

BEMIDBAR

NASO

BEHAALOTKHA

SHELAH

KORAH

HUKKAT

BALAK

PINHAS

MATTOT-MASEI



July 13-19, 2025 י"ז - כ"ג תמוז תשפ"ה



מה בפִּנְחָס • In This Week's Parashah

- Pinhas saved Benei Yisrael from a plague, and his reward is a בְּרִית שְׁלוֹם (brit shalom, covenant of peace).
- Time for another census! The total number of Benei Yisrael is 601,730, not including the שֵׁבֶט (shevet, tribe) of Levi.
- The information from this census is used to divide Eretz Yisrael fairly. There will be a lottery, but bigger families get more and smaller families get less.
- The five בָּנוֹת צִלְפָּחָד (benot Tzelofhad, daughters of Tzelofhad) ask whether they can inherit land from their father, who died. At that time, land was normally inherited by sons; but Tzelofhad had only daughters. God answers: Yes, they can inherit their father's land.
- God tells Moshe to climb Mt. Avarim and look at Eretz Yisrael from a distance because he will not be able to enter. Moshe asks for a good leader to replace him, and God says it will be Yehoshua.
- The parashah closes with the details of the קֶרְבָּנוֹת צִבּוּר (korbenot tzibbur), communal sacrifices offered on regular days, Shabbat, Rosh Hodesh, and holidays.





מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash

The census of Benei Yisrael includes one surprising pasuk.

Bemidbar 26:46

The name of Asher's daughter was Serah.

במדבר כו:מו

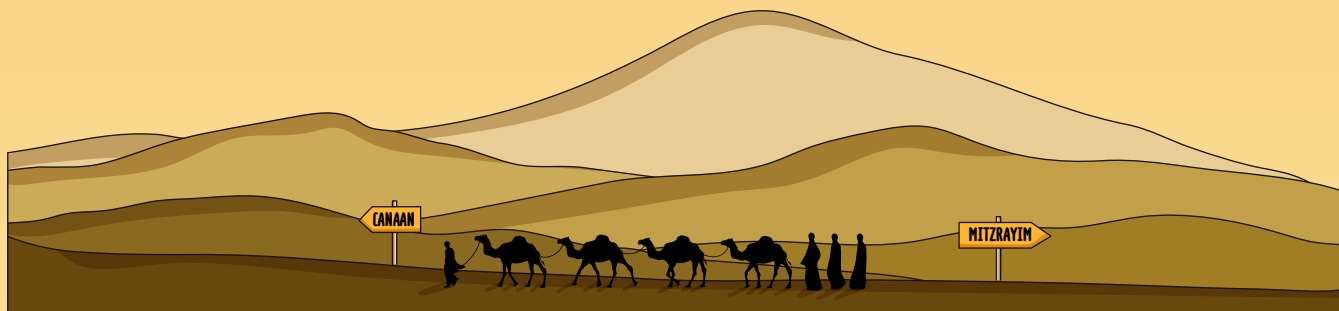
וְשֵׁם בֵּת אָשֶׁר שֶׁרָח:

There were obviously lots of women in the desert, but Serah is the only woman mentioned by name in the census. Who was she?

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

Another curious thing about Serah is that this isn't the only count where she appears. Back in Vayigash, when the Torah listed Yaakov's children and grandchildren who headed down to מִצְרַיִם (Mitzrayim, Egypt), Serah appeared on that list, too (Bereishit 46:17)!

Based on this, many midrashim suggest that Serah lived for a very, very, very long time. Here's a midrash that's wondering why she got to live so long. It thinks about Yosef's brothers returning from Mitzrayim after discovering that Yosef is still alive, and imagines that it must have been hard to break this news to their father, Yaakov.



Midrash Sefer Ha-Yashar

When they approached their houses they met Serah, the daughter of Asher, coming towards them. She was very good and wise, and she could play the harp. They called to her. She came to them, and she kissed them. They took her and gave her a harp. They said to her, "Please, sit before our father and play this harp and speak these words to him..."

