



“Awaiting the Good Hour”: Hope in the Bible as a Resource for Religious Life

Dr. Amy Kalmanofsky

Dr. Amy Kalmanofsky, Blanche and Romie Shapiro Professor of Bible, is dean of Albert A. List College of Jewish Studies, JTS’s undergraduate school, and dean of the Gershon Kekst Graduate School. As professor of Bible, she teaches courses on biblical literature, religion, and feminist interpretation of the Bible. In her writing and teaching, Dr. Kalmanofsky combines contemporary ideas and critical methods with traditional text study, teaching students to be careful, creative interpreters of Torah.

Dr. Kalmanofsky’s first book, *Terror All Around: The Rhetoric of Horror in the Book of Jeremiah* (T&T Clark, 2008) uses horror theory to argue that the biblical prophets constructed monsters and crafted language that worked to terrify their audience. Her book *The Dangerous Sisters of the Hebrew Bible* (Fortress Press, 2014) explores the biblical portrayal of sisters and sisterhoods and argues that both play a vital role in the Bible’s narrative. Her book *Gender-Play in the Hebrew Bible* (Routledge, 2017) examines the ways in which the Bible defies and challenges its gender norms. Her book *The Power of Equivocation: Complex Readers and Readings of the Hebrew Bible* (Fortress, 2022) addresses the Bible’s inherent complexity, as well as the complexity of those who seek to read the Bible critically, generously, and honestly.

Dr. Kalmanofsky also has written numerous articles examining the biblical representation of women and the roles women play in the Bible, as well as articles that consider the biblical rhetoric of violence. She serves on two editorial boards: *The Journal of the Feminist Studies in Religion* and the *Biblical Interpretation Series*.

Jeremiah 31:15-17

(15) Thus said GOD:

A cry is heard in Ramahi Or *“on a height.”* —

Wailing, bitter weeping—

Rachel weeping for her children.

She refuses to be comforted

For her children, who are gone.

(16) Thus said GOD:

Restrain your voice from weeping,

Your eyes from shedding tears;

For there is a reward for your labor

—declares GOD:

They shall return from the enemy’s land.

(17) And there is hope for your future

—declares GOD:

Your children shall return to their country.

ירמיהו ל"א:ט"ו-י"ז

(טו) כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה קוֹל בְּרָמָה נִשְׁמַע נְהִי בְכִי
תִמְרוּ לִים רַחֵל מִבְּכָה עַל־בָּנֶיהָ מֵאֲנָה לְהַנְחִים
עַל־בָּנֶיהָ כִּי אֵינָנו: {ס} (טז) כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה
מִנְעִי קוֹלִי מִבְּכִי וְעֵינַי מִדְּמָעָה כִּי יֵשׁ שָׂכָר
לְפַעֲלֹתֶיךָ נְאֻם־יְהוָה וְשָׁבוּ מֵאֶרֶץ אוֹיֵב: (יז) וַיֵּשׁ־
תִּקְוָה לְאַחֲרֵיתֶךָ נְאֻם־יְהוָה וְשָׁבוּ בָנִים לְגְבוּלָם:

Isaiah 49:14-21

(14) Zion says,
“GOD has forsaken me,
My Sovereign has forgotten me.”
(15) Can a woman forget her baby,
Or disown the child of her womb?
Though she might forget,
I never could forget you.
(16) See, I have engraved you
On the palms of My hands,
Your walls are ever before Me.
(17) Swiftly your children are coming;
Those who ravaged and ruined you shall leave you.
(18) Look up all around you and see:
They are all assembled, are come to you!
As I live
—declares GOD —
You shall don them all like jewels,
Deck yourself with them like a bride. (19) As for your
ruins and desolate places
And your land laid waste—
You shall soon be crowded with settlers,
While destroyers stay far from you. (20) The children
you thought you had lost *Lit. “of your bereavement.”*

ישעיהו מ"ט:י"ד-כ"א

(י"ד) וְתֹאמַר צִיּוֹן עֲזַבְנִי יְהוָה וְאֲדֹנָי שָׁכַחְנִי: (טו)
הַתְּשַׁבַּח אִשָּׁה עוֹלָה מֵרַחֵם בֶּן־בֵּטְנָה גַם־אֵלֶּהָ
תִּשְׁכַּחְנָה וְאַנְכִי לֹא אֲשַׁכַּחֲךָ: (טז) הֲיֵן עַל־כַּפְּיָם
חֻקְתֶּיךָ חוֹמֹתֶיךָ נִגְדִי תָמִיד: (יז) מִהֲרוּ בְנֵיךָ
מִהֲרִסֶיךָ וּמִחֲרִיבֶיךָ מִמֶּנּוּ יֵצְאוּ: (יח) שְׂאִי־סָבִיב
עֵינֶיךָ וּרְאִי כֹלֵם נִקְבְּצוּ בְּאוֹלָךְ חֵי־אֲנִי נְאֻם־יְהוָה
כִּי כֹלֵם כְּעַדִּי תִלְבְּשִׁי וְתִקְנִשְׁרִים כַּכֶּלֶה: (יט) כִּי
חָרַבְתִּיךָ וְשִׁמְמַתִּיךָ וְאַרְץ הִרְסַתְךָ כִּי עַתָּה תִצְרִי
מִיּוֹשֵׁב וְרַחֲקוּ מִבְּלַעֲיֶיךָ: (כ) עוֹד יֹאמְרוּ בְּאָזְנֶיךָ
בְּנֵי שִׁבְלֶיךָ צֵר־לִי הַמָּקוֹם גְּשָׁה־לִּי וְאַשְׁבָּה: (כ"א)
וְאַמְרַת בְּלִבִּיךָ מִי יִלְד־לִי אֶת־אֵלֶּהָ וְאַנִּי שְׂכוּלָהָ
וְגִלְמוּדָהָ גְלָהָ | וְסוּרָה וְאֵלֶּהָ מִי גִדְּלָהּ הֲיֵן אֲנִי
נִשְׂאָרְתִּי לְבִדִּי אֵלֶּהָ אִיפָּה הֵם: {פ}

