

## **The UK Community Shabbaton at home - A Unique Opportunity**

***“In a crisis, be aware of the danger but recognize the opportunity.”*** President John F. Kennedy.

We are in a crisis, there is no doubt about it. However, as President Kennedy said, we must recognise the opportunity.

Two weeks ago, my children were getting worried. It was the first lockdown Shabbat, what were they going to do? No children or youth services, no guests, no going round to friends' houses. 'I am not looking forward to Shabbat', said one of them. So we decided to create the first 'Family Shaw Shabbaton at home'. We planned a programme with a schedule with games, readings and activities. We had 'shul at home' altogether, which in some ways was more meaningful than a regular Shabbat. Every meal was a focus of discussions and singing. We all had a wonderful time.

The thought struck me during Shabbat, why cannot everyone do this? Have a Shabbaton at home. Thankfully, Rabbi Daniel Fine of Stanmore and Canons Park United Synagogue had a similar idea and along with Rabbi Michael Laitner of the United Synagogue and David Reuben, our Director of Programmes we have spent the last ten days devising the first ever 'UK Community Weekend at Home'. A project of Mizrahi UK in partnership with the United Synagogue. Huge thanks to them as well as to Richard Verber from the United Synagogue who has helped with all the IT and Gemma Denby from Mizrahi UK for liaising with all the communities.

Tens of thousands of homes all across the UK are joining together both with their communities in spirit as well as nationally to celebrate Shabbat in your homes.

From Glasgow to Golders Green, from Belmont to Broughton Park you will be celebrating Shabbat together...at home. In total over 60 communities across the country are participating in this Shabbaton at home, sending the project into well over 30,000 homes.

We have provided you with a schedule from the launch concert with Yaakov Shwekey on Friday afternoon until Havdalah with Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks and Chazan Jonny Turgel on Saturday night. We are honoured to have both the Chief Rabbi and the Prime Minister address us prior to Shabbat as part of this unique programme.

You hopefully have printed out both the schedule and the Shabbat pack which has been prepared by Mizrahi UK and the United Synagogue's Jewish Living Division. It contains readings, quizzes, inspirational ideas and Divrei Torah to guide you through Shabbat.

The idea is simple. Never before have so many people been at home for Shabbat, without shul and community. We want to make those 25 hours as enjoyable and inspirational as possible, linking everyone together, so that no Jew should feel in spiritual isolation even if unfortunately we are in physical isolation. So please take part in this first UK Shabbaton at Home!

As Rabbi Laitner mentioned to me, our sages teach us that on Shabbat Hagadol, the Shabbat before Pesach when Rabbis traditionally teach the laws and ideas of that Yom Tov, this is an opportune moment to bring meaningful words from inspiring personalities into our homes. Our synagogues may be closed, but our communities are open. This Shabbat, we join into one enormous community, united in purpose and spirit.

We live in an unprecedented time when we have been stripped of all our communal institutions. All we have left is the Jewish home. This is the crisis but is also where the battle for Jewish survival will be won and lost. That is where this UK Community Shabbaton at home will have an impact. That is our opportunity.

Shabbat Shalom and have a wonderful Shabbat at home!

Rabbi Andrew Shaw  
CEO Mizrahi UK



# THE UK COMMUNITY SHABBATON @ HOME

3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2020 | 10<sup>th</sup> NISSAN 5780

PARASHAT TZAV | פרשת צו

## Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> April

17:15 — Mincha (Pg 170)


17:30 — Pre Shabbat Concert with **Yaakov Shwekey**  **LIVE**

17:55 — Pre Shabbat Message from **The Right Honourable Boris Johnson MP**  **LIVE**

18:00 — Shabbat Message and Prayers for the Sick from **Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis**  **LIVE**

18:10 — Kabbalat Shabbat (pg 258) with **Rabbi Shlomo Levin and Rabbi Eli Levin**  **LIVE**

18:45 — Blessing of the Children (Either in person or call them!) (Pg 310) 

18:50 — Candle lighting (p254) (note that one may light candles as late as 19:22 but once you have lit candles you have accepted Shabbat - please do not light before 18:15) 





## שבת שלום

18:55 — Boi V'Shalom and Mizmor Shir (pg 270)

19:00 — Maariv for Shabbat (pg 274)

19:15 — Kiddush (Pg 314) 

Followed by — Friday Night Dinner

- Friday Night Quiz – Quiz of two halves 
- Thoughts to Ponder – **Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks** 
- Heroes of Jewish History – **Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau** 
- Dvar Torah by **Rabbanit Shani Taragin** 
- Shabbat Zemirot

21:00 — Birkat Hamazon – Grace after meals (Pg 756)

21:15 — After Dinner Shabbat Entertainment - Oneg Shabbat

- L'chaim
- Games Night - Play your favourite board games



Attached to Email



Will be featured Live on  
Facebook and YouTube



Pg

Pages to be found  
in the Green Siddur



## Shabbat 4th April

09:15 — Shul at Home

- Shacharit (pg 16-32, pg 322-402): omit Kaddish, Barchu and repetition of Amidah
- First four Mishnayot of Pirkei Avot for discussion (pg 524) 
- Parasha of the Week – Tzav (pg 429 Hertz, pg 568 ArtScroll) and Haftarah Shabbat HaGadol (pg 1005 Hertz, pg 1220 ArtScroll)
- Ideas about prayer and the morning service 

11:00 — Kiddush – Get rid of all that Chametz

11:20 — Rabbi's Sermon 

11:30 — Mussaf (pg 434)

