



LOUGHTON SHUL
MORE THAN A SHUL

INSPIRE

SHAVUOT

6-8 SIVAN - 29-31 MAY 2020

THE TWO-WAY MIRROR

Does G-d care if I cheat on my taxes? Am I going to be a better husband/wife/parent if I keep kosher? Are these the same question? The 613 mitzvot ("commandments") of the Torah are commonly divided into two categories: 1) laws that govern the relationship "between man and G-d" (bein adam la-makom); and 2) laws that legislate the proper conduct "between man and his fellow" (bein adam la-chavero). Even the Ten Commandments were inscribed on two separate tablets, one containing commandments such as "I am G-d your G-d" and "Remember the day of Shabbat," and the other proclaiming laws like "Do not kill" and "Do not steal." But is this division a legitimate one? Let us examine the evidence. On the one hand, we have the aforementioned two tablets (though one still needs to explain how "honor your father and your mother" ended up on the "between man and G-d" side). On the other hand, we have the famous story the Talmud tells about the prospective convert to Judaism who came to Hillel asking to be taught the entire Torah while standing on one foot. "What is hateful to yourself," said Hillel, "do not do to your fellow. This is the entire Torah; the rest is commentary." (But how is putting on tefillin a commentary on "Love your fellow"?) There's also the statement by the Zohar that the divine instruction, "I am G-d your G-d... You shall have no other gods beside Me," is the essence of all 613 commandments and prohibitions of the Torah. (Meaning that helping my neighbor shovel his car out of a snowbank proclaims the oneness of G-d and disavows the existence of any other gods beside Him?) The masters of the mystical wisdom of the Kabbalah insist that, ultimately, there is no essential difference between the Torah's "civil" laws and its so-called "religious" laws. Each mitzvah, whether it's visiting the sick or waving a lulav on Sukkot, is a facilitator of the flow of desire and gratification between G-d and creation — a flow that sustains all of the created existence and fulfills the divine intent in creating it in the first place. So a crime against G-d (which causes a disruption in the flow) is a crime against all of His creations; and a crime against a fellow creature is also a crime against G-d (for the same reason). A kindness to a fellow is a kindness to G-d, as it contributes to the realization of His desire in creation; and a positive "personal" relationship with G-d has a positive effect on His relationship with creation as a whole and with each and every citizen of His world. So why did G-d deliver His Torah to us in two tablets? Maybe it's because He wants us to understand that there are two sides to life. Life is not an uninterrupted spiritual experience, nor is it exclusively a social exercise. Life means dealing with people, but also conversing with oneself; it means meditating and praying, as well as digging neighbors' cars out of snowbanks. G-d is the absolute oneness, and human life is the endeavor to express His oneness. But true oneness is not uniformity. True oneness tolerates, indeed embraces, various and even opposite particulars. For there is no greater expression of oneness than the ability to see opposites reflected in each other. So G-d divided the divinely-ordained blueprint for life into a "between man and G-d" column and a "between man and man" column. And then He granted us the ability to see each side reflected in the other. To see a fellow's needs peering out to us from the pages of our prayerbook. And to see G-d's face smiling to us from a beggar's mumbled gratitude, from the wonder in a child's question, from a loved one's trusting eyes.

Question:What's behind the custom of eating dairy products on Shavuot? Is there a connection between the giving of the Torah at Mt Sinai and eating milk products? (I'm not complaining, I love cheesecake - I'm just looking for a deep spiritual excuse to eat more.)

Answer:Milk is actually refined blood. In a complex and wondrous process, the mammary glands transform blood into pure white milk. There's something supernatural about that. To take a liquid as pungent and distasteful as blood, and convert it into a nourishing and drinkable food is nothing short of miraculous. We can simulate this miracle in our own lives. Blood represents raw animalistic passion and untamed instinct. Milk is a symbol of refinement and purity of character. Making milk out of blood - refining our lower instincts - is our life goal. The Torah introduced a radical new path to achieve this goal - the divine commands. Through engaging in simple acts of goodness and sanctity, we can tame our animalistic instincts and align ourselves with the divine. With each individual act we elevate ourselves and our world another step, gradually transforming a rough and untamed existence into a home for G-d. We can turn our blood into milk. I also love cheesecake. But this year as we eat it, let's remember the message behind it - that the Torah was given to transform our selfish appetites into an appetite for giving; to turn our blood, which is just for ourselves, into milk, the one thing the body produces just to give to another.

