

FROM THE RABBI

We will bring in the 2nd day of Shavuot early. The meal must begin without delay so that you are at the main course before 8:29 PM (sunset), thus making the meal happen during the first day and permissible to prepare for it on the first day.



Sunrise on the First Day of Shavuot will be at 5:24 AM!

SHABBAT CANDLE LIGHTING 8:08 PM | 2 SIVAN | JUNE 8, 2024 | SHABBAT HAVDALA 9:12 PM

שבת פרשת במדבר/יום המיוחס
SHABBAT PARSHAT BAMIDBAR
YOM HAMYUCHAS

Haftorah is Hosea 2:1-22. Say **אב** **צדקתך צדק**, **הרחמים**, but not **צדק**. Pirkei Avot Chapter 6.

FRIDAY EVENING

MINCHA	6:42 PM
EARLIEST CANDLES	6:53 PM
SHKIA	8:27 PM
TZAIT HAKOCHAVIM	9:07 PM

SHABBAT

HASHKAMA	7:55 AM
MAIN	9:00 AM
LAST KRIAT SHEMA	9:10 AM
POST-HASHKAMA SHIUR	9:55 AM
FUNDAMENTALS SHIUR	11:30 AM
PRE-MINCHA SHIUR	7:00 PM
MINCHA	7:40 PM
MAARIV	9:12 PM

שבועות / SHAVUOT

At Yizkor pledge Tzedakah to elevate the souls of the departed.

TUESDAY EVENING

CANDLE LIGHTING	8:10 PM
MINCHA	8:15 PM
TZAIT HAKOCHAVIM	9:09 PM

WEDNESDAY

VATIKIN	4:50 AM
SHACHARIT	8:45 AM
LAST KRIAT SHEMA	9:10 AM
MINCHA PRE-PLAG	6:40 PM
MAARIV POST-PLAG	6:55 PM
CANDLES PLAG	>6:55 PM
YIZKOR CANDLES	>9:14 PM

THURSDAY

HASHKAMA	7:45 AM
HASKAMA - YIZKOR	≈9:05 AM
SHACHARIT	8:45 AM
LAST KRIAT SHEMA	9:10 AM
YIZKOR - MAIN	≈10:15 AM
MINCHA	8:15 PM
MAARIV/HAVDALAH	9:15 PM

MAZEL TOV



Mazel tov to Chana & Rabbi Shestack on the birth of beautiful baby girls, Emuna Bina & Shira Geula, and to big sisters Adira, Nava & Shalva! גדלן לתורה ולחופה ולמעשים טובים May they raise them to Torah, chuppah and good deeds.

RUT ROUND ROBIN

This Seudah Shlishit is our Rut ½-Perek By-½-Perek shiur. Speakers: Betsy Sonnenblick 1:1-11, Aryeh Brenenson 1:12-22, Joan Goldberg 2:1-11, Elisheva Katz 2:12-23, Moshe Katz 3:1-9, Eli Shteingart 3:10-18, Avi Cohen 4:1-11, & Steven Plotnick 4:12-22.

KIDDUSH - 2ND DAY OF SHAVUOT

Kiddush/luncheon on the 2nd day of Shavuot is sponsored by the Schwitzer family in honor and memory of their parents, Aharon Rahabi HaLevi^ע, Rivka Malka Rahabi^ע, David Schwitzer^ע, and Malka Schwitzer^ע. They taught their children the significance of Hashem and the Torah in this World.

PIRKEI AVOT ON THE PORCH

This Shabbat at the home of Chava & Chayim Goldberg at 5:30 PM.

YOUTH EVENTS

- Shabbat, 3:45 PM, play date at Radburn Park! Snacks provided.
- Wednesday, June 12, teen lunch at the Mayer house.
- Thursday, June 13, 4:15 PM, Shavuot children learning and dinner/dairy dessert. Dinner is \$5/child or \$12/family.


