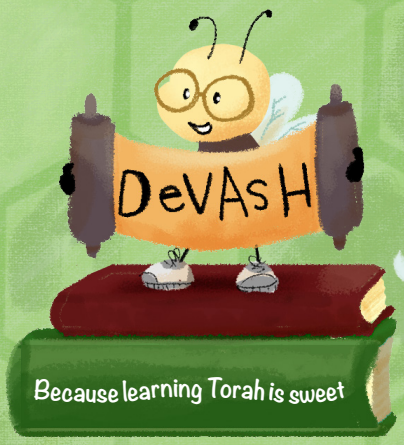
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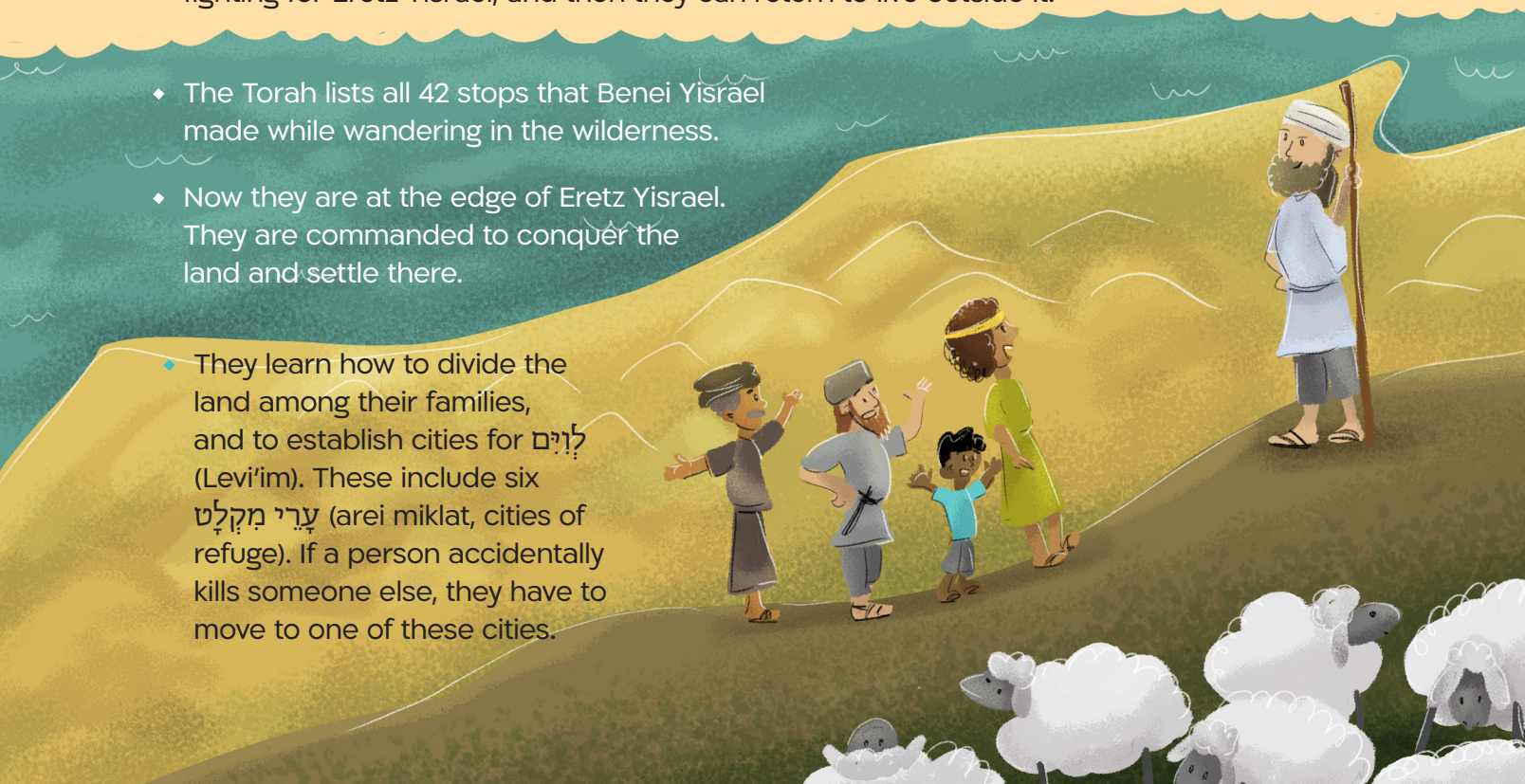


