

THE JLE JOURNAL

Volume 1, #4
Shavuot 2002

DEPARTURE AND DESTINATION

When asked to think of a Jewish festival, most would imagine a Passover seder or remember the resonating ring of the ram's horn on Rosh Hashanah. Very rarely would the festival of Shavuot spring to mind right away. There are no obvious symbols of this holiday. It is relatively short (two days outside of Israel, one day in Is-

rael). Despite its apparent obscurity, this festival in many ways is the most fundamental and essential in

our calendar. It commemorates an event which changed the world. In what was probably the most spectacular light and sound show in history, G-D revealed himself to the ENTIRE Jewish People and entrusted us with the Torah.

our calendar. It commemorates an event which changed the world. In what was probably the most spectacular light and sound show in history, G-D revealed himself to the ENTIRE Jewish People (a claim no other religion dares to make) and entrusted us with the Torah—a blueprint for mankind's mission.

The task of the Jewish People is to live by the Law and cre-

ate a society which will be a model to the rest of humanity. Receiving the Torah on Shavuot was our point of departure as a nation; living up to our promise is our desti-

Inside this issue:

Departure and Destination	1
Shavuot: A Few Laws & Customs	2
Back Page	3

You Can Make A Difference!

The Jewish Learning Experience is a non-profit organization that aims to bring Jews closer to their Jewish heritage by providing educational and experiential programs in a warm, non-threatening environment. To further this aim, we would like to produce the JLE Journal on a regular basis. You can help us achieve this by advertising, or sponsoring an edition. For further information please contact Rabbi Price at (201) 833-1328 or at jlerrabbi@hotmail.com.



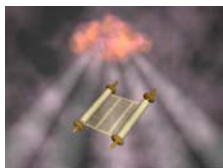
SHAVUOT: A FEW LAWS & CUSTOMS

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

“Shavuot” literally means weeks. The Torah does not specify a date for this festival, but tells us that it is celebrated seven weeks after the anniversary of the Exodus. The Jewish People counted the days and the weeks until they received the Torah on Shavuot. That word is also homonymous with the word for “oath”. This was the day that the Jewish People took an oath of loyalty to G-D.

“Shavuot” literally means weeks. The Torah does not specify a date for this festival, but tells us that it is celebrated seven weeks after the anniversary of the Exodus.

The Jewish People counted the days and the weeks until they received the Torah on Shavuot. That word is also homonymous with the word for “oath”. This was

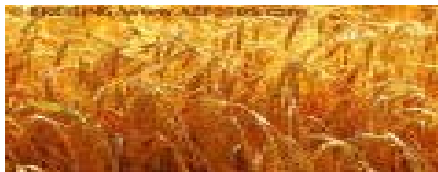


the day that the Jewish People took an oath of loyalty to G-D.

Shavuot is also known as “z’man matan Torateinu” - The Season of the Giving of the Torah (for obvious reasons).

It is furthermore known as “Chag HaBikkurim”- The Festival of the First Fruits. In ancient times, Jewish farmers would bring the first ripened produce to the Temple as a sign of gratitude for the bountiful harvest. This ceremony was accompanied by much pomp and celebration.

BURNING THE MIDNIGHT



OIL

This lucubration is known as “Tikkun Leil” meaning “correction of the night”- a reference to the tradition that our ancestors failed to wake up early on the day they re-

ceived the Torah.

THE SCROLL OF RUTH

The story of the righteous Ruth is read on Shavuot. Ruth was a Moabite princess who converted to Judaism. Her selfless dedication to her poor elderly mother-in-law earned her the privilege of being the ancestor of King David and ultimately, of the Messiah.

This book is read on Shavuot for a number of reasons.

- ◆ Ruth’s conversion and her immortal words “Your people are my people and your G-D is my G-D” are paradigmatic for the Jewish People who, upon accepting the Torah, also became “converts”.
- ◆ Ruth’s illustrious descendant King David was born and passed away on Shavuot.
- ◆ The story took place during the barley harvest, the season of Shavuot.

The story of the righteous Ruth is read on Shavuot. Ruth was a Moabite princess who converted to Judaism. Her selfless dedication to her poor elderly mother-in-law earned her the privilege of being the ancestor of King David and ultimately, of the Messiah.

that day.

COW JUICE



There is a prevalent custom to eat dairy foods on Shavuot. A number of reasons are given.

The Torah (Exodus 23:19) juxtaposes a reference to the Festival of First Fruits to the prohibition of mixing meat and milk. Therefore on Shavuot we eat separate meals of dairy and of meat.

Song of Songs (4:11) states “it drips from your lips like honey and milk under your tongue”. According to our tradition this is a reference to the pleasure and value of studying the Torah.

At Mount Sinai, the Jews became obligated to slaughter their animals in a specific way if they wished to eat meat. On the day they received the Torah they did not yet have the know-how or the equipment to perform a proper *shechita*. They thus ate dairy on

FLOWER POWER



There is a beautiful custom of decorating the synagogue with greenery and flowers. This commemorates our tradition that Mount Sinai bloomed on the day the Torah was given. It is also symbolic of the agricultural aspect of the festival.

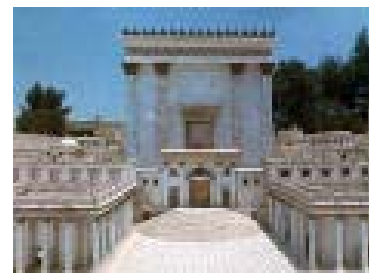
WALK THE WALK



Shavuot is one of three “pilgrimage festivals” during which the Jewish People would go up to the Temple in Jerusalem. In 1967 the Old City of Jerusalem was liberated and Jews were able to go to the Wall for the first time since the Arab conquest in 1948. That first Shavuot was an emo-

tional scene of hundreds of thousands of Jews taking that long-awaited walk to the vestige of our Holy Temple. This has become an annual tradition in modern Jerusalem. Every year before dawn on the morning of Shavuot, you can witness the trickles of Jews become streams and then torrents as the streets converge en route to the Temple Mount.

May we merit to see the entire Jewish People participate speedily in our days.



CANDLES

On Thursday May 16 light two candles before 7:47pm (Sundown) in honor of the festival. This is repeated the next evening (Fri. May 17), same time; but on the second day, candles must be lit from a pre-existing flame (e.g. 24 hour candle) since we may not create a new fire. These two blessings are recited after the lighting:

Baruch Atah Ado-noy E-lo-hainu Melech Ha'olam, Asher Kid'shanu B'mitzvotav, V'tzivanu L'hadlik Ner shel (Shabbat v'shel)* Yom Tov (Add on Friday night)*

Baruch Atah Ado-noy E-lo-hainu Melech Ha'olam, she'hechyanu V'kiyemanu V'higiyanu laz'man hazeh.