24 JANUARY 2026 | 6 SHEVAT 5786 VOLUME 39 | #20

DAF HASHAVUA

בֹּא | BO

SHABBAT ENDS:

London: 5.26pm
Birmingham: 5.31pm
Bournemouth: 5.40pm
Cardiff: 5.43pm
Dublin: 5.46pm
Edinburgh: 5.26pm
Glasgow: 5.33pm
Hull: 5.27pm
Leeds: 5.26pm
Liverpool: 5.37pm
Manchester: 5.31pm
Nottingham: 5.31pm
Sheffield: 5.31pm
Southend: 5.23pm
Southport: 5.37pm
Jerusalem: 5.45pm

"Take both your flocks and your cattle, just as you said, and go!"
(Shemot 12:32)

The United Synagogue

Jami Mental Health Shabbat
part of JEWISH CARE

SIDRA BREAKDOWN

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3rd Sidra in:
שְׁמוֹת
SHEMOT

By Numbers:
106 VERSES
1,655 WORDS
6,149 LETTERS

Headlines:
PESACH AND THE EXODUS

BO:
Artscroll p.340
Hertz p.248
Koren Sacks p.425
Soncino p.377

HAFTARAH:
Artscroll p.1151
Hertz p.263
Koren Sacks p.1465
Soncino p.404

SIDRA SUMMARY

1ST ALIYA (KOHEN) – SHEMOT 10:1-10:11
After the first seven plagues, Moshe (Moses) and Aharon (Aaron) again warn Pharaoh to let the nation go, lest Egypt suffer an eighth plague. Pharaoh's advisors encourage him to agree. However, he only agrees to let the men leave temporarily, but not the women or children.

2ND ALIYA (LEVI) – 10:12-23
The 8th plague: Moshe stretches his staff "over Egypt". An easterly wind brings a swarm of locusts over the whole of Egypt, eating any grass and foliage still left over from the plague of hail. Pharaoh admits his sin of not letting the people go and asks Moshe and Aharon to pray for an end to the plague. God sends a easterly wind (see Rashi's commentary) which carries away the locusts. God hardens Pharaoh's heart and he refuses to let the people go. The 9th plague: Moshe raises his hand towards the heavens. For three days, a thick darkness descends over all of Egypt, except for where the Israelites live.

3RD ALIYA (SHLISHI) – 10:24-11:3
Moshe once again asks Pharaoh to allow the entire nation to leave so that they can bring offerings in the desert. He adds that they should be allowed to take livestock with them. God hardens Pharaoh's heart and he refuses. God requests that Moshe ask the Israelites to ask for gold and silver vessels from the Egyptians.
Point to Consider: *Why did God insist on the Israelites taking these vessels? (see Rashi to 11:2)*

4TH ALIYA (REVI'I) – 11:4-12:20
Moshe warns Pharaoh about the plague of the first born (Rashi), which will only affect the Egyptians. God tells Moshe and Aharon the laws of *Rosh Chodesh* and that Nissan is to be the first month of the 'year of months'. They are also told to instruct the nation about the Pesach offering: the lamb must be designated on 10 Nissan and slaughtered on the afternoon of 14 Nissan. Its blood is to be placed on the door frame and the meat eaten, together with matza and maror, on the night of 15 Nissan. This will be commemorated every year with the seven-day Pesach festival.

5TH ALIYA (CHAMISHI) – 12:21-28
Moshe relates the laws of the Pesach offering to the elders. The blood on the door frame will 'indicate' to God to 'pass over' the Israelite houses and only smite the Egyptians.

6TH ALIYA (SHISHI) – 12:29-51
The 10th plague: The plague strikes Egypt at midnight, leaving no house without a death. Pharaoh searches frantically for Moshe and Aharon (Rashi) and tells them to leave. The Egyptian people also urge the Israelites to leave. They take their dough with them before it has time to rise. The Egyptians agree to let them take gold and silver items. The nation travels from Ra'amses to Succot. They bake the unleavened dough, making matzot. Additional laws of the Pesach offering are given.

7TH ALIYA (SHEVI'I) – 13:1-16
God relates to Moshe the mitzvah of redeeming firstborn male children *(pidyon ha'ben).* Firstborn animals also have a special sanctity. The mitzvah of *tefilin* is stated twice.

HAFTARAH (YIRMIYAHU 46:13-28)
Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah) is told by God that Egypt will be destroyed by the Babylonian invader Nebuchadnezzar. The nation of Israel, referred to as "His servant Yaakov", should not be afraid. Even if they are punished for wrongdoings, they will eventually be redeemed from their lands of captivity.

