



STUDIO OCHENTA ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT

CULTUREVERSE – EPISODE 7: THE GOLEM

[0:06]

NARRATOR: This is Cultureverse. A Place where myths and legends come alive in the modern world.

NARRATOR: Episode 7: The Golem. I'm your host, Yara Shahidi, and today we bring you a story about a mythical protector. Trigger alert, this episode deals with bullying. Once kids began to go to school virtually, cyberbullies began attacking virtual classrooms. This week's story starts in Brooklyn, New York with a young girl who came up with a unique way to fight back.

(VIDEO GAME - SFX Golem walking - heavy rock creature walking sounds - Growl that crescendos into an echo.)

NARRATOR: Twelve-year-old Sarah is at the dinner table with her mother, Deborah. Sarah looks upset and has barely touched her dinner.

(SFX: Dishes and cutlery. Deborah's voice fades in)

[1:18]

DEBORAH (excited, energetic): Sarah sweetie, you're not hungry?

(No answer from Sarah)

DEBORAH (mockingly): Earth to Sarah!

SARAH: *Oh... sorry mom... I was just...*

DEBORAH (Laughing): *Traversing the cosmos?*

SARAH: *Just thinking.*

DEBORAH: *You remember App Olympiad submissions close next Friday, right?*

NARRATOR: *Sarah is an accomplished junior coder. She got her skills from her mom, who has been programming for twenty years. And she is also the reigning champ of the Cybaverse Heroes' Competition, where kids fix cybersecurity vulnerabilities in virtual operating systems.*

DEBORAH: *Any idea of what you're going to submit this year?*

SARAH (mumbling): *I don't know.*

[2:11]

DEBORAH: *Hmmmm... Maybe this year you can add some family inspiration to it! You can be inspired by a Jewish concept for your project... like... Tikkun Olam, you know? Always consider how we can do our part to help repair the world with the work we create! I'm sure you'll come up with something great!*

SARAH : *Yeah... right*

DEBORAH: *What is it, Sarah?*

SARAH (sadly): *I'm fine. I kinda wanna just lay down in my room.*

DEBORAH: *Do you have a fever?*

NARRATOR: *DEBORAH reaches out and places her hand on Sarah's forehead, but Sarah pulls away.*

SARAH: *I'm fine, Mom! I just wanna lay down.*

(SFX Sarah moving the table's chair aggressively, then walking and door slamming).

NARRATOR: *After a long nap, Sarah logs into an online study group with two classmates.*

GIRL: So what was one of the first world empires? Sarah?

SARAH: It's um... King Sargon of Akkad. Circa 2340 B.C.

GIRL: Awesome that's 10/10 girl! Now quiz me!

NARRATOR: All of a sudden a shared screen comes on with a picture of a cow.

RANDOM KID: Oh no!! Zoom bomb! Someone hacked the meeting!

[3:30]

NARRATOR: The image of the cow fades into an unflattering screenshot of Sarah from earlier in class with the word MOO written over the image. Sarah has recently become a target for cyberbullies at her school.

GIRL: Oh, Sarah, I'm so...

SARAH: It's all good... Uhm... hey, it's getting late, I'm gonna log off and get to bed.

RANDOM KID: Are you sure you're ok?

SARAH: Yessssss! I'm fine.

(SFX: A couple of clicks. She walks to her bed, falls down to the mattress, and bursts into tears)

(SFX: A couple of seconds later, the door opens quietly and Deborah enters the room)

DEBORAH (concerned): Baby, what is going on?

SARAH: I don't wanna talk about it!

DEBORAH (concerned): I'm worried about you...

NARRATOR: Just then, an email file finishes downloading on Sarah's laptop and the screen starts flashing with images of cows until the doctored pic of Sarah freezes as the screensaver. Sarah has been fully hacked.

[4:43]

DEBORAH: What is that?

SARAH: Arghhhhh! Someone from school has been... Someone's been messing with me.

DEBORAH: I'm so sorry, bubala... come here... Is this what happened earlier today?

NARRATOR: Sarah flops onto her stomach and buries herself in her pillows.

DEBORAH: Sarah! Has this happened before?

SARAH (sadly, muffled by the pillows): Earlier today they sent me a bunch of... stupid private messages.

DEBORAH: What did they say?

(PAUSE)

SARAH: They called me-

DEBORAH: Sarah, what did they say?

SARAH: They called me... a cow.

