

Shavuot Nov. 09

**FROM THE COVENANT OF THE RAINBOW TO THE COVENANT AT SINAI; FROM THE PILGRIMAGE TO THE TEMPLE TO THE VISION OF THE CHARIOT, FROM THE BERACHAH OF THE FIRST FRUITS TO THE PRIESTLY BERACHAH, AND FROM THE *TIQQUN LEIL SHAVU'OT* TO THE REVELATION OF THE *SHEKHINAH***

By **RACHEL ELIOR**<sup>1</sup>

For David Grossman

“One must rejoice on this festival in particular, for it is the day on which we acquired the crown of Torah...”  
Shelah, *Masekhet shavu'ot, shenei luhot ha-berit*, p. 7.

“If all their experiences are not here, certainly a memorial to their lives is here. And it is fitting and proper that we afford them a name and a vestige in Hebrew script and in the kadosh tongue.” S. Y. Agnon,  
*Ha-esh ve-ha-egim*, p. 337.

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<sup>1</sup> Translated from the Hebrew by Joel Linsider. Except as noted below and elsewhere in the article, translations from primary sources and Hebrew secondary materials are by the present translator, as are all footnotes. Except as otherwise noted, the following translations of ancient texts have been used:

**Hebrew Bible:** New Jewish Publication Society Tanakh (NJPS), copyright © 1985, 1999 by the Jewish Publication Society.

**Apocrypha and New Testament:** New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.

**Jubilees:** translation by O. S. Wintermute, in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Charlesworth) (New York: Doubleday, 1985), vol. 2, pp. 35-142.

**1 Enoch:** 1 Enoch, translated by Ephraim Isaac, in Charlesworth, vol. 1, pp. 5-90.

**Qumran literature (Dead Sea Scrolls):** Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (New York and London: Penguin Books, 1997 [1962]) (referred to as Vermes) or Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (Leiden: Brill and Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2000) (referred to as DSSSE).

The festival of Shavuot (lit., “weeks”)—the fourth of the seven “appointed times of the Lord/YaHuWaH” detailed in the Pentateuch and one of the three pilgrimage festivals—is known in the Pentateuch by four names. In the book of Exodus, it is expressly mentioned as one of the pilgrimage festivals and termed the “Feast of the Harvest” (Ex. 23:14-16); it is later called the “Feast of Weeks, of the first fruits of the wheat harvest” (Ex. 34:22). In Leviticus (23:15-22), it is mentioned in detail as the day on which “you shall bring an offering of new grain to the LORD/YAHUWAH,” associated with the counting of seven full weeks from “the day after the sabbath,” following the time for harvesting the first sheaf (“omer”; id. 10-11). In Deuteronomy, the holiday is called the “Feast of Weeks” in the context of the instruction that “You shall count off seven weeks; start to count the seven weeks when the sickle is first put to the standing grain. Then you shall observe the Feast of Weeks [*hag shavu`ot*] for the LORD/YAHUWAH your God/Aloah , offering your freewill contribution according as the LORD/YAHUWAH your God/Aloah has Baruched you. You shall rejoice before the LORD/YAHUWAH your God/Aloah ...at the place where the LORD/YAHUWAH your God/Aloah will choose to establish His name” (Dt. 16:9-11). The joy of the festival is associated with the pilgrimage to the sacred place, as stated in Deuteronomy, and the occasion is termed “the day of the first fruits” in Numbers 28:26 on account of the first fruits of the wheat harvest brought to the sanctuary on that day by those who had been Baruched with the harvest and were coming to appear before God/Aloah . The festival sacrifices, offered by the priests at the sanctuary and including the “offering of new grain to the Lord/YaHuWaH on your Feast of Weeks [on which] you shall observe a sacred occasion” (id.) are described there in detail.

Rather astonishingly, therefore, this central festival—known variously as the Feast of the Harvest and the Feast of the First Fruits of the Wheat Harvest, the day of the first fruits, the Feast of Weeks, the festival observed on the fiftieth day, after counting seven weeks, one of the three pilgrimage festivals, the feast of the harvest Berachah and the feast of the offering of new grain—is not mentioned by any of its biblical names in the early rabbinic tradition recorded in the Mishnah. The rabbis identify no commandment uniquely dependent on the Feast of Weeks, which is based on the precise counting of seven Sabbaths or seven weeks, known as the “counting of the *omer*,” that precedes the pilgrimage to the sanctuary, and the Mishnah likewise contains no tractate devoted to the holiday and named for it, analogous to the tractates devoted to other holidays (such as *Sukkah*, *Pesahim*, or *Yoma*). Compounding one’s surprise at the omission of the festival from mishnaic tradition and the single fleeting reference to it as an aside in the Tosefta is the perplexing suppression of the ancient tradition’s explicitly stated time for observing it. That, in turn, becomes even more perplexing given that holiday is known in the ancient, pre-Christian-era priestly tradition recorded in the Book of Jubilees as the day of testimony, the festival of the giving of the Torah, the festival of the covenants, the festival observed by the angels, and the festival associated with Ezekiel’s vision and the tradition of the chariot. In the Temple Scroll found at Qumran, the festival of Shavuot is described in a manner that blends various biblical traditions and emphasizes the holiday’s place in the sanctuary and in the service of priests who wave the sheaf; it appears in the context of the cycle of seven weeks between the first fruits of the barley harvest and the first fruits of the wheat harvest:

You shall count seven complete Sabbaths from the day of your bringing the sheaf of [the wave-offering. You shall c]ount until the morrow of the seventh Sabbath. You shall count [fifty] days. You

**Commented [JL1]:** This is the passage as it appears in Vermes. It differs in some respects from the Hebrew, but the version in DSSSE is much more different.

shall bring a new grain-offering to YHWH from your homes, [a loaf of fine fl]ou[r], freshly baked with leaven. They are firstfruits to YHWH, wheat bread, twe[lve cakes, two] tenths of fine flour in each cake...the tribes of Israel. They shall offer...their [grain-offerin]g and dr[ink-offering] according to the statute. The [priests] shall wave...[wave-offering with the bread of] the firstfruits. They shall b[elong to] the priests and they shall eat them in the [inner] court[yard], [as a ne]w [grain-offering], the bread of the firstfruits. Then...new bread from freshly ripened ears. [On this] da[y] there shall be [a kadosh gathering, an eter]nal [rule] for their generations. [They] shall [do] no work. It is the feast of Weeks and the feast of Firstfruits, an eternal[1] memorial (Temple Scroll, XVIII-XIX, Vermes, p. 195).

The festival of Shavuot was known in antiquity as the festival of Pentecost, as in the Book of Tobit, which describes the pilgrimage and refers to “our festival of Pentecost, which is the sacred festival of weeks” (Tobit 1:6-8; 2:1), and in 2 Macc. 12:31 and Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities* 13:252; *Jewish Wars* 1:253). In Christian circles, Pentecost was the festival on which the Kadosh Spirit alit on the Apostles in Jerusalem in connection with the renewal of the covenant (Acts 2:1-4). Early *midrashim* from the Land of Israel associate the festival of Shavuot with the angels and with the Chariot tradition tied to the revelation at Sinai: “The Kadosh One Baruched Be He descended on Sinai with 22,000 bands of ministering angels. Another comment: ‘God/Aloah ’s chariots are myriads upon myriads, thousands upon thousands’ (Ps. 68:18); this teaches that 22,000 chariots descended with the Kadosh One Baruched Be He, and each and every chariot was as the vision seen by Ezekiel” (*Pesiqta de-rav kahana, Ba-hodesh ha-selishi*, 107b). The holiday was linked in the early Jewish-Christian tradition with the receiving of the Torah from the angels, as suggested by the comments of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, who was stoned to

death in Jerusalem. Stephen rebuked the High Priest who served during the fourth decade of the first century CE: “You are the ones that received the law as ordained by angels” (Acts 7:53). Even earlier, in the mystical tradition of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the festival of Shavuot was the festival of the vision of the Chariot, linked to the world of the cherubim and angels, and early in the first millennium BCE, it was the festival associated with the renewal of the Sinai covenant during the third month of the year (2 Chr. 15:10-15). In kabbalistic lore based on ancient traditions, the festival that renewed the giving of the Torah and the Sinaitic covenant was regarded as the time of the nuptials between the Kadosh One Baruched Be He and the *Shekhinah*,<sup>2</sup> and the *tiqqun leil shavu`ot*—a ritual of staying awake all Shavuot night, engaged in study and prayer—was the occasion for readying the bride for her nuptials. That description is based on the portrayal of the Sinaitic covenant as a marriage bond between God/Aloah and the congregation of Israel; and that, in turn, is connected to the wedding descriptions in the Song of Songs, which tannaitic tradition says was recited at the revelation at Sinai (*Song of Songs Rabbah* 81:2). In the debate over whether Song of Songs should be deemed canonical, R. Akiva called the book the “kadosh of holies,” saying that “The entire world is not as worthy as the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel; for all the scriptures are kadosh, but Song of Songs is kadosh of holies” (Mishnah, *Yadayim* 3:5). The song that was given at the Sinai revelation is taken to refer to the day of the giving of the Torah as a wedding day, to the groom who gives the Torah and to the congregation of Israel, His bride: “*O maidens of Zion, go forth and gaze upon King Solomon wearing the crown that his mother gave him on his wedding day*—this is the time of the giving of the Torah; on

**Commented [JL2]:** The quotation doesn't link the events to Shavuot. Should that be further explained?

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<sup>2</sup> The *Shekhinah* refers variously to God's presence, often personified in feminine form, or to the feminine qualities within God, again often personified as a separate entity.

*his day of bliss*—this is the building of the Temple” (Mishnah *Ta’anit* 4:8). “*On his wedding day*—this is Sinai, which was his wedding, as it is said, ‘stay pure today and tomorrow’<sup>3</sup> [Ex. 19:10]. *On the day of his bliss*—this is the giving of the Torah, as it is said, ‘He gave it [the Torah] to Moses when he finished [*ke-khaloto*] speaking with him’ [Ex. 31:18]. But the *ketiv* is ‘his bride’ [*ke-khalato*]” (*Numbers Rabbah* 12:8).<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, for reasons that will be explained presently, the authors of the Mishnah preferred to suppress these ancient traditions and to avoid drawing explicit connections between the festival of Shavuot and the day of the giving of the Torah, between the giving of the Torah and the revelation of the Chariot, and between the revelation at Sinai and the day of testimony, the day when the covenant was renewed at the time of the wheat harvest. Instead, they passed in silence over the priestly, mystical traditions associated with the oath, the covenant and its renewal, the giving of the Torah, the divine revelation at Sinai, the encounter the angels, and the Chariot. They repressed this rich collection of memories when they struck the name “Shavuot” and instead referred to the sacred occasion by the rootless name “*Azeret*” (lit., assembly), disregarded the renewal of the covenant, and forbade expounding the passage in Ezekiel that describes the Chariot or reading it as the prophetic portion (*haftarah*) in the synagogue. During the first generations following the destruction of the Temple, the sages relegated the tradition of the oaths and the covenants to the domain of the forgotten. They did so when they argued with the Sadducees over when the holiday was properly to be celebrated; when they ordained the counting of seven weeks from the day following the first day of Passover instead of counting seven

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<sup>3</sup> The Hebrew translated “stay pure” is *ve-qidashtem*. Literally, it means “sanctify yourselves,” but *qiddushin* also refers to marriage (more specifically, betrothal).