מַטּוֹת-מַסְעֵי
Mattot-Masei

ב"ב - ב"ח תַּמּוּז תשפ"ד July 28 - August 3, 2024

מָה בַּפָּרָשָׁה • In This Week's Parashah

- נְדָרִים (nedarim, vows) are obligations you can accept upon yourself, like voluntary mitzvot, and they have to be taken seriously if you make them. Nedarim can sometimes be canceled.
- Benei Yisrael fight against Midyan. They win, capture spoils of war, and divide it all up. A portion was given to the Mishkan.
- The tribes of Reuven and Gad want to stay outside Eretz Yisrael, just to the east of the Jordan River, where there is lots of room for their cattle. They make a deal with Moshe. First they'll join Benei Yisrael in fighting for Eretz Yisrael, and then they can return to live outside it.
- The Torah lists all 42 stops that Benei Yisrael made while wandering in the wilderness.
- Now they are at the edge of Eretz Yisrael. They are commanded to conquer the land and settle there.
- They learn how to divide the land among their families, and to establish cities for לְוִיִּם (Levi'im). These include six עָרֵי מִקְלָט (arei miklat, cities of refuge). If a person accidentally kills someone else, they have to move to one of these cities.



פֵּרוּשִׁים • Commentary

Near the end of Sefer Bemidbar, God commands Benei Yisrael to enter Eretz Yisrael and live there:

במדבר לג:נג

וְהוֹרַשְׁתֶּם אֶת הָאָרֶץ וִישַׁבְתֶּם בָּהּ כִּי לָכֶם נָתַתִּי אֶת הָאָרֶץ לָרֶשֶׁת אֹתָהּ׃

Bemidbar 33:53

And you shall take possession of the land and live in it, for I have given the land to you to possess.

Is there still a mitzvah to live in Eretz Yisrael today?

Ramban (Spain, 800 years ago) believes this is a mitzvah that every Jew should try to keep today:

הוספות לספר המצוות עשה ד

הִיא מִצְוַת עֲשֵׂה לְדוֹרוֹת מִתְחַיֵּב כָּל אֶחָד מִמֶּנּוּ וַאֲפִלּוּ בִּזְמַן גָּלוּת בַּיָּדוּעַ בַּתַּלְמוּד בִּמְקוֹמוֹת הַרְבֵּה. וּלְשׁוֹן סִפְרֵי מַעֲשֶׂה בְּרַבִּי יְהוּדָה בֶּן בְּתֵירָא וְרַבִּי מַתְיָא בֶּן חָרָשׁ וְרַבִּי חֲנַנְיָה בֶּן אֲחִי ר׳ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ וְר׳ נָתָן שֶׁהָיוּ יוֹצְאִין חוּצָה לָאָרֶץ וְהִגִּיעוּ לִפְלַטְיָא וְזָכְרוּ אֶת אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְזָקְפוּ אֶת עֵינֵיהֶם וְלָגוּ דִּמְעוֹתֵיהֶן וְקָרְעוּ בִּגְדֵיהֶם וְקָרְאוּ הַמִּקְרָא הַזֶּה וִירִשְׁתָּהּ וְיָשַׁבְתָּ בָּהּ (דברים כו:א) וְשָׁמַרְתָּ לַעֲשׂוֹת (דברים ו:ג). וְאָמְרוּ יְשִׁיבַת אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁקוּלָה כְּנֶגֶד כָּל הַמִּצְוֹת.

Ramban's Additions to Sefer Ha-Mitzvot, Positive Commandment 4

This is a mitzvah for all generations. Everyone is obligated to do it, even in times of galut (exile). It comes up in the Talmud in many places.



Ramban, continued

The Sifrei tells a story about R. Yehudah ben Beteirah, R. Matya ben Harash, R. Hananyah ben Ahi, R. Yehoshuah, and R. Natan who were leaving Eretz Yisrael. They arrived at a street crossing, remembered Eretz Yisrael, and burst into tears. They tore their clothing (in mourning) and read these pesukim: "And you shall take possession of the land and live in it" (Devarim 26:1), and "You shall keep this mitzvah to do it" (Devarim 6:3). They said: Living in Eretz Yisrael is equal to all the mitzvot combined.

Ramban took his own words to heart and moved from Spain to Eretz Yisrael even though he was old by then and it was a very difficult journey!

