



**NCSY's National Board presents:**

# **WHAT ARE YOU LEARNING THIS HOLIDAY?**

A Guide to an Inspirational Shavuos



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LETTER FROM RABBI DOVID BASHEVKIN **3**

LETTER FROM NCSY'S TEEN PRESIDENT **4**

THOUGHTS FROM NCSY'S NATIONAL BOARD **5**


THOUGHTS FROM REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES **10**

FUN PAGES **16**



# MAKING TORAH YOURS

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Google has a fascinating employee policy. While all Google engineers spend the majority of their time dedicated to organizational business, they are also encouraged to spend 20% of their time working on projects they find interesting. Many of Google's most famous initiatives have come as the result of the 20% of time employees spend on their own projects. In fact, Gmail, Google's famed emailed service, is the product of someone's 20% of time allotted to their personal initiatives. One Google executive estimated that 50% of new Google products are the result of the 20% of time employees are encouraged to spend on their own products.

Torah innovation operates in a similar way. Of course, we spend most of our time immersed in the Torah ideas of the great Jewish leaders that precede us. Whether it is Chumash, Rashi, Talmud, or more recent Torah works, we look to our past to receive guidance for our future. Still, the importance of developing your own voice and ideas in Torah cannot be understated. In fact, the Talmud in Pesachim (68b) cites a disagreement which holidays require a personal component of celebration. The disagreement surrounds whether Jewish holidays should just be about prayer and learning or do they also demand a personal element, like a festive meal. The Talmud concludes that all of the opinions agree that Shavuos requires a personal element.

## WHY IS SHAVUOS DIFFERENT?

Much like Google, Torah requires a personal element to ensure that the development of Torah continues in each generation. It is not enough to just focus on Torah that has been written and transmitted – we need to create our own Torah ideas as well. The perpetuation of Torah demands that there is a personal contribution.


It is such a pleasure to share with you Torah ideas that reflect the personal element of Torah development. Spearheaded by JJ Kampf, NCSY's International Teen President, this journal is a testament to the personal voices and empowered Torah that NCSY has been fostering for decades. I hope you enjoy their words of personal Torah and, in turn, create ones of your own.

Wishing you a wonderful Shavuos – with a personal touch,




**Dovid Bashevkin**

Director of Education



# BEYOND THE TECHNICALITIES OF TALMUD

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I would first like to thank you for making great use of your time and learning Torah this Shavuot. Throughout my time as National President this year, I've been continually amazed at your continued growth and achievement.

A great deal of work went into this, so I'd like to thank the amazing national staff and my fellow board members for their perseverance and unrelenting dedication to ensure this project became a reality. I couldn't be more proud of the job we've all done this year.

This Shavuot, you need to take a moment and dive into a very unique Gemara which can be found in *מסכת יומא, דף פו עמוד א'*. About a week ago, I explored this piece and was amazed at what I found.

We often think of Gemara as a purely halachic and pragmatic text, a complex roadmap to living a Jewish life. This Gemara, however, is a refreshing lesson in fundamental Middot. *אביי* comments on the popular phrase from Shema: *ואהבת את ה' אלקיך*, and he tries to uncover the true essence of what it means to love Hashem.

What he actually finds is a unique connection between commandments that are *Bein Adam L'Chaveiro* (between man and his fellow man) and *Bein Adam L'Makom* (between man and Hashem). Too often, we find a disconnect between these two categories. One may think "If I learn all day and I daven, that gives me the right to slack off in my interactions." In reality, this is not the case at all. If devoted learning is not accompanied by positive character traits, *אביי* posits, it is a true *Chillul Hashem*.

This is just the beginning. This Gemara is both intellectually and spiritually stimulating. Go check it out!



**JJ Kampf**

President of NCSY National Board

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Thoughts from

# National Board

# THE SECRET TO LIFE

**Mesilat Yesharim, The Path of the Just**, is perfect for some inspiring Shavuot learning. It's one of the classic Jewish guidebooks, outlining a clear, progressive path toward spiritual perfection. This book focuses on allowing man to perfect his avodat Hashem as part of a larger goal of self-improvement. If taken to heart, these eight chapters of self-growth can change your life!

The Ramchal begins by saying that the bedrock of piety, the root of our avodah, and the root of everything in life begins with a man thinking of his purpose in the world. Once one thinks about their purpose, they will work through sweat and tears to accomplish their goals.

