Limmud Chavruta Project

PILGRIMAGE

A RESOURCE FOR TIKKUN LEYL SHAVUOT

Reflection upon learning with a partner

בַּרְזֶל בְּבַרְזֶל יָחַד
וְאִישׁ יַחַד פְּנֵי־רֵעֵהוּ

משלי כז:יז

As iron sharpens iron,
so too one person sharpens
the wits of their friend

Proverbs 27:17

An invitation to learn

The tradition of studying together through the night on Tikkun Leyl Shavuot – the eve of Shavuot – epitomises the Jewish passion for and commitment to communal learning. Inspired by this tradition, Limmud has compiled these materials for you to explore with your family and friends this Tikkun Leyl.

Shavuot is one of the *shalosh regalim*, Judaism's three pilgrimage festivals. This year, as we mark the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel, these texts reflect upon the relationship between time and space, history and holiness, and the spiritual significance of the Land of Israel.

We invite you to learn with a partner or group, in the spirit of participation, reflection, and transformation that characterises the model of Chavruta.

Chag Shavuot Sameach!

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APPEARING BEFORE GOD

Deuteronomy 16:16–17

דברים טז:טז-יז

שָׁלוֹשׁ פְּעָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה יֵרָאֶה כָל־זְכוּרְךָ אֶת־פְּנֵי ה׳ אֱלֹקֶיךָ בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחָר בְּחַג הַמַּצּוֹת וּבְחַג הַשָּׁבֻעוֹת וּבְחַג הַסֻּכּוֹת וְלֹא יֵרָאֶה אֶת־פְּנֵי ה׳ רֵיקָם: [17]אִישׁ כְּמַתְּנַת יָדוֹ כְּבִרְכַּת ה׳ אֱלֹקֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לָךְ:

[16]Three times in a year – on the Feast of Unleavened Bread [Pesach], on the Feast of Weeks [Shavuot], and on the Feast of Booths [Sukkot] – all your males shall appear before the Lord your God in the place that He will choose. They shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed, [17]but each with his own gift according to the blessing that the Lord your God has bestowed upon you.

Translation: NJPS

Mishnah Kelim 1:6

משנה כלים א:ו

אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל מְקֻדֶּשֶׁת מִכָּל הָאֲרָצוֹת. וּמַה הִיא קְדֻשָּׁתָהּ? שֶׁמְּבִיאִים מִמֶּנָּה הָעֹמֶר וְהַבִּכּוּרִים וּשְׁתֵּי הַלֶּחֶם, מַה שֶּׁאֵין מְבִיאִים כֵּן מִכָּל הָאֲרָצוֹת.

The Land of Israel is holier than all other lands. What is its holiness? That we bring from it the *omer* [barley offering for the second day of Pesach], the first fruits and the two loaves of bread [both offered on Shavuot], which may not be brought from other lands.

The Territories

The land of Israel is the Holy Land and the Temple Mount is a holy place only by virtue of the Mitzvoth linked to these locations. ... The idea that a specific country or location has an intrinsic "holiness" is an indubitably idolatrous idea.

Yeshayahu Leibowitz, *Judaism, Human Values, and the Jewish State*, Eliezer Goldman (ed) p.227

Points to consider

The Torah repeatedly commands Israelite males to come to the Temple three times per year. What is powerful about this idea? What is challenging about it?

"They shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed..." What might this mean when we travel to Israel today?

WALKING THE LAND

Genesis 13:17

Rise, walk in the land, to its length and to its breadth, for I will give it to you.

בראשית יג:יז

קוּם הִתְהַלֵּךְ בָּאָרֶץ לְאָרְכָּהּ וּלְרָחְבָּהּ כִּי לְךָ אֶתְּנֶנָּה׃

Rise and Walk in the Land

Rise and walk in the land
With a backpack and a stick
And you'll meet along the way
Once again, the Land of Israel
Her paths will embrace you
The paths of the good land
She will call you to her
As to a cradle of love

Modern Israeli folk song by Yoram Taharlev

Points to consider

Zionism encourages Jews to hike through Israel. Do we walk the Land because it has been given to us, or do we receive the Land by walking it?

