

## Shavuot - Nature and Torah

From the Jewish Tract Series

by Evelyn Garfiel

There are three Pilgrim Festivals (the *Shalosh Regalim*) so called because on each of them, Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot, every male Israelite was required to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem there to offer sacrifices in the Temple. These Pilgrim Festivals - together with *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*, and of course the Sabbath - are the major holy days of Judaism; and of these, it is perhaps the Pilgrim Festivals which are fraught with the most varied Jewish values.

### WHAT IS SHAVUOT?

Literally Shavuot means "weeks," but its real meanings and modes of celebration are various and complex. In fact, an ancient but still living institution never has one simple meaning; nor can it be celebrated in any one ceremony. *Shavuot* is no exception to this rule. During its long history various significance have become embedded in it and many forms have been created for experiencing and expressing its values.

### IN EARLY TEMPLE DAYS

Where can we locate and identify the authentic values inherent in Shavuot? First, naturally, in the Bible. In Leviticus 23:15-21 and in Deuteronomy 16:9-10 we learn that Shavuot occurs seven weeks after Passover - therefore the name Shavuot, "weeks." We are told to count fifty days beginning with the second day of *Pesah* in order to arrive at the first day of Shavuot. The "fifty days" explains the English, and Christian, name of the Festival - *Pentecost*, from the Greek for "fifty." But the manner of counting these interval-days so carefully and reverentially, preceded by the benediction of the *Omer*, is not a Biblical injunction; it was instituted by the

Rabbis.

After setting the date for Shavuot, the Torah prescribes its mode of celebration. Offerings are to be brought to the Temple: two loaves of bread baked of fine flour, and certain other offerings and sacrifices. In addition, "on that very day ye shall proclaim a holy convocation (*mikra kodesh*) and ye shall do no work" (Leviticus 23:21).

### FOREIGNERS' RIGHTS

These ways in which we are commanded by the Torah to celebrate Shavuot are apparently all rituals. Yet there is no dichotomy in Judaism between so-called ritual mitzvot (commandments) and even the noblest ethical commandments which are also mitzvot. Here in this same twenty-third chapter of Leviticus, in verse 22, following immediately upon the ritual prescriptions for the Festival, is the famous commandment concerning the "corner of the field." "When ye reap the harvest of your land, do not complete [reaping] to the corner of your field, do not gather in the gleanings of the harvest; for the poor and the stranger shall ye leave them; I am the Lord your God." And not only your own poor have a claim on you, says the Torah, but the outsider, the foreigner is also your responsibility; you must provide for him, too. Thus, the mitzvah of charity, *tzedakah*, in its broadest sense, is also associated with the harvest festival of Shavuot.

### A TIME TO REJOICE

Another mitzvah characterizes Shavuot in the Bible. Emphatically stated in the Torah is this remarkable injunction: "And ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your son and your daughter and your male servant and your female servant, and the Levite in your gates and the stranger and the orphan and the widow among you. . ." (Deuteronomy 16:11). Clearly, in the time of rejoicing, as well as in the obligation to provide them with food, the helpless, the underprivileged and the stranger must also be included.

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## A TIME TO REJOICE *continued...*

In the Festival prayers which are not Biblical but the product of the Rabbis, there is a clear echo of this Biblical injunction to "rejoice before the Lord." In the *Kiddush* and in each *Amidah* (Standing Prayer) on all the Pilgrim Festivals we thank God for having given us, "mo'adim lesimchah, hagim uzemanim lesason – festivals for gladness, holidays and times for joy." The cheerful customary greeting on the holiday reflects this happy quality: "Mo'adim lesimchah!" you say, and the response is the second half of the prayer book phrase, "Hagim uzemanim lesason!"

In fact, according to the Talmud, each day of a *Hag* (festival, holiday) is to be divided in half, "half of it for God and half for yourselves." And this is interpreted to mean, "On the *Hag* they divided it, half for the synagogue and the House of Study, and half for eating and drinking, for "that you rejoice on the *Hag* is a mitzvah."

## BARLEY AND WHEAT AND GREEN GROWING THINGS

Such was Shavuot in the Bible: a happy Festival on which Israel expressed its gratitude to God for the year's grain harvests, the barley garnered in the early spring and the wheat harvest just completed. Offerings were brought to the Temple, a Holy Convocation proclaimed, and it was a day of rest from work.

