

Geshem: Verses for our Mothers

(c) Composed by Mark Frydenberg, Translated by Rabbi Simcha Roth, 1995,1998

Sarah:

זְכוֹר עֲקָרָה שֶׁלְקַחָה לְשֵׁלֶשָׁה מְעֻט מַיִם,
חִדַּל לְהִיּוֹת-לָהּ אוֹרַח מַיִם חַיִּים,
וְנִפְקְדָהּ בְּזִקְנֹתָהּ, וְשָׁפִיר סוֹבְבוֹ אֶת עוֹבְרָהּ מַיִם -
בְּעִבּוּרָהּ אֵל תִּמְנַע מַיִם.
Remember the barren one who prepared the three [strangers] water [Gen. 18:2][1]
At a time when she ceased to be as living waters [Gen. 18:11]
And God remembered her [Gen 21:1] in her old age, in her womb creating water [2]
For her sake don't hold back water.

Rebecca:

זְכוֹר חֲסוּדָה אֲשֶׁר מָלְאָה מֵהִשְׁקֵת מַיִם,
לְעֶבֶד נְתָנָה לְשִׁתּוֹת מִכְדָּה מַיִם,
בְּחָרָן הָעִיר לְגַמְלֵיו שְׁאֲבָה מַיִם -
בְּצִדְקָהּ חוֹן חֲשֵׁרֵת מַיִם.
Remember the kind one who carried a pitcher of water [Gen 24:14]
To the servant she gave water [Gen. 24:17]
In Charan for the camels, she drew water. [Gen. 24:19]
For her sake, grant water.

Rachel:

זְכוֹר צְעִירָה שֶׁרְעָתָה צֹאן לֵיד בְּאֵר-מַיִם,
וַיִּשָׁק לָהּ אַהוּבָהּ לֵיד בְּאֵר-הַמַּיִם,
בְּרַמָּה מִבְּכָה בְּנִיָּה וְעֵינֶיהָ יוֹרְדָה מַיִם -
בְּעִבּוּרָהּ אֵל תִּמְנַע מַיִם.
Remember the younger one who to the flock [of Lavan] she gave water [Gen 29:10]
Her lover kissed her near the well of water [Gen 29:11]
At Ramah for her children, her eyes weep tears of water [Lamentations 1:16]
For her sake, don't hold back water.

Leah:

זְכוֹר אִם הַבְּנִים שְׂיָבוֹק רֵאשׁוֹנָה עִבְרָה מַיִם,
עֵינֶיהָ הִרְכּוֹת זָלְגוּ דְמָעוֹת-מַיִם,
בְּנָה שָׁכַן לֵיד חוּף-יָמִים וְהַפְּלִיג בְּמַיִם -
בְּצִדְקָהּ חוֹן חֲשֵׁרֵת מַיִם.
Remember the Mother of Children who at Yabbok was first to cross the water [Gen 32:23/33:2] [3]
Her eyes were tender from crying tears of water [Gen 29:18]
Her son lived out his days at the edge of the water [Gen 49:13] [4]
For her sake, grant water.

Miriam:

זְכוֹר אַחֹת שֶׁהִשְׁגִּיחָה עַל נֶעֱר בּוֹכָה בְּמַיִם,
שִׁירָה עָנְתָה בְּעִבּוּר יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּגִזְרוֹת מַיִם,
בְּקָדֵשׁ קְבוּרָתָהּ בְּקִרְבַּת בְּאֵר-הַמַּיִם -
בְּעִבּוּרָהּ אֵל תִּמְנַע מַיִם.
Remember the sister who watched the baby crying in the water [Ex. 2:6]
She sang and rejoiced after the people Israel crossed the water [Ex. 15:20]
In Kadesh she was buried near gurgling water [Num. 20:1]
For her sake, don't hold back water.

Notes: 1 While Abraham took the water to the three strangers, we suggest that Sarah helped prepare it along with the cakes she prepared in Gen 18:6.

2. Shafir in Hebrew means 'fine', but 'mey shafir' means the amniotic fluid that surrounds the foetus ('ubbar') in the womb.

3 "Mother of Children" [Ps. 113]. In Gen. 32:23, Leah and her children ford the Yabbok. Preceded by the maidservants and their children, Gen 33:2 explicitly names Leah as first, followed by her offspring, to brave Esau's expected wrath. We suggest that they forded the Yabbok first as well.

4 In Gen.49:13, Leah's son Zvulun is blessed saying he'll dwell at the shore of the sea.