**[Radiant Beauty – Parshat Ki Tavo](https://www.torahofawakening.com/torah-of-awakening-teachings-408656/radiant-beauty-parshat-ki-tavo)**

There’s a Hasidic story that the once the Jews of the town of Apt were threatened by a local decree against them and were in great distress, so the rabbi of Apt issued a command for a universal fast in order to call down God’s mercy. But when Rabbi Yisrael of Rizhyn heard of the threat, he called for his favorite*klezmorim* (musicians) to come and play on his balcony every evening. As the sounds wafted down, a crowd of Hasidim would begin to gather below, and as the gathering grew, they would begin to dance.  
   
Word eventually came to the rabbi of Apt of what was happening: “Rabbi! Your decree of a time of fasting has been turned into a time of rejoicing by Rabbi Yisrael!”  
   
The rabbi of Apt responded by quoting a *pasuk:*  
   
וְכִֽי־תָבֹ֨אוּ מִלְחָמָ֜ה בְּאַרְצְכֶ֗ם עַל־הַצַּר֙ הַצֹּרֵ֣ר אֶתְכֶ֔ם וַהֲרֵעֹתֶ֖ם בַּחֲצֹצְר֑וֹת וֲנִזְכַּרְתֶּ֗ם לִפְנֵי֙ יְהוָ֣ה אֱלֹֽהֵיכֶ֔ם וְנוֹשַׁעְתֶּ֖ם מֵאֹיְבֵיכֶֽם׃  
  
*“When you come into battle in your land against an aggressor who attacks you, you shall sound the trumpets, that you may be remembered before Hashem your Divinity and be delivered from your enemies…*  
(Numbers 10:9)  
   
“How can I judge someone who is taking this command of the Torah to heart?”  
   
In this story, the response rabbi of Apt to the impending calamity is to impose austerity. This is a common traditional response; when life brings us danger, the practice is to try to avert the danger through asceticism. In this taking of suffering upon oneself on purpose, the belief is that you can stop the danger from manifesting externally.  
   
The logic of this type of approach comes from our ordinary experience of relationships. You may have experienced that when a person realizes they have wronged you, and they come to you with sincere apologies and grief, it is not difficult to forgive them.  
   
But there is also another path; instead of being repentant and sorrowful, the offender might do something so delightful that the offense is forgotten. This is often true in the case children! While children might occasionally be sorry, usually their offenses are more often forgiven when they do something adorable.  
   
In Kabbalah, the ascetic approach is the path of *Gevurah*, while the approach of delight is the path of *Tiferet*. In the story, it is the playing of music that draws down Divine compassion, hence the association of *Tiferet* with “beauty” and “splendor,” which are straightforward translations of *Tiferet,* but also with “compassion,” or *rakhamim.*  
   
Another kabbalistic dimension of the story is the description of the scene: the musicians play up on the balcony, and the music wafts downward to the gathering Hasidim below, who begin to dance. This is the transcendent beauty of *Tiferet* above, arousing *Yesod*below, which represents the foundational functions of joy and community.  
   
In addition to the association of *Tiferet* with beauty and compassion, *Tiferet* is also associated with *Emet,* Truth.  
   
…תורָתְךָ אֱמֶת: תִּתֵּן אֱמֶת לְיַעֲקב. חֶסֶד לְאַבְרָהָם            
   
*Your Torah is Truth; Grant Truth to Jacob, Kindness to Abraham…*  
   
- *Atah Kadosh* liturgy, weekday *Shakharit*, *Shabbat Minkha*, *Motzei Shabbat Maariv*  
   
In this Talmudic liturgical text, Abraham is associated with *Hesed/*Kindness, while Jacob is associated with *Emet/*Truth. In Kabbalah, the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, come to be associated with three *sefirot, Hesed, Gevurah* and *Tiferet;* hence the association of *Tiferet* with Truth.  
   
But this is strange – how can *Tiferet* represent beauty and compassion, and also truth?  
   
Beauty and compassion make sense; we experience beauty, and this arouses compassion. But to have compassion, we often have to ignore truth to some degree; we overlook the truth of a person’s guilt in order to respond compassionately. Furthermore, beauty is often an external effect that *covers up truth,* as when a person puts on makeup or dyes their hair. We can “photoshop” a photo to create a more beautiful image of a person. In music recording, we can digitally “fix” a person’s voice when they sing off key, making the recording more beautiful while hiding the truth of how they actually sang.  
   