Shavuot closes the spring season, the time not only of the first grain harvests but of the early blooming of trees and flowers. Many pilgrims from all over the land, therefore, brought *Bikkurim*, offerings, of their first fruits to Jerusalem at this season (Numbers 28:26-31) and offered them at the Temple in baskets covered with fresh new leaves and flowers. But the Temple was destroyed and the people scattered far and wide, and there were no more grain harvests to celebrate, or fine new fruits and lovely flowers to offer up.

Appreciation of flowers, however, continued to be a living influence in Jewish life, as we can see by the numerous floral symbols and decorations that are found in ancient Jewish artifacts and in the illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages. Perhaps even more striking is the fact that no less a person than the fourth century legal scholar, Rabbi Judah ben Ezekiel of Pumbeditha, urged that one recite a benediction on first seeing a tree decked in its new leaves of spring and this benediction is now found in the prayer book. "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Who has created a world in which nothing is lacking and has put in it goodly creatures and goodly trees to give delight to the children of men." Thus, in remembrance of the springtime flowering and the harvests of the Land, arose the custom of decorating our homes and our synagogues on Shavuot with green and lovely growing things.

Another quasi-symbolic by-product of both the agricultural

and the Torah aspects of Shavuot is the custom of serving dairy and honey delicacies on the Festival. The Land of Israel is said to flow with milk and honey; Torah is often compared to honey, and so cheese and honey dishes, and latterly (at least in communities stemming from Eastern Europe) blintzes have become characteristic dishes served on Shavuot - derived in a long, convoluted way from the experience at Mount Sinai and the spring bounty of nature in the Land of Israel some 2500 years ago!

But is this, then, to be all that is left of Shavuot?

## THE RABBIS ENRICH SHAVUOT

No indeed! For Judaism does not end with the Bible. Many of the values we properly take for granted as essential elements of our religion, many of the meanings inherent in the Festivals, and many of the ceremonies and rituals which have become an integral part of Judaism are not found in the Bible at all. They are Rabbinic in origin, and no instance of this development is more striking than the Festival of Shavuot as we know it.

## TORAH BECOMES A MAJOR THEME OF SHAVUOT

It is not certain when Shavuot became known as the *zeman mattan Torataynu*, the time of the giving of our Torah. Josephus and Philo, at the beginning of the Common Era, do not associate Shavuot with "the giving of our Torah," yet the connection was already firmly established for the Rabbis by about 200 of the Common Era.

It is important to realize, however, that *Mattan Torah* does not mean Revelation or even Revelation of the Torah. Revelation in this sense is a non-Jewish term and idea, nor is there a Rabbinic Hebrew term meaning Revelation of Torah. The only authentic Jewish use of the idea of Revelation is in the term *Gilluy Shekhinah*, Revelation of God. It represents an actual sensory apprehension of God, a phenomenon present relatively often in the Bible but rather rare in Rabbinic times. In fact, even the term *Gilluy Shekhinah* occurs only once in the whole of Rabbinic literature - in the Haggadah of *Pesah*. On the other hand, the Hebrew words *Mattan Torah* mean simply "giving of Torah," no less but no more.

## THE CONCEPT OF MATTAN TORAH

Just as the Rabbis regarded *Yetziat Mitzraim* (the Exodus from Egypt) as a dogma and embedded it in the Haggadah of *Pesah*, so they regarded the giving of Torah on Mount Sinai as a dogma and embodied that in the Festival of Shavuot. And just as the freeing of the Israelite slaves by God Himself is, in the Bible, set in a background of miracles, so, too, is the giving of Torah at Sinai set in a matrix of wonderful and miraculous happenings.

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Sunday Shacharit 9:00 am Mincha 7:30 pm  
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Thursday Shacharit 7:00 am Mincha 7:30 pm  
Friday Kabbalat Shabbat 8:00 pm  
Saturday Shacharit 9:30 am Mincha/Maariv (call office on Friday).

