

The Pardes Center for Jewish Educators presents

# *An Interactive* **PARSHA EXPERIENCE**



**Parsha:** Miketz

**Title:** Knowing and Not Knowing: Two Sides of the Same Coin

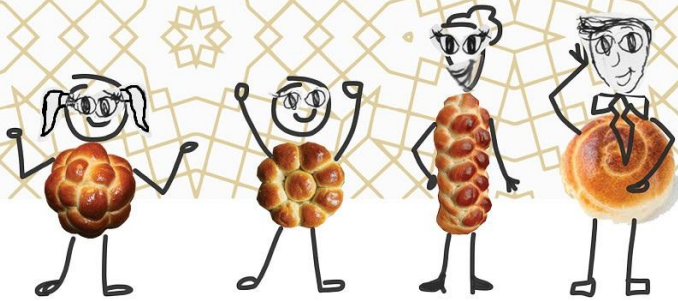
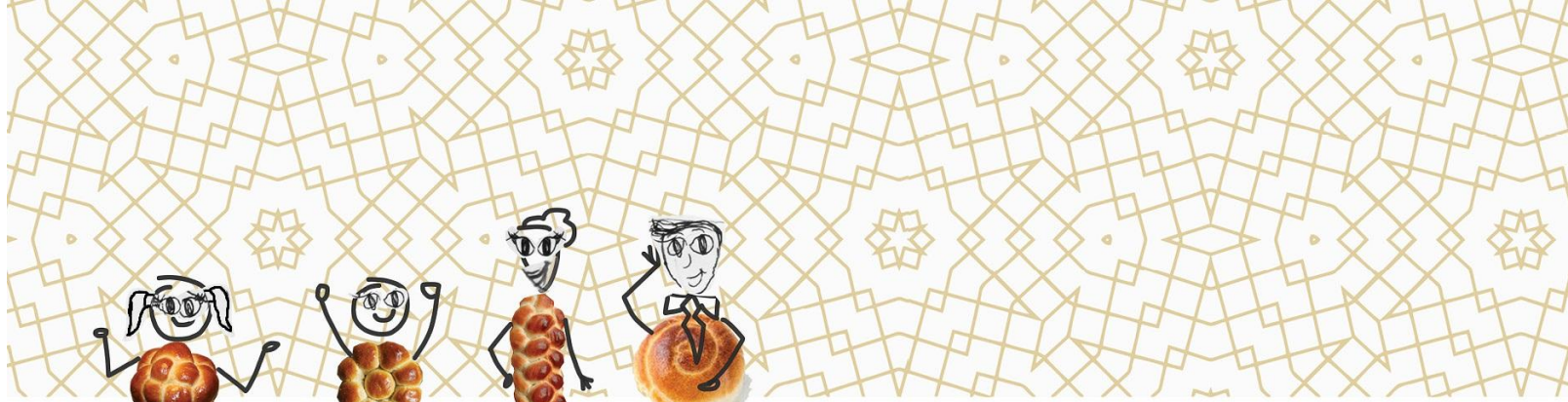
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## *The Parsha at First Glance*

### **Warming Up:**

Have you ever heard of a contronym? That is a word that is its own antonym; a word that has two different meanings which are opposites of each other! Here are some examples:

- **Off** can mean deactivated (the lights went off) or activated (the alarm went off)



- To **dust** means both to remove dust (dusting shelves) or to sprinkle it about (dusting sugar on top of a cake)
- **Transparent** can mean invisible or impossible to see but it also means so clear that something is obvious

**Question:** Can you think of more examples of contronyms in English? (Consider breaking up into two teams for about three minutes to see which side can come up with the highest number of contronyms.)

