בס"ד

AHAVAT ACHIM
קהלת אהבת אחים
THE FAMILY SHUL

CANDLE LIGHTING 7:53 PM | 29 IYAR 5783 | MAY 20, 2023 | HAVDALA 8:57 PM

שבת פרשת במדבר
SHABBAT PARSHAT BAMIDBAR

Haftorah is "מחר חדש", the special Shabbat Haftorah for Erev Rosh Chodesh (Samuel I 20:18-42). We bless the month of Sivan. We say אב הרחמים, but not צדקתך צדק. Pirkei Avot Chapter 6.

FRIDAY EVENING	
MINCHA	6:29 PM
EARLIEST CANDLES	6:40 PM
SHKIA	8:11 PM
TZAIT HAKOCHAVIM	8:51 PM

SHABBAT	
HASHKAMA	8:00 AM
MAIN	9:00 AM
LAST KRIAT SHEMA	9:14 AM
EARLY SHIUR	10:00 AM
GEMARA SHIUR	7:05 PM
MINCHA	7:45 PM
MAARIV	8:57 PM

Molad for Sivan is this Shabbat, May 20, 2:52 AM & 14 Chalokim.
ראש חדש סיון יהיה ביום ראשון
הבא עלינו ועל כל ישראל לטובה

KIDDUSH

Kiddush is sponsored by Stacey & Yitz Finkelstein to celebrate Mikey's Aufruf and upcoming wedding to Leora Fischman.
יעלה הזיווג יפה ויבנו בית נאמן בישראל
May the beautiful couple be elevated in the building of a faithful house of Israel.

SEUDAH SHLISHIT

Seudah Shlishit sponsored by Eli Zezon to commemorate the yahrzeit of שלמה בין אליהו. May his neshama have an aliyah.

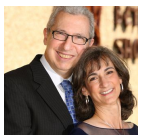
MAZEL TOV

Mazel tov to Melanie Kwestel on the birth of a grandson to Pauly & Heidi.
יגדלוהו לתורה ולחופה ולמעשים טובים ויכניסוהו לבריתו בזמנו ובעתו
May they raise him to Torah, chuppah and good deeds, and may he be entered into the covenant of Abraham.

TIKKUN LEIL SHAVUOT DINNER

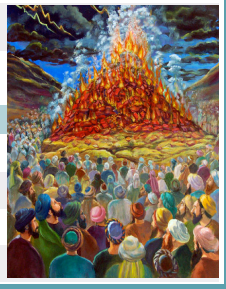
Tikkun Leil Shavuot Dairy Dinner is less than one week away. Click here to RSVP: Dairy Dinner

ANNUAL JOURNAL EVENT



The Journal Event is happening on Sunday, June 18, 10:30 AM, honoring Lori & David Garfunkel. Some might argue that they should be honored every year, but regardless, at least we will honor them this year! More details to come.

ORTHODOX UNION Enhancing Jewish Life	SUNDAY 5/21	MONDAY 5/22	TUESDAY 5/23	WEDNESDAY 5/24	THURSDAY 5/25	FRIDAY 5/26
WEEKDAY MINYANIM AT AHAVAT ACHIM						
SHACHARIT	**8:00 AM**	**6:15 AM**	**6:25 AM**	**6:25 AM**	**6:15 AM**	
MINCHA/MAARIV	**8:01 PM**	**8:02 PM**	**8:03 PM**	**8:04 PM**	**8:00 PM**	
ZMANIM						
Earliest Talit	4:28 AM	4:27 AM	4:26 AM	4:25 AM	4:24 AM	
Gedolah	1:30 PM	1:30 PM	1:30 PM	1:30 PM	1:31 PM	
Shkia	8:13 PM	8:14 PM	8:15 PM	8:16 PM		
Tzait	8:53 PM	8:54 PM	8:55 PM	8:56 PM		