But Rambam (Spain and Egypt, 850 years ago) doesn't list this mitzvah at all, and some people think this means that Rambam thought the mitzvah to live in Eretz Yisrael doesn't apply at all times:

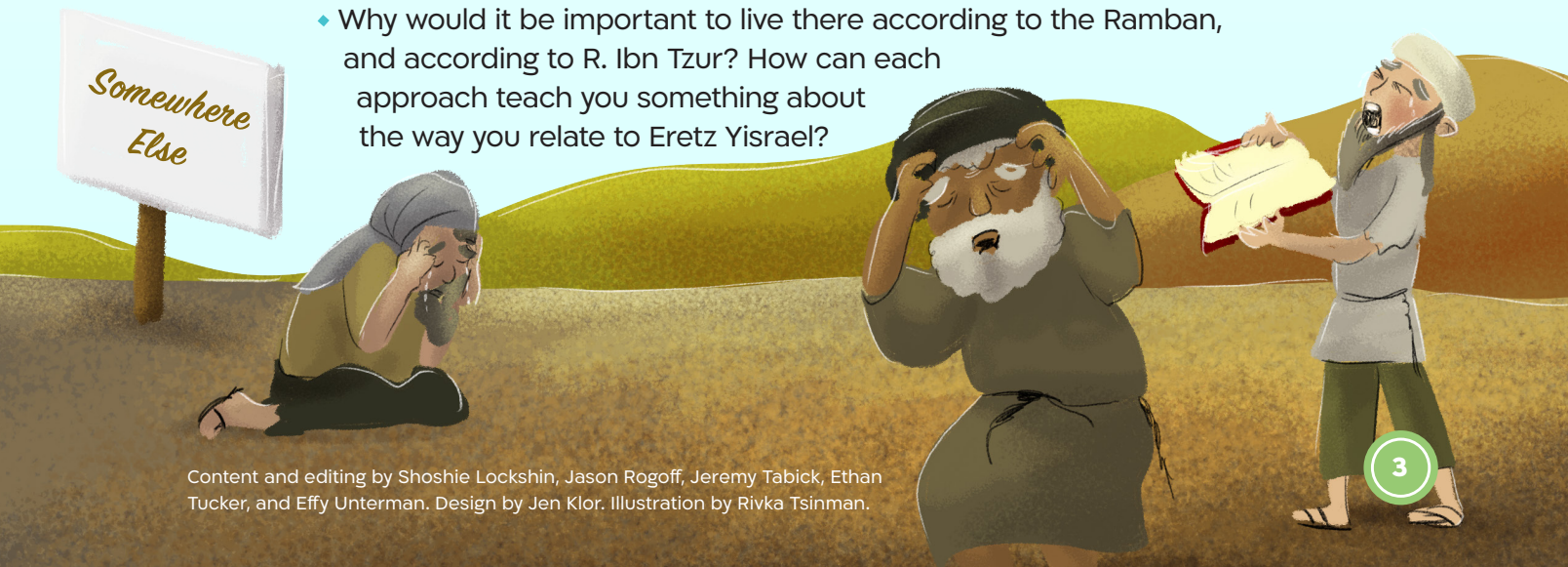
R. Yitzhak Ibn Tzur (Italy, 500 years ago)

It seems to me that Rambam didn't list a mitzvah of living in Eretz Yisrael because this mitzvah applied only in the time of Moshe, Yehoshua, and David, and any time before the Jewish people were exiled from their land. But after they were exiled from their land, this mitzvah doesn't apply until the Jewish people have redemption.

ספר מגילת אסתר

נִרְאֶה לִי כִּי מָה שֶׁלֹּא מְנָאָה הָרַב
הוּא לְפִי שֶׁמִּצְוַת יְרֻשַּׁת הָאָרֶץ
וִישִׁיבָתָהּ לֹא נָהֲגָה רַק בִּימֵי
מֹשֶׁה וִיהוֹשֻׁעַ וְדָוִד וְכָל זְמַן שֶׁלֹּא
גָּלוּ מֵאַרְצָם אֲבָל אַחַר שֶׁגָּלוּ
מֵעַל אַדְמָתָם אֵין מִצְוָה זוֹ נוֹהֶגֶת
לְדוֹרוֹת עַד עֵת בּוֹא הַמָּשִׁיחַ.

- What could it mean for there to be a mitzvah just to live your life in a certain place? What would it teach us about that place if just being there is considered doing a mitzvah?
- Why is Eretz Yisrael so important in the Torah?
- In what way might living in Eretz Yisrael be equal to all the mitzvot combined? Try looking up Devarim 6:3, one of the pesukim quoted by the rabbis in the story. Does it seem to connect living in Eretz Yisrael to all other mitzvot? How so?
- Why would it be important to live there according to the Ramban, and according to R. Ibn Tzur? How can each approach teach you something about the way you relate to Eretz Yisrael?



