

עץ חיים

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ETZ HAYIM

TORAH AND COMMENTARY

THE RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY  
THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE OF CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM



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must, to be acceptable, be without blemish; there must be no defect in it. <sup>22</sup>Anything blind, or injured, or maimed, or with a wen, boil-scar, or scurvy—such you shall not offer to the LORD; you shall not put any of them on the altar as gifts to the LORD. <sup>23</sup>You may, however, present as a freewill offering an ox or a sheep with a limb extended or contracted; but it will not be accepted for a vow. <sup>24</sup>You shall not offer to the LORD anything [with its testes] bruised or crushed or torn or cut. You shall have no such practices in your own land, <sup>25</sup>nor shall you accept such [animals] from a foreigner for offering as food for your God, for they are mutilated, they have a defect; they shall not be accepted in your favor.

<sup>26</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: <sup>27</sup>When an ox or a sheep or a goat is born, it shall stay seven days with its mother, and from the eighth day on it shall be acceptable as a gift to the LORD. <sup>28</sup>However, no animal from the herd or from the flock shall be slaughtered on the same day with its young.

<sup>29</sup>When you sacrifice a thanksgiving offering to the LORD, sacrifice it so that it may be acceptable in your favor. <sup>30</sup>It shall be eaten on the same day; you shall not leave any of it until morning: I am the LORD.

<sup>31</sup>You shall faithfully observe My command-

**22.** There is a marked similarity between the physical defects that render a priest unfit to officiate and those that render an animal unfit for sacrifice.

**23. freewill offering** Because this offering is a gift to the sanctuary and is not intended for sacrifice, it need not be perfect.

תָּמִים יִהְיֶה לְרִצּוֹן כָּל־מוֹם לֹא יִהְיֶה־בּוֹ :  
<sup>22</sup> עֹרֹתָ אֹו שָׁבוֹר אֹו־חֲרוּץ אֹו־יִבְלֹת אֹו  
 גָּרֵב אֹו יִלְפֹת לֹא־תִקְרִיבוּ אֵלָהּ לַיהוָה  
 וְאִשָּׁה לֹא־תִתְּנֶנּוּ מֵהֶם עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ  
 לַיהוָה :<sup>23</sup> וְשׂוֹר וְשָׂה שְׂרוּעַ וְקָלוֹט נְדָבָה  
 תַּעֲשֶׂה אֹתוֹ וּלְנֹדֵר לֹא יִרְצָה :<sup>24</sup> וּמַעֲוֹף  
 וְכַתּוּת וְנִתְּנוֹק וְכָרוֹת לֹא תִקְרִיבוּ לַיהוָה  
 וּבְאַרְצְכֶם לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ :<sup>25</sup> וּמִיַּד בֶּן־נֶכֶר לֹא  
 תִקְרִיבוּ אֶת־לֶחֶם אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מִכָּל־אֵלָהּ  
 כִּי מִשְׁחַתֶּם בָּהֶם מוֹם בָּם לֹא יִרְצוּ  
 לָכֶם : פ

<sup>26</sup> וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר :<sup>27</sup> שׂוֹר  
 אֹו־כֶּשֶׁב אֹו־עֹו כִּי יוֹלֵד וְהָיָה שְׁבַע־עַת  
 יָמִים תַּחַת אִמּוֹ וּמִיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי וְהִלְאָה  
 יִרְצָה לְקַרְבַּן אִשָּׁה לַיהוָה :<sup>28</sup> וְשׂוֹר אֹו־  
 שָׂה אֹתוֹ וְאֶת־בְּנוֹ לֹא תִשְׁחֲטוּ בַיּוֹם  
 אַחָד :

<sup>29</sup> וְכִי־תִזְבְּחוּ זֶבַח־תּוֹדָה לַיהוָה לְרִצְוֹנְכֶם  
 תִּזְבְּחוּ :<sup>30</sup> בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יֵאָכֵל לֹא־תוֹתִירוּ  
 מִמֶּנּוּ עַד־בֹּקֶר אֲנִי יְהוָה :

<sup>31</sup> וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם מִצְוֹתַי וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם אֲנִי

**28.** The law forbids such sacrifice even after eight days.

**29–30.** These verses present a separate law for the thanksgiving offering, which is here treated as distinct from the *sh'lamim*.

**27–28.** Maimonides writes, "There is no distinction between the suffering of a human being and that of a beast in this respect, since feelings of maternal affection belong not to the intellectual faculty but to the emotional faculty, which is common to humans and animals alike." Recent research seems to indicate that animals do indeed

have such feelings. Other scholars claim that the primary concern of the law is not with the animal's feelings but with the cultivation of kindness and compassion in the heart of the human being. "It is not because God pities the animal but in order that the people of Israel should not practice cruel habits" (B'khor Shor).

ments: I am the LORD. <sup>32</sup>You shall not profane My holy name, that I may be sanctified in the midst of the Israelite people—I the LORD who sanctify you, <sup>33</sup>I who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God, I the LORD.

יהוה: <sup>32</sup>ולא תחללו את-שם קדשי ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל אני יהוה מקדשכם: <sup>33</sup>המוציא אתכם מארץ מצרים להיות לכם לאלהים אני יהוה: פ

**23** The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: <sup>2</sup>Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: These are My fixed times, the fixed times of the LORD, which you shall proclaim as sacred occasions.

<sup>3</sup>On six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there shall be a sabbath of complete

**כג** רביעי וידבר יהוה אל-משה לאמר: <sup>2</sup>דבר אל-בני ישראל ואמרת אליהם מועדי יהוה אשר-תקראו אתם מקראי קדש אלה הם מועדי: <sup>3</sup>ששת ימים תעשה מלאכה וביום השביעי שבת שבתון מקרא-קדש כל-

THE CALENDAR OF SACRED TIME (23:1–44)

Chapter 23 presents a calendar of the annual festivals celebrated in biblical times.

SHABBAT (vv. 1–3)

**2. Speak to the Israelite people** These sacred occasions are to be observed by all the people, not only by the priesthood.

