joe was nowhere in sight, but they could still faintly hear the lawnmower.

“It’s down the street,” said Timothy, and they ran after it.

Every lawn they passed was freshly mown. One of the neighbors stood outside, scratching his head.

They could see some neighbor kids gathered on the sidewalk, staring into a yard. Then they saw Joe, still mowing.

“Stop, Joe!” yelled Timothy as they ran up.

Joe stopped and turned to them with a smile. “Moooww lawwwwn.”

Timothy turned off the mower.

“Hey, Timothy,” said one of the kids. “Isn’t that the guy who put the Stinks in the tree?”

“Yeah,” said Timothy.

“Well, he’s kind of strange. He’s been mowing every lawn between your house and here.”

“Yeah, I know,” said Timothy. “He just kind of likes to mow lawns.”

“Moooooww lawwwwn,” said Joe.

“Weird,” said the kid, shaking his head.

They started back to the house, with Timothy dragging the mower behind. “Nothing could go wrong, huh, Arnie?”

“Well, it wasn’t so bad. But why did he do that?”

“Because we told him to!” said Timothy. “I said to mow the lawn. I didn’t say when to stop!”

“Guess we have to be careful what we tell him,” said Arnie.

“I guess so!” said Timothy.

As they reached the house, Timothy could hear his sister’s flute from an upstairs window. Suddenly, Joe came to a halt and stood staring upward.

“Come on, Joe,” said Timothy, pulling him by the arm. But Joe didn’t budge.

“Hey, he likes the flute!” said Arnie.

“Flooooooot,” said Joe dreamily. “Flooooooot.”

Timothy sighed. “Our friend Joe Jones is *full* of surprises. I wonder what’ll be next!”

## 9

“Do you think they’ll try anything today?” said Arnie.

“I doubt it, with Joe here,” said Timothy. “There they are, over by the jump ropes.”

It was Monday morning recess. The Stinks were giving them ugly looks, but they didn’t look eager to get closer.

“Buuull-eeeeezz.”

“That’s right, Joe,” said Arnie. “But you took good care of them.”

Joe started toward the Stinks.

“Hey, Joe!” said Timothy, running to catch up. “Where are you going?”

“Buuull-eeeeezz,” said Joe, smiling.

“Yeah, but you got them last time. They’re not doing anything now. So we have to leave them alone, OK?”

“Timmo,” said Arnie, catching up with them, “what’s going on? Why won’t he stop?”

“I don’t know!” said Timothy.

Joe halted in front of the Stinks, who looked pale at the sight.

“Buuull-eeeeezz.”

“Hey, Tolliver,” said Buzz, “what’s with this guy? He’s your cousin, right?”

“Right,” said Timothy.

“Well, call him off. Tell him we’re not bothering anyone.”

“Yeah,” said Spud. “We’re minding our own business, OK?”

“Come *on*, Joe,” said Timothy, trying to pull him by the arm. But Joe wasn’t going anywhere.

A crowd of kids was gathering around. “*Joe, listen to me!*” yelled Timothy.

“Buuull-eeeeezz.”

It was over in seconds. Joe grabbed some jump ropes from the box, wrapped them around the Stinks, and tied them in a tight bundle.

“What the . . . !” said Buzz.

“Let us out o’ here!” screamed Grub.

The crowd of kids was muttering, and many of them looked with fear at Joe.

“Arnie,” said Timothy softly. “This has gone too far. I have to shut him down.”

“I’m with you, Timmo. Just be careful, OK?”

Timothy walked up to Joe. “Nice job, Joe. You really know what to do with bullies.”

He slipped his arm around Joe’s shoulder, slid a finger down his collar, and flipped the switch.

A startled look appeared on Joe’s face, then he stood stone still.

Timothy turned away and sighed. “OK, Arnie. I guess it’s over.”

“Not quite, Timmo,” said Arnie, who looked as pale as the Stinks. “Take another look.”

Timothy turned around. Joe was smiling at him.

“Jooooo Jooooones.”

