Crumbling Old Books

in the dusty old library

(if you care to slip between the covers)

Introduction

The readings that follow are background sources for the book, Malkah's Notebook: A Journey into the Mystical Aleph-Bet (2022) and the accompanying animation, the Day before Creation (2021). The readings will help place objects and images in time and place, and provide sources for ideas found in both text and image. Some of them will point to the importance of a single image on a particular page, while most will refer to the contribution of ideas behind the scenes, so to speak—the rationale for Malkah's travel to archaeological sites, her interest in one topic over another, and the like. In essence, what follows are the sources of my own ideas and influences. What follows is an *annotated* bibliography. That means it's not simply a list of readings in alphabetical order. No, instead, for each citation there is an explanation of the importance of the reading to my own thinking about the ideas that have been included in the book and movie. Keep in mind, book and movie head off in different directions about halfway through, so if you're not finding something, it may well be elsewhere—or even in an early draft of the book which included a midrash, or alternate tale, on the recto, or left-hand side of each spread. If the missing tales and commentaries seem something you like to track down, you can find them as pdfs under *Drafts* at my site on academia.edu. If there's not enough here for you—just ask. Consider this biblio a draft… There's always more.

The Annotated Bibliography

Alexiou, Stylianos
Minoan Civilization.
Look at the gold ring from Mokhlos. There she is, the Vegetation Goddess carrying the Tree of Life in a boat from the Upper World down to us, in the world below. And the Tree she's bringing is a sabra cactus, of all things. "Sabra" just like native-born Israelis call themselves. And I wonder if, when that name was coined, anyone knew what they were doing. Was it only "prickly on the outside, sweet on the inside" as I was taught as a kid? Or did someone have a historic (or pre-historic) sensibility? Those who are born in this holy land are the people of the original Tree of Life. Did anybody know?

Then there's the goddess's boat, which looked to me like the letter ב, just as so many pictograms of boats from the ancient Mediterranean do. The goddess forms the middle stroke of the letter. And that's how I asked my original illustrator, Neil Johnson, to draw it for me when I started my aleph-bet journey in the late 1980s. Neil drew many magical letters for me that I used in my classes for over about 20 years. And then he died.

Every page and image in this unassuming volume is worth paying attention to. Because of the secrets hidden in it. I will never see anything but a boat between worlds made of the letter ב. And a sabra cactus with thorns as the Tree of Life. In

an arid zone like that of the Near East, a cactus seems the obvious choice of benevolent gods. (Part III-12, 27, 28; and IV-15)

Amiras, Mira Z.
—"Experience beyond Belief: The 'Strangeness Curve' and Integral Transformative Practice of Michael Murphy and George Leonard" in *Social Analysis*, Vol 52:1 (and other works)
I've kept most of the magic out of this book partly because I think it's a distraction. And yet I used to teach how to achieve visions, do remote viewing, perform oracular and other forms of divination, and experience the extraordinary. I taught these for a quarter of a century at the university—the way an anthropologist does: Not only participant-observation but also the more important question: "*So what"?* What happens when you shift your view of the world around you? What happens if you see in the person before you an angel or a demon? How do you behave, based on whether you see "good" or "evil" before you? And what are the consequences of demonizing the Other?

Many of these exercises came from a three-year experiment I participated in in the 1990s. This article focuses on the results of that experiment as well as the work of Michael Murphy and George Leonard of the Esalen Institute. In this article, I focus on only one aspect of the study—the cultivation of extraordinary capacity. Do you need to believe in order to achieve? This is a question that gnaws at me every time I hear that someone's god or spirits saved them, or guided the hand of their surgeon. Or when people say, "He's in a better place now." So I wanted to know if faith helps people achieve the extraordinary or if, as I thought, belief just got in the way. Michael and George were testing the same kind of questions (phrased much more diplomatically) and after three years participating in the their study, I got my answer. And wrote about it. Here. (Part II-3, 31; III-12 and throughout)

—"Tracking the Mother Tongue: Tamazight from the Middle Atlas to the Amazigh Diaspora" in *So What? Now What? The Anthropology of Consciousness responds to a World in Crisis* (M Bronson and T Fields, eds),

and

—"Amazighité, Arab/Islamic Hegemony, and the Christian Evangelical Challenge" in *Religion, Politics & Globalization* (G Lindquist and D Handelman, eds)
(and other articles on the subject)
Lest you think that the only letters and language I care about are Hebrew, I have long been obsessed with the original written languages of North Africa, their structure, and alternate letters from mountain top to mountain top. At one point I thought the book I wanted to write with Malkah was on *tifinagh*. Although in that book her name would have been "Malika," and she would have been a manifestation of the hero of the Imazighen, Dahia El Kehenna—the last matriarch and queen to hold out against the Arab incursion into North Africa. Dahia was martyred in Tunis, along with her sons—and thus died the Berber revolt against the eastern invaders and Islam. But think of this, *El Kehenna* means "priestess." Dahia was a *Co-*

hen, a Jewish Berber defender of her people. At the time of my last journeys in Amazigh country, Berber names were still illegal in Morocco, and very likely in the rest of North Africa as well. I'm not sure if that's changed yet. But a few Tamazight road signs have come to be allowed, most likely because they're a boon to tourism. But where it matters—in family names and the use of language, in the courts where only Arabic has prevailed and in the preservation of culture—Tamazight needs revival before it goes extinct.

Things began to change in North Africa after the ascension of King Muhammad VI of Morocco, and I decided that, at this point, the Imazighen surely don't need me in the struggle for their own indigenous language revitalization. The modern Tamazight revival movement was started by Mouloud Mammeri, an Amazigh poet and anthropologist from the Kabyle in Algeria. And for some reason, I identify with him strongly, and his death is a blow I can feel. Although they say he died in a road accident, I can't help feeling—

A book on *tifinagh*, the written forms of indigenous North African language, is still a book I dream of writing. But like so many other dreams, this one is for someone else. (Parts I-IV)

Ashe, Marjorie Dugdale
Adam's First Day and Other Poems
Although I still have not found a copy of the illustrated children's version I had as a kid, this volume is likely what it was based on. Even the font on the front cover is the same. The poem addresses that same question: What is it like to awaken to consciousness, only to imagine at the end of the day that this one day is all you'll ever get? The children's book hit me harder than this poem does.

I'm just beginning to get a sense of what this book means to me. I still feel that every day is about to be my last. I climb into bed each night filled with gratitude, relief, and joy that I made it through another day, although some days I'm not so sure I'll make it. Waking up isn't a huge surprise, because I sleep so poorly. As if—if I don't wake four or five times in the night, I might not wake at all. This is exacerbated these days by not having a human by my side. Something I've done to myself by chasing away everyone who's ever loved me, except my kids. Kitty and pup are warm and furry, but they don't remark if you wake up dead. And they don't call 911 or my kids. And sometimes I wonder if *Adam's First Day* did this to me when I was very little. Or was I already on the road? If you ever find a copy of the kids' version in some flea market pile—please pick it up for me. *Please*. Maybe then I can get over it. (Part I-11, 17)

Asimov, Isaac
Isaac Asimov's Guide to the Bible (and everything else he's written)
I probably should tell you that I have two libraries filled with crumbling old books. I used to have three, with one in my office at the university. But these days there's just one upstairs and one downstairs. Even though it's my downstairs li-

brary that concerns us here, there are a few books upstairs that are mentioned in these pages. And that includes Asimov. I have two shelves worth of Asimov upstairs, in a whole bookcase of science fiction. It's worth reading Asimov from near-future to far, to appreciate the vastness of his vision. What I love about science fiction are all the possible futures I will never live to see, and how authors construct the future based upon their understanding of the past and present.

Downstairs, the only Asimov I have is his guide to the Bible (on a shelf of many Bibles). Asimov goes deep into history, prehistory, ecology, ethics and logic. That is, Asimov' is an atheist's guide to the Bible, and a refreshing and instructive one at that.

I've left almost everything from the upstairs library out of our Crumbling Old Books section here. Almost. Jean Genet is up here with other French and German writers of the same period. They're all on a top shelf, head of the hierarchy, Kafka, Dürrenmatt, Mann and Hesse, and Grass. You get the idea. But all the shelves below are science fiction, and Asimov rules here. Next on the hierarchy is Niven and Pournelle, Frank Herbert of course, and LeGuin. In the next bookcase there's all the Asian art and philosophy, sitting quietly beneath my meditation shelf. And then there's art. Art and architecture. Art and paint and color and glaze. Yes, I have a collection of books on making color. There are also shelves of my own work-in-progress, because my own published works I keep downstairs.

Here's the thing, though. Most of the books upstairs I can't read anymore. Some of them are crumbling terribly or the pages are falling out. Some I've taped back together, some are held together with rubber bands. But mostly—I can't see them. My eyes refuse to focus on the fading small print on yellowing paper. And yet I cannot let these old friends go. They are my fellow travelers, and they've kept me safe clutched in my hand or tucked in my pack, a security blanket whenever I've had to go somewhere unpleasant (like a social occasion). Some of them have been with me through most of my life, and the idea of letting them go is too much like sending a small child off to a foster home. I won't do it.

Black, Jeremy and Anthony Green (yes, really)
Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary
Black and Green's book has a misleading title, suggesting it's for children or young people writing a quick term paper they haven't prepared for. *Ooooh, how 'bout this one? Looks cool*—until you open it and discover what Felicitas Goodman always argued: that the positions of ancient figures were not random in the iconography. She said that if you stood in the positions of the gods and the ancients as they appear in these statues, paintings, and figurines, and if you enter into a kind of shamanic trance, you will achieve their state of consciousness and know the core of their intent.

Abulafia came to a similar conclusion centuries earlier. Goodman led us in standing like a statue one year at a conference of the Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness in Tempe AZ or some place like that. And the Cherokee elders in

the back of the hall started yelling at her, "*Go back to the Presbyterian Church where you belong*," and shouted for her to stop singing their prayers. At that point, I was quite happy that the exercise had not worked for me.

Black and Green put names on faces (or faces on names) of divinities who stand in those positions, that are so important to Goodman. They help us understand the consciousness of those ancient times and the politics of their day. One of my favorite friezes depicted in here is of a human-like figure dressed in the skin of a fish, at the doorway of the Temple of Ninurta at Kalhu. No bearskins or feathers such as you might see in the Americas. No, these are, after all, the gods of the twin rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates. Of course you'd be wearing fish skins when you want to honor them in their commitment to protect those two great rivers. (Part III-29)

Braudel, Fernand
The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II. (both volumes, and other works).
Braudel's vision of history begins as water flowing down the Alps, entering the Mediterranean, and following channels that determine sea routes and trade. It's a beautiful vision of ecological forces and historical cycles. Be sure to read, at the very least, Volume I and the last chapter of Volume II. His very last pages give a vision of history that is vast, and poetic, and evocative of the movement of nature itself.

My father gave me Braudel when I was in the hospital for five days with a shattered elbow that the orthopedist had trouble screwing back together ("if you were a golfer, I'd get it right. But you're not a golfer"). My father gave me Vol I, which I devoured, and then tracked down Vol II. That broken arm cost me a year. I was supposed to be writing grant proposals but couldn't think with my right arm way up in the air, typing only with one hand. But it turned out there was nothing wrong with my proposal. My research topic had been approved even by the Tunisian Ministry of Agriculture. No—years later, I was told that there was an Egyptian woman on the committee who said—out loud, mind you—"she's a Jew. Let her father give her the money."

But what my father gave me were books.

Not linear but not circular, Braudel's "history" is more like ocean waves, moving in recurrent cycles and seasons—predictable to some extent, but capricious and alive. He was influenced by Ibn Khaldûn, and in his turn he influenced Immanuel Wallerstein. All of them together influenced me. (Part I-2)

Campbell, Joseph
The Masks of God (four volumes, especially volume 1)
I'm happy with Volume I—*Primitive Mythology*, and happy to stop right there. But read it all. Of course, you can cheat and watch the 12-part program on Campbell

on DVD or streaming or whatever people are doing these days. Either way, Campbell captures a genuinely psychodynamic view of creation stories here, rooted in childhood experiences of the world. He demonstrates his attachment not only to Jung but also to Freud. I like these volumes much better than *The Hero's Journey*.

Compare Campbell's approach to Lord Raglan's "22 points of the life cycle of the hero." They take exactly the opposite approach. Campbell's takes the psychological "*you* are the hero" on your own journey approach. Raglan takes the moralistic high ground, hammering in how different you are from the hero. For Raglan, the hero suffers for us, bringing us laws and making a difference in society. But he (always, *he*) never lives to reap the rewards of his actions. Read them both. Step back and enjoy what they do with the same material (Campbell's buoyant spiritual path versus Raglan's cautionary tale of suffering and martyrdom). It certainly beats choosing one and having to commit. (Part II-4, 29)

Caquot, André and Maurice Sznycer
Ugaritic Religion
When I first held this one in my hands, I felt the sturdy self-important weight of its paper. At first glance, I thought, this was an archaeological field report meant to last as long as the relics it described. The report itself felt like an old relic. Reading the Introduction, the relics came to life. I beheld, for the first time, the Temple of Ba'al, and the four top gods of the Ugaritic pantheon—El, Athirath, Ba'al, and Anath. And they were suspiciously familiar, evoking for me the Hebrew letters of the Tetragrammaton.

These images marinated in my imagination for years. But by the time I thought to take another look, my copy of Caquot and Sznycer had disappeared. I found that the only copy for sale under $400 was held by my friend David Wiegleb, who had rescued the historic Fields Bookstore of San Francisco, and had also attended our Beit Malkhut gatherings in the early years until the bookstore took over much of his energies. David was also a wonderful Hebrew calligrapher, and I was terribly jealous, for I am incapable of calligraphic precision. Straight lines take me back to my childhood reoccurring nightmare of the all-too-perfect thread of light that begets nothing but tension until, at last, it shatters.

The new copy confirmed many of my feelings about the parallels between Bronze Age Ugaritic religion and the early symbols of the Tetragrammaton. But by then I had found other volumes on Ugarit to flesh out the tales of the gods—almost none of which appear either here or in our *The Day before Creation* movie. I then filed my new copy in its unmistakable place in my library, on exactly the right bookshelf, only to discover that my original copy was tucked in, exactly in that place, where it was supposed to be. My guess is that it had taken off somewhere in hiding, just to force me to appreciate how essential it was to my thinking. So, yes, I admit it. I'm in love with this field report. (Part III-26, 30; IV-33)

Castaneda, Carlos
The Teachings of Don Juan (and the rest of them)
The first I'd ever heard of "shamanic" anything, sorcery, entheogens, power spots, visions, animism, and the like was from reading *The Teachings of Don Juan* and the other volumes in Castaneda's wheelhouse. His argument for the existence of an animate world—in which all entities, from rocks to humans, possess consciousness—is for me, the most compelling aspect of his books. His work gave me a language in which to understand my experience of the aleph-bet.

