



## MEOROT – LIGHTS SF CONFERENCE (JERUSALEM) Jan 02-2025

<https://meorot.sf-f.org.il/2024/>

חדשות האגודה – דצמבר 2024 The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

תל אביב: מועדון הקריאה יעסוק בספר "הרואה" מאת יובל אטיאס. ויתקיים ביום חמישי 12.26, בשעה 19:30, בדירה בת"א. לקבלת המיקום יש להירשם במייל של דפנה קירש (dafna1485@walla.co.il), ובדף האירוע בפייסבוק. <https://www.facebook.com/events/1041913523811981>

ירושלים: לפרטים על המפגשים הבאים ניתן להצטרף לקבוצת הפייסבוק או ליצור קשר במייל עם מרכזת, גלי אחיטוב, [sal.maple@gmail.com](mailto:sal.maple@gmail.com) ולהצטרף לקבוצת הוואטסאפ של המועדון.

כל האירועים של האגודה מופיעים בלוח האירועים (שפע אירועים מעניינים, הרצאות, סדנאות, מפגשים ועוד)

לקבלת עדכונים שוטפים על מפגשי מועדון הקריאה ברחבי הארץ ניתן להצטרף לרשימת התפוצה או בדף האגודה בפייסבוק.

Society information is available (in Hebrew) at the Society's site: <http://www.sf-f.org.il>

### This month's roundup:

- Special Wartime Issue (#15) – Some thoughts
- Reviews: Severance TV Series
- Our usual tidbits from the Web – will return next month!

– Your editor, Leybl (Leon) Botwinik

# Special Wartime Issue #15

**UPDATE: For over 435 days, there are still 100 hostages being held in Gaza (babies and elderly, men and women) – under intolerable conditions of pain and suffering.**

From month to month – sometimes on a weekly basis, and even on a daily basis – the Middle East seems to find something new to startle us with. The previous month it was the massive Israeli air force response to the shocking, inhumane attack on civilian targets by Iran's wave of over 180 ballistic missiles. I can't think of when a country was so targeted – and of course, the Israeli military responded in kind, with wave after wave of air force attacks – but only on Iranian military targets.





This month, the Middle East was again rocked by turmoil – and hopefully for the better – with the fall of the Syrian military dictatorship of the terrorist and mass murderer Bashar Assad and his henchmen. To protect itself from possible rearmament of the failing Syrian army, or that chemical or other weapons would fall into the hands of unpredictable Jihadists (the anti-government coalition that toppled Assad comprises tens of thousands of Islamic militants, including Al-Quada fighters), the Israeli Air Force again took to the air. Within 48 hours, hundreds of Israeli aerial attacks destroyed what was reported to be about 80% of the former Syrian army: installations, chemical & gas manufacturing plants, etc., including military aircraft, naval vessels, and anti-aircraft batteries. IDF ground troops were also deployed on a strip of Syrian territory to set up defensive barriers, in case the Jihadists have plans to continue their strike onwards to Jerusalem.

**No Place to Go? How about Mars?**

While all this is happening in the Middle East, there are still out-of-control protests around the world – even in my home city of Montreal – against Jews and Israel (which is only trying to defend itself on the one hand, and trying to get our hostages back, on the other). The protesters are either super naïve individuals or outright supporters of Hamas and Hezbollah terrorism. Just yesterday, the Israeli government decided that the embassy in Ireland was shutting down – the Irish government has become just too toxic vis-à-vis Israel.

Israelis love travelling. However, the tourist venues open to them where they could feel relatively safe are few(er) and far(ther) between. The Israeli satirical TV show “Eretz Nehederet” (“a wonderful land/country”) did a skit about Israeli tourists looking for some R&R outside of Israel. The conclusion was that a trip to Mars was probably the only safe bet.

Following are some photos I took off the TV screen, as the skit was running:

<p>The skit depicted a typical Israeli couple that is considering taking a vacation to some foreign country – possibly even to emigrate there...</p>	
<p>but almost everywhere – even for those with dual citizenship (with a non-Israeli passport) – there is a sign warning Israelis of potential danger.</p>	
<p>A government representative/tourist agent from Mars then appears and offers them a safe visitor haven,</p>	
<p>and that they can even acquire a Martian citizenship: “It’s not too late to get a Martian passport”</p>	

The skit in Hebrew: [https://www.mako.co.il/mako-vod-keshet/eretz\\_nehederet-s22/short/Video-47725ee3d5c2391026.htm](https://www.mako.co.il/mako-vod-keshet/eretz_nehederet-s22/short/Video-47725ee3d5c2391026.htm)

