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**Rabbi Hershel Schachter**  
uncovers deep insights  
into Sefirat HaOmer  
PAGE 21



**Dr. Yael Ziegler**  
guides us through the  
message and meaning of  
Megillat Rut  
PAGE 40



**Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon**  
discusses the  
*beracha* on cheesecake  
PAGE 10



**Rabbanit Yemima Mizrahi**  
helps us discover our  
real purpose and identity  
PAGE 23



**Rabbi Hanoch Teller**  
with a gripping tale on  
the forgotten front of the  
Six-Day War  
PAGE 58



**Rabbanit Rachelle Fraenkel**  
takes you on the wondrous  
journey of learning Torah from  
the sources  
PAGE 44

## Yom Yerushalayim & Shavuot

**GUIDED  
LEARNING**  
PAGE 38

Fascinating Shavuot topics with in-depth  
sources and questions to learn on your own

**NEW  
COLUMN!**  
PAGE 55

**ONE  
ON  
ONE**

**FAMILY  
ACTIVITY**  
PAGE 60



This edition is dedicated anonymously in memory of those brothers who died in Meron  
and for the full and speedy recovery for all the injured  
בתוך שאר חולי ישראל



**MIZRACHI**  
WORLD MOVEMENT

www.mizrachi.org  
office@mizrachi.org  
+972 (0)2 620 9000

CHAIRMAN

**Mr. Harvey Blitz**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

**Rabbi Doron Perez**

EDUCATIONAL DIRECTORS

**Rabbi Reuven Taragin**

**Rabbanit Shani Taragin**

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EDITORIAL TEAM

**Daniel Verbov**

**Esther Shafir**

**Avital Gastwirth**

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

**Simi Eisenbach**

PRODUCTION AND ADVERTISING MANAGER

**Meyer Serman**

production@mizrachi.org

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# IN THIS ISSUE

## TORAT

### HAMIZRACHI

**6 | The Journey Home**  
**Rabbi Ari Rockoff**

**8 | The Three Blessings on Talmud Torah**  
**Rabbi Reuven Taragin**

**11 | Shir HaMaalot:**  
**Marveling at Yerushalayim**  
**Rabbanit Sharon Rimon**

**14 | Why Are We So Happy About Yerushalayim?**  
**Sivan Rahav Meir and Yedidya Meir**

## GLOBAL RELIGIOUS LEADERS

**18 | Receiving the Torah Anew**  
**Rabbi Avraham Shapira**

**22 | Setting the Stage**  
**Shira Smiles**

## HOLIDAY READING

**30 | The Torah of Yerushalayim**  
**Rabbi Moshe Hauer**

**33 | What is So Special About Boaz?**  
**Dr. Tamar Meir**

## THE PEOPLE AND THE LAND

**46 | Zionist Leaders in Easy Hebrew**

**52 | What's in a Word:**  
**The Names of Shavuot**  
**David Curwin**

## GENERAL INTEREST

**58 | Story: The Forgotten Front**  
**of the Six-Day War**  
**Rabbi Hanoch Teller**

**60 | Yerushalayim Treasure Hunt**  
13 riddles to lead the whole family on an adventure through Yerushalayim

**62 | Find the differences: Maamad Har Sinai**  
Win a prize with this interactive activity for Shavuot



## Torah Learning: Anywhere, any time, any topic

Rabbi Shalom Rosner, Rabbi Ya'akov Trump, Dr. Karen Kirschenbaum, Rabbi Doron Podlashuk, Rabbanit Zemira Ozarowski and Rabbi Chaim Sabato with convincing reasons to join some incredible initiatives of daily Torah learning.



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# Jerusalem's D-Day

## When the Hand of Heaven Changed the Course of Human History

There is no rational way to explain the remarkable circumstances that led to the liberation of the Old City of Jerusalem in 1967. It was one of the most unexpected and inexplicable phenomena in the history of human warfare.

To begin with, there was no battle plan for Jerusalem whatsoever. Israeli intelligence never expected the impending confrontation to include Jordan, which had been in control of the Old City since 1948.

Egypt was the issue. In contravention of international law, Egypt had closed the Straits of Tiran and sent 100,000 troops and thousands of tanks into the demilitarized Sinai Peninsula, a clear act of aggression and war intent. Along with that mounting threat from the south, tensions were also building on the Syrian border in the north. Likely battles on two fronts perhaps, but certainly not on the long mountain range border with Jordan in the east.

President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt had other plans. Unbeknown to the Israelis, Jordan had signed an agreement with Egypt, placing the Jordanian Army under the direct command of Nasser's Chief of Staff, General Riad. It was Nasser's plan to unleash a triple-pronged attack – from Egypt, Jordan and Syria, which he believed the young State of Israel could not defend, and he would finally avenge the defeat of 1948.

On the first day of the war, during the fighting with Egypt in Sinai, the Jordanian forces began shelling major

cities across Israel, including heavy bombardment of Jewish West Jerusalem. Not wanting to engage in war with Jordan, Israel repeatedly implored the Jordanians to cease fire and promised they would not react. Once all diplomatic attempts failed, Israel had no choice but to defend itself and enter the unplanned fray in Jerusalem. Israel would have to defend their "Auschwitz Borders" all at once.<sup>1</sup>

Rabbi Yoel Bin-Nun, a member of the paratrooper reserve Brigade 55 under the command of Motta Gur, recalls the surprising change in plan. On the first day of the war, he and his fellow soldiers were en route to El Arish in Sinai when they received an urgent command to redirect to Jerusalem. Since it was so spontaneous, the IDF had only a few hours to familiarize themselves with the routes and topography in and around the capital.

With only partial intelligence, a dire lack of East Jerusalem maps, and in complete darkness, the troops charged into battle at 2.00 am early Tuesday morning on the second day of the war. It was then the paratroopers engaged in the fierce battles on Ammunition Hill, the American Colony and Wadi Joz, and suffered the worst day of losses in their unit's history.

Rabbi Bin-Nun lost 100 comrades in these battles. In comparison, the very same brigade fought for two weeks in the Yom Kippur War and lost 52 soldiers, half of those lost on this one blood-drenched day in the outskirts of Old Jerusalem.

However, despite the heavy price,

Brigade 55, together with the Harel and Jerusalem brigades, had almost surrounded the Old City.

Moshe Dayan, the Defense Minister in the Unity Government, had ordered them not to capture the Old City, for two reasons. Firstly, the intention of this defensive war was never to conquer the Old City of Jerusalem and its holy sites, sacred to many religions. Secondly, he was aware of the large Jordanian military presence in the Old City, especially on the Temple Mount, with huge amounts of artillery and ammunition. Having seen the devastating losses on that one day, Dayan anticipated much greater losses in hand-to-hand street combat, especially in defence of the holy sites. This would be a battle Israel would not fight... or so he thought.

What he didn't realize was that "Divine destiny was knocking at the door."<sup>2</sup> The drama of Jewish destiny was about to unfold.

That same evening, two utterly unexpected and unpredictable things occurred.

The first, in a remarkable display of unity, left-wing Yigal Alon and Menachem Begin from the right came together to Prime Minister Levi Eshkol to intercede on behalf of Jerusalem.

Now was the time to liberate the Holy City.

Never in history had a people prayed for and yearned so much for a city.

The emergency Cabinet heavily debated the issue, with many concerned that the world would not tolerate a Jewish conquest of Jerusalem, and that

Israel should not attack. Eventually, Moshe Dayan's decision was overruled and the Cabinet gave the green light.

It was time to return to Jerusalem for the first time in 2,000 years... at any cost.

At that very same time, another dramatic decision was being made. The commander of the Jordanian troops in the Old City, sensing the inevitable and realizing he was surrounded, requested permission to retreat over the Mount of Olives and back over the Jordan River. General Riad gave his approval and the Jordanians fled that same evening!

When Motta Gur positioned himself on the Mount of Olives the next morning, preparing for the battle of his life, he was astounded. There was barely a Jordanian soldier in sight.

After a few minor skirmishes and mercifully with very little loss of life, Motta Gur proclaimed the iconic words, *הר הבית בידינו*, "The Temple Mount is in our hands." Israel had accomplished what seemed impossible with all the political predictions and military assessments from just a few days before.

The Jewish people had returned Home.

Motta Gur recounts a breathtaking conversation between himself and Rabbi Shlomo Goren, the IDF's Chief Rabbi at the time, which had taken place the evening before.<sup>3</sup> While in the Rockefeller Museum at the north eastern tip of the Old City, awaiting orders, the Rabbi said to him, "Motta! Jewish history obligates you to liberate the Old City!" Motta replied that while he draws great inspiration from Jewish history, he takes his orders from his superiors. "Motta," said Rabbi Goren, "Jewish history will not forgive a Jewish commander who had the opportunity to reclaim Jerusalem and did not do so."

## Heaven and Earth

Our Sages describe how Jerusalem is the only city in the world that exists on two planes, in Heaven and on Earth. Jerusalem on High and Jerusalem down below. Nothing happens in Jerusalem on High unless it happens concurrently in Jerusalem below.<sup>4</sup> One is a reflection of the other. The spiritual destiny of the city is inseparable from its physical reality.

Perhaps, at the very moment the debates between the Rabbi and Commander and within the Cabinet were taking place in the city below, a similar debate was being held in the Heavenly Cabinet – between the *קטיגורים*, the prosecuting angels, and the *סניגורים*, the angels of mercy.

Were the Jewish people worthy of returning to *Yerushalayim Ir HaKodesh*?

Was this the moment they'd been waiting for for 2,000 years or would they have to wait 2,000 more?

Would there be more devastating loss of life in a battle on the Mountain of G-d or would there be a more merciful outcome?

As we know, Divine mercy won the day. *Am Yisrael* would not have to wait any longer and little blood would be spilt on that epic day in Jerusalem in June 1967.

This extraordinary turn of events – and the entire Six-Day War – is another powerful reminder of the meaning of Jewish life. Our collective journey on earth cannot be separated from our heavenly odyssey. Individual and national master plans cannot be severed from the Master's plan. The existence of Israel and Jerusalem are a constant testimony to the inextricable bond between human history and Divine Providence; between Jewish destiny and spiritual destination.

Yom Yerushalayim, celebrated on this very day of our return to Jerusalem, 54 years ago on the 28<sup>th</sup> of Iyar, is a wonderful opportunity to express our appreciation for the miracles of our generation. Together with Shavuot, it is the perfect time to reflect on our unique mission in the world.

*Yom Yerushalayim and Chag Shavuot Sameach!*

<sup>1</sup> This was an expression used by Abba Eban, Israel's Foreign Minister, who actually said, "... The June map is for us equivalent to insecurity and danger. I do not exaggerate when I say that it has for us something of a memory of Auschwitz. We shudder when we think of what would have awaited us in the circumstances of June, 1967, if we had been defeated; with Syrians on the mountain and we in the valley, with the Jordanian army in sight of the sea, with the Egyptians who hold our throat in their hands in Gaza."

<sup>2</sup> A reference to Rav Soloveitchik's famous essay, *Kol Dodi Dofek*, in which the Rav uses the metaphoric imagery in *Shir HaShirim*, Song of Songs, to contextualize the establishment of Israel and return to Zion as G-d knocking on the door, so to speak, of Jewish destiny.

<sup>3</sup> Rabbi Bin-Nun recounts that Motta Gur mentioned this in a radio interview following Rav Goren's passing in 1994. Another version appears in Rav Goren's autobiography, edited by Avi Rath and translated into English as *With Might and Strength*.

<sup>4</sup> Ta'anit 5a.

*This article is the basis of the script for Mizrachi's special new video for Yom Yerushalayim, see page 17.*

**Rabbi Doron Perez** is Executive Chairman of the Mizrachi World Movement.



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# The Journey Home

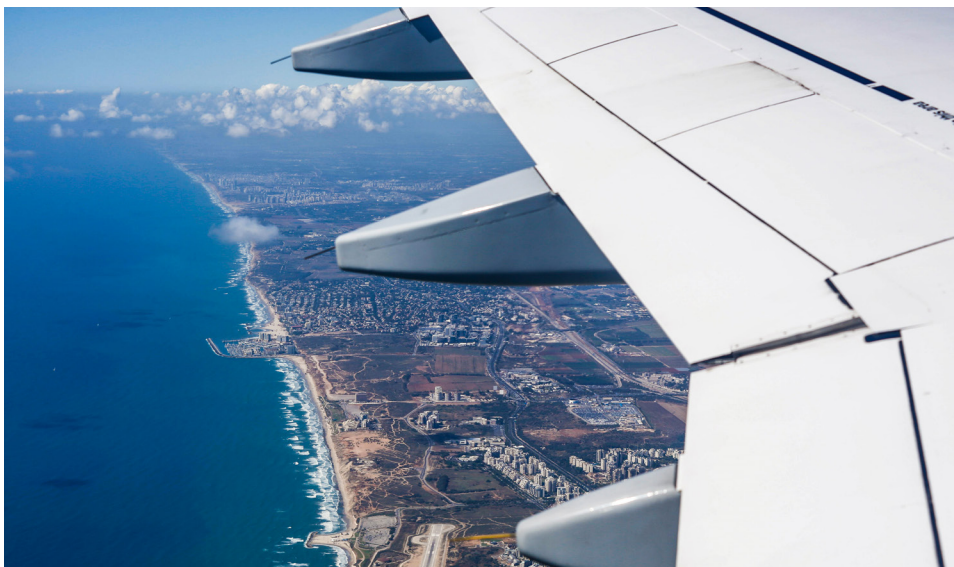
הגיע הזמן להתעורר  
לעזוב הכל להתגבר  
לשוב הביתה לא לחפש מקום אחר

It's time to wake up,  
To leave everything and  
strengthen ourselves,  
To return home, not look  
for another place  
(Ishay Ribo)

For most of us, our lives have been home-focused over the last year. We have spent far less time in public places than before the pandemic and barely left our homes.

Yet there is one home the pandemic has detached us from – our national home, Israel. Since March 2020, members of our community have not been able to jump on a plane and go to Israel, as we have become so used to. Parents and grandparents have been separated from their children and grandchildren in Israel. Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz, Director of *Semicha* at RIETS, captured what many of us felt this past Yom HaAtzmaut: “When the doors close, we should be inside, not outside.”

To address this separation from our home in Israel, we began seriously planning the RZA-Mizrachi Journey Home Mission, to bring our community back to Israel as soon as possible. Because being away from home is painful, we want to take the first chance to go back, as soon as the doors open. So much has inspired us about Israel in the last year, from the signing of



“  
There is one  
home the  
pandemic  
has detached  
us from—  
our national  
home, Israel  
”

the Abraham Accords to Israel's world-leading vaccination campaign. Traveling home to Israel is our way of showing that even if the whole world has changed, our connection to Israel remains as strong as ever.

The Gemara in Ketubot (75a)

expounds on the *pasuk* from Tehillim , ולציון יאמר איש ואיש יולד בה , “But of Zion it can be said, ‘Man after man was born in her.’” noting the repetition of the word איש. The Gemara explains, אחד, הנוולד בה ואחד המצפה לראותה , “One who longs to see Yerushalayim is equal to one who was born there.” Many Jews have indeed merited to be born in Yerushalayim. They will dance through its streets on Yom Yerushalayim, celebrating the reunification of the Holy City 54 years ago. But even those of us born and living elsewhere are obligated to be among those who are מצפים לראותה , who long to see it, to wait, yearn and prepare, so that we are ready, at the first opportunity, to make the journey home.

**Rabbi Ari Rockoff** is Executive Vice-President of Religious Zionists of America—Mizrachi.



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## The Three Blessings on Talmud Torah

**W**hy Three *Berachot*? The *mitzvah* of Talmud Torah is unique in that we recite **three** *berachot* before performing the *mitzvah* each morning. The Raavad explains that reciting all three does not constitute *berachot levatala* because each *bracha* relates to an independent, indispensable aspect of the *mitzvah*.

### The First *Beracha*: The *Mitzvah* of Talmud Torah

We begin the *berachot* with the classic formulation we use for *berachot* on other *mitzvot*: אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו לעסוק בדברי תורה. Before relating to the unique aspects of Talmud Torah, we relate to it as a *mitzvah*. The first and basic reason we learn is because Hashem commanded us to do so. It is critical that our learning be *lishma* – done with the intention to fulfill Hashem's commandment.

### The Third *Beracha*: The Gift of Torah

Reciting only the first *beracha* would be ignoring the added significance of Talmud Torah. The third *beracha* expresses our appreciation to Hashem for having chosen to give the Torah to us: אשר בחר בנו מכל העמים ונתן לנו את תורתו. ברוך אתה ה' נותן התורה. Torah enriches the lives of those who learn it. By giving us the Torah, Hashem gives our lives meaning and direction.

Like the rest of creation, human beings are created for the glory of G-d. Most people struggle to identify and realize their destiny. Hashem separated us from those 'wandering' by giving us the Torah, which offers us eternal life by teaching us the truth about the world and our place within it.

By giving us the Torah, Hashem expressed His love for us. We show

our appreciation of this love and how Torah enriches our lives and we commit ourselves to taking full advantage of the opportunity to learn it by reciting the *beracha* before *Kriyat Shema* (during *Ma'ariv*):

אהבת עולם בית ישראל עמך אהבת- תורה ומצות חוקים ומשפטים אותנו למדת.  
על כן ה' אלקינו בשכבנו ובקומנו נשיח בחוקך ונשמח בדברי תורתך ובמצותיך לעולם ועד.  
כי הם חיינו וארך ימינו ובהם נהגה יומם ולילה.

Before we recite *Kriyat Shema*, which mentions the *mitzvah* for **us** to love **Hashem**, we emphasize how much **Hashem** loves **us**, as evidenced by His having given us His Torah and *mitzvot*. They are a gift which makes our lives meaningful and our days 'long' because they give us the ability to use our time in a meaningful way. One who spends his time learning Torah can look back on his days and years and feel like they were truly valuable as time he used to accumulate meaningful knowledge and to grow as a person.

### The Second/Segue *Beracha*: Praying For Torah Growth

Not everyone has had the opportunity to learn Torah on a meaningful enough level to appreciate its beauty and significance. This is why we have the second/middle *beracha* which asks Hashem to help us appreciate the Torah's sweetness:

והערב נא ה' אלוֹקינו את דברי תורתך בפנינו ובפני עמך בית ישראל  
ונהיה אנחנו וצאצאינו וצאצאי עמך בית ישראל כולנו יודעי שמך ולומדי תורתך לשמה.  
ברוך אתה ה' המלמד תורה לעמו ישראל.

Our view extends beyond that of our own lives to those of our children and future generations. We realize that for them to 'know Hashem' through His Torah, the Torah needs to be sweet for us

so we can relay that sweetness to them. We ask Hashem as the eternal teacher (not just the giver) of Torah to teach us that sweetness.

### The Flow of the Three

Our relationship with Torah begins with our recognition of the *mitzvah* to learn. Our personal commitment to Torah learning precedes and leads to a greater appreciation of it and gives us the right to ask Hashem to help us get there.

We see this idea in the *beracha* of *Ahava Rabba* before *Kriyat Shema* in *Shacharit* (which, like that of *Ma'ariv*, presents Hashem's giving us the Torah as an expression of His love for us):

אהבה רבה אהבתנו ה' אלוֹקינו,  
חמלה גדולה ויתרה חמלת עלינו.  
אבינו מלכנו בעבור אבותינו שבטחו בך ותלמדם  
חקי חיים, כן תחנונו ותלמדנו.  
אבינו האב הרחמן המרחם רחם עלינו ותן בלבנו  
להבין ולהשכיל לשמוע ללמוד וללמד לשמור  
ולעשות ולקיים את כל דברי תלמוד תורתך באהבה  
והאר עיינינו בתורתך ודבק לבנו במצוותיך ויחד  
לבבנו לאהבה וליראה את שמך ולא נבוש לעולם  
ועד.

Because of our ancestors' faith in Hashem and his Torah, they merited Hashem teaching them Torah. May our *birchot HaTorah* do the same!

**Rabbi Reuven Taragin** is Educational Director of Mizrachi and Dean of the Yeshivat HaKotel Overseas Program.



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Rabbanit Shani Taragin

## Yerushalayim of Gold: The Crown of Torah Continuity and Commitment

Rabbi Akiva consistently saw the beauty of Yerushalayim, even in the direst of circumstances. While his peers responded to the site of the destroyed Temple and jackals emerging from the *Kodesh Kodashim* with cries, Rabbi Akiva laughed; he saw a different Yerushalayim – one that would be rebuilt (Makkot 24b).

Rabbi Akiva's unshakable faith and vision were rooted, as Rav Kook explains (Alumah 1936), "in a profound love of G-d. This love so filled his pure heart that the future was a certain reality, leaving no room to mourn over the disasters of the present." This love enabled him to look and learn beyond the present, beyond the letters before his eyes, and instead, see crowns of glory waiting to be interpreted.

The Gemara (Menachot 29b) records that when Moshe Rabbenu ascended to receive the Torah, he found G-d sitting and attaching crowns to the letters. When Moshe inquired as to the purpose of these crowns, G-d replied, "There is one man, Akiva the son of Yosef, who will in the future expound many laws from every crown." These crowns are not just the literal crowns found on seven letters in the Torah, but rather the golden crown on the "curly locks, black as a raven" described in Shir haShirim, referring to every stroke of the black letters of the Torah (Eruvin 21b). Rabbi Akiva examined every crown, every nuance and inflection of every letter and verse of the Torah and extrapolated numerous *mid-rashei halacha*.

Rabbi Akiva saw beyond the simple reality of "locks of the hair" and appreciated the golden crowns of letters above and between the lines. These crowns

represent Divine depth and beauty beneath the surface, yet were evident to Rabbi Akiva as clear as day. For Rabbi Akiva, the crowns of the Torah linked him to the Torah of Moshe Rabbenu and inspired his commitment for the future of Torah continuity in every aspect of his life.

That's why when Rabbi Akiva and his beloved wife Rachel were married and were so poor that they would sleep in a storehouse of straw, Rabbi Akiva would gather strands of straw from her hair and say, "If I had the means I would place on your head a Jerusalem of Gold (a golden crown with an engraving of the city of Yerushalayim)."<sup>1</sup>

Where others saw yellow straws of poverty, Rabbi Akiva saw the golden crown of Jerusalem, the commitment to Torah his wife had displayed by marrying him, leaving a life of opulence and sending him off to study Torah. Rabbi Akiva already saw her in the full glory of the future, with her golden crown yet to be adorned.

*Chazal* refer to this "Jerusalem of Gold" adornment as a diadem that may or may not be worn as one goes out to the public domain on Shabbat (Shabbat 59a-b):

Rabbi Meir holds that it is considered a burden and not an ornament, and one who carries a burden into the public domain is liable to bring a sin-offering.

The Rabbis hold that it is an ornament. Why, then, did they prohibit going out into the public domain wearing it? They are concerned lest she remove it, and show it to another, and come to carry it in the public domain.

Rabbi Eliezer holds: Whose manner

is it to go out with a City of Gold ornament? Only an important woman, and in that case there is no concern, as an important woman does not remove ornaments and show them to others.

I learned from my esteemed and beloved mentor, Rabbanit Malka Bina (*Yikirat Yerushalayim* 5781), that each Tanna is expressing a different view regarding one's commitment to Yerushalayim/Torah. Some see the crown of Yerushalayim/Torah as a burden to remove when convenient. Others see affiliation with Yerushalayim/Torah as an ornament to display and "show off" one to the other. Rabbi Eliezer's explanation, as taught to Rabbi Akiva, is that an "important woman" recognizes that the crown of Yerushalayim/Torah shall never be removed from one's head, from one's consciousness; it is not a burden, but a badge of honor!

For Rabbi Akiva, the crown of Yerushalayim is a crown of commitment to Torah. When he sees Yerushalayim in bleak desolation, and his wife's hair with golden straw, he sees the black letters of the Torah with crowns of light. He reminds us that we shall never remove these crowns from our heads and hearts for they will bring us from the past to the future, from jackals to Jerusalem of gold, from cries of pain to glory and laughter.

<sup>1</sup> Nedarim 50a.

**Rabbanit Shani Taragin** is Educational Director of Mizrahi and the Director of the Mizrahi Matan Lapidot Educators' Program.



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## What is the *Beracha* on Cheesecake?

