

This Shabbat is the 243rd day (of 354); the 35th Shabbat (of 50) of 5766 • We read/learn the FIRST perek of Avot
בזודעו השלישי... ביום הזה באו מדבר סיני: שמות י"א: (Chu"l: no Avot, no Naso, yes 2nd day YT)

What's in a name? The Whole Picture

Shakespeare asked it in Romeo and Juliet. Isaac Asimov wrote a short story with that title. And an early Rodney Dangerfield album carried that title, borrowed from one of the comic routines on that record. Relevance of any of this? None.

Actually, although the Bard claims that a rose would smell as sweet regardless of its moniker, in the case of Shavuot, each different name we have for the Chag gives it a distinctly different fragrance, all of which combine exquisitely to make an important statement.

Shavuot, Festival of Weeks, focuses our attention on the role of the Chag as the culmination of a process whose beginning we mark and celebrate with Pesach. The Mishna's name for Shavuot - Atzeret - also points to its role as the cap and crown to Pesach. (In the Torah, the term Atzeret is shared by the 7th day of Pesach and Shmini Atzeret.)

In what way is Shavuot the culmination of Pesach? Let some of its other names teach us. Z'man Matan Torateinu, the time of the giving of the Torah. Back at the Burning Bush, where and when G-d first appeared to Moshe Rabeinu, He told Moshe that the Sign that G-d indeed sent Moshe into Egypt would be their return to Horev (Sinai) on their way out of Egypt (to receive the Torah). In Va'eira, G-d promises that He will take us out of Egypt and will make us His people and He will be our G-d. That means Matan Torah. That means that Shavuot is the culmination of Pesach.

But there are other names. Chag HaKatzir (festival of the cutting of the grain) and Yom HaBikurim also show us how Shavuot is the culmination of Pesach. At the same Bush, G-d said to Moshe that He is going down into Egypt in order to

Word of the Month



A weekly feature of Torah Tidbits to help clarify practical and conceptual aspects of the Jewish Calendar, thereby better fulfilling the mitzva of HaChodesh HaZeh Lachem...

Many people wait until after Shavuot (this year, after Shabbat as well) to say Kiddush L'vana for Sivan. In fact, Motza'ei Shabbat also satisfies the opinion to wait until the moon is a full 7 days old before saying KL. Machzorim for Shavuot end with Kiddush L'vana. It is a very widespread practice.

However, the strict Minhag Yerushalayim KL sayers will tenaciously stick to the "first op is the best op" and say KL from 3 full days after the molad... always (weather permitting). This includes Tishrei, Sivan, and Av, the months in which KL is popularly held over to follow Yom Kippur, Shavuot, and Tish'a b'Av respectively.

First op for KL (Minhag Yer.) is/was Tuesday night, May 30th, eve of the 4th of Sivan.

TORAH Tidbits AUDIO
www.radiou.org and www.israelnationalradio.com
New shows from Thursday

OTHER Z'MANIM
Correct for Jerusalem

The OU Israel Center and Torah Tidbits do not necessarily endorse the political or halachic positions of its editor, columnists, or advertisers, nor do we guarantee the quality of advertised services or products

- **First column: Yom Tov candles (Thu)**
- **Second column: Shabbat candles (Fri)**
- **Third column: Location**
- **Fourth column: Havdala (Motza"Sh)**

Correct for TT 717 • Rabbeinu Tam (I'm) - 9:07pm

7:04pm	7:05pm	Jerusalem	8:23pm
7:22pm	7:22pm	Raanana	8:26pm
7:20pm	7:21pm	Beit Shemesh	8:24pm
7:22pm	7:22pm	Netanya	8:26pm
7:21pm	7:22pm	Rehovot	8:25pm
7:01pm	7:02pm	Petach Tikva	8:25pm
7:20pm	7:21pm	Modi'in	8:24pm
7:20pm	7:20pm	Be'er Sheva	8:23pm
7:19pm	7:19pm	Gush Etzion	8:23pm
7:21pm	7:21pm	Ginot Shomron	8:25pm
7:04pm	7:05pm	Maale Adumim	8:23pm
7:19pm	7:20pm	K4 & Hevron	8:23pm
7:11pm	7:12pm	Tzfat	8:26pm
7:21pm	7:22pm	Tel Mond	8:26pm

Ranges are FRI-FRI • 6-13 Sivan • (June 2-9)

Earliest Talit & T'filin - 4:36-4:34am
Sunrise - 5:34-5:33am
Sof Z'man K' Sh'ma - 9:05-9:05 am (8:11-8:10am)
Sof Z'man T'fila - 10:16-10:16am (9:39-9:39am)
Chatzot (halachic noon) - 12:37-12:38pm
Mincha Gedola (earliest Mincha) - 1:13-1:14pm
Plag Mincha - 6:13-6:16pm
Sunset - 7:45½-7:49 (7:40-7:44pm)

• Remember **EIRUV TAVSHILIN** on Thursday, Erev Yom Tov. See last week's TT for text and details

• See **Shavuot Section** at the end of this file

OU ISRAEL CENTER
Seymour J. Abrams • Orthodox Union
Jerusalem World Center

Yitzchak Fund, President
Rabbi Emanuel Quint, Senior Vice President
Prof. Meni Koslowsky, Vice President
Rabbi Dovid Cohen, Vaad member
Moshe Kempinski, Vaad member
Sandy Kestenbaum, Vaad member
Simcha Rock, Vaad member
Zvi Sand, Vaad member
Harvey Wolinetz, Vaad member
Menachem Persoff, Director of Programs, Israel Center
Phil Chernofsky, Educational Director and TT editor

22 Keren HaYesod • POB 37015 • Jerusalem 91370
phone: (02) 566 7787 • fax: (02) 561-7432
email: tt@ou.org • website: www.ou.org/torah/tt

Orthodox Union • National Conference of Synagogue Youth
This publication and many of the programs of the Israel Center and NCSY in Israel are assisted by grants from The Jewish Agency for Israel
Produced and printed "in house" at the Israel Center

bring the people up to a good land, a land flowing with milk and honey - Eretz Yisrael. Agricultural mitzvot mean Eretz Yisrael. Bikurim are brought only to the Beit HaMikdash - guess where? May we merit the full value of Shavuot soon, in our time.



NASO STATS

35th of 54 sedras; 2nd of 10 in Bamidbar
 Written on 311 lines in a Sefer Torah (7.4 cols)
 26 Parshiyot; 18 open, 8 closed
 only 4 sedras have more parshiyot
 176 p'sukim, 2264 words, 8632 letters
 Indisputably the longest sedra in the Torah,
 however you count length; well below average
 though in length of p'sukim

MITZVOT:

18 mitzvot; 7 positive, 11 prohibitions

The Israel Center Family
 extends its heartfelt condolences to
Rabbi Berel Wein and family
 on the untimely passing of his wife
Jackie Wein ע"ה

*a woman loved and admired
 by all who knew her*

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

Numbers in [square brackets] are the Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI (positive mitzva); L=LAV (prohibition). X:Y is the perek and pasuk from which the mitzva comes.

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma respectively. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

Kohen - First Aliya - 17 p'sukim - 4:21-37

[P> 4:21 (8)] The second count of Levi continues with the family branch of Gershon. The first count was of males from 30 days old and up. This count is of males between 30 and 50 years of age only. That constitutes the work-force for the Mishkan.

Note: The starting age for a Levi's service is 30. In the Beit HaMikdash, there is no maximum age. In the Mishkan, however, since a Levi's work required carrying Mishkan components in addition to singing and guarding, there was a mandatory retirement age of 50 for the strenuous tasks.

Also note that the family-branch of K'hat was counted and their tasks were enumerated at the end of Bamidbar.

Gershon's tasks include: the three coverings of the Mishkan - the Mishkan (intricately woven, multi-colored, first layer), the Ohel (goat's hair, woven middle covering), and the Michseh (outer covering - dyed ram skin and tachash skin); the curtain at the entrance of Ohel Moed (same weave as the Mishkan); the linen curtain material that surrounded the courtyard, and the entrance curtain of the courtyard; the securing stakes and other related tools. Leviyim were to function only as instructed by the kohanim. The supervisor of family Gershon is Aharon's son Itamar.

Question: Look over the list of that which the Gershon family carried. Why isn't the Parochet on the list? Answer is at the end of B'midbar.

[S> 4:29 (9)] Family-branch Merari was also counted - males between 30 and 50 years of age. They were in charge of the wall-boards of the Mishkan, beams, posts, and foundations. Similarly, the courtyard posts, stakes, foundation sockets, and related tools. Itamar was their supervisor too. (Merari used 4 of the 6 wagons - see towards the end of the sedra - and Gerson used the other 2. K'hat used their shoulders.)

The counts of the work-forces of Levi came to: 2750 for K'hat...

Levi - Second Aliya - 12 p'sukim - 4:38-49

[S> 4:38 (12)] 2630 for Gershon, and 3,200 for Merari. The total work-force of Levi in the Mishkan was 8580. (The position of "Sheni" might vary in different editions of the Chumash.)

SDI ...LA'AVOD AVODAT AVODA VA'AVODAT MASA... Note the four words in a row with the same root. Rashi says the Avodat Avoda (kind of a strange phrase) refers to playing musical instruments. As far as Avodat Masa is concerned - the Gemara in Chulim comments that only when there is heavy manual labor involved, then there is an age limit for the Leviyim (as was mentioned above). And it seems that the age limit of 50 was only for the carrying. In other words, a Levi was able to continue serving in the Mishkan after 50, but only for SHIRA and SH'MIRA. (Yet the count was only for Leviyim from 30-50. Interesting, no?)

