

## Table Blessing

### Rice

It grew in the black mud,  
It grew under the tiger's orange paws.  
Its stems thinner than candles, and as straight.  
Its leaves like the feathers of egrets, but green.  
The grains cresting, wanting to burst.  
Oh, blood of the tiger.

I don't want you just to sit down at the table.  
I don't want you just to eat, and be content.  
I want you to walk out into the fields  
Where the water is shining, and the rice has risen.  
I want you to stand there, far from the white tablecloth.  
I want you to fill your hands with the mud, like a blessing.

Mary Oliver, from New And Collected Poems (volume 1), p. 38

### Wheat

One who sees the masses of Israel says: Blessed/baruch is the One wise in mysteries for not one of them is like the other in knowledge, neither does one resemble the other. Ben Zoma saw the crowd on the top of the Temple mount and said: Blessed/baruch is the One wise in mysteries, and blessed/baruch is the One who created all of these to be of service to me. He used to say: What labors the first human had to undertake until he realized bread to eat. He plowed, sowed, and reaped. Then he bound the sheaves; he threshed and winnowed, selected the ears. He ground and sifted, kneaded and baked and then—at last—he ate. Whereas I get up and find all these things done for me!

(Babylonian Talmud Tractate Berachot 58a)