HADAR Children & Families
VOLUME 2 ISSUE 21

Devash

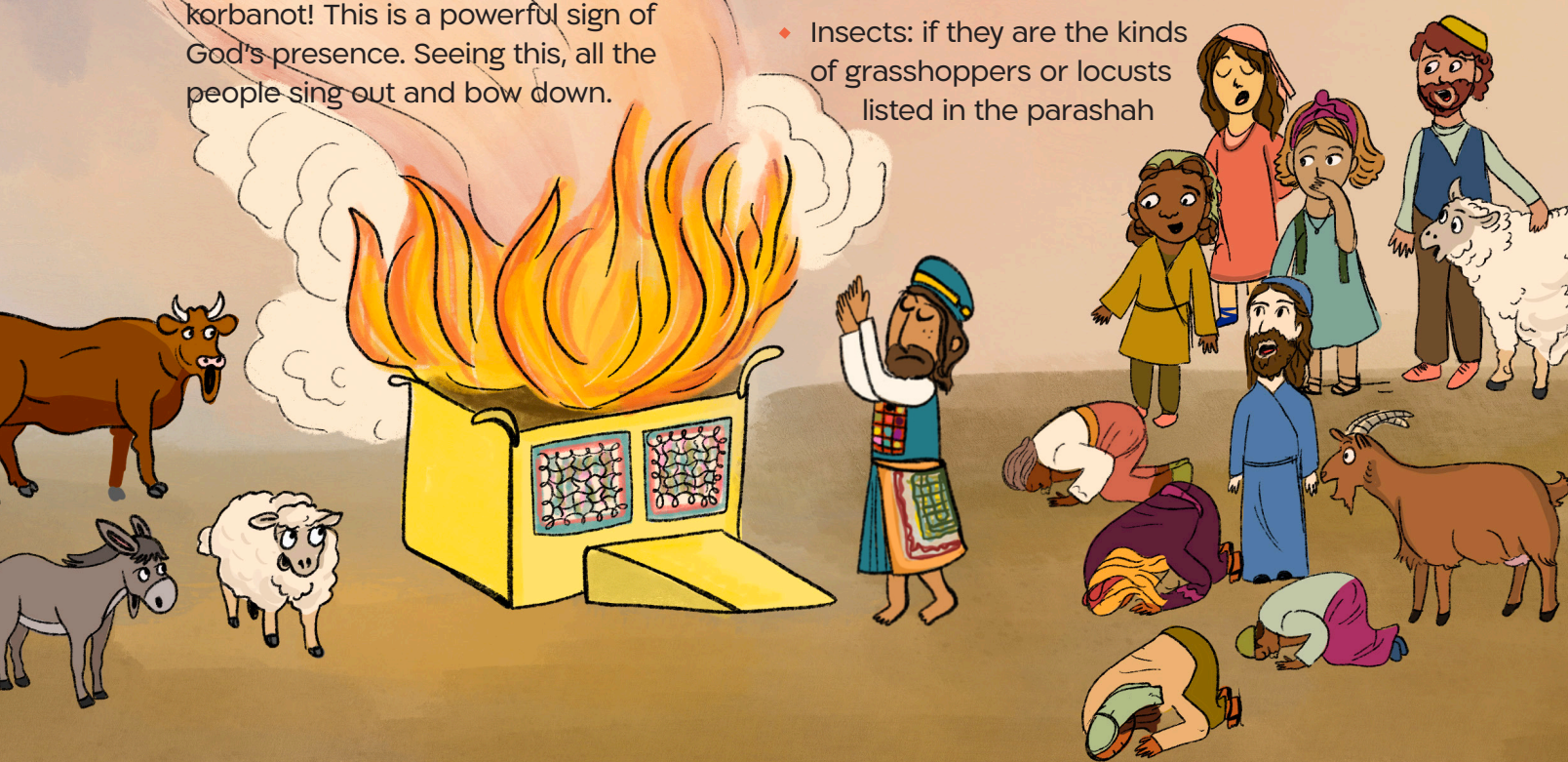
שְׁמִינִי Shemini

Because learning Torah is Sweet.

כ"ג — כ"ד נִיסָן תשפ"ו April 10–11, 2026

מָה בְּפָרָשָׁה • In This Week's Parashah

- Shemini means eighth, and it refers to the day after the seven days of מִלּוּאִים (milluim, inauguration) that we learned about in last week's parashah. It is the first day of the regular routine of using the mishkan.
- Aharon prepares קָרְבָּנוֹת (korbanot, sacrifices), and he and Moshe bless בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (Benei Yisrael, the Israelites).
- A fire from God consumes the korbanot! This is a powerful sign of God's presence. Seeing this, all the people sing out and bow down.
- Nadav and Avihu, two of Aharon's sons, bring a "strange fire" before God. They are consumed by fire. When Aharon finds out, he is silent.
- God teaches the rules about which animals are kosher:
  - Land mammals: if they have split hooves and chew their cud
  - Fish: if they have fins and scales
  - Birds: the Torah lists around 20 birds that are **not** kosher, so any bird not on the list is kosher
  - Insects: if they are the kinds of grasshoppers or locusts listed in the parashah





פְּשַׁט הַפְּסוּקִים • Understanding the Verses

Before or after Shabbat, scan to listen to a discussion of these pesukim on the Shemini episode of TORAH TIME!