There is a custom to eat dairy foods on Shavuot (Rema 494:3). Some believe that dairy serves as a parable to Torah (Mishan Berura *se'if katan* 11), since the Torah is likened to milk, as it says “honey and milk under your tongue” (Shir HaShirim 4:11), metaphorically referring to the sweetness of Torah in one’s mouth. Some believe that since the people of Israel received the laws of *kashrut* for the first time at *Matan Torah*, they could not immediately eat meat and kasher their utensils, so they ate milk.

Many eat cheesecake on Shavuot; but what *beracha* should one say? In baked cheesecake, there is pastry (*mezonot*) and cheese (*shehakol*). Similar mixtures of different distinct ingredients in one dish exist in many foods today, for example, the Israeli *krembo*. Let’s think about the different possibilities for the *beracha*:

Maybe we say a *shehakol*, because the cheese or cream is *shehakol*, and it seems this is the *ikkar*, the most important part of the cake.

Maybe two blessings are recited: *mezonot* on the pastry or cake section and *shehakol* on the cheese or whipped cream.

Could it be that we recite only *mezonot*?

The Mishnah (Berachot 44a) states:

“This is the rule: whenever there is an essential food and a secondary food [within a mixture], we say a *beracha* on the essential and exempt the secondary.”

The Gemara (Berachot 36b) teaches us another rule: when there is a mixture of foods which include *shehakol* ingredients and *mezonot* ingredients, the **flour is considered primary, even**

**if it is less important** (unless we really do not enjoy its taste or cannot taste it). The reason for this is that the five kinds of grain are of special importance, since bread is usually made from them, so even if they are in a relatively small (but noticeable) amount, they are considered the main ingredient. In the language of the Gemara:

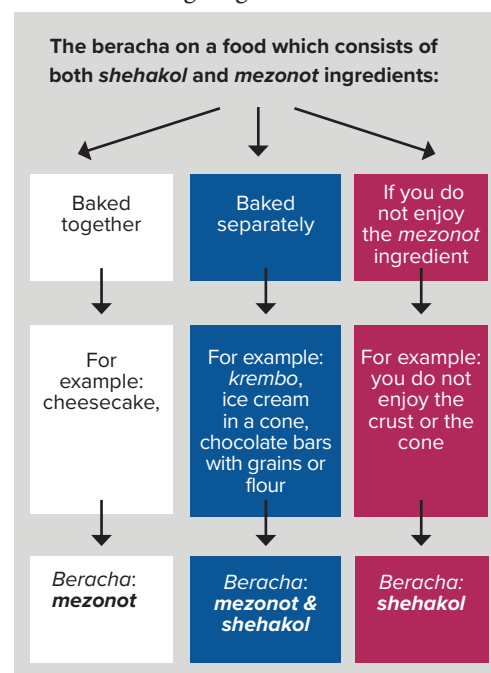
“Anything which contains one of the five kinds of grain – its *beracha* is *borei minei mezonot*.”

Therefore, the *beracha* on baked cheesecake is **only *mezonot***. Although the cheese is most important to us, the **bottom of the cake, which is *mezonot*, is considered primary**. So too with chocolate bars which include *mezonot* ingredients (like the Israeli *kif-kef*, *pesek zman*, etc.): although the chocolate is more important to us, the *mezonot* part is primary, since we taste that part and enjoy it as well.

However, one of our most important *poskim*, the Mishna Berura (168, *se'if katan* 45), clarified that only when the two ingredients are **baked together** should one say *mezonot* alone. However, **when the two things are separate, and only laid together, like ice cream in a cone**, such that a person enjoys both the ice cream and the cone, he should say two *berachot*: ***mezonot* (on the cone) and *shehakol* (on the ice cream)**. Therefore, on a *krembo*, one should say two *berachot*, **because it includes two separate ingredients not baked together**.

If someone does not like the *mezonot* in the cake at all (or ice cream cone), **and the foods are used only as a ‘container’ to hold the cake or ice cream, one should not say *mezonot* at all, only *shehakol***.

The following diagram summarizes:



On Shavuot, we try to raise ourselves up a level, to be filled with the desire to fulfill G-d’s will in the world, to be ready to receive the Torah.

We hope that we will prepare properly and not only hear the *ba’al koreh* reading *Aseret HaDibrot*, but hear G-d’s very voice emanating from within the words. As the Kedushat Levi writes:

“Thus a person merits that on every Shavuot he hears the voice announcing *Anochi Hashem Elokecha*. We find that a person must greatly prepare himself to merit hearing the words of G-d.”

Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon is Rosh Yeshiva of JCT-Machon Lev and Head of Mizrachi’s Educational Advisory Board.



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Rabbanit Sharon Rimon

## Shir HaMaalot: Marveling at Yerushalayim

Upon the 15 steps leading up to the *beit HaMikdash* were they Leviim stood and sang the 15 *Shir HaMaalot* in Tehillim. Chapter 122 of Tehillim, *שיר המעלות לדוד*, which we customarily read on Yom Yerushalayim, speaks of the Holy City, expressing the joy, wonder, and excitement of those going up to Yerushalayim: *שומחתי באמרים לי: בית ה' נלך*

The chapter is written from the point of view of a Jew going up to Yerushalayim who is filled with wonder at the sight of the city before him: *עמדות היו רגלינו... בשעריה... ירושלם הבנויה*. He marvels at the beautiful buildings which glorify Yerushalayim and the vastly different neighborhoods within one great city.

He does not only admire the physical aspect of the city, but marvels at the building of the Jewish people and their unity around Yerushalayim: *כעיר שחברה לה יחדיו; שישם עליו שבטים*. Although the people of Israel are made up of different tribes and ethnic groups, all have a part in Yerushalayim. Yerushalayim is on the border between the tribe of Yehudah and the tribe of Binyamin, thus uniting all the parts of the nation. A Jew sees all parts of the nation gathering together in Yerushalayim, is overcome with wonder, and blesses Yerushalayim: *שאלו: שלום ירושלם... יהי שלום בחילך שלום... אדברה בך*. *Shalom* and *shalva* repeat themselves numerous times in these verses, and their sound is similar to the word "Yerushalayim," so much so it is understood that Yerushalayim is thus named because it is the city of peace and wholeness. The Jew wishes Yerushalayim peace with its external enemies, and inner peace, between the different parts of

the people. Peace with external enemies depends on inner peace. The foundation of unity is within Yerushalayim. Indeed, David HaMelech succeeded in conquering Yerushalayim only after uniting all the people under his kingdom, and as in the days of David so too today; the conquest of Yerushalayim and the unification of the two halves of the city was successful only in the Six Day War, when there was a special unity among the nation.

“  
Yerushalayim  
is the city the  
represents  
connection to G-d,  
justice and unity  
”

The Jew blesses Yerushalayim that its inner essence will be expressed, that the city will indeed be *יחדיו* *לה יחדיו*, “connected together,” uniting all of Israel.

The Jew continues to look at his brethren coming to Yerushalayim, which deepens his view of the purpose of the gathering in Yerushalayim: Yerushalayim is the spiritual center for all Jews, (and in the future will be a spiritual center for all nations). David's choice of Yerushalayim was not accidental, but because **Yerushalayim has an intrinsic Divine foundation:** the *even hashetiya* from which the whole world was founded is in Yerushalayim and the binding of Yitzchak took place here. That is why Yerushalayim is the most suitable city for

the inspiration of the Divine within the Jewish people. The spiritual dimension of the city of Yerushalayim gives it a unique facet, which does not exist in other capital cities: the deep connection between *Yerushalayim shel mata*, “Yerushalayim of below” and *Yerushalayim shel maalah*, “Yerushalayim of above.” The fact that Yerushalayim is the sanctified city is the deep reason why the Jewish people unite around it: from the belief in one G-d, who unites all forces, comes the foundation of the unity of all reality, and the unity of the tribes of Israel.

After the Jew admired the unity and holiness expressed in Yerushalayim, he continues to observe and admire another element expressed in this special city: *כי שמה ישובו כסאות למשפט*. David HaMelech made Yerushalayim **the eternal city, within which his holy kingdom is united**. One of the important roles of the king is to do justice, and therefore, Yerushalayim, as the city of the kingdom, is supposed to be the city of justice. G-d's expectation from the people of Israel is not only expressed on the ritual and spiritual level. G-d also expects and demands a high level of moral norms.

Yerushalayim is the city that represents all of these values: the connection to G-d, justice and unity.

Standing at the gates of Yerushalayim and seeing at the glory and greatness of all its aspects – physical, intellectual, social and national – the Jew would sing and bless the city that its inner essence will grow and be a blessing for the people of Israel and the world:

*אדברה נא שלום בך... אבקשה טוב לך!*

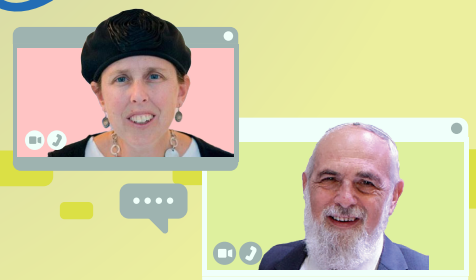
Rabbanit Sharon Rimon teaches Tanach and is Content Editor for the HaTanakh website.



*Thank  
you*



Thank you to the communities and speakers who participated in this year's Israel360 program. To celebrate Israel during the month of Iyar, Mizrachi brought inspiring Israeli speakers and thinkers to communities all around the globe, reflecting Israel's international reach and Mizrachi's mission of spreading Torat Eretz Yisrael across the world.







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## JERUSALEM'S D-DAY

WHEN HEAVEN ALTERED  
THE COURSE OF HISTORY





Sivan Rahav Meir and Yedidya Meir



# Why Are We So Happy About Yerushalayim?

On 28<sup>th</sup> Iyar 5727 (1967), during the Six-Day War, Jerusalem was united under Israeli rule. Israeli paratroopers defeated the Jordanian Legion and, visibly moved, reached the Kotel, the Western Wall. Since so many years have passed, it is perhaps worthwhile to remind ourselves what is so joyful about this day:

**1** First of all, we are not only celebrating the liberation of Yerushalayim. We are also celebrating the success of Tel Aviv. Anyone who was here during the tense waiting period before the Six-Day War knows very well that the existence of the entire young State of Israel was in danger. Our 19-year-old country was saved, gained in size, and many Biblical areas were returned.

**2** The realization of the dream. An Ethiopian immigrant told me some years ago how every time she and her siblings saw a stork in the skies above their home in Addis Ababa, they would shout up: "Stork, stork, how is Yerushalayim doing?"

Natan Sharansky told us about how when he was accused with his friends of treason against "Mother Russia," the court asked them to sum up their arguments. Sharansky said: "I have nothing to say to this court, but to the Jewish people and to my wife I say: לשנה הבאה בירושלים! - "Next Year in Jerusalem!"

We are living in a 2,000-year-old prophecy coming true every day!

**3** Most importantly, we are happy today due to the enormity of our contemporary challenge. For the huge opportunity we have *davka* in our generation. We have won the

lottery, and now, what do we do with the jackpot? Our assignment is to transform all this energy – all the oaths and the yearnings and the prayers of thousands of years... into practicalities.

So that we can connect Heavenly Jerusalem with earthly Jerusalem.

So that this will indeed herald an alternative culture for the entire world.

We're on the way

Our great great-grandparents never imagined that we would pay municipal taxes in Yerushalayim, that we would stand in traffic on its streets, or even debate and argue about what character the city should have. We have that merit!

## Prophecies in the Headlines

28<sup>th</sup> Iyar, the day the Old City was liberated. In order to understand, it's sometimes best to step back a moment, to what the archives say.

The day after Jerusalem was united, the Haaretz newspaper quoted the prophecy of Yeshayahu in large letters on its front page: צהלי ורוני יושבת ציון – "Exult and shout for joy, O inhabitant of Zion." In the editorial, they wrote: "There are no words to express the emotions bubbling in our hearts at this moment. The Old City of Jerusalem is ours. Its gates are open, and the Western Wall will no longer stand silent and abandoned. The glory of the past will not be observed from afar, but from now on it will be part of the new State and disseminate its light upon the building of a Jewish society that is a link in the long chain of generations of a people in its Land. The entire Jewish people, in Israel and in the Diaspora, lauds the IDF for restoring the glory of yesteryear."

These moving sentiments are

restrained in comparison to the next report, of Haaretz's correspondents on the ground: "Anyone who saw Jerusalem in its joy yesterday, could perhaps imagine the joy of ancient Jerusalem, at the time of the pilgrimage on the Three Foot Festivals. And in the tumult of emotion, suddenly the concept of the Beit HaMikdash became something much more tangible. 'Now we can build the Temple.' That was a yearning that emanated from the heart. Yesterday, people were very serious about what they said. A university professor said it. A high school student said it. Many said it, and *davka* non-religious people. One who did not witness Jerusalem and its joy yesterday has never seen what joy really is."

Chana Zemer, the Editor of the Davar newspaper, wrote in her publication that the day after the paratroopers entered the Kotel area: "The Redeemer had come to Zion. For 2,000 years, 80 generations, Jews turned East – *Shacharit*, *Mincha*, *Maariv*. Thousands of years did not blur the national memory, with which a Jew is born just as he is born with all of his limbs. All the verses are now coming alive before our very eyes."

A short lesson on the media, on perspective, and on Yerushalayim.

## "We were like dreamers"

I think this is one of the most moving testimonies about the liberation of the Kotel. Rabbi She'ar Yishuv Cohen, the late Chief Rabbi of Haifa, recalled: "A few days after the victory, on the first Shavuot after the liberation, I was very fortunate to walk down to the Kotel with the masses alongside the unforgettable Jerusalem *tzaddik*, Rabbi Aryeh Levin, who was happy to see me and warmly



hugged me. We walked together, silently in thought, and then he said to me, almost in a whisper, the following words: 'For my whole life, I have never understood the explanation of the verse **בשוב ה' את שבי ציון היינו כחולמים** – "When G-d will return the captivity of Zion, we will be like dreamers." Now I understand.'

'What does the Rabbi understand?' I asked.

He said: 'A dream, such is how it works. A person sees a glimpse of events that last for a long time. Sometimes, one can see in a dream something that would naturally last for many years, and yet one sees it in a moment, and in the blink of an eye the whole picture becomes clear. An entire era, an entire history, the experience of generations, flashes past your eyes in an instant. In a dream, we can capture the past, present and future in seconds. That's what's happening to us now, right here. We are entering the Old City, walking to the Kotel, and we are like

dreamers. At this precise moment we are bonding with the multitudes that prayed and wished for this moment for generations. For this very moment we are living right now. In an instant we see everything that happened in Exile, in the Holocaust, in the underground, in the wars. Every single person who ever prayed, waited, hoped. Here it is. Thousands of years flowing together into this one moment. We are like dreamers."

### The Heart of the Heart

Elie Wiesel, the Nobel Prize-winning Holocaust survivor and author, once published a full-page ad in the American press. It was during the Obama administration, and Elie Wiesel was urging to stop the pressure on Israel regarding the issue of Yerushalayim. This is how he tried to explain the significance of the city: "For me, the Jew that I am, Jerusalem is above politics. It is mentioned more than 600 times in the Bible, and not a single time

in the Koran... There is no more moving prayer in the Jewish past than that which expresses the yearning to return to Jerusalem... It is much more than a city. It's what binds one Jew to another in a way that remains hard to explain. When a Jew visits Jerusalem for the first time, it's not the first time. It's a homecoming... I heard once, in the name of the Chassidic master Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, that everything in the world has a heart, and that the heart itself has a heart. Jerusalem is the heart of our hearts."

### Low Gear

A little story about Yerushalayim, and the feelings it is meant to arouse in us: Prof. Nechama Leibowitz, the great Tanach teacher and Israel Prize Laureate, made aliyah during the British Mandate. For the first time, the young 25-year-old immigrant traveled to the city up the hills and down the valleys we all know. On one of the bends, she and her husband saw a sign at the side of the road: "Stay in low gear." They both only knew Biblical (and not spoken) Hebrew, and Nechama understood that this was a spiritual instruction for those going up to Jerusalem: stay in low gear, i.e., keep a subdued frame of mind, humble and lowly, as you enter the gates of the city. "How beautiful," she said to her husband. "In *Eretz Yisrael* there are road signs that remind those making the pilgrimage to the Holy City to enter it with humility, in the right spirit."

**Sivan Rahav Meir and Yedidya Meir** are popular Israeli media personalities and World Mizrahi's Scholars-in-Residence.



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## The People Who Forgot How to Dance

**T**o me, Yom Yerushalayim is one of the greatest days in the last 2000 years, a day which transformed our people, a day which had been prophesied for centuries and then, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of Iyar 5727, the prophecy came true – G-d brought us back to Yerushalayim. We came home.

The most watched TED talk of all time is by Sir Ken Robinson. There he tells a powerful story, so relevant to Yom Yerushalayim.

The story is about Gillian Lynne, a world-famous choreographer of works such as “Cats” and “Phantom of the Opera.” How did she become a dancer? When she was at school, she was hopeless. Her school, in the 1930s, wrote to her parents to tell them that Gillian had a learning disorder. She couldn’t concentrate; she was fidgeting. Today we might call it ADHD.

Gillian went to see a specialist with her mother and sat on a chair for 20 minutes while the man spoke to her mother about all the problems Gillian was having at school – she was disturbing people, her homework was always late, and so on.

In the end, the doctor went and sat next to Gillian and said, “I’ve listened to all these things your mother’s told me. I need to speak to her privately. Wait here. We’ll be back. We won’t be very long,” and they went and left her.

But as they went out of the room, he turned on the radio that was sitting on his desk. And when they got out of the room, he said to her mother, “Just stand and watch her.” The minute they left the room, she was on her feet, moving to the music. They watched for a few minutes, then the man turned to her mother and said, “Mrs. Lynne, Gillian isn’t sick. She’s a dancer. Take her to a dance school.”

And she did. She went to dance school, full of people like her – people who couldn’t sit still, people who had to move to think.

Gillian eventually auditioned for the Royal Ballet School. She became a soloist; she had a wonderful career at the Royal Ballet. She eventually graduated from the Royal Ballet School, founded the Gillian Lynne Dance Company and met Andrew Lloyd Webber. She’s been responsible for some of the most successful musical theatre productions in history and she’s given pleasure to millions.

Somebody else might have put her on medication and told her to calm down.

The Jewish people were born to sing and dance. We danced out of Mitzrayim as we crossed the sea. The Leviim sung in the *Mishkan* as we built a home for G-d. David danced the *aron* into Yerushalayim as he made it his capital. The nation danced at the *Simchat Beit Hashoeva* in Yerushalayim during the first and second Temples.

And then the Babylonians came and destroyed *Bayit Rishon*. And then the Romans came and destroyed *Bayit Sheni*. The Romans murdered millions of us and exiled us from Yerushalayim. And then we stopped dancing. We began wandering, crying, praying, hoping.

However, wherever they were in the world, the Jewish people did not forget their homeland. In every prayer, every blessing, at every event, whether joyful or sad, we remembered the Land of Israel and Yerushalayim – we remembered how we used to dance.

And then it happened: first in 1948, we began to feel the energy returning to our aching limbs, and then in 1967, 250,000 marched to the *kotel* on that first Shavuot after its liberation to sing and dance – we had returned as our prophets had foretold.

We need to wake up and realise the incredible blessing G-d has given us, to thank G-d and realise that we are a rejuvenated people, that we are living in an era of *reishit tzmichat geulatenu* – the beginning of our redemption.

Rabbi Akiva told us 2000 years ago that we would return, that there would be centuries of darkness and storms but that G-d would be with us throughout till we came back to Yerushalayim *shel zahav*.

It’s time to dance.

### Get to know the author:

Rabbi Andrew Shaw is the CEO of Mizrachi UK and his love of music and theatre led him to create several musical productions including ‘Haim Potter’ and ‘Grease – the Jewish Version’. Today he is the writer of ‘Dreams of a Nation’ – a show that tells the story of the Jewish people from Avraham Avinu to the present day as well as writing and narrating several films with Chazan Jonny Turgel. He lives in the UK with his wife Gila and two boys, Yoni and Daniel.





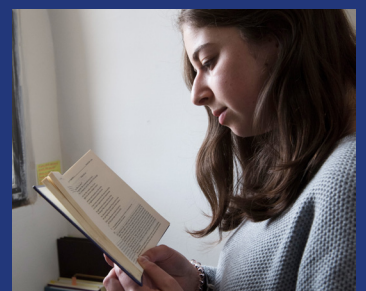
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## Receiving the Torah Anew

**C**hag Matan Torah is the holiday of the Oral Law. Of the Torah Sages of every generation. *Matan Torah* is renewed in every generation, and the day the Torah was given in the past is a day infused with the spiritual energies for the Torah to be given every year. Every year, there is a return to what was, and just as Pesach is the time of freedom every year, so Shavuot is the time ripe for receiving the Torah anew in every generation. When we celebrate Shavuot, we are not celebrating an historical event in the past but the essence of the day that regenerates itself year after year.

The Yerushalmi says,<sup>1</sup> "In all the *korbanot* it is written חטא (sin) and concerning *Atzeret* (Shavuot) it is not written חטא. *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* said to them, since you accepted upon yourselves the yoke of Torah, I consider it as if you have never ever sinned." And the *Korban HaEida*<sup>2</sup> explains that concerning all *korbanot* it is written, ועשיתם שעיר עיזים אחד לחטאת and concerning *Atzeret* it is not written לחטאת but just שעיר עיזים אחד, and that's because "every year on *Atzeret* is like the day we stood at *Har Sinai* and received the Torah anew... and therefore there is no חטאת, no sin, on this day." The regenerative reality of *Kabbalat HaTorah* every year is what allows a person's sins to be atoned for every year anew. And every time we read the pasuk ונעשה ונשמע,<sup>3</sup> there is another, new acceptance of Torah.

### For each of us

This annual *Kabbalat HaTorah* is for each and every one of us. Rav Yosef

says,<sup>4</sup> "Were it not for this day, how many Yosefs would there be in the marketplace?" In other words, thanks to *Matan Torah*, I am different from your regular Yosef, and hence he instituted special foods on Shavuot. But at first glance it is not clear why he says this. After all, if it wasn't for this day, the entire world wouldn't exist, not only Rav Yosef. Rather we learn from here that Rav Yosef is not referring to the Giving of the Torah to the entire world, but to his private *Kabbalat HaTorah*, and hence we learn that everyone has their own private *Kabbalat HaTorah*.

### Accepting the yoke of Torah

The Yerushalmi cited above stresses that "since you accepted upon yourselves the yoke of Torah, I consider it as if you have never ever sinned." It is not enough to receive Torah, but one must accept the yoke of Torah. The effort, the challenge, in Torah is the main aspect of the Torah. A person can fulfil the *mitzvah* of *Talmud Torah* in the smallest amount of time, even with one word, but the crux of the Torah, the life of the Torah, is the yoke of Torah.

We learn all this as an introduction to Torah, as a preparation. The Torah's command: "And make yourself fit to learn Torah,"<sup>5</sup> is in itself a difficult, deep and complex instruction and one must learn it profoundly just like any other piece of Torah.

Before the description of *Matan Torah*, the Torah describes the people's preparation across many verses,<sup>6</sup> and this section carries eternal lessons. The preparation for Torah is Torah in itself, and it needs to be "on this day."<sup>7</sup>

There is a need to repeat the exercise

every day and at any time, but there is particular significance in repeating it in the days leading up to Shavuot.

These are the days in which the light of Torah begins to appear, just as at *Har Sinai* the light of the Torah began to sparkle even before then, and therefore we don't say *Tachanun* on these days, like the *Rishonim* say we don't say *Tachanun* on Fridays at *Mincha*, because the light of Shabbat already begins to appear before Shabbat actually begins.

The elevated reality of *Chag* and Shabbat begins before the holy days themselves. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us specifically during these days to reinforce our Torah study and the way we prepare for *Matan Torah*.

May we merit receiving the Torah together as a people, and each of us individually, with awe and fear, love and joy.

<sup>1</sup> Rosh Hashanah 4:8

<sup>2</sup> Rabbi David Frankel, 1704-1762

<sup>3</sup> Shemot 24:7

<sup>4</sup> Pesachim 68b

<sup>5</sup> Pirkei Avot 2:12

<sup>6</sup> Shemot 19

<sup>7</sup> According to the start of the chapter there: "In the third month to the Exodus of Bnei Yisrael from the land of Egypt, they came to the Sinai Desert on this day."

