



י"ז - כ"ג כִּסְלוֹ תשפ"ב November 21 - 27, 2021



- ◆ Yaakov gives Yosef a כְּתוֹנֶת פְּטִיִּים (ketonet passim, a fine coat or sweater). 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.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ The brothers dip Yosef's ketonet passim in goat blood. They show it to Yaakov, who assumes that Yosef was killed by a wild animal.
- ◆ 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, but Yosef is still in prison.





מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash

The bloody coat did the trick, and the brothers managed to deceive their father, Yaakov, into believing that Yosef had been killed by a wild animal. Yaakov had no idea that his sons had actually thrown Yosef into a pit and then had him sold into slavery. The midrash wonders: how did the brothers keep their terrible deeds a secret from their father for so many years?



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.

Midrash Tanhuma Vayeishev 2

They said: "Let us make a **vow** among ourselves that not one of us should tell our father, Yaakov." Yehudah said to them: "Reuven is not here, and this type of **vow** cannot be made unless ten witnesses are present." What did they do? They included God in their **vow** not to tell their father what had happened.

מדרש תנחומא וישב ב

אָמְרוּ: נִחְרִים בֵּינֵינוּ שְׁלֹא יִגִּיד אֶחָד מִמֶּנּוּ לִיעֲקֹב אָבִינוּ.

אָמַר לָהֶם יְהוּדָה: רְאוּבֵן אֵינוֹ כָּאן וְאִין הַחֲרָם מִתְקִים אֶלָּא בְעֶשְׂרָה.

מָה עָשׂוּ? שִׁתְּפוּ לַהֲקֵדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בְּאוֹתוֹ הַחֲרָם, שְׁלֹא יִגִּיד לְאָבִיהֶם.

This midrash notices that there are two ways Yaakov might have found out about what the brothers had done:

1. Reuven could have found out what happened and then tattled on his brothers. We know he wasn't there when Yosef was sold. In fact, he came back to the pit to bring Yosef back home, and when he found the pit empty, he was very distressed (Bereishit 37:29).
2. God could have told Yaakov!



A Vow-
a very
Serious,
Solemn
Promise.

By making a vow of secrecy together, and including God in that vow, the brothers ensured that Yaakov could not have found out in either of these two ways.

- ◆ What other possibilities can you think of to explain why no one—including God—ever told Yaakov what happened?
- ◆ What do you think can happen in families that keep secrets for a long time?



פְּרָשְׁנוֹת • Commentary

Who sold Yosef?

While the answer seems obvious (his brothers, of course!), a close reading of the text shows that it is more complicated.



Bereishit 37:28

Midianite merchants passed by **and they drew and lifted Yosef out of the pit**, and sold Yosef to the Yishmaelites for 20 shekels of silver. And they brought Yosef into Egypt.

בראשית לז:כח

וַיַּעֲבְרוּ אַנְשֵׁים מִדְּיָנִים סוֹחְרִים וַיִּמְשְׁכוּ וַיִּשְׁלְדוּ אֶת יוֹסֵף מִן הַבּוֹר וַיִּמְכְּרוּ אֶת יוֹסֵף לִישְׁמַעֲאֵלִים בְּעֶשְׂרִים כֶּסֶף וַיְבִיאוּ אֹת־יוֹסֵף מִצְרָיִם׃

This text is ambiguous: who is the “they” that lifted Yosef out of the pit and sold him?



Rashi (France, 1,000 years ago)

And they drew up—the sons of Yaakov drew up Yosef from the pit, and they sold him to the Yishmaelites, and the Yishmaelites to the Midianites, and the Midianites to Egypt.

רש"י

וַיִּמְשְׁכוּ: בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב אֶת יוֹסֵף מִן הַבּוֹר וַיִּמְכְּרוּהוּ לְיִשְׁמַעֲאֵלִים וְהַיִּשְׁמַעֲאֵלִים לְמִדְיָנִים וְהַמִּדְיָנִים לְמִצְרַיִם.

According to Rashi, it was the brothers who first sold Yosef. Rashi explains that the Torah mentions multiple caravans because Yosef was sold multiple times.



Here's a different reading, from Rashbam, who was Rashi's grandson:

Rashbam (France, 950 years ago)

The brothers were sitting down to eat food at a distance from the pit... and before the Yishmaelites came, some other Midianite men passed by on the road there, and saw [Yosef] in the pit, and pulled him out. The Midianites sold him to the Yishmaelites. It is likely that the brothers didn't know.

