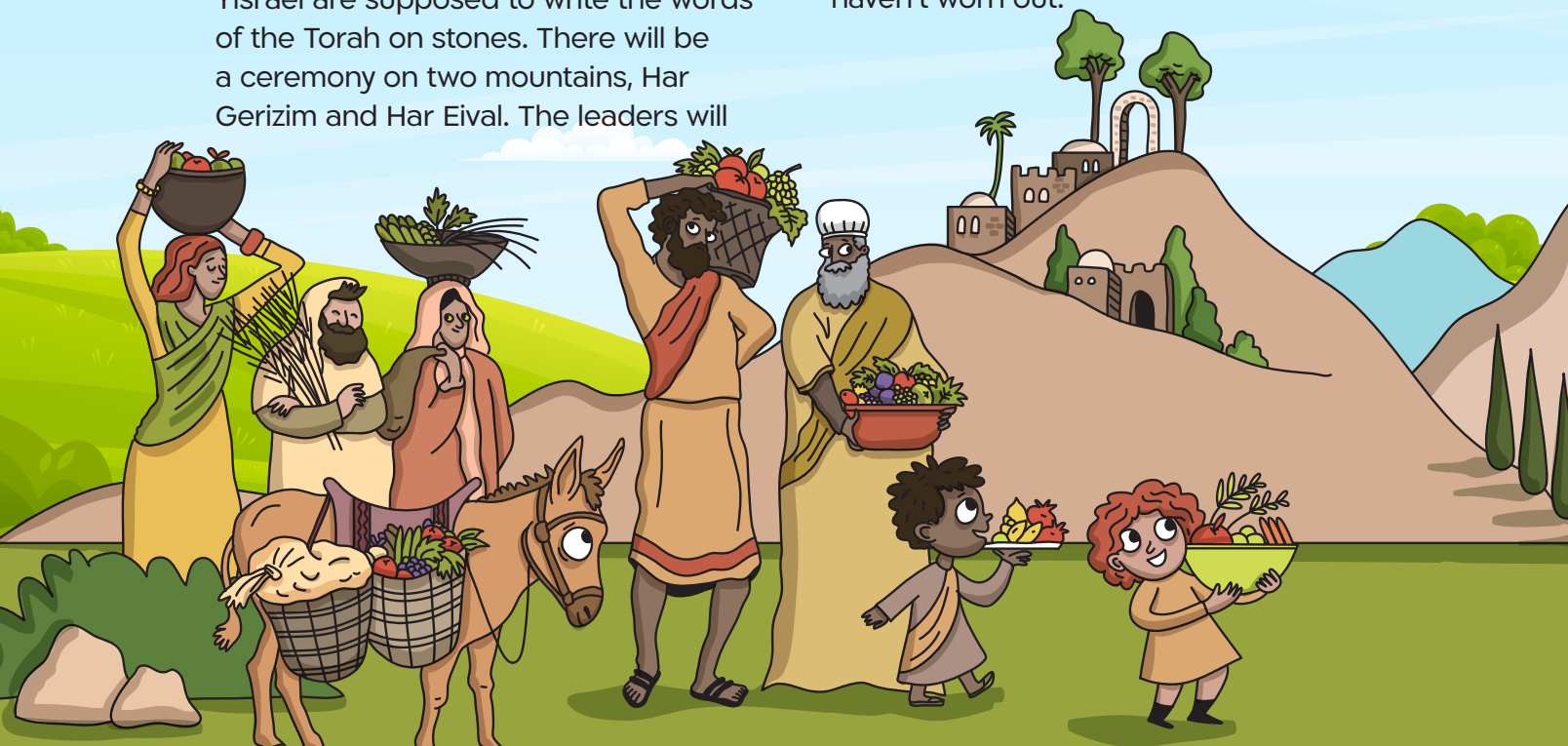


י"ד - כ' אלול תשפ"ה September 7- 13, 2025



קָה בַּפָּרָשָׁה • In This Week's Parashah

- ◆ In Eretz Yisrael, farmers bring בְּכֻרִים (bikkurim, first crops) to Yerushalayim. They say a special declaration thanking God for freeing us from Egypt. This declaration is famous because it's an important part of the Pesah Haggadah!
 - ◆ Farmers also give מַעֲשֵׂר (ma'aser, a tithe) from their crops to the tribe of Levi and to other people who need it like strangers, widows, and orphans. There's also a declaration for doing this.
 - ◆ After they cross the Jordan River, Benei Yisrael are supposed to write the words of the Torah on stones. There will be a ceremony on two mountains, Har Gerizim and Har Eival. The leaders will announce blessings and curses, and everyone will respond, "Amen!"
 - ◆ If Benei Yisrael follow God, they will be raised high. But if they do not follow God, curses could come their way, and they will be brought low. Like the curses in Behukotai, this section is called the תּוֹכְהָה (tokhehah, rebuke).
 - ◆ Benei Yisrael have experienced amazing miracles since being saved from מִצְרַיִם (Mitzrayim, Egypt). Even after 40 years in the desert, their clothes and shoes haven't worn out.





מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash

Has there ever been a time that you've felt like you had to keep going, even though your body would have preferred to stop and take a rest?

The Torah says that, in exile, Benei Yisrael will have that feeling that they just can't stop moving.

