

The Haftarah of the first day of Shavuot is taken from the first chapter of Ezekiel. In the Haftarah, the prophet Ezekiel tells us how he was consecrated as a prophet. In a prophetic vision he saw a Divine revelation.

Ezekiel describes the Heavenly Chariot and the visions which he saw when the heavens opened to him. It was then that G-d made him a prophet and ordered him to carry the message of G-d to the people. Whether the people listened to him or not, even if they placed obstacles in his way, the prophet was to carry out his mission without fear.

When the spirit of the prophecy came upon Ezekiel, he was standing by the river Chebar, a tributary of the Euphrates in Babylon. It was in the fifth year of the Babylonian Exile.

Ezekiel was born in Jerusalem to a priestly family. His father's name was Buzi. When Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, carried off King Jehoiachin into exile in Babylon, Ezekiel was among them.

The first exiles in Babylon settled down to a new life in captivity. Ezekiel kept the spirit of Judaism alive among them. But the practices of idolatry that had proved Judah's undoing were deeply rooted among the exiles. The widespread idol worship of their conquerors was about to engulf them. Some of the exiles thought that G-d had sold them out to the Babylonians and that there was no longer any sense in keeping up the Torah.

Ezekiel had a difficult task in convincing his fellow exiles that the captivity was but temporary punishment for their disloyalty to G-d. He warned them that if they abandoned their faith, they would be committing national suicide. He sternly rebuked them and constantly reminded them that their fellow Jews in Judah would share their fate for the same reason that had brought disaster upon them. Many scoffed at him.

Then one day Ezekiel received the sad prophecy he dreaded so. It was on the tenth day of the month of Tevet, in the ninth year of the Babylonian Exile. Many miles away, in the land of Judah, Nevuzaradan, the general of the Babylonian armies, began his siege of the Holy City. At that very moment Ezekiel was informed of the calamity in a prophetic vision, and was ordered to record the date and the event, and to bring the sad news to his fellow exiles. The sad news was confirmed, and the Jews in Babylon realized that Ezekiel the priest was truly a prophet of G-d.

The sad news of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Holy Temple reached the exiles in Babylon, and before long scores of thousands of Jews joined their brethren in the Babylonian exile.

When everything seemed lost, Ezekiel saved the day. He was no longer the stern preacher, but a consoling father full of courage and hope. He turned his harsh words against the cruel neighbors of Judah who rejoiced and gloated over Judah's downfall. He foretold their doom but assured his brethren that the Jewish people would survive all their enemies.

Ezekiel's strongest prophecy at this time was undoubtedly his prophecy in the Valley of the Dry Bones. The prophet found himself in a valley where dry bones were strewn all about. He was to prophecy that the dry bones would be resurrected. Soon an amazing sight evolved before his eyes. A storm broke out and caused the bones to join limb to limb until they became skeletons.

Presently the skeletons were clothed with flesh and skin. The dead bodies were revived by the spirit of G-d, and a mighty host rose on its feet before the prophet's eyes.

In this way the prophet told his fellow exiles that the Jewish people were to be revived to new life and glory.

Ezekiel prophesied that the breach between the Kingdom of Judah and that of Ephraim (the Ten Tribes) would be healed. There would be one united nation, restored to its land. The Holy Temple would be rebuilt, and Israel would enjoy unity with G-d as never before.

The prophet described in detail the new Jerusalem, the new Temple and the new priesthood which would eventually flourish under the reign of the House of David.

But what were Jews to do in the meantime?

Ezekiel was a great teacher. He taught that the revival of the whole nation could come only through the revival of each individual. Every Jew individually was responsible for his life and conduct and had at the same time a responsibility towards the entire nation. The

secret of Redemption lay in absolute loyalty to G-d and His Torah. G-d is always ready to forgive the sinner who returns to Him in sincere repentance.

"I delight not in the death of the wicked, says the L-rd, but that he return from his evil way and live," Ezekiel taught again and again.

