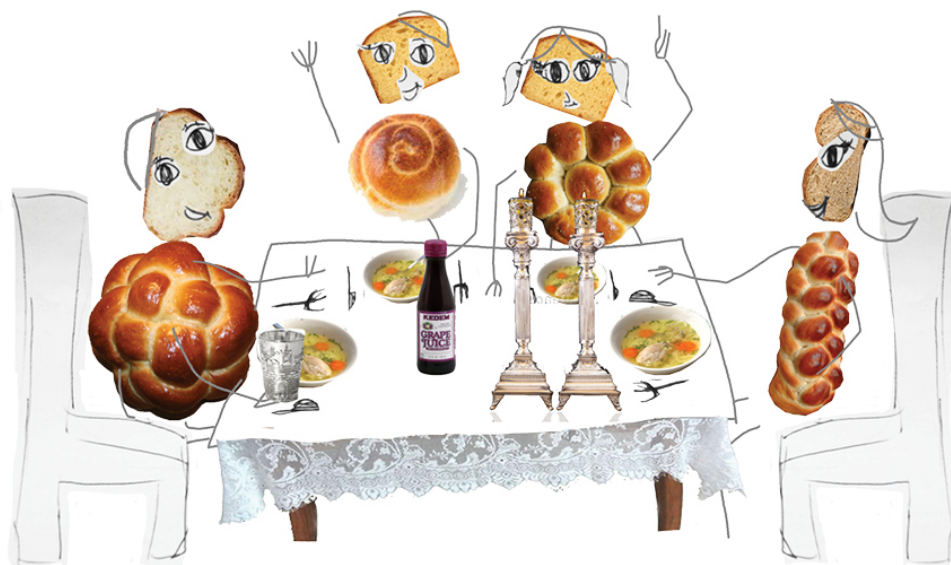


The Pardes Center for Jewish Educators presents

An Interactive **PARSHA EXPERIENCE**



במדבר | Bamidbar

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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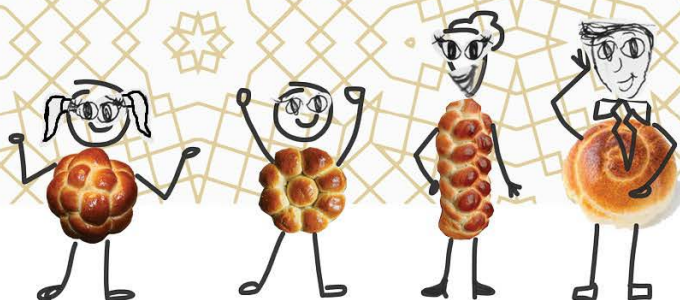


Sponsored by the Rosekind Family in honor of the 18th graduating cohort of the Pardes Day School Educators Program. We wish them the best of luck as they embark on their journeys as Jewish Educators and hope they will always be counted amongst their respective tribe.

Parsha: Bamidbar

Title: Stand Up and Be Counted

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



The Parsha at First Glance

Spotlight on the Parsha:

This week we start a new book of the Torah! It is just a little over a year since *Bnei Yisrael* exited Egypt, 11 months since they received the 10 Commandments on Mt. Sinai, and one month since the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) was erected in the desert. As far as anyone knows, the next step in their big journey is: entering the Land of Israel!

As such, God tells Moshe to do a census of the people. That means that he needs to count them, to figure out how many of them there are. More specifically, God wants to know how many people are 20 years old and can therefore serve as soldiers when they enter their new land, as they may have to fight their way in.

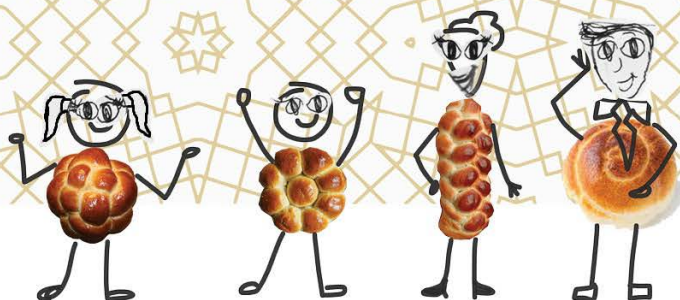
Questions for Consideration:

Most of our *parsha*, *Parshat Bamidbar*, talks about this census, or counting, that Moshe does. Why does it spend so much time on that, though? How hard can counting people be?!

To find out, try counting your own family. Not just the people around your table, though. Count everyone in your WHOLE family. Then consider:

- Who do you include when asked to count your WHOLE family? Just one side of the family? Or both sides?
- How far back do you go? Grandparents? Great-grandparents?
- Do you include only first cousins? Or also second cousins and third cousins?

Now imagine trying to count a whole nation – without any computers or online data.



- How/where would you even start?
- How might you divide up the nation in order to make it a little more manageable?
- Where would you get your information from? How would you know that information was reliable and accurate?

Zooming In:

Since counting such a large group of people is obviously going to be a challenge, God tells Moshe to get the help of the leaders of each of the 12 tribes of Israel, and to have them each work on counting the people of their own tribe. That way it would already become more manageable. But then what?

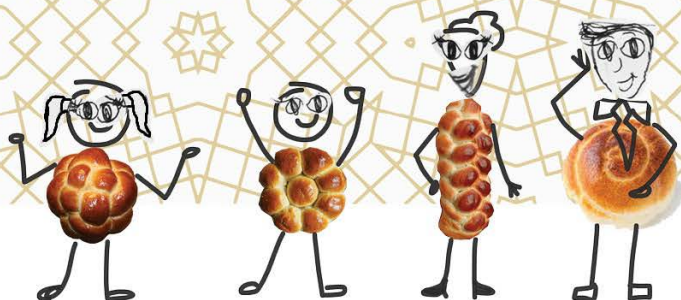
We are told in **Bamidbar 1:18**:

And all the community they assembled on the first day of the second month, and they **were registered** by their clans, by their fathers' houses according to the number of names, from 20 years old and up, by their heads.

וְאֵת כָּל-הָעֵדָה הִקְהִילוּ, בְּאַחַד
לְחֹדֶשׁ הַשָּׁנִי, וַיִּתְּלְדוּ עַל-מִשְׁפְּחֹתָם
לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם; בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמוֹת, מִבֶּן
עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְיַמְעֵלָה לְגִלְגֻלְתָּם.

On the first day of the month of Iyyar, all the people gathered, and in order to be counted they did something called וַיִּתְּלְדוּ. We have translated it as "were registered," but honestly, it's not really clear what that word actually means.

The commentator Ibn Ezra says that וַיִּתְּלְדוּ, from the same root word as נולדו (which means 'were born'), means that since the reason for the counting was to identify how many people were old enough to serve as soldiers, they were each asked what their birthday (and birth year) was!



The commentator Rashi says something else – that what **וַיִּתְּנֵנִי לְדוֹן** means is that they brought **סִפְרֵי חַוּסֵיהֶם**, **their books of their family tree**, to prove that they really belonged to the tribe they said they were from. That way, each tribe was able to figure out how many people they actually had. Then Moshe added up all the numbers from all the tribes, and in that way knew how many soldiers the nation had!

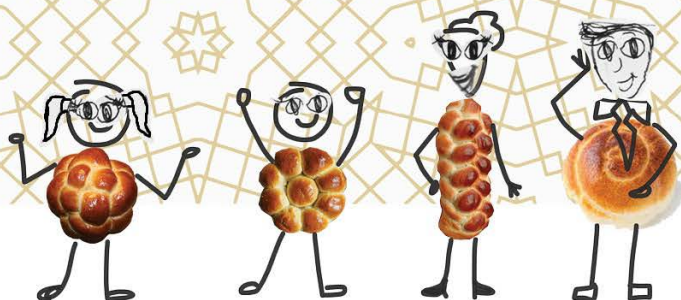
The Parsha Through Another Lens

Family Tree Time:

Note: If playing the Family Tree Game, you may want to print and cut out the family tree stick figures before Shabbat. To make it work even more easily, you may want to label the printed-out figures as different members of your family, so your children can build accurate family trees. You may also choose to attach the figures to toothpicks or matchsticks for easy holding.

