

## WHO KILLED KESHER'S RABBI?

*Parts 3 and 4*

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## Love the Stranger

### A CLOUD OF GRIEF HUNG OVER RABBI PHILIP RABINOWITZ IN THE YEARS BEFORE HIS MURDER.

The Georgetown rabbi maintained his stature as the spiritual and intellectual beating heart of Keshet Israel Congregation, but after his wife died, something fundamental had changed. He was broken.

The rabbi had to navigate the difficult halacha, or Jewish law, around burial and matrimony in a way that few others had done before. He wanted his daughter to be able to enjoy life as a newlywed as much as possible while also mourning her mother. He opted to forego immediately sitting *shiva* for his wife so that his daughter could spend the week after her wedding celebrating with the traditional *Sheva Brachot*, or Seven Blessings, a week of festive gatherings.

After a period of intense emotional whiplash, Rabinowitz was left to reenter normal life on his own.

"At the time of her death, I'm reasonably certain that Rabbi Rabinowitz had no inkling of how to boil water, no idea how to do any cooking at all," said Dan Klein, a longtime Keshet member. "But he learned, and there were a few members of the congregation who helped him out a little bit, and he eventually got to the point where he

could invite a few people over for a Shabbat meal."

THE RABBI did not regularly have guests over, though, and congregants began to walk or drive him home after evening prayers. The neighborhood wasn't particularly unsafe — Georgetown was spared the worst of the violent crime that racked Washington in the 1980s and 1990s — but Rabinowitz's residence was closer to The George Washington University campus than it was to the multimillion-dollar Georgetown homes, and besides, "it was pitch black," said Howard Rosen, who often walked with Rabinowitz on his way back to the GWU dorms.

Still, Rabinowitz was not willing to only accept congregants' pity and shrink from his duties. In 1979, he quit his teaching job at a local Jewish school to focus full-time on the congregation. He continued his responsibilities as a religious leader, but he also doubled down in his commitment to pastoral care. This, congregants say, is where he really shined: remembering the names of all of your kids, or visiting you when you were sick, and making it clear he saw you as a person, and not just as the 10th member of a prayer quorum.

"It's incredible that people like this,

who have gone through a life like that... He went through the worst experience in life — he was a survivor and refugee and it just made him more kind and generous," said Rosen. Some would later question, only in hindsight, whether he had been too generous.

Rabinowitz always made a point of welcoming anyone who walked through Keshet's doors. In the last few years of his life, that included several individuals who were homeless. These visitors, though also Jewish, did not always fit in with Keshet's base of highly educated professionals.

One woman who came to services regularly was believed to suffer from schizophrenia. "She wasn't socialized like the rest of the people who went to synagogue. Sometimes she was disruptive. She may not have been dressed appropriately, acting out appropriately, you know. That was just part of our community," Rosen said.

Rosen recalled another man who would sometimes come to evening services "with alcohol on his breath." One time, Rosen left the synagogue with him and they started walking together. The man said good night before walking into Rock Creek Park, the massive urban park in the center of Washington. It was a warm night, and that's where he planned to sleep.

*Oh, Rosen thought. So he's going home, and we're going home.*

THE RABBI AND HIS WIFE had never been the type of gregarious couple that was always socializing or having people over for holiday meals. Selma Rabinowitz harbored some resentment for the old-timers on the synagogue's board whom she felt didn't treat her husband properly.

Measured financially, this was a statement of fact: The synagogue paid him so little that Rabinowitz had to take the job teaching at the Hebrew Academy on 16th Street in Northwest Washington.

"I don't think anyone disliked him. They just didn't hold him in as high regard as I think he deserved. They thought they could toss him around at will. He had no power base to fight back," Irving Haber said of the older synagogue members. According to Keshet lore, Rabinowitz defeated an attempt to oust him — the mythology varies as to exactly when it was — when a crowd of loyal young members showed up at the secretive bagel brunch where the vote was being held.

The tradition of Modern Orthodoxy maintains that observant Jews can live, work and interact in the secular world while also following the strictures of Jewish law. And at Keshet Israel Congregation, two blocks away from Georgetown's busiest commercial corridor and just a mile or two from the White House and the U.S. Capitol, congregants keep one foot firmly planted in the secular world.

