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# *the Jewish Journal*

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YEAR OF HAKHEL • YEAR OF ASSEMBLY

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SHAVUOT 5769

JUNE 2009



## upcoming:

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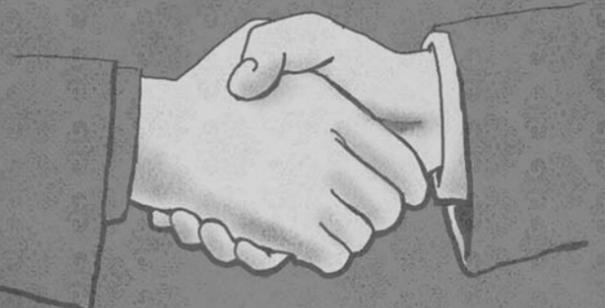
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# shavuot!

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## From the Rabbi's Desk

Would anybody decline an invitation to witness the revelation of G-d?

Here is the offer:

Ever since G-d revealed himself at Mount Sinai and gave us His Torah, we remember it every single day. Recalling this experience is one of the injunctions a Jew is to observe daily. Although G-d revealed Himself at Sinai 3321 years ago, we as a people keep the experience foremost in our consciousness. The memory of revelation keeps us focused on who we are, on our privilege and our commitment. It gives us purpose and keeps us connected to the Giver of the Torah. So too, whenever we are called to the Torah – especially at turning points of our lives such as a Bar Mitzvah or before a wedding – we recall the giving of the Torah by G-d at Sinai.

The festival of Shavuot is the anniversary of the giving of the Torah. We commemorate this experience by publicly reading the story of G-d's revelation at Sinai where He transmitted the Ten Commandments to all of the Jewish people – millions of men, women and children who were present there. We feast and we celebrate; we demonstrate our appreciation for the Torah and renew our commitment to Torah and Judaism for the forthcoming year.

As important as it is to recall the experience of 3321 years ago, it is essential to realize that what happened long ago is also actually happening now!

The purpose for the constant remembrance of the Sinai experience and for the annual celebration is to keep us focused on the fact that when we study Torah today there is a G-dly revelation that takes place at that moment. As G-d is looking out for us to internalize His thoughts, His wisdom – He connects with us when we do that, when we study His Torah.

On the anniversary of the giving of the Torah, on Shavuot, G-d intensifies His bond with the Torah and with those who connect with Him through it. Thus, tuning ourselves, we experience the new intensified bond between G-d and the Jewish people who study the Torah.

•••

The aforementioned has special meaning this year, being the year of Hakhel on the Jewish calendar, when we are instructed to reenact the experience of Mount Sinai (as explained at length in Talmud and Maimonides. ).

•••

Let us, this Shavuot, re-experience and reconnect by intensifying our commitment to the study of Torah, tuning in to understand and internalize G-d's wisdom.

Best wishes for a very happy and meaningful Shavuot.

Rabbi L. Krinsky  
Rabbi M. Wilansky  
Rabbi M.L. Gray

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We cannot take responsibility for the Kashrut of items advertised in this publication.

## From our Mailbox

**WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!**  
Comments, Ideas, Suggestions.

Send to: The Jewish Journal  
7 Camelot Place  
Manchester, NH 03104

Dear Rabbi Wilansky,

The children and teachers of the Adas Yeshurun Hebrew School would like to thank you for your visit and for teaching us about matza making!

Shalom,  
L.B. Rockland, ME

Rabbi & Mrs. Wilansky,

Thanks to you for a wonderful meal Shabbos and also thank you for an enriching experience. I appreciate your good work and I am grateful that I visited your home.

B.Z Portland, ME

Dear Rabbi Wilansky,

I want to thank you for visiting us during Shiva. It was a long trip for the short time you spent with you! And thank you for the matza. It was very thoughtful of you and much appreciated.

Sincerely,  
J. Portland, ME

Dear Rabbi and Chani,

Even though it has been five years since I have been a student at Dartmouth, much has stayed the same - pong is still a lot of fun, my Hinman Box is still there, and even though Chabad has moved locations, Rabbi Gray and Chani continue to provide a welcoming and festive place to spend the holidays and pass the time. Some things have changed, however. What struck me first (and perhaps most) was the sheer number of people celebrating Pesach at the Grays' house. Every single room on the first floor of the house was full of tables and chairs, and not a single one was empty.

Together, eighty five of us celebrated the first night of Pesach thanks to the generosity of the Rentz family, and the endless hard work and preparation by Rabbi Gray and Chani. It was great to go back to

## CHABAD OF MAINE CELEBRATES WITH SCHOLAR-IN-RESIDENCE RABBI ELI SANDHAUS

Are you ready for The Torah?? Are you ready for some fun and learning??

