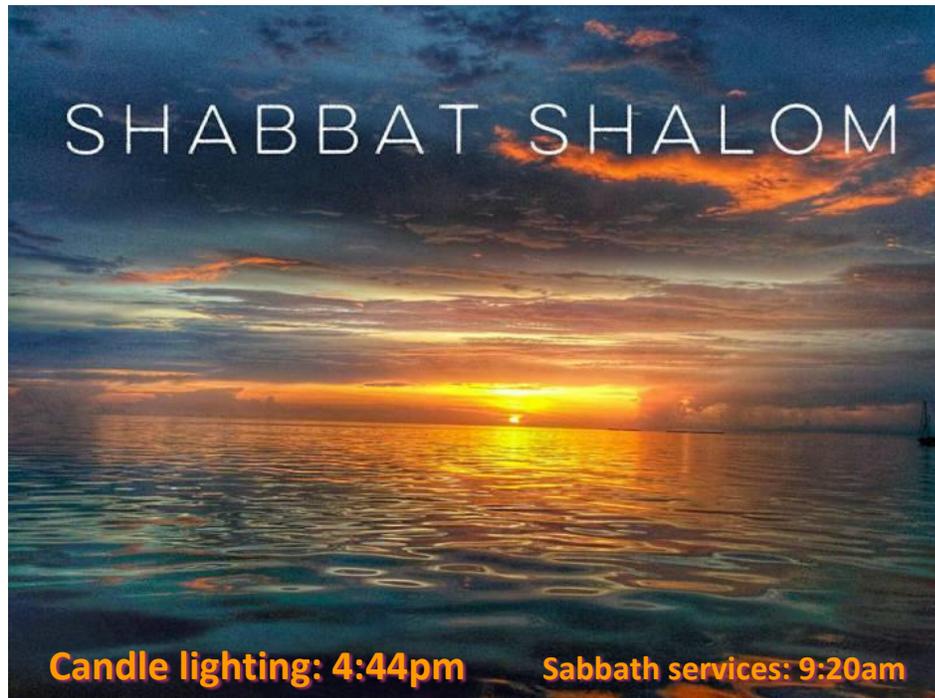




Carnegie Shul Chatter

December 28, 2017



The Golem: How Much is True?

I first heard the legend of the Golem of Prague when I read a book called *Snow in August*, written by Pete Hamill in 1999, and I have been fascinated by the story of the Golem ever since. Two recent books, *The Golem of Paris* and *The Golem of Hollywood*, by Jonathon Kellerman and Jesse Kellerman, have added to my curiosity concerning the Golem.

On the following page is an article by Mark Timmen that was published in jewishmag.com in June, 2007. What do you think? Was there a Golem in Prague?



Fair Play? No Way!

And now the Israeli chess team has been denied visas to enter Saudi Arabia to compete in an international chess tournament that is being held this week in Saudi Arabia.

Of course, Saudi Arabia does not recognize Israel and there are no diplomatic ties between the two countries.

Israel Chess Federation spokesman Lior Aizenberg said efforts were still being made "by various parties" to ensure the Israeli players take part.

"The event is not a world championship if they prevent chess players from several countries from taking part," Aizenberg told Reuters.

"Every chess player should have the right to participate in an event on the basis of professional criteria, regardless of their passports, their place of issue or the stamps they bear."

The Saudis ban Israeli chess players and the world barely notices.

The U.S. recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the world goes berserk.

It's a mad, mad, mad, mad world.

The Golem – Fact or Fiction?

By Mark Timmen, from the June 2007 Edition of the Jewish Magazine

One of the most popular figures in Jewish folk legend is the legendary 'Golem' a creature that was allegedly constructed by the famed Maharal of Prague. Although most people readily accept the concept that a great rabbi, specifically Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague who was expert in Kabbalistic learning, was able to use the holy and ineffable name to create a Frankenstein like being that only he was able to control.

Although the place of birth of Rabbi Loew is uncertain, it is reckoned to be either in the German city of Worms or in a nearby Polish city, between 1520 and 1525. He became the Chief Rabbi of Prague in 1597 and lived there until his death in 1609. He is referred to as the Maharal, which is an acronym for Moraynu HaRav Yehudah Loew ben Betzalel which means Our Master, Rabbi Judah Loew, the son of Betzalel.

The story that surrounds the Maharal and the Golem is that the Jews of Prague were threatened with the mob violence that was so prevalent in those times. False accusations were levied against them by the church that held the Jews responsible for various mishaps and catastrophes that occurred during those times. Blood libel, which was common belief amongst Christians in that period, enhanced the mood of the ignorant masses to take vengeance from the Jews. The Jews of Prague were then in mortal danger. They lived in fear of their lives; each minute the danger of attack by a crazed mob seeking to murder, plunder and rape grew greater. What could be done?

The legend continues that the Maharal went down to the riverbank and there made a man's shape from the clay. The Maharal used his knowledge of kabbalistic teachings specifically the secrets from the "Sefer HaYitzirah" (the Book of Creation) to bring life into the clay form. When the clay man came to life and rose, the Maharal sent him to protect the Jews.

The Golem (from the Hebrew, meaning raw material) rose up and went to the gates of the ghetto. There he fought against the masses and killed and wounded many who had assembled to attack the Jews. Seeing the great strength of the golem, the remaining masses turned and ran for their lives, never to return.

