



GEULAS YISRAEL

RABBI MOSHE TARAGIN

RAM YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

MAGGID SHIUR ALL PARSHA AND ALL DAF, OU.ORG

Lifting and Carrying Torah

The Torah was delivered in a barren desert, a landscape stripped of permanence, to remind us that the eternal word of Hashem transcends both time and place. It does not belong to this world, though it was gifted to a human community that yearned for and embraced His word.

Though the Torah was given in the wilderness to reveal its timeless and universal character, the epic revelation at Sinai must be relived upon entering the Land of Israel. To reenact it is to affirm our hold on the Land, rooted in our divine mission and national destiny. Without devotion to the word and will of Hashem, that destiny cannot unfold.

For this reason, the drama of Sinai was reenacted upon the two northern mountains—Har Gerizim and Har Eival. Just as the ceremony at Sinai centered on the Ten Commandments, which form the foundation of religion, so too the ceremony on these

northern mountains was framed by a selection of mitzvot, presented in the Torah as a registry of ארורים—curses for noncompliance.

Of course, every pronouncement of ארור for violating a mitzvah was paired with its inverse: a declaration of ברוך for upholding that mitzvah.

UPHOLDING TORAH

The final entry in this list stands as a sweeping, summative declaration:

ארור אשר לא יקים את דברי התורה הזאת —“Cursed is he who does not uphold the words of this Torah.”

Alongside these words stood the counter-affirmation: ברוך אשר יקים את דברי התורה —“Blessed is the one who is תורה,” who upholds the Torah. Yet the precise meaning of someone who is תורה remains elusive.

Clearly, a person who performs mitzvot is considered תורה and is blessed. By extension, one who violates mitzvot fails to be תורה and is subject to ארור.

This appears almost implicit, not requiring repetition or formal declaration. Evidently, this endorsement of תורה reaches beyond the legalistic performance of individual mitzvot. It points to something deeper, more encompassing than the mere act of fulfilling a commandment. Being תורה speaks to something larger and more general

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than mitzvah adherence.

The Ramban suggests three explanations for “meikim Torah,” each unrelated to specific mitzvah adherence and offering an important lesson about religious identity, particularly as it is exposed and transformed through the course of history.

COMMITMENT AND CONVICTION, NOT PERFECTION

In his first explanation, the Ramban asserts that a *מְקִים תּוֹרָה* is a person who believes in the mitzvot even when their actual performance falters. A person who upholds the concept of divine commandments is considered a *מְקִים תּוֹרָה*, affirming the foundation of Torah even if perfect observance of mitzvot is beyond reach. Faith in and commitment to the principles of mitzvot is enough to be regarded as an upholder of Torah.

Conversely, a person who denies the concept of mitzvot, or questions whether they are logical or arbitrary, is regarded as not upholding the mitzvot and is subject to *אָרוּר*. The goal of meikim Torah demands that we believe in and commit to mitzvah observance, even if our execution falls short.

This offers a vital and comforting framework for religious struggle. We all wrestle with our inability to perform every mitzvah perfectly. Guilt accumulates, and we begin to question whether we can still call ourselves religious if we consistently fall short.

This declaration reminds us that religious identity rests in embracing the yoke of mitzvot and affirming their purpose. Hashem wants us to fulfill as many as we can, and we must certainly strive for complete success. When we fail, we should feel remorse for falling short of divine expectations and for prioritizing our own needs or weaknesses

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over the commandments.

Yet we should not erase ourselves from the life of Torah. Our orthodoxy is rooted in our mindset and our commitment to mitzvot. Even when our performance is imperfect, we are still considered *מְקִים תּוֹרָה*.

RESTORATION

The Ramban offers a second definition of *מְקִים תּוֹרָה*, drawn from a dramatic spiritual awakening near the end of the First Mikdash era. Yoshiyahu became king as a child, ascending the throne after a string of corrupt and evil rulers. At this point, the nation had sunk so low that the people had largely forgotten the mitzvot and were scarcely familiar with the Torah.

During renovations of the Mikdash, a Sefer Torah was discovered and brought to Yoshiyahu. When it was opened, it fell upon the verse *אָרוּר אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָקִים אֶת דְּבַר יְהוָה הַזֹּאת*. Confronted with the gravity of the spiritual decline and the stakes for the nation, Yoshiyahu declared “*Alai l’hakim*” — “Upon me to uphold it”—and launched a sweeping religious revival. He eradicated idolatrous practices, reinstated commitment to the Torah, and sought to awaken the people to the obligations of mitzvot.

