



Daf Hashavua

1 February 2020
Shabbat ends

6 Shevat 5780
London 5.39pm
Jerusalem 5.51pm

CELEBRATING OUR PAST
ENSURING A GOLDEN FUTURE

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Bo



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Jami

The Mental Health Service for our Community

Sponsored by Jami, the mental health service for the Jewish community, to mark Mental Health Awareness Shabbat



“[The locust-swarm] covered the surface of the entire land and the land was darkened; it ate all the grass of the land and all the fruit of the tree that the hail had left over. No greenery remained on the trees or the grass of the field in the entire land of Egypt” (Shemot 10:15).

Sidrah Summary: Bo

1st Aliya (Kohen) – Shemot 10:1-10:11

After the first seven plagues, Moshe and Aharon again warn Pharaoh to let the nation go, lest Egypt suffer an eighth plague. Pharaoh's advisors encourage him to agree. However, he only agrees to let the men leave temporarily, but not the women or children.

2nd Aliya (Levi) – 10:12-23

The 8th Plague: Moshe stretches his staff "over Egypt". An easterly wind brings a swarm of locusts over the whole of Egypt, eating any grass and foliage still left over from the plague of hail. Pharaoh admits his sin of not letting the people go and asks Moshe and Aharon to pray for an end to the plague. God sends a westerly wind (see Rashi's commentary) which carries away the locusts. God hardens Pharaoh's heart and he refuses to let the people go. **The 9th Plague:** Moshe raises his hand towards the heavens. For three days, a thick darkness descends over all of Egypt, except for where the Israelites live.

3rd Aliya (Shlishi) – 10:24-11:3

Moshe once again asks Pharaoh to allow the entire nation to leave so that they can bring offerings in the desert. He adds that they should be allowed to take livestock with them. God hardens Pharaoh's heart and he refuses. God requests that Moshe ask the Israelites to ask for gold and silver vessels from the Egyptians.

Point to Consider. *Why did God insist on the Israelites taking these vessels? (see Rashi to 11:2)*

4th Aliya (Revi'i) – 11:4-12:20

Moshe warns Pharaoh about the plague of the first born (Rashi), which will only affect the Egyptians. God tells Moshe and Aharon the laws of Rosh Chodesh and that Nissan is to be the first month of the 'year of months'. They are also told to instruct the nation about the Pesach

offering: the lamb must be designated on 10 Nissan and slaughtered on the afternoon of 14 Nissan. Its blood is to be placed on the door frame and the meat eaten, together with matza and maror, on the night of 15 Nissan. This will be commemorated every year with the seven day Pesach festival.

5th Aliya (Chamishi) – 12:21-28

Moshe relates the laws of the Pesach offering to the elders. The blood on the door frame will 'indicate' to God to 'pass over' the Israelite houses and only smite the Egyptians.

6th Aliya (Shishi) – 12:29-51

The 10th Plague: The plague strikes Egypt at midnight, leaving no house without a death. Pharaoh searches frantically for Moshe and Aharon (Rashi) and tells them to leave. The Egyptian people also urge the Israelites to leave. They take their dough with them before it has time to rise. The Egyptians agree to let them take gold and silver items. The nation travels from Ra'amses to Succot. They bake the unleavened dough, making matzot. Additional laws of the Pesach offering are given.

Question: *How long were the Israelites in Egypt for? (12:40) Answer on bottom of page 6.*

7th Aliya (Shevi'i) – 13:1-16

God relates to Moshe the mitzvah of redeeming firstborn male children (*pidyon ha'ben*). Firstborn animals also have a special sanctity. The mitzvah of tefilin is stated twice.

Haftarah

Yirmiyahu is told by God that Egypt will be destroyed by the Babylonian invader Nebuchadnezzar. The nation of Israel, referred to as "His servant Yaakov", should not be afraid. Even if they are punished for wrongdoings, they will eventually be redeemed from their lands of captivity.



United Synagogue Daf Hashavua

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Why did God spare the Israelite firstborn in Egypt?

by Rabbi Garry Wayland, US Living & Learning educator



Egypt was virtually laid waste. Moshe had had his final encounter with Pharaoh, to whom he said: “I will never again see your face” (Shemot ch.10 v.29). The Israelites had just engaged in their first public mitzvah – the slaughtering of the Pesach lamb – which was simultaneously an act of rebellion against their sheep-worshipping former masters and a declaration that, from now onwards, “we are the firstborn lamb of God”.

