

Shavuot 5778

שבועות תשע"ח



Making Torah Our Own

Dr. Galeet Dardashti, Assistant Professor of Jewish Music and Musician-in-Residence, JTS

The *piyyut* below was written by Rabbi Ya'akov Abihatzeira, an important religious figure in 19th-century Morocco. Sung in Moroccan communities primarily in honor of Shavuot, the *piyyut* portrays the Israelites' acceptance of the Torah at Sinai. It depicts God as the beloved bridegroom entering into a figurative marriage with Israel, the bride, and playfully riffs on the Ten Commandments. Each stanza ends with the word *tov* (good), perhaps referencing the counting of the Omer (culminating with Shavuot), during which many take stock of all that is good in their lives each day.

During Shavuot we are also expected to imagine that we ourselves are standing at Sinai receiving the Torah. We can do that by making Torah / Jewish texts our own in the present moment. I've done that this week by layering my own vocal accompaniment into this beautiful *piyyut* recording by Israeli Rabbi Yosef Avuchatzira.

Adonai Eloheinu gave us through Moses our master
A lesson of good so offer God thanks for this good

My beloved descended to his garden to sanctify us as a bride
His precepts God commanded us: avoid evil and work at good

On the holy day of Shabbat the sixth day's eve in that month
The bridegroom married his bride—as kin who share what is good

His banner protects me with love for my beloved is exalted above ten thousand

God comes from Sinai: all may see this good

I am and You shall not have—a word is a thing than can kill or revive
God is and subsumes all time and is the ethical and the good

Blessed is He and blessed His name who commanded his people
You shall not take His name in vain, God said: not good

The day of Shabbat is calm with no distress or sigh
Joy and felicity give voice and here: the light is good

This day's gift to you, if you will honor it all your days
And your father and mother—a long life and also the good

God's image and reflection: You shall not murder for you shall die
Including animals and beasts for God is to all only good

Have courage You shall not commit adultery and God will not rage
Not an angel or seraph but God who loves days that reveal good

Keep your distance from those acts—do not steal or cover up
Just the law of Moses—taste it and see how good

Acquire but don't resell the truth—responding as inflamed with drink
Don't covet and remember the precepts always—you won't suppress the good

Vital and holy One exempt us—pure and ethical One answer us
Accept our prayer for more than life itself the kindness of your love is good

Translation: Piyut North America

ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ לָקַח טוֹב נָתַן לָנוּ
עַל יַד מֹשֶׁה רַבֵּנוּ הוֹדוּ לָהּ כִּי טוֹב

דוֹדֵי יָרַד לָגֵנוּ וּכְכַלָּה קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו צִוָּנוּ סוּר מִרָע וַעֲשֵׂה טוֹב

וּבַיּוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת קִדְּשׁ הוּא יוֹם שְׁשֵׁה לַחֹדֶשׁ
חֲתָן כָּלְתוּ קִדְּשׁ כְּשַׁבַּת אַחִים מֵה טוֹב

דָּגְלוּ עָלַי אֱהָבָה דוֹדֵי דְגוּל מִמְרַבָּבָה
ה' מְסִינֵי בָּא וַתֵּרָא אוֹתוֹ כִּי טוֹב

אֲנוּכִי וְלֹא יִהְיֶה דְבַר מְמִית וּמְחִיָּה
הִי הוּהוּ וְיִהְיֶה הוּא הַיֵּשֶׁר וְהַטוֹב

בְּרוּךְ הוּא וּבְרוּךְ שְׁמוֹ אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה לְעַמּוֹ
לֹא תִשָּׂא לְשׁוֹא שְׁמוֹ אָמַר אֱלֹהִים לֹא טוֹב

יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת מְנוּחָה לֹא יְגוֹן וְאֶנְחָה
קוֹל שְׁשׁוֹן וְקוֹל שְׂמִחָה וְהִנֵּה הָאוֹר כִּי טוֹב

חַיִּים וְחֹסֵד לָךְ אִם תִּכְבֵּד כָּל יְמֶיךָ
אָבִיךָ וְאִמְךָ אֶרֶךְ יָמִים וְגַם טוֹב

צַלֵּם אֱלֹהִים וּדְמוּת לֹא תִרְצַח כִּי מוֹת תָּמוּת
גַּם חַיּוֹת גַּם בְּהֵמוֹת כִּי ה' לְכֹל טוֹב

יִשָּׂר חֵיל לֹא תִנְאָף אֲזִי אֲזִי לֹא יִחָרֶה אָף
לֹא מְלֹאךְ וְלֹא שִׁרְף אֶהָב יָמִים לְרֵאוֹת טוֹב

רָחֵק תִּרְחַק לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה לֹא תִגְנוֹב לֹא תִכְסֶה
כִּי אִם בְּתוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה טַעְמוֹ וּרְאוּ טוֹב

אֶמֶת קִנְיָה אֵל תִּמְכַּר לֹא תַעֲנֶה כְּשׂוֹר
לֹא תַחֲמוּד זָכַר תִּזְכֹּר וּמִצְוֹת אֵל תִּמְנַע טוֹב

חֲסִין קְדוֹשׁ חֲנֻנוּ זֶךְ וְיִשָּׂר עֲנָנוּ
קִבַּל תְּפִילָתֵנוּ חֲסִדֶךָ מִחַיִּים טוֹב

Listen to Dr. Dardashti's recording at:
www.jtsa.edu/making-torah-our-own