



מִשְׁנָה • Mishnah

When a person brings מַעֲשֵׂר (ma'aser, a tithe) of their produce to Yerushalayim, they make a declaration called וְדוּי מַעֲשֵׂר (vidui ma'aser). It includes this statement:

Devarim 26:14

I have obeyed God my Lord,
I have done all You commanded me.

דברים כו:יד

שָׁמַעְתִּי בְּקוֹל ה' אֱלֹקֵי
עָשִׂיתִי כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתָנִי:

No one is perfect. So how can anyone ever say that they have done everything God commanded?!

A mishnah explains:

Mishnah Ma'aser Sheni 5:12

I have done all You commanded me: I have rejoiced
and made others rejoice.

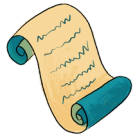
מעשר שני פרק ה משנה יב

עָשִׂיתִי כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתָנִי, שְׂמַחְתִּי
וְשִׂמְחָתִי בּוֹ.

According to this, when you do what God tells you to in a way that's joyful for you and joyful for others, you actually can say that you are doing ALL God commanded!

- ♦ Why is it so important to do mitzvot in a way that makes yourself and others happy?
- ♦ In what way could that be considered "everything" God wants?
- ♦ What does this mishnah teach us about what the kind of impact God wants our mitzvot to have?
- ♦ **Try it out!** What are some ways you can do mitzvot in a way that brings joy to others?





Here's the next part of vidui ma'aser:

Devarim 26:15

Hashkifah (look down) from Your holy place, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel and the land You have given us

דברים כו:טו

הַשְׁקִיפָה מִמַּעוֹן קֹדֶשְׁךָ מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם
וּבֵרַךְ אֶת עַמְּךָ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת
הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַתָּה לָנוּ

"Hashkifah" is a neat word! It comes from the שָׁרַשׁ (shoresh, root) פ.ש.ק, and it also appears in other places in the Torah. How does "hashkifah" in our pasuk connect to the other places it comes up?



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

Yerushalmi Ma'aser Sheni 5:8

R. Huna bar Aha said in the name of R. Alexandra: Come and see the power of those who keep mitzvot. Because all the places that "hashkafah" appears in the Torah are curses, but this time it's part of the language of blessing.

תלמוד ירושלמי מעשר שני ה:ח

רַבִּי הוּנָא בַר אֲחָא בִּשְׁם רַבִּי אֱלִבְסֵנְדָּרָא
בּוֹא וּרְאֵה בְּמָה גְדוֹל בּוֹחֵן שְׁלֵעוּשִׁי
מִצּוֹת שֶׁכָּל הַשְׁקָפָה שְׁבִתוּרָה אֲרוּרָה
וְזֶה בְּלִשׁוֹן בְּרָכָה.

Hazal compare "hashkifah" in our parashah to other places this shoresh appears in the Torah. For example:

Bereishit 18:16

The people set out from there. They looked down—vayashkifu—toward Sedom.

בראשית יח:טז

וַיֵּקְמוּ מִנְּשָׁם הָאֲנָשִׁים וַיִּשְׁקְפוּ עַל פְּנֵי
סְדֹם:

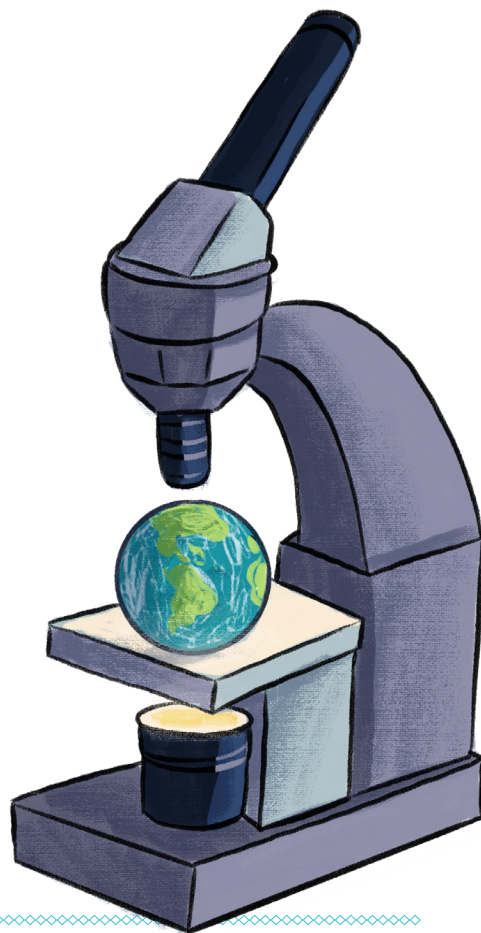
In this example from Lekh Lekha, "vayashkifu" describes the people who were looking down on Sedom, preparing to destroy it. According to Hazal, that's how this shoresh is normally used: to tell us that something bad is going to happen.