רשב"ם

וַיַּעֲבְרוּ אֲנָשִׁים מִדְיָנִים: בְּתוֹךְ שָׁהוּ יוֹשְׁבִים לֶאֱכֹל לֶחֶם וְרוֹחוּקִים הָיוּ קִצְתָּ מִן הַבּוֹר... וְקָדָם שָׁבְאוּ הַיִּשְׁמַעֲאֵלִים עָבְרוּ אֲנָשִׁים מִדְיָנִים אַחֲרֵי דְרָךְ שָׁם וְרָאוּהוּ בַּבּוֹר וַיִּמְשְׁכוּהוּ וַיִּמְכְּרוּהוּ הַמִּדְיָנִים לְיִשְׁמַעֲאֵלִים, וַיֵּשׁ לֹאמֹר שְׁהָאֲחִים לֹא יָדְעוּ.

- ◆ What evidence can you find for each opinion? Look ahead to Bereishit 40:15 and 45:4 for more clues! It can be interesting to see how a story gets retold.
- ◆ How does your understanding of the story change based on who sold Yosef? If the brothers had already decided to sell Yosef, and were responsible for leaving him alone in a pit, does it matter that they might not have actually done it because other people got there first?



- ◆ Why do you think the Torah tells the story in this ambiguous way?



הלכה • Halakhah

Both of Yosef's dreams in the beginning of the parashah feature his brothers bowing down to him—first as bundles of wheat and then as the stars (Bereishit 37:6–9).

Bowing is not something that we normally do in our lives, but it has been an important part of showing submission to authority—both to humans and to God—throughout history. In fact, one kind of bowing called “full prostration,” which means lying face down on the floor, used to be a central component of Jewish tefillah. For example, it is said that Rabbi Avraham, son of the Rambam, used to prostrate fully in every blessing of the Amidah. Nowadays, this kind of bowing is reserved for certain tefillot on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

However, there are situations when Jewish law prohibits bowing fully, even on the High Holidays. This prohibition is traced to a story in the Talmud:



Talmud Bavli Megillah 22b

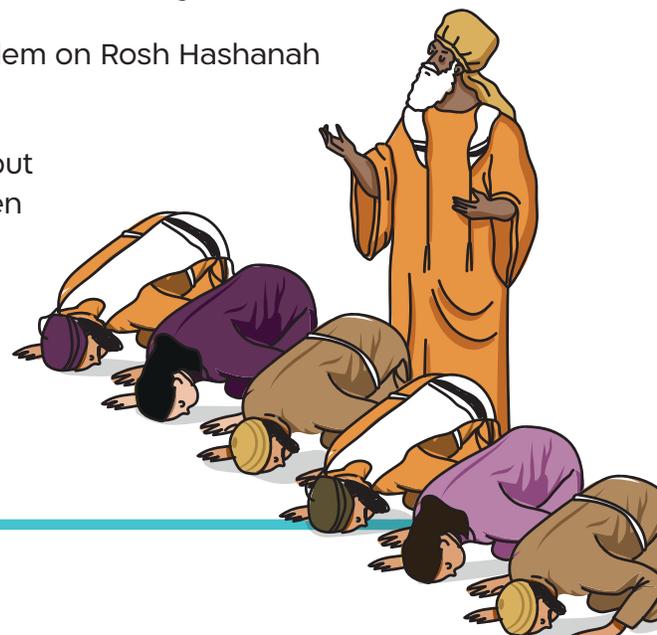
Rav came to Bavel on a public fast day... everyone fell on their faces, but Rav didn't fall on his face.

תלמוד בבלי מגילה כב עמוד ב

רב איקלע לרבךל בתענית צבור...
נפול כולי עלמא אאנפיהו
ורב לא נפל על אנפיה.

The Talmud explains that Rav didn't bow because the floor he was standing on was stone, and outside of the בית המקדש (Beit Ha-Mikdash, Temple in Jerusalem), it is forbidden to prostrate on stone (based on Vayikra 26:1).

- ◆ Based on this story, Jewish law forbids bowing down fully on a stone floor. According to most authorities, bowing halfway (at the waist) is okay.
- ◆ In shuls with stone floors, this poses a potential problem on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.
- ◆ The Rema (Orah Hayyim 131:8) says that people can put some grass on the ground to create a barrier between themselves and a stone floor. Nowadays, when prostrating on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, some people place a paper towel or a cloth in front of them so that their clothes and heads do not touch the stone floor while bowing.