Recipe

This salad is packed with Mediterranean flavours and nutrient-dense ingredients. It packs up well for workday lunches, makes a refreshing dinner for hot summer days, and works well for Shavuot.

You can leave out or replace most of the add-ins to suit your taste. Use diced regular tomatoes instead of cherry tomatoes if you prefer, use mint instead of parsley (or cilantro if you insist!) or even a combo of herbs. You get the idea. Salad recipes are guides, not set-in-stone do-or-die instructions.

Ingredients

- 2 cups cooked tricolour quinoa (1 cup raw)
- 2 small cucumbers
- 10-15 cherry tomatoes
- 1 small purple onion
- 1 cup loosely packed flat leaf parsley
- 1 cup pitted black olives (use kalamata if you have)
- 1 cup cooked or canned chickpeas
- 1 cup crumbled feta cheese

Dressing Ingredients

- ¼ cup olive oil
- ¼ cup fresh lemon juice
- 2 tbsp. red wine vinegar
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- ½ tsp. fresh cracked black pepper

Directions

Cook the quinoa according to the directions on the packet and set aside to cool fully. (You can use any kind of quinoa—I like the look and texture of the tri-color.)

Prepare the vegetables: slice the cucumbers into quarter rounds, halve or quarter the tomatoes (depending on size), finely dice the onion, chop the parsley roughly, and slice the olives. If you're using canned chickpeas, rinse them thoroughly.

Whisk the dressing ingredients in a small bowl.

Gently toss the quinoa with the vegetables and feta. Pour the dressing and toss until coated.

SHUL TIMES

Yom tov Times

Thursday Evening-
Candle Lighting 8:41 pm
Light Shabbat
candle(from pre existing
candle) before 8:54 pm
Shabbat ends
10:18pm

Wednesday, 27 May

8:00 pm Q&A with Rabbi
Yanky, Rabbi Yehudah &
Rabbi Zvi.

**Please submit your
questions via email**

Thursday, 28 May

7:30 pm Shavout Prayers
with Yizkor and Kumzitz
with Rabbi Refoel
Sandler of Aish Essex

New Weekly Classes

for month of June
no prior knowledge
necessary.

Ignite

8:00pm each Tuesday

Trust in the Almighty

Thursdays @8:15pm-9pm

PARSHA SUMMARY

On the **first day** of Shavuot we read from Exodus chapters 19 and 20. A summary of the content: The Children of Israel camp opposite Mount Sinai, where they are told that G-d has chosen them to be His "kingdom of priests" and "holy nation." The people respond by proclaiming, "All that G-d has spoken, we shall do." On the sixth day of the third month (Sivan), seven weeks after the Exodus, the entire nation of Israel assembles at the foot of Mount Sinai.

G-d descends on the mountain amidst thunder, lightning, billows of smoke and the blast of the shofar, and summons Moses to ascend. G-d proclaims the Ten Commandments, commanding the people of Israel to believe in G-d, not to worship idols or take G-d's name in vain, to honor their parents, keep the Shabbat, and not to murder, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness or covet another's property. The people cry out to Moses that the revelation is too intense for them to bear, begging him to receive the Torah from G-d and convey it to them.

On the **second day** of Shavuot we read from Deuteronomy chapters 14-16 which detail the laws of the three pilgrimage festivals — Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot — on which all Jews came "to see and be seen before the face of G-d" in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

HAFTORAH SUMMARY

First Day of Shavuot Ezekiel

The haftorah for the first day of Shavuot describes Ezekiel's Vision of the Chariot reminiscent of the revelation experienced by the Jewish people at Mount Sinai, on the very first Shavuot of history. The prophet Ezekiel son of Buzi relays the vision he had of a chariot led by four creatures that resemble men and describes their physical appearance and actions in detail, "When they [the living beings] would go, they [the wheels] would go, and when they would stand, they would stand, and when they would lift themselves up from the ground, the wheels would lift themselves correspondingly to them, for the will of the living being was in the wheels... Like the appearance of the rainbow that is in the cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness round about; that was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the L-rd, and when I saw, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice speaking." The haftorah ends with Ezekiel's mention of the prayers of the angels to G-d.