**which you shall proclaim as sacred occasions** Although the dates of the festivals and the regu-

larity of *Shabbat* were set by God, the Israelites also must proclaim them as sacred.

**3. On six days work may be done** This statement emphasizes three norms of conduct basic to the observance of *Shabbat*: (a) the prohibition of *m'lakhab* (work), (b) the sanctity of *Shabbat*, and (c) the requirement that *Shabbat* be observed in all Israelite settlements.

**sabbath of complete rest** Hebrew: *shabbat*

**32. in the midst of the Israelite people** The public performance of a *mitzvah* not only benefits the one who does it but has an effect on those who see it, even as a violation of the Torah in public is more damaging than similar behavior done privately (Hoffman). This led the Sages to view the sanctifying of God's name (*Kiddush ha-Shem*) as essentially a public act. Thus, for example, a *minyan* is required for recitation of the mourner's *Kaddish* and for other prayers proclaiming God's holiness. The faith of the congregation is strengthened when a newly bereaved man or woman, who might have reason to feel angry with God, stands up in its midst to praise God. The Talmud states that there is no greater achievement for a Jew than acting in a way that causes others to praise and respect the God of Israel and the Torah's ways; and there is no graver sin for a Jew than

acting in a way that causes people to think less of Israel's God and Israel's laws (BT Yoma 86a). The term *Kiddush ha-Shem*, sanctifying God's name in public, is often linked to, but not limited to, acts of martyrdom.

CHAPTER 23

**2.** The festivals of the Jewish year are listed first in Exod. 34. The list is repeated here to set out the special role and responsibilities of the *kohanim*, again in Num. 28–29 to present the special offerings brought on each festive occasion, and once more in Deut. 16 to emphasize the obligation of pilgrimage to the central shrine. The Israelites find the presence of God in the sanctuary, which represents the permanent holiness of sacred space, and on the festivals, which represent the recurring holiness of sacred time.

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

**23:3. do no work** The Hebrew word *m'lakhab* (work) signifies any creative endeavor. One should refrain not only from paid labor but also from many actions that today may be considered leisure activities, such as gardening, cooking, sewing, arts and crafts, building, and writing.

rest, a sacred occasion. You shall do no work; it shall be a sabbath of the LORD throughout your settlements.

<sup>4</sup>These are the set times of the LORD, the sacred occasions, which you shall celebrate each at its appointed time: <sup>5</sup>In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight, there shall be a passover offering to the LORD, <sup>6</sup>and on the fifteenth day of that month the LORD's Feast of Unleavened Bread. You shall eat unleavened bread for seven days. <sup>7</sup>On the first day you shall celebrate a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations. <sup>8</sup>Seven days you shall make gifts to the LORD. The seventh day shall be a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations.

<sup>9</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: <sup>10</sup>Speak to the Israelite people and say to them:

*shabbaton*; literally, "the most restful cessation" from assigned tasks. The word *shabbat* means "to desist, cease, be idle."

**sabbath of the LORD** A day that belongs to God.

#### FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD (vv. 4–8)

**4.** Each festival is to occur at the same time every year.

**5. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month** This is the dating system that was in use during much of the biblical period. The unit of time was the lunar month (*hodesh*), not the week; and the months of the year were designated by ordinal numbers: the first month, the second month, and so forth. The counting of months began in the spring.

**twilight** The period of time between sunset

מְלֹאכָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ שַׁבַּת הוּא לַיהוָה  
בְּכָל מוֹשְׁבֹתֵיכֶם: פ

<sup>4</sup>אֵלֶּה מוֹעֲדֵי יְהוָה מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר-  
תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם בְּמוֹעֲדָם: <sup>5</sup>בַּחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן  
בְּאַרְבַּעָה עָשָׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ בֵּין הָעֶרְבִים פֶּסַח  
לַיהוָה: <sup>6</sup>וּבַחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה  
תִּגַּד הַמִּצּוֹת לַיהוָה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים מִצּוֹת  
תֹּאכְלוּ: <sup>7</sup>בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ  
יְהִי לָכֶם כָּל-מְלֹאכֶת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ:  
<sup>8</sup>וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם אֶשֶׁה לַיהוָה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים  
בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ כָּל-מְלֹאכֶת  
עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ: פ

<sup>9</sup>וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: <sup>10</sup>דַּבֵּר  
אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם

and nightfall, approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes in duration.

**passover offering** Here the term "*pesah*" refers to the sacrifice, not to the festival (see Exod. 12:6).

**7.** On the first and seventh (or last) days of the festival, work is forbidden. The community celebrates together. During the intervening days, necessary normal work may be done, but the celebration continues.

#### NEW GRAIN CROP (vv. 9–14)

New grain is to be regarded as belonging to God and may not be eaten until certain offerings are taken from it and presented before God. Those offerings remove the sanctity from the crop, thereby releasing the remainder for ordinary human use.

**7. you shall not work at your occupations**  
The Jewish festivals challenge us: Do we define ourselves primarily by our work? Or do we de-

fine ourselves primarily by our total humanity, our ability to celebrate, to sanctify time, to share special moments with our families?

#### HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

**23:6. seven days** Traditionally, *Pesah* is observed for eight days in the Diaspora. See Comment to Exod. 12:16.

**23:7. not work at your occupations** Most categories of *m'lakhah* (activities prohibited on *Shabbat* and *Yom Kippur*) are also prohibited on the three pilgrimage festivals and *Rosh ha-Shanah*; the permitted activities are those necessary for the preparation of food (*okhel nefesh*), such as cooking, carrying, and the transfer of fire (M Betz. 5:2).

When you enter the land that I am giving to you and you reap its harvest, you shall bring the first sheaf of your harvest to the priest. <sup>11</sup>He shall elevate the sheaf before the LORD for acceptance in your behalf; the priest shall elevate it on the day after the sabbath. <sup>12</sup>On the day that you elevate the sheaf, you shall offer as a burnt offering to the LORD a lamb of the first year without blemish. <sup>13</sup>The grain offering with it shall be two-tenths of a measure of choice flour with oil mixed in, a gift of pleasing odor to the LORD; and the libation with it shall be of wine, a quarter of a *hin*. <sup>14</sup>Until that very day, until you have brought the offering of your God, you shall eat no bread or parched grain or fresh ears; it is a law for all time throughout the ages in all your settlements.

