

K5: Purim



Aims:

1. To learn about Purim.
2. To understand the concept of 'Venahafoch hu'.
3. To learn why Purim will always exist.

A reminder of the Purim story...

Once upon a time, when the Second Temple was being rebuilt, the Jewish nation was almost obliterated. In the city of Shushan, Vashti, the Queen of Persia, refused to obey the order of her husband Achashverosh, King of Persia, to appear before his guests. So, the King disposed of her and began his search across the country for a new queen. From among hundreds of applicants, he chooses Esther, a cousin of Mordechai the Jew.

The King's Prime Minister was an evil man named Haman. Haman, a descendant of the tribe of Amalek, hated the Jews and decided to kill them. He convinced King Achashverosh to issue an edict that ordered the destruction of all Jews in the land of Persia. Mordechai pleaded with Esther to save the Jewish people by talking to the King and persuading him to overturn the edict. At the risk of her own life, Esther appeared before the King without being summoned by him (an action that was punishable by death). She revealed her own Jewish identity to the King and exposed Haman's evil plans.

The King was outraged at Haman, and he issued a decree to make Haman the victim of his own sinister plot. Haman and his sons were killed, and the Jews were saved. To commemorate this miraculous turn of events, Jews celebrate Purim on the 14th/15th Adar by reading the Megillah (the story of Purim), enjoying a Purim Feast, sending gifts of food to our friends and the needy, and having great fun.

Venahafoch Hu

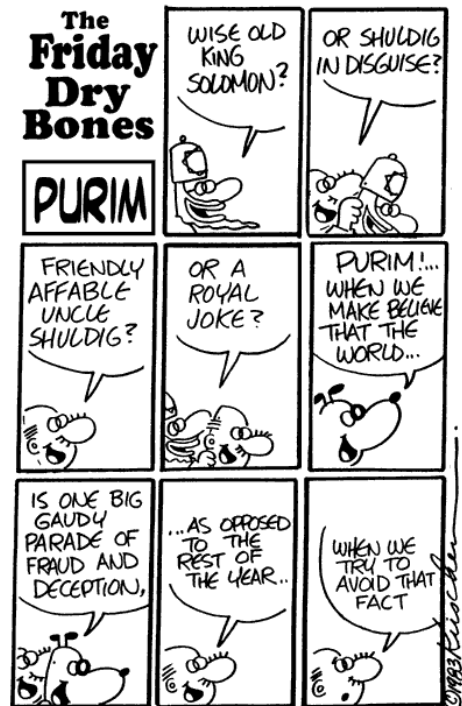
Purim is the story of *Venahafoch Hu*, - 'and it was turned upside down' - but what does this mean?

Recorded in the Torah is the story of when Rivka was brought from her home to meet her betrothed, Yitzchak; when she saw him, she fell off her donkey:

וַתִּשָּׂא רִבְקָה אֶת-עֵינֶיהָ וַתִּרְאֵ אֶת-יִצְחָק וַתִּפֹּל מֵעַל הַגָּמֶל:

"And Rivka raised her eyes and she saw Yitzchak and she fell down from the camel."
(Bereishit 24:64)

February 25, 1983



The Midrash in Bereishit Rabbah asks why she fell off her donkey when she saw her future husband? The suggested answer is that Rivka fell from her donkey because when she saw Yitzchak he was returning from Gan Eden, having gone there to use the mikveh. Says the Midrash, in Gan Eden one walks with their head on the ground and their feet in the air; upside down, 'Venahafoch Hu'.



What might be symbolised by this 'walking upside-down'? Why should it cause Rivka to fall from her donkey?

Reinterpreting reality

We can see this upside-down business with Rabbi Akiva as well. There is a well-known story about Rabbi Akiva walking towards the Temple Mount (Har HaBayit) with some fellow Rabbis; they began crying at seeing the destruction of the Temple and the tragedy of their present circumstances, while Rabbi Akiva laughed:

"Once again they were coming up to Jerusalem together, and just as they came to Mount Scopus they saw a fox emerging from the Holy of Holies. They fell weeping but Rabbi Akiva seemed merry. 'Why', said they to him, 'are you merry?' Said he: 'Why are you weeping?' Said they to him: 'A place of which it was once said, 'And the common man that draws near shall be put to death', has now become the haunt of foxes, and should we not weep?!' Said he to them: 'Therefore am I merry; for it is written, 'And I will take to Me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the Son of Jeberechiah'.... Uriah was [in the time of] the First Temple, and Zechariah was [in the time of] the Second Temple! But the Torah makes Zachariah's prophecy dependent upon Uriah's prophecy. With Uriah, it is written: 'Therefore, because of you, Zion shall be plowed as a field; [Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the Temple Mount like the high places of a forest.]' With Zachariah it is written, 'Old men and women shall yet sit in the streets of Jerusalem.' As long as Uriah's prophecy had not been fulfilled, I feared that Zechariah's prophecy may not be fulfilled either. But now that Uriah's prophecy has been fulfilled, it is certain that Zechariah's prophecy will be fulfilled'. Said they to him: 'Akiva, you have comforted us! Akiva, you have comforted us!'" (Makkot 24b)

The message from this story is a poignant one: where others saw destruction, Rabbi Akiva saw the complete opposite, he saw hope. He understood that just as one (negative) prophecy had been fulfilled, it signalled that a different oracle of hope would also one day actualise: he knew that what you see before your eyes loses its significance when God is guaranteeing something else.



Should we seek to reinterpret all sad events optimistically? Is this a productive outlook to have?

Take a Chance

Purim appears to be a story of how God ‘plays the world’ and it comes out trumps for the Jewish people. From a straight reading of the Megilla, the story seems subject to chance. God doesn’t even get a direct mention!



“Hello Honey! Sooo sorry. Benny didn’t make it !”

the *Seir LaShem* [the goat which is dedicated to God and sacrificed].

