



October 30 - November 5, 2022 ד' - י"א מְרֻדָּשׁוֹן תשפ"ג



קַה בַּפָּרָשָׁה • In This Week's Parashah

- ◆ God commands Avram to go from his home to a land God will show him.
- ◆ Avram and Sarai travel to אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן (Eretz Canaan, the land of Canaan) together with their nephew, Lot.
- ◆ Avram and Lot each own large herds of cattle, but their shepherds argue, so Lot decides to move to Sedom, which is a wicked city.
- ◆ A group of four kings, on one side, wages war against a group of five kings, on the other side. The four kings conquer Sedom and take Lot captive.
- ◆ Avram chases down the four kings, defeats their armies, and rescues Lot.
- ◆ God makes a special promise to Avram that he will have children as numerous as the stars in the sky, and they will inherit Eretz Canaan.
- ◆ Sarai has her servant, Hagar, marry Avram in order for them to have children together. Hagar and Avram have a son named Yishmael.
- ◆ God changes Avram's name to Avraham and gives him the mitzvah of בְּרִית מִילָה (brit milah, circumcision).
- ◆ God changes Sarai's name to Sarah and says the בְּרִית (brit, covenant) will continue through her own son.

(We'll call these two characters Avram and Sarai in all the parts of the story before their names are changed.)

Are we there yet?



פְּשֵׁט הַפְּסוּקִים • Understanding the Verses

God tells Avram that he will be protected and receive a great reward. But Avram still has questions. He knows he's getting old, and he doesn't have any children yet! God emphasizes that Avram **will** have children. Read what happens next:

Bereishit 15:5-6

God took him outside

and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them."

God said to him, "Your children will be like this."

And he had faith in God, and it was considered tzedakah.

בראשית טו:ה-ו

וַיּוֹצֵא אֱתוֹ הַחוּצָה

וַיֹּאמֶר הִבֵּט נָא הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וְסַפֵּר
הַכּוֹכָבִים אִם תּוּכַל לְסַפֵּר אֹתָם

וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ בַּה' יִהְיֶה זַרְעֲךָ:

וְהָאֱמוּן בַּה' וַיִּחְשְׁבֶהָ לוֹ צְדָקָה:

- ♦ Why does God take Avram outside to hear this promise? What's the connection between the stars and the promise?
- ♦ Imagine Avram standing under the vast, star-filled sky. How might he have felt?
- ♦ What could the last phrase mean, **וַיִּחְשְׁבֶהָ לוֹ צְדָקָה** (and it was considered tzedakah)? Who considered what to be tzedakah?
 - ♦ According to Rashi: God considered Avram's faith to be a kind of tzedakah.
 - ♦ According to Ha'amek Davar: Avram considered God's promise to be a kind of tzedakah.
- ♦ Does one of these seem more likely to you? Can there be more than one interpretation?

Before or after Shabbat,
scan to listen to a
discussion of these pesukim!
The Lekh Lekha episode of
TORAH TIME
will be live on
October 31, 2022.



מְדַרְשׁ • Midrash

What things frighten you? What do you think are some reasons to be scared?

In Lekh Lekha, God tells Avram not to be afraid.

Bereishit 15:1

Some time later, the word of God came to Avram in a vision. God said, "Fear not, Avram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great."

בראשית טו:א

אַחַר הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה הָיָה דְבַר
ה' אֶל אַבְרָם בְּמַחְזָה לֵאמֹר
אַל תִּירָא אַבְרָם
אֲנִי מִגֵּן לְךָ
שְׂכָרְךָ הִרְבֵּה מְאֹד:



What was making Avram scared?

Bereishit Rabbah

R. Levi said he was afraid that, in the battle he had just fought, he might have killed one innocent and God-fearing person...

The Rabbis give a different explanation. They say he was afraid because he said to himself, "God has already saved me from the kivshan ha-eish (fiery furnace), and God just saved me from this war, too. Is it possible that I've already received all of my reward in this world, and there won't be any reward left for me in the next world (after I die)?"

