

**GUILT TRIPS & MISHEGAS:
AN EVENING OF JEWISH
HOLI-PLAYS**

**By
David Lipschutz**

GUILT TRIPS & MISHEGAS

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GENERAL PRODUCTION NOTES:

- The plays may be performed as stand-alone pieces, or they may be performed together as a collection of plays. If performed together as a collection, then the plays should be presented in the order as listed. Also if performed together as a collection, director's discretion to include all, some, or none of the Rabbi's monologues as well as the Optional Extra Holi-Play.
- Director's discretion to allow for casting actors to play multiple roles. This collection of plays can be performed with as little as six (6) and as many as twenty-four (24) actors (even more if you include real children for the Rosh Hashanah scenes), but it would be best with at least eight (8) performers, suggested as follows:
 - Actor 1 – Rabbi, Rae, Macey
 - Actor 2 – Morris, Jerry, Mel
 - Actor 3 – Mildred, Kat, Sylva
 - Actor 4 – Asher, Joseph, Stuart
 - Actor 5 – Mom, Dane, Avia
 - Actor 6 – Zayde, Ken, Howard
 - Actor 7 – Val, Dan, Azi
 - Actor 8 – Judy, Helen, Miss L
- A sign should be on stage for each play to reflect the respective play's holiday. This can be done with an easel pad/flip chart, or with a projection screen, or with any other creative format that effectively displays the appropriate holiday.
- Lastly, this play is written based on one Jewish person's experience. However, it offers an incredible opportunity to showcase a diverse range of voices and experiences that truly reflect the world in which we live. It is preferred but not required that casting be Jewish performers of various identities and backgrounds. The hope is that casting decisions not only align with the authenticity of the characters but also contribute to a more inclusive and representative theatre. By doing so, we honor the integrity of the stories and provide audiences with a richer, more meaningful experience.

עֶרֶב רֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה

Erev Rosh Hashanah

-

A Preamble

CHARACTER:

RABBI any/all/no gender(s), any adult age, Jewish, a rabbi.

PLACE:

A bimah at a synagogue.

PRODUCTION NOTE:

- RABBI can be played by any/all/no gender(s) performer. Identifiers throughout are set as female and she/her for RABBI but should be changed to reflect the performer's gender(s) and pronoun(s).

The sign reads "Welcome". There is a lectern on stage. Lights up.

RABBI. *(Off-stage; in a loud, announcer-like voice.)* Gooooood evening! Please rise as we welcome to the bimah, everyone's favorite rabbi, the Midwest Mensch, the one, the only, Rabbi Sam Finkelman! *(SFX of fake applause along with lavish, showy music. RABBI enters, cheerfully and excitedly. She is carrying a siddur. As she crosses the stage to the lectern, she waves at audience. Then, in a normal voice.)* Hellooooo there! How are my fabulous congregants doing tonight?? Woo! Thank you for that lovely introduction. *(As Rabbi reaches lectern, she places siddur on lectern and stands behind it.)* You may be seated. *(Rabbi looks in siddur,*

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finds her place, then looks at congregation and moves from behind lectern, smiling.) Before we begin our service, I have to ask you all a question. Could you tell who was the voice of the announcer introducing me just now? No? Well, I have a confession to make. The announcer introducing me was, in fact, me! What can I say? Your rabbi is not only witty and charming, but she's pretty darn talented with voices, too. Which actually brings me to why we are all here this evening. Tonight is a very special night full of very special talent. We're going to travel an entire year in less than two hours. Several members of the congregation have gotten together to present an evening of plays about Jewish holidays, starting with – *(Rabbi looks at sign, which still currently reads "Welcome".)* Oh, right. *(Rabbi changes the sign so it now reads " עֶרֶב רוֹשׁ הַשָּׁנָה הַעֲרֵב רֵאשׁוּ | Erev Rosh Hashanah".)* There. That's better. As I was saying, we will be presenting an evening of plays about Jewish holidays, starting with *(Imitating a horn effect.)* dah-dah-dah-dahhh *(Referencing the sign.)* Erev Rosh Hashanah, of course! Tonight will be about joy and family, love and loss, and the relationship we have with each other throughout the year. And, hey, maybe you'll learn something new about a holiday or two. Your fellow congregants will be playing a multitude of characters. And if you're lucky, you may even see a certain rabbi take on a role as well. So sit back, relax, and enjoy the show! *(Rabbi scans the congregation, then moves back to behind the lectern, smiling.)* And now, let us turn to page 47. *(Lights down.)*

END OF PLAY

רֹשׁ הַשָּׁנָה

Rosh Hashanah

-

In The [Book] Beginning

CHARACTERS:

MORRIS male, 65+, Jewish, a Zayde, married to MILDRED.
MILDRED female, 65+, Jewish, a Bubbie, married to MORRIS.

