

עץ חיים

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ETZ HAYIM

TORAH AND COMMENTARY

THE RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY  
THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE OF CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM



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and he shall become your slave in perpetuity. Do the same with your female slave. <sup>18</sup>When you do set him free, do not feel aggrieved; for in the six years he has given you double the service of a hired man. Moreover, the LORD your God will bless you in all you do.

<sup>19</sup>You shall consecrate to the LORD your God all male firstlings that are born in your herd and in your flock: you must not work your firstling ox or shear your firstling sheep. <sup>20</sup>You and your household shall eat it annually before the LORD your God in the place that the LORD will choose. <sup>21</sup>But if it has a defect, lameness or blindness, any serious defect, you shall not sacrifice it to the LORD your God. <sup>22</sup>Eat it in your settlements, the impure among you no less than the pure, just like the gazelle and the deer.

house. The significance of this action is unclear. It might symbolize the servant's obligation to heed the master's orders; the pierced ear might have held an earring that served as a slave mark; driving the awl into the door might signify the servant's becoming permanently attached to the master's house.

**in perpetuity** According to Jewish law, for the rest of the master's life, unless a jubilee year (as prescribed in Lev. 25) comes first. Even a servant who chooses to remain with the master is not passed on to the master's heirs and does not remain beyond the jubilee.

**18. do not feel aggrieved** Deuteronomy is interested in the Israelite's feelings, not just in compliance with the law. Having grown accustomed to a servant's usefulness, a master might regard the Torah's demand to free the servant as an unreasonable hardship. The text reminds masters that they have profited handsomely from their servants and have no reason to feel deprived.

**double the service of a hired man** The point may be that the wages of a hired man would have been twice what the servant cost in room and board and perhaps a defaulted loan. Furthermore, a hired man would have worked only during the day, whereas the servant was available day and night.

**God will bless you** Any loss incurred will be more than made up by God.

וּבְדֹלֶת וְהָיָה לְךָ עֶבֶד עוֹלָם וְאָף לְאַמְתָּךְ  
תַּעֲשֶׂה-כֵן: <sup>18</sup> לֹא-יִקְשֶׁה בְּעֵינֶיךָ בְּשִׁלְחָךְ  
אֹתוֹ חֲפָזִי מֵעִמָּךְ כִּי מִשְׁנֵה שְׂכָר שְׂכִיר  
עֲבַדְךָ שֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים וּבִרְכָךָ יִהְיֶה אֱלֹהֶיךָ  
בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה: פ

<sup>19</sup> כָּל-הַבְּכוֹר אֲשֶׁר יוֹלֵד בְּבָקְרֶךָ וּבְצֹאֲנֶךָ  
הַזָּכָר תִּקְדִּישׁ לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא תַעֲבֹד  
בְּבָכָר שׁוֹרְךָ וְלֹא תִגְזֹ בְכוֹר צֹאֲנֶךָ: <sup>20</sup> לִפְנֵי  
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ תֹאכְלֶנּוּ שָׁנָה בְּשָׁנָה בַּמָּקוֹם  
אֲשֶׁר-יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֶתְּךָ וּבֵיתְךָ: <sup>21</sup> וְכִי-  
יְהִי בּוֹ מוֹם פֶּסֶחַ אוֹ עוֹר כֹּל מוֹם רָע  
לֹא תִזְבְּחֶנּוּ לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ: <sup>22</sup> בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ  
תֹאכְלֶנּוּ הַטָּמֵא וְהַטְּהוֹר יַחְדָּו כַּצִּבִּי

#### THE SACRIFICE OF FIRSTBORN CATTLE

(vv. 19–23)

The first issue of all living things is considered holy, reserved for the Lord. Only after these are given to God, thereby acknowledging Him as the source and owner of all life, are the remainder of the crop and subsequent offspring of animals desacralized and freed for human use. Such practices were common in the ancient world.

**19. consecrate** Treat them as holy by not using them for any secular purpose and by eating them in a sacral meal.

**20. eat it annually before the LORD** As a *sh'lamim* sacrifice. According to 12:17–18, Levites also would be invited to take part in the meal (see Lev. 3).

**annually** Firstborn cattle must be sacrificed within a year of their birth, presumably on one of the pilgrimage festivals.

**21. if it has a defect** Offering a defective animal to God shows contempt. One would never present such an animal to a human ruler. Hence, in 17:1, sacrificing flawed animals is regarded as an abomination. It is among the offenses that profane God's name in Lev. 22:2,17–25,32.

**22.** A disqualified firstling may be eaten as food and need not be replaced sacrificially by another animal, redeemed for money, or destroyed, as would be the case with the firstling of an impure animal.

<sup>23</sup>Only you must not partake of its blood; you shall pour it out on the ground like water.

וְכַאֲשֶׁר לֵאמֹר: 23 רַק אֶת־דָּמּוֹ לֹא תֹאכַל עַל־  
הָאָרֶץ תִּשְׁפְּכֶנּוּ כַּמַּיִם: פ

**16** Observe the month of Abib and offer a passover sacrifice to the LORD your God, for it was in the month of Abib, at night, that the LORD your God freed you from Egypt. <sup>2</sup>You shall slaughter the passover sacrifice for the LORD your God, from the flock and the herd, in the

**טז** שְׁמוֹר אֶת־חֹדֶשׁ הָאָבִיב וְעִשִׂיתָ  
פֶּסַח לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי בַחֹדֶשׁ הָאָבִיב  
הוֹצִיאָךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִמִּצְרַיִם לַיְלָה:  
2 וְזָבַחְתָּ פֶסַח לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ צֹאן וּבָקָר  
בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־יִבְחַר יְהוָה לְשֹׁכֵן שְׁמוֹ

#### PILGRIMAGE FESTIVALS (16:1–17)

The main themes of these festivals are commemoration of the Exodus and gratitude for the harvest. Deuteronomy mentions the festivals to make the point that they must be observed only at the chosen sanctuary. Before the time of the single sanctuary, the festivals would have been observed by a pilgrimage to any of the country's temple cities.

