

TRANSCRIPT
Folktales Audio Listening Stations

**Jewish Folktales Retold:
Artist as Maggid**

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**CONTEMPORARY
JEWISH MUSEUM**

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I. The Bird of Happiness as told by Miriam Kanani

{Artists Julia Goodman, Inez Storer, and M Louise Stanley were inspired by this story}

There once was a young boy named Aaron, who had spent his entire life wandering in the desert. His parents had been slaves, but they had run away to find a place where they could be free. Every day they searched for food and water, while the sun beat down on their backs, and sand blew in their faces. Still, Aaron never lost hope, for his mother would say, “One day the Bird of Happiness will guide us to Jerusalem.” For that was their dream—to reach the city of Jerusalem. But how could they find their way there?

Every night, when they stopped to rest, Aaron’s father would teach him what it meant to be a Jew. They had no books, but his father remembered the Bible stories he had learned as a boy, and he remembered the Ten Commandments, and these he taught to his son. Aaron took them to heart and let them be his guide.

So it was that they wandered for many years, and still the desert stretched endlessly before them. Then one night, Aaron had a strange and vivid dream. In the dream he was traveling with his parents when the world suddenly grew dark. Aaron’s parents said, “Quickly, Aaron, crouch down and cover yourself with a blanket. A sandstorm is coming!” And as soon as he did, sand started swirling around him and beating down on the blanket, and the sandstorm lasted a long time. At last it subsided, and Aaron and his parents threw off the blankets. But when they did, they found that their food had been scattered and their water spilt, and, even worse, their foot-prints had been covered by sand, and they could no longer tell where they had come from or where they should go.

Just when everything looked hopeless, Aaron saw

something on the horizon. At first it was only a speck, but soon he saw that it was a beautiful white bird. That bird came closer and closer, and just as it flew over Aaron, it dropped something from its beak, and in the dream, Aaron caught it! At that moment Aaron woke up and discovered that he was clutching something in his right hand—a glowing stone. Aaron jumped up and showed it to his parents, and when they saw it and heard his dream, they were amazed, and his mother said, “This means that the Bird of Happiness is coming that much closer.”

After that Aaron hung the glowing stone from a leather thong around his neck, and it proved to be a wonderful guide. For when they were traveling in the right direction, the stone would glow, but when they were going in the wrong direction, it remained dark. In this way the glowing stone guided them to every oasis, where pools of fresh water were surrounded by trees bearing sweet fruit. And each time they came to such an oasis, they said a prayer of thanks.

So it was that after years of wandering through shifting sands and blazing sun, Aaron and his parents finally came to the walls of a great city—the first city that Aaron had ever seen. As they passed through the gates, they were surprised to see a huge crowd had gathered in the streets. Aaron wondered about this, because his father had told him that in cities people live in houses. Aaron’s father went up to a man and said, “Excuse me, sir, but could you tell us what city this is?” The man said: “Why, don’t you know where you are? This is Jerusalem.” “It is?” said Aaron’s father, and they were astonished, for that meant they had finally reached the city of their dreams.

Then Aaron’s father asked why everyone was standing the streets. The man said, “Three days ago our king died. And it is the custom in our city to let the will of heaven decide who will be our next king. So on the third day after the king’s death, the rare Bird of Happiness is released and circles above the city, and

whoever the bird lands on is chosen to be the next king of Jerusalem. The bird is about to be released. That is why everyone is standing in the street.”

Just then there was a great shout from the crowd, and Aaron looked up and saw a white bird soaring on high and circling above the city, and there was something strangely familiar about that bird. It spiraled lower and lower, while Aaron’s glowing jewel glowed more brightly than ever before. And suddenly the bird swooped down and landed on Aaron’s head! There was a great shout from the crowd, and all at once Aaron was picked up and carried off, while his parents ran after them, crying, “That’s our son. Where are you taking him?”

The crowd brought Aaron to the king’s palace, where he was placed on the king’s throne, with the Bird of Happiness still perched on his head. Everyone bowed low before him, and they declared that he, Aaron, the poor boy wandering in the desert, the son of slaves, was their king. At first Aaron thought it must all be a dream, but then he felt the tugging of the bird’s talons in his hair, and he knew that it must be real.

Three days later there was a great coronation, and Aaron was officially crowned king of Jerusalem. After that Aaron and his parents lived in the palace. No longer did they wonder what they would eat or drink or where they would sleep at night. As king of Jerusalem, every important question was brought before Aaron to decide. Now while Aaron had never gone to school or even seen a book, he let the Ten Commandments be his guide in deciding what was right and what was wrong, and he found that they served him very well. Plus, he had the secret assistance of the glowing stone. For whenever the answer to a question was yes, the stone would glow brightly. But if the answer was no, it would remain dark.

At first the nobles of Jerusalem were worried that the fate of the city was being entrusted to such a young boy. But as they

listened to his decisions, they came to realize that he was very wise. There was only one thing they wondered about. The young king had asked that a simple shack be built out of branches next to the palace. There he spent an hour each day—but no one knew what he did.

Finally, the king's minister could not contain his curiosity, and he asked the young king about his strange actions. Aaron said, "When I go into that shack, I put on the rags I was wearing when I came here, and I stand before the mirror so that I can remember where I came from. For only then can I know where I must go."

When the minister heard this, he knew that heaven had truly blessed them with a wise young king. After that he served Aaron faithfully for many years, and in this way Aaron became one of the great kings of Jerusalem, as great as King David, as great as King Solomon. And every day Aaron and his parents thanked God for all their blessings—and especially for the Bird of Happiness.

—Iraq: oral tradition

II. *The City of Luz*, as told by Liora Brosbe {Artist Mike Rothfeld was inspired by this story}

Long ago there was a kingdom that had been ruled by the same dynasty for more than ten centuries. And it was the custom in this kingdom, each time a new ruler was crowned, to bring forth the royal mantle—the very mantle that had been used when the first king was crowned. Now this mantle had been woven of the finest silk, and had been dyed a shade of blue that was unique, for nowhere else was that color to be found. And when it was wrapped around the shoulders of each new king, the people clapped and cheered for their new ruler.

It came to pass that the old king decided to step down from the throne to allow his son, the prince, to be crowned in his place. Preparations for the lavish ceremony were begun a year in advance, and it was then that a servant was sent to fetch the royal mantle from the golden chest where it had lain for forty years. But when the chest was unlocked, the servant discovered to his horror that the royal mantle had been devoured by moths, and that all that remained of it were rags.

When the old king heard about this, he began to tremble with fear, for the mantle was the symbol of the dynasty, and if another were used, the seal of authority of the king could be endangered. Therefore the king called in his ministers, and asked for their advice. They all agreed it was a very serious matter, and warned the king that if the people found out, his enemies might proclaim it as a sign that after ten centuries the dynasty was coming to an end. The ministers told the king that he must find a way to have another mantle made, of the same color. For the people would not accept any other.

Then the king gathered together all of the royal soothsayers, and asked for their advice. But none of them knew of a way to duplicate the shade of the color, and they were silent. Then at

last the oldest soothsayer among them spoke and said: “I remember hearing as a child, O king, that the royal mantle was a gift of the Jews. If that is true, then they must know how to prepare the dye and duplicate the color.”

Now when the king heard this, he wasted no time, but ordered that the leaders of the Jews be brought to the palace the very next morning. And when they stood before him, the king showed them what was left of the royal mantle, and he said: “It was your people, the Jews, who gave this mantle to the first king of this dynasty. Somehow a moth must have entered the golden chest in which it was stored, and during the past forty years the moths multiplied and destroyed the royal mantle. This is all that remains. In one year the coronation of my son is to take place. Plans have already been made, a palace is being built for the occasion, and many great kings have been invited to attend. It cannot be delayed. I want you to take one of these rags with you, and before nine months have passed, I want you to deliver the dye that produces this exact color. If you do not, all of the Jews in this kingdom will be doomed. So too must you keep this mission a secret, for if you do not, there will be a bitter end.”

The Jewish leaders were terribly frightened when they heard the harsh edict of the king, for they too were familiar with the legend that the royal mantle had been a gift of the Jews. That was the same blue dye the Torah commands be used in the corner fringes of the prayer shawl worn by the men, known as the tallit. But the secret of how to produce that dye, known as tekhelet, had been lost for centuries, and since then a white thread had been used in its place. One of the leaders tried to explain this to the king, but he grew flushed with anger, and sent them from his presence, reminding them that the edict was still in effect.

In great fear the Jewish leaders met in the synagogue and discussed the matter. They knew that they could not reveal the

edict to the rest of the community, since the king had commanded it be kept secret on penalty of death, and besides, they did not want the others to become terrified as well. Therefore they vowed to keep the matter a secret among themselves, and not to reveal it even to their wives.

After this they considered the problem of how to obtain the dye, the secret of which had been lost for so many centuries. For no one knew for certain if it were made from a shellfish or snail, and therefore it could not be produced. Long ago the rabbis had decided that it would be better to leave the corner of the prayer shawl white rather than to err in trying to fulfill the commandment, and this is what had been done. Now, though, they were forced to seek out the dye once again.

Then one old rabbi among them, whose name was Rabbi Abraham, spoke and said: "There can be no doubt that we must find a way to satisfy the demand of the king, otherwise he will carry out the threat he has made, and we will all be doomed. Let us concentrate, then, on fulfilling this task, even though it appears to be impossible."

The others recognized that what the old rabbi had said made sense. Then Rabbi Isaac, who was highly respected, spoke and said: "The question is, where can this dye be found? I recall it is said in the Talmud that the secret of how to prepare the dye was known in the city of Luz. That is the city in the Holy Land built at the place where Jacob dreamed of the ladder that reached from earth into heaven, with angels ascending and descending upon it."

"Yes, that is true," said Rabbi Abraham, "and according to the Talmud the natives of the city of Luz are spared the fate that is inescapable for all other men—the inevitability of death. For when God decreed that man must die, he left one place on earth where the Angel of Death never held sway, and that is the city of Luz. Not even the armies of Nebuchadnezzar could disturb the

city.”

“But, with all respect,” said the youngest among them, whose name was Rabbi Jacob, “what good does it do for us to think of the city of Luz, for it is to be found in the Holy Land. The journey there could take a year in itself, as well as a year to return, and the king has commanded that we deliver the dye to him within nine months. Even if it were possible to reach the city of Luz, and even if the secret of how to prepare the dye is still known there, how could this be accomplished in the time remaining?”

After Rabbi Jacob had spoken there was silence for a long time, for what he said was all too true—the journey to the Holy Land and its return could not take place in the time remaining to them. All of their faces were fixed in a frown, but suddenly the face of the old rabbi lit up and he said: “Fear not, for all hope is not yet lost!” And all of the others turned to him with wonder in their eyes, for they could not imagine what he had to say. Then Rabbi Abraham said: “All my life I have kept the secret that I am about to reveal to you, which I learned from my father, and he from his father before him, a secret held in our family for many generations. My father made me vow never to reveal it unless a day should come when lives hang in the balance, and only this secret can save them.”

All of the others held their breaths in anticipation of a secret that had been kept for so long, but was about to be revealed. Then the old rabbi said: “This, then, is the secret: When the End of Days has come and the era of the Messiah is upon us, all souls will travel to Jerusalem for the resurrection. And how will they get there? Through underground caves. And the secret that I know is the location of one of these caves, which leads directly to the Holy Land itself, to a place that is not far from the city of Luz! And the entire journey to the Holy Land through this cave will not take longer than a week!”

When the others heard this, they could not believe their ears, and for the first time a ray of hope entered their hearts.

Then Rabbi Abraham continued: “This, then, is what we should do: Let us choose two among us to undertake this mission. I would go myself, for I have always longed to enter that cave, but I know that it is too long a journey for an old man, and there must be no delay. I will take the two who are chosen to the mouth of the cave, which is hidden, and reveal it to them. I am afraid that no others may accompany us, for the location of the cave must be kept secret.”

