

Tikkun Leyl Hayzot:

Texts from our Rabbinic Tradition

Edited by Barry Dov Lerner

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Dear Colleagues and Friends,

The following pages are as described, “Jewish Freeware,”™ that soon will be available for download from a new website, www.jewishfreeware.org. These Rabbinic sources are being shared separately from the “*Shavuot for Families: 50 Pages of Background, Stories, Games*” which were published on the Web several days ago to facilitate using them for teaching, rather than for Family Education programs.

If you would help and publish the URL for current downloads of the “*Shavuot for Families: 50 Pages of Background, Stories, Games*” to all of your congregants and friends, you can choose whether you wish to also make available the download for this Tikkun package.

I’ve chosen to make available ten pages of text parallel to the Aseret HaDibrot, similar to the Shavuot Family Education package consisting of 50 pages, for the roughly 50 years since it was first printed in Israel – a collection of Israel’s textual ‘first fruits’ – and the 50 days between Pesach and Shavuot.

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The following material is taken from *Shavuot Sheaves*, a work published in 1953 by the Youth Department, Head Office, Jewish National Fund, Jerusalem, Israel, Ahva Press. The Jewish National Fund office has given permission to share this early edition with you for Shavuot as “Jewish Freeware.” Yehuda Haezrahi edited *Shavuot Sheaves*, and the title pages indicate that it is or was intended to be part of a larger JNF Festival Series; unfortunately I only was able to find this book. The original presentation, spelling, (often British) grammar, and transliteration has been retained, and I know that you will find as did I wonderful nuggets of phrase and translation in this recovered publication.

How can we, each of us, respond to this wonderful gift from the Jewish National Fund? Share them with your family and friends. Read the stories with your family on the eve of Shavuot (or beforehand). Plant a tree in Israel, and then - go to Israel at least once a year to water it! And take your family with you! ☺

May this Shavuot be a fulfilling **Festival Of Weeks** (*Exodus 34:22*), **Festival Of Reaping** (*Exodus 24:16*), **A Time Of First-Fruits** (*Numbers 28:26*), **The Finale To The Sefira** (*TB Rosh HaShana*) and **The Season Of The Giving Of The Torah** (*from the Festival liturgy*) for you, your family and your community.

Barry Dov Lerner

THE THREE PILGRIMAGES

“THREE times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the Feast of Unleavened bread, and in the Feast of Weeks, and in the Feast of Tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the Lord empty; every man shall give as he is able according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he hath given thee” (Deuteronomy 16:16-17)

Once there was one who forgot to lock the doors of his house and went up to Jerusalem for the festival, and when he returned, he found a serpent knotted in the rings in his doors.

Another time there was one who forgot and failed to put his hens inside his house and went up for the festival, and when he returned he found destroyed cats lying before them.

Another time there was one who forgot and failed to put a bundle of wheat inside his house and went up for the festival and when he returned he found lions surrounding it to guard it.

Said Rabbi Pinchas: There were once two brothers in Ashkelon, whose neighbors were evil men from other nations. And they said: “These Jews go up to Jerusalem to pray, let us go in and take what is in their houses and destroy them.”

The time came and the brothers went up to Jerusalem. The Holy One, Blessed Be He, sent angels in their image to stay in their homes. When the brothers returned from Jerusalem, they distributed of the goods they had brought with them among all their neighbors. The neighbors said to them: “Where have you been?”

They answered: “In Jerusalem. “ “When did you go up?” “On such and such a day.” “And when did you come back?” “On such and such a day.” Then they said: “Blessed be the God of the Jews, who has not abandoned them and does not abandon them.”

Those men had calculated when the brothers were going up to pray in Jerusalem, so that they might rob them - and God sent angels in their image who stayed in their homes. (Shir Hashirim Raba, 7)

HARVEST

“AND THE feast of Harvest, the first fruits of thy labors, which thou hast sown in the field.” (Exodus 23: 16)

“When thou cut test down thine harvest in thy field and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it; it shall be for the stranger, for .the fatherless and for the widow; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands.” (Deuteronomy 24: 19)

So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem, in the beginning of barley-harvest.

