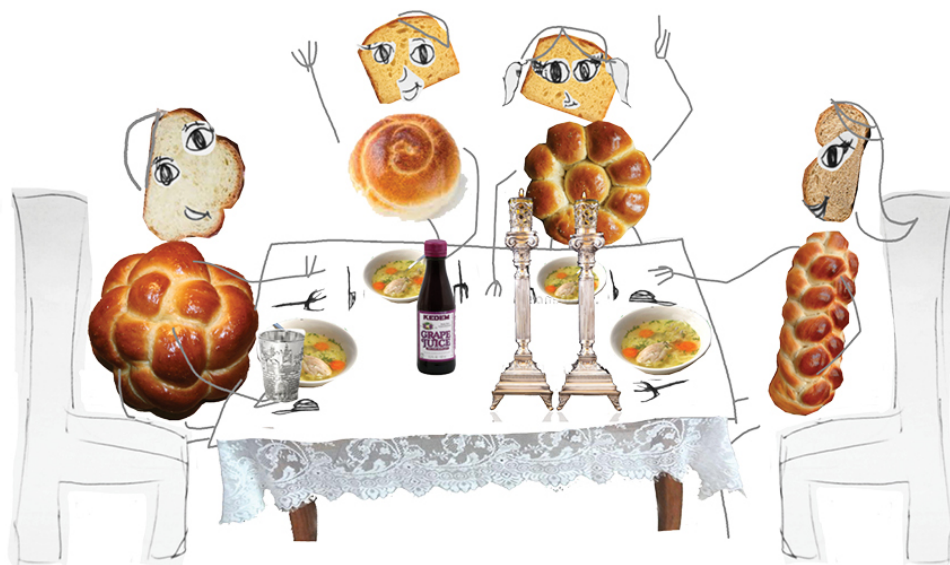


The Pardes Center for Jewish Educators presents

An Interactive **PARSHA EXPERIENCE**



בראשית | Bereishit

An Interactive Parsha Experience is a family-oriented parsha resource. Complete with summaries and related questions for the weekly parsha, this guide provides games, activities and other fun things for parents and educators to bring to their class or family Shabbat table.

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Parsha: Bereishit

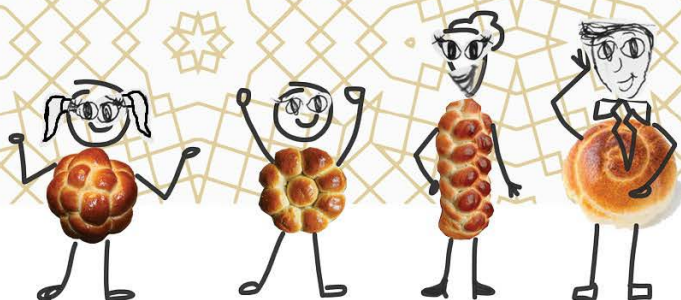
Title: The Blame Game - What a Shame

Contributor: Reuven Margrett, Director of Digital Content, Pardes Center for Jewish Educators, and Pardes Day School Educators Program Graduate '05-'07

The Parsha at First Glance

Spotlight on the Parsha:

In the beginning God created... basically the whole universe (light, dark, heavens, trees, seeds, stars, sun, land, birds, beasts, and finally humans). After placing Adam in the garden of Eden God commands that the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil not be eaten. And of course, like any child (or adult)



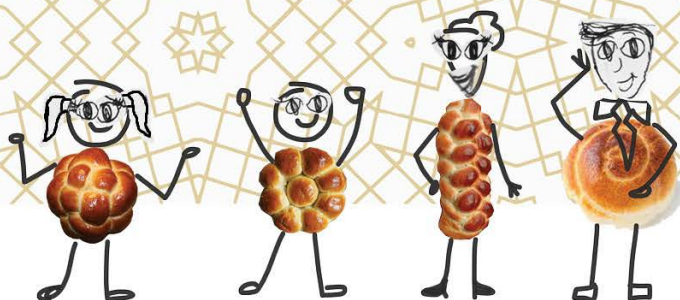
who is told not to do something - the temptation is too strong and they do. Both Adam and his wife Chava (Eve) eat the fruit from the tree and when confronted by God about whether they did it or not, Adam blames Chava, and Chava blames the sneaky snake. The classic 'It's not my fault! So-and-so made me do it' excuse - it's as old as the hills (give or take a day or two). God gives harsh consequences because of this: the snake loses its legs, Chava gives birth in pain, and Adam has to work the land extra hard. Everyone has to leave the garden called Eden. Not such a happy ending. So what do we learn from this?

Zooming In:

One of the first things that the first humans do is make mistakes, which means getting things wrong is a part of who we are. No human being has lived and not made some sort of mistake. It may be hard to admit - but we (and you) are not perfect. In fact everyone around this table has and will make mistakes. When Adam and Chava made a mistake, what did they do? Instead of admitting it they played the blame game, which could be worse than making the mistake in the first place! Perhaps the issue is how we handle the mistakes we, and others, make, rather than making them at all.

Questions for Consideration:

- a) How many mistakes did you make today already? (*I've made at least 10, and I don't even know when you're reading this.*)
- b) So when Adam and Chava made the mistake, why did they not just say 'Sorry God, I made a mistake'? Was it feeling bad at having made a mistake, feeling guilty, scared of punishment, or lack of self-awareness?
- c) Do you think God was more upset at Adam and Chava for not listening to the command not to eat from the tree, or for not admitting they made a mistake?
- d) How do you feel after making a mistake? Do you want to hide it, or admit it? Why?



The Parsha Through Another Lens

Getting Your Gameface On - Two Truths and a Lie:

Each person at the table has to say two things that happened to them today, and one made up thing that didn't happen to them today. The other people around the table need to guess which one is not true.

Follow-up questions:

- *How did it feel to tell a lie?*
- *How did it feel when you knew someone else was not telling the truth?*
- *What are the consequences when we are not honest with other people?*
- *Why do you think people don't always tell the truth about their actions?*

The Parsha in Practice - Table Truth:

You can do this once, every week, or every month.

Each person, in a blame- and consequence-free environment, says something they are sorry for. Rather than people covering things up, having internal feelings of guilt, and letting things stew, the Shabbat table can be an outlet for honesty, making mistakes, building trusting relationships, learning, and growing.

PLEASE NOTE: This activity requires trust and a safe environment. It also requires the caregivers to understand that it is better that a child admits a mistake and not get a consequence, rather than cover up and try and get away with it (*i.e., making the same mistake that Adam and Chava made*).

Shabbat Shalom!

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Parsha: Noach

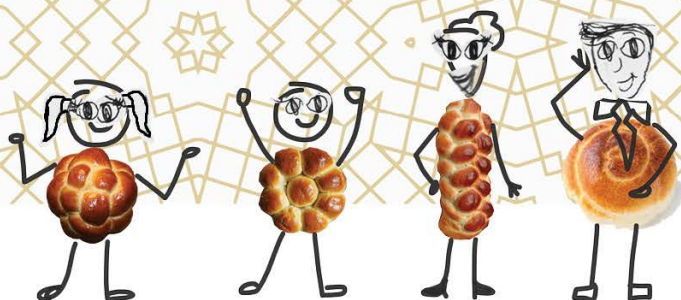
Title: Strength in Numbers?

Contributor: Amy Martin, Pardes Day School Educators Program '09-'11

The Parsha at First Glance

Spotlight on the Parsha:

Imagine a world where everyone speaks in the same words and the same language. In *Parshat Noach* this world exists in the story of The Tower of Bavel (Genesis 11:1-9). The people say to each other, "Let's build a city with a tower that reaches the sky and make a name for ourselves." God worries about why



they are doing what they are doing. God decides to make it so that they no longer all speak the same language, so it will be harder for them to do their work.

Zooming In:

There is a tension in this parsha between the desire to work in a group and the potential danger that being in a group can bring about. This tension is real to our lives too!

Questions for Consideration:

Think of a group you are a part of.

- When is being part of that group exciting?
- What do you like about being a part of this group?
- Has there ever been a time when you didn't like being part of the group? Why?
- Do you feel like your voice or opinion has as much power when you work in a group? Is that a good or bad thing?

Think of an activity you prefer to do by yourself or a time you prefer to be alone.

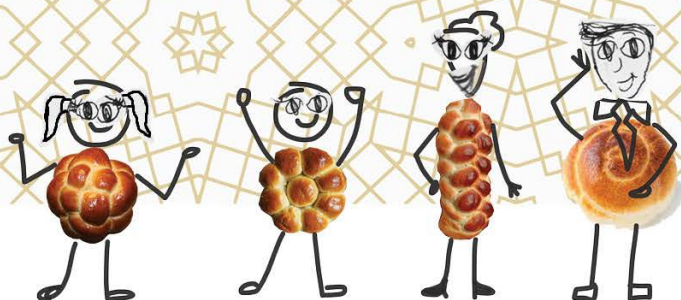
- What are the best parts of doing something by yourself?
- Can you accomplish as much by yourself as you can in a group? What are the positives and negatives of that?

The Parsha Through Another Lens

Getting Your Gameface On:

Get a group of four or more people together to play the following two games. Use a timer and spend ten minutes on each game.

PLEASE NOTE: This activity requires advanced preparation and includes building.



I'm the Engineer:

Materials needed: Gather individual masking tape rolls for each person, and have a large pile of clean recyclables (such as: plastic bottles, emptied and cleaned out yogurt cups, paper towels rolls, etc.) that each person can draw from. Alternatively, gather lego or blocks.

Directions: Set your timer for ten minutes. Make sure each individual has a place to work and their own materials. Your only instruction is to build a tower to the sky.

Once your timer is up, do a gallery walk. Have each member of your group walk around and look at each individual's construction.