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## THE CONCEPT OF MATTAN TORAH *continued...*

The upper reaches of the Mount flash lightning and a loud roaring noise fills the air. As God descends to its top, the mountain seems consumed in flame and the terrifying voice of an unearthly shofar issues out of its depths. Moses alone is present when God speaks the words of the Ten Commandments. For us to try to erase the miraculous in this picture by hypothesizing the eruption of a volcano or a tremendous electric storm, to explain and therefore to explain away the miracle is to lack poetic imagination - more, it is to miss the point entirely. The Ten Commandments are an apodictic law—a law or set of laws, that is, for which no reasons are or can be adduced; it is in itself an ultimate. It remains, even today, an incomparably advanced moral constitution, certainly difficult to explain for that time and place. How otherwise than in such an awe-inspiring, miraculous setting could Israel have adequately described the occasion when they acquired the supreme gift of the Decalogue?

*Continued Next Column...*



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A dogma is a belief in a past event which you yourself have not experienced, or in an event projected into the far-distant future, and which you must accept "on faith." There are very few such dogmas in Judaism, probably not more than three: *Yetziat Mitzraim* (the Exodus from Egypt), *Mattan Torah* (the giving of Torah), and *Tehiyat Hamaytim* (Resurrection of the Dead).

Moreover, neither these three nor any other beliefs are anywhere in Rabbinic literature drawn up into an official creed. In fact, the earliest Jewish Creeds, so-called, are medieval in origin, as for example, the "Thirteen Creeds" of Maimonides, of the twelfth century. But the most striking aspect of these Rabbinic dogmas is that in one way or another, the Rabbis seem always to be trying to qualify their absolute, their dogmatic character by transforming them into potentially personal experience, and to modify their apparently absolute character in other ways we shall soon describe.

Even the extraordinary event at Mount Sinai, they taught, though it was the major one, was not the only occasion on which God gave Torah to Israel. Certain laws, for example, had already been given to them in the desert before reaching Sinai. The dogma of *Mattan Torah* is thus made less rigid since it is reported to have occurred not only at Sinai but in several other places and at various other times as well.

### MATTAN TORAH BECOMES POTENTIALLY UNIVERSAL IN SCOPE

The experience of Israel at Sinai as described in the Bible was extended even further by the Rabbis into a potentially universal experience, properly available to all peoples everywhere. Noah, the father of mankind after the Flood, they taught, was given a code of seven laws basic to man's very existence. These Noachian Laws forbid theft, blasphemy, murder, adultery and incest, and eating any part of a living animal; they forbid idol-worship with all its immoral celebrations and concomitants, and enjoin the establishment of just law courts. Inconceivable to the Rabbis, apparently, was a world lacking at least these minimal requirements of morality.

Moreover, we are told, all the peoples of the world (*ummot ha'olam*) heard the Ten Commandments at Sinai, for the Decalogue was spoken simultaneously in all the seventy languages of man. In addition, says an *aggadah*, the Torah was actually offered to other peoples - to Ishmael and to Esau - but each of them refused it on the ground that some of the Ten Commandments placed unacceptable restrictions on their ability to make a living, to wit: Do not steal, Do not murder.

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## MATTAN TORAH BECOMES POTENTIALLY UNIVERSAL IN SCOPE *Continued...*

In the same vein, the *Mekhilta* asks: Why was the Torah given at Sinai, in a wilderness so far from human habitation? And the answer given is: Just because it is a wilderness, belonging to no one, so that no people can say the Torah was given in its land and thus no people will be able to lay exclusive claim to the Torah. Clearly, the Rabbis are saying here that Torah is really meant for all men, not just for Israel. Thus they qualify the dogma of *Mattan Torah* by a repeated emphasis on the potentially universal character of Torah and on God's generous offer of Torah (*Mattan Torah*) to other peoples as well.

## THE "DOGMA" OF MATTAN TORAH IS TRANSMUTED INTO PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Just as the dogma of the Exodus was transformed from a matter of belief into a matter of experience through the symbolic ceremonies of the Seder and the reading of the Haggadah of Passover which teach that everyone must see himself as though he had been redeemed from slavery in Egypt, so *Mattan Torah* was taken out of the realm of pure belief and transmuted into the realm of personal experience through the various aggadot about *Mattan Torah*, and through the prayers and benedictions of Shavuot.

The idea that *Mattan Torah* is NOT an event which was experienced only once long ago by ancient Israel is clearly demonstrated in this aggadah: Not only were all the Israelites of that time present at the foot of Sinai - men, women and children - but also all the unborn souls of Israel, so that you, too, as it were, stood there and received the Torah, and you yourself experienced *Mattan Torah*.