11:50 — Shul Announcements by **Ashley Blaker** 

11:55 — Adon Olam

12:00 — Shabbat Hagadol Learning with **Sivan Rahav Meir** 

13:00 — Shabbat Lunch

- Tribe Quiz 
- Thoughts to Ponder – **Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks** 
- Heroes of Jewish History – **Miriam Peretz** 
- Dvar Torah by **Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis** 
- Shabbat Zemirot

15:00 — Shabbat Menucha – Shabbat relaxation

18:00 — The Great Shabbat Challenge

- Dingbats 
- Moral maze 

18:45 — Mincha (pg 476)

19:00 — Seudah Shlishit - The third meal of Shabbat

- Pesach Misc 
- Thoughts to Ponder- **Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks** 
- Heroes of Jewish History – **Natan Sharansky** 
- A concluding message from **Rabbi Shaw, Rabbi Laitner & Rabbi Fine** 
- Shabbat Zemirot

## שבוע טוב

20:30 — Maariv (pg 202)

21:00 — Havdalah with **Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks & Chazan Jonny Turgel**  



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# FRIDAY NIGHT

## Blessing for the Children

**For boys, the introductory line is:**

May you be like Ephraim and Menashe.

יְשִׁימְךָ אֱלֹקִים כְּאַפְרַיִם וְכַמְנַשֶּׁה

**Yesimcha Elo-him k'Ephraim v'chi-Menashe**

**For girls, the introductory line is:**

May you be like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel & Leah.

יְשִׁימְךָ אֱלֹקִים כְּשָׂרָה רַבֵּקָה רָחֵל וְלֵאָה

**Yesimech Elo-him k'Sarah Rivka Rachel v'Leah**

**For both boys and girls, the rest of the blessing is:**

May God bless you and protect you.

יְבָרְכֶךָ ה' וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ

**Y'varechecha Ado-nai v'yishmerecha**

May God show you favor and be gracious to you.

יָאֵר ה' פְּנֵיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיְחַנְךָ

**Ya'er Ado-nai panav eilecha vichuneka**

May God show you kindness and grant you peace.

יִשָּׂא ה' פְּנֵיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּשֶׂם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם

**Yisa Ado-nai panav eilecha v'yasem lecha shalom**

## Candle Lighting

**Reading for Candlelighting:** The train dragged on with its human freight. Pressed together like cattle in the crowded trucks, the unfortunate occupants were unable even to move. The atmosphere was stifling. As the Friday afternoon wore on, the Jews and Jewesses in the Nazi transport sank deeper and deeper into their misery. Suddenly an old Jewish woman managed with a great effort to move and open her bundle. Laboriously she drew out two candlesticks and two challot. She had prepared them for Shabbat

when she was dragged from her home that morning. They were the only things she had thought worth taking with her. Soon the Shabbat candles lit up the faces of the tormented Jews and the song of 'L'cha dodi' transformed the scene. Shabbat with its atmosphere of peace had descended upon them all.

**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שַׁבָּת**

## A message from Rabbi Daniel Fine before Kiddush

With our community institutions stripped away from us, all we have left is our Jewish homes. The Jewish home is supposed to be the bedrock of Jewish values and practise, and our current situation pushes us to recognise this even more. Any Shabbaton is made up of how much the people put into it, and this Shabbaton is no different. Instead of people celebrating Shabbat together, we are observing together a most meaningful Shabbat individually in the comfort of our own homes. We are going back to basics to create something profound. Wishing you all an amazing and special Shabbat.



## Friday Night Quiz

## PARASHAT TZAV IN A NUTSHELL

1. Name the five wealthiest people in the world
2. Name five athletes who have won the most Olympic Gold medals
3. Name top five grossing films of all time (adjusted for inflation!)
4. Name top five longest Sidrot in Torah according to number of verses (not double sedras)
5. Name top five longest reigning monarchs in the UK

How did you do? Getting the number 1's in each was possible, knowing some of the 2nd, 3rd, 4th or 5th - more difficult.

Here's another quiz, another five questions. See how you do on this one:

1. Name five teachers who aided your journey through school
2. Name five friends who have helped you throughout your life
3. Name five people who have taught you something worthwhile
4. Name five people who have made you feel appreciated and special.
5. Name five heroes whose stories have inspired you.

Easier? I am sure you scored five out of five on every one.

**The lesson:** We don't just remember one person. The people who make a difference in your life are not the ones with the most credentials, the most money, or the most awards. They are the ones that care. They are the ones who have helped you when you needed it. We have a better memory for those who have invested and expressed genuine interest in our development.

Such an exercise needs to be taken one step further, express your appreciation to these people. Now with more time on our hands – make sure you do! Have a wonderful Shabbat.



Parshat Tzav continues the laws of sacrifices that we began to learn in last week's parsha, but this time we learn about the requirements of the Kohanim who will be the ones actually performing the rituals.

The laws of the burnt and grain offerings, sin and guilt offerings, and peace offerings, are all discussed, and each one has special details of how to bring the offering. Then we learn how Aaron (the Kohen Gadol) and his sons will be initiated into their roles as Priests. Finally, the opening ceremony of the service of the Mishkan is described.

### QUESTION TO PONDER:

The root of the word for sacrifice (korban) means 'to come close'. How do you think giving God a sacrifice brings us closer to Him?

