

# **Yankee & Abraham**

by

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**A Play in Two Acts**

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## **Cast of Characters**

**RABBI Yaakov Levy (Yankee)** - 32, an orthodox Rabbi, a Lubavitch Hasid

**SARAH Levy**- 28, Rabbi's wife, teaches children, childless herself

**MORRIS Liebowitz** - 84, member of board of Temple Chaim

**MICHAEL FINE** - 52, President of Temple Chaim, wealthy lawyer

**MRS. SAMUELS (Natalie)** - 62, recent widow, wealthy

**YUSSIE Yablonski** - 55, unmarried, very poor

**ABRAHAM** - 4,000 years old (approx), dressed like a shepherd

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## **Time**

The play begins Tuesday evening, in October, six days after Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year. It then proceeds over the next three and a half days, until early Saturday morning, Yom Kipper, the Jewish High Holy day, the Day of Atonement.

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## **Place**

The play takes place inside Temple Chaim. It is located in Sunshine, Florida, an imaginary town west of Miami with a small Jewish population.

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## **The Set**

The set is the study of Rabbi Levy inside Temple Chaim. The primary details are a desk, chairs, a couch, and books. The sanctuary section is offstage, right. The Rabbi and his wife, Sarah, live in the back, in an apartment, offstage. The set changes three times, twice to go to a bench outside Temple Chaim, and once when the Rabbi gives a sermon in the sanctuary. This is done by darkening the set and spotlighting a bench, or a podium, which are brought on and then removed.

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## **Summary of Scenes**

### **ACT ONE**

**Scene One** - Tuesday evening, three days before Yom Kippur, Rabbi's study

**Scene Two** - Wednesday afternoon, Rabbi's study. Changes to outside bench

**Scene Three** - Thursday evening, Rabbi's study

### **ACT TWO**

**Scene One** - Friday morning, before Yom Kippur, Rabbi's study

**Scene Two** - Friday night, Yom Kippur, in sanctuary. Changes to outside bench

**Scene Three** - Early Saturday morning, Yom Kippur, Rabbi's study

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# Yankee & Abraham

## ACT ONE

### Scene One

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[THE PHONE RINGS]

RABBI

Rabbi Levy ...

[SARAH LEVY ENTERS]

SARAH

(Whispers) Is that her, Yankee?

RABBI

Yes, Mrs. Samuels.

SARAH

She's not coming.

RABBI

I'm sorry to hear that.

SARAH

What's wrong ?

RABBI

Is it serious?

SARAH

Is what serious?

Yankee, don't shush me!

RABBI

No. It's no problem.

SARAH

Yankee, where are you going?

RABBI

I said, it's not a problem.

**[RABBI EXITS]**

(Offstage) I'm on a portable phone, Mrs. Samuels. It gets staticy when I go outside.

**[SARAH EXITS]**

**[RABBI ENTERS with SARAH RIGHT BEHIND]**

Okay. Goodbye, Mrs. Samuels.

SARAH

Why did you do that?

RABBI

Sarah, how am I supposed to talk on the phone with you toomeling in the background?

SARAH

So she's not coming, right?

RABBI

No, she's coming. But she's going to be late.

SARAH

How late is late?

RABBI

About an hour.

SARAH

Why?

RABBI

Her dog ate something it shouldn't.  
It's throwing up.

SARAH

Such a tragedy.

RABBI

Sarah.

SARAH

Yankee, it's not right. She cares more about that dog than people.  
Do you see the way she kisses it on the mouth? It's disgusting!  
Do you know where that dog's mouth has been? Ugh!

RABBI

Sarah, someone might think you were being ungrateful if they overheard ...

SARAH

Ungrateful? Yankee, she hasn't given ...  
Could you put the book down when we're talking?.

RABBI

I'm listening.  
Sarah, you're a worrier. Herbie gave his pledge.

SARAH

So?  
Yankee, I'm still talking to you.

RABBI

I know you're still talking, Sarah. I wish you were listening, too.  
I said Herbie gave his pledge. A pledge is a pledge.

SARAH

But Herbie's gone.  
Let me have that book!

RABBI

Can I have it back please?

SARAH

Not until you listen to me.  
I'm trying to explain to you, but you're not hearing me, that Natalie has her own mind.

RABBI

Her own mind? Hmm. A rare trait in a Jewish woman.  
That you for explaining that to me, Sarah.  
I don't know why it didn't occur to me. Now, may I have the book, please?  
Thank you.  
Sarah, why do you stick your tongue out at me, behind my back, like a child?

