בס"ד

10 JANUARY 2026 | 21 TEVET 5786

VOLUME 39 | #18

DAF HASHAVUA

שְׁמוֹת | SHEMOT

SHABBAT ENDS:

London: 5.06pm
Birmingham: 5.10pm
Bournemouth: 5.20pm
Cardiff: 5.23pm
Dublin: 5.24pm
Edinburgh: 5.03pm
Glasgow: 5.10pm
Hull: 5.05pm
Leeds: 5.04pm
Liverpool: 5.16pm
Manchester: 5.10pm
Nottingham: 5.10pm
Sheffield: 5.10pm
Southend: 5.02pm
Southport: 5.16pm
Jerusalem: 5.33pm

"An angel of God appeared to Moshe in a blaze of fire from amid the bush. He saw that the bush was on fire, but the bush was not being consumed"
(Shemot 3:2)

The United Synagogue

SIDRA BREAKDOWN

שְׁמוֹת
SHEMOT

1st Sidra in:
שְׁמוֹת
SHEMOT

By Numbers:
124 VERSES
1,763 WORDS
6,762 LETTERS

Headlines:
THE START OF THE SLAVERY; INTRODUCTION TO MOSHE

SHEMOT:
Artscroll p.292
Hertz p.206
Koren Sacks p.349
Soncino p.319

HAFTARAH:
Artscroll p.1146
Hertz p.225
Koren Sacks p.1453
Soncino p.345

SIDRA SUMMARY

1ST ALIYA (KOHEN) – SHEMOT 1:1-17

The Torah names the sons of Yaakov (Jacob) who came down to Egypt. Yosef's (Joseph) death is recorded again. His brothers also die. The nation increases in number. A new Pharaoh comes to power, who subjects the nation to hard labour. Yet the more they are afflicted, the more they increase. The Egyptians intensify the labour. Pharaoh instructs the Hebrew midwives to kill newborn Hebrew males. They refuse, instead giving the babies food and drink (see Rashi's commentary).

Point to Consider: *What miraculous birthrate is hinted to in verse 1:7? (see Rashi)*

2ND ALIYA (LEVI) – 1:18-2:10

Pharaoh commands the Egyptians to drown all newborn males in the River Nile. Moshe (Moses) is born. After hiding him for three months, his mother Yocheved places him in a basket in the reeds at the riverbank. Pharaoh's daughter retrieves the basket and identifies the baby as a Hebrew infant. Moshe's sister Miriam, watching from afar, offers to get a Hebrew nurse. Pharaoh's daughter agrees; Miriam brings Yocheved, who looks after him until he is weaned. Moshe is then brought up in Pharaoh's house.

3RD ALIYA (SHLISHI) – 2:11-28

Moshe encounters an Egyptian striking a Hebrew; he kills the Egyptian. Pharaoh hears of Moshe's crime. Moshe flees for his life, arriving in Midian, where he meets the daughters of Re'uel (also known as Yitro) by a well. Moshe marries Re'uel's daughter Tzipporah. They have a child, called Gershom. God hears the Hebrews in Egypt crying out because of their hard labour.

4TH ALIYA (REVI'I) – 3:1-15

Moshe, shepherding Yitro's flock, arrives at the 'Mountain of God'. He encounters a fiery blaze in a bush, which is not consumed by the flames. God appears, instructing Moshe to take off his shoes. God tells Moshe that He will rescue the nation and that Moshe should go to Pharaoh and instruct him to let the nation leave Egypt.

5TH ALIYA (CHAMISHI) – 3:16-4:17

God reassures Moshe that the elders of Israel will respond to his call. Moshe is to request from Pharaoh that he let the Hebrews out for three days, to bring offerings in the desert. Pharaoh will refuse, after which God will smite Egypt with plagues. God empowers Moshe with three signs to show the people: a staff that turns into a snake, his hand turning white with the appearance of leprosy and water taken from the Nile turning to blood. Moshe is reluctant to take the leadership. God tells Moshe that his brother Aharon can be his spokesman.

