בס"ד

13 DECEMBER 2025 | 23 KISLEV 5786 VOLUME 39 | #14

DAF HASHAVUA

וַיֵּשֶׁב | VAYEISHEV

SHABBAT ENDS:
London: 4.46pm
Birmingham: 4.49pm
Bournemouth: 5.00pm
Cardiff: 5.02pm
Dublin: 5.03pm
Edinburgh: 4.41pm
Glasgow: 4.47pm
Hull: 4.44pm
Leeds: 4.43pm
Liverpool: 4.54pm
Manchester: 4.48pm
Nottingham: 4.49pm
Sheffield: 4.49pm
Southend: 4.42pm
Southport: 4.54pm
Jerusalem: 5.17pm

Shabbat Mevarechim

Chanukah begins on Sunday night

Rosh Chodesh Tevet is next Shabbat and Sunday

"Pharaoh's cup was in my hand. I took the grapes and squeezed their juice into Pharaoh's cup; then I placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand." ***(Bereishit 40:11)***

The United Synagogue

SIDRA BREAKDOWN

וַיֵּשֶׁב
VAYEISHEV

9th Sidra in:
בְּרֵאשִׁית
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
Koren Sacks p.249
Soncino p.229

HAFTARAH:
Artscroll: p.1142
Hertz: p.152
Koren Sacks: p.1443
Soncino: p.248

SIDRA SUMMARY

1ST ALIYA (KOHEN) – BEREISHIT 37:1-11
Yaakov (Jacob) settles in the Land of Cana'an (later Israel). Yosef (Joseph) 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 (Judah) 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'I) – 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 woman but he does not find her. Yehuda is later told that Tamar is pregnant and orders her to be put 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'I) – 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.

HAFTARAH (AMOS 2:6-3:8)
The prophet Amos sends a warning message to the people to stop persecuting the poor, a sin that cannot be overlooked. He also accuses them of corrupting the prophets and the Nazarites. The rich and powerful will not be able to escape God's ultimate judgement.

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United Synagogue Daf Hashavua
Produced by US Education & Events together with the Rabbinical Council of the United Synagogue

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COVENANT AND CONVERSATION

SPEECH THERAPY

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

The story of Yosef (Joseph) and his brothers is a profound narrative filled with important messages. It shows us the consequences of sibling rivalry, favouritism, and perhaps most importantly, what happens when communication breaks down. Yaakov's (Jacob's) favouritism towards Yosef is symbolised by the ornate and colourful coat he gives to Yosef as a gift. This of course causes Yosef's brothers to feel a great deal of animosity towards him, further aggravated by Yosef's reports to his father about their misdeeds. As *Bereishit 37:4* poignantly notes, "When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a peaceful word to him."

Rabbi Yonatan Eybeschutz (1690-1764) points out that the unusual Hebrew phrase *"Velo yachlu dabro le-shalom"* ("they could not speak a peaceful word to him") indicates a deep failure of communication. He connects this to the command in *Vayikra 19:17*, which states, "You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely reprimand your neighbour and not bear sin because of him." Rambam (1138-1204) interprets this in light of interpersonal relationships, emphasising the need to confront and - if there is *teshuvah* (repentance) - forgive offences, rather than harbouring silent resentments.

But in our story, it is clear that Rambam's wisdom is not reflected in the story of Yosef and his brothers. If so, as Rabbi Eybeschutz says, they could have simply discussed their resentment and, perhaps, attempted to resolve it. Instead, their silence leads to a tragic chain of events. Yosef's brothers, consumed by hatred, plot against him, culminating in his being sold into slavery. This ultimately leads to the exile and slavery in Egypt of all the Children of Israel.

The Talmud (*Brachot 26b*) states, *"Ein sichah ela tefillah"*, which means that conversation is a form of prayer. In other words, communication is key to both human and Divine relationships. Open dialogue recognises the humanity of others and fosters mutual understanding, even if disagreements remain and the conflict remains unresolved. The story of Yosef and his brothers illustrates this theme, and when all 12 brothers finally reconcile after enduring years of trauma, it is an emotional scene in which we will see them speak openly at last.