SARAH

How do you know that?

RABBI

In Yeshiva we were taught to have eyes in back of our yarmulkes.

SARAH

I give up.  
Are you hungry? Do want some dinner?

RABBI

Hmmm..

SARAH

Maybe we can have a quick dinner before she gets here.  
Yankee, let's eat inside, together, for a change.  
Yankee? Yankee, I'm still here.

RABBI

I'm sorry, Sarah. What did you say?

SARAH

Never mind.

RABBI

Sarah, let's eat dinner inside.

SARAH

Yes, Yankee. It'll be ready in twenty minutes. I'll call you.

RABBI

Hmm?

SARAH

I said I'll call ... Yankee?  
Give me strength.

**[SARAH EXITS]**

RABBI

I'm sorry, what did you say? Sarah?

**[There is a knock on the door.]**

RABBI

That was quick. Mrs. Samuels, did you ...

**[RABBI opens the door. YUSSIE YABLONSKI ENTERS.]**

RABBI

Yussie!

YUSSIE

Is it too late, Rabbi?

RABBI

No, no. Come in, Yussella. How is your New Year so far?

YUSSIE

Ah. And how's by you?

RABBI

Me? Who wants to talk about me?

YUSSIE

You seem happy, Rabbi.

RABBI

Can you keep a secret, Yussie?

YUSSIE

A secret? For me it's easy to keep a secret.  
Nobody listens to Yussie.  
Nobody talks to Yussie, either

RABBI

Tsk, tsk. My good friend, I listen to you. And I enjoy talking with you.

YUSSIE

So you shouldn't ask if your secrets will be safe with me, Rabbi.  
You're the only one I can tell them to.

RABBI

Are you getting a sense of humor, Yussie?

YUSSIE

A sense of humor? What would I do with a sense of humor?  
Rabbi, don't sneak around to tickle me.  
You're a Rabbi. You shouldn't be tickling people!

RABBI

You're right. I'll stop.  
Maybe one little tickle ... I knew there was a laugh in there.

YUSSIE

That is not fair. You sneaked that laugh out of me.

RABBI

Yussie, tonight is going to be a very happy night, and you have to be happy with me.  
A prayer is going to be answered tonight.

YUSSIE

A prayer?

RABBI

Mrs. ... no. I shouldn't talk about it.  
Kena hora.

YUSSIE

Would it have to do with our talk ?

RABBI

Our talk?

YUSSIE

Last week? You forgot.



RABBI  
What did I forget?

YUSSIE  
Never mind. It's not important.

RABBI  
Yussie, my good friend. I'm sorry.  
Tell me what it is I forgot. Please?

YUSSIE  
The job ... as Shamish.

RABBI  
Oh yes! Of course!  
Yussie, the job is yours.

YUSSIE  
Truly, Rabbi? You're not just humoring me?

RABBI  
I'm sure of it. Well ... not completely sure. But I will be tonight.  
I'll call you later to confirm it.

YUSSIE  
Call me? Rabbi, maybe I should ...

**[SARAH LEVY ENTERS]**

SARAH  
Yankee, would you like potatoes or .... oh, hello Yussie.

YUSSIE  
Hello Rebbetzin. How are you?

SARAH  
Thank God.

RABBI  
Yussie, would you like to join us for dinner?

SARAH

Yankee ...

RABBI

Sarah is making something delicious - Sarah what are you making?

SARAH

Yankee ...

YUSSIE

No, Rabbi. I already had dinner. Thank you anyway.  
Look, it's late. I should be going.

RABBI

Are you sure? Yussie, we have plenty. It would be no trouble.

SARAH

Yankee ...

YUSSIE

No. No. Thank you, Rabbi. Really, thank you.  
I had a big meal before I came here. I couldn't get anything more down.  
Thank you, Rebbetzin. I'm sorry to disturb you.

RABBI

Yussie, are you sure. It's really ....

**[YUSSIE EXITS]**

RABBI

...no trouble ... Sarah, really, you could have been ...

**[SARAH EXITS]**

RABBI

... more hospitable.

**[SARAH ENTERS with a deodorizing spray]**

SARAH

Didn't you smell him? Does he ever bathe?

SARAH (cont'd)

Yankee, maybe you have eyes in the back of your yarmulke, but your nose is blind.

RABBI

Sarah, could you stop spraying for a minute.

SARAH

Yes.

RABBI

You pushed a hungry man away from our table tonight.

SARAH

Hungry? He said he ate. Now who's not listening?

