

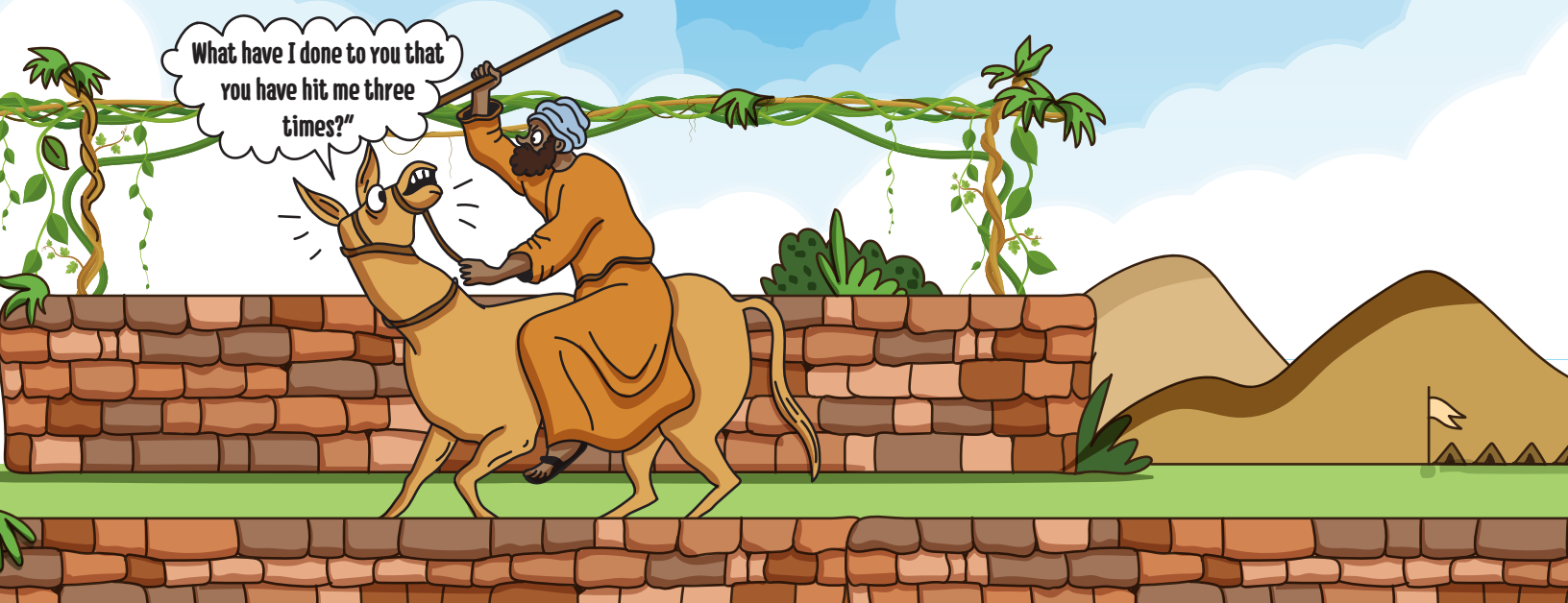


י"א - י"ז תמוז תשפ"ב July 10 - 16, 2022



## מה בפַרְשָׁה • In This Week's Parashah

- ◆ Balak, the king of Moav, dislikes Benei Yisrael. He sends messengers to Bil'am, who is known for cursing people, asking him to curse Benei Yisrael.
- ◆ God says no to this, but Bil'am tries to get a different answer. Eventually God says yes—provided Bil'am only says whatever God tells him to say.
- ◆ Bil'am sets out to meet Balak. God sends a scary angel with a sword, which only Bil'am's donkey can see.
- ◆ The donkey swerves off the road, then squishes into a wall, and finally stops and sits down. Bil'am hits the donkey each time. Then, God lets the animal speak!
- ◆ God reveals the angel to Bil'am. The angel criticizes Bil'am for hitting his donkey, and emphasizes that Bil'am must only speak God's words.
- ◆ Balak and Bil'am meet up. Balak is ready for Bil'am to curse Benei Yisrael. But whenever Bil'am opens his mouth to speak, blessings come out! After this happens three times, Balak sends Bil'am away.
- ◆ Some of Benei Yisrael start to worship Baal Peor, a false god. God sends a plague.





## מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash

Bil'am was hired to curse Benei Yisrael. But God puts words into Bil'am's mouth, and he ends up speaking poetic blessings! Here is one line of his poetry:

### Bemidbar 23:9

As I see them from the boulders,  
gaze on them from the heights...

### במדבר כג:ט

כִּי־מֵרָאשׁ צֻרִים אֶרְאֶנּוּ  
וּמִגְבְּעוֹת אֲשׁוּרֵנּוּ...

What are these "boulders"  
and "heights" Bil'am is  
referring to?

Bzzzz  
A lot of midrashim are  
*bugged* by something  
unusual in the Torah text



Notice the parallelism! The same idea is repeated twice, using different words. We discussed this feature of biblical poetry a few months ago, in Devash for Beshallah. As you read the poetry in our parashah, try to see how many examples of parallelism you can find.

### Midrash Tanhuma

"As I see them from the boulders"—these are our avot (fathers: Avraham, Yitzhak, Yaakov).

"Gaze on them from the heights"—these are our imahot (mothers: Sarah, Rivkah, Rahel, Leah).

### מדרש תנחומא בלק יב

"כִּי מֵרָאשׁ צֻרִים אֶרְאֶנּוּ"—אֱלוֹ הָאָבוֹת.

"וּמִגְבְּעוֹת אֲשׁוּרֵנּוּ"—אֱלוֹ הָאִמֹּהוֹת.

Rashi quotes this midrash and explains it a little more. He says that Bil'am is commenting on Benei Yisrael's firm and established foundation—the family and history that came before them. Benei Yisrael stand tall and strong, like rocks, because they have the strength of their avot and imahot.

- Can you think of people who came before you, in your family or in your community, who give you the foundation to stand tall and strong?
- Words in poems can often mean many different things all at once. Why do you think this midrash says that the "boulders" and "heights" are actually a description of Benei Yisrael and their ancestors? Could these words also be about something else?



## פְּרָשְׁנוֹת • Commentary



### Bemidbar 22:20-22

That night God came to Bil'am and said to him, "If these people have come to invite you, **you may go with them.** But whatever I command you, you must do."

Bil'am woke in the morning, saddled his donkey, and departed with the leaders of Moav.

**God got angry** because he was going...

### במדבר כב:כ-כב

וַיָּבֹא אֱלֹקִים אֶל-בִּלְעָם לַיְלָה וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ  
אִם-לִקְרָא לְךָ בָּאוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים קוּם לֵךְ אִתָּם  
וְאֵךְ אֶת-הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר-אָדָּבַר אֵלַיךְ אֲתוֹ  
תַעֲשֶׂה:

וַיָּקָם בִּלְעָם בַּבֹּקֶר וַיַּחֲבֹשׁ אֶת-אֲתוֹנוֹ  
וַיֵּלֶךְ עִם-שָׂרֵי מוֹאָב:

וַיַּחֲרֹאף אֱלֹקִים כִּי-הוֹלֵךְ הוּא ...

Compare the bolded words at the top of the passage and at the bottom. You might wonder: **If God just gave Bil'am permission to go, why is God already angry that he went?**



Rashi, quoting a midrash, says that Bil'am's actions in the morning revealed his true intentions:

### Rashi (France, 1,000 years ago)

"Saddled his donkey"—hatred makes people act in unnatural ways. Bil'am wouldn't have normally done this job for himself (because he would have had a servant do it, so we know he was acting from extreme hatred)...

"With the leaders of Moav"—his heart equal to their hearts.

רש"י

"וַיַּחבֹּשׁ אֶת אֲתוֹנוֹ" - מִכָּאן שֶׁהַשְּׂנְאָה מְקַלְקֶלֶת אֶת הַשּׂוֹרֶה, שֶׁחָבֵשׁ הוּא בְּעֶצְמוֹ...