What is the difference between meeting the Land of Israel in its cities and on its hiking trails?

PILGRIMAGE AS TOURISM

Babylonian Talmud, Ketubot 111a

Said Rav Yeremiah bar Abba in the name of Rabbi Yohanan: Each person who walks four cubits in the Land of Israel is assured of a place in the world to come.

תלמוד בבלי, כתובות קיא ע״א

אָמַר רַב יִרְמְיָה בַּר אַבָּא אָמַר רָבִּי יוֹחָנָן: כָּל הַמְּהַלֵּךְ אַרְבַּע אַמּוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל מוּבְטָח לוֹ שֶׁהוּא בֶּן הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא.

Tourists

Visits of condolence is all we get from them.
They squat at the Holocaust Memorial,
They put on grave faces at the Wailing Wall
And they laugh behind heavy curtains
In their hotels.
They have their pictures taken
Together with our famous dead
At Rachel's Tomb and Herzl's Tomb
And on the top of Ammunition Hill.
They weep over our sweet boys
And lust over our tough girls
And hang up their underwear
To dry quickly
In cool, blue bathrooms.

Points to consider

When it comes to spending time in Israel, how much time is "enough"?

What is important for Jewish tourists to see in Israel? What distinguishes Jewish tourism in Israel from pilgrimage?

Once I sat on the steps by a gate at David's Tower, I placed my two heavy baskets at my side. A group of tourists was standing around their guide and I became their target marker. "You see that man with the baskets? Just right of his head there's an arch from the Roman period. Just right of his head." "But he's moving, he's moving!" I said to myself: redemption will come only if their guide tells them, "You see that arch from the Roman period? It's not important: but next to it, left and down a bit, there sits a man who's bought fruit and vegetables for his family."

Yehuda Amichai, translated by Glenda Abramson and Tudor Parfitt

CENTRALITY OF PLACE

Psalm 122:1–2

[1]A song of ascents. Of David. I rejoiced when they said to me, "We are going to the House of the Lord." [2]Our feet stood inside your gates, O Jerusalem.

Translation: NJPS

תהילים קכב:א–ב

[1]שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת לְדָוִד: שָׂמַחְתִּי בְּאֹמְרִים לִי בֵּית ה׳
נֵלֵךְ: [2]עֹמְדוֹת הָיוּ רַגְלֵינוּ בִּשְׁעָרַיִךְ יְרוּשָׁלִָם:

Coming Home

Here were the stones, holy stones, steeped in sorrow and tears, not mere silent rocks but saturated with Jewish suffering. I stood rooted to the spot. Here were women clinging to the Wall and crying. Generation after generation, burdened with the sadness of exile, their faces turned to the Wall, they had clung to those stones.

Upon my right stood men at prayer: some recited Psalms, others sitting on the floor were bent in silence over holy books. The tears choked my throat. My arm stretched out and touched the Wall; my eyes closed and my head rested on the cool rock. There were no words of prayer in my heart. Sorrow mounted up in me, sorrow that our destiny was so cruel, our people still scattered in exile, our land still lying waste. I did not notice that now hot tears were streaming from my eyes as from the eyes of the mothers nearby. I stood and stroked the stony surface.

Rahel Yanait Ben Zvi, *Coming Home* (1957) p35,
translated by David Harris and Julian Meltzer

Points to consider

Is the justification for visiting Jerusalem and the Western Wall primarily theological, historical, ideological, or something else?

Do you remember visiting the Western Wall for the first time? What was your emotional reaction? How do you feel about the Western Wall today?

VISITING THE DEAD

Genesis 23:19

And then Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave of the field of Machpelah, facing Mamre – now Hebron – in the land of Canaan.