Things had developed so quickly that all of the leaders were in a state of awe, and they wondered who among them should be chosen to go. At last one of them spoke and said: “The important decision that now lies before us is who we shall send on this quest, on which all of our lives and those of our families depend. In such a case we must choose those in whose hands we can safely entrust our lives.” All of the others nodded in agreement, and then Rabbi Abraham spoke again: “When I was a child, there was once a situation of life or death such as this, in which it was essential to choose the right one to represent us before the king, who had just signed an evil decree against the Jews. Then the elders gathered outside this very synagogue at midnight on the night of a full moon and the decision was made there. I know this because I concealed myself behind a tree and observed all that took place. If you will accompany me outside, we may be able to reach our decision, for it is almost midnight, and tonight there is a full moon.” Then all of the others followed Rabbi Abraham out of the synagogue. He led them to a tree nearby, where the full moon could be seen through the branches. “Let each of you stand before this tree,” said Rabbi Abraham, “as did the elders in my childhood. And let us see if anyone’s shadow, cast by the moon, is long enough to reach the door of the synagogue. For the elders believed that the one whose shadow reached the door

was destined to represent them. That night when I was a child there was only one among them—and it was my own father—whose shadow reached the door. And it was he who went before the king, and convinced him to cancel the evil decree against us.”

The others nodded, and one by one they stood by the tree, but one after another they discovered that their shadows fell short of the synagogue. Soon there were only two of them left who had not yet taken the test, Rabbi Isaac and Rabbi Jacob. But when Rabbi Isaac took his place by the tree, his shadow seemed to grow longer before their very eyes, until the edge of it touched the base of the door. The rabbis cheered, for at last one of them had been found worthy of the quest. Then it was Rabbi Jacob’s turn, and when he stood before the tree, his shadow grew so long that it reached not only to the door of the synagogue, but climbed up to the very handle. All of the others gasped when they saw this, and they understood that in this way the Holy One had identified those who should undertake this essential mission.

That night Rabbi Isaac and Rabbi Jacob packed their belongings for the journey, and took leave of their wives and families, although they did not tell them where they were going. At dawn they met Rabbi Abraham at the synagogue, and he gave them a letter of introduction to take with them, and then led them to the forest that surrounded their town. They walked through the forest until the sun was high in the sky, and at last they reached a small spring. The old rabbi followed this stream until they reached a carob tree of great beauty, which was filled with fruit, behind which the stream seemed to disappear. Then Rabbi Abraham said to them: “Behind this tree lies the mouth of the cave that leads to the Holy Land. Know that not any man can enter this cave, but only those who possess pure souls will be permitted to pass. All others will be stopped by the flaming sword inside the entrance, which guards the way. If the sword

stops spinning and permits you to pass, then you will know that the test of the shadows chose well. And if the sword does not stop spinning, then you must turn back, for it is not destined that you go on.”

Then Rabbi Abraham pointed to the unlit torches that the two younger rabbis carried, and he said: “If you do succeed in passing the flaming sword, you should hold your torches near it, and light them with that fire. It will last all of your journey through the cave, for that is the same fire that Moses saw when he beheld the burning bush, which burned but was not consumed. You should also know that the water of the stream that runs through this cave is pure, and will sustain you. Know too that the carobs that grow on this tree will be your only food for the seven days that you journey through the cave. For while you are there only your spirit will require sustenance, and not your body; that is why you must eat carobs for in no other food is such a pure essence of the spirit contained. Therefore fill your pockets with them.” This is what the two rabbis did, and then they stepped behind the tree and found the mouth of the cave, just as Rabbi Abraham had said.

Rabbi Isaac, who was the elder of the two, entered first, and when he had passed beyond the first turn in the cave, he was confronted with a flaming circle that whirled before him, and he knew that this was the flaming sword of which Rabbi Abraham had spoken. As Rabbi Isaac stood there, the whirling sword slowed down, so that he could see the blade, but it did not stop. A moment later Rabbi Jacob joined him, and as soon as he stood beside him, the flaming sword came to a halt. Then the two rabbis did not hesitate, but hurried past it into the cave. And no sooner had they gone beyond it than the sword started spinning again. Then the two rabbis held out their torches near the flaming sword until each torch caught fire. And the fire burned with a purity unlike anything they had ever seen, and illumined the cave

for a great distance. So it was that at last they were on their way to the city of Luz, and there was no turning back.

As Rabbi Isaac and Rabbi Jacob made their way through the long cave, following the stream in its twists and turns, they saw that the walls of the cave were lined with beautiful stone that seemed precious in itself. And the farther they went, the more the air was pervaded with a perfume, like the scent of balsam, and the rabbis were intoxicated with that scent.

After they had traveled for six days they reached a large cavern that was like a room built of well-hewn stones. At the far end of that room they saw a wooden tabernacle that had been set up there in a crevice in the wall of the cavern. And before the Ark there was a stone that seemed to resemble a pulpit. Then the two rabbis did not hesitate, but approached the pulpit together, and although they did not have prayer books with them, when they opened their mouths and sang, the words rose up by themselves and were carried upward as if on wings. And the echo of their voices filled the cavern so that it sounded as if a chorus of many voices had joined them in prayer, although no one else was to be seen.

Afterward the two rabbis spent all of the seventh day in that cavern, for they knew it was the Sabbath, and they did not want to continue traveling on the day of rest. All that day their spirits were high, and they were at peace. And the next morning, when they had gone only a short distance, they saw a golden glow, and knew that they were about to reach the other end of the cave. And when they came there, they found another carob tree, even more beautiful than the first. And as they stepped from the cave they fell to the earth and kissed the ground of the Holy Land, and gave thanks for their good fortune in reaching that sacred place. Then they left their torches burning in the entrance of the cave and replenished their supply of carobs, which they had grown to love, and set off to find their way to the city of Luz.

Not far from the entrance of the cave they saw a hut in the woods, and hurried to it. There they met an old man who lived alone. They asked him about the way to the city of Luz, and he pointed out the path to them, but warned them that they would have to cross woods and swamps and heavy underbrush along the way. So it was that they walked and walked until they could hardly move their feet any longer. Their garments were torn by brambles, and their shoes were worn out by the time they reached Luz.

Once they arrived in the city, the two rabbis asked at once to be brought to the rabbi of Luz. When they met him they showed him the letter of introduction written by Rabbi Abraham, and they revealed the purpose of their quest and asked for his advice. Imagine their astonishment when the rabbi said: "My friends, you have come to the city of Luz, but this is the modern city of Luz, and the place you are seeking is the ancient city of Luz. It is to be found many miles from here, in the wilderness, but only God can say whether or not you will be permitted to enter it. In any case, when you reach the city, keep these words in mind: 'The nut has no mouth.'"

The two rabbis almost wept when they learned that they still had not reached their destination. They were so weary and the wilderness looked so terrifying that they almost fainted in despair. But then they remembered the grave danger facing their people, who had put all of their trust in them, and their courage was renewed. They returned to the wilderness, walking rapidly through the thick underbrush and black forests and on through great stretches of fields. They walked for days, and it seemed as if they had walked to the ends of the earth. At last they reached a clearing, and within it they saw a city encircled by a high wall—the ancient city of Luz. The two rabbis threw up their hands in joy that they had reached it at last. Then they ran from the forest to the clearing, despite their exhaustion, and reached the wall of the

city. From where they stood they saw no entrance, so they decided to walk around the wall until they reached the gate. The two rabbis began their walk beside a giant almond tree that stood outside the wall of the city. The wall itself, built in a circle, was several miles in diameter, and it took them three hours to circle the entire city and to return to the tree whence they had started. But when they reached it, they were appalled, for they realized that there was no gate to the city at all. Never had they heard of such a thing, and their eyes filled with tears, for they had not expected that there would be still more obstacles to overcome. Still, they were determined not to give up now that they had traveled so far.

It was then that Rabbi Isaac remembered the words of the rabbi of the modern city of Luz, and he said to Rabbi Jacob: "What could the old rabbi have meant when he said that 'The nut has no mouth'?" And Rabbi Jacob replied: "Perhaps it is a riddle in which we may discover the secret of how to enter the city." Then the two rabbis sat down beneath the almond tree, and contemplated the riddle. Suddenly an idea occurred to Rabbi Jacob, and he said: "Let us remember that the word for nut is 'luz,' and that this is also the name of the city. Perhaps this almond tree we are sitting beneath, which stands outside the city, somehow bears on the mystery."

Then the two rabbis went closer to the tree and examined it, and to their amazement they discovered that its trunk was hollow, and that the opening was large enough to admit a man. Then Rabbi Isaac said: "Perhaps by saying that 'The nut has no mouth,' the old rabbi was telling us that no man could discover how to enter the city, for perhaps it has no gate but this almond tree." "Yes," said Rabbi Jacob, "let us step into the hollow trunk and see if it leads anywhere."

This they did, and to their amazement they found that the hollow trunk led to the entrance of a cave. Then they entered the

cave, which led beneath the wall of the city. "Surely we have discovered the entrance," said Rabbi Jacob, and Rabbi Isaac agreed that indeed this must be so, for no other entrance was to be seen. And behold, before they had traveled very far, they saw the faint light that signified they had reached the other end of the cave. And when they emerged from the cave, they found themselves in the city of Luz.

Now at first the rabbis thought that the city was a city like every other, and the people seemed like those seen everywhere else. Children played in the streets, and men and women went about their business. But soon they saw strange sights. They saw very, very old men walking in the streets. Some had beards so long they tripped over them. Finally, the two rabbis approached one of these old men, who seemed downcast. Rabbi Isaac said to him: "Tell us, what is the matter?" And the old man replied: "Alas, my father has punished me because I fell asleep by the bed of my grandfather, and did not hear him ask me for a glass of water." The two rabbis were amazed to hear this, and they asked the old man how old he was. "I am three hundred years old," said the old man. "And how old is your father?" they both asked at the same time. "He is five hundred years old," came the reply. "And your grandfather?" "He is eight hundred." "And is his father still living?" "Yes, he is," said the old man, "and may all Jews be saved from such a fate. He is one thousand years old, and sleeps all week in his bed and only wakes on the Sabbath."

The two rabbis were astonished to hear what the old man said, and they were especially surprised that he did not consider living to such an age a great blessing. Rabbi Jacob asked him about this, and the old man said: "It is a terrible thing to have to live forever. For God has cursed us with eternal life." Now the two rabbis had not forgotten that Rabbi Abraham had told them that the inhabitants of the city were immortal, but it was amazing to

hear it firsthand.

Then Rabbi Isaac said: “And it is impossible, then, for any inhabitant of this city to depart from this life?” “Yes, unless they first depart from the city,” said the old man. And Rabbi Jacob said: “But why would anyone, young or old, choose to take leave of this city?” And the old man said: “Be- cause sometimes we grow tired of living.”

The two rabbis looked at each other and realized that the old man had been talking about himself. Then Rabbi Isaac said to him: “Tell us, old man, what is it that you do for a living?” “It is my work to produce the blue dye that is used in prayer shawls,” said the old man. The two rabbis were over- joyed to hear this, and Rabbi Jacob said: “Surely Providence has sent you to us as we were sent to you.” Then he revealed the purpose of their mission to him, and when he had learned it, the eyes of the old man came alive, and he said to the two rabbis: “Come with me to the home of our rabbi, and repeat to him what you have told me, and then perhaps he will realize how important is my work in the eyes of the Lord.”

So the two rabbis accompanied the old man to the home of the rabbi of Luz. However, when they arrived they were told that the rabbi was very ill. When they asked what was wrong, the rabbi’s disciples told them that the rabbi had once tasted a carob when he was a child, eight hundred years ago, which a stranger had brought into the city. And since that had been the last stranger who had entered the city, the rabbi had never been able to taste another carob, since carob trees did not grow in that city. Lately he had been taken with a terrible longing to taste the fruit of the carob once again, but it was impossible to obtain it for him, for no inhabitant who left the city was ever able to return.

Then Rabbi Jacob smiled and put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a handful of carobs. And he said: “We are strangers who have just entered the city from the outside; here are the

carobs that the rabbi has been longing for.” And when the disciples saw the carobs, they hurried to bring the two rabbis into the presence of the old rabbi.

