

In loving memory of Harav Yitzhak Yoel ben Shlomo Halevi

**Volume 32 | #46**

8 August 2020  
18 Av 5780

**Shabbat ends:**

London 9.31pm  
Sheffield 9.50pm  
Glasgow 10.13pm  
Edinburgh 10.10pm  
Birmingham 9.42pm  
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May God bless us and the whole world.

# Daf Hashavua

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*"A Land of wheat, barley, grape, fig and pomegranate;  
a Land of oil-olives and date-honey"  
(Devarim 8:8)*



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עֵקֵב

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3rd Sidra in:

דְּבָרִים

Devarim

By Numbers:

**111 verses**

**1,747 words**

**6,865 letters**

Headlines:

**Uniqueness  
of the Land  
of Israel**



**United Synagogue Daf Hashavua**

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# An Englishman's Brolly: is rain a blessing or a nuisance?

by Rabbi Mendel Lew,  
Stanmore & Canons Park United Synagogue



If there is one topic virtually guaranteed to feature in conversations among the British it is the weather, especially rain. From a drizzle to a downpour, downcast to overcast, cheery to depressing, it is an ever-present part of British life.

Rain may disrupt our carefully prepared plans, but it is, in fact, an unbelievable demonstration of Divine kindness and blessing. It literally helps to sustain life! Far from being terrible, it should be categorised as beautiful!

While emphasising the life-giving

nature of rain, the Torah does acknowledge the discomfort of being caught in a downpour. In the second paragraph of the Shema - featured in this week's sidra - the promise of ample rain in the Land of Israel is given as a reward for following the Torah: "and I will grant the early and late rains of your land at their proper time" (Devarim 11:14). According to the commentary of Rashi (1040-1105), 'proper time' is when people are less likely to be



**In loving memory of Chaya Rachel bat Moshe Ben-tzion**

## Sidra Summary

**1st Aliya (Kohen) – Devarim 7:12-9:10**

Moshe encourages the Israelites to keep God's commandments. This will allow them to prosper in the Land and to be the most blessed of peoples. In the same way that God took them out of Egypt, so too He will allow them to defeat the Canaanite nations. The nation must destroy the Canaanites' idols. Moshe entreats the Israelites to remember the 40 years in the desert, including the eating of the manna. God will bring them into a Land with abundant resources, where they will lack nothing.

**Point to Consider:** Which mitzvah is derived from 8:10?

outside. Like Friday nights.

This is referred to as 'rains of blessing'. It descends in perfect quantity, without harming the environment either by insufficient amounts or by flooding. Neither does it inconvenience pedestrians. It is rain which can be genuinely viewed, and appreciated, with a smile and with joy.

In all the discussion about convenient weather patterns, what should not be

overlooked is that the symbiotic relationship between the human being and God manifests itself specifically through rain.

In the opening chapter of the Torah, we read about Creation. For six days God paints the canvas and weaves the tapestry. There is colour, purpose, beauty and structure. It is a beautiful world. Then God rests.

In the next chapter (verse 5) the Torah returns to the narrative of Creation, filling in a key detail. "Now all the trees of the field were not yet on the earth and all the herb of the field had not yet sprouted, for God had not sent rain upon the earth."

The world was all set and ready to go. The missing part of the

project was rain. Why? The verse carries on with an explanation, "there was no man to work the soil." It would appear that the arrival of rain depended exclusively on the human being.

Rashi explains that the human being was indeed vital to the project. He would immediately realise the necessity and benefit of rain upon the earth and – crucially – pray for its arrival. Adam's first task was to pray for his needs!

Ever since that early experience in the life of the human race, we have been obliged to ask for rain. It instilled in Adam, and continues to instil in us, the delicate balance of earning an honest living, while never forgetting the source of our success.

Rain is thus a symbol of our strength and endeavour within the context of our relationship with God. We reach out to Him in prayer, and He responds. A true partnership, where one reaches out and there is reciprocation.

May we appreciate the true "rains of blessing" and be "showered" with every other blessing as well.



