



This is My God:

Mirrors, Diapers, and Where Redemption Happens

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Pre-Pesah Mini Yom Iyyun

1. שמות טו:א-ב

¹ אֶזְיִיר־מֹשֶׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לַיהוָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֵאמֹר אֲשִׁירָה לַיהוָה כִּי־גָאֹה גָאֹה סוֹס וָרֶכֶב רָמָה בָּיָם: ² עֲזִי וְזִמְרַת יְהוָה וַיְהִי־לִי לִישׁוּעָה זֶה אֱלֹהִי וְאַנְוָהוּ אֱלֹקֵי אָבִי וְאַרְמְמֶנָהוּ:

1. Exodus 15:1-2

¹ Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD. They said: I will sing to the LORD, for God has triumphed gloriously; Horse and driver God has hurled into the sea. ² The LORD is my strength and might; God is become my deliverance. This is my God and I will enshrine the Divine; The God of my parents, and I will exalt the LORD.

2. תלמוד בבלי סוטה יא:

דרש רב עזירא בשכר נשים צדקניות שהיו באותו הדור נגאלו ישראל ממצרים בשעה שהולכות לשאוב מים הקב"ה מזמן להם דגים קטנים בכדיהן ושואבות מחצה מים ומחצה דגים ובאות ושופתות שתי קדירות אחת של חמין ואחת של דגים

ומוליכות אצל בעליהן לשדה ומרחיצות אותן וסכות אותן ומאכילות אותן ומשקות אותן ונזקקות להן בין שפתים שנאמר (תהלים סח, יד) אם תשכבון בין שפתים וגו' בשכר תשכבון בין שפתים זכו ישראל לביזת מצרים שנאמר (תהלים סח, יד) כנפי יונה נחפה בכסף ואברותיה בירקרק חרוץ

וכיון שמתעברות באות לבתיהם וכיון שמגיע זמן מולדיהן הולכות ויולדות בשדה תחת התפוח שנאמר (שיר השירים ח, ה) תחת התפוח עוררתיך וגו'...



2. Talmud Bavli Sotah 11b

Rav Avira taught: In the merit of the righteous women that were in that generation, the Jewish people were redeemed from Egypt. At the time when these women would go to the river to draw water, the Holy One, Blessed be He, would materialize for them small fish that would enter into their pitchers, and they would therefore draw pitchers that were half filled with water and half filled with fish. And they would then come and place two pots on the fire, one pot of hot water for washing their husbands and one pot of fish with which to feed them.

And they would then take to their husbands, to the field, and would bathe their husbands and anoint them with oil and feed them and give them to drink and bond with them between the sheepfolds, as it is stated: "When you lie among the sheepfolds," (Psalms 68:14), as a reward for "when you lie among the sheepfolds," the Jewish people merited to receive the plunder of Egypt, as it is stated: "The wings of the dove are covered with silver, and her pinions with the shimmer of gold" (Psalms 68:14).

And when these women would become pregnant, they would come to their homes, and when the time for them to give birth would arrive they would go and give birth in the field under the apple tree, as it is stated: "Under the apple tree I awakened you; there your mother was in travail with you; there was she in travail and brought you forth" (Song of Songs 8:5). ...

3. דברים רבה (ליברמן) פרשת דברים

רבבה כצמח השדה נתתיך ותרבי (יחזקאל ט"ז ז'), כיצד?

אלא בשעה שגזר פרעה ואמ' כל הבן הילוד (שמות א' כ"ב) וגו', ומה היו עושות, בשעה שהיתה בת ישראל מרגשת בעצמה קרובה לילד היתה יוצאה לילד לשדה, וכיון שהיתה יולדת תולה עיניה כלפי מעלה ואומרת אני עשיתי את שלי שאמרת פרו ורבו אף אתה עשה שלך.

ומה היו המצרים עושים?

כשהיו המצריים רואים את בנות ישראל יוצאות לשדה לילד שם, היו יושבין כנגדן מרחוק, וכיון שהיו בנות ישראל יולדות ונכנסות להן בעיר היו המצרים נוטלין אבנים והולכין להורגן, והיו התינוקות נבלעים בשדה וחוזרין ונראין מרחוק ושוב נבלעין וחוזרין ונראין להם, עד שהיו המצריים מתייגעין והולכין להם.

והיאך היו התינוקות חיים בשדה?



