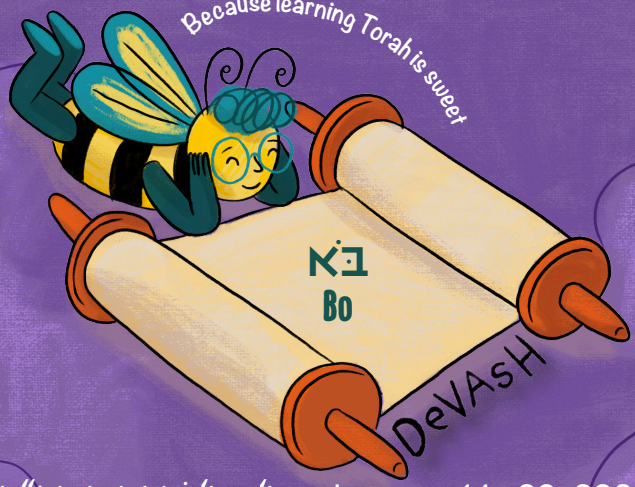


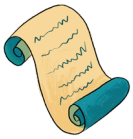
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מָה בַּפָּרָשָׁה • In This Week's Parashah

- The eighth plague in מִצְרַיִם (Mitzrayim, Egypt) is a swarm of locusts that blocks the sun and eats crops.
- The ninth plague is a heavy darkness. For several days, no one could see each other or move.
- God tells Benei Yisrael that they will soon be freed and that they should ask for gold and silver from their Egyptian neighbors.
- The month of יְצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם (yetziat Mitzrayim, the Exodus from Egypt) becomes the first month in the Jewish calendar.
- God commands Benei Yisrael to sacrifice lambs and to place some of the animals' blood on their doorposts. This is a sign for God to pass over their homes during the tenth and final plague, the death of the firstborns.
- Future generations are told to celebrate yetziat Mitzrayim by eating matzah and not eating hametz for seven days and by sacrificing a קָרְבַּן פֶּסַח (korban pesah, pesah offering).
- After the last plague, Pharaoh tells Benei Yisrael to leave, and the Egyptians push them out. They depart in such a hurry that their dough does not have time to rise. They're free!





מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash



Shemot 12:7

You shall protect the matzot, for on this very day I brought your ranks out of the land of Mitzrayim (Egypt). You shall keep this day in future generations for all time.

שמות יב:ז

וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת הַמַּצּוֹת כִּי בְּעֶצֶם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה הוֹצֵאתִי אֶת צִבְאוֹתֵיכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם חֻקַּת עוֹלָם:

The first word in this pasuk comes from the שֹׁרֶשׁ (shoresh, root) ש.מ.ר, which seems to mean "protect" here. But why would matzah need protection?!



This midrash offers two possible explanations. The first one is:

Mekhilta

"You shall protect the matzot" means guard them so they don't become invalid...

מכילתא

"וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת הַמַּצּוֹת" - שָׁמְרֵהוּ שֶׁלֹּא תְּבִיאֵהוּ לִידֵי פְּסוּל...

According to this explanation, the pasuk is telling us to give our matzah special protection in order to make sure it doesn't turn into חָמֵץ (hametz, dough or bread that has risen). The Shulhan Arukh writes that this extra protection is needed specifically for the matzah we eat at the Seder (see Mishnah Berurah, 453:22). This kind of matzah is called מַצָּה שְׁמוּרָה (matzah shemurah, matzah that has been protected). It is carefully watched to make sure no water comes in contact with the wheat from the moment it is first cut from the ground until it's time to make the dough for the matzah.

- It's not often that the Torah tells us to give a specific mitzvah extra special protection. What does it teach us about matzah that the Torah singles it out like this?





The midrash records another way to read this pasuk:

ר׳ יֹאשִׁיָּה אוֹמֵר, אַל תִּקְרָא כֵּן, אֶלָּא וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת הַמִּצְוֹת. כְּדֶרֶךְ שֶׁאֵין מַחֲמִיצִין אֶת הַמַּצָּה כָּךְ אֵין מַחֲמִיצִין אֶת הַמִּצְוָה, אֶלָּא אִם בָּאָה מִצְוָה לְיָדְךָ עֲשֵׂה אוֹתָהּ מִיָּד.

R. Yoshiyah says: Do not read it that way but rather, "You shall protect the mitzvot." Just as matzot are not permitted to become hametz, so a mitzvah should not be permitted to become hametz. If the opportunity to do a mitzvah presents itself to you, do it immediately.



Another meaning of the word ש.מ.ר is "keep." The Torah tells us a lot of times to "keep" the mitzvot (see Vayikra 22:31 or Devarim 30:16). And notice how similar the words מַצּוֹת (matzot, plural for matzah) and מִצְוֹת (mitzvot, commandments) are! So R. Yoshiyah suggests another reason the Torah might be going out of its way to tell us to protect the matzot is because they represent something much bigger we're supposed to protect - all the mitzvot!