**Rain may disrupt our carefully prepared plans, but it is, in fact, an unbelievable demonstration of Divine kindness and blessing.**

### **2nd Aliya (Levi) – 8:11-9:3**

Moshe warns the Israelites not to forget God once they enter the Land. They should not fall into the trap of thinking that they inherited the Land thanks to their own efforts and merits; rather it was God who guided and protected them during the years in the desert. Failure to heed this lesson will result in exile from the Land.

### **3rd Aliya (Shlishi) – 9:4-9:29**

The Israelites should remember that they are a "stiff-necked people" and they are not inheriting the Land because of their own righteousness. In fact, since leaving

Egypt, they repeatedly provoked God, initially with the sin of the golden calf, which Moshe now recalls in detail. He also reminds them of the sin of the spies.

### **4th Aliya (Revi'i) – 10:1-11**

Moshe describes how he carved two new stone tablets, having broken the first set upon seeing the worship of the golden calf when descending Mount Sinai. In the aftermath of the golden calf, the tribe of Levi was set apart for its special functions of guarding the Ark and serving God.

# Eruvim

by Rabbi Adam Edwards, Eruv Co-ordinator for the London Beth Din



In recent years, more and more United Synagogue communities have had the benefit of an Eruv. The US has devoted considerable resources to this project, which enables many of our members to carry items outside on Shabbat within the framework of halacha.

This is not a new invention, indeed, the Talmudic tractate of Eruvin, completed around 1500 years ago, is particularly devoted to this subject. Participants in the Daf Yomi daily Talmud study programme are commencing this tractate at present, so we asked Rabbi Edwards to explain the concept to us:

In my work with the London Beth Din Eruv department over the last 12 years, one of the questions I am most asked is if the word eruv translates as “loophole”. Tongue in cheek or not, the meaning of the word eruv is ‘mixture’, an amalgamation of courtyards. But, reasonably so, people are confused. If the Torah says that carrying outside is forbidden on Shabbat, how can a few barely visible wires make a difference?

The question is a good one... and an old one. Almost 900 years ago, the great medieval philosopher and poet Rabbi Judah Ha-Levi (1080–1141) wrote about an exchange between a Jewish sage and a king who asked the same question (as recorded in his work, Sefer HaKuzari 3:50).

Before we can understand why

an eruv is not a loophole in a law prohibiting carrying, let us first understand why and where carrying is forbidden in the first place.

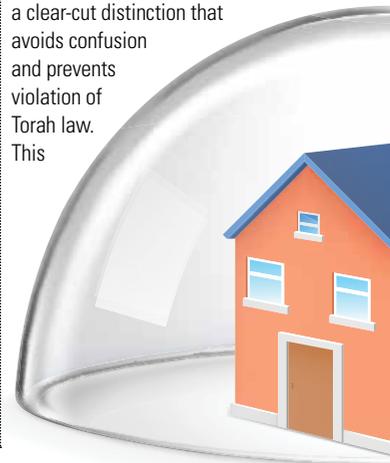
## THE PROHIBITION

On Shabbat, one of the 39 forbidden activities is to carry anything four cubits (approximately six feet) within a public domain. This also includes transporting things from a private domain into a public one, or vice versa. In this context, “private” and “public” has little to do with who holds the deed and everything to do with the physical properties and function of the area.

A “private domain” is an enclosed area. A “public domain” is generally defined as an unenclosed major thoroughfare that is used regularly by

the public, and is at least 16 cubits wide (about 24 feet). Some rabbinic authorities are of the opinion that it also needs to have 600,000 people passing through it on a daily basis.

Now, if it would be permitted to carry in open areas that are shared by many people but are not public domains per se, confusion would be likely to follow. So, to err on the side of caution, the rabbis expanded the carrying ban to extend to any area, unless it is both fenced in and owned privately. This rabbinic law provides a clear-cut distinction that avoids confusion and prevents violation of Torah law. This



In memory of Yisrael Shmuel ben Yirmaya Yehoshuah

## 5th Aliya (Chamishi) – 10:12-11:9

Moshe urges the Israelites to fear and love God and to open their hearts to Him. Moshe recalls the miraculous Exodus from Egypt, the splitting of the Sea of Reeds and the earth swallowing Korach and his rebels.