DEBORAH: And the teacher did nothing?

SARAH: They're busy running the class, they don't have time to review all the instant messages.

[5:30]

DEBORAH: But why didn't you say anything to her or... to me?

SARAH: 'Cause it will just get worse. He's already making my life miserable, if he finds out I snitched then...

DEBORAH: He? Who is it?

(SILENCE)

DEBORAH: SARAH, WHO IS IT?

SARAH: It's... It's Aaron Levinson, OK!

DEBORAH: I'm calling the school first thing in the-

SARAH: Mom, NO! What about advocating for myself? Isn't that what you always say?

DEBORAH: This is different!

SARAH: No, it's not. Give me a day to come up with something.

DEBORAH: You have to come up with something constructive! Ok, Sarah?

[6:13]

SARAH: Something constructive! I promise.

DEBORAH: Okay, let me know if you need anything and I'll check in with you later.

NARRATOR: DEBORAH leaves and Sarah stays up all night thinking about what she can do. She quickly gets bored of googling and takes a quick Tik Tok break that lasts...

(SFX: Scrolling through Tik Tok SFX, like at the beginning of Cholito de la Suerte)

NARRATOR: ...a couple of hours.

(SFX: A couple more scrolls and then:

SANDY POPLORE (super excited): I'm Sandy Poplore here on Tik Tok! CAN YOU BELIEVE IT? Today we're exploring the folktale of The Golem, a 16th-century tale from Eastern Europe. Maybe you've seen it in some movies and video games, IT LOOKS LIKE THIS, SEE IT'S RIGHT BEHIND ME! Isn't that cool??! Anyway. The Golem is a figure made of clay that comes to life to protect the Jewish people... This had interesting consequences because you see... (Fades out)

NARRATOR: The thumbnail of the video shows a tall dark, stonelike creature with dark hollow eyes, and Sarah is inspired!

SARAH (to herself): GOLEM, huh??

(SFX: FADE OUT TO HER TYPING HER CODE)

(Transition to tea kettle and keyboard clicking)

NARRATOR: At breakfast the next day Sarah finds her mother with her face buried in her laptop.

[7:22]

DEBORAH (Energetic, concerned): Good morning! (Reading) Ref error? How is that undefined? Ugh, should be an underscore... (PAUSE) How did you sleep?

SARAH: I was up late. I found this video about the Golem creature in Jewish history. You told me about it before, right? It sounded super familiar...

(SFX keyboard clicking)

DEBORAH: Let's see... right. The Golem. Well, first of all, it's Jewish like us! The main story comes from Prague but there are many legends that are similar across Eastern Europe. The gist is usually the same but basically: the Golem is a creature made by Jewish people to protect them!

SARAH: But how--was it actually alive or what?

DEBORAH (excited about the story making emphasis on "supernatural" and "strong"): Oh, the creature came to life through spells so it was... I guess you could say supernatural. And it was very **strong**. The story goes that a rabbi sculpted it from clay then brought it to life to protect Jews from being persecuted.

SARAH: And it protected the people by...?

[8:34]

DEBORAH: Mmm, I'm not sure. I believe it obeyed its creator's orders like if...? Like if--

SARAH (amazed): Like if it were programmed to do so?

DEBORAH: Well, coding is certainly magical in its own way, isn't it...? Oh...sorry honey, I need to finish this before ten! Don't you have school? We can talk about this later, promise.

SARAH (excited): O--okay! See you later mom!

NARRATOR: Sarah sits down at her desk and takes a deep breath. Now, class in session.

TEACHER (monotone): Hurry guys, let's all turn to page twenty-eight in your world history books.

NARRATOR: Things are going smoothly until the teacher's shared screen is hijacked.

(Sfx: Moo)

SARAH: Not again...

(SFX slamming of laptop)

(Sound of SARAH breathing heavily in and out)

SARAH: Don't cry. Don't cry! Don't cry. (Deep breath) What am I gonna do??? (A pause) Well I AM not going back to class today that's for sure... ugh... (plops head on table)

[9:46]

NARRATOR: Sarah turns on the TV and tries to find something to distract herself.

SARAH: Oh hey, there's a doc about the Golem...

(SFX TRAILER)

*VIDEO NARRATOR 1: In **Jewish tradition**, a golem is a man-made creature subject to living a life of servitude towards its creator...*

GOLEM VOICE: I am here to protect you. I am GOLEM!!!! (roar)

NARRATOR: Sarah pulls out her laptop again, inspired.

