

Crisis in Meaning

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iUniverse, Inc.
Bloomington

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Dedication

A selection of the poems are inspired by my work with my mentally ill residents at Founders House of Hope over a 15 year period. My residents have taught me that Schizophrenia and Bipolar Disorder does not defeat the indomitable will to live meaningfully. Although the seasons of anguish, futility, and recovery are lifelong, our courageous residents sustain hope of restoring and tasting life as they once knew it. I am forever indebted to my residents for illuminating their world to me; inviting me to listen to more deeply appreciate how their enduring, unforgiving symptoms disrupt life. The intimate sharing strengthens our partnership. The trauma of carrying a diagnosis of mental illness is devastating, coupled with countless devaluing experiences in society. Stigmatization also exacts a powerful attack on the self, creating a consciousness of otherness. Our mission is to restore hope and self-determination to underserved, neglected individuals pursuing recovery and life significance.

Contents

I	XI
Disguised Words.....	1
Awakened.....	2
Elusive Meaning.....	3
Fluidity.....	4
Became.....	5
Man—This Tamed Being.....	6
The Revealed Code.....	7
Discontinuity.....	9
Pass off Memory as Time	10
Condemned to Movement.....	11
II	13
Tamed.....	15
Nonbeing	16
Faith.....	17
Senseless Aggravation	18
Pursuing Reasoned Meaning	19
Audience of One.....	20
Tainted	21
Movement.....	22
The Absent G-d	23
III.....	25
Schizophrenia Masquerading Through Mime.....	27
Absurdity.....	28
Delusion	29

Schizophrenia.....	31
More Than Demented.....	33
Eternal Psychic Ache.....	34
But For	35
Shadow	36
Psychic Freak.....	38
Source.....	39
Electrical Communication	40
 IV	 41
 Indelible Code.....	 43
The Gift of Eat.....	44
Retreat to Likeness	46
O t h e r n e s s	48
Margins.....	49
 V.....	 51
 What Do You Mean by Meaning?	 53
Blemished.....	54
Fitting Work.....	55
Fancy Looking People.....	56
That Ain't Success to Me	57
Who Knows Happiness in Chicago?	59
Workin Time	60
The Mendelson	61
Happening	62
The Texture of Pretending.....	63
Illusory Self-Importance Through the Shine.....	64
 VI	 65
 Fifty Ǿ	
This Serious World.....	69
Analysis of Time	70
As a Child.....	71

VII	73
Seared for Eternity	75
Inescapable Death Anxiety	76
Cursed by Death.....	77
Inescapable.....	78
Nothingness	79
The Ultimate Challenge.....	80
VIII.....	81
The Heroic	83
On Chaplin.....	84
Meaning Systems	85
Achromatic	86
Self-Perpetuation	87
Emotion Filled Memories	88
Looking Out	89
Meaning.....	90
Template for Life.....	91
Authenticity.....	92
Derivatives of the Self.....	93
It Matters	94
Undoing	95
Talkin'	96
Thinkin'	97
Chaplin's Tramp Striving for Heroic Significance.....	98
The Memoirs of Nessim Levy	105
A Story of an Immigrant Miracle Worker.....	105

I

Disguised Words

Is anything beyond the magic of birth
and
painful
tragedy of
death a universal?

Meaningful living is relative.

Brutality
in the hands of dictatorial regimes,
political persecution,
genocide constitutes meaningful living
for the perpetrators.

The brutal perpetrators force you
to accept their doctrine for meaningful, purposeful living.
A perverse delusion, manipulation of words to justify imposing a
life of political persecution, infanticide, religious intolerance,
sexual mutilation, racial hate,
genocide.

Awakened

Awakened.
But not to the truth.

The realm of possibility.
Vision activating it,
connecting purpose and deep,
abiding faith to discovery of self.

Awakening breaks
habit of thought.

Don't abandon possibility,
unleash thought, discovery.
Truth narrows possibility.

Reality isn't continuous,
a series of moments
embedded in impermanence.

The self is awakened each moment.

Elusive Meaning

Where can I find meaning?
Where did you find it?
Was it difficult to keep it once you found it?
Tell me.
Please—I'm desperate.
Just be honest now.

Did you buy meaning from a meaning store?
You can select from a chart identifying "depth of meaning in life"

It ranges from the most expensive to the least expensive.
The most expensive is "profound depth of meaning in life" to the least expensive "just enough depth of meaning in life."

I'll buy "profound depth of meaning in life" because I want to know who put me here, what I'm supposed to do with my life, what's the purpose of my life?

I hope I can afford it.
If I can't,
I'll ask if there's one in-between the two.
They can call that one "more than just enough depth of meaning in life."

Where's the store?

Fluidity

Streaming.
Life is movement.

Express.
Patience.
Love.
Discontent.
Violence.
Gratitude.
Humility.

Words, movement, continuity.

Life— purposeful movement.

Became

I realized one day,
I couldn't return
to where I wasn't ever before.
Not physically or psychologically.
Not even imaginary.
Or can I imagine myself where I've never been?

I can only return to where
I've been before.

And not to undo what I was.

I know why I became what I am.

I am what I was,
I remember who I was, to know who I am.

If I undid what I was,
I'd have to undo who I am.

I like what I am— with my life's unanticipated occurrences.

A chance for this— and a chance for that.

Man—This Tamed Being

I don't know that
man
can be tamed.
Half animal,
half social,
half biological.
Freud claimed dark, ferocious, unconscious forces
beyond our control drive behavior.

Who is responsible for
taming this social animal?
Sociobiologists say nature can tame,
and biology can tame.

Instinctual urges, aggression, sex,
death instinct and primary process
needs powerful, disciplined taming.

Can institutions like
religion tame?
Obligated social conformity,
or social control.

Did G-d equip man with the internal mechanism to tame himself?
The internal mechanism malfunctions in the untamed.

The Revealed Code

What's it all supposed to mean?
One in six billion in this ordered,
yet, absurd world which,
according to sociologists
contains unpredictability,
chance, anomie.
Is it necessarily logical?

I've spent 50 years decoding the code to life.
I like decoding.
Decoding invites inquiry, analysis, asking
right,
urgent,
questions.
I think it's more important to ask right, ultimate questions
than demanding the right answers.
I learned this from my Rabbi in a Judaism class.
I also learned in my critical thinking class
that it's a myth to think we'll arrive at the right answer—
except that human beings will die.
That's not a myth—and the answer to the question “Will human beings
die?”
Yes.

I know the inescapable, undeniable truth
that one should be good.
We're here for the sake of others.
The code shows it.
Is life's ultimate concern being good to others?

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Many people need ministering.
Simple kindness, not complicated kindness.
Kindness gets remembered.
Anonymous kindness is powerful.
The code shows it.

Give anonymously, where only a shadow is revealed.
The code shows it— Absolutely.

I don't measure up.
I measure down, looking at a sea of down measured,
throwing them a lifeline.

Conspicuous consumption.
Doesn't genuinely define you—living through your decaying, dead,
once adorable objects.
Your genuine self, not what you masquerade as,
is what others remember.
Your legacy of care will be an enduring,
symbolic manifestation of your righteous life.
Your name becomes the immortality symbol.
The code shows it.

Discontinuity

Discontinuity emerges from continuity.

An interruption ^ ^ ^ ^ ^in a process.
Intended or unintended?

It compels you to reevaluate, clarify expectations.
Ask the right questions that will illuminate things.

Pursuing your true meaning
challenges the easy pretense of life
if you're courageous enough to
ask.

Who am I?
What is my purpose?

Continuity discontinuity clarify derail
illuminateact

Movement is life.

Pass off Memory as Time

Memory.

A euphemism for time.

Memories chronologically ordered compose time and life.
An intruder— uninvited agent can infect
memory,
causing it to misalign time and confuse life's timeline.

Consciousness wanes, intellectual functions deteriorate.
Unfamiliar images enter the visual field,
the known become unknown,
the inheritor of this anguished illness
of misaligned time.
Unknown to himself.

The knower does not know what he knew.
The knower does not know who he's supposed to know.
The knower does not know his condemned anguish.

Condemned to Movement

Life.

Fluidity of purposeful movement,
undeniably humanlike.

Driven by molecular consciousness.

Urge for movement is reflexive.
Does self-perpetuation inextricably push movement.
The ascetic, austere is damned to movement.
The catatonic schizophrenic is tragically
trapped in his mind.
His mind won't release him from bondage.
Even psychological movement is paralyzed.

II

Tamed

How will I end my suffering?
Iniquities.
Sincere words are a sufficient beginning.
But insufficient alone.
Who are the words for?
For those I've hurt—the words express my apology.
Words for G-d ask for forgiveness.
G-d— are you listening?

Nonbeing

The ultimate state of material non-existence.
in a celestial sphere; our final destination.
Foreboding.
The final, eternal disconnect.

How to know?
The soul cannot know.
Ascend to eternal, holy, disconnect
to be united with
G-d.

Is the soul a sacred, immortality symbol?
An immortality symbol of a life transferred to the ethereal.

Faith

I understand
invisible
is synonymous with faith.
I tried to touch,
smell, or listen to faith.
Can you listen to the invisible?

I can't see faith.

I tried to materialize,
make tangible faith—it's futile.
Converting uncertainty to certainty,
with more than words.
A wish materialized.

Shall I abandon belief in faith?
Trust that G-d is—
yet cannot be materialized.
Disbelief.
I'll sustain belief,
Abiding faith in
G-d.

It's not irrational.

I trust love,
unseen.

Senseless Aggravation

Yes—
there's a purpose to my life.
Leave me alone now.
I'm not placating you.
Find someone else to aggravate with this stupid question.

Maybe you'll bump into a philosopher
and talk for days
about who put you here,
G-d,
meaninglessness.
and why the world is absurd.

Go ahead,
I'll be here when you return.
Just compare what the philosopher tells you,
to what I told you.
I'm the bus driver.
I do enough talking
with strange looking people.

Pursuing Reasoned Meaning

I used to think meaning could be harnessed if the values driving my life derived from scripture.

Unswerving,
self-assuredness these virtuous, principled actions
represented the word of G-d.

A deity,
watching, recording every thought, movement.
An unparalleled, precise, eternal recording,
capable of being rewind—
replayed only by
Him.
But then—would G-d need to rewind?

Audience of One

On this earthly plane, an audience of one won't get you paid enough.

Performing for the Ultimate audience of one—
gets you paid in righteous ways,
unlike
any other payment you've ever received.

The check won't bounce.
You get an eternal, overdraft protection plan.
The performance will be the final review
with the absolute, correct grade.

Tainted

The propensity for good and evil is innate.

G-d created me this way.
Imperfect.

First man and woman,
disobeyed G-d.
Are we now tainted?

Movement

I see you move,
organismic striving.
Yes, condemned to movement until at the molecular,
physiological level,
there's cessation of cerebral function.

Movement abruptly ends for eternity.
Cessation of movement.
A universal eventuality
except for the
Almighty.

I'm curious— Does G-d move?

If He doesn't—
maybe Nietzsche was right.
G-d is dead.
Absent.
THE ULTIMATE DEATH.
Maybe G-d is asleep.
If He is
who will awaken Him?

Can a human being awaken G-d?
What if He doesn't want to be awakened?
How did G-d ever fall asleep?
I know he rested on the seventh day.

But didn't he awaken
and get to work on Monday?

He must have known there was an enormous amount of work to do.

The Absent G-d

I don't like what the atheistic existentialist Sartre
said about
G-d.
Sartre denies
G-d exists.
Each of us acts in a world devoid of moral absolutes.

I define my morality through my choices,
and experience despair knowing
G-d
is absent from the human condition.
It's a logical necessity for G-d to exist—
Sartre should have looked around more.

III

Schizophrenia Masquerading Through Mime

If I mime schizophrenia could you detect it?
Only if you perceive my hand tremor or psychomotor retardation.
You'd have to know these are side effects of powerful medications for my
dreadful schizophrenia.

I'd also have to mime my auditory hallucinations, persecutory delusions,
loose associations,
and poverty of thought.
But how?

Ever try to physically communicate a grandiose delusion?