Shall yet say in your hearing,
 “The place is too crowded for me;
 Make room for me to settle.” (21) And you will say to
 yourself,
 “Who bore these for me
 When I was bereaved and barren,
 Exiled and disdained *Meaning of Heb. uncertain.* —
 By whom, then, were these reared?
 I was left all alone—
 And where have these been?”

Isaiah 54:1-10

(1) Shout, O infertile one,
 You who bore no child!
 Shout aloud for joy,
 You who did not travail!
 For the children of the wife forlorn
 Shall outnumber those of the espoused
 —said GOD. (2) Enlarge the site of your tent,
 Extend the size of your dwelling, *Lit. “Let the cloths of
 your dwelling extend.”*
 Do not stint!
 Lengthen the ropes, and drive the pegs firm. (3) For you
 shall spread out to the right and the left;
 Your offspring shall dispossess nations *i.e., the foreigners*

ישעיהו נ"ד:א-ו'

(א) רְנִי עֵקְרָה לֹא יִלְדָה פְּצָחִי רַנָּה וְצִהְלִי לֹא־חֶלְהָ
 כִּי־רַבִּים בְּנֵי־שׁוֹמְמָה מִבְּנֵי בְּעוּלָה אָמַר יְהוָה: (ב)
 הֲרַחֲבִי אֶמְקוֹם אֹהֶלְךָ וִירֵעוֹת מִשְׁכְּנוֹתֶיךָ יִטוּ אֶל־
 תַּחְשֻׁכֵי הָאָרֶץ מִיִּתְרֶיךָ וִיתְדוֹתֶיךָ חֲזָקִי: (ג) כִּי־יִמִּין
 וּשְׂמֹאל תִּפְרָצִי וְזָרְעֶךָ גּוֹיִם יִירָשׁ וְעַרְיִם נִשְׁמֹת
 יוֹשְׁבוֹ: (ד) אֶל־תִּירָאִי כִּי־לֹא תִבּוֹשִׁי וְאֶל־תִּכְלַמִּי כִּי
 לֹא תַחֲפִירִי כִּי בְּנֶשֶׁת עֲלוּמֶיךָ תִּשְׁכָּחִי וְחֲרַפְתַּי
 אֶלְמַנּוֹתֶיךָ לֹא תִזְכְּרִי־עוֹד: (ה) כִּי בַעֲלֶיךָ עֲשִׂיךָ יְהוָה
 צְבָאוֹת שָׁמֹו וְגִאֲלֶךָ קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֱלֹהֵי כָל־הָאָרֶץ
 יִקְרָא: (ו) כִּי־כֹאשָׁה עֲזוּבָה וְעַצוּבַת רוּחַ קָרְאָךָ יְהוָה
 וְאַשְׁתֵּי נְעוּרִים כִּי תִמָּאֵס אָמַר אֱלֹהֶיךָ: (ז) בְּרַגְעַת קָטָן

who had occupied regions from which Israelites had been exiled; cf. 2 Kings 17.24.

And shall people the desolate towns. (4) Fear not, you shall not be shamed;

Do not cringe, you shall not be disgraced.

For you shall forget

The reproach of your youth,

And remember no more

The shame of your widowhood. (5) For the One who made you—whose name is “GOD of Hosts”—

Will espouse you.

The Holy One of Israel—who is called “God of all the Earth”—

Will redeem you. (6) GOD has called you back

As a wife forlorn and forsaken.

Can one cast off the wife of his youth?

