Because learning Torah is sweet

HADAR Children & Families

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בְּשַׁלַּח Beshallah

DeVAsH

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מָה בַּפָּרָשָׁה • In This Week's Parashah

- God leads בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (Benei Yisrael, the Israelites) out of Egypt.
- Pharaoh and his army chase Benei Yisrael, trapping them by the יַם סוּף (Yam Suf, Reed Sea). Moshe raises his staff and God miraculously splits the sea.
- Bnei Yisrael cross through the sea on dry land with walls of water on either side. Pharaoh and his army chase after them. The water returns to normal in time to drown the Egyptians.
- Moshe, Miriam, and Benei Yisrael sing songs thanking God.
- Benei Yisrael arrive at Marah, where the water is too bitter to drink. God shows Moshe a branch to throw into the water to sweeten it. Later, Moshe is commanded to provide Benei Yisrael with more water by hitting a rock.
- Benei Yisrael complain that they do not have enough food. God rains down מָן (mann, miraculous food) from the sky. On Friday, they get a double portion since no mann falls on Shabbat.
- Amalek attacks Benei Yisrael. Moshe stands over the battle with his special staff, and Aharon and Hur help him hold his hands up all day long. Yehoshua leads the Israelite army, and they are victorious.

מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash

These words are part of the song that Benei Yisrael sing at the yam suf.

Bzzzz
A lot of midrashim are **bugged** by something unusual in the Torah text

Shemot 15:2

This is my God and I will glorify God

שמות טו:ב

זֶה אֵ-לִי וְאַנְוֵהוּ

Many פַּרְשָׁנִים (parshanim, commentators) believe that זֶה (zeh, this) in the Torah almost always indicates something that's right there that people are pointing at.

A midrash suggests that after Pharaoh decreed that Benei Yisrael's baby boys must be thrown into the Nile, women would give birth to their babies secretly in the wilderness. To escape Pharaoh's law of certain death, the mothers would have to leave their newborn baby boys there, not knowing what would happen to them.

But what could Benei Yisrael mean when they say, "This is my God"? Why would they be trying to point at God?

Devarim Rabbah 1:15

R. Hiyya the Great said: ...The babies grew in the field like grass, and after they grew, they returned to their homes in flocks...

How did they know which home was their family's?

The Holy Blessed One accompanied them, pointed each one to his parents' home, and said, "Call your father this and your mother that." The children would say to their mothers, "Don't you remember when you gave birth to me, on this day in that field?"

...When they eventually came to the sea and saw God, the children pointed to God with their fingers, showing God to their mothers, and said, "**This** is my God, and I will glorify God"—**this** is the One Who raised me!

דברים רבה א:טו

אָמַר רַבִּי חִיָּא הַגָּדוֹל...הָיוּ הַתִּינוֹקוֹת גְּדֵלִים בַּשָּׂדֶה כִּצְמָחִים הַלָּלוּ, וְהָיוּ מִתְגַּדְּלִין וְנִכְנָסִין בַּעֲדָרִים לְבָתֵּיהֶם...

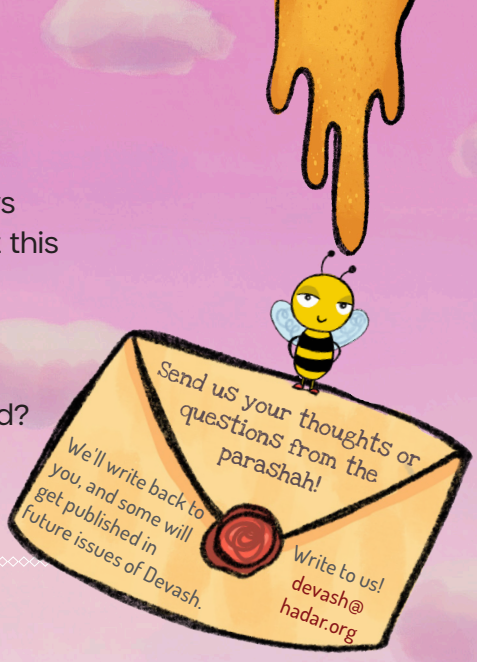
וְהֵיאַךְ הָיוּ מַכִּירִין לֵילֵךְ אֵצֶל אֲבוֹתֵיהֶם, אֶלָּא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא הָיָה נִכְנָס עִמָּהֶם וְהָיָה מַרְאֶה לְכָל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד בֵּית אָבִיו, וְאוֹמֵר לוֹ קְרָא לְאָבִיךָ פְּלוֹנִי וּלְאִמְּךָ פְּלוֹנִית, וְאוֹמֵר לָהּ אֵין אַתְּ זְכוּרָה כְּשֶׁיָּלַדְתְּ אוֹתִי בְּשָׂדֶה פְּלוֹנִי, בְּיוֹם פְּלוֹנִי...

