

# New and Improved

We say three times every day in Krias Shema, "these words that I command you today shall be on your heart." Our sages point out that use of the word "today" needs explanation. After all, the Torah was given three-thousand years ago! Our sages answer that every single day should be viewed as if the Torah was given for the first time on this very day. Marketers know this rule. The words that appear most often in supermarkets are, "New and Improved."

Hashem tells us in Parshas Behaaloscha, that Aharon lit the Menorah as he was commanded to do. Rashi quotes the Sifri, "the Torah gives special praise to Aharon, because he did not deviate from the commandment to light the menorah." The meforshim question, one should never deviate from Hashem's commandment! Why does Aharon merit special praise that he did not deviate from Hashem's words? Of course he would not and should not deviate from Hashem's words!

Hagaon Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach Z.T.L. gave the following answer. Imagine if we had received a mitzva to light the menorah in the Bais Hamikdosh. Imagine that our very action would kindle the menorah that will testify to the world that the Shechina dwells among Bnai Yisroel! This is a supernatural light that would burn for twenty-four hours, even though there was enough oil only for nine hours! How would we prepare for this mitzva?

For starters, we would go to the mikveh and say Tehillim all day. Toward the evening we would put on the Kohain's special garments. As we climbed the steps to the menorah, our eyes would most likely fill with tears; we would "shukel" intensely. In the process of cleaning the menorah, we may spill some oil; drop the old wicks, put in the new wicks without removing the old ones, etc. The Torah testifies on the greatness of Aharon Hakohain, that in spite of the great emotional feelings that are associated with lighting the menorah, he never made a mistake! He never spilled the oil; he never mixed the old wicks with the new ones, etc. The job was impeccable.

The Sefas Emes gives a different answer. Typically, when we do a mitzva for the first time, we become very involved and excited about the mitzva. As we continue to do the mitzvah many times, it becomes routine and almost as if the car is in cruise control. Witness the emotional excitement and happiness of the bar mitzvah boy when he puts on tefillin for the first time. Now, fast forward forty years. The same person puts on tefillin with no emotion or feeling whatsoever. The Torah praises Aharon that the same "bren" and "hislahavus" that he had when he lit the menorah for the first time, remained with him throughout the 14,600 (40years x 365 days) times he lit the menorah!

This could be the meaning of the Chazal that we mentioned earlier. Every single day, the Torah that you learn should be viewed as if it was given to you for the first time! The same joy and love and desire for the Torah should be at its peak when you learn it the first time. The same devotion should remain with you for your entire life.

We are approaching the end of the zman. It is the time when we find many "other things" to do during seder; many tirdos. When the zman started, we were fired up to do well! Our parsha teaches us to emulate Aharon! All the reasons to "cut" seder should be postponed until Tisha Bav. Now our focus should be to shteig as best as we can! The barometer of one's learning is based on the learning one does as the zman is drawing to a close. "Hakol Holaich Achar Hagmar" the key indicator is one's learning at the conclusion of the zman. Hatzlocho Rabba!

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# Hagbaha

Rabbi Henoah Plotnik

**T**here is a well-known passage in the Talmud Yerushalmi (Sotah Ch. 7:4) that serves as one of the sources for the mitzvah of hagbaha - showing the words of the Torah to all those present at kriyas hatorah. The Pasuk says “**cursed is the one who does not uphold the words of this Torah** (Devorim 27:26). The Yerushalmi says this is a reference to the chazan, interpreted by the Ramban (ibid.) to mean the one honored with hagbaha, who must lift up the Torah high enough for all to see. This interpretation of the Yerushalmi is based on the Beraisa in Mesechta Sofrim (Ch. 14:14) that instructs the magbiya (chazan) to show the Torah to everyone on his right and left as well as to those in front of him and behind him. Indeed, the halacha requires that the Torah be open to a width of at least three columns when hagbaha is being performed (mishneh b’rura 134:8). The pasuk of “**v’zos hatorah,**” as mentioned in the Beraisa in Mesechta Sofrim, is to be recited during hagbaha. Although the pasuk of Toras Hashem Temima is also mentioned in the same beraisa, it is not universally said. (According to one version, the Beraisa actually offers a choice between the recitation of the two pesukim). We will present a number of items concerning the proper procedure and performance of this mitzvah.

