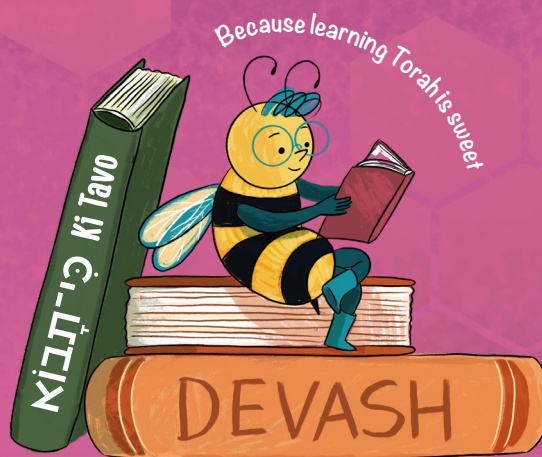


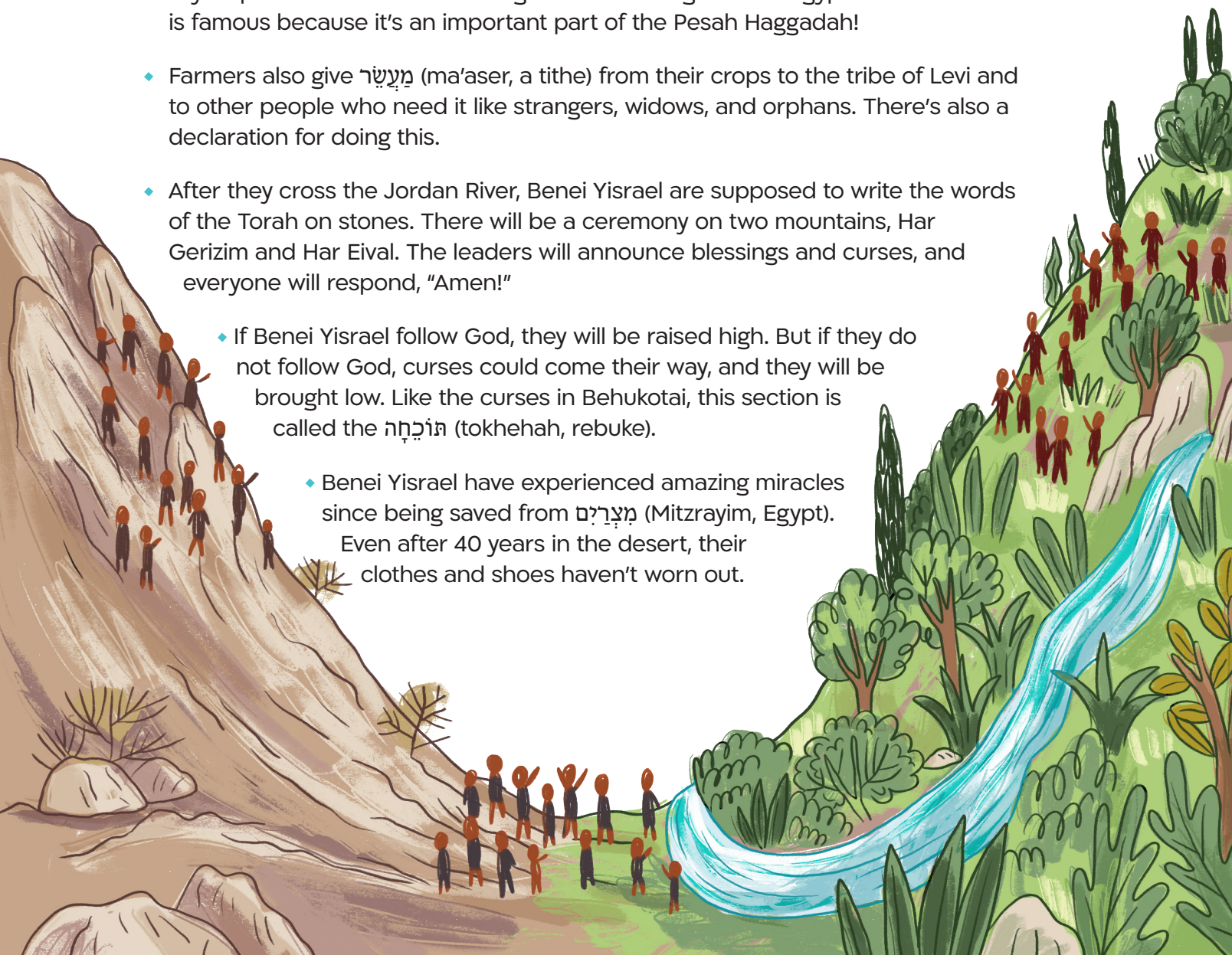


י' – ט"ז אלול תשפ"ו August 23–29, 2026



• In This Week's Parashah

- ◆ In Eretz Yisrael, farmers bring בִּכּוּרִים (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 מַעֲסֵר (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.





פִּשְׁט הַפְּסוּקִים • Understanding the Verses



Devarim 28:12-13

God will open for you God's good treasury – the heavens – to provide rain for your land in season and to bless all you do.
You will lend to many nations, but you won't borrow.

God will make you the head, not the tail.
You will always be at the top and never at the bottom—if you listen to the mitzvot of God your Lord that I am commanding you today, to keep and to observe.

דברים כח:יב-יג

יִפְתָּח ה' לְךָ אֶת אוֹצְרוֹ הַטּוֹב
אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם לָתֵת מָטָר אֲרֶצְךָ בְּעֵתוֹ
וּלְבָרֶךְ אֶת כָּל מַעֲשֶׂה יָדְךָ
וְהָלוּיֹת גּוֹיִם רַבִּים וְאַתָּה לֹא תִלְוֶה:

וַיִּתְּנֶךָ ה' לְרֹאשׁ וְלֹא לְזָנָב
וְהָיִיתָ רַק לְמַעַלָּה וְלֹא תִהְיֶה לְמַטָּה
כִּי תִשְׁמַע אֶל מִצְוֹת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ
אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מְצַוֶּה הַיּוֹם
לְשָׁמֹר וּלְעָשׂוֹת:

- ♦ What do you notice? What's the big idea here?
- ♦ Why is it a blessing to be a lender and not a borrower? Do you ever get to use that blessing?
- ♦ What is God's "good treasury"? What does it mean to be "the head, not the tail"? Why do you think the Torah uses these different symbols? What do they represent? How do they help us understand the big idea?



פְּרָשְׁנוֹת • Commentary

