

PARSHAT BECHUKOTAI
LEVITICUS 26:3-27:34
HAFTARAH JEREMIAH 16:19-17:14
25 IYYAR 5784/30 MAY 2024



Bearing Witness Enduring Love
Mixed media on paper by Julia Meyerowitz-Katz

A RETURN TO A NEW BEGINNING

1. אָדָם כִּי־יִקְרִיב מִכֶּם קֶרְבָּן לַיהוָה... (Leviticus 1:2)
When any of you presents an offering to God [of cattle...]

Each of us has two souls: the Godly soul and the animal soul (nefesh ha-behamit). The essential purpose of our lives is to enable the Godly soul to prevail over the tendencies of the animal soul. Even the animal soul shares in a love of God, as the Shema states. “When a human being from among you will bring...” The syntax reveals a deeper meaning: “When a human being will bring from among you...” And what is the offering we are to bring? It is from our animal soul. (Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi)

2. “I will give peace in the land, and you will lie down and none shall make you afraid, and I will cause evil beasts to cease to exist (*hishbati*) from the land.” (Leviticus 26:6)

3. Rav Yehuda explains that *hishbati* means that God will cause these evil beasts to disappear. However, Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai interprets that only the evil of the beasts will cease from the land; the beasts themselves will not be destroyed. (Midrash, Sifra)
4. “Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread; on the very first day you shall have caused the leaven to cease to exist (*tishbitu*) from your homes.” (Exodus 12:15)
5. Rabbi Shimon says: “What better shows the greatness of the Almighty: when there are no dangerous animals, or when the animals exist but they pose no threat? The answer is the latter, as it is written: ‘And a wolf will live with a lamb, and a lion will lie with a calf’ (Isaiah 11:6).” (Midrash, Sifra)
6. All of my work in one way or another is an expression of my embodied unconscious responses to the vagaries of uncertainty, trauma, and loss as well as the capacity for connection and joy which we all share. (Julia Meyerowitz-Katz)