<sup>15</sup>And from the day on which you bring the sheaf of elevation offering—the day after the sabbath—you shall count off seven weeks. They must be complete: <sup>16</sup>you must count until the day after the seventh week—fifty days; then you shall bring an offering of new grain to the LORD. <sup>17</sup>You shall bring from your settlements two

פִּי־תֵבֵאוּ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן לָכֶם וְקִצְרֹתֵם אֶת־קִצְרֵיהָ וְהִבֵּאתֶם אֶת־עֹמֶר רֵאשִׁית קִצְרֹתֵיכֶם אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן: <sup>11</sup> וְהִנִּיף אֶת־הָעֹמֶר לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לְרִצְוֹנְכֶם מִמַּחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת יִנִּיפּוּ הַכֹּהֵן: <sup>12</sup> וְעִשִׂיתֶם בְּיוֹם הַנִּיפְכֶם אֶת־הָעֹמֶר כֶּבֶשׂ תָּמִים בֶּן־שָׁנָתוֹ לְעֹלָה לַיהוָה: <sup>13</sup> וּמִנְחָתוֹ שְׁנֵי עֶשְׂרֹנִים סֵלֹת בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן אֲשֶׁה לַיהוָה רֵיחַ נִיחֹחַ וְנִסְכּוֹ וְנִסְכּוֹ יֵינן רְבִיעֵת הַדֵּהִין: <sup>14</sup> וְלֶחֶם וְקִלְי וְכֶרֶמֶל לֹא תֹאכְלוּ עַד־עֵצֶם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה עַד הִבֵּיאֲכֶם אֶת־קֶרְבַּן אֱלֹהֵיכֶם חֶקֶת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם בְּכָל מִשְׁבְּתֵיכֶם: ס

<sup>15</sup> וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמַּחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת מִיּוֹם הִבֵּיאֲכֶם אֶת־עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה שִׁבְעַ שְׁבֻעוֹת תְּמִימֹת תַּהְיִינָה: <sup>16</sup> עַד מִמַּחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת הַשְּׁבִיעִת תִּסְפְּרוּ חֲמִשִּׁים יוֹם וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם מִנְחָה חֲדָשָׁה לַיהוָה: <sup>17</sup> מִמוֹשְׁבֵיכֶם תָּבִיאוּ\* | לֶחֶם תְּנוּפָה

v. 17. א' דגושה

**10. sheaf** Hebrew: *omer*, a bundle of stalks bound together after reaping. Here, the reference is to barley, the first grain to ripen in the spring. **to the priest** The particular priest who officiates at the rite in the sanctuary.

**11.** The purpose of such rites was to “show” the offering to God, so that it might be accepted.

**12–13.** The burnt offering (*olah*) was often accompanied by a grain offering (*minḥah*) and a

libation (*nesekh*), as prescribed here. The measure of grain required here is twice the usual amount, to emphasize the importance of grain in this celebration.

**14.** Until God receives a share of the new grain crop, none of it may be used by humans.

SHAVU·OT FESTIVAL (vv. 15–22)

**17.** No leaven could be brought up on the

**11. the day after the sabbath** This starts the counting of the *Omer* (see *Halakhah l'Ma'aseh*, below). The Sages held that “the sabbath” here refers to the *Pesaḥ* festival. Explaining that interpretation, Arama writes, “If the *Omer* were tied to *Shabbat*, symbol of the creation of the world, then the wheat harvest would be seen purely as a natural phenome-

non. Connecting it to the Exodus teaches us to see it, like the Exodus, as an instance of God’s benevolence.” It is through God’s favor, not through our clever manipulation of nature, that the earth yields food for us to eat; that is why we cannot properly enjoy it until we have thanked God for it.

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

**23:15. you shall count** From the second night of *Pesaḥ* until *Shavuot*, we count the 49 days of the *Omer*. Jewish communities hold varying segments of this time period, known as the *S'firah* (literally, “counting”), as a time of semimourning, during which weddings and festive occasions do not take place.

loaves of bread as an elevation offering; each shall be made of two-tenths of a measure of choice flour, baked after leavening, as first fruits to the LORD.<sup>18</sup> With the bread you shall present, as burnt offerings to the LORD, seven yearling lambs without blemish, one bull of the herd, and two rams, with their grain offerings and libations, a gift of pleasing odor to the LORD.<sup>19</sup> You shall also offer one he-goat as a purification offering and two yearling lambs as a sacrifice of well-being.<sup>20</sup> The priest shall elevate these—the two lambs—together with the bread of first fruits as an elevation offering before the LORD; they shall be holy to the LORD, for the priest.<sup>21</sup> On that same day you shall hold a celebration; it shall be a sacred occasion for you; you shall not work at your occupations. This is a law for all time in all your settlements, throughout the ages.

<sup>22</sup>And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I the LORD am your God.

<sup>23</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: <sup>24</sup>Speak to the Israelite people thus: In the seventh

שָׁתַיִם שְׁנַי עֶשְׂרִים סֶלֶת תַּהֲיִינָה חֶמֶץ  
תֹּאפִינָה בְּכוּרִים לַיהוָה: <sup>18</sup> וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם  
עַל-הַלֶּחֶם שְׁבַעֵת כִּבְשִׁים תְּמִימִם בְּנֵי  
שָׁנָה וּפָר בֶּן-בָּקָר אֶחָד וְאֵילָם שְׁנַיִם יִהְיוּ  
עֲלֶיהָ לַיהוָה וּמִנְחֹתָם וְנִסְכֵיהֶם אִשָּׁה  
רִיח־נִיחֹחַ לַיהוָה: <sup>19</sup> וְעֲשִׂיתֶם שְׁעִיר-  
עֲזִים אֶחָד לְחֻטָּאת וּשְׁנַי כִּבְשִׁים בְּנֵי  
שָׁנָה לְזִבַח שְׁלָמִים: <sup>20</sup> וְהִנִּיף הַכֹּהֵן |  
אֹתָם עַל לֶחֶם הַבְּכוּרִים תְּנוּפָה לִפְנֵי  
יְהוָה עַל-שְׁנַי כִּבְשִׁים קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיוּ לַיהוָה  
לִכְהֹן: <sup>21</sup> וּקְרֹאתֶם בְּעֶצֶם | הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה  
מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם כָּל-מְלֹאכֶת  
עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ חֻקַּת עוֹלָם בְּכָל-  
מוֹשְׁבְּתֵיכֶם לְדוֹרֵיכֶם:

