



## A Pesach Prayer for the Earth

*Rabbi Rachel Barenblat*

Each life contains constriction and release:  
times when the tight squeeze of circumstance  
pins us in place, the salty waters of grief  
threaten to wash us away -- and other times

when the vise grip clamped around our hearts  
releases and breathing comes easy, when  
the touch of a staff transforms bitter waters  
to sweet. The contractions of birthing ourselves

into what comes next -- of moving ourselves  
through the open doorway marked with blood --  
can hurt so much we think we can't get through.

But we can get through. On the far side

open waters sparkle, far as eyes can see.

The earth on which we live knows hard times, too:

strip mines like open gashes in her skin,  
the air which cushions her against cold space

soured with acid and with rancid smoke.

Her changes unfold in geologic time:  
our centuries of industry a single breath  
drawn in growing awareness of her pain.

Can we begin to midwife her contractions  
as she watches over ours? What would it mean  
to murmur words of love, to wipe her brow?  
Each birth marks transformation not only for

the one emerging through the narrow place  
but for the place herself. God's in this place:  
let us not claim that we, we did not know.

Her presence illumines from the highest peaks

to the lowest undersea trenches in the deep.  
Our planet cries out to us in her hard labors.  
Help us to soften our hearts, resolve to be  
cruel taskmasters no more: to set her free.