Rabbi Ely Shestack

President Richie Mayer

UPCOMING EVENTS

May 25 - Tikkun Leil Shavuot Dinner - Click here to RSVP: Dairy Dinner
May 27 - Rut perek-by-perek shiur
May 28 - Memorial Day weekend softball - Click here to RSVP: Softball
June 11 - Hiking (rain date June 25)
June 18 - Journal Dinner
June 24 - Mental Health Awareness Discussion at Seudah Shlishit
July 29 - Prospective Family Shabbaton

IN OUR FUTURE

June 6 - Board Meeting
June 10 - Kiddush sponsored by Dina & Elliot Greene celebrating their 50th anniversary
June 10 - Seudah Shlishit sponsored by Eli Zezon in memory of ברוך מפציר בן שמואל
July 15 - Seudah Shlishit is sponsored by Steven Plotnick in honor of a siyum on Yerushalmi Masechet Demai

SHIURIM

- RAMBAN ON THE PARSHA, Tuesdays at 1:00 PM, in person and on zoom: https://zoom.us/j/7291311899 (PW: 112233).
- TORAH FOR YOUR COMMUTE, via a Whatsapp group, with 3-minute daily halacha insights and a weekly 5-minute parsha elucidation. To join email Rabbi Shestack at rabbishestack@gmail.com.
- SHABBAT GEMARA SHIUR, 40 minutes before Mincha.
- SHABBAT ONEG SERIES.
- FUNDAMENTALS OF JEWISH THOUGHT, after Shabbat kiddish.
- MESORAH-IN-REVERSE lecture series at Seudah Shlishit on Shabbat.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

May 31 - Fair Lawn Mikvah Rededication.

GITA COOPERWASSER ע"ה YOUTH EVENTS

May 27 - Stay & Play (2nd Day Shavuot) - 4:00 PM at Sharon & Adam Brook's home.
June 16 - Pre-Shabbat Ruach 5:00-5:45 PM
June 17 - Stay & Play
July 8 - Stay & Play, Borsuk home, 4:00 PM
July 28 - Pre-Shabbat Ruach 5:00-5:45 PM
July 29 - Stay & Play, Herman home, 4 PM
Aug. 18 - Pre-Shabbat Ruach 5:00-5:45 PM
August 19 - Stay & Play
Sept. 9 - Stay & Play, Wigod home, 4 PM
October 1 - Stay & Play (2nd Day Sukkot)

GITA COOPERWASSER ע"ה YOUTH PROGRAM

- Rabbi Meet & Greet, every Friday night, kids come over to the Rabbi after davening to receive a cup of grape juice and a ticket!
- Children earn tickets for coming to minyan (Friday night and/or Shabbat day), asking the rabbi questions or attending parent-child learning programs! Tickets can be redeemed for prizes!
- Shabbat Youth groups for children from Kindergarten to 2nd Grade starts at 9:00 AM in the Youth Room on the right upon entering the social hall. This group is run by our wonderful youth leaders. Parents are encouraged to drop their children off.
- Shabbat Youth groups for Children in Pre-K and younger starts at at 10:00 AM in the Youth Room on the left upon entering the social hall. Tefillah begins at 10:30 AM led by Perri Mayer.
- Shabbat Youth groups for Children 3rd Grade and up starts at 10:15 AM in the Beit Midrash.

Friday Evening, May 19

Saturday Evening, May 20

Sunday Evening, May 21

Monday Evening, May 22

Tuesday Evening, May 23

Wednesday Evening, May 24

18-25 Saddle River Road
Fair Lawn, NJ 07410
201.797.0502
http://www.ahavatachim.org

Shirley Vann has dedicated the attached Covenant & Conversation (used with permission of The Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust) in memory of her beloved mother Necha bat Yitzchok ע"ה.

