

God's Children: A Haggadah Supplement for Immigrant Justice

Artwork by children held in Dilley Detention Center, obtained by ProPublica; translations on page 2

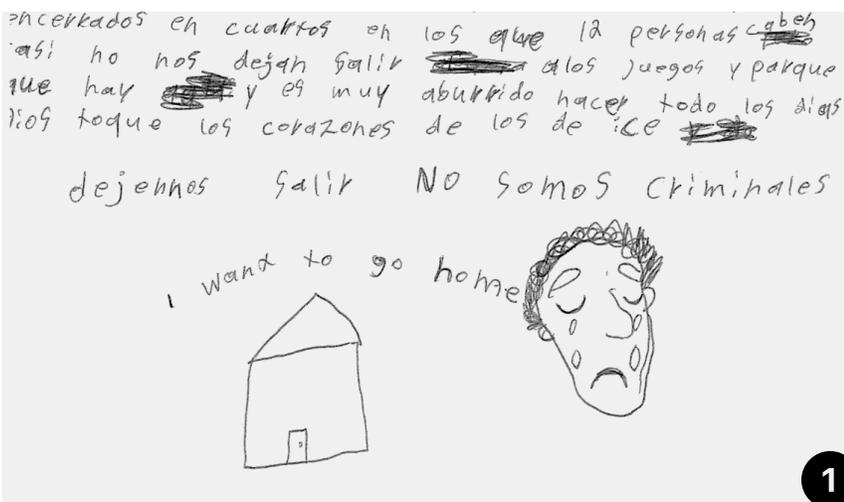
The Talmud recounts a fantastical tale of how God saved the lives of babies born after Pharaoh decreed death on every Jewish newborn boy.

"When the time came for [the Jewish women] to give birth, they would go and give birth in the field under the apple tree. . ." (Talmud Sotah 11b) The text describes how God would send an angel to care for the new babies as they grew.

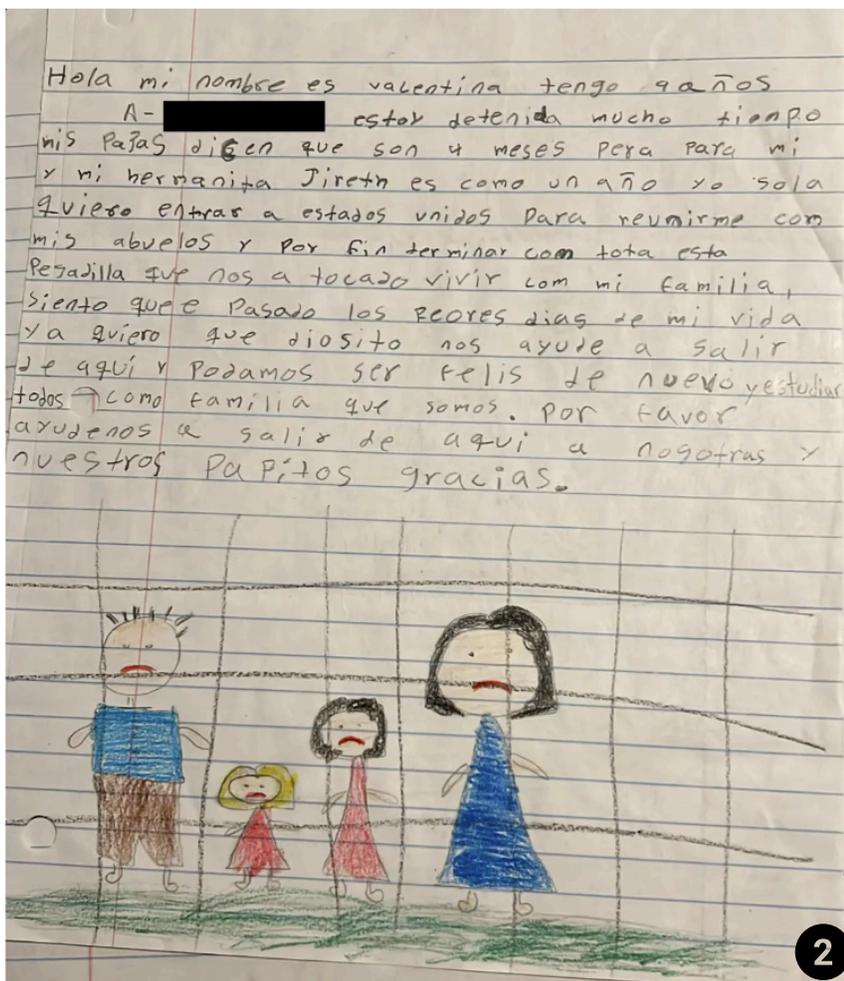
When the Egyptians realized these were Jewish babies, they would come after them to kill them. However, "A miracle would occur for them and [the babies] would be swallowed up in the earth." Then the Egyptians would "bring oxen and would plow upon them, as it is stated, 'The plowers plowed upon my back.' (Psalms 129:3)."

