

Text/Context

FRESH ENCOUNTERS WITH JEWISH TRADITION

Grant the gift of water.

— Tefilat Geshem,
the prayer for rain

FIRST FRUITS

Jessica Hammerman

LIVING WATERS

Anita Diamant

ON ONE FOOT

Rabbi Joseph Telushkin

WAITING FOR RAIN

Rabbi Lauren Berkun

WATERSIDE RITUAL

Jeff Yablonka

JAZZ WAVES

Alexander Gelfand

IRRIGATING THE LAND

Eric Herschthal

MIKVEH: A MAN'S VIEW

Simon Fleischer

DEAD SEA REFLECTIONS

Daniella Cheslow

JOURNAL WATCH

Jerome A. Chanes

JILL NATHANSON. *Separate Water from Water*, 2007-2010, mixed paper, plastics, acrylic paint, 46 x 68". Image courtesy of Messineo Art Projects/Wyman Contemporary

Water

EDITOR'S NOTE



**SANDEE
BRAWARSKY**

I write this with a view of the Atlantic Ocean, listening to the roar of the waves breaking at the shore. It's a soothing sound, even as it hints of danger. Water is both gentle and fierce, creative and destructive, as we've seen with this summer's flooding in the Indus Valley of Pakistan, washing away precious lives and displacing millions of people.

Like many of the subjects we've chosen to focus on in Text/Context, "Water" was overflowing with possibilities for topics (and puns), in so many directions. Turning to the new year that begins this week, we thought to explore the connections between water and holiness, blessing and the idea of renewal.



JILL NATHANSON. *In Our Image, by Our Likeness*, 2007-2010, mixed paper and plastic, 144 x 29 1/2". Image courtesy of Messineo Art Projects/Wyman Contemporary

Our contributors find water and meaning in a variety of texts and contexts. Rabbi Lauren Berkun looks closely at the traditional prayer for rain, and Anita Diamant and Simon Fleischer consider the mikveh. Jeff Yablonka takes a walk along the Hudson River during Tashlich and looks back at the origins of the ritual. Alexander Gelfand writes of a jazz musician who finds water in music.

Jessica Hammerman turns to the Rosh HaShanah rituals of Algerian Jews, and offers a taste of a desert fruit, and Eric Herschthal interviews Daniel Hillel, an Israeli expert in soil and water physics. Daniella Cheslow raises concerns about the shrinking of the Dead Sea. Jerome Chanes, as always, digs deep and wide, and finds water in the essence of Jewish life.

We're pleased to feature an excerpt from Rabbi Joseph Telushkin's new book, "Hillel: If Not Now, When?" (Nextbook Press/Schocken), in which he shares Hillel's vision, looking toward a renewed Judaism.

The magnificent image on the cover, "Separate Water from Water" by Jill Nathanson, is featured in the exhibition "Sacred Presence/Painterly Process" (Sept. 26 – Dec. 19) at the Derfner Judaica Museum in Riverdale, the Bronx. Her work in the Genesis series grew out of Nathanson's ongoing study of text and midrash related to the six days of creation, along with years of conversations with Arnold Eisen, chancellor of The Jewish Theological Seminary. Color is Nathanson's language, and she strives to translate the biblical text in painting, rather than to illustrate it. Her mixed-media collages are unbounded assemblages, with borders unconstrained by a canvas edge or frame. As she explains, "It gave me a chance to imagine God working: the boundless artist with boundaries so absent we can't begin to imagine."

I always like the line in the High Holidays liturgy in which we ask for "a year in which the precious fruits ripen with sweetness." May it be a new year in which we are all nourished by an abundance of water. May we be spared tears.

A sweet year to all of you, and thanks for your support.