כְּשֶׁבָּאוּ לַיָּם וְרָאוּ אוֹתוֹ הָיוּ מַרְאִים לְאִמּוֹתָם בְּאֶצְבַּע, וְאוֹמְרִים לָהֶן "זֶה אֵ-לִי וְאַנְוֵהוּ" - זֶהוּ שֶׁגִּדְּלַנִי.



This midrash explains that the parents of these children always wondered how their sons had found their way home. It was at this moment at the Yam Suf that the children made it all clear.

- Why do you think the children point to God?
- What do you think this means about their relationship with God?
- Can you think of a moment when you have felt a special connection with God?





הֲלָכָה • Halakhah

In a different midrash about these words, R. Yishmael wonders about וְאַנְוֵהוּ (ve-anveihu). We translated it as "I will glorify God," but it could also mean "I will beautify God."

מכילתא

רַבִּי יִשְׁמָעֵאל אוֹמֵר: וְכִי אֶפְשָׁר לְבָשָׂר וָדָם לְהַנְוֹת לְקוֹנוֹ? אֶלָּא אַנְוֵהּ לוֹ בְּמִצְוֹת - אֶעֱשֶׂה לְפָנָיו לוּלָב נָאֶה סֻכָּה נָאֶה צִיצִית נָאֶה תְּפִלָּה נָאָה.

Mekhilta

R. Yishmael says: Is it actually possible for a human to beautify their Creator?

Rather, it means "I will beautify God through mitzvot" - I will prepare before God a beautiful lulav, a beautiful sukkah, beautiful tzitzit, and beautiful tefillah.



R. Yishmael's teaching is the source for a principle in halakhah called **הִדּוּר מִצְוָה (hiddur mitzvah), which means that we should try to make our mitzvot as beautiful as possible.** Because of hiddur mitzvah, we try to make and use beautiful ritual objects, such as beautiful kiddush cups, decorations for the sukkah, shofarot, and Torah scrolls. These can enhance our experience of performing mitzvot. CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE >>

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There are some guidelines for how to do hiddur mitzvah.

- R. Zeira teaches that the maximum you should spend on hiddur mitzvah is one-third above the standard cost of doing the mitzvah (Bavli Bava Kama 9b). There's some debate about what exactly this means. One opinion is if an etrog normally costs $60, you shouldn't spend more than that plus ⅓ - so, $80 - to get a really nice one. The other opinion is that you shouldn't spend more than $90, which itself is ⅓ more than $60.

- If you have to perform a mitzvah, you should not wait in the hopes that you will find a more beautiful object to perform it with. It's best to use what's available to you just in case you can't get one that is more beautiful (Sefer Hasidim, 878).



- There's a difference between the object that's used to do a mitzvah and its accessories that come along with it. Hiddur mitzvah applies to the actual mitzvah object, not the accessories. So getting a really nice tallit or a really nice hallah for Shabbat is hiddur mitzvah. But getting a really nice bag for your tallit or cover for your matzah is not really hiddur. Don't worry though - those things still show כָּבוֹד (kavod, honor) for your mitzvot, and that's still a big mitzvah! (Sefer Hasidim, 129)



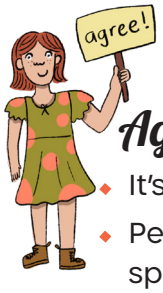
דַּקָּה שֶׁל דִּיּוּן • One-Minute Debate



Debate: It's rude to point.

How to play:

- Here are some arguments to get you started, but try to come up with your own. Then debate someone!
- For a true one-minute debate, give each side 30 seconds to make its best case.



Agree!

- It's not respectful.
- People should be spoken **to**, not spoken **about**.
- It makes people feel very awkward when you point at them.