What does it mean that God will make us "the head, and not the tail"? Here are two ways to understand it.

R. Shimshon Raphael Hirsch (Germany, 150 years ago)

By the amazing blessing bestowed on you by God as a result of your keeping the mitzvot, you will draw the eyes of the nations, so that they will recognize your example as worthy of copying you. You will lead them as an example, but you will not feel compelled to imitate them.

R. Hirsch thinks that being at the "head" means to be a leader among all the nations of the world. People who aren't Jewish will see the good acts of the Jewish people and will want to

This pasuk is the source for the custom to place a fish head on your table on Rosh Hashanah!



copy Jewish practices. Not being a “tail” means that we won’t want to copy what other people do. We’ll be leaders, not followers.

- ♦ In this understanding, the “head” refers to the Jewish people being leaders – an example for other people to follow. Why do you think it’s a good thing for others to copy Judaism and for Jews not to copy others?
- ♦ People sometimes feel differently about their own traditions based on how they think others will view them. What do you think – should it matter? How would you feel about your Jewish practices if you knew everyone wanted to copy them? How would you feel if no one wanted to copy them? Do you think this is part of the blessing here?
- ♦ Can you think of things that our non-Jewish friends might see about Judaism and want to copy and do for themselves? Why would they want to copy these things?
- ♦ Look at the previous pasuk: וְהָלַיְתָּ גוֹיִם רַבִּים וְאַתָּה לֹא תִלְוֶה (You will lend to many nations, but you won’t borrow). How does this context support R. Hirsch’s reading?

