



# SUNSETTING DAY 2 OF HOLIDAYS

TIME TO REDISTRIBUTE THE WEIGHT OF  
THE YOKE OF THE MITZVOT

# WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT? 5 SECOND DAYS

- Sukkot — day 2
- Shmini Atzeret — day 2 (Simchat Torah)
- Pesach — day 2 and day 8
- Shavuot — day 2
  
- Rosh Hashana has two days even in Israel because of the influence of Babylonian Jewry

# WHY ARE THERE TWO DAYS OF HOLIDAYS AT ALL?

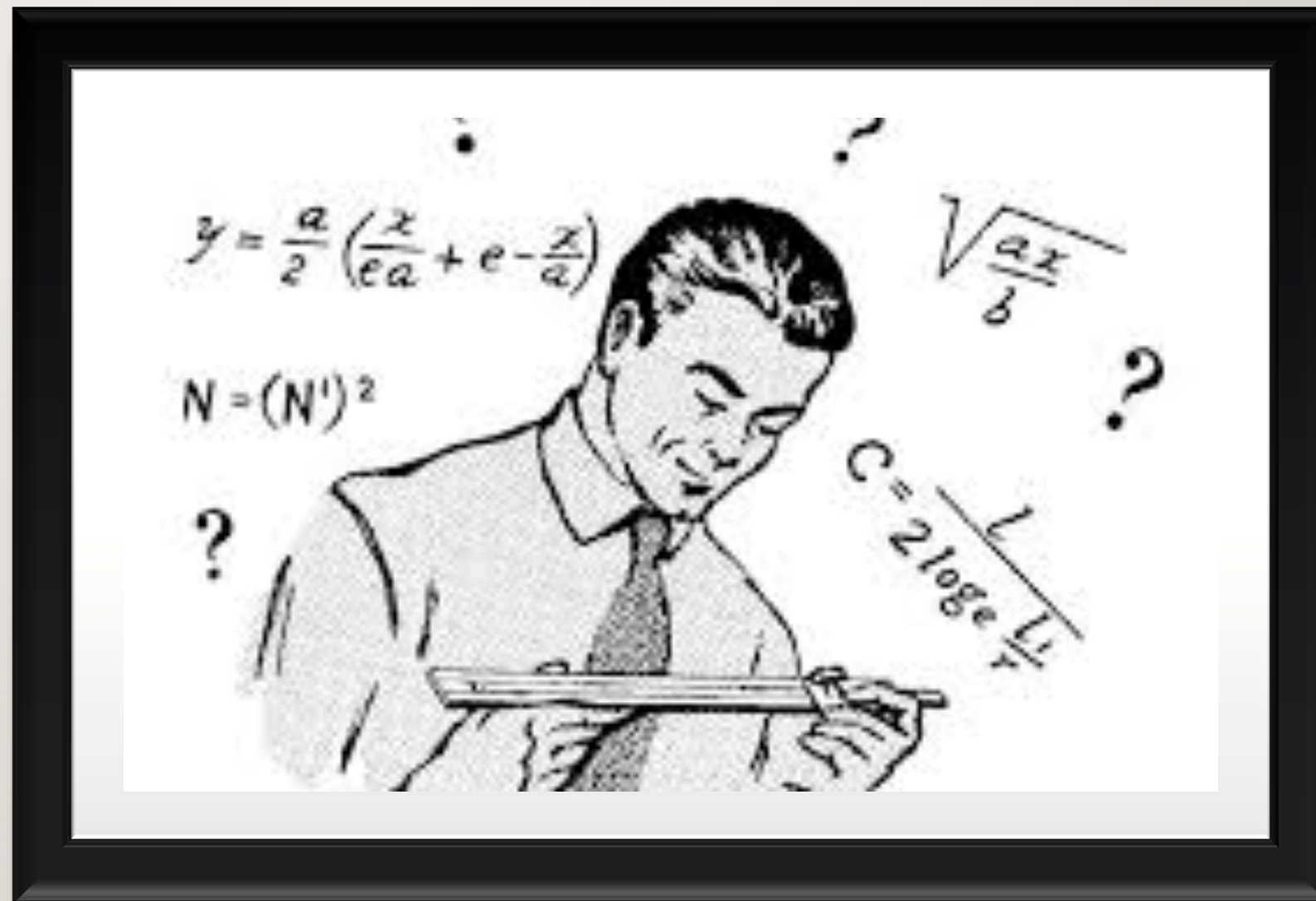
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- During the Second Temple period, the northern neighbors of Judah (the Samaritans) sabotaged the communication system which the Judeans had put into place alerting communities outside the Land of Israel that testimony had been accepted declaring the new moon.
- The form of communication was smoke signals from mountain tops. The Samaritans would try to deceive the Jewish community by blowing smoke on the wrong days.
- In order to ensure that the Jews outside of Israel were celebrating the holiday on the “right” day, the sages instituted a 2-day holiday.



