

Hakhel and The Power of Moments
Torah in Motion - Parshat Hashavua
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I. The “What” of Hakhel:

1. The Power of Moments: Chip Heath & Dan Heath

In our research we have found that defining moments are created from one or more of the following four elements:

1. **Elevation:** Defining moments rise above the everyday. They provide not just transient happiness...but memorable delight... Moments of elevation transcend the normal course of events; they are literally extraordinary.
2. **Insight:** Defining moments rewire our understanding of ourselves or the world. In a few seconds or minutes, we realize something that might influence our lives for decades.
3. **Pride:** Defining moments capture us at our best - moments of achievement, moments of courage. To create such moments we need to... plan for a series of milestone moments that build on each other en route to a larger goal.
4. **Community:** Defining moments are social... These moments are strengthened because we share them with others.

2. The Power of Moments: Chip Heath & Dan Heath

...But for an individual human being, moments are the thing. Moments are what we remember and what we cherish. Certainly we might celebrate achieving a goal, such as completing a marathon or landing a significant client—but the achievement is embedded in a moment. Every culture has its prescribed set of big moments: birthdays and weddings and graduations, of course, but also holiday celebrations and funeral rites and political traditions. They seem “natural” to us. But notice that every last one of them was invented, dreamed up by anonymous authors who wanted to give shape to time. This is what we mean by “thinking in moments”: to recognize where the prose of life needs punctuation.

3. Deuteronomy 31:9-13

(9) Moses wrote down this Teaching and gave it to the priests, sons of Levi, who carried the Ark of God's Covenant, and to all the elders of Israel. (10) And Moses instructed them as follows: Every seventh year, the year set for remission, at the Feast of Booths, (11) when all Israel comes to appear before your God in the place that [God] will choose, you shall read this Teaching aloud in the presence of all Israel. (12) Gather the people—men, women,

3. דברים ל"א:ט-י"ג

(ט) וַיִּכְתֹּב מֹשֶׁה אֶת־הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת וַיִּתְּנָהּ
אֶל־הַכֹּהֲנִים בְּנֵי לֵוִי הַנִּשְׁאָרִים אֶת־אַרֹן בְּרִית ה'
וְאֶל־כָּל־זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: (י) וַיֹּצֵא מֹשֶׁה אוֹתָם לְאֶמֶר
מִקֶּץ שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים בְּמִעַד שָׁנָה הַשְּׁמִיטָה בְּחַג
הַסֻּכּוֹת: (יא) בְּבוֹא כָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל לִרְאוֹת אֶת־פָּנָיו ה'
אֶל־קִיָּץ בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר תִּקְרָא אֶת־הַתּוֹרָה
הַזֹּאת נֹגֵד כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאָזְנֵיהֶם: (יב) הִקְהֵל
אֶת־הָעָם הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַנְּשִׁים וְהַטָּף וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר
בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ לִמְעַן יִשְׁמְעוּ וְלִמְעַן יִלְמְדוּ וַיֵּרְאוּ אֶת־ה'
אֱלֹקֶיכֶם וְשָׁמְרוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־כָּל־דְּבַר הַתּוֹרָה

<p>children, and the strangers in your communities—that they may hear and so learn to revere your God and to observe faithfully every word of this Teaching. (13)</p> <p>Their children, too, who have not had the experience, shall hear and learn to revere your God as long as they live in the land that you are about to cross the Jordan to possess.</p>	<p>הַזֹּאת: (יג) וּבְנֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדְעוּ יִשְׁמְעוּ וְלִמְדוּ לִירְאָה אֶת־ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם כָּל־הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם חַיִּים עַל־הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם עֹבְרִים אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן לְשִׁמָּה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ: {פ}</p>
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- What aspects of this ritual seem particularly notable?
- What questions do you have about Hakhel?
- What seems to be the purpose of the ceremony?