Actually, Castaneda doesn't say a word about shamanism. That would be Michael Harner. Erica Bourguignon. Melvin Spiro, and others. What's the difference? Castaneda's sorcerers are selfish, power hungry, and self-serving.

Folks have been arguing since the publication of *The Teachings of…* whether "Don Juan" or anything or anyone else in his books are true or real. Which reminds me of a really good Castaneda story. I heard two versions of it. One from Michael Harner, best known for shamanic studies, and one from Michael Murphy, co-founder of the Esalen Institute. It's such a good story it would be a shame to ruin it here in an annotated biblio. But were I to tell it, I would start it with,

"Castaneda, Fritz Perls, Essie Parish, and Michael Harner were invited by Murphy to Esalen to once and for all determine whether the Other World is real…"

Or, maybe— "a trickster, a gestalt therapist, a Pomo shaman, and an anthropologist walk into a bar…" It's a really good story. And it's a Castaneda event that was filmed, has credible witnesses, and actually happened. A couple of my students took it upon themselves to track down the film. But it, like so many other images of Castaneda, had been destroyed. You can find a short version of what happened in the book, *Esalen*. I still have it in my library somewhere. But mine's a better telling for having multiple sources. And versions. (Parts I-2, II-13, IV-12)

Curtis, Adrian
Ugarit: Ras Shamra
In here you can encounter the Ugaritic gods, and the roots of letters and verbs—including the letter *yd*, standing for both the right hand of authority and the penis—thus making it clear where authority resides. This is another slim volume worth spending a lot of time in. My copy is all scribbled with notes and underlined in red ink, and every time I misplace it, I panic. But that's true of so many of these book-entities (note the animistic reference here).

I think you can see how much I resonate with Ugarit. It's odd, isn't it? My friends interested in this early stuff have primarily been Egyptologists. And they've been really been bound up in ancient Egyptian mysteries and ritual. I was always jealous of their bond and their fervor, but what can I say? Despite some mindboggling revelations from an Egyptian archaeologist, I've focused more on the influence of Mesopotamia in the Torah. He showed me how the Egyptian gods manifest in To-

rah, and I've been unfair not to follow up his teachings. I'm not sure what it is. Maybe I'm afraid of what I'll find. (See Part IV-33)

Darwin, Charles
On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life (and other works)
At the end of *Origin*, Darwin has an amazing paragraph that I've thought about, it seems, forever. You probably know it:

> "Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, directly follows. There is a grandeur in this view of life, … from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved."

It's Darwin in a nutshell. And I think about it often. I have more to say on this under Kropotkin. (Part IV-36)

Delaney, Carol
Abraham on Trial: The Social Legacy of Biblical Myth (and other works)
Ah, the big questions! Carol never shied away from these. I wish I'd have had the fortitude to write this book, or another like it. But no. I would go on and on in lecture about Abraham and the *Akedah* and the *Qorban* (Hebrew and Arabic for the almost-sacrifice of Abraham's son) and how it is handled by both Muslims and Jews, who don't even agree on which son the tale is about). It's such a powerful, evocative story. One talk I used to give was "From Abraham to Arafat," which was not just on the construction of kinship but also on how it manifests in the struggle over the Holy Land. Carol goes to the heart of the question my son asked so pointedly. *How could he?* How dare he? The question I ran to the rabbis with, for their learned answers. But I didn't know Carol then, and I don't think she was even at Stanford yet.

I first met Carol on our way to Baghdad. We were both Malone Fellows in Arab and Islamic Studies with the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations. We were expected to set up exchange programs with Baghdad University. By the last day of our fellowship, however, everything changed and we were detained in Iraq. Carol's book shows that, unlike me, she could get to the heart of the moral questions regarding Abraham not just the political ones. For while I saw Saddam Hussein as playing out his part in the Abrahamic saga (Abraham was Iraqi, therefore Saddam saw himself as Abraham's political heir), Carol went to questions of child abuse and filicide. Why hadn't I? (Part II-26, 29)

dePlanhol, Xavier
The World of Islam
This is one of my favorite books, although it's not strictly about Islam or about the Islamic world. Instead, it's about the organization of early Middle Eastern cities

predating in some ways, Islamic political organizaiton. dePlanhol is a geographer with a lyrical sense of space, and of populations moving through space. Different ethnic groups inhabit the same cities in a uniquely Middle Eastern way—in segregated quarters. Each with their own places of worship, schools, courts, and modes of dress. And where do they meet and interact? In the marketplace.

DePlanhol's *The World of Islam* reads like a choreographed ballet—and you can still feel this ancient way of life inside the walls of medinas throughout the region. Under Saddam Hussein, Baghdad expanded this organizing principle. In the US they'd call it ghettos. Segregation. Poor city services. But in the Middle East, at tone time they called it autonomy, self-rule, and pride of like communities. Even very small towns have small remnants of the quarter system. Take one of the most beautiful towns on the planet—Chefchauoen—in the Rif Mountains of Morocco. The town was divided into four quarters. Berber, Andalusian, Jewish, and Moroccan. The Jews are long gone, having descended to the coastal town of Tetouan, or to France, or even further abroad, say, as far as Montreal. But each quarter still retains distinctive architecture and modes of dress. The Jewish Quarter has become more of a retail section of town, now less distinctive than in the past.

I'm not speaking strictly of the *dhimmi* system, an Islamic form of organizing non-Muslim communities within cities under Islamic rule. The dhimmi system did not differentiate the legal status of Muslim communities within the city. Only non-Muslims, who were supposed to be under protection of the Islamic state held this status. My great-grandmother's name, *Amiras*, meant essentially, protection under the emir. And if the ruler returned your dhimmi taxes, you knew that the emir (or pasha, or whoever the Islamic ruler happened was) could no longer protect you. And your quarter burned…

But when it worked, there was something to be said for autonomy, self-rule, meeting the Other in the market place, and protection under the state. And I'm for it. (Part I-2; IV-11, 14)

Durkheim, Émile
The Elementary Forms of Religious Life (and other works)
Elementary Forms is Durkheim's most relevant book for our topics here, but my personal favorite of his is: *The Division of Labor in Society*. But then again, there's also his very first, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, (in which Durkheim invented the field of "sociology"). Durkheim was right about so many things, it's too bad he's so unreadable. Read his books anyway, not excerpts out of readers. He's worth wading in on your own, then diving deep. Each of his topics, like suicide, he treats as a social fact, not a psychological one, or a religious precept.

Think about what happens when you treat something like suicide as a social fact. You begin to ask different questions—and before you know it, you end up with something like Fanon's *A Dying Colonialism*. This is the power of Durkheim. A psychiatrist like Fanon treating mental distress as a symptom of societal disorder. His prescription: *revolution*. (See Part IV-19, 34)

Dürrenmatt, Friedrich
The Quarry (and other works)
This is another from the upstairs library. It's one of the Holocaust nightmares my mother used to read to me right after my sister died. Before Dürrenmatt wrote his more famous surreal plays, he wrote mystery stories, including this one. *The Quarry* is one of the most disturbing things I've ever read. Fiction, yes, but it doesn't feel like it. Maybe it's that I still hear the sound of my mother's voice reading to me. She never read bedtime stories, mind you. She read to me under the harsh light of the living room, or the sunlight at our cottage by the Del Monte Forest, which we had briefly.

My mother addicted me to Dürrenmatt, and I considered studying Schweizerdeutsch to read him in the original, as well as to read works of his that had never been translated. For a couple of years, I fantasized going to Switzerland just to see his theater productions. But I was never much for following through. I lent *The Quarry* to whoever asked me for a good read but no one ever returned my copies. The last time I bought a copy for myself, I vowed to never lend my books again. *Grr*. I never learn. (Part I-20)

Fanon, Frantz
A Dying Colonialism (and other works)
Fanon was a psychiatrist who worked for a time at the Hôpital Razi in Manouba, Tunisia, where my husband later worked when we lived in Tebourba. It was from seeing psychiatric patients there that Fanon's ideas about mental health, colonialism, and revolution began to take root and grow. Some of the psychiatry faculty when we were there had actually worked with Fanon—although he was not their favorite topic of conversation. *A Dying Colonialism* analyzed the fissures in Algerian society under the French—including the impossible position of Algerian Jews trapped between worlds by the manipulations of the French. Theirs was a position similar to that of the Berbers—the Imazighen—because the French used "marginal" populations to create fractures in Algerian opposition to colonial rule. Fanon is eloquent in his language, vision, and understanding. If you read only one book from my library it should be this one. It's also available as a pdf file for download. Ah, how the library has changed. (Part IV-41)

Faulkner, Georgene (retold by)
Little Peachling and Other Tales from Old Japan
One of my truly crumbling books from childhood. Beautifully illustrated by Frederick Richardson in the style of Japanese miniatures. The book starts out, "My Dear Children, In far-away Japan, the people all love to listen to the old, old tales…" Note "listen to," not "read." This, and my father's storytelling, set the stage for how a story sounds out loud in my mouth and in the mouths of others. *The oral tradition.* And note— "old, old..." thrilled me with the doubling of words, making them feel right. (My editor made me delete most of them here).

But the biggest influence here was the tale of "Momotaro," Little Peachling. About a kind and honest old woodcutter and his wife who wanted nothing more than to love a little child of their own. And how I wanted to be that child, found in a peach, whom they loved with all their hearts. And to this day, when the season is just right, I cut into my peaches slowly and carefully, in the hope of a little Momotaro of my own.

But think—it's essentially the tale of a small child put into foster care, into the hands of a couple who really care. And as a result, Momotaro grows healthy and strong, not dwarfed by insecurity, fear, and self-loathing.

Frymer-Kensky, Tikva
In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women, Culture and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth
R' Aubrey Glazer, my Zohar teacher, recommended this one to me. It only recently showed up on my doorstep. So, as a newcomer, it's on one of the piles of newer books vying with each other to be read next, thus winning the right to squeeze onto a proper shelf. I like Tikva starting with the world of the ancient goddesses, moving into "biblical transformations" and then taking her argument into the contemporary "unfinished agenda." However, it seems to me that Patai covered much of this territory, decades ago, and that women keep rediscovering it, starting with Merlin Stone's *When God Was a Woman*. Yet Frymer-Kensky has the language chops to give us ancient nuances beyond what Patai and others demonstrated. I'm looking forward to hanging out with *In the Wake of*—sometime soon. It's reached the top of one of the "to read" piles. (Part IV)

Genet, Jean
Our Lady of the Flowers (and other works)
I read Genet, like Hesse and Mann, after moving to Brussels when I was around 20. I took to heart Genet's approach to writing—that is, writing to give oneself pleasure. However, I've never been as brave as he in this regard. (Or rather, I don't take pleasure the same way). Nor do I write as well. Nor am I stuck in a French prison with nothing else to do. But I like the sound of words out loud, and I write things over and over just to sense how they feel on my tongue and down my throat. He seems to have influenced Malkah's words (in Part IV), which in turn led to my own writing getting a little weirder. I'd recommend you read passages over and over out loud until you can feel them rolling around inside you, until you can taste every word, no matter the language—do that, and you'll be fine. The pleasure in writing for me is oral. Rhythmic. And at times, hypnotic. And so, I repeat words—not because you need them, but because I need them.

Note—my editor is pulling out much of the rhythmic repetition of words here, so you'll never experience the satisfaction of how it feels when being read out loud. Unless you improvise. (Parts I-IV)

Gesenius, William (translated by Edward Robinson)
A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing Biblical Aramaic
My copy, like so many other things I love, is a bit ripped and tattered. It's filled with stickies, scribbles, and toothpick markers (but at least not too many paper clips). All of which means that I'm still in love with my *Gesenius*. And despite my unhappily aging eyes, I can still read it (unlike my Lane *Arabic Lexicon*, which I passed on to a student). While I know that so many volumes are now available as download pdf files, it's harder to browse through a download. You'd think that having *Gesenius* on my computer desktop would make it convenient. But the clutter on my desktop is not as much fun as the clutter on my desk top.

Do not ask me what my favorite Hebrew root is. Because I might spend some pages here telling you. And then I'll change my mind. (Parts I-IV throughout)

Glazer, Aubrey
Mystical Vertigo: Contemporary Kabbalistic Hebrew Poetry—Dancing over the Divide
(and other works)
One of my Zohar teacher's earlier books, before his volumes on the Jewish mystical sensibilities of Leonard Cohen and Bob Dylan. The section in Vertigo that for me is most worthy of wrestling with is Chapter VII—"Auto-Erotic Cosmogeny as Devekut: Rebirthing God as Self in Haya Esther's 'My Flesh speaks G!d.'" Aubrey introduces this as "mystical embodiment in non-traditional forms," citing an article by Gershom Sholem on the possibility of Jewish mysticism in our times.

I'm pretty sure that women embracing the mystical feminine godhead is neither a new nor a non-traditional practice. It is renewed, rediscovered, re-embodied, revived, and re-celebrated. It's very likely eternal—with an unbroken transmission from the ancient past. And it is validating, as Reb Zalman was validating, helping me to accept that it's okay to do what I have done here. And that is to start with the teachings of my father, and Malkah's Father—and to move further and further back in time to capture or re-capture the feminine divine. Not the way of the male scholar dreaming of union with the Shekhinah. Not even the way of the female scholar (for this is not a scholarly work), but simply as one who experiences mystical merging and the embodiment of the Shekhinah. And who experiences union through the vehicle of the holy letters.

It's not quite the same as reading. *Women know what it feels like to create life inside our own bodies*. Calling it "auto-erotic" might be accurate, but it doesn't feel right. It diminishes the embodiment of procreation. But when Glazer says that she "empowers her cosmological self through the somatic self" then, yes, I can relate. Although I think I experience it the other way round. (See especially our Part IV-16)

Gordon, A.D.
Selected Writings.

My guess is that my father may have revered A.D. Gordon, although I can't be sure. But it's not as if he was Judah Magnes. For my father, believe it or not, Magnes wasn't personal. He was meant to be a symbol for the Jews of Oakland, California. To bring them together, so they would develop some pride in their local history. Instead, Berkeley, more than Oakland, became a hub of young Jewish spirituality, innovative scholarship, and creativity. But guess what—that's where my father moved the museum—to Berkeley, not far from campus. And while my father fostered that youthful creative spirit, especially in the arts, he never took credit for it.

