בס"ד

20 DECEMBER 2025 | 30 KISLEV 5786 VOLUME 39 | #15

DAF HASHAVUA

מִקֵּץ | MIKEITZ

SHABBAT ENDS:
London: 4.47pm
Birmingham: 4.51pm
Bournemouth: 5.02pm
Cardiff: 5.04pm
Dublin: 5.05pm
Edinburgh: 4.42pm
Glasgow: 4.49pm
Hull: 4.46pm
Leeds: 4.44pm
Liverpool: 5.01pm
Manchester: 4.50pm
Nottingham: 4.51pm
Sheffield: 4.51pm
Southend: 4.44pm
Southport: 4.56pm
Jerusalem: 5.19pm

Rosh Chodesh Tevet is this Shabbat and Sunday

The United Synagogue

SIDRA BREAKDOWN

מִקֵּץ
MIKEITZ

10th Sidra in:
בְּרֵאשִׁית
BEREISHIT

By Numbers:
146 VERSES
2,022 WORDS
7,914 LETTERS

Headlines:
YOSEF (JOSEPH) RISES TO PROMINENCE

MIKEITZ
Artscroll p.222
Hertz p.155
Koren Sacks p.271
Soncino p.252

SHEVI'I (ROSH CHODESH)
Artscroll p.890
Hertz p.695
Koren Sacks p.1067
Soncino p.944

MAFTIR (CHANUKAH)
Artscroll p.768
Hertz p.599
Koren Sacks p.915
Soncino p.830

HAFTARAH (CHANUKAH)
Artscroll p.1210
Hertz p.987
Koren Sacks p.1649
Soncino p.857

SIDRA SUMMARY

1ST ALIYA (KOHEN) – BEREISHIT 41:1-14
Pharaoh dreams that he is by the River Nile, from which seven healthy cows emerge. Seven lean cows follow them out of the river and consume them. Pharaoh then dreams about seven good ears of grain on a stalk, which are swallowed up by seven thin ears growing after them. Pharaoh's magicians cannot interpret the dreams satisfactorily. The cupbearer, who had been imprisoned with Yosef, tells Pharaoh that Yosef interprets dreams. Pharaoh summons Yosef from prison.

2ND ALIYA (LEVI) – 41:15-38
Pharaoh relates both dreams to Yosef, who explains that there will be seven years of plenty, followed by seven years of famine. He advises Pharaoh to appoint someone to oversee grain storage during the years of plenty.

3RD ALIYA (SHLISHI) – 41:39-52
Pharaoh appoints Yosef as viceroy of Egypt to implement his economic plan. Pharaoh gives Yosef his ring, dresses him in regal clothes, changes his name and gives him a woman called Asenat to marry. They have two sons, Menashe and Ephraim. Yosef organises mass grain storage during the seven years of plenty.

4TH ALIYA (REVI'I) – 41:53-42:18
The famine begins and the Egyptians are starving. Yosef sells them spare provisions. There is also a famine in Cana'an. Yaakov (Jacob) tells his sons, apart from Binyamin, to go to buy food in Egypt. The sons arrive in Egypt. Yosef recognises them but they do not recognise him. Yosef accuses them of spying and imprisons them; they will only be released after one of them goes to fetch Binyamin.

5TH ALIYA (CHAMISHI) – 42:19-43:15
Three days later, Yosef changes the conditions. One of the brothers must stay in prison; the others must go to Cana'an to bring Binyamin. Yosef imprisons Shimon and sends back the brothers with grain in their bags. Yosef also plants money in the bags. During their journey, Levi discovers the money in his bag and fears that Yosef will accuse them of theft (Rashi). The brothers arrive home and tell Yaakov their story. They discover that in fact each one of them has money 'planted' in his bag. Yaakov refuses to let Binyamin go. Yehuda (Judah) persists, guaranteeing Binyamin's safety. Yaakov finally agrees, telling them to take a tribute for Yosef, in addition to the original 'planted money' and payment for the new grain.
Point to Consider: *Why did Yosef specifically choose to imprison Shimon? (see Rashi to 42:24)*

6TH ALIYA (SHISHI) – 43:16-44:17
The brothers arrive in Egypt. Yosef instructs his chamberlain to invite his brothers to come in and eat a meal. Shimon is released. Yosef asks them if Yaakov is still alive. He identifies and blesses Binyamin. Overcome with emotion, Yosef rushes to his room, cries, composes himself, then returns and gives them all food. Yosef orders them to be sent home, but has his own silver goblet 'planted' in Binyamin's sack. Yosef's chamberlain chases after them, accusing them of stealing the goblet. After denying the charge, they find the cup in Binyamin's sack. They return to the palace. Yosef demands that Binyamin remain as his slave, allowing the others to leave. Yehuda says that they will all stay as slaves, not just Binyamin.