#### *The Pesah Sacrifice and the Feast of Unleavened Bread* (vv. 1–8)

The first festival consists of two distinct celebrations: (a) the *pesah*, the protective sacrifice offered at the end of the 14th day of the first month; and (b) the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the 7-day festival that begins on the 15th day (see Lev. 23:6; Num. 28:17). Note the difference between the *pesah* sacrifice described here and the one in Exod. 12, especially in regard to the nature of the animal, the method of its cooking, and where it is to be offered.

**1. month of Abib** Literally, “new ears of grain.” It is the old name of the month that falls in March and April, when ears of grain have just begun to appear. During the Babylonian exile (6th century B.C.E.), when Jews adopted the Babylonian month names that are still in use today, Abib (or *Aviv*) became known as *Nisan*.

**passover sacrifice** This sacrifice (*pesah*) reenacts the original *pesah* offering brought by the

Israelites on the eve of the Exodus immediately before the last of the Ten Plagues. The name is derived from the verb *pasah*, which describes the manner in which God spared the firstborn in the houses of the Israelites after the blood of the sacrifice was smeared on their doorposts and lintels (Exod. 12:13,23,27). In the Vulgate, the verb appears as “[the LORD] passed over,” and the sacrifice is called “passover.” The Hebrew verb, however, does not mean “to pass over.” Most of the ancient translations and commentaries render the verb as the Lord “spared,” “had compassion,” or “protected.” The sacrifice, accordingly, is called the “protective sacrifice,” referring to the protection of the Israelites during the final plague. This very likely is the correct translation.

**at night** Although the Israelites themselves started to leave Egypt “on the morrow of the passover offering” (Num. 33:3), God's action—the slaying of Egypt's firstborn at night—is viewed as the essence of the event.

**2. from the flock and the herd** According to Exod. 12:3–5 and 21, the *pesah* offering was brought only from the flock and limited to sheep and goats. Deuteronomy clearly indicates that herd animals, large bovines, may be used as well. Perhaps this reflects a different economy, or a time when the sacrifice would be made at a central sanctuary where many households could share a larger animal.

#### CHAPTER 16

The summary of the festivals in other books of the Torah (Exod. 23:14–17; Lev. 23; Num. 28–29) tell us how to celebrate the holidays. In contrast, Deuteronomy tells us why: “for it was in the month of Abib, at night, that the LORD your God freed you from Egypt” (v. 1), “for you departed . . . hurriedly” (v. 3), “Af-

ter the ingathering” (v. 13). One might think that the reason for observance should precede the commandment to observe, so that people would know why they were celebrating. It seems to be more effective pedagogy, though, especially for children, to start with the deed and only later explain that this is why we eat *matzah* on *Pesah* and live in booths on *Sukkot*.

place where the LORD will choose to establish His name. <sup>3</sup>You shall not eat anything leavened with it; for seven days thereafter you shall eat unleavened bread, bread of distress—for you departed from the land of Egypt hurriedly—so that you may remember the day of your departure from the land of Egypt as long as you live. <sup>4</sup>For seven days no leaven shall be found with you in all your territory, and none of the flesh of what you slaughter on the evening of the first day shall be left until morning.

<sup>5</sup>You are not permitted to slaughter the pass-over sacrifice in any of the settlements that the LORD your God is giving you; <sup>6</sup>but at the place where the LORD your God will choose to establish His name, there alone shall you slaughter the passover sacrifice, in the evening, at sunset, the time of day when you departed from

שָׁם: <sup>3</sup> לֹא-תֹאכַל עִלְיוֹ חֶמֶץ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים  
 תֹּאכַל-עִלְיוֹ מִצּוֹת לֶחֶם עֲנִי כִּי בְּחַפְזוֹן  
 יָצֵאתָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְמַעַן תִּזְכֹּר אֶת-יְוִם  
 צֵאתְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם כֹּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ:  
 וְלֹא-יֵרָאֶה לְךָ שָׂאֵר בְּכָל-גְּבֻלְךָ שִׁבְעַת  
 יָמִים וְלֹא-יִלֵּין מִן-הַבֶּשֶׂר אֲשֶׁר תִּזְבַּח  
 בְּעֶרֶב בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן לִבְקָר:  
<sup>5</sup> לֹא תֹוּכַל לִזְבַּח אֶת-הַפֶּסַח בְּאַחַד  
 שְׁעָרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ: <sup>6</sup> כִּי  
 אִם-אֶל-הַמְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר-יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ  
 לְשֹׁכֵן שְׁמוֹ שָׁם תִּזְבַּח אֶת-הַפֶּסַח בְּעֶרֶב  
 כְּבוֹא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ מוֹעֵד צֵאתְךָ מִמִּצְרַיִם:

**3. anything leavened** Food prepared from dough to which a leavening agent was added to make it rise. In postbiblical *halakhah*, this means any leavened product of wheat, barley, spelt, rye, or oats. Most *Ashk'nazim* also include rice, millet, corn, and legumes in this prohibition.