It was the Jews who witnessed the Golem and this miraculous rescue who realized what had happened. They came to the Maharal to thank him, but he admitted nothing. Then believing that the creation of the Golem was contrary to divine will, the Maharal took it to his attic and destroyed it by taking the life force from it. Legend says that the clay mass in the shape of a man still rests in the attic of the house of the Maharal in Prague.

In support of the claims that the Maharal did create such a creature, the Talmud (Sanhedrin 65b) tells the following tale:

Rava said: the righteous could build worlds if they wanted but "it is your iniquities that separate you..." (Isaiah 59:2) Rava created a man. (Rashi: he studied Sefer Yetzirah and learned how to put the letters of G-d's name together) He sent this man to Rabbi Zera. Rabbi Zera spoke to him but the



man did not answer back (Rashi: the man did not have the power of speech). Rabbi Zera asked him, "Are you from the Chaverai? (Rashi: are you created by a group of people?). Go back to the dust!" Rav Chanina and Rav Oshiyah would sit each Friday and learn the Sefer Yetzirah. They created a three year old calf and ate it.

The above quoted passage in the Talmud which clearly states that the great and righteous Rabbis can create life is considered one of the bases for support of the story of the Golem.

The second basis for the story strangely enough comes from the great author, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes who wrote a story entitled "the Jew's Breastplate" (<http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks06/0600401.txt>). The story deals with a fictitious theft of the ancient Breastplate that was worn by the High Priest in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. In the story the breastplate is stolen from the British museum and subsequently returned. It was first printed in a magazine in 1899 and later included in a collection entitled "Round the Fire," published in 1908.

Now come the marriage of the two stories, that of Rava and that of Doyle.

Rabbi Yudel Rosenberg was one of the most popular Hebrew writers of the early twentieth century. He published in 1913 a book entitled "Sefer Hoshen ha-Mishpat shel ha-Kohen ha-Gadol" (the Book of the High Priest's Breastplate). The story line is based on that of Conan Doyle's but certain important changes were made, the most important is that the hero was the Maharal. In this book, the Maharal travels to London to gain access to the Jewels of the Breastplate which he uses for his own purposes and then has returned. This parallels the story of Arthur Conan Doyle but giving the story a distinct Jewish twist.

However, it appears that the first written report of the Golem is reported by some to appear 230 or 240 years after the Maharal's death in a book written in German in 1852. The accuracy of this report is doubted. This would be before Rabbi Rosenberg, but it could very well explain from where he got his idea.

Recently there have been scholarly voices that cast doubt on the accuracy of such reports and believe that there was no Golem. There are virtually no reports from contemporaries of the Maharal of the wondrous Golem in any of the writings available from the time of the Maharal. Certainly such a feat which found its way into the Talmud should find its way into contemporary writings, but sadly, there is no report of this Golem, leaving many scholars to believe that it is only a bit of imagination that was kept alive in the hearts and minds of the ignorant masses.

But who knows: if as we have seen in our times, that our contemporary educational institutions can take people with basic intelligence and after many years of schooling turn out brain-less wonders, should it be ridiculous that a great rabbi can take a brainless mass and give it intelligence?

Yahrzeit Plaques

Commemorate a loved one by dedicating a yahrzeit plaque in his or her memory at the Carnegie Shul. These beautiful plaques, mounted on the sanctuary walls, are lit on the loved one's yahrzeit, Yom Kippur, and days when Yizkor is recited. The names are also read aloud from the Bimah during services on the Sabbath of the yahrzeit and on Yom Kippur. To purchase a plaque, for only \$175, please email Mike Roteman at mrmike7777@yahoo.com.



Please consider sponsoring a Kiddush in honor or in memory of a loved one, for only \$36. Your sponsorship will be announced from the bimah and in the weekly Chatter. To sponsor a Kiddush, email mrmike7777@yahoo.com.

- CHABAD OF SOUTH HILLS PRESENTS - ב"ה

BEHIND ENEMY LINES

A FRENCH JEWISH SPY IN NAZI GERMANY TELLS HER STORY



AN UNFORGETTABLE CONVERSATION WITH

Marthe Cohn was born in France, in 1920. As the Nazi occupation escalated, her sister was sent to Auschwitz while her family fled to the south of France.

At the age of 24, she joined the Intelligence Service of the French Army. Utilizing her perfect German accent and Aryan looks, Martha posed as a German nurse desperately trying to attain word of a fictional fiancé. She traveled the countryside and approached troops sympathetic to her plight thereby obtaining vital information about troop movements for the Allied commanders. For her service, at the age of 80, she was awarded the Croix de Guerre, France's highest military honor.

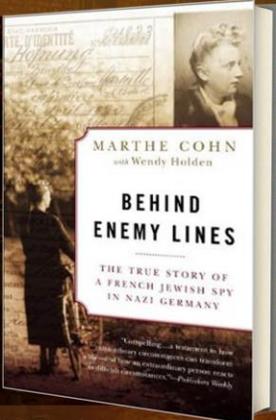
Marthe is 96 years old and lives with her husband in California. She travels internationally sharing her remarkable story and has no plans of slowing down.

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