

Kol Rina
An Independent Minyan
Parashat Vaera
January 17, 2026 *** 28 Tevet, 5786

[Va'era in a Nutshell](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/3242/jewish/Vaera-in-a-Nutshell.htm)

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The name of the Parshah, "Va'era," means "and I appeared" and it is found in Exodus 6:3.

G-d reveals Himself to Moses. Employing the "four expressions of redemption," take out the Children of Israel from Egypt, deliver them from their enslavement, redeem them, and acquire them as His own chosen people at "Mount Sinai"; He will then bring them to the land He promised to the Patriarchs as their eternal heritage.

Moses and Aaron repeatedly come before Pharaoh to demand in the name of G-d, "Let My people go, so that they may serve Me in the wilderness." Pharaoh repeatedly refuses. Aaron's staff turns into a snake and swallows the magic sticks of the Egyptian sorcerers. G-d then sends a series of plagues upon the Egyptians.

The waters of the Nile turn to blood; swarms of frogs overrun the land; lice infest all men and beasts. Hordes of wild animals invade the cities; a pestilence kills the domestic animals; painful boils afflict the Egyptians. For the seventh plague, fire and ice combine to descend from the skies as a devastating hail. Still, "the heart of Pharaoh was hardened and he would not let the children of Israel go, as G-d had said to Moses."

[Va'era Haftarah in a Nutshell: Ezekiel 28:25 – 29:21](#)

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/619492/jewish/Haftorah-in-a-Nutshell.htm

This week's haftorah begins with a mention of the ingathering of the exiles, echoing G-d's promise mentioned in the Torah portion: "I will take you out of the suffering of Egypt." The prophet then goes on to discuss the decimation of Pharaoh and Egypt, reminiscent of the primary theme of the Torah portion—the devastation G-d wrought upon Egypt.

Ezekiel begins with a description of what will occur during the ingathering of the exiles. "When I gather in the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they have been scattered, and I have been sanctified through them in the eyes of the nations, then shall they dwell on their land that I gave to My servant, to Jacob. And they shall dwell upon it securely..."

The prophet then proceeds to convey a prophecy regarding Pharaoh and Egypt, foretelling the fall of the Egyptian empire. Egypt merited this punishment for two reasons: a) They had reneged on their promise to come to Israel's aid against the attacking Babylonians. b) They had incredible arrogance, considering themselves un-reliant on G-d, instead attributing their success to the bounty their deified Nile afforded them. Therefore, Ezekiel warns: "And the land of Egypt shall be desolate and in ruins, and they shall know that I am the Lord! Because he [Pharaoh] said, 'The river is mine, and I have made it.'" G-d warns that the land of Egypt will be empty and desolate for forty years, after which G-d will return the people to the land to reinhabit it, but it will no longer be an important nation to be reckoned with.

The haftorah ends with another prophecy wherein G-d informs Ezekiel that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, will be the one

to conquer Egypt and take its spoils. This as a reward for his effort in defeating the wicked nation of Tyre.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

[Of Lice and Men: Va'era by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l \(5767\)](https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/vaera/of-lice-and-men/)

<https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/vaera/of-lice-and-men/>

The dust of the earth was turned to lice all across Egypt. The magicians tried to produce lice with their sorcery, but they could not. Meanwhile the lice still infested people and animals alike.

“This,” the magicians told Pharaoh, “is the finger of God.” But Pharaoh’s heart was toughened, and – as the Lord had predicted – he would not listen to them. (Exodus 8:12-15)

Too little attention has been paid to the use of humour in the Torah. Its most important form is the use of satire to mock the pretensions of human beings who think they can emulate God. One thing makes God laugh – the sight of humanity attempting to defy heaven:

The kings of the earth take their stand,
And the rulers gather together against the Lord and His
anointed one.

“Let us break our chains,” they say,
“and throw off their fetters.”

He who sits in heaven laughs,
God scoffs at them. (Psalm 2:2-4)

There is a marvellous example in the story of the Tower of Babel. The people in the plain of Shinar decide to build a city with a tower that “will reach heaven.” This is an act of defiance against the Divinely given order of nature (“The heavens are the heavens of God: the earth He has given to the children of men”). The Torah then says, “**But God came down to see the city and the tower . . .**” (Gen. 11:5). Down on earth, the builders thought their tower would reach heaven. From the vantage point of heaven, however, it was so minuscule that God had to “come down” to see it.

