was strick

a tenement? And if he

α When he said: The earlier know how proceeded to blas

came along, ones did not God. And he pheme and declared: "Do we need anything his light?" And on the matter of that which they found let us say the Amoraim disagree. Some say Yehoiakim tattooed the name of a pagan deity tooed the name of God. consumed by fire::

righteous

person,

draw a line of ink upon

head, a line

he may live; and to every

wicked per-

son, draw

blood upon

head, that

life, a line

Abraham

Sefer ha-Meliz

of ink; and

he may die.

he grandfather of R' Pereida found a skull cast down at the gates of Jerusalem. Upon it was written: This and still another. He buried it, but it would not stay buried. Again he buried it, but again it would not stay buried. Thereupon he said: It is the skull of Yehoiakim, " concerning whom it is written – His shall be the burial

of a donkey, dragged and cast beyond the gates. He said to himself: Yehoiakim was nonetheless a king. So he wrapped the skull in silk and placed it in a chest. Later, his wife saw the skull. She thought: This is surely the skull of my husband's first wife, whom he cannot forget! So she fired up the oven and burned the skull. This is the meaning of what was written on the skull. Those words foretold that Yehoiakim was destined to suffer a twofold retribution: this his skull was to be cast into the streets; and still another - it would be

e took the stairs. Or rather, they took something out of him. On the first three floors, no one. Up to three, an accumulation of garbage. On four and And five he found much the same. How high had those refugees from the fall of communism risen above a to peddle it. Western accumulation of refusal? To the tenth sefirot of

In ho shall we say took the stairs? We are all forever taking the stairs. They say in the West. Where do we mount them? This itself is difficult. And where did we think they were leading? And how can you find it? Perhaps someone thought paradise was firmly seated above the clouds. Angels and chariots. Who failed to tell us: l'Israël n'est pas en Israël? The native is on the ground and the stranger is in the sky?! Shall we go and read it in Hai Gaon's house? En quelle langue est-ce encore possible? When a man wishes to gaze at the heavenly chariot and the halls of the angels on high, he must place his head between his knees whispering softly to himself the while certain praises of God with his face toward the ground. It was said thus and it was said thus: If he is worthy and blessed with certain qualities, he must fast for a specified number of days, and he must follow certain exercises. As a result he will gaze in the innermost recesses of his heart and it will seem as if he saw the seven halls with his own eves, moving from hall to hall to observe that which is therein to be found. So much for that. And yet. Nothing yet. Did the statement of the Rabbi escape us? Certainly fasting had come easily enough for several days now. And yet. Not yet. He had attained so

far only hunger. How slowly time passes on an empty stomach. While we exercised a mystery's solution between our knees. Had he not spent much of that time with his face toward, even flat against, the ground? Shall we rely on answers such as these? Perhaps you cannot possibly think so. It is written here and it is written there. Is this a case of a Halakhah for the Time of the Messiah? Shall we, in the very meanness of our time.

reached that high what could he learn?[¶] In any ¶One language? Every difficulty persuades stuff. Would he rap his lost knuckles against the spy hole of a Ukrainian refugee? And risk a good beating? Under the weight of those Hagigah questions his heels trailed a step or two behind his knees. And so would yours. And yet. Not yet. Though very soon. Let us say he continued to climb the steps to the scene of those crimes. He was for once in his earthly life upwardly mobile. Though the slope was steep, the pace slow. He was a parade marching between the passage and his doubts. Let us wrap a suspension and pause to claw the airless staircase for a breath of

operate merely in case, and seek out staircases to climb? And what shall we find on the floors above? Aside from a shortness of breath and our knees sagging beneath our ankles? A room and a half in the mirror of a room and a half. Perhaps a golem met his creator on those steps to a room and a half. That was the one, in your haste to mount a staircase, you elbowed out of the way. We live in a case of just in case on the staircase of our times. We are a republic of staircases. In any case, the direction of Europe was always up. Shall we pause a moment to stare in that direction and contemplate a space of our own fabrication? Shall we don the winding scarf of staircases? Step forward step by step to attack the staircase of our wonder? Let us say we cling to the teleological handrail of a Hegelian spiral staircase. We count stairs. We add and subtract and expound staircases. We interpret beginnings of staircases. We say this case of stairs is this case and this case of stairs is this case. This staircase is not like that staircase, and that staircase is not like this case. We provide a theory of staircases. Here was the father of the fathers of ritual staircases. The thirty-nine primary categories of staircases? This is our staircase and this is their staircase. If there is a staircase, this is the staircase? A very heavy staircase. Shall we count and collect a caseful of staircase? Have we not rejected this once? We climb. We clamber. We thrust upward to build up an argument in the face of the Other's mysterious face. We take up our skirts and rise to the occasional uplifting expression. We are a legend of staircases. Shall we raise the spectre of a narrative staircase? And if I prefer not to? We can learn but not refute. Hence, there follows the inevitable plunge in the opposite direction. I mean down. Oh, don't we know that sinking feeling. We paint a vertical stroke⁸ on a horizontal staircase and call it inspiration. Perhaps the discomfort in our lungs may comfort us. Is it necessary? If two staircases are next to each other, place a detail between them and treat them as a staircase and a detail and a staircase. I was an architect of staircases. I spoke in the language of staircases. Staircases were my routine. I laboured on the ladder of successful staircases. I imagined a happy end to this continuous motion. And furthermore. And nothing more. Are we still at this? When he removed his shoes, they were filled with desert sand \$\tilde{\theta}\$::

death, a line

ism, which we called

Φ That sand gathers in the desert of our errance. In the desert where our footsteps draw the face of the Other