Indeed, Purim means lottery. When people want something to be random, they draw a lot. Pick out a hat. If we think about it though, it turns out there nowhere is Divine intervention clearer than in a lottery: the Jews divided up the land of Israel via lots. Moreover, on Yom Kippur two identical goats are taken, lots are drawn to decided which will be the *Seir Le’Azazel* [goat which is led off a mountain top, as the ‘scapegoat’ for all of Israel’s sins] and which

In Judaism, when we want to find out what God really wants, we draw a lot. It turns out, nature is actually not something we should take for granted. A lot isn’t random. The world is run always run according to Divine Leadership. For example, people thought that in 1967 winning the war was due to a strong army, and a number of ideological secular Jews - what they didn’t see was that God was running the show behind the scenes.

Living in this world

Under normal circumstances people walk with their feet on the ground and their head above because the head points to where we want to go, where we believe God rests. When Yitzchak walked out of Gan Eden upside down, he knew the truth: that this it is in this world that God truly resides, not the next world.

That is also why Yitzchak's name means 'laughter', not only because he could walk on his head but also because he knew this truth. Rabbi Akiva laughed because he could see through the tragedy and realise the tremendous kindness (*chesed*) and love that God was doing for us, especially at the time when He seemed furthest away.



The reason Purim is such a physical festival (eating and drinking etc...) is because when we eat we feel more alive and invigorated, and when we feel alive in *this* world that's when we can see the *chesed* of God and the meaning of life the most. That is why Purim will always exist. It is the eternal truth and the secret of the world to come when we will see nature for the Divine miracle it really is.



Yossi's mother couldn't understand why he was struggling socially.

Gratitude

The verse '*Vehi Sheamda*' appears in the Pesach Haggadah. It says: '*Ela Shebachol Dor Vador Omdim Aleinu l'chaloteinu, v'Hakodosh Baruch Hu Matzileinu Miyadam*' - In every generation, there are those who seek to destroy us and wipe us out from the face of the earth.

Though they tried, God saves us from their hands each time. The Chagim we have that commemorate these attempts, such as Purim, are a time of joy and happiness, but one should never forget God's part in our survival.

Haman tried to physically destroy Am Yisrael. Hashem saved us, but we should not take that for granted. Our duty is to prove that we deserved to be saved, that we can use the physical world to serve Hashem and spread joy. That is why Purim is centred around physicality. Eating, drinking, giving gifts, singing, dancing and laughing are all ways in which we can express our gratitude to God for the life that we have been granted.

Summary of K5:

1. The concept of Venahafoch Hu teaches us to look at the world in a different way.

2. We believe that everything comes from Hashem, nothing is left to chance.
3. God exists in the physical world, and we are supposed to engage with it and to use it to serve Him.

K4 : Chanukah



Aims :

1. To learn why we celebrate Chanukah.
2. To learn about the relevance of Chanukah.
3. To learn about how Chanukah relates to modern chagim.

What is Chanukah?

Chanukah is the only festival that has no source in the Tanach, but which has been rabbinically instituted. The questioning of the Gemara illustrates that a degree of mystery surrounds the origins of the chag: the Babylonian Talmud (Shabbat 21b) asks: 'Mai Chanukah?', 'What is [the reason of] Chanukah?' According to Rashi, the debate implicit in this question is: 'over which miracle did they establish it?'



"For when the Greeks entered the Temple, they defiled all the oils therein, and when the Hasmonean dynasty prevailed against and defeated them, they searched and found only one jar of oil which lay with the seal of the High Priest, but which contained enough for one day's lighting only; yet a miracle occurred and they lit [the lamp] therewith for eight days. The following year these

[days] were appointed a Festival with [the recital of] Hallel and thanksgiving" (Shabbat, 21b)

Setting the scene

From the moment that Bnei Yisrael settled in Eretz Yisrael, the area was fraught with tensions. Internal politics caused the country to split in two, with ten tribes forming the northern kingdom of Israel and two the southern kingdom of Yehuda. The invasion of the kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians in 720 BCE resulted in the ten tribes being lost. A century and a half later, Babylon invaded Yehuda, destroyed the first Beit Hamikdash, and exiled the remaining Jews. This policy of relocating the residents of regions that they conquered was intended to separate ethnic groups and remove their distinct identities.

The Persian Empire under Cyrus I that took over from the Babylonians fifty years after the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash had a more open policy. They allowed the Jews to go back to Eretz Yisrael and rebuild the Beit Hamikdash. The Persians were taken over by the Macedonian Greeks under Alexander the Great, and their empire split up after his death, leaving Eretz Yisrael under the control of Ptolemaic Egypt. In 198 BCE, the region was taken over by the Seleucids, also known as the Syrian Greeks. Their leader was Antiochus.

Scholars debate as to why Antiochus broke the Persian tradition from Cyrus of letting people worship in their own ways. Regardless of his reasoning, the outcome was an internal civil war. The Jews split between those who embraced the new Hellenist lifestyle and those who were committed to Torah and Jewish tradition. The two factions vied for political control and control over the priesthood and the Beit Hamikdash.

Enter Mattiyahu

Matityahu the Kohen lived in Modiin with his five sons. A leader among the Chashmonaim, the Jews faithful to the Torah, he was asked by a Seleucid Greek government representative to offer sacrifice to the Greek gods. Matityahu refused. He then killed both the Jew who had stepped forward to replace him and the government official. He called out:



“Let everyone who has zeal for the Law and who stands by the covenant follow me!”
(Maccabees 1 2:27)

His public religious stand sparked a rebellion against the Syrian Greeks that we know as the Chanukah story. After Matityahu’s death, his eldest son Yehuda led a campaign of guerilla warfare pushing back the armies of Antiochus and reclaiming Eretz Yisrael for the Jews. A large army was sent to crush the uprising but returned to Syria upon the sudden death of Antiochus.

The Maccabees cleaned and restored the Beit Hamikdash, setting Yonatan as Kohen Gadol. Upon reaching the ransacked Temple, they found a single small jug of oil for lighting the menorah, that miraculously lasted for eight days. The Hasmonean Dynasty founded by the Maccabees ruled Israel for almost 200 years

A contradiction

So, it seems that Chanukah celebrates a miracle that transpired, regarding the oil...

This is all well and good but if we look at another familiar source for Chanukah, the *Al Hanisim* prayer in the *Shemonah Esrei* and *Birkat Hamazon* prayers, we have a different story!