Chabad of Maine invites you to join us for a freyliche Shavuot holiday celebration. We are very pleased to welcome again Rabbi Eli Sandhaus, who many of you will remember as a wonderful teacher, inspiring us with insights about the Torah in the light of Chassidus, with wit and wisdom, with stories of the great rabbis of yore. You might also remember his beautiful chazzonos, as he is truly one of the sweet singers of Israel!

We start the chag with mincha-maariv minyan Thursday evening, May 28 at 7:45 PM. Candle lighting is at 7:54. Davening will be followed by a festive seudah (meal). That night, we return at 10:00 for all-night learning, known as Tikkun Leyl Shavuot. We observe this age-old tradition,



see how much Chabad has grown since I have left Dartmouth. I had a great time catching up with Rabbi Gray and Chani, as well as celebrating the holiday with my brother, his friends and countless other Dartmouth students who I was meeting for the first time. Many thanks to Rabbi and Chani for a wonderful visit!"

P.B. Dartmouth "04

Dear Rabbi Krinsky,

There are not enough words to tell you what your visit meant to all of us. The phone calls and the visit helped us all through a very tough time.

Enclosed is a check in memory of M. Please use it as you see fit.

Thank you  
S.P.H.

Dear Rabbi Levi and Shternie,

Once again it was a pleasure and joy to attend another Krinsky "simcha" this time Etti's! The evening was beautiful and most enjoyable and so delicious.

Etti is indeed a beautiful young lady who without a shred of doubt will continue to bring you the tremendous pride and joy you must have felt on that evening of March 23. It was a moving experience for all of us there.

Mazel Tov again to you and your blessed family and may you all enjoy only the very best in life.

Happy Pesach!

With warmest thought and affection.  
E.N. Manchester

Dear Rabbi and Shternie,

Many thanks for the lovely package for Purim. Needless to say each and every package of goodies have been opened and shared among us. We always appreciate your kindness.

Rabbi, just to say thank you would never begin to express our thanks to you for being a part of K's life we are only hoping that all the positive things you discussed will help. Again many thanks for all you do for everyone and for us.

Best regards,  
J.B.



learning and studying in preparation for receiving the Torah the following morning.

Shavuot morning davening will start at 10:00. Yizkor, the traditional remembrance and memorial service for our departed loved ones, will start around 11:00. Rabbi Sandhaus will be delivering a drasha (teaching) during the service. The Torah reading on shavuot includes the Ten Commandments. It is a custom for all men, women, and children, even the youngest, to come hear the Ten Commandments. A festive Kiddush and a wonderful traditional dairy meal follows davening.

# A TORAH THOUGHT

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe  
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

The Lubavitcher Rebbe  
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

**Moses received the Torah [from G-d at] Sinai and gave it over to Joshua. Joshua [gave it over] to the Elders, the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets gave it over to the Men of the Great Assembly {Ethics of the Fathers, 1:1.}**

On the surface, the Ethics is giving us a generalized listing of the first 23 generations of Torah's chain of tradition from Sinai to our day. On a deeper level, it is imparting the five primary qualities which are crucial to anyone who approaches the study of Torah.

**A) "Moses" Humility.**

Moses certainly knew who he was. He knew that he was the one human being chosen by G-d to communicate His wisdom and will to man. Nevertheless, the Torah attests: "And the man Moses was the most humble man upon the face of the earth."

Indeed, a lesser man, or a man less aware of his greatness, could not as poignantly exemplify the essence of humility: the understanding that man attains what he does with the gifts bestowed upon him by his Creator. "Had any other man been given what has been granted me," Moses would have said, "he most certainly would have accomplished far more than I."

To study Torah, a person must engage his mind and maximize its prowess an experience that usually inflates the ego and increases a person's sense of self-importance. So the example of Moses is cited as a prerequisite to the proper study of G-d's wisdom: apply your intellectual gifts to the utmost, but remember that these are indeed gifts, and the purpose to which they have been granted to you.

**B) "Joshua" Devotion.**

"The young man, Joshua the son of Nun, would not budge from the tent." Faithfulness, diligence and perseverance were the traits that characterized Joshua; these traits deemed him worthy to assume the mantle of leadership after the passing of Moses and to serve as the second link in the chain of the Torah's transmission from master to pupil.

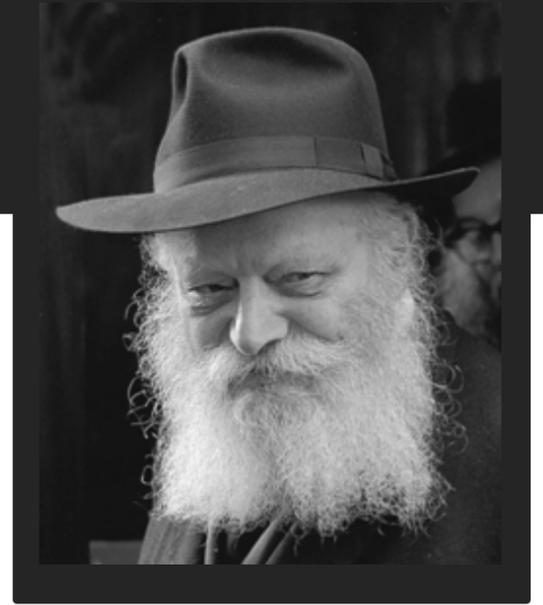
The greatest mind, the most pious of hearts, cannot hope to master Torah without years of devoted days and sleepless nights; "You shall study it day and night" for only then will your efforts meet success.