RABBI

If you listened closely, you would have hear his stomach growling too.

SARAH

His stomach? What about me, Yaakov Levy? Remember me?

I want to spend a little time alone with my husband. Is that a sin?

RABBI

We spend time.

SARAH

Yes, if you count sleeping.

RABBI

Sarah, I'm a Rabbi. You knew when we got married this was the kind of life I wanted.

SARAH

No, I didn't. Nothing could have prepared me for this.

RABBI

It's so bad?

SARAH

It's bad when a wife has to fight for some attention from her ...

**[There is a knock on the door]**

See what I mean?

RABBI

Sarah, let's discuss this later.

SARAH

Of course. Later.  
Who am I?

RABBI

Come in.

**[MICHAEL FINE ENTERS]**

MICHAEL FINE

Good evening, Rabbi. I know I didn't call, but I was riding by and saw ....  
What is that odor?

SARAH

Odor? What odor? Rabbi, do you smell anything?

RABBI

Sarah.

MICHAEL FINE

Did I come at a bad time?

RABBI

No, Michael.

SARAH

Tell him the truth, *Rabbi*. We were having a fight.

RABBI

Sarah.

SARAH

Oh, God forbid a Rabbi should fight with his wife.  
God forbid a Rabbi should be human, that his wife should be unhappy and complain  
about her husband working double shifts,  
so that she hardly sees him anymore, except when he's sleeping.  
Does your wife complain like me, *Mister Fine*?

RABBI

Sarah!

SARAH

Ah, what would your wife complain about?

The maid is stealing? The cook is lazy? The nanny is cold to the children?

MICHAEL FINE

I can see it is a bad time.

**[MICHAEL FINE EXITS]**

RABBI

Sarah, what's gotten into you tonight?

SARAH

What's gotten into me? I'm fed up.

I'm fed up living behind a synagogue, with the constant interruptions.

We have no privacy. None.

Yankee, I'm talking to you!

RABBI

And I'm listening.

SARAH

But your mind is on him. Why? Because he's the richest man in town.

Well, what are you waiting for? Go chase after him, *Rabbi*.

He wants to mount a small gold plaque - around your neck.

It will say, "This soul was bought and paid for by MICHAEL FINE."

**[SARAH EXITS to the rear apartment]**

**[RABBI LEVY EXITS from the front door]**

RABBI(Offstage)

Michael! ... Michael! ... Wait! ....

Michael I'm very sorry. She is an emotional woman, my wife.

She says something one minute, it's forgotten the next. It's nothing.

Come back inside, please ..... Come, we'll talk.

**[RABBI LEVY and MICHAEL FINE ENTER]**

MICHAEL FINE

Rabbi, I do not like being insulted.

RABBI

Michael, believe me, there was no insult intended. My wife is not herself. She gets this way ... about ... well, I guess it happens about once each month.

MICHAEL FINE

I would think once is too ... oh ... oh! Of course, Rabbi.

RABBI

Have a seat. Please. Sit. Would you like something to eat?

MICHAEL FINE

No, thank you, Rabbi. I've already eaten.

RABBI

Something to drink, perhaps? A little wine?

MICHAEL FINE

Hmm. Do you have anything imported?

RABBI

I have Manichevitz. It's from New York City ... it that far enough away from Florida to be considered foreign?

MICHAEL FINE

No thank you, Rabbi.

RABBI

So what brings you out this way?

MICHAEL FINE

I have a yartzite coming up. For my father.

RABBI

Okay. Let me write it down. When?

MICHAEL FINE

Tomorrow.

RABBI

Tomorrow?! Michael, this is very short notice.

MICHAEL FINE

My mother called an hour ago to remind me. I've been very busy.

RABBI

It won't be easy, Michael, but I'll try.

MICHAEL FINE

Try? This is important, Rabbi. It's my father.

RABBI

Michael it's difficult to get ten men on such short notice.

MICHAEL FINE

Tell them it's for me. They'll come.

RABBI

Michael, it's difficult to get the men to come when .... others don't return the favor.

MICHAEL FINE

I come when I can. They understand I'm busy.

RABBI

Some men feel they are just as busy.

MICHAEL FINE

Do they know how much I pledge each year?

RABBI

It was your idea to publish the numbers. I didn't ...

MICHAEL FINE

Rabbi, I shouldn't mention this, but .... No. Never mind. It's better I keep quiet.

RABBI

Mention what?

MICHAEL FINE

No, I don't want to upset you.