Under Ezekiel's influence, the exiles built synagogues and houses of Torah study in Babylon, and the spirit of Judaism was kept alive. When Ezekiel died, he was sadly mourned by all Jews, but his prophecies remained to inspire them forever.

*Excerpted from The Complete Story of Shavuot, Kehot Publication Society*

THOUGHTS  
THAT COUNT  
on the weekly Torah portion

Shavuot

G-d gave His three-part Torah (the Five Books of Moses, the Prophets and the Writings) to a three-part nation (the Jewish people, who are divided into Priests, Levites and Israelites) in the third month (Sivan, the third month of the year when counting from Nisan, the "first month" according to the Bible). (*Our Sages*)

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev used to say: Shavuot is the only Biblical festival in connection with which the Torah does not command that a "sin offering" be brought. For on Shavuot, the day on which the Torah was received, every Jew is in the category of a convert, who is considered to be "a young child who is just born." Just as a newborn infant is without sin, so too is the Jewish people without sin on Shavuot.

And Israel camped opposite the mountain [Mount Sinai]

The word the Torah uses for "camped" is in the singular tense, for the Jewish people stood at Mount Sinai "like one man, with one heart," with perfect unity and love for one another. This feeling of unity constituted the most appropriate preparation for receiving the Torah, for when Jews are united, they merit G-d's blessing. (*Likutei Sichot, Vol. 2*)

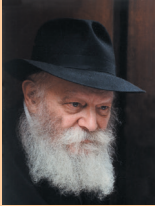
The Baal Shem Tov taught that we must love every Jew, the simplest person as well as the greatest Torah scholar. Jews are G-d's "tefilin," as it were, the Baal Shem Tov explained. Scholarly Jews, those with great intellectual abilities, are the tefilin that are worn on the head. Simple Jews, those who perform G-d's mitzvot with joy and gladness, are the tefilin that are worn on the arm. Just as when putting on tefilin the hand precedes the head, so too must we demonstrate love for the simple Jews first. (*Maayan Chai*)



8:00 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area  
5 Sivan//May 28 Eve of Shavuot  
6 Sivan//May 29 Shavuot-Shabbat  
Light candles 8:01 PM  
7 Sivan//May 30 Shavuot-Shabbat  
Shavuot and Shabbat end at 9:09

l'Chaim l'Chaim l'Chaim l'Chaim l'Chaim l'Chaim l'Chaim l'Chaim l'Chaim l'Chaim l'Chaim l'Chaim l'Chaim l'Chaim l'Chaim  
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נוסד תוך ימי השלושים  
Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson  
"Unveil my eyes, that I may perceive the wonders of Your Torah." (Psalm 119:18)



LIVING WITH THE  
REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe  
on the Torah portion

This year, the holiday of Shavuot takes place in the week between the two Torah portions of *Bamidbar* and *Nasso*. One of the subjects found in both of these portions is the Sanctuary in the desert and the distribution of the duties connected with it, when the Sanctuary was carried from place to place.

This emphasizes the fact that even when Jews find themselves in a desert, they have the ability to erect a Sanctuary for G-d to dwell among them, and in every one of them.

Just as there is a desert in a physical sense, a place of desolation, extreme climatic conditions, poisonous snakes, etc., so is there a "desert" in a spiritual sense, created by desolate ideas and values; and such a spiritual desert can be found also in a flourishing garden.

Our Torah teaches us that when Jews find themselves in such a spiritual desert, it is possible, necessary and imperative to erect a Sanctuary, carry it, and go forward, step by step, until eventually the environment and situation change from a spiritual desert – into the blessed and holy land, with the complete redemption.

In the spiritual desert in which some of us find ourselves, where a void prevails in matters of Judaism, we must all help each other to make this environment into a sanctuary, a fitting place for G-d.

The portion *Bamidbar* tells us of the Jewish census: First in the desert of Sinai, after receiving the Torah, at the beginning of their wanderings through the desert.