<sup>4</sup> *Ketiv* refers to the Masoretic written consonantal text; it is distinguished from the *qeri*, the text as vocalized and read.

weeks from the day after the Sabbath following the full week of Passover; and when they forbade the reading Ezekiel's vision of the Chariot, which had been associated with the festival of Shavuot, determining instead that "one does not read the Chariot [as the prophetic passage] for Shavuot (Mishnah, *Megillah* 4:10). The commandments related to the first-fruits festival are very briefly treated in the Mishnah; the sages devote to it only a few lines in tractate *Bikkurim*, which deals primarily with the agricultural aspects of the first-fruit offering and therefore appears in the order *Zera'im*, pertaining to agricultural matters, rather than in the order *Mo'ed*, where the other festivals are considered. No attention is devoted specifically to the wheat harvest, which is conflated with the first fruits that are harvested in the seventh month; the festival is referred to not as Shavuot (Weeks) but as *Azeret* (Assembly); no *gemara* was written about this mishnaic passage; and no unique customs are associated with the holiday. Moreover, the mishnaic passage omits all mention of cherubim and angels; and it transforms the holiday's association with the vision of the Chariot and the angels into a covert tradition. To do so, it rules that "the [passage concerning the] Chariot is not expounded" and "the [passage concerning the] Chariot is not read as the prophetic reading." Moreover, the sages deemed the written traditions that discuss the Chariot, linked to the *Kadosh of Holies*, and that expand upon the celestial chariots, associated with the calendar for Temple service, to be "external books" (i.e., the non-canonical works of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha) not to be read. The absence of the festival of Weeks from rabbinic memory is striking, as is the sages' reluctance to deal with it as the festival of the giving of the Torah and the entry into the covenant, the festival of the written Torah and of the Chariot, the festival observed by the angels, the festival of the offering of new grain and the waving of the first-fruit offering, associated with the counting of

seven weeks, or as “[a kadosh gathering, an eter]nal [rule] for their generations.... It is the feast of Weeks and the feast of Firstfruits, an eternal[l] memorial” (Temple Scroll XIX, Vermes, p. 195). It appears that these phenomena are all associated with the fact that the pre-Common-Era priestly traditions that appear in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in parallels in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha assign the festival of Shavuot a central place as the festival of renewal of the covenant observed by the angels in heaven (Jub. 6:18) and the priests on earth.

And so, for example, the second-century-BCE Book of Jubilees tells of the covenant entered into with Noah during the third month, at the conclusion of the flood: “He set his bow in the clouds for a sign of the covenant which is forever.... Therefore it is ordained and written in the heavenly tablets that they should observe the feast of Shebuot [Weeks] in this month, once per year, in order to renew the covenant in all (respects), year by year. And all of this feast was celebrated in heaven from the day of creation until the days of Noah....” (Jub. 6:16-18). The parallel version in Gen. 9:16-17 says nothing of the date or of the renewal of the covenant: ““When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God/Aloah and all living creatures, all flesh that is on the earth. That,’ God/Aloah said to Noah, ‘shall be the sign of the covenant that I have established between Me and all flesh that is on earth.’” The rainbow is elsewhere mentioned in the Hebrew Bible only in Ezekiel’s vision, which also forms part of the tradition regarding covenants in the third month, as will be explained below. In Jubilees, the holiday is termed “the festival of the renewal of the covenant,” a name derived from the command just quoted: “they should observe the feast of Shavuot in this month, once per year, in order to renew the covenant in all (respects), year by year.” It is referred as well as a day of testimony and a kadosh day (Jub. 6:12, 36-37) and as a



twofold feast (Jub. 6:21); and numerous traditions linking the Patriarchs to the covenants and the angels who enter into a covenant in the third month are associated with it (Jub. 14:18-20; 15:1-15; 16:13-14).

The name Shavuot is associated not only with weeks (*shavu`ot*) but also with oaths (*shevu`ot*) and covenant. It is tied to the covenant entered into between God/Aloah , the liberator from servitude, and those who left Egypt and attained freedom from servitude. That covenant was entered into at Mount Sinai, after the passing of seven weeks from the start of the Israelites' journey through the wilderness, which had begun on the twenty-sixth day of the month declared to be the first: "This month shall mark for you the beginning of the months; it shall be the first of the months of the year for you" (Ex. 12:2).

The festival of Shavuot is known in the Book of Jubilees as the time for renewal of the ancient covenants entered into on that occasion: the covenant of the rainbow, entered into with Noah during the third month, as described earlier, and the covenant between the pieces entered into with Abraham at the mid-point of the third month (Jub. 14:10). The angels are those who execute the covenant, as the angel of the presence says: "And on that day [the mid-point of the third month], we made a covenant with Abram, just as we had made a covenant in that month with Noah. And Abram renewed the feast and the ordinance for himself forever" (Jub. 14:20). Like every one of the seven appointed times of the Lord/YaHuWaH, the festival of Shavuot forms a crossroads of remembrance and forgetting, canonization and censorship, hegemonic memory and alternative memory, transmission and loss. It is a holiday linked to the struggle over memory and the weaving of historical alternatives from antiquity to our own time, and it is linked as well to polemics and disputes that have been little considered and that most have preferred to pass over in silence.

The history of the hidden festival of Shavuot is linked to three disputes that raged in late antiquity: one between the Zadokite priests and the Hasmonean priests during the second century BCE; one between the Sadducees and the Pharisees during the first century BCE and first century CE; and one between the sages and the Jewish-Christians during the first and second centuries CE. For the priests of the House of Zadok, Shavuot occupied a central and sacred place as the festival of the covenants and oaths executed during the third month and of the renewal of the covenant at that time. This is evident from passages in Jubilees and the Temple Scroll, from the account of the giving of the Torah that appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls, from the calendar appearing at the beginning of the letter in the Dead Sea Scrolls known as *Miqzat ma'aseh ha-torah* ("Some Observances of the Law," abbreviated as MMT), and from the beginning of the Dead Sea "Community Rule," all of which were written during the last centuries BCE. The sages, however, who were active following the destruction of the Second Temple, sought to suppress the traditions associated with this priestly festival—the festival of the covenant and the testimony, of the angels and the Chariot; the festival of the Zadokite priests and of the pilgrimage to the Temple. They did so during the first centuries following the destruction of the Temple, an event that necessarily entailed the abolition of the sacred Temple service and the rejection of the cultic and mystical priestly tradition set forth in the written Torah and its Dead Sea Scroll expansions. All of those texts without exception were considered sacred scriptures, and many were linked to the Zadokite priests and their covenantal associates, the angels.

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The priests of the House of Zadok were a dynasty that served as High Priests for nearly a millennium, from the time of Aaron the priest until 175 BCE. In the tradition of the rabbinic sages, they are known as Sadducees and Boethians; in Hellenistic literature they are known as the House of Honyo, named for Honyo ben Simeon III, the last Zadokite priest to serve in the Temple in Jerusalem; and in the Dead Sea Scrolls they are known as the Zadokite priests and the men of their covenant, named for Zadok ben Ahituv, the priest who served as the “first among the sons of Phineas” in Jerusalem at the time of King David, as mentioned in the Joshua Apocryphon. The Bible tells that Zadok was the priest who served in the time of King David (2 Sam. 8:17; 15:24-29) and anointed Solomon as David’s successor (1 Kgs. 1:34, 39-45). Toward the end of the First Temple period, they are referred to as the sons of Zadok, in view of the words of the priest and prophet Ezekiel: “the priests who perform the duties of the altar—they are the sons of Zadok, who alone of the descendants of Levi may approach the LORD/YAHUWAH to minister to Him” (Ez. 40:46; 43:19; 44:15; 48:11). Zadok ben Ahituv’s lineage goes back to Aaron, the priest, progenitor of the High Priesthood (Ezra 7:2-5; Neh. 11:11; 1 Chr. 16:39), and his descendants served in Solomon’s Temple until the time of Seraiah, the chief priest, who was exiled with King Jehoiachin (1 Kgs. 4:2; 2 Kgs. 25:18; 1 Chr. 5:29-34, 38; 9:11; 2 Chr. 31:10). Thereafter, the descendants of Seraiah’s grandson, Joshua ben Jehozadak, served in the Second Temple from the return from the Babylonian Exile until the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, who conquered Jerusalem in 175 BCE. The dispute between the Zadokite priests and the sages regarding the time for harvesting the *omer* and the consequent time for the festival of Shavuot is known as a dispute between Sadducees and Pharisees, but it was preceded by the intense conflict between the displaced Zadokite priests, who maintained the use of a solar calendar,

**Commented [JL3]:** I added this citation because it seems to be the only one that speaks of Seraiah’s exile.

and the Hasmonean priests who supplanted them and maintained the use of a lunar calendar. For 120 years, from the middle of the second century BCE until the time of Herod, during the final third of the first century BCE, the Hasmonean priests took the place of the Zadokite priests. In general, little attention is devoted to the nature of these disputes, which related to the festival of Shavuot, the festival of the renewal of the covenant and the time of the priestly Berachah, and were tied to the dispute over the fixed weekly calendar vs. the variable monthly calendar and to the dispute over the times of the harvest. That lack of attention may be attributable to the complexity of the disputes' historical context, to the widespread anachronistic tendency to read ancient history exclusively through the rabbinic tradition, or to the struggles over remembrance and forgetting that have been waged through the ages, from antiquity until our own time.

The disputes over the festival of Shavuot—its names and timing, the commandments that depend on it, and the memories associated with it—are connected to the polemic over the calendar and the struggle over who had the authority to fix it and determine the premises that would guide its calculation. The Torah, in the formulation adopted by the sages following the destruction of the Temple, does not specify a fixed number of days in a year or in a month, does not specify a day of the week to be associated in advance with the date for any of the seven fixed times of the Lord/YaHuWaH, and lacks a set time for the festival of Shavuot. In contrast, the parallel and earlier versions of the Torah found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, written by the “priests of the House of Zadok and the men of their covenant,” contain a fixed time for Shavuot, known and calculated in advance—[Sunday, the fifteenth day of the third month, seven weeks after the day of waving the sheaf; the latter observance likewise is always on a Sunday, the twenty-sixth day of the first month.](#) The

difference between the two perspectives flowed from the view of the Zadokite priests and the men of their covenant that the Temple was to follow a fixed, 364-day solar calendar, known and calculated in advance. The calendar was made known by the angels to Enoch son of Jared, of the seventh Adamite generation (Gen. 5:21-24; Jub. 4:16-25) and is associated with various events in the tradition of the books of Genesis and Jubilees. The calendar began each year with the first day of the first month (Ex. 12:2), which always fell on a Wednesday, the day on which the sun, moon, and stars were created; it was the first day of the month of Nisan, the day of the vernal equinox. The year thus began with the day on which the heavenly luminaries were created, in the first month, also known as the month of Abib, from which cyclical and eternal Jewish time was counted—a time system encompassing cycles of respite from servitude. The times of respite were termed in the Bible “the appointed times of the Lord/YaHuWaH” and were tied to the counting of seven-based cycles that establish the covenant. In the Book of Exodus, the first month is the month of transition from enslavement to liberty, and it is the point from which one begins to count the Sabbaths and the seven appointed times of the Lord/YaHuWaH. Time is marked by Sabbaths, by the seven appointed times, and by sabbatical years and jubilees, all of which point to the covenant through sacred seven-based cycles. This seven-based cycle is introduced by “These are the set times of the Lord/YaHuWaH, the sacred occasions, which you shall celebrate each at its appointed time” (Lev. 23:4) and is detailed in Chap. 23 of Leviticus; it is referred to in the Scrolls as “appointed times of freedom.” These seven appointed times, and the cycles of sabbatical years and jubilees associated with them in the seven-based cycles of respite, are tied to the commandments made known in the covenant entered into in the third month on the festival of Shavuot, in the encounter at Sinai.

The Dead Sea Scrolls version of “The Book of Heavenly Luminaries,” a portion of 1 Enoch (chapters 72-82), tells of the receipt of the calendar from the angels, and Jubilees (chapter 6) recounts the flood story as the story of the calculation of the calendar. According to both of these texts, the year is divided into four equal quarters of ninety-one days each. The first day of each quarter is called the “day of remembrance.” As already noted, the first day of the year is invariably a Wednesday, the day on which the heavenly luminaries were created; it is the day of remembrance on the first day of the first month. Each of the quarters, corresponding to the four seasons of the year, likewise begins on a Wednesday: the first of Nisan, corresponding to the vernal equinox; the first of Tammuz, the summer solstice; the first of Tishri, the autumnal equinox; and the first of Tevet, the winter solstice. Each quarter began with the day of remembrance on a Wednesday, encompassed thirteen Sabbaths with designated dates, and continued for thirteen identical weeks. The first Sabbath would fall invariably on the fourth day of the first month of the quarter, and the final Sabbath, the thirteenth in the quarter, would fall on the twenty-eighth of the

third month.

