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“WHAT WAS, WAS. NOW BEGIN FROM THE BEGINNING.”

With no worries, goals, or time limits, **Ido** was hitchhiking across China. Every morning he awoke in a different hostel and decided where he was going next. “It was my type of fun,” he recalled.

One day, he decided to travel to a city some 120 miles away on his own. Much of the route lay on dirt roads and through dangerous terrain, but Ido was up for a challenge. After walking for a while, he hitched a ride on a truck that was going that way.

The trip proved too difficult even for the truck, however, and the driver told Ido he would have to turn back. Undaunted, 22-year-old Ido continued on foot. Some 20 minutes later, he found himself alone in a large field. He must have taken a wrong turn, but he had no idea where, or even if he could retrace his steps.

He put down his backpack and took out some water. At that moment, he recalled how, when he was a young boy in Jerusalem, a rabbi from the north of Israel had visited his class and taught the children a song, which translated roughly as, “What was, was. The objective now is to begin from the beginning.”

The long-forgotten song seemed to encapsulate his current situation, and alone in the field, Ido began to sing and dance. “*Mah shehaya, hayah...*”

Just then a pickup truck rolled into the field. The driver, a little shocked at the strange apparition of a white man dancing in the middle of a Chinese nowhere, asked him what he was doing. Ido explained that he was making his way to Chengdu on foot and had lost his way.

“Why are you dancing?”

“This is a Jew’s way of asking G-d for help,” the Israeli explained.

Bemused, the driver offered to take him the rest of the way.

The man, a Chengdu resident, dropped Ido at the only Jewish building he knew of in the city, the Chengdu Chabad House. “Just go in”, he told the backpacker, “They will help you.”

Ido, who had no idea what day it was, walked in and found himself in the middle of a Shabbat meal. Standing at the head of the table and addressing the crowd was the rabbi's grandfather, Rabbi Yitzchak Grossman, chief rabbi of the northern Israeli city of Migdal HaEmek.



Ido was shocked to see the same rabbi who had visited his classroom so many years before and taught him the song he had been singing in the field. "I saw G-d's hand at work in China," he exclaimed later.

A few weeks afterward, Rabbi Dovi Henig, the Chabad representative in Chengdu, received a text message from Ido, "Can you please tell me what time Shabbat begins this week?"

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Source: Expanded and supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from collive.com

*Why this week?* The second half of the doubled Weekly Torah Reading is all about journeys and stopping places.

*Biographical note:*

**Rabbi Yitzchak Dovid Grossman**, chief rabbi of Migdal Ha'Emek since 1969 at age 23, is a sixth generation Jerusalemite. He is a member of the Chief Rabbinate Council and a recipient of the Israel Prize and many other prestigious government awards for his successful efforts to bridge the gap between the religious and secular populations in Israel (thus his nickname from 50 years ago, *the Disco Rabbi*). His *Migdal Ohr* educational institutions and charitable organizations in Migdal Emek service thousands of underprivileged and at-risk children and teenagers.