

# Zera Shimshon

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## Chapter XV: Bo (Ex. 10:1–13:16)

### Essay 14. Matzot and Mitzvot

**"וְשָׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־הַמִּצְוֹת"** פֶּרֶשׁ רַש"י ר' יאֲשֵׁיָה אָמַר אֶל תְּהִי קוֹרָא "אֶת־הַמִּצְוֹת", אֶלָּא "אֶת הַמִּצְוֹת", כְּשֵׁם שְׂאִין מִחֲמִיצִין אֶת הַמִּצָּה, כִּד אִין מִחֲמִיצִין אֶת הַמִּצְוֹת עכ"ל. יֵשׁ לְדַקְדֵק מִהוּ אֶל תִּקְרִי "אֶת־הַמִּצְוֹת", שְׂאֵם רוּצָה לְדְרוֹשׁ אֶת הַמְסוֹרֶת וְנִקְא, אִין לֹ לֹמַר אֶל תִּקְרִי עַל הַמִּקְרָא. כִּדְאֲשָׁפְסֵן בְּכֹלֵיָה תִלְמוּדָא דְאִיכָא מֵאֵן דְסָבִירָא לִיה יֵשׁ אִם לְמִקְרָא וְאִיכָא דְסָבִירָא לִיה יֵשׁ אִם לְמְסוֹרֶת וְאִינֵם עוֹשִׂים אֶל תִּקְרִי.

**“You shall observe [“guard”] the [Festival of] Unleavened Bread” (Ex. 12:17). Rashi explained: “Rabbi Josiah said: Do not read *הַמִּצְוֹת* [*ha’mitzot*] [“the unleavened bread”], but *הַמִּצְוֹת* [*ha’mitzvot*] [“the commandments”]. Just as we may not cause the unleavened bread to become leavened [by letting the dough remain in its raw state too long], so too we may not let the commandment become “leavened” [by waiting too long before we perform it]. If [a commandment] comes to your hand, perform it immediately.”<sup>1</sup>**

We need to investigate the meaning of “don’t read ‘the unleavened bread,’” for if [Rabbi Josiah] wants to specifically expound the Masoretic [written] text, he doesn’t need to say, “don’t read” regarding the [pronounced] Scripture. As we find throughout the Talmud, there is one whose opinion is that the Masoretic text is authoritative, and one whose opinion is that the [pronounced] Scripture is authoritative,<sup>2</sup> and they don’t need to support their position by saying, “don’t read” the other way.

וְעוֹד שְׂכַתְבֵּי הַרְא"ם וְז"ל, שְׂאֵף עַל פִּי שְׂדוֹרֶשׁ הַמִּקְרָא בְּ"אֶל תִּקְרִי", מִכַּל מְקוֹם לֹא יֵצֵא מִיַּד פְּשוּטוֹ, דְּאִם לֹא כֵן מֵאַחַר שְׂדוֹרֶשׁ הַמִּצָּה לְמִצְנָה בְּ"אֶל תִּקְרִי" אִידָּ חֲזַר וְאָמַר כְּשֵׁם שְׂאִין מִחֲמִיצִין אֶת הַמִּצָּה כִּד אִין מִחֲמִיצִין אֶת הַמִּצְנָה עכ"ל. וְלִפִּי זֶה קִשָּׁה טוֹבָא דְהִיָּה לֹ לֹמַר קִרִּי בֵּיה נְמִי "אֶת הַמִּצְוֹת", כִּדְאֲמַרְיֵנָן בְּפֶרֶק י' דְפִסְחִים קִרִּי בֵּיה נְמִי לֹא תִשְׂיָא שְׂמַע שְׂוֹא וְעִי"ש.

**Also, the Re'em<sup>3</sup> wrote, and these are his words: “Even though [Rabbi Josiah] expounded the [pronounced] Scripture by saying ‘don’t read [the unleavened bread, but rather**

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<sup>1</sup> The Rashi is based upon Mechilta d’Rabbi Yishmael 12:17:1.

<sup>2</sup> Sukkah 6b: “The Rabbis hold: The tradition of the written text is authoritative. And Rabbi Shimon holds: The vocalization is authoritative.”

<sup>3</sup> Rabbi Elijah Mizrahi (c. 1455– 1525 or 1526), Talmudist and mathematician.

the commandments],’ in any event he didn’t leave behind its plain meaning. For if that weren’t so, after he expounded that ‘unleavened bread’ as ‘commandment’ by saying ‘don’t read,’ how did he return and say, ‘Just as we may not cause the unleavened bread to become leavened, so too we may not let the commandment become leavened?’ ” [In other words, the Re’em is saying that Rabbi Josiah didn’t literally mean that one should ignore the plain meaning of “unleavened bread,” or else then he wouldn’t have mentioned unleavened bread in saying “just as we may not cause the unleavened bread to become leavened.”]