Devarim 28:65

Yet even among those nations, you shall find no peace, nor shall there be a resting place for your feet. God will give you there an anguished heart and eyes that pine and a depressed spirit.

דברים כח:סה

וּבְגוֹלִים הֵיִם לֹא תִרְגִּיעַ וְלֹא יִהְיֶה מְנוּחַ לְכַף רַגְלְךָ וְנָתַן ה' לְךָ שֵׁם לֵב רָגֵז וְכִלְיוֹן עֵינַיִם וְדָאבוֹן נֶפֶשׁ:

The word מְנוּחַ (manuah, a place to rest) is familiar from other places in Tanakh. Is there a connection between the different places where this word appears?

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



Bereishit Rabbah 33:6

"The dove didn't find manuah" (Bereishit 8:9).

R. Yehudah bar Nahman said in the name of Reish Lakish: If she (the dove) had found manuah, she never would have returned (to Noah's ark).

Similarly, "she sat among the nations, without finding manuah" (Eikhah 1:3). If she (Benei Yisrael) had found manuah, they never would have returned (from exile).

Similarly, "yet even among those nations you shall find no peace, nor shall your foot find manuah" (Devarim 28:65). If she would find manuah, they would never return.

בראשית רבה לג:ו

"וְלֹא מָצְאָה הַיּוֹנָה מְנוּחַ" (בראשית ח:ט) -

ר' יהודה בר נחמן בשם ריש לקיש אמר: אלו מְצָאָה מְנוּחַ לֹא הִיָּתְה חוֹזְרֶת.

וְדָכוּתָהּ, "הִיא לֹשְׁכָה בְּגוֹלִים לֹא מָצְאָה מְנוּחַ" (איכה א:ג) - אלו מְצָאָה מְנוּחַ לֹא הִיוּ חוֹזְרִים.

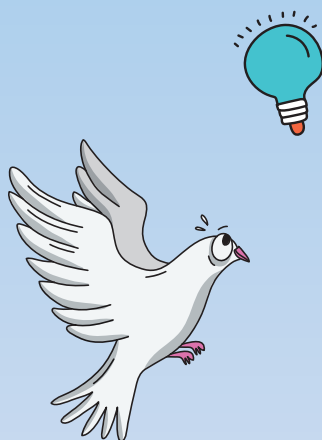
וְדָכוּתָהּ, "וּבְגוֹלִים הֵיִם לֹא תִרְגִּיעַ וְלֹא יִהְיֶה מְנוּחַ" (דברים כח:סה) - הָאֵלּוּ מְצָאָה מְנוּחַ לֹא הִיוּ חוֹזְרִים.