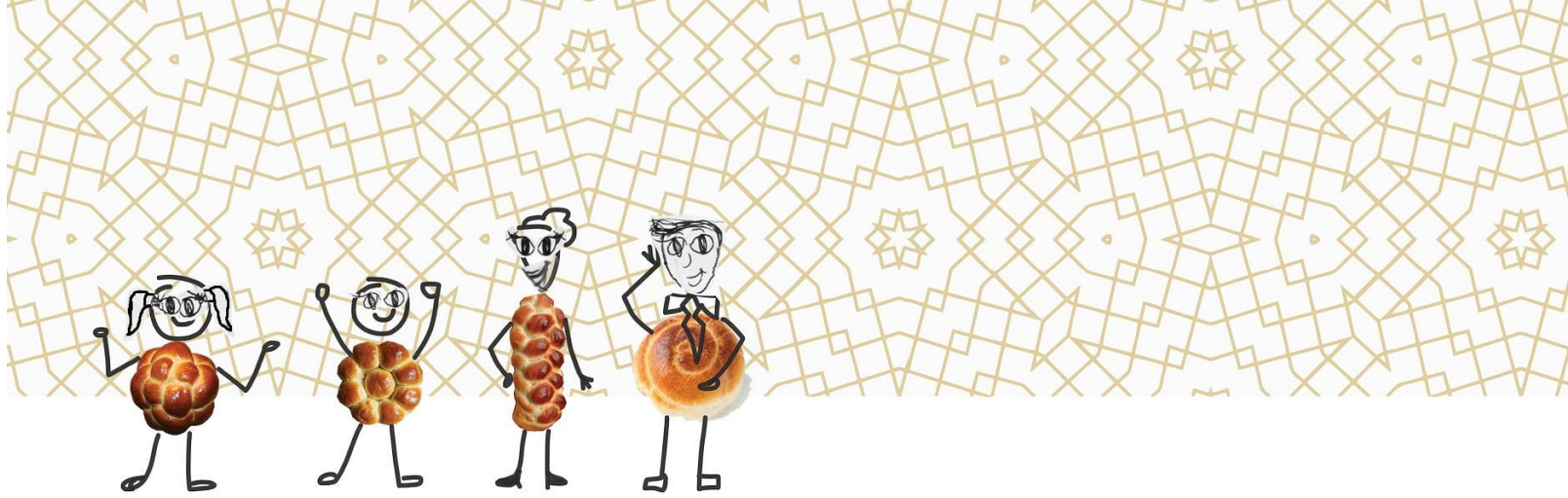
Well... there are contronyms in Hebrew too! The same three letter Hebrew root - נ.כ.ר - means both to be familiar or known but it also means to be strange or foreign. Let's see if you can figure out what interesting role this contronym plays in this week's *parsha*, *Miketz*.

### Spotlight on the Parsha:

There is a lot of drama in our *parsha*! Yosef, who lingered for two years in a harsh Egyptian prison, has now been promoted to become the second most powerful person in Egypt - directly under Pharaoh! Because of Yosef's ability to correctly interpret Pharaoh's dreams and predict seven years of plenty, followed by seven years of famine, Joseph has been made responsible for managing the grain which will be needed to feed everyone throughout Egypt for seven years. The famine has begun and it is really affecting people - including Yaakov and his family - even outside of Egypt. Rumors of this stored grain compel Yosef's brothers to travel down from Canaan to Egypt in the hope that this very powerful man will agree to sell them some food provisions to take back home. The action picks up in the next few verses - Genesis 42:7-8.

וַיֵּרָא יוֹסֵף אֶת-אֶחָיו וַיִּכְרַם; וַיִּתְנַכֵּר אֲלֵיהֶם וַיְדַבֵּר אֲתָם קָשׁוֹת, וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם מֵאֵין בְּאֵתָם, וַיֹּאמְרוּ, מֵאָרֶץ כְּנָעַן לְשֹׁבֵר-אֶכֶל.

When Joseph saw his brothers, he **recognized** them (ויכרם) ; but he **made himself a stranger** (ויתנכר) in front of them and spoke harshly to them. He asked them,



“Where do you come from?” And they said, “From the land of Canaan, to procure food.”

ויכר יוסף את-אחיו; והם לא הכירו.

Though Joseph **recognized** (ויכר) his brothers, they did not **recognize** him (הכירו).

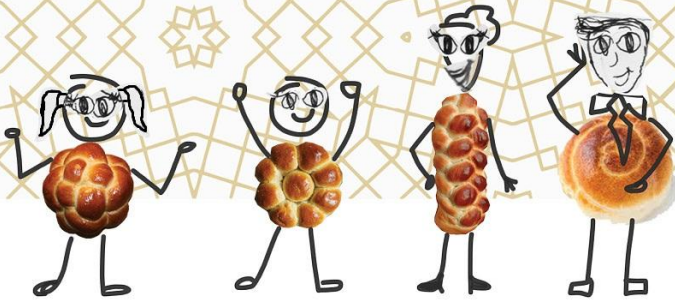
### Zooming In:

After all these years, Yosef is suddenly reunited with his brothers - the ones who sold him into slavery - and they don't even realize it! Now Yosef is the one with all the power and they are practically beggars standing in front of this man, desperate for food.