NAME	HEBREW DATE	CANDLE EVENING OF	DEDICATOR	RELATIONSHIP
Czarna Bickel	3	May 22	Jack Bickel	Grandmother
Friedrich D. & Lina Rothschild	3	May 22	Audrey Bickel	Grandparents
Walter Leo Spier A-1838	5	May 24	Arnie Spier	Father
Nacha Bat Yitzchak	6	May 25	Shirley Vann	Mother
Samual Smedresman	7	May 26	Steve Smedresman	Grandfather
Solomon Heimer	9	May 28	Sophie Infield	Friend
Louis Lewissohn	10	May 29	Robert Lewissohn	Father
Sue Weinflash	10	May 29	Joan Goldberg	Mother
Ernest Kuhl	12	May 31	Linda Stock	Father
Arnold M. Mailman	12	May 31	Elyce Smedresman	Father
Molly Mittelpunkt	16	June 4	Eita Latkin	Cousin
Rymer Frankel	21	June 9	Elyce Smedresman	Grandmother
Michael Lerner	23	June 11	Laurie Phipps	Father
Baruch Mafzir	24	June 12	Orit Zezon	Father
Sara Page	25	June 13	Eita Latkin	Cousin

DAVID SCHWITZER ע"ה SOCIAL HALL

Please contact Lori Garfunkel at garfmom@gmail.com to book the David Schwitzer ע"ה Social Hall for an event or special occasion. $250 per simcha (members)/$325 for Associates/$400 paid in advance for non-members, plus the cost of additional clean up (and a $150 security/ cleaning deposit refunded when the social hall is returned in its original condition). Private caterers must be approved in by the Rabbi.

DONATE A SEFER, ETC.

Siddurim & Machzorim ($36), and Chumashim ($54), are available for donation. Please contact Jeff Safier at jeff.Safier@gmail.com for details.

SCRIP

Men's Club scrip is available. Email dmgarfunkel@gmail.com for details.

HONORARIA

The available Honoraria list will be provided upon request by contacting Steven Plotnick at seplotnick@gmail.com.

MISHEBAYRACH

With a Mishebayrach you've pledged to give Tzedakah on behalf of those for whom you asked Hashem's blessing. Contributions to the shul can be made using Paypal's Giving Fund (with 100% of the proceeds going to the Shul), by clicking here: Ahavat Achim Donations. If by check, please indicate on its face "Aliyah Donation."

YAHRZEIT PLAQUES

Memorialize a loved one with a plaque, $300 for members/$450 for nonmembers. We will strive to send you written notice of upcoming yahrzeit and announce name during public Yizkor. Email Amy at aagress@gmail.com to arrange.

MEN'S CLUB

Please contact Elliot Greene at MensClub@AhavatAchim.Org to join the Men's Club.

SPONSORSHIPS

Sponsorships opportunities for Yahrtzeits, Refuahs, and Hodahs (thanks), are available for regular shiurim, youth events and similar activities (but not for established honorariums or sponsorship funded events). Cost of sponsorship (shiur or youth event) is $100 per sponsor. Multiple sponsors for an event will be accepted. Sponsorships will be listed in the bulletin and announced at the event (and, if possible, a placard with the sponsorship will be prepared and displayed at the event).

Sponsorships do not include any extra amenities (such as food). Please contact either Stephen Agress or Steve Plotnick for questions or clarifications.

יום המיוחס
YOM HAMYUCHAS

The שלשת ימי הגבלה period begins on Monday night, May 22, commemorating the three days before Shavuot during which the Israelites purified themselves before receiving the Torah. We do not say Tachanun from Rosh Chodesh Sivan through and including the 12th of Sivan. We begin saying Tachanun again on Friday, June 2 (13 Sivan).

AHAVAT ACHIM MEMBERSHIP/ HOSPITALITY

Email Sara at membership@ahavatachim.org for membership details or Shabbat hospitality.

PERSONAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Various life cycle events related to members are announced in the bulletin (e.g., births and weddings of children/grandchildren, bar/bat mitzvahs of children, deaths requiring shiva observance, as well as travel to/ from Israel to study). Other personal announcements are not appropriate except as part of the bulletin's dedication ($36 cost - $54 with photo).