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Editor-in-Chief: Rabbi Baruch Davis
Editorial and Production Team:
Rabbi Daniel Sturgess
Rebbetzen Nechama Davis
Laurie Maurer
Jennifer Dorling
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OUR CAMPUS TOO!

BY: **RABBI DR HARVEY BELOVSKI**
Emeritus Rabbi of Golders Green Synagogue and Chief Strategist and Rabbinic head of University Jewish Chaplaincy

Parashat Bo brings *Bnei Yisrael* to the brink of freedom. After centuries of slavery and months of devastating plagues, the Israelites are finally ready to step out of Egypt into Jewish history. Yet the Torah focuses not on victory celebrations but on the Jewish life they will live as free people.

Before the final plague, God commands the Jews to mark the doorposts of their homes with the blood of the Pesach offering and to eat its meat in family groups, inside their homes, behind closed doors (*Shemot* 12). Freedom begins not in the public square but in the safe and nurturing space of the Jewish home. Indeed, for Rashi (1040-1105), the exhortation, 'Do not leave the entrance of your house until morning,' (12:22) emphasises that this sacred, protected space was essential at the very moment the outside world was in turmoil.

This unique Jewish approach must be transmitted and explained to each generation and replicated on Seder night:

'And it shall be when your children say to you, "What is this service to you?"' (*Shemot* 12:26)

Elaborating on this theme, Ramban (1194-1270, on *Shemot* 13:16) stresses that the signs and rituals associated with the Exodus ensure that Judaism is not an abstract philosophy, but a lived, embodied experience – a story that children can question, own and continue.

Campus today is one of the key places where that story is under threat. For many young Jews, university is their first opportunity to say, 'This is our Jewish life, our community, *our campus too.*' Yet this transition continues to take place in an environment of unconscionable hostility. In the past year alone, University Jewish Chaplaincy has seen a 10% increase in demand for our services, as students encounter not only open anti-Jewish and anti-Israel sentiment, but also the quieter pressures that can make proud Jewish life feel unsafe or unwelcome.

Our extraordinary Chaplains create the modern equivalent of that vibrant yet protected Jewish home back in Egypt: a safe, warm and confident Jewish space right at the heart of campus. Across 12 regions and more than 100 universities, they provide a sanctuary for all Jewish students – places for Shabbat and festivals, learning and laughter, pastoral care and deep conversation.

They are there in times of crisis and fear, but also in moments of joy and growth, enabling students not just to *cope* with campus, but to build rich, meaningful and outward-looking Jewish lives there.

'Our Campus Too' means that Jewish students are entitled to the same safety, dignity and space as anyone else – and that, with the help of University Jewish Chaplaincy, like our ancestors, they will walk into their Jewish futures heads held high, as proud bearers of our ancient, living story.

For more information, visit: www.mychaplaincy.co.uk

In loving memory of Yentel bat Zev z"l

SEEING IN THE DARK – MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS SHABBAT

BY: **SHARON DANIELS**
Head of Chesed and Volunteering

JAMI's Mental Health Shabbat is marked annually on *Parashat Bo*, which details the final three of the ten plagues, including the plague of darkness. Mental Health difficulties can feel like a place of deep darkness, not just physically but socially, emotionally and spiritually. One sentence in our *parasha* summarises an experience which, sadly, many find relatable: "A man did not see his fellow, nor did anyone get up from his place for three days" (*Shemot* 10:23). Lack of social connection, and the feeling of being unable to leave one's home, or even one's bed, are common features of mental ill-health, often lasting for far longer periods.

A leading Chasidic Rabbi, the Chiddushei HaRim (1798-1866), develops a deeper understanding of this phrase. There is no greater darkness than one in which "a man did not see his fellow" – it is a dark place where we do not see others, we do not notice suffering, we do not reach out to others. The responsibility does not sit with the person who is struggling, rather it is on all of us to be observant, to notice changes, and to reach out.

The *parasha* continues beyond the plagues and the People of Israel are given the first *mitzvah* – to adopt a lunar calendar. The Egyptians worshipped the sun as a deity, believing that through worship, the sun would provide what they needed, including light and sustenance. The moon, however, does not itself shine; rather, it reflects light. We, as Jewish people, are like the moon: we take the light that we receive – from God, our families and communities and reflect it onto those around us, through our daily actions and interactions.

To be a community that supports mental wellbeing is to be proactive. We do this individually, with family and friends, and collectively as a community. Our synagogues have initiatives to welcome new members, to enable people to build connections. Inclusion projects nurture spaces where everyone feels they truly belong – welcomed, respected and embraced as part of the community. *Chesed* (kindness/care) teams ensure we notice and reach out, particularly at more difficult times, such as illness, divorce, bereavement or financial hardship. We also reach out beyond the Jewish community, to notice the challenges people face and offer whatever help we can.

