

# Storytelling and Spirituality: Sacred and Shared between Generations

*Peninnah Schram*

According to legend, just before a child's birth, an angel gently strikes the place just above the middle of the child's upper lip in order to erase all of the Torah learning its soul had learned in the womb. It is said that is why humans have a slight indentation above the upper lip and must spend the rest of their life relearning Torah. Doing so nourishes the *n'shamah* (soul/spirit), as food nourishes the body. Judaism relates the quality of one's soul to one's performance of mitzvot, to reaching higher levels of understanding, and to feeling a closeness to God. It is our *n'shamah* that makes us human (*Midrash Tanchuma, P'kudei 3*).

This search for learning Torah is the search for spiritual learning through the sacred stories we have in our Jewish oral and written traditions. It is a search to know "our" family stories, both our personal family and our greater Jewish family, so that we feel connected to a group. However, there is an additional dimension to this search, namely, to connect to some force beyond ourselves and, yet, within ourselves. As it says in Torah: "And let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them" (Exod. 25:8). Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg comments, "The essential space is the space within the human heart."<sup>1</sup>

If we open ourselves to spirituality, God dwells within each of us and among all of us. By bringing these dimensions into our

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PENINNAH SCHRAM, storyteller, is professor of Speech and Drama at Yeshiva University. She is the author of twelve books of Jewish folktales. The anthology *Mitzvah Stories* was published in her honor. She is a recipient of the prestigious Covenant Award for Outstanding Jewish Educator awarded by the Covenant Foundation and the National Storytelling Network's Lifetime Achievement Award. For an annotated bibliography of collections of Jewish stories and recordings, e-mail Peninnah1@aol.com.

lives, we can become more compassionate people who perform mitzvot (acts of loving-kindness and righteous deeds). It is in hearing shared stories, sacred and secular, that we learn to empathize with others and reach out to them.

In other words, we learn in Leviticus 11:13, 19, that the *chasidah* (a bird that Rashi identifies as the stork) is an “abomination” because the *chasidah* is kind only to its own species and not to any others. This bird is to be “detestable unto you” since selfishness is not an admirable Jewish trait.

Where and what are these stories? To begin, Jews have a great treasure of sacred literature that encompasses both Written Law (*Torah Shebichtav*) and the Oral Law (*Torah Shebal Peh*). In addition to Torah, Talmud, and midrashim, we have a rich secular oral tradition including folktales, fairytales, fables, parables, tall tales, mystical and supernatural tales, as well as other genres. All of these Jewish stories—or Jewish variants of world folktales—contain what Jews have always considered significant, specifically, the faith, values, traditions, history, geography, and customs of the Jewish people. As folklorist Richard Dorson has stated in his Foreword to Dov Noy’s *Folktales of Israel*, “Among the Jewish people the telling of stories and the learning of the faith are interwoven in a manner unparalleled in other countries of Western civilization.”<sup>2</sup>

Through all of these stories, sacred and secular, we transmit the spirituality of the Jewish people, namely, the relationship of a person to God and one person to another. As folklorist Angelo S. Rapoport wrote in *The Folklore of the Jews*, “The Folklore of the Jews is distinguished from that of other nations, primitive and even civilized, by its *monotheistic* and *ethical* background.”<sup>3</sup> All of the stories, songs, and proverbs mirror the soul of our people painting a composite portrait of who we are as a Jewish people.

In this essay, I will explore the power, importance, and spirituality of storytelling. I will also focus on the relationship between the storyteller and the story listener. There is no substitute for the voice of a parent, rabbi/educator, or young people telling one another stories. After all, the voice is produced by breath (*n’shamah*). In Latin, breath is *spiritus*, which can also mean inspiration, from *spirare*, to breathe. We can then see how breath/inspiration and voice are tied together in order to bring forth feeling and bring to life an idea or action. In this way, by telling and listening to stories the storytelling educators and listeners breathe together with

their hearts beating in synchronicity. By telling stories “by heart,” the teacher does not present the lesson as a linear straightforward speech, but rather in an inspired, fluctuating, undulating, interactive, fluid manner reaching into the heart (the “seat of memory”).