Absurdity

Things are absurd.

Yes— even the world.

I discern absurd elements in the world.

Absurdity is escapable?

For the schizophrenic, is there discernment of absurdity?

Is the Schizophrenic aware that others see him as absurd?

For the existentialist, who isn't Schizophrenic, the world is absurd.

Does the existentialist see the Schizophrenic as absurd?

What about the existentialist who is Schizophrenic?

He and the world are absurd.

What of the Schizophrenic who isn't an existentialist?

Delusion

A ridiculous, false belief—but only for me, and I know it when the psychiatrist with a diploma on the wall reminds me.

There's only one Dalai Lama.
So the fancy doctor advises me it's fine to hold the delusion,
but don't share it with others,
and don't call the Dalai Lama and accuse him of being an impostor.

I know what the doctor's doing.
It's not therapeutically indicated to take my delusion away from me,
it isn't harming anyone.
Not me, him or the Dalai Lama.

I've had lots taken away from me.
Schizophrenia took life and continues taking away from me.

I'm 58— no car, apartment; one dresser, a roommate
Who is nuttier than me with his
grandiose, persecutory delusions and hallucinations.
I live in a facility
with 90 other broken minds with magnificent delusions,
thought disorganization, extraordinary, luminous misperceptions.

My doctor has a fancy nomenclature to describe the clinical features of
Schizophrenia,
poverty of speech, loose associations, tangentiality, paranoia, persecutory
delusions,
negative symptoms of Schizophrenia, withdrawal, apathy, restricted affect.
It's all a fancy, sterile way of saying otherness.

Elijah Levy, Ph.D.

Abnormality—a deviation from the ideal, acceptable norm.

I get reminders I am otherness.

I don't like it.

I am not otherness,

Not defined

By what is bizarre.

The psychic freak inside of me.

I am defined by being a human being first,
and deserve being treated with simple dignity.

Maybe you didn't notice.

Don't I look like a human being?

Schizophrenia

Hallucinations.

Paranoia.

Persecutory delusions.

Grandiosity.

Thought insertion.

Retreat.

Porous boundary.

Nil for insight.

Social contradiction.

A rational construction of reality is impossible at times.

Schizophrenia.

A profound, alienating misperception,
and interpretation of a purported reality.

My misinterpretation approximates
the purported reality.

Isn't approximating the truth good enough?

I learned this in a critical thinking class in college—before receiving
my glorious diagnosis of Schizophrenia.

An existential psychiatrist once explained to me that
society is an absurd, meaningless,
complicated stage for creatures to play out their selfish desires.

Driven by impulses for self-perpetuation.

The central, fundamental problem for man is overcoming awareness of
mortality.

Elijah Levy, Ph.D.

I'm not worried about death—but by a need to belong.
I am desperate to belong—not fearful of death.

The atheistic existentialist Sartre said of humanity :

“man is condemned to be free; condemned because he did not create himself, yet, in you come alive, life is nothing; it's up to you to give it a meaning, and value is nothing else but the meaning you choose”

More Than Demented

I am demented.
The professionals diagnosed me—
it's in my medical chart.

I know they know that I'm not supposed to know it.

I was first diagnosed,
with cognitive loss,
decline of intellectual functioning.
Why would I want to know?
I'd rather not know my mind is deteriorating
and have fun with the distortions and mind trapeze.
Who needs their frontal lobe functions?
The cause and effect connections I've made my whole life
which were encapsulated within a healthy mind
were deemed incorrect.

I'm told
awareness of being demented can create
a depressive disorder secondary to dementia.
What's that supposed to mean?

All this fancy nomenclature, It just means now I'm depressed because
I'm aware of my dementia, and its progressive, deteriorating course.
But, I'm also aware of other things that invite depression into my
already atrophied frontal lobes.
Why won't they let me eat kettled, caramel covered popcorn?

Eternal Psychic Ache

I don't agree with the existentialists
that man is
condemned to
suffer from inescapable,
inexorable, death anxiety.

The tragedy of man's awareness,
of his indignant mortality.

But For

A visual hallucination performs while a shadow emerges only after a human appears.

A trick of mind.

The visual hallucination is chromatic—not black or white.

No escaping the shadow when the angle is right.

No escaping the visual hallucination, unless the medication is right.

Sometimes—the medication is right—but it still doesn't cover the auditory hallucination.

Psychiatry is a wonderful science, but works on probabilities.

It's probable you'll hear less voices if we start you on Abilify.

It's probable you'll no longer have a visual hallucination if we start you on Abilify.

It's probable you'll experience this hallucination your entire life—a symptom of your incurable mental illness.

Life is based on this universal,
fundamental
principle of probabilities.

Longevity is probable,
minus an untreatable cancer,
and if you choose wisely.

I remember a Boeing engineer who explained
to me the formula for mitigating risk.

I generalized it to life.
Mitigate risk for physical hurt.

Shadow

A hallucination will show you what the shadow can't.

The sun illuminates form,
but only in silhouette.
The hallucination illuminates psychosis in mosaic.

On a sunny, life giving day,
you can't escape the shadow.
It's a safe revealing.
It's silent,
grey but may communicate
only through movement and form.
Listen with your eyes.
It's safe.
you
WILL
trust movement.

Watch a silent, Chaplin film.
Communication through physical gesture.
Mime.
life would change if we only communicated by movement.
No language.
Only the symbolic world.
No pretense—because it's tough to fake movement.
Doing before thinking and talking.
Trust movement.
It may reduce contradiction,
provocation, violence.

It pushes predictability.
We'd have to exhaust our creative capacities,
to be understood and not be understood.
Movement shows me leading you to food.
Bless the sun for the glorious shadow.
Movement, the safe revealing.
Communication by shadow,
you wouldn't know I hallucinated.
Trust me, my movement to care for you is no pretense.
Words can deceive.
Movement cannot deceive.

Psychic Freak

I am a psychic freak,
and you can't see it.
The beauty of being a
psychic freak is you can
mime it.

The splendor of mime.
The suffering, stigmatic effects of action
using conventional words.

I mime the cognitive.
You'll never know my psychic,
freak, nature.
Maybe you will.
Can you discern a psychic, freaky cognitive mime?
The cognitive, mechanics of mind is invisible to you.

Source

It's in me.
the Schizophrenia virus,
I caught at 20.
Attacked—defenseless.
A victim of an ultimate invasion left me
righteously vulnerable.

INCURABLE.
Stop reminding me.

I cannot regain who I was. Regain a life—
Impossible. The talk is now about gaining function—
not life.

You cannot regain what thought disorder takes away.
The unfolding of morning.
Breakfast, group.
Lunch, take meds— Abilify, Geodon.
Attend another group.
Supported employment program earns me a stipend of \$3.00 an hour.
Dinner, meds, t.v. sleep to distant noise.
Psychosis in the air—inescapable.

Function.
Human movement in a building.
Psychosis revealed in human mechanics.

Electrical Communication

I have a patient with schizophrenia,
whose nomenclature is the language of
electricity,
amps,
voltage.

Electricity

“the free or controlled movement of charged particles such as electrons,
positrons and ions”

I communicate with him in his language.
Communication by metaphor,
symbols,
images, associations.

I understand him
when I enter his energized world.

A problematic day emerges from a faulty electrical transmission.
A zip, zip, zip is good until a zap disrupts the transmission.
My patient removes the zap and he feels better.

IV

Indelible Code

What's wrong with me?
A defective genetic code.
Unalterable.
The code is me.
I cannot decode me.
Should I decode me?
Where's the password?

I'm not interested in decoding myself.
I want to know what's innately possible for me with this code.
Decoding obliterates
who I am, who I become.

The Gift of Eat

For a Jew, it was a late dinner on Christmas Eve 1990, 10:20 p.m. I saw a coffee shop, it looked open, decent and it invited me in for dinner. I needed to feel a city alive, not shut down. The down darkens the town and life retreats home on a holy night. All retreat except me. I need to feel life tonight. Is there something wrong with me? I'm a Jew walking around on Christmas Eve.

Who's out eating tonight? Has family strife kept them out? People should be home, building a fire and giving, not patronize their love to one another.

I observe an older man across my table eating with another man. As I watch— think, and now know it's dad and son. Is mother deceased? I'll enjoy my meal and ponder why they are out tonight. I'll listen—be an interlocutor without joining the absent discussion.

I suspect father's gift to son is tonight's eat; a fundamental, symbolic expression of love. It's all revealed in the sparse talk I hear. You don't need talk to have things revealed. Dinner is a mechanical process, life giving event.

There is food, and mashed potatoes on the son's chin and chest. I'm the observant intruder. It pains me to watch. The father gives no lesson to his son on how to eat. A thousand lessons don't help out. Unabashed eat. Why isn't there talk tonight during dinner? Has it been like this a long time?

I know why. Mental retardation gives it away. Intellectual limitations, sensorimotor impairments, self care deficits. The son is awkward looking. Is that a deficit? The gift of eat on Christmas Eve.

They are together now but the son will be home in a while. A dark and quiet ride home to the son's residential care facility. Will father kiss his son on the cheek tonight? A handshake may suffice. Will father say "Goodnight son. I love you?" Will son say "Goodnight dad, I love you."

A ritual sustains the love. Togetherness is love. The ritual dinner sustains silent love. Christmas Day may find father away. I watch from my table where there's an absence of talk.

Father and son's expression of love needs no talk. The son understands dinner is the gift, despite intellectual limitations. Emotion breaks through intellectual deficits. The gift of eat on Christmas Eve 1990 is the gift of ritual love at the empty eatery. I watch across the table with a silent, teary eye. Dinner is silent, ritualistic and functional.

Retreat to Likeness

I walk along the plane of likeness.
Comfort.
Assurance.
Acceptance
in the sameness of
look,
breath,
feel.
Unconditional positive regard.

Along the plane of unlikeness,
there's discomfort
in unsameness of
look,
breath,
feel.

Unlikeness is otherness.
Other
than
me.

Unsameness,
invites reasonable
logical, analysis of biological,
racial,
cultural
difference.
Explication of otherness.

A righteous need to confirm
my look is the right one.

I was here first.
Who invited you?
Disinvite yourself.

O t h e r n e s s

I am not you.
I define me by not being you.
Self-definition by unlikeness.
By opposition to you.

You're coded with the ultimate biological variance.

Do you think you are like me?
You want to be like me.
You can't decode yourself.

My code works. It's right. There's more like me in the world than you.

Your code doesn't live here.
The wrong coded live on the other side.
All of you self-loathing belong there.

Margins

Margins exist for a reason,
to show who drifts to the perimeter.
Is there a palpable difference
in the drifter?
In his look and talk?
Is it peculiar?

Yes, absolutely there's something with him.
He's atypical—polar opposite of typical.
He's an aberration from the ideal.
Or is he different from the norm?
Who calls him to the perimeter?

We label him marginal?

What if he looks different but doesn't talk oddly?
What if he doesn't look different but talks oddly?
And if he looks different and talks bizarrely?

Is he partly marginal?
Are there degrees of marginality?
More or less of a supposedly measurable unit of behavior or construct.
More or less marginal.

Substitute the euphemism creative self-expression for marginality.
Showing my expressive individuality
marginalizes me.
What is it measured against?
The ideal, norm or you.

Talk to me.
I can hear you from the margin you're on.

v

What Do You Mean by Meaning?

I don't know if I got meaning in my job, but I like it. No one is watching me all the time. I ain't got what you said, job alienation. An illness or virus you catch on your job. I'm happy I don't have that condition. It sounds bad. Sure—the job could pay better. I don't got a fancy business card with a prestigious title. But I got this feeling them other people I work with need me. I belong here and them relationships I got with them is genuine. No fakers, no one is more important than anyone else. I'll give up some pay for belonging here, with them friends of mine. There's Maurice, Axle, Vito and Lieto the Turk. Now—if that's what you mean by meaning at work, I got meaning at work. I'm thinking these people mean something to me, and I matter to them. The job means I eats. Lieto gives me his kishke once in a while.

Blemished

I prefer blemished to unblemished.
Unblemished at birth.
Time, movement initiates blemishing.

