THE JEWISH PARROT

Moskowitz had bought a parrot and one morning found the bird at the

eastern side of the cage, with a small prayer shawl over its head, rocking

to and fro, and mumbling. Bending low to listen, Moskowitz was

thunderstruck to discover the parrot was intoning prayers in the finest

Hebrew.

(Well, it wasn't Pigeon Hebrew, anyway!)

"You're Jewish?" asked Moskowitz.

"Not only Jewish," said the parrot, "but Orthodox. So will you take me to

the synagogue on Rosh Hashanah?"

Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, was indeed only two days off, and it

would as always usher in the high-holiday season which would end with Yom

Kippur, the Day of Atonement, ten days later.

Moskowitz said, "Of course, I'll take you, but can I tell my friends about

you? It isn't a secret, I hope?"

"No secret at all. Tell anyone you want to." And the parrot returned to

his praying.

Moskowitz went to all his friends, full of the story of his Jewish parrot.

Of course no one believed him, and in no time at all Moskowitz was taking

bets. By Rosh Hashanah, he had a thousand dollars, all told, riding on

the parrot.

Grinning, Moskowitz brought the parrot to the synagogue in its cage. He

put him in a prominent place and everyone turned to watch even as they

mumbled their prayers. Even the rabbi watched, for he had seventy dollars

that said the parrot could not pray.

Moskowitz waited. Everyone waited. And the parrot did nothing.

Moskowitz carefully arranged the prayer shawl over the bird's head, but

the parrot ducked and the shawl fell off.

After the services, Moskowitz's friends, with much mockery, collected

their money. Even the rabbi snickered as he took his profit of seventy

dollars.

Utterly humiliated, Moskowitz returned home, turned viciously on the

parrot and said, "Prepare to die, you little monster, for I'm going to

wring your neck. If you can pray, now's the time."

Whereupon the parrot's voice rang out clearly: "Hold it, you dumb jerk.

In ten days it's Yom Kippur, when all Jews will sing the tragic, haunting

Kol Nidre. Well, bet everyone that I can sing the Kol Nidre."

"Why? You didn't do anything today."

"Exactly! So for Yom Kippur, just think of the odds you'll get!"