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# Chai Today

# SHAVUOT

5 X PER JAAR - FEBRUARI, MAART,  
JUNI, AUGUSTUS, EN NOVEMBER  
JUNI 2024 / P. 408-436  
AFGIFTEKANTOOR : 2650 EDEGEM 1

# A WORD FROM THE RABBI

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Dear friends,

*As we approach Shavuot, when we celebrate the giving of the Torah and our enduring commitment to our faith and traditions, we find ourselves reflecting on the current state of the world. This year, our celebration is marked by a backdrop of rising antisemitism and the ongoing war.*

*The resurgence of antisemitism across the globe, as well as the increase of acts of hatred and intolerance, threaten the principles of diversity and acceptance, which are the pillars of our society. It is imperative that we stand united, educating others about the dangers of bigotry and advocating for justice and peace.*

*Simultaneously, we are deeply affected by the current war that has impacted so many lives. Our hearts go out to those affected, and we stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Israel as well as the hostages still in captivity, praying for their wellbeing and safety. In these trying times, it is crucial for us to come together as a community, strengthening ourselves and each other.*

*Shavuot is a reminder of our shared history and the strength we derive from our faith. As we commemorate the giving of the Torah, let us draw inspiration from its teachings to guide us through these challenging times. The Torah's messages of justice, compassion, and resilience are more relevant than ever.*

*Let us use this Shavuot to reaffirm our commitment to our heretige and traditions, to stand up against hatred, and to work towards a world where peace and understanding prevail.*

*So, please join us in shul on the 1st day of Shavuot, as we hear the 10 commandments and relive the Sinai experience. Let us draw courage and strength from the Torah, to stand strong and tall in the face of all challenges.*

Chag Shavuot Sameach.

Rabbi Menachem Hertz

*Menachem Hertz*



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# CONNECT TO THE CHAI CENTER



## CARE TO SHARE

OUR HEARTFELT CONDOLENCES TO  
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HER DEAR MOTHER

MAZAL TOV TO SERGE & TALI FRANK,  
AND ALL THE FAMILY, ON THE BIRTH OF  
GOLDI

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FRIDAY EVENING: PLEASE CALL FOR TIME  
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FOLLOWED BY KIDDUSH

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# Lag Baomer

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR AMAZING VOLUNTEERS WHO HELPED MAKING THIS EVENT THE BIG SUCCESS IT WAS!



# C teen



## CTEEN SHAVUOT PARTY

### TOP 10 Reasons to come hear the TEN COMMANDMENTS This Shavuot



- CHOCOLATE
- Vanilla
- Strawberry
- mint chocochip
- sugar cones
- chocolate fudge
- colored sprinkles
- Strawberry Syrup
- CHOCOLATE SWIRL
- dulce de leche



Enjoy a fun ice cream party with a delicious dairy Buffet @ the Chai Center Garden.

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@ THE CHAI CENTER**

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FOLLOWED BY  
SHABBAT DINNER**

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NEXTEP  
by





# SHAVUOT

## WHAT IS SHAVUOT AND HOW TO CELEBRATE

### What is Shavuot? And how to celebrate it

Shavuot comes fifty days after Passover. In Hebrew, the word 'Shavuot' means 'weeks' and alludes to the seven weeks during which the Jewish people prepared themselves for the giving of the Torah.

During this time they rid themselves of the scars of bondage and became a holy nation ready to stand before G-d. The giving of the Torah was more than just an historical event. It was a far-reaching spiritual revelation - one that touched the essence of the Jewish soul then and for all time. Each year, Shavuot is the special time for us to reawaken and strengthen our special relationship with G-d. We can do so by rededicating ourselves to the observance and study of the Torah - our most precious heritage.

### Torah Isn't that an Israeli dance?

No, but it does raise our spirits. The Torah is the Hebrew name for the Bible. But it's actually much more than a holy book. It contains much more than mere knowledge or wisdom. The word Torah is derived from Hora'ah, meaning instruction. The difference between instruction and wisdom is that wisdom is abstract knowledge in which conclusions are reached through the processes of human reasoning. They are always subject to revision. By contrast, the Torah gives us a set of Divine laws and guidelines that are so universal that they have been applied these three millennia by Jews in every country and every culture throughout the world.

The Torah is composed of two parts: the written law and the oral law. The written Torah contains the Five Books of Moses, the Prophets and the Writings. Together with the written Torah, Moses was also given the oral law, which explains and clarifies the written law. It was transmitted orally from generation to generation and eventually transcribed in the Talmud and Midrash. Throughout the generations our people have studied these works, commenting upon them, clarifying their meanings, deriving practical applications of these principles and codifying the laws derived from them. Thus, a continuous chain of tradition extends throughout the generations, connecting the scholars of the present day to the revelation at Mt. Sinai. The Torah contains 613 Divine commandments, embracing every possible phase of Jewish life. The Torah addresses ritual law - like prayer, Shabbat, etc. And it defines laws governing interpersonal relationships.

