



December 12 - 18, 2021 ח' - י"ד טבת תשפ"ב



## קַה בַּפָּרָשָׁה • In This Week's Parashah

- ◆ After 17 years in מִצְרַיִם (Mitzrayim, Egypt), Yaakov feels his life coming to an end.
- ◆ Yaakov blesses Yosef's two sons, Menasheh and Efrayim. Yosef places Yaakov's right hand on Menasheh, the older son, and places Yaakov's left hand on Efrayim, the younger son. Yaakov switches his hands, saying that Efrayim will be greater than Menasheh.
- ◆ Yaakov gives a final message to each of his children.
- ◆ Yaakov instructs his children to bury him in the Makhpelah cave in Hevron, back in אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן (Eretz Canaan, the Land of Canaan). This is where Leah, his parents, and his grandparents are already buried.
- ◆ Yaakov dies. His family mourns for him, and they bury him as he asked.
- ◆ Yosef's brothers are afraid that Yosef will take revenge against them. Yosef calms them down and says that it was part of God's plan for him to come to Mitzrayim so he could save the family from famine.
- ◆ Yosef lives to see his great-grandchildren. He makes his family swear to take his bones with them when they eventually leave Mitzrayim, and then he dies.





## מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash



Midrashim are ideas or stories that explain the Torah. They often come from listening very carefully to what the Torah says and how it says it. Here, we will look for what clues this midrash sees in the Torah's words, and try to understand its messages.

### Bereishit 50:15

When Yosef's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Yosef still bears a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrong that we did to him!"

### בראשית נ:טו

וַיֵּרְאוּ אֶחָיו יוֹסֵף כִּי־יָמָת  
אֲבִיהֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לּוֹ יִשְׁטָמְנוּ  
יוֹסֵף וְהִשָּׁב יֵשִׁיב לָנוּ אֶת  
כָּל־הָרָעָה אֲשֶׁר גָּמְלָנוּ אֹתוֹ:

Out of their fear of revenge, the brothers tell Yosef that Yaakov's dying wish was that Yosef should forgive them.

### Bereishit 50:16-17

They instructed [messengers] to tell Yosef, "Before his death, your father left this instruction: So shall you say to Yosef, 'Forgive the offense and guilt of your brothers who treated you so harshly.' Therefore, please forgive the offense of the servants of the God of your father." And Yosef was in tears as they spoke to him.

### בראשית נ:טז-יז

וַיִּצְווּ אֱלֹהֵי־יוֹסֵף לֵאמֹר אֲבִיר צֹה  
לִפְנֵי מוֹתוֹ לֵאמֹר: כֹּה־תֹאמְרוּ  
לְיוֹסֵף אָנָּה שָׂא נָא פָשַׁע אַחִיר  
וְחַטָּאתָם כִּי־רָעָה גָּמְלוּךָ וְעַתָּה  
שָׂא נָא לְפָשַׁע עֲבָדֵי אֱלֹהֵי  
אֲבִיר וַיְבֹר יוֹסֵף בְּדִבְרֵם אֵלָיו:

The fishy thing here is: the Torah never actually says that this was Yaakov's dying wish! It's possible that this conversation did happen, but wasn't recorded in the Torah. However, a midrash suggests that the brothers were actually lying here.

## Bereishit Rabbah 100:8

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says: Peace is so great that even the tribes (= Yaakov's 12 sons) spoke false words in order to bring peace between Yosef and the tribes. As it is written, "They instructed [messengers] to tell Yosef [that Yaakov commanded Yosef to forgive them]." And where did Yaakov command this? We do not find that he commanded it.

## בראשית רבה ק:ח

רבי שמעון בן גמליאל אומר  
גדול השלום שאף השבטים  
דברו דברים בדוים בשביל  
להטיל שלום בין יוסף לשבטים,  
הדא הוא דכתיב: ויצוה אל יוסף  
לאמר וגו',  
והיכן צוה? לא מצינו שצוה.

- ◆ If the brothers were lying, was it the right thing to do? Why or why not?
- ◆ What else could the brothers have said or done if they had wanted to avoid lying?
- ◆ What are some possible negative consequences of not telling the truth?



## פְּרָשְׁנוֹת • Commentary



At the end of his life, Yaakov offers final poetic words to each of his sons. Some of these are blessings, others are more harsh. One that stands out is when Yaakov speaks to Shimon and Levi, criticizing the anger which led them to kill people in Shekhem (back in Parashat Vayishlah).