Satire is essential in order to understand at least some of the plagues. The Egyptians worshipped a multiplicity of gods, most of whom represented forces of nature. By their “secret arts” the magicians believed that they could control these forces. Magic is the equivalent in an era of myth to technology in an age of science. A civilisation that believes it can manipulate the gods, believes likewise that it can exercise coercion over human beings. In such a culture, the concept of freedom is unknown.

The plagues were not merely intended to punish Pharaoh and his people for their mistreatment of the Israelites, but also to show them the powerlessness of the gods in which they believed (“**I will perform acts of judgement against all the gods of Egypt: I am God**”, Ex. 12:12). This explains the first and last of the nine plagues prior to the killing of the firstborn. The first involved the Nile. The ninth was the plague of darkness. The Nile was worshipped as the source of fertility in an otherwise desert region. The sun was seen as the greatest of the gods, Re (and Pharaoh was considered to be his child). Darkness meant the eclipse of the sun, showing that even the greatest of the Egyptian gods could do nothing in the face of the true God.

What is at stake in this confrontation is the difference between myth – in which the gods are mere powers, to be tamed, propitiated or manipulated – and biblical monotheism in which ethics (justice, compassion, human dignity) constitute the meeting-point of God and humankind. That is the key to the first two plagues, both of which refer back to the beginning of Egyptian persecution of the Israelites: the killing of male children at birth, first through the midwives (though, thanks to Shifra and Puah’s moral sense, this was foiled) then by throwing them into the Nile to drown.

That is why, in the first plague, the river waters turn to blood. The significance of the second, frogs, would have been immediately apparent to the Egyptians. Heqet, the frog-goddess, represented the midwife who assisted women in labour. Both plagues are coded messages meaning: “If you use the river and midwives – both normally associated with life – to bring about death, those same forces will turn against you.” An immensely significant message is taking shape: Reality has an ethical structure. If used for evil ends, the powers of nature will turn against man, so that what he does will be done to him in turn. There is justice in history.

The response of the Egyptians to these first two plagues is to see them within their own frame of reference. Plagues, for them, are forms of magic, not miracles. To Pharaoh’s magicians, Moses and Aaron are people like themselves who practice “secret arts”. So they replicate them: they show that they too can turn water into blood and generate a horde of frogs. The irony here is very close to the surface. So intent are the Egyptian magicians on proving that they can do what Moses and Aaron have done, that they entirely fail to realise that far from making matters better for the Egyptians, they are making them worse: more blood, more frogs.

This brings us to the third plague, lice. One of the purposes of this plague is to produce an effect which the magicians cannot replicate. They try. They fail. Immediately they conclude, “This is the finger of God” (Ex. 8:15).

This is the first appearance in the Torah of an idea, surprisingly persistent in religious thinking even today, called “the god of the gaps”. This holds that a miracle is something for which we cannot yet find a scientific explanation. Science is natural; religion is supernatural.

An “act of God” is something we cannot account for rationally. What magicians (or technocrats) cannot reproduce must be the result of Divine intervention. This leads inevitably to the conclusion that religion and science are opposed. The more we can explain scientifically or control technologically, the less need we have for faith. As the scope of science expands, the place of God progressively diminishes to vanishing point.

What the Torah is intimating is that this is a pagan mode of thought, not a Jewish one. The Egyptians admitted that Moses and Aaron were genuine prophets when they performed wonders beyond the scope of their own magic. But this is not why we believe in Moses and Aaron. On this, Maimonides is unequivocal:

Israel did not believe in Moses our teacher because of the signs he performed. When faith is predicated on signs, a lurking doubt always remains that these signs may have been performed with the aid of occult arts and witchcraft. All the signs Moses performed in the Wilderness, he did because they were necessary, not to authenticate his status as a prophet . . . When we needed food, he brought down manna. When the people were thirsty, he cleaved the rock. When Korach’s supporters denied his authority,

the earth swallowed them up. So too with all the other signs. What then were our grounds for believing in him? The Revelation at Sinai, which we saw with our own eyes and heard with our own ears . . . Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah 8:1

The primary way in which we encounter God is not through miracles but through His word – the Revelation – Torah – which is the Jewish people’s constitution as a nation under the sovereignty of God. To be sure, God is in the events which, seeming to defy nature, we call miracles. But He is also in nature itself. Science does not displace God: it reveals, in ever more intricate and wondrous ways, the design within nature itself. Far from diminishing our religious sense, science (rightly understood) should enlarge it, teaching us to see “How great are Your works, O God; You have made them all with wisdom.” Above all, God is to be found in the Voice heard at Sinai, teaching us how to construct a society that will be the opposite of Egypt: in which the few do not enslave the many, nor are strangers mistreated.