NUMBERS & INFO

ERUV: To subscribe for updates, email fairlawneruv@groups.io. Check status at https://groups.io/g/fairlawneruv or call 201-254-9190.
MIKVAH: 201-796-0350. At Shomrei Torah. Go to http://www.fairlawnmikvah.org/ for online booking.
TWITTER: AhavatAchimFL
FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100091322384429
INSTAGRAM: www.instagram.com/ahavatachim/
FLICKR: flickr.com/photos/ahavatachim/albums

BULLETIN DEDICATIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND SHUL CALENDAR

Email seplotnick@gmail.com to request an announcement of a simcha, refuah or life cycle event in the bulletin or to dedicate a bulletin for $36 ($54 w/ Photo).

COMMUNITY SECURITY

To volunteer and become part of our community security service, email Margo at security@ahavatachim.org.

COMMUNITY SECURITY SERVICE

KIDDUSH & SEUDAH SHLISHIT

To sponsor a Kiddush or Seudah Shlishit email David at dmgarfunkel@gmail.com.

ORTHODOX UNION תורה ומצוות
Enhancing Jewish Life

AHAVAT ACHIM

קהלת אהבת אחים

THE FAMILY SHUL

tikkun leil Shavuot dinner

Join us as we kick off Shavuot 5783 with a delicious dairy meal after davening on Thursday, May 25th, followed by shiurim all-night, given by Rabbi Shestack, Chana Shestack, and others, on the topic of "Mitzvot in Competition". The first shiur will start immediately after dinner. Keep the learning going with an extravagant dessert table and coffee!

rsvp by 5/19

Adults (12 years old+) - $25

Children Ages 6 - 11 - $13

Children Ages 3 - 5 - $5

Family Max - $72

events@ahavatachim.org

AHAVAT ACHIM

קהלת אהבת אחים

THE FAMILY SHUL

April 23, 2023

Dear Friends and Members,

It is with great pleasure that we announce that Ahavat Achim Orthodox Congregation of Fair Lawn will hold its Annual Journal Dinner on June 18, 2023. This year, as our shul celebrates its 45th year, we are pleased to honor Lori and David Garfunkel, a family that has been an integral part of the shul for more than four decades since their arrival in Fair Lawn.

Lori and David joined our shul in 1982. Through the years, they have both diligently worked to better our synagogue and have served our community in many capacities. In addition to being one of our resident kohanim, David is a Past President, Vice president, Treasurer, Bulletin Editor, and has served on multiple Rabbi search committees. He has maintained the Members' database and Yahrzeit database, and has produced the annual Journal Book for many years. But David is best known as "The Kiddush Man". As our in-house caterer, David arranges the food for, sets up, and cleans up after every kiddush and seuda shlishit. David's kitchen, his sacred domain, provides the warmth, family feeling, and sustenance we have all come to appreciate.

Lori has served as Sisterhood President, Synagogue Treasurer, Financial Secretary, House Committee Chairperson, Shiva Committee Chairperson, Journal Dinner Chairperson and was one of the founding board members of the Fair Lawn Mikvah Association. Lori sends out the synagogue's robocall messages, and she prepares the welcome gift bags for families who move into our side of Fair Lawn. She helped obtain a Homeland Security Grant and is currently working on its implementation. Basically, whenever someone wants something (anything) done, they call Lori.

Lori and David are the proud parents of Alyssa (and Daniel), Jonathan z"l, Debra (and Haim), and Uri. They currently have eight adorable grandchildren: Aharon, Leah, Ezra, Yehoshua, Yehuda, Eliana, Nava, and Avigail.

As important as it is to honor and thank our dedicated members, please remember that our Annual Dinner is our largest single fundraiser. This Annual Journal Dinner is critical to our budget. To attend the dinner, you can either solicit ads from your local merchants and family members or you can place your personal ads totaling $400. This evening should be a celebration with 100% participation. It will be a fun night with laughter, good food and drink where we celebrate our community while honoring Lori and David.