What is man's purpose in the world? How do we know? Our Rabbis teach us that the only reason man exists is to celebrate G-d, bring Him into the world, and enjoy his presence. This is the ultimate enjoyment. The place where one will ultimately feel this enjoyment will be in the World to Come. Although this is true, this world isn't just a waiting place for a better existence. Rather, it is a place to build ourselves up so that we can greater enjoy Hashem in The World to Come. We bring Hashem down into this world – we elevate everything in this world – to better ourselves.

How do we reach our objective of celebrating G-d? This insightful book has an answer for this pressing question as well. This world is compared to a long hallway just before The World to Come. People don't just use that hallway as a waiting room, rather they use it to do mitzvot. This hallway is for you to utilize this world, because once you go to the next world, according to the Ramchal, you are who you are. There will be no turning back. We have to live in the now! Everyday, a person must think of a way to find G-d. Doing mitzvot is a way of celebrating Hashem with actions.

This idea of man's purpose is hard to fully digest and comprehend. This is just the beginning of this phenomenal book, so this Shavuot, sit down by yourself or with friends and learn the eight ways to accomplish this goal of celebrating G-d and becoming the best version of you!



**SHARONI BORENSTEIN**

NATIONAL AMBASSADOR OF SUMMER PROGRAMS

# LESSONS IN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Throughout the night this Shavuot, I will be learning **Igeret HaRamban, or The Ramban's Letter**. This Sefer, written by the famous Ramban to his son, discusses the importance of working on our Middot, key character traits. The Ramban explains why it is so vital to remove all traces of anger and jealousy from our lives. As Shavuot is the holiday commemorating the giving of the Torah to the Jewish people, I thought it best to learn a book focused on perfecting the way we observe and perform the mitzvot that Hashem commanded us Jews to do through the Torah.

In this letter, the Ramban says that many of our aveirot, our sins, stem from our inability to control our anger and other negative emotions. In writing this letter to his son, the Ramban claims that if his son listens carefully and reads the letter often, he will be an incredibly successful, mitzvah-observing Jew. I agree that learning Torah is absolutely vital to being a Jew, but if we do not work on our Middot, we are ignoring so many of the mitzvot that we have been commanded to fulfill, such as the mitzvot Bein Adam L'Chaveiro, between man and his fellow. Learning Torah is incomplete without the ability to work on our Middot, and this is the reason I would recommend to everyone that they read Igeret HaRamban. This letter shows us deliberately how to work on our Middot and become better people, and it's an absolute necessity for every Jew to read.



**ETHAN DALVA**

NATIONAL AMBASSADOR OF SUMMER PROGRAMS

# 48 WAYS TO GROW

Thousands of years ago, Shavuot was the day that G-d gave the Jewish people the Torah. This event is considered one of the most spiritual times for the Jewish souls. Therefore, each year on this holiday, we renew our acceptance of this precious gift from G-d. From the beginning of sundown of the fifth of Sivan until nightfall of the seventh of Sivan is when we celebrate each year. It has become a custom that on the first night of this holiday, we stay up all night to learn Torah.

A sefer that I enjoy to learn is **48 Ways to Wisdom**, written by Rabbi Noah Weinberg. This inspiring book identifies the 48 tools to help us acquire the Torah. It's divided into 48 chapters; each with a different tool to help us find clarity and meaning with a concept we hope to work on living more fully. One thing that truly sticks out about this sefer is that at the completion of each chapter, Rabbi Weinberg leaves a spot for applied wisdom. In this space, he offers the reader a place to test out what they have learned by completing a quick task. This not only helps you remember what you just read, but it also takes the book a step further by forcing you to apply the information contained inside of it to a real-life situation. If you are searching for an inspiring and impactful sefer to read on Shavuot, this would definitely be a great pick. I hope that this book inspires others as much as it has inspired me.



**ABBIE FLEETER**

NATIONAL AMBASSADOR OF SOCIAL ACTION

# A GOOD DEED A DAY KEEPS THE DOCTOR AWAY

Chesed is one of my favorite things in the world. I love the feeling of making those around me happy, seeing a smile on their face and knowing that I had a positive impact on their day. As such, one of my goals in life is to constantly bring happiness to others. I also love learning, which is why Shavuot is one of my favorite holidays. I love learning new ways to connect to HaShem, better myself as a person, and express and connect to my Judaism.

One of my favorite NCSY advisors gave me a book this past summer on TJJA called **Chofetz Chaim: Loving Kindness**. She saw how important it was to me to make others happy and decided that this book would grant me the knowledge I would need to further achieve my goals. I used to read it each day, but as life got busier, I stopped. That is why I am excited for Shavuot, so I can reinvigorate myself with learning how to perform daily mitzvot for others.

