

Zaddik

Scene 1

Chairs have been scattered randomly throughout the room. The audience takes its seats.

In the darkness, a group of four shrouded figures scuttles, crawls across the floor. They are dragging, lugging something huge – contained in a very beaten burlap sack – behind them.

After much indecision, three of them push a hooded figure out into the audience.

He goes up to members of the audience, and with a mixture of grunts and signs, establishes where the figures have landed, the year and the language the audience speaks.

Each bit of information is conveyed in Hebrew to the five, who respond with appreciative grunts.

They begin to go to work unveiling what turns out to be a huge Torah. Once unveiled, it is then unrolled – almost to the very end. One of the four – the RABBI – takes out a pointer and prepares to read from it.

ZADDIK (pacing through the audience, checking each person for firearms)

Tonight, I, THE Zaddik, and my Mini-Minyan, are going to perform the greatest play of all time.

Greatest, because it is from the me. THE ZADDIK!!! (*waits for applause, which doesn't of course come*) The most remarkable person in the Bible.

OK, well after HaShem himself. And Adam and Eva. OK. And Noah and family. Probably also Moses. But I come definitely after that. Seriously.

Greatest, because it is completely different than all other great plays.

Now, you being obviously highly-educated people – and you smell so good.

Listen, after 5783 years of holding my nose, wow, finally get a chance to breathe in. And you have such great teeth (*Zaddik checks out individuals' teeth by forcing them to grin*).
Wow!

You being so totally-educated – I can literally smell your degrees – you know how a great play starts and ends. With a great hope and with a funeral.

Like that play from that kid Billy Shakespeare.

I told him: "Bill old fruit, that young tragic love thing. It's been done to death. Try doing it the other around.

But did Bill listen to me? No, because no one ever listens to me. And why should they? I'm just an old funny looking guy lugging around a huge Torah and three even weirder accomplices:

The Rabbi, the Kibbitzer and the Yenta.

The Mini-Minyan take nervous bows.

So you totally-educated people know how Romeo and Julia goes down.

Starts like this.

(Miming a bad Shakespearean actor) Romeo where for art thou, Romeo?

(Pretends to be hugging and kissing himself).

(Chants the Death March from Chopin).

Same boring plot with great works.

La Bohème. Anna Karenina....

(The Mini-Minyan start grumbling.)

ZADDIK

Alright already. I'm getting there.

All with the same plot.

First act: the dawning hope. The last act: the funeral.

But tonight, we're going to do it the other way around.

We're going to start with a funeral – BTW yours – and end with a great hope.

(While Zaddik is talking, the Kibbitzer and the Yenta are going up to members of the audience and ascertaining their names – and then calling them out to the Rabbi, who writes them down in the Torah).

So before we start, a couple of requests.

Please don't kill us.

Actually, you can't kill me. As many of our audiences over the last 5783 years have found out.

That's why I am THE Zaddik – as opposed to the other 35 in each generation.

And I don't think you can kill the Mini-Minyan *(they grunt in agreement)*.

You can, however, beat on us, piss on us, torture us. Or simply walk out on us.

And if I am being honest, that's what most of our 350 previous audiences have done.

As a matter of fact, to be really and completely honest, no one has ever stayed for the ending.

And that's a shame because Zaddik's play – my play – ends with a great hope. As mentioned.

So are we all clear on the rules? (surveying the audience, seeing their assent).
(Zaddik shakes his head doubtfully, and turns with a shrug to the Mini-Minyan)

ZADDIK

In Hebrew: Let's get started. It can't hurt.

The four stand in the midst of the audience. The KIBBITZER,, YENTA and the RABBI nervously hold their tablets.

The RABBI stands over the Torah and prays Kaddish. Yitgadal veyitgadash...

As he reads, the three call out sporadically the names on the tablet.

Music swells. Darkness.

Lights up.

The Mini-Minyan have put on tawdry Asiatica. Hula leis, grass skirts and tiki-tiki hats.

ZADDIK

What's going on?

KIBBITZER

Did it ever occur to you why 350 audiences have walked on us? But not before trying to humiliate or kill us.

Because we didn't offer anything more than the Old Wailer and his singsong!

YENTA

We need bing-bong.

We need to get audience involved!

That way we'll make it through Asia.

KIBBITZER

Give it a try. What can it hurt?

ZADDIK.

Nachon. OK.

Turning to the audience.

This is your funeral.

Kaddish for Asia.

RABBI

Bing-bong. Since 1945.