קָה זָה • What's Going On Here?

At the beginning of the parashah (Bereishit 37:3), Yaakov gives Yosef the כְּתוֹנֶת פָּסִים (ketonet **passim**, a fine coat or sweater) as a sign of his love. What was special about this piece of clothing?

RADAK SAYS

It was multicolored.



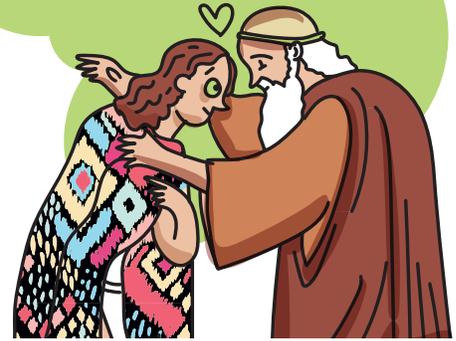
IBN EZRA SAYS

It was embroidered.



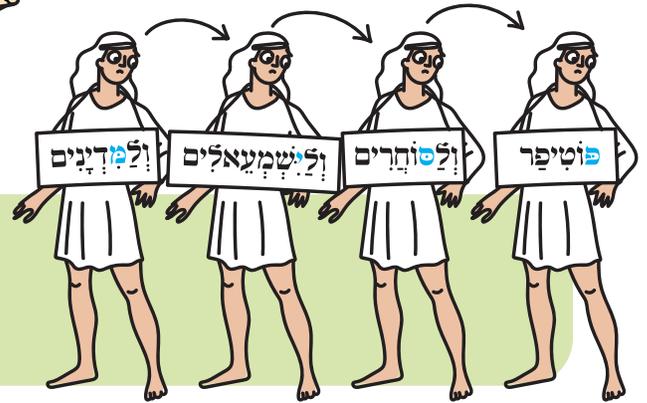
HIZKUNI SAYS

It was given to appease Yosef (the word for appeasing is יָסַף/piyyus—a play on words because it sounds like “passim”).



RASHI SAYS

Passim (פָּסִים) was an acronym for all the people Yosef would be sold to (see Bereishit 37:28 and 39:1).



רְגַע שֶׁל עִבְרִית • A Moment of Hebrew

Bereishit 37:7

There, we were binding bundles of grain in the field, when suddenly my bundle **stood up** and remained standing; then your bundles gathered around and bowed low to my bundle.

בראשית לז:ז

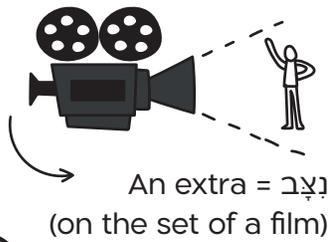
וְהָיָה אֲנִיחוּ מֵאֲלֵמִים
אֲלֵמִים בְּתוֹךְ הַשָּׂדֶה וְהָיָה
קָמָה אֲלֵמִתִּי וְגַם-נֹצְבָה
וְהָיָה תִסְבְּינָה אֲלֵמֵתֵיכֶם
וּתְשַׁתְּחוּיִן לְאֲלֵמֵתִי:





נִצָּבָה (שָׁרֵשׁ י.צ.ב.)

- 1. Standing, upright
- 2. Perpendicular



An extra = נִצָּב
(on the set of a film)



Tombstone or monument = מִצָּבָה



Stable = יָצִיב



= מָה הַמִּצָּב?
What's up?
What is the situation?

Find the Word!

- ◆ When God destroys the cities of Sodom and Amarah, the angels rescuing Lot and his family warn them not to look back. But Lot's wife looks back. Can you find the verse in Bereishit, chapter 19 that uses this same שָׁרֵשׁ (shoresh, root) to describe what happens when she looks back? (Hint: look at verse 26.)



דְּבָרָה טֵל דִּין • One-Minute Debate

How to play:

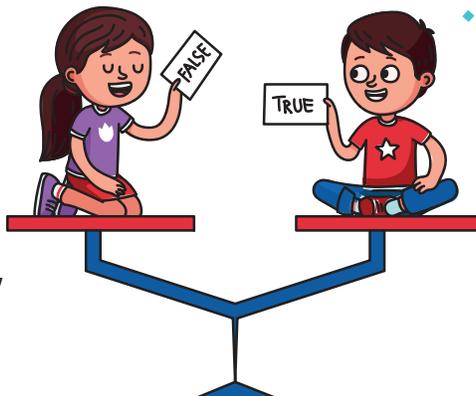
Here is a topic for debate along with some suggested arguments, but feel free to come up with your own.

