Because learning Torah is sweet

HADAR Children & Families
VOLUME 2 ISSUE 43

DEVASH

Va'ethanan וְאֶתְחַנַּן

ה' - י"א אָב תשפ"ו July 19–25, 2026

מָה בַּפָּרָשָׁה • In This Week's Parashah

- Moshe continues his speech to Benei Yisrael. He talks about how he begged God to let him enter Eretz Yisrael. God said he could not, but God allowed him to see the land from a distance.
- Moshe gives strong encouragement to the people to follow the Torah, and warns them that they could be kicked out of Eretz Yisrael if they worship idols. However, Moshe promises that God will never forget the בְּרִית (brit, covenant) with our ancestors, and Benei Yisrael can always return to God.
- God's revelation at הַר סִינַי (Har Sinai, Mount Sinai) was an inspiring experience. Moshe reminds the people of how powerful it felt and tells them the עֲשֶׂרֶת הַדִּבְּרוֹת (Aseret Ha-Dibrot, Ten Commandments).
- The pesukim that form the first paragraph of Shema also appear in our parashah. They emphasize that we must love God and learn the words of the Torah wherever we go.
- Benei Yisrael must destroy the idols of the nations living in Eretz Canaan, and not marry people from these nations.



פְּשַׁט הַפְּסוּקִים • Understanding the Verses

Here's how Moshe describes the experience of receiving the Torah at Har Sinai.

Devarim 5:2-4	דברים ה:ב-ד
Our God the Lord made a brit (covenant) with us at Horev.	ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ כָּרַת עִמָּנוּ בְּרִית בְּחֹרֵב:
It was not with our ancestors that God made this brit, but with us. We who are here, all of us living now.	לֹא אֶת אֲבֹתֵינוּ כָּרַת ה' אֶת הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת כִּי אִתָּנוּ אֲנַחְנוּ אֵלֶּה פֹּה הַיּוֹם כֻּלָּנוּ חַיִּים:
God spoke to you face to face on the mountain out of the fire.	פָּנִים בְּפָנִים דִּבֶּר ה' עִמָּכֶם בָּהָר מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ:



- What do you notice in these pesukim? What makes you curious?
- What does Moshe mean when he tells people who were born after the revelation at Har Sinai that they were actually part of the brit at Har Sinai? How does that work?
- Why is this an important message for Benei Yisrael to hear before they enter Eretz Yisrael?
- In what sense were you present at Har Sinai, or part of the brit that was formed there? How does this idea impact your relationship and responsibility to Torah?
- Does God have a face? What do you think it means that God spoke with us "face to face"?

פֵּרוּשִׁים • Commentary

The Shema uses a common word—מְאֹד (me'od, very much)—but in an unusual way:

Devarim 6:5

You shall love God your Lord with all your heart, with all your life, and with all your me'od.

דברים ו:ה

וְאָהַבְתָּ אֵת ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בְּכָל לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל מְאֹדֶךָ:

What does me'od mean here? Rashi gives two different answers:

1.

Rashi (France, 1,000 years ago)

With all your money. Some people love their money more than their body, therefore it is said "with all your me'od."

רש"י

בְּכָל מָמוֹנְךָ, יֵשׁ לְךָ אָדָם שֶׁמָּמוֹנוֹ חָבִיב עָלָיו מִגּוּפוֹ, לְכָךְ נֶאֱמַר בְּכָל מְאֹדֶךָ.

- What is the connection in meaning between "me'od" and "money"?
- What are ways that people can love God with their money or their property?
- What does it mean for a person to love their money more than their bodies (or lives), and why would that be a problem according to the Torah?

2.

With every middah (measure) that God measures out for you, whether it is a measure of good or a measure of punishment.

בְּכָל מִדָּה וּמִדָּה שֶׁמּוֹדֵד לְךָ, בֵּין בְּמִדָּה טוֹבָה בֵּין בְּמִדַּת פֻּרְעָנוּת.