God gives Benei Yisrael detailed instructions about which animals they are allowed to eat. Here's the end of this section.

Vayikra 11:46-47

This is the Torah (teaching) about animals, birds, all living creatures that move in water, and all creatures that swarm on the earth.

In order to divide between what is tamei (impure) and what is tahor (pure), and between animals that may be eaten and animals that may not be eaten.

ויקרא יא:מו-מז

זֹאת תּוֹרַת הַבְּהֵמָה וְהָעוֹף
וְכֹל נֶפֶשׁ הַחַיָּה הָרֹמֶשֶׂת בַּמָּיִם
וּלְכָל נֶפֶשׁ הַשֹּׁרֶצֶת עַל הָאָרֶץ:

לְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הַטָּמֵא וּבֵין הַטָּהֹר
וּבֵין הַחַיָּה הַנֶּאֱכֶלֶת
וּבֵין הַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר לֹא תֵאָכֵל:

- What do you wonder about?
- What divisions are described here? What are the different categories? Why are these divisions important? (Look back at Devash for Terumah for more about why we so often divide between things in our religious lives!)



- What can these pesukim tell us about the reasons why it is important to keep the laws about eating kosher animals? What might be other reasons it is important to keep these laws?



- Is it easy to make divisions when you eat (like by not eating something you know you shouldn't)? Why? How can you be mindful of what you eat, both in terms of its כַּשְׁרוּת (kashrut, kosher status) and in terms of its health or impact on the environment?

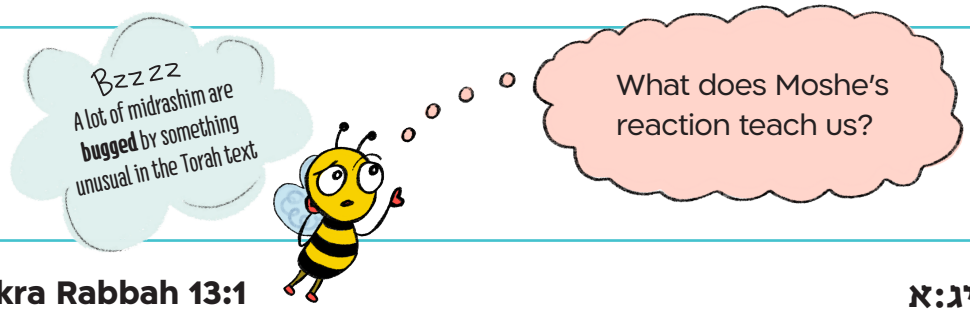
Content and editing by Yitzhak Bronstein, Elie Kaunfer, Chana Kupetz, Shoshie Lockshin, Jeremy Tabick, Ethan Tucker, Effy Unterman. Illustration by Rebecca Kerzner. Design by Jen Klor.

מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash

Moshe gets angry when he thinks that his nephews Elazar and Itamar offered a קָרְבָּן (korban, sacrifice) in the wrong way. But Aharon defends Elazar and Itamar by explaining what they did. Here's Moshe's reaction:

Vayikra 10:20 **ויקרא י:כ**

Moshe heard this and it was good in his eyes. וַיִּשְׁמַע מֹשֶׁה וַיִּיטַב בְּעֵינָיו׃



Vayikra Rabbah 13:1 **ויקרא רבה יג:א**

Moshe sent a proclamation out to the whole camp and said: I made a mistake in understanding the halakhah and my brother Aharon came and taught me (what was right). הוֹצִיא כְּרוֹז לְכָל הַמַּחֲנֶה וְאָמַר, אֲנִי טָעִיתִי אֶת הַהֲלָכָה וְאַהֲרֹן אָחִי בָּא וְלִמֵּד לִי.

This midrash believes that Moshe did more than simply hear Aharon's explanation. Moshe really listened to Aharon; he was truly open to new ideas even if they conflicted with his own. The words וַיִּיטַב בְּעֵינָיו (va-yitav be-einav, and it was good in his eyes) show that Moshe was not upset or resentful about being wrong. He was just happy to know the truth.



- It can be hard to do this kind of listening! Do you think it was difficult for Moshe?
- Why would Moshe want everyone to know he'd been wrong? What was he trying to teach them?
- Some people might feel embarrassed to admit they'd made a mistake. Does it seem that Moshe felt that way? Why do you think he was able to do what he did? What would you say to someone who's feeling bad about admitting a mistake?

פַּרְשָׁנוּת • Commentary

Vayikra 10:1-2

Aharon's sons Nadav and Avihu each took his fire pan, put fire in it, placed a ketoret (incense) offering on it, and offered before God a strange fire which God had not commanded them.