Shlishi - Third Aliya - 10 p'sukim - 5:1-10

[P> 5:1 (4)] People who are ritually defiled from any of three specific types (ZARAAT, ZAV, T'MEI MEIT), are to be excluded from the camp pending purification [362,A31 5:2]. We are taught that the three have different restrictions, as follows: A "m'tzora" is excluded from the entire camp of Israel and must remain in isolation until purification. The "zav" and "zava" are permitted in the camp of Israel, but are banned from the Levite camp (and, of course, from the area of the Mikdash). [Har HaBayit today, outside the area where the Beit HaMikdash and its courtyard stood, has the sanctity of the Levite camp.] A person who came into contact with a dead body is banned only from the "Camp of the Divine Presence" (Mikdash and its courtyard) [363,L77 5:3].

[P> 5:5 (6)] A person who sins is required to verbally confess (when repenting) [364,A73 5:6]. He/she must also make restitution (if money was involved) and pay a penalty to the victim.

SDI Take a close look at the portion in the sedra dealing with repentance. It speaks of a man or a woman sinning and of THEIR (not his) requirement to confess and do T'shuva. It is often the case that when an individual sins, others are somewhat responsible. Perhaps a parent who did not educate the child properly. Maybe someone who made stealing (for example) too easy and/or tempting. Does the society bear some of the responsibility for a sinner's actions, because of misplaced emphasis on the wrong values? A person is primarily accountable for his actions. But the Torah's use of the plural, reminds us of our duty to develop an environment of Torah values that will be conducive for all members of society to enthusiastically follow a Torah way of life. This is part of KOL YISRAEL AREIVIM ZEH BAZEH.

(We can suggest that the mitzva of EGLA ARUFA illustrates this point - part of the procedure required upon finding a dead body - that met with foul play, as they say - is for the elders of

the town closest to the body to proclaim that they didn't kill the person. There is an implication of involvement in the unsolved homicide. So too, the fact that the death of a Kohen Gadol releases "inadvertent killers" from their cities of refuge, implies responsibility on the part of the spiritual leader of the people for the carelessness that leads to SHOGEG deaths.)

MITZVA WATCH

According to Rambam (and others), this is the one Torah mitzva among the laws of repentance. When a person sins, and repents (not, when a person sins, he is required to repent, and..., but WHEN he repents - this is very significant), in addition to the various elements of T'shuva, including regret for the past, acceptance for the future, changing one's ways), the repentant individual must verbally confess his sins before G-d.

One can suggest that Rambam holds that T'shuva itself is not one of the 613 mitzvot, but rather a natural result of a Jew accepting of G-d's gift - the opportunity for a second chance. When a person sins and does T'shuva... The mitzva is to confess (as part of the process of T'shuva) and not to let the process be exclusively in one's heart and mind.

Other mitzva-counters do include T'shuva among the 613 mitzvot. The whole process of T'shuva should be instinctive and not even require a command — except for the verbal component of the mitzva. G-d knows our thoughts; why do I need to verbalize them? Therefore, VIDUI is a command.

Another way to explain why the mitzva of T'shuva per se is not on Rambam's list of 613 is because it spans all mitzvot, rather than being a specific mitzva on its own. For example... The Torah forbids doing melacha on Shabbat. If one violates this prohibition, he is required to repent. Repentance is part of the mitzva prohibiting melacha on Shabbat. So too for all mitzvot, positive as well as prohibitions. Bench after a meal; if you don't, repent your non-fulfillment of this mitzva.

T'shuva can be viewed as a VAT tacked on to every other mitzva. As such, it does not get counted on its own among the Taryag mitzvot. (The specific command to verbally confess as part of the T'shuva process does get counted among the 613, because it is specific).

On the other hand, others disagree with Rambam and DO count T'shuva as one of the 613. Some include VIDUI in the mitzva of T'shuva and some count it separately.

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya - 48 p'sukim - 5:11-6:27

This long portion primarily contains the topics of the SOTA (wife suspected of infidelity and duly warned), the NAZIR (one who vows abstinence of a specific type), and Birchat Kohanim.

[P> 5:11 (21)] If a wife is unfaithful to her husband, and there is no proof of her adultery —or— if a man suspects his wife of unfaithfulness and it be unwarranted, he may formally warn her in front of witnesses not to be seen in the company of a specific

man. This warning is a precondition to the whole topic of Sota. Suspicion alone, or even actual adultery, do not produce the conditions for Sota without a formal warning by the husband. Once the warning is issued, it is a mitzva (requirement) to proceed with the Sota-process [365,A223 5:12]. The husband must bring his wife to the kohen at the Beit HaMikdash. A barley-meal offering is brought. No oil [366,L104 5:15] or spice [367,L105 5:15] is used with it, since the issue at hand is so serious and unpleasant before G-d.

The kohen prepares a potion consisting of water from the KIYOR (the washing basin in the courtyard of the Beit HaMikdash), earth from the floor of the Mikdash, and the dissolved writing of this portion of the Torah. The kohen administers an oath to the woman asking her to swear to her innocence, if that be the case, or to admit her guilt. The woman is warned of serious adverse effects of the potion which she will be given to drink, if in fact she has committed adultery, and of the favorable effect of the potion if she is innocent.

The seriousness with which the Torah treats the issue of Sota is motivated by G-d's desire (so to speak) to bring harmony between husband and wife (when feasible) and the notion that doubt is extremely detrimental to a relationship. G-d, so to speak, permits (nay, requires!) His Name to be written and erased in order to advance the cause of marital harmony.

There are many details, too numerous to include here, concerning the conditions necessary for the Sota-process to go through to its end. In other words, there would be many situations when the oath and potion would not be used.

[P> 6:1 (21)] A man or a woman may make a Nazirite vow to G-d. This is usually, but not always, for a period of one month. A Nazir is forbidden to drink wine [368,L202 6:3], eat grapes [369,L203 6:3], raisins [370,L204 6:3], grape seeds [371,L205 6,4], and grape skins [372,L206 6:4]. A Nazir may not cut his hair [373,L209 6:5], but rather must let his hair grow long [374,A92 6:5]. A Nazir may not come into contact with a dead body [375, L208 6:6], nor become ritually defiled even from the bodies of a close relative [376,L207 6:7].

If a Nazir does become defiled, he must purify himself (following 7 days of defilement), shave his hair, bring two doves and a lamb as korbanot, and begin his period of Nazir anew. When a Nazir successfully concludes the term of his vow, he brings two lambs and a ram plus various types of flour-oil offerings and wine for libation [377, A93 6:13]. Included with these korbanot is a sin offering. (This implies that it is not entirely proper for one to accept upon himself a Nazirite vow. The Torah often provides extreme measures for one who feels he must live a stricter life in order to correct certain shortcomings, but still reminds us that it is not a preferable way of life.) Part of this mitzva is for the Nazir to shave off his hair, which is put into the fire under his korban. Afterwards, he may drink wine.

[P> 6:22 (2)] Next, the Torah presents the "three-fold blessing" which forms the text of "Birkat Kohanim". (We also say these p'sukim every morning as part of Birchat HaTorah, and we "borrow" the bracha for our children on Leil Shabbat, even though we are not all Kohanim.) When the kohanim pronounce this blessing, G-d will bless them and the people of Israel. Birkat Kohanim is a mitzva upon kohanim, daily [378, A26 6:23]. Unusual as this might seem, each pasuk of Birkat Kohanim is a separate parsha (s'tuma).

[S> 6:24 (1)] The first pasuk.

[S> 6:25 (1)] The second pasuk.

[S> 6:26 (1)] The third pasuk.

[S> 6:27 (1)] And the final statement on this issue from G-d: And they (the kohanim) will place My name on Bnei Yisrael, and I will bless them (either the people or the kohanim or both).

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya - 41 p'sukim - 7:1-41

The reading from this point until the end of the sedra and into the beginning of the next sedra, constitutes the readings for the eight days of Chanuka. (Some start from the Birkat Kohanim portion at the end of R'vi'i.) Some communities also read "the gifts of the tribal leaders" on the first 12 days of Nissan.)

[S> 7:1 (11)] On the day the Mishkan was completed, it and its furnishings, altar and its utensils, were anointed and sanctified. The tribal leaders gave to the Mishkan six wagons and twelve oxen, two to pull each wagon. The wagons were to be distributed to the Leviyim proportional to the tasks of the different families. Gershon received two wagons and four oxen. Merari received four wagons and eight oxen (because their loads were considerably heavier and bulkier). No wagons were given to K'hat, since they were responsible for the sacred articles which had to be carried by shoulder. That the Aron was to be carried on the shoulders of Leviyim from family K'hat is a mitzva [379, A34 7:9].

Next follow 12 portions of 6 p'sukim each, which are practically identical. Each portion contains the name of a tribal leader and a description of the gifts of gold and silver vessels and animals for sacrifices that were presented on one of the twelve days of dedication of the Mishkan.

[S> 7:12 (6)] Nachshon b. Aminadav of Yehuda was the first to present his gifts. Although the gifts were identical, some of the wording is curiously different, aside, of course from the different day, tribe, and leader. For example, the words VAIHI HAMA KRIV precede BAYOM HARISHON. This is different from the other 11 days. And Nachson b. Aminadav is described as being of the tribe of Yehuda. See other days to compare.

[P> 7:18 (6)] On the second day, the leader of Yissachar presented his gifts to the Mishkan. Here we also find a different wording. On the second day, HIKRIV Netanel b.

Tzu'ar, the leader of Yissachar. Then it continues with HIKRIV ET KORBANO... Nachshon was called a MAKRIV, noun, bringer of a gift. For Netanel, the verb HIKRIV is used twice. No one else has that word. Rashi explains that Reuven wanted to go second (probably first, but Yehuda had that honor). Moshe said that it was G-d's command that the gifts be in order of camps. That is, Degesh Machane Yehuda was first, meaning Yehuda, then Yissachar, then Zevulun. Then came Reuven and his camp- partners, etc. Rashi points to the "missing" YUD in HIKRIV, allowing the word to be read HAKREIV, a command to bring his offering on the second day. Rashi further says (from Rabbi Moshe HaDarshan), that Yissachar got second honor because he was the one who suggested that the Nesi'im bring gifts.

