

ELEVEN ARE THE STARS
BY RABBI ZOË KLEIN MILES

In the Pesach song, "Who Knows One," when it comes to eleven, the verse is:

אחד עשר כוכביא
Eleven are the stars.

The stars in the song refer to the stars in Joseph's dream. But now, for us, eleven are the stars, these are our beloveds: Joyce Feinberg, Richard Gottfried, Rose Mallinger, Jerry Rabinowitz, Cecil Rosenthal, David Rosenthal, Bernice Simon, Sylvan Simon, Daniel Stein, Irving Younger, and Melvin Wax.

Who knows eleven? We know eleven. Eleven are the stars. Our Sabbath stars.

Shabbat begins with two individual candles, reminding us to observe and remember. Shabbat closes with one candle of many wicks, braided together. Each of our stars, individually, are an entire world. Beautiful, complex, unique, sacred. As it is written in our Talmud, "Whoever destroys a soul, it is considered as if he destroyed an entire world." (Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 37a). Each of our stars, their light comes together, intertwined like the wicks of the Havdalah candle, a bright torch that dispells the darkness. We lift it high with song and blessing.

They are our stars, our light.

Proverbs 20:27 reads: The soul of a person is the candle of God.

Their souls sparkle in the Shabbat candles, in the Havdallah candles, in the shamash that ignites the Hanukkiyah, in the dancing flame of the Yizkor candle. Eleven are the stars.

Let their light shine forever. Let their light decorate the heavens. Let their light steer the ships, guide the troops, chart the wanderers, dispel the gloom, orient the dreamers, bless the living, and infuse the breathing with courage and trust and wonder.

Who knows eleven? We know eleven. Eleven are the stars.

A constellation of beauty and love.