

עץ חיים

ETZ HAYIM

TORAH AND COMMENTARY

THE RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY
THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE OF CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM



Produced by THE JEWISH PUBLICATION SOCIETY

Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary
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*The Rabbinical Assembly
3080 Broadway
New York, NY 10027*

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Illustrations of the tabernacle and its furnishings by Joe Sikora.*

*Composition by VARDA Graphics, Skokie, Illinois
Design by Adrienne Onderdonk Dudden
Manufactured in the United States of America*

09 10 10 9 8

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Bible. O.T. Pentateuch. Hebrew. 2001.

*Etz Hayim: Torah and commentary / senior editor, David L. Lieber; literary editor,
Jules Harlow; sponsored by the Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue of
Conservative Judaism.*

p. cm.

Text of the Pentateuch in Hebrew and English; commentary in English.

*Includes the haftiarot and commentary on them, p'shat and d'rash commentaries,
comments on Conservative halakhic practice, topical essays, and other material.
Includes bibliographical references and index.*

ISBN-10: 0-8276-0712-1 ISBN-13: 978-0-8276-0712-5

*1. Bible. O.T. Pentateuch—Commentaries. 2. Haftiarot—Commentaries. 3. Bible. O.T.
Pentateuch—Theology. 4. Conservative Judaism—Customs and practices. I. Lieber,
David L. II. Harlow, Jules. III. United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. IV.
Rabbinical Assembly. V. Bible. O.T. Pentateuch. English. Jewish Publication Society.
2001. VI. Title.*

BS1222 .L54 2001

222'.1077—dc21

2001029757

Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary
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and he shall become your slave in perpetuity. Do the same with your female slave. ¹⁸When 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.

¹⁹You 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. ²⁰You and your household shall eat it annually before the LORD your God in the place that the LORD will choose. ²¹But if it has a defect, lameness or blindness, any serious defect, you shall not sacrifice it to the LORD your God. ²²Eat 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.

וּבְדִלְתָּ וְהָיָה לְךָ עֶבֶד עוֹלָם וְאָף לְאַמְתֶּךָ
תַּעֲשֶׂה-כֵן: ¹⁸ לֹא-יִקְשֶׁה בְּעֵינֶיךָ בְּשִׁלְחָךָ
אֹתוֹ חֲפָזִי מֵעֲמֶךָ כִּי מִשְׁנֶה שְׂכָר שְׂכִיר
עֲבָדְךָ שֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים וּבִרְכָּךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ
בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה: פ

שביעי ¹⁹ כָּל-הַבְּכוֹר אֲשֶׁר יוֹלֵד בְּבָקְרֶךָ וּבְצֹאֲנֶךָ
הַזָּכָר תִּקְדִּישׁ לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא תַעֲבֹד
בְּבָכָר שׁוֹרְךָ וְלֹא תִגְזֹר בְּכוֹר צֹאֲנֶךָ: ²⁰ לִפְנֵי
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ תֹאכְלֶנּוּ שָׁנָה בְּשָׁנָה בַּמָּקוֹם
אֲשֶׁר-יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֶתֶּה וּבֵיתֶךָ: ²¹ וְכִי-
יְהִי בּוֹ מוֹם פֶּסֶחַ אוֹ עִזָּר כֹּל מוֹם רָע
לֹא תִזְבְּחֶנּוּ לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ: ²² בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ
תֹאכְלֶנּוּ הַטֶּמֶא 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 sacrificial 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.

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

וְכִאֵיל: ²³רַק 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. ²You shall slaughter the passover sacrifice for the LORD your God, from the flock and the herd, in the

טז שָׁמֹר אֶת־חֹדֶשׁ הָאָבִיב וְעָשִׂיתָ
פֶּסַח לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי בַחֹדֶשׁ הָאָבִיב
הוֹצֵאתָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִמִּצְרַיִם לַיְלָה:
²וְזָבַחְתָּ 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.³ 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.⁴ 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.

⁵You are not permitted to slaughter the pass-over sacrifice in any of the settlements that the LORD your God is giving you; ⁶but 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 sundown, the time of day when you departed from

שם: ³ לא-תאכל עליו חֵמֶץ שְׁבַעַת יָמִים
תֹּאכַל-עָלָיו מִצּוֹת לֶחֶם עֲנִי כִּי בַחֲפוֹז
יֵצְאתָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְמַעַן תִּזְכֹּר אֶת-יוֹם
צֵאתְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם כֹּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ:
⁴ וְלֹא-יֵרָאֶה לָּךְ שְׂאֵר בֶּכֶל-גִּבְלֶךָ שְׁבַעַת
יָמִים וְלֹא-יֵלִין מִן-הַבָּשָׂר אֲשֶׁר תִּזְבַּח
בְּעֶרֶב בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן לַבֹּקֶר:
⁵ לֹא תֹכַל לִזְבַּח אֶת-הַפֶּסַח בְּאֶחָד
שְׁעָרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ: ⁶ כִּי
אִם-אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם 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. ⁷You 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. ⁸After 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.

