

עץ חיים

ETZ HAYIM

TORAH AND COMMENTARY

THE RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY
THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE OF CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM



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Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary
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you may not eat: the eagle, the vulture, and the black vulture; ¹³the kite, the falcon, and the buzzard of any variety; ¹⁴every variety of raven; ¹⁵the ostrich, the nighthawk, the sea gull, and the hawk of any variety; ¹⁶the little owl, the great owl, and the white owl; ¹⁷the pelican, the bustard, and the cormorant; ¹⁸the stork, any variety of heron, the hoopoe, and the bat.

¹⁹All winged swarming things are impure for you: they may not be eaten. ²⁰You may eat only pure winged creatures.

²¹You shall not eat anything that has died a natural death; give it to the stranger in your community to eat, or you may sell it to a foreigner. For you are a people consecrated to the LORD your God.

You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

²²You shall set aside every year a tenth part of all the yield of your sowing that is brought

distinguished by easily observable external characteristics. Hence, no general rule is given for distinguishing among them, but only a list identifying those that are impure.

12. Virtually all the forbidden winged creatures are scavengers or birds of prey. They share four characteristics: they lack a crop (the pouched enlargement of the gullet that stores food), they lack an extra toe on the back of the foot, the sac in their gizzards cannot be peeled off, and they tear their prey. Note that the identification of several of the birds is not certain.

eagle Hebrew: *neshet*, which can refer also to a griffon vulture.

19. swarming things Hebrew: *sheretz*, creatures that swarm or crawl—such as insects, rodents, reptiles, and ambulatory marine animals.

20. pure winged creatures Certain leaping locusts (Lev. 11:21–23).

21. died a natural death It was not torn by another creature.

give it to the stranger . . . sell it to a foreigner Deuteronomy, unlike Lev. 17:15, does not mandate that “strangers” (i.e., resident aliens) must avoid impurity, because they are not subject to the requirements of holiness that are incumbent

לֹא־תֹאכְלוּ מֵהֶם הַנֶּשֶׁר וְהַפֶּרֶס וְהָעֲזֹנִיָּה׃
 וְהָרָאָה וְאֶת־הָאֵיָהּ וְהַדִּיָּה לְמִינָהּ׃
 וְאֶת כָּל־עֹרֵב לְמִינוֹ׃¹⁵ וְאֶת בֵּת־
 הַיַּעֲנָה וְאֶת־הַתַּחֲמָס וְאֶת־הַשֶּׁחַף וְאֶת־
 הַנֶּץ לְמִינָהּ׃¹⁶ אֶת־הַכּוֹס וְאֶת־הַיִּנְשׁוּף
 וְהַתְּנַשְׁמַת׃¹⁷ וְהַקָּאֵת וְאֶת־הַרְחֻמָּה
 וְאֶת־הַשֶּׁלֶף׃¹⁸ וְהַחֲסִידָה וְהָאֲנָפָה לְמִינָהּ
 וְהַדּוֹכִיפֹת וְהָעֵטְלָף׃

¹⁹ וְכֹל שֶׁרֶץ הָעוֹף טָמֵא הוּא לָכֶם לֹא
 יֵאָכְלוּ׃²⁰ כָּל־עוֹף טָהוֹר תֹּאכְלוּ׃
²¹ לֹא תֹאכְלוּ כָל־נֶבֶלָה לְגֵר אֲשֶׁר־
 בְּשַׁעְרֵיכֶם תִּתְּנֶנָּה וְאֶכְלָהּ אֹ מְכַר לְנֹכְרֵי
 כִּי עִם קְדוֹשׁ אַתֶּם לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם
 לֹא־תִבְשֹׁל גְּדִי בְחֵלֶב אִמּוֹ׃ פ

חמישי ²² עֶשֶׂר תַּעֲשֶׂר אֶת כָּל־תְּבוּאֹת זְרַעְךָ

on Israelites. Hence they may eat the flesh of animals that die of natural causes. The distinction between “giving” the meat to resident aliens and “selling” it to foreigners reflects the differing economic status of the two classes. Resident aliens were often poor and objects of charity. Nonresident foreigners normally were in the land for purposes of trade and were able to support themselves.

You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk

This rule is listed with the food prohibitions because meat cooked this way may not be eaten (see Exod. 23:19, 34:26). Meat boiled in sour milk (*leben*) was probably regarded as a delicacy, as it is by Arabs. The prohibition is similar to the rule against slaughtering cattle and their young on the same day and the requirement that newborn cattle remain with their mothers at least one week before they are sacrificed, to prevent acts of insensitivity against animals.

