

Arden

T H E A T R E C O .

SUPPLEMENTARY STUDY GUIDE
for

My Name Is Asher Lev

WORLD PREMIERE
By Aaron Posner
Adapted from the novel by Chaim Potok
Directed by Aaron Posner
Artistic Consultant Adena Potok
On the Arcadia Stage
January 8 - March 15, 2009

Additional copies of this study guide are available online at www.ardentheatre.org.

My Name Is Asher Lev

By Aaron Posner, adapted from the novel by Chaim Potok

Directed by Chaim Potok

Cast:

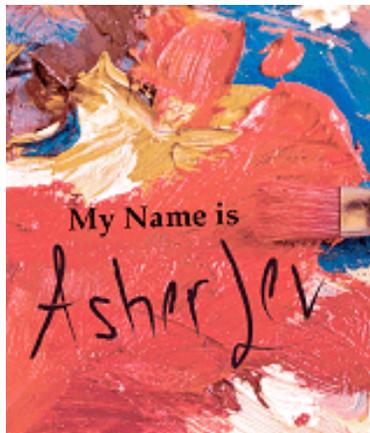
Man.....Adam Heller
Asher.....Karl Miller
Woman.....Gabra Zackman

Direction:

Director.....Aaron Posner
Artistic Consultant.....Adena Potok
Stage Manager.....Alec E. Ferrell
Dramaturg.....Michele Volansky
Asst. Director.....Adrienne Mackey
Asst. to the Stage Manager.....Katherine Fritz
Casting.....Amy Dugas Brown and
Stephanie Klapper CSA

Designers:

Scenic Designer.....Dan Conway
Lighting Designer.....Thom Weaver
Costume Designer.....Alison Roberts
Sound Designer.....James Sugg



Plot Synopsis

The play begins with a self-introduction: “My Name Is Asher Lev.” This is the first line spoken as the story unfolds and we quickly learn that the protagonist, Asher, is a painter by occupation and has painted a controversial work entitled the Brooklyn Crucifixions. As he narrates his own story, Asher travels back through his personal history beginning with “an early Lev.”

We shift to Asher at the age of twelve, living in Brooklyn with his mother, Rivkeh, and his father, Aryeh. While Aryeh is away in Europe, Rivkeh takes Asher to the Art Museum only to find out that he had returned multiple times thereafter to sketch paintings of Jesus, as well as nude portraits of women. Rivkeh worries about what Aryeh will do when he finds out about Asher’s sketches and warns Asher that what he is doing isn’t right. Indeed Aryeh is furious with Asher and tells him that no good Torah Jew would ever draw such things. When Aryeh tries to blame his Mother, Asher defends his actions by saying that it is his will to draw. Aryeh demands that he “must fight against it. Otherwise, it will destroy the world.”

Suddenly we are carried away to an earlier place in Asher’s life. He is six. We see Rivkeh admiring a portrait that young Asher has drawn of her. As she looks closer at her son’s artwork, Rivkeh questions his choices for capturing unpleasant details like sweat, and capturing her falling out of a boat. There is a quick shift in Asher’s memory as we focus on a conversation between him and Aryeh. Aryeh poses similar questions about Asher’s choice to use cigarette ash as a medium to draw a portrait of his father.

Asher shifts once again to the audience and briefly discusses his family’s lineage and his grandfather and father’s love and devotion to travelling for the purpose of bringing “the Master of the Universe, the Ribbono Shel Oylom, into the world.

The story continues with Asher at the age of seven drawing a portrait of his Uncle Yitchok, who is visiting. Yitchok beams at his nephew’s artistic talent and compares him to the renowned artists Chagall and Picasso. Uncle Yitchok offers to buy the drawing from Asher despite Rivkeh’s warnings against it. Asher sells him the drawing but remarks that it left him with a strange feeling that he still has to this day.

We jump back one year again as Asher describes a typical morning in his house. Every morning each of them would drink a glass of homemade orange juice. After drinking the juice, Rivkeh would see Aryeh to the door as he went on his travels for the Rebbe. Asher spent these mornings questioning his mother about the reasons behind his father’s travels.

We hear a phone ring and the story shifts to a different memory of Asher’s. We hear a chilling scream spill out of Rivkeh and Asher explains to us that his Uncle Yaakov, her brother, is dead. His mother and father’s emotional response to this tragic event is beyond his realm of understanding.