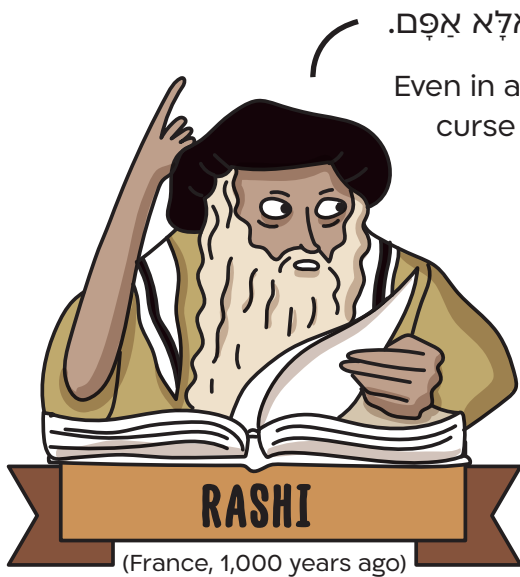
## Bereishit 49:6-7

I shall not come in their company; in their congregation my presence will not be, since in their anger they killed people and tore through bulls. **Cursed be their anger, as it is so fierce**, and their wrath is so harsh. I will divide them in Yaakov, and scatter them in Israel.

## בראשית מט:ו-ז

בסדֵם אֶל־תֵּבֵא נַפְשִׁי בִּקְהִלָּם אֶל־תִּחַד כְּבֹדִי  
כִּי בְאַפָם הָרְגוּ אִישׁ וּבְרִצָּנָם עָקְרוּ־שׁוֹר:  
אָרוּר אָפָם כִּי עָז וְעִבְרָתָם כִּי קִשְׁתָּה  
אֲחֻלְקֵם בְּיַעֲקֹב וְאֶפְיָצֵם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל:

What does Yaakov mean when he tells Shimon and Levi that "cursed be their anger?"



אִפִּילוּ בְּשַׁעַת תּוֹכָחָהּ לֹא קָלַל אֶלֶּא אָפָם.

Even in a moment of rebuke, he did not curse them, but rather their anger.

אִין זֶה קָלִלָה אֶלֶּא בְּרָכָה.  
כְּלוּמַר יְהִי רָצוֹן שְׁלֹא  
יִצְלִיחוּ בְּאַפָּם כִּדִּי שְׁלֹא  
יִרְגְּלוּ לַהֲיֹת רַגְזָנִים.

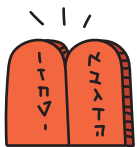
This is not a curse, but a blessing. Meaning, that their anger should not lead to success, so that they will learn not to act out of anger.



According to **Rashi**, Yaakov's statement is intended as a curse. However, there is a lesson to be learned from the way Yaakov chooses his words. Rather than cursing Shimon and Levi themselves, Yaakov limits the curse to their anger. Even while criticizing them, he limited the curse to the behavior they needed to improve, not to them as people.

**Hizkuni**, though, reads "cursed be their anger" as a blessing! The blessing is that Shimon and Levi will learn to not act through anger, by finding that anger does not make them successful. In this way, they will be blessed to leave their anger behind.

- ◆ What evidence in the text can you find to support each position?
- ◆ How does it feel to be criticized? Can you relate to the difference that Rashi highlights, between criticizing a person and criticizing a specific behavior?
- ◆ Is it realistic to think that a person would stop acting in anger if they see that anger isn't effective? Is anger ever effective?



הלכה • Halakhah

When Yaakov is approaching death, he blesses his children and grandchildren. First, Yaakov blesses Yosef, and then he blesses Yosef's children.



## Bereishit 48:20

He blessed them on that day, saying, "With you, Yisrael will bless, saying, 'May God make you like Efrayim and like Menasheh,'" and he placed Efrayim before Menasheh.

## בראשית מח:כ

וַיְבָרֶכֶם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר בְּךָ  
יְבָרֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר  
יְשֻׁמָּךְ אֱלֹקִים כְּאַפְרַיִם וְכַמְנַשֶּׁה  
וַיִּשֶׂם אֶת־אַפְרַיִם לִפְנֵי מְנַשֶּׁה:

Commenting on this verse, Rashi says that any time a parent blesses their children, they should bless them with the language of this pasuk.

In many families, parents bless their children every Friday night. This מנהג (minhag, custom) is first recorded by Rabbi Aharon Berakhyah of Modena (Italy, 300 years ago).

The blessing for sons begins

יְשֻׁמָּךְ אֱלֹקִים  
כְּאַפְרַיִם וְכַמְנַשֶּׁה  
(may God make you like  
Efrayim and Menasheh).

