28 NOVEMBER 2026 | 18 KISLEV 5787 VOLUME 40 | #13

DAF HASHAVUA

וַיִּשְׁלַח | VAYISHLACH

SHABBAT ENDS:

London: 4.50pm
Birmingham: 4.54pm
Bournemouth: 5.03pm
Cardiff: 5.06pm
Dublin: 5.08pm
Edinburgh: 4.47pm
Glasgow: 4.53pm
Hull: 4.49pm
Leeds: 4.48pm
Liverpool: 4.59pm
Manchester: 4.53pm
Nottingham: 4.53pm
Sheffield: 4.53pm
Southend: 4.42pm
Southport: 4.59pm
Jerusalem: 5.15pm

Chanukah begins next Friday night

"[Yaakov] said, 'I will appease [Esav] with these gifts that go before me, and then I will face him; perhaps he will forgive me'"
(Bereishit 32:21)



The United Synagogue

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SIDRA BREAKDOWN

וַיִּשְׁלַח
VAYISHLACH

8th Sidra in:
בְּרֵאשִׁית
BEREISHIT

By Numbers:
153 VERSES
1,976 WORDS
7,458 LETTERS

Headlines:
JACOB IN THE LAND

VAYISHLACH:
Artscroll p.170
Hertz p.122
Koren Sacks p.217
Soncino p.195

HAFTARAH:
Artscroll p.1139
Hertz p.135
Koren Sacks p.1441
Soncino p.220

SIDRA SUMMARY

1ST ALIYA (KOHEN) – BEREISHIT 32:4-13
Yaakov (Jacob) sends angels to inform his brother Esav (Esau) that he is returning home, after decades away. Yaakov's message offers Esav the chance to make peace, but also conveys Yaakov's own strength (Rashi). The angels return, warning Yaakov that Esav is approaching with 400 men. Yaakov becomes afraid, divides his camp into two and prays to God for survival.

2ND ALIYA (LEVI) – 32:14-30
Yaakov sends copious gifts to Esav, hoping to appease him. That night, Yaakov's family crosses over the Yabok stream. Yaakov is left alone. He is attacked by 'a man', identified by the Midrash as the ministering angel of Esav. They wrestle until dawn. The 'man', unable to defeat Yaakov, nevertheless dislocates Yaakov's hip. The 'man' then tells Yaakov that his name will later change to 'Yisrael' and blesses him.

3RD ALIYA (SHLISHI) – 32:31-33:5
Yaakov's injury is the source of the prohibition of eating the sciatic nerve of an animal. As Esav approaches, Yaakov bows to him seven times. Esav embraces and kisses Yaakov, and they both weep.

4TH ALIYA (REVI'I) – 33:6-33:20
Each person in Yaakov's family bows to Esav. Yaakov successfully urges Esav to accept the gifts that he had sent. Esav suggests that he and Yaakov travel together, but Yaakov politely declines. Esav departs for Seir and Yaakov departs for a place called Succot. Yaakov then travels to Shechem.

5TH ALIYA (CHAMISHI) – 34:1-35:11
Dinah is captured and violated by Shechem the son of Chamor, ruler of the town. Shechem falls in love with Dinah and asks his father to secure her as his wife, whilst still holding Dinah captive. Yaakov's sons are outraged. Chamor speaks to them, suggesting that their two families unite in marriage, as well as offering them trade and land prospects. Shechem offers a large dowry for Dinah. Yaakov's sons trick Chamor and Shechem – they offer the Israelite girls only if all the town's males are circumcised. Chamor and Shechem agree; all the men of the town circumcise themselves. Three days later, when they are in great pain, Shimon and Levi kill them all, take Dinah back and plunder the town. Yaakov rebukes them.

God appears to Yaakov, telling him to go back to Beit El, where he originally built an altar when escaping from Esav. As the angel had previously foretold, God changes Yaakov's name to Yisrael.
Point to Consider: *Why did Yaakov rebuke Shimon and Levi? (see Rashi to 34:30)*

6TH ALIYA (SHISHI) – 35:12-36:19
Rachel dies whilst giving birth to Binyamin and is buried in Beit Lechem. After Rachel's death, Reuven, Leah's son, moves his father's bed out of Bilhah's tent and into Leah's (Rashi). Yitzchak (Isaac) dies, aged 180. He is buried by Esav and Yaakov. Esav's descendants are listed.