**unleavened bread** *Matzah*, bread made without yeast and not allowed to rise. It can be made quickly and was commonly prepared for unexpected guests. It is similar to the flat unleavened bread that Bedouins still bake on embers.

**bread of distress** The *matzah* is “bread of affliction” or “bread of poverty,” eaten by prisoners or by the poor. It is unpretentious, primitive fare that one would not normally eat. There is no evidence that the Israelites ate *matzah* when they were slaves. It commemorates the Exodus, not the enslavement.

**remember the day of your departure** By re-enacting the first *pesah* sacrifice and eating unleavened bread.

**4. leaven** Hebrew: *s'or*. Here refers to leavening agents, such as sourdough or yeast. It differs from “anything leavened” (*hametz*; v. 3), which

refers to foodstuffs that have been leavened by leavening agents.

**none of the flesh . . . shall be left until morning** The sacrifice is offered at sunset (v. 6). It must be eaten through the night and finished by morning, thereby emulating procedures with the original *pesah* sacrifice in Egypt (see Exod. 12:8).

**5.** Once sacrificial worship is centralized in the chosen place, the *pesah* must be offered there. This is a characteristic requirement of Deuteronomy.

**6. the time of day when you departed from Egypt** The original *pesah* sacrifice, which was indispensable in ensuring the safety of the Israelites during the 10th plague, is here seen as the onset of the Exodus.

**7. cook** Literally, “boil,” reflecting the practice of a populace settled in the promised land. (Compare this with Exod. 12:9, which requires roasting, reflecting pastoral nomadic practice.)

**in the morning you may start on your journey back home** The entire seven days need not be spent at the chosen place, because it is necessary to return home in time to begin the harvest. Either

#### HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

**16:3. you shall not eat anything leavened** From this verse, the Talmud determines that the use or ownership of *hametz* (leavened products) is prohibited from midday on the day preceding *Pesah*, the 14th of *Nisan* (BT Pes. 28b). As a precautionary measure, the Sages rule that the *hametz* be burned at least one hour before midday (S.A. O.H. 434:2) and that one refrain from eating *hametz* from two hours before midday (i.e., the fourth hour after sunrise) (see Exod. 12:15; Lev. 2:11).

Egypt. <sup>7</sup>You shall cook and eat it at the place that the LORD your God will choose; and in the morning you may start back on your journey home. <sup>8</sup>After eating unleavened bread six days, you shall hold a solemn gathering for the LORD your God on the seventh day: you shall do no work.

<sup>9</sup>You shall count off seven weeks; start to count the seven weeks when the sickle is first put to the standing grain. <sup>10</sup>Then you shall observe the Feast of Weeks for the LORD your God, offering your freewill contribution according as the LORD your God has blessed you. <sup>11</sup>You shall rejoice before the LORD your God with your son and daughter, your male and female slave, the Levite in your communities, and the stranger,

7 וּבִשְׁלֹתָ וְאִכַּלְתָּ בַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בּוֹ וּפְנִיתָ בִבֹקֶר וְהִלַּכְתָּ לְאֹהֲלֶיךָ: <sup>8</sup> שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תֹּאכַל מִצֹּת וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי עֲצַרְתָּ לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה מְלָאכָה: ט

<sup>9</sup> שִׁבְעָה שָׁבָעַת תִּסְפְּרֶנָּה מֵהַחֵל חֲרֹמֶשׁ בְּקִמָּה תַחֵל לִסְפֹּר שִׁבְעָה שָׁבָעוֹת: <sup>10</sup> וַעֲשִׂיתָ חַג שָׁבָעוֹת לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִסַּת נִדְבַת יָדֶךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּתֵּן כְּאֲשֶׁר יִבְרַכְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ: <sup>11</sup> וְשִׂמְחֹתָ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אַתָּה וּבִנְךָ וּבִתֶּךָ וְעַבְדְּךָ וְאִמְתֶּךָ וְהַלְוִי

Deuteronomy does not consider travel to be forbidden on festival days or it does not regard the second part of the day, following the *Pesah* sacrifice and meal, as sacred. Some traditional commentators hold that “in the morning” refers to the morning of the second day of the festival.

**8. six days** That is, for the first six of the seven days on which it must be eaten (v. 3). According to postbiblical Jewish law, eating unleavened bread is obligatory only on the first day and not on the remaining days, though nothing leavened may be eaten.

**solemn gathering** Because this gathering occurs after the people have returned home, it must take place in their hometowns. This clearly indicates that Deuteronomy intends to allow nonsacrificial religious gatherings to take place throughout the country. Only sacrifice is restricted to the chosen place.

**do no work** Unlike on *Shabbat*, preparation of food is allowed (Exod. 12:16).

*The Feast of Weeks* (vv. 9–12)

The name of the festival is derived from the fact that it is observed exactly seven weeks after the onset of the harvest. The passage of seven weeks

is an essential aspect of the festival. Until seven weeks have passed, it is not known whether the harvest will be successfully completed and plentiful enough to sustain life and not be damaged by late rain or pests.

**9. count off** That is, calculate.

**seven weeks** The time needed to complete the harvest.

**when the sickle is first put to the standing grain** That is, when the grain harvest begins, normally in April. The text gives no exact date, probably because the harvest cannot begin everywhere on the same date owing to regional variations in the climate. Thus farmers from diverse places probably would have observed the feast at different times.

**10. Observe the Feast of Weeks** A time of solemn gathering on which no work is permitted and loaves made of new grain are offered as first fruits of the grain harvest (see Lev. 23:16–21). Presumably, tithes, firstlings, freewill, and obligatory offerings were also brought, as on other festivals.