"עַם-שָׂרֵי מוֹאָב" - לְבֹו בְּלִבָּם שׂוֹה.



### Or Ha-Hayyim (Morocco, 300 years ago)

"Because he was going"—the pasuk emphasizes "he" to tell us that the reason God was angry was that in the morning Bil'am didn't make clear to Balak's messengers that God had given him permission to go. (He acted like he was going by his own choice.)

אור החיים

"כִּי-הוֹלֵךְ הוּא" - דִּקְדִּיק לומר "הוא" לומר טַעַם שֶׁחָרָה אָף ה' בּוֹ שֶׁלֹּא אָמַר בְּבִקֹּר לְשָׂרֵי בָלָק שֶׁה' נָתַן לוֹ רְשׁוּת לָלֶכֶת.



- ◆ What is the textual evidence for each of these פְּרָשָׁנִים (parshanim, commentators)?
- ◆ As you read the parashah, how do you understand Bil'am? Can you think of three or four characteristics to describe him? Be sure to back up your characteristics with evidence from the story!

(For even more evidence about Bil'am, check out Bemidbar 31:16, Devarim 23:6, and Nehemiah 13:2.)



## הלכה • Halakhah

### How are we supposed to treat animals?

In our parashah, Bil'am's donkey doesn't get treated very well. When it tries to avoid the angel, Bil'am hits the donkey over and over. The donkey defends itself, and tells Bil'am that the beatings aren't fair. Then the angel appears to Bil'am, and criticizes Bil'am for mistreating his donkey (Bemidbar 22:32).

There are other places in the Torah where we can also see concern for treating animals properly. For example, in Parashat Mishpatim, the Torah says that if you see an animal struggling under a heavy load, you cannot ignore it. You need to step in and help it, even if the animal belongs to your enemy (this will come up again in Ki Teitzei).

In the Gemara (Bava Metzia 32b), the obligation to prevent animals from suffering is based on a concern called **צַעַר בְּעֵלֵי חַיִּים (tza'ar ba'alei hayyim, the suffering of living things)**. Rambam explains that tza'ar ba'alei hayyim is behind a number of halakhot regarding kashrut. For example, the rules for how to slaughter animals are designed to minimize their pain.

Rambam also explains that the principle of tza'ar ba'alei hayyim is the reason the Torah doesn't allow us to slaughter an animal and its child on the same day (Vayikra 22:28). This is like the rule that you can't take eggs from a nest while the mother bird is present (Devarim 22:6). In these cases, Rambam says, if an animal parent sees its child being killed, it suffers tremendously. Rambam even says this emotional pain is no different than the pain that a human being would experience (Moreh Nevukhim 3:48)!

The Rema says that if you have to cause pain to an animal for human health (like maybe to make a medicine), then that is allowed. Still, we should never act with cruelty towards any of God's creatures (Even Ha-Ezer 5:14).





## שקלא וטריא • Join the Conversation!

Dear Devash,  
What would happen if Hanukkah were  
in summer and Pesah were in fall?  
Why do we need these holidays to be  
at a specific time?

Sincerely,  
Maya, 6th grade, California

Thank you for this great question, Maya!

Pesah always has to be when it's spring in Israel (and the rest of the Northern hemisphere). This is because the Torah (Devarim 16:1) specifies that Pesah is in חֹדֶשׁ הָאָבִיב (hodesh ha-aviv, the spring month).

The whole Jewish calendar is constructed with the goal of keeping Pesah in the spring. This makes all the other holidays fall into their places. It's a good thing, too, because there are harvests associated with the other two of the שלש רגלים (shalosh regalim, three main festivals when people used to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem). Shavuot is at the time of the wheat harvest, and Sukkot is the end-of-season harvest.

Hanukkah is in a different category because it's not associated with the seasons. It has a specific date: 25 Kislev. Once Pesah is fixed in the spring, you can count on Kislev always being in the winter (in the Northern hemisphere). So, at the darkest time of the year, we light up the nights!



