בס"ד

31 JANUARY 2026 | 13 SHEVAT 5786 VOLUME 39 | #21

DAF HASHAVUA

בְּשַׁלַּח | BESHALACH

SHABBAT ENDS:

London: 5.38pm
Birmingham: 5.42pm
Bournemouth: 5.50pm
Cardiff: 5.54pm
Dublin: 5.58pm
Edinburgh: 5.40pm
Glasgow: 5.46pm
Hull: 5.39pm
Leeds: 5.38pm
Liverpool: 5.48pm
Manchester: 5.43pm
Nottingham: 5.43pm
Sheffield: 5.43pm
Southend: 5.34pm
Southport: 5.49pm
Jerusalem: 5.51pm

Shabbat Shira

Tu Bishvat is on Monday

"Moshe stretched out his hand over the sea, and God moved the sea with a strong east wind all night, and He turned the sea to dry land and the water split"
(Shemot 14:21)

The United Synagogue

SIDRA BREAKDOWN

בְּשַׁלַּח
BESHALACH

4th Sidra in:
שְׁמוֹת
SHEMOT

By Numbers:
116 VERSES
1,681 WORDS
6,423 LETTERS

Headlines:
CROSSING OF AND THE SONG AT THE SEA

BESHALACH:
Artscroll p.366
Hertz p.265
Koren Sacks p.455
Soncino p.407

HAFTARAH:
Artscroll p.1152
Hertz p.281
Koren Sacks p.1471
Soncino p.434

SIDRA SUMMARY

1ST ALIYA (KOHEN) – SHEMOT 13:17-14:8
After Pharaoh sends the Israelites out of Egypt, God does not lead them on a straight path through the land of the Pelishtim (Philistines) towards Cana'an (later Israel), but rather towards the Sea of Reeds. Moshe (Moses) is carrying Yosef's (Joseph) bones, as Yosef had requested before his death (see *Bereishit* 50:25). A pillar of cloud guides the Israelites by day, and a pillar of fire lights up their journey at night. God tells Moshe to turn back in the direction of Egypt. God hardens the heart of Pharaoh, who pursues the Israelites with his armed chariots.

2ND ALIYA (LEVI) – 14:9-14
The Egyptians catch up with the Israelites, who are encamped by the Sea. Seeing the approaching army, the people cry out in prayer, and also ask Moshe why they left Egypt only to die in the desert. Moshe tells them not to fear; they will experience God's salvation.

3RD ALIYA (SHLISHI) – 14:15-25
Moshe raises his staff; an easterly wind blows and the Sea splits. The Israelites walk through the dry channel, the water providing a wall on either side of them. The Egyptians enter the Sea but struggle to move forward.
Point to Consider: *Why did God move the sea with a "strong easterly wind"? (14:21)*

4TH ALIYA (REVI'I) – 14:26-15:26
Moshe raises his staff; the Sea closes on the Egyptians, drowning them. The Israelites see the drowned Egyptians on the seashore. Together with Moshe, they sing the Song at the Sea (*Shirat HaYam*) which celebrates God's miraculous salvation. The nation travels on, experiencing three days in the desert without water. They come to a place called Marah, where the water is too bitter to drink. They complain to Moshe, who is shown a tree by God. Moshe throws the tree into the water, thus sweetening it.

5TH ALIYA (CHAMISHI) – 15:27-16:10
The Israelites arrive in the Sin Desert and complain to Moshe that they are hungry. God tells Moshe that he will send down a daily portion of 'bread' from the heavens. Moshe tells the people they will also get meat in the evening.

6TH ALIYA (SHISHI) – 16:11-36
The heavenly bread – called '*man*' (manna) – falls between two layers of dew (Rashi). Each household gets a daily portion sufficient for its members. Moshe tells them not to leave any over until the next day. Some people ignore this warning; their manna becomes infested.
A double portion falls on Friday. Moshe tells them to use the excess for Shabbat and not to go out to collect any manna on Shabbat. Again, some ignore this instruction. Moshe tells Aharon to preserve some manna in a container, as a reminder to future generations.