**This is very difficult, for [instead of saying “don’t read,”] [Rabbi Josiah] should have said, “read into it also ‘the commandments,’ ” as it says in the tenth chapter of Pesachim (118a), [regarding Ex. 22:30, “you shall not utter [תשא] [tisa] a false report,” “read into it also ‘you shall not relate [תשיא] [tasi] a false report.’ ”<sup>4</sup>**

ונש לומר שכתב הרא"ש בריש פ"ק אין צדין בשם הירושלמי, מנין שאין טוחנין ואין בוררין ואין מרקדים ביום טוב? תלמוד לומר "אך אשר יאכל לכל-נפש" וכו' "וישמרתם את-המצות", פלומר מלישה ואילך מותרים ולא מלאכות שקודם הלישה עכ"ל. ומהירושלמי הזה משמע דלא בעינן שימור למצת מצוה אלא מלישה ואילך. וכתב הב"ח (א"ח סימן תנ"ג סע"ד) דאנן לא קיימא לן הכי אלא כמסקנת הש"ס דילן דבעי שימור משעת קצירה וכו' ועיי"ש.

**It can be said that the Rosh<sup>5</sup> wrote at the beginning of the chapter “Ein Tzadin” (the third chapter of tractate Beitzah, siman 1) in the name of the Jerusalem Talmud: How do we know that there is no grinding of food, and no selecting inedible waste from edible food, and no sifting on a Festival? The verse states, “You shall celebrate a sacred occasion on the first day, and a sacred occasion on the seventh day; no work at all shall be done on them; only what every person is to eat, that alone may be prepared for you. You shall observe the [Festival of] Unleavened Bread” (Ex. 12:16–17), as if to say that labors performed from kneading onwards are permitted, but not categories of work that precede kneading.**

**From this [teaching] in the Jerusalem Talmud, we hear that it’s only necessary to guard Matzot mitzvah, the three matzot that will be used during the Passover seder, from the [time of] kneading onwards. The Bach<sup>6</sup> wrote (Orach Chaim, siman 453, se’if 4) (the words starting, “Rav Alfasi wrote”<sup>7</sup>) that we do not hold in accordance with this, but rather as an analogy of our Talmud, i.e., the Babylonian Talmud, Peachim 40a, that [the wheat] requires guarding from the time of harvest, etc., and see there.**

<sup>4</sup> In addition to Pesachim 118a, this is also found in Makkot 23a.

<sup>5</sup> Asher ben Jehiel (“Rabbeinu Asher” or “the Rosh”) (c. 1250, probably Cologne–1327, Toledo).

<sup>6</sup> Rabbi Yoel ben Samuel Sirkis (1561–1640), Polish *posek* (decisor):.

<sup>7</sup> Rabbi Isaac ben Jacob Alfasi ha-Cohen (1013–1103) (“Alfasi” or “The Rif”), author of Sefer haHalachot.

ולפי זה ר' יאשיה אָמר אל תקרי משום דְּלֹא סְבִירָא לִיהּ כְּהִירוּשְׁלָמִי ד' וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־הַמַּצּוֹת" סְמִיךְ ל' אַדְּ אֲשֶׁר יֵאָכֵל לְכֹל־נֶפֶשׁ" דְּהָא בְּעֵינֵי שְׁמִיר מְשַׁעַת קִצְיָרָה, אֲלֵא הֵכִי קִרְיָנָא "וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת הַמַּצּוֹת" כְּשֵׁם שְׁאִין מִתְּמִיצִין אֶת הַמַּצָּה וְכוּ', וְדָרִישׁ הֵכִי, כְּשֵׁם שְׁאֵם נֶאֱמַר "וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת הַמַּצּוֹת" אִין לוֹ עֲנִין ל' אַדְּ אֲשֶׁר יֵאָכֵל לְכֹל־נֶפֶשׁ". כִּד אִם נֶאֱמַר "וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־הַמַּצּוֹת" אִין לוֹ עֲנִין לְיוֹם טוֹב כָּלֵל, אֲלֵא אֲזַהְרָה לְשִׁמּוֹר הַמַּצּוֹת סְתָם, דְּהֵינּוּ כֹּל הַשְּׁמִירוֹת הַצָּרִיכוֹת וְאִף מְשַׁעַת קִצְיָרָה מְשַׁמְעָה. וְאִין הֵכִי נְמִי דְּרִישׁ תְּרַנְיָהוּ אֶת הַמַּצּוֹת וְאֶת הַמַּצּוֹת, אֲלֵא שְׁהוּצְרָךְ לֹאֲמַר אֵל תְּקַרִי לְאַפּוֹקִי מִהִפּוּרוֹשׁ הַנ"ל.