There is a hint to this riddle in the *parshah:*  
  
אֶת־יְהוָ֥ה הֶאֱמַ֖רְתָּ הַיּ֑וֹם לִהְיוֹת֩ לְךָ֨ לֵֽאלֹהִ֜ים וְלָלֶ֣כֶת בִּדְרָכָ֗יו וְלִשְׁמֹ֨ר חֻקָּ֧יו וּמִצְותָ֛יו וּמִשְׁפָּטָ֖יו וְלִשְׁמֹ֥עַ בְּקֹלֽוֹ׃  
  
*You say today that Existence Itself will be for you as God, that you will walk in Its ways, that you will guard Its practices and commandments and ethical rules, and that you will listen to Its Voice.*  
  
וַֽיהוָ֞ה הֶאֱמִֽירְךָ֣ הַיּ֗וֹם לִהְי֥וֹת לוֹ֙ לְעַ֣ם סְגֻלָּ֔ה כַּאֲשֶׁ֖ר דִּבֶּר־לָ֑ךְ וְלִשְׁמֹ֖ר כָּל־מִצְותָֽיו׃  
  
*And Existence Itself affirms today that you are to It a treasured people, as said to you, and to guard all of Its commandments,*  
   
וּֽלְתִתְּךָ֣ עֶלְי֗וֹן עַ֤ל כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם֙ אֲשֶׁ֣ר עָשָׂ֔ה לִתְהִלָּ֖ה וּלְשֵׁ֣ם וּלְתִפְאָ֑רֶת וְלִֽהְיֹתְךָ֧ עַם־קָדֹ֛שׁ לַיהוָ֥ה אֱלֹהֶ֖יךָ כַּאֲשֶׁ֥ר דִּבֵּֽר׃  
  
*And you will be set far above the nations that were made, for praise and fame and splendor (Tiferet), and you will be a holy people to Hashem your divinity, as said.*

* Deuteronomy 26.17-19

This passage describes the benefits that the Children of Israel will receive for living in alignment with the Divine. Each of these qualities are aspects of *Tiferet:*  
   
עֶלְי֗וֹן  
   
*Elyon –* exalted, above, transcendent; this is *Tiferet* in relation to *Malkhut,* as *Tiferet* is symbolized by the sun and *Malkhut* by the earth.      
   
לִתְהִלָּ֖ה  
   
*Lit’hilah –* “for praise” particularly through song. This is the beauty of music, as in the story above. The Psalms, which were sung by the Levites in the temple, are called *Tehilim.*  
   
לְשֵׁ֣ם  
   
*L’shem –* “for name” meaning “famous.” The artists and musicians are the beloved icons of culture, the celebrities that embody the beauty and transcendence of *Tiferet.*  
   
תִפְאָ֑רֶת  
   
*L’tifaret –* for *Tiferet!* That is, for “beauty” or “splendor.”  
   
But how are we to receive all this *Tiferet?*  
   
    אֶת־יְהוָ֥ה **הֶאֱמַ֖רְתָּ** הַיּ֑וֹם לִהְיוֹת֩ לְךָ֨ לֵֽאלֹהִ֜ים  
*You****say****today that Existence Itself will be for you as God…*  
   
The qualities of *Tiferet* arise not merely from doing the *mitzvot,* but from *verbally pledging* to do them, and then following through. In other words, they result from *being true.* This is the underlying message of the Jewish idea of *brit,* of covenant: On the deepest level, it is not only the commandments in the abstract which are the essence of the teaching, but *being true to one’s word,* that is, being one within oneself, so that one’s intentions and words and actions become one and thereby express the One. In this way, beauty and compassion come not to cover up truth, but arise as expressions of it.  
   
There is another way that truth and beauty can be allies:  
   
Rabbi Yaakov Yitzhak, the Seer of Lublin, would sometimes take a pinch of snuff right in the middle of *davening.* One time, a fellow *davener* saw him do this corrected him: “It is not proper to interrupt prayer.”  
   
The Seer responded, “Let me tell you a story. Once there was a great king who, while traveling through his kingdom, heard a ragged old street singer, singing and playing an old harp. The king was moved by the music, so he invited the street musician into the palace, where he enjoyed his music day and night.  
   
“The minstrel didn’t want to part with his old harp, and he often had to stop in the middle of playing to tune it up again and again. One day, a courtier snapped at him: ‘You really aught to tune up your instrument beforehand.’  
   