Featured in Covenant and Conversation — Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks



- 
- (1) 1. Jeff Bezos, 2. Bill Gates, 3. Bernard Arnault, 4. Warren Buffet, 5. Mark Zuckerberg
  - (2) 1. Michael Phelps, 2. Larissa Latynina, 3. Paavo Nurmi, 4. Mark Spitz, 5. Carl Lewis.
  - (3) 1. Gone with the Wind, 2. Avatar, 3. Titanic, 4. Star Wars, 5. Avengers – Endgame
  - (4) 1. Naso, 2. Pinchas, 3. Bamidbar, 4. Vayishlach, 5. Noach
  - (5) 1. Elizabeth, 2. Victoria, 3. George, 4. Henry, 5. Edward



## LIVING HEROES OF JEWISH HISTORY

### RABBI YISRAEL MEIR LAU

In his remarkable autobiography, **'Out of the Depths'** Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau tells his story of rising from the ashes of the Holocaust to become the Chief Rabbi of Israel. In these extracts, he tells of his liberation from Buchenwald aged just 8 years old and, later on, his own sense of mission:

*In full army uniform, Rabbi Schacter got down from his jeep and stood before the pile of bodies. Many of them were still bleeding. Suddenly he thought he saw a pair of eyes, wide open and alive. He panicked, and with a soldier's instinct, he drew his pistol. Slowly, carefully, he began to circle the pile of bodies. Then—and this I recall clearly—he bumped into me, a little boy, staring at him from behind the mound of corpses, wide-eyed. His face revealed his astonishment: in the midst of the killing fields, from within that sea of blood—suddenly, a child appears! I did not move. But he knew that no child in this place could be anything but Jewish. He holstered his pistol, then grabbed me with both hands and caught me in a fatherly embrace, lifting me in his*



*arms. In Yiddish, with a heavy American accent, he asked me: "Wie alt bist du, mein kindt? How old are you, my boy?"*

*I saw tears dripping from his eyes. Still, through force of habit, I answered cautiously, like someone perpetually on guard: "What difference does it make? At any rate, I'm older than you." He smiled at me from behind his tears, and asked, "Why do you think that you're older than I am?" Without hesitating, I replied, "Because you laugh and*

*cry like a child, and I haven't laughed for a long time. I can't even cry anymore. So which one of us is older?"*

*Then he introduced himself to me, and the tension subsided. Rabbi Schacter asked who I was. "Lulek from Piotrkow," I replied. "And who is your family?" he inquired. "My father was the rabbi of Piotrkow." "And you're here all alone, without your father?" "Without my father, without my mother. But I have a brother. He collapsed and is lying sick, here in the camp."*

*Years later, Rabbi Lau named his first born son after his father. And he finishes the book with the following:*

*My oldest son Moshe Chaim is the first candle in the private Chanukah Menorah I have been privileged to create. My wife is at the base of*

*that menorah, from which the candles, our eight children, went out into the world. And I am the gabbai, whose role is to help light those candles so that they will spread their light and proclaim, each in a special way, the miracle of the victory of eternal Israel.*

*Reproduced with permission of Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau*



Shabbat Table - Yellows, Sharon Feldstein  
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## THE 5 STAR SEDER IN BNEI BRAK

### RABBANIT SHANI TARAGIN

The Haggadah tells us, “Even if we were all wise... all sages and well learned in the Torah, it would still be our duty to tell the story of the departure from Egypt. And the more one elaborates upon the story of the departure from Egypt, the more one is to be praised.”

This teaching is followed in the Haggadah by the narrative of the “Five Sages” in Bnei Brak – Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah, Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Tarfon -who fulfilled that teaching, discussing the Exodus until the time for saying the Shema in the morning.

Their gathering together in Bnei Brak, away from their families, hosted by Rabbi Akiva who was the student of three of the other rabbis, was unusual. This is emphasised by the teaching of Rabbi Eliezer himself, that one is required to celebrate Yom Tov in one’s home, in the absence of the Beit

Hamikdash (Temple), based on the verse, “You shall rejoice, you and your household,” which he contradicts

spending Pesach night at Rabbi Akiva.

Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein (1829-1908), in his commentary to the Haggadah, suggests that the Seder in Bnei Brak took place after the destruction of the Second Beit HaMikdash in 70 CE, most probably during the harsh Hadrianic persecutions following the failed Bar Kochba rebellion (132-135 CE).

This was one of the most tragic and despairing eras in Jewish history as Jewish leaders were being tortured to death and a harsh Roman exile was yet to follow.

How could Pesach – the holiday of freedom and redemption – be celebrated that year in the midst of terror and persecution? Who could inspire the leaders to retain their faith and optimism? Perhaps all agreed that Rabbi Akiva could offer them the inspiration they needed!

How so? Rabbi Akiva debated with Rabbi Tarfon regarding the proper conclusion to the Maggid section of the Haggadah: “Rabbi Tarfon said, ‘Blessed are You, O God... Who has redeemed us and has redeemed our forebears [past tense] from Egypt’ – and did not seal [the blessing]. Rabbi Akiva added a conclusion to Rabbi Tarfon’s blessing: ‘...So shall our God and the God of our forebears bring to us other festivals and

celebrations for peace, rejoicing in the rebuilding of Your city and revelling in Your service; and we shall eat there from the paschal lamb and the sacrifices... Blessed are You, Who has redeemed Israel.’

Rabbi Akiva’s beracha of thanksgiving for past and future redemptions would be recited that year (even in the presence of Rabbi Tarfon) since he hosted this monumental Seder as one of the “five- star” leaders of his generation. For though he may have been the student, that year he would teach and inspire generations to maintain faith in God and the destiny of the Jewish people. Rabbi Akiva would ultimately live and die with the words of Shema Yisrael on his lips – constantly engaged in Kabbalat Ol Malchut Shamayim (accepting the yoke of Heaven) - however dire his circumstances, as we read about in the Musaf prayers on Yom Kippur.

Under quarantine and danger, Rabbi Akiva teaches us messages of redemption every Seder; the secret is not only to retain optimism and

***“Under quarantine and danger,  
Rabbi Akiva teaches us messages  
of redemption every Seder”***

recount the redemption of the past as a prelude to the future, but simultaneously to strengthen oneself in

religious commitment.

