

The Chronicle

June 2021

Issue IIII

Sivan 5781



Rabbi's Message

Rabbi Eliezer Zwickler
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Our shul is back open. What a difference a year makes! I was pretty certain that I wasn't going to be able to stay up learning Torah on Shavuot night last year. We were all at home, alone at the worst point of the pandemic. I was still recovering from my personal battle with Covid, and was concerned that without the buzz and array of shiurim in Shul, there was no way I would make it all night. Yet, I, as well as so many of us, found last Shavuot more meaningful than the past, and we were able to connect with Torah learning in an even more meaningful way than before.

This year, thankfully we are able to learn in the Shul on Shavuot once again. Our Shavuot program will feature all night learning outside and inside, youth learning, refreshments outside, culminating in our Netz minyan as the sun rises. As in years past, we will also have our Shavuot Beis Midrash on both afternoons. We are excited to learn together as a united community once again. A

(Continued on page 2)

President's Message

Andrew Yolin
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Shavuot is the yahrzeit for Nili's father, my father-in-law, Zvi Schipper (Zvi Aryeh ben Shmuel Gronim z"l). When we reflect on 'Saba Zvi's' life, it's hard to ignore the difficult start. When he was four years old, he and his parents fled Belgium to the east as the Nazis crossed the western border.

They traveled through France, Spain and Portugal before securing passage to Jamaica, where they stayed for 6 months in a Jewish refugee camp. Eventually they made their way to Cuba and finally, in 1945, to New York. Sadly, just a few months shy of his bar mitzvah, Saba Zvi's father passed away at the young age of 40. For the remainder of his life,

(continued on page 2)



Shavuot Edition

Laws of Shavuot	5
Lauren Elise Bier Nursery School	8
Youth	12
Marketing	14
Tribute To Mickey Weiss	16
Mazel Tovs & Condolences	25
Counting Up	28

Web Dvar
by Rabbi Eliezer Zwickler

Parshat
Hashavuah
Tidbits

Rabbi's Message *cont'd*

disciple of the Chafetz Chaim once came to his Rebbe appearing downtrodden. The Chafetz Chaim inquired as to what was bothering him and the student responded as follows. "I have spent years learning Torah but do not feel that I have been able to master any part nor do I feel success from my learning." The Chafetz Chaim answered his student that Hashem wishes from us to fulfill the mitzvah of *והגית בו יומם ולילה*—To study and become engrossed in Torah day and night.

Hashem does not desire for every person to be a brilliant scholar who is able to answer the most complexing problems, rather he wants us to sit and learn Torah with love. Please join me in this Shavuot journey of Talmud Torah which is at the very essence of who we are as a Shul family.

Chag Sameach!

Congregation AABJ&D Executive Committee

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President's Message *cont'd*

Saba Zvi, an only child, displayed that not-uncommon duality of a survivor: a brisque toughness expected from anyone whose life went as his did, and a constant desire to socialize and be surrounded by friends and family.

As we prepare for our second Shavuot post-Covid, and look optimistically at vaccine rates and relaxing regulations, I can't help but wonder what Saba Zvi would have made of all this. How would he have adjusted to life without seeing people at Shul each Shabbat? Would he have followed the strict guidelines and not seen his children and grandchildren the whole time? Would he have been receptive to a new vaccine?

And as I write this, I realize that's a microcosm for all of us, as a community. We have different perspectives on where we have been, what we should or should not have done along the way, and especially what should come next. In the two weeks between when I write this and when it is read on Shavuot, we will actually have spoken with about 50 of you in focus groups to hear what you think about reopening of the Shul's programming.

After that, building upon your feedback, I'm hopeful the Shul leadership will be able to make concrete plans for additional in person programming - from minyanim to events to youth. Whatever path we take, we'll need to be as safe as we have tried to be all year, balanced with a desire to get back to what we miss most about life pre-Covid. I thank you in advance for your input and patience as we plan for the continued reopening of the Shul building.



The Soul Of The Torah

Yosef Sharbat
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There is a famous idea that there are 600,000 letters in the Torah, corresponding to the 600,000 people who received the Torah. Rabbi Yaakov Yehoshua Falk, (Pnei Yehoshua) notes, based on the Zohar, that this is hinted in the word **אִישׁ שֵׁשִׁים רִבּוּא אוֹתִיּוֹת לַתּוֹרָה**, that there are 600,000 letters in the Torah. The idea is that every Jewish soul is connected to a letter in the Torah, and we are charged to “find” our voice in the Torah and connect to it in a spiritual way. The Rabbis teach us that one tears kria if present at the time that a person passes away as if they witnessed a Sefer Torah burning. Every Jew is as holy as a Sefer Torah!

The Gemara in Avoda Zarah 18a recounts a story of Rabbi Hanina ben Teradyon, who was sitting and engaging in Torah study in defiance of the Roman Empire, and convening assemblies in public, with a Torah scroll placed in his lap. The Romans brought him to be sentenced, and wrapped him in the Torah scroll, and encircled him with bundles of branches, and they set fire to it. His daughter said to him: Father, must I see you like this? Rabbi Hanina ben Teradyon said to her: If I alone were being burned, it would be difficult for me, but now that I am burning along with a Torah scroll, He who will seek retribution for the insult accorded to the Torah scroll will also seek retribution for the insult accorded to me. His students said to him: **רַבֵּינוּ מַה אַתָּה רֹאֶה** Our teacher, what do you see? Rabbi Hanina ben Teradyon said to them: **גִּלְיוֹן נִשְׂרָפִין וְאוֹתֵיּוֹת** I see the parchment burning, but its letters are flying to the heavens.

R. Asher Weiss explains that R. Hanina's students were asking: what do you see as our future? Will we be able to survive without our leadership? R. Chanina answered that the

parchment, representing our physical bodies, may be destroyed, but the letters, representing our souls can never be destroyed. The neshamot are **פְּרוּחוֹת בְּאוֹר**, which doesn't necessarily mean flying through the air, but are blossoming and sprouting like a **פֶּתַח** flower. These letters are sprouting and growing for the next generation.

Each letter represents another person. But we also have to help others find their voice in Torah. How will we help our children, family and friends navigate through life and connect to Torah? The pandemic has affected all of us in different ways and ofcourse impacted last year's Shavuot celebrations. Communal learning, shiurim, and the sound of Torah was limited to our homes. Baruch Hashem this year, we are back in action- offering shiurim, and providing adequate space for safe chavruta learning. I eagerly looking forward to seeing our community learning Torah with the same vigor and excitement as in the past. But we need everyone to join in our communal learning. The halacha is that if one letter is missing in a Torah, then the entire Torah is *pasul*. *Everyone is a letter of our communal Torah; everyone matters. As life begins to go back to “normal”, let's encourage our friends and family members to return to our shul community and reengage with tefilla and Torah learning. Only when we join together will our communal Torah blossom and flourish for many years to come.*

Wishing you a Chag Sameach!



Shavuot has a number of customs which are deeply ingrained in the celebration of the holiday.

Laws of Shavuot

What are the Customs of Shavuot?

Shavuot has a number of customs which are deeply ingrained in the celebration of the holiday. Among these are the following:

- Staying up all night to learn Torah on the first night of Shavuot.
- Spreading greens and flowers in the synagogue on Shavuot.
- Eating dairy meals on Shavuot.

Staying Up (Without NoDoz)

There is a custom among the People of Israel to stay up all night to study Torah on the first night of Shavuot. One of the reasons given for this custom is that it is to “make up” for the behavior of a large number of Jews who were present at Sinai, at the “main event,” so to speak, yet they went to sleep that night. And Hashem had to wake them up with sounds of thunder and shofar blowing to receive the Torah. It is said in defense of those Jews that they slept *l'shem shamayim*, with good intentions, for they felt that they would be better able to absorb and withstand the experience of Hashem's Revelation, which they knew was coming in the morning.

Special care should be exercised not to slumber during the Shacharit prayers, the Torah reading, and especially during Mussaf, which “seals” the Omer period. (The reference is to the “new-gift-offering” brought on Shavuot morning upon the termination of the Omer-count days).

Those who remain awake through the night wash their hands in the morning, but do not recite *al netilat yadayim*, or Birkot Hashachar. They are

required only to hear these *brachot* recited by one who is obligated to say them, and to answer “Amen.”

Spreading Greens and Flowers

It is customary to decorate the synagogue and home with greens, and some decorate the Torah scrolls with roses. If the greens were not prepared before Shavuot, it is forbidden to use unprepared leaves—though they were cut before Shavuot—for decoration. If the greens were, however, prepared for the sake of the festival, but were not arranged out of forgetfulness, they may be arranged on Yom Tov.

There is a custom of placing tree branches and boughs about the *bimah* (synagogue pulpit) in the synagogue, to recall that Shavuot is the time of judgment for the fruit of the trees, so that prayers might be uttered in their behalf. The Gaon of Vilna, however, suspended this custom in many communities since it had become an established practice in gentile religious festival usage.

Eating Dairy Meals

“Shavuot is an extension of Pesach and its conclusion. Just as we eat two cooked dishes on Pesach in memory of the Paschal Lamb and the Chagigah offering of Pesach, we likewise eat two cooked foods on Shavuot; one a milk dish, and the other a meat dish. Since one may not eat from the same loaf of bread with both meat and milk dishes, this custom is a memorial of the two breads brought on Shavuot.” (*Rabbi Moshe Isserles -- Rama*)

There are a number of reasons given for the custom of eating dairy meals on Shavuot. Here are some:

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

1. “The day when Moshe was drawn out of the water was the 6th of Sivan, and he was willing to be nursed only by a Hebrew woman. Therefore, we recall this merit of his, through the eating of milk foods on the same day.” (*Sefer Matamim*)

2. “Until the giving of the Torah, the Jews were permitted to eat meat of animals which were not kosher, as well as meat of animals that had not been slaughtered in accordance with the laws of *shechitah*. After the giving of the Torah, *shechitah* and the laws of forbidden foods were prescribed for them. Since all their utensils and dishes thereby became prohibited and they were unable to make them kosher, they could only eat milk foods.” (*Ge’ulat Israel*)

3. “The Numerical value of the Hebrew letters which constitute the Hebrew word for milk (*chalav*) add up to forty—corresponding to the forty days spent by Moshe on Mount Sinai.”

4. “Mount Sinai has eight names, one of which is *gavnunim*, because its appearance resembles that of cheese, (*gevina* in Hebrew).”

Until the giving of the Torah, the Jewish People were afraid that the milk of animals was prohibited under the category of a “limb from a living animal.” This is one of the Seven Laws of Noach, which Noach transmitted to his sons, obligatory upon all of humanity, and which is the source of the prohibition of causing excessive pain to living creatures. Once the Torah was given, and *chalav*, milk, was included among the seven types of produce with which the Land of Israel is blessed, the Jewish People realized that milk was indeed permitted.

Prayers and rituals

The order of prayer and kiddush is the same for Shavuot as for the *Shalosh Regalim*, (the three pilgrim festivals), but with specific reference made to “this festival of Shavuot, the time of the giving of our Torah.” During Mussaf the “additional sacrificial offerings” and the “new gift offering” for Shavuot are mentioned, as is the passage *Uveyom Habikurim*. *Hallel* is likewise said in whole, in accordance with the practice followed during the *Shalosh Regalim*.

During the kiddush, *Shehecheyanu* is said. Women recite *Shehecheyanu* together with the *brachah* over the candles prior to lighting them. Again in keeping with Yom Tov practice, it is obligatory to partake of two meals, and to include meat and wine.

It is customary to practice immersion in a mikvah (ritual bath) on Erev Shavuot (the eve of Shavuot), for one is obliged to purify himself at the advent of a Yom Tov. There are some who practice immersion also on Yom Tov morning, in remembrance of Israel's purification during the “days of abstinence” prior to their receipt of the Torah.

Though it is generally customary to recite the Ma'ariv prayers somewhat earlier than usual on Erev Yom Tov, on the first night of Shavuot, Ma'ariv is delayed until after the appearance of the stars. Seven whole weeks are to elapse counting from the second day of Pesach till the advent of Shavuot. And, if the sanctity of Yom Tov is “accepted” before the forty-ninth day is concluded, the days-of-the-counting will not have been whole. Similarly, the Shavuot kiddush is not recited until certain nightfall.

Once the Torah was given, and *chalav*, milk, was included among the seven types of produce with which the Land of Israel is blessed, the Jewish People realized that milk was indeed permitted.





CONGREGATION AABJ&D
presents

TIKKUN LEIL SHAVUOT

ALL-NIGHT LEARNING PROGRAM

*Rabbi Zwickler (outside at 11:30pm)
Rabbi Sharbat (outside at 12:30am)
And more! (inside)*

YOUTH RAFFLE PRIZES

*Including:
Nintendo Switch
All-you-can-eat at Holy Schnitzel
And more!*

SUNDAY, MAY 16TH

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FIRST DAY OF SHAVUOT, MONDAY, MAY 17



Join Rabbi and Sharon Zwickler in their backyard,
25 Curtis Avenue, for Torah and Ice Cream!

4:30-5:00PM: Grades 1-4

5:30-6:00PM: Grades 5-8



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Lauren Elise Bier
Nursery School
AT CONGREGATION AABJ&D

Aliza Maslansky
Early Childhood Director
alizam@aabjd.org

Our spring explorations at The Lauren Elise Bier Nursery School are in full swing. Once Purim was over, we delved right into learning about Pesach. Each class learned so much about the Chag and created their own wonderful Haggadot and projects to bring home and use to enhance their families sederim. We had two different model seders this year. The Tiny Tots and 2's had their model seder in their classroom and invited parents and grandparents to join them virtually. The 3's and Pre-K classes also had a virtual model seder with family, but this special seder was led by Rabbi Zwickler over Zoom.



After Pesach we began counting the Omer. Each day we added a number to our chart and the children were very excited to count the days until we get the Torah. The 3's and Pre-K classes each have their own charts that they count on daily.

During the Omer we had a few special holidays. The first one was Yom Ha'atzmaut. Each child made their own Israeli flag and then the whole school gathered, socially distanced of course, to decorate their own visors, and sing and dance together to celebrate Israel's 73rd birthday. We then celebrated Lag B'Omer where we had picnic lunches outside and enjoyed bringing some of our riding toys outside as well.



The week of May 3rd we celebrated Teacher Appreciation Week and our teachers received special gifts to show them how appreciated they are for being part of our school. Thank you to our PTA for making this week special for our dedicated morot.



On Yom Yerushalayim we built our own Kotel in the lobby and each class took turns visiting and putting notes in the wall.

As we prepared for Shavuot we learned about the Torah and sang songs about Har Sinai. We hope our families enjoy the lovely projects that we made and brought home for the chag.

It's hard to believe that the end of the year is so near. We are very excited for our End of Year Celebrations and Pre-K Graduation. Registration is open for the 2021-2022 school year and we invite anyone who is interested in our program to please reach out to Aliza.

We wish everyone a wonderful summer! We look forward to seeing everyone back in September!

LAUREN ELISE BIER NURSERY SCHOOL
OF CONGREGATION AABJ&D

**REGISTRATION
OPEN FOR 2020-2021**

FROM FIRST DISCOVERIES TO LASTING SKILLS,
THE LAUREN ELISE BIER NURSERY SCHOOL AT
CONGREGATION AABJ&D IN WEST ORANGE, NJ
PROVIDES CHILDREN AGES 1 YEAR-5 YEARS OLD
WITH A JOYFUL INITIAL CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE
AND A SOLID JEWISH FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE.
COME SEE FOR YOURSELF!

HURRY...SPACE IS LIMITED!

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER,
CONTACT ALIZA AT ALIZAM@AABJD.ORG
OR VISIT WWW.AABJD.ORG/NURSERY-SCHOOL

Camp Shemesh



Sura Rozenberg
Camp Director
aabjdsummercamp@gmail.com

Each night Jewish adults stand to count the omer and count the days until Shavout. We are looking forward to commemorating the receiving of the Torah and eating cheesecake. While grown ups are busy counting up to Shavout the kids of West Orange are counting down the days until Camp Shemesh (36 days from the first night of Shavout). This summer our Camp Theme is "All About Me". We will have weekly mini themes including My favorite Animal is, When I grow up, My favorite Color Happy Birthday and more. We have so many fun activities, projects and visitors planned for our summer and we can't wait for the summer to begin.

There are still spots left in camp if you are interested in registering your child or have any questions please e-mail camp director Sura Rozenberg at aabjdsummercamp@gmail.com



Men's Club

Saul Maslansky
Ilan Rosenrauch
Co-Presidents

The AABJ&D Men's Club holds special outings and events throughout the year and provides members with the unique opportunity to serve the Synagogue and Community by working on various special fundraising projects and social events. The Men's Club commits to \$10,000 of the Shul budget every year, making each and every fundraiser and event an important and beneficial one for the entire community.