[P> 7:24 (6)] On the third day, the leader of Zevulun offered his gifts. This wording - on the so-and-so day, NASI (leader) of the children of so-and-so (tribe), Ploni ben Ploni. His korban... now follows through the rest of the days. From day 3 to 12, the wording fits the same pattern. The differences are found only on the first two days.

[P> 7:30 (6)] Reuven's leader is on the fourth day.

[P> 7:36 (6)], and Shimon's is on the fifth day.

General comment: Although the gifts are identical, there are sources that teach that each leader brought his gifts with special kavanot and symbolisms unique to his tribe.

The gifts of the fifth day conclude the fifth Aliya, CHAMISHI.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya - 30 p'sukim - 7:42-71

[P> 7:42 (6)] And the gifts of the sixth day begin the SHISHI Aliya. Finishing off the South Camp of Reuven and Shimon is the tribe of GAD, whose leader brings his gifts on the sixth day.

[P> 7:48 (6)] On the seventh day, the leader of Efrayim, Elyasaf b. D'u'el.

[P> 7:54 (6)] On the eighth day, Menashe's NASI, Gamliel b. P'datzur.

Observation: In Parshat B'midbar, Efrayim is preceded by mention of Yosef. Efrayim and Menashe are separate tribes, but they are bracketed, so to speak by mention of Yosef. In this part of NASO, Yosef is not mentioned. And in Sh'lach, they are not even consecutive, with reason.

[P> 7:60 (6)] The camp of the children of Rachel Imeinu conclude their offerings with Binyamin on the ninth day.

[P> 7:66 (6)] The final camp - the north Dan camp, begins its gifts on the tenth day with Achiezer b. Amishadai.

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya - 18 p'sukim - 7:72-89

[P> 7:72 (6)] On the 11th day, the leader of Asher brought his gifts.

Notice that for days 1-10, the format is the same - BAYOM HA-whatever, RISHON, SHEINI... ASIRI. For the 11th day, it is B'YOM ASHTEI ASAR YOM.

[P> 7:78 (6)] Finally, the leader of Naftali presents his gifts B'YOM SHNEIM ASAR YOM...

[P> 7:84 (6)] Which brings us to the final parsha of NASO, the final six p'sukim, which summarize the gifts of the 12 leaders of the tribes.

Then the Torah presents totals and summaries of the "Dedication" gifts. ZOT CHANUKAT HAMIZBEI'ACH...

cont. page 35

The last pasuk seems to go beyond the summary. When Moshe came to Ohel Moed to speak to HaShem, he heard the Voice speaking to him from the KAPORET (lid of the ARON), from between the two K'RUVIM (Cherubs), and that is how G-d spoke to Moshe. All aspects of getting the Mishkan to function are completed. Then the Torah tells us how G-d communicated with Moshe. The last three p'sukim are repeated for the Maftir.

Haftara - 24 p'sukim - Sho-f'tim 13:2-25

The sedra teaches us the laws of the Nazir. The haftara tells us of a famous Nazir, namely Shimshon. The nazirship of Shimshon is not typical. His was "ordered" by G-d via a heavenly angel and was to be a Nazir from birth, for Shimshon's entire life. "Regular" nazir- ship is proclaimed by a vow and is for a limited time, usually one month. The nazir's outward appearance - his unshorn hair - should be the external evidence of an inner sanctity. In Shimshon's case, his nazirship was accompanied by miraculous feats and heroic achievements against the Philis- tines who were Israel's major adver- saries of the time.

The angel instructs Shimshon's mother (wife of Mano'ach of the tribe of Dan) as to how she must behave when she becomes pregnant. She must not drink wine nor eat anything Tamei. Can we suggest this as a demonstration of the fact that alcohol intake of a pregnant woman affects her child?

THE JERUSALEM INSTITUTE OF JEWISH LAW - Rabbi Emanuel Quint, Dean

Lesson 333

Building a Dividing Wall

I was asked recently by two brothers, Reuven and Shimon, who were visiting Israel, the following question. They had inherited from their father a parcel of land on Long Island. It was a small parcel and they agreed how to divide the land; surveyors placed stakes in the ground and they each knew the boundaries of the part owned by them. It was thought by them and they are still close friends besides being brothers, that each would build a small summer cottage and their families would no longer have to go to the Poconos for the summer. Reuven's wife likes to sun bathe and wants a wall placed along the boundary line so that her neighbors, including her brother-in-law Shimon and his wife cannot look into the property when she sun bathes or entertains guests. Shimon did not see the necessity for such a wall, which they said would give them a closed in look. If Reuven wanted to build the entire wall on his own property and at his own cost and expense, it would probably not be a problem since in most instances halacha does not prohibit a person from building a fence or wall to give himself privacy. In this instance, Reuven wanted the wall to be built on the boundary line, half on his side of the boundary and half on Shimon's side of the boundary. I suspected and was proved to be right, that the question of area to be given up was not the question. Reuven thought that if he could get Shimon to agree then Shimon would have to share the cost of the wall, one half each. They wanted to know what, if anything, halacha had to say in such situations.

Shimon and his wife said that none of the other neighbors in the neighborhood had walls or even high fences, just some short hedges or short fences delineating the borders, and they did not want to have such a fence. (The question of a fence on the other side of the property was not an issue since the house on the side was very rarely used.

I told them that Reuven could demand the building of the wall.

I explained that the halacha favors the one who wants a wall of separation to be built. The lack of such a wall anywhere else on the block was not of any importance as regards these brothers.

As to the type of wall it would generally follow the type used in the community, but since most of the community did not have walls of separation, there was no precedent as to the height, width or material from which to make the wall. The wall would have to be made of material that was opaque so that one could not see through it; it could not be of translucent glass etc. It could also not be so flimsy that it would fall with the first strong wind, and there are strong winds on Long Island. This all assumes that there are no building or zoning laws restricting the building of the wall or its type or height. I told them to consult with their lawyers and architects to see that it was legal to proceed. When it was ascertained that they could proceed, I told them to drive around the neighborhood and see where there were fences

and how they were constructed. As there were so few such fences, the neighbors fences would not be a precedent. I told them to attempt to agree, otherwise Beth Din would have to decide and that they were far better off agreeing among themselves. I told them to look in the yellow pages for fence and garden contractors and consult with them to get ideas for the separation fence, or perhaps just tall hedges etc. After some time they agreed on a cyclone fence with green plastic to keep outsiders from seeing in. I also told them some of the halachot dealing with common fences. The fence would be built along the boundary line and each brother would give about three inches from his own yard to the common fence. If the fence would eventually fall down, for example as a result of a hurricane etc. the space under the fence would be divided up equally between them as would the scrap metal value of the fallen fence. This would hold true even if the fence would all fall into only one of their yards. Should the fence fall down either party could insist that the fence be rebuilt of the same materials and same height and each would contribute half of such cost.

In halacha, a wall is presume to be four amot (about seven feet) in height. I was asked what if one of the parties wishes the height of the fence to be higher, could he have it raised in the future without the consent of the other brother? The party wishing to raise the height of the fence could not compel the other to pay for the raising of the height. The party wishing to raise the height can do so if he wishes to pay the entire expense himself and if in doing so does not thereby interfere with the light on the other's property. Also it can endanger the existing fence if it cannot bear the additional weight of the addition to the fence. If in raising the height of the fence damage is caused to the fence, the party that raised the height would have to pay for the fence to be repaired. Assuming that Reuven was the first to want to raise the height but thereafter Shimon wanted to raise it still higher. Who bears the expenses involved? If Reuven, at his own expense raised the fence to eight feet, he must bear the total expense of the additional foot. However, if Shimon thereafter raised the height to nine feet, Shimon must pay for the ninth foot and also for one half of the expense of the eighth foot. Similarly, if Reuven, at his own cost and expense raises the wall to twelve feet and thereafter Shimon rests a crossbeam in the raised wall nine feet above the ground, which is two feet above the original wall, Shimon will have to pay for half of the expense of the two feet, between seven and nine feet. That which has been said regarding the height of the wall also applies to extending the length of the wall.

The subject matter of this lesson is more fully discussed in volume V chapter 157 of A Restatement of Rabbinic Civil Law by E. Quint. Copies of all volumes can be purchased via email: orders@gefenpublishing.com and via website: www.israelbooks.com and at local Judaica bookstores. Questions to quint@inter.net.il

TANACH

SPIRITUAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES IN THE BEREISHIT STORIES by Dr. Meir Tamari

"Megilat Yaakov" [3]

"Through you all the families [nations] of the Earth shall be blessed; by you living according to the rules of the G-d-given Torah, they will learn to grow close to Him" (Tanchuma, B'reishit 28:14).

In his vow, Yaakov, in addition to asking for G-d's protection in Exile and His help in his return home, adds an element to the blessings promised him that is singular to this occasion and has much relevance to our personal individual lives. He asks for a livelihood - *parnasa* - thus teaching us the first stage in our treatment of wealth and the desire for it; the most truthful and effective *segula* is direct prayer to G-d. Yaakov's understanding of *parnasa* has become a role model for us, exemplified by the prayer said during Birkat Kohanim on the festivals: "Bestow on me and on the souls of my household, our food and livelihood, generously and not sparsely, honestly not in forbidden ways from your generous hand, just as You gave food and clothing to our father Yaakov called Ish Tam, a wholesome man". "That our commerce should be done in faith does not mean honesty in commerce, for that we have *halakhot* that militate against fraud, theft and robbery, false weights and measures, oppression, lying and interest. Rather it means faith that G-d is the sole source of all our wealth" (Orech HaShulchan 156); he who does not say in Ashrei, 'You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing' with full devotion, does not fulfill his obligation. Furthermore, Yaakov does not ask for more than bread to eat and clothes to wear. He thus lays down for us the Torah's teaching that modesty does not apply only to dress but also to consumption and standards of living; the economics of enough, without which there can be no morality, business or otherwise. He reaffirms this teaching when in reply to Eisav's, "I have a lot" which always leaves space for wanting more, he answers "I have everything". This places limits on how much we want to earn and thereby also on how we earn it.