Gordon was more personal for my father, although he wasn't a spiritual man. The most spiritual I ever saw papa get was when he was about to say kaddish for a departed friend. He chuckled and said with a glint in his eyes, "*C'mon, boys, let's give him a really good send-off!*" That was it. Kaddish.

But I don't believe my father ever once (as Gordon advocated) touched the soil of the Holy Land with his own hands. And without that, Gordon is just another abstract Zionist philosophy.

Yet he's anything but. He advocated a spirituality of labor, a Zionism of the soil. If you don't work it with your own fingers, your own hands—what do you know of *holy land*? The land belongs to those who toil. Not to parasites who do no physical labor. It is the labor, the devotion to the soil, that makes it holy.

And so my father sent me off to labor when I was a kid. To a kibbutz in the north.

After the '67 war, I went to kibbutz Ramat Rahel, not far from where I lived on the outskirts of Jerusalem, when they put out a call for labor for the distressed orchards. Of course I went—how could I not? The soil, the trees, the leaves beckoned. If I believe in anything, I believe in the miracle of soil, along with that of the womb. Gordon nailed it.

A lost memory rises to the surface. My father is handing me an old photograph. All he says is, "*Marty, this is for you*." Years later, maybe decades later, I look at the back of this dismal old picture. In careful handwriting, that is not my dad's, says:

> Grave of
> A.D. Gordon,
> Dagania, 'א,
> 23 March 1933

It sits in a drawer next to me (*I'm reaching…*). A drawer of my father's mementos. It's a bit underexposed, a bit off center, and only around 2"x 3." It's a picture of a neglected gravesite alone in a quiet forlorn forest. There's Gordon, alone, forever with the land. And I wonder about the provenance of this old photo. Whose handwriting? Maybe that of my father's first wife?

Not to be too heavy-handed here, but do you understand that a book is not just a book? That it's a vehicle for transformation? And that I can't just give you a simple list, and say, here—these are my sources, and hand them over the way my father would have. *You can read, or not read. Either way is a good start*.

Trust them, Marty. They'll be fine—

And we're marching around the dining room table, singing *anu anu ha-palmach*. He's set me loose in his favorite musty bookstore. I'm captive, in a hospital bed, and he's handing me Braudel (who, curiously, is writing his volumes about land and soil and water building up empires, and letting them fall).

And now I'm in Paris, and Ahmad is handing me a volume—and he doesn't need to say a word. (Part I-9; IV-40)

Green, Arthur (editor and Introduction)
Dissenter in Zion: From the Writings of Judah L. Magnes (and other works)
Somewhere between A.D. Gordon and Judah Magnes, that's where my father raised me. Magnes had gone to my high school in Oakland (as had Gertrude Stein). So we were like kin, weren't we? And my father chose Magnes as the focus of his brainchild, the museum, now the Magnes Collection at the Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley. Always a mouthful…

Magnes was opposed to a separate Jewish state of Israel. He was blacklisted by other Zionists. His image had been scratched out of Zionist group photos. His crime? He wanted—and I want, for I was raised on Magnes—a bi-national state.

When the State of Israel was formed, Mt Scopus, site of the original Hebrew University, was not inside Israel's borders in the divided city of Jerusalem. Magnes refused to leave. And he died, like Moses, outside the budding promised land.

"*Palestine is no place for maximalist Jewish aspirations*," he said. Still apparently too radical for so many Jews, he said, "*The time has come for the Jews to take into account the Arab factor as the most important facing us. If we have a just cause, so have they. If promises were made to us, so were they to the Arabs…. If we wish to live in this living space, we must live with the Arabs*."

But the Magnes Museum did not educate museum-goers with the ideologies of Magnes himself, only with a vague sense of his prominence in the formation of the Jewish state. It probably wouldn't have been a good strategy for fundraising, and my father was ever the pragmatist. However, Magnes's ideas, like Gordon's, were rooted deep in me before I was conscious of their having been planted, watered, and tended there at all.

Many years later, when my father asked me to write a proposal for a new direction for the museum, I envisioned creating a center devoted to Magnes' vision of Arab-Jewish co-habitation of the Holy Land. A large initial grant was handed over to us

for the Magnes reboot. The donor was very excited, writing out the check right during our meeting. And I'm realizing just this very second that it was my father who handed that check over to pay the bills, keep the lights burning, and hire more staff. He never intended to follow through with my proposal. But he knew it would draw the funds from this particular donor. A bricks-and-mortar reboot rather than an ideological one.

Score another win for the Magnes Museum. And the loser, once more, is Magnes, himself. (Part I)

Hammer, Jill, with Taya Shere
The Hebrew Priestess: Ancient and New Visions of Jewish Women's Spiritual Leadership
The first I heard of the Kohenet Movement was when I got a message from Taya to ask if I'd teach a session for them up in the High Sierra one winter. My partner and I were driving back from Montana right about then and would be crossing the mountains just when the Kohenet training was to occur. *Bishert*. Jill was not coming out to the west coast to teach that winter. And so, I gave a workshop for the kohenet up there in the beautiful High Sierra, as the snow was melting.

What a diverse, playful, serious, and exciting group of women the Kohenet were—studying to be Hebrew Priestesses! Some had been raised in Chabad families, and some had no Jewish education at all. I decided to do what I always do. Start from the beginning—with the aleph-bet. That, and their own names. Follow the letters, and they will discover their own journey. Many of the women had changed their names. Or had a "priestess" name. Or wanted a priestess name. In the Torah, the changing of a name is the changing of a destiny. Most of them had not known this. But it makes a difference how a name is changed. What letters, what vowels? How we spell things, how we write them. Spirituality without scholarship can really make a mess.

The book focuses on archetypes that the Kohenet trainees hope to embody. And what I learned spending a weekend with the Kohanot-in-training is the same thing I discovered with Abraham Leader's Abulafian meditation, Reb Zalman's early Jewish Renewal practice, or shamanism, or any other religious practice. I learned, and reaffirmed, that I am just not a practitioner. Even with women. Even with women trying to do exactly what I think we ought to be doing. Even reclaiming what is ours. And still, I'm not a practitioner. It continues to surprise me.

Rav Hammer also has a prayer book that she's written—*The Kohenet Siddur*. And it's everything I'd have wanted a prayer book to be and do. But—too late, too late. I'm already set upon my own path. (Part IV)

Harner, Michael
The Way of the Shaman (and other teachings)
Michael Harner taught my father how to build a museum from scratch. I mean how odd is that? What Michael is mostly known for is his writing on and promot-

ing of shamanic ritual, healing and divination across the globe. He developed what he called "core" shamanism, uncovering the common features of shamanic practice around the world and combining them into a ritual process for contemporary healing and spiritual problem-solving. Not exactly museum building, is it?

I invited Michael to present at two conferences of the Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness, both held at UC Berkeley. The first was a keynote lecture on what he called "shamanic dismemberment" and the second was a workshop in shamanic journeying to the lower world. For the first, I heard muttering of "oh, Michael, we already knew that"—without acknowledging that it had been Michael himself who had introduced the concept in the first place.

The second event, the ritual, drew shamans from around the West Coast and Southwest U.S. to come, "to see," as Michael put it with a laugh, "if I do it right." The additional shamans drummed for the ritual that Michael led, and it was a particularly potent night. I had my only full-blown shamanic experience of my life that night. These things happen. Our Malkah indeed experiences a "shamanic dismemberment," or what the Sufis might call *al fana*, in which she is taken completely apart, into the dispersal of her own core elements (into the aleph-bet letters, of course), and disappears very possibly into the Godhead itself. And, in keeping with the principles described by Harner, she returns, integrated and at peace, something she had never been before. (Parts I-2, 19, II-14, IV-12)

Herbert, Frank
Dune (and other works)
Frank Herbert got to the Sahara long before I did. But his works are still in the upstairs library, not in the North Africa bookcase downstairs. He met the Tuareg first and fell in love with their ecological resourcefulness. Took pleasure in the power of their consonants and vowels. And wove all that into an allegory of arid zones and oil ("*mélange*"), power and freedom. And the allegory still holds. As for me, I was just getting out of high school when the first volume of *Dune* was published. And it was another two or three years before I got myself to North Africa, and stepped a booted foot upon the red Saharan sand. My old volume of *Dune* is crumbling, but only a few of its yellowed pages are falling out at the ends. Then again, as with so many of my treasured books, my eyes can't handle the small print anyway. And still I do not let them go. Along with Hitchcock's "The Man Who Knew Too Much," Frank Herbert's *Dune* was almost my first introduction to North Africa. Of course, de Saint-Exupéry's *Little Prince.* already had captured my heart when I was little. After reading it over and over, I'm pretty sure my love affair with the Sahara and North Africa was fairly inevitable. (Part III)

Hesse, Hermann
Steppenwolf (and other works)
Such swooningly beautiful writing that a little bit goes a long way. Like Poe, Hesse can take just one phrase and set your spine a-tingling. And while Genet and Hesse

may both have written to ease something profoundly internal, Genet's writing is designed to heat the body, while Hesse is able to warm the reader's soul.

Think of this: *Steppenwolf* was Hesse's 10th novel. Imagine being able to come up with that! I still get weak in the knees from his writing, and keep one or more of his books open by my side just to inhale a sentence or two at a time. His words are downright entheogenic, (if I can compare them to things that grow), with long tendrilled roots, inside me. Sometimes I stare at the same sentence day after day and wonder that I have the chutzpah to write anything at all. (Parts I-IV)

Hussein, Saddam
Thus We Should Fight the Persians
This is Saddam Hussein's equivalent of Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*. Although it seems to me it could have come right out of a chapter in Wittfogel on the building blocks of systems of total power. After all, Wittfogel uses Mesopotamia as his prototype for "oriental despotism."And Saddam followed such a template, using the rulers of Sumer and Babylon as his model. But the surprising thing in this little volume is the degree to which Saddam's identification with the Mesopotamian gods is based on his magical practices to attain their invincibility. Gods and god kings are never conquered.

Written in 1983, three years after the start of the Iran-Iraq war, Saddam speaks to 5,000 years of grievances against the Persians. When I was in Iraq in 1990, he was still at it, complaining about the abuses of the neighbors. But at the end of our faculty fellowship there (under the auspices of the National Council on U.S. Arab Relations), a shift took place. We few American faculty had been chosen to establish exchange programs between Iraqi universities and our own. But on the day we were to leave Baghdad, we were detained at the airport. There had been a reversal of policy. Iran overnight became Iraq's beloved Muslim brothers, and the British and the U.S. were now Saddam's official despised adversaries. I admit it wasn't quite that simple, but the overnight reversal of allies and enemies was a bit of a shock.

It didn't have to work out that way. There was a simple way out. Costly, but not as costly as the first Gulf War (or as the subsequent wars, and occupations have turned out to be). Those of us on fellowship in Iraq had been given this and other books by Saddam Hussein and Tariq Aziz when we met with the Baghdad Historical Society at the University of Baghdad. Who knew what rare treasures these little volumes would be?

This book is an extraordinary attempt to reunite the gods that Abraham shattered in ancient times. Or perhaps the gods themselves are trying, through Saddam's raised hand and sword, to reassert themselves upon the contemporary Middle Eastern political landscape. Or maybe it's just the ravings of a power-hungry dictator using ancient mythology to justify and solidify his rule. I felt it was a brilliant job, the way Saddam used the ancient past to try to create a unified Iraqi identity.

Might have worked, too, if he hadn't also used opposing strategies to undermine unification at the same time. (Part III-IV)

Ibn Khaldûn, Abu Zayid 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Muhammad
The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History. (Two Volumes) or the abridged Princeton paperback edition.
In 1377, *The Muqaddimah* was a fresh theory of history which included the reasons for northern imperialism over their more southern neighbors, how to anticipate the rise and fall of empires, and for understanding the dynamics of the oscillation of elites. The *Muqaddimmah* also included a microanalysis of the nutritional habits of peoples from royal families to nomadic outliers. Ibn Khaldûn ascertains the signs and predictors of the fall of civilizations, from ecological degradation to the rise of homosexuality.

His work heavily influenced Fernand Braudel's theory of world systems, whose work, in turn, influenced Immanuel Wallerstein, best known for the theory of world systems. Ibn Khaldûn's family background surely influenced his view of the circulation of marginal peoples and central authorities. His two volumes on Berber history give rise to questions worth considering about his own ancestry. The *Muqaddimah* is available in English in an abridged paperback edition, which is surely enough for the somewhat casual reader, or in the full two volumes hardbacks, complete with fold-out maps. If you haven't been properly introduced, skim throughout, before you attempt to read from cover to cover. Take it in slowly. Much of what he has to say is still of value, even when he is entirely wrong. Keep in mind that he was writing a century before Columbus set sail. (Plate II-16)

Idel, Moshe
Hasidism—Between Ecstasy and Magic; The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia; Studies in in Ecstatic Kabbalah (and other works)
As soon as I dipped into Abulafia, I was hooked. In Idel's hands he became a bit more accessible. He reaffirmed my view of the aleph-bet letters, such as the letter מ, "which gives birth" which was in accord with my own vision of the letter being almost to term,(being about 9 cms dilated) and not quite ready to bear down and give birth.

The other affirmation Idel gave me regarding Abulafia and others was the experience of annihilative experiences in the Jewish tradition—akin to *al-fana* in Islam. My illustrator, Josh Baum, invited me to join him in a six-week workshop on the ecstatic methodology of Abulafia, offered by Abraham Leader. Josh ended up not attending the webinar, but I did. And realized that reading about the mystic (as in reading or studying with Idel) and contemplating aleph-bet letters on my own was about as much as I could handle. 'Incanting' with Leader and his followers was too much *pratique* for me. (Part IV-10-16)

Jacobsen, Thorkild
The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion
My copy is so scribbled in that an artist friend decided to do some art installations based on my beloved dog-eared volumes. She scribbled all over, and I mean *scribbled* all over, some fairly precious books—not understanding that my scribblings—which included notes, agreements, arguments, circled key points, stickies, toothpicks, and scraps of bookmarking shreds of paper—were filled with meaning and conversation with the text. Hers obliterated the text, with no conversation with the author, no wrestling, and no content at all. She made her books illegible. Nor did she understand my shock at her disrespect. To her, her scribbling looked exactly like mine. And that was the beginning of the end of our brief friendship.

