

LAKE SHORE DRIVE SYNAGOGUE

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ABOUT 613 MITZVOT

We've all learned that the Torah contains 613 mitzvot. Some have been taught that there are 248 positive mitzvot and 365 negative mitzvot. But what is the source of these counts? And have you ever seen a list of them? The short answer to the first question is that this was a count mentioned in both the Talmud and the Midrashic literature. The short answer to the second question is that the post-Talmudic rabbis played "Where's Waldo?" to work up a list of exactly 365 positive and 248 negative mitzvot.

Let's look at the Talmudic source, Makot 23b: "*Reb Simlai (second generation amora 250-290 CE) when preaching said: Six hundred and thirteen precepts were communicated to Moses, three hundred and sixty-five negative precepts, corresponding to the number of solar days [in the year], and two hundred and forty-eight positive precepts, corresponding to the number of the members of man's body.* (For details on the 248 (אברים) "members of man's body", sometimes mistranslated as "organs," see the list in the Mishnah Oholot 1.8. I warn you, this is not to be confused with Gray's Anatomy.)

When asked, "*What is the authentic text for this?*" Rabi Hamnuna, Reb Simlai's contemporary, quoted Deuteronomy 33:4, "*Moses commanded us torah, an inheritance of the congregation of Jacob,*" and interpreted the word "torah" (תורה) as being in letter-value equal to 611. He then said that since we heard the first two commandments from God's mouth (not from Moses), that this has to be added to the count, bringing it to 613.

Obviously, these amoraim did not make this up; they must have had an earlier source. Wikipedia cites two earlier sources for 613 mitzvot, Simon ben Azzai in Sifre Deuteronomy 76 and Eliezer ben Yose HaGelili in Midrash Aggadah Genesis, 15:1. Both were contemporaries of Akiva, so the notion of 613 was, according to "Reb Wikipedia," around before the Mishna was written. However, I was unable to find either reference. (In fact, the reference in Sifre Deuteronomy 76 is to 3 positive mitzvot, not even the 300 referred to more specifically later in Wikipedia.)

Unfortunately, the Talmud does not provide a list of the 613 mitzvot. The first known listing of the 613 mitzvot is in a book, Halachot Gedolot, written by Simon Kayyaha (first half of 8th century). Rabbi Saadiah Gaon (9th century) published his list in Sefer Hamitzvot. Maimonides (12th century) published a book also titled Sefer Hamitzvot, with his own list of the 613 mitzvot. This appears to be the definitive list referred to today, though in 1247 Moses ben Jacob of Coucy, France published an alternative list of 613 mitzvot in Mitzvot Gadol. To see the Maimonides list, just go to https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/613_commandments. One can also find reference there to other lists, some of which do not contain 613 items.

Three related asides: (1) These counts appear today in the prayer for a sick man (Art Scroll Siddur, page 442-3), where the wording is "his 248 organs (אבריו) and 365 blood vessels (גידיו)" (2) Rashi comments on the verse (Genesis 32:5) "I have sojourned (גרתני) with Laban" as an indication that Jacob observed the 613 mitzvot, because the Hebrew number for 613 is תריג, an anagram of גרתני. (3) In a comment of the verse (Genesis 5:1) "this is the book of the generation of Adam," the 13th century Midrash Genesis Rabbah 24:5 says "I only gave him 6 mitzvot and he was not able to abide by them, so how am I going to give him 613 mitzvot, 248 positive ones and 365 negative ones."

Of some interest is the continued rabbinic discussion in Makot 24a, pointing out that the prophets had reduced this list. First David produced a list of 11 mitzvot in Psalms 15. Isaiah reduced the count to 6 in Isaiah 33:15-116. Micah reduced it to the oft-quoted three in Micah 6:8, "to do justice, and to love loving mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." Finally both Amos and Habakuk reduced the count to 1, with Amos 5:4 "Seek me, and you shall live," and Habakuk 2:4, "the just shall live by his faith."

WRY BREAD

NEW TALMUD VOLUME "VOTIN" FOUND IN IRAQ

In the midst of the continuing struggle of the free world to defeat the armies of ISIS and Al Qaeda, a startling discovery was made last week in an Iraqi cave. A team of archaeologists digging alongside Kurdish Peshmerga near the Turkish border discovered a cache of scrolls that included the long-lost Talmudic tractate VOTIN, which details extensive discussions of the laws of planning and running elections. Talmudic scholars are fascinated with the implications of the find, as the reasoning of the sages clarifies current issues relevant to the highly contested and greatly anticipated elections in the United States in November.

The academic world has long believed that this tractate existed but were stymied in the search until now. This new volume joins its companion volumes, all parts of the Talmud Baghdadi, which were discovered in the 1991 bombing of Iraq and in the subsequent search for weapons of mass destruction.

The Talmudic volumes originally discovered include:

FRESSIN - The laws of preparing and partaking of a shul kiddush

NAPPIN - The laws of taking Shabbat afternoon naps

MEETIN - The laws of conduct during shul meetings

TANTZEN - The laws of mixed dancing

PATCHEN - The laws of child discipline

Another volume, SHTUPPIN, is still being deciphered, with experts uncertain whether it is about the laws of pushing an allegorical work alluding to more intimate behavior. Here is an excerpt from VOTIN:

MISHNAH: How does one choose a candidate when all of the choices are bad? One holds one's nose and casts the ballot. From what time is it permitted to cast a ballot? From the time that the final poll numbers are posted by CNN and FOX. How long is it permitted to wait in line to vote? Not too long, because idle chatter while waiting could lead to mixed dancing.