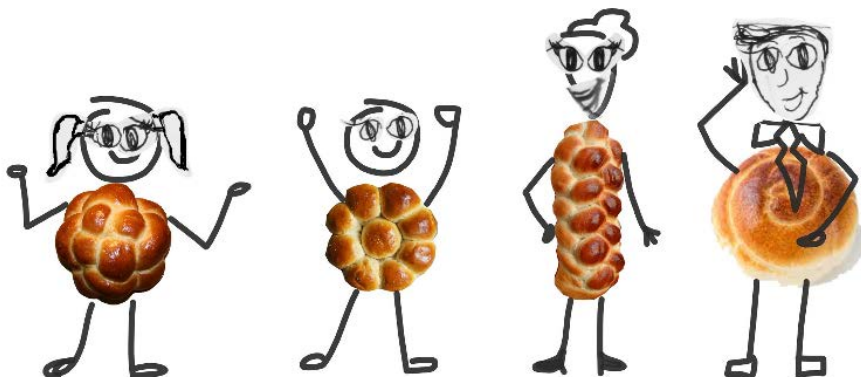
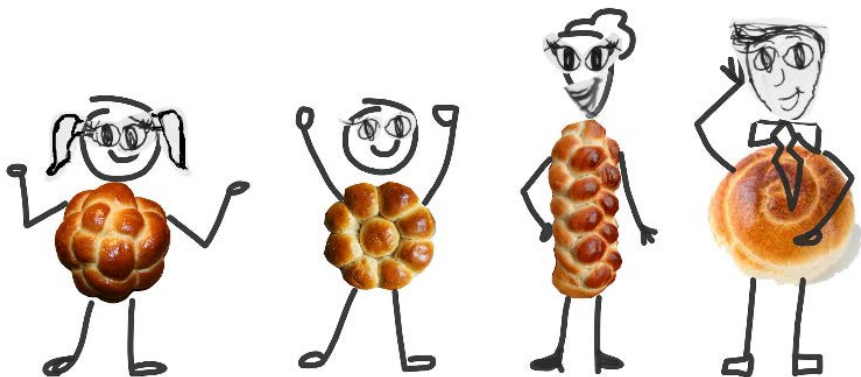
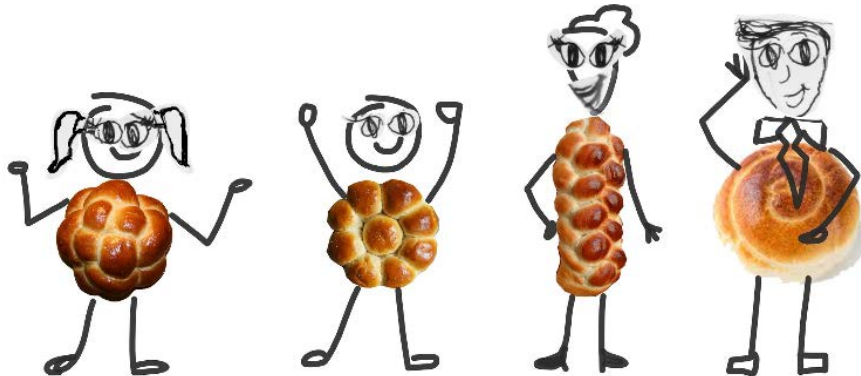
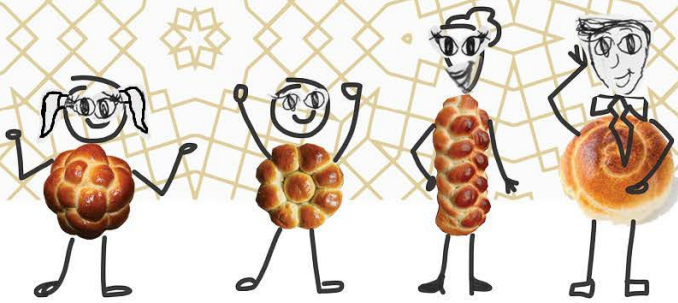
Along the lines of Rashi's commentary – let's spend some time talking about our own **Family Tree!**

Some of us are lucky enough to live close by to some of our relatives; while some of us have to use Skype or Facetime to talk to many of our family members. But no one knows all of their relatives, or all of the interesting stories about them! Use this opportunity to talk about YOUR family tree by choosing one relative to share about. You might choose an older relative who has led a long life, or one who is gone. Alternatively, you might choose a family member who lives far away in another part of the country or the world.



1. **Show them off:** If you have photographs of that relative, pull them out to show your family.
2. **Storytelling:** Choose one or two stories to share about that relative that will pique your family's interest.
3. **The Family Tree Game:** Use the family tree stick figures below to show your family exactly how you are related to your relative.

Shabbat Shalom!



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Parsha: Naso

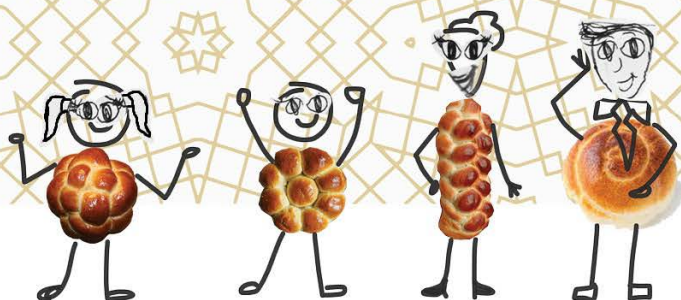
Title: Blessing Our Children

Contributor: Hannah Perlis, Pardes Day School Educators
Program '11-'13

The Parsha at First Glance

Spotlight on the Parsha:

This *parsha* continues to detail the jobs in the *Mishkan*, as well as punishments for violating certain laws. One part of *Parshat Naso* discusses a blessing God tells Moshe about. God says that Aharon and his children, who are *kohanim* (priests), should bless *Bnei Yisrael* with these special words.



Zooming In:

Bamidbar 6:24-26

24. May God bless you and watch over you.

25. May God's face shine on you and favor you.

26. May God raise His face towards you and give you peace.

כֹּד יְבָרְכֶךָ יְהוָה, וַיִּשְׁמְרֶךָ.

כִּה יֵאָר יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ, וַיִּחַנְּךָ.

כִּוּ יִשָּׂא יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ, וַיִּשֶׂם לְךָ
שְׁלוֹם.

Kohanim today still use this blessing, *Birkat Kohanim*, to bless the congregants in a synagogue in some communities! This blessing is also used on Friday nights before Shabbat. It is said by parents giving their children a blessing.

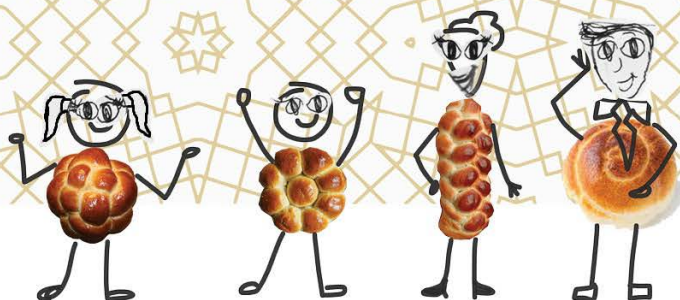
There are three parts to this blessing:

- Protection/feeling safe physically
- Having a safe spirit
- Feeling complete/at peace

After saying the words of the blessing, some parents also take a moment to tell their children something they did during the week that they are proud of.

Questions for Consideration:

- In addition to the traditional words of the blessing, what three-part blessing do you think you would like to receive from your parents before Shabbat?
- Would you want it to be the same words every week for routine and tradition, or would you want the blessing to be different each week?
- Why is Shabbat a good time to be given a blessing for peace? Why is Shabbat a good time to be told something positive about yourself?
- Why is it special that the blessing used for children before Shabbat is the same group of words from the Torah, used to bless Bnei Yisrael?



The Parsha Through Another Lens

The Parsha in Practice:

Part 1: Design your own three-part blessing that you would want to receive as a child using the words that make you feel safe and ready for Shabbat.

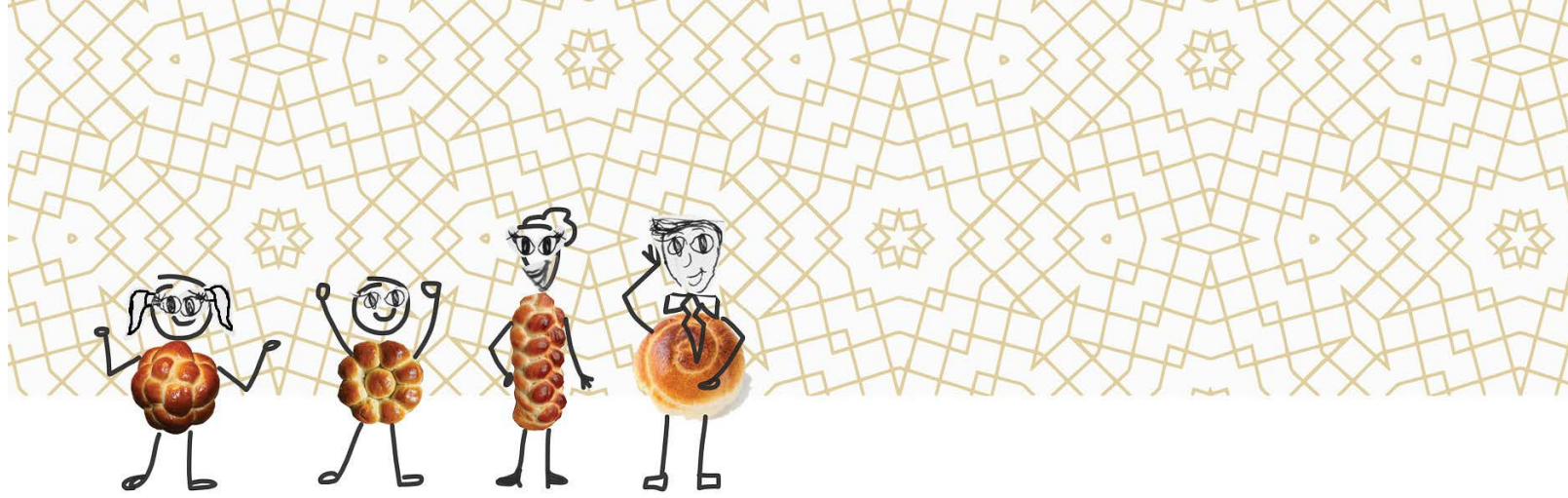
Part 2: Now, design your own three-part blessing that you would want to give your parents to make them feel safe and peaceful.

