

# ב"ה Torah Tidbits

ISSUE 1614

MAY 31<sup>ST</sup> 2025 • ד' סיון תשפ"ה

פרשת במדבר - שבועות  
PARSHAT BEMIDBAR - SHAVUOT

PIRKEI AVOT 6



United We Stand



ישראל



**Halachot of Shavuot Morning**  
Rabbi Shimshon HaKohen Nadel  
Page 74



**What Does Shavuot  
Look Like To You?**  
Jen Airley Page 82



This week's issue of Torah Tidbits is dedicated in loving memory of  
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ועשית חג שבועות לה' אלקיך דברים ט"ז

## YERUSHALAYIM ZMANIM

SHABBAT BEMIDBAR: CANDLES 7:03 PM • EARLY 6:11 PM • HAVDALA 8:21 PM • RABBEINU TAM 8:56 PM

SHAVUOT: CANDLES 7:04 PM • HAVDALA 8:23 PM • RABBEINU TAM 8:58 PM



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See [TorahTidbits.com](https://TorahTidbits.com) > Individual Articles  
for this week's Divrei Torah by:  
[Rabbi Nachman Winkler](#) and  
[Rebbetzin Dr. Adina Shmidman](#)

## IMPORTANT REMINDERS



Earliest Kiddush Levana 3 Days After Molad: 5 Sivan/ Motzei Shabbat May 31

7 Days After Molad: 8 Sivan/ Tues. night June 3

Last Opportunity to Say Kiddush Levana until: 15 Sivan/ Wed night June 10



Yizkor is recited on Shavuot



See Rav Shimshon Nadel's article on page 74-75 which reviews the  
Halachot of reciting berachot after being up all night.



We read on Shavuot Shemot 19:1 - 20:23. Haftorah for Shavuot: Yechezkel 1:1-28, 3:12



## COVER IMAGE Photographed by Tzvi Yehuda Berman

I live in Givat Ze'ev with my parents. The photo was taken during a trip to Nof Ayalon. The photo captures the beauty that is found in Eretz Yisrael and the special love that one gains by walking the Land and experiencing it's holiness first hand.

# CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



## OTHER Z'MANIM



### JERUSALEM

**Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat  
May 28 - June 7 / 1 - 11 Sivan**

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	<b>4:37-4:34</b>
Sunrise	<b>5:35-5:33</b>
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	<b>9:06-9:05</b>
Magen Avraham	<b>8:23-8:22</b>
Sof Zman Tefila	<b>10:16</b>
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanaya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	<b>12:36-12:38</b>
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	<b>1:11-1:13</b>
Plag Mincha	<b>6:09-6:14</b>
Sunset (Including Elevation)	<b>7:42-7:47</b>



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	BEMIDBAR			SHAVUOT		NASO		
	Candles	Early	Havdala	Candles	Havdala	Candles	Early	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	<b>7:03</b>	6:11	<b>8:21</b>	<b>7:04</b>	<b>8:23</b>	7:07	6:14	8:25
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	<b>7:20</b>	6:13	<b>8:23</b>	<b>7:21</b>	<b>8:24</b>	7:24	6:16	8:27
Beit Shemesh/RBS	<b>7:22</b>	6:12	<b>8:22</b>	<b>7:23</b>	<b>8:23</b>	7:25	6:15	8:26
Alon Shvut	<b>7:18</b>	6:11	<b>8:21</b>	<b>7:20</b>	<b>8:23</b>	7:22	6:14	8:25
Raanana/Tel Mond /Herzliya/K.Saba	<b>7:21</b>	6:13	<b>8:24</b>	<b>7:22</b>	<b>8:25</b>	7:24	6:16	8:28
Modi'in/Chashmonaim	<b>7:19</b>	6:12	<b>8:23</b>	<b>7:20</b>	<b>8:24</b>	7:23	6:15	8:27
Netanya	<b>7:21</b>	6:13	<b>8:24</b>	<b>7:22</b>	<b>8:26</b>	7:25	6:17	8:29
Be'er Sheva	<b>7:19</b>	6:12	<b>8:21</b>	<b>7:20</b>	<b>8:23</b>	7:22	6:15	8:25
Rehovot	<b>7:20</b>	6:13	<b>8:23</b>	<b>7:21</b>	<b>8:25</b>	7:24	6:16	8:27
Petach Tikva	<b>7:03</b>	6:13	<b>8:24</b>	<b>7:04</b>	<b>8:25</b>	7:24	6:16	8:28
Ginot Shomron	<b>7:20</b>	6:12	<b>8:23</b>	<b>7:21</b>	<b>8:24</b>	7:23	6:15	8:27
Haifa / Zichron	<b>7:12</b>	6:14	<b>8:26</b>	<b>7:13</b>	<b>8:27</b>	7:16	6:17	8:30
Gush Shiloh	<b>7:19</b>	6:11	<b>8:22</b>	<b>7:20</b>	<b>8:23</b>	7:22	6:14	8:26
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	<b>7:21</b>	6:13	<b>8:24</b>	<b>7:22</b>	<b>8:25</b>	7:24	6:16	8:28
Givat Zeev	<b>7:23</b>	6:11	<b>8:22</b>	<b>7:24</b>	<b>8:23</b>	7:27	6:14	8:26
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	<b>7:18</b>	6:11	<b>8:21</b>	<b>7:19</b>	<b>8:22</b>	7:22	6:14	8:25
Ashkelon	<b>7:21</b>	6:13	<b>8:24</b>	<b>7:22</b>	<b>8:25</b>	7:24	6:16	8:28
Yad Binyamin	<b>7:20</b>	6:12	<b>8:23</b>	<b>7:21</b>	<b>8:24</b>	7:24	6:16	8:27
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	<b>7:14</b>	6:12	<b>8:24</b>	<b>7:16</b>	<b>8:25</b>	7:18	6:15	8:28
Golan	<b>7:19</b>	6:11	<b>8:23</b>	<b>7:20</b>	<b>8:24</b>	7:23	6:14	8:27
Nahariya/Maalot	<b>7:21</b>	6:14	<b>8:26</b>	<b>7:22</b>	<b>8:27</b>	7:25	6:17	8:30
Afula	<b>7:20</b>	6:12	<b>8:24</b>	<b>7:21</b>	<b>8:25</b>	7:24	6:15	8:28

**Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Bemidbar 8:56 PM • Shavuot 8:58 PM • Naso 9:00 PM**

All Times According to MyZmanim (20 mins before Sunset in most Cities;  
40 mins in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva; 30 mins in Tzfat and Haifa)

\* Havdalah without Candle or Besamim

**Daf Yomi Shabbat: Shevuos 30**



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## DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

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There is a pre-holiday custom in many Israeli workplaces called a “*haramat kosit*” (literally, “raising the cup”). According to this “custom,” around Rosh Hashanah and Pesach time, employers all over Israel put on an office celebration and typically also give their employees a holiday gift. Essentially, a *haramat kosit* is a way for everybody in the company to get together, from employees to stakeholders to benefactors, so that the head of the organization can talk about how much they’ve accomplished, as well as wish them all a *chag sameach* before the holiday break.

The Rosh Hashanah *haramat kosit* covers not only Rosh Hashanah, but also Yom Kippur and Sukkot, which come soon after. The pre-Pesach

one obviously covers Pesach. In all this, it seems to me, Shavuot loses out. Why doesn’t Shavuot get a pre-holiday *haramat kosit*?

One answer is that there’s not much off time to speak of, especially here in Israel where Shavuot is really just one day. Add to that how the Ministry of Education is no longer giving off for the day after *chag*, called *Isru Chag*, so it’s even less. Another reason might be how connected Shavuot is to Pesach. Since Shavuot is in the shadow of the massive holiday of Pesach, it doesn’t get its own party.

Nevertheless, it always bothered me a little. Shavuot, after all, is described in the Torah, just like Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, and Pesach. Even more so, it’s *zman matan Torateinu*, celebrating when we received the Torah itself. It surely deserves recognition, just as much as the other Torah holidays. So why does this one holiday have to be left out?

I was pondering this question while attending a very special *haramat kosit* before Pesach this year. This *haramat kosit* took place at the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration, the government office focused on helping *olim* land on their feet in Israel. I heard from Minister Ofir Sofer (who we also had the honor of joining us the week before Pesach at NCSY Israel’s YAIR day of learning), as well as his Director General, Avichai Kahana, who talked about the wonderful work that they’re doing. I happened to be familiar with most of their initiatives and events, but hearing it all in one sitting was very powerful. In their beautiful presentation, they really showed how their department is trying to reach a stage where *olim* can get the best

**May the Torah learned  
from this issue of TT  
be in loving memory of and לע"נ  
our dear parents  
whose 12th and 32nd yahrzeits  
are observed in Sivan**

**Udy Katz Cherrick ז"ל**  
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possible treatment in Israel when they make Israel their permanent home.

I was really inspired. The State of Israel is doing so much to try to make sure that *olim* have a good immigration process. I know that the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration listens to us at OU Israel when we advocate on behalf of *olim* from English-speaking countries, as they know that we are in a position to be able to explain the unique challenges facing *olim* in Israel. As I left the celebration, I found myself walking alongside a police officer who had left the party at the same time, and had apparently parked his police vehicle near mine. As he got into his car, I glanced at his license plate and I couldn't believe my eyes. After the letter *mem*, which all police cars begin with (standing for *mishtara*, police), the next three numbers were 613. So it basically said “*Mem-613*.”

I looked at the policeman and I said to him (in Hebrew), “*Achi*, what a beautiful license plate!” He looked back at me, and he wasn't confused at all by what I had said. Immediately, he responded, “Don't forget to keep the 613 mitzvot!”

With Shavuot's lack of a *haramat kosit* on my mind, I said to myself, “You know something? Here was my little *haramat kosit* for Shavuot.” I knew that this story truly symbolizes what the State of Israel is. We are able to live in a country that is *Baruch Hashem* built up of Jews who have gathered from a hundred countries around the world, all coming home to the State of Israel. As Jews from all over the world, we have come back not as strangers, but with the same Torah that protected us and kept us going in India, in Australia, in North America, in Europe, in Africa, and everywhere else. The



same Torah and the same 613 *mitzvot*. Yes, the customs might be different; whether you say *selichot* before Rosh Hashanah for 30 days or for just a week; whether you eat *kitniyot* on Pesach or not. Yet the Torah remains the same. We all celebrate Shavuot and the rest of the biblical holidays. We have people who are proud to receive the number “*Mem-613*,” and know to

### לעילוי נשמות

**Rabbi Dr. Aaron Baer z"l**  
on his seventeenth *yahrzeit* - 2 Iyar

and

**Rebbetzin Hannah Baer a"h**  
on her fourth *yahrzeit* - 29 Iyar

מצאו חן ושכל טוב בעיני אלוקים ואדם

remind those who point it out to keep those 613 mitzvot that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* gave us on Shavuot. To me, that policeman was a beautiful symbol of what a Jewish state is all about.

I know there's still a lot more to do and a lot more progress that needs to be made. Yet, it's moments like these that give me pause and I say, "*Baruch Hashem* that we get to live in such an incredible country."

Speaking of those reminding us of the Torah and the 613 mitzvot, let me take the opportunity to give a special praise and a tremendous *yasher koach* to Rabbi Elyada Goldwicht, founder of the Semichat Chaver Program (SCP) at the OU. Like I've written here many times before, he has turned learning *halacha* into an incredible program that gets everybody excited to accomplish it together. He has also created the most amazing booklet for Shavuot in order to make sure that everybody will be able to learn with their children beautiful *halachot* in an organized fashion on Shavuot night when many of us stay up to learn Torah. *Kol hakavod* for putting comics in there among all the Torah, which makes the learning extremely attractive and exciting for both children and parents alike. And, dear reader, we look forward to hearing your feedback and hearing from you that this booklet and Torah Tidbits were a big part of your Torah learning this Shabbat and Shavuot.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat and a remarkable Shavuot.



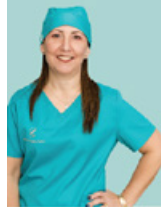
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## FROM THE DESK OF RABBI MOSHE HAUER

OU EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT



# The Highest Value

The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni, Nevi'im 499) describes the scene at the end of days: "When the King Moshiach will come, he will stand on the roof of the Bait Hamikdash and announce to the Jewish people: 'Anavim, humble ones, your time of redemption has arrived.'"

Developing humility is not a simple task as it is challenged both by our successes as a community and as a nation and by our sense that in a threatening world, we must stand up proudly for ourselves. And yet, humility is a value that we clearly need to embrace – as individuals and as a nation – to hear the call of Moshiach. How do we build a sense of humility?

The Talmud (Sotah 5a) cites an argument between two sages, Rav Hunna and Rav Chisda. One suggested that G-d brings the crushed and the humble to be with Him on high, while the

other proposed that G-d lowers Himself to be alongside the humble. The Talmud accepts the latter opinion based on Hashem's choice of Sinai – the lowest of mountains – as the location for the giving of the Torah. Their debate revolves around two approaches to developing humility.

On the one hand humility may be derived from the recognition of G-d's greatness and our relative vulnerability. This is expressed as G-d bringing the humble to be with Him. Another form of humility draws from a broader aversion to self-centeredness and enhanced awareness of others. In that form, G-d comes to take His place with the humble. The Talmud concludes from the choice of Sinai that it is that broader humility and non-self-centeredness that is G-d's preference.

This idea is present in every aspect of what we celebrate on Shavuot. Moshe merited revelation resulting from his awareness and action on behalf of other people, while Ruth – the mother of that King Mashiach – came to G-d through her humble and selfless dedication to her mother-in-law Naomi.

That quality of non-self-centeredness is one that we must celebrate and strengthen as we experience our successes and relate to our host environment. May we always see others and their needs and concerns and in that way merit to see G-d and hear the call, "Anavim, humble ones, your time of redemption has arrived." ■

In Loving Memory of

**Ida Cooper a"h**

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### PARSHAT BEMIDBAR

Sefer Bemidbar is the march to the Land of Israel. The Promise of the Land was made to Avraham. And Yitzchak. And Yaakov. Moshe was told at the burning bush that G-d would take the people out of Egypt because of the promise He made. To give them the land of Israel. That has been the goal from the time of Avraham. The overlay narrative of the entire Torah is the promise of the Land and the march to it.