### Divine Architecture

Speaking metaphorically, our Sages tell us that G-d constantly "gazes into the Torah and creates the world." The Torah is not only a practical guide for our behavior in daily life, but also, on a deeper level, it is actually the "blueprint" for creation. Everything that happens in our lives is a manifestation of G-d's wisdom, as expressed in His Torah. As such, Torah represents the very source of our vitality, and the key to the fulfillment of our deepest aspirations.

When we study Torah, even on the simplest level, we link our minds and hearts with G-d's will; our feelings become imbued with His benevolence; our minds become illuminated with His wisdom.

### It's only as old as you make it

Our Sages have declared that we must always view the Torah as "new, as if we received it today." Each year on Shavuot, in particular, we commit ourselves anew to the observance and study of Torah. We relive the historic revelation at Mount Sinai by listening as the Ten Commandments are read from the Torah in Shul (the Synagogue) on the first day of Shavuot. It is important for all to be present for this reading, including children. The importance of children is underscored by the fact that it was the children whom G-d accepted as guarantors of the Torah.

### Would your mortgage company agree to this?

Our Sages explain that before G-d gave the Torah to the Jewish people He demanded guarantors. The Jews offered many possibilities, from the patriarchs to the prophets and other great men as yet unborn, but G-d was not satisfied until the children were suggested. The Jewish children would be the guarantors and transmitters of Torah; our commitment to their education was and is the best assurance of our continued commitment to Torah and Mitzvot.

### Accept first: Ask questions later

Six hundred thousand men of conscription age, plus their families and others who had joined the Jewish people, totaled several million men, women, and children who witnessed the unparalleled revelation of G-dliness. The Midrash teaches that all souls of all generations, past and future, were present at Mount Sinai. With the words, "Na'aseh V'nishmah - We will do and we will hear," the Jewish people accepted the mission of keeping G-d's commandments, even prior to understanding them. In so doing they established the identity of the Jewish people for all time. The Jews would henceforth be reminders of G-d's presence in the world, carriers of the ideal of ethical conduct and morality based upon G-d's law. ■



# SHAVUOT CUSTOMS

## 1. Torah all Night

On the first night of Shavuot, we stay up all night and study Torah. One explanation for this tradition is that the Jewish people did not rise early on the day G-d gave the Torah, and it was necessary for G-d Himself to awaken them. To compensate for their behavior, Jews have accepted upon themselves the custom of remaining awake all night.

## 2. Megillat Ruth

It is appropriate to read the Book of Ruth on Shavuot for two reasons: First, because Shavuot is a harvest festival and the Book of Ruth gives us a picture of the harvest, and how the poor were treated in the harvest season with sympathy and love. Secondly, because Shavuot is the anniversary of the passing of King David, who was the great-grandson of Ruth and Boaz, whose story is told in the Book of Ruth. But perhaps the main reason for our reading the Book of Ruth on this festival is because it gives us such a vivid picture of the "Ger Tzedek", true convert. Shavuot is the "time of the giving of our Torah," and when we received it, we too, like the "Ger Tzedek", pledged to accept the Torah and fulfill its 613 commandments.

## 3. Eating Dairy Foods

There are a number of reasons for this custom: On the holiday of Shavuot, a two-loaf bread offering was brought in the Temple. To commemorate this,

we eat two meals on Shavuot - first a dairy meal, and then, after a short interruption, we eat the traditional meat holiday meal.

With the giving of the Torah the Jews now became obligated to observe the laws of Kosher. As the Torah was given on Shabbat no cattle could be slaughtered nor could utensils be koshered, and thus on that day they ate dairy.

Another reason is that the Torah is likened to nourishing milk. Also, the Hebrew word for milk is "Chalav." When the numerical value of each of the letters in the word "Chalav" are added together - 8; 30; 2 - the total is forty. Forty is the number of days Moses spent on Mount Sinai when receiving the Torah.

## 4. Adorning the Home

Since Shavuot is the Harvest Festival (in the time of the Temple the first fruits of harvest were given on Shavuot), it is customary to adorn the home and synagogue with fruits, flowers and greens. Furthermore, our Sages relate that although Mount Sinai was situated in a desert, when the Torah was given the mountain bloomed and sprouted flowers.

## 5. Yizkor Memorial Service

Following the Torah reading on the second day of Shavuot, those whose parents have passed on recite the Yizkor memorial service.

# DATES & TIMES

## Blessings:

1. Baruch Atah Ado-nai, E-loheinu Melech ha'olam, asher kideshanu b'mitzvotav, v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Yom Tov.
2. Baruch Atah Ado-nai, E-loheinu melech ha'olam, she-hecheyanu v'kimanu v'higiyanu lizman hazeh.

## Shavuot Eve Tuesday June 11

Light Candles at 21:39  
Say Blessings 1 & 2

## Shavuot Day One Wednesday June 12

Morning Services at 10:00  
Kids fun Program at 11.00  
Reading the 10 COMMANDMENTS  
at 11:15 aprox.  
Service Followed by a Shavuot Dairy Buffet  
Light Yom Tov candles  
at 23:12  
Say Blessings 1 & 2

## Shavuot Day Two Thursday June 13

Morning Services at 10:00  
Yizkor Memorial Services at 11.30  
Holiday Ends at 23:13

\*On holidays, it is permissible to light from an existing flame burning since before the holiday, such as a gas pilot or candle. (Do not create a new fire by striking a match, lighter, etc..) After lighting do not extinguish the flame, let it burn out on a safe surface.

