

Jewish Ecological Thought: Sacred Activism as Biophilia

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Paintings by Micaela Amateau Amato from
Zazu Dreams: Between the Scarab and the Dung Beetle,
A Cautionary Fable for the Anthropocene Era

Ladino Proverbs by Daisy Saragoussi
Ladino and Hebrew glossary provided upon request

Zazu: We prayed to our revered *tzaddik* for an end to profit-driven biocide; we prayed for an end to the monoculture of the mind; we prayed for ecological intelligence to help us figure out how to encourage people to realize the deep connections between environmental justice and human rights, and act together to stop the suffering of people whose lands and water are poisoned and stolen; we prayed for a transition from a global extraction economy to a global regenerative economy. ...

I realized that a search for home was at the root of all these prayers. Home, I now understood, was a lived and shared opening to global interconnectedness. We can stop these crimes against nature if we can understand the relationship between *bal taschit*¹ and a collective *tikkun olam*—between caring for people and caring for our environment, for what Mama calls our indigenous social ecology.



Cara: So goes my cross-cultural tale of Jewish polymaths and conviviality, biophilia and multiplicity. In the tradition of the *maggid*, I offer this tapestry as a strategy to ignite social justice dialogue, ecological consciousness, and collective action. Throughout this presentation you will hear Ladino,² the

¹ Rabbi David Seidberg's essay, "Bal Taschit: What's Wrong With the Jewish Law Against Destruction and Waste — and How to Fix It," <https://www.tikkun.org/bal-taschit-jewish-law-against-destruction>

² The Inquisition followed the Sephardic Jews to the so-called "New World." According to UNESCO's Red Book, Ladino is a *seriously endangered* language. Reviving the diversity of Jewish spoken languages is critical to recognizing our global interconnectedness. This reclamation is pivotal to embodying hybrid cultural identities and reflects the potency of biodiversity throughout our ecosystems. At the heart of this practice is an investigation of Ladino. Throughout our story, the characters hear and speak Ladino. Exiles of the Diaspora of 1492 wove Hebrew, Turkish, Greek, Italian, French, Portuguese, and Arabic into their 15th century Spanish. Ladino is the ultimate polyvocal, hybrid language—a reflection of the Diaspora; embracing difference. Rich with humor, songs, and poetic metaphors, Ladino has no set linguistic laws; grammar laws of Spanish do not apply. It is deeply connected to oral traditions; only phonetic pronunciations are used. Ladino is the language of the polymath Maimonides, the poet Yehuda Halevi, and the entire tradition of Kabbalah (and the Zohar, its foundation). These sacred texts were written in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic—identified as one of the many layers of Ladino. Because of our vast diaspora, Ladino language gradually developed two overarching dialects. Oriental Ladino spoken in Turkey, Rhodes, North Africa, Egypt (echoing Castilian Spanish), while Western Ladino (closer to northern

language of my family—a hybrid of ancient Spanish, Hebrew, Arabic, Turkish, Italian, French, and Greek—depending on where the Mizrahi and Sephardi Jews had fled when they were exiled from Iberia and Europe during the various expulsions beginning in the 14th century.

Ladino proverb: *Ken mete kara, toma marido!* (Those who take risks accomplish the most!)



Both the multiplicity of ethnic identities across the Jewish diaspora and principles found in Jewish languages,³ symbols, festivals, liturgy, life-cycle markers, and discussions of Torah can be antidotes to our industrial-waste consumer culture. I contend that the alternative to convenience culture is not inconvenience. “Consumer-reduction” has become an unpopular approach to environmental crises because it falsely implies sacrifice. I suggest we redefine “convenience” and taken-for-granted normative infrastructures. The ethnic mosaic of Jewish identities is integral to understanding how we can engage on a day-to-day basis with the sacred world around us. While encouraging individuals and communities to *collectively* resist industrialized capitalism and its inherent self-destructive consequences, this presentation offers behavioral and infrastructural design shifts that embody Jewish sacred activism.

Spanish and Portuguese) was spoken in Greece, Macedonia, Bosnia, Serbia, the former Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Romania. Both dialects were also spoken in France, Israel, the United States and Latin America. The United Nations agency, UNESCO, publishes a Red Book of Endangered Languages. Yiddish is listed as ‘endangered’ while Ladino is listed as ‘seriously endangered.’ Our characters’ search for home through language is also an attempt to build solidarity alliances with other ethnic minorities whose languages have been systematically obliterated— thus stripping and eventually erasing their cultures. In spite of its history of adaptation, Ladino will most likely be extinct in 30 years or less. Few Jews are even aware of Ladino’s existence, let alone its demise. Although Yeshiva University is attempting to revitalize Ladino, most major American rabbinical schools have chosen to ignore Ladino. Additionally, Yeshiva University permitted a Hebrew Literature professor to call Sephardim “poor and uneducated” (David Shasha, “The Idiot Sephardim”[groups.google.com/forum/#!searchin/davidshasha/idiot\\$20sephardim/davidshasha/HWE675C8-No/VxmT4bkxZlCJ](https://groups.google.com/forum/#!searchin/davidshasha/idiot$20sephardim/davidshasha/HWE675C8-No/VxmT4bkxZlCJ)). Prior to World War II, approximately 80% of Diaspora Jews were Ladinospeaking. However, an estimated 90% of all the world’s Ladino-speakers were wiped out during the Holocaust (Lorne Rozovsky, “Will Ladino Rise Again?”: www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1085545/jewish/Will-Ladino-Rise-Again.htm).

³ *Zazu Dreams: Between the Scarab and the Dung Beetle, A Cautionary Fable for the Anthropocene Era* explores not only Ladino, Hebrew, Judeo-Arabic, but other Jewish dialects from around the world, including: Judeo-Malay. Judeo-Malayalam (of the Cochin Jews from Kerala), Judeo-Berber, and the Judeo-Iranian languages (Judi—Judeo-Persian and Judeo-Shirazi of the Shirazi Jews), Bukhari (Judeo-Tajik), Judeo-Tat (Juhuri), Judeo-Ishfahani, Judeo-Median, Judeo-Gurgani, Judeo-Hamandani, Judeo-Yazdi, and Judeo-Kashani).

Ladino proverb: *Una mano lava lo otra, I las dos lavas la kara* (One hand washes the other and together they wash the face)

I ask: How can we transform habitual behaviors of entitlement and obsessive accumulation, so that we embody the ways we are all interconnected as a model and resource for compassionate living? How can citizen-activists manifest symbiotic solutions as we transition from our Anthropogenic, petroleum-pharmaceutical-addicted cyber-culture to a biocentric Commons—one that inspires, educates, and mobilizes peoples of diverse cultural backgrounds? How can we hold accountable ourselves and corporations while recalibrating our normalized relationship to consumption / disposal habits that we know harm us, our children, and everyone around the world?

Ladino proverb: *Kyen a la mar se kaye, de la espanda se detyène* (A drowning man will hang onto anything)

Navigating our own extinction along with the collapse of the known world, we witness not only our fears and failures, but also the exhilarating potential to radically transform our Anthropogenic status quo that defines our species' hubris. Transitioning from the Anthropocene Era (human-induced ecological destruction due to advanced capitalism, rampant consumerism, international development, environmental racism) to biophilia, love of life, necessitates collaborative personal-political practices echoing Judaic exegetical dialogue rooted in mindfulness and deep inquiry. This transition depends on nurturing the sacred in *everyday objects* as well as the ecologies they inhabit.



This practice of interdependency cultivates Maimonides' holism (the intersection of biodiversity and biophilia). Rabbi David Seidenberg reminds us: “Maimonides, *who integrated medieval philosophy and Judaism*, warned against seeing everything in anthropocentric terms, suggesting instead that we think of the whole creation and each creature in terms of itself instead of in terms of its usefulness to us.”⁴ Seidenberg describes the imperative of co-evolution: “We need to grow up in our relation to the Earth, to enter into mutual relationships, to cherish kinship with all life, rather than reward exploitation.