**C) "Elder" It has to cost you.**

The Hebrew word for "elder", zakein, is related to the word kanah, to purchase; thus, the Talmud defines an "elder" as "one who has purchased wisdom." "If someone tells you, I have not toiled, but I have accomplished, do not believe him," advise our sages, who also stated, "The Torah is attained only by one who kills himself over it."

**D) "Prophet" You cannot do it on your own.**

Torah is the wisdom and will of G-d. To comprehend Torah is to know the infinite mind of the Creator which is by definition unknowable. So the Torah must be granted to us, as we say in the blessing recited prior to its study, "...blessed are You G-d, Who gives us the Torah." It is only because G-d desires that the human mind should comprehend Him, only because He chooses to transcend the line He had drawn at creation between the finite and the infinite, that we are capable of understanding a single word of Torah. Thus, the study of Torah is unlike any other science. While success in any field of knowledge is strictly a matter of intellectual ability, a person's moral and spiritual qualifications are paramount when it comes to the study of Torah. For ultimately,



mately, every one who masters the wisdom of Torah is a "prophet" one whom G-d has chosen to allow a glimpse of His truth.

**E) "The Great Assembly" Make it real.**

The "Men of the Great Assembly" were a council of 120 sages who led the Jewish people at the time of their return to the Holy Land in the 4th century B.C.E. after three generations of exile in Babylonia. Many challenges faced the fragile, recovering nation, ravaged by 70 years of displacement and assimilation. The Men of the Great Assembly applied their knowledge of Torah to address the needs of their time, instituting a unified text for daily prayer and many other statutes and ordinances. This is the final of the five principles upon which one's approach to Torah must be based: Torah must never be studied as a theory. The most lofty of its concepts must be carried down to the nitty-gritty of everyday life.

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## What is Shavuot?

Shavuot marks the anniversary of the day when we received the Torah at Mount Sinai. It is the second of the three major festivals (Passover being the first, and Sukkot the third), occurring exactly fifty days after the

second day of Passover.

This is a biblical holiday complete with special prayers, holiday candle lighting and kiddush. During the course of the holiday we don't go to work, drive, write or switch on or off electric devices. We are permitted to cook and to carry outdoors.

The word "Shavuot" means "weeks"; it marks the completion of the seven-week counting period between Passover and Shavuot. During these seven weeks, the Jewish people cleansed themselves of the scars of Egyptian slavery and became a holy nation, ready to enter into an eternal covenant with G-d with the giving of the Torah.

On this day, we received a gift from Above which we could not have achieved with our own limited faculties. We received the ability to reach and touch the Divine; not only to be cultivated human beings, but Divine human beings who are capable of rising above and beyond the limitations of nature.

Before the giving of the Torah, we were a family and a community. The experience of Sinai bonded us into a new entity: the Jewish people, the Chosen Nation. This holiday is likened to our wedding day -- beneath the wedding canopy of Mount Sinai, G-d betrothed us to Him. G-d swore eternal devotion to us, and we in turn pledged everlasting loyalty to Him.

Every year on the holiday of Shavuot, we reenact this historic moment. G-d re-gives the Torah, and we lovingly reaccept, and reaffirm our fidelity to Him alone.

## What is the Torah?

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 Mishna, Talmud and Midrash.

The word "Torah" means instruction or guide. The Torah guides our every step and move through its 613 "mitzvot." The word "mitzvah" means both commandment and connection. Through the study of Torah and fulfillment of mitzvot we connect ourselves and our environment to G-d. G-d's purpose in creating the world is that we sanctify all of creation, imbuing it with holiness and spirituality.

On the holiday of Shavuot, the entire Jewish nation heard from G-d the Ten Commandments. The next day Moses went up to Mount Sinai where he was taught by G-d the rest of the Torah -- both the Written and Oral Laws -- which he then transmitted to the entire nation.

## The Ten Commandments

The holiday of Shavuot is the day on which we celebrate the great revelation of the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, 3320 years ago. You stood at the foot of the mountain. Your grandparents and great-grandparents before them. The souls of all Jews, from all times, came together to hear the Ten Commandments from G-d Himself.

This year, on Friday, May 29, go to your local synagogue to hear the Ten Commandments and reaffirm the covenant with G-d and His Torah.

## The Role of Children

When the Torah is read in the synagogue on Shavuot, we experience anew the Sinai transmission of the Torah by G-d. Just as the Sinai Event was attended by every Jewish man, woman and child, so too every

Jewish person should make every effort to be present in a synagogue on Friday, May 29, 2009, as the Ten Commandments are read from the Torah.