Some of their satirical **English language skits** related to the international anti-Israel atmosphere:

- Here’s one about the BBC: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHTNuBKtzHc>
- and another one: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYUL1R4pupU>
- and read: <https://www.politico.eu/article/israeli-tv-sketch-show-brandishes-satire-as-weapon-in-hamas-war/>

Leybl Botwinik, Editor

# SEVERANCE TV Series – Season 01

Review by Leybl Botwinik

A forty-ish yr. old man comes to work, parks in a large outdoor parking lot of the LUMEN company, in some remote industrial zone. He enters a large office complex. There are a few people wandering about. He passes the guard at the entrance and enters a changing room, where he pulls everything out of his pockets and stores them in a locker, grabs a badge, and goes out to an elevator, where a lone guard scans him with a metal detector. In the elevator, his demeanor abruptly changes to an almost blank look.



After stepping out of the elevator, he walks down a series of long and empty, white-walled corridors, winding around corners, of an apparently enormous underground complex devoid of noise or people. After a while, he finally reaches his section and uses his pass card to enter a huge empty room. In the very center is a 4-way 'open space' set of desks, occupied by two more men. Later a new member – a woman – joins them.



The four of them had opted for 'Severance' from society during their workday. They had undergone a medical procedure where a microchip has been inserted into their crania area, causing an absolute split or division in their brain's memory. The minute they enter the elevator to go down to their 'day job', they forget everything that ever happened in their life experience as an 'Outie' (someone who lives 'above' in

the normal world). They have no recollection of any friends, family, past, or current life above. The opposite is true as well. When they leave for home via the elevator that takes them back up to the ground floor, and they switch back to 'normal' – they have no memory of what they did or saw in the building. As if they were two different people (reminds one of 'Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde').

Down below, it's almost like they are in a prison (not unlike an office job 😊). They can't even sneak out a note or any message. They are continuously under observation and an ultra-sensitive detector in the elevator when they are on their way home can pick up anything that they didn't have on the way in (even a secret message written and/or 'hidden' in/on some part of their body).

Their day job is a seemingly meaningless, dry and clerical tracking and identifying of number patterns running on a screen. They need to 'identify' problematic sets/sequences and bunches of digits. Why – they don't know. They are not permitted to talk of anything else and don't know the purpose of what they are doing.

Once the woman arrives – taking over the place of the 4<sup>th</sup> person who had had a 'breakdown' and virtually disappeared – cracks start to appear in the otherwise cruel, stringent, sterile environment. Of course, there is more to the storyline.

Read this fascinating piece about the show and the Lumen office building itself:

<https://www.curbed.com/2022/05/apple-tv-severance-bell-labs-architecture-eero-saarinen-set-design.html>

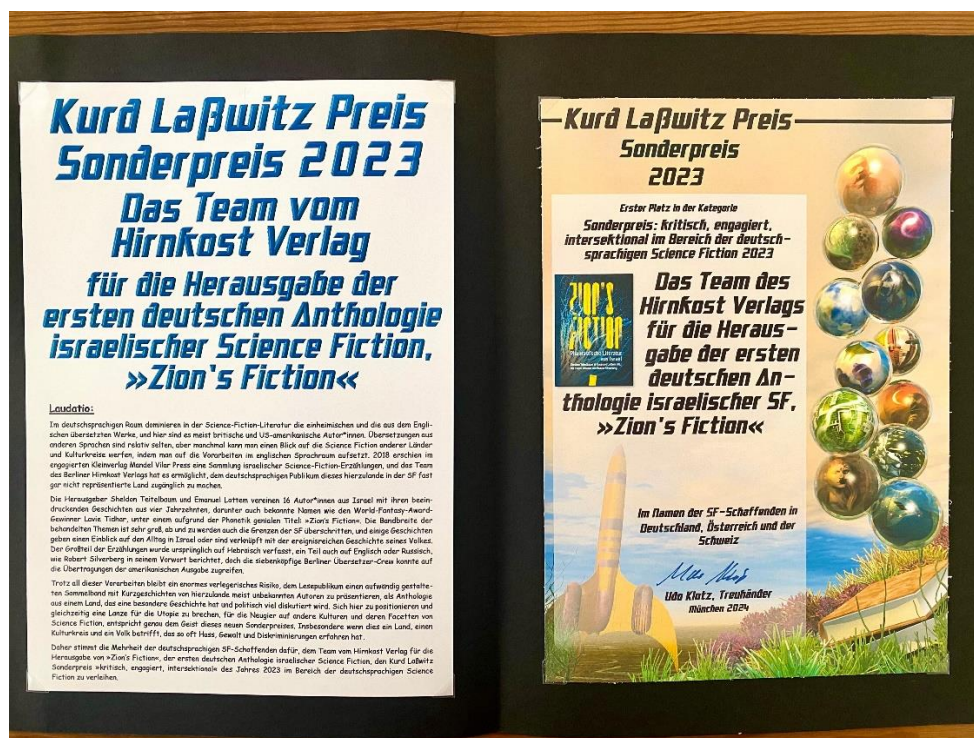
In conclusion, the first season is both intriguing and in some (even many) ways boring. It takes a while to get into it and understand what is going on. Not the why, of course – that's part of the mystery that the plot builds up well, albeit slowly, as I've mentioned.