Rivkeh is not the same as before. She is haunted and is speaking to her dead brother with a vacant look in her eyes. And despite a request that her son draw pretty things and that he “should make the world pretty”, he translated his family’s grief into darker works of art. Rivkeh asks Asher once again if he is “making the world pretty” he says that he won’t draw the world this way because in truth the world is not pretty. Rivkeh asks Aryeh if she can go to work to continue her dead brother’s unfinished work. Aryeh protests but says he will speak with the Rebbe. When Rivkeh responds with claims that the Rebbe was responsible for killing her brother, Asher loses control and repeats that the world is not a pretty place.

Three years goes by and Asher has stopped drawing. Observing his mother’s emotional shift after the passing of her brother causes him not only to lose his gift for drawing, but to also lose his path. During this time, Asher unveils that he did poorly in school and that most of his memories from that time were of his mother staring out the living room window waiting for his father to return home from travelling.

Asher now tells us that he is ten years-old. His mother and father have just told him that they will be moving the family to Vienna. Stalin has just died and Aryeh is being sent by the Rebbe to travel abroad in Europe to teach the beliefs of the Ladover Hasidus sect of Judaism. Asher does not want to go. He is frightened and he feels like it is the wrong thing to do.

The next day the Rebbe comes to Asher’s school to discuss the events taking place overseas. During his lecture, Asher draws the Rebbe directly onto a page of the Siddur, a holy book. Asher is sent home from school where Aryeh reprimands him for his actions. Asher explains that he does not draw to make fun of people. Aryeh tells his son that “drawing is foolishness”. Rivkeh instructs him to respect his father. Asher gives in and apologizes.

He turns to the audience and tells us that after this event, he was drawing again. He started to draw everyone and everything around him. Aryeh tries once again to explain in detail the reasons they must go to Vienna as a family and once again Asher begs not to go. He is scared of losing his will and inspiration to draw.

Then we are told that the Rebbe was aware of Asher’s desire to remain at home. He sends Aryeh off to Vienna alone and Rivkeh and Asher stay in Brooklyn. His father and mother argued about the Rebbe’s decision but Aryeh went off alone. And once again Rivkeh stares out the window as he walked away.

The story transitions into Asher “as a young man.” Asher is thirteen and is waiting to meet with the Rebbe in preparation for his Bar Mitzvah. Before entering to meet with the Rebbe, Asher notices an older man also waiting. And he is drawing. During Asher’s meeting, the Rebbe reminds him to live his life for the sake of entering into heaven and to remember to honor his father. Asher listens and obeys but is once again distracted by the artist. As they walked passed each other, Asher smelled paint and turpentine. He quickly

noticed a drawing on his seat. It was a sketch of Asher. Asher reciprocates by leaving a sketch of the man on his chair.

There is a shift and we now witness Asher meeting man. His name is Jacob Kahn. He is a renowned artist and Asher knows this. Jacob warns Asher to take up another occupation because he is a Torah Jew. Jacob explains that although he is Jewish, he is not an observant Torah Jew. He continues to give his own warning, as well as a warning from the Rebbe, to Asher about taking up art as an occupation. Jacob leaves but still gives Asher his business card and says they will talk soon.

We are now in Jacob Kahn's studio with Asher, Jacob Kahn and Anna – a gallery owner. Anna compares him to other famous Jewish artists and leads the conversation into a religious one. Asher describes his specific Hasidic beliefs and Anna interrupts him with the same warning that Jacob gave earlier: The art world is not the place for “people who want to make the world holy.” Anna looks at his drawings and is blown away that a thirteen year old was responsible for creating them. As Anna sings his praises, Jacob argues that painting is a religion also. He makes the claim that there has never been a great painter who remained a religious Jew. He tells Asher to go back to Brooklyn. Asher stands firm in his desire to become a painter and tells both Jacob and Anna that he knows what he wants. Jacob says that he will give Asher five years to pursue his art as his apprentice.

The scene unfolds with Asher in his various stages of study with Jacob Kahn. We hear Kahn's advice and critique of how Asher approaches his painting. A woman enters in the nude. Kahn teaches Asher about the importance of sketching the naked human body. Asher hesitates because this type of painting is against his religious beliefs, but decides to draw the woman regardless.

Rivkeh interrupts Asher's memory and tells him she is going to join his father in Europe. She gives Asher the chance to join her but he declines.

We are back in Jacob Kahn's world as he bluntly labels Asher “a whore.” He points out that Asher has hidden his payos behind his ears and that by doing so he is a fraud. Asher is upset by these comments but tells us that he continues his studies with Kahn travelling to various museums painted crucifixions and nudes.