There is also special significance to bringing children, even the youngest of infants, to hear the Ten Commandments.

Before G-d gave the Torah to the Jewish people, He demanded guarantors. The Jews made a number of suggestions, all rejected by G-d, until they declared, "Our children will be our guarantors that we will cherish and observe the Torah." G-d immediately accepted them and agreed to give the Torah.

Let us make sure to bring all our "guarantors" along to the synagogue on the first day of Shavuot. Learning on Shavuot night

On the first night of Shavuot (this year Thursday night, May 28, 2009), Jews throughout the world observe the centuries-old custom of conducting an all-night vigil dedicated to Torah learning, and preparation for receiving the Torah anew the next morning. 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  
Eating Dairy Foods

It is customary to eat dairy foods on the first day of Shavuot. There are a number of reasons for this custom; here are a few:

\* 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 holiday meat-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.

\* 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.

## Adorning the Home with Greenery & Flowers

Since Shavuot is also called the "Harvest Festival," 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.

## The Book of Ruth

In many synagogues the Book of Ruth is read on the second day of Shavuot. There are several reasons for this custom:

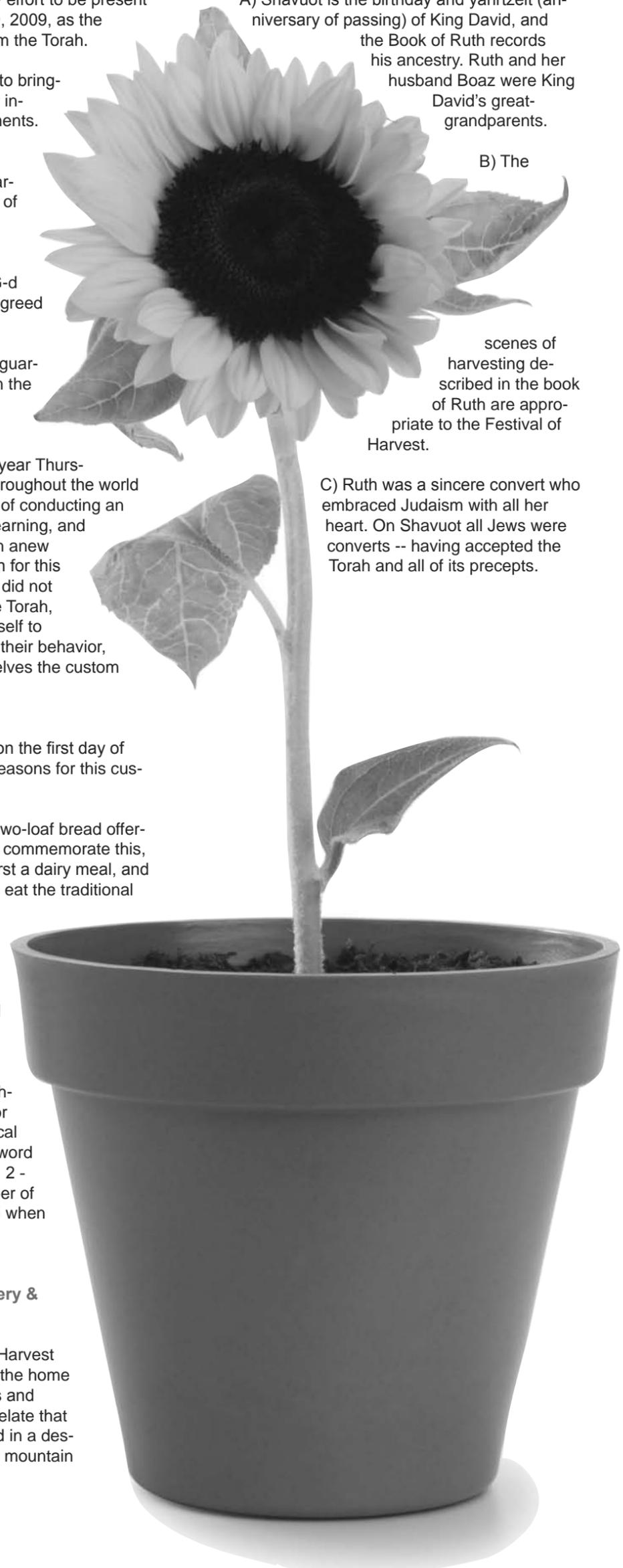
A) Shavuot is the birthday and yahrtzeit (anniversary of passing) of King David, and the Book of Ruth records his ancestry. Ruth and her husband Boaz were King David's great-grandparents.

B) The

scenes of harvesting described in the book of Ruth are appropriate to the Festival of Harvest.

C) Ruth was a sincere convert who embraced Judaism with all her heart. On Shavuot all Jews were converts -- having accepted the Torah and all of its precepts.

