

In memory of all those brutally murdered in the war on Israel,
including the recently fallen soldiers of the IDF

בס"ד

9 DECEMBER 2023 | 26 KISLEV 5784

VOLUME 37 | #14

DAF HASHAVUA

וישב | VAYEISHEV

SHABBAT ENDS:

London 4.46pm
Southend 4.42pm
Leeds 4.43pm
Edinburgh 4.41pm
Hull 4.44pm
Birmingham 4.51pm
Sheffield 4.49pm
Manchester 4.48pm
Glasgow 4.48pm
Liverpool 4.52pm
Southport 4.55pm
Cardiff 5.02pm
Dublin 5.03pm
Jerusalem 5.15pm

Shabbat Mevarechim

Rosh Chodesh Tevet is on
Wednesday



CHANUKAH
SAMEACH
FROM THE US!



SIDRA BREAKDOWN

וישב VAYEISHEV

9th Sidra in:

בראשית BEREISHIT

By Numbers:
112 VERSES
1,558 WORDS
5,972 LETTERS

Headlines:
**JOSEPH'S
DREAMS AND
BEING SOLD
INTO SLAVERY**

VAYEISHEV:
Artscroll p.198
Hertz p.141
Soncino p.229

MAFTIR:
Artscroll p.768
Hertz p.599
Soncino p.830

HAFTARAH:
Artscroll p.1210
Hertz p.987
Soncino p.857

Sidra Summary

1ST ALIYA (KOHEN) – BEREISHIT 37:1-11

Yaakov settles in the Land of Canaan (later Israel). Yosef brings negative reports to his father about the sons of Leah, his half-brothers (Rashi). Yaakov makes a woollen tunic for Yosef, his favourite son. Yosef's brothers become jealous. Yosef has a dream in which all 12 brothers are binding sheaves in the field. The brothers' sheaves gather around Yosef's sheaf and bow to it. This increases their hatred. Yosef has another dream; the sun and moon and 11 stars bow to him. He relates this to his brothers and to Yaakov, who rebukes him.

2ND ALIYA (LEVI) – 37:12-22

Yosef's brothers shepherd Yaakov's flock. Yaakov sends Yosef to meet them. His brothers plot to kill him. Reuven dissuades them, advising them to throw Yosef in a pit, but not to kill him. Reuven plans to rescue Yosef and return him to his father.

3RD ALIYA (SHLISHI) – 37:23-36

Yosef's brothers remove his tunic and throw him in the pit. They see a caravan of merchants approaching. Yehuda suggests selling Yosef to the merchants. Yosef is sold on repeatedly (Rashi), eventually arriving in Egypt. The brothers dip the tunic in the blood of a slaughtered goat and show it to Yaakov, who concludes that Yosef was killed by an animal.

4TH ALIYA (REVI') – 38:1-30

Yehuda has three sons – Er, Onan and Shela. Er marries Tamar, but is killed by God. Yehuda instructs Onan to marry Tamar. Onan also dies. Sometime later, Yehuda's wife dies. Tamar disguises herself and approaches Yehuda at a crossroads. Unaware of her identity, he consorts with her, for the wage of two kid goats. He leaves her his ring, coat and staff as surety. Yehuda sends a friend to take the payment to the unidentified lady but he does not find her. Yehuda is later told that Tamar is pregnant and orders her to be burned to death. As she is taken out,

she declares that the owner of the surety is the father. Yehuda recognises the objects and admits his role. Tamar is spared and gives birth to twins, Peretz and Zerach.

Point to Consider: *Why did Yehuda not instruct Shela to marry Tamar after the death of Onan? (see Rashi to 38:11)*

5TH ALIYA (CHAMISHI) – 39:1-6

Yosef is sold to Potiphar, the Chamberlain of the Butchers. Yosef is very successful and Potiphar places him in charge of his household.

6TH ALIYA (SHISHI) – 39:7-23

Potiphar's wife tries to seduce Yosef, who rejects her advances. One day they are alone in the house. She tries again and catches his garment; he runs away. With Yosef's garment in her hand, she summons her household, shows them his garment and accuses Yosef of attempting to seduce her. Potiphar imprisons Yosef, who earns the trust of the chief prison officer.

7TH ALIYA (SHEVI') – 40:1-23

Pharaoh's baker and butler transgress against Pharaoh and are sent to the same prison as Yosef. Each one has a dream, which Yosef interprets: both will be taken out of prison in three days – the baker to be hanged and the butler to be restored to his post. Yosef asks the butler to mention his plight to Pharaoh, but he forgets to do so.