So many lines in Jacobsen opened doors for me. One of the most evocative was a section called "Ultimate Power: The Assembly of Gods," showing how the Old Gods of the Assembly, in exhaustion after Marduk's horrific conquest over his mother Tiamat, gave up their powers and ceded all decision-making authority to Marduk, the brutal, megalomaniac of his time. It is no surprise that Saddam Hussein equated himself with Marduk, sweeping over the enemies of Iraq. Imagine my surprise, then, when I discovered that *The Zohar* also spoke of the Greater Holy Assembly, along with some lesser ones. See *Ha-Idra Rabba Qadisha*. And when Rabbi Abba speaks, it's as if he's speaking of Marduk himself. Some of the translations are mind-boggling.

Jenkins, David
Dream Re-Play: How to Transform Your Dream Life
David is my dream partner. And I have to say that his book ought to be as good as he is, but it isn't. David's hands-on work with dreams and nightmares is healing. His method is non-interpretive, in that he sees the job as following the dream and seeing where it leads—including into the next dream or next series of dreams. In this way, a 'nightmare' is only one moment in the dreamer's life. David is interested in what you do with that dream, how you follow it up, and, as he says in the title of his book, how you transform it, not how it transforms you. All this, without controlling your experience through lucid dreaming (which I, personally consider rude).

Jenkins sees the dreamer as separate from the 'dream ego'—the person experiencing the dream from the inside. And he sees the dreamer's job as protecting the dream ego and helping her on her way. But do not judge this book by its terrible cover. Take Jenkins seriously—although I'm not at all sure he cares. I think he's more interested in enjoying yoga and tai chi and meditation, grandchildren, and just having an excellent dream life. I did discover, however, that Jenkins' technique bears a resemblance to another dream worker, whose name I've quite forgotten, even though he led a dream workshop at one of our anthropology conferences in Portland. I was not impressed. Jenkins' well-honed methods are far superior to those of his colleague's.

Side note. Jenkins recently helped my daughter's with her nightmares in about ten minutes. In other words, he taught her strategies for taking good care of her dream ego. And that in turn, I think, helps to keep my daughter safe. Which reminds me to say, somewhat tangentially, that when they were little, his elder daughter taught mine to swim by asking her, "*Do you want to be a mermaid*?" Even way back then, I think, my daughter was being taught to live inside her dreams. (Part IV-12, 22, 27)

Kafka, Franz
"Metamorphosis"(and other works)
This is one of the stories my mother used to read to me as a child. A must read, true enough, but please don't read Kafka to an already morose and melancholy eight-year-old. Kafka appears less in these pages than he ought. He taught me to scratch the underlying structure of society. Not its skin, but its bones. And to experience the stark unfairness of a system we cannot understand. I did not learn the terror of such things, per se. Instead, I chose equanimity in the face of them. I'm not sure that's such a good thing. On the surface, it might look an awful lot like apathy. So maybe equanimity is the wrong word. Let's say, instead, that I learned the art of analysis. And later, to help students ferret out those underlying bones of inequality and injustice. Curiously, I have put very few of my analytic skills to work here. I believe that as the reader, that's your job. (Part I-20)

Kaplan, Aryeh (and other works, as author)
Meditation, Kabbalah and Meditation, Inner Peace, (and many others)
Read them, don't read them. Either way is a good start. As for me, I hunger for Kaplan's commentaries and approach to individual aleph-bet letters and Hebrew words. His book, *Inner Peace*, might seem to have a facile title, something you might read for the wrong reasons. But this book, rather than introducing the reader to sacred texts, is Kaplan's own systematic introduction of key kabbalistic principles. He hands us the 'so what' of it all. It's a very good place to start.

My heart is happiest inside Aryeh Kaplan's translations. His bilingual editions help ease folks through the door. *Come and see*—

Kaplan, Aryeh, (bilingual editions, translations and commentaries)
Yes, I do realize that his teachings, translations, and commentaries are being continued by his followers. Kaplan prepared them by recording his lectures, his students'questions, and by working with his copious notes. But these volumes were his, and for me, formative:

—*The Bahir: Book of Illumination* (bilingual edition, translation and commentary)
Kaplan's *Bahir* is organized such that the Hebrew is at the front—that is, the *back*—if you start from the Hebrew side of the book, which is written from right to left. But the translations and commentaries start from the other direction and read from

left to right. This makes Kaplan's version of *Bahir* harder to work with in both languages at once.

Kaplan shows how letter formation affects meaning. And reading it was a *mechaya*, because it's something I learned when I was five in the kindergarten my father enrolled me in. It met in the basement of an old black Baptist church and that is where I first learned my aleph-bet. It was part of Hillel Hebrew Academy in Los Angeles, before they built themselves a grand new building on the edge of Beverly Hills. And changed their name, I understand, to that of their biggest donor. I preferred the church basement to the new building. It was cozy and felt like the home that home should be. I spent decades making up my own reasons why drawing a letter one way instead of another made a difference—and Kaplan was the first teacher who taught me why.

My favorite tales in *The Bahir* are the those of the King—especially the story of the King giving his soldiers bread to eat, and what happens when they waste it. We *are* wasteful, are we? (Part IV-28 and well, everywhere else that has, or thinks about, letters—especially Parts I and IV)

Kaplan's other bilingual works are organized in a more useful way, with Hebrew, English, commentaries, footnotes, etc. all on the same double page of text. Look left, you see English. Right, you see Hebrew. Below the main body of text in either language are Kaplan's notes and commentary.

—*The Living Torah* (bilingual edition, translation and commentary)
Of the translations, scrolls, or bilingual editions of Torah that I have had in my library, my favorite to work with remains Kaplan's. I have two copies of his *Living Torah*. One used be in my office bookshelves at the university, and one at home. Which means that by the time I brought my office library home, my two copies had completely different stickies and notations in them. And that meant I had to keep them both. And so I would hold different arguments depending on which one I had pulled off the shelf. Wrestling, inside different arguments. Mostly, no matter which text, I get stuck around לך לך. And then we, my Living Torah and I, rant at each other, and even yell from time to time. And in this way, I have just discovered why Aryeh Kaplan calls his Torah "Living Torah"—because it is loud in its beckoning, and always ready to hold the conversation.

And then I step back and just marvel at the beauty (or ambiguity) of the language. And then Kaplan steps in with his footnotes, and I get out my crumbing old *Gesenius Lexicon* and we have a field day. For I am just a poor and lonely anthropologist, whose primary concern has always been fieldwork. I'm not a scholar, you know.

Kaplan gives us notes and grammatical points, recipes and building instructions, family trees and botanical speculations, as well as other odd little alternate considerations. Here, the notion of "innovating in the study of Torah" really comes to life, as Kaplan and his reader engage with the text.

Thank you, Aryeh Kaplan, once again for bilingual editions side by side. *Come and see*—that wasn't so hard. (Parts I-IV, throughout)

—*Sefer Yetzirah: The Book of Creation in Theory and Practice*
(Kaplan, bilingual edition, translation and commentary)
Here it is. The birth of the aleph-bet letters. The Mothers, the Doubles, and the Elementals (also called the "Simple" letters). It's all here, and organized so much better than Kaplan's *Bahir*. Finally, a perfect format for study: Hebrew passage. Translation. Commentary. *Repeat*. Kaplan makes it easier to see why he's translating a word one way rather than another. And also makes it easier to hold the conversation with him and the text. But Kaplan takes the *Sefer Yetzirah* much further. He includes correspondences of letters, meditations, and the physics of Creation. Although my study partner at Beit Malkhut Study Group of San Francisco, physicist Ovid Jacob, says he's made some mistakes in that regard, I'll just let the physicists argue that among themselves.

My quibble (well, more than a quibble—it goes to the secret of everything) is with the title, which Kaplan translates as the *Book of Creation*. I remember Kaplan apologizing somewhere for this. Maybe in his Introduction. Maybe in a dream. I'm not sure. His subtitle is *In Theory and Practice* which gives you a hint to the problem. And to the misnomer of his title. For *Sefer Yetzirah* means the *Book of Formation*, not Creation—thus referring to a different kabbalistic world entirely. What difference does it make? Look at the grammar of the *Sefer Yetzirah* text and notice its visual punning. As long as you only read silently in Hebrew, you can have it both ways. This is how God created the world. Or, this is how I can form (or re-form) the world. The first version is a mystical text (God did it). The second is a magical one (I can do it). Or, as Kaplan puts it—in theory (God did it) or in practice (I can do it). But those visual gymnastics are only discernable when reading the Hebrew.

As soon as Kaplan translates the *Sefer Yetzirah*, he plays it safe, kind of. He translates the text as an entirely mystical book describing God's process of Creation. But then, being coy in his commentaries, he shows you how (unlikely as that may be) you yourself can use the Book of Formation. Confused? Kaplan wrestles mightily, apologizes for his indiscretion, and hands us everything, everything—if we can only figure it out.

My job is to enjoy his wrestling and keep out of it. Mystical book (God's work) or magical book (cookbook)—the *Sefer Yetzirah* is both until you open your mouth and read aloud. There are no vowels written here, so the text can be either. Silently, you can enjoy it. Aloud, you've got to decide which is which. As my mother always said, there's no such thing as being neutral. Even doing nothing is taking a position. (Part I and Part IV)

Kropotkin, Petr
Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution

It's not that Kropotkin was saying Darwin was wrong. It was that he was saying Darwin missed a crucial element in the evolutionary mechanism. I bumped into *Mutual Aid* in a little Marxist bookshop in an alleyway just off the University of California, Berkeley campus when I was 16. I was still in high school, cutting class, as I often did. I'd head over to Berkeley, before even the rumblings of the Free Speech Movement began. I'd pretend that I was a student there. Something I had been dreaming of since 6th grade when my dad would take me on outings on campus and we'd play King of the Mountain, where years later they built the undergrad library. Decades later I brought my own kids to campus to play King of the Mountain. By then, at last, I was a grad student in Kroeber Hall, in the Anthropology Department. And I had a carrel of my very own in the Anthropology Library. I didn't even know such treasures existed. And I was just a stone's throw away from the Bancroft Library in the middle of campus.

Decades further down the road, my father would hand over the keys of his life's work, the Judah L. Magnes Museum, and place the museum under the wing of the Bancroft at the University of California, Berkeley. And we lived happily ever after.

Actually not. My father saved the museum. And then he died about a week later.

By then the campus had been built up so much that it was hard to find ourselves much of a mountain to play on. Still, I prefer the hill just off the Faculty Club, and it's still there. You can roll all the way down and land yourself in the creek and still be surrounded by redwood trees. This is my favorite place on earth.

When I was a kid, Aeschylus was my default. I wasn't ready for Marx, let alone Kropotkin. But when I grew into him, I was besotted. Kropotkin came by his ideas by—oh, now there's a tale—but discover that for yourself.

The key point here is that Kropotkin came to be seen as an opponent of Darwin's principle of natural selection through the competition between individuals—what some call "survival of the fittest"(something quite different from what Darwin meant by the term). But that's not what Kropotkin meant at all. It wasn't an either-or, but a both-and natural selection and mutual aid.

Kropotkin isn't as warm and fuzzy as he's made out to be. No, his notion of cooperation and mutual aid among creatures large and small emphasizes self-sacrifice for something greater than the self. Think soldiers, martyrs, and suicide bombers. And yet—okay fine, I'll tell you—the story goes that when Kropotkin's mother died, the servants and serfs told little Prince Petr of the goodness of her heart. And their wish that he grow up to be as kind and generous as she had been. And so, by age 12, he relinquished his title. And as he grew up, he came to a philosophy that honored the altruism of his dead mother. However, the opposite argument could be made. That the servants acted in their own self-interest, trying to shape a benign future ruler—a decidedly Darwinian approach. A third idea is, of course, that in Russia, the times they were a-changing. (Part IV-1, 15, 36)

Kuhn, Thomas
The Structure of Scientific Revolutions
How, why, and when paradigms start to break down or entirely collapse—this was Kuhn's contribution to the history of science. *Paradigm shift*. That was his addition to the vernacular. For Kuhn (no judgment about it), just facts, mechanisms, and variables.

Like Ibn Khaldûn, Braudel, Wallerstein, and AFC Wallace, Kuhn documents the rise and fall of ideas, those who hold dear the old ones, and those who knock them down. Which makes it funny that he thought his theory of paradigm shift only applied to the physical sciences. For good reason, people applied *paradigm shift* to just about anything—from religious ideologies to getting a new haircut. I can feel Kuhn rolling over in his grave over this. Which is very funny. For Kuhn's Structure, bears an uncomfortable resemblance to A.F.C. Wallace's much earlier article, "Revitalization Movements," right down to the processes in each of Wallace's stages. Yes, even Kuhn's stages are almost identical to Wallace's. Did Kuhn plagiarize and just add a twist of *paradigm*?

Wallace made sure his theory was universal. He was building on the work of Ralph Linton—citing his sources. But Linton's theory of "nativistic" movements was too narrow, and Wallace intended universal application. No matter what happens, Wallace's theory applies. Revolution. No revolution. Stagnation. Flourishing. Any way is a good start.

Wallace, Kuhn, and others wanted to map it out: *How does it happen*? What are the underlying conditions that make mainstream society (read: *steady state* for Wallace and *fixed paradigm* for Kuhn) fall? In my book, Ibn Khaldûn did the best job of it. But I like using them all. Maybe I should throw in a few more theorists who are on the same page—just to make Kuhn squirm. (Part II-22 and more)

Lane, Edward William
An Arabic-English Lexicon (Two Volumes)
Another treasure. This one reprinted from 1863. With even tinier print than my Gesenius *Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon*. It's organized the same way, by root pattern. I found Lane at a Middle East Studies Conference. The publishers have their own enormous hall to entice us with, and at the end of the conference they don't want to schlep books back with them, so they sell all their wonderful samples for a song. If you're interested in Semitic languages at all, fall into a lexicon. Although I must admit, Arabic-English dictionaries are also arranged by root, not by word—which makes things so much easier. In this way, when you want to understand correspondences between words, you don't always have to reach for your lexicon.

However, I had a problem with Lane. As I got older, not only did my eyes start rejecting all that small print (even after cataract surgery), but my hands did as well. I could barely lift a volume to work with it at my library table. And so, as I recall, I gave this treasure, along with other favorites, to a former student who was starting grad school. She later, how shall I put it, did not succeed in her Arabic studies, and

I'm not so sure that my Lane's *Lexicon* has yet found its forever home. I'm sure she'll pass it on, when the time comes.