# THE YARTZEI OF THE BAAL SHEM TOV



**R**abbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Chassidism, was born in Ukraine in 1698 (Elul 18, 5458 on the Jewish calendar). His father, Rabbi Eliezer, who was a member of the secret society of "hidden tzaddikim," passed away when young Israel was only five years old; his last words to his son were, "Fear nothing but G-d alone. Love every Jew with all your heart and all your soul."

The young orphan would spend much of his time wandering and meditating in the forests that surrounded his hometown; there, he one day met with one of his father's compatriots, and eventually joined their society. For many years, he lived disguised as a simple innkeeper and clay-digger, his greatness known only to a very small circle of fellow mystics and disciples. But on his 36th birthday, he was instructed by his master to "reveal" himself and

publicly disseminate his teachings.

Drawing from the mystical "soul of Torah," the Baal Shem Tov ("Master of the Good Name," as he came to be known) taught about the spark of G-dliness that is to be found in every creation, and about the great love that G-d has for each and every one of His children, scholars and simple folk alike. He emphasized the importance of joy and simple faith in serving G-d, rather than asceticism. Initially, his teachings encountered fierce opposition from the scholarly elite and established leadership of the Jewish community; but many of those very scholars and communal leaders ended up becoming his devoted disciples. When Rabbi Israel passed way at age 62 on Shavuot of 1760, the movement he founded was well on the way to becoming the most vital force in Jewish life. ■



# THE WEEKDAY HOLIDAY

BY ELISHA GREENBAUM

Aspiring Olympians train for years, focusing everything they do on one day. They spend thousands of hours of pressure and preparation in the hope that they'll peak at precisely the right moment. To a lesser degree, students do the same; their yearly mark depends on the final exam and can often determine their future profession.

What are the highlights of your career? When you look back at the photo album of your life, which moments will you most treasure or regret, and which will you struggle to even remember?

Certain days just mean more—your wedding day, the birth of your first child, and Yom Kippur all loom large in life's pantheon, while other days just seem to sweep by.

The big moments in life don't actually last that long; it's hard to maintain the intensity. An athletic event is usually over in seconds, while most exams are over within hours. Even the most schlepped out wedding ceremony finishes eventually, and the actual moment of birth is usually quick, no matter how many hours of labor preceded it. Most of us coast to the finish line, and then collapse in an exhausted heap immediately after bursting through the tape.

The holiday of Shavuot is literally translated as the "Festival of Weeks." It seems like a misnomer; the festival itself is two days (or one, if you're living in Israel), and the "weeks" refer to the time we've spent preparing for the big day. You'd never refer to your wedding as a "Celebration of our 14-Month Engagement," or the Super Bowl as the "Festival of the Football Season," so why name this holiday after its preparation period?

The lesson of the Festival of Weeks is that weekdays can become festivals. Unlike the Olympics, where you only get one chance at the gold medal, Jews are granted a never-ending chance at immortality. According to Judaism, you don't just have a one-time chance for redemption, rather the weeks and days of our life are expected to become festivals of G-d.

There is a famous quote, "Spectacular achievement is always preceded by unspectacular preparation," but the Torah teaches that the preparation itself is an integral, spectacular part of the journey. The days and weeks of our lives are far more than mere stages in our long journey toward a goal, but are unique opportunities to access eternity.

But how do we tap into this rich vein of purpose? Isn't it natural to invest certain moments with greater gravitas than others? The way to recognize the inherent value of each point in time is to count the days, to fill up each moment of every day with meaning, and then the weekdays will become holidays. Often, we focus on the future and ignore the here and now. But the lesson of Shavuot is that every moment of every day counts.