Then, have each individual answer: What about how you built or what you built surprised you?

Now play the next game.

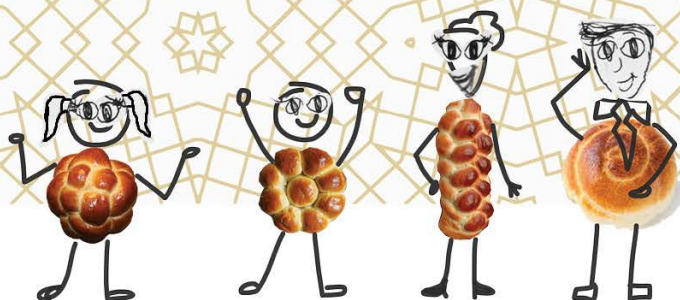
Group Build:

Materials needed: Gather masking tape and a pile of clean recyclables (such as: plastic bottles, emptied and cleaned out yogurt cups, paper towel rolls, etc.). Alternatively, gather lego or blocks.

Directions: Set your timer for ten minutes. Work together as a group to build the tallest structure you can. Make sure that each person in your group is participating in the building.

When your timer is up, see what you've built. Have each team member go around and answer: What about what you built surprised you?

As a group, answer:



Was there a difference between the building that you created or the ways you built during the “Group Build” game and the “I’m an Engineer” game?

If you have time, think back to your conversation from the Zooming In section.

Discuss: When is there a benefit in doing something as an individual? When is there a benefit in doing something as a group? What might be lost when you do an activity as a group?

Taking It Back to the Text:

Think about how God felt about the people building the Tower of Bavel. In your mind, why did God stop them from building their tower and speaking the same language?

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Parsha: Lech-lecha

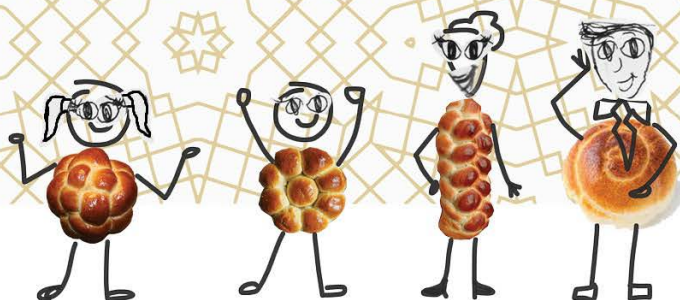
Title: Who is Up for the Challenge?

Contributor: Rachel Friedrichs, Assistant Director, Pardes Center for Jewish Educators, and Pardes Day School Educators Program Graduate '05-'07

The Parsha at First Glance

Spotlight on the Parsha:

At the very start of *Parshat Lech-lecha*, God famously begins speaking to Avram - seemingly out of nowhere! God doesn't introduce Himself to Avram - God just cuts right to the chase and commands Avram to do something really difficult and kind of crazy. God says, "Leave behind your homeland, your family and everything



that is familiar to you so that you can go someplace new and strange. If you do this, I will bless you and make you a great nation.” And Avram does it! He agrees to go on God’s *Lech-lecha* mission... and as we probably know, this is the start of a very close relationship between God and Avram that, according to our tradition, still lasts today (since we are Avram/Avraham’s descendents)!

Zooming In:

There are a lot of interesting and puzzling aspects to this little piece of narrative. One question that many people ask (hopefully you did too!) is: Why did God choose Avram for this mission and give him the chance to earn such a wonderful blessing? Was it random or had God seen something special in Avram that made God believe that Avram would be up for this challenge and deserving of this reward?

To help you think about this question we have shared a midrash - a story written over 1,000 years ago by Rabbis - which tries to answer these kinds of questions about the Torah. But, before you look at one of the answers provided by the midrash, think about what kind of person YOU think would be up for this kind of a challenge.

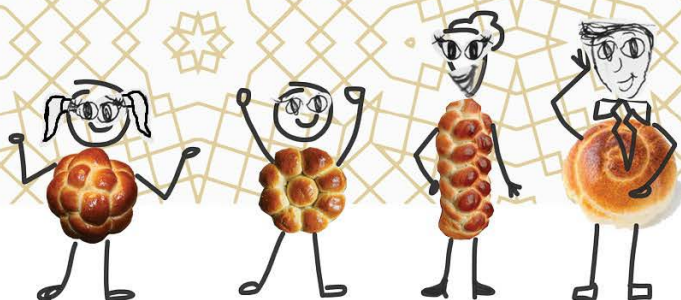
Question for Consideration:

What characteristics, strengths and/or behaviors would a person need to exhibit to be chosen for this kind of mission and blessing?



Midrash Matters:

Now, here is the story that the writers of the midrash use to describe the kind of person *they* thought God would have chosen for this special mission (this is a



paraphrased English version of a midrash found in Genesis Rabbah 38:13). This story **does not** appear in the Torah, but can be told in order to help us better understand the stories that do appear in the biblical text. The Rabbis imagine that this story might have happened before God spoke to Avram at the start of our *parsha*:

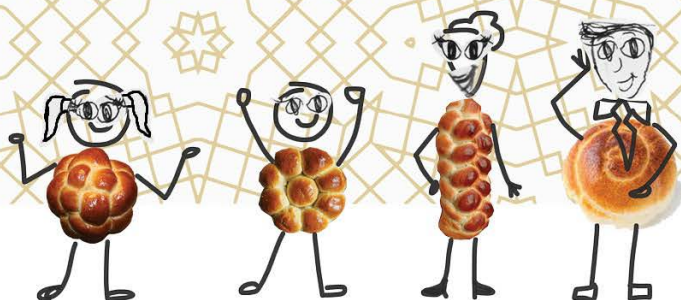
Terah, Avram's father, was a worshipper of idols and even ran an idol shop which sold little statues for worship. One time Terah had to be away from his shop for a day, and he left Avram in charge.

A little later on, a woman entered the shop carrying a dish full of flour, which she wanted to offer as a sacrifice to the idols in the shop. She said to Avram: "This is for you to offer before the idols." Avram took a large stick in his hands and quickly broke all of the idols in the shop, except for one! He then placed the club in the hands of the biggest idol. The woman, quite shocked, left the shop in a hurry.

When Avram's father returned, he asked: "Who did all of this!? Who broke all of the idols!?" Avram replied: "I can't hide it from you - a woman came carrying a dish of flour and told me to offer it before them. I did as she asked, but then one of the idols said 'I will eat it first,' and another shouted 'NO, I will eat it first!' Soon, all the idols were fighting over the flour offering. Finally, the biggest one got up, took a large stick, and smashed the rest of the idols."

Terah retorted angrily: "What, do you think you can trick me? These idols can't think or talk or move! How could they fight one another!?" "Well," Avram replied: "Do your ears hear what your mouth is saying? Why do you worship these idols as gods, if they can't think, talk or move!?"

Terah was so angry that he took Avram to see King Nimrod, even though Terah knew that Avram could get a very big punishment from the king - even be killed! - for smashing idols. Even after arguing with King Nimrod for some time, Avram



would not back down; he was just so sure that worshipping idols was really silly. Avram believed only in God. And so, it was decreed that Avram must be thrown into a fiery furnace for disrespecting the idols and the king. Just before Avram was sent to his death, Nimrod shouted: "If the God you worship is so powerful, let Him save you from the fire." And indeed, that is just what happened - Avram miraculously was pulled out of the burning hot furnace without a scratch (or burn) on his body.

Question:

Based on the midrash above, what kind of person did the Rabbis think was suitable for God's *Lech-lecha* challenge and blessing? What kinds of characteristics, strengths or talents does Avram demonstrate in this rabbinic story that made him worthy of being God's choice for this special mission?

Story Time:

Each person around the table should choose one or two of the characteristics that have been suggested.

Now, try to think of a time where you either:

- felt like you exhibited these characteristics
- wanted to exhibit those characteristics but found it too hard
- observed someone else act that way
- hope in the future you will act this way

Share your stories/reflections, if you feel comfortable!

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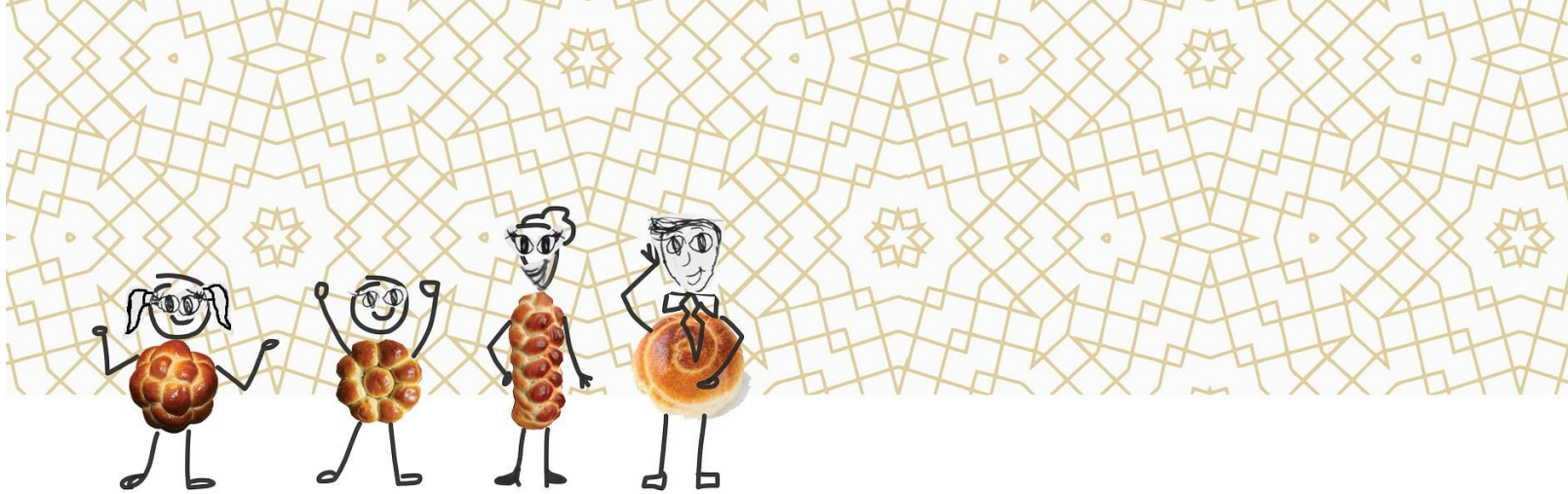
Parsha: Vayera

