

The Pardes Center for Jewish Educators presents

An Interactive PARSHA EXPERIENCE



Parsha: Vayelech

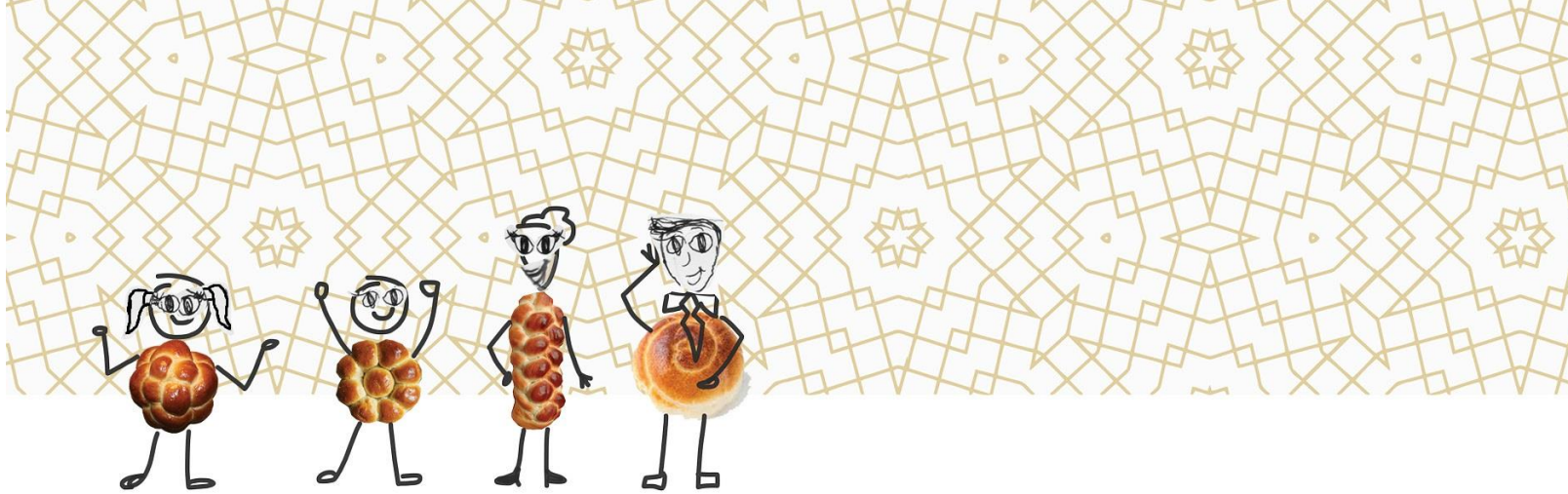
Title: The Strength to Remain Calm

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The Parsha at First Glance

Spotlight on the Parsha:

Welcome to the shortest *parsha* of all the *parshiot* – only 30 verses! This means that every word counts.



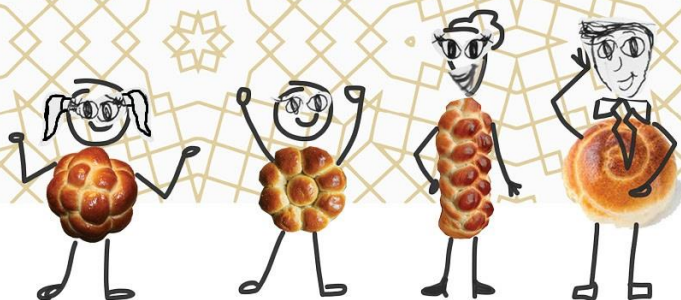
Moshe has reached the ripe old age of 120 and, as part of his final preparations before he dies, gives final instructions to *Bnei Yisrael* (the Children of Israel). He appoints his student Yehoshua in front of the whole nation to be the next leader of the Jewish people as they prepare to cross over the Jordan River and enter the Land of Israel.

Zooming In:

If a tennis coach says to their student, "When you serve you have to keep your eye on the ball," the student *may* listen. If the coach says it a second time, the student *hopefully* will listen and do it. What if the coach says it a third time? Wouldn't the student feel they have to do it, because it is so important that the coach had to repeat it three times!?! But hang on, *why* did the coach have to repeat it three times?

In our very short parsha, where every word counts, we have something similar – a threefold repetition of the necessity to *be strong and courageous*. Look at these three verses from our parsha, found in chapter 31 of *Devarim*:

<p>6. "Be strong and courageous! Neither fear, nor be dismayed of them, for the Lord, your God, He is the One Who goes with you. He will neither fail you, nor forsake you."</p>	<p>ו חִזְקוּ וְאַמְצוּ, אֶל-תִּירְאוּ וְאַל- תַּעֲרְצוּ מִפְּנֵיהֶם: כִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ, הוא הַהֹלֵךְ עִמָּךְ, לֹא יִרְפֶּךָ, וְלֹא יַעֲזֹבֶךָ.</p>
<p>7. And Moses called Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous! For you shall come with this people to the land which the Lord swore to their forefathers to give them. And you shall apportion it to them as an inheritance."</p>	<p>ז וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה לַיהוֹשֻׁעַ, וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו לְעֵינַי כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, חִזְק וְאַמְץ כִּי אַתָּה תָּבוֹא אֶת הָעָם הַזֶּה אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה לְאַבְתָּם לָתֵת לָהֶם וְאַתָּה תִּנְחַלְנָה אוֹתָם.</p>



