



Voices for Prophetic Judaism

## **JUDITHS FOR JUSTICE**

**A Chanukkah resource  
celebrating inspirational Judiths  
past and present  
5786 – 2025**



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***This collection is dedicated to our  
very own inspiring Judith-for-Justice,  
Rabbi Dr Judith Rosen-Berry***

## Introduction

Technically a minor festival because it is post-biblical, Chanukkah is one of the most popular sacred celebrations of the Jewish year.

It's not surprising: eight nights dedicated to kindling light, eating latkes and doughnuts, and playing the dreidel. What's not to like? And the miracle tale associated with it is so well-known. Anyone brought up celebrating Chanukkah can probably recite by heart how one-day's supply of oil for the Temple menorah ('lampstand') lasted for eight days.

But the miracle tale is not the whole story. The historical account which focuses on a military victory against a mighty empire can be found in the two Books of Maccabees. And then there is another, lesser-known story, the tale of Judith, whose courage and audacity, also led to the defeat of the forces of persecution and tyranny.

Like the Books of the Maccabees, the Book of Judith cannot be found in the Hebrew Bible. Unlike the Books of the Maccabees, the central character is a valiant woman.

Inspired by the heroism of the original Judith, this booklet uncovers her story, her presence and her absence, and casts light on other Judiths for Justice, inviting us to reflect, night after night, on the role of courageous Jewish women in the pursuit of justice, from the original Judith until today.

Chanukkah samei'ach!

Rabbi Gabriel Kanter-Webber

Rabbi Dr Judith Rosen-Berry

Rabbi Elli Tikvah Sarah

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## **Judith: remembering and celebrating her power**

***Rabbi Elli Tikvah Sarah and Dr Jess Wood***

### **Reading Judith (ETS)**

Have you read the Book of Judith? If you haven't, you won't find it in the Hebrew Bible. It is included in the collection of works designated as the 'Apocrypha'. From a Jewish perspective, the Apocrypha consists of fourteen books - among them, Judith - that were not included in the canon of the Hebrew Bible. From a Christian perspective, the Apocrypha is a collection of books that were written in the 'intertestamental' period between the 'Old Testament' and the 'New Testament', although seven of the apocryphal works, including the Book of Judith, are included in the Catholic Bible.<sup>1</sup> The Christian perspective suggests that the apocryphal books were written after the canon of the Hebrew Bible was closed. The Jewish perspective suggests that those responsible for finalising the canon - the early rabbis - decided to exclude these books from the Hebrew Bible. Significantly, the Book of Judith is included in the Septuagint (often referred to as the 'LXX'), the first translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, attributed to seventy-two scholars (six from each of the twelve tribes). The Greek translations of the 'Five Books of Moses' are dated to the third century BCE. The remaining books, a century later.

<sup>1</sup> The apocryphal books included in the Catholic Bible are: Tobit, Judith, Maccabees I and II, the Wisdom of Solomon, Ben-Sirach, and Barukh.

The dating of the Book of Judith has been the subject of scholarly debate. The story recounted in the book situates events in the time of King Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled the Babylonian Empire, c. 605-532 BCE (although the book identifies him as king of the ‘Assyrians’). However, a consensus among scholars, based on the use of language and other textual features suggests that it was probably written during the period of the Maccabean revolt (167-141 BCE). Further, aspects of the story mirror the tale told in the two Books of the Maccabees, which, significantly, like the Book of Judith, are included in the Apocrypha, but not in the Hebrew Bible. For example: Nebuchadnezzar’s persecution of the Jews is reminiscent of the persecutions inaugurated by Antiochus IV; the cutting off the head of Nebuchadnezzar’s general, Holofernes, by Judith, has its parallel in Judah Maccabee doing likewise to the Selucid military commander, Nicanor in 161 BCE (I Maccabees 7:26-50; II Macc. 15:1-36); and Judith’s pivotal role in inspiring a Jewish revolt against imperial forces is clearly similar to Judah Maccabee’s role in leading a guerrilla campaign.

There isn't the space here to explore why the Books of the Maccabees were excluded from the canon of the Hebrew Bible. So, why was the Book of Judith left out? In her chapter, ‘The Jewish Textual Traditions’ in the book, *The Sword of Judith*,<sup>2</sup> Deborah Levine Gera sets out four possible explanations:<sup>3</sup> that Judith was composed too late to be included; that, either, it was originally written in Greek in Alexandria, or, that an earlier Hebrew version disappeared, and so the book survived in the Greek canon, but not in the Hebrew Bible; that the book includes material that is not in keeping with halakhah, Jewish law, such as the account of an

<sup>2</sup> Levine Gera, Deborah. (2010). ‘The Jewish Textual Traditions’ in Brine, Kevin R., Ciletti, Elena, Lahmemann, Henrike. Eds. (2010). *The Sword of Judith*. Open Book Publishers, pp.23-39. <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0009>

<sup>3</sup> Levine Gera, Deborah, 2010, pp.27-29.

Ammonite converting, and being circumcised, but not undergoing ritual immersion or bringing a sacrifice to the Temple (Judith 14:10) (however, as Levine Gera points out, this explanation depends on these rules being codified ahead of the story being written); that the figure of Judith portrayed ‘suggests that she was simply too feminist and independent to be accepted by the rabbis, who did not appreciate her subversion of patriarchal norms’.<sup>4</sup>

In my view, the fourth explanation seems very likely, given what the Book of Judith tells us about Judith, a pious widow, who became a woman warrior in defence of her people.

Let me summarise the story. Holofernes, the commander of King Nebuchadnezzar’s army led one hundred and seventy-two thousand warriors to Bethulia, a city which, according to the text, was near Dothan (Judith 7:3),<sup>5</sup> and besieged the city for many days, cutting off its water supply. Just as the inhabitants were ready to capitulate, Judith came before the elders of the city, and in a long speech (8:11-27) persuaded them not to do so. Judith then ‘cried out to the Eternal with a loud voice’ (9:1), and in a passionate exhortation, called on God to save the people (9:2-14). Next, removing the sackcloth and the widow’s garments that she had been wearing, Judith bathed and anointed herself, adorned herself with beautiful clothes and jewels, and went out with her maidservant to the gates of Bethulia, where she persuaded the watchmen to open the gates.

The two women then proceeded swiftly until confronted by an ‘Assyrian patrol’. Taken into custody, Judith persuaded them that ‘a daughter of the Hebrews’, she was fleeing from her people, and on

<sup>4</sup> Levine Gera, Deborah, 2010, p.29. Levine Gera cites two other authors for this fourth explanation. See p.29, note 15.

<sup>5</sup> Later versions of the story, from tenth to sixteenth centuries, identify the city as Jerusalem.

her way to give ‘a true report to Holofernes, the commander of your army’, and show him how he could go about capturing ‘the hill country’ (10:11-13). Convinced, the patrol organised one hundred men to accompany her and her maid to Holofernes. When Holofernes granted Judith permission to speak, in a long speech (11:5-19), she set out her proposal for the conquest of the city. Holofernes was so pleased that he invited her to eat, but pious Judith refused saying that she had her own provisions.

Brought into his tent, after midnight Judith asked permission to go out and pray. This routine continued for three nights, and then on the fourth night Holofernes invited Judith to a banquet. Dressed in all her finery, Judith came and lay down, and Holofernes, wishing to ravish her, plied her with alcohol. But it was Holofernes who fell into a drunken stupor. Calling on God to ‘look in this hour upon the work of my hands for the exultation of Jerusalem’ (13:4), Judith then took the sword that was hanging at the end of the bed, asked God to ‘give me strength this day’ (13:6), ‘struck his neck twice with all her might, and severed his head from his body’ (13:8).

When Judith came out of the tent, she gave the head to her maid, who placed it in her food bag. They proceeded to go through the camp, around the valley and up the mountain to Bethulia, where Judith called on the watchmen at the gates: ‘Open, open the gate! God, our God, is still with us, to show his power in Israel, and his strength against enemies, even as he has done this day’. (13:11). The people were astonished, and Uzziah, the magistrate of Bethulia, praised Judith, gave thanks for her deed, and declared, ‘May God grant this to be a perpetual honour to you, and may he visit you with blessings, because you did not spare your own life when our nation was brought low, but have avenged our ruin, walking in the straight path before our God.’ (13:20). Judith then told the people to hang the head of Holofernes on the parapet, and take up their weapons, as if they were going into battle, in order to draw out the



Assyrian army, predicting that finding their commander dead, they would then flee before them.

Everything went as planned. The Israelites defeated their enemy, and plundered their camp for thirty days, gifting Judith Holofernes' tent and all his lavish furnishings. The story draws to an end with the women of Israel gathering to see Judith and bless her, before performing a dance for her, crowned with olive wreathes - one of the elements that suggests that the text is Hellenistic (15:12).

Judith's last words are delivered in a song of triumph. Her final deed, to dedicate to God all the vessels of Holofernes, as well as the canopy that she took for herself from his bedchamber. The book concludes by informing the reader that Judith remained a widow all her life, and that before she died, she distributed her property to the members of her late husband Manasseh's family. The final verse proclaims: 'No one ever again spread terror among the people of Israel in the days of Judith, or for a long time after her death' (16:25).