אר"ל שני מלאכים היה הקדוש ברוך הוא מוסר לאחד מהם, אחד להרחיצו וא' להלבישו, ונזקק להניקו ולהסך אותו, שנא' ויניקוהו דבש מסלע (דברים ל"ב י"ג), וכה"א וארחצך במים ואלבישך רקמה (יחזקאל ט"ז י'). א"ר חייא הגדול לא המלאכים היו עושין כן, אלא הקדוש ברוך הוא בכבודו, שנא' וארחצך, אילו נאמר וארחצך, הייתי אומר שמא ע"י מלאך, אלא כתי' וארחצך ולא ע"י מלאך, ישתבח שמו של הב"ה, הוא בכבודו היה עושה להם כך.

והיו התינוקות גדלים בשדה כצמחים הללו, והיו מתגדלין ונכנסין בעדרים לבתיהם, הוא שיחזקאל אומ' רבבה כצמח השדה נתתיך.

והיאך היו מכירין לילך אצל אבותיהם? אלא הקדוש ברוך הוא היה נכנס עמהם והיה מראה לכל א' וא' בית אביו, ואומ' לו קרא לאביך פלוני ולאמך פלונית, ולאמך פלונית,

ואומ' לה אין אתה זכורה כשילדת אותי בשדה פלוני, ביום [פלו'], מקודם חמשה חדשים, והיא שואלתו ואומרת לו מי היה מגדלך, והוא אומ' לה בחור אחד קוֹוֹץ נאה שאין כיוצא בו, והרי הוא בחוץ והוא הביאני לכאן, והיתה אומרת לו בא והראה לי, והיו יוצאין לחוץ ומחזירין בכל המבואות ובכל מקום ולא היו מוצאין אותו, לפי' כשבאו לים וראו אותו היו מראים לאמותם באצבע, ואומרי' להן זה אלי ואנוהו (שמות ט"ו ב'), זהו שגדלני, זה אלי ואנוהו, הוי רבבה כצמח השדה נתתיך.

3. Devarim Rabbah (Lieberman), Parashat Devarim

“I made you grow like the grass of the field.” How so?

When Pharaoh decreed that all newborn boys would be cast into the sea, what did the women do? When a Jewish woman felt contractions beginning, she would go out to give birth in a field. Once she had given birth, she would look upward and say, “You said ‘Be fruitful and multiply’ and I’ve done my part. Now You do Yours.”

What would the Egyptians do?

When the Egyptians saw the Jewish women going out to the fields to give birth there, they would watch them from a distance. Once the Jewish women had given birth and returned to the city, the Egyptians would pick up rocks and go to kill the babies. But the infants would be swallowed up in the field and would reappear far away, only to be swallowed up again and appear again elsewhere—again and again until the Egyptians got tired and went away.

And how did the children live in the fields?



Rabbi Levi said that the Holy Blessed One would assign two angels to each one—one to wash her and one to clothe her—and He nursed and anointed them, as it says (Deut 32:13), “He nursed you with honey from the rock,” and “I washed you with water and clothed you in garments.” Rabbi Hiyya the Great said, “It wasn’t the angels who did that, rather the Holy Blessed One Himself, as it says ‘I washed you.’ Had it said, ‘I caused you to be washed,’ I would have said that perhaps it was by an angel. But since it says, ‘I washed you’, and not an angel. May the Name of the Holy Blessed One be blessed, since He Himself cared for them.

The babies grew in the field like grass, and after they grew, they returned to their homes in flocks—this is what Yehezkel said, ‘You grew like the grass of the field.’

How did they know which home was their family’s?

The Holy Blessed One accompanied them, pointed each and every one to his parents’ home, and said, ‘Call your father this and your mother that.’

The children would say to their mothers, “Don’t you remember when you gave birth to me, on this day in that field, five months ago?” And she would ask him, “Who raised you?” And he would say, “A special, handsome young man, unlike anyone else. He brought me here and he’s right outside.” She would say to him, “Come and show him to me.”

And they would go outside and search all the alleyways and everywhere, but they couldn’t find him. When they came to the sea they saw him, and the pointed him out to their mothers with their fingers and said to them, “This is my God and I will honor Him”—this is the one who raised me. “This is my God and I will honor Him”—i.e. “I made you grow like the grass of the field.”