At first the old rabbi of Luz was angry to be disturbed, but when he saw that they had brought him the carobs he so longed for, tears of joy filled his eyes. And no sooner did he take the first bite of the carob than his strength returned, and his pale color became ruddy again. Then he found the strength to sit up in bed, and asked the two rabbis to tell him who they were, and why they had come to that city. So it was that they told their tale and explained the reason for their quest. And as soon as the old rabbi learned of the vital mission, he commanded the dyemaker to hurry home to get a bottle of the dye that the two rabbis needed. While he was gone, Rabbi Jacob turned to the old rabbi and said: “Why is it that the Holy One, Blessed be He, permits the inhabitants of the city of Luz to be immortal?” And the old rabbi replied: “No one knows for certain why this is so. There are those who say that after the sin of Adam and Eve, God wanted to preserve one boundary in the world that the Angel of Death could not cross. Others say that when God decreed that man would live from dust to dust, he left one small bone that the grave does not consume. This bone is called the luz, and it will be from this bone that man will be resurrected at the End of Days. And in the same way that God left one bone in the back which is not destroyed, so he also left one place on earth where the Angel of Death cannot enter, and that is this city. Still others, those who feel that our eternal lives are a blessing, say that the Holy One made Luz immortal because it was here that Jacob dreamed of the ladder reaching from earth to heaven, since this is one of the Gates of Heaven. But those who despise our eternal lives say that this city has been cursed by God because when Jacob ran away from Esau, the people refused to let him rest here, and he had to sleep in the wilderness. Therefore, God cursed us with eternal

life.”

“Tell me,” said Rabbi Isaac, “why would anyone choose to abandon such a city? And why can these wanderers never come back?” The old rabbi replied, “Why do they leave? Some may have grown tired of living, others are said to have been called by an angel to another place. No one knows what they found once they left the city. Perhaps they lost the way and spent their lives trying to find the road that would lead them back. Or perhaps the Angel of Death took them as they turned to go, and buried them in the fields beyond the wall.”

“In any case,” the old rabbi continued, “whatever the reason, the histories of this city, reaching back for centuries, do not record a single war, a single flood or fire, nor the death of a single man, for all who are born here have their name inscribed in the Book of Life, and there it remains unless they depart from the city.”

Just as the old rabbi finished this explanation, the old dyemaker returned with a bottle of the unique blue dye in his hand, and gave it to Rabbi Jacob. Then Rabbi Jacob, who had carried with him the rag that had been part of the royal mantle, took it out and compared it to the dye in the bottle, and the color was identical. Then he gave the bottle to Rabbi Isaac for safekeeping, and Rabbi Isaac put it in a pouch and tied the pouch to his belt. And now that they had completed the quest, they knew they had to hurry, for they had no time to waste, but Rabbi Jacob had one last question before they departed. He said to the dyemaker: “Tell me, does this dye come from a shellfish or from a snail, for this is a question that our rabbis still debate.” “It comes from a snail that is found only in this city,” said the dyemaker, “and for every bottle the size of that I have given you, twelve thousand snails are required.” The two rabbis were amazed when they heard this, and they realized that the bottle of dye they had obtained was even more precious than they had

thought. Then they took their leave from the old rabbi and the dyemaker with many thanks, and set out on their journey home. They made their way to the cave that ran beneath the city, and returned the same way they had entered.

Somehow the distance did not seem as far this time, and the hours flew, and before long they reached the carob tree that guarded the way to the cave, where their torches were still burning, and a week later they arrived back in their own kingdom. And when they came to the synagogue, they found all of the leaders assembled together, praying for their safe return. And when they showed them the dye that perfectly matched what was left of the old mantle, there was great rejoicing, for their lives had been saved. Then they revealed all that had happened to them, and the others marveled at the tale. Now not only could they satisfy the king, but there was also enough of the dye for the fringes of every prayer shawl as well, making it possible to fulfill the commandment once more, and this is what they did. Now only three months had passed since the departure of the two rabbis, and when they showed the dye to the king, he was overjoyed to see that it was exactly that which was needed, and ordered that a new royal mantle be made up at once, identical to the first. And as a gift to the Jews who had caused the precious mantle to be restored to his dynasty, the king signed a decree freeing the Jews from all taxes and harsh decrees for as long as the dynasty should last, and had it announced everywhere. And thus began a period in which the lives of the Jews blossomed as never before, for the Holy One had seen to it that they were blessed with great abundance.

—Eastern Europe: c. nineteenth century

III. Drawing the Wind, as told by Joel ben Izzy

{Artists Vera Iliatova and M Louise Stanley were inspired by this story}

Long ago, on the Spanish island of Majorca, a young boy spent most of each day at the shore, sketching the ships that sailed into the harbor. Solomon was a wonderful artist, everyone agreed. His drawings seemed so real that people wondered if the waves in his pictures were as wet as they seemed—or the sun as hot. His father was a great rabbi who really preferred Solomon to spend his time studying, but Solomon would always slip away to the shore. A few days before Rosh Hashanah, a ship arrived from the city of Barcelona. Solomon overheard one of the sailors talking to a local merchant.

“There’s news from Spain that will make every Jew on this island tremble.”

“What is it?” asked the merchant.

“The king and queen have decreed that all the Jews in the land must give up their religion and become Christian.”

“And if they refuse?”

“Then they must leave at once,” said the sailor.

“But what if they want to stay?”

“Then they lose their lives.”

Solomon was frightened. He didn’t want to leave his beautiful island. He ran home to tell the news to his father, Rabbi Simeon ben Tsemah Duran.

“Must we leave, Father?” asked Solomon.

“I cannot leave, my son,” said his father. “The other Jews look to me for guidance. I must stay until they all escape. But you should go, and I will join you later in Algiers.”

“I won’t leave you,” said Solomon. “You are all I have since Mother died. Surely God will protect us.”

Rabbi Simeon hugged his brave son.

“Then let us work together and spread the word that everyone must meet in the synagogue.”

They hurried through the village, knocking at the doors of every Jewish home and shop.

When everyone had gathered at the house of prayer, Rabbi Simeon told them about the terrible decree.

“Save us!” they cried out in fear.

They hoped their beloved rabbi would work a miracle. For they knew his prayers had once turned back a plague of locusts. Another time, when crops were withering in the fields, his prayers had brought rain.

“You have only three choices,” Rabbi Simeon told the men. “You can escape by sailing to Algiers. You can stay and pretend to convert, but secretly remain a Jew. Or you can defy the king and queen. As for me, I would rather go to my grave than say I am giving up my religion.” Solomon realized how strong his father was and how he strengthened and comforted his people.

In the days that followed, most of the Jews crowded onto ships, taking very little with them. They saw to it that the women and children took the first available ships. Some Jews stayed and pretended to convert, in order to save their lives. They were known as Conversos, but in secret they continued to follow their Jewish ways.

Only a handful of Jews openly refused to convert. Among them were Solomon’s father and Solomon himself. They planned to leave together, once they were certain that all those who wanted to escape had done so. By then it was the start of Rosh Hashanah. Rabbi Simeon and Solomon and those few who dared enter the synagogue prayed with great intensity, in hope that their names would be written in the Book of Life. For on Rosh Hashanah that decision is said to be made on high. Surely God would hear their prayers and guard over them.

All went well the first day, but on the second day of Rosh

Hashanah, just after the sounding of the shofar, soldiers rushed into the synagogue and dragged them all away. They were cast into a prison cell, where Rabbi Simeon continued to lead the prayers by heart. Solomon would have been terrified if he hadn't seen how calm his father remained.

None of them slept that night. Even though Rosh Hashanah had ended, they stayed awake, praying. The cell was very dark, with only one high window. But at dawn it let a little sunlight in. When Rabbi Simeon saw it, he said, "Have faith, my brothers. For just as there is a bit of light, so there is hope, and I feel that God has heard our prayers and will protect us."

The guard overheard them and laughed. "You think you have hope. You have just three days to live. Then you die. Let's see what your God does for you then."

Rabbi Simeon saw how frightened they were. So he turned to Solomon and said, "Won't you help us pass the time? Why don't you draw one of those ships you do so well?"

Solomon couldn't believe his ears. His father was asking him to draw? Solomon felt in his pocket and pulled out his last piece of chalk. When he looked up, he thought he saw a hint of a smile on his father's face. Solomon remembered all the ships he had watched from the shore, and he began to draw the one he thought was the most beautiful on the sunlit wall. The wind he drew filled the great sails, and he added barrels of wine and bushels of wheat.

Solomon's father and the other men watched him draw until the sun set and the prison cell was enveloped in darkness. Then they began to pray to God to save them. Once again, they prayed all night.

The next day, Solomon continued to work on his drawing. Little by little he finished every detail of the ship, and then he drew the sea around it. The waves looked as if they might spill right off the wall and splash onto the floor. The picture seemed

finished, but Solomon didn't want to stop. His father suggested that he draw the two of them, there on the deck. This Solomon did, and all the men marveled at the fine resemblances. Then the second day in prison ended, and again they prayed throughout the night.

When the sun rose on the third day, one of the men asked Solomon to draw him on the ship, too. "For I would like to be with you." And one by one, the others made the same request. But when darkness fell, Solomon had not finished drawing the last man.

That night they prayed to God with all their hearts, for they knew the execution was set for sunrise the next day. All of the men shook with fear, except for Rabbi Simeon. Solomon took strength from his father, and he, too, remained unafraid. As soon as the first light of dawn came through the window, Solomon took out his chalk and quickly finished drawing the last man.

Just as he drew the final line, he heard keys jangling. The soldiers were coming to unlock the door to their cell. Then Solomon and all the men would be taken to the courtyard for their execution.

Solomon turned to his father and saw that he was deep in prayer. And, at that very moment, he heard his father pronounce God's secret name out loud.

Suddenly Solomon could not hear the guards in the hallway, and when he looked down, he saw that he was standing on the deck of the beautiful ship he had drawn on the prison wall. His father and all the other men in the picture were with him, safely aboard a real ship floating on a real sea. The sails strained against the wind, just as they had in Solomon's drawing, and the ship sped away from danger.

All the Jews from the prison cell rejoiced with Solomon and his father—for they knew they were aboard a ship of miracles,

on their way to freedom. They would never forget that Rosh Hashanah when God had seen fit to save them.

—The Balkans: oral tradition

IV. The Dybbuk in the Well, as told by Rabbi Lyn Gottlieb {Artist Dina Goldstein was inspired by this story}

One night, after dipping in the mikveh outside her house, a young woman went to the well with a candle in her hand. She wanted to prepare a soup for her husband. She left the candle in a crevice near the opening of the well and lowered the bucket into the water. As she was pulling it up, the candle blew out and she was suddenly gripped by a powerful force and dragged halfway into the well. She pulled back with all her might and then she was lifted up into the air, screaming, and in that moment of terror, she fainted. Hearing her cries, her husband ran outside and found her lying in a faint next to the well. He picked her up and carried her inside and sent his brother to bring the doctor at once.

When the doctor arrived he found the woman lying in bed with her eyes closed and her mouth open, like a body without a soul. When at last she opened her eyes and tried to speak, a strange voice came forth from her. This was not her voice, but that of a man, and they realized, to their horror, that she had been possessed by a dybbuk. The doctor told her husband there was nothing more he could do for her—she needed the help of a rabbi. And the doctor himself went to alert the rabbi about this terrible turn of events.

When the rabbi arrived, he saw at once that the woman had indeed been possessed by a dybbuk. She lay on her bed helpless, with a dazed look in her eyes, while a man's voice spoke through her. The voice that came forth spoke in Italian, as did all of those present. The rabbi commanded the dybbuk to respond to his questions and asked to know his name.

The dybbuk said, "My name was Yoseph ben Samuel, from Sicily."

"What were your crimes?" the rabbi asked.

And the dybbuk replied, “I was a great sinner, who was hung for my crimes.”

“And did you repent before you died?”

“No, I refused to repent,” the dybbuk confessed, “and I died with a curse on my lips. That is why my punishment is so terrible.”

Then the dybbuk began to sob, and the rabbi consoled him until he was calm enough to reply to the rabbi’s questions.

The rabbi asked, “What has happened to you since your death?”