7TH ALIYA (SHEVI'I) – 36:20-36:43
The Torah lists eight Edomite kings and their origins.

HAFTARAH (HOSHEA 11:7-12:12)
The Haftarah, according to the general United Synagogue custom, is taken from the Book of Hoshea. The prophet refers to events in Yaakov's life, including his struggle with the angel. Hoshea encourages the people to learn from Yaakov's responses to the spiritual challenges he faced, so that they can become worthy of being his descendants.

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THE COURAGE TO STAND ALONE: WHEN "LEVADO" BECOMES HOLY

BY: **RABBI ELCHONON FELDMAN**
Bushey United Synagogue and Chairman, Rabbinical Council of the United Synagogue

One of the most startling Midrashim on Yaakov (Jacob) appears in *Bereishit Rabbah* (77:1). Commenting on the verse "*Vayivater Yaakov levado*" ("Yaakov was left alone"), Rabbi Berachyah teaches:

"Just as regarding the Holy One, blessed be He, it is written, 'God alone shall be exalted on that day' (*Yeshayahu* 2:17), so too regarding Yaakov it is written, 'Yaakov was left alone' (*Bereishit* 32:24)."

The comparison is striking. The Midrashic Sages are not comparing Yaakov's kindness, wisdom or faith to God's. They are comparing his *levado*, his aloneness.

Yet this seems difficult to understand. Elsewhere, the Sages view Yaakov's situation critically. The Talmud (*Chullin* 91a) notes the dangers of travelling alone at night, and commentators wonder why Yaakov's family allowed him to remain isolated on the far side of the Yabok River. After all, from the beginning of the Torah we are taught that "it is not good for a person to be alone" (*Bereishit* 2:18).

So, is Yaakov's aloneness a problem or a virtue? The answer may lie in recognising that the Midrash is speaking not about loneliness but about uniqueness. When Yeshayahu (Isaiah) declares that "God alone shall be exalted," he is not describing Divine solitude. He means that on that day all rival claims to power and importance will disappear and God's truth alone will remain standing. *Levado* means singular, distinct and uncompromising.

The Midrash sees the same quality emerging in Yaakov. At this moment he has sent ahead his family, possessions and camp. Everything by which a person ordinarily defines himself has been removed. He stands not as patriarch, husband, father or wealthy shepherd. He stands simply as Yaakov. It is precisely then that he wrestles through the darkness and emerges as Yisrael (Israel).

The *Sefat Emet* (Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter, 1847-1905, on *Vayishlach* 56:48) quotes a Midrash which says that Yaakov went back for *pachim ketanim*, "small vessels," because the possessions of the righteous are precious to them, having not been acquired through theft. Every possession honestly earned has spiritual significance because it forms part of a person's Divine mission.

It is in reclaiming those vessels, stripped now of family, status and support, holding only what is essential to his essence, that Yaakov earns the uniqueness of *levado*. The battle that follows is not merely a physical struggle but a confrontation with his very identity and destiny.

Judaism does not celebrate loneliness. We are a people of family, community and covenant.

But there is another kind of *levado* that every person must experience: a moment when we can no longer hide behind the crowd, a moment when we must decide who we are and what we stand for, a moment when we stand before God entirely on our own. That is the *levado* of Yaakov Avinu.

The Midrash teaches that the highest expression of spiritual maturity is not self-sufficiency but fidelity to one's deepest identity. The closest a human being comes to the Divine is when, like Yaakov, he possesses the courage to remain true to his mission even when he must stand alone.

Sometimes aloneness is frightening. But sometimes it is where Yisrael is born.

> **Sometimes aloneness is frightening. But sometimes it is where Yisrael is born.**



A LIGHT IN THE HOSPITAL

BY: **RABBI STANLEY COTEN**
Senior Hospital Chaplain

There is something about a hospital that makes us think differently about light.

