

This Week in Jewish History

Highlights from "The Israel Bible"

22 Sh'vat - Anniversary of the death of Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Morgensztern (1787-1859) was born in Poland. He was a Hasidic rabbi and leader, known for his sharp-witted sayings and down-to-earth philosophies. Rabbi Morgensztern was also known as Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk and the Kotzker Rebbe.

After returning from their mission to scout out the land, the spies report, "We saw the Nefilim there, the Anakites are part of the Nefilim, and we looked like grasshoppers to ourselves, and so we must have looked to them" (Bamidbar 13:33).

In comparison to the giants living in Canaan, the spies thought that they must have looked like grasshoppers and conclude "so we must have looked to them". Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk suggests that the sin of the spies was that they worried about what others thought of them. As emissaries of Hashem, they should have been concerned only with fulfilling their mission, despite how they might have been perceived by the people around them.

The Talmud (Taanit 29a) records that Hashem reprimanded the people of the generation of the spies for their lack of faith and said: "As you cried on the

ninth of Av for no reason, this day will become a day of crying for all future generations." The events surrounding the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash are linked back to the biblical account of the twelve spies, to illustrate that all of Jewish history is inexorably interwoven, and is the unfolding of Hashem's plan. We must never forget that one of the keys to the heralding in of the Messianic Era is our unquestioning trust in God, and appreciation of Eretz Yisrael, no matter what others say or think.

24 Sh'vat - Anniversary of the death of Eliyahu Koren

That Ezra came up from Babylon, a scribe expert in the Teaching of Moshe which God of Yisrael had given, whose request the king had granted in its entirety, thanks to the benevolence of Hashem toward him. (Ezra 7:6)

Ezra was a kohein and scribe who lead a group of returnees to the Land of Israel following the construction of the second Temple (Ezra 7). He became a leader of the Jewish community in Israel, implementing religious reforms, combating assimilation, promoting Jewish education and reestablishing a proper system of justice.

A modern-day "scribe", Eliyahu Koren (1907-2001) was born in Germany. Like Ezra, he immigrated to Israel in 1933. He was a master typographer and graphic artist and founded Koren Publishers Jerusalem in 1961. The following year he published the "Koren Tanach", the first Bible edited, designed, produced and bound by

Jews in nearly 500 years. David Ben-Gurion responded to the publication of the Tanach, "Israel is redeemed from shame." Koren, along with his team of experts, considered the precision of every letter, the placement of every word on every page and designed a new font to ensure maximum clarity and to signify the renewal of ancient Hebrew in modern times. After its publication, it became the Bible that IDF soldiers received, along with a gun, upon their induction into the Israel Defense Forces, and it is the Bible upon which Knesset members are sworn into office. In 2018, Koren Publishers Jerusalem and Israel365 partnered to produce The Israel Bible, the first Bible dedicated exclusively to the land, people, and God of Israel.

"The Israel Bible" is edited by Rabbi Tuly Weisz and co-published by Israel365 & Koren Jerusalem's Menorah Books and was the #1 new release Bible on Amazon