The best argument against the world of Ancient Egypt was Divine humour. The cultic priests and magicians who thought they could control the sun and the Nile discovered that they could not even produce a louse. Pharaohs like Ramses II demonstrated their godlike status by creating monumental architecture: the great temples, palaces, and pyramids whose immensity seemed to betoken Divine grandeur (the Gemara explains that Egyptian magic could not function on very small things). God mocks them by revealing His Presence in the tiniest of creatures. “I will show you fear in a handful of dust”, writes the poet, T. S. Eliot.

What the Egyptian magicians (and their latter-day successors)

did not understand is that power over nature is not an end in and of itself, but solely the means to ethical ends. The lice were God's joke at the expense of the magicians who believed that because they controlled the forces of nature, they were the masters of human destiny. They were wrong. Faith is not merely belief in the supernatural. It is the ability to hear the call of the Author of Being, to be free in such a way as to respect the freedom and dignity of others.

[VaEra: And God Spoke by Rabbi Moshe Heyn](https://truah.org/resources/moshe-heyn-vaera-moraltorah_2026_/)
[https://truah.org/resources/moshe-heyn-vaera-](https://truah.org/resources/moshe-heyn-vaera-moraltorah_2026_/)
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When sharing a teaching, it's proper to honor the custom of *b'shem omro*, which is to give credit to the teacher from whom one learned the teaching. Yet, poor Reb Zusha of Anipoli was never able to honor that custom. The reason is that whenever he would join his fellow students around the tish of their rebbe, the holy Maggid of Mezeritch, he rarely ever got to hear the teaching.

As would typically happen, the rebbe would open with a biblical verse, like: "Vayomer Adonai el Moshe laymor... and God spoke to Moses, saying....," but could get no further before Zusha fell into a fit of ecstasy, perhaps in astonishment that Moses would have the ability to hear God speak. Or perhaps Zusha was shouting in wonderment that we would have the ability to speak of a God whose essence is beyond words.

For whatever reason, Zusha persisted in crying out, "Vayomer Adonai...Vayomer Adonai....," "And God spoke...And God spoke....," making such a commotion that his fellow students

had to escort him out of the room. By the time he had regained his composure, they were already on to another topic. Such is the reason that poor Reb Zusha rarely heard the content of his rebbe's teaching.

There are many things to be astonished about in this week's Torah portion, VaEra. It could be God's renewed promises to redeem the enslaved Israelites, or it could be any of the first seven plagues that ensued after Pharaoh's refusal. But the thing I wonder about most is found in the opening verse, "God spoke to Moses, and said to him, 'I am YHVH.'" (Exodus 6:2) God goes on to explain this enigmatic pronouncement by saying, "I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as El Shaddai, but I did not make Myself known to them by My name YHVH." (Exodus 6:3)

Even the explanation is puzzling. Why would God appear to be making God's-self known to Moses for the first time as YHVH? The Tetragrammaton, the four-lettered Divine Name, has already appeared 153 times in the book of Genesis, and 24 times in the first five chapters of Exodus. What is new or different now in the way Moses is to understand the words, "I am YHVH"?

Traditional commentators, such as Rashi and Ibn Ezra, suggest that different names represent different attributes. For example, the name "El Shaddai" represents the attributes of One who makes promises, whereas the name "YHVH" represents the attributes of One who fulfills promises.

Kabbalistic and Chasidic interpretations go a step further to suggest that the mysterious four-lettered name is not descriptive like other names, but evocative. Its use in this context implies an altogether new and different way of knowing — not with the mind but with the heart. God is now

making God's-self known in a way that the patriarchs had never experienced.