It is no surprise that Rabbi Akiva’s own students had to come to announce, “Our masters, the time for the recitation of the morning Shema has arrived.” The Rabbis were well aware of the ideal time to recite the Shema; in fact they had been engaged in reciting Rabbi Akiva’s teaching about the Shema all night as they rekindled their faith in redemption, in martyrdom and in Kabbalat Ol Malchut Shamayim.

The students who came to tell their teachers that morning had arrived had themselves yet to partake in such a Seder; otherwise they would have known that the dawn heralding the redemption had already risen hours earlier, as the Pesach story was retold throughout the night in Bnei Brak.

I hope that these teachings of our Sages fortify us in our challenging circumstances this Pesach and wish you all well.



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# SHABBAT MORNING

## SHUL AT HOME

### First 4 Mishnayot of Pirkei Avot

- **Mishna 1:** To whom is the phrase 'Make a fence for the Torah' addressed? How would you apply it to our current situation?
- **Mishna 2:** How do you understand the three things which the world stands on? How can you apply them in our current situation and what do they tell you about the importance of community?
- **Mishna 3:** What does our current situation teach us about the values of doing good without the promise of a reward and the significance of being cognisant of God's presence?
- **Mishna 4:** This Shabbat, the absence of technology is more acute than usual. How have you brought Torah into your home during the current situation?

### Prayer

#### Rabbi Daniel Fine

Prayer is about building a relationship with God; we do this by sensitising ourselves to His existence and influence. In fact, when you ask anything in prayer you are automatically attesting to 5 things:

- 1) God exists
- 2) God interacts with you
- 3) God wants to fulfil your requests
- 4) God has the power to fulfil your requests
- 5) You are important enough to speak to God-

**Structure.** There are two types of prayer. The first is the fixed prayers which are Biblical in concept and Rabbinic in their text; honed by the Avot (forefathers) and specific powerful words were later fixed as the text of prayer by the Men of the Great Assembly in the second Temple era. Though prayer and synagogue are often synonymous, this is only true of our daily prayers, which are based on the Temple offerings, such as those which are outlined in Parashat Tzav. However, personal prayers and requests in times of need can be said in any language and at any time. Thus, prayer combines the world of the personal and the world of the communal - both are critical facets of our relationship with the Divine.

**Blessings** are another important and familiar element of prayer. Most blessings use the phrase Baruch Atah Hashem, which means that 'you, God, are the source of all blessing', whether the blessing is on the performance of a mitzvah, praising God or prior to benefiting from something physical such as food.

Prayers are phrased in the third person, we - for one prays on behalf of the entire Jewish People - solidifying their Jewish identity and increasing the chances of their prayers being answered by connecting to the merits of the nation. I hope these ideas help you with your prayers during this Shabbat in particular.

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### A story for Shabbat Hagadol

Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev (known as the Kedushat Levi), was a great defender of the Jewish People. He would often turn to God, talk about the great achievements of the Jewish People, and ask Him to show mercy towards them. One year, as he was about to start his Pesach Seder, Rav Levi Yitzchak paused and proclaimed that he would not be starting his Seder until people brought him some Turkish cigars and some bread. Turkish cigars were illegal and bread on Pesach!? People thought that something was wrong with the Rabbi – maybe he was tired or something had affected his brain. But the Kedushat Levi insisted that they get on with it – he would not be starting his Seder until they searched the town and brought him the cigars and bread. Mayhem broke out in the town as everybody heard about the Rabbi's request, and people went searching from house to house. After two hours, they returned with a small box of the illegal Turkish cigars but admitted that their search for bread had been unsuccessful – they could find no bread in any Jewish home in Berdichev. Rav Levi Yitzchak looked up at the Heavens and smiled: you see how amazing Your people are. Turkish cigars are illegal, yet some Jews keep them anyway – they do not fear the police. But You do not have any policemen, You do not punish immediately and still nobody dares keep any chametz on Pesach. And with that, the Kedushat Levi was ready to begin his Seder.



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## **Shabbat Hagadol - Thanking G-d** **Rabbi Eliyahu Silverman**

In this week's parashat Tzav, we read about the Korban Toda – the thanksgiving offering. In order to bring it, you had to bring the sacrifice of an animal and 40 different types of breads and matzah. It's strange, this is the way to give thanks to God by bringing all of these things to Him? How much time do you have to eat all of this? The answer is a day and a night. Even the talented eaters amongst us would not be able to eat a whole animal and 40 loaves of bread and matzah within a day and a night!

Says the Netziv, why so much? Why does the Torah, when we want to say thank you, command us to bring so much food and expect us to eat it in such a short space of time? His answer is that the proper way to thank God is not to do it privately but to publicise it to the world that God did something great for you. You want to say thank you, don't keep it to yourself. Publicise it to the world to as many people as you can. Therefore if the food is anyway going to be burned the next day, you might as well bring as many people as you can to join you.

That's the reason we bring the so much food for the Korban Todah.

However, there is another reason. If we want to truly thank God. What's the proper way to thank God. How do we truly thank God? Let's learn through an example.

If you have a king or a queen that has everything, how do you thank them? Will you give them a gift? They have everything. Make them a good meal? They have the best chef in town! Buy them a piece of jewellery? They have the greatest already. How do you say thank you to a king or a queen? The answer is you can't give them anything. We can never really thank them properly. Similarly, as we say in Nishmat Kol Chai on Shabbat morning - there is no way you can properly thank God.

However, if the king has a child in need far away from the palace and you will go out of your way to assist that person in need, that the King will truly, truly appreciate. The same thing goes with us all. When you want to say thank you to God what does He want? Care for other people. Look

for the people who are never invited to a feast. People that go unnoticed, you invite them to join you in your Korban Todah, you can't eat all on your own. God is guiding and teaching us. When you want to thank God, you go out of your way and do something good to someone else.

