

1 AUGUST 2026 | 18 AV 5786

VOLUME 39 | #48

# DAF HASHAVUA

## עקב | EIKEV

### SHABBAT ENDS:

London: 9.45pm  
Birmingham: 9.57pm  
Bournemouth: 9.53pm  
Cardiff: 10.02pm  
Dublin: 10.19pm  
Edinburgh: 10.28pm  
Glasgow: 10.33pm  
Hull: 10.07pm  
Leeds: 10.04pm  
Liverpool: 10.13pm  
Manchester: 10.07pm  
Nottingham: 10.04pm  
Sheffield: 10.08pm  
Southend: 9.41pm  
Southport: 10.16pm  
Jerusalem: 8.16pm



The  
United  
Synagogue

*"I will provide rain for your Land in its proper time, the early and late rains, that you may gather in your grain, your wine and your oil"  
(Devarim 11:14)*

עֲקֵב  
EIKEV

3rd Sidra in:  
דְּבָרִים  
DEVARIM

By Numbers:  
**111 VERSES**  
**1,747 WORDS**  
**6,865 LETTERS**

Headlines:  
**UNIQUENESS  
OF THE LAND  
OF ISRAEL**

**EIKEV:**  
Artscroll p.980  
Hertz p.780  
Koren Sacks p.1191  
Soncino p.1032  
  
**HAFTARAH:**  
Artscroll p.1197  
Hertz p.794  
Koren Sacks p.1603  
Soncino p.1051

SIDRA SUMMARY

**1ST ALIYA (KOHEN) – DEVARIM 7:12-8:10**

Moshe (Moses) encourages the Israelites to keep God’s commandments. This will allow them to prosper in the Land and to be the most blessed of peoples. In the same way that God took them out of Egypt, so too He will allow them to defeat the Cana’anite nations. The nation must destroy the Cana’anites’ idols. Moshe entreats the Israelites to remember the 40 years in the desert, including the eating of the manna. God will bring them into a Land with abundant resources, where they will lack nothing.

*Point to Consider: Which mitzvah is derived from 8:10?*

**2ND ALIYA (LEVI) – 8:11-9:3**

Moshe warns the Israelites not to forget God once they enter the Land. They should not fall into the trap of thinking that they inherited the Land thanks to their own efforts and merits; rather it was God who guided and protected them during the years in the desert. Failure to heed this lesson will result in exile from the Land.

**3RD ALIYA (SHLISHI) – 9:4-9:29**

The Israelites should remember that they are a “stiff-necked people” and they are not inheriting the Land because of their own righteousness. In fact, since leaving Egypt, they repeatedly provoked God, initially with the sin of the golden calf, which Moshe now recalls in detail. He also reminds them of the sin of the spies.

**4TH ALIYA (REVI’I) – 10:1-11**

Moshe describes how he carved two new

stone tablets, having broken the first set upon seeing the worship of the golden calf when descending Mount Sinai. In the aftermath of the golden calf, the tribe of Levi was set apart for its special functions of guarding the Ark and serving God.

**5TH ALIYA (CHAMISHI) – 10:12-11:9**

Moshe urges the Israelites to fear and love God and to open their hearts to Him. Moshe recalls the miraculous Exodus from Egypt, the splitting of the Sea of Reeds and the earth swallowing Korach and his rebels.

**6TH ALIYA (SHISHI) – 11:10-21**

Moshe goes on to say that God always has “His eyes” on the Land of Canaan. He then tells them a passage which we recite twice daily as the second paragraph of the *Shema* (see Authorised Daily Prayer Book, p.68). It spells out the benefits of fulfilling the commandments and the consequences of neglecting them. The mitzvot of *tefillin*, *mezuzah* and studying Torah are stated.

**7TH ALIYA (SHEVI’I) – 11:22-25**

Moshe urges the people to remember their Torah learning and to have a connection with Torah scholars (see Rashi).

**HAFTARAH (YESHAYA 49:14-51:3)**

Taken from the book of Yeshaya (Isaiah), this is the second of the seven ‘haftarat of consolation’ read after Tisha B’Av. Just like a mother does not forget the child of her womb, so too God will never forget the Jews and will avenge those nations who have persecuted them. Yeshaya famously calls upon the Jews to be a “light unto the nations”.



