

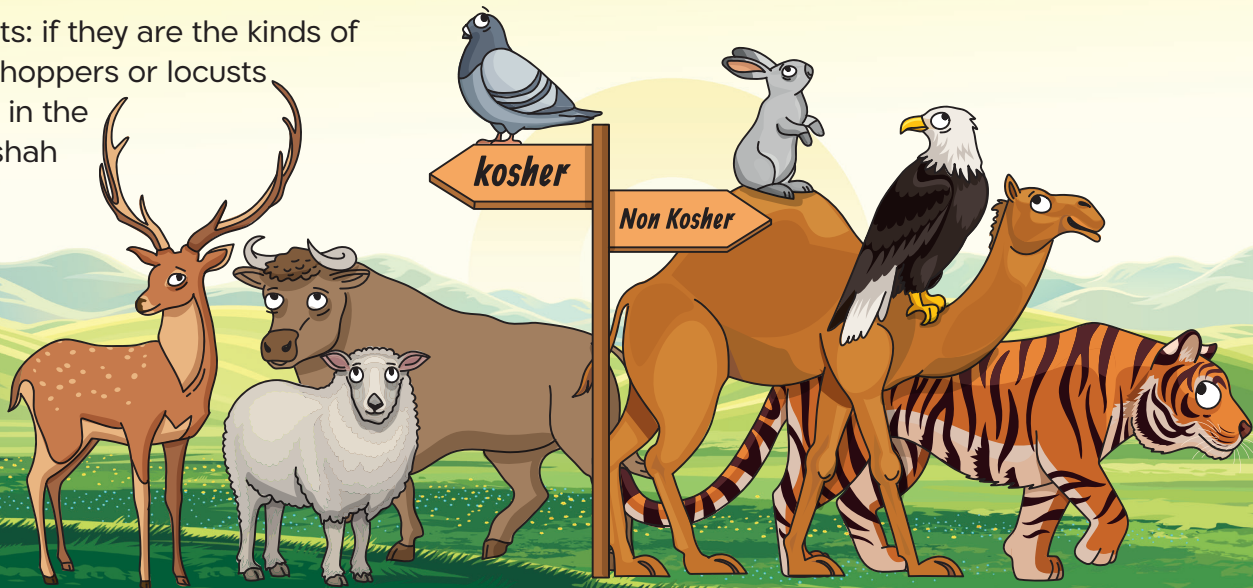


י"ז - כ"ג אדר ב' תשפ"ב March 20 - 26, 2022



מה בפָּרָשָׁה • In This Week's Parashah

- ◆ Shemini means eighth, and it refers to the day after the seven days of מְלוּאִים (milluim, inauguration) that we learned about in last week's parashah. It is the first day of the regular routine of using the mishkan.
- ◆ Aharon prepares קֶרְבָּנוֹת (korbanot, sacrifices), and he blesses בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (Benei Yisrael, the Israelites).
- ◆ A fire from God consumes the korbanot! This is a powerful sign of God's presence. Seeing this, all the people sing out and bow down.
- ◆ Nadav and Avihu, two of Aharon's sons, bring a "strange fire" before God. They are consumed by fire. When Aharon finds out, he is silent.
- ◆ God teaches the rules about which animals are kosher:
 - ◆ Land mammals: if they have split hooves and chew their food more than once
 - ◆ Fish: if they have fins and scales
 - ◆ Birds: the Torah lists around 20 birds that are not kosher, so any bird not on the list is, in theory, kosher
 - ◆ Insects: if they are the kinds of grasshoppers or locusts listed in the parashah





מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash

Midrashim are ideas or stories that explain the Torah. They often come from listening very carefully to what the Torah says and how it says it. Here, we will look for what clues this midrash sees in the Torah's words, and try to understand its messages.



Vayikra 10:1-2

Aharon's sons, Nadav and Avihu, each took his fire pan, put fire in it, and placed spices on it. They offered before God a strange fire, which God had not commanded them.

Fire came forth from God and consumed them; they died before God.