Disagree!

- Sometimes you get really excited and you have to show people what you mean!
- If God raised you in a field like a parent, you'd probably point when the sea split, too.

שְׁאֵלוֹת הַשְׁבוּעַ • Parashah Scavenger Hunt

aliyot:
1) Shemot 13:17–14:8
2) 14:9 to 14:14
3) 14:15 to 14:25
4) 14:26 to 15:26
5) 15:27 to 16:10
6) 16:11 to 16:35
7) 17:1 to 17:16

haftarah for Ashkenazim:
Shoftim 4:4 to 5:31

haftarah for Sefaradim:
5:1 to 5:31

The answers to the first seven questions can be found in the matching numbered aliyah in the Torah reading. **The answers to questions 8 and 9 are harder and can come from anywhere in the parashah. The answer to question 10 is in this week's haftarah.**

Good luck!

1. What promise is fulfilled in this aliyah?
2. What do Benei Yisrael say there were plenty of in מִצְרַיִם (Mitzrayim, Egypt)?
3. How long did it take for the wind to split the sea?
4. What five words in a row all begin with the letter א (alef)?
5. How many date-palm trees were there in Eilim?
6. What would happen to the מָן (mann, miraculous food) in the heat of the sun?
7. What did Moshe have to do to ensure a victory over Amalek?
8. What two famous characters are introduced by name for the first time in our parashah?
9. Other than Benei Yisrael, what nations are mentioned in our parashah?
10. **From the haftarah:** Who looks through a window?

* Look for the answers on page 7!

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מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash

Shemot 14:22

Benei Yisrael came into the midst of the sea on dry land, and the waters were a wall for them on their right and on their left.

שמות יד:כב

וַיָּבֹאוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם בַּיַּבָּשָׁה
וְהַמַּיִם לָהֶם חוֹמָה מִימִינָם וּמִשְּׂמֹאלָם׃



What does it mean for water to be a "wall"?

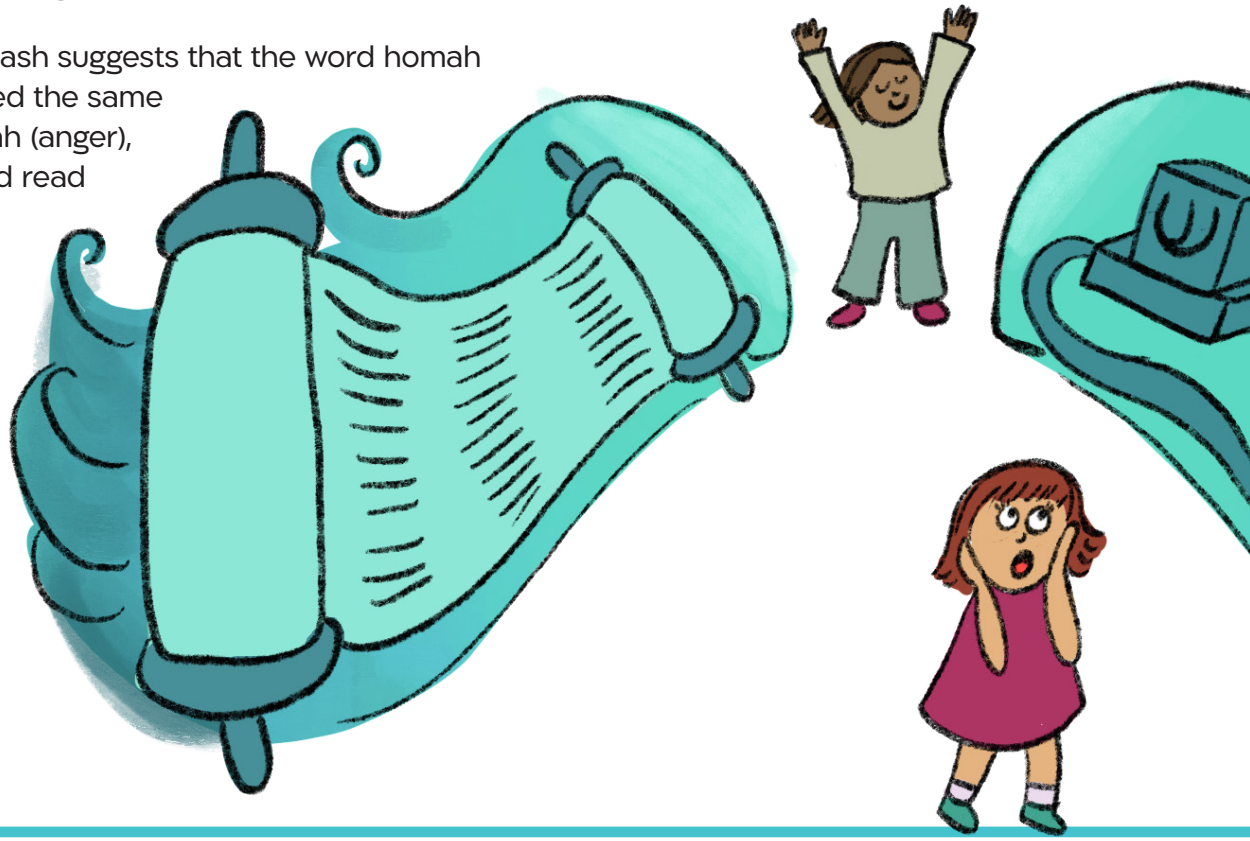
Bzzzz
A lot of midrashim are **bugged** by something unusual in the Torah text

