
JESSICA JACOBS
COVENANT BETWEEN THE PIECES

What woman here is so enamored of her own oppression that she cannot see her heelprint upon another woman's face?

—Audre Lorde

Abram divided

three cows, three goats, three rams down the middle

and walked with God
between the halves
like a bloody Red Sea.

To cut a deal, cut animals. Those were literal times.

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Say it wasn't just animals.

On one side, Sarah,
his wife,

on the other, Hagar, her
handmaid, his
second wife.

Between them,
a man and jealousy
passing like a flaming torch.

And ahead, for each, a son;
their boys, half-brothers:

Ishmael, whom “God will hear,”
twice-exiled at Sarah’s command.

Isaac, whose name, “he laughs,”
seemed more like a taunt with every passing year.

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Each woman the other’s shadow self:

Sarah, a beloved princess, as Hagar, a daughter of Pharaoh, had been
in Egypt. Hagar, the fertile body Sarah had always wanted to be.

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Together,
two singular people:

Sarah the only woman renamed by God; Hagar,
the only woman to give God a name: *El Roi*, “God Who Sees Me.”

Together, two wings
are enough to unshackle from the grasping
ground. Alone, one wing
is just a lonely hand waving for help in the distance.

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Because it’s easiest to loathe those most like us,
women often reserve their worst cruelty for each other.

But like neighboring countries, their boundaries
are just agreed-upon fiction.

to take in your flaws. *Partner* in Hebrew
 shares the same root as *zygote*, a cell
 built from the essence of two people,
 the start of a thing intended
 to live beyond those
 who created it:

a *zug*

ז י ב

—every mate a kind of mirror
 with that selvage
 of selves between you.

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In the desert where Sarah had banished her, Hagar ran between
 two peaks, up and down across land empty for all but her dying son.

Up close: a woman, terrified, desperate, searching for help.

From afar: with her tracks crisscrossing the sand,

from the Seeing God's-eye view, Hagar

was a needle mending a great tear.

Back and forth, back and forth, a surgeon suturing a consolable wound.