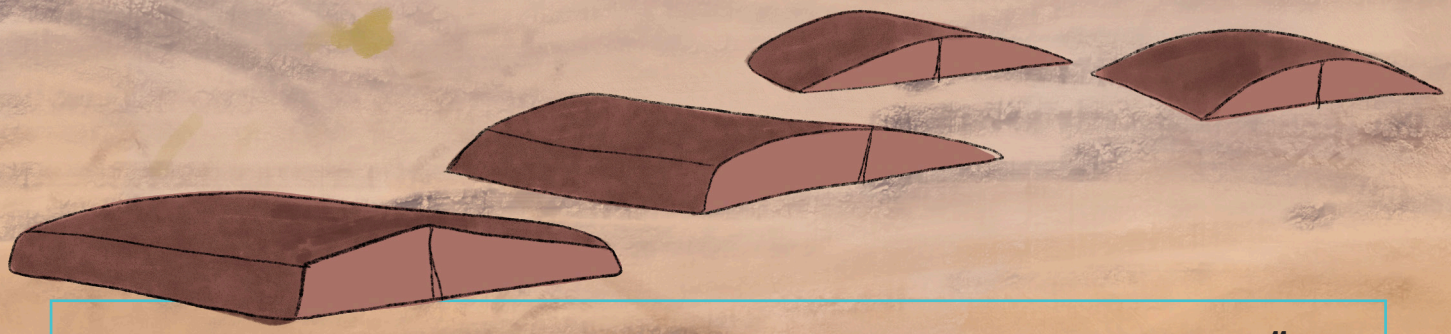
Fire came forth from God and consumed them, and they died before God.

ויקרא י:א-ב

וַיִּקְחוּ בְנֵי אַהֲרֹן נָדָב וַאֲבִיהוּא אִישׁ מַחְתָּתוֹ וַיִּתְּנוּ בָהֵן אֵשׁ וַיָּשִׂימוּ עָלֶיהָ קְטֹרֶת וַיַּקְרִיבוּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֵשׁ זָרָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא צִוָּה אֹתָם:

וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי ה' וַתֹּאכַל אוֹתָם וַיָּמֻתוּ לִפְנֵי ה':

What went wrong here? What exactly was Nadav and Avihu's mistake? Our פַּרְשָׁנִים (parshanim, commentators) offer many explanations. Here are two.



Rashi (France, 1,000 years ago)

R. Yishmael said: They died because they entered the mishkan when they were drunk.

The proof is that, right after their death, God warns the remaining kohanim (priests) not to go into the mishkan when drunk (see 10:8-9).

רש"י

ר' יִשְׁמָעֵאל אוֹמֵר: שְׁתוּיֵי יַיִן נִכְנְסוּ לַמִּקְדָּשׁ. תִּדַּע שֶׁאַחַר מִיתָתָן הִזְהִיר אֶת הַנּוֹתָרִים שֶׁלֹּא יִכָּנְסוּ שְׁתוּיֵי יַיִן.

Drinks with alcohol can affect a person's brain and behavior, and can even be dangerous. Rashi and others notice that God immediately commands Aharon and his children to never go into the mishkan after drinking alcohol.



- There are many other stories in the Torah where drinking wine leads to a bad result. (Some people think the fruit eaten by Adam and Havah was actually grapes for this very reason—because grapes make wine!) What lesson should we be learning here?

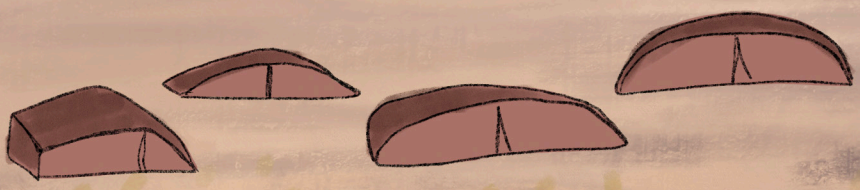
Ha'amek Davar (Eastern Europe, 150 years ago)

They entered with the fire of inspiration from their love of God. The Torah says that love of God is precious in God's eyes, but not when that love is expressed in a way that God didn't command.

העמק דבר

שֶׁנִּכְנְסוּ מֵאֵשׁ הִתְלַהֲבוּת שֶׁל אַהֲבַת ה'. וְאָמְרָה תּוֹרָה דְּאַף עַל גַּב דְּאַהֲבַת ה' יְקָרָה הִיא בְּעֵינֵי ה', אֲבָל לֹא בָּזֶה הַדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר לֹא צִוָּה.