We jump to a dialogue between Asher, his mother and his father. Aryeh is perplexed by Asher's choice to painted naked women. Asher explains that there is a difference between naked women and a nude. Asher, like many famous painters before him, paints nude portraits. Aryeh refuses to understand his son. In a heated argument Asher accuses his father of having “aesthetic blindness” and, in response Aryeh tells his son that he has “moral blindness”. Rivkeh hopes that one day they will reconcile.

The third part of the play is a time of reflection for Asher. He reveals to us stories about his debut in New York art galleries, and his travels to Europe to study the works of the great painters. He tells us that he had already painted everything that familiar to him and

he was stuck. He started to paint his dreams which included a mythic ancestor who often haunted him as a child. He talks about the lasting effects that his mother and father had on him and how it all swirled together and became the inspiration for his two great masterpieces: The Brooklyn Crucifixion I and the Brooklyn Crucifixion II.

There is music and it is now the fourth and final section of the play featuring Asher as the artist. Asher and Jacob are reunited. Kahn is older and he is ill. He asks Asher if his parents are coming to his opening for the Crucifixion paintings. Rivkeh and Aryeh are now in the scene. It appears they have reconciled and Aryeh is at peace with his son's occupation. He tells them in vague terms that two of his paintings have been sold to a museum in New York. They are proud of Asher.

The scene shifts to Asher's memory of his art opening. He describes his parents seeing the works and then walking out of the gallery. He tells of a negative review in the New York Times and the uncomfortable silence that awaited him at his parents' house. He was banned from his synagogue and the Rebbe suggested that he leave Brooklyn entirely. Asher says good-bye to his family and to his religious life in Brooklyn and ends the story by telling us that he is going off to Paris.



Brooklyn Crucifixion I painted by **Asher Lev** author Chaim Potok

About the Writer

Chaim Potok (1929-2002)

Chaim Potok, born Herman Harold Potok, February 17, 1929, in Brooklyn, NY, was the son of Polish immigrants who had strong ties to Hasidism and was reared in an Orthodox Jewish home. His Hebrew name was Chaim Tzvi. In an interview Potok said, "I prayed in a little shtiebel [prayer room], and my mother is a descendant of a great Hasidic dynasty and my father was a Hasid, so I come from that world."



After reading Evelyn Waugh's novel *Brideshead Revisited* when he was a teenager, Potok decided to become a writer. Riveted by the world of upper-class British Catholics that Waugh brings to life in the novel, Potok realized for the first time that fiction had the power "to create worlds out of words on paper." To learn how to write, Potok carefully studied the novels of such writers as Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Charles Dickens, and Mark Twain. Over a period of five years, he spent most of his free time reading the novels of great writers.

At the same time, he became fascinated by less restrictive Jewish doctrines, particularly the Conservative movement. He attended Yeshiva University and graduated summa cum laude in English literature in 1950 before moving on to the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, where he was ordained a Conservative rabbi.

Potok served as combat chaplain with the United States Army in Korea from 1955 to 1957. He described his time in South Korea as being a transformative experience. Brought up to believe that the Jewish people were central to history and God's plans, he experienced a region where there were almost no Jews and no anti-Semitism, yet whose religious believers prayed with the same fervor that he saw in the Orthodox synagogues at home.

He then taught at several Jewish colleges, including the University of Judaism in Los Angeles, before moving on to become the managing editor of *Conservative Judaism* in 1964. After spending a year in Israel working on his doctoral dissertation, Potok earned a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Pennsylvania, and the following year he became the editor of the Jewish Publication Society of America. He remained in that position for eight years before becoming a special-projects editor of the publication in 1974. Throughout his career in publishing, Dr. Potok wrote numerous popular articles and reviews.

Potok began his career as an author and novelist in 1967 with the publication of *The Chosen*, which stands as the first book from a major publisher to portray Orthodox Judaism in the United States. With its story about the friendship between the son of a Hasidic rabbi and a more secularly-minded Jewish boy in Brooklyn, *The Chosen*

established Potok's reputation. Critics praised the book for its vivid rendering of the closed Hasidic community, while many considered it to be an allegory about the survival of Judaism. Potok followed *The Chosen* with a sequel two years later called *The Promise*. He returned to the subject of Hasidism for a third time with the 1972 novel *My Name Is Asher Lev*, the story of a young artist and his conflict with the traditions of his family and community. Potok followed this novel with a sequel, as well, publishing *The Gift of Asher Lev* eighteen years later in 1990.