ויקרא י:א-ב

וַיִּקְחוּ בְנֵי-אַהֲרֹן נָדָב וַאֲבִיהוּא אֵשׁ מִחֻמָּתוֹ וַיִּתְּנוּ בָהֶן אֵשׁ וַיִּשִּׂימוּ עָלֶיהָ קִטְרֶת וַיִּקְרִיבוּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֵשׁ זָרָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא צִוָּה אֹתָם:

וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי ה' וַתֹּאכַל אוֹתָם וַיָּמָתוּ לִפְנֵי ה':

This is a sad story. It's also a confusing one because it's not clear what exactly Nadav and Avihu did wrong. This midrash looks closely at the first words of the pasuk to offer an explanation:

Sifra Mekhilta de-Milluim 2

When they saw the new fire from God, they got excited and tried to add even more love.

"Each took"—the word "taking" indicates joy.

Since it says "Nadav and Avihu," why does it also say **"Aharon's sons"**? To teach us that they did not honor Aharon.

"Nadav and Avihu"—these words teach us that they did not ask Moshe's permission, either.

"His fire pan"—these words teach us that each one acted on his own, and they did not even consult each other.

ספרא

כִּיִּן שָׂרְאוּ אֵשׁ חֲדָשָׁה עֲמָדוֹ לְהוֹסִיף אֶהְבֶּה עַל אֶהְבֶּה.

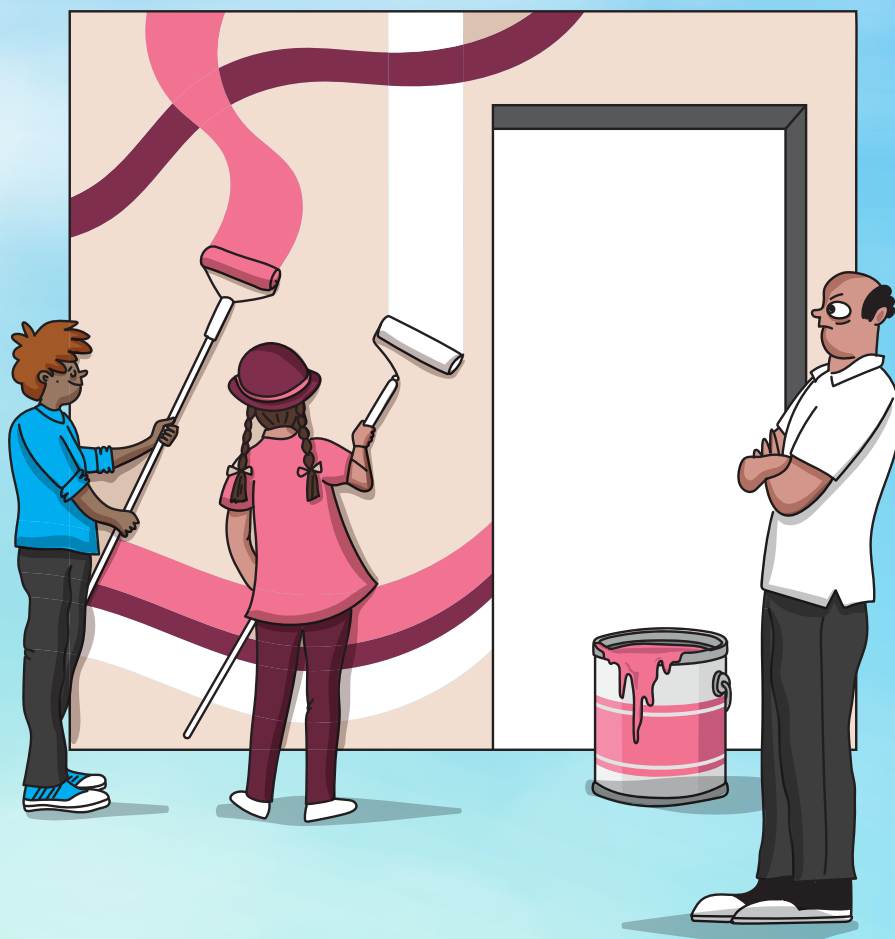
"וַיִּקְחוּ" – אֵין 'קִיחָה' אֶלָּא שְׂמֻחָה.

"נָדָב וַאֲבִיהוּ" – מָה תִּלְמוּד לומר **"בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן"**? שֶׁלֹּא חִלְקוּ כְבוֹד לְאַהֲרֹן.