Tragically, this renewal was cut short by his untimely death at the hands of the

Egyptians, leaving the promise of restoration unfulfilled. Yet the episode illustrates that to be מְקִימֵ תוֹרָה is to recognize pivotal moments in history when Torah is faltering and needs restoration. It is a summons to rebuild Torah during critical periods, when it seems to be fading.

GUARDIANS OF TORAH

Torah itself can never truly vanish, for it is the eternal word of Hashem. It transcends history and will endure beyond every generation. Every attempt to eradicate it has failed; its survival is certain, impervious to the forces of destruction and neglect.

However, there have been moments in history when Torah heroes were needed to replenish it. Individuals have singlehandedly rebuilt Torah in the darkest periods. For example, after losing 24,000 students and facing brutal Roman persecution, Rabbi Akiva did not surrender but trained five new talmidim—Rabbi Meir, Rabbi Yehuda, Rabbi Shimon, Rabbi Yosei, and Rabbi Eliezer ben Shamua—who would later reshape the landscape of Torah.

Similarly, after witnessing the devastation of the Rhineland Jewish communities at the end of the 11th and 12th centuries, Rashi and his grandchildren, the Ba’alei HaTosafot, led

a Torah renaissance. They sparked an outpouring of Torah learning in the same land where Jews had suffered severe massacres.

More recently, great Torah leaders in both Israel and America devoted their lives to rebuilding a Torah world that the Nazis had sought to annihilate.

Torah endures through history, yet there is always a need for a מְקִימֵ תוֹרָה—someone willing to uphold Torah in perilous times. Yoshiyahu was among the first, but far from the last.

THE METAPHOR OF HAGBAHAH

Finally, the Rambam cites a Yerushalami which assigns the title of מְקִימֵ תוֹרָה to a specific context. It refers to someone who performs the Hagbahah and, while holding up the Torah, fully displays it to the audience. A מְקִימֵ תוֹרָה is someone who performs Hagbahah well!

Yet, this declaration of בְּרוּךְ cannot be understood merely as praise for a technical Hagbahah. Clearly, the Yerushalami’s example conveys a deeper, metaphorical lesson.

Sometimes we are able to lead Torah revolutions like Yoshiyahu, replenishing Torah study and renewing halachic commitment. In other circumstances, advancing actual Torah learning is not possible—the timing is wrong, or historical conditions impede the effort.

At those times, we are called to perform the Hagbahah: to show people the beauty and dignity of Torah, and to create a positive atmosphere around it. Shouldering the Torah is not merely teaching its wisdom; it is leaving the nation with an impression of Torah’s majesty. Literally holding it up for people to see conveys its presence and significance. It does not require that they study it in that moment; rather, it introduces them to the

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CARRYING THE WEIGHT OF TORAH

On the doorstep of Rosh Hashanah, as we yearn for the malchut of Hashem, all three connotations of מְקִים תּוֹרָה should be held in mind. Without diminishing our awareness of imperfect observance, we must remind ourselves that as long as we submit to the principle of malchut shamayim and embrace the mitzvot, we are sustaining and upholding the Torah.

Regarding the second connotation of מְקִים תּוֹרָה, we are a fortunate generation. We have the privilege of inhabiting a world rebuilt for Torah, with Torah learning flourishing as never before. There has never been such widespread study since the days of the First Mikdash.

While we could always use more figures like Yoshiyahu and Rabbi Akiva, we must not underestimate that Torah is vibrant and pervasive today. Nor should debates over army conscription diminish our appreciation of Torah. Our nation is protected through Torah study and through our encounter with the eternal word of Hashem. We must not overlook this, nor allow ideological differences to dull our own engagement with Torah or

our appreciation of its profound significance.

We believe that under current conditions, the ideal devotion to Torah must be united with the sacred responsibility of defending our people and our Land.

Finally, it is imperative that religious people are mindful not only of their actions but, more significantly, of their words. People are listening, and sometimes our comments act as a reverse Hagbahah: instead of elevating the beauty of Torah, they leave others with a bitter impression. Part of our calling to be מְקִים תּוֹרָה is to care deeply about how all Jews—even those distant from Torah study—perceive the eternal word of Hashem.

We must lift Torah for ourselves and for others. Too often, we let it slip. ■



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