Reading the Book of Judith, we can discern parallels not only with the Books of the Maccabees, but also with a book that was included in the Hebrew Bible: the Book of Esther. The Book of Esther, tells a story of how a young Jewish woman became the wife of Achashveirosh, the king of a great Empire, and saved her people from destruction, and is read at the post-biblical festival of Purim. But of course, there are crucial differences between the two tales. Both women drew on their femininity to win the favour of a powerful man, but while Esther worked together with her, 'uncle' Mordecai, Judith acted completely on her own initiative, spoke authoritatively to leaders and people alike, prayed ardently to God (who makes no appearance in the Book of Esther), and assumed leadership of the events as they unfolded.

Judith's powerful presence and song of triumph resonate with another biblical character: Deborah the prophet in the Book of Judges, chapters four and five, who partners with Barak, the

commander of the Israelites' army, to take on the army of Yavin, King of Canaan. Both stories make reference to victory being won 'b'yad ha-ishah - by the hand of a woman' (Judith, 13:22; 16:6; Judges 4:9). And both stories conclude with reference to the long peace that followed the respective victorious military campaigns. And there is another feature of the Deborah narrative that is shared with the tale of Judith, although it does not concern Deborah herself. The precise 'hand of the woman' who defeats the enemy in the story of Deborah, is that of Ya'el, the wife of Chever, the Kenite, who lures the enemy's captain, Sisera, into her tent, gives him milk, covers him, and then drives a tent peg through his forehead.

As we consider these parallels, the exclusion of Judith from the Hebrew Bible becomes even more puzzling. After all, if the Book of Judith is 'just a story', surely this is also true of the Book of Esther? And if the rabbis were not happy with portrayals of women executing violence, then why would the story of Yael's tent-peg assassination of Sisera be acceptable, but not Judith's sword-wielding assassination of Holofernes?

The absence of Judith from the Hebrew Bible is reinforced by there being no mention of her in the Talmud or in any early rabbinic literature. Could it be possible the sages were not aware of the book? It is not until the tenth century that Judith surfaces in revised versions of the story that appear in various midrashim.<sup>6</sup> These midrashim, which continue to be written through to the sixteenth century, shift the action to Jerusalem, and present Judith as a menstruant, making her menstrual state the key element that

<sup>6</sup> For an analysis of the Judith *midrashim*, see: Gabay Bernheim, Rosalie. (2025). 'Examples of Medieval Judith Midrashim: The Reception of the Pre-Modern Niddah' in Schittenhelm, Alina L., Fedeski, Amy, Mayerhofer, Kerstin. Eds. (2025). *Experiencing the Hebrew Bible. Spotlights on History and Tradition*. Paderborn, Germany: Brill Schoningh, pp.121-142  
<https://brill.com/display/book/9783657796946/BP000014.xml>

secured a victory over Holofernes. In her paper, 'Examples of Mediaeval Judith Midrashim: The Reception of the Pre-Modern Niddah',<sup>7</sup> Rosalie Gabay Bernheim argues that the hostile Christian environment in which Jewish communities were living in Mediaeval Europe provides an explanation for this transformation of the story, and was a way for Jews to reclaim Judith from Christian readings that viewed her as a prototype of Mary, and re-present her as an exemplary Jewess. Bernheim concludes that in the environment of Mediaeval segregation, 'Just as circumcision was used to differentiate Jewish men from their Christian counterparts, menstruation became the defining factor that separated Jewish from Christian women. It is a mark of differentiation from non-Jews, as well as a symbolic marker of Jewish community and faith'.<sup>8</sup>

Significantly, one of these Medieval midrashim has the title, Megillat Y'hudit. And so, the connection between Purim and Chanukkah was sealed through the role of two Jewish heroines, Esther and Judith, respectively, in the defeat of a hostile enemy. Consequently, just as the M'gillat Esther, the Scroll of Esther is read at Purim, so the Book of Judith came to be associated with Chanukkah.

The connection is important. But the distinctive power of Judith demands acknowledgement. The Judith we discover in the original Book of Judith is bold and confident, and acts completely on her own volition. Judith dominates the last nine chapters of the sixteen-chapter book, gives long speeches, addresses God at great length, cuts off the head of the commander of Nebuchadnezzar's army with his own sword, and then, like Deborah in chapter 5, sings a song of triumph. Judith is remembered for her audacious murderous deed.

<sup>7</sup> See note 6.

<sup>8</sup> Bernheim, 2025, p. 140.

She should be remembered for her powerful voice, determination, fidelity to God, and unwavering determination to save her people.

Finally, before we turn from Judith to a marvellous seventeenth century female painter who found inspiration in her story, let us consider the significance of Judith's name: Y'hudit, which literally means 'Jewess', the feminine form of Y'hudi, 'Jew'. Y'hudit is the exemplar of the Jewish woman who challenges tyranny and oppression. Interestingly, in addition to speaking of the 'Israelites', *b'nei Yisrael*, (4:1;8), the Book of Judith also mentions 'Judea', Y'hudah, when describing the location of the city of Bethulia (3:9). Y'hudah was the name given to the southern kingdom, when King Solomon's dominion was divided following his death c. 931 BCE, with Jerusalem as its capital. In the Book of Judith, Y'hudit is the saviour - along with God - of Y'hudah. And let us not forget that in the parallel tale told in the Books of the Maccabees, the hero is 'Judah', Y'hudah. Chanukkah: a time to remember Y'hudit as well as Y'hudah, celebrate Jewish heroism, and do what we can to increase the light in dark times.

### **Painting Judith (JW)**

Around 1620, Artemisia Gentileschi (Rome 1593 - Naples 1652) painted *Judith Beheading Holofernes*. How instructive it is to compare her dynamic version of the story with that of Caravaggio's. For Caravaggio, Judith is standing upright and barely exerting any force in her execution of the gruesome deed. On the contrary, she demurs and seems to be pulling away from it. Her elderly maid plays the role of the grim bystander. In contrast, in Artemisia's portrayal, Judith's strong forearms forcefully wrench the sword of death across the neck of Holofernes with deliberation and vigour, and she is actively assisted by her maidservant.



Artemisia Gentileschi, *Judith Beheading Holofernes* (c. 1620; Uffizi version; oil on canvas; 146.5 x 108 cm; Inv. No. 1890 n. 1567) and Michelangelo Caravaggio, *Judith Beheading Holofernes* (c. 1599-1600; oil on canvas; 145x195 cm; Gallerie Nazionali di Arte Antica, Palazzo Barberini, Rome.

Both artists use the dominant lines in their paintings to reinforce their interpretations of the scene. In the Caravaggio, the two female figures are upright, and set on a vertical axis, and the male figure is laid horizontally. This creates an almost classical sense of pictorial stability which belies the intense drama of the moment. In contrast, Artemisia plays on the highly dynamic diagonals of Judith's and Holofernes's bodies. These intersect with the horizontal lines of the hilt of the sword and the bed, and the vertical lines of the maid's downward-thrusting arms, and Holofernes upward-resisting arm, and of course, the pure verticality of the slicing edge of the sword. Each of these lines meet almost exactly at the hand of Judith in the centre of the painting. Artemisia thereby makes her bold visual statement: by the immense and determined violence of the hand of Judith, the enemy is slain, and the people saved.

And in a much later painting, a self-portrait, we see Artemisia again using a dynamic visual diagonal to convey the dynamism of the act, not of killing, but of painting:



Artemisia Gentileschi Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting (La Pittura) (c.1638-9; oil on canvas; 98.6 x 75.2 cm; RCIN 405551, Cumberland Art Gallery, Presence Chamber, Hampton Court Palace)

Artemisia used her brush to paint Judith with a sword killing her enemy. Much has been made of this association, for in 1611, her father, the painter Orazio Gentileschi, accused Agostino Tassi (c. 1580-1644), a painter with whom he collaborated, of raping his daughter. The case went to trial in 1612 and Artemisia was tortured as she gave evidence. She spoke out against him with courage and eloquence. Tassi was convicted but his punishment was not enforced. She went on to triumph over this early adversity. In July 1616, Artemisia became the first woman to become a member of Florence's Accademia delle Arti del Disegno (Academy of the Arts of Drawing). She worked in Naples, Venice and London and was a highly successful artist. Several commentators have seen in Artemisia's Judith Beheading Holofernes, painted almost a decade after the rape, Artemisia taking her visual revenge on Tassi. She saw

in the biblical figure of Judith a role model for women in pursuit of justice in a male-dominated world.

See further: <<https://www.rct.uk/collection/stories/artemisia-gentileschi>>, <<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/exhibitions/past/artemisia/artemisia-in-her-own-words>>; and Jonathan Jones, <<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/oct/05/artemisia-gentileschi-painter-beyond-caravaggio>>; Bogdan Cornea (2023), *The Matter of Violence in Baroque Painting*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.





## **Judith Hauptman**

### ***Rabbi Dr Margaret Jacobi***

My PhD in Talmud was a struggle, done part time whilst working. But it can't compare with what Judith Hauptman faced, as the first woman to get a PhD in Talmud.<sup>9</sup> She is now recognised as an outstanding Talmud scholar but it wasn't easy.

It's hard to realise what a closed world Talmud was when this Judith obtained her PhD. There were no Yeshivot for women to study Talmud; Orthodox Synagogue classes were usually for men and until the 1970s, rabbinical seminaries did not admit women. Academia was theoretically open, but Talmud was still mostly a man's world.