The blessing for daughters begins

יְשֻׁמָּךְ אֱלֹקִים  
כְּסָרָה רַבְקָה רָחֵל וְלֵאָה  
(may God make you like Sarah,  
Rivkah, Rahel, and Leah).



The blessing for everyone continues with Birkat Kohanim (the priestly blessing).

## Bemidbar 6:24-26

May God bless you and protect you.  
May God shine God's face on you and favor you.  
May God raise God's face toward you  
and grant you peace.

## במדבר ו:כד-כו

יְבָרֶכֶךָ ה' וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ:  
יָאֵר ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיְחַנְּךָ:  
יִשָּׂא ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּשֶׂם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם:

The Vilna Gaon (Lithuania, 250 years ago) said that a parent should place only one hand on their child's head during the blessing to be like Yaakov, who used only one hand each to bless Efrayim and Menasheh. Rabbi Yaakov Emden (Germany, 300 years ago), however, argued that parents should use two hands for blessing a child to copy the כֹהֲנִים (Kohanim, priests) in the בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ (Beit Ha-Mikdash, Temple), who would use two hands to bless the people.

- ♦ What does it mean for you to receive a blessing? How does it feel?



## פֶּה זֶה • What's Going On Here?

### What happened to Yosef's bones?

At the very end of Sefer Bereishit, Yosef makes his brothers promise that they will take his bones back to אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל (Eretz Yisrael, the Land of Israel; Bereishit 50:25). And, in fact, the Torah records that Moshe took Yosef's bones with him (Shemot 13:19) when he led Benei Yisrael out of מִצְרַיִם (Mitzrayim, Egypt) centuries later.

However, the Talmud (Sotah 13a) says it was not so simple for Moshe to get the bones. The Egyptians had buried Yosef in a metal coffin and sank it in the Nile, as a blessing for the river. Moshe called out to Yosef that it was time to fulfill the promise—and the coffin immediately floated to the surface!







## רִמֵּעַ שֶׁל עִבְרִית • A Moment of Hebrew

**Bereishit 49:25**

The God of your father who **helps** you...

**בראשית מט:כה**

מֵאֵל אֲבִיר וְיִעְזְרֶנּוּ...



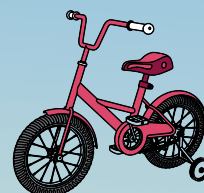
With God's help = בְּעֶזְרַת הָאֵל

לְעֶזֶר (שֶׁרֶשׁ ע.ז.ר.)

To help



First aid = עֲזָרָה רִאשׁוֹנָה



Training wheels = בִּלְנִילֵי עֶזֶר

### Find the Word!

One of Moshe's children's names contains this שֶׁרֶשׁ (shoresh, root)! Can you find it in Shemot 18? Can you think of other Hebrew names with this root?



## דִּקְוָה שֶׁל דִּין • One-Minute Debate

### How to play:

Here is a topic for debate along with some suggested arguments, but feel free to come up with your own.

- ◆ Assign people to the "true" or "false" sides.
- ◆ Each side gets 30 seconds to make their case.
- ◆ At the end, the group votes on a winner.

**Debate: Some things are impossible to forgive, no matter how much you apologize or how much time passes.**



### True!

- ◆ The brothers were afraid that Yosef was just waiting for their father to die to get back at them. Even they didn't think that what they had done could truly be forgiven.

### False!

- ◆ Yosef made it very clear that he had forgiven his brothers and moved on.
- ◆ Forgiveness is critical in Judaism. We even have a whole day of the year dedicated to forgiveness: Yom Kippur!



## 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.

*Good luck!*

1 How old was Yaakov when he died?

2 When Yaakov blessed Efrayim and Menasheh, what kind of animal did he compare them to?



3 Why did Yaakov cross his hands when he blessed his grandchildren?

4 Yaakov's "blessings" to three of his sons sound a lot like criticisms. Which ones?

5 One of Yaakov's blessings used his son's name in four different ways. Which one?

6 What was unusually Egyptian about Yaakov's body after he died?

7 What was the name of Menasheh's son?

8 What two-word phrase did Yosef use twice to talk about the Israelites' eventual departure from מצרים (Mitzrayim, Egypt)?

9 How many days did the Egyptians mourn for Yaakov?

\*  
Look for the answers on page 12!

10 **CHALLENGE:** Can you name all the types of animals referred to in our parashah?





