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מה בפרשה • In This Week's Parashah

- ◆ Yaakov gives Yosef a כְּתוֹנֶת פָּסִים (ketonet passim, a fine shirt or coat). Yosef's brothers feel jealous and hate him.
- ◆ Yosef dreams that his brothers' bundles of wheat bow down to his, and that the sun, moon, and 11 stars bow down to him. He tells his brothers, and they hate him even more.
- ◆ Yaakov sends Yosef to check on his brothers, who are out shepherding. When they see him approaching, they plot to kill him.
- ◆ Reuven persuades the others to throw Yosef into a pit instead of killing him. Yehudah proposes selling him. Yosef is sold to traders passing by and taken to מִצְרַיִם (Mitzrayim, Egypt) as a slave.
- ◆ In Mitzrayim, Yosef is sold to Potiphar, an important member of Pharaoh's court. Potiphar's wife falsely accuses Yosef of attacking her, and Yosef is sent to jail.
- ◆ While in jail, Yosef meets Pharaoh's baker and cupbearer. Both of them have dreams, which Yosef interprets, predicting that the baker will be killed and the cupbearer will return to Pharaoh's service. This all comes true, and Yosef is left in prison.
- ◆ The brothers dip Yosef's ketonet passim in goat blood. They show it to Yaakov, who believes that Yosef was killed by a wild animal.





פֶּשֶׁט הַפְּסוּקִים • Understanding the Verses

At the beginning of our parashah, Yosef tells his brothers about two dreams he had. Here's the way he reports the first dream:

Bereishit 37:7

There we were binding sheaves in the field. Suddenly, my sheaf stood up and remained upright. Then, your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf.

בראשית לז:ז

וְהִנֵּה אֲנִיחוּ מֵאֲלֵמִים אֲלֵמִים בְּתוֹךְ הַשָּׂדֶה
וְהִנֵּה קָמָה אֲלֵמָתִי וְגַם נָצְבָה
וְהִנֵּה תִסְבִּינָה אֲלֵמָתֵיכֶם
וְתִשְׁתַּחֲוֶינָה לְאֵלֵמָתִי:

And here's his description of the second dream:

Bereishit 37:9

...Look, I have had another dream. This time, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.

בראשית לז:ט

...הִנֵּה חֲלֵמָתִי חִלּוֹם עוֹד
וְהִנֵּה הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וְהַיָּרֵחַ וְאַחַד עָשָׂר כּוֹכָבִים
מִשְׁתַּחֲוִים לִי:

Before or after Shabbat,
scan to listen to a discussion
of these pesukim
on the Vayeshev episode
of Torah Time!



- ◆ How are Yosef's dreams similar to each other? How are they different?
- ◆ What might they represent? Can you think of a few possibilities?

◆ When Yosef tells these dreams, what is he saying about himself and his brothers and his family?

◆ If you were one of Yosef's siblings, how might you react?



מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash

When Yosef's brothers see him coming to meet them, they come up with the idea to kill him.

Reuven tries to stop them.

Bereishit 37:21-22

Reuven heard, and tried to save him from them. He said, "Let us not take his life."

Reuven said to them, "Don't shed blood! Throw him into that pit in the wilderness, but do not touch him yourselves."

He intended to save Yosef from them and bring him back to his father.



Reuven intended to bring Yosef home... but we know that didn't work out. So, what do we think of Reuven? What can we learn from him?

בראשית לז: כא-כב

וַיִּשְׁמַע רְאוּבֵן וַיִּצְלֵהוּ מִיָּדָם
וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא נִכְנֹו נַפְשׁ:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם רְאוּבֵן אַל תִּשְׁפְּכוּ דָם
הַשְׁלִיכוּ אֹתוֹ אֶל הַבּוֹר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר בְּמִדְבָּר
וְיָד אֶל תִּשְׁלְחוּ בוֹ
לְמַעַן הַצִּיל אֹתוֹ מִיָּדָם לְהַשִּׁיבוֹ אֶל
אָבִיו:

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

Ruth Rabbah 5:6

R. Yitzhak son of Maryon said: The Torah teaches that if a person is going to do a mitzvah, they should do it wholeheartedly.