Now that Yaakov was elevated to great spiritual heights through his prophetic vision, he was able to realize that there is sanctity even in the material possessions that G-d will grant him. It is this sanctity of material possessions that makes him [and us] obligated to tithe *maaser*. *Maaser* flows from the intrinsic *kedusha* that only Eretz Yisrael has; a sanctity that is connected to the People who share its name" (Mei Marom, Harav Harlap). There are many *mitzvot* that come to teach us that our wealth really belongs to G-d and this obligates to act according to His commandments. Omer that is a payment as it were, to the real owner that permits us to eat of our new harvests, *shmita* and *yovel* which abrogate our legal ownership, *bikurim* with its humbling confession that He has granted us everything so we bring First Fruits to His Temple, and the grace said before and after eating or enjoying material things.

The conclusion of the vow, "And every- thing that You give

me I shall repeatedly tithe unto You", shows that is not a matter of asking for G-d's blessing and then promising something in return, but rather a promise to act in a way that recognizes the Source of the benefits. "Maaser comes to make us keep in mind that G-d is the real master of our property even after it becomes ours. We have to dedicate a share of it according to His wishes and this dedication comes in two forms. The first, at the outset of our earning: *b'chor*, *bikurim* and *t'ruma*. These are easy to accept since with the first cent that we get we still have the feeling that G-d gave it. However, those that follow seem to be the natural result of the preceding stream of effort or of income. Then we need the second form, *maaser*, to remind us that these too are a direct gift from G-d" (R. S.R.Hirsch, B'reishit 14:20). "Pe'ah is brought only on completion of harvesting the field. This ending shows that our intention throughout the agricultural work [wealth creation] was to fulfill His Will and commandments. A nation whose whole material activity is geared to be able to do just this, will never be completely harvested-destroyed" (Shem Mi Shmuel).

G-d could provide directly for the needs of the poor, but He established the world in such a fashion that we receive wealth to be used for our own needs but also to provide for the needs of the weak. In that, there is created not only the vertical relationship between us and G-d, the Provider, but flowing from that relationship also a horizontal relationship between us and others. "G-d wanted that His creatures should be well-versed and actively engaged in *Chesed* and mercy. Through His kindness to each of us, He thereby provides for all His creatures. Furthermore, we thereby learn to fear Hashem, our G-d" (Sefer HaChinuch 473,474). "We give a tenth of the wealth that Hashem gives us to those who are in need, so that they become G-d fearing and worship Him [apparently to forestall their rebellion against Him due to their poverty]. This tithing applies also to the sons (B'reishit Rabba 70:7) as we learn from the *maaser* that has to be given to the *Leviyim* who busy themselves with G-d's worship more than their brothers" (Radak). The Talmud (Ketubot 50a) learnt from our verse that a person of average wealth should not spend more than 20% on charity in cases where they would themselves be reduced thereby to poverty. "Although this restrictive ruling has been extended to one's spending on the observance of positive *mitzvot*, regarding spending in order to prevent failing in negative *mitzvot*, one is required to spend even all one's wealth (Rama, Orech Chaim 656).

"Kingship will not be established in Israel and the True Faith not established except through *tzedaka* as it is written: "Establish yourselves through righteousness" (Isaiah 54:14), and we will not be redeemed except by virtue of *tzedaka* as it is written (Isaiah: 1:27): "Zion shall be redeemed with Justice and her returnees through righteousness"." (Matnat Aniyim 10:1).

This is installment #130 in Dr. Tamari's series on "Tanach and its messages for our times"

MISC section - contents:

[1] Vebbe Rebbe

[2] Candle by Day

[3] From Aloh Naaleh

[4] A Touch of Wisdom, A Touch of Wit

[5] Parsha Points to Ponder

[6] Portion from the Portion

[7] MicroUlpan

[8] G'matriya Match

[9] Torah from Nature

[10] Catch All

[11] From the desk of the director

[1] From the virtual desk of the OU **VEBBE REBBE**

The Orthodox Union – via its website – fields questions of all types in areas of kashrut, Jewish law and values. Some of them are answered by Eretz Hemdah, the Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, headed by Rav Yosef Carmel and Rav Moshe Ehrenreich, founded by HaRav Shaul Yisraeli zt"l, to prepare rabbanim and dayanim to serve the National Religious community in Israel and abroad. Ask the Rabbi is a joint venture of the OU, Yerushalayim Network, Eretz Hemdah... and the Israel Center. The following is a Q&A from Eretz Hemdah...

Q

Need one eat milchig on Shavuot? If so, when is one supposed to do so? What steps must he take regarding meat and milk? There are many minhagim and little clarity on the issue.

A

We can give you only partial clarity - and an assurance that there are many legitimate ways to fulfill the minhag. The minhag to eat milchig food on Shavuot seems to have emerged in Ashkenazic lands in the time of the Rishonim and is accepted by the Rama (Orach Chayim 494:3). It has begun to be more accepted among S'fardim, at least in Israel, where the dairy industry pushes the minhag aggressively (we wonder why?). The problem is that there are many educated guesses as to the rationale behind the minhag, which impacts on the optimal way to follow it. Also, some good ways of fulfilling it raise halachic problems. It is not surprising then that both rabbis and laymen have developed varied systems. This variety and the phenomenon that people often do as they feel on this not overly crucial matter are reasonable.

The Rama (ibid.) understands that the minhag is to remind us of the Sh'tei HaLechem (two loaves of wheat), offered on Shavuot in the Beit HaMikdash. The Magen Avraham (ad loc.:8) explains that by eating both milk and meat in a meal, there will be two loaves of bread with which to eat the food. He says that in keeping with this reason, it is best to bake some milchig bread. Although bread is supposed to be parve, loaves that are small or are made in a special shape, both of which were customary on Shavuot, are permitted (Rama, Yoreh Deah 97:1). This approach explains why many eat milchig and fleishig at

the same meal despite the complications (see below).

Another reason to split a meal between milchig and fleishig parts is that many require a meat meal at night and in the day of Yom Tov (see Rosh, Berachot 7:23 with Ma'adanei Yom Tov; Sha'arei Teshuva 529:2). Others say it is sufficient to have meat in the day. Therefore, those who have one fully milchig meal on Shavuot, do so at night (see Piskei Teshuvot 529:11 & 494:11).

Other reasons for the minhag are based on kabalistic ideas regarding milk (Magen Avraham 494:6), hints of its acronym (Aruch Hashulchan OC 494:5), and the idea that after receiving the Torah, Bnei Yisrael required time to be able to prepare kosher meat (Mishna Berura 494:12). According to these approaches, it may be sufficient to have milchig food at any point during Yom Tov, including a snack or kiddush after Shacharit.

One should not compromise the laws of meat and milk in order to fulfill this minhag. Therefore, if eaten in succession, milchig is obviously eaten first. Between the two, one should clean the mouth by eating parve food and rinsing his mouth and either rinse or inspect his hands (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 89:2). He should also change the tablecloth (Mishna Berura ibid.: 16). (Most people simply eat the milchig food on a plastic tablecloth on top of the regular one.) Some people are careful to make a full break between milchig and fleishig with Birkat HaMazon (or a beracha acharona for the many who fulfill the minhag with cake) between them (Pri Megadim on Shach 89:6). However, that is a special chumra, not halachically required (ibid.; see Mishna Berura ibid.; Melamed L'ho'il II 23). If one does bentsh, then there are varied opinions as to how long one should wait before starting the meat meal (beyond our present scope).

In brief, it is all but impossible to accept the most stringent approach to the integration of milk into a meat meal while following all the stringencies of the prohibitions of milk and meat (see Igrot Moshe, OC I, 160). Some systems are cumbersome enough for many people to take away from their simchat Yom Tov, cause them to make mistakes, or unnecessarily delay the minhag of learning all night. Therefore, people should continue a family minhag they are comfortable with or adopt one which works for them. One who wants to figure out the most machmir way to do so may be blessed but should be aware of "collateral damage."

Ed. note: See the section on Dairy Foods, which is part of the Shavuot section at the end of this PDF file

*Ask the Rabbi Q&A is part of Hemdat Yamim, the weekly parsha sheet published by Eretz Hemdah. You can read this section or the entire Hemdat Yamim at www.ou.org or www.erezhemdah.org. And/or you can receive Hemdat Yamim by email weekly, by sending an email to info@erezhemdah.org with the message: *Subscribe/English (for the English version) or Subscribe/Hebrew (for the Hebrew version)*. Please leave the subject blank. Ask the Vebbe Rebbe is partially funded by the Jewish Agency for Israel*

[2] **Candle by Day**

We cannot banish with a wave of the hand the false beliefs that have grown up with us. We are not built that way. If we did so, we would dismiss our true faith too. Our beliefs have been built up patiently, bit by bit, until they have become intermingled, as it were, with the fibers of our being. We cannot tear out our flesh to cast them away. We can only pick them out, if they need picking out, as so many tiny pieces of glass that have embedded themselves within it.

From "A Candle by Day" by Rabbi Shraga Silverstein

A Candle by Day • The Antidote • The World Of Chazal by Rabbi Shraga Silverstein • Now available at 054-209-9200

[3] **CHIZUK and IDUD**

for Olim & not-yet-Olim respectively

Shavuot is a holiday of opportunity - the opportunity to accept anew the Torah and the yoke of God's kingdom or alternatively to spend it eating cheesecake and gossiping with friends! The megila that we read on Shavuot also reflects the idea of opportunity. Megilat Ruth reveals to the reader what happens to those who take advantage of the opportunities presented by God and what happens to those who pass them up.

The first person to miss an opportunity is Elimech. A leading figure of his generation, he had the means with which to help his townsmen, but instead he chooses to run from this opportunity and ends up dead and buried in a foreign land with his children intermarried to local women. Naomi hears that "God has remembered His people" and she chooses to return. One daughter-in-law is perceptive enough to see the opportunity, goes along with her and becomes the grandmother of the king of Israel; the other turns back and becomes the grandmother of the evil giant Goliath. After they return to Bet Lechem, the closest relative is offered the opportunity to marry and redeem Ruth, but he is afraid and therefore becomes an anonymous personality, a nobody. Boaz uses the opportunity presented to him and redeems Ruth, thus becoming the ancestor of the mashiach.