A worthwhile, genuine life looks,
feels blemished.
Blemished is a life scraped up.
Bruised.
Grinding—mashing big gears,
pushing torque against resistance.

Blemished is glamorous in its own way.
Invulnerable righteousness.
Resilience teaches you—given you look to learn.

Revealing authenticity, a purity, working on life,
greasy hands from factory work, scarred, bruised arms,
stained, missing teeth with unabashed, prideful smiles.
Pissed at your boss.
Instrumental work— job you go into,
job you go out of when the mighty, liberating bell sounds.

This is life used up.

Rust on the surface reveals
time is cruel to us—
just enough grease to
make it tough to grind off.
If it doesn't wash off,
it symbolizes a good day's ass buster.
Get a more powerful grease solution to remove the oil.

Fitting Work

You search for meaning and purpose, and some philosophical type explains to you that it's all a pretense; a righteous, wild deception called life. I know a plumber who reads existentialism, and he's mixed up real bad. He's telling me the world's an absurd place and it wasn't G-d who threw me into this ridiculous, meaningless situation. He says there's characters roaming around this universal stage, slaughtering animals and piling up food to fill their stomachs. What a perverse thing called life. All of it means nothing—just inhale, exhale and try to enjoy and savor that lean, hot pastrami, swiss cheese and sauerkraut sandwich on an onion roll while passing the greasy, torque wrench to Stoykovich. And—don't worry about the grease on the onion roll. It tastes good with the sauerkraut. I work in the freightyards—what used to be the Illinois Central Railroad in Chicago and this job is fitting work for me. This job called me here—and it's my fitting work, just like they've got their fitting work in a stiff, pressed white shirt walking into that fancy building on State Street. The stiff, digital man don't read Sandburg—the mighty Chicago poet who glorified, brought dignity to blue collar work. The heroic busting his stiff ass, aching bones doing his rugged work in the red slaughterhouse—Sandburg's hog butcher of the world.

Fancy Looking People

The white shirt people
order blue shirt people around.

I once tried to touch the white shirt man.
The fingers magically slip off.
There's little texture, it's more glossy than anything I've known.
Appeals to some, but not me.
I prefer a natural, raw feel to a glossy, blinding feel.

The raw feel reveals more than the glossy feel.
The raw feel reveals something,
you can get a genuine grip of integrity.
The feel is worthy of trust.
The glossy feel is slippery.
I know that anything slippery it's tough to grip, can't be trusted.
A thin, shiny, executive, protective coating.
The genuine, raw feel also shows bruises.
Psychological and physical,
serious setbacks, vulnerability, bravery,
resilience, self-confidence, honesty.
No shame in skin imperfection.

The fingers don't slip
when touching the skin of the blue shirt people.
Their life is exposed in their skin.
Bruises, pride,
scars, stitches,
bony terrain.

A life time spent moving on rough terrain corrodes, tears and wears that
body.

That Ain't Success to Me

The abundant man,
equates success with money.

Money,
that magical, sacred, death defying, cultural symbol
that enhances the abundant man's life.
Conspicuous consumption.

Who has meaningful work?

I work and earn less, define success by the work I do,
not the money.

Don't misunderstand me.
I like money and could use more of it.

Success is enjoying a simple,
holy,
fat pastrami and swiss cheese sandwich
with Stoykovich at lunch.
He's not the quintessential conversationalist, but he's there for me.
I love his toothless smile.
He's missing a front tooth—but that makes Stoykovich the genuine Pole.

The abundant, successful man with all that money seems unhappy.
He looks at what others got and wants what they got.
Not what I gots.
He wants so he can devalue what they got.
He measures up.

Elijah Levy, Ph.D.

I measure down.
and give on Sundays to the lonely, hurting and vulnerable man without.

I watch the abundant man carefully.
He needs taming.
Just let him have his righteous illusion
that his money is life giving.
His pathetic self-deceit grants him ridiculous immunity from death.

Who Knows Happiness in Chicago?

I wondered about how to find enduring happiness.
So I asked the philosopher,
who deeply contemplates these things,
where we're going,
what is happiness,
and what's the purpose of aging.

He told me to contemplate, in a serious way,
not on happiness— but on meaning and purpose.
I told him I've never been able to deeply contemplate things,
except to earn enough for Esther to put a chicken in the oven on Friday
night.
Shabbat.
I also told him I didn't understand what meaning and purpose meant.

He told me to go to Austin Park,
and watch the Poles and Jews picnic on Sunday.

I walked away knowing that kishke,
pastrami,
white fish, pickled eggs
and pickled turnips
is meaning.
The Poles ate breaded pork cutlets
and meat dumplings, bread, sausages and sauerkraut.
But not the Jews.

Workin Time

I hauls trash, in a big city, with an underground of peoples needing things.

I likes moving trash, and getting me hands and face dirty. The big dressing people in white, in their offices be sitting all day; is fat cause they ain't moving around like me.

I does dignified work. Yeah dignified cause I'm the best trash hauler in Chicago. Fast, strong and knowing things. I ain't got no fancy degree, and them peoples with degrees have fancy fun that kills 'em.

I is still here; no degree, just busting ass and grinding through them days. I seen degrees put people in the ground too early.

The Mendelson

Feingold's Deli named a sandwich after me. Marvin Feingold, the owner told me I was one of his most loyal customers, and to express his appreciation to me, he'd name a sandwich after me. He said I was easy to talk to—you know, always having something to talk about like the Yankees and stuff. You see, sometimes I did special things for Marvin. Once— Marvin was short staffed and he needed someone to go pick up his dentures from the dental lab across town. He didn't want to serve customers that day with his teeth missing. So, I drove down first thing in the morning when the lab opened and got Marvin his new chops.

And let me tell you, what a magnificent sandwich the Mendelson is. It's got smoked white fish, capers, horseradish, lettuce, tomatoes, onions, all on a fresh onion roll. You get a pickle too. I know it'll be a popular sandwich, and it just makes me feel real good that Marvin considers me one of his favorite customers. I mean, I think he does. Oh, I almost forgot, he's putting a lot of white fish in this great sandwich— and he's serving it with cole slaw on the side. I never thought I'd ever be this famous. Marvin looks real good with his new chops.

Happening

I saw it happen to others.
Could it happen to me?
No—no—not me, being told to leave my job.

My stomach ached from the worry of money.
Uncontrollable worry—and a generalized, persistent fear of being unemployed.
I could experience social death by absence of that sacred, magical, death defying,
life giving, green paper.
A rather indeterminate anxiety
overcame me.
Immersed in my trembling.

The psychological mechanisms produced endless,
repetitive scripts.
Recurrent, negative and fatalistic
“You’re no good—deserve to be fired. You’ve never been good”

My stomach doesn’t
deserve to ache.
I don’t deserve to have a psychophysiological disorder.
I’m a good human being.
My Rabbi told me so.
I’m realizing budget cuts, cost cutting and lean initiatives
take precedence over my good and the awards I got.

The Texture of Pretending

The pretender's texture gives it away.
The awesome smooth,
glossy,
and blinding look.
Slippery to get your hands on.
Looks great.
Aesthetically appealing and convincing.
But is it enough to reveal a truth?
Can an aesthetic symbol reveal a truth?
I know the ingredients are expensive.

My ingredients are modestly priced.
The texture, feel, is imbued with purity and integrity.

Illusory Self-Importance Through the Shine

I knew it. There was an immediate shout—"Hey you over there, stop—look at me. I do prestigious work, a huge salary and command a slew of people. I'm incredibly important I tell you. Look at my European luxury car. It's a holy car. Look at me, see the shine."

So— you're a quasi-G-d, an important man. You don't want me to have what you have— your sacred, death defying, immortality symbol— money. Not everyone is welcome to have as much of it as you do.

Can you see my shine? It's less blinding, and it doesn't shout to be admired. Why do you devalue my shine? It's more subtle.

You're notoriously self-absorbed. Deathly hungry for adulation. A pathetic man, needing self-glorification, desperate, agonizingly self-absorbed and relentlessly searching for lookers in a world that admires givers. Givers find the needers.

VI

Fifty

Youth begets righteous innocence and

Immortality.

Adolescence welcomes
a righteous invulnerability.

Adulthood brings choice, patience,
wisdom,
pursuit of meaning.
White or blue collar work.

Dignity in blue collar work.
Unadulterated, physical manipulation
of raw material by greasy, filthy hands.

Exchanging money for food.

Sandburg romanticized
cut, bruised,
aging, dirty hands, thickened with grease, in the freight yards.
A toothless smile conveying an unabashed, genuine happy man.
The greasy man's smile.

Later adulthood
brings an inescapable, courageous look.
at measured days.
A turning from the material, world to the
sacred, holy world.

Elijah Levy, Ph.D.

A sensitive reach to the lonely, hurt of a people.

Summing up.

An unadulterated, deserving solitude.

Decisions not based on days left.

Days left based on gratitude over days lived.

This Serious World

As a child, the world
wasn't so complicated, serious,
dangerous,
containing so much
chance.

As an adolescent the world seemed
conquerable.
The element of
danger, risk wasn't truly, singularly appreciated.
I thought I could outwit the fundamental, guiding and enduring principles
governing things.

It wasn't about mitigating risk,
or other formulas to reduce danger.

As an adult, aspects of the world seem
remarkably ordered and those fundamental, guiding principles can't be
outwitted.
An invisible, great force is operating.

Analysis of Time

Life is time.

Life swallows time

in a supposed meaningful way.

Saroyan wrote about inhaling and exhaling,
and yelling to remind yourself you're alive.

A life of self-deceit also swallows time.

Be aware of self-deceit.

Chew time before swallowing it.

It'll mean more.

You cannot unswallow time.

Swallow time cautiously, meaningfully.

Chew before swallowing.

Even if it's a tough chew.

It's sure nice to enjoy a slice of marzipan.

As a Child

At age nine I saw an old man
lying on the floor of the tiled lobby
in our brownstone apartment
in the west side of Chicago.

I was eight years old.
Didn't speak English—but Hebrew.
I was here a year from Haifa.

I saw death on television in Chicago,
and knew it was impermanent.
It was death by pretending.
An illusion to make an impact on the viewer.

I calmly walked through the lobby,
walked upstairs and told my mother.
The loud, red cars arrived.
The old man died, only this time it wasn't pretend.

Mother explained to me that
the old man's death could
not be undone,
like on television.

I cried some—when remembering the old man being alive.
I think his heart gave out.

VII

Seared for Eternity

The Shoah.
Anguished memories inherited for eternity.

Seared and scorched into consciousness.
The ultimate human burn.
Memory of consummate human evil.
Unmitigated, brutal shame.
Horror of slovenly, untamed, horrific atrocity.

Hearts once throbbing,
only transmit unrelenting sorrow, grief in the celestial sphere.
We are the inheritors of indelible, seared memories of pure suffering.

Ending of sacred life
for honor, justification of righteous hated otherness.
Holy life gone wholesale to the
death furnaces.

Inescapable Death Anxiety

The old man searches for meaning.

Isn't he done chasing meaning?
Shouldn't he be working through death anxiety?

Condemned to swallow death anxiety.
It pains him when swallowing?

If it pains him enough, he ought to talk to someone
with a fancy diploma on the wall.
A doctor for the mind.
An existential psychoanalyst can help the old man.

The old man would get relief from
unswallowing death anxiety.
His search for meaning,
a defense against confronting
death anxiety.

Not ready to swallow death,
just keep it out of awareness.

Cursed by Death

Man.
Cursed,
by awareness of his mortality.
A fixed element of his nature.
Central, fundamental, inescapable principle.
Nonbeing.

Death.
Ultimate insult to an organism,
striving to introject life unabashedly.

Death.
Totally inescapable.
Denial of death.
Narcissistic strategy.
Erect symbolic, death denial system.
Illusion offers momentary escape.

Inescapable

If dreams express wish fulfillment,
will my wish be granted to live forever?

But not only in my dream.

I want to live forever,
not taste death.
I want righteous invulnerability.

I cannot tame my death anxiety.

Death frightens me.
A dreadful, agonizing fright.
I'll
never
be prepared for
absolute nothingness.

Perish,
return
to earth—dust to dust.