<p>4. Mishnah, Sotah 41a</p> <p>MISHNA: How is the portion of the Torah that is read by the king recited at the assembly, when all the Jewish people would assemble? At the conclusion of the first day of the festival of Sukkot, on the eighth, after the conclusion of the Sabbatical Year, they make a wooden platform for the king in the Temple courtyard, and he sits on it, as it is stated: “At the end of every seven years, in the Festival of the Sabbatical Year” (Deuteronomy 31:10).</p> <p>The synagogue attendant takes a Torah scroll and gives it to the head of the synagogue that stands on the Temple Mount. And the head of the synagogue gives it to the deputy High Priest, and the deputy High Priest gives it to the High Priest, and the High priest gives it to the king. And the king stands, and receives the Torah scroll, and reads from it while sitting. King Agrippa arose, and received the Torah scroll, and read from it while standing, and the Sages praised him for this. And when Agrippa arrived at the verse in the portion read by the king that states: “You may not appoint a foreigner over you” (Deuteronomy 17:15), tears flowed from his eyes, because he was a descendant of the house of Herod and was not of Jewish origin. The entire nation said to</p>	<p>4. משנה סוטה מא.</p> <p>פְּרִשְׁתַּת הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּיצַד? מוֹצְאֵי יוֹם טוֹב הָרִאשׁוֹן שֶׁל חַג, בְּשָׁמִינִי בְּמוֹצְאֵי שְׁבִיעִית, עוֹשִׂין לוֹ בֵּימָה שֶׁל עֵץ בַּעֲזָרָה וְהוּא יוֹשֵׁב עָלֶיהָ, שְׁנֵאָמַר: “מִקֵּץ שִׁבְעַ שָׁנִים בְּמַעַד וְגו’”.</p> <p>חֲזַן הַכִּנְסֶת נוֹטֵל סֵפֶר תּוֹרָה וְנוֹתְנָה לְרֹאשׁ הַכִּנְסֶת וְרֹאשׁ הַכִּנְסֶת נוֹתְנָה לְסֹגֶן וְהַסֹּגֶן נוֹתְנָה לְכֹהֵן גָּדוֹל וְכֹהֵן גָּדוֹל נוֹתְנָה לְמֶלֶךְ וְהַמֶּלֶךְ עוֹמֵד וּמִקְבֵּל וְקוֹרֵא יוֹשֵׁב אֲגִרִיפַס הַמֶּלֶךְ עֹמֵד וְקִבֵּל וְקוֹרֵא עוֹמֵד וְשִׁבְחוּהוּ חֲכָמִים וְכֹשֶׁהֲגִיעַ לֵלֵא תוֹכֵל לִתֵּת עָלָיו אִישׁ נָכְרִי זָלְגוּ עֵינָיו דְּמָעוֹת אָמְרוּ לוֹ אֵל תִּתֵּירָא אֲגִרִיפַס אַחִינוּ אֶתָּה אַחִינוּ אֶתָּה</p> <p>וְקוֹרֵא מִתְחִילִת “אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים”, עַד “שִׁמְעוּ”, וְ”שִׁמְעוּ”, “וְהָיָה אִם שִׁמְעוּ”, “עֲשֹׂה תַעֲשֶׂה”, “כִּי תִכְלֶה לַעֲשׂוֹת”, וּפְרִשְׁתַּת הַמֶּלֶךְ, וּבִרְכוּת וְקִלְלוֹת, עַד שְׁגוּמֵר כָּל הַפְּרָשָׁה.</p> <p>בִּרְכוּת שִׁכְחָה גָּדוֹל מִבֶּרֶךְ אוֹתָן הַמֶּלֶךְ מִבֶּרֶךְ אוֹתָן אֵלָּא שְׁנוֹתָן שֶׁל רִגְלִים תַּחַת מִחִילַת הָעוֹן.</p>
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him: Fear not, Agrippa. You are our brother, you are our brother.

And the king reads from the beginning of Deuteronomy, from the verse that states: **“And these are the words”** (Deuteronomy 1:1), **until** the words: **“Hear, O Israel”** (Deuteronomy 6:4). **And** he then reads the sections beginning with: **“Hear, O Israel”** (Deuteronomy 6:4–9), **“And it shall come to pass, if you shall hearken”** (Deuteronomy 11:13–21), **“You shall tithe”** (Deuteronomy 14:22–29), **“When you have made an end of the tithing”** (Deuteronomy 26:12–15), **and the passage concerning the appointment of a king** (Deuteronomy 17:14–20), **and the blessings and curses** (Deuteronomy 28), **until he finishes the entire portion.**

The same **blessings** that the **High Priest recites** on Yom Kippur, **the king recites** at this ceremony, **but he delivers** a blessing **concerning the Festivals in place of** the blessing concerning **forgiveness for iniquity.** (Translation: Sefaria)

- Which elements from “The Power of Moments” do you see reflected in Hakhel?