Rabinowitz presided over a community that would become known for its eclectic mix of acclaimed writers, famed intellectuals and members of the political elite. In 2000, when Joe Lieberman, the Connecticut senator and Keshet Israel member, ran for vice president, images of the synagogue appeared on the front pages of newspapers around the world. The rich Jewish life that exists today in Georgetown, one of Washington's most exclusive neighborhoods, flourished because Rabinowitz managed to leave his native Europe before the Holocaust.

The synagogue was started by a ragtag group of Jewish merchants in 1911. Within two decades, the founders of what was originally called the Georgetown Hebrew Benevolent Association had pooled enough money to purchase a plot of land at 28th

and N streets, two blocks from M Street, Georgetown's main drag. This was prime real estate for a group of men who usually went straight from Saturday morning prayers — which were held earlier than was traditional, at their request — to open their shops.

BACK THEN IN THE 1910S, Georgetown wasn't yet the posh enclave that came to be associated with the Kennedys and Washington's highest social castes. The Jews who arrived in Georgetown and opened stores at the turn of the 20th century "weren't moving to a wealthy Georgetown that you picture today," said Linda Brody Blumenreich, whose grandfather owned a clothing store on M Street for decades. These were working-class Eastern European immigrants, while the wealthier and more educated German Jews ("the lawyers and doctors," Blumenreich explained) settled on 16th Street.

Keshet was never a typical synagogue. Located in a neighborhood where the median home price is now more than \$1.5 million, Keshet's membership has always been transient, with people cycling in and out depending in part on what they can afford.

Driving and the use of electronics are prohibited on Shabbat, so observant Jews have unique geographic constraints when choosing a synagogue and a home. The result is a mix of young people in their 20s and 30s who are renting, eventually moving out to the suburbs when they have kids; and older people, often retirees or empty-nesters who come back to the city to downsize.

Rabinowitz arrived at Keshet in 1950. Washington's suburbs were just starting to explode: Several times over the years Rabinowitz would have to fight with synagogue leaders who wanted to uproot Keshet and move it to Maryland, or turn it into a Conservative synagogue, meaning it would adhere less strictly to Jewish law.

"It's not nice to say," one longtime Keshet member confessed, "but most of the presidents drove to shul." (David Epstein, the retired lawyer who served as the synagogue's liaison to the police after the murder, described it this way: "I get there magically." He lives in Maryland and has been going to Keshet for 60 years.)

"Rabbi Rabinowitz kept the flame going at a time when the flames of urban Judaism were flickering, and he impacted lives. There are not too many rabbis who can do that," said Gerard Leval, a partner at the Washington law firm ArentFox Schiff.

Beginning in the 1970s, the synagogue experienced a revival. It was slow at first before picking up in the 1980s and 1990s, as Washington gentrified and young Orthodox Jews who came to Washington for graduate school or jobs on Capitol Hill opted to live in the city instead of the suburbs.

Before Keshet's renaissance, the synagogue was more flexible in its religious character. There were some people who had grown up Orthodox and attended yeshiva schools who would sit and learn with Rabinowitz. Many spoke Yiddish. Others, like those who drove in from Maryland, were less observant. And then there were people in their 20s who did not grow up Orthodox but simply wandered into Keshet one day and never left, so deeply impacted were they by Rabinowitz's outstretched hand.

Leval, who grew up in Paris, went to Keshet one Shabbat at the invitation of a woman he was dating, hoping to impress her but not especially interested in the service himself.

"That's when Rabbi Rabinowitz came up to me. I had no particular plans to go back," Leval recalled. "It was quite a dramatic day." He and his date broke up not long after, but Leval kept going to Keshet. He later met his wife through a friend from shul.

"There was something comforting here in the midst of all the roughness of Washington, and there was something authentic, and I was immediately taken in by other young people who invited me to join them," said Leval. "It became a kind of family, extremely hospitable. And I would say that one has to attribute much of that to Rabbi Rabinowitz."

IN THE YEARS before Rabinowitz was killed, new life was pouring into Keshet. GW and Georgetown undergrads and graduate students, Capitol Hill and White House staffers, budding lobbyists and lawyers.

Young men and women were finding their way to this little synagogue. Neil Kritz, now the senior scholar in residence at the U.S. Institute of Peace, recalled one

*brit milah*, or ritual circumcision, that took place in the early 1980s, one of the first times in years that a new baby was born in the community.

Rabinowitz stood in the corner of the social hall, which for years had been half-empty at festive events and now was bursting with people. The rabbi looked at the crowd, smiling to himself. "He kept the synagogue going through all those years, and now we had succeeded. We had a new generation coming in and being born in the community," said Kritz.