6TH ALIYA (SHISHI) – 4:18-4:31

Moshe returns to Egypt from Midian. God tells Moshe to warn Pharaoh that He will eventually kill the Egyptian firstborn if Pharaoh refuses Moshe's requests (Rashi). Moshe fails to circumcise his new-born son Eliezer when they stop in lodgings on the way; Tzipporah does it instead. Aharon greets Moshe, who relates God's words to him. Aharon in turn relays these words to the people. Moshe performs the three signs.

7TH ALIYA (SHEVI'I) – 5:1-6:1

Moshe and Aharon approach Pharaoh. Pharaoh refuses their requests and increases the work load. The people complain to Moshe and Aharon. Moshe asks God why He sent him, if his intercession has only made life more difficult.

HAFTARAH (YESHAYAHU 27:6-28:13 AND 29:22-23)

The prophet Yeshayahu (Isaiah) depicts how low the nation of Israel has stooped and bemoans the drunken arrogance of the tribe of Ephraim and the other lost tribes. However, one day a great shofar will be blown and all those cast away in foreign lands will return to Jerusalem.

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

GOD SEEKS LEADERS WHO DON'T SEEK RECOGNITION

BY: **LAURIE MAURER**
Projects Executive, US Education

In *Parashat Shemot* we meet two extraordinary women, Shifra and Pu'ah — courageous midwives who quietly, steadfastly stood up to Pharaoh. Ordered to kill every newborn Israelite boy, they instead chose life. In response to their bravery, the Torah tells us: *"Vaya'as lahem batim"* — "God made homes for them" (1:21).

Rashi (1040-1105), drawing on the Talmud (*Sotah* 11b), explains that these "homes" were not physical buildings, but dynasties. Shifra and Pu'ah were, in fact, Yocheved and Miriam — the mother and sister of Moshe (Moses). From Yocheved came the lines of the *Kohanim* and *Levi'im*, the priests, and the royal dynasty of King David comes from Miriam. The most significant spiritual and national leadership of *Am Yisrael,* the Jewish people, flows from these two women.

Rabbi Efrem Goldberg of Boca Raton Synagogue in Florida asks, why this reward? How does sparing the children lead to God's gift of eternal leadership?

Rabbi Yosef Sorotzkin, in *Megged Yosef*, notices an interruption in the narrative. Just before we read that God gave them "houses," the Torah says: *"Vayeitev Elokim la'miyaldot... vayirbu... vaya'atzmu me'od"* — "God was good to the midwives... and the people multiplied and became very numerous" (1:20). Why insert this detail here?

He explains that this was the midwives' first and greatest reward: the sight of Jewish babies continuing to be born safely. That was all they ever wanted. Their courage came from a place of pure devotion, not personal gain. They weren't seeking honour, applause, or even gratitude. The simple knowledge that *Am Yisrael* was growing and thriving in a time of harsh, antisemitic decrees, brought them more joy than any material reward could.

Seeing this selflessness, God responded in kind. Leadership, in Torah, is not about power or prestige. It is about sincerity — the willingness to give without expecting recognition, to care without needing thanks. The truest leaders are those who, like the midwives, find their reward in the flourishing of others.

And so, from Shifra and Pu'ah, God chose to establish the great dynasties of Israel's spiritual and national leadership. Their quiet, unpublicised acts of devotion became the foundation of all future Jewish leadership.

This message speaks deeply to our communities today. There are many roles that are "thankless" — positions that demand effort but often attract criticism more readily than appreciation. Just look around your shul – at the *gabbaim* who put in hours of preparation to make sure the service runs well, at the financial representative whose careful attention to detail keeps the community running on budget, at the care coordinators who spend their free time looking after the vulnerable – to name but a few community roles that we sometimes take for granted.