PERIODIC DUTIES (14:22–16:17)

TITHES (vv. 22–29)

The farmer must set aside a tithe of his produce each year. Tithing was a well-known practice in

from the field. ²³You shall consume the tithes of your new grain and wine and oil, and the firstlings of your herds and flocks, in the presence of the LORD your God, in the place where He will choose to establish His name, so that you may learn to revere the LORD your God forever. ²⁴Should the distance be too great for you, should you be unable to transport them, because the place where the LORD your God has chosen to establish His name is far from you and because the LORD your God has blessed you, ²⁵you may convert them into money. Wrap up the money and take it with you to the place that the LORD your God has chosen, ²⁶and spend the money on anything you want—cattle, sheep, wine, or other intoxicant, or anything you may desire. And you shall feast there, in the presence

הַיֵּצֵא הַשְּׂדֵה שָׁנָה שָׁנָה: ²³ וְאָכַלְתָּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר-יִבְחַר לְשֹׁכְנֵי שְׁמוֹ שָׁם מֵעֵשֶׂר דְּגַנְךָ תִּירֹשֶׁךָ וַיִּצְהָרֶךָ וּבְכֹרֹת בְּקִרְךָ וְצֹאנֶךָ לְמַעַן תִּלְמַד לִירְאָה אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ כָּל-הַיָּמִים: ²⁴ וְכִי-יִרְבֶּה מִמֶּךָ הַדֶּרֶךְ כִּי לֹא תוּכַל שְׂאֲתוֹ כִּי-יִרְחַק מִמֶּךָ הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשׁוֹם שְׁמוֹ שָׁם כִּי יְבָרְכֶךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ: ²⁵ וְנָתַתָּה בַּכֶּסֶף וְצָרְתָּ הַכֶּסֶף בְּיָדְךָ וְהִלַּכְתָּ אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בּוֹ: ²⁶ וְנָתַתָּה הַכֶּסֶף כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-תִּאֲוֶה נַפְשֶׁךָ בַּבָּקָר וּבַצֹּאן וּבַיִּין וּבַשֶּׁכָּר וּבְכָל אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁאַלְךָ נַפְשֶׁךָ וְאָכַלְתָּ

the ancient world. Because there are inconsistencies among the various tithe laws in the Torah (see Lev. 27:30–33; Num. 18:21–32), modern scholars generally assume that they were not originally parts of a single system but reflect practices in different times or places.

The Annual Tithe (vv. 22–27)

In four years out of seven, the tithe is to be consumed by the farmer and his household during the course of worship at the chosen sanctuary.

22. This verse introduces the first tithe, which is given in years 1, 2, 4, and 5 of the cycle. (Verses 28–29 deal with years 3 and 6. And in year 7, no tithe can be given because there is no harvest; see Exod. 23:10–11, Lev. 25:2–7).

the yield . . . brought in from the field Including wine and oil as well as grains (see v. 23).

23. in the presence of the LORD The text does not say when these offerings are to be brought to the sanctuary. The regular pilgrimage festivals were probably the most convenient occasions, although farmers probably made private pilgrimages at other times, too.

firstlings of your herds and flocks They are

mentioned here because, like the tithe, they are brought to the chosen sanctuary by their owners and eaten there. All firstlings are consumed, not merely a tenth of them (15:19–20).

so that you may learn to revere the LORD Reverence will be fostered in the chosen city by contact with the priests, who teach piety and law.

24. because the LORD . . . has blessed you Because this was the blessing of abundant crops, the tithe would be too ample for transport over a long distance.

25. money Hebrew: *kesef*; literally, “silver.” Money consisted of precious metal, most often silver. The metal was shaped into rings, bracelets, and ingots, the value of which was established by their weight at the time of each transaction.

wrap up the money Keep it intact in a money bag, spending none of it along the way.

26. wine, or other intoxicant This phrase refers either to different types of grape wine, such as new and old or mixed and unmixed, or to grape wine and another intoxicant, such as date wine, pomegranate wine, or beer.

anything you may desire To eat as part of the feast.

23. How will consuming the tithe in Jerusalem teach us to revere God? Seeing the Temple in all its glory and the priests at their service will inspire a sense of reverence (Rashbam). Another commentator suggests that we attain a sense of reverence not through an intellectual process

but by experiencing God’s grace in our lives.

24. because the place . . . is far from you *Makom* (place) is also one of the names of God—the site of all reality. Thus the verse can mean, “should the distance seem too great for you because God is far from your heart.”

of the LORD your God, and rejoice with your household.

²⁷But do not neglect the Levite in your community, for he has no hereditary portion as you have. ²⁸Every third year you shall bring out the full tithe of your yield of that year, but leave it within your settlements. ²⁹Then the Levite, who has no hereditary portion as you have, and the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow in your settlements shall come and eat their fill, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the enterprises you undertake.

