

פרשת נח מרחשון תשפ״ג



## HAKHEL IN THE PARSHA

The Hakhel gathering brought together all men, women and children in order to bring the people "to fear Hashem... all of the days".

The unity of Hakhel was limited to the Min Hamedaber - man.

In Parshas Noach we find an even greater form of Hakhel. In the Teivah, there was a gathering of all of the elements of creation: mankind and animals.

Knowing that the Flood was taking place outside, would bring them to experience fear of Hashem.

The Mabul went for an entire year, encapsulating all of the phases of time. This is like the purpose of Hakhel that they "fear Hashem ... all of the days".

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## MONDAY NIGHT CHASSIDUS

Join Rabbi Johnson this week on Monday, 8:30pm on Zoom and delve into the teachings of Chassidus on the weekly Parsha

The Avodah of Lech Lecha A Journey away from self to discover yourself.

## LUNCH AND LEARN

Thursday 1:15-1:45pm in North Caulfield. Followed by Mincha. Contact us for details.

A collection of Torah thoughts produced by Kollel Menachem



# אין בית המדרש בלא Chiddush

## In this Edition

The Secret of the Rainbow P.1 How Many Mitzvos of Hakhel? P.2

reflection of an underlying spiritual change in the

The rainbow is produced by a combination effect

when sunlight is refracted through the mist within the

clouds. But this will only occur when the clouds are

'light' enough for the sunlight to shine through. A

The sun is used as a metaphor for the revelation of

Hashem's presence shining from Above. Clouds, pro-

duced from the water evaporating from the earth's

surface, represents the physicality of the world and

As a result of the sin of the Eitz Hadaas and the sins of

light of Hashem became completed hidden and could

the subsequent generations, the world became

coarse and corrupted. Like dark, dense clouds, the

The Alter Rebbe explains that the flood acted like a

After the flood, the physicality of the world can be

refined and elevated. Through our observance of

of the world to serve Hashem, we cause a refined mist to ascend. This is the Avodah of Birrurim.

These refined clouds are Keilim through which the

light of Hashem can shine. The combination of the

The Zohar teaches that one should not look for the

footsteps of Moshiach until they see a brilliant rain-

bow shining in the sky. Moshiach's arrival is the cu-

mulative result and revelation of our efforts to refine

two, produce the brilliance of the rainbow.

the world and reveal G-dliness within it.

Torah and Mitzvos and our utilising of the physicality

Mikvah that purified the coarseness and corruption of

our actions and deeds within it.

not shine through.

the world.

rainbow will not appear in dark, dense clouds.

## The Secret of the Rainbow

nature of existence.

The rainbow's status in Jewish thought is a paradox.

We are introduced to the rainbow in this week's Parsha as the sign of Hashem's covenant with Noach to never again destroy the earth by flood. Should it arise in G-d's mind to bring darkness and destruction upon the world, the appearance of a rainbow would cause Him to withhold the destructive flood waters.

Accordingly, the advent of a rainbow seems to indicate G-d's displeasure. Indeed in perfectly righteous generations such as that of king Chizkiyahu and Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, the rainbow never appeared.

But on the other end of the spectrum, the Gemara teaches that one who stares at a rainbow, is not concerned for the honour of His Creator. This is based on the prophecy of Yechezkel which likens the image of the glory of Hashem to "the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day", so was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Hashem.'

The Rishonim raise an obvious question about the sign of the rainbow. The appearance of the rainbow is a natural phenomenon caused by atmospheric conditions, as such it was present before the flood as well?

Ramban and Rav Saadiah Gaon write that indeed the rainbow itself was nothing new, but was merely designated as the sign of the covenant, most But most Rishonim learn that there was a change in the world and the atmospheric conditions that produce the rainbow only came into being after the flood.

The Ibn Ezra attributes this to a magnification of the sun's radiance. Most Rishonim associate the change with a change in the nature of clouds from prior, to after the Mabul.

Chassidus explains that this physical change was a

- 1. Makkos 23b, Horayos 8a. Also recorded in Mechilta Yisro and Sifri Devarim 66
- 2. See Ramban introduction to his comments on Sefer Hamitzvos who discusses this teaching, its source and whether it is disputed.
- 3. Mitzvah 289 and 290
- 4. The authorship is disputed. Some attribute it to Shimon

Kavvara. Others attribute it to Rav Yehudai Gaon

- 5. Mitzvos Aseh 162
- 6. Parshios Mitzvah 65 7. Mitzvos Aseh 16
- 8. See Rabbi Yerucham Fishel Perlow on the Sefer Hamitzvos
- 9 We find other words in Loshon Kodesh where two words with the same letters

but interchanged share the same meaning, such as בבש and בשבwhich both mean a lamb

- 10 Parshios 10
- 11. Sotah 7:8. Also recorded in Yerushalmi
- the Mishneh Torah This would also appear to be the

view of the Ramban who does not challenge the Rambam's enumeration as only one Mitzvah.

- 13 Mitzvah 612
- 12. Positive Mitzvah 16. Also found in the list of Mitzvos in

- 14. Mitzvas Aseh 230
- 15. Ner Mitzvah on Sefer Hamitzvos
- 16. Hilchos Chagigah 3:1
- 17. 3:6

## How Many Mitzvos of Hakhel are there?

The weekly Halacha analysis

## Rabbi Yonason Johnson

The Gemara<sup>1</sup> teaches that there are 613 Mitzvos in the Torah. This is derived from the verse תורה צוה לנו משה.

The word Torah has the Gematria of 611. These are the 611 Mitzvos that were taught by Moshe at Har Sinai. Together with the Mitzvos of "I am Hashem your G-d" and "You shall not have any other gods" which we heard directly from Hashem, this totals 613.