Judith Hauptman opened up Talmud study, both in paving the way for other women to follow and in the subject matter she explored. Her early work was on the development of rabbinic literature. She later wrote about the role of women in the Talmud, notably in *Rereading the Rabbis. A Woman's Voice*.<sup>10</sup> Her work was not only academic but was also influential in convincing the Conservative movement in the USA to allow full participation of women in egalitarian services at the Jewish Theological Seminary. She also

<sup>9</sup> However, Regina Jonas, the first woman to be ordained a rabbi, wrote a PhD based in rabbinic literature, including Talmud, in the 1930s. For a translation of Regina Jonas's rabbinic thesis see Klapchek, Elisa. (2004). *Fraulein Rabbiner Jonas. The Story of the First Woman Rabbi*. San Francisco, CA: Josey Bass.

<sup>10</sup> Hauptman, Judith. (1998). *Rereading the Rabbis. A Woman's Voice*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.



supported women scholars, particularly through the Association of Jewish Studies Women's Caucus.

On top of all that, Judith Hauptman became a rabbi herself. She founded an innovative congregation in New York which drew in young unaffiliated Jews. She also served as a volunteer chaplain at a care home. In both roles, she continued to encourage, support and include others.

What is equally remarkable is how modest and unassuming Judith Hauptman is. I learnt from her at Limmud and she reminded me of Louis Jacobs in her ability to make Talmud accessible, using day to day language and examples. One memorable night at Limmud we had a women rabbis' meeting and I treasure memories of our conversation.

Battling Judiths don't have to win victories by cutting off someone's head. They can go about it quietly and determinedly, taking others along with them, including the men who might initially have opposed them. Like a drip of water wearing down a rock, they have their effect gently and effectively. To continue the water metaphor, the ripples they create spread into the future. So let's celebrate Judith Hauptman, whose light is an inspiration to all who wish to learn and explore our rabbinic heritage and make it relevant to our world.



## **Judith Shklar's moral empire**

***Rabbi Gabriel Kanter-Webber***

In July 1846, the writer Henry Thoreau spent a night in the town prison in Concord, Massachusetts after refusing to pay his poll tax. His refusal was an act of protest against America's refusal to abolish slavery.

Thoreau was not, of course, alone in his opposition to slavery. But the political philosopher Professor Judith Shklar found him particularly intriguing in that his convictions didn't arise from religious beliefs.

The typical 19th-century abolitionist was a faith leader of some sort or another: Theodore Parker, Lucretia Mott, John Pierpont, Rabbi David Einhorn, the list goes on and on. Shklar observed that, for these activists, *"the entire Constitution ... was a slave document [that they had] no obligation to obey [so] religious loyalty was the only significant bond left"*. They had to *"choos[e] between loyalty and laws"*, and they chose loyalty: loyalty to their God, loyalty to their scriptures, loyalty to the congregations and movements behind them.

Thoreau, though, was a secular abolitionist. He had no congregation. He had no movement. Thoreau, in standing against the United States with nobody by his side, placed himself in what Shklar described as *"personal isolation of the most extreme sort"*. In that isolation, she explained, Thoreau *"...was asserting the unconditional primacy of conscience in the face of what he regarded*

*as absolute evil. The moral ‘empire of me’ was created because there was no other.”*

Shklar was born into the Latvian Jewish community in 1928. Her family fled Nazi persecution, eventually ending up in Montreal – although not before the 12-year-old Shklar had, herself, spent time in prison, when she and her parents jailed for several weeks in Seattle as “*illegal Oriental immigrants*”.

She ultimately became one of the earliest female tenured professors at Harvard – certainly the first to have been granted maternity leave – and she spent her career producing extraordinary writing about the moral implications of state cruelty.

Shklar was initially somewhat troubled by people like Thoreau, who voluntarily became an “*internal exile*”, opting out of all of the ties that bind humans together, throwing off the yoke of the state but at the same time rejecting religion, family and all other forms of “*social loyalty*”, and appointing himself marquess of “*the moral ‘empire of me’*”.

*"Such claimants," Shklar wrote, "are in many ways disruptive ... They are very hard to defend. They seem egotistical, hyper-individualistic."* How can one single man's objection entitle him to exempt himself from every law and social norm?

Ultimately, though, Shklar accepted: *"I cannot see why ... a claim for 'we' is inherently superior to one made in the name of 'I'. We are just as often wrong, only more audible."*

Judaism in general, and the story of Judith and Holofernes in particular, is all about “*the moral ‘empire of me’*”. Of course, the Jewish people is a collective, and it is centred on a corpus of values, yet the phenomenal political, ethical and philosophical diversity amongst us proves that values do not translate uniformly and incontrovertibly into action. There were rabbis opposed to American slavery, and, regrettably, rabbis inspired by the same

Torah who were supportive. Even the United States Constitution, which Thoreau so roundly rejected, begins with a pledge to “*establish justice*”: the entire Civil War was a dispute over what that value meant in practice.

Judaism teaches that we each need to become marquis of our own “*moral ‘empire of me’*”. We each have the duty to turn those values which inspire us into action in the best way that we can. We are a people that thrives on difference and celebrates individuality.

A particularly beautiful passage of Mishnah records the sage Akavia ben-Mahal’lel rejecting a communal consensus by sternly declaring: “*It is better for me to be called a fool every day of my life, than to do for a single second what is evil in the sight of the Eternal One.*” Of course, Akavia was not standing up for any great ethical principle on a par with Thoreau’s abolitionism. Yet if a dispute over the kashrut of sheep’s wool – because, yes, that’s what it was all about – was worth casting off bonds of communal loyalty, how much more so are the great moral issues of the age... of any age?

Shklar ended one of her articles by remarking: “*I am not good at conclusions. The desire to arrive at them strikes me, frankly, as slightly childish. A need for an ‘and they lived happily ever after’ ending does not seem to me to fit a type of discourse that is unending.*”

And, indeed, the Jewish quest for justice is unending. Two Jews, three moral empires.

This Chanukkah, may the moral legacy of Judith Shklar inspire us to value the bonds that we have, while not allowing ourselves to be fettered by them.



## **I speak up because I can't be silent any more: an interview with Yehudis Fletcher**

***Rabbi Lev Saul***

Yehudis Fletcher is a Haredi activist, who is campaigning for change within her community. Having established an advocacy charity, *Nahamu*, she just released her autobiography, *Chutzpah: A Memoir of Faith, Sexuality, and Daring to Stay*. I interviewed her, with help from her 13-year-old son.

**Lev Saul:** Our theme for this edition is “Judiths for Justice” and you are certainly a Judith who has been fighting for justice.

**Yehudis Fletcher:** Yes, I actually wrote a paper about this.

As a child attending Haredi educational institutions, I had learned the story of Yehudis. Sanitised in the same way all our texts were, Yehudis was presented as a brave woman who quietly did whatever needed to be done in a time of crisis. Her story, stripped of the sexy detail (except the bit about killing Holofernes) chimed perfectly with everything else that was communicated to me about my role as a Haredi girl: women might be backstage, but we were doing the *real* work.

As a Haredi girl, I had not been allowed to study the text properly. For a long time, I looked for Yehudis's story in the books we had at home. It was only after I stumbled across the online library Sefaria in 2016 that I began to have more access to previously forbidden

texts, and eventually, I realised Yehudis might be there too. When I found her, I read her story in one sitting.

I shouldn't have been surprised to read that she did not act alone. Her maidservant is acknowledged in the text as being 'in charge of everything'. The two of them summon the male elders of the city, who come to Yehudis's home. When they arrive, she berates the elders for their lack of success in liberating the people of Judea, and for good measure, their lack of faith in G-d.

The men respond in a way I have heard a hundred times before. They assure her that she is a righteous woman, and not wrong at all, but they (the men) have no choice but to do what they do. They suggest that she pray for them.

Yehudis responds and says, 'Listen to me and I will do something which will be remembered throughout all generations among the children of our nation' and then took charge, instructing them not to interfere. Either Yehudis, or whoever wrote her story, is deliberately light on how much of her plan was shared with the men in advance. The men left, Yehudis prayed, and then she and her maidservant went off on their mission, armed with wine and figs (not cheese, as I was taught as a child). The elders watched her go.

The verses that follow detail strategic planning, and the exquisite execution of, well, an execution, by two women working together like a well-oiled machine. There is no doubt that Yehudis knows she is beautiful and uses her beauty to her advantage, but she doesn't subject herself to anything more than the general's gaze, before killing him.

(Re)claiming her story to fit with mine is itself an act of resistance as I look for clues in the text for details about Yehudis. I was less interested in her physical strength (decapitating generals is hard work) and more in her fortitude. Did she shake, the way I do, when she held the elders to account?

Her collaborative relationship with her unnamed maidservant feels similarly compelling. I noticed that *shifcha*, maidservant, is how Yehudis refers to herself in relation to Holofernes, when she is positioning herself as a sexual partner available to him. Perhaps, then, *shifcha* is a euphemism, and the unnamed woman who takes care of everything is no more Yehudis's maidservant than Yehudis is Holofernes's. I saw a version of the expectation put on me that if I must be a lesbian, I should at least only be one in private. For years, my partner went unnamed and hidden. It is easy for me to imagine an ancient Yehudis who falls in love with another woman, disguising their relationship with a dynamic that is heteronormative.

I am fascinated by Yehudis's bolshiness: her clarity, her skill, and her power. But most of all, I want to know more about her maidservant, her friend, her sidekick. The woman who took care of everything, and, I think, her lesbian lover. Stories are often told by the dominant group. If it is up to non-dominant groups to find the untold stories about ourselves, I think the book of Yehudis is a good place to start.

