

SHABBAT CHOL HAMOED PESACH

שַׁבַּת חֹל הַמּוֹעֵד פֶּסַח

In loving memory of Harav Yitzhak Yoel ben Shlomo Halevi



Volume 32 | #29

11 April 2020

17 Nisan 5780

Shabbat ends:

London 8.49pm

Sheffield 9.06pm

Edinburgh 9.20pm

Birmingham 8.58pm

Jerusalem 7.46pm

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May God bless us and the whole world.

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9th Sidra in:

שְׁמוֹת Shemot

By Numbers:

38 verses
460 words
2,602 letters

Headlines:

Instructions for Pesach



United Synagogue Daf Hashavua

Produced by US Living & Learning
together with the Rabbinical Council of
the United Synagogue

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Pushing the Boundaries

By Rabbi Yoni Birnbaum,
Hadley Wood Jewish Community



Craig Lundberg is a
former lance corporal
from Liverpool.

Tragically, he lost his
sight during a rooftop battle with
insurgents in Iraq in March 2007.
But, incredibly, Craig went on to run
the London Marathon, climb Mount
Kilimanjaro, cycle across France and
even learn to ski.

When asked how he had
managed to achieve so much,
despite his disability, Craig simply
replied: "Your limitations are only as
far as you're willing to push them".
What a remarkable attitude. He
realised that when one values time
properly, one can make the most
of every moment, whatever the
circumstances.

On Pesach we begin counting the
days until Shavuot – from the day
we became a free people until the
day we received the Torah on Mount
Sinai. One way of understanding
the purpose of this mitzvah is by

appreciating something that slaves
never have – their own time. A
slave lives only in the moment. The
master commands and the slave
must carry out the task. There can
be no thought of long-term planning
or strategies.

Seen in this light, the ability to
count time is a defining quality of a
free human being – to appreciate
that sometimes what makes
achievement possible is the ability
to endure a delay. Although it takes
time to get from the start of a
journey until its completion, every
step brings us closer to our ultimate
destination.

When the art of counting time
is mastered, when every day – and
every moment of every day – is
counted properly, that is when what
seems insurmountable becomes
possible. Slavery can truly be
transformed into freedom.


However, there is another
key message in this mitzvah of

In loving memory of Chaya Rachel bat Moshe Ben-tzion

Sidra Summary

1st Aliya (Kohen) – Shemot 33:12-16

After the grave sin of the Golden Calf, God had initially threatened to wipe out the nation. He then relented, allowing them to survive, but without His direct supervision. Rather, an angel would guide them. Unprepared to accept God's response, Moshe appeals to God to directly 'accompany' the nation and requests that Israel retain a special status, distinct from other nations. God agrees to both requests (Rashi).



counting and an even clearer link to the inspirational story of Craig Lundberg. The counting period is called the 'counting of the Omer' after the Omer barley offering brought in the Temple on the second day of Pesach. We count from this day until a special wheat offering was brought on Shavuot.

Barley in Temple times was considered the lowest quality flour – of such an inferior quality that it usually could not be used for offerings. There is a powerful message in the very name – 'counting the Omer'.

So often our circumstances seem like the inferior barley rather than the high quality wheat. Yet the message of the Omer count is to never say that "when life will be

like wheat, when the right time is here, that is when I will achieve my potential". Greatness is achieved not by hoping for a better situation, but by taking the here and now and transforming it into a springboard for success.

The inferior barley ripens months before the higher-quality wheat. The Jewish approach is never to wait for the wheat, for the 'perfect circumstances' to arrive. Rather we begin the count right now, today. We strive to make the most of every moment, to achieve the maximum we can with the tools that we have been given.

We are challenged to remember Carl Lundberg's message that "Your limitations are only as far as you're willing to push them".

On Pesach we begin counting the days until Shavuot – from the day we became a free people until the day we received the Torah on Mount Sinai.

2nd Aliya (Levi) – 33:17-19

Sensing a moment of Divine favour, Moshe asks God to show him a vision of His Divine majesty. God responds that no mortal can see a 'full view', but He will show Moshe as much as possible.

3rd Aliya (Shlishi) – 3:20-23

Moshe is told that he will experience this revelation situated in a hollowed-out rock on Mount Sinai. He would be shown

only a vision of 'God's back' (so to speak) but not 'His front'. The Talmudic Sages explain that Moshe would see God enwrapped in a tallit like a chazan, wearing tefillin on His head.