According to a midrash, a wall protected Benei Yisrael while they crossed the sea. This wall was "the Torah on their right and tefillin on their left" (Mekhilta Vayehi 5).

Rabbeinu Bahaye explains this midrash, pointing out that Torah is often compared to water and also comes from God's right hand (see Devarim 33:2); also, most people (being right-handed) wear tefillin on their left arm. In other words, it was Benei Yisrael's commitment to God and mitzvot that saved them in the Yam Suf.

- In what ways might Torah and mitzvot protect us?

Another midrash suggests that the word homah (wall) is spelled the same way as heimah (anger), and you could read it that way. Here's what it means for the waters to show anger to the people.



Yalkut Shimoni #234

The angel Samael came down and said before God, "Master of the world! Didn't Benei Yisrael worship avodah zarah (idolatry) in Mitzrayim (Egypt)? And now You are doing miracles for them?!" And he shouted to the ministering angel of the sea, who became filled with heimah (anger) against them and tried to drown them.

Straightaway, the Holy Blessed One responded to him, "Fool! Did they do avodah zarah willingly?! They only did it because they were forced! Why would you judge an accident like it was on purpose, and what was against their will as if it was what they wanted?!"

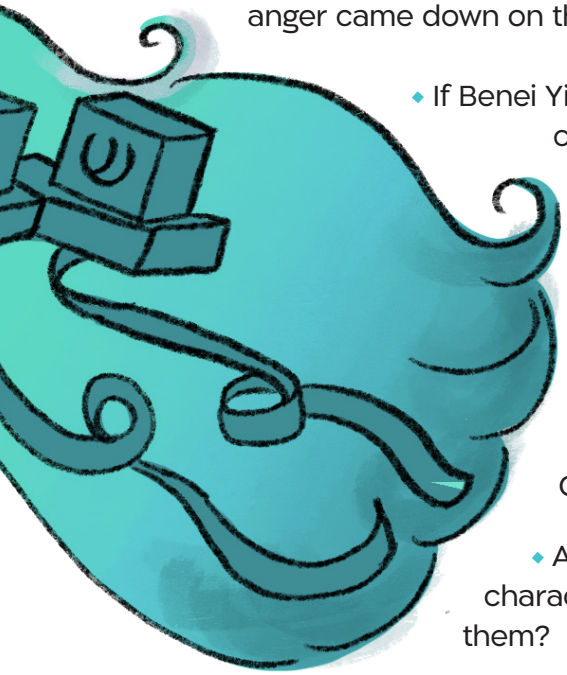
When the ministering angel of the sea heard this, he turned his heimah from Benei Yisrael so that it faced Mitzrayim, as it is says, "the water returned" (Shemot 14:28).

