

# *In the Fields of Tekoa*



In the hills of Tekoa, the farmers stood amid the wheat fields. Some swung their scythes among the stalks and sang: "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy;" Others bound sheaves, singing: "He that goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed, shall come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.' Still others gathered the grain into the threshing-floor, and sang, 'My standing wheat knelt and bowed to my sheaf. Lord! Bless my strength to gather my grain." The field was filled with work and song.

Eliav, his wife and two sons came to their field to begin the harvest. They came to the standing wheat from the four corners of his field. They all were enveloped, the full tall stalks covered them over. Swiftly glittered the scythes in the hands of the nimble workers. The stalks fell hither and fro as the heads of the reapers were seen above the golden sea. A neighbor called to Eliav:

'From your standing wheat to your threshing-floor, my neighbor.' "From your vineyard to your wine-cellar," replied Eliav. One blessing in return for another. "The blessing of the Lord on you," called out Eliav's wife to her neighbour. "Have you washed the wool of your flocks?" "The Lord be with you, my neighbour," she replied. "I have washed it and carded it." "I have already woven thread." "The Lord sends us blessings according to our abilities!"

"Zizz! Zizz" whispered the scythes to each other. It was as if they had scolded and said: "Hush, women. Don't gossip so much Time to work." The women cut short their conversation, and swung their scythes in the grain. "Zizz! Zizz! " whispered the scythes to each other. At that moment there passed a wanderer from the land of Moab. He was tired and hungry. Eliav saw him and called out: "The Lord be with you, wanderer! Turn hither, and



pluck for yourself ears from the wheat, and bless the Lord that he has sent us his blessing." And the wanderer came, and plucked wheat, ate, and was sated. "Wait, wanderer," Eliav said to him. "Behold I am cutting my wheat; take from the corner." But the wanderer did not understand the significance of the word 'corner'. Eliav said to him: "This is the custom of the Hebrew farmers: when we reap our wheat, we leave stalks in the corner of the field for the poor and the wandering. It is called the corner." The wanderer plucked wheat, placed the seed in his pouch, and went on his way.

The wanderer passed the field of Eliav's neighbour, and a voice called out behind him: "O, blessed of the Lord! Why do you shame me? For I have done you no wrong." And the wanderer was taken aback and said: "O, my lord, when did I shame you? I am a stranger. Only now have I come from the land of Moab, and I have never seen your face until today." "And do you not shame me," replied the farmer, "when you pass my field while I am binding the sheaves and do not gather the gleanings?" "What are the 'gleanings'?" asked the wanderer. "It is the way of the Hebrews" answered the farmer "The reaper grasps a handful of stalks and the scythe cuts them below. The stalks slipped from the hand and escaped the scythe; they are not for the reaper. The Lord has saved them for the poor and the wandering."

The wanderer took the gleanings, placed the seed in his pouch, and went on. The wanderer went up to the mountain, and a voice called to him: "Stranger! Will you do thus to me? Behold I am making a threshing-heap, and will you not turn to me and collect the forgotten?" "O, my lord, I know what are the 'gleanings' and the 'corner,' but I do not know what the 'forgotten' is."

And the farmer said: "This is the way of the Hebrew farmer. When a man gathers his sheaves to the threshing-heap, and has forgotten sheaves behind him, it is a sign that the Lord has given them to the wandering and the poor. Now you go and pass through my field, and you will seek and find sheaves, and take unto you what the Lord has saved for your sake." The wanderer gathered the forgotten sheaves, beat them out, rubbed them, placed the seed in his pouch and went on his way. *Adapted by Eli Rogosa from the poem by Yehuda Steinberg, Moldavia, 1905*

*"Greater is one who welcomes visitors than one who welcomes the Divine presence"*

Shabbat 127a

## Seder Zra'im - The Way of the Seed

### סדר זרעים

*First volume of the Mishnah written down 200-220 CE*

*These are the things for which no measure is prescribed: gleanings, first-fruits, the festive offering, deeds of loving-kindness and the study of Torah. These are the things whose fruits a person enjoys in this world while the capital remains in the world to come: honoring father and mother, acts of loving-kindness, and making peace between person and another. But the study of Torah equals them all.' Mishnah Peah 1.1*

