

A LITTLE SLICE OF TORAH

פון פרשת דער וואָך FROM THE WEEKLY PORTION

September 02, 2023



לזכר עולם – הייה קיילא בת משה ושרה שווארץ – ט"ו באלול

ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם,
אשר קדשנו במצותיו, וצונו לעסוק בדברי תורה:

“Tachometer Torah”



...read down to the red line

Parashat-haShavu'a Stats

Weekly Portion: Ki Tavo

Consists of: Deuteronomy 26:1-29:8

Sequence—

in annual Torah cycle: 50th of 54

in Deuteronomy: 7th of 11

- A Salient Selection from the Portion -

Deuteronomy 26:1-10

Context: Deuteronomy, last of the Five Books of the Torah, consists of Moses's farewell address to the Jewish people, in which he reviews—and formally renews their commitment to—the Covenant they and their parents had made at Mount Sinai a generation earlier.

Content: This week's portion opens with the prescription, made by Moses in the fortieth year of Israelite national history, of a ritual of ratification which the Israelites are to carry out after they completed the conquest of the Promised Land to which he has brought them.

26:1] - Then it will be— **once you have come into the land** that The Eternal One your God is giving you as a heritage, and once you have possessed it and settled in it— [26:2] - that you are to take some of the first fruit of **the soil**, which you have harvested from **your land** that The Eternal One your God is giving you; deposit it in a basket, and go **to that place** which The Eternal One your God will have chosen as the abode of the Divine Name.

26:3] - Go to the priest in charge at that time and say to him, “**I hereby declare this day before The Eternal One, your God**, that I have arrived in **the land** that The Eternal One swore to our fathers to assign us.” [26:4] - The priest shall take the basket from your hand and set it down in front of the Altar of The Eternal One your God.

26:5a] - You shall then recite as follows before The Eternal One your God:

וְהָיָה כִּי-תָבֹא אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ נַחֲלָה וּיְרִשְׁתָּהּ וּיִשְׁבְּתָּ בָּהּ וּלְקַחְתָּ מִרְאשֵׁית כָּל-פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר תֵּבִיא מֵאֲרָצְךָ אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ וְשַׂמְתָּ בְּטֶנְא וְהִלַּכְתָּ אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשֶׁכֶן שְׁמוֹ שָׁם

וּבָאתָ אֶל-הַכֹּהֵן אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה בְּיָמֶיךָ הֵם וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו הַגִּדְתִּי הַיּוֹם לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי-בָאתִי אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָשָׁבַע יְהוָה לְאֲבוֹתֵינוּ לָתֵת לָנוּ וּלְקַח הַכֹּהֵן הַטֶּנְא מִיָּדְךָ וְהִנִּיחוֹ לִפְנֵי מִזְבֵּחַ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ

וְעָנִיתָ וְאָמַרְתָּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ

- more over

26:5b] - “My forebear was a rootless Aramean, who went down to Egypt few in numbers, and sojourned there until he became there a great and mighty nation. [26:6] - But the Egyptians dealt harshly with us, and oppressed us; they imposed heavy labor upon us, [26:7a] - so that we cried to The Eternal One, the God of our forebears.

אַרְמֵי אֲבִד אָבִי וַיֵּרֶד מִצְרַיִם וַיִּגְר שָׁם בְּמִתֵּי מַעֵט וַיְהִי-שָׁם לְגוֹי גָדוֹל עַצוּם וָרֶב וַיַּרְעוּ אֶתְנוּ הַמִּצְרַיִם וַיַּעֲנוּנוּ וַיִּתְּנוּ עָלֵינוּ עֲבָדָה קָשָׁה וַנִּצְעַק אֶל-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ

26:7b] - “Whereupon The Eternal One heard our plea and saw our plight, our misery, and our oppression. [26:8] - The Eternal One freed us from Egypt by a mighty hand, by an outstretched arm and awesome power, and by signs and portents, [26:9] - and brought us to this **place** and gave us **this land**— a land flowing with milk and honey.

וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה אֶת-קִלְנוּ וַיִּרְא אֶת-עַנְיֵנוּ וְאֶת-עַמְלָנוּ וְאֶת-לַחְצָנוּ וַיּוֹצֵאֵנוּ יְהוָה מִמִּצְרַיִם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה וּבְזֵרַע נְטוּיָה וּבַמָּרָא גָדֹל וּבְאֹתוֹת וּבַמִּפְתִּיּוֹת וַיַּבְּאֵנוּ אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וַיִּתֵּן-לָנוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת אֶרֶץ זָבַת חֶלֶב וּדְבַשׁ

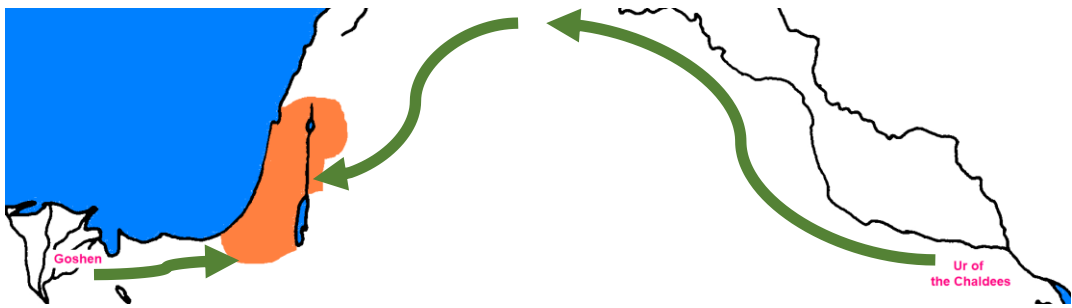
26:10] - “So that I now bring the first fruits of **the soil** which You, Eternal One, have given me.” Having said which, you are to put it down in the Presence of The Eternal One, your God, and to bow low before the Presence of The Eternal One, your God.

וַעֲתָה הִנֵּה הֵבִאתִי אֶת-רֵאשִׁית פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר-נָתַתָּה לִּי יְהוָה וְהִנְחִיתוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתָ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ

וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו

26:3 – and you are to say to him:

הַגִּדְתִּי הַיּוֹם לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ
 “I hereby declare **this day** before The Eternal One, your God,
 כִּי-בָאתִי אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע
 that I have arrived in **the land** that [God] promised



9 geographical referents – in a passage of 158 words

אָרֶץ region, territory, land 5x	אֲדָמָה soil, land 2x	מָקוֹם position, place 2x
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A) Genesis 13:17 -

וַיַּעְבֵּר אַבְרָם
בְּאֶרֶץ עַד מְקוֹם
שָׁכֵם וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה אֵל-
אַבְרָם וַיֹּאמֶר לְזַרְעֲךָ
אֶת-הָאָרֶץ
הַזֹּאת

Abraham passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, where The Eternal One appeared to him and declared: “**I will be giving your descendants this land.**”

B) Genesis 26:3 -

לְךָ וּלְזַרְעֲךָ אֶתְּנוּ אֶת-
כָּל-הָאָרֶצַת הָאֵל
וְהַקְמַתִּי אֶת-
הַשְּׂבֵעָה אֲשֶׁר
נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאַבְרָהָם
אָבִיךָ

To you and your descendants will I be giving **all these lands, to fulfill the oath that I swore** to your father, Abraham.

C) Genesis 25:13-14 -

הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה
שֹׁכֵב עָלֶיהָ לְךָ
אֶתְנֶנָּה וּלְזַרְעֲךָ
וּפְרִצְתָּ יָמָה וְקִדְמָה
וְצָפְנָה וְנִגְבָּה

The ground on which you lie, **I will be giving to you and your descendants**, from which you will spread out to the west and the east, the north and the south.

D) John Ronald Reueul Tolkein (1892-1973), *The Hobbit* - **Surely you don't disbelieve the prophecies, because you, yourself, had a hand in bringing them about?** You don't really suppose, do you, that all your adventures and escapes were managed by mere luck, just for your sole benefit? You are a very fine person, Mr. Baggins, and I am very fond of you; but you are only quite a little fellow in a wide world after all!”

- ואמרת אליו

E) Midrash Sifrei, Tavo 3 - “And you are to say to him” [Deuteronomy 29:3] –

שאינך כפוי טובה

that you are not unmindful of these bounties.