And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz.

And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi: Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her: Go my daughter. And she went; and she came and gleaned in the field after the reapers. And her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.

And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem; and he said unto the reapers: The Lord be with you. And they answered him: The Lord bless thee!

Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers: Whose damsel is this? And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said: It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab; and, she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves; so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house.

Then said Boaz unto Ruth: Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens; let thine eyes be on the field that they reap, and go thou after them. Have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? And when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels and drink of that which the young men have drawn.

And when, she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying: Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not; and let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them that she may glean them, and rebuke her not. (Ruth I: 22; a: 1-9, 15-16)

BIKKURIM

And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave-offering; seven Sabbaths shall be complete; even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat-offering unto the Lord. Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave-loaves of two tenth parts; they shall be of fine flour; they shall be taken with leaven; they are the first fruits unto the Lord. (Leviticus) 23: 15-17)

And it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein, that thou shalt take of the first of all fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of the land that the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name there. And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him: I profess this day unto the Lord thy God, that I am come unto the country which the; Lord swore unto our fathers for to give us. And the priest shall take the basket out of thine hand, and set it down before the altar of the Lord thy God. And thou shalt speak and say before the Lord thy God:

A wandering Aramean was my father; and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty and populous. And the Egyptians evil-entreated us and afflicted us and laid upon us hard bondage. And when we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice, and looked on our affliction and our labor and our oppression.

And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs and with wonders. And he hath brought thus into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey. And now, behold, I have brought the first fruits of the land, which thou, O Lord, has given me.

And thou shalt set it before the Lord thy God, and worship before the Lord thy God. And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee and unto thine house; thou, and the Levite, and the stranger that is among you. (Deuteronomy 26: 6-11)

How were the first fruits set apart? When a man goes down into his field and sees for the first time a ripe fig, or a ripe cluster of grapes, or a ripe pomegranate, he binds it with reed grass and says: "Lo! These are the first fruits;"

How were the first fruits brought to Jerusalem? The inhabitants of the smaller cities in their Maamad gathered together, in its chief town and spent the night in the open place.

Early in the morning, the Officer of the Maamad said to them "Arise and let us go to Zion, to the house of the Lord our God." Those who lived near to Jerusalem brought fresh figs and grapes, and those who lived far away brought dried figs and raisins. In front of them went an ox, with its horns overlaid with gold and a wreath of olive leaves on its head.

The flute played before them until they reached Jerusalem. They then sent messengers and decorated their first fruits. The rulers, the chief priests and the treasurers of the Temple went out to meet them and all the craftsmen of Jerusalem stood up and greeted them with the words, "Brethren, ye are welcome."

The flute was played until they reached the Temple mount when even Agrippa, the king would take his basket on his shoulder and enter into the Temple court. The Levites would then sing, "I will exalt Thee, O Lord, for Thou has raised me up and not made mine enemies to triumph over me."

Whilst the basket was on his shoulder, a man would recite the Biblical verses, from Deuteronomy, chapter 26:

"I profess this day unto the Lord thy God, that I am come unto the country which the Lord swore unto our fathers for to give US ...And thou shalt speak and say before the Lord thy God: A wandering Aramean was my father, he went down into Egypt and sojourned there with a few . . . And the Egyptians afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage; and when we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers; the Lord heard our voice . . . And he hath brought us into this place and hath given us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. And now behold I have brought the first fruits of the land which Thou, O Lord, hast given me!' When he came to the words, " A wandering Aramean," he took down the basket from his shoulder and held it by the rim. Then the priest put his hand beneath it and waved it and the man recited the words, from " A wandering Aramean"

until he finished the passage. Then he left the basket by the side of the altar, bowed down and went on his way.

The rich brought their first fruits in baskets overlaid with silver and gold, while the poor brought them in wicker baskets made of peeled willow branches and the first fruits were given to the priests. (Mishna Bikkurim, 3)

AT MOUNT SINAI

And it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud so that all the people that were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace; and the whole mount quaked greatly.

