



CANDLE LIGHTING 7:49 PM | 29 IYAR | MAY 16, 2026 | HAVDALA 8:53 PM

ערב ראש חודש
שבת פרשת במדבר
EREV ROSH CHODESH
SHABBAT PARSHAT BAMIDBAR

Haftorah is from "מחר חודש", the Haftorah for when Sunday (tomorrow) is Rosh Chodesh. (Samuel I 20:18-42). We bless the month of Sivan. We say אב הרחמים. Chapter 6 of Pirkei Avot.

FRIDAY EVENING

MINCHA	6:26 PM
EARLIEST CANDLES	6:37 PM
SHKIA	8:07 PM
TZAIT HAKOCHAVIM	8:47 PM

SHABBAT

HASHKAMA	7:45 AM
SHACHARIT - MAIN	9:00 AM
POST-HASHKAMA SHIUR	≈ 9:15 AM
LAST KRIAT SHEMA	9:15 AM
FUNDAMENTALS SHIUR	≈ 11:30 AM
PRE-MINCHA SHIUR	6:45 PM
MINCHA	7:25 PM
SHKIA	8:08 PM
MAARIV	8:53 PM

החדש הזה לכם

Molad for Sivan is Shabbat, May 16, 6:02 PM & 15 Chalokim.

ראש חודש סיון יהיה ביום ראשון
 הבא עלינו ועל כל ישראל לטובה

SEUDAH SHLISHIT

Ruth, 1/2-Perek-By-1/2-Perek Shiur at Seudah Shlishit, featuring Akiva Gordon (1:1-11), Benji Cooper (1:12-22), Matt Neubauer (2:1-12), Zach Doberman (2:13-23), Eli Shteingart (3:1-9), Steven Plotnick (3:10-18), Chayim Goldberg (4:1-11), & Andrew Wigod (4:12-22).



	SUNDAY 5/17	MONDAY 5/18	TUESDAY 5/19	WEDNESDAY 5/20	THURSDAY 5/21	FRIDAY 5/22
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WEEKDAY MINYANIM AT AHAVAT ACHIM

SHACHARIT	6:20/8:00 AM	6:15 AM	6:25 AM	6:25 AM	6:15 AM	
2ND SHACHARIT MINYON - YISHTABACH AT 7:40 AM		7:25 AM	7:25 AM	7:25 AM	7:25 AM	
MINCHA/MAARIV	7:57 PM	7:58 PM	7:59 PM	8:00 PM	8:01 PM	
ZMANI						
Earliest Talit	4:32 AM	4:31 AM	4:30 AM	4:29 AM	4:28 AM	
Gedolah	1:30 PM	1:30 PM	1:30 PM	1:30 PM	1:30 PM	
Shkia	8:09 PM	8:10 PM	8:11 PM	8:12 PM		
Tzait	8:49 PM	8:50 PM	8:51 PM	8:52 PM		



UPCOMING EVENTS

May 17 - Boker Tov Sivan - Musical Hallel & Breakfast, sponsored by the Czinnis in honor of Judah's 5th Hebrew Birthday. RSVP here: [Hallel](#)

May 24 - Softball (3:00 PM) and Pizza (4:30 PM) at Edison Park. RSVP here: [Picnic](#)

June 14 - Bowling at Bowlero, Fair Lawn! Sunday, 8:00 PM, RSVP here: [PINS](#)

June 23 - Annual Membership Meeting, Ice Cream Social, 8:45 PM.

July 3 - Friday Night Independence Day BBQ /Shabbat Dinner. RSVP here: [250 Years](#)

July 12 - Summer Hike, Ramapo Valley. 10:00 AM. RSVP: [Take a Hike](#)

IN OUR FUTURE - KIDDUSH, SEUDAH SHLISHIT, & ETC.

May 23 - Kiddush is sponsored by Ilana & Nate Schwitzer in memory of their parents.

May 23 - Seudah Shlishit is sponsored by Eli Zezon in memory of [בין אליהו](#).

May 30 - Kiddush is sponsored in honor of Barbara & Ziv Farajun to wish them bracha, hatzlacha and yishuv tov on moving to Israel

June 6 - Birthday and Anniversary Kiddush

June 6 - Seudah Shlishit is sponsored by Eli Zezon in memory of [בן שמואל](#).