Here are some optional sentence ideas to get you started:

May you feel _____ and _____.
(emotion or feeling word) (emotion or feeling word)

May you be blessed to have plenty of _____ and _____
(object/idea/ thought/feeling)
_____ in your life.
(object/idea/ thought/feeling)

May you have lots of peace in your life, full of _____ and _____.
(noun or verb) (noun or verb)



Picture This:

The pictures below depict people giving or receiving blessings for Shabbat, through the ages.

- Which picture do you like the most, and why?
- Which picture do you have a question about?





Where are the picture from?

Top left: From ritualwell.com

Top right: Google images

Middle right: : Grandfather Blessing a Child, Wilhelm Wachtel, 1914

Middle left- From the JTS Archives

Bottom - Mother's Blessing, Anton Peczely, early 20th cent.

Shabbat Shalom!

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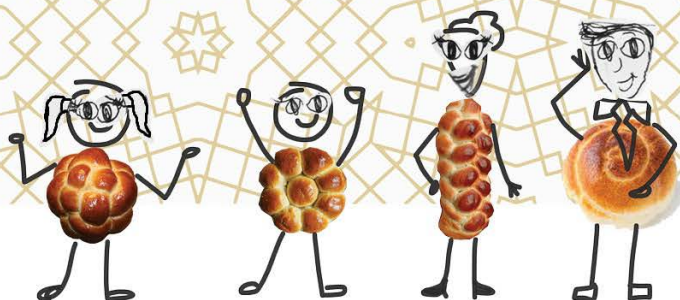


Sponsored by the Rosekind Family in honor of Gary Rosekind z"l, father of Barry Rosekind (PEP Cohort 18). We bless Barry and his fellow PEP graduates to always seek humility as Moshe finds in God's eyes, and when he prays for Miriam's health.

Parsha: Behaalotekha

Title: A Desire to Serve

Contributor: Sefi Kraut, Pardes Center for Jewish Educators Faculty



The Parsha at First Glance

Spotlight on the Parsha:

When you read a book, do you ever wonder why the author chooses to tell the story in a particular order? Rashi often wonders about that question when it comes to the information in the Torah. He frequently asks why one passage of the Torah is placed next to another passage in the Torah, especially when there is no obvious connection between the two sections.

This week's Torah portion, *Parshat Behaalotekha*, begins with God instructing Moshe to tell his older brother, Aharon the High Priest, to light the *menorah* in the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle). The Torah portion last week ended with the story of the dedication of the Mishkan.

Rashi asks: Why does the passage about the menorah follow the story of the dedication of the Mishkan? Are these two events somehow connected?

Zooming In:

Rashi suggests that the key to understanding the connection between these two events is to think about who was and who was not involved in each. As part of the dedication ceremony of the Mishkan, the *nesi'im* (tribal leaders) brought a lot of gifts and sacrifices. The tribe of Levi, Aharon's tribe, was the only tribe that did not participate in the dedication ceremony. Aharon became upset that neither he nor his tribe participated, so God tried to cheer up Aharon by reminding him that he has a special role in the Mishkan service. God told Aharon, "Your part is of greater importance than theirs, for you will light and set in order the lamps (for the menorah)."



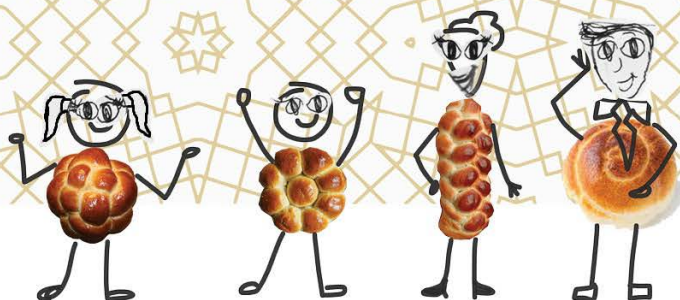
Most of us have felt left out sometimes in our lives so we know that it is a really bad feeling. Rashi says that God tried to make Aharon feel better by highlighting the fact that Aharon has the privilege of lighting the menorah. But it's strange that out of all the ways God could have tried to make Aharon feel special, God chose to mention the menorah. The Torah tells us in Exodus 27:21 that all priests are allowed to light the menorah in the Mishkan. If God wanted to remind Aharon that he is special and unique then why not mention a *mitzvah* that is reserved exclusively for the high priest?

Perhaps the reason that Aharon had been upset was not because he'd felt left out from the group of *nesi'im* (tribal leaders). After all, Aharon knows that as the high priest he performs certain *mitzvot* that nobody else in the whole nation is ever allowed to perform. But Aharon performs those mitzvot, because he is obligated to do so.

The *nesi'im* were not commanded to bring all kinds of lavish gifts to God at the dedication ceremony of the Mishkan. They were simply so grateful to God and so desperately wanted to show Him their appreciation that they decided on their own to bring Him all these gifts. Aharon respects and admires the *nesi'im* for going beyond the call of duty to serve God.

He wished that he too could have a chance to voluntarily express his appreciation for God instead of only performing mitzvot as a way to fulfill his obligation.

Recognizing Aharon's wish, God comes to Aharon after the *nesi'im* bring their volunteer gifts and reminds him that he too goes beyond the call of duty every single day when he lights the menorah. Though any priest could perform that mitzvah, Aharon the High Priest makes a point to light it each day because he values the opportunity to serve God even in ways that he is not obligated to do so.



The Parsha Through Another Lens

Discussion Time:

Do you think it is a greater achievement to fulfill a daily obligation or to perform a volunteer task? For example, is it more impressive for a person to go to work every day or to volunteer on Sundays at a soup kitchen? Is it more impressive for someone to take out the garbage every day because his parents assign him that chore or because he realizes that the garbage is starting to get smelly?

Can you think of a scenario in which you would get greater satisfaction from fulfilling an obligation than volunteering? How about the reverse?

Shabbat Shalom!

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Parsha: Shelach Lecha

Title: Bring Out Your 'Yay-Sayer'!

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

The Parsha at First Glance

Spotlight on the Parsha:

The Mission – The Israelites are about to prepare for entering *Eretz Canaan*, which is the Land of Israel. Towards this goal, God speaks to Moshe in this *parsha* and tells him:



Bamidbar 13:2

Send for yourself men to spy out the land of Canaan.

שְׁלַח-לְךָ אַנְשִׁים, וַיִּתְּרוּ אֶת-אֶרֶץ
כְּנָעַן.

For this very important mission, Moshe chooses 12 spies, one from each of the 12 tribes of Israel. Before they set out he gives them some instructions. Moshe tells them to travel around the country to see what kind of land it is, whether it is 'fat' or 'lean' and if 'there are trees there.' God also tells them to check out the people who live there, whether they are 'strong or weak,' 'few or many.' He ends with the word **וְהִתְחַזְקוּתֶם**, "be courageous!"

The spies are on their mission for 40 days and then they return. (We can imagine that all of the people left behind, including Moshe, must have been anxiously and perhaps eagerly awaiting their return to hear what they had to say.)

The Report – The news the spies have to share is mixed. There's good news and bad news. Ten of the spies tell about how the land is beautiful, 'flowing with milk and honey.' However, they also say that the people living there are very powerful and the cities are strong. They claim there are giants there! Their conclusion is: "We cannot attack that people, for they are stronger than us."

Yehoshua and Calev return from the same trip but come back with a different report. They agree with the other 10 tribes that the land is a 'good land' and that it 'flows with milk and honey.' They also say that we should 'have no fear of the people in the country.' Calev tells the people, "Let us by all means go up (and conquer the land), and we shall gain possession of it, we can do it!"

Sadly, the nation is persuaded by the opinion of the 10 spies. They become frightened by their report and refuse to listen to Calev and Yehoshua's positive



words of encouragement. The Israelite people become so discouraged by the words of the 10 spies that they even lament and want to go back to Egypt!!

This failure to listen to the voices of Calev and Yehoshua, voices that told them that they should be courageous, that they can do it, would lead God to lose faith in this whole generation of Israelites. God will punish this generation of Israelites who lacked the confidence and courage to set out on their mission. Instead of entering the Land of Israel, this generation will continue to wander in the wilderness for another 40 years. This generation will never get to see the Land of Israel.

Questions for Consideration:

Though this story does have a sad ending, important questions remain.

- How could all the spies have been on the same trip, seen the same things, and come back with totally different impressions?
- What was it that made Calev and Yehoshua believe the nation could accomplish the task of conquering and resettling the Land of Canaan while the 10 other spies, facing the same reality as Calev and Yehoshua, believed it would be too hard and therefore couldn't be done?

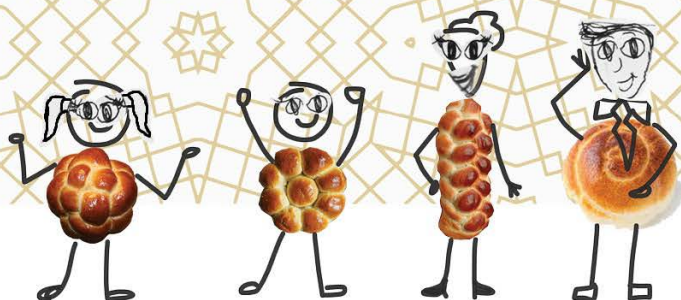
Let's zoom in on one of the *pesukim* the 10 spies say when they are reporting on their mission.