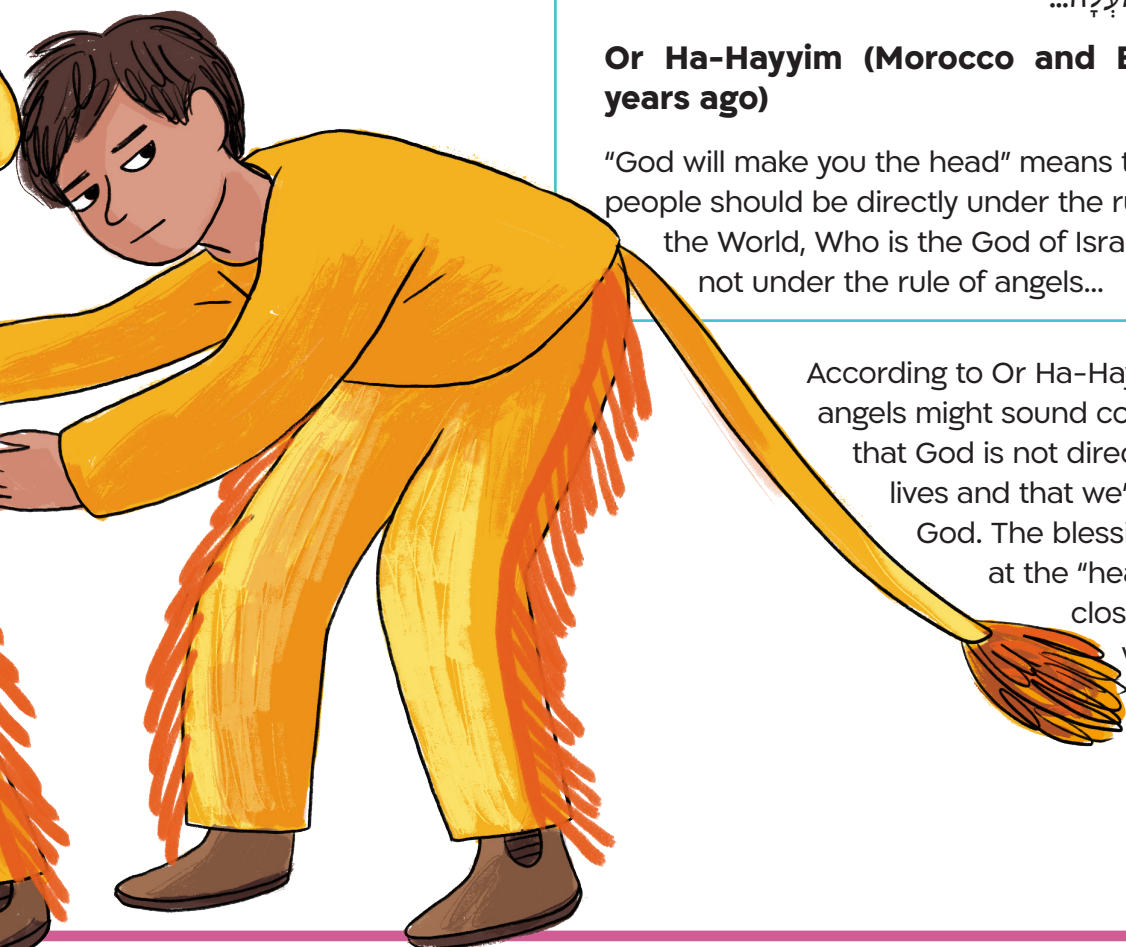
אור החיים

וּבִתְנֶהָ ה' לְרֹאשׁ - פָּרוּשׁ שֶׁיְהִי יִשְׂרָאֵל תַּחַת מְמִשְׁלַת רֹאשׁ
הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהוּא אֱלֹקֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְלֹא לְזָנָב - שֶׁהֵם שָׂרֵי מַעְלָה...

Or Ha-Hayyim (Morocco and Eretz Yisrael, 300 years ago)

“God will make you the head” means that the Jewish people should be directly under the rule of the Head of the World, Who is the God of Israel, “and not the tail” – not under the rule of angels...

According to Or Ha-Hayyim, being ruled by angels might sound cool, but it would mean that God is not directly involved in our lives and that we’d be distant from God. The blessing here of being at the “head” represents the closeness to God we get when we keep God’s mitzvot.



