- BEMIDBAR
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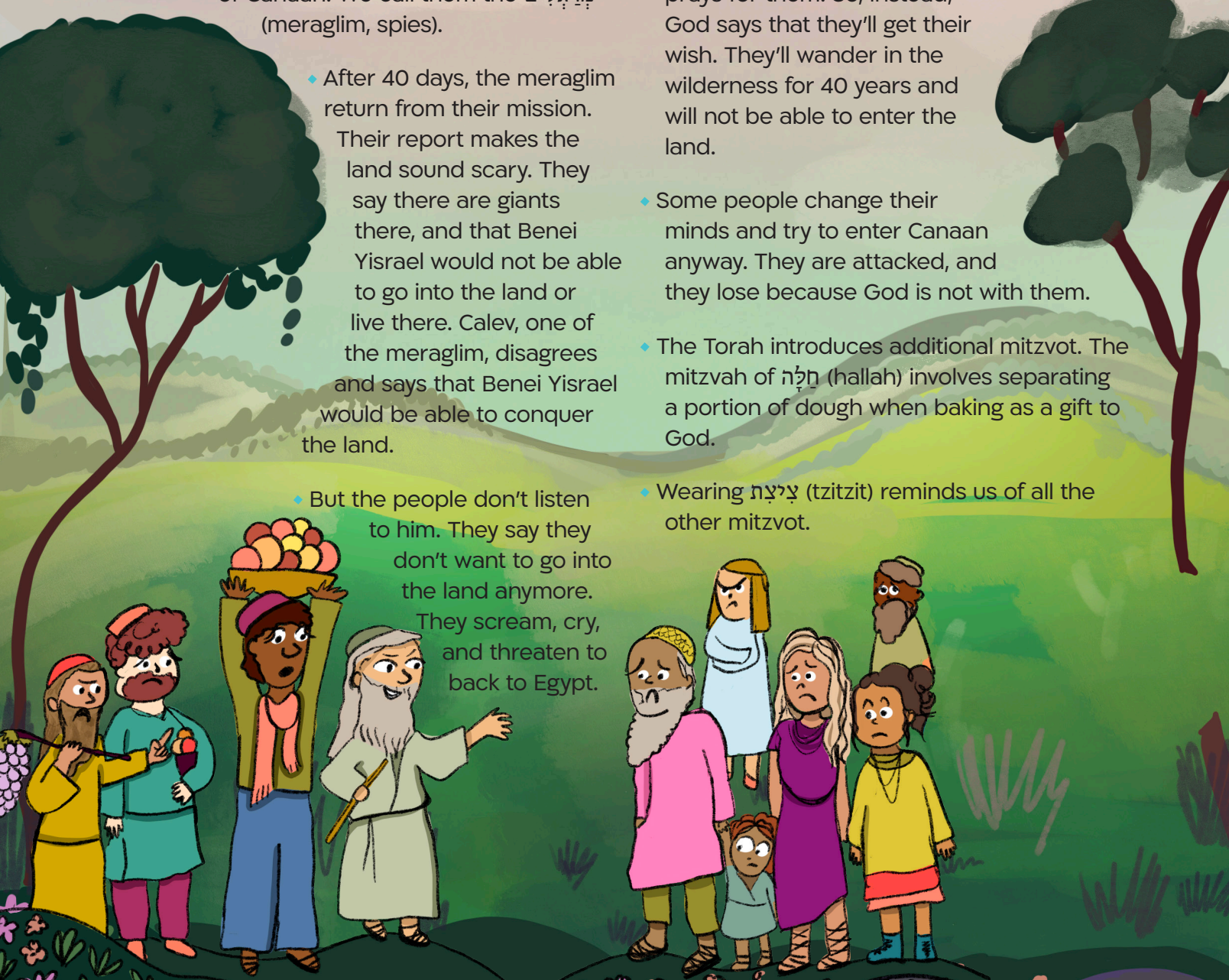
VOLUME 2 ISSUE 36