בראשית רבה מד:ה

רַבִּי לֵוִי אָמַר לְפִי שֶׁהָיָה אָבִינוּ
אַבְרָהָם מִתְּפִיחַד וְאוֹמֵר תֹּאמַר
אוֹתָן אֶכְלוּסִין שֶׁהִרְגֵתִי שֶׁהָיָה
בָּהֶם צְדִיק אֶחָד וִירָא שָׁמַיִם אֶחָד...

וּרְבִנָּן אָמְרֵי חֲדָא, לְפִי שֶׁהָיָה
אָבִינוּ אַבְרָהָם מִתְּפִיחַד וְאוֹמֵר
יְרֵדְתִי לְכַבֵּשׁ הָאֵשׁ וְנִצַּלְתִּי, יְרֵדְתִי
לְמַלְחָמַת הַמְּלָכִים וְנִצַּלְתִּי, תֹּאמַר
שֶׁנִּתְקַבְּלְתִּי שְׂכָרִי בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה וְאִין
לִי בְלוּם לְעַתִּיד לְבוּא?

- ◆ Both R. Levi and the Rabbis connect Avram's fear to the war that he just fought (and won). Do you think it's surprising that winning a war could make a person feel less confident, not more? Why or why not?
- ◆ What is scary about having possibly hurt an innocent person? How does it feel to be wondering if you might have accidentally done that? What is this midrash telling us about how we should look at war, even if it's a war we have to fight?
- ◆ What do you think about the idea that Avram is worried he might have "used up" all his reward? What might you tell him, if this is his fear?



פְּרָשְׁנוֹת • Commentary

After Sarai invited Hagar to marry Avram so that he could have a baby with her, Hagar became pregnant, and started looking down on Sarai. Sarai then treated Hagar harshly, and Hagar ran away. She met an angel on the way, and this pasuk tells us what he said to her.

Bereishit 16:11

The angel of God said to her,
"Behold, you are pregnant, and you will give birth to a son,
you will call him Yishmael,
for God has heard your suffering."

בראשית טז:יא

וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ מַלְאָךְ ה' הִנֵּה הָרָה וְיִלְדֶתָ בֵן וְקָרָאתָ שְׁמוֹ יִשְׁמָעֵאל כִּי שָׁמַע ה' אֶל עֲנִיָּה:

The name Yishmael connects the שְׁרָשׁ (shoresh, root) ש.מ.ע – which means to hear or listen – to a name of God.

Our פְּרָשְׁנִים (parshanim, commentators) wonder: **Why did God want to convey this message, that God listens? Who needed to know this?**

Ramban (Spain, 800 years ago)

He (the angel) told her (Hagar) that she should call him this, to help her remember that God heard her suffering.

רמב"ן

וַאֲמַר לָהּ שֶׁהִיא תִּקְרָאנוּ בֵּן, וְתִזְכֹּר כִּי שָׁמַע אֱלֹקִים אֶל עֲנִיָּה.

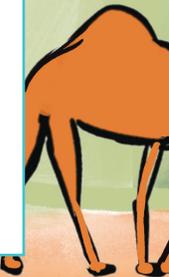
Malbim (Eastern Europe, 200 years ago)

The reason the angel told Hagar to name the baby Yishmael – because God has heard her suffering – was so that Sarah would understand that she should stop causing pain to Hagar.

מלבי"ם

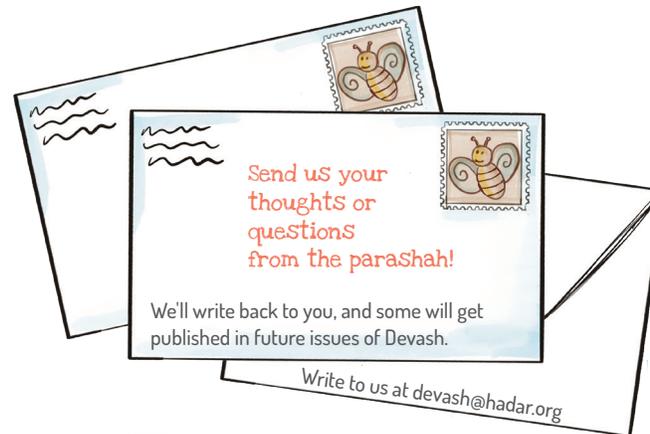
וְעַל זֶה אָמַר שֶׁתִּקְרָא שֵׁם הַבְּנוֹלָד יִשְׁמָעֵאל כִּי שָׁמַע ה' אֶל עֲנִיָּה, וְיִתֵּן בְּלִב שָׂרָה שְׁלֵא לַעֲנוֹתָה עוֹד.