SHAVUOT LEARNING

Tuesday night: After Mincha, **How HR and Contemporary Hiring Practices Align with HaSocher Es HaPoalim**, Liz Jacob; 11:30 PM, **How Much of Halacha Can Be Automated?**, Rabbi Shestack; 12:30 AM, **Shatnez, What, Where, & How - A Checkers Guide**, Zach Doberman; 1:15 AM, **"If It Walks Like a Duck" - Identifying Kosher Birds & The Strange Case of the Muscovy Duck**, Chayim Goldberg, 2:15 AM, **A Lifeguard's Creed - "Don't Stand Idly By"**, How to Save a Life, Richie Mayer; 3:00 AM, **"All's Fair in Outreach & War" - How Far Does Heter Kiruv Go?**, Shalom Brauser, 3:45 AM, **Complicated Cases in Milah - From the Operating Room of a Religious Urologist**, Dr. David Ambinder. Shavuot 2nd Day, after Mincha, **MiDor L'Doorway - Two Generations of Eruv Builders and Checkers Tell Their Stories**, Adam and Stu Ariel.



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
6/9	6/10	6/11	6/12	6/13	6/14

WEEKDAY MINYONIM AT AHAVAT ACHIM

SHACHARIT	8:00 AM	6:15 AM	6:25 AM		6:25 AM
MINCHA/MAARIV	8:16 PM	8:16 PM			6:45 PM
ZMANIM					
Earliest Talit	4:15 AM	4:14 AM			4:14 AM
Gedolah	1:34 PM	1:34 PM			1:35 PM
Shkia	8:28 PM	8:28 PM			
Tzait	9:08 PM	9:08 PM			

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 25 - Annual Membership Meeting

July 4 - Softball Game

IN OUR FUTURE

Aug. 24 - Seudah Shlishit is sponsored in memory of Warren Wolf.

KIDDUSH & SEUDAH SHLISHIT

- Enjoy Scotch at Kiddush, please donate a bottle to the shul from time to time.
- To sponsor a Kiddush (prices start at \$318, plus a bottle of scotch) email dmgarfunkel@gmail.com.
- Want to know what is on the menu for Kiddush? If so, please email dmgarfunkel@gmail.com so he can put you in the WhatsApp group.
- To sponsor for \$136 Seudah Shlishit (or in the case of multiple sponsors, \$100 per sponsor), email dmgarfunkel@gmail.com.

SHIURIM



- SAMSON RAFAEL HIRSCH ON THE PARSHA, Tuesdays at 1:00 PM (<https://zoom.us/j/7291311899>, PW: 112233).
- TORAH FOR YOUR COMMUTE, via a Whatsapp group, with 3-minute daily Halacha insights. To join email Rabbi Shestack at rabbishestack@gmail.com.
- SHABBAT SHIUR, 40 minutes pre-mincha.
- FUNDAMENTALS OF JEWISH THOUGHT, after Kiddush.
- MESORAH-IN-REVERSE lecture series at Seudah Shlishit.
- Tzurba M'Rabanan on Shabbat, Wednesdays at 7:30 PM (to be adjusted as Maariv time changes), on Zoom with Shalom Brauser.

CONTACTING THE RABBI

The Rabbi is always available for halachic and pastoral issues. For less exigent matters, text, call, or drop by during the Rabbi's office hour, Tuesdays, 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM, or feel free to reach out to the Rabbi to make other meeting arrangements.



GITA COOPERWASSER ע"ה YOUTH EVENTS

June 8 - Playground/Radburn Park/3:30 PM

June 13 - 2nd Day of Shavuot Youth Extravaganza and Dinner

GITA COOPERWASSER ע"ה YOUTH PROGRAM

- **SHABBAT YOUTH LEADERS, 1ST - 4TH GRADE: LETIZIA & NICOLE; 3 YRS - K: LYLA & GENESIS**
- **SHAVUOT YOUTH LEADERS BOTH DAYS: ARIELLA, ABBY, DANIELLE, & PERRI**
- Youth group for children in 1st to 4th Grades starts at 9:00 AM (Drop Off) in the Youth Room on the left upon entering the social hall.
- Youth group for children 3 years old through Kindergarten starts at 9:15 AM (Drop Off) in the Youth Room on the right upon entering the social hall.
- Parent & Me room opens at 9:15 AM in the Beit Midrash.
- 5th through 9th graders will meet for Torah and games at 10:00 AM in the David Schwitzer ע"ה Social Hall.
- Rabbi Meet & Greet, every Friday night, kids can come over to the Rabbi after davening to receive a cup of grape juice and a ticket!
- Children's corner at Seudah Shlishit - On Hiatus.
- 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.