# Shavuot Guide



Marriage may sound like a bizarre concept; must've been G-d's idea. Who else would bring together two opposites under one roof to share a life? Who else could invent an institution as beautiful and powerful as marriage? Wacky--but it works. It is precisely its absurdity that makes marriage a unique experience.

An exciting aspect of marriage is the discovery of the profound differences between men and women, and how they complement each other. These differences are not just biological. On every level of our being--intellectual, emotional, psychological and spiritual--men and women seem to come from different planets.

You don't have to be married to realize this. We see it in our parents, our siblings, and our friends. But only in marriage do you appreciate and enjoy these differences. What you made fun of in your little sister you may love in your wife; and the things that made your brother an obnoxious brat could make your husband into the man you love.

Is it just social conditioning that makes a man a man and a woman a woman, or are we born that way? Is masculinity a hormone, a feeling, or a way men are educated? Are women trained to be feminine or are they innately so?

There are many theories on the gender issue. The approach of Jewish mysticism, or Kabbalah is unique and revolutionary; the source of male/female identity is beyond nature and nurture. It is our very soul; men and women have different soul-roots.

In Kabbalistic terms, men's souls come from divine transcendence; women's souls come from divine immanence. Transcendence is the divine quality of being beyond; immanence is the equally divine quality of being present. These male /female aspects of the Divine are reflected in man and woman down here in

the human realm.

Although every individual is unique and we don't all fit into over-simplified definitions, in a general sense there is a clear distinction between male and female spiritual postures. Their diverse soul-sources translate into different personas. Men are more removed souls; geared to provide the direction in the relationship. Women are more involved souls; bringing presence to the marriage.

In certain situations this contrast becomes more obvious and exaggerated. Let's look at a few examples.

Preparing for their wedding, Joanne complains that Eddie doesn't seem so excited. When it

## a wild idea

By Rabbi Aron Moss

comes to choosing the menu, Eddie tells Joanne that she can decide on her own--he really doesn't mind if the salad is served with French or Italian dressing. The color scheme is totally up to her, he'll go along with whatever she likes, even if it's mauve (he's not sure what 'mauve' is).

Joanne runs to see how the invitations turned out, and Eddie doesn't bother to look at them. When she shows them to him he doesn't even notice the watermark in the paper that spells their names in calligraphy. Any mention of the wedding and she is overcome with excitement; he hasn't even bought a suit yet.

Eddie is excited--but in his own way. Eddie is excited to get married, but for him getting married has nothing to do with a menu or decorations. It's an event--the details don't interest him. But for Joanne, every detail of the wedding makes the event. In each detail is the stamp of her personality. She is involved. He is removed.

Another example: Adam and Lisa just attended a self-help lecture. The speaker spent an hour and a half suggesting strategies to improve your life. Lisa is on fire, inspired, and ready to start implementing major changes in her life. Adam is still wondering how much the speaker gets paid per appearance. Asked how he found the speech, he responds with "interesting," "well-presented," "entertaining"--distant and impersonal assessments.

Lisa may or may not ever change her life, but she definitely thought about it. For Adam, the ideas were good, but it would take time and great effort to even realize that those ideas may apply to him too. Adam is removed. Lisa is involved.

Raymond and Tammy are reading this very article. The look on Tammy's face shows exactly what she is feeling. She is infuriated. All these generalizations and blanket statements about men and women. I don't fit into these stereotypes! She walks away after three paragraphs. "I can't read this junk," she says. Raymond, not hearing her outburst or noticing her departure, reads on. His face is mostly blank--the only reaction is a slight raise of the eyebrows. He finishes the article, not even realizing that this paragraph was about him, and moves on to look at the advertisements. He may have agreed with the article, maybe not. Ask him to find out. Raymond is removed. Tammy is involved.

Tammy is right. We don't all fit exactly into these molds. In fact, we each have elements of both gender groups--our male and female sides. But in general, there is a male and a female attitude. The male is removed and aloof. The female is present and involved. There's nothing wrong with either attitude. Each has its advantages and disadvantages. Sometimes it's good to be removed. When it comes to seeing things in context and making judgments, aloofness and objectivity are essential. You can only see things for what they really are when you remain outside of them; once you are involved you can no longer see the big picture. This is the strength of the male soul--distance that allows objectivity.

But objectivity also has its downside. You'll get nowhere if you stay on the sidelines of life and remain a spectator. To be alive and real means getting involved, and for this you need to come down out of the world of theory and immerse yourself in the moment. This is where the female element comes in. It is her sense of involvement and presence that gives life color and personality. It is the woman who makes life real and vibrant, who takes things from the analytical to the experiential, from theory to practice. Marriage is the ultimate partnership between immanence and transcendence. By each partner learning to share his/her unique perspective while appreciating and connecting to the other's parallel perspective, husband and wife become a balance of complimentary universes. The man guides the woman, the woman leads the man. Man gives perspective, woman gives experience. One without the other is an incomplete picture. Together, they form a unit with the best of both worlds.