The soul descends into this world to make an abode for G-d in this material and earthly world. When a Jew looks around and sees that the world around him is a spiritual "desert" full of materialism and sometimes even crassness, the thought may occur: How is it possible to carry out this mission? So the Torah tells us that there is no cause for apprehension, for this is the way Jews began their mission when they became a nation and received the Torah at Mount Sinai. With the strength derived from the Torah, they made it through the vast and terrible desert - a bleak wilderness in every respect, where in the natural order of things there is no bread and water, but only difficulties and trials. Moreover, wherever they made their way through the desert, they transformed the desert into a blooming garden - through Miriam's well that caused the desert all around to bring forth all sorts of vegetation and fruit.

This is also one of the significant teachings of the above-mentioned countings, where each was counted individually, regardless of his station and standing in life, and each was counted as no more than one and no less than one, to underscore that everyone has his mission as a "soldier" in G-d's army. And, although in an army there are various ranks, from an ordinary soldier to the highest in command, each one individually and all together carry out the Divine mission to make for G-d an "abode" in this world, even in a desert. Indeed, precisely those who were counted in the second census – those who were brought up in the desert - merited to enter the Land of Israel.

*Adapted from a letter of the Rebbe*

One Heart

Who ever heard of a person with two hearts? In the annals of medical history, was such a case ever reported?

When describing a pivotal part of the Jewish people's preparations for the giving of the Torah (celebrated on the festival of Shavuot, from the evening of Thursday, May 28 through Saturday night, May 30 this year), the Torah states: "And Israel encamped in front of the mountain." The word "encamped" is written in the singular form in Hebrew. This is because, Jewish teachings explain, they encamped "as one person with one heart."

But let's be realistic. How should they have encamped, as one person with two hearts?

The verse and its commentary teach us that a prerequisite for the singular event of the giving of the Torah was that the Jewish people unite into one singular entity.

But why was the analogy of the heart used rather than the mind?

Is it so impossible to imagine that once, in the entire history of the Jewish people, we were "single-minded" or at least "like-minded"?

Although Jews are generally "of two minds" (or three or four.) surely at the time of the giving of the Torah we were united body and soul, heart and mind.

Perhaps, in typical Jewish style, this question can best be answered with another question. Do you know any physicians who smoke? Do you, perhaps, know any oncologists who smoke? Certainly these doctors are aware of the studies and may even have treated people who, G-d forbid,

suffer from the ravages of smoking. And yet, what their minds know does not (necessarily) influence their behavior. To impact on one's lifestyle, it is not enough to know something; a person has to feel it, as well.

So, too, with the receiving of the Torah. Of course, Torah study and mitzvot observance should not be approached in a "mindless" manner. However, when our ancestors accepted the Torah from G-d, they did so with the words: "We will do and we will listen (i.e., we will begin by doing the mitzvot and then study and learn why we are doing them).

On an intellectual level, they had different opinions or approaches. And that's okay. The Talmud states unequivocally "No two opinions are the same." Even when Moshiach comes there will be different opinions and approaches, because that's the way it's meant to be! But on an emotional level, they were totally one. They had feelings for one another and they had feelings for the Torah.

As we relive the giving of the Torah this year, we should grow in ways that will foster positive feelings toward Torah and mitzvot, and toward other Jews. Our Jewish living should be filled with joy and enthusiasm that encompasses those around us, especially the young people with whom we interface. We should bring ourselves and our children to the synagogue on Shavuot to hear the Ten Commandments read and to receive the Torah once again, like one person with one heart.

May we imminently experience the true singularness of the Jewish people in the Messianic Era.



# SLICE OF LIFE

Any place, Any topic, Any time



Rabbi Yehuda Dukes, JNet director

JNet – Jewish Learning Network, provides people the opportunity to take the time to study any area of Torah on any level in any language with a study partner. Below are questions and answers posed to JNet participants. Clearly, whatever the topic, and whether you are a “student” or a “teacher,” JNet is a transformational experience.