June 20 - Kiddush is sponsored by Shelly & Steve Winchester celebrating Daniel's Avf Ruf and upcoming wedding to Yael Simons.

BIRTHDAY & ANNIVERSARY KIDDUSH

To add a birthday or anniversary to our April list (next Kiddush on Shabbat, June 6), click here: [SIMCHA](#). Listings/sponsorships are \$36 per family per month. RSVP for the May birthday/ anniversary Kiddush by Sunday night, May 31.

SHIURIM

- PESHAT OF THE PARSHA, Tuesdays at 1:00 PM, click here: [Parsha](#).
- POST-HASHKAMA SHIUR, analyzing Mishlei (Proverbs)
- FUNDAMENTALS OF JEWISH THOUGHT, after Kiddush.
- SHABBAT SHIUR, **SANHEDRIN CH. 8**, 40 minutes prior to mincha.
- TZURBA M'RABANAN w/ Zack Doberman, Wednesdays at 8:30 PM. In-person at the shul and via Zoom.
- SEDER ON THE SIDDUR, at Seudah Shlishit.

GITA COOPERWASSER ע"ה YOUTH EVENTS

May 22 - First Day of Shavuot, Edison Playground, 3:45 PM.

May 23 - Shul Playground, followed by an Interactive youth program and dinner, 3:45 PM.

GITA COOPERWASSER ע"ה SHABBAT YOUTH INFO



• SHABBAT YOUTH LEADERS:

3RD - 5TH: LETIZIA

K - 2ND: & ARIELLA & SOPHIA

3 YRS - PRE-K: ARIELYS & ARNELLA

- Youth groups for 3rd through 5th Graders starts at 9:00 AM (Drop Off) in the Youth Room on left on entering the social hall.
- Youth group for children 4 years old through 1st Grade starts at 9:00 AM (Drop Off) in the Youth Room on the right upon entering the social hall.
- Parent & Me, 9:00 AM in the Beit Midrash.
- Rabbi Meet & Greet, Friday night, kids can 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.
- Children's corner at Seudah Shlishit, 1st to 5th graders will get 10 Torah questions in 10 minutes from Rabbi Shestack, with special snacks, tickets and more.

BOARD MEETINGS 8:15 PM

May 26 - At shul w/Zoom option, 8:45 PM (after Mincha-Maariv).

Friday Evening, May 15



Saturday Evening, May 16



Sunday Evening, May 17



Monday Evening, May 18



Tuesday Evening, May 19



Wednesday Evening, May 20



18-25 Saddle River Road
Fair Lawn, NJ 07410
201.797.0502

<http://www.ahavatachim.org>



NAME	HEBREW DATE	CANDLE EVENING OF	DEDICATOR	RELATIONSHIP
Czarna Bickel	3	May 18	Jack Bickel	Grandmother
Friedrich D. & Lina Rothschild	3	May 18	Audrey Bickel	Grandparents
Walter Leo Spier A-1838	5	May 20	Arnie Spier	Father
Nacha Bat Yitzchak	6	May 21	Shirley Vann	Mother
Samual Smedresman	7	May 22	Steve Smedresman	Grandfather
Solomon Heimer	9	May 24	Sophie Infield	Friend
Louis Lewisohn	10	May 25	Robert Lewisohn	Father
Sue Weinflash	10	May 25	Joan Goldberg	Mother
Ernest Kuhl	12	May 27	Linda Stock	Father
Arnold M. Mailman	12	May 27	Elyce Smedresman	Father
Molly Mittelpunkt	16	May 31	Eita Latkin	Cousin
Rymer Frankel	21	June 5	Elyce Smedresman	Grandmother
Michael Lerner	23	June 7	Laurie Phipps	Father
Baruch Mafzir	24	June 8	Orit Zefon	Father
Sara Page	25	June 9	Eita Latkin	Cousin

DAVID SCHWITZER^{ר"ע} SOCIAL HALL

Contact Lori at garfmom@gmail.com to book the David Schwitzer^{ר"ע} Social Hall for an event or occasion. \$250 (members), \$325 (Associates), or \$400 paid in advance for non-members, plus the cost of clean up (and a \$150 refundable security/cleaning deposit). Private caterers must be approved by the Rabbi.

