



**Daf Hashavua**

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# Bechukotai בְּחֻקֹּתַי

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Yom Yerushalayim is on Sunday.

In loving memory of Shalom ben Pinchas



Clementine after the Rain  
Credit: Israel Nature Photography by Ary

“If you will follow My decrees and observe My commandments and perform them; then I will provide your rains in their time, and the Land will give its produce and the tree of the field will give its fruit. Your threshing will last until the vintage, and the vintage will last until the sowing; you will eat your bread to satiety and you will dwell securely in your Land“ (Vayikra 26:1-5).

# Sidrah Summary: Bechukotai

## 1st Aliya (Kohen) – Vayikra 26:3-5

God promises that if we keep His laws, then He will provide rain, the Land will give plenty of produce and we will not suffer any physical threat from enemies.

## 2nd Aliya (Levi) – 26:6-9

More blessings are promised if we follow God's will. Wild beasts will withdraw from the Land and our enemies "will fall before us". God will make us fruitful and multiply our numbers.

**Question:** *How many Israelites will it take to pursue a hundred enemies? (26:8) Answer on bottom of p. 6.*

## 3rd Aliya (Shlishi) – 26:10-46

This aliyah opens with further blessings if we choose the right path – a huge abundance of crops and a tangible sense of God's presence amongst us: "I will walk among you, I will be God unto you and you will be a people unto Me".

However, it then continues with the *tochacha*, the Passage of Retribution, which is recited in an undertone by the person reading from the Torah. If we do not listen to God and do not observe the mitzvot, the consequences will be grave. Five stages of punishments are listed. These include: being captured by enemies, the Land being unproductive, livestock being destroyed, famine, hunger and being chased from the Land but finding no comfort on foreign soils. Eventually, however, God will remember His covenant with the forefathers. He will never fully reject Israel.

**Point to Consider:** *With which transgression does Rashi associate the onset of the retribution? (26:14)*

## 4th Aliya (Revi'i) – 27:1-15

One is able to make a vow pledging to give one's monetary value or the monetary value of

someone else, to the Temple. These gifts are referred to as *erechin* ('valuations'). The amount is based on a list of fixed values depending upon age and gender. After designating an animal to be brought as an offering, one is not allowed to try to switch its status to another animal.

## 5th Aliya (Chamishi) – 27:16-21

The Torah details how to 'redeem' a house or field, as first discussed in the 3rd and 4th aliyot. This includes calculating the amount of time left until the Jubilee year (*Yovel*) at the point of redemption.

## 6th Aliya (Shishi) – 27:22-28

A firstborn animal is dedicated from birth to be a Temple offering. If a person dedicated a non-kosher animal to the Temple, he must redeem it and bring its monetary value instead, after adding a fifth to its value.

## 7th Aliya (Shevi'i) – 27:29-34

Certain types of agricultural tithes can be redeemed if an additional fifth of the original value is added.

This is the closing part of the book of Vayikra. We stand for the final verse and after it recite: "*chazak, chazak ve'nitchazek*", a phrase asking for continued strength for our study of the Torah.

## Haftarah

The prophet Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah) admonishes the people for worshipping idols and forecasts the downfall of those who turn their hearts away from God. In contrast, Yirmiyahu encourages those who trust in Him, comparing them to "a tree that is planted near water, which will spread its roots alongside brooks and will not see when heat comes, whose foliage will be ever fresh".



United Synagogue Daf Hashavua

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# The Blessing behind the *Tochachah*

by Rabbi Emanuel Levy, Palmers Green & Southgate United Synagogue



Within the greatest tragedy there can lie the seeds of consolation. Much of our sidrah is devoted to the *tochachah*, the series of calamities which are destined to befall the Jewish people in the land of Israel if we turn

away from the path of the Torah. We learn that although we will be exiled from the Land, our enemies who dispossess us will nevertheless be unsuccessful in populating it.: 'And your enemies that dwell therein shall be desolate in it' (Vayikra 26:16).

On these very words, the Ramban has a famous comment: 'These are good tidings; during all our exiles, our Land will not accommodate our enemies... for since the Jewish people left it, it has never accepted any other nation or tongue; even though they all try to settle it, none has succeeded'.

