



Carnegie Shul Chatter

May 14, 2021



Shabbat Shalom
Chag Shavuot Sameach

Light Shabbat candles — 8:11pm Services 10am

Light Shavuot candles Sunday night — 8:13pm

Yizkor services Tuesday 11am via Zoom:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81596143536>

Bamidbar in a Nutshell

Numbers 1:1–4:20

In the Sinai Desert, G-d says to conduct a census of the twelve tribes of Israel. Moses counts 603,550 men of draftable age (20 to 60 years); the tribe of Levi, numbering 22,300 males age one month and older, is counted separately. The Levites are to serve in the Sanctuary. They replace the firstborn, whose number they approximated, since they were disqualified when they participated in the worshipping of the Golden Calf. The 273 firstborn who lacked a Levite to

Israel Under Attack

This week Israel has come under attack once again from Hamas. More than a thousand rockets have been fired from Gaza into Israel. Regardless of any grievances, real or perceived, that Hamas has against Israel, the indiscriminate firing of rockets at Israel is appalling.

If the United States fires a carefully-guided cruise missile at a purely military target and a single civilian is injured or killed as a result of collateral damage, the world is appalled. But when Hamas launches over a thousand rockets at non-military, civilian targets, much of the world says nothing and many even applaud. How is this even remotely conscionable?

And when Israel retaliates, they must retaliate against missile launchers that are hidden among Gaza's civilian population, and against arms storage warehouses that are in civilian buildings and

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replace them had to pay a five-shekel “ransom” to redeem themselves.

When the people broke camp, the three Levite clans dismantled and transported the Sanctuary, and reassembled it at the center of the next encampment. They then erected their own tents around it: the Kohathites, who carried the Sanctuary’s vessels (the Ark, menorah, etc.) in their specially designed coverings on their shoulders, camped to its south; the Gershonites, in charge of its tapestries and roof coverings, to its west; and the families of Merari, who transported its wall panels and pillars, to its north. Before the Sanctuary’s entranceway, to its east, were the tents of Moses, Aaron, and Aaron’s sons.

Beyond the Levite circle, the twelve tribes camped in four groups of three tribes each. To the east were Judah (pop. 74,600), Issachar (54,400) and Zebulun (57,400); to the south, Reuben (46,500), Simeon (59,300) and Gad (45,650); to the west, Ephraim (40,500), Manasseh (32,200) and Benjamin (35,400); and to the north, Dan (62,700), Asher (41,500) and Naphtali (53,400). This formation was kept also while traveling. Each tribe had its own nassi (prince or leader), and its own flag with its tribal color and emblem.



neighborhoods. But before striking such targets, Israel fires warning shots or drops leaflets to warn the civilians to evacuate. But if a civilian is injured or killed, the network newscasts here in America lambast Israel for killing innocent Palestinians while barely saying a word about the targeting of civilians by Hamas.

Do you remember the Cuban missile crisis? JFK risked nuclear war with Russia to prevent missiles being based in Cuba. And what would have been the consequences if a missile had ever been launched from Cuba against

the US mainland? Would the Island of Cuba still exist?

But why is it that Hamas launches rocket after rocket against Israel and Israel is expected to show restraint?

I just don't get it.

Shavuos

Shavuos (or Shavuot, in the Sefardi pronunciation used in Israel) begins this year on Sunday evening, May 16 and continues until nightfall, Tuesday, May 18, 2021.

So what exactly is Shavuos and why do we celebrate it? The following is what *myjewishlearning.org* says about the festival.

Shavuot

Shavuot commemorates the spring harvest and the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai.

Shavuot, the “Feast of Weeks,” is celebrated seven weeks after Passover (Pesach). Since the counting of this period (sefirat ha-omer) begins on the second evening of Passover, Shavuot takes place exactly 50 days after the (first) seder. Hence, following the Greek word for “fifty,” Shavuot is also referred to sometimes as Pentecost. Although its origins are to be found in an ancient grain harvest festival, Shavuot has long been identified with the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai.



Shavuot History

Shavuot combines two major religious observances. First is the grain harvest of the early summer. Second is the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai seven weeks after the exodus from Egypt. The first determines the ritual for the holiday, which was one of the three pilgrimage festivals of ancient Israel, when Israelite males were commanded to appear before God in Jerusalem, bringing offerings of the first fruits of their harvest. The second determines the significance of the holiday for Judaism, tying it in with the seminal event of Jewish religious memory, namely the entering into a covenant between God and Israel, exemplified by Israel’s assumption of Divine law.

Shavuot at Home

Since Shavuot is an ancient pilgrimage holiday, it is not surprising that its ritual focuses on the community. Nonetheless, there are a number of customs associated with personal practice. Chief among them is the eating of dairy products on Shavuot. Although the reasons for this custom are not completely clear, it has become traditional to eat milk and cheese products as part of the celebration of Shavuot.