**LS: Can you tell us about your activism in Nahamu?**

**YF:** My activism with Nahamu began when I was trying to understand what it was about the Haredi world that I was living in that seemed to enable sexual abuse. I wasn't really interested in individual instances of sexual abuse, but to know what was it about the environment and the systems that I was living in where sexual abuse seemed to be covered up. It was a hospitable environment in which people could abuse people with less power than them.

So, I was doing that, and I came across Eve Sacks, who was lobbying at the time for Haredi boys who didn't have access to secular education. We put our heads together and we started to think about the other issues that are systemic. We came up with three more. If

we take the first two: the cover up of sexual abuse, the denial of secular education, mostly to Hassidic boys.

We added three more, which are forced marriage; what we call “coerced criminality,” which are the ways that people earn a living if they have no education and no access to contraception; and the fifth, which is more overarching, is the denial of personal autonomy. That covers things like women being required to shave their heads in line with their menstrual cycle, women not being allowed to drive, that sort of thing.

We have three main audiences. We campaign on these issues to central government and local authorities. Of course, we campaign internally: we want to alert people within Haredi communities to their civil rights. And the third audience is what we call the “mainstream Jewish community” and that includes the Progressive community, who we think have a crucial role to play in addressing extremism and human rights abuses right within our own community.

There’s a tendency sometimes to think of Haredim as people that you need around to bris you and to bury you, and there’s quite a nostalgia attached to that, particularly with the resurgence of the popularity of Yiddish culture. That can sometimes turn into something quite unpleasant, in which the Haredi and Hassidic communities look “ultra Jewish,” as if there’s some kind of hierarchy as to how to perform Judaism. That is relished, without understanding what it means to be within that community; to be a woman, who’s not allowed to drive.

**LS: You very much live up to your namesake of the biblical Judith. Your story of naming abusers, surviving assault, dealing with harassment and rejection, and leaving abusive marriages is harrowing and powerful. How do you find your strength?**



**YF:** This is a really important question. How do some people survive the things I've been through and come through it stronger; and some people go through the things I've been through and don't have the strength? Where does that strength come from?

I was a Research Fellow on a really important project funded by the AHRC at the University of Kent into abuse in religious settings. One of the strands of the project looks specifically into what makes people survive well. It's not actually been published yet, but I don't think there is one specific answer. I think there's a combination of factors.

For me, I have got this personality that is quite vivacious. Once I've got something between my teeth, I just don't give up. Some of that I think is innately to do with my personality. Some of it is to do with the obstinate side of me - the chutzpah - is really strong. Some of that makes me a bit of a pain in the arse to be around. It's not all pleasant. My power, my chutzpah, is both my strength and my Achilles' heel.

I speak up because I can't be silent any more. It's not about "why do I speak?" It's because I can't stay quiet.

**LS: You've just released your autobiography, *Chutzpah*, which everyone should read. What inspired you to tell your story?**

**YF:** Well, I see *Chutzpah* as an opportunity to show people what's possible. Sometimes it's just about, rather than trying to tell people what I think is possible for Haredi communities, just really showcasing my life, and what I've managed to change already, and how I've managed to get there. That inspired me. I see *Chutzpah* as something chutzpadik. I also see it as a catalyst for more chutzpah that's yet to come.

**LS: How did you choose the title?**

YF: Chutzpah means “audacious,” and I have chutzpah because I just am a chutzpadik person. But that’s not what chutzpah was called originally. It was originally called *K\*ke, D\*ke, What’s not to L\*ke?* But I wanted to be interviewed on Radio 4, so we changed the title.

**LS: There is a profound moment when you quote a teacher, saying “I’m not threatening to leave, I’m threatening to stay.” What does staying in your Haredi community as a lesbian feminist look like?**

YF: Some of it is physically staying: being there to change the topography of the community, and resisting just by existing within it. Some of it is staying within the narrative; making sure that I’ve got a seat at the table. Some of that means diplomacy and not saying things as strongly as I might feel them. Some of that is about making really careful choices in what I speak up about, and really picking my battles. It’s really important for me to stay within the community and to keep a seat at the table.

**LS: You mention in passing that some more liberal Jews have treated abuses of women and girls, like forced marriages in late teens, as something that religious Jews just do. What should Progressive Jews be doing to support your efforts, and show solidarity?**

YF: We should all treat these issues as human rights abuses that are our business. *Kol Yisrael aravim ze vezeh*: all of our community is responsible for each other. I really reject the framing in which people see Haredi communities as separate or other to the rest of the community. We deserve to be safe just like everyone else does.

If you see something, say something. Don’t look away just because it’s a difficult conversation.

Some of it is joining us in our campaigning work. Some of it is speaking up for us, speaking up with us, supporting Nahamu with any of your skills. Nahamu is here to raise the voices of those of us

who otherwise don't have an opportunity for our voices to be raised.

It doesn't have to be Nahamu. Wherever you find yourself: can you employ somebody from the Haredi world who doesn't have the qualifications but definitely has the skills? Can you host somebody who desperately needs a place to stay when they are trying to find somewhere safe? Do you sit on a board that allocates funds to charities within the Haredi world? Maybe you can ask probing questions about how your money is being used. There's endless ways in which you can be involved!

**LS: I was moved by your description of God as One “big enough for all of us,” who you felt was with you, despite others’ rejection, which goes right back to your childhood. What does your relationship with God look like now?**

**YF:** It's a complicated relationship. I think if it's not complicated, is it really a relationship? I pray on a very regular basis. I think I have a little bit more perspective now on what prayer is and what it does. This way works for me. I don't think it's the only way to get close to God or godliness, but, for me, ritual and prayer and observance of halachah keeps me close. I find myself most able to feel close to doing the right thing when I do it through the lens of religiosity. But I don't see that there's only one route to doing that, and that's what I mean by “God is big enough for all of us.”

**LS: What are your hopes for the future of the Jewish community, especially for women and girls?**

**YF:** I have a vision for Haredi communities where people don't have to choose between staying within them or staying safe. I believe that's possible. I want to see autonomy and agency, and people choosing to stay, and being able to make that choice because they have the freedom to do so. I want people to have the dignity to earn

a living; to have the benefit of education; to choose who to marry, when to marry, or whether to marry at all. I have big dreams.

**LS: This is coming out for Chanukah. What do you love about Chanukah, and what will it look like for you this year?**

YF: This sounds really cheesy, but I just love those little lights! I love the *ner le-echad, ner le-meah*: it doesn't take from me to give to you. For me, Hanukkah this year is a double celebration. It's always a double celebration, because one of my children has their birthday in Hanukkah. So it will be a triple celebration because I am graduating from the University of Manchester with my Masters Degree in Religion and Theology with a Distinction, which is a significant achievement from a little girl who went to school in the cloakroom on top of a synagogue.



## **Judith-Yehudit (the apocryphal), Judith-[Jack] Halberstam (the queer theorist) and Judy/Judith Hopps (the animated rabbit): three interconnected Judiths for Justice**

***Rabbi Dr Judith Rosen-Berry***

This Chanukah I will be celebrating three *Judiths*. And they are: the *not quite* biblical Judith our apocryphal warrior, Jack-[Judith] Halberstam an academic and public queer theorist and Judy (Judith) Hopps an animated rabbit who features in the movie *Zootropolis*. Of course, making any connection between these three *Judiths* for the celebrating of the Jewish festival of Chanukah demands a small leap of interpretative imagination. I say this because - the *Jewish* identity of these three *Judiths* is a bit sketchy and probably wouldn't have passed the first Chanukah/Maccabean-Hasmonean test of Jewish belonging.<sup>11</sup> Of course, I feel differently (from them), and with some flexible/sensitive rabbinic input, I am almost entirely sure that their 'status' would be entirely acceptable, at least, to liberal Jews.<sup>12</sup> But it is complicated because the apocryphal Judith, is just that: 'apocryphal' - so not *really* Jewish.

<sup>11</sup> The Hasmoneans were rather too zealous in their enforcement of what it meant to belong to the Jewish people. Rather a lot of forced homogeneity, and not much generosity shown to the non-Jew.

<sup>12</sup> Based on our commitment to 'inclusivity' I can't see why progressive or liberal Jews would be too worried about accepting into our community (*Jewish*) fictional, animated or any other queer character - which I see as a positive.

And Jack-[Judith]<sup>13</sup> Halberstam self-describes as ‘positionally’ Jewish, but not practising or believing.<sup>14</sup> And of course Judith, or Judy Hopps - is only Jewish by dint of her being *spoken* into existence (literally animated) by the voice of the Jewish actor Ginnifer Goodwin.<sup>15</sup> But anyway, despite their challenging credentials, these are my three (Jewish) *Judiths* (often figural, prominently queer, and animated) and they are, at least to my thinking, interestingly connected.

How so? Well, (in brief), to begin with Jack-[Judith] Halberstam, although a highly respected and prominent academic and author in the fields of queer theory and gender studies - is also known for his critical analysis of a series of animated [Disney/Pixar] movies, and this is what I am drawing on. It’s Halberstam’s methodology (derived from both queer and ‘low theory’<sup>16</sup>) that provides us, in this case, with a unique approach for analysing the cultural

<sup>13</sup> Jack Halberstam does not mind being called ‘Judith’, though he primarily uses the name ‘Jack’ professionally and in public. Halberstam, a prominent gender and queer theorist, has described himself as a ‘free-floater’ when it comes to names and pronouns, embracing a certain ambiguity around his gender identity. He also accepts both ‘he/him’ and ‘she/her’ pronouns, explaining that the back and forth ‘sort of captures the form that my gender takes nowadays.’ He does not wish to ‘resolve [his] gender ambiguity’ and prefers “not to police any of it’ ([jackhalberstam.com](http://jackhalberstam.com)) Sept.3. 2012.