Brochot - Blessings

Peah – Corners - Gifts to the Poor,

Demai – Produce of the Am Ha'Aretz

Kilayim - Diverse Varieties\*

Shevi'it' - Sabbatical Year and the Jubilee

Trumot - Donations

Maserot - Tithes

Maserot Sheni - Second Tithes and the Fruit of the Fourth Year

First Fruits and Other Priestly Gifts Outside the Sanctuary

Hallah - Dough Offering

Orlah - First Fruits of Trees

Bikkurim - First Fruits gifts to Priests and Temple





אלו דברים שאין להם שעור. הפקה, ובהכורים, והראים, וgmtilot חסדים, ותלמוד תורה. אלו דברים שאדם אוכל פרותיהם בעולם הזה והקרו קיימת לו לעולם הבא. כבוד אב ואם, וgmtilot חסדים, והבטחת שלום בין אדם לחברו, ותלמוד תורה פג'ג בכם.

*'These are the things for which no measure is prescribed: gleanings, first-fruits, the festive offering, deeds of loving-kindness and the study of Torah. These are the things whose fruits a person enjoys in this world while the capital remains in the world to come: honoring father and mother, acts of loving-kindness, and making peace between person and another, but the study of Torah equals them all.'* Mishnah Peah 1.1

### Berakhot - Blessings

*The heart of farming and eating is to bless. When to bless? When to say the Shema?*

### Peah - Corners - Gleaning - Justice for the Poor

**ובקארכם את קציר הארץ לא תכלה פאת שדק לכאך ולקט קצינה לא תלקט:**

*'When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap the edges of your field, or gather the dropped or blemished produce of your harvest.'* Lev. 19:9

Thirteen commandments: (1) Leave the corner of the field unharvested; (2) Not reap the corner of the field; (3) to leave the fallen stalks; (4) not to gather the fallen stalks; (5) to leave the imperfect clusters of the vineyard; (6) not to gather the imperfect clusters of the vineyard; (7) to leave the individual fallen grapes of the vineyard; (8) not to gather the individual fallen grapes of the vineyard; (9) to leave the forgotten sheaf; (10) not to go back to take the forgotten sheaf; (11) set aside a tithe for the poor; (12) give charity according to one's ability; (13) do not harden one's heart against the poor.

**שלש אבעיות ביום, בשחר וב낮 ובמנחה**

The farmer must stand in his field at least three time a day for people to glean forgotten sheaves and blemished crops: Dawn when nursing mothers arise before their infant wakes, Mid-day for most people. Twilight for the elderly that walk slowly to the fields.

### Demai - Questionably Tithed Produce

"One may give Demai produce to the poor for food."

## Kilayim - Not Mixing Species - Maintaining Natural Relationships

אַתְּ חִקְתִּי תָשִׁמְרוּ בַהֲמֹתֶךָ לֹא תִרְבִּיעַ כָלָאִים שְׂדֵךְ לְאַתְּזִרְעַ כָלָאִים וְבָגֵד כָלָאִים שְׁעַטְנֵז לֹא יַעֲלֵה עַלְיכֶם:

*'You shall not let your cattle mate with a different kind. You shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed. You shall not put on cloth from a mixture of two kinds of material.'*

Five commandments: (1) not to sow diverse seeds together; (2) not to sow grain or vegetables in a vineyard; (3) not to mate animals of different species; (4) Don't work animals of different species together; (5) not to wear clothing of both wool and linen.

## Shevi'it - Sabbatical Year and the Jubilee

*Shmittah is the Shabbat of the Living Earth. Agricultural fallows were on a three year cycle. Shmittah is a return to natural harmony and justice.* Twenty-two commandments: (1) The land shall rest unworked in the Sabbatical year; (2) One shall not work the ground in that year; (3) One shall not work the trees in that year; (4) One shall not harvest what grows by itself in the manner of harvesters; (5) One shall not harvest a vineyard in the manner of harvesters; (6) that one shall renounce ownership of what the land produces; (7) One shall release all your loans; (8) One shall not oppress nor demand a debt; (9) One shall not refrain from making loans before the Sabbatical year, so as not to lose his money; (10) Count the years by sevens; (11) Sanctify the fiftieth year; (12) Sound the shofar on the Tenth of Tishri so that slaves go out free; (13) The land shall not be worked in that year; (14) One shall not harvest what grows by itself in manner of harvesters; (15) To not harvest the vineyards in the manner of harvesters; (16) Grant redemption to the land in this year, which is the rule for inherited fields or purchased fields; (17) The land shall not be sold in perpetuity; (18) the rule for houses in walled cities; (19) None of the Tribe of Levi shall receive a heritage in the Land of Israel, but cities to dwell in shall be given to them as a gift; (20) The Tribe of Levi shall not take a share in the spoils of war; (21) Give to the Levites cities to dwell in and open land round about the cities; (22) Open land round about cities shall never be sold, but may be redeemed at any time whether before the Jubilee or after the Jubilee.