But one man arrived in this period who would make a different kind of impression on the community. We will call this man, simply, the Russian, because that's how so many Kesherites refer to him to this day. Of all the many men and women Rabinowitz helped over the years, the Russian is the one people remember most.

The Russian was a Soviet Jewish émigré, a new arrival to this capitalist nation who was deeply suspicious of everyone — Jewish and otherwise — that he met. Today, descriptions of the Russian vary: He was an engineer, some say; a mathematician, according to others. He may or may not have been imprisoned in a Soviet gulag before coming to the United States. The rabbi took an interest in him, wanting to help. This was the rabbi's nature.

He sometimes let the Russian, who lived in a homeless shelter a couple miles from the synagogue, sleep overnight on the floor of the synagogue social hall. Rabinowitz often gave the Russian money from the community *tzedakah* box, used to collect donations for charity.

Like countless other immigrants before and after him, the Russian's skillset did not get him very far in a new country where he did not speak the language. Still, he came to Keshet, which may have offered some comfort as a place where Jews could gather safely, unlike in his native Russia. Before Rabinowitz died, the synagogue did not have any security.

Some people in the Keshet community grew uncomfortable with this occasionally belligerent man whom they viewed as an unpredictable nuisance in the community. They would prefer if he stopped coming to the synagogue, and they certainly did not want him staying there overnight any

longer. These congregants approached the rabbi with their concern and asked him to talk to the Russian and urge him to find shelter somewhere else.

"You may run into people with psychological problems, and how do you know when you're in danger or not?" asked David Epstein, the congregant who served as a liaison to the police after Rabinowitz died. That question only came later, when it was too late.

"On the one hand," Epstein continued, "you're supposed to show kindness and so forth to the poor and the helpless. And on the other hand, are they going to turn on you at some point, because you're the only person they know? Are they going to get angry and take it out on you?"

These questions would haunt the Keshet community for decades to come. In the days after Rabinowitz was murdered, suspicion began to center on one person: the Russian.

SIX WEEKS after the rabbi died, Passover arrived. Rabinowitz had written one final D'var Torah, a sermon, before he died, and it was published in the Passover bulletin that synagogue members received in the mail before the holiday. The newsletter arrived with an almost eerie quality, as though Rabinowitz was writing from the next world.

The message he chose to deliver that year — the last words of Torah he would ever write — centered on the mitzvah, or commandment, of *Ma'ot Chitim*, the collection of charity to donate to Jews in need locally and around the world. (Translated as "wheat monies," the term originally referred to wheat that was collected and distributed to people who needed food.)

"This important mitzvah is based on the idea that as an observant Jew, one cannot honestly sit down at the festive Seder and partake of everything, unless the less privileged are also able to celebrate the festival of freedom in an atmosphere of happiness," Rabinowitz wrote. "Thank G-d that the generosity of our Jewish people has sustained and strengthened many an underprivileged family, not only for the Seder of Pesach, but the rest of the days of the year as well."

"Our tradition," he wrote, "demands that we care" when a Jew is in need.

A story began to take hold among

Keshet congregants soon after Rabinowitz died: The Russian killed the rabbi. This impoverished and perhaps mentally unwell immigrant needed support, but he turned on the person who offered it, a pious man who took seriously his tradition's demand that he care when his fellow Jew was in need.

Even today, ask a 30-year-old member of Keshet who killed Rabinowitz. They weren't alive when he died, but to the extent that they know anything about Rabinowitz's death, they have heard: It was the Russian. This assertion is made with confidence by many. Yet the police never arrested the Russian — or anyone. Still: Could it be true? If it was him, how did he evade arrest for decades?

Despite Rabinowitz's generosity, everyone agrees that the rabbi would never open his door to a person he didn't know. He kept the deadbolt latched and he pulled back the curtain to see who was outside before allowing anyone in.

The night Rabinowitz died, he was expecting a visitor. ♦

# The Outsider

## THE LAST NIGHT OF RABBI PHILIP RABINOWITZ'S LIFE STARTED JUST LIKE EVERY OTHER.

Like always, he ended the day at his Georgetown synagogue, where he led the brief evening prayer service. It was a small group of men, made up of the synagogue's most devout and those who needed to be with a *minyan* to say the Mourner's *Kaddish*.