"[We thank You also] for the miracles, the redemption, the mighty deeds, and the victories in battle which You performed for our ancestors in those days at this time..."

Fundamentally, we must note that *Al Hanisim* focuses entirely on the attempted destruction of the Jewish nation by the Greeks and specifically praises Hashem for the military victory and subsequent re-purification of the temple. (There is no mention of the miracle with the oil). *Al Hanisim* finishes by stating that Chanukah was established to thank (*l'hodot*) and praise (*l'hallel*) Hashem.



If Chanukah celebrates the re-dedication of the Temple and the re-establishment of a Jewish state in the land of Israel, why do we celebrate it today when we are without a Temple?

The simple answer is to return to our original point about the 'two miracles' of Chanukah: whereas originally the reason may have been the military victory and rededication of the Temple, once the Temple was destroyed, the emphasis shifted to the miracle of the oil. Since the Gemara was written around the Fifth Century – a long time after these events – it discusses the miracle of the oil, as that was of greater relevance during their day. In contrast, *Al Hanisim* was written closer to the time when the military victory was relevant, so it emphasises that cause for celebration.



A message from the exile

פְּרֹאשִׁית פָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ: וְהָאָרֶץ הִיְתְּהָ תֵהוֹ
וּבְהוֹ וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל-פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם: וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אֹר וַיְהִי-אֹר:

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. Now the earth was unformed and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters. And God said: 'Let there be light.' And there was light."
(Bereishit 1:1-3)

Chazal teach that the four expressions of nothingness, as found in Genesis 1:1-3, represent the four exiles:

- Babylonian – 'unformed'
- Persian – 'void'
- Greek – 'darkness'
- Roman – 'face of the deep'

Of all four exiles, the Greek exile was the worst; for the Persians never actually exiled us, in fact they allowed us to return to Israel, and the Babylonians and Romans may have destroyed our two Temples, but their threat was observable. By contrast, the Greek exile took place when the Jews were all in the land of Israel and seemingly all was good – but in reality the Greeks were mounting a cultural war, to “*make them forget Your [God’s] Torah and to turn them away from the statutes of Your [God’s] will*” (*Al Hanisim*). This is the most dangerous enemy we have had to deal with: other enemies, such as Haman, are identifiable – we could recognise the enemy and the whole Jewish world united in order to defeat him. With Chanukah, the Greeks were not alone: many Hellenised Jews (*mityavnim*) joined their vision of attacking the Jewish religion.

Therefore, we see that the message of Chanukah has relevance even after the destruction of the Temple. Since the year 70CE, the Jews have wandered around the world in many different forms of exile, and throughout this time, Jews have faced the threat of assimilation – none more so than today. In this ‘long night’ of exile, Chanukah serves as a yearly reminder not to give up our religion. Instead of accepting the darkness of a secular Greek-based culture; we light candles reminding us of the true light of the Torah.

But there is yet another often-missed aspect to Chanukah, which really turns things around! Excited? Read on...

Divine Providence



What’s so special about the miracles of Chanukah? Surely other miracles have occurred throughout Jewish history?

One possible answer is that the miracle itself wasn’t such a big deal, but its broader significance has made Chanukah what it is today. Remember: the Jews had just mobilised an army and won a military victory against the Greeks with no obvious divine intervention – in fact, it seems to be a fairly non-religious event. But then came the oil: in the absence of any Tanach-writing prophet, this miracle comes as a seal of approval that the Maccabees had fought a just war, but that their victory only came about through Hashem’s help – even if it was ‘invisible’, so to speak.

In modern times, the astonishing victories of the Israeli Army have changed the Jewish world – we now have independence in our own land and a more secure way of life for the Jewish people. After the War of Independence, it was clear to some that we had experienced a ‘modern day miracle’: the success of the newly (re)born State of Israel was unexpected and unpredictable, from a military point of view. In recognition of God’s crucial role in Israel’s victory, we celebrate Yom Ha’atzmaut today by singing Hallel and ascribing triumph to God in the way which we are accustomed to go on major and minor festivals.

We can say that Chanukah has become even more relevant since 1948! Not only do we as a people face the biggest assimilation problem in our history, but just like in the

times of the Hasmoneans, we also have a Jewish army who fight military campaigns where there is no clear divine intervention. The challenge for the Jewish state today is to learn the lesson of Chanukah and attribute the military successes to God, rather than the might of the army alone: we need the miracle of the oil as well as the military victories...

Summary of K4:

1. The Chanukah story is about the defeat of Hellenism by the Chashmonaim, and the reestablishment of Jewish control in Eretz Yisrael.
2. The miracles of Chanukah were the military victory as well as the miracle of the oil.
3. Chanukah is there to remind us not to give up hope in the darkness of exile.
4. It is important to recognise God's hand in military victories, both past and present.

K3: Yamim Noraim



Aims :

1. To understand what is Rosh Hashana;
2. To learn about the period between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur
3. To understand the meaning behind Yom Kippur.

Rosh Hashana

The source for Rosh Hashana can be found in the Torah:

דָּבַר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּאַחַד לַחֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם שַׁבָּתוֹן זִכְרוֹן תְּרוּעָה מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ:

"And in the seventh month, on the first of the month, you shall observe a cessation of work - a day of remembrance, of the sounding of the shofar." (Vayikra 23:24)

Why two days?

The Rambam, Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, writes:

"The Festival of Rosh Hashana - in the period when they would establish (the calendar) based upon testimony - was celebrated by the majority of the residents of the Land of Israel for two days because they were in doubt [as to when the Festival began], for they did not know when the court had established the new month since the agents of the court did not go out on a Festival." (Hilchot Kiddush ha-Chodesh 5:7-8)

What is the significance of the day?

