

were by his refusal to play the game by the rules that had been established in the decades after Watergate. When Trump's poll numbers stayed high, pundits couldn't explain it. It couldn't be anything about *them*. They concluded that Trump's followers were racist or stupid, and probably both.

What really happened was that the so-called masses joined the game and started playing it differently. To people who had seen their jobs and medical insurance and pensions disappear, Trump was refreshing. The wilder his comments, the more they cheered—but not because they trusted that he would do the things he said. Rather, they sensed quite correctly that by being

willing to offend anyone and everyone, Trump was tearing down the façade of a political structure that had become as much a lie as a movie set. They applauded Trump, not as a change agent, along the lines of Barack Obama, but as a living IED that has been lobbed over the tall gates and barbed wire of America's political green zone.

I have more than a passing familiarity with the Trump voter; several members of my family support him. When I ask them what they like in Trump, they say what Trump supporters have said all over the country: He tells it like it is. Of course, they don't mean that he tells the truth. What they mean is that he doesn't

give a damn about playing the game according to the rules set by the political and media establishment.

Contrary to what most pundits say, this election is not a test between one candidate striding confidently into the future and another wanting to turn back the clock to the 1950s. In fact, the reverse is true. Hillary Clinton represents the focus group-tested product of several decades of political sausage-making. The real harbinger of the future—a future that is as yet unrevealed—is the uninvited guest at the dance, the gate-crasher whose only purpose is to overturn the tables and jump on the bandstand to sing an out-of-tune version of “My Way.” ■

## Sabbath Alone

by Viva Hammer

The sun falls between the leaves outside the kitchen window as I prepare for my first Sabbath alone. Beginning on Thursday morning, Sabbath greetings have arrived, and they have not ceased. From Berlin a photograph of flowers for the Sabbath table, and then a goodbye to my parents in Sydney as they enter the Sabbath silence half a day before I do. A friend in Jerusalem sends messages during the night, which I wake to answer, and on Friday morning I catch some words with my son studying in Haifa. Throughout the day, I chat with my daughter, who is cycling through Montana on her way across the country; she is homesick on a broken bike. Two-doors-away delivers

me challah—homemade braided bread—as she does every week.

So many things are forbidden on the Sabbath that the hours prior are a turmoil of activity. I fill the urn from which I will make tomorrow's tea, broil fish, and peel vegetables. I switch on the lights that will stay lit twenty-five hours, and turn all others off. In the last moments, three messages arrive from distant places. I tell them I am alone, and all exclaim that I should have come to them, or they to me! I thank them. Then I put all devices away, shower, and dress in fresh clothes.

The sun has almost reached its rest. I lay out the candles and think through the Sabbath eve tasks, and sure of their completion, I light a

match. Five candles: two for the Sabbath, one for each of my children, and one extra, in penance for the weeks I did not light, and for those who live in darkness, and for the child not born.

I cover my eyes with my hands and make a blessing on the candles. The Sabbath is in.

My first Sabbath alone.

A Jew alone for the Sabbath is like a Sabbath without weekdays. The Sabbath is circled by her weekdays, three prior and three post. They skirt her and veil her, and she is their queen. All Jewish holidays were set by the moon and then by the calendar, but the Sabbath is independent of time or space. A Jew who is lost and cannot recall which day it is begins counting days, and after six days sets her own Sabbath and keeps it thus from then on.

The Sabbath is a memorial to God's creating the world, in which

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six days were spent on the work of creation and the seventh on rest. It is also a memorial for the Exodus from Egypt, in which we became free of all masters except the One we chose. The Sabbath is inviolable, and although we may break its prohibitions to save life or limb, we may not do so to save property. It overrides all other holidays and days of mourning or joy. Even Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, does not override the Sabbath: When they fall on the same day, they form a joint Sabbath of Sabbaths.

An entire legal system was built by scholars around the thirty-nine types of work prohibited on the Sabbath. We may not write or use money, cook, play music, or garden. We may not work for pay or pay others to work for us. Our businesses shut. Recent rabbis forbade the activation of electricity on the Sabbath, so that we may not turn on lights, drive cars, talk on telephones, type into computers, or engage with any of the accoutrements of modern life.

We may talk and walk, read and debate, sing and eat, and host others to join us in the same. We may visit and make marriage matches (but not business deals), pray and learn sacred texts. Sabbath does not accommodate the virtual social life. Sabbath requires sitting face-to-face with your community, your family, and yourself. If you begin the Sabbath far from others, you will remain alone for twenty-five hours.

I didn't need to be alone. If I had asked, "Can I come for *Shabbos*?" I would have had a dozen invitations within walking distance, or I could have invited others, or I could have gotten on a plane or a train on Friday. Sabbath is the people's day; we save our conversation and our best food and wine for it. We take in those who have nowhere to go and no one to be with.

But this Sabbath I am alone.

The Sabbath begins with song and ends with song, and I sing to welcome the angels of peace who transport us from the weekday to the day of rest, and then I discover I don't have grape juice for kiddush. How can a religious home be without the first ingredient for the Sabbath meal? Every weekday I should be anticipating the coming Sabbath and preparing for its arrival, but this week, in my aloneness, I was derelict. Did I expect the grape juice to arrive miraculously as the challah arrived from two doors away? But there was no miracle of grape juice, so I make the kiddush on challah, as my father did in Central Europe when grapes were an unimaginable luxury.