The voice of the dybbuk replied, “As soon as my spirit rose from my grave, I was confronted with avenging angels, with fiery whips, who chased after me. To escape them, I fled like the wind, and tried to hide wherever I could—in flowers, trees, and even in a stone. But whenever I emerged from my hiding place, the avenging angels were waiting. So too did I enter the body of many animals—a sheep, a goat, and, finally, a dog. But in each case the animal went mad the instant I entered it, and ran wildly until it dropped dead.”

The rabbi asked, “How did you take possession of this woman?”

The dybbuk replied, “I was hiding at the bottom of the well when the woman came to draw water. I could tell she was full of lustful thoughts about her husband, and that made her vulnerable to me. I slipped into the bucket she lowered, and when she pulled it up, I entered her.”

The rabbi asked the dybbuk how he had entered the woman, and the dybbuk replied, “From that place.” Everyone who had gathered there was horrified to hear this, and they sobbed at her fate. Then the rabbi asked the dybbuk where he was situated in the body of the woman, and voice replied, “Between the ribs and the hips on the left side.”

Then the rabbi ordered the spirit to leave the woman, and

the dybbuk said, “I can’t!”

“Why not?” the rabbi demanded to know.

The dybbuk replied: “Because this room is filled with avenging angels! The instant I leave her, they will punish me without mercy.”

The rabbi and the woman’s family looked around and saw nothing, but they understood that those implacable angels must indeed be present in that place.

Then the rabbi said, “Know, dybbuk that I call upon the avenging angels to make your punishment a thousand times worse if you remain in this woman any longer! But if you do as I command, in the name of God, I call upon the angels to show mercy toward you. Now depart from her at once!”

At that instant the body of the woman shook uncontrollably, and her hips rose as if she were giving birth, and a wrenching scream came forth in her own voice, and the dybbuk was gone. An instant later everyone heard the cries of the dybbuk as the avenging angels chased after him with their fiery whips. And that is how a dybbuk was expelled in the city of Ferrara.

—Italy: sixteenth century

V. *Elijah's Violin*, as told by Jordan Hill

{Artist Mads Lynnerup was inspired by this story}

Once upon a time there was a king who had three daughters. Now he loved them dearly, but one day he had to leave them to go off to war. Before he left he spoke to his daughters and said, "If I am victorious in this war, I will bring each of you a gift. Tell me, what would you like?" The eldest spoke up and said, "I would like a diamond in the shape of a star." And the second daughter said, "I would like a gown woven from pure gold." But the youngest said, "I only want you to come home safely from the war." The king was pleased to hear this, and he said, "Thank you, daughter, for your good wish. But you must ask me to bring you something, as your sisters did. Think it over for three days, then tell me before I depart what it is that you want."

Now the youngest daughter was sitting alone on a rock next to the lake outside the palace, when there appeared before her an old woman, who asked her, "What is wrong, child?" And she replied: "I do not know what gift to ask of my father, the king." The old woman said: "You must ask your father for Elijah's violin." So the princess agreed that this would be her request. At the end of three days the king said to his daughter: "What gift have you decided upon?" And the princess replied: "I would like you to bring me Elijah's violin." The king agreed and set out to war.

Now the king led his troops to victory in every battle, and after his triumph he sought and found the gifts for his two eldest daughters, the star-shaped diamond and the golden gown, but he was unable to find Elijah's violin anywhere. The king asked his generals if they knew where it could be found, but none of them had heard of it. And he asked his wise men, but none of them had read of it in any book. And he asked his soothsayers, but none of them could find it in the stars. So the ship of the king

departed, and sailed until it came to land. The king ordered his crew to cast anchor there, to see if Elijah's violin was to be found in that place. And in this way he embarked on a long quest, which took him to the four corners of the world. After many trials and tribulations, he was led to an old man who lived in a cave, and the old man said: "Elijah's violin is in the possession of the king of this country." He also said that the king had a daughter imprisoned in stone and whoever freed his daughter from the stone would be richly rewarded. Then the old man gave the king three long hairs and he said: "These three strands are from the bow of Elijah's violin. Burn these when you are in the presence of the princess."

The king thanked the old man, and took the three hairs from the bow of Elijah's violin, and put them safely away. Then he asked the old man what he might give him in return. And the old man said: "There will come a day when you will repay me in full, for your daughter will set free the imprisoned melodies." And the king wondered at this, and he said: "Tell me, old man, what is your name?" The old man replied: "My name is Elijah." And then the old man returned to the shadows of the cave, and the king set off to rescue the princess who was imprisoned in stone.

When the king approached the palace in which the stone princess lived, he advised his generals and wise men and soothsayers that he preferred to proceed on his own, and that they should camp there and wait for him. And when he came to the gates of the palace and announced that his purpose was to set free the imprisoned princess, he was given an audience with the king and queen at once. For they had left orders that no one who offered to free her was to be refused, but that anyone who failed was to be put to death. That same day the visiting king was taken into the presence of the princess.

Now it was a great shock for him to see the princess, for she seemed to be alive and dead at the same time, as if she were a

living sculpture. But much greater was his surprise when she began to speak—for the enchantment under which she had fallen permitted her the power of speech but no other. While the princess was speaking, it seemed as if she were alive. But when she fell silent, it was as if she had turned completely to stone. He could not bear her silence, so he asked her: “Tell me, how did it happen that you were turned to stone?”

The princess replied: “One day I was wandering through the palace, and I came upon a stairway I had never known about, and I followed it until I came to a room where there was a mirror with a golden frame. As I stood before it, my mirror image stole out of the glass and forced me to take its place within. And from that moment I found myself turned to stone, with only my power of speech remaining. No one has known how to set me free. Since then there have been reports that someone who looks exactly like me, and claims to be me, has been seen in the kingdom, but slips away like a shadow if anyone comes too close.” And then the princess was silent, and it was the silence of stone.

The king remembered the strands from the bow of Elijah’s violin that the old man had given him, and took them out and threw them into the fire that until then had done little to keep the room warm. Then the chill of the room seemed to melt, and at the same time the stone princess turned to flesh and blood again. And the king who had set her free said to her: “Now that you have been freed from this spell, your mirror image surely has been returned to its place in the mirror. To keep it there you must blindfold yourself and take a stone and shatter the glass.

That way your mirror image will remain in its world of reflections, and will not take your place in this world again.” The princess promised she would do this, and she did so before the end of the day. Her father, the king, was so grateful that he told the king who had broken the spell that he could have any gift of

his choice. Nor did he refuse him Elijah's violin, for that is what he requested as his reward.

Now that the king had gathered the gifts for all three of his daughters, he sailed with his soldiers directly home. And because the winds were with them, it took them only seven days, and when the king arrived he gave the gifts to his daughters. The first two took their gifts and hurried off to try them on, but the youngest hugged her father first, and then took the violin to her room. And that is how the princess who was the youngest daughter of the king came to possess Elijah's violin.

Now when the princess first opened the case of the violin, what did she find? A small, perfectly carved violin that had been preserved for many centuries, and next to it a bow. And when she put the bow to the strings, a clear melody sailed forth, effortlessly. And while she played the violin, it seemed that the violin was playing itself, as if it had many melodies stored up, which sought to emerge from within. And even before she finished playing there appeared before her a handsome young man, who asked her: "Why have you brought me to this place?" The princess was amazed to see him, and she said: "But how did you enter this room?" He showed her the window through which he had entered. Then the princess asked: "But where do you come from?" To which the young man replied: "From far away." And the princess asked: "Then how did you come to be here?" The young man answered: "The music of the violin brought me." Nor did the princess question him more than that, for she understood at once that the violin she had played was enchanted, and that she and the prince, for he was a prince, had been brought together through its magic.

After that, the princess would take out Elijah's violin whenever she missed the prince, and each time she would play it, the prince would arrive soon after the melodies floated outside her window. Before long the prince and the princess exchanged

rings and vowed that one day they would be wed.

Then it happened, after some time had passed, that the eldest sister of the princess heard her speaking to the prince in her room. She hurried to the second sister, and said: "Someone has been visiting our sister in her room." They decided to search her room to see what they could learn, and so they persuaded the youngest princess to join them in the baths. When they arrived there the eldest said she had forgotten her soap, and left to fetch it. But instead she went to her sister's room and began to search through it. When she found the ring of the prince, she threw it and broke the window through which the prince entered the room. And when she saw the case of the violin, she opened it and began to play, but the melody that emerged was a dark one, filled with brooding. And as the music filled the air, the prince was compelled to appear. He sought to enter by the broken window, but was wounded by the sharp glass and was forced to turn back.

When the youngest princess returned from the baths, she could feel that something had happened in her room, but she did not know what it was. So she took out Elijah's violin and began to play, but this time the prince did not appear. Then she saw that the window was broken, and that three drops of blood were on the curtain. When she realized that her sisters must have discovered her secret, and brought harm to the prince, the princess became very sad and left the palace to sit on the rock by the lake. While she was sitting there the old woman appeared, and asked her what had happened.

The princess told her all that had taken place, and the old woman said: "Pretend that you are ill, so that the doctor will order that no one be admitted to your room until you are well. Meanwhile, you must set out and find the prince who has been wounded, for only you can heal him. To do so you must pluck three strands from the bow of Elijah's violin, and take them with

you. Then you must burn those strands when you are in the presence of the prince.”

The princess did as the old woman had said, and the doctor ordered that no one be admitted to her room. She then set out on a quest to find the wounded prince, so that she might heal him. So it was that the princess walked and walked through all of that kingdom and the forest surrounding it, until she grew tired and sat down to rest beneath an elder tree. She was so tired that she lay down to sleep. But no sooner did she close her eyes than she discovered she understood the speech of the doves that perched on the branches above her. When she opened her eyes, their speech sounded only like chirping, but when she closed her eyes once more, the language of the doves was clear to her, and she heard them say: “The prince has been wounded, and the way to his palace is impossible to find without a map. And where can a map be found? Only in the leaves of this tree.”

Then the princess arose at once, and plucked one of the leaves from the tree. And when she looked at it, she found she was able to read it like a map. She saw where she stood in the forest, and the way she must take to emerge from there, and how she could reach the palace where the wounded prince waited to be healed. After this she followed the map directly to that kingdom. There she disguised herself as a man, and presented herself as a doctor before the king. The king warned her that thirty-nine doctors had already tried to heal the prince, and all had failed and been put to death. The fate of this doctor would be the same as that of the others if he did not succeed.

The disguised princess agreed to these terms, but requested that she be left alone with the prince. As soon as she entered the prince’s room and saw him asleep on the bed, she was overcome with emotion and wanted to embrace him. But, remembering her purpose, she cast the strands from the bow of Elijah’s violin into the flames of the fireplace, and as soon as they

started to burn, the wounds of the prince healed, and he opened his eyes and saw the princess, who had cast off her disguise. Then she called in the king and queen, who were overjoyed to find that the prince had recovered, and they agreed at once that the prince and princess should be wed. So it was that they came to be married and that they lived together in great wealth, peace, and virtue for all the days of their lives, and many were the times when the melodies of Elijah's violin were heard drifting over that land.

—Egypt: oral tradition

VI. *The Enchanted Island*, as told by Liora Brosbe

{Artist Michael Arcega was inspired by this story}

One of the earliest disciples of the Ba'al Shem Tov was Rabbi Wolf Kitzes, who was famous for his ability to blow the shofar. So resonant were the sounds he drew forth that the Ba'al Shem Tov called upon him to blow the shofar during the Days of Awe, so that its voice would ascend on high all the way to the Throne of Glory.

Now it was the dream of Wolf Kitzes to travel to the Holy Land, and at last he was about to set out on his journey. Just before he left, he went to see the Ba'al Shem Tov, who embraced him and said: "God willing, you will blow the shofar in Jerusalem this year. But remember this: when anyone asks you a question, take care to consider your reply."

So Wolf Kitzes set out for the Holy Land, and when he reached the Black Sea he took a ship to Istanbul. Now for the first few weeks everything went well, but one day, during a terrible storm, the ship was struck by lightning and it split apart. All the passengers lost their lives except for Wolf Kitzes, who somehow managed to grab a long plank that floated nearby. He clung to that plank for three days and nights, until at last the current carried him to an island.