When you first read the pasuk in our parashah, not finding a resting place seems really tough. But the midrash is suggesting that, if you can connect this to the story of the dove that also contains the word manohah, you can see something **good** come out of not resting!

- ♦ When the Jewish people are in exile, where does the midrash think they are supposed to return to?
- ♦ When is it important to keep going, even if you want to rest? When is it important to take a rest, even if you want to keep going?



Send us your thoughts or questions from learning the parashah. We'll write back to you, and some will get published in future issues of Devash!
Write to us at devash@hadar.org



פְּרָשְׁנוֹת • Commentary

When farmers bring בכורים (bikkurim, first crops) to Yerushalayim, there's a special declaration to say. It's a summary of Benei Yisrael's history, beginning here:

Devarim 26:5

You shall then recite before God your Lord: "**Arami oved avi**. He went down to Egypt in small numbers and stayed; but there he became a large nation."

דברים כו:ה

וְעָנִיתָ וְאָמַרְתָּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲרָמִי אָבִד אָבִי וַיֵּרֶד מִצְרַיִםה וּבְגֵר שָׁם בְּמִתִּי מַעֲטָ וַיְהִי שָׁם לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל עָצוֹם וָרֹב:

We didn't translate the first three words of the declaration because they are puzzling. **What does "arami oved avi" mean?**

The problem is that the שֹׁרֵשׁ (shoresh, root) א.ב.ד in "oved" could mean one of two things:

It could mean "destroy," and then the phrase is:
An Aramean destroyed my father. (This is the
reading that appears in the Pesah Haggadah!)

Or it could mean "lose," and then
the phrase is: My father was a
lost (or wandering) Aramean.



You can see these two readings, in Rashi and Rashbam.

Rashi (France, 1,000 years ago)

Lavan (the Aramean) tried to uproot it all
when he chased after Yaakov.

רש"י

לָבָן בִּקֵּשׁ לְעָקֹר אֶת הַכֹּל
כְּשֶׁרָדַף אַחֲרַי יַעֲקֹב.

Rashbam (France, 950 years ago)

My father Avraham was an Aramean, lost and
wandering, from the land of Aram(-Naharayim).

רשב"ם

אָבִי אֲבִרְהָם אֲרָמִי הָיָה, אוֹבֵד
וְגוֹלָה מֵאֶרֶץ אֲרָם.

Each interpretation has pros and cons.



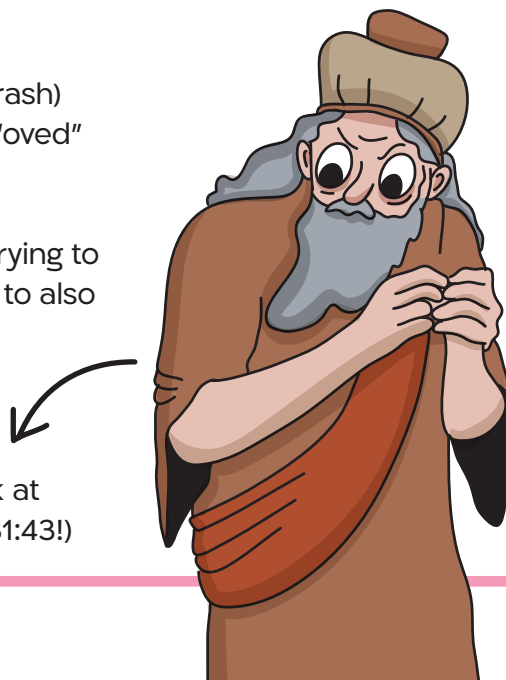
Rashi's interpretation (which is based on a midrash)
doesn't work that well grammatically, because "oved"
in this form wouldn't normally mean destroyed.