RABBI

Upset me?

MICHAEL FINE

Well, there are members of the board of directors that are, shall we say, less than happy with your performance here.

RABBI

Like who?

MICHAEL FINE

I couldn't betray confidences.

RABBI

Morris Leibowitz?

MICHAEL FINE

One might mention him ... along with others.

RABBI

Others?

MICHAEL FINE

Rabbi, we never had a minyon problem when Rabbi Gold, may he rest in peace, was here.

RABBI

I wish he would have shared his secret with me before he passed away.

MICHAEL FINE

Secret? He didn't have any secret.

RABBI

Michael, did you come to temple every time Rabbi Gold called?

MICHAEL FINE

Well, yes, as a matter of fact, I did.

RABBI

So how come, when I call, you don't come?



MICHAEL FINE

I come.

RABBI

The last three times you haven't.

MICHAEL FINE

I've been busy.

RABBI

Were you not busy when Rabbi Gold called?

MICHAEL FINE

No. I was even busier. I was building my law practice back then.

RABBI

So?

MICHAEL FINE

Rabbi, if you keep pushing this point, you may get an answer you don't like.

RABBI

'I don't know' is an answer I don't like. I would rather hear the truth.

MICHAEL FINE

You want the truth?

RABBI

Yes.

MICHAEL FINE

You're not going to like the truth.

RABBI

Let me be the judge of that.

MICHAEL FINE

Okay. I think you're too young. You don't get the respect Rabbi Gold did.

RABBI

How shall I correct that, Michael? At what age do people start taking a Rabbi seriously? Maybe I should die my beard white? What do you think?

MICHAEL FINE

I think I shouldn't have told you the truth.

RABBI

Michael, did you think I didn't guess at what the problem is?

You just confirmed it.

Have you ever asked yourself how I feel?

I shouldn't have to call and beg people to come to synagogue.

That's what I do. I beg people to do what's right.

Do you like begging, Michael? I don't.

MICHAEL FINE

What I don't like, Rabbi, is the tone in your voice.

I am your greatest supporter on the board.

RABBI

Yes, and I value your support.

MICHAEL FINE

Rabbi, if I were to withdraw my support, as President of the Temple, well ...

RABBI

Well what?

MICHAEL FINE

Let's put it this way, it is a matter of supply and demand. There are a lot of Rabbis, older Rabbis, who can no longer tolerate the colder weather. As they get closer to retirement, they look for jobs in the warmer climate. I don't have to tell you Sunshine has one of the best climates in Florida, maybe in the country. You should see some of the resumes we receive, all unsolicited, of course.

RABBI

What are you saying, Michael?

Are you saying you're going to fire me if I don't get ten men tomorrow night?

MICHAEL FINE

Rabbi, I'm saying I want a minyon for my father's yartzite, and it's very important I get it.

RABBI

Then God willing, you will get it.

MICHAEL FINE

Thank you, Rabbi.  
Look at the time! I must be going.

RABBI

Yes. Michael, thanks for coming by and sharing your confidence in me.

MICHAEL FINE

I'll see you tomorrow night.

RABBI

God willing.

MICHAEL FINE  
(hands him an envelope)

Oh, by the way, here.

RABBI

Thank you, Michael.  
What is this for?

MICHAEL FINE

I want to sponsor the meal, the break fast, after Yom Kippur.

RABBI

Oh ... I'm sure the congregation will appreciate it.

MICHAEL FINE

I'd like the same things you ordered last year. Lox, bagels, cream cheese. Some whitefish salad, chubs, you know the drill.

RABBI

Yes.

MICHAEL FINE

I want the best of everything.

RABBI

Of course. I'll order from Bubbe's Deli.

MICHAEL FINE

Don't forget the card, mentioning my law firm as the donor.

RABBI

Of course.

MICHAEL FINE

Well, good night, Rabbi.

RABBI

Good night, Michael.

**[MICHAEL FINE EXITS]**

[The Rabbi looks at the door. After a short pause, **there is a knock on the door**]

RABBI

Yes, Michael, did you ....

**[MORRIS LEIBOWITZ ENTERS]**

Oh, good evening Morris.

MORRIS

You thought maybe I was some fancy, shmancy lawyer?

I saw him out in the parking lot. What a boolvon!

RABBI

Morris, please ... it's been a rough day and an even rougher night.

MORRIS

And it's only Morris Leibowitz, huh?

RABBI

Morris, please, can this wait?

MORRIS

No, it can't wait, Rabbi.