Attached is an ad blank for your solicitations and personal use. If you prefer printed ad blanks, they will be available in the shul lobby, or feel free to contact us at AhavatAchimDinner@gmail.com. The dinner is less than 2 months away, so we need to start soliciting immediately. A separate mailing of the dinner invitation will be forthcoming.

Please start soliciting ads and submit them to us (AhavatAchimDinner@gmail.com) as soon as possible.

Richie Mayer, President

Please check appropriate box:

- ☐ PLATINUM PAGE $1800
- ☐ GOLD PAGE $1000
- ☐ SILVER PAGE $750
- ☐ FULL PAGE $400**
- ☐ HALF PAGE $250
- ☐ QUARTER PAGE $125
- ☐ EIGHTH PAGE (business card) $75
- ☐ LISTING $50

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

_____

PHONE (___) _____

SOLICITED BY: _____

****$400 donation entitles you to 2 reservations for the dinner****

YOUR CONTRIBUTION IS TAX DEDUCTIBLE TO THE EXTENT ALLOWED BY LAW

Payment Options:

Check: Payable to Ahavat Achim

PAYPAL: paypal.com/us/fundraiser/charity/1444321

Visa or Mastercard: Please fill in below

Name on Card: _____

Amount: $_____; Card #: _____; Exp. Date: _____ Sec Code: _____

Billing Address: _____; Phone #: _____

Authorized Signature: _____

Please return this ad blank with your payment to:

AHAVAT ACHIM, 18-25 SADDLE RIVER ROAD, FAIR LAWN, NJ 07410 AhavatAchimDinner@gmail.com

THE FINAL AD DEADLINE IS JUNE 4, 2023

Ad copy (JPG, PDF, Word, etc…) can be emailed to AhavatAchimDinner@gmail.com
For hard-copy submissions, please print ad clearly or attach business card *(use a separate ad blank for each ad)*

Special Recognition Pages:

Rabbi's page ($18 per family)

_____

Dr. Richard Latkin Memorial page ($18)

_____

Memorial Listing ($10 per name)

_____

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Children's Listing ($5 per child)

_____ _____

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_____ _____

Grandchildren's Listing ($5 per grandchild)

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_____ _____

בס״ד

AHAVAT ACHIM

קהלת אהבת אחים

THE FAMILY SHUL

Orthodox Congregation of Fair Lawn

2023 Journal Dinner

Honoring

Lori & David Garfunkel

Sunday, June 18, 2023 **29 Sivan 5783**

Community Baseball Game

AHAVAT ACHIM
קהלת אהבת אחים
THE FAMILY SHUL

PLAY BALL

WATCH & CHEER

SUNDAY, MAY 28 2023

EDISON PARK AT 3PM

YOUTH & TEEN SPORTS COMPETITION TOO!

EVENTS@AHAVATACHIM.ORG | RSVP BY MAY 22

CHANUKAS HABAYIS

REDEDICATION OF THE FAIR LAWN MIKVAH

WEDNESDAY
MAY 31, 2023

INGE AND FREDY
HEISER SIMCHA HALL
SHOMREI TORAH

FAIR LAWN MIKVAH ASSOCIATION

Men and women invited
Formal invitation to follow

Mikvah USA

Covenant & Conversation

Jonathan Sacks
THE RABBI SACKS LEGACY

BAMIDBAR • במדבר STUDIES IN SPIRITUALITY

FROM THE TEACHINGS AND WRITINGS OF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS זצ"ל

With thanks to the Schimmel Family for their generous sponsorship of Covenant & Conversation, dedicated in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel.
"I have loved the Torah of R' Chaim Schimmel ever since I first encountered it. It strives to be not just about truth on the surface but also its connection to a deeper truth beneath. Together with Anna, his remarkable wife of 60 years, they built a life dedicated to love of family, community, and Torah. An extraordinary couple who have moved me beyond measure by the example of their lives." — Rabbi Sacks

The Sound of Silence

Bamidbar is usually read on the Shabbat before Shavuot. So the Sages connected the two. Shavuot is the time of the giving of the Torah. *Bamibar* means, "in the desert". What then is the connection between the desert and the Torah, the wilderness and God's word?