MAFTIR (BEMIDBAR 7:42-47)

The special Maftir reading for Chanukah is taken from parashat Naso, which details the offerings brought by the tribal heads to celebrate the inauguration of the *Mishkan*.

HAFTARAH FOR SHABBAT CHANUKAH (ZECHARIA 2:14-4:7)

Yehoshua was the Kohen Gadol (High Priest) at the time of the inauguration of the second Temple. The prophet Zecharia describes an angel warning Yehoshua to listen to God's laws and perform the Temple services properly. The angel shows Yehoshua a Menorah with olive trees on either side of it, symbolising prosperity and spirituality.



United Synagogue Daf Hashavua

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The Great Conundrum



**RABBI
YONOSON
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The story of Yosef (Joseph) and his brothers reads like a novel. This week's parasha relates that Yosef innocently goes off in search of brothers who dislike him because of his dreams, yet he walks straight into their trap. Although they decide not to kill him, they sell him as a slave. Yosef eventually ends up in Egypt, where a series of events (discussed in next week's parasha) result in his appointment as viceroy, which enables him to provide food for the nation and his own family during the ensuing famine. The former victim has arrived in a position of power and his brothers become afraid that he will try to get even (Bereishit 50:15).

Yet Yosef does not seek revenge. It was only many years later he tells them: "although you intended me harm, God intended it for good, in order to accomplish... that a vast

people be kept alive" (ibid. v.20).

This storyline, however, creates a conundrum. The Yom Kippur liturgy contains the account of the Ten Martyrs (Talmudic sages who were executed by the Romans), and implies that their deaths atoned for the brothers' treatment of Yosef hundreds of years earlier. Yet had that sale not happened, Yosef would not have got into the position which enabled him to be a lifesaver. Perhaps the entire story of the Exodus would never have taken place, nor the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. If so, why was atonement necessary?

The Zohar (the foundational text of Jewish mysticism) teaches us to learn from Yosef's conduct that if people harm you, try not to retaliate in anger. Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812) explains that everything that happens to a person is decreed by God. He keeps all creation alive on a constant basis, and He oversees that whatever happens, which is His doing, is for the good. It may not always be apparent to the recipient or onlooker but

that is due to the limits of human understanding. With the benefit of God's perspective, things take on a different meaning.

Where does this idea leave freedom of choice? Rambam (Maimonides, 1138-1204) writes that the answer to this seeming paradox is "longer than the earth and wider than the sea"! Obviously, God could neither reward nor punish human action unless we were free to make the choice. On the other hand, when things do not go as planned, it is seemingly engrained in the Jewish psyche to say "it's bashert" – it is meant to be. Rambam explains that God is able to know what choice we will make before we have made it. Nevertheless, His knowledge does not influence our decision. His shaping of circumstances is a product of our decision, not the other way round.

Yosef knew that his sale was part of a plan and must be for the good. His brothers, however, would not have known what that plan was. So from their perspective, they made a bad choice. That, however, was between them and God, which explains why Yosef did not seek revenge.

This lesson may be a hard maxim by which to live, but ultimately it provides a crucial antidote to the ups and downs of life. Knowing that God is responsible reassures us that ultimately whatever happens – "it's bashert".

Go, Go, Go Joseph...



**SHIRA
JACKSON**

US Educator

Thanks to Andrew Lloyd Webber, we know this story inside out and can even sing along. But perhaps the musical does not quite convey the immensity of Yosef's legacy.

Yosef, as a young boy, gets ripped away from his family home, has to work as a slave in the home of Potiphar, a high-ranking government official, and then lands up in jail.

Despite having every excuse to reject his upbringing and hide his Jewish identity, he instead tells everyone who will listen that he is Jewish and that he believes in God. It gets to the point that the other Egyptians notice it, "And his master [Potiphar] saw that God was with him and that God made him successful in everything he did" (Bereishit 39:3). By next week's parasha, even Pharaoh says of Yosef, "Could we find anyone like this man, who has the spirit of God in him?" (ibid. 41:38).

As a result, Yosef becomes viceroy of the world superpower at the time, averting economic crisis and turning Egypt into the centre of commerce, whilst staying true to his beliefs and bringing up his children accordingly.

Before Yaakov (Jacob) dies in Parashat Vayechi, he blesses Yosef's sons, "By you the Children of Israel will bless saying, 'May God make you like Ephraim and



Kiel, Germany, 1932

Menashe," and every Friday night Jews bless their children using those exact words. Why does Yaakov bless us to be like his two grandsons who were brought up immersed in Egyptian culture, rather than any of his own sons who grew up in his household?