<sup>22</sup> וּבִקְצֹרְכֶם אֶת-קְצִיר אֲרֻצְכֶם לֹא-  
תִכְלֶה פֶּאת שְׂדֶךְ בִּקְצֹרְךָ וּלְקַט קְצִירְךָ  
לֹא תִלְקֹט לְעַנִּי וּלְגֵר תַּעֲזֹב אֹתָם אֲנִי  
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: ס

<sup>23</sup> וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: <sup>24</sup> דַּבֵּר  
אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי

altar. Here, because no part of the offering presented before God ascends the altar, it could be made of “leavened dough” (*hametz*).

**18–20.** The offerings prescribed in these verses are typical of those included in public rites, in which several different sacrifices are offered together to constitute a more elaborate celebration. The animals, both small and large, are to be offered as burnt offerings and are accompanied by the grain offerings and libations.

**20. The priest shall elevate these—the two lambs** That is, the two yearling lambs.

**they shall be holy to the LORD, for the priest** In the first instance, these offerings are the Lord’s,

who, in turn, commands that they be allotted to the priests.

#### FIRST DAY OF THE SEVENTH MONTH (vv. 23–25)

This section ordains the celebration of three major sacred occasions occurring during the seventh month: (a) the first day of the seventh month (which in the later tradition became the Jewish New Year), (b) the Day of Atonement, and (c) the *Sukkot* festival.

**24.** Here, the day is presented as one of rest and sacred assembly. It is conceived of not as a new year but as an occasion before the Day of

**22.** Why are the gleanings of the harvest mentioned here, interrupting the list of festivals? Perhaps because they were gathered at the *Shavu-ot* harvest season, as we read in the Book of Ruth, or because, as the *Sifra* suggests,

when one shares one’s bounty with the poor, it is as if it were offered on God’s altar.

**24.** The Torah never refers to the first day of the seventh month as *Rosh ha-Shanah*. That term first appears in Ezek. 40:1. In the Torah,

month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe complete rest, a sacred occasion commemorated with loud blasts. <sup>25</sup>You shall not work at your occupations; and you shall bring a gift to the LORD.

<sup>26</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: <sup>27</sup>Mark, the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. It shall be a sacred occasion for you: you shall practice self-denial, and you shall bring a gift to the LORD; <sup>28</sup>you shall do no work throughout that day. For it is a Day of Atonement, on which expiation is made on your behalf before the LORD your God. <sup>29</sup>Indeed, any person who does not practice self-denial throughout that day shall be cut off from his kin; <sup>30</sup>and whoever does any work throughout that day, I will cause that person to perish from among his people. <sup>31</sup>Do no work whatever; it is a law for all time, throughout the ages in all your settlements. <sup>32</sup>It shall be a sabbath of complete rest for you, and you shall practice self-denial; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall observe this your sabbath.

Atonement. The Hebrew term *zikhron t'ru-ah* means, literally, "commemoration by blasting" the *shofar*.

DAY OF ATONEMENT (vv. 26–32)

See Comments to 16:29–34.

בְּאֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם שַׁבָּתוֹן זִכְרוֹן תְּרוּעָה מִקְרֵא-קֹדֶשׁ: <sup>25</sup>כָּל-מְלָאכֶת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם אִשָּׁה לַיהוָה: ס

<sup>26</sup>וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: <sup>27</sup>אָךְ בְּעֶשְׂרֵי לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי הַזֶּה יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים הוּא מִקְרֵא-קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם וְעֲנִיתֶם אֶת-נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם אִשָּׁה לַיהוָה: <sup>28</sup>וְכָל-מְלָאכָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ בַעֲצֵם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה כִּי יוֹם כִּפּוּרִים הוּא לְכַפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: <sup>29</sup>כִּי כָל-הַנֶּפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא-תַעֲזֶה בַעֲצֵם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וְנִכְרְתָה מֵעַמֶּיהָ: <sup>30</sup>וְכָל-הַנֶּפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר תַעֲשֶׂה כָל-מְלָאכָה בַעֲצֵם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וְהָאֲבֹדְתִי אֶת-הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהוּא מִקְרַב עִמָּה: <sup>31</sup>כָּל-מְלָאכָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ חֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם בְּכֹל מִשְׁבְּתֵיכֶם: <sup>32</sup>שַׁבָּת שַׁבָּתוֹן הוּא לָכֶם וְעֲנִיתֶם אֶת-נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם בַּתְּשׁוּעָה לַחֹדֶשׁ בְּעָרֵב מֵעָרֵב עַד-עָרֵב

שׁוֹי תִשְׁבְּתוּ שַׁבְּתֵיכֶם: פ

**27. you shall practice self-denial** That is, you shall fast.

**32. from evening to evening, you shall observe this** This verse has been interpreted as setting the norm for every festival in the Jewish religious calendar, namely, that the celebration

it is called "a day of remembrance" or "a day of sounding the *shofar*." Readers may be surprised to learn that *Rosh ha-Shanah* begins the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar rather than the first. It commemorates the creation of the world, which traditionally is believed to have happened in the fall, the beginning of the new agricultural cycle. But the people Israel date their calendar from the Exodus, which

happened in the spring (cf. Exod. 12:2, designating the month of the Exodus as the first month of Israel's calendar).

**32. on the ninth day... at evening** The *Yom Kippur* fast does not start until the evening (after sunset, at night) after the ninth day. "Eating and drinking responsibly on the day before and the day after *Yom Kippur* are as much of a *mitzvah* as fasting on *Yom Kippur*" (BT Yoma 81b).