**Rabbi Avraham Shapira זצ"ל** served as the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel from 1983 to 1993. He was also the Rosh Yeshiva of *Merkaz HaRav* in Jerusalem. He passed away in 2007.





## Always Receiving

**T**he year was 1935, and the Spanish government was making elaborate plans to commemorate the 800th anniversary of the Rambam's birth – seemingly a great honor and proud moment for Jews everywhere.

Yet, while many Jews around the world welcomed the initiative and prepared celebrations of their own, some had reservations. These concerns were addressed to the leading Torah sage of the time, Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky:

*“We do not need to commemorate the Rambam's birth, for he lives on wherever teachers and students discuss his words; his teachings upon which we meditate every day are his eternal remembrance. This has been an everyday occurrence for many generations – the wellsprings have not ceased to this day.”*

Stamps and statues. Plaques and paintings. Buildings and bridges. These are the traditional ways we commemorate the great people of the past. The 1935 Spanish government sought to celebrate the legacy of the great Maimonides, Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, the Rambam, in much the same way. But we Jews aren't in the habit of memorialising our leaders and teachers. Rav Chaim Ozer's objection was based on the fact that we live with the Rambam – with his writings and teachings – every day. His philosophical ideas and halachic rulings form part of our collective Jewish consciousness. The Rambam is not a historical relic; he is a figure of the present.

This vignette about the Rambam provides a window into understanding the Torah's approach to history. We do more than remember the fact that the Exodus from Egypt took place – we *re-live* that liberation. The Rambam himself codifies

– based on the Talmud – that a person is obliged in every generation to see themselves as if they had personally gone out of Egypt. We live by the Exodus daily – by its messages of faith in G-d, of the importance of freedom and of resisting tyranny, and of dedicating that freedom to something greater than ourselves.

Jewish time is not linear, but cyclical; every year, when, for example, Pesach

“

**Our relationship  
with the Torah  
is immediate  
and visceral**

”

comes around, it's not that we are remembering an event that happened in the distant past, but rather we experience the same spiritual energy that was unleashed in the world at the time of the original Pesach.

This same principle applies to every one of the events that are recorded in the Torah, and that we are called on to remember. We are not merely remembering; we are reliving and re-integrating the experiences, and making them part of our daily lives – tangible and relevant in every way.

Arguably, no festival embodies this idea quite like Shavuot, which is the anniversary of the giving of the Torah exactly 3,333 years ago. The Kli Yakar points out that when the Torah calls on us to celebrate the festival of Shavuot, it does so without mentioning it is the

anniversary of the giving of the Torah *at all*. We infer that Shavuot is the anniversary of the giving of the Torah from the date on which the festival takes place (the 6th of Sivan), but there's no explicit mention of it. Why would the defining dimension of Shavuot not be directly stated by the Torah?

He answers that the Torah did not want us to fixate on one day as the anniversary of the giving of the Torah, to relate to this day as a memory of the distant past.

Our relationship with the Torah is immediate and visceral. We receive it – we incorporate it into our lives – each and every day. When the Jewish people are approaching Mount Sinai to receive the Torah, the verse says, “In the third month of the children of Israel leaving the land of Egypt, on **this** day they arrived in the desert of Sinai.” Rashi notes that it says “**this** day” and not “that day.” “That day” would imply an event in the past, “this day” implies that it's happening *today*. Right now. Let us stop for a moment now and realise that at this moment in time we are actively receiving the Torah from G-d.

There's a unique offering which was brought in the Temple on Shavuot – two loaves of bread, made from the newly ripened first grains of the wheat harvest. The Torah calls this offering the *Mincha Chadasha* – the “new offering.” Why this focus on newness? Because Shavuot is a celebration of freshness and renewal. It's a celebration of renewed inspiration and renewed challenge. It's a celebration of Torah, today.

**Rabbi Dr. Warren Goldstein** is the Chief Rabbi of South Africa.



## The Power of Our Customary Preparations

Unlike Pesach, which has the *mitzvah* of *matzah*, and Sukkot, when we take the Four Species and sit in the *sukkah*, Shavuot has no special *mitzvot*. Rather, five *minhagim* have developed to enhance this *yom tov* (see Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 494, and Mishna Berura there): 1. Preceding the Torah reading with the reciting of *Akdamut* 2. Eating dairy foods 3. Megillat Rut 4. Decorating the *shul* and home with flowers and trees, and 5. The all-night Torah study, or *Tikkun Leil Shavuot*. (These are *minhagim* of the Ashkenazi community for the most part.)

The seriousness with which we approach the practice of these customs illustrates the importance of *minhagim* to the enhancement of the *mitzvot*, as Reb Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor demonstrated when a wealthy businessman from Kovno invited the Rav to his daughter's wedding.

The wedding was to take place on the grounds of the man's lavish home. The Rav wished the man *mazal tov* and informed him that he could not attend. The *minhag* in Kovno was that all weddings took place in the courtyard of the *shul*, and he could not attend a wedding that deviated from the custom of the town. The *ba'al simcha* dismissed the custom, saying it was not all that important. The Kovno Rav responded by quoting a Midrash that says that *minhagim* are compared to a pile of nuts that will topple if even one is removed from its place. If the Midrash, explained the Rav, was merely telling us that all *minhagim* are jeopardized by trifling with any of them, then any pile of round objects could have been used as an example. Why did the Midrash specifically use nuts? The answer, said Reb Yitzchak Elchanan, is that a nut at times is but a shell with no nut to be found inside, similar to some *minhagim*, which do not appear to be important or significant.

However, tampering even with these customs endangers the entire system.

Perhaps this is why the word *מגן* contains the same letters as the word *המגן*, “the shield,” because *minhagim* are a shield and enhancement for Torah and Rabbinic laws. Thus, the Vilna Gaon points out that the first letters of the *minhagim* of Shavuot – *Akdamut*, *Chalav*, *Ruth*, *Yerek*, and *Tikkun* – spell out the word *אחרית*, “end.” The proper completion and perpetuation of the Torah, which is called *ראשית*, beginning, is the observance of *minhagim* that *Klal Yisrael* have instituted throughout the generations.

“  
Minhagim are  
compared to a pile of  
nuts that will topple if  
even one is removed  
from its place  
”



### Foundations for acquiring Torah

All the *minhagim* of Shavuot bolster and enhance the importance of preparation. *Akdamut* reminds us that before we begin the Torah, a lengthy and poignant preface is needed. Similarly, milk is the food with which animals and man are sustained in the first stages of life, forming the foundation for all that follows. By eating milk products

on Shavuot, we are reminded of the importance of this foundation to future development. The book of Ruth traces the preparation and foundation of the Davidic dynasty and ultimately the *Melech haMashiach*, who will descend from that dynasty. This signifies that the entire goal of the world is already contained in its foundation and preparatory episodes. Trees and fruit and vegetation in general remind us how important it is to toil in the preparatory stages of planting, plowing and fertilizing, and the other preparatory processes essential before any fruit or vegetable can be enjoyed. So too, one must toil in Torah, symbolically planting and plowing, before G-d will bless us with attainment, the fruit of our labors.

Finally, we stay awake learning Torah the entire eve of Shavuot as a *tikkun*, a rectification, for our ancestors. Unfamiliar with the nature of Torah, they thought that a good night's sleep would be the proper way to prepare for the historic moment of Divine revelation the next day. Once we received the Torah, however, we realized that it is the toil and the intense straining of ourselves to the limit of our powers that prepares us to receive the Divine Presence on our Torah attainment.

הזורעים בדמעה – “those who sow with tears,” those who toil in Torah day and night, those who sacrifice with blood and tears to observe Torah in the most difficult circumstances and in the most challenging ways, ברינה יקצורו – “will reap with joyous song.” They will reap the sweetness of Torah understanding and the joys of *mitzvah* observance.

Rabbi Zev Leff serves as the Rav of Moshav Matityahu.



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Rabbi Hershel Schachter



## Counting the Omer Today

The Gemara (Menachot 66a) teaches that Ameimar would count only the days of the Omer, but not the weeks. Ameimar's rationale was that after the destruction of the *Beit HaMikdash*, we observe *Sefirat HaOmer* only as a *zecher leMikdash*, and the counting of days is therefore sufficient. The simple explanation of Ameimar's opinion is that we wish to demonstrate that the *mitzvah* is incomplete, as the *pasuk* links the counting of *sefira* to the *Korban Omer*, מיום הביאכם את עומר התנופה. Chazal wanted people to realize that we are missing the full *mitzvah* because we lack this *korban*.

Tosafot (s.v. *zecher*) maintains that all of the opinions in the Gemara agree with Ameimar in that *sefira* is *deRabanan* in our day; the *machloket* relates only to whether one must count the weeks in addition to the days.

The Rambam (*Hilchot Temidin UMussafin* 7:24) disagrees. He rules like the *Geonim*, that the *psak* is in accordance with the opinion of Abaye and Rav Ashi, to count both days and weeks, and that according to them, *Sefirat HaOmer* is *deOraita* even today.

One way to explain the *machloket* between the Rambam and Tosafot relates to whether women are obligated in *Sefirat HaOmer*. Despite the fact that *sefira* would seem to be an obvious example of a *mitzvah asei shehazman grama* (timebound positive *mitzvah*), being that it begins on a particular calendar date and involves the counting of days, the Rambam (*Kiddushin* 34a, s.v. *vehevei*) includes this *mitzvah* in a list of *mitzvot* that women are obligated in. Although some assumed this to be a

misprint (see *Nefesh HaRav*, 1994 ed., p. 191; *Divrei Malkiel* 3:5), the son of the Maharam Chalavah cites this opinion in the name of the Ramban.

The son of the Maharam Chalavah proceeds to offer an explanation in the name of his father (*Imrei Shefer*, *Vayechi* 49:28; *Shitat HaKadmonim*, *Bava Kamma*, pp. 334-335). According to the Ramban, the phrase מיום הביאכם את עומר התנופה is not merely an identification of the calendar day on which *Sefirat HaOmer* begins.

Rather, the *pasuk* establishes that it is the *hakravat haOmer* which causes the obligation of *Sefirat HaOmer* and not the day of the 16th of Nissan. Therefore, *Sefirat HaOmer* is, in fact, not a *mitzvah asei shehazman grama*. Although the day obligates the *Korban Omer*, it is the *korban* that, in turn, is the direct cause of *Sefirat HaOmer*.

According to the Ramban's understanding, that the *mechayev* (the obligating factor) of *Sefirat HaOmer* is the *Korban Omer*, nowadays, in its absence, the *mitzvah* of *sefira* cannot be *mideOraita*. This is Tosafot's position. The Rambam, however, disagrees, and maintains that the day of the 16th of Nissan is the *mechayev* of *Sefirat HaOmer*. According to this approach, *sefira* remains a *mitzvah deOraita* even today, while women are exempt from *sefira* because it is a *mitzvah asei shehazman grama* (*Hilchot Temidin UMussafin* 7:24).

Thus, these two issues – whether *sefira* is *deOraita* nowadays and whether women are obligated in *sefira* – are interrelated, and they depend on the identification of the *mechayev* of *Sefirat HaOmer*.

Rav Chaim Brisker did not favor the

above explanation of Tosafot, and offered a different explanation of the *machloket* between Tosafot and the Rambam (see *Chiddushei HaGrach al HaShas*, *Menachot* 66a, pp. 252-253).

According to the Rambam, *sefira bazman hazeh* is *deOraita* based on the *halacha* that “the original sanctification [of Yerushalayim and the *Beit HaMikdash*] sanctified these areas for that time and sanctified them for all future time.”

The Mishnah in *Eduyot* (8:6) teaches that for this reason, “we may offer *korbanot* [at the *Beit HaMikdash* site] even though there is no [Sanctuary] building.” This is, in fact, how the Rambam rules with regard to the current state of *kedushat haMikdash*; the *makom haMikdash* retains its *kedusha* even after the *churban haBayit* (*Hilchot Beit HaBechira* 6:14-16).

Thus, even though we are not able to actually offer the *Korban Omer* nowadays, since there is still a *kedushat makom* in the *makom haMikdash*, there exists a theoretical obligation to do so. The *chiyuv hakrava* is in place today, just as it was when the *Beit HaMikdash* stood, and *Sefirat HaOmer* therefore remains a *mitzvah deOraita*. Tosafot, in contrast, maintains that the *Beit HaMikdash* site did not retain its *kedusha*. As such, there is not even a *chiyuv hakrava* nowadays, and *Sefirat HaOmer* is therefore only *mideRabanan*.

**Rabbi Hershel Schachter** is Rosh Yeshiva and Rosh Kollel at Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University.



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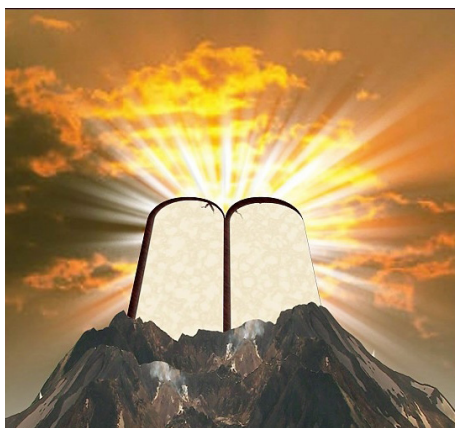
## Setting the Stage

**T**he Sefat Emet tells us that our entire spiritual year is dependent on the days of *Sefirat HaOmer*. Just as our physical sustenance is determined during this wheat harvesting period, so our spiritual sustenance is set during these weeks. If our lives are dependent on this *mitzvah*, shouldn't it involve a lot more than just a minute or so of a short liturgy? Obviously more is hidden beneath the surface.

What is the power of *Sefira* that gives us the ability to make ourselves pure and whole again? We find that Shavuot is the only holiday that has a Torah-mandated period of preparation. There is something very pivotal embedded in these weeks. Our counting during *Sefira* expresses our yearning for *Matan Torah*. The actual counting leaves an imprint on our soul and opens a pathway of desire to acquire the Torah in our hearts. The holiday of the giving of the Torah is called Shavuot – weeks, because our efforts determine how we will experience the holiday. We will receive the Torah in a more meaningful way only with the proper preparation.

In the Haggadah we read, אילו קרבנו לזהר סיני דינו, “If You had brought us close to Sinai it would have been enough.” The Alshich and the Shelah explain that the process of purification and preparation was so precious, that if G-d would not have given us the Torah, it would have been enough.

Each year, in our individual and collective lives, we relive the experience of coming closer to G-d. Torah and *mitzvot* are not just knowledge and good deeds, but a catalyst for transformation. It is about making us into better people and bringing us nearer to His presence. The preparation of *Sefira* is bringing ourselves to a level of appreciating the greatness of



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The process of  
purification and  
preparation was so  
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would not have given  
us the Torah, it would  
have been enough  
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Torah and awakening within ourselves a yearning for *deveikut baHashem*.

Shavuot is the ‘*Yom HaDin*’ of our *ruchniyut*. It is a time to take a good hard look at our spiritual state and ask ourselves, “Is this all I’ve achieved? What am I capable of?” It is a time to look at the disparity of who we are and what we can be if only we desire it enough. Not only is *Sefirat HaOmer* a time to work on respecting our fellow Jews; it is also a time to sensitize ourselves to *kavod haTorah*.

During the building of the Mishkan, G-d said, ובלב כל חכם נתתי חכמה, “I have given wisdom in the hearts of all the wise

people.” Rav Nebenzhal explains that G-d gives wisdom only to those who have the wherewithal to hold onto it, otherwise it is a wasted investment.

The way to guard our Torah is through working on our *middot*. That is why the first *omer* sacrifice was barley, an animal food. It was meant to teach us to subdue our animalistic desires and evil traits.

Rav Pincus says that in G-d’s lexicon, a “day” hints to *yichud Hashem* – oneness of G-d, similar to the very First Day of Creation, when there was no other reality except G-d. The 49 days of *Sefira* are about reminding ourselves that each day must be completely dedicated to *yichud Hashem*, to feeling G-d’s presence at every moment in our lives.

When we count each day, we must ask ourselves, “What am I doing to make this day different?” By counting upwards, we show that each day is one of building and working towards the goal of becoming a fitting receptacle for Torah.

*Sefira* is called שבוע שבתות, seven Shabbatot. Shabbat is the source of blessing. The Sefat Emet tells us that every day of *Sefira* carries a vestige of Shabbat, and G-d gives us injections of *kedusha* to help us come close to Him. If we are successful in arousing ourselves out of our apathy, these days become a model of holiness for the entire year. When we recite the *beracha* of *Sefirat HaOmer* it should inspire us to feel more sanctity and to strive for greater heights. When we say *hayom yom...* we must think about committing ourselves to live that day in the best possible way.

Mrs. Shira Smiles is a sought-after international lecturer, a popular seminary teacher, and an experienced curriculum developer.



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## Discovering why You are Here

People who know Naomi keep asking about Ruth: “Who is this?” Ruth is always being asked about her identity. Boaz watches her picking barley in his field, and asks his attendant, who is in charge of the reapers, “To whom is this girl?” But you know the answer, Boaz! After all, when Ruth and Naomi returned to Beit Lechem, poor and bereaved, the whole town was shocked to see them. So why are you asking who this girl is?

And it happens once more, when at night she sneaks into the threshing floor and lies at his feet, Boaz asks: “Who are you?” But Boaz, you were already told; you know the answer! And again, when Ruth returns to her mother-in-law and knocks at the door, Naomi asks her: “Who are you, my daughter?”

Why, throughout the Megillah, is Ruth asked, “Tell me, who are you? Who *are* you? Who are *you*? But *who* are you?”

How many times do you look in the mirror and ask yourself: “Who is this girl? To whom do I belong in the world? What did I come here to do? What is the role G-d expects me to fulfill?”

On Shavuot we receive our role in the world. This holiday is called *מי* in the Zohar HaKadosh. We reach the level of “who.” *מי* has a *gematria* (numerical value) of 50. We counted 50 days and arrived at a place called *Mi*, “who,” also called the *Keter Elyon* in the Zohar. After asking yourself so many times who you are, to whom you belong, you are given a role

and reveal who you are. You have a title, you are crowned.

Rabbi Yosef HaTzaddik said: “If not for the holiday of Shavuot, כמה יוסף, how many Yosef would be roaming in the marketplace” (Pesachim 68b). How many “Yosef” – why not “Yosefs”? Because these are the parts of the same Yosef. He has dispersed in a million directions and does not know who he is: “Maybe I’m Yosef the *talmid chacham*. Maybe I’m Yosef the computer guy. Maybe I’m Yosef the coach. Maybe I’m Yosef the student. Who am I?”

“

**The Torah removes one babushka and then another and another, until you reach the tiny babushkina deep in your soul**

”

Why don’t we recognize Ruth? Because the more you study Torah, the more you reveal about yourself. More and more and more. Ruth the Moabite gentile at the beginning of the Megillah is not the Jewish Ruth at the end of the Megillah. Each time we see her in a new and different context and ask: “Is this her? Which girl is this? What did the Torah do to her – could it be that, this one? Another one?”

The Russian doll, the babushka, hides another doll and another and another. Rabbi Nachman says that outwardly you become a heavy and cumbersome babushka. But the Torah removes one babushka and then another and another, until you reach the tiny babushkina deep in your soul. The Torah reveals my internal core to me. What have I come to do in the world? Who am I?

When the Jewish people stood at Mount Sinai פסקה זוהמתן, their contamination ceased (Shabbat 146a). What is זוהמה? The Gemara explains: זוהמה, – This, what is it? Meaning, who is it? Who is this girl? This confusion, this scattering, is זוהמה. You pollute yourself with unnecessary energies: “Maybe I will learn this or maybe that...” Unnecessary contamination. Get clarity and you will find out who you are. In the giving of the Torah, everything becomes clear to you. With the giving of the Torah, a crown is placed upon you; your contamination ceases. You reach the 50th level of purity and the incredible and beautiful woman inside you is revealed.

**Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi** is a popular Israeli teacher, speaker and writer.





# Liberating *Yerushalayim* EVERY DAY

**T**he students of the Vilna Gaon helped revitalize Torah and religious life within the ancient walls of Jerusalem in the early 1800s. The JNF have been involved with redeeming land for the Jewish people for over 100 years. Rothschild, Montefiore, Moskowitz and others have helped redeem land in and around Jerusalem, each in their own generation.

These were giant footsteps taken by idealistic Zionists who both dreamt and materialized those dreams of revitalizing Jewish life in the heart of Jerusalem.

Today, Ateret Cohanim is walking in the footsteps of these "Jerusalem greats," because for this organization, the struggle to keep a united Yerushalayim in Jewish hands is far from over.

Ateret Cohanim (Crown of Priests) has been operating for about 40 years as the main non-profit organization for redeeming land in the eastern neighborhoods of Jerusalem and

strengthening the Jewish communities of the Old City and its environs. The purchase of properties and land from the Arabs, some of whom are either illegally squatting on old Jewish property or protected tenants, is a complicated and delicate process requiring patience, funds and *emunah*. Ateret Cohanim facilitates such acquisitions for ideological investors from Israel and abroad.

Up against the Arab nations, world condemnation and hypocritical UN resolutions, extreme left-wing groups and ever-growing Arab violence and intolerance, Ateret Cohanim are, in the words of the Spokesperson and Executive Director, Daniel Luria, "modern day paratroopers fighting the 7th day war." Ateret Cohanim is the link connecting past and future Jerusalem.

## How it All Began

In the mid-late 1800s, there were close to 19,000 Jews living inside the Old City, out

of a total population of 28,000 residents. A Jewish majority inside the Old City, with 21 synagogues and six yeshivot in the area today known as the Moslem Quarter. It was the main hub of Jewish life and activity due to its proximity to the Temple Mount. Under the Turks, Jews and Arabs lived side by side and there were no quarters as we know today. (The current division into four quarters came later, under the British.)

But Arab pogroms and riots in 1920, 1928-29 and 1937-38 decimated Jewish life in the Old City, and Jews were evicted from their homes by both the Arabs and the impotent British authorities. What remained of the tiny Jewish Quarter was also lost in the Independence War of 1948.

The miraculous Six-Day War victory in 1967 brought Jewish life back to the Jewish Quarter, but the old Jewish Quarter (also known as the Moslem Quarter and the Christian Quarter) was left abandoned and forgotten.





Mati Dan, a young yeshiva student, had a dream to return to the Old City of Yerushalayim. On Chanukah in 1979, he founded Ateret Cohanim, also known as the “JNF of Jerusalem,” which began its real estate redemption efforts by facilitating the purchase of the well known Yeshivat Chayei Olam from the late 1800s, now the Breslover Shuvu Banim Yeshiva. Miraculously, when they approached the Arab owner at the time, he said, “This is a Jewish house. Give me compensation and I’ll get out of here.”

The flame had been lit and the door opened up to the Old City.

### The Photographer’s House

Since then, G-d has opened many doors for Ateret Cohanim. Every time Ateret Cohanim manages to facilitate the acquisition of a house, there is an incredible story of *hashgacha pratit* behind it. One such house is *Beit HaTzalam* (The Photographer’s House).

22 years ago, Ateret Cohanim was trying to track down a Jewish photographer who had taken pictures of a group on tour. Due to a mistake of one digit in the phone number, Mati Dan accidentally called an Arab from the Old City, who agreed to sell his home, on condition that Ateret Cohanim organized a flight and work in America.

*Beit HaTzalam* has joined dozens of other complexes in the Old Jewish Quarter that are currently inhabited by Jews. Today there are 1,000 Jewish residents (families and yeshiva students) in this area.

### The Dangers

Sometimes, dealing with buying property from Arabs can be dangerous. An official Moslem edict (Fatwa) declares death to any Arab seller of land or apartments to Jews. Any Arab middleman who assists in any of these transactions can be arrested, tortured, excommunicated and jailed for life.

And although the Jewish families in the Old Jewish Quarter live in relative safety and life is “normal,” there have tragically been a number of terrorist attacks over the years, the most recent being Rabbi Nechemiah Lavi *Hy”d* from Beit Wittenberg four years ago. Following the murders of Chaim Kerman and Gabi

Hershberg *Hy”d* (23 years ago) inside the Old City and subsequent efforts of Ateret Cohanim to enhance security, the Government of Israel decided to install hundreds of security cameras, a surveillance center and security guards in the Old City. In fact, the Government spends close to \$30 million on security for all Jewish families in and around the Old City.