Michael Rubin, Age: 33

Location: Panama City, Panama

Occupation: Operations & Strategy for a Tech Company

Who I study with: Shlomo Backman, a computer programmer from Spring Valley, New York.

What we’re currently studying: Masechet Brachos

The impact JNet had on my life: Even though I have learned so much, the biggest impact is knowing first hand how Rabbi Backman takes time from his busy day, and for so long, to teach someone he never even heard of several thousands of miles away. It shows me the power of connection between Jews and sets the bar for what I should be aiming to do.

An interesting experience I’ve had through JNet: Last time I traveled to Brooklyn I decided to drive up to Springfield, New York to meet Rabbi Backman. During those weeks I was go-

ing through very difficult times that I didn’t even share with the rabbi. As soon as we sat for a cup of tea he told me something that made me change my outlook on what was going on and what to do. Rabbi Backman told me his secret for a happy life: We say Saturday night after Shabbat: “May you be at peace, and your household at peace, and all that is yours at peace.” First one needs to be at peace with himself, then he needs to be at peace with his home (wife and kids)... only after those two are taken care of, then everything else (all that is yours) will be in peace. Amazing effect it had and has on me.

Sophia Katz, Age: 23

Location: Brooklyn, New York

Occupation: Student in University, BA in Psychology

Who I study with: Sarah Hollander from Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and Tovah Justic from Lawrence, New York

What we’re currently studying: Tanya and The Book of Our Heritage

The impact JNet had in my life: Learning with my chavrusas (study partners) and delving into powerful concepts has been extremely inspiring to me. Sharing in the experience of understanding new ideas and resonating with G-d’s Torah... that’s a meaningful encounter I believe we’ll carry through life, and what gives us the power and strength to grow in each of our journeys.

An interesting experience I’ve had through JNet: Both of my chavrusas really challenge our learning sessions to both interact with the text at hand, but also to take our learning off the page, and provide a human lens for understanding Torah concepts. Though it is sometimes challenging to answer questions relating to human experience, I really enjoy the process of both experiencing and watching my partners resonate with the idea at hand when explained in personal terms. Working to connect two different minds is no easy feat, but it’s extremely gratifying.

Steven Stein, Age: 55

Location: Chandler, AZ

Occupation: Therapist

How I heard about JNet: I knew about it for

some time. Recently when I expressed an interest in learning the sources of the Mitzvos my rebbetzin Mrs. Deitsch suggested I sign up.

Who I learn with: Levi Jacobson. A corporate insurance salesman from Brooklyn, New York.

What we’re currently studying: Tanya in depth.

The impact JNet had in my life: My previous perception of G-d was a very negative one. Through learning Tanya I got a whole new perspective. I also love the concept that the Tanya teaches that our thought, speech and actions are like garments or clothing that can be changed at will. This has helped me in my practice as a therapist in helping people with learned helplessness.

An interesting experience I’ve had through JNet: Levi is very open and flexible. He gives me the feeling like I can ask any question and is patient and non-judgemental. I love being able to bounce ideas and thoughts off him and I always feel inspired after a call with him.

Chaim Polter, Age: 24

Location: Oak Park, MI

Occupation: Teacher

Who I learn with: Binyamin Grega. A salesman from Orlando, FL.

What we’re currently studying: Binyamin wanted to learn how to study Talmud and we chose the Tractate Makos.

The impact JNet had in my life: First of all, when I explain something it really helps me understand the material so much better. Also the idea that someone at a later age in life is taking on a whole new world of learning inspires me to also want to learn and do more. Additionally, since I really enjoy teaching, having such an eager study partner makes it a great experience.

An interesting experience I’ve had through JNet: When we spoke for the first time we discovered that I had taught the son of his rabbi! We also had the opportunity to meet and study in person when Binyamin came to visit New York for a wedding and for a Chabad Young Professionals event.