According to the Torah, the Talmud, and folklore, the heart is considered to be the seat of wisdom combining both the cognitive and affective realms. “A man’s whole wisdom is in the heart” (*Kohelet Rabbah* 1:7). In addition, the heart is also considered the seat of memory and recollection (Deut. 4:9). When I use the term “by heart,” what I mean is that the story comes from a deep place within us with bridges to sensual associations, feelings, connections, and secrets that we make and keep in our memory. Stories transmit the experiences, history, and lessons of past generations. This is part of the teaching that Moses passes on to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 31:13, “Their children, too, who have not had the experience, shall hear and learn to revere the Lord your God as long as they live in the land that you are about to cross the Jordan to possess.” So we are all called to be “holders of the story” in order to keep alive the wisdom of the past.

Storytelling is the most human activity. People have an urge to tell someone about an adventure, where they were when there was a crisis, when they experience a life-cycle moment, and on and on. What happens after the shared telling? Most often, the storytellers experience a catharsis. Tears of joy or sadness shared in community offer healing and hope with a perspective that restores the energy for life. Telling the story can possibly illumine options and alternative approaches to resolve negative emotions. Above all, the story becomes part of that person’s history and a shared experience with the listeners.

As Roger Schank writes, “We need to tell someone else a story that describes our experiences because the process of creating the story also creates the memory structure that will contain the gist of the story for the rest of our lives. Talking is remembering.”<sup>4</sup> Talking sets the story in the heart. The word “ear” is embedded in both words: hear and heart. Thus, we tell stories with the voice from the heart to reach the ears and hearts of others. Telling stories is sharing.

The philosopher Walter Benjamin, in his essay “The Storyteller,” wrote: “The storyteller takes what he tells from experience—his own or that reported by others, and he in turn makes it the experience

of those who are listening to his tale.”<sup>5</sup> In effect, storytelling promotes a dialogue among the storyteller, story, and listener.

Scholars in the field of communication are discovering that the oral transmission of tales is literally mind-expanding. In his *Scientific American* article entitled “Paleoneurology and the Evolution of Mind,” Harry Jerison states, “We need language more to tell stories than to direct actions.” He continues:

In the telling we create mental images in our listeners that might normally be produced only by the memory of the events as recorded and integrated by the sensory and perceptual systems of the brain.

... The role of language in human communication is special because we have the vocal and manual apparatus to create spoken and written language. In hearing or reading another’s words we literally share another’s consciousness, and it is that familiar use of language that is unique to man. The point, however, is that it was necessary to have a brain that created the kind of consciousness communicated by the motor mechanisms of language. That new capacity required an enormous amount of neural tissue, and much of the expansion of the human brain resulted from the development of language and related capacities for mental images.<sup>6</sup>

More recent research by interpersonal neurobiologists has found and confirmed that there are dynamic changes to the structure and functioning of the brain as a result of relationships and shared narratives. In her article “Neuroscience and Spirituality: Implications of Interpersonal Neurobiology for a Spirituality of Compassion,” Andrea Hollingsworth develops four criteria as components of a “spirituality of compassion.” Hollingsworth’s fourth criterion focuses on the importance and power of shared narrative, reinforcing the findings of Walter Benjamin and Harry Jerison, quoted above:

Telling our own story to someone else, or listening to someone narrate his or her story, asks us to be affected by and share in the state of the hearer or speaker in such a way that we hold on to our own perspective even as we attempt to indwell the experience of the other person. Shared narratives, therefore, are the fourth condition for the emergence of empathy in humans and constitute the fourth component of a spirituality of compassion.

Stories are naturally bound up within human spirituality; speaking, reading, and/or hearing sacred narratives from our

traditions are at the heart of many of our experiences of the divine . . . The combination, therefore, of neural integration and empathic connection with others and self, and deep personal meaning and transcendent participation, means that storytelling holds potential to raise us to greater levels of concern for the pain of others and motivate us to stand in solidarity with those who are suffering by weaving their stories into the fabric of our own.<sup>7</sup>

In Bruce Feller's article "The Stories That Bind Us," he reports on research by psychologists Drs. Marshall and Sara Duke. They found that children with learning disabilities who knew about their family's history were more resilient when they encountered challenges and dealt with stress. According to Dr. M. Duke, "The answers have to do with a child's sense of being part of a larger family." In other words, children who knew their family narrative "know they belong to something bigger than themselves... Talking also means telling a positive story about yourselves... The bottom line: If you want a happier family, create, refine and retell the story of your family's positive moments and your ability to bounce back from the difficult ones. That act alone may increase the odds that your family will thrive for many generations to come."<sup>8</sup>

We may apply this paradigm to the Jewish people and the telling of our stories. Our Torah and our entire history contain stories about how we did well and succeeded and also how we wrestled with problems and defeats. Yet, we bounced back—we survived—and continued on as a united community of Jews all around the world. When we know our history, when we understand that we belong to the Jewish People, that there is a force beyond ourselves, and yet within each of us, that we are not alone in the world, we create group immortality by living and telling our stories. We tell our stories in order to live a life filled with compassion leading to ethical behavior.