“It has made a huge difference to the overall security,” Luria says, adding, “but the best security is having more Jewish families!” In many neighborhoods, attacks have lessened as Jewish presence has increased.

### Tehillim Stand in the Way

Despite the dangers, it is clear that G-d protects those who serve Him. When Mati Dan first founded Ateret Cohanim, he went to the JNF to see if they could help support the cause, as the JNF was primarily set up to reclaim land for the Jewish people.

He sat with the then Director, who wanted to introduce Mati to an Arab who had connections and might be able to find Arabs willing to sell in Yerushalayim. Neither Mati nor the Director followed through with the introduction.

A few years later, Mati needed a taxi. He flagged down three drivers, none of whom would take him. Frustrated, Mati got into the fourth taxi. Upon conversing with the Arab driver, Mati discovered this was the same man he had been meant to meet a few years earlier.

Mati told the driver that if he ever had any property to sell, he should be in touch, giving the driver his phone number which he had written in a tiny Sefer Tehillim. This driver became the middleman responsible for bringing many deals to Ateret Cohanim.

About eight years after this “chance meeting” in the taxi, Arab gunmen burst into the home of this middleman and shot him with five bullets in his upper torso. In the ICU, the doctors removed a small, blood-drenched Sefer Tehillim, with a bullet hole in its center, from the man’s shirt pocket. Thinking the man was a Jew, the doctors called Mati Dan, whose phone number was in the Tehillim. There was blood on the top part of the Tehillim from the wound to the man’s



Ateret Cohanim founder Mati Dan (left) with donor Irving Moskowitz



Children playing on rooftop playgrounds in the Old Jewish Quarter

shoulder, but the bullet that should have hit his heart and killed him on the spot didn’t fully penetrate the book. There was no blood around this bullet hole, in the middle of the Tehillim.

The Arab miraculously survived, took the Tehillim home and had it framed. Mati Dan tried to get it back, but the Arab family wanted to keep the holy Jewish book. Eventually, after many requests, the Arab agreed to give Mati the Tehillim, on condition that he buy him another one – “this time a lot thicker please!”

When Mati saw the framed Tehillim, he couldn’t believe his eyes. The Tehillim was opened at the end of the hole made by the bullet at *perek* 84, which speaks about Yerushalayim as G-d’s courtyard, and the following words: ליבי ובשרי ירננו אל א-ל חי, “my heart and my flesh will rejoice to a living G-d.”

### Facts on the Ground

Ateret Cohanim’s conceptual platform stands firm on undisputed historical facts.

“Our ambition is to return the situation to what it was in the past, and to do some national introspection regarding our priorities in the Old City. We want to return home, to the old Jewish neighborhoods near *Har HaBayit*, where Jews have lived all those years. This place

is the heart of the nation, and we must be in it,” Luria explains.

“The whole world wants to divide Yerushalayim. The soft underbelly of the eastern neighbourhoods of Jerusalem is the Old City, the Mount of Olives and moving eastward. Jewish life in these places is a far more significant human shield than any wall or fence.

Only our physical presence in this place will establish facts on the ground. The war for Yerushalayim is over every inch, and in today’s atmosphere of disengagement and compromise, the Zionist dream begins to crumble. We must tell people to stop, wake up and remember our roots. The Arabs understand, just like us, that the facts on the ground will determine reality.”

In recent years we have also witnessed an alarming phenomenon of illegal Arab construction in and around the Old City. Ateret Cohanim must also contend with huge Arab investments trying to influence the future and sovereignty in Jerusalem.

## Leaving the Old City

About 30 years ago, Ateret Cohanim decided to expand its activities beyond the walls of the Old City. Together, these old-new communities create a vital lifeline for united Jerusalem and are thus called the “Shield of Jerusalem.”

Maale HaZeitim, located on the slopes of the Mount of Olives, is one of Ateret Cohanim’s best success stories, with over 100 Jewish families living in the gated neighborhood overlooking the Old City. Ateret Cohanim refers to the project as the “jewel in the crown,” due to the significance of the project in the face of world and Arab objections at the time. Yasser Arafat once quipped, “the only Jews I will allow in my Al-Quds are those who have been here for generations” (referring to the Jews buried on the Mount of Olives). Look where we are today.

The most hotly contested and hostile neighborhood with the most Arab violence is undoubtedly the area called Silwan (initially known as Kfar HaTeimanim, the Yemenite Village) in the Shiloach.

Before a single Arab lived in the area, Yemenite Jews settled there in 1882. At its peak, over 120 Yemenite families lived in the area, but Arab pogroms coupled with British apathy saw the end of the Jewish neighborhood in August 1938. Arabs destroyed homes and subsequently squatted on the land.



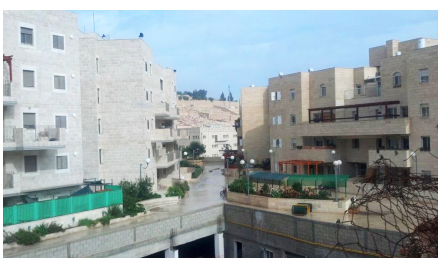
**The Amdursky Central Hotel, the first Kosher hotel in the Old City, today the Petra Jaffa Gate Hotel.**



**The Tehillim that saved a life**



**The “Mediterranean Hotel” where Mark Twain stayed in 1867, today known as “Beit Wittenberg.” Ariel Sharon bought an apartment there in 1987.**



**Maale HaZeitim**



**Returning home to Old City: Beit HaTzalam from Beit HaNof rooftop**

In 2004, backed by overseas and Israeli investors, Ateret Cohanim helped move families back to Kfar HaShiloach. The first buildings were Beit Yonatan (dedicated to Jonathan Pollard) and Beit HaDvash. The original Yemenite Beit Knesset is currently undergoing renovation as part of a wider restoration project of the Lamm Yemenite Heritage and Synagogue complex. This area is today home to 21 Jewish families in six building complexes, including the original Yemenite Beit Knesset, with another 15 families about to move into two compounds recently acquired.

There are also 10 families in the strategic Kidmat Zion project, east of the Mount of Olives, at the municipal border of Jerusalem, and adjacent to Abu Dis. A vital Jewish neighborhood of 300-350 residential units is planned for the land first purchased by Jews in the years 1917-23.

Other projects of interest in Jerusalem include the “Key to the Old City,” the Jaffa Gate Hotels project, which is currently in the Israeli courts, and the very symbolic Mufti-Shefer Hotel Project. The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin El Hussein, was paid by the Nazis and responsible for the massacre of Yugoslavian Jewry. He established the only Nazi SS unit of Moslems (Hanjar) and spearheaded the Arab pogroms of the 1920-30s. His Jerusalem home is today in Jewish hands. “Having his residence turned into a Beit Knesset and a children’s nursery for the Jewish families in the area is both very symbolic and beautiful historical justice,” says Luria.

## The Future

Ateret Cohanim has come a long way, but there is a lot more work to be done. Besides their determination to continue facilitating acquisition of more homes for Jews, Ateret Cohanim looks forward to the day when they won’t need security cameras for their rooftop playgrounds or escorts for children; the day when Jewish children will play freely and in safety in every and all alleyways of the Old City and the surrounding neighborhoods. They look forward to a day when Arabs will be able to sell freely to Jews without the fear of death threats. They envision tolerance, an end to violence, and the sweet sounds of Jewish prayer and learning ringing out from every corner and rooftop in the heart of Jerusalem.





## Castles in the Air

When I last visited Yerushalayim's Israel Museum, pre-Corona, I was struck by the magnificent oil on canvas *Castle of the Pyrenees*, painted in 1959 by Rene Magritte, in the museum's expansive art section. It depicts a massive rock floating in the clouds above the sea, upon which rests a medieval castle. It suggests there are fantastical places within our imagination which hover somewhere between Heaven and Earth, well within our mind's eye yet just beyond our touch. Disconnected as they are from the ground, floating above the waves, these castles represent that ideal home we yearn for; that splendid, safe and serenely spiritual haven we crave yet stays elusively beyond our grasp.

Yerushalayim, for millennia, was a Castle in the Air. An idea, an ideal; a far-off, majestic vision of a perfect, Divinely-inspired society where Man and G-d sublimely meet in religious harmony and bliss. A magical utopia where war and strife are unknown, where the great faiths sing their respective psalms in perfect pitch, where humanity's potential to become "only slightly lower than the angels" is finally realized.

Long before Yerushalayim was captured by David HaMelech and the Temple constructed by his son Shlomo, the Torah tantalizingly describes it as "the place where G-d's name will reside." And after its destruction and the exile of its Jewish population, the great religions lusted after it and held it up as the

planet's greatest prize.

For 2000 years, Diaspora's Jews turned to our eternal city in prayer, and we spoke of it with heartfelt longing at the deepest and most emotionally-charged moments of our lives: wedding ceremonies, britot, the Pesach Seder and the Yom Kippur liturgy. For centuries, Yerushalayim remained a fantasy, something more surreal than real. We designated various celebrated cities in our Exile – from the Rhineland to Vilna – as "little Jerusalems," never really daring to believe that we could someday actually restore and return to the real thing.

But then a miracle occurred. We did return! We took those ancient bones of our capital and put living flesh upon them. Like the Jewish people itself, Yerushalayim rose from the ashes and emerged as a living, breathing fact of history. Our renaissance was as shocking as it was spectacular; it was particularly challenging for the other religious denominations to accept. For Christians, it was an authentic event of Resurrection; for Moslems it interrupted their march to an all-Muslim Middle East.

And in many corners of the Jewish world, the notion of Yerushalayim as a concrete reality rather than an abstract concept was equally hard to accept. The adage of "be careful what you pray for" hit us smack between those same eyes that we "lifted to Zion." How could we live up to this awesome responsibility now placed squarely on our shoulders? How could we leave our homes and our ingrained routines and start life anew? Yes, we had begged to return, but now

that our wish had been granted, were we up to the task? Had we really meant to inhabit the palace, or were we more than content to gaze at it from afar?

There were – and perhaps still are – those who asked, in self-righteous tones, "Is this truly the Yerushalayim shel zahav we sought, or is it a tarnished version? Does it stand up to our preconceived, romanticized vision of what the Holy City should be?" By focusing primarily on the politics, the police presence and the traffic, we lost sight of the kedusha that imbues every street and stone.

The truth is that in so many ways, Yerushalayim is greater than it has ever been at any point in its history. Its population is booming, and so the city is expanding in every direction, with new and beautiful neighborhoods sprouting like wildflowers. It is a magnet, a "must-see" for all the world's travelers. More people are studying Torah here today than ever before, and the prophecy of *ki miTzion teitze Torah* is being literally fulfilled as Yerushalayim energizes Jewish learning worldwide.

Of course, there is one essential element still missing: we await the crowning achievement, the rebuilding of the third and final Beit HaMikdash. Surely that is coming. After G-d has blessed us with bringing down to earth a seemingly unreachable Castle in the Air, we are closer than ever before to reuniting our eternal capital with its heart and soul.

**Rabbi Stewart Weiss** is director of the Jewish Outreach Center of Ra'anana.





## Facing Jerusalem

In the town of Radin about 100 years ago, a family came to speak with the Chafetz Chaim. They were desperate. Their son was being conscripted into the Russian army and when Jewish boys were conscripted, it meant complete separation from the community, and an end to their Jewish practice and identity. One couldn't even bring a *yarmulke*, let alone observe Shabbat, keep kosher or marry a Jew.

The father begged the Chafetz Chaim to intercede, to *daven*, to make a miracle, to give them a *beracha* that they would be spared. The Chafetz Chaim, with a tear glistening in his eye, responded, "My dear friends, I'll do what I can do. As you know, this is the *gezeira*, the harsh decree of our generation. But of course I will pray."

The family fell into a dark silence.

With a voice filled with fear and pain, the son spoke up, "Rebbe... is there anything that I can do?"

The Chafetz Chaim took his hand and placed it on the boy's heart.

My dear son, do you feel your heart beating? Every morning, no matter what happens to you or wherever you may be, when you wake up, face Yerushalayim and feel your heart beating. And know that the heart of a Jew beats to the pulse of Yerushalayim.

As long as your heart is beating, it will beat to the rhythm of Yerushalayim, *Ir haKodesh*, the City of Holiness. Even without *tefillin*, a *siddur* or *yarmulke*... face Yerushalayim, and know you will never be separated from *kedusha*."

Chazal assure us, מעולם לא זוהי שכונה מכותרת, המערבי, "The Divine Presence never left the Western Wall." Even without Torah and *mitzvot*, *chas veshalom*, even when we live in a far away land or are far from spiritual observance and Jewish life, G-d's presence is openly manifest and accessible. On the outside it may have seemed as though the



“  
The Divine  
Presence never left  
the Western Wall  
”

*Beit HaMikdash* lay in ruins, but the Divine Presence has never left the city, nor us.

We have turned toward Yerushalayim throughout our history, and in facing our Holy City expressed the depth of our identity and *Yiddishkeit*. Ever since the miraculous victory and blessing of the Six-Day War, *Klal Yisrael* have been blessed to witness amazing progress toward the fulfillment of Biblical promises and prophecies of national return as well as our own personal spiritual restoration. Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch explained the phrase Yerushalayim *Ir HaKodesh* as

the holy place that מעורר, awakens (from the same root as the word עיר, city), our yearning for *kedusha*. For a feeling Jew, every day is 'Yom Yerushalayim.'

Wherever a Jew may be and whatever may happen, our hopes and prayers, thoughts and dreams are bound up with the fate, status and wellbeing of our Holy City. In the near future, our collective heart, the heart of the world, will again manifest in physical form as the *Beit HaMikdash HaShlishi*, the eternal Third Holy Temple. And therefore, כל עוד בלבב פנימה – “as long as the Jewish heart beats,” wherever we are, we are always facing Yerushalayim, with great expectation and love. May we merit the גאולה השלימה והאמיתית במהרה בימינו ממש.

Rabbi Judah Mischel is Executive Director of Camp HASC, the Hebrew Academy for Special Children, Mashpia of OU-NCSY and founder of Tzema Nafshi.



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Stephen Flatow



## Ah, Yerushalayim!

I've read what the Talmud says, "10 measures of beauty descended on the world, nine were taken by Yerushalayim, one by the rest of the world" (Kiddushin 49:2). A beautiful thought if ever there was one. But the realist in me takes over and I see recycling bins overflowing with plastic bottles and newspapers. I will say, however, that the trash from our building is picked up daily and the streets and sidewalks are cleaner than ever as they get a regular sweeping. But I still struggle with a question – what beauty was the Talmud referring to? Was it something physical or a state of mind?

I've been to the *shuk* on *erev* Shabbat. I've been on Ben Yehuda Street and watched diners drop food and wrappers on the ground. I've seen teens with streaks of blue and red hair throwing plastic bottles on the ground amid the cigarette butts. Not pretty.

I've been to *Har HaBayit* where we are escorted by police and carefully walked around the site so as to not approach the sacred precincts of the *Beit HaMikdash*. Meanwhile, Arab children are playing soccer in the shadow of the Dome of the Rock where the Holy of Holies once stood. Indeed, you will find stores selling soccer balls in the *shuk* leading up to the Chain Gate entrance to *Har HaBayit*. We are like prisoners marching in a prison yard, but this is in our own Land. Not a great feeling.

Many years ago, a wise person said to me, "Have you ever seen Biblical prophecy come true?" My silence led her to say, "Read Zechariah, chapter eight, verses four and five." So I did.

"Thus, said the L-rd of Hosts: There shall yet be old men and women in the streets of Jerusalem, each with staff in hand because of their great age. And the

streets of the city shall be crowded with boys and girls playing in the streets."

Now, years later, as *olim chadashim*, my wife and I could qualify as part of the "old men and women." No, we don't walk with canes, yet, but the streets and parks near our apartment in the German Colony are filled with boys and girls riding their bicycles, playing basketball and kicking a soccer ball.

It will soon be Yom Yerushalayim, my first here in Israel. My daughters, who attended *midrashot* in their gap year programs, walked the traditional celebratory march around the Old City. Let me say that the march is not on my bucket list, but *kol hakavod* to those who make the trek.

On my first attempt to walk to *shul* from our apartment on a hot summer Shabbat evening, I wound up doing what seemed to me my own march around the city. I tried to follow the walking instructions I culled from Google. Well, let me say I got a little lost on the Mesilla Park walkway and what should have been a 10-minute walk turned into a 25-minute one. After *davening*, I thought

I knew exactly where I had gone wrong. I promptly proceeded to make a wrong turn again and it wasn't until I saw the Orient Hotel ahead of me that I knew where I was. Somewhat exhausted, I climbed the steps to our apartment and we had our first Shabbat dinner as Israeli citizens.

The next afternoon, it hit me that the "nine measures of beauty" were not necessarily strictly physical measures. My *tiyul* to *shul* took me through side streets I would have never known existed, and as I wandered those streets, I realized they were full – house after house – of Jewish families. The synagogue, one of the oldest in my area, founded by survivors of the *Shoah*, is vibrant and the melodies I heard were for the most part recognizable. We have returned.

On that Shabbat afternoon, as we sat on our *mirpeset*, Rosalyn turned to me and said, "Do you hear that?" "Hear what?" I answered. "The silence." She was right. I wanted to put out my hand to touch the peace of Shabbat, and I knew that it too was a measure of beauty one could only experience in Yerushalayim.

*Chag Sameach!*

**Stephen Flatow** is an attorney, Vice-President of the Religious Zionists of America and father of Alisa Flatow, murdered by Palestinian Arab terrorists in 1995. Her organs were donated to save others.







Founded in 1898, the **Orthodox Union (OU)** serves as the voice of American Orthodox Jewry, with over 400 congregations in its synagogue network. As the umbrella organization for American Orthodox Jewry, the OU is at the forefront of advocacy work on both state and federal levels, outreach to Jewish teens and young professionals through NCSY, Israel Free Spirit Birthright, Yachad and OU Press, among many other divisions and programs.



# The RAH of Yerushalayim

**D**id Klal Yisrael embrace Torah or was it foisted upon us? Are we G-d's people because of our enthusiastic embrace of that mission, נְעֻשָׂה וְנִשְׁמָע, or because G-d held the mountain threateningly over our heads, כָּפָה עָלֵינוּ הָר כְּגִיגִית?<sup>1</sup>

Apparently, there is a dual nature to our relationship with G-d and Torah, that includes both choice and destiny. Our בְּחִירָה, our free choice, defines the extent to which we embrace Torah in our lives, allowing mitzvah, Halacha, and Torah ideals to guide our decisions and actions. Our destiny, on the other hand, does not require our consent and is defined by הַשְׁגָּחָה, by G-d's choices guiding us towards our rightful place in the world and its history. Thus, from the outset we needed to embrace the commandments of the Torah voluntarily, as this was representative of the lifetime of choices we would exercise relative to their observance. Destiny however was foisted upon us. The Jews have an inescapable and critical role in the world.

This duality between commandment and destiny is found within the Torah itself, which – as Rashi notes in his opening comment on the Torah – documents both G-d's word and His deed. It includes the *mitzvot*, beginning with הָיָה לָכֶם, while also recording the Divinely guided path of history, כִּכְּ מַעֲשָׂיו הַגִּיד לְעַמּוֹ, that culminates in the ultimate gift of *Eretz Yisrael*.

And similarly, there are two aspects to the celebration of Shavuot. In our *tefillot* we describe the day as זְמַן מִתֵּן תּוֹרָתֵנוּ, the time when the Torah was given to us, while the Torah<sup>2</sup> refers to it as יוֹם הַבְּכּוּרִים, the festival when we begin to offer the first

fruits, celebrating the gift of *Eretz Yisrael*, the place of our destiny.

This duality within Shavuot is specifically manifest in the process we begin the day after we celebrate leaving Egypt, the *mitzvah* of *Sefirat HaOmer*. The Exodus had been framed by G-d and by Moshe in terms of two end goals, one of destiny and the other of *mitzvah*. On the one hand, we were leaving Egypt to *Eretz Yisrael*, to the Land promised to our forebears,<sup>3</sup> the Land flowing with milk and honey.<sup>4</sup> On the other, we were leaving Pharaoh's bondage to instead serve G-d on Mount Sinai.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, the counting of the Omer, which represents the eager anticipation of reaching the goal of our liberation from Egypt, has two dimensions. Explicitly, we count from the offering of the barley on Pesach to the offering of the wheat loaves, the שְׁתֵּי הַלֶּחֶם, of Shavuot. These offerings symbolize our bond to the Promised Land and begin the season of offering *Bikkurim*.<sup>6</sup> Implicitly, however, we are counting towards Sinai. As the Midrash records, when we left Egypt, we immediately asked Moshe when we would have the promised opportunity to serve G-d on His mountain. When Moshe responded that it would be after 50 days, every member of the Jewish people started counting on their own towards that day.<sup>7</sup> It is that yearning, that striving towards G-d, towards both the destiny He has charted for us and the word He would share with us, that we perpetuate through our own counting of the Omer.

It is no surprise therefore that when we crossed the Red Sea and sang the song of redemption, שִׁירַת הַיָּם, we sang specifically of our anticipated arrival at *Har HaBayit*,





תבאמו ותטעמו בהר נחלתך. מכון לשבתך פֿעֿלֿתֿ ה' מִקְדָּשׁ ה' כּוֹנֵנוּ יְדִיד the Temple Mount. If *Har Sinai* represents G-d's word and Eretz Yisrael represents our destiny, there is one place that represents the blend of the two, and that is *Yerushalayim* and its *Har HaBayit*. מִקְדָּשׁ מֶלֶךְ עִיר מְלוּכָה the word of G-d comes forth from Yerushalayim. This is the place that was always meant to serve as the center and source of Torah learning<sup>8</sup> and halachic rulings,<sup>9</sup> as well as the city that is מִקְדָּשׁ מֶלֶךְ עִיר מְלוּכָה the center and capital of the land of our destiny.

It is this blend of Torah and destiny that we bear in mind on *Yom Yerushalayim*, as we commemorate the visible Divine hand of destiny that 54 years ago granted us the renewed gift of Yerushalayim. We recall the joyful and torrential flow of Jews returning to the Kotel on Shavuot 1967, and we celebrate and embrace the renewed and revitalized connection to our Torah and the approaching fulfilment of our destiny.

- 1 Shabbat 88a.
- 2 Shemot 34:22; Bamidbar 28:26.
- 3 Shemot 6:2-8.
- 4 Shemot 3:8, 3:17.
- 5 Shemot 3:12, 5:1.
- 6 Bikkurim 1:3.
- 7 Ran at conclusion of Pesachim; Sefer HaChinuch no. 306.
- 8 Bava Batra 21a.
- 9 Berachot 63a-b.

**Rabbi Moshe Hauer** is Executive Vice President of the Orthodox Union.

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## Kabbalat HaTorah in 5781



**M**a'amad Har Sinai is obviously one of the most defining moments in the history of our nation. It represented the birth of our halachic *mesora* (see Rambam *Peirush HaMishna* Chulin 100b) and gave us a purpose to fulfill every single moment of our life. How can we relate this experience to our modern society, a society which doesn't seem to have spirituality as its ultimate goal?

The Beit HaLevi (Yitro) asked a basic question on the entire experience of *Kabbalat HaTorah*. Rambam (Mechira 11:16) teaches us that an open-ended obligation is not binding. If Reuven agrees to pay "any amount of money" to Shimon, the obligation is not binding at all. One cannot obligate themselves to a *דבר שאינו קצוב*, something unlimited. Thus, asks the Beit HaLevi, how did

*נעשה ונשמע* work? We obligated ourselves to whatever G-d would command us. But we had no idea what the obligation would be! Isn't that an example of a *דבר שאינו קצוב*, which shouldn't be binding at all?

He answers with yet another *halacha* in the Rambam. A person cannot obligate himself to a *דבר שאינו קצוב*, but he *can* obligate himself to become a servant of another, to create a relationship of *eved* and *adon*, servant and master. Once that relationship exists, then, step two, the *eved* is obligated to do everything the *adon* asks of him. That, says the Beit HaLevi, is exactly what happened at *Ma'amad Har Sinai*. *נעשה ונשמע* wasn't a direct acceptance of all future obligations. Rather, it was a commitment to become *ovdei Hashem*, to be G-d's people and His representatives in the world. Once we accepted that reality, we were then

bound by all the future commandments.