The festival of Shavuot, on this calendar, always falls on the day following the eleventh Sabbath of the first quarter, that is, Sunday, the fifteenth day of the third month. All of the quarters are marked by a similar, regular division into thirteen Sabbaths having fixed dates, known in advance: the first Sabbath in the quarter falls on the fourth day of the first, fourth, seventh, and tenth months, respectively, and the final Sabbath in the quarter falls on the twenty-eighth day of the third, sixth, ninth and twelfth months, respectively. Each month numbered thirty days, and at the end of the third month in each quarter—which always ended on a **Tuesday**—an additional day was added, making for a month of thirty-one days. This additional day, the ninety-

**Commented [JL4]:** Should this be Monday, so that the yom pagu' a is Tuesday and then the next month can begin, as always, on Wednesday? Since 91 is a multiple of 7, a 91-day period beginning on a Wednesday will end on a Tuesday—or am I misunderstanding something?

first in the quarter, was called “*yom pagu`a*,” (“the defective day”). Once every seven years, during the sabbatical year, an extra week appears to have been added in order to make up the difference between the 364 days of their calendar and the solar year of 365¼ days, a period well known in antiquity and referred to in 2 Enoch. They may have added two weeks once every twenty-eight years in order to make up the missing quarter day. They selected a year of 364 days rather than of 365¼ days, as astronomical calculation of the solar year would require, because the priestly calendar was one of fixed Sabbaths, calculated in advance and based on a symmetric division of the days of the year and its seasons into equal seven-day periods. The symmetrical yearly calendar of identical weekly and quarterly periods comprised fifty-two weeks, as detailed in the Psalms Scroll found in Qumran Cave 11, and was divided into four equal, 91-day periods, as detailed in Enoch and Jubilees. On this fixed, mathematically calculated calendar, which provided the underpinnings for the priestly sacred service and was anchored in oath and covenant, each Sabbath and each of the seven appointed times of the Lord/YaHuWaH had a fixed day, a fixed date, and a fixed interval between it and the appointed time that preceded it. The three pilgrimage festivals fell on the fifteenth of the first, third, and seventh months. Thus, the festival of Shavuot—the appointed time of the first fruits of the wheat harvest, set by Scripture at seven weeks following the time of the barley harvest—invariably fell on Sunday, the fifteenth of the third month, seven weeks after the time of the waving of the sheaf. The latter, according to the priestly calendar, invariably fell on the Sunday following the conclusion of the Passover festival, the twenty-sixth of the first month. This 364-day, 52-week calendar is referred to at various points in the Dead Sea Scrolls. It begins with the month of Abib (that is, Nisan) and, as noted, comprises four 91-day seasons (Jub. 6:23-29); they are known as the season of early harvest, the

summer time, the season of sowing, and the season of grass (Comm. Rule, 1QS X:7).

The calendar is discussed in various traditions, beginning with the books of Jubilees and Enoch, continuing through the Qumran Psalms Scroll and the calendar at the beginning of MMT, and culminating in the Temple Scroll, the Priestly Courses Scroll and the Qumran version of the flood story, which is an account of the determination of the yearly calendar. All of the Zadokite priestly traditions are identical in this regard, emphasizing the fixed 364-day year divided into fifty-two weeks that were allocated to the twenty-four priestly courses (1 Chr. Ch. 24) who served in the Temple for one week at a time on a fixed rotation and after whom the weeks of the festivals were named. The Qumran Priestly Courses Scroll enumerates the cycles of songs sung by the priests over a period of hundreds of years. During the six-year period between sabbatical years, each of the twenty-four courses of priests was on duty thirteen times for a week at a time and followed the song cycles listed in the Priestly Courses Scroll. The priestly courses—the groups who maintained the rotation in the sanctuary—were endowed with responsibility for the eternal priestly covenant; they observed the continuous annual cycle of fifty-two Sabbaths and seven appointed times of the Lord/YaHuWaH along with the seven-year cycle of sabbatical years and jubilees. These cycles were the essence of the eternal testimony to the sacred cycles of respite (“the appointed times of the Lord/YaHuWaH, kadosh convocations”) that maintain the covenant; accordingly, the festival of Shavuot, which attests to them, is called “the day of testimony.” The cycles embodied the essence of the oath taken at Sinai, the oath that the festival of Shavuot was meant to maintain and renew annually.

Once each of the priestly courses had served thirteen times over six years, the seventh year was declared to be a sabbatical year in which work ceased, just as the seven days of the week concluded with the seventh day, the Sabbath, on which all labor was



forbidden. After seven seven-year cycles—forty-nine years—a jubilee year was declared. The twenty-four priestly courses were a living liturgical calendar, for their rotation into and out of service every Sunday marked the start of the new week and their rotation after fifty-two weeks marked the start of a new year. The completion of thirteen cycles of service by each of the twenty-four courses marked the time for the sabbatical year, and the completion of ninety-one cycles of service marked the time for the jubilee. The rigorous observance of these eternal and sacred seven-based cycles of respite from labor—fixed and calculated in advance as cycles of rest, sabbatical year, equality, freedom, and liberty, and made known from the heavens through the oath and covenant at Sinai—were regarded by the Zadokite priests as the essence of the oath and covenant maintained by the festival of Shavuot and written in  
the tablets of the covenant.

\* \* \* \* \*

According to the priestly historiography, this solar calendar of Sabbaths, mathematically calculated in advance and always beginning in the month of Abib (Nisan) was followed in the sanctuary from the time of the High Priest Zadok son of Ahituv, who served in the First Temple and whose descendants are referred to by the prophet Ezekiel—himself a priest—as “the levitical priests who are of the stock of Zadok, and so eligible to minister to Me” (Ezek. 43:19). It remained in force until 175 BCE, the year in which the Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanes, the son of Antiochus III (a descendant of Alexander the Great’s successors) came to power. He conquered Jerusalem and imposed, in the Temple as throughout his dominions, the Seleucid-Greek calendar (Dan. 7:25; 11:31). That calendar, instituted for administrative reasons, was a lunar calendar whose year began in the fall; it was based

on human observation of the moon and required intercalation to keep the lunar and solar years synchronized—something not contemplated by the Bible. The High Priest serving in Jerusalem at the time—Honyo ben Simeon, the last of the Zadokite priests—rejected Antiochus’s demand to institute the lunar calendar with its variable number of days. He insisted that there could be no change in the sacred, 364-day solar calendar with its spring-time new year, a calendar that was based on divinely revealed fixed calculations and that provided the basis for the entire sacred service of the priestly courses. For his defiance, Honyo was ousted by Antiochus from his position as High Priest and, in 171 BCE, was murdered by Andronicus, an agent of the Hellenizing High Priest Menelaus, whom Antiochus had appointed. From 175 to 164 BCE, Antiochus appointed a series of Hellenizing high priests who purchased the position and obeyed Antiochus’s directive to change the calendar. Three Hellenizing priests—Jason, Menelaus, and Alcimus—served in place of the ousted Zadokite priests between 175 and 159 BCE. In the wake of the Hasmonean war against Antiochus (167-164 BCE) and the corrupt and defiling calendar and ritual that he imposed on the Temple (Dan. 11: 31-32; 2 Macc. 6:1-7), the Hasmonean dynasty came to power, serving as priests from 152 to 37 BCE. During that long period, the ousted Zadokites and their allies called themselves “the sons of light,” for they struggled on behalf of the sacred, seven-based solar calendar, in which the festival of Shavuot would always fall on Sunday, the fifteenth of the third month, following the eleventh Sabbath of the quarterly season, as written in the MMT Scroll found at Qumran. In the account of the calendar with which that letter begins, its authors determined that: “[...On the seventh of the third month: sabbath. On the fourteenth of it: sabbath. On the fifteenth of it: Feast of Weeks. On the twenty-f]irs[t] of it: sabbath. [On] the twenty-eighth of it: sabbath. The first of the sabbath (=Sunday) and the

second[day] (=Monday) [and the third are to be added. And the season is complete: ninety-one days...]" (MMT A:I-II, Vermes, pp. 221-222). The Zadokites referred to their rivals, the Hasmonean priests, as the "sons of darkness." The latter were not included in the biblical account of the high priestly dynasty and assumed the priesthood by force of arms (1 Macc. Chap. 10). They adopted the Seleucid calendar—a variable, lunar calendar, dependent on human observation of the new moon and precluding advance determination of the times for the festivals. The Hasmonean priests came to power as the appointees of Antiochus's successors, King Alexander Balus and King Demetrius II, during the 150s and 140s BCE (1 Macc. 10:18-21; 11:27-37, 57-58; 13:36-42; 14:38), and these Seleucid kings imposed their lunar calendar on the Hasmonians, their protégés. The Hasmonians were termed not only "the sons of darkness" but also "the priest of wickedness" (opposite of "the priest of righteousness"), the "sons of evil" (opposite of "the sons of righteousness"), and the "dominion of malice and Mastema"; they were so called because they stole the priesthood from the Zadokites, desecrated and defiled the sanctuary, and accepted—evidently having no choice in the matter—the lunar calendar of their Seleucid patrons.

In contrast to the Hasmonean priests, who affirmed the variable lunar calendar and were therefore termed "sons of darkness" and "sons of evil, nullifiers of the covenant," the Zadokite priests, who adhered to the fixed and sacred solar calendar, termed themselves "sons of light" and "sons of righteousness, preservers of the covenant." They saw themselves as loyal to the covenant, divinely chosen to maintain the ways of righteousness and of the sacred and covenantal appointed times, grounded on preservation of the fixed, pre-calculated, seven-based cycles. They saw themselves as well as preservers of the sacred priestly courses, the stock of Aaron, who was the holiest of the kadosh, able to trace their lineage all the way back to the

Israelites' wandering in the wilderness, and "the stock of Zadok, and so eligible to minister to me" (Ezek. 43:19), going back to the kingdom of David and Solomon. The Qumran Habakkuk Commentary, written in the circles of the "men of truth who keep the Law" (Vermes, p. 482) and are led by the Teacher of Righteousness (id.), tells of a struggle between two priestly houses regarding the time for observing the fast of the Day of Atonement. On the one hand are those loyal to "the Covenant of God/Aloah" who follow the path of light; they are the House of Zadok. Arrayed against them are "the breakers of the Covenant" who walk in the paths of darkness; they are the Hasmoneans. The scroll describes how the wicked Hasmonean priest persecutes the righteous Zadokite priest on the day considered to be the Day of Atonement on the sacred Zadokite calendar (Friday, the tenth day of the seventh month):

Its interpretation concerns the Wicked Priest who pursued the Teacher of Righteousness to consume him with the heat of his anger in the place of his banishment. In festival time, during the rest of the day of Atonement, he appeared to them to consume them and make them fall on the day of fasting, the sabbath of their rest (DSSSE p. 21).

The Day of Atonement and the festival of Shavuot were the two central priestly festivals on which the service of the High Priest was assigned the highest level of importance. Shavuot stood at the focus of the Zadokite world, for they interpreted its name as referring not only to weeks (from *shavu`a*, a week) but also to an oath or covenant (*shevu`ah*), as declared by Jeremiah, the priest-prophet: "Who keeps for our benefit the weeks [*shevu`ot*, also translatable as 'oaths'] appointed for harvest" (Jer. 5:24) (Ezek. 16:8) and consistent with the meaning of the word *sheva* in Scripture, also associated with an oath or covenant (Gen. 26:31-33). As noted, the oath concerns the maintenance of the seven-based cycles of respite referred to as "the fixed times of

**Commented [JL5]:** I could find no reference to paths of light or darkness in either the Vermes or DSSSE version of Peshier Habakkuk. Also, the Hebrew citations are  $\text{אש}$ , but I'm not sure what the reference is to, so I left out most of the references.