Sequestered in their homes with the blood on their doorposts, the final plague was soon to come. The death of the Firstborn was to vanquish the remnant of the hierarchy of Egyptian society that had enabled and enacted the slavery of the Israelites. It was an utterly devastating punishment, necessitated by the refusal of a people steeped in immorality, amorality and indifference to listen to God and Moshe.

Yet even for the Israelites, the primal and chaotic forces of destruction unleashed were so powerful that even their safety was not an automatic given. For this, they had to take the Pesach lamb and put its blood on their doorposts and lintels: “the blood [of the lamb] shall be for you a sign on your houses that you are there. I shall see the blood and I will pass [*ufasacht*] over you; there shall not be within you a plague of destruction whilst I smite Egypt” (Shemot ch.12 v.13)

The commentaries offer various explanations as to how the blood on the doorposts protected the Israelites. Did it serve as a mark to protect an otherwise indiscriminate destructive force (Ibn Ezra, Seforno); as a mitzvah through which the Jews would gain the merit to survive (Rashi); or a declaration of utter faith in Hashem (Rabbeinu Bachye)?

The traditional interpretation of the word *pasach* is ‘to pass over’. This is how we refer to the festival in both Hebrew (Pesach) and English

(Passover). Rashi explains *pasach* as a combination of ‘jumping’ and ‘skipping out’. God jumped from one Egyptian house to the next, leaving out the Israelite houses.

Rabbi Yaakov Medan, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Har Etzion, Israel, suggests a completely different approach, based on the Mechilta, a midrash on the book of Shemot: “He was not prepared to hand over to an agent the task of protecting His firstborn son, Israel. In order to prevent the Destroyer from entering the houses of Israel, He Himself, as it were, “jumped” from one house to the other, stood above them, and barred the Destroying Angel from entering and causing harm”.

Regardless of the understanding of the word *pasach*, it seems clear that the nation of Israel had to act in order to be saved at that time. The blood of the lamb which they daubed on their doorposts was a shield from the chaos that was on the outside.

The faith of the Israelites was deep-rooted, but they had been influenced by living for so long in a society steeped in idolatry. The Pesach offering and the daubing of its blood on the doorposts and the lintels was a pure declaration of faith, one that invited God to lovingly hover over us and redeem us.



Jewish Mental Health Awareness Shabbat

by Rabbi Mordechai Wollenberg, Woodford Forest United Synagogue



This Shabbat we read the portion of Bo which contains the last few of the ten plagues in Egypt, locusts, darkness, and death of the firstborn.

It is also the portion chosen for "The Mental Health Awareness Shabbat", an initiative of Jami for this week, with particular focus on the plague of darkness.

Darkness is a metaphor for despair, for the dark cloud a person can feel hanging over them when experiencing mental health challenges, symbolic of the all-pervading feelings that can affect someone living with mental ill health. Much has been written on this topic, and the connection between this parsha, the plagues and Mental Health. Indeed, we have come a long way in understanding the challenges of mental illness, thanks in no small part to Jami and other organisations, which support mental health provision in the Jewish community. We are now able to do more to help people than ever before.

There is one aspect of the plague of darkness which provides an important insight into our approach to mental health challenges.

The Torah tells us that during the first three days, it was so dark that "a man saw not his fellow" (Shemot 10:23).

The greatest darkness is when "a man sees not his fellow." When we fail to see those around us,

their needs and their struggles, it is truly a dark time.

The Torah elsewhere, in Parshat Kedoshim, tells us "You shall stand up for an elderly person; I am the Lord your God" (Vaykira 19:32). What is the connection between, for example, standing up for an elderly person on the train, and God?

Rashi (1040-1105) explains that there are a number of mitzvot which involve an element of awareness. It could be I did not see the elderly person on the train who needs a seat, that I was genuinely unaware. Or it could be that I saw them but turned aside and chose to ignore. Only God knows the truth. "Help another", says the Torah, "I am the Lord your God". I will know the truth, whether you closed your eyes to a person in need or not.

This is connected to a plague of darkness, when we do not see the pain, the needs of another. Sometime we close our eyes, because it is the easier option, even though we see someone who needs our help.

A darkness where we do not see one another, where we are oblivious to others, is a destructive and devastating one.

Our community has made huge strides in the services we provide to people struggling with their mental health. The next frontier is to have conversations, to reach out to people in need, to avoid closing our eyes to another. That is how we lift the darkness.

