



MIKNAF
HAARETZ

A CHANUKAH 5781 ZINE

*In the dark times
Will there also be singing?
Yes, there will also be singing
About the dark times.*

- Bertolt Brecht, 1939

Here we are, emerging from a second UK lockdown, heading into the darkest time of the year. Shavuot - the lightest part of the year, when we stayed up all night to receive the Torah of this time and produced our first zine, feels like a lifetime ago.

Chanukah too involves the night, leaning into the dark, laying out and lighting the candles at nightfall, to publicise the miracle of our survival against all odds. An old story that carries renewed meaning each year. To fight against erasure, against assimilation, against the de-sanctifying of our holiest of spaces. And to rejoice! To be together! To re-dedicate our alters. To sing into the night.

If Shavuot was an all-night rave, Chanukah is a pajama party with a strict early bedtime. Here it is then, a cosy gathering in the folds of this zine co-woven by our precious, growing community. To be read by candlelight or in the bath, with a hot chocolate close to hand.

Miknaf Haaretz, literally means end, edge or wing of the earth. Rabbi Nachman teaches there is a song that emerges from this edge, a song of the dark times. Maybe Chanukah is this song at the end of the world, the swell of mystery and emergence in the darkness, one bobbing flame at a time.

Our original Chanukah call-out asked our community how we can hold each other in this precarious unknown, what wisdoms our tradition offers for the dark times, what nourishment, what comfort we could find in the night.

We've been so moved and encouraged by your responses... Chanukah may feel quite different this year but we hope this gathering of insight, of Torah will offer a sense of community and witness in this time. We hope it nourishes your deepest selves and invites you into meaningful reflection in the coming dark.

We are delighted to be raising funds for the Palestine Heirloom Seed Library, a cause close to both of our hearts. And a project we think carries the quintessential message of Chanukah - to nurture the last morsels of our strength and self, to pass it on intact for easier times.

For us, the question of seed & food sovereignty in Palestine, (and the world over) is an integral piece of our radical-jewish-diasporism and earth-rooted lives as food growers and land-lovers. These ancient seed varieties are humanity's last drop of oil. They need to be protected, preserved and put to use as vibrant living resistance against all that seeks to destroy them. We are so proud to support this project and the work of Palestinian land-workers tending the soils as resistance to occupation and being uprooted from their lands.

Hag Samaech!

The Palestine Heirloom Seed Library

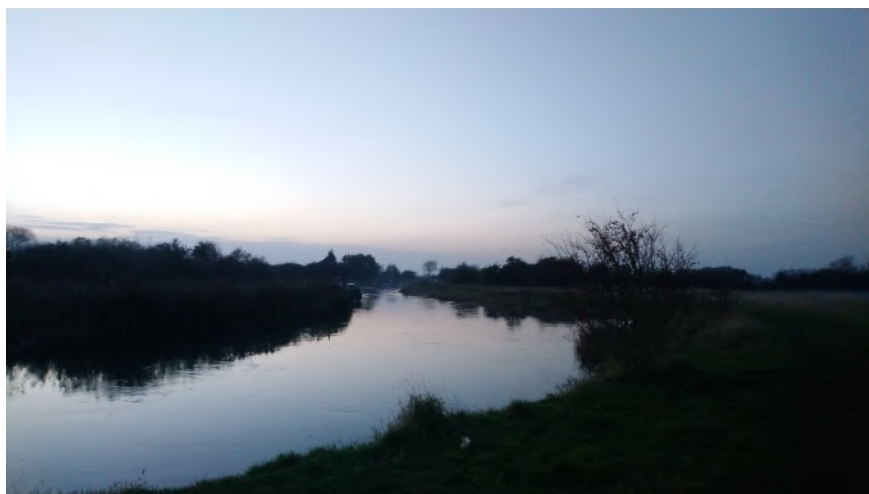
"Part of the Fertile Crescent, Palestine has been considered one of the world's centers of diversity, particularly for wheat and barley. This biodiversity, which has kept us alive for millennia, is being threatened by policies that target farmers and force them to give up their heirloom seeds and adopt new varieties. Heirlooms, which have been carefully selected by our ancestors throughout thousands of years of research and imagination, form one of the last strongholds of resistance to the privatization of our life source: the seed. These seeds carry the DNA of our survival against a violent background that is seen across the hills and valleys through settlement and chemical input expansions.

Heirloom seeds also tell us stories, connect us to our ancestral roots, remind us of meals our families once made at special times of the year. The Palestine Heirloom Seed Library (PHSL) is an attempt to recover these ancient seeds and their stories and put them back into people's hands. The PHSL is an interactive art and agriculture project that aims to provide a conversation for people to exchange seeds and knowledge, and to tell the stories of food and agriculture that may have been buried away and waiting to sprout like a seed. It is also a place where visitors may feel inspired by the seed as a subversive rebel, of and for the people, traveling across borders and checkpoints to defy the violence of the landscape while reclaiming life and presence.

Like most farmers around the world, Palestinian farmers are facing the dangers of agribusiness, corporate seed, land dominance along with political violence. But many of these farmers are the heroes who have been safeguarding these precious seeds and the knowledge these seeds carry. Palestinian heirloom seed varieties are under threat; many have gone extinct. These seeds that have been passed down to us over the centuries carry in their genes the stories and the spirits of the Palestinian indigenous ancestors. Aside from their cultural significance, these seeds carry options for our future survival as we face climate change and the erosion of agrobiodiversity worldwide. As such, it is urgent that we save and propagate them.

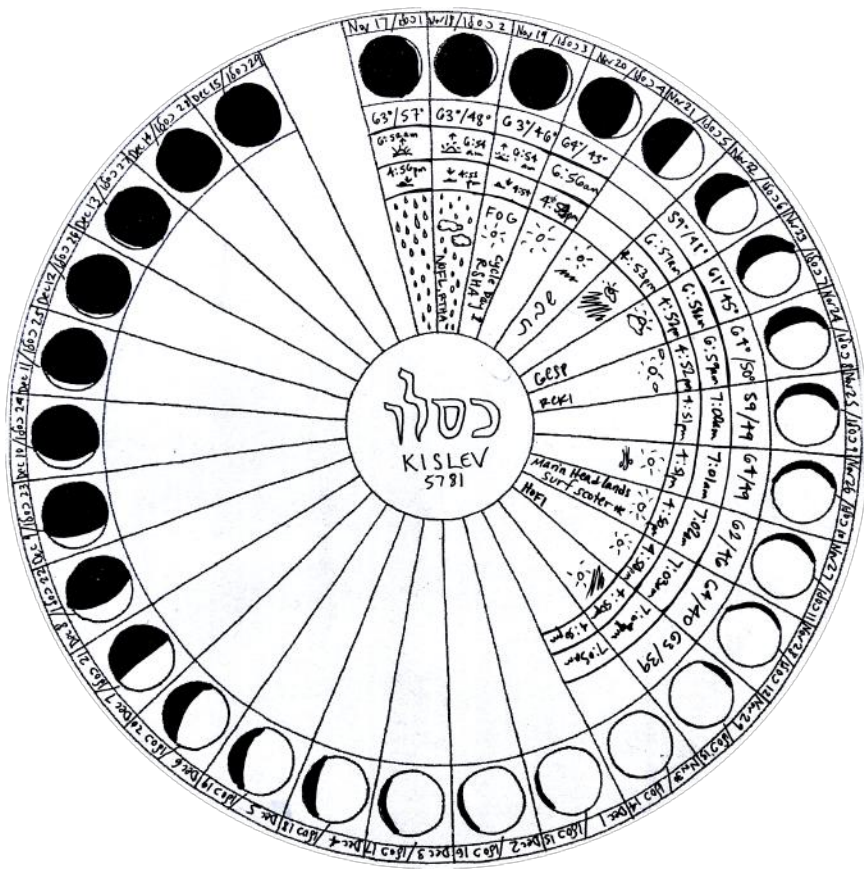
Founded by Vivien Sansour, the PHSL and its Traveling Kitchen project seek to preserve and promote heritage and threatened seed varieties, traditional Palestinian farming practices, and the cultural stories and identities associated with them. Based in the village of Battir, a UNESCO World Heritage site outside Bethlehem, the PHSL also serves as a space for collaborations with artists, poets, writers, journalists, and other members to showcase and promote their talents and work. Working closely with farmers, Sansour has identified key seed varieties and food crops that are threatened with extinction and would provide the best opportunities to inspire local farmers and community members to actively preserve their bioculture and recuperate their local landscape. The PHSL is part of the global conversation about biocultural heritage. Its Traveling Kitchen is a mobile venue for social engagement in different communities, promoting cultural preservation through food choices."