The light of the moon waxes and wanes. We know there will be brighter times and darker times, both individually and as a community. To continue to engage in *mitzvot*, even when the light doesn't reflect back so brightly, is a sign of faith, believing that the light is there and will shine brighter one day. For some, it is hard to see that day, and we need to continue to notice, to reach out and to reflect our own light to others.

As the prayer in the daily *Amida* for those who are unwell states, we pray for "a complete recovery... healing for the soul and healing for the body". Both mental and physical health are important for us all, and our community can be part of the healing process.

In loving memory of Avraham ben Yisrael z"l

THE ANATOMY OF HEBREW - PART 3

TO LIFE!

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

We have already seen from Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) that Hebrew words that sound similar often share related meanings. Rabbi Hirsch highlights a group of verbs that chart not only the development of life but also what life is for and how to cope when things go wrong.

First, a bit of Hebrew biology. The root אלל (*alal*) means "to negate." In Psalm 96:5, we find אֱלִילִים (*elilim*), "false gods," reflecting pagan gods who deny human requests unless appeased. This term can be seen as describing the germination of a seed, since in its earliest stage of development the seed is barely different from its environment and can only be perceived in a negative sense as being distinct from the soil that surrounds it.

The root אלל (*alal*) is linked to הלל (*halal*), חלל (*chalal*), and עלל (*alal*), all starting with guttural letters formed in the throat. These words progress in increasing guttural strength, symbolising greater presence or intensity as life develops.

The next stage after אלל (*alal*) is הלל (*halal*), meaning "to radiate from a central point," corresponding to the growth of a tiny organism. חלל (*chalal*) follows, meaning "empty." As an organism develops, it forms cells – tiny spaces that hold chemicals for growth and strands of DNA guiding its path.

Finally, עלל (*alal*) represents visible growth, as in Psalm 8:3: מִפִּי עוֹלְלִים וְיוֹנְקִים – "out of the mouths of babes (*'ol'lim'*) and sucklings."

This sequence reflects biological development, but Rabbi Hirsch uncovers a deeper philosophical insight in חלל (*chalal*).

Beyond growth, it carries tragic connotations. In *Devarim* 21:1, it refers to someone murdered – emptied of life: כִּי יִמָּצֵא חָלָל – "if a murder victim (*'chalal'*) is found..."

It also refers to desecration, as in *Vayikra* 21:12: וְלֹא יְחַלֵּל אֵת מִקְדַּשׁ אֱלֹהָיו – "and he will not desecrate (*'yechalel'*) the temple of his God," reflecting the emptying of holiness.

Yet intriguingly, חלל can also mean "to begin": אָז הוּחַל לִקְרֹא בְּשֵׁם י׳ – "then people began (*'huchal'*) to call in the name of the Lord" (*Bereishit* 4:26).

Rabbi Hirsch explains that what appears as an end can also signify a beginning. In murder, the victim begins a new life in the next world, and the perpetrator might embark on a path of repentance. If the Temple is desecrated, we do not despair; we examine what went wrong, renew our commitment, and strive to do better. Judaism teaches that failure contains within it the seed of success.

Through these linguistic and philosophical insights, Rabbi Hirsch shows that Hebrew verbs not only chart life's biological stages but also reveal a profound worldview. Negation, radiance, emptiness and visible growth illustrate the cycle of beginnings, challenges and renewal. Life's setbacks are never final – they invite reflection, repair and new growth.

“ Through these linguistic and philosophical insights, Rabbi Hirsch shows that Hebrew verbs not only chart life's biological stages but also reveal a profound worldview.

SEFER YESHAYAHU (ISAIAH) - PART 6

SHOWDOWN WITH THE KINGS

BY: **PNINA SAVERY**
Ma'ayan and US Educator

In our chronological account, we now reach the narrative of King Chizkiyahu's (Hezekiah's) illness, the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem and the city's miraculous salvation. This has already been discussed in our articles on *Sefer Melachim* (the Book of Kings), so here we will focus on Yeshayahu's portrayal of the narrative.[1]

The relationship between Yeshayahu and King Chizkiyahu has begun to break down. The prophet is nervous that the king is getting involved with political and military alliances, something which he has repeatedly warned against. Chizkiyahu falls ill and the prophet visits him. Our Sages explain how this highlights the souring of their relationship. Rabbi Chamnuna states that the heavenly decree of Chizkiyahu's illness was to make Yeshayahu go to visit the king. Previously the two men both insisted that the other come to visit them.[2]

During this visit, Yeshayahu warns Chizkiyahu that "you shall not live" (38:1). But Chizkiyahu does not reply. A similar conversation occurred with Chizkiyahu's father, King Achaz, who also refused to respond to Yeshayahu. The big difference is that Chizkiyahu cries and prays to God. On hearing his prayers, Yeshayahu immediately responds with the Divine message that Chizkiyahu will recover and live for another 15 years. In addition, God promises to spare the city of Jerusalem from the Assyrians, providing a sign as proof. In response, Chizkiyahu sings a beautiful song of thanksgiving.