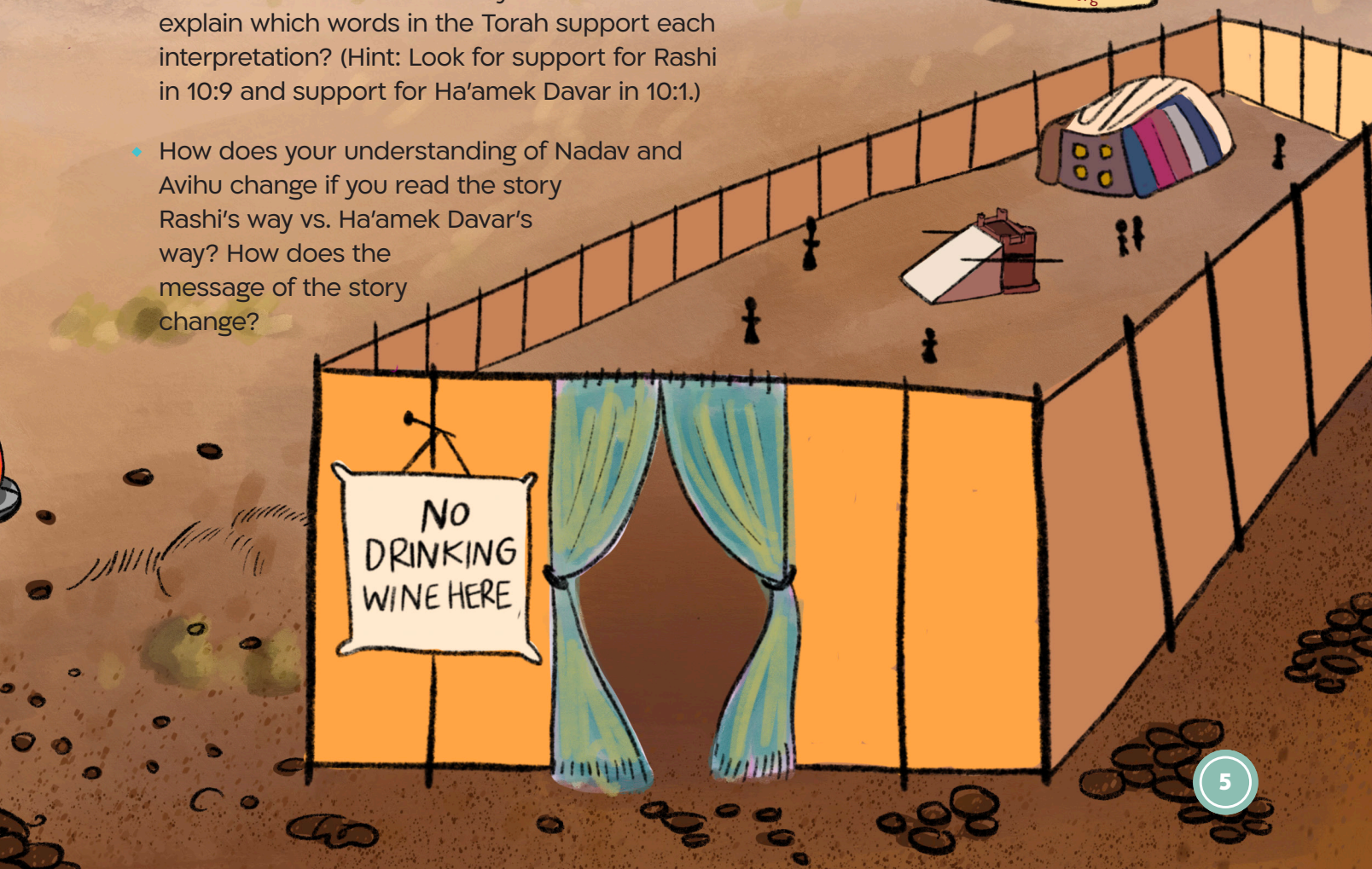
- If Nadav and Avihu had good intentions (because they loved God), what was the problem with inventing their own way to show that?



- Show me the evidence! Can you find and explain which words in the Torah support each interpretation? (Hint: Look for support for Rashi in 10:9 and support for Ha'amek Davar in 10:1.)

- How does your understanding of Nadav and Avihu change if you read the story Rashi's way vs. Ha'amek Davar's way? How does the message of the story change?





aliyot:
1) Vayikra 9:1 to 9:16
2) 9:17 to 9:23
3) 9:24 to 10:11
4) 10:12 to 10:15
5) 10:16 to 10:20
6) 11:1 to 11:32
7) 11:33 to 11:47

haftarah: Shmuel Bet 6:1 to 6:19 for Sefaradim and 6:1 to 7:17 for Ashkenazim

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. What letter in this aliyah is larger than the rest?
2. Who lifts their hands and blesses the people?



3. How were Misha'el and Eltzafan related to Aharon?
4. What were the names of Aharon's sons that stayed alive?
5. What didn't Aharon do that Moshe told him to do?
6. If a שֶׁרֶץ (sheretz, creepy crawly creature) dies and falls on your clothing, how long do you stay טָמֵא (tamei, impure)?



7. What type of sheretz can be eaten?
8. Who gets angry in this parashah?



9. What kind of divisions are emphasized in this parashah?
10. **From the haftarah:** How does Uzza die?

* Look for the answers on page 10!