In order to make these connections, I will summarize three inspiring stories in the oral and written traditions. They illustrate how nonlinear and nonthreatening teaching can integrate shared experiences and introduce children and adults to the deeper meaning of rituals and performance of mitzvot.

As Elie Wiesel has said, "I'd rather share than teach." While teaching means reaching out, the sharing of stories becomes an interactive connection that goes beyond teaching. These folk and

personal narratives are retained in the imagination, connect to what we learn in Torah, and expand empathetic feelings and lessons into our new consciousness.

## I.

In Genesis 18:2–8, Abraham welcomes his three guests and offers them hospitality. In verse 16, Abraham sees that they are ready to depart: “The men set out from there and looked down toward Sodom, Abraham walking with them to see them off.” From this verse, we understand the mitzvah of accompanying our guests a certain distance when they are leaving our home.

How does one begin practicing such a mitzvah? Rabbi Benji Levene has written a deeply moving story about his grandfather, Reb Aryeh Levin, the Tzaddik of Y’rushalayim, who always escorted his guests from his home to the main road. He would also accompany someone to help a person find the right destination.

His story is entitled “The Escort.” As a young rabbinical student in Jerusalem, Benji read an article in an Israeli newspaper and learned of his grandfather’s practice of accompanying guests to the main road. His father tells Benji how his own father, Reb Aryeh, many years before, had promised to deliver a message to the wife of a Jewish man who had been taken prisoner by the British. This Jew had been fighting in the underground to help establish a Jewish state in the Land of Israel. However, when Reb Aryeh could not find the right street, he knocked on the door of a house hoping to get directions. Upon hearing his request, the young woman brought Reb Aryeh directly to the right address.

Reb Aryeh asked her why she had taken him instead of just giving him directions, especially when it was close to Shabbat. She told him the story how, when her father was near death, he had told his children, gathered around his bed, that a person doesn’t take honors or wealth when s/he leaves the world—a person only takes the mitzvot s/he performed in life. He tells his children to continue doing mitzvot but to also choose one special mitzvah that they would do whenever possible, even when difficult. This young woman selected the mitzvah of escorting people to where they needed to go. Reb Aryeh’s request gave her the opportunity to fulfill this mitzvah.

When Reb Aryeh heard this, he wrote in his notebook how he had learned from a young woman an important lesson of fulfilling

this commandment of accompanying people to where they needed to be. When Benji heard this about his grandfather, he decided to also choose this same special mitzvah for himself.

A few evenings later, Benji noticed an old man looking lost on a street in Jerusalem. He found out that the man was looking for a specific street and Benji wondered whether God was testing him so soon. He immediately took the man directly to the place he had been searching for. The man asked him why Benji had taken time to do this, especially since young people are always in such a hurry. Benji replied that it was because his grandfather always performed this mitzvah. The old man was curious to know who his grandfather was and when he found out, he was amazed because he was the reporter who had written the just-published article about Reb Aryeh. Now Reb Aryeh's grandson was escorting him through the streets of Jerusalem. Benji told him, "And do you know why? Because Reb Aryeh's grandson read your stories and learned how important and beautiful it is to escort another person on his or her way."<sup>9</sup>

This story, "The Escort," teaches us several lessons we can transfer to our own lives. First of all there is the theme of hospitality that should not end by closing the door just as the guest steps out of the house. Secondly, it is wonderful to help others who have lost their way. We can also see how important it is to choose a special mitzvah to perform whenever possible.

I would like to suggest the "special" mitzvot of:

1. listening and reading stories of family elders, including survivors of the Shoah (Holocaust)
2. asking questions, as Benji did in the story
3. retelling stories

Here are some kinds of follow-up questions you might ask of the elders:

1. What wisdom would you want to transmit to the next generation?
2. What mitzvot have you done or had performed for you during your life?
3. What mitzvot did you see fulfilled by someone else?
4. What stories did you hear in your family or school that influenced how you act in the world?