But there is one more crucial point, lest we think this was something we had doubts about, lest we think we weren't sure this was the best commitment for our future. Rav Simcha Bunim of Peshischa adds a beautiful thought. How did we say *נעשה ונשמע* anyway, using the plural language? Shouldn't it have been *אעשה ואשמע*, I will do and listen? How did each Jew know what was in the other one's heart? He answers with a *mashal*. Five men are locked up in an overheated, non-ventilated jail cell, and have not been given anything to drink for three days. Finally, the warden comes in with a big jug of water, and asks, "Who would like some water?" What would their answer be? "I'd like some, but I'm not sure about my friend." Of course not! It's obvious what each of them would want, and they could each confidently scream out, "Yes, we'd all love some water!" So too, says Rav Bunim, was the exclamation of *נעשה ונשמע*. It was so clear, each Jew had such Divine clarity, that it was a "no brainer" to become *ovdei Hashem*, to accept a fulfilling life of Torah and *mitzvot*.

*Yehi ratzon* that each of us recognize the privilege, every day of our lives and especially on this day of *Kabbalat HaTorah*, to serve G-d in all areas of life. The Torah is our oxygen and our water. Let us imbibe every drop and live by its dictates and laws. *Chag Sameach!*

**Rabbi Shalom Rosner** is a Rebbe at Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh and Rabbi of the Nofei HaShemesh community.



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## What is so Special about Boaz?

**W**hat really happened that night on the threshing floor, and why is Boaz one of the most impressive men in Tanach?

“Boaz ate and drank, and in a cheerful mood went to lie down beside the grain pile. Then she [Ruth] went over stealthily and uncovered his feet and lay down. In the middle of the night, the man gave a start and pulled back – there was a woman lying at his feet!” (Ruth 3:7-8)

Ruth comes at night to the threshing floor. This is her last chance – at least, thus believes Naomi, who cares so much for her. Ruth is willing to pay the price. She comes to the threshing floor and knows that anything can happen there. That no one promises her anything. With her status – foreign, poor, an outsider – she can quickly become easy prey.

What is Boaz bothered about? A woman came to him. At night. To the threshing floor. He hadn't asked for it, he hadn't ordered it. She had initiated it. What exactly did she think she was doing? Boaz could do whatever he wanted to her and give her nothing in return. And even if she would tell – who would believe her? He is an honorable, rich man, with status and power. And she? Both her class and her situation are so against her.

The truth is that he does not have to take advantage of her. He could just throw her out, scream at her, ask her what she thought she was doing exactly. He can embarrass her. Defame her. Or he can concede. Why wait for tomorrow? She's here.

The Midrash was well aware of these possibilities, and the test that Boaz faces:

“As the L-rd lives! Lie down until morning” (Ruth 3: 3). The *yetzer hara* sat all night and told him, ‘You are available

and seeking a wife and she is available and seeking a husband; you know that a marriage can be consummated through relations. Get up and lay with her, and she will be your wife!’ So Boaz swore to his *yetzer hara* and told him, ‘As the L-rd lives, I will not touch this woman! And to her he said, ‘Lie down until morning.” (Sifre Bamidbar 88)

At this moment, when Boaz awakens after eating and drinking, ostensibly aware of himself and his body, the greatness of his spirit and soul are revealed.

“

**When the person  
across from me  
has a name and  
a personality, I  
see the person  
within him rather  
than an object**

”

Boaz was horrified to find a woman lying at his feet, as the Sages rightfully state (Ruth Rabbah 6:3): “He would have been justified in cursing her, but... he gave her his heart and blessing, it says: ‘Blessed are you to the L-rd, my daughter.” (Ruth 3:10)

Boaz could have cursed Ruth. But he first asks: “Who are you?” She is not a generic woman, she is not a body. She is a woman with a personal belonging and identity. When the person across from me has a name and a personality, I see the person

within him, rather than an object or tool for personal use.

Ruth replies with words I think should be read in one breath, fast, frightened. She must say everything and ask quickly. Now. This is her chance. Now or never: “I am your maidservant, Ruth. Spread your robe over your maidservant, for you are a redeemer” (3: 9).

There is so much anxiety in this moment, so much fear and uncertainty. But Boaz is not just a great person; it turns out he has a deep understanding of the human psyche as well. He tells her exactly what she needs to hear in that moment: I do not think badly of you. You are wonderful. You are righteous. Good for you. I appreciate you: “Be blessed of the L-rd, daughter! Your latest deed of loyalty is greater than the first, in that you have not turned to younger men, whether poor or rich” (3:10).

He reassures her: Do not be afraid. It will be alright. I will help you: “And now, daughter, have no fear. I will do on your behalf whatever you ask.” And more: I will protect your good name. I know who you are. Everyone knows: “for all the elders of my town know what a fine woman you are” (3:11).

It is not for nothing that the Sages attributed the verse: גִּבּוֹר־הֶזֶק בְּעוֹז, “A wise man in strength (*be'oz*) and a man of understanding” (Mishlei 25:5) to Boaz.

**Rabbanit Dr. Tamar Meir** is a researcher and lecturer, head of the Literature Department in Michlelet Givat Washington, head of the Women's Bet Midrash in Givat Shmuel and a children's writer.



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# עשיה תורתך קבוע

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# Daf Yomi

// Rabbi Shalom Rosner



There are three main qualities that benefit a *daf yomi* learner. First, it connects each Jew to Torah every single day of the year. There is no day when there is no *daf*. No matter what is happening in one's life, no matter how busy one is, there is always the *daf* to be learned. The *keviut*, the time commitment that is devoted to learning, is invaluable. The way we accomplish the most in our lives is by accepting commitments. This takes us all the way back to *נעשה ונשמע*, our first national commitment. If we want to ensure our daily and constant involvement in *Talmud Torah*, then *daf yomi* is an amazing option.

Second, the *daf* connects each learner to every part of Torah. No *masechet* is out of the purview of the *daf*. Sefer Chasidim (261) bemoans the fact that certain parts of Torah have become "*meit mitzvah*" *masechtot*, 'dead,' in that Jews are not dedicated to learning them. *Daf yomi*, conversely, gives each of us the chance to connect to every single concept and message in the corpus of *Torah SheBe'al Peh*.

Finally, *daf yomi* is a wonderful mechanism to connect us to our fellow Jews. Rav Meir Shapiro, the founder of *daf yomi*, at the first *daf yomi siyum* in 1931, said:

"The secret of the magnetic pull of the *Daf Yomi* is the idea that the same *daf* that someone learns here is being learned by thousands of Jews all over the world... Each person has his own way of learning, his own way of thinking, and his own type of *shiur* to go to, but Abaye and Rava are always the same Abaye and Rava..."

These three qualities are what make learning *daf yomi* so magical.

Rabbi Shalom Rosner is renowned for his ability to clarify the most complex sugiyot. His popular *Daf Yomi* shiurim are broadcast online and followed by thousands of global talmidim at [www.OU.org](http://www.OU.org) and [YUTorah.org](http://YUTorah.org).

# Nach Yomi

// Rabbi Ya'akov Trump



Almost every finals season in school, the students turn to their teacher and ask what will be in the final exam. The more they know, the more it helps them prepare. In a similar vein, we all tacitly wish to know what will be in the final exam at the end of our lives.

The truth is, we do know. The Gemara (Shabbat 31a) tells us a number of questions we will be asked at the end of their life journey. It is worth considering these questions to help us prepare correctly. One of those questions will be: "Did you make time for Torah study?"

Before we answer about the volumes and libraries of *sefarim* written by our Sages, it behooves us to know the *sefarim* given to us by G-d via our prophets. There are 24 books and 929 chapters in Tanach. That is a far smaller corpus of material than the Talmud and sometimes much more accessible. And yet it is oft overlooked.

The Gemara tells us that although there were hundreds of thousands of prophets, only those prophecies which speak to each generation were canonized for posterity. That means that as we open up Yeshayahu, we gain insight into a utopian era we yearn to see ourselves; when we learn Iyov, we experience the challenges of suffering in Eastern Europe, and when we study Chaggai, we can gain perspective on Zionism in the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Tanach is alive. Tanach is our identity.

At a *perek* a day for seven days a week, one can finish Nach in two years; at five days a week in just three years. It is a journey within our reach and within our responsibility. Join me on this journey.

Rabbi Ya'akov Trump serves as the Rabbi of Young Israel of Lawrence Cedarhurst. He has thousands of online Nach shiurim at his Nach website <https://www.nachnook.com/>, as well as on his app, podcast and on various online Torah platforms.

# Mishnah Yomit

// Dr. Karen Kirschenbaum



**T**he motto of my father, Prof. Dov Zlotnick z”l, was, “A Mishnah a day keeps ... away.” I have met students of his from over 50 years ago who still study a Mishnah a day. They have reviewed the *Shas* many times.

There is nothing like the study of Mishna to help acquire a broad picture and a good basis of the entire Oral Tradition, with its many concepts and laws. When studying Gemara, one focuses on a number of *dapim*. In studying the Mishna, one gains an understanding of the entire Oral Torah and learns many laws and basic concepts that form the foundation of all of Talmudic literature.

I often hear people say that the Mishna is a dry and technical book. Not so in my eyes. In my studies and teaching of the Mishna I try to imagine the *Tannaim* as living people with strong feelings, beliefs and opinions, living and working in a difficult but fascinating historical period in the life of our nation. I try to vividly imagine the objects that appear in the Mishna, as accurately as possible.

I recommend my students learn a chapter of Mishna a day, with the help of Kehati and

Bartenura. By studying a chapter a day, you will finish the *Shas* in a year and a half.

If you can’t find time for a chapter a day, a Mishnah or two a day is also a wonderful way to learn and add kedusha to your daily routine. I’ve had the pleasure of attending many students’ *siyumim* of *Shas*.

As opposed to Gemara learning, which may be complex, Mishna is accessible to everyone, and requires no previous knowledge or skills. One student told me that when she served in the Intelligence Corps, she always had a small pocket volume of Mishna Kehati in her pouch. She managed to find time to study daily. The soldiers who served with her often asked in bewilderment: Haven’t you finished that little green booklet yet? (There are about 50 such booklets, 63 tractates.) This soldier stuck to her goal and always found time to learn, despite her busy schedule. If a busy IDF soldier can do it, anyone can.

**Dr. Karen Kirshenbaum** has a PhD in Talmud and has written a book on furniture of the home in the Mishna. She teaches Mishna and Talmud and has taught a weekly Shabbat Mishna class in Ramot, Yerushalayim for the last 36 years.

“  
**A Mishna or two a day is a wonderful way to add kedusha to your daily routine**  
”



# Halacha Yomit

// Rabbi Doron Podlashuk

**T**he Beit HaLevi explains that there are two aspects of *Talmud Torah*. The first is learning for sake of the *mitzvah* of *Talmud Torah* as a positive commandment. The second is that it enables us to know how to act and live as Torah Jews. Perhaps this is why *Chazal* praised learning *halacha* over other aspects of Torah learning and why they stated: “one who learns *halacha* every day is certain to receive *Olam Haba*.” *Halacha* incorporates all aspects of our lives – how we deal with people and interpersonal relationships, business dealings, daily and weekly religious activities, etc.

As the Mishna Berura states in his introduction to *Hilchos Shabbat*, one who does not learn will inevitably transgress numerous Torah violations unknowingly. That is why it is so critical to learn *halacha* – even if it is just enough to realize there might be a problem and ask a Rav a question. There are many books and halachic works that answer this necessity, from the Sefer HaChinuch to the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch and Mishna Berura. Different programs aid in daily studying of *halacha*, for example, the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* is divided into daily portions such that a person can finish the entire book within a year. Over the last few years, the English-speaking world has been able to learn the four parts of Shulchan Aruch in a five- year cycle through the Tzurba M’Rabanan Program, which incorporates the sources from the Torah and Talmud through to modern day *poskim*.

**Rabbi Doron Podlashuk** is the Director of the Selwyn and Ros Smith & Family Manhigut Toranit Program and one of the initiators of the Lax Family English Tzurba M’Rabanan series, which has revolutionized halacha learning, allowing thousands of people around the globe the ability to learn in-depth halacha from the sources in a concise and systematic manner.



# Daily Parasha Aliyah

// Rabbanit Zemira Ozarowski



**A**s a child, I remember how my father z”l used to constantly review the weekly *parasha*. He was a busy working man, yet always made sure to find time to learn the *parasha*. We’d sometimes find him asleep over his Chumash, but he always managed to finish! Even when he got sick with cancer, he remained committed to his *parasha* study. In the last week of his life, when he lay unconscious in his bed, I would go into his room and read the *parasha* to him. I knew that deep down in his subconscious, he was listening and absorbing, and that he would not want to go up to *Shamayim* without finishing his weekly quota.

I learned from my father’s commitment and over the years, I have been privileged numerous times to take on the practice of learning one *aliyah* a day of the weekly *parasha*, sometimes just the *pshat* and sometimes with Rashi or other *mefarshim* (commentators).

When one learns in this consistent manner, one stops looking at the *parasha* as a technical detail, merely marking which Shabbat it is. Rather, the weekly portion begins to characterize and shape the entire week! Learning the *parasha* over the course of seven days gives one the headspace to examine the ideas and stories found within all week long, and to arrive at Shabbat prepared and ready for the Torah reading and the ensuing Shabbat table discussions.

For hundreds of years, Jews around the world have been reading one *parasha* each week, finishing the entire Torah over the course of a year. What’s the goal? To give us the opportunity to review the Torah, the blueprint of the world, each year. By breaking the Torah down into weekly portions, the goal becomes attainable. Breaking it down even further by covering one *aliyah* per day, we are able to focus properly, to learn a little more deeply, and to integrate the embedded lessons into our daily lives.

It’s not easy to make the commitment but it’s an opportunity to strengthen our dedication and to pass that devotion down to our children and grandchildren!

**Rabbanit Zemira Ozarowski** is the Director of Community Programming at the OU Israel Center where she runs the L’Ayla Women’s Learning Initiative. She is the author of the Torat Imecha parasha series.

# Rambam Yomi

// Rabbi Chaim Sabato



**T**he Rambam’s Mishneh Torah is the backbone of the Jewish nation, unique in its innovation, wholeness, order, clarity and genius. There is no other work in the Jewish world which can be compared to it.

**Innovation:** The Rambam’s idea was bold and novel – to turn all the sources before him into an organized and systematic book of laws.

**Wholeness:** There was no such book before Rambam’s time, nor has there been such a book since. It deals with the entire gamut of Torah, with laws practiced today, as well as those that are not. The laws of holiness and purity of the *Beit HaMikdash* are presented in as meticulous detail as the laws of holidays and damages we observe today. The laws of *Mashiach* and *teshuvah* are presented alongside the laws of physical and mental health. It details everything from Torah laws and Rabbinical laws to *gezeirot* (decrees) and *takanot chachamim* (the Sages’ ordinances), and includes the sources that preceded them: Tanach, Midrashei Halacha, Mishna, Tosefta, Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds, and the writings of the *Geonim*.

**Order:** It takes a lot of talent and expertise to take scattered *sugiyot* and organize them according to topic. We can learn so much from the fact the Rambam places certain *halachot* in specific books and not in others. Within each book, the *halachot* are organized according to logical chapters and principles, and within each chapter, each *halacha* is connected to the next.

**Clarity:** Rambam’s golden language and skillful Hebrew don’t only contribute to the book’s aesthetic appeal, but aid clarity, because the Rambam wanted all to learn his book, young and old, simple and wise. Many halachic accuracies were reached thanks to the clarity of his language and the meticulousness of his words.

In all of the Rambam’s words there is not a single deviation from the Talmud.

The Rambam wrote the Mishneh Torah to set up the pillar of Torah for generations, from a great love that burned in him: *Ahavat Hashem*, *Ahavat HaTorah* and *Ahavat Am Yisrael*!

**Rabbi Chaim Sabato** is the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Birkat Moshe and one of the educational advisors for the Rambam Yomi project, where he has over 1,000 online classes on every chapter in the Mishneh Torah.



# GUIDED LEARNING



Dr. Daniel Rose

## The Evolution of Shavuot in the Eyes of Rabbi Sacks

In this guided learning, we will study some of Rabbi Sacks' teachings on Shavuot, alongside Rabbinic teachings, to understand how our connection with the Torah on a national level has developed throughout history

Rabbi Sacks identifies several themes of the holiday of Shavuot in his essay *The Greatest Gift*, including the historical development of the central themes of Shavuot. Rabbi Sacks summarizes this evolution in our understanding of Shavuot in the following way:

### Shavuot Reframed



Life is lived forward but understood only backward, in retrospect. It was in the aftermath of the two great historical catastrophes, the Babylonian conquest and the failed rebellion against Rome, that the nature of Jewish history became clear. *The law did not exist for the sake of the land.* It was the other way round: *the land existed for the sake of the law.* It was in order that the Israelites should create a sacred society of justice and compassion that G-d gave Israel the land. You do not need a territorial base to encounter G-d in the private recesses of the soul, but you do need a land to create a society in which the Divine Presence is real in the public square.

It was only when they lost the land but knew they still had the Torah that Jews fully realized that this is what Shavuot had been about from the very beginning.

*The Greatest Gift*

### Points to Ponder:

► What was the highest level of religious experience before the destruction of the *Batei HaMikdash*?

► What lessons are to be learned from exilic Judaism and how are they reflected in the holiday of Shavuot?

In this guided learning, we will explore some Rabbinic sources that describe this process of reframing Judaism around the value of Torah study and the role it has played in the evolution of Jewish civilization, together with some excerpts from the writings of Rabbi Sacks, helping us to understand how the Jewish people became known as the People of the Book.

### KING DAVID REIMAGINED

Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 30a-b

אמר ר' יודן לר' יוחנן: רבונא של עולם, הו' קאי. אמר לו: גמרא היא מלפני שאין מודיעין קצו של בשר ודם... "ואדעה מה תדל אני" אמר לו: בשבת תמות...

David said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, in how long will I die? G-d said to him: It is decreed before Me that I do not reveal the end of the life of flesh and blood... Again he requested: on what day of the week will I die? He said to him: You will die on Shabbat...

כל יומא דשבתא הוה יתיב וגריס כולי יומא. ההוא יומא דבעי למינח נפשיה, קם מלאך המוות קמיה ולא יכיל ליה, דלא הוה פסק פומיה מגירסא. אמר: מאי אעביד ליה? הוה ליה בוסתנא אחורי ביתיה, אתא מלאך המוות סליק ובחיש באילני. נפק למיחזי. הוה סליק בדרגא, איפחית דרגא מתותיה, אישתיק ונח נפשיה.

What did David do? Every Shabbat he would sit and learn all day to protect himself from the Angel of Death. On that day on which David was supposed to die, the Angel of Death stood before him and was unable to overcome him because his mouth did not pause from study. The Angel of Death said: What shall I do to him? David had a garden [*bustana*] behind his house; the Angel of Death came, climbed, and shook the trees. David went out to see. As he climbed the stair, the stair broke beneath him. He was startled and was silent, interrupted his studies for a moment, and died.

### Points to Ponder:

► What is our previous image of King David? How is it different from the King David we meet in this story?

► How is this new image of King David another expression of the evolution of the themes of Shavuot?

Simple though it is, this story tells us what had changed in Jewish life.



For the rabbis, David was no longer primarily the military hero, victor of Israel's greatest battles, or the astute politician, or even the man who initiated the plan to build the Temple. He had become a sage. The battles he fights are in the mind. His home has become a house of study.

David had become a new kind of symbol for an old-new people that no longer predicated itself on a land, a king, an army, a Temple, sacrifices and a priesthood, but lived instead in synagogues, schools and academies. So long as the Jewish people never stops studying, the story intimated, the Angel of Death has no power over it. Jews had become, in the most profound sense, people of the book, of Shavuot, of Sinai. Theophrastus, a pupil of Aristotle, called them "a nation of philosophers."

*The Greatest Gift*





## THE WORLD'S FIRST UNIVERSAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

Talmud Bavli, Bava Batra 21a

דאָמער רב יהודה אָמער רב בָּרם זָכור אוֹתוֹ הָאִישׁ לטוב ויהושע בן גמלא שמו שאלמלא הוא נשתכח תורה מישראל שבתחלה מי שיש לו אב מלמדו תורה מי שאין לו אב לא היה למד תורה מאי דרוש ולמדתם אתם ולמדתם אתם  
If not for Yehoshua ben Gamla, the Torah would have been forgotten from the Jewish people. Initially, whoever had a father would have his father teach him Torah, and whoever did not have a father would not learn Torah at all.

התקינו שיהיו מושיבין מלמדי תינוקות בירושלים ... ונעדיין מי שיש לו אב היה מעלו ומלמדו מי שאין לו אב לא היה עולה ולמד התקינו שיהיו מושיבין בכל פלך ופלך ומכניסין אותו בכו שש עשרה בכו שבע עשרה

When the Sages saw that not everyone was capable of teaching their children and Torah study was declining, they instituted an ordinance that teachers of children should be established in Jerusalem... But still, whoever had a father, his father went up with him to Jerusalem and had him taught, but whoever did not have a father, he did not go up and learn. Therefore, the Sages instituted an ordinance that teachers of children should be established in one city in each and every region [pelech]. And they brought the students in at the age of sixteen and at the age of seventeen.

ומי שהיה רבו כועס עליו מבעיט בו ויצא עד שבא יהושע בן גמלא ותיקנו שיהיו מושיבין מלמדי תינוקות בכל מדינה ומדינה ובכל עיר ועיר ומכניסין אותו בכו שש עשרה

But as the students were old and had not yet had any formal education, a student whose teacher grew angry at him would rebel against him and leave. Yehoshua ben Gamla came and instituted an ordinance that teachers of children should be

established in each and every province and in each and every town, and they would bring the children to learn at the age of six and at the age of seven.

### Points to Ponder:

► Why is it important that all children receive an education?

► What impact has this had on Jewish history?



This was the first system of its kind in the world. The Talmud also contains the world's first regulations about teacher provision and class size. As H.G. Wells noted in his *Outline of History*, "The Jewish religion, because it was a literature-sustained religion, led to the first efforts to provide elementary education for all children in the community."

...Throughout the ages, Jewish communities made education their first priority. The fees of poorer children, and sometimes the salaries of teachers, were paid for by the community...

These values had been part of Judaism from the beginning. In Genesis, G-d says of Abraham, "For I have chosen him, so that he will instruct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the L-rd..." (Gen. 18:19). Abraham was chosen to be a father and a teacher. In two of the key passages of Jewish faith, the first and second paragraphs of the Shema, Moses placed education at the heart of Jewish life: "Teach them [these words] repeatedly to your children, speaking of them when you sit at home and when you travel on the way, when you lie down and when you rise" (Deut. 6:7). But it took crisis – defeat and exile – to bring this value back to the fore...

In their darkest moments Jews rediscovered this ancient truth. It was the Giving of the Torah at Sinai on the first Shavuot that proved to be the gift of eternity.

**The Greatest Gift**

## CONCLUSION

In these sources, we have seen how the Jewish passion for Torah study is a result of the journey through history the Jewish people has taken, from Sinai, to the creation of a Biblical society in *Eretz Yisrael* based on Torah law, through thousands of years of exile and persecution, until today, where we have more institutions of Torah study and more students of Torah, in Israel and the Diaspora, than any previous generation. The Jewish people has continuously affirmed it is deserving of the title "The People of the Book."



# GUIDED LEARNING



Dr. Yael Ziegler

## The First Verse of Ruth through the Eyes of Chazal

In this guided learning, we will explore the time period of Megillat Rut

The Megillah's opening sentence generates two primary questions:

And it was in the days of the judging of the judges, and there was a famine in the land (Ruth 1:1).

Linguistically, many exegetes focus on the double language in the verse. Why not simply write, "And it was in the days of the judges?" The second question relates to the vague description of the time-period, in which no specific judge is mentioned.

The Gemara (Bava Batra 15b) addresses the linguistic question:

אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן מֵאֵי דְכָתִיב וַיְהִי בִימֵי שְׁפֹט הַשּׁוֹפְטִים דּוֹר שְׁשׁ־עָשָׂר שָׁנִים  
Rabbi Yochanan says: What is the meaning of that which is written: "And it happened in the days of the judging of the judges" (Ruth 1:1)? This indicates a generation that judged its judges.