CHESED TEAM

If you or someone you know needs assistance, email us at chesed@ahavatachim.org.

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 yahrzeit@ahavatachim.org to arrange.

DONATE A SEFER, ETC.

Donate Siddurim & Machzorim (\$40), and Chumashim (\$60). Contact David at dmgarfunkel@gmail.com for details.

MISHEBAYRACH

For a Mishebayrach pledge 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."

HONORARIA

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

SINGLES SHIDDUCH GROUP

Reach out to Rabbi Shestack or Sara Levine (saralevine06@gmail.com) if interested.

SPONSORSHIPS

Sponsorships opportunities for Yahrzeits, 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 Steve Plotnick for questions or clarifications.

MEN'S CLUB

Email MensClub@AhavatAchim.Org to join the Men's Club.

**יום המיוחס/YOM HAMYUCHAS - DAY OF DISTINCTION (FROM OU.ORG)
MONDAY - MAY 18**

The forty-sixth day of the Omer (the 2nd day of Sivan) is called Yom HaMeyuchas, the Day of Distinction. It is the day before the Shloshet Yemei Hagbalah, the Three Days of Restraint. What is so distinguished about this day that entitles it to a special name? Several possible answers:

(1) The Sages, in their great sensitivity, were concerned even for the feelings of inanimate objects (e.g., embarrassment of the challot, the Shabbat loaves, while Kiddush is recited over wine, requiring the challot to be covered), and even for the feelings of "entities" such as units of time, like days, the existence of which is even more tenuous than that of "objects." So they gave a name to this day, the "Day of Distinction", as it sat forlorn in the shadow of Shavuot and the Shloshet Yemei Hagbalah.

(2) On the First of Sivan, HaShem instructed Moshe to tell the nation, "You shall be a Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation" (Shemot 19:6). On the 2nd day of Sivan, Moshe delivered this message and the people answered, "Everything that G-d has commanded we will do" (Shemot 19:8). So that great day of acceptance of the Torah by the people was given the title of the "Day of Distinction."

(3) This Day symbolizes a machloket, a disagreement involving the Tanna Rav Yosi as to what day the first Shavuot took place, which is an example of the Oral Torah (the Torah She-B'al Peh) that is the foundation of our belief and practice. It is the existence of this day in this week that makes this machloket possible.

(4) Judaism is fundamentally a meritocracy. A person is rewarded for his own achievements, not those of his father's or his sons. This is exemplified by the principle that "a Torah Scholar who is a 'mamzer' (the product of an illicit sexual union), is considered superior to a Kohen Gadol, who is an ignoramus in Torah." Thus yichus or yachas, good family ties, should matter less than one's own achievements. If we take the word yachas, spelled 'Yud,' 'Chet,' 'Samech' out of the word Meyuchas, special, we are left with 'Mem' and 'Vav,' or forty-six, as in the Forty-Sixth Day of the Omer.

שלושת ימי הגבלה

SHLOSHET YEMEI HAGBALAH - THE THREE DAYS OF RESTRAINT

The שלושת ימי הגבלה period begins Monday night, May 18, 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. On these three days Moshe commanded the Jewish People to observe; restraint in approaching Mt. Sinai and restraint from marital intimacy. The purpose of the latter was so that the Jewish People would be pure and full participants on the day that HaShem would give the Torah to them, which event occurred on the 6th day of Sivan, according to one Tannaic opinion, or the 7th day (for this first Shavuot), according to Rav Yosi.

**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 for 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 become part of our community security service, email Margo at security@ahavatachim.org.

**HOW TO DONATE TO THE SHUL
USING PAYPAL**

Please do not simply pay the shul using PayPal, as that incurs a 3% service charge that will get charged to the shul. Instead, please use our fee-free dedicated PayPal link <http://paypal.com/us/fundraiser/charity/1444321>. PayPal will email you a receipt for your charitable donation and the shul will receive 100% of your donation. [Make sure you click the "SHARE MY NAME" box so the shul will know who paid so that we can credit your account.]