Our generation has also been granted a unique opportunity. We have been afforded the chance to leave the foreign land in which we live, take advantage of modern transportation and live in the flourishing Holy Land, which has been rebuilt from the ashes of destruction. May God grant us all the vision to seize this moment and take advantage of the wonderful opportunity He has given us.

Chana Tannenbaum, Nof Ayalon

TORAH THOUGHTS as contributed by Aloh Naaleh members for publication in the Orthodox Union's 'Torah Insights', a weekly Torah publication on Parshat Ha'Shavuah

[4] **A Touch of Wisdom, A Touch of Wit**

R' Shmuel Hanagid, one of the great Jewish leaders of Spain, was highly respected by the Spanish king. R' Shmuel was an exemplary man in every way: wise and learned, a philosopher and poet, and - above all - a man of truth, who was not interested in the accumulation of wealth. The king greatly appreciated R' Shmuel, and eventually appointed him as his minister of finance.

The other ministers were jealous of him. After all, why should a Jew be given such a lofty position? They therefore spread rumors that R' Shmuel was stealing money from the royal treasury. The king ignored these tales, because he knew R' Shmuel, and how honest he was. However, to prove R' Shmuel's innocence to the other ministers, he asked him to bring him a complete list of his assets.

R' Shmuel immediately did as told, and brought the king his accounting books. When the king examined them, though, he found that it only represented a tenth of R' Shmuel's assets.

"Tell me," said the king angrily, "is that all you own? I myself gave you much more than this?"

"My lord the king," R' Shmuel answered, "You ordered me to bring you a listing of my assets. I did as you asked, and here it is. This is what I have spent on charity. These are my assets, because they cannot be taken away from me. All the rest of my possessions are not truly mine."

Shmuel Himmelstein has written a wonderful series for ArtScroll: Words of Wisdom, Words of Wit; A Touch of Wisdom, A Touch of Wit; and "Wisdom and Wit" — available at your local Jewish bookstore (or should be). Excerpted with the permission of the copyright holder

[5] **Parsha Points to Ponder - NASO**

1) When the Torah commands that the family of Gershon be counted, why does it add the words **GAM HEIM** meaning **ALSO THEM?** (4:22)

2) Why does the Torah repeat itself in stating **AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL DID SO... SO DID THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL** regarding the command to send the impure people out of the camp? (5:4)

3) The Torah teaches that the 12 princes brought six covered wagons. Why does it then teach the seemingly superfluous fact that this amounted to **A WAGON FOR EVERY TWO LEADERS?** (7:3)

THESE ARE THE ANSWERS

Ponder the questions first, then read here

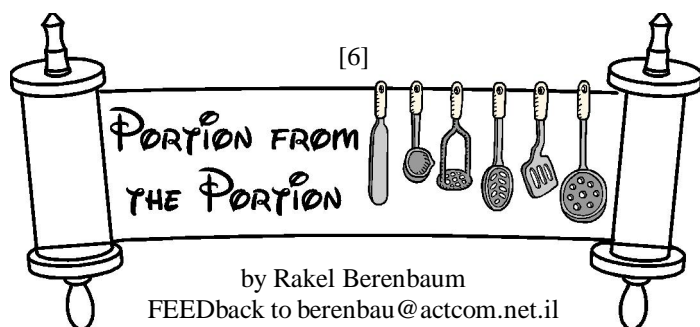
1) Rav Moshe Feinstein points to last week's Parsha which taught that the children of Kehat carried the most holy items such as the Aron and the Menora while the family of Gershon carried the lower level items such as the curtains and the columns. The family of Gershon could have become demoralized by their seemingly less important role. G-D, therefore, goes out of His way to equate Gershon's role with Kehat's role through the words, **GAM HEIM**.

2) The Chizkuni explains that the first statement refers to the senders. People sent the impure people out of the camp even

though, at times, this meant distancing their relatives from them. The repetition of SO DID THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL refers to the impure people themselves who did not protest and willingly accepted the command for them to be sent out of the camp.

3) My great-grandfather, Rav Elimelech Fischman answers this question beautifully. (This is a meaningful time to teach his Torah since he was murdered by the Nazis on Shavuot night in Auschwitz in 1944.) Tradition teaches that the leaders chose to use wagons to serve as an atonement for the sin of the golden calf. (The word EIGEL shares the same root as the Hebrew word for wagon - AGALA.) The sin of the golden calf happened largely due to a lack of unity since the disunity led to the people rejecting Aharon's stalling tactics. Perhaps the leaders chose to share wagons to demonstrate that they learned the lesson of that sin and were now working with unity for a positive cause. The Torah goes out of its way to emphasize this act of unity and atonement by stating that there was A WAGON FOR EACH TWO LEADERS.

Parsha Points to Ponder is prepared by Rabbi Dov Lipman Mashgiach Ruchani, Yeshivat Yesodei HaTorah in Bet Shemesh, author of "DISCOVER: Answers for Teenagers (and adults) to Questions about the Jewish Faith", soon to be republished by Feldheim - ppp@israelcenter.co.il



FROM PESACH TO SHAVUOT "SUR MEIRA VAASEI TOV"

Shavuot has no specific date in the Torah. The Torah relates it as being fifty days after the second day of Pesach. There seems to be a definite connection between Pesach and Shavuot. Rav Metzger in his book brings a number of these links. One explanation has to do with a general lesson in moral development that we learn from Tehilim (34:15). There the verses describe how one can become a G-d-fearing person. Included in the list is "depart from evil, and do good". This is a two stage process. It is not sufficient to distance ourselves from evil. We need to do two things; distance ourselves from evil and do good.

We see this idea in the connection between Pesach and Shavuot. On Pesach we were taken out of Egypt where we had been on the 49th level of defilement. Our redemption from Egypt was what is called "SUR MEIRA" - "distance yourself from evil". We left the idol worship, idolatry and debasement behind. That was a good start, but it was not enough. Shavuot is the "ASEI TOV" - "do good". Receiving the Torah helped us know what we should do to be righteous. The Torah tells us how to act in every aspect of our life. We should take this lesson with us always. Whenever we want to improve our- selves and our mitzva performance, we should remember to do this

two step process of "SUR MEIRA VAASEI TOV".

COEUR A LA CREAM

This classic molded French dessert is relatively simple to make. It's milky so it is in line with the custom to eat dairy on Shavuot. (One reason for this minhag is brought in the Imrei Noam. He says that milk is both a drink and a food and therefore contains everything just like the Torah contains everything in it.) The dessert is served shaped like a heart. On Shavuot the heart symbolizes our love for learning Torah. It is usually garnished with strawberries, but you can use grapes instead to remember the species brought for Bikurim (the first fruits). The French have a special heart shaped pan with holes in it for making this dish. Any pan with holes will do or just tie up the cheese mixture in a cloth diaper over the faucet in order to drain out the excess liquid.

250 gm. white cheese (gvina levana)

1 cup sour cream

1 cup sweet cream

200 gm. cottage cheese

½ tsp. salt

1 cup sugar

Garnish

½ kilo ripe strawberries (you can use frozen if you don't have fresh) or use grapes

½ cup sugar

Mix all the cheeses together and add the salt (which helps to strain the liquid out)

Place cheese cloth, or two coffee filters, or a clean cloth diaper at the bottom of a sieve

Pour the cheese mixture into the sieve and let the liquid drain out for at least an hour. The best would be to leave it in the fridge overnight. Shape into a heart. Decorate with fruit.

[7] MicroUlpan

Kids today don't really know what a record player is. In Hebrew? Patiphone. Not really. Try MAKOL

מקול

[8] G'MATRIYA MATCH

The Torah commands us: V'HIGADITA L'VINCHA BAYOM HAHU LEIMOR BAAVOR ZEH ASA HASHEM LI B'TZEITEI MIMITZRAYIM:

that we are to tell our children about the Exodus from Egypt...

This mitzva is essentially fulfilled on Seder night. But is that the end of the story?

Do we stop our telling and teaching of the Exodus on that first night of Pesach?

The story of the Exodus continues. It culminates on Shavuot, which marks the receiving of the Torah AND the coming to Eretz Yisrael and building the Mikdash, all symbolized by Shavuot's names: Zman Matan Torateinu, Chag HaKatzir, Yom HaBikurim. The g'matriya of the pasuk above is 2522, the same numeric value as the answer to the question "until when?":

YOM CHAG HASHAVUOT HAZEH ZMAN MATAN TORATEINU:

[9] **Torah from Nature**

Western Crowned-pigeon a.k.a. the Blue-crowned pigeon, is the largest pigeon in the world... size of a small turkey..... one of the most beautiful pigeons, alluring blue feathers and a deep purple patch across the shoulders, males and females look similar... mask of dark blue feathers extending from the slender bill through the eye, and the fan-like crest of lacy light blue feathers on top of the small head ...found in New Guinea and other Indonesian islands... males and females pair for life, but courtship is still elaborate... one egg, incubated by mother at night and the father by day... hatchling is fed 'pigeon's milk' by both parents... for about a month After the chick has fledged, parents will continue to feed it for several months...

[10] **Catch All**

This will be a from-time-to-time column for those items each of which really belong somewhere else, but they came to light after a particular feature, page, or column was completed. For example...