GET DEVASH IN THE MAIL!
hadar.org/devash
הדר HADAR TORAH · AVODAH · HESED
HADAR Children & Families



רֶגַע שֶׁל עִבְרִית • A Moment of Hebrew

Vayikra 10:16

ויקרא י:טז

Then Moshe **inquired** about the goat of the sin offering, and it had already been burned! He was angry with Elazar and Italmar, Aharon's remaining sons, and said...

וְאֵת שְׂעִיר הַחַטָּאת **דָּרֹשׁ דָּרַשׁ** מֹשֶׁה
וְהִנֵּה שָׂרֹף וַיִּקְצֹף עַל אֶלְעָזָר וְעַל
אִיתָמָר בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן הַנּוֹתָרִם לֵאמֹר:

לִדְרֹשׁ (שֹׁרֶשׁ ד.ר.ש)

To demand, to inquire, require, or desire (lidrosh)



A place of Torah study

דִּרִישׁוֹת תַּפְקִיד = Job requirements (derishot tafkid)

מוֹדַעַת דְּרוּשִׁים = Classified ad (moda'at derushim)

דִּרִישַׁת שָׁלוֹם (ד"ש) = Regards or greetings (derishat shalom)

מִדְרָשׁ = Midrash

דְּרִישָׁה וַחֲקִירָה = Investigation (derishah va-hakirah)

Find the Word!

There are several examples in the Torah where this שֹׁרֶשׁ (shoresh, root) is used when people seek an answer or guidance from God. One of the most well known examples is when Rivkah is pregnant with twins who are struggling within her. Can you find it in Bereishit 25? (Hint: Start looking at the beginning of Parashat Toldot, 25:19).

הַפְטָרָה • Haftarah

After Benei Yisrael arrive in Eretz Yisrael, the mishkan is set up in Shiloh. Eventually, the Pelishtim fight a war against them, and steal the אָרוֹן (aron, ark). King David is able to recapture it, but he wants to bring it to Yerushalayim in order to start building the בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ (Beit Ha-Mikdash, Holy Temple) there.

Copyright (c) 2026 by Hadar | Devash: Shemini 2026 by Hadar is licensed under a Creative Commons. Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

So David places the aron on a wagon and he and his troops lead it towards Yerushalayim, rejoicing along the way. Then a disaster happens. The animals pulling the wagon stumble, and a man named Uzzah grabs the aron. But that is not allowed, and God kills Uzzah.

David is scared to keep moving the aron right away. He stores it in the home of Oved-Edom. But a couple months later, David tries again. This time he's successful. The aron makes it all the way to Yerushalayim in a joyful parade.

How's this story connected to Parashat Shemini? Think about it before you read on!

A midrash notices that there are disasters in both our parashah and our haftarah, and these disasters have some similarities. The midrash suggests that both disasters caused Benei Yisrael to complain.

Tanhuma Beshallah 21

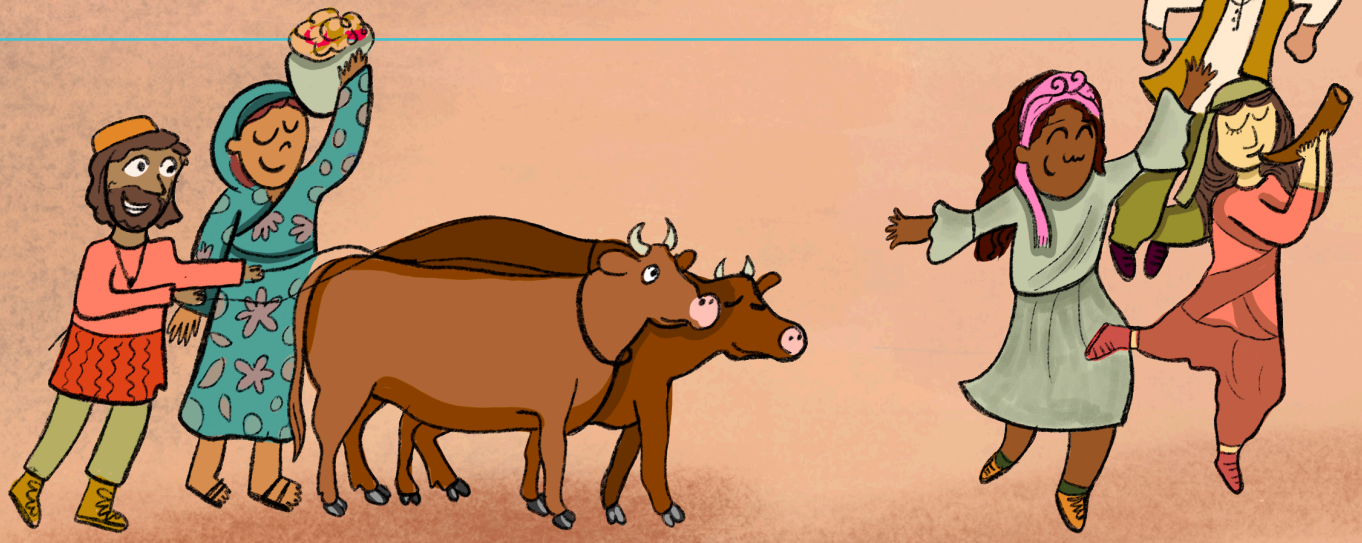
Benei Yisrael complained that the ketoret (incense) caused punishment, because it killed Nadav and Avihu. That's why God showed Benei Yisrael that ketoret actually brings forgiveness, as it says: "And he (Aharon) placed the ketoret, and gained forgiveness for the people" (Bemidbar 17:12). (This was during Korah's rebellion.)