Mishlei/Proverbs
Post-Hashkama Shiur 28 – The Macro View

כ"מִצִּיל נַפְשׁוֹת עַד אָמֶת וְנִפְסַח בְּזַבְיִים מִרְמָה: כ"בִּירְאֵת יְ-ה-וָה מִבְּטַח-עַז וְלִבְנָיו יִהְיֶה מַחְסֵה: כ"גִּירְאֵת יְ-ה-וָה מְקוֹר חַיִּים לְסוֹר מִמְקֵשֵׁי מָוֶת: כ"דבְּרֵב-עַם הַדֶּרֶת-מֶלֶךְ וּבְאֶפְסֹס לְאֵם מַחֲתַת רָזוֹן: כ"האֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם רַב־תְּבוּנָה וּקְצָר־אוֹיֹם מְרִים אַנְלֹת: כ"והַיִּי בְּשָׂרִים לֵב מִרְפָּא וְרַקֵּב עֲצָמוֹת קִנְאָה: כ"זעֲשֶׂהוּ וְיִמְכְּדוּ חֲגָן אֶבְיוֹן: כ"חבְּרַעְתּוֹ יִדְתָּה רִשְׁעָה וְחֹסֶה בְּמוֹתוֹ צַדִּיק: כ"טלֵב נָבוֹן תְּנוּחַת חֲכָמָה וּבְהִקְרַב כְּסִילִים תִּנְדַּע: ל"צדָּקָה תְרוֹמֵם-גּוֹי וְחֶסֶד לְאֲמִים חֲטָאת: ל"דצוֹן-מֶלֶךְ לְעַבְדּוֹ מִשְׁכִּיל וְעִבְרָתוֹ תִּהְיֶה מְבִישׁ: —

25A truthful witness saves souls, but he who speaks lies is [a man of] deceit. 26The fear of Hashem is a stronghold, which will be a refuge for one's sons. 27The fear of Hashem is a fountain [source] of life, allowing one to avoid the snares of death. 28Numerous people are the glory of a king, but a lack of people will be the downfall of the nation. 29Being slow to anger shows insight, but a hothead elevates foolishness. 30A tender heart leads to a healthy body, but envy rots bones. 31One who withholds what is due to a poor man disgraces his Maker, but He is honored by those that pity the poor. 32A wicked man is felled by his own evil, but a righteous man has hope even in death. 33Wisdom rests in the heart of a judicious man, but [what little wisdom is] in the midst of the fools becomes known. 34Righteousness will elevate a nation, but when a regime sins there will be reproach. 35The king favors a faithful servant, but his wrath befalls one that acts shamefully.¹

A. As Chapter 14 concludes, Shlomo appears to pull the lens back from the individual and his fate to the larger moral order of society and its rulers, *i.e.*, Hashem above or a human king below.

B. Fear of Hashem.

- V. 26 → The fear of Hashem is a stronghold, which will be a refuge for one's sons.
 - o Bereshit 22:12 – “. . . for now I know that you are a God fearing man, as you did not withhold your son, your only one, from Me.” Bereshit 22:16-18 – “. . . because you have done this thing and you did not withhold your son, your only one . . . I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand that is on the seashore, and your descendants will inherit the cities of their enemies. And through your children shall be blessed all the nations of the world, because you hearkened to My voice.”
- V. 27 → The fear of Hashem is a fountain of life, allowing one to avoid the snares of death.
 - o Vilna Gaon notes that the gematria of “בִּירְאֵת” (first word of verse 26) is 613, mitzvot (as that is the number of Mitzvot), and that of “יִרְאֵת” (first word of this verse, containing no ב), is 611, Torah (as that is the gematria of the word “תורה”), and, in the context of these pasukim, that suggests that verse 26 refers to Olam HaZeh, and verse 27 to Olam HaBah.