Second Day of Shavuot Habakkuk The haftorah of the second day of Shavuot is a prophecy of Habakkuk. The prophet recalls the wonders that G-d had done for Israel at the time of the Giving of the Torah at Sinai. He also speaks of the punishments that G-d meted out to the enemies of Israel.

WISHING ALL THOSE WITH YARTZEIT THIS WEEK CHAIM ARUCHIM

Berg Sharon Father Hershl ben Shmuel 7 Sivan
White David Father Shaul Chaim ben Avraham HaLevi 8 Sivan
Baskin Louise Mother Yetta bas Eliezer 9 Sivan
Baskin Stanley 1st Wife Yetta bas Eliezer 9 Sivan
Baskin Tracy Mother Yetta bas Eliezer 9 Sivan
Laderman Cyril Wife Miriam bas Binyamin HaLevi 9 Sivan
Laderman Daniel Mother Miriam bas Binyamin HaLevi 9 Sivan
Laderman Robert Mother Miriam bas Binyamin HaLevi 9 Sivan
Goldstone Loretta Father Baruch ben Reuven 11 Sivan
Kovler Ivan Mother Zarah bas Baruch 11 Sivan
Grant Suki Mother Jean Jaqueline Bas Levi 13 Sivan
Shlosberg Melanie Mother Chava Beyla bas Binyomin 13 Sivan

JEWISH HUMOR

Issy and Howard were brothers disliked by the entire community. They ran a crooked business, they lied, and they cheated the poor. But they were also very, very wealthy. When Issy died, Howard went to Rabbi Bloom and said, "I will donate one million dollars to the synagogue if at the funeral you say that my brother Issy was a mensch." The Rabbi thought long and hard but eventually agreed. When it came time for the funeral, the Rabbi recounted Issy's wrong doings during his eulogy at length. He then closed with the sentence "But, compared to his brother, he was a mensch!"

RIDDLE OF THE WEEK

Question: I'm number three. But I'm not a number. I'm hot and cold at the same moment but not at the same time. I'm number three. But I'm not a number. Who or what am I?

Answer to last week's Riddle.

