

When
God
Yelled
at Me

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When God yelled at me
shaking his fist from the bima
up to the women's gallery,
where I leaned forward,
I laughed—half-falling
over the railing
that marked sacred
from profane, man from woman,
Chagall's floating city
from our earthbound
snotty kids, screaming babies,
Nana Mazal weeping, girls giggling,
ladies gossiping—
when God glared at me,
my laughter coiled
like a snake,
hurtled through the air
and bit him

on the tongue.
The women gasped,
pulled me back. I tore away:
had to see. His tongue was swelling,
like a bee sting—vast, filling
the shul. The men bobbed
and swayed, muttered prayers—
didn't see his tongue
mushrooming—
bread dough left too long,
rising and foaming.

The women watched
the men sink and drown
in a sea of dough.
God's tongue billowed
towards us, but Nana Mazal took
her sewing scissors
and cut. We watched it sag,
deflate, disappear
with a burp.

The men rose,
still praying and mumbling.
They didn't look back at us.
And with a jerk
of his shoulders,
God left the room—
without a word.
His mother should have
taught him better.