נ-כ-ר “regard, observe” → הִכִּיר V / הִפְעִיל / causative active -
“pay regard to; recognize, acknowledge”

noun (absolute) הִכָּרָה “an acknowledgment”

noun (construct) הִכָּרַת “an acknowledgment of...”

idiom הִכָּרַת הַטּוֹב “acknowledging a boon; gratitude”

תנו רבנן אסור לו לאדם שיהנה מן העולם הזה בלא ברכה וכל הנהנה מן העולם הזה בלא ברכה מעל

F) Babylonian Talmud, B'rachot 35a - Our Mishnaic sages have taught that anyone who derives benefit from something in the world, **without having first recited the appropriate benediction**, is guilty of theft—

וכתיב לה' הארץ ומלואה

for it is written “the earth belongs to The Eternal One, with all its fulness” [Psalm 24:1].

- more over

G) Nigel Savage (1970-), American Jewish World Service lesson for TU biSh'vat - The point of “the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof” is to remind us that **we enjoy the natural fruits of creation**. We ourselves did not create, and never could create them. A *b’rachah* is different than saying “Thanks for dinner, Mom” (though we should say that, too). When the rabbis of the Talmud suggested not merely that we say a *b’rachah* before eating, but that failing to do so represented a case of theft, **this is a central idea that they teach us: we might buy an apple, or we might grow it, but we can never create it, so its existence is an everyday miracle.**



מנא הא מילתא דאמרי אינשי **בירא דשתית מיניה לא תשדי ביה קלא**

H) Babylonian Talmud Baba Qamma 92b - What is the basis of the folk-proverb “**having drunk from a well, don’t toss a dirt-clod into it**”?

לא-תתעב אדמי כי אַחידָּהּ הוא לא-תתעב מְצָרִי כִי-גֵר הֵייתָ בְּאַרְצוֹ

It is derived from the Torah verse “You may not abhor an Edomite, for he is your kinsman [descended from your uncle, Eisav]; you may not abhor an Egyptian, for you were a guest in his land” [Deuteronomy 23:5].

I-1) Exodus 7:19 -

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה אָמַר אֶל אֶהְרֹן קַח מִטְּעֵף וְנִטְהַר יָדָךְ עַל מַיִם מִצְרַיִם

The Eternal One told Moses: “**Instruct Aaron**: ‘take your staff, and stretch out your hand over all the waters of Egypt’....”



I-2) Exodus 8:12 -

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה אָמַר אֶל- אֶהְרֹן נִטְהַר אֶת-מִטְּעֵף וְהָדָף אֶת-עַפְרֵי הָאָרֶץ וְהָיָה לְכֹנֶם בְּכָל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם

The Eternal One told Moses: “**Instruct Aaron**: ‘stretch out your staff and strike the soil on the ground, so that it may be a plague of lice over all the land of Egypt’.”

J) Midrash Exodus Rabbah 9:10, 10:7 -

למה לא לקו המים ע״י משה

Why were the waters not stricken by Moses’s own hands?

א״ל הקב״ה המים ששמרוך כשהושלכת ליאור אינו דין שילקו על ידך

The Holy And Blessed One declared: “Those are the same waters that bore you up, when you were cast into the Nile— **it would not be fitting that they should be stricken by your hand.**”

א״ל הקב״ה למשה עפר שהגין עליך כשהרגת את המצרי אינו דין שילקה על ידך לפיכך לקו מכות אלו על ידי אהרן

The Holy and Blessed One told Moses: “That same soil protected you, when you killed the Egyptian [and hid his body in the sand (Exodus 2:12)]— **it would not be fitting that it should be stricken by your hand.**” Accordingly these Plagues were wrought by means of Aaron instead.

K) Yaacov Haber (1950-), OU Torah Classics - Usually *Hakarot HaTov* is translated as gratitude. However, a better understanding of the term refers to a person’s ability **not just to recognize good that was done, but never to lose sight of that good.**



Without this ability it is impossible to be a pious Jew. It is impossible to maintain a relationship with man or with God. It is impossible to have a successful marriage. It is impossible to find the truth in life, because **one is always blinded by the specks of fault even in the face of a multitude of goodness.**

There is something psychological about us not having *Hakarot HaTov*. We do say “thank you”; we may show gratitude— but recognizing and appreciating a good that was done for us is, for some reason, a difficult task.

L) Eric Gurvis (1961-) The Mussar Torah Commentary - Read through the lens of *hakarot hatov*— seeing the good that is present, seeing our strengths even in the midst of our struggles and imperfections— the Torah can help us to summon the courage and strength, not to mention the will, **to reach higher toward the good and the holy.** We can live our lives in the context of a world and relationships that challenge our striving to do good and be holy.