שָׁם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְשִׂמְחֶתָּ אִתָּהּ וּבֵיתְךָ:

וְהִלְוִי אֲשֶׁר-בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ לֹא תַעֲזֹבֵנּוּ כִּי אֵין לוֹ חֶלֶק וְנִחְלָה עִמָּךְ: ²⁸ מִקְצֵה אֶשְׁלֶשׁ שָׁנִים תּוֹצִיא אֶת-כָּל-מַעֲשֶׂר תְּבוּאָתְךָ בַּשָּׁנָה הַהִוא וְהִנַּחְתָּ בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ: ²⁹ וּבָא הִלְוִי כִּי אֵין-לוֹ חֶלֶק וְנִחְלָה עִמָּךְ וְהַגֵּר וְהַיְתוּם וְהָאֵלְמָנָה אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ וְאָכְלוּ וְשָׂבְעוּ לְמַעַן יְבָרְכֶךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-מַעֲשֶׂה יָדְךָ אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה: ס

15 Every seventh year you shall practice re-

שִׁי **טו** מִקָּץ שִׁבְע־שָׁנִים תַּעֲשֶׂה שְׂמִטָּה:

rejoice with your household A farmer and his household could not possibly consume the entire tithe during the required 9 days of pilgrimage to the sanctuary each year (16:1–17). Theoretically, a household producing at subsistence level would require 35.4 days to consume 10 percent (a tithe) of its produce. Even if the farmers invited the Levites and the poor to the festival meals, as required, and doubled their normal consumption, they still could not dispose of all the food—unless there were as many Levites and poor as there were members of the farmers' households, which is unlikely. Perhaps whatever was left over had to be given away to the poor or was destroyed.

27. Levite in your community Those residing in the various towns and cities.

The Triennial Poor Tithe (vv. 28–29)

In the third and sixth years of each seven-year cycle (see 15:1), the farmers shall not eat the tithe at the sanctuary but must deposit it in their hometowns to feed the Levites and the poor. Presumably, the produce collected in each of these two years was expected to suffice for three or four years until the next collection. It seems unlikely that the poor were to be fed only two years out of seven.

28. bring out From your property.

full tithe None of it is to be diverted to any other use.

leave it within your settlements Public storage facilities and threshing floors near the city gate would have been natural locations for the deposit, distribution, and long-term stockpiling of the produce.

29. the fatherless, and the widow That is, the poor.

come and eat their fill The recipients of the tithe would be given food daily as needed.

so that the LORD . . . may bless you Such assurances are given with laws that require economic sacrifice for the sake of the poor. Because the Israelite might fear that these sacrifices would cause economic hardship, the donor is assured that, in the end, they will lead to prosperity.

MEASURES TO PROTECT THE POOR (15:1–18)

This section deals with extreme difficulties that can befall the poor: inability to obtain loans, inability to pay off debts, and indentured servitude. Some of these laws are also found elsewhere in the Torah and in other ancient Near Eastern societies.

CHAPTER 15

1. Most of this chapter is concerned with ensuring that there not emerge in Israel a permanent underclass—persons unable to lift themselves out of poverty. Such a condition

would be unfair to human beings, fashioned in God's image, and dangerous to society as a breeding ground for lawlessness and irresponsibility. The first step in the direction of preventing that is the remission of debts in the seventh year.

mission of debts. ²This shall be the nature of the remission: every creditor shall remit the due that he claims from his fellow; he shall not dun his fellow or kinsman, for the remission proclaimed is of the LORD. ³You may dun the foreigner; but you must remit whatever is due you from your kinsmen.

⁴There shall be no needy among you—since the LORD your God will bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you as a hereditary portion—⁵if only you heed the LORD your God and take care to keep all this Instruction that I enjoin upon you this day. ⁶For the LORD your God will bless you as He has promised you: you will extend loans to many nations, but require none yourself; you will dominate many nations, but they will not dominate you.

⁷If, however, there is a needy person among

וְזֶה דְבַר הַשְּׁמִטָּה שְׁמוֹט כָּל־בַּעַל מַשְׁהָה
יָדוּ אֲשֶׁר יִשָּׂה בְרַעְהוּ לֹא־יִגָּשׁ אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ
וְאֶת־אָחִיו כִּי־קָרָא שְׁמִטָּה לַיהוָה: ³ אֶת־
הַנִּכְרִי תִגָּשׁ וְאֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה לְךָ אֶת־אָחִיךָ
תִּשְׁמַט יָדְךָ:

⁴ אָפֶס כִּי לֹא יִהְיֶה־בְּךָ אֶבְיוֹן כִּי־בִרְךָ
יְבָרְכֶךָ יְהוָה בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה אֱלֹהֶיךָ
נֹתֵן־לְךָ נַחְלָה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ: ⁵ רַק אִם־שָׁמוּעַ
תִּשְׁמָע בְּקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשָׁמֹר לַעֲשׂוֹת
אֶת־כָּל־הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מִצְוֶה
הַיּוֹם: ⁶ כִּי־יִהְיֶה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּרַכְּךָ כַּאֲשֶׁר
דִּבַּרְתָּ לְךָ וְהִעֲבַטְתָּ גוֹיִם רַבִּים וְאֵתָהּ לֹא
תַעֲבֹט וּמִשְׁלַתָּ בְּגוֹיִם רַבִּים וּבָךְ לֹא
יִמְשְׁלוּ: ⁸

⁷ כִּי־יִהְיֶה בְּךָ אֶבְיוֹן מֵאֶחָד אָחִיךָ בְּאֶחָד

Remission of Debts (vv. 1–6)

The Torah is here concerned with the type of debt incurred by the poor and insolvent: a farmer in dire need of funds because of crop failure and a city dweller destitute as a result of unemployment. Loans to such individuals were regarded as acts of philanthropy rather than commercial ventures, and the forgiving of such loans was an extension of the generosity. The remission of debts and other provisions for the relief of debtors are part of the Torah's program for preserving a balanced distribution of resources across society (see Exod. 22:24–26; Lev. 25:36–37; Deut. 23:20–21, 24:6,10–13,17).