כ"ב – כ"ח סִיוָן תשפ"ו

June 7–13, 2026

מָה בַּפָּרָשָׁה • In This Week's Parashah

- Moshe sends 12 leaders to check out the Land of Canaan. We call them the מְרַגְּלִים (meraglim, spies).
- After 40 days, the meraglim return from their mission. Their report makes the land sound scary. They say there are giants there, and that Benei Yisrael would not be able to go into the land or live there. Calev, one of the meraglim, disagrees and says that Benei Yisrael would be able to conquer the land.
- But the people don't listen to him. They say they don't want to go into the land anymore. They scream, cry, and threaten to back to Egypt.
- God wants to wipe out Benei Yisrael. Moshe prays for them. So, instead, God says that they'll get their wish. They'll wander in the wilderness for 40 years and will not be able to enter the land.
- Some people change their minds and try to enter Canaan anyway. They are attacked, and they lose because God is not with them.
- The Torah introduces additional mitzvot. The mitzvah of חַלָּה (hallah) involves separating a portion of dough when baking as a gift to God.
- Wearing צִיצִת (tzitzit) reminds us of all the other mitzvot.



פְּשַׁט הַפְּסוּקִים • Understanding the Verses

This is the first report that the מְרַגְּלִים (meraglim, spies) share about the Land of Canaan:

Bemidbar 13:27-28	**במדבר יג:כז-כח**
This is what they told him: "We came to the land where you sent us; it does flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit.	וַיְסַפְּרוּ לוֹ וַיֹּאמְרוּ בָּאנוּ אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר שְׁלַחְתָּנוּ וְגַם זָבַת חָלָב וּדְבַשׁ הִוא וְזֶה פִּרְיָהּ׃
However, the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We also saw the Anakites there."	אֶפֶס כִּי עַז הָעָם הַיֹּשֵׁב בָּאָרֶץ וְהֶעָרִים בְּצֻרוֹת גְּדֹלֹת מְאֹד וְגַם יְלִדֵי הָעֲנָק רָאִינוּ שָׁם׃

- What do you notice, and what are you wondering about?
- The meraglim seem to be speaking to only one person. Who do you think it is? Why?
- Which parts of this report do you think are positive, and which parts do you think are negative? Are the meraglim just reporting facts, or are there parts that are opinion?



- At the end of this story, Benei Yisrael refuse to enter the land and God punishes them with 40 years of wandering in the desert. Based on what the meraglim share in these pesukim, could the story have gone in a different direction? How could Benei Yisrael have responded to this report?
- As you read the rest of the story of the meraglim, try to identify what were the main moments when things really started to go wrong for the meraglim and for Benei Yisrael!



מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash

The sin of the מְרַגְּלִים (meraglim, spies) gets a super-harsh punishment! Here it is, in God's words:

Bemidbar 14:22-23

"None of the people who saw My Presence and the miracles that I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness,
who tested Me so many times and didn't listen to Me—

They will not see the land that I promised to their ancestors. No one who rejected Me shall see it."

במדבר יד:כב-כג

כִּי כָל הָאֲנָשִׁים הָרֹאִים אֶת כְּבֹדִי וְאֶת אֹתֹתַי אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי בְּמִצְרַיִם וּבַמִּדְבָּר
וַיְנַסּוּ אֹתִי זֶה עֶשֶׂר פְּעָמִים וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹלִי:

אִם יִרְאוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לַאֲבֹתָם
וְכָל מְנַאֲצַי לֹא יִרְאוּהָ:





In these pesukim, God points out that Benei Yisrael have disobeyed many times already! So why is this the time they're punished to not enter Eretz Yisrael? What was uniquely terrible about the sin of the meraglim?

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

The Mishnah (Arkhin 3:5) explains that this was Benei Yisrael's worst sin yet because it was לָשׁוֹן הָרַע (lashon hara, slander). We see from here that it's even considered lashon hara to speak badly about a place!

In the Gemara, R. Elazar ben Parta comments on this idea in the Mishnah.

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Talmud Bavli Arkhin 15a

It was taught: R. Elazar ben Parta says: Come and see the power of lashon hara. How do we know this? From the meraglim. If saying bad things about trees and rocks gets such a harsh punishment, how much worse it must be to say bad things about another person.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת ערכין דף טו עמוד א

תַּנְיָא אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן פַּרְטָא בּא וּרְאֵה כַּמָּה גָּדוֹל כֹּחַ שֶׁל לְשׁוֹן הָרָע. מִמְּנָּלַן? מִמְּרַגְּלִים, וּמָה הַמּוֹצִיא שֵׁם רַע עַל עֵצִים וַאֲבָנִים כָּךְ, הַמּוֹצִיא שֵׁם רַע עַל חֲבֵרוֹ עַל אַחַת כַּמָּה וְכַמָּה.