And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, And waxed louder and louder, Moses spake; and God answered him by a voice.

And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mount. And the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount, and Moses went up.

And the Lord said unto Moses: Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them, perish. And let the priests which come near to the Lord sanctify themselves, lest the Lord break forth upon them.

And Moses said unto the Lord: The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai; for thou chargedst us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it.

And the Lord said unto him: Away, get thee, down; and thou shalt come up, thou, and Aaron with thee; but let not the priests and the people break through to come up unto the Lord, lest he break forth upon them. So Moses went down unto the people, and spake unto them.

And all the people saw the thunderings and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses: Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

And Moses said unto the people: Fear not; for God is come to prove you and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.

And the people stood afar off; , and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness, where God was.(Exodus, 19: 16-26; 20: 18-21)

The Lord regarded all the mountains and found no mountain so worthy as Mount Sinai that the Torah should be given on it and God's spirit rest on it. Why did Mount Sinai merit all this? Because it humbled itself: When it saw Mount Hermon and Mount Shirion quarrelling with each other, one saying "On me shall it (God's spirit) rest," the other saying, "No, but on me shall it rest," the Holy One Blessed Be He, saw its humility, and made His spirit to rest on it; (Midrash Aseret Hadibrot)

Rabbi Yitzchak said: When Israel went out of Egypt they were worthy that the Torah should be given them at once, except that the Holy One Blessed Be He said to them: "The glory of my sons has not yet come; they have come out from the enslavement

of clay and bricks, and cannot receive the Torah at once.” The matter can be likened to a king whose son recovered from an illness. His tutor said to him: „Let your son go back to his school.” Said the king: “The glory of my son has not yet come back, and you say ‘Let your son go back to his school.’ Let my son rather recuperate for two or three months, in eating and drinking, and he will recover, and after-wards will he go to his school.” (Kohelet Raba, 3)

“And they encamped in the desert.” The Torah was given to Israel publicly in a place which belonged to no man. If it had been given in the land of Israel might have said. To the peoples of the earth: “You have no portion of the Torah.” And for this reason it was given publicly and in a place which belonged to no man. Thinkest thou perchance it was given in the night? No, for it is written: “And it was on the third day when the morning was risen.” Thinkest thou perchance it was given in silence? No, for it is written: “There was thunder and lightning.” Or thinkest thou perchance that these thunders were not heard? No, for it is written: “And all the people heard the crashing of the thunder . . . ”

When the Holy One, Blessed be He, pronounced the words “I am the Lord thy God”, the earth trembled, and all the kings of the earth ran to Balaam, the impious, to question him. But when they heard him say that God was about to give the Torah to his people, they all returned, each one to his place.

The peoples had been called together, that they might not say afterwards: “Had the Torah been offered to us, we should have accepted it.” For it was offered to them, and they refused it, as it is written: “The Lord appeared on Sinai, and He burned upon Seir for them: He showed himself upon the Mountain of Pharan, on His right a place of fire - for them.”

And He revealed himself first to the children of Esau, saying: “Will you also accept the Torah?” They asked Him: “What is written therein?” And he answered: “Thou shalt not kill!” Then they said: “We cannot accept the Torah, for the blessing of our father, his heritage, was: “By thy sword shalt thou live.”

Then God revealed himself to the Ammonites and the Moabite and He asked them: “Will you accept the Torah?” They asked Him: “What is written therein?” And when He replied, “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” they answered: “How shall we accept it? Are we not all the issue of adultery?”

Then God revealed Himself to the children of Ishmael, saying: “Will you accept the Torah?” And they asked: “What is written there-in?” And when he answered: “Thou shalt not steal,” they replied, “How shall we accept it? Was not the blessing of our father: “He shall be a savage man, and his hand shall be against every man?” But when God came before the children of Israel, with the fire of the Torah on His right, they cried as with one voice: “All that the Lord hath said, we shall do and obey.” (Mechilta)

Rabbi Joshua ben Levi also said: “When Moses ascended: on high, the ministering angels spake before the Holy One, Blessed Be He, Sovereign of the Universe! What business has one born of woman amongst us?” “He has come to receive the Torah,” answered He to them. Said they to Him, “That secret treasure, which has been hidden to Thee for nine hundred and seventy-four generations before the world was created, Thou desirest to give to flesh and blood! What is man, that thou art mindful of

him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him? O Lord our God, How excellent is thy name in all the earth! Who has set thy glory (the Torah) upon the Heavens!