If Reuven had known that God would write about him: "Reuven heard and tried to save him from them" (Bereishit 37:21)—then Reuven would have picked up Yosef and carried him straight home on his shoulders!

רות רבה ה:ו

אָמַר רַבִּי יִצְחָק בֶּר מְרִיּוֹן בָּא הַכְּתוּב
לְלַמֶּדֶד שֶׁאִם אָדָם עוֹשֶׂה מִצְוָה לְעִשְׂנָה
בְּלִבָּב שְׁלֵם.

שְׁאֵלוֹ הָיָה רְאוּבֵן יוֹדֵעַ שֶׁהַקְדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ
הוּא מְכַתִּיב עָלָיו: "וַיִּשְׁמַע רְאוּבֵן
וַיִּצְלֵהוּ מִיָּדָם" (בְּרֵאשִׁית לז:כא)—
בְּכַתְּפוֹ הָיָה מוֹלִיכּוֹ אֶצֶל אָבִיו.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE >>





וְאִלּוּ הָיָה יוֹדֵעַ אַהֲרֹן שֶׁהַקְּדוֹשׁ
בְּרוּךְ הוּא מִכְתִּיב עָלָיו: "הִנֵּה
הוּא יֵצֵא לִקְרֹאתְךָ" (שְׁמוֹת ד:יד)–
בְּתַפִּים וּבְמַחֲלוֹת הָיָה יוֹצֵא
לִקְרֹאתוֹ.

And if Aharon had known that
God would write about him:
"Here he is coming to meet you"
(Shemot 4:14)—then Aharon
would have danced out to greet
Moshe with drums!

וְאִלּוּ הָיָה יוֹדֵעַ בְּעֵז שֶׁהַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ
הוּא מִכְתִּיב עָלָיו: "וַיַּצְבֵּט לָהּ קָלִי
וַתֹּאכַל וַתִּשְׂבַּע וַתֵּתֶר" (רוּת ב:יד)–
עֲגָלוֹת מִפֶּטְמוֹת הָיָה מֵאֲכִילָהּ.

And if Boaz had known that God
would write about him: "He gave
her roasted grain, and she ate
her fill and had some left over"
(Ruth 2:14)—then Boaz would
have fed Ruth fattened cows!



Our actions may be way more important than we realize. Sometimes, a simple act can even change history. The midrash seems to be suggesting that we should try to always act as if what we are doing will have a major impact, and will be remembered forever.

- ♦ Why is it so hard to know how important our actions are? Can you think of some examples of small acts you can do that might have a huge impact on others?
- ♦ If you knew that your actions would be written in a book that people would read for thousands of years, how would that change the way you act?
- ♦ Can you imagine acting with this kind of intention all the time? What would that feel like?



פְּרָשְׁנוֹת • Commentary

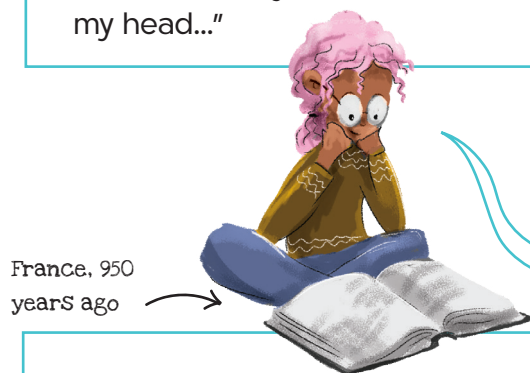
When Yosef ends up in jail in מִצְרַיִם (Mitzrayim, Egypt), his fellow prisoners are Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker. After Yosef interprets the cupbearer's dream, this happens:

Bereishit 40:16

When the baker saw that he [Yosef] **had interpreted well**, he said to Yosef, "In my dream, similarly, there were three baskets on my head..."

בראשית מ:טז

וַיֵּרָא שֶׁר הָאֲפִים כִּי טוֹב פָּתַר
וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל יוֹסֵף אֲף אֲנִי בַחֲלוֹמִי
וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה סִלִּי חָרִי עַל רֹאשִׁי:



France, 950
years ago

What's the meaning of the words כִּי טוֹב פָּתַר (ki tov patar, had interpreted well)? What did the baker see? Here

are two possibilities:

Rashbam says

Had interpreted well—they were recognizable as words of truth.