7TH ALIYA (SHEVI'I) – 17:1-16
The Israelites travel to Refidim, but again do not find water. God tells Moshe to strike a rock with his staff; water emerges from the rock. Amalek attacks the Israelites at Refidim. Yehoshua (Joshua) leads the battle against them, whilst Moshe, Aharon and Chur (Moshe's nephew) ascend a nearby hill. Whenever Moshe raises his arms, Israel overcomes Amalek. Aharon and Chur support Moshe's tired arms. Yehoshua is victorious.

HAFTARAH (SHOFETIM 4:4-5:31)
Devorah was a prophetess and a judge. The haftarah, from the Book of Judges, includes the song that Devorah sang to celebrate the defeat of the evil Ca'ananite general, Sisera. This defeat was facilitated by the bravery of Yael, who attacked and killed Sisera with a tent peg.

To sponsor Daf Hashavua, scan this QR code or go to **www.theus.org.uk/daf-hashavua-sponsorship**

For any comments or questions, contact **education@theus.org.uk**

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

Editor-in-Chief: Rabbi Baruch Davis
Editorial and Production Team:
Rabbi Daniel Sturgess
Rebbetzen Nechama Davis
Laurie Maurer
Jennifer Dorling
Tatiana von Beelen

www.theus.org.uk
©United Synagogue 2026

This Daf can be recycled

THE MELODIES OF MEMORIES

BY: **SHIRA JACKSON**
US Educator

Parashat Beshalach opens with motion — the Israelites leaving Egypt, the sea splitting, the journey beginning. But beneath the drama lies a quiet question: what does it mean to walk forward when you've never known freedom?

They are not just a nation in transit, but a people learning to trust. The Torah tells us:

"וַיּוֹשַׁע ה' בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל... וַיַּאֲמִינוּ בַּה' וּבְמֹשֶׁה עַבְדּוֹ"

"On that day, God saved Israel... and they believed in God and in Moshe (Moses) His servant." (*Shemot* 14:30–31)

Once they finally see the Egyptian army, their oppressors, dead on the shore, they burst into song; "אז" "Then, Moshe and the Children of Israel sang." The crossing of the sea is not just physical salvation; it is spiritual birth. The people move from fear to faith, from silence to song. The *Shirat HaYam*, the Song at the Sea, is their first communal voice. It's raw, poetic and deeply theological. "זֶה אֵ-לִי וְאַנְוֵהוּ" — "This is my God and I will glorify Him" (*Shemot* 15:2).

The *Midrash* (*Mechilta Beshalach* 15:2) teaches that even the simplest among the people had a higher level of prophecy at the sea than the prophet Yechezkel (Ezekiel). Revelation, here, is not reserved for the prophets but for the entire nation.

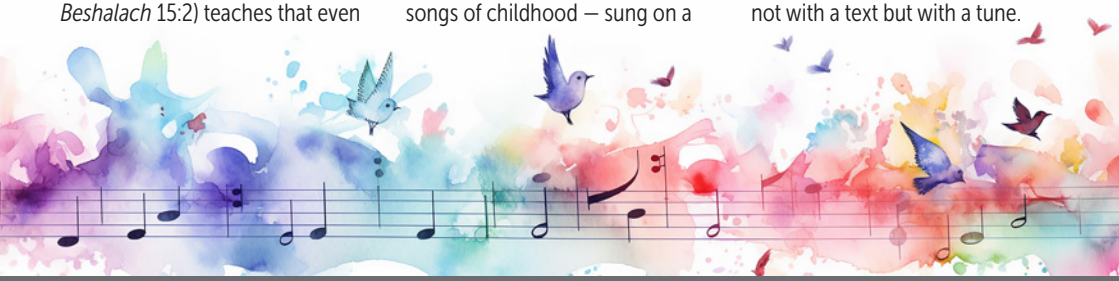
But the journey doesn't end with song. Immediately after, the people are thirsty. They complain. They fear. *Beshalach* is not triumphal but cyclical. Faith rises and falls. The *manna* falls daily, teaching them to always look heavenwards for their sustenance. Shabbat is introduced not as a command, but as a gift embedded in the natural order, as life takes on a new rhythm. A weekly day of rest is a privilege, to be enjoyed only by those who are free.