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**Editor-in-Chief:** Rabbi Baruch Davis

**Editorial and Production Team:**

Rabbi Daniel Sturgess  
Rebbetzin Nechama Davis  
Laurie Maurer  
Jennifer Dorling

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# VULNERABILITY AND GRATITUDE:

## WHY BENSCHING SAVES US FROM OURSELVES

BY: **RABBI JACK COHEN**

Mill Hill East Jewish Community

The human mind is built to seek safety. When we build houses and settle into them, we are doing what comes naturally. We create spaces that insulate us from the elements and secure our resources. The problem is that this insulation creates a psychological closed loop within us and our agency at the centre. The better life goes, the harder it becomes to notice the underlying fragility of the entire structure and, therefore, our ultimate dependence on God. When this happens, our religious life is liable to wither and die.

*Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God... Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery... You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." (Devarim 8:11-14,17)*

Reflecting on this phenomenon, the Talmud in *Berachot* 32a records the ancient proverb: *malei chreisei zanei bishei* (a full stomach is a source of many evils). Likewise, Rabbi Yochanan (*Sotah* 4b) states that

anyone with arrogance of spirit denies the reality of God. In other words, a haughty person is in a state of wilful ignorance about their dependency on the Divine.

To counteract the powerful and dangerous illusion of self-sufficiency, the Torah furnishes us with two tools:

The first is a sharp confrontation with **vulnerability**. Moshe recalls our history as slaves in Egypt and our journey through the "vast and terrifying wilderness with venomous snakes and scorpions, an arid wasteland where there was no water" (*Devarim* 8:15). Remembering that exposure reminds us of our deep vulnerability and the reality that our moment-by-moment survival always depends on the grace and generosity of God who "fed you manna in the wilderness, something your ancestors did not know, to humble and to test you" (*ibid.* v.16).

The second tool is more gentle, **gratitude**. The Torah tells us that "you shall eat and be satisfied, and you shall bless Hashem your God" (8:10) and this is the source for the mitzva of *Birkat HaMazon* ("bensching"). Precisely at the moment when the closed loop of self-satisfaction threatens to lock into place, the Torah urges us to open

**“ Vulnerability pushes us to realise that we can't survive alone, gratitude pushes us to realise that we don't survive alone.**

our eyes to the reality beyond our self-insulation. It is here that we make an active effort to appreciate the gifts that God has given us and remind ourselves of our fundamental contextuality, interconnectedness and, of course, our dependence on God.

**Vulnerability pushes us to realise that we can't survive alone, gratitude pushes us to realise that we don't survive alone.**

Both paths force us outside the closed walls of our "good houses", breaking the illusion that we are entirely self-contained. In this way we can stop hiding our fragile nature from ourselves, and it is exactly this choice that prevents our connection to God from withering away. When we choose gratitude over arrogance, we rescue our inner world from dying of self-absorption and transform our daily achievements from a monument to our own power into a living, breathing relationship with God.





# CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS AND HIS JEWS

BY: **RABBI MEIR SALASNIK**

Former Rabbi of Bushey United Synagogue

On 1<sup>st</sup> August 1498, Christopher Columbus discovered the land that was to become known as Venezuela. This was the first time he landed on the mainland of the American continent. His previous expeditions in 1492 and 1493 had discovered Caribbean islands, namely the Bahamas, Cuba and Hispaniola.

Years ago, the irony for Jews of the year 1492 was noted. In the year that Ferdinand and Isabella expelled the Jews from Spain unless they converted to Christianity, thus bringing the largest Jewish community in the world to its end, they commissioned Christopher Columbus to sail west. This opened up the New World, a continent which, five centuries later, would be home to the largest concentration of the world's Jews.

But was this coincidence? Or was Columbus' voyage meant to find a future haven for Jews?

The Jews of Spain were not a monolithic group. There were Jews who preferred the vicissitudes of expulsion to giving up their faith. There were Jews who converted to Christianity but secretly continued Jewish observances. There were Jews, '*conversos*', who had converted before 1492 and continued as secret Jews. And, according to Professor Ben Zion Netanyahu, father of Israel's Prime Minister, most Jews assimilated into Catholicism.