1. Every seventh year According to talmudic law, debts were canceled at sunset on the last day of the seventh year.

remission of debts Hebrew: *sh'mittah*; literally, “dropping, release.” In Exod. 23:10–12, “*sh'mittah*” refers to land, not debts.

2. every creditor Because the remission is for the benefit of the poor, it probably does not cover all types of debts. (According to later Jewish law, unpaid wages, bills owed to shopkeepers for merchandise, and certain types of secured loans are not canceled.)

his fellow or his kinsman That is, “his fellow, who is his kinsman.” Both terms refer to one person.

for the remission proclaimed is of the LORD

This seems to be the equivalent of the formula in Mesopotamian decrees explaining that debts may not be collected “because the king has established a remission for the land.” In the Torah it is God—Israel's divine king—who establishes the remission.

3. The remission applies only to debts owed by fellow Israelites, not by foreigners. Similarly, the remission edict of the Babylonian king Ammitsaduka canceled only the debts of kinsmen: Akkadians and Amorites in Babylon. Collecting debts is a legitimate right, and forgiving debts is an extraordinary sacrifice that members of society are willing to forgo only on behalf of those who have a special family-like claim on their compassion.

4. your God will bless you With prosperity.

6. as He has promised you The promises are linked to the Israelites' obedience.

you will extend loans If the Israelites will obey God's laws, not only will they have no poor who need loans but they will be so prosperous that other nations will turn to them for loans.

you will dominate Economically.

Lend to the Poor! (vv. 7–11)

Even those who normally would be willing to lend to the poor might hesitate as the year of remission approaches, because it is likely that they would lose what they had loaned. Moses urges the people to disregard such calculations. Such appeals for

you, one of your kinsmen in any of your settlements in the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not harden your heart and shut your hand against your needy kinsman. ⁸Rather, you must open your hand and lend him sufficient for whatever he needs. ⁹Beware lest you harbor the base thought, “The seventh year, the year of remission, is approaching,” so that you are mean to your needy kinsman and give him nothing. He will cry out to the LORD against you, and you will incur guilt. ¹⁰Give to him readily and have no regrets when you do so, for in return the LORD your God will bless you in all your efforts and in all your undertakings. ¹¹For there will never cease to be needy ones in your land, which is why I command you: open your hand to the poor and needy kinsman in your land.

compassion are characteristic of Deuteronomy (see v. 18).

7. If . . . there is a needy person among you If the ideal promised in verse 4 is not achieved.

9. you will incur guilt Guilt builds up until it leads to punishment, just as merit builds up and leads to reward.

7–10. An obligation to generously support a kinsman who has fallen on hard times without calculating whether the help will be repaid. This is not so much a loan as an investment in a decent, compassionate, stable society.

7. do not harden your heart One who ignores the needy is like an idolater (BT Ket. 68a). Also, it is forbidden to insult the poor or accuse them of being undeserving.

9. In late Second Temple times, the law of remission did become a deterrent to lending, as anticipated by this verse. To protect people who needed loans and to prevent violation of verses 9 and 10, the sage Hillel (1st century B.C.E.–1st century C.E.) devised a legal means for circumventing the remission. The means was a document or declaration (*prosbul*) in which the lender declares that a specific loan will not be subject to

שְׁעָרֶיךָ בְּאַרְצֶךָ אֲשֶׁר-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נֹתֵן לָךְ לֹא תֵאֲמַן אֶת-לִבְבְּךָ וְלֹא תִקְפֹּץ אֶת-יָדְךָ מֵאֲחִיךָ הָאֲבִיּוֹן: ⁸ כִּי-פָתַח תִּפְתָּח אֶת-יָדְךָ לוֹ וְהֶעֱבַט תִּעֲבִיטְנוּ דֵי מַחְסָרוֹ אֲשֶׁר יִחְסַר לוֹ: ⁹ הַשְּׁמַר לָךְ פֶּן-יִהְיֶה דְבַר עִם-לִבְבְּךָ בְּלִיעַל לֵאמֹר קָרְבָה שְׁנַת-הַשְּׁבַע שְׁנַת הַשְּׁמִטָה וְרַעָה עֵינֶךָ בְּאֲחִיךָ הָאֲבִיּוֹן וְלֹא תִתֵּן לוֹ וְקָרָא עֲלֶיךָ אֶל-יְהוָה וְהָיָה בְּךָ חַטָּא: ¹⁰ נָתַן תִּתֵּן לוֹ וְלֹא-יִרַע לְבָבְךָ בַּתְּתִנֶּה לוֹ כִּי בְגִלָּל הַדְּבַר הַזֶּה יִבְרַכְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-מַעֲשֶׂיךָ וּבְכָל מַשְׁלַח יָדְךָ: ¹¹ כִּי לֹא-יִחָדֵל אֲבִיּוֹן מִקְרֵב הָאָרֶץ עַל-כֵּן אֲנִי מִצְוֶיךָ לֵאמֹר פָּתַח תִּפְתָּח אֶת-יָדְךָ לְאֲחִיךָ לְעִנִּיךָ וּלְאֲבִינֶךָ בְּאַרְצֶךָ: ^ס