Let me illustrate this last question. While stories teach us, it is also the voice of the storyteller that creates the bond between the story and the listener. In the book *Mothers, Sisters, Resisters: Oral Histories of Women Who Survived the Holocaust*, one account moved me very deeply because of the role of story within the story. Rose Muth, while in Auschwitz, tells of relating parables to her sister that their father had told her. The remembered parable served as a blessing and a focus that helped Rose Muth and her sister survive:

I had told her things that my father said. He prepared us for the hardship . . . through *meshalim* he gave us courage and taught us how to live in spite of difficulties.

Just before we were separated, before we went to Wadowice, my father took us four girls aside. He told us a parable of two men. They were tired of life. They had difficulties and problems. They went to a river, stood on the bridge, and contemplated suicide. One of the men courageously jumped into the water and was gone. The other one shivered and went away. Which was the coward and which was the brave man? Of course, as children, we said it was the one who had the courage to jump into the river.

My father said, "No, you're wrong. The one who took up the fight and continued to live and fight for what he wanted, this one was the brave man." I had told this to Estusia before, and she kept on repeating it to me. Other things that he told us made us have faith, to believe that some good would come of it. I feel that it was my father's blessing that helped me survive.<sup>10</sup>

Walter Benjamin said, "All this points to the nature of every real story. It contains, openly or covertly, something useful. The usefulness may, in one case, consist in a moral; in another, in some practical advice; in a third, in a proverb or maxim . . . To seek this counsel one would first have to be able to tell the story . . . Counsel woven into the fabric of real life is wisdom."<sup>11</sup>

We never know when we will need the wisdom given to us in the most beautiful way through a story. Therefore, stories must fill the storehouse of memory from early childhood on to help us live, feel connected to, and transmit our Jewish faith and values.

## II.

Tears! A string of tears threads itself through the last four *parashiyot* of Genesis, which tell the story of Jacob and Joseph and his brothers.

Heartbreaking tears become transformed into hopeful, joyous tears. I recall that I had been told, a long time ago, that tears produced by sorrow and those produced by joy have different chemical compositions. Nevertheless, interwoven throughout—and in folklore too—is a mystical connection between tears and rain.

I remember that when I was a child my father used to tell me the story of Jacob and Joseph and the coat of many colors, or he would ask me to read the story to him. Every time the brothers showed the coat drenched in goat-blood and told their father of not finding Joseph, my own father would weep. I didn't understand what those tears meant. How could a child understand this emotion. But I now know that those tears were a gift and a deep memory.

This *parashah*, *Mikeitz*, opens “at the end of” two full years of Joseph's imprisonment. So we see that with endings there are new beginnings. Pharaoh has his now-famous dreams, which Joseph interprets with precision. As a result, Pharaoh appoints him his overseer. After seven years of plenty, the predicted famine arrives. No rains fall. Food is only available in the storehouses of Egypt, thanks to Joseph.

In this *parashah*, there are two deeply moving passages that connect to tears. The first is in Genesis 42:1: “Now Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, and Jacob said unto his sons: ‘Why do you look one upon another?’”

At a time when food is scarce and people famished, how hard is it for a parent to see the children hungry? *Midrash HaGadol* (compiled by Rabbi Dovid al-Aldeni in the thirteenth century) notes that what we can learn from Jacob's story is that it is a parent's worst trial to have their children ask for food when there is nothing to give. No doubt Jacob shed tears at those moments.

This reminds me of a story, “The Gates of Tears,” a folktale from Syria collected in the Israel Folktale Archives, that connects tears and rain in a compelling way. Versions of this story—with the theme of “*Rachmana liba ba-ei*” (God wishes the heart)—can be found in Ashkenazi and Sephardic folklore traditions and it is found only in Jewish literary and oral traditions.

There was a drought, but prayers and fasting by the rabbis and community did not bring rain to the land. One night the rabbi dreamed that he should ask Rachamim to pray for rain. Rachamim was a poor illiterate man and the rabbi could not believe the dream. However, he finally asks Rachamim to lead the prayers.

Immediately Rachamim leaves the synagogue and soon returns carrying a small clay pitcher with two spouts. On the bimah, as the ark is opened, Rachamim whispers something into one of the spouts. Then he holds the other spout up to his ear. Instantly dark clouds cover the sky and a heavy rain begins to fall.