PLACE:

A living room.

PRODUCTION NOTE:

- Director's discretion to have grandchildren be real actors or imaginary props on the stage. If real actors, director's discretion to have grandchildren be played by children or by adult actors pretending to be children.

The sign reads "רֹשׁ הַשָּׁנָה | Rosh Hashanah". A comfy chair is center stage. In the blackout, MORRIS is on stage, sitting in the comfy chair. There are real or imaginary grandchildren on the floor in front of him.

MORRIS. And Hashem said, "Let there be light!" (*Morris does a double-clap and lights up suddenly.*) I love that bit. And Hashem said, "I take it back. Let there be darkness." (*Morris does another double-clap and lights down suddenly.*)

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MILDRED. *(Off-stage.)* Morris! *(From off-stage, MILDRED does a double-clap and lights up suddenly. Mildred enters, standing behind Morris.)*

MORRIS. What?! Oh Mildred, I'm just showing our grandchildren the maaagic of the holiday.

MILDRED. Yes, but you do that same joke every year.

MORRIS. *(To Mildred.)* I do not! *(To grandchildren.)* I do not. Right? *(The real or imaginary grandchildren nod and agree. Mildred jokingly scoffs and exits.)* Good answer! So anyway, *(Morris watches until he is sure Mildred has left.)* I thought I'd tell you about my favorite Rosh Hashanah story. Back when I was a little pisher living in Rogers Park.

MILDRED. *(Off-stage.)* Morris!

MORRIS. What?!

MILDRED. *(Off-stage.)* You tell that story every year.

MORRIS. *(To Mildred.)* I do not! *(To grandchildren.)* I do not. Right? Good answer! So anyway. *(Lights slowly fade as Morris pantomimes telling a story to the real or imaginary grandchildren while using extravagant hand gestures until lights down.)*

END OF PLAY

נְדִירֵיפֶל

Kol Nidre

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The Good Dybbuk

CHARACTERS:

ASHER any/all/no gender(s), 17-23, Jewish, sports fanatic.

MOM female, 40-60, Jewish, Asher's mother, voice only.

ZAYDE male, 60-80, Jewish, Asher's grandfather, a good Dybbuk.

PLACE:

An attic.

PRODUCTION NOTES:

- | indicates overlapping.
- / indicates interruption.
- ASHER can be played by any/all/no gender(s) performer. Identifiers throughout are set as male and he/him for ASHER but should be changed to reflect the performer's gender(s) and pronoun(s).
- Lighting of attic can either be regular stage lights, or, if possible, a single overhead light above the middle of the stage (like from a single lightbulb, whereby ASHER would have to pull a lightbulb chain). With this latter option, the single overhead light could create some fun and spooky shadows. With either option, the lighting on the stage can gradually become brighter as the scene progresses.

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The sign reads “ םל ךל ךל | Kol Nidre”. There are boxes and other items scattered around the stage. As play begins, lights on stage are dim, barely showing off the attic space. SFX of low volume baseball game. The following voices are shouts that are muffled as if on another floor.

MOM. *(Off-stage.)* Asher, have you gone through Bubbie’s attic yet?

ASHER. *(Off-stage.)* Can’t Hayley do it?

MOM. *(Off-stage.)* Your sister’s doing the | basement.

ASHER. *(Off-stage.)* Ugh.

MOM. *(Off-stage.)* We all promised to chip in, | mister.

ASHER. *(Off-stage.)* Yeah, I know, | but, mom,

MOM. *(Off-stage.)* And you picked | the attic card, remember?

ASHER. *(Off-stage.)* It’s game 7 of the NLCS, and if the Cubs win, they’re going to the | World /

MOM. *(Off-stage.)* Asher Benjamin Levine, you haul your butt up there this instant. I want us to have a good chunk of the house done by sundown in time for Kol Nidre.

ASHER. *(Off-stage.)* Ugh fine. *(SFX of baseball game stops. SFX of steps. SFX of a latch coming undone and a door creaking open. ASHER enters in dim light. He pantomimes flipping a switch or pulling a lightbulb chain [see PRODUCTION NOTES]. Asher looks around room; it is an attic full of boxes.)* Wow. This attic is a mess. *(Asher moves a box and starts coughing from the dust.)* Oof, and dusty! Makes sense, since Bubbie pro’lly hasn’t been up here since before Zayde died. *(Asher looks around more.)* Where do I...? How do I even begin? *(Asher shrugs, then, after a beat, grabs a box and picks it up to move/organize. As Asher picks up the box, though...)*

ZAYDE. *(Off-stage; quietly.)* Oooo.