But, on the other hand, a lot of the bikkurim
declaration (Devarim 26:5-10) is about people trying to
oppress us, so it might make sense for this line to also
be about oppression!

- ♦ According to Rashi, how did Lavan try
to destroy Yaakov?

(Hint: Look at
Bereishit 31:43!)

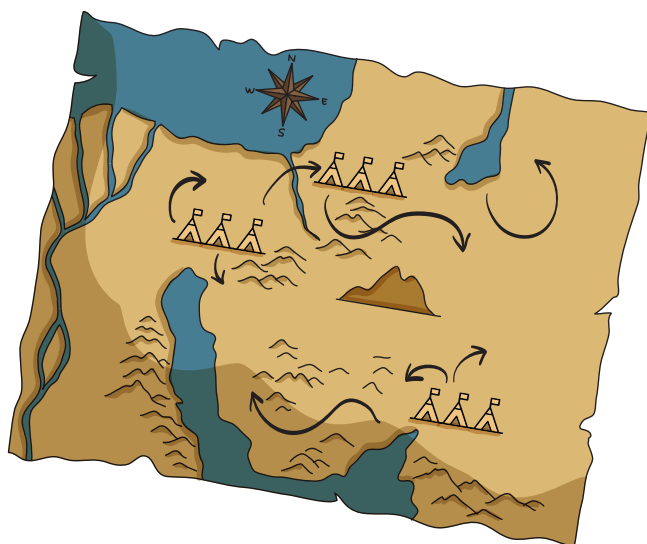




Rashbam's interpretation works better grammatically.



But, on the other hand, the pasuk is about someone who went down to מִצְרַיִם (Mitzrayim, Egypt) and stayed. It makes more sense for that to be Yaakov, not Avraham!



- ◆ According to Rashbam, what does Avraham have to do with the story of going down to Mitzrayim? (Hint: Look at Bereishit 15:13!)
- ◆ How does the story of our past change depending on where you begin telling it, with Avraham or with Yaakov?



הלכה • Halakhah



What do you think is the right attitude to have when you're doing mitzvot?

In Ki Tavo, we're told that we should serve God בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְטוֹב לֵב (b'simhah u-v'tuv leivav, with joy and with gladness of heart; Devarim 28:47).

Rabbeinu Behaye explains:

People are supposed to be happy about mitzvot when they observe them, or when they see others observing...

It's known that being happy about mitzvot is itself a mitzvah. Each mitzvah is considered "avodah" (service or worship) of God, and happiness is also called "avodah" – as it says, "because you didn't do the 'avodah' of God your Lord with simhah" (Devarim 28:47).

שִׂתְחַיֵּב הָאָדָם לְהִיטוֹ שִׂמְחָה בַּמִּצְוֹת
כְּשִׁיעָשָׂה אוֹתָן אוֹ יִרְאֶה אֲחֵרִים עוֹשִׂין...

וְיָדוּעַ כִּי הַשִּׂמְחָה בַּמַּעֲשֵׂה הַמִּצְוֹת מִצְוָה
בְּפָנֵי עַצְמָהּ. וְכֵשֶׁם שֶׁהַמִּצְוָה עֲבוּדָה לָהּ
תְּבָרָה, כֹּךָ הַשִּׂמְחָה עַל הַמִּצְוָה נִקְרָאת
עֲבוּדָה, וְכֵן כְּתִיב "תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר לֹא עֲבַדְתָּ
אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּשִׂמְחָה..." (דְּבָרִים כח:מז)

There are also certain times on the Jewish calendar designated for extra simhah. For example, we sing זמירות (zemiroth, special Shabbat songs) in order to express the joy of the day (see p. 8 for a discussion of one Shabbat zemer).

On Yom Tov, celebrating with simhah is considered a serious מצוה דאורייתא (mitzvah de-orayta, biblical commandment)! Rambam writes that simhah on Yom Tov involves eating special foods (like meat and wine), wearing new clothes, singing and dancing, distributing fruits and sweets to children, and feeding people who are poor (Sefer Hamitzvot, Mitzvot Asei #54, Hilkhos Shevitat Yom Tov 6:18).