C. Nations, peoples, and kings.

- V. 28 → Numerous people are the glory of a king, but a lack of people will be the downfall of his nation.
 - o Rabbeinu Yonah sees this as affirming the previous pasukim in the context of monarchs, as kings who do not fear Hashem must rely on manpower for their glory and security.
- V. 34 → Righteousness will elevate a nation, but when a regime sins there will be reproach.
 - o The term “וְחֶסֶד” appears to go untranslated in most English renditions of this pasuk, apparently taking חֶסֶד not as a second virtue to be translated independently, but as shaping how צְדָקָה is understood in context. On the other hand, Artscroll's Tanach Series translates this pasuk as “Charity will uplift a nation, but the kindness of regimes is a sin.” In that

¹ Mishlei Chapter 14.

vein, the Chevel Nachalah reminds us, as an example, that kindness to murderers is a sin when it results in harm to your fellows.

- V. 35 → The king favors a faithful servant, but his wrath befalls one that acts shamefully.
 - o Rabbeinu Yonah sees this couplet as referencing two different people whose deeds are identical, but the first is doing it out of love and awe of Hashem, while second to glorify themselves or who are just going through the motions.

D. As the verses in Sections B and C, above, describe the moral architecture of the world, *i.e.*, fear of Hashem above, and kingship/nationhood at the public level below, Section D reflecting the remaining pasukim in this chapter shows the people through whom that order is either upheld or betrayed in daily life.

- V. 25 → A truthful witness saves souls, but he who speaks lies is [a man of] deceit.
 - o The second half of the pasuk, “וְיִפְיֵה כְּזָבִים מְרַמֶּה”, literally reads, “and one who breathes out lies — deceit,” so translators must supply the implied connection in English, and interpretations vary significantly.
 - o Ralbag sees the second half of the pasuk as the opposite of the first, so he sees it as liars destroy lives.
 - o Metzudot sees it as liars saving their fellow deceivers by lying for them.
- V. 29 → Being slow to anger shows insight, but a hothead elevates foolishness.
 - o There seems to be a difference in the understanding of the first half of this pasuk as to whether being slow to anger creates insight/understanding, or whether insight/understanding results in one being slow to anger.
 - o We previously discussed 14:17, “A hothead commits folly. . .” Malbim sees these two pasukim as describing two different types of hotheads, *i.e.*, verse 17 discusses one whose temper overwhelms him in the moment causing an immediate reaction, while the hothead of this verse seethes but controls himself, carefully plotting his revenge.
- V. 30 → A tender heart leads to a healthy body, but envy rots bones.
 - o As mentioned, Malbim sees the hothead in verse 29 not as raging, but seething inside. That understanding would make verse 30 a logical follow up, now looking at the impact of envy, an emotion in my experience that is usually bottled up inside, on one’s physical health.
- V. 31 → One who withholds what is due to a poor man disgraces his Maker, but He is honored by those that pity the poor.
 - o Malbim sees the first part of the couplet as referring to a poor wage earner, and the disgrace it is to deny him his wages and forcing him to take charity, followed by praise of those that give charity receiving nothing in return.
- V. 32 → A wicked man is felled by his own evil, but a righteous man has hope even in death.
 - o Ibn Ezra sees this as a follow up to the previous verse. The wicked man exploits the poor thinking the wrongfully retained riches will benefit himself, while for the righteous/charitable person, death itself does not terminate the security of his path.
- V. 33 → Wisdom rests in the heart of a judicious man, but [what little wisdom is] in the midst of the fools becomes known.
 - o Rabbi Hirsch sees this as continuing upon a common theme of Mishlei, that a wise man calmly examines his thought process as well as its conclusions, while a fool makes snap judgments.

BOKER TOV SIVAN

- MUSICAL HALLEL
- KIDS ACTIVITIES
- FREE BREAKFAST

SUNDAY MAY 17TH

9:15 AM SHACHARIT (Hallel at 9:40)

10:00 AM ARTS & CRAFTS for Kids

10:30 AM BREAKFAST

[RSVP AT TINYURL.COM/BOKERTOVSIVAN](https://tinyurl.com/bokertovsivan) BY 5/13

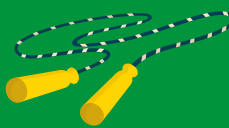


Save the Date!

Playdate in the Park: Shavuot Edition



Join us at Edison Park on
Friday, May 22nd at 3:45 P.M.