Learn more about the PHSL's work at <https://viviensansour.com/Palestine-Heirloom>



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Turning our Hearts Toward the Darkness

Riv Shapiro

The Hebrew phrase לשים לב/*lasim lev* is typically translated as “to pay attention”. Yet there is something crucial in the literal meaning - “to put heart”. When we offer our attention, we apply our heart toward something. I have many rituals of attention, from recording the birds I see in my neighborhood each day to observing the cycles of Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh. Tracking cycles of moon, migration, Torah and plant growth grounds me. Offering my attention to the lineages that form me and the land that shapes me allows me to withstand the chaos and challenge of the moment. I set my heart upon something eternal.

This year as we descend into the season of darkness, the practice of creating a phenology¹ wheel helps me to turn my heart to the long nights and short days of Kislev.

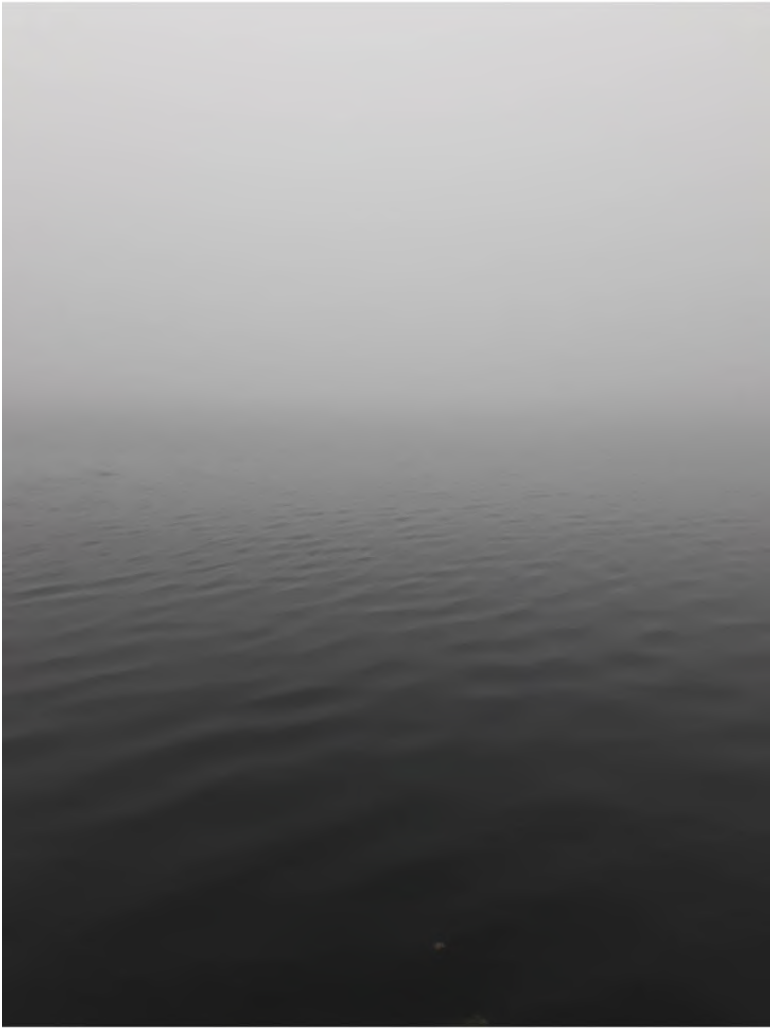
I enter even this darkest moon cycle with curiosity, willingness, and most of all - a sense of belonging. I can trust in the container, the circles that weave me with the wind and the rain.

With every day of observation there is the promise of the next, a reason to get out of bed in the morning and enter the day in wonder.

In the month of Kislev, each day tracks another minute or two of dark -- another minute of depths, of dreams, of fertile rest. Each day I notice what changes and what is constant, within and without me. The line between myself and “nature” dissolves. I am tracking my home, my relationships with the elements and other species who are my kin. I am paying attention. I am noticing when the rains come, and when they don't. I am putting my heart toward the wildfire smoke lingering in the air mid-Kislev. I am marking the visits of the Cedar Waxwings, who join me for the winter months. I am recording my dreams. I am listening. I am tracking change in a changing world.

We all belong to this interplay of darkness and light. We belong to the rhythm of these cycles. They are ready to claim us. They are calling us home. Who is singing outside your window? Who is growing stronger in the dark, damp earth? Who is calling you home?

¹ *Phenology = the observation of the changing of the seasons. I created this wheel using the template at <https://tinyurl.com/y4v98odv>. You can create your own, or join my Patreon starting at \$1/month for a monthly wheel template, Hebrew calendar teaching and original music or other goodies: www.patreon.com/rivshapiro.



Redmires, Sheffield (UK), late November. The cold, grey months of winter make us want to snuggle up under a duvet and hide away until the sun returns. Short days with little light drain our energy, and long nights make us feel we could sleep forever. But sometimes finding ways to cope with darkness means getting inside it, even just for a couple of minutes - gingerly stepping into its soft waves, continuing to breathe, grounding yourself, and then launching right in, startling your body with the cold shock, splashing around with pure silly joy - to find you were strong enough all along, and there are good things to be found in the mist. (Like hot tea in flasks, and homemade cake, and plenty of thermal layers afterwards.)

Darkness Draws Me

Nici

I've come to be with my parents for the lock down. I wanted to come offer some support, spend some time with them, with the wood burner, the pets, the fields, the river, the birds and hedgerows, the space and sky. I'm glad I came too because our dog was ill when I arrived and tests the next day found tumours and growths that meant I was just in time to say goodbye. Precious Mya who I've known her whole life, from little walnut-headed soft-tummied pup to wiry old girl who, though she still loved to sniff around the undergrowth, wouldn't make me worry, anymore, for the fauna she might find there.

She spoke of honey as a grief thing, slow stuck shock, gentle healer.

We always had lots of pets when I was growing up. It was a thorough introduction to death, but I've never been with one whilst they were euthanised. (I know there can be comfort in the euphemisms of “put to sleep” or “put down” but they also leave out the pain, and there is pain.) I've known friends and family while they were dying, and spent time with one friend when she was dead, but I've never been there at the moment of that transition. It was shocking (as death always is) and so quick. She was alive and then she was dead, and a little while after that she was gone. I so desperately wanted to keep her that I almost asked for scissors to cut a bit of her fur, but I felt strange to do that and knew it wouldn't mean I didn't have to let go.

*Amber and umber
Warm and bold
Against the drizzle-sky*

I've been going on walks that she loved - something to do with the grief, a way to remember and heal and process. I went to the river one afternoon, just at the end of sunset. The sky was so soft, some last tinges of peach, and mist starting to come in off the fields. The river was high with rain and tide. I found it so inviting; silky surface with elegant eddies carved in like cut glass, so sure of itself, flowing and flowing, confidently, in the right direction. I stopped to dip my hand in, remind myself of how cold it would be. It was very cold, and delightful,

the way it dripped off my fingers, made them tingle and glow. The mist too was inviting. I wondered about being engulfed by it, hidden by its myriad of miniscule mirrors. I felt curious about this desire to disappear or dissipate into the landscape. I took a few more steps in but stopped, listened to the birds, and walked back to the car.

*Walking by the river, Autumn lays the structure bare,
Walking by the river, Autumn sky and grass and air,
Walking by the river, Autumn colours deep and fair.*

I've brought some things from my altar with me and have them arranged in my room. I add saltwater to the little white bowl, to help hold my grief, and get the urge to touch a drop to my tongue each day, maybe to make it tangible, tasteable. I have stones (gifted, found and bought), jewellery (gifted, bought and passed down), and leaves and sticks, acorns, their hats and galls, lichen, moss, a conker- all picked up while walking, alone or with friends. I just realised that I found the acorn with the gall on a walk with Mya last time I was here, and on my altar I left at home there is a picture of Mya, coming out of the river from a favourite drinking spot, the same place I dipped in my hand the other day. I have two candles on my altar too, tea lights in little glass holders. I spend at least a little time every night before bed at my altar, in the dark with candles lit. A little time to connect with myself, to love myself. I enjoy my candle time so much I've been going to bed too late. Lingering just a little longer in the lovely glow that makes me want to dance and write and sing and rest.

*I ask Music to move me to open,
Help me feel what I need.
A collaboration with my body
And the sad soft melodies.
May I heal, may I hold, may I heal.*

The two Jewish rituals I grew up with were Chanukah and lighting Yahrzeit candles for my grandparents. I love them both. The story I hold about why we celebrated Chanukah as a family is that it was a reaction to my coming home from nursery school my first year with a part in the nativity play. (We lived in rural Oxfordshire - very Church of England, very white, very conservative.) It feels sweet that an anti-assimilation celebration is an important part of my anti-assimilation

story. And Chanukah was fun, lighting candles, eating latkes and doughnuts and soooo much chocolate (used as counters for the dreidel game). We got presents too and sang Maoz Tzur, badly, every night. That, the letters on the dreidel and the blessing for the lighting of the Chanukah candles were the only herbrew I learnt until I was an adult. I remember Mum coming to my primary school one year to teach my classmates about Chanukah. I remember finding it so uncomfortable, feeling so other and on show, being a curiosity. It feels different to share it now, more like a welcoming than a showing. I've held Chanukah parties in recent years, they've been over the top, the kids have lost their shit on chocolate and excitement, I've exhausted myself cooking too many latkes, it's great. I love the quiet ones too though, with family or a friend or two, less noise, more staring into the flames.