7TH ALIYA (SHEVI'I) – (BEMIDBAR 28:9-15)
The reading for Shabbat Rosh Chodesh is taken from parashat Pinchas and details the additional Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh offerings in the Temple.

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* (portable Sanctuary).

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

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COVENANT AND CONVERSATION

SIBLING RIVALRY

This essay is an abridged version of Rabbi Sacks' 2010 Covenant & Conversation essay, marking the recent 5th yahrzeit of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l. Learn more from Rabbi Sacks at www.rabbisacks.org

This week's Torah portion recounts how Yosef (Joseph), despised by his older brothers and sold into slavery by them, eventually becomes a powerful Egyptian ruler. When his brothers later visit Egypt they fail to recognise him, though Yosef immediately recognises them.

This story is not just a simple narrative of envy and reconciliation. Rather, it's one of sibling rivalry - the root of most conflicts in *Sefer Bereishit*. Other examples include Kayin and Hevel (Cain and Abel), Yitzchak and Yishmael (Isaac and Ishmael), and Yaakov and Esav (Jacob and Esau). In these stories, the younger sibling represents the present-day Jewish condition – diminutive, misunderstood, resented, but ultimately resilient.

Yosef's story has clear parallels with the history of the Jewish people. Judaism, the first monotheism, was followed by Christianity and Islam, both claiming descent from Avraham. This relationship can also be seen as a sibling rivalry. Throughout history there have been periods of harmony, like in early medieval Spain, but also many times of extreme conflict, such as during the blood libels, expulsions of Jews, and the Holocaust.

The establishment of the State of Israel has been the destination of the Jewish journey since the days of Avraham, and the homeland of the Jewish people since the days of Yehoshua (Joshua). No nation on earth - with the possible exception of the Chinese people - has had such a long association with a land. Yet Israel has faced existential threats from its neighbours, who deny its right to exist. From the day the State of Israel was declared in 1948 until today, Israel has been under threat of attack. This conflict is not a mere border dispute; it's a fundamental denial of Israel's legitimacy by groups like Hamas, Hizbollah, and the government of Iran.

Israel's struggle for recognition and peace is not just a local issue but a global concern. No other nation in the UN has its existence questioned like Israel. And while we as Jews argue among ourselves as to this policy or that, we must not distract focus from the larger issue of Israel's existence in the first place.

The resolution to this conflict lies not in policy debates but in a fundamental shift in recognition and acceptance. The story of Yosef and his brothers serves as a metaphor for this journey - a journey towards mutual recognition and peace. Yosef's brothers did not recognise Yosef, and until they did, there was no repair. So too, the nations of the world must end their fratricidal stances towards Israel and pursue peace and reconciliation. Until Israel's fundamental right to exist is accepted, there can be no peace, merely a series of staging posts on the way to a war that will not end until there is no Jewish state at all.

The crucial point is that the Jewish community - both within Israel and the diaspora - should focus on the bigger picture. We may disagree about Israeli politics, and internal debates are valid, but right now we need to focus our energy on ensuring the survival and recognition of Israel.

The story of Yosef is a reminder of the resilience and eventual triumph of the Jewish spirit, a narrative that continues to unfold in the modern context of Israel's existence and its quest for peace and recognition.

THE CURIOUS TORAH READING OF CHANUKAH

BY: **RABBI YOSSI HAMBLING**
Rabbinical Coordinator, KLBD

Searching for the story of Chanukah in a *Tanach* (Hebrew bible) would not be a productive use of time; it simply is not there. Rather, the story is only found in later sources, with different texts emphasising different aspects of the festival. Thus, whilst the *Sefer HaMakabim* (Book of Maccabees) and the *Al HaNissim* prayer focus on the miraculous military victory, the Rabbis of the Talmud (*Shabbat* 21b) sought to focus on the rekindling of the Menorah in the *Beit HaMikdash* (Temple) and the fact that these lamps burned for a full eight days. As such, in selecting the *Kriat HaTorah* (Torah reading) of Chanukah (which would need to have at least tangential significance to the festival), one would have expected the Rabbis to choose passage(s) from the Torah relating to the Menorah.

However, whilst it is true that the final verses read on the eighth day of Chanukah reflect this sentiment, this was clearly not the Rabbis' focus. Rather, they chose the passages from *Parashat Naso* that describe the offerings of the princes on the inauguration of the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle).