Title: Feeling Our Laughter

Contributor: Laura Marder, Pardes Day School Educators Program '12-'14

The Parsha at First Glance

In *Parshat Vayera*, Avraham and Sarah are old and past when they think they will be able to have children. Suddenly, as Avraham is sitting at the opening of his tent, he looks up and sees three men appear. He rushes to make sure they feel welcomed and well cared for. We then find out that these men are angels sent from God. One of them tells Avraham that next year they will return and Sarah will have a son. Sarah hears this news and laughs to herself because she thinks



that she is too old to hope for that to happen. In fact, the *parsha* explains three moments when Sarah laughs around the topic of having her son. She even names her son “Yitzhak” which comes from the word *tz-h-k* (צ-ח-ק), meaning ‘laughter.’

Just as Avraham began this *parsha* with his eyes downward - needing to look upwards and outwards to be able to spread goodness to others and see the guests he wanted to welcome - Sarah too goes through a similar journey. At first she begins with an inner doubting laughter, but later spreads the laughter outwards, sharing it with others joyfully.

Zooming In:

Read and discuss the following pieces of the *parsha* which mention Sarah’s laughter.

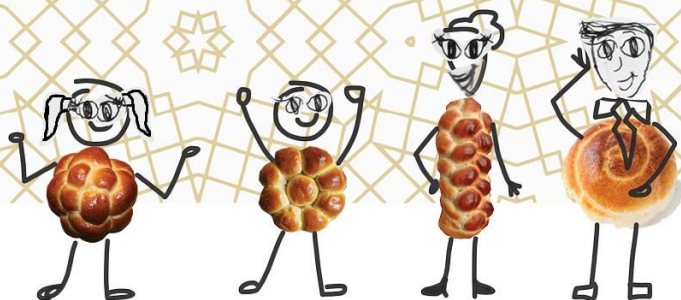
Sarah laughs within herself: Bereishit 18:12

<p>12. And Sarah laughed within herself, saying, “After I have become worn out, will I have smooth flesh? And also, my master is old.”</p>	<p>יב ותצחק שרה, בקרבה לאמר: אחרי בלתי היתה-לי עדנה, ואדני זקן.</p>
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- Why do you think Sarah laughs at this moment?
- Can you relate to this kind of laughter?
- Why do we sometimes think or feel things just inside ourselves first before talking about them or sharing them with others?

God creates joy for Sarah: Bereishit 21:6

<p>6. And Sarah said, “God has made laughter for me...”</p>	<p>ו ותאמר שרה--צחק, עשה לי אלהים...</p>
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- Why do you think Sarah now says aloud that God has made this laughter for her?
- What usually makes you laugh?
- How does it feel when someone makes you laugh?

Everyone who hears will laugh for me: Bereishit 21:6

6....Everyone who hears will laugh for me.	ו...כָּל-הַשֹּׁמְעַ, יִצְחַק-לִי.
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- Once Sarah has accepted the gift of the laughter or joy from God she thinks about how everyone else will feel when they hear about it. She uses the same word **צַחֵק** (laugh) to describe what they will do when they hear about it. Do you think she is worried about *being laughed at* or that *she is excited* to spread the happiness about what God has given her?
- How do you feel when you make others laugh?

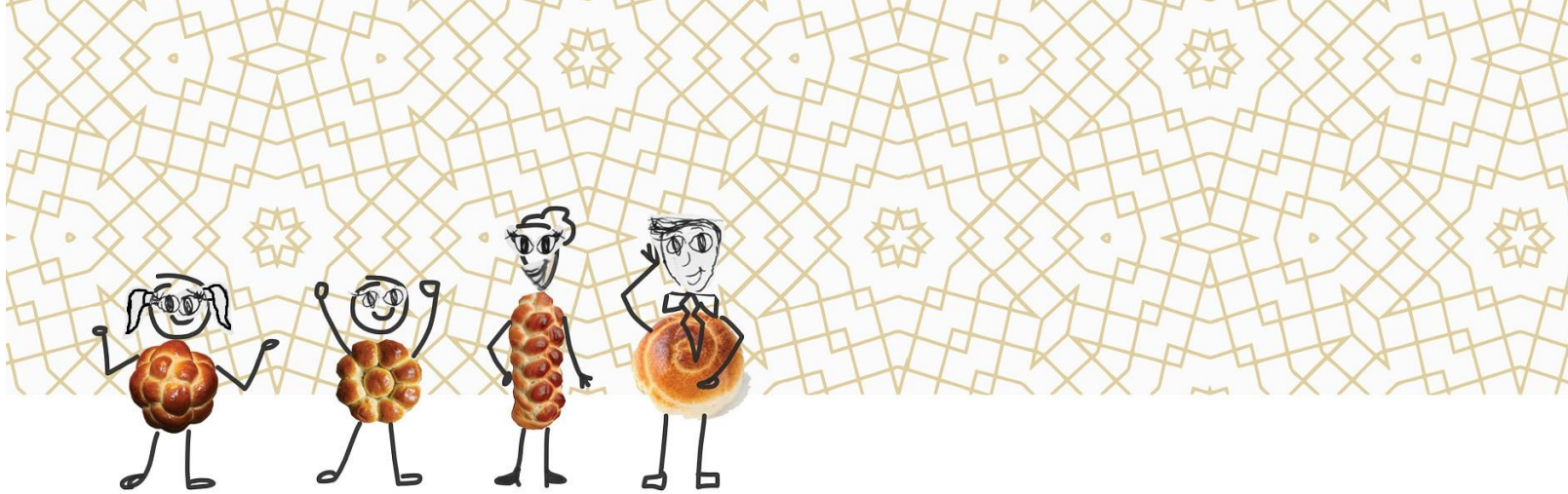
The Parsha Through Another Lens

The Parsha in Practice:

Let's practice this important lesson modeled by Avraham and Sarah in *Parshat Vayera* with a laughter meditation around your table!

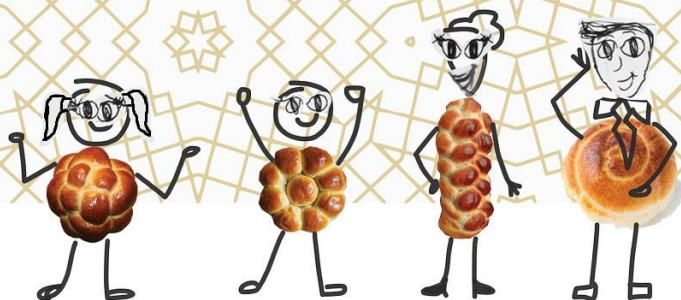
Laughter Meditation:

1. Begin with loosening the body and getting comfortable in your space. Roll your shoulders, wiggle your legs, shake your head, etc.
2. With your eyes closed, sit and just laugh! It will feel odd at first and even very forced. If you stick with it you will eventually forget that it started this way and real laughter will emerge. Place your hand on your body where



you feel the root of where your laughter is bubbling from. Hear your laughter within you, just like Sarah did (וּתְצַחֵק שָׂרָה בְּקִרְבָּהּ = And Sarah laughed within herself).

3. Open your eyes and turn to your side. Look right into the eyes of the person next to you as you continue laughing. Feel the intensity build as you receive their energy and they share yours. Receive each other's energies like a gift, like Sarah received the joyful news from God that she would have Yitzhak (צָחַק עָשָׂה לִי אֱלֹהִים = God has made laughter for me).
4. Look around at everyone. Hear EVERYONE'S different laugh. Feel how the laughter has grown from just that point within you and is now shared and mixed with everyone else's (כָּל הַשְּׂמֵעַ יְצַחֵק לִי = everyone who hears will laugh for me).
5. Motion for everyone to quiet down. Allow quiet to rest around the table. Instruct everyone to keep their hand on their body in the spot where they felt the laughter come from. Pose some questions to float in the room as the silence sets in:
 - How does your body feel now?
 - How did your experience change once you opened your eyes and shared your laughter with everyone?
 - How will you carry this feeling with you?
 - How did Sarah feel when she received such unbelievable information that she would have a child?
 - Why did she laugh? Out of happiness? Relief?
 - How did her laughter make her feel? How did it affect those around her once she let it out?



Challenge to Bring into your Week:

1. Try to notice if you are holding something inside that can be shared with others. Maybe you think your idea is too silly or out of the box. After you have thought about it in your head, let it out and share it with others so they can benefit from your idea and maybe even help it grow!
2. Make someone laugh! Laughter has the power to make your whole body and mind feel better, so find something that will bring someone else happiness and share it!