# OF LIFE AND LOGOS

BY YOSSY GOLDMAN

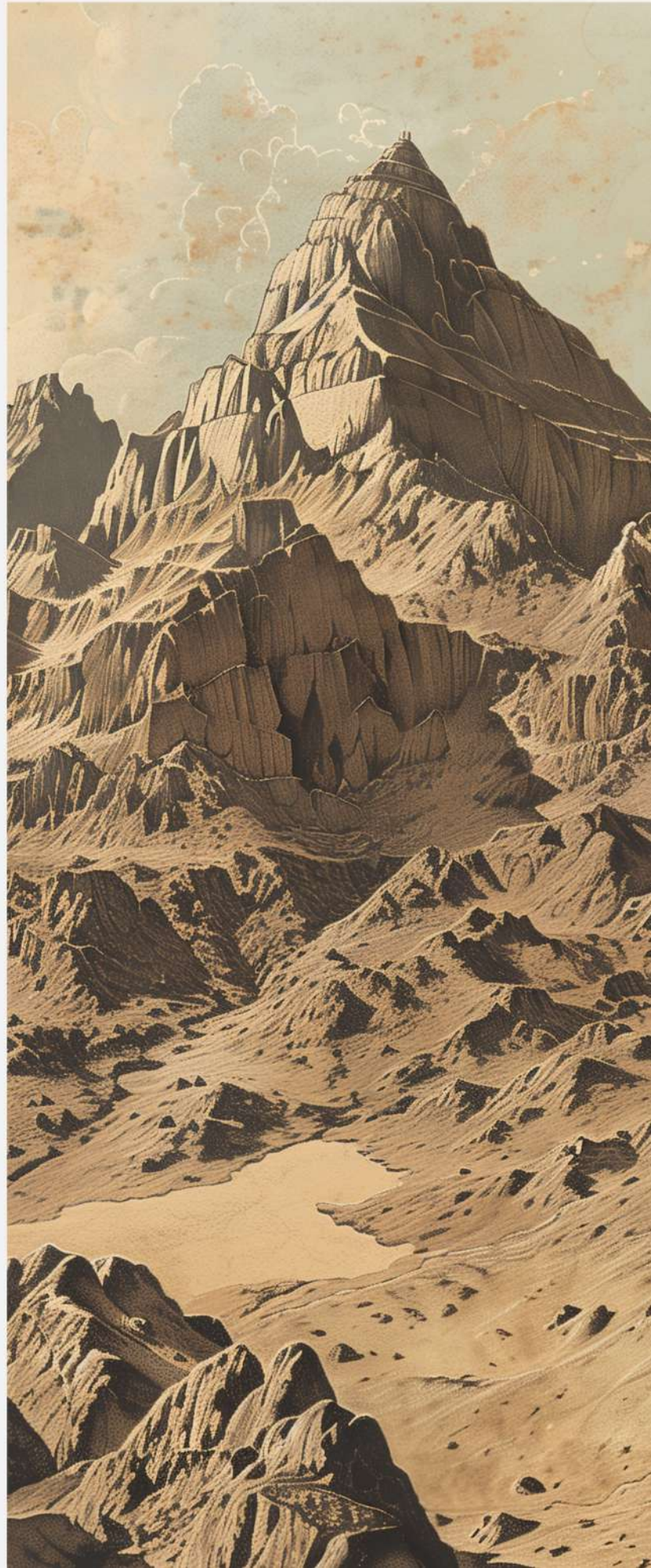
"Everything in life is luck," Donald Trump is reputed to have once said with uncharacteristic humility.

And for a change, the great rabbis of Talmudic times agreed. "Everything depends on luck," they said, "even the Torah scroll in the Holy Ark." It's absolutely true; some Torah scrolls get lucky and are used regularly. Others, for reasons unknown even to the beadle, get relegated to the back of the Holy Ark and are rarely used, if ever. Some people have more mazel than others and, yes, even some Torahs enjoy more mazel than their neighbors.

And so, it would appear, is the case with our Jewish holidays. Our festivals all evoke excitement and splendor. Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Passover and Sukkot all come wrapped in festive symbols that fire our imaginations. The Shofar, the sacred fast, the little huts we build and the lulav and etrog we buy, matzah and the whole Seder experience – they all constitute so much of the imagery we have inside our childhood memories. Neither are Chanukah and Purim short on symbols – menorahs and graggers are only two of many. It is these vivid symbols that stimulate our eager anticipation of beautiful and meaningful holiday celebrations today.

*WHAT IS JUDAISM WITHOUT TORAH? TO REDUCE TORAH TO A SYMBOL IS TO VIOLATE ITS SANCTITY.*

But what about Shavuot? Does it not seem somewhat orphaned and bereft of imagery? Where is there a strong symbol for Shavuot? What prominent image do we hold aloft to represent the season of the Giving of the Torah? Yes, there are the Ten Commandments, but they are studied and observed all year long too. Why do all the other festivals seem to have specific signs, vivid emblems or icons to capture our attention and Shavuot does not?





The 19th century German rabbi and thinker Samson Raphael Hirsch suggests that for something as special as Shavuot, the holiday which represents the Giving of the Torah, i.e. the very foundation of Judaism, a mere symbol would be utterly inadequate. What are Jews without Torah? What is Judaism without Torah? To reduce Torah to a symbol is to violate its sanctity. The only way to represent Torah is to live by it. Torah is measured by substance not by symbols. Can Torah be contained or encapsulated in a logo or symbol?!

In the language of the Chassidic masters, the Torah is higher than mere symbolism; it is beyond depiction or embodiment. It is not only wisdom or law. The Giving of the Torah was not merely an event or a historical experience. Torah is the very essence of everything.

So when we need to remember the Exodus and the miraculous protection in the wilderness, we do things to keep that memory alive and to help us relive those experiences. But Torah is not limited to memories. Remembering Sinai, the Ten Commandments, and the thunder and lightning, is not good enough. The only way we can plug into Torah is by living it. There are no shortcuts. We need to study Torah, learn its ways and live by it.

That's why the great Torah teachers through the centuries have not necessarily been outwardly charismatic, at least not in the popular sense. Nor have they needed to be tall, larger than life personalities. Some of our greatest spiritual leaders have been small in size but giants in stature. They were humble, unassuming and pious. It wasn't their powerful baritones or handsome features which attracted the people, but their nobility of character that commanded respect. Sure, their deep wisdom was an outstanding quality but, more importantly, it was their flawless behavior that made them stand out. Those who were academically brilliant at Talmud but whose conduct did not match their scholarship did not become the Torah leaders of their generation. The truly great ones who stood out were those who became "Torah personalities." The genuine Torah leaders of history weren't seeking fame or fortune. They hired no publicists to mount PR campaigns. They were men of truth and, intuitively, the people flocked to them.