- What is the connection in sound between "me'od" and "middah"?
- Why should we love God no matter what God does to us?
- Is it easier to love God when your life is going well than when it's going badly? Why or why not?

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מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash

Hazal have some amazing ways to interpret pesukim. Sometimes they teach us something new about a pasuk by comparing it to a pasuk from a totally different part of Tanakh.

דברים ד:מא

אָז יַבְדִּיל מֹשֶׁה שָׁלֹשׁ עָרִים,
בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן מִזְרָחָה שָׁמֶשׁ.

Devarim 4:41

Then Moshe set aside three cities on the east side of the Jordan.

קהלת ה:ט

אֹהֵב כֶּסֶף לֹא יִשְׂבַּע כֶּסֶף וּמִי אֹהֵב בָּהָמוֹן לֹא
תְבוּאָה גַּם זֶה הָבֶל.

Kohelet 5:9

A lover of silver never has their fill of silver, nor a lover of wealth their fill of income. That too is futile.

The pasuk on the left is from our parashah, and it's about Moshe setting up three עָרֵי מִקְלָט (arei miklat, cities of refuge) for accidental killers. (We discussed these cities in Devash two weeks ago, for Mattot-Masei.)

The pasuk on the right, from Kohelet, is about being greedy. It describes someone who is never able to get enough silver.

These pesukim don't seem to have much in common, right? But a midrash connects them in a surprising way.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת מכות דף י עמוד א

דָּרַשׁ רַבִּי סִימַאי מַאי דִּכְתִיב אֹהֵב כֶּסֶף
לֹא יִשְׂבַּע כֶּסֶף...זֶה מֹשֶׁה רַבֵּינוּ שֶׁהָיָה
יוֹדֵעַ שֶׁאֵין שָׁלֹשׁ עָרִים שֶׁבְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן
קוֹלְטוֹת עַד שֶׁלֹּא נִבְחֲרוּ שָׁלֹשׁ בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנַעַן
וְאָמַר מִצְוָה שֶׁבָּאָה לְיָדִי אֲקַיְּימֶנָּה.

Talmud Bavli Makkot 10a

R. Simai taught: What is the meaning of "A lover of silver never has their fill of silver"?... This is a reference to Moshe our teacher, who knew that the three arei miklat on the east side of the Jordan could not accept accidental killers until the three arei miklat inside the land of Canaan were also set up. But Moshe still said: When a mitzvah opportunity comes up, I'll do it.

R. Simai flips the negative verse from Kohelet into something positive. Some people might love silver so much that they can never get enough, and some people love mitzvot so much that they can never get enough!







A great example of this is Moshe in our parashah. He wants to do a mitzvah (setting up arei miklat) really, really badly. Despite the fact that Moshe knows that he will not enter Eretz Yisrael, and that the arei miklat will only become effective when all of them are set up—including those that he'll never reach—he still is excited to perform the mitzvah!

- What do you think we can learn from Moshe?
- If a person could never get enough of mitzvot, what would that be like?
- Have you ever been excited to be a part of something at its beginning, even if you knew that you wouldn't be there when it was completed?
- What can we learn from this type of midrash and the way the rabbis bring together pesukim from totally different parts of Tanakh?

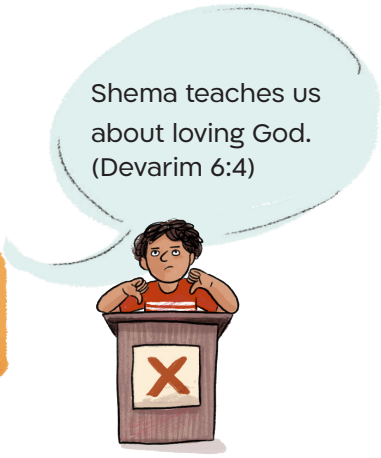


דַּקָּה שֶׁל דִּיוּן • One-Minute Debate

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.

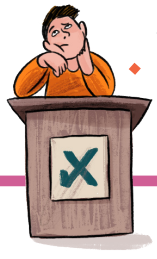


Debate: It doesn't make sense to command love.