מדרש ספר הישר ויגש

וַיֵּלְכוּ לָהֶם עַד קִרְבָּם אֶל בְּתִיָּהֶם
וַיִּמְצְאוּ אֶת שֶׁרָח בֵּת אָשֶׁר אֲשֶׁר
יוֹצֵאת לִקְרֹאתָם, וְהִנֵּעְרָה טוֹבָה עַד
מְאֹד וַחֲכָמָה וַיֹּדַעַת לִנְגֹן בְּכִנּוֹר.
וַיִּקְרְאוּ אֵלֶיהָ וַתְּבוֹא אֲלֵיהֶם וַתִּשָּׂק
לָהֶם, וַיִּקְחוּהָ וַיִּתְּנוּ לָהּ כִּנּוֹר אֶחָד
לֵאמֹר, בּוֹאֵי נָא לִפְנֵי אָבִינוּ וְנִשְׁכַּחַת
לִפְנֵינוּ, וְהָיָה בְּכִנּוֹר וּדְבָרָתָהּ וְאָמַרְתָּ
כְּדִבְרֵימֵי הָאֵלֶּה לִפְנֵינוּ...

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE >>

She played the harp beautifully, and she sang in the sweetness of her voice, "My uncle Yosef is alive and ruling over all of Egypt; he is not dead..."

Yaakov heard her words, and they were sweet to him. When he heard her sing it twice and three times, his heart was filled with joy from the sweetness of her voice. The spirit of God came over him, and he knew that all her words were true.

Yaakov blessed Serah for singing these words before him, and he said, "My daughter, because you brought new life to my spirit, you will never die."

וַתִּיטֵב הַכְנֹר וַתִּגָּן וַתֹּאמֶר בְּנֵעַם
דְּבָרֶיהָ, יוֹסֵף דּוֹדִי חַי הוּא וְכִי הוּא
מִשָּׁל בְּכָל אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְלֹא מֵת...

וַיִּשְׁמַע יַעֲקֹב אֶת דְּבָרֶיהָ וַיַּעֲרֵב לוֹ.
וַיִּשְׁמַע עוֹד בְּדָבָרָהּ פַּעַמִּים וּשְׁלוֹשׁ,
וַתְּבֹא הַשְׂמֵחָה בְּלֵב יַעֲקֹב מִנֵּעַם
דְּבָרֶיהָ וַתְּהִי עָלָיו רוּחַ אֱלֹקִים
וַיֵּדַע כִּי כָּל דְּבָרֶיהָ נִכּוֹנָה.

וַיְבָרֵךְ יַעֲקֹב אֶת שָׂרָה בְּדָבָרָהּ
הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה לְפָנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ,
בְּתִי אַל יִמָּשָׁל מוֹת בְּךָ עַד עוֹלָם כִּי
הַחַיִּית אֶת רוּחִי.

- According to this midrash, what was special about Serah's actions that made her deserve this reward? Why did the brothers need her help to break the news to Yaakov?
- What are other times when it's important to be sensitive not only to what words a person says, but to the way those words come out?
- How does music help Serah and Yaakov in this midrash?



פְּרִשְׁנוֹת • Commentary

בְּנוֹת צִלְפָּחַד (benot Tzelofhad, the daughters of Tzelofhad) have a question for Moshe:



Bemidbar 27:3-5

"Our father died in the wilderness. He was not one of Korah's crowd who rebelled against God. He died for his own sin; and he had no sons.

Why should our father's name be lost to his family just because he had no son? Let us inherit the land for our father's family!"

Moshe brought their case before God.

במדבר כז:ג-ה

אָבִינוּ מֵת בַּמִּדְבָּר וְהוּא לֹא הָיָה בְּתוֹךְ
הָעֵדָה הַנוֹעֲדִים עַל ה' בַּעֲדַת קֶרַח כִּי
בְּחַטָּאוֹ מֵת וּבָנִים לֹא הָיוּ לוֹ:

לָמָּה יִגְרַע שֵׁם אָבִינוּ מִתּוֹךְ מִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ
כִּי אֵין לוֹ בֶּן תָּנָה לָנוּ אַחֲזָה בְּתוֹךְ
אֲחֵי אָבִינוּ:

וַיִּקְרַב מֹשֶׁה אֶת־מִשְׁפָּטָן לִפְנֵי ה':

Our פְּרָשָׁנִים (parshanim, commentators) wonder:
Why did Moshe have to bring this question to God?
Was he really stumped?



Rabbeinu Behaye (Spain, 700 years ago)

Some have explained that it's because benot Tzelofhad revealed that their father was not part of Korah's rebellion. Moshe understood that if he were to judge this case himself, he might not judge truthfully, because this information could be like a bribe.