*Golden threads of loving connection
Stretching like mycelium through the rich rotting layers*

I appreciate my family's cultivation of celebration (we took any excuse), a skill of bringing light and joy into our lives. But I don't want to only conflate light with hope and dark with despair. I was so scared of the dark as a young one, it was where the 'bad thing' hid, waiting. The unknown still scares me but I think I've learnt, am learning, more about the gifts of darkness. We come from darkness, it is rich, it is ground, it is life and holds hope too. I love this dark time of the year, the subtle shades of autumn and winter: lingering green, browns, greys, orange, red. How many shades of grey are there in the sky today? And see how the last few orange leaves shine out against them? I love being warmed by layers of knitwear and spiced crown prince squash and lentil soup. I love being reminded of the preciousness of life, the beauty there is in all its stages, snuggling into that.

*Sometimes with darkness comes the memories of every humiliation, every shame,
every regret, every shock-silenced rage.*

*Sometimes with darkness comes the imagining of everything that could go wrong,
every inevitable terror, everything I want that won't happen.*

*Sometimes with darkness comes the knowledge of all my wrongnesses, every flaw,
every unfixable, unloveable, unacceptable bit.*

*And sometimes darkness draws in deep peace, deep calm, deep rest, deep love, deep
creativity, deep healing, deep pleasure, deep dreams.*

*Darkness draws me to myself, makes my inner world the infinite horizon of my
experience.*

Turning Earth

Tash Hart



This lockdown has opened up space for me to deepen my practice in ceramics, turning dark into light, deep earth into form and beauty.



Adam in the Trees

Joe Hyman

Avodah Zarah 8a:7 When Adam the first man saw that the day was progressively diminishing. He said: Woe is me; perhaps because I sinned the world is becoming dark around me and will return to chaos and disorder. And this is the death that was sentenced upon me from Heaven. He arose and spent eight days in fasting and in prayer. Once he saw that the season of Tevet and saw the day was progressively lengthening, he said: This is the way of the world. He went and observed a festival for eight days. This piece explores Adam's experience of feeling trapped by his sin in the garden of Eden. He can't see through the trees and they surround him in a darkness until he realises the darkness is not his fault, it's the way of the world and he can stop blaming himself for past mistakes.

How do we cope with darkness?

Eva Orbuch



Chanukah Midrash

How do we cope with darkness?

Sometime after the summer solstice but before the winter solstice, the Gemara in Avodah Zarah 8b explains Adam's second encounter with darkness.

Our Rabbis taught: When Adam saw the day getting gradually shorter, he said,

"Woe is me, perhaps because I have sinned, the world around me is being darkened and returning to its state of chaos and confusion; this then is the kind of death to which I have been sentenced from Heaven!"

So he began keeping an eight days fast and praying. But as he observed the winter solstice and noted the day getting increasingly longer, he said, "This is the world's natural course."

What if you went into Prayer and fasting - or your own version of it - when confronted with fear?

How can you gain deeper understanding and acceptance of the world's natural course?

Latke Recipe

Antonia Sara Zenkevitch

You'll need: oil, tears, laughter, golem, roots under snow, heat, sweet, pepper, sour, wheel, word, boughs that grow

How to make:

Potatoes, like golems, are pulled up towards the sun as Adam from red loam; we wash, shape and squeeze them, wild talismans of home; in imaginations golems roam as guardians, despite limitations, each clay person finds their tongue as we give back to soil, midwifing from earth's womb, combined labour and toil, in our darkest season, watch onions uncoil with renewed recollections of oppressors foiled, fear-not precipitation; leaky eyes won't spoil this spell of preparation, we'll eat tears embroiled to salt each situation, each strand fried in oil, we heat, browning these ribbons into glistening gold as ancestresses have done, today this kitchen holds both survival and customs bound up in Cosmos' yoke; what was, is and is to come, since Interbreath first spoke, use not what is broken; pepper everything with hope, spice and anticipation, mix, warm with passion's scope for emancipation; grease spits songs from iron throats tempered with compassion, abundance is not remote - a dish for everyone; onion, oil, potato - that many feed upon, tales old and new told of nosh eaten on the run; rebels on long roads to seek their liberation; reclaim identities; faith can't be seen as treason; cultures, communities cast out all subjugation; reach to feed the hungry as the menorah burns on, eight nights, infinity if we seek to do no harm, and celebrate plenty by sharing earth's profusion, recognising bounty, routes to Tikkun Olam, this portion made easy through roots of restitution; latkes at the ready - for great serving suggestions top with something creamy, munch without hesitation, choose sweet or savoury; apple sauce on the table, a gift from She; the Tree of Life; the fruit of fable; the juice of mystery, enjoy, get out the dreidel, give plates out to the free; those seeking a liberty that does not bend another, make your latkes and stories to share through the winter.

Geoffrey Cohen and The Temple of Fishballs

166 BCE. The Greeks have conquered Judea, sacked the temple and set up a range of high-quality saunas in Jerusalem. But young Judeans refused to take this defeat - or the communal baths - lying down. They launched an uprising against the oppressors, led by Mattathias and his sons, Judea's greatest dynasty - the Maccabees.

But an equally eminent dynasty was also involved in this epic conflict.

At first Geoffrey Cohen and her disciples had chosen to remain in Babylon - where there were better cafes, no animal sacrifices and if you shuffled in on shabbes morning, no one came round and dragged you to the temple. But when the Maccabees issued their call to arms, Geoffrey instructed her followers to answer it, adding that it 'sounded like a bit of a jolly' and 'it might make them famous'.

And so the group journeyed to the land of their ancestors. Once there, they contributed immensely to the war effort, fighting bravely from the back line and tactically hiding behind trees. For their legendary heroism they earned the name 'The Beigel Brigade'. But as victory drew close Geoffrey began to have a change of heart. "Do we really want this temple after all?" she asked her brave army. "And these Greeks - they seem rather civilised, with all their philosophy, democracy and tabbouleh." "Do we really want to live in a theocracy?" the troops agreed. "Shouldn't we just pack it all in?"

So the Beigel Brigade returned to the diaspora, and received a hero's welcome from the people of Pumbedita. A large meal was immediately organised for their return, in which Babylonian dishes such as hummus and pita sat next to Biblical delicacies such as pickles and almond kugel. At the centre of this great feast was an exact replica of the temple, made entirely out of fishballs. It is of this meal that the Book of Jewdas records "On that day swords were turned into breadsticks and cannonballs into gefilte fish". A great miracle took place that night, as an apparently small pile of beigels turned out to be enough for everyone to have six each. And, most famously, eight candles were lit, one for every gin and tonic that Geoffrey Cohen consumed.

Ever since that day (apart from a few years when everyone forgot), the people of Babylonia marked the festival الحفلة كبيرة! (al-hefle kbeereh) or ‘night of large party’ on the 23rd of Kislev. Or, as Rav Geoffrey taught, ‘on a Saturday night conveniently close to Christmas’. While some reportedly celebrate another, more militaristic Jewish festival a few short days later, we only have vague descriptions of this custom and it cannot be verified whether or not these people are actually Jews at all.

Diasporist Meditation on Hanukkah

Sophie Bigot-Goldblum

So long as the Jews were real Jews only the body was in exile, not the soul. But when the Jews cast off their spiritual yoke, the body became emancipated and the soul went into exile. Oh was that an exile - a bitter exile².

What is the meaning of Hanukkah? How can we redeem it from its nationalist narrative, its consumerist celebration? Sing its songs to a different tune than that christian jingles heard in a shopping mall. To make Hanukkah our own, we must retell its sorry, rethink its miracle.

If Pesach stands for the commemoration of our liberation, Hanukkah is the celebration of our victory.

But Hannuka's miracle lies not in the overpowering of the Seleucid army but in the continuity of the propagation of light.

Without the miracle, we would have been able to relight the menorah, but soon enough the oil would have run out, and we would have had to wait for a week before the real dedication of the temple. It's hard to picture such a torment: the victorious jews entering the temple, relighting the menorah, and being witness to its light slowly fading out... God was not going to have it be so. There was no need to wait for the fire to be rekindled. The menorah would know of no interruption! As soon as we entered the sanctuary, the menorah would not cease radiating. The miracle lies in God's act of kindness, of not letting us witness the fragility of continuity. By the miracle of the never-ending cruse of oil, we were to be made aware that our relationship with God could start where we left it, untouched, untarnished by our betrayals, by assimilation.

The idea of continuity is echoed in the very name of the holiday, חנוכה, which shares its etymology with a mysterious biblical character, חֲנוּךְ (Chanoch, rendered Enoch in English), son of Cain.