Friday Evening, June 7



Saturday Evening, June 8



Sunday Evening, June 9



Monday Evening, June 10



YIZKOR APPEAL

To make or redeem your Shavuot Yizkor Appeal, click here: [YIZKOR](#).

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

א' דשבוט / FIRST DAY SHAVUOT

We wait until tzait to count seven complete weeks. Candles brachot are "להדליק נר של יום טוב" and "שהחיינו". Many study Torah all night, say Tikun Shavuot, and/or read the 613 Commandments. In Shacharit we say "אקדמות", the long Aramaic poem praising G-D, before the Torah reading. The first Sefer Torah is Exodus 19:1-20:23. Maftir is Numbers 28:26-31. Haftorah is Ezekiel 1:1-28 and 3:12. Many have varying customs regarding partaking of dairy food on Shavuot.

ב' דשבוט / SECOND DAY SHAVUOT

We read Megillat Rut (the Book of Ruth) followed by Mourner's Kaddish. The first Sefer Torah is Deut. 15:19-16:17. Maftir is Numbers 28:26-31. Haftorah is Habakkuk 2:20-3:19, but after the second verse of the Haftorah the Maftir recites the Piyut "ציב פתגם". During Yizkor we pledge Tzedakah to elevate the souls of the departed.

YIZKOR (ADAPTED FROM CHABAD.ORG)

Yizkor, a special memorial prayer for the departed, is recited in the synagogue four times a year, after the Torah reading on the last day of Pesach, second day of Shavuot, on Shemini Atzeret and on Yom Kippur.

Yizkor, in Hebrew, means "Remember." It is not only the first word of the prayer, it also represents its overall theme. In this prayer, we implore G-d to remember the souls of our relatives and friends that have passed on.

When we recite Yizkor, we renew and strengthen the connection between us and our loved one, bringing merit to the departed souls, elevating them in their celestial homes. The main component of Yizkor is our private pledge to give charity following the holiday in honor of the deceased. By giving charity, we are performing a positive physical deed in this world, something that the departed can no longer do. The soul gains more merit if the memory of good deeds spur their loved ones to improve their ways.

It is customary for those with both parents alive to leave the synagogue during the Yizkor service. A mourner during the first year remains in the synagogue without reciting the Yizkor. In addition to reciting Yizkor for one's parents, one may recite Yizkor for any Jew who has passed on, including relatives and friends. When reciting Yizkor for more than one person, repeat the Yizkor paragraph each time, and substitute the words "Aböh Mori" (my father), or "Imi Morösi" (my mother), with the appropriate title, as follows: For a Husband: "Ba-ali." Son: "B'ni." Brother: "Öchi ." Uncle: "Dodi." Grandfather: "Z'kainy" . Wife: "Ishti." Daughter: "Biti." Sister: "Achosi." Aunt: "Dodosi." Grandmother: "Z'ken-ti."

DAVID SCHWITZER^{ה"ע} SOCIAL HALL

Please contact Lori Garfunkel at garfmom@gmail.com to book the David Schwitzer^{ה"ע} 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 (\$40), and Chumashim (\$60), 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 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 either Stephen Agress or Steve Plotnick for questions or clarifications.

יום המיוחס
YOM HAMYUCHAS - THE DAY OF DISTINCTION
SHABBAT - JUNE 8
(ADAPTED FROM OU.ORG)

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? Possible answers:

(1) The Sages, in their great sensitivity, were concerned even for the feelings of inanimate objects (e.g., embarrassment of the challot 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 שלשת ימי הגבלה period begins Sat. night, June 8, 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 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.