Each time he intones a country, he plays the rhythm on his beatbox between his legs

KIBBITZER

(to the audience)

Your part is really fun and simple.

Those to the left, when I wave at you, you scream "Kill".

Those to the right: "forget".

Got it?

Let's practice.

OK, great.

Rabbi, give us the beat:

RABBI

beats out a snappy version of

Kill the living, forget the dead.

KIBBITZER *with great dignity*

Pick any place in human history

RABBI

Asia

KIBBITZER

Pick any time in human history

RABBI

After World War Two to today

KIBBITZER

Pick any name and any reason for killing

YENTA

Genocide, territorial conflicts, colonial wars, ethnic cleansing, civil wars...

YENTA

And kill.

Kill the living, forget the dead.

The living were killed in

RABBI

Korea

YENTA

3 million dead.

KIBBITZER

And were forgotten.

The living were, are being killed

RABBI

Afghanistan.

Since 1978, USSR, Russians, USA, Taliban, others

AUDIENCE

Kill

RABBI

453,000 dead.

AUDIENCE

Forget

YENTA

453,000 dead. Forgotten.

KIBBITZER

Being killed in Myanmar

RABBI

Kachin, Karen, Rohingya, Kalay, Mon, since 1948.

AUDIENCE

Kill

YENTA

210,000 dead.

AUDIENCE

Forget

YENTA

Endless wars in Myanmar.

All will be forgotten.

KIBBITZER

The dead have been forgotten.

KIBBITZER TWO

The living are forgetting those killed in

RABBI
Vietnam

YENTA
3 million dead.

AUDIENCE
Kill. Forget.

RABBI
Sri Lanka

YENTA
36 years of civil war. 100,00 dead.

AUDIENCE
Kill. Forget.

RABBI
Partition of British India.

YENTA
2 million dead.

AUDIENCE *new cue from KIBBITZER*
Forget. Kill. Forget.

RABBI
India-Pakistan

YENTA
Four wars over Kashmir.

RABBI
Iran-Iraq

YENTA
2 million dead.

AUDIENCE
Forget. Kill. Forget. Kill.

RABBI

Iraq

YENTA

150,000 dead

AUDIENCE

Kill. Forget. Kill. Forget. Kill.

KIBBITZER

The living are being killed

YENTA

and will be forgotten.

KIBBITZER

The dead have been forgotten

YENTA

by the living

KIBBITZER (stepping up the pace)

In China: killing the living...

signals the AUDIENCE

AUDIENCE (non-stop)

Kill. Forget. Kill. Forget. Kill. Forget

RABBI

Uighurs, Tibetans

YENTA

Forgetting the dead

KIBBITZER

Civil wars. Drug wars. Tribal wars. Territorial wars in

RABBI

Philippines, Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan.

YENTA

Are killing. Are being killed. Will be forgotten.

KIBBITZER

whips up the audience to a frenzy.

And then suddenly stops them.

All four come together.

FOUR:

In Asia: kill the living, forget the dead.

Wars in post-World War II Asia.

Asia will be forgotten.

Wars are forgotten.

Kaddish for Asia.

Kaddish for you.

Kaddish for us.

Hope for you:

All names in Zaddik's Torah.

Written by Zaddik in his Torah.

RABBI and YENTA play Kaddish by Maurice Ravel

Darkness. Music. Lights up.

Zaddik is wearing farmer's overalls, a fright wig and fake spectacles.

The Mini-Minyan form a Greek chorus. They act out – in crude pantomime – everything that Zaddik says.

ZADDIK

Here a war, there a war, everywhere a war war. Old MacDonald had a farm, ee I ee I o.
And on this farm..Hey, you're great. Still here. No spitting, no slingshots. Wow! And we
already got Asia done.

So as a reward, here's comes some light entertainment. A bedtime story. Good timing,
since this well might be one of the last nights of your or anybody's life.

So everybody, once upon a time, there was a God. An invisible one – though in those days
very outspoken and kind of everywhere – named Adonai, Elohenu, Yahweh, whatever.
Found predominantly in burning bushes.

And he she it whatever said let there be light, and saw it was good. You know this,
Genesis. Beshert.

And he she it whatever created heaven and earth and saw it was good. And so forth and
so on.

And on the sixth day, he created us. Humankind. And he she it whatever quickly saw this it
wasn't good. In fact, it was bad. A big big mistake.

And no wonder.

Who were the first of the humans – you know, c'mon guys and gals and whatever, this is
easy. Especially you totally and optimally educated people.

