



# תורת חיים Torat Chayim

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בס"ד

Yitro

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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: Moshe, Where Are My Keys?

The first meeting of the prophet Shemuel and the future King Shaul began in a very mundane way. Shaul's father lost some donkeys, and Shaul set out with an aide to find them. After three days of fruitless wandering, Shaul and his aide arrived in Shemuel's town. The aide told Shaul about Shemuel, "There is a man of Hashem in this town, and he is greatly esteemed. Everything he says comes true. Let's go to him; perhaps he will tell us our path." (Shemuel I 9)

The story seems off. Shemuel restored prophecy after a period when it was nearly gone. He was the lead judge for the nation, travelling from place to place adjudicating cases. He would crown the next two kings. Should his Divine access be used to find missing livestock?

Rabbi Meir Leibush Weiser (Malbim to Shemuel I 9) offers two ways to read the story. In the first approach, Shaul's aide was correct; this sort of question was fair game. In the second approach, Shaul's aide was a country bumpkin, insensitive to the difference between fortune tellers and great prophets. Ramban on our parshah makes clear that he believes in the first approach; the job of a prophet is to manage all needs, great and small.

Moshe's father-in-law, Yitro, came to visit and watched Moshe go about his business. He then asked, "What are you doing to the nation? Why are you sitting alone, while the entire nation stands before you from morning to evening? (Shemot 18:14)" To which Moshe replied, "The nation comes to me, to seek Hashem. When they have any matter, they come to me. I judge between parties, and I teach the statutes and teachings of Hashem."

Ramban (Shemot 18:15) explains that Moshe was clarifying why the Jews stood before him all day. "They come to me for many matters... to pray for their sick, **and to tell them about their lost items.**" Ramban then invokes the story of Shaul's donkeys as an example. Yes, Moshe is the address for all problems, including lost animals.

Perhaps this is why it is important that Moshe was the most humble person (Bamidbar 12:3). As the only human being to speak with Hashem directly, he could have felt that playing Lost and Found was beneath him. But Moshe understood the truth of Jewish leadership: the job of a prophet is to manage all needs, great and small. [For a similar thought regarding kings, see Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Melachim 2:6.]

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

Age 4-8: What was the name of the desert where the Jews received the Torah? A) Sahara B) Fondue C) Sinai

Age 8-12: What does the Torah say will happen for people who honor their parents?

Age 12+: According to Rashi, why is it bad to use iron to shape the stones of the mizbeich?

## Journey Through Tanach: Yehoshua, Perek 16

With only ten sentences and a compact theme, our chapter is relatively straightforward: Ephraim receives their portion of the Land of Israel.

Various reasons are suggested to explain why Yehudah and Yosef received the initial distributions of land, including:

- As explained in Yehoshua 18:5, Yehudah anchored the south, and Yosef held the northern end of the land Yehoshua conquered, so deploying them first made sense. (Rashi, Abarbanel)
- Kalev and Yehoshua, the two righteous spies from Parshat Shlach, were the sole survivors of the generation of men who served in the military when the Jews first entered the wilderness, and so their tribes received first. Kalev was from Yehudah and Yehoshua was from Ephraim, son of Yosef. (Abarbanel)
- Yehudah produced the Davidic dynasty, and Ephraim produced kings in what would become the northern kingdom of Yisrael after the time of Shlomo haMelech. Further, in the future there will be a Mashiach descended from Yosef and a Mashiach descended from Yehudah. (Malbim)

Ephraim is located in the center of the country, a smallish rectangular portion spanning the width of the land. Their southern neighbor is Binyamin, and their northern neighbor is Menasheh. The east end of Ephraim's southern border is the point where the Jews crossed the Jordan River, near Yericho, and from there the border runs west to the Mediterranean, with a brief turn north in a mountainous area called Har Beit El. Their northern border also runs from the Yarden to the Mediterranean. Their land is relatively small; perhaps to compensate them, they received certain cities which were actually in Menasheh's territory.

The text starts by mentioning Menasheh, but then it describes Ephraim's land before returning to Menasheh's portion in Chapter 17. This might be because the text generally proceeds from south to north in describing the distribution of land, but it may also be emulating Yaakov's berachah, in which he put Ephraim in front of Menasheh. Some also note that Ephraim's portion was for a full tribe, while Menasheh's portion was only for part of their tribe, the rest receiving land east of the Jordan River.