In other words, the Gemara characterizes this generation as one in which the people render judgment upon their judges. This is both a comment on the rebelliousness of the people, who do not accept the authority of the judges, as well as on the quality of the judges themselves.

The society depicted by this exegetical reading is chaotic, lacking any viable judicial infrastructure. Not only do the people disrespect the judges, refusing to heed their instructions, but the judges themselves are not worthy of respect!

By viewing the first sentence of the book as a direct reference to the problem of leadership during this period, the Gemara focuses our attention on the manner in which Megillat Rut presents the problems of this period in its opening. The backdrop of Megillat Rut is the chaotic leadership of the period of the Judges.

► Read Shoftim 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25. What phrase repeats itself throughout the book?

Megillat Rut concludes with the birth of David, an exemplary leader and the founder of a dynasty of leaders:

Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David.

► Based on what we've seen, how does the conclusion of

the Megillah serve as a solution to its opening, laying the foundations for repair?

Let us now address the factual question. The Midrash in Rut Rabbah 1:1 says:

"And it was in the days of the judging of the judges." And who were they?

Rav says: They were Barak and Devorah.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says: They were Shamgar and Ehud.

Rabbi Huna says: They were Devorah, Barak, and Yael. *Shofot* [would have implied] one, *Shoftim* [would have implied] two, *haShoftim* [implies] three.

וַיְהִי בִימֵי שְׁפֹט הַשּׁוֹפְטִים וְיָמֵי הָיוּ? רַבִּי אֶמֶר: בָּרַק וְדִבּוֹרָה הֵיוּ. רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן לֵוִי אָמַר: שְׁמַגָּר (וְאַהוּד הֵיוּ. רַב הוּנָא אָמַר: דִּבּוֹרָה וּבָרַק וַיֵּעַל הֵיוּ. שְׁפֹט אֶחָד, שְׁפֹטִים תְּרִין, הַשּׁוֹפְטִים תְּלָתָא)

This Midrash records three opinions as to the identity of the Judges during the period of the book of Ruth. Each of the opinions is based on the premise that the plural form of the word "judges," *השופטים*, designates a period in which multiple judges ruled simultaneously.

Let's examine each opinion in the Midrash.

### EHUD AND SHAMGAR

The Gemara writes (Nazir 23b):

אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹסִי בְּרַבִּי חֲנִינָא רוּת בַּת בְּנוֹ שֶׁל עֶגְלוֹן מֶלֶךְ מוֹאָב הָיְתָה  
Rabbi Yosei, son of Rabbi Chanina, said: Ruth was the daughter of the son of Eglon, king of Moab.

► Read Shoftim 3:12-30. How does Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi's opinion in the Midrash cohere with Rabbi Yosei's in the Gemara? Might this account for Elimelech's choice to journey to Moav during the famine? Might this explain the wariness of the inhabitants of Beit Lechem to accept a Moabite into their midst?

► Read Shoftim 30:15. Which tribe was Ehud from? Note that Ehud appears to be the first judge who is not from tribe of Yehuda in the book of Judges (assuming that Otniel is from the tribe of Yehuda; see Shoftim 1:13). Read Shoftim 1:1 and Ruth 1:1. Why is it significant that Megillat Rut takes place at the time that Ehud becomes the leader? How does this connect to the conclusion of Megillat Rut?



## DEVORAH AND BARAK

► Read Shoftim chapters 4-5. What thematic similarities can be found between the story of Devorah and Yael and the story of Ruth? How can they be contrasted?

Several linguistic similarities support the comparison between these two stories:

1. The verb *hum*: murmur, roar, tumult, to cause confusion.

a) Devorah: The denouement of the battle against Sisera is described as follows (Shoftim 4:15):

And G-d confused (ויהם) Sisera.

b) Ruth: This same word appears in Megillat Rut to describe the atmosphere of bewilderment and excitement that accompanies Naomi's return to Beit Lechem (Ruth 1:19):

And the entire city was confused (ותהם) upon them.

2. The command, *sura* (turn aside), followed by the immediate obedience to the command, *vaYasar*.

a) Devorah: Yael instructs Sisera to turn aside in order to enter her tent (Shoftim 4:18):

And Yael went out to greet Sisera. And she said to him, "Turn aside (סור) my master, turn aside (סור) to me, do not be afraid." And he turned aside (ויסר) to the tent and she covered him with a blanket.

b) Ruth: Boaz directs the *goel* to turn aside and sit at the gate in search of a buyer for Naomi's land and a husband for Ruth (Ruth 4:1):

And Boaz went up the gate and he sat there. And behold the *goel* is passing about whom Boaz had spoken. And he said, "Turn aside (סור), sit here *Ploni Almoni*." And he turned aside (ויסר) and he sat.

3. The adverb *lat* or *balat*: stealthily, secretly, gently.

a) Devorah: Yael approaches Sisera surreptitiously, exercising extreme caution (Shoftim 4:21):

And she came upon him stealthily (בלאט), and she drove the tent pin into his temple.

b) Ruth: Ruth is likewise silent as she approaches a sleeping Boaz (Ruth 3:7, 9):

And she came stealthily (ולאט) and she uncovered his feet.

4. The doubling of the verb *lech*: where you go, I will go.

Informing Barak that G-d has commanded him to fight

the enemy, Devorah assures him of certain victory. But Barak disregards Devorah's authority and compelling Divine promise and responds by appending specific preconditions for accepting the assignment:

And he said to her, "If you come (אם תלכי) with me I will go, but if you do not come (ואם לא תלכי) with me, I will not go (לא אלך)" (Shoftim 4:8).

► What can we learn by comparing and contrasting Barak's statement: "If you do not come with me, I will not go!" with Ruth's "Wherever you go, I will go"?

The difference between Ruth and Barak underscores the broader difference between the book of Shoftim and the book of Ruth. The story of Devorah bespeaks commotion, war and death, while the Ruth narrative depicts reunion, marriage and continuity. The book of Shoftim tends to feature characters who are not fully committed to society and whose primary loyalty is to themselves and to the promotion of their own interests. Megillat Rut, on the other hand, tells the story of an extraordinary person who displays unhesitating loyalty, even when it undermines her own personal interest. The story of equivocal loyalties and selfishness portrays a society wracked by war, unrest and troubled social relations. The book of Ruth, in contrast, takes place on a backdrop of kindness, selflessness and devotion, producing a society that is tranquil, cohesive and viable.

## BOAZ AND IVTZAN

Another Midrash attempts to establish the precise time period during which Megillat Rut took place:

Rabba bar R. Huna said in the name of Rav: Ivtzan is Boaz (Bava Batra 91a).

To fully understand this Midrash and its consequences for understanding Boaz, we must examine the Biblical portrayal of Ivtzan.

► Read Shoftim 12:8-10. On what basis does the Gemara identify Ivtzan with Boaz? How does identifying Boaz with Ivtzan suggest that Boaz's intention in marrying Ruth is completely selfless?

How can Ivtzan's behavior be contrasted with that of the *goel* in Ruth 4:6?

## CONCLUSION

Megillat Rut's deliberately vague time frame indicates that any attempt to date the book definitively is at odds with the objective of the book itself, which presents Ruth as the solution to the entire era. Nevertheless, the suggestions found in the *midrashim* enrich our understanding of the goals of the book of Ruth. These *midrashim* draw our attention to the similarities and differences between the book of Ruth and certain narratives in the book of Shoftim. By contrasting and comparing these stories, we emerge with new perspectives and valuable insights into the book of Ruth, its characters, values and messages.



# GUIDED LEARNING



## Ma'amad Har Sinai (Shemot chapters 19 and 20)

Rabbi Menachem  
Leibtag

In this guided learning, we will explore Maamad Har Sinai through the text of the Chumash with the help of Rashi and other commentaries

Before you begin this guided learning, be sure to have a Chumash with Rashi handy, as the following battery of questions will help guide your study of the Torah reading for Shavuot morning – the story of *Matan Torah* in Shemot 19 and 20. We will ask lots of questions – don't worry if you don't have an answer for all of them! Use these questions to launch discussions or as food for thought.

**1. Study Shemot** 19:1-8, paying careful attention to the flow of topic. (Don't skip to the next question, until you have completed it!)

Verses 19:1-2 'set the stage,' while the primary topic of this section unfolds in 19:3-6 – when G-d speaks to Moshe, instructing him to deliver a message to the nation. Note the formality of this message (i.e. its 'double introduction' in 19:3, and its 'superfluous conclusion' in 19:6).

**2. In your opinion,** what is the purpose and essence of this message, and why must it be ratified by the people in 19:7-8? Could this 'message' be understood as a 'proposal' to *Am Yisrael*, or some type of a 'deal'? Be sure you understand the 'two sides' of this proposal as detailed in 19:5-6 (i.e. what is the IF, and what is the THEN?).

**3. Would you consider** 19:4 part of the message or a 'motivating reason' to accept what follows? Relate your answer to the need for what transpires in 19:7-8.

**4. Note the word** ברית in 19:5. In your opinion, does it refer to something 'old' or something 'new'? According to each possibility, what covenant is being referred to? How does this *brit* relate to the proposal? Relate your answer to Shemot 24:7-8 and 6:7, as well as to Devarim 4:9-13 and Devarim 5:2. See also Bereishit 17:7 and its context. (Bonus: see the commentaries of Rashi and Ramban.)

**5. Note the phrases** ממלכת כהנים and גוי קדוש in 19:6. How did you translate these phrases? Do they describe two different concepts or the same concept? Relate your answer to the concept of a גוי גדול as promised to Avraham Avinu in Bereishit 12:1-3, as well as to the purpose for why Avraham was chosen in 18:17-19.

**6. Review this proposal** once again in 19:3-8, noting how *Bnei Yisrael* may have had the option to reject it. In your opinion, what would have happened had they answered 'no'? In light of your answer, consider the following Midrash:

Rabbi Avdimi bar Chama bar Chasa said: the Jewish people actually stood beneath the mountain, and the verse teaches that the Holy One, Blessed be He, overturned the mountain above the Jews like a tub, and said to them: If you accept the Torah, excellent, and if not, there will be your burial.

(Mechilta, quoted in Shabbat 88a)

**7. In 19:7-8,** *Bnei Yisrael* answered 'yes' to this proposal. In your opinion, what should happen next? In other words, how will *Bnei Yisrael* find out the more specific details of this covenant? Relate your answer to what does happen in chapters 19 and 20 and in chapters 21 through 24, and the rest of Chumash.

**8. Carefully read 19:9,** and try your best to translate every phrase in this *pasuk*. Is there anything that doesn't make sense?

The first half of verse 19:9 relates to the 'proposition' discussed in 19:5-6 and agreed upon in 19:7-8.

**9. What is the purpose** of the 'cloud'? What will G-d be telling Moshe while he is in this cloud, and what are the people supposed to 'overhear'? Relate your answer to what will take place in chapter 20.

**10. How did you understand** the phrase 'so that they will believe in you [Moshe] forever'? Is there a *mitzvah* to believe in Moshe? In general, whenever Moshe relays the words of G-d to the nation, how does the nation know that Moshe is 'telling the truth'?

**11. Now review** the final phrase of 19:9: "and Moshe told the people's answer to G-d." How does this final phrase relate to the first half of the *pasuk*? What 'answer of the people' is this verse referring to?

Verses 19:10-11 appear to be G-d's response to what the people said in 19:9.



**12. Based on this response**, what seems to have been the people's request?

Rashi on Shemot 19:9 says the following:

*The words of the people, etc.* — He said to G-d: "I have heard from them a reply to this statement — that their desire is to hear the commandments from You and not from me. One who hears from the mouth of a messenger is not the same (in the same position) as one who hears directly from the mouth of the King himself. It is our wish to see our King.

Based on this Rashi, it appears that G-d's original plan was to speak the Ten Commandments to Moshe in the cloud in a manner in which the people would 'overhear', but Moshe would later need to relay their precise content. However, due to the people's request for a more direct encounter, the new plan would be for G-d to speak the Ten Commandments directly to the people; hence the necessity for three days of preparation.

**13. Next**, review the Ten Commandments in chapter 20.

Note the difference in 'person' between the first two *dibrot* and the last eight: there is a grammatical change from 'first person' (in 20:2-5) to 'third person' (in 20:6-13). The following Midrash addresses this difference:

Rav Hamnuna said: What is the verse that alludes to this? It is written: "Moses commanded to us the Torah, an inheritance of the congregation of Jacob" (Devarim 34:4). The word Torah, in terms of its numerical value [*gematriya*], is 611, the number of *mitzvot* that were received and taught by Moses our teacher. In addition, there are two *mitzvot*: "I am the L-rd your G-d" and: "You shall have no other gods" (Shemot 20:2, 3), the first two of the Ten Commandments, that we heard from the mouth of the Almighty, for a total of 613.

(Makkot 23b)

**14. Return now to Shemot 20:1** – the opening line of the Ten Commandments. Based on that verse, who is G-d speaking to? (May there be a word missing in that verse?)

**15. Now carefully read** the story in Shemot 20:15-16, the narrative describing how the people beg Moshe rather than G-d to speak to them – and relate this story to the above questions.

Did these verses take place after the *Dibrot* – or in the middle? If the latter, why then would the story be told only afterward?

**16. Return now to review** 19:10-15, noting the need for the three-day preparation. In your opinion, why was this necessary, and what was supposed to happen on day three? Where should the people have been on the third day in the morning – at *Har Sinai*, or in the camp? Relate this to what transpires in 19:16-17, and to why Moshe needed to 'take them out from the camp' and bring them to the 'foot of the mountain.'

**17. Next**, study 19:18-19; how did you understand the phrase: משה ידבר והאלוקים יענו בקול Who is Moshe speaking to – the people, or G-d? According to either possibility, what was Moshe 'saying'?

Rashi on 19:19 answers the above question:

*Moshe spoke* — When Moshe was speaking and proclaiming the Commandments to Israel — for they heard from the Almighty's mouth only the Commandments לא יהיה לך and אנכי, whilst the others were promulgated by Moshe — then the Holy One, blessed be He, assisted him by giving him strength so that his voice might be powerful and so become audible.

According to Rashi, the second half of verse 19 is describing how G-d amplifies Moshe's voice when he is relaying the last eight commandments! According to Rashi's interpretation, both the nation's request to hear G-d directly in 19:9, and their actual hearing of G-d's voice directly in 19:19 is mysteriously 'missing' in this narrative.

**18. Can you explain why?**

Verses 19:20-25 form a distinct unit and are quite difficult to understand.

**19. Try your best** to relate what transpires in these verses to the 'two plans' discussed in the questions above.

**20. Who are** the *kohanim* described in 19:21-24? How are they 'different' than the rest of the nation, and where are they standing? Relate your answer to Shemot 24:1-11, noting especially 24:1 & 24:9-11. (Can 19:22 be understood without 24:1? Bonus: Might this explain Rashi's comment on 24:1 in regard to when these events transpired?).

## CONCLUSION

The Torah seems to be intentionally ambiguous in regard to how close we stood before G-d during this momentous event, possibly causing the reader to ponder this very question in regard to one's own search for G-d in his or her daily life. Hopefully these thoughts will make our own Shavuot experience a little more meaningful.



# GUIDED LEARNING



Rabbanit Rachelle  
Fraenkel

## והגית בו יומם ולילה

What exactly is our obligation to learn Torah? In this guided learning, we will examine the concept of constancy with regard to the *mitzvah* of *Talmud Torah*

Let us begin this guided learning by examining a section from the first chapter of the book of Yehoshua:

After the death of Moshe, the servant of the L-rd, the L-rd said to Yehoshua son of Nun, Moshe's attendant: My servant Moshe is dead. Prepare to cross the Jordan, together with all this people, into the Land that I am giving to the Israelites... Be strong and resolute, for you shall apportion to this people the Land that I swore to their fathers to assign to them. But you must be very strong and resolute to observe faithfully all the teaching that My servant Moshe enjoined upon you. Do not deviate from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. **Let not this Book of Torah cease from your lips, but recite it day and night**, so that you may observe faithfully all that is written in it. Only then will you prosper in your undertakings and only then will you be successful. I charge you: Be strong and resolute; do not be terrified or dismayed, for the L-rd your G-d is with you wherever you go.

► What are the main instructions Yehoshua gives Am Yisrael upon entering Eretz Yisrael?

► What are the unique dangers they might face? What will protect them?

Read the verse:

לא ימוש ספר התורה... מפיה והגית בו יומם ולילה

Let not this Book of Torah cease from your lips, but recite it day and night.

► What questions can be asked on this verse?

The following commentaries address the above verse. Try to think about what question they are addressing:

Nachlat Yehoshua:

לא ימוש מפיו – this states there is another condition besides the deeds, and that is studying and being busy with the Torah, which is the business of learning and reciting the laws of the Torah and

its commandments.

והגית – you should always think about and study the theoretical part of the Torah. And the purpose of the study will be for the deed, to keep away from transgressions, and to fulfill the commandments.

Radak:

The meaning of ויהגית is ... that one should meditate on it day and night, whenever one finds time from one's livelihood.

Let's try to dig deeper into the understanding of this commandment.

The Gemara (Menachot 99b) describes the level of constancy that obligates a Jew regarding Torah learning:

Rabbi Ami says: From Rabbi Yosei's statement we may learn that even if a person learned only one chapter of the Mishnah in the morning and one chapter of the Mishnah in the evening, he has thereby fulfilled the *mitzvah* of "Let not this Book of Torah cease from your lips." Rabbi Yochanan says in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai: Even if a person recited only the recitation of *Shema* in the morning and in the evening, he has fulfilled the *mitzvah* of "Let not this Book of Torah cease from your lips." And it is prohibited to state this matter in the presence of ignoramuses [*amei ha'aretz*].

And Rava says: On the contrary, it is a *mitzvah* to state this matter in the presence of ignoramuses!

► What is the implication of this principle to Torah study?

► Why the fear of stating this principle in front of *amei ha'aretz*?

Here are two reasons for hiding the idea:

1. So that one does not absolve himself from studying Torah by reciting *Kriyat Shema*. (Rabbeinu Gershom)

2. So that one will not accustom his sons not to learn Torah. (Rashi)





Here are three reasons for sharing the idea:

1. So that one thinks “if I can fulfill **לא ימוש** so easily, imagine how much I can gain if I learned even more!” (Rabbeinu Gershom)

2. So that one will accustom his sons to learn Torah. (Rashi)

3. In case one thinks that since it is impossible to study “day and night,” there is no hope in fulfilling the *mitzvah* of Torah learning, and will completely despair of the Torah. Therefore, it is a *mitzvah* to inform him that even by reciting one chapter he fulfills **לא ימוש**. (Sfat Emet)

► **What could be the relevance of these approaches in our time?**

The Talmud continues:

Rabbi Yonatan says: This verse is neither an obligation nor a *mitzvah*, but a blessing. The Holy One, Blessed be He, saw Yehoshua and observed that the words of Torah were very precious to him, as it is stated: “...and his servant Yehoshua, son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the Tent.” The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Yehoshua: Yehoshua, are the words of Torah so precious to you? I bless you that “this Torah Scroll shall

not depart from your mouth.” The *Tanna* of the school of Rabbi Yishmael teaches: The words of Torah should not be considered as an obligation upon you, but at the same time you are not permitted to exempt yourself from them.

► **What are your thoughts about Torah as an obligation, a *mitzvah*, or a blessing?**

Let’s examine what some of the commentaries have to say on the words “Torah should not be considered as an obligation”:

► A person who has a debt says: “When will I repay it and get rid of it already!” But a person should not say: “I’ll recite one chapter of Torah and be exempt,” since you are not allowed to exempt yourself from Torah. (Rashi)

► “Not an obligation” means that you would **only** engage in Torah, and “you are not permitted to exempt yourself from them” means not to engage with Torah at all. Rather, the proper way is “*Talmud Torah* with *derech eretz*.” (Rashi)

► One does not have a duty to study the **whole** Torah, as stated in Avot: “It is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you at liberty to neglect it.” (Tosafot)

## CONCLUSION

*Am Yisrael* has been given the gift and duty of **והגית בו יומם ולילה**. It is a multifaceted challenge, combining the necessities of life, being creative and productive, while always being deeply connected to Torah. It is also a wondrous journey, as described by Rabbi Nachman of Breslov:

You should know: there are chambers of Torah. When someone who is worthy of them begins to innovate in Torah, he enters these rooms and passes from room to room and from room to room. For in each and every room there are any number of entrances to other rooms; and from these other rooms to other rooms as well. He enters and strolls about in all of them, gathering from there treasures and exceedingly precious and delightful jewels. Fortunate is his lot!

The Torah is infinite and its potential is never ending. Although the exact halachic parameters regarding fulfilling one’s obligation to it can be drawn under the plane of scrutiny, in truth, we can never truly finish learning Torah.

## Zionist Leaders in Easy Hebrew

## הַרְבֵּה הֵלֵל רִיבְלִין מְשַׁקְלֹב וְהַסְפֵּר קוֹל הַתּוֹר

בן יוסף ומִשִּׁים בן דָּוִד. מִשִּׁים בן יוסף יפֵּעַל בִּימֵי **עֲקֵבְתָא דְּמִשִּׁיחָא**, וְעֵינֵינוּ הוּא קְרֹב הַגָּאֲלָה עַל יְדֵי מַעֲשֵׂי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּדֶרֶךְ טְבִיעִית **הַמַּעֲוֶרֶת** הַנִּהְגָּה אֱלוּקִית נְסִית נִסְתָּרָת. לְעַמַּת זֹאת, מִשִּׁים בן דָּוִד יפֵּעַל בִּימֹת הַמִּשִּׁים, וְעֵינֵינוּ הוּא הַגָּאֲלָה עֲצָמָה, שֶׁתְּבוֹא עַל יְדֵי מַעֲשִׂים עִם נְסִים גְּלוּיִים. בְּסִפֵּר נִכְתָּב, כִּי הַגֵּר"א רָאָה אֶת עֲצָמוֹ **כְּנִיצוּץ** מִשִּׁים בן יוסף, שֶׁתִּפְקִידוֹ לְדַאֵג לְבִנְיָן הָאָרֶץ, וּמִשׁוֹם כֹּךְ שָׁלַח אֶת תַּלְמִידוֹ לִישֹׁב אֶת הָאָרֶץ.

עַל אֵף הַנֶּאֱמָר בַּתְּלֻמָּד בְּבָבְלִי בְּמַסְכֵּת סָכָה (דף נ"ב, עַמּוּד א') כִּי נִגְזַר עַל מִשִּׁים בן יוסף שֶׁיִּהְיֶה בְּמַלְחָמָת גּוֹג וּמָגוֹג, עַל פִּי הַגֵּר"א בְּסִפֵּר קוֹל הַתּוֹר גִּזְרָה זֹאת **בְּטֻלָּה** בְּזָכֹת אֶרֶץ הַגְּלוּת, בְּנִין אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל, חֲבָלֵי מִשִּׁים וְתַפְלוּתֵינוּ בְּעֵד חַיּוֹ. **קְבִיעָה** זֹאת שֶׁל הַגֵּר"א הַמְכֻנָּה "עוֹד יוֹסֵף חַי" הִנֵּה אֶחָד מִשְׁבָּעָה **עֲקֻרֹנוֹת** גָּאֲלָה הַמוֹבָאִים בְּסִפֵּר קוֹל הַתּוֹר.

הַרְבֵּה הֵלֵל רִיבְלִין מְשַׁקְלֹב נוֹלַד בַּתְּאָרִיף ב' בְּתִשְׁרִי ה'תק"ח (16 בְּסֶפְטֶמְבֶּר 1757) וְנִפְטָר בְּשַׁבַּת קֹדֶשׁ ט' בְּסִינִן ה'תקצ"ח (2 בִּיּוֹנִי 1838).

הָיָה מְבַכֵּירִי תַלְמִידוֹ שֶׁל הַגָּאֹן מוֹיִלֵנָה (הַגֵּר"א) וְלִפִּי מִסְרֵת מְשַׁפְּחַת רִיבְלִין, בְּשָׁנַת ה'תקמ"ב (1782) **נוֹכַח** הַגָּאֹן מוֹיִלֵנָה שָׁאִין בְּאַפְשָׁרוּתוֹ לַעֲלוֹת לָאָרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעֲצָמוֹ, וְהַעֲמִיד אֶת הַרְבֵּה הֵלֵל **בְּרָאשׁוֹת** תְּנוּעַת "חֲזוֹן צִיּוֹן" שֶׁתִּיָּסַד עָלֶיהָ לָאָרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּמִסֵּר לוֹ אֶת "סִידוֹת הַגָּאֲלָה". עַל פִּי מִסְרֵת זֶה, עָמַד הַרְבֵּה הֵלֵל בְּרָאשׁ עֲלִית תַּלְמִידֵי הַגֵּר"א לָאָרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשָׁנַת תַּקס"ט (1908).