Jami

The Mental Health Service for our Community

The United Synagogue @150 – 1. “In the Beginning” – the genesis of the United Synagogue

by Simon Goulden, Education Consultant to the United Synagogue



This year, we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the founding of the United Synagogue. How did it all begin? As many of us know, the Jews were expelled from England by Edward I in 1290, the decree being signed on

Tisha B’Av. Although there were certainly a few Jews living secretly in London in the intervening centuries, the first real Jewish re-settlement in England was in 1656, courtesy of Oliver Cromwell. This community was Sephardi, consisting of Jews who had come from Spain and Portugal via Amsterdam. It was the group vividly portrayed by Samuel Pepys in his diaries, when he visited Creechurch Lane Synagogue on Simchat Torah. When Charles II returned to the throne in 1660, some saw an opportunity to seek the removal of the Jews, but he had been helped substantially by them in his Continental exile and was well disposed towards them, as well as being religiously tolerant. This was especially important when, in 1673, so the story goes, a group of Jews met in a building in Duke’s Place for prayer and were arrested for ‘rioting’. The Privy Council quickly stopped the legal proceedings and, from then on, the position of the Jews in England appears to have been more secure.

By 1690 there were enough Ashkenazi Jews in London to form a separate community, which soon became known as ‘The Great Synagogue’ and in religious matters followed *minhag Polin*, the German-Polish rite, modelled on the practice of Hamburg, from where many of the new arrivals had come. This is still reflected today in the front page of the Sacks Singer’s Prayer Book.

During the next 100 years, the community grew through immigration and natural growth, so that by the early 1800s there were at least three major Ashkenazi synagogues in London, The Great, the Hambro’ and the New. Between them, they accounted for some 7-8,000 people and they

served the Jews living on the eastern side of the City of London, Houndsditch and Goodman’s Field. But like our community now, our ancestors were also on the move, migrating towards the new and upcoming areas of Bloomsbury, Marylebone, Westminster and Bayswater. Those left behind were often poorer or older, retaining a sentimental attachment to the communities of their youth. Opening new synagogues would seem to have been the obvious choice, but both Sephardi and Ashkenazi communities were anxious to avoid fragmentation, partly because they were worried about the financial impact on communally-funded activities across the community at large, such as welfare, the Chief Rabbinate, *Pesach matzot* and *shechita*.

However, by the middle of the nineteenth century, the new ‘suburban’ communities needed new synagogues to be built in their neighbourhoods. The year 1848, was one of momentous revolution and change in Europe. Our own Jewish community was also changing.



Rimmonim from the Hambro in the Jewish Museum

Shefford – Dr Judith Grunfeld זצ"ל

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.

One day five of our best teachers were called away for internment. They were given half an hour to pack their belongings, to follow the police, to be taken to the internment camp on the Isle of Man. There was no choice. Pale-faced and worried, they were leaving their families, their work and the school community which they had helped to create and which was so much in need of them, to live idle and empty lives behind barbed wire. They were technically considered enemy aliens as they came from an enemy country, although this enemy country had hunted them out. They did not possess the nationality of the country that gave them asylum, and so were considered a risk and put under guard. The members of the staff who were left behind had, in addition to their own work, to fill the gap. It was a year before these teachers were allowed to return to resume their places again in our midst.

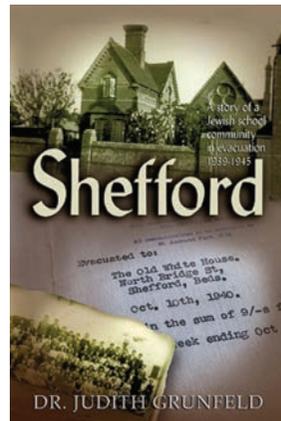
And there were also the special days which the Jewish calendar handed to us over and over again. There were five occasions of *Tisha B'Av* (the Ninth of Av), a day of mourning for the destruction of the Temple) which left its serious imprints on the young minds. We were seated on low benches in the evening; candles were lit. The elders recited the *Kinnos* (elegies) in a *Nigun* that clearly held the sighing of many past tragedies in its rhythm. The bigger boys joined in the mournful melodies. The customary buoyancy was banished and the tragedy of our history made itself felt. On these days of the *Ninth of Av*, all 150 children (this was the number of children that stayed with us permanently throughout the six years) were seen walking round the village with canvas shoes on their feet, in accordance with the law relating to that day that leather shoes should not be worn. Boys over thirteen and girls over twelve would fast, and the foster-parents in the village came to admire our children

for their steadfastness when they refused – oh what an unheard of asceticism – even a cup of tea in the morning.