Zooming In:

Bamidbar 13:33

And we saw the giants and we looked like grasshoppers IN OUR OWN EYES...

וְשָׂם רְאֵינוּ אֶת הַנְּפִילִים בְּגֵי עֵינֵינוּ כְּחִגְבִּים...
הַנְּפִילִים ; וְנָהִי בְּעֵינֵינוּ כְּחִגְבִּים...



Let's focus on their words, "in our own eyes." The 10 spies were looking at the land and the people through their 'grasshopper eyes.' In other words, they thought of themselves as small and weak and therefore unfit for the task that Moshe and God had asked them to do.

Yehoshua and Calev did not have 'grasshopper eyes' when they looked at the land and people. They had eyes that told them, 'We can do this!'

The Parsha Through Another Lens

The Parsha in Practice:

Let's call the 10 tribes the 'nay-sayers' and Calev and Yehoshua the 'yay-sayers.' We all face tasks and challenges that might seem overwhelming or really hard. When we face these tasks most of us have both of these voices in our head.

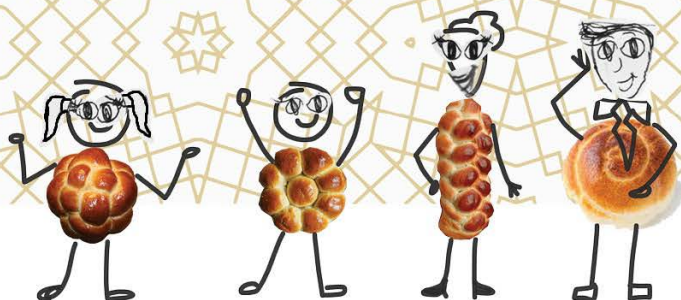
The 'nay-sayer' is saying, "Oh, I'll never be able to do this," or "It's too much or too hard," or "I'm just a grasshopper."

The 'yay-sayer' is saying, "I can try," or "I will start and do my best."

How can we let our 'yay-sayer' voice be loudest?

Option 1: Share Around! Let's learn from those around us. Ask the people around your table to share a story of a time when they faced a challenge and let their 'yay-sayer' voice be loudest. What was the challenge? What did they say to themselves to help them face that challenge?

Option 2: Action! Practicing with your 'yay-sayer' voice and letting others encourage you are other ways to work towards facing challenges with a



Calev/Yehoshua attitude. Ask everyone to go around and share an upcoming challenge (big or small). In turn, ask each person to practice facing this challenge by using their 'yay-sayer' voice. Ask others for encouragement as well. Act it out! Practice!

Option 3: Some Examples! Here are some challenge stories that could help us practice being a 'yay-sayer.' Pick one of them, read it out loud and practice facing this challenge as a 'yay-sayer.' Feel free to get some advice from the 'yay-sayers' around you!

Up At Bat – You are the next hitter on your baseball team. You are facing one of the best pitchers on the other team. You can give up your place in the batting order or step up to bat.

Messy Room – You have quite a messy room which you must clean up!

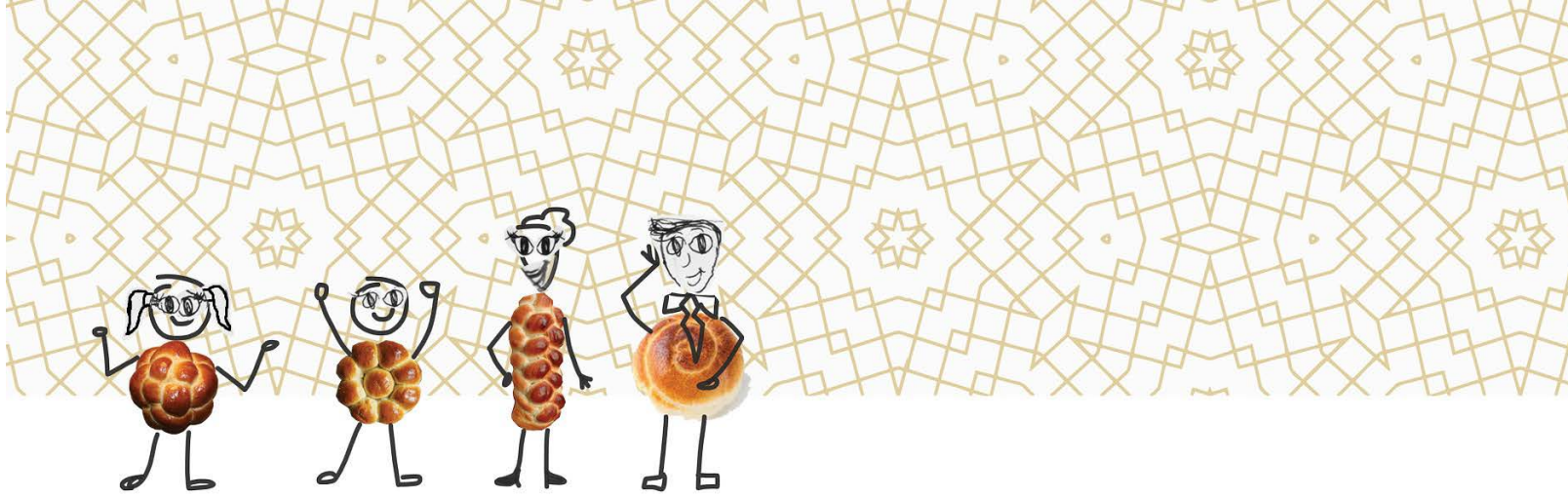
Big Assignment Coming Up – You have a very important group project coming up and are feeling overwhelmed by your part in it.

Difficult Conversation – Some of your friends have been fighting with one another. You decide that you want to try and help them make peace but it suddenly feels impossible.

Marathon – You took on the challenge of running in a mini-marathon that requires more training than you realized.

Now... just one more thing!

Remember that there is another important benefit to being a 'yay-sayer.' If you approach your challenge as a Calev/ Yehoshua 'yay-sayer,' you get to see if it will work out. If you remain a 'nay-sayer,' you'll never know.



Calev and Yehoshua remained 'yay-sayers,' and they, and not the 10 nay-sayer spies, actually *do* get to see how it worked out.

Yehoshua will become the person who will lead the Israelite nation into Israel and resettle the land and Calev will be right there with him.

Shabbat Shalom!

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Parsha: Korach

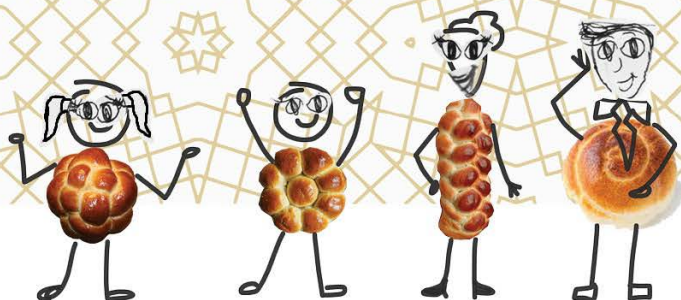
Title: Torah Talk - The Why of What We Do

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

The Parsha at First Glance

Spotlight on the Parsha:

We witness one of the Torah's most famous scenes of rebellion in this week's *parsha*, and it plays like a movie. Korach, a Levi, "takes himself aside," along with Datan, Aviram, and On, and confronts Moshe and Aharon, challenging them. Korach and his group of rebels call out Moshe and Aharon, saying: "You take too



much upon yourselves, for the entire congregation are all holy, and the Lord is in their midst. So why do you raise yourselves above the Lord's assembly?" (Bamidbar 16:3)

Zooming In:

Korach, Datan, Aviram, and On are angry that Moshe and Aharon are considered special or different than the rest of the congregation. God is with all of us, they argue, so what makes you so holy or so deserving of your leadership?

As scholars of the Torah, we know that this is a huge deal!

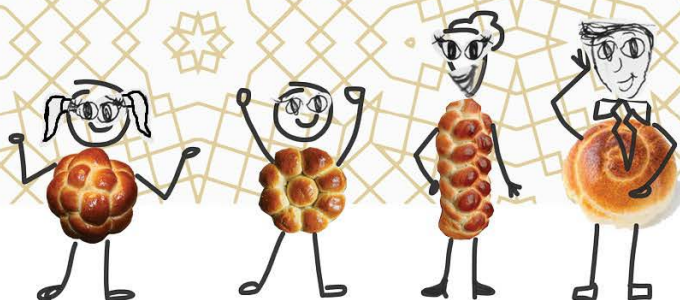
To challenge Moshe and Aharon, who have been God's right-hand helpers, the connectors between God and *Bnei Yisrael*, is an almost earth-shattering action.

So why would Korach, Datan, Aviram, and On do this?

What are their motivations to challenge Moshe and Aharon's authority?

Questions for Consideration:

- What might be the goal behind Korach, Datan, Aviram, and On's words and actions?
- Is it ever right to question the established leaders or system of who is in charge?