An EIRUV TAVSHILIN page was in last week's TT (#715, p.10). EB called to our attention to a point we neglected to include. Let's put it like this: There are two levels of ET. The first is personal. It is made by an individual for himself and his household. Period. And the correct text of the ET declaration is LANA, it shall be permitted for us. The advanced version is for "Gedolei HaIr", the rabbinic leaders of the community. They add, LANU ULCHOL YISRAEL HADARIM BA'IR HAZOT, for us and for all Jews who live in this city. A person who forgets to make an ET, or whose ET was eaten before he had a chance to cook on Friday for Shabbat, is covered by this "advanced" ET. One who purposely does not make an ET, intending to rely on the ET of others, is NOT covered by it. Everyone should make an ET. But the advanced version is there just in case. However... in order to make this kind of ET, one has to take the ET food, give it to someone else (one's child above the age of mitzvot, or some say only to someone not part of your household) to "acquire" it on behalf of others. Then he takes it back, makes the bracha and declaration, including the extra phrase. Know that not just the community leaders make this extra ET, anyone can and preferably should, if he is able to do it properly. Confused? Talk it over with your rav.

TTriddle Report Addendum

MM/Bklyn found another member of the Wilderness Rock Group. Tzuriel b. Avichayil, leader of the Merari family. Being a Levi, he was probably lead singer of the group. MM also suggests Moshe as the group's drummer, since he hit the TZUR with a stick.

Candle Lighting Clarifications

On Thursday, Erev Yom Tov, a 24-hr candle should be lit before Yom Tov candles, so that a flame will be available on Friday afternoon to help light Shabbat candles. Since Yizkor is said on Shavuot, many homes will have Yizkor candles lit anyway. Those who don't say Yizkor should remember to light a candle to have fire available.

If one has no flame to take a light from, he/she should try to get a flame from a neighbor. If none is available, Shabbat candles should NOT be lit. We may not produce fire by striking a match on Yom Tov, even for the mitzva of Shabbat candles.

On Thursday, one should not only set up for Yom Tov lighting, but should also put out the candles needed for Friday's lighting, just to have them at hand when it is time to light Shabbat candles.

Generally, Ashkenazi women accept Shabbat with the lighting of Shabbat candles. Therefore, their SOP (standard operating procedure) is to light the candles first, cover their eyes, and then make the bracha. Since handling fire is permitted on Yom Tov, one should say the bracha first and then light (then putting down the match or helper candle to go out on its own, since extinguishing fire is forbidden on Yom Tov). It is permissible for a woman to light her usual Shabbat way for Yom Tov if she fears a mix-up.

[9] **Divrei Menachem**

As is well known, we put two Challot on the Shabbat table to represent the double portion of Manna that fell in the desert before Shabbat so that Bnei Yisrael would have sufficient to eat without having to desecrate the Shabbat collecting the Manna. What is less known is that on the Festival of Shavuot the people were commanded to, "Bring out of your habitations two wave loaves... the first [of the meal-offerings of the new crop] unto the Eternal" (Vayikra 23:17).

Following Sefat Emet, we can discern an interesting connection between the two Shabbat Challot and the two loaves brought on Shavuot. By raising the Challot in our hands as we make the Bracha on the bread on Shabbat, we at once recognize Hashem's bounty and mark Shabbat as a symbol of His mastery in this world. We concurrently confer Kedusha (holiness) to Shabbat. And insofar as we elevate ourselves in honor of G-d, so do we raise the level of His majesty in this world.

According to the (2,135-1), the two loaves of Shavuot represent the Torah SheBichtav, the Written Law, and Torah Sheb'al Peh, the Oral Law. Thus, the waving of the loaves indicates the homage we afford to these two bastions of our tradition. And by virtue of this command, we also raise the level of our Kedusha.

Thus through our actions with these loaves we both bestow and receive Kedusha. What better thought for the Chag that traditionally celebrates our receiving of the Torah.

**Chag Sameach and Shabbat Shalom
Menachem Persoff**

SHEYIBANEH BEIT HAMIKDASH...

A series of articles on Beit HaMikdash-related topics by Catriel Sugarman intended to increase the knowledge, interest, and anticipation of the reader, thereby hastening the realization of our hopes and prayers for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Beit HaMikdash.

Yehoshua's Mizbei'ach and that of the 2½ Tribes

From Devora: "Dear Catriel. You wrote that 'when Yehoshua, in fulfillment of Moshe's command (Devarim 27:5,6), erected a Mizbei'ach on Har Eival, he deliberately built his altar without a base [thereby disqualifying it to be used as a Bama Gedola CS] and that Yehoshua wanted to emphasize that this altar was a Hora'at Sha'a- a "special case". It was not to be used as a Bama Gedola, and 'undermine the legitimacy of the newly reestablished Mishkan in Gilgal'. We were wondering if this is somehow connected with what is related in Yehoshua 22 about the altar the two and a half tribes built near the Jordan."

Related? Absolutely! But first, a bit of background. Through the millennia, the great leaders of Am Yisrael intuitively grasped the importance of national unity. Our greatest leader, Moshe Rabeinu, the "shepherd" of an obstreperous and ungrateful people, managed to lead them through the wilderness for forty years. He, more than anyone else, was familiar with Am Yisrael's proclivity for dissension and mutiny. At the very gates of the Promised Land, two of the tribes, Reuven and Gad (later joined by half of Menashe), after having shared Am Yisrael's vicissitudes during the long trek through the wilderness, abruptly announced that they did not want to cross the Jordan and enter Eretz Yisrael at all! Their multitudinous sheep and goats were happy just where they were. Moshe was furious. (Try to imagine what was going through Moshe's mind on a personal level when he first heard this! Think of it! G-d had denied his most impassioned wish, to "cross and see the good land that is on the other side of the Jordan" (D'varim 3:25) and suddenly, he is faced with whole tribes who "liked money and [therefore] preferred to live outside of Eretz Yisrael" [Bamidbar Rabba 22:7,8]). He angrily accused them of preferring the lush green grass of Transjordan to the hardships of the long and arduous campaign that awaited Am Yisrael on the other side of the river. He cried out in anguish (Bamidbar 32:6,7), "Shall your brothers go out to war and you will sit here? Why do you dissuade the heart of the Children of Israel from crossing to the land that G-d has given them?" In the end, happily, the crises "blew over". The representatives of the "wayward" tribes assured Moshe that even if their families and livestock did remain in the Gil'ad, their fighting men would cross the Jordan and participate in the coming war of conquest. They would not let their brothers down. They solemnly promised, "We will not return to our homes until the Children of Israel will inherit - every man his inheritance..." True to their word, they placed themselves in the vanguard of the advancing Israelite armies. The "expeditionary units" of the two and a half tribes acquitted themselves so well on the field of battle and their military discipline was so superlative, that at the conclusion of the war, Moshe's successor, Yehoshua bin Nun, blessed them and even wished them economic success before giving them an "honorable discharge" (Yehoshua 22:6). However, on their way home, as they approached the Jordan River, a strange thing happened.

"And when they came to the region about the Jordan, that is in the land of Canaan, the Children of Reuven, and the Children of Gad and the half-tribe of Menashe built there an altar by the Jordan, a great altar to look upon" (Yehoshua 22:10). Conscious of the vulnerability of their nation, both religiously and politically, the other tribes reacted sharply. "And when the Children of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the Children of Israel gathered themselves to Shilo to go against them to war." We noted last week the source of the ban on Bamot - "private field altars" (Vayikra 17:3, 4) and why this prohibition was relaxed at a time when, for one reason or another, the Bama Gedola - the Mizbei'ach of the central sanctuary - and the Aron HaBrit were "separated". While the Mishkan was in Gilgal, Kohanim together with the Aron accompanied the Israelite armies in the field. When Yehoshua, in fulfillment of Moshe's command (D'varim 27:5,6), erected a Mizbei'ach on Har Eival (Yehoshua 8:30,31), he deliberately built his altar in such a way that it was inherently unfit to be used as a Bama Gedola. Yehoshua's altar was a Hora'at Sha'a (a "special case") and nothing more. The reason why Yehoshua built the Mizbei'ach on Har Eival and offered Korbanot thereon was to emphasize the extreme importance of the "ceremony of the blessings and curses". Originally ordained by Moshe (D'varim 27:11-26), this awesome ceremony, performed by all Am Yisrael in the presence of the Aron HaBrit, was conceived as a sort of a reenactment of Ma'amad Har Sinai. However, Yehoshua's altar and these "ad hoc" sacrifices were not meant to replace or undermine in any way the authenticity of the Mishkan, the nation's central sanctuary, then at Gilgal.

After Eretz Yisrael was conquered and divided among the tribes, the Mishkan was relocated to Shilo and the Aron HaBrit was "reunited" with the newly built national altar. That condition fulfilled, the ban on private Bamot was renewed. When "the children of Israel heard say, 'Behold the children of Reuven, the children of Gad and the half tribe of Menashe have built an altar', the "children of Israel" could only view such behavior as rebellion. This was true even after they had witnessed the sterling performance of the "Transjordanians" on the battlefield. They demanded, "What treachery is this that you have committed against the G-d of Israel, to turn away this day from following the Lord, in that you have built an altar...?" Happily, this crisis also "blew over" and the Transjordanians were able to convince "the congregation of the Lord", that their altar was not for sacrifice and "treachery". Au contraire, the faithful tribes of the Gil'ad conceived of their altar as a memorial expressing their hope that even though they lived on the other side of the Jordan, they would continue to be thought of as an integral part of Am Yisrael. Maybe their choice of design was defective, but their hearts were certainly pure. Shilo would remain the only legitimate sanctuary of all Israel on both sides of the Jordan.

From Reuven Brauner, Ra'anana: "When will we learn that holocaust-deniers, Temple-deniers etc. are all out to delegitimize us? They come from without and within. It is truly unnerving to realize that there are such small-minded Jew-haters out there and that they will do anything to deny us a place on this planet. Quite a few imaginative "archaeologists" with political agendas of their own have real problems when they are faced with something as real as Yehoshua's Mizbei'ach. I suppose that if a 'modern archaeologist' of that ilk excavated Ground Zero, the site the World Trade Center, he would have to come to the undeniable conclusion that it never actually existed. The documentary evidence? The photographs and films? They

must have been digitally altered. The millions of eyewitnesses? Delusional. Brainwashed. They must have all been from some fanatic religious cult. The people who designed and built them? A solar myth..."

