

From Standing Rock to Flint to Philadelphia to Gaza. Water is the source of life

Tashlich 5778

Tikkun Olam Chavurah & Philadelphia Jewish Voice for Peace

SING

By the waters of Babylon, we lay down and wept for thee Zion. We remember thee, Zion.

ALL

We begin wherever we can.

We begin in our thoughts, in our one-on-one interactions, in our choices about how we will use what privilege we have.

We begin by talking about it. We begin with awareness.

We begin over and over and over. We begin by listening, by hearing our grief, our rage, our arrogance, our ignorance, our brainwashing.

And beginning is no small thing.

Carolyn Gage

LISTEN

From Micah 7:13, 16, 19

וְהָיְתָה הָאָרֶץ לְשִׁמְמָה עַל־יֹשְׁבֶיהָ מִפְּרִי מַעַלְלֵיהֶם
יִרְאוּ גוֹיִם וַיִּבְשׂוּ מִכָּל גְּבוּרָתָם יִשְׁימוּ יָדָם עַל־פִּה אֲזִינֵיהֶם תִּחַרְשְׁנָה׃
יָשׁוּב יִרְחַמְנוּ יִכְבֹּשׂ עוֹנֵינֵינוּ וְתִשְׁלִיךְ בַּמַּצְלוֹת יָם כָּל־חַטְאוֹתָם׃

V'hayta ha'aretz lishmamah, al yoshveha, mip'ri, ma'al'lehem.

Yiru goyim v'eyvoshu, mikol gevuratam. Yashuv v'rahameynu,

yihbosh avonoteynu; v'tashlih bim'tzulot yam, kol hatvotam.

And the land shall be desolate for those that dwell there, because of the fruits of their doings.

The nations shall see and be put to shame. But the Spirit of the World will have compassion on

us and purge us of injustice; and our sins will be cast into the depths of the sea.

SING

Mayim Chayim

Susan Rothbaum

Brucha aht eyn mayim chayim

Blessed are you, source of living waters

ALL

Psalm 51: 3 - 5

חַנּוּנֵי אֱלֹהִים כְּחֶסֶדְךָ כְּרֹב רַחֲמֶיךָ מִתְּהָה פְּשָׁעֵי:
הַרְבֵּה [הָרַב] כִּבְּסִנִּי מֵעוֹנָי וּמַחֲטָאתֵי טְהַרְנֵי:
כִּי־פִשְׁעֵי אָנֹכִי אֲדַע וְחַטָּאתֵי נֶגְדֵי תָמִיד:

Honeyni elohim k'hasdeha; kerov rahameha m'hey f'shahai. Herev, hab'seyni meyvavoni; umeyhatati tahareyni. Ki f'sha-ai, ani eyda; v'hatati negdi tamid.

May the Spirit of the World have compassion upon me and forgive my transgressions. May I be washed of injustice and cleansed of wrongdoing. For I acknowledge my transgressions; my sin is always before me.

“Wherever the river flows, all living creatures teeming in it will live. Fish will be very plentiful, for wherever the water goes it brings health, and life teems wherever the river flows.” – Ezekiel 47:9

Today’s reading from Ezekiel reminds us that in the desert of the Hebrew Scriptures, the presence of water literally brought life to the people. Without water their crops and communities would perish.

While our ancestors were keenly aware of their dependence on Mother Earth, in the United States today many people, sadly, have become disconnected from their water source, land, and, ultimately, a sense of place and belonging. Throughout this past year, however, the courageous struggle of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe has reawakened us to an important concept that our ancestors understood: *Mni Wiconi* which means *Water is Life* in the Lakota language.

Many (but not all) of us have the luxury of going throughout our day without thinking about access to clean water, and as a result, we forget what a sacred and sustaining gift it is. Water is our life-force, and while the protests at Standing Rock have ended for now, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Tribal Nations, and allies bravely witnessed what it looks like to protect what is sacred. As noted Senegalese forestry engineer, Baba

Dioum, states, "In the end we will protect only what we love; we will love only what we understand; and we will understand only what we are taught."