One of the most famous Jews of the time, Yitzchak Abrabanel, Torah commentator and adviser to the Spanish monarchs, who could have remained in Spain but chose exile, encouraged and partly financed Columbus' voyage.

Avraham Zacuto was a Jewish scholar and astronomer, who also left Spain rather than convert, and his astronomical tables and almanacs were used by Columbus' voyage.

Luis de Santangel was the grandson of a *converso* and may have continued secretly to observe Judaism. He was also a major financier and adviser to the Spanish monarchy. When Ferdinand and Isabella were not sure about commissioning Columbus, and Columbus considered contacting other monarchs for patronage, Santangel convinced Ferdinand and Isabella to support Columbus. Why was Santangel so keen to ensure the success of Columbus' voyage and to ensure it was under Spanish patronage? Was this an investment? Was he seeking a haven for Jews?

Associated with Santangel was another financier from a *converso* family, Gabriel Sanchez, Treasurer of Aragon, King Ferdinand's own country.

Among Columbus' crew, there were Jews who were *conversos*, assuming that they were travelling westward to India or China.

**“ This opened up the New World, a continent which, five centuries later, would be home to the largest concentration of the world's Jews.**

Columbus engaged as interpreter Luis de Torres, a formerly Jewish linguist whose languages included Hebrew, Arabic and Aramaic. De Torres was among a group that remained in a garrison they set up in Hispaniola, but when Columbus returned the following year, he found that all of the garrison had been wiped out.

The first land was spotted by Roderigo de Triana, also of Jewish background. Columbus thought they had found India, but it was the Bahamas.

Perhaps the most famous Jew on board was Christopher Columbus himself. Recent research into his and his family's DNA suggests a strong likelihood of a Jewish background.

If Santangel's motives in supporting Columbus' expeditions were to find a haven for Jews, it was not all 'plain sailing'. The Inquisition extended its influence into the New World, but eventually, even after centuries, Jewish communities were established in the places Columbus and his crew found.

## ISRAEL IN THE PARASHA

*This series is an adaptation of short ideas written by former Chief Rabbi Lord Jakobovits z"l in the 1960s, which were later reprinted in a compilation of his writings, 'Mishnat HaSar'.*

# EIKEV: THE LAND THAT DEPENDS ON GOD

Even the natural conditions that characterise the Land of Israel testify to its being the chosen land of God: "For the land you are entering to possess is not like the land of Egypt... Rather, the Land you cross over to possess is a land of mountains and valleys, which drinks water from the rain of Heaven – a Land that Hashem, your God, seeks always" (*Devarim* 11:10–12).

Ramban explains that Egypt, flat and irrigated by the Nile,

requires constant human effort, with canals dug to supply water. By contrast, the Land of Israel, with its mountains and valleys, depends entirely on rain throughout the year and therefore on special Divine providence. If the Jewish people fail to heed God, the land itself is affected, bringing drought and hardship. This theme continues in the second paragraph of the *Shema* (vv.13–21), where reward and punishment are expressed

through rain and abundance or drought and exile.

While God sustains all lands, the Land of Israel has a unique status: "a Land that Hashem, your God, seeks always." Rashi teaches that, through God's care for this land, all other lands are sustained. Rabbeinu Bachye (to *Devarim* 10:12) develops this further, comparing the Land of Israel to the heart, from which life flows to the entire world.

## PHRASE OF THE WEEK

BY: **RABBI ALEX CHAPPER** | Borehamwood & Elstree United Synagogue

*Each week, working our way through the alphabet, we explore a Jewish word or phrase, bringing clarity and deeper understanding to its meaning.*

D  
E  
F

## Does **EIDIM ZOMEMIM** mean:

1. Eastern Jewry? | 2. False witnesses? | 3. Shabbat table songs?

The Talmud in *Makkot* discusses the fascinating laws of witnesses who conspire to give false testimony in *Beit Din* and their unique punishment.

The Torah requires that testimony be established by at least two witnesses. Before their evidence is accepted, the witnesses are carefully examined to ensure that the correct procedures have been followed. In criminal cases, this includes warning the accused before the act is committed,

and the witness testimony must be based on direct observation rather than hearsay or circumstantial evidence.