II. The “Why” of Hakhel:

a. Rambam: To encourage Mitzvah performance

5. Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon (1138-1204), Mishneh Torah, Festival Offering 3:1

(1) It is a biblical positive command to assemble all Israelites, men, women, and children, after the close of every sabbatical year, when they go up to make the pilgrimage, and recite to them sections from the Torah which will urge them to perform the precepts and encourage them to cling to the true religion, as it is written: "At the end of every seven years, the year set for remission, at the festival of *Sukkoth*, when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord ... gather the people, men, women, and children, and the strangers within your towns..." (Deuteronomy 31:10-12).

5. רמב"ם, משנה תורה, הלכות חגיגה ג' א'
(א) מִצְוַת עֲשֵׂה לְהִקְהִיל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל אָנָּשִׁים וְנָשִׁים וְטָף בְּכָל מוֹצָאֵי שְׁמִטָּה בְּעֵלוֹתָם לְרִגְלָם וּלְקִרְוֹת בְּאֶזְנֵיהֶם מִן הַתּוֹרָה פְּרָשִׁיּוֹת שֶׁהֵן מְזַרְזוֹת אוֹתָן בְּמִצְוֹת וּמַחֲזִיקוֹת יְדֵיהֶם בְּדַת הָאֱמֶת. שְׁנָאִמַּר (דברים לא י) "מִקֵּץ שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים בְּמַעַד שָׁנָה הַשְּׁמִטָּה בַּחֹג הַסֻּכּוֹת" (דברים לא יא) "בָּבוֹא כָל יִשְׂרָאֵל לְרֵאוֹת" וגו' (דברים לא יב) "הִקְהֵל אֶת הָעָם הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַנָּשִׁים וְהַטָּף וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ" וגו'.

b. Ralbag: So the Torah is not forgotten

<p>6. Rabbi Levi ben Gershon (France, 1288-1344), Devarim 31:10 And Moses instructed them as follows: Every seventh year, the year set for remission, at the Feast of Booths - He commanded to recite "this Torah" in this ears of the people - men, women, children, and converts, <u>in order to educate everyone to serve the Holy Blessed One and so the Torah is not forgotten from the Jewish people,</u> saying that 'all of the days that you are on the land teach about the eternal nature of the Torah.'</p>	<p>6. רלב"ג ביאור המלות על התורה, דברים לא: (א) ויצו משה אותם לאמר מקץ שבע שנים במועד שנת השמיטה בחג הסוכות. צוה לקרא את התורה הזאת באזני העם האנשים והנשים והטף וגרי הצדק אשר עמהם כדי שיתחנכו כלם לעבודת הש"י ולא תשכח התורה מישראל ואמר כל הימים אשר אתם חיים על האדמה להורות על נצחיות התורה:</p>
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c. Sefer HaChinukh: A reminder of the Jewish people's connection to Torah