Over the holiday of Shavuot, I will stay up all night learning Loving Kindness, learning new ways to fill my neshama with the strength of positivity and goodness that I can bring to others. I hope that learning this book will inspire me to become a better person who is able to perform acts of chesed with each passing day of my life. What are you waiting for?



**ARIELLA KOVACH**

NATIONAL AMBASSADOR OF EDUCATION

# OH, THE TORAH YOU WILL LEARN!

Shavuot. Once a year, it is socially acceptable to complete an all-nighter and consume an atrocious amount of cheesecake. That's right!

It all begins with my sluggish stroll to shul after a delicious, overly-satisfying meal. More desserts welcome me before I situate myself in the back row of the Beit Midrash. After my boredom from listening to the "intriguing" keynote speaker increases, I bounce into random rooms, eavesdropping about talmudic and political disagreements. Around two o'clock, my friends and I attempt to master a typical Jewish concept, until they fall asleep; only I and the holy bochurim remain.

After much deliberation and brainstorming about successful "staying awake" strategies, I escape to my local hideout – the childcare rooms. In the corner of my eye, my favorite books are organized in a wooden container on the shelf. I stare at the variety of plots and characters, loaded with meaningful values complemented by rhymes. My eyes explode and my heart skips a beat as I enter the world of Dr. Seuss.

Think about it – he would be the perfect NCSY Rabbi. He is charismatic, motivational, and could recite a relatable story within seconds to inspire a crowd. As I unravel *The Sneetches*, *Yertle the Turtle*, and *Horton Hears a Who*, I applaud Theodor Seuss Geisel's ability to arouse youngsters in reading mesmerizing stories within their limited vocabulary while gaining useful advice that will last a lifetime. For decades, his stories teach children important lessons about individuality, diversity, self-esteem, thirst for knowledge, and being a mensch. His stories never grow old, rather they only deepen with growing wisdom and age.

So this Shavuot, do yourself a favor. Get some cheesecake and reread a Dr. Seuss classic. Step back into your childhood, enjoy the story, decode the profound messages, and incorporate them in your life. Sometimes you need a blast from the past to advance you forward.



**LIAT LEVKOVICH**

NATIONAL AMBASSADOR OF SUMMER PROGRAMS

## CLEAVE; IT'S ITS OWN ANTONYM

My favorite Sefer to learn and try to understand is **Derech Hashem** written by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, or, as he is often referred to as, the Ramchal. Derech Hashem is a sefer written in Hebrew, but when I learn it, I use a translated copy which Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan has put together. The intriguing and inspiring sefer talks about the fundamentals of life, God, and Emunah. It dives headfirst into life's biggest questions, such as "How does God exist?" "What is the best way to serve God?" and "What is the purpose of life?"

Derech Hashem is split up into four sections: 1) Fundamentals, 2) Providence, 3) The Soul, Inspiration, and Prophecy, and 4) Serving God. The ideas inside may be difficult to understand, but the way it is worded and spelled out is so simple; giving straight answers to these hard questions! For example, the first sentence of chapter three of the first section is "Man is the creature created for the purpose of cleaving to God" - a direct answer to the worldwide search for man's fundamental purpose in this world. I think it is really special and eye-opening to learn about the higher order of the world, and more of the "whys" and "hows" of humanity and of how God works. If you are looking for answers to your big questions, or are just curious about a more spiritual interpretation of the world, I highly recommend opening this book on Shavuot! I also recommend grabbing a teacher or a chavrusa to learn it with, because when you learn of these revelations, you are not going to want to keep them to yourself!



**ILANA PASKOFF**

NATIONAL AMBASSADOR OF SOCIAL ACTION



# HAPPINESS

Two years ago, a small book wrapped in a plastic bag was handed to me towards the summer's end by the leader of my TJJ Ambassadors bus with the hope that its contents would help me achieve what its brightly designed cover encourages: happiness. Since then, Rabbi Zelig Pliskin's highly recommended book, entitled **Happiness: Formulas, Stories & Insights**, has sat on one shelf after another, traveling with me as I have moved but remaining closed.

This Shavuot marks my last in high school, proving to be a bittersweet occasion. One of the most valuable lessons I have learned in high school is the importance of getting to know happiness like I might get to know a new friend, and striving to become so connected to it that one day it will effortlessly walk hand-in-hand with me through life. I have taken many steps and made many decisions which have brought me closer to this goal, and yet all along, this book has remained with me, unopened. I am not one to turn down potential inspiration, which is why I have decided that the small yellow book, which radiates its title, can no longer remain closed.