רבנו בחיי

יֵשׁ שֶׁפִּרְשׁוּ כִּי כִּיּוֹן שֶׁגִּלּוּ בְּנוֹת
צִלְפַּחַד בְּטַעֲנָתָן שֶׁלֹּא הָיָה אָבִיהֶן
מֵעֵדֶת שׁוֹנְאָיו שֶׁל מֹשֶׁה, הָיָה בָּזָה
קְרוֹב הַדַּעַת לְמֹשֶׁה, וְאֵלּוּ הָיָה דָּו אֶת
דִּיבְנוּ הָיָה כְּאֵלּוּ נוֹטֵל שֹׁחַד דְּבָרִים.

- ◆ When someone tells you they are your friend, would it be easy to be a judge over a question they were involved in? Would you be able to tell them "no" if you had to?



Rashi (France, 1,000 years ago)

This section should have been written by Moshe (like most laws in the Torah, which are taught by Moshe, to the people, without anyone else involved).

But benot Tzelofhad were given a reward, and the section was written because of them.

רש"י

רְאוּיָה הָיְתָה פְּרָשָׁה זוֹ
לְהַכְתֵּב עַל יְדֵי מֹשֶׁה.
אֲלֹא שֶׁזָּכוּ בְּנוֹת צִלְפַּחַד
וּנְכֻתָּהָ עַל יָדוֹ.



- ◆ Look back at pesukim 3-5 above. What do you think benot Tzelofhad did to deserve this reward?
- ◆ It probably took a lot of courage for benot Tzelofhad to ask their question in front of Moshe, Aharon, and all the other leaders! Do you ever not ask a question, maybe because you're afraid of what people might think? What might benot Tzelofhad tell you in that situation?



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



הלכה • Halakhah



This time of year, between the fast days of 17 Tammuz and 9 Av, is a sad time on the Jewish calendar. It's sometimes called "the three weeks," or בֵּין הַמְּצָרִים (Bein Ha-Metzarim), which means "between the bad things"—like you're trapped.

These "bad things" are listed in the Mishnah (Ta'anit 4:6). On 17 Tammuz, the Jewish people experienced five tragedies, including the walls of Jerusalem being broken by the Romans. On 9 Av, there were also five bad things that happened in Jewish history, including the destruction of the first and the second בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ (Beit Ha-Mikdash, Temple in Jerusalem).

There are many customs that express the sadness of this time. Some apply to the whole three weeks, and others are observed during the week in which 9 Av falls (or sometimes for the first nine days of the month of Av).

1 Special Haftarot

- ◆ Each Shabbat during the three weeks, we read a haftarah connected to the destruction of the Beit Ha-Mikdash (Orah Hayyim 428:8). (See Haftarah section, p. 10.)



2 Eating Meat and Drinking Wine

- ◆ While the Mishnah forbids eating meat and drinking wine on the eve of 9 Av, there is a custom to extend this to the whole nine days period, or to the week in which 9 Av falls.



Washing and Haircuts

- ◆ The Mishnah (Ta'anit 4:7) says people shouldn't get a haircut or wash their clothes during the week in which 9 Av falls. This is the custom of many who follow the Shulhan Arukh (Orah Hayyim 551:3).

- ◆ However, many people in Ashkenazi communities don't get haircuts for the entire three weeks, following the Rema's opinion (Orah Hayyim 551:4).



Joyful Activities

- ◆ It's common to avoid scheduling weddings in the three weeks, and to take a break from attending concerts with live music, or other public festive events. In the nine days, people cut back on even more fun activities, like swimming or traveling.
- ◆ The Shulhan Arukh (Orah Hayyim 551:17) says not to buy new clothes or eat new fruit during the three weeks. That's because it's appropriate to say a שְׁהֵיְהָנוּ (sheheheyanu) blessing for these new things, and that blessing is itself a kind of celebration.



רֵעַ שֶׁל עֵבְרִית • A Moment of Hebrew

Bemidbar 26:53

Among these shall the land **be divided** into shares, according to the listed names.

במדבר כו:נג

לְאֵלֶּה תִּחְלַק הָאָרֶץ בְּנִחְלָה בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמוֹת:

לְחַלֵּק (שָׂרַשׁ ח.ל.ק.)