<p>7. Sefer HaChinukh (13th Century) 612:2 (2) It is from the roots of the commandment [that it is] because the entire essence of the people of Israel is the Torah; and through it are they separated from every nation and language, to be meritorious for life of the forever — eternal pleasure that is not surpassed by anything among the creatures. Therefore since their entire essence is in it, <u>it is fitting that everyone should gather together at one point in time to hear its words, and for the voice to go out among the whole nation — men, women, and children — to say, "What is the great gathering, that we have all been gathered together?" And the answer would be, "To hear the words of the Torah, which is our entire essence and glory and splendor." And they will come from this to tell of the great praise and the splendor of its value; and its yearning will enter all of their hearts.</u> And with this yearning for it, they will learn to know God and merit good, and "God will be happy with His creations" — like the matter that is written in explanation of this commandment "and in order that they will learn and fear the Lord."</p>	<p>7. ספר החינוך תרי"ב: (ב) מִשְׁרָשֵׁי הַמִּצְוָה. לְפִי שְׂכָל עֲקָרָן שֶׁל עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל, הִיא הַתּוֹרָה, וּבִהּ יִפְרְדּוּ מִכָּל אָמָה וְלִשׁוֹן לְהִיּוֹת זֹכִין לַחַיִּי עַד, תַּעֲנוּג נִצְחִי שְׁאִין לְמַעַלָּה הַיָּמֵנוּ בַּנִּבְרָאִים, עַל כֵּן בְּהִיּוֹת כָּל עֲקָרָן בִּהּ רֵאיוֹ שִׁיקְהֵלוּ הַכֹּל יַחַד בְּזִמָּן אֶחָד מִן הַזְמָנִים לְשִׁמְעַ דְּבָרֶיהָ, וְלִהְיוֹת הַקּוֹל יוֹצֵא בְּתוֹךְ כָּל הָעָם. אֲנָשִׁים וְנָשִׁים וְטַף לֵאמֹר מָה הַקְּבוּץ הַרֵב הַזֶּה שֶׁנִּתְקַבְּצוּ יַחַד כָּלָנוּ? וְתִהְיֶה הַתְּשׁוּבָה. לְשִׁמְעַ דְּבָרֵי הַתּוֹרָה שֶׁהִיא כָּל עֲקָרָנוּ וְהוֹדֵנוּ וְתַפְאֲרֵתָנוּ, וַיִּבְאוּ מִתּוֹךְ כָּךְ לִסְפֵּר בְּגִדְל שְׂבַחָהּ וְהוּד עֲרֶכְהָ וַיְכַנִּסוּ הַכֹּל בְּלִבָּם חֲשִׁיקָה, וְעַם הַחֲשִׁיק בִּהּ יִלְמְדוּ לְדַעַת אֶת הַשֵּׁם וַיִּזְכּוּ לְטוֹבָה, וַיִּשְׂמַח הַשֵּׁם בְּמַעֲשָׁיו, וַיַּעֲבִין שְׂכָתוֹב בְּפִרוּשׁ בְּזֹאת הַמִּצְוָה וּלְמַעַן יִלְמְדוּ וַיִּרְאוּ אֶת ה'.</p>
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d. Rambam: To recreate the Har Sinai experience

<p>8. Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, Mishnah Torah, Festival Offerings 3:6:</p>	<p>8. רמב"ם משנה תורה, הלכות חגיגה ג: וְגֵרִים שְׂאִינָן מִכִּירִין חִבִּיבִין לְהַכִּין לָבֵם וּלְהַקְשִׁיב</p>
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<p>Converts who do not understand are obligated to concentrate their attention and direct their hearing, <u>listening with reverence and awe, rejoicing while trembling as on the day the Torah was given at Sinai</u>. Even great Sages who know the entire Torah are obligated to listen with exceedingly great concentration. One who is unable to hear should focus his attention on this reading, for Scripture established it solely to strengthen the true faith. He should see himself as if he <u>was just now commanded regarding the Torah and heard it from the Almighty</u>. For the king is an agent to make known the word of God.</p>	<p>אָזנֶם לִשְׁמֹעַ בְּאִימָה וִירָאָה וּגִילָה בְּרַעְדָּה כִּיּוֹם שְׁנִתְּנָה בּוֹ בְּסִינִי. אָפְלוּ חֻכְמִים גְּדוֹלִים שִׂיזְדְּעִים כָּל הַתּוֹרָה כְּלָה חִיבִין לִשְׁמֹעַ בְּכֹנֶה גְדוֹלָה יִתְרָה. וּמִי שְׂאִינוּ יָכוֹל לִשְׁמֹעַ מִכּוֹן לְבּוֹ לִקְרִיאָה זֶה שְׁלֹא קִבְעָה הַפְּתוּב אֶלֹא לְחִזְקַת דֵּת הָאֱמֶת וִירָאָה עֲצֻמוֹ כְּאִלּוּ עָתָה נִצְטוּהָ בָּהּ וּמִפִּי הַגְּבוּרָה שׁוֹמְעָה. שְׁהִמְלִךְ שְׁלִיחַ הוּא לְהַשְׁמִיעַ דְּבַרִּי הָאֵל:</p>
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9. Parallels between Hakhel and Har Sinai	
<p>דברים לא:ט-יג</p> <p>(יב) הַקְהֵל אֶת־הָעָם הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַנְּשִׁים וְהַטָּף וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ לִמְעַן יִשְׁמְעוּ וְלִמְעַן יִלְמְדוּ וִירְאוּ אֶת־ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְשִׁמְרוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־כָּל־דְּבַר הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת: (יג) וּבְנֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדְעוּ יִשְׁמְעוּ וְלִמְדוּ לִירָאָה אֶת־ה' אֱלֹהֶיכֶם כָּל־הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם חַיִּים עַל־הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם עֹבְרִים אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן שָׁמָּה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ: {פ}</p> <p>(12) Gather the people—men, women, children, and the strangers in your communities—that they may hear and so learn to revere your God and to observe faithfully every word of this Teaching. (13) Their children, too, who have not had the experience, shall hear and learn to revere your God as long as they live in the land that you are about to cross the Jordan to possess.</p>	<p>דברים ד</p> <p>(י) יוֹם אֲשֶׁר עָמַדְתָּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּחֹרֵב בְּאֶמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי הַקְהֵל־לִי אֶת־הָעָם וְאֶשְׁמְעֵם אֶת־דְּבַרִּי אֲשֶׁר יִלְמְדוּן לִירָאָה אֹתִי כָּל־הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר הֵם חַיִּים עַל־הָאֲדָמָה וְאֶת־בְּנֵיהֶם יִלְמְדוּן:</p> <p>(10) The day you stood before your God at Horeb, when God said to me, "Gather the people to Me that I may let them hear My words, in order that they may learn to revere Me as long as they live on earth and may so teach their children."</p>