There could be no more prophetic words than these. Every single nation, apart from our own, who ever tried to settle en masse in the Land, always failed. When the Jewish community was destroyed, following the destruction of the second Temple, the many Greeks and Romans who had made their homes there also disbanded and disappeared. Both Christians and Moslems recognised the holiness of the Land, but their attempts at settling it met with failure. The Arabs, the Turks and the Mongols also set their eyes upon it, but none were able to make the Land flourish.

When the Ramban emigrated to Israel, in 1267, he wrote these words to his son: 'The desolation and devastation of the Land are extensive... the holier the site, the more ruined it is. Jerusalem is the most ravaged of all.'

History bears testimony to the fact that Heaven has designated the Land of Israel to the Jewish

people. Only with the onset of mass Jewish immigration did the Land become productive, and only because of our presence have non-Jews prospered there.

Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik (1903-1993) goes so far as to say that the union of the Jewish people with the Land of Israel is comparable to a marriage. In a marriage, the groom cannot be wedded to the bride unless he knows her. This, says Rabbi Soloveitchik, explains why the Jewish people first sent out spies to view the Land before settling it. Each of the spies represented one of the twelve tribes, and by travelling across its length and breadth, despite the spies' grave mistake, the people eventually became wedded to the Land. Only because we are wedded to it can it prosper.

It goes without saying that just as the sanctity of marriage must be preserved, so must we protect the sanctity of Israel. Our claim to its sovereignty rests solely on our Torah observance and respect of the moral code with which we were charged when we became the Chosen People.



## From Darkness to Light

by Rabbi Daniel Fine, Community Rabbi, Stanmore & Canons Park United Synagogue



When a child takes their first steps, one of the least helpful things that a parent can do is to hold the child's hand. It is only when the child knows that there is no way out – no safety net to fall back on – that they will utilise their strengths.

A similar theme appears in this week's haftarah, whose connection to the sidrah is the common theme of punishment for wrongdoing. The prophet Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah) rebukes the people and warns of exile and punishment. What is the purpose of God decreeing suffering upon a person? After all, if the world was created for our gain, where do punishment and suffering fit in? Our haftarah hints at the beginnings of one approach (of many that have been offered) to answer this.

Accordingly, the Ramban (Nachmanides, d. 1195-1270) writes that when besieging an enemy, one must not surround them on all four sides, lest the enemy realise that there is no way out and use all their strength to fight back.

Nowadays, society in general seems to be displaying less and less will to exhibit restraint. Addictions, for example, are becoming more and more widespread. As a response to this, 'constriction training' has emerged as a mini-phenomenon. Diet groups are one example. In a similar vein, to combat inappropriate use of Internet, there is a system in which a list of every site that one has clicked on is forwarded to a selected 'internet mate'. The common thread is that, as the Ramban proposed, putting oneself in a constricted environment can guide a person and bring out latent inner strengths.

The haftarah alternates between threats of punishment and calls to retain our belief. This suggests that one aspect of punishment and exile is to improve our faith in God and create a newfound commitment to Him. Indeed, after the destruction of the First Temple, throughout the time of the Babylonian exile, idol worship was uncommon. Being thrown into exile, far from the comforts of our home Land, at the mercy of the surrounding nations, had the effect of highlighting the uncomfortable reality that we are not masters of our own fate. We are shown how much we are reliant on God. This refining of faith, a positive and constructive aim, is one of the many aspects of exile. A constricted environment and harsh conditions can bring out the nation's inner strengths.



# Looking Ahead to Shavuot: Lessons of *Bikkurim*

by Rebbetzen Freda Kaplan, US Jewish Living Division



Our festivals all have strong agricultural themes. Yet in today's urbanised culture, it is not always easy to identify with them. Every year, on Shavuot, the mitzvah of bringing *bikkurim* (the first fruits) to

the Temple started afresh. To appreciate the relevance of this mitzvah to our lives today, it is worth noting that one who brought their first fruits in baskets to the Kohen would recite a short narrative recalling our history, from humble beginnings to the slavery in Egypt and, finally, to freedom in the Land of Israel. (Devarim 26:1-10).

A pivotal verse follows directly after this text: "You shall be glad with all the goodness that the Lord your God has given you and your household - you and the Levite and the proselyte who is in your midst" (26:11).

There seem to be three main lessons that can be learned from the mitzvah of *bikkurim*, which are relevant to Shavuot.