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הַפְּטָרָה • Haftarah



Our haftarah is the second in the תְּלָת דְּפֻרְעָנוּתָא (Telat De-Puranuta), the three sad haftarot that we read in the weeks leading up to Tisha B'Av. This week, we hear from the prophet Yirmiyahu. He delivered his message in the final years before the destruction of the first בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ (Beit HaMikdash, Holy Temple).

Yirmiyahu mentions many reasons that Benei Yisrael deserve to be punished. He expresses how unbelievable it is that things have gotten so bad. In two places, God asks: How is this even possible?

Yirmiyahu 2:21

I (God) planted you (Benei Yisrael) with noble vines, from true seed.

How is it that you changed into a bad and strange vine?

ירמיהו ב:כא

וְאָנֹכִי נְטַעְתִּיךְ שׂוֹרֵק כֻּל�ּה
זֶרַע אֱמֶת

וְאֵיךְ נֶהְפַּכְתְּ לִי סוּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן
נָכְרִיָּה:



Yirmiyahu 2:23

How can you say, "I am not made tamei (impure),
I have not gone after the Ba'al idols"?
Look at your deeds in the valley,
Consider what you have done!

ירמיהו ב:כג

אֵיךְ תֹּאמְרִי לֹא נִטְמֵאתִי
אַחֲרֵי הַבְּעָלִים לֹא הָלַכְתִּי
רְאִי דַרְכֵּךְ בַּגַּיְא
דְּעִי מֶה עָשִׂית...

When God asks אֵיךְ (eikh, how), we are reminded of the Book of Eikhah, which we'll read on Tisha B'Av. It opens with the word אֵיכָה (eikhah)—meaning "how?!" or "Alas!"—and this word appears several times in the book.

- This is very relatable. Sometimes, there's just no good reason to do a wrong thing or treat someone badly, and yet we do it anyhow. So, how would you answer these questions? How is it that we change from good to not-so-good in those moments? How do we let ourselves do those things? How come we are sometimes good at lying to ourselves and pretending like we've done nothing wrong?
- And here's the most important one: How can we make it better?
- As you read the haftarah, what other images or ideas stand out to you? How can these help you get into the right mindset for Tisha B'Av?





דַּקָּה שֶׁל דִּיּוּן • One-Minute Debate

Debate: It would be fun to travel through the wilderness with Benei Yisrael.

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!

- They got to visit so many different places—42 in total!
- A pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire would be really cool to see.
- Life's a journey, not a destination.





Disagree!

- It's hard to never feel settled in one place.
- I'm happy to go on a trip any time, but not for 40 years!
- Camping is not my idea of a good time.

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aliyot:
1) Bemidbar 30:2 to 31:12
2) 31:13 to 31:54
3) 32:1 to 32:19
4) 32:20 to 33:49
5) 33:50 to 34:15
6) 34:16 to 35:8
7) 35:9 to 36:13

haftarah: Yirmiyahu 2:4 to 2:28, and Ashkenazim add 3:4, and Sephardim add 4:1 to 4:2

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.

Good luck!

1. Who were the five kings of Midyan?
2. What percentage of the goods taken in war did the soldiers need to give as a gift to God?
3. What do the leaders of Reuven and Gad agree to do with the rest of Benei Yisrael?



4. The names of two holidays appear in this aliyah. Which ones?
5. How should Eretz Yisrael be divided among the tribes?
6. Who shares a name with one of the בִּגְדֵי כְּהֻנָּה (bigdei kehunah, items of clothing for priests)?
7. Who did the בְּנוֹת צְלָפְחָד (benot Tzelofhad, daughters of Tzelofhad) agree to marry?
8. What six types of metal are mentioned in our parashah?
9. How many stops do Benei Yisrael make on their 40-year journey? (Hint: Count the word וַיַּחֲנוּ [vayahanu, they camped] each time it appears.)
10. **From the haftarah:** How does Yirmiyahu's prophecy connect to laundry?



* Look for the answers on page 8!

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פֵּרוּשִׁים • Commentary

Moav and Midyan are two nations that teamed up to curse Benei Yisrael back in Parashat Balak (Bemidbar 22:3-4).

Now, in our parashah, God tells Moshe that it's time for one of them to be punished:

Bemidbar 31:2

Benei Yisrael should take vengeance on Midyan.