## קריאת התורה • Torah Reading

This Shabbat, we finish reading the first book of the Torah! To celebrate, we say some special words right after the final aliyah:

### חֲזַק חֲזַק וְנִתְחַזֵּק

Hazak hazak ve-nit'hazeik

Be strong! Be strong! And let us be strengthened!

This shows how we want to finish reading each book of the Torah on a good note and with the energy to keep reading the next books. This practice also affects the tune for reading the last few words of the parashah. The last words of our parashah are:

#### Bereishit 50:26

He was placed in a coffin in Mitzrayim.

#### בראשית נ"ו:

וַיִּשֶׂם בְּאֵרוֹן בְּמִצְרַיִם:

Listen in shul when the reader reads these words, and you will hear an unusual tune that is meant to lead you into singing hazak hazak ve-nithazeik. But then listen when the reader reads this pasuk again for the short, repeated מַפְטִיר (maftir) section.

The second time should just sound normal! We only change the notes and the tune when we want people to chime in with hazak hazak ve-nit'hazeik. It is a reminder of how music is such a powerful tool to move people, and to guide them to join in doing something together.

## חֲזַק חֲזַק וְנִתְחַזֵּק



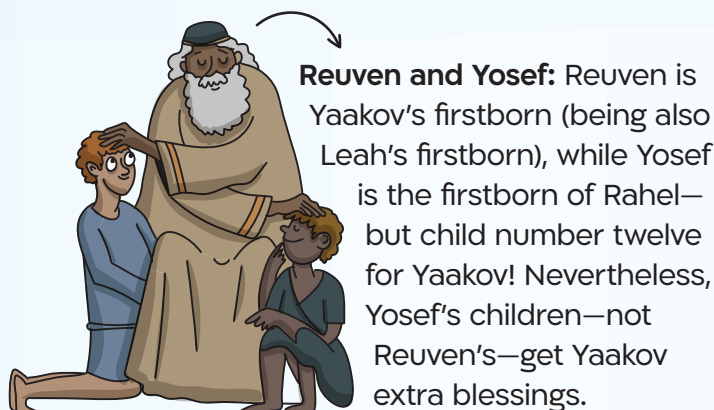


## בואו נדבר על זה • Tell Me More About This!

This week's הלכה/Halakhah section talks about blessing children, a custom that is traced to Yaakov's blessing of his grandchildren, Efrayim and Menasheh (p. 5). Yaakov switched his right and left hands, in order to give the greater blessing to the younger brother. Turns out, in the Torah, it's pretty common that you are not more successful just because you're older:



**Yishmael and Yitzhak:** The Jewish people continue through Yitzhak, even though Yishmael is older.



### Esav and Yaakov:

Although they are twins, Esav came out first and is the firstborn, but he lost those privileges to Yaakov.

### Aharon, Miriam, and Moshe:

Moshe is the youngest of his siblings and, while all of them have important roles in bringing בני ישראל (Benei Yisrael, the Israelites) out of מצרים (Mitzrayim, Egypt), Moshe is definitely the one in charge.



- What is the Torah trying to teach us by showing that the younger child is chosen over the older?
- Devarim (7:7-8) tells us that God chose Benei Yisrael out of all the nations, not because we are the biggest nation—since, in fact, we are a very small people—but rather because God loves us. What do you think about this? How might this be connected to God choosing the younger child?