Catriel's book in progress: The Temple of Jerusalem, A Pilgrim's Perspective; A Guided Tour through the Temple and the Divine Service

from page 3 PARSHA PIX

The fork lift stands for the work of the Gershon and mostly the Merari families of Leviyim. Only Kehat might have had a problem using a forklift, since they must carry the sacred vessels on their shoulders. Gershon and Merari were given wagons (also shown) to help in their tasks. A forklift would probably be acceptable for loading the wagons, and Merari would definitely have put one to the best use.

The calculator is for counting the Leviyim.

The Do Not Enter signs are for the three types of ritually defiled individuals who may not enter one camp of another - The Camp of the Sh'china, i.e. the Mishkan and its courtyard, the Camp of the Leviyim which surrounded the Mishkan area on four sides, three each for the family units of Levi and one side (east) for Moshe, Aharon and family.

The grapes, wine, and shaver are Xed out for the Nazir. Not shown: Becoming Tamei, but it too is forbidden to a Nazir.

The SOTA bottle holds the potion for the Sota to drink. The liquid is brown because of the ink and dust of the Mikdash floor that is mixed in.

The animals and golden spoon with Ketoret that are around the opened gift box are part of the gifts of the N'si'im .

TTRIDDLES...

are Torah Tidbits-style riddles on Parshat HaShavua (sometimes on the calendar). They are found in the hard-copy of TT scattered throughout, usually at the bottom of different columns. In the electronic versions of TT, they are found all together at the end of the ParshaPix-TTriddles section. The best solution set submitted each week (there isn't always a best) wins a double prize a CD from Noam Productions and/or a gift (game, puzzle, book, etc.) from Big Deal

Last issue's (Bamidbar) TTriddles:

Note: ORDER of TTriddles has been changed

[1] And that would have made all 7 days this week, had Rosh Chodesh not been on Sunday

This TTriddle was altered to correct the mess-up with the haftara last week. Of course, had the correct haftara been there in the first place, this TTriddle would not have been asked.

Six days a week, boys from 13 years and up and men wear T'filin. Many (most) who say the different passages and p'sukim in addition to the brachot (or bracha), when they make the three winds of the strap (R'TZU'A) of the SHEL YAD around the middle finger, recite the p'sukim from HOSHE'A (2:21,22).

Though T'filin are not worn on Shabbat, those p'sukim conclude the REGULAR haftara of Bamidbar, which was preempted by MACHAR CHODESH. Hence the out-of-place and convolutedly worded TTriddle.

[2] From those mentioned in the sedra, who's in the Wilderness Rock Band?

Here's a "normal" TTriddle for Bamidbar. Among the names of the tribal leaders (and their fathers) we find Reuven's leader Elitzur, the father of Shimon's leader, Tzurishadai, and the father of Menashe's leader, P'datzur. With TZUR in each of these three names, and with TZUR meaning ROCK, perhaps these three formed the Wilderness Rock Band in the Midbar.

[3] 10 times this week all over; once (sort of) in Chutz LaAretz next Shabbat; 4 times the following Shabbat here, 4 times the following Shabbat there. (prize)

The two-word phrase KOL B'CHOR, every firstborn, appears in Parshat Bamidbar 10 times. That's a very noticeable phrase in Bamidbar. Nowhere else do we find anywhere near that many occurrences. So this week, referring to Shabbat Parshat Bamidbar, we all read KOL B'CHOR ten times. Next Shabbat (referring to this coming Shabbat, our - in Israel - Parshat Naso, and the second day of Shavuot in Chutz LaAretz), the phrase KOL HAB'CHOR (which is at least sort of like KOL B'CHOR) is read in Chutz LaAretz as part of the Torah reading for the second day of Shavuot. In Israel, we read Naso, which does not have the phrase. But, the following Shabbat, B'haalotcha, the phrase occurs four times. Those will be read in Israel, but not in Chutz LaAretz, where Naso will be read. And the week after that, when we are reading Sh'lach, without any KOL B'CHORS, people in Chutz LaAretz will have the four times in their B'haalotcha. Get it?

[4] The MAZAL (Zodiac sign) TTriddle

The Word of the Month box is almost as old as Torah Tidbits (going on 14 years). The monthly inclusion of a graphic representing the Mazal of the month in the upper right corner of the box began with TT 531, Elul 5762. Until a little over a year ago, the graphic had been either the official Zodiac sign for the Mazal or some straightforward graphic of the sign. For more than a year, the graphic has been some play on the sign. Shavuot's mazal is T'OMIM, the Twins, Gemini. Last year, for the month of Sivan (we change the graphic with Shabbat M'vorchim), we had a picture of the baseball cap of the Minnesota Twins team. This year, we're going with the mathematical expression $6K \pm 1$ (6 times K plus and minus 1). This is the form that TWIN PRIMES (or PRIME TWINS) take. A prime number, if you remember (or even if you don't) is a whole number that can only be divided (without remainder) by 1 and itself. 23 is a prime because no number other than 1 and 23 can evenly divide 23. 39 is not prime, because in addition to 1 and 39, 3 and 13 will also divide 39 evenly. TWIN PRIMES are two consecutive odd numbers, both of which are prime. (Aside from 2 itself, no even number can be prime.) 5 and 7 are TWIN PRIMES. So are 11 and 13. 17 and 19. Besides 3 and 5, which are technically TWIN PRIMES, the number between all TWIN PRIMES is divisible by 6. [Pick an even number. Any even number. If it is not a multiple of 3 (i.e. divisible by 3), then either the number right before it or the one right after it will be a multiple of 3. So, only an even number that also is divisible by 3 (meaning a number divisible by 6) can possibly have a prime number before it and after it. It won't always be surrounded by PRIME TWINS, but it might be. Therefore, the formula for prime TWINS is $6K \pm 1$, where K is a whole

number. Remember, not every $6K \pm 1$ will be twin primes, but every pair of prime TWINS will be $6K \pm 1$. The three pairs of TWINS mentioned earlier (not counting 3,5) correspond to $K=1,2,3$. If $K=4$, $6K \pm 1$ are 23 and 25, not twin primes. But for $K=5$, we have 29 and 31, twins. Next potential twins are not - 35 and 37. Next, 41,43 are. 49,51 are not. 53,55 are not. 59 and 61 are. Etc. Sorry (not really), the math teacher in me got carried away.

NachKwestion of the Week

The sun in Tanach:

For whom did the sun stop?

For whom did it regress?

Who got sunstroke?

Who got suntanned?

Yehoshua (Book of Yehoshua 10:13)

The sun regressed 10° in Yeshayahu 38:8 as a sign that Chizkiyahu HaMelech's life would be extended for an additional 15 years.

Yona got sunstroke when the KIKAYON that was shading him from the sun shriveled and died.

The subject of Shir HaShirim was suntanned. Actually, the word which is used in modern Hebrew for suntan, probably is better rendered in the context of Shir HaShirim as sunburned.

Concerning the previous NachKwestion:

HC writes that there is really another pasuk that ties for second most common pasuk in T'hilim. HODU LASHEM KI TOV KI L'OLAM CHASDO. It appears three times with HODU spelled HEI-VAV-DALET-VAV and once with HODU spelled HEI-DALET-VAV, the HEI being voweled by a CHOLAM CHASEIR. In addition, there is another pasuk that can be added to the list, but not quite: HALELUKA HODU LASHEM KI TOV KI L'OLAM CHASDO. If we count that one, which we won't, it would push HODU into undisputed second place. We'll leave it as a tie for second.

After the above paragraph was typed, we got an email from JS saying exactly the same thing. BARUCH SHEKIVANNU. Prizes due EB, HC, and JS.

This week's TTriddles:

[1] 23 times in some form or other within itself

[2] Wagon, Shabbat song, Torah enjoyment

[3] animals best suited to pull wagons

[4] What Biblical personality would call Shavuot with a slightly different name?

[5] Diminutives confuse tribes. Which?

[6] Major Seth Adams might have had a job with Gershon or Merari but not with Kehat

Not a TTR: Bonds may have passed Ruth, but (as of this writing) he still lags behind Torah Tidbits

NachKwestion of the Week

List names of people in Tanach whose fathers' names are the names of animals (or close to it).

Shavuot

SHAVUOT falls on the same day of the week as the second day of Pesach. Calendar "rule" for Shavuot (meaning the one day of Shavuot in Israel and the first day in Chu"l) is LO G'HaZ (not on Tuesday, Thursday, or Shabbat).

GREENERY There is a long-standing custom to decorate the shul and one's home with greenery - grasses and branches (flowers are used, but original custom seems to be branches) on Shavuot. Several reasons are given for this custom.

Immediately prior to and during Matan Torah, people and their animals were strictly forbidden to go up Har Sinai, or even to touch it. Our sources tell us that Har Sinai became miraculously adorned with vegetation, the implication being that this was in honor of its function as the venue for Matan Torah. This is why animals had to be specifically banned.

Decorating with tree branches is a reminder that the world is judged by G-d on Shavuot concerning the fruit of the tree. It is appropriate to pray on Shavuot for bountiful yields of fruit.

Moshe Rabeinu was born on 7 Adar and hidden for three months. He was placed in a waterproof basket, floated on the Nile, hidden among the reeds on the day that was to become Shavuot, 80 years later.

Bikurim baskets were adorned and decorated in various ways. Shavuot is Yom HaBikurim.

DAIRY FOODS Shavuot is a Yom Tov. On Yom Tov we have the mitzva of Simcha. One of the traditional forms of Simchat Yom Tov is festive meals with meat and wine.

(Note for veggies and others who prefer not eating meat: Meat as Simcha is subjective - if you don't like meat, then you need not have it on Yom Tov; if you enjoy eating meat dishes, THEN it is proper to honor and enjoy Yom Tov in that way. This is when we have no Beit HaMikdash. In the time of the Beit HaMikdash, Simchais associated with the korban called Shalmei Simcha.)