² Singer, Isaac Bashevis. *The penitent*. Macmillan, 2007.

וַיֵּדַע קַיִן אֶת אִשְׁתּוֹ וַתַּהַר וַתֵּלֶד אֶת הַנּוֹדָד וַיְהִי בְנָה עֵיר וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם הָעֵיר כְּשֵׁם בְּנוֹ הַנּוֹדָד

Cain knew his wife; she conceived and gave birth to Enoch. He became the builder of a city and called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch³.

It is no coincidence that it is only after a son is born to him that Cain, a man whose curse is to wander throughout the land- takes on to build a city. Surely, he is never to inhabit it. But his offspring will. The project is directed to his progeny to such an extent that he names the city after his son. Not only will he not benefit from the city, he will not even take credit for it. For a man whose existence had been so marked by his self-centeredness, by his inability to leave space for his brother, this act of selflessness speaks volumes. Through his wanderings, Cain has indeed come a long way.

He names his son הַנּוֹדָד. The Bible, which until this point had not been shy in giving meaning to each name, is eloquently silent on Cain's choice. The root הִנָּח gives us both the idea of dedication and education. As if, as he became a father, Cain exclaimed 'I have learned!': there's more to my existence than the fulfillment of my own desires. What Cain couldn't learn from being a brother, he learned by becoming Enoch's father.

Enoch's mysterious ends connect us back to Hanukah. Enoch 'walked with God' וַיִּתְהַלֵּךְ הַנּוֹדָד אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים - and he was no more, 'for God took him.'⁴ כִּי-לָקַח אֱתוֹ אֱלֹהִים. Enoch was in a process with God, a necessarily endless endeavour. Hence Enoch doesn't die, but is taken. He knows not the abrupt irreversibility of death : the way Chanukah wards off the irreversibility of exile.

Hidden in the miracle of hanukkah lies that fundamental promise, that despite exile, the connexion between God and her people is everlasting, for those brave and curious enough to look for that cruse of oil. Hidden under rubble lies the spring of everlasting light.

³ Bereshit 4:17

⁴ Bereshit 5:24

The Descent of She'ilah

Yael Tischler

The story of She'ilah is from Judges 11 (though she isn't named there). According to the Machzor Vitry, a text from 11th century France, She'ilah is sacrificed on the Winter Solstice. The story below is my midrash (interpretive retelling) of She'ilah's story. The first part is fairly true to the account in the Book of Judges, but then it takes its own direction. It is inspired by the Mesopotamian epic, The Descent of Inanna.

And there was, in those days, in Mizpah, a girl named Shalah; her name had the meaning of the Quiet one, the Peaceful One. And she surely lived up to her name; there was no girl more soft-spoken in all of Gilead, or so her father boasted.

Now Shalah loved her father very much, more than anyone else in the world. When he was away in battle, it was her custom to sit by the window, awaiting his return. And when he returned from victory, she would take her frame drum in her hand and go out to meet him with drums and dances, the daughters of Mizpah following after her.

This is what they would sing:

Ozi v'zimrat yah, va'yehi li li'shua
My Strength and the Song of Yah
Will be my Deliverance

Now, it came to pass, that one day when the Sun was low in the sky, Shalah's father came home from battle, and she ran to greet him, as usual, with drums and dances.

But it was that when he saw her, he tore the clothes off his back and threw his sword to the ground; it was still bloodied.

And he said, "Alas daughter! You have brought me low; you have become my troubler! For I have uttered a vow to the Lord I cannot retract." When he spoke, he surely did not look upon her. And he told her that in the heat of the battle, he had made a vow to God that if he was victorious, he would sacrifice the first thing that he saw upon his return. And behold: when he returned, there was Shalah.

And so it was that Shalah came to accept what had been decreed against her. For she was the Quiet One, the Peaceful One; there was no girl more soft-spoken in all the land.

But Shalah asked one thing only of her father: "Please, let me go with my Sisters into the mountains for two months. There, together, we will mourn for what has been and for what will never be. Then, if I must die, then I must die."

So Shalah took her Sisters, and they journeyed together on foot for three days, until they reached the mountains.

There, on the mountaintop, in the company of her sisters, Shalah made an offering to the Goddess. It was the offering of the toys of her youth, as was the custom amongst the Daughters of Israel. They would do this before they were married, before they left their mothers and sisters to enter the house of their husbands. And as She'ilah watched her toys burn, she said in her heart: "I will not be married to any soul, save Death."

After these things, Shalah and her sisters wept:

They wept on account of Shalah and on account of her short life, and they wept on account of the blame that Shalah's father placed upon her, though it was he and he alone who had sinned in the eyes of Goddess.

And it was that when they wept, the whole world wept alongside them: the mountains and the trees and the beasts of the fields and the rain pouring down from the Heavens.

Behold: the tears of Shalah and her sisters opened a chasm in the Earth herself. And in the chasm was a gateway to Sheol, the Underworld, the resting place of the ancestors.

And Shalah heard, arising from the Earth, voices that called out to her:

*Come to us, daughter, into the Earth, the Dark, She calls to you
Come to us, daughter into the Earth, the Dark, she calls to you
We call with the voice of the many who have walked this path before
We call with the voice of the many, to you we open the door*

In the beginning, Shalah feared to descend into the Dark. But, then, it came to pass that one of her sisters unravelled her shawl, making a long red thread. And she spoke to Shalah, saying: "Hold this. and we will surely hold you in your descent, and thus you will find your way back to us."

And so, Shalah heeded the voices, and descended into the Earth.

In the beginning of her setting out, she saw the moist walls of the passageway and the unsmoothed stones of which they were made; and the Earth was wet beneath her feet.

But then, she was so far beneath the face of the Earth, that she surely could not see a thing. She had only her voice for a guide. And so, Shalah sang to herself, as a remembrance of who she was, in the name of guarding the thought that she still existed, even in the Dark.

And it was that as Shalah was walking, all of her body-soul began to fall away: the clothes upon her limbs and the hair upon her head; her skin and her flesh, until she was only a pile of bones.

And so she remained, for forty days and forty nights.

And then, out of the darkness came a woman. And her hair was long and flowed like a river, and her robe woven out of Earth and tree roots. She had the semblance of being very old and very young.

And she gathered up Shalah's bones. And she held them in her arms like a nursling.

And over the bones, she wept. And over the bones, she sang:

*You are loved by an unending love
You are loved by an unending love*

And she rocked the bones of Shalah in her arms. And she wept and she sang:

*You are loved by an unending love
You are loved by an unending love*

And she dug a hole in the Earth.

And she buried Shalah's bones, alongside her mothers.

And over them she wept, and she sang:

*You are loved by an unending love
You are loved by an unending love*

And out of the Earth, from the bones of Shalah, grew a tree:

It was a pomegranate tree with sweet, red fruit and many branches, reaching up out of the Earth, towards the Sun that was hidden.

And the woman knocked on the trunk of the tree, and there was an opening in it.

And behold: inside lay Shalah, whole and asleep.

And into the palm of Shalah's hand, the woman placed a gift.

The gift was the letter aleph, aglow with flame.

There are those who say that the aleph has no sound. But it is taught also that the aleph surely is in possession of a sound. It is the sound of the breath and of the voice, that holds within it a power that cannot be subdued.

And the woman said unto her: “You are no longer Shalah, the Peaceful One, the Quiet One; with this letter aleph, you become She’ilah, the Questioner, the One Who Descends to Sheol, the Underworld, and Who Returns.”

And She’ilah said, “The One Who Returns?” for she had thought to remain in the refuge of the ground.

And the woman said, “You will surely *return*. But so too will you return here, to Sheol, for the world moves in cycles.”

And so it was that She’ilah emerged out of the tree, and she used its branches to climb out of the Earth, following the red thread of her sisters all the while, back to where they awaited her on that mountaintop.

And when they saw her, they were moved to tears once again, but lo! they were tears of joy.

And they saw that she was changed, and that her face was radiant.

And so they greeted her with this song:

*Who is she who shines like the dawn?
Beautiful as the moon
Radiant as the Sun
Awesome as bannered hosts*

And so it was that She’ilah recognised the power within her. So she said to her sisters, “Light up your candles, for a fire burns brightly inside of me, and we will go together to meet my Father at the shrine in Mizpah.”

And when She’ilah and her sisters arrived at the shrine in Mizpah, there was her father, awaiting her. And She’ilah rose up onto the altar. And she bellowed in a great voice, “Do you think in truth that your God would command you to lay your hand upon your own daughter? Is your will so weak that you must follow your vow like a prideful fool? Am I so little to you that you would send me up in flames?”

He said to her, “It is on your account that I do this thing, for this is what the Lord has decreed.”

She said to him, “No! It is you who raises your hand against me. Behold: let Shekhinah decide between you and me, and we will see who is right in Her eyes.”