**Commented [JL6]:** I assumed they maintained both interpretations side by side, and added this clause to clarify that.

**Commented [JL7]:** This citation appears in the Hebrew but the verse—which mentions "covenant" but not "oath"—isn't quoted.

the LORD/YAHUWAH...sacred occasions” and as the “times of liberty” established in the fixed, eternal, and pre-determined order of cycles made known in the covenant of Sinai that was entered into on the festival of Shavuot. These cycles of respite preserve the cycles of days of freedom and liberty that lie at the basis of the covenant between God/Aloah and his people. Their meaning is that man is bound by oath to forgo his dominion, possession, and ownership on one day in every seven; on the seven appointed times that fall during the first seven months of each year; during one year in every seven; and once in every seven seven-year cycles. Man is commanded to rest, in accord with these seven-based cycles of appointed times, from all labor and from any enslavement of himself or another; to cease from earning any profit and from changing creation for his benefit. This respite from all labor entails following the paths of righteousness, which interrupt secular enslavement and treat all members of the resting community equally, sanctifying them through the sacred occasions. These ways of righteousness are conditioned on observing “the fixed times of the LORD/YAHUWAH...the sacred occasions” and are tied to “the spirits of true and righteous knowledge in the Kadosh of Holies,” as referred to in the Song for the Sacrifice of the Eleventh Sabbath found at [Qumran](#). That sabbath (the eleventh) falls on the fourteenth day of the third month, the day preceding the festival of Shavuot, which always falls on Sunday, the fifteenth day of the third month. The ways of true and righteous knowledge were conditioned on the cycles of respite and release, of renouncing mastery and ownership, wealth and enslavement, all in accord with the rhythm of fixed, seven-based cycles. These continuous cycles of “fixed times, the fixed times of the LORD/YAHUWAH, which you shall proclaim as sacred occasions” (Lev. 23:2) constitute cycles of social justice; sacred, seven-based cycles preserved in oath and covenant. They comprise a periodic waiver of mastery and renunciation of

**Commented [JL8]:** I could find this text neither in Vermes nor in DSSSE; what is its 4Q citation?

ownership, emancipation of lands and emancipation of slaves. These cycles, all based on seven (*sheva*) and oath (*shevu`ah*), consist of **five** segments: fifty-two Sabbaths and seven fixed times of the Lord/YaHuWaH, all falling during the first seven months of the year (Lev. 23), on which no work at all permitted; together they come to seventy days every year. In addition, they include the sabbatical years once in every seven years and the jubilee once in every seven seven-year cycles (Lev. 23:1-14). These cycles are the precondition to the Berachah of the seven species with which the Land of Israel is Baruched during the first seven months of the year, during which the seven “fixed times of the LORD/YAHUWAH” fall.

The oath and the covenant—referred to, as noted, in the words of the priest-prophet Jeremiah as “the weeks [oaths] appointed for harvest”—are based, on the one hand, on the divine promise given to those who observe the covenant grounded on seven-based cycles of human rest and, on the other, on divine Berachah through seven-based cycles of agricultural productivity. The covenant was entered into with those adjured to maintain the seven-based cycles of respite, known as the “fixed times of the Lord/YaHuWaH, the sacred occasions.” Those who observe these cycles will be Baruched with, and enjoy to satiation, the seven forms of produce yielded by the Land of Israel during the first seven months of the year—that is, between Nisan and Tishri—in accord with God/Aloah’s words that sum up the Torah portion of *Be-har* and introduce the portion of *Be-huqqotai*:

[If] you...keep my sabbaths and venerate My sanctuary [or: My sacred occasions—R. E.]...If you follow My laws and faithfully observe My commandments, I will grant your rains in their season, so that the earth shall yield its produce and the trees of the field their fruit. Your threshing shall overtake the vintage, and your vintage shall overtake the sowing; you shall eat your fill of bread and dwell securely in your

**Commented [JL9]:** It's not clear what constitute the five. Is it (1) Sabbaths; (2) fixed times; (3) sabbatical years; (4) jubilees; and (5) seven species?

land....I will...make you fertile and multiply you; and I will maintain  
My covenant with you (Lev. 26:2-9).

“Threshing” refers to the barley harvest and the wheat harvest, which are seven Sabbaths, or seven weeks: the barley harvest—that is the “sheaf” (*omer*), as noted, is on Sunday, the twenty-sixth day of Nisan, and the wheat harvest is seven sabbaths later, on Sunday, the fifteenth of Sivan. The “vintage” is the time for gathering wine grapes, which begins seven sabbaths, or seven weeks, following the conclusion of the wheat harvest, on Sunday, the third day of the month of Av. Seven weeks after that, on Sunday, the twenty-second of the month of Elul, is the beginning of the olive-pressing season. After these four species have been gathered—at seven-week intervals during the period running from the first month through the sixth; that is, barley on Sunday, 26 Nisan (termed “the festival of the barley time” in the Priestly Courses Scroll), wheat on Sunday, 15 Sivan, wine on Sunday, 3 Av, and oil on Sunday, 22 Elul—the year concludes with the seven-day festival of Sukkot, beginning at the mid-point of the seventh month, Tishri. It is then that dates, figs, and pomegranates are harvested in their respective ways. The dates for harvesting all seven of these species are specified in the Qumran Temple Scroll and alluded to in  
Scripture in the expression “grain, wine, and oil.”

An example of this seven-based enumeration, providing for seven-week cycles between the onsets of the times for harvesting the first four of the seven species (barley, wheat, grapes and olives) can be found in the Temple Scroll’s comments about the time of the grape harvest, which begins seven weeks after the time for the offering of new bread first-fruits—that is, the wheat time, the festival of Shavuot:

You [shall count] seven weeks from the day when you bring the new grain-offering to YHW[H], the bread of firstfruits. Seven full Sabbaths

[shall elapse un]til you have counted fifty days to the morrow of the seventh Sabbath. [You] shall [bring] new wine for a drink-offering  
(Temple Scroll XIX:11-14; Vermes, p. 195).

Maintenance of the sacred seven-based cycle of rest on the Sabbaths, the seven fixed times of the LORD/YAHUWAH, the sabbatical years, and the jubilees—detailed in God/Aloah 's word in Torah portions of *Emor* and *Be-har* (Lev. 23 and 25) and in God/Aloah 's word transmitted in the first person in the Temple Scroll—ensures the continuation of the seven-based cycles of harvest or the annual cycle of the seven species that promises Berachah, fertility, and life, as detailed in the portion of *Be-huqqotai* (Lev. 26). The encounter at Sinai at the middle of the third month (Ex. 19:1; Jub. 1:1) takes place at the time of the first-fruit festival—the fixed time of the wheat harvest; the festival of Shavuot; the time of the “weeks [oaths] appointed for harvest” (Jer. 5:24); the time at which the covenant was entered into and the oath was taken regarding the seven-based cycles of respite commanded from the heavens, whose pinnacle is the festival of Shavuot; the day of testimony; the festival observed by the angels on high, known as the festival of the giving of the Torah. There is a divine command regarding cyclical times of rest on Sabbaths and on the seven sacred fixed times, during the sabbatical year and the jubilee, all of which were made known by divine revelation at the time the covenant was entered into at Sinai; and the promises made to those who maintain the covenant, also made known at that time, are renewed and attested to again annually, in concrete form, beginning with the entry into the Land of Israel at the fiftieth jubilee (Jub. 50). That process takes place through the cyclical renewal of the “weeks [oaths] appointed for harvest” and the harvest cycles of the seven species, all dependent on divine Berachah. [That Berachah, in turn, is conditioned on maintaining the way of righteousness through oath, respite, and](#)



renunciation of mastery on one day in every seven; on each of the seven fixed times of the LORD/YAHUWAH; during one year in every seven; and during the jubilee year once in every seven seven-year cycles. These sanctified, seven-based cycles of sacred time were observed in the Temple by the priests of the House of Zadok and the priests of the House of Aaron, the guardians of the sacred courses, who served in the Temple by divine selection (Ex. 27:21; 28:1; 29:44; Lev. 3:38; 1 Chr. 23:13) and were maintained by oath and covenant as summed up in the calendar of Sabbaths, fixed times of the LORD/YAHUWAH, sabbatical years, and jubilees referred to earlier. For the people, all of whom (except for the tribe of Levi) were engaged in agriculture, the harvest times were days of rest, joy and gladness (“you shall rejoice in your festival”). The planters and reapers who realize Berachahin their toil would joyfully and gratefully bring to the Temple the first fruits of their barley harvest, along with the first fruits of their wheat, grape, and olive harvests at seven-week intervals during the first seven months of the year (Deut. 28:51; 2 Chr. 31:5; 32:28; Hos. 2:10; Neh. 10:40).

2 Chronicles, chapter 15, recounts the joy felt by the pilgrims going up to Jerusalem during the third month for the festival of Shavuot, the first-fruits festival of the wheat harvest, in the time of King Asa, Solomon’s great-grandson, who reigned in Jerusalem from 908 to 867 BCE. The pilgrims, grateful for the Berachahof the harvest, came to reenter and renew the covenant, to seek God/Aloah, and to swear an oath to God/Aloah in loud voice, accompanied by trumpets and rams’ horns recalling the encounter at Sinai (2 Chr. 15:10-15). In its translation of that passage, the

Aramaic Targum of Chronicles refers specifically to the festival of Shavuot.

The Qumran Community Rule text describes a ceremony by which those who maintain the oath related to the priestly, seven-based cycle of rest and the solar calendar of Sabbaths enter into the covenant on the festival of Shavuot:

In order to seek God/Aloah with [all (one's) heart and] with a[ll (one's) soul;] in order to do what is good and just in his presence, as he commanded by the hand of Moses and by the hand of all his servants the Prophets....In order to welcome all those who freely volunteer to carry out God/Aloah's decrees into the covenant of kindness; in order to be united in the counsel of God/Aloah and walk in perfection in his sight, comply with all revealed things concerning the regulated times of their stipulations....And all those who enter in the Rule of the Community shall establish a covenant before God/Aloah in order to carry out all that he commanded....When they enter the covenant, the priests and the levites shall Baruch the God/Aloah of victories and all the works of his faithfulness and all those who enter the covenant shall repeat after them: "Amein, Amein" (Rule of the Community, I:1-20; DSSSE, p. 71).

The account, only part of which is quoted above, concludes with the Berachah recited by the priests for each individual entering the covenant:

And the priests will Baruch all the men of God/Aloah's lot who walk unblemished in all his paths and they shall say: "May he Baruch you with everything good, and may he protect you from everything bad. May he illuminate your heart with the discernment of life and grace you with eternal knowledge. May he lift upon you the countenance of his favor for eternal peace" (Rule of the Community II:1-4; DSSSE, pp. 71-73).

This Berachah is an interesting priestly version of the priests' Berachah prescribed in Num. 6:24-27; the version here is addressed to an individual and does not mention God/Aloah's name, while that in Numbers mentions God/Aloah's name

three times. The Dead Sea Scrolls also include a version of the Berachah addressed to the congregation as a whole, to be recited by the priest for the pilgrims coming to renew the covenant before God/Aloah and the angels. That version likewise mentions God/Aloah's name several times; it is the source of the Berachah of the cyclical four seasons of the year—referred to in Enoch as the “chariots of heaven” (1 Enoch 75:3)—and of the treasure house of Baruched rain, the preconditions to the cycles of productivity and fertility:

[Answering, he shall say] to the sons of [I]srael: May you be Baruched in the name of the Most High [God/Aloah ]...and may His Kadosh name be Baruched for ever and ever. [May all His kadosh angels be Baruch ed. May] the M[ost High] God/Aloah [Baruch ] you. [May He shine His face towards you and open for you His] good [treasure] which is in heaven [to bring down on your land] showers of Berachah, dew, rain, [early rain] and late rain in His/its time, and to give [you the fruit of the produce of corn, wine, and o]il plentiful. And may the land [prod]uce for [you fruits of delight. And you shall eat and grow f]at. And there shall be no miscarriage [in yo]ur [la]n[d] and no [sickness, blight or mildew] shall be seen in [its] produ[ce]. And there shall be no loss of children n]or stumbling in [your] congrega[tion], and wild beasts shall withdraw] from your land and there shall be no pestil[ence in your land.] For God/Aloah is wi[th you and His kadosh angels stand in your congregation, and His] kadosh [name] shall be invoked upon you...in your midst... (4Q285, fr. 1, Vermes, pp. 187-188).

**Commented [JL10]:** Hebrew reads 75:4, but in Charlesworth it seems to be v. 3.

**Commented [JL11]:** Hebrew reads Q2854, but this seems to be right.

The High Priest's Berachah for the festival pilgrims, recited in the Temple before God/Aloah and the angels and before the Ark of the Covenant and the cherubim (cf. BT *Yoma* 54a), was in the nature of a renewal of the covenant and oath entered into at Sinai on the festival of Shavuot, the festival of the giving of the Torah. But it was also a Berachah of thanksgiving for the satiety and abundance granted to

those who maintained the covenant, who had just now gathered their wheat harvest into the granary. Entry into the covenant was the pivotal event in the world of the Zadokite priests, for it constituted undeniable evidence of the link between resting on the seven-based cycle of sacred fixed times and the Berachah of the harvest. It also served as a promise that this Berachah would be renewed in the ensuing year for those who maintain the covenant and rest on Sabbaths and festivals, sabbatical years, and jubilees. The Zadokite priests declared, on the Sabbath preceding the festival of Shavuot, their faith in “the spirits of true and righteous knowledge in the Holy/Kadosh of Holies,” as set forth in the Song for the Sabbath Sacrifice. They believed with all their hearts in “justice, justice shall you pursue” and spoke of the “covenant of kindness” and the commandment to support the stranger, the orphan, and the widow and to walk in the ways of righteousness. In their writings, they waged war against those who walked in the ways of corruption and evil, headed by the wicked

Hasmonean priest, whom they spoke of in their commentary on Hab. 2:14:

*Because of the blood of men and the violence done to the land, the city, and all its inhabitants....* Interpreted, the city is Jerusalem where the wicked priest committed abominable deeds and defiled the Temple of God/Aloah . *The violence done to the land:* these are the cities of Judah where he robbed the Poor of their possessions (Commentary on Habakkuk XII; Vermes, p. 484).