According to Ramban, the message of the name was for Hagar. It aimed to comfort her and help her feel secure.



According to Malbim, the message of the name was for Sarai. It was to remind Sarai that God is paying attention - God heard about the pain caused to Hagar. It would make Sarai act more kindly.

- ◆ How does knowing that God is watching and listening help us act with more kindness?
- ◆ Before all this happened, the Torah tells us: וַתֵּרָא בִּי הָרְתָה וַתִּקַּל גְּבִרְתָּהּ בְּעֵינֶיהָ (Hagar saw she had become pregnant, and she took her mistress lightly; Bereishit 16:4). How might Yishmael's name affect how we understand this pasuk? How might Ramban explain this, and how might Malbim?





רְגַע שֶׁל עִבְרִית • A Moment of Hebrew

Bereishit 16:2

And Sarai said to Avram, "Look, God **has kept me** from giving birth. You marry my maidservant; perhaps I shall have a child through her." And Avram listened to Sarai's voice.

בראשית טז:ב

וַתֹּאמֶר שָׂרַי אֶל אַבְרָם הִנֵּה נָא עֲצָרְנִי ה' מִלֵּדֶת בְּאֵן נָא אֶל שִׁפְחָתִי אוֹלִי אֲבִנָּה מִמֶּנָּה וַיִּשְׁמַע אַבְרָם לְקוֹל שָׂרַי:

לְעֲצֹר (שָׂרַשׁ ע.צ.ר.)

- To stop or block (la'atzor)

= מַעְצֹר
Brake (ma'atzor)




= תַּמְרוּר עֲצֹר
Stop sign (tamrur atzor)

 = עִצּוּר
Consonant (itzur)



 = עוֹצֵר
Curfew (otzer)

= עֲצֵרֶת
1. Assembly, rally
2. Another name for Shavuot (atzeret)



Find the Word!

In the second paragraph of Shema, we say pesukim where God warns Benei Yisrael about what could happen if they worship other gods. Their punishment would include blocking the sky so that rain can't fall. Can you find the word from this שָׂרַשׁ (shoresh, root), that says this? (Hint: Look at Shema in a Siddur, or in Devarim 11.)

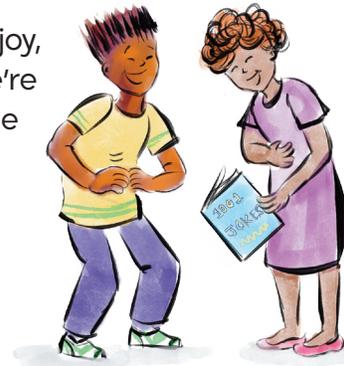


בואו נדבר על זה • Tell Me More About This!

Names in Tanakh are often important, as we saw with Yishmael (p. 5). In Lekh Lekha we also hear about Yitzhak's upcoming birth. His name connects to his parents' laughter when they found out he would be born.

There are many kinds of laughter. Sometimes we laugh out of joy, or because something is funny. Sometimes we laugh when we're nervous. Laughter can also be hurtful, like laughing at someone to show you don't take them seriously or to embarrass them.

Here are pesukim where Avraham and Sarah laugh about Yitzhak's birth. **How do you understand their laughter? What emotions can you detect?**



Bereishit 17:17

Avraham fell down on his face and **laughed**. He said to himself, "Can a child be born to a man 100 years old, or can Sarah give birth at 90?!"

