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WOMEN MUST LEARN AND LEAD: A RESPONSE TO CHAIM SAIMAN

SHARONA MARGOLIN HALICKMAN

I read with interest Professor Chaim Saiman's article ["The Opaque Ceiling Hovering Over Women's Torah Study,"](#) but respectfully disagree with many of his points concerning the family structure, appropriate roles, and scalability of women's leadership. Notwithstanding the OU statement (which he accurately describes), depending on the needs and *hashkafah* of the community, American Modern Orthodox women can and should be able to serve in positions of leadership at all levels.

Family Structure

Professor Saiman believes that our community has an issue with developing female halakhists since we are accustomed to a male-centric "Torah leadership family." I disagree.

There are a variety of centrist synagogues in the United States, and each forms a different type of community. In Riverdale, NY alone, there are at least four synagogues which identify as Modern Orthodox; each serves a totally different population within the spectrum. The standard male-centric "Torah leadership family" that Professor Saiman describes still exists in some communities (usually those which lean to the right), but it has not existed in many more modern communities for over 20 years.

When I lived in the New York area, the communities that I was a part of never expected the rabbi's family to have "more children than the surrounding norm," understood that the rabbi's wife had her own career and did not always have time for "various teaching and chesed projects," and never expected that she would always be on call and play "hostess for those seeking physical and spiritual nourishment."

I am not saying that the rebbetzins did not contribute to the synagogue community; they certainly did. However, while raising their own families and working full-time, they could not be expected to be on call to teach, counsel, and visit congregants in the hospital to the same extent as their husbands who were being paid to lead the community.

Indeed, the "complete package" that Professor Saiman describes no longer exists in communities in which the rabbi is not paid enough to afford his wife the opportunity not to work, nor in communities in which the rabbi's wife has a career of her own that she wants to pursue independent of the synagogue.

With a male spiritual leader and role model already running a synagogue, the identity of the female spiritual leader's husband - or whether she is married at all - should not be a consideration. Just as the female doctor's husband has to deal with going to *minyan* while his wife is on call, so too does the female spiritual leader's husband have to make arrangements if his wife needs to speak at a *shiva minyan* or conduct a Bat Mitzvah ceremony. If her husband is comfortable with her taking the position, women in some parts of our community need not be held back simply because in other communities, there is an expectation that the rabbi and the rebbetzin split the work.

Appropriate Roles for Women's Leadership

Professor Saiman also presents the idea that “technical halakhic issues are at play: the male’s *tefilah be-tzibur* and *Talmud Torah* take precedence over that of the female, and we become uneasy when these baselines are inverted.” If a community has enough *minyanim* in place that the female spiritual leader’s husband can attend *minyan* as well then I don’t see a contradiction in the role. As far as women’s *Talmud Torah* is concerned, although her obligations may be different from those of a man, women are obligated to learn everything that applies to them - and, at the end of the day, almost every area of Torah and Halakhah applies to women in some way. With more learned women leading communities, more community members will feel comfortable asking questions. I remember a congregational rabbi saying that the only time of year that he is asked questions is during Pesach preparations. The rest of the year, the congregants are not connected enough to ask. With a female role model in place, another door would be open for women and men to ask questions that they may not have been comfortable asking the rabbi, as congregants of both genders may relate better to a female spiritual leader and may be intimidated by the rabbi.

According to Professor Saiman, the OU needs to draw guidelines in order to distinguish between “‘mainstream’ or ‘centrist’ Orthodoxy, from iterations to its left.” In my opinion, it is unfortunate that the OU is dictating these guidelines - which I find to be more hashkafic than halakhic - as some women who do not have a close connection with the rabbi may connect better with a female spiritual leader, thereby bringing more congregants closer to Judaism.

If a community already has a male spiritual leader (rabbi, cantor, etc.), there should be no reason to disqualify a woman from working at that synagogue in a spiritual role (excluding serving as a witness, leading the prayers, and being counted in a *minyan*).

Scalability

Professor Saiman points out that if a woman decides to study Torah for a few years and then chooses another career, “she will be seen as a disappointment to those who invested dearly in her education.” I am surprised to hear that the “community” would be more disappointed in her than in a male in the same situation. When I studied at Yeshiva University’s Azrieli Graduate School, I was part of a fellowship of men (mostly rabbinical students) and women called the Block Program. The agreement was that we were obligated to teach in a Jewish day school in the United States for two years. After that, we were free to do whatever we wanted. Twenty years later, some graduates are still teaching Judaic studies in the USA and some have moved on, but nobody is looking over his or her shoulder.