‘“The king has many musicians in his orchestras and choirs much better than I,’ replied the minstrel, ‘But the king has picked me and my harp, so it is apparently his wish to endure its peculiarities and mine...’”

***More on Ki Tavo...***

**​**[**Making Friends with the Now – Parshat Ki Tavo**  
​](https://www.torahofawakening.com/torah-of-awakening-teachings-408656/making-friends-with-the-now-parshat-ki-tavo)9/17/2019 [0 Comments](https://www.torahofawakening.com/torah-of-awakening-teachings-408656/making-friends-with-the-now-parshat-ki-tavo#comments)  
  
Many common experiences are completely ineffable and inexplicable, yet we take their reality for granted because they are so common. Like the flavor of food, for example. Or music – can you explain the experience of listening to music? Can we even know what music is? Of course not – music is a mystery. Flavor is a mystery.    
   
And yet, if someone says, *“mmmmm”* we understand they’re enjoying food, because we know that experience. If we see someone dancing to the rhythm, we know they are hearing the music. We can’t really explain it, but because we know the experience, we can recognize the outward signs of the experience in someone else.  
   
כִּֽי־הִנֵּ֤ה הַחֹ֙שֶׁךְ֙ יְכַסֶּה־אֶ֔רֶץ וַעֲרָפֶ֖ל לְאֻמִּ֑ים וְעָלַ֙יִךְ֙ יִזְרַ֣ח יְהוָ֔ה וּכְבוֹד֖וֹ עָלַ֥יִךְ יֵרָאֶֽה׃   
*Behold! Darkness shall cover the earth, and thick clouds the peoples; but upon you the Divine will shine, And Its Presence be seen over you.*  
(Isaiah 60:2, *Haftora Ki Tavo)*  
   
What does this mean – that *yizrakh Hashem – the Divine will shine*and *Its Presence will be seen?*It sounds like a contradiction – if “darkness covers the earth,” how can the “Presence” be seen?  
   
But that’s the point – you cannot “see” the Divine any more than you can “see” the flavor of food, or “smell” the sound of music. The dimension of the sacred is, nevertheless, not an uncommon experience; we know the outward signs of it, just like we recognize the savoring of food or dancing to music.  
   
What are the outward signs?  
   
הַמַּכִּיר אֶת מְקוֹמוֹ – *knowing one’s place*  
(Pirkei Avot, 6:6)  
   
In Pirkei Avot, there is a list of qualities one needs to aquire wisdom, and among them is *hamakir et m’komo – knowing one’s place.*It may sound like a negative thing, like being passive and not speaking up for yourself. But the word for knowing, *makir,*also means “friend” – so the “knowing” is like the knowing of a friend; it’s a knowing of love, of relationship. The word for “one’s place” – *m’komo –*is a form of *Makom,*which is also a Divine Name. So, to be *hamakir et m’komo*means to “make friends” with the place you are actually in, right now, and thereby connect to the Divine Presence that shines beneath the surface of this moment.  
   
When someone does this, we can recognize it – we sense an inner light, a friendly aliveness, a peaceful presence. We may not be able to conceptualize it or explain it – *darkness shall cover the earth –*but nevertheless there is recognition.  
   
From this quality of making friends with the present moment, there naturally arises the next quality mentioned in the *mishna:*  
   
וְהַשָּׂמֵחַ בְּחֶלְקו – *and being happy with one’s portion…*  
   
It is good to appreciate what you’ve got. But to be truly *samayakh b’helko – happy with one’s portion –*we must realize what we are on the deepest level:  
   
וְעָלַ֙יִךְ֙ יִזְרַ֣ח יְהוָ֔ה וּכְבוֹד֖וֹ עָלַ֥יִךְ יֵרָאֶֽה  
*And upon you the Divine will shine, And Its Presence be seen over you.*  
   
This Presence, this Light, is what we are – it is the awareness that befriends this moment and expresses Itself as radiance and peacefulness on the one who realizes.  
   