- ◆ 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: Yaakov should not have sent Yosef to check on his brothers.

◆ True:

- ◆ Yaakov knew that the brothers hated Yosef. Nothing good could come of sending him over to them!
- ◆ Look at what happened, Yosef could have easily been left to die in a pit.



◆ False:

- ◆ Sometimes siblings need an opportunity to work things out without their parents around.
- ◆ How could Yaakov have imagined that his kids would do something so terrible?!



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 About whom did Yosef tattletale?

2 Where did Yosef finally meet up with his brothers?

3 What items for sale were the Yishmaelites carrying in their caravan?

4 What was the name of Tamar's second son?

5 What was Potiphar's job?

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

7 In his dream, what was the cupbearer holding in his hand?

8 What word in our parashah has the special שְׁלֹשֶׁת (shalshet) note on it?

9 What word in our parashah is written with dots on top of it?

10 What word is used twice in our parashah to describe two different places where Yosef found himself?



*
Look for the answers on page 12!





Azla Geresh אַזְלָא-גֵרֶשׁ

Azla geresh looks like a kadma reflected through a mirror, and its name means "going out" or "chased out." It is a bit of a dramatic note, going up and down twice. Sometimes it surprises us and appears all by itself, following another completed musical phrase. Here it is following a revii in our parashah:



בראשית לח:יב
וַיִּנְחַם יְהוּדָה וַיַּעַל
עַל-גִּזְזֵי צֹאנוֹ

Bereishit 38:12

Yehudah was comforted and went up to his sheep shearers

But more often, it forms a pair with kadma, known as kadma ve-azla. Here is an example of that from this week as well:



בראשית לז:יג
וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-יוֹסֵף

Bereishit 37:13

Yisrael said to Yosef

Kadma ve-azla is a fun pair to listen to, so perk up your ears and enjoy.



QUICK FACTS

1

How many times does it appear in the Torah?

1,121 - Common

Approximately every 6 pesukim

2

Does it end a phrase?

Yes

3

Is it above or below the word?

Above

4

Does it fall on the accent?

Yes (so the word is pronounced with emphasis where the azla geresh appears)



בואו נדבר על זה • Tell Me More About This!

The item of clothing that Yaakov gives to Yosef, כְּתוֹנֶת (ketonet, coat or sweater), is mentioned in a bunch of other places in Tanakh. For example:

The leather clothes that God made for Adam and Havah once they realized they were naked (Bereishit 3:21).



The special linen robes the כֹּהֲנִים (kohanim, priests) wore while serving in the Mishkan (Shemot 28:4) and later in the Beit Ha-Mikdash.



The clothes that King David's daughter, Tamar, wore, which had the exact same description as Yosef's: ketonet passim (Shmuel Bet 13:18). The verse suggests that this was a garment worn by princesses in general.

- ◆ What do these four instances of the word have in common?
- ◆ Do these other ketonet examples change how you think about Yosef's ketonet?

