



# תורת חיים Torat Chayim

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בס"ד

Bo

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*This issue of Torat Chayim is dedicated to the soldiers of the IDF, the hostages, and the wounded.*

## Ramban on Our Parshah: This Month's for You

As the Jews prepare to leave Egypt, Hashem summons Moshe and Aharon and gives them a two-part mitzvah (Shemot 12:2):

- 1) Declare the start of the month (Rosh Chodesh) when the moon looks as it does now;
- 2) Make the current month the start of the year.

But along the way, Hashem emphasizes that this is for "you": "This is Rosh Chodesh **for you**; it is the first of the months **for you**." Who is the target of this "you"? Who is excluded?

A gemara (Rosh Hashanah 25b) suggests that "you" refers to Moshe and Aharon, excluding the rest of the Jews from the calendar process. Hashem stipulates that the future directors of the calendar must be experts, like Moshe and Aharon.

A midrash (Mechilta d'Rashbi) contends that "you" refers to that generation of Jews, as opposed to any human beings of any other period or nation. It is not a command, but a compliment. *You* are valued, and not only as a product of your ancestors; *you* are unique and special.

Ramban sees this "you" differently. He first suggests that it points to the eternal Jewish nation as opposed to others, instructing us to observe the mitzvah of our special calendar for all time. He also quotes the aforementioned gema-

ra requiring calendar experts. But then he adds that "you" may also mean that each member of the eternal Jewish nation is obligated to count the months from Nisan. Our months should have numbers rather than names. Just as counting weekdays as "first" "second" and "third" from Shabbat perpetually calls to mind Divine creation, so counting the months as "first" "second" and "third" from Nisan would perpetually call to mind the Exodus.

This is a beautiful idea – but we don't do it. We identify the months of the purported "Jewish" calendar with titles that come from Babylon and Persia! Ramban quotes a midrash (Talmud Yerushalmi Rosh Hashanah 1:2) explaining that Yirmiyahu (16:14-15) predicted the greatness of our miraculous return from the Babylonian exile, saying that no longer would we praise Hashem for bringing us up from Egypt, but instead we would speak of how Hashem brought us back from Bavel. We fulfill this by replacing the month-numbers with month-names that remind us of our bygone exile in Bavel and Persia.

Today, many of us use the civil names of January, February, etc. Are we violating the imperatives of numbers and Babylonian/Persian names? Rav Asher Weiss (Minchat Asher, Shemot 14) offers a unique justification. The numbers and Babylonian/Persian names refer to lunar months. Since the civil names are for solar months, we may use them.

## Parshah Riddles for Kids (answers on the back)

Age 4-8: How long did the makah of darkness last: A) 1 day, B) 7 days, C) 1 month?

Age 8-12: Shemot 12:15 says to remember Yetziat Mitzrayim by eating matzah for how many days?

Age 12+: According to Rashi, why does Shemot 13:4 emphasize that we left Egypt in the Spring?

## Journey Through Tanach: Yehoshua, Perek 14

Chapter 14 introduces a lottery to allocate land west of the Yarden to each tribe, but the lottery is inherently problematic. Bamidbar 26:54-56 said to give larger portions to the large and smaller portions to the small, and **also** to use a lottery. How could distribution be uncontrolled **and** based on size? Here are five approaches:

- Rashi (Bamidbar 26:54): The plots were of different sizes, and the lottery assigned them per each tribe's size.
- Ramban (Bereishit 48:6): The plots were all large enough for the biggest tribe and assigned by lottery. Human authorities then subdivided the tribal lots among families based on their size.
- Ralbag (Yehoshua 18:4): The tribes were assigned equal portions by lot, but the authorities then adjusted the tribal portions as needed for each tribe's size.
- Radak (Yehoshua 17:14): The plots were of equal size, and those who received nicer areas compensated those who received poorer areas and needed more resources.
- Raavad (Malbim to Yehoshua 14:1), Abarbanel (Yehoshua 14:3-4): The lottery assigned each tribe a

region, and then the authorities assigned actual territory in that area, by size.

Yehudah receives their portion first. In 14:6-12 Kalev ben Yefuneh is the first member of the tribe to claim land. But Kalev skips the lottery, quoting Moshe's personal promise: Because Kalev remained loyal to Hashem when he was sent with the *meraglim* to investigate Canaan, Moshe promised that he would receive "the land where he had walked," and this was Chevron. [See Bamidbar 13:22. Radak notes that Kalev cannot claim the city itself, as it is a city of refuge, controlled by the tribe of Levi. Kalev receives land on the outskirts of Chevron.]

