

# BO בא

## 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



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6 Shevat 5782

#### Shabbat ends:

London 5.04pm

Sheffield 5.07pm

Glasgow 5.07pm

Edinburgh 5.00pm

Birmingham 5.07pm

Southport 5.13pm

Hull 5.02pm

Jerusalem 5.32pm

*"God said to Moshe: 'Stretch forth your hand towards the heavens, and there shall be darkness upon the land of Egypt, and the darkness will be tangible'"*  
(Shemot 10:21)



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## Sidra breakdown

בא

Bo

3rd Sidra in:

שמות

## Shemot

By Numbers:

**106 verses**

**1,655 words**

**6,149 letters**

Headlines:

## Pesach and the Exodus



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# To Feel the Love

by Rabbi Elazar Symon,  
University Jewish Chaplain of Cambridge and East Anglia



The Israelites receive their first commandment shortly before the final step of the Exodus. Why specifically at that time, and what can it teach us?

This week's sidra tells the final chapter in the story of the Israelites in Egypt. After years of enslavement by the Egyptians, Pharaoh finally utters the words: *"Rise up, depart from among my people!"* (Shemot 12:31).

There is a well-known observation that the Israelites are extremely passive throughout the Exodus and its immediate

aftermath. They are mentioned only in their complaints, do not engage in any religious act, nor does God demand anything of them. A common explanation for this is that the Exodus is a story of "awakening from above". God is the One "descending" to the people, carrying the Israelites in His arms like helpless infants. The Israelites are a nation of slaves, they lack the power and character to act or to spirituality awaken themselves. It is *after* the redemption that they will start to form an identity, receive the Torah and begin an active relationship with their Redeemer.

In light of this, it is surprising

## Sidra Summary

### **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.

# It can be hard to feel the sympathy and care from our friends from the depths of the pit, even if in retrospect we can appreciate it.

that just *before* - and not *after* - the tenth and decisive plague, the tone of the story changes and the Israelites are called to action:

*"Speak to the whole community of Israel and say that on the tenth of this month each of them shall take a lamb for a family, a lamb for a household"* (ibid 12:3). The Torah continues, specifying exactly how this should be done, including the instruction to place blood on their doorposts.

Does God really need blood on the doorposts? Has He not differentiated between the Israelites and the Egyptians until now? What is the significance of this call for the

Israelites to take action in a process that is managed exclusively by God and Moses?

I think there is a great lesson here. There are times in our lives when we are down, when we cannot raise our eyes to the sky or the future. We are stuck and we cannot help ourselves. In these times, if we are lucky, we might have someone who loves us that we can rely on, someone to carry us in their arms and put us back on our feet. Having someone like that is the most precious thing in the world. But sometimes our head hangs so low that we cannot even see that. It can be hard to feel the

sympathy and care from our friends from the depths of the pit, even if in retrospect we can appreciate it. The nature of depression is that it makes you feel alone even if you are not.

Perhaps this was similar to how the Israelites felt. They were so oppressed they could not even recognise the miracles around them; they could only see the sweating back of the person working in front of them. So God gives them a mitzvah, asks them to raise their heads just for a second, before He completes the task. He tells them to place blood on their doorposts to draw their attention to the fact that the King of kings Himself, in His great love for them, is reaching down from the heavens and knocking on each of their doors, whispering words of comfort and protection in a challenging and chaotic world. He wants to make sure they do not miss how much He loves them.

May we all be able to recognise the love and kindness in the world, even during the harder times, and in so doing, leave those times behind and reach a new world of redemption and freedom.



## In loving memory of Devorah bat Avraham z"l

### 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

# Mental Health Awareness Shabbat

by Rabbi Alex Chapper,  
Borehamwood & Elstree Synagogue



I remember once being stuck in traffic in the Blackwall Tunnel for what felt like hours. In this dark and dingy black hole, we moved

so slowly it would have been quicker to walk. I could not see anything else in front of me except for cars, walls and more tunnel. Eventually, as I inched my car forward, I could gradually make out some light up ahead. At first it was only a pin prick but then, there it was, the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel. As I emerged from its gloomy confines, I had to blink at the dazzling light outside.

In describing the plague of darkness, the Torah says, "People could not see each other, and for three days no one could get up from where they were; but all the Children of Israel had light in their dwellings" (Shemot 10:23).

Ramban (Nachmanides, 1194-1270) explains that this darkness was not a mere absence of sunlight, where the sun set and it appeared as if night. Rather, it was a thick darkness that extinguished every light, similar to the darkness of deep caverns where light cannot last as it is swallowed up in the density of

**We must constantly repeat the truism that mental health is just as important as physical wellbeing and there is help and support available out there. You are not alone.**

the darkness.

This plague caused two deprivations for the Egyptians. First, since it was so dark that not even brothers could recognise each other, there was a loss of social interaction, with everyone isolated. Secondly, this sustained isolation caused a sense of paralysis which meant that the Egyptians were rooted in their place unable to escape the situation.