We protect what we love, and God calls us to fall in love with the land where we live. Only out of love can we access the life-giving waters that sustain us in our work for justice. The Water Protectors at Standing Rock have demonstrated that resistance is an act of love and challenge us to rise up each day to protect what we love most dearly.

LISTEN

from Havasupai Medicine Song

The land we were given
is right here,
right here.
Red rock
streaked with brown
shooting up high
all round our home.
Red rock
shooting up high
right here.
A spring will always be there
down at its foot.
From way back
it is ours.
Right down
the center of our land
a line moves,
bright blue-green.
This is what I'm thinking.
At the edge of the water
cattails appear,
bright blue-green,
all round the water.
This is what I'm thinking.
At the edge of the water
silt is being laid down
in ripples.

This is what I'm thinking.
Water skaters walk,
gliding, gliding.

This is what I'm thinking.
Water grasses growing,
bright blue-green
under the water,
waving, waving
This is what I'm thinking:
Under the water
tiny pebbles.
Flowing over them
the water we drink.
The water is gliding toward the north,
into the distance, beyond our sight.

LISTEN

Ojibwa Poem: Nibi (Water)

Anishinaabekwe, the Daughters,
You are the keepers of the water.

I am Nibi... water.. the sacred source,
the blood of Aki, Mother Earth,
the force filling dry seeds to great bursting.

I am the wombs cradle.
I purify.

Nibi, the lifegiver, forever the Circle's charge
I have coursed through our Mother's veins.
Now hear my sorrow and my pain
in the river's rush, the rain.

I am your grandchildren's drink.
Listen, Daughters, always.

You are the keepers of the water.
Hear my cry, for the springs flow darkly now
through the heart of Aki.

LISTEN

A Weakened World Cannot Forgive Us
Kathleen Dean Moore

...I have come to believe that dam-breaching is not really about dams. Dam-breaching is America's own exercise in truth and reconciliation. For a hundred years we thought we could have it all -- cheap power, salmon, and alfalfa fields in the desert -- but we were wrong. ...We thought we needed power and wealth, but we discovered to our sorrow that what we really need are health and beauty and a way of life that listens to the land.

What humans destroy, we often destroy forever. ... But a river? A river has the power to forgive. To breach a dam is to admit mistakes, and so to release the power of the river to heal itself, to begin to heal the rift between human and nature, user and used...

Healing the rift is slow, hard work, but I think I've seen the beginnings of a process of reconciliation – healing landscapes that have been damaged or destroyed, pulling back the bulldozers, tearing out barbed-wire fences, opening sluice gates, releasing young condors into the wild, planting trees. We are actively trying to undo the damage we have done and make the landscape whole again.

But we still must know that there is damage we are doing now – to the atmosphere, to the seas, to the climate – that may be beyond the earth's power to heal. When the earth is whole, it is resilient. But when it is damaged too severely, its power to heal itself seeps away. If we continue to turn against the land, pour chemical fertilizers onto worn-out fields, sanitize wastewater with poisons, dam rivers, burn oil, and bear more children, then there may be no chance of healing. A weakened world cannot forgive us.

LISTEN

Source of Life that sustained my parents and my ancestors,
May my prayers open my heart.
I have been given freedom to choose between right and wrong
And I have not always chosen wisely.
Now, together with this community of Jews, I ask forgiveness.
I have not done all the misdeeds which I am about to name Yet I come before You not
only as an individual,
but also as a cell in the body of my community, my people, and the whole human race.
I am implicated in the acts, good and bad, that any of us does.

ALL

We are one and together we take responsibility for the misdeeds and wrongdoings of our community and our people.

We cast these sins away,
we will work to make them known, we will work to make them end.

The sin of wasting water...

The sin of polluting the water...

The sin of poisoning the drinking water of poor communities...

We cast these sins away,
we will work to make them known, we will work to make them end.

The sin of buying enormous numbers of bottled water...