Faith is not a one-time event. It's a process. The sea splits, but the desert stretches far. We learn to appreciate not only the miracles but the mundane — the daily choices to trust, to move forward, to belong.

We introduce our children to Judaism through song. Before they can read, they can sing. Before they understand Jewish law, they know the tune to *"Mah Nishtanah."* For many, it is the songs of childhood — sung on a parent's lap, in school, or around a Shabbat table — that remain their deepest tether to Jewish identity. As people age and begin to remember little else, they'll often recall a tune from shul or a Pesach song. The *Shira* at the sea is not just a historical moment — it's a pedagogical model. Music bookends our lives; music reaches the soul before the mind is ready and lingers in the soul as the mind begins to fade.

Not only that; it spans human existence. Our Sages say there are 10 *Shirot* (songs). The first, Psalm 92, was sung by Adam on the first Shabbat; the last will be sung when Mashiach comes and we sing *Shirat HaYam* daily in *Shacharit*. The sea may part once, but the song echoes for generations.

A child at the sea might not understand theology, but she can dance to the sound of Miriam's tambourine. This is our calling: to teach Torah that sings. To build communities where melody is memory, and where even the youngest voices feel part of the chorus. Remember, the most enduring Jewish education begins not with a text but with a tune.



Dreadfully missing our mother Shirley Tucker

OUR FRIEND, BITYA

BY: **REBBETZEN SHULI LISS**
Highgate United Synagogue

There are people in our lives whose impact we may not notice or value - but through their actions or words, our lives are changed.

Bitya was the daughter of Pharaoh (see *I Divrei Hayamim* 4:18), even though many people refer to her as Batya. Both mean 'daughter of God', but the latter is the name we commonly use to name our daughters.

Whilst bathing in the Nile, Bitya noticed a baby floating in the river and reached out her hand to save him. Little did she know that this baby, Moshe, would be chosen by God to take the Jewish people out of Egypt. We read only a few verses about her, yet without her, our story would have looked very different.

In fact, she was also listed as one of four people who merited to enter the Garden of Eden alive. (*Devarim Rabbah* 11:10)

The history of our people is dotted with remarkable women who altered the course of our national journey through their courage and kindness. There are the more well-known ones - like our matriarchs: Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, and then there are the less well-known ones, who may only be mentioned in a few places, but their contribution is no less significant.

Rabbi Yochanan, quoting Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, taught us that Bitya was in the river on that day because she had decided to convert to Judaism and was using the river waters as a *mikvah* to complete the process (*Sotah* 12b). We often find that other sources will elaborate on the lives of our heroes, whilst the Torah itself is brief and succinct.

This Shabbat is the US Women's Shabbat. It's a time for each community to recognise and appreciate our women. There are so many different ways to contribute and often we are only aware of those who rise to positions of responsibility. The truth is that there are many who help out in quieter or more collaborative ways. Supporting welfare, calling the lonely, arranging one-off events, sharing ideas they have learnt, or simply befriending people at kiddush. Each woman inspires another through their actions - whether large or small.

> **“ Countless women in our communities make a difference through small, everyday acts that ripple far beyond what they imagined.**

Miriam and Bitya remind us that greatness often begins with quiet, unseen acts. Miriam stood by the river, simply watching over her brother, unaware of the future. Bitya reached out to rescue a crying child, not knowing she was shaping history. Neither sought recognition – yet their choices changed everything. In the same way, countless women in our communities make a difference through small, everyday acts that ripple far beyond what they could possibly have imagined.

So this Shabbat, we can look around in our communities - and find those precious women. Whether on the sidelines or standing at the front - there is much we can learn from each other, as we continue to build the next generation.

In loving memory of Moshe ben Avraham Zarach z"l

TU BISHVAT – DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

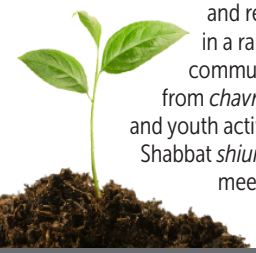
BY: **HANNAH GERSON**
Social Responsibility Manager, US Chesed

Tu Bishvat (15th Shevat) is the Jewish New Year for Trees, marking the start of the agricultural cycle in Israel. Traditionally, it involves eating fruits, especially those from Israel like figs, dates and pomegranates. Modern observances include planting trees and promoting environmental awareness, reflecting Jewish values of nature stewardship.