Kalev notes that dangerous giants live in the area of Chevron, but he contends that his personal strength has not waned. [A midrash found in the Cairo Geniza claims that Kalev was punished for this apparent boast with the loss of his strength, as indicated in Yehoshua 15:16.] In 14:13-15, Yehoshua gives Kalev the land.

## The 613 Mitzvot: #15-16 - Flesh and Bone, Part 1

The korban pesach symbolized the Jewish people's newly-acquired freedom from slavery in Egypt, and so it was to be eaten in a royal manner. Therefore, Hashem gave the Jews two rules:

- 1) Not to take portions of the korban out of the place where the group eats it;
- 2) Not to break the bones of the korban, as one would in order to reach the marrow.

When impoverished people enjoy a feast, they save portions and take them home, and they break the bones to reach the last bit of edible meat. Ordinarily, we are trained not to waste food, and so one might think we should also take home the leftovers and pursue the marrow – but we are taught to create a feeling of royalty and freedom with the korban pesach, to commemorate the joy of our departure from Egypt.

Sefer haChinuch lists these practices as the Torah's sixteenth and seventeenth mitzvot. But the author asks: Is this not overkill? How many practices do we need in order to remember the miraculous departure from Egypt? (*Sefer haChinuch* #16)

*To be continued with his response...*

## Israel's Chief Rabbis: Planting in Israel, Rav Avraham Y. Kook

Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook was born in Latvia in 1865. He learned in the Volozhin Yeshiva and was close with the Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin (Netziv). At a young age, Rav Kook served as Rabbi in Zaumel and then Bausk. In 1904 Rav Kook moved to Israel and became Chief Rabbi of Jaffa. He was in Europe during World War I; soon after returning home, he was appointed as the first Chief Rabbi of "Palestine". He served in that role until his passing in 1935.

Rav Kook's love of the land of Israel emerges clearly in the following passage, from a letter to his parents on 23 Sivan 5670 (June 30 1910, *Igrot haRa"ayah* I #314):

"The succah of peace and the generosity of Hashem are spread over me, and I feel them in my entire soul, every time I step upon the holy plains, when I go to see the welfare of my brethren and the welfare of the vineyards of Judea, and all of the pleasant plants, for the purpose of establishing law and statute with the mitzvot which are tied to the land, year after year.

"Their radiance spreads and illuminates all of the chambers of my heart and my innards, elevating my spirit and making my innards rejoice in the joy of the land of desire, every day, at all occasions and all times, with a heart full of anticipation of salvation, the return to the fortress of the prisoners of hope, the great nation of Hashem, whose celestial love will elevate us upon the heights of the earth."

Once, Rav Kook was honored with planting the first sapling in a ceremony. Tears streamed from his eyes, and his face shone like a flame, as he refused the shovel and instead dug with his bare hands.

When asked about his emotion, he replied, "Planting a fruit tree in Israel is not some normal act of agriculture. This is cleaving to the attributes of Hashem, who also involved Himself in planting Israel first." (Reported by Rav Zev Gold in *Moadei haRa"ayah*, Chapter 17, and see Vayikra Rabbah 25:3)

## Upcoming Learning!

All classes are open to men and women and free of charge, unless otherwise noted  
4:55 PM Shabbat January 20

**LED Shabbat Candles, and the Shabbat Elevator**, with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, at Eitz Chayim

8:30 AM to 9:15 AM Sunday January 21

**Fourteen Centuries: Giants of Halachah - The Baal Halachot Gedolot**

With Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, in the lobby at Eitz Chayim

7:30-8:30 PM Monday January 22

**Halachah in Healthcare Settings, based on Nishmat Avraham**

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, at Eitz Chayim and on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/medhal>

8:15-9:00 PM Tuesday January 30

**New Weekly Shiur: Gemara Makkot** with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner at 693 Knollwood, for men

**Scholar-in-Residence Shabbat February 2-3: Israel, Today and Tomorrow**  
Rabbi Reuven Tradburks, Director, Israel Region of the Rabbinical Council of America

Sponsorship link: <http://tiny.cc/ecdp>

Age 4-8 B: 7 days  
Age 8-12 7 days  
Age 12+ Because Hashem chose a season when leaving Egypt would be easy; see Rashi to Shemot 13:4

Answers to Parshah Riddles

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