Words create; words reveal; words command; words redeem. Judaism is a religion of holy words. For words are the narrow bridge across the abyss between soul and soul, between two human beings, and between humanity and God.

Language is the redemption of solitude, and the mender of broken relationships. However painful it is to speak about our hurt, it is more dangerous not to do so. Yosef and his brothers might have been reconciled early on in their lives, and spared everyone much grief. Revealing pain is the first step to healing pain, and speech is a path to peace. Yosef's story serves as a reminder of the transformative power of words and communication. The failure of Yosef's brothers to engage in open dialogue from the outset represents a missed opportunity for reconciliation and understanding. Openly expressing pain and hurt, though undoubtably difficult, is a crucial step towards healing and peace.

CHANUKAH: ONWARDS AND INWARDS

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

Each evening of Chanukah, we light the *Shamash*—the candle used to light the other candles on the Menorah—together with the number of candles corresponding to that night of Chanukah. Thus, on the fifth night, we light the *Shamash* and five additional candles.

The Talmud in *Shabbat* (21b) argues that this is far from obvious. Indeed, the basic obligation recorded by the Talmud is for a single light to be kindled in each home on each night of Chanukah. Nevertheless, universal practice has become to perform the mitzvah in the most ideal way. According to Beit Shammai, this involves lighting eight candles on the first night (plus the *Shamash*), seven on the second night, and so on. This corresponds to the decreasing number of bulls brought in the *Beit HaMikdash* (Temple) during Succot.

Beit Hillel, on the other hand, says that we should light one candle on the first night (plus the *Shamash*), two on the second, and so on. This was not simply to indicate to the onlooker what night of Chanukah it was. Rather, it was to teach the principle that "we must increase in holiness, rather than decrease".

This is the opinion we follow, and it expresses a beautiful message. Naturally, we experience moments of holiness and moments of distance from God throughout our lives. The goal, however, is always to aspire to greater spiritual heights of connection and commitment, rather than simply holding on to past moments of inspiration.

Furthermore, Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler (1892-1953) argues that the goal on Chanukah is to become progressively more excited to perform the mitzvah of lighting the candles with every passing night.

And yet, as he himself notes, this is easier said than done. Surely doing (virtually) the same thing over and over becomes progressively more boring, not exciting!

As such, Rav Dessler explains, lighting Chanukah candles only becomes boring if it remains an external action. However, it becomes exciting if it represents something internal.

In other words, if we have internalised the ideas of Chanukah, lighting the candles becomes the opportunity to proudly show the people around us – and ourselves – what we stand for.

This does not come automatically. But if we take some time before Chanukah to learn about both the themes and the halachic details of the festival, we too can invest such meaning into those moments of simply kindling. And as we increase the candles each night, it will not simply be a case of "onwards and upwards", but rather "onwards and inwards", connecting to ourselves on a deeper level than ever before. And what could be more exciting than such a journey!

WOMEN'S POETRY AND PRAYERS WRITTEN IN A POST-OCT 7 WORLD - PART 1

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 October 7, the ongoing war in Israel and the huge rise in antisemitism in many parts of the world. Compiled and edited by Shira Lankin Sheps, Rachel Sharansky Danziger and Ann Gordon, it contains women's prayers "for our time of need". The book also contains original paintings by contemporary female Israeli artists, including the beloved Avital Sharansky.

The table of contents reveals how far-reaching the effects are of the ongoing trauma our people are living through. There are prayers "to be able to pray again" and prayers for aspects of daily life, like reading the news.

"A Prayer for the Morning News", by The Editors

Please God-
When you open my eyes
Give me the strength to handle
whatever this new day brings
Be gentle with my mind,
Be kind to my eyes,
Hold my hand through the updates,
Shield my heart from breaking beyond what I can repair.

(*Az Nashir*, p.28)

There are also prayers for the Land and the State, about realities of war, the challenges of those on the home front, mourning, women performing their special mitzvot, and what Shabbat feels like now.

There are even prayers which address the trauma of antisemitism.