**Do I recommend it?** It's not for everyone, but I personally do look forward to the next season, to discover what the whole thing is about. Hope it's worth the wait.

One more '...for the show': <https://reactormag.com/severance-severance-and-the-importance-of-honest-corporate-sci-fi/>

## Zion's Fiction – Kurd Laßwitz 2023 Award

(Was to appear last month)



## Fun from the Web

- **Man outgunned as girlfriend brings AI ammo to every argument**  
<https://www.pcmag.com/news/man-outgunned-as-girlfriend-brings-chatgpt-ammo-to-every-argument?ref=thefuturist>
- **Space isn't all about the 'race' – rival superpowers must work together for a better future**  
<https://www.space.com/space-exploration/human-spaceflight/space-isnt-all-about-the-race-rival-superpowers-must-work-together-for-a-better-future>
- **Photo contest reveals strange beauty of the microscopic world**  
<https://www.nbcnews.com/science/science-news/nikon-small-world-photo-contest-winners-microscope-rcna175587?ref=thefuturist>
- **Here's what the regenerative cities of tomorrow could look like**  
<https://www.wired.com/story/heres-what-the-sustainable-cities-of-tomorrow-could-look-like>
- **Researchers tortured robots to test the limits of human empathy**  
<https://www.popsci.com/technology/people-hurting-robots/?ref=thefuturist>
- **A wild theory suggests kissing started as ape grooming – and the science is fascinating**  
<https://www.zmescience.com/science/news-science/origin-kissing-ape-grooming>
- **(AI): The best new singer-songwriter of 2024 is...**  
<https://www.stacksocial.com/sales/supermusic-ai-pro-plan-lifetime-subscriptions>
- **Grove of 100 Giant Trees Discovered in 2019 – Tallest in the Amazon– Protected by State Park**  
<https://www.goodnewsnetwork.org/grove-of-100-giant-trees-discovered-in-2019-are-tallest-in-the-amazon-and-now-protected-by-state-park>

### TV&MOVIES

- **'The Man Who Loved UFOs' explores how hoaxes go viral**  
<https://www.space.com/entertainment/netflixs-the-man-who-loved-ufos-explores-how-flying-saucer-hoaxes-go-viral-review>
- **'Interstellar' gets 10th anniversary deluxe 4K UHD and Blu-ray collector's edition**  
<https://www.space.com/interstellar-movie-10th-anniversary-4k-blu-ray>
- **21 Cool Things We Spotted in Marvel's Big TV Preview**  
<https://gizmodo.com/21-cool-things-we-spotted-in-marvels-big-tv-preview-2000518595?ref=thefuturist>

### COMICS

- **Qui-Gon Jinn and Obi-Wan Kenobi reunite in Marvel Comics' 'Star Wars: Jedi Knights'**  
<https://www.space.com/entertainment/qui-gon-jinn-and-obi-wan-kenobi-reunite-in-marvel-comics-star-wars-jedi-knights>
- **Explore a long-lost Starfleet ghost ship in new 'Star Trek: Lower Decks' comic (exclusive)**  
<https://www.space.com/entertainment/explore-a-long-lost-starfleet-ghost-ship-in-new-star-trek-lower-decks-comic-exclusive>

### GAMES

- **Ubisoft fulfills dark prophecy by releasing NFT game**  
<https://boingboing.net/2024/11/02/ubisoft-fulfills-dark-prophecy-by-releasing-nft-game.html?ref=thefuturist>

### BOOKS

- **'The Orville' executive producer delivers deluxe guidebook to the cult sci-fi series (exclusive)**  
<https://www.space.com/guide-to-the-orville-book-preview>

*For Comments:* E-mail: [leybl\\_botwinik@yahoo.com](mailto:leybl_botwinik@yahoo.com). Tel: Leybl Botwinik +972-54-537-7729  
 Editor: Leybl Botwinik. Founding Editor: Aharon Sheer (א"ל). Logo by: Miriam Ben-Loulu (מ"ל).  
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