



# תורת חיים Torat Chayim

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בס"ד

Tzav/Parah

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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: Respect the Uniform

Every night, the previous day's korbanot are burned on the *mizbeiach* (altar). In the morning, a kohen removes the ashes and disposes of them outside. (Vayikra 6:3-4) In our parshah, Hashem instructs the kohen to wear his special *bigdei kehunah* uniform to remove the ashes from the *mizbeiach*, and to change into "other clothes" for the disposal. [For a different understanding of the text, see Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Temidin uMusafin 2:10.]

Rashi writes that changing out of the uniform is not a requirement; it's *derech erez*. As the Maharal explains, Rashi means that this is "common sense." Rashi writes, "The clothing that a servant wears when cooking his master's meal isn't the clothing he wears when pouring his cup." But Ramban disagrees, contending that the kohen is **obligated** to change his clothing. Why does Ramban insist that changing clothing is not simply common sense?

Based on a comment by the Maharal, we might suggest that Rashi and Ramban are debating the proper attitude toward the *bigdei kehunah*.

- As far as Rashi is concerned, a kohen may wear his elevated uniform to take the ashes outside, and if it becomes dirty then he should change out of it for subse-

quent *avodah* (service). There is no sin in dirtying the uniform in the first place, so long as the kohen doesn't use a dirty uniform for the *avodah*.

- Ramban is not satisfied with that approach. By distinguishing between the clothing worn for the ashes and the clothing worn for the *avodah*, the Torah teaches sensitivity. The uniform is not simple thread, but a manifestation of our relationship with Hashem, and we will not permit ourselves to make it dirty in the first place.

Ramban's point is relevant for all of us, even without a Beit HaMikdash. The Tur writes (Orach Chaim 91, 98) that our davening is parallel to the *avodah*, and the clothes we wear for davening are parallel to the *bigdei kehunah*. We could do as Rashi suggests, using our davening clothes for other purposes as well, and just changing before davening if our clothing becomes dirty. But we might consider (and this is the Tur's recommendation) following Ramban's sensitive approach, and designating specific clothing for davening, which we use for nothing else. Even if we cannot designate an entire outfit for davening, we could identify a particular garment. This would emphasize the special character of our relationship with Hashem.

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

Age 4-8: What red animal do we use to make ourselves *tahor*: A) Bull B) Cow C) Rover

Age 8-12: How long was the training period for the kohanim to learn how to work in the Mishkan? (See Vayikra 8:33)

Age 12+: According to Rashi, how many black hairs would disqualify a *parah adumah*?

### Journey Through Tanach: Yehoshua, Perek 24

We have arrived at the concluding chapter of Yehoshua, featuring Yehoshua's second "final speech" to the Jews, in Shechem. Both speeches exhort the Jews to be loyal to Hashem, but Abarbanel explains that the second speech employs a new tactic. The first speech was just an exhortation, and the people didn't respond, so now Yehoshua tries to challenge them.

Yehoshua begins by recounting Hashem's kindness prior to our national arrival in Canaan. [As instructed in the Talmud Yerushalmi (Pesachim 10:5), we include the opening verses of this passage in our Pesach Haggadah.] He recounts the idolatry of Terach, and our ancestors' journey to Canaan and then Egypt. He omits our slavery, jumping to Hashem taking us out of Egypt, across Yam Suf, and through the aggression of Moav and the Emori nations. He also skips the miracles of the manna, Hashem's cloud and fire, and more; the focus is on our entry into Eretz Yisrael. He describes Hashem's protection in our wars, and how Hashem gave us a land we had not worked, orchards we had not planted, and cities we had not built. (24:1-13)

Then Yehoshua's challenge begins. He demands that the

Jews decide whether they will worship idols, or serve Hashem. A midrash (Sifri Devarim 2) says he is asking rhetorically, but Ralbag explains it as a sincere question. Yehoshua anticipates consent to the covenant, but he wants it to be voluntary. The people indeed affirm their commitment to Hashem. (24:14-18)

Yehoshua persists, insisting that they will not succeed in remaining loyal, and they will bring punishment upon themselves. But the nation replies that they will indeed serve Hashem. Yehoshua executes a final covenant with them, and erects a stone monument marking the site. (24:19-28)

The book concludes by recording the death and burial of Yehoshua and of Elazar, the kohen gadol. (24:29-33) It also records the burial of Yosef's bones, even though that happened much earlier. Perhaps this is mentioned here because Yehoshua's gathering was in Shechem, which is a site associated with Yosef's kidnapping, and the place to which his bones were returned. We mention this here to highlight that we have now completed the arc of Egyptian exile, and we have returned home.

