



# Kirk Douglas, Hollywood Golden era Leading man Has Died



*Kirk Douglas eats up the scenery in Ace in the Hole (1951)*

*This Week's Torah Beshalach*

 *Candle lighting - 4:27 pm*

## In this week's Scroll

***Kirk Douglas, Hollywood Golden Era Leading man  
Has Died***

***Simon Says - B'shalach***

***Shabbat Services, Kiddush, & CAS News***

**K**irk Douglas, the iconic actor of the 40's & 50's, has died. Douglas, 103 died at his Beverly Hills home on

**To Succeed at Anything, You Must Be Brave Enough To fail**



Wednesday. Douglas known for such films as *The Bad and the Beautiful*, *Paths to Glory*, *Champion*, *Spartacus*, and many more classic movies was one of a hand full of powerhouse actors who dominated the screen during the latter part of Hollywood's Golden Age.

With his muscular physique, Cleft-chin, piercing stare, mischievous smile, and gravelly voice, Douglas graced the screen in nearly 90 feature films over his illustrious 62-year career; usually portraying the charming scoundrel. Born, Issur Danielovitch Demsky on December 9, 1916, in Amsterdam, New York to Jewish Immigrants, Herschel and Bryna Danielovitch, Douglas, raised poor and saddled with an alcoholic father, was an excellent student and stellar athlete. He was drawn to acting while still a teenager. Douglas attended Saint Lawrence University on an athletic scholarship; but, longed to act. Douglas was soon received a scholarship to the American Academy of Dramatic Arts; where he attended class with fellow future Hollywood icon, Lauren Bacall.

Reportedly, when choosing his stage name, Issur choose Douglas because it started with a 'D' like his birth name; he settled on Kirk because he liked the hard 'K' sound and Kirk Douglas was born.

In 1941 Douglas joined the U. S. Navy. During WWII, he was assigned to hunt down and destroy Japanese submarines He was troubled by his time in the service; writing in his personal blog he said, "In the Pacific, our assignment was looking for Japanese submarines. It bothered me to imagine young Japanese sailors deep in the ocean crowded on a submarine. They were looking to kill us; we were looking to kill them. I wondered if they felt any of the reluctance that I felt. My consolation was that I was better off than an army soldier having personal contact with the enemy. But

it's a strange experience from the war that still haunts me."

After the war Douglas returned to the stage, within a year he would be on the silver screen. Based on a suggestion by Bacall, Movie producer, Hal B. Wallis tested and awarded Douglas a leading role in the film Noir Classic, *The Strange Love of Martha Ivers*, (1946) opposite Barbara Stanwyck, Van Heflin and Elizabeth Scott. Douglas received good reviews for his first film role. He received additional accolades on his next film, another Hal B. Wallis production, *I Walk Alone* (1947) opposite Burt Lancaster and Liz Scott. Lancaster and Douglas would become lifetime friends and co-star in seven films. In *Out of the Past* (1947) Douglas played bigtime gambler, Whit Sterling, who has unfinished business with former detective Jeff Markham (Robert Mitchum.) Douglas so skillfully interweaves charm with menace he almost walks away with the film.

But it was the 1949 film *Champion* that made Douglas a bona fide star. He received rave reviews and an Oscar nomination. In *Champion* Douglas plays Midge Kelly a soulless opportunist boxer who eschews any

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semblance of decency as he rises up the latter; cheating on his wife Emma, (Ruth Roman) double-crossing his manager Haley, (Paul Stewart) and even betraying his brother, Connie (Arthur Kennedy.)

Three years later, Douglas earned another Oscar nomination for the role of Jonathan Shields, a charming; but unscrupulous movie producer in the movie *The Bad and the Beautiful*.

In 1956 he was nominated a third time, for his riveting depiction of artist Vincent van Gogh in the MGM production of *Lust for Life*.

In 1955 Douglas formed his own production company Bryna Productions (named after his mother) that turned out two epic films. Fueled by his personal experiences and feelings about war, *Paths of Glory* (1957) features Douglas as Colonel Dax, a French Officer who is forced to defend his men after they refuse a suicide mission to take a hill held by the Germans during WWI. Ordered to take the hill by a glory mad general, Colonel Dax, understands it's essentially a suicide mission; but, is trained to follow orders. However, the futility of the mission becomes all too obvious to the men under fire and some fall back. Embarrassed by the mission's failure, General George Broulard orders the trial of three of Dax's soldiers over their cowardice and Dax must defend them even at the risk of his own military career.

The second film released by Bryna Productions was the larger-than-life *Spartacus* (1960) starring Douglas as Spartacus, a Thracian slave sent to Gladiator school to train and learn to fight to the death for the entertainment and pleasure of Roman citizenry. But the students led by Spartacus revolt, escape the school

and form a ragtag army of former slaves that numbers in the thousands and wreak havoc on the Roman army as they try to escape to freedom.

Bryna Productions would make 18 more films between 1955 and 1986, with six more produced by Bryna subsidiary Joel Productions.

While *Spartacus* may have been Douglas' last big splash, many more magnificent performances lay in Kirk Douglas' future.

In 1962 Douglas starred as John W. "Jack" Burns, a solitary fiercely independent modern day cowboy in *Lonely Are the Brave*. Upon hearing his old friend Paul Bondi (Michael Kane) has been jailed, Burns sets out to get himself arrested, with the intention of both escaping. Once jailed Burns discovers Bondi has no interest in escaping. He escapes with two other inmates and heads for the Mexican border with the law in hot pursuit.