Potok continued to examine the conflict between secular and religious interests in his other novels as well, which include *In the Beginning* in 1975, *The Book of Lights* in 1981, and *Davita's Harp* in 1985. His most recent works include *I Am the Clay*, published in 1992, *The Tree of Here* in 1993, and the 1995 novel *The Sky of Now*. Potok also published several non-fiction works, including *Wanderings: History of the Jews* (1978), in which the author combines impressive scholarship with dramatic narrative, and *The Gates of November*, a 1996 chronicle of a Jewish family in the Soviet Union.

Potok served as a visiting professor at the University of Pennsylvania in both the 1980s and 1990s, and taught briefly at Bryn Mawr College and Johns Hopkins University. He was a passionate lover of Israel, and lived there for several years. Potok was also very active in the Soviet Jewry movement.

Chaim Potok died July 23, 2002, at his suburban Philadelphia home of brain cancer at the age of 73. He is survived by his wife, Adena; two daughters, Rena, a Philadelphia-area college professor, and Naama, an actor in New York; a son, Akiva, who is a filmmaker in California; and two grandchildren.

About the Adapter

Aaron Posner

Aaron Posner is a co-founder and former Artistic Director of the Arden, and is currently the Artistic Director of Two River Theater Company in Red Bank, New Jersey. He has directed more than 40 productions at the Arden over the last 20+ years. He received a Barrymore Award for his direction of *A Midsummer Nights Dream* which opened the F. Otto Haas Theatre in 1998, and one (with Chaim Potok) for their adaptation of *The Chosen* in 1999. Aaron has worked as a director and playwright at major regional theatre including the Folger Shakespeare Theatre, Portland Center Stage, Seattle Rep, Arizona Theatre Company, Actor's Theatre of Louisville, The Alliance Theatre, and many more. *The Chosen*, and his musical (with composer James Sugg), *A Murder, A Mystery & A Marriage* are published by Dramatists Play Service. He has won two Helen Hayes Awards, and is an Eisenhower Fellow. He is married to actress, teacher, and four-time Barrymore nominee, Erin Weaver. They live in Middletown, NJ.

My Name Is Asher Lev – models of the set by designer Dan Conway



Vocabulary and Terms

Many of the words and phrases spoken in My Name Is Asher Lev are Hebrew. Below are some of the frequently mentioned terms, their English translation, and a detailed explanation for some.

Gay guzunt un cum guzunt: “Go in health and return in health”

Goyim: Nation

Explanation: Yiddish word for a non-Jew

Kabbalah: That which is received

Explanation: another word such as *shalsholet hakabbalah*, the chain of tradition, or *kabbalat Shabbat*, the traditional ushering in of the Sabbath. It also refers to a particular credential for doing something within the context of a religious community, particularly for the *Shochet*, who ritually slaughters animals for food. In addition, this term also refers to the general mystical tradition in Judaism.

Kibud ov: Parental honor

Narishkeit: Foolishness

Ribbono Shel Oylom: Master of the Universe

Payas: Earlocks

Explanation: Hair that is allowed to grow so that a blade might never get near the sideburn area. A custom of the pagans to be avoided assiduously was the engraving of the skin in that area

Rebbe: The title of the spiritual leader of the Hasidim

Sitra achra: The Other Side

Explanation: In Kabbalist traditions, this term is used to refer to the forces of evil which underlie all of reality. The power of *Sitra Achra* derives largely from the sins of humans.

Talmud: Study; Learning

Explanation: From the Hebrew word "lamed"--to study. An encyclopedic collection of legalistic interpretations based upon the Mishnah, but also containing homiletic material, some esoteric in nature.

Yeshivah: Seated

Explanation: The oldest institution of Jewish learning, devoted primarily to Talmud and rabbinic literature. Originally, this term signified a meeting of scholars, a council, a session, over which presided an elected *rosh yeshivah*. The yeshivot that were established in medieval Europe were a direct continuation of the academies that flourished during the talmudic and geonic periods in Eretz Yisrael and Babylonia.

About the Artists

*Below is a glossary of the famous artists mentioned in **My Name Is Asher Lev**.*

Asher Lev – Asher Lev is a fictional character. However, author Chaim Potok enjoyed drawing and painting. The first "Brooklyn Crucifixion", a work by Asher which plays a central role in the novel and play, is an actual painting by Potok, who was an accomplished artist as well as a novelist and rabbi; the second Crucifixion, which is described in the book as being superior to the first, does not have a real-life counterpart.