10. God will bless you The closer the year of remission, the more likely it is that the loan will end up as a gift. But any loss incurred will be more than made up by God.

11. there will never cease to be needy ones The realism of this verse contrasts with the ideal described in verse 4.

remission. By this means, Hillel ensured that the law would not undermine its own purpose.

10. The Midrash imagines God saying, “You sustain My dependents (the poor, the widow, and the orphan) and I will sustain your dependents” (Tanh. 18).

11. For there will never cease to be needy ones in your land Therefore, you must build the solution to poverty into the social structure, and not rely on people’s generosity. A poor person need never be embarrassed to accept help, because giving *tz’dakah* is an obligation, not charity resulting from kindness. At the same time, the Sages also tell us: “Better to flay carcasses in the marketplace than to depend on public assistance because you feel the available work is beneath your dignity” (BT Pes. 113a).

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15:7–11. open your hand These verses undergird Jewish poverty laws requiring us to feed, clothe, and house poor non-Jews as well as Jews. See also Exod. 12:49; Lev. 19:9–10, 25:25, 35; Deut. 24:10–22.

¹²If a fellow Hebrew, man or woman, is sold to you, he shall serve you six years, and in the seventh year you shall set him free. ¹³When you set him free, do not let him go empty-handed: ¹⁴Furnish him out of the flock, threshing floor, and vat, with which the LORD your God has blessed you. ¹⁵Bear in mind that you were slaves in the land of Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I enjoin this commandment upon you today.

¹⁶But should he say to you, “I do not want to leave you”—for he loves you and your household and is happy with you—¹⁷you shall take an awl and put it through his ear into the door,

כִּי־יִמְכַר לְךָ אֶחִיךָ הָעִבְרִי אוֹ הָעִבְרִיָּה וְעָבַדְךָ שֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים וּבַשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁבִיעִת תִּשְׁלַחְנוּ חֲפָשִׁי מֵעִמָּךְ: ¹³ וְכִי־תִשְׁלַחְנוּ חֲפָשִׁי מֵעִמָּךְ לֹא תִשְׁלַחְנוּ רִיקָם: ¹⁴ הָעֲנִיִּק תַעֲנִיֵּק לוֹ מִצֹּאֲנֶךָ וּמִגֶּרְנֶךָ וּמִיִּקְבֶּךָ אֲשֶׁר בֵּרַכְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ תִתֶּן־לוֹ: ¹⁵ וְזָכַרְתָּ כִּי עָבַד הָיִיתָ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וַיַּפְדֶּךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ עַל־כֵּן אֲנֹכִי מִצְוֶךָ אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה הַיּוֹם:

וְהָיָה כִּי־יֹאמַר אֵלֶיךָ לֹא אֵצֵא מֵעִמָּךְ כִּי אֶהְבֶּךָ וְאֶת־בֵּיתְךָ כִּי־טוֹב לוֹ עִמָּךְ: ¹⁷ וְלָקַחְתָּ אֶת־הַמַּרְצֵעַ וּנְתַתָּהּ בְּאָזְנוֹ

Manumission of Indentured Servants (vv. 12–18)

This is one of several laws in the Torah that deal with servitude, an accepted fact of life in ancient Israel as it was everywhere else in the ancient world. Biblical law and ethical teachings aimed at securing humane treatment for servants (see Exod. 21:2–6; Lev. 25:39–55).

12. fellow Hebrew That is, “Hebrew kinsman” (literally, “brother”). The law limits the amount of time during which one Israelite may control another. Only foreigners may be owned in perpetuity and passed on to heirs (Lev. 25:39–55). The phrase reminds one of the special, brotherly obligations toward fellow Israelites.

woman Who becomes indentured because of insolvency or debt—her own or that of her husband or father.

sold to you The law refers to the sale of a son or a daughter by an indigent father or the sale of a thief by the court. The aim in either case would be to satisfy a debt or raise the funds to do so. It could also refer to the self-sale of a destitute person for self-support or support of family.

six years The standard term of indenture (see also v. 18; Exod. 21:2).

13. Here Deuteronomy goes beyond Exod. 21:2, in requiring that newly freed servants be given capital and supplies for living as they resume independent life. The aim is to prevent them from starting off penniless and possibly returning to the same wretched condition that originally led to servitude.