See Q9 in the Parashah Scavenger Hunt for where this phrase appears in our parashah!



## רגע של עברית • Moment of Hebrew

### Bemidbar 22:25

The donkey, seeing the angel of God, **pressed herself** against the wall and **squeezed** Bil'am's foot against the wall; so he beat her again.

### במדבר כב:כה

וַתֵּרָא הָאֵתוֹן אֶת־מַלְאָךְ ה' וַתִּלְחֹץ אֶל־הַקִּיר וַתִּלְחֹץ אֶת־רֶגֶל בִּלְעָם אֶל־הַקִּיר וַיִּסֹּף לְהַכּוֹתָהּ:



לִלְחֹץ (שָׂרַשׁ ל.ח.צ.)

◆ To press or put pressure (lilhotz)



## דְּבָרָה שֶׁל דִּינָה • One-Minute Debate

### How to play:

Here is a topic for debate along with some suggested arguments, but feel free to come up with your own.

- ◆ Assign people to the "Agree" or "Disagree" sides.
- ◆ Each side gets 30 seconds to make their case.
- ◆ At the end, the group votes on a winner.

Agree!



**Debate: If my donkey talked, I would not have been able to talk back to it.**

### Agree!

- ◆ Um... If your donkey is talking to you, either you need to take it to the vet, or you need to go to the doctor and get yourself checked out.

Disagree!

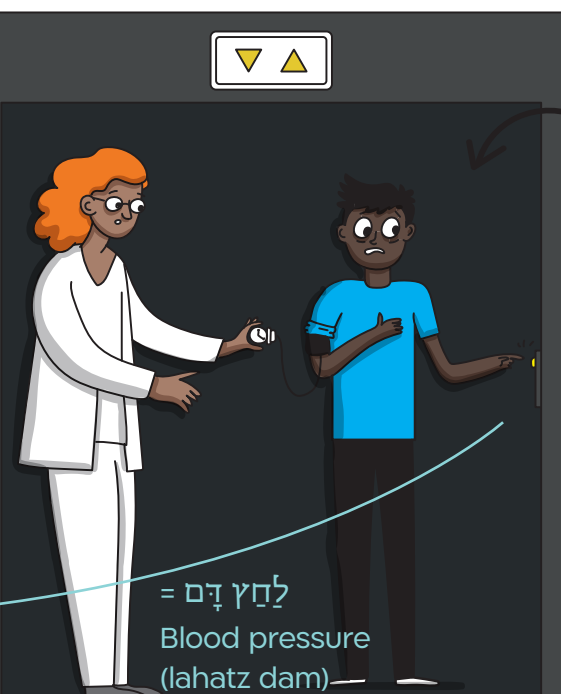


### Disagree!

- ◆ A talking donkey?! If God makes a miracle like that, you better say something.
- ◆ I've seen parrots speak, why couldn't donkeys?

### Find the Word!

In Parashat Mishpatim, a word from this שָׁרֵשׁ (shoresh, root) is used in the context of not oppressing or applying pressure to a גֵּר (ger, stranger). Can you find it? (Hint: Check out Shemot 23:9.)



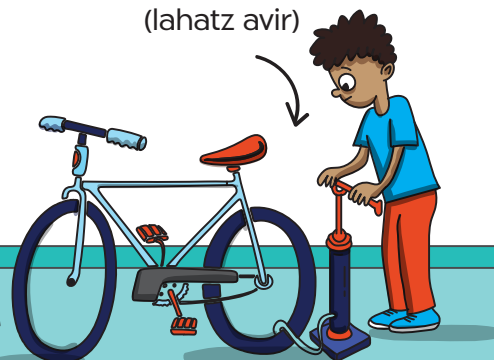
לַחֲץ דָּם  
Blood pressure  
(lahatz dam)

לְהִלָּחֵץ  
To get stressed  
(lehilaheitz)