Marc Chagall – (1887-1985). A Russian Jewish artist associated with several key art movements and was one of the most successful artists of the twentieth century. As a pioneer of Modernism, he forged a unique career in virtually every artistic medium, including paintings, book illustrations, stained glass, stage sets, ceramics, tapestries and fine art prints. Chagall's haunting, exuberant, and poetic images have enjoyed universal appeal, and art critic Robert Hughes called him "the quintessential Jewish artist of the twentieth century."

Goya (Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes) – (1746-1828). An Aragonese Spanish painter and printmaker. Goya was a court painter to the Spanish Crown and a chronicler of history. He has been regarded both as the last of the Old Masters and as the first of the moderns. The subversive and subjective element in his art, as well as his bold handling of paint, provided a model for the work of later generations of artists, notably Manet and Picasso.

Jacob Kahn – A fictional painter and sculptor in *My Name Is Asher Lev*. Asher becomes his apprentice.

Michelangelo (Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni) – (1475-1564). An Italian Renaissance painter, sculptor, architect, poet and engineer. Despite making few forays beyond the arts, his versatility in the disciplines he took up was of such a high order that he is often considered a contender for the title of the archetypal Renaissance man, along with his rival and fellow Italian Leonardo da Vinci. Despite his low opinion of painting, Michelangelo created two of the most influential works in fresco in the history of Western art: the scenes from Genesis on the ceiling and *The Last Judgment* on the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel in Rome. Later in life he designed the dome of St. Peter's Basilica in the same city and revolutionized classical architecture with his use of the giant order of pilasters.

Amedeo Modigliani – (1884-1920). An Italian artist of Jewish heritage, practicing both painting and sculpture, who pursued his career for the most part in France. Modigliani was born in Livorno (historically referred to in English as Leghorn), in northwestern Italy and began his artistic studies in Italy before moving to Paris in 1906. Influenced by the artists in his circle of friends and associates, by a range of genres and art movements, and

by primitive art, Modigliani's *œuvre* was nonetheless unique and idiosyncratic. He died in Paris of tubercular meningitis, exacerbated by poverty, overworking, and an excessive use of alcohol and narcotics, at the age of 35.

Jules Pascin (Julius Mordecai Pincas) – (1885-1930). A Bulgarian painter. Despite the constant partying, Pascin created thousands of watercolors and sketches, plus drawings and caricatures that he sold to various newspapers and magazines. He studied the art of drawing at the Académie Colarossi and, like Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec before him; he drew upon his surroundings and his friends, both male and female, as subjects. He wanted to become a serious painter but in time he became deeply depressed over his inability to achieve critical success with his efforts. During the 1920s, Pascin mostly painted fragile *petites filles*, prostitutes waiting for clients, or models waiting for the sitting to end.

Pablo Picasso – (1881-1973). An Andalusian-Spanish painter, draughtsman, and sculptor. As one of the most recognized figures in twentieth-century art, he is best known for co-founding the Cubist movement and for the wide variety of styles embodied in his work. Among his most famous works are the proto-Cubist *Les Femmes d'Alger* (1907) and his depiction of the German bombing of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War, *Guernica* (1937).

Pierre-Auguste Renoir – (1841-1919). A French artist who was a leading painter in the development of the Impressionist style. Renoir's paintings are notable for their vibrant light and saturated color, most often focusing on people in intimate and candid compositions. The female nude was one of his primary subjects. In characteristic Impressionist style, Renoir suggested the details of a scene through freely brushed touches of color, so that his figures softly fuse with one another and their surroundings.

Chaim Soutine – (1893-1943). A Jewish expressionist painter from Belarus. He has been interpreted as both a forerunner of Abstract Expressionism and as a proponent of painting in the European tradition exemplified by the works of Rembrandt or Chardin. Soutine produced the majority of his works from 1920 to 1929. He seldom showed his works, but he did take part in the exhibition of Independent Art held in 1937 in Paris, where he was at last hailed as a great painter.

Titian (Tiziano Vecelli) – (1485-1576). The leading painter of the 16th-century Venetian school of the Italian Renaissance. He was one of the most versatile of Italian painters, equally adept with portraits and landscapes (two genres that first brought him fame), mythological and religious subjects. During the course of his long life Titian's artistic manner changed drastically but he retained a lifelong interest in color. Although his mature works may not contain the vivid, luminous tints of his early pieces, their loose brushwork and subtlety of polychromatic modulations are without precedent in the history of Western art.