Translation: NJPS

בראשית כג:יט

וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן קָבַר אַבְרָהָם אֶת־שָׂרָה אִשְׁתּוֹ אֶל־מְעָרַת
שְׂדֵה הַמַּכְפֵּלָה עַל־פְּנֵי מַמְרֵא הִוא חֶבְרוֹן בְּאֶרֶץ
כְּנָעַן:

An Israeli Pilgrimage?

Jewish men praying at the Cave of Machpelah[1]

Birthright group at the grave of Michael Levin, an American who died serving the IDF in 2006[2]

March of the Living participants at Auschwitz, Poland[3]

Haredi men gather at the grave of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai in Meron on Lag B'Omer[4]

Photo sources
1. https://tinyurl.com/ya6naxsm
2. https://tinyurl.com/ycfe9vc6
3. https://tinyurl.com/y9fo9gk6
4. https://tinyurl.com/ydcd52vn

Points to consider

Are all of these images of pilgrimage? Why or why not?

Is Jewish pilgrimage always about death? Is it always about Israel?

SPIRITUAL PILGRIMAGE

Nahmanides on Exodus 23:17

"*Before the Sovereign, the Lord*": He is the Sovereign Lord who provides for those who serve Him. Having gotten their reward from Him, they come to Him to see what He will command them. According to the True interpretation, "before," *lifnei*, is derived from the word *panim*, "face."

Translation: adapted from Michael Carasik

רמב"ן על שמות כג:יז

וְזֶה הַטַּעַם אֶל פְּנֵי הָאֲדוֹן ה׳: שֶׁהוּא אָדוֹן הַמְפַרְנֵס עֲבָדָיו, וּבִנְטָלָם פְּרָס מִלְּפָנָיו יָבוֹאוּ אֵלָיו לִרְאוֹת מַה יְצַוּוּם, וְהִנֵּה אֶל פְּנֵי כְּמוֹ לִפְנֵי, וְעַל דֶּרֶךְ הָאֱמֶת יִהְיֶה מִן פָּנִים.

Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, Sichot Haran 141

Bear witness to my words. When my days are over and I leave this world, I will still intercede for anyone who comes to my grave, says these Ten Psalms and gives a penny to charity. No matter how great his sins, I will do everything in my power, spanning the length and breadth of creation, to save him and cleanse him...

Translation: Avraham Greenbaum

Man is Not Alone

Faith is not the clinging to a shrine but
an endless pilgrimage of the heart.

Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Man is Not Alone* (NY 1951) p160

Points to consider

What is the relationship between spirituality and pilgrimage?

For centuries, Jewish pilgrimage meant a physical journey to the Land of Israel. What does Jewish pilgrimage mean today?

Limmud

Limmud is an international community of Jewish learning founded in the UK in 1980.

Almost every week, there will be a Limmud activity or event somewhere in the world. These are organised by independent grassroots groups following shared values which include choice, diversity and volunteerism. Groups, volunteers, participants, presenters and supporters connect through the Limmud experience and by collaborations such as this Shavuot resource.

Limmud promises that wherever you find yourself, Limmud can take you one step further on your Jewish journey.

Find out for yourself and get involved at limmud.org

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Reflection upon concluding learning with a partner

טוֹבִים הַשְּׁנַיִם מִן־הָאֶחָד
אֲשֶׁר יֵשׁ־לָהֶם
שָׂכָר טוֹב בַּעֲמָלָם

קהלת ד:ט

Two are better than one,
because they have
a greater reward
for their toil

Ecclesiastes 4:9

UJIA OUR ISRAEL. OUR FUTURE.

To celebrate the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel, UJIA is proud to support Limmud Publications with its 2018 resources.

Celebrate Unity Day on 6 June by learning together with selected resources from unityprize.org

We hope you've enjoyed learning with Limmud this Shavuot. Limmud is a charity which relies on your support to continue its activities, including the costs of this resource. We would hugely appreciate it if you can give us a donation to help with the costs of this and all our learning activities.