And the same holds true to this day. Because Torah is truth and truth must be lived truthfully and consistently, otherwise it's a lie.

So Shavuot has no dominant symbol. Torah is too powerful, too awesome and too sacred to be slickly packaged or labeled with a logo. Torah is truth. And truth cannot be marketed. It can only be lived.

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# COUNTDOWN

BY NAFTALI SILBERBERG

The preparations for any given event give us an idea as to the substance of the anticipated event. The woman in a bridal boutique purchasing a white wedding gown is preparing for her wedding day, and the person in a camping site collecting dry wood and arranging it in a pile is getting ready to make a bonfire. It's a pretty fair assumption that the wedding gown isn't intended for wearing at a bonfire, and the wood isn't being stacked in a pyramid in anticipation of a wedding reception. The same applies with preparations for spiritual and religious events. A month of introspection and repentance is certainly the suitable preparation for the High Holidays, when G-d examines our deeds and renders a judgment regarding the new year. And scouring the house in search of chametz is a sure sign that Passover is approaching—a holiday when the possession of all leavened substances is banned for eight days.

Shavuot is the holiday that marks the anniversary of the day when G-d gave us the Torah. This monumental day also follows a preparation period—the seven-week Omer counting period. We prepare for Shavuot by counting numbers.

Interestingly, the Torah portion of Bamidbar is always read shortly before Shavuot, usually on the Shabbat immediately preceding the holiday. This Torah reading begins the book of Numbers, and the portion is indeed filled with numbers. First a census is taken of the Israelites, and the Torah supplies us with the number of Israelites in each tribe and in each of the four “flags,” and then gives the grand totals. The Levites are then counted—twice. The firstborns earn their very own headcount, too.

*WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN NUMBERS AND THE SPECIAL GIFT OUR NATION RECEIVED ON SHAVUOT?*



Counting is an equalizer. Every unit which is counted adds up to one, no more and no less. Let us use the two countings which we have just mentioned—the Omer counting and the censuses of the Israelites—as examples:

The seven weeks of the Omer period contain many different days, some holy and exciting, others seemingly mundane and ordinary. On one side we have the days of Passover, seven Shabbats, Rosh Chodesh, and the deeply mystical holiday of Lag BaOmer; and then we have the “back to dull work” Mondays and the rest of the run-of-the-mill days. But as concerns the counting of the Omer, each of these days has the exact same value: one day in the journey towards Shavuot. This is because no matter the external qualities (or non-qualities) that any given day may possess, in essence every day is a carbon copy of the day that just passed and the day to follow. Every day is a gift from G-d, and we are intended to use it, to maximize it to its utmost in His service. The seven weeks of the Omer period contain many different days, some holy and exciting, others seemingly mundane and ordinary. On one side we have the days of Passover, seven Shabbats, Rosh Chodesh, and the deeply mystical holiday of Lag BaOmer; and then we have the “back to dull work” Mondays and the rest of the run-of-the-mill days. But as concerns the counting of the Omer, each of these days has the exact same value: one day in the journey towards Shavuot. This is because no matter the external qualities (or non-qualities) that any given day may possess, in essence every day is a carbon copy of the day that just passed and the day to follow. Every day is a gift from G-d, and we are intended to use it, to maximize it to its utmost in His service.

The same is true with regards to counting Jews. As a nation, we are far from a homogenous group. This is true in all areas—and our service of G-d is no exception. Depending on our unique talents, some of us serve G-d through assiduous Torah study, others through volunteering time in public service, others through financially supporting worthy causes, and yet others through reciting Psalms with devotion and sincerity. Leaders and followers. Old and young. Men and women. Scholars and laymen. Every segment of our nation, and indeed every individual person, serves G-d in his or her unique way.

And the counting of the Jews teaches us that the service of any one person isn't more or less important than the service of another. One's service may be more attractive, flashy and attention-grabbing than another's; but at the core we are all involved in the exact same pursuit—serving our Creator with all our available talents and resources.