Okay, footnote here. I have just discovered that lexicons are now available as pdf downloads, and their fonts can be adjusted to any size your poor eyes require. A miracle! (Part IV-throughout)

Mann, Thomas
The Holy Sinner (and everything else Mann wrote)
Oh how I was captivated by this tale when I first read it as a 20-year-old living in Brussels, so close to Bruges. It starts out as a sweet fairy tale love story but the problem of incest is at the core of Mann's tale. In my book, acts done in innocence are worth an explanation of what might make them wrong, rather than casting shame, imposing secrecy, and requiring heavy penance for an act of love. Mind you, I was reading Mann for the first time, and I had run off with my draft-dodging boyfriend to live abroad without a visa. It was the '60s outside—the height of the era of sexual liberation. I knew that incest avoidance was fairly universal and could lead to genetic abnormalities, but what made it *morally* wrong? And why would the celibate Church have heavy-handed dominion over sexuality and procreation? I just didn't get it. The reversal of sacred and profane was also an issue for me. After all that flogging and suffering, how could the Church suddenly find the "*issue*" of sinners to be the holiest among them? The story is beautifully maddening.

The story triggered for me anger I had never let myself feel. When I was 8 years old, and my best friends came home from church one Sunday, telling me we could no longer play under the covers—because they would go to Hell. What on earth were they being taught in Sunday School? That something innocent, beautiful, and fun between little kids had been proclaimed sinful and worthy of Hellfire?

All this might sound normal, reasonable, and second nature to you, but I was not raised with awe, respect, or obeisance for the Church. My mother railed against the evils of the Church, its inquisition, and our expulsion from our homes in Spain almost as much as she raged against the Holocaust, Nazis, and Germans in general. That is, until my parents were stuck in Berlin when the Twin Towers were attacked and destroyed. The Germans hosted Americans unable to return home. They gave them luxurious room and board for a couple weeks until they could return home. One instance of generosity, and just like that, my mother reversed her estimation of Germans. Now she was free to buy as much Bavarian crystal as her heart desired.

Mann, Hesse, Dürrenmatt, and Günter Grass all live in their own little section of my library, conversing happily together in the middle of the night when I'm asleep. I just found this quote from Grass: "even bad books are books and therefore sacred." Grass died not too long ago. Not sure why I've tucked him in here instead of giving him his own citation. Maybe it's because he's stacked deep down in a pile instead of standing upright, accessible on the shelf.

Matt, Daniel
The Essential Kabbalah: The Heart of Jewish Mysticism (author)
Do not underestimate this little volume. R' Aubrey reminded me of it when I asked him if 'we' had a concept like *el fana* of the Sufis. And where that might be documented. Danny, he reminded me, has a lovely section in here on *devekut*—joining with the divine—in his section called "Mind, Meditation, and Mystical Experience." It's "like pouring a jug of water into a gushing spring: all becomes one" he said. The Sufi concept of *el-fana* is more the merging of a single drop into the ocean. Of the two, the Sufi imagery is closer to the utter dissolution of the self, disappearing into into the recesses of the cosmos. (Part IV especially, Plates 10-14)

Matt, Daniel, (translation, commentary, and series editor)
The Zohar, Pritzker Edition
The putative author of *The Zohar* is Shimon Bar Yohai, but it is considered to have been written (channeled) by Moses de León in the 13th century. My grandfather would have called him "Mushón,"(the Ladino diminutive of Moshe, or Moses), implying a much more intimate connection, for he read passages of Zohar every week on the Sabbath. In honor of completing the translation of the first nine volumes, Matt returned home to Berkeley and, with Lehrhaus Judaica (inspired by my father, but founded in 1974 by Fred Rosenbaum, one of my father's favorite "boys"), he began a coordinated series of Zohar studies in multiple cities around San Francisco. Matt's collective Zohar study began around 2014 and continues to this day. The first three years in San Francisco, our studies were under the direction of Rabbi Aubrey Glazer, who led us into (though not back out of) the world of Zohar. *The Zohar* has seriously influenced Malkah's story, Josh's illustrations, and my meditations here as well.

The Aramaic invitation תא חזי "*come and see*," which appears especially the Part IV conversations with my walking companion on the cliffs above the Pacific honors the walking conversations of the companions of *The Zohar*. I'm beginning to think that translation of the phrase here is fine the way it is, although I didn't like it at first. I was being fairly literal when I complained to R' Aubrey that it really should be "*come, behold*!"—being a much stronger verb than merely 'to see.' But Matt's more subtle phrase has grown on me. And the revelations of the healing properties of the letters (that are not Zoharic), gives me more of a quiet astonishment rather than a big bang, cliff collapsing sort of revelation. And yet the day I reached my final page of writing we got that too—*the cliff collapsed*. And a woman was buried within.

The Zohar is organized by *parsha*, the weekly Torah portion. Sephardi *kehillot*, synagogues, like my grandfather's, maintained the practice of reading *The Zohar* each Shabbat along with each week's *parsha*. However, this is not common practice in Ashkenazi synagogues.

The tales of the companions of the Zohar are often delightful, and I allude to them (or my jealousy of them) from time to time.

I have a complaint about the Pritzker Edition. No matter how much longer the volumes might have been, they should have been published with the Aramaic on the same page as the translation and commentary. Think how beautifully instructive a bilingual (or trilingual, with Hebrew) edition would have been compared to the English translation alone. I know, I know—the original Aramaic is available in downloads. But it's cumbersome to navigate the original, the translation and the footnotes and commentaries, as well as one's own notebook. When not in one volume, it takes a large library table. And very good light. We who are creaky in Aramaic vote for Kaplan's all-in-one-volume approach to studying text. If my language skills were better, I might snobbishly approve of keeping the Aramaic as a download only. But no, I don't approve.

I did consider taking Danny Matt's Aramaic Zohar classes, but driving all the way across the bridge to Berkeley, and studying Zohar twice a week instead of once. But I drew the line and proved myself a dilettante. I'm just an anthropologist, indulging in text. One who primarily enjoys the pre-Judaic parallels and survivals—symbols and imagery from Sumer and Babylon. What am I doing immersed in this text anyway?

I was in the National Archives in Paris one year, and a historian I knew looked at me in horror. "What are *you* doing here?" he said. "Anthropologists aren't supposed to read. That's *our* job!" (Parts I-IV)

A few notes follow:

—Vol I—*Haqdamat Sefer ha-Zohar*—We didn't get to Vol I until year four of our studies, which was annoying. I had already gone through Vol I on my own, skimming for את's and ב's and checking footnotes. But without a good teacher, I was bound to miss something, get something wrong, offend someone, dishonor the text. And then I started again from scratch at Matt's *Translator's Introduction* and found his own trepidations over the daunting task before him. And so I felt better.

Maybe it's always daunting to take on material like this, no matter one's relationship to it. In the introduction, Matt shares with us the views of the 2nd century sage, Rabbi Yehudah who says, "*One who translates a verse literally is a liar; one who adds to it is a blasphemer*." *The Zohar*, he says, is an enterprise of innovation and creativity (the "creation of a grand literary truth"). So, I figure, if in the 14th century they could do it, so can I. What I fear, though, is that I don't go far enough. That I'm not good enough or brave enough. That I've been too polite. Pulled my punches. Obfuscated. And that I haven't grasped the whole metaphysical truth. As if one could.

The Zohar's obsession with concealed vs. revealed truths has made me less anxious about getting it right. If I haven't gone far enough, then perhaps it's because some things are meant to remain concealed. Stop obsessing.

Volume I did not disappoint. Rooting around, I finally figured out the difference between מי and מה, which had me baffled for years. It hinged not on the literal translation (the *who* and the *what*), and or on the letter מ, which needed to be peeled away like an onion skin. No, it was the remainder that I found that was revealed—the relationship between the י and the ה of the Tetragrammaton. I was right back at the heart of what I care about. All those years, I had been so focused on words instead of letters that I just couldn't unpack it.

But there was more. *Archetypes* inside the מי and מה. There was El and Anat. God and the Shekhinah. Keter and Malkhut. Fire and Earth. *Binary oppositions*, male and female, above and below, the maker and the made. If you're rooting around in my "Crumbling Old Books," then surely you've fallen into a bit of Zohar yourself.

—Vol II—*Va-Yetse*—Here there's some contemplation of the phrase היה היו (which unfortunately, I did not include in our section on the YHVH in Part IV). This phrase, 'happening, happened' is another construct of prophesy—although I only included והיה (*v'hayah*, "and it may come to pass" or "once upon a time"), when I wrote about the Tetragrammaton and time. *The Zohar* says that היו (*hayo*) is above, and היה (*hayah*) is below (I have a lot to say about this…). But it made me think of Abulafia's use of the phrase דם ודיו *(dam v'dyo*)—'blood and ink' as how God created the world. Reading Zohar, suddenly I could see Abulafia's poem more clearly. The דיו (*dyo*—or *dio*), the Ladino singular of *dios* 'God,'—a stunning bilingual pun—is not just ink but God doing the writing. *Dio* דיו was above, in Keter on the Tree of Life. And *dam* דם was below, residing in Malkhut. I saw the quill creating from above, I saw it dipping into the inkwell of the night sky (Plate IV-8), while the דם, blood, dripped onto Malkhut, the domain of Earth, below. This was the abode of אדם, (*adam*—man), a primordial being (א) made of blood, and אדמה, (*adamah*) the ruddy earth itself. Here, Josh and I depict this relationship as well. (Plate IV-17)

—Vol III—*Va-Yeshev*— Did you know that את is another manifestation of the Shekhinah? In *The Zohar*, the Shekhinah seems to be hiding in every nook and grammatical cranny, concealed—but on occasion ready to be revealed. She comprises the entire aleph-bet of divine speech. Note that I'm choosing to skip (because my blood pressure can't take it) railing about the impurity and filth of women in this volume, and that it seems as if *The Zohar's* view of women is beautiful only when the feminine remains abstract, as is the case with the divine Shekhinah. So much fear of "defilement" defiles me just reading it, when all I want to do is stay inside a cocoon of potential beauty—letters that could create poetry if they felt like it. But letters also form crude and hurtful words writ large upon a wall. Larger and more visible than any poetry I've ever seen.

—Vol IV—*Shemot* to *Yitro*—We spent two years studying Vol IV, and picking out just a brief note to comment on here is difficult. I've scribbled all over it. Don't tell Danny. There are stickies and folded handouts of additional sources that R'Aubrey gave us each week. Vol IV is a gem. There are some shamanic elements in *Va-era* and consideration of the magical properties of Moses's staff, as well as those of his older brother, Aaron. And—small detail that it is—there's a bit in here that states that evil comes from the north: a belief that may have been commonplace in the 14th century. Ibn Khaldûn builds much of his argument on this idea, anticipating the threat of colonialism from "the North" onto the Muslim lands of North Africa, and onto the even more vulnerable populations of sub-Saharan Africa. In *Yitro*, there is another bit on my favorite little grammatical structure, את (*et*). Danny's note comments that the את amplifies what follows so that we understand its importance. *Ah*. Why didn't I think of that? I've always pronounced it thus.

—Vol V—*Mishpatim*—I'm drawn to the section in here on consideration of 'the woman who does not remarry' and what becomes of the spirit that her husband left in her. When the Zohar is sad and sweet, it's a very special moment for me. This isn't my top contender, but it certainly resonated. Still, I can answer the question in an entirely non-mystical non-Zoharic way, fueled by the physical world and equal parts of love and rage. The spirit of her husband remains and is absorbed. His י imbeds inside her ה. She takes that energy, and if she's ready, she loves—she loves herself. And she begins to love women. She finds joy. The cocoon opens, and she flies away.

There can also be the removal of her primal י, if she's got an overabundance. Think of Sarah. When she was Sarai she was filled with too much י energy and could not conceive. And when she shed the י and embraced the ה becoming Sarah, there he was at last—Isaac, her son. Her anguish, however, simply redirected from the problem of barrenness to anxiety over the rights of her son compared to those of his elder half-brother (in the age of primogeniture, when only the eldest son inherits). The letter ה brought Sarah feminine youthfulness and beauty, desirability and adventure. She was now ready to be the matriarch of a people. However, I don't believe that י ever really left her. She was not more generous than before, and she did not embrace Hagar. Had she done so, all of history would have been kinder.

—Vol VII—*Aharei Mot*—touches on the differences between inseparable companions, like those who walk and think together in the Zohar, and brothers, who are not companions by choice, and who are therefore more prone to rivalry and shameful acts of sabotage and conniving. It is why I long for companions, while as a child I longed only for siblings. Perhaps I did not understand the difference. Or perhaps what I really wanted was a sister by my side who could see what I saw, experience what I felt—and the two of us together could figure out how on earth to survive it. But here in *Aharei Mot*, the "Supernal Mother" is called a Companion. As if the term "mother" alone wasn't large enough to convey the inseparability she

may feel towards those she has birthed. But let me stop here for a moment, as I join my daughter for dinner at a Vietnamese place we're trying for the first time, just on the other side of 19th Avenue. Who knew that the "sister by my side" whom I longed for would be my son's sister, not my own. And, yes, I feel that inseparability. How could I not? Supernal Mother, indeed. That, now *that* I know how to do.

—Vol VIII—*Idra rabba*—The Great Assembly of the Zohar is a version of the more ancient one of the Babylonian gods. But in the Zohar, we have the gathering of Rabbi Shim'on and his Companions—heroes of the Zohar. To be honest, I don't know if the putative authors of the Zohar had any knowlege of the more ancient Assembly of the Gods of Mesopotamia. And yet, as with the Torah itself, I believe that the earlier conflicts and stories left neither our collective consciousness nor the adventures of the Zoharic companions. A wonderful cautionary tale that I dare not engage with here, lest I go on a rant about despots and their subversion of democracy in ancient times, as well as our own. (Part III)

—Vol IX—*Pinhas*—Oh, this has been the most moving passage of Zohar for me. I encountered it one Shabbat morning in July 2016. My Zohar teacher, R'Aubrey, for years also led Shabbat Zohar meditations before services at 8:30 in the morning. And I would attend religiously. Then, as people would be pouring in for services, I would be leaving after a powerful meditation in the *Makom Shalom* of the shul, to go walk the cliffs with my pup, wishing I had a Zoharic companion to join us.

On that Shabbat, R'Aubrey invoked a passage that made me cry my eyes out. And I have been moved by it ever since. Note the dedication to my father, at the beginning of our tale, which I adapted from the following— (Part I).