The sin of building cities where is no water to accommodate them...

The sin of growing things where there isn't adequate water and shipping them to places where there is...

The sin of hydroelectric dams...

The sin of dumping the waste from mining into the waterways...

We cast these sins away,
we will work to make them known, we will work to make them end.

The sin of allowing the people of Gaza to be deprived of safe water: of having no power for sewage treatment plants, of Israeli settlements draining the aquifer, of the area where Gazan fishermen fish being polluted and destroyed and of not allowing the fishermen to go farther out to fish...

The sin of the ease with which a criminal decision was made in Flint that did not acknowledge water as a human right...

The sin of allowing lead to poison the water in many cities...

The sin of fracking that is poisoning people's wells near Philadelphia and in many parts of the country..

We cast these sins away,
we will work to make them known, we will work to make them end.

SING

Shifchi kamayim

Linda Hirschhorn , text adapted from Lamentations 2:19

Shifchi kamàyim, kamàyim libéch. שפכי כמים, כמים לבך

And pour out, pour out, pour out your hearts like water.

Pour out, pour out, pour out your hearts.

And remember, remember, remember, remember.

ALL

This I Declare

Elliott batTzedek

*Adonai sefatie tiftach
ufi yagid t'hilatecha*

אֲדֹנָי שְׁפֹתַי תִּפְתַּח
וּפִי יִגְדַּל תְּהַלְתֵּךְ

This I declare, the earth is not ours

This I declare, we belong to the earth

*Adonai sefatie tiftach
ufi yagid haemet v'tzedek*

אֲדֹנָי שְׁפֹתַי תִּפְתַּח
וּפִי יִגְדַּל הָאֵמֶת וְצֶדֶק

This I declare, we cannot live if the rains don't fall

This I declare, we cannot live if the rivers don't flow

*Adonai sefatie tiftach
ufi yagid t'hilatecha*

אֲדֹנָי שְׁפֹתַי תִּפְתַּח
וּפִי יִגְדַּל תְּהַלְתֵּךְ

This I declare, what we've planted we will reap

This I declare, what we've poisoned we will reap

*Adonai sefatie tiftach
ufi yagid haemet v'tzedek*

אֲדֹנָי שְׁפֹתַי תִּפְתַּח
וּפִי יִגְדַּל הָאֵמֶת וְצֶדֶק

This I declare, we must choose either life or death

This I declare, our harvest is upon us

*Adonai sefatie tiftach
ufi yagid t'hilatecha*

אֲדֹנָי שְׁפֹתַי תִּפְתַּח
וּפִי יִגְדַּל תְּהַלְתֵּךְ

This I declare, every act is a choice we make

This I declare, every breath's a prayer it's not too late

*Adonai sefatie tiftach
ufi yagid haemet v'tzedek*

אֲדֹנָי שְׁפֹתַי תִּפְתַּח
וּפִי יִגְדַּל הָאֵמֶת וְצֶדֶק

This I declare, the earth is not ours

This I declare, we belong to the earth

*Adonai sefatie tiftach
ufi yagid t'hilatecha*

אֲדֹנָי שְׁפֹתַי תִּפְתַּח
וּפִי יִגְדַּל תְּהַלְתֵּךְ

ALL

From Psalm 130:1, 7-8

מִמַּעַמְקִים קָרָאתִיךָ יְהוָה:
יִתֵּל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־יְהוָה כִּי־עַם־יְהוָה הַחֶסֶד וְהַרְבֵּה עֲמוֹ פְּדוֹת:
וְהוּא יִפְדֶּה אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכָּל עֲוֹנוֹתָיו:

Mima'anakim k'ratihah adonai: Yahayl yisrael, el adonai, ki-im adonai hahesed; v'harbey imo f'dut. V'hu, yifdey et-yisrael -- mikol avonotav.

Out of the depths I have cried out: Let Israel have hope in the Source of Life, for in that Source is forgiveness and abundant mercy. And may Israel be redeemed from all its iniquities.

Amein.