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By Rabbi Cat Zavis

Chapter 1

How. . .

The Land, lonely She sits.
Great peoples and religions
dwelling in harmony,
shaping each other.

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.

Israel
A nation unclean.
Starvation, genocide, apartheid,
thousands imprisoned.
Children eaten by dogs
dead people blown to the sky.

*Tired bodies, hunger digs into the ribs.
Walking with a burdened pace
over merciless dust.
And withered eyes
looking for a glimmer of bread or dream.

In the corners, muffled sighs,
and in the hearts,
a long silence that does not know
how to scream.*

(words from Palestinian Ma'soumeh Hussein)

Around the world people rise up.
Horried
millions protest
For months and months on end

Encampments,
Block bridges,
Disrupt life,
Demand action.

And still the genocide continues
Callous leaders
from all rivers to all seas
perpetuate,
do not stop
the genocide.

Pogroms from Huwara to Turmus Ayya
have spread throughout the West Bank.
Burnt homes, cars, and businesses
Stolen sheep and lands
Bulldozed homes and schools
Palestinians shot and kidnapped.

Israel has greatly sinned
A pariah she has become.
Her leaders wage endless wars
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 do 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

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: Mother 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
Bring down Its hand and weight
Again and again, without cease

Pursue us in darkness
and daylight.
Kidnap us
at schools, places of worship,
workplaces, courthouses,
driving our children to daycare,
off the streets.

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"
"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 YHWH.
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
All beings 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
Food, medicine, even formula
denied entry.
Babies lips are parched
crying dry tears.
Little children beg for bread
None give them a morsel

Children lie in the streets

their bones protrude
through their opaque skin.

They cry for their mothers,
seeking the comfort of their breasts,
the warmth of their hearts,
yet they too are dying.

*We've already
surpassed starvation.
In an advanced laboratory, no bullets
or bombs are necessary - just time.
Time for our bodies to collapse
with the refined grace of slow death.

We are no longer just hungry.
We are rotting from within,
watching our own cells resign
in quiet rebellion.
Our organs
gnaw at each other
like abandoned furniture
left to decay
under brutal sun.

The immune system?
Extinct.
It auctions off its final breaths
on the black market of diseases.
Even a mosquito bite is a battle
we're doomed to lose.

Hunger has evolved into a chronic condition
we call "active dying."
Collapsing in the streets
is now a collective ritual.
And dizziness
a luxury
only the lucky can still afford.

And the children – those fragile creatures
who gnaw at our hearts
with their weakness –
have become mere statistics

in the race to the bottom.
They drop, one by one, like brittle leaves
from a lifeless tree
in the season of airstrikes.

No medicine.
No food.
No salvation.
Just wait.
Just watch.

This is the new manual
For genocide:
Make them melt slowly
Before their own eyes . . .
Then sneer and ask,
“Did you feel that?”*
(Words from Palestinian artist Mohammed Harb)

Chapter 5: Return Us

Please remember us Holy Source
Our sin is immense.

Help us crumble the walls
of oppression
Untie our traumas to
soften our hearts
Break the barriers
in our minds
Draw close to the
Divine

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 HaVaYa 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
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
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