

The Pardes Center for Jewish Educators presents

# *An Interactive* **PARSHA EXPERIENCE**



**Parsha:** Nitzavim

**Title:** To Stand or Not to Stand?

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## *The Parsha at First Glance*

### **Warming Up:**

Can you think of a synonym (in English) for the verb 'to stand'? (As in: I am standing, not sitting.) Hmm... it's a bit tricky, isn't it? (If you think of a really good one, let me know, because I am stumped! - [rachelf@pardes.org.il](mailto:rachelf@pardes.org.il))



Interestingly, even though there are WAY more words in English -170,000 - compared to Biblical Hebrew - 9,000 – in Hebrew there are two roots for the word stand... עמד and יצב. Why would Biblical Hebrew, with about 1/20th of the words that English has, use two of its 9,000 words on the verb 'to stand'?

Ok, we will come back to this question. First let's catch up on the *parsha!*

### Spotlight on the Parsha:

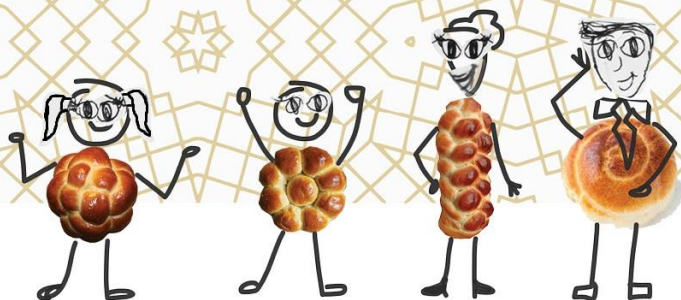
Moshe has been speaking to *Bnei Yisrael* for a long time now... there is a lot that he wants to teach and remind them before they cross into Canaan without him. Moshe has been reminding them of the laws that they have to keep and the importance of being loyal to God. In exchange for this loyalty, Moshe explains to the people, God will bless you and protect you.

### Zooming In:

Even though Bnei Yisrael have already been standing before Moshe for a long time, listening to his teachings and warnings, this parsha begins with Moshe saying to them, "Today you are all standing (נצבים) before God... ." A little further on, Moshe reminds the people that if they listen to God He will make them a great and prosperous nation and protect them in the land.

### Questions for Consideration:

1. Hmm... does that word נצבים (standing) sound familiar (hint, go back to the start of this document)?
2. The people have already been standing for a LONG time... why does Moshe mention now that the people are standing before God?



## The Parsha Through Another Lens

### Hyperlinked Hebrew:

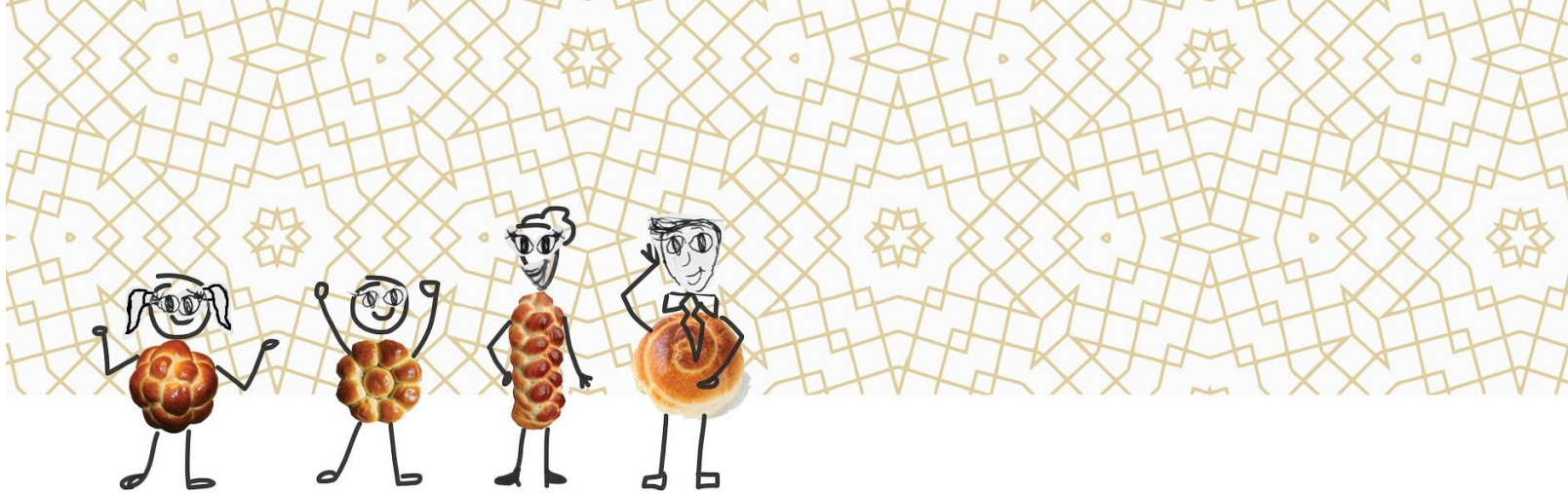
A reminder, before we try to answer our questions above:

Often, when an unusual word is used in the Torah it is a clue for the readers to try to find connections between the text we are reading and other passages in the Torah which use the same unusual word. It is kind of like these rare words are hyperlinked with one another and all the stories that use the word are connected!

Hmm... so where else does the root נצב appear in the Torah and how are the stories connected?