Most of us take light for granted. We switch on a light and the room is illuminated. But in a hospital, light can mean something much more profound: a nurse checking on a patient during the night, a family member sitting beside a bed, or a chaplain entering a room and saying, "Shalom. I've come to see how you are."

These may seem like small things, but when someone is frightened, lonely or uncertain about tomorrow, they can make an enormous difference.

This is particularly relevant as we approach Chanukah, the festival whose central mitzvah is to bring light into the darkness.

This week's *parasha*, *Vayishlach*, gives us another powerful image. Yaakov (Jacob) spends the night wrestling with a mysterious figure. The struggle continues until dawn, and Yaakov emerges wounded, walking with a limp.

The Torah does not suggest that he comes through the experience untouched. He has been changed by it. But then we are told: "**The sun shone upon him**."

There is something deeply relevant here to hospital chaplaincy.

Illness, bereavement, disability, an operation or a difficult diagnosis can leave a person changed. There may be physical or emotional scars. We cannot always make those difficulties disappear, but we can accompany people through "the night".

Sometimes that "night" is literal. Hospitals are full of people awake at two or three in the morning, worrying about test results or waiting for a procedure.

But there are other kinds of darkness: fear, loneliness and uncertainty.

For a Jewish patient, there can also be a feeling of being disconnected from Jewish life at precisely the moment when Jewish identity becomes especially important.

That is why Jewish hospital chaplaincy matters. It may mean arranging kosher food, providing a siddur, helping someone mark Shabbat or a festival, saying *Shema* with someone who is frightened, or simply sitting and listening.

The hospital sees the patient's diagnosis. Chaplaincy helps us see the person behind the diagnosis.

This is why JVisit and its volunteer Jewish hospital visitors are so important. They offer something that cannot be prescribed on a medical chart: time, presence and human connection.

Sometimes a patient wants to talk about their illness, family, synagogue, Israel or their memories. Sometimes they simply want to see another Jewish face.

> **"The hospital sees the patient's diagnosis. Chaplaincy helps us see the person behind the diagnosis.**

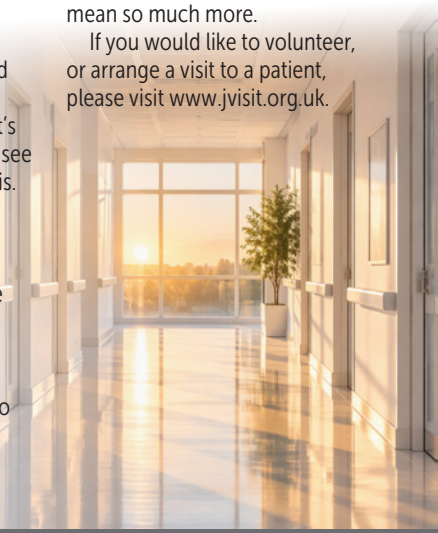
You do not need to be a rabbi or a medical professional to make such a visit. You simply need to be willing to walk into a hospital room and say:

"Shalom. I'm here to see how you are."

JVisit needs more volunteer visitors – men and women – to help ensure that Jewish patients are not forgotten when they are in hospital.

One visit may take only a little of our time. But to someone facing a difficult night, it may mean so much more.

If you would like to volunteer, or arrange a visit to a patient, please visit www.jvisit.org.uk.



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'.

VAYISHLACH: THE HOLINESS OF THE LAND OF ISRAEL

When Yaakov returned safely to the Land of Israel, the Torah records that he "purchased the piece of land on which he had pitched his tent" (*Bereishit* 33:19). Ibn Ezra explains that the Torah includes this detail to teach us the unique significance of Eretz Yisrael: one who possesses a portion of the Land is regarded as having a share in the World to Come.

Soon afterwards, Yaakov named the altar he had built *El Elohei Yisrael*, "God, the God of Israel" (*Bereishit* 33:20), expressing the idea that the Divine Presence rests in the Land of Israel (Ramban).