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

**23:24. commemorated with loud blasts** This is the source for the ruling that the *shofar* is not sounded on *Rosh ha-Shanah* when it coincides with *Shabbat*, which is itself a commemoration (BT RH 29b). On such a *Shabbat*, we "remember the blasting" in our prayers. It is also the source for the practice during the *Musaf* service on *Rosh ha-Shanah* of reciting 10 biblical verses about each of the themes of God's kingship, God's remembrance, and the *shofar* (BT RH 32a).



<sup>33</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: <sup>34</sup>Say to the Israelite people:

On the fifteenth day of this seventh month there shall be the Feast of Booths to the LORD, [to last] seven days. <sup>35</sup>The first day shall be a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations; <sup>36</sup>seven days you shall bring gifts to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall observe a sacred occasion and bring a gift to the LORD; it is a solemn gathering: you shall not work at your occupations.

<sup>37</sup>Those are the set times of the LORD that you shall celebrate as sacred occasions, bringing gifts to the LORD—burnt offerings, grain offerings, sacrifices, and libations, on each day what is proper to it—<sup>38</sup>apart from the sabbaths of the LORD, and apart from your gifts and from all your votive offerings and from all your freewill offerings that you give to the LORD.

<sup>39</sup>Mark, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the yield of your land, you shall observe the festival of the LORD [to last] seven days: a complete rest on

שש<sup>33</sup> וידבר יהוה אל־משה לאמר: <sup>34</sup> דבר אל־בני ישראל לאמר  
בַּחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי הַזֶּה  
חַג הַסֻּכּוֹת שִׁבְעַת יָמִים לַיהוָה: <sup>35</sup> בַּיּוֹם  
הָרִאשׁוֹן מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ כָּל־מְלֹאכֶת עֲבֹדָה  
לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ: <sup>36</sup> שִׁבְעַת יָמִים תִּקְרִיבוּ אֹשֶׁה  
לַיהוָה בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה  
לָכֶם וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם אֹשֶׁה לַיהוָה עֲצַרְתָּ הוּא  
כָּל־מְלֹאכֶת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ:

<sup>37</sup> אֵלֶּה מוֹעֲדֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר־תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם  
מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ לְהַקְרִיב אֹשֶׁה לַיהוָה עֲלֵה  
וּמִנְחָה זָבַח וּנְסֻכִים דְּבַר־יוֹם בַּיּוֹמוֹ:  
<sup>38</sup> מִלֶּבֶד שַׁבְּתוֹת יְהוָה וּמִלֶּבֶד מִתְּנוּתֵיכֶם  
וּמִלֶּבֶד כָּל־נְדָרֵיכֶם וּמִלֶּבֶד כָּל־  
נְדָבוֹתֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר תִּתְּנוּ לַיהוָה:

<sup>39</sup> אַךְ בַּחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ  
הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּאֶסְפְּכֶם אֶת־תְּבוּאת הָאָרֶץ  
תַּחֲגוּ אֶת־חַג־יְהוָה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים בַּיּוֹם

commences on the evening (actually the night, after sunset) that precedes the day of the festival. Scheduling the Day of Atonement only a few days before the major pilgrimage festival of the year ensured that the sanctuary and the people would be restored to a state of fitness in time for the celebration of the autumn *Sukkot* observance.

SUKKOT FESTIVAL (vv. 33–44)

**34. the Feast of Booths** The Hebrew word *suk-*

*kab*, “booth,” derives from the verb סכך, “to cover over,” as with branches. It designates a small, usually temporary, structure that is covered on top and only partially enclosed on its sides.

**36. solemn gathering** This term derives from the Hebrew verb עצר, “to detain, restrain, confine,” and may refer to the fact that the people are kept together for an additional day.

**35. first day** Why is it called the “first day” when it is actually the fifteenth of the month? After the slate has been wiped clean on *Yom Kippur*, we begin our relationship with God anew on *Sukkot* (Lev. R. 30:7).

**36. solemn gathering** The word *atzeret* is usually understood as “concluding event” or “solemn gathering.” But Hirsch here understands it as derived from a root meaning “to gather, to store up.” Even as farmers gather up

the harvest in the autumn to last through the winter months, even as animals store food for the winter, the Israelites are urged to store up the feelings of gratitude and dependence that mark the holiday season—to last them through the months that will follow, months without festival days. (In the biblical period, *Hanukkah* did not exist. It celebrates events that took place after the time of the Torah.)

the first day, and a complete rest on the eighth day. <sup>40</sup>On the first day you shall take the product of *hadar* trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. <sup>41</sup>You shall observe it as a festival of the LORD for seven days in the year; you shall observe it in the seventh month as a law for all time, throughout the ages. <sup>42</sup>You shall live in booths seven days; all citizens in Israel shall live in booths, <sup>43</sup>in order that future generations may know that I made the Israelite people live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I the LORD your God.

<sup>44</sup>So Moses declared to the Israelites the set times of the LORD.

הָרֵאשׁוֹן שְׁבֻתוֹן וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי שְׁבֻתוֹן :  
 40 וּלְקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בַּיּוֹם הָרֵאשׁוֹן פְּרֵי עֵץ  
 הַדָּר לַכֹּפֶת תְּמָרִים וְעֵנָף עֵץ-עֵבֶת וְעַרְבֵי-  
 נָחַל וּשְׂמַחְתֶּם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם  
 שִׁבְעַת יָמִים : 41 וְחֻגְתֶּם אֹתוֹ חֹג לַיהוָה  
 שִׁבְעַת יָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה חֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם  
 בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי תַחֲגוּ אֹתוֹ : 42 בַּסֹּפֶת  
 תֵּשְׁבוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים כָּל-הָאֶזְרָח בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל  
 יֵשְׁבוּ בַסֹּפֶת : 43 לְמַעַן יֵדְעוּ דֹרֹתֵיכֶם  
 כִּי בַסֹּפֹת הוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 בְּהוֹצִיאִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲנִי יְהוָה  
 אֱלֹהֵיכֶם :

44 וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶת-מִעַדֵי יְהוָה אֶל-בְּנֵי

יִשְׂרָאֵל : פ

**40. hadar trees** Literally, “beautiful trees.” They symbolize the abundance of water and oases and the beauty of the land of Israel. In horticulture, there are no particular trees designated as *hadar*. Traditionally, the “product of *hadar* trees” has been taken to be the citron (*etrog*).