To become a JNet Study Partner call 347-770-JNet, or email [info@jnet.org](mailto:info@jnet.org). A division of Merkos L’Inyonei Chinuch.

## The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence  
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Rosh Chodesh Sivan 5715 [1965]

It is surely unnecessary to elaborate on the close relationship between the physical and the spiritual, which even modern science has become convinced of.

Physically, at this time of the year, we find Nature again in full bloom. After a period of hibernation, it springs back to life with renewed vigor and vitality, faithfully reproducing the same elements which characterized the same period a year ago, and two years ago, and all the way back to the first seasons of the Nature cycle.

In our religious and spiritual life, also, we have the seasons and festivals which recur year after year, and reproduce the same spiritual elements which first gave rise to them. Thus, at this time of the year, with the days of Sefirah connecting the festival of Passover (physical freedom) with its culmination in Shavuot (spiritual freedom), we can – if we are sufficiently prepared and attuned to it, relive the experiences of our ancestors who actually witnessed the Revelation and accepted the Torah at Sinai. What a long way our ancestors covered in the course of but 50 days; from the abominations of Egyptian “culture,” in which moral depravity and polytheism reigned supreme (as recent archeological discoveries have amply brought to light) to pure monotheism at Mount Sinai, where the Jew receives the Torah with the call of Na’aseh v’nishma. Na’aseh first, i.e. complete surrender of man to G-d.

Through the medium of the Torah, G-d “descends” on Mount Sinai and the Jew ascends to G-d. The soul is released from all its fetters tying it down to earthly things, and on the wings of fear of G-d and love of G-d unites with the Creator in complete communion. It is then that it can fully appreciate the inner meaning of “I am G-d thy G-d, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage,” and the rest of the Ten Commandments, till “Thou shalt not covet,” i.e. not only refrain from taking what is not yours, but not even desire it.

This great rise from the abyss of Egypt to the

sublime heights of Sinai was attained by pure and simple faith in G-d, from the day when parents and children, women and infants, several million souls in all, set out on the trek through the desert, not dismayed by the irrationality of it, but simply obeying the Divine call with absolute trust. This won special Divine favor in the words of the Prophet: “I remember unto thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thy betrothal, thy going after Me into the wilderness.” It is this faith that carried the Jews through the ages, an insignificant physical minority in the midst of a hostile world, a spot of light threatened by an overwhelming darkness. It is this absolute faith in G-d that we need nowadays more than ever before.

It is said, the whole sun is reflected in a drop of water. And so the whole of our nation is reflected in each individual, and what is true of the nation as a whole is true of the individual.

The core of Jewish vitality and indestructibility is in its pure faith in G-d; not in some kind of an abstract Deity, hidden somewhere in the heavenly spheres, who regards this world from a distance; but absolute faith in a very personal G-d, who is the very life and existence of everybody; Who permeates where one is, or what one does. Where there is such faith, there is no room for fear or anxiety, as the Psalmist says, “I fear no evil, for Thou art with me,” with me, indeed, at all times, not only on Shabbos or Yom Tov, or during prayer or meditation on G-d. And when one puts his trust in G-d, unconditionally and unreservedly, one realizes what it means to be really free and full of vigor, for all one’s energy is released in the most constructive way, not only in one’s own behalf, but also in behalf of the environment at large.

The road is not free from obstacles and obstructions, for in the Divine order of things we are expected to attain our goal by effort; but if we make a determined effort success is Divinely assured, and the obstacles and obstructions which at first loom large, dissolve and disappear.

I wish you to tread this road of pure faith in G-d, without being overly introspective and self-searching, as in the simple illustration of a man walking: he will walk most steadily and assuredly if he will not be conscious of his walk and not seek to consciously coordinate the hundreds of muscles operative in locomotion, or he would not be able to make his first step.