## 6th Aliya (Shishi) – 11:10-21

Moshe goes on to say that God always has “His eyes” on the Land of Cana’an. He then tells them a passage which we recite twice daily as the second paragraph of the Shema (see green siddur, p.68). It spells out the benefits of fulfilling the commandments and the consequences of neglecting them. The mitzvot of tefilin, mezuzah and studying Torah are stated.

pseudo-public area is called a karmelit.

### THE EXCEPTIONS

In order for carrying to be allowed, you will need both an eruv and a tzurat ha-petach. The word eruv (which we will explain later) actually refers to food that serves to symbolically transform the shared area into an area owned by a single household. The tzurat ha-petach is a series of structures that transform the karmelit into a closed area. Together, the two mark the area as private. Although not technically correct, the term eruv has come to refer to the tzurat ha-petach structure as well. The eruv is often large enough to include entire neighbourhoods with homes, flats and synagogues, making it possible to carry on Shabbat, since one is never leaving the private domain.

But what kind of enclosure do you need? For a rabbinically ordained karmelit, under which category many neighbourhoods fall, a technical enclosure may suffice.

In that case the wall may



## But walls alone are not enough. In order for an area to be private, it needs to belong to a single household or entity.

have many doorways, leaving large open spaces. Essentially, this is the kind of “wall” we are creating with wires and poles; the poles are the doorposts, and the cables strung above them are the lintels.

In addition to providing people with more freedom to enjoy their Shabbat, Rabbi Judah ha-Levi explains that the relatively simple route to privatising a karmelit is deliberate, in order that a distinction is made between the rabbinic enactment and the biblical prohibition of carrying in a proper public domain.

### THE REAL ERUV

But walls alone are not enough. In order for an area to be private, it needs to belong to a single household or entity.

This stipulation originated with King Solomon, who foresaw that if people were allowed to carry in public, albeit in enclosed areas, this would result in confusion, and the entire law would be forgotten or distorted.

In order to symbolically join multiple families into a single household, King Solomon and his court established the concept of eruvei chatzeirot, whereby everyone in the area contributes food (or, as is usually done, one person can gift the

food to everyone) to be kept in one of the houses. Since they all share food, they are now one household. The word eruv means “blending,” as the purpose of this food is to mix the entire community together into one.

In a communal eruv, this is done by a local synagogue Rabbi on behalf of the community using matzah which is kept in a communal place, such as a synagogue, and can be accessed by anyone.

So to conclude, I would like to put to rest the claim that an eruv is a loophole, a circumvention of Biblical law. In a Biblically proscribed domain, an eruv would not be effective. In order that one would not come to carry in a Biblically proscribed domain, the rabbis prohibited carrying in other domains, as well. However, the rabbis allowed one to carry in rabbinically proscribed domains (the karmelit) if there was an eruv. In other words, it was the rabbis who proscribed carrying and it was the rabbis who permitted carrying in non-Biblically prohibited domains.

*We thank Rabbi Edwards, both for this article and for the tireless devotion that he and his colleagues give to enable the construction and maintenance of many eruvim across Greater London.*

**In memory of Yehuda ben Yaakov HaCohen**

### 7th Aliya (Shevi'i) – 11:22-25

Moshe urges the people to remember their Torah learning and to have a connection with Torah scholars (see Rashi).

### Haftarah

Taken from the book of Yeshaya, this is the second of the seven 'haftarot of consolation' read after Tisha B'Av. Just

like a mother does not forget the child of her womb, so too God will never forget the Jews and will avenge those nations who have persecuted them. Yeshaya famously calls upon the Jews to be a “light unto the nations”.

# Judaism and Art part 4

## ‘Mystery’

by Rabbi David Lister, Edgware United Synagogue



Sefer HaChinuch, a monumental, encyclopaedic

commentary on the 613 commandments, highlights a challenging paradox within the first of the Ten Commandments, the commandment to acknowledge that God exists.