Now we know that it is going to take 40 years to get there. But we need to read the Torah trying hard to stay in real time as the story unfolds. And as the story is unfolding, as far as the people know they will enter the land of Israel imminently.

Bemidbar is the dawn of the march to the Land and as such the Torah changes

dramatically. Since Mt. Sinai, the focus of the Torah has been the encounter of G-d and man. We built the Mishkan as a place to rendezvous. The book of Vayikra outlined how we approach Him and when we may not approach Him. And that the approach to G-d occurs not only in the drama of the Mishkan but in the holiness of our daily life as well.

Now, the entire narrative changes. We are pivoting from holiness to, well, earthiness. Marching. Conquering. Dividing the Land. Moving from the rarified air of pursuing holiness to the messy business of a national aspiration of taking the Land.



#### 1ST ALIYA (BEMIDBAR 1:1-19)

On Rosh Chodesh Iyar of the second year since leaving Egypt, Moshe and Aharon are to take a census of all men over the age of 20. The leaders of each tribe are to assist. These leaders are named. Moshe, Aharon and the leaders gather the people who establish to which tribe each person belongs.

The census is to be conducted by tribe. The leader of the tribe conducts the census. The names of the leaders of each tribe are listed. And there is an echo. "These are the names" introduced a different book and is repeated here almost verbatim. It introduced the book of Shemot. These are the people who went down to Egypt. And here: these are the names of the leaders of the tribes (the same names as those who went down to Egypt). What a simple way to convey a powerful message: those individuals are now tribes of tens of thousands. We've come a long way. From individuals to powerful tribes.

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## 2ND ALIYA (1:20-54)

The census, by tribe, of all men over the age of 20, the age of army service is presented. The tribe of Reuven: 46,500. Shimon: 59,300. Gad: 46,500. Yehuda: 74,600. Yissachar: 54,400. Zevulun: 57,400. Ephraim: 40,500. Menashe: 32,200. Binyamin: 35,400. Dan: 62,700. Asher: 41,500. Naftali: 53,400. The total of this census done by Moshe and Aharon and the 12 leaders of the tribes was 603,550. However, the tribe of Levi is not included. They are to safeguard the Mishkan: camping around the Mishkan, transporting it, dismantling and assembling it. The tribes camp in distinct groups, while the Leviim encamp around the Mishkan.

The census is taken by tribes. While there were 12 sons of Yaakov, Levi is not a part of this census. That leaves 11 tribes. But there is no tribe of Yosef; his 2 sons, Ephraim and Menashe take their place alongside their uncles as full tribes. Hence, 12 tribes even without Levi.

The emphasis on tribes, or shevatim, is new. Up until now, the Jew has functioned in 2 realms; individual and Am Yisrael, the Jewish people. We have mitzvot for the individual. And we have mitzvot for the people, like the daily offering. It is for the Jewish people.

But why is there a notion of tribe? Why identify in 3 ways, as individual, as tribe and as a people? It is somewhat akin to: I am a Jew, I am an Israeli, and I am a Yerushalmi. While that is true, what does it convey?

And this theme of tribal affiliation will animate much of the book. We camp as a tribe. The Land of Israel will be divided by tribe. If land is sold in the land of Israel, it reverts back to its original owner in Yovel, in order to maintain tribal integrity. The tribe is like a state within the nation, a province within a country.

I usually like asking questions as a way to offer an answer. But this notion of shevatim,

of tribes is perplexing. On some level we can say that all who descend from Binyamin have the genetic influence of Binyanim. The shevatim are, after all, a family, a large extended family, all descendants of Binyamin.

Perhaps it is an introduction to diversity. In the pivot from holiness to the reality of the march to the Land, we also move from what we all share, holiness, to how we are different. We are different due to our genetics, our upbringing, the influence of our surroundings.

And in the march to the Land, this diversity will be challenging. There will be disputes and disagreements. I don't think it is an overstatement to say that diversity is the single biggest challenge to mankind. Managing differences is terribly challenging. Things would be a lot simpler if we were all the same. And bland. Diversity brings color to life but that color comes at a cost.

And in this, the book of Bemidbar will be the introduction of diversity and the challenges that it brings.



## 3RD ALIYA (2:1-34)

The tribes are to camp in a designated manner. For each of the tribes the name of their Nasi, the number of their tribe and the place in the formation is given. On the east side, the front, is Yehuda, Yissachar and Zevulun. Their combined number is 186,400. On the south side is Reuven, Shimon and Gad. Their combined number is 151,450. The Ohel Moed, surrounded by Levi, both camps and travels in the middle. On the west side is Ephraim, Menashe and Binyamin. Their combined number is 108,100. On the north side is Dan, Asher and Naftali. Their combined number is 157,600. The total count of the army age men is 603,550 without the tribe of Levi.

The people travel and camp with the Mishkan in their midst. Physically and metaphorically. We travel our history with G-d in our midst. The

distinct feeling you get in the detailed description of where each tribe encamped is the feeling of an army encampment. But with the Mishkan in the middle.



#### 4TH ALIYA (3:1-13)

Aharon's sons' names were Nadav, Avihu, Elazar and Itamar. Nadav and Avihu died without children. Elazar and Itamar serve as Cohanim with Aharon. Take the Leviim: they are to serve Aharon. The Leviim are responsible for the Mishkan: to support the Kohanim and the people, to facilitate the running of the Mishkan. The Leviim shall take the place of the first-born, who became obligated to me when saved in Egypt.

There are 2 groups mentioned here: Kohanim and Leviim. The lineage of the Kohanim is given. It just doesn't take much room. Because Aharon is a Kohen and his sons. And he only has 2. So the entire lineage of the Kohanim is 3 people. The Leviim, on the other hand, are an entire tribe, descendants of Levi, son of Yaakov. Their lineage, at quite some length, is given in the next aliya.



#### 5TH ALIYA (3:14-39)

Count the tribe of Levi by households, from 1 month and older: the households of Gershon, Kehat and Merari, the sons of Levi. The sons of Gershon, Kehat and Merari are listed. Gershon's family, from a month and above, is 7,500. They camp to the west of the Mishkan. Their task was to transport and be responsible for the curtains and coverings. Kehat numbered 8,600, camping to the south. They were responsible for the vessels: Aron, Menorah, Table, altars. Merari numbered 6,200, camping to the north. Responsible for the structure of the Mishkan; the walls, supports and beams. The total of the tribe of Levi is 22,000. On the front side, the east of the Mishkan, Moshe and Aharon and families camped.

The encampment around the Mishkan had

2 layers. The Leviim were in close, on 3 of the 4 sides of the Mishkan. The 4th side, the leading side, had Moshe and Aharon. The entire 12 tribes were farther removed on all 4 sides.

The 3 sons of Levi were family groups; Gershon, Kehat and Merari. They had full responsibility for the Mishkan. Their tasks fell in categories. Gershon; textiles. Kehat; furniture. Merari; building. Gershon took care of the curtains and coverings. Kehat, the important main vessels of the Mishkan. And Merari the structure of the building.



#### 6TH ALIYA (3:40-51)

Count all the firstborn of the age of a month and above. The Leviim are to replace the firstborn. There were 273 more firstborn than Leviim; these were redeemed.

The first born are replaced as public servants by the Leviim. The notion that the firstborn shall be the public servants has great appeal; every home becomes infused with public service by virtue of the firstborn dedicated to holy work.

But, as appealing as that is, it is not implemented. The firstborn are switched off for the Leviim. Perhaps because it would be an inequitable burden. The poor families rely on their firstborn to work, to be the first to contribute to the family wellbeing. The replacement of the firstborn by the Leviim may be recognition of the inequity that would inevitably result in requiring the firstborn of every family to leave their home for public service.



#### 7TH ALIYA (4:1-20)

Take from Kehat all men from the age of 30 to 50 to do their work of the holy of holies. But since Kehat was to carry the vessels of the Mishkan, Aharon and his sons covered each vessel to prevent Kehat from touching them. The Aron was covered by: the Parochet (curtain), then leather, then techelet covering. The Shulchan: techelet, then the extra utensils, then red, then the tachash

skin. Menorah: techelet, then tachash. Incense altar: techelet, then tachash. Outer altar: purple, then tachash. In this way, calamity will not befall Kehat in transporting the holy things.

There are 3 different age surveys. The tribes are surveyed to count all males above 20. For army service. The Leviim were surveyed to count all males above 1 month. For they assume Levi status pretty much from birth. And here, the Leviim who will actually do public service are those from age 30-50. 30 years old is relatively



## STATS

34th sedra of 54; first of 10 in Bamidbar. Written on 263 lines, ranks 3rd.

30 parshiyot; 23 open, 7 closed, 4th. 159 pesukim - rank 3 (3rd in Bamidbar). 1823 words - rank 13 (4th in Bamidbar). 7393 letters - rank 9 (3rd in Bamidbar).



## MITZVOT

None of Taryag in Bamidbar - it is the largest of the 17 sedras without mitzvot.

old to begin the public service. Perhaps to convey that youth has its advantages, but so too does experience and maturity. ■

This weeks Haftorah is Hoshea 2:1-22

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## A SHORT VORT

BY RABBI CHANOKH YERES  
RAV, BEIT KNESSET BEIT YISRAEL, YEMIN MOSHE

אלה שמות בני אהרן הכהנים המשחים (ג:ג)

“These are the names of the sons of Aaron, the anointed priests” (3:3)

Why does the verse begin with the words “These are the names” when the preceding verse (3:2) states similarly “And these are the names of the sons of Aaron: Nadav the firstborn”, while introducing the genealogy of Aaron’s family?

Rabbi Yonatan Eibeshitz (1694-1764, Poland) points out that usually in other cultures, when a person is assigned to a higher position, his name is changed. Different titles of stature are added to his name (Sir, Your Excellence) or a new name is bequeathed upon the individual. The Torah signifies here that even upon receiving a position of prominence, his personal identity should remain as it was. He should not allow his ego to swell and show off his new position with pride or conceit. The names of the Kohanim remained the same, even at the time that they were anointed and assigned this new role in Israel.

- Shabbat Shalom



## THE PERSON IN THE PARSHA

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB  
OU EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, EMERITUS

### “I Called Him ‘Dad’”

Last week, on the 25th day of the month of Iyar, we commemorated the 55th anniversary of his death. He was my grandfather, my mother’s father, but we, my sisters and cousins and I, called him “Dad”!

He came to the United States from what was then called Austria-Hungary, near the end of the nineteenth century. He was a young boy at the time. He struggled but ultimately succeeded in his own business. He suffered misfortune in the Great Depression but recovered in the aftermath of World War II. His business associates and customers called him “Max”, but I called him “Dad”.

He was a strong personality, observant religiously despite his sparse Jewish education. He helped establish the Shomer Shabbos *shtiebel* in Boro Park, Brooklyn, and was its president for many years. He was committed to its policy of only accepting strict Sabbath observers as privileged voting members of the shul, although all Jews were welcome to pray there. The shul

exists, and thrives, to this day. He was known there as Mr. Hartman, and his Hebrew name, Mordechai ben Nachum Shmuel, still graces a memorial plaque on the synagogue’s eastern wall, but I called him “Dad”.

During the pre-Holocaust years, he helped support the members of his family who had remained in Europe. In fact, he traveled there several times to visit them and attempted to convince them to come to America, with little success. While there, he was approached by dealers in sacred books and returned with what became a well-stocked library of rare *seforim*. Book dealers called him “*Der Amerikaner*”, but I called him “Dad”.

He had little, if any, formal Jewish education. But as he grew older, he attended many rabbinic lectures and public classes. He expected me to become a Torah scholar and proudly “stole” my parchment *semicha* certificate the day after my ordination and displayed it on the bulletin board of his *shtiebel* (much to my dismay!). He regretted that he could not teach me Torah himself. But he encouraged me to use his well-stocked library and bequeathed much of it to me in his will. I still cherish those books and have had them rebound and restored by a master of the trade. Those books contain the secret of why I call him “Dad” to this very day.

For, you see, a centerpiece of the library was a complete set of the Pentateuch, the Five Books of the Torah, with a commentary known as



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*Torah Temimah*. The author of that work was Baruch HaLevi Epstein, an impressive Torah scholar who earned his livelihood as a bank employee in his native Belarus but published a wide range of remarkably lucid and innovative works. Those works are still widely appreciated nowadays.

In one passage of this work, *Torah Temimah*, you will discover why I call Mordechai Hartman, may he rest in peace, “Dad”. That is why I refer to my grandfather as “father”. The passage is in this week’s Torah portion, *Bamidbar* (Numbers 1:1-4:20).

There, in chapter 3, verses 1 and 2, we read: “This is the line [of descendants] of Ahron and Moshe at the time that the Lord spoke with Moshe on Mount Sinai. These were the names of Ahron’s sons: Nadav, the first-born, and Avihu, Elazar and Itamar.”

Rashi immediately comments that although only the sons of Ahron are named here, they are referred to as descendants of Moshe. He explains that this is because Moshe taught his nephews Torah. All who teach another’s child Torah are considered “parents” of that child, as if they gave birth to that child.

The author of *Torah Temimah* finds the source of Rashi’s contention that he who teaches Torah to another is in some manner that person’s “Dad” in a passage in the Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 19b. That is my reason for calling my grandfather “Dad”. In his own way, “Dad” taught me Torah, a lot of Torah.

*Torah Temimah* expands upon this teaching. He cites another Talmudic passage, *Sanhedrin* 99b, in which the sage Reish Lakish asserts that “he who teaches Torah to another’s child is considered by scripture to have “made” that child,” meaning he has “formed” the child, or better has “transformed” him. Reish Lakish draws upon the verse in Genesis 12:5

which refers to the “souls that Avraham and Sarah ‘made’ in Charan.” That is, the souls of the masses who were “transformed” by our Patriarch and Matriarch.

By granting me access to his precious tomes, “Dad” helped to transform me from a rather bored adolescent to an eager bookish soul.

*Torah Temimah* has much more to say about the meaning of the word “father” or “Dad”. These words connote much more than a “male biological parent”.