⁴ <http://multi.jewishpublicaffairs.org/coejl/resources/cosmology-and-biodiversity-the-divine-purpose-in-creating-many-species/>



Shiluach haken [the Hebrew term for kindness or compassion toward non-human animals] is one commandment that offers us a window into our own souls and a yardstick to measure how far we have come along that path.”⁵ Counter to agribusiness and advanced capitalism, Jewish sacred activism incorporates a commitment to our non-human kin. These include Shabbat, the Jewish laws of *Sh'mitah*, and the Sabbatical years including *Yovel*, the Jubilee years. Judaic relationships to generosity and agriculture, gleaning, eco-kashrut, restoring balance to the land, forgiving debt, and multiple interpretations of fertility offer visions of possibility for contemporary social and environmental justice. In contrast to tyrannies of linear progress, these biophilic relationships reflect the necessity for “cross-species connections and communications.” For example, “[p]lant time honors the difference between human time and vegetal temporalities—the cycles of germination, growth, maintenance, seeding, and dormancy or death.”⁶

We must shift the hegemonic concept that there is only one way to approach development and progress, that high-tech is going to solve all of our social and ecological problems. Like indigenous cultures across the world, for thousands of years, Jewish communities have evolved using ancient design systems and local/traditional wisdoms' slow and low technologies that work symbiotically with their natural environments. These technologies embrace the concept of *deep time*. Architect Julia Watson reminds us: “This knowledge is based upon thousands of years of thinking and understanding and adapting. [I]t's also circular time because it works with seasons...it repeats, and ...strengthens as it builds on itself...[it] changes based upon new impacts. [While the benefits] might be slow, they have an incredible multiplier effect.”⁷ This ecological intelligence embodies resiliency that is rooted in adaptability and “creativity in crisis.”

By understanding the interconnections between homogenized cultures, impoverished soils, and resulting malnutrition, we can collaboratively create more efficient and just alternatives to the Anthropocene in our everyday lives. We can generate a fertile territory within the intersections between ethnic identities, indigenous wisdoms, and our natural environment as a basis for global justice. Jewish

⁵ <https://jewschool.com/2016/09/77477/nesting-mothers-food-compassion-sustainability/> See also, Rabbi Seidenberg's, *Kabbalah and Ecology: God's Image in the More-Than-Human World*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2016.

⁶ “Anthropologist Natasha Myers calls this process of paying attention to the material entailments of other elements of the world ‘attunement.’” (cited in Charis Boke's “Plant Time,” Matthew Schneide-Mayerson, Brent Ryan Bellamy, and Kim Stanley Robinson, eds., *An Ecotopian Lexicon* Introduction. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019: 205).

⁷ See <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/964214673>

philosophies resonate with this enfoldment of our material, spiritual, and social bodies.

Ladino Proverb: *Ande komen dos, komen i tres* (Where two people eat, three people also can)



Spiritual intelligence embraces practicing teachings from the *Zohar* (the foundation of Kabbalistic thought):⁸ how to lead a practical, holy life. Like the *Zohar*, the Islamic-Arabic concept of *adab*, and the *yamas* and *niyamas* of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras in the Hindu tradition also offer both individual and social behavioral ideals for which to strive to live an ethical life. The word yoga translates as 'to yoke,' to unite.⁹ Examining *Kabbalah* from a feminist perspective, we witness how "all things exist in a state of inherent *yichud*, a uniting of disparate parts."¹⁰ Judaism is rooted in this equilibrium in flux. Similarly, *Kabbalah* scholar, Daniel Matt explains that the *Zohar* crosses binaries, interweaves our differences.¹¹ *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Assiyah*, the aggregation of the three faculties of thought, speech,

⁸ Bar-Yohai was affectionately known as Rasbhi in the year 2nd century. While hiding from the Romans for thirteen years, Rashbi and his son buried themselves in sand to protect themselves from the sun. Composed in Aramic supposedly by Kabbalist Rav Shimon bar Yochai, the *Zohar* (the foundational text of the Kabbalah), which translates as , splendor, or radiance, offers possibilities of healing, miracles, prosperity, and protection. "The *Zohar* [known as The Book of Enlightenment] is the internal soul of the Bible...it reveals the secrets of the Bible" (Matt, Bildner Center, Lecture, 2013). Rashbi's Hilloula may be the most popular among Sephardim in North Africa. Some contemporary rabbis question whether or not Rashbi did in fact write the *Zohar*. *Kabbalah* scholar Daniel Matt claims that the Sephardic Rabbi Moshe (Moses) de Leon of 13th century Spain actually wrote the *Zohar* and hid his identity behind the famous Rashbi in order to gain credence so that his words would be read and spread. By claiming the *Zohar* was "written under the influence of a holy spirit," under the guise of an authority alive 1,000 years before the *Kabbalah*, Moses de Leon was able to profit financially. We include this debate as an example of the fluidity of interpreting history and Judaic commentary always in flux. I focus on the '*Zoar*' (Ladino translation for *Book of Jewish Mysticism*) as integral to the climax of *Zazu Dreams* because it both reinterprets the *lekha* (to yourself): "Travel in order to transform yourself, create yourself anew" (Zorenberg 139), paying deep attention to what already exists. The *Zohar* embodies the "delectable delight diverging" (Matt, Bildner Center, Lecture, 2013) from the essence. In other words, the *Zohar*, which emerged from within the context of 13th century Spain, still offers an invitation to receive the ongoing choice of being fully alive, fully present, fully connected to one's communities. The *Zohar* reminds us: "Love comes from affinity" (author's italicis, Aviva Zorenberg, *The Murmuring Deep: Reflections on the Biblical Unconscious*. New York, NY.: Schocken Books, 2009: 251), no matter how unpredictable it may be.

For references to the layers of racism and sexism embedded in *Kabbalah*, see Rabbi David Seidenberg's presentation with Nurete Brenner's bimonthly discussion group: Sacred Ecological Judaism (SEJ), March 14, 2021.

⁹ Another critical definition of "yoga" is to pay attention. The confluence of environmental, economic, interpersonal, and bodily challenges demand "that we learn to *pay attention* in new terms" (Charis Boke's "Plant Time," Matthew Schneide-Mayerson, Brent Ryan Bellamy, and Kim Stanley Robinson, eds., *An Ecotopian Lexicon* Introduction. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019: 206).

¹⁰ Rabbi Tirzah Firestone, *The Receiving: Reclaiming Jewish Women's Wisdom*. San Francisco, CA.: Harper Collins, 2003: 106, 110.

