

TEFILLAH TIPS

TEFILLAT SHACHARIT—SHABBAT

Shavuot - **ZACHOR**

The Hebrew word *Zachor* – *Remember* is so often associated with our remembering the atrocities of the Holocaust and the murder of six million Jews. Yet for over two thousand years Jews have been chanting *Zachor* six times every morning after prayers. The early *Kabbalists* prescribed that we pronounce Six Remembrances every day: 1) To Remember our Exodus from Egypt, 2) To Remember our Receiving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai, 3) To remember our encounter with the evil nation of Amalek, 4) To remember the sin of the Golden Calf, 5) To remember what happened to Miriam, the sister of Moshe, and 6) To remember the holy Shabbat. In honor of the holiday of Shavuot I would like to focus this article on Remembrance #2 – **The Receiving of the Torah at Sinai.**

Almost a decade ago a beloved member of Congregation Sons of Israel who has since passed on to the World to Come, Mr. Paul Rosenberg z"l, a respected attorney, shared with me that he was petitioning a judge to reschedule a court case which was scheduled on the holiday of *Shavuot*. Despite Paul explaining to the Jewish judge that it was a Biblically based holiday and him showing it on a Platt Memorial calendar the judge initially would not budge. The judge remarked, "I know of the High Holidays *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur* and even *Sukkoth*; I also recognize Passover, but I know of no such holiday as *Shavuot* and I will not reschedule the court case". This is precisely why the Torah Deut (25:17-19) states emphatically **ZACHOR** – *Remember, lest you forget what you saw with your own eyes and penetrated your hearts. And make this known to your children and grandchildren, the day you stood at Sinai.*

The *Talmud Pesachim* 68b states that the great Rabbi Joseph exclaimed on the holiday of *Shavuot*, "Were it not for this day, I would be just another Joseph in the marketplace". Rabbi Joseph was extolling the eternity of *Torah* from Sinai. There have been thousands of Johns, Jacobs and Josephs throughout the millennia that played their individual significant roles in world history and then exited the world stage forever. Rabbi Joseph and all those that link themselves unto the Divine *Torah* of Sinai are attached to the ultimate truth of G-d and therefore stand for, live for and sometimes die for the Divine truth of Torah that always was, is and will be. The Torah and its truths are eternal.

It has been our national experience over the generations that those Jews that proudly echo the words and sentiments of Rabbi Joseph and the verses in Deuteronomy are as a rule able to pass on the family treasures of *Torah*, *Mitzvoth* as well as Jewish customs and culture to their children and grandchildren after them. Unfortunately those that do not subscribe to the teachings of Rabbi Joseph present a less secure and compelling case for Judaism that resonates less and less as time marches on *Ledor Vador*. I also believe with a firm faith that if the State of Israel would nationally present our rights to the land based on Torah from Sinai (like Ben Gurion did) our negotiations with the Palestinians would be eminently more successful.

I am happy to report that in the end the judge did reschedule the court case in deference to the holiday of *Shavuot*. On Shavuot there is a custom to stay up all through the night to revel and study our holy Torah in celebration of our having received it 3323 years ago that night. I invite all of our readers to attend Torah study sessions on Shavuot night at any of the myriad of synagogues hosting all night learning programs to see and experience firsthand the insight of Rabbi Joseph.

Unfortunately over the millennia there are plenty of Jewish tragedies to commemorate, but thank G-d there are also positively world changing, ground breaking moments of truth and joy that have helped create and fortify who we are today and what will be tomorrow.

Zachor!

Shabbat Shalom and Chag Somayach,
Rabbi Ephraim Epstein