(SFX Laptop keys, various clicks and transition to various voices sequence while a crescendo builds up with music)

SARAH: That's it. I'm going to make a Golem! And not just any kind... (Fades out).

(SFX keyboard clicking + music transition)

NARRATOR: She doesn't know much about Aaron, but everyone in the class knows he is obsessed with gaming. So she takes her mom's advice and uses her coding skills to construct something useful.

(SFX timid computerized beeping and growling sounds from the computer).

[10:34]

NARRATOR: At first, her Golem looks like a spherical ball made of stone but then...

(SFX timid computerized beeping and growling sounds from the computer).

SARAH: Meaner!

(SFX Keyboard clicking and slightly more threatening growling sounds from the computer)

SARAH: More menacing!

(SFX keyboard clicking and slightly more threatening growling sounds)

SARAH: Ferocious! Ruthless! Merciless!

(SFX keyboard clicking really scary growling)

SARAH: YESSSSSSSSSSSSSS!

NARRATOR: Sarah creates a Golem avatar that can hack into Aaron's cyberworld and kick some butt!

(SFX keyboard clicking fast and then sound of heavy rock creature moving/stepping)

SARAH (Laughing): It's alive, it's alive, IT'S ALIVE!

(SFX: Dramatic music build-up ends here with a classical innuendo that recalls Frankenstein)

[11:09]

NARRATOR: In the virtual world, the Golem looks as big and strong as King Kong and is made of stone with lifeless hollow eyes.

SARAH: Now... I just need to test you before sending you off, Golem. Let's see... (SFX Keyboards) What happens if I make you pick up this digital rock...

(SFX: Heavy rock creature stepping towards one side)

SARAH: ...aaand throw it over there to that digital house...

(SFX: Rock being thrown and house being smashed. Golem growls triumphantly)

SARAH: Awesome!! Now for something more complex. (SFX Keyboards) What if you were to blend in with your surroundings like a chameleon?

(GOLEM growls triumphantly)

SARAH: I can't even see you! YESS!

(SFX Knocking on door)

DEBORAH: Sarah, are you ok?

[11:55]

SARAH: I'm fine!

DEBORAH: It's beautiful outside, why don't you come with me to buy some ingredients for the latkes I'll make tonight.

(SFX gunfire)

[12:54]

AARON (no walkie-talkie): Loser, he must have gone to the bathroom.

GOLEM (growling to himself): Aaron.

NARRATOR: The Golem stalks Aaron through the jungle under a full moon.

(SFX FOOTSTEPS OF GOLEM)

SARAH: I've got you now, Aaron Levinson!!

(SFX gunfire)

AARON: Whooaaaaaaaa that was a close call.

SARAH: So... should I stomp on him, rip him to shreds or bite his head off?

(SFX Stone monster walking and breathing).

AARON (on walkie talkie): What is that sound, does anybody else hear it? Sounds like heavy breathing. Monroe, time to hit the inhaler! You're ruining my concentration. (Pause) Monroe? Monroe?

(SFX: Other characters each going AHHH one by one as they get thrown away)

[13:34]

NARRATOR: The Golem grabs each member of Aaron's raiding team and throws them up into the sky.

AARON (walkie talkie): Guys where'd you go???? What's wrong with your mikes? I can't hear

you anymore... Must be someone with a super hack... it must be really powerful.

SARAH: HAH. Now no one can help you!

(SFX jungle bird sounds)

NARRATOR: Aaron wanders into an open area illuminated by the moon and he realizes he is a sitting duck. He starts to sprint towards the foliage again so he can find cover before...

(SFX: running, rapid gunfire, and rock monster moving faster)

AARON: GUYS! Get back here and cover me! Ah, that rock came out of nowhere... wait, why can't I get up?? What's going on??

(SFX tripping and falling)

SARAH: Prepare to go down!

NARRATOR: Sarah disables the camouflage effect on the Golem and it appears, lumbering over Aaron with one foot raised ready to crush him...

[14:38]

GOLEM:GRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRr

NARRATOR: Then, all of a sudden...

(SFX SMACKING SOUND, a controller falling to the ground)

GREG: What's up, moron!

AARON: Owwww! I'm playing a game!

NARRATOR (in disbelief): The Golem has malfunctioned. Somehow it has patched Sarah into Aarons's headset and she can hear everything going on in his room, in his real-life... Aaron's older brother Greg just came into the room.