This is evidenced by the verses in Genesis 4:20-21 which names Yaval as “the ‘father’ of those who dwell in tents and amidst herds,” and his brother Yuval as “the ‘father’ of all who play the lyre and the pipe.” Clearly, argues the author of *Torah Temimah*, “father” refers to the ability of these two brothers to transform the cave dwellers into tent dwellers and hunters into shepherds, and to grant humanity the gift of beautiful instrumental music.

“Dad” erected a tent for me, the “tent of Torah”, and although he was decidedly not musical in the simple sense of the word, he surely opened my ears to the “sounds of the music” of Torah.

Never satisfied with just a few observations on the text, the author of *Torah Temimah* raises a question: Did not Moshe teach Torah to all Jews, not just his brother Ahron’s children? Why is he not called “father” of the entire Jewish nation?

He responds by proposing, or perhaps by supposing, that whereas Moshe taught Torah to the Jewish people as a group, he surely must have delivered special private personalized tutorials for his dear nephews. By giving them “fatherly” attention, he merited to be called “Dad”.

My “Dad” gave each of us individual attention, and in my case, it took the form of his library of sacred books, *Torah Temimah* being just one of many hundreds.

I've learned much from *Torah Temimah* over the years and became aware of many aspects of Baruch HaLevi Epstein's life. He was the son of the author of *Aruch HaShulchan*, and a nephew of the famed Netziv of Volozhin. He spent the years 1923-1926 in the United States of America and served as the head of *Ezras Torah* before the famed Rav Henkin. My late Uncle Moshe Weinreb was acquainted with him during those years.

Tragically, he died at a very advanced age after the German army occupied his city of Pinsk. Although most records of his death suggest that he was hospitalized there and died of a serious illness, I've seen accounts insisting that he was brutally murdered by the Nazis. *HaShem yinkom damav, zecher tzaddik livracha.*

And "Dad" too, may your memory be a blessing to all whom you "fathered" by bringing us closer to Torah, one way or another. ■

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THOUGHTS ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA

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לעילוי נשמת  
**HaRav Ya'akov Zvi ben David Arie'el zt"l**

לעילוי נשמות

פנחס בן יעקב אשר וגולדה בת ישראל דוד אי"ז ע"ה ועזריאל בן אריה לייב ומעניה בת יצחק שרט"ר ע"ה

# The Ever-Repeated Story

Bamidbar takes up the story as we left it toward the end of Shemot. The people have journeyed from Egypt to Mount Sinai. There they received the Torah. There they made the Golden Calf. There they were forgiven after Moses' passionate plea, and there they made the Mishkan (the Tabernacle) inaugurated on the first of Nissan, almost a year after the Exodus. Now, one month later, on the first day of the second month (Iyar), they are ready to move on to the second part of the journey, from Sinai to the Promised Land.

Yet there is a curious delay in the narrative. Ten chapters pass until the Israelites actually begin traveling (Num. 10:33). First there is a census. Then there is an account of the arrangement of the tribes around the Ohel Moed - the Tent of Meeting. There is a long account of the Levites, their families and respective roles. Then there are laws about the purity of the camp, restitution, the *sotah* (the woman suspected of adultery), and the nazirite. A lengthy series of passages describe the final preparations for the journey. Only then do they set out. Why this long series of seeming digressions?

It is easy to think of the Torah as simply

telling events as they occurred, interspersed with various commandments. In this view the Torah is history plus law. This is what happened, these are the rules we must obey, and there is a connection between them, sometimes clear (as in the case of laws accompanied by reminder that "you were slaves in Egypt"), sometimes less so.

But the Torah is not mere history as a sequence of events. The Torah is about *the truths that emerge through time*. That is one of the great differences between ancient Israel and ancient Greece. Ancient Greece sought truth by contemplating nature and reason. The first gave rise to science, the second to philosophy. Ancient Israel found truth in history, in events and what God told us to learn from them. Science is about nature, Judaism is about human nature, and there is a great difference between them. Nature knows nothing about freewill. Scientists often deny that it exists at all. But humanity is constituted by its freedom. We are what we choose to be. No planet chooses to be hospitable to life. No fish chooses to be a hero. No peacock chooses to be vain. Humans do choose. And in that fact is born the drama to which the whole Torah is a commentary: how

can freedom coexist with order? The drama is set on the stage of history, and it plays itself out through five acts, each with multiple scenes.

The basic shape of the narrative is roughly the same in all five cases. First God creates order. Then humanity creates chaos. Terrible consequences follow. Then God begins again, deeply grieved but never losing His faith in the one life-form on which He set His image and to which He gave the singular gift that made humanity godlike, namely freedom itself.

Act I is told in Genesis 1-11. God creates an ordered universe and fashions humanity from the dust of the earth into which He breathes His own breath. But humans sin: first Adam and Eve, then Cain, then the generation of the Flood. The earth is filled with violence. God brings the Flood and begins again, making a covenant with Noah. Humanity sin again by making the Tower of Babel (the first act of imperialism, as I argued in an earlier study). So God begins again, seeking a role-model who will show the world what it is to live in faithful response to the word of God. He finds it in Abraham and Sarah.

Act II is told in Genesis 12-50. The new order is based on family and fidelity, love and trust. But this too begins to unravel. There is tension between Esau and Jacob, between Jacob's wives Leah and Rachel, and between their children. Ten of Jacob's children sell the eleventh, Joseph, into slavery. This is an offence against freedom, and catastrophe follows – not a Flood but a famine, as a result of which Jacob's family goes into exile in Egypt where the whole people become enslaved. God is about to begin again, not with a family this time but with a nation, which is what Abraham's children have now become.

Act III is the subject of the book of Shemot. God rescues the Israelites from Egypt as He once rescued Noah from the Flood. As with Noah (and Abraham), God makes a covenant,



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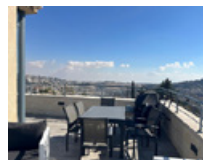
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this time at Sinai, and it is far more extensive than its precursors. It is a blueprint for social order, for an entire society based on law and justice. Yet again, however, humans create chaos, by making a Golden Calf a mere forty days after the great revelation. God threatens catastrophe, destroying the whole nation and beginning again with Moses, as He had done with Noah and Abraham (Ex. 32:10). Only Moses' passionate plea prevents this from happening. God then institutes a new order.

Act IV begins with an account of this order, which is unprecedentedly long, extending from Exodus 35, through the whole of the book of Vayikra and the first ten chapters of Bamidbar. The nature of this new order is that God becomes not merely the director of history and the giver of laws. He becomes a permanent Presence in the midst of the camp. Hence the building of the Mishkan, which takes up the last third of Shemot, and the laws of purity and holiness, as well as those of love and justice, that constitute virtually the whole of Vayikra. Purity and holiness are demanded by the fact that God has become suddenly close. In the Tabernacle, the Divine Presence has a home on earth, and whoever comes close to God must be holy and pure. Now the Israelites are ready to begin the next stage of the journey, but only after a long introduction.

That long introduction, at the beginning of Bamidbar, is all about creating a sense of order within the camp. Hence the census, and the detailed disposition of the tribes, and the lengthy account of the Levites, the tribe that mediated between the people and the Divine Presence. Hence also, in next week's Parsha, the three laws – restitution, the *sotah* and the *nazir* – are directed at the three forces that always endanger social order: theft, adultery, and alcohol. It is as if God were saying to the Israelites, this is what order looks like. Each person has

their place within the family, the tribe, and the nation. Everyone has been counted and each person counts. Preserve and protect this order, for without it you cannot enter the land, fight its battles, and create a just society.

Tragically, as Bamidbar unfolds, we see that the Israelites turn out to be their own worst enemy. They complain about the food. Miriam and Aaron complain about Moses. Then comes the catastrophe, the episode of the spies, in which the people, demoralised, show that they are not yet ready for freedom. Again, as in the case of the Golden Calf, there is chaos in the camp. Again God threatens to destroy the nation and begin again with Moses (Num. 14:12). Again only Moses' powerful plea saves the day. God decides once more to begin again, this time with the next generation and a new leader.

The book of Devarim is Moses' prelude to Act V, which takes place in the days of his successor Joshua.

The Jewish story is a strange one. Time and again the Jewish people has split apart: in the days of the First Temple when the kingdom divided into two; in the late Second Temple period when it was driven into rival groups and sects; and in the modern age, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when it fragmented into religious and secular in Eastern Europe, orthodox and others in the West. Those divisions have still not healed.

And so the Jewish people keep repeating the story told five times in the Torah. God creates order. Humans create chaos. Bad things happen, then God and Israel begin again. Will the story never end? One way or another it is no coincidence that Bamidbar usually precedes Shavuot, the anniversary of the giving of the Torah at Sinai. God never tires of reminding us that the central human challenge in every age is whether freedom can coexist with order. It



can, when humans freely choose to follow God's laws, given in one way to humanity after the Flood and in another to Israel after the Exodus.

The alternative, ancient and modern, is the rule of power, in which, as Thucydides said, the strong do as they will and the weak suffer as they must. That is not freedom as the Torah understands it, nor is it a recipe for love and justice. Each year as we prepare for Shavuot by reading Parshat Bamidbar, we hear God's call: here in the Torah - and in its mitzvot - is the way to create a freedom that honours order, and a social order that honours human freedom. There is no other way. ■

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**SHAVUOT**



# Unique Aspects of Shavuot

In Parshat Emor we encounter a list of the holidays, including Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Pesach, Shavuot and Succot. With respect to **all** but **one** holiday, the Torah states the date of the holiday, followed by the mitzvot associated with that holiday. For example:

## Pesach:

ובחמשה עשר יום לחדש הזה חג המצות לה' שבעת ימים מצות תאכלו:

*And on the fifteenth day of that month is the Festival of Matzot to the Lord; you shall **eat matzot** for a seven day period.*

We are first instructed that Pesach falls on the 15th of Nissan and then commanded to eat matzot.

## Succot:

דבר אל־בני ישראל לאמר בחמשה עשר יום לחדש השביעי הזה חג הסוכות שבעת ימים לה' (ויקרא כג:לג)

ולקחתם לכם ביום הראשון פרי עץ הדר כפת תמר־ים וענף אֶצֶבֶת וְעַרְבֵי־נָחַל וּשְׂמַחְתֶּם לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם שִׁבְעַת יָמִים (ויקרא כג:לט)

*Speak to Bnei Yisrael, saying: On the fifteenth day of this seventh month, is the Festival of Succot, a seven day period to the Lord. (Vayikra 23:33)*

***And you shall take for yourselves on the first day, the fruit of the hadar tree, date palm fronds, a branch of a braided tree, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for a seven day period. (Vayikra 23:39).***

We are first informed that the holiday of Succot is on the 15th day of the seventh month, and only later instructed to take the *daled minim* on that day.

## Rosh Hashana:

דבר אל־בני ישראל לאמר בחדש השביעי באחד לחדש יהיה לכם שבתון זכרון תרועה מקרא קדש: (כג:כד)

*Speak to Bnei Yisrael, saying: In the seventh month, on the first of the month, it shall be a Sabbath for you, a remembrance of [Israel through] the **shofar blast, a holy occasion.** (Vayikra 23:24)*

We are first informed of the date of Rosh Hashana and then commanded to blow the shofar on that date.

However, with respect to the holiday of Shavuot we are instructed of the required actions, waving of the *omer*, prior to being provided with the date of the holiday. In fact, no date appears! Rather we are told to count seven weeks in order to declare the holiday and offer the appropriate sacrifice (korban Ha'omer).

## Shavuot:

דבר אל־בני ישראל ואמרת אליהם כִּי־תבאו אל־הארץ אשר אני נתן לכם וקצרתם את־קצירה

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וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמַּחֲרַת הַשָּׁבֹת מִיּוֹם הַבֵּיאְכֶם אֶת-עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה שִׁבְעַת שָׁבוּעוֹת תְּמִימֹת תִּהְיֶינָה: (כג:טו)

*Speak to Bnei Yisrael and say to them: When you come to the Land which I am giving you, and you reap its harvest, **you shall bring to the kohen an omer** of the beginning of your reaping.* (Vayikra 23:10)

*And you shall count for yourselves, from the morrow of the rest day from the day you bring the omer as a wave offering seven weeks; they shall be complete.* (Vayikra 23:15)

With respect to Shavuot, in contrast to the other holidays, we are first informed of the act of bringing the omer and only afterwards of the necessity to count the days from Pesach to Shavuot. In fact, in Parashat Pinchas, when the sacrifices of each holiday are enumerated, Shavuot is presented in a similar manner.

וּבַיּוֹם הַבְּכוּרִים בְּהַקְרִיבְכֶם מִנְחָה חֲדָשָׁה לַה' בְּשִׁבְעַתֶּיכֶם מִקְרֵא-קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם כָּל-מִלְאכָתְ עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ (במדבר כח:כו)

*On the day of the first fruits, when you offer up a new meal offering to the Lord, on your festival of Weeks; it shall be a holy convocation for you, and you shall not perform any mundane work.* (Bamidbar 28:26)

In Parashat Pinchas as well, initially we are informed of the mitzva of the day and only subsequently that it is a holiday and work is prohibited.

Why is the presentation reversed with respect to Shavuot? In addition, why is the term ממחרת השבת used? It has created a controversy among the nation – it would have been much clearer to refer to Pesach rather than Shabbat, so what is the term Shabbat used? Moreover, we are instructed to waive the Korban – that is not required with all sacrifices. Why is *trufo* required in connection

with the sacrifice on Shavuot?

## INFUSING THE MUNDANE WITH HOLINESS

Rav Eliyahu Blumensweig (V'Hithalachta B'tochechem) offers a significant insight. Shabbat is declared by God. He created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. The actual date of the other holidays is determined by God as well (although we determine the calendar). However, the holiday of Shavuot is determined by man and his actions. Perhaps that is why the mitzvot of the day precede its date. Only once the mitzvot are fulfilled can one arrive at the true essence of the holiday. If one does not perform mitzvot and lacks appreciation of the Torah, the holiday of Shavuot, when the Torah was given to Bnei Yisrael lacks significance. We need to act to sanctify the holiday. Matan Torah- the giving of the Torah, is only possible with a willing and worthy recipient!

