

# The Weekly Daf



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Megillah 28 – Mo'ed Katan 3

Issue # 295 Parshat Bereishit

Week of 24-30 Tishrei 5760 / 4-10 October 1999

Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

## Simchat Torah Mystery

Mystery surrounds the source of a familiar custom. The *gemara* tells us that on the very last day of Succot (known as "Simchat Torah") we read the last parsha of the Torah — "Beracha" — and for the haftarah we read from the eighth chapter of Melachim I (8:22) about King Solomon's prayer at the inauguration of the *Beit Hamikdash*.

Rabbeinu Nissim (Ran) explains the choice of these two sections. Simchat Torah is the climax of the festivals, and it is fitting to read on that day the blessings which Moshe gave to all of Israel. Since a haftarah must follow the spirit of the Torah reading, it is fitting that Moshe's blessings be followed by the blessings Solomon gave to all of his people.

Tosefot already calls attention to the custom — which is the one we follow — to read as the haftarah the first chapter of Yehoshua. Rabbeinu Nissim's explanation of this custom is that since we concluded our Torah reading with Moshe's passing, it is fitting that the haftarah consist of what Hashem commanded Moshe's disciple, Yehoshua, immediately afterwards.

The explanations are perfect. But there is a mystery as to why we have abandoned what the *gemara* determines as the haftarah. Tosefot cites a source that says the Gaon Rav Hai instituted this custom, but Tosefot wonders what reason there was for deviating from what our *gemara* says.

Rabbeinu Asher (Rosh) cites the Jerusalem Talmud as the source for this custom, but Korban Netanel comments that he was unable to find it there.

Whatever the source, this is the universal Jewish custom just as is the celebration which surrounds the completion of the reading of the entire Torah. The source for this celebration, however, is no mystery. The Midrash, referring to King Solomon making a festive banquet for all his servants when he realized that Heaven had granted his request for wisdom (*Melachim I 3:15*), declares this as a source for celebrating when we finish reading the entire Torah.

Just as Solomon felt a need to celebrate the gift of wisdom granted by Heaven, so do all Jews, who feel so much wiser as a result of reading the entire Torah for a year, feel the need to celebrate with Simchat Torah.

Megillah 31a

## Every Day a Holiday

The mitzvah to read on holidays the Torah portions relating to those holidays, says the *mishna*, is hinted at in the passage which concludes the Torah section on holidays: "And Moshe related these holidays of Hashem to the Israelites." (*Vayikra 23:44*)

Rashi explains that it would seem superfluous for the Torah to inform us that Moshe related to Israel the *mitzvot* of the holidays, since we already know that Moshe related to them all the *mitzvot*. The hidden message of this passage must then be that he was instructed to tell them to read the Torah sections related to those holidays. In line with this, Maharsha suggests that we gain another perspective of an earlier passage (23:4) in which the holidays are introduced with a command to "proclaim them in their season." The word "*tikre'u*" (proclaim) in that passage can now also be interpreted literally as "you shall read," since there is a mitzvah to read the Torah sections related to the holidays "in their season" — on the holidays themselves. Mesechta Megillah ends with a *beraita* informing us that Moshe instituted that Jews should study the laws of Pesach on Pesach, the laws of Shavuot on Shavuot and the laws of Succot on Succot; they are to ask the halachic authorities about those laws and listen to public lectures about them. This, notes Maharsha, was not included in the Divine command to read the Torah sections related to the holidays, but was an initiative of Moshe to create a greater awareness of what is required of Jews on those special days.

But why only in regard to the three festivals did Moshe institute this practice, and not in regard to Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur which are also mentioned in that same Torah chapter about holidays?

The answer, concludes Maharsha, is that Moshe felt a need for Jews to study the *mitzvot* relating to holidays which came at specific times of the year in order to refresh their knowledge of the essence of those days. The essence of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, however, is the repentance which a Jew must achieve in order to be worthy of favorable judgment. Such repentance is not a once a year issue but a matter which is relevant every day of the year.

Megillah 32a

### Prepared by Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel

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