"נָדָב וַאֲבִיהוּ" – לֹא נָטְלוּ עֶצֶה מִמֹּשֶׁה.

"אֵשׁ מִחֻמָּתוֹ" – אֵישׁ מַעֲצָמוֹ יֵצֵאוּ וְלֹא נָטְלוּ עֶצֶה זֶה מִזֶּה.

- ◆ According to this midrash, Nadav and Avihu had the right intentions. They were feeling joy and love. But that wasn't enough; they still acted in the wrong way. Can good intentions sometimes make up for wrong behavior? In what kinds of situations?
- ◆ The midrash seems to be saying that Nadav and Avihu should have shown more respect to their father, Aharon, and done a better job of asking permission from Moshe and even thinking through their decision with each other more carefully. Why do you think respect, permission, and checking with each other were particularly important in this story? When do you need permission or advice, and when can you act without them?



פְּרָשְׁנוֹת • Commentary

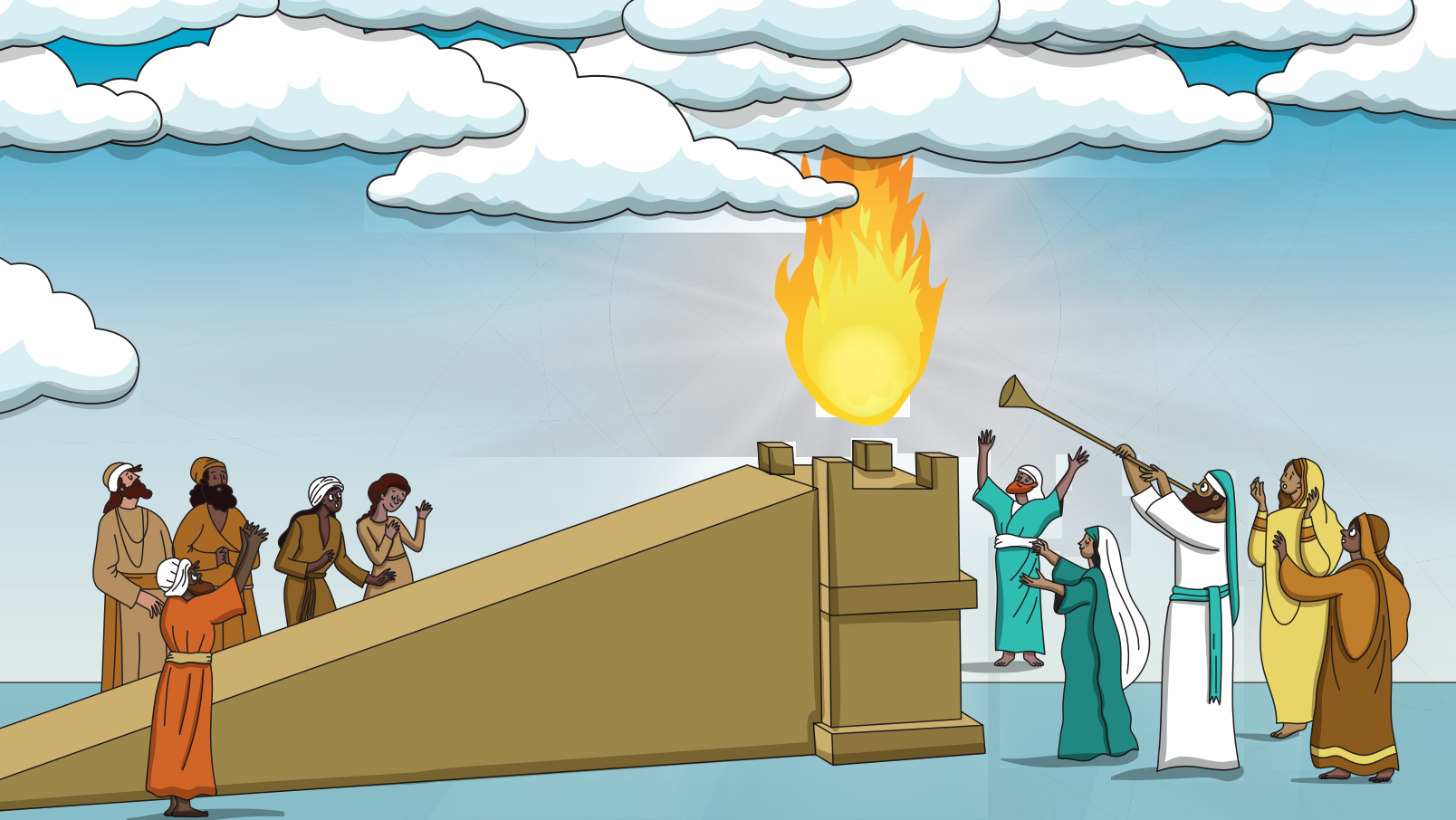
Aharon and his sons are finally ready to take charge of the work in the מִשְׁכָּן (mishkan, sanctuary for God in the wilderness). They offer many קִרְבָּנוֹת (korbanot, sacrifices) on the מִזְבֵּיחַ (mizbei'ah, altar), for the first time ever. The story comes to an exciting, fiery climax:

Vayikra 9:24

Fire came forth from God and consumed the sacrifice and the fat parts on the altar. All the people saw, and sang out, and bowed down.

ויקרא ט:כד

וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי ה' וַתֹּאכַל עַל-
הַמִּזְבֵּיחַ אֶת-הָעֹלָה וְאֶת-הַחֲלָבִים
וַיֵּרָא כָּל-הָעָם וַיִּרְאוּ וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל-פְּנֵיהֶם:



Our פְּרָשָׁנִים (parshanim, commentators) wonder about the fire in this pasuk. When the Torah says “fire came forth,” where did it come from?

Rashbam (France, 950 years ago)

This fire came **from the holiest part of the mishkan**. It traveled past the golden altar, where it burnt up the incense, which was always offered before the daily sacrifice. At the golden altar, the fire found the sons of Aharon and consumed them. Then the fire moved to the altar in the courtyard of the mishkan.

רשב"ם

מִבֵּית קֹדֶשׁ הַקֹּדְשִׁים דֶּרֶךְ
מִזְבֵּחַ הַזָּהָב לְהַקְטִיר קֶטֶרֶת,
שֶׁהוּא קֹדֶם לְהַקְטִיר תָּמִיד...
וְשֶׁם מָצָא בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן אֶצֶל
מִזְבֵּחַ הַזָּהָב וּשְׂרָפָם, וְאַחֲרָיִם
כֶּף יֵצֵא וּבָא לוֹ עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ.

Sifra Mekhilta de-Milluim 2 (Eretz Yisrael, 1,800 years ago)

When the people saw a new fire **descending from the sky** and lapping up the sacrifice and the fats on the altar, they opened their mouths in song.

ספרא

בֵּינוֹן שָׂרְאוּ אֵשׁ חֲדָשָׁה שִׁירָדָה
מִשָּׁמַי מְרוֹם וְלַחֲכָה עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ
אֶת הָעֹלָה וְאֶת הַחֲלָבִים –
פְּתָחוּ פִּיהֶם וְאָמְרוּ שִׁירָה.

Rashbam thinks one fire did two opposite things: one really upsetting (consuming Nadav and Avihu), and one really wonderful (consuming the sacrifices). Did you notice that the Torah uses the exact same words ("fire came forth") in connection to both of these (9:24 and 10:2)? This is what Rashbam is noticing, and that's why he thinks it was really one fire.

The Sifra thinks there was a special fire that came straight from heaven to consume Aharon's sacrifices. This must have been a really awesome thing to see! Can you find evidence that this is what happened?

- ◆ When you read the story, which interpretation do you find more meaningful? Which makes more sense for the parashah? Why?



הלכה • Halakhah

What makes a fish kosher?

Our parashah teaches that fish that have fins and scales are kosher (Vayikra 11:9).

Fish is Pareve

The main categories in kashrut are meat and dairy. We keep these apart, using separate dishes and utensils for each.

Where does fish fit in? It's not dairy. And even though fish are animals, Jewish law doesn't treat fish like meat. Fish is actually placed in the pareve category—neither meat nor dairy—along with fruits and vegetables, bread, water, and things like that.