To understand this different way of knowing, Zusha's example proves useful. Whereas the primary mode of religious engagement in his day was intellectual study, Zusha's experience was akin to *devekut*, a sort of mystical cleaving to God that became a hallmark of early Chasidism. In other words, while his fellow students heard only words, Zusha heard them with a sense of what Abraham Joshua Heschel called "[radical amazement](#)," in which words are no longer just words; they become nothing less than divine utterances.

For many of us today, our primary mode of religious engagement is advocacy and activism, but this parshah calls us into a deeper way of understanding the importance of our work, and a deeper way of hearing any pronouncement that begins with the words, "I am." Such as...

...I am a refugee. I am an immigrant. I am a person of color. I am a transgender person...

"Vayomer Adonai...Vayomer Adonai..."

...I am a single mother of a disabled child. I am a senior citizen dependent on food stamps. I am a person chronically ill without medical care. I am a child who lost a friend in a school shooting....

"Vayomer Adonai...Vayomer Adonai..."

Whether or not the floodgates of our hearts break open and we are moved to raise our voices in sadness or wonderment, once we regain our composure and return to our sacred tasks, we do so with a sense of radical amazement. As we learn from Moses, our teacher, Reb Zusha, Rabbi Heschel, and others who have encountered this way of knowing, words become more than just words when we know that it was YHVH who

spoke them. (*Rabbi Moshe Heyn, D.Div. (he/him) is a surfer, paraglider, hospice chaplain, neo-Chasidic activist, and the spiritual leader of the Coastside Jewish Community in Half Moon Bay, CA.*)

[Parshat Va'era: Overcoming Social Anxiety by Anna Veronese](https://www.yeshivatmaharat.org/post/parshat-va-era-overcoming-social-anxiety)
<https://www.yeshivatmaharat.org/post/parshat-va-era-overcoming-social-anxiety>

Recently I re-watched the 2010 film *The King's Speech*, in which King George VI struggles with a debilitating stutter as he prepares to lead his nation through World War II.

Thousands of years earlier, the Torah presents a strikingly similar story: Moses, chosen to lead the Israelites out of slavery, faces Pharaoh with a speech difficulty and crippling self-doubt.

Three verses in Shemot describe Moses's speech difficulty. The first one is found in Parshat Shemot (4:10): after having been designated by Hashem to lead the people outside of Egypt, Moses tries to avoid the task, by saying: “I have never been a man of words, either in times past or now that You have spoken to Your servant; I am heavy of speech and heavy of tongue.” Though Hashem finds him a solution—his brother Aaron will accompany and serve as his spokesman (“he will be your mouth” (Shemot 4:16))—Moses raises the issue again in our parsha, in verses 6:12 and 6:30, by telling God: “I am of uncircumcised lips.”

These descriptions raise some questions about the nature of Moses's condition. Do these different terms all refer to the same underlying problem, or do they describe an evolving situation? What is exactly the nature of this difficulty—is it physical or psychological? What might be its origin, and is it a permanent condition or something that can change over time?

Perhaps most intriguingly, why does Hashem specifically choose someone with such a challenge to be His messenger?

Commentators offer two main understandings of Moses's speech problems. Midrashic sources claim that Moses's impediment was physical in nature, causing him to stutter or mispronounce certain letters. Others, however, reject the possibility that Hashem sent a messenger with a physical disability. For example, Rashbam argues that after years in Midian, Moses was simply not sufficiently fluent in the Egyptian language, while Sforno maintains that he lacked oratory skills. According to Ibn Ezra, Moses's condition included both a medical condition from birth and a lack of eloquence.

Among modern commentators, Umberto Cassuto offers a slightly different perspective that moves away from both the physical and linguistic explanations. Cassuto's reading of the verse in our parsha (Shemot 6:12) is particularly illuminating. He argues that we are not witnessing a simple repetition of the doubt that Moses already expressed at Horeb. Rather, we see an escalation of the earlier situation, now operating at a fundamentally different level.

Initially, at Horeb, Moses was afraid that perhaps the people of Israel would not listen to him. He had already overcome this fear, and he had already witnessed in practice that, with Aaron's help, it was possible for him to gain the trust of the people (Shemot 4:31). But that is no longer the case in our parsha: after their workload is increased, the people have withdrawn their trust and no longer listen to him. When Hashem gives him the command to go and speak to Pharaoh, he doubts his powers of speech again, but in a new and far more severe form than before. Moses's reasoning follows a

kal vachomer logic: if he did not succeed before his own people, how could he possibly succeed before the king?