“Return them an answer,” bade the Holy One, blessed be He, to Moses.

“Sovereign of the Universe,” replied he, “I fear lest they consume me with the [fiery] breath of their mouths.”

“Hold on to the Throne of Glory,” said He to him, “and return them an answer, as it is said, He maketh him to hold on the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud over him, whereon Rabbi Nachman observed: This teaches that the Almighty spread the lustre of His Shechinah and cast it as a protection over him. He [then] spake before Him. “Sovereign of the Universe. The Torah which Thou givest me, what is it; written therein?”

“I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the Lord of Egypt.” Said he to them [the angels], ‘Did ye go down to Egypt; were ye enslaved to Pharaoh: why then should the Torah be yours?’

Again, what is written therein? Thou shalt have none other gods: do ye dwell among peoples that engage in idol worship? Again what is written therein? Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy: do ye then perform work that ye need to rest? Again what is written therein? Thou shalt not take (tissa) the name . . . in vain: is there any business (massa) dealings among you? Again what is written therein, Honour thy father and thy mother: have ye fathers and mothers? Again what is written therein? Thou shalt not murder. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal, is there jealousy among you; is the Evil Tempter among you ?’ Straightway they conceded [right] to the Holy One, Blessed Be He, for it is said, O Lord, our Lord, How excellent is thy name, whereas Who hast set thy glory upon the heavens is not written. Immediately each one was moved to love him [Moses].” (Talmud Bavli --Shabbat, 88b)

Rabbi Meir said: When Israel stood before Mount Sinai, the Holy One Blessed be He said to them: “I vow, I will give you the Torah, but bring me trustworthy guarantors that you will guard it, and I will give it to you.” They said to Him: “Lord of the World, our forefathers will be our guarantors.”

The Holy One Blessed be He said to them: “I have complaints against your forefathers, but bring me trustworthy guarantors and I will give it to you.” They said to Him: “Lord of the World, our prophets will be our guarantors.” He said to them: “I have complaints against them, but bring me trust-worthy guarantors, and I will give it to you.” They said: “Behold our children are guarantors for us.” Said the Holy One Blessed be He: “These are certainly trustworthy guarantors -for them will I give you it.” (Shir Hashirim Raba)

Rabbi Yehoshua the son of Korcha says: “Moses' feet stood on the mountain and he wholly in the heavens, like a tent which is spread and men sit within it and their feet stand on the earth and they are wholly in the tent. Thus was it with Moses, his feet on the mountain and he wholly in the heavens, and he regarded all which was in the heavens, and the Holy One Blessed be He spoke to him like a mall which speaks with his comrade. The first Voice issued, and the heavens and earth reverberated with it and the seas and the rivers fled, the mountains and hills collapsed, and all the trees crumpled, and the dead in

the grave came to life and stood on their feet and all those which were yet to be created even until the end of all generations stood with them at Mount Sinai. And the people of Israel who were alive fell on their faces and died. Then issued a second Voice, and they live and stood on their feet and said to Moses our Teacher: 'We cannot hear the Voice of the Holy One Blessed be He, for we die.' The Holy One Blessed be He heard the voice of the people of Israel and reassured them.