To strengthen the Jewish people's legal claim to the Land, Yaakov followed Avraham's example by purchasing land, just as Avraham had secured a permanent foothold by acquiring the Cave of Machpelah. Commenting on the verse, "He encamped before the city" (*Bereishit* 33:18), Ramban explains that Yaakov wanted his first dwelling in the Land to be on property that he owned. He therefore camped in a field and purchased it, thereby establishing a holding in the Land.

Ramban adds that this episode also foreshadows the future. The area that Yaakov acquired near Shechem would later become one of the first parts of the Land to be inherited by his descendants.

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.

Does ***UNTERFURER*** mean:

1. Busybody? | **2.** Undergarment? | **3.** Wedding escort?

At a wedding, it is customary for parents to escort their own child to the chuppah. Others have the custom of the fathers escorting the groom, while the mothers escort the bride.

Whoever accompanies the bride and groom are known by the Yiddish term *Unterfurers*, which literally means those who lead or escort another person. They are also referred to as *shushvinim*, a Hebrew term whose precise meaning is uncertain, although it connotes friendship and is used to describe a beloved friend. In the Talmud, the term also refers to monetary wedding gifts given to help cover the costs of the wedding feast.

The idea of designating this role has a remarkable precedent in the Torah itself. According to the *Midrash*, God served as the original *shushvin* for Eve, bringing her to Adam. The custom is also associated with the marriage between God and the Jewish People at Mount Sinai, with Moses and Aaron serving as attendants at this spiritual union.

Ideally, a married couple should fulfil this role at a wedding, as it is considered a *siman tov* - a good omen - for the newlyweds.

"According to the *Midrash*, God served as the original *shushvin* for Eve, bringing her to Adam.



UN RESOLUTION 181 (II)
THE PARTITION PLAN FOR TWO STATES, 29TH NOVEMBER 1947[1]

BY: **RABBI MICHAEL LAITNER**
US Director of Education, Head of Research at the Rabbi Sacks Legacy

The concept of a still ill-defined "two-state solution" between Israel and the Palestinians remains prominent in public debate. What are its origins?

In November 1948, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 181 (ii), known colloquially as 'the Partition Plan', which divided (what was then called) Palestine into proposed Jewish and Arab states with a joint Economic Union and with Jerusalem as an 'international city' administered by the UN Trusteeship Council.

After much lobbying, voting was 33-13 in favour, with 10 abstentions, including Britain. The Resolution was one catalyst for Israel's Declaration of Independence in May 1948. It was accepted by the Jewish Agency, despite its limitations on Jewish immigration and the territorial compromises that it outlined; yet it was rejected by Arab governments and Palestinian Arab leaders. Those leaders declared war on the nascent Israeli state in May 1948; the Resolution was thus never fully implemented, since it was superseded by the 1949 Armistice Agreements between Israel and its neighbours.

Nonetheless, the Partition Plan's significance remains undiminished in understanding the history and religious debate behind the establishment of the State of Israel. The plan's roots lay in the Balfour Declaration of 1917 which was adopted by the League of Nations at the San Remo Conference in 1920 as the objective for a Mandatory Power in Palestine to help prepare "a national home for the Jewish people".

The Mandate was awarded to Britain in 1922. By 1947, Britain still held the Mandate, to the frustration of both Jews and Arabs. The UN, which had replaced the League of Nations after World War Two, appointed an 11-member Special Committee on Palestine in April 1947, which recommended the Partition Plan.

The Plan also provided modern context for the fascinating Rabbinic debate surrounding a Talmudic passage (*Ketubot* 111a) which discusses three linked 'oaths' relating to Jewish national aspirations.

These 'oaths' bound Jews to not proactively create a state; not to rebel against non-Jewish rule and also bound non-Jews not to oppress the Jewish people. Did the positive decisions of the San Remo Conference and the Partition Plan mean that efforts for Jewish statehood would not break these 'oaths'?

Writing after the San Remo Conference, the renowned Rabbi Meir Simcha HaKohen of Dvinsk (1843-1926) understood that proactive attempts were now outside of the scope of the oaths. This added, even prior to the Holocaust, to the understanding that countless persecutions of Jews had absolved us of these oaths.

