

Shaken & Stirred: A Jewish Reading of James Bond

SKYFALL



SPECTRE



Introduction

- Longest-running film franchise; \$\$\$; mere escapism?
- World's most-famous spy; cult status; a modern myth...

“Throughout the inhabited world, in all times and under every circumstance, the myths of man have flourished; and they have been the living inspiration of whatever else may have appeared out of the activities of the human body and mind. It would not be too much to say that myth is the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into human cultural manifestation. Religions, philosophies, arts, the social

forms of primitive and historic man, prime discoveries in science and technology, the very dreams that blister sleep, boil up from the basic, magic ring of myth.

The wonder is that the characteristic efficacy to touch and inspire deep creative centres dwells in the smallest nursery fairy tale – as the flavour of the ocean is contained in a droplet... “

(Joseph Campbell,

The Hero with a Thousand Faces, 1949)

Nobody Does it Better



Ian Fleming (1908-1964) - English author, journalist and WWII naval intelligence officer. First Bond novel: *Casino Royale*, 1952. First film: *Dr No* (1962)

Lieutenant **Sidney Reilly**, MC (1873-1925), famously known as the ‘Ace of Spies’, was a Jewish Russian-born adventurer and secret agent employed by Scotland Yard, the British Secret Service Bureau and later the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS). He is alleged to have spied for at least four nations. Born **Shlomo**

Rosenblum, his notoriety during the 1920s was created in part by his friend, British diplomat and journalist Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, who publicised their thwarted operation to overthrow the Bolshevik regime in 1918. After Reilly’s death, the *London Evening Standard* published in 1931 a *Master Spy* serial imparting his exploits. Later, Ian Fleming would use Reilly as a model for James Bond. Many consider Reilly to be the first 20th century super-spy. Reilly was a master of deception, and most of his life is shrouded in legend.



To proceed, we need to appreciate MIDRASH, a huge genre of rabbinic literature (1st-11th C.)

- *Midrash* מדרש - Verb *lidrosh* לדרוש, which means ‘to search, examine, investigate’ (c.f. Genesis.25:22, Leviticus.10:16 & Deuteronomy 13:15)
- *Agadah* אגדה – Verb is *l’agod* לאגוד, i.e. ‘to tie together’, ‘to make connections’

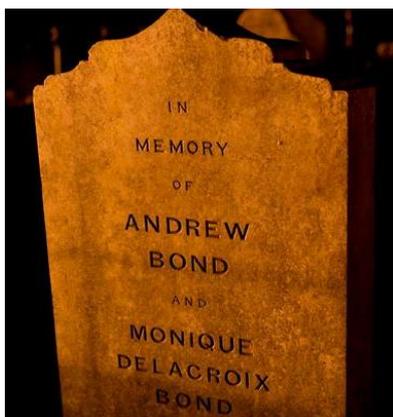
Midrash – Sifrei Devarim 49

Do you want to get to know ‘the One who spoke and so created the world’? Then study *aggadah*, for through this you will get to know the One who spoke and so created the world, and cling to His Ways.

“The midrash found in the Talmud is not to be regarded as unimportant and insignificant. Much wisdom resides there. For one thing, it includes marvellous riddles and wondrous, delightful tales. More than that, if you ponder them intelligently, you will find there truths of unsurpassed worth...”

(Commentary on Mishnah, Maimonides)

- 007 *Sheva*, שבוע (= *Sova*, complete, perfect).
- 7s in Judaism: Creation; Shabbat; Menorah; Shmittah, Israeli species, *Brit*, Marriage, Mourning; Qabbalistic Sefirot.



SKYFALL (2012) – An origin story...

*“This is the end, Hold your breath and count to ten,
Feel the earth move and then, Hear my heart burst again,
For this is the end, I've drowned and dreamt this moment,
So overdue I owe them, Swept away I'm stolen,
Let the skyfall, when it crumbles, we will stand tall,
and face it all together... at Skyfall...”*

*Where you go I go, What you see I see, I know I'd never
be me, without the security [בטחון], of your loving arms,
keeping me from harm...”* (Skyfall theme song, Adele)

SKYFALL – A tale of two brothers...

Genesis 27:36 And Esau said: That’s why he is named Jacob (James)! because he’s **deceived me** twice now: he took my birthright; and now he has taken my blessing!

[NOTE: לעקוב *la'akov*: ‘to follow, spy on’; עקב *akav*: ‘detective’]

Genesis 32:28-29 And the Angel/Man said to him, ‘What’s your name?’ And he said, ‘Jacob’. And he said, ‘Your name shall be no more be Jacob, but **Israel**; for you have **fought** with God and with men, and **you’ve won**.