> **"The greatest leaders in our history emerged not from those who sought fame, but from those who found satisfaction simply in helping others.**

And yet, like the midwives, those who step forward to serve do so because they care. Their motivation is the wellbeing of the community, the smooth running of the shul, the joy of seeing something good grow.

The Torah reminds us that this quiet, humble service is not unnoticed. God Himself cherishes it. The greatest leaders in our history emerged not from those who sought fame, but from those who found satisfaction simply in helping others.

May we appreciate the "thankless tasks" and the people who take them on, and may we each learn from Shifra and Pu'ah to lead with sincerity, courage and a full heart — even when no one is watching.

CRICKET AND THE JEWS

BY: **ZAKI COOPER**
Formerly Head of External Relations in the Office of the Chief Rabbi (2004-2006)

As the Ashes contest between England and Australia concludes Down Under, the eyes of the cricketing world have been fixed on the series. Among those watching closely has been our own Jewish community, where the genteel game enjoys a loyal following.

Any visitor to Lord's on a match day will notice the sizeable number of Jewish spectators. For several years now, *Mincha* services have been held during major matches at the Home of Cricket. The ground provides a multifaith space which was opened by Highgate Synagogue's Rabbi Nicky Liss and can be used for Jewish prayer. All Jewish fans are welcome, whatever their level of observance; there is even a WhatsApp group called "The Lord's Minyan", sharing updates! It has become a gathering point for supporters from seats across the ground during the tea interval.

But Jews are not only fans; they have been involved in cricket in every aspect of the game, on and off the pitch. This is the story explored in a special exhibition at the MCC Museum at Lord's, dedicated to Jews and cricket in the Community Gallery. It was curated by me and my friend Daniel Lightman, who contributed many items from his private collection.

There is an old joke that a book on Jewish sporting heroes would be the shortest in the world. The comedian Mike Yarwood once quipped, "I was doing the smallest books in the world... Famous Jewish cricketers!" Yet, as our exhibition demonstrates, this is not strictly accurate.

Jews have played Test cricket for Australia and South Africa, and – perhaps most surprisingly – for the West Indies. Jews have served as administrators, journalists, patrons and commercial figures within the game. They have captained their countries, served as President of the MCC, and even baked cakes for *Test Match Special*.

Turning back to the recent series: only one Jewish man, Julien Weiner, has ever played in an England–Australia match, though the Ashes themselves were not contested in the 1979–80 fixtures. A resilient opening batsman, Weiner played six Tests in total. He is the son of Holocaust survivors who settled in Melbourne after fleeing Poland and Austria.

In the women's game, Netta Rheinberg played her single Test during England's 1948–49 tour of Australia. She was the team manager but was drafted into the side due to injuries, making a "pair" and becoming the first woman to do so on Test debut. The Australian batter Ruth Buckstein, scored 83 against England in Australia's first innings in her only Test, at Hove in 1987.

The exhibition also includes a pair of *tzitzit* – almost certainly a first for Lord's. They belong to the South African batsman Mandy Yachad, who wore them in a 1991 one-day international. At the time he was becoming increasingly observant. Now fully observant and living in South Africa, he travelled to London for the exhibition's launch two summers ago.

A vibrant Jewish cricket club scene also features prominently, including London's Maccabi Vale and Belmont & Edgware, as well as New Rover (Leeds) and Carlisle Street (Dublin). One photograph even shows the Chief Rabbi playing cricket in Dublin during his tenure there.

The exhibition at Lord's serves as a timely reminder that like all sports, cricket is enriched by the diverse communities who have embraced it with love for the game.

THE ANATOMY OF HEBREW - PART 1

HEAD IN THE CLOUDS

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

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (Germany, 1808–1888) was one of the greatest rabbis of his era. He worked tirelessly to demonstrate the Torah's timeless relevance as an ethical guide, encouraging Jews to integrate study and observance into daily life. He also wrote pioneering commentaries on the Torah, the Siddur and the Jewish year.

