

# THE KTM DAF PARASHA

## BRINGING A TASTE OF ISRAEL TO MONTREAL



### EXCORCIZING THE GHOST OF MIDIAN

BY RAV ARI FAUST (ROSH KOLLEL)

Few scenes in the Torah are as emotionally charged as Yosef's descent into the pit. The brothers' rage boils over; they strip him of his ketonet pasim and throw him into a pit. Their intent is chillingly clear - there can be but one outcome of abandoning their brother in a dry pit in the desert.

Then something unexpected happens, a caravan of Yishmaelite merchants appears. Yehudah suggests a more palatable path (Bereishit 35:25-27): "What gain is there if we kill our brother and cover his blood?" Yehudah suggests selling their brother instead of killing him. And so it would seem: Yosef is sold. End of story.

Except...it isn't so simple.

When Yosef later reveals himself in Egypt, he attributes the sale directly to his brothers (Bereishit 45:4): "I am Yosef, your brother, whom you sold to Egypt". Yet in our parasha, the Torah presents a puzzle (37:38):

וַיַּעֲבְרוּ אֲנָשִׁים מִדְּיָנִים סֹתְרִים וַיִּמְשְׁכוּ וַיַּעֲלוּ אֶת יוֹסֵף מִן הַבּוֹר  
וַיִּמְכְּרוּ אֶת יוֹסֵף לִישְׁמָעֵאֵלִים בְּעֶשְׂרִים כֶּסֶף וַיְבִיאוּ אֶת יוֹסֵף  
מִצְרָיִמָּה.

**When Midianite traders passed by, they pulled Joseph up out of the pit. They sold Joseph for twenty pieces of silver to the Ishmaelites, who brought Joseph to Egypt.**

The psukim in our parasha never explicitly says the brothers sold him. In fact, when Reuven returns to the pit, he is shocked to find Yosef missing (37:30). So who actually pulled Yosef from the pit? Who sold him? And what, exactly, are Midianites doing in the story?

According to Rashi (37:28), the sale unfolded in layers: the brothers sold Yosef to the Yishmaelites, who then sold him to the Midianites, who then sold him again down to Egypt.

But Rashbam offers a radical alternative: the brothers never sold Yosef at all. They sat to eat, far from the pit. Before they returned, Midianite traders - not Yishmaelites, not the brothers - pulled Yosef out and sold him onward. The brothers intended harm, but the actual sale occurred without their involvement.

Whichever interpretation we take, Midian enters the story suddenly and disappears just as quickly. They are not central. They are not driving the plot. They show up, disrupt the narrative, and vanish.

And this is not the last time they will do so.

Fast-forward to Sefer Bamidbar. Israel is commanded to wage a devastating war against Midian (Bamidbar 31:1-3):

**Avenge the children of Israel against Midian then you shall be gathered to your people... Let troops be picked out from among you for a campaign, and**

**let them fall upon Midian to wreak Hashem's vengeance on Midian.**

This is not a normal military campaign. Soldiers from every tribe are required. The destruction is total. Even Midianite women and children are executed. Spoils are taken and divided. Most strikingly, the Aron HaBrit itself accompanies the troops onto the battlefield - an almost unheard-of escalation. And Moshe's life mission is explicitly tied to this war: only after the destruction of Midian will he "be gathered to his people."

Why are Midian - not Egypt, not Amalek - the nation whose eradication becomes Moshe's final task? What exactly did they do to deserve such an unprecedented Divine command?

A close reading of the Torah reveals a pattern: Midian is rarely the main antagonist. They do not have longstanding territorial disputes with Israel like Canaan. They do not persecute Israel as Egypt did. They do not display theological hostility like Amalek. Instead, in every story in which they appear, Midian plays a supporting - but toxic - role.

In the Yosef story, they are opportunistic interlopers who extract Yosef without provocation. Later, at Baal Peor, the Moavite plot to seduce Israel is engineered and facilitated by Midian (Bamidbar 25). Again, they are not the central players, but they ignite the most devastating internal crisis of the desert period.