Like all pareve foods, fish can be eaten on meat dishes or on dairy dishes.

Fish and Meat

Still, the Gemara says that you shouldn't eat fish and meat together, mainly due to various health concerns (Pesachim 76b). Based on this, the Shulhan



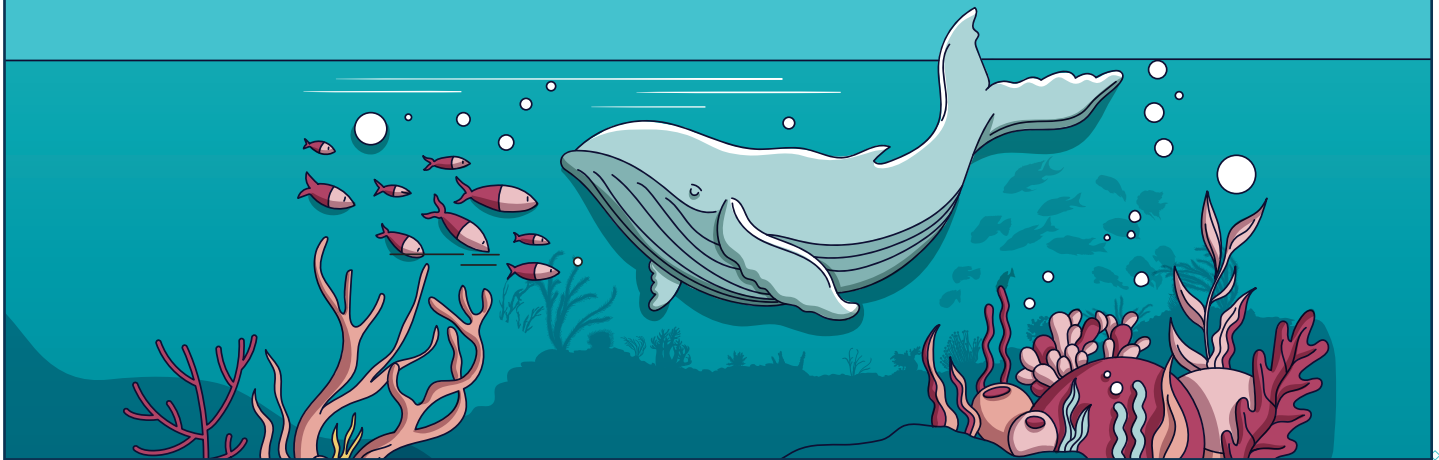
Arukh says that fish and meat may not be eaten together (Yoreh De'ah 116).

However, the Magen Avraham (173:2) observes that eating fish and meat together doesn't seem to be dangerous today, and suggests that things might have changed. Many halakhic authorities, though, believe that the law of the Gemara remains even if there is no known danger. So, while people don't really have separate dishes for fish and meat, and will even eat them at the same meal, you will often see people eat them separately and

not use the same fork, knife, or plate for both (unless they have been cleaned).

Fish and Dairy

Beit Yosef (Yoreh De'ah 87) says you should not eat fish together with dairy. However, most commentaries (Darkhei Moshe, Shakh) say this is based on a mistake, and that the Gemara's warning only applies to fish and meat together. Pass the tuna melt, please!



רָגַעַ נָשֶׁל עִבְרִית • A Moment of Hebrew

Vayikra 9:21

And Aharon **elevated** the animals' breasts and right thighs, as an **elevation offering** before God—as Moshe had commanded.

לְהַנִּיף (שָׂרַשׁ נ.ו.פ.)



◆ To raise or lift up
(le-hanif)

ויקרא ט:כא

וְאֵת הַחֲזוֹת וְאֵת שׁוֹק הַיָּמִין
הַנִּיף אַהֲרֹן תְּנוּפָה לִפְנֵי ה'
בְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה מֹשֶׁה:





דְּבָרָה שֶׁל 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 "true" or "false" sides.
- ◆ Each side gets 30 seconds to make their case.
- ◆ At the end, the group votes on a winner.

Debate: you are what you eat.

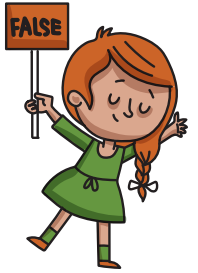


True!