“What exactly is going on here?” said Mrs. Matterhorn, rushing up. “Timothy Tolliver, did your cousin do this? Untie these boys right now, then take your cousin directly to the principal’s office!”

“Buuull-eeeeezz,” said Joe, smiling at Mrs. Matterhorn.

“Joe! No!” cried Timothy.

But Joe wasn’t listening. He grabbed another jump rope and tied Mrs. Matterhorn to the Stinks. Then he ran to the fence, leaped over, and took off down the street.

“Joe!” yelled Timothy. “Joe! Come back!”

“Perilous Passover,” muttered Arnie. “Maybe we should just change schools.”

## 10

“And that’s the whole story,” said Timothy unhappily.

His mother and father, sitting on the sofa, gave each other a slightly bewildered look. His sister, on the armrest, looked disgusted.

“You expect us to believe all that?”

“I don’t think we have a choice, Tina,” said Mr. Tolliver. “It’s the only way to make sense of what’s gone on around here and the message we got from Timothy’s principal and the radio news reports.”

“Speaking of news,” said Mrs. Tolliver, “maybe we should turn on the television.”

She picked up the remote control and pushed some buttons. Local commentator Victoria Featherstrap appeared on the screen.

“... a boy, approximately nine years old, who appears to have unusual strength. He has attacked a brother teasing his sister, a young man kicking his dog, a mother spanking her son, a gentleman smoking a cigar, and a gang of teenagers shouting bad words and playing a radio at high volume. None of his victims so far have been seriously injured. In each case, he has disappeared as quickly as he came.

“The boy seems to know only one word: ‘Bullies.’ Police are at a loss to identify this mysterious marauder and are asking for calls from anyone with possible clues.

“I’ll be back after this word. . . .”

Mrs. Tolliver turned it off.

“Great,” said Tina. “Just what we need. Someone from the school is bound to put two and two together and call in. Then we’ll have police and reporters swarming all over here, looking for your ‘cousin.’ Timothy, if you weren’t such a genius, I’d call you a real numbskull.”

Timothy winced.

“Timothy,” said his mother, “I understand your wanting to surprise us with your science fair project. But considering what you were up to, I think you should have told us.”

“I’m sorry, Mom,” said Timothy. “I didn’t think it would get so complicated.”

Tina snorted. “He brings a robot to life, and he thinks he can keep it simple.”

“Your sister’s right, Timothy,” said his father. “And if the whole truth gets out, there could be much greater consequences.”

“What do you mean, Dad?”

“Think about it, son. What if military leaders learn what you’ve done and how you did it? They could soon build armies of living super-robots that no humans could stand against. Even if the robots were first used only for defense, sooner or later some country would send them to attack its neighbors.”

“Wow,” said Timothy softly. “That would be terrible!”

“There’s nothing wrong with protecting yourself, Timothy,” said his mother. “But you have to make sure you don’t create something worse than what you’re fighting.”

The phone rang and Mrs. Tolliver got up with a sigh. “I just hope that’s not the police or the press.”

But a moment later, she called, “Timothy, it’s Arnie.”

“Thanks, Mom. I’ll get it in the lab.”



Timothy hurried downstairs. He picked up the phone and his mother hung up.

“Arnie?”

“Hey, Timmo. Did you see the news?”

“Yeah. Things look pretty bad. I told my parents everything.”

“How did they take it?”

“About as well as you could expect. Listen, Arnie, I’ve been wondering. Just what happened with that Golem in the legend?”

“He, uh . . . well . . . he kind of . . . got out of hand.”

“*Now* you tell me!”

“Sorry, Timmo. It slipped my mind in the heat of the moment.”

“And what did they do with him then?”

“They took away his life.”

“How, Arnie? How did they?”

“They . . . reversed the spell, or something.”

“Reversed the spell,” said Timothy to himself. “Reversed the spell. Listen, Arnie, can you meet me at the park playground tomorrow, half an hour before school.”

“Half an hour . . . ! Oh, all right, I guess so. But what for?”

“I’ll tell you then. Right now, I have to make a phone call—to the Stinks.”