One of the men present for the *minyan* on the evening of Feb. 28, 1984, was the homeless Russian man who had been a regular Keshet attendee for the better part of two years. He was in his 40s or 50s, with a scruffy and somewhat unkempt look, usually wearing a cap that he kept on even inside the synagogue. He was restless that night, fidgety; he kept picking up items in the entryway to the sanctuary until Rabinowitz grew impatient with him.

"Put that down!" Rabinowitz said to the Russian, interrupting the prayer service. "Leave it alone. It's not yours."

It took a great deal for the rabbi to lose his patience. No one at Keshet remembers him talking to another congregant this way. Rabinowitz followed a Judaic school of thought that stressed stringent ethical standards: "If they wanted to admonish somebody, they did it very privately. They did it in an indirect sort of way," said Reuven Schlenker, who frequented Keshet during this period.

Still, no one thought too much about the interaction. Not until later, when the rabbi was dead.

AFTER THE SERVICE wrapped up, Rabinowitz got a ride home from a group of men who lived across the Key Bridge in Roslyn, Va. They dropped him off sometime after 7 p.m. It was the last time anyone, except his murderer, would see Rabinowitz alive.

Not long after he got home, Rabinowitz got a phone call from Nat Lewin. Lewin, a well-known litigator and civil liberties expert who has argued more than two dozen cases

before the Supreme Court, was the picture of a "prominent Washington lawyer" — and not just in the slightly mocking way that Rabinowitz meant when he jokingly applied the moniker to the many attorneys at Keshet Israel. Lewin was calling to tell Rabinowitz that he had to be in court the next day in New York and would miss a Jewish event in Washington that he was supposed to lead, and could Rabbi Rabinowitz fill in for him?

"Can you call me back in a little bit?" Rabinowitz responded. "I'm expecting somebody."

Lewin was at a payphone at New York's LaGuardia Airport after canceling his flight and decided to wait by the phone there. Half an hour later, Lewin called again. No answer. He called a second time, and a third.

"The phone rang, and the phone rang, and the phone rang, and nobody picked up," Lewin recalled in a recent conversation. "I was very puzzled about the fact that he had said he was expecting somebody."

Lewin eventually went back to his hotel in Manhattan, but he called the rabbi again the next morning. No answer. Later that day, after he got back to Washington and heard Rabinowitz was dead, he went to the police to tell them about his conversation with the rabbi.

"I may have been the last person he talked to," Lewin recounted, "before he allowed a murderer into his house."

BRUCE AND NANCY JAMES walked out of the National Theater in downtown Washington after 10 p.m., when their show ended. They decided to stop by Rabinowitz's house before heading home for the night. The young couple needed to drop off that week's edition of the synagogue newsletter for the rabbi to edit, like he did every week.

By the time they arrived, it was after 11 p.m. They didn't want to bother the rabbi. They were surprised to see the lights on, but they didn't think too much of it. Rabinowitz sometimes listened to Israeli news over a shortwave radio, and it would have been time for the morning broadcast in Israel,

where his brother lived. The couple dropped the newsletter draft in his mailbox and went home.

The next morning, after learning that the rabbi had been murdered, the couple frantically called the police, eager to give a statement after having stopped at his home the night before.

"They told us that if we pushed the door open, we would have found the body ourselves," Bruce said.

NO ONE KNEW who the rabbi was expecting that night. But within hours of hearing about his death, congregants began to wonder who, out of the many people Rabinowitz would invite to his home, might be vengeful enough to kill him. Suspicions quickly settled on one person.

"Wild rumors, fomented by fear and without any basis in established fact, have been circulating in our community," the *Washington Jewish Week* editorial board wrote the week after Rabinowitz was killed, already cognizant of the suspicions being cast within and outside of the community. Israeli journalists had even speculated that the murder was terrorism. "Rabbi Rabinowitz of blessed memory was the gentlest of men. Let us restrain our imaginations and await the apprehension of his assailant before we reach any conclusions."

The *Jewish Week* editorial reflected the widespread certainty among both the Washington Jewish community and the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department that a culprit would be swiftly caught and brought to justice. In the immediate aftermath, when evidence was still being gathered, up to 20 officers were working the case. Two MPD homicide detectives worked full-time on the case for more than a year. For months, detectives asserted that they were confident they would find the killer.

