

The Paragraph He Can Say



Illustration coming soon

For ages 15-18



Chapter 1: Without Looking

Netanel says the paragraph without looking at the page.

His classmate holds the book and follows the words with a finger.

There is one pause before the final sentence. Otherwise, Netanel gets it exactly.

"You know this," the classmate says.

Netanel is seventeen. Their history lesson uses a made-up village to practice explaining causes. The exercise does not claim that the village is a real place.





The village has two paths to a market. A narrow path is shorter. A wider one is longer. On market day, carts waiting to pass one another block the narrow path. Some merchants begin using the wider route and reach the market earlier despite traveling farther.

Netanel can say the explanation in the book. He remembers the phrase about the difference between distance and delay especially well.

His classmate closes the book.

"Let's do the next section."

"That one is ready too," Netanel says.

They spend their remaining study time repeating another paragraph. Neither asks Netanel to explain the market without the book's sentences.





Chapter 2: The Different Question

In class, Rebbi changes one part of the example.

"Suppose it is a quiet day. There are only two carts, traveling in the same direction. Does the wider path still have to be the quicker choice?"

Netanel puts up his hand.

"The merchants improve the journey by separating distance from delay."

Rebbi waits.

"What causes the delay in the original example?"

Netanel hears the book's paragraph begin again in his mind.

He repeats its middle sentence.





"Yes," Rebbi says. "Now tell me what changes when those waiting carts are absent."

Netanel looks at the drawing on the board. Two paths. Two little cart shapes.

He knows the sentences. He does not know where to put the new cart shapes inside them.

Another boy answers that the original reason for choosing the longer route may not apply on the quiet day. They would need to consider the actual journey rather than keep the same conclusion automatically.

Rebbi asks the class what information they still lack. The lesson continues.

Netanel lowers his hand. His paragraph is still perfectly available.





Chapter 3: More of the Same

At home, Netanel reads the paragraph six times.

On the seventh, he covers the page and recites it.

He does not miss a word.

That should make him feel prepared. Instead, he sees the two cart shapes on the board.

His younger brother comes into the room to get a ruler. He pauses beside the open book.

"Is that homework?"

"Revision."

"Why is the long way faster?"

Netanel begins the paragraph.

His brother interrupts at the unfamiliar phrase.





"What does that mean?"

"It means distance isn't the same as delay."

"I know they're different words. Why would it take less time?"

Netanel points to the drawing.

"Because the narrow route is inefficient."

His brother looks at the picture again.

"What happens there?"

Netanel feels irritated. He is trying to study, not produce a whole lesson for somebody younger.

"Take the ruler. I need to finish."

His brother takes it and leaves.

Netanel reads the sentence about efficiency once more. It does not answer the brother's question simply because he recognizes every word.





Chapter 4: The Part He Cannot Show

Tatty finds Netanel sitting with the book open.

"What are you working on?"

Netanel tells him about the classroom question. He also tells him about repeating the paragraph afterward.

"Maybe Rebbi wanted a different wording," he says.

Tatty reads the fictional example.

"Did you understand the change he asked about?"

"I understood all the words."

"What were the carts doing before the merchants changed paths?"

Netanel describes carts trying to travel in opposite directions through a place with room for one.

"They were waiting."





"And on the quiet day?"

"Those two weren't meeting anything coming the other way."

Tatty puts the book between them.

"Then can you use the same reason without checking what is happening?"

Netanel starts to say the paragraph again. He hears himself beginning.

"I can remember the reason in the book," he says. "I haven't been checking which part makes the conclusion work."

Tatty nods.

"Repeating isn't useless. But it tests one thing. The question asked another."

Netanel turns to a blank page. He does not cross out the original paragraph.





Chapter 5: Three Lines, Not a Speech

He writes three headings: What happens, why it matters, what changes.

Under the first, he writes that carts cannot pass and must wait.

Under the second, he writes that the waiting can take longer than the extra distance on the other route.

Under the third, he writes that a quiet day might remove that particular waiting problem.

Tatty asks him to point to the line supported by the original picture and the line about the changed situation.

Netanel finds them.





"So the longer path is always quicker when there are lots of carts,"
he says.

"Does the exercise give you enough information to say always?"
Netanel checks.

It describes one market-day situation. It does not describe every
long route, every cart, or every narrow road.

He replaces always with in this example.

The three lines look less polished than the printed paragraph. They
are not meant to replace accurate terms in an answer. They show
him whether he knows what those terms are doing.

He closes the book and draws two rough arrows for the routes.

Beneath the narrow one, he writes waiting to pass.

This time the words point to something he can describe.





Chapter 6: The Reassurance He Corrects

At the next study period, his classmate asks whether he is ready. "I could recite that paragraph yesterday," Netanel says. "I couldn't explain the changed example. Those weren't the same thing."

"But you got the words exactly."

"Yes. That's what we checked. Could we check a different question too?"

The classmate looks at the book.

"What should I ask?"

Netanel shows him the three headings. Then he remembers that giving every question himself might create another rehearsal he already knows.

"Rebbi has some extra practice examples. Let's ask for one."

Rebbi gives them a short fictional account of two copying tables. One person copies headings while another checks them before the next page begins. A second group waits until all the pages are copied before checking and discovers a repeated error.

No actual workshop instruction is involved. The boys are identifying how one event affects another inside an invented lesson.

They read the passage separately. This time Netanel does not begin by trying to memorize the strongest sentence.





Chapter 7: An Answer That Needs Checking

"The first group works faster," Netanel says.

His classmate points at the passage.

"Does it say faster?"

Netanel checks the page.

It says the first group avoids repeating a heading error. It does not give the time either group takes.

He has supplied a larger claim because it sounds like a tidy conclusion.

"It catches that error before it spreads to the next pages," he says instead.





"Why?"

"They check before continuing."

The classmate asks what happens if the first page has no error.

Netanel thinks for a moment.

"Then checking doesn't discover this particular mistake. It may still be useful, but that result isn't shown here."

They take their answers to Rabbi during the review time. He checks the distinctions and helps them fix one unclear line.

Netanel still has a term to learn. He writes it beside the plain explanation, rather than treating the two as enemies.

They spend the last five minutes saying the term, explaining its place in the passage, and answering one changed question.





Chapter 8: Beside the Paragraph

At home, his brother returns the ruler.

Netanel asks whether he wants the answer about the long path.

"If it isn't the whole paragraph again."

"The carts on the narrow path get stuck waiting to pass one another. In that example, the waiting costs more time than going farther. If nothing blocks them on another day, that reason might not work."

His brother looks at the drawing.

"So not just because it's wider."

"Right."

The brother goes to put his own drawing away. Netanel does not make him stay for another demonstration.

On his revision sheet, Netanel keeps the accurate paragraph at the top. Below it, he adds the three headings and a space for a changed example.

For tomorrow's passage, the space is still blank.

He opens that passage, reads the first event, and writes what actually happens before deciding which sentence he can repeat.