Benei Yisrael also said that the aron was made of magical sapphire and it killed Uzzah... That's why God showed Benei Yisrael that the aron is actually a blessing, as it is written, "The aron of God stayed at the home of Oved-Edom the Gittite for three months, and God blessed Oved and all his house" (Shmuel Bet 6:11).

תנחומא בשלח בא

הַקְּטֹרֶת, שֶׁל פֵּרְעָנֻיּוֹת הִיא, שֶׁהָרְגָה נָדָב וַאֲבִיהוּ. לְפִיכָךְ הוֹדִיעָן שֶׁהִיא שֶׁל כַּפָּרָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וַיִּתֵּן אֶת הַקְּטֹרֶת וַיְכַפֵּר עַל הָעָם" (במדבר יז:יב).

הָאָרוֹן, אָמְרוּ שֶׁל סַמְפִּירִינוֹן הָיָה, הוּא הָרַג אֶת עֻזָּה... לְפִיכָךְ הוֹדִיעָם שֶׁהוּא שֶׁל בְּרָכָה, דִּכְתִיב: "וַיֵּשֶׁב אֲרוֹן ה' בֵּית עֹבֵד אֱדֹם הַגִּתִּי שְׁלֹשָׁה חֳדָשִׁים וַיְבָרֶךְ ה' אֶת עֹבֵד אֱדוֹם וְאֶת כָּל בֵּיתוֹ" (שמואל ב ו:יא).



Devash is a weekly parashah magazine that makes Torah learning sweet. By engaging directly with texts and taking kids seriously as Jews, Devash helps children (ages 7+) and grown-ups discover the weekly Torah portion. Write to us: devash@hadar.org

This midrash points out that these holy objects are really sources of forgiveness and blessing.

- If that's true, why did people die in both stories? Were their deaths because of the holy objects, or for some other reason?
- What's the message in the parashah, haftarah, and midrash about how we should use, or approach, holy objects?



הֲלָכָה • Halakhah

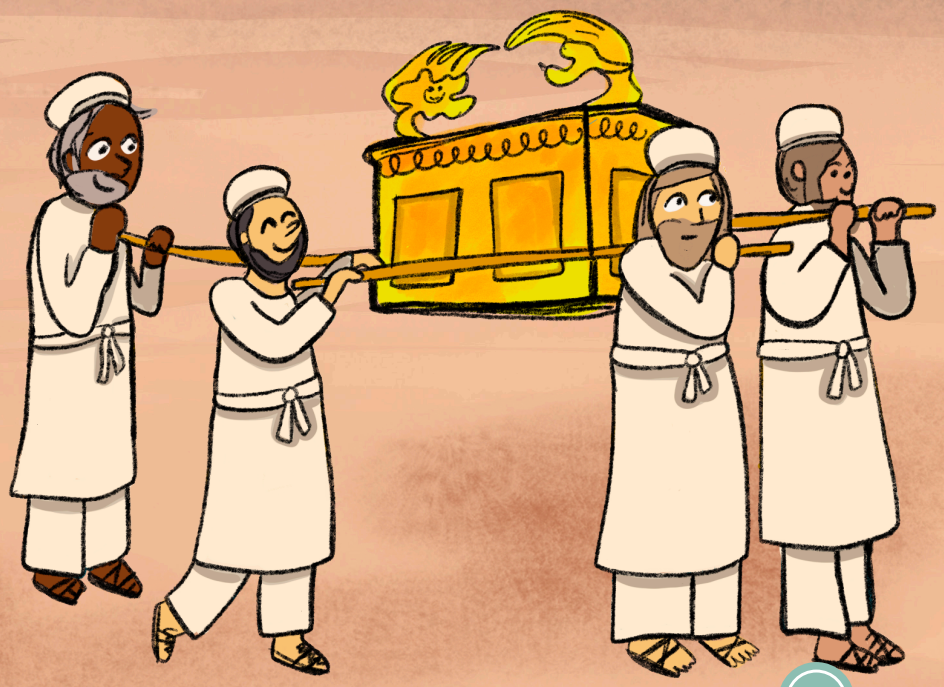


At the end of our parashah we hear about all the animals that we aren't allowed to eat. Then there's a command from God that sounds pretty general:

Vayikra 11:44	**ויקרא יא:מד**
...Make yourselves holy and be holy because I am Holy...	... וְהִתְקַדִּשְׁתֶּם וִהְיִיתֶם קְדֹשִׁים כִּי קָדוֹשׁ אָנִי...