This Shavuot, I will stay up all night reading the words of Rabbi Pliskin, absorbing his insights on achieving one of my goals: happiness. Regardless of whether this book proves awe-inspiring and changes the way I view everything or just gives me a couple of tips on how to be happier, it has already given me pause to remember to be thankful for the happiness I already feel. I am so grateful to Hashem for placing so much good in my life, including this small yellow book which has followed me for the past two years.



**TALI ROGOFF**

NATIONAL AMBASSADOR OF SOCIAL MEDIA

# BECOMING MOUNT SINAI

*Moshe received the Torah from Sinai and transmitted it to Yehoshua, and Yehoshua to the Elders, and the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets transmitted it to the Men of the Great Assembly. They said three things: Be deliberate in judgment, raise up many disciples and make a fence for the Torah*

The first Mishnah found in Pirkei Avot begins with an outline of the general transmission of the Torah from generation to generation, starting with Moshe receiving the Torah at Sinai all the way until the Anshei Knesset Hagdola. This lineage is clarified by the Rambam, Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, in his introductory comments to the Mishnah Torah. He goes through nearly forty generations, naming the primary Torah Scholars in each generation and who they passed their knowledge to, going from Moshe all the way until Ravina and Rav Ashi, the authors of the Talmud. It is really incredible to realize that the words of Torah we learn today are the same ones that Ravina and Rav Ashi learned, and the same words learned by everyone that came before and after. It connects us in a whole new way to our heritage and culture, and to Hashem.

This Mishna also teaches us something important about how to learn and internalize Torah. We all know Moshe received the Torah from Hashem, so why does it say he received it from Sinai? If it were to say at Sinai, that would make sense, as Moshe was on top of Mt. Sinai when he got the Torah. What is the Mishnah trying to teach us here? The Noam Elimelech explains this perplexing statement beautifully. The reason why Mt. Sinai was originally chosen for Kabbalat Hatorah is because it was the least flashy and humblest of all the mountains. In order to be receptive to the Torah, one has to also be humble. A haughty person is unable to bring himself to truly accept the Torah's messages and change. They interpret the Torah differently, as if looking at it through a different lens. So, when the Mishnah says Moshe received the Torah from Sinai, it means he received it from a state of Sinai. He was in a state of humility which allowed him to actually receive the Torah and internalize it, thereby allowing him to pass it on. On this night, where we commemorate the receiving of the Torah, it's important that we reflect on how we act and if it is the proper way to fully immerse ourselves in Torah.



**ELI SZAFRENSKI**

NATIONAL AMBASSADOR OF SOCIAL ACTION



Thoughts from

# **Regional Representatives**

# APPRECIATING OUR CHOSENNESS: LESSONS LEARNED FROM RUTH

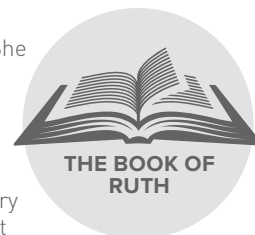
Like many high schoolers today, I find myself constantly tied between school, work, and trying to balance some level of a social life. While I try to keep Judaism at the core of my hectic life, it often becomes easy to lose sight.

On Shavuos, we learn the book of **Ruth**, and upon studying it I immediately related to Ruth as a person and the lasting lessons she left.

Ruth's admirable role in our Jewish history emerged ironically from her own history as a non-Jew. She was raised affiliated with another faith, but our Torah and HaShem made so much sense to her that she decided to convert and devote herself to Judaism. Because she came to Judaism on her own, she had an elevated appreciation and awareness of the life she decided to take on.

Upon learning her story, I instantly grew guilty of the Jewish life I was lucky to be born into but often take for granted. Sure, everyone has noise in life to test our ties to HaShem, but Ruth's inspiring story should serve as a reminder to tackle the commotion through the lens of Torah. After all, noise is just noise: the distraction put in all of our lives intended to test our relationship with HaShem; it's our job to quiet it and keep focused on what really matters.

I recommend studying the book of Ruth this Shavuot to redefine your relationship with HaShem through the inspiration of a woman who chose Judaism without even being a Jew herself.



**SYDNI BURG**

CENTRAL EAST

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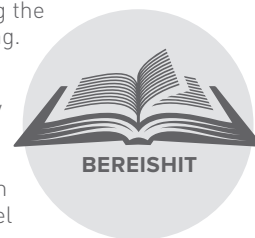
# DIVING BACK INTO OUR ROOTS

This Shavuot, I'll be learning the first Parasha of the Torah: **Bereishit**.

The reason I'm learning Bereishit during the night is that when I think of the holiday of Shavuot, it represents the culmination of Matan Torah, the giving of the Torah to the Jewish people at Har Sinai. This holiday marks the epic covenant between G-d and the Jewish people that was promised to Avraham, with the Torah binding the Jews to our Creator. I feel that the best way to learn Torah this Shavuot is to start from the beginning.