Genesis 25:30 And Esau (Tiago Rodriguez) said:
...I’m tired! [Rashi 25:29 ‘of killing’]

Genesis 28:5 Isaac sent Jacob away; and he went to Paddan-Aram to Laban, son of Betuel, the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, **the mother of Jacob and Esau**.

מדרש – ספרי דברים מט
רצונך שתכיר מי שאמר והיה
העולם? - למוד הגדה! שמתוך
כך אתה מכיר מי שאמר והיה
העולם, ומדבק בדרכיו.

“Whoever sees in Aggadah mind games or intellectual ornamentation does violence to its essence and squanders its riches... To find the true meaning of Aggadah, search deeply into each interpretation. You will find there struggles, worries, and yearnings, eternal problems and contemporary questions...”

(Heavenly Torah, A.J. Heschel, p.2-3,7)

וַיֹּאמֶר הַכִּי קָרָא שְׁמוֹ
יַעֲקֹב וַיַּעֲקֹבֵנִי זֶה פְעַמִּים
אֶת בְּכֹרְתִי לָקַח וְהִנֵּה עֲתָה
לָקַח בְּרִכְתִּי

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו מַה שְׁמֶךָ וַיֹּאמֶר
יַעֲקֹב: וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא יַעֲקֹב
יֵאמָר עוֹד שְׁמֶךָ כִּי אִם
יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי שָׂרִיתָ עִם אֱלֹקִים
וְעִם אַנְשִׁים וַתֻּכַּל

וַיֹּאמֶר עָשׂוּ אֵל יַעֲקֹב...
עָנָה אָנֹכִי (רש"י: בְּרַצְיָהָה)

וַיִּשְׁלַח יַצְחָק אֶת יַעֲקֹב וַיֵּלֶךְ פָּדָן אֲרָם
אֵל לָבָן בֶּן בְּתוּאֵל הָאֲרָמִי אַחֵי רֵבְקָה אִם
יַעֲקֹב וְעָשׂוּ: [רש"י: אִם יַעֲקֹב וְעָשׂוּ -
איני יודע מה מלמדנו:]

Context:	Birthing Pool One (Seder: Dip 1)	Birthing Pool Two (Seder: Dip 2)
SKYFALL:	M: 'Take the shot' (waterfall)	M: 'What took you so long?' (lake)
Ya'akov - Yisrael	Birth canal fight (Genesis 25:26)	Fight across Yabok (Genesis 32:23)
Moshe:	Nile - Almost drowned as a child	Red Sea – He makes it split
Bnei Yisrael:	Red Sea - Leaving Egypt	Jordan – Crossing into Israel
Hallel: Psalm 114	הַיָּם רָאָה וַיָּנֶס	הַיַּרְדֵּן יָסַב לְאַחֹר

The gradual establishment of the BRIT בְּרִית, the 'Covenantal Bond':

- Beginnings: Two nations in Rebekah's womb (Genesis 25:22-23)
- Desire & Commitment: Jacob's relationships with his wives: (the kiss - Genesis 29:10-11; *dudaim* - 30:14-16; Boys names - chp.30)
- Renamed twice: 2nd time after Mother Rivka's death (Genesis 35:6-13 + Rashi)

***The Fighting Temeraire tugged to her last berth to be broken up, 1838*
by J.M.W. Turner**

Q: It always makes me feel a bit melancholy. Grand old war ship. being ignominiously hauled away to scrap... The inevitability of time, don't you think? What do you see?

Bond: A bloody big ship.



M: We are not now that strength which in old days moved earth and heaven;
That which we are, we are; One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will.
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield. (*Ulysses*, Tennyson)



Life & Death: You Only Live Twice • Live and Let Die • Licence to Kill • Die Another Day
'May their soul be bound in the bond of life' תהיה נשמתו צרורה בצרור החיים - ת.נ.צ.ב.ה
M's last words: 'I did one thing right.' – Evokes what Abigail said to David...

Talmud – Shabbat 152b Rabbi Eliezer said: The souls of the righteous are hidden under the Throne of Glory, as it says, *"the life of my lord will be bound up in the bond of life"* (Samuel 1 25:29).

תלמוד - שבת קנב: תניא רבי אליעזר אומר נשמתן של צדיקים גנוזות תחת כסא הכבוד שנאמר, *"וְהָיְתָה נַפְשׁ אֲדֹנָי צְרוּרָה בְּצִרוּר הַחַיִּים"* (שמואל א כה: כט).