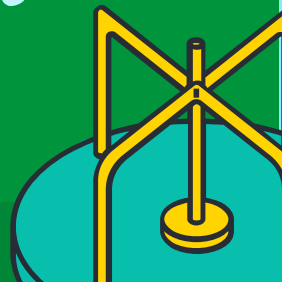
Fruit & snacks will be provided!
Bring your own water.

please do not bring snacks containing nuts



AHAVAT ACHIM
קהלת אהבת אחים

704.764.1111



Shavuot Schedule

5786 | 2026



Perek by Perek Round Robin

Join us for Seudah Shlishit on 5/15 for a special Round Robin on Megillat Ruth

Tikkun Leil Schedule

“It’s a Machloket!”

Great Rabbinic Debates

11:00pm Rabbi Shestack	THE DAY AFTER [PASSOVER] SHABBAT Sadducees vs. Pharisees
12:00am Rich Mayer	NOT IN HEAVEN'S NAME Moshe vs. Korach
1:00am Zack Doberman	WHO'S THE GOAT? Beit Shamai vs. Beit Hillel
2:00am Shalom Brauser	TORAH OF THE CAVE OR THE WORLD Rashbi vs. R' Yishmael
3:00am Chayim Goldberg	THEY'RE MORE THAN GOOD...THEY'RE GLATT! Beit Yosef vs. Rama
4:00am Stephen Agress	IT'S ELECTRIC! E-COMMERCE ON SHABBAT Stephen Agress vs. The World
5:00am	Shacharit

Shavuot Day 1

Youth Park Meetup

Edison Park @ 3:45

Women's Shiur

50 IS THE NEW 50:
Sh'mita-Yovel vs. Omer-Shavuot
Sufian Residence @ 4:00

Shavuot Day 2

Dairy Kiddush Luncheon

sponsored by
Nate and Ilana Schwitzer

Shavuot Youth Program

@ 3:45 followed by dinner



Fun and games for all ages!



AHAVAT ACHIM
קהלת אהבת אחים
THE FAMILY SHUL



Good food!



COMMUNITY SOFTBALL GAME & PIZZA

Join us on Sunday, May 24th at 3pm for a community softball game at Edison Park, followed by a pizza picnic at 4:30pm!

**COME TO PLAY BALL, CHEER ON PLAYERS,
OR KICKOFF SUMMER WITH A CHILL PIZZA PICNIC!**

\$7 PER PERSON / \$25 PER FAMILY FOR PIZZA

RSVP BY 5/20!



AHAVAT ACHIM
קהלת אהבת אחים
THE FAMILY SHUL

SPRING-SUMMER EVENTS

FRI-SAT
MAY 22-23

SHAVUOT

SUN, MAY 24

COMMUNITY
SOFTBALL GAME
FOLLOWED BY PIZZA

SUN, JUNE 14

BOWLING NIGHT
FOR ADULTS

TUES, JUNE 23

ANNUAL MEETING
+ ICE CREAM SOCIAL

FRI, JULY 3

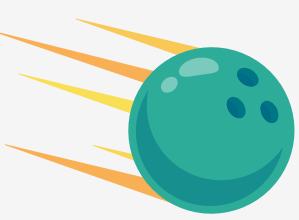
BBQ SHABBAT DINNER

SUN, JULY 12

SUMMER HIKE
AT RAMAPO VALLEY
COUNTY RESERVATION

For More Information Visit:

www.ahavatachim.org/aa-events/upcoming-events/



AHAVAT ACHIM
קהלת אהבת אחים
THE FAMILY SHUL

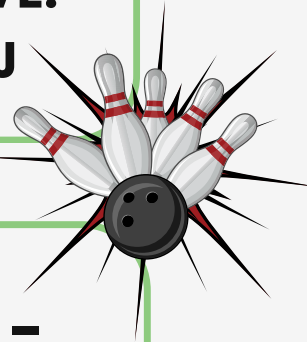
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Jonathan Sacks
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FROM THE TEACHINGS AND WRITINGS OF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS זצ"ל

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

This year's series of essays were originally written and recorded by Rabbi Sacks זצ"ל in 5773 (2012–2013). These timeless messages are accompanied by a new [Family Edition](#) created to inspire intergenerational learning on the Parsha.