So next time something good happens to you in life and you want to thank God for it,

Yes, thank God and mean it. However also go out of your way, try to show something good to someone else for that is the true appreciation God really desires.

May we all merit to do so.

Shabbat Shalom



## Shul Announcements – Ashley Blaker

Since everyone is praying in their home, please designate a room in your house that will serve as your shul. Please also set aside another room to be the other shul you would never set foot in.

This week you should remember to hold elections and assign key synagogue roles to members of your family. These should include the vital positions of shul president, sweetie man, and the man who thinks he's really interesting because he always wears a bow tie. Please note, as with regular shuls, there should be only one eccentric man in a bow tie per shul.

To anyone who has not sold their chametz, please remember to do so in good time. This year you will find many non-Jews who are incredibly happy to buy your pasta and cereals for a very good price. Whilst not technically chametz, if you have any spare toilet roll to sell, this will definitely sweeten the deal and help procure a very good price.

A notice for parents: if your child is not attending a Jewish homeschool, please ensure that you also run a home cheder on Sunday mornings.

The congregation is reminded that this year one should not open the door for the prophet Elijah during seder night. He has travelled from other countries and has not had an opportunity to self-isolate for 14 days.

Finally, tomorrow evening, Sunday 5th April, Ashley Blaker is returning to JW3 to perform in an empty theatre, talking about Pesach, self-isolation, homeschooling and a whole lot more. After Shabbos, remember to grab your virtual front row seats to stream *Ashley Blaker: Alone at JW3*, starting at 8pm.

Wishing you a very good Shabbos, good Yom Tov, and please stay well.

## SHABBAT HAGADOL LEARNING WITH SIVAN RAHAV MEIR

### LESSONS FROM PHARAOH'S HEART

We suggest you read this article and then consider the following discussion questions:

1. In its description of the Yetziat Mitzrayim (the Exodus), what is the Torah teaching us about our heart?
2. How this Pesach might you feel more free, based on the lessons in the article below?

The great contemporary Israeli scholar, Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, makes a fascinating observation, not to look upon Pharaoh as evil since, in fact, we have more in common with Pharaoh than we do with Moshe Rabbeinu! Rabbi Steinsaltz's point was that Pharaoh is not simply a remote, evil person but instead an archetype who exists inside of us and from whom we can learn.

Until the first five plagues have ended, Pharaoh's heart is described as follows:

וַיִּחַזַק לֵב פַּרְעֹה וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֲלֵהֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה'

But Pharaoh's heart remained steadfast, and he did not listen to them (Moshe and Aharon), as God had spoken. (Shemot 7:13, 8:15)

In his own mind, Pharaoh rules. He is in charge, he decides how his heart will react.

Then, after the sixth plague, that of shechin (boils), ends, there is a dramatic change. God's control  
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now becomes manifest:

וַיִּחַזַק ה' אֶת לֵב פַּרְעֹה וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֲלֵהֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה

But God strengthened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not listen to them, as God spoke to Moses. (Shemot 9:12)

At a certain stage, God hardens Pharaoh's heart and he does not control its decisions alone. Why is the Torah so concerned with what is happening inside Pharaoh's heart? To teach us a most important lesson: when free choice is not properly utilised, it may vanish with the passage of time.

It would appear that is analogous to a form of addiction.

We need to internalise the following principle: addiction applies to good character traits and habits as well as to bad ones! This is true with doing mitzvot as well as with negative pursuits. Take lying as an example. There is a difference in the control we have over the first as opposed to the millionth lie.

The late Professor Nechama Leibowitz (1905-1997), author of hundreds of study sheets on the weekly Torah readings, writes about this at length.



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Generally, she rarely brings her own ideas into the discussion she builds. Instead, she encourages us to understand the commentators solely from their own words.

On our discussion, however, she adds her own words:

“Every decision as to which of two paths to take is always in a person’s hands. Yet it is only at the beginning that the two paths are available in equal measure.

Once a choice is made and a path is taken, no future choice will be as easy as that first one. If the first path taken was the wrong one, the longer a person persists in following that path, the more difficult it becomes to move to the correct path. By this stage, if free choice is always available, it is not as free and limitless as it was initially.

Thus, it is not God who makes getting back on the right path more difficult but rather the person who persists in piling up obstacles on the road back to the right path. And God created people in this manner, so that sins create a barrier to teshuva, to returning to Him. Thus, it is the person who chooses, opening or hardening his or her heart, and God assists according to that person’s desire, in whichever direction he or she wants to go”.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, in “Covenant and

Conversation”, his essays on the Torah readings, says that this is a salient point in the story of Pharaoh:

“Freedom in the deepest sense, the freedom to do the right and the good, is not a given. We acquire it, or lose it, gradually. In the end tyrants

bring about their own destruction, whereas those with willpower, courage and the willingness to go against the consensus, acquire a monumental freedom.

That is what Judaism is: an invitation to freedom.” Rabbi Sacks reminds us that despite the difficulties of returning to the correct path, even evil people have hope since it is always possible to choose good. The Torah does not state that God locks Pharaoh’s heart, only that He hardens it.

A person can choose a better path. It is difficult but it is possible. Free choice is always there, but it diminishes when you are on the wrong path. This is a message of our Exodus from Egypt, here and now. It helps us to understand both the repeated references to Pharaoh’s heart and Rabbi Steinsaltz’s perceptive observation.

I wish you all a Chag Sameach, a time of safety and blessing for the whole world.