במדבר לא:ב

נְקֹם נִקְמַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֵת הַמִּדְיָנִים

Just Midyan? Why aren't Benei Yisrael also supposed to punish the people of Moav?

Rashi (France, 1,000 years ago)

"On Midyan"—but not on Moav. Because Moav came to this situation out of fear; they were afraid that Benei Yisrael would steal all of their resources.

רש"י

מֵאֵת הַמִּדְיָנִים—וְלֹא מֵאֵת הַמּוֹאָבִים, שֶׁהַמּוֹאָבִים נִכְנְסוּ לַדָּבָר מֵחֲמַת יִרְאָה, שֶׁהָיוּ יְרֵאִים מֵהֶם שֶׁיְּהֵיוּ שׁוֹלְלִים אוֹתָם.

It's true that both Moav and Midyan tried to hurt Benei Yisrael. But Rashi explains that there's a difference between them. Moav was afraid and was trying to protect themselves. Maybe they didn't have a good reason to be afraid, but we all know that we sometimes make bad decisions when we're afraid, so perhaps their actions could be forgiven. But Midyan tried to hurt Benei Yisrael for no reason at all! They got themselves involved in a situation that had nothing to do with them just in order to cause pain. So they had to be punished.



- Is being afraid a good reason to hurt someone? Why?
- If we know that someone was afraid when they did something hurtful, can that help us forgive them? How? What is the Torah trying to teach us about how to relate to people who have done hurtful things?
- Have you ever made a mistake and then tried to explain why you did it? Or has anyone done something bad to you and then you felt differently after you understood why they did it? What was that like?

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דִּקְדּוּק • Grammar

If you listen to the beginning of the Torah reading this week, you might hear one sound over and over, one that sounds like someone saying aH, with a strong "h" at the end. That's a mapik-hei, a dot that appears in the letter hei at the end of a word, like this:

ishaH (her husband) אִישָׁהּ

This word is a short form for saying הָאִישׁ שֶׁלָּהּ (ha-ish shelah), which means "the man that's hers" (meaning, her husband). The mapik-hei is called a **possessive ending**, because it shows that the אִישׁ (ish, man or husband) belongs to someone.

Without the mapik-hei, this would sound a lot like the word אִשָּׁה (isha, woman). Thanks to the mapik-hei, though, you don't have to see the words to tell the difference. If you hear the word "isha" without the strong "h" sound at the end, it means "a woman," and if you do hear the strong "h" sound at the end (ishaH), then it means "her husband."

In the Tanakh, you can find possessives tacked on at the end of many words. They come in lots of different forms. Here are some examples from our parashah and haftarah. See how many more you can find as you read along!

נְעָרַי
(ne'urai, **my** youth)
short for הַנְּעוּרִים שֶׁלִּי





דַּרְכֵּךְ
(darkeikh, **your** way)
Short for הַדֶּרֶךְ שֶׁלָּךְ

חַטַּאתְכֶם
(hattatekhem, **your** sin)
Short for הַחֵטְא שֶׁלָּכֶם





נְדָרֶיהָ
(nedarehah, **her** vows)
Short for הַנְּדָרִים שֶׁלָּהּ

Parashah Scavenger Hunt Answers:

1. Evi, Rekem, Tzur, Hur, Reva (31:8)
2. 1 out of 500, which is 0.2% (31:28)
3. Conquer the land of Canaan (32:16-18)
4. Pesah (33:3) and Sukkot (33:4)
5. By lottery (33:54)
6. The chief of the tribe of Menasheh was named Haniel ben Ephod; the ephod was a kind of apron worn by the כֹּהֵן גָּדוֹל (kohen gadol, high priest) (34:23)
7. Members of their own tribe, the tribe of Menasheh (36:10-12)
8. זָהָב (zahav, gold), כֶּסֶף (kesef, silver), נְחֹשֶׁת (nehoshet, copper), בַּרְזֶל (barzel, iron), בְּדִיל (bedil, tin), עוֹפֶרֶת (oferet, lead) (31:22)
9. 42 (33:5-37,41-49)—Rashi points out that the first 14 stops take us just past Hatzerot, which was still before they were told they would wander for 40 years. And the last eight stops were after Aharon died, which we know was in the 40th year. This means that for the 38 years in the middle, Benei Yisrael only had 20 stops!
10. He compares Benei Yisrael's sins to stains that can't be removed, even with powerful cleaning materials (Yirmiyahu 2:22)