- In this understanding, the "head" is God, not the Jews. Can you find evidence from the pasuk to suggest that we are not the head, but we serve the Head?
- Look at the next pasuk (Devarim 28:14). How does this verse support Or Ha-Hayyim's reading?
- Why is it better to have a direct connection to God and to have God directly in our lives? What would be lost if we didn't have that?



מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash

Devarim 26:17-18

You have appreciated this day that God is your Lord, that you will walk in God's ways, that you will observe God's laws and commandments and rules, and that you will listen to God.

And God has appreciated you this day, that you are God's treasured people...

דברים כו:יז-יח

אֶת ה' הָאֱמַרְתָּ הַיּוֹם לְהִיּוֹת
לְךָ לֵאלֹהִים וּלְלַכֵּת בְּדִרְכָיו
וּלְשַׁמֵּר חֻקָיו וּמִצְוֹתָיו
וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו וּלְשָׁמֶעַ בְּקוֹלוֹ:

וְה' הָאֱמִירְךָ הַיּוֹם לְהִיּוֹת
לְךָ לְעָם סֻגָּלָה...

Do you notice that the actions go both ways in these pesukim?



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

Our Rabbis in the Talmud think these pesukim are teaching us that we share a kind of two-way relationship with God. God expresses appreciation for the Jewish people just like the Jewish people express our appreciation for God. And one way we each do that is by wearing tefillin!

The following gemara is based on these pesukim.

Talmud Bavli Berakhot 6a

R. Avin bar Rav Adda said in the name of R. Yitzhak: How do we know that the Holy Blessed One wears tefillin? As it says, "God swears an oath with God's right hand and strong arm" (Yeshayahu 62:8). God's right hand is Torah... and God's strong arm is tefillin...

R. Nahman bar Yitzhak asked R. Hiyya bar Avin: These tefillin of the Master of the Universe, what is written in them? He said: "Who is like Your people Israel, a unique nation in the land" (Divrei Hayamim Aleph 17:21)...

The Holy Blessed One said to Israel:... You have made Me something special in the world, as it says, "Listen, Israel, God is our Lord, God is One" (Devarim 6:4), so I will make you something special in the world, as it says, "Who is like Your people Israel, a unique nation in the land?"

תלמוד בבלי מסכת ברכות דף ו עמוד א

אמר רבי אבין בר רב אדא, אמר רבי יצחק: מנין שהקדוש ברוך הוא מניח תפילין שנאמר: "נשבע ה' בימינו ובזרוע עזו" (ישעיהו סב:ח). "בימינו" – זו תורה... "ובזרוע עזו" – אלו תפילין...

אמר ליה רב נחמן בר יצחק לרב חייה בר אבין: הני תפילין דמרי עלמא מה כתיב בהו? אמר ליה "ומי כעמך ישראל גוי אחד בארץ" (דברי הימים א יז:כא)...

אמר להם הקדוש ברוך הוא לישראל: אתם עשיתונני חטיבה אחת בעולם, שנאמר: "שמע ישראל ה' אלהינו ה' אחד" (דברים ו:ד), ואני אעשה אתכם חטיבה אחת בעולם, שנאמר "ומי כעמך ישראל גוי אחד בארץ."

Later on, the gemara suggests that the next pasuk in our parashah (Devarim 26:19) is also in God's tefillin. **Look it up!**

- How do tefillin express our appreciation for God? How might they express God's appreciation for us?

- What could it mean that God might in some way do mitzvot like we do, or fulfill the Torah together with us? What does this teach us about how to view the Torah? How does this idea impact our relationship with God?



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 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) 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

haftarah: Yeshayahu
60:1 to 60:22

Good luck!



1 What does God choose?

2 From where does God look?

3 Where does God put you?

4 What kind of tool are you not allowed to use on the stones of the altar?

5 What secretive things are not allowed?



7 During their 40 years in the wilderness, what did Benei Yisrael not drink?

6 Which of the plagues from יְצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם (yetziat Mitzrayim, the Exodus from Egypt) appear as potential curses for Benei Yisrael?