⁹You shall count off seven weeks; start to count the seven weeks when the sickle is first put to the standing grain. ¹⁰Then 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. ¹¹You 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,

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

7 וּבִשְׁלֹתָ וְאָכַלְתָּ בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בּוֹ וּפְנִיתָ בִּבְקָר וְהִלַּכְתָּ לְאֹהֲלֶיךָ: 8 שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תֹּאכַל מִצֹּת וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׂבִיעִי עֲצַרְתָּ לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה מְלָאכָה: ט

9 שִׁבְעָה שָׁבָעַת תִּסְפֹּר-לָךְ מִהַחֵל חֶרְמֶשׁ בְּקִמָּה תַחֵל לִסְפֹּר שִׁבְעָה שָׁבָעוֹת: 10 וְעָשִׂיתָ חֹג שָׁבָעוֹת לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִסֵּת נִדְבַת יָדְךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּתֵּן פֶּאֶשֶׁר יִבְרַכְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ: 11 וְשִׂמַּחְתָּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אַתָּה וּבִנְךָ וּבִתְּךָ וְעַבְדְּךָ וְעַמְּתָךְ וְהַלֹּוֹ

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. ¹²Bear in mind that you were slaves in Egypt, and take care to obey these laws.

¹³After the ingathering from your threshing floor and your vat, you shall hold the Feast of Booths for seven days. ¹⁴You 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. ¹⁵You 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.

¹⁶Three 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, ¹⁷but 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 simḥateinu*).

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 וְהַגֵּר וְהַיְתוֹם וְהָאֵלְמָנָה
אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבְּךָ בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשָׂכֵן שְׁמוֹ שָׁם: ¹² וְזָכַרְתָּ כִּי-עֶבֶד
הָיִיתָ בְּמִצְרַיִם וּשְׁמַרְתָּ וַעֲשִׂיתָ אֶת-
הַחֻקִּים הָאֵלֶּה: פ

מפסיר ¹³ חַג הַסֻּכּוֹת תַּעֲשֶׂה לָּךְ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים
בְּאֶסְפֶּךָ מִגִּרְנֶךָ וּמִקִּרְבֶּךָ: ¹⁴ וּשְׂמַחְתָּ בְּחֻגְךָ
אִתָּה וּבִנְךָ וּבִתְּךָ וְעַבְדְּךָ וְאִמָּתְךָ וְהַלֵּוִי
וְהַגֵּר וְהַיְתוֹם וְהָאֵלְמָנָה אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעֲרֶיךָ:
¹⁵ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים תַּחֲגֹל לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ
בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר-יִבְחַר יְהוָה כִּי יְבָרְכֶךָ יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל תְּבוּאָתְךָ וּבְכָל מַעֲשֵׂה יָדְךָ
וְהָיִיתָ אֶף שִׂמְחָה:

¹⁶ שְׁלוֹשׁ פְּעָמִים | בַּשָּׁנָה יֵרָאֶה כָּל-זָכוֹר
אֶת-פָּנָי | יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר
בְּחַג הַמִּצּוֹת וּבְחַג הַשְּׁבָעוֹת וּבְחַג
הַסֻּכּוֹת וְלֹא יֵרָאֶה אֶת-פָּנָי יְהוָה רִיקָם:
¹⁷ אִישׁ כַּמִּתְנַת יָדוֹ כְּבִרְכַּת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ
אֲשֶׁר נָתַן-לָּךְ: 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, ¹⁷and on the fifteenth day of that month a festival. Unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days. ¹⁸The first day shall be a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations. ¹⁹You 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. ²⁰The 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; ²¹and for each of the seven lambs prepare one-tenth of a measure. ²²And there shall be one goat for a purification offering, to make expiation in your behalf. ²³You shall present these in addition to the morning portion of the regular burnt offering. ²⁴You 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. ²⁵And the seventh day shall be a sacred occasion for you: you shall not work at your occupations.