בראשית יז:יז

וַיִּפֹּל אַבְרָהָם עַל פָּנָיו וַיִּצְחַק וַיֹּאמֶר
בְּלִבּוֹ הֲלֵבֶן מֵאָה שָׁנָה יוֹלֵד וְאִם
שָׂרָה הִבֵּת תִּשְׁעִים שָׁנָה תֵּלֵד:

- ◆ God responds to this by telling Avraham that the baby will be named Yitzhak (because of Avraham's laughter). What do you think Avraham's laughter meant?

Next week, in Vayera, we'll read about Sarah's reaction to the news. **Look it up: Bereishit 18:12-15.** Sarah laughs, then God asks her why she's laughing, she denies that she laughed, but God insists: Yes, you did laugh.



- ◆ What can God's reaction tell you about the meaning of Sarah's laughter? How might it have been different from Avraham's laughter?

Finally, right after Yitzhak is born:

Bereishit 21:6

Sarah said, "God has brought me **laughter**; everyone who hears will **laugh**."

בראשית כא:ו

וַתֹּאמֶר שָׂרָה צָחַק עָשָׂה לִי אֱלֹקִים
כָּל הַשְּׂמֵעַ יִצְחַק לִי:

- ◆ The Hebrew is a little hard to understand. We don't know if Sarah is happy that people will laugh with her, or nervous that people will laugh at her. How does each one change the way we see Sarah's laughter?
- ◆ Which aspects of laughter do you think Yitzhak represents?



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) Bereishit 12:1 to 12:13
- 2) 12:14 to 13:4
- 3) 13:5 to 13:18
- 4) 14:1 to 14:20
- 5) 14:21 to 15:6
- 6) 15:7 to 17:6
- 7) 17:7 to 17:27

Haftarah: Yeshayahu 40:27 to 41:16



Good luck!

1 How is Avram related to Lot?

2 What Hebrew words does the Torah use to describe Avram as having been very rich?

3 In this aliyah, God tells Avram he will have many descendants. As many as what?

4 What body of water is mentioned in this aliyah?

5 What does Avram agree to take from the king of Sedom?

6 How long will Avram's descendants be enslaved in a foreign land, according to what God says?

7 What does Avraham do right after God tells him that Sarai will become Sarah, and will give birth to a child?

8 Who is described as a כֹּהֵן (kohen, priest) in this week's parashah?

9 What is the name of the place where God speaks to Hagar, and why did it have this name?

10 **From the Haftarah:** Who does God describe as אֹהֲבִי (ohavi, My beloved one, or My friend)?

*
Look for the answers on page 11!





דְּקָה נְשׁוּל דִּיּוּן • 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.



Debate: Moving to a new place is an exciting adventure.



Agree!

- ◆ It can really open your mind. When you live in a new place, and you see how different people do things, you can become more understanding and wise.
- ◆ Life can get boring if you stay in one place. People have set expectations of you. Moving to a new place can be a chance to start new.
- ◆ If you bring along some friends and family from your old place, you get the best of both worlds! (That's what Avraham and Sarah did.)

Disagree!