¹¹ "Zohar and Kabbalah," The Allen and Joan Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life, Lecture, 2013.

and action, form *mazalot*¹² (constellations). He tells us: “To those without spiritual attainment, The *Zohar* reads like a collection of allegories and legends that can be interpreted and perceived differently by each individual. But to those with spiritual attainment, i.e. Kabbalists, The *Zohar* is a practical guide to inner actions that one performs in order to discover deeper, higher states of perception and



sensation.”¹³

Practicing the *yamas* and *niyamas* parallel Jews’ commitment to read the Bible (The *Talmud*, *Midrash*) exegetically—through a contemporary-context magnifying glass—learning about how to live in the Now. In “The Story of the Jews,” Simon Schama defines Judaism as living in “the here and now.” He explores the *Mishnah* as a text which presents “how to be and stay Jewish in a non-Jewish world” through repetition, oral interpretation, and laws of daily life.¹⁴ Like the *yamas* and the *niyamas*, the synagogue’s mosaic floor in the ancient Israeli village of Sepphoris (a major cultural crossroads) depicts life itself as a place of worship. Abraham Joshua Heschel declared, “Our goal should be to live life in radical amazement. ...Get up in the morning and look at the world in a way that takes nothing for granted. Everything is phenomenal; everything is incredible; never treat life casually. To be spiritual is to be amazed.” Rabbi Tirzah Firestone explores this deep mindfulness as a shared purpose in which “we are brought together to grow beyond ourselves. ...In order to be fed, we must feed the world around us, or our system collapses.”¹⁵ We can cultivate traditional indigenous practices, this spiritual intelligence, as a form of devotion to ecological living.¹⁶

One personal example of living Jewish ecological thought is how my family and I build our home, how we animate the embodied energy¹⁷ of each object and the space we create by combining them. This is a

¹² *Mazalot* are heavenly constellations that live among us. The *Zohar* and *Midrash* tell us, “There is no blade of grass that does not have a ‘constellation’—Mazal—over it, telling it to grow” (www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/361901/jewish/Angels-and-Mazalot.html).

¹³ www.kabbalah.info/engkab/mystzohar.htm#.V0sVL9c7Efo

¹⁴ PBS 2014.

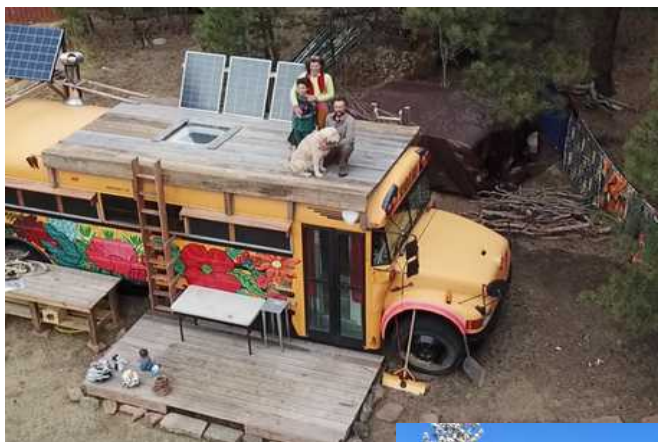
¹⁵ Firestone 187.

¹⁶ “When one’s inner world *is* rooted in the Tree of Life, i.e., the Jewish tradition and all that entails in terms of ethical values, moral conduct, and deep connectedness to the Jewish people and the Land of Israel, then increasing knowledge only augments the flow of life... [I]n the best tradition of Classic Sephardi Judaism, to partake in all aspects of life, to consume different kinds of tasty fruits, but to do so in a way that is integrated with the deepest impulses and highest aspirations of the Jewish tradition” (“The Surprising Sephardi Significance of *Tu B'Shevat*,” American Sephardi Federation newsletter, 2021).

¹⁷ “Reusing embodied energy” (Hawken 90) not only saves both energy and capital costs, it is also spiritually intelligent.

deliberate commitment to local and global nonviolence. When we consider the objects and the space / place they share sacred, nothing is taken-for-granted. We embody radical amazement—infusing awe throughout our daily interactions. Animating our embodied energy allows us to shift our relationship to consumer-waste culture's everyday violence—creating a bridge between infrastructural change and individual-collective accountability. I am happy to be in dialogue with others about this intimacy that deeply shifts our relationship to objects and people as disposable.

For the past three years, my family and I have lived in a biocentric art installation. Using only



repurposed materials and equipment, we converted a school bus into our performance-based tiny home.



Our LoveBus is a spiritual commitment, a Kabbalistic practice. Rabbi Firestone shares: “Never actually occurring in the Bible, the term *Shechinah* and the concept of God dwelling here and now, the very essence of the feminine presence, is hinted at when God tells Moses, 'Let them [the people] make for

Me a sanctuary so that I may dwell [v'*shacahanti*] within them”¹⁸ It is rooted in the ancient Hebraic philosophy of *gilgulim*, to reanimate or reincarnate; a process of bringing new life to that which was considered dead—or landfill. “Trash,” an object no longer valued thus deemed as waste, is rooted in Western concepts of Progress and Development.



When we rethink taken-for-granted assumptions that perpetuate the fact that over “40 percent of the content of American landfills is construction waste,”¹⁹ we can shift the underlying concept of development from neocolonialism to, as Paul Hawken urges, “reimagine development as a tool for restoring nature and communities.”²⁰ In contrast, continual renewal implied in *gilgulim* echoes the First Law of Thermodynamics: the total amount of heat energy can never be altered; energy can never be created nor destroyed, instead it is transformed. Learning from cross-cultural wisdoms, we choose to embody this Law in how we live our home.

Ladino proverb: *Lo ke se aprendre en la kuna, sien anios dura* (What you learn in the cradle lasts a hundred years.)

When we are clearly attuned with the space and objects around us, we witness what is already here, how it can be used in surprising ways. Like the physicist and cosmologist, Stephen Hawking’s idea,



¹⁸ 33.

¹⁹ Hawken 100.

²⁰ 109.

everything we need to know is already within us just waiting to be realized, Leah Sha'rabi, the Mizrahi mystic, declared that "Everything you see has a spark of holiness in it that is waiting to rise up. It wants to be free, like a person in prison who longs to be rescued."²¹



Rescuing an everyday object means that we release its inherent dignity. Although not directly identifying with Animism, Hinduism, or even the *Kabbalah*, Sha'rabi believed that everything has a soul, every object is sacred, the most menial tasks are sacred. When we embrace the sacred possibilities of mutual accountability we can begin to uproot our materialist society, eventually rebuilding in its place a "Living Democracy" (Frances Moore Lappé) that aligns our values with the natural world.



In answer to the question, *how* can we live Jewish ecological thought as an ever-evolving practice that reinvigorates our most vital relationships, I wrote *Zazu Dreams: Between the Scarab and the Dung Beetle, A Cautionary Fable for the Anthropocene Era*. This quintessential Judaic *aggadah*²² explores

²¹ Firestone, 180.

²² *Aggadah*, a narrative component of Judaism's Oral law in the Talmud or other rabbinical literature. A quintessential intersectional device, *aggadah* incorporates parables, maxims, folklore, ethical convictions, historical anecdotes, and practical illustrations. This narrative is deployed in multiple social realms ranging from medical advice to business possibilities.

ecological extinction in the context of cultural extinction—including histories of forced conversion rooted in binary-driven fundamentalism that undergirds our oppressions of silence and assimilation. *Zazu Dreams* is a call for hospitality and a renewed *Convivencia* (conviviality—referring to the Golden Age of Spain during which Muslim and Jewish literature, science, and arts flourished). *Convivencia* can be reframed as the apotheosis of non-binary relationships. Historian Americo Castro has said that Spain must acknowledge that Hispanics are historically “½ Muslim, ½ Jewish, and ½ Catholic.”

Understanding historical relationships between the Spanish Inquisition²³ and contemporary manifestations of erasing cultural difference and ecosystem diversity, Zazu, the protagonist shares: “I understood more and more that there was so much work to be done; that the only way to heal ethnic and racial divisions and the ecology of our global body is to see how we are all intermeshed. We all have to take care of each other.”²⁴ The characters become increasingly aware of ecological relationships to humanitarian crises; while in each country they visit, they witness how, for hundreds of generations throughout the Middle East, the Caribbean, and Southeast Asia, symbiosis between humans and nature has been the norm. Along the way, they learn from historic figures such as: Spinoza,



²³ Congruent with the Spanish Inquisition's *conversos*, a term for descendants of Jews forcibly converted to Christianity, the other-within disrupts cause-and-effect binary codes—the “totalitarian tendency underlying universalism” (Irwin Hall cited in Benay Blend's "Because I Am in All Cultures at the Same Time" 1: Intersections of Gloria Anzaldúa's Concept of *Mestizaje* in the Writings of Latin-American Jewish Women, <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/%E2%80%9CBecause-I-Am-in-All-Cultures-at-the-Same-Time-%E2%80%9D-1-Blend/aa8697ce82d466d8aebf905ec650b50f6b8b79d6?p2df>). For example, the island of Majorca's history of “*quince siglos de racismo*” demonstrates how the legacy of the Inquisition continues to infect the lives of the ancestors of those Jews who converted to Christianity five hundred years ago.