**You can keep track of how many people you made laugh this week and compete with your family!*

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Parsha: Chaye Sarah

Title: In Search of a Wife for Yitzhak

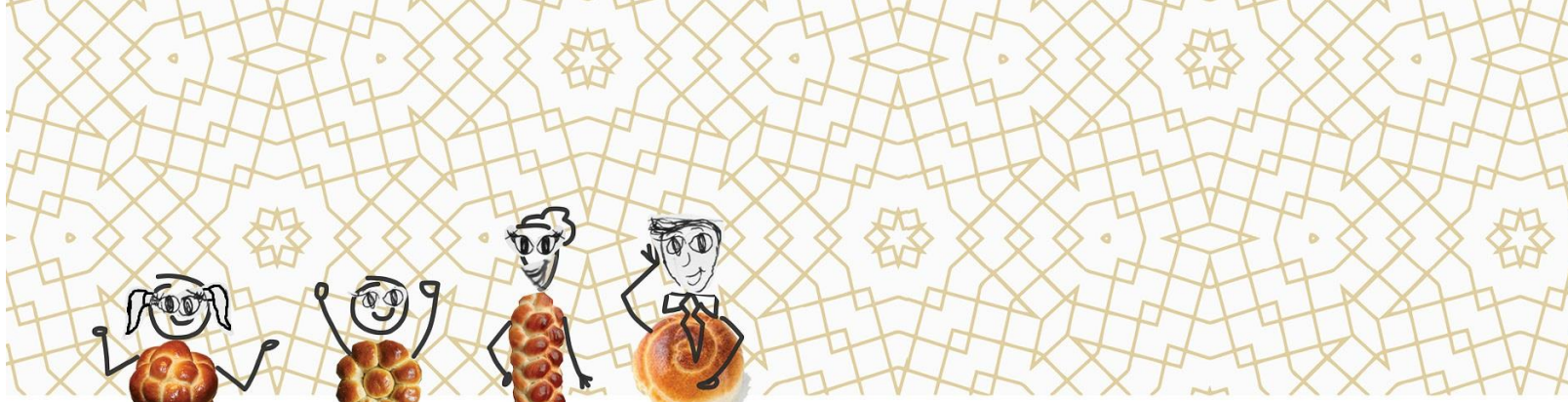
Contributor: Aviva Lauer Golbert, Director, Pardes Center for Jewish Educators

The Parsha at First Glance

Spotlight on the Parsha:

At the beginning of *Parshat Chaye Sarah* – which, weirdly enough, actually means "The Life of Sarah" – Avraham's wife Sarah dies at the very old age of 127.

Avraham, also quite old at that time, feels that he has been blessed with a full, wonderful life and has just one more thing to settle: finding a wife for his son,



Yitzhak. But Avraham doesn't want just *any* wife for Yitzhak – he wants someone very special. In fact, he wants someone *so* special that he feels the need to make sure Yitzhak doesn't marry a local woman from Canaan, since they don't follow the same practices or have the same good values as Avraham and family. So he asks his most trusted servant – basically his butler – to take a long trip back to Aram Nahara'im, where Avraham was originally from, and find a wife there for Yitzhak.

Zooming In:

The butler, whom tradition identifies as Eliezer, spends days and days on the road. He knows that the woman he is looking for must be very special. She must have the same good values that Avraham and his family hold close. Will he be able to find someone like that?

When he arrives at the edge of town, he prays to God: (Bereishit 24:12-14)

<p>12 And he said, "O Lord, God of my master Avraham, grant me good fortune this day, and deal graciously with my master Avraham:</p>	<p>יב ויאמר--יהוה אלהי אדני אברהם, הקרה נא לפני היום; ועשה חסד עם אדני אברהם:</p>
<p>13 Here I stand by the spring as the daughters of the townsmen come out to draw water;</p>	<p>יג הנה אנכי נצב על-עין המים; ובנות אנשי העיר יצאת לשאב מים:</p>
<p>14 let the maiden to whom I say, 'Please, lower your jar that I may drink,' and who replies, 'Drink, and I will also water your camels'—let her be the one whom You have decreed for Your servant Yitzhak. Thereby shall I know that You have dealt graciously with my master."</p>	<p>יד והיה הנער אשר אמר אליה הטי-נא כידך ואשתה, ואמרה שתה, וגם-גמליך אשקה--אתה הכחת לעבדך ליצחק, ובה אדע כי-עשית חסד עם-אדני:</p>



Questions for Consideration:

- a) Why do you think Eliezer specifically prays for a woman who will offer both him and his camels a drink? What would that mean about her? What would it mean if she only offered him a drink but not the camels? What would it mean if she offered to *sell* him water?
- b) Based on Avraham and Eliezer's choices and actions in the *parsha* so far, what values do they seem to hold dear?

The Parsha Through Another Lens

Parsha Poetry:

The poet, Shel Silverstein, wrote a poem called "In Search of Cinderella" (if need be, you might retell the story of Cinderella for context before reading the poem aloud):

From dusk to dawn,
From town to town,
Without a single clue,
I seek the tender, slender foot
To fit this crystal shoe.
From dusk to dawn,
I try it on
Each damsel that I meet.
And I still love her so, but oh,
I've started hating feet.



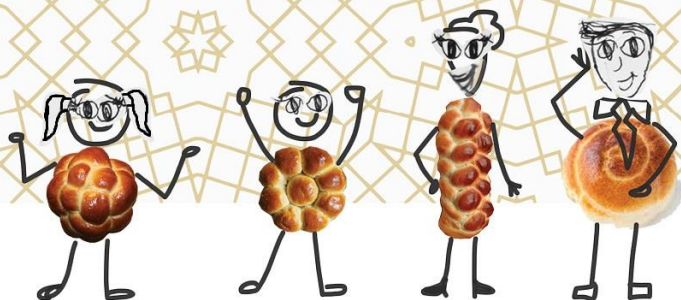
Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

- a) Who is speaking in this poem? Why has the speaker started hating feet by the end of the poem?
- b) How do you think Eliezer feels about the mission he has been given? How would you feel if you were in his shoes? Try to imagine that you are him, on his journey:
 1. What do you see around you? Does the scenery change as you travel farther and farther from home? Who do you meet on this journey?
 2. How do you feel about this mission? Do you have one main feeling or maybe some mixed emotions? What are they?
 3. Are you a servant who came with Avraham from his home country to Canaan – meaning, is this a trip back home to a place you never thought you'd visit again? How does that feel? Or are you a Canaanite servant of Avraham? If so, how does this mission make you feel?

Crafting Our Own Poems:

Again, imagine you are Eliezer going on the journey, searching for the perfect woman to be Yitzhak's wife. How do you feel? What might you be nervous about? Excited about? What do you think you might start to hate by the end of the journey (like Prince Charming hating feet)? What might you be most looking forward to back home?

Make up a poem as a family that starts just like Silverstein's poem, in the voice of a traveling Eliezer. You might have each family member add a line in turn! Begin with:



From dusk to dawn,
From town to town,
Without a single clue,
I seek...

Shabbat Shalom!

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Parsha: Toldot

Title: Building Blocks

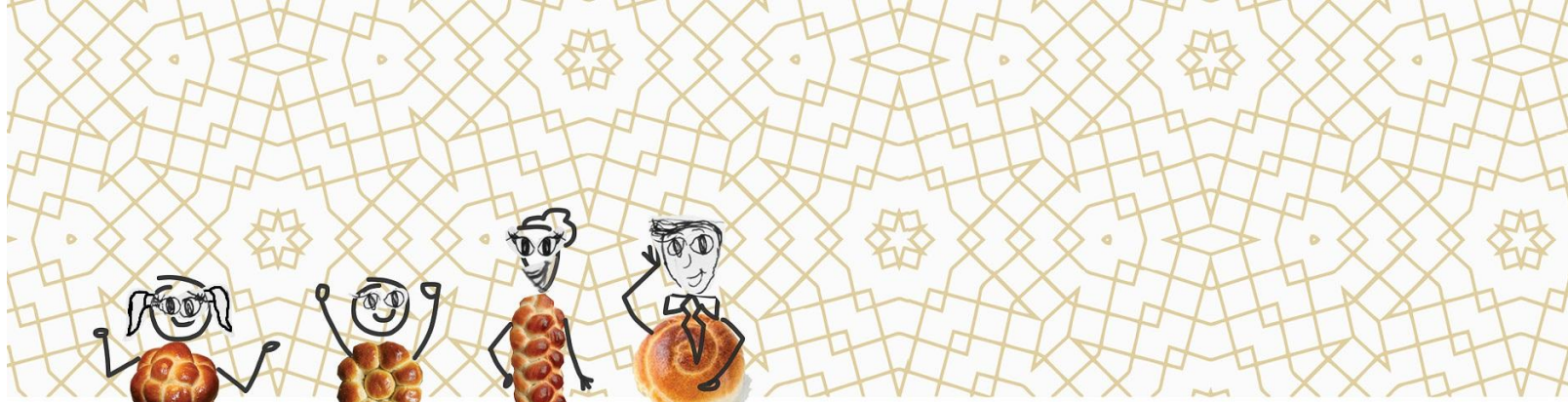
Contributor: Sefi Kraut, PCJE Faculty

The Parsha at First Glance

Spotlight on the Parsha:

Chapter 26 of *Parshat Toldot* tells a lot of stories that might sound very familiar to you. Listen to the episodes from chapter 26 listed below and see if you can figure out where in Tanakh you've heard similar stories before:

1. There is a famine in the land of Canaan and Yitzhak wants to head toward Egypt to get food.



2. Yitzhak moves to a Philistine city in Canaan and tells the people living there that Rivka is his sister when, in fact, she is his wife.
3. Yitzhak re-digs the wells that Avraham had dug years earlier (the Philistines had sealed them), and he calls the wells by the same names that his father had given them.
4. Yitzhak makes a peace treaty with the Philistine leader named Avimelech.

Zooming In:

Where have you heard some of these things before? Yes, **Avraham** also faced a famine in the land of Canaan, pretended that his wife was his sister, dug the original wells, and made a peace treaty with Avimelech. Why did Yitzhak face so many of the same situations as his father Avraham? Did Yitzhak do anything important or was he just an Avraham copycat?!