> That "shade" came and sat down and kissed him. They heard a voice saying, "Make room, make room for Rabbi Pinhas, son of Ya'ir, who is with you!"
>
> For we have learned: Any place in which a righteous person innovates words of Torah, he comes to visit when he is in that world—especially when other righteous ones are present there, innovating words of Torah in that place…(The Zohar Pritzker Edition, Vol IX, p.537 *Pinhas* [3:220a])

Why did I cry when I heard this passage? Was it comforting? Reassuring? *No*. It was that I knew my father would never visit me from the other world no matter how righteous or innovative in Torah I might become. If he visited anyone at all, I thought it would probably be one of his "boys" (that's what my mother called them). The young men who surrounded him, who admired him, adored him. I have no authentic claim to him. He merely scooped me up out of a foster home just like the bum who moved in with his family in the Bronx when he was a child. Just like his favorite boys, that he found on a park bench, or selling trinkets on Telegraph Avenue. He called me "Marty," but it never made me one of his *boys*.

And at his funeral, the boys took over, as I expect big brothers do. Stealing my thunder. Stealing my father. And at the funeral, no one knew me until I spoke at the podium and shocked them with my existence. Then scores of them came up to me to say it straight out like it can't hurt, like it's a compliment—"*he was like a father to me, he saved me, he fished me out of the sea*…". My father's boys became prominent in the Jewish community, and I, I cloistered myself, veiled myself. I studied the Arab world. Islam. The Imazighen.

In public, he never introduced me as his daughter. He wanted, he said, for me to stand on my own. To be respected on my own. My father—the anti-nepotist. In this way, he discouraged me from actively engaging with the museum. Discouraged me from his ventures and adventures with the boys. His eyes didn't light up when he saw me. No, ours was a bond of sorrow. The sorrow of being tethered to my inconstant, unstable, shrill mother. Of having lost his true child to brain cancer. We endured together. We martyred together, as he put it. And he wanted nothing more than for me to stay on my own side of the Bay, to keep my children safe, and to not be consumed by my mother's fire.

He called me once after we'd seen a film at the Jewish Film Festival. It was by Lily Rivlin (Lily Rivlin, who I fell in love with as a child, for being the most beautiful woman I had ever seen in my life—now that's a story). Her movie was about how her father never said he loved her. "Did I ever say I love you?" he said. And I answered him truthfully—No. You never did. "But you know it, right?" Yes, I said, I know it. "Good," he said. *Click*.

If my father's "shade" wanted to, would he come? *I'm here, ready*. My arms are open. My head is ready to lie upon his chest and wail my loss and discontent. But all that is overshadowed by my mother's fear that I might love him more. "*I'll curse you from the grave*," my mother used to say at any potential infraction. And her curses were more powerful, she'd say, than tenderness from anyone else in the other world.

You are witness to where a rational atheist may stumble in the face of the Zohar. Okay, enough. Enough already.

Oh, but wait, *wait*—indulge me one more Zoharic moment. We're now working on Volume X, which has it's own translator and commentary. You'll find more Zohar here in the Biblio listed under Wolski, Nathan. (There are actually 12 volumes, but while the last two sit in my bookshelves, I haven't spread their covers yet).

Momen, Moojan
An Introduction to Shi'i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism
Momen opens doors into Islam. As does Maxime Rodinson's biography of the Prophet (pbuh, as Muslims say) and there's also Rodinson's volume on Islam and Capitalism. But I'm not including Rodinson here, out of sheer exhaustion, (and also because I think I must have given my Rodinsons away, or lent them out—because I can't find them in my library). Momen gives a history of very early Is-

lam, although another way to go would be Hodgeson's four volumes. Yes, I'm that out of date. Unfortunately, my library is not a repository of newer histories of Islam. But I haven't let my Momen go. So many English language histories of Islam are Sunni oriented. So I used to assign Momen in my Middle East Studies classes, just for an alternate perspective. Most of our students, however, were Sunni, and they were infuriated by this view of history. One semester, the animosity ran deeper than usual, and my one outspoken Shi'a student from Iran stopped showing up for class. Checking on her, it turned out she'd been threatened by the Sunni Egyptian woman who would bait her in class and out. When I finally saw her again, she was beside herself.

"This is not what I came to America for," she said, "to be threatened and attacked?" She worried that she'd lose her visa if there was any conflict surrounding her. She worried primarily for her four kids. And so she stopped coming to class. And then she worried that she would fail. And lose her visa that way. I raised the issue in class. As a hypothetical case. *What do we do?* And the Egyptian woman stood up and said she would apologize. And she did.

An Iranian Shi'a view of history was that threatening in class. And it was my fault.

Momen sets the stage right up to the occultation of the 12th Imam. After that, he takes us inside some messianic Shi'a teachings, demonstrating how they lead to a fervor entirely different from the shari'at legalism of Sunni orthodoxy. In this way, we can better understand what makes post-revolutionary Iran tick. Or even pre-revolutionary Iran under the Shah, leading up to the Iranian revolution. Here you have a people waiting, every moment, for the return of the 12th Imam, and the arrival of the apocalyptic/messianic transformation of the world. This makes Shi'ism not just a religion with a set way of organizing and living one's life on a sacred path, but also a religion of expectation and fervor. And I think it also helps us understand a portion of the Iranian population, nominally Shi'a, the elite, who are devout secularists unable to give a damn about messianism. And whose only fervor is in unique party gowns, plastic surgery, and wealth beyond measure. Who are the extremists, tell me? (Part III-10-12)

Montagu, Ashley
The Natural Superiority of Women
Montagu, a British physical anthropologist, wrote this in 1953, long before the feminists of the 1970s began exploring their own power and vulnerabilities. However, I don't recall any feminists using Montagu's arguments at the time. Likely his argument was too biological for use in the fight against social constructs. What he does here is focus on biological, genetic, social, and even emotional qualities of women that demonstrate their natural capabilities and gifts—without the need to try to imitate men in order to be successful. Ignore the title, if it bothers you—the book is transformative, and was my first awakening that women's bodies were not what my mother told me they were—bodies that betray us. Montagu did much to shape my view of women, women's power, and women's potential than anything

written since. He was vociferous on racial and gender equality. Lost his teaching position during the McCarthy hearings, but never lost his sense of humor.

Stop. My speculations on Montagu and his "window into the Other"—as a male raised with a female name (even in Britain)—are dead wrong. Wikipedia has just informed me that he was born with the name Israel Ehrenberg and faced "antisemitic abuse when he ventured out of his own neighborhood" in London. So. Being Jewish was more than enough to explain his sensitivities. And his sense of humor. (Part IV-19)

Murphy, Michael
The Future of the Body: Explorations into the Future Evolution of Human Nature (and other works)
Michael Murphy set out to document every transformative practice that humans have ever discovered, invented, or employed that would expand their consciousness and their physical and cognitive abilities without using manufactured technologies. He worked on this book for over thirty years, and the writing alone took eight. His publisher, Praeger, had to pull the manuscript out of his hands one day and say enough is enough. The very next day, Michael found another transformative practice he wanted to include: extraordinary crying—the use of crying to achieve an altered state. But his publisher said enough was enough, and would not let him add to the collection.

Michael and his buddy George Leonard set out to test the ideas in Michael's book while it was still being edited. Which practice was the most integral? And so we explored this question for three years—and yes, Michael's hypothesis was borne out. There was a definitive answer. And even I agree with it, having done some of my own research on their research. See Amiras, earlier, "Experience beyond Belief." (Part IV-11 and throughout)

Nobler, Milton
The Art and History of the Jewish Traders on the T'ang Silk Road (unpublished dissertation)
Curiously, my biological father was more taken with early Chinese art than I. He spent about fifty years of his life practicing Chinese scroll painting. He began this practice by growing his own bamboo to make his own pens and brushes. Next, he painted pictures of the bamboo he was growing until his teacher felt he was ready to move on to other plants. The rigid hierarchy of Chinese painted suited the scientist in him. Carefully following steps, without skipping any. After bamboo came other plants. Then came birds, mountains, horses, and last of all people.

He wrote the dissertation for his PhD in Art History at Pacific Western University, a now defunct program. The appendices alone are worth spending time in for their documentation of Jewish colonies in Chinese cities, and the flyer for a talk by Qu Yinan, a Chinese woman who thought her family was Muslim because they did

not eat pork. He received his PhD in 1989 when he was around 70 years old, seven years after I received mine in anthropology at UC Berkeley.

I just found some of his handwritten notes in my copy, written in his shaky penciled hand—the same shaky hand that disinherited me with a penciled-in notation on his last will and testament: *omit*. As if I were a simple editing mistake.

Patai, Raphael
The Hebrew Goddess (and everything else he wrote, apart from *The Arab Mind*)
In graduate school, every time I got interested in something, Patai had already published on it years or decades before. This included Middle Eastern kinship patterns, folklore and folktales, the distribution of Jewish communities around the world, alchemy, and the feminine divine in ancient cultures. Depth and breadth, that was Patai, culminating in *The Hebrew Goddess*. He was there first. Even Merlin Stone, who wrote *When God was a Woman*, said that if she had known of Patai's *Hebrew Goddess* (she didn't, because it had long been out of print), she would never have bothered writing *WGWAW*. Patai had already done it, and done it better. So it was good to have another human being verbalize the frustration that I felt. But—and I'm thinking this just right now—what Patai does not do, not by a long shot, is correlate the gods and goddesses to letters of the aleph-bet. And that's the part that interests me the most. For that, I needed *The Bahir* and *Sefer Yetzirah*, and Abulafia but (as far as I can tell) not Patai. Hallelujah.

Still, if my mother says Raphael Patai is the one who set me down in a little origami boat and pushed me off the shore, she must be right. I just don't remember it. But what she really means is that I couldn't have thought of anything I care about all by myself. (Parts III-IV)

Pessin, Deborah
The Aleph-Bet Story Book
This was my favorite aleph-bet book as a child. And I believe it is the book that has influenced me in my obsession with letters, especially the aleph-bet letters, but not exclusively those. What I didn't realize as a kid was what a kabbalistic book this was. Each of the letters is on a quest, a quest in search of the Sabbath Bride (the Shekhinah). The way I remembered the book, is that at the end they find the Sabbath Bride and convince her to come back to earth. But curiously, that's not how the book ends. I still have my childhood copy, and just took another peek at the end, and no. A completely different, completely unsatisfying tale ends the book. Restoring the Sabbath Bride to earth is the penultimate tale. The story of the letter ט. It was my new father, the one for whom this book is dedicated, who gave me this, my this, very first aleph-bet book.

Picasso, Pablo
Picasso Line Drawings and Prints

My mother told me over and over that it was a book of Picasso's line drawings that I first pulled out of our bookcase as a baby. But this isn't it. Nevertheless, look at those line drawings of animals or human figures. And follow them. How brilliantly simple they are.

However. I have my own memories of the first book I pulled out of my mother's bookcase. I remember thicker lines. With balls or bulbs or nerve ending bundles at the crossroads of intersecting lines. Like trolley lines, or maybe telephone wires. While Picasso has smooth, comforting lines that you can travel with ease, the one I remember did not flow—it bifurcated sharply. Both volumes consisted of page after page of pen and ink line drawings, but, oh, how different they were. Either one I looked at, I was lost, lost in them. But now, thinking about those primordial volumes, I find myself riding in the back of a trolley in 1950s Los Angeles. I look out the back window at the sky above, and all I see is an ink drawing with nerve endings before the sound of the train lulls me back to sleep. (Part I-3; IV-10)

Poincaré, Henri
The Value of Science: Essential Writings of Henri Poincaré
Poincaré has a holistic, synthetic view of the beauty of nature through the eyes of science. It's in this volume that you can read his moving sentiment that "if nature were not beautiful, it would not be worth knowing, life would not be worth living…." He goes on to describe what beauty means to a scientist, and how much deeper it is than for us ordinary folk. Curiously, reading Poincaré, you could be reading Castenada for a similar feeling of accessing a higher existence. He goes on, "What I mean, is that more intimate beauty which comes from the harmonious order of its parts, and which a pure intelligence can grasp." That is his view of science. Wow. So is it reprehensible and arrogant—or is it the essence of what we all should aspire to? Or maybe, just maybe, it's both? (Part IV-1)

Russ-Fishbane, Elisha
Judaism, Sufism, and the Pietists of Medieval Egypt: A Study of Abraham Maimonides and His Times
Okay, this is another one that is new to my dusty old library. And not even a used book from Green Apple. The spine is hard and uncracked, and between the covers are only a few of my stickies placed strategically at "Jewish Prayer in an Islamic Mode," which is the section that I can't wait to get to. Unfortunately, the print's a little small for me these days. Nevertheless, I'll keep this in my collection but (*sigh*) get another copy that I can change the font size on. This is what I've had to do with some of my most favorite books. In this way, I can still curl up with them under the covers, on a backlit screen, and ruin my eyes even more. (Part III)

Ryan, Sheila and Muhammad Hallaj
Palestine is, but not in Jordan
This is a brilliant little book of maps purporting to document the "Zionist conspiracy" to take over the Middle East. Using sources from the Torah to the diaries of Theodor Herzl, Ryan and Hallaj show what they call the true intentions of the Zi-

onist State. Curiously, in the 2019 elections, Netanyahu based his election promise on exactly the sort of thing depicted in this volume in 1983—that is, the outright annexation of the West Bank. Based on the Torah (specifically—*lech lecha*), Ryan and Hallaj argue that the West Bank is only the beginning. Or, as a Palestinian student of mine once told me, the Israeli flag depicts the real goal of the "Zionist Entity:" the usurpation of territory in both directions—from the twin rivers of the Tigris and Euphrates in the east, to the Nile in the West. One hell of a land grab. The purpose of Ryan and Hallaj's book is to provide evidence supporting that common belief. As long as the Israeli flag waves, my Arab students say, there is proof of Israel's intentions. You want peace? First change the Israeli flag. (Plate III-22-24)

Scholem, Gershom
Sabbatei Sevi: The Mystical Messiah; The Messianic Idea in Judaism—and Other Essays in Jewish Spirituality (and other works)
Because of Scholem, oh how I am grateful for Shabbatei Tzvi. Forget the "false messiah" stuff. Or rather, view it as a vehicle. As unlocking a door, and the winds of history start blowing the whole damned door down and blasting it to smithereens. Shabbatei Tzvi changed the whole conversation. In his inability to prove himself the messiah in the Ottoman courts ("show us a miracle"), and given the choice of being martyred (be hanged on a tree outside the courts), or convert to Islam (sure, okay, no problem), he shocked the Jewish world. The messiah converted. So, is conversion what the messiah had to do to save the Jews? Did he just prove his own falseness? Did his devotees need to follow him into conversion (some did, some didn't). Was it okay for other putative messiahs to convert to other religions? Um, Christianity? Or how about Zen Buddhism?