However, if a second set of witnesses subsequently appears and, rather than disputing the facts of the case, they testify that the first witnesses could not possibly have witnessed the event because they were elsewhere at the time, the original witnesses are classified as *eidim zomemim* - false witnesses.

In such a case, the Torah legislates that the false witnesses receive the punishment they intended to impose upon the accused. For example, if they sought to have someone sentenced to death, they themselves become liable to that punishment. One curious feature of this law is that if their scheme has already succeeded and the punishment has been carried out, they do not receive the same punishment themselves.





# THE COMMENTATORS: THE MALBIM

BY: **SHIRA JACKSON**  
US Education

Rabbi Meir Leibush ben Yechiel Michel – the Malbim – despite spending much of his life without security, moving from city to city under pressure or threat, became one of the most original exegetes of the nineteenth century. What sustained him was not position or stability, but a deep conviction that Torah is the true source of life.

This conviction comes into sharp focus in his commentary on *Devarim* 8:3: “A person does not live by bread alone.”

Malbim explains that bread represents all the structures that appear to sustain us – salary, reputation, communal approval, political protection. But real life, he argues, comes from responsiveness to the divine word. That is why we were trained in the desert to eat Manna, a clearly spiritual type of food. Material security may nourish the body, but meaning, resilience, and direction come from Torah.

Malbim knew this not as theory but as lived experience.

During his rabbinate in Bucharest, he clashed with powerful communal figures who sought to reshape Jewish life. He refused to make changes to the *Siddur*<sup>1</sup> and opposed the

construction of the non-Orthodox Choral Temple. The conflict escalated until he was arrested, then later released through the intervention of the great Jewish activist, Sir Moses Montefiore. He was warned that a mob was preparing to attack him; supporters smuggled him out of the city disguised as a wagon driver, and he fled across the border into the Ottoman Empire. He left behind his home, position, and all material security, but not his conviction for advancing Jewish life and scholarship.

His wanderings took him through Constantinople and Paris, and eventually to Königsberg (then in Germany, today Kaliningrad in Russia). There, in his final years, he lived quietly, almost in isolation from the great centres of Jewish life in eastern and central Europe. Without institutional power or communal prominence, this period became one of extraordinary creativity. He devoted himself almost entirely to writing, refining his commentaries on the *Tanach* (Hebrew Bible) and completing his great linguistic project, *Ayelet HaShachar*<sup>2</sup>.

## THE MALBIM

**Name:** Rabbi Meir Leibush ben Yechiel Michel Wisser

**Known as:** The Malbim

**When:** 1809-1879

**Where:** Volhynia, Romania, Poland

**Writings:** Commentary on *Tanach*. *Ayelet Hashbachar* on Biblical Hebrew. Commentary on the *Shulchan Aruch* (Code of Jewish Law).



“A Jewish life is sustained not by the conditions around us, but by the convictions within us.”

Malbim’s life repeatedly stripped away the “bread” of stability. What remained was the conviction that a person should rely on God, living a life committed to mitzvot, and inspired by the intellectual and spiritual nourishment of Torah.

Malbim’s commentary on our verse becomes, in this light, a quiet autobiographical note. His message endures: a Jewish life is sustained not by the conditions around us, but by the convictions within us.

<sup>1</sup> E.g. He opposed proposals to delete or shorten traditional prayers and liturgical poems (*piyyutim*), as well as suggestions to remove or alter traditional references to the Messiah and the physical rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup> *Ayelet HaShachar* (The Morning Star) lists exactly 613 grammatical and exegetical principles used to analyse biblical syntax, etymology and phrasing.

# THE TRIBE WEEKLY

PARASHAT EIKEV

31 JULY - 1 AUGUST | 18 AV

## ARE WE HARD-HEADED?



BY: **MENUCHA  
SAMPSON**

Tribe gap year  
student

Have you ever heard someone described as 'hard-headed'? We may use this phrase as an insult, describing someone who is stubborn, as in 'He was too hard-headed to admit he was wrong', or describing someone who is practical and determined, as in 'a hard-headed businesswoman'.