<p>23. And He commanded Joshua the son of Nun, and said: "Be strong and courageous! For you shall bring the Children of Israel to the land that I have sworn to them, and I will be with you."</p>	<p>כג וַיִּצַו אֶת-יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן-נּוּן, וַיֹּאמֶר חֲזַק וְאַמֵץ כִּי אֶתְּהָ תָבִיא אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לָהֶם; וְאֲנֹכִי אֶהְיֶה עִמָּךְ.</p>
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As Moshe is about to pass on, why are we being reminded that the most important thing is to 'be strong and courageous'? And what does that even mean? Stop those who are weaker than us from being bullied? When everyone else is doing the wrong thing, to stand up and do the right thing? When times are hard to stick at it and persevere? I imagine the answer is yes to all of these possibilities. We need to be strong and courageous in many aspects of life, especially when it comes to doing the right thing.

Yet there is another aspect of these words brought in a *midrash* from Yalkut Shimoni (a collection of midrashim from the Middle Ages), which explains what 'be strong and courageous' in verse 7 means:

Moshe said to Yehoshua, "This nation that I am giving you are like young goats. They are still young children. Do not be too harsh with them as even their Creator called them children, as it is written (Hoshea 11:1): "Israel is but a beloved lad."

The Jews at that point in time needed to be treated by their leaders with patience and calm – which can be really hard! Especially when all you want to do is shout, lash out, storm off, or break something. Being patient and calm when those around you are not requires true strength and courage.

Did you ever have a younger (or older) sibling that annoyed you, or a fellow student in class that irritated you in some way? How did you react? Did you have the strength to remain calm? Were you courageous in not lashing out?

Questions for Consideration:



1. Did you ever experience someone giving you instructions and repeating it often? If so, what were they?
2. Why do you think people repeat instructions three (or more!) times?
3. How do you normally react when people do irritate and annoy you?
4. Why do you think the Midrash suggests that the words strength and courage are connected to being patient and calm?

The Parsha Through Another Lens

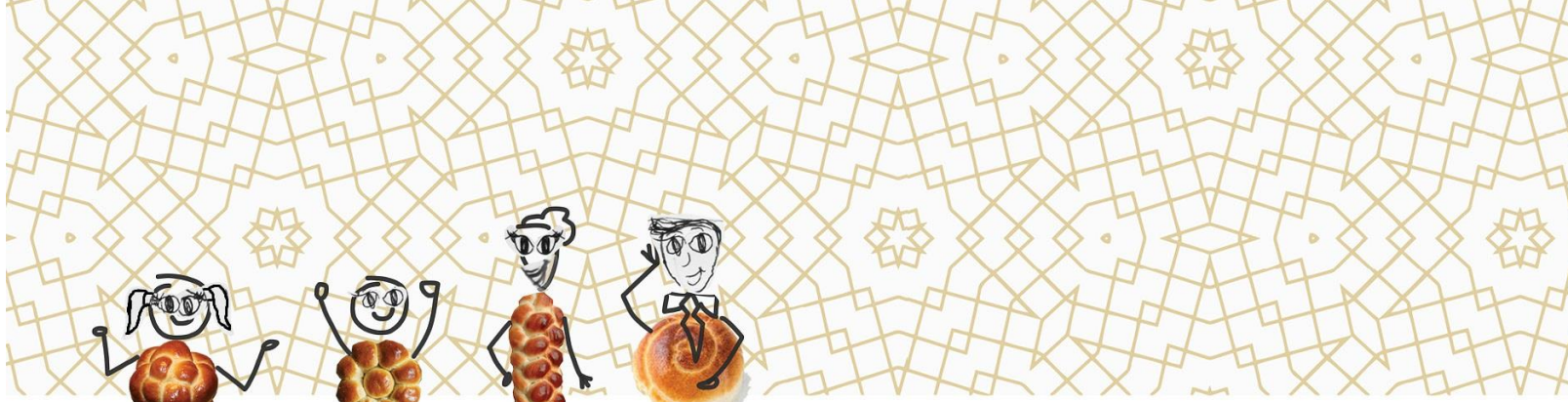
Endurance!

Being patient and calm can be difficult; it requires courage and strength to do it. This game aims to test your students' or Shabbat guests' ability to stay calm in a physically stressful situation. Ask them to pay attention to facial expression.

The following are physically tough exercises that will test how people respond to stress. This can be played one person at a time, or having several people doing the same test all together. Who can stay calm the longest?

1. Have the person stretch out their arms holding a can of pickles (or other weighty can) in each arm. How long does it take before they falter?
2. See how long they can do the plank





exercise.

3. Have them do a wall squat and see how long they can last.



Questions for discussion after the endurance exercise:

- Could you control your body?
- How did your feelings change throughout the activity?
- How much in control of your facial expressions were you?
- What was going through your mind when it was getting tough?

The game is really a trigger to get people thinking about how they behave when they are aggravated by the people around them.

This can move onto a discussion about the types of situations where a young person (or adult!) needs to have strength and courage to remain calm and patient. Everyone can contribute to a brainstorm about tactics to give them the strength and courage to remain calm. Here are some example annoying/stressful situations...

- A sibling who does something annoying
- A parent asking for chores to be done
- A doctor who is giving you a shot
- Not getting a toy/object that you really want
- Have the people around the table add their own stressful situations...

Shabbat Shalom!