But, even though we are this Light, it is easily concealed; we must make the effort to realize this Light by coming to this moment as a friend, by being *hamakir et m’komo*even with our own darkeness, with our own negativity. Because it is through presence *with* the negativity – with the fear, with the anger, with the resentments, with the irritability – that we can reclaim the consciousness that has temporarily taken a negative form and transmute it back into Light. When that happens, it can then be said:  
   
ק֥וּמִי א֖וֹרִי כִּ֣י בָ֣א אוֹרֵ֑ךְ וּכְב֥וֹד יְהוָ֖ה עָלַ֥יִךְ זָרָֽח  
*Arise, shine, for your light has dawned; The Presence of the Divine has shone upon you!*  
(Isaiah 60:1, *Haftora Ki Tavo)*  
  
**​**[**Only One Thing– Parshat Ki Tavo**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/only-one-thing-parshat-ki-tavo)  
8/29/2018  [1 Comment](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/only-one-thing-parshat-ki-tavo#comments)  
  
There’s a story of Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sasov, that once while he was absorbed in a mystical ecstasy, he heard a knock at the window. A drunken peasant stood outside and asked to be let in and given a bed for the night. For a moment, the *tzaddik’s* heart raged with anger and he thought to himself, “How can this drunk have the *hutzbah* to ask to be let into this house!”  
   
But then he said silently in his heart, “And what business does he have to exist at all, when Existence is nothing but the Divine? But if Hashem gets along with this guy and allows him to exist in this world, who am I to reject him?” He opened the door at once and prepared a bed.  
   
Everything that appears in our awareness is actually nothing but a form of awareness. So, when we resist something or someone who appears, we are really resisting our own being; we are creating an inner split, an experience of exile, of being not at home. But when we welcome whatever comes, whether it be a person, or a situation, or a feeling – it doesn’t matter – the hospitality we express toward that which appears allows us to be at home ourselves, in this moment.  
   
וְהָיָה֙ כִּֽי־תָבֹ֣וא אֶל־הָאָ֔רֶץ אֲשֶׁר֙ יְהוָ֣ה אֱלֹהֶ֔יךָ נֹתֵ֥ן לְךָ֖ נַחֲלָ֑ה וִֽירִשְׁתָּ֖הּ וְיָשַׁ֥בְתָּ בָּֽהּ׃  
   
*It will be when you come into the land that Hashem, your Divinity gives to you as an inheritance and you take possession of it and dwell within it…*  
   
The fullness of this moment, along with these bodies we now inhabit, is like a *nakhalah,*an inheritance; it comes to us from the boundless past, as an unearned gift. From the infinite possibilities of what could be, *here we are,* now.  
   
But the ordinary activity of the ego is to resist aspects of this moment, and thereby create a sense of dis-ease, of not being at home in our *nakhalah*. We’re like the Israelites wandering in the desert. But if we want to truly feel the peace of dwelling within our inheritance, we have to actively take possession of it, and that means actively welcoming whatever appears, while resting awareness within our bodies. In that active welcoming, we can come to the state of simply being *(hayah)* through “coming in” *(ki tavo)* to the “land” that is this moment *(el ha’aretz)*.  
   
This is both the goal and the path of awakening: to continuously dwell in the truth of this moment:  
   
אַחַ֤ת ׀ שָׁאַ֣לְתִּי מֵֽאֵת־יְהוָה֮ אֹותָ֪הּ אֲבַ֫קֵּ֥שׁ שִׁבְתִּ֣י בְּבֵית־יְ֭הוָה כָּל־יְמֵ֣י חַיַּ֑י לַחֲזֹ֥ות בְּנֹֽעַם־יְ֝הוָ֗ה וּלְבַקֵּ֥ר בְּהֵיכָלֹֽו  
   
*Akhat she’alti me’eit Hashem, otah avakeish, shivti b’veit Hashem kol y’mei hayay, lakhazot b’no’am Hashem, ul’vakeir b’heikhalo!*  
   
*Only One Thing I ask of the Divine – this I seek – to dwell in the House of the Divine all the days of my life, to behold the sweetness of the Divine and to meditate in Its Sanctuary!*  
  
[**Doing and Being: Parshat Ki Tavo**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/doing-and-being-parshat-ki-tavo)  
9/8/2017  [1 Comment](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/doing-and-being-parshat-ki-tavo#comments)  
  
*Parshat Ki Tavo*begins, *“V’hayah ki tavo el ha’aretz – It will be when you come into the land that the Divine gives you as an inheritance, to possess it, and to dwell within it…”*It then goes on to talk about a special ritual of gratitude that involves putting the first fruit of your harvest into a basket, making a pilgrimage to the Temple, and offering the fruit in gratitude for having come out of slavery in Egypt, and into the the "land flowing with milk and honey."  
   
