

## Book Review

Reviewed by Merle Carrus

### Hope Valley, by Haviva Ner-David

I grew up during the 1960s and early '70s sitting at family dinners with relatives who were Holocaust survivors. By high school, I was a proud Zionist and marched in New York City in an Israel Day parade chanting "Never Again." I thought my understanding of what was happening in Israel was the only story. We took pride in the strength of the Israeli army to win the 6 Day War and the Yom Kippur War. We thought the Jews were right in taking land and pushing Palestinians out all the way back to 1948.

Well, as time has gone on, and we are learning more of our history all the time, reading both nonfiction and fiction stories can offer other opinions and different interpretations of the events of Israel's history.

In *Hope Valley*, a novel set in northern Israel near the Galilee, author Haviva Ner-David explores the history of the land from both an Israeli point of view and a Palestinian perspective. Beautifully written, this novel finds a unique way of showing us both sides of the story.

We meet Tikvah, a woman who followed her Zionist dream from Long Is-

land, NY to make aliyah to Israel and marry Alon, a displaced Israeli who becomes an officer in the Israeli army. We also are introduced to Ruby, or Rabia, her Palestinian name. She was born in the settlement of Yakut al-Jalil a stone's throw away from the village her father grew up in. After the War of Independence, or as the Arabs called it the Catastrophe, her father had romanticized the area for Ruby, until she left the country to find herself and become an artist. Ruby has come home for the medical treatments she needs to fight cancer.

Tikvah, Alon and their daughter, Talya, moved to the moshav that developed after Ruby's father's family and their neighbors were evacuated from their village. Moshav Sapir is where Tikvah and Alon have come to create a safe and secure world for themselves after the tragedies and difficulties in their lives.

The two women, one Jewish Israeli and one Palestinian Israeli, seem worlds apart, but they build a friendship as they are both artists and are dealing with disease. Their accidental, casual encounter leads to a strong friendship that helps

them both. They build a connection worrying about the fragility of life and remnants of trauma. Meeting in the valley between their opposing villages at the beginning of the second intifada, they ignore the hatred on both sides. They share their personal stories and offer the reader hope that getting to know an individual can change the course of the Israeli Palestinian divide.

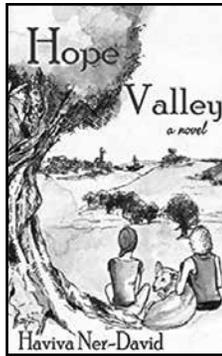
A wonderfully expressive novel written from the perspectives of three characters, Tikvah, Ruby, and Jamal (Ruby's father). We read Jamal's diary to give us the background story to the history of the Jewish Palestinian interactions that leads to Tikvah and Ruby's friendship. With incredible quotes like, "Open your mouth only if what you are going to say is more beautiful than silence." What a perfect concept.

Another theory to contemplate is Ruby explaining to Tikvah, "It's when you stop trying to swim against the current and just let it carry you, instead. It's about learning to surrender to the flow instead of trying to grab on to rocks along the way. Because in the end, you won't be able to hold on forever. Rocks are slippery, and no one has endless strength. Nothing is permanent."

Haviva Ner David's characters find

their way into the reader's heart. Each of the women seems to really believe in their versions of the history of the area, and it takes the love that is developing between them to keep them open to seeing that maybe the other person's story may have some credibility. This can give the reader hope that there is hope for the future of Israel to reach peace someday with the Palestinians, if everyone can just really hear what the other side is saying and want to make peace.

Rabbi Dr. Haviva Ner-David is a rabbi and writer. She is the rabbinic founder of Shmaya: A Mikveh for Mind, Body, and Soul, the only mikveh in Israel open to all to immerse as they choose. She is the author of two spiritual journey memoirs: *Chanah's Voice: A Rabbi Wrestles with Gender, Commandment, and the Women's Rituals of Baking, Bathing, and Brightening*, and *Life on the Fringes: A Feminist Journey Towards Traditional Rabbinic Ordination*, which was a runner-up for the National Jewish Book Council Awards. Ordained as both a rabbi and an inter-faith minister, certified as a spiritual counselor (with a specialty in dream work), she also has a doctorate on mikveh from Bar Ilan University. She lives on Kibbutz Hannaton with her husband and seven children.



## Film Review

By Zach Camenker

### Chai Flicks, for admirers of Jewish and Israeli films and television

If you're like me and have begun to switch your TV services to an entirely streaming-based platform, then you'll love the fact that Chai Flicks, a streaming service designed for admirers of Jewish and Israeli films and television shows, is available on multiple smart devices.

Chai Flicks was launched about a year ago by the duo behind Menemsha Films, a Jewish-themed distributor that has produced many of the films we have screened over the years at the New Hampshire Jewish Film Festival. It is currently available for a 7-day free trial and then at the low cost of \$5.99 a month or \$49.50 for the year.

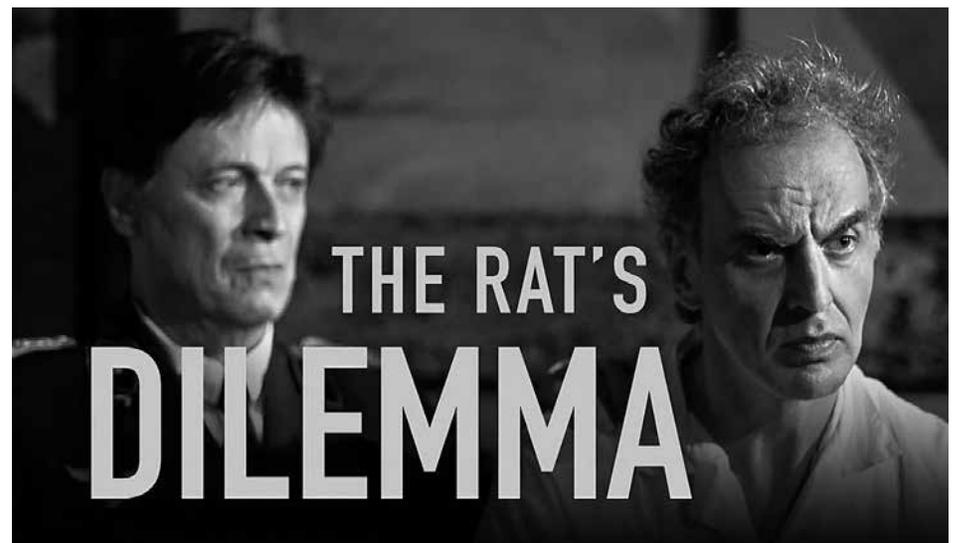
If you do not have access to Chai Flicks but are an Amazon Prime subscriber, you'll be happy to know that



many of the titles are available on Prime by typing "Menemsha Films" into the search bar. One perk of Chai Flicks, however, is the access to short films which are not as readily available on other platforms. If you're

a fan of shorts like I am, then Chai Flicks is definitely for you! I watched an Israeli short called *The Rat's Dilemma* and a documentary short called *Joe's Violin*.

*The Rat's Dilemma* blends styles and genres to tell the intriguing story of a Jewish physicist named Rudolph who is tasked with building a teleporter for the Nazis during the Holocaust. A sobering and amusing mix of historical and science fiction, the film runs at just 11 minutes but focuses intently on provocative themes and ideas that make us



*The Rat's Dilemma* (2014)

question humanity. As Rudolph works alongside his Nazi supervisor, who suspects he is hiding something, he truly

faces a major challenge that leaves the audience wondering the outcome.

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