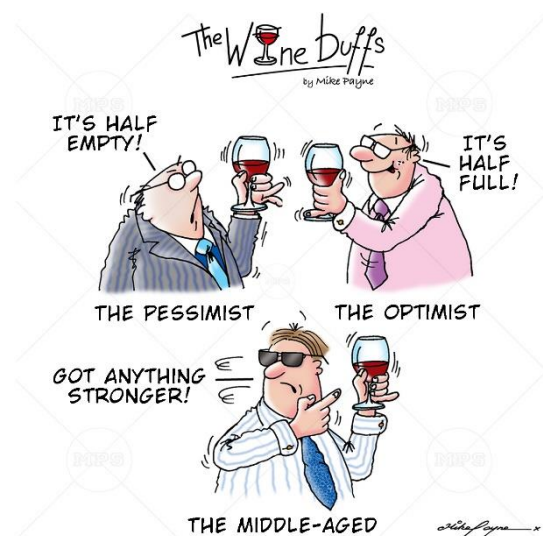
Rosh Hashana is the day of judgment on which the whole world is judged according to the actions of the year passed. There are two reasons that this day was chosen: the first being that it was on this day that mankind was created, the second it was on this day that mankind first sinned regarding the famous episode in the garden of Eden and was forgiven.



Why would these two days be appropriate times for judging mankind?

On this day a person is judged according to the deeds of the past year, and God decides on that person's future. However, God only passes final judgment on this day inscribing in the book of life and death if the person is completely righteous or completely wicked. If a person is neither, they are in the category of a beinoni, a middle person, and their actions are scrutinized. Their future is hanging on the smallest action until Yom Kippur.

"R. Cruspedai said in the name of R. Yochanan: Three ledgers are opened on Rosh Hashana: one for those who are entirely wicked, one for those who are entirely righteous, and one for those who are in the middle. The entirely righteous are immediately inscribed and sealed to live. The entirely wicked are immediately inscribed and sealed to die. The fate of those in the



middle is held in balance between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. If they have merit [i.e., if they repent], they are inscribed to live. If they do not have merit [i.e., if they fail to repent], they are inscribed to die" (Gemara Rosh Hashana 16 a,b)

What is its central observance?

The central observance on Rosh Hashana is the sounding of the shofar, as we saw in the Torah verse above. To fulfil this commandment, we usually use a rams horn but never that of a cow. The reasoning behind it is as follows: The ram signifies the Akeida because it was it which was substituted for the last minute as the sacrifice instead of Isaac, the ram therefore is meant to invoke the remembrance of Abrahams complete commitment to God and his willingness to fulfil His commands. The sounding of a



cow's horn, the animal involved in the incident of the golden calf, would only be detrimental to our seeking of forgiveness, akin to waving a murder weapon in the face of a judge about to decide the case.

Another reason for sounding the horn is to awaken man to repentance. The shofar blasts are a reminder that judgment is imminent, it is a final call to change. The Rambam writes:

"Even though the sounding of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah is a decree, it contains an allusion. It is as if [the shofar's call] is saying: Wake up you sleepy ones from your sleep and you who slumber, arise. Inspect your deeds, repent,

remember your Creator. Those who forget the truth in the vanities of time and throughout the entire year, devote their energies to vanity and emptiness which will not benefit or save: Look to your souls. Improve your ways and your deeds and let every one of you abandon his evil path and thoughts." (Teshuvah 2:4)

The Ten Days of Repentance



These are the days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. They are the days in which we are given the final chance to change. Since no one can assume they are righteous or wicked, they must do their utmost to be inscribed in the Book of Life. It is therefore the custom of Jews to give more to charity and to do more good deeds during this time.

"I have a new app that tracks my sin-to-repent ratio."

"Even though repentance and calling out [to God] are desirable at all times, during the ten days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, they are even more desirable and will be accepted immediately as [Isaiah 55:6] states: "Seek God when He is to be found. When does the above apply? To an individual. However, in regard to a community, whenever they repent and cry out wholeheartedly, they are answered immediately as [Deuteronomy 4:7] states: "[What nation is so great that they have God close to them,] as God, our Lord, is whenever we call Him."" (Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah 2:6)

Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur is the Day of Atonement, falling on the 10th of Tishrei, a day on which God enters the final inscription in the books of life and death. On this day we make our final appeal for a good verdict.

"It is the apex of forgiveness and pardon for Israel. Accordingly, everyone is obligated to repent and confess on Yom Kippur." (Rambam 7:2)

Yom Kippur is the day on which God gave Bnei Yisrael the second set of tablets; it is on this day that he forgave them, after Moses's intense period of davening for the transgression of the golden calf incident. On

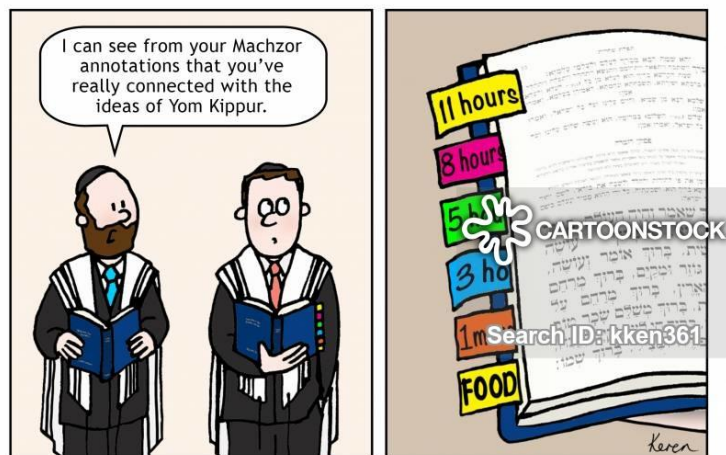
this day He gives man the 13 Attributes of Mercy that when invoked will help Bnei Israel attain forgiveness when they are used.

Yom Kippur is a serious day but as the Gemara in Ta'anit points out Yom Kippur is one of the two happiest days of the year. It is on this day that we are given a second chance to change and become better people. It is a serious day as well, just like one goes into court to plead for one's case, however we have the benefit of knowing that ultimately we will be forgiven.

What does Yom Kippur atone for?

Yom Kippur only atones for transgressions against God. However, in order to be forgiven by other people we must seek their forgiveness separately, by appeasing them and repairing the damage we have done.