Professor Saiman mentions that there are “quasi-rabbinic jobs that lie between *Rosh Yeshiva* and front-line *mashgiah*. But it is harder to see what opportunities are offered to the parallel group of learned women.” Most synagogue rabbis in the United States are not *gedolei ha-dor* (Torah giants). I know some YU RIETS graduates received *semikhah* by studying the “*mesorah*” of notes, passed down from one group of students to the next. Despite these men being “less than perfect” students, they are leading prominent synagogues across the USA. Why is it not worth training women, even if only a small percentage can be top leaders? Instead of resigning ourselves to the fact that we can’t see this happening, why don’t our communities open up more leadership roles on different levels for women? We already see this happening with [JLIC programs on college campuses](#), in which both the husband and

wife are paid to run programming for the students, and scholar-in-residence programs at which synagogues open their doors to a male or female scholar for a Shabbat to teach and deliver a sermon for the entire community on Shabbat morning. Similarly, there is no halakhic barrier for an Orthodox woman to be trained as a chaplain or to serve as a *Mashgiah Ruhanit* in a school.

Conclusion

Twenty years ago, I was the first Orthodox woman to work as a *Madrikhah Ruhanit* (Spiritual Mentor) at the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale. The position fulfilled a need, as there are many areas of synagogue leadership in which women can excel and serve both male and female congregants in ways that male leaders can't, as not everyone is comfortable approaching the rabbi and men and women have different styles of leadership. Doesn't it make more sense to have a woman who is specifically hired for the job work at the shul, rather than a rebbetzin who is pulled in simply because her husband is a rabbi?

There are numerous brides, converts, Bat Mitzvah students, and community members who would not have had a clergy member to whom to turn to discuss personal matters if I had not been there.

How did the community feel about me receiving the position without being married to a rabbi? They did not have a problem with the fact that my husband Josh was an accountant. Josh contributed to the spirituality of the community and was loved by the congregants. He often led the service in the main sanctuary and in the learning service, and together we welcomed over 1,800 guests to our home for Shabbat and holiday meals. After our oldest son was born, Josh attended an early *minyan* at a different synagogue so that I would be able to be at the synagogue on time on Shabbat morning, where I often gave an introduction to the Torah reading, helped women find their place in the women's section, and delivered the sermon. When you are living in a community with a number of synagogues there are more possibilities. Josh didn't have to skip services due to my role at the synagogue, and the same ought to be true for many others as well.

Professor Saiman's description therefore did not match the reality 20 years ago, and it is certainly not the reality today, as many women hold leadership roles in Orthodox synagogues throughout the USA. When the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale and Lincoln Square Synagogue announced the "Congregational Internships" for women, everyone was nervous how it would turn out. We were interviewed in a variety of newspapers, from the *New York Times* to the *Jewish Week*. When they saw that we were religious women following Halakhah the media backed off. Today you can find Yeshiva University GPATS ([Graduate Program for Advanced Talmudic Studies for Women](#)) students and graduates serving as interns, and no one thinks twice.

Although I disagree with many of the points that Professor Saiman presents in much of his analysis, I do agree with his comment that "the set of seriously learned women who are respected within their communities is considerably larger in Israel than in the US. This provides a ready base of talent and support from which more advanced programs can develop." As I have lived in Israel for the past fourteen years and serve as a member of *Beit Hillel*, an organization which believes that it is imperative to include women in public religious leadership roles, I agree that "in Israel, religious leadership is less connected to

synagogue life” and Israelis are not at all concerned about what restrictions the OU tries to impose upon the community. May Israel serve as a light to the nations in the area of women’s learning and leadership.

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WOMEN AND PATERNALISM

JUDAH GOLDBERG

I am humbled by my dear friend [Professor Chaim Saiman's response](#) to my [recent article on women's higher learning](#) and his generosity of spirit towards my wife and me. More, I believe that his response elegantly models what online discourse can and ought to look like, and I am grateful for having been accorded that respect.

