

Eicha for 2023

By Rabbi Cat Zavis

Chapter 1: Israel/Palestine

Eicha. How. . .
Israel, lonely She sits
Great peoples and religions
to be great among the nations
A model for all
Is now lost

Bitterly She weeps in the night,
Tears stain Her cheeks and streets
There is none to comfort Her.

Allies invite Her corrupt leaders
To address their chambers;
They break bread together.

Now like all other nations
Jerusalem has become among them
A thing unclean.
Apartheid, imprisoned children,
inequity prevail.

What happened?
Once so much hope
She is but a stain.

Leaders have no shame
Oppress the other, hate the stranger
Women's rights, LGBTQ liberties threatened
Theocracy creeping in

Hundreds of thousands protest
For months on end
Filling streets from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem
People rise up, horrified

Grieving citizens set-up camps,
Block roads,
Empty workplaces,
Even military reservists refuse service

Pogroms from Huwara to Turmus Ayya
Burnt homes, cars, and businesses
Stolen sheep and lands
Bulldozed homes and schools.

Checkpoints separate families
Gaza, an outdoor prison,
Jenin, battered and beaten
Hebron, decimated.

Jerusalem has greatly sinned
She has become a mockery
All who admired her, despise her.
They see her clearly now.
She sighs and shrinks back

Her leaders wage endless war
Their sons and daughters they send
To carry out murderous orders.
Her filth clings to her buildings,
to all within her gates.

There is no escape.
To her future, they gave no thought
Only for themselves they care.

For these things do I weep
My eyes flow with tears
There is none to comfort me
Who might revive my spirit.
All who would care are gone
I am alone

Cry out all justice-loving Ones,
Godwrestlers, cry out
Join the movement
Rise up

YHVH, Transformative Power, save us
Help us see our way back
Redeem us
Return us to your teachings
Open our eyes

Awaken our hearts
So we love the stranger,
care for the needy.
Remind us
We are all siblings,
From one God.

Chapter 2: Earth

Alas, God's wrath
God's fury emblazons the Earth.
Sinful we are.
Our greed unbounded.
Offspring of evildoers.
Enslaved to cravings.

Consume and produce endlessly
No concern for Mother Earth
or her inhabitants.

Chasing and hoarding
Money, power, fame, land
Walls that separate
Voting rights for some
An economy that benefits few
On the backs of many.

STOP, YHVH warns:
When justice does not flow
Like a mighty river.
When brothers are enemies,
cries of the needy go unheard,
Unbalanced becomes Mother Earth.

We refuse to listen;
We turn away.
Plagues befall us.

The sun burns her rays
Straight through the ozone layer
Clouds unleash Noahic floods
Swallowing homes and cities.

Oceans, once a source of life,

Polluted with slippery oil
Seabirds' wings weighed down
Struggling to fly
As heavy weights they fall to the ground

Ocean ice melts
Flooding shorelines
Small island countries guzzled
For solid ice to rest,
Polar bears search in vain.

Earth, parched and dry,
fracked and cracked
Places once sound and solid
Quake and rattle
Gaping holes devour homes.

Fires rage - the Divine's fury.
Burning bushes
that fail to pierce our hearts

Unsatiated
we continue to rape our Mother
Strip her bare
She lies naked and desolate
Paralyzed by our arrogance.

She cries tears
Yet none heed Her heartache.
New phones and cars,
Bigger homes; more stuff
These are our idols;
The ones we bow down to.
We are earth's enemies.

Sunsets, fragrant flowers,
Towering mountains,
Flowing rivers,
Majestic cedars,
The creeping crawling ones
The mammals and sea life,
The ones that fly.
We seek no more.

Televisions, social media, videos
Fill our time and minds.
Awe and radical amazement
A thing of the past.

Sleep comes easily for those in comfort.

We shun the Divine.
She looks for us, but we hide.
We are not our brothers' keepers.
She grieves our transgressions.
And cries out, Ayekah: Where are you?

The youth, indigenous,
Elders, and earthkeepers
Have risen.
Protested and shut businesses.
Strewn blood on sidewalks,
Girded themselves with sack cloth
Bowed their heads to the earth.

My eyes are spent with tears,
My heart is in tumult,
My being melts away
Over the ruin of My poor people,
As babes and sucklings languish
In the squares of the city.

Infant species
Vainly suckle at their mothers' breasts
Milk is dry or toxic
Air thick, too heavy to breathe
There is nowhere to hide.

Chapter 3: The U.S.

