



23 September 2016/ 20 Elul 5776

Dear Shir Tikvah:

Our Torah portion this week, Ki Tavo, instructs the Israelites to offer "bikkurim"-sweet, unblemished fruits-as an offering to the Eternal as they enter the Promised Land. In an elaborate ritual, they gave their offerings to the Cohanim (the Temple Priests), retold the story of our ancestor Abraham, a wandering Aramean, recalled their oppression in Egypt and celebrated God's power in freeing them from bondage. The ritual concluded with a joyous celebration of gratitude and the sharing of their abundance with everyone in their community, including the strangers in their midst.

Out of gratitude, from a place that honors the painful places we've traveled and the agonizing moments we've known, we share what we have with others. There is no denial of slavery's dehumanization; there is joyous celebration for redemption, renewal, and recreating the future.

As Shabbat approaches, I invite us to consider how we lift up an offering to the people and community who hold us during times of agony, celebrates with us in times of joy, and creates a holy space to tell our stories: beautiful, tender, broken, loving stories of being human.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Michael Adam Latz