The Midrash describes Avraham as the first person to recognize that there is only one God and to reject the idolatry that everybody around him believed in and worshipped. Avraham *publicly* declared his belief in God despite the fact that others probably mocked him for being weird or crazy.

It takes a lot of insight to come up with a new idea and a lot of courage to stick with your convictions when you stand alone. But for a new idea to have lasting impact, someone has to ensure that the idea gets passed down and further developed by the next generation. If not, sadly, a great new idea will die with the person who invented it.

Yitzhak's main role was to take the 'radical' new ideas of Avraham and firmly establish them in society. Avraham built the foundation, and Yitzhak needed to make sure that the foundation stayed strong and grew. It was not a coincidence that Yitzhak chose to re-dig the wells Avraham dug and rename them with the identical names that his father had given them. Yitzhak understood that his job was to ensure that Avraham's legacy would last forever so he made sure to reinforce what his father had started.



Questions for Consideration:

- Do you think that it would be easy or hard to be Avraham's son? Why?
- Do you think that the role of the 'inventor' (Avraham) or the role of the 'establisher' (Yitzhak) is more important? Why?
- We talked about the ways that the Yitzhak stories in Genesis 26 are similar to the earlier Avraham stories. But can you think of the way(s) these stories are different from the Avraham stories?

The Parsha Through Another Lens

Story Sequence:

(Please note: This activity requires the use of picture books in your house.)

We just talked about the fact that the story of the Jewish nation began with Avraham and it only continued forward thanks to Yitzhak's conscious effort to continue what his father had started.

Today, everyone around your Shabbat table will work together to create a story, each person in turn, in a game called "Story Sequence." Here's how it goes:

Every person around the Shabbat table chooses a random picture book found on a bookshelf in your home. Each person opens his/her own picture book to a random page. One person then starts making up a story that incorporates whatever is on *his/her* picture. The next person adds to the made-up story – continuing what the previous person started – by incorporating the picture in his/her picture book, and so on, until every person at the Shabbat table has contributed to the story.

Shabbat Shalom!

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An Interactive **PARSHA EXPERIENCE**



Parsha: Vayetze

Title: Looking with 'Fresh Eyes'!

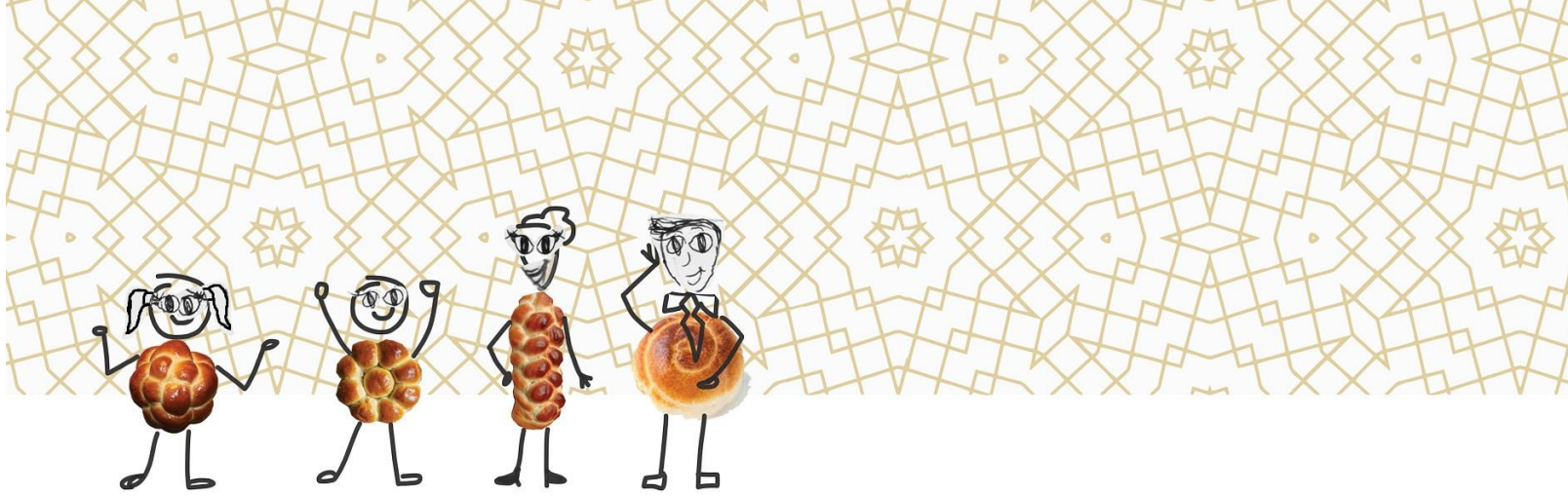
Contributor: Susan Yammer, Director of Novice Teacher Support, Pardes Center for Jewish Educators

The Parsha at First Glance

Spotlight on the Parsha:

In *Parshat Vayetze*, Yaakov begins his journey out of Eretz Yisrael, leaving behind his family in Beer Sheva. He leaves with nothing more than his walking stick!

Little does Yaakov know, but his 'visit' to Lavan will be much longer than he thought. By the time Yaakov leaves Lavan's house (20 year later) he will have 13 children, 2 wives, 2 handmaids, cattle and sheep! A lot more than a walking stick!



Along the way he goes to sleep and has a dream about angels going up and down a ladder. God reassures him that He will be with Yaakov and protect him wherever he goes. It's easy to imagine how important that dream was to Yaakov who was leaving Eretz Yisrael for the first time in his life! God also reassures Yaakov that he will eventually return to his homeland, Eretz Yisrael.

When Yaakov arrives in Haran he first meets Rachel, the daughter of his uncle Lavan, at the well outside the city. Rachel brings Yaakov to meet her father Lavan and Yaakov stays at the house of Lavan. Yaakov agrees to work for Lavan for 7 years in exchange for marrying Rachel.

After the 7 years are up, Lavan tricks Yaakov and gives him his older daughter Leah to marry instead of Rachel. Though tricked (and understandably angry) Yaakov agrees to work another 7 years in order to also marry Rachel.

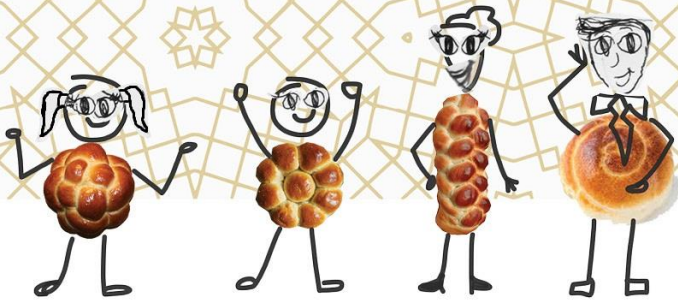
Yaakov remains at Lavan's house for 20 years. During that time he builds a family with Leah and Rachel. Leah gives birth to one daughter, Dina, and six sons: Reuven, Shimon, Levi, Yehuda, Yissachar and Zevulun. Sadly, Rachel remains barren. Rachel gives Yaakov her handmaid, Bilhah, as a wife to bear children in her place, and two more sons, Dan and Naphtali, are born. Leah does the same with her handmaid, Zilpah, who gives birth to Gad and Asher. Finally, Rachel's prayers are answered and she gives birth to Yosef.

At the end of our *parsha*, Yaakov, remembering God's promise to him long ago, decides along with his wives that it's time to leave Haran and begin their journey back to Eretz Yisrael.

Zooming In:

Let's now zoom in on the scene right after Yaakov wakes up from his amazing dream of ladders and angels.

Yaakov, on his journey to Haran, stops at what to him seems like just a good place to rest and sleep. He gathers some stones to rest his head on and closes



his eyes. While he is sleeping he has an amazing dream about angels going up and down a ladder. When he awakens he says (Bereishit 28:16-17),

16 ...“Wow, God is in this place and I, I didn't even know it!”	טז... אָכּוּ יֵשׁ יְהוָה בְּמָקוֹם הַזֶּה ; וְאֵנֹכִי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי
17 “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gateway to heaven!”	יז מֵהַ-נוֹרָא הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה ; אֵין זֶה כִּי אֵם-בַּיִת אֱלֹהִים, וְזֶה שַׁעַר הַשָּׁמַיִם

Yaakov then names this spot Bet El, meaning a 'house of God.'

Question for Consideration:

Have you ever looked at something or someone with 'fresh eyes,' seeing something good or special about that place or that person that you never noticed before?

