Noah's Wife, The Story of Naamah[1]
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We all know the Noah story: God asked Noah to build an ark; he brought in animals two by two—and saved all the animals. But what about his wife? His wife is never mentioned by name, but there is a lovely midrash about her that I want to share today.

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When God called out to Noah, God also called out to Naamah, "Walk across the land and gather the seeds of all the flowers and all the trees. Take two of every kind of living plant and bring each one onto the ark. They shall not be for food, but they shall be your garden, to tend and to keep. Work quickly. The rains begin tomorrow."

Naamah tied an apron of many pockets around her waist and walked through all the earth's fields and gardens. She journeyed into the forest and carefully gathered the spores from the moss that made a carpet at her feet. She placed them in the cool deep pockets of her apron, away from the light of the sun.

She came upon the giant redwoods. They carried their cones too high for her hands to reach.

"God," called Naamah, "blow me a wind so that the redwoods will let go of their seeds and I may gather them."

Just then a fierce howling sound blew through the forest and soon, at Naamah's feet, were the cones of the redwoods.

Naamah picked acorns from the oak trees and nuts from the pecan and pistachio. The winged seeds of the maples snapped under the gentle pull of her hands. She carefully lifted the seedlings of the cedar and cypress, the persimmon and plum. She found every tree—from acacia to ziziphus.

Naamah walked into the fields right past the dandelions, pretending not to notice their feathery yellow heads sprouting over the grass.

"Naamah," called God, "gather the seeds of every living plant!"

And Naamah knew that God meant the dandelions, too. Reluctantly, she placed their seeds in her pockets with all the others. Because Naamah had ignored them, God made certain that dandelions would cover the earth.

Naamah gathered the seeds of the sunflowers and buttercups, the orchids and jasmine. The fields blossomed with dahlias and daffodils, lilies and lavender. She picked two of every kind and planted them in red clay pots to carry onto the ark. She collected all the flowers—from the amaryllis to the zinnia.

Tomatoes burst with seed and avocado pits rested in their green fruit. The fields were ripe with potatoes and pomegranates, oranges and okra, lima beans and lemons. Naamah carried large straw baskets to hold all the varieties of fruits and vegetables—everything from apples to zucchini.

When Naamah had collected the seeds and seedlings of every living plant upon the earth, she arranged every plant and seed—each in its special place on the ark. Then, she made a sign that said:

NAAMAH'S GARDEN—these plants are not for food.

Then the sun disappeared, lightning flashed and thunder boomed. Dark clouds filled the sky, and rain poured from the heavens until the waters covered all the lime-green aspens and the emerald-green pines.

After 40 days and 40 nights, a rushing wind rolled over the waters, and the rains ceased. The ark rested on the mountains of Ararat. When Naamah and Noah looked out the window atop the ark, they saw the black sky soften into shades of blue.

Finally, the ground was dry and firm. Two by two, Noah led the animals from the ark. Some pranced, some flew, some slithered; and in this way, they spread out over the earth.

Naamah carefully placed all the seeds and seedlings in the deep pockets of her apron. As soon as she set foot on the new land, Naamah knelt down, put her hands into the soft moist earth and made small cradles in which to plant.

She placed downy tufts of milkweed seeds in her palms and held them up to the sky to let the wind carry them in all directions.

Naamah took off her sandals and let her feet sink into the soft soil. She sighed with delight at the touch of the land.

Morning gave way to afternoon, and Naamah worked without rest. As she patted the earth around a small raspberry bush, a dark red berry fell generously into her hand. The taste of ripened raspberry refreshed her.

God saw all that Naamah had planted, and God said: "Because of your great love for the earth, I will make you guardian of all living plants."

For a single moment, God gave Naamah's eyes the vision to see into the future and from one end of the earth to the other. She saw how the seeds were carried great distances and how they landed softly on the soft ground. As God had promised, dandelions were everywhere.

Naamah delighted in how the trees grew tall and spread umbrellas of shade over the earth. Flowers sprinkled yellow, peach and lilac over the fields. To this day, whenever someone digs in the earth and plants a seed, Naamah's garden continues to grow.

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This story reminds us to value the small actions—the "seeds"—that help big things grow. Without Naamah's collection of seeds, the animals would not have survived.

Let's remember the little things, too. They may seem insignificant, like gathering a few seeds, but these small actions set the foundation for greater things.

[1] https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/wonder/session8/naamah