e. Rav Hirsch: Proper framing for the upcoming year

<p>10. Rabbi Shimshon Refael Hirsch (Germany, 1808-1888), Devarim 31:10:</p> <p>...This reading out of the Torah prescribed here is not meant to be a means of the people getting to know the Law, that, or course, should be nurtured daily in the ordinary life at home... <u>but it is something extraordinary which recurs from the seventh year to seventh year for quite a special purpose</u>. And moreover, <i>b'moed</i>, at a time which invites every Jewish soul to a meeting with God: the year of Shemitah, <u>at every restart of a period of agriculture and business that had been interrupted by the year of relief and remission, on Sukkot, when the festival assembles the national circle all together in remembrance of the time when it was not</u></p>
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agriculture or business, but where the miraculous grace of God provided for everybody... So that with every entry of a period of agriculture and business, the consciousness proclaims itself ever afresh that the way to God only lies in the way of His Torah, the bond with God is the bond with His Torah...

III. The “When” of Hakhel

11. Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra, Devarim 31:12

“Assemble the nation,” they are all available not having chores to attend to, since everything is ownerless (and they are not at home but in Jerusalem).

11. אבן עזרא דברים לא:יב

הקהל את העם וגו' שהכל פנוים ואין אוסף לבית כלם כי הכל הפקר.

IV: The “Who” of Hakhel

12. Talmud Bavli, Chagiga 3a

The Sages taught: There was an incident involving Rabbi Yohanan ben Beroka and Rabbi Elazar ben Hisma, when they went to greet Rabbi Yehoshua in Peki'in. Rabbi Yehoshua **said to them: What novel idea was taught today in the study hall?**

...They said to him that Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya interpreted the following verse: **“Assemble the people, the men and the women and the little ones”** (Deuteronomy 31:12). This verse is puzzling: **If men come to learn, and women, who might not understand, come at least to hear, why do the little ones come? They come in order for God to give a reward to those who bring them,** i.e., God credits those who bring their children to the assembly. Rabbi Yehoshua **said to them:** This **good pearl** of wisdom **was in your hands, and you tried to conceal it from me?** (Translation: Sefaria)

12. תלמוד בבלי חגיגה ג.

תנו רבנן: מעשה ברבי יוחנן בן ברוקה ורבי אלעזר [בן] חסמא שהלכו להקביל פני רבי יהושע בפקיעין. אמר להם: מה חידוש היה בבית המדרש היום?

...“הקהל את העם האנשים והנשים והטף”. אם אנשים באים ללמוד, נשים באות לשמוע, טף למה באין? כדי ליתן שכר למביאיהן. אמר להם: מרגלית טובה היתה בידיכם, ובקשתם לאבדה ממני?