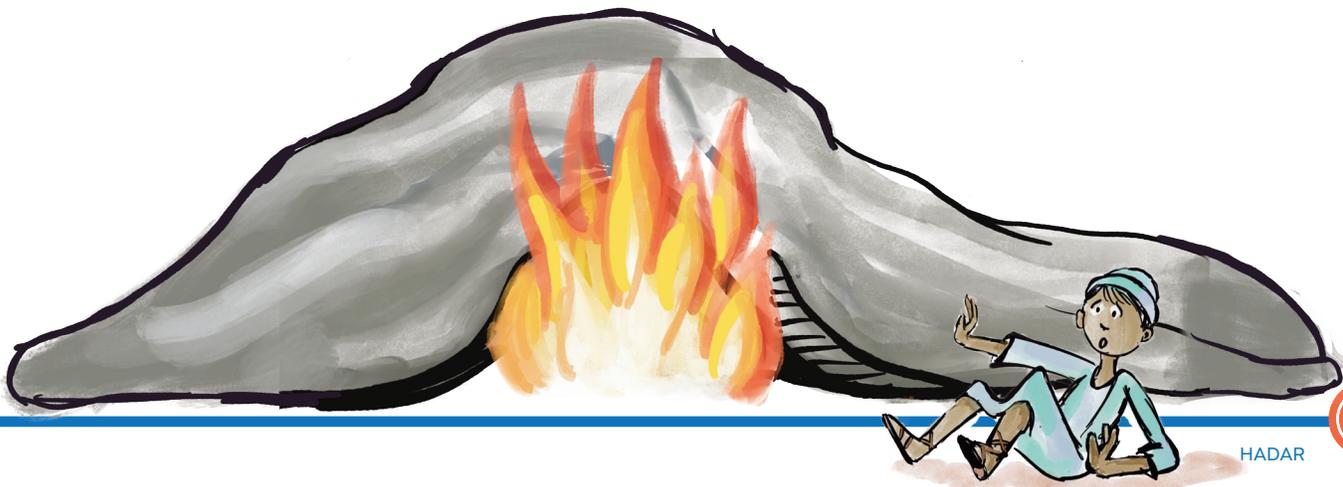
- ◆ Who wants to leave behind the people and places they care about? It can be really hard to adjust to a new place and make new friends.
- ◆ Moving is such a schlep. Your house is full of boxes, and things always end up getting lost. It's much easier to stay where you are.



בּוֹאוּ וְנִדְבֶר עַל זֶה • Tell Me More About This!

In our Midrash section (p. 3), Avram mentioned that God had saved him from the **כִּבְשָׁן הָאֵשׁ** (kivshan ha-eish, fiery furnace). What's this?

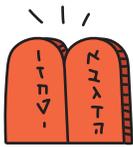
Bereishit Rabbah (38:13) tells a story about Avram's father, Terah, accusing his son of destroying all his idols. Terah brings Avram to Nimrod, who was the king



at the time. Nimrod decides to punish Avram by throwing him into a fiery furnace. But God comes to the rescue - a miracle happens, and Avram is saved!

This story connects to Sefer Daniel (chapter 3), where King Nevuhudnezzar throws Daniel's companions (Hananyah, Misha'el, and Azaryah) into a נֹרָא יְקִידָא (nura yakid'ta, fiery furnace in Aramaic). They are saved by an angel, identified in later tradition as Gavriel.

- ◆ How does it change your understanding of Avraham if his backstory—before we meet him in the Torah—is that he stood up to a king and was saved by God?



הַלְכָה • Halakhah

Name Changes

In Lekh Lekha, Sarai becomes Sarah, and Avram becomes Avraham. These changes are set in motion directly by God, and are meant to set these two up for leadership of a new people. But did you know that there is a long Jewish tradition of people changing their own names for other reasons?

One of the scariest things in life is to get very sick. We are lucky today to be able to use our knowledge about the human body and medicine to help people. But we can't fix everything, and this was even more true in the past, when medical science was more limited. So, we also pray for those who are sick, and ask God to send them healing. You may be familiar with this from special prayers said during the Torah reading for people in the community who are in need of healing. Here is how Rema (R. Moshe Isserles, Poland, 500 years ago) describes that practice:



Rema Yoreh Deah 335:10

...And it is the practice to bless those who are sick in the synagogue, **and to give them a new name**, because changing a person's name tears up their prior fate.

רמ"א יורה דעה שלה:י

...וְכֵן נִהְיָ לְבָרֵךְ חוֹלִים בְּבֵית
הַפְּנִיטָה, לְקַרְא לָהֶם שֵׁם חָדָשׁ, בִּי
שְׁנוּי הַשֵּׁם קוֹרֵעַ גְּזֵר דְּיָנֹו.

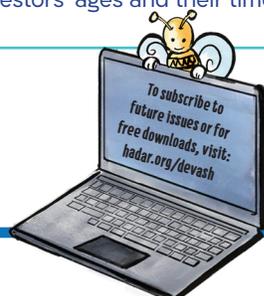
Wow! We see here that sometimes, when people were really sick, communities didn't just pray for them, they gave them a whole new name! The Talmud (Rosh Hashanah 16b) says that getting a new name helps a person start over; they can now think of themselves almost as being a new person. Some famous rabbis went through this process. The author of the Kli Yekar commentary on the Torah was born named Efrayim, but after he got deathly ill, he changed his name to Shlomo Efrayim—and recovered! He went by this new name for the rest of his life.