The Sages gave several interpretations. According to the Mechilta, the Torah was given publicly, openly, and in a place no one owns because had it been given in the Land of Israel, Jews would have said to the nations of the world, "You have no share in it." Instead, whoever wants to come and accept it, let them come and accept it.[1]

Another explanation: Had the Torah been given in Israel the nations of the world would have had an excuse for not accepting it. This follows the rabbinic tradition that, before God gave the Torah to the Israelites, He offered it to all the other nations and each found a reason to decline.[2]

Yet another: Just as the wilderness is free – it costs nothing to enter – so the Torah is free. It is God's gift to us.[3]

But there is another, more spiritual reason. The desert is a place of silence. There is nothing visually to distract you, and there is no ambient noise to muffle sound. To be sure, when the Israelites received the Torah, there was thunder and lightning and the sound of a shofar. The earth felt as if it were shaking at its foundations. But in a later age, when the Prophet Elijah stood at the same mountain after his confrontation with the prophets of Baal, he encountered God not in the whirlwind or the fire or the earthquake but in the *kol demamah dakah*, the still, small voice, literally "the sound of a slender silence" (1 Kings 19:9-12)." I define this as *the sound you can only hear if you are listening*. In the silence of the *midbar*, the desert, you can hear the *Medaber*, the Speaker, and the *medubar*, that which is spoken. To hear the voice of God you need a listening silence in the soul.

Many years ago British television produced a documentary series, *The Long Search*, on the world's great religions.[4] When it came to Judaism, the presenter Ronald Eyre seemed surprised by its blooming, buzzing confusion, especially the loud,

[1] Mechilta, Yitro, Bachodesh, 1.

[2] Ibid., 5.

[3] Ibid.

[4] BBC television, first shown 1977.

argumentative voices in the *beit midrash*, the house of study. Remarking on this to Elie Wiesel, he asked, "Is there such a thing as a *silence* in Judaism?" Wiesel replied: "Judaism is full of silences ... but *we don't talk about them*."

Judaism is a very verbal culture, a religion of holy words. Through words, God created the universe: "And God said, Let there be ... and there was." According to the Targum, it is our ability to speak that makes us human. It translates the phrase, "and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7) as "and man became a *speaking* soul." Words create. Words communicate. Our relationships are shaped, for good or bad, by language. Much of Judaism is about the power of words to make or break worlds.

So silence in Tanach often has a negative connotation. "Aaron was silent," says the Torah, after the death of his two sons Nadav and Avihu (Lev. 10:3). "The dead do not praise you," says Psalm 115, "nor do those who go down to the silence [of the grave]." When Job's friends came to comfort him after the loss of his children and other afflictions, "they sat down with him on the ground for seven days and seven nights, yet no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his pain was very great" (Job 2:13).

But not all silence is sad. Psalms tells us that "to You, silence is praise" (Ps. 65:2). If we are truly in awe at the greatness of God, the vastness of the universe and the almost infinite extent of time, our deepest emotions will indeed lie too deep for words. We will experience silent communion.

The Sages valued silence. They called it "a fence to wisdom" (Mishna Avot 3:13). If words are worth a coin, silence is worth two (Megilla 18a). R. Shimon ben Gamliel said, "All my days I have grown up among the wise, and I have found nothing better than silence" (Mishna Avot 1:17).

The service of the Priests in the Temple was accompanied by silence. The Levites sang in the courtyard, but the Priests – unlike their counterparts in other ancient religions - neither sang nor spoke while offering the sacrifices. One scholar, Israel Knohl, has accordingly spoken of "the silence of the Sanctuary". The Zohar (2a) speaks of silence as the medium in which both the Sanctuary above and the Sanctuary below are made.

There were also Jews who cultivated silence as a spiritual discipline. Bratslav Hassidim meditate in the fields. There are Jews who practise *ta'anit dibbur*, a "fast of words". Our most profound prayer, the private saying of the Amidah, is called *tefillah be-lachash*, the "silent prayer". It is based on the precedent of Hannah, praying for a child. "She spoke in her heart. Her lips moved but her voice was not heard" (1 Sam. 1:13).