If I can only affectively realize that life consumes death.

Nothingness

Can nothingness only be experienced with biological death?

The existentialist professes
nothingness
is experienced when one is
conscious
of his existence.

Well—that's ridiculous.

Existence means choice,
knowing that conscious choice
inexplicably brings responsibility,
dread,
anguish.

Oh— this dreadful, existential angst.
Inescapable.

If only I can repress deep enough to get one night's ultimate sleep
and enjoy my smoked white fish sandwich.
It's an expensive sandwich not to enjoy,
especially with capers, onions and a tomato.
Why should the thought of death spoil lunch?

The Ultimate Challenge

Don't think about it.
You'll develop this condition,
existential death anxiety,
or some milder free floating anxiety about death.

It's deplorable.

Activate a strategy.

Negative thought stopping.

What a match.
Negative thought stopping,
a cognitive strategy
against existential death anxiety.

VIII

The Heroic

The heroic act
achieves a righteous,
moral outcome.

Selflessness does not guarantee self-perpetuation.
A marine covers a live grenade,
only to have his guts royally obliterated,
and keeping intact his brother's guts.

The instinctual drive for self-perpetuation.
meets its ultimate challenge
with the holy heroic who honors the other.

The heroic subordinates
his self-perpetuation.

On Chaplin

Chaplin— genius of the cinema.

The tramp was universally loved as the heroic because his pantomime crossed cultural lines. Pantomime is universally understood—communication through movement—a hand that feeds and caresses is unmistakably understood as love and care. The honor of the other. A deliberate, gentle, soothing, warm touch expresses action—and it is inextricably connected to trust. Action unfolds and is shown on the plane of movement— and it is trusted. Words can spoil promises. Trust pantomime and the little fellow because he is striving for heroic significance in a society that labels him insignificant.

Meaning Systems

I like Becker's work on cultural meaning systems. It's understandable and reveals lots about how human beings can pursue meaning. Because values are embedded within culture—they generally induce conformity and engender cooperative behavior. Values honored such as being here for the sake of others, as Einstein asserted, compel us to nourish our self-esteem by socially caring for others. Yes—meaning systems promote mutual love—and love for other inextricably nourishes feelings of self-significance. Using life to convey that others matter to you is invulnerable, self-righteousness.

Achromatic

The shadow reveals things achromatically,
and it's good enough.

I've noticed it does so in a reliable, predictable way,
and I know it has
to be this way.

It's simply a reflection of my movement
preceded by thought.

I think that's interesting because now I can say
the shadow is a mirror of my thought.

Self-Perpetuation

I've been studying the ultimate questions we ask, incisively analyzing in a deliberate, purposeful, introspective way only to discover that seizing absolute truth is impossible. The only exception is death. There's no analyzing death except to conclude it's a robbing of time. Death is universal and absolute. Human beings die, it's absolute truth. No qualifier will change this incontrovertible, universal self-evident truth. You can't escape, defy or cheat death. The cessation of physiological life is a physical eventuality. We embark on life beginning with a dim knowledge that one day it ends, that you physically decay, perish. The ultimate end—like no other invites as much anguish as this one. Anguish is your life ending. It is the end of you— your organismic striving for self-perpetuation ends with nonbeing. The finality of purposeful breath and thought.

Emotion Filled Memories

Not all memories are
emotionally charged.

Emotionally charged memories
moisten the eyes,
reminding you of the time mother sat you
in her lap stroking your golden,
curly hair.

Or the first time you saw your
father
cry
after his mother died.
It was at Shul, can't remember the name of it,
on Central Avenue near Madison
that father recited the Kaddish.
The Rabbi's name was Chaimowitz.
The magnification and sanctification of G-d's holy name.

Looking Out

I learned that life is about restoring life
to the down measured people.

It's a looking out,
not looking in.

I'm tired of looking in.
I look in enough.

I'm done with the archaeological dig
of my unconscious.
I've excavated enough.

Meaning

I'll discern what
meaning is when
I read more existentialism.
The existentialist asserts
there's even meaning in absurdity.
It's psychic torture trying to figure it all out.

Existentialists proclaim
you cheat by looking to G-d for meaning.
Illusory meaning.
Life means something without G-d.
Does it?

Template for Life

It was revealed to me yesterday,
after a long time.
An ultimate,
liberating, transcendent experience.

I could impose
my own meaning,
on a world
short on meaning.

It just came to me— in a dream and I deserved it.

My own template—a rubric for my life.
Yes—a rubric for my life.
It doesn't match the world's rubric.

It's about the fit between my template
and the world template.

It doesn't match.
What the world prescribes isn't a fit with my template's
prescription for life.
The template I'm superimposing on the world
is good.

Authenticity

Be authentic
and resist the temptation to not be you.
You know you.

The pretender is seduced
by adulation and being inauthentic.

The seduction can be wild.
So why be un-you?

Inauthentic is a euphemism
for self-importance.
Look at me.

You is honest,
Portrayed by self-knowing.
You're not craving for self-glorification.

Derivatives of the Self

I am— as derived from who I was.

I am not who I was— as derived from who I am.

Or am I?

I ought to be— as derived from what others want me to become.

I am what I was—and ought not be.

It Matters

I'm done thinking on it
Because I heard you can overdo thinking bit by bit.
Deeply, systematically over-analyzing.
Dissecting, reducing—and also inferring.
Excessive over-analysis.

I know with absolute certainty
that the most essential, desperate need
of a human being is to know
that as a psychic being
he is worthy of a look.
Just a quick look,
by you please.
The implications for me are enormous.
Can you do it just for me?

Undoing

If I could
undo
events
that filled me with anguish,
would it represent a pretense that
life is a dance without missteps?

Learning to dance includes missteps.

I have misstepped and am rehearsing
for this pageant of life.
Is one's entire life a rehearsal?
I'm tired of rehearsing,
but am realizing this
may be all there is?

Maybe life's simply about
rehearsing and our eternal
resting place is where we
receive a final judgment of our lovely rehearsal.

And what an audience !!!
An audience of one will judge you.
The Ultimate One.

Only one ticket sold.

Talkin'

My purpose in life—well, that's a question for an existentialist and I'm not one of those introspective, deeply philosophical people questioning why I'm here, who put me here and what I'm supposed to do with my life. I'm simply doing—and there's nothing complicated about it. I move around in a materialist world and will continue doing so until I break down. It's a preservation thing. My life is an instrument—a sort of utility, work for the mortgage, food and occasionally enjoy good ice cream and shrimp. I like shrimp—but not with ice cream. That's it for my purpose in life. By the way, why does everything need to have a purpose? One time, a philosopher asked me if I knew what the purpose of aging was, followed by my purpose in life. Now that's a bizarre question. I advised him to ask a gerontologist. Between you and me—it seemed like a stupid question. What's your purpose in life? I've got a friend named Hank. He's a plumber, and when I've got a problem, he tells me to get the crud out of the lines. Hank also warns me about how to keep the tree root out of the pipes and he's also got a plumber's license on his greasy wall. For his time, I end up making him a breakfast sandwich—with a couple of fried eggs, pepper jack cheese he likes and exactly six pieces of Best Kosher salami on the toasted bread. I really like Hank, we've been friends for 40 years.

Thinkin'

I've been studying the ultimate questions we ask, incisively analyzing in a deliberate, purposeful, introspective way only to discover that seizing absolute truth is impossible. The only exception is death. There's no analyzing death except to conclude a thief robbed you of time. Death is universal and absolute. Human beings die, it's absolute truth. It's incontrovertible, universal and a self-evident truth. You can't escape, defy or cheat death. The cessation of physiological life is a physical eventuality. We embark on life beginning with a dim knowledge that one day it ends, that you physically decay, perish. The ultimate end—like no other invites as much anguish as this one. It is the end of you— your organismic striving for self-perpetuation ends with nonbeing. The finality of purposeful breath and time.

Chaplin's Tramp Striving for Heroic Significance

In film history, an enduring image that embodies heroism in its truest spirit is Charlie Chaplin's tramp. The tramp made more people laugh than any other character in film history in the early 1900's and is considered one of the most universally recognized figures of all time. His character was the unassuming, lonely, selfless, well meaning vagrant with oversized trousers, a tight fitting coat, large shoes, a bowler hat, moustache and a cane. Despite being a tramp, he insisted on being treated with dignity. Understandably, he was misunderstood by society, labeled and stigmatized as irrelevant. For some, the tramp represented freedom from the limits of a stratified society of individuals leading routinized lives—and he was socially marginalized for being unemployable, homeless and incapable.

The majority of Chaplin's films were silent, requiring audiences to listen with their eyes. The tramp's popularity was attributed to the universal understanding of pantomime. Since pantomime requires no spoken language—communication through physical movement is understood. It is the universal language of life happening at the plane of movement. Movement can be trusted more often than words professing to action, and it reveals one's intentions and motives. It is the expectant. Thus, pantomime lent itself quite nicely as a method for the tramp to be trusted and reveal his altruistic behaviors. The caring social gestures the tramp routinely expressed convinced audiences of the "little fellow's" integrity. When the talkies emerged, Chaplin asserted "Talkies are spoiling the oldest art in the world—the art of pantomime. They are ruining the great beauty of silence. They are defeating the meaning of the screen."

Charlie Chaplin was born on April 16, 1889 in London, England. At the age of five, Chaplin performed in a music hall. In 1896 his mother could not obtain work and Chaplin and his half-brother Sydney were taken to a workhouse in Lambeth, London. He was the product of parents who were performers, his father a vocalist and actor and his mother an attractive actress and singer. A little later, he and his half-brother were relocated to Hanwell School for Orphans and Destitute Children. In 1900, at age 11 Chaplin's brother Sydney managed to get Charlie a role as a comic in *Cinderella* which was playing at the London Hippodrome. Chaplin arrived in America in 1912 after being hired by the Karno troupe. Soon, Mack Sennett saw Chaplin's acting and hired him to work in the Keystone Film Company. Chaplin was a big hit with American audiences and was offered a motion picture contract. At the tender age of 12 Chaplin's father died an alcoholic. Hannah, his mother suffered from a mental illness and was institutionalized at the Cane Hill Asylum at Coulsdon.

By 1915 Chaplin's tramp was widely known and recognized as the lonely, homeless, and resilient character in search of adventure, romance and a purposeful life. Chaplin's movies predictably contained a measure of sentimentality and pathos. The tramp was a lonely traveler on the unforgiving highway of life, without funds, a regular meal or friends. These undeniable themes derive from his early childhood memories of being homeless as a child, neglected, and living in poverty. The creation of the tramp symbolized the "little fellow" which Chaplin readily identified with. He was acutely aware of the pain and suffering caused by the depression in America. It is for this reason his tramp is depicted experiencing discrimination, poverty and unemployment. In his feature films the tramp is likeable, unassuming, good hearted and lovable. Despite being a vagrant, he expects to be treated with dignity. In "The Kid" his first full length feature film in 1921, he is heroic—rescuing an orphaned child about to be taken to the orphanage, and attempting to be a capable, surrogate father.

In "City Lights," a romantic comedy he hesitatingly falls in love with a blind woman and makes it his life mission to care for her—pay her rent to avoid being evicted and pay for an operation to restore her sight. The story is simple, yet powerful and poignant in its portrayal of the effects of stigmatization. The blind woman, selling flowers on the street, mistakes the tramp for a wealthy man because of the mutual exploitation that occurs

between the tramp and the wealthy man. The eccentric, wealthy and suicidal man engages the tramp for friendship only when he is intoxicated, and when sober he realizes what a grave mistake he has made befriending a vagabond and allowing him into his home. The tramp obtains money from the wealthy, intoxicated millionaire and offers it to the blind woman to pay her rent and for the operation to restore her sight. The developing romance between the tramp and the blind woman is beautifully handled. For the tramp it was absolutely safe to pursue a romance with a beautiful woman because she was blind. As long as she couldn't see his otherness—that he was a tramp, it was safe and he discovered that once he could love and care for her, he was capable of working and befriending others. Through a series of misadventures he is sent to jail for a few months and the blind woman has the operation to restore her sight. After his release from jail the tramp is wandering the streets, being teased by adolescents for looking destitute. The tramp then sees the woman working in a flower shop. She is, however, not blind now and the tramp knows the operation was a success. The tramp knows the woman, but she doesn't know him as she looks at him on the sidewalk from inside her shop. A moment earlier we see a handsome wealthy, young man enter the shop to order an arrangement, and the previously blind woman thinking maybe it was "him" only to be disappointed this was not the wealthy man who gave her life.