- ◆ Eating healthy makes you healthy, and eating junk food is not good for you. Pretty simple!
- ◆ Spinach made Popeye strong.

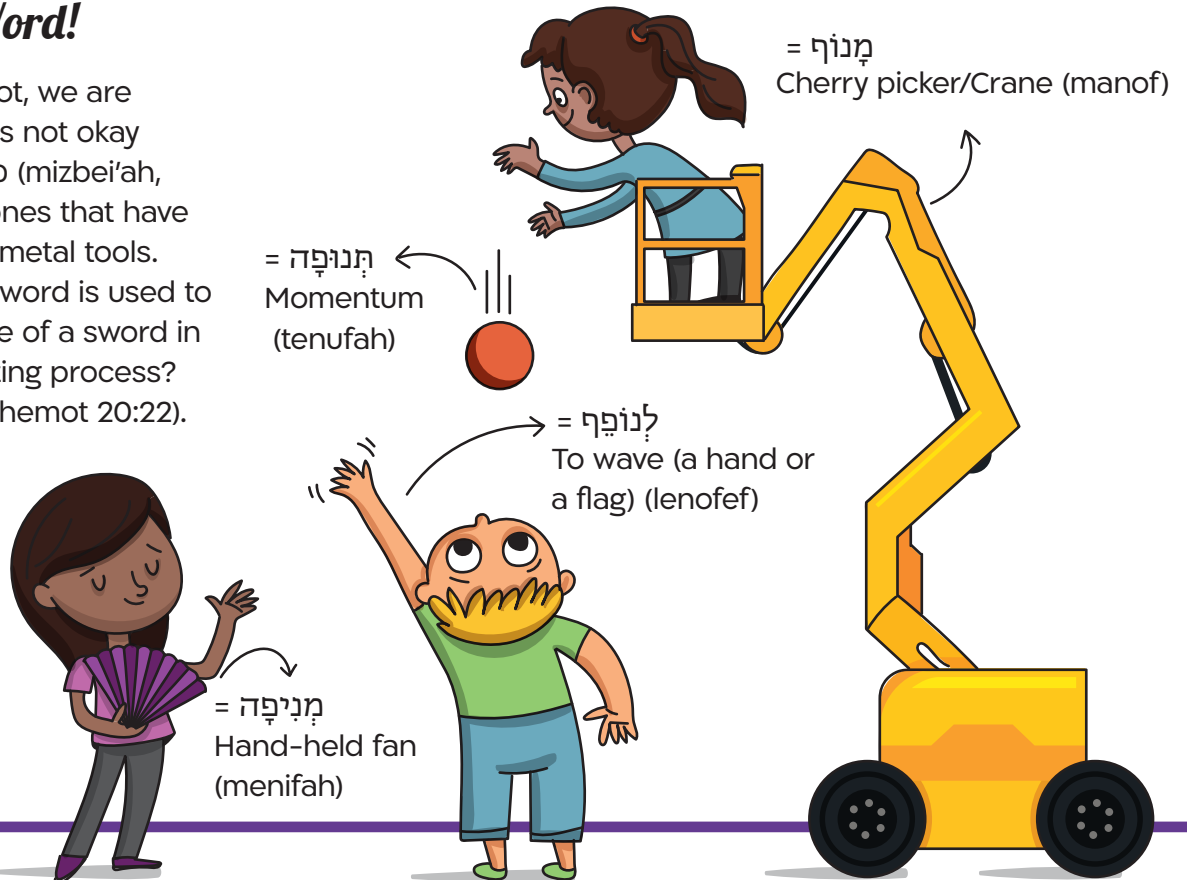
False!

- ◆ If you eat a banana, you don't actually become a banana!
- ◆ Any food is ok in moderation (as long as it's kosher).



Find the Word!

In Sefer Shemot, we are warned that it's not okay to build a מִזְבֵּי'אֵחַ (mizbei'ah, altar) using stones that have been cut with metal tools. What Hebrew word is used to explain the role of a sword in the stone-cutting process? (Hint: look at Shemot 20:22).





