



2 Eichas for Today

The Shalom Center

Beginning eleven years ago with the Deepwater Horizon oil disaster caused by the greed and recklessness of the BP corporation in the Gulf of Mexico, Rabbi Tamara Cohen created a new Eicha/ Book of Lamentations for Temple Earth, chantable according to the traditional wailing melody. It was first chanted on Capitol Hill on Tisha B'Av 2011, as part of a challenge to the US government to protect Earth from such depredations. Rabbi Cohen was then an intern for The Shalom Center; she is now director for innovation at Moving Traditions. We offer its first chapter here. Her entire "Eicha for Earth" and a full new Tisha B'Av prayer service are at

This year, in the wake of worsening of the climate crisis and the Covid19 pandemic, Rabbi Sue Morningstar of Ashland, OR, leader of Morningstar Healing Arts at <https://morningstarhealingarts.net> has furthered this tradition of an English Lament for Earth by writing and chanting a one-chapter "Eichah." It is followed by a comment from Rabbi Daniel Siegel, a very early student of Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and a leader of ALEPH Canada, now living on Hornby Island, British Columbia.

Eichah for Earth¹

By Rabbi Tamara Cohen

Eichah: Alas, she sits in danger.
Earth, home to multitudes,
like a beloved, deep in distress.

Blue ocean, source of life --
Endangered and imprisoned.

Bitterly she weeps in the night
Her shorelines wet with tears.
Of all her friends, none to comfort her;
All her allies have betrayed her.

Checkerspot butterflies
flee their homes;
Polar bears
can find no rest.
Because our greed has heated Earth.

Whole communities destroyed
To pursue off-shore oil.
Lives and dreams have been narrowed.

Coastlines mourn for families,
lost homes and livelihoods.
Barrier islands lament, desolate.

Wetlands sigh without their song birds.
Estuaries grieve; the sea is embittered.

¹ <https://theshalomcenter.org/node/1733>

Earth's children – now her enemies;
Despite destruction, we sleep at ease.
The Breath of Life grieves
our abundant transgressions.
Infants of every species,
captive to our conceit.

Hashivenu Yahh elecha v'nashuva, hadesh yameinu kekedem.

*Let us return, help us repent,
You Who Breathe all Life;
Breathe us, Breathe us,
Breathe us into a new path--
Help us, Help us, ,
Help us Turn to a new way of living
Make–new, Make -new,
Our world of life intertwining –
Splendor, beauty, joy in our love for each life-form*

Eicha for Our Times, 2021

Adapted by Rabbi Sue Mauer Morningstar July 2021 .²

איכה | יְשֻׁבָה בְּיַד הָעִיר רַבְתִּי עִם הַיְתָה פְּאַלְמֹנָה

Eicha: Alas, she sits abandoned. Earth's abundance, once green and flourishing, is slowly disappearing. (1:1)
We have come through trying times, the Great Pause of distancing and hermitting.
So many have lost lives, other suffer long term consequences.

Rushing, we shed our masks, in celebration of our freedom.
But "safety" is an illusion, when variants lurk, and our planet is suffering.

As we emerge from this curs-ed blessing, have we learned our crucial lessons?
16 months of quieted highways, pollution cleared, human and animal lives saved.
16 months of quieted skyways, airplane travel ceased, vistas no longer concealed.
Viewing the magnificence of the Himalayas, city skylines were suddenly revealed.

Now we have resumed our toxic flying, as United proudly announces hundreds of new planes buying.
Endlessly consuming, our fruits we plunder, while thousands of children die daily of hunger. (2:20, 4:4)
Fires threaten, Earth's parched and dry, we pack our "go bags" and watch the sky. (5:10)
Oceans rising, temperatures climbing, rainforests shrinking, Shechinah crying.

We weep without consolation, there is no comfort to refresh our souls. (1:18)
What will it take to wake us up to the destruction and planetary crisis, what will it take??

² *Rabbi Morningstar can be heard and seen chanting her new Eicha in English with the traditional wailing melody at*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1pBSHtRhQVk>

Unbearable heatwaves burn our skin like in an oven, while our mother self-destructs. (5:10)

Our creeks and rivers have run dry, crops and fish wither and die. (4:9, 5:4)

Polarity, meanness and hatred are everywhere, racism, xenophobia and injustice prevail.

The joy in our hearts has ceased, our dancing has turned into mourning. (5:15)

Antisemitism on the rise from the left and the right.

all of our

enemies have opened their mouths wide against us. (

Returning to our homeland after 2000 years, cousins still divided in fear.

On this day we remember the siege of our holy Jerusalem, and the destruction of our holy temples.

On this day we remember the start of the Crusades, the expulsions from England, France and Spain.

On this day we remember Kristallnacht and the Warsaw Ghetto, is it our terrible destiny for history to repeat itself?

Here in America, violence in our streets, 30 million adherents follow Q-anon.

We've lost our trust in our government, we've lost our trust in our journalists.

We've lost our trust in our judicial system, in our electoral process, and even in science.

Look and see, pain upon pain, Your sanctuary plundered, Your planet overrun. (1:12)

What will it take to wake us up, to choose healing and love, compassion and cooperation?

When will we heed this warning, when will we protect our future generations?

Your brokenness is as vast as the sea. Who can heal you? (2:13)

Let us sit alone in quiet reflection, and let our souls fill with God's compassion. (3:28, 32)

Hashivenu Yah elecha v'nashuva, hadesh yameinu kekedem.

Renew our days and return us to You, help us reach awareness in the midst of somnolence. (5:21)

"I commend to you this new version of the traditional Megillat Eichah and

urge you to share it as widely as possible. As we rush to return to

"normal," it will be all too easy to forget that the pre-covid normal was unsustainable and indeed helped to create the pandemic which is still in progress. This eichah asks us to bring the many crises of this moment together, to see how they are linked to each other, to pause and weep for the damage we have been causing and continue to cause, and to pledge a return, not to a pre-covid materially based way of living, but one imbued with a deeper humility, a willingness to sacrifice for the common good and for the future of our children and grandchildren.

"In turn, that sacrifice will yield a satisfaction and joy greater than any material thing can provide, the satisfaction that comes from taking time to deepen our experiences of friendship and family, for the earth, and for our linkage to all of life which sustains us." Rabbi Daniel Siegel, Hornby Island. British Columbia, Canada 7-1-21