- ◆ To distribute
- ◆ To divide (lehaleik)

= מַחְלֻקֶּת

Disagreement (mahloket)





דְּבָרָה שֶׁל דִּיּוּ • 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: There's no such thing as a bad question.



Agree!

- ♦ It's ok not to know something. Everyone starts from somewhere.
- ♦ How else are we going to learn?
- ♦ You never know until you ask.



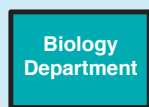
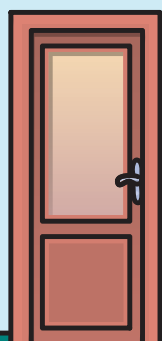
Disagree!

- ♦ It can be a good idea to do a little thinking for yourself first. Then you are more likely to ask a good question.
- ♦ Take, for example, "Is this question a bad question?" Is that actually a good question? No! Not all questions are created equal.

= מַחְלָקָה
Department, unit, or division
(mahlakah)

= חֵלְקִיק
Particle (helkik)

= חֲלֻקָּה
Distribution
(halukah)



Find the Word!

A mishnah in Pirkei Avot (4:1) asks, "Who is happy?" Look it up to find the answer, which contains a word from this שָׁרֵשׁ (shoresh, root)! Do you agree with this mishnah's answer? Or would you come up with a different answer?



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) Bemidbar 25:10 to 26:4
- 2) 26:5 to 26:51
- 3) 26:52 to 27:5
- 4) 27:6 to 27:23
- 5) 28:1 to 28:15
- 6) 28:16 to 29:11
- 7) 29:12 to 30:1

Good luck!

1 What were the names of the two people struck down by Pinhas?

2 What happened to Korah's sons?

3 Who was Tirtzah, and why is she mentioned?

4 According to the Torah, if a man has no children at all, who inherits from him when he dies?



5 When did Benei Yisrael first start offering the עֹלַת תָּמִיד (olat tammid, twice-daily olah sacrifice)?

6 What is Shavuot called in our parashah?

7 What was the total number of bulls offered over all seven days of Sukkot?

8 In the count of Benei Yisrael in our parashah, which tribe is the smallest?

9 Who was Asher's daughter?

*
Look for the answers on page 12!

10 On which three special days was the עֹלָה (olah, burnt offering) supposed to be one bull, one ram, and seven lambs?





Zakeif Gadol זָקֵיף גָּדוֹל

This week we get a bit of a fancier note. First of all, it looks fancier! Zakeif gadol (a big zakeif) features a zakeif katon (a little zakeif) on the right and then a straight line to its left. This looks bigger than a zakeif katon, and it sounds bigger too. People sing this one lots of different ways, but it usually goes up strongly and boldly before coming down in steps. Zakeif gadol means a “big, standing up” note. You usually get a bunch in each parashah, and they give the words they are on a special feel, designed to make you pay attention. Sometimes, like in our parashah, they help structure long lists. So, when we hear about all the heads of families in the counting of Benei Yisrael, we get lots of phrases like this:



Quick Facts

1

How many times does it appear in the Torah?

525—Unusual
Approximately every 12 pesukim

2

Does it end a musical phrase?

Yes

3

Is it above or below the word?

Above

4

Where is it placed on the word?

On the accent

במדבר כו:ו

לְחֶצְרֹן מִשְׁפַּחַת הַחֶצְרֹנִי

Bemidbar 26:6

Of Hetzron, the family of
Hetzronites...

This line is part of a long list of families, but the zakeif gadol is meant to help break it up and keep it special. Listen up!



Before or
after Shabbat,
scan to hear this
zakeif gadol!

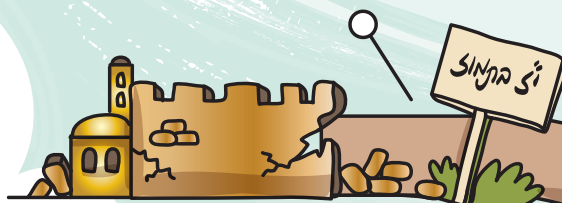




הַפְּטָרָה • Haftarah

Starting this week, we're in a special cycle of ten haftarot that go from 17 Tammuz to Rosh Hashanah. Instead of being about the parashah of the week, the first three are about the destruction of the Beit Ha-Mikdash (building up to 9 Av), and the last seven are about consolation, teshuvah, and redemption (as we move away from 9 Av).

