

HIGHER HOLIDAYS

A PRAYER CORRECTED by Ariana Reines

Cultures rise and fall leaving us nothing
But their great poem. (I want to pray
But was never taught how)
I wanted to pray to God but God instructed me
To pray to myself
I am praying to myself on your behalf
To the treasure of having been born human
I pray that we will aspire to humanness and
Humanness above all
Not angel, animal, or vegetable
Not the archons of invisible billionaire popes
Or the arcane black magic of bad mortgages
But the breathing centrifugal mystery
The alpha and omega enclosed within my breathing breast
And at my most exalted I behold all beings as a kind of people
Rocks are people
Bad ideas are people
Galaxies are people, with their charming, unaccountable personal quirks
The smile of your husband, infinitesimally more open
At the corner of the mouth on the left side
The mysterious reason, never to be known,
Why your father, if he turns onto his left side while sleeping
Will experience terrible vertigo even as he dreams

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My prayer for us

Is that we ask and that we not forget to ask

Who are we?

Why are there Jews on Planet Earth, among all other peoples,

And why are we they?

Why were we given a flame language that went dead which some

Revived? Why have so many of our fathers, patriarchs and rabbis

Down to today feared and dreaded the volcanic interdimensional

Knowledgeses of women? We, who sanctified what had been written

And who worshipped the divine faculties of speech and argument

And who determined that for human life on earth to manage

Anything worthwhile at all it would take not only ten commandments

But over six hundred laws?

What is this unmanageable, ungovernable species?

I have come here too late to testify on behalf of the book

And for all the doctors and lawyers, comedians and screenwriters,

Billionaire hierophants and deceitful fathers we've impressed

On the world, I wonder, with whom is our argument really?

Being Jewish tires and confuses me

Unslaked by its normalized reforms

I go looking for the twisted, self-devouring root of the flaming letter

And find a tiny vowel, nothing more than a glottal stop

Disrupting the air of the word

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This is the only thing I know to be truly Jewish
I can summarize our entire history with a single word:

But

Why is Yiddish the fusion of God's tongue with the speech of our slaughterers?

What lives between either and or?

Who lives between either and or?

We do.

Who is complicit with apartheid in America?

Whose grandmothers are rolling in their graves?

Whose great-grandmothers' hair was woven into rugs

Their bodies tallow & ash

Why won't this joke get old?

Whose comedians failed to forestall the disaster?

Who gave what up for whiteness

Tithing our soul for the soul of America

Upon which our life, what is left of it, depends

-Ariana Reines