This Tu Bishvat, we are delighted to launch a new community learning initiative, 'Developing Sustainable Communities', conceived and developed as part of our environmental initiative, Dorot (generations).

This resource aims to help communities explore the environment through a Jewish lens, guided by our principles; Talk, Learn, Think, Act. The series brings together Torah sources, halachic guidance and practical steps to help us move from learning to meaningful, values-driven action.

Tu Bishvat is a poignant time to begin this journey; it reminds us that every tree begins with a small seed and that every act of care and kindness for our planet begins with just one step. The programme encourages discussion and reflection in a range of community settings, from *chavruta* learning and youth activities to Shabbat *shiurim*, Council meetings and *Divrei Torah*, all helping communities to explore how Jewish values can guide our response to today's environmental challenges.



Our message is captured in the parable of 'The Drowning Man'. A man is stranded on his rooftop during a flood. A boat comes to rescue him, but he refuses, saying, "No, thanks. God will save me". Another boat appears, but our man refuses this second offer of help, for the same reason. Finally, with the floodwaters having risen to his roof, a helicopter lowers a rope ladder for him and the pilot urges him to jump on, but he still refuses, saying, "God will save me". When he inevitably drowns and asks God why He didn't save him, God replies, "I sent you two boats and a helicopter, and you turned them all away!"

The parable teaches us that faith and action must always go hand in hand. As the Talmud (*Ta'anit*) reminds us, "A person should never stand in a place of danger and say, 'A miracle will be performed for me.'" Judaism calls on us not to wait passively for change but to take responsibility, to act courageously and faithfully to protect the world God has entrusted to us.

Through Dorot, the United Synagogue has supported communities to phase out disposables, rewilded our cemeteries, planted 1400 trees through the Woodland Trust and installed solar panels at two cemeteries.

Every one of our actions has an impact, today and for future generations. We have a sacred responsibility to ensure that we are doing everything we can to address the environmental emergency facing our planet. Judaism gives us a divine imperative not only to develop the world, but to look after it, not just to provide comfort in the present but to safeguard its future.

As the Chief Rabbi teaches, "The planet is not ours to do with as we wish. It is a gift, entrusted to us to guard and nurture for future generations."

Through 'Developing Sustainable Communities', we hope to turn that teaching into action - to Talk, Learn, Think and Act in ways that create lasting change and, in doing so, we return to the essence of Dorot itself, ensuring that by making these changes now, we create a better, more sustainable world for generations yet to come.

For more information on bringing 'Developing Sustainable Communities' to your community, please email dorot@theus.org.uk

dorot
thriving, for generations

THE ANATOMY OF HEBREW - PART 4

REACHING FOR THE STARS

BY: **RABBI DAVID LISTER**
Edgware United Synagogue

In our exploration of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch's (1808-1888) insights into the Hebrew language, we encounter three related Hebrew words: צָבָא (*tzava*), צִוָּה (*tzivah*), and מִצְוָה (*mitzvah*).

The first, צָבָא (*tzava*), is typically translated as "host" or "army" and refers to a large assembly of people or things. In *Bereishit* 2:1, we read: וַיְכֻלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל-צְבָאָם – "and the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their host (*tzva'am*)."

Rabbi Hirsch explains that צָבָא describes a configuration around a central point. This insight comes from the related verb צָבָה (*tzavah*), meaning "to swell from a central point" (*Bemidbar* 5:21, 22, 27). Just as something that swells from a centre expands outward while remaining organised around its origin, the heavenly bodies move in orbits around central points: moons orbit planets, planets orbit stars, stars orbit the centres of galaxies, and galaxy clusters revolve around gravitational centres shaped by dark matter. In this way, the word *tzava* captures both the idea of a collective "host" and the inherent order radiating from a central source.