But in our parashah, "hashkifah" introduces God's blessing!

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE >>

Hazal explain that, in Ki Tavo, we're talking about the mitzvah of giving **מַעֲשֵׂר** (ma'aser, a tithe) to poor people. This mitzvah is so powerful that it can even turn a normally negative word into a source of blessing! So when we're giving tzedakah, God will look down upon us in a positive way.

- ♦ Why can the mitzvah of ma'aser be powerful enough to change bad things to good things?
- ♦ According to this midrash, some "lookings" are good and some are bad. What does it mean to look at something in a bad way, versus looking at it in a good way? How can we control the way we look at things? How can that change what we see?
- ♦ What are we praying for when we ask God to look upon us and Eretz Yisrael?



דְּבָרָה שֶׁל דִּיּוּן • One-Minute Debate

When we read the **תּוֹכְהָה** (tokhehah, rebuke) in shul this Shabbat, there are different customs. Some communities read those pesukim more quietly and quickly than others. But some communities read them normally.

Debate: We should read the tokhehah quietly.

How to play:

Here are some arguments to get you started, but try to come up with your own. Then debate someone!

For a true one-minute debate, give each side 30 seconds to make its best case.



Agree!

- ♦ The tokhehah can be hard to think about and imagine happening. You don't want to scare anybody!
- ♦ We have to read these pesukim because they're part of the Torah, but we have to find a way to show that these ideas make us sad.



Disagree!

- ♦ There's nothing to be afraid of. God wants to give us **בְּרָכוֹת** (berakhot, blessings).
- ♦ All pesukim in the Torah are equal, and they should be read equally.





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 questions 8 and 9 are harder and can come from anywhere in the parashah. The answer to question 10 is in this week's haftarah.**

aliyot:

- 1) Devarim 26:1 to 26:11
- 2) 26:12 to 26:15
- 3) 26:16 to 26:19
- 4) 27:1 to 27:10
- 5) 27:11 to 28:6
- 6) 28:7 to 28:69
- 7) 29:1 to 29:8

haftarah: Yeshayahu
60:1 to 60:22

Good luck!



1 What is the Hebrew word for basket?

2 What number year is said to be שְׁנַת הַמַּעֲסֵר (shenat ha-ma'aser, the year of the tithe)?

3 Where does God put you?

4 What kind of tool are you not allowed to use on the stones of the altar?

5 What secretive things are not allowed?

6 If God punishes the people and makes them return to Egypt, how would they get there?

7 During their 40 years in the wilderness, what did Benei Yisrael not drink?

8 What are the three times that baskets are mentioned in our parashah?

9 Which six tribes were responsible for representing the blessings when the people entered the land?

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10 **From the haftarah:**
What will be the hours of operation of the gates of Yerushalayim?



*
Look for the answers on page 8!



Throughout this year, we've learned basically all the vowels used with Hebrew letters. But look at the first line of this week's parashah, and you might see some vowels we haven't really talked about before:

אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ נִתֵּן לְךָ נַחֲלָה (דברים כו:א)

Which God your Lord is giving you as an inheritance (Devarim 26:1)

What are the vowels that look like a combination of a sheva and something else?

Introducing: the הַטָּפִים (hatafim)! These three types of vowels appear instead of a sheva when the letter above them can't get a sheva because it would be difficult or impossible to pronounce. This usually happens with the letters aleph, hei, het, and ayin. A hataf is easy to spot because it has a sheva as part of it! Here are examples from our parashah:

1

נַחֲלָה

(nahalah, inheritance)

הַטָּף פָּתַח (hataf patah) is pronounced like a patah. This one is the most common.

2

הַטָּף סֵגוֹל (hataf segol) is

pronounced like a segol. This one often appears when another segol is nearby.

הֵייתֶם

(heyitem, you were)

3

בְּאֹנִיּוֹת

(ba-oniyot, in boats)

הַטָּף קָמָץ (hataf kamatz) is pronounced like a kamatz katan.

Fun fact: When there is a joining vav before a hataf, it takes on the vowel sound of the hataf! Like in these cases from our parashah:

וְחֻלִּים

(va-holavim, and sicknesses)

וְהִשִּׁיבָה

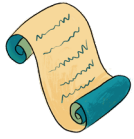
(ve-heshivkha, and return you)

וְאֲבוֹתֶיךָ

(va-avotekha, and your fathers)

Happy hataf hunting!





מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash

Moshe says something a little strange:

Devarim 29:3

But God did not give you a heart to know or eyes to see or ears to hear until this very day.



How could Moshe say they didn't have a heart or eyes or ears? And what changed on that day?