The Talmud understands this phrase in a very specific way!





Talmud Bavli Berakhot 53b

"Make yourselves holy"—this refers to the first water (handwashing before a meal);
"and be holy"—this refers to the final water (handwashing after a meal).

תלמוד בבלי מסכת ברכות דף נג עמוד ב

"וְהִתְקַדִּשְׁתֶּם" - אֵלּוּ מַיִם רִאשׁוֹנִים,
"וִהְיִיתֶם קְדֹשִׁים" - אֵלּוּ מַיִם אַחֲרוֹנִים.

The "first water" is what we commonly call נְטִילַת יָדַיִם (netilat yadayim), when we wash our hands before eating bread. But what's the מַיִם אַחֲרוֹנִים (mayim aharonim, final water)?

This is the practice of washing your hands right before בִּרְכַּת הַמָּזוֹן (Birkat Ha-Mazon, Grace after Meals).



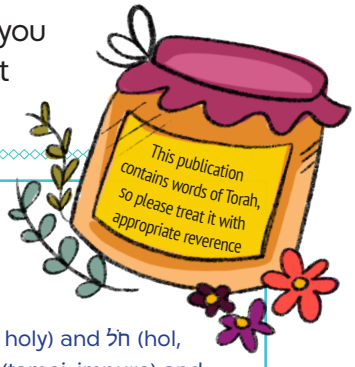
There are a few explanations for mayim aharonim.

- Since our hands often get dirty when we eat, we make sure to wash them before we thank God for our food.
- The Talmud (Bavli Eruvin 17b) says that people used to eat food with very strong salt, and if you didn't wash your hands after eating, you might rub your eyes and risk blinding yourself!

These explanations can also help us understand why mayim aharonim isn't such a popular practice today.

- Already in the middle ages, we hear about communities that had dropped mayim aharonim as a practice, because they no longer ate that strong salt.
- We eat almost all of our food with cutlery, so the concern about dirty hands might not apply much.

Some people still do mayim aharonim, and now you'll know what it is if you see it. And you can give it a try! Just rinse your hands right before Birkat Ha-Mazon. No additional berakhah necessary.



Parashah Scavenger Hunt Answers:

1. The letter ב (vet) in וַיִּקְרְבוּ (vayikrevu, they came close) (9:5)
2. Aharon (9:22)
3. They were his cousins, the sons of Aharon's uncle Uziel (10:4)
4. Elazar and Itamar (10:12)
5. Eat the חַטָּאת (hattat, sin offering), instead, he burned it (10:16-18)
6. Until nightfall (11:32)
7. None! (11:41)
8. Moshe (10:16)
9. Divisions between קֹדֶשׁ (kodesh, holy) and חֹל (hol, regular); divisions between טָמֵא (tamei, impure) and טָהוֹר (tahor, pure); divisions between animals that can be eaten and animals that can't be eaten (10:10 and 11:47)
10. He holds onto the אָרוֹן (aron, ark) (Shmuel Bet 6:6-7)



בּוֹאוּ נְדַבֵּר עַל זֶה • Tell Me More About This!

The Torah describes Aharon's reaction after his sons Nadav and Avihu die: וַיִּדֹּם אַהֲרֹן (va-yidom Aharon, Aharon was silent).

What was the meaning of Aharon's silence? It can be understood in different ways.

- Rashi, drawing on a midrash, says that Aharon held back his feelings and didn't express them. This was a sign of his faith, and God ultimately rewarded him for that.
- Abarbanel says Aharon was in so much pain that he couldn't say anything at all. That's why he was silent.
- The Sefat Emet says that Aharon was quieting not only his voice but his whole self. He did this because he wanted to hear God in this difficult moment, and to do that he had to quiet his whole self and listen.



דַּקָּה שֶׁל דִּיּוּן • One-Minute Debate

Debate: Fish are better than land animals.

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 really easy to tell which ones are kosher because any fish with scales has fins. (And who knows what "chewing cud" is anyhow?)
- Fish are pareve, so you can eat fish with dairy! And who wants to wait for hours after you eat meat?
- They're very healthy for you.



Disagree!

- Nothing is better than chicken soup.
- Kosher animals like cows give us milk and help farmers plow their fields. What do fish do?



תְּפִלָּה • Prayer in the Parashah

In our parashah, we see the mishkan achieve its goal. Aharon offers the sacrifices, Aharon and Moshe give Benei Yisrael a blessing, and then God's presence appears to everyone (Vayikra 9:23). That was the whole point of making a mishkan!

You might wonder, what was the blessing that Moshe and Aharon gave the people in this moment? Rashi (quoting a midrash) says it was this verse:

Tehillim 90:17

May the favor of God our Lord be upon us.
Make the work of our hands be successful for us.
Make the work of our hands be successful!