GREG: You mean losing a game?

AARON: Be quiet!

GREG: You be quiet!!

(SFX messing with controller)

AARON: Stop it, Greg!

(SFX sound of Greg ripping Aaron's game controller and throwing it against the wall)

AARON: Man, I just bought that!

[15:13]

GREG (mockingly): I just bought that YOU DON'T DESERVE TO HAVE ANYTHING LOSER!

(SFX: Door slamming and being locked)

AARON: Hey don't lock the door! (Starts pounding on the door and forcing the handle with no use, starts sobbing) Let me out!!! Quit it!

(SFX footsteps walking away)

AARON (sobbing, upset): Why----?

GOLEM (confused, sympathetic): Aaron...??

(SFX rock monster walking away sounds)

NARRATOR: Sarah's shocked at what she hears and while she wasn't ready to forgive Aaron, she feels compelled to do something about it. She refers back to her mother's words of wisdom for guidance.

DEBORAH: Tikkun Olam... we should always consider how we can do our part to help repair the world with the work we create!

NARRATOR: She disconnects from the game and the Golem appears alone on her coding screen again. Golem roars.

SARAH: Maybe this Golem can be used for something even more constructive... For good.

(SFX keyboard clicking)

NARRATOR: Sarah taps into her skills and finds the most constructive way to fight against bullying using the Golem software.

[16:21]

SARAH: Golem... What about Golem Cyberbullying Security! Think you can help with that?

(Golem GRUNTS)

SARAH: You don't need to be so big and strong anymore... Let's make you friendlier looking... And instead of camo, how about powers of detection? You can help find and get rid of mean words bullies use on social media and virtual meeting platforms. The ultimate anti-bully!

NARRATOR: Sarah enhances the Golem and in less than a week puts it into action. She presents it at the App Olympiad and gets the winning prize.

DEBORAH: I'm so proud of you sweetie! What inspired this?

SARAH: When I was bullied and it... it really hurt... and I know there are other kids out there who have gone through it even worse. I decided that if I could use my skills to prevent other kids from experiencing the same, then I could possibly save lives.

[17:20]

DEBORAH: Bravo sweetie!

NARRATOR: Shortly after that, Sarah's Golem gets installed in dozens of virtual classrooms across the country fulfilling its duty to make the cyber world a safer place.

GOLEM: I am here to protect you. I am Golem!

(Music playing low in the background)

[17:48]

NARRATOR: This story is inspired by the Jewish folktale of the Golem, a stone figure brought to life to protect a Jewish community in Prague. Golems are not intelligent, and if commanded to perform a task, they will perform the instructions literally. There are many variations of the GOLEM story which originates from the Czech Republic, Poland, and ancient Judaic tribes.

[18:13]

*NARRATOR: If you want to learn more about Jewish legends and folktales check out the books *Jewish Stories of Prague: Jewish Prague in History and Legend*, by V.V. Tomek and *Yiddish Folktales* by [Beatrice Weinreich](#).*

[18:27]

NARRATOR: This podcast was produced by Studio Ochenta for TRAX on PRX.

NARRATOR: Sarah was voiced by Dylan Tanzer. Deborah was voiced by Azriela Jaffe, Aaron was voiced by Xavier Geneste and Greg was Luis Raúl López Levi. Special thanks to our Cultureverse editorial team for this episode: Jamie Bourne and Liz Kleinrock, who brought their Jewish experiences to this story.

[18:55]

NARRATOR: The Creative Director and Executive Producer for this series is Lory Martínez, founder of Studio Ochenta. Dr. Kiona is our consulting producer for all things culture. Our Senior Fiction Producer is Maru Lombardo. All original opening songs for this series were composed by Gabriel Dalmasso. Sound design by Luis Raúl López Levi, and music by Doctor Dreamchip and Luis Raúl López Levi. And our art is by Steve Aparicio.

[19:27]

NARRATOR: The Executive Producer for TRAX is Michelle Smawley and our scripts were edited by Nathan Yungerberg.

NARRATOR: Follow us on TikTok & IG @cultureversepod. Transcripts are available at ochentastudio.com/cultureverse.

NARRATOR: And I'm Yara Shahidi, your host. Thanks for listening!

(SFX: STUDIO OCHENTA AUDIO LOGO)

(SFX: TRAX/PRX AUDIO LOGO)

END OF EPISODE