## SHABBAT AND PESACH – DIVINE; SHAVUOT- MUNDANE

The term used is ממחרת השבת – to highlight the contrast between the holiday of Pesach – like Shabbat, where God's supernatural powers were evident and the holiday of Shavuot, where we need to infuse holiness into the mundane. Korban Ha'omer is brought from barley, symbolizing basic food typically eaten by animals (similar sacrifice offered by a Sota), leading up to fruit brought to the Mikdash on Shavuot, which is celebrated by man. On Pesach we refrain from chametz and eat simple matzah. On Shavuot, as part of our offering we include Hametz, possibly to underscore man's required addition to the basic recipe, again symbolizing man's necessity to act in order to grow and properly receive the Torah.

### TNUFA- SHAKE US UP

Whereas on Pesach we witnessed down

below miracles from above, the days of the omer require us to raise our earthly matters with sanctification. To transform from passive by-standers to active participants in observing God's commandments. That is why the Korban Omer undergoes a waving –*tnufa*– we need to uplift ourselves and our actions to be worthy of receiving the Torah.

May we utilize these seven weeks leading up to Shavuot to properly prepare for receiving the Torah and truly appreciate the essence of the day. ■

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## Fortuitous Foods

We are all familiar with the custom to eat dairy foods on the chag of Shavuot. A less well-known custom is to eat honey and/or foods made with honey. This is based on the verse, “*Dvash ve’chalav tachat leshonaich* – honey and milk are under your tongue,” (*Shir Hashirim 4:11*). Shlomo Hamelech compares Torah to the sweetness of honey and milk, hence, notes the *Mishnah Berurah* it is appropriate to eat both foods on the day we were given the Torah. What is the deeper connection between honey and milk and the analogy to Torah?

When we recite *birkat HaTorah* every morning, we ask Hashem, “*ve’ha’arev na*,” please make Torah *arev*, sweet and palatable for us. We want Torah learning to be ‘sweeter than honey.’ To highlight this aspect of Torah, we eat honey on Shavuot.

In *Chazon L’moed*, Rav Shapira offers another explanation. In an interesting halachic analysis, *Rashba* notes that honey has two opposite properties, it both preserves and dissolves. Honey serves as a preservative to whole bodies, i.e. an insect that falls into a vat of honey remains intact. However, a severed body will be penetrated and dissolved by the honey. Here is an analogy to our relationship with Torah; if we hold onto our ego, we will not be able to fully fuse with Torah. If, however, we relinquish control and allow Hashem’s Will to guide our attitudes, we

will become subsumed in the entity of Torah.

Rav Hamnuna teaches that after 120 years one will be judged concerning matters of Torah (*Sanhedrin 7b*). Yet Rava teaches that after one passes from this world, one will first be asked, “Did you conduct business faithfully?” (*Shabbat 31a*) How do we resolve this difference? One approach is to understand Rav Hamnuna’s question as focusing on the impact that Torah had on an individual. Indeed, Rava seems to be asking the same. How has Torah affected your business ethics? True Torah living requires integration, becoming one with our Source, like fragments being incorporated into honey.

Further, the gemara teaches that camel’s milk is *tamei*, since that which comes from an impure animal is rendered impure. Yet mother’s milk is permitted to be consumed since it is produced from the mother’s blood that is transformed into milk. The goal for Torah learning should not be for the sake of information, rather transformation. Torah should impact our entire being, inspiring us to become different people - greater and more refined.

Like the special foods we eat on the night of Rosh Hashana, the foods we eat on *Chag Matan Torateinu* can not only delight and satiate, but can propel us to a broader, more elevated spiritual consciousness. May we merit to experience a true *kabbalat haTorah*. ■

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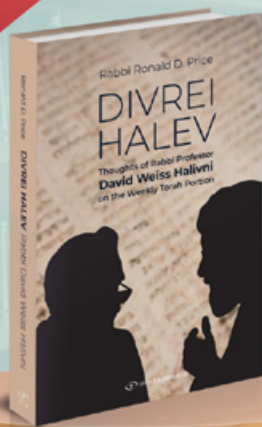
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# Nothing More, Nothing Less

Rebbe Yekusiel Yehuda Halberstam, zy'a, the "*Shefa Chaim*" of Klausenburg, Romania, was an extraordinary gaon and tzadik. During the Holocaust he suffered the murder of wife and eleven children and the destruction of his community, and he survived numerous death marches and concentration camps. Drawing from his deep reservoir of *emunah* and purpose, incredible dedication and holy determination, he rebuilt his community in Kiryat Sanz in Netanya and Union City New Jersey and built institutions such as Laniado Hospital, *Mifal haShas* and a thriving *Chassidus*.

Throughout his public talks and sefarim, the *Shefa Chaim* stressed the importance and challenge of remaining *b'simcha* under all circumstances, for true *simcha* comes as a result of knowing that all is from Hashem.

In the first few days after the Liberation, an American rabbi, a chaplain, visited the

Rebbe in Föhrenwald DP Camp and asked, "Do your disciples, who study with you, have everything they need when they sit and learn with you?"

"I teach them not to need anything," the Klausenberger replied, "so that they naturally have everything they need."

Many years after the War, in the midst of the revelry at a Purim seuda, the Klausenberger Rebbe remarked to one of his outstanding *talmidim*, "You must be happy today because you've learned a lot of Torah! The student smiled with a sense of approval and satisfaction. The Rebbe drew him close and continued, "A much deeper joy however is just to be happy about being a Yid. I am *b'simcha* that my father and mother were Jews and that I was therefore born Jewish...."

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"And you shall be to Me a kingdom of princes and a holy nation —

these are the words that you shall speak to Bnei Yisrael." (*Shemos*, 19:6)

On the phrase, "These are the words that you shall speak to Bnei Yisrael," Rashi makes a curious comment: ולא יותר, "Neither less nor more (than these words)." The Chasam Sofer explains why it is that here, out of all of the instructions, commandments and statements in the Torah, does Rashi need to

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clarify the will of Hashem? Would Moshe, the *Eved Ne'eman*, the Faithful Servant of the Ribbono shel Olam, really be tempted to embellish or detract from this Divine directive?

On a deeper level, Rashi hints at the following facts. When Klal Yisrael received the Torah, Hashem bestowed upon our nation a most meaningful challenge and blessing, and with it a unique title to match: ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש, “a kingdom of *kohanim* and a holy nation”. This is a status, obligation and privilege unmatched among all nations — it is “neither less” (there can be no greater, more exalted achievement than being a Yid), “nor more” (there is no Jew unworthy of this great status).

Many of us often point to impressive statistics enumerating the collective successes and accomplishments of our people, such as disproportionate advancements and innovations, science and technology, economics, academia, and so on. Jewish dedication to education is undeniable and all of these statistics are valid. At the same time, our focus on Jewish intellectual prowess misses the point. We are not merely what we accomplish. Actually, much more essential to our identity than feats of *Yiddishe kup*, is our *Yiddishe heart*.

This week, as we celebrate and relive receiving the Torah and our becoming the “People of the Book”. Let us remember what truly makes us special: we are chosen and beloved *for who we are*, regardless of our accomplishments, our IQ, our abilities or whatever ‘gifts’ we may think the Ribbono shel Olam needs from us. Hashem wants our hearts; Hashem wants *us*. The Ribbono shel Olam is giving us the Torah as an expression of His love for *us*, and in His limitless Kindness, He chooses *us* simply for who we are. Matan Torah expresses the promise Hashem

made to our beloved Avos and Imahos: *Atah b'chartanu mikol ha-amim...* “You chose *us* from among all the nations,” *ahavta osanu, v'ratzisa banu*, “You loved *us* and took pleasure in *us*.”

On *Chag Matan Toraseinu* we may certainly rejoice in our accomplishments and learning and feel elevated by all we have strived to achieve, study and fulfill. May we also heed the invitation to rejoice in our *unbreakable* relationship with Torah, and in the greatest joy of all: celebrating our unique role as Hashem’s chosen people — ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש, לא פחות ולא יותר, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, no more and no less! ■

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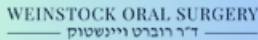
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# Mixture of Dairy and Fish

## INTRODUCTION

The *Rema* (*Orach Chaim* 494:3) cites the well-known custom of eating dairy foods on *Shavuot*. Since dairy dishes are commonly served on the *Yom Tov* table, this article will examine whether it is permissible to prepare and consume dishes that contain both dairy and fish.

The *Gemara* in *Pesachim* 76:b discusses the custom to avoid consuming fish and meat that have been cooked together. This prohibition applies both to fish and meat cooked in the same dish, and even when they are cooked together in the same oven. The Sages attributed this practice to health concerns associated with consuming such a mixture. Although modern medical science has not identified any health risks from combining meat and fish, the custom remains binding and must still be observed (See *Pitchei Teshuva* YD 117:3).

## FISH AND DAIRY

It is evident from numerous Talmudic sources that mixing fish and dairy is

permitted. This includes both cooked mixtures and foods where the two are combined, such as a tuna and cheese casserole. However, Rabbi Yosef Karo, in his commentary *Beit Yosef* (YD 87), cites a custom to avoid eating fish and dairy together. Although he does not codify this opinion in the *Shulchan Aruch*, other halachic authorities reference the custom, including earlier sources such as *Rabbeinu Bechaye* (*Parashat Mishpatim*).

The *Knesset HaGedolah* (YD 116:22) and Responsa *Chinuch Beit Yehuda* (61) cite early medical opinions claiming that combining fish and dairy is as dangerous as mixing fish and meat. Based on this, they argue that the same halachic restrictions should apply to fish and dairy combinations.

## ASHKENAZI CUSTOM

The foremost authority on Ashkenazi halachah, the *Rema* (*Darchei Moshe* YD 87), along with nearly all later Ashkenazi poskim, reject the existence of such a custom (see *Psakim U'teshuvot* 87:10). They note that numerous halachic sources clearly permit the consumption of fish and dairy together, and even suggest that the Sages prepared specific dishes that combined these ingredients.

Some authorities go further and claim that the mention of “fish and dairy” in the *Beit Yosef* is a scribal error, and that the original text intended to refer to “meat and fish.” If this is correct, even Sephardic Jews would

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have no reason to observe this custom, since its basis would be entirely mistaken. (*Taz* YD 87:3, *Shach* YD 87:5)

### SEPHARDIC CUSTOM

Rabbi Chaim David Azoulay (the *Chid'a*), a renowned Sephardic posek from over 250 years ago, aligns with the Ashkenazi authorities and rules that there is no halachic concern in eating fish and dairy together. He reasons that not only is there no proven health risk—something even the Rambam omits—but also that the *Beit Yosef* presents the opinion very briefly, without elaboration. Furthermore, in the sections of the *Shulchan Aruch* that address dangerous food combinations, fish and dairy are not mentioned. Therefore, the *Chid'a* concludes that the *Taz's* assertion—that the custom arose from a textual error—is the most logical explanation (*Machzik Bracha* 87:4).

Nevertheless, many contemporary Sephardic authorities maintain the custom and advise that those with a family tradition to avoid fish and dairy should continue to do so. Even so, the custom typically applies only to milk, cheese, and dairy spreads. Butter is generally excluded, and frying fish in butter

is permitted according to most Sephardic opinions (*Halichot Olam* 7, p.20-21)

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach ruled that the custom to avoid fish and dairy is only binding for individuals who have a clear tradition to that effect. If a Sephardic Jew is unsure of their family custom, they may be lenient and consume mixtures of fish and dairy, especially since the origin of the custom is questionable (*Halichot Shlomo Moadim* 12). ■

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# SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR  
DIRECTOR, TORAH INITIATIVES,  
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## SHAVUOT



Perhaps the most well known tradition associated with the *Yom Tov* of *Shavuot* is the custom to stay awake the entire night, in symbolic anticipation and preparation for the reenactment of *Kabbalat HaTorah*. As we recall this seminal event in Jewish History each year, we may actually be fulfilling a fascinating mystical concept as well.

There is a teaching in the **Mishna, (Pirkei Avot 1:15)** which introduces to us the concept of the frequency of *Torah* study. The text teaches us in the name of *Shammai*: “*Asei Toratcha Keva*”- *Make your study of Torah a kviut- an established, regular part of your daily life.*

On the simplest of levels-this is very obvious, in order for a Jew to live life as a Jew, to fulfill all aspects of Jewish ritual and living, one must be engaged in the on-going pursuit of knowledge, and continue to address all of life's issues through the lens and guidance of the eternal wisdom of the *Torah HaKedosha*.

The **Talmud, (Masechet Shabbat 31 a)** echoes this sentiment: “*Amar Rava: beshaa shemachnisin adam ladin omrim lo:...kavata*

*itim latorah?*” “*Rava said: When a soul appears before the Heavenly tribunal to be judged, he will be asked: ‘Did you set aside time for the study of Torah?’*”

The **Rambam**, in the opening chapter of the laws of *Talmud Torah*, spells out in specific terms the importance of regular *Torah* study and some of its parameters. In the eighth entry he writes:

“*Kol Ish Miyisrael chayav b’talmud torah, bein ani, bein ashir, bein shalom b’gufo, bein baal yisurin, bein bachur, bein shehaya zakein gadol shetashsash kocho. Afilu ani hamitparneis min hatzedaka umchazer al hapetachim, v’afilu baal isha uvanim-chayav likboa lo zeman letalmud torah bayom uvalaylasheneemar-“V’hagita bo Yomam Valayla (Yehoshua 1:8)...”*

“*Every Jew is required to study Torah, whether impoverished or wealthy, healthy or ill, young or old and weak. Even a beggar who is dependent on charity, and who must go door to door, and a man with a wife and family to support must devote time to study Torah day and night, as stated in the verse: “and you shall discuss it day and night... (Joshua 1:8).”*

It seems the **Rambam** adds an additional stringency to this idea of regular *Torah* study-that one must set aside time to study regularly **both bayom**-during the daytime as well as *balayla*- in the evening.

There is a fascinating statement which might help us better understand this idea, in the first comments of the **Magen Avraham**, the important legal work and commentary on the *Shulchan Aruch* written by



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the 17th Century Sage Rabbi Avraham Abele Gombiner.