The term *aljama* was the Catholic Spanish appellation for identifying both Jew and Muslim. While they encourage an acute awareness of the interconnected web of the ancient past with the present, such realizations are intended to undermine marginalization of the Inquisitional cultural pariah. Believed to be crypto, or secret Jews practicing crypto-Judaism, these *aljama* families continue to be pariahs in their own homeland. “Home” becomes a dangerous and ambiguous zone within the cultural imagination—a space nourished by fictionalized and demonized mythology and superstition.

²⁴ Cara Judea Alhadeff, *Zazu Dreams: Between the Scarab and the Dung Beetle, A Cautionary Fable for the Anthropocene Era*. Berlin: Eifrig Publishing, 2017: 26.

Rachel Carson, Harriet Tubman, Doña Grasi Nasi,²⁵ Sol Hachuel,²⁶ Inayat Noor Khan,²⁷ and ibn Sina,



She was the same woman from the catacomb caves in Iran—the hooded figure who had whispered to me about remembering the *Ummah*. Cocomiso recognized her voice. As before, she spoke in a language I had never heard, but somehow I still understood her

as well as 21st century villains like Nestlé, Merck, Exxon, and Monsanto—Big Pharma, Big Oil, and



Black Gold (oil) to White Gold (lithium);
Embodied Energy and The Politics of Batteries/Energy Storage,
Solar/Photovoltaic Parks, Wind Farms, Electric Vehicles,
Biofuel Crops, Nuclear Regression

²⁵ In *The Woman Who Defied Kings*, Andre Aelion Brookes chronicles the amazing journey of *converso* banker, Doña Gracia Nasi (Gracia Mendes Nasi 1510-1569). Doña Gracia fled the Inquisition in Portugal and wandered throughout Europe. In Antwerp where she found sanctuary, she eventually became a financially powerful banker. Doña Gracia lived the end of her life in Turkey where she was seen as the uncrowned Queen of Jewry in the Ottoman Empire. Doña Gracia Nasi developed a secret escape network that saved thousands of her fellow *conversos* from the brutalities of the Inquisition.

²⁶ Sol Hachuel, a Jewish female saint who was revered by Muslims and Jews, defied forced conversions in Morocco in the 19th century. She was publicly beheaded at the age of seventeen.

²⁷ An interlude from *Zazu Dreams*: “Remember the Ummah...” She was the same woman from the catacombs in Susa. As she spoke, her face slowly transformed into women I had seen in Ima's books. Ima had told me about women who started underground escape networks for persecuted people or who sacrificed their lives for their undying commitment to empathy and the common context of struggle—women like Noor Inayat Khan, who survived WWII as long as she did because of her belief in the imagination and her extraordinary commitment to human rights. Khan was an East Indian-American Muslim who became a spy for Britain's covert unit, the Special Operations Executive who supported an underground resistance network in Nazi-occupied Paris. “Khan took her assignment knowing the average survival time for an underground wireless operator in occupied France was six weeks. She lasted 16 weeks. ...Betrayed by a double agent, she was kept prisoner for almost a year until she was executed at Dachau concentration camp.

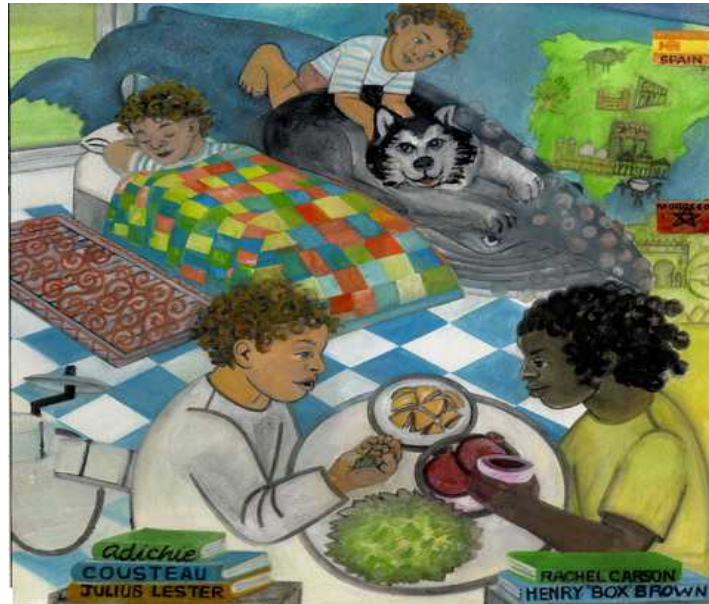
Agribusiness giants that stalk planet Earth. *Zazu Dreams* crosses the border between diasporic



identities with environmental action.

Ladino proverb: *Todo ke tyene ambre, venga y Komen* (Let anyone who is hungry, come and eat with us)

Zazu Dreams is divided into 2 sections—image and narrative, as well as about 400 endnotes of scientific, economic, historical, and literary references. All the human characters in the story are real historical figures.



In his dreams, Zazu a Sephardic²⁸ boy travels the globe on a humpback whale, crossing both temporal dimensions and international borders—overlapping vast space and time.²⁹ Following the *Kabbalistic*

²⁸ In our story, we are talking about an endangered cultural species. Spanish Sephardic and Arab Mizrahi Jewish peoples are frequently *not* assimilated into the United States because of their Hispanic and Arabic culture. As People of Color, Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews share common histories and customs with both Latino and Muslim communities in the U.S. This is our departure point to explore the erasure of *all* cultural minorities.

²⁹ “To truly live *Kabbalah*, you need to be outside time and space” (director Steve Bram in his film, “Kabbalah Me: A

idea that “water has the power of purifying because it takes you to a place of interconnection... [transforming] a person of separateness to a person of connectedness,”³⁰ the characters travel across the worlds' oceans and seas. In today's performance my collaborator will read excerpts from the magical realist narrative and I will read the voice of the compendium deriving from Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project*. This is a story about unlearning what we think we know, and learning love along the way. It is an invitation to practice *Kabbalah* in our daily lives. Time to begin.

Ladino proverb: *Kon pedos no se boyadeya wevos* (One cannot paint eggs with farts / Change requires action)

This excerpt highlights the relationship between resisting cultural extinction—in this case, of Sephardic Jews from the Iberian Peninsula—and ecological extinction—in this case coral reefs.

Chapter Two: The Pirates of the Caribbean



Zazu: What a great adventure we had, Ari! All the stories my family has told me have come to life in my *haloms*, my dreams! Last night I dreamt about the Jewish Pirates of the Caribbean.³¹ Many Jews became pirates, outlaws, and freedom-fighters because hundreds of thousands of Jews were brutally forced by the Inquisition to flee Spain and Portugal, convert to Christianity, or be killed.

Cara: Similar to the Salem Witch Trials of the late 1600s in Massachusetts, between the years 1100 and 1800, hundreds of thousands of Jews were charged with witchcraft and conjuring magic spells. Thousands were publicly executed. Many *conversos* (New Christians), practiced Judaism in secrecy.

Spiritual Journey Into the World of Jewish Mysticism,” 2014).

³⁰ Rabbi Yitzchak Schwartz cited in “Kabbalah Me.”