When the rabbi asks Rachamim what he had done to bring the rain, he tells the rabbi how he sees his children going to bed hungry at night and he sheds tears that he collects in this special clay pitcher. He had also asked his wife to bury this tear-filled pitcher with him when he died. So he spoke to God in the first spout threatening to shatter the pitcher that was filled with his bitter tears, the outpouring of his soul, if God would not bring rain. He then turned the pitcher to listen and heard God say, "Do not shatter the pitcher."

The rabbi wept and concluded, "It is because of your tears that the rains came. How true are the words of our Sages: 'The Gates of Tears are never locked.'"<sup>12</sup>

Returning to the *parashah*, perhaps it was Joseph's tears that were needed to release the rains. Perhaps during the years of famine Joseph's heart hardened without nourishment since it was a time without rain, a time without tears. It was a time when he was alone without family and love, experiencing a sense of betrayal by those whom he trusted and loved. Nevertheless, when Joseph sees his half-brothers, and hears them express regret amongst themselves for what they had done to Joseph, "he turned away from them and wept" (Gen. 42:24). Sferno posits that these tears were because of his compassion for their distress. Joseph discovered empathy for his brothers. As it says in midrash, "only tears extinguish the burning coals of the heart."<sup>13</sup>

When Joseph could not weep, his heart, like the earth, remained dry and could not produce the human contact to bring about a family reunion, even with his beloved father. Only when Joseph could release his tears, then the reunion of the family, and between heaven and earth, were complete. I like to imagine that a good rain fell that night.

In a *New York Times* article, "I Cry, Therefore I Am," by Michael Trimble, he writes, "More recently, we've learned from neuroscience that certain brain circuits are activated rapidly and unconsciously, when we see another in emotional distress. In short, our brain evolved circuits to allow us to experience empathy and

compassion, which in turn made civilization, and an ethics based on compassion, possible."<sup>14</sup>

### III.

Tears as a result of seeing someone emotionally distressed is beautifully expressed in "The Princess Who Wanted to See God.": Molly Cone wrote this story to illustrate the Second Commandment: "You Shall Have No Other Gods—Only Me" found in Exodus 20:3. Let me summarize her story up to the closing climactic interaction between the princess and the wise old man:

There once was a princess who had never cried because she always got what she wanted so there never was a reason to cry. One day she told her father, the king, that she demanded to see God. The king called the Chief of Law and Order but he could only show her a book of laws and punishments. Then her father called the Treasurer but he could only show her a room full of gold. Finally the king tried to find God himself, but never having searched for God he didn't know how to find God. He began to walk on a path away from the palace when he met an old man planting a fruit tree. When the king asked if the old man would live long enough to eat the fruit of the tree, the old man responded, and added "God willing, that is." The king asks the old man if he could show God to the princess. The old man agrees and asks the princess to visit someone. The princess goes reluctantly with the old man to a small shabby cottage. When she steps inside, she sees a young girl who is very poor but smiling as she remains seated. When the princess discovers that the girl cannot walk, the princess quickly leaves the cottage and follows the old man silently back to the palace.

This ending is taken directly from Molly Cone's story:

When they reached the palace hall, the old man turned to her.

"Are you ready?" he said.

"Ready? For what?" asked the princess. She had been so busy thinking of the other girl that she had forgotten all about herself.

The old man smiled. "You are ready," he said. To the princess' surprise, he put a mirror in her hand.

"Now close your eyes, hold up the mirror, and look deep into your heart."

The princess closed her eyes and held up the mirror. Suddenly tears began to roll down the cheeks of the princess who had never cried. Big, soft, wet tears.

Why are you crying?" asked the old man.

"I have been selfish all my life," she cried, "and I did not know it until I saw that poor girl." She put the mirror down and opened her eyes. "Oh, sir, do you think it would help if I brought her some good soup, and maybe a pretty dress to wear? Do you think that would help?"

The old man smiled. He took the mirror from her hand and put it carefully away.

"You have seen God," he said.<sup>15</sup>

In this story, the tear is an important symbol of understanding and repentance. Instead of talking about forgiveness, about what God looks like, the story shows it in ways that a child can visualize. The story has the power to change the way we talk about God.

These are some questions that the storyteller might ask after the telling: Have you ever searched for God? What does God look like? Have you ever cried over something serious or sad? Who helped comfort you? Was the dilemma resolved? What effect did the tears have on you and on others around you?