The Parsha Through Another Lens

Acting Out:

Part One: Skit

With the people at your table or in your class, read through Bamidbar 16:1-35.

Assign different people to act as Moshe, Aharon, Korach, Datan, Aviram and the members of the *edah* (congregation). Have everyone read through their “script” (the *pesukim*/verses – see below) once or twice before you act. Then, get out of your seats and truly act out the verses as if they were a skit. Make sure to use your body and voice to show the emotions behind your character’s words.

Part Two: Torah Talk

After acting out the *pesukim*, invite each of the actors to your talk show: Torah Talk. Take turns interviewing each actor as a group.

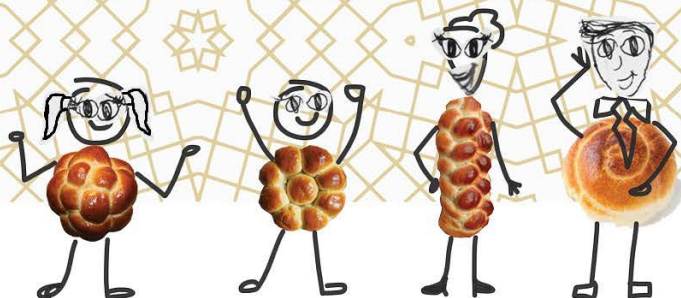
Have the other people at your table or in your class ask each character questions about why they acted the way they did in these *pesukim*.

Be as creative as possible - feel free to challenge your Moshe, or Korach, or a member of the congregation to explain *the why* behind their actions.

Part Three: The Why Questions

Use what you know about this moment in Bnei Yisrael’s life - the transition between Egypt and the experiences they’ve had in the *midbar* (desert) - to add to what you think your character will be thinking and feeling.

- Why do you think the rebels are so frustrated?

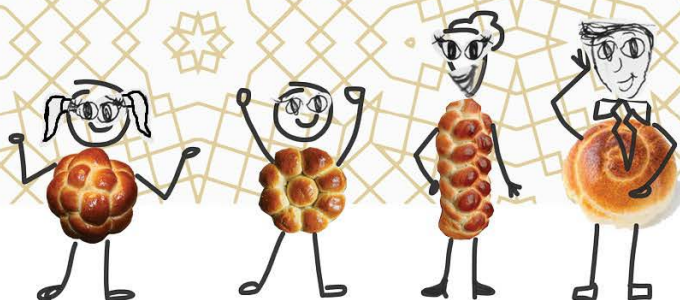


- Do you think the rebels were scared or nervous about challenging Moshe?
- Korach is both a Levi and a cousin of Moshe. How might his family background influence his feelings towards Moshe and Aharon and their leadership?
- Was it a dangerous act to challenge Moshe? (Even before you knew about the actual punishment...)
- How do you think it feels to be Moshe or Aharon, who have worked for so long to build community and hope among Bnei Yisrael, and who are now being challenged about their leadership style?
- If you are a member of the congregation, why would you turn against your leaders - Moshe and Aharon - and join a rebellion?
- Even though Korach (not to mention everyone else involved) dies for his part in the rebellion, the parsha is still named for him. Why do you think that is?

Part Four: Spotlight on Your Own Life

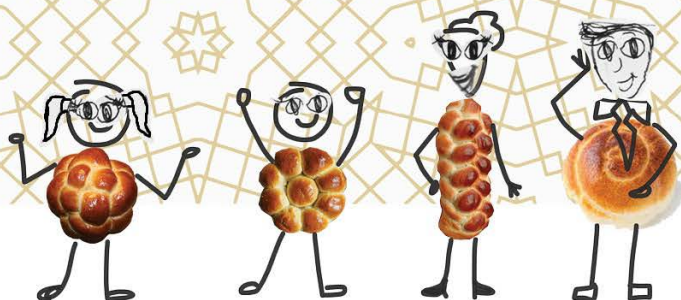
- Think about the people in charge in your life - your teachers, your coaches, your parents, members of the government or others.
- Is there ever a time when you have felt it was hard for you that they had power over some of the decisions in your life?
- Was there ever a time when you didn't understand why someone was chosen to do something special and you weren't?
- What, if anything, would make you challenge a leader, like Korach, did?

Shabbat Shalom!



Bamidbar 16:1-35

- 1. Korach the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi took [himself to one side] along with Datan and Aviram, the sons of Eliav, and On the son of Peleth, descendants of Reuven.*
- 2. They confronted Moshe together with two hundred and fifty men from the children of Israel, chieftains of the congregation, representatives of the assembly, men of repute.*
- 3. They assembled against Moshe and Aharon, and said to them, "You take too much upon yourselves, for the entire congregation are all holy, and the Lord is in their midst. So why do you raise yourselves above the Lord's assembly?"*
- 4. Moshe heard and fell on his face.*
- 5. He spoke to Korach and to all his company, saying, "In the morning, the Lord will make known who is His, and who is holy, and He will draw [them] near to Him, and the one He chooses, He will draw near to Him.*
- 6. Do this, Korach and his company: Take for yourselves censers.*
- 7. Place fire into them and put incense upon them before the Lord tomorrow, and the man whom the Lord chooses he is the holy one; you have taken too much upon yourselves, sons of Levi."*
- 8. Moshe said to Korach, "Please listen, sons of Levi.*
- 9. Is it not enough that the God of Israel has distinguished you from the congregation of Israel to draw you near to Him, to perform the service in the Mishkan of the Lord and to stand before the congregation to minister to them?*
- 10. He drew you near, and all your brothers, the sons of Levi with you, and now you seek the kehunah as well?*
- 11. Therefore, you and your entire company who are assembled are against the Lord, for what is Aharon that you should complain against him?"*
- 12. Moshe sent to call Datan and Aviram, the sons of Eliav, but they said, "We will not go up.*
- 13. Is it not enough that you have brought us out of a land flowing with milk and honey to kill us in the desert, that you should also exercise authority over us?*
- 14. You have not even brought us to a land flowing with milk and honey, nor have you given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards. Even if you gouge out the eyes of those men, we will not go up."*
- 15. Moshe was exceedingly distressed, and he said to the Lord, "Do not accept their offering. I have not taken a donkey from a single one of them, and I have not harmed a single one of them."*
- 16. Moshe said to Korach, "You and your entire congregation should be before the Lord you, they, and Aharon tomorrow.*



17. Let each man take his censer and place incense upon it, and let each man present his censer before the Lord; [there will thus be] two hundred and fifty censers, and let you and Aharon each [take] his censer."

18. So each man took his censer, and they put fire upon it and placed incense upon it, and they stood at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting with Moshe and Aharon.

19. Korach assembled all the congregation against them at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord appeared before the entire congregation.

20. The Lord spoke to Moshe and Aharon saying,

21. "Dissociate yourselves from this congregation, and I will consume them in an instant."

22. They fell on their faces and said, "O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, if one man sins, shall You be angry with the whole congregation?"

23. The Lord spoke to Moshe saying,

24. "Speak to the congregation saying, 'Withdraw from the dwelling of Korach, Datan and Aviram.'"

25. Moshe arose and went to Datan and Aviram, and the elders of Israel followed him.

26. He spoke to the congregation saying, "Please get away from the tents of these wicked men, and do not touch anything of theirs, lest you perish because of all their sins.

27. So they withdrew from around the dwelling of Korach, Datan, and Aviram, and Datan and Aviram went out standing upright at the entrance of their tents together with their wives, their children, and their infants.

28. Moshe said, "With this you shall know that the Lord sent me to do all these deeds, for I did not devise them myself.

29. If these men die as all men die and the fate of all men will be visited upon them, then the Lord has not sent me.

30. But if the Lord creates a creation, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them and all that is theirs, and they descend alive into the grave, you will know that these men have provoked the Lord."

31. As soon as he finished speaking all these words, the earth beneath them split open.

32. The earth beneath them opened its mouth and swallowed them and their houses, and all the men who were with Korach and all the property.

33. They, and all they possessed, descended alive into the grave; the earth covered them up, and they were lost to the assembly.