## The 613 Mitzvot: #17 - Linking Korban Pesach and Brit Milah

The korban pesach symbolizes our rejection of Egyptian lamb-worship and our acceptance of Hashem and the covenants Hashem made with Avraham and Sarah. One of those covenants is the brit milah. Therefore, an *arel* (an uncircumcised male) may not eat from the korban pesach, as specified in Shemot 12:48. Sefer haChinuch counts this prohibition as the Torah's 17<sup>th</sup> mitzvah. Indeed, when the Jews arrived in Israel under Yehoshua, they needed to circumcise those who had not undergone brit milah in the wilderness, before they could perform the korban pesach. (Yehoshua 5)

The korban pesach and brit milah also share another link. These are the only two commandments for which one who abstains is punished with Divine *kareit* [ex-communication]. (Mishnah Keritot 1:1)

According to most authorities, the *arel*'s disqualification includes someone who is uncircumcised due to health concerns. [See Yevamot 70a-b, and Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Korban Pesach 9:8-9; for a different view, see Minchat Chinuch 17:1.] The disqualification also includes the father of a minor *arel*. (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Korban Pesach 5:5) Interestingly, the sage Rava (Yevamot 71b) contended that an *arel*'s mother may not eat, even though only the father is obligated to circumcise him. Maharsha explained that the brit milah requirement for korban pesach is not a law of brit milah. The brit milah criterion here is a function of the korban pesach, a requirement that we confirm our commitment to the brit of Avraham before we may participate in our national redemption. [See, too, Minchat Chinuch 2:2 and Tzitz Eliezer 2:11.]

## Israel's Chief Rabbis: The Text of Nachem, Rav Chaim Dovid HaLevi

Rav Chaim Dovid HaLevi was Chief Rabbi of Rishon LeTzion from 1951-1972; he concurrently served on the Rabbinical Council of the Israeli Chief Rabbinate. When Rav Ovadia Yosef was appointed Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel in 1973, Rav HaLevi took over as Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv and kept that role until 1997.

In the late 1960s, Rav HaLevi was asked: Shouldn't we alter the text of the *Nachem* prayer which is traditionally recited in *shemoneh esrei* on Tisha b'Av? The original words call to Hashem, "Comfort the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem, and the city which is grieving, ruined, disgraced, and desolate, grieving without her children... She sits with her head covered, like a barren woman who has not given birth." Does that suit a post-1967 Jerusalem?

Many *poskim* have ruled conservatively. Rav Tzvi Yehudah Kook (*HaTzofeh*, 13 Tammuz 5727), Rav Ovadia Yosef (*Yechaveh Daat* 1:43) and Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik all opposed changes. Among their reasons: 1) We lack a Beit HaMikdash, 2) Our spiritual state is diminished, and 3) We generally don't alter the wording of our prayers.

Rav Chaim Dovid HaLevi supported changing the text. He wrote (*Aseh Lecha Rav* 1:14), "I also felt, on the first Tisha b'Av after the Six Day War, that I can no longer say these words in my prayer; they have the status of lying before Hashem. Not only year-round, and especially on festivals, including the 5<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of Iyar, is Jerusalem bustling with celebratory masses... Even on Tisha b'Av, the national day of mourning, when the masses of the House of Israel come to the Western Wall, wrapped in their mourning for the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash, even then I sense a certain corner in my heart into which the mourning cannot penetrate. This is a corner of joy, upon the beginning of the sprouting of our redemption."

Therefore, Rav HaLevi personally recited an altered version of *Nachem*. He retained the reference to mourners of Zion and Jerusalem, because we are all mourners without a Beit HaMikdash. But after that he continued in the past tense, "the city which **was** ruined and degraded and desolate, without her children... She **sat** with her head covered, etc." He acknowledged the lack of a Beit HaMikdash, but celebrated the miracles received.

## Upcoming Learning!

All classes are open to men and women and free of charge, unless otherwise noted

**Scholar-in-Residence Shabbat February 2-3: Israel, Today and Tomorrow**

**Rabbi Reuven Tradburks, Director, Israel Region of the Rabbinical Council of America**

8:30 PM Friday night: Oneg: Greatness in the Wake of Horrors

Shabbat morning: Derashah: Adi Vital Kaploun HY"D: Thoughts of an Uncle

4:15 PM Shabbat afternoon: The RCA and Conversion in Israel

5:10 PM Shabbat afternoon: The Mood of the Country and the Future

8:30 AM to 9:15 AM Sunday February 4

**Fourteen Centuries: Rav Saadia Gaon**, with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, in the lobby at Eitz Chayim

7:30-8:30 PM Monday February 5 at Eitz Chayim and on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/medhal>  
**Halachah in Healthcare Settings: Davening in Unclean Spaces** with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

8:15-9:00 PM Tuesday February 6

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

Age 4-8 C: Sinai  
Age 8-12 They will have long lives  
Age 12+ The mizbeach extends life and brings peace between us and Hashem; Iron is for war. See Rashi Shemot 20:22.

Answers to Parshah Riddles

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