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (1903-93) suggests that this was to draw our attention to another, lesser-known aspect of Chanukah.

The Talmud elsewhere notes (*Yoma* 16a) that the oil was not the only resource in the *Beit HaMikdash* to become defiled by the Greeks; the *Mizbe'ach* (Altar), too, had become unusable for spiritual purposes once it had been utilised by the Greeks for their own, idolatrous worship. Thus, the *Chashmonaim* (Hasmoneans) did not simply search for oil when they entered the *Beit HaMikdash*. Rather, they also began the arduous process of building a new *Mizbe'ach*, which would be inaugurated through new *Korbanot* (sacrifices) to be brought in due course – the Biblical parallel of which is found in the inauguration of the original *Mizbe'ach* in the *Mishkan*.

We often associate Chanukah with loud, proud displays of our Jewish identity. Indeed, many of the *halachot* (laws) regarding lighting Chanukah candles pivot on the principle of *"pirsumei nisa"* (publicising the miracle). For example, the Chanukah Menorah should not be placed lower than 3 *tefachim* (handbreadths) from the ground and no higher than 20 *amot* (cubits) off the ground, as people do not naturally look up to such a height (see *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 671:6).

Nevertheless, Chanukah should also be a time of looking inwards, because true pride in our Jewish identity is only possible when coupled with reflecting on what Judaism really means to us. What does our inner *mizbe'ach* look like? For what are we prepared to sacrifice ourselves? Are we driven solely by a western *zeitgeist*, or do we organise our priorities around building a deeper relationship with God through Torah and Mitzvot?

As our Chanukah lights are shining brightly out towards the world, we are encouraged to also shine a metaphorical light inward, to rediscover the spiritual greatness within us, and to ensure that we are living our most authentically Jewish lives.

In loving memory of Devorah bat Avraham z"l

WOMEN'S POETRY AND PRAYERS WRITTEN IN A POST-OCT 7 WORLD - PART 2

BY: **REBBETZEN NECHAMA DAVIS**
Israel, Daf Hashavua Editorial Team

Az Nashir, We Will Sing Again, a 500-page volume of poetry and original prayers, is one of many creative responses to the tragedies of 7 October, the ongoing war in Israel and the huge rise in antisemitism in many parts of the world.

One of the editors is Rachel Sharansky Danziger, a distinguished Jerusalem-born writer and educator, and daughter of Natan and Avital Sharansky. In the Foreword to the book, she writes, "On October 7th, I sobbed into my hands in shock...but then I saw my young daughter's pale face and her horror-struck eyes... I realized that I had a task to carry out - keeping my children safe from danger and trauma. And while I didn't choose to be at war and couldn't choose what would happen in the Gaza envelope, I could choose to set aside my own grief, focus on my children's needs, and put on a brave face, as so many mothers did on that horrible day."

Sharansky Danziger continues: "So many of us struggled to give voice to our new reality in the post October 7th world. 'I can't find the words... there are no words,' we heard many say. 'I'm stuck'- stuck in horror, in shock, in despair. Moved by this need, we asked Israeli women of faith who are masters of artistic, spiritual, and emotional expression to help find the words that we all needed."

"This book continues the ancient tradition of Jewish women composing their own prayers. In Babylonia, Sephardi lands, and especially Ashkenazi communities—where women were literate in Yiddish—women wrote heartfelt prayers reflecting daily life. From candle lighting to childbirth, these prayers—by and for women—capture the emotional and spiritual depth of Jewish womanhood across time and place." (Introduction, *Az Nashir*)

My Lord
Evil strangers breached Your holy day
And came to desecrate Your Temple
Because every home is a small Temple.
They spilled blood, desecrated the holiness.
Danced, drunk on murder,
In the sanctuary.

And since the devastation of the homes, my God,
We have all been kohanim at your service
In the homes that are yet standing: in our hearts.

We elevate ourselves even higher
From within the depths of despair.
We offer ourselves before You
Even when we yearn for distance.
We sprinkle consolation and slaughter despair
And light memorial lights
And candles of hope in our souls
And the simple candles of our ability to breathe
Even when the news is harsh...
Each day, each hour, we remove
The white robes of mourning
And wrap ourselves in the golden robes of courage
And immerse ourselves in the waters of hope time and again
And serve ourselves the bitter waters
Of reality
And hope against hope that our thighs will not sag, and our hearts will not falter
But that we will deliver a new faith in the future
Davka, especially, from within these bitter waters.