A hallmark of his writings is his linguistic analysis of Hebrew.

In volume 8 of his *Collected Writings* (p. 21, Feldheim edition), Rabbi Hirsch notes that understanding a language deeply allows insight into how its speakers perceive the world. Similarly, Hebrew – the language fashioned by God – offers a glimpse into the divine mind, helping us see the world and ourselves through His eyes. This series presents his analyses of Hebrew words to reveal how Jews perceive reality.

Rabbi Hirsch used two principal approaches to Hebrew:

a. He explored connections between words: Hebrew words are built from three-letter roots, and roots sharing similar sounds or articulation often reveal conceptual links.

b. He also noticed that many Hebrew words seem to carry multiple meanings, and deduced that despite apparent varied meanings, a deeper, unifying meaning must underlie all uses.

One striking example of this second approach is נָשִׂיא (*nassi*), a less common word for "cloud."

Thus Jeremiah 10:12 says: וַיַּעֲלֶה נְשִׂאִים מִקְצֵה הָאָרֶץ – "[God] brought up *nesi'im* clouds from the ends of the earth."

The same word more commonly means "prince," as in *Bereishit* 23:6: נְשִׂיא אֱ-לֹהִים אַתָּה בְּתוֹכֵנוּ – "You are a *nassi*, a prince of God, among us."

How are a cloud and a prince connected? A cloud forms as water vapor rises from the earth and condenses. It gathers water not for itself; when it rains, it brings life and abundance. Similarly, a *nassi* may have no personal wealth and does not seek it. He collects taxes not for himself but for the public good. When these funds are wisely allocated, they benefit society more than if kept individually. Like a cloud, a *nassi* gathers resources and transforms them into a blessing for all.

Rabbi Hirsch's method shows that seemingly different meanings often reflect a deeper reality, uniting ideas and revealing the divine logic embedded in language. His analyses illuminate how Hebrew words mirror natural and moral order, offering insight into human behaviour and God's perspective.

Next, we will explore one of the most universal concepts: the nature of existence.

> **"Hebrew – the language fashioned by God – offers a glimpse into the divine mind, helping us see the world and ourselves through His eyes.**

SEFER YESHAYAHU (ISAIAH) - PART 5

CHIZKIYAHU: THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

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

After King Achaz turned the southern kingdom of Yehuda (Judah) into a vassal state of Assyria, the prophet Yeshayahu (Isaiah) withdrew from the public arena. The Assyrian cultural and religious influence is flooding the kingdom, with idolatry rampant. With his students in the study houses he states, "I will wait for the Lord who is concealing His face... I will hope for Him" (Yeshayahu 8:17). Instead of trying to influence royal policy, the prophet focuses on inspiring the people. Even during the difficult times when God may conceal Himself, we have the message of hope that better times will come.

This idea returns in the *Tanach* (Hebrew Bible) generations later. Regarding redemption, Chavakuk the prophet is told to write down: "even if it tarries, wait for it still, for it will surely not come late" (Chavakuk 2:3). Similar wording appears in Rambam's Thirteen Principles of Faith: "and even though he [the Messiah] may tarry, I still wait for him, every day". We can see how a fundamental Jewish belief is rooted in the words of the ancient prophet Yeshayahu.[1]

After the death of Achaz, his son Chizkiyahu becomes king. Determined to reform the people, he immediately acts to remove the widespread idolatry. Yeshayahu had predicted, while Chizkiyahu was still a child, that he would become a great leader and would bring peace (Yeshayahu 9:5-6). While many people dislike his religious reform, Yeshayahu and his students are overjoyed and full of hope for the new generation.

