

ספר במדבר, is called the ספר המספרים, the sefer of a census, because in במדבר as well as in ושא, we're counting כלל ישראל. The הפטרה is from הושע, and starts off with the famous words וְהָיָה מִסְפַּר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כָּחֹל הַיָּם. And it's tied to the פרשה by this connection with counting.

The last two פסוקים of the פרשה are תפילין known to any man who puts on תפילין. They are וְאַרְשָׁתֶּיךָ לִי לְעוֹלָם. I'd like to read you a story about how significant these פסוקים are, which we generally don't say slowly enough. The article is entitled, Tefillin in Dachau. It was written by Rabbi Yosef Wallace. In Dachau, a Jew who was being taken to his death suddenly flung a small bag at a person named Judah Wallace. He caught it thinking it might contain a piece of bread. Upon opening it, however, he was disturbed to discover a pair of תפילין. Judah was very frightened because he knew were he to be caught carrying תפילין, he would be put to death instantly. So he hid the תפילין under his shirt and headed for his bunkhouse. In the morning, just before roll call, while still in his bunkhouse, he put on the תפילין. Unexpectedly and unfortunately, a German officer appeared. He ordered Judah to remove the תפילין, noted the number on his arm, and ordered him to go straight to the roll call. At the roll call, in front of thousands of silent Jews, the officer called out Judah's number.

He had no choice but to step forward. The German officer waved the תפילין in the air and screamed, "Dog, I sentence you to death by public hanging for wearing these." Judah was placed on a stool and a noose was placed around his neck. Before he was hanged, the officer said in a mocking tone, "Dog, what is your last wish?" "To wear my תפילין one last time," Judah replied. The officer was dumbfounded.

He handed Judah the תפילין. As Judah put them on, he said the פסוקים that that we all say while winding the תפילין around our fingers. וְאַרְשָׁתֶּיךָ לִי לְעוֹלָם וְאַרְשָׁתֶּיךָ לִי בְצֶדֶק וּבְמִשְׁפָּט וּבְחֶסֶד וּבְרַחֲמִים: וְאַרְשָׁתֶּיךָ לִי בְאֱמוּנָה וּבְיָדָעַת. - I will betroth you to me forever. And I will betroth you to me with righteousness, with justice, with kindness, and with mercy. And I will betroth you to me with fidelity, and you will know Hashem. In silence, the entire camp looked on. At the Jew with a noose around his neck and תפילין on his head and arm, awaiting his death for the crime of observing this מצוה. Even women from the adjoining camp were lined up at the barbed wire fence that separated them from the men's camp, compelled to watch this ominous sight. As Judah turned to the silent crowd, he saw tears in many people's eyes. Even at that moment, as he was about to be hanged, he was shocked. Jews were crying. How is it possible that they still had tears left to shed? And for a stranger? Where were those tears coming from? Impulsively, in Yiddish, he called out, "Yidden! Don't cry! With תפילין on, I am the victor! Don't you understand? The victory is mine!" The German officer, of course, understood the Yiddish and was infuriated. He said to Judah, "You dog! You think you are the victor? Hanging is too good for you. You are going to get another kind of death."

Judah, my father, Rabbi Yosef Wallace writes, was taken from the stool, and the noose was removed from his neck. He was forced into a squatting position, and two large rocks were placed under his armpits. Then he was told that he would be receiving 25 lashes to his head, the head on which he dared to place the תפילין. The officer told him that if he dropped even one of the rocks from his armpits, he would be shot immediately. In fact, because this was such as an extremely painful form of death, the officer advised him, "Drop the rocks now! You will never survive the 25 lashes to the head. Nobody ever does." "No," Judah responded, "I won't give you the pleasure." At the 25th lash, Judah lost consciousness and was left for dead. He was about to be dragged to a pile of corpses and then burned in a ditch. When another Jew saw him, he shoved Judah to the side, and covered his head with a rag so people would not realize he was still alive. Eventually, Judah recovered consciousness. He crawled to the nearest bunkhouse that was on raised piles and hid under it until he was strong enough to come out from under it under his own power. Two months later, he was liberated.



During the hanging and the beating episode, a 17-year-old girl had been watching from the women's side of the fence. After the liberation, she made her way to the men's camp and found Judah. She walked over to him and said, "I have lost everyone. I don't want to be alone anymore. I saw what you did that day when the officer wanted to hang you. Will you marry me?" The rest is history. The couple walked over to the Klausenberger Rebbe, whose own קידוש השם is legendary, wrote out a כתובה by hand from memory and married them. I, Rabbi Yosef Wallace, their son, keep and cherish that כתובה to this day.

After the above story appeared in שיחת השבוע, ארץ ישראל's sister publication in Israel, a subscriber to the publication called the שיחת השבוע office. Mr. Olasky, a 95-year-old man, asked for the phone number of Judah Wallace's son, Rabbi Yosef Wallace, who happened to be at the time the director of ערכים, a fabulous organization. When asked why he wanted the number, Mr. Olasky stated, "I was in Dachau together with Judah Wallace. However, I never knew that he survived the beating. I always wanted to thank him for letting me put on his תפילין in Dachau. Now at least I can thank his son." After receiving the phone call, Rabbi Wallace visited Mr. Olasky.

Mr. Olasky then thanked him for the תפילין his father had lent him. "I am certain," said Mr. Olasky, "that the תפילין that I wore in Dachau protected me in the camp and gave me long life and health." Rabbi Wallace commented, "Until now, I never found anyone to validate my father's story. Now I have an eyewitness. The circle of history has now come full circle."

וארשתיה לי לעולם. The first פסוק in the הפטרה is וְהָיָה מִסְפַּר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּחֹל הַיָּם. The last two פסוקים are - וְכָרַתִּי לָהֶם בְּרִית בְּיוֹם הַהוּא, which is nowhere near as famous, is Hashem is telling the נביא to tell כלל ישראל that if we behave and משיח comes through our זכות; עם תֵּיט הַשְׁדָּה; זכות. It's talking about המשיח. If we are able to be counted, even until this day, among those that fulfill the מצות, Hashem tells us he will marry us forever. וארשתיה לי לעולם וארשתיה לי בצדק ובמשפט ובחסד וברחמים: וארשתיה לי באמונה ונדעת את ה'. What a הבטחה. What a ברכה. And we should think about that every time we put on our תפילין.