(Extract from "Help Me To Do Your Work" by Rachel Sharansky Danziger, *Az Nashir*, p.408. Translated from the Hebrew.)

These are magnificent words of inspiration, helping us to take pain and grief, and channel them into wholehearted service of God and our people.

A CHUMASH TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY FOR OUR TIMES

BY: **RABBI MICHAEL LAITNER**
US Director of Education & Head of Research for The Rabbi Sacks Legacy

Rabbi Sacks produced many books. Yet one particular planned volume, especially close to his heart, was missing when he passed away in 2020 but has now come to fruition: the publication of the Conrad Morris Edition of the Chumash with translation and commentary for the contemporary British Jewish community.

In pursuing this project, Rabbi Sacks was following in the footsteps of Chief Rabbi Dr J.H. Hertz, who had similarly produced a new edition in the 1930s, the well-known "Hertz" edition, still used in many communities.

Rabbi Sacks had completed the translation and had begun to work on short, pithy pieces of commentary but, sadly, was unable to finish this work. His own project notes show that he wanted to encourage discussion, reflection and further study rather than simply to explain passages.

Consistent with his dedication to encouraging conversation between people to sharpen ideas and provide ongoing practical application of the Torah, he planned to research and present ideas from a broad range of contemporary Jewish scholars as well as long-established sources. He would also have striven to fashion his words so that they would speak to questions which have resonated for generations and provide readers with the impetus to develop their own ideas.

Instead, a team of researchers continued the project, scouring his writings for material to reflect many of his seminal ideas on questions and themes which arise from the Chumash whilst endeavouring to follow his vision. Here is an example from *Parashat Mikeitz*.

A commentary essay on "Joseph and his brothers meet again" appears on pages 283-287.

It notes how the tables have turned. The same Joseph who was cast into a pit and abandoned by his brothers now stands before them, unrecognisable as the powerful Egyptian viceroy, about to put them through a form of trial to see whether they will abandon another brother, Benjamin, or will act correctly as changed people.

"There can be," wrote Rabbi Sacks, "no more life-changing trial than finding yourself *on the other side.*" These words echo a sermon he delivered at Marble Arch Synagogue in 1987, preserved in his archives, about how to bring Jews together. He queried the implications of Joseph's actions and how, as shown after the death of Jacob when the brothers fear Joseph will finally take retribution against them[1], the tensions had not fully dissipated since both sides "had recognised each other as brothers but behaved to each other as strangers."

In analysing subsequent splits in Jewish history, such as at the time of Chanukah, he made an assertion which sadly echoes today as much as when he said it, paraphrased below.

"In *Galut*, in exile, in Egypt, Moses turned the warring family of Jacob into a nation. He gave them laws, a Torah... they became a people of God... And after the destruction of the Second Temple, in *Galut*, the Rabbis turned us once again into a nation united by a common Torah...In *Galut*, Jews have learned to live together, but do we know how to live together with a Jewish land, a national home? When was Abraham, and hence us, first promised the Land of Israel? Only after he turned to his want-away nephew, Lot, and said, 'Let there not be strife between us, because we are not strangers but brothers.' These words are *atchalta degeula*, the beginning of redemption."

[1] Bereishit 50.15

THE TRIBE WEEKLY

PARASHAT MIKEITZ 19-20 DECEMBER | 30 KISLEV

HOW "COWS = YEARS" UNLOCKS THE DREAM

BY: **THE TRIBE TEAM**

In one day Joseph is raised from the pit and given a change of clothes. The story begins to run in reverse. Where he once fell, he now rises. Where he was forgotten, he is now remembered. The Torah is signalling that a long pattern is coming to fruition.

How does Joseph realise that cows and ears of grain stand for years, not days or months? Several clues point in that direction. First, Pharaoh dreams in two sevens, and Joseph's family history already taught him to hear "two sevens" as units of years, as with Jacob's service for Rachel and Leah. Second, the images are agricultural. Fat and lean herds, full and blighted stalks, suggest seasons and cycles, not moments. Third, Pharaoh receives the dream twice, which Joseph reads as God fixing the matter and bringing it soon. When you put those pieces together, time is the natural key. Once "cows = years," the plan becomes obvious: store in plenty to survive in scarcity.

Mikeitz also shows how humility sharpens insight. Joseph says, "It is not in me; God will answer" (Bereishit 41:16), and because he is not performing, he is free to perceive. Wisdom is less about dazzling explanations and more about attentive service: seeing what needs doing and doing it.