About Asher's Religion and Home

Ladover and Chabad-Lubavitch

Asher and his family were Ladover Hasidic which is actually a fictitious sect of Hasidic Judaism based on the Chabad-Lubavitch sect. Chabad-Lubavitch is one of the largest Hasidic movements in Orthodox Judaism, and is based in the Crown Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn (The Lev family's neighborhood). Chabad is a Hebrew acronym for *Chochmah, Binah, Da'at* meaning Wisdom, Understanding, and Knowledge. Lubavitch is the only extant branch of a family of Hasidic sects once known collectively as the Chabad movement; the names are now used interchangeably.

Chabad philosophy incorporates the teachings of Kabbalah as a means to deal with one's daily life and psyche. It teaches that every aspect of the world exists only through the intervention of God. Through an intellectual approach and meditations, Chabad teaches that one can attain complete control over one's inclinations. In a break with early Hasidism, Chabad philosophy emphasizes mind over emotions.

Different from earlier formulations of Hasidic thought, Chabad stresses the individual responsibilities of every Jew. The Rebbe serves as a teacher and advisor. He is there to recognize the vocation of each of his followers, guide them towards it and rejoice in their achievements.

Crown Heights, Brooklyn

Crown Heights is a neighborhood in the central portion of the New York City borough of Brooklyn. The main thoroughfare through this neighborhood is Eastern Parkway, a tree-lined boulevard designed by Frederick Law Olmsted extending two miles east-west.

Crown Heights had begun as a posh residential neighborhood, a "bedroom" for Manhattan's growing bourgeois class. Beginning in the 1880s, many upper-class residences, including characteristic brownstone buildings, were erected along Eastern Parkway. Away from the parkway was a mixture of lower middle-class residences. This development peaked in the 1920s. Before World War II, Crown Heights was among New York City's premier neighborhoods, with tree-lined streets, an array of cultural institutions and parks, and numerous fraternal, social and community organizations. Many second and third generation people of Jewish descent had settled in the area.

During the '40s, '50s and '60s, many middle class Jews lived in Crown Heights. There were a number of large synagogues on Eastern Parkway, including Chovevei Torah between Albany and Troy, and 770 Eastern Parkway, home of the world-wide Lubavitch movement. In 1950, the neighborhood was 89 percent white, with a small but growing black population. Some 50- 60 percent of the white population, about 75,000 people, was Jewish, and had about thirty-four synagogues, from reform to Hasidic. By 1957, there were about 25,000 blacks in Crown Heights, about one fourth of the population.

There were two very prominent Yeshiva elementary schools in the neighborhood, Crown Heights Yeshiva on Crown Street between New York and Nostrand Avenues and the Yeshiva of Eastern Parkway, located on Eastern Parkway between Troy and Schenectady Avenues. Another famous school in the neighborhood was the Reines Talmud Torah which was not a day school, having only afternoon and Sunday morning classes.

In the mid-twentieth century, many of the more established residents left for newer housing and jobs in the suburbs. With increased apartment vacancies, property owners rented to tenants who would not have been able to afford the area earlier. Concurrently, the values of private homes began to fall. Both white and non-white middle class families felt compelled to move out before their houses were devalued further. Their places were taken by African Americans, later immigrants from the Caribbean.

As of 2007, of the approximately 150,000 residents in Crown Heights, 90 percent were of African descent (70 percent from the Caribbean and 20 percent of American birth), 8 percent were Hasidic Jews, and 2 percent were Latino, Asian and other ethnic groups.



Map of Brooklyn

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think the challenges are for the Man and the Woman to take on so many different characters within the play? Were these characters clear and distinct within the story? Why or why not?
2. What types of changes occur when adapting a novel into a play? How are these changes dealt with in this production?
3. My Name Is Asher Lev deals a lot of conflict. What are the main points of conflict between Asher and his mother and Father? What is Asher's internal conflict throughout the play?
4. The character of Asher spans from age 6 to adult. What elements of the production (acting, directing, costumes, etc.) help the audience see Asher's growth and the passage of time?
5. Asher accuses his father of having "aesthetic blindness" while Aryeh accuses Asher of having "moral blindness". Aryeh poses the question: "What if you had to choose between aesthetic blindness and moral blindness? What then?" Discuss.
6. The Arden often reconfigures the theatre seating to meet the needs of each production. Why would the director have chosen this particular audience arrangement? Do you think it was a good choice?
7. Aaron Posner both adapted the novel into a play as well as directed this production. How does this close connection to both the words and production enhance what you see on stage?