And She’ilah’s father took his torch in his hand and lowered it onto the altar, and the robe of She’ilah caught fire.

And She'ilah burned, but she was not consumed. For the fire wrapped itself around her, but it could not kill her, for she had been to the House of Death and returned from it.

Thus, the father of She'ilah ran in haste to a place that is unknown to this day.

And She'ilah did not see her father again after that time.

And so She'ilah lived on, and she became a Shrinekeeper of Mizpah.

But every year, when the world becomes dark, she descends again into She'ol. There, she is restored, in order that she may Return to Us. It is said that she is always descending and returning, just as we are always descending and returning.

It is also said that the Daughters of Israel observe a festival for She'ilah four days out of every year, to this very day. And they go up to the mountains, and they weep and wail on account of She'ilah for three days. And then, on the fourth day, they rejoice at her return and they sing together:

*May Sheilah watch over our descents into the dark,
May She guard our ascents into the light
And may we be a part of the cycles of the Earth
That are with us until the end of our days*

Amen! Amen! Selah!

The story of She'ilah is connected to the Winter Solstice, which often overlaps with Channukah, or at least happens during the same period of darkness. Our ancestors avoided drawing water on the Winter Solstice, since this was the day that Jephthah supposedly sacrificed She'ilah, and her blood was said to flow into the waters.

Tipporah Calls the Ravens

Antonia Sara Zenkevitch



Tipporah Calls the Ravens is, paint and digital collage inspired by the coming of winter, unexpected light and the synergy of Tipporah's name (meaning bird) with ravens who to me embody the spirit of knowledge, mystery, mischief, freedom and defiance. I see these themes in Chanukkah and this time of year.

Chapter 4: Stesyee and Gnesyee

The two little old ladies, who Mordechai Markus saw and started at through his window.

Two little old ladies, two cemetery measurers - Stesyee and Gnesyee (another Gnesyee⁵), wrapped in shawls with knots tied at the back, with withered faces from which protrude little old lady potato-noses bearing spectacles with strings tightened up behind their ears.

Two psalm-sayers, Stesyee and Gnesyee, grey like chickens, who go knocking on doors every Monday.

Two, who sit quietly on the doorsteps and curse and bless with their sunken mouths.

Stesyee and Gnesyee live in the Ta'are⁶ house at the cemetery. There, every day they look through the little window, watching a bird fly and a blade of grass grow.

And at night they sleep; Stesyee - on the oven, Gnesyee - on the cot, covered with a small pelt and a rag.

And they whisper in their sleep and they lie, and they lie, like two wax candles.

And in the middle of the night Stesyee stirs, she rubs the dry cracks that are her eyes, and she asks:

“Gnesyee, Gnesyee - are you asleep?”

Gnesyee answers:

“No, and you, Stesyee?”

“Also no.”

They crawl down from their sleeping places, pour water over their hands three times with blessings, tie and button themselves up, and little by little, take out the dead thread from the casket.

Then they open the low, heavy door of the Ta'are house, and they come out into the cemetery.

Oh, how the stars are shining.

Stesyee takes up the end of the thread and walks far ahead. And Gnesyee holds the ball behind her, uncoiling it bit by bit, and like this they measure the cemetery.

Like this.

⁵ Gnesyee is also the name of the protagonist's romantic interest, so it's quite interesting that this reminder of the lover is repeated here

⁶ Ta'are = ritual cleansing of the body before burial

The white thread stretches out in the darkness, it swirls and expands in the wind, which blows, it unrolls itself up longer and longer up in the sky, until it entangles the church spires and tall towers of the city. It catches the stars in its web. And so it spins, and weaves, and envelopes the whole town in a dead thread.

Annabel Cohen

At Channukah we celebrate lights as the world descends in the darkness. In this chapter of Moyshe Kulbak's Montog, set in dark times during the Russian Revolution, two feldmesterins (cemetery measuring women) measure the cemetery with thread which they will later use to make soul candles - a ritual practised by Jewish women in Eastern Europe since at least the 1700s.

A Candle Burns

A candle burns for those forgotten,
for those who've past and passed and gone,
for those who've passed beyond the stage of memory,
bore the thought we'd bring them home.

Through stories told to me by elders
I've heard "the hep!" and felt the flames,
hid from mobs in time of pogrom,
done to death in a Greco Hebrew name.

The Gods of old begat my coming,
I have walked eternity,
out of Eden, through its jungle
of becoming, I am myself the refugee.

There is no earth where I've not wandered,
desert, plain, and city street
met the eyes that you've averted,
tasted hunger, sensed disbelief.

Akin to death is how I'm pictured,
all skin and bone with haunted eyes,
my colour's black and white and browning,
your clothes I wear are not my size.

Do I believe you are my brother?
You will forgive me if I say,
that I've heard that said so often,
it's meaning lessens every day.

There is hatred in each country,
persecution ignites fear,
rich versus poor and vice versa,
the immigrant and people here.

We've come a long way from the garden
walking forward, looking back,
diverged to many trackways
and lost the route to have the knack.

A simple thought, this worlds' for sharing,
how many times I've heard that said,
but what's meant by shared is different
they that only share the earth in unity
are the speechless who are dead.

A simple thought, too simple maybe
is as we circle round looking forward
to the garden, the trees of Eden lie behind us
in the forests of our minds...waiting to be found.

(i) D. R.

For her children to have children

Samson Hart

For great-great-grandma Sarah, and her home in Riverside, Cardiff

This road is longer than you see
my feet tell me as I
walk along fitzhamon embankment
tracing the footsteps of Sarah
feeling the ground meet me where I am
and where she is
and where she walked

how her feet might have touched this ground more gently
how she might have carried vegetables
and children
and immigrant hopes

maybe she thought of me
walking lightly
those two feet nimbly meeting the ground
hoping not to sink
or be swallowed by the world again

hoping the road ahead was long enough
for her children to have children to have children

maybe, when she lit a candle in the dark
she watched its' fragile flickering flame
and thought of time,
memory like a mystic pool,
what was-is-will be

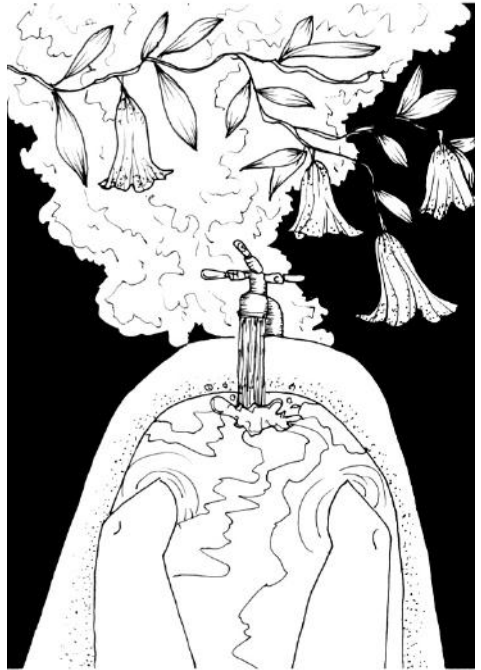
was she willing to sacrifice everything?
her yiddish
her tears
her treacherous journey kept secret
her prayers to the water
muttered under the breath
catching the ripples of time
to find me here

a candle still burning on the eighth day

Miriam

Rena Oppenheimer

Not long after she crossed
Into life itself, the mother
Of my mother of my mother
traversed a near-endless sea.
She was still Miriam then,
As I am now--the firm, quiet
Centerpiece between
My first and final
Names, often looked over.
Her *yum* and the echoing timbrel
Were taken in one swipe
Of a pen on Ellis Island.
Without any say of her own,
Sea-of-Sorrow and *Myrrh* and
Strength-in-Westward-Change
Reduced to *Bitterness*--docked
To Mary, just and only Mary.
Short a syllable and a man,
She let out the seams
Of narrow dresses, made room
For her full body to be.
She rocked back and forth
Like the boat that carried her--
Keeping herself, her sisters,
And daughters, afloat.
I am not a mother
But I will do my best
To hold fast to the *iam* you lost,
Miriam, Miriam, whole Miriam,
Waves-of-Beloved-Rebellion--
Printed dark in my documents,
Nestled as deeply in me
as a rib or a wish.