But even more directly, the Rabbis teach, is it possible for those who study Torah to experience *Mattan Torah* now, today. According to them, "it must not be regarded as merely an event in the past, but must be felt as a present reality. "This is how they put it: " 'All the statutes and the ordinances which I set before you this day' (*ha'yom*, Deuteronomy 11:32), let them be as beloved of you as though you had received them from Mount Sinai *this day*, be as conversant with them as though you heard them *this day*." And again: "But thou shalt meditate therein day and night" (Joshua 1:8); to this, the Rabbis add, citing several proof-texts from the Bible, "...he who is engaged in Torah and observes it, it is as though he received it from Mount Sinai."

The liturgy of every day, and thus of Shavuot, too, contains similar Biblical texts in their Rabbinic connotations, as well as benedictions which stimulate or imply personal experience of *Mattan Torah*. A Jew is expected to begin the new day with some study of the Torah. To this end three passages are included as an integral part of the morning prayers: one from the

Pentateuch, one from the Mishnah and one from the Talmud in a brief sampling of Torah from its three major sources. This study of Torah is preceded - as is always the case before the reading or study of Torah by a benediction which here includes these remarkable words: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord, Who *teaches* [in the present tense] Torah to His people. " It is as if the Lord Himself were standing by and teaching you Torah as you pray and study the Torah selections provided in the Morning Service.

The Shema is part of the morning and evening prayers every single day of the year and its first paragraph is another vivid example of the immediacy of the experience of Torah. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.... And these words which I command thee *this day* shall be upon thy heart .... And thou shalt speak of them" at home and abroad, when you go to bed and when you get up, all the time and everywhere. Though this section from Deuteronomy (6:4-9) stands in the liturgy without Rabbinic comment, it seems clear that the Rabbis who established the order of the prayers attached the same meaning to it as they did to Deuteronomy 11:32 and Joshua 1:8 which we discussed above - that Torah is given to you *ha'yom*, today, and that *Mattan Torah* can be, in fact *is*, a personal experience when you study and meditate on the words of the Torah.

## AND ALL NIGHT TOO - THE TIKKUN

A late addition to the celebration of Shavuot is the institution of the *Tikkun* which so intensely reflects the sense of Torah as a present gift of God. Exactly when or where the *Tikkun* began or how it acquired its name (which means "establishment," "institution" or "correct procedure") is not very well known but the first record of the *Tikkun* occurs in the sixteenth century in Safed, associated with the name of that great scholar, mystic and kabbalist, Rabbi Isaac Luria.

On the eve of Shavuot, after the Evening Service and the Festival meal, the whole night is devoted to studying Torah until it is time for the Morning Service. Three to seven verses from the beginning and end of each parshah (the section of the Pentateuch assigned for each week's reading), as well as some of its accompanying prophetic portion (the Haftarah), are read and discussed. Excerpts from the Mishnah are covered, too, often the beginning and the end of all its sixty-three treatises. Again the night-long immersion in Torah-literature is designed to capture something of the personal experience of *Mattan Torah*. Any reading or discussion of Torah may be included if it adds to the sense of one's personal involvement in Torah and to an intimate experience of *Mattan Torah*.

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## THE LITURGY OF SHAVUOT

The basic form of the three daily services remains essentially the same for every day of the year. On Sabbath and Festivals there are a few omissions and certain additions specific to each holy day in turn. Salient points in the Morning Service and certain prayers specific to *Shavuot* will be discussed below.

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## THE BIBLE MEANING IS REVERSED

On Festival mornings (except when the Festival falls on the Sabbath), and this naturally includes Shavuot, when the Ark is opened for removal of the Torah scroll, verses 6 and 7 of Exodus 34 are chanted three times by the congregation: "The Lord, the Lord is a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and of great kindness and truth, showing loving-kindness for a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and pardoning. . . ." The last word in the Hebrew *here in the service* is *venakay*, "and pardoning," but in the Bible verse which it quotes, this is NOT the last word in the verse or even in the phrase of which it is a part. The whole phrase reads: *venakay lo yinakay*, an emphatic, reinforced negative meaning, "He will not pardon," and the Bible moreover continues, "visiting the iniquity of the fathers n the sons... unto the third and fourth generation." In the Rabbinic tradition, the lovingkindness shown by God to man was a recurring "emphatic trend." And so when these verses were chosen for inclusion in the Festival service, this emphasis on God's *Middaf Rahamim*, His quality of mercy, was so poignantly felt that they even dared to reverse the sense of the Bible text by omitting the two crucial negative words, *lo yinakay*, "will not pardon." Though the inclusion of this "revised version" is of later origin, it did express the Rabbinic emphasis on God's love, and the use of this verse as a prayer for forgiveness is Rabbinic.