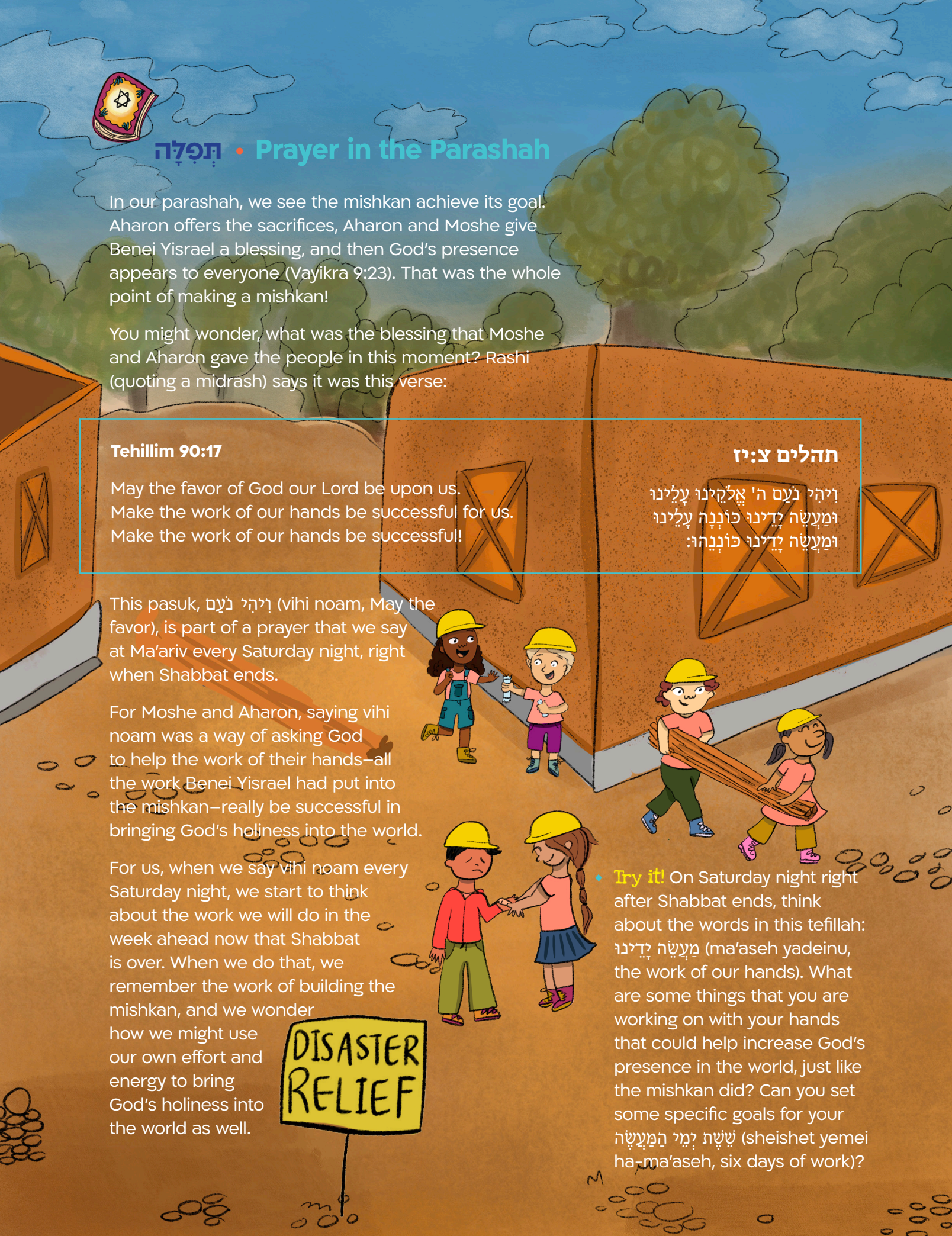
תהלים צ:יז

וִיהִי נֹעַם ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ עָלֵינוּ
וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵינוּ כּוֹנְנָה עָלֵינוּ
וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵינוּ כּוֹנְנֵהוּ׃

This pasuk, וִיהִי נֹעַם (vihi noam, May the favor), is part of a prayer that we say at Ma'ariv every Saturday night, right when Shabbat ends.

For Moshe and Aharon, saying vihi noam was a way of asking God to help the work of their hands—all the work Benei Yisrael had put into the mishkan—really be successful in bringing God's holiness into the world.

For us, when we say vihi noam every Saturday night, we start to think about the work we will do in the week ahead now that Shabbat is over. When we do that, we remember the work of building the mishkan, and we wonder how we might use our own effort and energy to bring God's holiness into the world as well.



- **Try it!** On Saturday night right after Shabbat ends, think about the words in this tefillah: מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵינוּ (ma'aseh yadeinu, the work of our hands). What are some things that you are working on with your hands that could help increase God's presence in the world, just like the mishkan did? Can you set some specific goals for your שֵׁשֶׁת יְמֵי הַמַּעֲשֶׂה (sheishet yemei ha-ma'aseh, six days of work)?