Contrastingly, Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum of Satmar (1887-1979) did not regard the majority vote of the Partition Plan in particular as effective in this way.

British-born Israeli diplomat Yehuda Avner (1928-2015), in chapter two of his book *The Prime Ministers* (The Toby Press, 2010) described reaction in Jerusalem to the Partition Plan.

November 29th was a Shabbat and so he only heard about the Partition vote during the early hours of Sunday morning. After the initial lively rejoicing, the grim realities of British withdrawal and preparations for the coming conflict set in, as violence increased. Avner wrote candidly of his faith and fears at that challenging time, finding strength through *Tehillim* (the Book of Psalms).

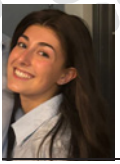
Following the Partition Plan Resolution, dreams of renewed Jewish national return to and sovereignty in the Land of Israel for the first time in almost 2,000 years seemed closer than ever to fulfilment. Yet a rocky road still lay ahead before those dreams would be realised.

[1] An earlier version of this article appeared in 2017

THE TRIBE WEEKLY

PARASHAT VAYISHLACH 27-28 NOVEMBER | 18 KISLEV

TO COMPROMISE OR NOT TO COMPROMISE?



BY: **NICOLE BLOOM**

Youth Director, Edgware

Imagine you're going out with a friend. They decide that you're going to the cinema, choose the film, pick the snacks AND decide when you're allowed to eat them! At what point do you finally say, "Hang on a minute! Don't I get a say in this too?"

In this week's *parasha*, Yaakov (Jacob) and Esav (Esau) prepare to meet for the first time in years, after Yaakov fled when Esav vowed to kill him. There is a lot of tension between the brothers, and the Torah shows us all the preparations that Yaakov, who is understandably anxious, does for their reunion. He sends gifts to Esav, splits his camp, prays and delivers a rather strange message:

"*Im Lavan garti*", "I have lived with Lavan" (*Bereishit* 32:5).

Why does Esav need to know where Yaakov has been living?

Rashi explains that the numerical value of the word *garti* is 613, corresponding to the total number of mitzvot in the Torah. It seems that Yaakov was sending Esav a deeper message: *I lived with the wicked Lavan and still observed all 613 mitzvot!*

Yaakov understood that, when dealing with other people, compromising is essential. However, he also knew that there are certain things you should never give up. He was willing to compromise with Esav, but when it came to his Torah and mitzvot, there was no room for negotiation.

We learn an important lesson from Yaakov: when to compromise and when to stand your ground. It's important to be flexible and willing to accommodate others. However, we need to know where to draw the line. Yaakov teaches us that we should never compromise on the values and beliefs that matter most to us.

Gematria Gymnastics!

Each Hebrew letter has a *Gematria* (numerical value).
Using the chart below, can you answer the following questions?

Gematria values:

1	= א	30	= ל
2	= ב	40	= מ
3	= ג	50	= נ
4	= ד	60	= ס
5	= ה	70	= ע
6	= ו	80	= פ
7	= ז	90	= צ
8	= ח	100	= ק
9	= ט	200	= ר
10	= י	300	= ש
20	= כ	400	= ת