13. Kli Yakar (Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim Luntschitz, Prague, 1604-1619), Devarim 31:12

Gather the nation, men, women, and children. The sages said (Chagiga 3) that the men came to learn, the women to listen, but why bring the children? To give reward to those who bring them... And this is challenging, as it's similar to being commanded to carry wood

13. כלי יקר, דברים לא:יב

הקהל את העם האנשים והנשים והטף. אמרו רז"ל (חגיגה ג) אנשים באו ללמוד נשים לשמוע טף למה באים ליתן שכר למביאיהן... זזה דוחק גדול כי זה דומה כאילו צוה שישאו עליהם משא מעצים ואבנים לבית ה' כדי ליתן שכר למביאיהם...

or stones to the Temple so that God will give you a reward for doing so...

14. Mei HaShiloach, Rabbi Mordechai Yosef Leiner (the Izhbitzer Rav, 1801-1854, Poland), Vol. 1, Notes on the Talmud, Chagiga:

...Rather "to bring reward to those who bring them" is because the aliyah l'regel experience is so impactful to those who attend that impression spreads to the children... and there is no way to logically predict what will happen in the future (with your children), but you do what you can, and then God will ensure that your hopes for your children will come true...

14. מי השלוח, חלק א', ליקוטי הש"ס, חגיגה
...אלא כדי ליתן שכר למביאהו היינו מחמת שכל כך פועלת העליה לרגל נדבות לב בלבות ישראל עד כמה שיוכל להתפשט הקדושה בזרעו ולהכניסם תחת כנפי הקדושה, ואין ביכולתו לעמוד ולמנוע מזה מצד טעם וסברא להביט מה שיהיה אחר זמן רק הוא עושה מה שביכולתו ובטח יתן ה' תיכף מבטח עוז במעשה זרעו להוציא לאור תעלומות לבבו ויביא ג"כ את טפו מכח תשוקת לבו, וע"ז אמר מרגליות טובה היתה בידכם ובקשתם לאבדה ממני.

V. Hakhel throughout the ages:

a. Yoshiyahu's Reform

15. II Kings 23: 1-4

(1) At the king's summons, all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem assembled before him. (2) The king went up to the House of GOD, together with the entire citizenry of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests and prophets—all the people, young and old. And he read to them the entire text of the covenant scroll that had been found in the House of GOD. (3) The king stood on a platform and solemnized the covenant before GOD: that they would follow GOD and observe God's commandments, injunctions, and laws with all their heart and soul; that they would fulfill all the terms of this covenant as inscribed upon the scroll. And all the people entered into the covenant. (4) Then the king ordered the high priest Hilkiah, the priests of the second rank, and the guards of the threshold to bring out of the Temple of GOD all the objects made for Baal and Asherah and all the host of heaven. He burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and he removed the ashes to Bethel.

15. מלכים ב, כג: א-ד

(א) וישלח המלך ויאספו אליו כל־זקני יהודה וירושלם: (ב) ויעל המלך בית־ה' וכל־איש יהודה וכל־ישרי ירושלם אתו והכהנים והנביאים וכל־העם למקטן ועד־גדול ויקרא באזניהם את־כל־דברי ספר הברית הנמצא בבית ה': (ג) ויעמד המלך על־העמוד ויכרת את־הברית לפני ה' ללכת אחר ה' ולשמר מצותיו ואת־עדותיו ואת־חקתיו בכל־לב ובכל־נפש להקים את־דברי הברית הזאת הכתבים על־הספר הזה ויעמד כל־העם בברית: (ד) ויצו המלך את־חלקיהו הכהן הגדול ואת־כהני המשנה ואת־שמרי הסף להוציא מהיכל ה' את כל־הכלים העשויים לבעל ולאשרה ולכל צבא השמים וישרפו מחוץ לירושלם בשדמות קדרון ונשא את־עפרם בית־אל:

