God Who Suffers With: Divine Presence Amidst Pain

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Lamentations Rabbah 1:16/1:50 (excerpts)

בּת נַחְתּוֹם בּת נַחְתּוֹם This is the story of Miriam bat Tanḥum, ... שַּנְשֶׁבֵּית הָיא וְשְׁבְעָה בְּנֵיהָ who was taken captive with her seven sons. . .

הוֹצִיא הַשְּׁבִיעִי וְהוּא הָיָה קְטָן שֶׁבְּכֵלְּן Caesar brought the seventh son, the youngest of them. אַמֵר בִּנִי He said to him,

הְשְׁתַּחֲנָה לְצֶּלֶם "Bow before the image."

... אָמֵר לוֹ חַס וְשָׁלוֹם He said, "Heaven forbid! . . .

קַבי יֵשׁ אֱלוֹהַ לְעוֹלְם Caesar said to him, "Is there a God in the world?"

אָמַר לוֹ אַלְלִי עֶּלֶידְ קִיסָר He said to him, "Woe to you Caesar,

בי עוֹלָם שֶׁל הֶפְקֵר רָאִיתָ. that you see a world that is free for the taking."

באַמר לוֹ וַכִי יֵשׁ פָּה לְאלֹהֵיכֶם Caesar said to him, "But does your God have a mouth?"

אָמַר לוֹ בֵּאלהֵיכֶם כְּתִיב He said to him, "Of your gods, it is written,

קברוּ לֹא יְדַבֵּרוּ They have mouths, but do not speak. (Psalm 115:5)

וּבָאלהֵינוּ כָּתִיב: But of our God, it is written,

. בַּדְבַר ה' שַׁמַיִם נַעֲשׂוּ By the word of God, the heavens were made." (Psalm 33:6)

עַיניִם לֵאלֹהֵיכֶם Caesar said to him, "But does your God have eyes?"

אָמַר לוֹ בַּאלהֵיכֶם כְּתִיב He said to him, "Of your gods it is written,

עִינַיִם לָהֶם וְלֹא יִרְאוּ They have eyes but cannot see (Psalm 155:5)

But of our God, it is written,

 \dots ציני ה' הַמָּה מְשׁוֹטְטִים בְּכָל הָאָרָץ The eyes of God roam over the entire earth." (Zech. 4:10) \dots

לוֹ Caesar said,

אָם יֵשׁ בּוֹ כָּל הַמִּדּוֹת הַלָּלוּ בֵּאלהֵיכֶם "If your God has all of these qualities, מְפְנֵי מָה אֵינוֹ מַצִּיל אֶתְכֶם מִיָּדִי אָתְכֶם מִיָּדִי מָה אֵינוֹ מַצִּיל אֶתְכֶם מִיָּדִי ישׁאַל וַצְּזַרְיָה ... פְמוֹ שֶׁהָצִיל לְחָנַנְיָה מִישְׁאֵל וַצְזַרְיָה ...

אָמֵר לוֹ חֲנַנְיָה מִישָׁאֵל וַעֲזַרְיָה כְּשֵׁרִים הִיוּ He said, "Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were deserving, וּנְבוּכַדְנָצַּר מֶלֶךְ הָגוּן הָיָה and Nebuchadnezzar was worthy

לעשות גס על יָדוֹ that a miracle be done at his hands.

אַכָּל אַתָּה לָשֶׁמַיִם But you are not worthy, and we are guilty.

... אָם אֵין אַהָּה הוֹרְגֵנוּ הַרְבֵּה הוֹרְגִים יֵשׁ לַמְּקוֹם ... If you did not kill us, there are many killers in the world many bears, wolves, lions, snakes, leopards

many bears, wolves, lions, snakes, leopards מְרְבֵּה זָאַכִּים וַאְבְיוֹ many bears, wolves, lions, snakes, leopards מון and scorpions that can attack us and kill us.

אָלָא לַסוֹף הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא עָתִיד לִפָּרַע מִמְּךּ אֶת דְּמֵינוּ In the end, God will take repayment from you for our blood."

ַ מִיָּד גָּזַר עָלָיו לְהוֹרְגוֹ. Immediately, Caesar decreed that he be killed.

אָמְרָה לוֹ אָמוֹ בְּחַיֵּי רֹאִשְׁךּ קֵיסָר His mother said, "By your life, Caesar!

. אָני נאָחַבְּקהוּ נאָנּשְׁקהוּ Give me my son, so I may kiss him and embrace him."

וְתְנוּהוּ לָה They gave her her son,

... אָלָב װָבֶּנִיקְתּוּ קוֹנְביִיקְתּוּ חָלָב and she uncovered her breast and let him suckle milk. . .

Bavli Gittin 58a

An account of a woman named Tsafnat bat Penuel: צפנת שהכל צופין ביופיה
דsafnat because all gazed (tsofin) at her beauty, bat Penuel because she was the daughter

של כהן גדול ששימש לפני ולפנים of a high priest who served at the Holy of Holies.

שנתעלל בה She was captured and abused by her captor the entire night.

למחר הלבישה שבעה חלוקים Afterward, he dressed her in seven garments and took her out to sell her in the market.

בא אדם אחד שהיה מכוער ביותר A certain man came who was extremely ugly.

אמר לו: הראני את יופיה He said to him, "Let me see her beauty."

אמר לו: ריקא אם אתה רוצה ליקח קח אמר לו: ריקא אם אתה רוצה ליקח קח He said, "Empty one! If you wish to buy, then buy.

For her beauty is unmatched in the entire world."

אמר לו: אף על פי כן He said to him, "Even so, [let me see her.]" He stripped off six wraps—

and she tore the seventh and rolled in the dirt.

אמרה לפניו: רבונו של עולם She said before God, "Lord of the World, even if You have no compassion on us,

על קדושת שמך הגבור have You no compassion for the sanctity of Your great name?"

ועליה קונן ירמיה: Regarding her, Jeremiah lamented: (Jer. 6:26)

בת עמי חגרי שק Daughter of my people, put on sackcloth and strew dust on yourselves!

אבל יחיד עשי באפן and serew dust on yourselve Mourn, as for an only child;

. מספד תמרורים כי פתאום יבא השודד עלינו wail bitterly, for the destroyer has come upon us.

עלינו אלא עלינו It does not say "upon you," but "upon us,"

for it is as if to say—

. עלי ועליך בא שודד the Destroyer has come upon Me and upon you.