In the very first entry in this work, he wrote: *“Besheleh Katuv: sod lechibeir yom velayla betorah oh betefilla, bein baboker, bein baerev...”* *“It is written in the Shnei Luchot HaBrit (two tablets of the law written by the 16th Century Kabbalist Rabbi Yeshayahu Horowitz, of Prague): it is a mystical fundamental to join together day and night with Torah study or with prayer, both at daybreak, and at nightfall...”*

What exactly is the Kabbalistic significance that the **Shnei Luchot Habrit** refers to, in joining the day and night or night to day, through either *Torah* or *Tefilla*?

Shlomo HaMelech in Mishlei (Proverbs) wrote- *“Ki Ner Mitzva, v'Torah Ohr”*- *Each mitzva is like a candle and the Torah is light.*

The Chasidic Masters often speak of the analogy of the light of *Torah* outshining the darkness in the world. When a Jew brings a little bit of *Torah* into the twilight zone at the end of each day, or from the night into the early hours of the morning, symbolically, mystically they are contributing to bring the light of the Divine into this world which is often seen as being full of darkness and confusion.

Perhaps this is another possible reason for the custom to stay awake studying *Torah* the entire night on *Shavuot*. On the very day we anxiously and joyously prepare ourselves to once again symbolically stand and accept the *Torah* at *Sinai*, we simultaneously and symbolically help to bring the light and perspective of *Torah* into this world of confusion. On *Shavuot* we rejoice that we have received the gift of *Torah* as a source of guidance and inspiration which helps to bring light, clarity and meaning to our lives, and to the world around us.... Chag Sameach! ■



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**Rabbi Berel Wein,  
Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb,  
Rabbi Joel Kenigsberg,  
Rabbi Jesse Horn,  
Rabbi Sam Shor and  
Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider**

**10:30 PM-11:30 PM**

**SHAVUOT NIGHT SHIURIM**

with **Rav Ezra Friedman** in  
**ARNONA, BEIT KNESSET SHAI  
AGNON, 11 LEIB YAFFE STREET**

**10:30 PM**

Kashrut and Technology (English)

**11:00PM**

תלמוד תורה בעידן החדש



**MONDAY  
JUNE 2**

*Chag  
Shavuot  
Sameach!*





**TUESDAY  
JUNE 3**

## COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN BAKAA

Classes @ Bet Knesset Nitzanim, 3 Asher Street, Bakaa

**9:20 AM**

Understanding Tefila  
Rabbi Yossi Goldin

**11:25 AM**

Chumash B'lyun Rabbi Shmuel  
Goldin

**10:15 AM**

Meaning in Mitzvot  
Rabbi Yitzchak  
Breitowitz

**12:20 PM**

Unpacking the Messages of Chazal  
Rabbi Shai Finkelstein

## WOMEN'S COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH

Classes @ Beit Knesset HaNassi, 24 Ussishkin St. Rechavia

**9:30AM**

Torah Tapestries Parsha Shiur  
Mrs. Shira Smiles

**10:30AM**

Towards Meaningful Tefilla  
Mrs. Zemira Ozarowski

**11:15AM**

The Seven Neviot  
Mrs. Leah Feinberg



## MODIIN-THE BAIS

Men's Programs in Modiin Yeshivat Hesder Meir Harel,  
Emek Beit Shean 53, Modiin

**10:00AM -2:00PM**

Weekly Kollel Boker -Instructors include  
Rabbi Avi Herzog,

Rabbi David Fine,  
Rabbi Ian Shaffer,  
Rabbi Dovid Wolpe

# This Week's Inspirational Torah Learning with OU Israel

## WEDNESDAY JUNE 4

### COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN RECHAVIA

@ Bet Knesset HaNassi,  
24 Ussishkin St., Rechavia

**9:15AM**

Holy Poetry **Rabbi Dr. Aaron Adler**

**10:20 AM**

Contemporary Issues in Halacha and  
Hashkafa

**Rabbi Anthony Manning**

**11:25 AM**

Wisdom of Rav Kook

**Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider**

**12:30PM**

Medieval Jewish History

**Dr. Deborah Polster**

## THURSDAY JUNE 5

### COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN ARNONA

Classes @ Bet Knesset  
Shai Agnon,  
11 Rechov Leib Yaffe, Arnona

**9:15 AM**

Parshat HaShavua

**Rabbi Ari Kahn**

**10:30 AM**

Parshat HaShavua

**Rabbi Baruch Taub**

**11:15 AM**

Trailblazing the Text of TaNach-

**Rabbi Neil Winkler**

**12:20 PM**

Modern Masters

**Rabbi Sam Shor**

**8:00 PM**

Halachic Controversies

(the Bais) **Rabbi Aschi Dick**

@ Bet Knesset Ohel Yitzchak,

Keren Hayesod Street

**NOTE NEW NIGHT!!!!**

**8:30 PM**

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# SHAVUOT NIGHT *in Rechavia!*



SUNDAY, LEIL SHAVUOT | 6 SIVAN | JUNE 1 | 10:45 PM-4:45 AM  
BEIT KNESSET HANASSI, 24 USSISHKIN STREET, RECHAVIA



11:00PM

Torah MiSinai **Rabbi Berel Wein**  
**Mara D'Atra, Beit Knesset HaNassi**



11:45PM

שברֵי לוחות ושברֵי לב: Broken Tablets  
and Broken Hearts **Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb**  
**Executive Vice President Emeritus, Orthodox Union**



12:45AM

Are We Losing Our Minds?: The Human and Halachic  
Quandaries of Artificial Intelligence  
**Rabbi Joel Kenigsberg, Rabbi, Beit Knesset HaNassi**



1:45AM

Destruction & Rebuilding: Four Post Mabul Perspectives  
**Rabbi Jesse Horn Senior Faculty, Yeshivat HaKotel**



2:45AM

One People, One Heart **Rabbi Sam Shor**  
**Director, Torah Initiatives, OU Israel**



3:45AM

The Lights of Torah:  
Rav Kook on Talmud Torah  
**Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider**

Refreshments  
Served All Night

**Schedule is subject to change**

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# YIZKOR REMEMBER

On Shavuot Yizkor is recited to commemorate the memory of our departed loved ones. It is the tradition of many to pledge to contribute tzedaka in memory of those who have left this world. Please consider making a contribution to the OU Israel, which will help to support the on-going Torah learning and many community programs of the OU Israel.

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SHAVUOT



# The Two Conversions of Rut

Rut's conversion and her entry into our people is the quintessential conversion story in Tanach. Her decision to join *Am Yisrael* and marry Boaz set in motion the birth of *Malchut Beit David* and the future of Jewish monarchy. We read her story on Shavuot—the day we all became converts at Har Sinai, as we entered the *brit* and accepted the Torah.

Rut's initial desire to convert is met with resistance. Naomi urges her to follow Orpah and return home. Only after Rut displays resolute devotion does Naomi accept her decision to join *Am Yisrael*.

Naomi's initial hesitance becomes a model for our approach to conversion. We don't encourage conversion. If someone first expresses interest, we discourage them, highlighting the demands of a religious life and the weight of Jewish history.

## HALACHIC CONVERSION

*Halachic* conversion requires, among other components, a full acceptance of *mitzvot*. In this light, *Chazal* viewed the dialogue between Rut and Naomi on their journey as a veiled description of Rut's embrace of halacha. According to the way *Chazal* decoded these *pesukim*, Naomi outlines various *mitzvot*, and Rut responds with steadfast devotion.

אסור לנו תחום שבת – באשר תלכי אלך

אסור לנו ייחוד – באשר תליני אלך

מצווים אנו על תר"ג מצוות – עמך עמי

אסור לנו לעבוד עבודה זרה – ולאוקרך אלוך (יבמות מ:)

Naomi mentioned the limitations of travel on Shabbat, to which Rut responded, "Where you travel [on Shabbat], I will also travel," accepting Shabbat observance. Naomi then alluded to the *halachot* of *yichud* and sexual conduct, and Rut replied, "Where you sleep, I will sleep," implicitly accepting the framework of marital boundaries. Only after Rut accepted *kabbalat ol mitzvot*—the full yoke of *mitzvot*—was she welcomed as a *giyoret*.

Of course, the formal completion of her conversion took place before a *beit din*, as described in the closing *perek* of *Megillat Rut*, which unfolds in the presence of the court. Rut could not marry Boaz—nor be considered halachically Jewish—until she had undergone a full halachic conversion.

## HISTORICAL CONVERSION

Yet the simple reading of *Megillat Rut* doesn't explicitly describe a halachic conversion. The story we encounter is quite different. Rut's entry into Jewish peoplehood isn't centered on halachic procedure but on fierce loyalty and personal sacrifice.

Essentially, there are two stories in *Megillat Rut*. One is the halachic story—subtle and inferred by *Chazal*, woven between the lines. But the second story is the one we read directly: the story of joining a people, of forging identity, of becoming Jewish not just through *mitzvot*, but through solidarity, courage, and belonging.

By providing two different stories, *Megillat*

Rut asserts that Jewish identity is not limited to halachic performance. There is a broader experience of being Jewish—a fierce sense of peoplehood that can stand apart from halachic expression. Even in the absence of halachic observance, a person can embody a profound and authentic Jewish spirit. Aside from halachic conversion there is also historical conversion.

### THE CLASH

Of course, this question has emerged sharply in Israel—surrounding those who seek deep connection with our nation but are unable or unwilling to undergo full halachic conversion.

This issue rests at the crossroads of two weighty responsibilities. On one hand, we yearn for every Jew to be halachically Jewish—for both halachic and communal reasons. On the other hand, as a nation returning home, we carry the burden of welcoming all Jews who seek to belong—even if they haven't completed full halachic entry.

There is no simple answer to this dilemma.

However, independent of the practical and policy-driven aspects of conversion, *Megillat Rut* offers a powerful lesson about Jewish identity—even when it stands apart from *halachic* status. It reminds us that belonging to the Jewish people is not only a matter of religious classification but also of deep loyalty, personal sacrifice, and shared destiny. It highlights two foundational aspects of Jewish identity: fidelity to Jewish history, and a willingness to act with *chesed* toward our broader Jewish family.

### LOYALTY

Though *Megillat Rut* weaves together many themes and human virtues, its central thread is loyalty. In the opening scene, Elimelech and his two sons abandon their responsibilities. In a moment of national anguish, as our people buckle under the weight of a crippling famine, a wealthy and prominent father and his two



sons choose flight over fidelity. They turn their backs and walk away.

The Midrash casts their actions in an even darker light: they could have easily endured the famine, but they feared becoming a public address for the desperate—those who lacked their wealth and were suffering through hunger. They abandoned not just their people, but the call of public responsibility. They ran, but not from death but from duty.

Not only did they flee—they defected to Moav, our sworn enemy. The story unfolds during the era of the *Shoftim*, a time when Moav relentlessly persecuted our people. In one of the bleakest chapters of that generation, when hunger ravaged our Land, those who had the means to help chose, instead, the lap of luxury across the river. They didn't just abandon their people; they sought comfort in the arms of our tormentors.

Against the backdrop of their abandonment, Rut displays unwavering loyalty. She single-handedly repairs their selfish behavior by returning to Israel with her aging and penniless mother-in-law. She isn't naïve. Rut is fully aware of the risks that lie ahead. Naomi will be seen as a traitor, an object of scorn who fled in a time of need. Few, if any, will welcome her or offer assistance during a time of famine. Rut knows that by accompanying Naomi, she risks her own safety—perhaps even her

life. When she declares, “המות יפריד ביני וביניך”, she isn’t speaking in poetic abstraction—she understands that death by hunger may very well await her. When she pledges to be buried beside Naomi, she isn’t speaking in metaphor. These two destitute women, with no food or protection, may very well succumb to hunger and be buried side by side.

Orpah, her sister, made the reasonable decision. Why should two people perish? Why burden a desolate woman with another mouth to feed? Yet Rut courageously chooses loyalty over fear, devotion over self-preservation.

Her devotion doesn’t go unnoticed. Boaz blesses her not only to be like our founding mothers Rachel and Leah, but also like Tamar. His mention of Tamar isn’t incidental—it highlights Rut’s fierce loyalty to family. Tamar remained loyal to Yehuda’s household even when she was scorned and denied marital opportunity. She wouldn’t relinquish her place in a family that tried to discard her, and her steadfastness was rewarded with children who carried the family legacy. Boaz sees Tamar in Rut. Two women whose loyalty defied the odds and refused to let broken families wither. And through their loyalty, they built our future.

### Broader Loyalty

Rut’s loyalty to her mother-in-law reflects deeper and broader loyalties. A person who remains faithful to family will likely remain

faithful to people and to Land. Her unwavering devotion to both lies at the heart of her historical conversion—the conversion explicitly described in the *pesukim*.

When she declares, “עמך עמי”, she pledges allegiance to the people whom Elimelech and his sons so callously abandoned. When she insists on joining Naomi through every hardship and peril, she adds, “בְּאֶשֶׁר תִּמְוֹתַי אָמוּת וְשָׁם, אֶקְבֹּר”. She yearns to be buried in the Land of Israel. With these words, she joins the ranks of Ya’akov, Yosef, and Moshe—great figures who longed for burial in Eretz Yisrael, even if they themselves could not reside there in life.

### THE HARVEST

It is no coincidence that the backdrop for Rut’s conversion is the agricultural harvest season. As the nation celebrated the bounty of a Land reborn from famine, Rut cast her lot with that Land. Like a modern-day Avraham, she left her homeland, crossed the river, and joined both the Land of Israel and the people of Israel. Alongside her halachic conversion, she bound herself to our nation and to our homeland.

Evidently, the story of Rut’s conversion—at least on the *literal level*—is about a woman who joins the Jewish people through selfless commitment to both *Am Yisrael* and the Land of Israel. Her devotion may very well cost her life, yet it is worth it. Loyalty to *Am Yisrael* and Israel is too sacred to be measured by personal risk.

### THE REPAIR OF CHESED

However, loyalty alone isn’t enough. For the story of Rut to unfold, it will take kindness that reaches beyond duty. Quiet gestures of care and selfless devotion carry the story forward. אמר ר' זעירא: מגילה זו אין בה לא טומאה ולא טהרה ולא איסור ולא היתר, ולמה נכתבה? ללמדך כמה שכר טוב גומלי חסדים (מדרש רות רבה, פרשה כ, טו).