לְחִיצַת יָד  
Handshake  
(lehitzat yad)

לַחֲץ אָוִיר  
Air pressure  
(lahatz avir)





## שאלות השבוע • Parashah Scavenger Hunt

The answers to the first seven questions can be found in the matching numbered aliyah in the Torah reading. **The answers to the last three are harder and can come from anywhere in the parashah.**

### aliyot:

- 1) Bemidbar 22:2 to 22:12
- 2) 22:13 to 22:20
- 3) 22:21 to 22:38
- 4) 22:39 to 23:12
- 5) 23:13 to 23:26
- 6) 23:27 to 24:13
- 7) 24:14 to 25:9

*Good luck!*

1 What town is Bil'am from?

2 On what condition does God let Bil'am go to Balak?

3 What was the angel of God carrying?

5 What is the name of the second place where Balak tries to curse the people?

4 What three Hebrew roots are used in some way to mean "curse"?

6 What famous line from the Siddur is in this aliyah?

7 What two nations other than Benei Yisrael does Bil'am see and address before leaving?

8 How many words for animals appear in our parashah?

9 What phrase in our parashah might remind you of Pesah, Shavuot, and Sukkot?

10 What verbs are used to describe how God makes contact with Bil'am?

\*  
Look for the answers on page 12!





## Zakeif Katon זָקֵיף קָטָן

Zakeif Katon is the fourth most common note in the whole Torah; it usually appears one or more times in each and every verse. It looks like a colon, and the sound it makes is a higher note dropping down to a lower note. The word zakeif means "standing up," and katon means "small"—this note looks like it is standing up and it is musically not that big a deal. (We will meet the zakeif gadol, the big zakeif, next week!)

The zakeif katon almost always follows a munah or a pashta, closing out a longer phrase or idea that they started. And though it can be followed by all kinds of other notes, a lot of times it leads back into itself. Here, a mahpakh-pashta-katon is followed by a pashta-munah-katon:



במדבר כב:יג

וַיִּקָּם בַּלֵּעָם בַּבֹּקֶר וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־שָׂרֵי בָלָק

Bemidbar 22:13

Bil'am woke in the morning and said to Balak's messengers

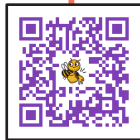


Every now and then, the zakeif katon appears all by itself, with nothing introducing it. One of those is in our parashah:



במדבר כב:לז  
הֲאִמֵּנָם

Bemidbar 22:37  
Am I really



Before or after Shabbat, scan to hear these zakeif katons!

Having learned zakeif katon, you will now recognize almost every note in the Torah. (We have only a few more to go.) Great job!



## QUICK FACTS

1

How many times does it appear in the Torah?  
6984—Very common  
More than once per pasuk!