PRACTICAL INFO: Yom Kippur is a complete Sabbath; no work can be performed on that day. It is a complete fast, beginning before sunset on the evening before Yom Kippur and ending after nightfall on the next day. The Talmud also specifies additional restrictions including washing and bathing, anointing one's body (with cosmetics,



deodorants, etc.), wearing leather shoes and engaging in sexual relations are all prohibited on Yom Kippur.

Summary of K3:

1. Rosh Hashana is when Hashem begins to judge the world. The call of the shofar reminds us to repent.
2. The Aseret Yemei Teshuva are a time where God is close to us, helping us to repent.
3. Yom Kippur is when Hashem offers us atonement for our Bein Adam L'makom sins. It is up to us to obtain forgiveness for Bein Adam L'chaveiro sins.

K2: Shalosh Regalim – Madrichim's Guide



Aims:

1. To know what is a Regal
2. To know why it was done
3. To know how the Shalosh Regalim link to each other

Pre-camp is an incredible opportunity for the future of Modern Orthodox Jewry (that's you!) to come together to discuss the major issues facing Judaism today. This chomer is structured somewhat differently to other Kvutzot you've studied in the past. The aim is to encourage more of a discussion-based study of the topic. This chomer consists of sources and prompt questions. Your Rosh/Sgan Machane has received a guide with further prompt questions and sources. I hope that this will be an exciting new way to study the topic and look forward to your feedback! If you think that this is an interesting way to structure the chomer, if you have suggestions for improvement, or if you are a die-hard traditionalist who loves the traditional structure, please drop me an email with your thoughts to chinuch@bauk.org. Happy learning!

The Shalosh Regalim:

שְׁלוֹשׁ פְּעָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה יִרְאֶה כָּל־זָכוֹר אֶת־פָּנָיו ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר בְּחַג הַמִּצּוֹת וּבַחַג הַשְּׁבֻעוֹת וּבַחַג הַסּוּפּוֹת וְלֹא יִרְאֶה אֶת־פָּנָיו יי רִיקוֹם: (דברים ט"ז:ט"ז)

Three times a year—on the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Pesach), on the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot), and on the Feast of Booths (Sukkot)—all your males shall appear before Hashem your God in the place that God will choose. They shall not appear before Hashem empty-handed (Devarim 16:16)

Why is it important to have designated times for all of Am Yisrael to gather together?

Why were these times chosen?

Why does the pasuk specify that men are required to do Aliyah L'regel?

How are these festivals connected to each other?



The CARTOON KRONICLES

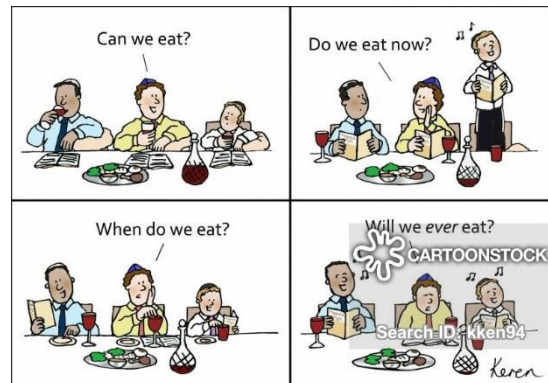
A Holy Place

שְׁמֹר אֶת־חֹדֶשׁ הָאָבִיב וְעִשִׂיתָ פֶּסַח לַה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי בְּחֹדֶשׁ הָאָבִיב הוֹצִיאָךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִמִּצְרַיִם לַיְלָה: וְנִבְחַתָּ פֶּסַח לַה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ צֹאן וּבְקָר בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־יִבְחַר ה' לְשַׁכֵּן שְׁמוֹ שָׁם: לֹא־תֹאכַל עֲלֵיו חֶמֶץ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים תֹּאכַל־עֲלֵיו מִצּוֹת לֶחֶם עֲנִי כִּי בַחֲפוּזוֹן יֵצֵאתָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְמַעַן תִּזְכֹּר אֶת־יוֹם יְצִאתְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ: וְלֹא־יִרְאֶה לְךָ שָׂאֵר בְּכָל־גִּבְלֶיךָ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים וְלֹא־יִלִּין מִן־הַבָּשָׂר אֲשֶׁר תִּזְבַּח בְּעֶרְבַּ בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן לַבֹּקֶר: לֹא תֹכַל לְזַבֵּחַ אֶת־הַפֶּסַח בְּאֶחָד שְׁעָרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר־יִי אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ: כִּי אִם־אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־יִבְחַר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשַׁכֵּן שְׁמוֹ שָׁם תִּזְבַּח אֶת־הַפֶּסַח בְּעֶרְבַּ כְּבוֹא

הַשָּׁמֶשׁ מוֹעֵד יְצִאתְךָ מִמִּצְרַיִם: וּבִשְׁלֵת וְאָכַלְתָּ בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בּוֹ וּפְנִיתָ בַּבֹּקֶר וְהִלַּכְתָּ לְאֹהֲלֶיךָ: (דברים ט"ז:א'-ז')

“Observe the month of Aviv and offer a Passover sacrifice to Hashem your God, for it was in the month of Aviv, at night, that Hashem your God freed you from Egypt. You shall slaughter the Passover sacrifice for Hashem your God, from the flock and the herd, in the **place** where Hashem will choose to establish God's name. You shall not eat anything leavened with it; for seven days thereafter you shall eat unleavened bread, bread of distress—for you departed from the land of Egypt hurriedly—so that you may remember the day of your departure from the land of Egypt as long as you live. For seven days no leaven shall be found with you in all your territory, and none of the flesh of what you slaughter on the evening of the first day shall be left until morning. You are not permitted to slaughter the Passover sacrifice in any of the settlements that Hashem your God is giving you; but at the **place** where Hashem your God will choose to establish God's name,

there alone shall you slaughter the Passover sacrifice, in the evening, at sundown, the time of day when you departed from Egypt. You shall cook and eat it at the **place** that Hashem your God will choose; and in the morning you may start back on your journey home.” (Deuteronomy 16:1-7)



The Four Questions of the Seder

Why is the word מקום - 'place' mentioned so many times?