When flour and water are finally mixed together to make matzah, it has to be mixed, kneeded, rolled, and baked very quickly in order not to become hametz - in less than 18 minutes!
R. Yoshiyah says the same quickness should be used for all mitzvot: Any time we have a chance to perform a mitzvah we must do it right away. If we wait too long, we might miss the opportunity. (The modern Hebrew word for missing an opportunity, לְהַחֲמִיץ [le-ha-hamitz], comes directly from this idea!)



- When you're really excited about doing something, do you push it off, or do you do it right away? What can this teach us about how we should feel about mitzvot?
- When we do mitzvot right away, how is that a way of "protecting" (rather than just "keeping") them?
- Have you ever missed an opportunity to do something because you waited too long? How did you feel when the chance passed you by?

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שְׁאֵלוֹת הַשָּׁבוּעַ • Parashah Scavenger Hunt

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.

aliyot:
1) Shemot 10:1 to 10:11
2) 10:12 to 10:23
3) 10:24 to 11:3
4) 11:4 to 12:20
5) 12:21 to 12:28
6) 12:29 to 12:51
7) 13:1 to 13:16

Haftarah: Yirmiyahu 46:13 to 46:28

Good luck!



1. After hearing about the threat of אַרְבֶּה (arbeh, locusts), who was Pharaoh willing to release?

2. Where did the locusts go after the plague ended?

3. Who was very popular in מִצְרַיִם (Mitzrayim, Egypt)?

4. What metaphor describes just how quiet things will be for Benei Yisrael during מַכַּת בְּכוֹרוֹת (makkat bekhorot, the death of the firstborns)?

5. What should Benei Yisrael use to spread blood on their doorposts?

6. Who asks for a blessing?



7. There are two verses in our parashah that refer to tefillin. What are they?

8. When does Pharaoh say that he sinned?

9. What do belts, shoes, and walking sticks have in common?

10. **From the haftarah:** Which plague from our parashah appears in our haftarah? Who is compared to this plague?

* Look for the answers on page 8!

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הַפְטָרָה • Haftarah

The prophet Yirmiyahu lived about 900 years after יְצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם (yetziat Mitzrayim, the exodus from Egypt). In Yirmeyahu's time, when the Jewish people were being threatened by an enemy from Bavel, Mitzrayim was not a helpful ally to the Jewish people.

In our haftarah, Yirmeyahu promises that Mitzrayim will be punished for not helping.

- King Nevukhadnezar of Bavel will attack Mitzrayim.
- Mitzrayim will become a bare wasteland.
- The people of Mitzrayim will slither away like a snake. They won't stand a chance against Bavel, who are as numerous as אַרְבֶּה (arbeh, locusts). (See a connection to our parashah there?)

By pairing this haftarah with Parashat Bo, the Rabbis were pointing out that yetziat Mitzrayim was not the only time that God had saved us from our troubles with amazing might and justice. God also promises to save the Jewish people from other threats, in other time periods. We can trust in God to continue to save us.

At the end of the haftarah, God promises to save the Jewish people:

Yirmeyahu 46:27 **ירמיהו מו:כז**

Have no fear, My servant Yaakov,
Don't be scared, Yisrael!
I will redeem you from far away,
and bring your children back from
their land of captivity.
Yaakov will return and be calm,
with quiet and with no trouble.

וְאַתָּה אַל תִּירָא עַבְדִּי יַעֲקֹב
וְאַל תֵּחַת יִשְׂרָאֵל
כִּי הִנְנִי מוֹשִׁעֲךָ מֵרָחוֹק וְאֶת זַרְעֲךָ
מֵאֶרֶץ שִׁבְיָם
וְשָׁב יַעֲקוֹב
וְשָׁקַט וְשַׁאֲנַן
וְאֵין מַחֲרִיד:

- What kind of redemption do you hope for, in our present time? What kind of calm and quiet do you pray for?

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דִּקְדּוּק • Grammar

Check out these two almost identical phrases from our parashah. The Hebrew words are exactly the same, they mean the same thing, and they're pronounced the same way. But look closely at the vowels!

The word וְלֹכֹל is spelled with a חוֹלָם (holam), a small dot right over the letter khaf.

(Shemot 11:7) וּלְכֹל | בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

The word וְלְכָל is spelled with a קָמָץ קָטָן (kamatz katan), which is a type of kamatz that also makes the sound o, and which is essentially a shorter form of the holam.

(Shemot 10:23) וּלְכָל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

u-lekhol Benei Yisrael (and for all of Benei Yisrael)

Why would you sometimes spell the word כל with a holam and sometimes with a kamatz katan? There is a simple rule:

- When כֹּל stands on its own, with its own note, it gets a holam.
- When כָּל־ is connected to another word with a dash, known as a meteg, and shares a note with the next word, it gets a kamatz katan.

Here's another example from our parashah. Look up 12:2, and you'll see the words הַחֹדֶשׁ (ha-hodesh, the month) and לְחָדְשֵׁי (le-hodshei, for the months of). Can you see why the second one gets a kamatz katan instead of a holam?