ASHER. *(Whirling around.)* Wuh, huh? What was that? *(When there is no answer, Asher laughs and maybe rolls his eyes, then starts moving again.)*

ZAYDE. *(Off-stage; louder.)* Oooo!

ASHER. Okay. I know I heard that! Hello? Is someone there!?

ZAYDE. *(ZAYDE enters from a different entrance than Asher.)* I said *(Even louder.)* “OOOO!”

ASHER. Ah! *(Asher drops box and starts running to his exit.)*

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ZAYDE. (*Laughing.*) Oy, my little boychik, wait wait wait.

ASHER. What the...!?! Who are you!?

ZAYDE. You don't recognize your own grandfather?

ASHER. Zay, Zayde?

ZAYDE. Bingo, give this nudnik a prize!

ASHER. But you're, ah, you're /

ZAYDE. Dead? Kaput? Observing Yizkor? Chanting the mourner's |
kaddish?

ASHER. Okay | okay.

ZAYDE. I sure am.

ASHER. I don't... So, what, are you, like a ghost, | or something?

ZAYDE. Eh, our people don't really like to discuss such things about the afterlife. In biblical terms, let's just say I'm like a nice, good Dybbuk!

ASHER. A what?

ZAYDE. Oy you youths don't know anything about Talmudic text. A Dybbuk is a, a mischievous spirit believed to be the displaced soul of a dead person. Mischievous, like all Zaydes. And as you can see, I appear to be quite displaced as I missed my elevator ride upstairs, so to speak. And it seems no one up there is able to access me down here, until I'm ready to re-join them that is. But that's okay. Because, this, being near your Bubbie, this is my heaven.

ASHER. Oh, | um /

ZAYDE. So I decided to stick around, to watch over her, literally and figuratively, being in the attic. And to keep her company of course.

ASHER. Wait. Bubbie knows about you?

ZAYDE. Are you kidding? How could she not hear me? I didn't get the nickname "Loudmouth Putz" for no reason from that fehkakte son-in-law of mine.

ASHER. Fehkakte... You mean, dad?

ZAYDE. Exactly.

ASHER. So, like, Bubbie heard you up here, and, and she actually came up and saw you?

ZAYDE. You betcha.

ASHER. (*Slight beat.*) But how?

ZAYDE. Eh?

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ASHER. How'd she even get up here?

ZAYDE. What do | you --?

ASHER. I mean, she's only four-nine. How'd she even reach the latch?

ZAYDE. Ah, you know your Bubbie. She reached it like she does with everything. With grit and determination! Okay. Enough small talk, let me take a look at you. My goodness, you've grown.

ASHER. I mean, you passed when I was only like twelve, and I'm a bit older | now.

ZAYDE. And thank hashem you have your mother's looks. A handsome man your father is not. A meeskite he is!

ASHER. Zayde!

ZAYDE. What? Just cuz I'm dead doesn't mean I can't have an opinion.

ASHER. I, sorry, this really doesn't make any sense. *(Asher sits on a box.)*

ZAYDE. Listen, Asher. *(Zayde sits on a box next to Asher.)* I believe it was Maimonides who said, "Souls in the afterlife have no bodies." They're purely spiritual beings. Of course, he also said that these spirits couldn't be seen by the human eye, but hey, Jewish philosophers can't be right about everything. *(Asher sees something out of the corner of his eye that is behind him.)*

ASHER. Woh! *(Asher picks up baseball card collection and starts flipping through it.)* Is this your baseball card collection?

ZAYDE. Sure is.

ASHER. These are all classics. Mantle?

ZAYDE. Good ol' Mickey. The Commerce Comet.

ASHER. And Sandy Koufax?

ZAYDE. A nice Jewish boy.

ASHER. And Yogi Berra?

ZAYDE. A nice non-Jewish boy, though a lot of folks thought he was Jewish | for some reason.

ASHER. These are incredible! I /

MOM. *(Off-stage.)* Asher, dinner should be ready in a few. How's it going up there?

ASHER. *(Asher stands suddenly and walks to near where he entered; shouting.)* Fine! Uh, mom, there's something you should | know /

ZAYDE. Shh!

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MOM. (*Off-stage.*) What's | that?

ZAYDE. You can't say anything! It'd break your Bubbie's heart, having kept my being here a secret all these years.

ASHER. (*To Zayde.*) I, okay. (*Shouting.*) I uh found some cool stuff of Zayde's up here.

MOM. (*Off-stage.*) That's nice. You'll have to show me after services tonight. Dinner in five, mister.