To be a great person among great people is a challenge, but to

maintain the strength of character to resist outside influences is another thing entirely.

Ephraim and Menashe represent the two qualities of Yosef.

Menashe was a talented linguist and worked for the Egyptian government, whereas Ephraim was a Torah scholar, devoted to the ways of his ancestors. They had a clear understanding of how both branches of wisdom complement each other and must be combined - secular wisdom and international expertise on the one hand and the Divine Torah with its ethical and moral direction on the other.

Yaakov foresaw that his children were about to enter a very dark period of slavery and recognised that this strength would help them - and us - withstand the trials of the next few thousand years of Jewish history.

When we light the Menorah on Chanukah, we reignite our connection to the Maccabees and everything they stood for. The Greeks weren't trying to kill the Jews, they were trying to destroy Judaism by outlawing Torah and mitzvot. Chanukah is all about Jewish pride; that is why we display the Menorah in the window for everyone to see. The real miracle of Chanukah is that both the Jews and Judaism have survived against all odds.

Who teaches us this concept of Jewish pride? Yosef in Egypt, in the depths of his misery, puts his faith in God and teaches the world about Him, showing us how shining a little light can help us survive the darkest times.

Chanukah starts on the

25th day of the Jewish month of Kislev

CHANUKAH

Over the entire chag, one person will light a total of **44** candles on their chanukiah

The biggest chanukiah in the world is in New York City and is 36 feet tall, and weighing **4,000** pounds

Chanukah lasts

8 days



In **1993** Jewish-American astronaut Jeffrey Hoffman brought

a chanukiah and dreidel to space, which was televised!



6

The world record for most jam doughnuts eaten in one minute without licking his lips was set by Jesse Freeman from Australia

THE FESTIVALS IN NUMBERS



The Menorah as the emblem of the State of Israel



**RABBI MICHAEL
LAITNER**

US Director of Education
& Head of Research at
The Rabbi Sacks Legacy

In July 1949, Israel's provisional government met at Tel Aviv, in the midst of the War of Independence. The agenda items, beyond the military situation and struggle to survive, covered continuing work to set up a new administration. As Israel set up legations around the world, built a civil service and prepared to apply for UN membership to consolidate its position in the family of nations, it needed a national emblem.

Remarkably, despite the war, a public competition had been launched to design or recommend an emblem; notes of the meeting in July record that 164 entries had been received!¹ The minutes reveal a reticence to endorse a symbol which was too similar to the Israeli flag, lest it might be difficult for Jewish communities in the Diaspora to display.

Eventually, as a preference for a Jewish symbol prevailed, especially one which resonated widely, the chosen entry depicted a Menorah with olive leaves on each side, as well as animals drawn onto the base. It was adopted into law on 11 February 1949.

WHY THE MENORAH?

At the dawn of the Second Temple

era, the prophet Zecharia ben Berechya, as recorded in today's Haftarah, described a prophecy of a seven-branched Menorah with two olive trees at the side. It represented renewal of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel and the daily kindling ritual in the *Beit Hamikdash* (Temple), themes which resonated particularly strongly in 1948.

Some focused on this Menorah as representing how the Jewish people, with God's help, had outlived their enemies. Infamously, etched onto the Arch of Titus in Rome, is a relief of Jews being exiled from Israel, along with a Menorah, ostensibly from the Temple. Jews in Rome gathered to celebrate at the Arch following Israel's declaration of independence on 14 May 1948. In our times, the beaming of an Israeli flag onto the Arch after the horrific attacks starting on 7 October this year was especially poignant.

Whilst some scholars queried whether the depiction on the Arch was historically accurate, the suitability of this Menorah as a 3-D symbol was also questioned.

In 1952, Rabbi Dr Itamar Warhaftig, a member of the Israeli Cabinet who had participated in the 1948 discussions, asked the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi, Dr Isaac Herzog, for his view on a proposed model of this Menorah which had been offered as a possible gift by a group of Labour MPs in the UK². Rabbi Herzog raised



The Knesset Menorah

two particular points: 1. Was it permissible to make a copy of the Menorah from the *Beit Hamikdash* if that Menorah was not to be used in the *Beit Hamikdash*? 2. Could physical beings be engraved on the Menorah?

A brief survey shows that Rabbi Herzog was reticent about the model, given the issues raised by reproducing items from the *Beit Hamikdash* for non-sanctified use and the proposal to make engravings of human forms on the Menorah's base.

Our ancestors, he noted, fought in Jerusalem against Hellenism; surely it was not appropriate to emulate Hellenist style engravings on this Menorah! The government, he hoped, would be resolute enough to politely decline the gift in the form proposed at the time.