Wishing you success in all above, and hoping to hear good news from you and yours,

With the blessing of a happy Yom Tov of Receiving the Torah with inner joy,

likewise, with the Redemption. Of the Messianic Era it is said that “the one preoccupation of the entire world will be solely to know G-d.” All knowledge of G-d derives from the Torah. Moshiach’s ultimate function, therefore, will be to “teach the entire people and instruct them in the way of G-d, and all nations will come to hear him.” In order to make it possible for the world to partake in these new revelations, the Messianic era will thus be a time of peace and harmony. (Living with Moshiach, Rabbi J. I. Schochet)

## A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

This Thursday evening through Saturday night (May 28 -May 30) is the holiday of Shavuot, celebrating when G-d gave the Torah to the Jewish people on Mount Sinai.

Three people in Jewish history are particularly associated with Shavuot: Moshe, King David and the Baal Shem Tov. And these three great leaders were also intimately connected with Moshiach and the Redemption.

As the one through whom the Torah was given to the Jewish people, Moshe is intimately connected with Shavuot. The Torah, in some places, is even referred to as “The Torah of Moshe”

– Torat Moshe. Moshiach will be so like Moshe in his leadership qualities, humility and Torah scholarship that our Sages even stated, “Moshe is the first redeemer and the last redeemer.

Shavuot is the birthday and anniversary of the passing of King David. One of the functions of Moshiach is that he will restore the Davidic dynasty, for Moshiach will be a descendant of King David, a human king.

Finally, we come to the Baal Shem Tov. The Baal Shem Tov, too, passed away on Shavuot, on the second day of the holiday. In a famous letter to his brother-in-law, the Baal Shem Tov described a spiritual “journey” when he visited the chamber of Moshiach. He asked Moshiach, “Master, when will you come?”

Moshiach replied, “When your wellsprings – your teachings – will spread forth to the outside.”

The Baal Shem Tov’s teachings – Chasidut –were recorded and expounded upon by his various disciples. They are a foretaste of the new and deeper revelations of Torah that we are promised will be revealed and taught by Moshiach, himself.

This year on Shavuot, let us also reconnect with the essence of the holiday and cry out for the ultimate revelation of the Torah and G-d through Moshiach.

Shmuel Butman

## L’ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA לזכרון חיה י מושקא

The name of our publication has special meaning. It stands for the name of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson (obm), wife of the Rebbe.



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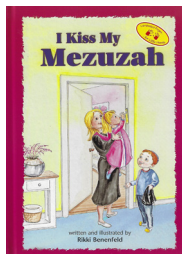
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## I Kiss My Mezuzah

In I Kiss My Mezuzah, a young brother and sister help their father take down the mezuzahs and bring them to a sofer to be checked. Do all the letters look clear and beautiful? The sofer shows them how he does his work and what is written on each mezuzah scroll. The children see a Torah scroll and a pair of tefillin, too! At home, when the mezuzahs are put back in place, what do you think the children do then? Written in simple rhyming verse, with soothing watercolor illustrations, I Kiss My Mezuzah is sure to become a favorite in every home and classroom! Like all books in Hachai’s Toddler Experience Series, I Kiss the Mezuzah has laminated page. Written and illustrated by Rikki Benenfeld, a new release from HaChai Publishing.



## WHO’S WHO

Choni HaMaagal was a scholar from the first century BCE. His name “HaMaagal” means “the circle drawer.” This name is derived from an incident that is recorded twice in the Talmud. When Israel suffered from a terrible drought, the people approached Choni to pray for rain. He drew a circle around himself and swore to G-d that he would not leave the circle until G-d provided “rain of blessing.” This prayer for rain that was answered took place on 20 Adar (this Shabbat). His tomb, a place of prayer for many, is in Chatzor HaGlilit, Galilee.

## MOSHIACH MATTERS

The Jewish people at Sinai sensed the absolute unity joining them together. In that frame of mind, they jointly desired and anticipated receiving the Torah, and that is when G-d gave it to them. It is