Midian is the nation that inserts itself not out of self-interest, but simply to inflame, destabilize, and fracture. Rabbi Shalom Dovber Schneerson (the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe) sharpens this point by turning to language:

**Midian is like the word madon, meaning strife and quarrel. For this is the essence of the klipah of Midian - to represent separation and divisiveness, the source of baseless hatred...**

Midian symbolizes not ideological conflict nor political rivalry, but something far deeper and more corrosive: conflict for its own sake. Midian is what happens when discord becomes recreational. When argument becomes identity. When division becomes instinct.

In both narratives - Yosef and Baal Peor - Midian contributes nothing except chaos. They do not act to defend themselves or secure territory. They do not pursue theological principles. They simply erupt into situations already charged with tension and make them worse. Such behavior is not merely socially harmful - it is metaphysically dangerous. If God is the source of unity, then Midian's essence - divisiveness for its own sake - is the ultimate antithesis of Godliness.



TORAH תורה  
מִצִּיּוֹן MITZION

KTM MONTREAL

**PARASHAT VAYESHEV  
23 KISLEV 5776  
13 DECEMBER 2025**

**CANDLE LIGHTING: 3:53 P.M.  
HAVDALAH: 5:02 P.M.**

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SPONSOR A DAF  
PARASHA, PLEASE CONTACT  
RAVARI@KTM.MTL.ORG.

**KTM CELEBRATES THE RETURN OF  
THE HOSTAGES! WE CONTINUE  
TO LEARN AND PRAY FOR THE  
RETURN OF THE REMAINS OF THE  
DECEASED, AND FOR A LASTING,  
ETERNAL PEACE.**

Seen through this lens, Moshe's final mission comes into sharp focus.

Moshe - the man who forged a nation out of slaves, who united tribes around a covenant, who stood between heaven and earth - must be the one to eradicate Midian because Midian represents the force most capable of undoing everything he built.

Egypt enslaved Israel's bodies. Amalek attacked their destiny. But Midian attacks their unity.

Moshe's legacy cannot be complete while the archetype of divisiveness remains unchecked.

The stories of Yosef's sale and the war against Midian bookend a much larger Torah message. Yosef's saga begins with a family torn apart by jealousy and misunderstanding. The Midianites enter precisely where that fracture is deepest. When the family is divided, Midian finds space to operate. When the nation is weak, Midian returns - at Baal Peor - to tear open the wound. And when Moshe prepares to leave this world, the last spiritual threat standing is the one that thrives on division.

Because the greatest danger to Am Yisrael has never been external enemies.



## אין כמו שנה בארץ

BY JULIA LUDVIG, WORLD BNEI AKIVA KADIMA

Kadima is such a special program because it's not like a typical yeshiva or seminary where you're sitting in class all day. Here, we're out in the world, moving around, and living the full Israeli experience. Even though we're based in Jerusalem, it honestly feels like we're never in one place for too long—we're always discovering something new. Every month brings new adventures, new places, new people, and moments that genuinely shape who we're becoming.

We started the year with Taglit (Birthright), traveling all the way from the green mountains of the Golan Heights down to the desert at Masada. One of the most emotional and powerful moments for me was visiting the site of the Nova music festival. Standing there and seeing the aftermath of October 7th made everything feel real and it's something I'll always carry with me.

The chagim in Israel were just on another level. I spent Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur with my program, which brought all of us closer, and then I got some time off for Sukkot to be with friends and family. Coming back for Simchat Torah was incredible—dancing with Israelis, celebrating together. It was exactly the type of feeling you dream about when you think of spending a year in Israel.

Then from the end of October to mid-November, I lived at Kibbutz Ein Hanatziv. Life there was calming and peaceful but in the best way, and it was definitely one of my favourite parts so far. We woke up early to volunteer in the fields, had Hebrew classes in the afternoons, and cooked dinner together at night. It felt like a reset—quiet, meaningful, real.