2

Does it end a musical phrase?  
Yes

3

Is it above or below the word?  
Above

4

Where is it placed on the word?  
On the accent

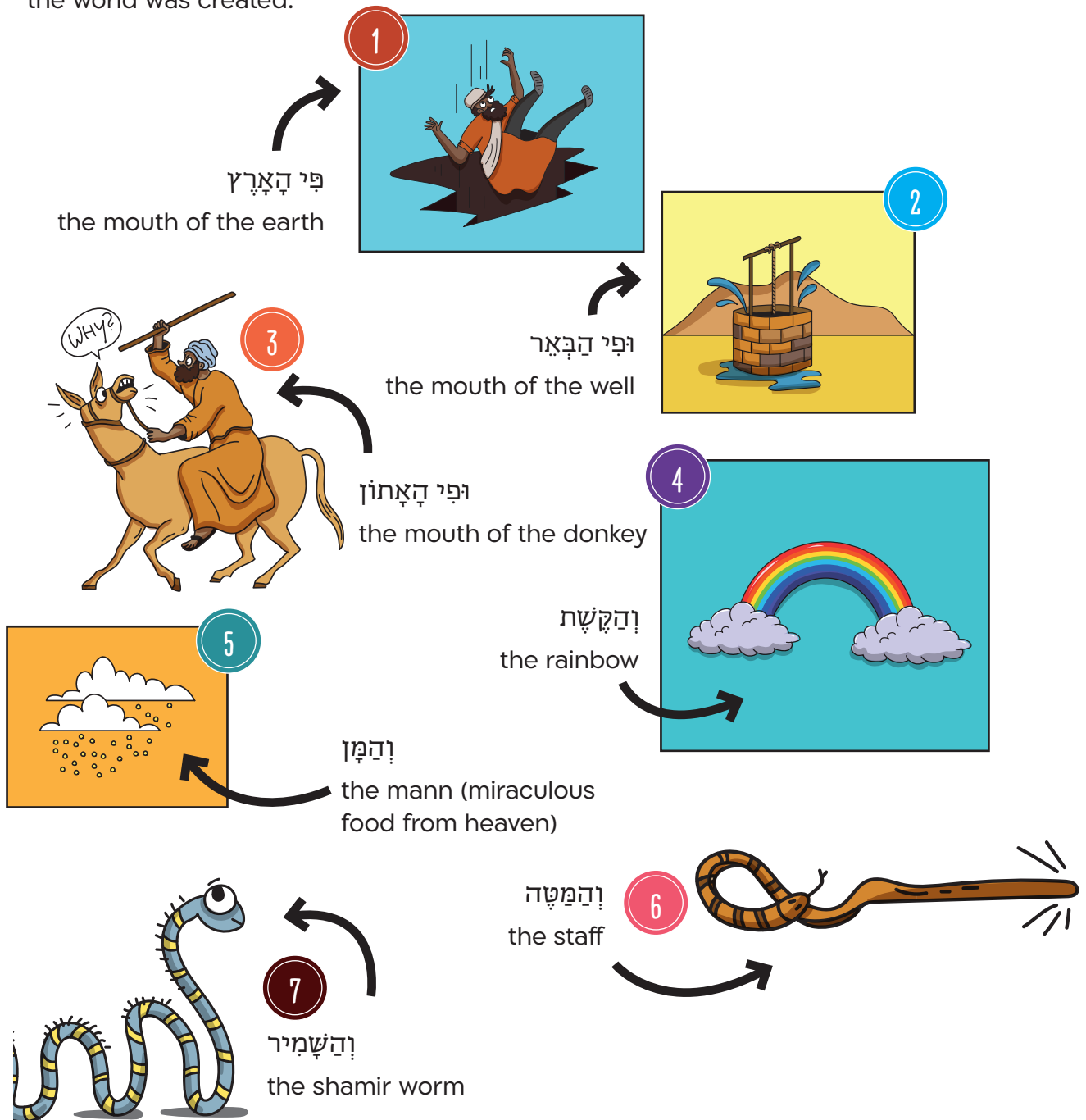


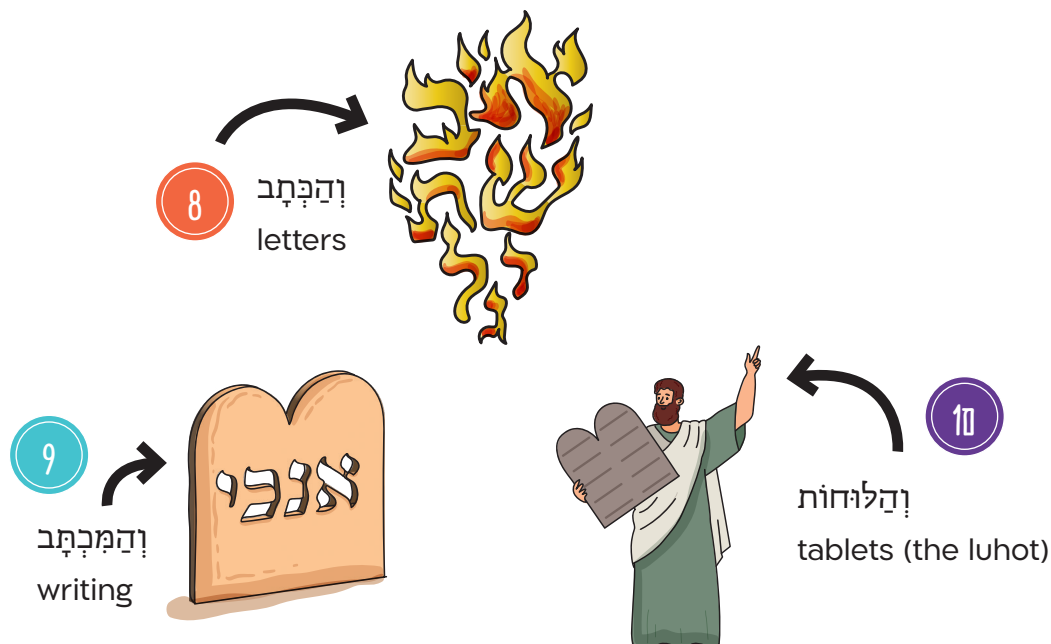
## בואו נדבר על זה • Tell Me More About This!