Once the woman spots the tramp admiring her in his ragged clothing, she says "I've made a conquest" to a co-worker, not knowing that he was the man she mistook for her handsome, wealthy prince. The tramp, embarrassed attempts to scuttle away only to be stopped by the woman who wants to give him a coin and a flower. She reaches to put the coin in his hand, and in a poignant instant, shockingly discovers through touching his familiar hand, he is the beloved, wealthy man. The tramp's face is overcome with measured joy, expressed in his beautiful, warm smile. The woman now knows, and she painfully realizes the impossibility of a lasting romance with the tramp. This poignant ending reveals the movie's irony—the contradiction exposed by a heroic tramp driven by a noble desire to give life through his selfless behavior and other sacrifices. The tramp understands he would be rejected by the beautiful woman once she realized who he was—his true identity revealed, as a tramp striving for heroic significance.

According to Becker (1973) “We like to be reminded that our central calling, our main task on this planet, is the heroic” (p. 1). Further, Becker (1973) conceptualizes culture as a theatre naturally designed for expressions of heroism:

. . . it is in the way society sets up its hero system and in the people it allows to fill its roles. The urge to heroism is natural, and to admit it honest. . . . The fact is that this is what society is and always has been: a symbolic action system, a structure of statuses and roles, customs and rules for behavior, designed to serve as a vehicle for earthly heroism. Each script is somewhat unique, each culture has a different hero system. What the anthropologists call “Cultural relativity” is thus really the relativity of hero-systems the world over. But each cultural system is a dramatization of earthly heroics; each system cuts out roles for performances of various degrees of heroism: from the “high” heroism of a Churchill, a Mao, or a Buddha, to the “low” heroism of a coal miner, the peasant, the simple priest; the plain everyday, earthly heroism wrought by gnarled working hand guiding a family through hunger and disease (p.4)

Again, from a Beckerian perspective, the tramp asks how does my society provide an honest, lonely, homeless man such as me, an opportunity to experience my primary heroism; to strive for heroic significance? For Becker, the human problem of heroism is central to humanity—deeper than any other because it originates from our organismic narcissism and it nourishes our self-esteem. Preserving and increasing self-esteem is indispensable for the tramp and society then becomes a codified hero system (Becker, 1973).

Becker’s analysis of the tramp’s heroic actions would suggest that the “little fellow” was driven to individuate himself and identify his unique talents. In part, heroic individuals perpetuate themselves by defeating evil forces and this is how they make a significant contribution and difference in the world. For Becker (1975):

Each person wants to have his life make a difference in the life of mankind, contribute in some way toward securing

and furthering that life, make it in some ways less vulnerable, more durable. To be a true hero is to triumph over disease, want, death. One knows that his life has had a vital human meaning if it has been able to bring real benefits to the life of mankind. Even more, by his own death the hero secures the lives of others, (p. 149)

The tramp's actions are directed toward gaining self-esteem, and at the organismic level self-esteem is life sustaining for the tramp. Without it, the tramp feels his life is not worthwhile, that he is insignificant and not vital as a human being. The tramp needs righteous self-realization—to know he matters. Further, it is the tramp's desperate need to be valued and display his human importance on society. He is acutely wanting to be recognized as “an object of primary value in the universe” (Becker, 1971). For Becker, culture provides rules, norms and identifies why people act the way they do in terms of the goal of behavior. A function of culture is to provide human beings with opportunities to nourish their self-esteem—to convince others that they are objects of primary value in a society of meaningful action (Becker, 1971).

The universal recognition and identification with the tramp was due, in part to what the “little fellow” symbolized as the personal struggle for economic sustenance and the plight of the ordinary worker. This was poignantly expressed in 1936, in his last silent film, “Modern Times” where the tramp was retired, and he poked fun at the advent of the modern industrialized nation. Chaplin criticized the corporate owners operating factories for being overly profit driven at the expense of cultivating job alienation in workers. In contradiction to the social elites of the time, the tramp insulted them and their indulgent lifestyle. At the time, audiences identified with the unrestricted freedom of the tramp—because it symbolized an authentic, self-chosen freedom; a breakaway from the governing social institutions demanding conformity and class structure that identified one's social status. The tramp, however was intuitive and socially astute, capable of accurately perceiving and interpreting his surroundings to satisfy his social, emotional and physical needs. He was absolutely self-directed.

The tramp, by being forever courageous and manipulating police officers expressed his subconscious defiance of death. One can argue here that death

defiance is a component of heroism and that the tramp was attempting to achieve a moral outcome through his heroic actions. In most of his feature films the tramp is a hero when he rescues and fathers an orphan child—or when he pays for an operation to restore sight to a blind woman. The tramp, as a hero motif, expresses selfless love and is sublime. The remarkably well conceived plots manufactured by Chaplin for the tramp reveal how intimately connected Chaplin was to the plight of the common man. Chaplin was remarkably sensitive to the capricious nature of the human condition with having work one day and on the strike line the next. Further, the social elites weren't immune from Chaplin's poking to reveal their vulnerabilities. For example, in *City Lights*, a wealthy, eccentric millionaire is a drunk contemplating suicide before the tramp convinces him to choose life over death. In the end, the wealthy have nothing on the destitute, they are just as vulnerable and given to hopelessness and despair as the well meaning and heroic striving tramp. It is this condition that united all of humanity, and what Chaplin acutely attempted to convey in his films. He juxtaposed humor and tragedy—it was irony and pathos. The Chaplinesque ending of his movies—encouraging and not becoming demoralized such as in the end of *Modern Times* when he says to the Gamin' "Buck up! Never say die! We'll get along." Chaplin was striving for heroic significance in the character of the tramp. From a Beckerian perspective, the tramp's motivation toward heroism derives from his awareness that ". . . our central calling, our main task on this planet, is the heroic." (Becker, 1973, p. 1)

In our final assessment of Chaplin's contribution to the understanding of heroism, through the character of the tramp we undoubtedly see moral outcomes resulting from selfless love and uncompromising social caring. Becker would explain that the tramp left an enduring symbol of his immortality in the universal recognition of the tramp. The tramp enjoyed international appeal precisely because he communicated through the universally understood medium of movement. Physical movement, physical comedy, tragedy, clever plots, romance and irony captivated audiences all around the world. The heroic tramp, as a character resonated with the heart and mind of ordinary people and heroism being a universal motif, lent itself to genuine admiration of courage and uncompromising selflessness. The tramp was searching for heroic significance, hungry for meaning. We need to rediscover Chaplin because for the right person his films can have a meaningful impact in terms of how people express their human emotions.

These emotional expressions of the tramp reflect his well entrenched values that drove him to provide social care.

The character of the Tramp embodied humanity's indefatigable will to survive in a seemingly insensitive world harboring the homeless, social elites and everything in between. Although the tramp was socially marginalized, he refused to surrender his will to live and was relentless in pursuing work. Social forces operating to devalue him, and stigmatization would not defeat him and the "little fellow" snubbed his nose at high society. In its most elemental level the tramp refused to be reduced to absolute insignificance. He understood how society worked and how he fit in. Although he was destitute at times, he was proud—dusting himself off when he was snubbed, and showing resilience. He ultimately waddled alone down the rugged highway of life. Charlie was a comic hero in his films—inviting adventure and misadventure, running from the police and romancing women. The kind hearted tramp found himself wanting to help others and was clever and resourceful. Although the tramp found himself pitted against the social elites, he cleverly managed to manipulate them and reveal their vulnerabilities. In the end, the tramp left behind an enduring, lovable and sacred immortality symbol of heroism.

The Memoirs of Nessim Levy

A Story of an Immigrant Miracle Worker

It all started in Shubrah, a district of Cairo, Egypt. My birthdate was December 28, 1929. My father's name was Elie Levy and he was born in Izmir, Turkey and my mother, Esther Fuchs was born in Cairo. My mother's mother was born in Italy, maybe Livorno. I don't know if my mother had any brothers or sisters. So, she met my father in Cairo and I don't know how they met, but they had six children. My father was a tailor and barely making a living. We were six children and we had a hard time making a living. At the age of four my mother decided to send us to a school, a residential school because they couldn't afford to feed and clothe six children. There was a French orphanage in a district of Cairo called Abbassieh, a French boy's orphanage and you had to be Catholic to be admitted. At the time, they never asked for proof so they just accepted my mother's word that we were Catholic. My older brother Maurice and I went to the school and my mother told them we were French, and we couldn't afford all the kids, with hard times and they accepted both of us. Our fake names were Jules Narbonne and Maurice Narbonne.

One day I was very sick, with a double pneumonia and anemia. It may have been due to poor nourishment. We ate lots of food like starches and bread, and couldn't afford good food. My mother took me to a doctor and he told her we can't do anything. I was three years old, and the doctor said to just make him comfortable, feed him hot soup and he may live two or three weeks. So, my mother went to Church at St. Theresa and prayed for a miracle, and they lit candles and oils and prayed to heal me. I remember my mother taking me there and we came home, and the next day I was playing

Elijah Levy, Ph.D.

in the street. I felt so much better the next day and felt I was healed. I was around three years old at the time. I remember enjoying my friend, who had a tricycle taking me for rides.

One day my mother took me to visit one of her friends in Shubrah, we cooked with a kerosene/propane burner and I was playing with her daughter in the kitchen. We played and by accident, the burner fell on us. Our clothes caught on fire and they immediately took us into the shower. My chin and ear was burned. We also went to the hospital and were treated—it hurt. I stayed home the next few days, with bandages. We used to ride cable cars to the hospital. At home, all of us were there except Rosa who wasn't born yet. At the age of four I was enrolled in a school to lighten the burden at home.

If you didn't have good grades during the week, they wouldn't let your parents visit. But, I always earned good grades and my parents came to visit me. Maurice, my older brother and I were there. I had a Greek friend at the school and his mother would bring him good food like chicken and he shared some of the food with me. Every year they celebrated the day of the dead and we went to the cemetery to sing. The Priest chose me to go with him. The Priest liked me and we said prayers on the grave, and I sang the Requiem in Latin. It was a prayer for the dead, so they would rest in peace. During Christmas, the French consulate used to have a big party for the French kids in the orphanage. The French kids and I went to the French consulate for the party which was in Cairo and we had lots of food, got toys and it was a nice party. My parents didn't come.

We used to go home for two days during Christmas, and the rest of the time we stayed in the orphanage. In the summer time, they used to take us to Alexandria for a few months where they had a villa and we slept there. Every morning we went to the beach, all the boys in the school. We had lunch, sandwiches and cheese at the beach. When we returned to the villa around 1:00 we took a nap then got up and studied history, math, composition. For two and a half months we stayed in the villa. Alexandria was four hours by train to Cairo.

Before the building was a school it used to be a cemetery, and when I was in bed at night, on occasion, I would hear a noise and it would scare me.

I was told that to get rid of the noise, I had to cross myself and it would stop. So, I did and I didn't hear the voices very often after that. It was less frequent. I thought it was ghosts from when the place was a cemetery. All night I couldn't sleep, and there was a woman in charge of the night shift, a mean woman that no one talked to. So, we had a big hall in the dorm where we slept and with rows of beds. At the end of the hall was a bucket that we urinated in at night. We teased the old woman because no one liked her. We used to tell her there was a kid at the bucket for an hour.

For entertainment on Sundays, a man used to come with a projector and he showed us movies, silent films of Charlie Chaplin. Sometimes he didn't show up and we were disappointed. Every Sunday our parents came to visit us for one hour. When they came we sat together and talked, they brought me a banana and orange. They didn't want to come empty handed, it was the thought that counted. In the school we woke up 5:00 am in the morning, washed up and we attended service in the morning. Maurice and I did communion, we sang in Latin in the choir, learned Catholicism. I used to help the Priest by being an altar boy. After church we had breakfast in the dining hall, then into the classroom until 12:00 noon and after lunch we returned to classes until 4:00, then we played in the yard. We played soccer and basketball and around 6:00 we went to bed.