Agree!

- Have you ever been told that you have to be friends with someone? How did that go??
- You can control your actions, but you can't control how you feel.



Disagree!

- Sometimes with feelings, you can fake it 'till you make it. If you act in a loving way because you are commanded to do that, eventually you'll feel loving, too. As the Sefer Ha-Hinukh would say, our hearts follow our actions.
- If there's a commandment to love, just try your best to love. That's good enough.
- Deep down, we all love God already. Even if we don't know it yet.

רֶגַע שֶׁל עִבְרִית • A Moment of Hebrew

Devarim 6:7

Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you stay at home and **when you go** on your way, when you lie down and when you get up.

דברים ו:ז

וְשִׁנַּנְתָּם לְבָנֶיךָ וְדִבַּרְתָּ בָּם בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ
בְּבֵיתֶךָ **וּבְלֶכְתְּךָ** בַדֶּרֶךְ וּבְשָׁכְבְּךָ וּבְקוּמֶךָ׃

לָלֶכֶת (שֹׁרֶשׁ ה.ל.כ)

To go, to walk (lalekhet)

= תַּהֲלִיךְ

Process (tahalikh)

= הוֹלֵךְ/הוֹלֶכֶת רֶגֶל

Pedestrian (holekh/holekhet regel)

= תַּהֲלוּכָה

Parade or procession (tahalukhah)

= לֹא הוֹלֵךְ לִי

It's not working, I'm stuck (lo holekh li)

= מַהֲלָךְ

1. Process, step
2. A move in a game (mahalakh)

= הֲלָכָה

Jewish law (halakhah)

= הָלוֹךְ וָשׁוֹב

Back and forth (halokh va-shov)

= הֲלִיכוֹן

Walker (halikhon)

= הִלּוּךְ

A gear (hilukh)

Find the word!

Which parashah in the Torah has our שֹׁרֶשׁ (shoresh, root) in its name, two times? (Hint: It's in Sefer Bereishit.)

aliyot:
1) Devarim 3:23 to 4:4
2) 4:5 to 4:40
3) 4:41 to 4:49
4) 5:1 to 5:18
5) 5:19 to 6:3
6) 6:4 to 6:25
7) 7:1 to 7:11

haftarah: Yeshayahu 40:1 to 40:26

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 can we not add to or subtract from?

2. What are four things that an idol can't do?

3. What was the name of the עִיר מִקְלָט (ir miklat, city of refuge) in the territory of the tribe of Reuven?

4. What reward is connected to honoring your parents?

5. Where does God tell Benei Yisrael to go?

6. Where should the words of Shema be written?

7. How does the size of Benei Yisrael compare to the other nations?



8. Which pasuk in our parshah appears in the Aleinu prayer? (Hint: It's the last line of Aleinu's first paragraph.)

9. What pasuk in our parashah is said in shul after Torah reading, when we do הַגְבָּהָה (hagbah, lifting up the Torah)?

10. **From the haftarah:** Yeshayahu describes someone announcing good news to Jerusalem. He calls this announcer מְבַשֶּׂרֶת צִיּוֹן (mevaseret Tziyon) and also מְבַשֶּׂרֶת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם (mevaseret Yerushalayim). Where is this mevaseret/announcer told to go?

* Look for the answers on page 11!

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הַפְטָרָה • Haftarah

It's been a rough time on the Jewish calendar. We just completed three difficult weeks of mourning for the Beit Ha-Mikdash. On Tisha B'Av we sat on the floor, fasted, and read about really sad things that happened to our people.

Now it's time to feel hopeful again, and that's what Shabbat this week is all about. It even has a special name: Shabbat Nahamu. This means "Shabbat of comfort," and the name comes from the first line of our haftarah.