**freewill contribution** Offering what you can afford as a result of the harvest (cf. v. 17, 12:15, 15:14). The contribution might be of produce, animals, or money.

**7. in the morning you may start back on your journey home** According to the Tosafot, the prohibition of traveling on festivals is not found in the Torah; it is a Rabbinic enactment (BT Hag. 17b, s.v. *dikhtiv*).

**9–11.** *Shavu-ot* (the Feast of Weeks) is presented in the Torah as a celebration of the early harvest, marked by bringing the first fruits to

the Temple. In Second Temple times, it was calculated that the 50th day after the Exodus—the date of *Shavu-ot*—was the day on which the Torah was given at Mount Sinai. *Shavu-ot* became *z'man matan Torateinu* (the time of the giving of our Torah). Like *Pesah* and *Sukkot*, *Shavu-ot* thus acquired a historical dimension along with its agricultural significance.

the fatherless, and the widow in your midst, at the place where the LORD your God will choose to establish His name. <sup>12</sup>Bear in mind that you were slaves in Egypt, and take care to obey these laws.

<sup>13</sup>After the ingathering from your threshing floor and your vat, you shall hold the Feast of Booths for seven days. <sup>14</sup>You shall rejoice in your festival, with your son and daughter, your male and female slave, the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow in your communities. <sup>15</sup>You shall hold a festival for the LORD your God seven days, in the place that the LORD will choose; for the LORD your God will bless all your crops and all your undertakings, and you shall have nothing but joy.

<sup>16</sup>Three times a year—on the Feast of Unleavened Bread, on the Feast of Weeks, and on the Feast of Booths—all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place that He will choose. They shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed, <sup>17</sup>but each with his own gift, according to the blessing that the LORD your God has bestowed upon you.

**12.** The memory of slavery is invoked to motivate extending this prescription to the servants and the poor mentioned in verse 11.

*The Feast of Booths* (vv. 13–15)

The third feast, at the end of the summer, celebrates the gathering of grain and new wine into storage for the coming year, the goal of all the preceding agricultural activities. This is the most exuberant of the festivals and has come to be called “the time of our rejoicing” (*z'man simhateinu*).

**13. After the ingathering from your threshing floor and from the vat** That is, after the processed grain and the unfermented grape juice are put in containers and stored away in advance of the autumn rains.

**Feast of Booths** According to Lev. 23:42, the name is derived from the practice of dwelling in booths, or bowers, during the seven-day festival.

**14.** The harvest season and festivals were proverbial times for celebration.

אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעֲרֶיךָ וְהִגַּר וְהִיתוּם וְהָאֱלֹמָנָה  
אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבְּךָ בְּמִקְוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְהוָה  
אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשֹׁכֵן שְׁמוֹ שָׁם: <sup>12</sup> וְזָכַרְתָּ כִּי-עֶבֶד  
הָיִיתָ בְּמִצְרַיִם וְשָׁמַרְתָּ וְעָשִׂיתָ אֶת-  
הַחֻקִּים הָאֵלֶּה: פ

מפס"ד חג הסוכות תעשה לך שבועת ימים

בְּאֶסְפָּךָ מִגְרָנְךָ וּמִיִּקְבֶּךָ: <sup>14</sup> וְשָׂמַחְתָּ בַחֲגֹךָ  
אִתָּה וּבִנְךָ וּבִתְּךָ וְעַבְדְּךָ וְאִמְתְּךָ וְהַלְוִי  
וְהִגַּר וְהִיתוּם וְהָאֱלֹמָנָה אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעֲרֶיךָ:  
<sup>15</sup> שְׁבַעַת יָמִים תִּחַג לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ  
בְּמִקְוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְהוָה כִּי יִבְרַכְךָ יְהוָה  
אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל תְּבוּאֹתֶיךָ וּבְכָל מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֶיךָ  
וְהִיִּיתָ אַךְ שִׂמְחָה:

<sup>16</sup> שְׁלוֹשׁ פְּעָמִים | בְּשָׁנָה יֵרָאֶה כָּל-זָכוֹרָךְ  
אֶת-פָּנָי | יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּמִקְוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר  
בְּחַג הַמִּצּוֹת וּבְחַג הַשְּׁבִעוֹת וּבְחַג  
הַסּוּכוֹת וְלֹא יֵרָאֶה אֶת-פָּנָי יְהוָה רִיקָם:  
<sup>17</sup> אִישׁ כַּמְתַּנֵּת יָדוֹ כְּבִרְכַּת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ  
אֲשֶׁר נָתַן-לְךָ: ס

**15. all your crops . . . all your undertakings . . . nothing but joy** The soaring extent of the blessing explains why the celebrating is to last a full seven days.

**16. Feast of Unleavened Bread** Here, the term must refer to the night of the *pesah* sacrifice (and not the following seven days), because that is the only time (according to v. 7) when worshippers are required to be at the chosen place.

**males** Only the adult males are obligated to appear, probably because pregnant and nursing women and young children could not reasonably be required to make long trips. Nevertheless, women and children frequently did take part, as is clear from verses 11 and 14.

**appear before the LORD** To pay Him homage at His sanctuary. This resembles the practice of homage to human sovereigns as reflected in treaties.