How was Bil'am's donkey able to talk? The Torah tells us that this was a miracle (Bemidbar 22:28), but the Mishnah (Avot 5:6) takes this a step further and says that the donkey's miraculous talking mouth was one of the things God had planned since the last day of creation:

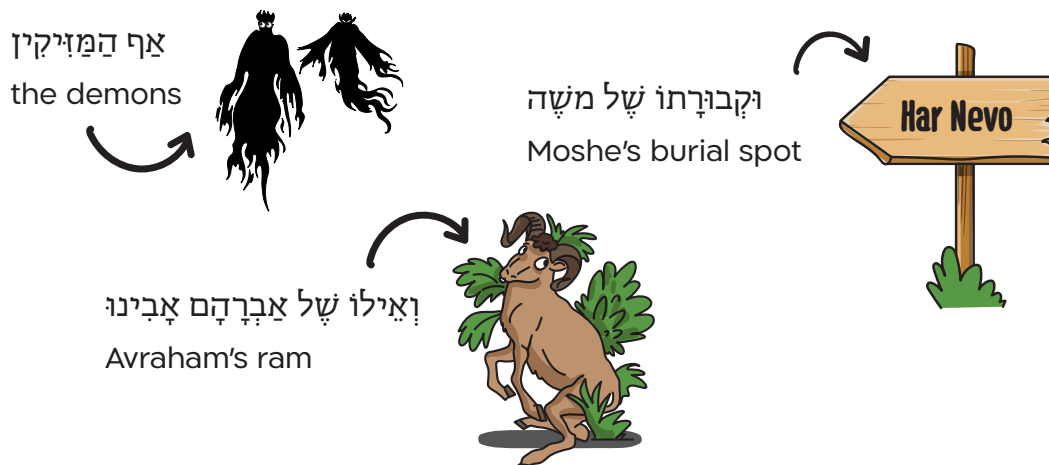
Ten things were created at twilight on Friday, just before Shabbat, in the week the world was created:

עשרה דברים נבראו בערב שבת  
בין השמשות, ואלו הן:



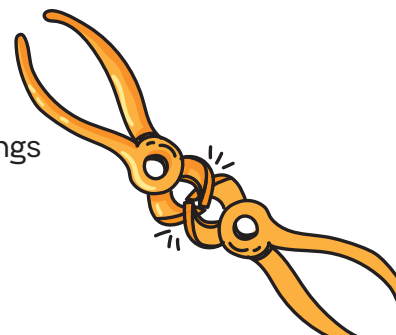


וְיֵשׁ אוֹמְרִים:  
Some say:



וְיֵשׁ אוֹמְרִים:  
Some say:

אֵף צֶבֶת בְּצֶבֶת עֲשׂוּיָה  
and also tongs, made with tongs



- Why were these specific things so important that the Mishnah says they were part of the creation story?
- What does it say about these things that they were the last to be created, just before the first Shabbat?