³¹ Sephardic Pirate Jean Lafitte was exiled from Spain as part of the expulsions of the 1700s. He later became an influential statesman in North America, and helped the United States win the War of 1812 against the British. Another displaced freedom-fighter who was pivotal in the formation of the United States, was Emma Lazarus, a Sephardic young poet of Portuguese descent and a student of environmentalist-poet Ralph Waldo Emerson. In 1883, Lazarus was asked to write about the Statue of Liberty as an invitation to those who had struggled to find refuge—find home. Highly acclaimed for her writing denouncing the pogroms in Russia and her persistent activism for Ashkenazi immigrants, Lazarus named the Statue of Liberty the Mother of Exiles, and wrote “The New Colossus:” “... Give me your tired, your poor, / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, / The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. / Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, / I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

People who had converted to Christianity were called *anusim* (forced ones), *marranos* (swine), *chuetas* (pig-eaters)—all were officially sanctioned vilifying names.³² The Inquisition of 1492 coincided with the conquistadors' invasion of the Americas. It behooves present day environmental activists who are fighting against colonial oppression to recognize the intermeshed histories between the expulsions of the Jews and the original occupation of the Americas.

Zazu: Jewish people had lived in Spain for more than 1,000 years, before we were violently expelled from our ancient homeland. In my dream, when we first met Rabbi Habibi from Gibraltar, he had



recited ancient Ladino poetry, heavy with the melancholy of our diaspora. I remember his deep, hypnotic voice chanting:

Ladino proverbs: *Montanyas yoran por aire* (Mountains cry for air);

Avlar kero, i no puedo, mi korazon sospira (I want to speak, I can't; my heart sighs);

Quando sale la luna, nadie come naranjas (When the moon departs, no one eats oranges).

Cara: Sharing this same sadness and loss during The Inquisition, swashbuckling, Ladino-speaking pirates ransacked the monarchy's flotilla on the high seas across the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea.

³² Crypto-Jews devised secret strategies to maintain their practice of Jewish traditions such as touching a *mezuzah* hidden in the foot of a statue of the Madonna and pretending to light candles for Catholic saints—but only on the Friday Sabbath. In the Caribbean, *conversos* spread sand over synagogue floors as symbolic of the Jews in Inquisitional Spain and Portugal who covered floors with sand in order to muffle the sounds of their chants and prayers. If their secrets were discovered, they were condemned. Because mothers and grandmothers were responsible for maintaining traditions, more women than men were tried, convicted of heresy, and burned at the stake.

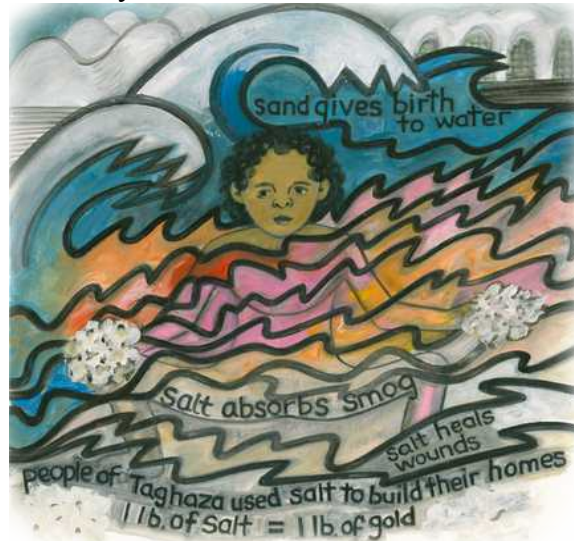
Stripping a people of their name is a classic colonial tool to destroy cultural identity and erase memory. Two recent PBS specials, Simon Schama's *The Story of the Jews* and David Grubin's *The Jewish Americans* make no reference to Sephardi/Mizrahi histories, and ignore the pioneering contributions of Sephardim to colonial America as early as the 15th century. As Laila Lalami tells us in *The Moor's Account*, a name is precious; it carries inside it a language, a history, a set of traditions, a particular way of looking at the world. Losing it meant losing my ties...



Zazu: Rebellious Sephardic pirates got their revenge against the Spanish galleons!

Cara: The Sephardim were not pirates like today's Somali pirates. They were 'privateers' licensed by Spain's enemies. In retaliation for Jews and Moors being expelled from Spain, Sephardic pirates looted gold from King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella's Armada.³³ The Sephardi pirates also prevented Catholic missionaries from landing on shore and converting indigenous peoples to Christianity.

Zazu: Ima told me this history is an important part of The Age of Colonialism, but we are not taught any of this history in school. Understanding how and why our histories have been forgotten or ignored might help us understand how and why animals and their environments are being destroyed.



Cara: For example, coral reefs represent the perfect metaphor for symbiosis of *convivencia*—co-beneficial interdependency. Coral reefs are the result of millions of years of teamwork between coral and algae co-existing across multiple lifecycles as they share food and shelter.³⁴ Every organism, structure, and raw material fulfills a job that benefits the entire community. Coral reef ecosystems are the carbonate landscapes that govern ocean communities. They are the rainforests of the ocean. There is almost no waste on a coral reef. Warmer sea temperatures due to climate crisis disrupt the delicate symbiotic relationships among coral organisms, sea slugs, and algae.³⁵ All coral reef species throughout

³³ In ships bearing old-testament names like the Prophet Samuel, Queen Esther, and Shield of Abraham, the Sephardi rebels marauded the Spanish fleet while forming coalitions with European nations in order to safeguard Jews living in hiding.

³⁴ The largest living organism on the planet is Australia's Great Barrier Reef, visible even from outer space.

³⁵ The sea slug (Holothuroidea) feeds on plankton and decaying matter on the ocean floor, along with grazing on the rocks and coral reefs for algae. Although sea slugs are relatively motionless, by eating the decomposing plant matter, they are essential to maintain algae levels within a homeostatic balance in all marine environments. They are essential to waste-prevention/ creative-waste living. Like the survival of the dung beetle whose job it is to keep the savannas and prairies

the Caribbean are severely threatened. Coral reefs are now identified as the graveyard of the Atlantic.

Zazu: We continued our expedition across the turquoise waters of the Caribbean Sea: the smell of salt water and the screeching cry of seagulls, always overhead. Once again, I felt we were sliding through time as we traveled across the Sea. Time appeared to be suspended between the past and the future in a continuous present. We seemed to be inside folded time, overlapping pre-history and the Middle Ages, all the way up to 2016! We held on tightly to our whale through the Panama Canal to the vast Pacific Ocean. Exhausted and parched by the heat of the sun, we approached the sub-continent of India in the Arabian Sea. After thousands of kilometers of listening to the songs of the whales, I began to decipher their collective voice as a song of peace. As communal animals, whales instinctively know we are *all* interdependent—all creatures of the land, of the oceans, rivers, lakes, and sky.

Ladino proverb: *El mundo se manea, ma no kaye* (The world shakes, but does not crumble)

This excerpt emphasizes the power of language—both emancipatory language—in this case, Ladino's dynamic nature, and manipulative language—in this, case mass misinformation about alternative energies.

Chapter Five: It takes a village³⁶...

Zazu: But beware! We cannot assume that what we see is what there is. Some people think Ladino is a fossilized language, like this beetle preserved in an amber deposit, forever unchanging, but Ladino is alive; it is like this *shofar*—reminding us of our interconnectedness. Our relationship to this ram's horn



is our humility, our breath.³⁷ The interaction between human and divine—our co-existence brings us

'clean,' because sea slugs eat most dead matter (almost every marine creature except fish), their survival is critical to keep the seas 'clean.'