The importance of reciting **v’zos hatorah** should not be taken lightly. Witness the words of the Sha’arei T’shuva (134:6) that one should even interrupt his recitation of Emes **V’yatziv** following Sh’ma to say v’zos hatorah. Although the Sha’arei T’shuva seems to have some difficulty with this, surely we see how important it is to say it when one is holding at that point in the davening and not to engage in idle chatter! The Arizal would stare at the letters of the Torah to the extent that he could read them clearly because a “good light” attaches itself to one who does so (mishneh b’rurah 134:11). Even if one cannot see the actual letters he should recite the pasuk anyway, as long as he is looking in the right direction. The Ben Ish Chai (Kaf HaChaim 134:13) writes that staring at a word whose first letter corresponds to the first letter of the person’s name is a segula for success. According to one contemporary authority, **v’zos hatorah** should not be recited at all if the person can only see the outside of the parchment (B’Tzel Hachochmo Vol. 5 #54). It is worth pointing out, though, that the Arizal holds that hagbaha should be performed before kriyas hatorah in accordance with the opinion of the Shulchan Aruch and minhag Sefard. It is then that the light of the Torah shines on all of those assembled (brought in Sefer Piskei Teshuvos 134 #40). It is beyond us to determine if the segulos mentioned above are specifically dependent upon doing the hagbaha then. Our minhag (ashkenazim) is to do hagbaha after kriyas hatorah.

Many siddurim contain a nussach that adds the words “*al pi Hashem b’yad Moshe*” to the pasuk of **v’zos hatorah**. These are the last five words of a pasuk in this week’s sedra (Ch. 10:23) The Aruch HaShulchan questions this custom from two angles. First of all, we have a general rule than “any pasuk that was not divided by Moshe Rabbeinu is not allowed to be divided.” If so, how can we take this half-pasuk which describes our travels throughout the desert as being executed by the mouth of Hashem through Moshe, and use it as an addendum to **v’zos hatorah**! Secondly, the Beraisa in Meseches Sofrim makes no mention of these words whatsoever! This nusach, however, is indeed brought in the siddur of the Sh’la Hakodosh. It is understood that these added words are an allusion to the authenticity of the Torah Shel Ba’al Peh. It is therefore recommended by Rav Chaim Volozhiner to recite the whole pasuk beginning from “al pi Hashem yachanu” (see Chumash Medrash Halacha, Bamidbar 10:23). As an aside, the Sh’la sees this second pasuk as a source for the minhag Yisroel to always say “Im Yirtzeh hashem” or “*B’ezras hashem*” when mentioning one’s plans and hopes - everything is exclusively “al pi Hashem.”

The Shulchan Aruch makes mention of bowing toward the Sefer Torah during hagbaha, a practice that is not generally followed and is in fact discouraged by other early authorities

(Shiltei Giborim quoted in Har Tzvi Vo. 1 #64). It has been suggested that the custom to bow was only applicable in former times when hagbaha was performed with the *k'sav* toward the people, like we do on Simchas Torah (Divrei Yatziv [Klausenberg] Vol. 1 #76). It is brought in the name of Rav Chaim Kanievsky Shlita to indeed bow even nowadays, in opposition to the common practice (see Piskei Teshuvos, Ch. 134 Note 29).

The Yalkut Me'am Loez (Parshas Ki Savo) brings yet another custom practiced during hagbaha, which is to point at the Torah with the small finger. This should not be done, however, during the recitation of Sh'ma (Ishei Yisroel Ch. 20 Note 77). There is yet another less popular custom to kiss the tzitzis of the tallis and point them towards the Torah.

Regardless of one's particular custom, hagbaha is a wonderful opportunity to express our love and appreciation for our precious and holy Torah. May we all merit receiving the brochos reserved for "those who uphold the words of this Torah."

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