**17. each with his own gift** Literally, “each according to his means” (as in v. 10).

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

**16:14. rejoice** Prohibitions on transferring fire and carrying are less restrictive for the biblical festivals than for *Shabbat*. This is in order to add joy to the festivals (MT Festivals 1:4–6).

to the LORD, <sup>17</sup>and on the fifteenth day of that month a festival. Unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days. <sup>18</sup>The first day shall be a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations. <sup>19</sup>You shall present a gift, a burnt offering, to the LORD: two bulls of the herd, one ram, and seven yearling lambs—see that they are without blemish. <sup>20</sup>The grain offering with them shall be of choice flour with oil mixed in: prepare three-tenths of a measure for a bull, two-tenths for a ram; <sup>21</sup>and for each of the seven lambs prepare one-tenth of a measure. <sup>22</sup>And there shall be one goat for a purification offering, to make expiation in your behalf. <sup>23</sup>You shall present these in addition to the morning portion of the regular burnt offering. <sup>24</sup>You shall offer the like daily for seven days as food, a gift of pleasing odor to the LORD; they shall be offered, with their libations, in addition to the regular burnt offering. <sup>25</sup>And the seventh day shall be a sacred occasion for you: you shall not work at your occupations.

<sup>26</sup>On the day of the first fruits, your Feast of Weeks, when you bring an offering of new grain to the LORD, you shall observe a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations. <sup>27</sup>You shall present a burnt offering of pleasing odor to the LORD: two bulls of the herd, one ram, seven yearling lambs. <sup>28</sup>The grain offering with them shall be of choice flour with oil mixed

לְחֹדֶשׁ פֶּסַח לַיהוָה: <sup>17</sup>וּבַחֲמִישֵׁה עֶשֶׂר יוֹם לְחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה חַג שִׁבְעַת יָמִים מִצּוֹת יֹאכְל: <sup>18</sup>בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן מִקְרֵא-קֹדֶשׁ כָּל-מְלֹאכֶת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ: <sup>19</sup>וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם אִשָּׁה עֹלָה לַיהוָה פָּרִים בְּנֵי-בָקָר שְׁנַיִם וְאֵיל אֶחָד וְשִׁבְעָה כִּבְשִׂים בְּנֵי שָׁנָה תְּמִימִם יְהִיו לָכֶם: <sup>20</sup>וּמִנְחָתָם סֶלֶת בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן שְׁלֹשָׁה עֶשְׂרִינִים לְפָר וּשְׁנַי עֶשְׂרִינִים לְאֵיל תַּעֲשׂוּ: <sup>21</sup>עֶשְׂרוֹן עֶשְׂרוֹן תַּעֲשֶׂה לַכֹּפֶשׁ הָאֶחָד לְשִׁבְעַת הַכִּבְשִׂים: <sup>22</sup>וְשַׁעִיר חֲטָאת אֶחָד לְכַפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם: <sup>23</sup>מִלֶּבֶד עֹלֹת הַבָּקָר אֲשֶׁר לְעֹלֹת הַתָּמִיד תַּעֲשׂוּ אֶת-אֵלֶּה: <sup>24</sup>כְּאֵלֶּה תַעֲשׂוּ לַיּוֹם שִׁבְעַת יָמִים לֶחֶם אִשָּׁה רֵיחַ-נִיחֹחַ לַיהוָה עַל-עֹלֹת הַתָּמִיד יַעֲשֶׂה וְנִסְכּוֹ: <sup>25</sup>וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִקְרֵא-קֹדֶשׁ יְהִי לָכֶם כָּל-מְלֹאכֶת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ: <sup>26</sup>וּבַיּוֹם הַבְּפוּרִים בְּהִקְרִיבְכֶם מִנְחָה חֹדֶשׁ לַיהוָה בְּשִׁבְעַתֵיכֶם מִקְרֵא-קֹדֶשׁ יְהִי לָכֶם כָּל-מְלֹאכֶת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ: <sup>27</sup>וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם עֹלָה לְרֵיחַ נִיחֹחַ לַיהוָה פָּרִים בְּנֵי-בָקָר שְׁנַיִם אֵיל אֶחָד שִׁבְעָה כִּבְשִׂים בְּנֵי שָׁנָה: <sup>28</sup>וּמִנְחָתָם סֶלֶת בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן שְׁלֹשָׁה עֶשְׂרִינִים

even though it is a private sacrifice (see Exod. 12:1–11) indicates that by this time the two festivals had become fused.

**17. festival** Both the paschal sacrifice and the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread are observed at the sanctuary, precisely as instituted by Deut. 16:1–6.

**18. occupations** Hebrew: *m'lekhet avodah*; literally, “laborious work,” of the sort that is forbidden on the festivals. This is in contrast to “any work” (*kol m'lakhal*), which is forbidden on *Shabbat* and *Yom Kippur* (Num. 29:7; Lev. 23:3,28). The nonlaborious work permitted (by implication) on the festivals is not defined, except for the explicit permission to pre-

pare food on the first and last days of *Pesah* (Exod. 12:16).

#### FEAST OF WEEKS (vv. 26–31)

This festival, which marks the start of the wheat harvest, does not depend on the lunar calendar. It occurs seven weeks after the beginning of the barley harvest (Lev. 23:15–16). In this regard it is like *Shabbat*, which is also independent of the lunar calendar.

**26. day of the first fruits** This day is also called “the Feast of the Harvest” (*Hag ha-Katzir*) in Exod. 23:16, and “the Feast of Weeks” (*Hag [ha-]Shavu-ot*) in Exod. 34:22, Deut. 16:10,16, and 2 Chron. 8:13.