9 What did Benei Yisrael not have in the wilderness until Moshe taught them this parashah?

8 What are the three times that baskets are mentioned in our parashah?

10 From the haftarah:
Which animals appear in this haftarah?

*
Look for
the answers
on page 11!



רָגַעַ שֶׁל עִבְרִית • A Moment of Hebrew

Devarim 26:5

You shall then recite before God your Lord:
"My father was a wandering Aramean. **He went down** to Egypt in small numbers and stayed; but there he became a large nation."

דברים כו:ה

וְעִנִּיתָ וְאָמַרְתָּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ
אֲרָמִי אֲבִד אָבִי וַיֵּרֶד מִצְרָיִם
וַיְגַר שָׁם בְּמִתֵּי מֶעֶט וַיְהִי שָׁם
לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל עָצוּם וָרֹב:

לָרֶדֶת (שָׁרֵשׁ י.ר.ד.)

◆ To go down,
come down
(laredet)

= יָרַד מֵהַפָּסִים

Went off the tracks,
went crazy (yarad
mei-hapasim)

= מוֹרָד

Slope, hillside
(morad)

= יָרִיד

A fair, market
(yerid)

Find the Word!

In Sefer Bereishit, someone dreams of a ladder with angels going up and down on it. Whose dream was this, and can you find this שָׁרֵשׁ (shoresh, root) in the description of his dream? (Hint: Look through Bereishit 28.)



דְּקָה שֶׁל דִּיּוּן • One-Minute Debate

Debate: Sinning in private is worse than sinning in public.

Ki Tavo lists some specific sins that deserve curses. A bunch of these are bad things that people do behind closed doors (Devarim 27:15-26).

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 hypocritical to act good in public but bad in private.
- ♦ If you hurt someone in private, they might not be able to get the help they need.



Disagree!

- ♦ When you sin in public you create a חִלּוּל ה' (hillul Hashem), which means desecrating God's name. You give Judaism and Jewish people a bad reputation.
- ♦ A person who sins in public can influence other people to sin as well.



שִׁקְלָא וְטַרְיָא • Join the Conversation!

Dear Devash,

In the magazine for Behar-Behukotai you wrote about מַעֲשֵׂר (ma'aser, tithing). You said it's a mitzvah for farmers to give away one tenth of their harvest or their newborn animals. But what if you're a farmer and you have a flock of eight new lambs? How do you give away one tenth of that?

-Landy, age 12



Dear Landy,

Thanks for sending this question! We're answering it this week, because the mitzvah of ma'aser appears again in our parashah, Ki Tavo. We also talked about some different kinds of ma'aser a couple weeks ago, when ma'aser came up in Parashat Re'eh. Ma'aser gets mentioned again and again in the Torah, so you can see that it's a really important idea.

Ma'aser of animals is called **מַעְסֵר בְּהֵמָה** (ma'asar beheimah). The Mishnah describes how to do it.

Mishnah Bekhorot 9:7

How do you separate ma'aser (from animals)? You gather them in a pen and make a small opening, so that two animals could not fit through it together.

You count the animals (as they pass through the opening) with a staff: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine. Then for the tenth one that passes through, you mark it with a red mark and declare: This is ma'aser.

משנה בכורות ט:ז

כִּיצַד מַעְסְרֶנּוּ? כּוֹנְסִין לְדִיר וְעוֹשֶׂה
לָהּ פֶּתַח קָטָן כִּדִּי שְׁלֹא יִהְיוּ שְׁנַיִם
יְכוֹלִין לָצֵאת כְּאַחַת, וּמוֹנֶה בַּשֶּׁבֶט,
אֶחָד, שְׁנַיִם, שְׁלֹשָׁה, אַרְבָּעָה,
חֲמִשָּׁה, שֵׁשָׁה, שִׁבְעָה, שְׁמוֹנֶה,
תְּשֻׁעָה, וְהִיוֹצֵא עֲשִׂירֵי סוֹקְרוֹ
בְּסִקְרָא וְאוֹמֵר הִיא זֶה מַעְסֵר.