4th Aliya (Revi'i) – 34:1-3

God instructs Moshe to carve a new set of Tablets, containing the same words as the first set, which Moshe had broken on his way down from Mount Sinai.



Shir Hashirim

Peering Through the Lattices

by Rebbetzen Rina Shindler,
Richmond United Synagogue.



On Shabbat Chol Hamoed we read Shir Hashirim, the Song of Songs. Among the many allegorical images, there is one which I find stands out vividly, as if in High Definition; perhaps it touches something deep inside. In Chapter 2 (verse 9) we read: "Behold, He stands behind our wall, looking through the windows, peering through the lattices". Rashi (d. 1105) connects this to the verse in Shemot (3:7), during the Israelites' slavery, which states: "God said: 'I have indeed seen the affliction of my people that is in Egypt and I have heard its outcry'".

The power of poetry and song lies in the ability of the author to use both aesthetic and rhythmic qualities of language to convey thoughts and ideas, in order to evoke feelings

beyond the ostensible meaning of the words. The author of Shir Hashirim, King Shlomo (Solomon), gives an emotional intensity to his expression of ideas and feelings, which captures our imagination.

The imagery used here is one of a loved one standing, hidden from view, watching and waiting for his beloved to reach out to him. He is keeping close watch over her, yet she is unaware of the care and concern which he has for her. Rashi is comparing this to the Jewish People in Egypt, who could not fathom the love which God had for them. They could not yet understand the yearning He had for a closeness to them.

He stands there patiently, watching His loved one, unobserved by her, yet aching for the moment when she will turn and cry out to Him to look after her. This is what the verse in Shemot (ibid.) means when it says "I have...seen". God is always there, watching over unseen,

yearning merely to be perceived and for His role to be recognised. It is our voices, lifted up to Him, which activates His power to help us. That is the continuation of the verse: "... and I have heard its outcry..."

The Ramchal (Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto d. 1746) writes that throughout the year, each of our Festivals hints to unique spiritual energies which are manifest at those particular times. During Pesach, there is a special theme of "peering through the lattices". In other words, we are granted the special opportunity to do some 'God spotting' in our lives. To look and see Him even where He is hidden, to turn to Him and ask Him to see and hear that we need 'redemption', be it from a character flaw, a difficult situation, or a daunting challenge that we may be facing.

May we merit to feel His watchful gaze on us at all times, and may He respond positively to our precious words of prayer and appeal.

In memory of Visrael Shmuel ben Yirmaya Yehoshuah

5th Aliya (Chamishi) – 34:4-10

Moshe ascends Mount Sinai with the new Tablets, as commanded. God now appears to Moshe, as requested and teaches him the 13 Attributes of Mercy. Moshe appeals to God to endow Israel with His full guidance and protection.

6th Aliya (Shishi) – 34:11-17

God declares to Moshe that he is making a covenant with the people. After entering the Land of Israel, they

must neither follow the idolatrous ways of the Cana'anite nations, nor intermarry with them.

7th Aliya (Shevi'i) – 34:18-26

The mitzvah of coming to the Temple with an offering for the three festivals (Pesach, Shavuot and Succot) is restated, as well as the mitzvah to redeem a first-born male child (Pidyon Ha' Ben) and not to mix meat and milk together.

Shirat HaYam

The Exalted King of Kings

By Pnina Savery, US Jewish Living Educator



Seventh day Pesach is the day that the Children of Israel crossed over the Sea of Reeds on dry land. The highlight of the day's Torah reading is Shirat HaYam, the song of praise that is sung to God. After seeing the numerous miracles, the climax of which was the splitting of the sea, the people praise and thank God. We say this song of praise in our daily morning prayers, (p. 56 in the green siddur) which reflects its importance in our everyday lives.

The first line of the song reads: "I will sing to God for He is exalted above all exaltedness, a horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea" (Shemot 15:1). The Hebrew word for exalted is ga'ah and its repetition makes this verse hard to translate. Onkelos (an early second century translation of the Torah into Aramaic) renders it as 'He exalted Himself above those who are exalted, and exaltation is His'.