This male/female definition explains two Jewish traditions. In the days before the wedding, it is customary for the groom to be called up to the Torah in synagogue, and for the bride to immerse in a Mikvah. These two activities seem worlds apart. Saying blessings over a scroll and dunking in a ritual pool hardly resemble each other. Why such diverse practices for man and woman?

One answer is that these acts are a way for bride and groom to plug in to their respective spiritual sources, to emphasize and nurture the unique contributions each party will bring to the future marriage. The man is to provide direction and stability to the marriage, so he plugs in to the ultimate source of direction and stability--the Torah.

The woman is to bring vitality and experience to the union, so she immerses in life-giving waters. His is an act of theory--a reading. Hers is an act of total envelopment--immersion. He connects to the source of transcendence; she to the fountain of immanence. It is no small feat to unite man and woman--opposites as diverse as heaven and earth, heart and mind, theory and practice. We prepare ourselves by first dipping into our respective spiritual sources--the holy words of Torah and the sacred Mikvah waters. At the Chuppah, a canopy of divine light fuses our souls as one. After the wedding, we have a lifetime to learn how to work together and discover the wonder and beauty of two worlds becoming one.

A pretty wild idea. A pretty good one, too.



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# The Ten Commandments {Not Multiple Choice}

By Rabbi Yossy Goldman

Often, I hear people say, "Well, I am not all that religious but I do keep the Ten Commandments." At such times I'm tempted to say, "Really? You do know that The Ten Commandments are not multiple choice..." I sometimes wonder if the people who glibly make that claim actually know what the Ten Commandments are...

Moses reviews the Big 10 in the Torah in Deuteronomy, why not go through the list so we can all get a better idea of how we score?

**1}** I am the L-rd Thy G-d. Basically, this is the command to believe in One G-d. I have every confidence that we all get full marks on this one.

**2}** Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. O.K., so you don't make a habit of bowing down to that bust of the Buddha in your living room. The question is, should it be there in the first place? And isn't it interesting that today we have all these Idols competitions being run around the world. Then, of course, there are all those well-established contemporary idols we tend to ogle and worship, celebrities like Brad Pitt, Madonna, Donald Trump, and of course Oprah.

**3}** Do not take the name of G-d in vain. This is not only about taking the oath or swearing in court. What about swearing in the street? How many choice four-letter words are in your vocabulary? And why drag G-d into those graphic expressions?

**4}** Observe the Shabbath day to keep it holy. Interestingly, the Ten Commandments appear twice in the Torah. In Exodus, the fourth Commandment begins with Zachor- Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. This week, we read Shamor - Observe the Sabbath day. "Remembering" is achieved through positive acts such as Kiddush, candle lighting, etc. "Observing" Shabbos, to guard it from any desecration, is the hard part. It may cramp our current lifestyles. That is where true commitment comes in.

**5}** Honor thy Father and thy Mother. Many people do indeed fulfill this mitzvah in exemplary fashion. I stand in admiration of sons, daughters, and often in-laws, who care for and tend to the needs of an aged parent or parent-in-law.

They shlep, they cook, they humor and often tolerate irritable, cantankerous elders. This commandment seems to get more difficult as time progresses. Yet the Torah makes no distinctions based on age. It is our responsibility to look after our parents when they are dependent on us as they looked after us when we were dependent on them.

**6}** Thou Shalt Not Murder. Well done. Here's another easy one to fulfill. I'm sure not one of you reading this ever murdered anyone. You thought of doing it, you almost did it but, in the end, Jews are not the murdering type. We can safely tick another one.

**7}** Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery. Umm... Let's move on the to next one.

**8}** Thou Shalt Not Steal. Strictly speaking, this refers to kidnapping in particular. However, all stealing--including the white-collar methods--apply.



**9}** Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness. How truthful are we? Even if we are not under oath, our word should be sacred. I remember hearing an old rabbi being introduced to a group of university students simply as a "man who never told a lie." How many of us could make that claim?

**10}** Thou Shalt Not Covet. Not easy either. Commentary defines this injunction as a prohibition on badgering someone, or conniving, to acquire--even legally--that which belongs to another. Go get your own. Why must it be his spouse, house or car?

There you have it. Did you score full marks? Did you pass, or are you in the forty-percent-or-less bracket? Worth working on, isn't it? Hopefully, we can all improve our score and one day claim with justification that we really do observe the Ten Commandments.

## Mazel Tov

Rabbi Moshe and Chana Wilansky upon the upshernish of their son, Yehudah Leib on Lag B'omer.

Gerald and Tracy Herring of Atlanta Georgia formerly of Bedford, NH on the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter Shelli.

Dr. Josh and Tobi Rifkind of Hanover, NH upon the birth of their daughter, Tamara.

## Condolences

Jill Marmorek upon the loss of her father.

Paula Harris upon the loss of her father.

Paula Silver of Merrimack NH on the loss of her father, Mr. Richard Silver of Florida.