We would like to thank everyone in the West Orange community for their ongoing support of the AABJ&D Men's Club and look forward to providing many more activities and programs for you throughout the year.

Men's club meetings are held monthly and we are always looking for individuals to take an interest in what we do and join us as we proceed with our programming of future events. If you have any questions about the Men's Club or would like to help plan any activities, please contact our co-presidents, Saul Maslansky and Ilan Rosenrauch.



Sisterhood News

Sorahleah Yudkowitz Mandelbaum
Chanie Goldstein
Co-Presidents

Chag Sameach!! Can't believe it's already Shavuot! We are excited about the spring and summer weather and all of the exciting Sisterhood events and activities we can look forward to, now that we can spend more time outdoors.

The Sisterhood is proud to be this year's sponsor of the Shavuot community giveaway. As we move into the second half of this year, we wanted to express how grateful we are for the friendship, support and dedication of the members of West Orange AABJ&D. We hope you enjoy the creamy delicious cheesecake and special truffle/liqueur combo! Thank you to **Larry Rein, Robin Amster, and Dorene Richman** for their creative and dedicated work on the gift bags. Thank you also to the volunteers who helped package and deliver the gifts to the many members of our community!



For Shavuot, **Barry Geiger & Midtown Florist** have outdone themselves with magnificent bouquets! We hope you are enjoying these beauties and if you missed the opportunity this chag, don't fret – the Shabbat bouquets are available to the community every week! Weekly order deadline for Shabbat delivery is Wednesdays at 8:00PM. Check out the weekly emails to put a smile on someone's face any time of the year! Bonus: you can also donate any amount (on the bottom of the form) towards bouquets to be delivered to our local nursing homes.



Our **#HowdoyouScrip** campaign continues on! We hope you all took advantage of the scrip available from so many of our local proprietors as you did your Shavuot shopping. Did you know that we offer scrip from almost every retailer you can think of including Carvel (yum!) and Amazon!! We're all already shopping, so why not support your shul as you shop? If you sign up for monthly scrip delivery, signing up is a one-time process and the cards or e-cards will automatically be delivered to you on a monthly basis... it's literally as simple as that! Many thanks to all of you who continue to support the Shul through Scrip and to the rest of you that will join!! Additionally, many thanks to the Scrip team that dedicates so much time and effort to this project: Yosef Birnboim, Larry Rein, Robin Amster, Sharon Zughaft, and Hannah Kestenbaum.

Ordering Scrip is easy! Simply click on the link: <https://www.aabjd.org/scrip>



amazon



A special thank you to Esther Schultz who works tirelessly every day to pull all these and other events together!

We're looking forward to greeting you outdoors as the weather improves, and hopefully soon, indoors, as we start to come together again in person, please G-d!

A A B J & D S I S T E R H O O D



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Youth

Shifra Caruso
youth@aabjd.org

Chag Sameach! Purim with the youth department was so much fun even though we were still virtual. Our many Purim events included Hamentashen baking with baker extraordinaire Shira Waldstreicher, a virtual family escape room, a costume contest won by Meir Kaplan and Dovid Shimon Rozehzadeh, Megillah reading with Daughters of Israel and Etan Hindin, and our first ever virtual Mentalism Beyond Belief show with mentalist David Jaison. Thank you to our generous sponsors the Hammerman family, Kestenbaum family, and Anonymous for bringing Purim joy to our youth!

Our joint youth family Lag Ba'omer extravaganza with Ohr Torah was a huge success! We had different inflatables, live action archery, and a visit from our local firefighter heroes and their fire truck! There was something for every age (even an impromptu game of archery for adults at the end....we cater to everyone, not just youth!)

Wishing everyone a Chag Sameach!





TIE DYE & SPRAY PAINT
SHAVUOT SUNDAY

AABJ&D and Ohr Torah Youth Department

May 16th
AABJ&D Parking Lot 700 Pleasant Valley Way

BRING YOUR OWN SHIRT

Come decorate your clothing and the shul parking lot like Hashem decorated Har Sinai!

k - 2nd grade 10:00- 10:40 am	3rd - 5th grade 10:45- 11:30 am
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Every child will get their own chalk package - Masks and social distancing enforced - Registration required

Marketing

Esti Buskin

The warm weather is always a sign of so many wonderful things in our community, from longer and nicer days, to kids playing outside, to Shavuot right around the corner. It also means calls and emails from so many families anxious to find out more about moving to our community. This year has brought more interest than ever as word spreads about the special and caring place that West Orange is.

We are excited to share the following updates:

Discover West Orange Drive-By!

On Sunday, May 2nd, the Marketing Committee hosted our first “Drive-By” event this year for prospective families. We welcomed 10 families who were interested in learning about West Orange. Families stopped first at AABJ&D and were greeted by Rabbi & Sharon Zwickler, Rabbi & Batya Sharbat, and community members. They also picked up a package of materials about West Orange, as well as a map to guide them throughout the day. From there they went to Ohr Torah, where they met Rabbi & Debra Spivak, and additional members of the community, and received a delicious lunch from Super Duper Bagels. Guests then stopped at the West Orange Bakery to pick up a dessert, and many met up at the Redwood School playground for some fun before heading home.

Attendees had an opportunity to hear first-hand from members of our community about what makes West Orange so special—including our shuls, schools, and so much more. Many thanks to those who participated and represented West Orange so well. And a special thank you to the members of the Marketing Committee for their hard work in planning and coordinating such a successful event. We hope to see our prospective families in West Orange again soon... as residents!



AABJ&D Welcomes New Families

Since December, we have welcomed the following families to West Orange:

- Ayala and Eldar Ben Zikry
- Alana and Josh Levitt
- Lana and Yoni Glatt
- Valentina and Ilya Rabkin

Several more will be moving over the coming months, and we look forward to welcoming them.

New families received a welcome gift and are invited to join our active Welcome WhatsApp group, where new families have an opportunity to network with each other and ask questions related to the neighborhood. If you moved to West Orange within the last year, and you would like to join the WhatsApp group, please email welcome@aabjd.org or contact Stephanie Hartman & Alanna Ben David.

Please join us in welcoming all of our new families to our community.

Stay Informed!

In partnership with the Shul office, we continue to deliver AABJ&D communications to you in multiple ways to help you stay informed of programming, events and important AABJ&D information. As a reminder:

- The **“AABJ&D Weekly”** email provides the schedule, programming and reminders for the upcoming week, and the **“AABJ&D Daily”** email includes the schedule and events of the day. Be sure to check your inbox every morning for the latest and greatest information from AABJ&D!
- The **AABJ&D WhatsApp Group** provides news and other important updates. Join the group at <https://chat.whatsapp.com/los1BLEp5qM307yaAUzS7e>. (There are also a number of additional AABJ&D WhatsApp Groups which offer learning and inspiration- including Rabbi Zwickler’s daily *Points to Ponder*)
- **AABJ&D FaceBook** - please go to www.facebook.com/aabjd and follow us, like us, and share our posts with your family and friends. This is a great way to amplify all of the great things that are happening in our community.
- We hope you have taken the time to check out the **AABJ&D website** at www.AABJD.org.

The site includes replays of our classes and events, so they can be conveniently viewed on -demand and much more. In addition, if you haven’t done so already, please log in and check your profile page under “My Accounts” and click on “My Profile”. Ensure your personal information such as contact information, family details, and yahrzeits, are up to date so we can provide you with communications and reminders that are most relevant to you.

Many thanks to Esther Schultz for everything she does on a daily basis to help deliver our communications. She is a rock star!

Have a wonderful Shavuot!

Tribute To Mickey Weiss

Bryan Bier

Andrea and I had the privilege to live next door to Mr. Weiss (Mickey) for over 32 years – since the summer of 1988. Andrea and I visited Mickey often, especially since the passing of his beloved wife, Zitta, approximately 9 years ago. Visiting him gave us much chizuk and I am sharing with you a personal perspective of things that we used to talk about.



Mickey vividly remembered milking the cows and drinking the warm milk.

When Mickey's sister Alice left for America in 1938, she told her family to come to America, but that in order to survive in the USA, everyone needed to learn a trade. Mickey then decided to become a baker. Though his parents were not happy with his choice, Mickey apprenticed as a baker for three years, from age 14-17. As an apprentice, Mickey was not paid, but was given room and board. In order to become a certified baker in Europe, one had to apprentice with 3 different bakers and, if qualified, one received his certification and a book from the baker's guild. Because of the war, Mickey did not receive his baker's book. Several years ago, Mickey contacted the town where he had apprenticed as a baker and asked for his official baker's book and they sent it to him.

After completing his apprenticeship, Mickey worked as a baker in Meze Khasene in the Berehove district of Transcarpathia Oblast in the Ukraine, near the Hungarian border. Mickey recalled that "Rabbi Teitelbaum, the Khasene Rebbe's son-in-law, was my good friend. We were later in concentration camp together." Mickey purchased that bakery and worked there until the Nazis deported him in 1943. He made extra money by taking cholent pots from the community and putting them into the bakery's ovens on Friday afternoons to let the cholent bake overnight. Mickey also provided bread to keep his fellow Jews alive during the war.

Mickey survived having been incarcerated in a total of four concentration camps: Birkenau, Auschwitz, Gross-Rosen, and Dachau. In Auschwitz, the Nazis specifically asked for bakers to operate the crematorium, and Mickey was forced to work there.

With the passing of Miklos Weiss (Mickey) this past March, our shul lost its last founder, past president, and another holocaust survivor. Mickey was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award at our shul's Annual Dinner in several years ago. Much of his life history was recorded by Mali Schwartz and I am sharing some of that here.

Mickey Weiss was born in 1924 in the Hungarian village of Pustadovitch, a small town of 400 families, 16 of which were Jewish. All of the Jewish families in Pustadovitch were Shomer Shabbos. The town had a shul, a mikvah and a shochet. The nearby town of Nermoda was much larger with 150 Jewish families. Mickey remembered that "8-10 yeshiva bochurim used to come to our village for Shabbos and were farmed out among the residents. My mother would get up about 3 in the morning on Fridays to begin preparing for Shabbos."

Mickey's parents Jenno and Leah had six children – three girls and three boys. Mickey was their youngest son and their second youngest child. Mickey's father was in the meat and vegetable import/export business and had a thriving business before World War II. They had a nice house with a large vegetable garden, fruit trees, and a small chicken coop.

Mickey came to the United States in 1946, remembering his narrow escape from the Nazis and was grateful to be able to start a new life in America. He came with his father and two brothers under the auspices of HIAS, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, the international migration agency of the American Jewish community. When Mickey first arrived in America, he stayed with his sister, Alice, in Brooklyn, and found a job as a baker in Long Island. He later worked as a baker for two of the largest baking companies in New York.

Mickey had stayed in touch with his friend from Europe, Rabbi Teitelbaum, who had also come to America. Rabbi Teitelbaum introduced Mickey to Zitta, z"l, his beloved wife of 61 years. She had also survived the Holocaust having been incarcerated in Auschwitz. They dated for several months and were married in 1950. Mickey found a job as pastry chef at Grossingers and the Concord Hotel, but Zitta did not like living there.

Mickey then opened a bakery in Manhattan with a partner on Columbus and 92nd Street. Shortly afterwards, Goldman's Hotel in West Orange hired Mickey to work a Bar Mitzvah. They liked him so much they offered him a job there. Mickey wasn't that interested, so he asked for a very high salary, thinking that they would refuse. Instead, they gave him what he asked for.

Long before Route 280 was in existence, West Orange was a mountain resort for the Jewish population of Newark. The Hotel was built in the late 1940s and grew into a large sprawling complex with a nine-hole golf course. The hotel was remodeled in the 1960s and became the Town and Campus Hotel.

That hotel and catering hall is now the Wilshire Grand, owned by Mickey's son, David. Mickey sold his share of the New York

bakery to his partner and moved to West Orange in 1952. Mickey fondly remembered the Goldman brothers, Arthur, Mack and Harold. While he started as the baker, Mickey was eventually put in charge of the entire kitchen and he insisted on a higher standard of kashrus. Goldman's became Glatt Kosher and offered catering of affairs such as weddings, bar mitzvahs, etc. Later, he rose to become the manager.

In the early 1960s there was enough interest in town to start an Orthodox shul and Mickey and Zitta were at the forefront of that effort. B'nai David was established in 1963 in what had been an animal hospital on Eagle Rock Avenue – across from where Aron's is now. Mickey would relate that they did not have money for a custodian, members, and especially the wives, would be called upon to sweep and mop the floors, clean the bathrooms, and put out the kiddush. He used to relate that no one left shul on Shabbos mornings until the shul was cleaned up and everything put away. Children were expected to help as well. There were no "free rides" as he put it.

Mickey treated our shul as if it were his own child. He was known to make minyan attendance a requirement for any Jewish males who worked in the hotel. He did not care if they were religious or not. In 1966, they were able to purchase 700 Pleasant Valley Way, in what was a Baptist Church. Timing was right because in July 1967 came the Newark Riots which drove most of the Jewish population out of Newark.

In 1967, B'nai David accepted the merger of several Orthodox synagogues from Newark, including the over 400 family member Congregation Ahawas Achim. Mickey was at the forefront of this effort. Other Newark synagogues joined afterwards into the early 1970s. The first building expansion started in

(continued on page 18)

1971. Several families from the West Orange Jewish Center, who were seeking an Orthodox davening, joined our shul at around that time were accepted with open arms by Mickey, the other founders, and Rabbi Marcus, who came to West Orange in June 1968. It was Mickey who hired Rabbi Marcus to lead a rapidly growing Orthodox Jewish community.

I share this perspective with you because Mickey took pride in helping to create a shul that was both inviting and accepting of anyone and everyone. Our shul is no different today. When shul politics would come up, Mickey would relate to me that personal interests should be put aside for the good of the shul and community.

Mickey loved our shul and it annoyed him in recent years when it was too difficult for him to walk to shul because of pain in his sciatica. Mickey had a lot of pride and resisted being pushed in a wheelchair. Over the past 10 or so years, when walking to shul became difficult for Mickey, neighbors on Lakeview Drive would make a Friday night minyan in his home from May until October. Ed Zughaft, Rich Kelin, and my wife would email around to make sure that we would have enough for a minyan.

Our neighbors gave Mickey the respect and honor that he deserved. This past High Holiday time, it was decided to daven in tents in the joint back yards of Ira & Ora Bloom and Howie & Yonit Felderman. We noticed that on the first day, that Mickey, who was a Cohen, was not able to make it down to join the other Cohanim to Duchan. We realized that Mr. Weiss, because of the slope of the land, could not make it down in his wheelchair. On the next day, when it came time to Duchan, the other Cohanim made sure to pay extra attention to Mickey, coming near his tent so that he would not be left out. One of the Cohanim bent down to untie his shoes, and another brought the water to him to wash his hands.

When visiting Mickey, and Andrea and I both did so increasingly over the past year, he would regularly ask me caring questions about the shul, such as how many people were in shul that Shabbat, or how many new families had joined, and how the shul was doing financially. I know firsthand that it bothered Mickey immensely that that because of covid, the shul needed to be closed last year from March until June and he could not understand why more people were not coming to visit him. I remember him saying to me several times "how can we close the shul? How can we put a limit on who how many can come inside?" This he could not understand.

It gave him much satisfaction when I shared with him that the numbers of attendees in shul were on the rise again as recently as this past February and March. If he could have, Mickey would have been a regular Shabbat morning attendee despite "the bug" (his term for covid).

When Zitta passed away, Mickey and his son David, dedicated the Youth Lounge in our shul in her memory. Mickey used to talk about the importance of making sure that our youth had their own space so that they feel a part of the shul. Mickey also dedicated 2 sifrei torah to our shul to mark special personal occasions in his life.

The entire Weiss family, including David's son, Travis, who manages the catering at the hotel, have been very generous to our shul by providing their facility at no cost for our shul's Annual Dinner.

In his lifetime, Mickey taught us all how to be a loving a caring husband. His son David taught us how to honor one's father.

We all owe Mickey much haharat hatov for his efforts, his example, and his resilience.

Inclusion

Eta Levenson

The inclusion committee is proud to have participated in Mental Health Shabbat on the first weekend in May.

Originally developed by the Jewish community in Montreal 3 years ago, this program has opened up to communities around the country, providing 4 virtual workshops over a 4-day period.

In addition, our rabbis addressed the issue of Mental Health Awareness in their Shabbat morning drashot and messages to the community.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month. During this past year of COVID, many of us are finding ourselves struggling with issues we had either never had before, or never addressed before. The stigma of Mental Health challenges has been diminished by (finally) a societal recognition of the prevalence of these kinds of challenges among all people. It is no longer a shame to ask for help - rather it is a shame to NOT ask for help - when there are so many resources available, many at just a click of your keyboard.