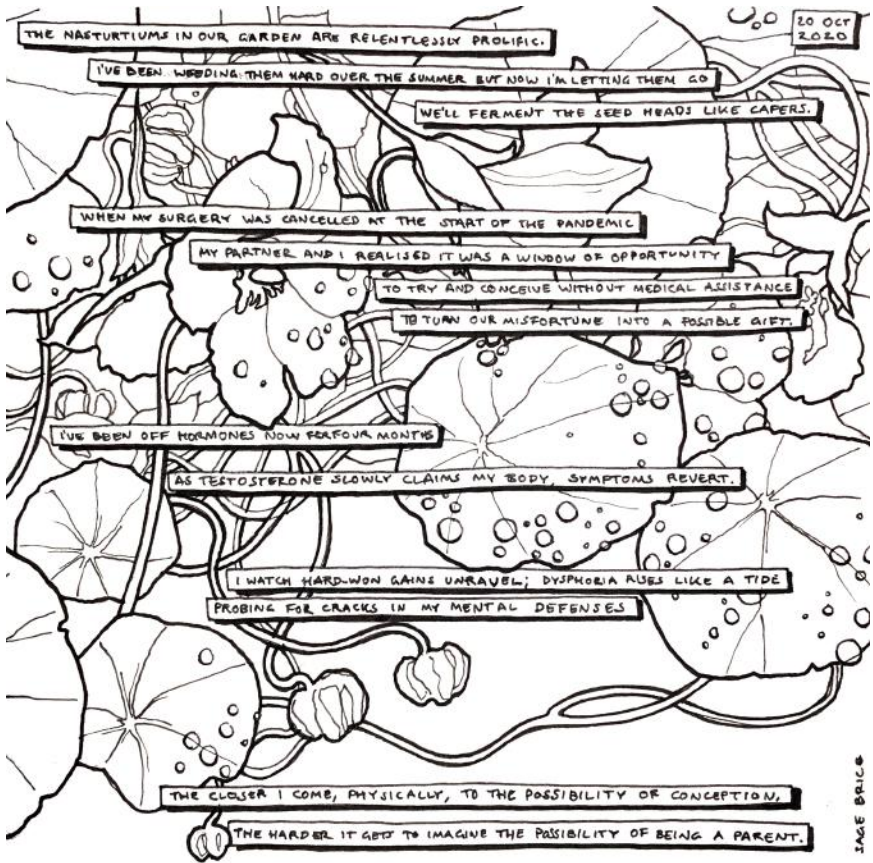
Susiya, Again

Rena Oppenheimer

The seeds came stained--
Blue for watermelon, pink for
Squash, each an impossible
Prayer for people and leaves
To grow unbothered. We blessed
With hands not meant to hold
One another. Before we could
Put them in the ground to sleep,
My people came over the ridge.
I could barely see them
Under the metal and straps,
And they couldn't see me--only
The dream of a bright horizon
Where a new crop of desert-tenders
make love and lawns and forget about
All the wandering. And so,
When the boots touched down,
Everyone asked the same question:
What are you doing here?

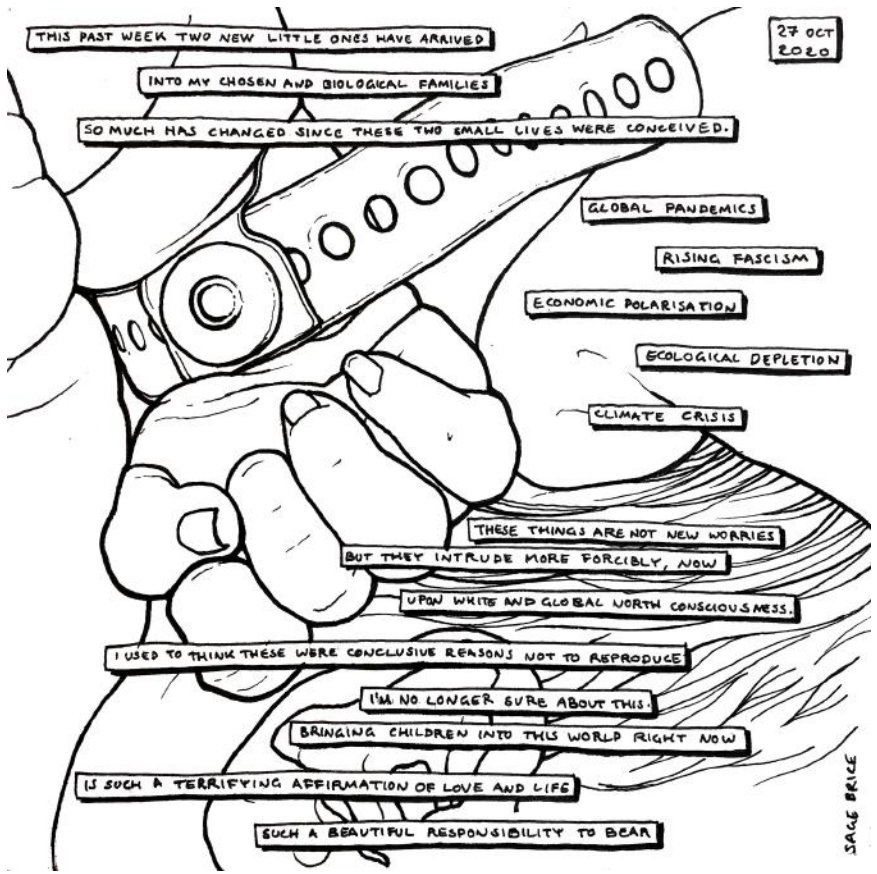
The smoke came before the sound.
Men wearing a yellow too shocking
to be natural gathered homes in their hands,
beams scrawled with the heights of children.
They took the smell of hot oil
Living in the canvas, the echoing
of ringtones and last words and barking dogs.
They slashed it into rubble, left scattered
Tires that once held everything
Gazing unblinking at an eternal sky.

The only thing to do was sing
About all that's created
When precious things are destroyed.
Young boys walked after the soldiers
As they retreated to some distant place.
They know lost sheep when they see them.
Every god we have, the harsh sun
and all the lizard witnesses curled over
and wept with the women, whispering,
Remember, remember, remember.
This place belongs only to the wind.



The nasturtiums in our garden are relentlessly prolific./ I've been weeding them hard over the summer but now I'm letting them go/ we'll ferment the seed heads like capers./ When my surgery was cancelled at the start of the pandemic/ my partner and I realised it was a window of opportunity/ to try and conceive without medical assistance/ to turn our misfortune into a possible gift./ I've been off hormones now for four months/ as testosterone slowly claims my body, symptoms revert./ I watch hard-won gains unravel; dysphoria rises like a tide / probing the cracks in my mental defences./ The closer I come, physically, to the possibility of conception, the harder it gets to imagine the possibility of being a parent.

27 OCT
2020



This past week two new little ones have arrived/ into my chosen and biological families/ so much has changed since these two small lives were conceived./ Global pandemics/ rising fascism/ economic polarisation/ ecological depletion/ climate crisis/ these things are not new worries/ but they intrude more forcibly, now/ upon white global north consciousness./ I used to think these were conclusive reasons not to reproduce/ I'm no longer sure about this./ Bringing children into this world right now/ is such a terrifying affirmation of love and life/ such a beautiful responsibility to bear

"The future is dark, with a darkness as much of the womb as the grave."

-- Rebecca Solnit

i was born here

Sara Moon

I was birthed in november. orienting to the post-womb world wrapped in blankets, hearing the pattering of rain on the top of my pram, alert to that descent into winter, the preparation of layers, the thermal vests, the woollen hats, the endless gurgle of the kettle.

my first winter on earth, pressed to my mother's breast, burrowing in beard, cradled by sisters and strangers, my grandmother nearby coiling up the newspaper for the fire.

Winter was my first sense.

From my very beginning learning its descent.

*

I write this now, thirty-one years later, from a little caravan in north yorkshire where i've been living for the last few months, watching summer wind its way into autumn, watching winter wrestle it to the ground, until the trees stand naked against these wild yorkshire skies.

Here I really apprentice the darkness - no street lights, at first no electricity, living mostly by candle and moon light. No avoiding it, no get-out. Take me *in* to that precious darkness.

The dark air embraces me as I come outside for my last wee before bed. I wash my dishes each evening in its blackness. after work I leave the strip-lighting of the packing shed and walk to my caravan. It was dark at 4 and now it is properly dark. I go slow, wading through an unrecognisable world, feeling my pupils dilate. Something tender and sensitive in my eyes responding to this night. There is a deep pleasure in it, a felt intimacy between my body and this cycle of time. My eyes orienting the rest of my body into the emotional pace of the dark. My pupils like a cervix, dilating for something to be birthed. What? I don't know. But as my eyes move, i feel myself getting closer.

I sit on the edge of a very cold chair outside my caravan. If the moon is there, I bathe in her. And if not, I bathe in unlight. a darkness of so much depth. Often there is a between, where the moon hides behind clouds and peeks out again, it is one of the joys of my life to play hide and seek with this sky-moon. Kiss my head.

Closer still. this invitation, this leaning in, this tiny birth. the darkness hangs like a blanket, something so soft and intimate in it. I sit and listen here. feeling the inter-play between my eyes and the dark, orienting, breathing it in. cosy lover. velvety, sensuous dance. the world's hand on my back, doula to this nocturnal, mysterious creature who emerges when allowed, a piece of me, that dreams are stirred from, a piece of me, of you, of all of us, cyclical and wild, so often forgotten in our over-emphasis of the light.

