

# The Necessity of Looking Back

Lot's Wife

# Genesis 19:15,17,26

And when the morning rose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying: “Arise, take your wife and your two daughters that are here; lest they be swept away in the iniquity of the city.

Escape for your life; look not behind you, ... lest you be swept away.

But his wife looked back from behind him and she became a pillar of salt.

# Out of Disobedience

- R. Isaac said: She sinned through salt. On the night that the angels visited Lot, Lot said to his wife, 'Give these guests a bit of salt. ' But she replied, '(Besides entertaining guests), is it you're your wish to introduce into Sodom another vile custom (that of seasoning their food)? What did she do? She went around among the neighbors, say to each one, 'Give me salt. We have guests.' Intending thereby to have the townspeople become aware of the presence of guests in her home. Hence, she herself became a pillar of salt.

Gen. R. 51:5



# Tova Beck-Friedman

she has not name  
she is his wife –  
Lot's wife  
she follows him  
it's expected  
as they climb from the valley  
she turns  
to take another look at the life  
she left behind  
--it's not allowed  
it's not allowed to look  
is she curious?

does she miss the home she  
left behind?  
a woman is not allowed  
a woman cannot disobey  
not in the mirror she stares not  
even into her own soul  
- it's not allowed  
erect she stands  
into a pillar of salt she turns  
a curvy statue of salt  
mountains  
head turned to the saw below  
elegant curves whisper  
sounds of eternity

- [Anna Akhmatova](#)

## *Lot's Wife*

And the just man trailed God's shining agent,  
over a black mountain, in his giant track,  
while a restless voice kept harrying his woman:  
"It's not too late, you can still look back

at the red towers of your native Sodom,  
the square where once you sang, the spinning-shed,  
at the empty windows set in the tall house  
where sons and daughters blessed your marriage-bed."

A single glance: a sudden dart of pain  
stitching her eyes before she made a sound . . .  
Her body flaked into transparent salt,  
and her swift legs rooted to the ground.

Who will grieve for this woman? Does she not seem  
too insignificant for our concern?  
Yet in my heart I never will deny her,  
who suffered death because she chose to turn.

# Out of Compassion

- Two married daughters and their husbands remained in the city as did her future sons-in-law. (Gen. R. 50:9) The pity of Idit, the wife of Lot, was stirred for her daughters who were married in Sodom and looked behind her to see if they were coming or not. She saw behind, the Shekhina and she became a pillar of salt.
- Pirkei de'Rabbi Eliezer, Chapter 25



*Marvin Hayes*





*Anselm Kiefer*





*Gerard Hoet 1728*



*Benton Murdoch Spruance 1948*





*Diane Victor 2008*

And Lot's wife, of course, was told not to look back where all those people and their homes had been. But she did look back, and I love her for that, because it was so human. So she was turned into a pillar of salt. So it goes.

Kurt Vonnegut

## Who Do We Need Her to Be

...they would have found her...

Found her, that is, not as the person she was/  
but as whom they needed her to be, and, man and woman,  
each of them would have wanted a piece of her  
Standing in that wasted landscape,/   
she must have seemed a statue erected there  
a tribute to human frailty, white crystallized,  
her head turned back as if in longing to be the girl/  
she had been in the city she had known.

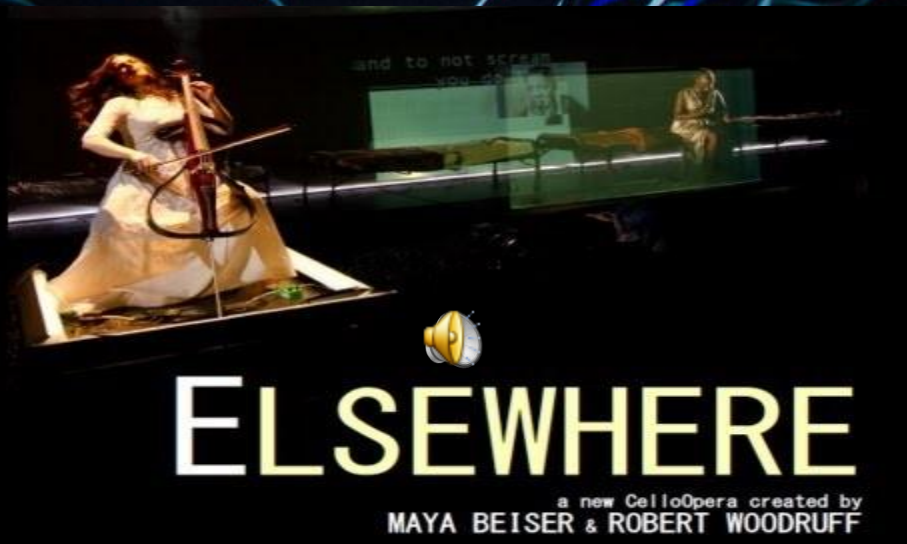
And they must have stood there as we do,  
a bit awestruck, taking her in for a time,/   
and then, with chisel and knife, spike and buckle,  
chopped at her violently and stuffed their leathern  
pouches full of her common salt, salt with which  
to season for a while their meat, their daily bread.

Gary Whitehead

# How Do We Remember

Rolling her name around on our tongue  
we make life savory,  
cure a little,  
preserve what we thought  
was forgotten. If we love her  
it will be with a sprinkling of salt  
on the challah, with tears, dark earth  
and a dusty taste in our mouths.

—Robin Cohn



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# A Blessing Over a Miracle

If one sees the place of the crossing of the sea or the throne on which Moses sat then Joshua fought with Amalek ... or the wall of Jericho which sank to the ground or the pillar of salt of Lot's wife... for all these one should give thanksgiving and praise to God.

- Berakhot 54a & b