As always, please feel free to reach out to one of us on the AABJ&D Inclusion Committee, or to our wonderful and discreet rabbis, for guidance.

All contacts are kept strictly confidential.

The AABJ&D Inclusion Committee -
Eta Krasna Levenson (chair), Paula Peikes,
Mindy Saibel, Juliet Rutner, Cheryl Munk,
Batya Jacob, Abbie Cohen, Debra Hauerstock
Ivker

Jewish War Veterans

Irwin Novick

Help us continue to keep our 180 year tradition of Jewish War Veterans place in United States history. Sanford L. Kahn Post 538 located in West Orange was started in 1946. It has continuously supported our Veterans-In-Need as well as social causes.

Some of these activities include:

1-Monthly visits to the Paramus Veterans Home sponsoring a Bingo Game for more than 100 Veteran residents; men and women who served. Gifts and snacks are also furnished

2 - Sponsoring annually a \$500 Olympiad Award to an outstanding high-school graduating student in memory of Israeli Olympians murdered in Munich.

3 - Providing funds for youth in scouting.

4 - Donating to the National Museum of American Jewish History in Washington, D.C.; where worldwide visitors are informed about the Jewish Veterans' role in our Country's Military History.

OUR MEMBERSHIP HAS SEVERELY DECREASED due to age, poor health, relocation and death. To continue our long tradition of helping our Veterans, we NEED YOUR HELP.

The SANFORD L. KAHN POST 538 meets monthly in West Orange.

We offer free membership for one year to all new members.

If interested, please contact IRWIN W. NOVICK @ 973-736-2988 for additional information and meeting dates.

Weekly Learning At A Glance

Join Joel Rich as we continue our series of Zoom shiurim in which we study the first book of The Rambam's Mishna Torah, Sefer Madda.

Sunday Mornings at 10:00 AM

No prior background is required for this series and each session can be attended independently.

AABJ&D Zoom Room

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Dial by phone: +1 929 205 6099, Meeting ID: 289 217 360



Zecharya

WITH RABBI YOSEF SHARBAT

TUESDAYS AT 8PM

Click here to join the Tanach WhatsApp Group for shiur updates.

AABJ&D ZOOM ROOM

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Dial by phone: +1 929 205 6099

Meeting ID: 860 8848 4151

See the bottom of the daily email for password.



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WOMEN'S Parshat Hashavuah SHIUR

WITH RABBI
ELIEZER ZWICKLER

TUESDAYS
AT 10AM

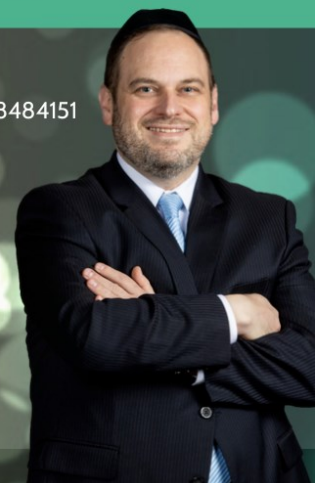
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Gemara Shiur

With Rabbi Eliezer Zwickler
Thursday Nights at 8:00PM

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Start Your Week Off Right!

Shabbat Morning Parsha Shiur
with Rabbi Eliezer Zwickler

Join us every Shabbat morning
at 9:00AM in the Social Hall
of Congregation AABJ&D.


Pirkei Avot

With Rabbi Eliezer Zwickler

Join us weekly on
Shabbat afternoon at 6:15PM
under the awning outside at
Congregation AABJ&D.




Dedication Opportunities

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Chumash Dedication **\$50**

Interested in dedicating a Siddur or Chumash
in honor of a special occasion or in memory
of a loved one? Contact the Shul office:
office@aabjd.org.



Tree of Life
Opportunities to participate:
Leaf- \$180
Rock - \$3,600
Pomegranate- \$5,000
Tree - \$25,000

Contact the Shul office:
office@aabjd.org


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Smores Cheesecake

Ingredients:

Nonstick cooking spray, for the pan
2 heaping tablespoons sugar
7 ounces graham crackers (about 14 sheets)
1 stick (8 tablespoons) unsalted butter, melted
One 1/4-ounce package unflavored powdered gelatin (about 2 1/4 teaspoons)
2 pounds cream cheese, at room temperature
Two 16-ounce containers marshmallow creme
Kosher salt
Three 1.55-ounce milk chocolate bars, such as Hershey's
3 cups (about 4 1/2 ounces) miniature marshmallows

Directions:

1. Spray a 9-inch springform pan with cooking spray. Combine the sugar and 6 ounces (12 sheets) graham crackers to a food processor and pulse to fine crumbs. Drizzle in the butter and pulse until the crumbs are completely coated and moistened. Firmly press the crumb mixture into the bottom of the prepared pan. Refrigerate while you make the filling.
2. Sprinkle the powdered gelatin over 1/4 cup cold water in a small microwave-safe bowl and allow to sit for 5 minutes. Microwave the gelatin in 15-second intervals, stirring or whisking vigorously in between each, until the mixture is very hot and the gelatin has completely dissolved, about 45 seconds total. Allow to cool completely to room temperature.
3. Combine the cream cheese, marshmallow creme and a pinch of salt to a large bowl, then use an electric mixer to blend until completely smooth. Add the cooled gelatin mixture and blend until thoroughly combined. Pour into the prepared crust, smoothing out the top with a rubber spatula. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate until



completely set, at least 6 hours and up to overnight.

4. Remove the plastic wrap and place the cheesecake on a cooling rack set over a baking sheet. Run a small offset spatula or paring knife around the edges of the cheesecake to loosen it from the pan, then open the pan's clasp and remove the outer ring. Use the off-set spatula or the back of the paring knife to smooth out the sides of the cheesecake.
5. Break 2 chocolate bars into small pieces and add to a medium microwave-safe bowl. Microwave in 15 second intervals, stirring after each, until the chocolate is completely melted, about 1 minute total. Drizzle the chocolate back and forth over the top of the cheesecake with a spoon, then place back in the refrigerator until the chocolate has hardened, about 20 minutes.
6. Pile the marshmallows on top of the cheesecake. Use a kitchen torch to toast the marshmallows, then break up the remaining graham crackers and chocolate bar into large pieces and stand the pieces up in the marshmallows.
7. Allow the cheesecake to sit at room temperature for 15 minutes (so the marshmallows aren't super gooey when you cut into it), then slice and serve immediately.

Mazel Tov

- Mazel Tov to Rocky & Meir Milgraum on the birth of a baby girl. Mazal Tov to the grandparents Rivkie & Yaakov Moradi and to big sisters Atara, Leora & Daniella. mazel Tov to aunts & uncles and the entire Milgraum & Moradi mishpachas.
- Mazel Tov to Abe Cohen on his Bar Mitzvah. Mazel Tov to parents Elisa & Mitch Cohen, sister Molly and brother Jack. Mazel Tov to grandparents Sol Glickman and Judy & Ari Cohen.
- Mazel Tov to Jack Cohen on his Bar Mitzvah. Mazel Tov to parents Elisa & Mitch Cohen, sister Molly and brother Abe. Mazel Tov to grandparents Sol Glickman and Judy & Ari Cohen.
- Mazel Tov to Dana & Ethan Amzallag of Jerusalem on the birth of a daughter on Purim. Mazel Tov to grandparents Nadine & Rusty Wruble of Jerusalem, Catherine & Joel Amzallag of Paris, France; great grandmother Lorraine Rennert and the entire family.
- Mazel Tov to Renee & Moshe Glick on the birth of a granddaughter. Mazel Tov to parents Esther & Calev Glick, to great grandparents Arlene & Naftali Glick and Shirley Glickman, to the aunts and uncles, and to the entire Glick and Alexander families.
- Mazel tov to Shira Kelin and Rafi Nemes on their recent marriage. Mazel tov to parents Sue and Richard Kelin and to grandmother Bea Taubenfeld. Mazel to Fawn and Alan Nemes of St. Louis.
- Mazel tov to Jill and Barry Geiger on the birth of a grandson. Mazel tov to parents Lakey and Josh Silverman, big brother Yosef, and big sisters Shayna and Chavi.
- Mazel Tov to Zevi Zwickler on his Bar Mitzvah. Mazel Tov to parents Rabbi Eliezer & Sharon Zwickler. Mazel Tov to grandparents Sena Ginsburg and Harold Ginsburg. Mazel Tov to siblings Yitzzy, Tziporah and Menachem.
- Mazel Tov to Josh Harris on his Bar Mitzvah. Mazel Tov to parents Daphie & Joel Harris and siblings Zoe & Ben. Mazel Tov to the extended Genauer and Harris families.
- Mazel Tov to Gail and Mark Hausdorff on the birth of twin granddaughters, Kate Bonnie and Celia Adele. Mazel Tov to parents Sara and Michael Fellus and to big siblings, Liza and Oscar. Mazel Tov to grandparents Odette and Jimmy Fellus and to all the aunts, uncles and cousins.
- Mazel Tov to Rabbi Alvin & Marilyn Marcus on the Bar Mitzvah of their great grandson, Yaakov Bashist, this Shabbat. Mazel Tov to parents Rabbi Michael and Debra Bashist and to great aunt and uncle Leah and Joshua Marcus.
- Mazel Tov to Maya Zeif on her Bat Mitzvah. Mazel Tov to parents Staci & Doron Zeif and to siblings Kira, Noah and Adina. Mazel Tov to grandparents Keri & Len Gershuny, and Susan & Bob Zeif. Mazel Tov to all aunts, uncles, cousins and the entire extended family.
- Mazel Tov to Ricki and Michael Roth on the birth of a grandson, Shlomo Meir Roth. Mazel Tov to parents Aliza and Yechiel Roth and big brother Yehuda Simcha! Mazel Tov to aunts and uncles Ariella and Juda Zurndorfer and Annette and Josh Roth. Mazel Tov to great grandparents Harold and Malka Tokayer and Barbara Roth.
- Mazel Tov to Daveda & Matthew Lipman on the birth of a grandson. Mazel Tov to parents Dalia & Gary Feder and big brother, Shmuel. Mazel Tov to Aunt Julia & Uncle Eli, to grandparents Sybil & Mel Feder of Woodmere and to the entire Lipman and Feder families.
- Mazel tov to Mindy & Kenny Saibel on the birth of a granddaughter, Annie Sophia-Aviva Sarit. Mazel to parents Atara & Ari Gartenberg and to big sister Maya. Mazel tov to great grandparents Stan Cohen & Bunny Saibel. Mazel tov to grandparents Miriam & Michael Gartenberg and to all of the aunts, uncles, cousins and the entire extended family.
- Mazel Tov to Dori & Rich Sobin and Andy & Lenny Elstein on the Bar Mitzvah of their grandson Ikey Elstein this Shabbat in

Mazel Tov, cont'd

Hillside, NJ. Mazel Tov to parents Tami & Josh Elstein and to siblings Jacob, Nili, Shaya & Sari. Mazel Tov to great grandparents, Maurine & Larry Sobin.

- Mazel Tov to Lee & Stan Saal on the engagement of their grandson, Jake Saal, son of Jennifer and Matthew Saal to Debby Greenstein, daughter of Sandra & Ira Greenstein and niece of Andrea & Dr. Ronald Sutlan.
- Mazel Tov to Barbara & Yosef Muskin on the birth of a grandson in Yerushalayim. Mazel Tov to parents Dorit & Ariel Cohen and brother Ivri. Mazel Tov to aunts and uncles, Hani & Ariel Sterngold, and Eliana & Oren Wintner, and to cousins.
- Mazel Tov to Jill & Barry Geiger on the Bar Mitzvah of their grandson, Jordan Silverman, this Shabbat in Bergenfield. Mazel Tov to parents Dani Silverman and Renana Silverman and to brother Jared.
- Mazel Tov to Shari & David Cherna on the birth of a granddaughter. Mazel Tov to parents Rebecca & Ami Schwarcz and big brother Dylan. Mazel Tov to great grandmother Natalie Schonfeld, aunt and uncles Rachel & Zach, and Sammy. Mazel Tov to grandparents Rick & Bruriah Schwarcz and the entire Cherna and Schwarcz families.
- Mazel Tov to Gail & Bruce Bukiet on the birth of a granddaughter, Orly Shira. Mazel Tov to parents Aviva & Steven Balter. Mazel Tov to big sister Bayla and to the entire family.
- Mazel Tov to Andra & Craig Goldman on the birth of a granddaughter. Mazel Tov to parents Deena & Oren Vaknin, grandparents Gabriel and Esther Vaknin, along with aunts, uncles and cousins.

Condolences

We extend our condolences on the passing of...

- One of our beloved founders and longtime member, Mickey Weiss.
- Ian Beube, beloved brother of Lilli Tammam.
- Carol Goldsammler, beloved wife of Barry Goldsammler and mother of Brad Goldsammler.
- Dr. Phillip Rosenberg, beloved husband of Sybil Rosenberg and father of Stuart, Rachelle and Gail.
- Lea Gottesman, beloved mother of Doris Hartman.
- Sylvia Cherna, beloved mother of David Cherna.
- Syon Eghbali, beloved father of Nahid Ohevshalom.



There are so many things happening and ways to get involved. Below you will find a list of some of our Shul committees and chairpersons.

Please feel free to contact them to either volunteer or inquire about their activities. If you have a special skill or talent that you would like to share or an idea that you would like to discuss, contact us at office@aabjd.org.

- **Adult Education:** Gregory Zuckerman (Gregory.zuckerman@wsj.com). Plans and coordinates all classes, lectures, and scholar-in-residence programs.
- **Cemetery Committee:** Judy Israeli (idadesq@aol.com), Chaim Silverman (Chaim@silverlaining.com), Anna Chosak (chosakhouse@comcast.net)
- **Chevre Kadisha:** Avi Laub (avilaub@yahoo.com)
- **Early Childhood:** Judy Birnboim (judybirnboim@gmail.com). Oversees the Nursery School and Summer Camp programs.
- **Fundraising:** Bryan Bier (bryanbier@comcast.net) and Larry Rein (reinlawrence@gmail.com)
- **Hi-Tech:** Seth Lyons (seth.lyons@gmail.com) and Yosef Birnboim (yosef@birnboim.com). Maintains website and all hi-tech equipment.
- **House:** Rob Wagner (email4rob@aol.com). Maintains our buildings and properties.
- **Inclusion:** Eta Levenson (jeserichad@aol.com)
- **Israel Action & Advocacy**
- **Kiddush Society:** Larry Liebman (liebmancpa@gmail.com). Helps provide the weekly kiddush and Seudah Shlishit.
- **Legal:** David Cherna (davidchern@gmail.com)
- **Marketing:** Esti Buskin (estibuskin@gmail.com). Responsible for recruiting, hospitality, welcoming new members, and shul communications.
- **Men's Club:** Ilan Rosenrauch (ilanrosenrauch@gmail.com) and Saul Maslansky (sjm1583@gmail.com).
- **Outreach:** Moshe Glick (mglickus@gmail.com) and Ira Bloom (IBloom@kushnercompanies.com). Coordinates programs of interest to the non affiliated.
- **Ritual:** Mitch Cohen (mitch@cohens98.com). Oversees the conduct of religious services.
- **Security:** Robert Ivker (tnsnyc@aol.com)
- **Seniors -Together on Tuesday:** Debbie Druce (deborahdruce@gmail.com)
- **Seudah Shlishit:** Mayer Popack (popack1@verizon.net)
- **Shiva:** Jaicky Tammam (jaickytammam@gmail.com) Coordinates shiva house needs and minyanim. Pnina Popack - coordinates shiva meals.
- **Sisterhood:** Chanie Gottlieb (chaniegottlieb@gmail.com) and Sorahleah Mandelbaum (sorahleah@gmail.com).
- **Tehillim:** Ora Bloom (obloom06@gmail.com) and Debbie Druce (deborahdruce@gmail.com)
- **Welcome** (marketing sub-committee): Stephanie Hartman and Alanna Ben David (welcoming@aabjd.org). Welcomes and facilitates integration of new members into the community.
- **Youth:** Shira Waldstreicher, Pam Greenwood, Jennifer Minsky (youth@aabjd.org)

Please note that all of our Board meetings are open to the membership.

CONGREGATION AABJ&D PRESENTS...

Counting Up

A Compilation Of Divrei Torah By AABJ&D Members

Shavuot 5781/ 2021

May this learning
project be a source
of blessings for all
generations.



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In honor of my children, grandchildren and great grandchildren
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Rachel & Dr. Howard Neiman and Family
Michelle & Rabbi Mark Smilowitz and Family

This learning project is
sponsored by Anonymous.

