**At the New Moon: Rosh Hodesh**

Once a two day holiday, the most sacred stretches in the slow swing of the epicycling year; then a remnant, a half holiday for women, a little something to keep us less unsatisfied; then abandoned at enlightenment along with herbals and amulets, bobbeh mysehs, grandmothers’ stories.

Now we fetch it up from the bottom of the harbor, a bone on which the water has etched itself, and from this bone we fashion a bird, extinct and never yet born, evolving feathers from our hair, blood from our salt, strength from our backs, vision from our brains.

Fly out over the city, dove of the light, owl of the moon, for we are weaving your wings from our longings, diaphanous and bony. Pilots and rabbis soared. The only females to fly were witches and demons, the power to endure and the power to destroy alone granted us. But we too can invent, can make, can do, undo. Here we stand in a circle, the oldest meeting, the shape women assume when we come together that echoes ours, the flower, the mouth, breast, opening, pool, the source.

We greet the moon that is not gone but only hidden, unreflecting, inturned and introspective, gathering strength to grow

as we greet the first slim nail paring of her returning light. Don't we understand the strength that wells out of retreat?

Can we not learn to turn in to our circle, to sink into the caves of our silence, to drink lingering by those deep cold wells, to dive into the darkness of the heart's storm until under the crashing surge of waves it is still except for our slow roaring breath?

We need a large pattern of how things change that shows us not a straight eight-lane tearing through hills blasted into bedrock, not stairs mounting to the sacrificial pyramid where hearts are torn out to feed the gods of power, but the coil of the moon, that epicycling wheel that grows fat and skinny, advances and withers, four steps forward and three back, and yet nothing remains the same, for the mountains are piled up and worn down, for the rivers eat into the stone and the fields blow away and the sea makes sand spits and islands and carries off the dune.

Let the half day festival of the new moon remind us how to retreat and grow strong, how to reflect and learn, how to push our bellies forward, how to roll and turn and pull the tides up, up when we need them, how to come back each time we look dead, making a new season shine.

*At the New Moon: Rosh Hodesh,* poem from *The Art of Blessing the Day: Poems with a Jewish Theme,* by Marge Piercy. Courtesy of Marge Piercy.