אֶת שְׁלֹמֹד מִהַגֵּר"א אוֹדוֹת **תְּהִלָּי** הַגָּאֲלָה עַל פִּי חֲכָמַת הַקְּבִלָּה, עָרַף הַרְבֵּה הֵלֵל בְּסִפֵּר "קוֹל הַתּוֹר". **פְּרָסוּמוֹ** הָרִאשׁוֹן שֶׁל הַסֵּפֶר הָיָה בְּשָׁנוֹת ה-20 שֶׁל הַמָּאָה ה-20.

**מָסֵר** מְרָכְזִי בְּסִפֵּר הוּא שִׁיטַּת "גָּאֲלָה בְּדֶרֶךְ הַטְּבִיעִי". **מוֹטִיב** מְרָכְזִי נוֹסֵף הוּא שִׁישְׁנָם שְׁנֵי מִשִּׁיחִים: מִשִּׁים

**בְּטֻלָּה**  
was nullified

**הַמַּעֲוֶרֶת**  
which awakens

**מָסֵר**  
message

**נוֹכַח**  
he realized

**קְבִיעָה**  
determination

**נִסְתָּרָת**  
hidden

**מוֹטִיב**  
theme

**בְּרָאשׁוֹת**  
at [the] head of

**עֲקֻרֹנוֹת**  
fundamentals

**כְּנִיצוּץ**  
like a spark

**עֲקֵבְתָא דְּמִשִּׁיחָא**  
footsteps of the  
Mashiach

**תְּהִלָּי**  
processes of

**פְּרָסוּמוֹ**  
its publication





## Embracing Ridiculous

As Israel's 24<sup>th</sup> Knesset was sworn in, not knowing if their tenure would last more than a few months, President Rivlin urged co-existence and mutual respect, and the development of a model of Israeliness that was inclusive and respectful. Israel continues to remain stuck in an absurd cycle of election and reelection, reeling from the insufferable and seemingly endless situation in which we find ourselves: nasty elections that result in a highly divided electorate and a Parliament that can't seem to find its way to a majority, let alone some sort of ideal consensus.

On April 6<sup>th</sup>, the President handed the power to form a government, once again, to Binyamin Netanyahu, who received the most endorsements by lawmakers. However, Netanyahu opens the negotiations with only 52 of the required 61 mandates.

To say that this situation has created strange bedfellows is an understatement. Netanyahu has reached out to the four-seat-winning Arab Ra'am party whose charter calls Zionism "a racist occupying project" and supports a Palestinian right of return. He also (supposedly) offered Naftali Bennett the option of rotating as a Prime Minister – on the strength of only seven mandates. Ostensible head of the left leaning coalition, Yesh Atid's Yair Lapid, also offered the explicitly right-wing Bennett a rotation as Prime Minister – the first rotation even. There is also loud chatter among the right leaning anti-Bibi parties about offering Netanyahu the Presidency, so he will step down as Prime Minister and those who promised never to serve with him can join together in a right-wing coalition.

I learned a new Hebrew word: מגורר – in English: truly ridiculous. These permutations and political machinations have ventured into once inconceivable, and outrageously incongruous and contradictory, pairings.

But perhaps the situation is actually not at all מגורר, or if it is, it should be reframed as brash and innovative. Maybe this is the parliamentarians' (conscious or subconscious) response to the idea that "Insanity is repeating the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." The electorate and the Parliament have simply repeated the same thing; the exact seats won by the exact parties have differed slightly, and the exact coalitions tried have varied somewhat, but overall, we have repeated similar patterns. There is no reason at all to believe that a fifth election will change anything. So maybe we need a little ridiculousness – a totally radical way of getting ourselves out of this deadlock. Maybe we should embrace the contradictions, instead of looking at them askance.

Israel is a country full of contradictions that combine to form things of beauty. Last month we celebrated Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut. The two days were deliberately established one directly after the other – a seemingly absurd juxtaposition of mourning and celebration that demands a willingness to embrace contradictions and an ability to tolerate nuanced conflicting emotions. More: the IDF can only function within a strict hierarchy, but as high up as the Supreme Court, laws have been passed that demand every soldier take personal responsibility for his own actions.

Yerushalayim, the capital of this

extraordinary country, has developed into a city of co-existing incongruities: Ultra-Orthodox mingling with teenagers in ripped jeans on Jaffa Street, Moslem doctors in hijabs tending to hospitalized Holocaust survivors in Hadassah. Electric scooters parked by ancient synagogues, and start-up companies housed in centuries-old buildings.

At the heart of Yerushalayim is the Kotel and Har HaBayit, a living testament to the power of reconciled contradictions: a Temple built by a king of peace, who was able to do so only because his father was successful at war. The place Yitzchak became an *akeidah*, because of his father's willingness to sacrifice him to a G-d that demanded the end of all human sacrifice. And in 1967, it was only with the deadly force of Israel's army that a democratic peace could be established over an undivided city.

So perhaps we should listen closely, but with an open mind, to what President Rivlin asked of us all: to develop a model of Israeli coexistence that is inclusive and respectful. Maybe what we need to most include and respect is the quintessential Israeliness of demanding that we live simultaneously within contradictions. And perhaps instead of calling some of the suggestions being made by parliamentarians מגורר, we should urge them to think in even more creative ways about how to create a new model of unity built upon the once inconceivable.

**Dr. Sharon Goldman** is a Vice-President at Bar-Ilan, and a frequent speaker and writer on such topics as Zionism, the American-Jewish Diaspora, and the U.S.-Israel relationship. Sharon has published articles in, among others, *The Times of Israel*, *Commentary* and *The Forward*.



## Tzion and Yerushalayim: A Warning from *Eretz Yisrael*

Chanania was a great scholar, among the greatest of his generation. But even after he left for Babylon, Chanania continued to set the Jewish calendar, deciding whether to add a leap month and determining the first day of the month.

The sages sent Chanania the following warning: “If you insist on setting the calendar outside of Israel, then go build your own altar and publicly declare that you and your community in Babylon have left the Jewish people and no longer belong to the G-d of Israel.” The Talmud (Berachot 63b) explains that the Sages’ response was based on the verse, “For Torah will go forth out of Tzion, and G-d’s word from Yerushalayim” (Isaiah 2:3). The source of Torah - including determining the Jewish calendar - is Yerushalayim and the Land of Israel.

Why is it so important that Yerushalayim be the center of Torah instruction?

### Tzion and Yerushalayim

We must first understand what the difference is between Tzion and Yerushalayim in this verse.

Rav Kook (*Ein Ayah* vol. II on *Berachot* 63b) explains that while Tzion and Yerushalayim refer to the same locale, they indicate different aspects of the Holy City. Tzion literally means ‘marked’ or ‘distinctive.’ It refers to those inner qualities that distinguish the Jewish people, “a nation who dwells alone” (Bamidbar 23:9), with their own unique spiritual traits and aspirations. The name Yerushalayim indicates the city’s function as a spiritual center for the entire world, influencing the nations of the world. Yerushalayim is the means by which Israel’s spirit of holiness

penetrates and uplifts the inner life of distant peoples.

In short, Tzion looks inward, emphasizing the city’s internal significance for the Jewish people, while Yerushalayim looks outward, stressing the city’s universal role as a spiritual focal point for the world.

It is axiomatic that the spirit of Torah and its ideals can only flourish when the Jewish people observe the Torah’s *mitzvot*. For this reason, the verse first stipulates that “Torah will go forth out of Tzion.” First the Jewish people must follow Torah and its *mitzvot*; only then can G-d’s word disseminate from Yerushalayim to the rest of the world. The two parts of the verse thus correspond to the dual aspects of Yerushalayim. First there must be Torah in, focusing inward. Then “the word of G-d” - the universal prophetic message - can spread to the rest of the world, emanating from Yerushalayim, the international quality of the holy city.

### The Sun and the Moon

What does all of this have to do with setting the calendar? According to Rav Kook, there are two aspects to setting the Jewish calendar. The first is to determine the hour of the new moon, and the second is to calculate whether it is necessary to intercalate an extra month so that the lunar cycle will remain in sync with the solar year and the seasons.

In rabbinical literature, the sun is often a metaphor for the nations of the world, while the moon represents the Jewish people. Thus the two calculations of the calendar correspond to the two aspects of Tzion-Yerushalayim. We need to determine the time of the new moon in order to observe the special lunar calendar of Israel — this is the internal Torah of Tzion. And we need to declare a leap year to maintain the



proper balance between the lunar year of Israel and the solar year of the nations — this corresponds to the universal message emanating from Yerushalayim.

### The Torah of an Entire Nation

But why must the Jewish calendar be set in the Land of Israel? The restriction on setting the calendar in *Eretz Yisrael* reflects a fundamental axiom of Torah. For the Torah to influence and enlighten the world, it must be established as a complete Torah, a Torah that governs all spheres of life. By setting the calendar outside of Israel, Chanania disconnected the Torah from the myriad aspects of life as a nation living in its own Land. He reduced the Torah to a personal religion that only relates to the ethical refinement of the individual and one’s private connection to G-d. Such an approach impoverishes the multifaceted richness of Torah. As the Sages warned him, this was akin to setting up a private altar to serve G-d - an irreparable break from the true goal of Torah and the people of Israel.

*Adapted from Silver from the Land of Israel.*

Rabbi Chanan Morrison is the author of several books on Rav Kook’s writings.





הארגון העולמי של בתי הכנסת  
והקהילות האורתודוקסיות  
World Organization of Orthodox  
Communities and Synagogues

# תפילה לשלום ירושלים Prayer for the Peace of Yerushalayim

Composed by Rabbi Shlomo Amar,  
*Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem and Former Chief Rabbi of Israel*

## יְרוּשָׁלַיִם

הָרִים סָבִיב לָהּ, וְה' סָבִיב לְעַמּוֹ.

אַתָּה הוּא ה' הָאֱלֹקִים אֲשֶׁר בָּחַרְתָּ בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם,  
וְאוֹתָהּ הִגַּבְתָּ עַד רוֹם שָׁמַיִם.

וּמִקֵּדְשְׁךָ בָּהּ כּוֹנֵנֶתָ, כִּי לְשָׁכּוֹן בְּתוֹכָהּ אָוִיתָ.

בְּאֵשׁ הָיִיתָ לָהּ לְחֹמֶמָה, בְּיָמֶיךָ עָנָךְ לְרוֹמָמָה,  
שׁוֹמֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁמוֹר עִם בָּחַרְתָּ,  
בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם אוֹתָהּ בְּשִׁמְךָ קִרְאתָ.

וּפָרַס סֶפֶת שְׁלוֹמְךָ עָלֶיהָ, וְתֵן שְׁלוֹם לְיֹשְׁבֶיהָ,  
וְשִׁמְחָה בְּבִנְיַת הַשָּׁבִים אֵלֶיהָ,  
תִּבְאֲמוּ וְתִטְעֲמוּ בָהֶר נַחֲלֶתְךָ,  
אוֹתוֹ קִדְשֶׁת מְכוֹן לְשִׁבְתְּךָ,  
וְהִגֵּן עֲלֵיהֶם בְּאַבְרַת חֲסִדְךָ,  
וְלִיְהוּדִים שִׁמְחָה וְאוֹרָה, תוֹךְ הָעִיר שְׁחַבְרָה,  
וּבִנָּה אוֹתָהּ מְהֵרָה בְּנֵין עוֹלָם,  
וְכִסָּא דָּוִד תִּכְיֶן בְּתוֹכָהּ דְּבִיר וְאוֹלָם.

יְהִי שְׁלוֹם בְּחִילְךָ שְׁלוֹה בְּאַרְמְנוֹתֶיךָ לְעוֹלָם,  
וְהַשֵּׁם יְהִי לָךְ לְאוֹר עוֹלָם,  
בְּרוּךְ שׁוֹמֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּבּוֹנֵה יְרוּשָׁלַיִם.

## Jerusalem,

enwrapped by hills, and G-d enwraps His people.

You are the L-rd G-d who has chosen Jerusalem,  
and lifted her to the heavens above.

You have established Your Temple within her,  
for You have desired to dwell within her.

In fire You were her wall, Your right hand's  
might elevating her. Guardian of Israel! Guard  
the People You have chosen, in Jerusalem  
that You have called by Your name.

Spread a pavilion of peace over her, give peace to her  
inhabitants, and give her joy in her children returning  
to her. Bring them and plant them on the mountain  
of Your heritage, which You have sanctified as Your  
dwelling place, and defend them with the wing of  
Your kindness. And may the Jews have joy and light  
within the city that is joined together, and may You  
build her, an eternal building, quickly, and prepare  
within her the throne of David, a sanctuary and a hall.

May there be peace within your walls, tranquility  
within in your palaces, forever, and G-d will  
be an everlasting light for you. Blessed be the  
Guardian of Israel and the Builder of Jerusalem.





## Cross that Border!

**T**his Yom Yerushalayim we will visit Yemin Moshe's hidden streets and parks. Last year's tour on these pages traced the Old City wall; now descend into the valley below Jaffa Gate, cross at the traffic light. Enter the park where a globe beckons you to enter. Artistically representing a medieval drawing of Jerusalem at the world's center, enjoy the echo inside. Continue forward to David's Village gate, and see the Tannous Bros. stone sign and historical explanation. I still remember the original building; evoking life under Jordanian guns, Jerusalem's front line, 1948-1967.

Turn left onto a gravel path, up to the asphalt road, and follow it down left until the right turn indicated by blue street signs (Hatikvah). Once on the path, take the right-hand stairs, then cross to the left-hand stairs, traverse the small, open park with benches towards the left, and up again. A left onto a tree-lined broken asphalt road, sharp right up through a parking lot, and left onto the first row of houses (shhh).

Follow Hatikvah Street until it dead-ends into HaMetzuda, and look up at the building facing you, from where an Arab sniper shot brave young fighter Avraham Michael Kirschenbaum on Shevat 30 5708 – he was fighter 36 of the tragic “Lamed-He/35” massacre; due to a mishap that night, he was sent here instead. After being transferred, a British sniper killed wounded Kirschenbaum; the synagogue memorial plaque hints at who was responsible. All three Jewish militias mourned him.

Kirschenbaum's grandmother was one of the original tenants of Mishkenot Sha'ananim. She was the person who brought milk to the area.

Go down HaMetzuda and turn right onto Pele Yoetz Street, to the 1899 Beit Yisrael Synagogue. Prayers continued here under fire during the tough war decades. Broad windows enable a view inside, enjoy the porch view and signs; descend the steps on the left into the former cistern, now a study hall. Rabbi Chanoch Yeres invites your calls for assistance (+972 525666230). Below the synagogue is a kindergarten, once another synagogue. The synagogue upstairs was for the Prushim (Litvaks). The synagogue downstairs was for the Chasidim.

Continue to HaMigdal Street, down and right onto HaMevaser Street with art, flowers and the stone square in the middle which marks the entrance to the community water cistern. Continue another block to the small, almost vertical alleyway called R. Yitzchak Badahab Street, and turn left to enjoy the 1897 Turkish Sephardic Synagogue, Malki Street No. 2. Jerusalem Mayor Moshe Lion celebrated his election by being *chazzan* here on Shabbat. Community members who lived for decades across from Jordanian soldiers and snipers on the Old City walls were forced to sell and move out, and some walk in from all over the city.

Yemin Moshe Street straddling the hill leads either down to the park and to restaurants and educational facilities, or to Mishkenot Sha'ananim, up to the windmill. Moses Montefiore used a grant from Judah Touro to construct this first step towards modern Jerusalem outside the Old City walls (1860) followed by the adjoining Yemin Moshe (1890s).

Right and up takes us to a little staircase; to the left it brings us to the windmill door. For 18 years, it

produced clean, kosher flour until technology surpassed it. The British blew it up; it was a Jewish defensive post. Recently restored, visit the wine store and fun activity center, including a chance to operate the windmill! (+97225661441). See Sir Moses' recreated carriage (he traveled with a personal *shochet*) and artistic depictions of his manifold deeds. The famed porch here faces the Old City and distant Jordan; catch a marriage proposal almost any night.

Up to the parking lot, right to signs enumerating Jerusalem's growth since 1860; grassy knoll to your left. At its end, walk forward and a touch left to an arbor covering benches and overlooking a lovely fountain, with benches all around. A series of paths and parks leads through the Zionist Confederation House gate, and onward with steps and paths until you see a canopy on your right. Weddings are often held here. Look at the Old City, with Teddy Park and the artists area below. Now reach the road – left takes you to the hotels and down; right returns you to our starting point below Jaffa Gate.

You have freely walked through borders and can now appreciate the blessing bestowed upon us by the sacrifices made in the Six-Day War, and all the decades and centuries leading up to it.

**Rabbi Barnea Levi Selavan is Co-Director of Foundation Stone, running educational programs in Israel and overseas, and a licensed archaeologist and tour guide. [selavan@gmail.com](mailto:selavan@gmail.com)**



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## Rabbi Yeshayahu Chaim Hadari zt"l A Man of Yerushalayim

**R**abbi Yeshayahu Chaim Hadari zt"l, who was both my teacher and Rabbi, became one of the most influential and important spiritual figures in the life of the Old City of Yerushalayim after the Six-Day War.

His death three years ago left the Jewish Quarter in the Old City without one of its paragons of Torah scholarship.

Rav Hadari was the founder of Yeshivat Hakotel and served as Rosh Yeshiva for more than 50 years. He shaped its special educational and religious approach, to which he added his own extraordinary personal qualities to create a way of life characterized by friendship, loyalty and mutual responsibility among the yeshiva students.

The yeshiva was initially situated in rundown, abandoned buildings and moved to the almshouses overlooking the road leading to the Kotel until it was finally housed in a permanent building within the rebuilt Jewish Quarter.

Through the yeshiva, Rav Hadari also left his imprint on the revitalized life in the Old City, including its physical renewal and the development of its spiritual and religious life.

As an outstanding and well-respected educator, endowed with rare pedagogical ability, he transformed the yeshiva into a spiritual beacon. Sounds of Torah study, joy and prayer could be heard between its walls day and night, enjoyed by local residents, tourists strolling through the alleys and the masses making their way down to the Kotel.

Rav Hadari was a man of thought and deeds, and acutely aware of the huge spiritual potential inherent in the yeshiva and its strategic location. He introduced

the traditional descent to the Kotel for the *Kabbalat Shabbat* service, which became one of the yeshiva's trademarks. Every Friday night at dusk, one could see the yeshiva students, led by Rav Hadari, dancing on their way to the Kotel to pray, while at the same time singing *ישמחו במלכותך שומרי שבת*. When they reached the Western Wall Plaza, many of the people already there joined them in the dancing and the *tefillot*.



Rav Hadari's concern for the spiritual development of Yerushalayim, coupled with his creative way of thinking, turned the *beit midrash* into a place that welcomed all Jews who wished to study Torah close to the remnants of the *Beit HaMikdash*. This would especially occur on Shavuot eve and on the eve of

Hoshanah Rabbah, when people from the entire Jewish spectrum, from both Israel and the Diaspora, would come to learn in the *beit midrash*.

His combination of vision and pragmatism also expressed itself when he encouraged his students to purchase housing in the Jewish Quarter, many of whom did so.

He would often quote the words of the Sages: "Any generation in whose days the *Beit HaMikdash* is not rebuilt, it is as if they destroyed it." The Sfat Emet explains that the rebuilding of Yerushalayim and the *Beit HaMikdash* is not a one-time matter, but rather a long and continuous process. Every generation lays its own foundations until the rebuilding is complete and the *Beit HaMikdash* stands before us. Therefore, if a generation failed to lay its own foundations and did not contribute its part, it is as if it destroyed the *Beit HaMikdash*. Rav Hadari zt"l, driven by a vision of a rebuilt Beit Mikdash, laid a wealth of solid foundations for the spiritual rebuilding of Yerushalayim.

This year on Yom Yerushalayim, when Yeshivat Hakotel will celebrate its anniversary and the Jewish Quarter will mark the day on which Yerushalayim was liberated and reunified, we will sorely miss the man who did so much to build and rebuild it.

**Rabbi Yechiel Wasserman** is Head of the Center for Religious Affairs in the Diaspora in the World Zionist Organization and one of World Mizrahi's representatives in the National Institutions. He is a graduate of Yeshivat Hakotel and was one of its first students.



# The Names of Shavuot

The holiday of Shavuot has many names. Let's review four of them:

## 1 | Chag HaShavuot

*Chag HaShavuot* is the most frequent name in Tanach (for example in Shemot 34:22 and Devarim 16:10). *Shavua* means "week," so this name means "Festival of Weeks." The word *shavua* derives from *sheva*, the number seven, because there are seven days in a week. Since the holiday of Shavuot is at the end of a seven-week cycle, the name also alludes to the 7 x 7 nature of the festival.

The root שבע also means "to swear, to take an oath." In the story about the origin of the name Beer Sheva, both "seven" and "oaths" appear:

"Avimelech said to Avraham, 'What mean these seven ewes which you have set apart?' He replied, 'You are to accept these seven ewes from me as proof that I dug this well.' Hence that place was called Beer-sheba, for there the two of them swore an oath" (Bereishit 21:29-31).

As a result, some have connected the two roots. Rabbi David Tzvi Hoffman (Bereishit 21:30) writes that seven is considered a Divine number, because of the seven days of Creation. As a result, people would hold seven items when taking an oath. The linguist Ernest Klein writes that שבע as "oath" came from the sense of "binding oneself by seven things, or by seven oaths."

## 2 | Chag HaKatzir

The name *Chag HaKatzir*, the "Harvest (or Reaping) Festival," appears in Shemot 23:16. This name indicates that the day is meant to thank G-d for

the successful wheat harvest. The name derives from the root קצר – "to cut short." The related word *katzar* means "short." There are other roots that begin with the two letters קצ that also mean "to cut." The linguist Edward Horowitz gives these examples:

קצץ - cut; from it we have קץ, end.

קצה - cut; from it we have קצין, captain, judge. The word cut is figuratively used for deciding.

מקצה - scrape off; מקצה (muktzeh) – set apart – forbidden for handling on Shabbat.

קצב - butcher; תקציב is a budget

קצע - cut into; מקצוע – a profession – is what one is cut out for

Based on this, some scholars believe that there was a two-letter root system in Hebrew before the three-letter one in use today.

## 3 | Yom HaBikkurim

In Bamidbar 28:26, the holiday is referred to as *Yom HaBikkurim* – "the day of the first fruits." This name commemorates the *bikkurim* offering, also called שתי הלחם (the two breads). It was the offering brought from the first wheat of that season. The Torah commands, "You shall observe the Feast of Weeks, of the first fruits of the wheat harvest" (Shemot 34:22). While in popular imagery, offerings were made of all the fruits of the Land of Israel, on Shavuot only wheat was brought, because the other fruits ripen later. Those other fruits were brought until, and on, Sukkot.

*Bikkurim* derives from the root בכר – "to bring forth." From that root, we get the word *bechor* – "first born." While both *bechorim* and *bechorot* are found

as plurals for *bechor*, some scholars say that *bechorim* applies to people, whereas *bechorot* applies to animals.

Some scholars connect the root בכר to other roots that express similar ideas. For example, Klein connects it to בגר, meaning "to grow up, mature," which gives us the word מבוגר – "adult." Several others also connect it to בקר, by saying that both mean "to break forth, be early." This is the root of *boker* – "morning," the time the daylight breaks through.

## 4 | Zman Matan Torateinu

Until now, we've looked at names that appear in Tanach. In the Talmud, Shavuot is referred to as *Atzeret*. (I discussed the background to that word in *HaMizrachi*, Volume 2, Issue 5, October 2019). A name that doesn't appear in Talmudic literature, but is used in our prayers, is *Zman Matan Torateinu* – "the time our Torah was given."