- What power do our words have? What's the problem with saying bad things about trees and rocks?
- Have you ever visited somewhere and it wasn't what you hoped it would be like? How are we supposed to talk about experiences like that? Why?
- Why does R. Elazar point out that it's worse to say bad things about people? How so?
- Has anybody ever spoken lashon hara about you? How did that feel?



פַּרְשָׁנוּת • Commentary

Bemidbar 13:2

Send people **to scout** the Land of Canaan...

במדבר יג:ב

שְׁלַח לְךָ אֲנָשִׁים **וְיָתֻרוּ** אֶת אֶרֶץ כְּנַעַן...

Why did God and Moshe send the מְרַגְּלִים (meraglim, spies)? The Torah doesn't tell us exactly. Can you think of a few possible reasons?

Here are answers from two פַּרְשָׁנִים (parshanim, commentators). Each understands the verb לָתוּר (latur, to scout)—which we highlighted in the pasuk above—in a different way.

Ha'amek Davar (Eastern Europe, 150 years ago)

The meaning is: one who goes to see which place is best (tov yoter) to conquer.

העמק דבר

הַהוֹלֵךְ לִרְאוֹת אֵיזֶה מָקוֹם טוֹב יוֹתֵר לִכְבּשׁ.

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Keli Yakar (Prague, 400 years ago)

God wanted to show Benei Yisrael the advantage (yitron) of Eretz Yisrael over all other lands.

כלי יקר

רָצָה הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא לְהַרְאוֹת לָהֶם יִתְרוֹן הָאָרֶץ עַל כָּל הָאֲרָצוֹת.

- Look at Moshe's instructions in Bemidbar 13:17-20. See if you can find evidence there for Ha'amek Davar and for Keli Yakar. What words is each parshan noticing?

במדבר יג:יז-כ

...עֲלוּ זֶה בַּנֶּגֶב וַעֲלִיתֶם אֶת הָהָר:

וּרְאִיתֶם אֶת הָאָרֶץ מַה הִוא
וְאֶת הָעָם הַיֹּשֵׁב עָלֶיהָ הֶחָזָק הוּא הָרָפֶה הַמְעַט הוּא אִם רָב:

וּמָה הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר הוּא יֹשֵׁב בָּהּ הֲטוֹבָה הִוא אִם רָעָה
וּמָה הֶעָרִים אֲשֶׁר הוּא יוֹשֵׁב בָּהֶנָּה הַבְּמַחֲנִים אִם בְּמִבְצָרִים:

וּמָה הָאָרֶץ הַשְּׁמֶנָה הִוא אִם רָזָה הֲיֵשׁ בָּהּ עֵץ אִם אַיִן וְהִתְחַזַּקְתֶּם וּלְקַחְתֶּם מִפְּרִי הָאָרֶץ...

Bemidbar 13:17-20

"Go up there into the Negev and to the hill country.

See what kind of land it is.
Are the people who live there strong or weak, few or many?

Is the land where they live good or bad?
Are the towns they live in open or fortified?
Is the soil rich or poor? Are there trees or not?
And be careful to bring back some fruit of the land."



- According to each parshan, what was going to be the next step after the meraglim came back?
- Both interpretations use a word that could be from a similar שֹׁרֶשׁ (shoresh, root) as latur: יוֹתֵר (yoter, more) in Ha'amek Davar and יִתְרוֹן (yitron, advantage) in Keli Yakar. Why do you think they each looked for a word like this? How does this strengthen their argument for what the meraglim were looking for?