As Rashi has famously said, the Torah starts with the creation of the world and not with the Jews becoming a nation for a very clear and evident reason. If the non-Jews were to approach us and say that we stole the land of Israel from the Canaanites, we would be able to refute that point solely because of the parasha of Bereishit. Due to the fact that the Torah starts with Bereishit, we can indisputably say that because the world was created by Hashem, he has the right to give any portion of it to whomever he chooses. Hashem essentially gave us the indisputable right to the land of Israel and to be the chosen nation through Bereishit.

This Parasha is not only one of the most powerful and awe-inspiring to me, but the essence of the birth of the Jewish nation.



**ETHAN LAZARUS**

ATLANTIC SEABOARD

# EARNING YOUR SHARE

It is a common idea in Judaism that living a life of Jewish ideals is just as important as learning Torah and doing mitzvos. This Shavuot, I hope you take the time to learn a perek or two of Pirkei Avos, "Ethics of the Fathers."

Pirkei Avos is a detailed guide to the behavior, attitudes, civility, and honor of Judaism. Although not a part of the original Pirkei Avos, there is a meaningful passuk that is recited at the beginning of every perek of Pirkei Avos. It goes as follows: **כל ישראל יש להם חלק לעולם הבא** – "All of Israel has a share in the World to Come..." According to R' Moshe Almosnino, the reason we read this verse before learning Pirkei Avos is to increase our incentive to apply ourselves to the teachings we are about to read in the perek. Pirkei Avos contains an overwhelming amount of ethical and moral advice, so much so that someone who begins to learn it might despair of achieving the high level that is required to earn a place in the World to Come. For this reason we read the opening verse to remind us that ALL of Israel has a share in the world to come. Our ultimate reward is in fact within reach and this encourages us to pursue it.



This was only the very beginning. It has been said that Pirkei Avos illustrates the way of life of our Forefathers, which was then embodied by the Torah's sages. Now it's your turn to take a look and start following the path of our nation's most righteous individuals. You won't regret it.



**URI LOCKER**

SOUTHERN

# A WORK FOR THE AGES

This Shavuot, I recommend you learn **Pirkei Avot**. Pirkei Avot is a compilation of ethical and moral principles that depict how one should carry oneself. The whole masechet resonates with me because it speaks of how important derech eretz, also known as the code of proper behavior, is; it outlines values such as kindness and respect, hakarat hatov, striving to be your best self, and being humble.

Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah states, "If there is no Torah, there is no derech eretz; if there is no derech eretz, there is no Torah" (Pirkei Avot: 3:17). Pirkei Avot is significant because, by learning it, we can further understand how to look at the world through a Jewish lens. Moreover, it summarizes the unique points of view and core philosophies of different tana'im and was created with the intention of being applicable to every person. It is said that one who internalizes all the lessons in Pirkei Avot is a true chassid.



I suggest a few questions that you may want to explore. Why is the last chapter of Pirkei Avot always read on the Shabbat before Shavuot? Secondly, in Pirkei Avot 2:9, Rabbi Elazar Ben Arach states that a lev tov is the best trait for a person to have. How do you believe one acquires or develops a lev tov? Finally, in Pirkei Avot 2:1, it says that one should be as careful with a minor mitzvah as with a major mitzvah because one does not know the mitzvah's rewards; thus, one should consider a mitzvah's cost against its rewards and a sin's rewards against its cost. What does the mishnah define as a major or minor mitzvah, and how do you define these terms?

Enjoy delving into Pirkei Avot. It's a text like no other!



**HODAYA PROPP**

NEW ENGLAND

# SHAVUOS: A TIME FOR MAXIMIZING OPPORTUNITY

From my experience, the learning possibilities on Shavuos are endless. My synagogue always has multiple different speakers giving multiple different lectures all accompanied by multiple different flavors of cheesecake. My favorite thing would always be to go into Shavuos blind, knowing only two things: one, that I will consume plates of delicious, quality cheesecake, and two, that I will learn something fulfilling. For me, that was always enough. But after learning from a very special sefer with an NCSY advisor last Shavuos, Pirkei Avot became my favorite thing to learn.