First, a feeling of humility when recognising our blessings. Upon excitedly noticing the first budding of fruit on his trees, the farmer could become quite arrogant, thinking only about what he had accomplished. At that very moment, the Torah requires him to pause and tie a string on the branch around the fruit. This was a sign to remind him that when the fruits would finally ripen, they were to be carried to Jerusalem. This is a powerful lesson. We may believe that we are the sole contributors towards our successes. We can take a moment to ponder, to attempt to realise that God is the primary source of our blessings and that we are in a partnership with Him.

Second, the recalling of Jewish history in the text read by the farmer indicates that we should never forget where we came from, as we owe so much

to the generations before us. If we understand this, we form a sense of belonging and grounding. On Shavuot, we internalise the feeling that we are privileged to be part of a long unbroken chain. Now it is our turn to do our part, looking for opportunities to make a contribution to better the world.

Third is the element of joy. As quoted above, the verse states that: "you shall be glad with all the goodness". The very fact that there is a need for a command 'to be glad' demonstrates that it is not an automatic reaction to feel joy. Being happy is something we have to work at and train ourselves in. The Torah is telling us that in order to achieve this sense of happiness, one must learn to share it with others and live as part of a community – "you and your household - you and the Levite and the proselyte who is in your midst".

Interestingly, the origin of the word 'fruit' is from the Latin word *fructus*, meaning enjoyment, delight or satisfaction. In today's world, even if the fruits that we enjoy are the fruits of our labour or the fruits of our womb, we must always strive to have gratitude and a sense of joy in our lives.



# Yom Yerushalayim

by Rebbetzen Nechama Davis, Chigwell & Hainault United Synagogue



Judaism, with all its elaborate rituals, allows us to express our spiritual side in personal, unique ways. And so it was, a few years ago, that I found myself in Jerusalem on Yom

Yerushalayim for the first

time since I had lived there over 20 years before. How would I celebrate it?

Then I remembered the *netz* (dawn) morning prayers at the Kotel, from the Shavuot experiences I had as a student. So I woke up at 5.30 on the morning of Yom Yerushalayim and started walking from Rechavia to the Kotel. Jerusalem without cars, just birdsong: perfect.

I wound my way through the wide streets and narrow alleyways and then suddenly the Kotel plaza was in view. Exuberant prayer reached my ears. Hallel was being sung with feeling. Israeli flags were waving in the morning breeze. It was such an inspiring davening! What a privilege to be at that special place on such a momentous anniversary.

To top off the experience, I took a bus home, following "the scenic route", watching the city wake up, as people hurried to shul, school and work. I saw places I had never noticed before, but it all seemed familiar, comfortable, and very beautiful.

My family and I have merited to have a close connection with Jerusalem, even though we were not born there. Most of my husband's immediate family, including his parents, made Jerusalem their home after they made aliya, fulfilling a life-long Religious Zionist dream.

My own journey to Jerusalem was a little less straightforward. As a teenager, I attended Bnei Akiva summer camp near Cape Town. Every day, we sang a song about a little bird whose "nest is Yerushalayim, where we all hope to go". It planted a seed in my head, and from that, my desire to live in Israel – especially Jerusalem –

sprouted. My *madrichim* (youth leaders) reinforced that feeling, teaching us about the mitzvah of *yishuv ha'aretz*, settling in the Land of Israel. I went to live in Jerusalem in 1979, a few weeks after I finished high school in Johannesburg, just over a decade after the city's re-unification.

At that time, the Jewish Quarter of the Old City was still very much a building site. Every week, my friends and I would make our way past the rubble to go to inspiring shiurim given by a young rabbi, Ephraim Mirvis, who would one day become our Chief Rabbi!

I studied for my degree in English and Drama and learnt *Ivrit* at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, while putting down strong roots in the city. I even met my husband on a number 19 Egged bus, as we made our way to a mutual friend's wedding on Moshav Ora near Ein Karem. We were married in Jerusalem and our first two children were born there.

Having now lived in Adelaide and London for over 30 years, I think of Jerusalem as a city that can exist in parallel in our hearts and minds, just like a song that grounds you to where you currently stand, but also has the ability to transport you to where your heart wants to be. My nest is, indeed, Yerushalayim. May we all celebrate *semachot* and God's miracles, together in Jerusalem.

