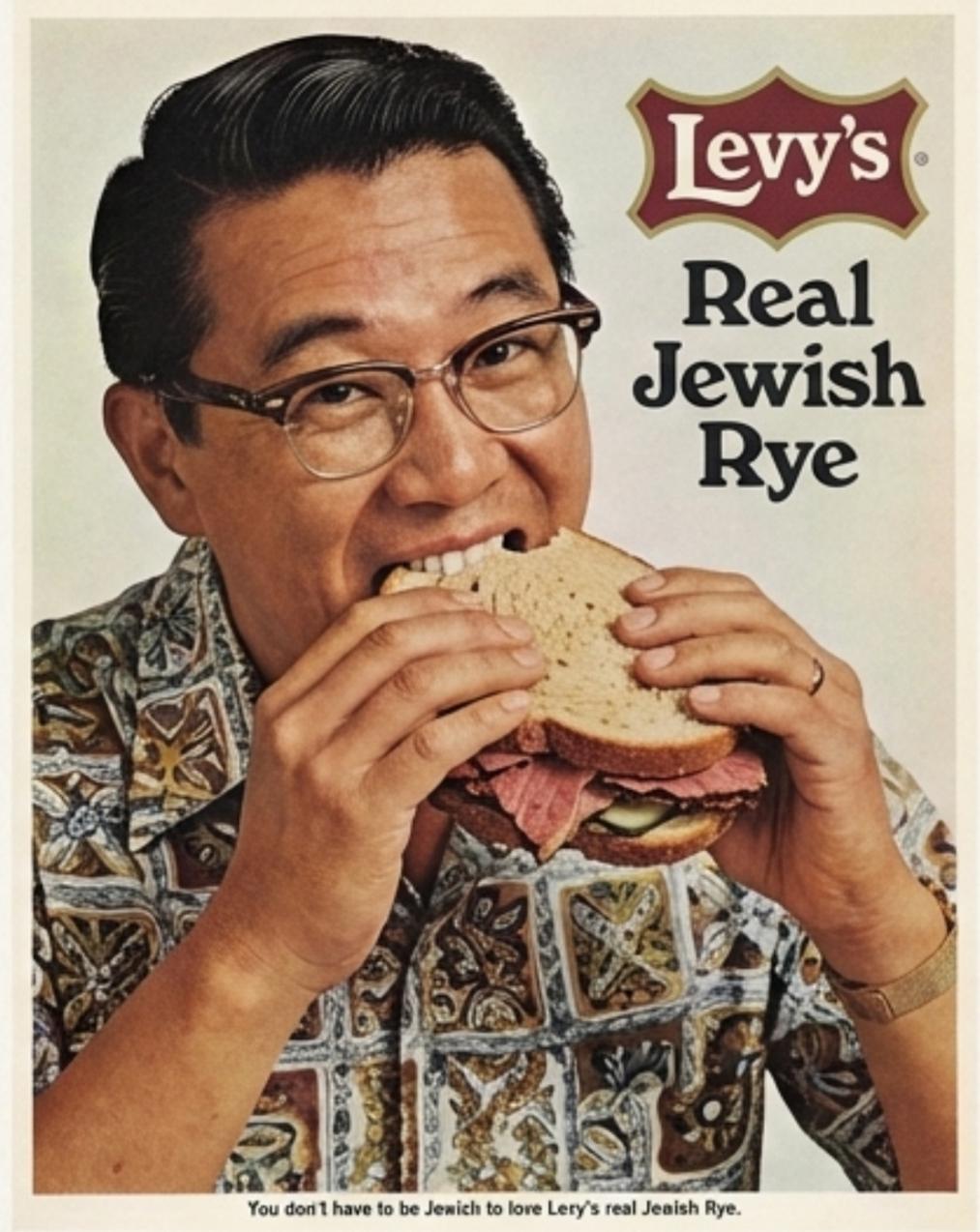


# What makes a photograph 'Jewish'?



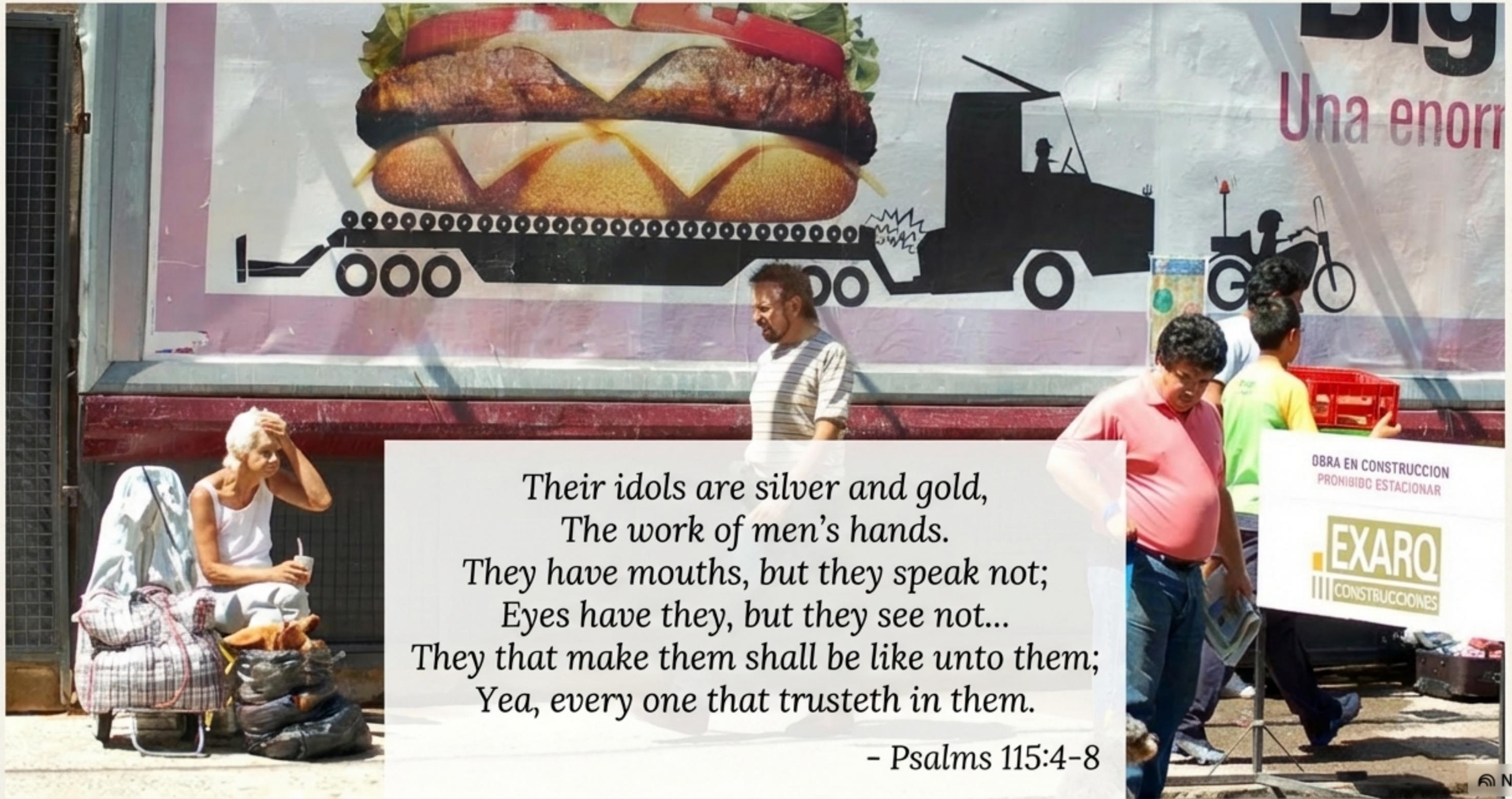
*Is it about traditional subjects and ritual items?*



*Or can it be something else entirely?*

**You don't have to be Jewish  
to love Levy's real Jewish Rye.**

# Our eyes are open, but are we truly seeing?



*Their idols are silver and gold,  
The work of men's hands.  
They have mouths, but they speak not;  
Eyes have they, but they see not...  
They that make them shall be like unto them;  
Yea, every one that trusteth in them.*

*- Psalms 115:4-8*

# We need a broader lens.

In 1984, the Seminar in Jewish Art defined it as “art that reflects the Jewish experience.” Vivian B. Mann elaborated,

Vivian B. Mann elaborated, stating it is “not a unified corpus, but a diversified body... in a state of continuous evolution.”