דברים כט:ג

וְלֹא נָתַן ה' לָכֶם לֵב לָדַעַת וְעֵינַיִם לִרְאוֹת וְאָזְנוֹת לִשְׁמָעַ עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה:

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

Rashi explains with a midrash he once learned:

Rashi (France, 1,000 years ago)

I learned that on the day that Moshe gave a Torah scroll to the Levi'im—as it is written, "And he gave it to the kohanim, sons of Levi" (Devarim 31:9)—all of Israel came before Moshe and said to him, "Moshe Rabbeinu (our teacher)! We also stood at Sinai and received the Torah and it was given to us! So why are you handing control over it to the people of your tribe? They could say to us in the future, 'It was not given to you; it was given to us.'"

And Moshe was happy about their request, and about this he said to them, "This very day you have become a people" (Devarim 27:9)—meaning: This very day I understood that you stick to God and want God!

רש"י

שִׁמְעָתִי שְׁאוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם שֶׁנָּתַן מֹשֶׁה סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה לְבְנֵי לֵוִי, כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב (דברים לא) "וַיִּתֶּנָּה אֶל הַכֹּהֲנִים בְּנֵי לֵוִי", בָּאוּ כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְנֵי מֹשֶׁה וְאָמְרוּ לוֹ מֹשֶׁה רַבֵּנוּ, אָף אֲנִי עִמָּדְנוּ בְּסִינַי וְקִבַּלְנוּ אֶת הַתּוֹרָה וְנִתְּנָה לָנוּ, וּמָה אַתָּה מְשַׁלֵּיט אֶת בְּנֵי שִׁבְטְךָ עָלֶיךָ וְיֹאמְרוּ לָנוּ יוֹם מִחָר לֹא לָכֶם נִתְּנָה, לָנוּ נִתְּנָה.

וְשִׁמַּח מֹשֶׁה עַל הַדְּבָר, וְעַל זֹאת אָמַר לָהֶם "הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה נִהְיִיתָ לְעָם", הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה הִבְנַתִּי שְׁאֲתָם דִּבְקִים וְחֻפְצִים בְּמָקוֹם.

According to this midrash, "this very day" was the day when Moshe finally saw that Benei Yisrael loved God and the Torah and wanted both for themselves.

- ♦ Why is this described as finally getting a heart and eyes and ears? What does this teach us about what a heart, eyes, and ears are for? How do hearts, eyes, and ears connect to desiring Torah and God?
- ♦ Why is it so important to make sure that every Jew feels they are connected to the Torah?





הַפְּטָרָה • Haftarah

This Shabbat we read a light-filled haftarah:

Yeshayahu 60:1-3

Rise up, shine, for your light has dawned;
The Presence of God has shone upon you!

Behold! Darkness will cover the earth,
And thick clouds the peoples;
But God will shine on you,
And God's Presence will be seen over you.

And nations shall walk by your light,
Kings, by your shining radiance.

ישעיהו ס:א-ג

קוּמִי אוֹרִי כִּי בָא אוֹרְךָ
וּכְבוֹד ה' עָלֶיךָ זָרַח:

כִּי הִנֵּה הַחֹשֶׁךְ יִכְסֶּה אֶרֶץ
וְעֲרַפֶּל לְאֻמִּים
וְעָלֶיךָ יִזְרַח ה' וּכְבוֹדוֹ עָלֶיךָ יִרְאֶה:

וְהָלְכוּ גוֹיִם לְאוֹרְךָ
וּמַלְכִּים לְנֹגַהּ זָרַחְךָ:

In these pesukim, light moves in a few directions: God is light, God's light shines on the Jewish people, and the Jewish people shine their light on the rest of the world.

Later in the haftarah, Yeshayahu talks about the Jewish people's bright future, when they will return to Yerushalayim from גָּלוּת (galut, exile). He says that Yerushalayim will no longer rely on the sun for its light, because God will be the source of light instead (Yeshayahu 60:19-20).

The idea of God as light also appears in Tehillim 27, which we've been adding to our tefillot each day since Rosh Hodesh Elul.

The opening line there is: ה' אוֹרִי וְיִשְׁעִי מִמִּי אֵיךְא – "God is my light and my help, whom should I fear?"

- ♦ What does light do for us? In what ways is God like light?
- ♦ In what ways can you be a light for others?

Parashah Scavenger Hunt Answers:

1. טֶנֶּא (tene) (26:2,4)
2. The third year (26:12). This refers to the tithe for the poor, known later on as מַעֲשֵׂר עֲנִי (ma'aser ani), and it is given in the third and sixth years of the seven-year shemittah cycle.
3. Up high! (16:19)
4. An iron tool (27:5)
5. Setting up an idol in secret (27:15), hitting another person in secret (27:24)
6. By boat (28:68)
7. Wine or other alcohol (29:5)
8. To hold בִּבְרִיִּים (bikkurim, first crops) (26:2), as part of a blessing (28:5), and as part of a curse (28:17)
9. Shimon, Levi, Yehudah, Yissakhar, Yosef, Binyamin (27:12)
10. Open 24 hours a day (Yeshayahu 60:11)