The *Midrash* observes that *Megillat Rut*

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contains no *halachot*. It is not a book of law, but a tale wrapped in the redemptive power of *chesed*. It reminds us that acts of kindness resonate through generations, mending the wounds of human tragedy.

Boaz performs a tremendous act of *chesed* by embracing a destitute, aging widow and her foreign daughter-in-law. Rut, too, exemplifies *chesed*—marrying a man far older than herself, a man with whom she will not grow old. Of course, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* directs and choreographs these events with His divine *chesed*, but His *chesed* descends only in response to human initiative. Redemption begins not in Heaven but on Earth—when people extend themselves beyond duty, when they choose kindness in a harsh world.

Rut joins the Jewish people not only through her steadfast loyalty to people and Land but also through her courage to perform selfless acts of kindness—mending a fractured society and awakening the hope for redemption. She attains halachic status by accepting the mitzvot and ultimately immersing in a mikvah. Her historical conversion is realized through loyalty to Land and people and by leading a wave of kindness to restore a wounded nation.

Loyalty to our people and to our Land, especially in the most challenging moments of Jewish history, lies at the heart of Jewish identity. The willingness to sacrifice personal interests for the *chesed* and for the greater needs of the nation is equally central.

Rut illustrates that the fullness of Jewish identity flows from weaving together halachic devotion and the deep roots of Jewish history. ■



Rabbi Taragin's newest sefer entitled "**To be Holy but Human: Reflections upon my Rebbe, Rav Yehuda Amital (Kodesh)**" is now available at: [mtaraginbooks.com](http://mtaraginbooks.com) and in bookstores



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SHAVUOT



# Wide Awake for Shavuot - and for the Next Generation

One of the most striking details in the Midrash about Matan Torah is that on that awe-inspiring day, the Jewish people had to be woken up! Hashem had to bring thunder and lightning to rouse them from their sleep (**Shir HaShirim Rabbah**). It's hard to believe—after centuries of slavery and weeks of miraculous preparation, how could they not be bursting with anticipation to receive the Torah?

Chazal saw in this moment a certain spiritual shortcoming—a lack of excitement for Torah.

And to repair it, many have adopted the Minhag of staying up all night on Shavuot, immersed in Torah learning (**Magen Avraham**). It's not just a symbolic gesture; it's a statement of commitment and passion, of showing Hashem and ourselves that this time, we're wide awake.

But beyond the minhag, there is a deep lesson here—especially for parents and grandparents. Our job is not only to pass on Torah and mitzvot to our children and grandchildren, but to pass on a passion for Torah. Not just to raise observant Jews, but inspired ones. How do we do that? The same way everything in parenting works: by role-modeling.



Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l

**Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky** articulated a powerful concept he called the “trickle-down theory” of Chinuch. Parents are not only educators—they are משפיעים, influencers. The word *mashpia* comes from *shipuah* (שיפוע)—a slope. Everything a parent is—our attitudes,

values, even what we do unconsciously—flows down to our children. A parent who davens with intensity, who sings Shabbat zemirot with passion, who loves learning Torah, raises children who absorb those feelings deep in

their bones. It's not what we say that matters most—it's what we are.

**Rabbi Yechiel Yakovson**, author of *אל תחטאו בידך*, often emphasizes that children see everything with “child eyes,” and pick up on nuances we don't realize we're transmitting. Passion can't be faked. Sincerity can't be staged. Kids know when we're living Torah because we love it—and when we're just going through the motions.

He shares the famous story of **Rav Moshe Feinstein**, who was once asked why so many children of *frum* immigrants in early 20th century America abandoned Shabbat observance, even though their

parents were *moser nefesh* for Shabbat. These parents often gave up their jobs rather than desecrate Shabbat—it was clearly important to them. So what went wrong? Rav Moshe explained: it wasn't that they didn't keep Shabbat—it was *how* they kept it. The children would hear their parents groaning, "Oy, it's so hard to be a Jew," watching them return from yet another lost job with tension and resentment. The message that seeped into their hearts wasn't "Shabbat is precious"—it was "Shabbat is a burden." Only those parents who were *moser nefesh* for Shabbat with love and passion, who radiated pride in keeping it no matter the cost, raised children who stayed the course.

Sadly, many children grow up watching their parents keep Torah and mitzvot without joy or excitement—and from that, they conclude that Torah and mitzvot must not be all that important.

The question we must all ask ourselves is:

what kind of message are we sending our children and grandchildren? Shavuot is the perfect time to reflect on this—after all, it's the day we celebrate the giving of the Torah and the transmission of our mesorah from generation to generation.

On Shavuot night, we stay up to show we're awake, alert, and yearning. But perhaps the deeper challenge is not what we do for one night, but what we show our children the other 364. Do they see a home where Torah is alive, exciting, a privilege? Or one where mitzvot are a checklist?

The answer isn't in putting on a show. It's in cultivating within ourselves the genuine love for Torah that we want them to feel. Because if we want our children to care deeply about Torah and Mitzvot, we must show them that *we* do. Let's use this Shavuot not just to stay up late, but to wake up—to the awesome role we play in shaping the next generation of Am Yisrael. ■



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By Liad Vaknish- J.Post

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has recently come to life, merging two worlds – the quiet luxury of private residences with the elegance and comfort of a deluxe five-star hotel. "The Theatron," the flagship project of the Hassid Brothers, is breaking new ground in Jerusalem's real estate market, offering an unparalleled quality of life for those who seek more than just a residential address in the most extraordinary city in the world.

The project is located in the heart of what's referred

to as "the cultural mile" – a stretch of the city that includes leading cultural institutions such as the Jerusalem Theater, the Islamic Art Museum, the President's Residence, Hansen House, and the First Station. It borders a protected pine grove known as "The Moon Grove," which provides open, green, and unexpected views in the heart of the city. This is a preservation-designated green area – guaranteeing the view and tranquility for generations to come.

The three residential buildings in the complex include only 21 apartments – intimate, luxurious, and bright. The apartments range from 165 to 560 square meters, with exceptionally high ceilings, huge windows, three exposures, and spacious balconies suitable for building a sukkah.

The penthouse – a top-floor single-level apartment – reaches a height of 4.5 meters and offers luxurious skyline living with the crisp mountain air Jerusalem is known for. The duplex garden apartment spans approximately 560 square meters of built area with a private garden of over 500 square meters – essentially a villa in every sense.

These are among the most spacious and meticulously designed apartments in Jerusalem, all furnished and decorated down to the last detail with one of the highest technical specifications in Israel – including Italian furniture, Bulthaup kitchens, electric curtains, designer lighting, and smart home systems – ready for immediate move-in with just a suitcase.

And as a bonus: all balconies face the nature reserve to the South, offering open green views and exposure to the Israeli sun for most of the day. According to the company, 13 out of the 21 units

have already been sold – meaning only eight remain available for purchase.

### Five-Star Living

The project is built adjacent to a luxurious boutique hotel from the international Accor brand's MGallery collection, providing residents with a unique quality of life – a rare combination of privacy, peace, and the comfort of home, with direct access to all the services and amenities of a five-star hotel.

It's a hybrid residential model: on one hand, a private lobby, separate entrance, dedicated elevator, and convenient direct parking access to the apartment floor; on the other hand, a wide range of services and facilities available to residents at the push of a button.

Residents can enjoy a Clarins spa, a heated year-round pool, a 24/7 gym, a gourmet restaurant and wine bar, 24/7 security, room service, a business lounge, and a magnificent synagogue within the hotel. There are also dedicated suites for hosting family members, and even picnic packages for outings in the city or the nearby grove.

Apartments are maintained regularly even when the owners are abroad – with cleaning services, fresh linens, stocked refrigerators, and plant care – everything ready for their return. Each resident enjoys personal support with an international standard, offering the highest-level lifestyle – with full privacy and control.

The apartments maintain an intimate and secluded feel; owners find themselves in a natural Jerusalem corner – with instant access to all the comforts, luxuries, and standards of a five-star hotel. The hotel itself is defined as a luxury boutique hotel – with only 73 rooms, no children's rooms or connecting rooms – ensuring peace, privacy, and a one-of-a-kind atmosphere.

It's also important to note: the hotel and the residential complex are completely separate in their design – residents have a private entrance with direct underground parking, an independent lobby, private elevators, and concierge services. This ensures complete privacy, while still allowing access to all hotel amenities – precisely when needed.

Buyers are also offered flexibility: those with smaller

apartments who wish to host extended family during the holidays can book hotel rooms at a 20% discount. Additionally, all residents receive permanent discounts – 30% off at hotel restaurants and 20% off spa, laundry, and cleaning services.

And if that's not enough – residents also enjoy a unique global benefit: up to 30% discount at approximately 5,000 of Accor's flagship hotels worldwide. This exceptional privilege upgrades every vacation – not only in Jerusalem, but also in Paris, New York, Rome, and even Tel Aviv.

### The Target Audience

The target audience is clear: traditional Jewish families from around the world who want to own a home in the most sought-after location in Jerusalem. Some use the apartments as a holiday home, visiting only three times a year, while others have chosen to live there permanently.

"Whether as a luxury vacation home for holidays in the heart of the capital or as a permanent residence



in Jerusalem – the project offers a rare opportunity for those seeking an unprecedented quality of life in the most special city in the world," say the Hassid Brothers.

### Down to the Last Detail: The Man Who Cares for the Residents

The key to it all is the unique role of Sheldon Ritz, who serves as the "liaison" – the personal point of contact for each apartment owner with the hotel. This role, innovative in Israel but common in such projects worldwide, was created to smoothly bridge the private living experience with the wider hotel system.

Ritz, 58, who emigrated from ➤ South



## THE ART OF LIVING IN TALBIEH



Africa more than three decades ago, has become one of the most recognized figures in Jerusalem's luxury hospitality scene. He served as the operations manager at the King David Hotel for 19 years – where he hosted high-profile guests, heads of state, and international delegations. The Hassid Brothers appointed him as the general manager of "The Theatron" hotel before its opening, and he later became the residents' representative, forming the initial relationships with apartment buyers.

His transition from hotelier to personal guide for luxury residents stems from a sense of mission. "My vision has always been to provide service that is highly professional but also deeply human," he says. "My goal is for each apartment owner to feel they have someone who fully understands their needs – and takes care of them before they even have to ask."

For Ritz, the role of liaison is not just operational – it plays a central part in creating a new lifestyle in which living and service coexist in perfect harmony. "It's a role that requires sensitivity, experience, and especially the ability to stay on top of things – all the time."

The position is dedicated to the apartment owners and includes tasks such as coordinating cleaning and maintenance, stocking fridges, preparing sukkahs for the holidays, booking spa treatments or room service – and even attending to the smallest details. It's a personal service envelope that gives residents peace of mind, a guiding hand, and the ongoing presence of someone who knows their home – even when they're not in the country.

"Some people request cleaning twice a week, others four times. Some want complete quiet, while others enjoy being part of the hotel's atmosphere – that's the beauty of it here: everyone gets exactly what suits them," Ritz concludes. "The project allows owners to live in a five-star hotel without living in a hotel – and to feel at home, even when far away."

*This article was written in cooperation with the Hasid Brothers by Jerusalem Post*



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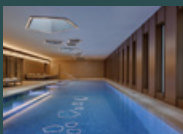
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## RABBI AARON GOLDSCHIEDER

EDITOR, TORAH TIDBITS  
RAV, THE JERUSALEM SHUL  
BAKA, JERUSALEM

# Hoisting the Blue-and-White

*Parashat Bemidbar* introduces us to the flags that the twelve tribes used to organize their encampments and travel during their long sojourn in the wilderness (Numbers 1:52, 2:2). Their colors, images, and, in some cases, letters carried profound significance. Little is known about later uses of flags in either of the Jewish Commonwealths, presumably because the fabric did not stand the test of time. Jewish signs and symbols have been preserved primarily as carvings in stone graves or monuments, castings on metal coinage or jewelry, and ink on bowls or parchment. This all changed with the establishment of the State of Israel, when a Jewish flag was flown once again. The colors of the nascent country became an inspiring symbol and rallying point for world Jewry, but also

raised concerns for halachically observant Jews.

### FLAGS IN A PLACE OF PRAYER



Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik zt"l

American synagogues commonly display the flags of Israel and America in the sanctuary, often flanking the ark containing the Torah scrolls. As one of the preeminent halachic decisors of twentieth-century America, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein was asked about people who deemed this forbidden and wanted to break away from their synagogue to form their own minyan. Rabbi Feinstein

could find no prohibition on the books that this violated, since the flags were not treated as some kind of holy object. Nevertheless, he felt that their placement there was a matter of foolishness (*inyan hevel u-shetut*), and encouraged their peaceable removal. If it is wrong to place flags in a synagogue, he reasoned, it would be much worse to create a dispute over it. He concluded his responsum by ruling that those desiring to leave were acting improperly, for it is a matter of “politics which comes from the evil inclination and Satan.”<sup>1</sup>

We see from this responsum that Rabbi Feinstein did not attribute any religious significance whatsoever to the Israeli flag, and

1. *Igerot Moshe, Orach Chayim*, 1:46.

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even considered its placement in the sanctuary improper.

### WHITE, BLUE, AND RED

The assessment of the Israeli flag by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik differed considerably from that of Rabbi Feinstein, his eminent colleague and close relative. He posited that the flag is holy because it represents the martyrs who fell in defense of the Holy Land:

“If you ask me, how do I, a talmudic Jew, look upon the flag of Israel, and has it any halachic value? I would answer plainly. I do not hold at all with the magical attraction of a flag or similar symbolic ceremonies. Judaism negates ritual connected with physical things.”