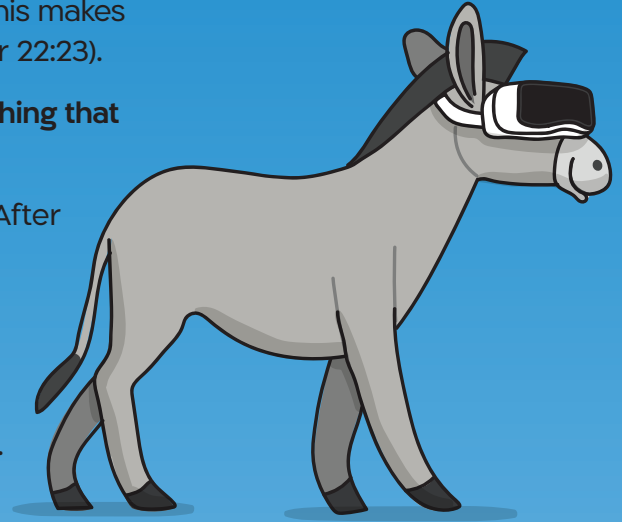


## מה דה • What's Going On Here?

Bil'am's donkey sees an angel of God, holding a sword. This makes the donkey scared, and it swerves off the road (Bemidbar 22:23).

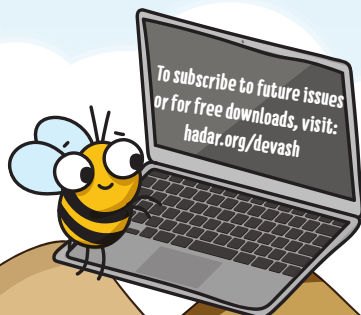
**What exactly did the donkey see? Did it really see something that Bil'am wasn't able to see?**

- Ramban says the donkey didn't **see** anything unusual. After all, angels don't have physical bodies! What happened is that the donkey **felt** something unusual and became scared.
- Rashi says God performed a miracle that allowed the donkey to see on a special, deeper level of perception. So its eyes actually saw an angel.



## Parashah Scavenger Hunt Answers:

1. The town of Pator. The Torah says פְּתוֹרָה (Petorah), but remember, the ה (heh) at the end of a place just means "to," as in, "in the direction of Petor" (22:5).
2. As long as Bil'am will only say whatever God tells him to say (22:20)
3. A sword (22:31)
4. The roots א.ר.ר. in לְכֹה אֶרְחֶה-לִּי ("come curse for me"), ק.ב.ה. in קָה אֶקֶב לֹא קִבֵּה אֶ-י ("how can I curse whom God has not cursed"), and ע.ז. in וְקָה אֶזְעַם לֹא זָעַם ה' ("another way to say "how can I curse whom God has not cursed") (23:7-8)
5. Sedei Tzofim (23:14)
6. מַה-טֹּבוּ אֹהֲלֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׁעֶיךָ מִשְׁכְּנֹתֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל (mah-tovu ohalekha Yaakov, mishkenotekha Yisrael; how fair are your tents, Yaakov, your dwellings, Yisrael) (24:5)
7. Amalek and the Keini (24:20-22)
8. Eleven! צִפּוֹר (tzippor, bird), שׁוֹר (shor, ox), אֲתוֹן (aton, donkey), בָּקָר (bakar, ox), צֹאן (tzon, sheep), פָּר (par, cow), אֵיִל (ayil, ram), רְעָם (re'em, ox), נָחָשׁ (nahash, in our parashah it means "magic," but it's the same word for "snake"), לָבִיא (lavi, lion), אַרְיִי (ari, another word for lion)
9. שְׁלֹשׁ רְגָלִים (shalosh regalim, in our parashah it means "three times," but in other places it seems to also refer to the holidays when you would walk with your feet to celebrate at the Beit Ha-Mikdash!) (22:28)
10. וַיָּבֹא (vayavo, God came) (22:9, 20) and וַיִּקָּר (vayikar, God encountered) (23:4, 16). Neither of these terms is ever used to describe God's communication with Moshe!



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