14. flock, threshing floor, and vat Some sheep or goats (or their products, such as milk or wool), some grain, and some wine.

16. The servant might consider that the security gained through subservience is preferable to the risks of independence. The fact that the law thinks it possible that the servant might love the master and desire servitude implies that the treatment of indentured servants was expected to be quite benign.

happy In the sense of being well off.

17. you shall take an awl See Exod. 21:2–6. The ceremony for making the servant’s status permanent consists of driving the point of an awl through his ear into the door of the master’s

12. The parallel passage in Exodus (21:2ff.) does not speak of the slave as “your brother” (*ahikha*), does not provide for freeing a female slave on the same terms as a male, and makes no provision for sending the freed slave forth with food and gifts. It may be that, in the weeks im-

mediately following the Exodus, the people could imagine slaveholding only after the Egyptian model. Their idea of progress was treating slaves with a modicum of decency. Only a later generation, nurtured in freedom, could empathize with the slave’s yearning to be free.

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15:13–14. do not let him go empty-handed On the basis of these verses, some Jewish authorities require employers to pay severance to employees hired on more than a temporary basis. Others see it as a moral duty exclusively (*Seifer Ha-Hinnukh* 481–482).

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.

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

¹⁹ כָּל-הַבְּכוֹר אֲשֶׁר יוֹלַד בְּבָקְרֶךָ וּבְצֹאֲנֶךָ
הַזָּכָר תִּקְדִּישׁ לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא תַעֲבֹד
בְּבָכָר שׁוֹרְךָ וְלֹא תִגְזֹ בְכוֹר צֹאֲנֶךָ: ²⁰ לִפְנֵי
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ תֹאכְלֶנּוּ שָׁנָה בְּשָׁנָה בַּמָּקוֹם
אֲשֶׁר-יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֶתְּךָ וּבֵיתְךָ: ²¹ וְכִי-
יְהִי בּוֹ מוֹם פֶּסֶחַ אוֹ עֵזֶר כֹּל מוֹם רָע
לֹא תִזְבְּחֶנּוּ לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ: ²² 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.

²³Only 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. ²You 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
הוֹצִיאָךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִמִּצְרַיִם לַיְלָה:
2 וְזִבַחְתָּ 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. ³You 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. ⁴For 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 sunset, the time of day when you departed from

שָׁם: ³ 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-יִלִּין מִן-הַבֶּשֶׂר אֲשֶׁר תִּזְבַּח
 בְּעֶרֶב בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן לִבְקָר:
⁵ לֹא תֹכַל לִזְבַּח אֶת-הַפֶּסַח בְּאֶחָד
 שְׁעָרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ: ⁶ כִּי
 אִם-אֶל-הַמְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר-יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ
 לְשַׁכֵּן 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

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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,

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

9 שְׁבַע שָׁבָעַת תִּסְפֹּר-לָךְ מֵהַחֵל חֲרֹמֶשׁ בְּקַמָּה תַחֵל לִסְפֹּר שְׁבַע שָׁבָעוֹת: 10 וְעָשִׂיתָ חַג שְׁבַעוֹת לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִסַּת נִדְבַת יָדֶךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּתֵּן פְּאֵשֶׁר יִבְרַכְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ: 11 וְשִׂמְחֹתָ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וּבְנֶךָ 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. 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 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 בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשֹׁכֵן שְׁמוֹ שָׁם: ¹² וְזָכַרְתָּ כִּי-עֶבֶד
הָיִיתָ בְּמִצְרַיִם וְשָׁמַרְתָּ וְעָשִׂיתָ אֶת-
הַחֻקִּים הָאֵלֶּה: פ

מפס"ד ¹³ חג הסוכות תעשה לך שבועת ימים

בְּאֶסְפֹּף מִגְרָנְךָ וּמִיִּקְבֶּךָ: ¹⁴ וְשִׂמְחִתָּ בַחֲגֹךָ
אֹתָהּ וּבִנְךָ וּבִתְּךָ וְעַבְדְּךָ וְאִמְתְּךָ וְהַלְוִי
וְהִגַּר וְהִיתוּם וְהָאֱלֹמָנָה אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעֲרֶיךָ:
¹⁵ שְׁבַעַת יָמִים תִּחַג לַיהוָה לִיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ
בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר-יִבְחַר יְהוָה כִּי יִבְרַכְךָ יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל תְּבוּאֹתֶיךָ וּבְכָל מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֶיךָ
וְהִיִּיתָ אַךְ שִׂמְחָה:

¹⁶ שְׁלוֹשׁ פְּעָמִים | בְּשָׁנָה יֵרָאֶה כָּל-זָכוֹרָךְ
אֶת-פָּנָי | יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר
בְּחַג הַמִּצּוֹת וּבְחַג הַשְּׁבָעוֹת וּבְחַג
הַסּוּכוֹת וְלֹא יֵרָאֶה אֶת-פָּנָי יְהוָה רִיקָם:
¹⁷ 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).

teen yearling lambs, without blemish; ³³the grain offerings and libations for the bulls, rams, and lambs, in the quantities prescribed; ³⁴and one goat for a purification offering—in addition to the regular burnt offering, its grain offering and libation.

