



Nourishing the Internal Garden

Holy Ground – Inside Us All

אֲדָמַת־קֹדֶשׁ הוּא

Ad'mat Kodesh Hu

It is holy ground! (Exodus 3:5)

Planting Seed of Joy and Light – What do You Want to Grow

אוֹר זָרַע לְצַדִּיק וּלְיִשְׁרֵי לֵיב שִׂמְחָה

Or zaru'ah latzadik ul'yishrei leiv simcha

**Plant the seeds of joy and light, tend them carefully day and night
In this soil so dark and deep, I plant the dreams that love will reap. (Psalm 97:11)**

In God's Shade – We Find Protection for What is Growing

בְּצִלּוֹ חֲמַדְתִּי וַיִּשְׁבַּתִּי וּפְרִיּוֹ מִתּוֹק לְחָכִי

B'tzilo chmad'ti v'yashav'ti, Ufir'yo matok l'chaki

In God's shade I delight to sit, tasting His sweet fruit (Song of Songs 2:3)

The Miracle – Then the Garden Will Bloom

בַּיִשָּׁם מִדְּבָרָה פָּעֵדוֹן וְעַרְבָתָהּ פֶּגַן־הוֹה

Vayasem midbara k'eiden v'arvata k'gan Adonai

God transforms her wilderness into delight, her wasteland into a divine garden. (Isaiah 51:3)



VA'ANI ASHIR UZECHA

Melody by Josh Warshawsky, Lyrics Psalm 59:17-18

These words come from Psalm 59, which is a psalm that is not a part of our liturgy. I found them when searching for texts in the Jewish canon that speak of strength. The most familiar is the phrase, “Ozi v’zimrat Yah vayehi li li’yeshua,” from the Song of the Sea (Shirat Hayam). There is a midrash (story/explanation – exegesis) that goes along with these words from the Shir Hashirim Rabbah (Exegesis from the Song of Songs). Shir Hashirim Rabbah is filled with parables of a king and the king’s relations with various people in the kingdom. In this particular midrash, the king has in his possession many precious jewels and stones; rubies and emeralds, diamonds and gold. The king’s child approaches the king and says, “Father, let me have those.” And the king says, “They’re yours, they’ve always been yours, and to you I give them.” The rabbis liken this parable to the people of Israel as they stand at the shore of the red sea before it has been split. The Egyptians are at their backs and they are frightened. They call out to God and say, “God! Give us strength! Ozi V’zimrat Yah!” And God replies, “It’s yours, it’s always been yours, and to you I give it.” And the midrash continues, “v’ein oz ela Torah,” and there is no strength except for Torah.

So what does it mean for the Torah to be our strength? I thought about the words of this Psalm, “Va’ani ashir uzecha,” And I will sing Your strength.” What does it mean to sing Torah into the world? How can we sing our strengths into the world? To sing is to share, to publicize. In this case it is a communal act. And through singing Torah, God’s strength and gift to us, we find our own Torah, our own strength. The words of this verse begin “Va’ani ashir uzecha,” And I will sing YOUR strength, but they end, “Uzi eilecha azamerah,” MY strength, I will sing out to You.