A question is often asked – why do we call it the day the Torah was given, and not the day the Torah was received – *Yom Kabbalat HaTorah*? The most popular answer is that the Torah was given only once, but we "receive" it every day. However, looking at Talmudic literature, we see that the phrase *Matan Torah* is quite common – appearing dozens of times. On the other hand, *Kabbalat HaTorah* only appears in a few midrashim. So it seems likely to me that when the prayers were standardized, they chose the more common phrase.

David Curwin is a writer living in Efrat, and the author of the Balashon blog. [balashon.com](http://balashon.com) • [balashon1@gmail.com](mailto:balashon1@gmail.com).



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# Shavuot RECIPES

HaMizrachi readers from around the world wrote in to share some of their favorite traditional family Shavuot recipes

## Betty Hadjizade's

### SHIR BERENJ, PERSIAN RICE PUDDING

This recipe comes from my mother, Bibbi Marlene Hadjizade (Bibbi is Persian for "grandmother"). It's the traditional Shavuot food for Persian Jews. It takes a lot of patience to make, but it's well worth it!

#### Ingredients

- 1 packet of pudding rice (only pudding rice works for this recipe)
- 1 pint or half liter whole milk
- Golden syrup

#### Directions

- Pour the rice into a saucepan. Cover with water and boil.
- When the water starts to go down, add more to keep the rice covered, stirring continuously for one and half hours until it's very thick and soggy.
- In the last few minutes add the milk in and stir until it is solid again.
- Pour onto plates or flat pie dishes and put into fridge.
- When ready to eat, slice into your own plate/bowl and pour golden syrup on it. Yummy!



## Lisa Stepner's

### CRACKER BLINTZAHs

Blintzachs (from Yiddish בלינטשע, often pronounced "blintzes" in English) are a classic Ashkenazi Shavuot food. This traditional Eastern European recipe takes a modern twist in our famous family recipe, which was passed down to me from my grandmother, Emma Rosenbloom

#### Ingredients

- Square saltine crackers
- 2 large or 3 small containers of farmer cheese
- 500 grams 3% cottage cheese
- 3 eggs
- 1 cup milk
- Cinnamon
- ¼-½ cups sugar
- Canola oil for frying

#### Directions

- In a large mixing bowl, combine farmer cheese and cottage cheese and mix well.
- Add in beaten eggs one at a time.
- Add sugar to taste. Generously add cinnamon.
- Pour milk into a bowl for dipping/drenching the blintzachs.
- Prepare a blintzah: take 1 square cracker, place a teaspoonful of mixture on one cracker, cover with cracker square, place in milk, let soak for about a minute. They shouldn't get soggy, but should be moist with milk. Place on plate until you have enough to fry.
- Heat frying pan and add oil (I don't use a lot but add as I go). Fry blintzachs until golden on both sides. Watch carefully because they can burn. (Slightly burnt are still yummy).
- Remove and place on a paper towel-lined plate to drain. Blintzachs will be small, square and thin. Enjoy warm or cold, with or without additional cinnamon and sugar.

**Note:** Quantities can be adjusted. I use more farmer cheese than cottage cheese but need both.





## with Nir Barkat



### Childhood

I grew up in a warm and lively Yerushalmi home where we were educated in Zionism, doing and giving, hard work and a love of Israel. Thanks to these values, I chose the path I am on today, to do as much as I can for society and country.

### Army

I served in the paratroopers, and in 1980 I was wounded in a battle with terrorists in southern Lebanon. I fought to stay in the battalion and became a company commander in the 890th Battalion in the First Lebanon War. I continued to serve in the reserves during the first Intifada and did reserve duty for many years, during which I expressed my love for the IDF and felt I was really contributing to the country. My military service, both as a soldier and an officer, shaped my personality and laid many foundations for my actions and choices to this day.

### Shabbat

After a busy week, Shabbat is a moment of rest with friends and family, a time to recharge my batteries.

### Zionism

Deep, unconditional love for Israel and the willingness to contribute to the future of the State in any way I can.

### Yerushalayim

Yerushalayim is what connects and unifies the past, present and future of the Jews and of Israel. I was privileged to serve as the Mayor of Israel's capital, the most beautiful city in the world. Today, Yerushalayim is on a path of growth and economic development, with impressive achievements in high-tech and tourism. It is growing and evolving with advanced infrastructure. And this is just the beginning.

### Experience as Mayor

Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu z"l instructed me to protect Yerushalayim, so with every step I took I asked myself, "What is the best thing for Yerushalayim?" Today I can see what I've left behind – the many plans which have been realized, massive construction, growth in tourism and high-tech, youth filling its streets... I think I lived up to the task.

### The Importance of a United Yerushalayim

3,000 years ago, the Land of Israel was divided

into tribes, but Yerushalayim was never divided. It was the unifying and connecting factor for all. In the future, as in the past, the role of this city is to unite and connect. The ability to work together around the common denominator of Yerushalayim is critical to the nation.

### Inspiring Others

I believe that the historical connection between the Jews and Yerushalayim is in the soul of every Jew around the world. We must encourage Jews to visit Yerushalayim and connect to it, and help each person, in his and her own way, to find their special bond to the city.

### Choosing Politics

I left my business out of a desire to serve Yerushalayim, and I was Mayor for 10 years. Today Yerushalayim is in a healthy position, moving in the right direction and on a path of growth, so I decided to take my life experience and make an impact at the national level.

### Visions for Israel's Future

We need to look 30 years ahead and figure out what kind of country we want to leave for our children. We have a large window of opportunity to take advantage of our technical, entrepreneurial advantage and our *Yiddishe kop*, and be a light unto the nations in every sense. I envision Israel as a leading regional and global power, existing in security and with economic superiority that promotes entrepreneurship and technology. I believe that if we work hard in the right ways today, it will become reality.

### FIVE FACTS

you didn't know about Nir Barkat

1 I still have a final project to complete in order to finish my MBA.

2 When I was wounded in the army, I didn't tell my parents, who were abroad at the time.

3 After I was wounded, I refused to receive compensation from the army.

4 I started my business experience as a salesman in my mother-in-law's ceramic doll shop.

5 I knew my wife Beverly from childhood. When she came to visit me at the hospital following the injury, she entered my heart and never left.



## Parenting with Trust

**A**s parents, we think carefully about how to convey our Torah values to our children. We aspire for them to identify with what is important to us, and we wonder how to most effectively transmit our beliefs, practices and heritage.

It can be normal to worry about whether we are being successful and whether our children are internalizing our messages. The goal, however, should be to instill “fear of G-d” in our children in ways that are healthy and palatable.

Describing the educational philosophy of his great-grandfather, Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, Dr. Mordechai Breuer once wrote: “In education, let ourselves be guided by trust and truth, not by fear.”

What can educating with trust look like in practice?

I believe that the first part is identifying the core values that are so important and meaningful to us in life, that we want ourselves and our children to carry forward always, no matter where we are and whatever life throws our way. Examples of core values can include our connection to *tefilla* or to Talmud Torah, Shabbat, *chesed* or the Land of Israel in our lives, the importance of being a mature and dignified person or the kind of relationships we have with family or friends.

If parents can trust that their children understand these values, then they do not need to live in fear that every misdeed on the part of a child might mean they have failed to educate properly. And when we have faith in the power of our values and in the way we convey them to our children, we can better trust our intuitions about when to discipline and when to ignore, when to punish and when to let something go.

Let’s take the example of Shabbat.

If Shabbat is a core value in our lives, we should focus on making it the highlight of the week for even our youngest children. It should be permeated with entrancing sounds and smells, tastes and images, rather than with parental angst or harsh scolding in response to children who reach for electric toys or giggle between handwashing and eating *challah*.

“

**If we genuinely believe in the ancient power of Judaism itself, we should trust that these values will penetrate over time**

”

This takes trust in the power of Shabbat, as well as the courage to avoid fear tactics and to overcome our own lurking fears for our children. For example, while much of Shabbat observance involves abstaining from many of our typical weekday practices, we need to trust that our children will absorb this concept over time and that what is genuinely important to us will become important to them as well. Even though we can introduce the concepts of *muktzeh* and *melacha* at a young age and discuss them in our homes, I would suggest we do not need to agonize or get

involved when a four-year-old colors on Shabbat or turns on a musical toy.

Unfortunately though, fear, often subconscious, can lead us to unjustifiably rebuke or even punish a child in these circumstances, as we worry that this child does not, and therefore will not, care about Shabbat.

The concern is real, but this kind of reflexive response can be damaging in the long run. We can always teach our children more about the expectations of observance, but it is infinitely harder to undo negative feelings and associations. Rebuke and scolding may cause a child to quickly drop the crayon she was coloring with, but what feelings will be internalized at the same time?

Moreover, fear is palpable and easily detected by even the youngest of children. If our youth sense fear, they might learn that even the adults in their lives don’t authentically believe in the inherent attractiveness of the very tradition they are working to transmit.

If, however, we trust the potency and vitality of our own values – that is, if we genuinely believe in the ancient power of Judaism itself – we should trust that these values will penetrate over time. We will ultimately parent our children better, as we use situations as opportunities for education rather than for punishment. It is entirely possible to inculcate a strong belief system based on a positive perspective of trust, and we should have confidence in ourselves to do so.

**Shayna Goldberg** is the author of the forthcoming book *What Do You Really Want? Trust and Fear at Life’s Crossroads* and in *Everyday Living* (Maggid, 2021) and a *mashgicha ruchanit* in the SKA Beit Midrash for Women of Yeshivat Har Etzion (Migdal Oz).





## Mr. ADHD Marries Miss Anxiety

**T**his is the tale of Shayna and Bentzi Cohen. Shayna and Bentzi are your perfect young couple, both bright, talented and successful. Both were brought up in good homes. Both are confident and goal-oriented. And both are a bit surprised with what marriage has brought them.

Here's Shayna's version: "Dating Bentzi was exhilarating. He was filled with energy, always moving. It gave me a sense of excitement and adventure. But after three years of marriage, his ADHD is driving me crazy. He's always late. He never puts things away. And he's constantly forgetting things – he'd forget the baby at the store if I didn't remind him. Why can't he just get it together?"

Bentzi has his own take: "When we were going out, I felt like her knight in shining armor. She would get nervous, and I would step in to smooth things over. If something happened between her and one of her friends, I would calm her down. I felt noble and gallant, rescuing the damsel in distress. But now I feel like her anxiety is over the top. Every *erev Shabbos* is high drama – and she's the queen. Why can't she just calm down?"

Shayna and Bentzi spend the next 20 years trying to change each other, but neither of them are successful. *Why not?* they each wonder. *If only he would change*, Shayna thinks, *our marriage would be so much better*. Bentzi feels the same way. *If only she would change*, *life would be much more peaceful*.

They nobly persevere. They try this and that and the other thing. They talk, they coach, they plead, they demand. Nothing helps.

Finally, after 20 years, they both give up. Suddenly, their relationship



improves. "Not sure why," Shayna says, "but he's just so much nicer to me these days."

"Not sure why," Bentzi says, "but she's just much easier to live with now."

And *then*, finally, they live happily ever after.

I call it a tale because everyone thinks *that would never happen to me*, and they're the perfect young couple, because it seems to happen to everyone – he and she each spend an inordinate amount of time and energy attempting to change the other. It never works. Time after time, couple after couple, it fails. The only thing they achieve is a lot of frustration and bad feelings on both sides.

The worst part is that often, the traits they are trying to change can't really be changed. ADHD is part of the makeup of an individual. Being high-strung is a disposition – not something a person chooses and not readily malleable. While there are certainly coping strategies and techniques that people can and should use to manage more effectively, the fact is there are many core tendencies that are

inborn and just aren't subject to change.

We all understand this – until we get married. When it comes to our spouse, we feel a moral imperative to correct them, straighten them out, and make them better. Not only doesn't it work, it creates friction between couples. He feels aggrieved because she just doesn't change, and she feels victimized because he demands that she become someone she's not. Each one feels frustrated that their spouse won't change and hurt that their partner doesn't accept them for who they are.

This particular tale has a happy ending, because while Shayna and Bentzi certainly made one of the 10 Really Dumb Mistakes that Very Smart Couples Make, eventually they got it right. But unfortunately, not every story ends as well.

**Rabbi Ben Tzion Shafier** is a veteran educator and noted relationships expert who served as a high school rebbe for 15 years before creating TheShmuz.com. His book, *10 Really Dumb Mistakes that Very Smart Couples Make*, will be published in the fall of 2021.



Rabbi Hanoch Teller

# THE FORGOTTEN FRONT *of the* SIX - DAY WAR

**M**emories of the Six-Day War invariably center upon the brilliant military triumph. Forgotten was the overriding concern of the Israeli military and government that the war would be decided more in Washington and in the UN in New York, than on the battlefield. If there was any lesson from the Sinai Campaign in 1956, it was that Israel could win a bloody war and then have it all vitiated.

And just as the Israeli military was blessed with manifest and more subtle miracles at every stage of the war, in the diplomatic arena Israel was also graced with industrial helpings of Divine Providence. To better understand this, some crucial background.

Nasser's closing the Straits of Tiran in May 1967 – which many assume precipitated the war – was actually the *final* chapter of what is often referred to as the “War for the Water.” That war is a more informed *starting point* to the Six-Day War.

In 1964, Israel completed its National Water Carrier, consisting of a north-to-south conduit of tunnels, canals and pipelines some 130 kilometers long transferring Jordan River water to the Negev Desert. To the Arab mind this was an existential threat, for it would increase

the usable land in Israel and consequently result in the influx of more Jews. Accordingly, the Syrians began diverting the Jordan River tributaries emanating from their territory to dry up the carrier.

Tank battles ensued across the border. The Syrians began to move their heavy equipment away from the border and out of the range of Israeli tanks.

There was no question that the diversion of water would constitute a *casus belli* (grounds for war) and there was also no question that the intervention of the Israeli Air Force in the water conflict would be the point of no return for *actual war*. Armor wizard Yisrael Tal made some critical modifications, extending the range of the Israeli tanks so that the Syrian earth-moving equipment was no longer safe wherever it was positioned.

This brought an end to the water diversion, commencing the next diversion. The Syrians began to rain missiles upon the Galilee farms and kibbutzim from the high ground of the Golan Heights. Cautious Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol finally authorized the air force to suppress the Syrian bombardments.

If ever there was a reason to be cautious, this was it, for this act could easily catalyze a regional war involving Soviet intervention. The Israeli air strike made Syrian Mig-21s take to the air and a dog fight

ensued resulting in the loss of six Syrian planes and no Israeli casualties.

Once again, the score on the battlefield did not mirror political realities. In diplomatic circles the world was up in arms, the UN suddenly had no agenda other than censuring Israel, the Soviets lost not only their most advanced fighter jets but also face, and the Arabs threatened the imminent destruction of the Zionist State with renewed vigor.

Egypt, under the leadership of Gamal Abdel Nasser, assumed the leadership of the Arab world by expelling the UN Emergency Force (UNEF) from the Sinai Peninsula and immediately afterward flooding it with Egyptian forces. These acts clearly signaled what Nasser was up to, and if any other proof was needed, on May 23, 1967, Egypt closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, constituting a *casus belli* for Israel.

Israel was thrust into the nerve-wracking countdown to war, remembered in the chronicles of Israel as the *Hamtana* (the Wait).

As Egypt had stationed 100,000 troops equipped with hundreds of Soviet tanks in the Sinai Peninsula, the most logical action for Israel would have been a preemptive strike. But Israel's (supposed) allies, its arms suppliers, would not hear of it.

France's Charles de Gaulle offered no advice how Israel was to manage with





her seaport choked, but he was unmistakably clear that if Israel fired the first shot, it would forfeit France's friendship and assistance for good. Britain's Harold Wilson was not nearly as strident, but he also had no solution to contain Nasser's war aspirations. President Johnson in America proposed the formation of an "international flotilla" of warships to sail through the Straits of Tiran in the hope it would terminate Nasser's blockade. But such a flotilla would take time to assemble, and in the interim Israel was expected to... *wait*.

Meanwhile in Israel, the pressure for immediate defense in the form of offense was rising to a fury.

Israel's waiting gave the Arabs the sense that the Jews were scared to fight. In Nasser's pep speeches about the destruction of Israel, he appeared to be drunk with an imagined victory as he united the Arab world in a paroxysm of triumph and hate.

Nasser sounded Hitler-esque and the responsive roars and cries of the Cairo mobs were too reminiscent of the Nuremberg rallies. Eshkol's mumblings and inept fumbling evoked memories of the helplessness of European Jewry against the Nazi menace. The contrast of ultra-charismatic Nasser and ultra-phlegmatic Eshkol were making Israelis cringe.

The period of *Hamtana* finally came to an end when America ever-so-subtly hinted that they felt it was not their position to restrain others. Israel had the green light and it acted immediately, effectively, and decidedly. In the air and very swiftly afterward on the land, Israel defeated the Egyptian threat and then focused upon destroying the Jordanian and Syrian air forces.

The clock was ticking.

Israel had not yet liberated Jerusalem nor cleared the Golan Heights and the UN was pressuring for the adoption of a ceasefire. Nothing could have been less in Israel's interest.

America was willing to let Israel win the war, but it was not interested in a clash with the USSR, which demanded immediate condemnation of Israel and withdrawal to the previous lines.

Gambling on the fact that Russian forces were not yet in the region (albeit

steaming in that direction), and the fact that the Arabs and the world did not know the full extent of the Arab defeat (because Cairo Radio issued announcements about Egyptian victories and even informed Jordan that 75% of Israel's air force had been eliminated), the IDF fought on. Israel was so desperate to avoid the imposition of a ceasefire that Jerusalem issued no battle communiques of the truth.

**H**owever, when Moscow finally learned the extent of the Egyptian losses, Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin sent a strongly-worded message to Washington that it could no longer remain indifferent to "Israel's criminal aggression" and that if Israeli troops did not withdraw, the Soviet armed forces would use appropriate means to end the "Zionist adventure."

From this point on, the most important battlefield for Israel was in the United Nations. Israel dispatched its heaviest hitter, Foreign Minister Abba Eban. He arrived with no time to spare. A ceasefire resolution had already been drawn up that would have paralyzed Israel from achieving its military goals and robbing what had already been obtained. Eban, having shuttled non-stop across Europe, rose to the UN podium and delivered a tour de force.

With drama perfected through his Oxonian presentation, Eban delivered a panoply of metaphors that dazzled the assembled. Referring to the blockade he said, "Israel is breathing with a single lung," and labeled the UNEF, "an umbrella taken away as soon as it begins to rain."

"Look around this table and imagine," Eban reprimanded, "a foreign power forcibly closing New York or Montreal, Boston or Marseilles, Toulon or Copenhagen, Rio or Tokyo or Bombay Harbor. How would *your* government react? What would *you* do? How long would *you* wait?" He stressed that Israel's only aspiration was self-defense and peace and concluded, "Let us discern across the darkness the vision of a brighter and gentler dawn."

Abba Eban was brilliant and hailed worldwide as a genius of oratory. The Chicago Tribune summarized, "One of the great diplomatic speeches of all time." But

even with this gifted asset, Israel could still not fight off the world alone. Enter the white knight of rescue (his head adorned with an abundance of cotton locks like a tobacco shag about to be rolled), the United States' long-forgotten ambassador to the UN, Arthur Goldberg.

In what would appear as a fluke of history, Goldberg resigned from his position as a justice on the Supreme Court to accept Johnson's nomination to be his country's UN ambassador (LBJ believed Goldberg was the most competent member of Kennedy's cabinet). How Israel would profit from this nomination, and the unmistakable Divine intervention in this most unusual of career shifts, was not discernable when it occurred in 1965.

But in 1967, when Israel's future was so precarious, and the risk of being coerced to accept a ceasefire so imminent – which would have cost Israel its victory precisely as had happened 11 years earlier in the Sinai Campaign – there was no one who proved to be a better and more effective ally than Arthur Goldberg.

Goldberg knew how to handle the wily Russian ambassador Nikolai Fedorenko, who, despite his constant anti-American harangues, was fond of his American counterpart and admired his creativity. He referred to Goldberg as "A slick Jew who could fool the devil himself." Goldberg saw to it that the situation did not deteriorate into a situation that the Russians would actually enter the fray, and skillfully delayed matters at the UN to allow Israel the time it needed to achieve its full victory. ■

Rabbi Hanoch Teller's new podcast "Teller from Jerusalem" chronicles the stories of the early struggles of the modern State of Israel. Available wherever you listen to podcasts, or scan:



**Rabbi Hanoch Teller**, internationally-acclaimed storyteller extraordinaire, is an award-winning author and producer.



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# YERUSHALAYIM TREASURE HUNT

ARE YOU  
READY FOR AN  
ADVENTURE  
THROUGH  
YERUSHALAYIM?

Here are 13 teasers  
hinting at different sites in  
Yerushalayim. Study the  
map carefully, and number  
each site according to its  
matching teaser. Once you've  
numbered the sites in the  
correct order, arrange the  
letters next to each site to  
reveal the hidden Jerusalem-  
related phrase. Behatzlacha!

1

This building houses the national legislative  
body, which is based on the assembly of 120  
Sages in the times of the Mishna. Outside of  
this building stands a large bronze Menorah.

2

This Crusader and Arab fortress is a true symbol  
of Yerushalayim. At its core is a tower from the  
days of Herod. Its minaret dates to the 17th  
century.

3

Built on the edge of the city to serve as a  
meeting point between the farmers and the  
urban Jerusalemites, this area continues to  
draw locals and tourists alike for its unique  
atmosphere, local delicacies and fresh produce.

1



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KNESSET



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MT. SCOPUS  
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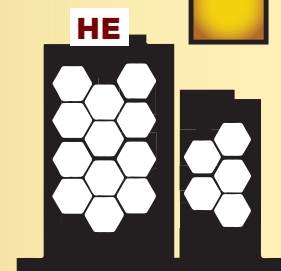


CHURVA  
SYNAGOGUE



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DAVID'S TOMB,  
MT. ZION



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RAMOT ALON



**4** Built in 1864 with financial help from Edmond de Rothschild, this building was destroyed by the Jordanian Legion during the War of Independence. After the return to the Old City, it was left in ruins with only one arc of its beautiful ceiling reconstructed as a reminder that one day it would be rebuilt. In 2005, reconstruction began and the building has been restored to its status as an outstanding landmark of the Jewish Quarter.

**5** Opened in 1925, this institute was an 'Israeli island' in Jordanian-controlled territory between 1948-1967. At its founding, Albert Einstein was asked to be its President.

**6** Built in 1538, this is the main entrance to the Old City from the west. The *mezuzah* here is one of the few in the world on a city gate.

**7** This gem of urban nature was created in 1993, when a new highway was built. The wildlife was trapped and threatened by feral dogs, jackals and even humans. Residents organized effective opposition and created a beautiful sanctuary.

**8** Some of Israel's oldest treasures are housed in this unique building. The building is an iconic part of the Yerushalayim skyline, but the contents themselves were not found in Yerushalayim.

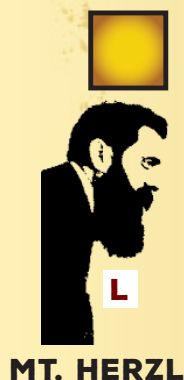
**9** A ring of satellite communities built after the Six-Day War to protect the unity of Yerushalayim. This community to the northwest is home to the unique architecture of the "beehive" apartments.

**10** Here lies the founder of modern Zionism, who never lived to see the establishment of the State of Israel. He died and was buried in Vienna but in 1949 his remains were brought here.

**11** This street takes its name from a valley connecting Yerushalayim and Beit Lechem. From here, the Plishtim raided Yerushalayim in the times of King David (Shmuel II, 5).

**12** Although not part of the Old City today, this is where King David and King Shlomo built their palaces. King Chizkiah improved the city infrastructure and today we can splash our way through his monumental construction project!

**13** Between 1948 and 1967, this became a pilgrimage site. Jews would climb to the top of a building here to strain their necks for a view and get as close as possible to the site of the *Beit HaMikdash*.



example:

**YE**

1

2

3

4

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8

9

10

11

12

13

Leiah Jaffe is a licensed tour guide living in Be'er Sheva. [leiah.jaffe@gmail.com](mailto:leiah.jaffe@gmail.com) +972-52-866-7748 [israelbyleiah.com](http://israelbyleiah.com)

# SPOT *the* DIFFERENCES





See if you can spot all 15 differences between these two Shavuot pictures!





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