³⁶ "It takes a whole village to raise a child" is an Igbo and Yoruba (Nigeria) proverb. In 2016, presidential candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton published *It Takes a Village: And Other Lessons Children Teach Us* (New York, NY.: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

³⁷ In Jewish, Muslim, and Christian traditions God blew breath / *ruach* or *ruh* into dirt to create humans. In Hebrew, Adam means dirt or clay. Conspire means to breathe together. We seek the possibility of breathing together as a form of *convivencia*. Adrienne Rich reminds us: "The breath is also Ruach, the spirit, the human connection to the universe" (Adrienne Rich, *What is Found There: Notebooks on Poetry and Politics*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993: 82). Breath also produces song, the whales' song, the voice of the shofar.

beauty and joy. Like the bending and adaptability of a reed, the spiraling bend in a shofar reminds us that everything is always changing, offering multiple perspectives.³⁸

Cara: How are we describing the problems that confront us? In climate change discussion, too much attention is on governmental band-aids and technological fixes—like extremely problematic, carbon-intensive “renewable” energies.³⁹ Not enough attention is on how we can educate people to catalyze our own empowerment. In our story, Zazu looks for alternatives for a better world in the least expected places, places you might think the opposite would be.

Zazu: We can adapt and continually transform ourselves, but what if we constantly get caught and stuck and caught and stuck, like the story of God showing Abraham a ram whose horns get stuck while trying to tear himself free from one thicket, and then becoming entangled in another and yet another? This pattern of getting caught and stuck is actually happening right now to rams where I grew up in California! The desert bighorn sheep are endangered there. *Solar* energy plants are making their situation worse. Because of poor location choices, solar power is being developed in ways that *actually harm* animals, their environment, and local human communities.⁴⁰

³⁸ The following Judaic principles reflect this imperative for a pluralistic social ecojustice. They represent *la'am* (simultaneously yes and no in Hebrew and Arabic), the balance of contradictions.

Machloket L'Shem Shamayim (Disagreement for the Sake of Heaven): Differing, and even contradictory, perspectives can become a fertile ground for dialogue and eventually collective action.

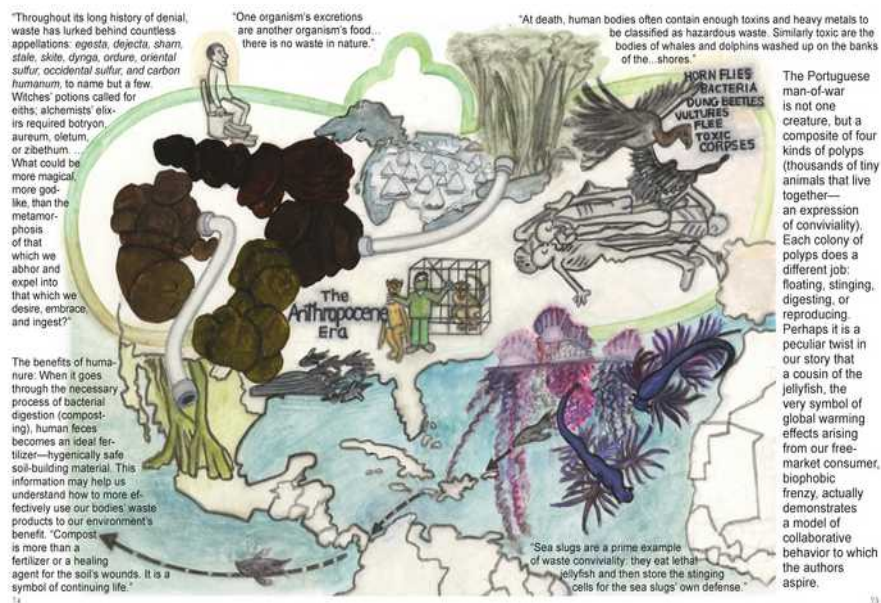
Elu V'Elu Divrei Elohim Chayim (These and These are the Words of the Living God): Unity in diversity represents the intersection of biodiversity and cultural diversity. It is rooted in a process of storytelling in which ambiguity is not a lack of clarity, but offers multiple clarities in order to confront contemporary ecological and humanitarian crises.

Shivim Panim La'Torah (Multiple Perspectives Can Co-Exist): We can embody lessons from Judaism's cross-culturalism. When asked his religion, Einstein replied: “Mosaic.” Brit Hazon reminds us: “Just as there are 70 faces to the Torah, so too are there a myriad of ways to understand our climate issues and approaches to solving them.”

Ribui HaShalom (The Multiplicity of Truths): Rabbi Seidenberg shares a criteria of biophilia: by “binding ourselves to other creatures (...), we are enriching the meaning of our own humanity” (*Kabbalah and Ecology*, 171). It is essential to understand ourselves in relation to a greater whole. Judaism, in its multiplicity, teaches us that we are not victims; we are not at the whim of corporate tyrannies; those most vulnerable can be empowered if we acknowledge and collectively act on *how* we are all interconnected. Living these interrelationships is the foundation for conviviality: compassionate coalition-building and sustainable ecological stewardship. See [Brit Hazon](#) (all about personal behavior change).

³⁹ See my detailed article critiquing fallacious “renewable” energies: *Deep Green Resistance News Service*, “Environmental Racism, Green Colonialism, and The Renewable Energies Revolution,” <https://dgrnewsservice.org/civilization/ecocide/environmental-racism-green-colonialism-and-the-renewable-energies-revolution/>

⁴⁰ See my video-lecture that disentangles the intricacies of fossil-fuel addicted “alternative energies:” [Climate Justice Now: Transforming the Anthropocene into The Ecozoic Era](#): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZKRPIHEvA0&t=8s>



Cara: As we transition away from fossil-fuel addicted economies, we must ensure protection of all peoples' livelihoods and their environments (that includes wildlife in all forms—from the microbial to the largest mammals). 'Creative' alternatives may unintentionally perpetuate the violence of wasteful behavior; they may actually *conserve* the original problem. Greenwashing through alternative energies is a key example. In 2021, we must be absolutely conscious of the implications of our "green" economy as the new backbone of environmental racism and green colonialism.

Zazu: We have bought into the idea that anything 'green' is good—but we know that there is no clear-cut good and evil. What happens when the very solution causes more problems than the original problem it was supposed to fix?

Cara: Replacing tar sands or oil-drills or coal power plants with megalithic 'green' energy is *not* the solution—it just masks the original problem—confusing 'freedom' with free-market and free-enterprise.⁴¹ Industrial-sized solar energy development is stripping the land bare—ravaging already extremely vulnerable wildlife.⁴²

Zazu: There is not a clear division between clean energy and dirty energy—clean isn't actually clean.

Ladino Proverb: *De la bará lo emprovisó mi padre* (Bargains aren't always bargains)

Zazu: Our Sephardic ancestors understood these kinds of contradictions! Even if we find great alternatives to fossil fuels, to Jurassic poop, what if "renewable" energies become big business and just maintain our addiction to consumption and convenience-culture? In fact, they already are!!!⁴³

Cara: Without convenience-culture / mass consumer-demand, the machine of the free-market would have to shift gears. We can't blame the oil companies without simultaneously implicating ourselves, holding our consumption-habits equally responsible.

⁴¹ Well over half a century ago Hannah Arendt identified the results of this barbarism.