Lynda Levine of Nashua NH on the loss of her father Mr. Samuel Borer of Montreal.

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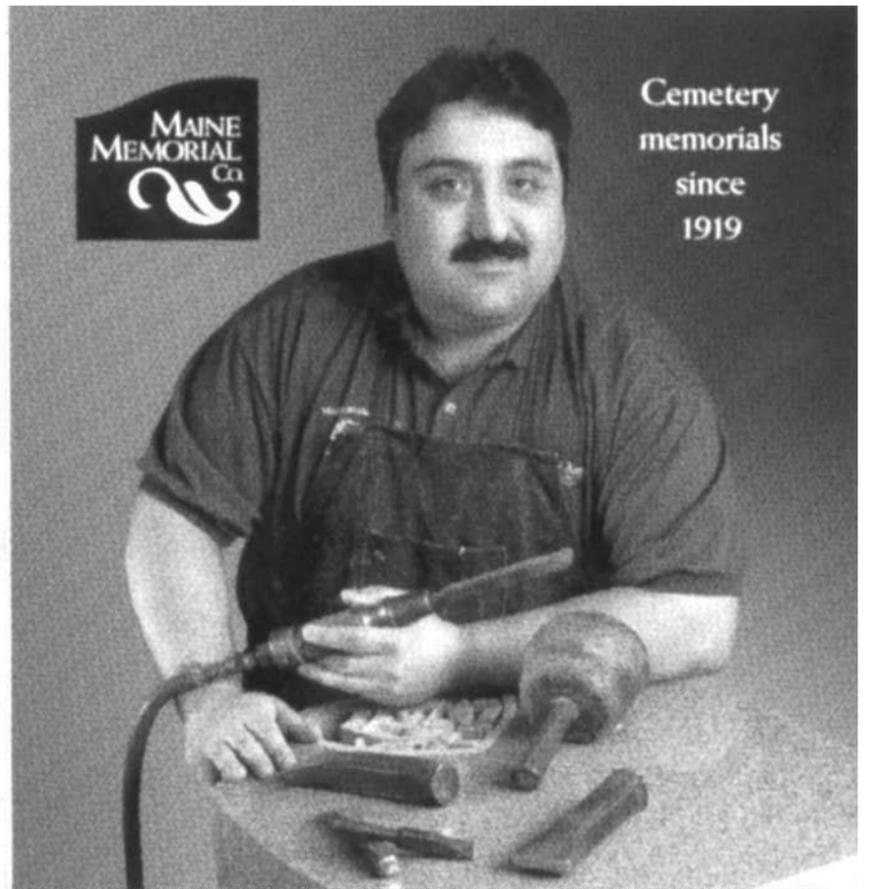
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# Doctor Makes House Call

# NUMBERS



In late 1977, Dr. C. Everett Koop made national headlines when he performed surgery on a pair of conjoined twins who shared one heart, separating the two infants. But the news didn't so much center on the operation itself – at the time, Koop, the future U.S. Surgeon General under President Ronald Reagan, was a famed pediatric surgeon at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and foremost authority on the phenomenon of conjoined twins – as on the fact that the separation took place only after weeks of debate involving top doctors and one of the generation's foremost authorities on Jewish law.

For Koop, who related the story of the case to a group of college students at the Chabad-Lubavitch center serving Dartmouth College, the moral issues at stake – the attempt to save just one of the twins' lives would invariably result in the sacrifice of the other – pushed him into a world where scientific judgment was questioned in the light of religious mandate. Even today, he looks back at the debate as a formative moment.

"I became, like I am tonight, a storyteller," Koop told the students, all of them alumni and participants in the Sinai Scholars Society at Dartmouth. "I talk about what happened with these girls and what we could have done differently."

Chabad at Dartmouth director Rabbi Moshe Leib Gray reached out to Koop after his Sinai Scholars class – part of a joint project of the Rohr Jewish Learning Institute and the Chabad on Campus International Foundation – came across a discussion of the case in their examination of the relevance of the Ten Commandments to the 21st century. The class was considering the Sixth Commandment against killing another person not only in the context of murder, but also in the context of some socially-acceptable manifestations of killing, such as dangerous surgical procedures and abortions.

Gray didn't have far to look for Koop: the graduate of Dartmouth's class of 1937 remains as the senior scholar at Dartmouth Medical School's C. Everett Koop Institute. Koop's resulting presentation revealed to the students that just as the Talmud and later Jewish sages considered cases similar to such seemingly modern questions as abortion and experimental treatments, those who pondered the fate of the conjoined twins also reached back to Talmudic arguments.

The doctor, who is not Jewish, said that he referred the case to Rabbi Moshe Feinstein at the encouragement of the twins' parents, who came from noted rabbinical families in Lakewood, N.J. Rabbi Moshe Dovid Tendler, an expert on medical ethics and a friend of Koop's, also got involved in the case as a son-in-law of Feinstein's.