Stapler

STORYTIME

Shavuot is the anniversary of the passing of the Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chasidic movement. There was a wealthy Jew, whose only daughter was becoming of marriageable age. While there were many promising young Torah scholars in his own town, he desired to have an exceptional Torah scholar as a son-in-law. After much effort, he indeed found one such young man. The couple were married, settled down and were extremely happy. The young man learned in the yeshiva study hall and grew in his learning and Torah knowledge. Everything was going as desired. Some years passed, and the wealthy father-in-law began noticing small changes in his son-in-law's conduct and observance of mitzvot (commandments). At first, he tried to dismiss them as insignificant changes, and perhaps his learned son-in-law has reasons to conduct himself in this new manner. After all he knows much more than I do, so who am I to question him! But as the weeks and months passed, he began noticing that he was taking off much more time from his learning and was seen in the company of others who were known to be completely non-observant. This was a situation that he was no longer able to ignore and pretend all is well. So one day, he sat down with his son-in-law and asked him, "What caused this drastic change. Are you perhaps unhappy about something or is something or someone bothering you?" The son-in-law replied, "I am extremely happy and fortunate. Your daughter is an excellent and kind hearted person. She is the perfect wife, and you are very gracious to us. A man couldn't ask for more." But you want to know if everything is perfect, what caused these changes? I began having some questions about G-d's ability to do certain things that our sages stated had happened. I noticed that some of the great commentators also wrote that these things are exaggerations. So I no longer knew what is real and what is being said as a way of a parable or metaphor. "Whoever I asked either replied that those are dangerous questions, that one is not allowed to ask, or gave me such weak answers and explanations, that they themselves admitted weren't complete answers, they weren't satisfactory. So now I have my doubts about many things, such as does G-d really care about such minute details, for example, when you wash your hands for bread, does it have to go until the wrist and a drop off makes it invalid or it isn't so important. And therefore I decided not to do it all." The father-in-law was torn with grief. This is the son-in-law that he had hand-picked for his wonderful daughter, who is so proper in her observance of every mitzva (commandment). Is everything lost G-d forbid? "No! It can't be," he told himself. "I must find a way to correct this." Turning to his son-in-law he said, "My dear son-in-law, you are much more learned than I, and if the great Torah scholars of the town couldn't answer your questions satisfactorily, I for sure don't have the ability. However, I am asking you one thing, please come with me to a great sage and allow him to answer and clarify everything." Wanting to please his father-in-law, especially as he always has the ability to say that the answer this sage gave was not a convincing or even good answer, he agreed. The father-in-law didn't waste any time, but immediately set out with his son-in-law to see the Baal Shem Tov. They arrived in Mezibuzh on a bright sunny day and the father-in-law poured out his troubled heart to the Baal Shem Tov and pleaded with him that he does whatever is in his ability to bring the son-in-law back to the ways of G-d. The Baal Shem Tov asked them to join him on a small journey. With the father-in-law sitting on his right and the son-in-law sitting on his left, they left Mezibuzh. Once they were out of the city and on the road in midst of an open field, the Baal Shem Tov turned to the son-in-law and said, "Young man can it rain now?" Looking at the clear blue sky, the young man replied, "No, there isn't a cloud in sight." The Baal Shem Tov said, "And I say it can rain!" Looking up once again, the young man peered in all directions to make sure that he saw correctly and indeed there wasn't a cloud in sight. So he smugly retorted and said, "It is impossible! No way in the world can it rain here at this very moment." The Baal Shem Tov smiled and said, "And I say it will rain momentarily!" A few seconds later the heavens opened and a deluge of rain came pouring down. The young man was bewildered at this happening. Not only is it pouring from a cloudless sky, but the Baal Shem Tov's wagon is remaining completely dry. This is truly miraculous and beyond human comprehension. Being an extremely intelligent person, he realized why the Baal Shem Tov showed him this and didn't try to answer his questions verbally. Far be it that the Baal Shem Tov was merely showing off to him his miraculous powers. It was much more than that; he had clearly demonstrated, that stories of our sages that are beyond human comprehension, doesn't mean that they never occurred or are not real. There are many happenings that human intellect says one way, but in actuality they happened the opposite way - the way he thought was impossible. Once this question was answered, he realized that all of his other questions and doubts were based on this premise. And therefore if this was resolved they all have nothing to stand on. Full of remorse he turned to the Baal Shem Tov and beseeched of him, to guide him back to the way of G-d. During the first year after his passing, the students of the Baal Shem Tov gathered and many of them related a miraculous story of the Baal Shem Tov that they personally were privy to. That night the Baal Shem Tov came to one of his students and said, "My greatness is not my ability to do miracles, it is my awe of heaven for even the smallest detail of a mitzva.

FOOD 4 THE SOUL

The very first rule was made to be broken—the rule that heaven is heaven and earth is earth and each must remain in its place. The first to break that rule was the very One who made it, when His glory descended upon Mount Sinai. And He gave us a Torah so that we, too, could continue breaking that rule—and all the rules that extend from it: The rule that truth must remain in the mind, but not descend into the heart; That serenity and spirituality must remain in secluded places and not enter your place of work; That the innermost wisdom is to remain a secret of the wise and not spill out onto the street; That your challenges, your upbringing, your handicaps must hold you back and not allow you to become who you really are. All these and all their like are rules made to be broken, and Torah is the key to unlock their chains.

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS FOR PERSONAL GROWTH

by Rabbi Alexander Coleman, MFT

My personal reflection on the 10 Commandments as they help navigate life's trials and challenges. The 10 Commandments are one of the most significant codes for social justice the world has ever known. Rabbi Saadia Gaon (882-942CE), explains that the 10 Commandments serve as a "roadmap" to all of the 613 commandments in general based upon the common conceptual principles of both. Here is a personal reflection on the 10 Commandments as they apply to personal growth and the navigation of life's trials and challenges.