Contrast this to the Jewish people's experience; they were totally unaffected by the surrounding

darkness and able to enjoy the benefit of light.

This episode underscores for us how it is conceivable for different people to simultaneously experience completely opposite emotions even though they are in the same situation. How it is possible for someone to feel completely alone in a room full of people; while those around may be enjoying themselves, that person is secretly crying inside. It is like sitting in the darkness of the audience at a theatre watching actors on a spotlight stage.

Jami's Mental Health Awareness Shabbat is an important moment to remind ourselves that the plague of darkness has a resonance with mental illness because, unlike a physical ailment, it is often unseen and those around are likely to be unaware of it. This compounds the effects and can lead to feelings of isolation and despair.

In an ever-changing world, it is vital to focus on and raise awareness of mental health and wellbeing. We must constantly repeat the truism that mental health is just as important as physical wellbeing and there is help and support available out there. You are not alone.

# The Haftarah of Bo – Egypt’s Destruction and the Will of God

by Rabbi Steven Dansky, Cranbrook United Synagogue



This week’s Haftarah comes from the book of Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah), the prophet in the years prior to the destruction of the first *Beit Hamikdash* (Temple). It deals with a prophecy regarding the Egyptian monarch, Pharaoh Necho, concerning the destruction of his forces at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. The Haftarah has a clear connection to this week’s parasha, which deals with the destruction of Egypt through the plagues centuries earlier, by the hand of God.

Yirmiyahu is told to go and proclaim the coming of the armies of the North to the Egyptians. The reason for this, as the rabbinic commentator Don Yitzchak Abarbanel (1437-1508) explains, is because it was the way of kings to proclaim their intentions to make war with the enemy, so the enemy could prepare themselves. In this way, the invaded territory could not claim that they had been attacked by stealth, ensuring that it was essentially a fair fight.

This furthers the connection between the Haftarah and the parasha. Just as Yirmiyahu warns the Egyptians of the upcoming attack from Nebuchadnezzar, Moshe warns Pharaoh about the upcoming plague of locusts (Shemot 10:1-6). He also warned Pharaoh about the death of the first-born Egyptians in response to his refusing to let the Jewish people (God’s firstborn) go (ibid 4:23).

An important difference between our parasha and the Haftarah is that the destruction about which Yirmiyahu speaks is in the hands of Egypt’s physical enemy, Babylon, whereas the destruction in the parasha comes from God Himself. Perhaps a message which can be taken from the connection between the parasha and the Haftarah is that the outcomes of battles which appear to be in the hands of humans, are as much God’s will as if He performed these actions Himself. This connection promotes the idea that God’s will is evident at every turn; even the decisions of kings to go to war must be seen with

spiritual rather than just physical eyes.

This idea is also alluded to in *Mishlei/Proverbs* (19:21), in a verse said daily in the *Pesukei D’zimra* (Verses of Praise) section of *Shacharit* (green siddur p.46): “*Rabot machashavot b’lev ish, va’atzat Hashem hee takum* - Many are the intentions in a person’s heart, but God’s plan endures”. Powerful people may think that they are fulfilling their own whims, but in reality, God’s will prevails.

The end of the prophecy foretells the return of Egypt to their homeland, and the Israelites who are in exile will wonder if they too will return to Israel. Yirmiyahu therefore finishes with words of reassurance, telling the Israelites that they have not been forgotten by the Almighty: “And Yaakov (the Israelites) will return and have peace and tranquillity, with none to make them afraid” (Yirmiyahu 46:27). These comforting words are referenced in the prayer we say for the State of Israel (green siddur p.422).

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.

## 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

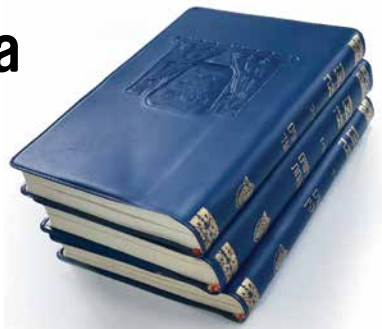
Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah) is told by God that Egypt will be destroyed by the Babylonian invader Nebuchadnezzar. The nation of Israel, referred to as “His servant Yaakov”, should not be afraid. Even if they are punished for wrongdoings, they will eventually be redeemed from their lands of captivity.

# Foreign Places in the Mishna

## Part Twelve:

# Cappadocia

by David Frei, US Director of External and Legal Services  
and Registrar of the London Beth Din



Those who read the travel supplements in the weekend newspapers will be familiar with photos

of brightly coloured hot-air balloons hovering above a landscape filled with strange-looking rock formations, arising out of the Anatolian plateau in Turkey. The region featured is Cappadocia, which is frequently mentioned in ancient Jewish sources.

*Targum Onkelos* (an ancient Aramaic translation of the Torah) on Bereishit 10:14 translates the *Caftorim*, listed as descendants of Cham, son of Noah, as being Cappadocians.