b. Ezra's ceremony

16. Nehemiah 8:1-18

(1) the entire people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the scroll of the Teaching of Moses with which the LORD had charged Israel. (2) On the first day of the seventh month, Ezra the priest brought the Teaching before the congregation, men and women and all who could listen with understanding. (3) He read from it, facing the square before the Water Gate, from the first light until midday, to the men and the women and those who could understand: the ears of all the people were given to the scroll of the Teaching. (4) Ezra the scribe stood upon a wooden tower made for the purpose, and beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah at his right, and at his left Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, Meshullam. (5) Ezra opened the scroll in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people; as he opened it, all the people stood up. (6) Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," with hands upraised. Then they bowed their heads and prostrated themselves before the LORD with their faces to the ground. (7) Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites explained the Teaching to the people, while the people stood in their places. (8) They read from the scroll of the Teaching of God, translating it and giving the sense; so they understood the reading. (9) Nehemiah the Tirshatha, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were explaining to the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God: you must not mourn or weep," for all the people were weeping as they listened to the words of the Teaching. (10) He further said to them, "Go, eat choice foods and drink sweet drinks and send portions to whoever has nothing prepared, for the day is holy to our Lord. Do not be sad, for your rejoicing in the LORD is the source of your strength." (11) The Levites were quieting the people, saying, "Hush, for

16. נחמיה ח:א-יח

(א) וַיֵּאסְפוּ כָּל־הָעָם כָּאִישׁ אֶחָד אֶל־הָרְחוֹב אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר־הַמַּיִם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְעֶזְרָא הַסֹּפֵר לְהָבִיא אֶת־סֵפֶר תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה ה' אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל: (ב) וַיָּבִיֵא עֶזְרָא הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַתּוֹרָה לִפְנֵי הָקָהָל מֵאִישׁ וְעַד־אִשָּׁה וְכָל מִבֵּין לִשְׁמֹעַ בְּיוֹם אֶחָד לַחֲדָשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי: (ג) וַיִּקְרָא־בּוֹ לִפְנֵי הָרְחוֹב אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר־הַמַּיִם מִן־הָאוֹר עַד־מַחְצִית הַיּוֹם נֹגֵד הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַנְּשִׁים וְהַמְּבִינִים וְאֶזְרִי כָּל־הָעָם אֶל־סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה: (ד) וַיַּעֲמֵד עֶזְרָא הַסֹּפֵר עַל־מַגְדֵּל־עֵץ אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ לְדַבֵּר וַיַּעֲמֵד אֶצְלוֹ מִתְתִּיָּה וְשֹׁמֵעַ וְעִנְיָה וְאוּרִיָּה וְחִלְקִיָּה וּמַעֲשִׂיָּה עַל־יְמִינוֹ וּמִשְׁמַאֲלוֹ פִּדְיָה וּמִישָׁאֵל וּמִלְכִּיָּה וְחָשִׁם וְחַשְׁבַּדְנָה זְכַרְיָה מְשֻׁלָּם: {פ} (ה) וַיִּפְתַּח עֶזְרָא הַסֹּפֵר לְעִינֵי כָּל־הָעָם כִּי־יַמְעַל כָּל־הָעָם הָיָה וַיִּכְפַּתְחוּ עֲמָדוֹ כָּל־הָעָם: (ו) וַיִּבְרָךְ עֶזְרָא אֶת־ה' הָאֱלֹקִים הַגָּדוֹל וַיַּעֲנוּ כָּל־הָעָם אָמֵן אָמֵן בְּמַעַל יְדֵיהֶם וַיִּקְדּוּ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ לַה' אֲפִים אֲרָצָה: (ז) וַיִּשׁוּעַ וּבְנֵי וְשִׁרְיָה וַיְמִין עֲקֹב שִׁבְתִּי וְהוֹדִיָּה מַעֲשִׂיָּה קְלִיטָא עֲזַרְיָה יוֹזָבֵד חֲנָן פְּלַאֲיָה וְחִלְיָהּ מְבִינִים אֶת־הָעָם לַתּוֹרָה וְהָעָם עַל־עַמְדָם: (ח) וַיִּקְרְאוּ בַסֵּפֶר בְּתוֹרַת הָאֱלֹקִים מִפָּרֶשׁ וּשְׁוֹם שָׁקֵל וַיִּבְּיֵנוּ בְּמִקְרָא: {פ} (ט) וַיֹּאמֶר נַחֲמִיָּה הוּא הַתִּרְשָׁתָא וְעֶזְרָא הַכֹּהֵן וְהַסֹּפֵר וְהַלְוִיִּם הַמְּבִינִים אֶת־הָעָם לְכָל־הָעָם הַיּוֹם קִדְּשׁ־הוּא לַה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם אֶל־תִּתְאָבְלוּ וְאֶל־תִּבְרְכוּ כִּי בּוֹכִים כָּל־הָעָם כָּשִׁמְעָם אֶת־דִּבְרֵי הַתּוֹרָה: (י) וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם לִכּוּ אֲכָלוּ מִשְׁמֵיִם וּשְׁתּוּ מִמֵּתִיקִים וּשְׁלַחוּ מְנוּחַ לְאִין נִכּוֹן לוֹ כִּי־קִדְּוֶשׁ הַיּוֹם לְאֹדְגֵינוּ וְאֶל־תַּעֲצִבוּ כִּי־חֲדָוֹת ה' הִיא מַעֲזָכֶם: (יא) וְהַלְוִיִּם מַחֲשִׁים לְכָל־הָעָם לֵאמֹר הִסּוּ כִּי הַיּוֹם קִדְּשׁ וְאֶל־תַּעֲצִבוּ: (יב) וַיִּלְכוּ כָּל־הָעָם לֶאֱכֹל וּלְשִׁתּוֹת וּלְשַׁלַּח מְנוּחַ וּלְעֹשׂוֹת שִׂמְחָה גְדוֹלָה כִּי הִבִּינּוּ בַּדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר הוֹדִיעוּ לָהֶם: {פ}... (יח) וַיִּקְרָא בַסֵּפֶר תּוֹרַת הָאֱלֹקִים יוֹם אֶחָד מִן־הַיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן עַד הַיּוֹם הָאַחֲרוֹן וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־חֵל שִׁבְעַת יָמִים וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי עֲצַרְתָּ כַּמִּשְׁפָּט: {פ}