Ultimately, a revised version of the Menorah was produced and presented to the Israeli government in 1956.

1 no.10 הישיבה הזמנית, מועצת המדינה הזמנית, הישיבה הזמנית www.archives.gov.il

2 *Techumin* Journal 2:167, reprinted in Rabbi Herzog's own collected writings and elsewhere.

THE TRIBE WEEKLY

PARASHAT VAYEISHEV

8-9 DECEMBER | 26 KISLEV

From Darkness to Light



BATSHEVA WOLF

Head of Education,
Tribe

At the start of the war in Israel, after a week of sad news of all the tragedies happening in Israel flooding my phone, a friend asked me a surprising question: "Have you joined the latest WhatsApp group? The one with only good news about Israel?" I wasn't sure if she was serious or pulling my leg. There was a war going on, there were people dying and captured - why should I join such a group? But as the days passed, I started to see it. I started to understand the purpose and value of such a group.

The Tanach (Hebrew Bible) tells us to be a "light amongst the nations" (Yeshaya 42:6), a beacon of light. Being a light amongst the nations means holding ourselves to a higher moral standard, making sure we behave as justly and correctly as we can. And at times like this, with the world watching Israel's every move, with people scrutinising our actions more than ever, maybe we can understand this in a different way too. Perhaps it can also mean: to be someone who sees the light. Someone who can identify the light sparks in the dark times, the 'God' element in the long, dark tunnel.

And this is something that each and every one of us can do. People have been doing amazing things across the Jewish world: from

meals to the Tzitzit-making activities for the benefit of Israeli soldiers, from Israel rallies to prayer services and so many other incredible initiatives. It is looking at examples such as these, and then of course perpetuating them, which can elevate us.

One of the prayers which has been said a lot since the start of the war has been '*Acheinu*'. A few lines long, this heartfelt prayer talks about our brothers and sisters in need. In it, we ask: "May God have mercy upon them and bring them... from darkness to light". From darkness to light. From a time of need to a time of joy. May we, in recognising the light, seeing God, and bringing more light into this world, contribute to bringing those in need to their light. May it be speedily in our days.

Parasha Rebus

A rebus puzzle uses pictures, symbols and letters to represent a phrase. Can you decipher the images below to reveal what Joseph's brothers wanted to do to him?



~~UGH~~
+W



+



IN + 2

THE



Answer: Throw Joseph into the pit





THE TRIBE SCRIBE

VAYEISHEV: HEAVEN SCENT!

IN THIS WEEK'S PARASHA, YOSEF (JOSEPH) IS SOLD BY HIS BROTHERS AND TRANSPORTED TO EGYPT.



THE TRIBES SOLD YOSEF TO A CARAVAN OF ISHMAELITE TRADERS WHO WERE HEADING TO EGYPT.



THE TORAH SPECIFIES THAT THE ISHMAELITES WERE MERCHANTS WHO WERE CARRYING SWEET SMELLING SPICES.

THE MEDIEVAL COMMENTATOR RASHI (1040-1105), POINTS OUT THAT IT WAS UNUSUAL FOR THE ISHMAELITES TO BE CARRYING SPICES. THEY USUALLY TRADED IN TAR AND CARRIED GOODS WITH A NASTY SMELL!



IT WAS AS IF THEY WERE CARRYING THE SPICES IN YOSEF'S HONOUR, SO THAT HE WOULD HAVE A MORE PLEASANT EXPERIENCE. IT WAS A WINK FROM GOD, SHOWING YOSEF THAT HE WAS AT HIS SIDE.

SMIFF!

OF COURSE, YOSEF WAS GOING THROUGH VERY CHALLENGING TIMES. HOWEVER TRAVELLING WITH THE SPICES, MADE IT THAT BIT EASIER.



WHEN WE GO THROUGH DIFFICULT TIMES THERE IS OFTEN A SMALL ASPECT: A HINT, A WINK, A FRAGRANT PERFUME, OR SOMETHING TO SWEETEN THE BITTER PILL, THAT SHOWS US GOD IS WITH US.



KING DAVID REMINDS US IN TEHILLIM (PSALMS 91:15): IMO ANOCHI BETZARA, GOD IS ALWAYS WITH US IN TIMES OF DISTRESS.

THE MESSAGE OF THE SPICES IS TO LOOK FOR THE GLIMMER OF HOPE DURING TOUGH TIMES. GOD MAY BE HIDDEN BUT HE IS ALWAYS PRESENT.



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Tribe is the Young People's Department of the United Synagogue: Creating a future for our community through engaging, educating and inspiring the next generation.