There is another meaning of the word ga'ah: arrogance. Certainly, the text is not calling God arrogant! Rather it reflects the contrast between the haughtiness of Pharaoh, the Egyptian king, and the exaltation of God. Pharaoh is the ultimate example of arrogance in the Bible, the haughtiest biblical character. He presents himself as a god, to the extent that he would use the Nile secretly for his bodily needs in order to hide his being "only human" from the people (see Rashi to Shemot 7:15). He cannot accept that there is an all-powerful God above him,

as he sees himself as the source of all power.

Percy Shelley, the nineteenth-century English poet, wrote the poem "Ozymandius", inspired by the arrival of the statue of Ramesses II in the British Museum in 1816. The final lines read:

And on the pedestal these words appear:

*"My name is Ozymandias,
King of Kings:*

*Look on my Works, ye Mighty,
and despair!"*

*Nothing beside remains. Round
the decay*

*Of that colossal wreck, boundless
and bare*

*The lone and level sands stretch
far away.*

The poem contrasts the arrogance of the Egyptian kings with the reality that 'nothing beside remains' of their vast dynasties besides their decaying archaeological ruins and broken statues. The paradox is clear: what remains in power is the true, all-powerful God 'who is exalted above all who are exalted'. Despite Pharaoh thinking he was the 'king of kings', God showed him how, in truth, only He is the 'king of kings'. In the end, Pharaoh saw the destruction of his country during the plagues and his entire army drowned at the splitting of the sea.

Now let us look at the second part of the verse. Why is the image of a horse and its rider being thrown into the sea put in the same verse

that contrasts God's exaltedness and Pharaoh's arrogance?

Horses and chariots represented power and wealth in those times. To an extent they still do so today. Consider the images of policemen on horses at football matches or demonstrations. The policeman on a horse has an automatic advantage in terms of sight, but his dominance is more than this. A horse is a powerful creature; before bombs and planes changed the face of war, the cavalry were the key to a successful military campaign. Moreover, in Arab lands, where Jews and Christians were subject to dhimmitude, a lower status based on their religious beliefs, one of the special laws, in addition to special taxes and so on, was that they could not ride a horse. This is because horses have long been a symbol of status and power.

Throughout the Tanach (Hebrew Bible) the apparent power of the horse is contrasted to the true power of God. The law states that the king of Israel cannot have too many horses (Devarim 17:16), perhaps to constantly remind him that his power does not come from them but rather from God. Additionally, Tehillim (Psalms) 20:8, also included in our morning prayers (p. 134 in the green siddur) reads "Some trust in chariots, others in horses, but we call in the name of the Lord our God". This is a perfect example of how the physical might of horses is contrasted to the ultimate might of God.

We can bring this back to Pharaoh, who believed himself to be the 'king of kings', safe from anyone else due to his powerful army and mighty cavalry. He was mistaken. This is the opening message of Shirat HaYam: all salvation and might is from God, which is why He is the 'King of Kings' and the One who is 'exalted' above all.

Farewell... pt.3

Shefford – by Dr Judith Grunfeld z'l

*Extract of an address to the school by Dr. Judith Grunfeld in 1940
at the end of the first year of evacuation.*

Ladies and Gentlemen, The time has come to say goodbye to you all, foster-parents and friends in this village, to say goodbye to your streets, your homes, your children. The familiar sights of Shefford will now retreat for us and big London will once again be our home. We take with us memories of this beautiful countryside which has been our home for six long years. We have become attached to Shefford and this attachment we shall ever carry with us wherever we go. We well remember the day when we arrived, how we felt to be strangers lost in completely new surroundings. Our children had become separated from their parents. We all had left our own homes and everything was unfamiliar to us. Strange were the streets, the houses and the people. We felt depressed and bewildered.

And then the miracle happened. The women started it. The great power of motherhood which is

“The mothers of Shefford gave us their welcome, the mothers who kept their homes bright and cheerful throughout the grim days of peril, who had their sons and husbands fighting in the war...”

international and knows of no races or boundaries, started to work. The mothers of Shefford gave us their welcome, the mothers who kept their homes bright and cheerful throughout the grim days of peril, who had their sons and husbands fighting in the war, extended their motherly love and care to these little

evacuees who had lost the security of their own homes. Goodwill sprang up in the village like flowers in the sun. From all sides the smiles came out, the encouraging words and the helpful actions. We found open doors and hearts, we found understanding for our special needs wherever we turned. Our children grew up and developed in these six long years in Shefford. Some of them are still today in the same homes in which they were billeted in 1939. And while their own homes retreated more and more into the back of their minds, Shefford's cottages became their homes, became part and parcel of their childhood and will, as part of their childhood memories, go with them evermore.