<sup>14</sup> Jack-[Judith] Halberstam, drawing on other Jewish thinkers like Judith Butler, Hannah Arendt and Walter Benjamin, maintains a “distinctly Jewish positionality” - from which he critiques power.

<sup>15</sup> I say this, but in an online article ([aish.com](http://aish.com)) written about the movie *Zootopia* - the question is asked: *Is Judy Hopps Jewish, Maybe?* And according to [aish.com](http://aish.com), “Judy Hopps shares some Jewish ‘characteristics’: she is meek, has many brothers and sisters, her parents worry a lot, and try to discourage her from taking a dangerous job. She is also good at accounting.” ???

<sup>16</sup> See: the work of Stuart Hall, Jamaican born British Marxist sociologist, who wrote *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* and *Cultural Studies 1983: A Theoretical History*.

significance of the Disney/Pixar movie *Zootropolis*. This is because the story's central protagonist Judy Hopps (the animated rabbit) finds a way, not only to break with conventional 'female character *holds*', but goes on to defiantly expose systemic and sexist bias in the Zootropolis police force. A theorist like Jack-[Judith] Halberstam immediately seizes on the cultural significance of this. Not only because Judy Hopps positively challenges the patriarchal stereotyping of female traits and characteristics, but because the (possibly 'queer') storyline of the movie *Zootropolis* has found a way to capture the attention of huge popular audiences. People from all walks of life, ages, backgrounds etc., went to see a movie in which Judy Hopps, Zootropolis's first female rabbit *cop*, not only ignores but defies the numerous misogynistic (and speciesist) 'micro-aggressions' directed towards her, and models what Halberstam identifies as 'transgressive-female' behaviours.<sup>17</sup> Meaning that Judy Hopps counters, and disrupts the qualities negatively attributed to the diminutive (but appealing) female 'bunny' - too small, too weak, too emotional - in order to become the *radical rabbit* who saves the Zootropolis community from a conspiracy aimed to destroy it.<sup>18</sup> In doing this Judy Hopps brings all the Zootropolis inhabitants together and re-establishes the Zootropolis *queer-liberal* mantra - "anyone can be anything"<sup>19</sup> - to the delight of all (including the audiences watching the movie).

<sup>17</sup> Halberstam, Jack. (1998). *Female Masculinity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.. Great book which explores the idea of 'masculinity without men'. This is not just about women 'acting like men' but more about how the traits of masculinity have been historically determined as *belonging/natural* to men, but how 'masculinity' can be embodied by women and is not just some sort of imitation of male masculinity. It is its own thing: female masculinity.

<sup>18</sup> See: Abigail Fisher, "Zootopia: An Empowering Feminist Tail." 14th March 2017, Jewish Women's Archive

<sup>19</sup> Unlike other allegories where the animal vs. animal dynamic suggests biological inevitability, *Zootropolis* is interpreted as spreading the positive



None of this chimes very well with the Maccabean-Chanukah message, but the story of how Judy Hopps saves her Zootropolis community bears an interesting resemblance to the ‘tale’ told about our apocryphal warrior Judith-*Yehudit*!

This ‘resemblance’ is perhaps most clearly seen in the way that both Judith-*Yehudit* and Judy Hopps *reject* flawed male authority. For Judith-*Yehudit* this ‘flaw’ or failure is illustrated in the inability of the patriarchs who preside over her community, to protect the ancient city of Bethulia<sup>20</sup> from *another* wicked conspiracy, one that takes the form of a siege led by the Assyrians. As a consequence Judith-*Yehudit* not only publicly rebukes the patriarchs for their lack of faith and courage but decides to take matters into her own hands. As described in *her* book<sup>21</sup> she acts independently, relying on her own intelligence, courage and faith, to formulate and execute a plan that will save the people of her city from their enemies. The best bit, or the highlight of this ‘tale’ (for me at least) is Judith-*Yehudit*’s near total subversion of male power through the application of ‘transgressive’ guile and deception.<sup>22</sup> This ‘transgressive’ tactic, not only enables her to bypass the

message that prejudice is a societal construct, not a natural one. *All* the animals in Zootropolis are building a more just and harmonious society.

<sup>20</sup> Bethulia translates as the ‘House of God’. I have been trying to think about the possible similarities that might exist (in a different world) between Bethulia and Zootopia - but this project will have to wait for another essay - unless you have some ideas?!

<sup>21</sup> Nobody is sure who wrote the *Book of Judith*, maybe Judith herself - but we will never know.

<sup>22</sup> These are not characteristics that Judy Hopps shares with Judith-*Yehudit*, but Jack-[Judith] Halberstam, might understand Judith-*Yehudit*’s tactics as embodying and enacting a ‘queer art of failure’ - in the sense that the moral behaviour (appropriate for a woman) that Judith-*Yehudit* bypasses, or fails to reproduce is actually heteronormative morality. So she fails in one sense - but successfully so - and this is ‘queer [moral] failure’. See: Judith Halberstam’s (2011) *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.



conventional warfare and power structures of her time by operating outside the domain of ‘honourable’ (male) conduct, but by consciously choosing ‘deception’ as her *modus operandi* - Judith-*Yehudit* prioritises liberation over established female etiquette. Its brilliant. Nobody was expecting that.

Now, of course, the animated movie *Zootropolis* is very different from the *Book of Judith*, but for our Chanukah celebration it is what they share that is of interest, even if these similarities are interpretative! What we have seen embedded in our two stories are two female protagonists who not only challenge conventional expectations (physical, emotional and spiritual) but use their intelligence to achieve remarkable goals. They are stunningly resourceful, and their *unboundedness* allows them to transcend, or to think beyond, previously unquestioned boundaries. And it’s by doing this that they save their communities, not only from the enemy *without*, but the enemy *within*. This is accomplished by their showing a distinct indifference (even hostility) towards those patriarchal tropes and traditions considered normative, and integral to the proper functioning of their respective communities. The actions of Judy Hopps and Judith-*Yehudit* are transformative.

As I have very briefly suggested then, there are some ‘imaginative’ comparisons to be made between the stories of Judy Hopps and Judith-*Yehudit* perhaps especially *via* the critical approach of Jack-[Judith] Halberstam. But to finish, I would like to return to a connection that I alluded to earlier. For hundreds of years the books of the Apocrypha, like the *Book of Judith*, worked not only as religious texts but also as popular cultural texts. In the sense that in the ancient and medieval worlds, apocryphal texts were widely read, not entirely as you might assume for ‘spiritual or moral’ instruction, but for enjoyment. Mostly, because they told engaging stories with themes of broad populist appeal. And among the most most ‘liked’ - most appreciated were dramatically and frequently

performed representations of the Judith-*Yehudit* story.<sup>23</sup> So, as we drift towards cultures increasingly differentiated by their particularities with *testing-(irritating)* shibboleths (that discern who is ‘in’ and who is ‘out’), I like the idea of the *Book of Judith* being embraced as a popular-cultural text, read or heard in the general public’s voice, for the general public’s consumption (Jewish or otherwise). A tale with popular/populist designs but never underestimating the willingness of its audience to be transformed by its content. Which in our case is a story not only about justice *performed*, but justice proactively pursued, and embodied by a powerful female protagonist.

Perhaps then, for me, reading the stories of Judy Hopps and Judith-*Yehudit* via the critical insights of Jack-[Judith] Halberstam this Chanukah, has reminded me of how the public are drawn to, and enjoy the telling of progressive-transformative, and ‘truth’ telling tales,<sup>24</sup> and that despite our current political climate and its hostility towards the ‘*populist-public*’ we should not allow ourselves to be persuaded otherwise. After all Jack-[Judith] Halberstam, Judy Hopps, and Judith-*Yehudit*, together, tell a *Chanukah’ish* story about what it means to be *with* and *for* the people. The end. Happy Chanukah.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> One of the first recorded standalone plays about Judith and Holofernes was staged in Pesaro, Italy, 1489, by the local Jewish community.

<sup>24</sup> This movie made more than a billion dollars at the box office, won the Oscar for best Animated Feature Film, in 2016. A LOT of people went to see it!!

<sup>25</sup> For more inspiring stories about Judiths for Justice, see the Voices for Prophetic Judaism website: <https://voicesforpropheticjudaism.uk>



**Dr Judith Plaskow**

***Rabbi Khazn Dr Barbara Borts***

Was I there, at Sinai? I had thought I was. So much of Jewish tradition spoke to me, even many of those aspects supposedly reserved for men - we are not separate species really, not from Mars and Venus - that I knew I too had been at Sinai, as it were, receiving the Torah and Jewish tradition and culture.

There were, of course, unsettling omissions, and unpleasant commissions which I, as one of the very first women rabbis in the world, and an avowed feminist and social activist, experienced with pain and aggravation, as I moved into the unfamiliar role of woman as leader in a Jewish community. I chose for my rabbinical thesis to explore radical theology and Jewish tradition, knitting together the exciting theologies I read elsewhere, with Judaism, our texts and our praxis. One chapter was on feminist theology. And, as this was 1980 - 1981, there was very little being written in the Jewish world, as opposed to the Christian, (and secular) worlds. I believed that one of the major differences between Christianity and Judaism and their approaches to the question of feminism arose from this: Christianity was much more of a theologically-driven religion and Judaism much more an experiential one. With regard to ordination of women, for example, Christian churches were busy with the theoretical side of such changes, the theology of it, whilst Judaism, at least Progressive Judaism, just got on with the ordaining of women and then trying to sort out the theological issues and conundrums which popped up once women were in such prominent and unprecedented roles. Very '*na'asey v'nishma*', let us

do and then listen in to how that works.<sup>26</sup> I had very little to work with and had to carve out my own modest ways of marrying feminism with serious Jewish religious life, translating, as I went along, the mostly Christian and secular sources into Jewish.