There the exhausted man crawled onto the shore and collapsed. Later, when he regained a little strength, he got up to explore the island, for he was famished from the three days he had spent at sea. Now the island seemed to be deserted, and he didn't find any fruit or anything else to eat, although he did find a freshwater brook that satisfied his thirst. Following it to its source, he discovered a spring, and there beside it was a magnificent mansion, a palace far greater than that of any king.

Wolf made his way to the door of that mansion and used the last of his strength to knock on the door. To his surprise, the door

opened by itself. At first he stood in the doorway and called out, but no one replied, so he decided to see if anyone lived there. He walked through the halls, opening every door. Every room was magnificent, but still no one was to be seen. At last he opened the door to a large dining room, and there he saw the longest table he had ever seen in his life. It was so long that he could not see the other end, which seemed to be enclosed in some kind of fog. At another time he might have wondered at this, but at that moment all he noticed was that there was one place setting at the table, although there was no food to be seen.

When he came closer to the table, Wolf saw that two precious objects had been placed there. One was the largest and most beautiful shofar he had ever seen, and the other was a golden horn whose begin to guess. He stood before those precious objects and wondered which he should examine first. Just then a single grape rolled out of the golden horn, and that decided the matter for him. He picked up the horn, and as he did, an immense amount of the finest food fell out of it, rolling across the table.

Wolf was overwhelmed at this unexpected abundance and quickly sat down so that he might partake of that delicious food. He pronounced the blessings before eating, and just as he was about to take his first mouthful, he heard a deep voice that seemed to come from the far side of the table: "So, how are my children faring?" Now all that Wolf could think of was that delicious food, and he quickly replied: "So, how should they be faring?" and he took the first bite. Then the voice replied: "So be it." At that instant the fog lifted. Wolf was able to see to the other end of the table, but no one was there. That is when he noticed that the shofar was missing, although the golden horn still remained. He decided to look for the shofar once he had finished eating, and he turned back to his plate. But each time he lifted his head, it seemed that the table had grown smaller. When he had

eaten his fill, he looked down and saw that the table was no bigger than a plank. At that moment a deep exhaustion came over him, his head sank down, and he fell asleep.

All at once Wolf was awakened by cold water washing over him, and when he opened his eyes, he found himself back in the sea, still clinging to the plank. And he could not decide if his visit to that mysterious mansion had been a dream or if it had really taken place. But when he realized he was no longer famished, he knew that some kind of miracle had occurred.

Not long afterward, a fishing boat found him floating in the sea and brought him back to shore. Then he knew that he must not attempt to continue his journey to the Holy Land but must return to the Ba'al Shem Tov, to tell him all that had taken place. When Wolf Kitze reached the small hut of the Ba'al Shem Tov, the Ba'al Shem Tov greeted him sadly and said: "What a shame, Wolf, that you did not pick up that shofar and blow on it, as you and only you can do so well. For if you did, the footsteps of the Messiah would have been heard every- where. For that is the shofar made from the horn of the ram that Abraham offered on Mount Moriah in place of Isaac. It is said that Elijah will blow that shofar at the End of Days. And it was within your grasp to do so, so that all our waiting would come to an end.

"Or at least if you had held on to that golden horn, hunger would have been banished from the world. For that is the Horn of Plenty, and if you had brought it back, no one would ever know hunger again.

"Or if you had replied otherwise to the question that was asked of you and told the Holy One, blessed be He, about our suffering in this world, surely everything would be different.

"But at least you were wise enough to say the blessings before you ate. For if you had not, you would have been lost at sea, as were all of the others who set out in that unfortunate ship."

—Eastern Europe: eighteenth century

VII. The Golden Mountain, as told by Jordan Hill

{Artist David Kasprzak was inspired by this story}

Many years ago there was a king who ruled over a vast kingdom, and was believed by many to be the wealthiest man in the world. This king had a daughter who was curious to know about everything—why the sun rises and sets, why spring follows winter, why the moon is full at some times and is only a sliver at others. So it was that when the princess learned there was a wise old man in their kingdom, a soothsayer who knew how to read the stars, she begged her father to bring him to the palace to teach her what he knew.

Now the king's daughter was very precious to him, and he was especially proud that she so loved to learn. Therefore he sent a messenger in a golden carriage to bring the old man to the palace. When the messenger arrived he said to the old man: "You need not be afraid, for the king will do you no harm." So the old man accompanied the messenger to the palace.

When the old man arrived, he was given an audience with the king at once. The king said to him: "It is known that you possess the knowledge of how to read the stars. I would like you to reveal this secret to my daughter, the princess, who has a great thirst for knowledge. As your reward, I shall build you the finest observatory in the world, from which you may gaze at the stars."

Then the old man said: "I agree to teach the princess on these terms, but there must be one more condition—that no one else be present while I instruct her." The king agreed to this condition, and the old man began to teach the princess how to read the stars. The princess listened carefully to everything he had to say, and proved to be a fine student. At the end of one year the old soothsayer had taught her all he knew about the stars, and when he returned to his home he found the

observatory had already been built, as the king had promised.

Now the princess quickly put all that she had learned to good use. For she read in the stars that an evil king in a bordering kingdom was planning a secret invasion. The princess warned her father about this, and he set a trap for the invading army, which was easily defeated. After this, the princess became the king's primary adviser, and he came to depend on her in many ways.

Some time passed, and one night the princess read in the stars of a mountain that had a vast treasure of gold hidden within it, and that only one person in the world knew how to enter it. And she also learned that this was none other than the old man who had taught her how to read the stars.

Then the princess reported what she had learned to her father, the king, and begged him to send for the old man again, so that he could reveal the secret of where the golden mountain could be found, and how it could be entered. The king agreed to his daughter's request, and sent a messenger in a golden carriage to bring the soothsayer back to the palace. And when the old man arrived, the king told him what his daughter had discovered in the stars, and asked him to reveal the secret of the golden mountain to her. As a reward, the king promised to have a telescope made for him that would bring the stars a thousand times closer to his eyes.

Now at first the old man hesitated, for he knew there were dangers associated with the golden mountain. But when the king insisted, he agreed to reveal the secret to the princess, but on the condition, as before, that no one else be present. When the soothsayer met with the princess, she begged him to take her to the golden mountain that very night. "In that case," the old man told her, "We must hurry, for we have to be there exactly at midnight." So it was that the two of them made their way in complete darkness, and reached the mountain at the appointed

time. There the soothsayer uttered a spell, which caused a large stone of the mountain to move with much rumbling, so that they could enter the cavern. But as they did, the old man, "Be warned, princess, that the mountain will remain open for only half an hour, and we must return before half past midnight, for then the stone will close, and if we have not departed from the cavern, we will be trapped there."

Inside the golden mountain the princess beheld treasures unmatched in all the world, even in the treasuries of her father, the king. She saw golden apples, silver raindrops, and a multitude of diamonds in the shape of snow- flakes. She was dazzled by the unimaginable splendor she saw there, and would not have remembered to take her leave had the old man not reminded her. And shortly after they left the cavern, the stone entrance closed. Then they returned to the palace, and the soothsayer received the telescope the king had promised him, and returned to his home. But before he said, "Take care, princess, if you ever decide to return to the mountain. Most of all, never forget to leave on time."

The following night the princess decided she wanted to return to the golden mountain, for just as they were leaving the night before she had glimpsed a golden seashell so exquisite that she had dreamed about it all night, and now she wanted to make it her own. She traveled there by her- self, and when she reached the mountain it was almost midnight, and she repeated the spell that the old man had uttered, for she had listened very carefully while he had spoken. Once again there was a great rumbling, and the stone moved, and she was able to enter the mountain. But in the dark- ness her gown caught on a thorn bush as she entered, and a single golden thread became unraveled, although the princess did not notice this.

Inside the mountain, the eyes of the princess were again so dazzled by the golden treasury that she became dizzy. But she

had not forgotten the golden seashell she had come there to seek out, and soon she held it in her hand. It was truly a miracle to behold, for it resembled an actual seashell of the most gold. Knowing that real seashells echo the sea, the princess held the golden shell up to her ear, and to her amazement she heard voices speaking there. That is how she discovered it was a magic seashell in which she could hear anything being said anywhere in the world. If she held it in one position, she would hear one conversation, and if she moved it ever so slightly, another would take its place. Now the princess was fascinated by this magic shell and did not notice the swift passage of time. Suddenly she realized it was time for her to leave the cavern, and she rushed to the entrance, but it was too late—the entrance to the cavern was closed, and she was trapped inside the golden mountain.

The next morning cries for help were heard from inside the mountain, and when it was discovered that the princess was missing, the king understood it must be the voice of his daughter they heard. Then he commanded his soldiers to take pickaxes and other tools and to dig into the mountain to pull her out. But it was all in vain, for every pickaxe broke against the mountain, and before long even the king conceded they would never save the princess that way. Then the king announced that anyone who could free the princess would be wed to her and would also receive half his kingdom. Many journeyed to the mountain and sought to free the princess with one spell or another, but none of them succeeded in making the mountain open, and the princess remained trapped inside.

Now in that kingdom there was a clever lad whose name was Yousef, and although his family was poor, he always managed to find something so that they never went hungry. One day Yousef was walking in the marketplace when he heard an old woman cry out that she had an oud to sell. But everyone who looked at the oud only laughed in her face, for it was very old and

battered, and besides, it was missing all of its strings. Now Yousef had only three copper coins in his pocket, but he said to himself: "The oud is old and worn, but I could polish it, and someday, when I have more money, I will buy strings and play it."

So Yousef approached the old woman, and offered three copper coins for the old oud. The old woman accepted the offer at once. Then she motioned for him to come closer, and she whispered in his ear: "This is a fine oud you have bought, my lad, for it is a magic oud. But for it to perform its magic, it requires golden strings, for no others will do." Then the old woman turned to go, and disappeared in the crowded marketplace. And even though Yousef ran after her, he could not find her, and he was sorry she had left before he could ask her what kind of magic the oud could do, and now it was too late.

It was at that time that the princess had become trapped in the golden mountain, and the king sought help in setting her free. Like many others, Yousef liked to imagine how wonderful it would be if he was the one who freed her. And even though he had no idea how to do this, Yousef decided to go to the golden mountain to see for himself. So he took leave of his parents, took his only possession, the stringless oud, and set out on his journey. Meanwhile the princess had begun to despair of ever escaping from the cavern. At first she had hoped that those trying to get her out would succeed, for she was able to listen to all their magic seashell.

In this way she soon discovered that they had failed, and learned that the king, in his desperation, had offered her hand to whoever succeeded in releasing her. Then it occurred to the princess that she might be able to open the mountain from within by pronouncing the spell, but this too failed, for the spell was effective only from the outside. Soon after she had become trapped there, she searched through the cavern of treasures to see if there was anything to eat or drink, and she found a spring

deep in the cavern, which had its source inside the mountain. So, too, did she find growing next to it a carob tree, which sustained her. And to pass the time she put the golden seashell to her ear, and heard in it all that her parents and others in the kingdom said about her, and learned how much they grieved over what had happened. So too did she listen to the lectures of wise men all over the world, for she had not lost her love for learning. And in this way several months passed, with the princess no nearer to freedom than she was in the first place.

Then one day the boy Yousef arrived at the golden mountain. He saw the crowds that gathered there during the day, because what had happened to the princess had made it a famous place. But when it grew dark, they all left and returned to town, leaving Yousef alone there, for he had nowhere else to go. He found a place for himself on the ground, and was about to go to sleep when he suddenly saw something glint in the moonlight. And when he arose and went over to see what it was, he was amazed to find a long, golden thread—the very one that had become caught in the thorn bush as the princess had entered the cavern. Yousef carefully pulled the golden thread from the bush without pricking his fingers on the thorns, and when he had it in his hand it occurred to him that he might try to string his oud with it. For, after all, the old woman had told him its magic would work only with golden strings. And when he had strung the oud, he found that the golden thread was just long enough to serve for all its strings.