**Jewish Photography: Photography that reflects the Jewish experience.**

# Jewish life is not static; it is a dynamic, creative, evolving process.

*“Judaism views life as a dynamic, creative, evolving process... life is the very opposite of being static... This is the very Jewish view of life – change, with continuity, but always active, creative change.” - Ya'akov Agam*

Like these two Amazon rivers, Judaism teaches that life is a tension between fundamental opposites:

- The sacred (*Kodesh*) and the profane (*Hol*)
- Good inclinations (*Yetzer Tov*) and evil inclinations (*Yetzer HaRa*)
- Fixed prayer (*Keva*) and spontaneous intention (*Kavana*)



# Seeing the world from more than one perspective.



The artist Ya'akov Agam challenges us to see beyond the static. His kinetic art changes as we move, revealing different forms and colors from different viewpoints.

**This teaches a core lesson: to see more of the world around us, we must be willing to consider alternatives and alternate ways of viewing.**



# A photograph is not just a picture; it is a text to be interpreted.

Judaism invented Midrash—the process of appealing to the human imagination—to keep the tradition dynamic.

## Split Rock Thinking

*“And like a hammer that splits the rock into pieces... so also may one biblical verse convey many teachings.”*

(Based on Jeremiah 23:29)

The Jewish Photographer applies this same principle to images. We can find multiple meanings, layers, and sparks within a single photograph.

# One image, multiple meanings.



## Interpretation 1: Sin as ‘Missing the Mark.’

The Hebrew word for sin, ‘Cheyt’ (חַטָּא), literally means ‘to miss the mark,’ like an archer missing a target. Here, the horseman appears to have missed his mark. The image becomes a visual representation of “Al Cheyt” — “For the Sins...”

## Interpretation 2: The Fear of Trying.

“Davar Acher / Another Matter: Which is worse, missing the mark or not trying at all? The image also evokes the “Jonah Complex” — our fear of becoming that which we can glimpse in our most perfect moments.

# A journey of rediscovery, a project of purpose.

During COVID-19, I began reviewing thousands of travel photographs. They felt like they were from a previous life. Out of sadness, I recited the Kaddish... After, my spirits rose as I sensed that my photography, past and future, might provide spiritual enrichment.

This became my “Jonah Project”—an attempt to overcome the fear of creating, to utilize this medium for self-discovery and spiritual well-being, and to develop a model for others to create their own visual Midrash.



# Our Sacred Smartphones: Finding the miraculous in the mundane.

You don't need a special camera.  
The most daring innovations and  
technology should be employed to  
**enhance our worship experience.**

The smartphone is a spiritual utility.



***“Recognize that as you are creating a photograph, God is creating through you... Open your eyes in wonder everyplace. With eyes of wonder you can discover the miraculous in the mundane. Stop long enough to uncover veiled aspects of HaMakom expressed expressed through the built environment and frame them through your lens.”***