It is accepted that this teaching is undisputed and appears to be an oral tradition tracing back to Har Sinai<sup>2</sup>. Whilst the total number of 613 is accepted, there is no list in the writings of Chaza"l of exactly which Mitzvos are included.

As a result, we have a number of works from the early scholars, both Geonim and Rishonim, which list the 613 Mitzvos, but are each different in what they include as Mitzvos and what they do not. In his Sefer Hamitzvos, the Rambam, explains the rules or criteria (Shorashim) that he employed to determine what is counted as a Mitzvah.

The Pesukim which are the source of the Mitzvah of Hakhel teach "At the end of seven years... on the festival of Sukkos, when all of Israel come... you must read this Torah before all of Israel... Gather the people – the men, women and the children..."

In this passage we find two terms denoting a command; "read this Torah" and "gather the people".

## Two Mitzvos

Based on this, many of the enumerators of the Mitzvos understand that there are two Mitzvos of Hakhel. One is a Mitzvah for the king to read the Parshios of Hakhel (*"read this Torah"*). The other is a Mitzvah for the people to gather at the time, to hear the king reading from the Torah (*"gather the people"*).

This is the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer of Mitz (12<sup>th</sup> Century, France) in his work the Yereim<sup>3</sup>, who lists two separate Mitzvos and quotes the two Pesukim as being the source.

In his enumeration of the Mitzvos, the Baal Halachos Gedolos (Geonic period<sup>4</sup>) divides the Mitzvos into positive and negative Mitzvos and also divides between the Mitzvos incumbent on the individual and Mitzvos incumbent on the Tzibbur (community).

He records an individual Mitzvah<sup>5</sup> for the king

to read the Torah at Hakhel and a separate communal Mitzvah<sup>6</sup> for the people to attend and listen to this reading.

Rabbi Saadiah Gaon, known by the acronym Rasa"g (9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> Century Babylon) also wrote a work – Sefer Hamitzvos - enumerating the 613 Mitzvos. This work is written in the form of a poem, with each Mitzvah alluded to in a few words. He also divides between positive and negative Mitzvos and communal and individual Mitzvos.

In the positive individual Mitzvos<sup>7</sup> he writes המלך יקראנה בלהקים "and the king will read it Belahakim". It is understood<sup>8</sup> that this refers to the reading of the Torah at Hakhel – the word Belahakim בלהקים comprising the same letters as בקהלים (from the word Kahal/Hakhel) meaning a gathering<sup>9</sup>.

In the communal Mitzvos<sup>10</sup> he writes והעם "and the people at the blowing (of the trumpet) of the king, will gather". This alludes to the Tosefta<sup>11</sup> that on the day of the Hakhel gathering, the Kohanim would go out into the public spaces in Yerushalaim and blow golden trumpets to call the Jewish people to gather for Hakhel. They did so as Shluchim of the king.

## Only 1 Mitzvah

In contrast to the above works, the Rambam in his Sefer Hamitzvos lists only 1 Mitzvah of Hakhel<sup>12</sup>; "we are commanded to gather the entire people together on the second day of Sukkos in the year after Shemittah and they shall read verses...".

In the Rambam's understanding, the two elements of Hakhel – the gathering and the reading of the Torah, are two parts of a single Mitzvah.

The Sefer Hachinuch, a classic 13<sup>th</sup> Century work which details the Mitzvos according to the order in which they are found in the Torah by Parsha, also lists only one Mitzvah of Hakhel that comprises two elements<sup>13</sup>; "The Mitzvah of Hakhel in the year after the seventh year – we are commanded that the Jewish people should gather and to read before them from the book of Mishneh Torah (Devarim)."

He writes that if either the people do not gather to hear the Torah or the king does not read the Torah, they would be negating the positive Mitzvah of Hakhel.

This is also the view of the Sefer Mitzvos Gadol

 Semag (Rabbi Moshe ben Yaakov of Couci 13<sup>th</sup> Century) who counts only 1 Mitzvah of Hakhel<sup>14</sup>.

The Acharonim<sup>15</sup> ask why these authorities do not count two Mitzvos of Hakhel as suggested from the Pesukim and as recorded by the other works on the Mitzvos discussed above.

#### A possible explanation;

Unlike other Mitzvos, the Torah teaches the reason for Hakhel – as indicated by the use of the word למען (in order...). The purpose of the Mitzvah is to instil in the hearts of the people and to inspire them to fear Hashem and to commit themselves to the observance of the Mitzvos of the Torah. The Rebbe explains that this is not just the reason for the Mitzvah but is the very essence of the Mitzvah.

In the words of the Rambam<sup>16</sup>: "It is a positive commandment to gather together the entire Jewish people - men, women, and children after every Sabbatical year when they ascend for the pilgrimage holiday and to read <u>so that</u> <u>they hear passages from the Torah that en-</u> <u>courage them to perform mitzvot and</u> <u>strengthen them in the true</u> faith - TT האמת -

In a subsequent Halacha<sup>17</sup> he writes even more strongly; "One who is unable to hear should focus his attention on this reading, <u>for Scripture established it **solely** to strengthen the true <u>faith</u>."</u>

Based on this understanding, there is only one Mitzvah of Hakhel. The essence of the Mitzvah is achieved through the gathering of the people and the king reading before them the Parshios of the Torah.

In his commentary, the Malbim explains how each detail of the Mitzvah facilitated the objective of Hakhel, including; the timing, the specific Parshios read, the location, the gathering and the reading by the king.

Being in such a holy place in the presence of Hashem, after a year of Shemittah immersed in learning Torah, seeing millions of Jews together focusing on the reading of Hashem's words, by the king—Hashem's chosen one, who stands with awe and dedication, all of this would certainly make a great and lasting impression and instil within their hearts the fear of Hashem and inspire them to observe all of the words of this Torah