I am the L-rd your G-d

LEAN UPON THE ALMIGHTY

Know that there is a God, that things don't happen without a reason and that ultimately all the challenges you have are opportunities for growth and avenues to connect to Him on a deeper level. Use this experience to deepen your relationship with Him, to pray to Him and to know that He is with you.

Do Not Worship Idols

DO NOT SUCCUMB TO ILLUSIONARY ESCAPES

If life becomes stressful, work is overwhelming, be aware of how you may be dealing with it. Are you gravitating toward unhealthy means to sedate the pain? Are you finding yourself relying upon alcohol, food or other addictive means? These are all illusionary vehicles for feeling good. They are alien and non-truthful support systems.

Do not Take G-d's Name in Vain

DO NOT JUSTIFY FALSE APPROACHES UNDER THE GUISE OF TRUTH AND SPIRITUALITY

When seeking techniques of self-improvement and well-being be careful to keep your moral compass and sense of right and wrong in the forefront of your mind and not rationalize a particular method under the guise of it being okay when really it isn't. Do not internally put God's stamp of approval on something you know He just wouldn't sanction.

Remember the Sabbath to Keep it Holy

UNPLUG FROM THE WORLD FOR ONE DAY A WEEK

We all need one day a week to unplug, to connect to oneself, family and God. It gives us a time to reflect and recalibrate where I'm going and how I'm doing things. Make Shabbat a top priority for the sake of yourself and your family.

Honour Your Father and Mother

HONOUR THE LEGACY OF YOUR PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS

Reflect upon your parents, grandparents or great grandparents' trials and tribulations and how they endured and overcame them. Honor their memory and their legacy by going the extra mile to face your challenges with dignity and victory like they did theirs.

Do Not Murder

DO NOT UNDERMINE THE IMAGE OF GOD WITHIN YOURSELF AND OTHERS

Self-improvement is predicated on a healthy self-esteem and sense of inner sanctity. Ponder your unique talents and qualities, how your identity is much larger and richer than the things and circumstances that are causing you stress. Know that you possess immense value and that you deserve to be happy.

Do not Commit Adultery

DO NOT VIOLATE THE LOVE AND SUPPORT OF YOUR CLOSEST LOVED ONES

It's easy to violate the love and support of loved ones when life becomes difficult. It's easy to disrespect them and distance ourselves from them. But remember that your wife, your husband, your best friend etc., love you and care for you. Don't violate these sacred bonds and precious relationships while in the mire of your struggle.

Do Not Steal

DO NOT ABROGATE RESPONSIBILITIES

The conceptual definition of theft is disregard for boundaries. Despite the challenges you may be going through, remain strong in your personal and social responsibilities even though you don't feel like performing them. A structured life is a healthy life; it keeps unhealthy emotional reactions at bay.

Do Not Bear False Testimony

DO NOT BE IN DENIAL OF WHAT YOU MAY NEED TO CHANGE

We can easily become locked up in our perspectives, behaviours and patterns of living. They feel secure. Change is unsettling. Be brave and take a serious look at how you're approaching your life and embrace that which you know you really should do but are avoiding or denying.

Do Not Covet

DO NOT THINK THAT OTHER PEOPLE'S CHALLENGES ARE EASIER

We come full circle back to the first commandment that everything happens for a reason. God is in control and whatever challenge you may be going through is tailor-made for you. There is no better portion of "good" and "bad" that you could have been given. Don't look a yonder to your neighbour, friend or family member and wish you had their life thinking it would be so much easier and better. It's not true. Your

5 TIMELY LESSONS FROM RUTH

By Baila Brackman

Shavuot, the holiday that celebrates the Giving of the Torah, has always been a favorite of mine. We eat scrumptious dairy meals with family and friends, enjoy pleasant weather, listen to the Ten Commandments, and discuss how the Torah is relevant to our daily lives.

This year, as I prepared to celebrate the holiday in quarantine, I knew that I would have to seek inspiration in order to find meaning and pleasure in this lonely, unusual Shavuot.