**you shall rejoice** Rejoicing is explicitly commanded in this chapter only for the celebration

of *Sukkot*. The pressing of the grapes had been completed, and there was no labor to be done until the beginning of the next agricultural cycle. The people had leisure time as well as ample food and wine with which to rejoice.

**43. I made the Israelite people live in booths** According to Exod. 12:37, *Sukkot* (literally, Booths) is the name of the first stop on the Exodus route from Egypt.

**40.** The Midrash offers many interpretations of the symbolic meaning of the four species of *Sukkot*. The *lulav* (palm branch) represents the spine—erect but not rigid; the myrtle, the eyes; the willow, the lips; and the *etrog*, the heart. They summon us to use all of our limbs and organs to rejoice before the Lord. Yet another *midrash* compares the *etrog*, which tastes and smells good, to people who possess learning and also do good deeds;

the *lulav*, which has taste but no fragrance, to people who have learning but do not do good; the myrtle, which has fragrance but no taste, to people who do good but lack learning; and the willow, with neither taste nor fragrance, to people who lack both learning and good deeds but who are still to be counted as members of the community in order for the community to be complete (Lev. R. 30:10–12).

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

**23:40. the product of hadar trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook** This is the source for the commandment to take the citron fruit (*etrog*) with the branches of willow (*aravah*) and myrtle (*hadas*) bound to a palm branch (*lulav*) to fulfill the *mitzvah* of waving the *lulav* during *Sukkot*.

**23:42. live in booths seven days** One can fulfill this commandment by either sleeping in the *sukkah* (booth) or eating one's meals there during the seven-day holiday. One is exempt from eating or dwelling in the *sukkah* if the weather or other factors cause undue hardship (BT Suk. 25b–26a,29a).

**23:44. So Moses declared** On festivals, this verse is recited aloud before the *Amidah* during the *Ma-ariv* service, and before the blessing over wine for the *Kiddush* preceding lunch.

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

לַחֹדֶשׁ פֶּסַח לַיהוָה: <sup>17</sup>וּבַחֲמִישֵׁי עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה חַג שִׁבְעַת יָמִים מִצּוֹת יֹאכְל: <sup>18</sup>בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן מִקְרֵא-קֹדֶשׁ כָּל-מִלְאֲכַת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ: <sup>19</sup>וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם אִשָּׁה עֹלָה לַיהוָה פָּרִים בְּנֵי-בָקָר שְׁנַיִם וְאֵיל אֶחָד וְשִׁבְעָה כִבְשִׂים בְּנֵי שָׁנָה תְּמִימִם יְהִיו לָכֶם: <sup>20</sup>וּמִנְחָתָם סֵלֶת 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>כָּאֵלֶּה תַעֲשׂוּ לַיּוֹם שִׁבְעַת יָמִים לֶחֶם אִשָּׁה רִיחַ-נִיחֹחַ לַיהוָה עַל-עֹלֹת הַתָּמִיד יַעֲשֶׂה וְנִסְכּוֹ: <sup>25</sup>וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִקְרֵא-קֹדֶשׁ יְהִי לָכֶם כָּל-מִלְאֲכַת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ: <sup>26</sup>וּבַיּוֹם הַבְּפוּרִים בְּהִקְרִיבְכֶם מִנְחָה חֹדֶשׁ לַיהוָה בְּשִׁבְעַתֵיכֶם מִקְרֵא-קֹדֶשׁ יְהִי לָכֶם כָּל-מִלְאֲכַת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ: <sup>27</sup>וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם עֹלָה לְרִיחַ נִיחֹחַ לַיהוָה פָּרִים בְּנֵי-בָקָר שְׁנַיִם אֵיל אֶחָד שִׁבְעָה כִבְשִׂים בְּנֵי שָׁנָה: <sup>28</sup>וּמִנְחָתָם סֵלֶת 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 שֵׁנִי)

## HAFTARAH FOR PESAH, SECOND DAY

2 KINGS 23:1–9,21–25

Life in the kingdom of Judah was affected by events elsewhere in the world. The kingdom of Babylon (under King Nabopolassar) rebelled against Assyria in 626 B.C.E. This began a series of struggles that led to the fall of Assyria in 614, and of Nineveh in 612. Because in the ancient world there was a close relationship between political freedom and national religious expression, one should not be surprised by the intriguing correlation between the fall of Assyria and the resurgence of religious reform in Judah. It may also explain a significant sequence of events during the time of King Josiah of Judah (639–609 B.C.E.).

According to 2 Chronicles, King Josiah underwent a religious awakening in the eighth year of his reign (631 B.C.E.). Four years later (627 B.C.E.) he began purifying the Temple by ridding it of pagan features. Six years after that (621 B.C.E.), in the course of subsequent Temple repairs, a “book of the Torah” was found (arguably Deuteronomy, or its core). This event led to a public renewal of the Covenant and a great *Pesah* celebration for the entire nation (2 Chron. 34:1–35:19).

There is a different account of this in 2 Kings (chapter 23), which puts the work of repair and the discovery of the Torah scroll before the acts of purification. It thus presents the finding of the Torah scroll as the reason for the religious reform. Most modern scholars regard this version of the events as ideologically motivated to emphasize the role of “the book” in inspiring Josiah’s pious enactment. By contrast, the account in Chronicles downplays the role of the book by linking the purification of worship to the report of Josiah’s religious revival.

This *haftarah*, compared to the full historical presentations in Kings and Chronicles, is more concise. Thus it does not even mention the Temple repairs or the actual discovery of the book (related in 2 Kings 22). It specifies some of the acts

of Temple purification (vv. 4–9), and concludes with a royal edict that *Pesah* be celebrated as “prescribed” in the “scroll.”