## THE AKDAMUT HYMN

Many poetic prayers have, in the course of time, been introduced into the Festival services. They are known as *piyyutim* (from the Greek for "poetry" or "poem"). One of the best known of these is the *Akdmut* hymn chanted in a haunting traditional melody on the first day of Shavuot after the Torah has been taken out of the Ark and laid on the reading desk. It was composed by Rabbi Meir ben Isaac Nehorai almost a thousand years ago. He died just before 1096, the year of the First Crusade in which his son and his son's wife were murdered by the crusaders. Rabbi Meir was a cantor and a preacher, famous for his learning and his poetry both in his own day and for many generations after his time.

*Akdmut*, written in Aramaic, is a hymn glorifying the Lord Who gave Israel the Torah and prepared a wonderful future in the World to Come for the pure and upright as a reward for their faithful observance of the mitzvot of the Torah. They will sit on golden chairs in the very presence of the Lord; they will drink wine made of grapes aged since the days of Creation, and feast on the flesh of the Leviathan (a legendary giant fish). How hungry and fear-ridden must the lives of Jews have been in the crowded ghettos of Middle Europe if a fine soul like Rabbi Meir could use these simple naive *aggadot* to express his vision of the reward of the righteous!

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## THE AKDAMUT HYMN *Continued...*

Yet a soaring spirit does shine through the vivid imagery of large sections of the poem - also indebted to ancient sources for many of its figures of speech.

*Were the sky of parchment made,  
A quill each reed, each twig and blade,  
Could we with ink the oceans fill  
Were every man a scribe of skill,  
The marvelous story  
of God's great glory  
Would still remain untold.*

## THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The Reading of the Torah on the first day of Shavuot in the morning (Exodus 19 and 20) deals, of course, with the major concern of the day - the giving of Torah, specifically the Ten Commandments, to the whole people of Israel by God himself. Chapter 19 recounts the psychological preparation of the people for the awesome event to follow, and their expressed willingness to abide by all that the Lord may command them to do. After three more days of preparation, the day arrives. The people are assembled near the Mount, forbidden to approach closer, and God speaks the words of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17). These, as we noted above, are apodictic laws, moral imperatives, ultimates for which no logical or social or philosophic "reasons" are given. They have stood down the ages as a gigantic monument to the grandeur of the religion of Israel.

## YIZKOR

On Yom Kippur and once on each of the Festivals, Yizkor ("May He remember") is recited after the reading of the Torah. It is one of the two Jewish prayers which alone recall the departed by name and pray that God may remember him (or her). It concludes, and may his/her soul be bound up with the souls of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and of Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, and of all the righteous." When reciting Yizkor, one undertakes, moreover, to do acts of charity and love for the sake of the departed. It is a prayer that was introduced into the service probably after the Crusades but it has in relatively recent times acquired an importance for many people which it did not originally have in the liturgy. The hushed and saddened atmosphere in the synagogue, the sense of so many people feeling anew the loss of their loved ones heightens while it comforts the grief each one experiences here. It is as if the formal communal occasion of remembrance has become an act of piety done for the departed as well as in his memory.

*Kaddish*, even the *Kaddish* recited by a mourner for eleven months after the death of a parent (or spouse or child) and on the anniversary of the death (*yahrzeit*), even that *Kaddish* is essentially not a prayer for the dead and never mentions the departed. It is a public declaration, a

sanctification of God's Name (*Kiddush HaShem*), a paean of praise of the Lord come to be associated with remembrance of the deceased.

## MUSAF

The *Musaf* (literally, "what is added") is primarily an additional Amidah, a series of benedictions recited on the Sabbath and on all the Festivals and Holy Days after the reading of the Torah. It is a substitute for, and a reminder of, the additional sacrifices offered in the Temple on those days. On Shavuot the *Musaf* naturally contains the phrase "*Shavuot, zeman mattan Torataynu - Shavuot, the time of the giving of our Torah.*"

## THE SONS OF THE SONS OF THE SONS OF THE PRIESTS

There is very little drama in the Jewish service. Removing the Torah from the Ark, carrying it around the synagogue so that all may see it and honor it, the tallit each person wears, that is about all the "pomp and ceremony" we have. For each person prays alone in the Jewish prayer service even when it is in unison with the congregation. No one can take the burden or the privilege of prayer from any man's shoulders and no one can pray for him; no one stands between a man and his God in Judaism.