²⁶On 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. ²⁷You shall present a burnt offering of pleasing odor to the LORD: two bulls of the herd, one ram, seven yearling lambs. ²⁸The grain offering with them shall be of choice flour with oil mixed

לַחֹדֶשׁ פֶּסַח לַיהוָה: ¹⁷וּבַחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה חַג שִׁבְעַת יָמִים מִצּוֹת יֹאכֵל: ¹⁸בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן מִקְרֵא־קֹדֶשׁ כָּל־מְלֹאכֶת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ: ¹⁹וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם אֶשָּׁה עֹלָה לַיהוָה פָּרִים בְּנֵי־בָקָר שְׁנַיִם וְאַיִל אֶחָד וְשִׁבְעָה כִּבְשִׁים בְּנֵי שָׁנָה תְּמִימִם יִהְיוּ לָכֶם: ²⁰וּמִנְחָתָם סֵלֶת בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן שְׁלֹשָׁה עֶשְׂרֹנִים לָפָר וּשְׁנֵי עֶשְׂרֹנִים לְאַיִל תַּעֲשׂוּ: ²¹עֶשְׂרֹן עֶשְׂרֹן תַּעֲשֶׂה לַכֹּבֶשֶׁת לַשִּׁבְעָה הַכִּבְשִׁים: ²²וְשַׁעִיר חֲטָאת אֶחָד לְכַפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם: ²³מִלֶּבֶד עֹלֹת הַבֹּקֶר אֲשֶׁר לְעֹלֹת הַתָּמִיד תַּעֲשׂוּ אֶת־אֹלֶה: ²⁴כָּאֵלֶּה תַעֲשׂוּ לַיּוֹם שִׁבְעַת יָמִים לֶחֶם אֶשָּׁה רֵיחַ־נִיחֹחַ לַיהוָה עַל־עֹלֹת הַתָּמִיד יַעֲשֶׂה וְנִסְכּוֹ: ²⁵וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִקְרֵא־קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם כָּל־מְלֹאכֶת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ: ס

²⁶וּבַיּוֹם הַפְּכוּרִים בְּהַקְרִיבְכֶם מִנְחָה חֲדָשָׁה לַיהוָה בְּשִׁבְעַתִּיכֶם מִקְרֵא־קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם כָּל־מְלֹאכֶת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ: ²⁷וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם עֹלָה לְרֵיחַ נִיחֹחַ לַיהוָה פָּרִים בְּנֵי־בָקָר שְׁנַיִם אֵיל אֶחָד שִׁבְעָה כִּבְשִׁים בְּנֵי שָׁנָה: ²⁸וּמִנְחָתָם סֵלֶת בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן שְׁלֹשָׁה עֶשְׂרֹנִים

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'lakhah*), 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 PESAH, 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-ah*) 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 *Pesah* is one of many ritual occasions when this truth and this hope are publicly celebrated.

10³²This same day at Nob

He shall stand and wave his hand.

O mount of Fair Zion!

O hill of Jerusalem!

³³Lo! 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:

³⁴The thickets of the forest shall be hacked
away with iron,

And the Lebanon trees shall fall in their
majesty.

י
עֹד הַיּוֹם בְּנֹב³²
לַעֲמֹד יִנָּפֵף יָדוֹ

הָרַבִּית בֵּית-צִיּוֹן
גִּבְעַת יְרוּשָׁלַם: ס
הִנֵּה הָאֲדוֹן יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת³³
מִסַּעֲף פֶּאֶרָה בְּמַעֲרָצָה
וְרָמֵי הַקֹּמָה גְּדוּעִים
וְהַגְּבֵהִים יִשְׁפְּלוּ:
וְנִקָּף סִבְכֵי הַיַּעַר בַּבְּרֹזֶל³⁴
וְהַלְבָּנוֹן בְּאֲדִיר יָפֹל: ס

11 But a shoot shall grow out of the stump
of Jesse,

A twig shall sprout from his stock.

²The 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.

³He shall sense the truth by his reverence
for the LORD:

יֵא וַיֵּצֵא חֹטֶר מִגִּזְעֵי יֵשׁוּעַ
וַיִּצְרֹחַ מִשְׁרָשָׁיו יִפְרֶה:
וְנָחָה עָלָיו רוּחַ יְהוָה²
רוּחַ חֲכָמָה וּבִינָה
רוּחַ עֲצָה וְגִבּוּרָה
רוּחַ דַּעַת וַיִּרְאֵת יְהוָה:
וַהֲרִיחוּ בִּירְאֵת יְהוָה³

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-hariho*. Tradi-

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

⁴Thus 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.

⁵Justice shall be the girdle of his loins,
And faithfulness the girdle of his waist.

⁶The 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.

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

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

⁹In 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.

¹⁰In 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.