Right, right.

Adam and Eve

Generation one: Adam, Eve. They mess up big time, and we get death and an unreasonable dislike of snakes. Hey, they're not bad.

Generation two: A & E have three boys. Winners. Cain and Abel and Seth. Cain puts the kibosh on his bro. He certainly wasn't his brother's keeper. With brothers like that...

And Cain's and Seth's kids: also real winners. Killing and cheating and running around.

So bad that God said after a mere nine generations: "That's it. My bad. Big mistake. Let's call it a day." And he/she/it/whatever wiped out humanity, actually pretty much everything.

With a nice cleansing flood.

But of course he she it whatever decides to make some exceptions: two of each kind of animal and eight human beings: Noah. His boys Shem, Ham and Japheth. And their respective, unnamed wives. Really sexist if you ask me. Which nobody is doing

So the Noahs sail around in their yacht for 40 days and 40 nights. You know that part: the dove and so forth.

What you Jews – any Jews here? – Baruchim habaim! - know is what He She It Whatever did after that.

Let us go on living. Under one big condition.

He She It Whatever decreed "Humanity will only be written into the Book of Life if there are 36 righteous in each generation." Rabbi, read it from the Torah.

RABBI reads passage from the Torah.

ZADDIK

For all those who aren't up on their Hebrew, what our dear old Wailer just read is: God is prepared to give humanity another generation of life – provided that 36 Zaddikim do their thing in the generation.

A Zaddik is a good guy/gal/whatever. Someone who is prepared at a key moment in their lives to do the right, righteous thing: sacrifice their lives to save a baby or a family or a city. Whatever. At the cost of their lives.

If there are only 35 Zaddikim in a generation: nighty night for humanity. Another flood.

36, and we get to go on.

36 people who, in each generation, at one moment in their lives, do the right thing:

Not a lot to ask. 9 billion people today. 36 Zaddikim. Pretty reasonable actually on the part of He She It Whatever.

Actually he she it whatever only requires 35 Zaddikim.

Because one Zaddik reappears in every generation. One Zaddik never gets to die.

One Zaddik is blessed – guys and gals and whatever note the irony here – with eternal life.

Blessed – and a big shout out to you Adonai for some really twisted humor – to witness every single time humanity kills each other.

And all because I shot off my mouth one single time.
One single time.

All I did was to ask He She It Whatever: “How’s this beneficial God, God of love, God of life business working for us? If you love us so much, if you’re on our side, why do you allow to wipe each other out all the time?”

Hey, it’s a valid question. Especially after the Holocaust, right?

And then I really shot off my mouth.

Though I still think – more than ever BTW – that it was a great question. One that all the high priests and rabbis and prophets really might have asked before running around, doing their kadoshy things.

“Exactly how does this chosen people thing work? What exactly have we been chosen for?”

That did it. That got HeSheltWhatever’s attention to me.

How could I know – I was just a kid in Jerusalem about to do his bar mitzvah – that He She It Whatever would be so touchy.

So I got blessed and cursed with eternal life.

So I’ve witnessed every single war since then. And wrote each and every one down in MY Torah. With the help of my dear and very respectful Mini-Minyan.

100,000 wars.

Each with the same plot and same ending.

What a fate!

Could have been worse.
Ask Job!

So, finishing this story up, nobody lived happily ever after. Because nobody lived or lives on. Except me and the Mini-Minyan.
But because we do, there will be happy ending to this story.

Promise.

Minyan!
Kaddish for Africa.

The Mini-Minyan have put on incredibly cheesy mix of hip-hop garb and tribal costumes, and have dabbed paint on to their faces.

RABBI (*with a boom box, starts beating*)
The place: it's Africa!!!

YENTA
The time: it's now!!! Since 1945 to right now!

KIBBITZER
The beat is FEAR FIGHT FORGET.
*Divides the audience into three groups.
Practices with them.*

YENTA
The Tutsi

AUDIENCE
fear

YENTA
their neighbors the Hutus

AUDIENCE
fight

RABBI
In Burundi.
Starts beating the rhythm on his beat box

AUDIENCE
forget.

YENTA

Forgotten!

Genocide in Burundi. Fearing, fighting then forgetting in

RABBI

Rwanda.

YENTA

The Hutu

AUDIENCE

Fear

YENTA

Their neighbors the Tutsi.

AUDIENCE

Fight

YENTA

Genocide. The Tutsis. 1 million dead.