Because of this, Rabbi Josiah says, **“Don’t read [‘the unleavened bread’]” because he is not of the opinion of the Jerusalem Talmud, that as the phrase, “you shall observe the [Festival of] Unleavened Bread,” is adjacent to the phrase, “only what every person is to eat,” to teach that only labors from kneading onward are allowed on Festivals. Rather, he holds like the Babylonian Talmud, that [the wheat] requires guarding from the time of the harvest.**

**Rather, Rabbi Josiah says, thus pronounce “observe the commandments,” such that just as we may not cause the unleavened bread to become leavened, one may not delay performing the commandments and allow them to become “leavened.” He expounded thus: if it is said, “observe the commandments,” then we understand that there is no connection to the next phrase, “only what every person is to eat.” Similarly, if we read, “observe the [Festival of] Unleavened Bread,” it would not have had any connection to the festival at all, but rather simply a warning to guard the matzot, which is all the necessary guarding and even meaning from the time of the harvest. It is indeed so that both were expounded: the matzot and the commandments. Rather, that it was necessary to say “don’t read,” to exclude the explanation above of the Jerusalem Talmud, that the matzot used for the Passover seder only had to be guarded from the time of kneading onwards.**

וְעוֹד דְּהָא דְּאִין מִתְּמִיצִין אֶת הַמַּצָּה אֲפִשְׁר דְּנִפְקָא לִיהּ מִקְרָא ד' "עֲגַת מַצּוֹת כִּי לֹא חֲמִץ", דְּקִשָּׁה דָּאִם הֵם מַצּוֹת פְּשִׁיטָא שְׁאִינְבָם חֲמִץ. אֲלֵא בָּא לֹאֲמַר שְׁאִינּוּ דִי שְׁיִשְׁמְרוּ אֶת הַמַּצּוֹת מְשַׁעַת לִישָׁה לְחוּדְהָ דְּהֵינּוּ מְשַׁעַת שְׁבָאוּ לִידֵי עוּגוֹת, אֲלֵא אִף מְעִיקְרָא בְּעֵינֵי שְׁמִיר שְׁלֵא יִהְיֶה בְּהֵם צַד חִימוּץ כָּלֵל. דְּהֵינּוּ מְשַׁעַת קִצְיָרָה, וְהִשְׁתָּא דְּנִפְקָא לִיהּ דְּבַמַּצּוֹת שְׁמִיר דְּמְעִיקְרָא בְּעֵינֵי, יְלִיף שְׁאִף בְּמַצּוֹת צָרִיךְ לִיְזַהֵר וּלְהַזְדַּרֵּז בְּהֵם מִתְּחִלָּה שְׁלֵא לְהַתְּמִיצֵן כָּלֵל וּכְלָל.

**Further, the fact that we may not cause the unleavened bread to become leavened, could be derived from the reading “cakes of unleavened bread that had not leavened” (Ex. 12:39). That is, [the verse] is difficult, for if they were unleavened bread, it’s obvious that they were not leavened! Rather, [Scripture] is coming to tell us that it’s not enough to observe the matzot from the time of their kneading alone, which is from the time that they are formed into cakes, but rather even from their origin, they require guarding so that there will be no possibility of leavening to them at all. That is, from the time of the harvest. Now that it’s coming to tell us that for matzot, guarding from the origin is needed, Rabbi Josiah would say it also teaches that even for the commandments, it’s needed to be careful and to hurry to fulfill them from the beginning, so that they won’t become “leavened” at all by delaying in their fulfillment.**

ועוד יש לומר דאיצטרוד קרא לומר "כי לא חמץ", שהרי למאן דסבירא ליה דלכונת של חיוב מצה בעינן דנקא שימור משעת קצירה, קשה שהרי המצות הראשונות שנצטוו ישראל אי אפשר שהתהינה שמורות משעת קצירה, שישאל לא נצטוו אלא בחדש ניסן, ואפילו הכי אמר הכתוב "על-מצות ומררים יאכלהו", ומהיכא תיתי לן לעשות שימור יותר מהם.

**Also, it can be said that a verse was needed to say “for it was not leavened,” for if one holds that even the first olive bulk’s amount of matzah that is required to be eaten at the Passover seder, specifically requires guarding from the time of harvest, there is a difficulty. That is, regarding the first matzot that Israel were commanded to eat, upon their speedy departure from Egypt, it was impossible that these would have been guarded from the time of harvest. For Israel was only commanded in the month of Nissan, and even so, Scripture says, “with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it” (Lev. 9:11). I.e., by the time we were commanded in Nissan, the grain had already been harvested. From where, in that case, would it come to us to do more guarding today than that which was done during the Exodus from Egypt?**

ומשום הכי הוסיף "עגת מצות כי לא חמץ", כלומר הכתוב מעיד שאותם החטים שנדמנו לישראל לעשות המצות לא באו עליהם מים כלל, "כי לא חמץ". ומפל שכן לפי מה שכתב רש"י על פסוק "ויהי מקץ שנתים ימים" שאין גשמים יורדים במצרים תדיר כשאר ארצות.

**Because of this, [Scripture] adds, “cakes of unleavened bread that had not leavened,” as if to say that Scripture was testifying that this wheat that Israel happened to use to make matzot had never been exposed to water, for it “had not leavened.” In any event, according to what Rashi wrote on the verse, “After two years’ time, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile” (Gen. 41:1), that rains don’t fall in Egypt as often as in other lands.**

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