**Pirkei Avot** is so unique because every lesson is concise, brief, and transmits every rabbi's teaching and voice in their generation by the chronological order of generations since the receiving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai. Take one of my favorite Pasukim, found in Pirkei Avot 2:15:

*"Rabbi Tarfon said: The day is short and the work is much, and the workers are lazy and the reward is great, and the Master of the house is pressing."*

This quote is not only a perfect depiction of how we should approach our life, but it reminded me of how we should approach the learning on Shavuos. Rabbeinu Yonah interprets this by saying that our days are short and our work (Torah learning) is greater; we shouldn't waste our days because the Torah and all the possibilities that come from it are greater than our days. He references Moshe Rabbeinu, who said, "If I sleep, how many pearls of words of Torah will I lose?" Let's look at Moshe this Shavuos and sacrifice a little of our physical pleasure (sleep) and use our "day" to enjoy the pearls of torah that Hashem gifted and will re-gift to us on this special day.

Chag Sameach, everyone! May our efforts contribute to the bringing of moshiach as speedily as possible!

(Oh... and... NORWHAAAAAT!?!?)



**GABRIL SHPITALNIK**

WEST COAST

## AN ETERNAL UNION

Fellow NCSYers,

Shavuot is a time for many things, including reflection, thanks, and prayer. But it is also a great time to study something meaningful.

I would like to share with you something meaningful that you might want to learn on the Chag. I would suggest taking a look at the Parsha where the giving of the Torah actually took place, since, after all, it is Shavuot. The parsha is **Yitro**. We learn from the Parsha that Hashem gave Bnei Yisrael three days to prepare for the giving of the Torah. But at the end of these three days, we come across something strange. The Pasuk says: **וַיּוֹצֵא מֹשֶׁה אֶת-הָעָם לְקִרְאֵת הָאֱלֹהִים, מִן-הַמִּדְבָּר; וַיַּעֲבֹד בְּתַהֲתִית הַהָר**; and Moses brought the nation out from the camp to meet G-d, and they stood at the nether part of the mountain. "But what does it mean to meet G-d? How can the nation, or any individual, "meet God?"

Rashi has a fascinating insight. He tells us that the word **לְקִרְאֵת** is used when two people are coming together. That word is also used when a bridegroom goes forward to approach and meet his bride during a wedding. This could also describe the bond between the Jewish people and HaShem at this moment. At Har Sinai, the Jewish people accepted the laws that G-d had given us, and we became one nation. This signified the everlasting bond that our nation formed with G-d starting from Abraham, just as a man and a woman enter a bond during their wedding. This Parsha is full of great insights about Shavuot, so be sure to check it out!



**ILAN SONSINO**

SOUTHWEST

# NO PAIN, NO GAIN

The story of creation always keeps me thinking. **Parshat Bereishit** discusses how Hashem created the Heavens and earth in six days. This series of events can be interpreted in many different ways. Whether it's the symbolism of the nachash (the serpent) or why Hashem decided for these creations to occur, there are so many details to keep in mind. To me, the most interesting part is the relationship between Hashem and man.

After Hashem created man and woman, He specifically told them that they can eat from any tree in the Garden of Eden except for the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad. Why weren't Adam and Chava allowed to eat – let alone touch – the fruit? Did Hashem think of them as rivals? Did Hashem want to be the only one to have judgement and morality?

Moving on to their punishment, because we are taught that they had no concept of morality, I wonder why it was Adam and Chava's fault that they ate the fruit even though they couldn't decipher what was good or bad. When I read through Rashi's commentary, he stated that the fruit provided extra wisdom to the mortals who ate it. I then realized that Adam and Chava had a concept of morality before they ate the fruit, however they no concept comparable to Hashem's capacity. Once I put all the pieces together, it made sense why they were punished. They both knew that eating from the tree was bad, but they did it anyway.

Every time I read the story of creation, my mind is flooded with curiosity, questions, and misconceptions. The Torah's complexity keeps the mind in constant thought, because nothing is clear cut or straight to the point. There is beauty within the challenge of learning Torah. Happy learning!



**EMILY TURNER**

NEW JERSEY

# A JOURNEY IN EMUNAH

For Shavuot more than any other time of year, we must dive into the idea of G-d and the reason behind the happenings of theism. The essay **"If You Were God"** by Aryeh Kaplan, accomplishes this task more so than any other text I've read.

The skeptic in me has always had difficulty justifying the reason behind many things in creation and the thought process behind many occurrences in the Torah. "If You Were God" presents a very effective and interesting way to see the possible reasoning behind God's method of creation.

Aryeh Kaplan presents learners with the more real-world problem of creating peace on an island containing many belligerent tribes all living in a constant state of war and fear, and your objective is that you must figure out the optimal way to create a healthy and peaceful society. The issue which arises is that revealing your all-powerful self would create a world with no choice, due to the fact that definitive knowledge of an all-powerful entity would make it hard to freely act according to your desires. This odd but intriguing activity attempts to simulate how and why God had to create many things the way He did.

