"Welcoming Ruth...and Marilyn and Richard and..."

Jenny Lebowitz

Why is it customary to study the Book of Ruth on Shavuot? Why on this holiday, when we mark the day that the Jewish people received the Torah and became a "Chosen People," do we also remember the extraordinary story of the Moabite woman Ruth? It is not as if there is a lack of other appropriate Jewish texts. Indeed, over the past 3,000 years we have amassed quite a collection of rabbinic commentaries, historical perspectives and, of course, sacred texts themselves. However, on Shavuot we specifically dedicate our time and effort to understanding the invaluable contributions and lessons to be learned from Ruth.

As a beginner, I often feel particularly connected with the Book of Ruth, and to me it is clear why it was chosen as the primary text of study for Shavuot. While Ruth eventually became the great-grandmother of King David, she was not born into a family steeped in Jewish tradition–indeed, she was not even born into a Jewish family. Ruth was the quintessential outsider. Not only was she not Jewish, but she was from the nation of Moab, with whom the Jews at that time had a not-so-friendly border relationship. More than that, the rabbis tell us that she was the daughter of the king of Moab! As you can see, Ruth was far from the type of person one would expect to become the great-grandmother of King David.

After the death of her husband, the son of a wealthy Jewish expatriate who had fled to Moab to avoid famine, Ruth chose to remain with her widowed mother-in-law, Naomi. When Naomi decided that it was time to return to her home in Bethlehem, Ruth went with her. Even when Naomi tried to send her back, Ruth refused and declared that she would remain with Naomi, that she wished to be part of Israel and accept the laws of Israel and the G-d of Israel. Living under Naomi's roof had inspired Ruth to join the People of Israel.

It's not easy to be the stranger, and I don't just mean a convert. It is not easy to walk into a traditional synagogue, where much of the ritual is foreign, even to one born and raised Jewish. But Ruth saw beyond the fact that she would be a stranger. She was inspired by everything that she had learned in Naomi's household and she knew that this was the life to which she aspired. Unfortunately, not everyone in Bethlehem understood that Ruth felt so passionately about the Jewish people. Naomi and Ruth were ostracized–Naomi because her husband had taken his family and fled during the famine instead of helping his neighbors, and Ruth because she was a member of a foreign nation.

Having seen the true beauty of Jewish life, however, Ruth was not deterred. Since they were totally impoverished, Ruth went out to the fields of Bethlehem to glean from the leftovers of the harvest. As you can imagine, this was quite a lifestyle change for a former princess, but Ruth did not complain.

"LOSING THE BEST OF OUR PEOPLE"

Ruth's patience and kindness of spirit did not go unnoticed. Boaz, the wealthy man who owned the field in which she went to gather food, saw beyond her foreign appearance, her past history and the suspicions of the local people. He saw in Ruth the essence of a Jewish soul, the drive to do for others and to serve G-d properly. And when, at the harvest festival, Ruth presented herself as a possible wife, Boaz did not hesitate to go against public opinion and marry her. From this union, the grandfather of King David was born.

What does this have to do with being a Beginner at Shavuot time? When the Jews came out of Egypt, the sages tell us that they were almost completely assimilated, except for their dress, their language and their names. They came forth out of Egypt as strangers to the traditions of their ancestors, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Leah and Rachel. But they wanted to follow the path that G-d set before them, and they accepted the Torah.

Today, we have many people who are coming from near complete assimilation, who have come to the conclusion that they want to more fully live their lives as Jews. And each Beginner comes with his/her own "different" appearance, his/her unique history, and are faced with the suspicions of the "locals." We live in a society where, too often, many times to our own detriment, we fail to invite in the opinions, thoughts and perspectives of others. Within our small Jewish community, we somehow manage to make it even smaller by placing boxes around individuals, and choosing to rely only on those people who fit into our box.

On Shavuot we can learn much from Boaz. He took a leap of faith that what he saw in Ruth was real, that, different as she might be, her drive and passion was her true self. We too, must take a leap of faith and recognize that sometimes, in order to prosper and flourish, we can learn from the outsider, who has so much to offer.

As for my own perspective, I am so grateful that the LSS Beginners Service and an organization like NJOP exist, welcoming people with different Jewish experiences and backgrounds to learn together. At the Beginners Services at Lincoln Square, Shabbat dinners, shmoozes and benefits, no one is considered an outsider and it is this all-embracing environment that reflects the best the Jewish people can offer to the community. After all, we Jews have much more that binds us together, than separates us.

A member of the L.S.S. Beginners Service, Jenny Lebowitz is the development professional for the Foundation for Jewish Camping, and lives on the Upper West Side

CONGRATULATIONS AND MAZAL TOV

WEDDINGS

Deborah Colson and Mark Diker
Beth Mandel and Andrew Fleisch
P'nina Gluck and Chaim Rapfogel
Naama Nakonechny and Hagai Raanan
Patty Diker and David Stark
Sigalit Dahari and Michael Steiner

BIRTHS

Eliana and Vlad Gutin, on the birth of a boy, Jacob Hersh (Yaakov Herschel)
Malka and Michael Levinson, on the birth of a girl,Shayna Elka
Jill and Rabbi Mark Wildes, on the birth of a girl

BAR/BAT MITZVAH

Jeremy Apple
Mazal Tov to parents
Robin (Gordon) and Steve Apple
Michael Beller
Mazal Tov to parents
Debbie and Rabbi Simcha Weinberg
Franziska and Claudio Beller
Louisa Miriam Kornblatt,
Mazal Tov to parents
Dr. Judith Deutsch and Marc Kornblatt
Daron Menachem Mendel Spivack
Mazal Tov to parents
Sharona and Steven Spivack

CONDOLENCES

Andrew Berman, on the loss of his father, Dr. Milton Berman
Evelyn Ebenstein, on the loss of her sister, Florence Ebenstein
Renee Lippin Leicht, on the loss of her father, Leon Lippin
Anat Levi, on the loss of her father, Arno Buiumsohn
Mitzi and Hal Witkin on the tragic and untimely loss of their son Dr. Ned Witkin

CONGRATULATIONS

Morton Goldman upon celebrating his 85th birthday

Mazal Tov
to
Sarah Rochel Hewitt,
Editor of Bereshith
and her husband,
David Hewitt,
on the birth of their
first born son,
Avraham Ephraim Barak

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Tue May 25, 2004 - 5th of Sivan
EREV SHAVUOT
Morning Services .....7:05 & 7:50 AM
Candle Lighting .....7:57 PM
Mincha .....8:00 PM
Maariv .....8:46 PM

Wed May 26, 2004 - 6th of Sivan SHAVUOT
Morning Services .....5:00 & 9:00 AM
Bible Class .....6:50 PM
Daf Yomi.....7:05 PM
Mincha .....6:45 & 7:50 PM
Yom Tov candles after.....8:57 PM
Maariv .....8:57 PM

Thu May 27, 2004 - 7th of Sivan SHAVUOT
Daf Yomi.....7:15 AM
Morning Services .....8:00 & 9:00 AM
Bible Class .....6:50 PM
Talmud Class .....7:05 PM
Mincha .....7:50 PM
Maariv .....8:57 PM
Yom Tov Ends .....8:57 PM

Fri May 28, 2004 - 8th of Sivan
Morning Services .....7:10 & 7:50 AM
Earliest Candle Lighting .....6:43 PM
Candle Lighting .....8:00 PM
Mincha .....6:45 & 8:05 PM

Sat May 29, 2004 - 9th of Sivan *Nasso*
Daf Yomi.....7:00 AM
Bible Class .....8:30 AM
Morning Services ...7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
Talmud & Bible Class .....6:55 PM
Mincha .....7:55 PM
Shabbat Ends .....9:00 PM
Daily Mincha & Maariv .....8:05 PM

Mon May 31, 2004 - 11th of Sivan
MEMORIAL DAY
Morning Services .....7:05 & 8:30 AM

Fri June 4, 2004 - 15th of Sivan
Morning Services .....7:10 & 7:50 AM
Earliest Candle Lighting .....6:48 PM
Candle Lighting .....8:05 PM
Mincha .....6:45 & 8:10 PM

Sat June 5, 2004 - 16th of Sivan
Beha'alotcha
Daf Yomi.....7:00 AM
Bible Class .....8:30 AM
Morning Services ...7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
Talmud & Bible Class .....7:00 PM
Mincha .....8:00 PM
Shabbat Ends .....9:05 PM
Daily Mincha & Maariv .....8:10 PM

Fri June 11, 2004 - 22nd of Sivan
Morning Services .....7:10 & 7:50 AM
Earliest Candle Lighting .....6:52 PM
Candle Lighting .....8:09 PM
Mincha .....6:45 & 8:15 PM

Sat June 12, 2004 - 23rd of Sivan *Sh'lach*
Daf Yomi.....7:00 AM
Bible Class .....8:30 AM
Morning Services ...7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
Talmud & Bible Class .....7:05 PM
Mincha .....8:05 PM
Shabbat Ends .....9:09 PM
Daily Mincha & Maariv .....8:15 PM

Fri June 18, 2004 - 29th of Sivan
Morning Services .....7:10 & 7:50 AM
Earliest Candle Lighting .....6:55 PM
Candle Lighting .....8:12 PM
Mincha .....6:45 & 8:15 PM

Sat June 19, 2004 - 30th of Sivan *Korach*
ROSH CHODESH
Daf Yomi.....7:00 AM
Bible Class .....8:30 AM
Morning Services ...7:40, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
Talmud & Bible Class .....7:05 PM
Mincha .....8:05 PM
Shabbat Ends .....9:12 PM
Daily Mincha & Maariv .....8:20 PM

Sun June 20, 2004 - 1st of Tamuz
ROSH CHODESH
Morning Services .....7:00 & 8:30 AM

Fri June 25, 2004 - 6th of Tamuz
Morning Services .....7:10 & 7:50 AM
Earliest Candle Lighting .....6:56 PM
Candle Lighting .....8:13 PM
Mincha .....6:45 & 8:20 PM

Sat June 26, 2004 - 7th of Tamuz *Chukat*
Daf Yomi.....7:00 AM
Bible Class .....8:30 AM
Morning Services ...7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
Talmud & Bible Class .....7:10 PM
Mincha .....8:10 PM
Shabbat Ends .....9:13 PM
Daily Mincha & Maariv .....8:20 PM

Fri July 2, 2004 - 13th of Tamuz
Morning Services .....7:10 & 7:50 AM
Earliest Candle Lighting .....6:56 PM
Candle Lighting .....8:13 PM
Mincha .....6:45 & 8:20 PM

Sat July 3, 2004 - 14th of Tamuz *Balak*
Daf Yomi.....7:00 AM
Bible Class .....8:30 AM
Morning Services ...7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
Bible Class .....7:10 PM
Perek Class.....7:10 PM
Mincha .....8:10 PM
Shabbat Ends .....9:13 PM
Daily Mincha & Maariv .....8:20 PM

Sun July 4, 2004 - 15th of Tamuz
INDEPENDENCE DAY
Morning Services .....7:10 & 8:30 AM

Tue July 6, 2004 - 17th of Tamuz
SHIVA ASSAR B' TAMMUZ
Fast Begins .....4:19 AM
Morning Services .....7:00 & 7:30 AM
Mincha .....8:00 PM
Fast Ends .....9:01 PM

Fri July 9, 2004 - 20th of Tamuz
Morning Services .....7:10 & 7:50 AM
Earliest Candle Lighting .....6:54 PM
Candle Lighting .....8:11 PM
Mincha .....6:45 & 8:15 PM

Sat July 10, 2004 - 21st of Tamuz *Pinchas*
Daf Yomi.....7:00 AM
Bible Class .....8:30 AM
Morning Services ...7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
Bible Class .....7:05 PM
Perek Class.....7:05 PM
Mincha .....8:05 PM
Shabbat Ends .....9:11 PM
Daily Mincha & Maariv .....8:15 PM

Fri July 16, 2004 - 27th of Tamuz
Morning Services .....7:10 & 7:50 AM
Earliest Candle Lighting .....6:51 PM
Candle Lighting .....8:08 PM
Mincha .....6:45 & 8:15 PM

Sat July 17, 2004 - 28th of Tamuz
Matot-Masei
Daf Yomi.....7:00 AM
Bible Class .....8:30 AM
Morning Services ...7:40, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
Bible Class .....7:05 PM
Perek Class.....7:05 PM
Mincha .....8:05 PM
Shabbat Ends .....9:08 PM
Daily Mincha & Maariv .....8:10 PM

Mon July 19, 2004 - 1st of Av
ROSH CHODESH
Morning Services .....7:00 & 7:40 AM

Fri July 23, 2004 - 5th of Av
Morning Services .....7:10 & 7:50 AM
Earliest Candle Lighting .....6:51 PM
Candle Lighting .....8:03 PM
Mincha .....6:45 & 8:10 PM

Sat July 24, 2004 - 6th of Av *Devarim*
HAZON
Daf Yomi.....7:00 AM
Bible Class .....8:30 AM
Morning Services ...7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
Bible Class .....7:00 PM
Perek Class.....7:00 PM
Mincha .....8:00 PM
Shabbat Ends .....9:03 PM
Daily Mincha & Maariv .....8:05 PM

Mon July 26, 2004 - 8th of Av
EREV TISH'A B'AV
Mincha .....8:05 PM
Fast Begins .....8:18 PM
Maariv & Kinnot .....8:49 PM

Tue July 27, 2004 - 9th of Av TISH'A B'AV
Morning Services .....6:30 & 8:30 AM
Early Mincha .....1:38 PM
Mincha .....7:45 PM
Fast Ends .....8:48 PM

Fri July 30, 2004 - 12th of Av
Morning Services .....7:10 & 7:50 AM
Earliest Candle Lighting .....6:44 PM
Candle Lighting .....7:56 PM
Mincha .....6:45 & 8:00 PM

Sat July 31, 2004 - 13th of Av *Vaetchanan*
NACHAMU
Daf Yomi.....7:00 AM
Bible Class .....8:30 AM
Morning Services ...7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
Bible Class .....6:50 PM
Perek Class .....6:50 PM
Mincha .....7:50 PM
Shabbat Ends .....8:56 PM
Daily Mincha & Maariv .....7:55 PM

Fri August 6, 2004 - 19th of Av
Morning Services .....7:10 & 7:50 AM
Earliest Candle Lighting .....6:36 PM
Candle Lighting .....7:48 PM
Mincha .....6:45 & 7:55 PM

Sat August 7, 2004 - 20th of Av *Eikev*
Daf Yomi.....7:00 AM
Bible Class .....8:30 AM
Morning Services ...7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
Bible Class .....6:45 PM
Perek Class.....6:45 PM
Mincha .....7:45 PM
Shabbat Ends .....8:48 PM
Daily Mincha & Maariv .....7:45 PM

Fri August 13, 2004 - 26th of Av
Morning Services .....7:10 & 7:50 AM
Earliest Candle Lighting .....6:32 PM
Candle Lighting .....7:39 PM
Mincha .....6:45 & 7:45 PM

Sat August 14, 2004 - 27th of Av *Re'eh*
Daf Yomi.....7:00 AM
Bible Class .....8:30 AM
Morning Services ...7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
Bible Class .....6:35 PM
Perek Class.....6:35 PM
Mincha .....7:35 PM
Shabbat Ends .....8:39 PM
Daily Mincha & Maariv .....7:35 PM

Tue August 17, 2004 - 30th of Av
ROSH CHODESH
Morning Services .....7:00 & 7:40 AM

Wed August 18, 2004 - 1st of Elul
ROSH CHODESH
Morning Services .....7:00 & 7:40 AM

Fri August 20, 2004 - 3rd of Elul
Morning Services .....7:10 & 7:50 AM
Earliest Candle Lighting .....6:22 PM
Candle Lighting .....7:29 PM
Mincha .....6:45 & 7:35 PM

Sat August 21, 2004 - 4th of Elul *Shoftim*
Daf Yomi.....7:00 AM
Bible Class .....8:30 AM
Morning Services ...7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
Bible Class .....6:25 PM
Perek Class.....6:25 PM
Mincha .....7:25 PM
Shabbat Ends .....8:29 PM
Daily Mincha & Maariv .....7:25 PM

Fri August 27, 2004 - 10th of Elul
Morning Services .....7:10 & 7:50 AM
Earliest Candle Lighting .....6:12 PM
Candle Lighting .....7:19 PM
Mincha .....6:45 & 7:25 PM

Sat August 28, 2004 - 11th of Elul *Ki Teitzei*
Daf Yomi.....7:00 AM
Bible Class .....8:30 AM
Morning Services ...7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
Bible Class .....6:15 PM
Perek Class.....6:15 PM
Mincha .....7:15 PM
Shabbat Ends .....8:19 PM
Daily Mincha & Maariv .....7:15 PM

Fri September 3, 2004 - 17th of Elul
Morning Services .....7:10 & 7:50 AM
Candle Lighting .....7:07 PM
Mincha .....7:10 PM

Sat September 4, 2004 - 18th of Elul
Ki Tavo
Daf Yomi.....7:00 AM
Bible Class .....8:30 AM
Morning Services ...7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
Talmud & Bible Class .....6:00 PM
Mincha .....7:00 PM
Shabbat Ends .....8:07 PM
Daily Mincha & Maariv .....7:05 PM

Mon September 6, 2004 - 20th of Elul
LABOR DAY
Morning Services .....7:05 & 8:30 AM

Fri September 10, 2004 - 24th of Elul
Morning Services .....7:10 & 7:50 AM
Candle Lighting .....6:56 PM
Mincha .....7:00 PM

Sat September 11, 2004 - 25th of Elul
Nitzavim-Vayeilech
Daf Yomi.....7:00 AM
Bible Class .....8:30 AM
Morning Services ...7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
Talmud & Bible Class .....5:50 PM
Mincha .....6:50 PM
Shabbat Ends .....7:56 PM
Daily Mincha & Maariv .....6:50 PM
Early Selichot .....10:00 PM
Late Selichot .....12:52 AM

Sun September 12, 2004 - 26th of Elul
Morning Services .....7:10 & 8:30 AM

Mon September 13, 2004 - 27th of Elul
Selichot & Morning Services ...6:40 & 7:30 AM

Tue September 14, 2004 - 28th of Elul
Selichot & Morning Services ...6:40 & 7:30 AM
Late Selichot .....9:00 PM

Wed September 15, 2004 - 29th of Elul
EREV ROSH HASHANA
Selichot & Services .....5:45 & 6:45 AM
Candle Lighting .....6:47 PM
Mincha .....6:50 PM

Thu September 16, 2004 - 1st of Tishrei
ROSH HASHANA 5765
Kollel Minyan.....7:30 AM
Main Sanctuary .....7:45 AM
Tashlich .....5:40 PM
Mincha .....6:40 PM
Yom Tov candles after.....7:47 PM
Maariv .....7:47 PM
Daf Yomi after Maariv

SAVE THE DATE

All Night Shavuot Learn-in
Tues, May 25, 11:30 p.m. - 4:55 a.m.

Last and First
Beginners Shabbat Luncheons
of the Seasons
June 5, Sept 11

Rosh Hashana
Wed-Fri, Sept 15 - 17