Love as Law, Law as Love

On the face of it the connections between the sedra and haftara of Bamidbar are slender. The first has to do with demography. Bamidbar begins with a census of the people. The haftara begins with Hosea's vision of a time when "the number of the children of Israel will be like the sand on the seashore which cannot be measured or numbered." There was a time when the Israelites could be counted; the day will come when they will be countless. That is one contrast between the future and the past.

The second goes deeper. The sedra and the book that bears its name are called Bamidbar, meaning "in the wilderness". The book is about the wilderness years in both a physical and spiritual sense: a time of wandering and internal conflict. Hosea, however, foresees a time when God will bring the people back to the desert and there enact a second honeymoon:

*I will lead her into the wilderness
and speak tenderly to her . . .
There she will respond as in the days of her
youth,
As in the day she came out of Egypt.*

Hosea 2:14

What gives the haftara its special resonance, however, is the fact that Bamidbar is always read on the Shabbat preceding Shavuot, the festival of the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. The fact that tradition chose this of all prophetic passages tells us something deeply moving about how the Jewish people understood this festival, and about the Torah itself as the living connection between a people and God.

The story of Hosea is one of the strangest of that great chain of visionaries we call the

Prophets. It is the story of a marriage. The prophet married a woman called Gomer. He was deeply in love with her. We can infer this, because of all the prophets, Hosea is the most eloquent and passionate on the subject of love. Gomer, however, proved faithless. She left home, had a series of lovers, was serially unfaithful, and was eventually forced to sell herself into slavery. Yet Hosea, caught between anger and tender longing, found that he could not relinquish his love for her.

In a flash of prophetic insight, God leads him to understand that his own personal experience mirrors that between God and the Israelites. He had rescued them from slavery, led them through the wilderness, and brought them to their new home, the land of Israel. But the people proved faithless. They worshipped other gods. They were promiscuous in their spiritual attachments. By rights, says God, I should have abandoned them. I should have called them (as the prophet called his third child) *Lo-ammi*, “you are not My people”. Yet God’s love is inextinguishable. He too cannot let go. Whatever the people’s sins, He will bring them back into the desert, the scene of their first love, and their marriage will be renewed.

The Talmud in Pesachim gives an extraordinary account of the dialogue between God and Hosea – the unwritten story of the episode that precedes chapter 1 of the book of Hosea: The Holy One, blessed be He, says to Hosea, “Your children have

sinned.” To this, the prophet should have replied, “they are Your children, the children of your favoured ones, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Be merciful to them.” Not only does he not say this, but what he actually says is, “Lord of the universe, the whole world is yours. Exchange them for another nation.” The Holy One, blessed be He, says, “What shall I do with this old man? I will tell him to go and marry a prostitute and have children by her. Then I will tell him to send her away. If he can, then I too will send Israel away.”

There are few more telling passages in the whole of rabbinic literature. If I were to summarise it, I would say: Who is a leader of the Jewish people? Only one who loves the Jewish people. Reading the prophetic literature, it is easy to see the prophets as social critics. They see the people’s faults; they speak them aloud; their message is often a negative one, foretelling disaster. The Talmud is telling us that such a view is superficial and misses the essential point. The prophets loved their people. They spoke not out of condemnation but from the depths of deep desire. They knew that Israel was capable of, and had been summoned to, great things. They never criticised in order to distance themselves, to set themselves above and apart. They spoke in love – God’s love. That is why, in Israel’s darkest nights, the prophets always had a message of hope.

There is one verse in the haftara so deep that it deserves special attention. God is telling the prophet about the time yet to

come when He will bring His people back to the places they once visited, the desert where they first pledged their love, and there they will renew their relationship:

On that day – declares the Lord – you will call Me ‘my Husband’; you will no longer call Me ‘my Master’.