Or how about these days? Can a revered rabbi become an imam in a Shi'a Sufi order? That last is exactly what my own mentor, Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi did. I went to his ordination, or whatever it's called. No, Reb Zalman did not convert. He supplemented. He joined one with one. He did what he told me to do when I was starting out. Decades earlier, Reb Zalman convinced me that my love for Islam was a good thing and compatible with my Jewish identity. And that teaching both at the university was going to be just fine for my fracturing identity. And it was. I felt more whole being able to appreciate the braided challah of our Abrahamic traditions.

I take this book of Scholem's personally. Shabbatei Tzvi was both the hero and antihero from my grandparents' hometown, Salonika. He made it reasonable for my grandmother to feel just fine praying in a church (although not in an Ashkenazi synagogue). And he was the reason my grandfather could go to a priest for an amulet. And then find the imam's amulet to be the most powerful of them all. My grandparents were profoundly grateful to the Ottomans for taking them in. Albeit that they had many Armenian friends who felt exactly the opposite. (Part IV-37)

Sharpes, Donald K.

Sacred Bull, Holy Cow: A Cultural Study of Civilization's Most Important Animal. When I ordered this book from Amazon, I was very excited. But it's not the same as going to a musty old bookstore and stumbling over something with a magnificent title like this one. When you're right there, you breathe in the book, feel its pages, and check out the chapters and see if it does what you're hoping it does. But I bought this one sight unseen, without even a glance at a synopsis, counting on the title to do the hard lifting. And then I entered randomly, as I like to do. Flipped through. I walked in on cattle drives in the wild and woolly West, primogeniture, and American land laws. But I was in the wrong part of town. So I headed back to the Introduction and found myself in more familiar territory. Sharpes had found himself transfixed by antiquities in the National Museum of Aleppo, Syria. So many bull statues and cows—what was that about? Later, at a bullfight in southern France he found himself forming a hypothesis:

> I was a spectator at a very ancient ritual celebrating the conquering of this ferocious animal for the benefits the cow provides. The bullfight was a ceremonial re-enactment of the killing of the bull in order to domesticate the cow, not a slaughter to satisfy the blood-thirsty sense of spectators but a historical dramatization of civilization's most prized food source, so important that the animals themselves were deified in every ancient society.

Isn't it wonderful when an author tells you exactly how they got to that moment when the door opens and they must walk through! And then Sharpes goes off through a door filled with cattle barons and the livestock industry. A materialist approach to sanctity. I thought I'd be pleased but curiously, I found myself disappointed. I'll try it again later. After all it's in my bookshelf, next to the good stuff. (Parts III-IV)

Smythe Palmer, A.
Babylonian Influence on the Bible and Popular Belief: A Comparative Study of Genesis 1.2. Published in 1897, the Vicar of Holy Trinity, Hermon Hill, Wanstead was on to something. As cheesy as this publication seems (terrible 3D effect book cover), do not let the book cover make you run. In his introduction, Smythe Palmer makes what may or may not be the most reasonable assertion one could want, that

> Speaking to the Hebrews, He must clothe his revelation in such figures of speech and familiar modes of thought as would be level to the Hebrew understanding.

Is that deeply condescending, diplomatic, or just his sense of humor? I think he's much more gracious than generally I am, but I can't tell. Should we Hebrews be insulted? And there it is. I'm stuck on a line before the book begins, obsessing over something I'm not sure I should care about, worrying about whether he's deeply anti-Semitic. I've been accused of worse by those who can't differentiate between the *teaching of* from the *belief in*. I've been called (behind my back) a self-hating Jew for asking the questions that I do. For spending time in the countries that I do, for spending time inside the Qur'an, sitting down on sheepskins in the courtyard, for

writing seriously about Jewish ritual conducted as leatherdyke performance art. And for saying things that could just as easily have come out of Reverend Smythe Palmer's mouth: "this concept is pre-Judaic, and here is its precursor."

I'm interested in origins—especially the origins of ideas. How could I not be excited about the survivals of hand-me-down ancestral Babylonian and neighboring traditions? How could I not enjoy examining how they've been tweaked, reversed, adapted and co-opted for a new population? How could I not laugh at those who self-righteously say they've abandoned the old gods in favor of the new? Especially when God himself speaks using ancient imagery and metaphor. In Smythe Palmer, I'd start with Tiamat as the uncontrollable Tehom of Genesis, conquered during the act of Creation and then go on from there. (Parts III and IV)

Suzuki, Daisetz
Zen and Japanese Culture.
My office consists of a long wall of books that I don't keep in the library. And oddly, almost all the books in here are on Asian or Asian-influenced art. In the middle of those books is my meditation "altar." I think that's what people call it. And it's calm. And it's beautiful. With my mother's statue of Kuan Yin sitting in front of surreal Chinese mountains in the early morning fog painted by my daughter from her time spent in China. And on another wall, are a couple of my biological father's own Chinese paintings rendered on silk. These he gave me when he was very much alive. Not his best work, but beautiful. But when he died and had disinherited me, my cousin gave me his Chinese paintbrushes. Nobody seemed to want those.

I spent decades immersed in and trying to paint Zen or Chan images. Zen art teaches us to peal away the layers until only the essential remains. My favorites in Suzuki are the versions of Han-shan (Kanzan in Japanese) and Shih-tê (Jittoku in Japanese) from the 12th and 14th centuries. But no matter how long I tried to paint them, they always ended up looking like Zen versions of my husband.

My meditation practice is Japanese, mostly influenced by Aikido. (The martial arts books are up here in the office as well). My aesthetics are influenced primarily by Chinese Chan painting. And I think my love for Chan painting, especially Mu Chi's *Six Persimmons* (my favorite painting in the world) must be connected to my early love of Picasso's line drawings. (Parts I and II)

Tagore, Abanindra Nath (and other works)
Art et Anatomie Hindous; Sadanga ou les Six Canons de la Peintures Hindou.
This is another crumbling little volume with liver spots on its yellow pages. This odd little volume describes human anatomy with its likenesses in other beings. Such as the shoulder and arm of a human having the qualities of an elephant's head and trunk. For me, it is the anatomy not of elephants but of Hebrew aleph-bet letters that come to mind. And while I've always thought that my notions of

animate letters came from early Near Eastern pictograms, if there's even a remote chance this crumbling old booklet influenced me, I thought I ought to mention it.

What I particularly note in Sadanga is Tagore's discussion of the paintings of young Bengali women and their influences over early poets in India. If you want to know what they look like—just look at our Malkah.

Takahashi, Shinkichi
Afterimages: Zen Poems
I'm embarrassed to admit that I bought this book because it had (a detail of) my favorite painting on the cover. Therefore, it must be a book of profound depth and wisdom, right? For meditation, after all, there is nothing more contemplative that the 13th century Buddhist monk, Mu Ch'i's, painting, "Six Persimmons." Mu Ch'i is Chinese (with many alternate names and spellings) and a revered Chan painter. That is, he is revered by the Japanese as the earliest *Zen* painter. "Six Persimmons" can be found not in China, but in Japan at the Daitoku-ji temple in Kyoto. Arthur Waley, another favorite author and translator, called the painting, "passion, congealed into a stupendous calm." The Letter Samech —ס—encapsulates that same stupendous calm. My favorite poem in here, not surprisingly is of a gray cat in meditation.

Van Gennep, Arnold
The Rites of Passage.
Everybody who was anybody in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was on the ritual process bandwagon. Van Gennep wasn't the first to describe stages of progress, ritual or otherwise. He had precursors like L. H. Morgan (obsessive in his documenting the details of ritual and society). There was Westermarck, with 200 pages on the word *baraka*. I searched for years to find my own copy of Westermarck, and then found two, and bought them both. One for the office and one for home. Then there was Marcel Mauss, and his uncle, Émile Durkheim. And at last—there was Victor Turner. Ah, how the origins of ideas follow a winding path.

The Turners, Victor and Edie, didn't just study and write about rites of passage and ritual process. They tried them out in the field and tried them on at home. And they'd invite grad students to come over and join in. Edie was immersed in what some anthropologists came to call "the spirit hypothesis"—the belief in the existence of transcendent beings all around us. Other people might call this "being religious" or just plain "spiritual" and not find it odd at all. But Edie interacted with other people's spirits, and that, for some reason, was a no-no in some anthropological circles. Therefore, she was something of an outlier in mainstream academia, except for our group the Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness. I don't think even Victor had ever been as forthright as Edie about personal contact with the spirits.

I should not have been surprised when Edie Turner asked me to give her a "kabbalistic reading," whatever that was. And then she opened up to me about some of

their forays into ritual process at home. They had tried everything, including kabbalistic meditations on the Tree of Life. So, I thought, I'll start with that, and we'll trace her journey on the Tree; where she started, when she stopped, and where she didn't go at all. We journeyed together far and long, with me still reciting my mantra, upon our return, that I just don't do that sort of thing. It was all her.

One year, at the Anthropology Meetings in Montreal, I was giving a paper with Erin Vang, a musician who now lives in Montana, on our year long experimental blog on ritual which I had dubbed "*Kaddish in Two-Part Harmony*." The more we dealt with our own personal losses in public, the more we attracted others wishing to share their grief and pain. We had unwittingly created sacred space in a solidly profane environment—the blogosphere. Maybe today this happens all the time. But back then, not so much. At the end of our presentation, Edie stood up and started to cry. And when the session was over, she held me for a long time. And whispered in my ear that now she could die. She was no longer afraid.

We had raised so many points, that I have no idea what it was that had moved her. But the key point is that van Gennep is right. And the Turners are too. Ritual is powerful stuff that makes the real transition more bearable.

Each time our Malkah tries out ritual, it shouldn't be surprising that it just doesn't seem to stick. What we have, Malkah and I, is a progression through the life cycle, which may seem to follow van Gennep's tripartite structure. But it's not ritual—it's life. Malkah begins as a child immersed in her own cultural norms. As she grows, these norms cannot answer her growing questions. She slams the door, and in a huff of liminal adventure, strides out to find the world. If you're strict with van Gennep's concepts, going to college just isn't ritual liminality, as so many of my students believed. Malkah looks in every direction for integration, but it doesn't come. Not until her return, and her integration of all she has learned. And then the pattern shifts at last. But see "H" for Harner for what I think really happens to her. (Part III-15; IV-11)

Von Franz, Marie-Louise
Patterns of Creativity Mirrored in Creation Myths (and other works)
It's precisely the *patterns* that make this book so interesting. Von Franz is not out to tell story after story. She's interested in structure, function, and psycho-dynamics from a Jungian perspective. She met Jung when she was 18, studied under him, and then collaborated with him until his death. Jung introduced her to Barbara Hannah, another analyst, and suggested that they live together. Now that sounds like an important tale, and I hope someone will tell it. Would Freud have suggested such a thing and for the same reasons? I think he would have, but I can feel some of Freud's contemporary followers sputtering and frowning down my neck. Those would be my ex-husband's colleagues, because they frowned at most anything I ever did or said.

My favorite chapter is "Abortive attempts at Creation." There are so many tales of unsuccessful attempts at birthing the cosmos. Yes, the act of creation, like procrea-

tion, is fraught with hazards, and there's no guarantee of success. This is a reminder that creativity is (almost always) hard, and we have to keep at it until we get it right. For if we give up, our creation, like the cosmos, ceases to exist. *Pop*.

Westermarck, Edvard
Ritual and Belief in Morocco (Two Volumes)
Of all the authors mentioned under van Gennep, I have only Westermarck left in my Library. For he was the only one who focused on Morocco and the Amazigh, and who continues to surprise and delight me. I mean, 200 pages on the concept, rituals, and beliefs regarding "*baraka*" alone—who could let that go? I count these volumes among my prize possessions. Plus, before the internet (in which all things are available), I looked for ten years to find a copy. And finally, there they were on sale—for only $200 for both volumes together. An incredible bargain, given it was so rare. My father would have bargained. We were in Berkeley at Black Oak Books, which was selling off all its holdings. Bookstores were closing left and right. Who could bargain with such sad luck? (Part IV-39)

Wittfogel, Karl
Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power.
Why this one, you may ask. Surely this is as far from the aleph-bet, Malkah, and me as it is possible to go. But it turns out that Wittfogel, like Braudel and Ibn Khaldûn, is key to my understanding of the ancient Near East. His "hydraulic theory" emphasizes the importance of water—rain, big rivers, and arid zones—in influencing (or determining) what kind of economy, political system, and society arise in a given environment. He says that "rain culture" requires expansion in the pursuit of more land (e.g., European colonialism) as opposed to "big river systems," which are ripe for becoming systems of total power, (e.g., ancient Mesopotamia). He considers the differences between a river like the Nile, with predictable flooding, and an unpredictable river system, like the Tigris-Euphrates: chaotic, violent, and in need of imposed order.

Wittfogel bases his argument on the Mesopotamian model, and the system of power he examines is rooted in the ancient gods of Sumer and Babylon trying to grapple with ecological uncertainty. These are the same rejected by the patriarch Abraham. And the same gods that Saddam Hussein emulated. My view of ancient gods, economies, and political systems is influenced more by Wittfogel than by Sumerian scholar Noah Kramer. (Parts III-IV)

Wolkstein, Diane and Samuel Noah Kramer
Inanna: Queen of Heaven and Earth, Her Stories and Hymns from Sumer.
Read especially the tale of the Huluppu Tree—and how the Torah's story of the Garden of Eden borrows heavily from the Sumerians. At the same time, the Bible turns a capable, powerful goddess into a deceitful, amoral weakling thrown out of what used to be (in her past life as a Sumerian goddess) her own garden. This epic

tale and what became of it is emblematic of the demotion of valorous powerful women from ancient times into sinful, conniving creatures. (Part IV-35)

Wolski, Nathan, (translation and commentary)
The Zohar, Pritzker Edition
—Vol X—*Midrash Ha-Ne'lam*— Year five of Zohar Study starts up again right after the holidays. So I thought I'd take another peak at Vol X, which is the focus of this year's study. There's no Zohar in San Francisco this year because there were so few students last year: Our teacher, R' Aubrey, had moved back to Canada and the enrollment plummeted. And the חבריה *chevraya* dispersed. Maybe it would have happened anyway. Maybe there's only so much Zohar a person in secular circumstance can take…. At any rate, there is a Zohar class still being coordinated by Danny Matt down the Peninsula, so I'll head there to study with R' Lavey Derby. R' Derby traces his lineage back to R' Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev—renowned for teaching, that good rests on a foundation of evil, take the evil and make it good. Which makes him sound a lot like Shabbatei Tzvi. And my father. Despite whatever good may come out of a long dark commute to Foster City during rush hour in pursuit of Zohar, I have a feeling this may well be the last year of Danny Matt's Zohar study groups around the Bay. חבל מאוד Bummer.