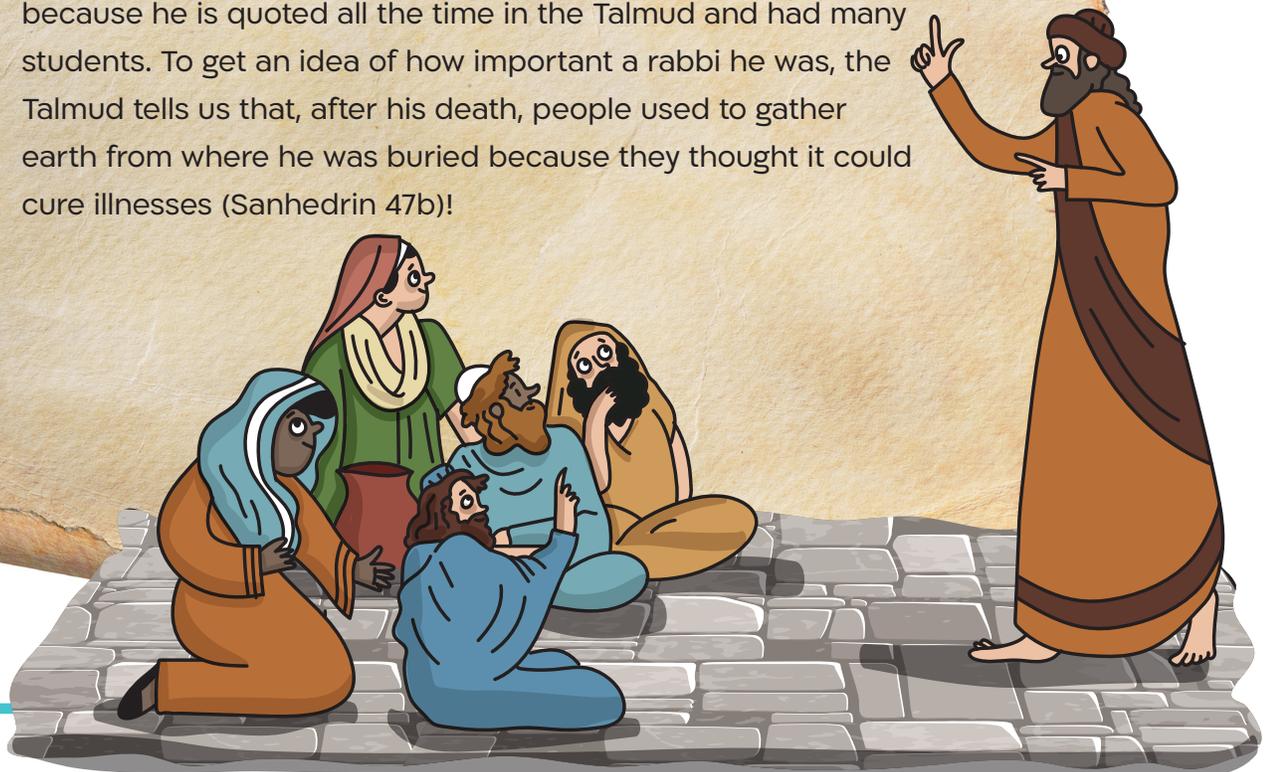


• **Who Were Our Sages?** • טי הויו חכמינו

This week's הַלְכָה/Halakhah section tells a story about **Rav** (p. 5), an important sage from about 1,800 years ago. His real name was **אַבָּא אַרִיכָא (Abba Arikha)**, which might have been a nickname because he was very tall (אַרוּךְ). In any case, he was so famous that he didn't even go by his name, just his title. "Rav" is the way the Jews of בָּבֶל (Bavel, Babylonia) said the word "Rabbi."

Rav went to אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל (Eretz Yisrael, the Land of Israel) as a young man to learn the Mishnah from the greatest scholars of his time, like Rebbe and Rabbi Hiyya. The Talmud describes him as one of the most junior—but brilliant—students there (Hullin 54a). He was also very humble. For example, he was terrified of leading בִּרְכַת הַמְּזוֹן (Birkat Ha-Mazon, Grace After Meals) in front of his teachers (Berakhot 43a).

When he returned to Bavel, he settled in a place called Sura and became one of the leaders of the first generation of Amoraim (rabbis of the Gemara). He must have taught a lot of Torah because he is quoted all the time in the Talmud and had many students. To get an idea of how important a rabbi he was, the Talmud tells us that, after his death, people used to gather earth from where he was buried because they thought it could cure illnesses (Sanhedrin 47b)!





Shabbat Shalom!

~ שבת שלום ~

Parashah Scavenger Hunt Answers:

1. The children of Bilhah and Zilpah
2. Dotan
3. נְכֹאת וְצִרֵי וְלֵט (spices, balm, labdanum)
4. Zerah (It is true that in 38:30 he is called Zarah, but that is because the name appears at the end of a verse, and so the vowels change because of something called a pausal form. Stay tuned for more on pausal forms in a future Devash magazine.)
5. שַׂר הַטְּבָחִים (sar ha-tabahim)—it's not fully clear what this means!
6. Prison
7. The royal wine cup
8. וַיִּמָּאֵן (va-yema'ain, and he refused)
9. אֶת (et, 37:12)
10. בּוֹר (bor): describing the pit where his brothers threw him, and the dungeon where he was imprisoned



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.



**This publication contains words of Torah,
so please treat it with appropriate reverence**

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