BUT HILLEL II (4<sup>TH</sup> C.)  
FIGURED IT OUT SO  
WE DON'T NEED  
WITNESSES OR  
SMOKE SIGNALS  
ANYMORE

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# BUT THE RABBIS PRESERVED THE 2<sup>ND</sup> DAY

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It had become a custom  
of our ancestors



Apparently, it was not  
considered a burden

FROM A  
LEADING  
SCHOLAR OF  
JEWISH  
LITURGY  
AND ITS  
HISTORY

*TIRCHA  
D'TZIBURA*

Jakob Petuchowski points out that “Concern with the need to not ‘[unnecessarily] **bother [or burden or hassle] the congregation’ [tircha d’tzibura]** has atrophied in the course of millennia. The initial framers of the Jewish liturgy seem to have had an awareness of the limited span of attention possessed by ordinary mortals. They also seem to have known that, at any rate on weekdays, Jews, in addition to worshipping their Creator, have to devote themselves to earning a living.”

## HOW DID OUR RABBIS UNDERSTAND *TIRCHA D'TZIBURA*?

What did the Talmud understand as a *tircha*? The mere addition of several *extra* verses in the morning prayer service qualified (Brachot 12b). Rabbi Yehuda, a student of Rabbi Akiva, reported that when his teacher would lead the congregation in service, he would shorten his prayer to avoid delaying the congregation (Brachot 31a). The sentiment was codified (h. Tefila 6:2 [RaMBaM] and O. H. 53:11 [Shulchan Arukh]).

# THE CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT HAS ENDORSED THE SUNSETTING OF THE SECOND DAY

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The Conservative movement addressed the issue in 1933 and then again in 1963. Not until 1969 were there enough rabbis to endorse the authority for individual rabbis to forgo the second day. Rabbis Philip Sigal and Abraham J. Ehrlich were quick to point out that for both students and workers, missing those extra days is “an extreme hardship.” Their arguments included both historical data and *halakhic* issues concerning the holiness of the second day and the permissibility of nullifying a custom.





## THEIR ARGUMENT

“Our proposed declaration on the Second Day of Festivals will also help restore some semblance of confidence in the machinery of *halakhah*, in the operation of our Law Committee, and in the realism of our approach to Judaism. *Yom Tov Shenit* [the Second Day of Festivals], more than anything we can pinpoint, is a severe case of an enactment which the community cannot live with, which the Rabbis of old had the good grace to remove... A declaration on the Second Day of Festivals should be offered because the second day is *halakhically* indefensible. It is not crucial if the declaration utterly fails to increase piety or Jewish observance among those of little devotion. We should act for the sake of those who enjoy and observe one day, but regard the second day as repetitious and burdensome, although they observe it because of their loyalty to *halakhah*.”

IT IS TIME TO  
UNBURDEN OUR  
COMMUNITY BY  
SUNSETTING THE  
FIVE SECOND DAYS  
OF HOLIDAYS

SEE ALSO CHERRY,  
*COHERENT JUDAISM*,  
PP. 491-94

- We *know* on which day the holiday falls.
- We no longer think of time as having a different essence on the “right” day of a holiday.
- Five extra days of observance are unnecessarily burdensome.
- Many Jews have voted with their feet and rejected the importance of second-day observance.
- The Law Committee has validated the option.
- Judaism is a living tree, not petrified wood. Sometimes principles need to be applied anew to generate laws for our circumstances *just as the sages did in their day*. Other times, laws and customs must be pruned.

# CONSEQUENCES OF SUNSETTING THE SECOND DAY OF HOLIDAYS

## PESACH

- We recite Havdalah at the end of the first day.
- Day 2 of Pesach, Day 1 of the Omer, is chol hamoed
  - A “second” seder would no longer be obligatory. Therefore were one to opt for a second seder, it wouldn’t necessarily be on what would have been the second day. Thus, second seders can be adjusted in terms of days, times, contents, guests, and media for maximum convenience and enjoyment.
- Pesach Day 7, Yizkor is recited. Havdalah is recited at the conclusion of the day.
- Pesach “Day 8”
  - **When the community is immersed in suffering, a person may not say: I will go to my home and I will eat and drink, and peace be upon you, my soul.** B. Ta’anit 11a
  - Out of solidarity with our chametz-free community members, we refrain from eating chametz gamur (e.g., bagels) on this day. We can, however, resume eating non-Pesach food (e.g., food that is not chametz gamur but is not labeled as kosher l’Pesach) and we can buy/own chametz gamur in preparation for sundown. (Practically speaking, you can buy beer and chill it.)

# CONSEQUENCES OF SUNSETTING THE SECOND DAY OF HOLIDAYS

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## SUKKOT/ SHMINI ATZERET

- **Sukkot**
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> day is chol hamoed. Torah reading follows Israeli system.
  - Shmini Atzeret/Simchat Torah is on the same day (as it is in Israel)
    - Evening: hakafot, chatan Torah, kallat bereshit
    - Morning: hakafot, chatan Torah, kallat bereshit
    - Yizkor is recited/No d'var Torah

# CONSEQUENCES OF SUNSETTING THE SECOND DAY OF HOLIDAYS

## SHABBAT

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- When the Second Day falls on Shabbat, we will read the Shabbat parashah — not the holiday parashah — just as they do in Israel.
- All haftarah readings will also follow the Israeli calendar.
- We will be a Conservative shul that does not observe the second day, which means the parashah we read will sometimes be different than other Conservative shuls outside of Israel, and our Torah readings are distinctive in that we follow the system of Rabbi Meir as explained in Seder Avodah, pp. 971-973.