The name Dr Judith Plaskow appeared in some collections of feminist theology, but it wasn't until a year after I had submitted my rabbinical thesis that Plaskow published her article *The Right Question is Theological*, in 1982. This was a response to an article by the writer Cynthia Ozick, entitled *Notes Towards Finding the Right Question*.<sup>27</sup> Whilst Ozick took a rather traditional Jewish approach of altering practise - the sociological changes - Plaskow plunged Judaism into the complicated matters of belief, God, prayer. She wrote. 'Men are the actors in Jewish life, because they are the normative Jews. Women are "other than" the norm; we are less than fully human.'<sup>28</sup>

Plaskow expands on the theme of woman as Other through careful readings of Biblical and rabbinical texts. She likens this to the status of the Jew vis-à-vis the non-Jew and then bluntly states that '...it is folly to think that justice for women can be achieved simply through halakhic mechanisms when women's plight is not primarily a product of *halakhah*.'<sup>29</sup> And then the *ikar*, the central point: The Otherness of women is also given dramatic expression in our language about God...The maleness of God is not arbitrary - nor is it simply a matter of pronouns. It leads us to the central question,

<sup>26</sup> A reference to a well-known understanding of Exodus 24:7, after *matan torah*, the giving of the Torah, the people say, we will do and we will listen. Deed first, analysis later.

<sup>27</sup> Both articles appeared in *On Being a Jewish Feminist: A Reader*. Edited by Susannah Heschel. Schocken Books, 1963. Ozick, p. 120. Plaskow, p.223

<sup>28</sup> p 224

<sup>29</sup> p 227

the question of the Otherness of women, just as the Otherness of women leads to the maleness of God.’<sup>30</sup>

Inspired by this article, which I often taught in conjunction with Ozick’s, I wrote to the editors of the prayerbook committee who were about to begin a new edition of the RSGB [Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, former name of MRJ: Movement for Reform Judaism] machzor for the Days of Awe, suggesting a hierarchy of feminist insights to consider, from the tinkering with pronouns to the challenge about the nature of the Divine. The letter exists in a hand-written form in my home. It took another decade before some of those changes occurred.

In 1990, Dr Plaskow published the first single-author, through-written Jewish feminist theology, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective*.<sup>31</sup> Her chapters included work on how to reimagine community; on reshaping Jewish memory; on sexuality; on repairing the world; and of course, on God. She opens with a comment on that hitherto comfortable assumption that I was there, at Sinai, by looking at a phrase in Exodus: וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-הָעָם הָיְיוּ זָכָרִים וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-הָאִשָּׁה: לְשִׁלֹּשֶׁת יָמִים אַל-תִּגְּשׁוּ אֶל-אִשָּׁה: - *Va-yomer el-ha-am: heyu n’chonim lishloshet yamim; al-tig’shu el-ha-ishah* - And [Moses] said to the people, “Be ready for the third day: you should not go near a woman.” (Exodus 19:15)

This was quite jolting. Why had I overlooked its import? Was I not there? Or was I silenced? Or was my sexual nature considered non-existent, therefore, not troublesome, not worth mentioning?

Plaskow interrogated the text and answered, as had I, that ‘To accept our absence from Sinai would be to allow the male text to define us and our connection to Judaism.’ She asserts that ‘To stand on the ground of our experience...the certainty of our

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Harper & Row Publishers, New York. 1990

membership...is to begin the journey toward the creation of a feminist Judaism.’<sup>32</sup> She concludes that women were silenced and that part of our work was to ‘...see a larger Torah behind the Torah, a Torah in which women’s experience is rendered visible.’<sup>33</sup> To that end, Rabbi Marcia Plumb and Rabbi Elli Tikvah Sarah in the UK organised a conference called The Half-Empty Bookcase. I offered a session in honour of Judith Plaskow on the theme of her book, *Standing Again at Sinai*, and invited the women in the workshop to write themselves into that narrative. Where were they, what were they doing, thinking, feeling? I only wish I still had those modern *midrashim*. They were imaginative, poignant, funny, and simply wonderful. They were participating in writing women back into the stories.

In 1992, I attended a Reconstructionist rabbinical conference in Florida, where the guest speaker was none other than Dr Judith Plaskow and I asked for the chance to speak with her, given my thesis of 10 years earlier, and her work. We had a delightful walk along the beach, exchanging news about mutual friends, but also discussing change in prayer. I was struggling with the *Avinu Malkeinu*, aware that the words conjured up images of God the father, God the king, that I was uncomfortable with. She agreed. And yet we both had a profound emotional attachment to this *piyyut*, which we had sung again and again throughout our lives. What she told me was interesting - that she may not be able to sing different words, but that she hoped her son would! She signed a note for me. 28 June, 1992, which I have taped in the front of my copy of *Standing Again at Sinai*.

<sup>32</sup> pp 27 - 28

<sup>33</sup> p 43

So much of what I wrote about above, the works I cited, was from almost thirty years ago. Where does Judith stand now on the topic of Jewish feminism?

In an interview given in 2023, she states that: ‘...it’s important to acknowledge that a huge amount has happened in terms of making women’s contributions visible since I wrote *Standing Again At Sinai*.’<sup>34</sup> She cites rituals and commentaries and changes in God language to demonstrate that there has been progress. It is well worth quoting her perceptions as to where Jewish feminism needs to look next:

That said, there is still much to be done. For one thing, it is important that those who give *d’vrei Torah*, at least now and then, confront some of the uglier parts of Torah and use them as starting points for talking about social transformation. E.g., there is so much violence against women in the Torah that mirrors the violence against women in the world. To take one example, how do we use the story of Lot offering his virgin daughters to the men of Sodom to begin a conversation about the routinization of violence in our texts and our world? And we also need to find ways to bring the voices of women and other marginalized Jews into worship in more substantive ways. One idea would be to replace the traditional Haftarah readings with texts connected to the parashah that offer a different lens on its themes.<sup>35</sup>

Plaskow’s contributions are summed up in her Wikipedia page. ‘Her contributions to Jewish feminist theology in particular have proved to be invaluable. She was the first Jewish feminist to call herself a theologian and *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective* (1990) was the first Jewish feminist text dedicated to theology... Additionally, her assertion that women's perspectives have been ignored in Jewish history and that Jewish feminists are

<sup>34</sup> <https://phralipen.hr/en/2023/10/12/judith-plaskow-the-patriarchal-aspects-persist-despite-the-increasing-egalitarianism-of-many-jewish-communities/>

<sup>35</sup>ibid



called to reclaim the female perspective has inspired a wealth of scholarship.’<sup>36</sup>

Our teacher Judith Plaskow is certainly worthy of having a place in the pantheon of important Judiths. All contemporary Jewish feminists are building upon her work, and the work of the women she cites as her colleagues in the creation of Jewish feminist theology. So much of this exists as anecdote, as handwritten scraps of paper, as memories of events never to be seen on social media. Those of us from the older generations of women rabbis and theologians call her our teacher, and generation builds upon generation. Thank you, Judith, and yes, I would love one day again to ‘have more conversations on beautiful beaches’<sup>37</sup>, looking back at what we accomplished, and looking forward to what other work there is to do.

<sup>36</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judith\\_Plaskow](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judith_Plaskow)

<sup>37</sup> From the note Dr Plaskow wrote to me after our walk in Florida.





## Judy Chicago

### ***Rabbi Dr Deborah Kahn-Harris***

Judy Chicago (born Judith Cohen, 20 July 1939), a pioneer of the Feminist Art Movement, was born in Chicago, Illinois to Arthur and May Cohen. Chicago describes her parents as ‘Jewish liberals, with a passion for the intellectual life and seemingly endless energy for political activism’ [Chicago 2021, p 9]. Although her Jewish upbringing was largely secular, she notes that her father was very proud of his family’s Jewish heritage and, particularly, his descendent from the Vilna Gaon. In Chicago’s most recent autobiography, *The Flowering: The Autobiography of Judy Chicago*, she traces the importance of this Jewish liberal milieu of childhood to her own development.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, Chicago writes,

...with hindsight, it becomes obvious that I was raised in a household shaped by what might be called Jewish ethical values, particularly the concept of *tikkun olam*, the healing or repairing of the world [*Ibid*, 12].

As her mother worked full time, her father undertook a greater share of childcare responsibilities. Chicago describes the vibrant

<sup>38</sup> Chicago has written three autobiographies. In addition to the current one, the other two are *Beyond the Flower: The Autobiography of a Feminist Artist*. New York: Penguin (1997) and *Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist*. Lincoln: Authors Choice Press (2006).

intellectual life that he provided for her as a girl, before his unexpected death when she was only thirteen.

Chicago displayed a prestigious talent for art from a young age alongside her bright and curious mind. She was sent to private art lessons at the Chicago Institute of Art and later went on to study art for a time at UCLA, before eventually gaining an Master of Fine Art from UCLA in 1964. During her undergraduate years, she met and married Jerry Gerowitz, who died tragically in a car accident in 1963 only two years after they were married.