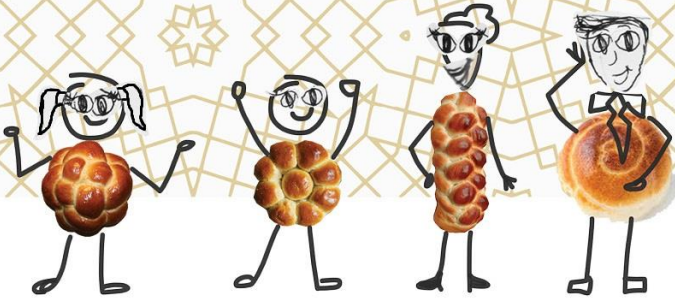
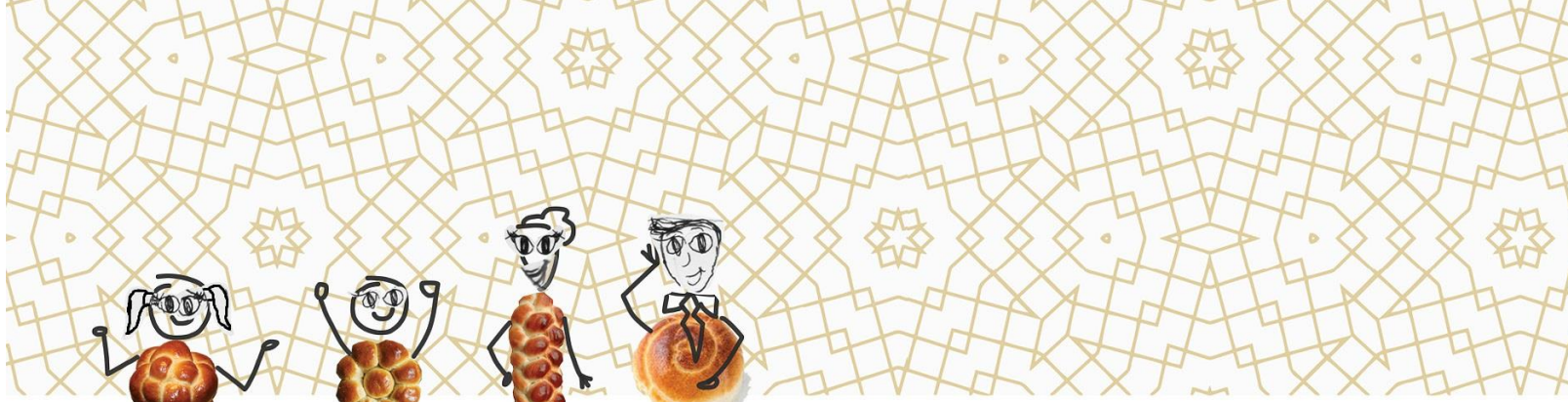
When Yaakov awoke he realized the 'good place to sleep' was really a 'house of God.' He looked at this place where he slept with 'fresh eyes' and saw something far more holy and special than just a circle of stones.



The Parsha in Practice:

Turn to a person or persons at your Shabbat table and look at that person with 'fresh eyes' (Yaakov eyes)!

Tell that person something wonderful about him/her that you hadn't noticed before.



Pay attention to what you feel when you try that. How do you think the person who you spoke to feels?

Remember: Your 'Yaakov eyes' are always available to you!

Shabbat Shalom!

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Parsha: Vayishlach

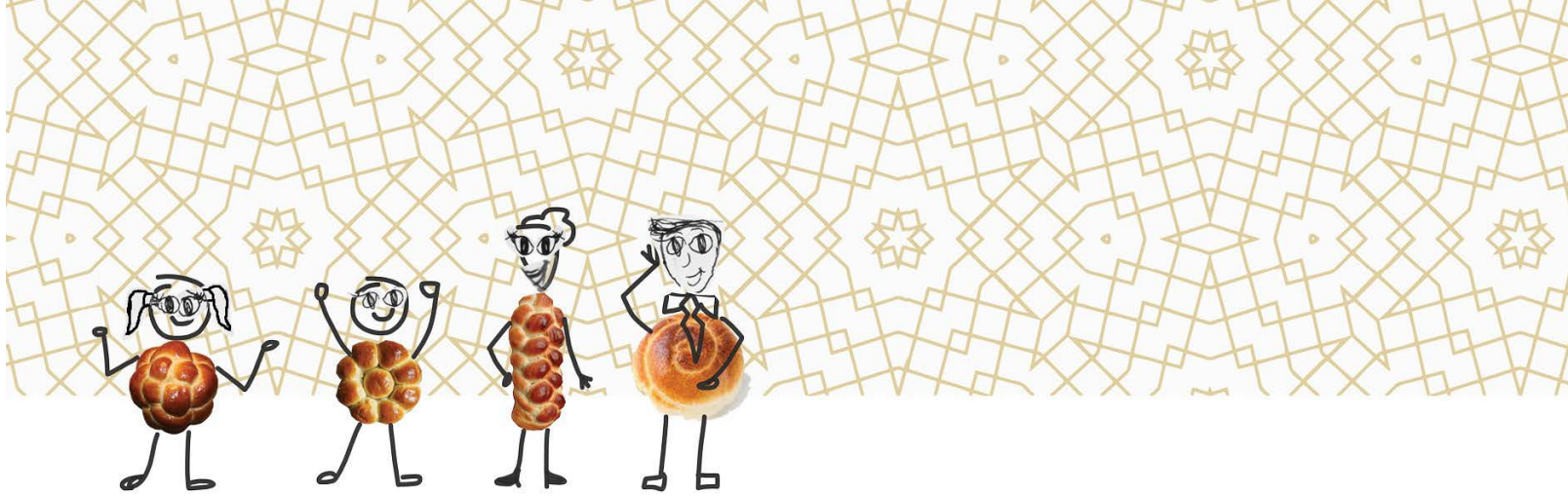
Title: Gaining Perspective on Prayer

Contributor: Leah Beck, Pardes Experiential Educators Program '17-'18

The Parsha at First Glance

Spotlight on the Parsha:

In *Parshat Vayishlach*, it's been 20 years since Yaakov fled from his brother Esav after stealing his birthright. Now Yaakov is going to see Esav again, and he is worried that his brother might kill him for what he did long ago. Yaakov prays to God that everything will go alright. The night before reuniting with his brother, Yaakov wrestles with someone throughout the night, breaking his hip in the process. It is unclear if this 'someone' is a dream, an angel, a man, or something



else entirely. This is the first time that Yaakov is renamed Yisrael (meaning something like 'he will strive with God'), because he has striven with beings divine and human both. When Yaakov and his family approach Esav, Yaakov bows to him, and in return Esav runs to Yaakov, weeping, to embrace him.

Zooming In:

Yaakov's prayer encompasses a lot. Overall it is a prayer for salvation. He asks God for protection, restoration, and a future for his people. It is also a prayer of gratitude. Some people have concluded from Yaakov's prayer that this moment is the spark that eventually leads to formal prayer structured in the way we pray today. Commentator Seforno connects Yaakov's prayer specifically to *Shemone Esre*, and although our text has many other examples of prayer that could potentially lead up to the way we pray today, it is Yaakov's prayer in this *parsha* that appears to be the main structure of our liturgy, more than others.

Questions for Consideration:

With whom is Yaakov wrestling? What does it mean if Yaakov is wrestling with an angel? With a man? With himself?

Yaakov's interaction in the night proves to him that he is ready to confront Esav, no matter how much bigger and stronger the people on Esav's side are. Why does Yaakov decide to pray? Does/how does prayer help him? Why do we pray? Does prayer help us?



Picture This:

PLEASE NOTE: This activity requires writing/drawing.



Let's think about all of the times a day/week that we pray. Count up all of the different prayers we say daily because they are part of our Jewish tradition. Now add to those all of the prayers we say because we need them for ourselves and they just come out (of our mouths, or we say them in our hearts). Talk about why these prayers are important to us, and if we feel relevance in all of them to our lives today.

Our prayers are often in a language that is challenging to understand, either because of a language barrier or because the wording is ancient and confusing. Write or draw your own versions of the prayers we say every day in a way that is relevant to you. If you'd rather, or in addition, write or draw your own prayers that you want to be saying every day in the future.

Maybe write them on label stickers that can be stuck to notebooks or water bottles that are frequently used as a reminder. Or write them in dry-erase marker on the bathroom mirror as the first thing seen after waking up in the morning!

Shabbat Shalom!

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Parsha: Vayeshev

Title: A Family Feud

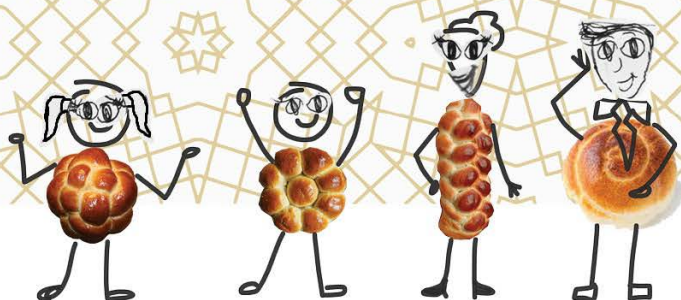
Contributor: Sefi Kraut, Faculty, Pardes Center for Jewish Educators

The Parsha at First Glance

Spotlight on the Parsha:

At the beginning of *Parshat Vayeshev*, we learn about siblings that do NOT get along with each other. Yosef's brothers resented the seventeen-year-old Yosef for a few reasons:

1. Yosef used to tell on them to their father when the brothers didn't behave properly.



2. Their father, Yaakov, loved Yosef the best and even gave him a special colorful coat that none of the other brothers received.
3. Yosef had two dreams that he shared with all of his brothers (and he told Yaakov about the second dream too). In the first dream, the brothers were binding wheat in the field together and all of the brothers' stalks of wheat surrounded Yosef's stalk and bowed down to it. In the second dream, the sun, moon, and eleven stars - Yosef had 11 brothers - all bowed down to him.

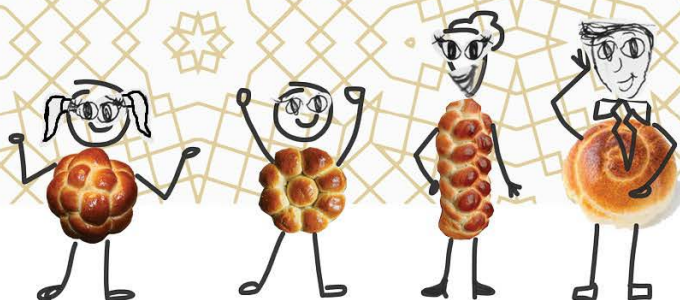
After giving us all this information, the Torah tells us that “the brothers were jealous of him” (Gen. 37:11) and they eventually decided to sell Yosef as a slave. They also lied to Yaakov and told him that a wild animal had attacked and killed Yosef.