So it was that as midnight arrived Yousef plucked the strings of the magic oud for the first time. And all at once it sang out with a melodious voice, almost human, and each time he plucked a string, it sang out another word, of something that sounded to Yousef like a spell. Suddenly he heard a loud rumbling. Then the princess, who had heard every word pronounced by the magic oud with the aid of the golden shell, hurried outside, and ran

straight to the boy who had released her, and embraced him, and thanked him again and again for setting her free. Then Yousef and the princess returned to the palace, he with his magic oud, and she with her magic seashell, and when the king saw that his beloved daughter had been freed, he was overjoyed. So too did he keep his promise, and soon there was a lavish wedding at which Yousef and the princess were wed. And the princess soon found out that the clever Yousef loved to learn as much as she did, and she taught him all that she knew, so that one day he became the wise ruler of that kingdom, where he was admired and respected by all.

—Morocco: oral tradition

VIII. *The Golem*, as told by Joel ben Izzy

{Artists Dina Goldstein, Elisabeth Higgins O'Connor, and M Louise Stanley were inspired by this story)

During the reign of the Emperor Rudolf, a wonder-working rabbi lived in Prague whose name was Rabbi Judah Loew. He had been tutored in these mysteries by Rabbi Adam, whose mastery was unsurpassed. Nor did Rabbi Adam withhold anything from his disciple, and thus Rabbi Loew served as the tzaddik of his generation, as Rabbi Adam had in the generation before him.

One year it happened in the spring that Rabbi Loew had a long and vivid dream, in which he found himself in the Christian quarter of Prague, outside the Jewish ghetto. There he witnessed a terrible crime, in which a child was murdered and thrown in a sack, then carried to the Jewish section of the city, and left inside one of the houses there. In the dream Rabbi Loew saw the face of the murderer; it was the face of the evil sorcerer Thaddeus, a great enemy of the Jews who spent his days plotting ways to harm them. And Rabbi Loew understood that Thaddeus was plotting to accuse the Jews of a blood libel. This terrible accusation, the claim that Jews use blood in order to make matzah for Passover, was a terrible lie. Never had such a thing been done. But the libel had been made in almost every generation, and now the evil priest was planning to accuse the Jews of this falsehood again.

In the dream Rabbi Loew found himself helpless to do anything when he suddenly heard the sound of beating wings and looked up and saw a flock of birds flying in formation, spelling a word that he read clearly in the heavens. It was God's most sacred Name, which holds the power at the source of all being. And in the dream Rabbi Loew wrote that Name down on a piece of paper, and slipped it into the pages of the Bible he was

carrying in his hand. No sooner had he done this, than he looked down at his feet, and suddenly saw the outline of a large body in the earth. Before his eyes the features of the body began to take form, and the word Emet, which means Truth, appeared on its forehead. Just as the eyes of the man of clay opened, Rabbi Loew awoke, the dream still vivid in his memory.

Now the rabbi recognized from the first that he must decipher this dream. For the Name of God was the most sacred word of all, and its appearance in a dream must portend matters of grave importance. He realized that it could have no other meaning than to warn him that Thaddeus was about to accuse the Jews of Prague of the blood libel, which would doubtless unleash a terrible pogrom against them. Thus the dream had come as an urgent warning, but surely it also contained the method by which the plot of the evil Thaddeus could be foiled. But what way was this? Rabbi Loew was uncertain.

Rabbi Loew decided to consult the Torah. He opened the Torah, and when he did, the first thing he saw was a slip of paper with God's Name on it—the very one he had written in his dream! He picked it up in his hand and marveled that it had come to him from the world of dreams. Rabbi Loew thought again of his dream, and of the outline of a man he had seen just before he woke up. Suddenly he had understood that his task was to bring that man into this world. But how could this be done? Surely God would guide him, and make it possible for him to bring that man into being.

There was no time to be lost. Rabbi Loew decided to undertake this mission that very night. Rabbi Loew hurried and awoke his son-in-law, Isaac ben Samson Ha-Cohen, and his foremost pupil, Jacob ben Hayim- Sassoon Ha-Levi, and told them to get dressed and to come with him at once. They wondered greatly what urgent matter had arisen, but dared not ask, knowing that the rabbi would tell them when he was ready.

And in fact he said nothing at all, but led them through the darkness to the banks of the river Moldau. There Rabbi Loew told his helpers to dig out enough clay to equal the weight of the three of them. This they did, and Rabbi Loew began at once to shape that formless mass into a clay man of immense size. The others watched, astonished, as Rabbi Loew created its features, then added the word Emet—Truth—to its forehead, just as he had seen in the dream. Then Rabbi Loew took the slip of paper on which he had written God's Name in his dream, and he put it inside the mouth of the man of clay. He then stood up and walked around the man of clay seven times in one direction, and seven times in the other. As he did, the body of the clay man began to glow, and Isaac and Jacob could barely believe their eyes. After Rabbi Loew completed the seventh circle, he pronounced God's Name, which he, alone in his generation, knew. At that instant the clay man opened his eyes and sat up and nodded to Rabbi Loew. That is when Rabbi Loew realized that he was mute.

Then Rabbi Loew told Isaac and Jacob that the man they had created was a Golem, who would protect them from the evil sorcerer Thaddeus. They were to call him Joseph. Then Rabbi Loew took out the clothes he had brought with him, and a large pair of shoes and gave them to the Golem. The Golem dressed himself, and then joined them as they walked back to town. And Isaac and Jacob marveled that three of them had set out that night, and now four of them were returning!

Rabbi Loew presented the Golem to everyone as a new servant who would be living with them. When they were alone, Rabbi Loew told the Golem that they must set out at once to find where the evil Thaddeus had hidden the body of the child he had murdered. So Rabbi Loew and the Golem walked together through the Jewish Quarter of Prague. The Golem strode swiftly past each house, and Rabbi Loew hurried to keep up with him. At

last the Golem stopped in front of a house near the gate of the ghetto, and pointed to the front door. Rabbi Loew went with him to the door and knocked. The door was opened by an old man, a pious Jew, who was very surprised to see Rabbi Loew at his door so early in the morning—and surprised, as well, at his strange companion.

Rabbi Loew hurried inside and asked the old man if there was a cellar in that house. The man said that there was, although it had not been used for many years. He showed Rabbi Loew and the Golem how to get there, and descended the steep stairway with them. At the bottom of the stairs they found the sack Rabbi Loew had seen in his dream, containing the child's body. Just then there was a loud knocking at the door, and when the old man climbed the stairs to answer it, the police demanded to be let inside. In the cellar, Rabbi Loew heard what was happening upstairs, and realized they were in terrible danger, for Thaddeus had no doubt reported the murder to the police and told them where to go. They must know as well, the Rabbi thought, to look for the body in the cellar.

Rabbi Loew turned to the Golem, who seemed to fully understand the danger. Without being told, the Golem picked up the sack with the body in it and led Rabbi Loew to a doorway in the floor of that cellar, hidden beneath a rug. They descended the stairway, closing the door behind them. It led to a dark tunnel, through which they walked for several miles. At last they arrived at another stairway, similar to the first. They climbed it, and found it led to another hidden door in another cellar. Quietly they entered, and heard loud laughter coming from above them. Rabbi Loew instantly recognized the voice of Thaddeus, who was boasting that he had fixed the Jews this time, and that their blood would begin to flow that very day. Then Rabbi Loew motioned to the Golem to leave the body there, and they returned to the dark tunnel.

By the time they had returned to the house of the pious Jew, in which Thaddeus had hidden the body, the police had already searched the whole house, including the cellar. When they found nothing, they departed. Then Rabbi Loew went to the captain of the police and reported a rumor he had heard: a child's body could be found in the cellar of the priest Thaddeus. The captain did not want to take this accusation seriously, but when he saw the Golem towering over him, he decided he had better go there and investigate. He insisted, however, that Rabbi Loew accompany him, for he intended to jail him if his accusation proved to be false.

So it was that the police arrived at the mansion of the wealthy sorcerer. Thaddeus was astounded to see Rabbi Loew and the powerful servant in the company of the police. And when the sorcerer saw the word Emet inscribed on the Golem's forehead, he began to tremble with fear, for he knew that Rabbi Loew had used his great powers to bring him into being. The captain informed Thaddeus of Rabbi Loew's accusation, and Thaddeus scornfully replied that they were free to search his entire house, not only the cellar. But the police said they only wanted to see the cellar, and Thaddeus took them there. Imagine his consternation when he found the body of the child that he himself had murdered, right there in his own home! He sank to the floor in a faint, and when he recovered enough to stand, the police took him into custody and thanked Rabbi Loew for having uncovered this terrible crime. Thus was the evil Thaddeus punished for his sin, and the Jews of Prague were spared the terrible pogrom that would have raged had the body been found in the Jewish Quarter.

After that the Golem remained in Rabbi Loew's home for many years, and every day and night he could be seen strolling through the streets of the ghetto, looking for anyone acting in a suspicious manner who might be trying to bring harm to the Jews. And when the enemies of Jews saw what a powerful protector they had, they ceased to plot against them, for they saw that the Jews could not be defeated. That is how Rabbi Loew and the Golem brought many years of peace to the Jews of Prague, for which they were deeply grateful. And the people gave thanks as well to the Holy One, blessed be He, for protecting them from the enemies of Israel.

—Eastern Europe: nineteenth century

IX. *Lilith's Cave*, as told by Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb

{Artist Tracey Snelling was inspired by this story}

There was a house in Tunis said to be haunted by demons. Once it had belonged to a wealthy family, but demons had invaded the house to hold a wedding, and when the wealthy owner had resisted, neither he nor his wife had ever been seen again. After that the house was boarded up, and no one entered it.

At last the house was sold for next to nothing to a man who planned to tear it down and build another in its place. But before he did, his wife convinced him to take out any valuables that might remain there. When the old people heard of their plan, they warned them not to go inside it, but they refused to heed them.

The man struggled with the key to unlock the door, and after he opened it, they found that the expensive furnishings inside had molded; nothing of value had survived. But before they left, the wife insisted on opening the door to the cellar as well, and at last the husband kicked the door in, despite the fact that the demons were rumored to make their home there. Much to their surprise they found the cellar furnishings in perfect condition; none seemed to have aged at all. They were worthy of a place in a palace, and especially valuable was a mirror with an ornate gold frame, which in itself was worth far more than they had paid for the house.

The wife brought the mirror and all of the fine furnishings in the cellar to her own home and proudly displayed it. She hung the mirror in the room of their daughter, a dark-haired coquette. The girl glanced at herself in the mirror all the time, and in this way she was drawn into Lilith's web. For a daughter of Lilith made her home in that mirror. And when it was taken from the haunted house, the demoness came with it. For every mirror is a

gateway to the Other World and leads directly to Lilith's cave. That is the cave on the shore of the Red Sea where Lilith went after she abandoned Adam for all time, where she sported with her demon lovers. From these unions multitudes of demons were born who flocked from that cave and infiltrated the world. And when they want to return, they simply enter the nearest mirror. That is why it is said that Lilith makes her home in every mirror. Nine months after the wife brought those furnishings into the house, she was found dead one morning, having choked on a feather she breathed in from one of the silken pillows she had taken from the cellar. After her death her husband sold all of the furniture and gave the proceeds to charity. He only wanted to get rid of it. All he kept was the gold-framed mirror, for his daughter refused to part with it.

In the days that followed, things went from bad to worse. During the day the girl avoided her household duties, nor did she give her widowed father any assistance. Instead she spent her time before the mirror, admiring herself.

Now the daughter of Lilith who made her home in that mirror watched every movement of the girl who posed before it. And one day she slipped out of the mirror and took possession of the girl, entering through her eyes. In this way she took control of her, stirring her desire at will.

So it happened that this young girl, driven by the evil wishes of Lilith's daughter, ran around with young men who lived in the same neighborhood. She started coming home later and later, and a time came when she sometimes did not come home at night at all. Her father suffered greatly over this, filled with shame. For he knew that once her reputation had been ruined, no worthy young man would marry her.

And in this he was right, for the daughter of Lilith that possessed the girl never let her come close enough to any one young man to feel love for him. For if this had happened, the

power of the demoness over the girl would have been broken. Instead, she drove her on, commanding her roving eye to seek out yet another.