Hosea 2.16

The resonances of this sentence are impossible to capture in translation. The key words in Hebrew are *Ish* and *Baal*, and they both mean ‘husband’. Hosea is telling us about two kinds of marital relationships – and two kinds of culture. One is signalled by the word *Baal*, which not only means ‘husband’ but is also the name of the Canaanite god. Baal, one of the central figures in the pantheon of the ancient Near East, was the storm god of lightning and the fertility god who sends rain to impregnate the ground. He was the macho deity who represented sex and power on a cosmic scale

Hosea, punning on the name, hints at the kind of world that emerges when you worship sex and power. It is a world without loyalties, where relationships are casual and people taken advantage of and then dropped. A marriage predicated on the word *Baal* is a relationship of male dominance in which women are used not loved, owned not honoured. The

word *Baal* means, among other things, ‘owner’.

Against this Hosea describes a different kind of relationship. Here, his literary device is not pun but quotation. In using the word *Ish* to describe the relationship between God and His people, the prophet is evoking a verse at the beginning of Genesis – the words of the first man seeing the first woman:

“This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called ‘woman’ for she was taken out of man.”

Gen. 2:23

Daringly, Hosea suggests that the making of woman from man mirrors the creation of humanity from God. First they are separated, then they are joined again, but now as two distinct persons each of whom respects the integrity of the other. What joins them is a new kind of relationship built on fidelity and trust.

How we understand the giving of the Torah depends on how we see the relationship between God and the people He chose to be His special witnesses on earth. Inevitably, the language of Judaism when it speaks of God is metaphorical. The Infinite cannot be compassed in finite categories. The metaphors the prophets use are many. God is, among other things, Artist, Creator,

King, Master, Warrior, Shepherd, Judge, Teacher, Redeemer and Father. From the point of view of God-as-King, the Torah is the code of laws He ordains for the people He rules. From the perspective of God-as-father-and-teacher, it represents the instructions He gives His children as to how they should best live. Adopting the image of Artist-Creator, Jewish mystics throughout the ages saw the Torah as the architecture of the universe, the deep structure of existence.

Of all the metaphors, however, the most lovely and most intimate was of God as husband, with Israel as His bride. Isaiah says:

For your Maker is your husband, The Lord Almighty is His name . . .

Isaiah 54:5

Likewise Jeremiah:

‘Return, faithless people,’ declares the Lord, ‘for I am your husband.’

Jeremiah 3:14

This is how Ezekiel describes the marriage between God and Israel in the days of Moses:

Later I passed by, and when I looked at you

and saw that you were old enough for love, I spread the corner of My garment over you and covered your nakedness. I gave you My solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you — declares the Lord, God – and you became Mine.

Ezekiel 16:8

From this perspective, the Torah is more than a constitution and code of laws, more than a set of instructions or even the metaphysical DNA of the universe. It is a marriage contract – a token and gesture of love.

When attraction, that most fleeting of emotions, seeks to perpetuate itself as love, it takes the form of marriage: marriage as covenant, in which both parties pledge themselves to one another, to be loyal, steadfast, to stay together through difficult times as well as good and to achieve together what neither could do alone. A marriage is created not by force or coercion but by words – the word given, the word received, the word honoured in faithfulness and trust. There are such things as the laws of marriage (the respective responsibilities of husband and wife), but marriage of its essence is more than a dispassionate set of

obligations and rights. It is law suffused with love, and love translated into law. That, according to this metaphor, is what the Sinai event was.

The supreme poet of marriage was Hosea. By reading this haftara on the Shabbat before Shavuot, we make a momentous affirmation: that in giving the Torah to Israel, God was not asserting His power, dominance, or lordship over Israel (what Hosea means when he uses the word *baal*). He was declaring His love. That is why it is no accident that the words with which the haftara end – among the most beautiful in the entire religious literature of humankind – are the words Jewish men recite every weekday morning as they wind the strap of the hand-tefillin like a wedding ring around their finger, renewing daily the marriage covenant of Sinai:

*I will betroth you to Me for ever;
I will betroth you to Me in righteousness
and justice, love, and compassion;
I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness,
And you will know God.*

Hosea 2:20



Around the Shabbat Table

1. Is our covenant with God similar to a business contract? Why do you think the Tanach expressly compares our relationship with God to a husband-wife relationship?
2. How could wrapping tefillin like a wedding ring change the way you view prayer?
3. What is the difference between following the laws out of fear versus out of love?

● 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 <https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/bamidbar/love-as-law-law-as-love/>



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