17 Tammuz
Walls of Jerusalem
are breached



Week 1
Pinhas

Week 2
Mattot-Masei

Week 3
Devarim

תלת דפרענותא
Three Haftarot
of Suffering

This Shabbat is called **שַׁבַּת חֲזוֹן** (Shabbat Hazon, Shabbat of Vision), because its haftarah from Yeshayahu begins with the word Hazon, and it describes a very sad vision. This is always read the Shabbat closest to 9 Av.



9 Av
Destruction
of the Temple

Week 1
Va'ethanan

Week 2
Eikev

Week 3
Re'eh

This Shabbat has a special name, **שַׁבַּת נַחֲמוּ** (Shabbat Nahamu, Shabbat of Comfort), because its haftarah from Yeshayahu begins with the words, "Nahamu, Nahamu" (take comfort), and it is an encouragement not to despair because God will forgive and redeem Benei Yisrael.



Rosh Hashanah

שבע דנחמתא
Seven Haftarot
of Comfort

Week 4
Shoftim

Week 5
Ki Teitzei

Week 7
Nitzavim

Week 6
Ki Tavo



• Who Were Our Sages? • כִּי הָיוּ חֲכָמֵינוּ

The most important work of halakhah today is the Shulhan Arukh ("Set Table"). It comes in two parts, both written about 500 years ago. The main work is by **R. Yosef Karo** (also called **the Mehaber** [the author]), but people today study it with a commentary called the Mappah ("Tablecloth"), written by **R. Moshe Isserles** (also called **the Rema**).

R. Karo was born in Spain, but his family was forced to run away when all the Jews of Spain were exiled. He eventually came to Tzfat, a city in Eretz Yisrael, where he became one of the most important teachers of his generation. He spent a long time putting together his notes on Jewish law, eventually writing the Shulhan Arukh as a guide that tells people the bottom-line halakhah.

While R. Karo taught in Eretz Yisrael, R. Isserles was one of the most important teachers in Poland. He was also writing a book of halakhah, but he was such a big fan of the Shulhan

Aruk, he decided to throw his own book away. Still, he knew that a lot of the decisions R. Karo made were specific to Sefaradim, so he added his notes for Ashkenazim into the Shulhan Arukh.



POLAND



ERETZ YISRAEL



מה קורה • What's Going On Here?

God told Moshe to appoint Yehoshua as the next leader of Benei Yisrael, since Yehoshua was אִישׁ אֶשֶׁר רוּחַ בּוֹ (a person of spirit) (Bemidbar 27:18).

What does this mean? Why would this quality make Yehoshua a good leader?

- ◆ Rashi says Yehoshua was able to understand and appreciate the unique character of each and every person.
- ◆ According to Targum Onkelos, the "spirit" means that Yehoshua was a prophet.
- ◆ Ha'amek Davar says that Yehoshua led with a clear perspective. He was not influenced by those around him to act for the wrong reasons, or to benefit himself.



Parashah Scavenger Hunt Answers:

1. Zimri and Kozbi (25:14-15)
2. They did not die during their father's rebellion (26:11)! Korah's descendants seem to have gone on to become famous poets and singers—you can see some of their songs in Sefer Tehillim (e.g., Tehillim 42).
3. She was a daughter of Tzelofhad, who died without any sons. She and her four sisters felt it was unfair to their father that his family would not inherit his land just because all his children were girls (27:1).
4. His brother (27:9)
5. At הַר סִינַי (Har Sinai, Mount Sinai) (28:6)
6. יוֹם הַבִּכּוּרִים (Yom Ha-Bikkurim, the day of first fruits) (28:26)
7. 70 (13+12+11+10+9+8+7) (29:13,17,20,23,26,29,32)
8. The Tribe of Shimon, with 22,200 (26:14)—and they were the third biggest in the count at the beginning of Bemidbar (1:23)!
9. Serah (26:46); she is mentioned both here and among those who went down to Egypt with Yaakov (Bereishit 46:17), leading some midrashim to say she lived hundreds and hundreds of years, or even forever (see Midrash, p. 2)!
10. The first day of the seventh month (Rosh Hashanah) (29:1-2); the tenth day of the seventh month (Yom Kippur) (29:7-8); the eighth day after the 15th of the seventh month (Shemini Atzeret) (29:35-36)

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