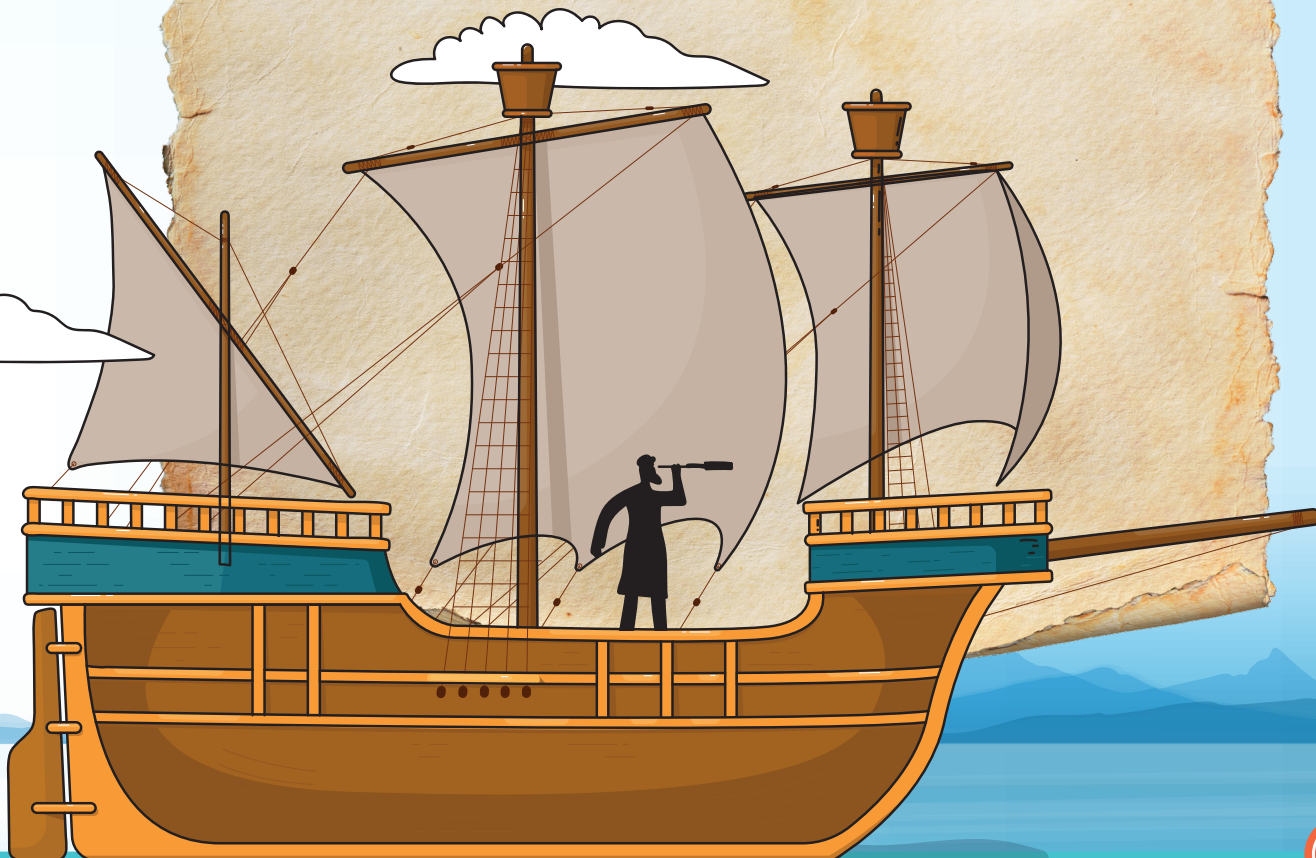




## • מי היו חכמינו • Who Were Our Sages?

**Rabbi Hizkiyah ben Manoah** was from the French school of פְּרָשָׁנִים (parshanim, commentators). He lived about 650 years ago, and is best known for his commentary on the Torah called **Hizkuni** (related to his name Hizkiyah). Very little is known about his life, but he talks in the introduction of his book about sailing across the world to collect interpretations of the Torah that he thought made sense.

His commentary was influenced by earlier French commentaries, like Rashi and Bekhor Shor, and he also integrated some kabbalah into his comments. He deliberately chose not to cite his sources (except for Rashi), because he didn't want people to judge the truth of an interpretation based on who said it.





# Shabbat Shalom!

~ שבת שלום ~

## Parashah Scavenger Hunt Answers:

1. 147
2. Fish—יִדְגּוּ לָרֹב (ve-yidgu la-rov, they will multiply to many); "yidgu" is related to דָּג (dag, fish)
3. So he could put his right hand on the head of Efrayim, whom he predicted would be greater than Menasheh
4. Reuven, Shimon, and Levi
5. Gad, גִּדְדוּד יִגְדוּ וְהוּא יִגְדֵּם עִקְבָּם (gad gedud yegudenu ve-hu yagud akeiv, Gad shall be raided by raiders, but he shall raid at their heels)
6. It was mummified!
7. Makhir
8. פָּקֹד יִפְקֹד (pakod yifkod, [God] will surely remember)
9. 70
10. יִדְגּוּ (ve-yidgu, fish—see question 2); שׁוֹר (shor, ox); אֲרִיָּה/לָבִיא/גֹּר (aryeh, lavi, gur; lions and cubs); חֲמֹר/אֶתוֹן/עִיר (hamor, aton, ayir; male, female and child donkeys); נָחָשׁ/שִׁפּוֹן (nahash, shefifon; snake or viper); סוֹס (sus, horse); אֵילָה (ayalah, female deer); זֶ'עֵב (ze'ev, wolf)



*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 and grownups discover new ideas, values, and sweet morsels in the weekly Torah portion. Devash is designed for kids aged 7-11 to read independently, or together with families and teachers.*



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