At the end of every year we took a test, a comprehensive test on all of the subjects. At the age of 11 I had to do a final test for my elementary school certificate and I passed with one of the highest scores in the school. I was first in French and English, and second in Arabic. But when they made my certificate it was in the name of Jules Narbonne and I had to leave the school at age 11. My brother, Maurice left one year ahead of me because he was older. Before I left they asked me if I wanted to become a Jesuit Priest and my parents said no. At the time, I didn't know what I was, I never even knew I was Jewish and I thought my real name was Narbonne. So, my parents took me from there and I enrolled in a French high school called the French Brothers. In French, it's spelled Frere, less than a Priest. The school was close to my house, a few blocks and I used to walk there.

My father, at the time had a small tailor shop and he wanted me to help him in the store. I was 12 years old and I didn't want to become a tailor. My mother said I couldn't say no to my father, he'd get very upset. My father

was very strict. World War II was starting at the time and he used to work with the British Army. In the store he would sew the soldier's uniforms. The soldiers were the British, New Zealand, Australian and American soldiers. There was a military camp in Cairo for all the soldiers from around the world. The German army was approaching Egypt in El Alamein with General Rommel from Germany so all the coalition forces were stationed in Cairo to fight this general and push him out of Egypt. I went to work in my dad's store because I was scared, I sewed buttons on uniforms and small alterations and I hated it. One of those days I told my mother I didn't want to go to the store and she told me she wasn't sure what my dad would do. I refused to go to the store.

After I left the school and began to live at home, my parents told me that my real name was Nessim Levy and that we were Jews. They told me they enrolled me in the Catholic orphanage because they couldn't afford to have me at home, and they had to change my name to be accepted in the school. It was a big shock to me and they had a hard time convincing me I was Jewish. I was mixed up, but when I started to work most of the workers were Jews my age in the office and I felt more comfortable with my Jewish identity. I didn't know anything about the Jewish faith. I saw my birth certificate and my real name was Nessim Levy. It also indicated my religion was Jewish. So, I accepted it, went back to my original name.

I used to wear my dad's long, baggy pants. Also, in Cairo, there was a large French, department store named Orosdiback. One day I went to the office, the last floor and applied for a job. I was around 12-13 years old. The manager of the office looks at me, with the baggy pants and says "Young man what do you want?" I said I'm looking for a job, and he says what? I told him that I looked young, but I'm older than I look. He didn't know what to do with me. He told me listen, I'm going to give you a chance. I'm going to give you an exam and you have to finish it in 15 minutes. So he thought I wouldn't make it and he wouldn't have to tell me to get out of here. I took the exam on a few subjects, math and composition. It was a big office with a lot of workers. He gave it to me and instead of 15 minutes I finished it in 10 minutes. I lifted my hand to tell him I'm done. He said are you sure you finished, you did it all? He said did anybody help you? I said no I don't know anybody here. He took the sheet of paper, graded it and said it was excellent. I got everything correct.

He couldn't believe it and he took the test and went to the manager, his name was Beresi, the highest manager in the office and he showed it to him and I could see through a window, they were talking. The manager was looking at me through the window. The office manager said because you did so good on the test and because of your age, I'm going to give you a chance. Come back tomorrow morning at 8:00 to begin working. I was happy I was going to make some money. I was broke all the time. My dad was mad, my mom knew I was going to apply for a job.

I came to the job the next morning, and they gave me some easy job of filing. It was boring and I didn't like it. I don't remember what it paid. Maybe two pounds a month. After a few months I met a fellow in the office, an older man. He was an Italian, named Budini and he was in charge of the import and export department. I told him I was Italian and we started talking and he liked me. He said Levy I'm not going to let you continue filing, I'll transfer you to my department and I'll make you a big shot here. I spoke Italian with him and told him my mom was Italian. He was very influential in the company. He transferred me to this department and he started to teach me everything about import and export. So, little by little I learned everything, and he ordered me a special desk with a typewriter, and I got one raise after another. I did very good there.

However, little by little, the political situation changed. They said 75% of the workers had to be Egyptians. The government allowed only 25% to be foreigners. I wasn't a foreigner, but I was considered a foreigner because I was Jewish. They knew my name was Levy. The government put a guy in charge to make sure everybody was following the rules. His name was Mustafa Abd Salam. This guy was one of the Muslim brotherhood, a fanatic. So I went to him and said, listen Mustafa how come I am on the foreigner's list? I was born here, and never left the country. I thought he'd be nice, but instead said "Levy you better shut up and get the hell out of here." So I just left him and ran. You cannot say anything, talk too much you'd get into trouble.

At about age 16, I used to go in groups with Jewish and non Jewish boys and girls to Mena House, a hotel in Cairo close to the pyramids where there was a swimming pool and we stayed and played the whole day. Sometimes we rode bicycles into the suburbs, kids from many different cultures. One

time we went on an excursion to Aswan, where there's a dam with big parks. We had a picnic and one time the Egyptian policeman came and saw us taking pictures. He accused us of being spies because we were taking pictures. He said we were Jewish spies and wanted to take us to the police station. We pleaded with him to not arrest us, but he refused. We decided to bribe him, and we collected some money to give him. He looked at the amount of money, took it, and said this time I'll let you go but next time I won't. We got sunburned and went to the drive in movies without a car. With the ticket they gave you ice cream and a snack. It was an open air theatre and we sat on chairs to watch movies. We went with the girls.

Everything began to change, and they started to lay off people. I quit because there was no future for me there. In the meantime I wanted to go to Israel and I was 18 years old. I was a Zionist, and belonged to Aliyot Noar a youth organization. I wanted to go to Israel. So I told my mom and dad, and they approved.

In Cairo, they had an officer they used to call Sheikh El Hara who he was in charge of the district I used to live in, and he came to my dad and told him because you are a good friend of mine I'm going to tell you something but don't say it to anybody. You're youngest son Nessim is on the black list. At that time they started to have camps for the Jews and they used to stab Jews in the street and throw rocks on them.

One time, I went to the movies with my girlfriend and on the way out of the movie, I walked down the stairs from the movies, walking down from the third floor where there was a bunch of young, Muslim boys. One of the boys kicked me with his foot and threw me over the rail. I was lucky that halfway down I grabbed the rail and didn't continue falling down the stairs to the main street. I didn't say anything to them because I didn't want to be hurt anymore. But they weren't done with me, they ran after me and one of them held my two arms behind my back and the rest of them were hitting me. The girl was an Italian girl named Magdalena. She started to cry, so I told her, why don't you go home before they beat you up. So, she left and they continued to beat me up in the middle of the street. I was lucky, at the office I was working, there was a rich Egyptian man from a high class, the Pasha working with me. So, I was lucky, he was passing by and he saw me, asked what's going on. Usually when they catch a thief they beat him up.

He saw me and yelled my name Levy. I couldn't talk, he always carried a gun in his pocket. He took out the gun and said he was going to kill them if he knew who they were.

So, I was badly beaten, bruises on my body and I couldn't get up. He called a taxi cab and took me to the doctor and the doctor said there's nothing I can do for him, take him home and let him rest. All my body ached. There was nothing my parents could do. They knew I got beat up.

On one occasion, in the middle of the night when I was living at home, the police came and knocked on the door with the rifle, saying "Open up right away, it's the police." We opened the door and we let them in. One officer and three policemen said "Where is the radio communication you have here, with the Jews in Palestine?" We said we don't have any radios here, what are you talking about. They went into our bedrooms and broke the dressers looking for wires. They said someone reported that we had radio equipment. They didn't find anything and eventually left. Sadly enough, they made a mess by destroying the bedroom furniture. All of the kids were living at home, except Sammy, Felix and Jeanette.

Another time, on the way out of a drive in movie, a bunch of Fundamentalist Muslims attacked me. We fought in the streets and the police came and called me a Jew and troublemaker. He took off his belt and began hitting me, calling me a dirty Jew and a troublemaker. He took me to the police station, it was night time and they told me to wait in the corner, on the floor and we'll tell you when to go home. So, I stayed there all night long until the morning and every time a policeman came into the station he slapped or kicked me with his foot, and cussed at me. Finally, they said we'll let you go this time but next time you won't leave alive.

My father panicked, and said to the officer what can I do? So the officer said I'll come back the next day and I'll tell you what to do. He came back the next day and said he found somebody in the passport department that would do phony papers so I could get out. They called it Laissez Passer, it means let go in French. It was going to cost 25 Egyptian pounds. At that time, workers used to make three pounds a month. My dad said from where were we going to get the money? The officer said that's it. My dad went to all of his friends to borrow money and when he got all the amount we

called the officer and we told him we had the money. The officer called me and wanted to talk to me, telling me, meet me at the sidewalk café in the center of Cairo, it was called Radwan at 3:00 in the afternoon and bring the money in the envelope. He said he'd bring papers in an envelope and you'll have to leave on the spot.

He said these papers are not guaranteed because they are fake, but you have a chance to make it. I had to go to Alexandria, the port to board a ship to Europe. I took one shirt and one pair of shorts, and I got on a train to Alexandria and I slept on the deck of the ship. Anyway, I presented my papers to the officers in Alexandria. The officer looked at my papers and they said I was going to Naples, Italy. He said he know where all the Jews end up, it's Palestine not Naples. He was suspicious.

Anyway, after 20 minutes, the officer tells me, Okay you Jew, he started to cuss, take your small package, a shirt and pair of shorts, and go to hell before I change my mind. So I said, this is not the time for him to change his mind. I went on the ship, an Italian ship called Hesperia. I got on board and I had a ticket to sleep on the deck, and I was still shaking from the experience with the officer. I knew they could still catch me even if I was on the ship. I said to myself, please G-d let the ship sail. As the ship moved, I was happy, still alive and that was the main thing. Now I'm going to Naples and I don't know anybody there and without a penny in my pocket. I don't care as long as I'm still alive, I'll manage to stay alive. The ship arrived in Naples, I got off the ship and decided to just sit there on the deck and relax. I closed my eyes to relax, and after a half hour I opened my eyes and looked all over, and didn't know where to go. So, I saw somebody holding a sign from far away and I couldn't read the sign, it was too far and I decided to get closer to him and the sign said Jewish Agency for refugees. So, I said that's the guy I need, G-d sent me to the right person. I talked to him, told him listen, this is so and so, and he said its our job to meet refugees from all over the world, to help the refugees. From Naples they took me to a refugee camp in the suburb of Rome and the name of the suburb was Conegliano Del Lazio. They kept me there for two to three weeks. They used to give me pocket money to eat a sandwich or something. I was then transferred to Marseilles, France in another camp called Camp D' Arenas.

After a few weeks they put me on a ship with hundreds of other Jewish refugees to Israel. We arrived in a refugee camp in Haifa called Shaar Alia. I was 19 years old at the time. I had in Israel, my uncle from Turkey, on my father's side. My father's side were all from Turkey, and I never met them in my life. I went to visit them for a few days, in their own refugee camp and the Sohknut Ha Yehudit, a Jewish Agency wanted to start an agricultural settlement with a group of Egyptian refugees, girls and boys. So they sent us to a Moshav, like a kibbutz near Tel Mond to learn agriculture. After this, we needed to start one of our own settlements. I went there and started to work in the orange groves and the vegetable gardens and many other duties to learn how to plant and harvest everything. After a while I didn't like it. It was very hard work and without good pay. We were on the borders and we had to guard the settlement, it was dangerous work. So, I quit and knowing I had to enlist in the Israeli Army, I went to Haifa. They told me there was a special unit called Heil Hasfar, the border patrol, and it was the most dangerous work, and it paid a little better. I went and it was very hard and dangerous work. Every evening at sunset we used to lay down on the border of Kalkilia, they used to call it the triangle Hameshulash. Our job was to protect the borders from sunset to sunrise, laying down with the old fashioned rifle from Czechoslovakia. A lot of things were happening, we were outnumbered.