There is goddess stirring in this dark. *We need more of her.*

Sunrise, Nightfall

Yael Roberts



an endless turning / the waves bite / into the night / no more yearning

What is darkness

Maya Brown

What is darkness

Quiet

Blank

Space

Time

Calm

Cold

We are often lost in a whirlwind of light and colour

Clothes, Spices, parties, business meetings, running from one thing to another

Darkness is the other side of the coin

The quiet

The sombre

The bland

The hollow

The night

Our own inner world

Yet when plummeted into darkness

What do we get?

First the agitation and anxiety that there is no light

The pictures and voices chasing each other round in our heads

Perhaps when that has calmed down we find stillness

The depths at the bottom of the ocean

Perhaps our depths do not feel still but thick and squelchy like mud, hollow
and empty like the inside

of a tree or sticky and sweet like molasses.

Only when we have embraced our inner darkness do we have space for the tiny
lights. The stars in

the sky, the hidden fishes at the bottom of the ocean.

At the bottom of the black hole is a well of imagination, wisdom, love,
realization waiting to be

discovered

If you can slow down enough to find it

If you can calm down enough to see it

Whatever feelings it brings if you can sit with it in acceptance, without
judgement-

You might just be able to pull some water out the well
And drink from your own pool of wisdom and imagination

Since being in lockdown this time and after getting through some of the darkness I have begun to rediscover my own creativity, in the form of songwriting and recording. Here is a song I've been working on that hopefully fits in to the themes of light in the darkness, it starts off with the feelings and darkness some may have been going through and travels towards the community and oneness that we need to get through.

Accessible on this link (better with headphones): <https://soundcloud.com/violinsoundspapaya/were-not-running-any-race>

love, disgust, love

Ari Wharton

1.

O Delusive Clarity, treasure me like I am worth it
the dysphoric truth of euphoria keeps following me
clinging as close as light and shadow discern my body

2.

a crushingly in love attitude
Embraced by the halls of whispered promises lovers make
After one of them dies,
is the other forever pardoned from the breezy courts of fate?
is the other forever parted in pleas?
like...Please please please

3.

Passion so foolish, it means exile
On my knees for hope again
prostrated with despair and ecstasy, Dizzily equal in measure
I Rise with the spirits of change, who make me over in the image of Melody

Trading pleasure for sacrifice at the altar of the gods of disreputation, a favorite
of my favorite places to pray.
Full of rot and desire, I reach my hand out to the angels of degeneracy that
dance in the collective dreams of the daring, delighted.
I don't read the inscriptions on the temple walls of Yearning, they read me

This flavor of indulgence tastes like: we wear our crowns, sovereign
Ill sing you to sleep as the song changes

Dear Darkness

Liv Barnett

I have never addressed you formally, though you have been a part of my life for the past two decades. As a child I was terrified of the physical manifestation of you, of the creatures that formed in your shadows, the burglars and murderers who hid in you, ready to pounce. By my early teens you had started to sneak your way into the corners of my heart, as I neared twenty you had captured my head with your nebulous glow, too.

Time wore on as you took over my whole body, life, soul. When once I slept with a torch to protect myself from your lack of light, I then armed myself with other tools to fight against your crushing murkiness. Tools that came in the form of bottles, pills, of staying in bed all day and shutting myself off from any source of daybreak. I could be with you if I had something to numb and protect me from fear.

I used to blame you for everything just as you blamed me, too. You told me cruel things I would never say to anyone else, convinced me we were inseparable. You tried to fracture my relationships with others so I would stay with you, only you. You left me trapped in bathroom cubicles, sobbing and praying for you to relinquish your grip on me. You're a funny one, Darkness. I've had to learn how we can get along with one another in a mutually supportive way. At first you didn't like it, and nor did I. You shouted loudly as I tried to get rid of you. I shuddered with fear as I distrusted the breaks of light I was beginning to see. You seduced me with your promise of known safety, only to keep me with you for long after the sun was rising. You kicked and screamed as I shunned you for what I desired: complete light. No lows, no night time, no you.

I am nearing my third decade soon with you in tow. I've learnt not to exile you, learnt that you are as necessary as the bright colours and light of the world. I'd say we have been forming a friendship slowly over the past few years, you and I. You let me light candles to embrace you, I listen when you call my name and ask me to tend to you. I can see the


stars that peak through you and admire their beauty all the more for how they compliment your contrasting, rich shadow.

It is winter now and we are approaching Hanukkah and Christmas and whatever they hold while a pandemic is keeping us from hugging our loved ones. I know you will become more prominent this season as the days get shorter and this time, I am ready for you. I have blankets and scented candles and essential oils to bathe in while you cover the sky. I am open to the quiet magic only you contain, willing to listen to the wisdom that you share. I'm not so afraid of you anymore, Darkness. We can walk hand in hand and snuggle up together. We can be whole, together.

Love and Courage,
Your Friend



Raizel Frank-Slater



וְיָשְׁבוּ אִישׁ תַּחַת
לְפֶנֶעַ וְתַחַת
תְּפֹלְתוֹ וְאֵין
מִחֲרִיב

AND EVERYONE
SHALL SIT UNDER
THEIR GRAPEVINE
OR FIG TREE AND
NO-ONE SHOULD
MAKE THEM AFRAID

Blessing

Talia Reed

This piece was created for Talia's potted garden at Sadeh farm. It will sit over a bench underneath a fig tree and grapevine.

Consider The Floor Your Friend

Shaina Kaye

Some people are born on ground level. Some people are born on a mountain top. Some people are born in a pit 10 feet underground. I am one of pit people. This is a personal reflection on my instinctual attempts to cope with the dark reality of having survived an abusive family system.

I started sitting shiva for my living parents years ago. Yes, my parents, the man and woman who made me, they are alive, but dead in spirit. They are alive, but I began mourning them like they were buried.

I didn't invite anyone over. I didn't tear my clothes. I didn't remove my shoes. I didn't stop looking in the mirror. I didn't stop showering (aside from my usual depressive spells that make me forget to). The one traditional element my body decided still applied to this unusual mourning was raw, obvious, and animal. By some body-wisdom instinct, I lowered myself to the ground on many mornings and many evenings, alone. Skipping the symbolic low stool, I flung to the floor like a magnet seized me.

There were no thoughts in this frail, crumpled posture. There was only lying fallow. There was the truth. There was an end to the incessant flashbacks. There was my psyche staring at demons shaped like parents, shaped like their parents, shaped like generations of anguish unrelenting. There was emptiness. There was wailing. There was orphanhood. There was only honesty. There were no more lies or secrets. There was the blue, mildewy carpet in my illegal, Kew Garden Hills basement apartment. It was dark as midnight with a faint moonlike light from a half window. It was almost too symbolic, like a cave for mourning with the smallest glimmer to tell you that the sun kept shining somewhere not too far away, but well beyond your vantage point. Then came the cold, hardwood floor at Beit Adamah. There was the soft, smelly goat hide after the shechting to cushion my embodied lamentation. There was my cheekbone pressed awkwardly against a naturally unforgiving surface. The pressure made me feel real.

These short moments collapsed instinctually on the floor, they let me release the burden of pretending that I was okay. This is the gift of grief: being in a state of uncompromising honesty with the truth of how deeply life can hurt. Some would say I was prostrating. If I was prostrating, it was to a god of chaos and meaningless violence. If I was praying, I was praying goodbye to the G-D with he/him pronouns who had protected my psyche from the brunt of loneliness

and terror. Whatever it was exactly that I was doing on the floor, it was embracing darkness without any bells or whistles.

All these years after the mourning began, I find my ritual to be woefully incomplete. I have sat with this darkness and I continue to, as there's no other way for me to keep living this life I was born to. It's dawning on me now, in this year of who-knows-how-many-will-actually-die, that my mourning is incomplete without witness from Jewish community. Where is my *yisgadal v'yisgadash shme'rabah*? Where are the tombstones? Who are the people I can share my grief with? Who's hands are open for holding? And how to relate to this mom and dad who live on in the flesh?

If I've learned anything about simply living alongside the darkest nights of human experience, it's that I cannot bear it alone. There is a grieving cave I knew to enter alone, learn to tend the fire even, yes, but upon emergence, I believe there is a dance that our community must embrace us with. I do not believe I can learn to dance again alone. I'm not even sure I was able to properly grieve without being escorted by my community to the cave in the first place! It's becoming clear to me, the more I learn to hear my own body's instincts, that the most painful wounds I carry were inflicted by those who knew me best and were supposed to protect me the most. It is only logical that this wound will heal most completely if it is tended by those who now know me best and care for me the most.