רשב"ם

כִּי טוֹב פָּתַר - נִכְרְיוֹ דְבָרֵי אֱמֶת.

- ♦ The baker hadn't yet seen Yosef's interpretation for the cupbearer come true. What might have convinced him that Yosef was speaking the truth?
- ♦ Are you able to tell when something is true, even if it's something that you don't know much about? If so, how?



Italy, 500
years ago

Interesting. Here's what Sforno says

Had interpreted well—and he (the baker) hoped that Yosef would also interpret favorably for him.

ספורנו

כִּי טוֹב פָּתַר - וְהָיָה מִקְוֶה שֶׁיִּפְּ-
תָר גַּם בְּעֵדוֹ לְטוֹב.



- ♦ Can you explain in your own words the two different understandings of ki tov patar (especially the word tov [well])?
- ♦ How does each interpretation change your understanding of the story, or your understanding of the baker?
- ♦ When you hear information about yourself, or information that might impact you, are you always ok hearing the truth? Do you ever find yourself only wanting to hear good things?



דְּבָרָה שֶׁל דִּיּוּ • One-Minute Debate

Debate: If you have a job to do, don't push it off. Get it done as soon as you can!

Reuven's intention was to save Yosef from the pit, and bring him back home (Bereishit 37:22).

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!



- ♦ When you procrastinate, your tasks just add up. You end up stressed out, with too much to do.
- ♦ If you don't do a job right away, you might forget to get it done. Or other things can start getting in the way.
- ♦ Learn from Reuven. He planned to save Yosef from the pit, but he waited. And then Yosef was sold, and it was too late!



Disagree!

- ♦ Sometimes you need a break from work. It's ok to push off a task until you're ready to do it. How many of us get home from school and go straight into homework? It's nice to at least have a snack first.
- ♦ It can be a good idea to spend some time planning out your job. You might do it better if you think about it in advance, instead of just diving right in. People might think you're procrastinating, but actually you're strategizing.
- ♦ Different people work differently!



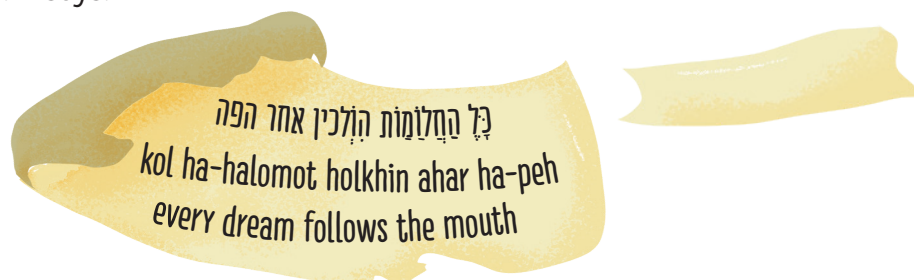
בואו נדבר על זה • Tell Me More About This!

Yosef emphasizes that he was able to interpret dreams because he had God's help (Bereishit 40:8 and 41:16). The Torah also tells us that God speaks to prophets in dreams (Bemidbar 12:6). But some pesukim also tell us that "dreams speak falsehood" (Zekhariah 10:2). **So, how should we view our own dreams?**

The Talmud (Berakhot chapter 9) suggests that dreams can have important meaning. But the Talmud also says that it's usually very hard to know what that meaning is!

Consider the story of Bar Hedaya. He would interpret dreams favorably if a person gave him enough money, but otherwise would interpret them unfavorably. Something unexpected happens: What he says comes true! Abaye pays him and has great success; Rava doesn't pay him and his life is destroyed.

You might wonder: If Bar Hedaya is a liar, why did it work? Rava discovers the answer to this question when he finds Bar Hedaya's book. It says:



In other words, what we say about our dreams has a tremendous amount of power. Sometimes, if we take a positive interpretation, that will change our perspective, and we'll see positive things happening. And the same thing can happen if we take a negative interpretation. Our words matter, and the perspective we take on the world around us - and especially on our dreams - can have a huge impact on how things will play out in the future.