*Extracted from the 'From Exile To Redemption' Machzor for Yom Hashoah, Yom Hazikaron, Yom Haatzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim. Published by Koren Publications Jerusalem & The United Synagogue*



Answer: five

Which KLBD Bakery will you choose  
for your cheesecake this Shavuot?



The Bagel Place • Bonjour • La Brioche • Cake Art • Carmelli  
Cohen's Bakery • Creme de la Creme • Daniels Bagel Bakery  
The Family Bread • Golan Bakery • Grodzinski Golders Green  
Grodzinski Hendon • Hendon Bagel Bakery • Just Kosher  
King's Bakery & Pizzeria • Munch 'N Crunch • Parkway Finchley  
Parkway Golders Green • Parkway Wembley • Perele's Cakes  
Pourtoi • Renbake Patisserie • Sharon's Edgware  
Sharon's Hendon • So Real (Health Foods) • Tami's Cakery  
Woodberry Down • Yossi's Bakery

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# THE TRIBE SCRIBE

BECHUKOTAI: REAPING THE REWARDS!

HI TRIBE SCRIBERS, WE'VE COME TO THE END OF THE THIRD BOOK OF THE TORAH, VAYIKRAH. AT THE END OF THE PARASHA THIS WEEK, WE HAVE A BEAUTIFUL CUSTOM TO STAND UP AND SAY THE WORDS 'CHAZAK, CHAZAK, V'NITCHAZEK', WHICH MEANS 'BE STRONG, BE STRONG AND MAY WE BE STRENGTHENED', AS WE GO ON TO LEARN ALL ABOUT THE EXCITING AND INFORMATIVE EPISODES IN THE BOOK OF BEMIDBAR, THE FOURTH BOOK OF THE TORAH.



IN THIS WEEK'S PARASHA BECHUKOTAI, THE B'NEI YISRAEL (CHILDREN OF ISRAEL) ARE TOLD ABOUT ALL THE WONDERFUL REWARDS THAT THEY WILL BE GIVEN BY HASHEM IF THEY FOLLOW HIS MITZVOT (COMMANDMENTS).

THAT'S RIGHT, DINA. WE GET AN EXTRA £2 POCKET MONEY OR 10 EXTRA MINUTES PLAYING OUR COMPUTER GAMES WHEN WE TIDY OUR BEDROOMS.

IT'S A BIT LIKE THE REWARDS WE GET AT HOME WHEN OUR PARENTS ASK US TO DO SOMETHING AND WE LISTEN TO WHAT THEY ARE ASKING US TO DO.

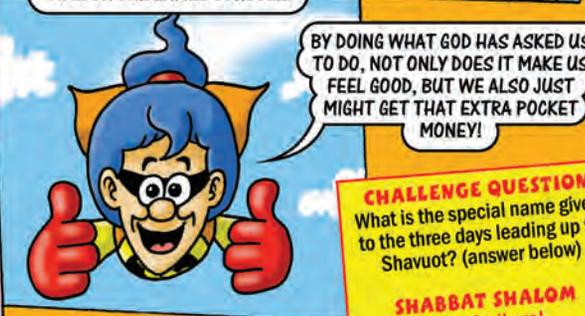
BUT WE GET ANOTHER BIG REWARD TOO - THE GREAT FEELING OF KNOWING WE HAVE RESPECTED OUR PARENTS AND THAT THEY ARE HAPPY WITH US.



IT'S REALLY COOL TO KNOW THAT YOU HAVE MADE SOMEONE WHO LOVES YOU FEEL HAPPY BECAUSE YOU LISTENED TO WHAT THEY ASKED YOU TO DO. THAT'S BETTER THAN ANY MONEY, SWEETS OR TIME ON THE GAMES CONSOLE.



BUT I'LL TELL YOU A SECRET... SOMETIMES THEY GIVE US SOME EXTRA POCKET MONEY TOO!



BY DOING WHAT GOD HAS ASKED US TO DO, NOT ONLY DOES IT MAKE US FEEL GOOD, BUT WE ALSO JUST MIGHT GET THAT EXTRA POCKET MONEY!

**CHALLENGE QUESTION**  
What is the special name given to the three days leading up to Shavuot? (answer below)

**SHABBAT SHALOM**  
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ANSWER: Shloshet Yamel Hag'hatalah

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