³⁵On the eighth day you shall hold a solemn gathering; you shall not work at your occupations. ³⁶You shall present a burnt offering, a gift of pleasing odor to the LORD; one bull, one ram, seven yearling lambs, without blemish; ³⁷the grain offerings and libations for the bull, the ram, and the lambs, in the quantities prescribed; ³⁸and one goat for a purification offering—in addition to the regular burnt offering, its grain offering and libation.

³⁹All these you shall offer to the LORD at the stated times, in addition to your votive and free-will offerings, be they burnt offerings, grain offerings, libations, or offerings of well-being. ¹So Moses spoke to the Israelites just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

שְׁנַיִם כְּבָשִׂים בְּנֵי־שָׁנָה אַרְבַּעַה עֶשֶׂר
 תְּמִימִים: ³³ וּמִנְחֹתָם וְנִסְכֵיהֶם * לַפָּרִים
 לְאֵילִם וְלִכְבָּשִׂים בְּמִסְפָּרָם כְּמִשְׁפָּטָם:
³⁴ וְשֹׁעִיר חֲטָאת אֶחָד מִלֶּבֶד עֲלֵת
 הַתָּמִיד מִנְחָתָהּ וְנִסְכָּהּ: פ
³⁵ בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׂמִינִי עֲצַרְתַּ תְּהִיָּה לָכֶם כָּל־
 מְלֹאכֶת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ: ³⁶ וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם
 עֲלֶיהָ אִשָּׁה רִיחַ נִיחֹחַ לַיהוָה פֶּר אֶחָד
 אֵיל אֶחָד כְּבָשִׂים בְּנֵי־שָׁנָה שִׁבְעָה
 תְּמִימִים: ³⁷ מִנְחֹתָם וְנִסְכֵיהֶם לַפָּר לְאֵיל
 וְלִכְבָּשִׂים בְּמִסְפָּרָם כְּמִשְׁפָּט: ³⁸ וְשֹׁעִיר
 חֲטָאת אֶחָד מִלֶּבֶד עֲלֵת הַתָּמִיד וּמִנְחָתָהּ
 וְנִסְכָּהּ:
³⁹ אֵלֶּה תַעֲשׂוּ לַיהוָה בְּמוֹעֲדֵיכֶם לְבֹד
 מִנְדְּרֵיכֶם וְנֹדְבֹתֵיכֶם לְעֲלֹתֵיכֶם
 וְלִמְנוּחֹתֵיכֶם וְלִנְסֻכֵיכֶם וְלִשְׁלֵמֵיכֶם:
 וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּכֹל
 אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה: פ

חסר י v. 33.

EIGHTH DAY (vv. 35–38)

Although *Sukkot* is a seven-day festival (v. 12), an eighth festival day is added. Its offerings, however, are not the same as those of the preceding festival; rather, they are the same as those of the 1st and the 10th of this month.

35. On the eighth day This, the eighth day, is an independent celebration, unconnected to

the preceding festival. Work is prohibited on this day, thereby making it a “sacred occasion,” as is the first day of *Sukkot* (v. 12).

39. Personal offerings may be presented in addition to the public offerings stipulated above.

30:1. This verse tells us that Moses informed the Israelites about the religious calendar before addressing them on the next subject.

35. On *Sh’mini Atzeret* (the Hebrew name of the festival cited), the day immediately after *Sukkot* week, the offerings are more restrained. The Talmud pictures God as a host, welcoming representatives of all nations who

come to pay homage on *Sukkot*; then, as the festival ends and the other nations depart, God says to Israel: “Stay here with Me a while longer for a more intimate celebration” (BT Suk. 55b).

the altar of the LORD, his hands spread out toward heaven. ⁵⁵He stood, and in a loud voice blessed the whole congregation of Israel:

⁵⁶“Praised be the LORD who has granted a haven to His people Israel, just as He promised; not a single word has failed of all the gracious promises that He made through His servant Moses. ⁵⁷May the LORD our God be with us, as He was with our fathers. May He never abandon or forsake us. ⁵⁸May He incline our hearts to Him, that we may walk in all His ways and keep the commandments, the laws, and the rules, which He enjoined upon our fathers. ⁵⁹And may these words of mine, which I have offered in supplication before the LORD, be close to the LORD our God day and night, that He may provide for His servant and for His people Israel, according to each day’s needs—⁶⁰to the end that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD alone is God, there is no other. ⁶¹And may you be wholehearted with the LORD our God, to walk in His ways and keep His commandments, even as now.”