How do we celebrate?

שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תֹּאכַל מִצּוֹת וּבֵיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי עֲצַרְתָּ לָהּ אֱלֹקֶיךָ לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה מְלָאכָה: שְׁבַעַת שְׁבַעַת תִּסְפְּרֶנָּה מִהַחֵל חֶרְמֵשׁ בַּקֹּמָה תִּחַל לִסְפֹּר שְׁבַעַת שְׁבַעוֹת: וְעֲשִׂיתָ חֵג שְׁבַעוֹת לַה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ מִסֵּת גְּדִבַת יָדְךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּתֵּן כַּאֲשֶׁר יִבְרַכְךָ ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ: וְשִׂמַּחְתָּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ אֶתֶּה וּבִנְךָ וּבִתְּךָ וְעַבְדְּךָ וְאִמְתְּךָ וְהַלְוִי אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ וְהַגֵּר וְהַיְתוּם וְהָאֵלֶמְנָה אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבְּךָ בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ לְשֹׁכְנֵי שְׁמוֹ שָׁם: וְזָכַרְתָּ כִּי־עַבְדָּ הָיִיתָ בְּמִצְרַיִם וְשִׂמַּרְתָּ וְעֲשִׂיתָ אֶת־הַחֻקִּים הָאֵלֶּה: חֵג הַסֹּפֶת תַּעֲשֶׂה לָּךְ שְׁבַעַת יָמִים בְּאַסְפָּה מְגֻרְנָה וּמִקְבָּה: וְשִׂמַּחְתָּ בְּסִגָּה אֶתֶּה וּבִנְךָ וּבִתְּךָ וְעַבְדְּךָ וְאִמְתְּךָ וְהַלְוִי וְהַגֵּר וְהַיְתוּם וְהָאֵלֶמְנָה אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ: שְׁבַעַת יָמִים תִּחַג לַה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־יִבְחַר ה' כִּי יִבְרַכְךָ ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ כָּל־תְּבוּאָתְךָ וּבְכָל מַעֲשֵׂה יְדִיךָ וְהָיִיתָ אֶף שְׂמֵחַ: שְׁלוֹשׁ פְּעָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה יֵרָאֶה כָּל־זְכוּרָה אֶת־פְּנֵי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר בְּחַג הַמִּצּוֹת וּבְחַג הַשְּׁבַעוֹת וּבְחַג הַסֹּפֹת וְלֹא יֵרָאֶה אֶת־פְּנֵי ה' רִיקָם: אִישׁ כַּמִּתְנַת יָדוֹ כְּבִרְכַּת ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לְךָ: (דברים ט"ז:ח'-י"ז)

“After eating unleavened bread six days, you shall hold a solemn gathering for Hashem your God on the seventh day: you shall do no work. You shall count off seven weeks; start to count the seven weeks when the sickle is first put to the standing grain. Then you shall observe the Feast of Weeks for Hashem your God, offering your freewill contribution according as Hashem your God has blessed you. You shall rejoice before Hashem your



God with your son and daughter, your male and female slave, the Levite in your communities, and the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow in your midst, at the place where Hashem your God will choose to establish God's name. Bear in mind that you were slaves in Egypt and take care to obey these laws. After the ingathering from your threshing floor and your vat, you shall hold the Feast of Booths for seven days. You shall rejoice in your festival, with your son and daughter, your male and female slave, the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow in your communities. You shall hold a festival for Hashem your God seven days, in the place that Hashem will choose; for

Hashem your God will bless all your crops and all your undertakings, and you shall have nothing but joy. Three times a year—on the Feast of Unleavened Bread, on the Feast of Weeks, and on the Feast of Booths—all your males shall appear before Hashem your God in the place that God will choose. They shall not appear before Hashem empty-handed, but each with his own gift, according to the blessing that Hashem your God has bestowed upon you. " (Devarim 16:8-17)

Why is feasting such a crucial part of celebrating a chag?

Conclusion

חֲזוּהָ צִיּוֹן קִרְיַת מוֹעֵדנוּ עֵינֵיךָ תִּרְאֶינָהּ יְרוּשָׁלַם נוֹה שְׂאֵנָן אֶהֱל בְּלִי־צָעֵן בְּלִי־סַע יִתְדֹתָיו לְנֹצֵחַ
וְכָל־חֲבָלָיו בְּלִי־נִתְקוּ: (ישעיהו ל"ג:כ')

"When you gaze upon Zion, our city of assembly, Your eyes shall behold Jerusalem As a secure homestead, A tent not to be transported, Whose pegs shall never be pulled up, And none of whose ropes shall break." (Yishayahu 33:20)

How can we relate to Jerusalem without a Beit Hamikdash?

What do we do today that maintains the essence of the Shalosh Regalim even without the Temple?

Summary of K2:

1. The Shalosh Regalim are times at which Am Yisrael can come together for some spiritual reinvigoration.
2. They are an auspicious time to connect with God, 'HaMakom'.
3. There is a historical and agricultural theme underlying the Shalosh Regalim.

K1 : Rosh Chodesh



Aims :

1. To understand that Rosh Chodesh was the first mitzvah given to Am Yisrael
2. To understand that Rosh Chodesh is the cornerstone of the Jewish calendar
3. How has the concept of Rosh Chodesh changed throughout history?

Finding Freedom

This chomer is about beginnings: our first Kvutza on the first machane focuses on the first mitzvah commanded to us in the Torah. At the very beginning of Sefer Shemot,

Am Yisrael are about to leave Egypt and God gives them the commandment of Rosh Chodesh:

הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם, רֵאשׁוֹן הַחֹדָשִׁים: רֵאשׁוֹן הוּא לָכֶם, לְחֹדְשֵׁי הַשָּׁנָה.

"This month shall be for you the head of the months, the first of the months of the year" (Shemot 12:2)



Why do you think that is this the first commandment that Bnei Yisrael receive? What other commandments might have been suitable for this?