ילקוט שמעוני רלד

שֶׁיָּרַד סַמָּאֵל וְאָמַר לְפָנָיו רִבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם לֹא עָבְדוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲבוֹדָה זָרָה בְּמִצְרַיִם וְאַתָּה עוֹשֶׂה לָהֶם נִסִּים?! וְהָיָה מַשְׁמִיעַ קוֹלוֹ לְשַׂר שֶׁל יָם וְנִתְמַלֵּא עֲלֵיהֶם חֵמָה וּבִקֵּשׁ לְטָבְעָן.

מִיָּד הֵשִׁיב לוֹ הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא שׁוֹטֶה שֶׁבָּעוֹלָם וְכִי לְדַעְתָּם עָבְדוּהָ וַהֲלֹא לֹא עָבְדוּהָ אֶלָּא מִתּוֹךְ שִׁעְבּוּד וּמִתּוֹךְ טֵרוּף דַּעַת וְאַתָּה דָּן שׁוֹגֵג כְּמֵזִיד וְאֹנֶס כִּרְצוֹן. כֵּיוָן שֶׁשָּׁמַע שַׂר שֶׁל יָם אוֹתָהּ חֵמָה שֶׁנִּתְמַלֵּא עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל הֶחֱזִירָהּ עַל מִצְרַיִם שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וַיָּשׁוּבוּ הַמַּיִם וַיְכַסּוּ אֶת הָרֶכֶב וְאֶת הַפָּרָשִׁים לְכֹל חֵיל פַּרְעֹה הַבָּאִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם בַּיָּם לֹא נִשְׁאַר בָּהֶם עַד אֶחָד. וַיִּשׁוּבוּ הַמַּיִם שֶׁשָּׁבוּ מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל עַל מִצְרָיִם.

In this interpretation, at first the waters were directed against Benei Yisrael in anger, trying to drown them! But then God won the argument with the angel Samael, and so the punishing anger came down on the army of Mitzrayim instead.



- If Benei Yisrael really had worshiped idols, how could anyone claim that they didn't really want to? Why might they have done it if they didn't really believe in it?
- It's a little scary to think that Benei Yisrael might not have deserved to be saved. Does Samael have a point though? What does this midrash try to teach us about God, and the way God looks at us?
- According to this midrash, what characteristic—if any!—of Benei Yisrael saved them?

Parashah Scavenger Hunt Answers:

1. Benei Yisrael's promise to take Yosef's bones out of Mitzrayim (13:19)
2. Graves (14:11)
3. All night long (14:21)
4. אָמַר אוֹיֵב אֶרְדֹּף אַשִּׂיג אֲחַלֵּק (amar oyev erdof asig ahalek; 15:9)
5. 70 (15:27)
6. It would melt (16:21)
7. Keep his hands up in the air (17:11-13)
8. Miriam (15:20) and Yehoshua (17:9)
9. Pelishtim (13:17), Mitzrayim (14:4), Edom (15:15), and Moav (15:15)
10. Sisera's mother (Shoftim 5:28)

דִּקְדּוּק • Grammar



A few weeks ago, we saw how the **וי"ו הַהֲפוּךְ (vav ha-hipukh, the reversing vav)** turned the past into the future. Now we will watch it time travel us from the future to the past!

Here are two phrases from our parashah, almost identical to one another, but with dramatically different meanings:

וְיָבֹאוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם בַּיַּבָּשָׁה

And Benei Yisrael **will come** through the sea on dry land (Shemot 14:16)

This pasuk is a description of what will happen **in the future**: Moshe will split the sea and Benei Yisrael will come through it. In the word we highlighted, the letter vav adds the word "and", attaching to the word יָבֹאוּ, which is the future form of the verb ב.ו.א, which means "to come."

וַיָּבֹאוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם בַּיַּבָּשָׁה

Benei Yisrael **came** through the sea on dry land (Shemot 14:22)

This pasuk is a description of what happened, now **in the past**. Moshe in fact stretched out his arm over the sea, the sea split, and the people walked through on dry land. In the highlighted word, the vav flips the tense of the verb יָבֹאוּ and carries us back in time.



Check out another example, a few pesukim later in 15:20-22. Can you find the phrases וְיָשֻׁבוּ הַמַּיִם and וַיָּשֻׁבוּ הַמַּיִם? One of these means "the waters will return," and one means "the waters returned." Only one of these phrases contains the vav ha-hipukh, again switching a future tense verb to the past. Can you figure out which phrase it is?