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) Vayikra 9:1 to 9:16
- 2) 9:17 to 9:23
- 3) 9:24 to 10:11
- 4) 10:12 to 10:15
- 5) 10:16 to 10:20
- 6) 11:1 to 11:32
- 7) 11:33 to 11:47

Good luck!

1 What word for a daily prayer appears in our parashah?

2 Can you find the name of a מַכָּה (makkah, plague) from Egypt in our parashah?

3 What rule did God give the כֹּהֲנִים (kohanim, priests) after Nadav and Avihu died?

4 What were the names of Aharon's sons that stayed alive?

5 What didn't Aharon do that Moshe told him to do?

6 In terms of kashrut, how is a חֲזִיר (hazir, pig) different from a גָּמָל (gamal, camel), a שָׂפָן (shafan, rock hyrax), and an אֲרֶנֶבֶת (arnevet, rabbit)?



7 If someone touched a נֶבֶלָה (nevelah, kosher animal that died on its own), how long were they טָמֵא (tamei, impure)?

8 What 4-word phrase appears twice in the third aliyah?

9 How many types of birds are listed in our parashah as forbidden to eat?

10 What's the difference in meaning between תִּטְמְאוּ and תִּטְמְאוּ?

*
Look for the answers on page 12!



קְרִיאַת הַתּוֹרָה • Torah Reading

Do you know how many words there are in the Torah? 79,980. That's a lot of words! How did they ever count them? In our parashah, if you look in many Humashim, you will see the following note, marking the middle of the Torah:

Vayikra 10:16

Moshe was inquiring,* and inquired

*Halfway point of words in the Torah

ויקרא י:טז
דָּרַשׁ * דָּרַשׁ
חֲצִי הַתּוֹרָה בְּתַבּוּת

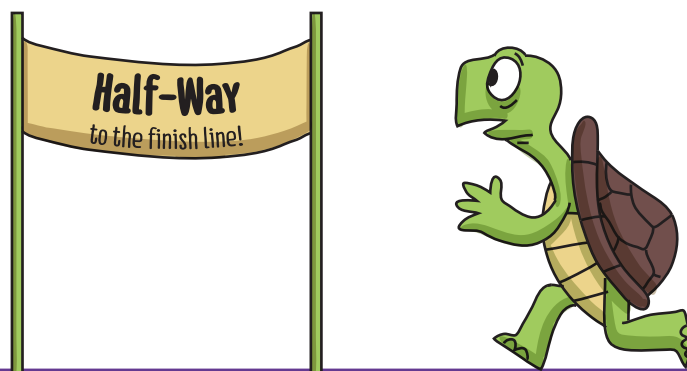
This note is based on the Talmud (Kiddushin 30a), where it says that if you count up all the words in the Torah and divide them in half, you'll find that the exact middle of the Torah lies right in between these two very similar words in our parashah.

These words are talking about Moshe inquiring what happened to one of the goats that was offered as a sacrifice on the day that the mishkan became fully functional for the first time. Pretty amazing that the middle point of the Torah would be between two nearly identical words, right? And pretty cool that those words are about seeking and asking questions, exactly what we do when we study Torah!

There's only one problem: if you count all the words of the Torah yourself, you'll see that the midpoint of words is actually somewhere else! (It's the word יְסוֹד [yesod, base] in Vayikra 8:15).

R. Yitzhak Zilber suggested that there are 89 times in the Torah when two words with the same spelling appear back-to-back, and this is number 45 of those, right in the middle!

This is a special moment in the middle of the Torah for us to think about how much we have already learned and how we have just as much left to go.





בואו נדבר על זה • Tell Me More About This!

Parashat Shemini is our introduction to the laws of kashrut. You might wonder: why does God care what we eat or don't eat? What logic could there be behind these mitzvot? Who are we hurting by eating an animal that wasn't slaughtered according to Jewish law?

These questions are not new—and there are many different ways of answering them. Here's how Rav thought about it:

Bereishit Rabbah 44:1

Rav said: The mitzvot were only given to refine people.

For otherwise, why should the Holy One care whether an animal is slaughtered from the front or the back of the neck?!