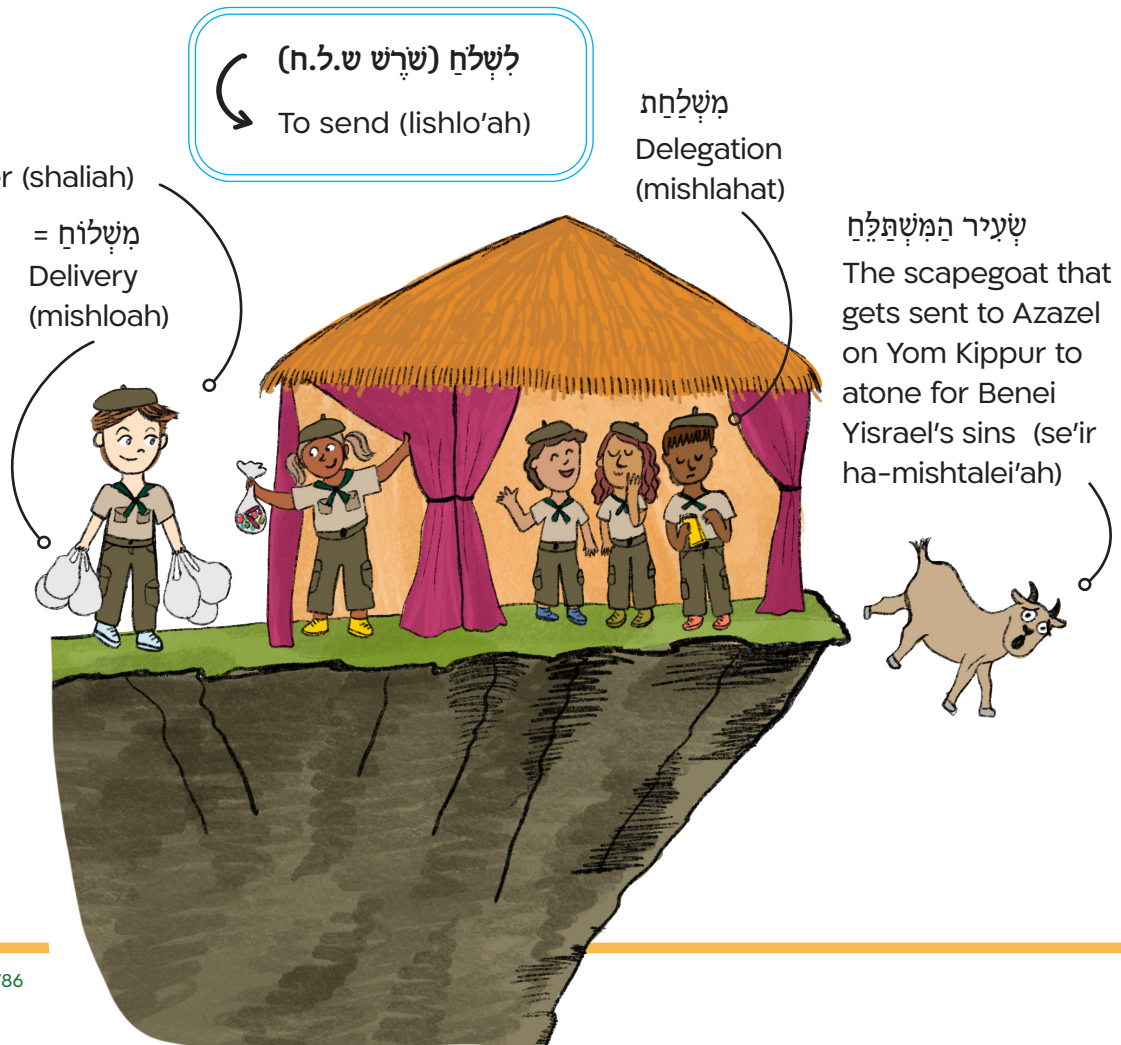
רֶגַע שֶׁל עִבְרִית • A Moment of Hebrew

Bemidbar 13:2

במדבר יג:ב

Send people to scout the Land of Canaan, which I am giving to Benei Yisrael; **send** one person from each of their tribes, each one a chief among them.

שְׁלַח לְךָ אֲנָשִׁים וְיָתֻרוּ אֶת אֶרֶץ כְּנַעַן
אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ אֶחָד אִישׁ
אֶחָד לְמַטֵּה אֲבֹתָיו תִּשְׁלָחוּ כֹּל נָשִׂיא בָהֶם:



Find the Word!