34. All Israel who were around them fled from their cries, for they said, "Lest the earth swallow us up [too]!"

35. A fire came forth from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who had offered up the incense.

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Parsha: Chukat

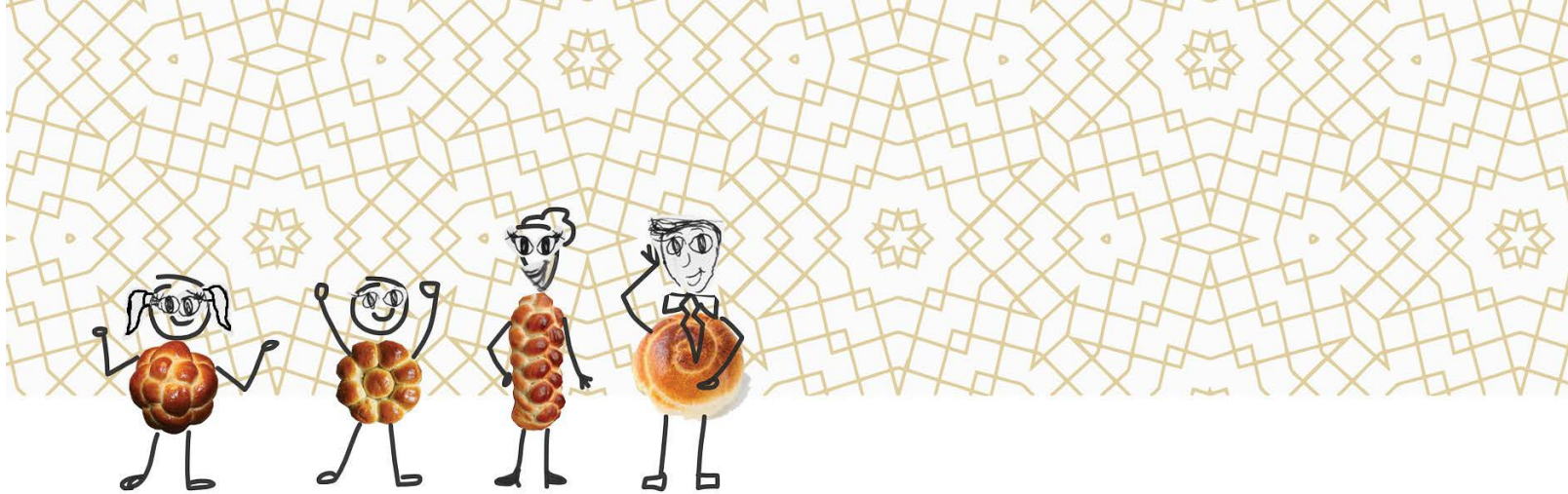
Title: Trust in the Unexpected!

Contributor: Reuven Margrett, Director of Digital Content, Pardes Center for Jewish Educators

The Parsha at First Glance

Spotlight on the Parsha:

Chukat contains an idea that is quite confusing – spiritual purity and impurity. Just like a person can be in a happy or sad mood, or a person can be wide awake or very tired, so too a person can be spiritually pure (*tahor* in Hebrew) or spiritually impure (*tameh* in Hebrew). Our *parsha* explains that contact with, or



being in the same room as, a dead person makes a person become tameh. It also explains that for a person to become spiritually pure again they need to be sprinkled with a special mixture.

Zooming In:

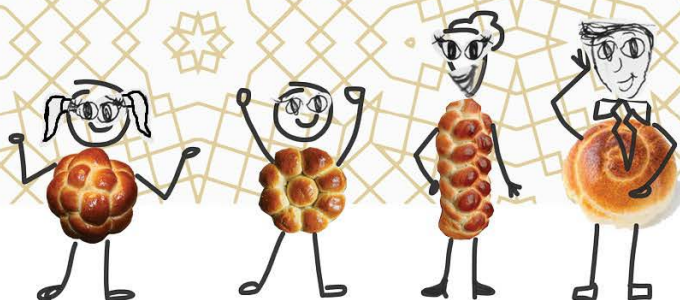
The creation of the special mixture that is sprinkled on a tameh person involves one of the most unique *mitzvot* (commandments) in the whole of the Torah – the burning of the *parah adumah* – red heifer (cow). A completely red-colored heifer is burned in a fire, its ashes are mixed with spring water and then sprinkled on a person. This is how the Torah, in Bamidbar 19:5-6, describes the creation of the ashes:

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>5. The cow shall be burned in his sight—its hide, flesh, and blood shall be burned, its dung included</p> | <p>ה וְשָׂרֵף אֶת-הַפָּרָה לְעֵינָיו ; אֶת-עֹרָהּ וְאֶת-בְּשָׂרָהּ וְאֶת-דָּמָהּ, עַל-פְּרִשָּׁה יִשְׂרָף.</p> |
| <p>6. and the priest shall take cedar wood, hyssop, and crimson stuff, and throw them into the fire consuming the cow.</p> | <p>ו וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן, עֵץ אֲרָז וְאַזְבִּיב--וְשָׂנִי תוֹלַעַת ; וְהִשְׁלִיךְ אֶל-תּוֹךְ שְׂרִפַּת הַפָּרָה.</p> |

This is certainly one of the more perplexing mitzvot contained in the Torah.

Questions for Consideration:

- Have you ever been told to do something which doesn't make any sense to you?
- What was it and how did you feel doing it?



The Parsha Through Another Lens

Background Midrash:

The mitzvah of the parah adumah is so strange to understand that even the wise King Shlomo [Solomon] could not understand it:

In reference to what did King Shlomo say (Kohelet 7:23), "I thought to be wise to it, but it is distant from me"... King Shlomo said: All of the Torah's commandments I have comprehended. But the chapter of the red heifer, though I have examined it, questioned it and searched it out - "I thought to be wise to it, but it is distant from me."

Bamidbar Rabbah 19:3

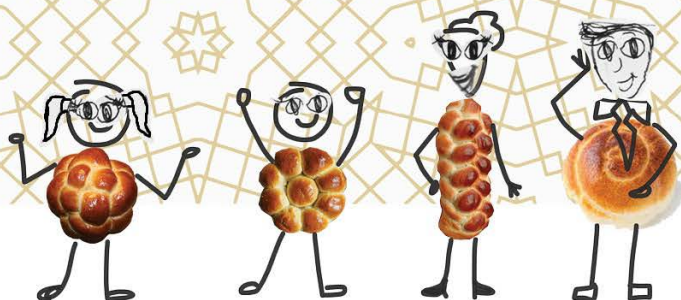
Mitzvot that do not make rational sense are given a general title of *chukim* (statutes). The red heifer is such an example as even wise King Shlomo could not figure it out! Should we follow these laws blindly or perhaps ask every three-year old's favorite question, 'But why?'

Rashi, the famous 11th-century commentator, writing on Bamidbar 19:2, already expects us to ask the *why* question and brings a midrash that informs us that in this case a why question will not work:

Because Satan [the Accusing Angel] and the nations of the world taunt Israel, saying, "What is this command and what reason is there for it?", on this account the Torah writes the term Chukat [statute] about it, implying: It is a statute from before Me; you have no right to criticize it.

The midrash that Rashi brings is saying that the mitzvah of the parah adumah needs no explanation. No answer to the *why* question is needed. God told us to do it, it is a *chok* [statute], and no explanation is given.

So how do we deal with laws that are beyond our understanding?



Part of the answer revolves around trust and answering the question, 'Do you trust the person who is giving you instructions?'. Hopefully, when a parent, teacher or doctor says to do something you trust that it benefits you in some way. A child trusts their parents when they tell them to brush their teeth, or look both ways before crossing a road, because it is good for them. An adult will trust the doctor who tells them to take a foul-tasting medicine because they trust it will make them better. The same goes for chukim – we have to trust the giver of the commandments, God.

Game On:

Trust Fall

A young person [the faller] stand a little bit in front of an adult [the catcher], with their back facing the front of the adult. The faller holds their arms out a little bit, so when they fall backwards they will be caught in the arms of the adult. The following clip shows what it looks like: <https://gph.is/2gwlkvZ>

This may be hard for a young person to do, could take multiple attempts, and in the end, they may not be able to do it. BUT the process should be fun and light-hearted.

Questions to ask after this activity:

- How did you feel before falling back?
- Did you hesitate, or try and stop yourself once you fell?
- When have there been other times in your life you've had to rely on others? Was it easy?
- What stops you from trusting others?

Transiting to talking about mitzvot and God:

- Are there any times in your life you've done something and trusted that 'God is there for you'?
- How do you feel about mitzvot that don't make any sense to you – do you do them anyway?
- What, if anything, holds you back from trusting God?

Shabbat Shalom!

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Parsha: Balak

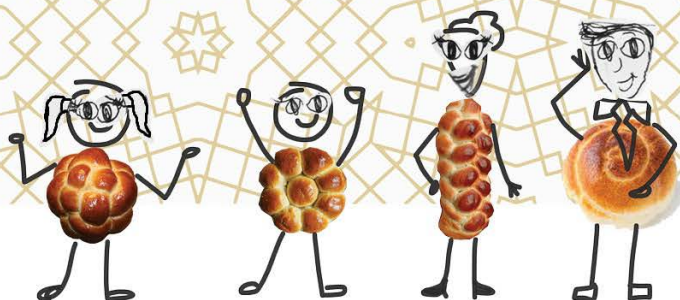
Title: There Are at Least Two Sides to Every Story

Contributor: Rachel Friedrichs, Assistant Director, Pardes Center for Jewish Educators

The Parsha at First Glance

Spotlight on the Parsha:

This week's *parsha* has a dramatic, complicated and fantastical story that will be fun to explore. Let's break it down...



Who are the key characters in our story?

- *Bnei Yisrael*: They are now wandering through the desert, and rumors about their victorious battles and amazing miracles are beginning to spread!
- *Moav*: A nation dwelling in the desert, not far from where Bnei Yisrael are camped, who fear Bnei Yisrael's power and size.
- *Balak*: The Moabite king.
- *Bilam*: A Moabite prophet who has the power to grant blessings and cast curses.
- *God*: Has the power to decide who gets blessed and who gets cursed.

What happens?