- *Lonely Are the Brave* remained Douglas' favorite film.
  - Kirk Douglas starred in many other memorable films during his long career including:
    - *In Harm's Way* (1965) with John Wayne
    - *Cast a Giant Shadow* (1966) with Angie Dickinson and Senta Berger
    - *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* (1957) with Burt Lancaster and Rhonda Fleming, and John Ireland
    - *The War Wagon* (1967) with John Wayne
    - *The Man from Snowy River* (1982) with Tom Burlinson
    - *Tough Guys* (1986) with Burt Lancaster
- Nominated three times, Douglas never won a competitive Oscar; however, in 1996 he received a lifetime achievement award from the American Film Institute and an honorary Golden Globes Award.



Douglas survived a series of close calls during his lifetime. In 1958 he narrowly avoided catastrophe when his wife convinced him to decline a private jet ride with producer Michael Todd (Elizabeth Taylor's third husband,) the jet crashed killing all on board.

In 1991 Douglas survived a mid-air collision when the helicopter carrying him flew into the path of a small plane; Douglas was injured; both people on the plane were killed when it exploded in mid-air. Recalling that tragic day Douglas said it "forever changed" his life, it also led him to reconnect with his Judaism.

In his autobiography *The Ragman's Son*, Douglas wrote, "years back, I tried to forget that I was a Jew," but acknowledged, later in his career he began "coming to grips with what it means to be a Jew,"

In 1996 Douglas suffered a debilitating stroke that affected his ability to speak. For an actor whose stock and trade had long been a sharp wit coupled with a sharp tongue it was devastating; but, Douglas had been a fighter his entire life and after a few bouts with depression he was back in the fight. A few months later he was back on stage accepting an honorary Oscar for lifetime achievement. Eventually Douglas regained his ability to speak, albeit with a slight slur.

Douglas was married twice, he married, Diana Dill in 1943. They had two sons, actor Michael Douglas and producer, Joel Douglas. They divorced in 1951. Three years later he married producer, Anne Buydens. This marriage also produced two sons, television

producer, Peter Douglas and actor, Eric Douglas (Eric Douglas died in 2004.)

Despite the long string of ruthless characters he played during his career, Kirk Douglas was a great humanitarian. In 1964 he and wife, Ann sold their art collection and donated the proceeds to several charitable projects including; The Anne Douglas Center for Homeless Women; Harry's Haven, named after Kirk's father, at the Motion Picture & Television Fund's Alzheimer's Unit; and the building of 350 playgrounds for children in the Los Angeles School District. There is also the Kirk Douglas Fellowship which awards 2-year scholarships at the American Film Institute.

The Douglas Foundation, founded by Kirk and Ann Douglas, has donated over 100 million dollars to numerous charitable causes over the years.

He also defied Hollywood's notorious "Black List" by hiring screenwriter, Dalton Trumbo to work on his 1960 film *Spartacus* and gave him screen credit (he also tapped Trumbo's skills for *Lonely Are the Brave* 1962.) In 1981 He was awarded the the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Jimmy Carter.

In addition to his other achievements, Douglas was a prolific writer and author of 11 books.

Kirk Douglas is survived by his wife Ann, sons, Michael Douglas, Joel Douglas, Peter Douglas, seven grandchildren, and his sister a sister, Ida Sahr. ✨



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# SIMON

# SAYS

## Thought Provoking Insights from Rabbi Simon Rosenbach



*Rabbi Simon Rosenbach*

**T**his week's Torah portion is called B'shalach. The Hebrew verb "shalach," among other things, "to send," or "to drive out." JPS translates the opening words of the Parashah, "va-y'hi b'shalach paro," as, "Now, when

Pharaoh let the people go." Robert Alter translates as, "And it happened when Pharaoh sent the people off." Everett Fox (who incidentally was the scholarly consultant to the movie, "The Prince of Egypt") translates the opening words as, "Now it was, when Pharaoh had sent the people free." So, the Israelites did not up and leave; they were sent by Pharaoh.

Later in the Parashah, we read, "vayugad I-melech mitzrayim ki varach ha-am va-yeihafeich I-vav [when the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled he changed his mind]." So I am confused: Pharaoh needed to be told the people had fled after Pharaoh drove them out?

The medieval commentators resolve the inconsistency by explaining that Moses all along proposed a three-day sojourn in the wilderness to worship God. When the Israelites did not return after three days, Pharaoh and his advisors knew that the Israelites had no intention to return.

The Torah is ambiguous. Pharaoh summons Moses and Aaron after the Tenth Plague and says to them, "Arise, go out from amidst my people, even you, even the Children of Israel, Go, serve Y-H-W-H according to your words, even your sheep, even your

oxen, take, as you have spoken, and go!" (Everett Fox translation). "According to your words" may have the meaning of "three days in the wilderness," which Moses mentioned a number of times, but the verb "shalach" is the same verb that is used when the Torah contemplates divorce: "v-shilchah mi-beito [and sends her from his house]." (Deut. 24:4)

It is possible that Pharaoh told Moses to lead the Israelites to spend three days in the desert and then return. The Torah indeed says, "What have we done, that we sent Israel from our service," intimating the Egyptians wanted the Israelites captured and

returned to a state of slavery. But after the killing of the first-born, who would want the Israelites to return to a state of slavery? What would the 11th Plague be, or the 12th Plague? What could be worse than the killing of the first-born? Pharaoh sending his army to capture the Israelites is Pharaoh thinking emotionally, not rationally.

Moses may have deceived Pharaoh, by telling him that the Israelites wanted to camp in the desert for three days to worship God, but God and Moses were always clear to each other: the Israelites were destined to leave Egypt permanently. ✡





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