This process is based on a pasuk from Parashat Behukotai:

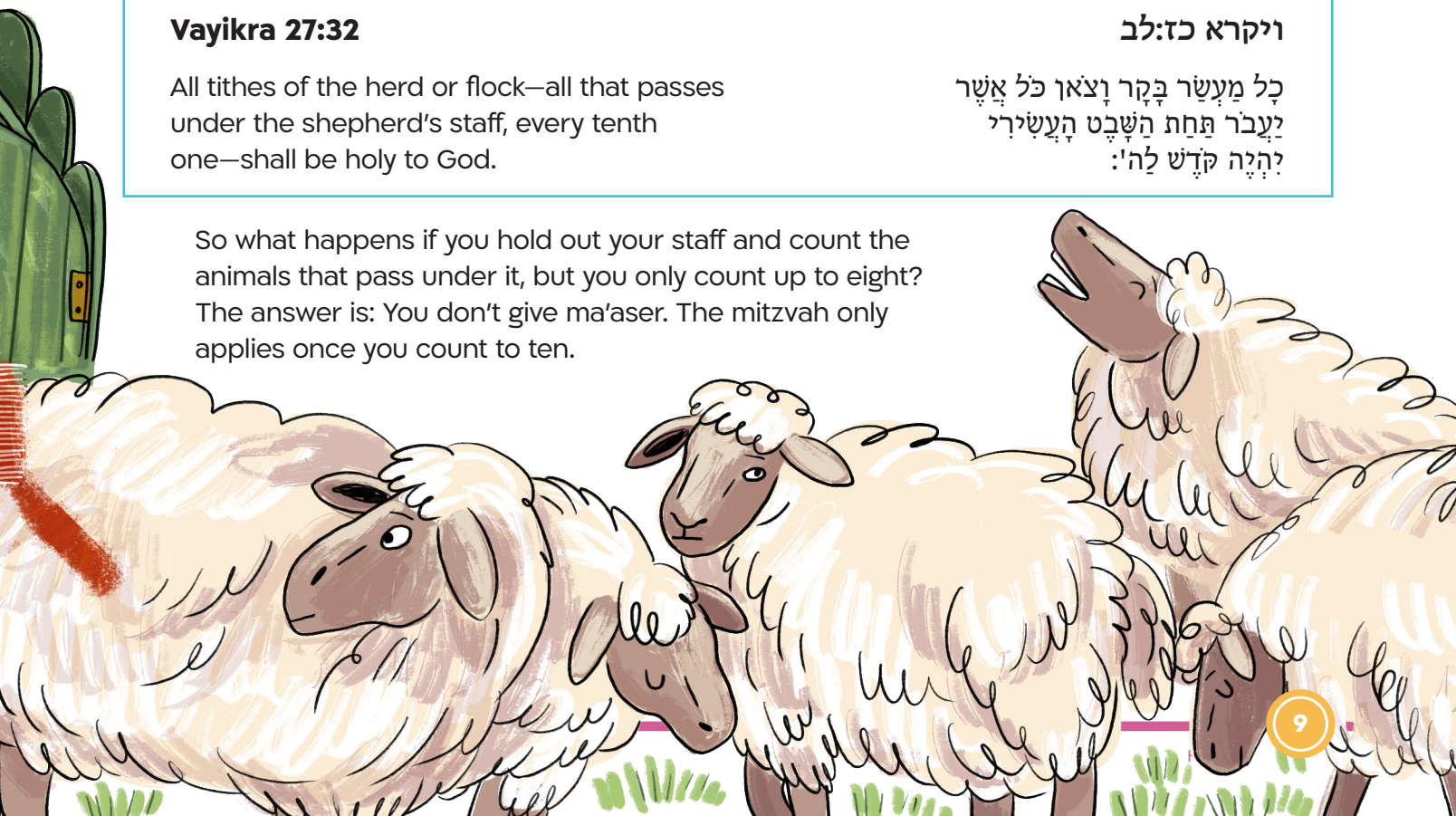
Vayikra 27:32

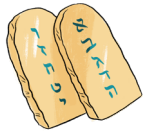
All tithes of the herd or flock—all that passes under the shepherd's staff, every tenth one—shall be holy to God.