4. שיר השירים ח:ה-ז

מִי זֹאת עֹלָה מִן־הַמִּדְבָּר מִתְרַפֶּקֶת עַל־דֹּדָהּ תַּחַת הַתְּפֹחַ עֹרֶרְתִּיךָ שָׁמָּה חִבְּלָתְךָ אִמְךָ שָׁמָּה חִבְּלָהּ יִלְדָתְךָ:
שִׁימֵנִי כַחוֹתֶם עַל־לִבִּי כַחוֹתֶם עַל־זְרוֹעֶךָ כִּי־עָזָה כְּמוֹת אֶהְיֶה קִשָּׁה כְּשֹׂאֵל קִנְיָהּ רִשְׁפִּי אֵשׁ
שְׁלֵהֲבִתִּיהָ זְמִים רַבִּים לֹא יֻכְּלוּ לְכַבּוֹת אֶת־הָאֶהְיָה וְנִהְרֹת לֹא יִשְׁטָפוּהָ אִם־יִתֵּן אִישׁ אֶת־כָּל־הֶון בֵּיתוֹ
בְּאֶהְיָה בֹדֵד יִבְּזֻזוּ לוֹ:

4. Shir HaShirim 8:5-7

⁵Who is she that comes up from the desert, Leaning upon her beloved? Under the apple tree I roused you; It was there your mother conceived you, There she who bore you conceived you.⁶Let me be a seal upon your heart, Like the seal upon your hand. For love is fierce as death, Passion is mighty as Sheol; Its darts are darts of fire, A blazing flame.⁷Vast floods



cannot quench love, Nor rivers drown it. If a man offered all his wealth for love, He would be laughed to scorn.

5. Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

“When warm weather came, Baby Suggs, holy, followed by every black man, woman, and child who could make it through, took her great heart to the Clearing—a wide-open place cut deep in the woods nobody knew for what at the end of the path known only to deer and whoever cleared the land in the first place. In the heat of every Saturday afternoon, she sat in the clearing while the people waited among the trees.

After situating herself on a huge flat-sided rock, Baby Suggs bowed her head and prayed silently. The company watched her from the trees. They knew she was ready when she put her stick down. Then she shouted, ‘Let the children come!’ and they ran from the trees toward her.

Let your mothers hear you laugh,’ she told them, and the woods rang. The adults looked on and could not help smiling.

Then ‘Let the grown men come,’ she shouted. They stepped out one by one from among the ringing trees.

Let your wives and your children see you dance,’ she told them, and groundlife shuddered under their feet.

Finally she called the women to her. ‘Cry,’ she told them. ‘For the living and the dead. Just cry.’ And without covering their eyes the women let loose.

It started that way: laughing children, dancing men, crying women and then it got mixed up. Women stopped crying and danced; men sat down and cried; children danced, women laughed, children cried until, exhausted and riven, all and each lay about the Clearing damp and gasping for breath. In the silence that followed, Baby Suggs, holy, offered up to them her great big heart.

‘She did not tell them to clean up their lives or go and sin no more. She did not tell them they were the blessed of the earth, its inheriting meek or its glorybound pure.



She told them that the only grace they could have was the grace they could imagine. That if they could not see it, they would not have it.

In this here place, we flesh; flesh that weeps, laughs; flesh that dances on bare feet in grass. Love it. Love it hard. Yonder they do not love your flesh. They despise it. They don't love your eyes; they'd just as soon pick em out. No more do they love the skin on your back. Yonder they flay it. And O my people they do not love your hands. Those they only use, tie, bind, chop off and leave empty. Love your hands! Love them. Raise them up and kiss them. Touch others with them, pat them together, stroke them on your face 'cause they don't love that either. You got to love it, you! And no, they ain't in love with your mouth. Yonder, out there, they will see it broken and break it again. What you say out of it they will not heed. What you scream from it they do not hear. What you put into it to nourish your body they will snatch away and give you leavins instead. No, they don't love your mouth. You got to love it. This is flesh I'm talking about here. Flesh that needs to be loved. Feet that need to rest and to dance; backs that need support; shoulders that need arms, strong arms I'm telling you. And O my people, out yonder, hear me, they do not love your neck unnoosed and straight. So love your neck; put a hand on it, grace it, stroke it and hold it up. and all your inside parts that they'd just as soon slop for hogs, you got to love them. The dark, dark liver—love it, love it and the beat and beating heart, love that too. More than eyes or feet. More than lungs that have yet to draw free air. More than your life-holding womb and your life-giving private parts, hear me now, love your heart. For this is the prize.