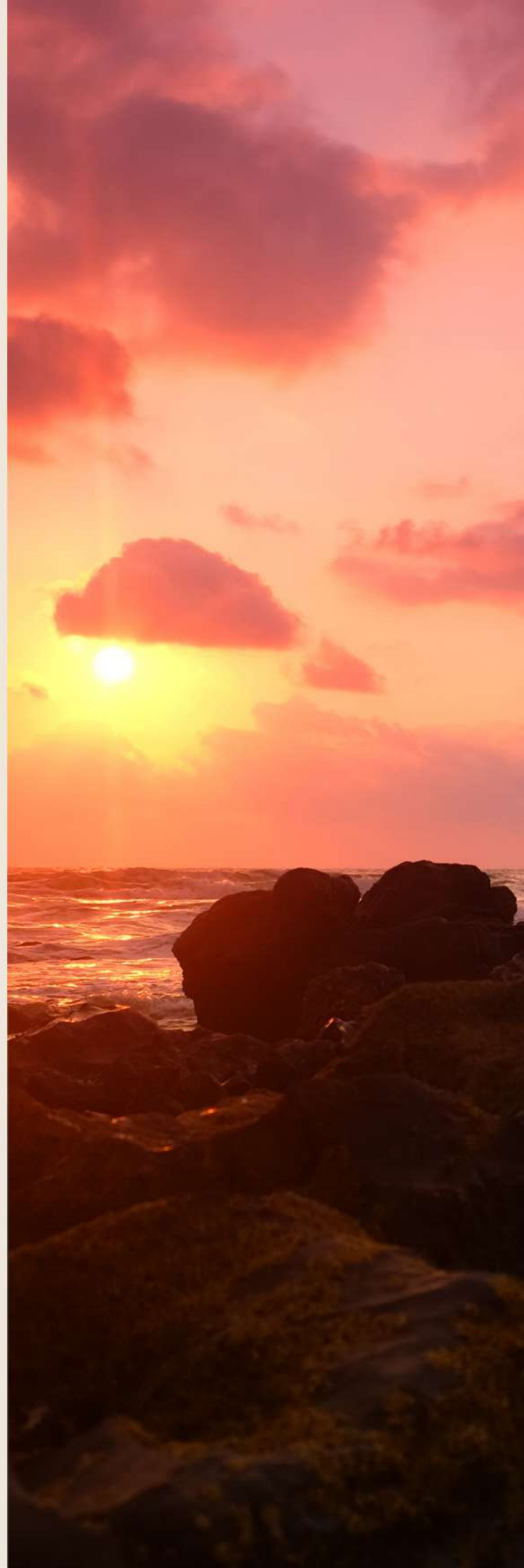
## *COUNTING DAYS ALLOWS US TO FOCUS ON WHAT UNITES THEM ALL, THEIR COMMON FACTOR AND PURPOSE.*

All these countings lead to Shavuot, the day when we were given the Torah, the ultimate equalizer.

The essence and purpose of all of creation is G-d's desire for a physical abode, an earthly realm which would be transformed into a hospitable habitat where His essence could be expressed. It is the Torah that (a) reveals to us this divine plan; (b) contains the mitzvot, the tools with which we bring this purpose to realization; and thus (c) brings harmony and equality to all of creation—for it shows us how every one of its myriads of components is essentially identical, for they all have one purpose.

As Shavuot approaches, let us take this message to heart. Every person counts. Every day counts. Every component of creation counts. And we should be counting our blessings that we were given the Torah—without which nothing would count.

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# IT'S EASY FOR YOU RABBI, YOU WERE BORN RELIGIOUS

*BY ELISHA GREENBAUM*

It's an argument I hear all the time. People will approach me at weddings and after funerals, they'll stop me on the street and corner me in the supermarket, and attempt to explain to me exactly why they can't accept more Judaism into their lives: because they just weren't born into it.

Their parents didn't practice, they didn't attend a Jewish school or weren't paying attention during religious classes. They can't read Hebrew fluently, they've never felt comfortable in shul, and they're sorry, but it's definitely too late to start now.

Is that true?



There have been tens of thousands of ba'alei teshuvah over the last few decades—men and women who weren't born into religious families but who have chosen to become Torah-observant. We all have the free choice to change and the ability to succeed. Admittedly, it might be harder to pick up a new language and to adopt new rituals at a relatively advanced age, but it definitely can be done, if one wants it enough.

Perhaps even more extraordinary than ba'alei teshuvah are geirim, converts, who weren't born Jewish and yet have taken the audacious step of transforming their lives and casting their lot in with ours. We welcome them aboard, and we admire their courage.

If you think about it, Shavuot is the festival where we celebrate this capacity to adopt Judaism and commit oneself to G-d. The men and women clustered around Mt. Sinai didn't really know what they were getting into, but they were willing to find out. Right then and there, they chose G-d and promised to spend the rest of their lives changing, learning and practicing until they got it right. It's not easy, but it's worth it.



On Shavuot, we all become ba'alei teshuvah and we all promise to convert. It makes no difference where we've come from; the real question is, where are we heading?