God hears our silent cry. In the agonising tale of how Sarah told Abraham to send Hagar and her son away, the Torah tells us that when their water ran out and the young Ishmael was at the point of dying, Hagar cried, yet God heard "the voice of the child" (Gen. 21:16-17). Earlier when the angels came to visit Abraham and told him that Sarah would have a child, Sarah laughed inwardly, that is, silently, yet she was heard by God (Gen. 18:12-13). God hears our thoughts even when they are not expressed in speech.

The silence that counts, in Judaism, is thus a listening silence – and listening is the supreme religious art. Listening means making space for others to speak and be heard. As I point out in my commentary to the Siddur,[5] there is no English word that remotely equals the Hebrew verb *sh-m-a* in its wide range of senses: to listen, to hear, to pay attention, to understand, to internalise and to respond in deed.

This was one of the key elements in the Sinai covenant, when the Israelites, having already said twice, "All that God says, we will do," then said, "All that God says, we will do and we will hear [*ve-nishma*]" (Ex. 24:7). It is the *nishma* – listening, hearing, heeding, responding – that is the key religious act.

[5] Koren Shalem Siddur.

Thus Judaism is not only a religion of doing-and-speaking; it is also a religion of listening. Faith is *the ability to hear the music beneath the noise*. There is the silent music of the spheres, about which Psalm 19 speaks:

> The heavens declare the glory of God
> The skies proclaim the work of His hands.
> Day to day they pour forth speech,
> Night to night they communicate knowledge.
> There is no speech, there are no words,
> Their voice is not heard.
> Yet their music carries throughout the earth.

There is the voice of history that was heard by the prophets. And there is the commanding voice of Sinai that continues to speak to us across the abyss of time. I sometimes think that people in the modern age have found the concept of "Torah from Heaven" problematic, not because of some new archaeological discovery but because we have lost the habit of listening to the sound of transcendence, a voice beyond the merely human.

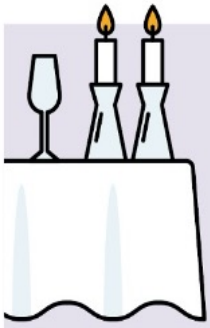
It is fascinating that despite his often-fractured relationship with Judaism, Sigmund Freud created in psychoanalysis a deeply Jewish form of healing. He himself called it the "speaking cure," but it is in fact a *listening* cure. Almost all effective forms of psychotherapy involve deep listening.

Is there enough listening in the Jewish world today? Do we, in marriage, really listen to our spouses? Do we as parents truly listen to our children? Do we, as leaders, hear the unspoken fears of those we seek to lead? Do we internalise the sense of hurt of the people who feel excluded from the community? Can we really claim to be listening to the voice of God if we fail to listen to the voices of our fellow humans?

In his poem, 'In memory of W B Yeats,' W H Auden wrote:

> In the deserts of the heart
> Let the healing fountain start.

From time to time we need to step back from the noise and hubbub of the social world and create in our hearts the stillness of the desert where, within the silence, we can hear the *kol demamah dakah*, the still, small voice of God, telling us we are loved, we are heard, we are embraced by God's everlasting arms, we are not alone.[6]



Around the Shabbat Table

1. Where else could God have chosen to give the Torah to the Children of Israel? Why do you think He chose the desert instead?
2. Why is listening important? Why is it "supreme religious art"?
3. Do you find it hard to listen? How can you improve this skill?

● These questions come from this week's **Family Edition** to Rabbi Sacks' Covenant & Conversation. For an interactive, multi-generational study, check out the full edition at **www.RabbiSacks.org/covenant-conversation-family-edition/bamidbar/the-sound-of-silence/**.

[6] For more on the theme of listening, see parshat Bereishit, "The Art of Listening," and parshat Eikev, "The Spirituality of Listening."