I know I didn't call, but I saw your lights on, and I thought, now is the time to get this off my chest.

RABBI

Morris, please ...

MORRIS

Oh, I see. MICHAEL FINE you go running after, Morris Leibowitz, he's a shlub. Well, Morris Leibowitz is nobody's shlub!

RABBI

No, Morris, you're nobody's shlub. Please ... sit.

MORRIS

So now I can sit like a human being, huh?

RABBI

Or stand. Whatever pleases you. Me, I'm going to sit.

MORRIS

You want to know what pleases me?  
How old are you, Rabbi?

RABBI

Morris, do we have to discuss ... all right, I'm 32.

MORRIS

What pleases me, Mr. Thirty Two year old Rabbi who doesn't have time for an 84 year old *director of this temple*, is that I say kaddish for my mother. For thirty six years, longer than you've been alive, I've been saying kaddish for the greatest woman that ever lived.

RABBI

And for five of those years, you've said it at our synagogue.

MORRIS

No, Rabbi, four of those years I said it at your temple. This year I couldn't say it because my thirty-two year old Rabbi, who goes running to kiss the toochis of fancy shmancy lawyers, he wasn't here.

RABBI

What do you mean? I called for a minyon. I had 10 promises.

MORRIS

Well, only nine promises showed up.  
I needed you, Rabbi. Where were you?!

RABBI

Morris, I was preparing Herbie Samuels for burial.

MORRIS

Sure. Another rich man.

RABBI

Morris, couldn't you find a tenth man?

MORRIS

On a Sunday morning? For Morris Leibowitz, the schlub?!

Noooo.

Everyone was too busy playing golf or going to the beach.

Who should come to synagogue for a half hour so Morris Leibowitz could say kaddish for his mother, the woman who went to an early grave so her son could live to be 84 years old?

RABBI

Morris, I'm so sorry. I thought you had your minyon. If I had known, I would ....

MORRIS

We tried to get you, Rabbi. I called your fakokta cell phone for two hours.

RABBI

The battery died.

MORRIS

Yeah, well, something else died that day. My faith in you as a Rabbi.

RABBI

Morris, I'm really sorry.

If I had known, I would have been here for you.

MORRIS

Yes, Rabbi. And I would have been here for you. But not anymore!  
I want my Torah back.

RABBI

Morris, please.

MORRIS

Rabbi, stop the nonsense and get my Torah.

RABBI

Morris, it's three days to Yom Kippur.

MORRIS

I bought that Torah in honor of my mother. I let you use it in her honor.  
When you dishonor her memory, you dishonor me.

RABBI

Morris, please, how can I have high holy day services with an empty arc?  
I'll be a laughing stock in front of the congregation.  
Please let me hold onto the Torah ... for a couple more days ... please ... I am begging you.

MORRIS

No!

RABBI

Morris, is there no understanding in your heart?

MORRIS

Understanding. I got plenty of understanding.  
You should have so much understanding.  
Now go get my Torah, Rabbi.

RABBI

Okay, Morris. If you insist.  
Just please, stop snapping your fingers at me. It gives me a headache.  
[RABBI EXITS AND THEN ENTERS carrying a Torah]

MORRIS

I'll take that.

RABBI

Morris, open the door and I'll put it in the car for you.

MORRIS

Rabbi, I'm old, but I'm not dead. Give me my mother's Torah.

RABBI

Okay, Morris. Here, I'll get the door for you.

MORRIS

Good bye, Rabbi.

RABBI

I'm only going to say good night, Morris.

[NATALIE SAMUELS ENTERS.]

MRS. SAMUELS

Hello Morris.

MORRIS

Hello, Mrs. Samuels. How are you?

MRS. SAMUELS

Who can lie? I miss Herbie.

MORRIS

I do too. If you need anything, call me, or the missus.

MRS. SAMUELS

That's very kind of you, Morris.

MORRIS

I mean it. You need anything, or you just want to talk, call us.

MRS. SAMUELS

Thank you, Morris.

[MORRIS EXITS]

MRS. SAMUELS

What a wonderful old man.

Rabbi, was there a reason he was carrying the Torah?

RABBI

It's a long story. In the meantime, come in. Come in!

How is your dog?

MRS. SAMUELS

Isabella is not so good. I was afraid to bring her in the car, so I got her a babysitter. She hates to be left alone.

[SARAH LEVY ENTERS]

SARAH

Yankee, dinner's ready ... oh, hello Natalie. How are you?

MRS. SAMUELS

As well as can be expected. How are you?