ויקרא כז:לב

כָּל מַעְסֵר בְּקָר וּצֹאן כָּל אֲשֶׁר
יַעֲבֹר תַּחַת הַשֶּׁבֶט הָעֹשִׂירִי
יִהְיֶה קֹדֶשׁ לַיהוָה:

So what happens if you hold out your staff and count the animals that pass under it, but you only count up to eight? The answer is: You don't give ma'aser. The mitzvah only applies once you count to ten.





הלכה • Halakhah



Learn one way
the parashah
practically impacts
our lives

Our parashah describes Benei Yisrael, when they were slaves in Egypt, crying out loud to God.

דברים כו:ז

וַנִּצְעַק אֶל ה' אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ
וַיִּשְׁמַע ה' אֶת קוֹלֵנוּ
וַיֵּרָא אֶת עַנְיָנוּ וְאֶת עֲמָלֵנוּ וְאֶת לְחַצְנוּ:

Devarim 26:7

We cried out to the God of our ancestors. God heard our voices and saw our suffering, our struggle, and our oppression.

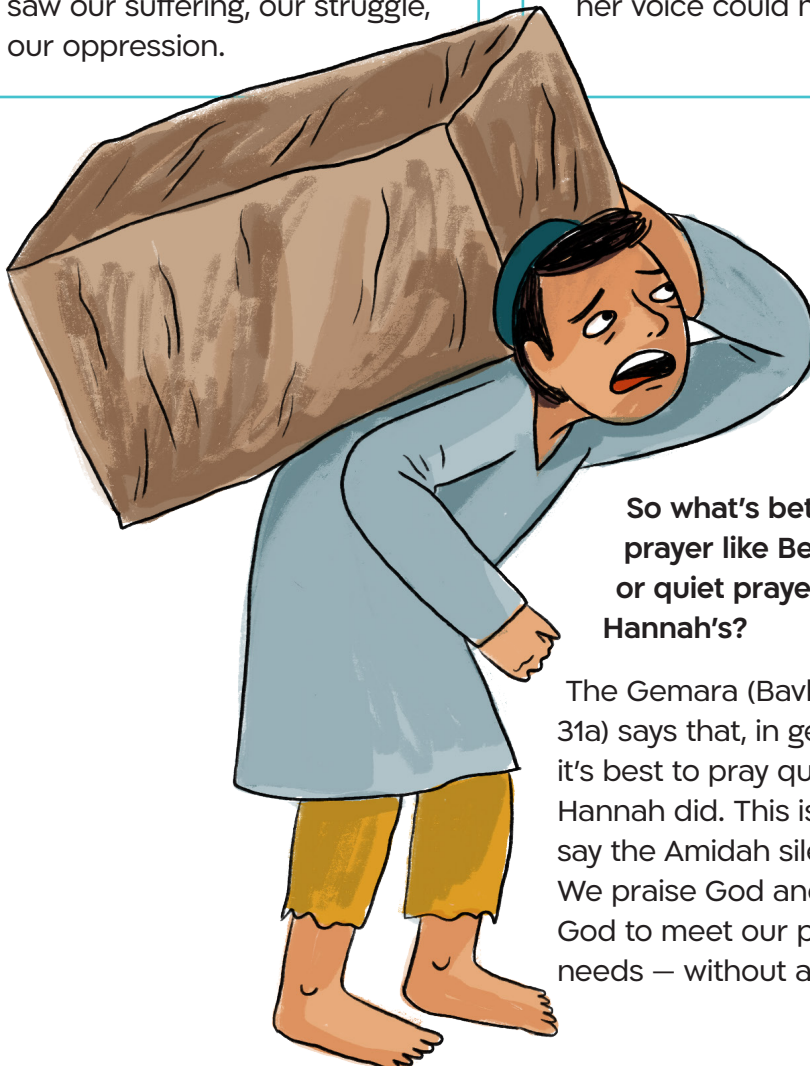
Hannah had a different style of prayer.

שמואל א א:יג

וַחֲנָנָה הָיָא מְדַבֶּרֶת עַל לִבָּהּ רַק שִׁפְתֶיהָ
נִפְעוֹת וְקוֹלָהּ לֹא יִשְׁמָע...