ZAYDE. (*Sniffing the air.*) Oh something smells delicious. Is that your Bubbie's famous brisket? And do I detect farfel for the matzah ball soup?

ASHER. Y-Yeah you do.

ZAYDE. Wonderful. (*A realization.*) Wait, services, farfel for the soup. Don't tell me it's Rosh Hashanah already.

ASHER. No.

ZAYDE. Oh good. I was worried time had really flown by since your Bubbie last came up here. Wait. It's not Yom Kippur, right? My family isn't shaming me by not fasting on the day of atonement!

ASHER. No. At least, | sorta.

ZAYDE. Phew I was about to plotz! Wait, sorta? What is this meshuggeneh?

ASHER. It's not Yom | Kippur.

ZAYDE. Uh huh.

ASHER. Until tomorrow.

ZAYDE. Ahh, so tonight is Kol Nidre.

ASHER. Yes.

ZAYDE. And you lucky duck, you get to have holiday dinner with the family. And with Bubbie's cooking no less. If I was able to feel hunger pangs, I'd be feeling it big time right now!

ASHER. Yeah. About | Bubbie, though /

ZAYDE. Hey, wanna hear a coincidence, did you know Yogi Berra died on Yom Kippur? Not only that, he died 50 years to the day none other than Sandy Koufax famously refused to pitch the World Series. And why was that? Because it was --

ASHER / ZAYDE. -- Yom Kippur.

ZAYDE. Exactly!

ASHER. Zayde, can I ask you a question?

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ZAYDE. Of course, my tateleh.

ASHER. What are you doing here?

ZAYDE. I told you. I'm here to love and support my darling bride of, let's see now, what year is it? Going on 64 years!

ASHER. No I get that. But why didn't you ascend, or whatever it is we Jews do? And since you stayed, why didn't you explore the world?

ZAYDE. Where else was I gonna go? This, this is my home. Your Bubbie is my home.

ASHER. Huh.

ZAYDE. Okay, enough talk. Go get your Bubbie.

ASHER. Yeah, about | that /

ZAYDE. Now that the cat's out of the bag, let's get a minyan up here. Perhaps Bubbie will finally be okay with your mom seeing me.

ASHER. Zay | de.

ZAYDE. And little Hayley. | Oh heck --

ASHER. Zay | de.

ZAYDE. -- Even the son-in-law can join. Harold. Who calls themselves | Harold?

ASHER. Zayde!

ZAYDE. What!?

ASHER. It's, um. I don't know how to say it.

ZAYDE. I always find the best way to say it is to just say it.

ASHER. Okay. I am up here for a reason /

ZAYDE. To go through my chotchkes. We already discussed that.

ASHER. No. It's that I'm here to clean out the attic.

ZAYDE. Why would you do that? Your Bubbie is perfectly content to keep her home the way she likes it, dust and all.

ASHER. But that's just it. Bubbie...

ZAYDE. *(Beat.)* No.

ASHER. Y-yeah. I'm sorry, Zayde.

ZAYDE. *(Zayde sits. Then, after a moment...)* No. It's okay. This, this is good news.

ASHER. It is?

ZAYDE. *(Hesitant.)* Yes. *(More confident.)* Yes. It means we can be together again.

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ASHER. Oh.

ZAYDE. Look. You've had her however many years since I passed, right?

ASHER. Yeah.

ZAYDE. And hey, you'll see her again many years from now, when it's your time, right?

ASHER. I guess.

ZAYDE. So, don't look so glum, chum. You ask to be written in the book of life. On Rosh Hashanah, it is written. And on Yom Kippur /

ASHER. It is sealed.

ZAYDE. Ah you remember your scripture? G'mar Chatimah Tova. Good boy. *(Zayde smiles.)* Now, if you'll excuse me, I think it's time I re-join everyone upstairs. I believe I have a date with the most beautiful woman in the world. I can't keep her waiting, can I?

ASHER. No, you can't. I'm not sure what to say. I love you and miss you. We all do.

ZAYDE. I miss you, too, kiddo. And everyone else. Even your schmegeggy father.

ASHER. Tell Bubbie I, we, we love and miss her very much.

ZAYDE. Will do, young man. Will do. You'd better hurry up and get downstairs before your dinner gets cold. And please, eat a second helping of farfel for me! I'll see ya around, kiddo. *(Zayde starts to exit; to off-stage.)* Sophia, my love, I'm home! *(Zayde exits the same way he entered the scene. Asher stares at the spot where Zayde exited. Beat. Asher sits and starts looking through the baseball card collection as lights slowly go down.)*

END OF PLAY

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