AUDIENCE

Forget.

Forget.

YENTA

Genocide. Burundi and Rwanda are forgotten.

RABBI

The South Sudanese

AUDIENCE

fight

KIBBITZER

The Sudanese

YENTA

40 years, 3.5 million dead.

South Sudan. Forgotten.

AUDIENCE

Forget.

Forget.

Fear
Fight
Forget.

RABBI
Fear fights in Darfur. Sudan.

YENTA
300,000 dead. Forgotten.

AUDIENCE
Fear. Fight. Forget. Fear. Fight. Forget.

RABBI
South Sudan

YENTA
We fear each other.
We fight each other.
We kill each other.
We forget what we have done.
And we are forgotten.

YENTA
Killing neighbors and families

RABBI
Bloody and eternal civil wars in...

KIBBITZER (*to the AUDIENCE*)
Let's pick up the beat.

AUDIENCE: each group starts repeating their word. The effect is of a chant.

RABBI
Nigeria, Biafra.

YENTA
2 million dead.

RABBI
Sierra Leone.

YENTA
70,000 dead

RABBI
Liberia
250,000 dead

Egypt.

Libya.

Algeria.

Central African Republic

Djibouti.

Angola.

YENTA
800,000 dead

RABBI

Mali.

Morocco

Chad

Congo

Tunisia

Mozambique

YENTA
One million killed.

YENTA
Fear fights. Fear and fighting are forgotten.

KIBBITZER
Ethiopia. Eritrea. Tigray.
9 wars. Millions killed.

Forgotten.

RABBI
Somalia.

KIBBITZER
Never-ending wars. Millions killed.
Forgotten.

YENTA
The names of fear.

RABBI
Idi Amin.

YENTA
400,000 killed.

RABBI
Lord's Resistance Army. Holy Spirit Movement. Uganda.

YENTA
The name that will be forgotten

KIBBITZER
Democratic Republic of Congo.

YENTA
Five million dead. Forgotten.

YENTA
Wars for freedom from colonialism,
from the

YENTA
French, Portuguese, British, South Africa, Morocco

RABBI
Algeria

YENTA
1.5 million dead. Vive la France!

RABBI

Angola, Mozambique, Kenya, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Western Sahara.

THE MINYAN BOKERS

Africa in our time: 145 wars. In every country.

Each triggered by fear.

Each fear leading to fighting.

Each fear and each fight forgotten.

Africa is forgotten.

SIX:

In Africa: fear, fight, forget.

Kaddish for Africa

Kaddish for you.

Kaddish for us.

Hope for you:

All names in Zaddik's Torah.

Written by Zaddik in his Torah.

Musical interlude

RABBI *very quietly* takes center stage

The self-plaguing cycle,
one hundred thousand times and more,
every fear has its enemy,
every fear breeds war.

The fear is always new,
the fight always final,
always the same.

Between the rubble falling
and the victim's pain,
forget and forget again.

ZADDIK

Too heavy?

How about this? (*does a little soft shoe*)

Me and my Torah, walking down the avenue (*to the beat of Me and My Shadow*)

So my nicely-smelling and beautifully-teethed friends – seated, seated, seated, hands where we can see them. No one carrying I hope but do not believe.

So we've done two whole continents of wars with each other.
Fun, fun, right?
And that makes us old friends.

And as old friends, it's time we talk tacheles with each other.
Cause it's not only about fear, right?
Cause fear isn't the only thing that get us going, gets us hot hot hot and bothered, is it?

ZADDIK goes gospel

It's time brethren and sethrens and whatever for truth telling.
The time for truth is at hand.

Cause what's in your minds is not just fear.
It's HA HA HA HATE!
And the gold standard of every bad emotion: GA GA GA GA GREEEEEEED!

That's what thrills us, that's what kills us.

Rabbi, start wailing the Americas.
Rabbi reads from the Torah

KIBBITZER
also going gospel, with rhythmic clapping

Hate and greed, hate and greed
Kill what we despise
Kill for what we need.

Hate and greed, hate and greed.
Making us bleed, bleed, bleed.

Starts directing the audience. They clap throughout the litany.

RABBI picks up the clapping
The place our greedy and hate-filled friends is the Americas.
The time it is now.
World War II to right now.

YENTA very gospel
Greed needs drugs and money.
Greed makes us bleed in

RABBI
Mexico

YENTA
400,000 dead

RABBI
And in Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, so many others

YENTA
Killers for power

YENTA
The CIA. Batista. Pinochet. Duvalier. Trujillo. Noriega. Chavez. Ortega. Videla. Castro.
FARC. ELN. Black Eagles. Tupac Amaru. Sendero Luminoso. Hundreds more.