בראשית רבה מד:א

רב אמר לא נתנו המצוות אלא לצַרֵּף
בָּהֶן אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת, וְכִי מָה אֵיכָפֶת לִי
לְהַקְדֹּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְמִי שְׁשׁוּחֵט מִן
הַצִּוָּאר אוֹ מִי שְׁשׁוּחֵט מִן הָעֶרֶף.

According to Rav, the point of kashrut—and all the mitzvot in general—is to make people refined. The word “refine” here refers to a process in making metal where foreign particles and things that cause contamination are removed from a metal, to make it more pure.

So, it may be true that the details of the mitzvot don't really matter. They are important because God knows that they will make us more pure—both by making us better people, and by practicing our devotion to God in a way that shows attention to detail.



Send us your thoughts or questions from learning the parashah. We'll write back to you, and some will get published in future issues of Devash!
Write to us at devash@hadar.org

- ◆ Do you think the practice of kashrut really improves people's character?
- ◆ When have you felt that a behavior or an action “refined” you, made you better?





מי היו חכמינו • Who Were Our Sages?

In this week's Devash, we quoted the same book twice: **the Sifra**, in both the **פירוש/מדרש**/Midrash (p. 2) and **פירושנות**/Parshanut (p. 3) sections. What is it?

The name Sifra means "scroll" in Aramaic, similar to the Hebrew word סֵפֶר (sefer, scroll or book). Another name for it is **תורת כהנים** (Torat Kohanim, rules for priests), because it is a commentary on the book of Vayikra, which mostly deals with the laws of kohanim and **קרבנות** (korbanot, sacrifices).

We don't really know who composed the Sifra, but it's associated with **Rabbi Akiva** and his students. Rabbi Akiva was famous for his optimistic way of looking at the world. When he and some of his colleagues came to the ruins of the **בית המקדש** (Beit Ha-Mikdash, Temple in Jerusalem), everyone else cried for the destroyed Temple—but Rabbi Akiva laughed! Why? Because, through creative thinking, he was able to see through the tragedy to the hope of a Beit Ha-Mikdash restored (Makkot 24b).





מה קורה • What's Going On Here?

One of the non-kosher birds that the Torah lists is called חַסִידָה (hasidah). What's the meaning behind this bird's name?

Rabbi Yehudah explains that it is a white stork, and that it has this name since it does חֶסֶד (hesed, acts of kindness) for other birds (Talmud Bavli Hullin 63a). Rashi explains that the hesed is sharing its food with its friends.

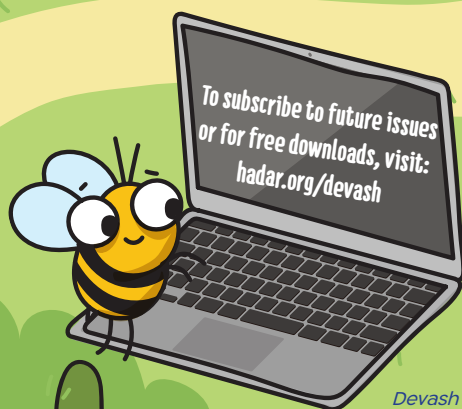
R. Yitzhak Meir Alter (Poland, 200 years ago) wondered: if a stork does kindness, why would it not be kosher?

He suggested that perhaps it's because, according to Rashi, that kindness is extended only to its friends. It's nice to share food with friends, but we have to learn to share even with those who aren't yet our friends.



Parashah Scavenger Hunt Answers:

1. מִנְחָה (minhah, a grain sacrifice and also the name for our afternoon prayer service) (9:4 and also 9:17, 10:12)
2. דָּם (dam, blood) (9:18 and also 9:9, 9:12)—also later, in the 6th aliyah, אֲרֵבָה (arbeh, locusts) (11:22)
3. Don't drink wine or other alcohol before entering the אוֹהֶל מוֹעֵד (ohel mo'ed, tent of meeting) (9:9)
4. Elazar and Itamar (10:12)
5. Eat the חַטָּאת (hattat, sin offering), instead, he burned it (10:16-18)
6. It DOES have split hooves, but it DOESN'T chew its food more than once (11:4-7)
7. Until nightfall (11:39)
8. וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי ה' (fire came forth from God; 9:24 and 10:2)
9. 20 (11:13-19)
10. To become impure (11:43) versus to make impure (11:44)



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