On a simple level, this is a farmer’s gratitude ritual for the goodness of the land. But on a deeper level, *V’hayah ki tavo el ha’aretz –*coming into the land means coming into the place you already are, coming into the full Presence of whatever is present. This is hinted at by *V’hayah ki tavo – It will****BE****when you come in –*meaning, coming in to the *mode of Being.* Our lives consist of both Doing and Being, but we tend to identify with the Doing mode. Doing means, constantly going out– constantly reaching toward a goal we imagine in the future. This is how we create and accomplish things, which is wonderful and necessary. But if it’s not balanced by the mode of Being, if there’s total identification with the mind and with Doing, then there’s no peace, there’s no contentment, there’s no coming in.  
   
So, what’s the solution? *V’hayah ki tavo el ha’aretz –*come into this place that you are, by connecting your awareness with the Presence of the *aretz-*the earth on which we live, this body through which we live, and with whatever else happens to be present. The mind tends to lurch toward some imagined fruits in the future. Instead, bring your focus to the fruits that are already here, in the basket of this moment. Then you will be able to say as the ancient farmer said, *“Vayotzieinu Hashem mimitzrayim – Hashem brought us out of Egypt* – meaning, we are brought out of the contracted bundle of mind-identified ego through simply Being, because the Hebrew Name of God actually means, Being. *V’samakhta v’khol hatov –* *and then you will rejoice with all the goodness that you are given, you and the strangers among you.*  
  
So on this *Shabbat Ki Tavo –*The Sabbath of Coming In, may we reel in our awareness from the tendrils of thought and time, into deeper connection with the earth, with the body, with our senses, with all the fruits that are just now ripe, giving thanks for this moment of Existence as it is –  
Good Shabbiss!!  
**​**  
  
[**Chosen to Choose- Parshat Ki Tavo**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/chosen-to-choose-parshat-ki-tavo)  
9/19/2016  [2 Comments](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/chosen-to-choose-parshat-ki-tavo" \l "comments)  
​  
As I was making coffee one morning, my almost ten year old son came into the kitchen and sat with me a bit. We started talking about the *Sh’ma,* the Jewish affirmation of Divine oneness. I asked him if he knew what was the first of the two blessings that come before the *Sh’ma.*  
  
He knew:  
  
*“Yotzer or uvorei hoshekh- Former of light and Creator of darkness- Oseh shalom uvorei et hakol- Maker of peace, Creator of All.”*  
  
I told him that these words actually come from the Bible, from the Book of Isaiah. There, Isaiah describes God with the same words- except for one difference.   
  
At the end of the verse in Isaiah, it doesn’t say-  
  
*“… uvorei et haKol- Creator of All."*  
  
Rather, it says- *“… uvorei et haRa- Creator of evil”!*  
  
Of course, “Creator of all” must include “evil” as well, since evil is part of the “all”, but the rabbis who composed this blessing must have thought Isaiah’s words were just a little too provocative, a little too dangerous.   
  
After all, how could a “good God” create evil?   
  
It’s the age-old theological dilemma (for those who go for theological dilemmas).   
  
Still, they included this verse right before the *Sh’ma*to emphasize that God is not one side of a polarity. God is Oneness, and that Oneness includes everything.  
  
I asked my son, “What do you think about *Hashem* creating evil?”  
  
He said, “There might be evil, but *we* are not evil, Abba.”  
  
And, I would add, sometimes it takes the experience of evil to realize your own inherent goodness. Sometimes it takes the experience of the “bad” to come to a true and simple humility, to a deep gratitude for the blessings that can otherwise go unnoticed.  
  
This week’s reading, *Ki Tavo,*begins by describing a ritual of gratitude and joy that the Israelites are to perform when they come to dwell in the Promised Land:   
  
*“Ki tavo el ha’aretz-*  
*"When you enter the land…*  
  
*"V’lakakhta mereishit kol p’ri ha’adamah-*  
*"You shall take from the first fruits of the earth…”*  
  
It goes on to describe how the celebrant should put the fruit in a basket and bring it to the place where the Divine “chooses” to “make the Holy Name rest”.   
  
The celebrant then makes a declaration of having come from slavery to freedom, of having now received the gift of the land, and of now coming to offer its first fruits. The celebrant then “rejoices” with  "family" and “stranger” together.  
  