GEMARA: The Etzba B' Af asks: How long should you hold your nose? Only as long as it takes to pull the lever. The Punkt Farkert disagrees and says as long as you are in the voting booth. The Grobber Yung says that it depends on the size of your hand and the length of your fingers. And you know what they say about a man with a big hand. A man with a big hand is likely to have a big nose. And a long nose may have to be held longer to complete the voting process. The Ohf Hagadol asks: How long should the voting booths be open? The Groisser Fresser gives his opinion that it should be at least as long as it takes for an elephant to cross the Euphrates River. The Regel BaPeh asks: How long is that? The Rodef Kessef replies: About twice as long as it takes a tiger to cross the Tigris River.

We have learned much from the pages of the Talmud Baghdadi, but few of us know the sages behind the pages. Here are some brief profiles of the sages quoted in the excerpts from Tractate Votin and the other volumes:

The Groisser Fresser was one of the biggest of the sages, literally. His positions were strict, but he tended to be more lenient in his opinions whenever they served to permit the consumption of more food.

The Punkt Farkert was a regular opponent of the Groisser Fresser and took great pleasure in refuting every one of his arguments.

The Etzba B' Af was widely known for his penetrating analysis but did not have many friends because of a lack of personal hygiene.

The Regel BaPeh had an uncanny ability to offer soundly reasoned arguments, but somehow tended to use them to undermine his own position.

The Ohf Hagadol, always one to seek compromises and find peaceful solutions, was the tallest of the sages but his skin had a yellowish cast, with an almost feather-like texture.

The Grobber Yung, as wide across as the Ohf Hagadol was tall, made his mark by barging in to discussions among the more revered sages, punctuating his remarks with obscure references.

The Rodef Kessef had a sharp mind for business, and always managed to voice opinions that maximized his financial opportunities.

...from the he Kustanowitz Kronikle, FAIR LAWN, NEW JERSEY, March 23, 2020.

LAKE SHORE DRIVE SYNAGOGUE FAMILY NEWS

MAZEL TOV to:

DAYNA and SHAUN KLEINMAN on the Bar Mitzvah of their son, Seth.
ALICE and FRANK KLEINMAN on the Bar Mitzvah of their grandson, Seth.
HELEN and MARC (BUZZY) RUBENSTEIN on the marriage of their son Joshua to Brittany Lirtzman.
EDE and AARON SNYDER on the marriage of their daughter Devora to Shimron Shefer.
ELLEN and ALBERT ZICKMANN on the Bar Mitzvah of their son, Shane.

מזל טוב!

SINCEREST WISHES FOR COMPLETE RECOVERY to:

All who have succumbed to COVID-19.
TSIPORA HAHAMY who was hospitalized.

רפואה שלמה!

KIDDUSHIMCANCELLED DUE TO COVID-19

HONORABLE MENSHEN

Please forgive me for any errors and omissions. AM

Lake Shore Drive Synagogue wishes to thank the following for their contributions. In memory of Corrine Dropkin: **Paula Kaplan Berger, Michael Crankovich and Ford Motor Company, Eva Eiseman, Harry Finkel, Alice and Frank Kleinman, Suzanne Krill, the Kwittken family, Peggy Rubenstein, Marion and George Siegel, Lauren and David Silverman, Aimee and Lee Strauss, Henry Winograd. Morene Dunn and Barry Axler:** in memory of Samuel Axler, **Liliane Dayan and her children:** in memory of Dr. Scott Rubinstein's sister and Deanna Yahav's mother. **Rose Dessau:** in memory of Grace and Henry Dessau. **Ludmilla Gimmelshteyn:** in memory of Naum Gimmelshteyn. **Tsipora and Benny Hahamy:** in memory of Bracha Hahamy and Shmuel Hahamy. **Carol Marcovich:** in memory of Ralph Bolozy. **Jill and David Schlossberg:** in memory of Nadia and Marcel Zickmann. **Michael Traison:** in memory of Samuel Traison. **Bonnie and Skip Wilder:** in memory of Nadia Zickmann. **Aimee and Lee Strauss:** in memory of Edward Baum and Warren Rife. **Ida and Alexander Urin:** in memory of Sara Kogosova and Vladimir Urin. **Sarah and Vladimir Milgram:** in memory of Marya and Gabriel Kener. **Henry Winograd:** in honor of Tsipora Hahamy's speedy recovery. **Shirley Aizenstein and Harry Finkel:** in honor of Sam Schuster's speedy recovery. In honor of Ede and Aaron Snyder's daughter's wedding: **Beverly Alpern, Henry Winograd. Jacklin and Jay Levine:** in honor of Reuven and Adrian Pinsler. **Sam Schuster:** for all the *mishebeirachs* and *tefillot* for his recovery. **Rose Dessau:** in honor of Shom Klaff's retirement.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

Lake Shore Drive Synagogue is pleased to announce the continuation of a series of Zoom classes led by Rabbi Bauman on topics of interest. The sessions will begin at 7:30 PM on Wednesday evenings. The link is given in the weekly Constant Contact message that our administrator, Tory May, sends out every Wednesday.

We now have Zoom morning minyanim every morning, from Sunday through Friday, at 8:30 AM. And stick around for the post-minyan *divrei torah* delivered by our congregants. The meeting ID is 83278107218 and the password is 810153.

Since there are no Friday night services scheduled, we do not include the Schedule of Services in this bulletin.

The next meeting of the Book Group will be on Tuesday, November 10, 2020 at 10:00 AM, where Yoram Hazony's The Virtue of Nationalism will be discussed. It will be held via Zoom with meeting ID 6984061038 and password is LSDSBooks.