## Examining the Case

The rabbinical debate focused on whether or not either of the twins had a reasonable chance of survival

remaining conjoined or being separated. Koop determined that one of the babies would certainly die with or without the separation procedure. If Koop operated, that baby would have to be sacrificed, but her twin had a slim, but reasonable, chance of survival.

Over the course of

several weeks, the rabbis examined several different cases of one person's right to live coming into direct conflict with another's. Although Jewish law has a general standard that one person cannot be sacrificed to preserve the lives of a group, the Talmud provides an exception in a case where outside powers demand that a specific person be handed over to be killed. Other exceptions include when a fetus endangers the life of its mother and killing in self-defense against a pursuer. The question was how should the twins be viewed, as either equal claimants to life or as a manifestation of one twin pursuing the life of the other?

Koop, aware of the urgency of medical intervention, had little to do but wait for a decision. "My problem was that I'm a doctor, I'm not a theologian," he said. But, "it became clear that the decision was going to be made with theological law coming long before medical law. That, I understood completely."

Finally, Koop received a call from a young man on behalf of Tendler, telling him that he could proceed with the operation.

As soon as Koop made the first incision, it became clear that his prediction was correct: the one baby would have died in either case.

"There was nothing we could do, we had to destroy one child to give the other life," said the doctor. "We went through the maneuvers, and at about 8:30, the twins were separated. Still, I thought the chances of even one child surviving were pretty darn slim."

The second twin died about three days after the surgery, leading some to ponder whether quicker medical action could have saved her.

Koop answered that he saw little value in asking "What if?" questions.

"Informed consent must of course be respected," said Bret Tenenhaus, a graduating Dartmouth senior, "and was thus the reason he had to wait a few days before operating."

Mackenzie Howell, a junior who serves as student president of Chabad at Dartmouth, appreciated Koop's story for the example it provides of a concrete application of the Ten Commandments.

"Sinai Scholars is all about how the Ten Commandments are still relevant today, and here's a real, live example of how these issues are still being debated," said Howell. "However distinguished a surgeon he was, he knew he was in over his head and needed to consult someone who had a better handle on the issues."

Numbers are funny things. On the one hand, they seem utterly devoid of meaning: think of the sterility of bureaucracies ("Go to Window #14 and fill out form #3062") or the banality of an address like "25 20th Street." On the other hand, consider how numbers are used when we say things like, "Eighteen years' experience in the business"; "A \$450,000 home"; or "This is our child. She's three."

Counting something makes it real to us: only when we have assigned it a quantity can we understand what it means to us and how we can use it. Imagine that you are given a chest full of gold coins. You thank your benefactor and take it home. As soon as the door is securely bolted, what's the first thing you do? Count them, of course. Sure, it feels great to be able to say, "I'm a rich man." But if you want to do something with your riches, you have to know: How much?

"And you shall count for yourselves from the morrow of the Shabbat, from the day on which you bring the Omer offering, seven complete weeks they shall be; until the morrow of the seventh week, you shall count fifty days... And you shall proclaim that very day a holy festival" (Leviticus 23:15-21) The people of Israel departed Egypt on the 15th of Nissan, celebrated ever since as the first day of Passover. Seven weeks later, on the 6th of Sivan--marked on our calendar as the festival of Shavuot--we assembled at the foot of Mount Sinai and received the Torah from G-d. Every year, we retrace this journey with a 49-day "Counting of the Omer." Beginning on the second night of Passover, we count the days and weeks. "Today is one day to the Omer," we proclaim on the first night of the count. "Today is two days to the Omer," "Today is seven days, which are one week to the Omer", "Today is twenty-six days, which are three weeks and five days day to the Omer," and so on, until: "Today is forty-nine days, which are seven weeks to the Omer." The fiftieth day is Shavuot.

The Kabbalists explain that we each possess seven powers of the heart--love, awe, beauty, ambition, humility, bonding and regality--and that each of these seven powers includes elements of all seven. These are represented by the seven weeks and forty-nine days of the Omer count.

Every Passover, we are granted a treasure chest containing the greatest gift ever given to man--the gift of freedom. It is also a completely useless gift. What is freedom? What can be done with it? Nothing, unless we open the treasure chest and count its contents.

So on the second day of Passover, after we've taken home our treasure, we start counting. We count seven times seven, because the gift of freedom has been given to each of the seven powers and forty-nine dimensions of our soul. Indeed, what use is a capacity for love, if it is a slave to external influences and internal neurosis? Of what value is ambition, if we are its pawn rather than its master?

Each evening for the next seven weeks, we open our treasure chest and count another coin. We count our loving love, intimidating love, beautiful love, ambitious love, humble love, bonding love and regal love. We assign a number to the regality of our awe ("Today is fourteen days, which are two weeks to the Omer") and to the beauty of our humility ("Today is thirty-one days, which are four weeks and three days to the Omer").

We count them all--and then we present ourselves at Mount Sinai.



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