⁶²The king and all Israel with him offered sacrifices before the LORD. ⁶³Solomon offered 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep as sacrifices of well-being to the LORD. Thus the king and all the Israelites dedicated the House of the LORD. ⁶⁴That day the king consecrated the center of the court that was in front of the House of the LORD. For it was there that he presented the burnt offerings, the grain offerings, and the fat parts of the offerings of well-being, because the bronze altar that was before the LORD was too small to hold the burnt offerings, the grain offerings, and the fat parts of the offerings of well-being.

עַל-בְּרָכָיו וּכְפָיו פָּרְשׂוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם: ⁵⁵וַיַּעֲמֹד וַיְבָרֵךְ אֶת כָּל-קְהַל יִשְׂרָאֵל קוֹל גָּדוֹל לֵאמֹר:

⁵⁶בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן מְנוּחָה לְעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר לֹא-נִפְּל דְבַר אֶחָד מִכָּל דְּבָרָיו הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר בְּיַד מֹשֶׁה עַבְדּוֹ: ⁵⁷יְהִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ עִמָּנוּ כַּאֲשֶׁר הָיָה עִם-אַבְתֵּינוּ אֶל-יַעֲזֹבֵנוּ וְאֶל-יִטְשָׁנוּ: ⁵⁸לְהִטּוֹת לְבַבְנוּ אֵלָיו לְלַכֵּת בְּכָל-דַּרְכָּיו וּלְשַׁמֵּר מִצְוֹתָיו וְחֻקָּיו וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֶת-אַבְתֵּינוּ: ⁵⁹וַיְהִי דְבַרִּי אֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר הִתְחַנַּנְתִּי לִפְנֵי יְהוָה קְרִבִים אֶל-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יוֹמָם וּלְיָלֵה לַעֲשׂוֹת | מִשְׁפָּט עַבְדּוֹ וּמִשְׁפָּט עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל דְּבַר-יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ: ⁶⁰לְמַעַן דַּעַת כָּל-עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ כִּי יְהוָה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים אֵין עוֹד: ⁶¹וְהָיָה לְבַבְכֶם שָׁלֵם עִם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְלַכֵּת בְּחֻקָּיו וּלְשַׁמֵּר מִצְוֹתָיו כִּי־זֶה:

⁶²וְהִמְלִיךְ וְכָל-יִשְׂרָאֵל עִמּוֹ זִבְחִים זִבַּח לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: ⁶³וַיִּזְבַּח שְׁלָמָה אֶת זִבַּח הַשְּׁלָמִים אֲשֶׁר זִבַּח לַיהוָה בְּקָר עֶשְׂרִים וּשְׁנַיִם אֵלֶּף וְצֶאֱן מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים אֵלֶּף וַיַּחֲנֹכוּ אֶת-בַּיִת יְהוָה הַמֶּלֶךְ וְכָל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: ⁶⁴בְּיוֹם הַהוּא קִדֵּשׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-תּוֹךְ הַחֲצַר אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי בַיִת-יְהוָה כִּי-עָשָׂה שָׁם אֶת-הָעֹלָה וְאֶת-הַמִּנְחָה וְאֶת חֲלָבֵי הַשְּׁלָמִים כִּי-מִזְבַּח הַנְּחֹשֶׁת אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי יְהוָה קָטָן מִהַכִּיל אֶת-הָעֹלָה וְאֶת-הַמִּנְחָה וְאֶת חֲלָבֵי הַשְּׁלָמִים:

64. the king consecrated the center of the court That is, Solomon sanctified the floor of the court by dedicating the altar there (BT Zev. 59a). The center of the court thus refers to the floor of the court of the priests. This special sanc-

tification was held because the “bronze altar” was “too small to hold” all the abundant offerings made at that time (Radak, Ralbag). According to tradition, Solomon there established an altar of stones affixed to the floor (BT Zev. 59a–60a).

⁶⁵So Solomon and all Israel with him—a great assemblage, [coming] from Lebo-hamath to the Wadi of Egypt—observed the Feast at that time before the LORD our God, seven days and again seven days, fourteen days in all. ⁶⁶On the eighth day he let the people go. They bade the king good-bye and went to their homes, joyful and glad of heart over all the goodness that the LORD had shown to His servant David and His people Israel.

⁶⁵וַיַּעַשׂ שְׁלֹמֹה בְּעֵת-הַהֵיאָה | אֶת-הַחֲגֻג
 וְכָל-יִשְׂרָאֵל עִמּוֹ קָהָל גָּדוֹל מִלְּבֹוא
 חַמַּת | עַד-נַחַל מִצְרַיִם לְפָנֵי יְהוָה
 אֲלֵהֵינוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים וְשִׁבְעַת יָמִים
 אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם : ⁶⁶בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי שָׁלַח
 אֶת-הָעָם וַיְבָרְכוּ אֶת-הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיֵּלְכוּ
 לְאֹהֲלֵיהֶם שְׂמֵחִים וְטוֹבֵי לֵב עַל כָּל-
 הַטּוֹבָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יְהוָה לְדָוִד עַבְדּוֹ
 וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל עִמּוֹ :