The tables have turned, and now at this very dramatic moment, we have our contronym conspicuously at work: the Hebrew root נ.כ.ר only appears a handful of times as a verb in the whole Torah, and so the fact that it appears four times - with both of its opposite meanings - in two consecutive *pesukim* is rather striking!

### Questions for Consideration:

1. What do you think Yosef is thinking at this dramatic moment? What thoughts and feelings could be running through his head?
2. Why does Yosef choose to disguise himself from his brothers?
3. Why, at this exact moment of our story, does the Torah choose to use this contronym - נ.כ.ר - four times? Why might it be important to emphasize things being known yet disguised at the same time?!



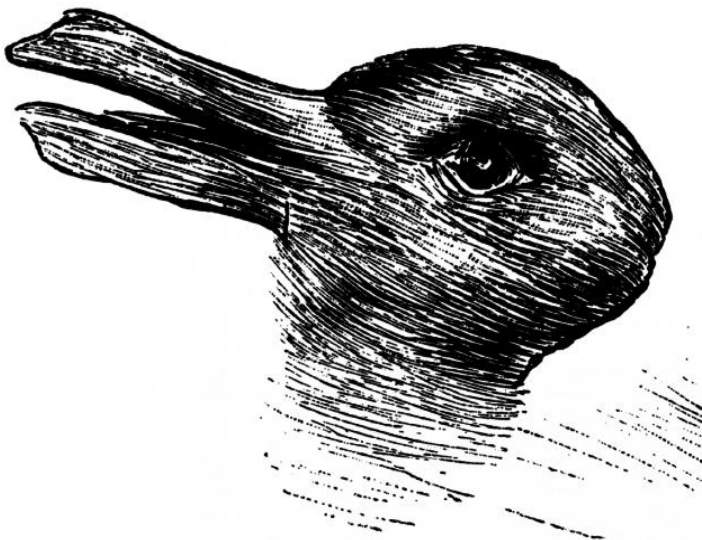
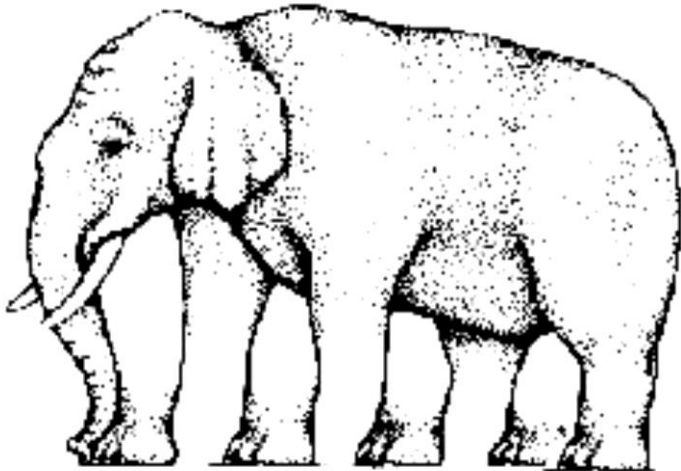
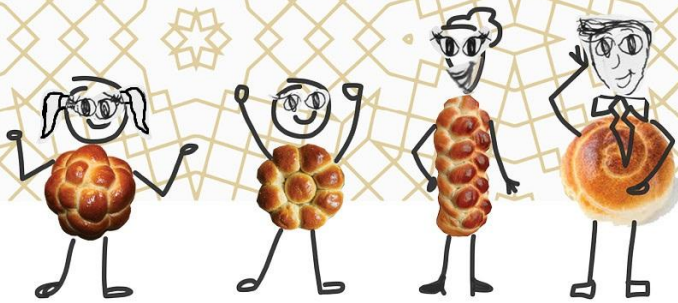
## The Parsha Through Another Lens

### Picture This:

Take a few minutes passing around and looking at the three images attached below. Then discuss the following question.

**Question:** What do these images have to do with your discussion about the *parsha*?





## Shabbat Shalom!

1. A 'cheat-sheet' with dozens of examples of conronyms can be found [here](#) or [here](#).