This cosmic model also illuminates the structure of the Jewish people. In *Shemot* 12:51, the generation of the Exodus is said to leave Egypt: עַל צִבְאֹתָם – "in their hosts (*tziv'otam*)."

Just as the heavens are organised around central points, the Jewish people were spiritually gathered around the Lord. In *Bemidbar* 2:1-32, the Israelites camped on four sides of the Temple so that the divine presence resting on the Ark (*Shemot* 25:22, *Bemidbar* 7:89) was at the centre. Similarly, the Temple in Jerusalem, at the heart of the land of Israel, reflected this centrality. Even today, this image of spiritual clustering around the Lord resonates for Jews scattered worldwide. And a physical army is one that has a central cause on which all participants are focussed.

The Hebrew root for "command" is צִוָּה (*tzivah*), the basis for the word מִצְוָה (*mitzvah*). This links naturally to the idea of צָבָא. The Torah emphasises fulfilling God's commandments as an expression of love and reverence. In *Devarim* 10:12-13, Moshe (Moses) says: וְעַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל מָה ה' אֱ-לֹהֶיךָ שֹׁאֵל מֵעִמָּךְ כִּי אִם-לְיִרְאָה אֶת-ה' אֱ-לֹהֶיךָ לָלֶכֶת בְּכָל-דְּרָכָיו וּלְאַהֲבָה אֹתוֹ וְלַעֲבֹד אֶת-ה' אֱ-לֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשֶׁךָ – "And now, Israel, what does the Lord, your God, ask of you? Only this: to revere the Lord, your God, to walk in all His ways, to love and to serve the Lord, your God, with all your heart and soul."

Understanding *mitzvah* in this light clarifies its transformative effect. Each commandment places us among the holy assembly surrounding the Lord. Every person who fulfils their *mitzvah* mission is spiritually radiant like a star, each tracing a shining path around the Lord, faithful to their position, bringing glory to Him, to others and to themselves. Those who care for the *mitzvot*, learn them and live by them, become the stars of the Jewish people.

Through צָבָא and צִוָּה, Rabbi Hirsch shows that both cosmic and spiritual order are centred on God. Just as celestial bodies orbit central points in an orderly pattern, so humans align their lives around the divine presence. Observing commandments is not merely ritual; it is alignment with the spiritual architecture of creation, connecting individuals to the whole of the Jewish people and to God Himself.

Thus, Hebrew words reveal both the structure of the universe and the moral purpose of life. By fulfilling מִצְוָה, we join the holy array of people clustered around God, shining individually yet forming a collective, radiant host.

THE TRIBE WEEKLY
PARASHAT BESHALACH 30-31 JANUARY | 13 SHEVAT

GOD IS OUR HEALER

BY: **ABI MENNESSON**

Tribe gap year student

When was the first time that the Israelites received commandments from God after the exodus from Egypt? Many would assume at Mount Sinai but this is not actually the case. The Talmud in *Sanhedrin* explains that the Jewish people were commanded to observe ten mitzvot when they were in Marah (a destination that they arrived at three days after the splitting of the sea), seven of which were the Noachide laws, as well as Shabbat and honouring one's father and mother.

God teaches the importance of listening to His commandments. In *Beshalach*, chapter 15, verse 26, God warns that; 'If you will heed your God diligently, doing what is upright in God's sight, giving ear to God's commandments and keeping all God's laws, then I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians, for I God am your Healer.' But why does God call Himself a "Healer"? What is He healing? Rebbe Nachman of Breslov (1772-1810) explains says that the Torah is talking about spiritual struggles, referring to a desire within us to do things that are immoral. Rebbe Nachman teaches that by turning to God and praying to Him, He gives us the help with what may be hard for us, stopping it from developing and getting worse. God shows the Israelites, and us, that if we struggle to follow His commandments and ask Him for help, He will listen to us and help us with our inner struggle to keep His commandments. This teaches an important lesson: Even if you think God is disappointed in you, He actually wants you to pray to Him and ask for help. No matter how low you feel, God is always your Healer.

Parasha Maze

Help the sick person find the correct path to healing!

THE TRIBE SCRIBE

BESHALACH - SHABBAT SHIRA: FIGHTING FIT!