For British life this is practical. Exams, UCAS choices, first jobs, family pressures. Do not only ask, "What do I want?" Ask, "What is the pattern that is forming, and how can I serve within it?" That is where clarity tends to appear. For more on the textual cues, Rabbi David Fohrman offers rich readings of these chapters.

Parasha Dingbats

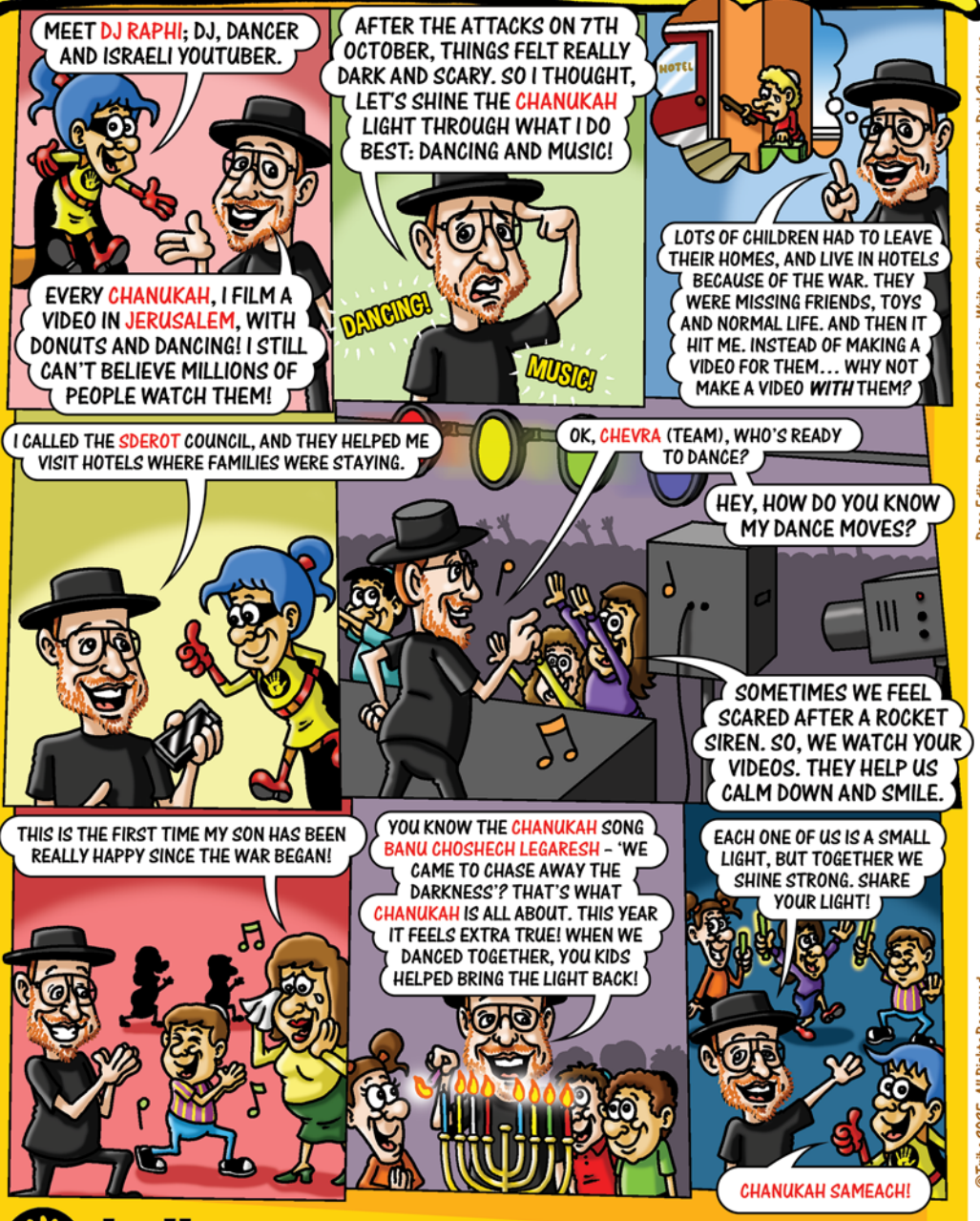
Can you work out the *parasha*-related words or phrases from these clues?

1. TEPRETR
2. A · ED / EGYPT
3. G O BYBYFOOD
4. ATBOMBION
5. FAM
6. U A (s=ch)

Answers: 1. Interpret 2. Appointed over Egypt 3. Go down to buy food 4. Abomination 5. Famine 6. Chanukiah

THE TRIBE SCRIBE

MIKEITZ-CHANUKAH: LIGHT FANTASTIC!



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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.