

April, 2024

I believed I was as American as Apple Pie,

loyal to the Yankees and in awe of

Benjamin Franklin, his lightening rod, his fight
for Independence,

On good days, the shtetl would rise in me with pride.

My mother born west of Kiev, father from another town
where roosters roamed the dirt roads.

Her sisters were let to a pit outside of town,
their Ukranian neighbor a new owner of the family candlesticks.

My father boarded a ship
to escape hunger and pogroms. In this country.

he stood awed
by a table spread with food.

He flew to celebrate the birth of his grandson,
born at an American university. Years later, hovered over
his graduation, lux et veritas in tiny print,
Nathan Hale, class of 1773.

Education our deliverance out of Egypt, our
escape from bondage.

Passover brought out the shtetl in me. I loved
helzel, the stuffed neck of a chicken my mother made,
the singing of Dayenu. It was enough, we believed.
We'd wandered in the desert for forty years
for a reason.
This year an alarm rings loud and clear.
Students at universities spew venom
from the river to the sea,
the ringing in our ears shrill, the trail of suffering real.
We are who we did not think we were anymore,
damn Jews.