I appreciate and accept his insightful sociological analysis as to why Modern Orthodox communities might be reluctant to push women to pursue expertise in Torah, which echoes and crystallizes critiques of my essay that I have received elsewhere. Given genuine hesitation about how to relate to a theoretical female “expert,” the sociological barriers to her earning respectability commensurate to her training, and the uncertain ends of the entire endeavor, it is understandable why our community might not be enthusiastic about pushing women higher and higher in practice, despite its endorsement of their advanced Torah learning in theory. I can also understand reluctance to invest heavily in a largely speculative project, especially when community resources are finite. And if I am guilty of blurring the line between ambivalence and apathy, I accept Saiman’s cogent defense of our community’s earnestness and apologize for any insinuation to the contrary.

If he and I differ in our perspectives and emphases, it may be a function of the different roles that we play. Saiman writes, I imagine, as a supportive but realistic community member, equally embrative of our shared *mesorah* from *Moreinu* Rav Lichtenstein but also sensitive to the complexities of Jewish communal life. I write as a faculty member of a women’s *beit midrash*, where I have encountered earnest, aspiring young women, American and Israeli, who are familiar, I think, with Saiman’s points, yet respond: “*Af al pi kein*” (“nonetheless”). They hear the world’s sympathetic warnings not to set themselves up for disappointment or risk their reputations; but I am not sure that the world hears them in return. It is merely their voices (see one heartfelt example [here](#)) that I seek to amplify.

Very few of these women dream of being world-class experts. More, they and I know that even the most successful among them are unlikely to grow into “primary elites” in present circumstances, and so at least some of the sociological concerns, I think, can be sidelined for now. Still, they want to be able to excel, mainly within the frameworks that already exist for them, and that request, to various degrees, is currently being denied.

I reiterate that my primary target for change is the period during which most female students are not yet worried about tending to the needs of a household. Why can’t American college students participate in an organized, yeshiva-style morning *seder*, as some of them did during a year of study in Israel? Why are students in established, elite Israeli institutions generally limited to three or four mornings of Gemara study a week, instead of five or six? And why is an intensive night *seder* track for women, on par with the standard fare in men’s *yeshivot*, so hard to come by on either side of the Atlantic? These are low-lying fruit that can be picked at relatively low cost and with little effort. Broader reflections about women and Orthodoxy should not distract us from these straightforward tasks.

As for those who indeed move on to higher levels, I trust them to negotiate their own paths and to make smart, informed decisions that take into account the realities of the Orthodox world and their personal place within it. Many may intentionally pull up short of their full potential for the sake of family life, just as Orthodox female (and male) professionals do in other fields, but I don't see that as problematic. To the contrary, I believe that our needs in education are diverse and will be well served by women of varying levels of achievement.

At higher levels still, while I acknowledge the sociological barriers that Saiman enumerates, I am not sure that it is either necessary or wise to confront them directly. Deliberately, as he observes, I advocate for focusing on principle - more access to intensive *Talmud Torah* for an underserved population - and trust that this essential good will organically nudge forward positive social processes on its own.

While this approach may sound naive, I think it is, in a sense, shrewdly practical and actually underlies the successes that established advanced learning programs for women in Gemara and Halakhah have seen to date. My impression is that communal norms have shifted in response to the appearance of ever better educated women (such as *Yoatzot Halakhah*), rather than in anticipation of them, and a concerted effort to lay extensive groundwork ahead of time may have been counterproductive. Yet, over time, these women have gradually found their places within their community - as the [Orthodox Union's recent statement](#) attests to - and I am optimistic that future scholars can be similarly absorbed and appreciated.

Furthermore, I sometimes wonder: What is the alternative? To those who see changing roles for learned women in the Orthodox community as an unnecessary headache, I point out that this train has already left the station. The issues, fundamentally, have probably been lurking since the [founding of the Beit Yaakov movement](#) and were propelled forward significantly by the launch of advanced programs. Perpetuating mediocrity may buy some extra time, but it does nothing to settle the core issues, and it comes at a steep moral and spiritual price.