- ♦ What does this story teach us about how careful we have to be when we interpret things we hear or read, or when we judge other people?
- ♦ When you interpret what other people say or do, or interpret the Torah, what power do you have?
- ♦ What if you did something and people interpreted it in a way that wasn't at all what you meant? What would you do?





רִמֵּעַ שָׁל עִבְרִית • A Moment of Hebrew

Bereishit 37:20

"Come now, let us kill him and **throw him** into one of the pits; and we can say, 'A savage beast devoured him.' We shall see what comes of his dreams!"

בראשית לז:כ

וַעֲתָה לָכֹוּ וְנַהַרְגֵהוּ וְנַשְׁלִיכֵהוּ
בְּאֶחָד הַבְּרוֹת וְאָמְרֵנוּ חִיָּה רָעָה
אָכְלָתָהוּ וְנִרְאָה מָה יִהְיֶה חֲלֻמָּתָיו:

Find the Word!

- ◆ This שָׁרֵשׁ (shoresh, root) appears in two other places in this week's parashah. Can you find them all?
- ◆ In Parashat Vayera someone throws a child under a bush, and in Parashat Beshallah a piece of wood is thrown into bitter water to make it sweeter, and in Parashat Ki Tissa gold that was thrown into fire becomes a calf. Can you find these stories, and the words that include this שָׁרֵשׁ (shoresh, root)?

לְהַשְׁלִיךְ (שָׁרֵשׁ ש.ל.ך.)

- ◆ To throw or cast
- ◆ To conclude or project (lehashlikh)

שָׁלַכְתָּ =
Fall (when leaves
are cast off trees)
(shalekhet)

שָׁלַךְ =
Osprey (probably
because it throws
itself into the water to
hunt for fish) (shalakh)

תַּשְׁלִיךְ =
Tashlikh, the ritual
of symbolically
throwing sins into
water on or right
after Rosh Hashanah

הַשְׁלָכוֹת =
Implications or consequences
(like ripple effects) (hashlakhot)



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 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.**

aliyot:

- 1) Bereishit 37:1 to 37:11
- 2) 37:12 to 37:22
- 3) 37:23 to 37:36
- 4) 38:1 to 38:30
- 5) 39:1 to 39:6
- 6) 39:7 to 39:23
- 7) 40:1 to 40:23

haftarah:

Amos 2:6 to 3:8

Good luck!

1 In Yosef's second dream, who bowed down to him?

2 What did the brothers call Yosef when they saw him approaching?

3 What was in the pit with Yosef?



4 How were Er and Onan related?

5 From whom did Potiphar purchase Yosef?

6 When Yosef got in trouble, where was he put?

7 Who forgot to uphold their end of a deal?

8 Which two people tear their clothes in the parashah?

9 Two people in the parashah refuse something, with the word וַיִּמָּאֵן (vayema'ain). Who are they?



10 **From the Haftarah:** Amos says that God is willing to forgive some of the sins of the people of Yisrael, but not others. Which are unforgivable?

*
Look for the answers on page 11!



Learn one way
the parashah
practically impacts
our lives



הלכה • Halakhah

The Talmud (see below) suggests that the pit Yosef was thrown into had snakes and scorpions in it. R. Barukh Epstein (Torah Temimah, 37:24) wonders: What were the brothers thinking? The whole point of putting Yosef in the pit was to not kill him (37:22). So why would they put him in there if it had snakes and scorpions?

Check out these two statements found together on the same page of the Gemara, and taught by the same group of people. Can you figure out how they help R. Epstein answer his question?

Talmud Bavli Shabbat 22a

Rav Kahana said that Rav Natan bar Manyumi taught in the name of Rav Tanhum: If Hanukkah candles are 20 amot (around 30 feet) above the ground, they are invalid.

And Rav Kahana said that Rav Natan bar Manyumi taught in the name of Rav Tanhum: Why does the pasuk say (about where Yosef was thrown), "and the pit was empty, there was no water in it" (Bereishit 37:24)? The words "there was no water in it" teach us that there were snakes and scorpions in it.