***– Melvin Alexenberg***

**We can use our smartphones not just for email, but for our emotional and spiritual well-being.**

# The Earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof.

*"I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth."*

- Genesis 9:13

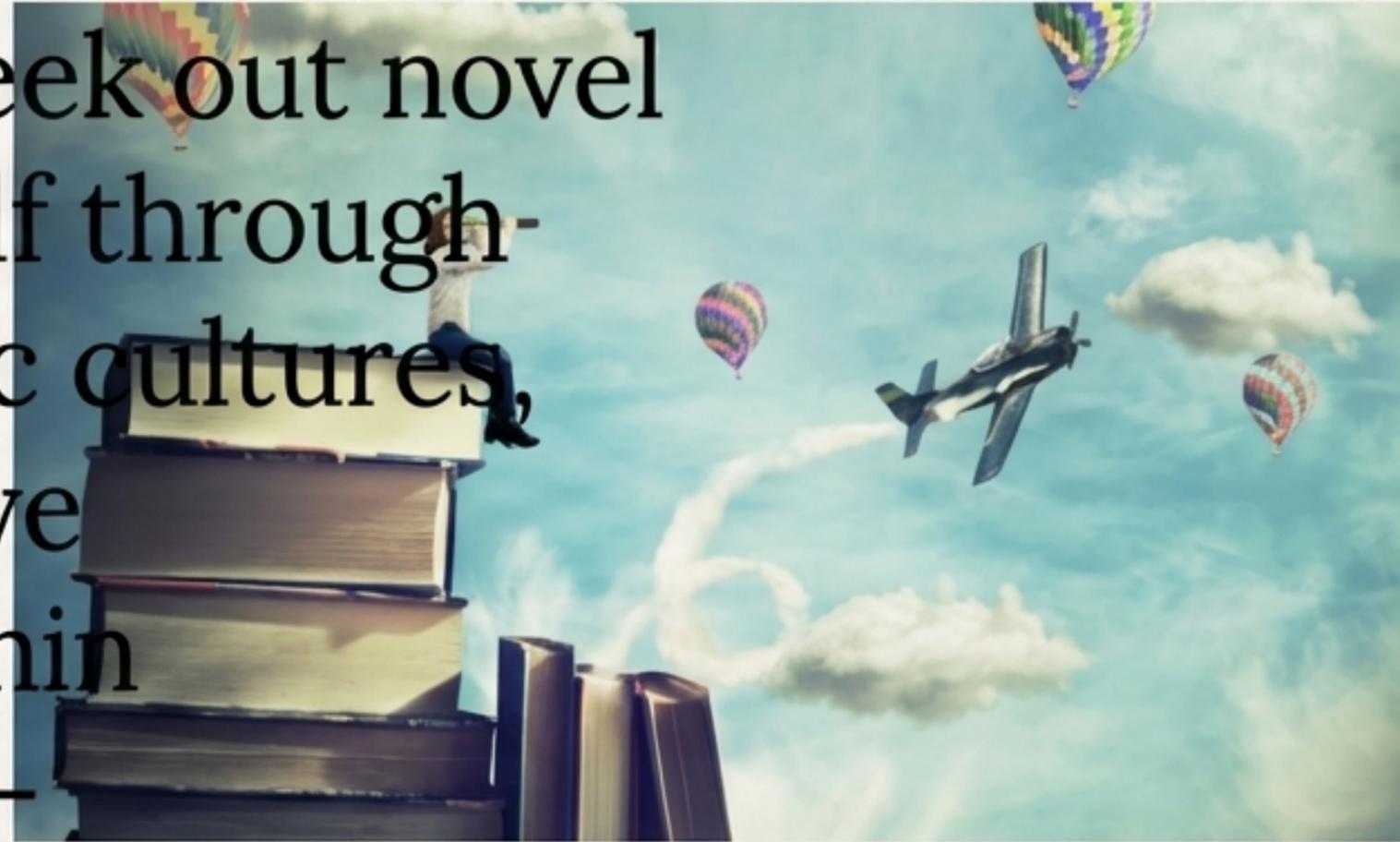
But this isn't the Holy Land. How can it be a 'Jewish Photograph'?

The Jewish Experience is not restricted to a physical land. As Jonah learned, one cannot escape to a place beyond God's presence. Capturing images of optimistic beauty anywhere is recognizing the divine source of beauty.

# A 21st Century Jewish Understanding

“To cherish individually, to seek out novel possibilities, to enrich oneself through exposure to varied and exotic cultures, and to prefer to risk subjective anxiety than to be secure within age-old objective constraints – **to be all these is to be Jewish.**”

–Ellis Rivkin, Historian



# Open My Eyes



The Jewish Photographer is a journey. It is an awareness that something is happening or being expressed, almost as if God was directing my lens and trigger finger.

**Open My Eyes that I may see wondrous things.**