

by Kay Faye Fialkoff

Prayers for the Earth: Wetlands Suite

MY ARTICLE, "PRAYERS FOR THE Earth in Threads of Silk," was published in the March 1996 *Needle Arts*. It expressed how moved I was at the sight of the white egret and how I went about developing the themes for the "Prayers for the Earth: Wetlands Suite." Now that the Wetlands Suite is complete, I felt it appropriate to share my thoughts about the entire suite.

My work is a celebration of creation, with the wetlands as its microcosm and the white egret its noble resident. To see an

egret up close with binoculars or spotting scope is a constant thrill to me. I study the airy quality of the feathers, the sunlight playing on its whiteness, the beautiful poses taken for preening, fishing, roosting. To realize that the lovely blue sky can be seen through the fluffed feathers excites my sensibilities. The white egret stirs a deep love in my heart, and all I can do is think of celebrating it with poetry and art.

I love haiku in Japanese paintings, and I particularly favor Hiroshige's work. I

wanted to bring to my embroideries what Hiroshige brought to his bird and flower prints.

How to create Hebrew haiku? From this ancient language I needed to express a lot in a short phrase.

יָרְאוּ עֵינֵינוּ וְיִשְׂמַח לִבֵּנוּ וְתִגַּל נַפְשֵׁנוּ

*Yir'u ainaynu v'yismach libaynu v'sagail
nafshaynu*

*May our eyes behold, our hearts rejoice,
and our souls be glad*



Prayers for the Earth: Wetlands Suite, #1

To combine Hebrew phrases with a circular design was an enormous challenge. After finding the phrases I wanted to use, I researched elements of Japanese design and the Japanese garden. I visited water gardens and became captivated by the lotus.

In the Middle East the lotus represents fecundity, resurrection, and immortality. It stands for purity, wisdom, spirituality and

perfection. In full bloom, the flower is the emblem of the sun, without which life on earth as we know it would be impossible.

My first work expresses the serenity the wetlands evoke.

וּפְרוּשׁ עָלֵינוּ סִכַּת שְׁלוֹמָךְ

Ufros alenu sukat shlomecha
Spread over us thy shelter of peace

I remember once witnessing the sky crowded with birds flying directly over me. As they flew overhead, the rush of air vibrated in my ears in a low-pitched hum. Their strong wings sent a force of energy across the sky and formed a canopy. I felt the shelter of peace, protected and one with creation.

In my "Wetlands Suite, #2," life is repre-



Prayers for the Earth: Wetlands Suite, #2

sented at its strongest—full flight, full sun, full bloom.

שִׁים שְׁלוֹם, טוֹבָה וּבְרָכָה

Sim shalom, tovah, u'vracha
Grant peace, goodness and blessing.

To me, the spring season represents peace, goodness, and blessing. It is a time of recovery from the harsh winter and too little daylight.

When spring arrives, the air seems so light. The breeze is crisp and life is

renewed. The lovely irises announce the rebirth with royal colors. The white egret's matrimonial feathers are generated in spirals—the fundamental dynamism of the universe. What a wonderful reminder that the fresh blooms and sights of returning birds can carry us closer to a life filled with blessings.

מִטַּל הַשָּׁמַיִם וּמִשְׁמַנֵּי הָאָרֶץ

Mital hashamayim umishmanay ha'aretz
Of the dew of the Heavens and the richness of the Earth

We live in a remarkable environment. The mystery of creation is more understood every day as science announces its new findings about the interior, surface and exterior of our planet and life on it, the atmosphere around it, and the complexities of the solar system and beyond. We've come to learn how we affect the environment and it affects us. With all the knowledge that is available to us, it is just as important to find a still point, to allow ourselves to feel at one with our world, to merge with it.



Prayers for the Earth: Wetlands Suite, #3

An early morning visit to a local wetland helped me find that still point and gave me the inspiration for "Wetlands Suite, #4." The sun was not high enough to have warmed the land. Yet, a quiet stillness inhabited the sky and glided across the water and its reflections. A northern harrier flew directly toward me on silent wings. Purple loosestrife bent toward the placid water. In the distance the white egret took up its station to fish the waters. The sepa-

ration of sky and ground dissolved in my consciousness.

I imagined how it must feel to nestle among the tall cattails, to be there in the moment, enriched by the dew and the bounty of earth. In short order a clear vision of my final composition came to me. At that moment I lived the dew and the richness.

For me, embroidering each thread was a journey in itself. In finality, passing thread over the silk cloth, thread became conse-

crated and made living prayers.

Developing and bringing to fruition this series demanded research, patience, and a steady vision. It has been a trial of intellectual, creative, and technical prowess. I hope that you find the work an inspiration in your life, and that your prayers include the Earth's well-being. ❖

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Prayers for the Earth: Wetlands Suite, #4