We were in groups of three soldiers and the Arabs were crossing the borders at nighttime from all over. I had a very hard time until I finished and I was lucky I got out alive because many of my friends didn't make it. After a year, I was discharged and they dissolved the border patrol. I left the army and my parents came from Egypt and were in a refugee camp near Haifa called Maarava, Tirat Ha Carmel which is 20 minutes from Haifa. I stayed with my parents, and so did my sister Rosa and brother Maurice. By this time, Jeanette, my older sister was in America. One day, I saw an ad in the paper for mail carriers in the post office in Haifa. I applied and they needed around 20 mail men, so I took the physical and I passed it. I didn't want to be a mailman. I wanted to be a clerk but they told me that to be a clerk I needed to be a mailman for two years, to learn the streets of Haifa before I could become a clerk. I couldn't say no. I took the job and worked in the Arab neighborhood called Wadi Lelnesnas. It was a big Arab neighborhood with all kinds of stores. After a couple of years I took a written test to become a clerk. I took the test, became a clerk and was promoted several times.

At the post office my future wife had many cousins working there. At the time I wasn't married, so one of her cousins told me he knew a good girl for me to marry. He didn't mention she was his cousin and I didn't want to get married at the time. I wanted to come to America single. So, he forced me to meet her at his house. The girl's name was Esther Yarhi. I said Ok and finished with him. He insisted that I meet her. I went to Mahane David, a section for refugees. We saw each other and I told him I'd let him know, but he wouldn't take this for an answer and said I needed to take her to the movies. I said, I just came to meet her and not go anywhere. But that guy, his name was Sou Sou Costica. His mother and Esther's mother were sisters. So, we went to the movies, and from one thing to another, after six months we were married.

The wedding was in the evening at the Rabbinate of Haifa. It was raining very, very hard that night. Everyone got wet and we didn't have a reception or party. We had a small home made cake and some drinks. The drinks were called gazoz. After the reception, the Rabbis blessed everyone and they went home soaked. We borrowed Esther's wedding dress from my father's cousin who used to loan wedding dresses to people. We didn't pay for it. It was a present for her. It wasn't ruined, but in bad shape and we couldn't do anything. I had a one bedroom condominium in Tirat Ha Carmel and my mother was living with me. My father passed away when he was 56, he had all kinds of problems, diabetes, high blood pressure and he used to smoke a lot and drink. One time we went dancing and Esther was pregnant. After coming home, she started bleeding and I took her to the doctor and he said it was a miscarriage. We had to wait for six months before trying again. After six months, she was pregnant again and we had our first child Eliahu Levy. Eliahu was two months old, when in the middle of the night there was an army truck that came by the house and they started to yell, Nessim come down fast, there's no time to talk. I said I finished the army and they said, we're at war. I asked where we were going and they didn't know. My wife started to cry, you're going to leave me with a two month old baby. I told her don't be afraid my mother is with you and I'll be back. The year was 1956, and they called it the Midbar Sinai, the Sinai Campaign and we also had the British, French and Israel fighting against Egypt.

The British and French attacked Egypt for the Suez Canal and Israel fought in the Sinai dessert to reach the Suez from the other side. The war lasted about one and a half months and then I came home and returned to my job at the

post office as a clerk. At the time, I used to work a lot of overtime and once in a while I went to the port in Haifa to clean up the ships. Sometimes, they changed the oil in a ship and there were holes a human being can barely go in to clean the holes containing grain with rags. There was a grain silo in the Haifa port called Dagon. After they unloaded the grain we had to clean up all the dust and everything, but I needed the money so I did it.

Back home, we had our second son Ezra, followed by Batia and Yossi. So, from the time I arrived in Israel in early 1949 I went to the American embassy in Tel Aviv and applied to immigrate to the United States. The embassy told me it would take 20 years for my turn with the quota to immigrate. So, I said 20 years, no way. But I kept the application there anyway. You never know.

After 12 years I received a letter from the embassy that my turn came and I had to go to the embassy and present my papers. I thought, when I applied I was single and now I have a wife and four children. So I called the embassy and explained this to them. They said no problem, bring the whole gang, with the birth certificates, an Israeli passport and come to the embassy. I did all the necessary steps and went there with the four children. At the embassy, the kids were so noisy, fighting and running around, screaming. Elie was seven,, Ezra was five, Batia was three and Yossi was six months old. The secretary came out from her room, and said what's all that noise? I told her I was sorry. She said where are all the kids and I said right here. She said bring everybody here, and come in right now. We went in and showed them the papers, they stamped the passport, gave me the visa and I was ready to go. I asked my sister Jeanette who was living in Odessa, Texas at the time to send me an affidavit of support. She sent me that paper and I sent it to the embassy. I then had to go to the health department in Haifa for all of us to get a physical. We did all the formalities and sold my one bedroom condo to buy the tickets for the trip. The value of the condo brought me only half the amount I needed for the tickets. I had to borrow money from friends at work who trusted me because they knew I was honest.

We boarded a ship called Zion, which stopped in Naples and Marseilles, then to New York. In Naples, Italy we got off the ship for a few hours and walked around a little bit. We also took a horse carriage ride through the city. After Naples, we sailed to Marseilles, France and Raoul, Esther's brother

came from Paris to visit us. After this we completed our trip to the U.S. and landed in New York during the evening. We were supposed to take a plane from New York to Odessa, Texas where my older sister Jeanette was living with her husband and two sons.

However, we needed to stay overnight in New York. One of my friends at the post office in Haifa had an aunt in Brooklyn who told him we could sleep at her house for one night only. So, we went to her house, knocked on the door and told her who we were, that her relatives in Israel told us you'd let us stay with you one night. She said no, I'm very sorry, I can't do it. So, we had no where to go and the kids were tired, hungry and crying. It was terrible. Joey had a rash. I asked her again to let us stay with her, it was evening, and we had no money, I pleaded with her and she said no. You have to leave. I left, and thought, what can we do? I remembered buying two bottles of whiskey while on the ship that I was going to give my sister Jeanette as a present. Now I only had \$10.00 in my pocket. I thought I'd sell the two bottles of whiskey and get a room in the hotel. I left the family in the lobby and took the two bottles, walking from one store to another asking them to do me a favor, to buy the whiskey. Nobody wanted to buy the whiskey.

Eventually, I found a kosher butcher shop, I thought, maybe this guy will buy the whiskey. I went in and explained to him my situation, thinking I'd sell it to him for half price. He bought them from me for very cheap and we found a hotel. I went in to the receptionist and asked him how much for a night, any room, not fancy and just for one night. He told me \$16.00 and all I had was exactly \$16.00. However, I needed to buy food and medicine for Joey's rash. He said I can't take less than that. I asked to speak with the manager, and I told him the whole story, and I asked him for just any room for us to sleep; I couldn't afford to give him the whole amount. I offered \$10.00 so I could buy some bread and cheese to feed the kids. He agreed and gave us a small room. I took everybody to the room, and left for the market to buy a loaf of bread and cheese, and to the drug store and bought ointment for Joey's rash. I came back to the room, and everyone jumped for the food, saying Abba, Abba we're hungry. We put the ointment on Joey's rash and he felt better.

We slept and the next morning we had to go to the airport to catch a plane to Odessa, Texas, where Jeanette lived. We didn't have money for the taxi. I had a few souvenirs from Israel, so I pulled them out, stopped a taxi driver and asked him how much to take us to the airport. The taxi driver wasn't interested in the souvenirs from Israel, and said what do you think this is, a swap meet? So, I kept asking different taxi drivers, and one accepted my offer. We went to the airport, showed them the tickets and they said we were in the wrong airport. I said, you know what, I'm not going to move from here, you'll have to take me there. They said we can't do that, you're on your own. I said I'm not moving with my kids until you give us transportation. In the end, they agreed to give us bus tickets to the other airport.

We got to the other airport, took a small plane with a dozen people and arrived at Odessa, Texas. At Odessa, my sister rented us a two bedroom house until I found a job and got settled. So, the following day I went to the unemployment office to ask for a job and they had a very long line. I didn't want to waste my time, it looked like it would take hours to be seen. I asked to talk with the manager, they let me and he after asking him how likely I could get work, he said unlikely. There's hundreds of people, less than half will get a job. And there's no jobs, the only jobs are physical ones with shovels on the road. I said no, I can't do that. I went back home and one of the neighbors told me to go to El Paso and look for something there because it was a bigger city.

The next early morning, I took a bus to El Paso, to the Jewish Family Service, thinking maybe they could help me find a job. They told me, we're sorry, go back to Israel. They asked me why I came here. By the time I finished there, it was dark and I didn't want to go back to Odessa in the dark. I told them I didn't have money to stay in a hotel in El Paso, so they gave me a ticket to buy some food and a ticket to sleep overnight at the YMCA. I went to the YMCA where they had a big dormitory with a hundred beds, with strange, weird people, and I remember worrying I wouldn't get out of there alive. There were Indians and people in drug rehabilitation there. So I couldn't sleep all night, I was scared of those people. No one harmed me. The next morning I took the bus home to Odessa and said to myself I'm wasting my time here, I have to find another way.

So, I had a good friend of mine in Chicago, his wife was our neighbor in Cairo. Esther Midler was a friend of ours from Cairo. I called them and asked them if they could let me stay with them in Chicago until I could find a job, and bring the family. Ben and Esther agreed to let me come. They were good friends. I took a bus by myself to Chicago and they took me to a commercial district in the south side of Chicago to look for a job. I saw a kosher sausage company, and thought maybe they'll give me a job. I went in and met the owner, his name was Harry Osherwitz and the name of the company was Best Kosher Sausage Company. I explained to him my situation, asking for any kind of job, just so I could feed my family. He said Ok, come tomorrow morning and start working. I came back the next morning and he took me to the basement where they had all the butchers, where they made all the meat kosher by salting it. I started to work as a laborer washing the meat and salting it. I transferred big barrels of meat to the cooler and it was very hard for me because I wasn't used to doing physical work. After about four months, the owner's son, Jerry asked me to come to the office. I thought he was going to fire me or lay me off, because I was having a hard time doing that job. I told him Jerry please don't fire me, I'll do better, it'll take time. He told me, let me talk. He said would you like to become a meat cutter? I said sure, it's better than what I'm doing now and I knew it paid better.

So, he called the foreman, Isaac who was a Polish Jew but with a very mean look. He told him to take this young man, I was 34 at the time, and teach him to be a meat cutter. He said Ok. He gave me a white apron and a small knife, and showed me how to cut and trim a small piece of meat. After a few days Isaac, the foreman, calls me to his office. I went to his office and he tells me you think I'm going to teach you for nothing? I told him the owner didn't say I had to pay you anything. Plus I'm an immigrant, I don't have any money. He said he didn't want to hear anything. Tomorrow morning, bring with you \$300.00 and if not, I don't know what's going to happen to you. I told him I didn't have a penny. He said, if you don't bring the money we'll see what's going to happen. So, there was an Israeli woman that worked in the same plant and I went to her and told her what happened. She told me Ok, Levy I'll loan you the money and you'll pay me little by little. If you don't pay him he'll find a reason to fire you. She gave me the money, I came to work the next morning, gave him the money and he was happy. He told me to return to work. Anita Rosen was the Israeli lady. After a week the foreman calls me again to his office and I asked him if I did anything wrong.

He tells me, are you crazy? He says do you think \$300.00 is enough? Do you call this money? So, I told him the first \$300.00 I gave him was money I had to pay back. I'm not going to give you my work checks. I'm not going to bring anything tomorrow. He said, we'll see what's going to happen to you.