And that, I think, is what is really at stake. After all the sociological angst has dissipated, I remain haunted by a simple moral question: Could it be that in 2018, when we already ask Orthodox women to exercise such restraint in the ritual realm, that our community will dictate to them, if only through conscious passivity, to what they may aspire intellectually? Will we tell them that Talmud study is permissible, but excellence in *Torah she-ba'al peh* is inadvisable and therefore unattainable? That expertise is available to them in any academic or professional field, but not in Torah? That they might be able to earn equal access, but only if they first prove their numbers? That for now we will paternalistically handicap their best intellectual efforts, not out of ideology, but for all sorts of well-meaning sociological considerations? I trust that Professor Saiman is no more comfortable with this reality than I am, even as he carefully articulates its unspoken logic.

Let us listen to our young women. Carefully. They are telling us what they seek. Ideology is on their side, even if circumstance is not. Will we deny them?

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BERNARD MALAMUD'S "THE GERMAN REFUGEE": A PARABLE FOR *TISHAH BE-AV*

EILEEN H. WATTS

When Moshe's twelve spies returned from their reconnaissance mission to Canaan, and only two reported positive findings, the people wept, despairing of entering the Promised Land. Infuriated, God asked Moshe, "How long will this people spurn Me, and how long will they have no faith in Me despite all the signs that I have performed in their midst" ([Bamidbar 14:11](#))? Tishah Be-Av's original sin then is not the Israelites' immoral behavior, but lack of faith in God. He cannot fathom why these newly freed slaves and survivors of the wilderness do not trust Him. Vowing to punish that generation by foreclosing Canaan to them, according to rabbinic tradition, God marked that date for tragedy. To wit, the following events are said to have occurred on or around 9 Av:

Destruction of the First Temple

Destruction of the Second Temple

Defeat of the Bar Kokhba Rebellion

Expulsion of Jews from England

Expulsion of Jews from France

Expulsion of Jews from Spain

Beginning of World War I

Official beginning of the Holocaust

Mass deportation of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto to Treblinka

These calamities, like stones pitched in a pond, create ripples not just in history, but in people's lives. The twentieth century author who comes closest to meditating on the ripple effects of Tishah Be-Av is Bernard Malamud. His sad, lonely, and displaced Jews, the defeated denizens of his short stories, are unwitting mascots of a day commemorating Jewish tragedy and suffering. It is as if each character embodies the cries of Eikhah 3: "I am the man who has known affliction under the rod of His wrath; Me He drove on and on in unrelieved darkness ... All around me He has built Misery and Hardship" (Eikhah 3:1-2, 5). Drenched in Jewish history, Malamud's stories speak poignantly to Tishah Be-Av's reach into twentieth century Jewish suffering.

Along with "God's Wrath," "Take Pity," and "The Mourners," whose very titles echo Eikhah, "[The Refugee](#)" (1963, published as "The German Refugee" in [Idiots First](#)) seems to bear the 'holiday's full burden: the Nazi Holocaust, the suffering of exile, the loss of faith, and resulting helplessness. These tales are set not on history's global stage, but on the gritty streets and flats of the Lower East Side, which Malamud, born in Brooklyn to Russian Jewish immigrants, knew so well. In a sense a parable for Tishah Be-Av, "The German Refugee" illuminates the 9th of Av from two perspectives: 1) it amplifies the date's themes by

personalizing its miseries and telescoping scattered historical events into a single day; and 2) it extends the theme of loss of faith in God to loss of faith in the individual, questioning whether we, having perhaps lost the former in our post-Holocaust world, have worsened the problem by also losing faith in ourselves.

Bernard Malamud (1914-1986)

One third of the twentieth century triumvirate of Jewish American writers including Saul Bellow (1915-2005) and Philip Roth (1933-2018), Bernard Malamud wrote lovingly and pitifully of American Jews in transition; that is, of the sufferings of immigrants bereft of home, career, income, language, friends, family, and often, faith. Malamud's National Book Award-winning short story collection, *The Magic Barrel* (1959), inspired by Joyce's *Dubliners* and Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, and his Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award Winning novel, *The Fixer* (1966), give voice to the Jewish dispossessed, living as strangers in a strange land. Yet floating above this misery is "an antique spirituality and an antique morality of surpassing beauty and importance, because it is a tie to God himself, [that] lives in the Jews."¹ It is this innate morality in the face of struggle that leads Malamud to see Jews as metaphors for everyman. As Theodore Solotaroff put it in a March 1, 1962 *Commentary* piece: "Malamud's Jewishness is a type of metaphor ... both for the tragic dimension of anyone's life and for a code of personal morality." (Perhaps the author learned this definition of 'Jewishness' from struggling immigrants he knew.)

