

# The World Beginning Again

by [Judith R. Robinson](#) (June 2026)



The Wedding from 'My Life' (Marc Chagall, 1922-23)

## New Pittsburgh Airport Hosts a Chabad Wedding

I spent most of today, March 18, 2026, struggling to remember the name for the clinging cloth hat women sometimes wear and I wore because I feared being seen bareheaded at the Orthodox Jewish wedding of the Rabbi's daughter at the new Pittsburgh Airport.

It was quite a lot, that event: spectacular: an outdoor canopy (chuppah) shaking in the high winds, a bride and groom who may (or may not have) met before, squeezed together with every relative possible under that chuppah, planes taking off above whenever the snow-whipping winds died down.

I could barely see any of this as there were at least five hundred people there, most of them huddled in front of me at a freezing picture window. But such joy! Such cheer! Mushka and Yisroel, and the repetition of a blessed ancient tradition! The world beginning again! An unlikely but wonderful story to tell the grandchildren someday!

And now, twenty-two hours later, it came to me: I wore a turban.

## **Jew Hill**

My father was born in 1914, the second youngest child of Harry and Dora Ruttenberg, a Jewish immigrant couple. There were six children, three boys and three girls. My father, Milton, was the youngest son, and I think, his mother's favorite, a blessing my grandmother extended into the next generation as well. I was her favorite grandchild, hands down.

Anyway, this story concerns Harry, my father's father, my grandfather, who I remember as an old fellow sitting in a chair across the room from my grandmother, smoking cigars and spitting into a green spittoon. He had very little to say to me or to her. She, however, liked to whisper to me about what a mean man he was. Nonetheless, they were married for 50 + years, and there were the six children.

One day when I was about twelve my father took me for a ride

to see the place he was born and lived the early years of his life. This was in Greene County, the most southwestern part of Pennsylvania, a coal mining area that borders West Virginia. My grandfather had picked this spot to settle and open a general store, after walking about four hundred miles from Ellis Island/New York, peddling matches to farm wives.

Did I mention that on his long trek Grandfather made a stop in Altoona, Pennsylvania, because he had been informed that there were some landsmen living there? Yes, there were, and in addition there was a young woman of marriageable age, a recent arrival from Lithuania herself, who was rather plain but sweet-natured and possessed her own wagon. Grandfather negotiated a deal that somehow included a horse as well, and was able to proceed to Greene County no longer on foot but with a wife, a sturdy horse and a brand new wagon.

This story—the clever, hard-working immigrant peddler who settles down and opens a store—was quite common, in fact became the history of retail business in America. Think of Sears-Roebuck, Gimbels, Neiman-Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue, and Macy's, to name a few. My Grandfather did the same thing but he did not become a merchant king doing it. He did, however, establish a certain notoriety, a certain distinction, even.

The store, Ruttenberg's, opened in competition to the mining company's store. Ruttenberg's beat them out by selling better dry goods, tools, and fresh farm foods at lower prices. Grandfather made money by the fistful. His customers knew him and liked him. Without any rancor, just as an honest shorthand moniker, he was called the Jew. True!

My father assured me this was only because Grandfather was, in fact, Jewish.

It was another time, an era when political correctness could never have been imagined.

Also to my amusement, and the point of this little historical piece, is some geography. Greene County is mountainous. Ruttenberg's stood at the top of considerable elevation.

Take a look, my father said to us on that day we visited. A dusty inclined plane, nothing there but greenery.

What is left is a road sign, and a designation on local maps. [\*]

"Jew Hill," (elevation 1,864 ft) is all that remains.

### **After October 7, 2023**

Layer upon layer    waiting 'til  
the pump that beats  
falls still and    stops.

Give me ground    a stone    a stalk  
a place    firm    enough  
          to    stack

hard Grief  
that swallows wild  
splits the rib cage

open    raw    red  
blood blackens    crusts over the soft core  
where Tikvah used to sit.

Witless Tikvah    spread  
her naiveté    eagerly    as a child  
butters bread.

Hashem if you can hear help me.  
It is hard to stay where  
land blood & eyes are so weary  
so scrutable.

This may be about having had enough.

This may be about wanting  
the world to come.

### **Ah, Faith!**

Orphee's agony coincides  
in mystery in irony in truth  
with the Satmar and Lubovitch—

breathless Jews in black frock coats  
twisting through the hot-baked  
streets of Crown Heights,  
their wives running behind  
dripping sweat under fashion wigs—  
pulling gaggles of kinder  
past the Kundalini Yogis of Soho  
whose gleaming eyes flicker  
whose breath comes  
in deep gasps of ecstasy  
rocking chanting davening swaying  
all of them rooted to the earth  
like ancient conifers  
certain as rain in spring  
that every human hair is counted  
every snowflake a blessed original  
as the glorious universe spins on  
palpably innocent a throb unfolding  
exactly as it is meant to.

## Some Folks

Some folks enjoy  
Taping mice to fireworks  
Constructing planks with nails  
For the roadways.

At the Music of Eurovision  
Some folks don't wish to allow  
The Israeli's to sing.  
One very small swipe  
Since the October massacre  
That unleashed & legitimized  
The gluttonous devour of flesh.

Not enough headless corpses  
To feed the gnawing lust hunger  
For some folks  
From the Netherlands from Ireland  
From Spain from Slovenia  
From Tlaib from Tucker  
They must condemn defiance—

=

That stubborn resistance to erasure by  
Those partisans in tatters  
From the ghettos, from Sobibor, Warsaw, Bialystok.  
From Netanya, Kiryat Shmona, Haifa.

For some folks  
The Jew is most despised  
when fighting back.

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[\*] <https://peakery.com/jew-hill-pennsylvania/>

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**Judith R. Robinson** is an editor, teacher, fiction writer, poet and visual artist. A summa cum laude graduate of the University of Pittsburgh, she is listed in the [Directory of American Poets and Writers](#). She has published 100+ poems, five poetry collections, one fiction collection; one novel; edited or co-edited eleven poetry collections. Her most recent poetry/art collection is [The Painted Poem](#) (Forest Woods Media, 2026).

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