**“Despite the difficulties of returning to the correct path, even evil people have hope since it is always possible to choose good.”**



Passover, Karin Foreman



# SHABBAT LUNCH

## A Dvar Torah from Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

The Shabbat before Pesach is called Shabbat Hagadol, 'the great Sabbath'. Many commentators explain that, as with other major Shabbatot of the year, their names are derived from a key word in the Torah reading or the Haftorah of that day. For example, the titles of Shabbat Chazon, Shabbat Zachor, Shabbat Nachamu and Shabbat Shuvah all come from such key words.

Similarly, in our Haftorah for Shabbat Hagadol, the Prophet Malach declares: Hineh Anochi Sholeach Lachem Et Eliyahu Hanavi – behold, says Hashem, I shall send Elijah the Prophet to you, Lifnei Bo Yom Hashem Hagadol Vehanorah - before that great and awesome day of Hashem. This is a reference to the great day of the coming of the Mashiach. Seeing as we read this passage on this Shabbat, the Shabbat takes its name from the key term 'Hagadol' and becomes 'Shabbat Hagadol'.

The Prophet continues, Veheishiv Lev Avot Al Banim Velev Banim Al Avotam - the hearts of parents will be inclined towards their children and the hearts of children will be inclined towards their parents. This is a description of a remarkable phenomenon; one in which we do not only find children being influenced by their parents, but, in addition to that, parents are influenced by their children. I believe that this is exactly what is happening within the Jewish world today.

Thanks to our outstanding educational systems, we are finding many children who are moving ahead of their parents in terms of their Jewish knowledge and observance. The parents, in turn, are deepening their Jewish awareness and are growing in their Yiddishkeit thanks to the inspiration they receive from their children.

Shabbat Hagadol therefore highlights for us one of the great features of our times. Not only can our children teach us a thing or two about it, they can also sometimes inspire us to strengthen our Jewish identity.



## Tribe Pesach Quiz – Shabbat Hagadol

1. How many stages are there in the Seder?

A. 10 | B. 12 | C. 15

2. Which animal, worshipped by the Egyptians, did the Jewish people use as an offering in Egypt and use blood from to protect themselves at the time of the plague of the firstborn?

A. Cow | B. Chicken | C. Lamb

3. What were the third and fourth of the ten plagues?

A. lice | B. hail | C. wild animals | D. locusts

4. On what date does Pesach start in the Jewish calendar?

A. 10 Nisan | B. 15 Nisan | C. 16 Nisan

5. Which song, sung by Moshe and the people after the crossing of the sea, do we say every day in our Shacharit (morning) prayers?

A. Adon Olam | B. Az yashir Moshe | C. Yigdal

6. What were the names of Moshe's brother and sister?

A. Joshua & Deborah | B. Barak & Yael | C. Aharon & Miriam

7. And finally...which Israeli city, mentioned in the Haggadah, is also the home for Coca-Cola in Israel?

A. Bnei Brak | B. Jerusalem | C. Beit El  
(Answers on bottom of page 13)

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## PARASHAT TZAV THE CORE IDEA

1. The details of the Tabernacle and the sacrificial service are the "how" to worship God in this week's parsha.

2. The haftarah says: "For when I brought your ancestors out of Egypt and spoke to them, I did not just give them commands about burnt offerings and sacrifices, but I gave them this command: Obey Me, and I will be your God and you will be My people. Walk in obedience to all I command you, that it may go well with you." (Jeremiah 7:22-23) This suggests that these laws are ultimately to encourage a closeness and connection with God. The Tabernacle addressed a passionate need on the part of the people to have God close not distant, in the camp not at the top of the mountain, accessible to everyone not just Moses, and on a daily basis not just at rare moments of miracle.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

1. According to the Parasha, how do we come close to God?

2. According to the haftarah, why do we need sacrifices and the Mishkan to worship God?





## LIVING HEROES OF JEWISH HISTORY

### MIRIAM PERETZ

The remarkable messages given by Miriam Peretz, a modern hero of Jewish history, have inspired thousands of people in Israel and further afield.

Despite losing two sons in combat, Miriam Peretz, a woman whom The Jerusalem Post called “a symbol of hope” for Israel, continues to speak to Israeli soldiers, inspiring them with her message.

In her early 60s, she has short curly hair, a long skirt, and a huge infectious smile. What I've learned about Miriam since the day I met her is that she is truly a giant amongst us. Her strength and character are unmatched.

*I am a very simple woman. You think I can change the world? I can change my family. My community. Easy. Easy. First with myself. I ask myself every morning and thank God for this day. That I can stand here and speak with you is a miracle. It's a miracle to live, so when I wake up, I say, "If it's a miracle, so what can I do with this moment? To spend a moment asking God 'why me'? I will never have this answer. To say the country is not good? For what?" I ask myself what I can do this day for my nation. For my country. This is the only question that I ask myself after I thank God that I can stand, eat, drink.*

*I believe that each person has something inside himself. And sometimes this grows in the time that it's needed. So because of that I think that the moments of crisis in our lives, we can grow from them. Why? Because we look within and we see how much strength we have. And sometimes this strength is discovered after the death of someone we love. But we have strength. I think that God gives each person in the world the strength to continue living... but sometimes you don't know your own strength. And this crisis, you are broken, but from the broken, you build something new. How? With your strength. With your kochot [strengths] that God gave you before!*

*"So, I say that we each have an argaz kelim [tool kit]. Throughout your life, you use the tools you need. If your child is not sleeping at night, and you haven't slept at all either, and you see that you have the strength to make it through the night—that's a tool. Each day we use certain tools that we have. We use all of our values. We use all of our faith. "I was born in Morocco in the Sahara desert. My parents were very poor. They never knew how to read or write. But they knew one word in Hebrew: Yerushalayim. They dreamt about the day they would move to Yerushalayim. And in 1964, the Jewish Agency took us from the ghettos in Morocco to this land. When we came to Haifa, I remember how my father kissed the earth and began to say 'Paradise! Paradise!'"*