⁴² Ibid.,

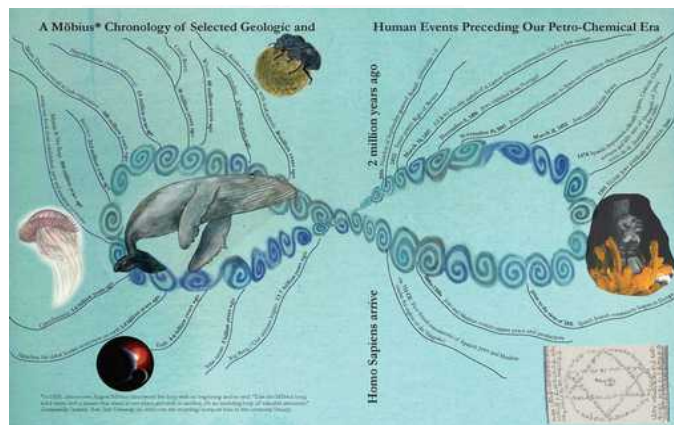
⁴³ Ibid.,

Zazu: How can we insist the government and transnational corporations be accountable, when we refuse to curb our buying and disposal habits? We must move beyond us versus them. This was a riddle for Joha the Trickster to unravel.



This excerpt demonstrates how the intertwined past converges with the present and future to form stories that guide us through climate chaos.

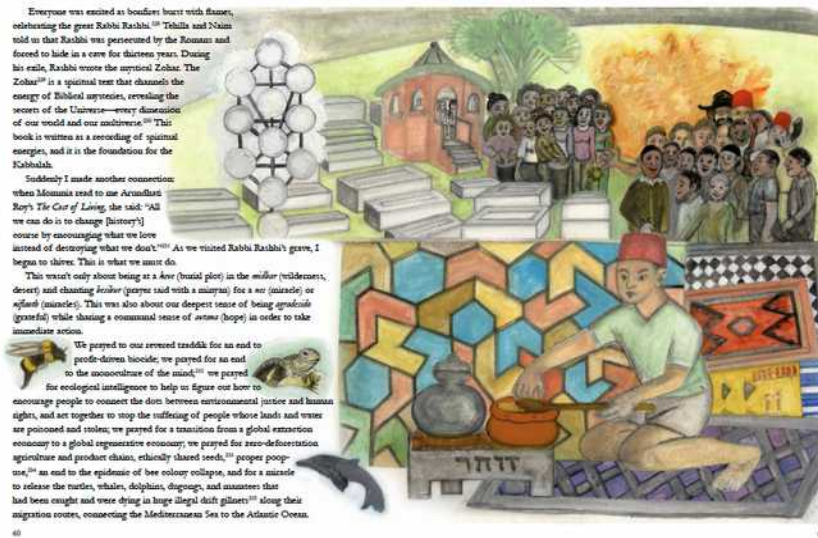
Chapter Eight: Between the Scarab and the Dung Beetle⁴⁴



Zazu: The scent of orange trees filled the air. My cousins, like thousands of other Jews who live among indigenous North African Berbers, were preparing for *Hilloula*. Moroccan Jews from all over the world make pilgrimage each year during *Lag Ba' Omer*⁴⁵ into the desert of Ouazzane to visit

⁴⁴ We are making a false division between the scarab and the dung beetle to emphasize how something historically revered has simultaneously been historically reviled. For instance, in Medieval Christianity, the dung beetle symbolized the sinner and was associated with “foulness and wickedness” (Arthur Evans and Charles Bellamy, *An Inordinate Fondness for Beetles*. 2000: 141)—quite the opposite of its actual role in our ecosystem. In contrast, the ancient Egyptians deified the dung beetle, their most significant religious symbol. It’s persistence and repetition represented both highly rational behavior, and was thought to be governed by the supernatural, symbolizing “the invisible forces that move the sun across the sky in a geocentric universe” (Ibid., 9).

⁴⁵ We are interpreting Lag B’Omer, the 33rd Day of the Counting of the Omer, between Pesach and Shavuot, The Bonfire Night as an opportunity to acknowledge one’s personal strength. Following “the biblical account of Joseph instructing Pharoah to store grain in years of plenty, for the years of drought that lay ahead; Rabbi Nachman tells us that this is a hint that we should do the same in our own spiritual journey” (Yehudit Levy, www.breslev.co.il/articles/holidays_and_fast_days/lag_bomer/building_bonfires.aspxid=24317&language=english). We must gather all of our positive thoughts and deeds as reminders of our collective and individual wholeness.



cemeteries and celebrate the lives of their beloved rabbis who are called *tzaddim*.⁴⁶ We prayed to our revered *tzaddik* for an end to profit-driven biocide; we prayed for an end to the monoculture of the mind.⁴⁷

Cara: Vandana Shiva decries, “You really need to have a brutal mind. It’s a war against evolution to even think in those [profit-driven] terms.”⁴⁸

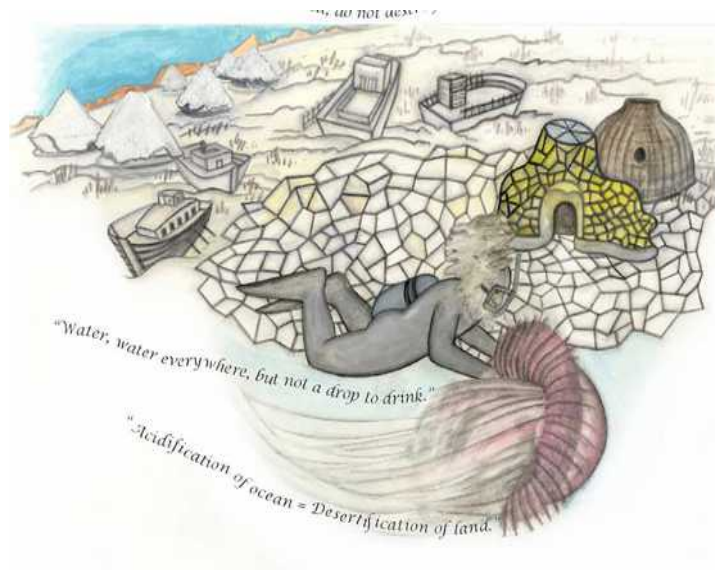
Zazu: ...we prayed for zero-deforestation agriculture and product chains and ethically shared seeds.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ According to legend, the exiled 18th century Rabbi Amran ben Diwan entered the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron which was forbidden for Jews at the time. He was disguised as a Muslim. When he was recognized as a Jew, he was reported to the Ottoman Pasha who ordered his arrest. Ben Diwan, an internationally revered *tzaddik*, finally fled and returned to Morocco. He is buried under a tree that never burns despite the fire and multitude of candles that have been lit there for centuries.

⁴⁷ In her 2016 lecture with the Institute for Arts and Humanities at Pennsylvania State University, Rosi Braidotti cited Vandana Shiva, who advocates for “an end to the monoculture of the mind.” See also: Dr. Shiva’s *Monocultures of the Mind: Perspectives on Biodiversity and Biotechnology*, London: Zed Books, 1993.

⁴⁸ See Mark Achbar, Jennifer Abbott, and Joel Bakan’s 2004 documentary film, “The Corporation.”

⁴⁹ Rather than treating seeds as software (codes that can be rewritten and patented), a shared distribution of germplasm (seeds) establishes a shared distribution of power. More than ever because of climate disruption, we need a diverse, publicly accessible seed supply. ‘Open-pollinated’ (‘The O.P.’) seeds undermine ownership implied in the intellectual-property system. This commitment to the Commons ensures food security, thus national security (Lisa H. Hamilton, *Linux for Lettuce*, ed. Rebecca Skloot, *The Best American Science and Nature Writing*. New York, NY.: Houghton, Mifflin, Harcourt, 2015: 75-89). “Knowledge, Humboldt believed, had to be shared, exchanged and made available to everybody” (Andrea Wulf, *The Invention of Nature: The Adventures of ALEXANDER VON HUMBOLDT, The Lost Hero of Science*. London: John Murray, 2015: 2). In comparison with the Commons in which people belonged to the land (the land did not belong to the people), our modern industrial lifestyle demands diminished public regulation: Privatization “means you take a public institution and give it to an unaccountable tyranny” (Noam Chomsky cited in “The Corporation”).