The next morning, I came to work as usual at 6:00 and I saw something wasn't right in the atmosphere. He made a plan with other Polish workers to start with me so he can have a reason to fire me. While I was working one of his polish friends came to me and slapped me in the face. It was all planned and I looked at the guy, wondering why he slapped me? What did I do to him? I knew he wanted to slap me again and I held his arm and I slapped him back. Right away, Isaac came to me and said it's not enough you don't do anything, and you're a trouble maker, you come in the morning and throw knives. I didn't throw knives. He wanted to have a reason to fire me. He told me I was fired. I knew I was going to get fired, but I wanted to give it to him before I left. I told him he didn't own this place and that he couldn't fire me. Only the owner could fire me. He told me I had a big mouth and I told him he had a big mouth. I'm not going home, only when the owner tells me to go home. You won't get paid, so go home. He went to the phone and called Jerry at home early in the morning. He told Jerry, you know that Arab Levy, he came here this morning throwing knives at everybody and acting crazy, and I told him to go home and he refuses to go home. I think Jerry told him not to do anything until he came to see what's going on. Jerry came to the basement and took me to his office. We talked in his office and he asked me what was going on. I told him the truth, everything that happened, and if you want to believe me fine, or you can fire me.

I asked him if he saw me as the kind of guy that throws knives, or hits people? And I told him about the money Isaac took from me the first time, and the second time. So he said Levy, I know you aren't that kind of person. But that Isaac has been here 15 years and you just started working, so I have your word against his. We can do something about it. Are you willing to go to the police and take a lie detector test? I said sure, anything you want. I went to the police station, they put all the wires on my arms, asked me questions and I answered all the questions. The results indicated everything was truthful.

They gave me the report to take back to Jerry. He said that's fine, now I can do something about it. He told me to go back to work in the basement. I went to work and Isaac came to me, started to holler, asking me who told me to come back. What are you doing here? Go home. In the meantime, Jerry came to the basement and asked what's going on? Isaac says, it's either me or him, not both of us. Jerry told Isaac, you are right, we can't have both of you here. You can go to hell Isaac, I don't want to see your face again. I thought Isaac was going to get a heart attack. He took his belongings, left and they replaced him with a guy named Elmer. Jerry joked with Elmer saying to keep an eye on me. After a few weeks, Jerry came back to the basement and he asked Elmer how is that young troublemaker doing? Is he still making trouble here? Jerry was joking with Elmer. Elmer said you know Jerry, if all the workers here were like this young man Jules, you wouldn't need a foremen here. He's a very nice young man, polite, good worker, always on time. He's the best.

I had to be an apprentice for two years to get my union scale wages. Jerry thanked me for having the courage to tell him the truth about Isaac because after Isaac left everybody reported giving him money every week. Some gave him \$10.00 and he scared everybody, to the point that no one disclosed anything to Jerry. They all worried about losing their jobs. Jerry said I was the first to report what Isaac was doing. I want to thank you very much for what you did, and instead of waiting two years to get your union scale, I'm going to give it to you right away. From that time, everything was quiet and Anita was moving to a new condo in Lincolnwood. She sold all her furniture to us and we rented the apartment she was living in on Central Avenue. The children were going to Emmet school, a public school just down the street. We had the temple down the same direction on Central, and the Rabbi's name was Chaimowitz. I then started Elie at Rambam School before transferring to Arie Crown. I stayed in the job, and I took extra jobs after work. I went to Vienna sausage company after work and sometimes a Jewish couple, their last name was Rose who owned many warehouses had work for me. I used to work in their warehouses, making reports on the damaged merchandise, mostly food and wine. The foreman liked me very much, he was Italian and the owner said his wife didn't have time to shop, so I used to shop for them.

On weekends, in their big house, I cleared the yard of leaves and she marked it down on my time card how many hours it took me to do it. Sometimes, I used to go to Halsted Street, South Street and sell pants with the Rabbi's son-in-law. We had a table on the street and we sold pants. I yelled in Spanish pantalones. On the weekends, I sold pants and clothes.

Our doctor was Dr. Schechter, a Russian doctor, tall and a very kind man. He was located on the second floor on top of a general store. One time all the kids had the flu and I took them to him, after he checked them he gave us some samples of syrup so we didn't pay for them. After he finished, I asked him how much I owed him. He said you want me to charge by piece or bunch. I told him I'd pay. He put his hand in his pocket and pulls out a bunch of bills, hundred dollars and twenty dollar bills. He said I don't need your money. I told him I wanted to pay something. He told me not now.

The kids went to Emmet Elementary School when we lived on Central and Madison Ave. Elie attended Emmet for one year because Rabbi Chamowitz asked us to transfer to a Hebrew Day School called Rambam. Elie attended Rambam for at least three years with Ezra. Betty and Joey stayed at home with Esther. I went to take car driver's lessons after working for three years. I saved enough money to put a down payment on a car. So, I had a friend of mine at work who knew about cars and he took me to look at cars. One day after work we went to a Chevrolet dealer and we found a red Chevy Chevelle. I wanted to surprise everyone so I didn't tell anyone about it. I came with the car one night and the kids and Esther were all surprised to see me in the car. I parked the car in front of the apartment on Central Ave. I chose the color red because in Egypt, King Farouk had red cars.

Elie attended Arie Crown Hebrew Day School for one year (5th grade) with Ezra. The reason we couldn't continue to send the kids to Arie Crown was because we couldn't afford it. So, we sent the kids to public school at Jamison Elementary School. Elie attended 6th grade and Ezra 5th grade at Jamieson.

Around 1967 we moved to the North side of Chicago and our address was 5408 B. North Artesian. We moved because I had saved enough money and I wanted to buy a condominium. It was a two story condominium and we paid \$16,000.00 dollars for it. I ended up selling it for \$18,000.00

Elijah Levy, Ph.D.

We also joined a new Temple on Foster street that was called Mikro Kodesh Anshe Tiktin. The Rabbi's name was Ellison and it was a conservative synagogue. Elie had his Bar Mitzvah at this temple the summer we moved to Long Beach in 1969.

The reason we moved to Long Beach was because my older sister Jeanette was living there. She rented a house for us at 835 Freeman Street that we moved into around August of 1969. Jeanette lived down the street from us on Freeman near 7th Street. I found a job in downtown Long Beach for about one year. I worked as a butcher near Anaheim and Magnolia. I didn't like the work because the foreman was a German who hated me. All day long he'd tell me I wasn't a good worker and yell at me "Move your butt."

I felt I was discriminated against by this German supervisor. I didn't do anything about it because I needed a job. So, one day when the union man came I told him I didn't like working here and I asked the union representative if he could help me find another job. Right away he said yes and told me about Lucky Stores who built a new plant in Buena Park, and they needed butchers. I applied and they hired me. I worked at Lucky for nine years, until 1978 when I bought the bakery.

We moved to a house on 15th Street and Obispo. It was a house we bought and it was a duplex. We rented the back house to a married couple. I believe we lived in this house about two years before buying another house on Wilton St. which was also a duplex. We lived at the Wilton house about three years. While living in the Wilton house I bought an apartment building that had five units which I took care of. After a few years I bought another apartment building on Coronado which had eight units. I also bought another 12 unit apartment on Coronado and PCH which had two bedroom units and a swimming pool.

Around 1978 a bakery was for sale. I had to sell the 12 unit apartments and the five unit apartment to purchase the bakery. However, I also bought a four plex on 5th Street and Ximeno around 1979-1980. We lived in one of the apartments in the front which was a three bedroom and we rented the three two bedroom units. We lived here for about three years before moving into the house connected to the bakery on Vista Street.

We bought the bakery with two partners, Betty Keller and Kalli. They were real estate agents who worked together in an office. They had 25% each and I had 50% of the business. We didn't get along because they were always complaining, being critical of me, telling me I was a lousy worker and didn't know how to run a business. I was working like a slave from the morning until midnight to learn the business and manage it. The business was bankrupt when I took it over. We had 15 employees and it was a big responsibility for me and I knew I was doing a good job. I used to buy the merchandise and do everything. The partners continued to complain that we didn't have enough income because I was a lousy manager. We made it a corporation and I was the president of the corporation and they couldn't do anything to me because I had a larger share of the business and I was the president. They threatened to fire me but they knew they couldn't fire me.

So, one day it got to me, especially after a sheriff came to the bakery and gave me some papers to go to court. He said they complained that I broke into their office and stole the books. I saw that they wrote checks in their husbands and son's names and I knew they couldn't be trusted. Every time I asked them about the checks they said to shut up and don't talk too much. They said I didn't know anything. I then went to my lawyer named Tincher on Ocean Blvd and explained what was happening. I was scared about going to jail. Tincher said don't worry about anything, I'll take care of everything. So, I said OK. Keller told my lawyer that she wanted to buy me out. I refused, saying no way. I went through a lot to get this business and now that it's better I'm not unloading it. She insisted about buying me out. I told Tincher I'll never sell it. She's wasting her time. After one day Tincher called me and says how much do you want to buy them out. They wanted double what they put in for one year. They put in \$25,000.00 each and they wanted \$50,000.00 each. So, my lawyer told me this is the only option or you give it to the government and they sell it. I went and got enough money to give them \$50,000.00 each just to get rid of them. So, I bought them out. After I had the business for myself I relaxed and didn't have to worry and have headaches. My business improved every day and I had a wholesale business too, and we made a very good living.

In 1989 I got tired of the bakery. I used to get up at three in the morning and work until 7:00 in the evening, standing on my feet and running around. I'd have to go home and do the bookkeeping. I decided to sell it—just the business and the building was mine. It was around 1987 when I sold it to a

woman who ran it to the ground. I carried a loan with her and she didn't last one year. She didn't know how to run a business and she was mean to the employees. She kept the same employees but she mistreated them. Finally, all the employees quit. After they quit she got in trouble and had to close the bakery. She was also behind in her payments and didn't pay me for three months. She closed the bakery and never told me anything. I was passing by one day and saw the store was closed. I asked the neighbors and they said it was closed for two weeks. But she didn't tell me anything. She also had the keys to the bakery. I had to go back to the lawyer and tell him what happened. I went to my lawyer Gyler and he said we'll take her to court. I went to court and she didn't show up and she lost the case.

The judge told me Mr. Levy go break the door and start working again. I didn't want to take it back because I was sure she killed the business and I wasn't sure the customers would come back. But anyway, I had no choice and I went back and I was lucky because I knew where my former employees were working and I called them back. The employees said it would be a pleasure to come back and work for you Levy because you were the best boss we ever had. They all came back to work for me. I tried to revive the business but it was too late and I lost all my wholesale business customers and most of the customers never came back. So I barely made the expenses and there wasn't enough work. I used to work 16 hours a day for nothing—I didn't get paid. That's when I decided to sell it again. However, no one wanted to buy it and operate it as a bakery when they saw the books. I then had no choice but to close it down. I tried to sell it but couldn't find a buyer for one year. I then decided to sell the building and not the business. I emptied everything—had an auction and sold all the equipment for hardly anything just to get rid of it. We were still living in the back of the bakery and I sold the building. The same person that bought the building then wanted to expand and asked me if I was interested in also selling the house. I told him sure, this was around 1998. We sold him the house and moved into the current townhouse The Fountains.

Since I have been retired, Esther and I have enjoyed traveling to all of Europe, including France, Switzerland, Italy, Turkey, Greece, Alaska, Hawaii, Jamaica, Australia, Panama Canal, Canada, Germany and Austria. I have been to Israel six times since moving to America. I currently enjoy going to the gym to do water aerobics. I have many female friends I socialize

with from the gym. We meet for lunch on Wednesdays, and on Tuesdays. On Monday, Wednesday and Friday I go to the gym. On Tuesdays I do errands.

I speak Hebrew, Arabic, French, Spanish, Italian, English and some Yiddish. I enjoy meeting people from different nationalities and speaking to them in their language. I enjoy reading news magazines, and used to have international satellite and watched all the Middle East news, movies and I have a big collection of foreign movies. I also speak at high schools and senior citizen centers, synagogues about my adventures and life experiences in Egypt, Israel and America.

My father passed away at age 56 from prostate cancer, diabetes and high blood pressure. I was in my 30's when he passed away. My father came to Israel in 1954 and he died that same year. My mother died in 1965 from an infection in her leg, she was 66 years old. My brother Felix died from smoking and alcohol, and the same with Sami. Jeannette passed away in 2009, while living in Oklahoma at the age of 84. Maurice is 83 and living in Los Angeles with his wife Clarice and two sons Elie and Schlomo. Rosa is 77 years old, living in Long Beach with her husband Caesar and they have six children, all Israeli born.