In the writings of the Zadokite priests and the men of their covenant, the festival of Shavuot—referred to as well as the “festival of weeks,” the “day of testimony,” and the “second festival” and described as the festival celebrated by the angels on high from Creation until the encounter at Sinai—is the festival of the giving of the Torah. That is the view taken in Jub. 1:1, in the Dead Sea Scrolls, in the Samaritan tradition, the Ethiopic tradition, and the tradition of the Babylonian Talmud

(*Pesahim* 68b). The Amidah prayer for Shavuot so states explicitly: “this festival day of Shavuot, the time of the giving of our Torah” (cf. *Shulhan arukh, Orah hayyim* 494:1). But this identification of the festival of Shavuot with the time of the encounter at Sinai, the time at which the Written Torah was given, is nowhere stated in the masoretic version of the Torah, as edited by the sages of the Oral Torah following the destruction of the Temple, and it is not expressly mentioned in the Mishnah or the *Tosefta*. A fragmentary tradition found among the Qumran Scrolls describes the festival of Shavuot and the entry into the covenant at Sinai, linked to the giving of the Torah (referred to here as “the precepts of Moses”) in wording that preserves the exalted essence of the revelatory encounter; the fear and trembling associated with the divine loftiness and wondrous sounds; and the angelic speech linking heaven and earth, heard from the mouth of Moses as he sanctifies himself

before the glory/Kavod of God/Aloah :

[...] and your signs ... [...] they understand the precepts of Moses.  
[...] And Elyab[o(?)] began to speak, saying: He[ar,] congregation of YHWH, and pay attention, all the assembly ...[...] to a[ll his] wor[ds] and [his] rulin[g]s. Cursed is the man who does not persevere and keep and carry [out] all the la[ws of Y]HWH by the mouth of Moses his anointed one, to follow YHWH, the God/Aloah of our fathers, who command[ed] us from the mountains of Sina[i.] He has spoken wi[th] the assembly of Israel face to face, like a man speaks to his neighbour. And like a man sees li[gh]tm he has appeared to us in a burning fire, from above, from heaven, and on earth he stood on the mountain to teach us that there is no God/Aloah apart from him and no Rock like Him. [And all] the assembly [...] [...] ... and trembling seized them before the glory/Kavod of God/Aloah and the wonderful thunders, and they stayed at a distance. But Moses, the man of God/Aloah , was with God/Aloah in the cloud, and the cloud covered him because [...] when He sanctified him and he spoke as an angel through his mouth, for who

was a messen[ger] like him, a man of the pious ones? And he sho[wed...] ... which were never created before or afterward... [...] ...  
(4Q377; DSSSE, p. 745).

Religious precepts, as we know, cannot be given without an epiphany, and the entry into the covenant, or the giving of the divine law made known in the encounter at Sinai, was bound up with a glorious divine revelation: “Now the Presence of the LORD/YAHUWAH appeared in the sight of the Israelites as a consuming fire on the top of the mountain” (Ex. 24:17). In response, “All the people witnessed the thunder and lightening and the blare of the horn and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they fell back and stood at a distance (Ex. 20:14). According to the version in the Scrolls, God/Aloah ’s commandments from Sinai were bound up with burning fire from the shaking heavens or with fear and trembling that seized those who were present on account of the “wondrous voices” and the glory/Kavod of God/Aloah speaking “with the assembly of Israel face to face.” The transmission of the laws of Moses to the congregation of the LORD/YAHUWAH, and the glorification of the image of Moses, a man of the tribe of Levi, are likewise bound up with the covenant at Sinai according to this version, which constitutes an account of an exalted divine revelation that took place at the middle of the third month. The revelation served as a numinous structure, filled with splendor and exaltation, for the ceremony of entering into the covenant at the middle of the third month, a ceremony performed by the Zadokite priests at the Temple in Jerusalem. The account at the beginning of the Community Rule, quoted in part earlier, and the account in chapter 15 of 2 Chronicles, attest to the importance of the oath-renewal and covenantal ceremony on the festival of Shavuot at the middle of the third month and to its link to the giving of the tablets of the covenant at the Sinai encounter.

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The cycles of sacred time are preserved in oath and covenant and ensure the precise recurrence of the barley harvest each year on Sunday, the twenty-sixth day of the first month, and the wheat harvest seven Sabbaths later, on Sunday, the fifteenth day of the third month. Maintaining those cycles is tied as well to the structure of the sacred space that houses the sacred law, written on the tablets of the Covenant and kept in the Ark of the Covenant over which the cherubim spread their wings. As noted, the giving of the tablets of the Covenant on Sunday, the fifteenth of the third month, is linked to the divine revelation on the festival of Covenant and testimony, and that revelation of the One Who dwells upon the Cherubim (1 Sam. 4:4; 2 Sam. 6:2; Ps. 99:1) is tied to the sacred place, the Kadosh of Holies, in which the cherubim were situated (Ex. 25:18-22; 1 Kgs. 6:23-28; 2 Chr. 3:10-13). At the time the tabernacle was built by the Israelites in the wilderness, the cherubim were constructed in accord with a celestial pattern shown to Moses at Mount Sinai (Ex. 25:40); later, when the Temple was built in Jerusalem, they were constructed in accord with a heavenly pattern shown to David: "...the gold for the figure of the chariot—the cherubs—those with outspread wings screening the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD/YAHUWAH. All this that the LORD/YAHUWAH made me understand by His hand on me, I give you in writing—the plan of all the works" (1 Chr. 28:18-19). During the time of the Zadokite priests' service, the Temple was the place where the seven-based cycles of oath and covenant were maintained, at least ideally, in both law and practice; the mechanisms for doing so included sacrifices, prayers, Brachot, and sacred assemblies performed by the priests who maintained the sacred courses. According to the biblical historiography, the Zadokite priests served continuously for

nearly one thousand years, from the time of Aaron the priest, Moses' brother, until time of Honyo ben Simeon, who was murdered by those who ousted him and seized his place in 171 BCE.

In the ideal order of these priestly writers, the traditions regarding the sacred place of the cherubim's Chariot in the Kadosh of Holies and the heavenly chariot described in the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice—"his glorious chariots [...] kadosh cherubs, shining ophanim, in the in[ner shrine ... spirits of God/Aloah s...purity...]" (4Q405, frag. 20; DSSSE, p. 833)—were integrated with the tradition of sacred time, that is, the tradition of the "heavenly chariots" in the Book of Enoch, which expressed the eternity of the cycles of time visible to the eye, as learned from the angels (1 Enoch 75:4). The "heavenly chariots" are the continuous, natural cycles of time associated with the celestial luminaries and the seasons of the year; they are independent of human reckoning and depend only on the kindness of God/Aloah and the angels, extended equally to all creatures (see "The Book of Heavenly Luminaries," 1 Enoch, chaps. 72-82). They are supplemented by "fixed times of liberty," that is, the seven-based cycles made known aurally at the Sinai encounter; the latter are dependent on the reckoning of the human beings who rest and are maintained in covenant and oath by those who enter the covenant. Naturally enough, the vagaries of history subjected this ideal system, which prophets and priests sought to hand down, to varied and recurring challenges.

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Early in the sixth century BCE, around the time of the destruction of the First Temple, the tradition of the cherubim and the structure of the chariot in the Kadosh of Holies was tied to the vision of the Chariot, in which the priest-prophet Ezekiel ben



Buzi saw the appearance of cherubim. In his vision of the future Temple (chapters 40-48 of the book that bears his name), Ezekiel spoke at length in praise of the Zadokite priests, and many of his prophecies were tied to the fixed times and the sanctuary. The mystical tradition sets Shavuot as the time of Ezekiel's vision and explains the opening verse of his book: "R. Eliezer began and said: *In the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month, when I was in the community of exiles by the Chebar Canal*—on the fifth day we have already explained, but this day was the day of Shavuot, that being the day on which Israel received the Torah on Mount Sinai" (*Zohar hadash, parashat yitro* 37c). Judah Liebes, a *Zohar* scholar, has determined that the *idra rabba* (an assembly of sages) described in the *Zohar* and often equated in the text itself to the encounter at Sinai and the giving of the Torah, was, in fact, a *tiqqun leil shavu'ot* (an all-night mystical and study session on Shavuot night), for the *Zohar* states that the *idra rabba* took place on Shavuot. The conclusion unconditionally reached by scientific study coincides with that reached in the mystical tradition, for according to calculations based on the metonic cycle (which synchronizes dates on the lunar and solar calendars), Ezekiel's vision indeed took place on Shavuot, the festival of the terrestrial Temple which held the cherubim in its Kadosh of Holies and which became, in the vision of the exiled priest prophesying in the time of the destruction, a heavenly chariot or the place of the cherubim in the heavenly chariot. If that is so, the surprising date that opens the Book of Ezekiel—"In the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month.... On the fifth day of the month—it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin" (Ezek. 1:1-2)—makes no sense on its face. In his book *The War of the Calendars During the Second Temple Period* (Heb.) (Tel-Aviv, 1993), p. 75, Michael Chyutin examines that date along with others mentioned in Ezekiel and suggests they be explained by relating them to the

solar calendar through the metonic cycle: “The beginning of Ezekiel’s prophecy (1:1), if synchronized with the solar calendar, was on Shavuot Eve (the fourteenth of the third month) or on the festival of Shavuot (the fifteenth of the month), as the members of the Qumran sect believed. But “the members of the Qumran sect” a common but erroneous term invented by scholars, are none other than “the Zadokite priests and the men of their covenant,” whose writings were found in 930 scroll fragments in eleven caves at Qumran and Masada and in the Cairo Genizah. As noted, all of the scrolls are sacred scriptures and their writers referred to themselves as the “Zadokite priests and the men of their covenant.”

It is entirely possible that what gave rise in Ezekiel’s consciousness to the vision of the chariot in the heavenly sanctuary was the cognitive dissonance between his recollection of Shavuot, the central priestly festival, in all its splendor, and the reality of the Temple’s destruction and its aftermath that he saw all around him. On the one hand was the holiday etched in his memory—the festival of the covenant, the day on which that covenant was entered into, and the day of testimony regarding the revelation of the written Torah. It had been celebrated with great pomp at the Temple in Jerusalem, in the presence of the pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem with the first fruits of their wheat harvest and with festive Brachot by the priests. On the other hand were the bitter reality of the destruction of the Temple and of Jerusalem (described in all their horror by Ezekiel’s contemporary, the prophet Jeremiah, in the Book of Lamentations) and the overwhelming experience of exile and the profound sadness felt by the exiled priest-prophet on the once-joyous day in the midst of the third month—a day on which mourning was forbidden but that nonetheless had been transformed into a day of mourning among the exiles in Babylonia.

