

Fables from the Jewish Tradition  
By Rabbi Manes Kogan

(35)

**The King and His Orchard**

Leviticus Rabbah 23: 3



**Background to the Fable "The King and His Orchard"**

**A Rose among the Thorns**

*"As a rose among the thorns, so is my beloved among the daughters."* (Song of Songs 2:2)

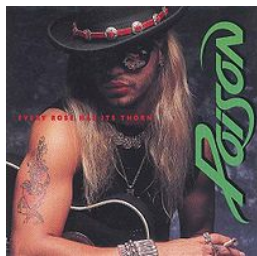
**?** What do you think is the meaning of the expression "a rose among the thorns"?

**Every Rose Has Its Thorn**



<http://www.wikipedia.org/>

"Every Rose Has Its Thorn" is a power ballad rock song by glam metal band Poison. It was released in 1988 as the third single from Poison's second album *Open Up And Say...Ahh!*. It is the band's first and only number one hit in the United States, reaching #1 spot on Christmas Eve in 1988 for three weeks (carrying over into 1989). It was a #13 hit in the United Kingdom. "Every Rose Has Its Thorn" was named number 34 on VH1's "100 Greatest Songs of the 1980s" and #100 on their "100 Greatest Love Songs."



**?** What do you think is the meaning of the expression "every rose has its thorn"?

## The King and His Orchard

Leviticus Rabbah 23:3

מדרש רבה ויקרא פרשה כג סימן ג

ג ר' עזריה בשם ר' יהודה ברבי סימון אומר משל למלך שהיה לו פרדס נטוע שורה של תאנים ושל גפנים ושל רמונים ושל תפוחים ומסר לאריס והלך לו לאחר ימים בא המלך והציץ בפרדס לידע מה עשה ומצאו מלא חותין ודרדרין הביא קצצים לקוצו והציץ באותן החותין וראה בו שושנה אחת של ורד נטלה והריח בה ושבת נפשו עליה אמר המלך בשביל שושנה זו ינצל כל הפרדס כך כל העולם כולו לא נברא אלא בשביל תורה לאחר כ"ו דורות הציץ הקב"ה בעולמו לידע מה עשה ומצא מלא מים במים דור אנוש מים במים דור המבול מים במים דור הפלגה מים במים והביא קצצים לקוצו שנא' (תהלים כט) ה' למבול ישב ראה בו שושנה אחת של ורד אלו ישראל ונטלה והריחה בשעה שנתן להם עשרת הדברות ושבת נפשו עליו בשעה שאמרו נעשה ונשמע אמר הקב"ה בשביל שושנה זו ינצל הפרדס בזכות תורה וישראל ינצל העולם.

A king had an orchard planted with figs, grapes, pomegranates, and apples. He left a caretaker in charge, and went away.

A few days later, when he returned, he went to look at his orchard to see what the caretaker had done, and found the orchard full of thorns and briars. He sent for pruners to prune the field.

When he looked again at the thorns, he saw a rosebud among them. He picked it and sniffed it, and his soul was gratified. The king said, "Because of this rose, the entire orchard will be saved."

Leviticus Rabbah 23:3

### Comprehension and Analysis Questions

**?** Why do you think the King changed his mind regarding pruning his field when he saw a rosebud among the thorns?

**?** Why do you think the King didn't order the pruners to prune his field with the exception of the rosebud?

### Marcelo Ferder's Drawing

**?** How would you describe the king in Marcelo Ferder's drawing?

### Note on "The King and His Orchard"

Again, the king represents God. Rabbi Azaria, in the name of Rabbi Yehuda, son of Rabbi Simon, teaches us that the world was created so that God could deliver His Torah. When God saw the corruption in the land in the generation of Enosh, in the generation of the flood, and in the generation of the Tower of Babel, He decided to destroy the world He had created (in our fable it is symbolized by the desire of the king to prune his orchard.)

