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BronfmanTorah: commentary on the Torah that draws on the lives, skills, and insights of our community

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Chosenness and Exceptionalism

Yael Marans '15 | BronfmanTorah | Yitro 2017

Yael Marans (Bronfman '15) is a student at the Hevruta Gap Year at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem. She loves writing and is obsessed with her Bronfman friends.

The Jews

Heaving at Sinai:
Wait for your text,
Abstaining from sex, do not touch
Do not touch
Do not touch
the mountain or the woman.¹
People of words
who tremble at smoke
compounded with crescendo shofarot,² and shrink-
their senses incompatible with action.

Opposed to the

Glorious activity
Of Jericho, the next of their community
Circumscribing the city,
Armed with trumpets and swords pointed,
Now a kingdom of priests³ appointed
masters of music, muscles, brass
The Canaanite Jew,
Sensual, alive.

I.
Reveling in the dorkiness of Diaspora,
Our lair is the library,
hibernating until
a Redemption we hope won't come,
Propagating pictures of doctors and lawyers
So at least we beat the haters,
The makers of the fist
Our labs could never formulate.
Treasure nation,⁴ built on a Treasure Island of isolation.
No, knowing everything is not enough.
Destined to be bent over books,
Incorporeal beings who mine for
More than they should expect,
And accept only that which exceeds.

II.
Transfigured from burnt Russian yids
To tanned statues of
Bodily Enlightenment
Darkened, bathed skin,
Coating muscles screaming
A finger to the Czar.
The ultimate kibbutznik,
Turned soldier, from Scouts.

Forgetting the books by the fireplace of Europe.

And still so moved by

Work Will Set You Free,

Only now on their own terrain.

No room for nerds in the open fields

Or the swamp where

"בארץ ישראל קם העם היהודי"⁵

III.

We whisper "we will do,"⁶ over again

And push our children to the tracks of unattainable,

Where they ache to rupture the screens of

Superhuman standards layered down since birth.

They meet in the thickest corners of the clouds,⁷ surrounding themselves

With each other, still waiting for some Torah to measure their success.

¹ Exodus 19:12,15

² Exodus 19:19

³ Exodus 19:6

⁴ Exodus 19:5

⁵ The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel

⁶ Exodus 19:8

⁷ Exodus 19:9

Continue the conversation. Send Yael your thoughts:
ymarans@gmail.com.



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