Hashem,
Help our hearts heal
from all the words
not said by those whom we considered friends
but could not demonstrate empathy for our pain,
yet expected us to empathize, after the massacre,
with the pain of our enemies.

Help us to get over our shock of discovering
that certain friends were no longer friends of Zionists,
and despised our homeland.

(Extract from "A Prayer for Healing after Betrayal" by Alana Rubin, *Az Nashir*, p.354)

In the foreword to the book, one of the editors, Shira Lankin Sheps writes:

"[It] is a precious snapshot of living in Israel after October 7, from the female perspective. It explores who we are as Israeli Jewish women, what we believe, what we've lived, what sustains us, **and the dreams that make a challenged reality worth living."**

Above all, the book gives voice to the gratitude so many of us feel to God to be blessed to be a part of a nation that has truly risen like a lion.

"Are You here?" we cry,
And we find You in all the missiles that miss their targets,
The Iron Dome fracturing the night sky,
The heartiness of our soldier's hearts,
And in the love of those who send them off to war
with faith that You will bring them home again.

We find You in the words of strength from grieving mothers,
In the hordes of Your people who have rushed to be here in Your name,
In the hugs of reunited hostages and their families,
Under the chuppot of couples dressed in green.

("A prayer for Mashiach", Shira Lankin Sheps, *Az Nashir*, p.480)

May these words fly heavenwards, bringing peace, redemption and an end to terror and war.

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THE TRIBE WEEKLY
PARASHAT VAYEISHEV 12-13 DECEMBER | 23 KISLEV

WHEN GOD SEEMS QUIET

BY: **THE TRIBE TEAM**

Vayeishev opens with dreams that go wrong. Joseph speaks too soon, alienates his brothers, and is thrown into a pit. The Torah does not report God speaking directly to Joseph or his siblings at this stage, so the question becomes: how does a person of faith listen when prophecy is not clear in the usual way?

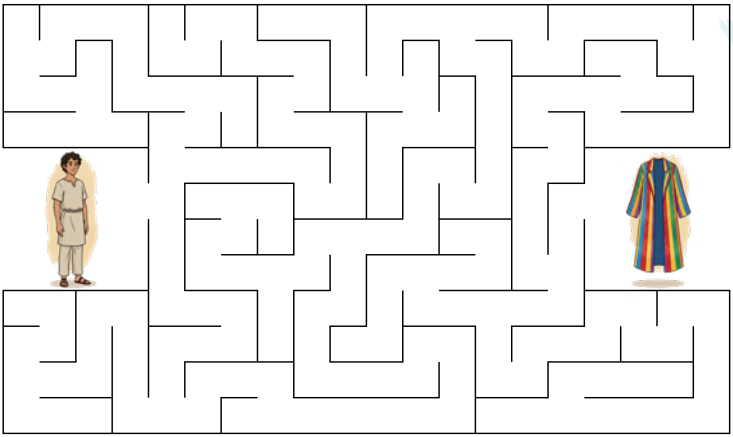
Joseph's early mistake is common. He confuses a gift with a mission. A striking dream does not make you a leader. Character does. The turning point comes later, when he will say to Pharaoh, "It is not in me; God will answer" (Bereishit 41:16). That is a different Joseph. He has moved from attention-seeking to attention-giving, from "my dream" to God's purpose.

The message for us is both warning and comfort. The warning: raw talent or loud confidence is not yet wisdom. The comfort: God's presence may come softly, through patterns that only make sense across time. The pit, the caravan, the prison, the small acts of faithfulness along the way: these are not detours. They are a curriculum in humility and service.

Teens know this world well. You revise hard, a friendship disappoints, a plan collapses. Vayeishev invites a brave response. Turn the volume down on ego. Turn the attention up on meaning. Ask: what good can I do here, with these people, in this moment? Often that is how heaven's quiet voice is heard. For further development of this idea, see Rabbi David Fohrman's *divrei Torah* on the Joseph narratives.

Parasha Maze

Help Joseph find his coat!



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VAYEISHEV: ENTICED!

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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.