



The Rabbi and the Hit Man: A True Tale of Murder, Passion, and the Shattered Faith of a Congregation

Arthur J. Magida

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On the evening of November 1, 1994, Rabbi Fred Neulander returned home to find his wife, Carol, facedown on the living room floor, blood everywhere. He called for help, but it was too late. Two trials and eight years later, the founder of what had become the largest reform synagogue in southern New Jersey was convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison.

The Rabbi and the Hit Man is a fascinating true-crime narrative about the first rabbi ever convicted of murder. In a gripping examination of the misuses of the pulpit and the self-delusions of power, Arthur J. Magida paints a devastating portrait of a manipulative man who used his temple as a place to acquire several mistresses -- and to befriend a lonely recovering alcoholic, whom he convinced to kill his wife "for the good of Israel."

The Rabbi and the Hit Man straddles the juncture between faith and trust, and confronts issues of sex, narcissism, arrogance, and adultery. At its core are such troubling questions as: Why do we often deify clergy, and what are the consequences when they betray us? What happens when religious leaders who set the standards of ethical behavior fail to abide by them in their personal lives -- and instead contribute to the decline of morality in modern America?

This is the definitive account of a charismatic clergyman who paid the ultimate price for ignoring his own words of wisdom: "We live at any moment with our total past; . . . What we do will stay with us forever."

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