He sent for the angels Michael and Gabriel and they grasped the arms of Moses against his will and brought him near to the mist and the rest of the words He spoke to Moses. Of this it is written: (As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him!' (Pirkei D'Rabi Eliezer, 41)

Rabbi Yehuda says: “When a person speaks with his comrade, he is seen and his voice is unseen; but [the people of] Israel heard the Voice of the Holy One Blessed Be He and saw the Voice issue from the Mouth of Might and the lightnings and the thunderings, as it is written, (And all the people saw the thunderings, and saw the lightnings',”

Rabbi Pinchas says: “All that generation that heard the Voice of the Holy One Blessed Be He on Mount Sinai were privileged to a life like that of the angels, and all manner of vermin had no authority over them, and in their death worms had no authority over them -blessed were they in this world' and blessed in the world to come. And of them is it written: 'Happy is that people, that is in such a case'.” (Pirkei D'Rabi Eliezer, 41)

Rabbi Abahu said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: “When the Holy One Blessed. be He gave the Torah, not a bird twittered, not a bird fluttered, not an ox bellowed, angels flew not, the seraphim said not 'Holy', the sea moved not, human creatures spoke not; but the universe was quiet and still ; and the Voice issued forth: 'I am the Lord thy God'!” (Shemot Raba, 29)

AKDAMOT

He has eternal might, too great to be explained
 Were all the heavens parchments, and all the forests quills,
 If all the seas were ink., the rivers and the lakes,
 If all that dwell on earth were skilful scribes and writers.
 The glorious Lord of heaven and Ruler of the land
 Alone he built the world, and its foundations hid,
 Untiringly, untiringly, perfected it,
 And with the lightest letters, quite intangible,
 Completed all His work, and on the seventh day,
 His glorious light ascended on His Throne of Fire. (Akdamot, 5-14)

THE PEOPLE AND THE TORAH

“And the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do” (Exodus 119, 8). Rabbi Elijah of Villa (“The Gaon”) said: This is what Israel replied to Moses: It is possible to do what the Lord hath spoken only when all of Israel are together, not when they are scattered among the nations.

KING AND RABBI

It was the sacred custom of Rabbi Levi-Yitzchak of Berditchev, who passionately defended the people of Israel to debate with God and point out the merits of His sons. Once, on the Festival of Shavuot, Rabbi Levi-Yitzchak rose to his feet and said: “Lord of the World, on Rosh Ha-Shanah you assumed the character of a King, the King of the Universe, and in justice You cannot over-look and forgive the sins of the people of Israel; for the law is written: “ A King may forego his honour, but his honour is not foregone.’ But today, the Time of The Giving of The Torah, You assume the character of a teacher and Rabbi, and You have it in Your power to forgive; for it is written: ‘A Rabbi may forego his honour, and his honour is fore-gone’.”

GIVING AND RECEIVING

Rabbi Yitzchak of Gur, the Chassdic sage, said: Why is Shavuot referred to as “The Time of the Giving of the Torah and not “The Time of the Receiving of the Torah”? Because the time of the giving of the Torah was only at Mount Sinai, whereas the time of the receiving of the Torah is everyday.

JEWS AND CONVERTS

Rabbi Shmuel of Fiorda was asked: “Let our Rabbi teach us, why do converts to Judaism and converts from Judaism exist? There are Jews who change their religion and become Gentiles a Gentiles who change their religion and become Jews.”

“This is why,” replied Rabbi Shmuel, “Tradition tells us that the Holy One, Blessed Be He, offered the Torah to all the nations and they failed to accept it, until He came to Israel and they accepted it, at first unwillingly and later willingly.

Do you think it possible that among all the nations who refused it there were no individuals who wanted to accept the Torah? And the six hundred thousand Israelites who said, “all that the Lord hath spoken we will do” - is it possible that there were not among them individuals who were not willing to accept the Torah? There were. It is these who in each generation return to their origins; these become Gentiles and those become Jews.”

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

“And Moses went down from the mount unto the people” (Exodus 19, 14). “This teaches us that Moses did not turn to his own affairs but went from the Mount to the people” (Rashi). But what “affairs” did Moses have other than the study of the Torah? “Moses did not turn to his own affairs,” teaches us that even to these “affairs” - the study of the Torah and the Will of God -Moses did not turn at a time when he was dealing with public matters.

Rabbi Yechezkiel of Kuzmir therefore said, that public matters done publicly are more important than the affairs of God done privately.