When Moshe asks Pharaoh to send Benei Yisrael out of Egypt, he uses this שֹׁרֶשׁ (shoresh, root) over and over. How many times can you find it in Shemot 5:1-2?

aliyot:
1) Bemidbar 13:1 to 13:20
2) 13:21 to 14:7
3) 14:8 to 14:25
4) 14:26 to 15:7
5) 15:8 to 15:16
6) 15:17 to 15:26
7) 15:27 to 15:41

haftarah: Yehoshua 2:1-24

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 changes whose name?

2. Who is most enthusiastic about Benei Yisrael's ability to inherit the land?

3. Which of the Ten Plagues from מִצְרַיִם (Mitzrayim, Egypt) does God threaten to send against Benei Yisrael?

4. Who will die during the years that Benei Yisrael wander in the wilderness?



5. If a גֵּר (ger, stranger) lives among Benei Yisrael, what rules should they follow when bringing a קָרְבָּן (korban, sacrifice)?

6. When must Benei Yisrael begin offering תְּרוּמָה (terumah)?



7. What does a person do in violation of Shabbat?

8. Who is described as being like grasshoppers?

9. How many times was God tested by Benei Yisrael?

10. **From the haftarah:** When they eventually enter the land, how will Benei Yisrael know where to find Rahav?

* Look for the answers on page 11!

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הֲלָכָה • Halakhah

This week's parashah talks about צִיצִת (tzitzit). It's a great chance to review some of the rules for these fringes!

Tekhelet: The Torah says tzitzit should have a string the color of תְּכֵלֶת (tekhelet), a shade of blue dye made from the חִלָּזוֹן (hilazon) snail. For many hundreds of years, the way to make this special tekhelet dye was lost, so people only wore white strings. Mishnah Menahot 4:1 says that if you don't have tekhelet you should still wear all-white tzitzit. In recent years, the way to make the old dye was rediscovered. Many people have started putting these blue strings back into their tzitzit, while others have continued the tradition of wearing all white. Look around and see what people in your community are doing!

In or out? The Torah tells us that the main point of wearing tzitzit is to see the fringes and be reminded of the mitzvot. So we wear a טַלִּית (tallit, prayer shawl) over our clothing, and it's easy to see. But what about for a טַלִּית קָטָן (tallit katan, little tallit), the kind of tzitzit that many people wear under their clothing? Do the strings on their corners need to be tucked out so they're visible, or can they be tucked in?

Some say of course they need to be out because the whole point is to see them! (See Shulhan Arukh OH 8:11; Mishnah Berurah 8:26.) But many Jews always wore a tallit katan under their clothes and, after all, you do see the strings when you get dressed. Building on this practice, some say that it's better for a tallit katan to be a more private mitzvah between you and God (Yehaveh Da'at 2:1).

Tightening on Shabbat: Sometimes the strings of tzitzit become loose and they need to be tightened. It's good to keep your tzitzit tied tight so the knots don't unravel! But on Shabbat, when we avoid tying knots, we should be careful not to tighten them (Ketzot HaShulhan 123:4). If you notice your tzitzit getting loose on Shabbat, it's best to wait and fix it on Saturday night or Sunday morning.





דַּקָּה שֶׁל דִּיּוּן • One-Minute Debate

Debate: You should always look on the bright side of life.

The report brought by the מְרַגְּלִים (meraglim, spies) contained both positives and negatives. But Benei Yisrael focused on the bad parts and panicked (14:1).

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.





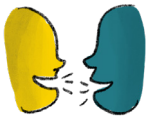
Agree!

- Having a positive perspective makes life easier.
- The glass is half full, not half empty!
- We're supposed to judge favorably (Pirkei Avot 1:6).



Disagree!

- There is such a thing as too much optimism. You can't ignore the truth before your eyes.
- Honesty is the best policy.
- The best way to overcome challenges is not to be in denial about them, but to acknowledge and face them.



בּוֹאוּ נְדַבֵּר עַל זֶה • Tell Me More About This!



Trees and stones are inanimate objects. They aren't alive, and they don't have feelings. So you might have been a little surprised that R. Elazar says that it was a problem for the מְרַגְּלִים (meraglim, spies) to speak badly about these things! (See Midrash section, p. 3.)

Here's another place that the Rabbis seem to show concern for inanimate objects. In the Gemara, Rava teaches that if you drink water from a well, you aren't supposed to throw a stone into that well (Bava Kamma 92b). Why not?