“This better be good,” said Buzz.

“*I’ll* say,” said Arnie.

It was early morning, and they were all at the park playground—Timothy, Arnie, and the Stinks. Except for Timothy, no one looked pleased to be there.

“OK, guys,” he told the gang, “here’s how it is. You don’t like my cousin pushing you around, right?”

“You better believe it,” said Grub.

“He picks on us even when we’re not doing anything,” said Spud.

“Yeah,” said Buzz. “The guy’s a real . . . a real . . .”

“Bully?” said Timothy.

“Right,” said Buzz, getting red in the face. Grub and Spud looked at the ground.

“Well, guys, now you know how we feel about *you*. You’ve only been getting what you’ve been giving.”

The Stinks were silent a moment. Then Buzz said angrily, “Did you bring us here to tell us that?”

“No,” said Timothy. “I want to make a deal.”

“What kind of deal?”

“Two things,” said Timothy. “First, you help me with a little plan and keep quiet about it. Second, you promise to quit bullying for good—us or anyone else. In return, I get Joe off your backs.”

Buzz gave him a long, sharp look, then turned to the others.

Spud nodded slowly. Grub gave a shrug and said, “If that’s what it takes to keep that creep away from us.”

Buzz turned back to Timothy. “OK, Tolliver. But you better deliver, or you’re dead—cousin or no cousin.”

Timothy grinned. “Fair enough.”

Arnie was looking goggle-eyed at Timothy, but for once he kept quiet.

“What do you want us to do,” said Buzz.

“Push us around.”

“What?”

“Push us around. Me and Arnie. Pick on us.”

The Stinks looked completely confused, and so did Arnie.

“OK,” said Buzz, “if that’s what you want.”

The three of them surrounded Timothy and Arnie and began pushing them lightly.

“Are you absolutely super-wacko?” hissed Arnie. “You got me up extra early in the morning to hand me over to a gang of sixth-grade Neanderthals?”

“Ouch!” shouted Timothy. “Oof!”

“What’s with this guy?” asked Grub. “We’re not even hurting them.”

“Come on, Arnie, make some noises.”

“Anything you say, Mr. Psycho Man. Ow! Oh, that hurts so much! Ow!”

“Get rougher with us, guys,” said Timothy.

“This guy is really nuts,” said Spud, but they pushed a bit harder.

“Oof!” shouted Timothy. “Ack! You bullies, leave us alone!”

“Nuts’ is right,” said Buzz. “Hey, wait a minute. Is that . . . ? Run for it, guys! It’s a trap!”

The Stinks lit out, but they didn't get far. Joe came barreling across the park, grabbed all three together, and carried them over to the high swings. Then he dumped each one in a swing and gave him a big push. The Stinks went up and over the top rail in a full circle, screaming and yelling. And each time one of them came around, Joe gave him another push.

"Buuull-eeeeezz."

"Tolliver, you die!" screamed Buzz.

"Tina!" called Timothy, turning to the bushes. "Now!"

Tina stepped out and lifted her instrument to her lips. A lovely melody drifted over the park.

Joe stopped and turned. He gazed at her dreamily.

"Floooooooot," he said. "Floooooooot."

Quick as he could, Timothy launched himself at Joe's back. He pulled down the robot's collar and stuffed a disk in the slot.

Joe looked around in surprise. His smile was gone.

"Timm-ohh-thee," he said sadly.

And that was the last thing he said.

Timothy stood in front of the lifeless robot. He felt like crying.

"Hey Timmo," said Arnie softly, putting his arm around Timothy's shoulders. "You had to do it. And besides, he wasn't really a person."

"I know," said Timothy. "But he almost was."

"Good work, little brother," said Tina gently as she reached them. "But how did you do it?"

Timothy sighed. "Arnie told me about reversing the spell, so I inverted the binary code that brought him to life. When it cycled through his circuits, it shut him down."

By now the Stinks had gotten off the swings, and they came shakily up to the others.

“I’m sorry, guys,” said Timothy. “The only way I could get at Joe was to use you for bait.”