¹¹In 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:

וְשֹׁפֵט בְּצֶדֶק דִּלִּים ⁴
וְהוֹכִיחַ בְּמִישׁוֹר לְעֲנוּי־אָרֶץ

וְהִכָּה־אֶרֶץ בְּשֶׁבֶט פִּיו
וּבְרוּחַ שְׁפָתָיו יִמִּית רָשָׁע:

⁵וְהִיָּה צֶדֶק אָזֹר מִתְּנוֹ
וְהָאֱמוּנָה אָזֹר חֻלְצִיו:

⁶וְגֵר וְאֵב עִם־כֶּבֶשׂ
וְנֹמֵר עִם־גְּדִי יִרְבֹּץ

וְעִגֹּל וּכְפִיר וּמְרִיאַ יִחְדּוּ
וְנֹעַר קֹטֵן נְהַג בָּם:

⁷וּפָרָה וְדֹב תִרְעִינָה
יִחְדּוּ יִרְבְּצוּ יִלְדִּיהֶן

וְאַרְיֵה כִּבְקָר יֹאכַל־תֶּבֶן:
⁸וְשִׁעְשַׁע יוֹנֵק

עַל־חֵר פֶּתֶן
וְעַל מְאוּרֵת צַפְעוֹנִי

גְּמוּל יָדוֹ הִדָּה:
⁹לֹא־יִרְעוּ וְלֹא־יִשְׁחִיתוּ

בְּכָל־חֵר קִדְשִׁי
כִּי־מִלֵּאָה הָאָרֶץ דָּעָה אֶת־יְהוָה

בְּיָמִים לַיִם מְכַסִּים: פ

¹⁰וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא
שְׂרֵשׁ יִשִּׁי אֲשֶׁר עֲמִד

לְנֶס עַמִּים
אֲלֵיו גּוֹיִם יִדְרְשׁוּ

וְהִיָּתָה מְנַחְתּוֹ כְּבוֹד: פ

¹¹וְהָיָה | בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יוֹסִיף אֲדָנִי | שְׁנִית
יָדוֹ לְקַנּוֹת אֶת־שָׂאֵר עַמּוֹ אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁאַר

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 וּמִחֲמַת וּמֵאֵי הַיָּם:

¹²He 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.

¹³Then Ephraim's envy shall cease

And Judah's harassment shall end;

Ephraim shall not envy Judah,

And Judah shall not harass Ephraim.

¹⁴They 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.

¹² וְנִשָּׂא נֵס לְגוֹיִם

וְאַסַּף נִדְחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

וְנִפְצוֹת יְהוּדָה יִקְבֹּץ

מֵאַרְבַּע כְּנָפֹת הָאָרֶץ:

¹³ וְסָרָה קִנְאֵת אֶפְרַיִם

וְצָרֵי יְהוּדָה יִכְרְתוּ

אֶפְרַיִם לֹא־יִקְנֹא אֶת־יְהוּדָה

וְיְהוּדָה לֹא־יִצָּר אֶת־אֶפְרַיִם:

¹⁴ וְעָפוּ בְכַתֶּף פְּלִשְׁתִּים וְזָמָּה

יַחְדּוֹ יִבְזּוּ אֶת־בְּנֵי־קֶדֶם

אֲדוֹם וּמוֹאָב מִשְׁלֹחַ יָדָם

וּבְנֵי עַמּוֹן מִשְׁמַעְתָּם:

¹⁵The 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. ¹⁶Thus 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.

¹⁵ וְהַחֲרִים יְהוָה אֶת לְשׁוֹן יַם־מִצְרַיִם
וְהִנְיף יָדוֹ עַל־הַנָּהָר בְּעִים רוּחוֹ וְהִכְהוּ
לְשַׁבְעָה נַחְלִים וְהִדְרִיף בְּנַעְלִים:
¹⁶ וְהִיְתָה מִסְלָה לְשָׂאֵר עַמּוֹ אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁאֵר
מֵאֲשׁוּר כֹּאֲשֶׁר 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,

²Behold the God who gives me triumph!

יב וְאָמַרְתָּ בְּיוֹם הַהוּא

אֲדֹכָּה יְהוָה

כִּי אָנַפְתָּ בִּי

יָשַׁב אַפִּי וַתִּנְחַמְנִי:

² הִנֵּה אֵל יְשׁוּעָתִי

12. hold up a signal The Hebrew (*v'nasa*) 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.

15. The prophet uses mythic imagery to

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.

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.”

אֲבִטָּח וְלֹא אֶפְחָד
כִּי־עֹזִי וְזִמְרַת יְהוָה יְהוָה
וַיְהִי־לִי לִישׁוּעָה:

³Joyfully shall you draw water
From the fountains of triumph,
⁴And 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.

³וּשְׂאֲבַתֶּם־מַיִם בְּשִׂשׁוֹן
מִמַּעַיְנֵי הַיְשׁוּעָה:
⁴וְאָמַרְתֶּם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא
הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה קִרְאוּ בְּשֵׁמוֹ
הוֹדִיעוּ בַעֲמִים עֲלִילָתוֹ
הִזְכִּירוּ כִּי נִשְׁגָּב שְׁמוֹ:

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

⁵וַיִּמְרוּ יְהוָה
כִּי גֵאוֹת עָשָׂה
מִידַעַת מוֹדַעַת זֹאת
בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ:
⁶צַהֲלֵי וְרַנִּי
יוֹשְׁבֵי צִיּוֹן
כִּי־גָדוֹל בְּקִרְבְּךָ
קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל: פ