Class # 38–Parshat Nitzavim–Vayelech -- IDF Swearing-in Ceremony

Advanced Fellowship Parsha Class - Sponsored in memory of Alice Toby Barbanel Z”l

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# <https://youtu.be/gRrhWffeNCA> - Yonatan Gordon - IDF Swearing-in Ceremony May 9, 2013

<https://youtu.be/B7QffjrE02A> - The IDF Oath – up close

# THE IDF Soldier’s Oath

"I swear and commit to maintain allegiance to the State of Israel, its laws, and its authorities, to accept upon myself unconditionally the discipline of the Israel Defense Forces, to obey all the orders and instructions given by authorized commanders, and to devote all my energies, and even sacrifice my life, for the protection of the homeland and the liberty of Israel."

While most soldiers follow the recitation of the oath by stating "I swear," religious soldiers generally say "I affirm." Each soldier then receives his or her personal firearm and places either a Hebrew Bible, a Christian Bible, or a Quran over the rifle to express his/her assent (atheists and anyone who does not subscribe to either Judaism, Christianity, or Islam, may place their hand over their gun instead).

The text of the oath was composed in 1948, upon the formation of the Israel Defense Forces

1. Why do the IDF and all armies have a swearing in ceremony?
2. Why does the IDF make their ceremony a large gathering with all the families and friends?
3. What impact does this make on all the participants?
4. What is the significance of placing the Tanach on their rifle? What does this show about the relationship of the Tanach to the use of force?
5. Where does the reverence of the IDF for the Tanach come from?

*Joshua; The Torah*

31:7 Moses summoned Joshua, and in the presence of all Israel, said to him, 'Be strong and brave, since you will be the one to bring this nation to the land that God swore to their fathers that He would give it to them. You will be the one to parcel it out to them. 31:8 But God will be the One who will go before you, and He will be with you. He will never forsake you or abandon you, so do not be afraid and do not [let your spirit be broken](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=5&CHAPTER=31#C4466).' 31:9 [Moses then wrote down this Torah](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=5&CHAPTER=31#C4467). He gave it to Levi's descendants, the priests [in charge of](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=5&CHAPTER=31#C4468) the ark of God's covenant, and to the elders of Israel. 31:10 Moses then gave them the following commandment:

'At the end of each seven years, at a fixed time on the festival of [Sukkoth](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=5&CHAPTER=31#C4469), [after](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=5&CHAPTER=31#C4470) the year of [release](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=5&CHAPTER=31#C4471),

31:11 when all Israel comes to present themselves before God your Lord, in the [place that He will choose](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=5&CHAPTER=31#C4472), [you must read](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=5&CHAPTER=31#C4473) [[from] this Torah](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=5&CHAPTER=31#C4474) before all Israel, so that they will be able to hear it. 31:12 'You must gather together the people, the men, women, children and [proselytes](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=5&CHAPTER=31#C4475) from your settlements, and let them hear it. They will thus learn to be in awe of God your Lord, carefully keeping all the words of this Torah. 31:13 Their children, who do not know, will listen and learn to be in awe of God your Lord, as long as you live in the land which you are crossing the Jordan to occupy.'

**Rambam, Laws of the Festival offering, Ch. 3**

**Halacha 1**

It is a positive commandment to gather together the entire Jewish people - men, women, and children - after every Sabbatical year when they ascend for the pilgrimage holiday and to read so that they hear passages from the Torah that encourage them to perfom mitzvot and strengthen them in the true faith, as [Deuteronomy 31:10](http://www.chabad.org/9995#v10)-12 states: "At the end of a seven-year period, at the time of the Sabbatical year on the Sukkot holiday when all Israel come to appear... gather the nation, the men, the women, the children, and your stranger in your gates...."

**Halacha 3**

When would they read? On the day following the first day of the holiday of Sukkot which is the first day of *Chol HaMoed* of the eighth year. The king would read so the people would hear. The reading was held in the Women's Courtyard. He would read while seated. If he read while standing, it is praiseworthy.

From which passages in the Torah should he read? He starts from the beginning of the *chumash [Devarim]*: "These are the words..." until the end of the passage *Shema*. He then skips to the passage *Vehayah Im Shamoa*, and then skips to the passage *asair te'asair*. He then reads from that passage in order until the end of the blessing and curses, i.e., until the phrase: "besides the covenant He established with them in Choreb where he concludes.

**Halacha 4**

How is the reading conducted? Trumpets are sounded throughout Jerusalem to gather the people. A large wooden platform is brought and set up in the center of the Women's Courtyard. The king ascends and sits on it so that they will be able to hear his reading. All of the Jewish people who made the festive pilgrimage gather around him. The attendant of the synagogue would take the Torah scroll and give it to the head of the synagogue. He would give it to the *segen*, who would give it to the High Priest, who would give it to the king. The transfer involved many people as an expression of respect.

The king accepts the scroll while standing. If he desires, he may sit when reading. He opens it, looks at it, and recites the blessings like anyone who is reading the Torah in a synagogue. He reads the passages mentioned in the previous halachah until he completes them. He rolls the scroll closed and recites the blessing afterwards as it is done in synagogues. He adds seven blessings which are….

**Halacha 6**

Converts who do not understand are obligated to concentrate their attention and direct their hearing, listening with reverence and awe, rejoicing while trembling as on the day the Torah was given at Sinai.

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 was just now commanded regarding the Torah and heard it from the Almighty. For the king is an agent to make known the word of God.

<https://youtu.be/z1ElFd2v0Bw> Hakhel 2015 at the Kotel

1. In what way is the nation of Israel, Tzivos Hashem like an army and each citizen a soldier in this?
2. Who is the commander of the army of Hashem? Where does the commander get his orders from?
3. In what way did the camp around the Mishkan first develop the “army of Hashem” concept?
4. According to the Torah, what problem is Hakhel trying to solve?
5. How does it accomplish its mission?
6. Why is it only every seven years? Why not every year?
7. Why does everyone have to be there?
8. Compare and Contrast: Hakhel and the mitzvah of reading the Torah publicly.