On Tisha B'Av we read:

דַּרְכֵי צִיּוֹן אֲבֵלוֹת

The **roads** of Tzion (Jerusalem) are in mourning (Eikhah 1:4)

Our haftarah responds:

פַּנּוּ דֶּרֶךְ ה׳

Clear a **road** for God! (Yeshayahu 40:3)



On Tisha B'Av we read:

אֵין מְנַחֵם לָהּ

There is no one to **comfort** her (Jerusalem) (Eikhah 1:9)

Our haftarah responds:

נַחֲמוּ נַחֲמוּ עַמִּי

Be **comforted**, be **comforted**, My people! (Yeshayahu 40:1)



On Tisha B'Av we read:

וַיֵּלְכוּ בְלֹא כֹחַ לִפְנֵי רוֹדֵף

They (the exiles from Jerusalem) walk without **strength** before their pursuer (Eikhah 1:6)

Our haftarah responds:

נֹתֵן לַיָּעֵף כֹּחַ...וְקוֵי ה׳ יַחֲלִיפוּ כֹחַ

God gives **strength** to the weary...those who trust in God shall renew their **strength** (Yeshayahu 40:29-31)

- What's powerful about seeing the same language and images appear first in a really sad context, and then in a hopeful and bold way?



בּוֹאוּ נְדַבֵּר עַל זֶה • Tell Me More About This!

Why does our haftarah say נַחֲמוּ נַחֲמוּ (nahamu nahamu, be comforted be comforted) two times? Wouldn't one nahamu be enough?

The Aish Kodesh (Poland, 100 years ago) points out that something else in the haftarah is double: Benei Yisrael's punishment. Yeshayahu says that Benei Yisrael receive כִּפְלַיִם בְּכָל חַטֹּאתֶיהָ (a double portion [of punishment] for all her sins) (Yeshayahu 40:2).

But why would they have received a double-punishment? That doesn't seem very fair. Shouldn't each crime be given only one punishment?

According to the Aish Kodesh, this was not only fair, but it teaches us something uplifting. When we suffer, God suffers too. The two portions of punishment represent the people's punishment, and also the way God felt and suffered through the same punishment. This is why there also have to be two portions of comfort: one nahamu for us to be comforted, and one nahamu for God to be comforted.



- The Aish Kodesh is known for writing about faith while he lived in a ghetto during the Holocaust. In the end, he was murdered by the Nazis. How might he and his students have been comforted by this idea of God suffering together with us?
- Can you think of other times that this interpretation of "nahamu nahamu" could offer hope to people?

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



הֲלָכָה • Halakhah



The first paragraph of Shema appears in Va'ethanan, and it contains some of the rules about how to say Shema.

Devarim 6:6-7

These words which I command you today shall be in your heart. Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you stay at home and when you go on the way, when you lie down and when you get up.

דברים ו:ו-ז

וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר
אָנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ הַיּוֹם עַל לְבָבֶךָ.
וְשִׁנַּנְתָּם לְבָנֶיךָ וְדִבַּרְתָּ בָּם
בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתֶךָ וּבְלֶכְתְּךָ
בַדֶּרֶךְ וּבְשָׁכְבְּךָ וּבְקוּמֶךָ.

Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel disagree about how literally we should interpret these pesukim.

Mishnah Berakhot 1:3

Beit Shammai say: In the evening every person should lie down and recite (the Shema), and in the morning they should stand up, as it says, "when you lie down and when you get up."

Beit Hillel say: Every person should recite in their own position, as it says, "when you are on the way." (And we don't take that line literally and conclude that you have to take a walk to say Shema!)

Why then does it say, "when you lie down and when you get up?" It means that you should say Shema at the time when people lie down and at the time when people get up.

משנה מסכת ברכות א:ג

בֵּית שַׁמַּאי אוֹמְרִים, בָּעֶרֶב כָּל
אָדָם יַטּוּ וְיִקְרְאוּ, וּבַבֹּקֶר יַעַמְדוּ,
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "וּבְשָׁכְבְּךָ וּבְקוּמֶךָ."