But on certain occasions, we return in spirit to the Temple of old through a very ancient ceremony. The great-great-grandsons of those long ago Priests - whose actual physical descent has been carefully and jealously guarded generation after generation - these Priests of our day again invoke God's blessing on the people, on the Festivals and at certain other times. But notice that though they are Priests in a direct line of descent from Aaron, even they have no power, themselves, to bless us. They merely call upon the Lord to bless his people; they are, as it were, the very instruments of the Lord so that the Birkat Kohanim, the Benediction of the Priests, creates a deeply-moving moment in the service.

The Levites retire from the synagogue with the Priests to serve them - to help them perform the ritual washing, the Priests having just removed their shoes. They all return to the synagogue, the Priests to ascend the *bimah* (the platform before the Ark). Each *Kohen* lifts his arms and extends his fingers in the ancient gesture of blessing, covering his head and arms completely with his tallit - and thus, at once, he ceases to be your neighbor, your grocer or your broker. He is now not a specific individual; he is a Priest, a *Kohen*, with the grave responsibility of invoking God's blessing on the people. For though it is God Who blesses, it is the Priest who conveys that benediction. Carefully, the *Kohanim* repeat each word of the formula of the berakhah, guided by the softly chanted prompting of the cantor, for these are God's words and no error must be allowed to creep in.

*Continued Next Page...*

## "If We Don't Sell Your House, ERA Will Buy It!"

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"May the Lord bless you and keep you,"  
and the congregation acknowledges with,  
"Amen."

"May the Lord cause His Presence to shine  
upon you and be gracious unto you."

"Amen" is the response.

"May the Lord favor you with His presence  
and bring you peace."

"Amen" is the response.

This ceremony takes place before the last benediction of the *Musaf* - itself a recollection of the Temple service." *Aleinu*, the Mourner's *Kaddish* and a hymn close the service.

### SHAVUOT - NATURE AND TORAH

Shavuot is a Festival of springtime. On Shavuot we celebrate the fruitfulness of the Land, the first generous harvests of the year which signalize God's goodness to man and to all living things, for thus "He prepares sustenance for all the creatures He has created" (from the Grace after Meals).

But we are joyous on Shavuot not only for the plenty of the harvests but for another, even greater gift of the Lord, for the Torah. It is the Torah which never ceases to lay before man the ideals, the values, he must live by. These values never grow old or out of date. They are given us afresh each time we study Torah and we need them today more than ever. Honoring father and mother, truth, chastity, honesty, love, regard for human life - all these are in the Ten Commandments, and there are many, many more in the foliating development produced by the Rabbis.

Judaism is not a mournful religion; it is a religion of joy. The Festivals make us conscious again of those precious gifts of God in which we may justly rejoice, and supply us with modes of celebration through which to express our common joys and our recognition of the values that mold our lives as Jews.



### Bond Breakfast Thanks

B'nai Tikvah's Israel Bond Committee would like to thank many people for making this year's event special.

First, thanks to Joan and Mory Shames. The love, respect and admiration so many have for you was evident throughout the morning. Allowing us to honor you, gave everyone an opportunity to show their support and appreciation. As a double mitzvah, it allowed us to promote the support of Israel through Israel Bonds.

Thank you to the 120 attendees who attended the tribute breakfast. Your support was, and remains, critical in making this annual event meaningful and special.

Thank you to our professional photographer, Bruce Gaynor, and our expert videographer Sandy Sharon. Both Bruce and Sandy were gracious in offering their services to help make this an event easy to remember.

Thank you to Evan Bernstein and Classical Caterers for their wonderful breakfast and their continued support of this annual event.

Thank you to Mark Kasdin, V.P. of School and Youth and Rabbi Eligberg for presenting the awards to this year's honorees. It made the award presentation extra personal and meaningful. Moreover, thank you to the synagogue office staff (Sharon, Cindy and Joseph) for their "back office" support.