Zooming In:

This is a very shocking story about family relationships and the power of jealousy. What makes jealousy such a strong emotion that it can cause brothers to sell one of their own siblings into slavery and break their father's heart with an awful lie about the “death” of his son?!

Questions for Consideration:

Think about all of the family members in this story: Yosef, Yaakov, Yosef's brothers. What choice(s) did each character make that added to the jealous feelings between the siblings? What different choice(s) could each character have made in order to lessen the jealous feelings between the siblings?



The Parsha Through Another Lens

Week in Review:

Jealousy is a totally normal emotion or feeling that everybody experiences at some point in their life. But we want to make sure that jealousy never builds up inside of us to the point that it causes us to harm ourselves or someone else the way that it did for Yosef's brothers. How can we make sure that jealousy doesn't get the best of us and cause us to do things that we'll regret?

Sometimes expressing how we feel out loud can be a really helpful way to manage our emotions. Let's try it by playing the game called, "Week in Review." Everyone will go around the table and answer the following two questions:

1. Tell me something that happened this week that made you say "I feel jealous."
2. Tell me something that happened this week that made you say "I am lucky."

If you've got time, you can add other fun prompts like:

Tell me something that happened this week that made you say "huh?"

Tell me something that happened this week that made you say "cool!"

Tell me something that happened this week that made you say "oy."

Tell me something that happened this week that made you say "that's weird."

Shabbat Shalom!

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An Interactive **PARSHA EXPERIENCE**



Parsha: Miketz

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

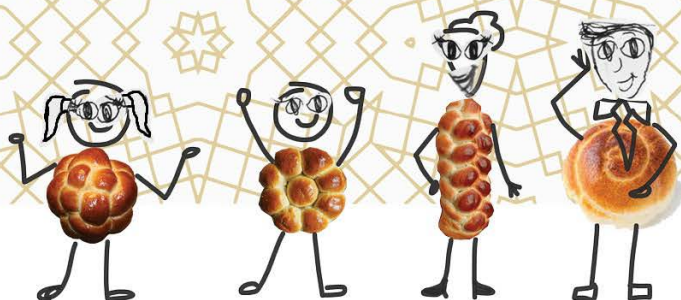
Contributor: Rachel Friedrichs, Assistant Director, Pardes Center for Jewish Educators, and Pardes Day School Educators Program Graduate '05-'07

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)



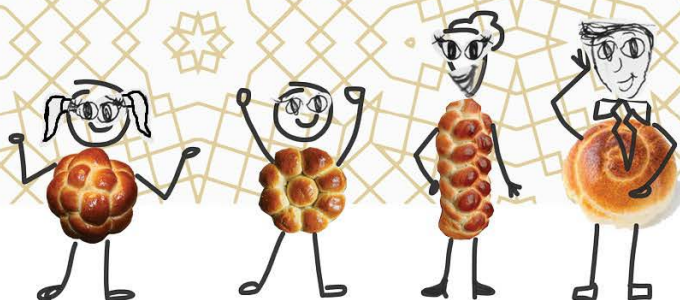
- To **dust** means both to remove dust (dusting shelves) or to sprinkle it about (dusting sugar on top of a cake)
- **Transparent** can mean invisible or impossible to see but it also means so clear that something is obvious

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.



<p>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."</p>	<p>ז וַיֵּרָא יוֹסֵף אֶת-אֶחָיו, וַיִּכְרֶם; וַיִּתְנַכֵּר אֲלֵיהֶם וַיְדַבֵּר אֲתָם קָשׁוֹת, וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם מֵאֵין בָּאתֶם, וַיֹּאמְרוּ, מֵאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן לְשָׂבֵר- אֶכֶל.</p>
<p>Though Joseph recognized (ויכר) his brothers, they did not recognize him (הכרהו).</p>	<p>ח וַיִּכֶּר יוֹסֵף, אֶת-אֶחָיו; וְהֵם, לֹא הִכְרָהוּ.</p>

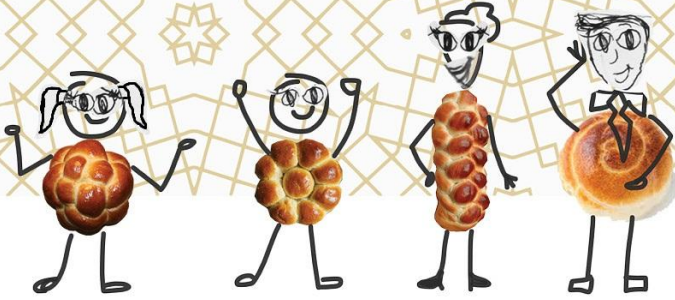
Zooming In:

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:

- What do you think Yosef is thinking at this dramatic moment? What thoughts and feelings could be running through his head?
- Why does Yosef choose to disguise himself from his brothers?
- 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?!



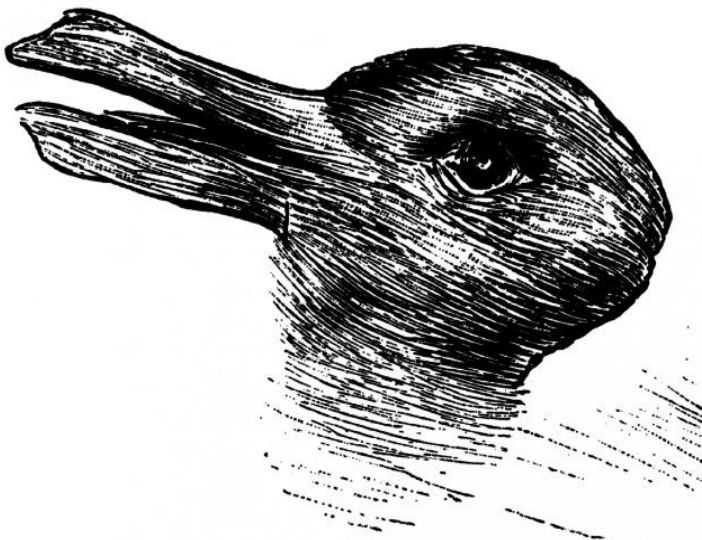
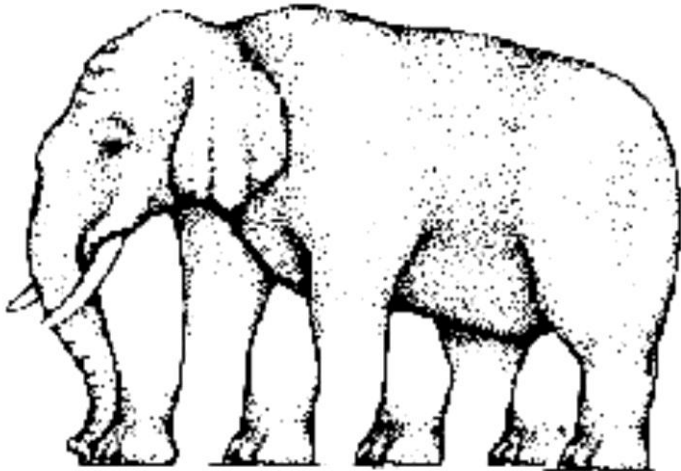
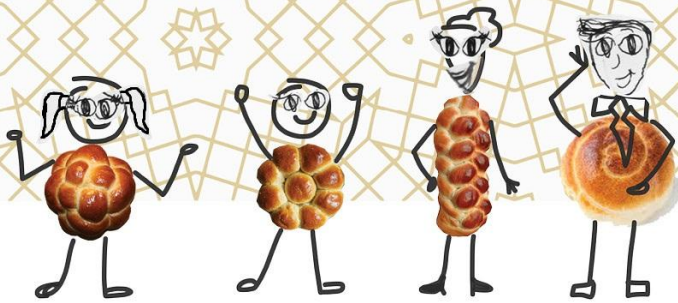
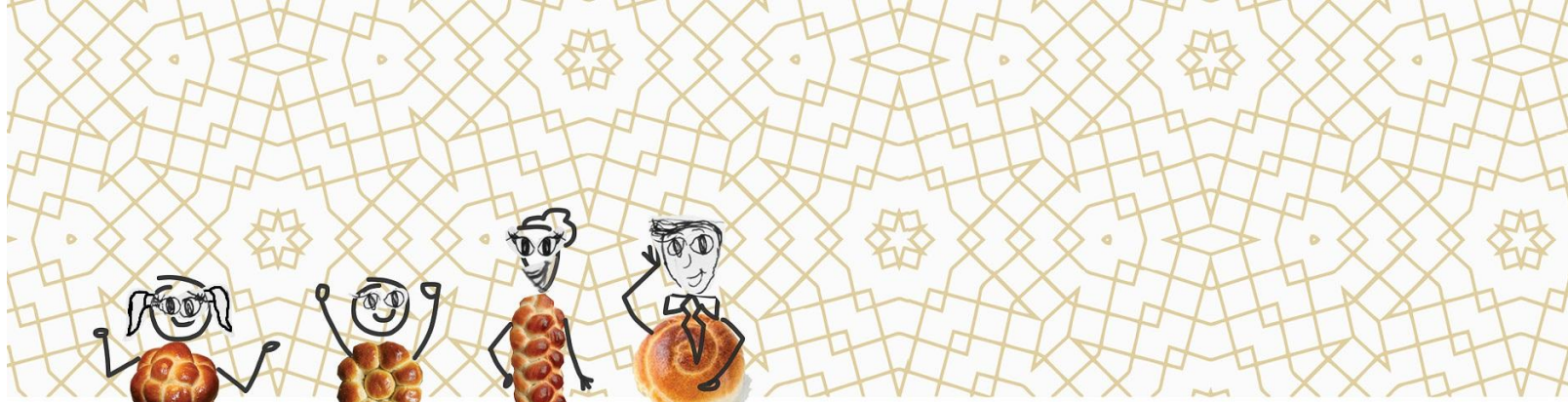
The Parsha Through Another Lens

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](#).