Dedicated by
Nili & Andrew Yolin
and Felicia Schipper

In memory of beloved
husband Zvi Harry Schipper,
Zvi Aryeh ben Shmuel Gronmin, z"l
devoted father of Nili Yolin
and grandfather of Koby, Nava and Jonah
in commemoration of this fourth Yahrzeit.

Dedicated
in memory of
my beloved parents,
Vivian and Julius Rein, z”l

They are true role models who believed in
passing along the tradition of Jewish learning
and getting involved in your community.

Larry Rein

In memory of Hersh Fluss, יצחק צבי בן ישראל זאב
whose Yahrtzeit was commemorated on כ"ז אייר

יהי זכרו ברוך

Donna and Harold Fluss

Active Listening: Are We Really Present?

By: Rabbi Eliezer Zwickler

There was a radio commercial a few years back that I absolutely adored, about a little girl who couldn't hear. Two voices spoke almost simultaneously about very different treatment options. The first voice represented one medical facility where the girl received treatment and the second voice represented a different, hypothetical facility. The commercial was clearly paid for by the former, where she received a cochlear implant that allowed her to hear. The commercial ended with a representative of the successful facility saying that the girl is now like every other 4 year old, "She hears, but she doesn't listen!" It's a phrase that might ring true for many of us.

The *eved ivri* is a Jewish slave who is sold into slavery. Rashi (Shemot 21:6) explains that this individual ended up as a slave for one of two reasons. Either he was sold into slavery by the court after having been found guilty of stealing, or he sold himself into slavery because of his poverty. At the conclusion of the sixth year of his servitude, the Torah informs us that this slave is to be granted freedom. If the slave wishes to stay in his present state, his master is told to bind his ear to the doorpost as a sign of the beginning of his lifelong servitude. Rashi quotes the Mechilta in the name of Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai as to why the ear is punctured as opposed to a different part of the body.

Rashi explains that the ear is singled out because of the role it played in the Jew becoming a slave. In the case of thievery, the ear heard the words "You shall not steal" spoken at Har Sinai, but did not listen. In the case of poverty, the ear heard at Har Sinai that we are to be servants to Hashem only, but did not listen. The ear is punished through piercing because in either case, the Jewish

slave failed to listen to Hashem's words. From this we learn that hearing is not the same as listening.

This is far too often the case for those of us who, Baruch Hashem, have been given the ability to hear. We hear, but we don't always listen. Is it that we don't want to listen, or do we unknowingly allow our minds to wander while someone else is speaking to us?

When it comes to dating and marriage, discerning the distinction between hearing and listening is critical. In our society, the term "being present" has become very popular. Being present means that one is engaged in an experience on multiple levels. In order to be present, an individual must be attentive to a particular experience on a cognitive, emotional and physical level.

Yet this is an area where many of us fail. We are not present. Rather we are everywhere but present. We often don't pay close enough attention to the people we love—the people who deserve our attention. Yet healthy relationships require us to show others how deeply we care. This failure, which is largely induced by societal changes, can and does seriously harm our interpersonal relationships. This is particularly evident in the way we communicate with our spouses.

There are two types of conversations couples typically have. The first kind we will refer to as a level one conversation. Examples of this include when one spouse reminds the other to take out the garbage or pick up the dry cleaning on the way home. These conversations are relatively quick and are content or action-based.

The second type of conversation we will call a level two conversation. These conversations require an investment. They require both partners to set aside time where they know they must fully engage. As opposed to a level one conversation that can be responded to with a few words, a level two conversation takes considerably more time, effort and attention. In order to have a level two conversation a couple must make the time, which usually means planning ahead. When these conversations are interrupted by cell phones, computers and other distractions, the ability for a couple to talk is adversely impacted and relationships suffer.

Chaim and Aviva were in their mid-to-late 20s when they were set up, and things seemed to really move along. Over their weeks of courtship they started to care deeply about each other. They had chemistry; they clicked. Chaim made Aviva laugh. He had a warm personality, a positive attitude toward life, and came from a great family. Chaim felt that Aviva was what he had been looking for: a modest person, kind, warm and a true baalas chesed. They enjoyed spending time together, had much in common and felt they had a great future ahead of them. It started to seem as if they were a match made in heaven.

As the relationship progressed and they grew even closer, Aviva started to become frustrated with Chaim. Aviva noticed that very often when they were on a date or on the phone, Chaim seemed to be focused on something else. When they were together, he checked his phone every few moments, and Aviva found herself having to repeat things several times. While Aviva tried speaking to Chaim about her feelings, he promised that she was important to him and that she always

came first.

It wasn't long before Chaim and Aviva were engaged. During their engagement Aviva became increasingly frustrated. This time she shared her concerns with her friends who comforted her by saying that engagements are stressful, and that everything would be better after they were married.

During the week of sheva brachot, however, Aviva was overcome with sadness. She felt that Chaim had become a different person and that immediately they were beginning to grow apart. It seemed that whenever she told him he was not paying attention to her, he acknowledged her feelings, but remained disengaged.

Aviva decided that it was time for a heart to heart conversation with her new husband. She explained to Chaim that they needed to set some rules for their conversations. At first, he was confused. He was then shocked to learn that Aviva felt he didn't listen to her. She explained to him that listening isn't the same as hearing and that real conversations can't take place when someone is looking at his phone, reading a book or thinking about something else. By listening to Aviva—really listening as opposed to just hearing her words—Chaim realized his inattentiveness had created a huge wedge between them. After their open and honest dialogue, he agreed the rules were necessary to protect their marriage.

Chaim and Aviva jotted down a few ideas that they thought would help make their conversations fruitful and satisfying. They then

(continued on page 36)

shared their lists and agreed on rules for their level two conversations. Neither of them was allowed to have any cell phones or technology present in the room when they were speaking. If the house phone rang, they would let it go to voicemail. Aviva asked Chaim to repeat what she said so she'd know Chaim was really listening. Chaim insisted that they plan ahead for these important conversations so that work commitments wouldn't interfere.

At first they both felt a little strange about formalizing these rules, but having created them together helped put them at ease. After a few conversations they both began to appreciate the exclusive time that they made for each other. After just a few of these conversations Chaim and Aviva felt they were able to communicate better. Aviva felt that Chaim was really present and was listening to her feelings, while Chaim felt liberated at being able to focus only on Aviva since his phone, computer and other potential distractions were not allowed in the room. The fact that they both had to make eye contact and repeat each other's statements gave them each a real sense of satisfaction.

Chaim and Aviva's challenge is not rare. It is actually very commonplace in the Jewish community as well as our society. A 2010 Harvard University study by psychologists Matthew A. Killingsworth and Daniel T. Gilbert found that people spend 46.9 percent of their waking hours thinking about something other than what they are doing.

"A human mind is a wandering mind, and a wandering mind is an unhappy mind," Killingsworth and Gilbert wrote in the study. "The ability to think about what is not happening is a cognitive achievement that comes at an emotional cost."

The study concludes that as human beings, we spend an inordinate amount of time thinking about that which happened in the past as well as what will happen in the future. This suggests that we may not be automatically

thinking about or focusing on the present. In a relationship, this could be critical.

Rina and Moshe didn't think that their first date was perfect, but they felt they had enough in common to go out again. Yet for most of their second date, they seemed to be engaged in small talk and could not really talk about anything of substance. Rina kept thinking about how Moshe reminded her of her friend's husband who was very outgoing and not at all right for Rina. Moshe, on the other hand, was so nervous about impressing Rina that his true personality could not come out. He spent the date worrying about what Rina would say to the shadchan and how that would affect future matches.

Without realizing it, both Rina and Moshe had emotionally checked out of their date. They were both present physically, but were not at all engaged mentally and emotionally. They were merely going through the dating ritual. Both Rina and Moshe's concerns were legitimate, but their concerns would have been best contemplated after the date itself. By allowing their minds to wander during the date, they weren't able to internalize and engage in the experience.

After Yosef revealed his true identity to his brothers, he sent them back to Eretz Canaan to tell Yaakov he was still alive. It was important to Yosef that this mission be accomplished as swiftly as possible. His father was not a youngster; time was of the essence. As Yosef sent them off he said, *אל תרגזו בדרך*, which means "Don't become agitated on the road" (Breishit 45:24). Rashi explains that Yosef was concerned that the brothers, who appeared to be ashamed of their behavior, would start blaming each other for the entire drama that had unfolded. While Yosef was showing compassion for them, he was also concerned that if they were busy doing something else, like arguing, they would lose track of their goal—reaching their father as swiftly as possible.

We live in very different times from Yosef. But the lesson is true for us today as well. We, too, need to be wary of the distractions around us and how they detract from our relationships with people and the world around us.

This past summer I was among some 90,000 Jews who gathered at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, NJ, for the Siyum Hashas, to celebrate the completion of the seven-and-a-half-year cycle of Talmud study. I had two of my sons with me as I wanted to experience this special moment with them. The highlight of the evening was the singing and dancing that took place halfway through the event. My sons and I were ingesting and enjoying the nostalgic moment when I noticed the thousands of flashes going off around the stadium at the same time. I couldn't help but think to myself that so many people were losing out on enjoying and living in the moment by trying to capture it on film. Attendees could have easily put down their cameras and joined the circle, as a sufficient number of talented members of the press were present.

Nicolas Carr in his book *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains* points out that over the last few decades we have become accustomed to everything being fast-paced. Carr asserts that "our desire for fast-moving kaleidoscopic diversions" has only gotten worse with the proliferation of the Internet. He continues by explaining that this fast pace, coupled with "multiple windows open simultaneously," erodes the human mind's ability to fully concentrate on the richness and depth of any one given experience. We live in a world with so much stimulation, yet we can no longer absorb the most precious and timely sights and sounds around us.

There are examples of this disengagement everywhere. Take for example someone attending the New York Philharmonic orchestra. Whereas in the past one would simply sit and listen to the performance, the Philharmonic now encourages those attending

to vote via text messaging for the encore of the performance. It's no longer the social norm to simply take in the performance.

Our world moves super-fast, yet our senses have become dulled and our ability to connect—really connect with people—has also diminished.

Nowadays we are programmed or expected to be busy at almost every moment. While we may be able to accomplish a lot, our interpersonal relationships are challenged by our inability to be present and fully engaged at any given moment in time.

The more we are aware of this phenomenon, the easier it will be for us to re-engage, become listeners, develop strong as well as long-lasting relationships, and enjoy all of life's moments. May we be zoche to live life in the present—hearing, listening and fully experiencing the world around us.

Making G-d Holier

By: Rabbi Yosef Sharbat

Our rabbis explain that קדושים תהיו means to be separated and rise above the secular. It means to stay away when you realize something isn't right. The Rambam in *Hilchot De'ot* (6:1) writes that it is man's natural instinct to think and act like his friends and colleagues and follow society. Therefore one should associate with good and wise men so that he may learn their practices. If one finds himself among a group of people who do not follow the correct path, then he should move to be amidst righteous people.

People may say that being angry at someone is a normal reaction. Therefore, the Torah tells us there is a prohibition to hate someone as it says “לא תשנא את אחיך בלבבך – Do not hate your brother in your heart.” Even after you have discussed the issue with that person, still do not think of taking out revenge rather “ואהבת” Love your brother as you love yourself, I am G-d. By rising above society's norm, we bring holiness into our lives fulfilling תהיו פירושם

The Ramban understands קדושים תהיו to mean sanctify yourself by withdrawing from that which is permissible to you. Based on the Ramban, *kedusha* means to possess outstanding character. This can be achieved by rising above the letter of the law. There are things that are not dictated by the Torah such as ordinary behaviors that aren't controlled. To be scrupulous with words and actions brings about *kedusha* in one's life.

There is yet a higher level of *kedusha* and that is the *kedusha* of a community. Rabbi Kalonemus Kalman Epstein, a mid-18th century Hassidic thinker writes in *Meor Va'shemesh* that *kedusha* in the highest form

is when one individual joins another individual hoping together to reach a level of *kedusha*. *Kedusha* does not exist in one who secludes himself or herself from society and cuts all ties with the world. Hence, G-d at the beginning of *parshat Kedoshim* commands Moshe to speak אל כל עדת בני ישראל to the entire assembly of Israel, ואמרת אליהם קדושים and tell them that they should be holy. Rashi, quoting the Midrash, tells us that this was said in front of the whole nation. These *Mitzvot* need to be heard by everyone, equally, so that we understand that if Jews unite then we can reach the highest level of *kedusha*. Likewise דברים שבקדושה declarations of G-d's holiness like *kaddish* and *kedusha*, can only be recited in the presence of a *minyan*. When each and every one of us join together to proclaim G-d's name, then we imbue ourselves with the highest form of *kedusha*.

If we come together with the common goal of imbuing *kedusha* in our lives and in the community then G-d also joins us in becoming holier, as it says in the *Midrash* “if you make yourselves holy then you make me holy.”

Experiencing Matan Torah

By: Sahba Azar

Torah has many pesukim that discuss the חג הסוכות and חג המצות related to מצוות. These מצוות are generally related to the historical reasons why we should celebrate the particular חג. On Pesach, we have Sipur יציאת מצרים at the Seder, and we eat Korban Pesach, Matza and Maror to commemorate יציאת מצרים. On Sukkot, we sit in the Sukkah to re-experience the Sukkot that Hashem provided for us in the desert. But when it comes to חג השבועות we have no special mitzvot for individuals to perform. There are מצוות of the Shte Halechem and Shlamei Tzibur that are brought in the Beit Hamikdash, but there is no particular and unique Mitzvah for individuals. Why is that?

We try to create some physical focus for the simchat hayom with the minhag to eat dairy and we stay up all night, but these are just minhagim. Why is there no special mitzvah? To make this question even stronger, Shaarei Aharon in Parashat Emor writes that the reason Chazal call חג השבועות Atzeret (when in fact חג השבועות is the only one of the three regalim that the Torah does **not** call Atzeret), is because it has no special ma'aseh mitzvah and is distinguished from other days **only** by the issur melacha (refraining from work) - "Atzira Mi'melacha!"

Even outside the context of חג השבועות, the basic commemoration of Matan Torah seems relatively minor. In Sefer Devarim chapter 4, pesukim 9-10, Hashem tells us:

רק השמר לך ושמר נפשך מאד פן-תשכח את-
הדברים אשר-ראו עיניך
יום אשר עמדת לפני ה' אלקיך בחרב

We are told that we must never forget what Hashem told us at חרב but the Rambam does not even count this as one of the Taryag mitzvot.

To answer this question, Rav Aharon Kotler (quoted in "Kuntres Ha'inyanim Le'chag Hashavuot") writes that Matan Torah is an ongoing event; it is the "Kol Gadol Velo Yasaf" an event that took place in the past and which resonates in the present, it never stops. Matan Torah is a current event: בכל-יום יהיו בעיניך כחדשים, every day it should be like new in your eyes. We sit at a Seder primarily because we were redeemed at the time of יציאת מצרים. We dwell in the Sukkah because we dwelled in Sukkot in the desert. But to do something that recalls Matan Torah would be wrong. We shouldn't be recalling Matan Torah. We should be experiencing it in real time every day just as we did at Har Sinai three thousand years ago. One who is experiencing a current Matan Torah does not need to artificially reinforce the experience, just as someone who lives in Florida and can look out the window and see the beach won't have a souvenir starfish on his

From Mincha To Bayit Shelishi

By: Bryan Bier

וְעָרְבָה לִיהוָה מִנְחַת יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלַם כִּימִי
עוֹלָם וּכְשֵׁנִים קִדְמָנִיּוֹת:
מֵלֶאכֶי 3:4

Many times a day we daven for the rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash. Have you ever wondered what will happen to the obligation of performing animal sacrifices when the Temple is rebuilt? If yes, please read on...

This is a subject that has troubled me for quite some time. How do we go back to animal sacrifice after 2000 years of not being able to? How many of us even shecht our own animals? It seems so far removed from our lifestyle.

The pasuk above is from sefer Malachi. It is familiar to us from the siddur as the last verse of the korbanot section of davening in the Pitum Haketoret and is also found at the conclusion of our amida.

Many of us recently learned Trei Assar with Rabbi Sharbat on Tuesday nights and we learned Sefer Malachi together. Malachi is the last of the Neviim and is one of 3 (Tzefania, Chaggai and, Malachi) who lived during the early part of Bayit Sheni. In this Sefer, according many mefarashim, Malachi already hints to the inevitable destruction of Bayit Sheni which would take place some 400 years later. Many of the Neviim warned the Jewish people at the time, that Hashem does not want our sacrifices that are being done by rote and not from our finest animals. What He does want is for us to approach Him in a sincere manner. Malachi offers us a glimmer of hope - following a long period of Galut, we will see the eventual coming of the Mashiach who will usher in Bayit Shelishi.

According to some mefarashim, the Navi in the pasuk quoted above, is telling us that in the time of Bayit Shelishi, the korban mincha will take over for the other korbanot. This is a fascinating mefarash on more than one level. As we know from the Torah in Sefer Vayikra, a korban mincha is a grain offering. This suggests that during the time of Bayit Shelishi, the grain offering will take over and replace those of animal sacrifice.

A grain offering, during the times of the Torah, was a sacrifice that associated with poor people – those who could not afford to bring an animal. How do we make sense of this? How could a korban brought by the poor replace the more expensive korbanot? Some suggest that in the time leading up to Bayit Shelishi, animals will be on a higher spiritual level and it will be forbidden to sacrifice them. This explanation is consistent with Yisahayahu 11, in which he tells us that a sign of the coming of the Mashiach will be the wolf living with alongside lamb and the leopard living alongside the goat.

A second thought is that what Hashem wants from us is to pay more attention to the necessary ingredients for a Korban Mincha as listed for us in the Pitum Haketoret and to approach His presence by paying close attention to what Hashem asks of us as opposed to with what we think is acceptable. To expound on this, let's take a close look at the last part of the pasuk quote above, what do the words “עוֹלָם וּכְשֵׁנִים קִדְמָנִיּוֹת:” refer to in this pasuk? Why the double language? I would like to suggest that it applies way, way back to the first mention of Korban Mincha in the Torah. The first reference to a Mincha offering is found in Sefer Beraishit with Kayin and Hevel. In Braishit 4:3 we see that Kayin brought a grain offering to God.

Subsequently, Hevel brought from the first of his flock of animals as a korban. There we read that Hashem paid close attention to Hevel's korban but not to that of Kayin. Many mefarashim suggest there that the issue with Kayin was not with that he brought grain verses an animal, but that it was not from the first of his crops. The implication is that Hevel's gift showed thinking of God first and therefore was a forethought while Kayin's gift was more of an afterthought.

The next time that you say the above pasuk in davening, contemplate that the Korban Mincha will, and we hope it will be soon, be replacing all other korbanot in Hashem's Home. Perhaps the take way for us as we are coming out of a long pandemic during which time shuls were closed to us, is that if we sincerely want to live to see the rebuilding of Hashem's House speedily and within our days, we need to contemplate that what Hashem really wants is our "first fruit grain offerings".

I think there is a very relevant message to all of us as we come back to shul after a long hiatus from Covid. None of us really know why we suffered the recent pandemic. I would like to suggest from here that perhaps Hashem wants us to come back to His Home with a sense of reverence and more prepared than in the past. It is important to realize that Hashem expects us to come to "His House" on time, to come to shul on Shabbat with our finest clothing and, of course respect for the Makom, and if we do so successfully, Hashem will reward us as Malachi promises.

Chababkuk

By: Danielle Bier

The haftorah we read on the second day of Shavuot is Chababkuk. In the first Perek he questions HaShem. In the second Perek HaShem responds to his prophet. In the third perek is Chababkuk's reply. Before we discuss what this conversation is about and why we read it today, I want to rewind the clock back into the Torah where we met Chababkuk before.

We settle in on Elisha HaNavi, a student of Eliyahu HaNavi. He is in the house of the Shunamite woman who is going through the fear of losing her son. HaShem, through Elisha, revived the boy. He brought the boy back to life by hugging him seven times. The Hebrew word for hug is chibuk. Some say the name of this boy was Chababkuk. He was from shevet Levi.

This story is similar to when Eliyahu revived a boy. Some say the boy he revived was Yonah. HaShem was with both Eliyahu and Elisha. In the haftorah of Chababkuk it is during the first Beit HaMikdash. We see him questioning HaShem. His prophecy is about bavel, who will come to attack and destroy the Beit Hamikdash. This seemed impossible! How can something like this occur in the heart of Israel? Chababkuk wants an answer from HaShem why bad things happen to good people. The Beit HaMikdash was destroyed for the three cardinal sins. However, there were people like him who were doing good. He pleads and demands HaShem to bring good. He draws a circle and waits for HaShem to respond.

In the second perek HaShem answers Chababkuk that something good will come speedily, and it seems that He is describing Mashiach. HaShem continues by saying that if Mashiach does not come then simply wait.

In the third perek Chababkuk replies with an apology. He has gotten some clarity from HaShem's answer. He apologises for questioning His ways. Why is this read on Shavuot? Why read it on one of the Shalosh Regalim?

Rabbi Greenberg discusses that a tzaddik is who he is because he gives his all when given a task. When a righteous person does the mitzvot and gives his or her all, HaShem rewards him or her with midda kinegged midda by giving His all in the way He sees the full picture.

Chababkuk saw the prophecy HaShem sent him. It was bad news and he felt far from HaShem and was scared. But when HaShem answered Mashiach will be here quickly, Chababkuk realised HaShem was close by and watching over him and all of Klal Yisrael. When we see sadness on the news or read about horrors in the newspaper, we fear HaShem because we feel far from Him. When we see HaShem's work we love Him. Because perhaps we see more clearly.

When Chababkuk heard the prophecy he was afraid and anxious. The war with Bavel seemed to him like it could have been the war of Goag U'Magog. Chababkuk was afraid to hear tragic news because Am Yisrael is a small army compared to Bavel. Goag U'Magog means strong leader and mighty army in this time. They probably thought Mashiach would come. He was concerned for his Israeli army.

Chababkuk had a goal and it was to protect his people and the children of HaShem. Chababkuk tells HaShem something beyond poetic. He has a goal. He has a purpose to his question. His reply reminds HaShem why

He chose us as a nation. Chababkuk reminds HaShem that we saw His glory when we received the Torah. When He protected Israel in the midbar. Chababkuk is apologising to HaShem but does it for a reason. He is bringing out compassion from HaShem by reminding Him of all the good things He did for us so that maybe all this bad can perhaps stop and Mashiach can come sooner? Maybe. But I believe it is to remind HaShem why He gave us this gift of the Torah to us. We accepted the Torah without any questions. He reminds HaShem of the gift of the Land of Israel and that this is was promised from Avraham Avinu.

Chababkuk writes a poem listing miracle after miracle from Mitzrayim till Chozkiyahu HaMelech. If HaShem decides to not bring Mashiach just yet to at least have compassion on us; His children. To watch over us with mercy in the dark times.

In Yigdal, we recite or sing in the twelfth line, "of Mashiach does not come then we should wait for Mashiach." The 13 principles of Emunah points out that Chababkuk will rejoice with HaShem by singing His song, because he knows Mashiach will come and everything will work out, because HaShem says so.

Out Of The Mouths of Babes

By: Hannah Munk and Cheryl Winokur Munk

There's nothing like the cry of a hungry baby to call a mother to action. The bodies of nursing mothers' react instinctively to this cry, and mothers of bottle-fed babies, too, rush into action when they hear their child's longing calls. So, too, it is with Hashem and his children on Shavuot.

We traditionally eat dairy foods on Shavuot. Things like mac and cheese, lasagna, ice cream and warm cookies with gooey chocolate chips. There are many reasons for this custom. One of which, according to R. Shlomo Kluger, is that Shavuot marks the time when God clarified that milk was allowed to the Jewish people.

Milk is also a comfort food. It's certainly true for babies and it's true for the Jewish people, who were like babies from a spiritual perspective at the time of Matan Torah. Is there something about Shavuot that suggests the need for comfort? After all, it should be a joyous one--the day we received the Torah.

And yet, learning Torah can be overwhelming at times and many, especially this year, may be feeling spiritually disconnected. Many have returned to shul, but others in the community remain at home, for any number of reasons.

As we eat our comfort foods this Shavuot, after more than a year apart, we should take extra solace in the fact that our ability to learn Torah transcends physical borders. We should continue to strive to connect with each other, and with Torah, in whatever ways we are capable. Big or small.

Traditionally, *Shavuot* is a time when we learn Torah as a community. This year, that may still not be possible for everyone. But we

should take comfort that even if we are physically apart, we are together.

Oops, Just Kidding

By: Rebecca and Charlie Feldman

How often have you said something in anger that you did not mean?

In Parshat Kedoshim, Sefer Vayikra, Hashem sheds some light on this type of speech. The parsha teaches:

וִיקְרָא יִטְיֵד "לֹא-תִקְלַל חֵרֶשׁ"
"Do not curse a deaf person"

What could be wrong with cursing a deaf person? The person cannot hear. The person does not know. If the Torah wants to teach us that cursing is wrong, why not just prohibit cursing anyone? Why does the Torah want us to know that it is wrong to curse a deaf person?

The Torah seems to be concerned with the words that come out of our mouths. If we must be careful not to curse someone who cannot even be aware of our comments, how much more careful we must be when speaking to someone who *IS* listening.

Rambam understood that this prohibition was made not out of concern for the deaf person, but rather concern for the person cursing. We are responsible for our actions, not just for the results of our actions. What comes out of our mouths reflects not only who and what we are, but also determines who and what we are. Foul language contaminates the mouth it comes from.

The Torah uses the word תִּקְלַל to mean curse. The word "kal" means light. The Torah is suggesting that we should not take a deaf person or anyone with a disability lightly. How we treat every person also has an effect on us and not only on the person we are treating negatively.

Hashem is always listening and always present. The Heavenly GoPro camera is always on, recording each of our actions and each of our words. In Parshat Kedoshim we find the words:

וְאַהֲבַת לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ (וִיקְרָא יִטְיֵד)

If we are careful in our speech and actions and view each interaction and communication through the lens of treating our fellows with the respect they deserve—even if we think no one is listening—we will ensure that we are following the path Hashem has set forth for us.

Chag Sameach.

Thoughts That Count

By: Chaim Lauer

Jews count. We count up. We count down. We count hours, days, weeks, months, and sabbatical years. We also count: minyan members, ounces, handbreadths, egg volumes, sheep for tithing, and more. By necessity, we learn our numbers. But what can we learn *from* numbers?

Perhaps, thinking about some numbers will help us proceed successfully from this Sinai moment.

1. Ten is the number of the *Aseret Hadibrot*, the Ten Eternal Pronouncements of Hashem from Mount Sinai. Ten is also the number of fingers on our hands, and the minimum number for a minyan, that is, a functioning community.

A thought: Two is a couple, three is a family. When three families invite in one extra who is not yet a family-builder or member -- and decide to work together -- a foundation for true community is set.

It is easy to count the fingers on our hands -- even to add things together -- but community building is not easy. So, how do we do it? Through sharing common principles, common memories, and joint goals that lead to mutual caring and action. Active caring creates and maintains community. *It was that unique moment at -- and the words of -- Sinai that provided and still provide for us the necessary principles, memories and goals to be a people and a community!*

2. Yet we never count "ten" for a minyan -- we use other ways to avoid counting individuals.

So, a related thought: Is a minyan 10 x 1? Are we just 1/10th of a minyan? Or something else - - and more? Perhaps, being part of a minyan make us more than the "one" we are when we stand alone, by ourselves. Perhaps, *the challenge is to remain our unique one, while still being part of the community.*

At the same time as we ask: "What can and do I gain from being a member of this group?" we should also ask: "What is it that I, particularly, bring to the table or can contribute to the ongoing and greater communal good?"

Just as each of the *Aseret Hadibrot* could stand alone, yet are so much more dynamically effective together, so can we be. Together. [Which could take us back to the lesson from the pre-Pesach half shekel. But that's for a different time.]

3. In his negotiations with G-d at Sodom, Avraham Avinu started with fifty and ended with ten, while we almost do the reverse in the Omer. We start with one and just about reach 50.

It may not be a simple coincidence. It can be a reminder. Avraham was known for his *gemillut chessed*, acts of lovingkindness. Sodom was not. And for what does Boaz laud Ruth, whose story is read on Shavuot? Her chessed to Naomi! Yet, Ruth is from Moav, a people born from Lot's daughter upon their escape from Sodom, the ultimate "anti-chessed" city.

Are we being reminded to show respect to all those who live "chessed" lives -- Jews and non-Jews alike? Perhaps, we are being taught that active, sincere chessed is what we should be about!!! The Talmud does teach that among three signature Jewish character traits is active

gemillut chessed. [Do you know the other two?]

4. So, let's think about chessed: While we can learn so much from nature -- cleanliness from cats, for example, or loyalty from dogs -- we learn true chessed from ... [drum roll] ... Hashem.

The Torah begins sentient human existence with an act of chessed -- G-d clothes the naked, Adam and Chava. The Torah ends its narrative with an ultimate act of chessed, Hashem burying Moshe. The Torah is literally a parenthesis of chessed. Essentially, all else is commentary.

5. Yet, note: Ruth came from the royalty of the not so friendly nation, Moav. Her ancestors lived in a most evil city, Sodom. But look what she became: the ancestor of King David and of the Mashiach!

Yes, Lot was Avraham's nephew -- but we can't always point at some genetic spark of goodness in everyone. Yes, the King of Moab did once show respect to G-d -- but we can't always find the good episode in someone's background. But, we can always look for the good in others, nurture it, and draw it out with respect and affection -- by consistently acting according to the moral and ethical principles that stem from our ancestors -- and from Mt. Sinai. Doing so can and will draw them to us and to Godliness ... and raise them up. Our model should be Naomi -- the other true heroine in the Book of Ruth.

There is, however, a danger in becoming a people that counts so much. We may focus too much on the counting, and not on the why; on aggregate totals, but not on values. We cannot know the inner workings of our own

soul, let alone that of another. We cannot judge the motivation or the long-term results of any act. But G-d can.

Therefore, as we start to count ounces or hours or size of donations, ask -- as G-d taught us to at Sinai: What really counts? Who counts? Who can be counted on? And, most important, can we be counted on?

Be-Har BeChukosai

By: Jack Becker

Our grandson Shalom's bar mitzvah was just this past Shabbos, parshios Behar-B'Chukasai. I would like to share with you the message I gave to Shalom at Friday night dinner.

The name by which we refer to the first parsha is quite strange. Behar simply means "a mountain." We see many other parshios with a two-word title. We don't just say V'zos – we say V'zos HaBeracha to give it context. Here we seem to drop the more important word. We don't even say BaHar which would mean "The Mountain" to refer to a specific and, by extension, important mountain – just BeHar, some seemingly random mountain. Even more surprising is that mountains have little to do with the subject of the parsha which deals with shmittah. Very rarely are crops grown on mountains and so shmittah would not apply. Thinking about this oddity led me to an idea appropriate for a bar mitzvah boy, but also one in which we can all find relevance.

Probably, the most difficult and dangerous of activities is mountain climbing. One false step, and uh oh. A climber needs to concentrate at all times – lapses can result in tragedy. Furthermore, every move needs clear and correct decisions: which path to take, how to navigate it, how to protect yourself. And, the worst thing you can do is stand still – keep moving forward to avoid falling backward. Probably the most dangerous part of the climb is when you pitch a tent on a narrow rock ledge to get some sleep – a lot of bad things could happen while you are not alert and aware.

Everyday life bears many similarities. We also face many challenges - making the wrong decision, losing focus, or standing still can result in disaster. But, how are we to find the guid-

ance to deal with the continuous challenges and take the right path through the uncertainties and obstacles?

That's where the second of the two parshios come in. Eem BeChukosai Taileichu – BeHar is followed immediately by BeChukosai. Use the Torah with its chukim and mitzvos as your guide when you climb life's mountains and you will *iy"H* reach the summit in one piece and with hatzlacha in your journey. Sounds good for a bar mitzvah boy just starting out at base camp, but also sounds good for us up on that slippery slope – just don't look down. Ever upwards!

Debbie and I want to take this opportunity to wish a big mazal tov to Shalom on the occasion of his bar mitzvah and the phenomenal job he did throughout the Shabbos. Mazal tov to our children, Rabbi Uri and Esti Becker, who put so much effort in raising Shalom to become an expert mountain-climber.

Brit, Not Broken

By: Robert Lichtman

My father of blessed memory joked with me that there was a movie he liked, and he came to care for the main character. Towards the end of the movie, that character opened a door that led to grave danger. So, my father kept going back to the movie theater and as the character was about to open the door, my father shouted at the movie screen, "Don't do it! Don't open that door!" Didn't help.

Sometimes I feel like shouting something out to Moshe as he ascends *Har Sinai* to receive the *luchot ha-Brit*, the tablets of our covenant with G-d. Because, having been to this movie before, I know that although there will be a majestic revelation on that mountaintop, in the end the sparkling sapphire tablets will lie shattered at the bottom.

When the *Atlantic* magazine asked its readers: What would be the greatest find from antiquity? I was sure that many responses would be The Holy Ark, the *Aron* in which the *luchot* are secured. Not only would we find the second set of *luchot* there, but the fragments of these first ones are waiting for us there as well.

Shavu'ot, which starts out as the zenith of the Exodus saga, leads to the Golden Calf and the smashing of the *luchot*, one of the greatest tragedies in Jewish history. Yet, year after year, for thousands of years, knowing that this story will undoubtedly end with the destruction of the only thing that G-d crafted since the creation of the universe, we set about to celebrate it again.

And even though the gift that we are about to receive on Shavu'ot is destined to be broken, we celebrate this event as one of the *Shalosh Regalim*—the three major festivals that not only unite all Jews spiritually, but are intended

to unite us all physically in the same place, in the *Beit HaMikdash*. And that just compounds this curiosity even further. Shavu'ot, the holiday when we celebrate receiving *luchot* that were smashed, is a time when we recall our presence in a Temple that was also destroyed.

Either one of those realities might be enough for another people to re-think this holiday—and perhaps call it off. But not this People. Because while we commemorate our past, we do not live there. We take a longer view.

The first set of *luchot* was created by G-d and destroyed by a person. They were unsustainable because people had no part in their creation. The second set of *luchot*—the ones that G-d and Moshe created as partners—are the *luchot* that endure.

The *Beit HaMikdash* was built by people and destroyed by G-d. It became unsustainable once G-d removed G-d's partnership in its existence. When the Mashiach arrives—a person acting as G-d's messenger and reintroducing the Divine partnership with humankind, the *Beit HaMikdash* will be established for all time.

Many of us are familiar with the first Rashi in the Torah about the creation of the universe. Less well-known, perhaps, is the very last Rashi of the Torah. Rashi quotes Reish Lakish as overhearing what G-d said when Moshe shattered the *luchot*: "*Yishar kochacha she'shavarta!*" (More power to you for smashing them). Rashi ends his commentary of the Torah where his commentary began, connecting the wondrous act of creating the universe with the thunderous act of destroying the *luchot*. G-d, who acted alone in creating our world calls upon us to sustain it. G-d, who acted alone in creating the first *luchot*, calls upon to sustain them.

On Shavu'ot our souls venerate the broken stones of the *luchot*, and our eyes caress the broken stones of the *Beit HaMikdash*, and we acknowledge that we need G-d to sustain us.

Rut: A Quest For Descendants

By: Eli Novick

Like every good essay, Megillat Rut begins with a topic sentence which gives an idea about what is about to be discussed: *It was in the days of the judging of judges, and there was famine in the land; a man from Beit Lechem went to go live in the fields of Moav, along with his wife and two sons.* At first glance, this pasuk seems to be more introduction than summary. However, there is so much meaning hidden behind these words.

Rashi comments that the judge to which we are referring is Ivtzan, a man who, as described in Shoftim 12:8-10, was born in Beit Lechem, had sixty children, and died in Beit Lechem. This is the same Beit Lechem from which our man (mentioned above) is coming. *Lechem*, in addition to meaning bread, can also refer to family and children, which makes sense, since bread rises like a family grows (see commentary on Bereshit 39:6, Shmot 2:20, Shmuel I 2:5, and Shmuel II 12:17 for examples). Megillat Rut, apparently, takes place during a time of fertility.

However, at the same time, *there was a famine in the land*. A famine, defined as a lack of food, can only mean one thing in accordance with our analogy: There was some aspect of *infertility*. Furthermore, our man takes his family to *the fields of Moav*. The original Moav was born out of a desperate situation to have children, since Lot's daughter (Moav's mother) thought that the entire world was destroyed (see Bereshit 19). Therefore, our man is going from a House of Bread (fertility) to the Fields of Moav (where children are born out of desperation). Our man is on a quest for descendants.

Our man and his wife (who we will now identify as Elimelech and Naomi) already have

two sons, Machlon and Kilyon, so they must be looking for descendants *through* them. As such, they go to Moav in search of wives and families for their sons. When her husband and then her two sons die, Naomi has no way of carrying on her legacy. *And only the woman remained* (Rut 1:5). Then, Naomi, who was unsuccessful in continuing her legacy in Moav, begins to return to home because she hears that *G-d remembered (pakad) his people, to give them bread* (Rut 1:6).

The last time G-d remembered (pakad) someone and gave them something was back in Sefer Bereshit. *G-d remembered (pakad) Sarah* and then she had her only son, Yitzchak (Bereshit 21:1). She had a child when it was least expected. Naomi, who wants to be in a similar situation, decides to return home because G-d has decided to *give [her nation] bread*, which we have translated as fertility.

Naomi continues on her quest for descendants. She gets up and tells her daughters-in-law (Rut and Orpah, who were married to Machlon and Kilyon, respectively) to go home. While Orpah begrudgingly obeys, Rut refuses to leave her mother-in-law. At the conclusion of her famous monologue (*wherever you go I'll go etc.*), Rut adds the world *only death will separate between you and me* (Rut 1:17).

Though at first glance this line is heart-warming, it seems to be a little strange. Back in Bereshit, when the creation of man and woman is discussed, the Torah states: *therefore, man will leave his mother and father and cling to his wife* (Bereshit 2:24). When Rut states that *death* will be the

separator between her and Naomi (who is now playing the role of a mother), she obviously doesn't think she will be able to find a husband to be that separator.

Naomi's legacy, which is why the child is called Naomi's in Rut 4:17. This child will complete their quest for descendants.

I want to suggest that Rut is unable to have any children. It fits in this context; that is the reason she says that death will separate her from Naomi as opposed to marriage. Furthermore, Rut sneaks in and lies next to Boaz at night in an intimate fashion (by lying at his feet), similar to the way Tamar, the daughter-in-law of Yehuda, disguised as a prostitute, sought to continue her family line through her father-in-law (Bereshit 38). Rut is on a quest for descendants, both for herself and for Naomi. That quest is satisfied with her marriage to Boaz. The elders of the city bless Boaz and Rut that their *house should be like the house of Peretz, whom Tamar bore to Yehuda* (Rut 4:12).

The rest of the blessings given by the elders also support this point. For example, *may G-d make [Rut]...like Rachel and Leah* shows that Rut, who is barren, will have children like Rachel and Leah—who were both barren—had children (Rut 1:11, Bereshit 30:1,9).

Though the story of Rut ostensibly seems to be a love story between a widow and a farmer, there is a hidden truth. Naomi escapes a fertility famine with her family to produce descendants, only to watch her entire legacy die. She brings her daughter-in-law home with her, only to find that Rut is barren. Naomi watches G-d's miracles unfold before her as G-d *gives her (Rut) pregnancy, and she bares a child* (Rut 4:15). This child will carry on Rut's legacy. This child will carry on

Logotherapy and Hashkafa: Perfect Together

By: Joel Rich

Viktor Emil Frankl was an Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist as well as a Holocaust survivor. Frankl was the founder of logotherapy which is a form of existential analysis. The mental health challenge addressed by logotherapy is the existential concept of escaping from the self, rather than reliance on self and thus not face the existential vacuum.

This example resonates with me: "...the Sunday neurosis: a depression which afflicts people who become conscious of the lack of content in their lives—the existential vacuum—when the rush of the busy week stops on Sunday and the void within them suddenly becomes manifest."

Perhaps as believing Jews there should be no void as we already know the questions that will be on the final exam:

תלמוד בבלי מסכת שבת דף לא עמוד א
אמר רבא: בשעה שמכניסין אדם לדין אומרים לו:
נשאת ונתת באמונה, קבעת עתים לתורה, עסקת
בפריה ורביה, צפית לישועה.....

"Raba said, When man is led in for Judgment he is asked: Did you deal faithfully [i.e., with integrity], did you fix times for learning, did you engage in procreation, did you hope for salvation?"

However, I think most of us would agree that this is not a one-size-fits-all answer as Dr. Frankl points out: "[Life's tasks] form man's destiny, which is different and unique for each individual. No man and no destiny can be compared with any other man or any other destiny." Not surprisingly we find a similar thought in the Talmud:

תלמוד בבלי מסכת ברכות דף נח עמוד א
תנו רבנן: הרואה אוכלוסי ישראל אומר: ברוך חכם הרזים. שאין דעתם דומה זה לזה, ואין פרצופיהן דומים זה לזה.

"Our Rabbis taught: If one sees a crowd of Israelites, he says, Blessed is He who discerneth secrets, for the mind of each is different from that of the other, just as the face of each is different from that of the other."

Dr. Frankl also notes that there is not one finite goal to be reached: "We must never be content with what has already been achieved. Life never ceases to put new questions to us, never permits us to come to rest."

A similar theme can be found in a thought from The Rav (pick which one): "The Rav extended an idea from Rav Kook ZT"L on the blessing of Elokay Ad Shelo Notzarti (that we recite at the conclusion of the Amidah on Yom Kippur and brought down in the Talmud in Berachos 17a) as follows. My G-d, in the countless generations that preceded me and that will succeed me You did not see fit to create me because You knew that I was not worthy to be sent out as Your emissary in those generations. And even though You have sent me as emissary in this generation, I have accomplished so little of my mission, I have been so ineffective, as if I would have existed in a different, sub-optimal generation relative to my ability to fulfill my Shlichus."

Perhaps a more classic source of this thought can be found in Rashi:

רש"י בראשית פרק לז

ביקש יעקב לישב בשלוה, קפץ עליו רוגזו של יוסף.
צדיקים מבקשים לישב בשלוה אומר הקדוש ברוך הוא
לא דיין לצדיקים מה שמתוקן להם לעולם הבא, אלא
שמבקשים לישב בשלוה בעולם הזה:

(continued on page 53)

When Jacob sought to dwell in tranquility, the troubles of Joseph sprang upon him. The righteous seek to dwell in tranquility. Said the Holy One, blessed be He, "What is prepared for the righteous in the world to come is not sufficient for them, but they seek [also] to dwell in tranquility in this world."

While perhaps not a major focus of western liberal society, Dr. Frankl echoes the well-known Mishna in Avot which reflects our being judged as both individuals and as members of society.

"If I don't do it—who will do it? And if I don't do it right now—when should I do it? But if I do it for my sake only—what am I?" If I don't do it..." This seems to me to refer to the uniqueness of my own self. "If I don't do it right now..." refers to the uniqueness of the passing moment which gives me an opportunity to fulfill a meaning. "And if I do it for my own sake only..." what here comes in is no more and no less than the self-transcendent quality of human existence. For it is a characteristic constituent of human existence that it transcends itself, that it reaches out for something other than itself.

משנה מסכת אבות פרק א

משנה יד

הוא היה אומר אם אין אני לי מי לי וכשאני לעצמי מה אני ואם לא עכשיו אימתי:

"He would also say: If I am not for myself, who is for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?"

And while Western liberal society focuses on freedom (Which is not just another word for nothing left to lose even if Kris Kristofferson thinks so), both Dr. Frankl and the Mishna in Avot beg to disagree: "Certainly man is free, but he is not floating freely in airless space. He is always surrounded by a host of

restrictions. These restrictions, however, are the jumping-off points for his freedom."

משנה מסכת אבות פרק ו

והמכתב מכתב אלהים הוא חרות על הלוחות אל תקרא חרות אלא חירות שאין לך בן חורין אלא מי שעוסק בתלמוד תורה

"And the tablets are the work of G♫d, and the writing is G♫d's writing, engraved on the tablets"; read not "engraved" (charut) but "liberty" (chairut)—for there is no free individual, except for he who occupies himself with the study of Torah."

While graduates are often urged to follow their dreams, both Dr. Frankl and the Talmud agree that it's the effort that counts: "[T]he job at which one works is not what counts, but rather the manner in which one does the work. It does not lie with the occupation, but always with us, whether those elements of the personal and the specific which constitute the uniqueness of our existence are expressed in the work and thus make life meaningful."

תלמוד בבלי מסכת ברכות דף ה עמוד ב

אחד המרבה ואחד הממעיט ובלבד שיכוין לבו לשמים

"The one who sacrifices much and the one who sacrifices little have the same merit, provided that the heart is directed to heaven."

I can't help but think that logotherapy takes some very basic Jewish Philosophy and tries to make it useful for nonbelievers as well. While I'm not in a position to comment on its effectiveness outside our community, there's no doubt in my mind that if we would consider its approach seriously, it would be very helpful for both a mental health and religious growth perspective.

Counting up, indeed.

What's In A Name?

By: Shifra Caruso and Aviva Dworken

Shavuot has many names in the Torah, which got me thinking about what's in a name.

"What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet"
-Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*

Is Juliet correct? Are names insignificant or is there something more to it?

Meschet Brachot 7b

מנא לן דשמא גרים אמר רבי אליעזר דאמר קרא לכו חזו מפעלות ה' אשר שם שמות בארץ אל תקרי שמות אלא שמות:

Regarding the basic assumption that these homiletic interpretations of names are **allusions to one's future**, the Gemara asks: from where do we derive that the name affects one's life? Rabbi Eliezer said that the verse says: "Go, see the works of the Lord, who has made desolations [*shamot*] upon the earth" (Psalms 46:9). Do not read the word as *shamot*, rather as *shemot*, names. **The names given to people are, therefore, "the works of the Lord upon the earth."**

Based on the above passage, the Arizal writes:

Chazal say that a name does have significance—at least the Jewish name does. A name is a statement of the individual's nature, personality, and path in life! There are many textual sources alluding to the importance of names. For instance, Adam named all the creatures on earth, and called them by their appointed name.

Another example of the significance of names is Hashem changing Jacob's name to Israel.

בראשית לב:כח וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו מַה שְּׁמֶךָ וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב. לב:כט וַיֹּאמֶר עוֹד שְׁמֶךָ כִּי אִם יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי שְׂרִיתָ עִם אֱלֹקִים וְעַם אָנֹכִי וַתִּוְכַל.

32:28 said the other, "what is your name?" he replied, "Jacob." 32:29 said he, "your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel, for you **have striven with beings divine and human, and have prevailed.**"

The new name "Israel" is a combination of the verb ש.ר.ה, which means "to strive with," as well as the א and ל, the designation for Hashem.

We can see exactly what Chazal meant from the previous source. "A name is a statement of the individual's nature, personality, and path in life." Because Yisrael quarreled with G-d he was named "Strives with G-d."

Naming after alive vs deceased?

Rashi: Divrei Ha'Yamim: Chur names his son, Calev, after his father who was still alive.

Sephardim continue this custom with the idea that this is a segulah for a long life, for the person being named and the one being named after.

Sephardim also name children after relatives who are still alive. This source is from the Talmud (Shabbat 134a), which records a child named after Rabbi Natan while he was still alive.

Ashkanazim have the opposite minhag: they name after the dead, because, according to Rabbi Yehudah Ha'Hassid, the child is coming on some level to replace the person being named after.

Naming after someone that died at a young age, or had other misfortunes, is a question often asked. The Stiepler of Bnei Brak says that this concept only applies if one is naming after the original person with this name and they had misfortunes. If, however, one is naming after someone that had bad mazal, but he or she is not the original “owner” of this name, then this idea does not apply.

Rav Feinstein:

If a person died a natural death and left children, this is not considered “bad fortune” which would preclude the use of the name. Both Shmuel Hanavi and King Shlomo died at the “young” age of 52, yet traditionally their names have always been used by Jews. If, however, a person died an unnatural death, then Rabbi Feinstein suggests that the name be altered. It may be for this reason that when naming after the prophet Isaiah—who was murdered—many Jews omit the last letter of his name (in Hebrew, Yeshaya instead of Yeshayahu)- Yam Shel Shlomo – Gittin 4:30

Changing names:

Breishit 17:5/15

וְלֹא יִקְרָא עוֹד אֶת־שְׁמֹךְ אַבְרָם וְהָיָה שְׁמֶךָ אַבְרָהָם כִּי אֲבֶרְהָמוֹן גּוֹיִם נִתְּתִיךָ:

And you shall no longer be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I make you the father of a multitude of nations.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים אֶל־אַבְרָהָם שְׁרִי אֲשַׁתְּךָ לֹא־תִקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמָהּ שְׁרִי כִּי שָׂרָה שְׁמָהּ

And G-d said to Abraham, Your wife Sarai-you shall not call her name Sarai, for Sarah is her name.

In Breishit above, we read that Avraham and Sarah had their names changed. They each received an extra “hey.” Once this name-

change took place, Sarah was able to have a child. You can learn from here that a change in a name does have some kind of power.

Gemara Rosh Hashana 16b

וּבְרִייתוֹ דְּרַבִּי יִצְחָק ד' דְּבָרִים מְקַרְעִין גִּזְרֵי דִּינֵי שְׁלֵם אָדָם אֵלּוּ הֵן צְדָקָה צַעֲקָה שִׁינוּי הַשֵּׁם וְשִׁינוּי מַעֲשֵׂה צְדָקָה

And Rabbi Yitzhak said: a person's sentence is torn up on account of four types of actions. These are: giving charity, crying out in prayer, **a change of one's name**, and a change of one's deeds for the better. An allusion may be found in scripture for all of them: giving charity

There is another concept in Judaism that when someone needs a Refuah we change his or her name. The Rama in Yoreh Daya (335) states that we give a bracha to a sick person and change his or her name in shul to show that the individual is a different person. That shows how powerful a name is.

We still have to be careful because according to the Beir Mayim Chayim on Breishit, changing one's name can be dangerous, because the name we get originally is from Hashem, who put it in the mouths of the parents through Ruach Hakodesh. Today, most people would just add another letter or an extra name, instead of completely changing it around.

Chag Sameach!

Shavuot: The Every Day Holiday

By: Jen & Eric Israeli

What is Shavuot really all about? For some, the holiday is immediately associated with cheesecake, whereas for others, associations to greenery and “all-nighters” are natural. Yes, all of these are valid answers. But what we commonly commemorate throughout the holiday of Shavuot is the giving of the Torah. This unique face-to-face transmission of the Torah from G-d at Har Sinai was breathtaking and groundbreaking, a final (or initial from an alternative vantage point) chapter in the formation of our people. As “The People of the Book,” our first attempt at analyzing this holiday is to refer to the pesukim themselves, hoping to glean a ritual, custom or deeper understanding. However, no mention of the holiday of Matan Torah that we are currently celebrating can be found there. The Torah fails to state even once when Ma’amad Har Sinai took place in the calendar, leaving it to our imagination and Rabbinic analysis to come up with a date, and presumably connect the dots to Shavuot.

If Shavuot as the time of Matan Torah is not mentioned in the Torah, then what is this third Regel of the Shalosh Regalim? After all, we are familiar with the tradition that three times throughout the year, Jews would ascend to Jerusalem to bring Korbanot and celebrate. The Torah tells us about the holiday of Shavuot in the context of three different topics. The first of these is the bringing of the Omer offering and the counting of seven weeks until the offering of the Shte HaLechem, as seen in Vayikra 23:15-21. The second of these topics, the Shalosh Regalim, appears both in Shmot 34:22 and Devarim 16:9-12. The third of these topics, namely the bringing of the first fruits, appears in Bamidbar 28:26. It is interesting to note that none of these topics are represented practically in how we celebrate the holiday of Shavuot today.

As pointed out by Rav Menachem Leibtag, when the Torah wants to tell us when something happened, it does. The pesukim tell us all about when Pesach and Yetziat Mitzrayim took place, but fail to mention anything about when Matan Torah took place. Not only that, it almost appears as though the Torah is trying to dissuade us from making any connection between Shavuot and Matan Torah even though Chazal have calculated, as brought down in the Gemara and Midrash, that Matan Torah and the Shavuot holiday found in the Pesukim both take place on the same day.

The key to interpreting the goal of the Torah in failing to disclose the date of Matan Torah can be found in Rashi’s commentary to Matan Torah. The Pasuk tells us emphatically that *ביום הזה באו מדבר סיני*, that TODAY they came into the Sinai Desert. The obvious question is posed by Rashi. The pasuk should tell us that “On THAT DAY” the Jews entered the Sinai rather than “today.” He answers by emphasizing that the Torah should remain new and fresh to us every day, as though it was just given to you, right now. In the words of Rav Leibtag, “We should not view Matan Torah as a one-time event; rather, every generation must feel as though they have just entered into a covenant with G-d. Every generation must feel that G-d’s words were spoken to them no less than to earlier generations. To celebrate the anniversary of Matan Torah as a single moment in our history could diminish from that meta-historical dimension.” Therefore, while it is true that Shavuot coincides with Matan Torah, G-d is making the point that each and every day should be its own Matan Torah.

(continued on page 57)

Nonetheless, the importance of having one day on which we can focus our attention, truly expressing gratitude to G-d for having chosen to bestow the Torah upon us is in order. We need it. It reminds us, as opposed to Simchat Torah, that celebrates the completion of the Torah and the cycle of learning, that our national existence stems from a central momentous occasion of transmission, one that remains to this day a foundation of our faith.

Rav Sharon Shalom, an Ethiopian Jew who recently catalogued many of the Jewish traditions kept in Ethiopia describes the Shavuot holiday in Ethiopia. "On Erev Shavuot, the entire community would descend to the river to purify themselves, donning new clothing, thereby preparing themselves for the acceptance of the Torah. The holiday ritual revolved around recreating Matan Torah. All too often in life we allow things, including adherence to Mitzvot and study of Torah, to become stale. We go through the same routine on a daily, weekly, monthly and yearly basis, failing to recognize the distinct and exceptional nature of what we are doing. While in theory we state, often drearily early in the morning, that G-d is מחדש בטובו בכל יום תמיד מעשה בראשית, (in His goodness, perpetually renewing creation) we fail to enable ourselves to truly sense the freshness and sweetness that we really desire deep down.

remind us the significance of what we have and help us create that sense of newness once again. It is our responsibility to find ways to celebrate our relationships and keep them fresh and exciting, as we do with Matan Torah, even when there is no reminder on our calendar.

The same concept applies throughout our lives, especially in regard to our relationships with others. We all have special relationships in our lives that often times we take for granted. Our interactions become routine and our conversations mindless. We grow so accustomed to these relationships that we don't treat them with the passion and respect they deserve. Shavuot teaches us that sometimes we need a renewal, something to

Women and Matan Torah

By: Mali Schwartz

In an article on Torah.org, entitled “Rosh Chodesh, A Special Holiday for Women,” a question arises, “What is the reason why women specifically are singled out to observe an added measure of holiness on this day?” Rashi in the tractate of Megilla (22b) quotes a Midrash that explains that at the time when the nation of Israel was planning the construction of the Golden Calf, the women were approached and asked to donate their gold jewelry for the cause. The women steadfastly refused to give over any of their gold.

Because of their firm commitment to Moshe and their faith in G-d, which manifested itself in the refusal to hand over their gold and their distance from the sin of the Golden Calf, women were rewarded with having Rosh Chodesh as a special holiday for themselves.

This is just one example of how the righteous women of Israel helped to save the day.

According to Mrs. Lori Palatnik, “After Moses received the Torah from G-d at Mount Sinai, he offered it first to the Jewish women, for he knew that if they accepted it, it would become part of the Jewish people for all time.

In the prelude to Sinai, we read: “*So shall you say to the House of Jacob and relate to the Children of Israel,*” (Exodus 18:3). Rashi explains the distinction between the two terms. The House of Jacob refers to Jewish women—Jewish women are the Jewish house. The ideas of Judaism come to life in the Jewish home and are translated into reality under the guidance of Jewish women.

Other examples of how the Israelite women maintained their faith is when the Jewish people wandered through the desert, the

men—not the women—repeatedly complained to Moses and even asked to go back to Egypt. And, when Jewish spies were sent into the Land of Israel and came back with reports of great dangers, it was the men—not the women—who refused to enter. Forty years later, only the women of that generation merited entering the land.

“The revelation at Mount Sinai—the central episode not only of the *parsha* of Yitro, but of Judaism as a whole—was unique in the religious history of mankind,” states Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks. If we think about the political ramifications of Sinai, a new kind of nation was being formed, and a new kind of society—one that would be an antithesis of Egypt, in which the few had power and the many were enslaved. And the partners to the covenant were to be “all the people”—an entire nation—young and old, men, women and children, the righteous and not-yet-righteous alike. And women led the way in their immediate acceptance of the Torah.

A woman who exemplifies the concept of Torah acceptance is Ruth, a Moabite princess, who lived in the 10th century BCE and who converted to Judaism 300 years after Mt. Sinai. We read the Megillah of Ruth during Shavuot. Her story reminds us that we were all converts at Mt. Sinai—her experience is a reminder to us that we are all Jews—only thanks to our own act of Torah acceptance.

Naomi tried to dissuade Ruth from joining her on her trek back to Israel, but she nonetheless stopped when she realized that Ruth was straining to keep up with her pace. She then realized that Ruth wanted to attach herself to Naomi so that she could be closer to G-d.

(continued on page 59)

Ruth had an innate understanding that Hashem was the source of all life and being, and she wanted to cleave to Him.

There is an essential link between Ruth and David in that she was specifically designated to bring David into this world. Ruth was a descendant of Avraham's brother, Haran, who was able to translate the knowledge that Avraham discovered in everyday life.

Lot, Haran's son, decided to leave Avraham for the material world and settled in Sdom. His powers to serve G-d seemed to be lost forever. According to Rabbi Nosson Weisz, "The conversion of Ruth, and the fact that she entered into a levirate marriage by marrying Boaz, means that she made possible the recovery of the lost power of Haran required to bring about the birth of the Jewish kingdom, reflective of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth."

The Gaon of Vilna shows how Ruth corrected this mistake—by a steadfast yearning for an attachment to G-d. And she carried the *binah* necessary to translate it into every-day life.

Ruth is just one example of a multitude of special Jewish women—who time and time again saved the Jewish people through their insightfulness, virtue, and belief in G-d.

Chad Emer= Shnei Imrin

By: Gary Eisenberg

“On account of our sins we have been exiled” and our Beis Hamikdosh remains unbuilt. We are deeply aware as we recite the Musaf service recounting the sacrifices we brought on Shavuot that we are unfortunately not able to bring them today. Instead, Shavuot is generally associated with learning Torah, in commemoration of the giving of the Torah on Shavuot. As a result, we sometimes overlook the Shavuot korbanos. My hope in writing this article is to influence some of us to take the korbanos of Shavuot and their message to heart. May the merit of the Torah we learn on Shavuot elevate us so that H-shem speedily restores the avodah and enables us to bring the Two Lambs and Two Loaves.

The Torah twice commands that a communal offering of two lambs be brought. Once is the musaf for Shabbos (Bamidbar 28:9). Those two lambs are olos and thus are mainly burnt on the mizbeach and are not eaten.

The other time is the sh’nei k’vasim for Shavuot (Vayikra 23:19). These two lambs (the “Two Lambs”) accompany the two special loaves (the “Two Loaves”) brought for Shavuot to mark the completion of the counting of the omer (Vayikra 23:16). The two lambs for Shavuot are shelamim. Thus, they are eaten, unlike the olos. However, they are only eaten by Kohanim (just like the goat chatas that must be brought with the Two Lambs (see Vayikra 23:19), based on a hekeish (analogy) drawn by Rava) (Zevachim 55a).

This suggests that there should be a link between Shabbos and Shavuot. Indeed, there is. We commemorate the giving of the Torah on the sixth of Sivan, which is Shavuot (Shabbos 86a). This is according to the opinion of the Rabbis. Rabbi Yose is of the opinion that the Torah was given on the seventh of Sivan. However, Rabbi Yose holds

that the seventh of Sivan, not the sixth, was Shabbos. Thus, according to either view, the Torah was given on Shabbos. Of course, since we outside of the Land of Israel keep two days of Yom Tov, one could tongue in cheek say that Rabbi Yose holds, too, that the Torah was given on Shavuot—on the second day of Yom Tov! But that is a side issue.

According to the Rabbis, who hold that the Torah was given on both Shabbos and Shavuot, it thus becomes appropriate that a similarity of korbanos ties Shabbos to Shavuot. Those two days are the only two days that are marked by the bringing of an obligatory offering of two lambs.

The Two Lambs of Shavuot must be brought with the Two Loaves. This establishes another link between Shabbos and Shavuot. Lechem mishna (two loaves) are placed on the table for each of the Shabbos meals we eat. The lechem mishna commemorate how H-shem gave the Children of Israel a double portion of man in the wilderness every erev Shabbos while no man fell on Shabbos. By contrast, on every other day of the week, one portion of man fell. Thus, the double man on Friday represented the culmination of the week, marked by a spiritual ascent into Shabbos, marked by lechem mishna. This spiritual ascent is marked by a doubling of the bread.

Similarly, once a year, the Two Loaves are brought, to mark the completion of the omer period. They are brought on Shavuot—the Yom Tov that commemorates the giving of the Torah, which took place on Shabbos. Thus we see that the Two Loaves of Shavuot mark a culmination of the spiritual ascent that begins on the second day of Pesach, when the omer is brought.

(continued on page 61)

Indeed, we see that the Two Lambs and Two Loaves represent a doubling of what is brought on the first day of chol hamoed Pesach (the first day after the first day of Pesach, since the omer is brought in the Land of Israel, where Yom Tov is one day). The Torah prescribes that, with the omer itself (a bundle of barley), one lamb is offered as an olah, together with one mincha (grain) offering. This is brought on the first day counted in the omer period. When we reach the fiftieth and final day of the omer period, we mark it with a doubling, analogous to the spiritual ascent from weekday to Shabbos in the wilderness capped with a doubling of the mon. Instead of one lamb and one meal offering, at the end of the omer, on Shavuot, the offering is Two Lambs and Two Loaves.

This doubling of Pesach offerings on Shavuot suggests that Shavuot is the culmination of Pesach. In fact, other observances and teachings reinforce this as well. For example, Shavuot in the Talmud Bavli is called Atzeres (see Rosh Hashana 16a). This is the same name by which the Torah calls the seventh (and in Israel, the last) day of Pesach in parshas Re'eh (Devarim 16:8).

The omer is brought from the first of the barley crop. Barley is one of the sheva minim (seven species of foods for which the Land of Israel is praised, see Devarim 8:8). The first fruits of the other sheva minim are brought to the Beis Hamikdash on Shavuot. This is known as the bringing of the bikkurim. When the bikkurim are brought, the person bringing them recites four verses. Thus, the bikkurim culminate the offering of the remaining sheva minim, the first of which was brought on Pesach.

This connection is even firmer in the Haggada. Magid, the central mitzva of the Pesach seder, is the telling of the going out of the land of Egypt. The heart of the magid text in the Haggada, though, is the quotation of the first

four verses that the person bringing the bikkurim recites (Devarim 26:5-8), together with the classic rabbinic commentary that expounds these four verses word by word.

Why should the Haggada, which recounts the Pesach story of our freedom and exit from Egypt, center on a Shavuot observance? One answer to suggest is that H-shem did not simply take us from Egypt and set us loose. He took us out in order to make us His people, which He did by giving us His Torah—on Shavuot. It is by keeping his Torah and living by its commands that we fulfill the real purpose for which He took us out of Egypt.

The giving of the Torah on Shavuot was the culmination of the exodus from Egypt. So, it is fitting that a central commandment of Shavuot, the verses accompanying the bikkurim that culminate the offering of the sheva minim which commenced on Pesach, should serve as the core text for the Haggada that enables the Jewish people to perform the commandment of telling of the exodus from Egypt.

It is appropriate for Pesach to have a firm link to Shavuot that is analogous to the link between Shabbos and Shavuot. This is because Pesach is the only Yom Tov in the Torah that is ever mentioned before Shabbos when Shabbos and more than one Yom Tov are listed and observances set forth. This occurs in parshas Ki Sisa (Shemos 34:18-23). Pesach is listed first, then Shabbos, then Shavuot and Succos). By contrast, in the other places in the Torah where Shabbos and more than one Yom Tov are mentioned, Shabbos always comes first (parshas Mishpatim, Shemos 22:12-17; parshas Emor, Vayikra 23; parshas Pinchas, Bamidbar 28:9-29:39).

(continued on page 62)

Sending Out Spies, Again?

By: Rich Kelin

Shabbos and Shavuos both represent a doubling of Divine bounty. In one case, it is reflected in the lechem mishna of Shabbos compared to the rest of the week; in the other, it is reflected in the transition from one lamb and one mincha on the first day of chol hamoed Pesach to the Two Lambs and Two Loaves of Shavuos.

The Vilna Gaon writes a peirush of Chad Gadya in which he identifies the two kids of this poetic Pesach song as those brought by Yaakov Avinu to Yitzchak Avinu to secure Yitzchak's blessing. According to the Gaon, the tears of Esav that those two goats triggered (even though Yaakov was justified in bringing those two goats) are ultimately at the heart of what has befallen the Jewish people during this long and bitter galus. Rectifying the pain of these tears, the Gra suggests, may be necessary to end the galus.

If so, then perhaps the Two Lambs (which Onkelos translates into Aramaic as "Shnei Imrin") are for us not only the symbol of hope but the actual means for the end of the galus. It is perhaps appropriate to speculate that through righteous deeds by the Jewish People the Beis Hamikdosh will be rebuilt and the Two Lambs and Two Loaves become able to be offered again. That level of righteousness perhaps will atone for the tears brought that triggered chad gadya—chad gadya that marks our galus. If so, then in a way our ultimate redemption will be brought about by shnei imrin, perhaps one by one (chad emer, chad emer).

It has been said that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results each time.

One of the great tragedies in Jewish history was the incident with the twelve spies sent out by Moshe as discussed in parshas Shelach. Those spies were sent shortly after the Jewish people left Egypt in anticipation of entering Eretz Yisroel. The nation believed the report of ten of the twelve spies who spoke disparagingly of the land and offered minimal hope for the people's chances of succeeding there. The expedition ended in disaster as the doubting nation was punished with a decree of having to wander the desert for forty years.

And yet, in the haftorah for parshas Shelach, which is read from the second chapter of the book of Yehoshua, we see that Yehoshua, you guessed it, sent out spies to reconnoiter the land of Israel prior to the people entering. Why would Yehoshua send out spies when such a plan ended so disastrously when Moshe did it forty years earlier? Yehoshua was certainly an integral part of the first mission and he knew all about the circumstances and consequences of the first incident, so why would he do the same thing again and expect different results this time?

Rabbi Sholom Rosner cites the Malbim, a famous Biblical commentator from the 19th century, who quotes five differences in the circumstances between the two incidents, which made Yehoshua confident that the second mission would be successful. All five differences are alluded to in the first verse of the Haftorah, as follows:

(continued on page 63)

“Vayishlach Yehoshua ben Nun” – and Yehoshua sent. Yehoshua made the decision to send the spies, not the people; that choice came from the leadership, not the masses. In contrast, Moshe sent the spies due to the demands of the people; Moshe acceded to such request, but it was done with reluctance.

The second set of spies were sent “min hashittim”- from a place called Shittim - which was right near the land of Israel. The people, including the spies, could see the beauty of the land from nearby Shittim. Everything seemed more real, and they could all sense the excitement about their upcoming entry into the land. This expedition was more likely from the start to be a successful campaign. Contrast that scenario with the spies who were sent by Moshe from Midbar Paran. In that situation, the people were far away and entry into the land did not seem definite or even likely. Not surprising then that the spies came back with a mostly negative report.

Yehoshua sent “shnayim anashim meraglim” - two spies - instead of twelve like Moshe did. We all know that when there is a committee of many people, matters tend not to be organized and rarely do things get accomplished quickly, if at all. A spy committee of two was much more realistic and likely to succeed. Furthermore, Chazal tell us that the two meraglim who Yehoshua sent were Pinchos and Calev - tzaddikim he could trust.

The pasuk says they were sent “cheresh” – quietly. They were sent without fanfare, without the public observing their departure. When matters are conducted quietly, they often have a greater chance of success. Chazal often point out that the luchos, the first tablets of the Ten Commandments, were presented with great pomp and ceremony. As we all know, matters did not fare well, as the incident of the Golden Calf followed shortly thereafter. The

second tablets were given quietly and without the pageantry and its legacy endures to this day. Yehoshua understood this and he was confident that his mission would not end in disaster, since the spies were sent without great spectacle.

Yehoshua told his two spies “lechu ra’u es ha’aretz v’es Yericho” – go and look at the land and at Jericho. He gave them a narrow, specific purpose. As the Malbim explains, the spies sent by Moshe were on an open-ended mission, so they felt they could comment on any aspect they desired. Yehoshua directed his two spies to a specific task, which made it less likely for them to raise complaints about issues which were not part of their mission.

So, what appears to be two similar situations yielded very different results. Yehoshua had the wisdom to learn from his prior experience with spies and he successfully applied it. This is a good lesson for us all – look, listen and learn from mistakes of the past and we can turn them into success for the future.

Finding Your Inner Kedusah

By: Batya Jacob

In *Parshat Terumah* (25:8) it states: וַעֲשׂוּ לִי : מִקְדָּשׁ וּשְׁכֵנִתִּי בְּתוֹכְכֶם
 You should build me a *Mikdash* so that I may dwell amongst you.

Sforno asks why it says “*b’tocham*,” amongst you, and not “*b’tochah*,” within it. According to Sforno, the action of building the *Mishkan* is to elevate the *kedushah* within each person in *Klal Yisroel* so that *Hashem* will live among the Jewish people. When *Hashem* dwells among *B’nei Yisroel*, He readily accepts our *tefillah* and *teshuvah*.

How does one build a *Mishkan* of oneself and elevate his/her own *kedushah*? From studying the *kellim*, vessels, of the *Mishkan* and some of the clothes of the *kohanim*, we can learn different *midot* that should guide our lives so that *Hashem* is able to dwell among us.

The Aron Hakodesh - Holy Ark: Sforno discusses the makeup of the *aron*. He describes how the *aron* consisted of three boxes: the outer one golden, the middle one made of wood, and the inner box golden again. Sforno learns that this represents a *midah* that humans should have – being the same on the inside as on the outside. We see this as well in the concept of

אחד בפה ואחד בלב

Speaking consistently with what you feel in your heart.

The Shulchan - Showbread Table: Ramban states that the table is a source of prosperity for *B’nei Yisroel*. He explains that even a small piece of bread from the *shulchan* was enough to feed and satiate the *kohen*. We see this concept in *Melachim B, Perek 4*, in

the story of Elisha and the woman with the small jar of oil. Elisha tells the woman to have faith in *Hashem*, and as a result, the oil lasts and is enough to sustain her. In *Pirkei Avot* (3:17) we see this same concept as well –

אם אין קמח אין תורה

Here the rabbis learn that if there is no sustenance, there can be no Torah observance. Based on this *Mishnah*, the Ramban teaches that a person must have a way to earn a living so that he/she can be free to observe the *mitzvot*, worship *Hashem*, and make himself or herself *kadosh*.

The Menorah - Candelabra: The *Sefer Hachinuch* states that the purpose of the *menorah* was to illuminate and glorify the *Mishkan*. The *menorah* inspires awe of *Hashem* inside a person’s heart. This is similar to the function of the *Urim v’Tumim* that the *Kohen Hagadol* wore. Its purpose was also to enlighten *B’nei Yisroel* when they observed the *mitzvot* of *Hashem*. This, in turn, could help each person glorify *Hashem* and build his/her inner *kedushah*.

The *Mishnah Tanchumah* states that the *mitzvah* of lighting the *menorah* is incumbent upon the *kohen* himself. This teaches us that one must follow through and perform the action of the *mitzvah*. Talking and thinking about it is not enough. As *Pirkei Avot* (1:17) states, the action is the most important part: לא המדרש העקר אלא המעשה

The Mizbayach Hanichoshet- the Bronze Altar: This was the altar that was in the courtyard, outside of the *Mishkan* itself, where animals were sacrificed. The rabbayim tell us that we can learn the *midah* of *tzinut* from the

mizbayach. The *mizbayach* was built with a ramp leading up to it, not steps. In this manner, the *kohen* would “shuffle” up the ramp, not lifting his legs and possibly exposing his body for people in the courtyard to see. The bells attached to the *kohen*’s robe served a similar purpose. The bells would let *B’nei Yisroel* know that the *kohen* was approaching, thus giving the people an opportunity to ensure that they were properly covered in his presence. *Tzinut* is important not just in front of other people, but in *Hashem*’s presence as well, as *Pirkei Avot* (2:1) states:

דע מה למעלה ממך עין רואה ואזן שומעת וכל מעשיך
בספר נכתבים

Be conscious of what is above you. A seeing eye, a hearing ear, and all of your actions are written in the book.

The *Mizbayach Hazahav* - the Golden Altar:

This is the altar inside the *Mishkan* where the *kohen* burned the spices. This is the last vessel set forth in the Torah, after the description of the clothing of the *kohanim*. The purpose of this altar, according to Sforno, was to lessen the severity of *Hashem*’s decrees against *B’nei Yisroel* if they did *teshuva* through the work in the *Mishkan* and through *tefillah*. Sforno says that the main purpose of the *Mishkan* is to honor *Hashem*. After all of the *kellim* and clothes are described, the *Mizbayach Hazahav* comes to teach us to honor and serve *Hashem*. In *Pirkei Avot* (2:12) it says: וכל מעשיך יהיו לשם שמים

All of your actions should be for the purpose of honoring *Hashem*. The Siftei Cohen takes it one step further. He states that the *Mizbayach Hazahav* is the most beloved of *Hashem*’s vessels in the *Mishkan*. He quotes the concept of אחרון אחרון חביב

The last is the most beloved to *Hashem*. We learn from the *Mizbayach Hazahav* that by utilizing all of the *kellim* in the *Mishkan* for the purpose of honoring and keeping *Hashem* in high esteem, we will have the end result of being loved most in *Hashem*’s eyes. This love of *Hashem* translates into *Hashem*’s presence among *B’nei Yisroel* wherever they are living. Once we dedicate our lives, thoughts, and actions to doing *Hashem*’s *mitzvot*, we can raise and build our own personal inner *kedushah* and *Hashem* can dwell among us.

Who Is Chovav?

By: Chayim Cohen

כט וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה, לְחֹבָב בֶּן-רְעוּאֵל הַמִּדְיָנִי חֹתֵן מֹשֶׁה, נֹסְעִים אֲנַחְנוּ אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אָמַר יְקֹוֹק, אֲתוּ אִתָּנוּ לָכֶם; לָכֶּה אִתָּנוּ וְהִטַּבְנוּ לָהּ, כִּי-יְקֹוֹק דִּבֶּר-טוֹב עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל.

29 And Moshe said to Chovav, the son of Reuel, the Midianite, Moshe's father-in-law: "We are journeying to the place of which Hashem has said: 'I will give it to you.' Come with us, and we will do good for you; for Hashem has spoken good concerning Israel."

ל וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו, לֹא אֵלָּךְ: כִּי אִם-אֶל-אֶרֶץ וְאֶל-מִוְלַדְתִּי, אֵלָּךְ.

30 And he said to him: "I will not go; but I will depart to my own land, to my homeland."

לא וַיֹּאמֶר, אֶל-כָּא תַעֲזֹב אֶתָּנוּ: כִּי עַל-כֵּן יִדְעָה, חֲנֻתָּנוּ בַּמִּדְבָּר, וְהִיִּיתָ לָנוּ, לְעֵינִים.

31 And he said: "Please do not leave us, inasmuch as you know our encampments in the wilderness, and you shall be "eyes" for us."

לב וְהִיא, כִּי-תֵלֶךְ עִמָּנוּ: וְהִיא הַטּוֹב הַהוּא, אֲשֶׁר יִיטִיב יְקֹוֹק עִמָּנוּ--וְהִטַּבְנוּ לָהּ.

32 And it shall be, that if you come with us, then with the goodness with which Hashem will benefit us, He will do good to you."

Bamidbar, Chapter 10, verses 29-32, record a conversation between Moshe and Chovav. Moshe tells Chovav that the Jewish people are traveling to *Eretz Yisrael*; Chovav responds that he plans on going to his own land and not *Eretz Yisrael*. Moshe then beseeches him to stay and be "eyes" for the people, and in return he will receive whatever benefits *Bnei Yisrael* receive from Hashem. According to Rashi (based on a Midrash),

Chovav is Yitro. The verse itself says that Chovav is Moshe's father-in-law, which makes this conclusion quite logical. The Ramban explains that after Yitro converted, he changed his name to Chovav. We are told in *Parshat Yitro* that Yitro arrived at *Bnei Yisrael's* camp. The question that we must ask ourselves: are these two stories (*Parshat Yitro* and *Parshat Beha'alotcha*) one event or two separate events?

Let's begin with the first option. According to Rashi, the story that we read in *Parshat Yitro*, of Yitro's arrival, actually occurred about a year after the Jews received the Torah, and the Torah continues that story in *Parshat Beha'alotcha*. The Jewish people have become numerous and Moshe can't handle judging all of them; that is why Yitro's advice (*Shemot*, 18:13-26) to create a court system is needed. After Moshe succeeds in implementing Yitro's plan, he informs Yitro that they are heading to *Eretz Yisrael* (*Bamidbar*, 10:29). Yitro, despite Moshe's insistence, decides to return to his family in Midyan, and leaves the Jewish people (*Shemot* 18:27).

A problem with this commentary is that there is a huge separation in the Torah between the two parts of this one story. It begins in *Parshat Yitro* in the middle of *Sefer Shemot*, and continues in the middle of *Sefer Bamidbar*, in *Parshat Beha'alotcha*. A bigger problem is that the story concludes back in *Parshat Yitro*. However, the most serious problem is that this commentary is based on an assumption that the story of Moshe judging in *Parshat Yitro* and the narrative in *Bamidbar* are the same story. It seems clear that in *Parshat Yitro*, Moshe has control over the situation, while in *Bamidbar*, he tells Hashem that he needs help (*Bamidbar* 11). Also, the solution to the problem that is offered is different. Yitro (*Shemot*, 18:13-26) suggests judges for the thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens of the Jewish people, while in *Bamidbar* (11:17), Hashem tells Moshe to appoint 70 elders to help him.

(continued on page 67)

Therefore, it looks as if there is no connection between these two judicial stories. (In *Devairim* 1: 6-18 it appears that when Moshe repeats this story, he combines these two judicial stories. A discussion of this phenomenon is outside the scope of this paper.)

The first problem, about placing part of the story in *Shemot*, has a very convincing explanation. The Radak (*Shoftim*, 1:16) explains that the story preceding the arrival of Yitro in *Parshat Yitro* is the war with Amalek. The Torah juxtaposes these stories to show us that Amalek came to harm us when we left Egypt, and we are commanded to wipe out this nation. By contrast, Yitro came with good intentions, and merited that when the Jewish people go to wipe out Amalek they will be careful to not harm his descendants. (See *Shmuel I*, 15:6, where Shaul warns the Kayni, Yitro's decedents, of his impending attack on Amalek.)

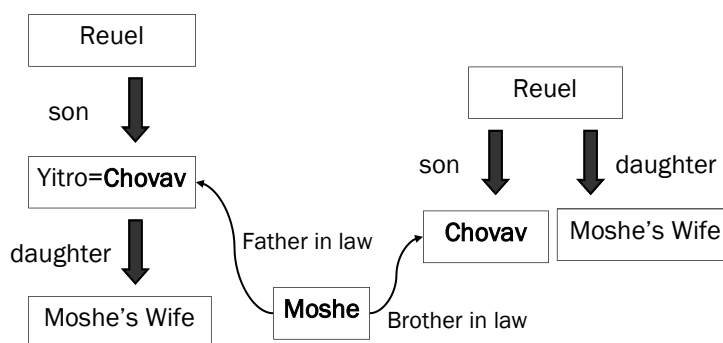
Our second option is that we are talking about two separate events. This is the opinion of the Ramban. Yitro arrives in *Parshat Yitro*. After advising Moshe about the judicial system, Yitro leaves (according to Rashi, to convert his family). At some later point he returns. As *Bnei Yisrael* prepare to enter *Eretz Yisrael*, Yitro decides to leave again, this time for good. According to the Ramban, this is because he thinks that he will not receive land in *Eretz Yisrael*. Moshe convinces him to stay. There are two proofs that Yitro stayed: (1) We see in *Sefer Shoftim* that his descendants lived in Jericho; (2) the next verse says “they traveled” implying that Yitro stayed with them. The problem with this opinion is that we don’t hear anything about Yitro’s return, and a different name for Yitro (Chovav) is used, which is misleading. I will therefore attempt to suggest a third opinion.

To begin with, I would like to offer a different explanation for the names of Chovav and Yitro. According to the Ibn Ezra (*Bamidbar*, 10:29) Chovav is Yitro's son. We know this

because the verse says that Chovav is the son of Reuel, who we know to be Yitro (see Rashi on *Shemot*, 18:1). The fact that the Torah calls Chovav “Moshe’s father-in-law” is not a problem according to the Ibn Ezra, who says that a brother-in-law can also be called a “father-in-law.” The following diagrams demonstrate the two opinions of who Chovav could be:

Generally accepted opinion:

Ibn Ezra in Bamidbar:



According to this interpretation, Yitro arrives in *Parshat Yitro* and leaves at the end of the chapter to convert his family. For one reason or another, Yitro does not return, but sends his son Chovav. The Sforno (*Bamidbar*, 10:31) explains that if the other nations would think that Yitro was abandoning the Jewish people, it would be a *chilul Hashem*. In order to avoid this outcome, he sends his son Chovav. Before the Jews begin the last leg of their journey to *Eretz Yisrael*, Chovav wants to go back to Midyan, his homeland, because he does not believe that he will receive land in *Eretz Yisrael*. Moshe replies that if he helps the Jews enter *Eretz Yisrael*, he will receive land. He agrees to stay, and in the end we see that Chovav's descendants live in Jericho.

In conclusion, the two different explanations of who Chovav was dramatically affect our understanding of the storyline in *Parshat Yitro* and *Parshat Beha'alotcha*.

The Chronicle

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Esther Schultz, Office.....	214
Esterina Herman (bookkeeper).....	213
Library	223

Nursery School

Aliza Maslansky.....	215
Tiny Tots Room.....	222
2's Room.....	225
3's/ 4's Room	217
Seniors' Program, Debbie Druce.....	240