## Trumot - Heave Offerings

*The Great Heave Offering is the first gift that the farmers gives from produce.* Eight commandments: (1) Set aside a great heave offering; (2) Set aside a heave offering of the tithes; (3) Set offerings aside in the right order; (4) An unauthorized person shall not eat a heave offering; (5) Even a tenant or hired worker shall not eat a heave offering; (6) Uncircumcised shall not eat a heave offering; (7) An unclean priest shall not eat a heave offering; (8) A profaned woman shall not eat a heave offering nor a gift from consecrated animals.

## Maserot - Tithes

One commandment: Set apart the first tithe of produce each and every year the fields are sown and give it to the Levites.

## **Second Tithes and the Fruit of the Fourth Year**

Nine commandments: (1) to set apart the second tithe; (2) not to spend its redemption money for any necessities but eating, drinking, and anointing; (3) not to eat it while unclean; (4) not to eat it while mourning; (5) not to eat the second tithe of grain outside Jerusalem; (6) not to eat the second tithe of wine outside Jerusalem; (7) not to eat the second tithe of olive oil outside Jerusalem; (8) that all the fruit of trees in the fourth year after planting shall be holy, and that it is to be eaten by its owner in Jerusalem like the second tithe; (9) to make the tithe declaration.

**Hallah** - dough offering “*You shall offer up a portion (challah) from the first of your dough as a gift*”

Numbers 15:20

The ancient Hebraic tradition of the separation of dough is consecrated transformation of grain into bread as a life process of fermentation. It was the dough portion given to the Kohanim in ancient Israel. Today a portion of the dough is separated and returned to the earth or burned, as a blessing is incanted on the renewing cycle of life.

A category of Torah mitzvot are ‘t’luyot ba’aretz’ - directly connected with the Land of Israel. The mitvah of hallah, the separation of dough, is directly connected to regenerative nature cycles, on a direct relationship to the Land itself. By Biblical law, hallah is taken only in the Land of Israel. However the Sages instituted the taking of hallah outside the Holy Land so that people living outside of Israel’s borders would not forget the mitzvah. The mitzvah to take hallah started the moment that the Israelites crossed the Jordan River into the Holy Land.

*Baruch Mekor Ha’Chaim L’hafrish challah.  
May blessings from the Source of Life imbue this portion’s returning.*

## **First Fruits and Priestly Gifts Outside the Sanctuary**

Nine commandments: (1) to set apart first fruits and bring them to the Sanctuary; (2) that the priest shall not eat the first fruits outside Jerusalem; (3) to recite the declaration on them; (4) to set apart a portion of dough for the priest; (5) to give the foreleg, the jaw, and the stomach to the priest; (6) to give him the first fleece; (7) to redeem the first-born son, and to give the redemption gift to the priest; (8) to redeem the first-born of an ass, and give the redemption gift to the priest; (9) to decapitate the first-born of an ass, if one does not want to redeem it.



## Omer Barley to Shavuot Wheat

The omer is a Biblical measure of grain. On the second day of Passover, an omer of barley were waved Temple, after which the new season's of 'chadash' (grains from the new harvest) were eaten. *Shemot 16:16* During the time of the Temple, the representative of the people, an official appointed by the high courts would go into each village field. Barley stalks were harvested and bound into sheaves in a public ceremony with festive music and dancing. The next day the entire village gathered in the fields and walked together to Jerusalem with great festivity, lead by town musicians and animals with garlands of flowers, to the Temple in Jerusalem, where the barley sheaves were waved by each family and by the priests. The 'waving of the omer' was an Israeli rain and good weather prayer-dance. The sheaves of barley were waved it in the four compass directions in evocation of good wind and weather forces, then up and down in evocation of rains and dew, then to the heart.

