



# תורת חיים Torat Chayim

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, Eitz Chayim of Dogwood Park

Pekudei

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This issue of Torat Chayim is dedicated by the Goldress Family in honor of the 100th birthday of Shira's Bubbie, Mrs. Esther Kaplan ז"ל:

## Ramban on Our Parshah: Day Eight: Sound and Cloud

Perhaps the most powerful sensory experience in Judaism is the korban; surrounded by the sights and scents of spiritual and ritual devotion, we immerse ourselves in an environment of dedication to Hashem. However, on two occasions that experience is augmented by a particular sound: the formal recitation of a set of biblical instructions.

- One occasion is the annual Yom Kippur service. The Kohen Gadol's deeds are accompanied by a public reading of their biblical instructions (Mishnah Yoma 7:1).
- The other was a one-time event, the eighth day of the *miluim*. Moshe served in the Mishkan for the first seven days, and on Day Eight the kohanim initiated their service. Their rituals were accompanied by a public recitation of the relevant biblical instructions (Yoma 5b).

According to Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (Vayikra 9:6), the readings were to "establish these rituals as fulfillment of Divine commands. No element was invented by a human heart and its subjective feelings; the totality of these actions was dedicated to fulfillment of a Divine command." But why only for these two events?

We might answer based on Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi's explanation of the sin of the Eigel (Kuzari 1:97). In his view, the makers of the golden calf intended to serve Hashem,

but sinned by creating ritual sans Divine sanction: "Their sin was in making a form, which had been prohibited to them, and ascribing the Divine element to that which they had made with their hands and desire, **without a Divine command.**" Creativity can be beautiful, but the bedrock value of a mitzvah is its expression of loyalty to Hashem.

This is why we emphasize that our Yom Kippur rituals fulfill Divine commands. On the first Yom Kippur we completed our atonement for that independent Eigel, and received the second set of *luchot*.

This is also why the eighth day of the *miluim* required these readings. According to Ramban (Vayikra 9:3), Day Eight was instituted to atone for the Eigel. And as Ramban writes (Shemot 40:2), Hashem's presence was not manifest for the first seven days of the *miluim*. **The Divine cloud covered the *ohel moed* only on the eighth day**, signaling the acceptance of Aharon's korbanot and his atonement for the Eigel. On this day we showed that we had learned to define ritual by Divine instruction.

May we remember the loyalty underpinning our mitzvot, and merit a Day Eight of our own.

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

Age 4-8: Whose names were in the *Ephod* (also called *Choshen*)? A) Aharon's family B) Haman's sons C) The shevatim

Age 8-12: Who assembled the Mishkan? A) Betzalel B) Moshe C) The nesi'im

Age 12+: According to Rashi, why was it hard to put up the walls of the Mishkan?

## Journey Through Tanach: Yehoshua, Perek 22

At the start of Chapter 22, fourteen years after entering Israel, the Jews have concluded their initial wars, distributed the land and established a Mishkan. Now Reuven, Gad and East Menasheh can cross the Yarden to the land promised to them in Bamidbar 32.

Yehoshua acknowledges that they have fulfilled their promises, maintaining loyalty to Hashem and their brethren. He uses Moshe's own words (such as Devarim 3:20) to charge them to continue to serve Hashem. He also gives them spoils to bring back to their families. (22:1-8)

Shockingly, the eastern tribes then build a giant altar at the spot where they cross the Yarden. This raises two fears in the west: 1) If it is for Hashem, altars are prohibited outside of the Mishkan in Shiloh. 2) Perhaps it is actually for idolatry! The western tribes assemble, planning to attack. (22:9-12)

But the western tribes change course, sending a diplomatic delegation of ten leaders from each tribe. [The text does not say whether the tenth was from Levi or West

Menasheh.] Pinchas leads the delegation; this may be because of his status as a kohen and religious leader, or because of his identity as a righteous warrior (Bamidbar 25:7-9 and 31:6).

The delegation harshly accuses the eastern tribes of trespass against Hashem. They invoke the sin at Peor (Bamidbar 25) and the sin of Achan (Yehoshua 7) as occasions when a minority's crime led to Divine punishment for the nation. They invite the eastern tribes to come live in Israel proper, as part of Hashem's nation. (22:13-20)

The eastern tribes react to the accusation in horror. They insist that they built the giant altar only as a monument, to remind the west that the eastern tribes are Jewish, lest some later generation decide that they are not of the Jewish people. [This is reminiscent of the many monuments the Jews erected when they first crossed the Yarden to enter Israel.] (22:21-29)

The delegation accepts their explanation and returns home, and the nation rejoices. (22:30-34)

## The 613 Mitzvot: #25 - Belief in Hashem, Part 1

According to the Sefer HaChinuch, the Torah's 25<sup>th</sup> mitzvah is the command which begins the Aseret haDibrot (Ten Commandments), "I am Hashem, your Lord."