For the first years of his reign, despite renewing the people's spiritual relationship with God, Chizkiyahu continues to pay tribute to Assyria. It is during this time that the northern kingdom of Yisrael is destroyed by Assyria. Chizkiyahu needs to maintain a delicate balance to prevent a similar fate coming to Yehuda. Yeshayahu is overjoyed at the revival of traditional Divine worship. Here we see beautiful prophecies of a messianic future: defeat of the wicked, justice for all and ultimate peace where "the wolf shall lie with the lamb" (ibid. chapter 10).

However, Yeshayahu is fearful that the king will be sucked into rebellions against the Assyrians. The prophet's views have not changed since time of Achaz. He still advises the king to remain neutral. As Chizkiyahu's reign becomes more stable and secure, with his religious reform complete, he turns his attention to regional politics.

> **"Even during the difficult times when God may conceal Himself, we have the message of hope that better times will come.**

The Philistine city of Ashdod leads a rebellion against Assyria and is joined by Egypt and other neighbouring nations. During the three years it takes Assyria to fully destroy Ashdod, Yeshayahu repeatedly warns against getting involved. God instructs the prophet to walk barefoot and in sackcloth through the streets of Jerusalem. Just as the prophet walks in this manner for three years, so too will the Egyptians be driven off unclothed and barefoot when they are defeated by Assyria.

The Rambam states this was a prophetic vision and that the prophet did not really walk the streets of Jerusalem. However, we can imagine the symbolic power if this really did happen. Every time anyone considers rebelling against Assyria, Yeshayahu is there to remind them of the great cost involved in such actions.[2]

[1] See Yoel Bin-Nun and Binyamin Lau, *Isaiah: Prophet of Righteous and Justice*, p.88-89.

[2] ibid., p.139-144.

THE TRIBE WEEKLY
PARASHAT SHEMOT
9-10 JANUARY | 21 TEVET

LOOKING FOR TREASURE

BY: **NAVAH BIALOGUSKI**

Tribe gap year student

In every *parasha*, if you follow the trail of questions and dig a little deeper, you uncover buried treasure.

In this week's *parasha*, Moshe (Moses) kills an Egyptian who was attacking a Hebrew slave and runs away from Egypt. Who would have thought that Moshe, now a criminal, would find refuge with Yitro, a priest of an idolatrous Midianite cult and close ally of Pharaoh, or that he would marry his daughter?

Let's start digging: "Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters... and he gave his daughter Tzipporah to Moshe" (*Shemot* 2:16–21)

Tzipporah's name itself gives clues to her character. "She was as lovely as a bird," offers *Shemot Rabbah* (1:32). Chizkuni (13th century commentator) adds that "she ran towards Moshe like a bird," capturing her readiness to act and take flight.

The *Yalkut Shimoni* (168:2) take us deeper: "When Moshe fled from Egypt, he came to Yitro, who cast him into prison. He was there ten years, and Tzipporah secretly brought him bread. When Yitro saw that Moshe survived miraculously, he said, 'No man is as worthy as Moshe,' released him, and gave him Tzipporah as a wife".

Yitro recognised God's hand in Moshe's survival, cleared his home of idols, and turned his heart toward God, a testament to his openness and faith. This *midrash* also highlights Tzipporah's courage and initiative. Raised in an idolatrous home, no one told her to behave this way. Yet she ensured Moshe's survival, becoming an agent in the eventual redemption of the Jewish people.

When Yitro later says at Mount Sinai, *"Atah yadati"*, meaning "Now I know," he finally grasps the greatness of God and the miracles behind the bigger picture. Tzipporah had already seen it. With conviction, strength and independence, she separated herself from her father's idolatry.

The *Kli Yakar* (1550-1619) connects her name to purification, just as the blood of a bird purifies a home afflicted with *tzara'at* (a type of spiritual illness), Tzipporah purified her father's house from idol worship.

The treasure: open your heart to God, act with initiative and trust that there is always a bigger picture.

Sometimes we just need a bird's-eye view.

Moshe's Maze

Help Moshe find the treasure!

THE TRIBE SCRIBE

SHEMOT: STEP UP!

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.