—said your God. (7) For a little while I forsook you,

But with vast love I will bring you back. (8) In slight anger, for a moment,

I hid My face from you;

But with kindness everlasting

I will take you back in love

—said GOD your Redeemer. (9) For this to Me is like the waters *Other Heb. mss. and the ancient versions read*

“days.” of Noah:

As I swore that the waters of Noah

Nevermore would flood the earth,

עֲזַבְתִּיךָ וּבְרַחֲמַיִם גְּדֹלִים אֶקְבְּצֶךָ: (ח) בְּשֹׁצֵף קֹצֶף
הִסְתֵּרְתִּי פָנַי רָגַע מִמֶּךָ וּבְחֶסֶד עוֹלָם רַחַמְתִּיךָ אָמַר
גְּאֻלְךָ יְהוָה: {ס} (ט) כִּי־יָמִי נָחַ זָאת לִי אֲשֶׁר
נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי מֵעַבְרַת מִי־נָח עוֹד עַל־הָאָרֶץ בֶּן נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי
מִקֹּצֶף עָלֶיךָ וּמִגְעַר־בָּרֶךְ: (י) כִּי הֶהְרִים יְמוּשׁוֹ
וְהִגְבַּעוֹת תְּמוּטֵינָה וְחִסְדִּי מֵאֲתָךְ לֹא־יְמוּשׁ וּבְרִית
שְׁלוֹמִי לֹא תִמוּט אָמַר מְרַחֲמֶךָ יְהוָה: {ס}

So I swear that I will not
 Be angry with you or rebuke you. (10) For the mountains
 may move
 And the hills be shaken,
 But my loyalty shall never move from you,
 Nor My covenant of friendship be shaken
 —said GOD, who takes you back in love.

Isaiah 66:7-14

(7) Before she labored, she was delivered;
 Before her pangs came, she bore a son.
Who would assure the household's continuity.
 (8) Who ever heard the like?
 Who ever witnessed such events?
 Can a land pass through travail
 In a single day?
 Or is a nation born
 All at once?
 Yet Zion travailed
 And at once bore her children! (9) Shall I who
 bring on labor not bring about birth?
 —says GOD.
 Shall I who cause birth shut the womb?
 —said your God. (10) Rejoice with Jerusalem
 and be glad for her,

ישעיהו ס"ו:ז-י"ד

(ז) בְּטָרֶם תְּחִיל יִלְדָה בְּטָרֶם יָבֹא תִבֵּל לָהּ וְהַמְלִיטָה זָכָר:
 (ח) מִי־שָׁמַע כְּזֹאת מִי רָאָה כְּאֵלֶּה הַיּוֹחֵל אֶרֶץ בַּיּוֹם אֶחָד
 אִם־יִוָּלַד גּוֹי פְּעַם אַחַת כִּי־חָלָה גַּם־יִלְדָה צִיּוֹן אֶת־בְּנֵיהָ:
 (ט) הֲאֵנִי אֲשַׁבֵּיר וְלֹא אוֹלִיד יֹאמֶר יְהוָה אִם־אֲנִי הַמּוֹלִיד
 וְעֲצַרְתִּי אֲמַר אֱלֹהִים: {ס} (י) שָׁמַח אֶת־יְרוּשָׁלַם
 וְגִילוּ בָהּ כָּל־אֲהַבֶיהָ שִׁישׁוּ אֶתְהָ מִשׁוֹשׁ כָּל־הַמְתַאבְּלִים
 עָלֶיהָ: (יא) לְמַעַן תִּינָקוּ וְשִׁבַעְתֶּם מִשָּׂד תִּנְחַמְיָהּ לְמַעַן
 תִּמְצוּ וְהִתְעַנְגְתֶם מִזִּז כְּבוֹדָהּ: {ס} (יב) כִּי־כֹה אֶמַר
 יְהוָה הִנְנִי נֹטֶה־אֵלַיָּהּ כְּנֹהַר שָׁלוֹם וְכִנְחַל שׁוֹטֵף
 כְּבוֹד גּוֹיִם וַיִּנְקַתֶם עַל־צִד תִּנְשְׂאוּ וְעַל־בְּרָכִים תִּשְׁעַנְשְׂעוּ:
 (יג) כְּאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר אִמּוֹ תִּנְחַמְנוּ בֶן אֲנָכִי אֲנַחֲמָכֶם
 וּבִירוּשָׁלַם תִּנְחַמּוּ: (יד) וּרְאִיתֶם וְשִׂשׁ לְבַבְכֶם וְעֲצַמוֹתֵיכֶם
 כִּדְנָשָׂא תִפְרַחְנָה וְנוֹדַעַה יַד־יְהוָה אֶת־עַבְדֵיּוֹ וְזָעַם אֶת־
 אֲיָבָיו: {ס}

All you who love her!
Join in her jubilation,
All you who mourned over her— (11) That you
may suck from her breast
Consolation to the full,
That you may draw from her bosom
Cf. Akkadian zīzu, Arabic zīzat, “udder.”
Glory to your delight. (12) For thus said GOD:
I will extend to her
Prosperity like a stream,
The wealth of nations
Like a wadi in flood;
And you shall drink of it.
You shall be carried on shoulders
And dandled upon knees (13) Like one whom a
mother comforts.
So I will comfort you:
You shall find comfort in Jerusalem. (14) You
shall see and your heart shall rejoice,
Your limbs shall flourish like grass.
GOD’s power shall be revealed
On behalf of those who render service;
But [God] shall rage against all foes.