The contrast with King Achaz is stark; Achaz did not reply, did not pray and refused a sign from God. This emphasises King Chizkiyahu's righteous nature, even whilst he is disagreeing with the prophet.

Following Chizkiyahu's recovery, a Babylonian delegation visits Jerusalem. They claim to have come to congratulate the king on his recovery. However, it appears that the Babylonians are spear-heading a new rebellion against Assyria. They have come to see if the southern kingdom of Yehuda (Judah) will join in. Chizkiyahu seems flattered by the visit, and he shows the visitors "everything in his treasure house" (39:2). The *Midrash* suggests that Chizkiyahu showed them around the entire Temple. Yeshayahu responds with anger, stating that these treasures and the people of Yehuda will be carried off to Babylon in the future.[3]

This is the end of the relationship between Yeshayahu and Chizkiyahu. Most authorities agree that this account of Chizkiyahu's illness actually happened before the siege of Jerusalem and its miraculous salvation. However, it is recorded later in both *Sefer Melachim* and *Sefer Yeshayahu*. The *Tanach* (Hebrew Bible) leaves this as the final recorded communication between them in *Sefer Yeshayahu*. In fact, this is the end of the narrative section of *Sefer Yeshayahu*. From chapter 40 onwards, the content of the book switches to comforting prophecies, which we will address in future articles.

Yeshayahu was also the prophet during the reign of Chizkiyahu's son Menashe. He was a wicked king and immediately reversed all of his father's religious reforms. No communication during Menashe's reign is recorded in *Sefer Yeshayahu*. Indeed, King Menashe is never mentioned once. Our Sages tell us that this is because, tragically, Menashe ordered the violent killing of Yeshayahu.[4]

[1] See articles on chapters 18-20 in *Sefer Melachim* (Kings) II.

[2] Babylonian Talmud *Berachot* 10a-b.

[3] See our article on *Sefer Melachim* (Kings) II, chapter 20, for more on this narrative.

[4] Babylonian Talmud *Yevamot* 49b; *Sanhedrin* 103b.

THE TRIBE WEEKLY
PARASHAT BO 23-24 JANUARY | 6 SHEVAT

THE BREAKING POINT

BY: **JACOB EPSTEIN**

Tribe gap year student

Parashat Bo contains the last three of the Ten Plagues that God brought down on Egypt: the swarm of locusts, the plague of darkness and the killing of the firstborn.

First there is the plague of locusts, a plague perhaps on par with the severity of the seven plagues in last week's *parasha*, Va'era. This is followed by the plagues of darkness and the killing of the firstborn, much more upsetting and soul crushing in their nature. By this point, Pharaoh is very distant from any logic and reasoning. The Egyptians were suffering more severely than ever and would likely have been pleading with Pharaoh to let the Israelites go. However, God won't allow Pharaoh to give in, his pride causing him to believe he can triumph in eternally subjugating the Israelites. In response, God brings down a duo of plagues that would fundamentally break the spirit and security of the Egyptians. The plague of darkness is described like a thick mass descending upon Egypt, as the verse states: "a darkness that can be felt" (*Shemot* 10:21). They were completely paralysed. The impact of this plague is unmistakable, precisely because it stands in stark contrast to the dramatic upheaval of the earlier plagues.