Some two thousand years later, a similar conjoining of terrible destruction with a festival on which mourning was forbidden led to the revelatory episode experienced by R. Joseph Karo's circle of kabbalists in Adrianopolis on Shavuot night of 1533. On that occasion, as they were engaged in a *tiqqun leil shavu`ot* in the Zoharic tradition, they received the bitter news that their colleague, the messianic kabbalist Solomon Malkho, had been burned at the stake. Malkho was born a converso in 1500 and lived as a Christian until his twenties, attaining a prominent position in the Portuguese court. He then publicly returned to his Judaism, choosing the name Malkho ("his king") on the basis of 2 Sam. 22:51—" [God/Aloah is a] tower of victory to His king [*malko*] [and] deals graciously with His anointed [*meshiho*; His messiah]"—and sought to advance a political messianic movement. His was condemned by the Inquisition and burned at the stake in Mantua in November 1532. Malkho's attempt to work for redemption through political means engendered hope and inspired confidence in the generation that had been expelled from Spain and Portugal—he had been, after all, an officer in the Portuguese court—and the news of his death, which did not reach Adrianopolis until Shavuot night, 1533, embodied the loss of that hope. The news produced an extreme disparity between the intense joy of the festival of renewing the covenant and receiving the Torah—a joy felt by those participating in the *tiqqun leil shavu`ot*—and the no less intense mourning over the terrible death of the last messianic kabbalist, a man who embodied a realistic hope for redemption during the first third of the sixteenth century. Public expression of that mourning was forbidden on the sacred festival, and the clash between the two emotions aroused within R. Joseph's Karo's consciousness the voice of the exiled daughter of Zion crying out in the Book of Lamentations. She appeared to him on the festival night in the image of the Torah / *Shekhinah* / diadem / Mishnah and, in a

voice emanating from his throat and speaking in first-person feminine, spoke dramatically to him and his colleagues of the destruction recounted in the Book of

Lamentations and the redemption associated with the encounter at Sinai:

Fortunate are you and fortunate are they who bore you.... For you set your mind to adorn me on this night, after many years since my diadem fell from my head and during which there has been none to comfort me; I was cast in the dust, grasping refuse heaps. But now you have restored the diadem to its former [glory/Kavod] .... And you have gained the merit to be of the king's palace; and the sound of your Torah-learning and the breath of your mouth have risen before the Kadosh One Baruched Be He, splitting several Firmament and several atmospheres in order to rise [there]. And angels were hushed, seraphs fell silent, and [heavenly] beasts stood still, as the entire heavenly host and the Kadosh One Baruched Be He heard your voice.... Now I, the Mishnah, have come to speak to you.... And by your hands I have been exalted this night...and you have been bonded to the LORD/YAHUWAH and He is happy with you. And so, my children, be strong and of good courage and rejoice in my love, my Torah, and my awe.... Be strong and of good courage and rejoice, my children and friends; do not allow the study to cease.... Therefore stand on your feet and exalt me and say aloud, as on the Day of Atonement, "Baruched be the name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever," and we said "Baruched be the name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever," as we were commanded. He again said "Fortunate are you my sons, return to your studies and do not stop for [even] a minute, and go up to the Land of Israel.... And know that you are among those who go up...and you are bonded with me, and a line of kindness is extended to you. And were the eye authorized to see it, you would see the fire surrounding this house.

A few centuries later, a similarly stark contrast gave rise to a mystical experience powerfully expressed by S. Y. Agnon in his story "*Ha-siman*" ("The

Sign”) first published in 1944 in the periodical *Moznayim*. It was on Shavuot eve 1943 that Agnon had learned of the terrible destruction of his hometown, Buczacz, Galicia. On the one hand, the time was one of joy at the onset of the festival of the giving of the Torah, the time of the covenant between God/Aloah and his people, memorialized in the image of Mount Sinai aflame and flames flashing around it. On the other hand, it was a time of mourning for the terrible devastation of the world of Torah and the annihilation, in the fires of the final destruction, of those faithful to the

covenant. Dan Laor, in a study of Agnon’s works, writes as follows:

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In mid-June 1943, the last residents of the Buczacz ghetto were liquidated, taken out to be killed in the city’s Jewish cemetery. Around the same time, the labor camp adjacent to the city was likewise liquidated.... Jews who had hid and were found in the ghetto or in the surrounding woods were brought to the cemetery in groups and murdered there.... When the Soviets returned to the city in July 1944, fewer than one hundred survivors were to be found.

“*Ha-siman*,” Agnon’s account of his vision on Shavuot night, was first published during the Second World War, in the Spring 1944 issue of *Moznayim*, as a one-page story. It was republished as a longer story in 1962, and went through several editions.<sup>5</sup> Agnon writes:

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<sup>5</sup> An English translation by Arthur Green was first published in *Response* 19 (1973), pp. 5-31 and was reprinted in David Roskies, ed., *The Literature of Destruction: The Jewish Response to Catastrophe* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1988), pp. 585-604 and in S. Y. Agnon, *A Book That Was Lost and Other Stories*, ed. with introductions by Alan Mintz and Anne Golomb Hoffman (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), pp. 378-409. The extracts that follow are variously from the original edition in *Moznayim* (translated by the present translator) and from the Green translation of the expanded story (with page references to the Mintz-Hoffman edition). The Hebrew original appears in *Ha-esh ve-ha-ezim*, vol. 8 of *Kol sippurav shel shmu’el yosef agnon*. The story “Forevermore,” quoted from at the end of

I made no Lament for my city and did not call for tears or for mourning over the congregation of God/Aloah whom the enemy had wiped out. The day when we heard the news of the city and its dead was the afternoon before Shavuot, so I put aside my mourning for the dead because of the joy of the season when our Torah was given (p. 379).

Agnon, deep in mourning over the destruction of his hometown but required by the sanctity of the festival to set aside his mourning and to rejoice even with a broken heart, experienced cognitive dissonance. In his story, he traverses boundaries of time and space and has a vision of the greatest Spanish-Jewish poet, Solomon Ibn Gabirol (1021 -1058), author of the *azharot* liturgical poem<sup>6</sup> for Shavuot, reviewing in verse

the commandments that made up the covenant:

Once, on Shavuot night, I was sitting alone in the house of study, reciting the *azharot*. I heard a voice and raised my eyes. I saw a kadosh man of God/Aloah standing near me.... I returned to my book and read the commandments of God/Aloah , as was my practice every year on Shavuot night, when I would read the commandments of God/Aloah as poetically rendered by R. Solomon, may his soul rest (from the original version in *Moznayim*).

The doors of the kadosh ark opened, and I saw a likeness of the form of a man standing there, his head resting between the scrolls of the Torah, and I heard a voice come forth from the ark, from between the trees of life.<sup>7</sup> I bowed my head and closed my eyes, for I feared to look at the kadosh ark. I looked into my prayer book and saw that the letters that the voice from among the scrolls was reciting were at the

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this article, is the final story in that volume; it is followed by the afterword from which the second epigraph to this article is taken.

<sup>6</sup> *Azharot* (lit., admonitions) are a genre of liturgical poems written for Shavuot, in which the 613 commandments are reviewed in verse.

<sup>7</sup> "Trees of life" is the term used for the staffs on which a Torah scroll is wound.

same time being written into my book. The letters were the letters of the commandments of the Lord/YaHuWaH, in the order set for them by Rabbi Solomon Ibn Gabirol, may his soul rest. Now the man whom I had first seen between the scrolls of the Torah stood before me, and his appearance was like the appearance of a king (Mintz-Hoffman ed., p. 405).

The man who appeared before the author's eyes is the tormented poet Solomon Ibn Gabirol, author of the *azharot* for Shavuot. The author speaks to him of the festival of Shavuot, of the destruction of his hometown, of memory and forgetting; and he asks that Ibn Gabirol remember all that the enemy has destroyed and set a sign for it in the heavens. All that can be done in the face of the terrible destruction wrought by human beings, and of the annihilation and oblivion associated with it, is to leave a sign in the heavens, in eternity, in poetry, story and memory. Memory is the metamorphosis of annihilation into eternity, of oblivion into written testimony; and the story or the poem effects the transformation in which loss and annihilation on earth (*lethe* in Greek) become eternal heavenly existence (*alethea*) and death becomes immortality and eternal covenant:

Rabbi Solomon said, "I'll make a sign, so I won't forget the name of your town." ...Once more a voice was heard, the sound of rhyme.... And he said, "Baruched among cities is the city Buczacz," and he went on composing a poem based on the seven letters of my town's name, a rhymed poem in faithful verse. My soul went out of me, and I forgot six lines of the town's song (from the original version in *Moznayim*). He did not speak to me by word of mouth, but his thought was engraved into mine, his kadosh thought into mine. Every word he said was carved into the forms of letters, and the letters joined together into words, and the words formed what he had to say. These are the things as I remember them, word for word (Mintz-Hoffman ed., p. 405).

Once more he moved his lips. I turned my ear and heard him recite a poem, each line of which began with one of the letters of the name of my town. And so I knew that the sign the poet made for my town was  
in beautiful and rhymed verse, in the kadosh tongue.  
The hairs of my flesh stood on end and my heart melted as I left my own being, and it was as though I was not. Were it not for remembering the poem, I would have been like all my townsfolk, who were lost, who had died.... But it was because of the power of the poem that my soul went out of me.... And if I don't remember the words of the poem, for my soul left me because of its greatness, the poem sings itself in the heavens above, among the poems of the kadosh poets, the beloved of God/Aloah (Mintz-Hoffman ed., p. 409).

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The experience of seeing divine visions on Shavuot, visions involving flashing fire among the cherubim and angels, and of hearing the heavenly voices of angels or the Kadosh Spirit, is an ancient tradition, mentioned in many sources: "All the people witnessed the thunder and the lightening" (Ex. 20:15); "...the heavens opened and I saw visions of God/Aloah" (Ezek. 1:1); "You are the ones that received the law as ordained by angels" (Acts 7:53). *Midrash Exodus Rabbah* 29:5 notes "The saw His glory/Kavod and heard His voice, as it is said (Dt. 5:21), *The Lord/YaHuWaH our God/Aloah has just shown us His majestic Presence.*" [The festival of Shavuot, one of the three pilgrimage festivals observed in the Temple, is linked to the tradition of the winged cherubim in the Kadosh of Holies, which were shown to the pilgrims at a distance: "When Israel would go up for the pilgrimage festival, they would roll back the curtain for them and show them the cherubim, which embraced each other" \(BT Yoma 54a\). Many years earlier, the heavenly model of the cherubim had been made known to Moses on Mount Sinai \(Ex. 25:40\) in the middle of the third month. It was](#)



made known to David on Mount Zion (2 Chr. 1:28, 18-19), at an unknown time, and it was made known through the vision revealed to the prophet Ezekiel on Shavuot.

As we know, the Torah reading for Shavuot tells of the encounter at Sinai. It begins with the verse that sets the encounter in the third month (Ex. 19:1); continues with the transformation of the mountain into a sacred place that may be neither touched nor approached because of the expected divine presence (id. 12-13, 23); and it reaches its climax with the reading of the Decalogue, concluding with the verse “All the people witnessed the thunder and the lightening, the blare of the horn and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they fell back and stood at a distance” (Ex. 20:15). The *haftarah* (reading from the prophets) for the holiday is the vision of Ezekiel ben Buzi the priest (chaps. 1 and 10), describing the divine visions revealed to him at the Chebar Canal, including winged animals described as cherubim and the image of the One seated upon the cherubim, linked to the description of the encounter at Sinai: “As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like coals of fire, burning like the appearance of torches; it flashed up and down among the living creatures; and there was brightness to the fire, and out of the fire went forth lightning. And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightening” (Ezek. 1:13-14<sup>8</sup>). The account of the divine visions continues: “And above the Firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone; and upon the likeness of the throne was a likeness as the appearance of a man upon it above (Ezek. 1:26), imagery tied to the description at the conclusion of the entry into the covenant: “And they saw the God/Aloah of Israel: under His feet there was the likeness of a pavement of sapphire, like the very sky for purity” (Ex.

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<sup>8</sup> The translation of these verses, and the one next quoted (Ezek. 1:16) are from the Old Jewish Publication Society translation (OJPS), *The Holy Scriptures* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1917).

24:10). Chapter 10 of Ezekiel, which describes a vision at the Temple in Jerusalem (id., 8:3), tells anew of the vision at the Chebar Canal, referring explicitly to the vision of the sacred beasts in Chapter 1: “I looked, and on the expanse over the heads of the cherubs, there was something like a sapphire stone; an appearance resembling a sapphire stone could be seen over them” (Ezek. 10:1). They are referred to twice again: “the cherubs ascended; those were the creatures that I had seen by the Chebar Canal” (id. 15); “they were the same creatures that I had seen below the God/Aloah of Israel at the Chebar Canal; so I now knew that they were cherubs” (id. 20). The divine visions shown to Ezekiel on Shavuot night, encompassing cherubim and *ofanim*, wings and flares, beasts and sapphire are recounted in several versions and are referred to in the Qumran texts as “The vision that Ezekiel saw...the light of a chariot and four creatures.” At the beginning of the second century BCE, the priest Joshua Ben-Sira refers to it as the vision of the chariot: “It was Ezekiel who saw the vision of glory/Kavod, which God/Aloah showed him above the chariot of the cherubim” (Sir. 49:8).