תלמוד בבלי שבת דף כב עמוד א

אמר רב כהנא, דרש רב נתן בר מניומי משמיה דרב תנחום: גר של חנוכה שהניחה למעלה מעשרים אמה – פסולה, כסוכה וכמבול.

ואמר רב כהנא, דרש רב נתן בר מניומי משמיה דרב תנחום: מאי דכתיב "והבור רק אין בו מים"? ממשמע שנאמר "והבור רק" איני יודע שאין בו מים? אלא מה תלמוד לומר "אין בו מים" – מים אין בו, אבל נחשים ועקרבים יש בו.



Parashah Scavenger Hunt Answers:

1. The sun, moon, and 11 stars (37:9)
2. בעל הַחֲלוּמוֹת (ba'al ha-halomot, the dreamer) (37:19)
3. Nothing, not even water (37:24) — Rashi quotes the Gemara (Shabbat 22a) that says that the pit actually had scorpions and snakes in it; otherwise why would the Torah tell us it was “empty” and also that “it had no water”?!
4. They were brothers (38:3-4)
5. From the Yishmaelites who brought Yosef to Egypt (39:1)
6. Prison (39:20)
7. The cupbearer (40:23)
8. Reuven (37:29) and Yaakov (37:34)
9. Yaakov (37:35) and Yosef (39:8)
10. Selling a righteous person for money, selling a poor person for shoes (Amos 2:6)

The Torah Temimah observes that the problem with Hanukkah candles being 20 amot high is that it's hard to notice things that far up.

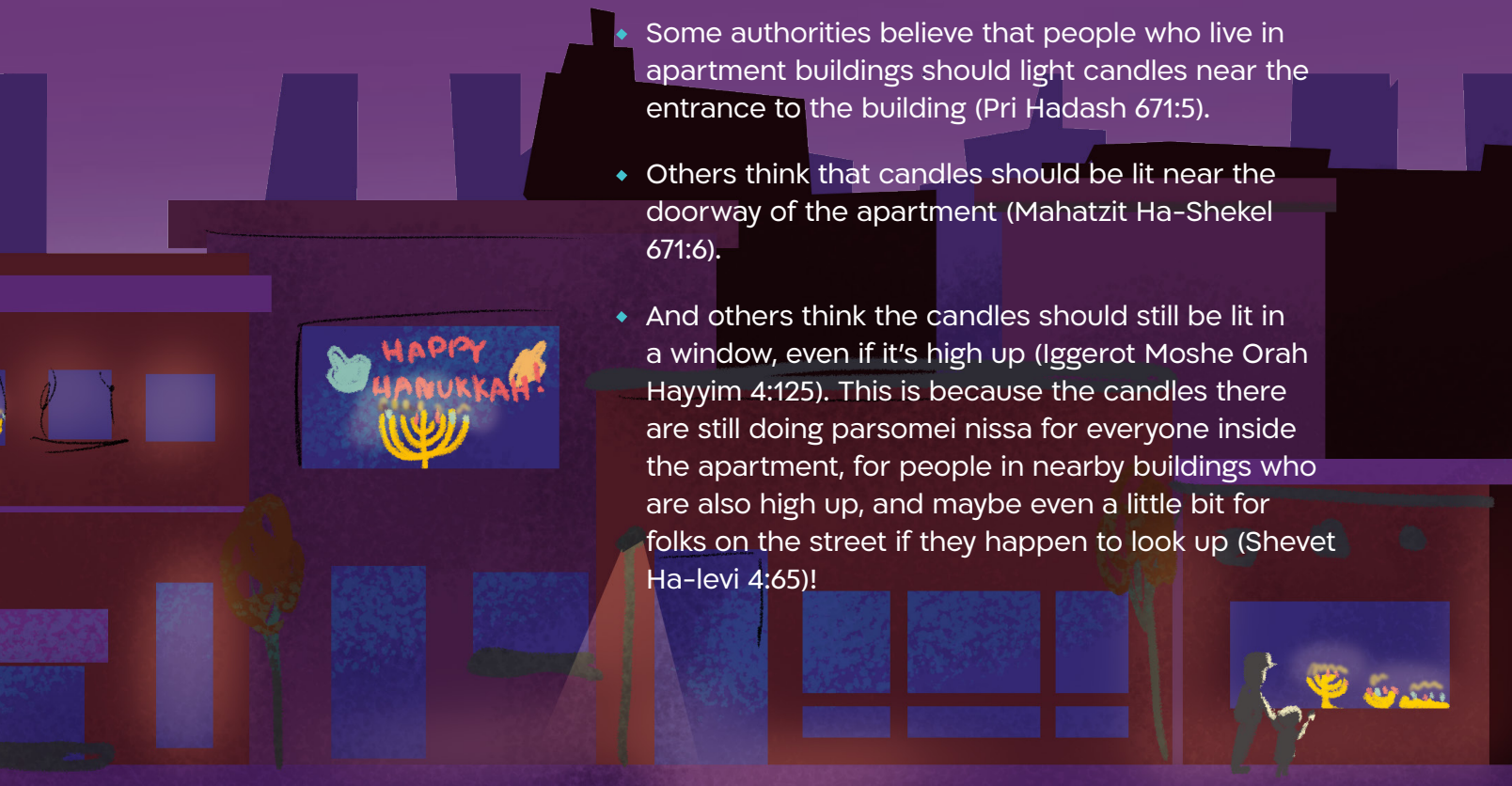
Based on that, he suggests that Yosef's pit might have been 20 amot deep, so the brothers weren't able to notice the snakes and scorpions in it! (But if they had noticed them, they wouldn't have put him down there.)