The *haftarah* begins with a national assembly, a public reading of the “covenant scroll,” and a communal renewal of the Covenant. It then turns to the cultic purification program, involving pagan artifacts, priests from Jerusalem, and Israelite shrines in the countryside (with the eviction of their personnel to Jerusalem). It concludes with a national *Pesah* and a summary of all the great events.

Each part of this sequence, initiated by the king, involves priestly and popular participation. Indeed, both the people and the king are said to have accepted God’s covenant with all their heart and all their soul. This language is carefully chosen and evokes the great proclamation of the *Sh’ma* (Deut. 6:4–9), which calls on all Israelites to love God with all their heart and soul and might. This implies that now, in the days of Josiah, the people have committed themselves fully to that covenant, much as Moses had exhorted their ancestors to do before their entry into the Land.

The covenant ceremony at the outset of the *haftarah* and the *Pesah* celebration at the end deserve special comment. This celebration of the Covenant was not only a public recitation of the divine teaching, reminiscent of Moses’ proclamation of Deuteronomy itself before his death and of Ezra’s reading of the Torah of Moses on the return from Babylonian exile (Neh. 8). It was the only time since Sinai that the whole nation publicly and collectively underwent a commitment to the divine covenant. Similarly, there had been nothing like the great *Pesah* celebration (2 Kings 23:21–22) during the whole period of the judges and the kings. The first post-Exodus *Pesah* event of such collective importance had occurred in the time of Joshua, immediately on entrance into the

Land (Josh. 5:10–11). The account of that event is recited as the *haftarah* for the first day of *Pesah*.

RELATION OF THE *HAFTARAH*  
TO THE CALENDAR

By designating this *haftarah* for recitation on *Pe-*

*sah*, the Sages teach that the *Pesah* liberation must be achieved and reconfirmed again and again. They also point out that its three central pillars are devotion to the Covenant, wholehearted commitment to God, and purging every sign of false or impure service from one's religious life.

**23** At the king's summons, all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem assembled before him. <sup>2</sup>The king went up to the House of the LORD, together with all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests and prophets—all the people, young and old. And he read to them the entire text of the covenant scroll which had been found in the House of the LORD. <sup>3</sup>The king stood by the pillar and solemnized the covenant before the LORD: that they would follow the LORD and observe His commandments, His injunctions, and His laws with all their heart and soul; that they would fulfill all the terms of this covenant as inscribed upon the scroll. And all the people entered into the covenant.

<sup>4</sup>Then the king ordered the high priest Hilkiyah, the priests of the second rank, and the guards of the threshold to bring out of the Temple of the LORD all the objects made for Baal and Asherah and all the host of heaven. He burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and he removed the ashes to Bethel. <sup>5</sup>He suppressed the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had appointed to make offerings at the shrines in the towns of Judah and in the environs of Jerusalem, and those who made offerings to Baal, to the sun and moon

**כג** וַיִּשְׁלַח הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיֹּאסְפוּ אֵלָיו כָּל־  
 וְיִצְחוֹ וְיְהוֹנָדָה וַיִּרְשָׁלָם: <sup>2</sup> וַיַּעַל הַמֶּלֶךְ  
 בֵּית־יְהוָה וְכָל־אִישׁ יְהוּדָה וְכָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 וְיִרְשָׁלָם אֹתוֹ וְהַכֹּהֲנִים וְהַנְּבִיאִים וְכָל־  
 הָעָם לְמִקְטָן וְעַד־גָּדוֹל וַיִּקְרָא בְּאָזְנֵיהֶם  
 אֶת־כָּל־דְּבָרֵי סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית הַנִּמְצָא בְּבֵית  
 יְהוָה: <sup>3</sup> וַיַּעֲמֵד הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל־הָעֲמֹוד וַיִּכְרַת  
 אֶת־הַבְּרִית | לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לְלַכֵּת אַחֵר  
 יְהוָה וְלִשְׁמֹר מִצְוֹתָיו וְאֶת־עֲדוּתָיו וְאֶת־  
 חֻקֵּיהֶם וְכָל־לֵב וּבְכָל־נֶפֶשׁ לְהַקִּים אֶת־  
 דְּבָרֵי הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת הַפְּתוּבִים עַל־הַסֵּפֶר  
 הַזֶּה וַיַּעֲמֵד כָּל־הָעָם בְּבְרִית: <sup>4</sup>  
 וַיִּצְוֶה הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־חִלְקִיָּהוּ הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל  
 וְאֶת־פְּהֲנִי הַמְּשֻׁנֶה וְאֶת־שֹׁמְרֵי הַסֶּף  
 לְהוֹצִיא מֵהֵיכַל יְהוָה אֶת כָּל־הַפְּלִים  
 הָעֲשׂוּיִם לַבַּעַל וְלַאֲשֵׁרָה וְלְכָל צָבָא  
 הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיִּשְׂרָפֵם מִחוּץ לִירוּשָׁלָם  
 בְּשָׂדֵמוֹת קִדְרוֹן וְנָשָׂא אֶת־עַפְרָם בֵּית־  
 אֵל: <sup>5</sup> וְהִשְׁבִּית אֶת־הַכֹּמָרִים אֲשֶׁר נָתַנוּ  
 מַלְכֵי יְהוּדָה וַיִּקְטֹר בַּבָּמֹת בְּעָרֵי יְהוּדָה  
 וּמִסְבֵּי יְרוּשָׁלָם וְאֶת־הַמִּקְטָרִים לַבַּעַל  
 לְשֶׁמֶשׁ וְלַיָּרֵחַ וְלַמַּזְלֹת וְלְכָל צָבָא

**2 Kings 23:2.** The public reading before the whole nation echoes the private reading to Josiah of the scroll that was found (22:10–11). In the *haftarah*, the monarch himself performs the public recitation. The personal repentance of the king thus results in a national renewal of the Covenant.