The account of Ezekiel’s vision of the chariot, revealed to him at the mid-point of the third month, the time of the covenant at Sinai, contains references to previous covenants and uses wording that calls to mind previous divine revelations during the third month, as recounted in Jubilees. These references include, among others, the rainbow associated with the covenant with Noah, the flares that were part of the covenant “between the pieces” with Abraham and of the encounter at Sinai, and the block of sapphire seen in the encounter at Sinai. The verse linking the Torah reading for Shavuot (the encounter at Sinai) with the *haftarah* (Ezekiel’s vision of the chariot) is one that preserves an ancient tradition tying the encounter at Sinai to the divine chariot and the angels: “God/Aloah ’s chariots are myriads upon myriads, thousands

**Commented [JL13]:** There was no citation, so I couldn't find the published translation; I translated the line myself.

upon thousands; the LORD/YAHUWAH is among them as in Sinai in holiness” (Ps. 68:18). The verse echoes a line in Deuteronomy: “The LORD/YAHUWAH came from Sinai; He shone upon them from Seir; He appeared from Mount Paran; and approached from Ribboth-kodesh [*mei-rivevot-qodesh*; perhaps to be emended to *be-merkavot-qodesh*, “in kadosh chariots”], lightening flashing at them from His right” (Dt. 33:2).

The treatment of Shavuot in the rabbinic tradition differs substantially from that in the various priestly traditions. In the latter, the chariot of the cherubim, Ezekiel’s vision of the chariot, and various visions of God/Aloah are all associated with the encounter at Sinai, where the cherubim were revealed to Moses and he was instructed to make models of them and place them in the Kadosh of Holies. Those various traditions regarding the cherubim and the chariot are tied, in turn, to the festival of Shavuot—the festival on which the covenant is renewed, and the Sinai experience recreated, the festival of the angels who presented the Torah to Israel at the Sinai encounter. The rabbinic tradition, in contrast, simply declares that “One does not read the [account of the] chariot as a *haftarah*” (Mishnah *Megillah* 4:10). The matter seems to have been in dispute, for a *baraita* in the Babylonian Talmud, in which the schedule of *haftarot* is first mentioned, notes that Ezekiel’s vision of the chariot is, in fact, read as the *haftarah* on Shavuot (BT *Megillah* 31a-b). Pertinent to this dispute is the inclusion of the word “chariot” in the versions of chapter 1 of Ezekiel that appear in the pre-Common-Era texts of Scripture found at Qumran and in the Septuagint. The word appears as well in the Septuagint to Ezekiel 43:3, which reads “and the vision of the chariot which I saw was like the vision which I saw at the

river Chobar”<sup>9</sup>; the Masoretic Text, in contrast, reads “the very same vision that I had seen by the Chebar Canal.” The version of the Scripture edited by the sages following the destruction of the Temple omits the word “chariot.” There is a tradition that the sages wanted to exclude the entire Book of Ezekiel from the canon (BT *Shabbat* 13a), and that tradition, too, may be related to the book’s references to the chariot and to the priest-prophet’s clear association with the Zadokite priests. The description in Ezekiel 45 of the fixed times of the Lord/YaHuWaH skips over the festival of Shavuot, going directly from Passover to Sukkot; but when it describes Passover as “a festival of seven days,” the Masoretic Text reads *hag shevu’ot yamim*. This, too, suggests that there may have been an earlier version of the text that included the festival of Shavuot. And despite the rabbis’ prohibition on reading Ezekiel’s vision of the chariot as the *haftarah* for Shavuot, synagogues have continued to do so from antiquity to this day.

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The dispute between the sages and the priests, alluded to in the bans on reading the account of the chariot as a *haftarah* (“the [account of the] chariot is not read as a *haftarah*”) and on expounding it (“the [account of the] chariot is not expounded”) is tied to the dispute between the Pharisees and the Sadducees / Boethians over the timing of the holiday. The Sadducees and Boethians mentioned in the rabbinic tradition, known in Scripture and the Scrolls as the Zadokite priests, set a fixed day and date for the festival of the first fruits of the wheat harvest; it was Sunday, the fifteenth day of the third month. As explained earlier, this was keyed to

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<sup>9</sup> *English Translation of the Greek Septuagint Bible: The Translation of the Greek Old Testament Scriptures, Including the Apocrypha*. Compiled from the Translation by Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton 1851, at <http://www.ecmarsh.com/lxx/Jezekiel/index.htm>.

the fixed time for the beginning of the barley harvest and the waving of the *omer*-sheaf; that occurred on Sunday, the twenty-sixth day of the first month, all pursuant to the fixed solar calendar calculated in advance. The Pharisees and the sages, on the other hand, followed a lunar calendar, either continuing to use the Hasmonean lunar calendar or else electing, after the destruction, to adopt a variable lunar calendar—a calendar differing from both the Zadokite solar calendar described earlier and from the 365¼-day Julian calendar of the Roman Empire in whose shadow they lived. They argued that the biblical phrase “the day after the Sabbath,” mentioned three times in the account of the waving of the sheaf of barley (Lev. 23:11, 15, 16), refers not to a Sunday but to the day after the first day of Passover (Mishnah, *Menahot* 10:3; *Sifra*, *Emor* 10:5, 100c). That day would always be the sixteenth of Nisan, but the day of the week on which it fell would vary from year to year, depending on when the onset of the month of Nisan—based on the sighting of the new moon—was proclaimed. The Pharisees / sages maintained that the term “sabbath” was applied to the first day of Passover because it was a festival day on which no work was to be done; they thus disagreed with the Priests, Sadducees, Boethians, Karaites, Ethiopian Jews, and Samaritans, all of whom took the term at face value, as referring to the first Sabbath following the conclusion of the week of Passover—that is, the fourth Sabbath of the quarter, falling invariably on the twenty-fifth of Nisan. On the Sunday that followed it, the twenty-sixth of Nisan, the barley harvest began. The Pharisees and sages rejected that date, which was based on the understanding that “the day after the Sabbath” referred to the Sunday following the conclusion of Passover and declined to accept the ancient date for Shavuot (15 Sivan) that followed from it in the priestly tradition. They briefly quoted the views of their rivals, the Boethians, regarding the festival of Shavuot, which they declined even to mention by name, referring to it,

instead, as *Atseret*: “the sheaf is not harvested at the conclusion of the festival day” (Tosefta, *Menahot* 10b; 23 p. 528); “*Atseret* follows the Sabbath.” They mounted a polemic against that view, but they avoided any mention of the fixed day for the barley harvest, the twenty-sixth of the first month, on which the time for the first fruits of the wheat harvest—the fifteenth of the third month—was dependent. Mishnah *Bikkurim* is silent with respect to the time for the first fruits of the wheat harvest, dealing only with the times for the first fruits that are not associated with a particular day. [The Book of Jubilees, which attests to the antiquity of the first-fruits festival, states expressly that “...in the third month, in the middle of the month, Abram made a feast of the firstfruits of the harvest of grain. And he offered up a new sacrifice upon the altar, the firstfruits of the \[produce\]...” \(Jub. 15:1-2\). MMT, cited above, likewise states explicitly: “of the third month.... On the fifteenth of it: Feast of Weeks” \(Vermes, p. 221-222\).](#)

**Commented [JL14]:** I've copied this as it appears, but I'm not sure what "23" and "p. 528" refer to.

**Commented [JL15]:** Charlesworth reads "food."

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The sages thus did all they could to suppress the holiday's name, to expunge its ancient date, and to ban the various pre-Common-Era priestly traditions pertinent to the holiday, most notably the giving of the Torah and revelation of the chariot, the entry into and renewal of the covenant, and the Berachah by the priests and Ezekiel's vision at the time of the covenant at Sinai. That they did so is certainly tied to the fact that some of these traditions were adopted by the Jewish-Christian community that was active in Jerusalem during the first century CE and that set Shavuot—the day after the conclusion of the seven weeks that began with the waving of the sheaf of barley, that is, the fiftieth day (Pentecost in Greek)—as the time when the Kadosh Spirit was revealed in stormy sounds and fiery flares:

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Kadosh Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability (Acts 2:1-4).

The festival of Shavuot became transformed into a foundational holiday of the Jewish-Christian community, the day on which the Kadosh Spirit, revealed in tongues of fire, came to rest on its members, who began to speak in tongues. The festival always fell on a Sunday at the mid-point of the third month, fifty days after Master Yahushua's resurrection on Easter, likewise a Sunday; and the new Jewish-Christian community saw in it a sort of renewal of the covenant with them, tied to the prophecy of Joel (3:1). They also saw the descent of the Kadosh Spirit as evidence of the fulfillment of Master Yahushua's promise that his spirit would dwell on his church. Shavuot thus became the festival of the Kadosh Spirit's descent on the Sunday at the mid-point of the third month, observed by the Jewish-Christian community during the thirties of the first century CE, and it remained the holiday of the founding of the church, celebrated with great pomp, as Pentecost, from then until today. Accounts of its celebration, including the singing of Halleluiah and of "*Veni Creator*" ("Come, Creator Spirit") in honor of the Kadosh Spirit can be found in the writings of late-fourth-century pilgrims. Needless to say, this glorification of Shavuot among the Jewish Christians as the festival of the church did not enhance the standing of the mystical-priestly festival among the sages, and it is nearly certain that it contributed substantially to the holiday's rejection within the Jewish community that came to be led by the *tanna'im* in the years following the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. It

may well be that these developments likewise influenced the liturgical treatment by  
the *tanna'im* of the chariot tradition as related to Shavuot.

According to tannaitic tradition, the Song of Songs was spoken at the Sinai encounter, which was interpreted, in *midrash* and by mystics, as involving the marriage covenant and mystical union between the Kadosh One Baruched Be He and the community of Israel; Shavuot thus comes to be seen as the wedding day. The link between Shavuot and a covenant of marriage appears in various contexts within the rabbinic tradition; one is that of the encounter at Sinai: “*The LORD/YAHUWAH came from Sinai—to greet Israel, in the manner of a bridegroom who goes forth to greet the bride*” (*Mekhilta de-rabbi yishma'el, Parashat ba-hodesh ha-shelishi*, sec. 3).

A second context in which the connection is drawn is that of the nuptials described in the Song of Songs, taken to refer to the bridegroom-Torah giver and his bride, the community of Israel. The talmudist Saul Lieberman noted a mystical interpretation of the Song of Songs in the tannaitic tradition that tied it to the tradition of the cherubim and the chariot, and he cited a later version of that interpretation based on the comments of the medieval kabbalist R. Joshua Ibn Shu'ib: “For the words of this song are extremely obscure and impenetrable and it therefore was considered to be kadosh of holies, for all its words are mysteries of the chariot.... For the bridegroom is the Kadosh One Baruched Be He and the bride is the community of Israel.... And by received tradition these are hidden matters that one may not even think about; they are the supernal chariot higher than Ezekiel's chariot and they are the *sefirot* [the kabbalistic divine emanations].” According to the tradition in the Babylonian Talmud, the pilgrims would be shown the cherubim “which embraced each other” on the ark-cover in the Kadosh of Holies, and it was said that “their mutual affection was like that of male and female” (BT *Yoma* 54a).



The *Zohar*, written in late-thirteenth-century Spain in the wake of the terrible destruction wrought by the Crusades on the Ashkenazi communities between 1096 and 1296, likewise associates Shavuot, the covenant festival, with the covenant of marriage—in this instance, the celestial nuptials between God/Aloah as bridegroom and the *Shekhinah* as bride. It associates the custom of staying awake all night on Shavuot, referred to in various midrashic sources, with the need to prepare the bride for entry into the marriage canopy: “The early pious ones would not sleep that night and would engage in Torah study, saying: Let us come and acquire a kadosh inheritance for ourselves and our children in both worlds. When the initiates gathered and joined him that night, R. Simeon said: Let us go and prepare the bridal jewels so she may be found tomorrow bejeweled and prepared as befits the King” (*Zohar*, part 3, 98a). As noted earlier, the *Zohar* associates Shavuot with the *idra rabba*, the occasion on which R. Simeon bar Yoḥai and his students convened, understood as the occasion for receiving the Torah anew and as a nuptial festival. In the *Zohar*, Shavuot night is called “the night of the bride uniting with her husband,” “the *tiqqun leil shavu`ot*” (the “repair” [of the fabric of the world] on Shavuot night) (*Zohar*, part 1, 8a-9a; part 2, 98a). Implicit in that conception of the night is the hope for renewal of the covenant—a new revelation of the heavenly Written Torah along with the beginning of redemption, linked to the Oral Torah, the *Shekhinah*, and the bride—with the nation that had violated the covenant and was exiled from its land for hundreds and thousands of years.