Publicizing miracles

It's important for Hanukkah candles to be visible to people outside because they are meant to achieve פְּרִסְמוּי נִסָּא (parsomei nissa). This means that they publicize God's miracles. Parsomei nissa is the reason that we light in windows and doorways. It's also the reason that there's a maximum height for Hanukkah candle placement, and a minimum too (3 tefachim, which is around 10 inches off the ground).

But what if you live in an apartment building? It might be that you live more than 20 amot above ground! How do you fulfill parsomei nissa from a high floor?

- ◆ Some authorities believe that people who live in apartment buildings should light candles near the entrance to the building (Pri Hadash 671:5).
- ◆ Others think that candles should be lit near the doorway of the apartment (Mahatzit Ha-Shekel 671:6).
- ◆ And others think the candles should still be lit in a window, even if it's high up (Iggerot Moshe Orah Hayyim 4:125). This is because the candles there are still doing parsomei nissa for everyone inside the apartment, for people in nearby buildings who are also high up, and maybe even a little bit for folks on the street if they happen to look up (Shevet Ha-levi 4:65)!





תפילה • Prayer in the Parashah



One of the main characters in Vayeishev is Yehudah. His name is connected to the שְׁרֵשׁ (shoresh, root) ה.ד.ה, which has a couple different meanings:

1. To give thanks

This was the meaning of Yehudah that we saw in Vayeitzei, when Yehudah's mother gave thanks to God at his birth.

2. To admit something

In Vayeishev, Yehudah acts out this meaning of his name. He has the courage to admit: I was wrong. He had made a promise to Tamar, his daughter-in-law, to have her marry his youngest son, Shelah. But Yehudah doesn't come through on that promise, until Tamar convinces him to admit his wrongdoing.

This same shoresh also forms the word מוֹדִים (Modim), which is what opens up the second-to-last section of the Amidah. What are we doing when we say Modim? Both of these things.



מוֹדִים אֲנִיחֵנוּ לָךְ שְׂאֵתָהּ הוּא ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ

We acknowledge to You,
that You are our God



נוֹדֶה לָּךְ...עַל חַיֵּינוּ

We give thanks to
You...for our lives

- ♦ Why might the same shoresh mean both to thank and to admit?
- ♦ When you pray, are you more focused on thanking, or on admitting something (maybe that God is in charge, or that you might have done something wrong)?
- ♦ The Gemara says that the Amidah ends with הוֹדָאָה (hoda'ah). Why do you think thanking and admitting are both important things to do at the end of the Amidah?

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