This is no ordinary Sabbath. It is the ninth of Av, the day of deepest mourning in the Jewish calendar, which commemorates many tragedies, including the worship of the golden calf, the sacking of Jerusalem, the expulsion of the Jews of Spain, the outbreak of World War II, and the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto. If the ninth of Av hadn't fallen on a Sabbath, I would be enduring a fast of twenty-five hours without food or water, without bathing or wearing leather shoes, greeting friends, engaging in levity, or studying the Torah. But the Sabbath overrides all mourning, and so we defer the day of fasting, even on the ninth of Av.

After I finish my meal alone, I open the Book of Lamentations, a dirge over the destruction of Jerusalem, the text read in synagogue when the ninth of Av isn't a Sabbath.

"How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! How is she become as a widow!"

Well! I'm in good company here this Friday night. Jerusalem, too, was alone for some centuries and not so sanguine about it.

When I talk to Jewish women about their image of family, they describe a quorum of children around the Sabbath table. The triumph of the family is around the Sabbath table, and the focus of the Sabbath is the family.

I have celebrated the Sabbath all my life. My mother made elaborate Sabbath table decorations, with leaves and flowers, fruit and nuts. One of my earliest memories is of a gorgeous cauliflower centerpiece and of my climbing onto the table to take a bite of it.

Then I left my parents' home and came to America. For three years I was a wanderer and tasted Sabbath at a hundred tables. Occasionally I remained in my Manhattan studio. Sabbaths alone pressed me to find a husband and set the Sabbath in its proper place, as the centerpiece of our faith in the bosom of the family. Five months after I signed the lease to my studio, I was engaged, and two months after that, married.

During the week, we stayed in Manhattan, and for the Sabbath, we were in Brooklyn, where my husband was rabbi. In my marriage, I as the rebbetzin-wife took on every burden except one. I was breadwinner and homemaker and child-bearer and child-rearer. My husband presided over religion. He studied sacred texts and ministered to his irascible congregation, which prided itself on never paying a salary.

The Sabbath is no day of rest for a rabbi and his rebbetzin. It is a day of hard labor, of sermons and hostings, of smoldering angers. On the weekends, I hosted his congregants and took their 3 a.m. panic calls and smiled at weddings and Bar Mitzvahs. The rest of the week, I was a lawyer in a big New York firm. The arrangement was, if I did all the work of this world, then he would take care of my portion in the world to come.

In those two decades as rabbi's wife, I did acquire some odd bits of knowledge. But any religious feeling, any connection with community, with God, with my spiritual self, was eviscerated. The way to God was blocked by my man and by my dependence on him for access to it. Jewish texts are damning of women and

their worth. My worth at work and with my children, on the other hand, was incontrovertible, so I channeled my energies to where I had an open path and left my husband to where he had his.

For half a decade now, I have been single, but the children remained with me. They stopped observing the Sabbath as they floated away into a culture in which one day is the same ceaseless round as the next. I am sad for them in their Sabbath-less world. But this summer they are both gone, and no one has replaced them. They instructed me that I must use these summer weeks as a trial and should not launch off into some other city or country to salve my aloneness. Sabbath alone will be my lot, and I must learn to embrace it.

“How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! How is she become as a widow!”

The images of Jerusalem destroyed are full of female suffering. The bereft widow, the violated virgin, the unpurified menstruant, a woman abandoned by her allies and abandoning her infants. The woman alone is a

symbol of destruction and of humanity unredeemed.

The Prophets and Lamentations are voluble on the sins that led to the destruction of Jerusalem, but the idea that our sins caused our sufferings is less in vogue today. Sin seems ineradicable, and the problem of righteous suffering hasn't been solved. And so while I read the anger of the author at the evils that preceded the destruction of Jerusalem, I do not take it as a lesson for my exile, which may last the rest of my life. The lesson I take is that Jerusalem lay desolate for close to two thousand years and now is profusely rebuilt, noisy, polluted, and breathtaking. She is redeemed. Even the mad dreamer Jeremiah would have been astonished.

**W**hat happened between the writing of Lamentations and the building of Jerusalem? This is what happened: lots of Sabbaths. Every single week without exception, and in every place of Jewish habitation.

I have a religious friend who fell in love with a nonreligious man. He

adored her but wanted to go skiing on the Sabbath. In the spirit of compromise, he suggested that every first week they make the Sabbath and every second week go skiing. No counselor could have offered a better deal, split fair and even. Only this: Sabbath comes every week at sundown on Friday, whether you've put the urn on or not, whether you've lit candles or not. It hovers over the week, beckoning, so that sometimes, on Tuesday, I'm so exhausted I yearn for the Sabbath. Not yearning for a day off, not for a vacation, but for the Sabbath. With its enforced quiet and song and contemplation and afternoon nap.

The Sabbath has become the centerpiece for a people who were chased hither and thither, not finding a home.

In that first Sabbath meal alone, without grape juice, but with the heavenly braided bread from two doors away, I sat in darkness flecked with candlelight, considering how I would do with the rest of my days, alone—

Alone and not so alone, because the Sabbath was with me. **F**

## Death Rights

by Hans Feichtinger

**L**ast year, Canada's Supreme Court unanimously decided that laws criminalizing assisted suicide are unconstitutional and in violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Following the court's

verdict, Canadian Parliament in June 2016 passed a new law according Canadians a right to assistance in causing their own deaths, as long as it is accompanied by free consent in circumstances of intolerable pain. In 2015, Germany's parliament

passed a similar law, but in different circumstances and with different implications. Because it was legislated rather than ordered by supreme judicial fiat, the German approach is less extreme and better attuned to social realities.

Passed by a large majority (360 out of 602 votes), the German law was proposed by members of Parliament belonging to all the parties

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