# הַפְּטָרָה לַפֶּסַח (יוֹם שְׁמִינִי)

## HAFTARAH FOR PESAḤ, EIGHTH DAY\*

ISAIAH 10:32–12:6

(\*Some also recite this passage on Yom ha-Atzma-ut, Israel Independence Day.)

This *haftarah* presents a series of promises concerning national redemption, as a conclusion to the opening cycle of prophecies in the Book of Isaiah (chapters 1–12). The prophet repeatedly refers to a “day” to come, a “day” of victory and fulfillment that will inaugurate a new order of existence (10:32, 11:10, 11, 12:1). The recitation of all of these hopes on the eighth day of *Pesah* concludes the festival of freedom with the anticipation of great redemption to come. The prophet Isaiah spoke his words in Jerusalem during the last third of the 8th century B.C.E., with an eye on the oppressive Assyrian power to the northeast. Isaiah’s message, however, has not been restricted to that time and place. It has become a transcendent, universal teaching of hope.

One of the most powerful and influential visions in all of Scripture is expressed in this cycle of prophecies. It moves from foretelling an end to foreign oppression to utopian visions of national justice and ingathering. A dimension of God’s universal dominion is depicted or projected at each point. The first prophecy begins with an oracle of divine victory over an Assyrian monarch. Subsequent prophecies, which portray God’s power to redeem the people Israel from all the nations of their dispersion, anticipate the universal acknowledgment of the just rule of the new Davidic king. The cycle concludes with a call to proclaim God’s triumphs to all peoples. The messianic era will be marked by justice, kingship, and national restoration, as well as the celebration of God’s acts of deliverance.

A vision of social and natural transformation lies at the center of this *haftarah*. The new ruler, inspired by the spirit of the Lord, will reveal this influence in all ways—through wisdom and

counsel, devotion and reverence, justice and impartiality. The king will transfigure the interpersonal sphere by inspired bearing and actions. This will be complemented by an even more radical transformation of the natural world. An era of Edenic bliss is projected for all creatures, resulting in the virtual end of enmity and rapacity among them. The prophet characterizes this result as a universalization of “devotion” to or knowledge (*de-ab*) of the Lord. Such a quality will change people and animals alike, so that “nothing evil shall be done” throughout the Land.

### RELATION OF THE HAFTARAH TO THE CALENDAR

One reason for the selection of this passage for *Pesah* is the promise that the nation will experience a new exodus from its dispersion (11:11–16). Just as the festival celebrates the original “Egyptian *Pesah*,” it anticipates a future ingathering from exile.

Why does the reading begin with Isaiah 10:32–34? Rashi’s comment on the talmudic source for the selection is terse, stating that the passage was chosen “because Sennacherib was defeated on the eve of Passover.” According to the Book of Kings, destruction of the Assyrian army occurred “at night” (2 Kings 19:35). The formulation there is strikingly similar to the statement in the Torah that, on the eve of the Exodus, “in the middle of the night,” the Lord struck down all the firstborns of the land of Egypt (Exod. 12:29). Such similarities were sufficient to link the two events.

The linkage of the defeat of Sennacherib with the eve of *Pesah* is testimony to the Jewish tendency to relate acts of divine deliverance to great historic models. By such associations, new events in history take on the power and often the char-

acteristics of an original and foundational moment. History thus becomes a series of repetitive and confirming truths. For Jewish memory, God’s redemptive acts constitute one such truth,

and the source of national hope. The festival of *Pesaḥ* is one of many ritual occasions when this truth and this hope are publicly celebrated.

# 10

<sup>32</sup>This same day at Nob  
He shall stand and wave his hand.

O mount of Fair Zion!  
O hill of Jerusalem!  
<sup>33</sup>Lo! The Sovereign LORD of Hosts  
Will hew off the tree-crowns with an ax:  
The tall ones shall be felled,  
The lofty ones cut down:  
<sup>34</sup>The thickets of the forest shall be hacked  
away with iron,  
And the Lebanon trees shall fall in their  
majesty.

עֹד הַיּוֹם בְּנֹב <sup>32</sup>  
לְעֵמֶד יִנְפֹף יָדוֹ

הָרַר בֵּית בַּת־צִיּוֹן  
גִּבְעַת יְרוּשָׁלַם: ס  
הִנֵּה הָאֲדוֹן יְהוָה צָבָאוֹת <sup>33</sup>  
מִסַּעֲף פְּאֶרֶה בְּמַעֲרָצָה  
וְרַמֵי הַקּוֹמָה גְדוּלֵים  
וְהַגְּבוּהִים יִשְׁפְּלוּ:  
וְנִקַּף סִבְכֵי הַיַּעַר בַּבְּרוֹזִל <sup>34</sup>  
וְהַלְבַּנוֹן בְּאֲדִיר יָפוּל: ס

# 11

But a shoot shall grow out of the stump  
of Jesse,  
A twig shall sprout from his stock.  
<sup>2</sup>The spirit of the LORD shall alight upon him:  
A spirit of wisdom and insight,  
A spirit of counsel and valor,  
A spirit of devotion and reverence for the  
LORD.  
<sup>3</sup>He shall sense the truth by his reverence  
for the LORD:

וַיֵּצֵא הָטֵר מִגֹּזַע יִשְׁשִׁי <sup>1</sup>  
וַיִּצְרַח מִשְׁרָשָׁיו יִפְרֶה:  
וַיִּנְחַח עָלָיו רוּחַ יְהוָה <sup>2</sup>  
רוּחַ חֲכָמָה וּבִינָה  
רוּחַ עֲצָה וּגְבוּרָה  
רוּחַ דָּעַת וַיִּרְאֵת יְהוָה:  
וַהֲרִיחוּ בִּירְאֵת יְהוָה <sup>3</sup>

**Isaiah 10:32.** The fall of the Assyrian aggressor precedes the accounts of the messianic ruler (11:1–10) and the national ingathering (11:11–16).