On *Lag B'Omer* the more manly ones would be seen rid of the unseemly growth of beard, and if any boy dared remove this before time, he would run the risk of being looked at askance by the friendly foster-parents.

They had five years to become acquainted with our calendar and its peculiar demands. As the years passed by, our ways became familiar to them; they became a part of their landscape, a part of their social life, a part of their friendly gossip and a welcome distraction in their comparatively uneventful and quiet country life. They became attached to us and even proud of us, because under their care we grew, we developed and we presented a picture of contented youth. The boys and girls were heard singing beautiful songs in a well-conducted choir. They were watched playing cricket and football. They were reported to have passed school examinations successfully. We had important public visitors so that the village was honoured by their arrival.

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mental health
wellbeing
mind & body
talk
caring talk
friends
talk

THE MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS SHABBAT

31 JAN - 1 FEB 2020

The Mental Health Awareness Shabbat date was chosen to coincide with Parashat Bo, which tells of the Plague of Darkness – a suitable launchpad for discussions on the nature of mental health.

We aim to raise the profile of mental health in the Jewish Community. It is an opportunity to encourage people of all ages to be more in touch with their own mental health and wellbeing, and to raise awareness of mental health and mental illness in the local and wider community.

Please share what you or your community have done to mark the Shabbat.

 @JamiPeople

 @JAMIMentalHealth

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The Mental Health Service for our Community

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THE TRIBE SCRIBE

BO: CHAIN REACTION!

OH NO! MY NECKLACE IS BROKEN! I WAS GOING TO WEAR IT FOR THE TU B'SHVAT PARTY.



I'M SURE IT CAN BE FIXED, AND PROBABLY IN TIME FOR THE TU B'SHVAT PARTY. IT'S JUST ONE LINK...



JUST ONE SMALL LINK AND YET WITHOUT IT THE WHOLE NECKLACE IS BROKEN!

IT REMINDS ME OF LINKS IN A DIFFERENT KIND OF CHAIN...



EACH ONE OF US IS A LINK, IN A CHAIN THAT STRETCHES BACK THROUGH TIME AND SPACE. THE **CHAIN OF MESORAH** - THE TRANSMISSION OF OUR JEWISH HERITAGE, PASSING ON THE JEWISH STORY. YOU AND I ARE THE RECENT LINKS, BUT THIS CHAIN INCLUDES OUR PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS, GREAT-GRANDPARENTS, **THE CHAFETZ CHAIM, SARAH SCHENIRER, RASHI, RABBI AKIVA, QUEEN ESTHER, KING DAVID, DEVORAH, CHANA, JOSHUA** AND FINALLY TO **MOSHE** AND ALL THE JEWISH PEOPLE AT THE TIME WHO RECEIVED THE **TORAH** DIRECTLY FROM **GOD**.



ALL OF THOSE PEOPLE ALONG THE WAY HAVE KEPT THE CHAIN STRONG, FOR US TO CONNECT TO. AND HERE WE ARE TODAY, AWARE AND PROUD OF OUR JEWISH IDENTITY.

AND THAT'S WHY THE **TORAH** REMINDS US IN THIS WEEK'S **PARASHA** AND IN MANY OTHER PLACES OF THIS REALLY IMPORTANT **MITZVAH. VEHIGADETA LEVINCHA** - TELL THE STORY OF THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT TO THE CHILDREN. WE SPEND THE WHOLE NIGHT TELLING THE STORY AT THE **PESACH SEDER**, AND OF COURSE WE REFER TO THE SAME IDEA IN **SHEMA**, IN **KIDDUSH**, IN **MEZUZOT** AND **TEFILLIN**.



WE KNOW OUR STORY BECAUSE OUR PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS AND TEACHERS TOLD IT TO US. WE HAVE BEEN LUCKY ENOUGH TO INHERIT THE STORY. IT'S UP TO US TO PASS IT ON TO THE FUTURE, SO THAT THE CHAIN OF OUR BEAUTIFUL JEWISH WAY OF LIFE WILL CONTINUE.

SURPRISE! LOOK DINA, I FIXED YOUR NECKLACE - I LINK YOU'LL BE HAPPY WITH IT!



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.