For not only is "The German Refugee" a personal story with a tragic ending, but it is based on personal experience. Scraping to make a living during the Depression, Malamud taught English to German-Jewish refugees. Exposure to these now-unemployed, struggling intellectuals made the young writer "suddenly [see] what being born Jewish might mean in the dangerous world of the thirties."² Sadly, the narrative is based on Malamud's fifty-five-year-old student, Dr. Friedrich Pinner, an economist and past financial editor of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, who, all his European clients gone, despaired of beginning again in a new country and with his wife, committed suicide by turning on the gas. As the story's puzzled English tutor and narrator Martin Goldberg comments: "Not everyone drowns in the ocean," and Malamud's ocean is filled with history.

"The German Refugee"

The narrative opens with a tableau of exile, transience, oppression, pain, and despair: "Oskar Gassner sits in his cotton-mesh undershirt and summer bathrobe at the window of his stuffy, hot dark hotel room on West Tenth Street.... The refugee fumbles for the light ... hiding despair but not pain."³ The stifling June heat seems a sympathetic response to the fifty-year-old Oskar's situation. Beginning in September, as a newly-hired lecturer for the Institute of Public Studies in New York, Oskar must give a weekly lecture on 'The Literature of the Weimar Republic' in English translation. As a critic and journalist in Berlin, he had never taught and was terrified of having to speak publicly in English. Martin Goldberg's job is to translate those lectures from German to English and enable Oskar to deliver them in

¹ Bernard Malamud, "Imaginative Writing and the Jewish Experience" in *Talking Horse: Bernard Malamud on Life and Work*, eds. Alan Cheuse and Nicholas Delbanco, (New York: Columbia UP, 1996), 188.

² Philip Davis, *Bernard Malamud: A Writer's Life* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010), 49.

³ Bernard Malamud, *The Stories of Bernard Malamud* (New York: Penguin, 1983), 93.

English. After months of grueling work and anguish, the first lecture, on Whitman's influence on Weimar's poets, is a success, but two days later, Oskar learns that to prove her loyalty to him, his wife back in Germany had converted to Judaism and been murdered by the Nazis. Giving up, Oskar writes a note leaving his possessions to Goldberg and turns on the gas.

Personalizing Tishah Be-Av's Miseries

Of course, the suffering of exile is not merely a matter of geographic dislocation, but is acutely psychological. It is the consequence of trying to begin again in a state of "displacement, alienation, financial insecurity, being in a strange land without friends or a speakable tongue" (*Stories*, 102). Thus, as June turns to July, and having written "more than a hundred opening pages [in German, to be translated later, Oskar] flung his pen against the wall, shouting he could not longer write in that filthy tongue. He cursed the German language" (*Stories*, 99). Robbed of his mother tongue because of what his country had done to him, Oskar Gassner is not so much a man without a country, but without a language.⁴

Unsurprisingly then, as the refugee explains why he can't get past page one of his lecture, he is afraid. He tells Martin, "It is a paralyzism of my will. The whole lecture is clear in my mind, but the minute I write down a single word — or in English or in German — I have a terrible fear I will not be able to write the next" (*Stories*, 102). Oskar's fear stems from his loss of faith in himself. He reports to Martin that he had tried to commit suicide his first week in New York, that he had been psychoanalyzed in Vienna years ago, and that those fears were gone. He admits, "I have lost faith. I do not—not-longer possess my former value of myself" (*Stories*, 103). When Martin encourages him to have confidence, Oskar replies, "Confidence I have not. For this and also whatever else I have lost I thank the Nazis" (*Stories*, 103). Ironically at this point, the story turns to Whitman's influence on German poets. Oskar tells Martin that they got from Whitman "most of all his feeling for *Brudermensch*, his humanity. But this does not grow long on German earth ... and is soon destroyed" (105). Yet Oskar finishes the lecture on September 1, 1939, as Germany invades Poland, and thanks Martin for having faith in him.