For over 200 years, Am Yisrael had faced the oppression of their Egyptian taskmasters. Finally, someone had come to free them. Imagine their surprise when they suddenly discovered that this freedom was conditional on them following a whole new set of rules! Hashem had to choose the first mitzvah carefully: this first instruction would frame His new relationship with His people. It was important that it created a distinction between the rules of the Torah and the rules imposed by Pharaoh.

Time is freedom

With the commandment of Rosh Chodesh, God is giving the Jewish people an empowering message. As slaves, their time was not their own. The difference between a free person and a slave is that a slave achieves nothing for themselves by their work, and their time is therefore not their own. If they finish their work early, there is no point in starting another task, because they achieve nothing for themselves by doing so, and when they are finished their master might simply order them to do something else. A free person should manage their time carefully and efficiently; every second is an opportunity to do good and become a better and more developed person.



Power to the people

Rosh Chodesh presents us with a powerful idea: the determination of the calendar is placed fully in human hands. Thus, if the moon were to appear in fact, on a Monday, but no one saw it until Tuesday, we follow the idea that "seeing is believing", and the Bet Din would decide that the first of the month was on a Tuesday. As a result, God, as it were, follows the decision of the court and acts accordingly, so that for example in the case of Rosh Hashana, He would push off His judgment of the entire world by one day! Another crazy ramification of the calendar being in human hands is that when the Rabbis decided to institute leap years in order to balance the lunar and solar

calendars, they determined that in a leap year, Pesach gets delayed by a month (due to the extra Adar). So just think that when you're sitting down to your Purim Seuda that if the Rabbis hadn't really had the power to institute leap years, you'd be eating chametz when it's forbidden on 14th Nissan!

The power of the Sanhedrin is illustrated in the Mishna in Masechet Rosh Hashana, which describes an occasion whereby there was a debate within the Sanhedrin regarding when the new month should begin. Rabbi Yehoshua said one day while Rabban Gamliel said another day. Rabban Gamliel was the Nasi (the head of the Sanhedrin) and he demanded that his opinion be accepted. By having a different date for Rosh Chodesh it would have meant that Yom Kippur was a different day. In order to demonstrate that his view was correct he demanded that Rabbi Yehoshua appear in the Bet Midrash with his wallet and stick on the day which according to him was Yom Kippur! The full text of the Mishna is included in the Appendix to this Kvutza.



Why did Rabban Gamliel insist that Rabbi Yehoshua should have to behave in this way?

Nationhood

Rosh Chodesh symbolises renewal, the ability of the Jewish People to rise up from oblivion and restore itself to its past greatness. Just as the moon disappears at the end of each month, but returns and grows to fullness, so Israel may suffer exile and decline, but it always renews itself. Perhaps the most dramatic example of this was indeed the exodus from Egypt. Bnei Yisrael had started off in Egypt as an exalted and wealthy family, were subsequently enslaved and downtrodden for two hundred years or so, and then plucked from their oppression by the revealed hand of God.



In renewing the pride of Am Yisrael, God gave us a national identity. A nation should have its own calendar and its own way of doing things. In the same way that we have a national law (the Torah) and a national homeland (Eretz Yisrael), we have a national calendar.

Framing the future

The mitzvah of Rosh Chodesh demands that not only do we declare the new moon, but we sanctify it, meaning that we designate it and set it aside as part of our religious and spiritual life. The journey of the Jewish people begins with this commandment because it teaches us that we have the potential to sanctify and elevate this world through the various mitzvot.

Rosh Chodesh: a Brief History



In ancient times, Rosh Chodesh was a significant festival day. At that time, the new months were determined by observation. Each month began when the first sliver of moon became visible. Observers would watch the sky at night for any sign of the moon. If they saw the moon, they would report their sightings to the Sanhedrin, which would interrogate them to make sure that they were not mistaken. Where in the sky did the moon

appear? Which direction was it pointing? If two independent, reliable eyewitnesses confirmed that the new moon had appeared and described it consistently, the Sanhedrin would say, "mekadesh" - 'sanctified'. The process was called 'Kiddush Hachodesh' - sanctification of the month. This decision would then be communicated to all Jewish communities telling people when that the new month had begun, through a system of beacons lit on hilltops.

Essentially, the decision of Sanhedrin could alter the date of the festivals; the day on which people testified and the New Moon was declared would decide whether any day of Yom Tov was one day or another. (This, by the way, is the source for why the Jews of the Diaspora would keep two days of the holidays, just in case they were wrong about which day was Rosh Chodesh if the information didn't arrive on time. Today we uphold this ruling even though we are able to accurately determine when Rosh Chodesh takes place).



What would we do differently today if we followed this method of determining Rosh Chodesh?

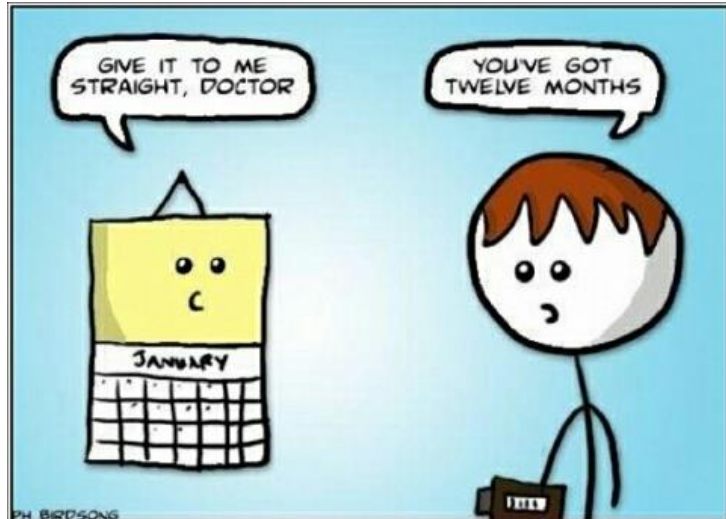
Fixed calendar

In later days, however, the calendar was fixed by mathematical computation. Here are some astronomy facts:

- Earth rotates about its axis (a day), it revolves around the sun in about 365¼ days
- Revolution of the moon about the Earth (a month); it revolves around the Earth in about 29½ days
- Revolution of the Earth about the sun (a year), that takes 12.4 lunar months

The Jewish calendar coordinates all three of these astronomical phenomena (which are independent of each other). Months are either 29 or 30 days, corresponding to the 29½-day lunar cycle. Years are either 12 or 13 months, corresponding to the 12.4 month solar cycle.