Once, when she had not returned home for two nights and her bed had not been slept in all that time, her father was possessed by a great fury and uttered a curse against her. The curse was so severe that even he was surprised to hear it spoken: “May the Lord turn my unworthy daughter into a bat, flitting around from place to place, from one man to the next, without ever becoming attached to any one! Because she has chosen to abandon herself to the night, may she be doomed to live in darkness! And may she be fated to bear this curse as long as the shame lives in my heart!”

At that moment the young woman, in the arms of a young man, suddenly screamed and vanished from the room. And all that he saw in that instant was a bat that flew out the window uttering a terrible cry.

—Tunisia: oral tradition

X. *Milk and Honey*, as told by Howard Schwartz

{Artists Vera Iliatova, Mike Rothfeld, Chris Sollars, and Inez Storer were inspired by this story}

There once was a shepherd boy named Joshua who lived in a forest near a little Polish village. Each day he herded his family's goats through the forest to a clearing where they grazed. And while they did, Joshua sat beneath a tree and studied the page of Talmud his father had taught him the night before. So too did he play Sabbath songs on his wooden flute. And at sunset Joshua led the goats back home, where his little sister Leah was waiting. She helped him milk the goats and feed the chickens, so that Joshua would have more time to teach her how to read. At night, after dinner, their father told them stories he had heard from his parents and grandparents. There were tales of sages and heroes, of angels and demons, of witches and wizards, all of which Joshua loved. But most of all, he loved to hear tales about the holy city of Jerusalem, so far away. He especially liked stories about the Wailing Wall, where people left messages for God in the cracks of the wall. It was Joshua's dream to go there. One morning, Joshua's mother handed him a cup of goat's milk. He thought it was unusually sweet, as if it had honey in it. The rest of the family agreed that it was the best milk they had ever tasted, and Joshua's father said, "Joshua, do you know which of the goats this milk came from?" Joshua said, "Of course I do. It came from the youngest one."

"Tell me Joshua," said his father, "do you know where that goat has been grazing? For if you do, you could take the other goats there, and they too might give such delicious milk."

"I'll try to find out," said Joshua, "but that goat wanders off every day and doesn't come back until sunset."

"In that case, follow it," his father said.

The next day Joshua led the goats out to the forest and sat

down under his favorite tree, determined to keep his eye on the youngest goat. Before long Joshua took out his wooden recorder and started to play it, and the melody was so beautiful he closed his eyes for just an instant. But when he opened them, the goat was gone. Nor did it come back until it was time to return home. This happened the next day and the next, and meanwhile the goat continued to give that delicious milk. Joshua's father saved some of it for the family and sold the rest in the village nearby. At breakfast the next day Joshua's father said, "Something strange happened yesterday. I delivered milk to this old woman who's been sick. She's been too weak to come out to meet me, so I've brought the milk to her. Well, yesterday she came out of her house looking much better and smiling and she said, 'That milk, that milk you gave me, I think it cured me. I want more of that milk!'"

Then Joshua's father turned to him and said, "So, Joshua, did you ever find out where that goat was grazing?"

"No, no . . . I tried . . . it's a very tricky goat," Joshua said.

"Now Joshua," his father said, "if that milk has special healing abilities, we really need to find out where the goat is grazing."

Joshua said, "I'll tell you what. I'll put a bell around the goat. Then even if it runs away, I'll hear the bell and I'll be able to follow it." His father said "Good idea!"

So Joshua found a little bell and tied it around the neck of the goat. And that day when he led the goats out to the forest, he heard the bell tinkling, and he smiled to himself, thinking, "He's not going to get away this time!"

When they got out to the forest, Joshua kept an eye on the goat, which grazed nearby, as he began to play his flute. Then he closed his eyes for just a instant, carried away by the melody. And when he opened them, the goat was gone. But Joshua still could hear the tinkling of the bell, so he jumped up and raced off in that direction. He caught sight of the goat just before it ran

behind a bush. So Joshua crept up to the bush and pushed it aside—but when he did, the goat wasn't there. Instead, there was the entrance to a cave, a cave he had never seen before. And from inside the cave he heard the faint jingling of the bell. Joshua didn't know what to do. Should he follow the goat into that cave? What if there were spiders or snakes in there? But then he remembered how badly his father wanted to know where the goat had been grazing, and all at once he felt very brave and he dashed inside.

At first the cave was large enough that Joshua could stand up in it, but before long it grew narrow, and he had to bend low, and sometimes crawl, and he wondered where the goat was leading him. He continued to hear the goat's bell in the distance and little by little the darkness in the cave began to lift, and Joshua knew he must be approaching the other end of the cave. Then Joshua came to a turn in the passage and he saw the goat running out of the cave. He hurried to catch up with it, but when he stepped outside, Joshua was astonished to find that he was no longer in the forest. Where did it go? Instead, he was standing in a beautiful orchard, where he saw trees he had never seen before—date trees and fig trees and olive trees. There were no trees like that in Poland. Where was he? Then Joshua looked up, and there, beneath a nearby date tree, calmly grazed the young goat.

Joshua walked over to the goat and petted it, and he tied it to the tree with the rope he used for a belt. Where he stood, the scent of dates was so enticing that Joshua reached up and picked one. He bit into it, and it was the sweetest date he had ever tasted, as sweet as honey. Joshua understood that the goat must have been grazing there, but he could not figure out where he was, for he seemed to have come to another land.

Then Joshua looked up and saw a synagogue nearby. Just then the service ended and ten men came out. One was walking in his direction, and when he passed Joshua he said, "Hello young man. I see you are wearing the clothes of the old country." Joshua said, "Yes, we are new here. Tell me, what is this beautiful place?"

"Why, this is the Holy Land," said the man. "Don't you know you are in the city of Jerusalem?"

"I am?" Joshua said, and his heart skipped a beat. But how could that be possible? He had traveled only a short distance through the cave, and the Holy Land was so far away. It must have been a miracle. But Joshua wanted to be sure. So he asked the man if the Kotel, the Wailing Wall, was nearby.

The man said. "That is what most strangers want to know. Yes, the Wall is very close. Just follow this path past the synagogue, and soon you will reach the marketplace. From there, anyone can guide you there." Joshua gratefully thanked the man and hurried off in that direction.

That path led Joshua to a teeming marketplace. Joshua felt at home there, for he had often accompanied his father to the market in his village. Everyone was buying and selling and bargaining, and every kind of food could be found, from raisins and dates to sweet-smelling oranges. But Joshua wasn't hungry—he was filled with thoughts about the Wall. As he walked through the marketplace, Joshua found himself walking next to an old man, wearing a white robe, carrying a staff. The old man greeted him, "Shalom aleichem." Then he asked, "Where are you going?"

"Aleichem shalom," Joshua said. "I am going to the Kotel." The old man replied, "I am going there too. Let us go together." So the old man led Joshua through the streets of Jerusalem. As they walked along, Joshua heard prayers coming from every direction, for there were many synagogues in that part of the city.

Joshua recognized the prayers, but the melodies were different from those in his village. Still, the words were the same. And knowing those words made him feel at home in that distant place. At last they came to the Wailing Wall. Joshua's heart leaped at the sight of it. Joshua and the old man hastened to the Wall, where dozens of men and women had gathered, all pouring out their hearts and leaving messages for God in the cracks in the Wall. With their tears, they implored God's help, and they mourned the destruction of the Temple and the scattering of the Jewish people all over the world.

Joshua stood close to the Wall and kissed it, with tears rolling down his cheeks. He had been waiting all his life for that moment: to stand before that wall in the city of Jerusalem in the land that God had promised to Abraham so long ago. Looking up, Joshua thought he saw some kind of holy presence hovering above the wall, and he knew that he was in a very sacred place. Joshua began to recite the prayers he knew so well, praying with a passion he had never known, certain that God was listening to every word.

When he finished, he looked up and saw that the old man was writing a message, which he rolled up and left in a crack in the Wall. He turned to Joshua and said, "Would you like to leave a message?" Joshua smiled and held out his hand and the old man handed him a pen and a slip of paper. Joshua thanked him and wrote a message in which he said: "God, how can I ever thank you for bringing me to this holy place? I am so grateful to be here. But God, I miss my parents. Isn't there some way that they could join me?" and he signed it "Joshua." Then he rolled up the message and put it in a crack in the Wall.

Now at the very instant that message touched the Wall, the goat in the orchard reared up and broke its rope. It ran through the cave back to the forest, and from there directly to Joshua's house. And when Joshua's parents saw that the young goat had

come back without him, they were very worried. So when the goat suddenly turned around and ran back to the forest, they all ran after it, calling out for Joshua. Even the family's animals ran after them. They saw the goat go behind the bush, and that is when they discovered the entrance to the cave. Joshua's father said, "The goat must be trying to lead us to Joshua. Perhaps he has been hurt. Quickly, let's see where this cave leads us." So they all went into the cave.

Meanwhile, Joshua thanked the old man and said good-bye to him. Now he was hungry, but he didn't have a single coin. Then Joshua remembered the goat. He could milk the goat and sell the milk in the market. Then he would have enough money to buy some food. So he hurried back to the orchard, where he had tied the goat. But when he got there the rope was broken, and the goat was missing. Joshua was heartbroken. That goat was his best friend in the Holy Land. Where could it have gone? Just then Joshua heard sounds coming from the cave, and all at once the goat came running out of it. He was so happy to see it. Joshua embraced the goat, and as he did, he heard familiar voices. He ran toward the cave just as his father, his mother, and his sister Leah came running out. Joshua was overjoyed. He rushed into their arms and they all shed tears of joy, for they had been reunited. And their faithful animals were with them as well, for they were still following them.

Then Joshua said, "Do you know where we are?"

"No," said his father, "what place is this? It can't be Poland."

And Joshua said, "No, it is not Poland. You have reached the land of Israel, the city of Jerusalem."

"How can that be?" said his father. "It takes months to travel to the Holy Land."

And Joshua said, "It's a miracle. I just prayed at the Wall for you to join me here. And God has answered my prayer."

And when they saw the orchards of Jerusalem instead of the

forests of Poland, his family realized that a miracle truly had taken place. And since God had brought them there, they decided to stay and make their home there. And their lives in the land of Israel were blessed, and they are still living there to this day.

—Eastern Europe: oral tradition

XI. The Prince Who Thought He Was a Rooster, as told by Miriam Kanani

{Artists Inez Storer and M. Louise Stanley were inspired by this story}

There once was a prince who thought he was a rooster. While other princes spent their days slaying dragons, courting princesses, or learning how to rule a kingdom, this prince cast off his royal robes and spent his days crouching beneath a table, refusing to eat any food except kernels of corn. His father, the king, was very upset at this behavior. "Send for the best doctors in all the land," he proclaimed. "A great reward will be given to anyone who can cure my son."

Doctors came from all corners of the kingdom. Each tried to cure the prince, but none of them succeeded. The prince still thought he was a rooster. He ate corn, preened his feathers, and strutted about, crying, "Cock- a-doodle-do! Cock-a-doodle-do!" When the king had almost given up hope, a wise man, passing through the kingdom, appeared before him. "Let me stay alone with the prince for one week, and I will cure him," he said to the king.

"Everyone else has failed," the king moaned, "but you are welcome to try." Thus the wise man entered the prince's chamber. There he took off his clothes, crawled under the table, and began to eat kernels of corn, just like the prince. The prince looked at the man with suspicion. "Who are you?" he asked. "I am a rooster," said the wise man, and he continued to munch on the corn. After a short while he asked the prince, "Who are you?" "I too am a rooster," said the prince. And after that the prince treated the wise man as an equal. The two strutted about, preening their feathers and crying, "Cock-a-doodle-do!"

When they had made their home under the table for a while

and had become good friends, the wise man suddenly crawled out into the prince's chamber and dressed himself.

The prince was shocked.

"A rooster doesn't wear clothes!" he said.

The wise man remained calm. "I am a rooster and I am wearing clothes!"

The prince considered this for a day or two. Then he decided to imitate his friend, and he, too, put on clothes.

A few days later, the wise man took some of the food that was being delivered to them every day, food that they had refused to eat. He carried it beneath the table and ate it.