It is here that the Rav identified a compelling source in Halachah which, in his eyes, should be applied to the halachic significance surrounding the flag of Israel:

Nonetheless, we must not lose sight of a law in *Shulchan Aruch* to the effect that: “One who has been killed by non-Jews is buried in his clothes, so that the blood may be seen and avenged, as it is written: ‘I will hold (the heathen) innocent, but not in regard to the blood which they have shed’ (Joel 4:21).” In other words, the clothes of the Jew acquire a certain sanctity when spattered with the blood of a martyr. How much more is this so of the blue and white flag, which has been immersed in the blood of thousands of young Jews who fell in the War of Independence defending the country and the population (religious and irreligious alike; the enemy did not differentiate between them). It has a spark of sanctity that flows from devotion and self-sacrifice. We are enjoined

to honor the flag and treat it with respect.<sup>2</sup>

The Rav shared this unique perspective at a major address when serving as the leading figure in the Mizrachi movement. It is no wonder that many of his students who served as distinguished rabbis in the United States would often proudly display the Israeli flag near the ark.<sup>3</sup>

### BANNER OF REDEMPTION

In 1915, the precursor to the British Army’s Jewish Legion, the Zion Mule Corps, was formed. These Jewish soldiers participated in the Great War and had their own battle flag, a menorah set against a blue-and-white background. In the years following the war, the flag was displayed in synagogues across England.<sup>4</sup> On December 17, 1925, the flag was brought to Israel. A ceremony was arranged to officially greet the flag as it made its way into the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Yerushalayim, where it would be placed in the Hurva



Rav Abraham Isaac Kook zt”l

Synagogue. Among those in attendance was the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rav Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook, who gave an important address to the assemblage.

The sermon begins by noting that the Torah commands the Israelites to form a camp with tribal flags, and then cites the Midrash which says that the Jewish people requested flags, to

2. Soloveitchik, *The Rav Speaks*, 139. Perhaps the Rav did not draw on the flags of the wilderness because he did not consider them a lasting model, or because he felt self-sacrifice to be more significant.

3. One example is the Young Israel of Kew Gardens Hills, which was led by Rabbi Fabian Schonfeld (1923–2020), a close disciple of the Rav.

4. Shavit, *Leharim et ha-Degel*, 172–173.


which God acceded, upon beholding thousands of angelic chariots descending on Mount Sinai bedecked with flags. Rav Kook locates the paradigm for the blue-and-white at the giving of the Torah at Sinai, the beginning of our nationhood. Its current iteration, he impassionedly declares, represents our march towards redemption and signifies the international unity behind the Zionist enterprise.<sup>5</sup>

In a prayer offered on the occasion, Rav Kook said: “We bear with us the exalted flag, a token of the mighty salvation of Your right hand.”<sup>6</sup> He likely was alluding to episodes in Jewish history where flags accompanied salvation or redemption. When the Israelites left Egypt it says, “and the Children of Israel were going out with an upraised arm” (Exodus 14:8). The Ramban commented on this verse that the Jews left in song and with flags. This may be the very first source for a flag employed by Jews to identify their mission and to celebrate their salvation. The tribal flags again play a prominent role as the nation is about to enter the land, which represents the realization of their national mission and salvation from the harsh desert (Numbers 10:11-29).

Rav Kook saw fit to bring a Jewish flag within the confines of the synagogue. Although he died thirteen years before the establishment of the State of Israel, he clearly indicated that the modern Israeli flag has deep spiritual value. ■

5. Shavit, *Leharim et ha-Degel*, 179–183.

6. *Ibid.*, 184.



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## Ice Cream on Hot Cake on Shabbat

**Question:** For Shabbat dessert, my hosts served very hot cake on a plate next to a scoop of *pareve* ice cream. Was it permitted for me to put the ice cream on top of the cake or is that *bishul* (cooking)?

**Answer:** We will start by analyzing the issue you raise – *bishul*. One is forbidden to put even already edible food near enough to a fire that it would cook if left there, despite his intention to remove it before that point (Shulchan Aruch and Rama, Orach Chayim 318:14). It is difficult to confidently assume that a given *pareve* ice cream is halachically already cooked.

Is the cake (if it is *yad soledet bo* => 45° C) a

problematic heat source? Usually, the cake is removed from its heat source and put onto a plate, which makes it a *kli sheini*, where the **rule** is that *bishul* does not occur (Shabbat 40b). However, the cake is a solid food (*davar gush*), which **might** “cook” other foods even in a *kli sheini* (Mishna Berura 318:65) and it is also hard to know which foods are exceptional foods that can be cooked in a *kli sheini* (see *ibid.* 39). Therefore, we must find other grounds for leniency.

*Bishul* for solid foods is contingent on significant change (*ma'achal ben drusa'i*), which is unfathomable in this case. For liquids, it is forbidden to bring them to *yad soledet bo* (Shulchan Aruch *ibid.*). Is ice cream that will melt solid or liquid? The Magen Avraham (318:40) and Taz (318:20) debate the status of congealed food which the heat will melt regarding reheating cooked food, which is forbidden for liquids, and the simple ruling is lenient (Mishna Berura 318:100). Besides the fact that some are *machmir* (see sources in Piskei Teshuvot 318:32), it is not obvious that it is correct to follow only the starting state regarding uncooked foods (beyond our scope; see Mishna Acharona 318:149.) In any case, the cake is probably not hot enough to get significant amounts of ice cream to *yad soledet bo*.

There is an issue you did not raise, known as *nolad*, i.e., causing the change from solid to liquid. It is forbidden to smash ice to turn it into water (Shabbat 51b). While many understand that it is a problem only when it is accomplished by a direct action (see variations in Rashi *ad loc.* and Rambam, Shabbat 21:13), the

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Sefer Hateruma (335) views it as more result oriented and forbids putting the solid near a fire to melt. The Shulchan Aruch does not cite the Sefer Hateruma's stringency; the Rama (OC 318:16) cites both opinions and accepts leniency when there is need.

While some understand the Sefer Hateruma as treating the melted matter as objective *muktzeh*, it is more likely (see Shut Panim Meivot I:84) that the prohibition relates to a problematic semi-direct act of changing the phase (see Orchot Shabbat, vol. I, pp. 203-5). Therefore, it is not surprising that the context of the melting process can make a difference even according to the stringent opinion. After this introduction, we will see reasons for leniency by which even the *machmirim* regarding *nolad* can allow putting ice cream on warm cake.

According to most, the problem of *nolad* relates to putting something near a recognized heat source and not, for example, a warm room (see Orchot Shabbat 4:44, Shevet Halevi VII:40). If the cake is warm rather than really hot, it may not pass muster. A corollary of this idea is that intention in putting it in a place where

it will melt will help determine whether it is an "act" of melting (see Mishna Acharona 318:153). In our case, most people prefer ice cream frozen and only would put it on the cake to more easily combine the tastes. Also, Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata (10:24) posits that *nolad* does not apply to ice cream because its function does not change whether it is frozen or melted. Finally, *nolad* is forbidden only with significant amounts of melting (Mishna Berura 318:105), and one who eats the ice cream quickly may do so without reaching that amount.

In summary, in most cases, it is permitted to put the ice cream on the hot piece of cake. (Our presentation shows that certain permutations are more likely to be problematic than others.) ■

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**SHAVUOT**



# Staying Up all Night: A Practical Guide

Many have the custom to stay up all night on Shavuot, engaged in the study of Torah. While considered meritorious and praiseworthy, staying awake all night creates a number of questions and poses some potential problems. Below is a practical guide for those staying up all night.

## **AL NETILAT YADAYIM**

There is a dispute as to the very reason for the mitzvah of washing one's hands in the morning, and whether one who remains awake all night is obligated to wash his hands. Therefore, one should use the bathroom prior to davening, and then may recite the beracha of *Al Netilat Yadayim* and *Asher Yatzar*. Alternatively, he may touch a part of his body typically covered and then recite the beracha before washing his hands. Sefaradim wash their hands without a beracha.

## **TALLIT KATAN**

If one is wearing his *Tallit Katan* all night, he does not make a new beracha on it in the morning. Instead, the beracha he makes on his *Tallit Gadol* exempts the *Tallit Katan*. One who does not wear a *Tallit Gadol* may shake the *tzitzit* on his *Tallit Katan* and recite the beracha.

## **ELOKAI NESHAMAH**

## **& HAMA'AVIR SHEINAH**

As it is unclear whether one who remains awake all night may recite *Elokai Neshamah & Hama'avir Sheinah*, it is preferable to have one who slept (minimally 30 minutes in a bed) recite these berachot for others, exempting them of their obligation. If there is no one present who slept, many authorities rule that these berachot may be recited by one who stayed up all night.

## **BIRKOT HATORAH**

Here too, there is a dispute as to what generates the obligation of *Birkot HaTorah* and if one who does not sleep is obligated to recite them in the morning. The common custom is to have one who slept recite these berachot for others, exempting them of their obligation. If there is no one who slept, many authorities rule that these berachot may be recited even by one who stayed up all night. Some suggest that he should instead have intent to fulfill his obligation in *Birkot HaTorah* while reciting *Ahavah Rabba/Ahavat Olam* prior to the Shema, and study



some Torah or recite p'sukim immediately following the Amidah.

One who slept during the afternoon of Erev Shavuot, even though he remained awake Shavuot night, may recite the *Birkot HaTorah* in the morning.

*Wishing you all a Chag Same'ach and a good Kabbalat HaTorah!* ■

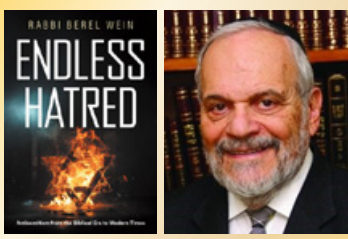
**Rabbi Shimshon HaKohen Nadel** lives and teaches in Jerusalem, where he serves as mara d'atra of Har Nof's Kehilat Zichron Yosef, rosh kollel of the Sinai Kollel.

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# Reverence, Renewal and Revelation

As the month of Iyar draws to a close, we find ourselves in the midst of chapters of Tehillim filled with sweeping praise of the grandeur of Creation; songs of praise and thanksgiving for the wonders that have accompanied us through history. These *mizmorim* bring to mind Rav Soloveitchik's description of man as one who "encounters the universe in all its colorfulness, splendor, and grandeur, and studies it with the naivete, awe and admiration of the child who seeks the unusual and wonderful in every ordinary thing and event... He looks for the image of God... in every beam of light, in every bud and blossom, in the morning breeze and the stillness of a starlit evening."<sup>1</sup> This attitude brings man

1. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Lonely Man of Faith*

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Elsewhere, the Rav teaches that "prayer requires the individual's absolute identification with an emotional state... The child responds spontaneously to his emotions; he fluctuates quite often between despair and joy. He never tries to censor them. The distress of a child is boundless, and there is no limit to his happiness. He knows how to pray 'from the depths' and at the same time how to thank and serenade God, how to sing praises to Him."<sup>2</sup>

How can we, as adults, turn to God in prayer empowered by the uninhibited emotions of a young child? The first mitzvah given to us as a nation is the mitzvah of *Kiddush HaChodesh*, sanctifying the New Moon. Psalm 104, with the opening phrase "ברכי נפשי את ה', ה' אלוקי" *Bless the Lord, my soul; Hashem my God, You are exceedingly great, clothed in glory and splendor,*" is recited at the end of davening on Rosh Chodesh. This *mizmor*, resounding in its awe-struck descriptions of the wonders of nature, highlights the phases of the moon<sup>3</sup>, thus earning it a place in our Rosh Chodesh prayers. Rosh Chodesh serves as an opportunity to renew our outlook, to focus on the fact that Hashem constantly renews all of Creation, and view each day as a new and unique opportunity to serve Hashem with renewed enthusiasm and childlike reverence.

Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch explains the mitzvah of *Kiddush HaChodesh* as an "institution for the periodical fresh spiritual and moral rejuvenation of Israel by finding itself once

2. Megillat Esther Mesorat HaRav 4:16

3. "עשה ירח למועדים, שמש ידע מבווא" (תהלים קד:ט)



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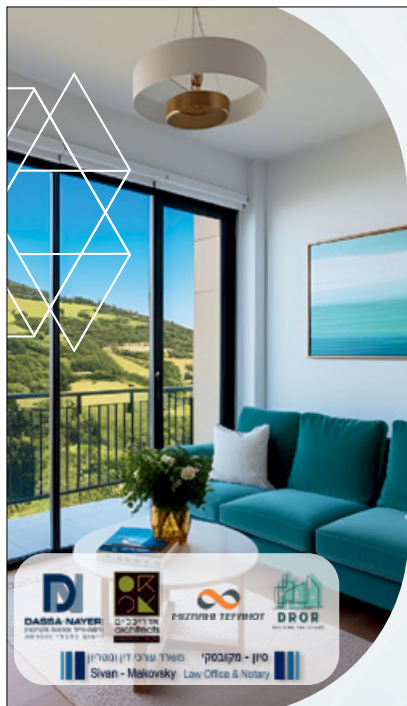
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again in conjunction with its God.” The Hebrew translation of the original German term for rejuvenation is “חידוש נעורים - a renewal of youth.” The waxing and waning of the moon is a symbol, modeling the process through which we, the Jewish people, drift toward obliviousness of God’s Presence in our daily adult lives, and offering a model for bringing ourselves back to a state of conscious awareness of His immanence, filling us with youthful wonder and appreciation.<sup>4</sup>

The Netivot Shalom points out that the mitzvah of *Kiddush HaChodesh* was given to us precisely at our darkest hour, when we were spiritually bereft, on the forty-ninth level of impurity. By gifting us with this mitzvah, Hashem indicated that even from those depths, the Jewish people are capable of rising to the highest heights and receiving the Torah just seven weeks later.<sup>5</sup>

So too today, we are capable of lifting our spirits and ourselves, preparing ourselves to once again receive the Torah with the enthusiasm of a child experiencing Revelation for the very first time, inspired by the words of David Hamelech to connect with Hashem through the wonders of His Creation. ■

**Mrs. Leah Feinberg** is a master educator who taught at the SKA High School for Girls in Hewlett for twenty-one years, also serving as Tanach Department chairperson and New Teacher Mentor. Leah is currently on the faculty of the OU Israel Center and has taught in all three cycles of the OU Women’s Initiative Nach Yomi program

In the **OU Women’s Initiative Nach Yomi series**, currently in its third cycle, women scholars deliver a daily shiur on the books of Prophets (Neviim) and Writings (Ketuvim) at the pace of a chapter a day. Shiurim are geared toward learners of all levels who would like to participate in the two-year Nach Yomi study cycle. Visit the OU Women’s Initiative to register for additional content.