YENTA
Killing for power in

RABBI
Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Dominic Republic, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala,
Panama

YENTA
Killing out of hate for Communists, democrats, progressives, unions, indigenous peoples.

YENTA
Greed and hate.
Hate and greed.
Making hopeless countries bleed, bleed, bleed.

RABBI
Haiti

KIBBITZER
Since 1792: Haiti bleeds, bleeds, bleeds.

RABBI
Colombia

YENTA
Seven decades of bleeding, bleeding, bleeding
220,000 dead.

YENTA

Greed and hate
Greed and hate
Won't stop
Until it's too late.

RABBI

Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.

FOUR:

The Americas:
Greet and hate
Hate and greed
Kill what you despise.
Kill for what you need.

Then:

Bleed, bleed, bleed.

Kaddish for the Americas.

Kaddish for you.

Kaddish for us.

Hope for you:

All names in Zaddik's Torah.

Written by Zaddik in his Torah.

Musical interlude

ZADDIK

I have something to say to you:

Toda raba – thanks – and mazel tov.

You've made it to the last litany.

For the first time in 5783 years, we get to the last litany and the surprise ending. Oops.

Which raises an interesting question.

Why have you stayed?

A wild idea: maybe some of you are zaddikim too.

The Mini-Minyan mutter in surprise.

Remember, Zaddikim never know that they are Zaddikim.

Or maybe you were well entertained, yes? Or are just very very patient with us.

In any case, thanks. You are literally the best audience we ever had.
The last one probably too. Oops.

KIBBITZER

The beat is:

Stop! Stop! It never stops!

Easy, right?

Divides the audience into two parts.

Practices the beat.

YENTA

And away we go – to the

RABBI

Near East and Europe.

Stop. Stop. It never stops.

1945 to now.

KIBBITZER

Stop. Stop. It never stops.

RABBI

Syria.

YENTA

600,000 killed – and counting. 12 million refugees.

YENTA

Stop. Stop. It never stops.

RABBI

Yemen.

YENTA

400,000 killed – and counting. 4 million refugees.

KIBBITZER

Stop! Stop! It never stops.

YENTA

Wars to destroy

RABBI

Israel.

KIBBITZER

Stop! Stop! It never stops.

RABBI

Israel. Palestine.

YENTA

Stop! Stop! It never stops.

RABBI

Lebanon.

YENTA

Stop! Stop! It never stops.

RABBI

Russia aggression against Chechnya, Georgia and Moldova.

KIBBITZER

Stop! Stop! It never stops.

RABBI

Azerbaijan against Armenia.

KIBBITZER

Stop! Stop! It never stops.

Wars against and persecution of

RABBI

Kurds, Alevis and Yezidis.

YENTA

Stop! Stop! It never stops.

Neighbors fighting neighbors, family fighting family in

RABBI

Greece. Basques in France and Spain. Northern Ireland.
And Yugoslavia.

KIBBITZER

Stop! Stop! It never stops.

RABBI

Serbia fighting with Croatia. Slovenia. Kosovo. NATO.

YENTA

Stop! Stop! It never stops.

RABBI

Massacres in Bosnia.

THE SIX

Stop! Stop! Stop!

It never stops.

It never stops.

RABBI

Russian aggression against the Ukraine.

Zaddik begins to roll up his Torah. The KIBBITZER and the YENTA strip off their costumes. The three begin to shuffle off.

Except for the

RABBI

first in Hebrew, then English – to Zaddik.

The hope.

You promised them the hope.

If anyone deserves it, they do.

They do.

If anyone is going to need it.

They will.

ZADDIK

I wasn't really going to go off without giving you the hope. Just trying to get a dramatic bit of suspense here.

Here it is.

And here's the surprise ending.

My Torah has a name.

The Book of Life.

Ironic, no?

Because it's full of death. 100,000 wars. 100 million people killed in them.

But as long as the book exists, as long as the names – your names – are known, can be read, we're still alive.

Let me quote Bill Shakespeare here:

“So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,

So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.”

I have written your names in my Torah.
As long as I live, as long I am writing, your names will live on.
Zaddik is still writing in his Torah.

Starts shuffling off.

Wow! A real exit. On my own power.

Who would of thought it.

Regretfully

Such nice teeth.