Last, but certainly not least, thank you to all purchasers of Israel Bonds and/or Certificates at *this time*, whose investments in Israel, in honor of the Shames', totaled over \$70,000.

For those of you who were not able to make the tribute breakfast this year, you can still invest in Israel Bonds in honor of Joan and Mory Shames. Contact Aaron Rosloff (297-2233) or Mark Cohen (821-5917) for more information.

Finally, a note of apology to our Sunday morning daveners. The Israel Bond Tribute Breakfast has previously been held in the Kiddush room, so the 9:30 am start time was not a concern. Due to the outpouring of support for Joan and Mory, the breakfast was moved into the social hall, bringing an unfortunate interruption to those praying. In future years, we will schedule the breakfast a bit later in the morning. We hope you'll join us.

## Nursery School Notes

The nursery school will be expanding to accommodate working parents starting in September, 1997. However, this child care is only opened for children registered in a 3 day or 5 day morning class (ages 3 to 5). The school is first and foremost a nursery school offering the best, since 1975, in promoting social, emotional, physical and intellectual development. The school is licensed by the State of New Jersey and every class has a licensed head teacher. The earliest morning care will start at 7 am while the latest after care ends at 6:15 pm. A free breakfast is served between 7:30 am and 8 am, the two snacks a day are included. The children bring their own dairy or parve lunch. The nursery school calendar will be followed. The school will offer one free parking spot for the parent while the child is in the child care program. A commuter bus going to N.Y.C. runs 11 times a day along Finnegans Lane. There are still some limited spots in the nursery school as well. For more information, rates, visits, etc., please call the Director, Joan Shames at 297-0295 between 9:30 - 11:15 am and 12:45 - 3:35 pm.

A trip to Imagine That! (science museum) for the Pre-Kindergarten children, a visit from some farm animals and a pony ride for the 3 day classes and a trip to Von Thun's Farm for the 2 day classes are planned. Yom Haatzmaut brought us an entire unit about Israel with crafts, songs, discussion and objects that came from Israel. Everyone dressed in blue and white and ate a slice of homemade birthday cake.

Evening graduation for all the Pre-Kindergarten classes for June and a Sunday family picnic at Babbage Park will end the school year. Our annual raffle drawing will take place in June with fabulous prizes including a \$500, \$300 and \$200 gift certificate, a color television plus other wonderful prizes.

Our thanks to Rabbi Eligberg for helping us bury the dead bird that we found. Also thanks to congregants Sandy Sharon and Mark Cohen

for spending many, many hours repairing the children's computer.

It is time to say goodbye to our classmates and teachers or "lehitraot" as we sing in "Shalom Chaverim" during graduation. A safe and happy summer to all from the staff.

### **Out Of The Mouths of Babes**

During the unit on space, the teacher asked the class what goes up like a rocket and comes down like an airplane. Sara answered: "A space shovel."

When the teacher was describing slavery during the Passover discussion, she asked the children, "What is a slave?" Sam answered, "Me!"

**Joan Shames,  
Director**

*There are seven days of both Passover and Sukkot. What is the reason why there are not seven days for Shavuot? Because Shavuot commemorates the day when Israel was "one heart" in accepting the Torah. (Zohar iii, 96a)*

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**Heather Chelton**  
(August 30, 1997)

**Celia Alameda**  
(September 13, 1997)

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BAR MITZVAH

**Jesse Olitzky**  
(June 14, 1997)

**David Weinstein**  
(June 21, 1997)

**Daniel Weinstein**  
(June 21, 1997)

**Jason Surks**  
(August 23, 1997)

**Michael Sloan**  
(September 20, 1997)

**Adam Zweig**  
(September 27, 1997)

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M.Ed., ACSW, LCSW

March 3, 1997

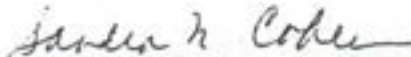
Mr. Edward Hirsch  
Congregation B'nai Tikvah  
1001 Finnegans Lane  
North Brunswick, NJ 08902

Dear Mr. Hirsch:

On behalf of Jewish Family Service of Southern Middlesex County, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of Congregation B'nai Tikvah's Men's Club for their generous donation to our upcoming Passover Food Project. The food baskets will be delivered to approximately 200 needy Jewish families in the southern Middlesex County area. I am sure that the play about Anne Frank was truly a memorable one for all who attended.