**Nob** The place-name is a pun on the reference in this verse to the monarch’s contemptuous and boastful “wave” (*y’nofef*) of “his hand” (Luzzatto). This negative act is reversed by God’s hand gesture (*henif*) over the Euphrates (11:15), in His act of deliverance.

**33. tree-crowns** Hebrew: *purah*, with an added silent letter *alef*. This unusual spelling may

be a pun suggesting a reference to the enemy’s pride (*pe-er*). The high branches here should be contrasted with the humble stump of Jesse’s descendant in the image at the beginning of chapter 11 (Luzzatto).

**Isaiah 11:2–5.** The messianic ruler will be divinely inspired.

**The spirit of the LORD** The general reference to “the spirit” (*ru-ah*) is explicated as the spirit of wisdom, insight, counsel, valor, devotion, and reverence.

**He shall sense** Hebrew: *va-hariḥo*. Tradi-

He shall not judge by what his eyes behold,  
Nor decide by what his ears perceive.

<sup>4</sup>Thus he shall judge the poor with equity  
And decide with justice for the lowly of the  
land.

He shall strike down a land with the rod of  
his mouth

And slay the wicked with the breath of his lips.

<sup>5</sup>Justice shall be the girdle of his loins,  
And faithfulness the girdle of his waist.

<sup>6</sup>The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,  
The leopard lie down with the kid;  
The calf, the beast of prey, and the fatling  
together,

With a little boy to herd them.

<sup>7</sup>The cow and the bear shall graze,  
Their young shall lie down together;  
And the lion, like the ox, shall eat straw.

<sup>8</sup>A babe shall play  
Over a viper's hole,  
And an infant pass his hand  
Over an adder's den.

<sup>9</sup>In all of My sacred mount  
Nothing evil or vile shall be done;  
For the land shall be filled with devotion to  
the LORD

As water covers the sea.

<sup>10</sup>In that day,  
The stock of Jesse that has remained standing  
Shall become a standard to peoples—  
Nations shall seek his counsel  
And his abode shall be honored.

<sup>11</sup>In that day, my Lord will apply His hand  
again to redeeming the other part of His people

וְלֹא-לְמַרְאֵה עֵינָיו יִשְׁפּוֹט  
וְלֹא-לְמִשְׁמַע אָזְנוֹ יוֹכִיחַ:

וְשִׁפֵּט בְּצֶדֶק הַלְלוֹים <sup>4</sup>  
וְהוֹכִיחַ בְּמִישׁוֹר לְעַנְוֵי-אֶרֶץ

וְהִכָּה-אֶרֶץ בְּשֵׁבֶט פִּי  
וּבְרוּחַ שְׁפָתָיו יָמִית רָשָׁע:

<sup>5</sup> וְהָיָה צֶדֶק אָזוֹר מִתַּנְיֹו  
וְהָאֱמוּנָה אָזוֹר חֲלָצִיו:

<sup>6</sup> וְגַר זָאֵב עִם-כֶּבֶשׂ

וְנֹמֵר עִם-גְּדֵי יִרְבֵּץ  
וְעֹגֵל וּכְפִיר וּמְרִיא יִחְדּוּ

וְנֹעַר קֹטָן נִהְגַּ בָּם:

<sup>7</sup> וּפָרָה וְדֹב תִרְעִינָה

יִחְדּוּ יִרְבְּצוּ יִלְדִיָּהֶן

וְאַרְיֵה כִּבְקָר יֹאכַל-תַּבָּן:

<sup>8</sup> וְשִׁעֲשַׁע יוֹנָק

עַל-חַר פֶּתֶן

וְעַל מְאוּרֵת צַפְעוֹנִי

גָּמוּל יָדוֹ הָדָה:

<sup>9</sup> לֹא-יִרְעוּ וְלֹא-יִשְׁחִיתוּ

בְּכָל-הָר קֹדְשִׁי

כִּי-מִלֵּאָה הָאָרֶץ דָּעָה אֶת-יְהוָה

בְּמַיִם לַיִם מְכַסִּים: פ

<sup>10</sup> וְהָיָה בַיּוֹם הַהוּא

שְׂרֵשׁ יִשִּׁי אֲשֶׁר עִמָּד

לְנֶס עַמִּים

אֲלֵיו גּוֹיִם יִדְרָשׁוּ

וְהִיְתָה מְנַחֲתוֹ כְּבוֹד: פ

<sup>11</sup> וְהָיָה | בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יוֹסִיף אֲדוֹנָי | שְׁנִית  
יָדוֹ לְקַנּוֹת אֶת-שְׂאֵר עַמּוֹ אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁאָר

tionally interpreted as an inner perception (Radak, Ibn Ezra), in contrast to the external senses of sight and of hearing noted in the sequel.

**9. Nothing evil** An image of righteousness

that is guided by royal example (vv. 2–5). The king will be inspired by knowledge of God (v. 2), which he will generate among the people. An image of Edenic transformation intervenes (vv. 6–7).

from Assyria—as also from Egypt, Pathros, Nubia, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and the coastlands.

מֵאֲשׁוּר וּמִמִּצְרַיִם וּמִפְתָּרוֹס וּמִכּוּשׁ  
וּמֵעִילָם וּמִשְׁנַעַר וּמִחַמַּת וּמֵאֵי הַיָּם :

<sup>12</sup>He will hold up a signal to the nations  
And assemble the banished of Israel,  
And gather the dispersed of Judah  
From the four corners of the earth.