IN THIS WEEK'S PARASHA, MIRIAM LED THE WOMEN IN SONG – HELPING THEM FIND THEIR VOICE. MEET SUNNY LEVI: SUNNY HAS IMPACTED THE LIVES OF THOUSANDS OF WOMEN AT A CENTRE SHE RUNS IN ARIZONA. SUNNY HELPS WOMEN WHO ARE STRUGGLING TO FIND THEIR STRENGTH, AND WOMEN WHO FEEL LOST, TO FIND CONNECTION.

PLOT TWIST – SUNNY DOES IT ALL USING TAEKWONDO! SUNNY DISCOVERED TAEKWONDO BY TOTAL ACCIDENT, AND IT SOON BECAME HER SUPERPOWER. CHECK THIS OUT…

MY LITTLE BROTHER QUIT A TAEKWONDO CLASS, AND I VOLUNTEERED TO TAKE HIS PLACE. I INSTANTLY FELL IN LOVE WITH IT! I TRAINED WITH FIERCE FOCUS, AND DREAMED OF BECOMING AN OLYMPIC CHAMPION.

SPORTS (AS WELL AS ACTING) BECAME MY WHOLE WORLD! I PUT ALL MY ENERGY INTO WINNING, TRAINING AND BECOMING THE BEST AT BOTH MY SPORT AND ACTING. I DIDN'T FEEL CONNECTED TO JUDAISM OR GOD AT ALL – JUST THE POWER, DISCIPLINE AND SUCCESS.

ONE DAY, I WAS ILL FROM TRAINING TOO HARD. AT THE SAME TIME, MY FATHER WAS HAVING CANCER TREATMENT. THINKING ABOUT BOTH OF US SICK FOR TWO CONTRASTING REASONS MADE ME WONDER, 'WHAT IS LIFE REALLY ABOUT?' I REALISED IT WAS NOT JUST MEDALS OR FAME.

I QUIT MY ACTING WORK BECAUSE IT ALL FELT FAKE. I DIDN'T WANT TO LIVE IN A WORLD OF PRETENDING – I WANTED TRUTH, PURPOSE, AND SOMETHING REAL. I EVEN TURNED DOWN A BIG MCDONALD'S COMMERCIAL!

CONTRACT

SLOWLY, I REDISCOVERED MY JUDAISM. AFTER MANY YEARS OF DISCONNECTION, I FINALLY SPOKE TO GOD AGAIN. AT FIRST, I FELT SILLY, 'IS ANYONE EVEN LISTENING?'

I SOON DISCOVERED I HAD SO MUCH TO SAY! TALKING TO GOD BECAME MY DAILY PRACTICE. I CHANNELLED THE TRAINING AND DISCIPLINE I HAD LEARNED IN TAEKWONDO, TO MY RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. IT CHANGED MY LIFE! SOMETIMES I MEDITATE AND TALK TO GOD FOR HOURS!

TODAY, SUNNY HELPS WOMEN FIND THEIR OWN INNER VOICE AND STRENGTH. SHE RUNS 'SPIRITUAL BOOT CAMPS' TEACHING SPIRITUAL SELF-DEFENCE – SHOWING WOMEN HOW TO TALK TO GOD, BELIEVE IN THEMSELVES AND SUPPORT EACH OTHER – USING BOTH MARTIAL ARTS AND JEWISH WISDOM TO HELP TURN STRUGGLES INTO CONFIDENCE AND HOPE.

AND GUESS WHAT? SUNNY BECAME ONE OF THE ONLY WOMEN EVER TO EARN AN 8TH-DEGREE BLACK BELT IN TAEKWONDO! HOW PRO IS THAT? WELL, THERE IS ONLY ONE FEMALE 8TH DEGREE BLACK BELT IN THE UK AND VERY FEW IN THE USA AND SUNNY IS THE ONLY JEWISH ONE IN THE WORLD! TALK ABOUT SUPER SUPERHERO!

Page Editor: Rabbi Nicky Goldmeier Writer: Shira Chalk Cartoonist: Paul Solomons

©Tribe 2026. All Rights Reserved.

tribe
www.tribeuk.com

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.