From M to Mossad



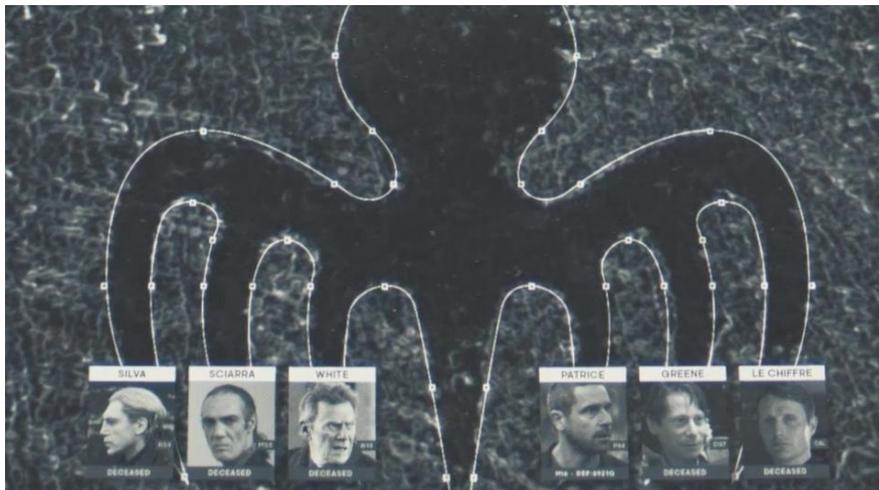
Israel's national intelligence agency set up in 1949. Full name: *HaMossad leModi'in u'le'Tafkidim Meyuchadim* מוסד למודיעין ולתפקידים מיוחדים meaning, *"The Institute for Intelligence and Special Operations"*. The emblem of the Mossad is the Menorah [7] with a verse: *"Without strategies the nation will fall, but there is salvation in much council."* (Proverbs 11:14)

SPECTRE (2015): Special Executive for Counter-intelligence, Revenge & Extortion

- Central 'death' theme: 'The Day of the Dead'.
I.e. Halloween: When the Dead Return to Us.

The dead are alive

Like *Sukkot*. Life/Death: Welcome back dead 'guests' into our Sukkah: *Ushpizin*.



R to L:

Le Chiffre
Dominic Green

Patrice

Mr White

Marco Sciarra

Raoul Silva

ALL DECEASED

(*The Anti-Ushpizin*)

End: Bond in burnt out MI6 building (symbol of good): This is a weakened *Sukkah* of protection; and the net Bond falls into is like *schach*. We see dead loved ones as mugshots on the wall: Vesper Lynd, Rene Mathis, M = *Ushpizin* "A million shards of glass haunt me from the past." (theme song)

- Spectre: Ring of Myth. 7 legs (Octopus 8) [Bond/band/bind]
- The Pale King, Mr White, symbolises לָבָן *Laban*...
Jacob loved his daughter, *Rachel* i.e. Madeleine Swann.
- Franz Oberhauser = Ernst Stavro Blofeld: Bond's nemesis.
He's Esau (again) = Edom/Amalek, Israel's Nemesis. [Drill: tries to erase memory]
So Blofeld is the return of Esau year's later – "the architect of all your pain".
In Torah, the Edomite Kings preceded Israelite kings (Genesis 36:31).
- Writing on the Wall: Belshazzar's Feast (Daniel ch.5) = A warning: 'You're next!'
- Jacob's Ladders: helicopter up/down; plane up/down; MI6 Buildings: up/down
- Jacob survives encounter with Esau: "You go ahead, I'll go slowly with pace of work and family." (Genesis 33:14). Rashi: ומדרשי אגדה יש לפרשה זו רבים...
"Finish it!" demands Bloefeld, but Bond says, "I've got something better to do" and walks to Swann (love, life, family). Ultimate rejection of Evil & Deathwish.
- Jacob/Bond is finally free – From DEATH to LIFE. So what next?



Genesis 33:16-17 So Esau returned that day to his path to Seir. And Jacob journeyed to Sukkot, and built himself a house, and made booths (*Sukkot*) for his cattle; therefore the name of the place is called **Sukkot**.

וַיָּשָׁב בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא עֵשָׂו לְדֶרֶכוֹ שְׁעִירָה: וַיַּעֲקֹב נָסַע סִבְתָּהּ וַיִּבֶן לָהּ בָּיִת וַלְמִקְנָהּוּ עָשָׂה סִבֵּת עַל-כֵּן קָרָא שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם סִבּוֹת:

- Live *Ushpizin*: Madeleine Swann, Moneypenny, M, BOND, Q, Bill Tanner, Felix Leiter
- Amazingly, SKYFALL [7] to SPECTRE [7] reflects: *Toldot* to *Vayetze* to *Vayishlach*