I am the person who has known affliction
I have been beaten by the rod of Its wrath
Its police, military,
homeland security, border patrol

Pursue us in darkness
Bring down Its hand and weight
Again and again, without cease

Ordered to push
small children, nursing babies
into the Rio Grande

We lay parched in the desert
Denied water
Worn away our flesh and skin
Shattered our bones

All around It has built
Misery and hardship

It has weighed me down with chains
I cannot break out

It steals my land and home
Wipes out my people
When we cry out and flee for safety
It slams Its door in our face

I cry out and plead
It shuts out my prayers and tears

It is a lurking bear to me
A lion in hiding

It has walled me in
forced me from my path
mangled me
with traps of razor wire-wrapped barrels

Pregnant women snared in their jaws
Bloody children
Their flesh dangling on the wires

Hoarding resources while people starve
Wealthy fed in their towers of Babel
Dead bodies of the poor pile-up on the streets below

Its troops sweep the unhoused
Off the streets
Steal their belongings
Destroy their homes

Obliterate their communities

On hilltops, greedy ones rest peacefully
Don't bother to look or see
What lurks beneath in the darkness below

Human beings pitted against one another
"You will not replace us"
"You're a basket of deplorables"
"You're either with us or against us."

Sell guns that kill
Ban books that educate and instill empathy
Outlaw people different from them,
People who love and laugh
People no different from them.

They say:
Wait patiently till rescue comes from YHVH.
It is good to bear a yoke.
Suffering instills hope.

Still, I turn to my heart
Expectantly I hope

Divine loving kindness endures
Your compassion sustains
Each morning they are renewed
Abundant is Your faithfulness

YHVH brings goodness
To those who seek Her,
Those chasing after justice.

The Divine does not willfully bring grief
Or affliction to human beings
Does not crush those beneath Her feet
All prisoners of the earth

To deny a person their rights, in the presence of the Most Holy
To wrong a person in their cause,
This the Divine does not choose.

But human beings,

This they do choose.
They forget they are mere dust of earth
That all beings are manifestations of the Divine.

Lift our hearts and hands to the Divine
Admit our mistakes
We have transgressed and rebelled
Will the Divine forgive us?
Will human beings forgive us?

I cry out to You, YHVH.
Do You hear me?
I turn to human beings,
Do you hear me?
Please hear me.

Chapter 4: Children Cry Out

Mothers' milk has run dry
Even formula has evaporated
Babies lips are parched
Crying dry tears
Little children beg for bread
None give them a morsel

Children cry out:
We lie here in the streets
our bones protrude through our opaque skin,
We cry for our mothers,
seeking the comfort of their breasts,
the warmth of their hearts,
yet they too are dying.

You think we don't know?
Can't see?

Yes we are young.
But we see.
The powerful - their greed and selfishness.

We know what you are doing.
You who build cities of injustice.
You who harass the needy and feed the full.

We cry out to those in power, like the youth of the past.
Yet you mock and ridicule us.
You tell us we are too young;
Don't know what we are talking about.
You dismiss us.
Pretend not to hear us.

Here we are now,
still crying, still dying.

Where are you,
you who call yourselves leaders,
servants of the public good?
What are you doing?
To whom are you beholden?

Our hearts open to love.
We seek connection fearlessly.
We share our food with others.

You too once gave without seeking.
You too once loved unconditionally,
trusted completely,
lived without fear.

We see the destruction and devastation
Fear, hatred, scarcity, and greed wreak.
Can you see it?
What are you going to do about it?
You have the power.
Act now.

Chapter 5: Return Us

Please remember us Holy Source
Our suffering is immense.
Our hearts are sick.
We have lost our way.

Open our eyes.
Circumcise our hearts.
Make us wise.
Help us discern.

Return us to the Divine path.

Guide us on a new path
So our rivers flow with justice.

Bring forth a new day
A day on which we rise to righteousness,
open the fetters of wickedness,
free the oppressed,
love the stranger,
See the humanity of all
And sanctity in all creation.

Hashivenu Yah elecha v'nashuva, hadesh yameinu kekedem.

Help us return, help us repent
You who make transformation possible
Transform us, Awaken us, Enliven us
Show us a new path
We need your help.
Help us build justice,
Help us love and care
Make anew, make anew
Our world
Return us to our true selves
Let us see our interbeing,
The Divine in all.

Hashivenu Chavaya elecha v'nashuva, hadesh yameinu kekedem.

Help us return, help us repent
You who make transformation possible
Transform us, Awaken us, Enliven us
Show us a new path
We need your help.
Help us build justice,
Help us love and care
Make anew, make anew
Our world
Return us to our true selves
Let us see our interbeing,
The Divine in all.

Hashivenu YHVH elecha v'nashuva, hadesh yameinu kekedem.

Help us return, help us repent
You who make transformation possible
Transform us, Awaken us, Enliven us
Show us a new path
We need your help.
Help us build justice,
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