However, when it became apparent that the people of Israel (symbolized by the rose) would accept the Torah, the soul of the King (of Kings) was comforted, and he said to himself, "Because of this rose (Israel), the orchard (the world) will be saved."

**?** Why, according to our midrash, didn't God destroy completely this corrupted world?

**?** Why, according to our midrash, doesn't God destroy completely this corrupted world?

### Let's Explore Other Sources

- **Genesis 8:21**

*And the Lord smelled the pleasant aroma, and the Lord said to Himself, "I will no longer curse the earth because of man, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth, and I will no longer smite all living things as I have done. (Genesis 8:21)*

**?** Why, according to Genesis 8:21 doesn't God destroy completely this corrupted world?

- **Throwing the baby out with the bath water**

To get rid of the good parts as well as the bad parts of something when you are trying to improve it

*I don't think we should throw the baby out with the bath water. There are some good features of the present system that I think we should retain.*

The idea of throwing the baby out with the bath water may be inspired by the relatively few baths taken by people in Europe even before the 16th century. Baths were often thought unhealthy, and they were difficult to prepare, since you had to draw and heat water for everyone to bathe in. This often meant that the same water might be used for a whole family's bath, and the baby was frequently bathed last. At this point, the bath water might be quite dirty, and might obscure view of the baby. A mother wouldn't want to mistakenly discard the baby with the dirty, murky water, not that this was likely to occur.



**?** What do you do when you can't get rid of the dirty water?

### **!** Wrapping Up

Looking for the rose among the thorns as a way to learn to live with thorns!  
or what our fable can teach us about relationships...

## Discussion Ideas from Rabbi Dorit Edut

### **K-3rd GRADES:**

1)

What happened to all the figs, grapes, and pomegranate trees while the king was away? Who didn't do the job he was supposed to do?

2)

What did the king find in his orchard that made him happy? What did he decide to do with his orchard after that?

3)

Tell of an experience you had when you thought something was ruined or broken forever, and then you found or did something which saved or fixed everything. How did this make you feel in the end?

### **4th- 6th GRADES:**

1)

Express what the king was feeling and what he probably said to the caretaker when he returned from his trip.

2)

Why do you think discovering the rosebud changed the king's mind and whole attitude?

3)

When have you ever felt that something was hopeless or totally destroyed, and then someone said or did something to give you back hope?

### **7th- 12th GRADES:**

1)

What does the rosebud symbolize? What modern stories or movies does this possibly remind you of?

2)

Our fable comes from a midrash about God wanting to destroy the world after God sees how corrupt humans are and what evil they have brought into the world—but Israel is willing to accept and live by God's Law (Torah), so God decides that the world will get a second chance. How does this help you to understand the idea of the Chosen People and what our role in the world really is? How does this make you feel about God and our world?

3)

There is a saying in the Talmud like this: "If you save one life, it is as if you saved an entire world." How do you understand this, especially in light of this fable?

## Language Arts Strategies from Dr. M. Patricia Cavanaugh

### **Pre-Reading Strategy: Book Link.**

Read an excerpt from Antoine d'Saint Exupery's *The Little Prince*. There are several which might fit this fable. Return to the beautiful but vain rose. She has four thorns which she declares will protect her against large animals. So, a connection could be made between the Little Prince's beautiful but vain rose and the King's rose which saved the orchard.

In another section, the Little Prince is on a journey, and he meets a king who insisted that his authority be universally respected. He would tolerate no disobedience, being an absolute monarch. But since he was a kindly man, all his commands were reasonable.

"If I were to command," he would often say, "if I were to command a general to turn into a seagull, and if the general did not obey, that would not be the general's fault. It would be mine."

"May I sit down?" the little prince inquired.

"I command you to sit down," the king replied majestically.

In the Fable, the king ordered a caretaker to care for his orchard and pruners to prune the fields, and declared the orchard could be saved. Students could discuss and/or write about authority and the rights of the people.