4. רש"י הירש, שמות יב:  
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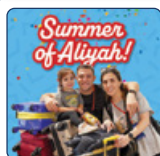


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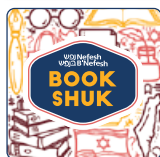
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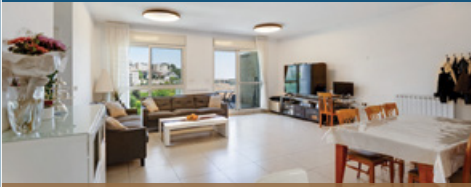


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# What Does Shavuot Look Like To You?

If I were to ask you to stop reading this article and close your eyes to “picture” Shavuot, what would you envision?

Are you picturing Har Sinai? That smaller mountain, humbly chosen for the most significant event in human history. The Midrash paints it adorned with flowers, blooming in honor of the revelation. The sky darkens, yet the atmosphere is illuminated — you see thunder and hear lightning, a miraculous reversal of the senses. All of Am Yisrael — men, women, and children — gather as one. לעיני כל העם. כי ביום השלישי ירד ה' After three days of intense spiritual preparation, we stand there, beautifully dressed, not just physically but spiritually — trembling and excited, waiting. קול שופר הולך וחזיק מאוד. And then it happens: the voice of God.

Maybe for you, it's the learning experience that defines Shavuot. You connect through the Tikkun Leil Shavuot, that electric atmosphere where Torah study becomes a communal act of love. In batei midrash and shuls across the world, young, old and all ages in between immerse themselves in Torah — the air buzzes with questions, answers, insights and “ah-ha”s of new understandings. That

magical night becomes a reenactment of Sinai, a collective reaching upwards.

Perhaps you find your connection in the story of Ruth in the Megillah — the Moabite princess turned Jewish heroine. Her chessed, her loyalty, her journey of personal sacrifice — all resonate deeply. She could have chosen ease and comfort, but she chose truth and faith. “Your people will be my people, and your God my God.” With those words, Ruth enters not just a new nation, but a new destiny. She becomes the great-grandmother of David HaMelech. Her story, read on Shavuot, reminds us that Torah is not just received — it is chosen, often through tears, effort, and courage.

Do you envision the agricultural joy of the first fruits — the Bikurim? Shavuot is Chag HaBikkurim, after all. The Torah commands us to bring the first and best of our produce to the Beit HaMikdash, as a gesture of gratitude to the Source of all blessing. Can you see it? Farmers from across the land, walking or dancing up to Yerushalayim, carrying baskets adorned with gold and doves, accompanied by music and festivity. It's Aliyah LaRegel at its most joyous — the intersection of physical sustenance and spiritual offering, celebrating complete dependence and reliance on Hashem. May we be worthy to once again experience this firsthand, speedily in our days.

Or maybe for you, Shavuot is something more intimate. Less about communal spectacle and more about personal bond. Maybe you close your eyes and picture yourself

standing alone before a Sefer Torah. Owning it. Accepting it. Loving it. Clinging to it. You don't need to hear thunder or see lightning — you feel the weight and the warmth of Torah in your soul. You know that this is yours. This is who you are.

That is where I find myself. This is my Shavuot.

Torah is my lifeline. My oxygen.

Our world might seem filled with uncertainty, insecurity, and instability. But that's furthest from the truth. We have Torah.

In a world that feels increasingly untethered — a world of shifting values, moral confusion, and constant noise — Torah is my anchor. My stake in the ground. When the headlines scream instability and the voices around us blur the lines between right and wrong, I look to Torah and I feel clarity. I feel truth. Torah doesn't shift. Torah doesn't scream. Torah speaks — directly, calmly, eternally.

When I learn Torah, I feel Hashem speaking to me. Personally. Lovingly. Even when there is rebuke. Torah is not just a document of law or a collection of wisdom — it is the living voice of God. It gives shape to my days, meaning to my choices, and direction to my doubts. It builds the framework of my home

and the language of my relationships.

Shavuot is the anniversary of that gift. Not just the giving of the Torah — Matan Torah — but the ongoing receiving of Torah — Kabbalat HaTorah. Because we don't just commemorate what happened. We re-enter it. We say “Na'aseh v'nishma” all over again. We stand beneath the mountain, in shul, in our homes, in our minds — and we accept. Every year I remind my teen students: if you really listen during the night, you might just hear the thunder of Har Sinai.

And maybe that's the most powerful image of all: a people who keep returning. Who keep saying yes. Who keep clinging to the words, and through them, to the One who gave them.

So this Shavuot, close your eyes for a moment. Picture your Sinai.

Is it grand? Communal? Quiet? Joyful? Emotional?

Whatever it is — may it be real. And may we all find ourselves not just remembering Shavuot, but living it. ■

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# Shagririm Balev

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## Emotionally Unavailable

### Ayelet asks:

How do you know if your candidate is emotionally available or unavailable? And if they're emotionally unavailable, should I still set them up—or are they not ready yet?

### Aleeza answers:

This is such a powerful and common question in the world of matchmaking. Emotional availability isn't about someone crying easily or being outwardly affectionate. It's about their capacity to let another person into their world and heart. Some people are more open-hearted by nature, while others are more closed off - and that usually stems from how they were raised and what life experiences have shaped them.

The key is: most people actually know where they stand on this. I had a client who

told me straight out, "I'm not so emotionally available. I've been manipulated before, and people used my openness against me." So he became guarded. If someone tells you they're guarded, that it takes them time to let someone in, or that they struggle to connect emotionally - **believe them**. These are clues that they need a longer dating process to develop feelings and connection.

And here's the surprising part: being emotionally unavailable doesn't mean they won't date or even get married. Many emotionally guarded people still move forward in relationships. Sometimes they choose partners who help draw them out - and other times they end up with people who are fine with the level of connection they're capable of giving.

So, should you set them up? Yes - but be mindful of who you match them with. Don't wait for someone to "fix" themselves or go to therapy for five years before they're finally "ready." That may never happen. Instead, focus on matching them with someone who's a good fit for where they are **today**.

Not everyone needs (or wants) the same level of emotional depth in a relationship. Your job as a matchmaker is to see people clearly, listen closely, and pair them thoughtfully. Emotional availability is one piece of the puzzle - not the

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by Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter



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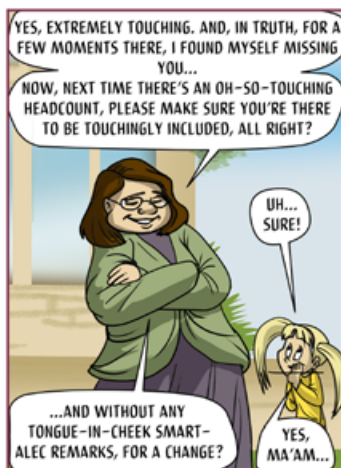


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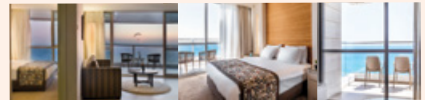
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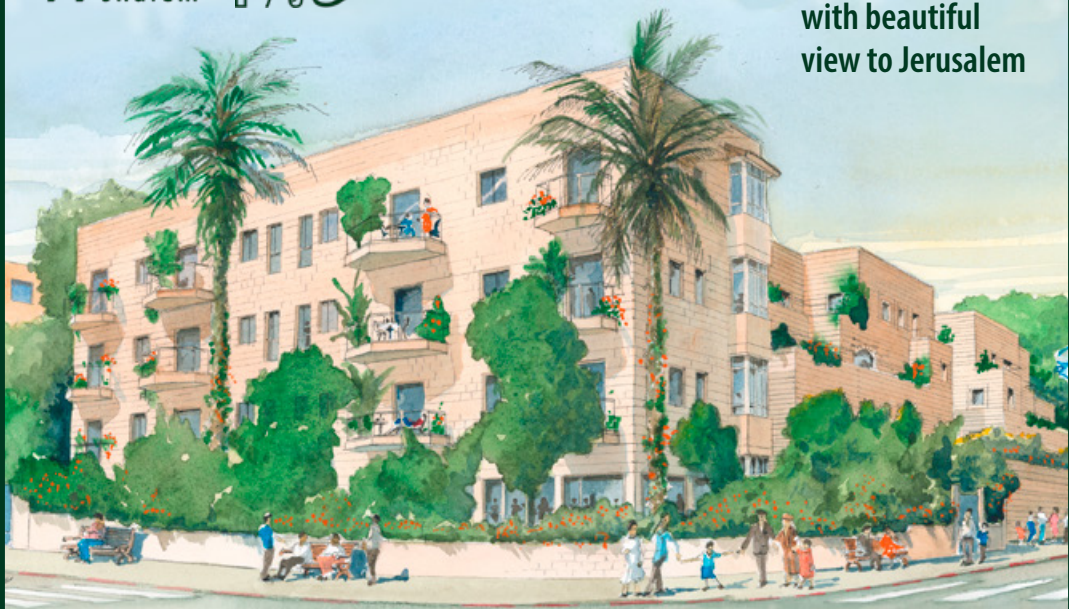
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## TORAH 4 TEENS

## BY TEENS

NCSY ISRAEL



**AYELET FISCHER,  
MADRICHA**

### COUNTING WITH LOVE, RECEIVING WITH UNITY

Parashat Bamidbar, which we read before Shavuot, begins with something that, at first glance, feels very administrative: a census of Bnei Yisrael.

“שָׂאוּ אֶת ראשׁוֹלָל עֲדַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל... לְמִסְפָּחָתָם” – “*Count the heads of the entire assembly of the Children of Israel, by their families, by their fathers’ houses*” (Bamidbar 1:2).

At first, it’s difficult to understand why this census is significant enough to open Sefer Bamidbar — after all, counting seems like a simple, technical task.

However, Rashi offers a beautiful approach to this pasuk, explaining that Hashem counts Bnei Yisrael out of love:

“מִתּוֹךְ חֲבִתָּן לְפָנָיו מוֹנֶה אוֹתָם כָּל שְׁעָה” – “*Because they are dear to Him, He counts them now and then.*”

In other words, this isn’t just about counting—it’s about showing that each person is truly

valued by Hashem.

Even the language of the verse in Bamidbar — “שָׂאוּ אֶת ראשׁוֹלָל”, which translates to “*lift up the head*” — portrays this act of counting as a way of recognizing and honoring the role of each individual.

This message becomes especially powerful as we anticipate Shavuot and celebrate receiving the Torah. According to the Midrash (Mechilta d’Rabbi Yishmael), when Bnei Yisrael stood at Har Sinai, they were

“כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד בְּלֵב אֶחָד” — “*as one person with one heart.*”

It was in that moment of complete unity that they were able to receive the Torah.

While Bamidbar emphasizes the importance of each individual, Shavuot emphasizes national unity. Although these ideas may seem contradictory, they actually support and enhance each other. Real unity doesn’t mean we must all act the same; rather, it means that we each contribute our personal strengths to something greater than ourselves. The Torah was not given to a crowd of identical people, but to a diverse nation that had learned how to stand together.

The Zohar (Vol. 3, 93a) adds that the Torah was given in the **Midbar** — the desert — because it is a humble and open space, free to all. This reminds us that Torah doesn’t belong to any one group, but to every individual. To receive it, we must be like the Midbar: humble enough to listen and open enough to make space for others.

As we prepare to receive the Torah again

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this Shavuot, may we internalize the lessons of Bamidbar and come together—because only when we honor each individual can we unite “כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד בְּלֵב אֶחָד”—and stand, once again, at Har Sinai.

**Shabbat Shalom and Chag Sameach!**



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## WHY WE COUNT

Parashat Bamidbar and Shavuot are often read together, and at first glance, they may seem totally unrelated. Bamidbar opens with a count of all of Am Yisrael in the wilderness. Shavuot, on the other hand, is a spiritual event marking the giving of the Torah at Har Sinai. Yet, if you dig deeper into both, you'll find a deep connection.

In Bamidbar, the Torah lists the numbers of people in each tribe, indicating that each individual is significant and irreplaceable. Each person is counted by name and by tribe, reinforcing the idea that each has a unique role and purpose within the collective whole.

Now think of Shavuot. The giving of the Torah is the ultimate moment of collective national identity. At Har Sinai, the Jewish people stood together “כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד בְּלֵב אֶחָד”—“like one person with one heart”, as Rashi explains. The unity they achieved was a harmonization of their well-defined identities for a common purpose—receiving the Torah.

Now the connection becomes clear: **Bamidbar teaches us that every person counts, and Shavuot teaches us why we count.** We are not just numbers; we are individuals with distinct roles, each essential to the collective mission of Torah and mitzvot.

**Shabbat Shalom and Chag Sameach! ■**



# TIKUN LEIL SHAVUT

AT THE YESHURUN CENTRAL SYNAGOGUE

**01.06.25**

11:00	Rabbi Moshe Miller   the Author of Rising Moon <b>Ruth: A Love Story</b>
11:45	Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz   the founder of Jews for Judaism <b>Adventures of a Real Cult Buster</b>
00:30	Rabbi Avrum M. Kowalsky <b>What is Bilam Doing in My Torah?</b>
01:15	<b>Light Refreshments</b>
01:30	Rabbi Haber <b>The Essence of Rabbi Akiva: Kavod Hatorah</b>
02:15	Rabbi Chanoch Yeres Rav Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe <b>Methods of Responsibility for All Jews: The Challenges and Solutions</b>
03:15	<b>Light Refreshments</b>
03:30	<b>Independent-learning</b>
04:40	<b>Megilat Ruth &amp; Shacharit</b>

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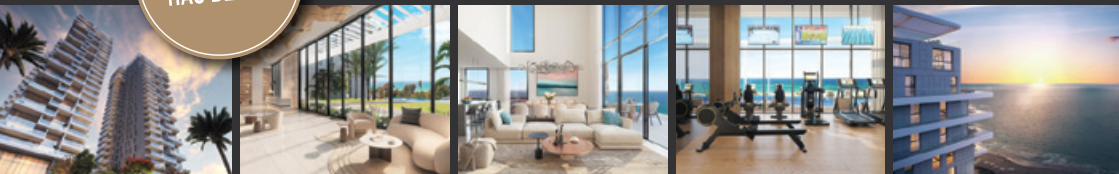


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