It is important to maintain a balance between the lunar and solar calendar. The problem with strictly lunar calendars is that there are approximately 12.4 lunar months in every solar year, so a 12-month lunar calendar is about 11 days shorter than a solar year. If we were to simply follow a lunar calendar, our chagim would fall out of sync with the seasons. Pesach is also known as Chag Ha'Aviv, and it is important that it should always fall in the spring. The Torah says that Pesach must be in the spring, so we cannot allow the calendar to wander all over the place. In order to counter this, we add seven months every 19 years, and the years that we add a month are called leap years. The Jewish calendar is therefore a 'helio-lunar' one.



What we do today

After the destruction of the Temple, it was no longer possible to offer korbanot, including those offered on Rosh Chodesh. Accordingly, the significance of this festival has substantially diminished.

Today, we mark Rosh Chodesh with the addition of Yaaleh Veyavo into benching and the Amidah, the recitation of half-Hallel and Musaf, and Rosh Chodesh Torah readings that describe the korbanot of Rosh Chodesh. We also treat the day in a celebratory manner: we are forbidden to fast or cut our hair and encouraged to honour the day through wearing nice clothing or eating special food.

Summary of K1:

1. Rosh Chodesh was the first mitzvah given to Am Yisrael as it frames our relationship with Hashem and emphasises our free will.
2. Rosh Chodesh teaches us to sanctify the mundane in our performance of mitzvot, and symbolises hope and renewal
3. Our distinct calendar is part of what defines us as a nation.
4. As we no longer have the Bet Hamikdash, our celebration of Rosh Chodesh focuses on prayer rather than sacrifice.
5. The Sanhedrin used some complicated maths to ensure our calendar runs smoothly.

Appendix

דמות צורות לבנות היו לו לרבן גמליאל בטבלא ובפתל בעליתו, שבהן מראה את ההקדושות ואומר, הקנה ראית או כנה. מעשה שבאו שנים ואמרו, ראינוהו שחרית במזרח וערבית במערב. אמר רבי יוחנן בן נורי, עדי שקר הם. כשבאו ליבנה קבלן רבן גמליאל. ועוד באו שנים ואמרו, ראינוהו בזמנו, ובליל עבדו לא נראה, וקבלן רבן גמליאל. אמר רבי דוסא בן הרפינס, עדי שקר הו, היאך מעידין על האשה שילדה, ולמחר פרסה בין שניה. אמר לו רבי יהושע, רואה אני את דבריה :

שלח לו רבן גמליאל, גזרני עליה שתבא אצלי במקלה ובמעוטיה ביום הכפורים שחל להיות בתשבונו. הלה ומצאו רבי עקיבא מצר, אמר לו, יש לי ללמוד שכל מה שעשה רבן גמליאל עשוי, שנאמר) ויקרא כג, (אלה מועדי יי מקראי קדש, אשר תקראו אתם, בין בזמנו בין שלא בזמנו, אין לי מועדות אלא אלו. בא לו אצל רבי דוסא בן הרפינס, אמר לו, אם באין אנו לדון אחר בית דינו של רבן גמליאל, צריכין אנו לדון אחר כל בית דין ובית דין שעמד מימות משה ועד עכשיו, שנאמר) שמות כד, (ויצל משה ואהרן נדב ואביהוא ושבעים מזקני ישראל. ולמה לא נתפרשו שמותן של זקנים, אלא ללמד, שכל שלשה ושלשה שעמדו בית דין על ישראל, הרי הוא כבית דינו של משה. נטל מקלו ומעוטיו בידו, והלה ליבנה אצל רבן גמליאל ביום שחל יום הכפורים להיות בתשבונו. עמד רבן גמליאל ונשקו על ראשו, אמר לו, בא בשלום, רבי ותלמידי, רבי בתקמה, ותלמידי שקבלת דברי :

Rabban Gamliel had diagrams of the moon on a tablet [hung] on the wall of his upper chamber, and he used to show them to the unlearned and say, "Did it look like this or this?" It happened that two witnesses came and said, "We saw it in the morning in the east and in the evening in the west." Rabbi Yochanan ben Nuri said: they are lying

witnesses. When they came to Yavneh Rabban Gamliel accepted them. On another occasion two witnesses came and said, "We saw it at its proper time, but on the night which should have been the new moon it was not seen," and Rabban Gamliel accepted their evidence. Rabbi Dosa ben Harkinas said: they are lying witnesses. How can they testify that a woman has given birth when on the next day her belly is between her teeth [i.e. swollen]? Rabbi Yehoshua said to him: I see your argument.

Rabban Gamliel sent to him [Rabbi Yehoshua]: I order you to appear before me with your staff and your money on the day which according to your count should be Yom Hakippurim. Rabbi Akiva went and found him in distress. He said to him: I can teach that whatever Rabban Gamliel has done is valid, because it says, "These are the appointed seasons of the Lord, holy convocations, which you shall proclaim at their appointed times" (Vayikra 23:4), whether they are [proclaimed] at their proper time or not at their proper time, I have no other appointed times save these. He [Rabbi Yehoshua] then went to Rabbi Dosa ben Harkinas. He said to him: if we call in question the court of Rabban Gamliel we must call in question the decisions of every court which has existed since the days of Moses until now. As it says, "Then Moses and Aaron, Nadav and Avihu and seventy of the elders of Israel went up" (Shemot 24:9). Why were the names of the elders not mentioned? To teach that every group of three which has acted as a court over Israel, behold it is like the court of Moses. He [Rabbi Yehoshua] took his staff and his money and went to Yavneh to Rabban Gamliel on the day which according to his count should be Yom Hakippurim. Rabban Gamliel rose and kissed him on his head and said to him: Come in peace, my teacher and my student: my teacher in wisdom and my student because you have accepted my decision.

(Mishna Rosh Hashana 2:8-9)