<sup>12</sup>וְנָשָׂא נֶס לְגוֹיִם  
וְאַסַּף נְדָחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
וְנִפְצוֹת יְהוּדָה יִקְבֹּץ  
מֵאַרְבַּע כְּנָפוֹת הָאָרֶץ :

<sup>13</sup>Then Ephraim’s envy shall cease  
And Judah’s harassment shall end;  
Ephraim shall not envy Judah,  
And Judah shall not harass Ephraim.

<sup>13</sup>וְסָרָה קְנֵאת אֶפְרַיִם  
וְצָרְרֵי יְהוּדָה יִכְרְתוּ  
אֶפְרַיִם לֹא־יִקְנֵא אֶת־יְהוּדָה  
וְיְהוּדָה לֹא־יִצַּר אֶת־אֶפְרַיִם :

<sup>14</sup>They shall pounce on the back of Philistia  
to the west,  
And together plunder the peoples of the east;  
Edom and Moab shall be subject to them  
And the children of Ammon shall obey them.

<sup>14</sup>וְעָפוּ בְּכַתְּף פְּלִשְׁתִּים לְמַה  
יַחְדוּ יִבְזוּ אֶת־בְּנֵי־קֶדֶם  
אֲדוֹם וּמוֹאָב מִשְׁלֹחַ יָדָם  
וּבְנֵי עַמּוֹן מִשְׁמַעְתָּם :

<sup>15</sup>The LORD will dry up the tongue of the Egyptian sea.—He will raise His hand over the Euphrates with the might of His wind and break it into seven wadis, so that it can be trodden dry-shod. <sup>16</sup>Thus there shall be a highway for the other part of His people out of Assyria, such as there was for Israel when it left the land of Egypt.

<sup>15</sup>וְהַחֲרִים יְהוָה אֶת לְשׁוֹן יַם־מִצְרַיִם  
וְהַנִּיף יָדוֹ עַל־הַנְּהַר בְּעַיִם רוּחוֹ וְהִכְהוּ  
לְשַׁבְעָה נַחְלִים וְהִדְרִיף בְּנַעְלִים :  
<sup>16</sup>וְהִיְתָה מְסֻלָּה לְשָׂאֵר עַמּוֹ אֲשֶׁר יִשְׂאֵר  
מֵאֲשׁוּר כַּאֲשֶׁר הִיְתָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיוֹם  
עָלְתוֹ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם :

**12** In that day, you shall say:

“I give thanks to You, O LORD!  
Although You were wroth with me,  
Your wrath has turned back and You comfort  
me,

**יב** וְאָמַרְתָּ בְּיוֹם הַהוּא  
אוֹדֶךָ יְהוָה  
כִּי אָנַפְתָּ בִּי  
יָשַׁב אַפְּךָ וַתִּנְחַמְנִי :  
הִנֵּה אֵל יְשׁוּעָתִי <sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Behold the God who gives me triumph!

**12. hold up a signal** The Hebrew (*v'nasas*) is alliterative. The various images of this prophecy have been combined by rabbinic tradition to form the 10th blessing of the daily *Amidah* prayer. In it, God is called on to gather the exiles from their dispersion. Its invocation of a triumphal blast of the *shofar* to inaugurate this messianic moment draws on Isa. 27:13.

convey the new exodus. The splitting of waters into seven streams is known from Canaanite and other ancient sources. The transfer of this battle to events of the Exodus is also found in Isa. 51:9–11.

**15.** The prophet uses mythic imagery to

**Isaiah 12:2–3.** These verses have entered fixed liturgical practice as an expression of messianic hope in the *Havdalah* service at the conclusion of *Shabbat*.

I am confident, unafraid;  
For Yah the LORD is my strength and might,  
And He has been my deliverance.”

אֲבִטַח וְלֹא אֶפְחָד  
כִּי־עֹזִי וְזִמְרַת יְהוָה יְהוּה  
וַיְהִי־לִי לְיִשׁוּעָה:

<sup>3</sup>Joyfully shall you draw water  
From the fountains of triumph,  
<sup>4</sup>And you shall say on that day:  
“Praise the LORD, proclaim His name.  
Make His deeds known among the peoples;  
Declare that His name is exalted.

<sup>3</sup>וּשְׂאֲבַתֶּם־מַיִם בְּשִׂשׁוֹן  
מִמַּעַיְנֵי הַיְשׁוּעָה:  
<sup>4</sup>וְאָמַרְתֶּם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא  
הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה קְרָאֵוּ בְשֵׁמוֹ  
הוֹדִיעוּ בְעַמִּים עֲלִילְתֵּיו  
הִזְכִּירוּ כִּי נִשְׁגַּב שְׁמוֹ:

<sup>5</sup>Hymn the LORD,  
For He has done gloriously;  
Let this be made known  
In all the world!  
<sup>6</sup>Oh, shout for joy,  
You who dwell in Zion!  
For great in your midst  
Is the Holy One of Israel.”

<sup>5</sup>וְזָמְרוּ יְהוָה  
כִּי גְאוֹת עָשָׂה  
מִיַּדְעַת מוֹדַעַת זֹאת  
בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ:  
<sup>6</sup>צַהֲלֵי וְרַנְּי  
יוֹשְׁבֵי צִיּוֹן  
כִּי־גָדוֹל בְּקִרְבְּךָ  
קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל: פ