וּבֵית הִלֵּל אוֹמְרִים, כָּל אָדָם
קוֹרֵא כְּדַרְכּוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "וּבְלֶכְתְּךָ
בַדֶּרֶךְ." אִם כֵּן, לָמָּה נֶאֱמַר
"וּבְשָׁכְבְּךָ וּבְקוּמֶךָ"? בְּשָׁעָה
שֶׁבְּנֵי אָדָם שׁוֹכְבִים, וּבְשָׁעָה
שֶׁבְּנֵי אָדָם עוֹמְדִים.



ה' אלקינו
ה' אחד

Parashah Scavenger Hunt Answers:

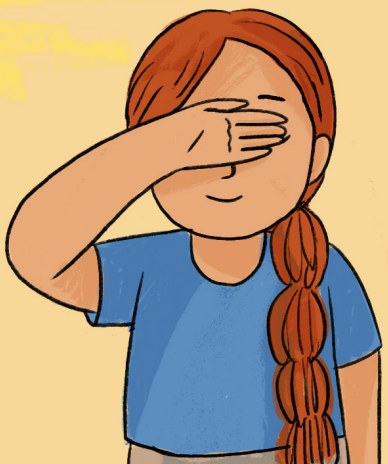
1. The mitzvot that God commands (4:2)
2. See, hear, eat, or smell (4:28)
3. Betzer (4:43)
4. A long life (5:16)
5. Back to their tents (5:26)
6. On your arm and between your eyes, on your doorposts and your gates (6:8-9)
7. Benei Yisrael are the smallest (7:7)
8. וְיָדַעְתָּ הַיּוֹם וַהֲשֵׁבֹתָ אֶל לְבָבֶךָ כִּי ה׳ הוּא הָאֱלֹקִים בַּשָּׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל וְעַל הָאָרֶץ מִתָּחַת אֵין עוֹד
(Know today and keep in mind that God alone is Lord in heaven above and on earth below; there is no other) (4:39)
9. וְזֹאת הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר שָׂם מֹשֶׁה לִפְנֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
(This is the Torah that Moshe set before Benei Yisrael) (4:44)
10. Up on a tall mountain (Yeshayahu 40:9)



As usual, we follow Beit Hillel. So you don't have to lie down to say nighttime Shema. But you are supposed to recite Shema twice a day at the correct times.

Here are some of the halakhot about reciting Shema (Shulhan Arukh Orah Hayyim 58-88):

- The time for morning Shema begins when there's enough light to recognize another person from 4 אַמּוֹת (amot, about 6 feet) away (58:1). There is some debate as to when this is exactly. Most opinions range from 40 to 60 minutes before sunrise. The time for Shema at night begins after the stars come out (235:1).
- It's important to pay close attention to the meaning of the words. There's a custom to cover your eyes when saying the first line to help you concentrate (61:1-5).
    - Try to pronounce every word clearly and loud enough so you can hear your own voice (62:1,3).
        - If you're reciting while on the go, you need to stand in place at least for the first verse (63:3).



שמע ישראל

תְּפִלָּה • Prayer in the Parashah

The first paragraph of Shema, one of our central prayers, comes from this week's parashah. When we say its opening line we perform קַבָּלַת עֹל מַלְכוּת שָׁמַיִם (accepting the yoke of Heaven), which means keeping ourselves aware that there is a Power above us.

Devarim 6:4 **דברים ו:ד**

Listen Israel, God is our Lord, God is Ehad (One). שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ ה' אֶחָד׃



What does this mean?

It could be a statement about the number of gods that exist: just The One!

It's also possible to understand it as an expression of love. Calling God "Ehad" could be like saying: You are my one and only! You are beloved and special to me.

The connection between God's oneness, and our love for God, is deepened in the next verse:

Devarim 6:5 **דברים ו:ה**

You shall love God your Lord וְאָהַבְתָּ אֵת ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ

- What does it mean to love God? How do you express that love?
- When have you experienced God's love? How does it make you feel?
- Why do you think we say Shema so often? Why is it important to repeat this message at least twice a day?