Kaplan delves into the ideas of morality, free will, and miracles all in relation to Jews in the modern world. The philosophical ideas are incredibly intriguing and thought-provoking for the logic-driven mind of many modern Jews.

I've only begun to scratch the surface of this essay. If you're a rational thinker, you must read this!



**MANNY WEINSTEIN**

UPSTATE NEW YORK

# LEARN TO LOVE HASHEM

After the holocaust, Rabbi Eliezer Silver travelled around Europe to find the lost Jewish children hiding in many different places to bring them home. As he walked into each place he would yell out "Shema Yisroel, Hashem Alokey-nu Hashem Achad." Hundreds of children were brought back to memories from before the war as they recognized the prayer that their mother or father said to never forget.

We say **Shema** twice a day, attach this pasuk to our doorposts and it is placed on the arms and forehead everyday.

But why? Over Shavuot we should learn and delve into the various reasons why this pasuk from the Torah is so important.

One thought I would like to bring is that in this small line, there are three fundamental factors. There is the existence of Hashem, the fact is He is the one and only G-d, and that we are His nation. Each of these in itself have many different meanings but the last one specifically mentions the fact that Hashem wants to have us remind ourselves that we are the chosen nation of Hashem and that we should love Him.

The Sifri asks how can we love Hashem if it is something that we are commanded to do by Him? He answers by saying that by studying Torah, we will recognize Hashem who spoke and created the world. Through understanding that He created us, we will love Him.

This Shavuot I give you all a bracha to truly be able to delve into new material to bring us all closer to Hashem, one phrase at a time.



**ISABELLA YAMPOL**

MIDWEST

# Dairy Jokes

by Ariella Kouach

Someone just hit me with their chocolate bar.  
How dairy!

Making pareve butter:  
There is little margarine for error.

What do you get from an Alaskan cow?  
Icecream.

Why do cows have hooves instead of feet?  
Because they lactose!

What games do cows play at parties?  
MOO-sical chairs!

What if soy milk is just regular milk introducing itself in Spanish?

What kind of cheese is sad?  
Bleu cheese.

Who you gonna call?  
Goats Butter!

Is Shavuot your favorite holiday?  
You cheddar believe it!

All of these jokes are udderly ridiculous.  
I am sorry if you are not a-moo-sed!

Since on Shavuot we enjoy dairy products, the best Shavuot jokes are cheesy.



# HOW TO SURVIVE SHAVUOT SHENANIGANS



— by Liat Levkovich —

**3:27 AM** Your head starts leaning and your eyes can barely stay open. You savour the sweet, short slumber before your chevrusa knocks his book on your head, reminding you to continue grappling the talmudic idea. Immediately, you regret not preparing a survival kit for staying up Shavoaot night. Don't commit this stupid, dumb mistake.

First things first, make sure you have a **power nap** BEFORE and AFTER the highly awaited all nighter. Those precious moments of hibernation will make this Shavoaot a make-it-or-break-it adventure.

Secondly, clarify with your shul's VIPs' that they're **stocked up** on cheesecake, ice cream, cookies galore. Your buddies and you will definitely need a walk through candyland to compose yall's sugar cravings.

Come prepared with a **captivating book**. Or plan to listen to an intriguing speaker. You got to stay busy, NOT BORED. Statistics prove that if you're bored, you are more prone to fall asleep.

Make sure to learn in **bright light**. In other words, make it physically impossible to fall asleep with blazing, luminous rays illuminating your vision.

Take a break and enjoy **spontaneous strolls** outside. Stargaze and savor the breeze.

Take advantage of that **enticing caffeine** – make sure to do it in small doses. Those coffee beans sure do perform incredible miracles.

Most importantly, invite your **wonderful friends** to join this exuberant occasion. We received the Torah – our foundation, our guidebook, our essence. It's time to celebrate!





We all know the story of \_\_\_\_\_ (holiday). After leaving \_\_\_\_\_ (a place), all of Bnei Yisroel stood around a \_\_\_\_\_ (noun). All of a sudden, a voice came down from the \_\_\_\_\_ (noun) and everyone was silent. There was thunder and \_\_\_\_\_ (noun), and the voice started saying the 10 \_\_\_\_\_ (plural noun). The Jews were \_\_\_\_\_ (verb ending in ing), but were so excited and happy to \_\_\_\_\_ (verb) the \_\_\_\_\_ (adjective) commandments. The mountain that they were \_\_\_\_\_ (verb ending in ing) around was so beautiful! It was covered in colorful \_\_\_\_\_ (plural noun) and \_\_\_\_\_ (adjective) flowers. From then on, we make sure to \_\_\_\_\_ (verb) Shavuos and the giving of the Torah every single year!