Chicago's early work (1965-1973) was part of the male dominated, minimalist art scene in southern California. Her work from this period is abstract with an interest in colour and developing her own visual language through the use of geometric shapes. During this time, she enrolled in auto body school to learn how to spray paint the hoods of cars (she was the only woman out of 250 students) and she learned how to use pyrotechnics to create photographs and films. Throughout this period, she struggled to prove to her almost exclusively male peers that she that she was committed to the rigours of being a serious artist.

By the end of the 60s Chicago's feminist consciousness had begun to more fully develop. In 1970 as part of an exhibition of her work, Chicago decided to change her name. Across from the entrance to an installation of her work, she posted the following notice:

*Judy Gerowitz hereby divests herself of all names imposed upon her through male social dominance and freely chooses her own name: Judy Chicago [Ibid, 50]*<sup>39</sup>

Also in 1970, Chicago left Los Angeles to set up a programme teaching Feminist Art education at Fresno State College. A year later

<sup>39</sup> See <https://www.normanrea.com/blog/61zzfy5ylu3ofuah94wjxf2oviwpf>

she and a fellow artist Miriam Schapiro set up a similar programme at the California Institute of the Arts, which resulted in the installation work *Womanhouse* (1972, Los Angeles). Here Chicago, Schapiro and their exclusive female students took a dilapidated house, refurbished it, and set up installations and performances in every space of the house reflecting ‘women’s experiences as a source of material for art, notably through craft techniques’ [Gioni, Carrion-Murayari, and Norton, 83]. The development of Feminist Art education and the subsequent work that resulted from it are the earliest manifestations of what was to become Chicago’s philosophy of art, namely, that

- women’s experiences are a valid basis upon which to create art;
- women’s experiences are equally normative as men’s experiences;
- and traditional ‘crafts’ (often framed as female media), such as needlework and pottery, are equally serious artistic mediums as (the male coded media of) painting and sculpture.

In time the philosophy she was developing alongside the methodology of working alongside and in partnership with other women resulted in the creation of her most iconic work, *The Dinner Party* (1974-79).<sup>40</sup> This monumental work involved the labour of some four hundred women, one and twenty-five of whom were designated as ‘members of the project’. *The Dinner Party* was the cumulation of ongoing research that Chicago did into women’s history. Eventually Chicago settled upon thirty-nine women, both historic and mythic, to seat around an enormous triangular table. At each seat a place is set for one of these women with a plate alongside a variety of supplementary material about these women

<sup>40</sup> See <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/en-GB/objects/5167>

on table runners. Underneath the table is the *Heritage Floor* containing the names of a further nine hundred and ninety-eight women from history, each name written on a porcelain floor tile.

At the entrance to the installation are six woven banners, each with an illustration and short phrase. Two of these banners contain phrases that are likely familiar to members of Progressive synagogues –

- ‘And then all that divided them merged’
- ‘And then Everywhere was Eden once again’<sup>41</sup>

These phrases became part of the now famous “Merger Poem”, which was originally published in the catalogue to *The Dinner Party*. The poem itself has found its way into our Jewish liturgies, sometimes used as an alternative to the second paragraph of the Aleynu.<sup>42</sup>

*The Dinner Party* was first exhibited in at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in March 1979. It has since been exhibited at numerous locations, both across the USA and internationally at major art museums and other spaces, before eventually, in 2007, finding a permanent home at the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum in New York. *The Dinner Party* has been the subject of extremely mixed reviews, for many decades particularly in the traditional art press. In recent years these reviews have been reassessed, especially in light of the only barely disguised misogyny from older, male art critics. Throughout, however, audiences have responded movingly and with deep appreciation for the piece. Often exhibitions of *The Dinner Party* have been sold out.

<sup>41</sup> See <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/en-GB/objects/166008>

<sup>42</sup> See *Forms of Prayer*, 347. In *Siddur Lev Chadash*, 213, the poem is used in themed reading, ‘Redemption’.

*The Dinner Party* embedded much of Chicago's art practice for her next major work, *The Birth Project* (1980-85). For this project Chicago worked with more than one hundred and fifty needleworkers across the United States to create often monumental canvases on the theme of childbirth. The subject matter of *The Birth Project* was chosen in response to what Chicago viewed as a lack of female perspective in the history of art. Childbirth, with its uniquely female experience, was an area of human life that Chicago determined had been little explored in the history of Western art.

Although Chicago has produced a number of other major bodies of work, none are as overtly Jewish as *The Holocaust Project: From Darkness into Light* (1985-93).<sup>43</sup> Shortly after meeting her now husband, Donald Woodman, the two of them went to see Claus Lanzmann's nine-hour documentary, *Shoah*. Like Chicago, Woodman is also Jewish with a similarly secular, Jewishly ethical upbringing. Together they began a journey of exploring the Jewish side of their identities, resulting in working together on *The Holocaust Project*. Chicago describes that just as she needed to do research and discover her history as a woman, so she needed to do the same with her Jewish identity.

As with other of Chicago's works, *The Holocaust Project* was a collaborative project, primarily with Woodman. Together the two of them travelled both to Europe and Israel to research the project. What they discovered for themselves was not only the specifically Jewish history of the Holocaust, but also the wider ramifications for world at large. Still, Chicago concludes that

...perhaps to learn the crucial lessons of the Holocaust, people will have to be willing to make their own journeys, to *choose*, as Donald and I did, to enter the darkness of the Holocaust - although I am not

<sup>43</sup> Various details from *The Holocaust Project* can be viewed here: <https://www.judychicagoportal.org/theme/jewish-identity>

suggesting our journey as the only route. We simply offered our experiences as a possible path [Chicago, 271].

Some Jews have found *The Holocaust Project* deeply moving and spiritually powerful. Others have criticised Chicago and Woodman for universalising the experience of the Holocaust and drawing too many analogies to other contemporary events. For Chicago states explicitly that she ‘came to see the Holocaust in the larger context of a global structure of power and powerlessness’ [*Ibid*, 271].

The sixteen pieces of *The Holocaust Project* are multimedia incorporating painting, photography (Woodman is a photographer), needlework, and stained glass among other media. The majority of these works examine various aspects of the Holocaust itself, some using photography from the liberation of the camps and other images from the Holocaust itself incorporated into Chicago and Woodman’s work. The final piece, however, is entitled ‘Rainbow Shabbat’, which presents an idolised vision of a multicultural, inclusive future.

Shortly after completing *The Holocaust Project*, Chicago created six illustrations to accompany a translation of the Song of Songs by the Jewish feminist poet, Marcia Falk.<sup>44</sup> While little else of her more recent work is overtly Jewish, her work continues to be informed by both her feminism and her deeply rooted commitment to *tikkun olam*, her social justice, and analysis of power dynamics. The Serpentine Gallery in London held a retrospective of her work in 2024, a review of which by Rabbi Mark Goldsmith was published in *The Jewish News*.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> <https://judychicago.com/the-jordan-schnitzer-family-foundation/print-archive/voices-from-the-song-of-songs/>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.jewishnews.co.uk/the-feminist-artist-who-rocked-a-rabbis-world/>

Now 86 years old, Chicago continues to create art and tour her work. The art world has more or less caught up to Judy Chicago now. To me, she will always be a role model for anyone who has ever been told that they cannot or should not be what they want to be and, nevertheless, persevered.

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## **Judith beyond the canon: Khazante Judith Berkson and the prophetic voice**

***Cantor Rachel Weston***

The apocryphal Judith doesn't wait for permission. She moves quietly and deliberately. She protects her people with her voice, her presence and her gentle pounding into uncharted space.

When speaking with Cantor Judith Berkson, it becomes clear that her own artistic life echoes that synthesis of rootedness and risk. Her relationship to sound, to prayer, and to artistry holds something of Judith's character: its intimacy, and its explorative courage.

Judith Berkson has had a varied career as a cantor, vocalist, and composer working across myriad genres. Her performance of lieder and her work as a composer have brought her to international acclaim and renowned collaborations. Judith's work has explored the musical and cultural legacy of the khazantes, women cantors of the early 20th century. She has developed new microtonal music for electronic and acoustic instruments, and also works as a pulpit cantor. Musicologist Dr Jeremiah Lockwood writes:<sup>46</sup>

Berkson's engagement with cantorial music runs towards extremes: she identifies the music as containing a kernel of modernist radicalism that she seeks to appropriate into her creative work; at the same time, she is a preservationist carefully studying the work of the

<sup>46</sup> <<https://schoolofmusic.ucla.edu/cantorial-pedagogy-in-the-wild-judith-berksons-online-khazones-class/>>



great historic cantors, reproducing the fine details of their vocal performances in her own singing.

Berkson's artistry can be seen as a methodology of resistance against the way religious life becomes rote, predictable, and drained of spirit. She talks of the mechanisms by which sound lodges in the psyche and how the voices we hear growing up become part of the "sonic transmission" of Jewish memory. Much of Berkson's musical life is inseparable from her upbringing. Her father, Cantor Thomas Berkson, was her first teacher. As children, she and her siblings learned prayers, pitch, harmony, and the precision of chamber music. They sang together, performed together, and listened intently to records of the old masters of Khazones.

Though it wasn't always enjoyable, some of it feeling demanding and forced, it nonetheless built an inner world: microtonal pitch, the sound of bending notes and the grainy recordings repeatedly rewound. Judith is part of a collective of emerging cantorial revivalists, studying from those same bootlegs, pausing, replaying, and listening for the detail inside the detail. These artistic approaches are integral to musical revivalist techniques which turn to old recordings, slowing them down to study the internal anatomy, every microtone, ornament, inflection, as a direct act of cultural preservation.