Now we've started our internships, and I'm so lucky to be working as a photographer at the Michael Levin Base, right near the Machane Yehuda shuk. The organization

supports lone soldiers and lone b'not sherut before, during, and after their service, and being able to help in even a small way means a lot to me.

And the year doesn't stop there. After Chanukah, I can either volunteer with Magen David Adom as an ambulance first responder or join the "Marva" IDF training course.

Another incredible part of Kadima is the opportunity to go to Poland. Getting to learn about the Holocaust by actually being there, hearing the stories right where they happened, is something I know will be emotional, heavy, but also life-changing. It's a privilege to be able to go with a group that I already feel very connected to.

And honestly, beyond all the trips and learning and crazy experiences, one of the

biggest parts of this year has been growth. I can feel myself changing in so many good ways. I'm becoming more independent, more confident, more open to new things. I'm learning who I am away from home, but also discovering a new home at the same time.

Kadima has become like my second family. The diverse and international group of fellow participants on the program are my home away from home. We support each other, joke around, and go through the real and hard things together. I never expected to find a group that feels this safe and close, but now I can't imagine this year without them.

*Julia Ludvig is an alumnus of Herzlia High School.*



## PARNASS HAYOM: KISLEV

- 3 KISLEV | Adrianne and Shlomo Drazin, in honour of the Yahrzeit of his grandmother, Bertha Sand z"l
- 17 KISLEV | David Zukor, in honour of the Yahrzeit of his father, Leslie Zukor z"l
- 18 KISLEV | Chaviva Lifson, in honour of the Yahrzeit of her mother, Sandra Katz z"l
- 20 KISLEV | Susan Lieberman and family, in honour of the Yahrzeit of her husband, Aron Lieberman z"l
- 22 KISLEV | Alex Spira, in honour of the Yahrzeit of his father, Abraham Spira z"l





## HALACHIC Q&A

BY RABBI YOSEF ZVI RIMON - NASI, WORLD MIZRACHI

**Question:** Someone has a collection of figurines that he has been gathering for about ten years, and the collection is now worth a significant amount of money. Is he allowed to continue owning and keeping the collection? If not, what should he do with it? I'm attaching a picture so the Rabbi can see exactly what we're talking about.

**Answer:** Regarding your question about keeping figurines of various shapes, Rambam writes (Hilchot Avodah Zarah 3:10): "It is forbidden to make decorative images, even if they are not intended for idol worship ... so that people do not mistakenly think they are objects of worship. The prohibition of making decorative images applies only to the form of a human being. Therefore, one may not fashion a human form—whether of wood, plaster, or stone—if it is three-dimensional, such as a raised sculpture..." The Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah 39) explains that the prohibition applies to making a human figure from any material—metal, wood, or stone—even if created only for decoration.

**Which types of human images are forbidden?**

Tosafot (Avodah Zarah 43b) write that a human figure is forbidden only when it is a raised, three-dimensional image; a recessed figure is permitted. But with images of the sun, moon, or constellations, all forms—raised or recessed—are prohibited. Ramban and Ran are more stringent, ruling that any form is Biblically prohibited, whether raised or recessed. The Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh De'ah 141:4) rules in accordance with Tosafot.

**Whole figure or partial figure?**

The Rosh (Avodah Zarah 3:5) and the Mordechai (Avodah Zarah §439) hold that the prohibition applies only to a complete human figure, and that making just a head without a body is permitted. By contrast, the SeMaG (Negative Commandments 22) prohibits even making only a human face. The Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh De'ah 141:4,

7), following Tosafot and the Rosh, permits recessed figures and partial figures. However, the Taz (141:15) and Shach (141:32) cite the SeMaG's stricter view, and the Pitchei Teshuvah (141:11) writes that one should ideally avoid relying on the leniencies. The Sheilat Yaavetz (I:170) even forbids a sculpted human head with a full facial structure.