The Sefer HaChinuch sides with the Rambam (*Sefer haMitzvot*, Aseh 1), that this mitzvah includes belief in a single, eternal Deity who created all that exists, and by whose Will all exists. The mitzvah is also to believe that this same Deity brought us out of Egypt and gave us the Torah. This is the foundation of Jewish belief and practice; the involvement of an omnipotent Deity in our world establishes the validity of the rest of Torah. Ramban wrote similarly (*Hasagot* to Aseh 1 and Lo Taaseh 5).

In contrast, the author of *Halachot Gedolot* (cited in Ramban's *Hasagot* to Aseh 1) argued that this Divine declaration set the stage for all other mitzvot, but is not itself a mitzvah. He cited a midrash (Mehilta d'R' Yishmael, Yitro: BaChodesh 6) stating that before any mitzvah, there must be a pre-mitzvah acceptance of Hashem: "This may be compared to a king who entered a land. His servants said, 'Issue decrees upon them!' He replied, 'No; when they accept my reign, I will issue decrees upon them. If they do not accept my reign, how will they fulfill my decrees?' So Hashem declared to Israel, 'I am Hashem, your Lord. You shall not have the gods of others before Me. I am the One whose reign you accepted in Egypt.' They replied, 'Yes.' 'Then just as you accepted My reign, so You shall accept My decrees: You shall not have, etc.'"

## Israel's Chief Rabbis: Musical Yom ha'Atzmaut, Rabbi Isser Y. Unterman

In his youth, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Rav Isser Yehuda Unterman studied under Rav Shimon Shkop and Rav Raphael Shapiro; he quickly became known as "the prodigy of Brisk". He held rabbinic roles in Lithuania from 1910 until 1924. At first, he founded a yeshiva and taught advanced students, but throat difficulties forced him to retire from full-time teaching, in favour of the pulpit.

In 1924, Rav Unterman became Chief Rabbi of Liverpool; he learned English, and united the local congregations. Many Liverpoolians fled during World War II, but Rav Unterman remained, tending to his population and to Jewish refugees. He was also a major figure in England's Zionism movement, and in 1946 he made aliyah and became Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv. Rav Unterman was awarded the Rav Kook Prize for Torah Literature in 1954, and soon afterward he joined the Chief Rabbinate Council. In 1964 he was appointed to replace the late Rav Yitzchak HaLevi Herzog as the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of the State of Israel; he served in that role until the conclusion of his term, in 1972. In 1954 he wrote the following regarding music on Yom ha'Atzmaut (*Shevet miYehudah* II Orach Chaim 58):

The Rabbis have explicitly permitted music on that day,

because of the great salvation Hashem wrought for Israel, the rising of an independent State of Israel, without the yoke of foreigners and enslavement to another nation, and the gates of Israel have been opened wide before the masses of the House of Israel in all of its Diaspora lands. Through this more than 600,000 souls have ascended from the exiles; according to our beliefs, this is the start of redemption.

And even though the spiritual state of the nation does not satisfy us at all, and we should fight it continually to strengthen religion and observance of the sacred Torah and her mitzvot, still, in the beginning of the days of Ezra haSofer it was also thus. We believe powerfully that the situation will improve, and the nation of Israel will return to the way of faithful Judaism.

Here we rejoice in Hashem's salvation, with song and communal Hallel (without a blessing). Also in the city of Bnei Brak, where the great majority of her residents observe Torah and mitzvot, the mayor, Rabbi Yitzchak Gershtekoren, arranged a concert in the city on Yom ha'Atzmaut. It is a mitzvah to rejoice on this day, and to praise Hashem for His kindnesses.

## Upcoming Learning!

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

7:00 PM Shabbat March 16

**How Halachic Prenuptial Agreements Work, Part 1**, with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, at Eitz Chayim

8:30 AM to 9:15 AM Sunday March 17—**Now with bagels and spreads!**

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

**NEW TIME:** 8:30-9:30 PM Monday March 18 at Eitz Chayim and on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/medhal>  
**Halachah in Healthcare Settings: Davening for the Terminally III** with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

8:15-9:00 PM Tuesday March 19

**Gemara Makkot** with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, for men, at 693 Knollwood

8:00 PM Wednesday March 20 **Sisterhood Pre-Purim Shiur!**

**Vashti: Villain or Victim?** with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, for women, at 737 Evergreen

Age 12+ The boards were too heavy; see Rashi on Shemot 39:33

Age 8-12 B: Moshe

Age 4-8 C: The shevatim

Answers to Parshah Riddles

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