Once the Egyptians were gone, the babies "would emerge and exit the ground like grass of the field" and return home to their families.

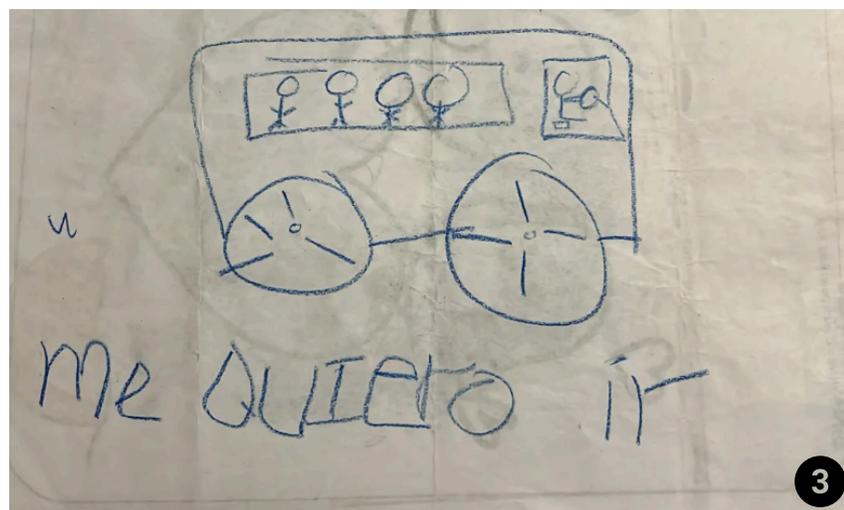
The passage ends with a beautiful image of divine recognition: "And when the Holy Blessed One revealed Godself at the Sea, [the children] recognized God first...from the previous time that God revealed Godself to them in their infancy, enabling them to say: 'This is my God.'" (Talmud Sotah 11b)



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It is no surprise that a despot intent on oppressing and marginalizing a population considered to be “foreign” would target babies, who represent pure innocence and hope for the future. It’s a sign of Pharaoh’s cruelty that he not only tries to prevent babies from being born and decrees their death, but also seeks to torture them by plowing on top of them.

God, on the other hand, intervenes to care for the babies directly, washing them, nursing them, protecting them, and ultimately bringing them back to their parents. At the sea, this special relationship between the children and God is revealed, and we hear the voices of the children directly, exclaiming in delight as they recognize God.

Today, an inhumane and xenophobic administration is again targeting children, and treating them with unbearable brutality — including detaining children and their parents and holding children in prisons without access to clean water, decent food, education, or medical care. Mass detention and mass deportation are traumatizing children.

We believe that God is again standing with these children and crying over their pain. But we can’t wait for miracles. We ourselves must work to close these detention camps, bring the children and their parents home, and ensure that every child has a chance to grow up — safe and free.

At our Seder, we remember these children by hearing their voices — through the art they have produced while in detention. We see the trauma our government is causing them and their families, and we cry out to God.

“The world only exists because of the breath of schoolchildren,” the Talmud says elsewhere. (Shabbat 119b) When we treat all children as our common responsibility, we sustain the world.

TAKE ACTION

Use the QR code below (or visit truah.org/godschildren) to email your representatives and tell them that you demand freedom for immigrant kids.

If your Passover practice allows, you can take action right at your seder table. If not, take the action during chol hamoed.



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- 1 13-year-old Gerson: “We are all stuck in rooms that can hold 12 people they won’t let us go out to the playgrounds and park and it’s very boring to do every day God touch the hearts of those at ICE let us out We are not criminals I want to go home.”
- 2 9-year-old Valentina: “I have been detained for a long time. My parents say it’s been 4 months but for me and my little sister Jireth it feels like a year I just want to go to the United States to be with my grandparents and finally end this nightmare that my family has had to live through, I feel like I’ve had the worst days of my life I want God to help us get out of here so we can be happy again and study together as a family. Please help us and our parents get out of here thank you.”
- 3 Elian: “I want to leave.”