I found it in a woman who lived 3,000 years before I was born: Ruth the Moabite, whose life-story is read on Shavuot.

Her story is a statement of enduring faith in the face of unexpected hardship. Ruth, the Moabite princess, left a life of luxury in the royal palace and wound up a poverty-stricken widow. Yet, she made every twist of her story into a turn for the better.

1. Ruth Didn't Let Her Eyes off the Goal

When Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law, was prepared to return to her home in Bethlehem, she beseeched her widowed daughters-in-law to remain in the comfort of their homes, the royal palaces. There, they would have had the opportunity to remarry and start their lives anew. Orpah hesitated but chose to return, while Ruth was determined to follow her mother-in-law, even if it meant struggling and poverty.

Ruth was inspired to attain her goal: To live the life of a Jew. And to achieve that goal, she left behind all she had. She abandoned her royal past and followed her mother-in-law Naomi to a foreign land. With the hope of joining with the Jewish people, and with a firm commitment to G-d's laws, she set off confidently on the long road ahead.

Ruth famously told Naomi, "Do not urge me to leave you, to turn back and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go; wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried."

Like Ruth, I can look beyond the challenges of today and remain focused on the long term. Yes, quarantine is uncomfortable and inconvenient, but I can see the big picture: the precautions we are taking are saving lives.

2. Ruth Rose Above Social Isolation and Scarcity

Ruth accepted upon herself a life of bitter poverty, and, upon arriving in Bethlehem with her mother-in-law, became the object of gossip instead of the warmly welcomed friend and sister.

Ruth and her mother-in-law lived a lonely existence. To keep from starvation, Ruth went to collect fallen barley sheaves during the harvest. The Torah commands us that an owner of a field is not to cut the corners of his field but to leave them for the poor. Similarly, if one dropped grains while reaping, they were to be left for the needy. Ruth and Naomi lived from these meager gleanings and were happy with what they had.

Like Ruth, I can be happy even if I cannot get the exact product I am used to finding at the supermarket, and even if my Shavuot table is not surrounded by anyone beyond my immediate family.

3. Ruth Articulated Her Gratitude

Even when relegated to collecting leftovers, Ruth demonstrated gratitude. When an impressed Boaz instructed his workers to leave extra barley for this modest woman, Ruth did not take his largesse for granted. She lay at his feet, seeking his protection, recognizing that he held the keys to her future.

Ruth demonstrated gratitude towards Boaz and Naomi even when her world seemed to have turned upside down.

Ruth ultimately married Boaz and once again enjoyed a comfortable life. She later became the great-grandmother of King David, greatest king of Israel, whose anniversary of passing is commemorated on Shavuot.

Ruth's idea of cultivating a sense of thankfulness and gratitude has been an important lesson for me. Giving thanks and recognizing our blessings increases joy and can lead to a calmer outlook during a stressful time. Thanking our essential workers and recognizing their sacrifice for all of us has been at the forefront of all of our minds.

4. Ruth Knew That True Wealth Is Spiritual Richness

Ruth's outstanding commitment to moving forward in her spiritual and personal development is a powerful lesson for each of us as we prepare to once again receive the Torah on Shavuot.

Life is a continuous learning experience, and as we keep rising and falling, like Ruth, we will recommit to our purpose and shine our unique individual light into the world.

5. Charity Is a Major Focus

The Torah's laws are eternal and the lessons from Ruth's kindness are inspiring reminders during the current spread of this pandemic. Charity, kindness and giving back have taken on new meaning and have had a positive, rippling effect.

It has been inspiring to see what so many organizations have done and how they answered the needs of others. I've seen people offer to pick up groceries, run errands, organize online programs, find ways to remotely cheer up friends, celebrate happy occasions and even toast l'chaim over zoom.

Ruth's faith and loyalty, coupled with a tremendous inner strength, is a source of inspiration for me. During our current coronavirus hardships or the everyday dips and curves of life's journey, I hope, like Ruth, to always be heading to a greater place in my life, to stay positive, to focus on the silver linings, and to plow ahead with joy and content.