It points out that, intrinsic to this knowledge of God’s, existence is our inability to know what He is:

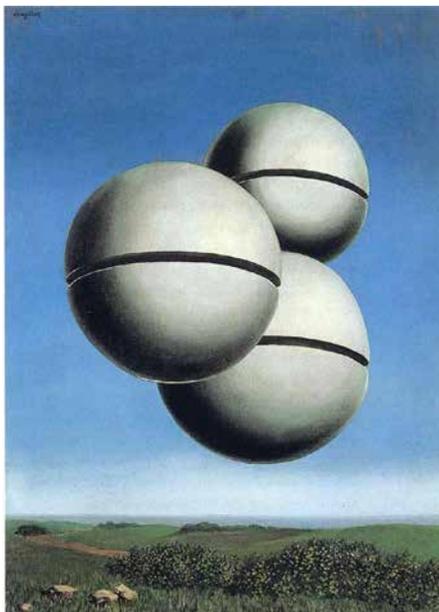
“We affirm that all greatness and glory, all blessing and existence are in Him, and that we cannot understand or relate to His greatness and goodness. Because of His greatness and glory He can only be understood by Himself.”

Central to everything we do with and for God is the sense that we are trying to get to know something which is ultimately unknowable.

This is an unfamiliar concept for our time. We are comfortable with the white heat of technology, but when we see a magician perform, we are not content to accept the mystery: we strive to understand, to know.

Surrealist art can enhance our own capacity for mystery, for accepting that there are things beyond our ken. Magritte delighted in painting things which go beyond meaning:

“My paintings evoke mystery and, indeed, when one sees one of



Magritte, *The voice of space*, 1931

**Surrealist art can enhance our own capacity for mystery, for accepting that there are things beyond our ken.**

my pictures, one asks oneself this simple question, ‘What does that mean?’”

In his *Voice of Space*, for instance, we see three massive sleigh bells hovering in the sky over a rich pastoral landscape. This was a typical Magritte technique, involving magnification of a common object

and placing it in an odd context. The sense of mystery in the picture is intensified by the crispness of the shapes and colours, and the beautiful Renaissance-style landscape, contributing to a deliberate sense of mystery. The questions posed by this picture are legion. Where are the bells from and how did they get there? Why are they so big? What are they going to do next? How will people react to them? Are the bells the “voice of space” and if so, why? We can only hazard guesses as to what is going on, and we know that there will be no clear answers.

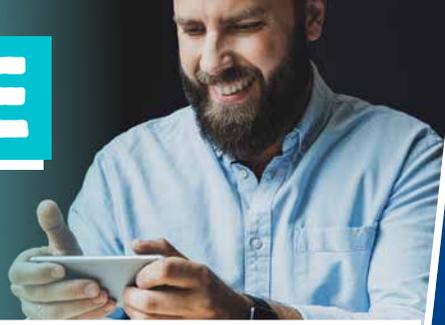
When we look at this picture and others like it, they confound us. But this is not a bad thing. In accepting

that we do not understand, we are actually developing our own ability to be able to live without knowing or understanding something.

We can apply this enhanced incomprehension to our perception of God. On the one hand, we can appreciate the fragments and splinters of God’s kindness and justice which we can grasp, and attempt to emulate them. Indeed, the Torah commands us to do so (Devarim 28:9).

On the other hand, we can remember that we cannot truly comprehend His greatness, kindness, wisdom and justice. In thus failing, we succeed. By not understanding God, we understand Him better.