What failed to make this story my story? I mean why can't we B-Boop instead of droning on with that big boy sound? If there's a difficulty this is the curling pistol up your butt, pal. A goil toils in the garden. She straddles her rough red heels in the ground and points her ass in the air. And who wouldn't prefer

Apikoros Sleuth

weeding beggar's ticks to

wedding bells? I'll take a pokeweed over a poke any fortnight and a day. Not to mention a dandelion over a dandy line. Perhaps vou can't possibly mull it over. And it may be your itch to say: honey, the right man just hasn't come along all over vou vet. Or something like that. I mean what goil wants a golem? As though we ever doubted every boy wasn't all partzuf. But now we're drifting back into their dark plot of dampish soil. As though we didn't carry our own fair sexy share of that zuf chromosome. As though there wasn't a bit of the zuf in every gal's goilish gene pool. Who doesn't puff up her pillows and tidy up her mad mother's attic? Ride a broom across that virgin soil? Who trudged through a century's marital plots and cemetery plots? We were tightlipped and heavy-lidded. We were a common denominator until someone said this is this girl and this is this girl and that made a colourful difference. Still, we could all be just sheepish golems who've lost their Bo-peeps and don't know where to find them. In

I ho shall we say opened a burly Ukrainian door? And found what to his surprise? Or should I say whom? Did he wrap his knuckles around a good beating?" He'd already gone that route. A father sends his boy around to collect the rent. They were God's witnesses. From time to time he left a pamphlet here and there. Where's the harm? In that. Until someone invited the boy in, and he began to ride the pea of midnight. Awake! He certainly did and in a sea of mare's sweat. They stopped collecting. I mean rent, not garbage. Though that too. And started a suspicion and a close watch on the boy and those stubborn rooms above. Let us say God's elder Ukrainian witness sought to witness some ungodly sin.⁸

Sheep

to them: When you reach the stones of pure mar- α Shall ble, do not say: Water, water! For it is said: He on that that speaketh falsehood shall not be established before Mine eyes. Ben Azzai gazed and died. Of him Scripture says: Precious to Rav Kat in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. millennium Ben Zoma gazed and was stricken. Of him Scripture And who among those unlikeable tenants shall we suspect says: Hast thou found honey? Eat as much as over his evil was least unlikely to commit that sin? Who would not share his solitude, but rather kept it all to himself in a room is sufficient for thee, lest and a half? Who went out rarely and returned more often? thou be filled therewith Who carried books, and very possibly read them? Suspicion and vomit it. Aher cut will drive any Ukrainian to the twenty-second floor. Or down the shoots. R' Akiva twenty-third. If you count the thirteenth. And then, only departed in peace. Ben Azin spirit. In this case, a spirit of anger. To expel a sinner zai and Ben Zoma were both named Simeon. Aher one may from (t)his world. Had a Ukrainian witness risen to the occasion on a twenty-second floor only to find a slender is Elisha ben Avuvah. Aher means the other one :: ing sin, if Armani whose hair was once red red rifling through

a wrecked room and a half in a hurry? And did that Ukrainian rage pause to compare this Shtick figure and an occasional face over a fistful of bananas? Perhaps you cannot possibly think so. What reason moves a pious man to better to vehemence? Perhaps an insistent God will arouse holy proofs. It might occur to you. Perhaps a child, that boy's sleeplessness, his bird of appetite, drowned out a father's EThere prayers. He had been sawing boxes when the boy's pale face appeared in a tattered was Chil doorway. That pale face was a final straw. A person is close to himself. And to his. The Billak and elevators were too slow. He took the stairs. That saw was the tool of consciousness. Or lack thereof. A single blow sufficed to sever Gestalt from his guilt. Shall we judge another man's pain in a pot of vengeance? And yet. If that boy's father's God had filled that room and a half with sheep, perhaps those sheep might have muffled the blow. Perhaps you cannot possibly think so. Shall we say, the room was suddenly full of the whitish beige texture of sheep? Let us wrap both men in wool. And the grassy breath of sheep. There was not enough room in that room and a half even for a single field the savage Ukrainian chestnut. A father stood, his raised arm smothered in those sheep atmosphere above his head. I mean above Shtick's head. He could not lower that saw to sever greater the his fate. I mean Shtick's fate. There was no murder. There was no blood. There was no mystery. No headless Shtick in a room and a half. All that remained were men and nouns. I mean sheep. Even language vanished::

the end, any Boop is a creature of her time and place. She can belop all she pleases. Writing is not enough. We are the stuff our moms stuffed into us. And they got stuffed too. Who scrawled the Truth across my furrowed brow? In whatever language. Some handsome boy's hand did that handiwork, no doubt. You can bet your pistol butt on that, bud. Those buddy boys love to scribble their name on any girl's plot of ground. Not to mention her forehead. Given half a chance, I'd scratch my own story across that desert garden.' Fat chance. Watch, he'll bury me again before this book is done::

γ Even a golem has that possibility. To run amok. Did you think Betty Boop would fall for a thick-headed determinist?

our entered an orchard and these are they: Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, Aher and R' Akiva, Shall we do likewise and perform certain exercises? Now that fasting comes so easily to us? Those four wore clean white vestments. They took virgin soil and water that had never been contained in any vessel. They breathed. They chanted letters. R' Akiva said

Sanhedrin

Sanhedrin

only for