Do you know anyone who has changed their name midway through life? What were they trying to accomplish when doing that?



Parashah Scavenger Hunt Answers:

1. Lot is Avram's nephew (his brother's son) (12:5)
2. קָבֵד מְאֹד (kaveid me'od, literally: very heavy) (13:2)
3. The dust of the earth (13:16)
4. יַם הַמֵּלַח (Yam Ha-Melah, The Dead Sea) (14:3)
5. Neither string nor shoelace (or any of the spoils of war, except for what was needed to feed the people who fought with him) (14:23–24)
6. 400 years (15:13) (But if you do the calculations (based on our ancestors' ages and their time in Egypt according to the Torah), it seems that Benei Yisrael actually end up in slavery for 210 years!)
7. Falls on his face laughing (17:17)
8. Malkitzedek (14:18)
9. Be'er Lahai Ro'i, which means "the well of the Living One Who sees me." This name seems to capture Hagar's experience of being seen, or noticed, by God. (16:14)
10. Avraham (Yeshayahu 41:8)



For support teaching this and other texts in your school, check out PoP! hadar.org/pop





תפילה • Prayer in the Parashah

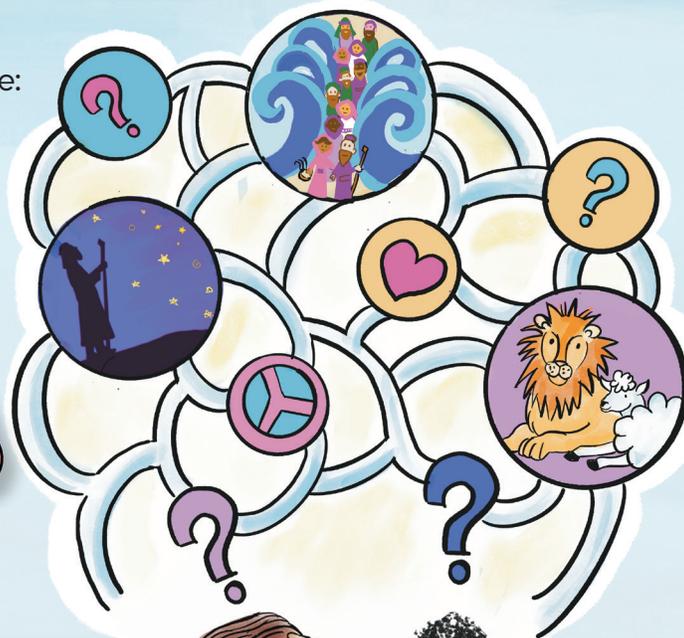
At the end of the first בְּרָכָה (berakhah, blessing) of the Amidah, we describe God as מָגֵן אַבְרָהָם (magen Avraham, shield of Avraham). If you've wondered where this description comes from, the answer is: Parashat Lekh Lekha! Here, God says (Bereishit 15:1):

“אַל תִּירָא אַבְרָם אֲנִי מָגֵן לְךָ”

“Don't fear, Avram, I am a magen (shield) for you”

These words describe God's promise to protect Avram. But if you keep reading the story, you see that Avram has a hard time believing God's promise.

Avram says things like:



“God, You promised me a land, but how do I **really** know I'll get it?” (Bereishit 15:8)

“God, You told me I'd have lots of children, but I don't see any...” (Bereishit 15:2-3)



Even after his questions and doubts, though, Avram eventually finds faith in God. The Torah tells this to us with these words (Bereishit 15:6): וַיִּהְיֶה אֱמִן בַּיהוָה (ve-he'emin ba-Hashem).

When we say “magen Avraham” in the Amidah, we can remember what Avram did with his questions and his struggles. He brought them directly to God, and that seemed to help him find a closer connection to God. In tefillah, we can try that too.

Sometimes it can be hard to believe in promises from God, or promises about God. Do you ever feel like Avram felt?