וְהִלַּכְתָּ אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם

26:2 – then you are to go to **that place**

לְשֵׁכֶן שְׁמוֹ שָׁם **אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ**

which The Eternal One your God will have chosen
as the abode of the Divine Name

**“The Abode of The Divine Name of God”
repositories of The Ark Of The Covenant**



- more over



וַיָּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּעַר שְׂבַע וַיֵּלֶךְ חָרָנָה
 M) Genesis 28:10-11, 16 - Now when Jacob went
 forth from Be'er-Sheva, to go to Charan,
 וַיִּפְגַּע בַּמָּקוֹם וַיָּלֶן שָׁם כִּי-בָא הַשָּׁמֶשׁ
 he reached **a certain place**, as the sun was setting....

וַיִּיקָץ יַעֲקֹב מִשְׁנָתוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אָכֵן יֵשׁ יְהוָה בַּמָּקוֹם
 הַזֶּה וְאֲנֹכִי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי

Jacob awoke from his sleep, with a start, and declared:
 “Clearly **The Eternal One is in this place**, yet I did not
 know!”

<p>N) <u>Mishnah P’sachim 10:5</u> - פסח - על שום שפסח המקום על בתי אבותינו במצרים It is “the Passover-offering,” because The Place passed over the houses of our forebears in Egypt.</p>	<p>O) <u>Mishnah Middot 5:4</u> - וכך היו אומרים ברוך המקום ברוך הוא Thus would they declare: “Blessed be The Place— blessed be He!</p>	<p>P) <u>B’rachot Bavli, 40b</u> - אמר כמה נאה פת זו ברוך המקום שבראה - יצא If one declares: “How lovely this slice of bread is— blessed be The Place, Who created it!” that is an acceptable benediction.</p>
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נקרא מקום

Q) MaHaRaL (Judah ben-B’tzalEl Loew, 1520?-1609), Chiddushei Agadot 3:147, on Tractate Sanhedrin - [God] is called “the Place”

שהוא מקיים הדבר שעומד בו
 because God sustains the existence of all that exists therein.

מקום	maqom
מקיים	m'qayeim

ויפגע במקום - למה מכנין שמו של הקב"ה וקורין אותו מקום

R) Yalkut Shimoni, 117 - “He reached **a certain place**” – Why do we use a nickname, by referring to The Holy And Blessed One as “the **Place**”?

מפני שהוא מקומו של עולם ואין העולם מקומו
 Because **God is the Place of the world**, while the world is not God’s place.

S) Ismar Schorsch (1935-), JTSA Chapel sermon on vaYeitzei – November, 1993 - The impulse to create **a sacred piece of real estate ran counter to the message that God is universally accessible**. Closer to the spirit of Genesis is the lesson taught by Rabban Gamliel not long after the Roman victory in 70 C.E.:

Why did God choose to reveal Himself to Moses in a lowly thorn bush? To make the point that there is no place on earth which is devoid of God’s presence.

In time Rabban Gamliel’s view became concretized in a bold new name for God, perhaps my

favorite: *Hamakom*, which we might render best as “the All-encompassing One.”

The term expands beyond measure the indeterminate “place” *makom* of Genesis. God is now dauntingly conceived as the space in which the universe exists. God is neither outside the world nor a resident within it; the world constitutes a part of God. Transcending both gender and image, **the conception expresses the grandeur and austerity of Jewish monotheism.** It has the capacity to do justice to a universe more than 15 billion years old and still expanding.

No less important, it offers the comfort of God’s nearness. The ancient charge against Judaism was that its God was transcendent and remote and therefore inaccessible. Monotheism had emptied the world of all intermediate beings. Perhaps it satisfied the mind, but it chilled the heart. To counter this, the rabbis avowed that their God was both far and near, awesome and intimate. As the soul fills the body, God’s presence pervades the universe.

God as *Hamakom*, the Spacious One, was meant to convey as well that one could pray in one’s heart without uttering a sound and still be heard by God. God was never out of reach. We were in fact immersed in God’s ubiquitous presence.

The challenge of *Hamakom* is to recognize God in the ordinary and every day. Our inclination to be awed only by the extraordinary serves to dull our senses to the miracles that surround us. The obligation to fill each day with no less than 100 *b’rachot*— that is, exclamations of **wonder and gratitude**— creates a receptive state of mind to behold the Divine in the commonplace.

הָפִיר	“pay regard to; acknowledge”
הַפְרַת הַטוֹב	“acknowledge a boon; gratitude”