My darkness is this legacy of three generations of physical, verbal, and sexual abuse, compounded by (or perhaps caused by) historical trauma and persecution. The emotional scars of family violence qualify me for at least three psychological disorders. (Do I get a gold star?) I toe this line between madness and justifiable grief-tending. When I wear my sociology hat, I am clearly grieving the most terrible human cruelty, witnessed and experienced from the youngest age. When I wear my psychology hat, I'm a mad person crumpled on the floor who should probably give medication another chance. When I wear my Ruach hat, I am a mammal in need of the village to witness my survival and transform my lament into dancing. The only thing I can identify that's truly moved me from despair to choosing life has been this flinging to the floor, this cave time, this learning to tolerate my darkest reality. When you find yourself feeling into the darkest parts or are confronted with the darkness in the face of someone you know, remember me, the orphan with living zombie parents, and consider the floor your friend. Consider embracing what feels true. Consider that a pretty dawn is not your concern right now, though it still shines somewhere else beyond your vantage point.



Ani Shelach

Sol Yael Weiss

*Ani shelach v'chalomotai shelach - I am yours and my dreams are yours.
Text from the prayer for dreams said during Birkas Kohanim / the priestly
blessing. Art as an offering of stars and wondering emerging from the
depths of Kislev dreamtime.*

Joy in the Dark

We asked our contributors where they found joy and nourishment in the dark.....

Touching a lover's back

In candlelight, and the ambiance it creates
under the night sky, in bed and in a 'dark' sense of humour

Creating art and writing

moving through familiar spaces unseeing

music and phone calls with friends

Singing niggunim until we fall asleep at the table

Cuddling with a loved one or just with myself, I feel the warmth of God.
in the stars

I find joy in deep dives into the dream realm - I feel like I winter in the ocean's
depths, looking at what has been out of view.

In the arms of loving friends, in tree limbs, in warm ceramic mugs between my
fingers, in hora dancing, in a kumzitz, in shabbos candles...

in chocolate, Torah and Sara Klugman.

Dancing around a bonfire with friends!

In noticing. May it be a little bird flying from one branch to another or a flower
along a walk that I've done everyday and managed to miss. These little
moments of noticing often bring me quiet joy in the dark

When I can see the stars!

Long slow creative nights. The transformation of fires and candlelight. The
support of loved ones. Hearty stews.

Reaching for the hot-water bottle in the middle of the night and it still being
warm!

Greeting shabbat and feeling her washing over the landscapes.

Reading poetry by/with the fire



Us

Kohenet Riv Shapiro (they/them/theirs)

Riv Ranney Shapiro (they/them/theirs) is a queer Ashkenazi multi-modal artist, educator and ordained Kohenet (feminist Jewish ritualist) living on Chochenyo Ohlone land in Oakland, CA. For music, Kohenet offerings and interspecies admiration, follow them on IG @kohenet.riv or join their Patreon at patreon.com/rivshapiro. Find out more at rivshapiro.com.

Ruth (she/her)

As well as a keen cyclist and nature-lover, Ruth is a musician (violin and piano) based in Sheffield. Her band The Unsung just released their second album, which can be found here: <https://bit.ly/3qEj7Bg>

Nici (she/they)

Nici is a tender queer who gets excited about doing grief work in community, learning about Jewish traditions and stories, and building practices which bring joy and connection (to the self, the natural world and each other). nici.cini on Instagram.

Tash Hart (she/her)

Tash Hart makes earth born, functional pieces that ask us to appreciate our material objects and say no to throw away culture. Her work is designed to be beautifully functional and enjoyable to hold and use. @clayandlimes

Joe Hyman (he/him)

Joe Hyman is a cultural programmer, visual artist and LGBTQ+ activist. He currently works at JW3 as their Young JW3 programmer and is the co-founder of DAVAR, the Jewish Art Immersive.

Eva Orbuch

Eva is a passionate justice seeker and organizer of beautiful trouble. Eva dedicates herself to community building in the Bay Area where she has lived her whole life, through music, womyns circles, progressive campaigns, and more. She is a Moon Dancer (a women's Mexican spiritual tradition), Kohenet (Hebrew Priestess) in training, and Adamah alum. She loves to support and coach people in finding their authentic activism and making practical progress on their creative dreams.

Antonia Zenkevitch (she/her)

Story-weaver, cat cushion, artist, social justice campaigner and collector and warrior of various disabilities. I've worked in peace, sustainability and interfaith projects and creative facilitation. I have an MA in Human Security & am co-founder of Nott Normal, a Nottingham-based accessible, adaptive arts project. <https://nottnormal.life> and <https://antoniasarazenkevitch.com> (the latter is a bit out of date) Geoffrey Cohen

Rabbi/Godol Hador is the mysterious founder of Jewdas who is in exile in the remaining kosher hotels of Bournemouth. www.jewdas.org

Sophie Bigot-Goldblum (she-hers)

Sophie is a wandering raven. She loves Arsenal and writes in French : <https://frblogs.timesofisrael.com/author/sophie-bigot-goldblum/>

Yael Tischler

Yael Tischler is a Kohenet (Hebrew Priestess), ritual-weaver, Jewish educator and song leader. She is the co-founder of Yelala, a constellation of work that celebrates Earth-centred, feminist Jewish spirituality and reclaims the practices of our women/femme and folk ancestors. She holds an MA in Writing for Young People from Bath Spa University, a BA in English Literature from Columbia University and a BA in Tanakh (Bible) from the Jewish Theological Seminary. She is a first year Rabbinical Student at Leo Baeck College.

Annabel Cohen (she/her)

Annabel Cohen is a PhD student in Modern Jewish Studies and a Kohenet in training. You can read more of her translations of Yiddish sources on cemetery measuring and other topics on her blog www.pullingatthreads.com

Del Reid (he+him+his)

Derek is a poet and a folklorist of Ashkenazi traditions, in particular Yiddish folk music, folk stories and superstitions. He worked for 20 years with the Yiddish poet Avraham Nachum Stencl, and is a founder member of The Society for Storytelling.

Samson Hart (he/him)

Samson is a food grower, land-tender, writer and earth-based Jewish diasporist. He is co-founder of Miknaf Haaretz, a collaborative associate at Gentle/Radical, and organises with Na'amod and The Landworkers' Alliance. Find him @samsonhart and subscribe to his writing/poetry here: tinyletter.com/thecomingspring

Rena Oppenheimer (she/her)

Rena is the granddaughter of Jewish leaders, social workers, and Holocaust survivors. She is a white queer Ashkenazi Jewish therapist, nature connection mentor, soferet-in-training, and Palestine solidarity organizer. She loves love, making friqqi/reverent Jewish art, pompoms, pickles, and burlesque performance.

Sage brice (she/her)

Sage Brice is an artist-geographer interested in the politics of nature, particularly in relation to queer and trans ecologies of identity. Her practice is an exploration of vulnerability as a political, ecological, and philosophical orientation. Methods include drawing, sculpture, animation, writing, and various forms of collaboration. The work presented here is an excerpt from an ongoing covid-19 diary, published in full at dandelionroots2020.wordpress.com Find her other work at sagebrice.com

Sara Moon (she/they)

Sara is a food grower, jewish educator and kohenet-in-training currently based in north yorkshire. emerging/we'll see instagram @jewdica

Yael Roberts

Yael Roberts is an artist and educator. www.yaelroberts.com

Maya Brown (she/her)

A musician and violinist currently based in Worcestershire with links to Sheffield reform community and 3 counties liberal Jewish community. Having recently come back from touring with the duo techolasmias she is currently working on music and storytelling performances, songs and compositions. Music from techolasmias is duo available at bandcamp or soundcloud/techolasmias. Sometimes posts original songs at soundcloud.com/violinsoundspapaya

Ari Wharton (they.them)

I think what I make mostly comes from some combination of listening to materials tell me what they want to be, a desire for all people to feel held and a yearning to change something. <https://gayteraphim.tumblr.com/>

Liv Barnett (she/her)

Loves pickles, hates fascism. Fusing Jewish and Celtic roots and getting very confused in the process. Into the outdoors, jazzy vintage outfits, loud conversations & even louder music.

Raizel Frankl-Slater raizelfrankl-slater.com

Talia Reed (she/her)

Currently a participant in the volunteer programme at Sadeh. Apart from being a newly-fledged ecologist, I also keep doves, dabble in art, and play the accordion.

Shaina Kaye (they/them & she/her)

Shaina is the author of a forthcoming poetry memoir, Nachas, on the intersections of female sexual pleasure, being bi, and growing up Orthodox. You can sign up for updates on the book release and read their latest thoughts at shaina-kaye.com.

Sol Yael Weiss (they/them)

Sol lives, prays and farms on Schaghticoke land in Millerton, NY as part of the core team at Linke Fligl queer Jewish chicken farm. They are a white non-binary trans Ashkenazi printmaker, illustrator and organizational development nerd who finds nourishment in catching songs, building queer family and dreaming of a rematriated land-based collective future. IG: @solshiney www.solyaelweiss.com.



We are an emerging collective of british-based diasporist jews committed to building radical, wild jewish community in the UK.

join us on facebook, instagram (@miknafhaaretz) and at miknafhaaretz.wordpress.com