- Balak, fearing Bnei Yisrael's strength, sends messengers to summon Bilam to curse Bnei Yisrael so that Moav might have a chance to defeat them in war.
- Bilam insists that he can only say the words that God puts into his mouth, but despite this Balak still wants him to curse Bnei Yisrael.
- On his way to cursing the nation, Bilam's donkey stops suddenly in the path and refuses to move. Bilam is initially angry and confused until the donkey miraculously begins to talk to Bilam! Then he realizes that the donkey stopped because there is an angel of God in the path. Bilam promises to only say the words that God puts in his mouth and the angel allows him to continue.
- Three times Bilam tries to curse the nation and three times God puts blessings in his mouth instead. Each time Balak gets angrier and angrier that his plan is not working. Each time Bilam explains that he can only say the words of God.
- After the third attempt, Balak furiously gives up and dismisses Bilam in a huff and they each go their own way. Bnei Yisrael is never cursed.



Zooming In:

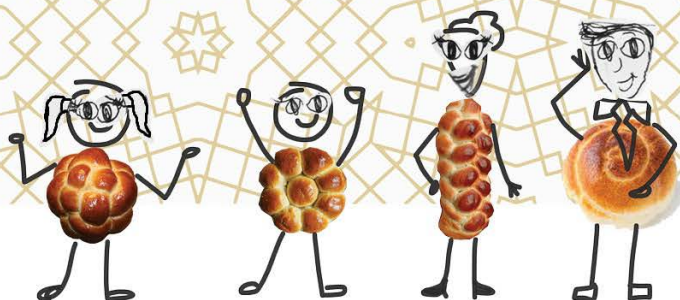
As in many stories in the Torah, there is a lot of drama and we know what the characters do, but we don't know exactly what they are thinking... let's try to explore this story from multiple perspectives to see if we can understand it more fully.

The Parsha Through Another Lens

Stepping into Someone Else's Shoes:

Instructions: You are going to imagine a few possibilities of what Bilam and Balak were thinking during this entire story. For each character, Balak and Bilam, there are two different possible perspectives with prompts below. Choose one of the perspectives (e.g., cruel and power-hungry king) and 'step into the shoes' of that character and perspective. Consider the prompts beneath it (and/or come up with your own prompts) and answer them in first person ("I knew that I needed to summon Bilam because I was...").

| Balak | |
|--|---|
| <i>Conscientious leader:</i> Balak is just looking out for his people. He is their leader and responsible for their safety. | <i>Cruel and power-hungry king:</i> Balak thinks that he can use Bilam's powers to his advantage to ensure that he will defeat Bnei Yisrael in battle and become more powerful. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you want Bilam to curse Bnei Yisrael? • How do you want the Moabite people to think of you? • How do you feel each time Bilam recites a blessing instead of a curse for Bnei Yisrael? • Why do you refuse to give up and insist repeatedly that Bilam curse Bnei Yisrael? • What are you hoping will happen once Bnei Yisrael are cursed? | |



Bilam

Shrewdly hoping that Balak will be embarrassed: Bilam knows that God is on the side of Bnei Yisrael (after all, look at all the miracles that God has already performed for them!) and will never agree to curse them. He could have just told Balak that it will never work, but instead he wants Balak to look like a fool, trying again and again to curse the people unsuccessfully.

Clueless fool just following orders: Bilam has no idea whose side to be on or what the full consequences of his actions are. He just goes along with what he is told, repeating again and again that he can only do whatever God tells him. He doesn't care really whether Bnei Yisrael are cursed or blessed.

- Are you afraid of Bnei Yisrael's power?
- What are you thinking when you initially refuse to be summoned by Balak's servants the first time?
- How do you feel after the blessings for Bnei Yisrael come out of your mouth instead of curses?
- Do you think that Balak is wise for trying three times to curse Bnei Yisrael?
- What, if anything, are you hoping will happen to Balak, Moav and Bnei Yisrael?

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Parsha: Pinchas

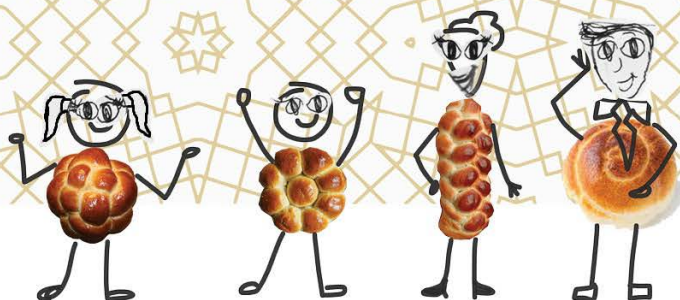
Title: Peace and Zeal

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

The Parsha at First Glance

Spotlight on the Parsha:

This Parsha is a doozy full of interesting decisions being made by God. First off, Pinchas (whom this Parsha is named for), son of Elazar, son of Aron, is rewarded for killing two people. His reward is a Peace Covenant that comes from God. After that, God instructs Moshe and Elazar to take a second census of the



Israelites because almost none of them are the same Israelites that stood at Mt. Sinai. They had been in the harsh desert so long that that majority of living Israelites were a new generation of people. One of the men who died in the wilderness was named Zelophehad, and he had five daughters and no sons. The five daughters of Zelophehad approached Moses with a case to inherit their father's property. Traditionally, women would not have been allowed to inherit land, but because they had no brothers, they decided to try. God agrees with the daughters' case and makes a new rule where, in this situation, women can also inherit property. And finally, Moses asks God not to leave the Israelites without a leader, and together God and Moses appoint Yehoshua to lead the people once they reach the Land of Israel. Phew! That was a lot!

Zooming In:

Option One: Peace

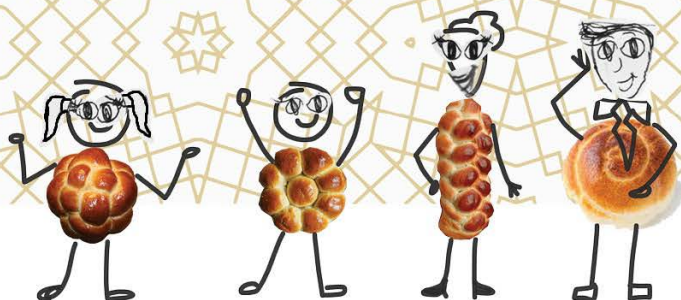
The word *Shalom* (peace) is written shin, lamed, vav, mem: שלום. In Numbers 25:12, the vav in this word is not allowed to be completed when it is written. This is a symbol that any peace achieved through violence is only an illusion of peace and not true peace.

Pinchas kills two people for the sake of *shalom bayit* (peace in the home). *Shalom bayit* is valued highly in Judaism. The challenge of *shalom bayit* may be regarded as the first step in the redeeming of the Jewish people and perfecting the world.

Option Two: Zeal

Zeal – fervor for a person, cause, or object; eager desire or endeavor; enthusiastic diligence; ardor. The power and potential challenges of passion.

When God thought about the daughters of Zelophehad, He realized that the daughters were right and the law He had created was unjust. God admitted that God was wrong.



Questions for Consideration:

What things do you feel passionately about? What are the benefits of feeling passionate about something? What are potential challenges to feeling passionate?

What can we learn from God seeing that a rule needed to be changed and changing it?

After the new census of the people, it is clear that these people will be entering Israel with fresh eyes. What are the benefits of having a new clean slate? Are there downsides?

The Parsha Through Another Lens

The Parsha in Practice:

In what ways do we make positive changes to the world around us when we see injustice? Think about ways that your family can make a positive difference in your community. Brainstorm organizations that create change in areas that your family is passionate about and make a post-Shabbat plan to do something together that will contribute to that cause. This might look like volunteer work, letters or phone calls to government representatives, acts of kindness in the community, or anything else your family can think of. Be like the daughters of Zelophehad! Stand up for the values you believe in!

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Parsha: Matot-Masei

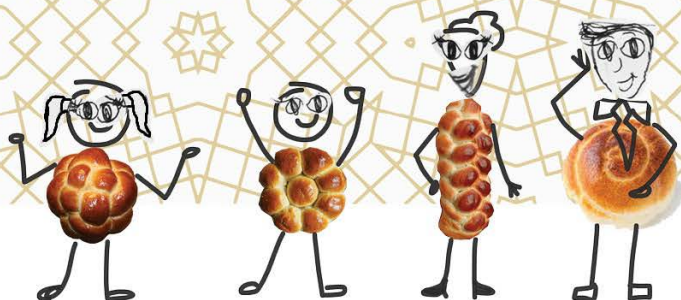
Title: How to Get What You Want! Plan Your Next Big Ask!

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

The Parsha at First Glance

Spotlight on the Parsha:

The Israelites are just about to finally be done with their journey in the desert and cross the Jordan River into the Land of Israel. The tribes of Gad and Reuven have the most cattle and sheep. They really want to stay on the eastern side of the Jordan River, where there are plush fields for their livestock.



They ask Moshe if they can just stay on the land on the eastern side of the Jordan River, instead of crossing over into the Land of Israel. Moshe gets pretty upset and accuses them of trying to start a whole revolution of people just wanting to stay put instead of fighting for the land. This is his reaction, of course, because their request has brought up past trauma: remember, with the previous generation, the whole episode of the “spies” reporting that it was too scary to go into the Land of Israel?

The tribes of Reuven and Gad could have just gotten mad and yelled “that’s not fair” or gotten sad and stomped away. Instead, they decided to think about what it was that was holding them back from getting what they wanted! They realized that Moshe just wanted to make sure everyone crossed the Jordan River to fight so that they could have the land. Not everyone had to live there afterward, though! So they promised to still go and fight hard! Moshe doesn’t say ok, but he does say that they better keep their promise or God will be very upset.