Meanwhile, I took just a peek at Vol X. It took a long time to tear myself away from the first page—in which the companions try to figure out how many "utterances" it took for God to create the world. Was it ten? But they could only come up with nine. And that wasn't mystically aesthetic enough, I suppose, although it should have been. Or maybe, it was one utterance—which is more pleasing, matching as it does the oneness of God. I sat there thinking about it for way too long. And, at last, I turned the page.

And there it was. Rabbi El'azar steps up to the plate, says it was with one letter, and one letter alone, and knocks it out of the park. Here I was thinking he was going to go for a single—the י that is, creation through a spark of the 'Or Ain Sof. But no. According to R' El'azar, God created the world through the Letter ה. That is, through a single breath of the Divine. Home run, all the way back down the Tree, touch the earth, as he slides into Malkhut. We don't start studying Vol X for another two weeks, but I think it's going to be a good year.

Yusuf Ali, Abdullah
The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary (bilingual Arabic-English Edition)
Each moment that I want to speak about my favorite *suras* of *Qur'an*, I want to search for the most beautiful translation, and I don't know which one that might be. And so, instead, I trust Yusuf Ali's bilingual edition of *The Holy Qur'an* with its notes and commentaries. And always, I wish I were more proficient, for the Arabic of the Qur'an is lyrical and beautiful.

I should mention that Yusuf Ali is Shi'a, as is Moojan Momen, whose *Introduction to Shi'i Islam* is excellent. Does this mean that I'm drawn more to Shi'a Islam than Sunni? Not at all. It means that my Sunni interpretations of text, especially Shariat law, are no longer in my library. For I've given them away to deserving students. On the other hand, note that my own mentor, Reb Zalman was ordained as a Shi'a imam. I went to his ordination in Oakland and for me it brought back a lesson Reb Zalman had given me decades ago. That yes, *yes*. It was okay. You can love both. Teach both. He wasn't referring to Sunni and Shi'a. He was referring to Muslim and Jewish identity. And here, for himself, he took it further: you can *be* both. So, self—it's okay to love Islam, as long as you love yourself as well. (Part III and IV).

Zussman, Mira (Amiras)
Development and Disenchantment in Rural Tunisia: The Bourguiba Years.
Yes, Zussman. I kept "Zussman" in my name when I changed my last name. After I divorced, my daughter and I were in Morocco one summer. We were up in the Middle Atlas Mountains, in Ifrane, at the university. I was hoping to create an exchange program. My daughter and I were lounging around in our room one evening, and she said, "Mommy, when are we going to change our name?" Leave it to her to always get to the essence of things.

And so, I thought about it. My name has changed so many times. After all, I was born with the names given me by my biological father. And then, by my adoptive father. And then, my husband. And now—it was time to follow the matriline and give my Sephardi heritage its due. My mother's "maiden" name was Camhi. Which is *kimhi*, for *kemah*—wheat. Which boils down to the name "Miller." But I didn't like the letters used in English to convey it. So I went another a generation back.

My grandmother's maiden name was Castro. Which was why my mother was so sure that Fidel Castro was Sephardic, and yes, we do have family in Cuba. But, let's face it. I wasn't about to change my name to Castro. So I went another generation back.

My great grandmother's maiden name was Amiras. And I had noted on the map a mountain town by that name on the island of Crete, where we had been trying to drive to the Psychro Caves, where Zeus and his sibling gods were born. We never made it. Ended up on sheep paths on top of the mountain, instead of under it. Amiras turned out to be just a few miles from where I had told my husband I was leaving him. And so—*Amiras*. The name had the connotation of being under the protection of the Amir, and that sounded, kind of ironic. Because I was about to be under nobody's protection, for the rest of my life. Someday, maybe I'll be able to go back to Crete and make it to the town of Amiras and, with luck, enter the Psychro Caves.

My daughter did not change her name then. She was worried that it would hurt her father's feelings. And I loved her even more for holding back. She thought about it for a long time, and then she went to my mother for advice.

"How do you say "Zussman" in Ladino?" she asked…

I've got a shelf with my writing on it, both as Zussman and Amiras. In Tunisia, I was primarily concerned with how the families of *fellahin*, (peasantry—a term hardly used these days) reacted to government experiments in land and agrarian reforms, and the terrible catch-22 of being a successful farmer. I was so polite in my book on the *fellahin*. So diplomatic. It certainly was never meant to be read by flesh-and-blood people. I omitted all the good stuff. Especially, how it felt to spend half my time in the courtyards with the women, and the other half interviewing men farming (or not farming) their own (or somebody else's) land. I tried for objectivity. Rationality. And not rocking the boat. And that meant I changed the names of everyone and everywhere, and then waited 16 years to publish until the old regime fell. God forbid I dishonor anybody, anybody at all. And what turned out to be funny about all this is that, well, it's a small country. And everybody knew who and where I was talking about. Everybody.

One day in San Francisco I got a message on my answering machine from Stephen King. "I want to do the follow-up to your study," he said, when he called back. "Where do you think it was?" I asked, a bit squirrely. "Oh," he said, "Tebourba, of course." Oh. Yah. Different Stephen King. This one was at Harvard.

When my book came out, the publisher sent me a box of author's copies. The postman rang, and I brought the box into the house, opened it, and took out one volume to take a look. I could feel this wave of depression rising up my spine, like dark smoke. I opened the book, and sure enough, the first thing I saw was an unbearable typo. The dark smoke got thicker and was hitting my shoulder blades— And then, the doorbell rang again. Thinking it was the postman with another box of typos, I flung open the door. It was my neighbor from across the street standing there.

"You look like you need a massage," he said.

After living in that house for years, those were the first words he had ever spoken to me. I had met him only once, when we were moving in. I was 7 or 8 months pregnant, hauling boxes into the house. He came across the street, lifted boxes, and carried them in for me. Not a single word. When he was done, he headed for the door, I nodded my thanks and he was gone. He used to watch me in the middle of the night sometimes, when I'd play guitar in the living room. I'd see the curtain above us flutter, I'd look, and then he was gone. But in eight years, not a word. Not until now. One sentence.

I nodded. He came in. I showed him up to the attic where there was some floor space, and I lay on the thick carpeted floor of my office. And he rubbed my shoulders. The dark smoke receded back down my spine. It was replaced by an odd sort of peace, or ecstasy, or well-being that I had no words for. And then, with another nod, he was gone.

More years went by. The day that I was leaving my husband, and the moving truck was picking up my stuff, I glanced across the street. There was a For Sale sign in front of his house.

You know the stereotype of women confiding in their hairdressers? Well, I told this story to mine. And in doing so, I learned that he was also a Brazilian Candomblé practitioner. I shouldn't have been surprised by his response.

"*You Americans—you don't understand anything*," he said. "That wasn't your neighbor. That was your angel looking after you from above. And when you finally were ready to leave, he could go on to his next assignment."

And that would explain all of it, wouldn't it? But, of course, I don't believe it.

I've written and presented on Tebourba as recently as this past spring, for the annual conference of the Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness. This time it was a paper I called "Fatma's Story," which I entirely rewrote the night before presenting. I realized that a treatise on the past 50 years of women and social change in rural Tunisia was not what was needed. Instead, I presented an open letter to Fatma's granddaughter, who is living with me these days. Telling her a story that her grandmother had once told to me—about *chakchouka* and social change. Reading my letter aloud to her was one of the most thrilling full circles I've ever experienced. And then she read it to Fatma, as well. (Parts I-21, III and IV)

—"Fairy Butch and the Labia Menorah: A Queer Example of Ludic Parody, Play, and Performance Art" A Hanukkah Ritual in San Francisco in *Focaal: Journal of European Anthropology*.
When I couldn't be in North Africa, I found field research that suited me close by. Sometimes, in the oddest of places. You might like this one, although it's on the more transgressive nature of Jewish holiday rituals when in the hands (and bodies) of leatherdyke performance artists in San Francisco. You see how restrained I am? I didn't include any of this wonderful world of queer women, sexuality, or the whips and chains of San Francisco's leather community in the book.

The way the leather research started—well that's a longer story. But the way the Fairy Butch article started was run-of-the-mill serendipity. I had a guest who wanted to see the night life. And the only place I knew of was way down on Minna Street, in an alley south of Market. So we went. It was Chanukah, but I didn't expect that would feature into the night's festivities of "In Bed with Fairy Butch" at the Coco Club. There was "yenta" matchmaking and Hasidic burlesque along with the stand-up. Did I mention it was women only? And when Fairy Butch asked how many women there were Jewish, half the women in the place raised their hands. And when she asked how many of those women had come with a Jewish partner, all the hands went down.

This made me start a piece of research I called "straight shikse queer shikse," trying to find out what the appeal, including my own, was all about. It had a glorious first sentence that went something like, "When I left my husband, we both headed for the shikses." And that, it turned out, was the most interesting thing I had to say. I wanted to know why, but I couldn't get past the obvious. I interviewed just about everyone I knew, both men and women. And I examined Neo-Nazi literature online about Jewish men stealing gentile women's souls (the main focus being Marilyn Monroe, icon of Jewish subversion). There was Portnoy, of course. So much male literature, but not female. So, yes, it was interesting, but I grew bored. "Other othering the Other" just wasn't enough to work with. My research notes are sitting in a big straw basket in the hallway. And I don't think I'm brushing the dust off any time soon. But if you want to follow this line of research, please do. Somebody should.

I gave Stephen King of Harvard many of my contacts in rural Tunisia. He knew what the follow-up study to mine was, and (as with the shikses) I just didn't want to do it. But he did. He had just one more question:

"How are they with black people?" This Stephen King was black.

When I first presented the Fairy Butch research at a conference on "The *Edge* of Jewish Feminism," held at San Francisco State University, some in the audience (out-of-towners, primarily) were dumbfounded. During the break, an Israeli scholar came up to me and said, "That can't be true, that can't happen…. Do you have movies I can see?"

And right then, his wife walked up. And he slunk away.

Postscript

I haven't touched the surface of my library here. Didn't even reach my books on the aleph-bet. Or Talmud. Or women and Judaism, or women and the goddesses. Or women at all. Or 19th century theory about matriarchal states and goddesses. Or folklore.

Oh, there's also an entire bookcase full of my favorite books and photocopied articles on North Africa and the origins of *tifinagh*, the writing system of the Amazigh (Berber) peoples of North Africa. For that, you'll have to visit some of my academic papers on the subject. The old journals on the origins of *tifinagh* are some of the most crumbling and beloved volumes that I've got.

Okay. Enough. It's really time to go. Just know that I love my library. And there are many other wondrous works, dusty, dog-eared, scribbled in mightily, or (hor-

rors!) brand new and as yet unread on my shelves. And I wish I could share them all with you.

Acknowledgements

I've written these pages first and foremost for my adoptive father, who saved my life in multiple ways and on multiple occasions. My father's "lost boys" as I call them, would say exactly the same of him—that Seymour Fromer rescued them. And he did it over and over again. Supported them, turned them around. Gave them a spark, a fresh start, some kind of treasure. Strangers, friends, and even slight acquaintances still come up and tell me stories of what my father did for them. And at least a couple of those are making their own movies in his honor, movies very different from my own. In like manner, he plucked me out of that foster home when I was little. I was to him his little boy, Marty, and he tried to make me his own.

These pages are also in remembrance of my mother, Rebecca Camhi Fromer, a difficult woman by all accounts. And a woman I did not understand and who did not understand me. Until at last, in what turned out to be her final years and days, we began to piece together the puzzle of each other—and learned, each of us, to love and laugh at what we found.

My daughter asked me some years ago to write my stories down for her. I started at andthispartistrue.blogspot.com figuring at least she could find the stories again if she ever wanted to, unlike paper stories shoved in a drawer somewhere. But at a certain point, Malkah entered the scene, and I thought I'd better give her her chance to grow. Curiously, most of those stories did not make it into this book—we were just too interwoven. Our stories braided into a complex and tasty challah that in some ways you have here before you. Furthermore, there was this little movie, languishing in the bowels of a crumbling old computer, that had sputtered out of existence and never gotten made. And so. I started all over again. And Malkah helped. And so did my father.

What emerged is some kind of composite. Stories for my parents. Stories for my kids, Michael Jacob Zussman and Rayna Leonora Savrosa—these stories are for you. If I skipped one of your favorites, remind me. Or better yet, write your own versions and tales of your own creation. I love you both immeasurably. And if I've embarrassed you, call it the ramblings of an old woman who has no idea what she's talking about.

Deepest gratitude to Josh Baum, illustrator and sofer extraordinaire, who has spent years with me creating Malkah's world, and loving her as I do. As Josh came up with drawings to meet the images in my head, my words changed in response to his images. In this way, we have collaborated—first on the movie, *The Day before Creation*, and then on this, our book of the same name. And the conversation grew and did not abate. Thank you, Izzy Pludwinsky for your insanely beautiful calligraphy—and yet insisting that Josh Baum was the artist I needed to work with. And to my daughter, Rayna, who found Josh independently and came to the same conclusion. Immense gratitude to Neil Johnson, my first Aikido partner, for agreeing to illustrate my ideas (30 years earlier) of an animistic aleph-bet. I think he would have been proud of the direction Josh's illustrations took. Know that you are missed.

Tim King and Alessandra Andrisani helped illustrate the four Ugaritic gods. Tim uncovered the star correspondences of their traditional figurative poses. I should not be surprised. Look more carefully, you may have missed them. Or wondered what they were. Thank you Tim, for being single-minded and methodical in your research, and creative in your art and your thinking.

Thank you, precious Natalie Reid, not only for careful editing, but also for understanding just about everything here (except the word "apical"). Thank you for your great memory from our days in Hebrew School together and for having kept your notebooks from when we were children. Because of that, you could fact check my assertions and help me be more precise. You knew my parents, my teachers, my inclinations, and you were kind and generous and exciting. Who knew we would come to this very moment?

My mentors, senseis, and teachers along the way have influenced to my thinking, especially my thoughts on what it is to be a teacher. These include Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, Rav Aubrey Glazer, Elizabeth Colson, Nelson Graburn, Laura Nader, and Martha Binford-Morris, as well as Jack Wada, Wendy Palmer, Robert Nadeau, Michael Murphy and George Leonard—all of whom opened doors of inquiry and study that I would never have followed without their guidance.

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All errors, bouts of bad grammar, poor judgment, obfuscation, or refusal to listen to reason I herein claim as mine and mine alone. But I'm willing to share.