

Parshiot Matot - Masei 5783, 2023:

*Remember Torat Moshe*

Rabbi David Etengoff

Dedicated to the sacred memories of my mother, Miriam Tovah bat Aharon HaKohane, father-in-law, Levi ben Yitzhak, sister, Shulamit bat Menachem, sister-in-law, Ruchama Rivka Sondra bat Yechiel, Chana bat Shmuel, Yehonatan Binyamin ben Mordechai Meir Halevi, Tikvah bat Rivka Perel, Gittel Malka bat Moshe, Alexander Leib ben Benyamin Yosef, the *Kedoshim* of Har Nof, Pittsburgh, and Jersey City, the *refuah shlaimah* of Mordechai HaLevi ben Miriam Tovah, and the health and safety of our brothers and sisters in Israel and around the world.

The phrase, “*aleh hamitzvot* (these are the commandments), appears twice in the Torah in the concluding *pasukim* of *Sefer Vayikra* and Parashat Masei:

These are the commandments (*mitzvot*) that Hashem commanded Moshe to [tell] the children of Israel on Mount Sinai. (*Sefer Vayikra* 27:34)

These are the commandments (*mitzvot*) and the ordinances (*v'hamishpatim*) that Hashem commanded the children of Israel through Moshe in the plains of Moab, by the Jordan at Jericho. (*Sefer Bamidbar* 36:13, these, and all Bible translations, *The Judaica Press Complete Tanach*, with my emendations)

The *pasukim* differ in that the location mentioned in the first *pasuk* is *Har Sinai*, whereas the second refers to “the plains of Moab, by the Jordan at Jericho.” Additionally, the first verse only mentions *mitzvot*, while the second adds *mishpatim*. In both cases, however, Moshe is tasked to teach the *mitzvot* to the Jewish people. This concept is alluded to, as well, in the well-known verse, “*Torah tzivah lanu Moshe morasha kehillat Ya'akov*” (“The Torah that Moshe commanded us is a legacy for the congregation of Ya'akov,” *Sefer Devarim* 33:4)

While the meaning of “*aleh hamitzvot*” is elusive, the *Talmud Yerushalmi* offers this

analysis: “[This means,] that these [and these alone] are the *mitzvot* that Moshe instructed us to observe. And so, too, did Moshe teach us: ‘In the future, and from this point forward, no other prophet may originate a new *mitzvah* for you.’” (*Megillah* I:V, translation my own)

In addition, this principle is found in *Midrash Sifrei to Sefer Bamidbar*, and four separate times in *Talmud Bavli*. This repetition signifies its particular import in classical halachic thought.

Based upon these sources, the Rambam (Maimonides, 1135-1204), codifies the expression, “no prophet is permitted to create a new matter (that is, *mitzvah*) from this point forward,” in this manner:

It is clear and explicit in the Torah that it [the Torah] is [Hashem’s] *mitzvah*, remaining forever without change, addition, or diminishment, as [*Sefer Devarim* 13:1] states: “All these matters which I command to you, you shall be careful to perform. You may not add to it or diminish from it,” and [*Sefer Devarim* 29:28] states: “What is revealed is for us and our children forever, to carry out all the words of this Torah.” This teaches that we are commanded to fulfill all the Torah’s directives forever. It is also said: “It is an everlasting statute for all your generations,” and [*Sefer Devarim* 30:20] states: “It is not in the heavens.” This teaches that a prophet can no longer add a new precept [to the Torah]. (*Mishneh Torah, Sefer Hamada, Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah* 9:1, translation, Rabbi Eliyahu Touger, underlining and brackets my own)

The Malbim (Rabbi Meir Leibush ben Yechiel Michel, 1809-1879) further explicates the meaning of our phrase, “no prophet is permitted to create a new matter from this point forward.” He opines that “*aleh hamitzvot*” connotes “these and no others,” and adds, “our teacher Moshe was the sole prophet of the Torah.” As such, “all subsequent prophets had but one purpose—to encourage loyalty to Moshe’s Torah (*Torat Moshe*).” Thus, by definition, “they could neither add nor subtract [from the Torah].” (*Commentary on Sefer*

*Vayikra*, section 120, translation my own) The Malbim's use of the expression, "*Torat Moshe*," is similar in kind to a *pasuk* in *Sefer Malachi* wherein the *navi* proclaims, "Remember the Torah of My servant Moshe (*Torat Moshe*), [inclusive of] the laws and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb (that is, at Mount Sinai) for all Israel." (3:22, translation my own)

The promise of reward for fulfilling *Torat Moshe* is found throughout the Torah. One of the most celebrated of these passages appears in the second paragraph of the *Shema*:

And it will be, if you hearken to My commandments that I command you this day to love Hashem, your G-d, to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, I will give the rain of your land at its time, the early rain and the latter rain, and you will gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil. And I will give grass in your field for your livestock, and you will eat and be sated. (*Sefer Devarim* 11:3)

This narrative focuses upon the physical rewards that will accrue to our nation if we demonstrate true allegiance to the Almighty. As such the focus is on rain, grain, wine, oil, livestock, and the general satisfaction of our earthly needs. In contrast, Malachi turns our attention to the ultimate spiritual reward, namely, the fulfillment of Judaism's eschatological vision: "Behold, I will send you *Eliyahu HaNavi* before the coming of the great and awesome day of Hashem, that he may turn the heart of the fathers back through the children, and the heart of the children back through their fathers..." (23-24)

With Hashem's help, may we ever strive to fulfill His eternal *Torat Moshe*. Then, may we behold *Eliyahu HaNavi*, and the coming of *Mashiach ben David*, soon and in our days.  
*V'chane yihi ratzon.*

Shabbat Shalom

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Please contact me at [rdbe718@gmail.com](mailto:rdbe718@gmail.com) to be added to my weekly email list.

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\*\*\* I have posted 164 of Rabbi Soloveitchik's English language audio *shiurim* (MP3 format) spanning the years 1958-1984. Please click on the highlighted link: [The Rav](#)