Whenever I come to the end of the Molly Cone story, I lower my eyes and keep silent for a few moments. I need time to make the transition to where I am physically. I know the listeners need the time, too. They have been on a journey with me. They have followed the search for God along with the princess, a young, selfish, and demanding spoiled child. The people in the audience need time to let the story settle into their minds and form the images in their mental storehouses.

The solution to the search is simply but effectively presented by the old man. He is an example, much needed in our society, of the older generation who has been there and who has so much to teach us and to hand down to us about the way we need to conduct our lives. A child listening to this story is able to react with empathy. If followed by a discussion, children can perhaps identify an elder to whom they go for comfort and/or advice when their heart is breaking.

Storytelling is a sacred responsibility that affects another's consciousness, emotions, and knowledge. Through hearing shared narratives we activate empathy and compassion. These emotions fill the *n'shamah* with wisdom, experience, memory, and meaning. We do this most effectively by telling stories face to face. We take this teaching from Exodus 33:11, "And YHVH would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his neighbor."

In this age of digital technology, young people's attention spans are changing and shortening. There is an ever-greater demand for instantaneous responses/answers. Their listening skills are being short-changed as well as the pleasure of interpersonal conversations. Yet, I maintain that, in spite of or because of these electronic devices, we need, more than ever, human interaction and sense experiences that come through the imagination and are evoked within the stories. It is through the senses that one recalls emotions. It is the emotions that cause one to act in concert with one's own group and to integrate the aspirations of the individuals with the ideals of their community.

The relationship between the storyteller and the story listener is dynamic, reciprocal, alive, spontaneous, and "in the moment." The response of the listener creates an energy that makes the story potent. The teller can adjust his/her voice, eye contact, and body language to make the experience personal and positive, and, thus, affect the listener forever. This transmission is not of facts but of an ability to make connections. It's a reciprocal process between two or more people in which there is mutual contact and trust. It's a shared story experience.

Everyone loves stories. Everyone has stories to tell. We can start by asking the young people about the stories of their names. In Judaism, we each have three names: the name given to us, the name others give us, and the name we give ourselves. Ask what is your name, your nickname, your Hebrew name, etc. Do you have a secret pet name used only by your parents or special friends? (No one need disclose that private name.) Why were you given those names? How did the parents choose that specific spelling of your name? Who were you named after? Tell us (or find out) who that person was and what characteristics that person had. If the name is a form of a biblical name, who was the biblical character and what were his/her characteristics and qualities? What kind of role models would they be for you?

Ask the students to remember what stories were their favorite as younger children. What story did they ask their parents to tell or read again and again? Write out the story as they recall it—before going back to the written or oral source of that story.

For those young people who are more visual learners, they might draw the story they love or of an experience in picture form

as though it were a comic strip or drawing board. Then they can retell the story based on the drawings.

In our Jewish oral and written traditions comprising our *mo-rashah* (heritage), we have a great treasure of stories of every genre. These stories, sacred and secular, transmit the faith, the values, traditions, and history of the Jewish people. They inspire and deepen the spirituality of the Jewish people, namely the relationship of a person to God and one person to another. Stories have the power to call forth deep emotions and move us to act, to engage in *tikkun olam*. Stories influence children and adults to live a life of *menschlichkeit*. I define a “mensch” as a compassionate resourceful hope-filled reaching-out-to-others *human* being.

I firmly believe that each one of us should and must wear that mantle of responsibility to transmit the stories of our own families and our Jewish people to the next generation in a most beautiful interactive way of teaching. We must tell stories—face to face—with our God-given gift of our human voices and listen to each other’s stories. The voice is the messenger of the heart.

### Notes

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3. Angelo S. Rappoport. *The Folklore of the Jews* (London: The Soncino Press, 1937), 5.
4. Roger Schank, *Tell Me a Story: A New Look at Real and Artificial Memory* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1990), 115.
5. Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller,” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. with intro. by Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 87.
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11. Benjamin, "The Storyteller," 86–87.
12. Peninnah Schram, "The Gates of Tears," in *Stories Within Stories: From the Jewish Oral Tradition* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, an imprint of Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 49–53.
13. Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, vol. 5 (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1909–38), 351 n. 244.
14. Michael Trimble, "I Cry, Therefore I Am," *New York Times*, Sunday Review, November 19, 2012.
15. Molly Cone, "The Princess Who Wanted to See God," in *Who Knows Ten?* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1965), 14–20. This book has been reissued by URJ. Molly Cone has given me permission to tell this story.