Shmuel Alef 1:13

Now Hannah was praying in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice could not be heard...



So what's better, loud prayer like Benei Yisrael's, or quiet prayer like Hannah's?

The Gemara (Bavli Berakhot 31a) says that, in general, it's best to pray quietly like Hannah did. This is why we say the Amidah silently. We praise God and we ask God to meet our personal needs – without anyone





Parashah Scavenger Hunt Answers:

1. The place where בִּכּוּרִים (bikkurim, first crops) are brought. This ends up being Yerushalayim. (26:2)
2. From God's holy abode, from Heaven (26:15)
3. Up high! (16:19)
4. An iron tool (27:5)
5. Setting up an idol in secret (27:15), hitting another person in secret (27:24)
6. דֶּבֶר (dever, animal disease) (28:21), שְׁחִין (sh'hin, boils) (28:27, 35), אֲרֵבָה (arbeh, locust) (28:38)
7. Wine or other alcohol (29:5)
8. To hold בִּכּוּרִים (bikkurim, first crops) (26:2), as part of a blessing (28:5), and as part of a curse (28:17)
9. A heart to know, eyes to see, and ears to hear (29:3)
10. Camels, sheep, rams, doves (Yeshayahu 60:6-8)

else listening in. The Gemara also warns that praying out loud could even be a sign of lack of faith; people who pray this way might be showing that they don't believe God can hear their silent prayers, even though God can! (Bavli Berakhot 24b)

There are a number of halakhot about when and how to pray silently, and when and how to pray out loud.

- ◆ When you say the Amidah, it's good to mouth the words just loud enough for you to hear them, but not loud enough for anyone else to hear (Rambam, Laws of Tefillah 5:9).
- ◆ If saying the words of the Amidah out loud helps you focus and have כַּוְּנָה (kavvanah, appropriate intention), then you can say it out loud as long as no one else is around. The general rule is that it's better to pray in silence with less kavannah than to disturb your friend's tefillah by praying out loud and distracting them (Shulhan Arukh Orach Hayyim 101:2). Your kavannah shouldn't come at the expense of someone else's!
- ◆ When you're saying Shaharit, Pesukei Dezimra and the blessings for Keriat Shema are a great time to pray out loud or in song. Feel free to belt these out! (Mishnah Berurah 101:7)





תפלה • Prayer in the Parashah

One of the saddest parts of the Torah is when Moshe isn't allowed to enter the promised land after he leads Benei Yisrael with tremendous dedication for 40 years. A midrash tells us that Moshe was upset with Benei Yisrael for not praying on his behalf:

Devarim Rabbah Ki Tavo 7:10

R. Shmuel bar Yitzhak said: When Moshe was starting to die, and Benei Yisrael didn't pray for him to enter the land, he gathered them and gave them critique. He said to them: One person (myself!) saved 600,000 people (you!) at the sin of the Golden Calf, but 600,000 people couldn't help save one person?! It is because "God didn't give you a lev lada'at (knowing heart)" (Devarim 29:3).

דברים רבה (וילנא) (פרשת כי תבוא) פרשה ז סימן י

אמר רבי שמואל בר יצחק: כיון שנטה משה למות ולא בקשו עליו רחמים שיכנס לארץ כנס אותו והתחיל מוכיחם, אמר להם אחד פדה ס' רבוא בעגל - וס' רבוא לא היו יכולין לפדות אדם אחד? ! הרי "ולא נתן ה' לכם לב לדעת" (דברים כט:ג).

- ♦ The pasuk about lev lada'at appears in our parashah. How does R. Shmuel understand what a lev lada'at is, and what it means to be lacking one?
- ♦ What do you think of Moshe's argument, that he prayed for the people, and so they should have prayed for him. Is this fair?
- ♦ Sometimes we don't think about praying for our leaders. Kids might not think that grown ups need their prayers. But maybe they do! We actually do this in a number of places, like in the berakhah for the righteous in the weekday Amidah (see if you can find it!), or in the tefillah called יקום פורקן (Yekum Purkan, May salvation arise) that is said on Shabbat before Musaf. Which Jewish leaders might you have in mind when saying these prayers?