*Her parents were not religious in the traditional sense, but they wholeheartedly believed in God. "It's a new mission that God gave me," she says. I meet with soldiers. I speak to them about leadership and about the values of my sons. I never speak to them only about death and darkness. I want to give them hope. I tell them to hold on to life. Life is very, very important for us. But what kind of life? I can spend my life building a new house, etc., but I understand after the death of my two children and my husband that God gives me every day time to live. What do I want to do with these moments? To waste them or to do something with meaning? When I meet these people, I don't understand how they say they take from the meeting strength to continue. I get maybe 5,000 letters from people from Israel and around the world that say how I influence them, and I ask myself, me? Me? At the end of the day what do I do?*



Adapted from an article by Gabriel Groisman  
at [www.thetower.org](http://www.thetower.org)

C, C, A&C, B, B, C, A  
Answers to Tribe Pesach Quiz:



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# SHABBAT AFTERNOON

## Shabbat Dingbats & Close-Ups from Rabbi



## Moral Maze by Rabbi Daniel Fine

1. Prisoners during the Shoah secretly attained a few matzot for Pesach. A debate ensued - should the matzah be given to the adults or the children. What would you say?
2. A family are discussing the future of the Jewish nation at the Seder Table. One person claims that though they appreciate modern comforts and unrestricted civil liberties, we have lost more Jews in the liberal West to assimilation than when life was tough in centuries past. Are they correct?
3. A certain soft drink are running a competition whereby you can win a car if you see a picture of a car under the bottle cap of one of their bottles. You attend a friend's birthday party and as you unscrew the bottle cap, you see the picture of the car. Do you tell the host whose simcha it is, or is the car yours since you had the rights to drink the contents of the bottle?

# SEUDA SHLISHIT

## What is Seuda Shlishit Rabbi Michael Laitner

Seuda Shlishit is the name given to the third of the three meals which we eat on Shabbat. Ideally, we have two whole chalot or other rolls for hamotzi at this meal, as we do for the other Shabbat meals as well. Often eaten as the day begins to move towards sunset, it is a time to share stories, slower songs and teachings from our rich heritage. This Shabbat, when we cannot have seudah shelishit with others outside of our home, we hope that the readings provided here will give you as uplifting a seudah shlishit experience as possible.



**Melinda Matyas, sowing seeds in the dark**  
**Pesach Misc**

### Discussion-prompting Pesach questions

- Why do we celebrate God taking us out of Egypt if He put us there in the first place? (i.e. what did we gain in Egypt)
- Why do you think Seder Night is so special?
- What is your earliest Seder Night memory?
- What is your most memorable Seder Night memory?
- What was the most surprising thing that has happened to you on Seder Night?

### Pesach charades – without using words, act out the following, for the ‘audience’ to guess:

- Baking matza
- Chad gadya
- Le’shanah ha’ba’ah be’yerushalayim
- The plague of blood
- The plague of boils
- Pharaoh refusing to let the Jews go
- Four cups of wine

### Advanced learning: where in the Haggadah can you find:

- Mention of matzah
- Mention of Jerusalem
- Mention of Rabbi Akiva
- An abbreviation of the Ten Plagues
- Moshe’s name
- Mention of a vegetable
- Mention of a goat

## PARASHAT TZAV THE THOUGHTS OF RABBI SACKS



*Jewish people around the world have sacrificed any forms of communal activity once again this Shabbat as we all strive to combat the Coronavirus, yet maintain our Judaism as best as we can. The following excerpts from the thought of Rabbi Sacks on Parashat Tzav provide us with some perspective on our current situation.*

### *What is a sacrifice?*

The root of the Hebrew word for sacrifice is k-r-v which means close. When we give a gift to a friend this brings us closer to them and them closer to us. The giver feels good that they have given something they have (monetary value, time, creativity, care) to another person, and this makes them feel closer and more connected. In the case of God, we feel closer and more connected when we give up something for God. It could be a sacrifice in the Temple times, or our time and passion today in the form of praying or carrying out mitzvot.

### **How does Judaism help us to view the world each day and especially in our current situation?**

“Science takes things apart to see how they work. Religion puts things together to see what they mean. Without going into neuroscientific detail, the first is a predominantly left-brain activity, the second is associated with the right hemisphere... Science is about explanation. Religion is about meaning. Science analyses, religion integrates. Science breaks things down to their component parts. Religion binds people together in relationships of trust. Science tells us what is. Religion tells us what ought to be. Science describes. Religion beckons, summons, calls. Science sees objects. Religion speaks to us as subjects. Science practises detachment. Religion is the art of attachment, self to self, soul to soul. Science sees the underlying order of the physical world. Religion hears the music beneath the noise. Science is the conquest of ignorance. Religion is the redemption of solitude.”

**The Great Partnership,**  
p. 2-6





## LIVING HEROES OF JEWISH HISTORY

### NATAN SHARANSKY

Natan Sharansky is a modern Jewish hero. An inspiration to many people around the world, Sharansky spent nine years in captivity at the hands of the brutal Soviet regime which regarded his Zionism as a 'crime', much of it in solitary confinement until his eventual release in 1986 when he fulfilled his dream of Aliya to Israel.

Whilst Natan has taught us, especially recently, about how to counter isolation, his thoughts on freedom and the moment of his reunion with his wife, Avital (formerly known as Natasha), which we include below from his autobiography *Fear No Evil*, are especially moving.

As Shabbat draws to a close and we move towards Pesach, we too pray to God to save humanity from the threats it faces, so that we can all soon celebrate the freedom of the Exodus and, with God's help, even greater miracles speedily in our times.