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An Interactive **PARSHA EXPERIENCE**



Parsha: Vayigash

Title: It's All a Matter of Approach

Contributor: Reuven Margrett, Director of Digital Media, Pardes Center for Jewish Educators, and Pardes Day School Educators Program Graduate '05-'07

The Parsha at First Glance

Spotlight on the Parsha:

In a brave move at the beginning of Parshat Vayigash, Yaakov's son Yehuda approaches and requests the release of his imprisoned younger brother Binyamin from his still-in-disguise brother Yosef (who just happens to be the second most powerful person in Egypt). After an impassioned plea where Yehuda offers to trade places with the enslaved Binyamin, with great emotion Yosef reveals himself to his brothers. After 22 years since Yosef was thrown in the pit,



the 12 brothers are finally reunited and plans are quickly made for them, and their father Yaakov, to move to the land of Goshen in Egypt.

Zooming In:

By approaching the still-in-disguise Yosef, Yehuda is putting his life on the line to rescue his younger brother. Enslavement or even death might follow. What was Yehuda thinking and feeling when he approached Yosef? How do we approach our difficult situations?

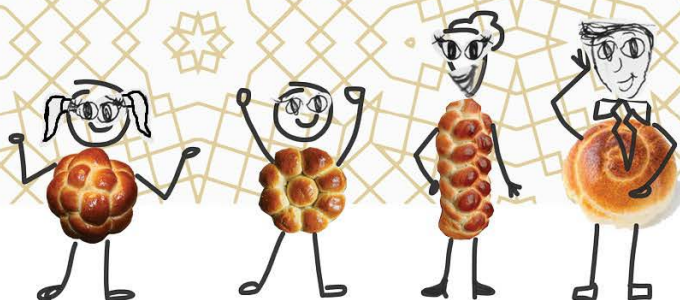
The Midrash ([Genesis Rabbah 93:6](#)) gives an insight into what the word *vayigash* ('and he approached') could mean. It brings four subtle interpretations of the word based on other uses of *vayigash*/approach in the Tanakh (Bible).

'And Yehudah approached (vayigash) him'

1. Rabbi Yehuda says: Approached to make war. As it says in II Samuel 10:13, *And Yoav, and the people with him, approached to make war.*
2. Rabbi Nechemya says: Approached in order to appease (make peace). As it says in Joshua 14:6, *And the children (tribe) of Yehuda approached Yehoshua to appease him.*
3. The Sages say: Approached him in prayer. As it says in I Kings 18:36, *And Eliyahu HaNavi approached and said 'God, my Lord...'*
4. Rabbi Elazar said: Combine them [all of the above interpretations]. If it be war, I come [for war]; if it appeasement, I come [for appeasement]; if it be for prayer, I come [for prayer].

Question for Consideration:

- a) Given what you know about Yehuda coming to Yosef-in-disguise, which opinion appeals to you the most?
- b) Can you think of another interpretation of 'and he approached'?
- c) Why do the Rabbis come up with so many different interpretations of *vayigash* ('and he approached')?



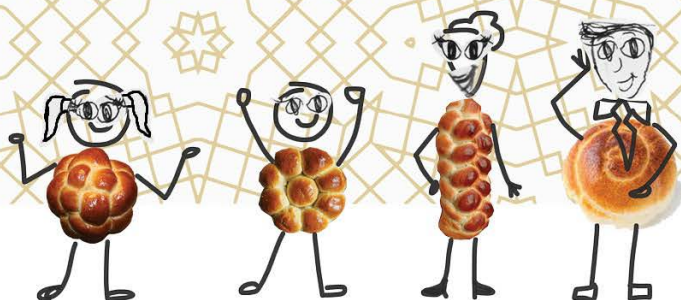
The Parsha Through Another Lens

Acting Out:

The aim of this activity, in a lighthearted way, is for people to think about how they approach difficult situations and/or people. Is it with anger, calm, faith or something else? The activity uses the Yehuda-Yosef dialogue to get us to reflect on how we deal with difficult situations and how we respond to them.

- One volunteer pretends to be Yosef.
- Four volunteers pretend to be Yehuda.
- Each one of the Yehudas, in the style of Yehuda character in the table below, makes a 30-second speech to Yosef as to why Binyamin should be let go. Yosef can respond to create a dialogue with each Yehuda.

Opinion from the Midrash	Yehuda	Key word from Midrash	Emotions and characteristics for the dialogue
Rabbi Yehuda	Yehuda 1	War	Confrontational, Angry, Injustice
Rabbi Nechemya	Yehuda 2	Peace	Calm, Understanding, Compromise
The Sages	Yehuda 3	Prayer	Faith, Divine Justice, God will help
Rabbi Elazar	Yehuda 4	War, Peace, Prayer	Flexible, Responsive, No set ideas



Extension Activity:

- Have all the Yehudas, in character, discuss why their approach is the most effective in this situation.
- Debrief what happened. You can use any, some, or none, of the questions below.
 - What did it feel like to role-play? Is this how you normally talk? Would you rather have played a different type of Yehuda, and if so, which one and why?
 - Which approach do you think would be the most effective in this situation?
 - Do you ever have difficult situations you need to deal with? What are they?
 - When you find yourself in a difficult situation do you 'approach' the situation like the examples above? (Do you go into the battle/war/argumentative approach, or the peace seeking/compromise approach, or leave it up to God/authority figure/whatever happens, happens approach?)
 - Are there certain types of situations where one approach would be better than another?
 - When you're in a fight with a sibling
 - When there is a problem with a classmate
 - When you don't see eye-to-eye with your friend
 - When you feel an injustice by your teacher
 - When you disagree with a parent

Shabbat Shalom!

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An Interactive PARSHA EXPERIENCE



Parsha: Vayechi

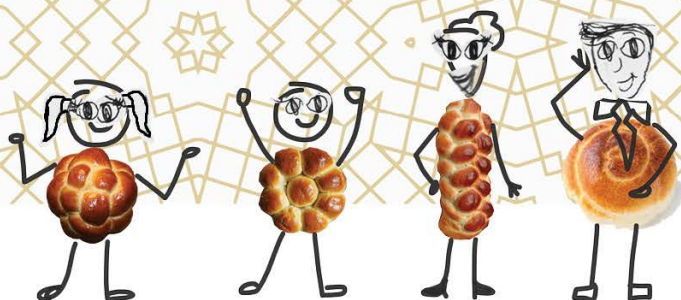
Title: Status Symbols

Contributor: Penny Joel, Director of Experiential Jewish Education,
Pardes Center for Jewish Educators

The Parsha at First Glance

Spotlight on the Parsha:

In *Parshat Vayechi*, Yaakov asks his sons to come to him so he can share some last words with each one of them. His message to each child tells a little bit about their past and their future and for most of the sons, what symbolizes each of them. Often those symbols were then used to symbolize each son's tribe.



Zooming In:

For example, Yaakov told Yehuda that he was like a lion, because he was strong and a leader (like the lion, which is sometimes referred to as the king of the animals). Later on, the tribe of Yehuda used the lion as its symbol.

The verse in Gen. 49:9 reads:

גֹּדֹר אַרְיֵה יְהוּדָה, מִטְרֹף בְּנֵי עֲלִיּוֹת; כָּרַע רֶבֶץ כְּאַרְיֵה וּכְלָבִיא, מִי יִקְיָמוּנוּ .

Judah is a lion's cub; on prey, my son, have you grown. He crouches, lies down like a lion, like the king of beasts—who dare rouse him?

Now try to guess what the symbols of some of the other sons were by reading the verses about them, and what those symbols might have meant about the sons themselves!

Zevulun (Gen. 49:13):

זְבוּלֹן לְחוֹף יָמִים יִשְׁכֵּן; וְהוּא לְחוֹף אֲנִיּוֹת, וַיִּרְכָּתוּ עַל-צִידוֹן.

Zebulun shall dwell by the seashore; he shall be a haven for ships, and his flank shall rest on Sidon.

Dan (Gen. 49:17):

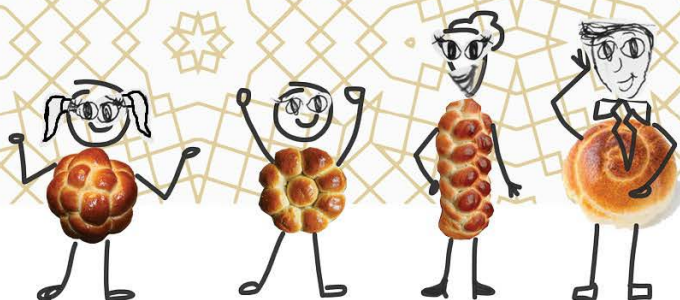
יְהִי-דָן נָחֵשׁ עַל-דֶּרֶךְ, שֹׁפֵיפִן עַל-אֶרֶץ--הַנֶּשֶׁף, עֹקֵב־סוּסִים, וַיִּפֹּל רֶכֶּבוֹ אָחוֹר .

Dan shall be a serpent by the road, a viper by the path, that bites the horse's heels so that his rider is thrown backward.

Binyamin (Gen. 49:27):

בְּנֵימִין זָאֵב יִטְרֹף, בַּבֹּקֶר יֹאכַל עֵד; וְלָעֶרֶב יִחַלֵּק שָׁלַל .

Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he consumes the foe, and in the evening he divides the spoil.



The Parsha Through Another Lens

Table Talk:

- What are some famous symbols you can think of? What do they symbolize?
- What symbol would you pick for someone else at your table and why?
- What symbol would you choose for yourself and why?

Shabbat Shalom!