The last Mishna in Tractate *Ketubot* (13:11) discusses the currency in which a man must pay his wife the monies due to her under her *ketuba* (a document given to her at the wedding which details a man's responsibilities to his wife) in the event of divorce. In an early example of what in today's legal system is called private international law, the Sages rule that whether the marriage took place in the Land of Israel, but the divorce was in Cappadocia or vice versa, the payment may be made in Israeli currency rather than the superior and more valuable currency of Cappadocia. Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel dissents, saying that in the latter case, since the marriage was

in Cappadocia, even though the divorce was in Israel, he must pay in Cappadocian currency because the undertaking to pay arose in Cappadocia. All agree that if the marriage and divorce take place in Cappadocia, then the local currency must be paid.

The Talmud (*Shabbat* 26a) discusses the fuels which may be used for kindling the Shabbat lights before the onset of Shabbat. After

use any substance not specifically prohibited by the Sages.

Cappadocian Rabbinic scholars such as Rabbi Yudan, Rabbi Shmuel and Rabbi Yanai are mentioned in the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds. We also know of distinguished Rabbis from the Land of Israel who visited Cappadocia.

The Talmud (*Yevamot* 121a) discusses issues surrounding presumption of death. In this context,

Rabbi Akiva relates that he once travelled on a boat, saw another ship sinking and was deeply saddened by the apparent death of Rabbi Meir who was on that vessel. Yet later, when he landed in Cappadocia, Rabbi Meir came and engaged him in Halachic debate. When Rabbi Akiva asked him how he had survived, Rabbi Meir told him that one wave had deposited him upon another wave until he

was carried to the shore.

To understand the size of the Jewish population in Cappadocia we should mention the Talmudic reference in Tractate *Moed Katan* (26a) to the slaying by the Persian King of the Sassanid dynasty, Shapur I, of 12,000 Jews in Mezigat Caesarea. This was in a battle between the Persians and the Romans in 260 CE. The city referred to as Mezigat Caesarea is today the city of Kayseri, the largest city in the Cappadocia region.



*Cappadocia*

quoting a *Tosefta* (a supplementary collection of laws from the time of the Mishna) which is restrictive about the fuels that may be used, Rabbi Yochanan ben Nuri objected, asking rhetorically, "what should Babylonians, who only have access to sesame oil, do? What should the people of Medea who only have nut oil, the people of Alexandria who only have radish oil and the people of Cappadocia who only have naphtha do?". He therefore ruled that one may

# JAMI MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS SHABBAT

## 7-8 JANUARY 2022

The Jami Mental Health Awareness Shabbat falls annually to coincide with Parashat Bo which tells of the Plague of Darkness – a suitable launchpad for discussions on mental health.

This year's theme is Mental Health in a Changing World. Living through the pandemic has affected all our mental health and this dedicated Shabbat is an opportunity for the entire community to focus on, and raise awareness of mental health, mental illness and wellbeing.

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

**#MHAS2022**

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# Jami

The Mental Health Service for our Community

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# THE TRIBE SCRIBE

BO: KNOWING AND GROWING!

THIS WEEK'S **PARASHA** DISCUSSES THREE OF THE **PLAGUES** IN EGYPT AND THE **EXODUS**. SO IT IS INTERESTING THAT IT MENTIONS THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING CHILDREN NO LESS THAN THREE TIMES!



THE VERSES ABOUT EDUCATING THE CHILDREN ALSO APPEAR IN THE **PESACH HAGGADAH** WHEN WE DESCRIBE THE FOUR CHILDREN, ANSWER THEIR QUESTIONS AND WE ENCOURAGE THE CHILD WHO DOESN'T YET KNOW HOW TO ASK.

THAT'S RIGHT, AND WE START THE ACTION AT THE **SEDER** WITH QUESTIONS TOO, WHEN THE YOUNGEST PERSON ASKS **MA NISHTANA?** BUT QUESTIONS AREN'T JUST FOR **SEDER NIGHT**...



Rabbi Lord Sacks Z"l explains the importance of asking questions:

IT IS A RELIGIOUS DUTY TO TEACH OUR CHILDREN TO ASK QUESTIONS. THAT IS HOW THEY GROW.



TO ASK IS TO BELIEVE THAT SOMEWHERE THERE IS AN ANSWER.

ASKING QUESTIONS IS THE KEY TO LEARNING AND DEVELOPING MORE UNDERSTANDING.



Isador Rabi won the Nobel prize for Physics in 1944 for his discovery of nuclear magnetic resonance which is used in **MRI scans**. Isador credited his incredible achievements to his ability to ask questions, which he learned from his mother.



MY MOTHER MADE ME A SCIENTIST WITHOUT EVER KNOWING IT. EVERY OTHER CHILD WOULD COME BACK FROM SCHOOL AND BE ASKED, 'WHAT DID YOU LEARN TODAY?' BUT MY MOTHER USED TO ASK, 'IZZY, DID YOU ASK A GOOD QUESTION TODAY?' THAT MADE THE DIFFERENCE. ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS MADE ME A SCIENTIST.

KNOWING IS GROWING! WHAT QUESTION ARE YOU GOING TO ASK TODAY?



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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.