Once again, we thank you for thinking of us and for your continued support.

Very truly yours,

  
Sandra N. Cohen, M.Ed., LCSW  
Executive Director

SNC/ad

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Taryn Bradus  
Heather Chelton  
Sheryl Chiola  
Scott Edley  
Jarra Flanagan  
Lauren Frumkin  
Kevin Grodzinski  
David Gurney  
Tzvi Heit  
Jason Van Hessen  
Nicole Kates  
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## Twenty-Two Righteous Women

Reprinted from The Jewish Press

The letter *tav* is the last of the 22 letters of the *alef-beit*, and *Esther* is the last of the 22 saintly women listed in the Tanach (Yoma 29a).....

The 22 *nashim tzidkaniyot* (righteous women) are: Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Leah, Yocheved, Miriam, the five daughters of Tzelofchad, Deborah (**Shoftim 4:4**), Manoah's wife (**Shoftim 13:2**), Hannah (**II Samuel 1:2**), Abigail (**II Samuel 25:3**), the woman of Tekoah (**II Samuel 14**), the widow that Elijah helped (**I Kings 17:9**), the Shunamitess (**II Kings 4:8**), Hulda (**II Kings 22:14**), Naomi (**Ruth 1:2**), Jehosheva (**II Kings 11:2**) and Esther.

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## A Hearty Welcome To

*Ann Kanarek*

Our New Religious School Educational Director

## And Many Thanks To

*Scott Feder*

Whose Accomplishments And Efforts Throughout  
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## Garage Sale- Sunday, June 22nd

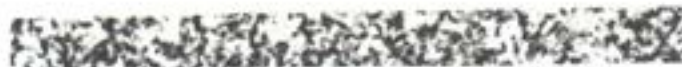
Congregation B'nai Tikvah will hold a garage sale on Sunday morning (time T.B.A.) as a fund raiser.

Do you have items you no longer want or need? Are they still in working condition and clean? If so, please consider donating them to our garage sale!

Donated items such as electrical appliances, objects d'art, exercise equipment, books, tapes, computers, toys, games, clothing etc. may be dropped off at the synagogue during regular office hours. Due to storage restrictions at the synagogue, drop off dates are limited to June 9th through June 18th, except June 11th and 12th. Arrangements for evening drop off can be made by calling Bill Greenberg at 297-6953.

Please help us by being selective in the items you donate. Items left unsold cannot simply be dumped in the garbage—we have to hire a carter to remove them.

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## Fifty Plus Group

The Fifty Plus Group recently elected the following new officers:

President	Madeline Gaynor
Program VP	Sy Kramer
Membership VP	Anita Roller
Recording Secretary	Blanche Fruhling
Corresponding Secretary	Neysa Bibel
Treasurer	Annette Kramer
Financial Secretary	Gloria Gitlitz

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 24 at 1pm in the social hall of Congregation B'nai Tikvah. The program will feature a guest speaker from United Synagogue Seniors who will inform us of various programs and events which are available to us.

As usual, we will meet through the summer. Meetings are scheduled for Tuesday, July 15 and Tuesday, August 26, both at 1pm. Additional events are being planned. Join us at a meeting and bring a friend. For further information call Madeline at 297-4240.

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**Rabbi Levi said: "Even as a statue, when visited by a thousand people at one and the same time, seems to gaze upon them all, so did everyone at Sinai feel that God's words were directed to him (Pesikata Buber, 110a)**

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Makelah Choral Group	Cheryl Amis	297-5379
New Beginnings Group	Jeanette Bergelson	246-1393
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All telephone numbers are (908) area code unless stated otherwise. T.B.A. = could not obtain name as of production date. If possible, please assist us in making this slate complete by leaving a message in the HaKol box or by telephone. Also, if there are additional groups that you would like to see listed (although we cannot guarantee its inclusion due to space limitations), please let us know.

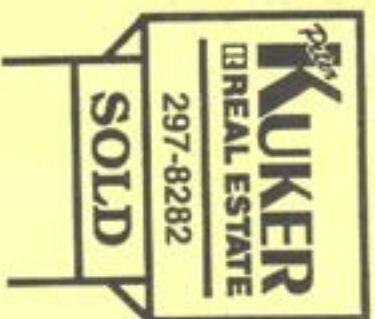
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