SARAH

Thank God.

RABBI

Mrs. Samuels, would you like to join us for dinner?

MRS. SAMUELS

No, I don't want to impose, and my poor Isabella is home waiting for me.

SARAH

I'll keep dinner warm, Yankee.

MRS. SAMUELS

No, stay, Sarah. I think you should hear this.

If it's all right with your husband?



RABBI

Of course it's all right by me. Everyone sit. Sit. Can I get you something to drink, Mrs. Samuels? Coffee ? Tea? A little wine?

MRS. SAMUELS

No, thank you.

Rabbi, you better save the charm and hospitality. You're not going to like what I have to say.

RABBI

I'm not?

MRS. SAMUELS

No, you're not. I've decided I'm not going to donate the money for the school.

RABBI

Mrs. Samuels - Natalie - Herbie wanted that school. He wanted his name on it.

SARAH

It was very important to him.

MRS. SAMUELS

Him, or you?

Herbie was never that interested in religion until you two came to town.

RABBI

Should we apologize for that, Natalie?

MRS. SAMUELS

I think the time has come to say it plain. You used my husband, but you won't use me.

SARAH

That's not fair! My husband brought your Herbie a great deal of comfort during his last days, Natalie.

MRS. SAMUELS

And he had to pay for the comfort, didn't he?

RABBI

What do you mean?

MRS. SAMUELS

You know perfectly well what I mean.

SARAH

No, I'm sure we don't.

MRS. SAMUELS

You promised a scared, dying man a good seat next to God, in return for, what shall we call it, a generous contribution. Isn't that how you worked it?

RABBI

Natalie, this is not like you.

MRS. SAMUELS

Not like me? You don't know anything about me.

Look at you. You look so pious.

You say the right words, mumble the right prayers.  
But what is underneath all those black clothes? Are you smirking behind your beard?.

RABBI

Please, don't touch me. You know that is forbidden.

SARAH

Natalie, what are you doing?

MRS. SAMUELS

What am I doing? I feel like a door has been opened to my soul.  
I feel like I can say whatever I want now.

SARAH

Just because you say it, doesn't make it true.

MRS. SAMUELS

What would you know about the truth? You're so brainwashed.  
Look at you. You even hide your hair under that silly wig so that only he can see it.

SARAH

My shadle is not silly!

MRS. SAMUELS

You are a joke in this community. The other women laugh at you behind your back.  
What were you raised to be?

A baby factory, with no mind of your own.

Only you failed in that matter, didn't you? The same as I failed.

RABBI

Natalie, please.

MRS. SAMUELS

Did you think I didn't know what you were doing? Both of you, playing up to my  
husband, trying to be the children we never had?

SARAH

Yankee, make her stop.

RABBI

Natalie, let's talk again, after some time has passed.

MRS. SAMUELS

One minute, one year, or one lifetime, it makes no difference.

There'll be no school. I don't want other children to be brainwashed by you.

RABBI

Natalie, wait a minute.

MRS. SAMUELS

What?

RABBI

Your husband, may he rest in peace, pledged he would build a school.

That is the truth, and you know it.

Is this the way you want him remembered?

MRS. SAMUELS

I remember him, and that is enough.

[NATALIE SAMUELS EXITS]

SARAH

I warned you, Yankee.

RABBI

I can not believe that God will allow this to happen.

How could He? This is a good thing, to teach children ...

How could God not allow such a good thing?.

SARAH

How could you let her talk to me like that, Yankee?

RABBI

She is out of her mind with grief, Sarah. She didn't mean what she said.

She couldn't.

SARAH

Yankee, we give everything to this little town. Everything.

I teach their children.

I cook for 20 on Shabbos to show them what a Shabbos is supposed to be like.

Your work so hard I never see you, and when I do, you're tired and go right to sleep.

Yankee, we spent our wedding money on new prayer books and a children's library.

And this is how they repay us? With contempt.

I never wanted to come here. You said we were needed. We're not needed.

Listen to her. We're a laughing stock. The other women laugh at me.

RABBI

Sarah, you're over-reacting.

SARAH

Over-reacting?!

RABBI

Sarah, no throwing! Sarah, I thought we agreed no more throwing.

Those books are expensive.

SARAH

Expensive! Everything is expensive when you live like mice.

RABBI

Sarah, that is a valuable book. Please put it back on ...

Now, you've broken the binding. Stop it!

SARAH

I swear, I could strangle you with my bare hands for being so blind.

RABBI

Sarah, stop it! Stop it!