דְּבָרָה שֶׁל דִּיּוּן • One-Minute Debate

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.

Debate: To really understand the Torah, you have to be a farmer.

Disagree



Agree



Agree!

- ◆ Unless you're a farmer, you could never fulfill—or even fully understand—mitzvot like פֶּאָה (pe'ah, leaving the corner of a field unharvested), בִּכּוּרִים (bikkurim, bringing first fruits to Yerushalayim), and שְׁמִטָּה (shemittah, the year of release).
- ◆ The Torah assumes we have a deep connection to nature, land, and the weather. For example, it emphasizes that the reward for keeping the mitzvot is rain. This idea isn't relatable unless you're a farmer, whose success depends on the rain.

Disagree!

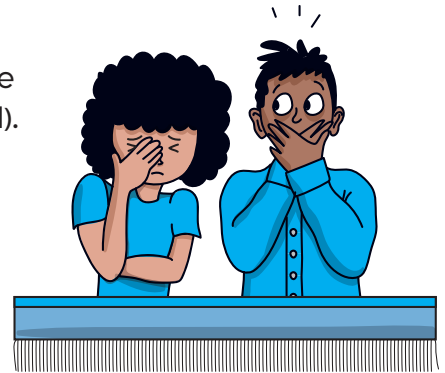
- ◆ Even people who aren't farmers know the feeling of relying on God for their needs.
- ◆ The Torah isn't limited to a certain type of job, just like it's not limited to people who lived thousands of years ago. The Torah is timeless and relevant no matter what kind of work you do.

קְרִיאַת הַתּוֹרָה • Torah Reading

Can you think of words that aren't polite to say in public? Some things are best shared with parents or with people we trust, but otherwise aren't really said out loud. And guess what? That happens in the Torah, too!

Earlier this year, we learned about קְרִי וּכְתִיב (keri u-khetiv, the written form of a word, and the different way it's said out loud). Usually, that is just a difference of a letter or two, and maybe changing one small sound. This week, though, we have two examples of words that get totally changed!

Part of this week's parashah is a series of curses that can come about if the people abandon the Torah. In one curse, the Torah says that the people will get struck:



Devarim 28:27

With Egyptian boils and ???



דברים כח:כז

בְּשִׁחִין מִצָּרִים וּבַעֲפָלִים

That last word, עֲפָלִים, seems to refer to some terrible illness in a private part of the body—we don't really know exactly what it was. But it was apparently bad enough (and maybe gross enough!) that we don't read this word in public. If you look at a printed book of Torah, you will see this:



דברים כח:כז

בְּשִׁחִין מִצָּרִים וּבִטְחָרִים

And that's how we read it – a totally different word with completely different letters from how it's written in the Torah scroll! Crazy, right? In fact, if a scribe actually wrote the word **וּבִטְחָרִים** in the Torah scroll itself, it would make the whole scroll invalid! (Shulhan Arukh Yoreh De'ah 275:6)

So why do you think we change the words of the Torah in this way when we read it? You might want to talk about this with some grownups at home. It seems like speaking politely in public is very important, and even the Torah reading tries to live up to high standards!

- ◆ There is another example of a word like this in our parashah—one that gets totally changed in how we read it. Can you find it?



בואו נדבר על זה • Tell Me More About This!

Our מדרש / Midrash (p. 2) connected a line in Ki Tavo to this line from Parashat Noah:

Bereishit 8:9

But the dove (that Noah sent from the ark to find dry land) didn't find **rest for the sole of her foot**.

בראשית ח:ט

וְלֹא מָצְאָה הַיּוֹנָה
מְנוּחַ לְכַף-רַגְלָהּ

This line, from the story of Noah, has a whole Shabbat song based on it!