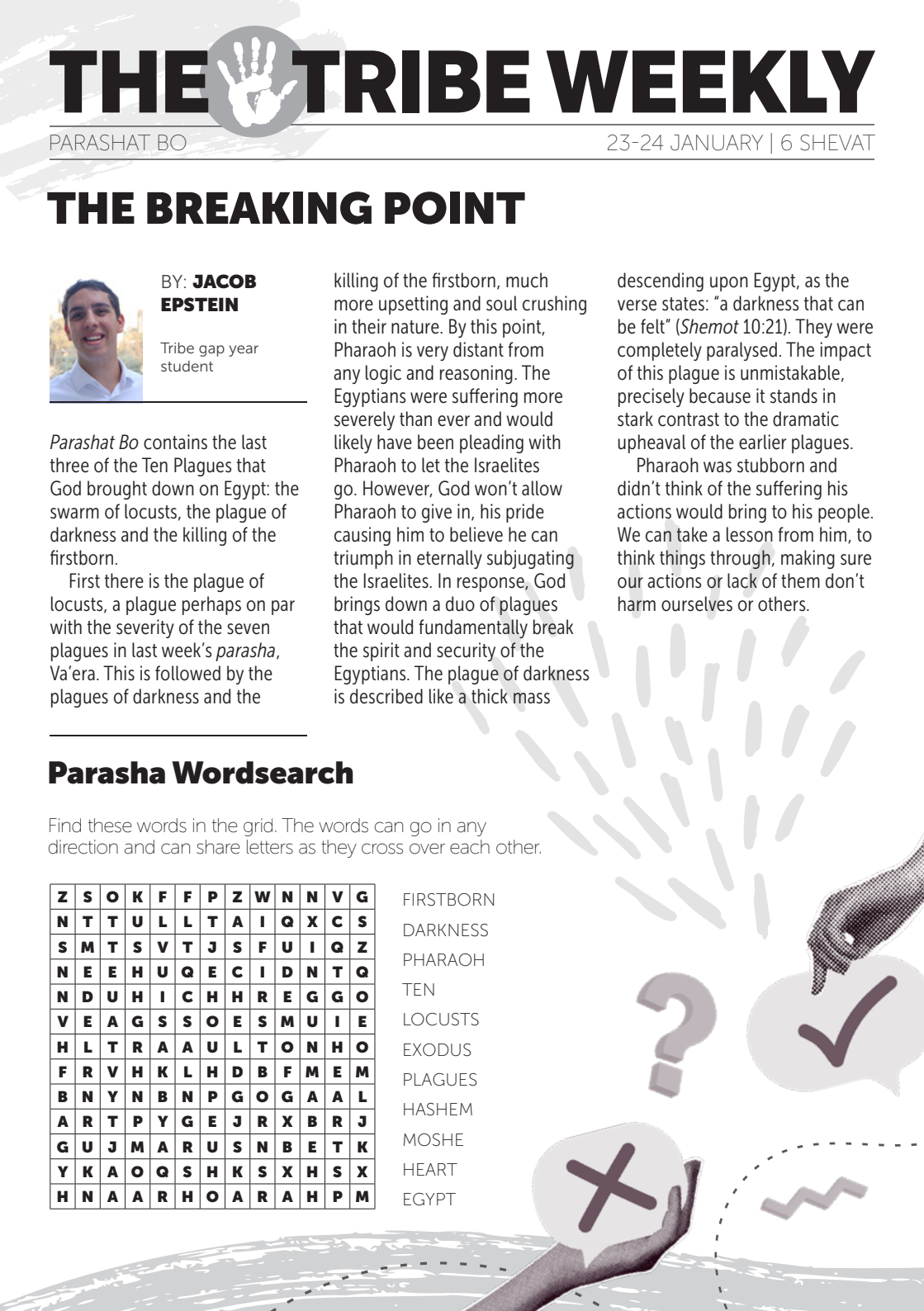
Pharaoh was stubborn and didn't think of the suffering his actions would bring to his people. We can take a lesson from him, to think things through, making sure our actions or lack of them don't harm ourselves or others.

Parasha Wordsearch

Find these words in the grid. The words can go in any direction and can share letters as they cross over each other.

Z	S	O	K	F	F	P	Z	W	N	N	V	G
N	T	T	U	L	L	T	A	I	Q	X	C	S
S	M	T	S	V	T	J	S	F	U	I	Q	Z
N	E	E	H	U	Q	E	C	I	D	N	T	Q
N	D	U	H	I	C	H	H	R	E	G	G	O
V	E	A	G	S	S	O	E	S	M	U	I	E
H	L	T	R	A	A	U	L	T	O	N	H	O
F	R	V	H	K	L	H	D	B	F	M	E	M
B	N	Y	N	B	N	P	G	O	G	A	A	L
A	R	T	P	Y	G	E	J	R	X	B	R	J
G	U	J	M	A	R	U	S	N	B	E	T	K
Y	K	A	O	Q	S	H	K	S	X	H	S	X
H	N	A	A	R	H	O	A	R	A	H	P	M

FIRSTBORN
DARKNESS
PHARAOH
TEN
LOCUSTS
EXODUS
PLAGUES
HASHEM
MOSHE
HEART
EGYPT



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BO: WINGS NEED WORK!

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