Until this ceremony was performed in the Temple, it was forbidden to eat from the new grains of the five species: wheat, barley, emmer, rye and oats. This barley was then be threshed, winnowed, sieved and roasted. After the chaff was separated, it was ground in a stone mill.

*'The day after the seventh Sabbath shall you count, 50 days. Then you shall offer a new meal offering to YHVH. You shall bring out of your habitations two wave-loaves; they shall be of fine flour, baked with leaven. They are the first fruits to the living G-d.'* Leviticus 23: 15-17

The 50th day after the first barley omer waving began the holiday of Shavuot. Two loaves made of wheat were brought by each family to the Temple to signal the start of the wheat harvest.

## **Guide to the Perplexed**

### **Ch 3, section 37 - Maimonides**

<https://www.sefaria.org/Guide%20for%20the%20Perplexed%2C%20Part%203.37.10?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en>

Witchcraft is intimately connected with astrology. Those that practice it assign each plant, animal, or mineral to a certain star, and believe that these processes of witchcraft are forms of worship offered to that star, which is pleased with those acts and fulfills their wishes.

On considering the customs of the heathen in their worship, they have farming-related practices in which they turn toward stars, in others to the two great luminaries; or the rise of signs in the Zodiac for sowing and fumigating. As to the circuits made by those who plant or sow, some complete five circles, corresponding to the five planets, with the exclusion of the two luminaries: others go seven times round, according to the number of the planets, when including sun and moon. They believe that all these practices are evoke mysterious forces for great efficiency in agriculture. These practices lead to the worship of stars.

They are careful to collect certain plants at a particular time, and to take a definite number of certain objects. There are many things comprised by witchcraft; they may be divided into three classes: first, witchcraft connected with objects in Nature, viz., plants, animals, or minerals. Secondly, witchcraft dependent for its performance on a certain time; and thirdly, witchcraft dependent on the performance of certain acts of man, such as dancing, clapping, laughing, jumping with one leg, lying on the ground with the face upward, burning a thing, fumigating with a certain material, or speaking intelligible or unintelligible words.

These are the various kinds of witchcraft. The witches sometimes take a leaf of a certain plant, when the moon is seen in a certain degree of the Zodiac in the east point or in one of the other cardinal points of the horizon, a certain quantity of the horn, the sweat, the hair and the blood of a certain animal when the sun is, e.g., in the middle of the sky, or in some other definite place; and a portion of a certain mineral or minerals, melted at a certain conjunction of sun and moon, and at a definite position of the stars; speak then, and say certain words, and fumigate those leaves or similar ones to that molten image, and such and such a thing will happen.

Those practices which were distinctly connected with idolatry are prohibited that include - eating the fruit of a tree during the first three years, intermixing of species (ie linen and wool) and mixing species in a vineyard. It must now be clear to you, with no room for any doubt, that the prohibition of wearing garments of wool and linen, of using the fruit of a tree in the first three years, and of mixing diverse species - are directed against idolatry, and that the prohibition against adopting heathen manners serves to remove anything which leads to idolatry.

'Rabbi Ahai ben Josiah said,  
'He who buys grain in the market, to what may he be compared?  
To a child who is cut off from his mother, and although it is taken to wet nurses, it is not satisfied.  
He who buys bread in the market, to what is he compared?  
To a man who digs his own grave - a precarious existence.  
But he who eats of his own produce is like a child reared at his mother's breast.'

Avot d'Rabbi Nathan 30:6

'If, along the road, you chance upon a bird's nest in a tree with fledglings or eggs and the mother sitting over them, do not take the mother together with her young, in order that you may fare well and have a long life.' Deuteronomy 22:6-7

'The Torah does not permit a killing that would uproot a species, even if it permitted the killing of individuals in that species for food. And here, the one who kills the mother and the child on the same day, it is as if that person has made that species extinct.' Nachmanides, 13th Century Spain; Commentary on Deuteronomy. 22:6

'Even those things that may appear superfluous to Creation such as fleas, gnats or flies -- even these are part of the web of Creation. G-d's purpose is carried through everything, even through a snake, a scorpion, a gnat and a frog.' Breishit Rabbah 10

*'G-d created the world so that all shall live in pleasantness, that all shall be equal, that one shall not lord over the other, and that all may cultivate the land. However, when warrior-minded people multiplied they began to rely on their might, and left off cultivating the land and turned to robbery. '* Hochmat haNefesh 22b, Rabbi Judah'

## **Bringing the First Fruits**

"*The Feast of the Harvest, of the first fruits of your work, of what you sow in the field* (Exodus 23.16)"--  
Bikkurim 1.1-3.