E.g. **גרתי** (*garti*): **ג + ר + ת + י** = 3 + 200 + 400 + 10 = 613

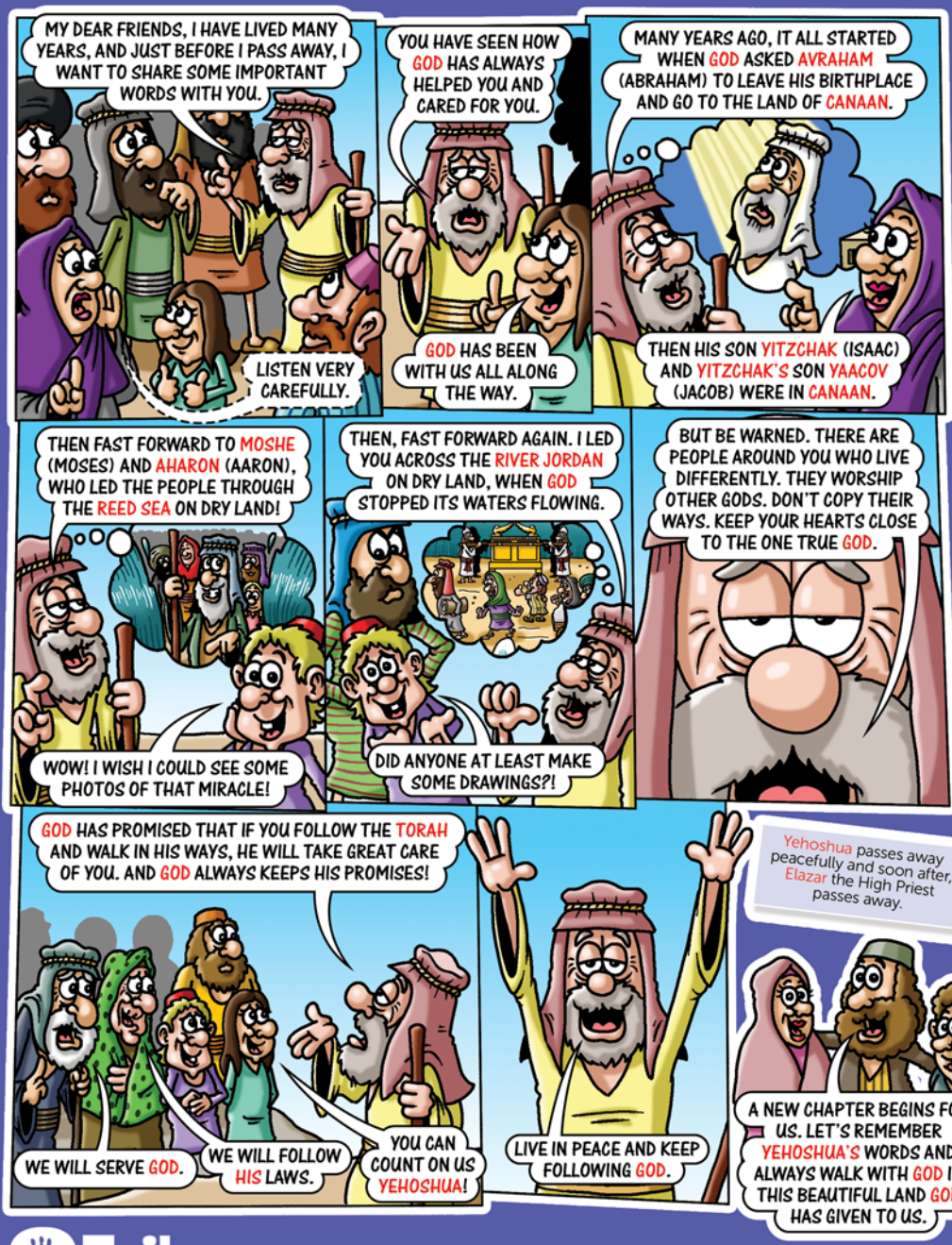
1. **חי** (*chai* - life) = ?
2. **לב** (*lev* - heart) = ?
3. Which has the higher *Gematria*: **יעקב** (Yaakov) or **עשו** (Esav)?
4. The *Gematria* of **וישלח** (*Vayishlach*) is:
   (a) Less than 300
   (b) Between 300 and 350
   (c) More than 350
5. Is the *Gematria* of **תורה** (Torah) more or less than the number of mitzvot in the Torah?

Answers: 1. 18 2. 32 3. **יעקב** (376) is higher than **עשו** (182)
4. (c) More than 350 (**וישלח** = 354) 5. Less (**תורה** = 611, compared with 613 mitzvot)

THE BOOK OF JOSHUA (YEHOSHUA): PART TWELVE

THE TRIBE SCRIBE

Yehoshua's Last Big Lesson!



Writer: Rabbi Nicky Goldmeier Cartoonist: Paul Solomons

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