Police Lt. John Harlow told Keshet board members at a meeting held at the synagogue less than a week after the murder that he was "positive" the case would be solved. The physical evidence was strong — blood,



fingerprints, a hat left at the scene. The police were looking for a “disorganized killer, violent, didn’t like the rabbi,” according to notes from the meeting. “No real evidence of robbery.”

“Could the murderer be vicious,” one congregant asked at the meeting, “or another Jew?” One person who attended the meeting with the detectives even speculated that the murder could have been a case of mistaken identity: The rabbi at Adas Israel Congregation, a large Conservative synagogue in Washington’s Cleveland Park neighborhood, was named Stanley Rabinowitz.

“Maybe he got the wrong Rabinowitz,” the person questioned. The police did not seem to take this theory seriously.

Detectives quickly learned from conversations with Rabinowitz’s children and Keshet community members that he had been helping an indigent person in the area, although that fact alone was not particularly notable. “He was always inclined to do that, we hear,” Capt. Jimmy Wilson, commander of the homicide unit, said.

Investigators — and synagogue members — began to suspect the Russian.

“The rabbi had told us that weekend that he was going to drop him off the dole, because we were running out of money,” Bruce James noted. Before he died, Rabinowitz had been giving the Russian money daily.

IN THE DAYS FOLLOWING THE MURDER, the police interviewed the Russian extensively. “This scene has the markings of murder for murder itself, not for terrorism,” Harlow told Keshet members. It was a brutally violent incident, but one that was more likely personal and vindictive rather than antisemitic.

Once, MPD detectives came to the synagogue hoping to talk to the Russian. He ran away when he saw them. “They have these little tiny bathrooms [at Keshet], and three policemen went in and followed him into the bathroom,” Bruce said.

“The detectives kept yelling at him from the vestibule to confess to the murder,” recounted Reuven Eliaz, “but he outlasted them.” The Russian continued to come to Keshet regularly for a couple of weeks, until

one day a group of men from the synagogue forced him to leave.

“I felt badly for him,” said Yaakov Hammer, who had been at Keshet the night Rabinowitz died. “Because I thought if the guy is innocent, what a horrible way to treat him.”

Reuven Schlenker, who had some Russian language skills from a period when he lived in Europe, was able to talk to the Russian. Schlenker found him off-putting and even unsavory, but did not believe him to be guilty of the murder.

He was someone who “just didn’t fit into the American Jewish mentality’s idea of how you should behave and what you should be doing,” Schlenker reflected. “Some at our shul were very bourgeois, and they have no tolerance for people that are, you know, in unfortunate circumstances.”

Two years after Rabinowitz was killed, Schlenker ran into the Russian in Washington. He looked worse than Schlenker had ever seen him.

“He had hair down to his shoulders. A couple of his teeth had been knocked out. I only had \$10, but I gave it to him,” Schlenker said. “He told me he was going to Florida.”

FOR DECADES, people from Keshet would occasionally see the Russian around Washington, often turning away if they saw him at the Farragut North Metro stop or walking around downtown. More than a decade ago, Gerard Leval, a longtime Keshet member, saw the Russian, by then almost an old man, wandering around the lobby of his law firm’s office on Connecticut Avenue.

“I urged the guards to ask him to leave just out of concern that he might still be violent,” Leval recalled.

David Epstein, the synagogue’s liaison to the police, understands why so many believe that the Russian did it. “The relationship that this individual had with the rabbi suggested that he might be the person who would have the kind of anger that would lead to such a disastrous outcome,” Epstein explained.

Epstein, like many others that *Jewish Insider* interviewed, avoided outright saying the Russian’s name, while still hinting at the prevailing belief held by many in the community that he was the one who killed the rabbi. “I’m not going to speculate as to who the suspect was, because I don’t think

it’s appropriate, since no one was ever charged,” Epstein said.

Because the Russian was never arrested, and because *Jewish Insider* was unable to locate him or determine if he was alive — many Keshetites suspect that this homeless man, who was already well into middle age nearly 40 years ago, is no longer alive — *Jewish Insider* is also refraining from publishing his name.

“Those of us who are more intimately familiar [with the case] know that there’s someone out there who we suspected, but Jewish law is very specific in how you can deal with — in this whole realm. It’s very, very clear, it’s much more stringent than even common law,” said Toby Grauman, the lawyer and rabbi who oversaw Rabinowitz’s autopsy. “I’m not a criminal lawyer, but I will tell you, although there were plenty of criminal lawyers at the shul, that you bend over backwards to protect the innocent ... In Jewish law, you do a triple somersault and back to protect the innocent.”