Telescoping History

Malamud's management of time also evokes the 9th of Av in terms of telescoping past into present by means of a narrative style that collapses historical events into the present. In his study of "The German Refugee" Robert Solotaroff notes the narrator's temporal shifts. The tale's first paragraph is written in the present tense (consider Martin Goldberg's description of his student sitting in his undershirt, fumbling for the light, staring at his tutor, hiding despair but not pain); the rest, save for one phrase, in the past tense.⁵ However, the contents of Oskar's mother-in-law's letter informing him of his wife's death, which ends the story, is also reported in the present. The narrator records:

She [his mother-in-law] writes in a tight script it takes me hours to decipher, that her daughter, after Oskar abandons her, ... is converted to Judaism by a vengeful rabbi.

⁴ For a fuller discussion of the loss of language in "The German Refugee" see my "Not True Although Truth: The Holocaust's Legacy in Three Malamud Stories" in [The Magic Worlds of Bernard Malamud](#), ed. Evelyn Avery (New York: State University of New York P., 2001), 139-152.

⁵ Robert Solotaroff, [Bernard Malamud: A Study of the Short Fiction](#), (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989), 82.

One night the Brown Shirts ... drag Frau Gassner, together with the other Jews, out of the apartment house, and transport them in lorries to a small border town in conquered Poland. There, it is rumored, she is shot in the head and topples into an open ditch with the naked Jewish men, their wives and children, some Polish soldiers, and a handful of gypsies (*Stories*, 107-8).

Reading this account of Nazi atrocities written in the present, it is as if we are standing in the field watching it all happen before our eyes. Malamud not only juxtaposes Oskar's suffering with concurrent events in Germany and Poland in the run-up to the Holocaust, but he makes us feel part of it. It seems to me that the effect of drawing us into the narrator's present and past is analogous to Tishah Be-Av's intended effect on us today.

That is, by compressing defining tragedies spanning millennia of Jewish history into one *yahrzeit* – Av 9 – the day reminds us of our relationship to time and to the past. Each horrific event (temple destructions, expulsions) engendered dislocations: of place, prayer, ritual, culture, community, language, and life. Mourning these events on Tishah Be-Av telescopes the centuries, collapsing each event into one day of our lives, fusing past with present, permitting us to feel a ripple of that original dislocation when the Israelites refused to enter the Promised Land because they had lost faith in God.

Extending the Theme of Loss of Faith

Interestingly, God is barely present in "The German Refugee." Instead, there is Hitler and "Kristallnacht, when the Nazis shattered the Jewish store windows and burnt all the synagogues" (*Stories*, 94), and the fall of Danzig. To survive in America, Oskar must have faith in his own ability to learn and speak English and in his tutor's ability to teach him. In fact, the narrator stresses the difficulties that these acts of faith pose. He writes: "To many of these [German refugees], articulate as they were, the great loss was the loss of language – they could not say what was in them to say. You have some subtle thought and it comes out like a piece of broken bottle" (*Stories*, 97). These men felt like children, or worse, often like morons. As another of Martin's students put it, "I am left with myself unexpressed. What I know, indeed, what I am, becomes to me a burden" (*Stories*, 97). The degree to which an immigrant's very identity and self-worth are tied up with the ability to communicate in a foreign language is stunning and heartbreaking.

Still, when Oskar thanks Martin for having faith in him upon completing the first lecture, the latter responds, "Thank God" (*Stories*, 105). This is one of only two times the word God appears in the text – here as mere exclamation, spoken by the politically naïve American teacher, not the persecuted, suffering immigrant student. God's second appearance is in Oskar's delivery of three lines from Whitman's "[Song of Myself](#), V":

And I know the Spirit of God is the brother of my own,
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and the women my
sisters and lovers,
And that the kelson of creation is love ... (*Stories*, 107).

Placing Whitman's belief in humanity's divine spirit in a story crowded with humanity's most savage acts certainly challenges one's faith in God, Tishah Be-Av's original sin. Here, Malamud amplifies our theological and existential condition. In other words, living in a

post-Holocaust Tishah Be-Av state of exile, our belief in God all but gone, what are we to do? For Malamud, Whitman's faith in humanity's divine spirit and love is our only escape from spiritual exile, that is, loss of faith in God.

And yet, as Martin knows, not everyone drowns in the ocean; not everyone loses faith, either in God or in ourselves. So, what is the moral of this parable? Perhaps, that like faith itself, loss of faith is, at times, a choice. Perhaps that is Tishah Be-Av's enduring message. Recall Malamud's wonder at an antique spirituality and morality, important "because it is a tie to God himself [that] lives in the Jews." Continuing that tie is also a choice.

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