יום שַׁבָּתוֹן (Yom Shabbaton) was written by R. Yehudah Ha-Levi, one of the most famous Jewish poets of all time (Spain, 900 years ago). The song's chorus refers to this very line, imagining that the dove that couldn't find dry land did eventually find rest on Shabbat!

The dove found rest on it (Shabbat)

יוֹנָה מָצְאָה בּוֹ מְנוּחַ

And there (on Shabbat) all those
who work hard will rest

וְשָׁם יָנוּחוּ לְגִיּעֵי כָח

The idea is that, during the week, all of us are like the dove flying away from the ark, working really hard at school or at jobs, and trying to find a good place to land and rest. After a week of hard work and flying around, on Shabbat, we rest.





שאלות השבוע • 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 the last three are harder and can come from anywhere in the parashah.

aliyot:

- 1) Devarim 26:1 to 26:11
- 2) 26:12 to 26:15
- 3) 26:16 to 26:19
- 4) 27:1 to 27:10
- 5) 27:11 to 28:6
- 6) 28:7 to 28:69
- 7) 29:1 to 29:8

Good luck!

1 What is the Hebrew word for basket used in this aliyah?

2 What number year is said to be שְׁנַת הַמַּעֲשֵׂר (shenat ha-maaser, the year of the tithe)?

3 A rare form of a word only appears twice in the whole Tanakh, and both appearances are in this aliyah. What are they?

4 Benei Yisrael were told to set up stones when they entered the land. What material were they supposed to cover them with?

5 How many times does the word אָמֵן (amen) appear in this aliyah?

6 If God punishes the people and makes them return to Egypt, how would they get there?

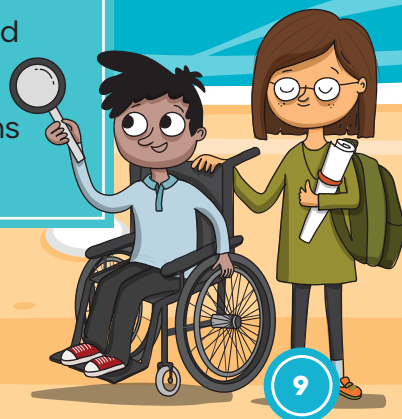
7 Where was Og the king?

8 What metal is mentioned three separate times in our parashah?

9 Which six tribes were responsible for representing the blessings when the people entered the land?

10 How many words in our parashah are connected to the שָׁרֵשׁ (shoresh, root) בִּרְכָּה, which means to bless?

*
Look for the answers on page 12!





Selichot are a series of tefillot that are usually said early in the morning, before Shaharit (although there's a custom is to say the first Selichot after the middle of the night on Saturday night). They are centered around two key tefillot: י"ג מִדּוֹת (Yud-Gimmel Middot Ha-Rahamim, 13 Attributes of Mercy) and תַּהֲנוּן (Tahanun, pleading). (We discussed these in Devash for Ki Tissa and Korah, respectively!)

After the sin of the golden calf, Moshe begs God for forgiveness with the Yud-Gimmel Middot.



Lord, God! Compassionate and merciful God; slow to anger; full of love and truth; guarding love for thousands; forgiving transgression, negligence, and sin; and cleansing (us of sin)...

שמות לד:ו-ז

ה' ה' א-ל רחום וחנון אָרְךְ
אִפִּים וְרַב-חֶסֶד וְאֶמֶת נִצֵּר
חֶסֶד לְאֻלָּפִים נָשָׂא עֵינֹן וּפְשָׁע
וְחַטָּאָה וְנִקְּהָ...

In a Selihot service, we repeat this many times. The hope is that God will have mercy today just like God had mercy in the time of the golden calf.

Some communities also blow the shofar each time these pesukim come up.