The root נצב appears four times in just 12 *pesukim* during the account of Yaakov's escape from his angry brother Esav and the famous dream he has of a ladder which reaches the heavens. How are these stories connected?? Let me show you (and maybe you can come up with additional connections):

Yaakov & his dream	Parshat Nitzavim
Yaakov has stopped for the night at the border of Canaan, just about to leave the land.	Bnei Yisrael are camped near the border of Canaan, just about to enter the land.
In Yaakov's dream the text reads: וַהֲגֵה ה' נֹצֵב עָלָיו <i>And God <b>stands</b> over Yaakov</i>	Our parsha begins with: אַתֶּם נֹצְבִים הַיּוֹם כְּלֶכֶם לִפְנֵי ה' <i>You are all <b>standing</b> today before God</i>
Yaakov promises to be loyal to God if God helps and protects him.	The people are being reminded of their promise with God... what will happen to them if they are loyal and follow God's commandments.



God promises that Yaakov's descendants will inherit the Land of Canaan.	Bnei Yisrael are about to enter Canaan to conquer it.
God promises Yaakov he will be a great nation.	Bnei Yisrael have become a large and powerful nation.

Do you think that now you can answer our question from above: **Why does Moshe mention now that the people are standing before God?**

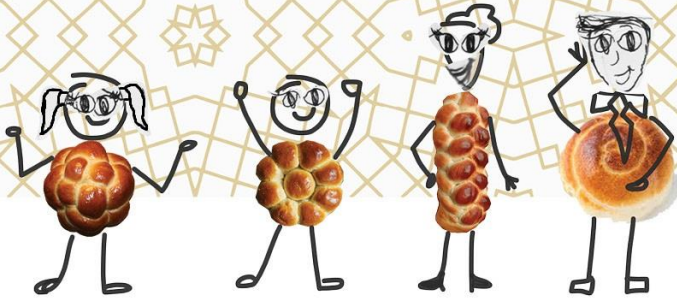
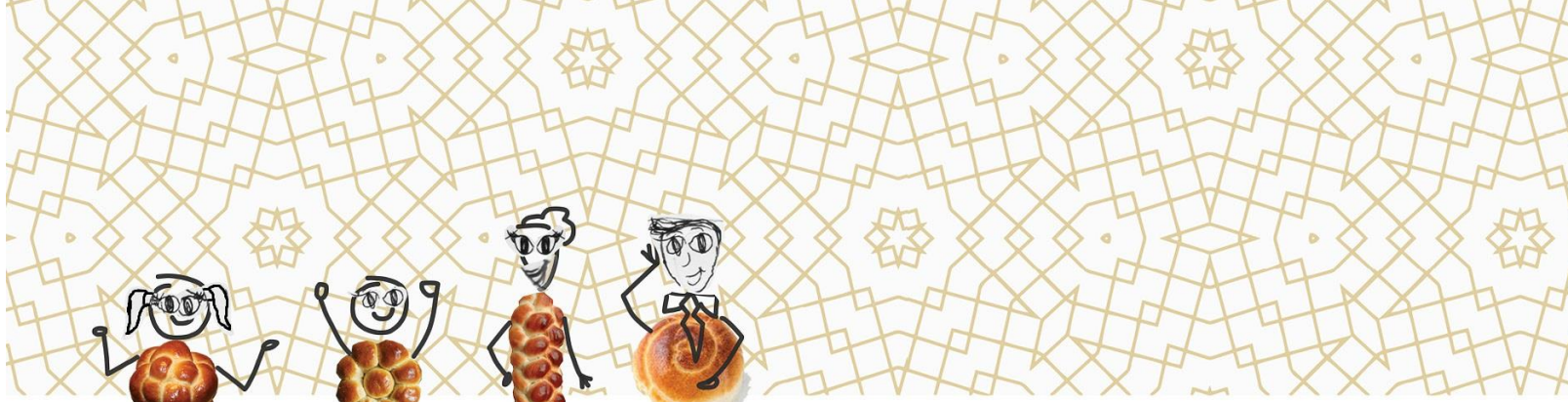
### Standing Tableau:

So, based on our two examples above (from our parsha and from Yaakov's dream) and several others from the Torah (such as: the word מצבה, which comes from the same root, which means a monument; or when three mysterious men come to tell Avraham & Sarah that they will have a son; several instances of building monuments to God and preparing sacrifices to God), it seems that the verb יצב meant **'to stand in a rooted way.'**

Now it's time to get up and try out different ways of standing! In comparing our two stories there are a lot of different 'postures' that the characters take. Let's step into their shoes and try to better understand our key verb נצב.

All participants should be on their feet with enough space around them that they could swing their arms or step side to side. After each posture all participants can reflect aloud in response to the questions below.

- Stand = עמד
  - Where are your feet?
  - Where are your shoulders?
- Stand in a rooted way = נצב
  - What did you have to do differently?
  - What makes you feel more rooted?



- What else in your body changes when you try to feel more rooted?
  - How does this feel?
- Position yourself like Yaakov fleeing from Esav = ויצא
  - What did you have to change about your feet?
  - What is your facial expression?
  - How does this feel?
- Position yourself like a monument = מצבה
  - Is it hard to stay perfectly still?
  - Would you change your position if you were a war monument?
  - What about your body might you change if you were a monument to God?
- Position yourself like one of Bnei Yisrael wandering in the desert for 40 years
  - What have you changed in your body's position? Why?
  - What is your facial expression?
- Position yourself as Bnei Yisrael standing in a rooted way before God = נצבים לפני ה'
  - Is this different from the way you stood rooted before?
  - Is there something you can do with your body to show that you are before God?

**Shabbat Shalom!**