In the Community

Much of the observance of the holiday centers on the synagogue and its rituals. The special readings for the holiday include medieval poems (piyyutim) and the Book of Ruth. A number of reasons are given for the inclusion of the latter. Among them are that the book takes place at the time of the barley harvest, that Ruth’s assumption of Naomi’s religion reflects the Israelites’ acceptance of the Torah at Sinai, and that King David, who is alleged to have died

at this time of year according to rabbinic tradition, is mentioned at the end of Ruth. Another tradition is to participate in a Tikkun Leil Shavuot, an all-night study session marking the holiday. And finally, Shavuot is one of the holidays on which both Hallel, the Psalms of Praise, is recited and Yizkor, the memorial service, is observed.

Shavuot Themes and Theology

By associating an ancient holiday of the grain harvest with the exodus from Egypt, Jewish tradition has imbued Shavuot with religious significance derived from the foundational event in Jewish historical consciousness. In the specific case of Shavuot, this takes the form of the entering into a covenant or formal agreement between God and Israel at Mount Sinai. This is a joyous time, since it is the moment at which God and Israel entered into a figurative marriage with each other, the hopeful springtime of their relationship.

The Ten Commandments

Shavuot commemorates the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. Is there any better moral fabric for humankind than these ten simple laws? Yes, there are 613 mitzvot, but if we could all just follow these basic ten, wouldn't the world be wonderful?

Here are the commandments and an explanation of each from torah.org:

1. I am G-d, your L-rd, who brought you out from the land of Egypt from the house of servitude.

This is a precept to cultivate one's faith in G-d. Indeed, it is axiomatic to our beliefs that everyone has an innate spark of faith by virtue of the holy soul inside them. We are enjoined by this commandment to fan this spark and make it burn warmly and brightly.

2. You should not have any gods of others before Me.

This commandment demands exclusive worship of The One G-d. One may not even consider the possibility that any other powers exist not under G-d's jurisdiction, or even any powers which share control of the universe with Him. This is one of the three commandments which we are expected to give our lives for rather than transgress. One should not serve other powers in any way, even if the act is an act of disgrace. There was a form of idol worship in ancient times which was performed by throwing stones at the idol. This would still be forbidden.



3. Do not invoke the name of G-d your L-rd falsely.

We may not swear in G-d's name falsely. This can be done in four different ways. a. Swearing that a man is a woman, or that a stone is gold. b. swearing for nothing; i.e. that a stone is a stone. c. swearing not to perform a commandment. d. swearing to do the impossible; i.e. to fly etc.

4. Remember the Sabbath day to make it holy.

This commandment involves verbally sanctifying the beginning and ending of the Sabbath. Rabbinically, this is done by reciting blessings while holding a cup of wine which acknowledge the institution of the Holy Sabbath. Part of making The Sabbath holy is wearing fine clothing, eating fine foods, spending time with family, and setting it aside for enjoyable pursuits. There are also many activities which go into the category of "melacha," loosely translated as "work," to refrain from doing on the Sabbath.



5. Honor your father and your mother.

Honoring is considered a positive act. It involves the "do's" of dealing with parents. Among them are bringing them food and drink, helping them dress (if they need it), and standing up for them when they enter. Elsewhere the Torah commands us to "fear" our parents, dealing with the "don't's". Among them are not contradicting a parents words, and not calling a parent by their first name.

6. Don't kill.

One should not kill unless it is for self-defense. One who unnecessarily kills is considered as if he destroyed an entire world. This is another one of the three precepts for which we must give our lives rather than commit.

7. Don't commit adultery.

We are commanded to control ourselves and not give in to our desires when doing so would be a forbidden act. A man having a marital relationship with another man's wife is forbidden. Similarly, a married woman having an extramarital relationship is forbidden by this same prohibition. This too is one of the three precepts for which we must give our lives rather than commit.

8. Don't steal.

This is a commandment prohibiting kidnapping. Not stealing is mentioned elsewhere in the Torah.

9. Don't give false testimony.

Here the Torah forbids us to use our credibility to establish things as facts which we are not sure of. Needless to say, this includes lying, but it even includes one testifying based on another's word as if he himself was a witness; even if the information is from a reliable source.

10. Don't covet.

One should not desire other people's things. This commandment forbids us to pressure someone to sell us something he really doesn't want to sell. This is even when we are offering a better than fair price. The advice given to avoid desiring someone else's things is to imagine they are on the moon, and completely out of our reach. Something which is not mine is not in my world. It is unavailable, and unattainable, so I will take my mind off of it. Proper fulfillment of this commandment depends a great deal upon one's degree of satisfaction with his portion in life.



These are the commandments which G-d conveyed to the Children of Israel at the time of the Giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai approximately 3,300 years ago. It is amazing to note how much the noble aspect of societies and civilizations have embraced these as truths. It was all based on this earth-shaking event without which the Jewish Nation would have assimilated and faded away long ago.

Out with the Old..



For years, this beautiful maple tree stood alongside our synagogue.

But, over time, the tree had already grown above the building and become unmanageable. Leaves from the tree clogged drains, which led to water damage inside the sanctuary that we had to repair more than once. Finally, we had little choice but to remove the tree.

In with the New!

A new "Appalachian Red" tree was recently planted to replace the old maple, and Carnegie Shul member Sondra Greer, who now lives in Estero, Florida, stepped forward to donate the new tree in memory of her beloved parents, Hyman and Sara Lederstein.

A plaque will be erected near the tree memorializing Sondra's parents, and a dedication ceremony will be scheduled sometime in the future.