Zooming In and Questions for Consideration:

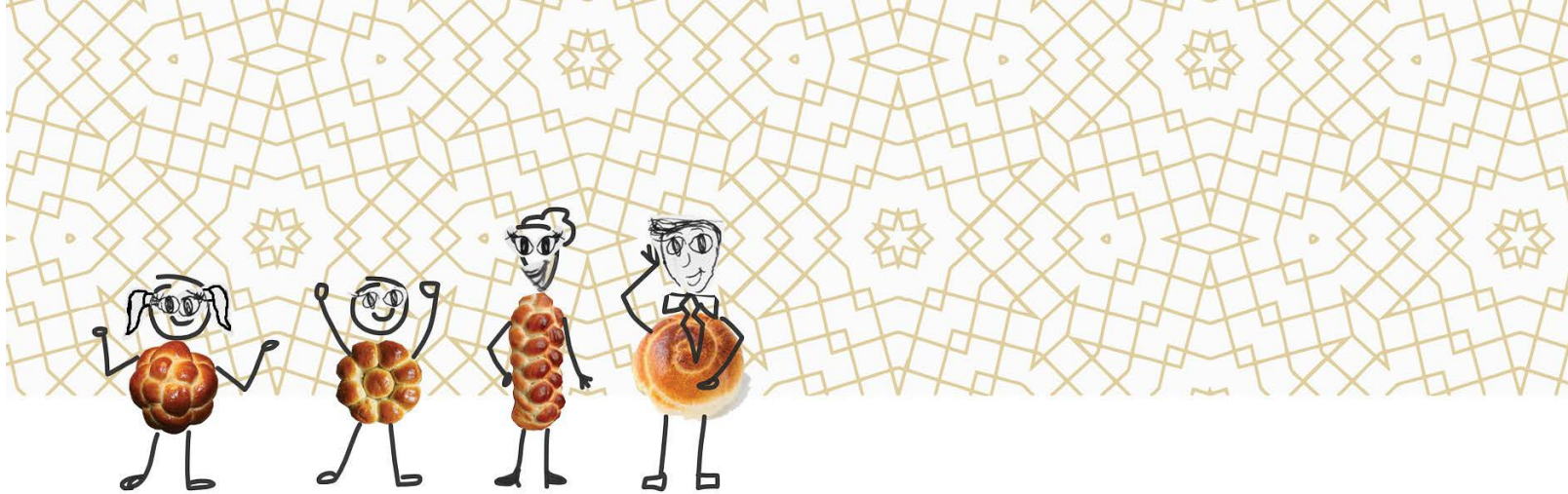
In your own lives:

- Think of something you asked for that you did not get. Why do you think you didn’t get it?
- Now, think of something you asked for and got! Why do you think the person said yes?

The tribes of Gad and Reuven are wise, and use a very helpful practice for getting what they want. We can follow their lead!

1. What is it you really want?

Think about the purpose of what you want and open up to the one you are asking. This can help the person you are asking have empathy (care and understanding) for you and your cause.



In this case we see that the tribes of Gad and Reuven just want a safe, happy place for their livestock and families.

Bamidbar 32:16

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Then they stepped up to him and said, "We will build here sheepfolds for our flocks and towns for our children."</p> | <p>וַיִּגְשׁוּ אֵלָיו וַיֹּאמְרוּ, גְּדֹרֶת צֹאן נִבְנֶה לְמִקְנֵנוּ פֹּה, וְעָרִים לְטִפְנוּ.</p> |
|---|--|

2. Come together with the other people who might want the same thing, or make sure you are very clear with yourself about the purpose of what you want.

- How do you become united with the people with whom you are asking for something?
- How do you really make sure you are "on the same page" about your reasoning for getting what you want?

Here we see that the text goes from plural to singular while talking about Gad and Reuven's tribes.

Bamidbar 32:5

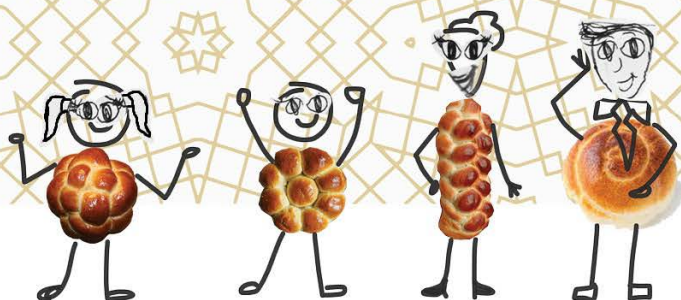
| | |
|---|---|
| <p><i>They said,</i> "if we find favor in your eyes..."</p> | <p>וַיֹּאמְרוּ, אִם-מָצָאנוּ חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ...</p> |
|---|---|

Bamidbar 32:25

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>And the children of Gad and the children of Reuven <i>said (singular)</i> to Moshe...</p> | <p>וַיֹּאמֶר בְּנֵי-גָד וּבְנֵי רְאוּבֵן אֶל-מֹשֶׁה...</p> |
|--|--|

3. Think about it from the other side.

Recognize how the person you are asking is feeling about your request. Make sure you understand what would worry them about you getting what you want.



What is Moshe worried about?

Bamidbar 32:6-8

6. Moses replied to the Gadites and the Reuvenites, "Are your brothers to go to war while you stay here?"

7. Why will you turn the minds of the Israelites from crossing into the land that the LORD has given them?

8. That is what your fathers did when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to survey the land."

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לְבְנֵי-גַד וְלְבְנֵי
רְאוּבֵן : הֲאֶחֱיִיכֶם יָבֹאוּ לְמִלְחָמָה,
וְאַתֶּם תֵּשְׁבוּ פֹה?

ז וְלָמָּה תִּנְיִאוּן אֶת-לֵב בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל--
מֵעֵבֶר אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-נָתַן לָהֶם
יְהוָה?

ח כֹּה עָשׂוּ אֲבֹתֵיכֶם, בְּשַׁלְּחֵי אֶתֶם
מִקְדָּשׁ בְּרִנֵּעַ לְרֹאוֹת אֶת-הָאָרֶץ.

4. Think about your approach and how you will reassure them.

How do you approach someone you are asking something from?

Gad and Reuven "come close" (vayigshu eilav), and meet Moshe. This makes it feel more personal. How might this help them get what they want?

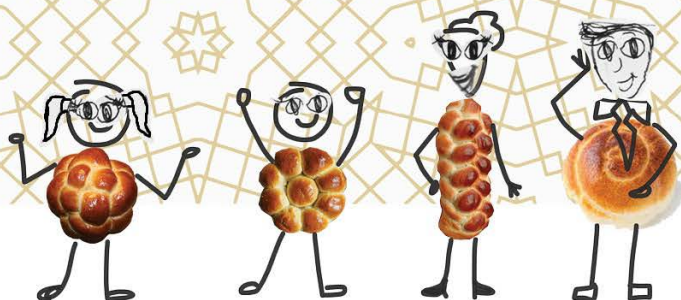
Bamidbar 32:16-18

16. Then they stepped up to him and said, "We will build here sheepfolds for our flocks and towns for our children.

17. And we will hasten as shock-troops in the van of the Israelites until we have established them in their home, while our children stay in the fortified towns because of the inhabitants of the land.

טז וַיִּגְשׁוּ אֵלָיו וַיֹּאמְרוּ, גְּדֵרֹת
צֹאן נִבְנֶה לְמִקְנֵנוּ פֹה, וְעָרִים
לְטַפָּנוּ.

יז וְנִהְיֶהנּוּ נֶחֱלָץ חֲשִׁים לְפָנֵי בְנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל, עַד אֲשֶׁר אִם-הִבִּיאֲנֵם
אֶל-מְקוֹמָם; וְיָשֶׁב טַפָּנוּ בְּעָרֵי
הַמְּבֻצָּר מִפְּנֵי יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ.



18. We will not return to our homes until every one of the Israelites is in possession of his portion."

יח לא נשוב אֶל-בְּתֵינוּ--עַד
הַתְּנַחֵל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ גִּחְלָתוֹ.

The Parsha Through Another Lens

The Parsha in Practice - My Planner:

Note: This activity can be talked through on Shabbat and written up after Shabbat.

The table on the following page follows the steps according to the wise tribes of Gad and Reuven in Parshiot Matot-Masei.

You should try to use this chart next time you want to ask for something! It can help you get what you want by being mindful of everyone's concerns and by listening to yourself and the person you are asking.

Make sure to use a kind understanding tone while asking.



| | |
|--|--|
| <p>What do I want?</p> | |
| <p>Why do I want this?</p> | |
| <p>Am I working with anyone else? If so, how can we make sure we are together in what we want?</p> | |
| <p>In your own words, how would you find out what the person from whom you are requesting something is concerned about?</p> <p>Ask the person you are going to request something from what they might be worried about if you get what you want. <i>For example: "You'll be too tired," or "You won't have time for homework," or "We already spend a lot of money on that."</i></p> | |
| <p>This is what I/ we promise in return that will make sure what you are concerned about is taken care of.</p> <p>Come closer to the person you are asking and make sure they know that you understand their concerns and that you respect them.</p> | |

Shabbat Shalom!