1. **Holiday**
2. **A place**
3. **Noun**
4. **Noun**

5. **Noun**
6. **Plural noun**
7. **Verb ending in "ing"**

8. **Verb**
9. **Adjective**
10. **Verb ending in "ing"**

11. **Plural noun**
12. **Adjective**
13. **Verb**

# Shavuamoji Codes!

Decode the emoji messages!  
Created by Daniella Mikanovsky



Answers: (1) Bikkurim (2) Up All Night (3) Ten Commandments (4) Book of Ruth (Book of Root)  
(5) Cheesecake (6) Sixth of Sivan (Sixth of Sea-Yan) (7) Counting Of the Omer (Count of the O-Mare)



# WORD JUMBLE

Unscramble the following Holiday words and phrases!  
Created by Daniella Mikanovsky

**1** ASTOUHV

**2** UGTONIC  
FO HET MERO

**3** ESNVE  
KEWSE

**4** OOBK FO  
URTH

**5** VASHTI  
IIAMHMN

## ANSWERS:

1. Shavut
2. Counting of the Omer
3. Seven weeks
4. Book of Ruth
5. Shivat Haminim

# CHAG GABS

Read the following phrases outloud. Try to figure out what they say, or try and get your friends to guess!

Created by Daniella Mikanovsky

1

Fort He  
Nye nind  
heys

2

Matt hant Ora

3

Sick Thofs  
Ivan

4

Shu low shre gal eem

5

Chizk ayk

6

O l'knight lur neang

Answers:

1. Forty nine days

2. Matan Torah

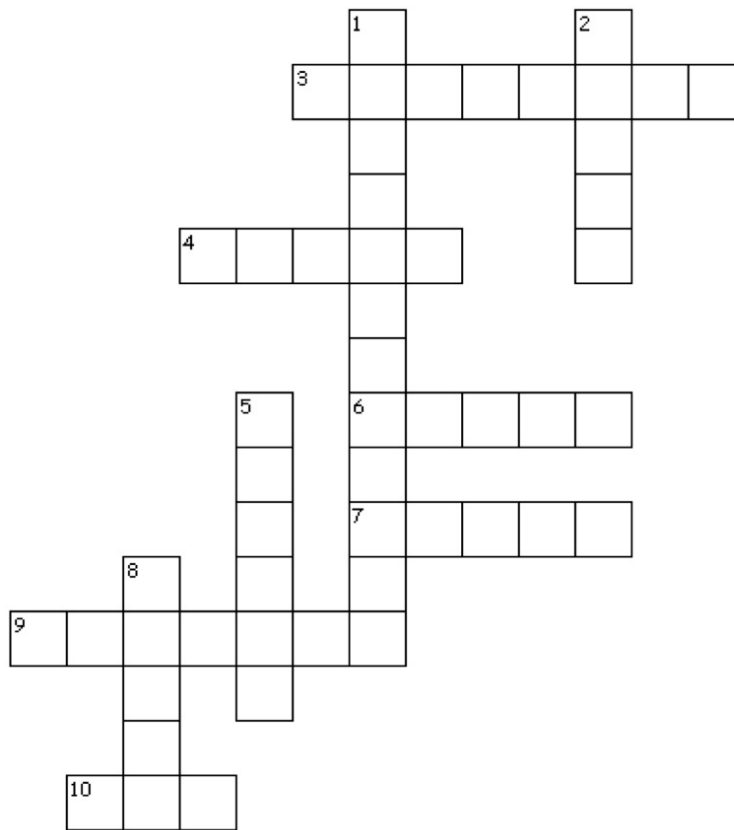
3. Sixth of Sivan

4. Shalosh Regalim

5. Cheesecake

6. All night learning

# SHAVUOT CROSSWORD PUZZLE



## Across

3. The Torah was given on a \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Hashem gave us the \_\_\_\_\_ on Shavuot.
6. What's the name of the mountain that the Torah was given on.
7. We have the custom to stay up all \_\_\_\_\_ to prepare ourselves for getting the Torah.
9. The mountain was covered with \_\_\_\_\_.
10. How many commandments are in the Luchot.

## Down

1. On Shavuot we are supposed to listen to the \_\_\_\_\_ in Shul.
2. It is a custom to eat \_\_\_\_\_ foods on Shavuot.
5. The first two commandments were said by \_\_\_\_\_.
8. I went up on the mountain for 40 days and nights.

Created by Jewishonlineschool.com