Cara: Shiva warns us of the implications of ‘terminator technology’ and ‘terminator seeds.’ Sterilizing seeds means that “farmers are not able to save their seeds, seeds that will destroy themselves through a suicide gene, seeds that are designed to only produce crop in one season. The possibilities of ethically shared seeds are becoming radically diminished as intellectual property rights and utility patents monopolize US agriculture.” In resistance, the Open Source Seed Initiative (OSSI), inspired by the conviviality of open source software, has attempted to protect the Commons and its ‘ethic of sharing.’

Zazu: ...we prayed for an end to the epidemic of bee colony collapse, and for a miracle to convince trawling companies to release the creatures that had been caught and were dying in huge illegal drift gillnets along their migration routes, connecting the Mediterranean Sea to the Atlantic Ocean.⁵⁰



Cara: “The nets not only torture sea life, slowly drowning dolphins, whales, and sea turtles, but they also hurt honest fisherman who catch swordfish locally and legally. Illegally obtained swordfish...cheat

⁵⁰ Currently, there is a battle going on in Morocco over a major ban on destructive and unselective drift gillnets. The activists from Oceana fought hard to officially phase them out in 2010. A recent undercover Oceana investigation discovered that illegal nets are being used again in Tangier. Even though the US and the European Union provided financial aid to Morocco to phase out the killer nets, critical enforcement of the ban is failing.

fishermen and conscientious buyers in...other countries.”⁵¹ Ignoring the ban encourages illegal fishermen to break the law, disrupt solidarity economics, and destroy more life.

Zazu: We silently spoke to Rashbi asking him to help us stop massive underwater sound cannons that cause sea creatures to go deaf.



Cara: Marine activists are attempting to stop the US construction of a military airstrip in Japan that would destroy the last habitat for endangered Okinawa dugongs (a cousin of the manatee).



Zazu: We prayed that the SeaVax would do the work it needs to do. These solar-powered ships could potentially clean up the entire Pacific Garbage Patch in the next ten years.

Cara: The SeaVax can suck up to 22 million kg of plastic a year. However, this technology does nothing to address the *roots* of our extraordinarily addictive petro-plastic culture and its concomitant tyranny of waste. Additionally, we now know that industrial-scale harvested solar energy is extremely carbon-intensive—feeding into the illusion of “green” energy and the fallacious “Renewables” Revolution.

⁵¹ Oceana e-newsletter, 2015.



Zazu: Please help us solve the roots of the intersecting crises of marginalized peoples, climate refugees, baby macaques, orangutans, monarch butterflies and their sweetgum trees, the whales and other sea mammals! We prayed for what Ima calls our indigenous social ecology.

Cara: Again, we revisit the concept of *adab*: lived values for personal and social conduct. This ritual praxis of ethics can be found in the *Zohar*. We are suggesting that a collective *tikkun olam* can be a result of *bal taschit*.

Ladino proverb: *El prove I el riko, todos se misura por un negro piko* (Whether you are rich or poor you have the same grave)

Rabbi David Aaron reminds us, “*Kabbalah* is there to help us overcome the misconception of the



disconnect.”⁵² Echoing this consciousness of interconnectedness, of “expansive, united beings,”⁵³ Zazu

⁵² Cited in “Kabbalah Me.”

⁵³ Ibid.

Dreams confronts false binaries that feed on the illusion that we are separate from one another, separate from our natural world. Such binary codes reinforce entanglements of implicit and explicit forms of corporate coercion and corporeal collusion. Dictating us versus them ideologies, these predetermined, prescribed categories of identification generate and sustain environmental and humanitarian injustices. Binary-laden conformity, “the trap of mere opposition,”⁵⁴ nullifies deviation from the norm.

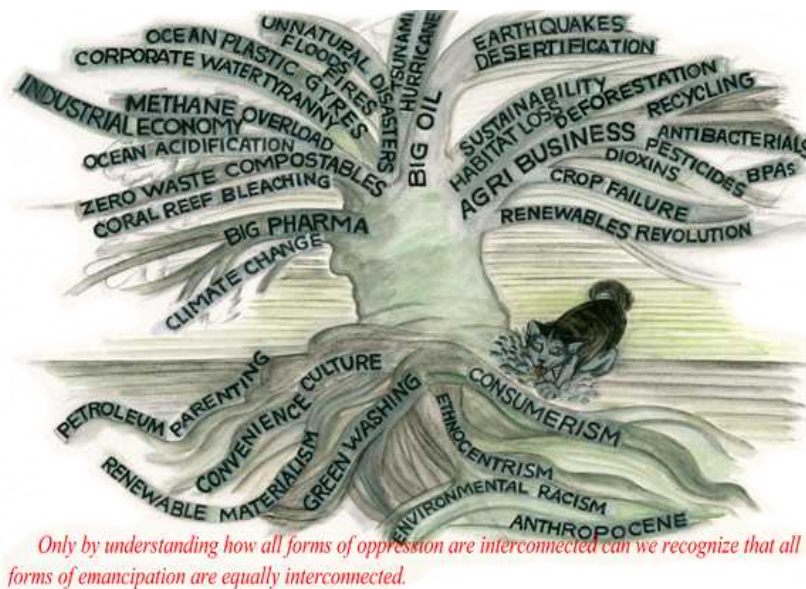
However, equally potent is our resistance to such hegemonies in the form of collaborative action that



ignites personal, collective, cultural, and ecological healing. As it says in *Pirkei Avot*, the Ethics of the Ancestors (the ancient collections of rabbinic writings): “Do not separate yourself from the community.” When we embrace multiplicity and the sacred possibilities of mutual accountability, we develop the capacity for intra-agency: “agency always emerges in relationship.”⁵⁵ Through the vast diversity of the Jewish diaspora we can explore the familiar within the unfamiliar —illuminating a recognition of difference—a spiritual, socio-political connection with *the other*, increasingly urgent in our reductive media-saturated, techno-euphoric age.

⁵⁴ Lewis Hyde, *Trickster Makes This World: Mischief, Myth, and Art*. New York: North Point Press, 1998: 274.

⁵⁵ See Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. (Durham, N.C., Duke University Press, 2007. Barad along with Noam Chomsky, Rabbi Lerner, Bill McKibben, James Hansen, David Orr, Arun Gandhi, Paul Hawken, SHK-G HumptyHump, Thom Hartmann, Henry Giroux, Stephanie Seneff, Eve Ensler, James Wines, Antonia Juhasz, and Daliya Kandiyoti endorsed *Zazu Dreams*.



Through creative, collaborative daily choices, we can disentangle the intertwined roots of our climate crisis. Once we collectively embody how, as Rabbi Arthur Waskow asserts, “social justice and planetary healing are inextricably intertwined,” we can ignite biocultural transformation—a resistance to colonialist legacies of systemic economic oppression and extractive industries.

Although I am haunted by the horrors of our insidious and explicit techno-utopic race into a robotic-5G future, I cling tenaciously to the possibility that we can shift our self-destructive complicity that sustains ravaging anthropogenic environmental racism. A joyful, cross-cultural, interspecies approach to climate-crisis mitigation weaves simultaneous individual, community, and infrastructural accountability. Recognizing and nurturing the sacred in everyday objects, we can co-create an action-oriented practice of gratitude and integrity—roots of the *Kabbalah*. This collective spiritual intelligence, this deep mindfulness, is a devotion to nonviolence. A devotion to repurposing objects, to constructing co-beneficial, regenerative infrastructural support systems is an antidote to industrialized convenience-culture. I maintain my staunch devotion to collective action that could generate the reciprocity of biophilic infrastructures. And, I would love to be in conversation with others who also find themselves ignited by such devotion.

Ladino proverb: Kuándo una puerta sérra syen avren (When one door closes, one hundred open)