**the covenant scroll** Hebrew: *seifer ha-b'rit* (cf. Exod. 24:7). It is also called “the scroll of the Teaching” (22:8,11). Many modern commentators assume that after the king heard the curses recorded in Deuteronomy, he responded by fulfilling its ritual prescriptions.

and constellations—all the host of heaven. <sup>6</sup>He brought out the [image of] Asherah from the House of the LORD to the Kidron Valley outside Jerusalem, and burned it in the Kidron Valley; he beat it to dust and scattered its dust over the burial ground of the common people. <sup>7</sup>He tore down the cubicles of the male prostitutes in the House of the LORD, at the place where the women wove coverings for Asherah.

<sup>8</sup>He brought all the priests from the towns of Judah [to Jerusalem] and defiled the shrines where the priests had been making offerings—from Geba to Beer-sheba. He also demolished the shrines of the gates, which were at the entrance of the gate of Joshua, the city prefect—which were on a person's left [upon entering] the city gate. <sup>9</sup>The priests of the shrines, however, did not ascend the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but they ate unleavened bread along with their kinsmen.

<sup>21</sup>The king commanded all the people, “Offer the passover sacrifice to the LORD your God as prescribed in this scroll of the covenant.” <sup>22</sup>Now the passover sacrifice had not been offered in that manner in the days of the chieftains who ruled Israel, or during the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah. <sup>23</sup>Only in the eighteenth year of King Josiah was such a passover sacrifice offered in that manner to the LORD in Jerusalem. <sup>24</sup>Josiah also did away with the necromancers and the mediums, the idols and the fetishes—all the detestable things that were to be seen in the land of Judah and Jerusalem. Thus he fulfilled the terms of the Teaching re-

הַשָּׁמַיִם: <sup>6</sup> וַיֵּצֵא אֶת־הָאֲשֵׁרָה מִבַּיִת יְהוָה מִחוּץ לִירוּשָׁלַם אֶל־נַחַל קִדְרוֹן וַיִּשְׂרֹף אֹתָהּ בְּנַחַל קִדְרוֹן וַיִּדַק לְעָפָר וַיִּשְׁלֹף אֶת־עֲפָרָהּ עַל־קִבְרֵי בְנֵי הָעָם: <sup>7</sup> וַיִּתֵּן אֶת־בָּתֵּי הַקְּדֻשִׁים אֲשֶׁר בְּבַיִת יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר הַנְּשִׂים אֲרָגוֹת שָׁם בָּתִּים לְאֲשֵׁרָה: <sup>8</sup> וַיָּבֵא אֶת־כָּל־הַכֹּהֲנִים מִעָרֵי יְהוּדָה וַיִּטְמָא אֶת־הַבָּמֹת אֲשֶׁר קִטְרוּ־שָׁמָּה הַכֹּהֲנִים מִגִּבְעַ עַד־בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע וַנְּתֵן אֶת־בָּמֹת הַשְּׁעָרִים אֲשֶׁר־פָּתַח שַׁעַר יְהוֹשֻׁעַ שַׁר־הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר־עַל־שְׁמָאוֹל\* אִישׁ בְּשַׁעַר הָעִיר: <sup>9</sup> אָךְ לֹא יַעֲלוּ כַּהֲנֵי הַבָּמֹת אֶל־מִזְבֵּחַ יְהוָה בִּירוּשָׁלַם כִּי אִם־אָכְלוּ מִצֹּת בְּתוֹךְ אֲחֵיהֶם:

<sup>21</sup> וַיִּצַו הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־כָּל־הָעָם לֵאמֹר עֲשׂוּ פֶסַח לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם כַּכְּתוּב עַל סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית הַזֶּה: <sup>22</sup> כִּי לֹא נַעֲשָׂה כַּפֶּסַח הַזֶּה מִימֵי הַשְּׁפֹטִים אֲשֶׁר שִׁפְטוּ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכָל יְמֵי מַלְכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמַלְכֵי יְהוּדָה: <sup>23</sup> כִּי אִם־בְּשִׁמְנֵה עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה לַמֶּלֶךְ יֵאֻשִׁיָּהוּ נַעֲשָׂה הַפֶּסַח הַזֶּה לַיהוָה בִּירוּשָׁלַם: <sup>24</sup> וְגַם אֶת־הָאֲבוֹת וְאֶת־הַיְדֻעָנִים וְאֶת־הַתְּרַפִּים וְאֶת־הַגְּלָלִים וְאֶת כָּל־הַשְּׁקָצִים אֲשֶׁר נִרְאוּ בָאָרֶץ יְהוּדָה וּבִירוּשָׁלַם בְּעַר יֵאֻשִׁיָּהוּ לְמַעַן הָקִים אֶת־דְּבַר־יְהוָה הַתּוֹרָה הַכְּתוּבִים עַל־

v. 8. מלא ר

**6.** The specific verbs used to mark Josiah's destruction of the idols ("burned" and "beat to dust") may intentionally allude to the very same acts performed by Moses when he destroyed the Golden Calf (Exod. 32:20). Josiah would thus function as a new Moses, a role fully consonant with his depiction as one wholeheartedly devoted to the Teaching of Moses (see 2 Kings 23:25).

**21–23.** This passage resumes the narrative of

the opening verses (vv. 1–3), after the description of the cultic reforms in Judah (vv. 4–14) and Samaria (vv. 15–20). The defilement of local Israelite shrines (v. 8) meant that the only legitimate place for the festival sacrifice now was Jerusalem. This fulfilled the instruction in Deut. 16:5–6 limiting the sacrifice to "the place where the LORD your God will choose to establish His name."

corded in the scroll that the priest Hilkiyah had found in the House of the LORD. <sup>25</sup>There was no king like him before who turned back to the LORD with all his heart and soul and might, in full accord with the Teaching of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him.

הַסֵּפֶר אֲשֶׁר מָצָא חִלְקִיָּהוּ הַכֹּהֵן בַּיַּת  
 יְהוָה: <sup>25</sup>וְכַמֹּהוּ לֹא־הָיָה לְפָנָיו מֶלֶךְ  
 אֲשֶׁר־שָׁב אֶל־יְהוָה בְּכָל־לִבּוֹ וּבְכָל־  
 נַפְשׁוֹ וּבְכָל־מְאֹדוֹ כְּכָל תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה  
 וְאַחֲרָיו לֹא־קָם כְּמֹהוּ: