

SHAVUOT - A DAY OF JUDGMENT

Fabia Preminger

Here we are, on the last day of the 49 days since starting the *Omer* count on the 2nd night of Passover... And the 50th day is Shavuot, one of the three pilgrimage festivals mentioned in the Torah. Shavuot is the holiday on which we celebrate G-d giving the Torah to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai.

Shavuot is more than just a day of commemoration. Both Reb Boruch of Mezibuzh, z"l, and the *Netivot Shalom* (Rabbi Sholom Noach Berezovsky) stated that Shavuot is actually a Day of Judgment, comparable to Rosh Hashana. On Rosh Hashana we are judged on material matters, but on Shavuot we are judged on spiritual matters for the entire coming year. One of the great differences between material and spiritual matters is that spiritual matters always rely on our own investment for growth and strength. Additionally, every individual has the power to elevate the material to the spiritual realm by "simply" verbalizing a blessing before eating.

The Talmud states that G-d looked into the Torah and created the world. How fascinating is it that in the *Zohar*, the source book of the *kabbalah*, it is written that man looks into Torah and sustains the world! By transforming the material to the spiritual, a person utilizes the talent to partake in G-d's creation, following His guidelines.

There are many ways in which a person may elevate the world that is around them. Reciting blessings and using material items to assist in mitzvot are two of the most common means. Another way Jewish people elevate the world is by reading the words of the Torah, internalizing them, and thus elevating their entire beings. In fact, the actual words of the Torah are important conduits to connect the *guf* (body) to the *neschama* (soul) and the whole to the greater spiritual realms.

One of the world's greatest Torah scholars in our generation, Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (who passed away last summer), stated that during the reading of the Torah portion containing the *Aseret HaDibrot* (Ten Commandments) one should not only concentrate on each commandment and its relevance to his/her own life, but realize that it is also an auspicious time to ask for a *refuah*



shlaymah (complete recovery-physically and spiritually) for those who are in need of healing.

On the 6th of Sivan in the year the Israelites left Egypt, the Jewish people received what are now known as the Five Books of Moses. For thousands of years afterward, the holy books continued to be written, up until the 5th century B.C.E., when the canon, which included the *Chumash* (Five Books of Moses), *Nevi'im* (Prophets) and *Ketuvim* (the Writings) was formally closed.

Not only is the Book of Psalms, which is included in *Ketuvim*, a collection of beautiful hymns, but it is an expression of the way that people may truly connect their daily lives to the spiritual. The Book of Psalms was written by King David, who was the great-great grandson of Ruth (the Book of Ruth is read on Shavuot). King David lived a life of incredible highs and devastating lows. Throughout all the challenging times of his life, he always praised G-d. King David was always able to see, and elevate, the world around him. It is, thus, no coincidence that King David was born and passed away on Shavuot. We are taught that when a person is born and passes away (years later) on the same day, he has completed a full cycle of life. From King David we can learn that it is up to us to choose and recognize G-d's continuous involvement in every single aspect of our lives.

This Shavuot, may we all take with us the gift of the Torah, and maximize our connection to G-d through its teachings and realize that G-d, our loving Father, is the ultimate source of ALL!

May we merit, as individuals and as a holy nation, to be open vessels to receive - not only with awe and fear, but through the higher level of love - the world's most precious treasure - our holy Torah - and fulfill its commandments for His sake, happily and humbly as the Chosen People, exemplifying ourselves as an *Ohr La'goyim*, a light unto the nations.

Brazilian-born Fabia Preminger moved to Israel, earned a BA and a Master of Science in Occupational Therapy from Hebrew University in Jerusalem. One of the pioneers in the field of Assistive Technology Department (at Alyn Hospital), she has lectured in conferences worldwide and published articles in Israeli and American Occupational Therapy journals. Fabia currently lives on the Upper West Side of Manhattan and is involved in Jewish outreach, education and community, as well as real estate.

CONGRATULATIONS AND MAZAL TOV

ENGAGEMENTS

Leah Bennett and Yaakov Weiner

Mazal Tov to parents Drs. Janice and Richard Bennett

Chava Yehudis Silverstein and Akiva Moshe Goodman

Mazal tov to parents Sharone and Shmuel Goodman

Chassia Schwartz and Yori Thau

Mazal Tov to parents Devorah Altman and Rabbi Brian Thau

Liza Zlatkis and Yoseph (Yos) Jacobs

Mazal Tov to parents Batya and Eddie Jacobs

Mazal Tov to grandparents Vicki and Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

MARRIAGES

Dr. Shanna Kowalsky and Adam Herbst

BIRTHS

Rachaeli and Eli Stromberg, on the birth of a girl

Mazal Tov to grandparents Esther Chana and Dr. Gene Stromberg

**BAR/BAT MITZVAH**

Shira Daniella Bousbib

Mazal Tov to parents Polly and Gabriel Bousbib

Yishai Bousbib

Mazal Tov to parents Helene and Ari Bousbib

Yonatan Asher and Keren Shoshana Yael Schiller

Mazal Tov to parents Gail and Doug Schiller

CONDOLENCES

Germaine Chabbott, on the loss of her father, Sam Chabbott

Sharon Janovic, on loss of her brother, Louis Meltz

CONGRATULATIONS

Lloyd Epstein on becoming Co-President of LSS

Valerie and Dan Feder on being Guests of Honor at the upcoming LSS Annual Dinner

Tracy and Sander Gerber on being Guests of Honor at the Yeshiva Ohavei Torah of

Riverdale Annual Dinner