I believe that Cassuto's interpretation aligns remarkably well with modern understanding of what stuttering actually is and how it relates to anxiety and social phobia. Contemporary research shows that stuttering is a neurological disconnect between intent and outcome during the task of expressing each individual sound. Importantly, acute nervousness and stress do not cause stuttering, but may trigger and exacerbate it in people who have the underlying neurological condition. Thus, stuttering is not a psychological problem, but psychological factors can make it significantly worse.

This understanding helps us reframe Moses's situation in a more nuanced way. Moses may indeed have had an underlying neurological speech difficulty, but his primary concern was not whether his mouth could form words—it was about his adequacy as a public speaker bearing enormous responsibility. His self-description—“[I am not a man of words](#)”—reflects a crisis of confidence in the face of overwhelming accountability. The progression we see across the three biblical passages reveals precisely how this anxiety escalates. At Horeb, Moses expresses initial fear of public speaking before his own people. Then, after the people's situation has worsened and they withdraw their trust, his anxiety deepens considerably. He has now experienced what feels like failure and rejection. Finally, when commanded to confront Pharaoh himself, the anxiety reaches its peak. For someone with an underlying neurological speech difficulty, this escalating psychological pressure would make the condition exponentially worse, creating a vicious cycle where anxiety exacerbates the speech problem, which in turn increases the anxiety.

Hashem's solution is profoundly psychological. Aaron is not given because Moses cannot speak, but because Moses believes he cannot succeed. Having Aaron beside him provides emotional security, shared responsibility, and a safety net that allows Moses to take risks and build confidence. Significantly, Aaron's role as spokesman diminishes as the narrative progresses. In the encounters with Pharaoh throughout our parsha and beyond, Moses increasingly speaks for himself. Aaron is there primarily to execute the miracles of Hashem, not to speak for Moses. This gradual transition reflects a therapeutic process—Moses builds confidence through supported practice.

The most compelling evidence comes in Deuteronomy, where Moses delivers eloquent addresses without the assistance of Aaron (who is already deceased). The Midrash Tanchuma (Devarim 2) captures the people's astonishment: **“Yesterday you said 'I am not a man of words,' and now you speak so much!**

It is quite possible that the underlying neurological condition never fully disappeared. But what did change was Moses's relationship to his difficulty. Through forty years of experience, through the support of Aaron, through countless successes in leadership, Moses found his voice. He learned that his worth as a leader did not depend on perfect eloquence, and he developed the confidence to speak despite his challenges. The neurological disconnect may still have been there, but the crippling social anxiety that had exacerbated it was overcome.

Like King George VI, Moses teaches us that finding one's voice is not about eliminating our challenges, but about learning to lead despite them. Perhaps this is why God chose

a leader with this particular challenge: to show us that our greatest strengths often emerge not despite our vulnerabilities, but through them—and that no one finds their voice alone.

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Whose God – Va-eira by James Loeffler

<https://reformjudaism.org/learning/torah-study/torah-commentary/whose-god>

"How odd / Of God / To choose / The Jews." The quip attributed to British journalist William Norman Ewer captures an eternal puzzle. Why would the God of all humanity single out one tiny nation as the vessel for revelation? The question proved vexing to generations of Jewish thinkers. Even Moses Mendelssohn, father of the Jewish Enlightenment and champion of Judaism as moral universalism, pondered the mystery in a 1773 letter to another rabbi:

How unspeakably miserable the human fate would be if the eternal felicity of all humanity were to depend on the interpretation of obscure passages in a book written for a particular people in Asia, a long time ago, in a foreign, now dead language, which was given as an inheritance to the congregation of Jacob alone?

This tension between universal monotheism and Jewish particularism permeates Exodus—at once Israel's national origin story and the account of a universal God revealed to the

world. One verse crystallizes it. When God instructs Moses in his negotiations with Pharaoh, the language is striking: "And say to him, 'My God, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you to say: Let My people go that they may serve Me in the wilderness'" (Ex. 7:16).

Writing centuries before Mendelssohn, the medieval rabbi and poet Judah Halevi noted the distinction. God commands Moses to announce he is a representative of "the God of the Hebrews" rather than "the God of heaven and earth" who created the world.