*I fly into the room – it's empty. I turn – Avital is sitting in the corner, wearing a kerchief and a dark suit. She whispers something, but I can't hear. I take a step toward her, and another, and a third. She stands up. Her lips are trembling and her eyes are filled with tears. Yes, it's really she, my Natasha – the same girl I had promised twelve years ago, at the Moscow airport, that our separation would be brief. In a desperate attempt to swallow the lump in my throat and to wipe the tears from our faces with a smile, I tell her in Hebrew, *Silchi li she'icharti k'zat* (sorry I'm a little late).*

*I hold Avital's hand just as twelve years ago I had held Natasha's hand on our way to the airport. Through twelve years of struggle, longing, and suffering, twelve years of desperate attempts not to lose hold of each other, I had been obsessed by the thought of how it would be when we finally met. Our separation lasted well over four*

*thousand days, and when I concentrate I can still recall every significant moment during those years. I remember how it was when I first met Natasha outside the synagogue, and what it was like to take her to the airport and leave her there on the morning after our wedding. I recall the pain and abandonment I felt when they confiscated her photograph in Lefortovo, and the joy I experienced when they finally gave it back.*

*But this precious and amazing moment for our reunion is somehow sealed off from me, like a black hole that pulls in the light and gives nothing back. What was I thinking when we finally saw each other? What did I say, and what did Avital whisper to me? Strange as it may seem, I do not know. I recall only that my head was dizzy and my knees grew weak, as it seemed that at any moment the two of us would leave the ground and start floating up into the air.*

*Only at night, in the Old City of Jerusalem, did I let go of her hand when the crowd carried us to different sides and I swam on people's shoulders to the Kotel, the Western Wall.*

*Holding our Psalm book in my hand, I kissed the wall and said, "Baruch matir asirim." Blessed is He who liberates the imprisoned. (Natan Sharansky, Fear No Evil)*



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## **A concluding message from Rabbi Andrew Shaw, Rabbi Michael Laitner & Rabbi Daniel Fine**

This year, Shabbat Hagadol has fallen on 10 Nisan in the Jewish calendar, as it did immediately prior to the Exodus itself. For that Shabbat, Bnei Yisrael, as we have learned today, took lambs as commanded by God. They used the blood of those lambs to protect themselves in their homes during the plague of the firstborn. This activity helped to unite Bnei Yisrael as they prepared for the Exodus.

This Shabbat Hagadol, we have also been at home, trying with God's help to protect ourselves and others from the dangers of Coronavirus.

Both during the original Shabbat Hagadol and this one, we have experienced the power of Shabbat and the Jewish home to unite us even when our synagogues are shut.

Rabbi Yehuda Amital (1924-2010), founder of the Har Etzion Yeshiva in Alon Shvut, Israel, related that he was once approached by a couple who wished to become religious but did not know where to start. Rabbi Amital based his advice on the Torah's teaching (Shemot 15:25), as explained of the great scholar Rashi (1040-1105), that Bnei Yisrael received three mitzvot at a place called Mara, prior to their arrival at Mount Sinai. Those mitzvot were Shabbat, the red heifer and 'dinim' which Rashi defines as the mitzvah of honouring parents.

On this basis, Rabbi Amital suggested that the couple start by observing Shabbat, a mitzvah between us and God, so that they follow Jewish practice at least once a week. Then, they should choose one interpersonal mitzvah, such as honouring parents and do that very seriously to show their commitment to the values of such mitzvot. Finally, following the example of the red heifer, a mitzvah which seems to have no understandable rational and is not practised in the absence of the Temple, they should choose one mitzvah which they do not understand and observe it too.

This was to show that we do not understand everything. We observe mitzvot because this is what Jews do as part of a covenantal community with God rather than basing our observance simply on our understanding.

Rabbi Amital understood the power of these suggestions very well, especially about Shabbat. During World War Two, he was herded into the brutal conditions of a Forced Labour Camp in

Hungary. The Jews were compelled to work on Shabbat. Rabbi Amital was able to bring a crumpled white shirt with him to the camp. Every Friday, he would stuff the shirt into his pocket. As the sun began to set, and work continued, he would slip the shirt out of his pocket and put it on as an act of accepting Shabbat. This, somehow, helped him to maintain Shabbat even in such an awful situation when the normal observances of Shabbat were impossible.

This story of that simple shirt continues to resonate. Even though we, thank God, are not anywhere near the circumstances of Rabbi Amital in Hungary and live in indescribably better times, we can look for opportunities to make Shabbat as special, sacred and uplifting as possible, even when things are not as ideal as we might wish them to be.

Over the course of this Shabbat, when we have all been isolated from others and concerned about those who are unwell, we have tried to bring you inspirational messages about Shabbat, uniting us in spirit as best as possible. In particular, for Shabbat Hagadol, we have also attempted to help you continue your preparations for Pesach.

We hope that you have enjoyed this first 'UK Community Shabbaton at home'. Until a couple of weeks ago, we would never have considered such an idea and we wish that these circumstances had never arisen. We hope that at least, despite our situation, this project has made your Shabbat more special than it would have been otherwise.

We thank our contributors and you all for your participation. We wish you chag sameach, as joyous a Pesach as possible, and as many more inspiring Shabbatot ahead in health and happiness with our communities open and flourishing.

May God bless us and the whole world, especially at this challenging time, to keep us safe and helping us spread our own blessing to the world through the mitzvot we perform as we continue to write the story of the Jewish people.

Please, after Shabbat and you have made Havdallah at home, tune into a very special online Havdallah with Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks and Chazan Jonny Turgel to conclude our Shabbaton.



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