In her early twenties, Judith realised that simply being "good at it" wasn't enough. She wanted to be an artist, someone who added something new, who lived inside the music instead of performing it from the outside, a powerful step into the Judith-like territory of making a life that doesn't quite match the one you were handed.

"If I don't improvise in davening," she says, "the music is dead." She describes those moments as a surrender of ego: the feeling that "it's not me; it's coming through me." That receptivity to be a channel sits very close to the heart of prophetic imagination.

Berkson's compositional work seems to sit in a long line of artists who were called avant-garde because they were a bit ahead of the curve. She points out how many once "strange" composers became standard listening within a generation. What begins underground often becomes the foundation. That's true in contemporary music, and it's true of Judith's story too: once peripheral, now central to the way many Jews think about Chanukah.

Berkson speaks about her mentor, the late Joe Maneri, with a kind of reverence reserved for the people who quietly alter the course of a life. Maneri opened doors towards an ecosystem of microtonalism, Greek and Turkish modes, jazz harmony, close score reading, choral voicing and instrumental composition. Maneri's mentorship dismantled the limits of Judith's upbringing, and allowed her to viscerally internalise musical systems so that she could eventually break the rules with artistic intentionality.

Judith's story lives outside the canon, and Berkson seems drawn, instinctively not self-consciously, to extra-canonical spaces of her own. Her work doesn't sit neatly inside any single tradition. It listens to cantorial records and bootlegs, to classical technique, to the avant-garde, to minimalism, to Yiddish song. It's a conversational musical midrash which spans across centuries.

In a moment when Jewish communities are searching for prophetic language, Berkson offers something different: a prophetic sound. Something that remembers the past but refuses to be contained by it, something that risks vulnerability in order to open a sonic and artistic doorway. Something that, like Judith's act, begins on the margins and ends up reshaping the centre.

### **Further reading**

<<https://judithberkson.info/bio>>

<<https://khazonesunderground.com/albums/khazntes/>>

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQWbPKqqIcs>>

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GlMuFoZamKQ>>



## **The City of the Judians**

***Rabbi Robyn Ashworth-Steen***

The tale below is a fan-fiction short story based on both the plot, imaginings and wisdom of Ursula le Guin and her story, *The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas*, and the apocryphal Book of Judith (with just a little nod to Hagar).

Judith paused outside the central tent. She could hear the chief Judians deep in conversation. The deliberation had just concluded and the group had decided, according to their custom of collaborative decision making and consciousness raising, to leave their encampment at The Well of the Living One Who Sees Me. The rumours had spread through camp like wildfire a few days ago, promises of a city like no other. A place far up in the mountains which had the greatest of views. A society where none suffered and everyone's needs were met and resources were plentiful.

Judith was wary but also she was tired. She knew her time was coming and her people needed a place to settle after so long trekking, teaching and forming their group. To be up in the mountains was attractive - these horizons without end made Judith uneasy. It was time.

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The last notes of the melodies which had carried the Judians to the gates of the city, vibrated through and around them. Judith stood

central and at the front of her large group of women who had committed themselves to a life in community, of the hard work of constructing and maintaining a group that was founded on the radical principles of accountability, transparency and justice.

Judith held out her sceptre and knocked on the gate. The Judians were quiet as they took in the jewelled, towering gate. It seemed strange to have such an opulent object placed on the mountain. Their eyes looked up and up, away from the scenery around them, the crevasses and the fissures, up and up to the top of the huge structure before them.

The gate opened. ‘Who goes there?’, the gatekeeper asked. ‘It is I, Judith of the Judians. I and my fellow Judians seek a home in this City of Omelas. May we enter. We are strong and have much wisdom to share.’

The gatekeeper replied in a tone that, ever so slightly, made Judith’s skin crawl and the chief Judians grip their swords more tightly. ‘You may enter the city of the renowned Omelas. Though to do so you must enter the city’s basement. There you will find the secret to the city’s success and richness here at the peak of the mountaintops. Having understood the reason for our city’s existence you may then either choose to enter the city and settle as one of us, or leave. The choice will be yours.’

The Chief Judians conferred after hearing from the people, young and old alike. They were unsure and were suspicious of any society that used secrecy and trickery but they had come this far. They began the short descent by the city’s wall to another gatekeeper by the basement doors, dull and unimpressive compared to the doors before.

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The Judians slowly entered the dark, musty and malodorous basement. Judith was first to see the most terrible site. She

screamed and fell upon her face. In the corner of the room, chained, mute and dishevelled was a young girl. Barely clothed, she was seated on the cold stone tiles next to a bowl with water, like a dog. 'Here', the gatekeeper boomed, 'is what enables our success. Because of the sacrifice of this child we prosper. Thanks to her suffering we no longer suffer. Now you have seen that which upholds our city you may enter. You will never speak of this child again or visit this basement. Or you may leave. The choice is yours.'

The Judians did not need to communicate verbally. They had been through too much, fought and worked too hard, on becoming all that they were. They fell on their faces, ran their hands through the dirt and dust around them and smeared it on their heads as times of old. They cried in a loud voice, led by Judith, the creed of the Judians - 'it shall not be so. Break down their stateliness by the hands of a woman. For your power is not found in numbers or your might in strong men; for you are a God of the afflicted, a helper of the oppressed, an upholder of the weak.'

And so the Judians defied the gatekeeper and unlike any other traveller before them who had either chosen to overlook the suffering, tortured child to reap the benefits of the city, or those who left unable to stomach the incongruence, the fierce Judians chose another path. Overpowering the gatekeeper, they gently unchained the child. They wrapped her, carefully noting the wounds she carried, and held her as one of their own. As they caressed the child the bricks around them began to buckle, a sign of the city's fragility now obvious to all, without the prop of a martyr and scapegoat for all the city's richness. The Judians left the basement walking through the streets heralding the child as they beat their chests and tore their clothes whilst wailing. The citizens of the Omelas fled, the rulers in their ivory towers were so stunned they turned into stone where they stood. People fled and the Judians and the child remained. The city fell, brick by brick.

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So it was that the Sanctuary of Judian was built, on the ruins of the City of Omelas. A place that symbolised the possibility of choosing another path, of never being satisfied with the sacrifice and suffering of one for the many. A place which refused to conquer the mountain but to live within it and as part of it. A society which breathed as one whilst celebrating all and every. A sanctuary which ruthlessly lived out its values of justice and courage, of strength and compassion.

Even today you can find the gatekeepers set in stone, part of the garden of the City of the Judians. A reminder to all of the price that is paid for chasing power at the expense of others.

## About the contributors

Rabbi Robyn Ashworth-Steen is a researcher, writer, thinker, teacher and artist who, with others, brings these modes together to find critical, creative and joyful ways to respond to the brokenness within and without.

Rabbi Khazn Dr Barbara Borts is a Yiddishist, Jewish educator, rabbi and chazzan, now working freelance.

Rabbi Dr Margaret Jacobi is the emerita rabbi of Birmingham Progressive Synagogue and Chair of Tzelem, Rabbis and Cantors for Social and Economic Justice in the UK. She has a particular interest in the Talmud and justice.

Rabbi Professor Deborah Kahn-Harris is Principal of Leo Baeck College, where she also lectures in Hebrew Bible. Her undergraduate degree is in History of Art, which she enjoyed getting to use for this piece!

Rabbi Gabriel Kanter-Webber is rabbi of Brighton and Hove Progressive Synagogue.

Rabbi Dr Judith Rosen-Berry teaches Modern Jewish Philosophy and Theology at Leo Baeck College.

Rabbi Elli Tikvah Sarah is Emeritus Rabbi of Brighton and Hove Progressive Synagogue. Her latest book, *Breaking Binaries*, is due to be published in March 2026.

Rabbi Lev Saul is Rabbi of Kingston Liberal Synagogue.

Cantor Rachel Weston is a freelance Chazzan, currently serving Kehillah, North London.

Dr Jess Wood has just been awarded her PhD from King's College, London, for her thesis examining the contribution of arts practice to biblical exegesis. She is married to Rabbi Elli Tikvah Sarah.

## **About *Voices for Prophetic Judaism***

Voices for Prophetic Judaism is an initiative led by Progressive Jewish clergy in Britain which aims to reclaim the Jewish legacy of ethical teachings by establishing a platform for prophetic voices and prophetic action, championing justice, peace, equality, human rights, and tikkun olam (repair of the world).

Launched with an online Tikkun Leyl Shavuot, a night of study, on 1-2 June 2025, a core feature of Voices for Prophetic Judaism is our website <[www.voicesforpropheticjudaism.uk](http://www.voicesforpropheticjudaism.uk)> where you will find a page providing the recording of the Tikkun Leyl; a 'Resources' page of sermons, articles, and other materials; and a 'Partners' page, which highlights some of the Jewish organisations and projects and initiatives in Britain, and Jewish and Israeli-Palestinian initiatives in Israel-Palestine, that promote social justice, equality, LGBTQ+ inclusion, human rights and eco-action.

In September 2025, VPJ produced a booklet of readings for Aseret Y'mei T'shuvah, the Ten Days of Return, that begin on Rosh Ha-Shanah and conclude on Yom Kippur.

This booklet of readings has been created for the eight days of Chanukkah.



Voices for Prophetic Judaism

[www.voicesforpropheticjudaism.uk](http://www.voicesforpropheticjudaism.uk)