## The 613 Mitzvot: #26 - Against belief in foreign gods

Shemot 20 commands, "You shall not hold foreign gods before Me." Sefer HaChinuch counts this as the Torah's 26<sup>th</sup> mitzvah. This law prohibits not only worship, but also belief. However, since this is a thought-based mitzvah, no human court can punish its transgression; only Hashem enforces this mitzvah. (Minchat Chinuch 26:1)

This commandment is also one of the "Noachide" mitzvot, which apply to all human beings; a non-Jew is not permitted to believe in foreign gods. However, based on a talmudic discussion (Sanhedrin 63a), many authorities contend that a non-Jew may believe in other gods along with Hashem. On this basis, Tosafot (Bechorot 2b *shema*) contends that a Jew is allowed to enter an agreement with a non-Jew in which the participants swear by their belief systems, even if that means the non-Jew will invoke a deity which combines Hashem with other beings.

As we noted regarding the mitzvah of belief in Hashem, the 8<sup>th</sup> century Baal Halachot Gedolot contended that the Divine declarations of "I am Hashem your Lord" and "You shall not hold the gods of others" are not mitzvot at all. Rather, Hashem said this to introduce the Torah's laws to the Jewish nation. (Cited in Ramban's *hasagah* to Mitzvah Aseh #1)

## Israel's Chief Rabbis: Learning Kabbalah, Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu

Rav Mordechai Eliyahu was born in 1929, to Rabbi Salman and Mazal Eliyahu of Jerusalem. After his father passed away in 1940, young Mordechai sold hummus while studying in the great Yeshivat Porat Yosef. As a young man, Rav Eliyahu aggressively fought public Shabbat desecration and the sale of non-kosher food in Jerusalem. He later renounced his aggressive methods.

In 1953 Rav Eliyahu married his wife Tzivya. At age 31 he became a *dayan* in Beer Sheva, and in 1967 he joined the Supreme Rabbinical Court in Jerusalem. In 1983 he was elected Israel's Chief Sephardic Rabbi. He was steeped in Kabbalah, and known as a miracle-worker. He was politically active; he visited Jonathan Pollard in prison nine times. He passed away in 2010.

In *Ma'amar Mordechai* (Vol 3 Yoreh Deah #10), Rav Eliyahu explored whether one may learn Kabbalah without knowing gemara and halachah.

He began by stressing the importance of learning Kabbalah, citing the Zohar (Naso pg 124b) saying that learning the Zohar would result in our redemption from exile. He also quoted the Ben Ish Chai (*Torah Lishmah* #17) saying, "One is obligated to strain and involve himself in Kabbalah, to learn Hashem's secrets."

But then he brought the warning of Rabbi Moshe Isserless (Rama, Yoreh Deah 246:4), "One may not tour in 'the orchard' until he has filled his stomach with meat and wine, meaning knowledge of prohibitions and permissions and the laws of mitzvot." To this he added the Shach's statement (Yoreh Deah 246:6) that Kabbalists themselves said one must fill one's self with gemara first, and that learning Kabbalah before this could harm the student.

He also stressed the need for a proper teacher, quoting Ramban (Introduction to the Torah) and the Rama (*Torah ha'Olah* 3:4) warning that one should not dare to learn Kabbalah from books. Kabbalah should be taught by someone who is ordained as a teacher of Kabbalah. The Ben Ish Chai warned likewise (*Rav Pe'alim* I Yoreh Deah 56).

Therefore, Rav Eliyahu concluded that someone who has yet to learn the entire Talmud and the four parts of Shulchan Aruch should not enter the study of Kabbalah. However, he did permit learning the book *Chok l'Yisrael*, which includes Zohar passages. He also permitted reading the Zohar on a superficial level as part of an ongoing practice, contending that this can purify the soul.

## Upcoming Learning!

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

7:15 PM Shabbat March 30

**Halachic Prenuptial Agreements, Part II**, with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, at Eitz Chayim

8:30 AM to 9:15 AM Sunday March 31—**Now with bagels and spreads!**

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

8:30-9:30 PM Monday April 1 at Eitz Chayim and on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/medhal>

**Halachah in Healthcare Settings: Davening for the Terminally Ill** with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

8:15-9:00 PM Tuesday April 2

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

8:00-9:30 PM Monday April 8, Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/mTORCZ>

**Medical Ethics: Updating the Determination of the Moment of Death**

Please register at <https://torontotorah.com/cme> Accredited for CME, non-medical professionals welcome

Age 12+ Two black hairs. See Rashi to Bamidbar 19:2.  
Age 8-12 Seven days  
Age 4-8 B: Cow

Answers to Parshah Riddles

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