SARAH

I hate this place! I hate these people!  
And I hate you for bringing us here!

[SARAH EXITS.]

RABBI

(Locks the door, sighs. He finds his prayer book and prays, intermittently out loud)  
Blessed are You, Lord our God and God of our fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob ..... Blessed are you, Shield of Abraham ... You are ....

[Slams his prayer book down]

This is not working!  
God I came here to bring these people closer to You.

[The phone rings]

After 5 years, I am further away than when I started.

[The phone rings]

And now my Sarah, whom I love more than my own life, she hates me.  
She hates me.

[The phone rings]

Please help me. Please.

[The phone rings]

STOP RINGING! I'M PRAYING FOR GOD'S SAKES

(The Rabbi answers the phone)

Yes! ...

Collect? Who would call me collect?....

Yes operator, I'll accept the charges.

Yussie? What's the matter? Are you okay? ....

No, Yussie, I'm sorry ... no, it didn't come through ...

I'm sorry, Yussie ... Thank God.... Good Night ..

(The Rabbi hangs up the phone)

Whom am I praying to? Whom am I thanking?

I'm standing here like a fool, talking to myself.

[The Rabbi cries silently into his hands]

[ABRAHAM APPEARS]

(He is a very old man, with a white beard, draped in white cloth, carrying a staff)

ABRAHAM

Don't cry, Tottilah.

RABBI

What? Who are you?

ABRAHAM

I am Avraham.

RABBI

Avraham?

ABRAHAM

You were expecting maybe God himself?

RABBI

Avraham Aveinu?

ABRAHAM

By me, just plain Avraham is fine. And boy am I aching!

It hurts to get pushed here after almost 4,000 years.

Feels like every bone in my body is saying "oy vay!".

You think maybe you could offer me some wine? You offered everyone else.

RABBI

You like Manishevitz?

ABRAHAM

To tell you the truth, I prefer homemade, but if Manishevitz is all you have ...

RABBI

Here.

ABRAHAM

Tottilah, don't be so stingy. I'm thirsty.

RABBI

Sorry.

ABRAHAM

Nu, pour some for yourself. You could use some for the tsuris, no?

RABBI

That I have plenty of.

ABRAHAM

Le chayem.

RABBI

Le chayem.

So which is it?

ABRAHAM

Which is what, Tottilah?

RABBI

I'm either crazy or dreaming. Which is it?

ABRAHAM

Neither. I'm here. You're there. And we have things to do.

But for now, we'll drink some wine.

RABBI

Things to do?

ABRAHAM

You wanted help, no?

RABBI

Yes.

ABRAHAM

So, I'm here to help. Pour me some more wine, Tottilah.

RABBI

Here ... enough?

Did you bring money with you?

Right now, alot of money would take away alot of tsuris.

ABRAHAM

I have something better than money. Le Chayem.

RABBI

Le Chayem.

Okay, I'll ask. What?

ABRAHAM

You have to ask? You're a Rabbi, aren't you? You went to cheder, no?

Someone read all these books, no?

What's better than money?

RABBI

Health.

ABRAHAM

When you have your health, you have everything. Right?

RABBI

Sure.

ABRAHAM

Phooey! I spit on that! I've known very healthy, miserable people.

RABBI

Okay, you brought happiness.

ABRAHAM

Oy vay, I can see I have my hands full here.

RABBI

Not happiness?

ABRAHAM

Tottilah, who do you know is happy? Really happy.

RABBI

You.

ABRAHAM

Me?! I had tsuris coming out my ears.

Maybe two things brought me happiness. My wife, and my son.

My wife, you add it up, maybe a couple of weeks of joy. Then rest of the time, ah!

My son. Isaac. A good boy. A nice boy.

But after God told me to sacrifice him, it was never the same.

He didn't like me standing behind him. Always a watchful eye out for me.

So happiness, I spit on it. Ptooeey.

RABBI

This is a joke, right?

ABRAHAM

Why me? Haven't you tested me enough?

RABBI

Who are you talking to?

ABRAHAM

You have to ask? Boy, have I got trouble.

RABBI

At least we have that in common.

ABRAHAM

Look, enough talking. Better, you should pour a little more wine. Le Chayem.

RABBI

Le Chayem to you.

ABRAHAM

Come on, finish it.

RABBI

Okay.

ABRAHAM

Now, call in your wife.

RABBI

No, she hates me.

ABRAHAM

I have a feeling if you call her, she'll stop hating you. Call her.