**Imperfect or damaged figures**

The Chatam Sofer (VI – Likkutim 6) rules that even a small defect—such as a slightly damaged ear or nose—is enough to remove the prohibition. The Darkei Teshuvah (141:18) permits keeping figures that are not normally worshipped. The Nachal Eshkol (III:50) is particularly lenient in modern times, noting that people today do not worship images of human beings. Similarly, the Chochmat Adam (Klal 85:6) leans toward permitting keeping human images nowadays, since we do not worship them.

**Conclusion**

Based on all of the above, the simple reading is that one may not create a complete human figure. However, we can combine the lenient views of the Nachal Eshkol and Chochmat Adam, who note that today people do not worship human forms (though the Chochmat Adam was discussing keeping them, not creating them).

Rav Kook, in Da'at Kohen (Yoreh De'ah 65), writing to the Bezalel Art School, sets out the halachic grounds for leniency but adds that, ideally, it is best to avoid making full human figures, as the "spirit of the Sages is not pleased" with the practice.

**However, in your situation, these are not realistic human sculptures, they are not whole figures, and he did not create them. Therefore, it is permissible to keep them—or to sell them.**





## ENCOUNTERING THE GIANTS: RABBI YISSACHAR SHLOMO TEICHTAL HY"D

BY CHAGAI SHREM

Rabbi Yissachar Shlomo Teichtal (1885–1944) was one of the great rabbis of Hungary in the period before and during the Holocaust. At the beginning of his career he belonged to the anti-Zionist ultra-Orthodox stream, like most Hungarian rabbis. But during the Holocaust he underwent a profound transformation: out of the grief and destruction he reached a theological conclusion that the Haredi world had erred in its opposition to the return to Zion and the settlement of the Land of Israel.

During the war he wrote his major work, entitled Eim HaBanim Semeichah, with almost no books in his possession, relying on his extraordinary memory. The book was published after his death and became one of the most important theological works on the return to Zion in the modern era. In 1944, while attempting to escape on a train toward Bergen-Belsen, he was murdered by the Nazis together with his family and many members of his community.

**Question: How do you know that God has decided that the Jewish people must return to the Land of Israel?**

God speaks to mankind not only through His prophets, but also through reality. When powerful forces in the world - kingdoms, governments, mass movements - all begin to point in the same direction, it is a sign that their source is an "awakening from Above." The awakening of nations, the opening of the gates of immigration, and the enthusiasm of entire communities to ascend to the Land - these are not coincidences but clear Divine signs:

*"Before the redemption many of Israel will volunteer to live in the Land of Israel and settle there from the four corners of the world. And when many dwell there and increase their prayers on the holy mountain, the Blessed Creator will hear and bring the redemption closer."*

God acts not only through kings and governments, but also through the hearts of the Jewish people. The fact that a large number of Jews - already since the

beginning of the century - awakened on their own to make Aliya, work the land, and build settlements is not a mere political movement but "the spirit of God." For hundreds of years no such awakening was seen, and therefore this is strong evidence that a redemptive process is underway. For the first time in many generations, the Christian and Muslim world is making room for Jews to return to their land. When a foreign empire grants permission to ascend - this is a clear sign of the hand of God, just as in the days of Cyrus the Great.

**Question: Does practical labor not diminish holiness?**

Choosing land, making Aliya, and building are not "mundane tasks" but the fulfillment of an ancient mitzvah! The generation that left Egypt plowed and sowed the land, Joshua divided inheritances, conquered, and built. Ezra and Nechemiah were engaged with the walls and the rebuilding of the city. Practical work itself is part of the redemption, not a spiritual compromise.

*"For the main thing is that we all long to return to our land, and also take action from our side - whatever is in our power - then God will complete it for us and bring us and plant us on the mountain of His inheritance."*

The redemption of Israel will come through natural means, and the natural actions that we perform - plowing, sowing, planting - are all part of serving God, for through them God's will is revealed in the world.