שיטה מקובצת

הַבּוֹר שֶׁשָּׁתִיתָ מִמֶּנּוּ לֹא תַּשְׁלִיךְ בּוֹ אֶבֶן אוֹ דָּבָר אַחֵר: כְּלוֹמַר לֹא תְּזַלְזֵל בּוֹ וְלֹא תִּגְמֹל אוֹתוֹ רַע אַחַר שֶׁנִּתְהַנֵּיתָ מִמֶּנּוּ.

וְזֶה עַל דֶּרֶךְ מָשָׁל לִשְׁאָר הַדְּבָרִים שֶׁמִּי שֶׁבָּא לָאָדָם מִמֶּנּוּ אֵיזוֹ תּוֹעֶלֶת אוֹ נֶהֱנָה מִמֶּנּוּ אֵין רָאוּי לוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת שׁוּם מַעֲשֶׂה שֶׁיָּבֹא לוֹ נֶזֶק מִמֶּנּוּ.

Shita Mekubetzet (Eretz Yisrael, 500 years ago)

Don't throw a stone or anything else into a well that you drank from: This means don't disrespect the well or treat it badly after you benefited from it.

This applies to all other things. If a person gets any productive use or benefit from any source, it's not appropriate to do anything that would cause harm to it.



The Shita Mekubetzet connects this idea to midrashim about why Aharon and not Moshe hit the river and the earth to bring about the first three plagues in Mitzrayim. According to these midrashim, Moshe couldn't hit the river because he wanted to show it gratitude for saving him when he was a baby. He couldn't hit the earth because he wanted to show it gratitude for helping him hide the body of the Egyptian he killed. (See Shemot Rabbah 9:10 and 10:7.)

Our most important values—like being grateful or speaking kindly—are so important that they have to be in our personalities. That way, our behavior will reflect those values all the time no matter what we're doing or who we're with, whether we're interacting with other people or with objects that don't have feelings!



Parashah Scavenger Hunt Answers:

1. Moshe changes the name Hoshea to Yehoshua (13:16)
2. Calev (13:30)
3. דֶּבֶר (dever, disease) (14:12)
4. Everyone who is over the age of 20 at the time of the מְרַגְּלִים (meraglim, spies), with the exception of Calev and Yehoshua (14:29-30)
5. The exact same rules that Benei Yisrael have to follow (15:15-16)
6. Once they enter the land where God is bringing them (15:18)
7. Gather wood (15:32)
8. The meraglim, when they imagine how they looked in the eyes of the giants (13:33)
9. Ten times (14:22)
10. She will tie a red thread from her window (Yehoshua 2:18-21)

- How does having kindness or gratitude in your personality change your behavior? How do you treat your things, and how can you treat them in a way that shows good values?
- How is showing gratitude to an object similar to not speaking lashon hara about an object?
- Can you think of some unexpected times or ways that you could express your values? How might that feel?

תְּפִלָּה • Prayer in the Parashah

The third paragraph of Shema comes from our parashah, and it's the part of the Torah where Bnei Yisrael are commanded to attach צִיצִת (tzitzit) to the corners of their garments.

In Shaharit, right before you say Shema, there's a custom to gather your tzitzit in your hand while you say these words:



In this action, we connect our tzitzit, which are sometimes called אַרְבַּע כַּנְפוֹת (arba kanfot, four corners), with a prayer that God should bring us together in unity from the four corners of the earth.

There are some other actions in tefillah connected to tzitzit, too. When you mention the word "tzitzit" in Shema, there's a custom to kiss your tzitzit (see Yafe LeLev – Rahamim b. Hayim Falaji, SA, OH 24:12). There is an even older custom to look at your tzitzit when you say the words וּרְאִיתֶם אֹתוֹ (ure'item oto, you shall look at it) (Bemidbar 15:39; and see Shulhan Arukh OH 24:4).

- Why do you think we gather, kiss, and look at tzitzit when we mention them in tefillah?
- Can you think of other times that we kiss objects in tefillah? How about looking at objects?
- How does prayer feel different when it comes with a physical action, not just saying words or singing?
- How does it feel to walk around all day with tzitzit knowing that, wherever you are and whatever you are doing, there is a part of tefillah with you?