**Bikkurim** were brought from seven species of Israel:  
wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olive oil, and date honey.

### **How were the bikkurim marked?**

A man went down into his field, and tied a reed rope around the first fig, cluster of grapes or pomegranate ripened and said, "Let these be for bikkurim".

### **How were the bikkurim taken up to Jerusalem?**

All the people of a village assembled and spent the night in the open place in the village center. Early morning the leader said: "*Let us arise and go up to Zion, to the house of the Lord our God*". Those who lived near Jerusalem brought fresh figs and grapes, but those traveling from a distance brought dried figs and raisins . An ox with horns bedecked with gold, and with an olive crown on its head, led the way. The flute was played before them, until they were nigh to Jerusalem; they then sent messengers in advance. The Temple folk went out to greet them. The people of Jerusalem would stand up before them and greet them: "Brethren, families of the village \_\_\_, we are delighted to welcome you".

The rich brought bikkurim in baskets overlaid with silver or gold, while the poor used wicker baskets of willow branches. The flute was played before them till they reached the Temple mount; even the king would take the basket, and walked to the Temple court.

The people would say:

*"A wandering Aramean was my father. He went down into Egypt and sojourned there. The Egyptians afflicted us, laid upon us hard bondage. When we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers; the Lord heard our voice. And he hath brought us into this place, giving 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!"*

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

## HOW TO ENHANCE DIGESTIBILITY AND NUTRIENT AVAILABILITY OF GRAINS



Soaking grain prior to baking was a tradition of earlier people and ancient Israelis. Soaking, sourdough fermenting or sprouting grains neutralizes anti-nutrient phytic acid, making the grains easier to digest and nutrients more available. Phytic acid binds up the minerals, decreasing absorption. Phytic acid protects the seed from germinating until surrounded by moisture and warmth for growth. A biologically active, living seed is nutritionally superior to a dormant seed.

Based on detailed discussions in the Talmud, we learn that ancient Israelis soaked grain overnight prior to baking. Initially matzah for Passover was made with soaked grain that did not sprout open. After Israel was conquered by Babylon then Rome, the Rabbis decided to not allow soaking grains for matzah to prevent sprouted grains becoming sourdough matzah in the distant lands lacking strong spiritual leadership.

**הדר אמר ר' בא: מצוה לילות, שנאמר "ושמרתם את המצות" – אי לא דבאי לתייתה שימור למאי? אי שימור דלישָׁה – שימור דלישָׁה לאו שימור הוּא.**

*14 - Rava concluded: It is not only permitted to soak the grains; it is actually a mitzva to soak the wheat grains...Soaking the grain is part of the process of baking however the grain should be guarded so as to not sprout open and become chametz. Talmud Pesachim 40a*

## Hopi Elders Speak

We Are the Ones We've Been Waiting For  
You have been telling the people that this is the Eleventh Hour.  
Now you must go back and tell the people that this is The Hour.  
And there are things to be considered:

Where are you living? What are you doing?  
What are your relationships? Are you in right relation?  
Where is your water? Know your garden.  
It is time to speak your Truth.

Create your community. Be good to each other. And do not look outside  
yourself for the leader. This could be a good time!

There is a river flowing now very fast. It is so great and swift that there are  
those who will be afraid. They will try to hold on to the shore. They will feel they  
are being torn apart, and they will suffer greatly. Know the river has its  
destination. The elders say we must let go of the shore, push off into the middle  
of the river, keep our eyes open, and our heads above the water.  
See who is in there with you and celebrate.

At this time in history, we are to take nothing personally. Least of all, ourselves.  
For the moment that we do, our spiritual growth and journey comes to a halt.

The time of the lone wolf is over. Gather yourselves!  
Banish the word struggle from your attitude and your vocabulary.  
All that we do now must be done in a sacred manner and in celebration.  
We are the ones we've been waiting for.