Additionally, we all know of the custom of eating dairy foods on Shavuot. Some people will have a dairy meal on Yom Tov night and a meat meal for lunch. This has a certain logic, since the nighttime is "more Shavuot-specific and the day is more "generically Yom Tov". Other families will have meat at night and dairy during the day. Still others will make Kiddush and HaMotzi, have some dairy dish (blintzes, perhaps), then bench. Following a short break and a change in table covering, they will wash again, this time for a meat meal.

Each according to his/her custom.

There are many "reasons" for the custom of dairy dishes on Shavuot. Keep in mind that some of the reasons might have produced the custom, while others might be merely additional symbolisms after the fact. Furthermore, some reasons explain why we eat dairy, while others make sense only in the context of having BOTH dairy and meat dishes.

The pasuk in Shir HaShirim (4:11) alludes to Torah as "honey and milk under your tongue". Some mix honey and milk - yogurt or sour cream do well - to match the pasuk.

To commemorate the first Shavuot celebrated in the Midbar when our ancestors ate only dairy dishes. This is

because eating kosher meat after receiving the Torah requires much preparation... (Like a Baal T'shuva eating a lot of cottage cheese until he gets new pots and dishes and kashers his kitchen.)

Mount Sinai is called Har Gavnunim (T'hilim 68:16) and the word GAVNU- NIM is similar to G'VINA (cheese).

The numeric value of the word CHALAV (milk) is 40, alluding to the forty days and nights Moshe spent on Har Sinai receiving the Torah.

Having both dairy and meat dishes as mentioned above requires strict attention to the laws of separation of milk and meat. These laws, of course, are based on the Torah's prohibition of "meat in milk" as presented by the phrase "Do not cook a goat in its mother's milk". This phrase (twice) follows, in the same pasuk, the command to bring Bikurim to the Beit HaMikdash. Shavuot, as the beginning of Bikurim-bringing season, is Yom HaBikurim. Therefore, we eat both dairy and meat dishes, with proper attention to the strictures of halacha, specifically on Shavuot.

Halachically (especially when handling food with our hands), it is improper to use the same loaf of bread for both meat and dairy meals because of the food residue that might adhere to the bread. Therefore, a dairy meal and a meat meal will require two loaves of bread, reminiscent of the Two Loaves offering of Shavuot. (In other words, this reason is primarily associated with the Two Loaves offering, the dairy aspect is secondary.)

Some suggest that having a dairy dish and a meat dish is like the "two cooked foods" of the Pesach Seder. Shavuot is not only its own Holiday; it is also the culmination of Pesach - hence, "two foods" on Shavuot as well as Pesach.

According to tradition, Moshe Rabeinu was born on the seventh of Adar and was successfully hidden by his parents for three months. It was on the future Shavuot that baby Moshe was placed in the basket on the river and found by the daughter of Par'o. We are taught that Moshe refused to nurse from an Egyptian wet nurse. Hence, Miriam's suggestion that Yocheved, Moshe's mother, be hired to nurse him. He, from whose mouth all of Israel learned Torah, could not drink "mother's milk" from a non-Jew. We remember this with dairy dishes on the day of Matan Torah.

It might also be suggested that the day of the receiving of the Torah is like the birth of the Nation of Israel, and we have milk to symbolize the spiritual infancy of the People of Israel.

The Torah commands us to bring in the Beit HaMikdash a Mincha Chadasha LaShem B'Shavuoteichem. The initial letters of this phrase spell the word MICHALAV - "from milk". This, too, is considered one of the origins of the custom.

How about this: Sources tell us that Bnei Yisrael refused to drink milk or eat dairy at all, fearing that milk was EIVER MIN HACHAI, limb from a living animal (forbidden to all people). It was receiving the Torah and its explanations that clarified the issue and taught them that milk was permitted. We celebrate this discovery of our ancestors with dairy dishes on Shavuot.

Be it cheese blintzes, 1/2% cottage, yogurt with honey, cheesecake, or lasagna — dairy dishes on Shavuot provide us with much food for thought.

Tikun Leil Shavuot - Learning Torah all night is a

praiseworthy practice, IF it will not ruin your davening in the morning or spoil your Yom Tov. It isn't for everyone. Used well, it is a special way of preparing to receive the Torah anew.

Megilat Ruth - Many communities read Megilat Ruth on Shavuot morning before Torah reading (outside of Israel it is read on the second day). Some communities read it in the afternoon. [A recent trend in Vatikin (pre-sunrise) minyanim is to read it before davening.] When read from a kosher megila (Minhag Yerushalayim), the reading is preceded by the brachot ...AL MIKRA MEGILA and SHE'HE'CHEYANU. Read from a book, no brachot are recited.

Several varied reasons combine to make Ruth the perfect reading for Shavuot.

The text itself tells us that its story takes place at the time of the "cutting of the wheat". Shavuot is CHAG HAKATZIR.

One of the major purposes of the Book of Ruth is to show us the lineage of David HaMelech and the Davidic line. Tradition tells us that David HaMelech died (and was born?) on Shavuot.

Perhaps most significantly, the story of Ruth is the inspiring story of Kabbalat HaTorah on an individual level, just as Shavuot is the commemoration of Kabbalat HaTorah on a national level. All of Israel were like converts at Sinai.

Ruth is the story of CHESED, acts of kindness. The Torah begins and ends with G-d's acts of kindness - clothing Adam and Chava on the one side and burying Moshe on the other.

Akdamut Milin - On Shavuot morning, after the Kohen is called to the Torah, but before his bracha and before the reading begins, it is the Ashkenazic custom to responsively recite AKDAMUT, a 90-line poem praising G-d, His Torah and His People. Written by Rabbi Meir of Worms (one of Rashi's teachers), it conveys the spirit of love of G-d and Judaism even in adverse conditions. Rabbi Meir's son was killed by Crusaders and he himself died soon after a "forced debate" with the Christian clergy of his town. The poem celebrates Torah. Each line of Akdamut ends with the syllable TA, spelled TAV-ALEF, last and first letters of the Alef-Bet. Some see this as a reminder of the nature of the Torah itself - as soon as we complete reading or learning the Torah, we immediately begin it again.

S'faradim do not read Akdamut, but they have the custom of reading a poem called the KETUBA, composed by Rabbi Yosef Najara, celebrating the marriage, so to speak, of G-d and Bnei Yisrael, or the Torah and Bnei Yisrael. They read the KETUBA when the Ark is opened, before the Torahs are taken out.

SHIR SHEL YOM - According to Minhag Yerushalayim, based on the opinions of the Vilna Gaon, on Yom Tov, a different Psalm replaced the "regular" Psalm of the Day in the Beit HaMikdash. On Shavuot, it is T'hilim 19. On Shavuot morning (this year), some will say only Friday's chapter. Some will say only Psalm 19, as per Minhag Yerushalayim. Some will say both. Whichever... just remember: Shavuot is the yearzeit of the composer of T'hilim, David HaMelech.

Torah Reading - From the first of two Torahs on Shavuot morning, we read from Parshat Yitro, the account of Ma'amad Har Sinai and Matan Torah, from

Sh'mot 19 & 20, a total of 48 p'sukim. The reading is divided among 5 Aliyot, as on all Yom Tov days (that don't fall on Shabbat - which Shavuot never does).

The reading begins with the famous pasuk: "In the third month since the Exodus, on THIS day, they (Bnei Yisrael) came to Midbar Sinai." Rashi's two comments on "THIS day" are:

[1] it was Rosh Chodesh Sivan that the People arrived at Sinai, and

[2] the Torah uses the term THIS rather than THAT to teach us that Matan Torah should not be thought of as a "once upon a time, a long time ago" experience, but rather "words of Torah should be fresh in our eyes as if we received it today."

This is such an important concept that it bears constant repeating and constant attention and effort to internalize. Especially when there are so many detractors who proclaim the Torah and its Mitzvot as antiquated, out-dated, and irrelevant, we must be enthusiastic proponents of the opposite view. EITZ CHAYIM HI... the Torah is the living, fresh, vibrant, complete source of the way of life that allows us to live in this world TODAY and to invest everything we do and are with spirituality and value.

The second pasuk is no less famous. VAYICHAN SHAM YISRAEL... Israel, as one being with one heart and a singular purpose, camped opposite the mountain. The unparalleled experience of Jewish Unity that gave standing at the foot of Mt. Sinai its everlasting significance, becomes one of our special goals of Jewish Life.

Aseret HaDibrot is read in the "upper notes", TAAMEI ELYON, even according to Minhag Yerushalayim (which uses TAAMEI HATACHTON for Parshat Yitro and Va'etchanan). TAAMEI ELYON presents the text as separate commandments, rather than as p'sukim, which is the way we hear it with TAAMEI TACHTON. And with greater fanfare and flair.

Maftir (in the second Torah) is the Musaf of Shavuot from Parshat Pinchas (Bamidbar 28:26-31).

Haftara is Yechezkel's first chapter and his most vivid and esoteric vision. The level and type of prophecy attained by the Jews at Sinai has been compared to the visions of Yechezkel.

NAMES - In addition to the various names and nicknames of Shavuot, it is significant that in the main presentation of the cycle of holy days of the year, Vayikra 23, Shavuot has no name of its own, but is presented as the culmination of Pesach.

Word play on the name: SHAVUOT. With a KAMATZ under the SHIN, pronounced SHAVUOT, the name means WEEKS, as in counting seven weeks from Pesach. With a SH'VA under the SHIN, pronounced SH'VUOT, the name means OATHS, as in the mutual oaths of commitment between G-d and Israel - His promise that we become a Kingdom of Kohanim and a Holy Nation (and many other promises.), our promise to do and understand all that He commands us.

SIMCHA - Remember: Shavu'ot is many things: Dairy foods, Decorations, Learning all night, Megilat Ruth, Akdamut, Aseret HaDibrot - But it is something else too. It is Yom Tov. And that comes with an important Torah commandment: SIMCHA. A mitzva often neglected, Try to see to it that appropriate Simcha is on your agenda.