“We all feel that sort of pain,” Grauman continued. “We think we know who he is, but there is someone there who they were never able to ... And maybe we were wrong. Who knows. Maybe we were wrong. Maybe it wasn’t him. But because of the nature of the death, and of all ironies, he was killed with what we believe was a *brit milah* knife.”

POLICE WOULD LATER SAY nothing indicated a robbery had taken place when they determined that only one item, which was not of any monetary value, was missing from the rabbi’s home. In the days after the murder, police could not find the knife the rabbi kept at home for performing ritual circumcisions.

As a point of fact, the knife used by the killer was, actually, *not* a regular kitchen knife. Police called the murder weapon “unique.” David Epstein’s wife Ellen pointed out that the police one day came to the synagogue and “asked to see a circumcision knife” when they were trying to identify a possible murder weapon. They also wanted to see a challah knife, which was longer and more serrated than a common kitchen knife. (The actual weapon was never found.)

But this, too, might just be a theory, a story Keshetites to tell themselves to ease the pain. A *brit milah* knife is likely not

large or sharp enough to commit the type of violence that took place in Rabinowitz's home. Still, it was not impossible. Nothing is impossible for a community that is still in mourning after close to 40 years.

It could've been the Russian. He could have killed the rabbi, dropped the knife into any of the hundreds of trash cans on Washington's streets, thrown out any bloodstained clothes — it's easy to see.

But the evidence was not there for an arrest.

"You basically solve cases three ways: You have evidence, you have witnesses and you have confessions," said Jim Trainum, a retired MPD officer who spent 19 years in the department's homicide division. The Rabinowitz case had none of the three.

The collection and use of DNA evidence in forensics did not begin until a couple years after Rabinowitz's death, and it didn't become widespread until the late 1990s. Blood-type analysis was a common practice at the time, and there was ample blood collected at the scene — including, perhaps, the culprit's blood. But all that could do was determine the blood type, not positively ID a potential suspect.

Later, when DNA analysis became commonplace, MPD's cold case unit — and similar units at thousands of police departments around the world — began to reexamine physical evidence collected in crimes that occurred before the advent of DNA technology. In 2021, a Montana police

department used DNA to solve a 1956 double murder. But investigators have not had the same luck in Rabinowitz's case.

"DNA that was collected from crime scenes was stored in our warehouse in very unfavorable conditions, because the warehouse was not heated, nor was it air-conditioned," Trainum explained. In 2018, an employee accidentally flooded the D.C. Crime Lab, causing \$27,000 in damage. It is unclear if the case file from Rabinowitz's murder was damaged in the flood, or if MPD detectives ever even looked at the case file again in the modern DNA era.

An MPD spokesperson declined to say whether MPD detectives have re-examined the case at all. The MPD spokesperson confirmed that MPD remains in possession of the case file but would not say if it was damaged in the flood.

There is also the chance that the prevailing theory about the rabbi's connection to the killer was wrong. What if, Trainum wondered, the rabbi had acquaintances that synagogue members didn't know about? Or what if the assailant was not somebody he knew at all?

"You would have to consider that maybe this is a person who came up upon him as he was letting himself into the house and forced his way in, and then stuff went bad, and they attacked him and then took off," said Trainum, who joined the force in 1983 but did not work on the Rabinowitz case.

Kim Rossmo, an expert in geographic

profiling and criminal investigations who is a professor of criminal justice at Texas State University, added his own caveat to the explanations coming from Keshet members. "It would be a hard case, period, but after this time period, it's a really, really hard case," Rossmo told JI.

"These stories," Rossmo continued, "all have to be taken with a grain of salt."

WEEKS PASSED, and then months, and finally a year — two — five...

Detectives promised Rabinowitz's children and his former congregants that they were working on his case. "We have some real good clues," Det. Sgt. J.T. McCann told *The Washington Post* in May 1985. By then, the case file was more than 190 pages long. There was a reward of \$10,000 for anyone who had useful leads.

No one confessed. No one was arrested.

Every few years, Keshet congregants would reach out to the police to ask them to reopen the case. They were usually met with silence. In 2013, MPD put out a bulletin urging anyone with information on the case to come forward.

"We are still open to any tips and if anyone has any information about this case, we encourage them to submit a tip," MPD public affairs specialist Alaina Gertz told JI in a December email. She would not say whether anyone employed by the department today is working on the case. ♦