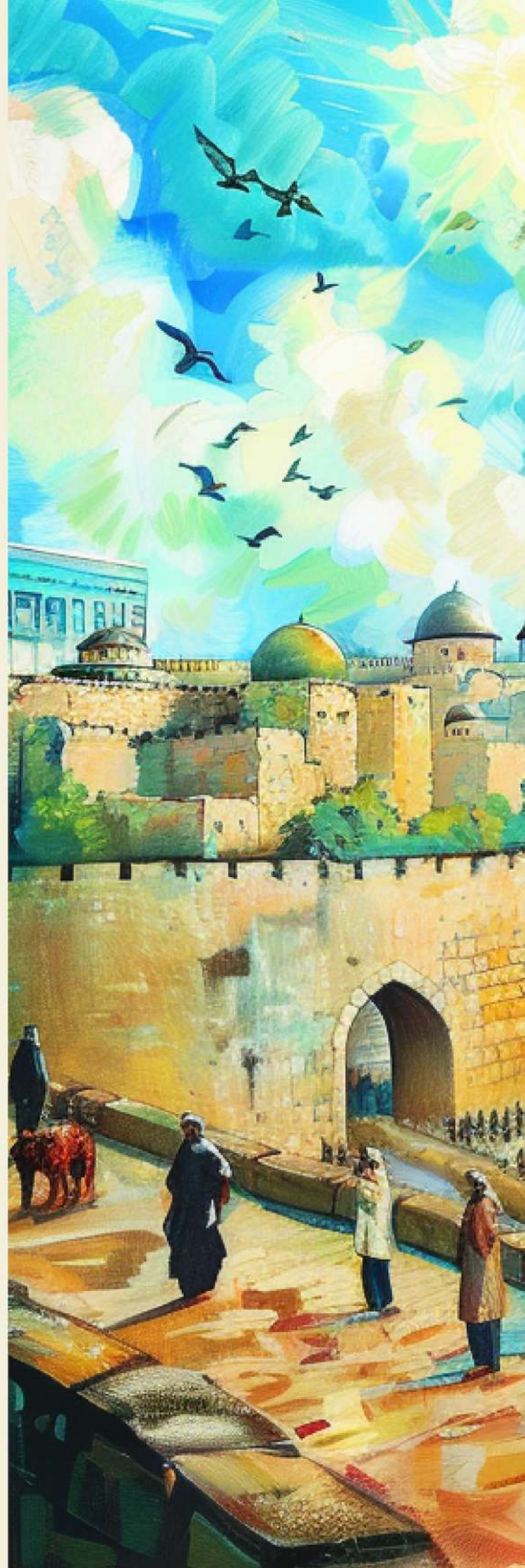
When Moses climbed the mountain to receive G-d's commands to His new nation, G-d instructed him to "say to the House of Jacob and tell the Children of Israel." Biblical commentators point out that the variant expressions "the House of Jacob" and "the Children of Israel" are a reflection of the different types of people whom Moses was addressing.

Jacob and Israel are both names of our forefather Jacob. Jacob was the name that he was given at birth, and reflects his identity as an innately holy Jew, born to spiritually pure parents. Israel is the name that he received when, as an adult, he demonstrated the courage and maturity to struggle against adversity and independently chose to transform himself.

The "House of Jacob" is a reference to our birthplace. We don't get to pick our parents, and we have done nothing to deserve the treasures into which we're born. The "Children of Israel," by contrast, describes us as the adults we have become, who choose our own paths in life and deserve the rewards that we have personally earned. G-d was instructing Moses to speak on both levels and tailor his message to every stage in the journey through life.

G-d is speaking to all of us, all the time. No matter what we've been doing till now, we can and must do better in the future. The training we've received to date and the legacy we inherited from our parents and teachers are useful only if we utilize them to better ourselves in the future. We were all born holy and, at the same time, we must all improve further.

When we gather in the synagogue on Shavuot to hear the Ten Commandments and receive the Torah anew, let us be truly grateful for the gifts we've received in the past, and let us promise to transform ourselves into the people that G-d wishes us to become—and thus earn the reward that He is confident we deserve.



# Q & A

When in public with my Kippah, I often get antisemitic taunts shouted at me from drivers passing by. How should I react to someone calling me a dirty Jew? If it were to my face it would be different, but here I only have a split-second to respond and they are gone. Should I shout back? Ignore?

## **Answer:**

The most appropriate reaction to being called a Jew is to say thank you. No matter what adjective is added, being a Jew is a badge of honour.

Whenever someone hurls me that compliment, I tip my hat in appreciation. I can think of nothing better than to be identified as a part of the Jewish people. And I will proudly accept that accolade from whoever throws it at me.

The truth is, some of the most generous compliments about Jews come from those who hate us the most.

Hitler said, "Conscience is a Jewish invention." I would give G-d the credit for that, but thanks anyway for crediting us with giving such a gift to the world.

Senior Hamas official Ali Baraka recently told an interviewer: "The Israelis are known to love life. We, on the other hand, sacrifice ourselves. We consider our dead to be martyrs."

Lechaim, Ali. We do love life. If only you would respect your own people's lives as much as we do, there would be no war.

But when it comes to complimenting the Jewish people, no one said it nicer than Haman, the villain of the Purim story:

"There is one nation, scattered and dispersed amongst the nations...."



So right. We are one nation, united forever. We may be scattered and dispersed, both geographically and ideologically. But the Hamans of history have always reminded us that the Jewish people are one and indivisible. And he continued:

"Their laws are different from every other people."

Spot on. Our code of ethics usually differs from that of the United Nations. Our sense of right and wrong does not always align with world opinion. And we are proud of it. Our laws condemn evil behaviour, regardless of the identity of its victim and its perpetrator. We believe there is one G-d and one standard of justice for all humanity. Not sure the UN or International Criminal Court agree with that. But thanks, Haman, for noticing that our laws are different.

As King David said in the Psalms: "Make me wise from my enemies". We can learn a lot from the statements of those who hate us. They despise morality and conscience. They celebrate death and hate life. And they can't stand when Jews are united. We can see goodness from what evil hates.