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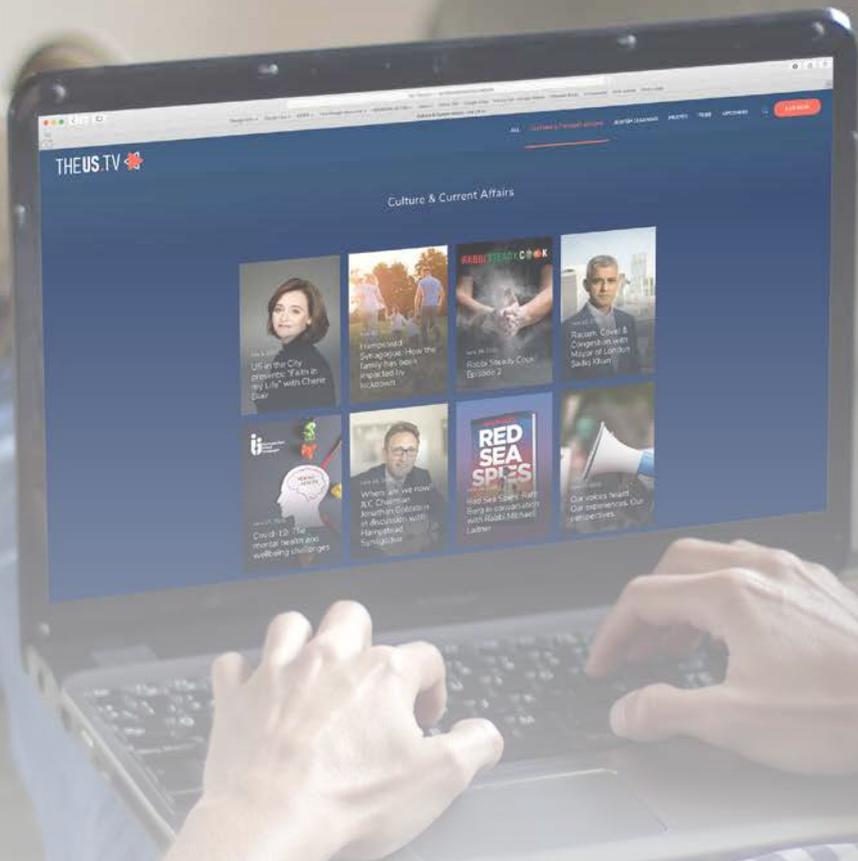
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EIKEV: EATING, DRINKING AND THANKING!

IN THIS WEEK'S PARASHA WE FIND THE FAMOUS VERSE:  
**V'ACHALTA, V'SAVATA UVEIRACHTA** - YOU SHOULD EAT, BE SATISFIED AND BLESS GOD.

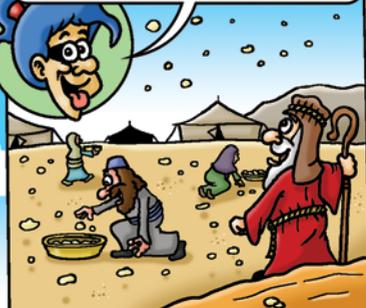


THIS IS THE MITZVAH OF BIRKAT HAMAZON AKA BENSCHING AKA GRACE AFTER MEALS.

DID YOU KNOW THAT THERE ARE **FOUR** MAIN BRACHOT OF BENSCHING.



THE **FIRST BRACHA** THANKS GOD FOR THE YUMMY FOOD THAT WE HAVE JUST EATEN. IT WAS AUTHORED BY **MOSHE** WHEN THE **MANNA** FELL IN THE DESERT.



THE **SECOND BRACHA** THANKS GOD FOR GIVING US THE **LAND OF ISRAEL**. IT WAS FORMULATED BY **JOSHUA** WHEN HE LED THE JEWISH PEOPLE INTO **ISRAEL**.



THE **THIRD BRACHA** EXPRESSES OUR DESIRE TO REBUILD **JERUSALEM**. IT WAS COMPOSED BY KINGS **DAVID** AND **SOLOMON** AT VARIOUS STAGES OF BUILDING **JERUSALEM**.



THE **FOURTH BRACHA** THANKS GOD FOR HIS GOODNESS TO ALL CREATURES. IT WAS WRITTEN AFTER THE JEWS WHO HAD BEEN KILLED IN THE ROMAN BATTLE AT **BEITAR** WERE FINALLY ALLOWED TO BE BURIED AFTER MANY YEARS. THIS BROUGHT CLOSURE TO THEIR FAMILIES. THE RABBIS UNDERSTOOD THAT EMOTIONAL HEALING IS AS IMPORTANT AS FOOD AND DRINK AND INCLUDED THIS **BRACHA** AS PART OF **BIRKAT HAMAZON**.



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**BIRKAT 'AMAZON!**

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