The prince was astonished. "Roosters don't eat that kind of food!" But the wise man calmly said, "A rooster can eat any food he wants and still be a good rooster." And he continued to eat the tasty food.

The prince watched this for a while. Then he decided to imitate his friend, and he, too, ate the food.

The next day the wise man stopped crouching beneath the table. He stood up proudly on his two feet and started to walk like a man.

"What are you doing?" asked the prince. "A rooster can't get up and walk around like that!" But the wise man said firmly, "I am a rooster, and if I want to walk like this—I will!" And he continued to walk upright. The prince peered at him from beneath the table. Then he decided to imitate his friend and he, too, stood up and walked on his two feet.

So, in this way, the prince began to eat, dress, and walk like a man. The week's time was up and no longer did he act like a rooster. The king was overjoyed, of course, and welcomed his son back with open arms. As for the wise man, why, he collected his reward and went happily on his way.

—Eastern Europe: nineteenth century A tale of Reb Nachman of Bratslav

XII. The Princess in the Tower, as told by Jordan Hill

{Artists Dina Goldstein, Mads Lynnerup, and
M. Louise Stanley were inspired by this story}

King Solomon had a lovely and charming daughter, whose name was Keziah. This daughter was the apple of his eye, and he often thought that he would let her marry only a great ruler, for no one else, he felt, would be worthy of her. Then it happened, during a war, when King Solomon's soldiers were crossing a river on a very hot day, that Solomon called upon the birds to protect them from the heat. In a moment the wings of thousands of birds beat above their heads, shielding them from the sun.

And while this was taking place, an eagle, whose wings were sheltering King Solomon himself, whispered to Solomon, who understood the language of the birds, that it had overheard a voice from heaven announce that King Solomon's beloved daughter Keziah was destined to marry a poor man. And this wedding would take place before a year had passed.

Now King Solomon was very upset to hear this, for he only wanted Keziah to marry a prince or king. The words of the eagle consumed him day and night, until at last he decided to try to outfox fate, by having a high tower built in the sea, where Keziah would stay until the year had passed. That way, he believed, he could prevent the undesirable union from taking place.

Therefore Solomon commanded that the building of a lofty tower be undertaken by his most trusted servants, on the farthest and most remote island of his empire. And he ordered the tower be built without entrances or doors of any kind, except for an entrance on the roof, and with only a single window in his daughter's chamber, from which she could look out to the sea. So too was the tower to be furnished with the finest furniture and many treasures, and seventy servants, all women, were to be sent to satisfy the princess's every wish and command, with abundant food to last a year. Now with the great resources available to King Solomon, the tower was soon completed. Then Solomon called in Keziah and said to her: "Keziah, I am sending you on a long voyage, to a beautiful island. I ask that you make your home there for one year. When you return I shall explain why I am sending you there. Meanwhile, while you are there, you will lack for nothing." And Keziah replied: "Your wisdom, father, is well known throughout the world. I know you love me, as I do you, and that you are sending me on this journey for a good reason. Therefore I will willingly go, and I do not doubt it will be for the best."

King Solomon thanked the Lord for having blessed him with such a wise and loving daughter. And a few days later the princess leave of the king and set sail. The ship sailed for forty days and nights, and at last arrived at the distant island where the tower had been built. To gain entrance a rope was put around the princess, and she was pulled up to the

roof, where the only entrance to the tower was to be found. Once inside, the princess was met by the seventy serving women who had been sent there before her, and she made her home at the top of the tower in a room that overlooked the sea.

Meanwhile, far away, in the city of Acco, there lived a young man whose name was Reuven, a scholar and a scribe, who was poor in possessions, but rich in knowledge and learning. In order to support his family, Reuven gathered wood in the forest, and brought it into town to sell. So it was that once he was wandering in the wilderness when night fell, and he had to sleep beneath the stars. However, as the night passed, it grew colder and colder, until he could no longer bear the chill, and he began to wander about, searching for somewhere to keep warm. In the dark he stumbled upon the carcass of an ox that had been slain by a lion that very day. The carcass was torn open, and the ox was still warm, and Reuven was so cold that he lay down inside it, where it was warm, and fell into a deep sleep. Then, during the night, a giant eagle known as a Ziz swooped down and picked up the ox in its claws, and bore it away, with Reuven still sleeping inside it. As fate would have it, the Ziz carried the ox to the balcony of the tower where the princess was living. There the Ziz ate its fill of the ox and flew off back into the wilderness, with the young man still asleep inside it.

Now it was the custom of the princess to awaken very early and to go out on the balcony to watch the sun rise over the sea. And when she went out that

day, she found the youth asleep in the carcass of the ox, and her surprise was great. She gently woke him and said: "Who are you, and how did you come to be here?" And when Reuven opened his eyes and found himself in that place, with a girl of peerless beauty standing before him, he assumed he was still dreaming. He rubbed his eyes, but nothing changed, and he realized that some kind of miracle had taken place. Then he said: "My name is Reuven. I am a scribe from the city of Acco. Last night I was sleeping in the wilderness when it became very cold, and I found the carcass of this ox, and slept inside it to keep warm. But I do not know how I came to be here."

Then the princess noticed three very large feathers lying beside the ox. She picked them up and showed them to Reuven and said: "These are the feathers of a giant bird, perhaps an eagle, which must have carried the ox here to devour, and brought you along with it." And when he saw the feathers, Reuven realized the princess must be correct, and then he was even more amazed that such a thing had happened. Nor did he regret the turn of events, for from the first instant he had seen the beauty of the princess, he had bound his heart to her. So too was the princess taken with the youth who had appeared so unexpectedly.

Now after sleeping inside the ox, Reuven badly needed a bath, so the princess invited him into her chamber, where she let him bathe and gave him a new robe to wear. And when he emerged from the bath, she was greatly struck by how handsome he

was. Then she shared her breakfast with him, and after they had eaten she told him who she was, and how she had come to be there. Then she said: "This tower has been built so that it is impossible to leave it, for there are no doors of any kind except for the one on the roof where we entered. And even if you succeeded in descending from the tower, nothing would be gained, for no ship ever passes this secluded island.

Perhaps it was fated that you come here; therefore, stay until the day my father, King Solomon, comes to fetch me at the end of a year." Thus Reuven remained in the tower with the princess Keziah, and every day their love for each other deepened. Before long Reuven asked the princess to marry him, and when she agreed, he wrote out a marriage contract which they signed, and then they exchanged vows and called upon God and the angels Michael and Gabriel to be their witnesses. And thus they became man and wife.

So it was that by the end of the year Reuven and Keziah had become the happy parents of a beautiful child, a boy, whom they named Solomon. And when the ship arrived to take the princess back to the palace in Jerusalem, King Solomon disembarked from it, for he had come to bring her back himself. Imagine his astonishment when he discovered that his daughter was married, and the mother of a fine son, his namesake! Solomon was overwhelmed, and he understood for the first time how vain it was to try to prevent the decrees of Providence from taking place.

And Solomon also recognized Reuven's fine qualities, and that he was a scholar and a scribe, and he did not oppose him, but welcomed him as if he were his own son.

Thereupon King Solomon accompanied his daughter and her husband and their child to Jerusalem, where a lavish wedding was held for the princess and her beloved to share their joy with all of the inhabitants of the kingdom. And afterward they lived together in joy and peace for all the days of their lives.

—Palestine: c. eighth to tenth centuries

XIII. The Souls of Trees, as told by Howard Schwartz

{Artists Youngsuk Suh & Katie Peterson, Andy Diaz Hope and Laurel Roth Hope were inspired by this story}

One day Reb Nachman of Bratslav told his Hasidim to tell Reb Lepke the coachman to prepare for a journey. When the Hasidim asked where he was going, all Reb Nachman would say was, "Someone needs our help."

Soon the coachman arrived, and Reb Nachman invited three of his Hasidim to join him. Then, just as they were about to depart, Reb Lepke asked Reb Nachman where he wanted to go. Reb Nachman replied, "Hold the reins lightly, Reb Lepke, and let the horses go wherever they please." The coachman was surprised, but he did as the rabbi asked.

The Hasidim rode for many hours, while the horses took one road after another, proceeding as if they knew exactly where they were going. When the sun began to set, the Hasidim wondered where they would spend the night. At last one of them asked Reb Nachman, and all he would say was "God will provide."

Then, just as darkness was falling, the carriage reached an inn. Reb Nachman called out for the coachman to stop, and everyone got out. The Hasidim had never been to this inn before, so they were delighted to find that it was run by a Jew and his wife. Now the innkeeper had heard of Reb Nachman

and he was honored that the great-grandson of the Ba'al Shem Tov was a guest at his inn, and he treated him with great respect.

Reb Nachman and his Hasidim joined the other guests for evening prayers. All together there were ten men, just enough to make a minyan. After that the innkeeper's wife served a fine meal, and the guests stayed up for many hours discussing the Torah. It was late when the innkeeper showed the Hasidim to their rooms. But before he left Reb Nachman, he said, "Rabbi, could I speak to you in private?" "Surely," said Reb Nachman, and he offered the innkeeper a chair. When the man was seated, he told Reb Nachman his story: "My wife and I have been married for ten years, and we love each other. But there is one sadness that fills our lives and overshadows everything else." And Reb Nachman looked more closely at the man and saw that he did, indeed, seem to be sad. And Reb Nachman said, "Yes, what is it?" And the man replied, "There is nothing in the world that we long for more than a child of our own. But so far God has not blessed us with a son or daughter. Rabbi, is there anything you can do to help us?"

Reb Nachman said, "It is late and I am tired. Let me think about this overnight, and in the morning I'll let you know if there is anything I can do." The innkeeper was pleased with this reply and took his leave of Reb Nachman. Soon Reb Nachman and all the Hasidim were all sound asleep, but in the middle of the night, Reb Nachman began to cry out, waking

everyone in the inn. They came running to see what had happened.

When they came in, they found Reb Nachman sitting up in bed, with a dazed look. He ignored all those who had gathered there. Instead, he took a book out of his bag, closed his eyes, and opened it, pointing to a passage. Then he opened his eyes, read what was written there, nodded, closed the book, and put it away. Then he turned to everyone gathered there and said, "Everyone can go back to sleep. I will be all right. Goodnight." Then everyone went back to sleep, except for the innkeeper and his wife, who didn't get a wink of sleep, for they were very curious to know what the rabbi would tell them.

The next day, after morning prayers, Reb Nachman signaled for the innkeeper and his wife to join him. When they were alone he said, "Tell me, were the walls of this inn built out of saplings that were cut down before their time?" The innkeeper and his wife looked at each other, and the innkeeper said, "Yes, rabbi, it is true. But how did you know?"

Reb Nachman said, "All night I dreamed I was surrounded by the bodies of the dead. I was very frightened. When I awoke and opened that book, the words I read there were 'Cutting down a tree before its time is the same as killing a soul.' That is how I learned that it was the souls of the trees crying out to me. So too did I learn why you and your wife can't have children."

"Rabbi," cried the innkeeper, "What possible connection could there be?" Reb Nachman said,

“There is an angel named Lailah, who is the angel of conception. It is Lailah who delivers the soul of the unborn child. But each time Lailah approaches your inn to bring you the blessing of a child, she is driven back by the sighs and moans and cries of the souls of the trees that were cut down too soon.”

“Oh, Rabbi, that is terrible,” said the innkeeper.

“Is there anything we can do about it?”

“Yes,” said Reb Nachman. “You must plant trees. Plant twice as many trees as you cut down. Take good care of them and see that none are cut down. If you do this for three years, you will be blessed with a child.”

The couple was overjoyed to hear this and the innkeeper thanked Reb Nachman for revealing this mystery to them. And that very day, even before Reb Nachman and his Hasidim took their leave, they began planting trees.

All the trees that the couple planted grew tall and strong. And after three years, Lailah returned to their home. Then the lullaby of the living trees soothed the cries of the trees that had been cut down, so that Lailah was able to reach the couple’s house, tap on their window three times, and bless them with a child. And every year after that the innkeeper’s wife gave birth to another child, until they had seven children, and all of them were as tall and straight and strong as a fine tree.

—Eastern Europe: nineteenth century