There is a fruit that you are reaping right now-  
  
That fruit is the fullness of this moment. This, now, is the “fruit” of all that has come before.   
  
But what is your “First Fruit?"  
  
It is your immediate relationship with this moment. The content of this moment is complex; it often contains both joy and suffering. Your mind may comment with stories and judgments.  
  
But *before*the stories, *before* the judgments, there is something more immediate. There is simply this life, this consciousness, meeting this moment as it is.   
  
When you descend deeply into yourself, when you return from the journeys of the mind into the reality of the present, it can dawn on you: you have the choice to hold this moment in the “basket” of gratitude.   
  
This is not a denial of suffering. In fact, it is often thanks to our suffering that we are awakened to those things that truly matter, to the blessings we are constantly receiving but often take for granted.   
  
And when you have the choice to relate to this moment with gratitude, is that not grace? It is your choice, but the fact you have become aware of that choice is a gift. It is as if God has chosen "rest Its Presence" in the place of your own awareness.   
  
Is there any greater gift than that? Is that not the movement from slavery to freedom?  
  
Two disciples of the Hassidic Master known as the “Maggid of Mezritch” came to the Maggid with a question:   
  
“We are troubled by the teaching of our sages, that one must bless for the evil one experiences as well as the good (*Mishna, Berachot,* 9:5). How are we to understand this?”   
  
The Maggid replied, “Go to the *beit midrash*(house of study). There you will find Reb Zusha smoking his pipe. He will give you the answer.”   
  
So, they went and found Reb Zusha and put the question to him.   
  
Zusha just laughed and said, “I think you’ve come to the wrong man. I have never experienced suffering in my life.”   
  
But the two knew that Zusha’s life had been a web of poverty, loss and illness… and they understood.  
  
On this *Shabbat Ki Tavo,* the Sabbath of Entering, and in this month Elul, the month of Return- may we fully enter this place we are already in. May we re-turn evermore in gratitude for the blessing of this “fruit,” and for the suffering that has brought us to this gratitude. May we too rejoice with all who are strange, knowing everyone as expressions of the One...  
  
Good Shabbos!!  
  
[**The Basket- Parshat Ki Tavo**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/the-basket-parshat-ki-tavo)  
9/11/2014  [3 Comments](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/the-basket-parshat-ki-tavo#comments)  
  
Two disciples of the Hassidic Master known as the “Maggid of Mezritch” came to the Maggid with a question: “We are troubled by the teaching of our sages, that one must bless for the evil one experiences as well as the good (*Mishna, Berachot,* 9:5). How are we to understand this?” The Maggid replied, “Go to the *beit midrash*(house of study). There you will find Reb Zusha smoking his pipe. He will give you the answer.” So they went and found Reb Zusha and put the question to him. Zusha just laughed and said, “I think you’ve come to the wrong man. I have never experienced suffering in my life.” But the two knew that Zusha’s life had been a web of need and anguish. They understood.  
  
When we hear a teaching like this, it can sound as though it is advocating that we play act. Suffering happens and we should pretend that it’s “all good”. We should put on a happy face. But the teaching is much deeper than that.   
  
This week’s parshah, *Ki Tavo,*begins by describing a ritual of gratitude that the Israelites should do when they dwell in the promised Land: *“V’lakakhta mereishit kol p’ri ha’adamah-*you shall take from the first fruits of the earth”. It goes on to describe how the celebrant should put the fruit in a basket and bring it to the place where the Divine “chooses” to “make the Holy Name rest”. The celebrant then makes a declaration of having come from slavery to freedom, the gift of the land, and of offering the first fruits. The celebrant then “rejoices” with one’s family as well as the “stranger”.  
  
This moment, right now, is the “fruit” of all that has come before. What is our “first fruit”? It is our primary relationship with this moment. The content of this moment may be complex; it may have both goodness and suffering. Nevertheless, it is our choice to hold this moment in the “basket” of gratitude. Without pretending away our problems, it is still our choice to give thanks for the gift of this “fruit”. In giving thanks, we also recognize that we are free, because we are not controlled by the “good” and the “bad”. We can remain open. And here is also the recognition that the Divine “rests” in this moment; in choosing to be present and give thanks for *this,*we receive this moment as G-d’s choice.   
  
In this month of return, may we re-turn evermore into the space of freedom that is gratitude for this eternal presence of Being. Amein.