Tahanun

Most Selihot end with Tahanun, a part of tefillah that we normally say after the daily Amidah. Tahanun focuses on taking responsibility for our own behavior, and pleading with God for help and forgiveness. Here's a line from Tehillim, that's part of Tahanun. It summarizes the mood of this prayer:



Tehillim 6:2-3, 5

Have mercy on me, God, because I am weak. Heal me, God, because my bones are terrified... Return, God! Deliver my soul! Save me because of Your kindness.

תהלים ו:ג, ה

חַנּוּנִי ה' כִּי אֲמַלְל אֶנִּי רַפְּאֵנִי
ה' כִּי נִבְהָלוּ עַצְמוֹתַי: ... שׁוּבָה
ה' חֲלֹצָה נַפְשִׁי הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי
לְמַעַן חַסְדְּךָ:

Mishnah Avot 2:13 says that Tahanun reflects what prayer is all about.

- ♦ Where do you see God's help in your life?
- ♦ What's hard about asking for forgiveness? Is there a part of asking for forgiveness that feels good? What is it?



• A Moment of Hebrew

Devarim 27:9

Moshe and the priests from the tribe of Levi spoke to all Israel, saying:
Silence! Hear, O Israel! Today you have become the people of God your Lord.

דברים כז:ט

וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה וְהַכֹּהֲנִים הָלֹוִים
אֶל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר הִסָּכֶת
וּשְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה
נְהִייתָ לְעַם לַה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ:

לְהִסָּכֶת (שָׁרֵשׁ ס.כ.ת.)
♦ To pay attention or listen closely (lehaskeet)

= מַסְכֶּת
Stethoscope
(maskeit)

= הִסָּכֶת
Podcast (this is a new word that was created in 2018! (heskeit)

Find the Word!

Guess what? You won't find this שָׁרֵשׁ (shoresh, root) anywhere else in Tanakh. This is the only place it appears! Pretty cool, right?!





קָה דָה • What's Going On Here?

What if there's just one pizza store in your town, and you open a second one? What if your pizza is more delicious, and everyone starts coming to your store instead of the one that was there first? Was it ok for you to take away business from the first pizza store?

It's complicated, but this might be a case of **הַסָּגַת גְּבוּל (hasagat gevul, capturing the boundary)**. This concept first comes up in our parashah.

Moshe tells Benei Yisrael that anyone who moves their neighbor's boundary line should be cursed (Devarim 27:17). You can't move the location of your fence to make your own property bigger by taking over some of your neighbor's property. This is the basic case of hasagat gevul.

In the Talmud, this is also applied to other situations in life.

For example, if someone has spread their fishing net to catch fish, then another person isn't allowed to come by and set up their own fishing net right next to the first net. It's considered unfair for the second person to catch fish that would have otherwise gone into the first net (Bava Batra 21b).

So, what do you think about the case of the pizza store? Is it hasagat gevul – just as unfair as the case of the fishing nets? Or should it be ok in this case? What's your argument?



Parashah Scavenger Hunt Answers:

1. טֵנָא (tene) (26:2,4)
2. The third year (26:12). This refers to the tithe for the poor, known later on as **מַעְשֵׂר עָנִי (maaser ani)**, and it is given in the third and sixth years of the seven-year shemittah cycle.
3. **הֶאֱמַרְתָּ (he'emarta)** and **הֶאֱמִירְךָ (he'emirekha)** (26:17,18). These are unusual forms of the verb **אָמַר (to say)**; it is not completely clear what the words mean, but they seem to have to do with declaring someone to be very special.
4. Plaster (27:2)
5. 12
6. By boat (28:68)
7. The Bashan (29:6)
8. Iron: it is forbidden to build an altar with stones cut by an iron blade (27:5); iron is a metaphor for earth that won't grow anything (28:23); the heavy burden that conquering nations will place upon Benei Yisrael is called an "iron yoke" (28:48)
9. Shimon, Levi, Yehudah, Yissakhar, Yosef, Binyamin (27:12)
10. 11 (26:15, 27:12, 28:3-6, 8, 12)

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