Our response is to strengthen our commitment to moral living, redouble our celebration of life, and deepen our sense of oneness with our people.

So next time someone calls you a Jew from a passing car, thank them. Feel blessed to be part of the nation that stands for goodness, life and unity. They may think it's a hit-and-run insult, but really it's a drive-by compliment.



# Q & A

I can't help feeling that we are living a big historical moment. People are even saying that Moshiach is about to arrive and the final redemption is here. But how can that be? There is so much bad stuff in the world right now, not just the terrorists, but the anti-semites and the haters everywhere. Yes, a lot of good is happening, but it seems the bad side is stronger and bolder than ever. And it's everywhere - even the usually quiet Australia. So how can we be sure that things will get better, and not worse?

## **Answer:**

Indeed, we are witnessing a major moment in history, perhaps even the culmination of history. Our world is the arena of a great battle, the battle between good and evil. We know the end of that battle is the victory of good, and the vanquishing of evil. And we are now seeing the signs that victory is near.

The force of evil is known by many names in Jewish writings: Satan (the Accuser), Yetzer Hara (the Evil Urge), Klipah (the Husk), Sitra Achra (the Other Side). Whatever we call it, evil is the force of darkness that has haunted humankind from the very beginning of time.

When the primordial snake enticed Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, the battle of good versus evil began. And it goes on to this day. The terrorists who commit atrocities, as well as those who support, celebrate and justify them, are all accomplices to evil. They have aligned themselves with all the infamous villains of history, right back to the snake.

Every good person has the duty to fight this evil. By doing so we align with all the righteous people of all generations who stood for light and truth and hope. And we will win. Because goodness is accumulative, while evil is not. All the good deeds of all time, and all good people around the world, add up to a massive force of light. Evil doesn't have that ability. Goodness unites. Evil divides. Goodness builds. Evil destroys. Goodness is everlasting. Evil is temporary. Good has real friends. Evil is always lonely.



And evil has a use by date. That date seems to be very soon.

There is a kabbalistic teaching about the end of evil. When the time comes for evil to be eradicated forever, it will go into panic mode. It will make one last hurrah before it is gone forever. And that is what we are seeing now.

Evil knows that its time is up, its day of reckoning has come. And so it puts up its final fight, and goes wild. This is evil in its death throes. Like an old car on its last legs, spluttering and coughing before it finally conks out, evil is making a lot of noise now, because its end is near.

We can bring this battle to a happy ending, if we all do our part. Our beloved soldiers in the Israel Defence Forces are waging the military war to eliminate the terrorists. We must pray for their safety and success. And we need to fight the evil closer to home, by calling it for what it is - hatred, falsehood and moral blindness.

But more than anything, to win this battle, we need to increase light, love and goodness. Every mitzvah we do adds power to the forces of truth in the world. Every good deed increases light. The old car of evil is about to break down once and for all. Let's not be scared, but be confident that goodness will prevail. In the words of the Al Tirah prayer with which we end every service:

“Do not fear sudden terror, nor the destruction of the wicked when it comes. They will conspire a scheme, but it will be foiled, conspire a plot and it will not materialise, for G-d is with us!”

# A DEEP REASON TO EAT CHEESECAKE

BY ARON MOSS

## Question:

What's behind the custom of eating dairy products on Shavuot? Is there a connection between the giving of the Torah at Mt Sinai and eating milk products? (I'm not complaining, I love cheesecake - I'm just looking for a deep spiritual excuse to eat more.)

## Answer:

Milk is actually refined blood. In a complex and wondrous process, the mammary glands transform blood into pure white milk.

There's something supernatural about that. To take a liquid as pungent and distasteful as blood, and convert it into a nourishing and drinkable food is nothing short of miraculous. We can simulate this miracle in our own lives. Blood represents raw animalistic passion and untamed instinct. Milk is a symbol of refinement and purity of character. Making milk out of blood - refining our lower instincts - is our life goal .



The Torah introduced a radical new path to achieve this goal - the divine commands. Through engaging in simple acts of goodness and sanctity, we can tame our animalistic instincts and align ourselves with the divine. With each individual act we elevate ourselves and our world another step, gradually transforming a rough and untamed existence into a home for G-d. We can turn our blood into milk.

I also love cheesecake. But this year as we eat it, let's remember the message behind it - that the Torah was given to transform our selfish appetites into an appetite for giving; to turn our blood, which is just for ourselves, into milk, the one thing the body produces just to give to another.



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**Chai**  
today



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HAPPY  
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**shavuot**  
ice cream &  
cheesecake party

**wednesday, June 12th**  
**Tefillah at 10:00**

**Children's program &  
10 commandments**  
**at 11.00**

**At the Chai Center**  
**Parklaan 120 Edegem**

The poster features a vibrant yellow background with pink and white abstract shapes. At the top, the word "shavuot" is written in a large, white, rounded font with pink decorative elements. Below it, "ice cream & cheesecake party" is written in a similar white font. The central image shows three ice cream cones: one with white vanilla, one with pink strawberry, and one with chocolate. To the right, there are two slices of cheesecake topped with fresh strawberries. The event details are listed in bold black text, and the location is at the bottom.