RABBI

Sarah!

See, I told you.

ABRAHAM

Call her like you mean it.

RABBI

SARAH!

ABRAHAM

You sound like a pipsqueak.

RABBI

SARAH!

SARAH

(Offstage) WHAT!

RABBI

What?

ABRAHAM

Tell her you want to speak to her.

RABBI

I WANT TO SPEAK TO YOU!

SARAH

(Offstage) SO, YOU'RE CRIPPLED!?! YOU CAN'T WALK OVER HERE!

ABRAHAM

I'm kvelling!

She sounds just like my Sarah. It brings back such memories.

RABBI

You want to meet her?

ABRAHAM

Sure.

[SARAH ENTERS]

SARAH

What do you want?

RABBI

I want you should meet my guest.

SARAH

What guest?

RABBI

She can't see you?

ABRAHAM

Just you can see and hear me, Tottilah.

RABBI

Thanks for telling me.

SARAH

Thanks for telling you what, Yankee?

RABBI

Never mind.

ABRAHAM

Who is Yankee?

RABBI

I am.

SARAH

Yankee, you're scaring me.

Maybe you better lie down.

RABBI

I'm okay, Sarah. Really. I'm fine.

SARAH

Lie down!

Yankee, did you forget to eat again today?

RABBI

No, I had breakfast. I think I had breakfast.



SARAH  
Do you talk to yourself a lot?

RABBI  
No. Well, maybe just a little, now and then.

SARAH  
Yankee, just lie down a little more.

ABRAHAM  
Nu, what were you worried about? I think she still loves you, no?

SARAH  
Yankee, if I ask you a question, could answer me truthfully. I mean, could you answer me without sounding like a Rabbi?

RABBI  
Sarah, I am a Rabbi.

SARAH  
You know what I mean.

RABBI  
Go ahead. Ask.

SARAH  
Are you going to make it here?

RABBI  
With God's help.

Sarah, we agreed no more throwing. Please, put it down ... please ...

ABRAHAM  
My Sarah liked to break pots. We went through a lot of clay pots.

RABBI  
I'll answer you like a man, is that what you want?

SARAH  
Yes, like a human being.

RABBI  
Sarah, there are two of us here. You and me.

I can make it, if you'll stand by me. Without you ...

SARAH  
I haven't been much comfort, have I?

RABBI  
I know what's really bothering you.

SARAH  
Yankee, it's another month.

RABBI  
Please don't cry.

SARAH  
I prayed so hard.

RABBI  
 So did I.

SARAH  
 I feel like half a woman.

RABBI  
 No! You are all the woman I want.  
 If it's God's will we don't have a child, then there is nothing we can do about it.

ABRAHAM  
 Now you got me going!  
 My Sarah, she suffered over this, too.

SARAH  
 Do you want to divorce me? It's your right. It's been 10 years.

RABBI  
 Never!

SARAH  
 Are you sure? A man should have children.

RABBI  
 Everything I want is right in this room.

SARAH  
 Yankee, I'm sorry. I can be such a ... well ... you know what.

RABBI  
 There is nothing to be sorry for.

RABBI  
 (Whispers to Avraham) Could you turn around please?

SARAH  
 What a strange thing to ask. But, okay.

RABBI  
 No, not you, Sarah.

SARAH  
 Yankee, you're scaring me again.

RABBI  
 Sarah, maybe you're right, I need to eat. Let's go inside.

SARAH  
 The food is probably ice cold and rock hard.

RABBI  
 So, you'll heat it up and we'll chisel around it. I'll be right inside after I lock up.

SARAH  
 No more, visitors tonight, Yankee! Promise me.

RABBI  
 I promise.

[SARAH EXITS]

ABRAHAM

Such a nice young woman ...looks a little like my Sarah ....  
Tottilah, what's it mean, a Yankee?

RABBI

It's a nickname.

ABRAHAM

Well, go eat, Yankee.  
No, it don't sound right coming from my lips.  
Tottilah, go eat. Yes, that sounds better.  
What do you think?

RABBI

Whatever pleases you, Avraham aveinu.

ABRAHAM

You're such a nice boy.  
Come you'll eat, then you'll get some rest. Tomorrow, we will go and do.

RABBI

Go and do what?

ABRAHAM

That's up to you.

[ABRAHAM AND THE RABBI EXIT]

ABRAHAM

(offstage) By the way, Tottilah, if you don't mind my asking,  
what's with wearing so much black?  
In the desert, if we wore colors like that, we would dry up.

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