“That’s OK,” said Buzz. “It looks like you did what you promised. But let’s get this straight. This guy’s a robot?”

“That’s right,” said Timothy. “The Artificial Robotic Life-Simulator. Alias Joe Jones.”

“Wow,” said Grub.

Buzz looked at Timothy admiringly. “You know, Tolliver, you may be a nerd, but you’re also some kind of genius.”

“Thanks,” said Timothy, grinning.

“Hey!” said Arnie. “How about saying something nice about *me*.”

Buzz eyed him. “Sure, Rosenberg. You’re a genius’s *friend*.”

“I’ll settle for that,” said Arnie.

## 12

“And First Prize in the Summerville Elementary Science Fair goes to . . . Mavis Brookburn, for her project on genetic diversity in gerbils!”

There was cheering and applause as Mavis scampered up to the platform to accept her certificate from the principal.

“Cheer up, Timmo,” said Arnie. “You would’ve won if you’d entered.”

Timothy sighed. “I know. Only there was no way I could let people find out Joe was a robot. I just hope the Stinks keep quiet, like they promised.”

“Yeah,” said Arnie. “And I hope they stick to their *other* promise—to quit bullying!”

Mrs. Matterhorn came walking up the row of exhibits. “Hello, boys. You know, Timothy, I was so surprised you didn’t enter anything this year. You’re so good at science.”

“I guess I just never got around to it, Mrs. Matterhorn.”

“Well, you probably spent too much time with that delinquent cousin of yours. He’s just lucky he left for Belize before the police came looking for him.”

“I guess so, Mrs. Matterhorn. I don’t know what got into him. But I’m sure he won’t do anything like that where he is now.”

“I hope not, for his sake. Anyway, I’d better go congratulate Mavis. Enjoy the exhibits.”

When she was gone, Arnie asked, “So, where is he now?”

“I stored him in a cubbyhole in the basement. No one will find him there.”

“You mean you’re not taking him apart?”

“Um, no. I thought I’d . . . keep him around.”

Arnie looked at him.

“*You* know,” said Timothy. “Just in case.”

Arnie chuckled. “Sometimes you amaze me, Timmo. But I don’t blame you. I mean, this was your greatest invention of all time.”

“It was pretty good,” said Timothy, with a grin. “But wait till you see what’s next.”





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## About the Story

In case the story didn't give itself away, this is a modern retelling of the Jewish legend of the Golem. For checking out the legend itself, I recommend two picture books: *Golem*, by David Wisniewski, Clarion, New York, 1996; and *The Golem: A Jewish Legend*, by Beverly Brodsky McDermott, Lippincott, Philadelphia, 1976. Other good retellings are by Isaac Bashevis Singer and Elie Wiesel. For a scholarly look at the legend's history, see *The Golem Legend: Origins and Implications*, by Byron L. Sherwin, University Press of America, Lanham, Maryland, 1985.

Though the specific Web pages described in this book are fictional, there are certainly many pages online concerning the Golem and the *Sefer Yezirah*. (If you're searching, *Sefer* can also be spelled *Sepher*, and *Yezirah* can also be spelled *Yetzirah* or *Yetsirah*.) The translation quoted in my story is one I actually found online. It comes originally from *Understanding Jewish Mysticism: A Source Reader*, by David R. Blumenthal, Ktav Publishing House, New York, 1978, 1982, and is reproduced here by permission of the author. Dr. Blumenthal's own Web page is at [www.emory.edu/UDR/BLUMENTHAL](http://www.emory.edu/UDR/BLUMENTHAL).

I hope to tell more adventures of Timothy Tolliver and Arnie Rosenberg. For news of later books, plus other special features, visit my Web site at [www.aaronshep.com](http://www.aaronshep.com).

Aaron Shepard

**Aaron Shepard** is the award-winning author of *The Sea King's Daughter*, *The Legend of Lightning Larry*, *The Baker's Dozen*, and many more picture books from major publishers. His stories also appear often in *Cricket* magazine. Please visit him at [www.aaronshep.com](http://www.aaronshep.com).