פַּרְשָׁנוּת • Commentary

The Torah describes the plague of darkness:

Shemot 10:23	**שמות י:בג**
No person could see their brother	לֹא רָאוּ אִישׁ אֶת אָחִיו

Isn't it a little obvious that people couldn't see each other in the dark? Why does the Torah have to explain how darkness works?

Here's an interpretation that suggests the Torah is trying to teach us a lesson:

מעינה של תורה

הַחוֹשֵׁךְ הַגָּרוּעַ בְּיוֹתֵר הוּא בַּאֲשֶׁר אִישׁ אֵינוֹ רוֹצֶה לִרְאוֹת אֶת אָחִיו בְּצָרָתוֹ וּלְהוֹשִׁיט לוֹ עֶזְרָה.

בְּרַם, הַתּוֹצָאָה הִיא, שֶׁבַּאֲשֶׁר אָדָם מִתְעַלֵּם מִדְּחָקוֹ שֶׁל חֲבֵרוֹ אֵין הוּא עַצְמוֹ יָכוֹל לָמוּשׁ מִמְּקוֹמוֹ - "וְלֹא קָמוּ אִישׁ מִתַּחְתָּיו."

R. Alexander Zusia Friedman (Poland, 100 years ago)

The worst kind of darkness is when a person cannot see their own sibling in pain and offer them some help.

And the result of this is that when a person ignores the suffering of their friend, they themselves get stuck, and that explains the continuation of the pasuk: "And no person could get up."

- R. Friedman suggests that the people in מִצְרַיִם (Mitzrayim, Egypt) were not able to see each other as friends or care about each other's pain. Why would that be the worst kind of darkness?
- Why do we get stuck ourselves if we don't help other people? Can you think of more than one reason?
- What happens when people do not consider themselves responsible for others? Can you think of a time when you have seen this?



דַּקָּה שֶׁל דִּיּוּן • One-Minute Debate

Debate: Deep down, Pharaoh was probably glad to see Benei Yisrael leave.



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!

- After all those terrible plagues? It would make sense for Pharaoh to say: Good riddance!
- It feels good to finally do the right thing, even if it means accepting you made a mistake.

Disagree!

- It's not easy to let go of slaves and find someone new to do your dirty work.
- Pharaoh was a stubborn guy. It's more likely he felt angry and humiliated.
- Maybe he was glad, but that didn't last long. He chases them down in the very next parashah!

פֵּרוּשִׁים • Commentary



Our parashah contains some of the pesukim from the Torah that are placed inside of tefillin. These pesukim explain that tefillin are reminders of the miracles God made at יְצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם (yetziat Mitzrayim, the Exodus from Egypt).

Ramban explains that we no longer experience obvious miracles that change nature – but tefillin are important because they remind us of our miraculous past.

Ramban (Spain, 800 years ago)

And because the Holy Blessed One does not make signs and wonders in every generation...therefore God commanded us that we should always make a memorial or sign of what our eyes have seen, and that we should transmit it to our children, and their children to their children, forever...

Talking about the great and obvious miracles can lead a person to acknowledge hidden miracles too... for you can only have a part in the Torah of Moshe our teacher if you believe that everything that happens is miraculous...

רמב"ן

וּבַעֲבוּר כִּי הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה אוֹת וּמוֹפֵת בְּכָל דּוֹר...יְצִוָּה אוֹתָנוּ שֶׁנַּעֲשֶׂה תָּמִיד זִכָּרוֹן וְאוֹת לַאֲשֶׁר רָאוּ עֵינֵינוּ, וְנַעְתִּיק הַדָּבָר אֶל בָּנֵינוּ, וּבְנֵיהֶם לִבְנֵיהֶם, וּבְנֵיהֶם לְדוֹר אַחֲרוֹן...

וּמִן הַנִּסִּים הַגְּדוֹלִים הַמְּפֻרְסָמִים אָדָם מוֹדֶה בַּנִּסִּים הַנִּסְתָּרִים... שֶׁאֵין לְאָדָם חֵלֶק בְּתוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה רַבֵּינוּ עַד שֶׁנַּאֲמִין בְּכָל דִּבָּרֵינוּ וּמִקְרֵינוּ שֶׁכֻּלָּם נִסִּים...

- What does it mean to see everything in the natural world as a miracle?
- What do you think are the most miraculous parts of the world around you?
- Try it out! Think of some miraculous parts of nature and thank God for them!



Parashah Scavenger Hunt Answers:

1. Only the men of Benei Yisrael (10:11)
2. Towards the יַם סוּף (Yam Suf, Reed Sea) (10:19)
3. Moshe! (11:3)
4. Not even a dog will bark (11:17)
5. A bunch of hyssop (a kind of plant) (12:22)
6. Pharaoh (12:32)
7. 13:9 and 13:16
8. After the plague of אַרְבֶּה (arbeh, locusts) (10:16)
9. They show that you are on the move, and they all had to be worn or held while eating the korban pesah in Mitzrayim (12:11)
10. The people from the north (Bavel) who will come to punish Mitzrayim are compared to אַרְבֶּה (arbeh, locusts) (Yirmeyahu 46:23)