The late thirteenth century, the end of the Crusades, was a time when destruction and annihilation had been visited upon many Jewish communities in Ashkenaz and weighty questions were being raised about the nature of the oath and covenant between God/Aloah and his people, who were suffering such devastating

persecution. It was in that context that the *Zohar* was written, seeking to forge a new unity between the memory of the Written Torah (God/Aloah , the bridegroom) and the creative memory of the Oral Torah (the bride, the community of Israel). The author of the *Zohar*, R. Moses de Leon, wrote the following account of a *tiqqun leil shavu`ot*, in which the ten martyrs were transformed from sages who had died for the sanctification of God/Aloah 's name in the time of the *tanna'im* into beings enjoying eternal life one thousand years later, thanks to the traversal of boundaries of time and

space within the tradition of the *Zohar*:

The mystery of the festival of Shavuot...The ancient ones, of Baruched memory, the pillars of the world who knew how to draw down from on high the grace/unmerited Favor that would enable them to go without sleep on these two nights of Shavuot, spend the entire night reading from the Torah, the Prophets and the Writings and then skip through the Talmud and *aggadot* [non-halakhic rabbinic texts] and read from the mysteries of the Torah until morning light, continuing their fathers' traditions.... And at those times [that is, the days of counting the *omer*—R. E.] the bride would adorn herself and enter the region on high, and on that fiftieth night, this night devoted to God/Aloah , uniting the Written Torah with the Oral Torah, her devoted children on earth would escort her into the wedding canopy. And it is listed and written in the book of memories that they would sing joyfully on the night of the bride's rejoicing.... And they should not, therefore give ransom for their souls through the singing of Torah, for they are listed before God/Aloah ...and God/Aloah will listen and heed and inscribe their memory before him with joy" (MS Schocken 14, 87a-b, quoted in Y. D. Yahalom, "*Sidrei tiqqunim*," in *Alei ayin—Festschrift for S. Z. Schocken on his Seventieth Birthday* [Jerusalem, 1948-1952], p. 126).

**Commented [JL16]:** I wasn't sure of the meaning here; I'm not aware of a published English translation of the text.

The mystical tradition shaped Shavuot night into a time of preparation for the kadosh union to take place on the festival—the nuptial day for heaven and earth, God/Aloah and His people, bridegroom and bride, Written Torah and Oral Torah, the *sefirah* of *tif'eret* (glory) and the *sefirah* of *malkhut* (sovereignty), the Kadosh One Baruched Be He and the *Shekhinah* (that is, the masculine and feminine aspects of divinity), all symbolized by the embracing cherubim that the pilgrims coming to observe the festival were allowed to observe from afar (BT *Yoma* 54a-b). This tradition generated a wealth of mystical symbols for the idea of king's coupling with his consort (*matronita*) or the union between the Kadosh One Baruched Be He and His *Shekhinah*—that is, the covenant between the bridegroom as giver of the Torah and the bride (the congregation of Israel) as receiver of the eternal Torah who perpetuates and continues to form it. The mystical tradition treats these images of union and coupling between “the Kadosh One Baruched Be He and His *Shekhinah*” in thousands of pages of kabbalistic literature and liturgical poems and sees the souls of Jewish men and women as the fruit of this mystical union. That tradition even formulated wording for a *ketubbah* (marriage contract) between “the bridegroom, the Kadosh One Baruched Be He” and the “bride, the virgin Israel” (Gershom Scholem, *Pirquei yesod be-havanat ha-qabbalah u-semalehah* [Jerusalem, 1976], p. 132) and described ceremonies in which that *ketubbah* was read as part of the *tiqqun leil shavu'ot*.

The mystical tradition recounts various occasions on which revelations of the Kadosh Spirit took place on Shavuot, as the passages telling of the encounter at Sinai or Ezekiel's vision of the Chariot were read. They include, in chronological order:

- The *idra rabba* described in the Zohar at the end of the thirteenth century.

- The revelation of the *Shekhinah* / Mishnah in R. Joseph Karo's circle during the first third of the sixteenth century, which culminated in their immigration to the Land of Israel in 1535 and the establishment of the kabbalistic settlement in Safed. These events are described in the introduction to Karo's *Maggid meisharim* and in *Shenei luhot ha-berit* by R. Isaiah Leib Horowitz, known as the kadosh *Shelah*, in the chapter titled "*Masekhet shevu'ot*".
- The Kadosh Spirit's alighting on Nathan of Gaza on Shavuot night 1665. When he lost consciousness, Nathan began to prophesy in bizarre voices that his listeners interpreted to foretell the renewal of the covenant and the ascent to sovereignty of the king messiah Shabbetai Zevi, who would lead his nation to redemption, just as had Moses.

That last episode decisively influenced the growth of the Sabbatean movement during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as detailed in Gershom Scholem's *Shabbetai zevi ve-ha-tenu'ah ha-shabta'it bi-yemei hayyav* (Tel-Aviv, 1967), vol. 1, pp. 177-178) and *Mehqarei shabta'ut* (ed. Yehuda Liebes) (Tel-Aviv, 1992), pp. 310-320. While there is disagreement over who wrote the account of the vision and some see it as pseudepigraphal, there is no dispute about its link to Nathan's vision on Shavuot, which begins with a sentence that echoes other ceremonies from the Book of

Ezekiel:

Now, it was Shavuot night and I was studying with the initiates in my home in Gaza. After midnight, I heard a voice from behind the ark curtain speaking to me [and saying]: Arise, and go to the outer courtyard, and I will speak with you there. My heart was stirred, and I went out to the courtyard, where I saw a man wearing a linen tunic; his appearance was that of a very awesome angel of God/Aloah and he said to me... (id., p. 310).

Another appearance of the Kadosh Spirit during the month of Sivan (the third month) took place in Italy, at the end of the first third of the eighteenth century, among the followers of R. Moses Hayyim Luzzatto. On that occasion, which was influenced by R. Joseph Karo's Shavuot-night vision, an angel-*maggid* appeared to Luzzatto and dictated heavenly Torah to him in a book titled *Zohar teniyya* ("Second *Zohar*") or *Adir ba-marom*. Luzzatto describes the beginning of the revelation as follows:

On the new moon of Sivan 5487 (1727), while I was performing a certain unification ritual, I nodded off and when I awoke, I heard a voice saying: "I have come down to reveal hidden secrets of the Kadosh King." I arose shaking a bit, but then gained my strength, but the voice did not cease, and told the mystery that it told.... Thereafter, on a certain day, it revealed to me that it was a *maggid* sent from heaven...and that while I did not see it, I would hear its voice speaking from my mouth (*Iggerot moshe hayyim luzato u-vene'i doro*, ed. Simon Ginsburg [Tel-Aviv 1937], p. 39).

Luzzatto here describes not only his own angel-*maggid* but also R. Joseph Karo's angel-*maggid*, which appeared on Shavuot night as well, and his account seems to echo in that of the wondrous man in Agnon's Shavuot-night vision quoted earlier.

The mystical innovation in the kabbalistic tradition is that the unification takes place between, on the one hand, God/Aloah, the One Who establishes the eternal covenant, the Kadosh One Baruched Be He, the *sefirah* of *tif'eret* (glory/Kavod) and the Written Torah, and, on the other hand, the *Shekhinah*, the community of Israel, the party entering into the covenant, the *sefirah* of *malkhut* (sovereignty), and the Oral Torah. The kabbalists who participated in covenant-renewal rituals called "*tiqqun leil shavu'ot*" or "*yihud qudsha berikh hu u-shekhintei*" (unification of the Kadosh One

Baruched Be He and His *Shekhinah*) experienced, from time to time, a renewal of the covenant in the form of a divine voice speaking in the spirit of such persons as the author of the *Zohar*, R. Joseph Karo, Nathan of Gaza, Moses Hayyim Luzzatto, or S. Y. Agnon. Some of them identified with Moses and internalized his image (the author of the *Zohar*, Karo, Luzzatto, the Seer of Lublin), while others identified with other written traditions (Malkho, Nathan, Agnon); but in all cases, the divine revelation is preceded by a written tradition, which undergoes transformation and reincarnation in the spirit of the person who experiences the new vision in his mind's ear, "seeing the voices."

As a practical matter, it was the reading of the biblical text that triggered these episodes. The text describes the entry into the covenant at Sinai, before the building of the Tabernacle, and its renewal in Ezekiel's vision, in the course of the destruction of the First Temple, and it was read loudly in kabbalistic circles during the *tiqqun leil shavu'ot*. That reading prompted a mystical awakening in which the voice of the *Shekhinah* was heard as a voice speaking from above the cover atop the tablets of the covenant or a voice calling for a return to the Land of Israel as it spoke from the mouth of the person reading from Scripture in the Zoharic tradition about the mystical nuptials. The *Shekhinah* is described as an angel oscillating between male and female, in a manner resembling the accounts of the cherubim and kadosh beasts as bisexual entities in the visions of Ezekiel and of R. Joseph Karo. The voice of the angel-*maggid* therefore is sometimes heard as a *qol midabber* (addressing voice), as in the verse (Num. 7:89) "When Moses went into the Tent of Meeting to speak with Him, he would hear the Voice addressing him from above the cover that was on top of the Ark of the Pact between the two cherubim; thus He spoke to him"; at other times, it is heard as the voice of the exiled daughter of Zion; and at still other times as a

voice described in terms of “Hark! My beloved knocks” (Song 5:2) or “Who announce[s] what is true [*maggid meisharim*]” (Isa. 45:19). As noted, an event involving renewal of the covenant was experienced by R. Joseph Karo, the author of *Maggid meisharim*, in Adrianopolis on Shavuot night 1533 and led him and his colleagues to immigrate to the Land of Israel in 1535 and establish the community of kabbalists in Safed. The Safed community, which devoted its time to hastening the redemption and uniting the *Shekhinah* with the Kadosh One Baruched Be He so as to renew the covenant at Sinai, spread kabbalistic-messianic awareness throughout the Jewish world and contributed decisively to fostering the yearning for Zion and the return to the Land of Israel.

R. Simeon bar Yoḥai’s final words in the *Zohar*, uttered as he dies, are “There the Lord/YaHuWaH ordained Berachah, everlasting life” (Ps. 133:3), a sentence linked to the eternal promise warranted to those who walk in the paths of righteousness, as declared by Jeremiah, the priest-prophet and advocate of justice: “Then only will I let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers for all time” (Jer. 7:7). Bound up with these words are the array of ideas related to Shavuot discussed above: the eternal covenant or oath related to the eternity of the divine promise and dependent on maintaining the eternal cycles of justice associated with the sacred fixed times and with the seven-based cycles of rest that have gone on from Sinai to this very day of Shavuot. These are sacred biblical cycles of memory, knowledge, justice and truth, cycles of the covenant and the Berachah in their varied manifestations over the course of history and in the pages of books. The verse in Jeremiah just quoted ends with the words “for all time” (*ad olam*), and “*Ad olam*” (“Forevermore”) is the title of the story with which S. Y. Agnon ends the volume of his works entitled *Ha-esh ve-ha-ezrim*. In the final pages of the volume, Agnon

summons up the memory of the witnesses to the covenant who call up from the depths of oblivion that which was engraved on the tablets and recall, against all odds, what had been forgotten:

How great is the true writer...who does not abandon his work even when the sword of death hangs over his neck, who writes with his very blood, in his soul's own script, what his eyes have seen!... So he would sit and discover new things which had been unknown to all the learned men of the ages until he came and revealed them. And since there were many things and learning is endless and there is much to discover and investigate and understand, he did not put his work aside and did not leave his place and he remained there forevermore.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> S. Y. Agnon, "Forevermore," trans. from the Heb. by Joel Blocker, revised by Robert Alter, in Robert Alter, ed., *Modern Hebrew Literature* (New York: Behrman House, 1975), pp. 248-249). The Hebrew original is the concluding story in *Ha-esh ve-ha-ezim*.