In this week's parasha, Moshe (Moses) uses this expression when describing the people's behaviour in the sin of the Golden Calf. He says they are '*am keshei oref*', a hard-headed (or 'stiff-necked') nation. The first time this

expression is used is in the actual account of the story of the Golden Calf as it happened, when God speaks to Moshe, rebuking the Israelites for their actions (*Shemot* 32:9). Later on, Moshe uses this term in his defence of the Israelites to God (*Shemot* 34:9).

Being 'hard-headed' can be a flaw when it leads us to be stubborn and not admit a mistake, in this case the miscalculation of when Moshe would return from Mount Sinai with the Torah. This stubbornness led to the misunderstanding that resulted in the sin of the Golden Calf; they thought they needed a substitute god or a vessel to connect with God, as they felt He had abandoned them when Moshe didn't return.

At the same time, our 'hard-

headedness' can be a strength when that determination is channelled for the good; it has helped us to be spiritually resilient, giving us the ability to follow God in the desert to our promised homeland. This quality has continued in the Jewish people throughout the centuries, through every expulsion, the pogroms, the Holocaust and now through October 7<sup>th</sup> and the rise in antisemitism. We are a hard-headed nation and have not only survived these events but adapted and thrived. We are a people who have the '*chutzpa*' to exist and be proud of it.

In general, just like with this trait of hard-headedness, we can decide how we use all the qualities we are given. We must be sure to use our gifts for the good.

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

HEAD  
NATION  
RESILIENT  
GOLDEN CALF  
CHUTZPA  
PRACTICAL  
MOSHE  
STUBBORN  
DEFEND  
REBUKE  
REALISTIC  
HOMELAND







# THE TRIBE SCRIBE

EIKEV: BEYOND THE BITE!

IN THIS WEEK'S PARASHA THE TORAH GIVES US THE MITZVAH OF BIRKAT HAMAZON, AKA BENSCHING, AKA GRACE AFTER MEALS.

NOT THAT KIND OF GRACE! THE TORAH REMINDS US THAT AFTER WE EAT AND FEEL FULL, WE DON'T JUST RUSH OFF. WE STOP AND THANK GOD FOR THE DELISH FOOD WE JUST ENJOYED. TALK ABOUT FOOD FOR THOUGHT!

RIGHT! WE HAVE BERACHOT (BLESSINGS) FOR LOADS OF THINGS: FOOD, DRINK, RAINBOWS, EVEN THUNDER AND LIGHTNING!

GRACE AFTER MEALS? THAT'S AN UNUSUAL GIRL'S NAME!

BERACHOT ARE LIKE A PAUSE BUTTON; THEY HELP US STOP, NOTICE AND SAY THANK YOU, INSTEAD OF ZOOMING PAST THE GOOD STUFF. LESS GUZZLE AND GO, MORE MENSCH AND MUNCH!

WHAT ABOUT OTHER TIMES? WHEN I HEAR MY FAVOURITE SONG AND IT MAKES ME WANT TO SING - SHOULDN'T THERE BE A BERACHA FOR THAT TOO?

WHEN WE SAW THOSE EPIC PAINTINGS AT THE MUSEUM, I WONDERED IF WE SHOULD THANK GOD FOR GIVING PEOPLE CREATIVITY, TALENT AND IMAGINATION.

SO HERE'S THE IDEA: THE SHEHAKOL BERACHA IS SAID OVER MANY FOODS AND DRINKS - IT LITERALLY MEANS 'EVERYTHING'.

WHEN WE SAY OUR FIRST SHEHAKOL OF THE DAY, WE CAN ALSO HAVE IN MIND ALL THE ENJOYABLE THINGS THAT DON'T HAVE THEIR OWN BERACHA.

SHEHAKOL NIHYE BIDVARO.

THANK YOU, GOD, FOR THIS YUMMY ORANGE JUICE AND ALSO FOR THE BRILLIANT BOOK I JUST READ!

BENSCHING AND BERACHOT ENCOURAGE US TO LOOK BEYOND BITE, AND THANK GOD FOR THE WONDERFUL MOMENTS IN OUR LIFE. TODAY IS A GIFT - THAT'S WHY IT'S CALLED THE PRESENT!

OF COURSE, WE CAN ALWAYS THANK GOD IN OUR OWN WORDS TOO!



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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.