I do not know whether there is any other village in this country where throughout the six years of war a school community of more than 150 strong has continued to live and to function in evacuation uninterruptedly, where foster-parents have kept one or two or three children under their care throughout the war and from where teachers and children are taking leave now with such a genuine feeling of true attachment.

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Dr Judith Grunfeld was the headmistress of the Jewish Secondary School in Stamford Hill in 1939, whose 450 children and staff were evacuated to Shefford and the neighbouring towns in Bedfordshire for the duration of WW2.

In memory of Yaacov ben Shmuel

Point to Consider: *what is the link between the mitzvot listed in this aliyah and the story beforehand?*

Maftir

Maftir is read from a second Sefer Torah, from the section of parashat Pinchas detailing the extra offerings brought during Pesach.

Haftarah

The prophet Yechezkel (Ezekiel) relates seeing lifeless bones in a valley. God instructs him to prophesy ‘to the bones’. Matching bones come close to each other, eventually re-forming into the bodies that they once constituted. Yechezkel then blows ‘life’ into them. God tells him that this event symbolises Israel's future revival.



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if you need help with things like shopping or cooking



Spiritual support

if you need Rabbinic advice or religious guidance



Emotional support

if you just need somebody to chat to

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Email us at

helpline@theus.org.uk

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If you would like to speak to us about volunteering or offering any other assistance during this challenging time, please email

Yael Peleg on helpline@theus.org.uk





THE TRIBE SCRIBE

PESACH: IT'S ABOUT TIME!

EVERYONE KNOWS THAT ON PESACH WE DON'T EAT CHAMETZ, WE EAT MATZAH INSTEAD. BUT WE WANTED TO FIND OUT WHAT THAT ACTUALLY IS ALL ABOUT. SO, WE PUT THEM TO THE TEST WITH OUR SUPER INCREDIBLE INGREDIOMETER!



HOW DOES THAT MAKE SENSE? HOW CAN CHAMETZ HAVE THE SAME INGREDIENTS AS MATZAH YET WE STEER CLEAR OF IT ON PESACH?



THAT SOUNDS LIKE A RIDDLE.

MAYBE THE INGREDIOMETER CAN TELL US MORE?

I KNOW! IT'S ABOUT TIME! THE TIME IT TAKES TO MAKE MATZAH HAS TO BE 18 MINUTES OR LESS. SO THAT IT DOESN'T HAVE TIME TO RISE! THE SAME INGREDIENTS WHEN THEY RISE BECOME CHAMETZ. OHHH! NOW I GET IT.

YES! SO THAT'S WHY WE CAN'T HAVE THE PUFFED UP, RISEN CHAMETZ ON PESACH. IT REMINDS US TO NOT BE TOO PUFFED UP OURSELVES. MATZAH TEACHES US NOT TO BE TOO FULL OF OURSELVES AND PUFFY. ARROGANCE IS NOT WELCOME HERE!



THE LETTERS ח and ה LOOK ALMOST THE SAME EXCEPT FOR THE SPACE IN THE ה - WHERE IT DIDN'T RISE! NOT EATING CHAMETZ ON PESACH GIVES US THE OPPORTUNITY TO THINK ABOUT OURSELVES AND HOW WE BEHAVE.



THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CHAMETZ AND MATZAH IS SO SMALL - IT IS JUST ABOUT THE EXTRA TIME TAKEN TO MAKE IT. THE CLUE IS IN THE LETTERS OF THE WORDS CHAMETZ חמץ and MATZAH מצה. THEY ARE ALMOST THE SAME. BOTH HAVE A ח AND BOTH HAVE A צ BUT THEY DIFFER IN THE ה AND THE ח.

WE CAN RISE AND SHINE ALL THE REST OF THE YEAR, BUT A CHAMETZ-FREE WEEK HELPS US NOT GET OVERBLOWN. HAPPY PESACH!



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