the day is holy; do not be sad.” (12) Then all the people went to eat and drink and send portions and make great merriment, for they understood the things they were told ...(18) He read from the scroll of the Teaching of God each day, from the first to the last day. They celebrated the festival seven days, and there was a solemn gathering on the eighth, as prescribed.

17. Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 21b

It is taught in a *baraita*: Rabbi Yosei says: Ezra was suitable, given his greatness, for the Torah to be given by him to the Jewish people, had Moses not come first and received the Torah already...(Translation: Sefaria)

17. תלמוד בבלי סנהדרין כא:

תניא רבי יוסי אומר ראוי היה עזרא שתינתן תורה על ידו לישראל אילמלא (לא) קדמו משה במשה הוא אומר (שמות יט, ג) ומשה עלה אל האלהים בעזרא הוא אומר (עזרא ז, ו) הוא עזרא עלה מבבל מה עלייה האמור כאן תורה אף עלייה האמור להלן תורה

VI. But, does it work?

18. Devarim 31:19

Therefore, write down this poem and teach it to the people of Israel; put it in their mouths, in order that this poem may be My witness against the people of Israel.

18. דברים לא:יט

וְעַתָּה כְּתֹבוּ לָכֶם אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת וְלַמָּדָה אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל שִׁמְיָהּ בְּפִיהֶם לְמַעַן תִּהְיֶה־לִּי הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לְעֵד בְּבִנְיַיִשְׂרָאֵל:

19. Rabbi Nathaniel Helfgot, “[The Juxtaposition of Parashot in Vayelekh and their Significance](#)”, VBM:

....Am Yisrael is commanded to relive the great experience of Matan Torah in order to preserve the national character and to remain loyal to its principles. However, past experience has proven that awesome experiences - even that of Har Sinai - are not sufficient to guarantee that the covenant will be kept, and therefore the Torah ensures this in another fashion - through a second receiving of the Torah, in a personal and private way: the writing of the song and its study. Alongside the magnificent experiences which come along from time to time, there is modest, private, daily activity.

Further reading:

1. Rabbi Nathaniel Helfgot, "[The Juxtaposition of Parashot in Vayelekh and their Significance](#)"
2. Prof. Aaron Demsky, "[Historical Hakhel Readings and the Origin of the Public Torah Reading](#)"
3. Rabbi Tzvi Sinensky, "[Nehemia Chapter 8: The Teshuva Revolution](#)"



President Isaac Herzog speaks at a Hakhel reenactment ceremony at the Western Wall in Jerusalem on October 12, 2022. (Haim Zach/GPO)