Halevi celebrates Jewish chosenness. He notes that God also addressed Israel in this way, by saying, "I am the God who led you out of Egypt," rather than "I am the Creator of the world and your Creator." Humans grasp abstract truths through specific stories, Halevi reasoned. Israel therefore serves this unique function.

Yet Halevi's answer exposes the inherent flaw in all universalisms: they never fully escape their particular origins. His own vision, while aspiring to universal truth, ultimately remains captive to Jewish exceptionalism, as evidenced by his controversial doctrine of Jewish biological supremacy. For Halevi, Egypt must simply yield to Hebrew superiority.

Where Halevi endorses hierarchical particularism, the medieval rabbis of Midrash Tanchuma offer a different approach. They reimagine the verse in question by transforming its context.

In their telling (Midrash Tanchuma, Shemot 5:1-2), Moses and Aaron arrive at Pharaoh's palace on his coronation day, when neighboring kings gather to acclaim him as cosmocrator, "ruler of the world:"

"Two old men are standing at the palace door," Pharaoh's

guards inform him. "Do they hold a crown in their hands?" he asks. "No." "Then let them enter last," he declares. When they finally appear, Pharaoh demands: "What do you desire?"

Moses replies: "The God of the Hebrews has sent me to you to say: 'Let My people go that they may serve Me.'"

Pharaoh retorts: "Who is the Lord, that I should hearken unto His voice? Does He not know enough to send me a crown?"

Pharaoh consults his registry: "The god of Edom, the god of Moab, the god of Sidon... I have read the entire list, but the name of your god is not upon it."

Moses and Aaron rebuke him: "Fool, these gods that you mentioned are all dead, but the Lord, the true God, is a living God, the King of the Universe."

Pharaoh mocks: "Is he young or old? How many cities has he captured? How many provinces has he humbled? How long has he been king?"

They answer: "The strength and power of our God permeate the world. He was before the world was created, and He will be at the end of all worlds. He fashioned you and placed within you the breath of life."

Pharaoh rages: "You have been speaking falsehood from the start! For I am the lord of the world, and I created myself and the Nile."

Through this imaginative dialogue, the rabbis present a universalism that directly confronts Pharaoh's divine pretensions. God is precisely the Creator of the world, not despite being the God of the Hebrews, but paradoxically through that very particularity. Unlike the territorial deities of neighboring nations and their self-deifying kings, the Israelite

God transcends all boundaries. Even as Israel seeks a homeland of its own, it must not turn nationhood into idolatry. These ancient tensions remain urgently contemporary. Our world swings violently between dreams of universal humanity and the ugly realities of tribal hatred. Judaism faces this same threat in the form of a messianic ultra-right Zionism that preaches Jewish superiority and demonizes Palestinians, reducing political conflict to a cosmic battle between good and evil.

We need a universalism that honors rather than erases difference, yet remains alert to the dangers of hierarchy. Mendelssohn wrestled with the two models he inherited from the medieval rabbis. His solution was imperfect but instructive. He imagined Judaism as a concrete particularism compatible with universal redemption. He asked pointedly: "[Shall all the inhabitants of the earth from east to west, except for us, be cast into a pit of annihilation](#)"-simply for not believing in the Torah given exclusively to Israel? His answer: That could not be.

As contemporary British-Israeli philosopher Jeremy Fogel observes in his 2023 book, "Jewish Universalisms," Mendelssohn answered his own question by maintaining Jewish election while rejecting supremacism. Israel was "[chosen by Providence to be a priestly nation](#)," Mendelssohn wrote in his 1783 book, "Jerusalem," whose conduct, beliefs, and experience continually call "[attention to sound and unadulterated ideas of God and his attributes](#)." The nations would remain themselves, not collapsing into an imperial fantasy of uniformity. All could access God's salvation. Yet his solution-Jews as eternal witnesses-still bears the trace of the tension rooted in Exodus. ([James Loeffler is Felix Posen Professor of Jewish History at Johns Hopkins University and Kogod](#)

Senior Research Fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America. His latest book, Excepetional Hatred: Antisemitism and the Fight ofer Free Speech in Modern America due out in Summer 2026.)

Yahrtzeits

Craig Miller remembers his mother Roberta Miller on Sunday
January 18th

Blossom Primer remembers her mother Esther Rappaport
on Tuesday January 20th