CHESED TEAM

Please reach out to our chesed team if you or someone you know needs assistance by emailing us at chesed@ahavatachim.org. We operate with confidentiality under Rabbi Shestack's guidance.



Shavuot All-Night Learning



AHAVAT ACHIM
קהלת אהבת אחים
THE FAMILY SHUL

"Torat Chaim": Lived, Practical Torah

11:30 p.m. How Much of Halacha Can be Automated?

12:30 a.m. Shatnez: What, Where, & How, A Checkers Guide

1:15 a.m. "If it Walks like a Duck": Identifying Kosher Birds & the Strange Case of the Muscovy Duck

2:15 a.m. A Lifeguard's Creed: Don't Stand Idly By/How to Save a Life

3:00 a.m. "All's Fair in Outreach & War": How Far Does Heter Kiruv Go?

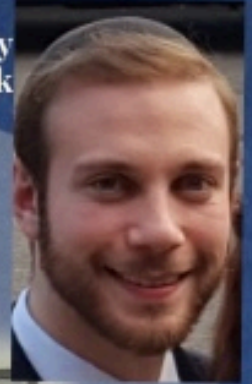
3:45 a.m. Complicated Cases in Milah: From the Operating Room of a Religious Urologist

Teen learning with Shalom Brauser 11pm-1am

To sponsor the cheesecake please contact David Garfunkel

Neitz Minyan @ 4:50 am

Rabbi Ely Shestack



Zach Doberman



Chayim Goldberg

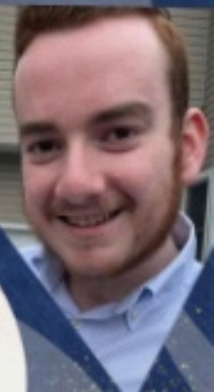


Rabbi Rich Mayer

Shalom Brauser



Dr. Dovid Ambinder





Ahavat Achim Youth

celebrates
Shavuot

Thursday, June 13
4:15 pm

Ages 0 - 5

Interactive children's learning
program with Sara Santacruz

Grades 1st - 4th

Roadmap of the synagogue

**Followed by dinner & dairy dessert
and playground fun**

\$5 per child/\$12 family

Must RSVP by June 9th

youth@ahavatachim.org

Shavuot Teen Program

June 11th

11:00 pm - 1:00 am

Shavuot night learning

RSVP to youth@ahavatachim.org by
June 9th

June 12th

Lunch at the Mayer's house



AHAVAT ACHIM
קהלת אהבת אחים
THE FAMILY SHUL



Community Baseball Game



**PLAY
BALL**

**WATCH &
CHEER**

THURSDAY JULY 4, 2024

EDISON PARK AT 10AM

EVENTS@AHAVATACHIM.ORG

[RSVP BY JUNE 30](#)



Join us for a
PLAYDATE IN THE PARK



SHABBAT Afternoon
June 8th at 3:45 PM
Radburn Park

 Snacks will be provided! 





Covenant & Conversation

Jonathan Sacks
THE RABBI SACKS LEGACY

BAMIDBAR • במדבר

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

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 and videos were originally written and recorded by Rabbi Sacks ז"ל in 5771 (2010–2011). These timeless messages are accompanied by a new [Family Edition](#) (2023–2024), created to inspire intergenerational learning on the *parsha*.

Liminal Space

In English, the book we begin this week is called Numbers, and for an obvious reason. It begins with a census, and there is even a second count toward the end of the book. On this view, the central theme of the book is demography. The Israelites, still at Sinai at the beginning of the book, but on the brink of the Promised Land by its end, are now a sizeable nation, numbering 600,000 men of an age to embark on military service.

Within Jewish tradition however, this book has become known as Bamidbar, "in the wilderness," suggesting a very different theme. The superficial reason for the name is that this is the first distinctive word in the book's opening verse. But the work of two anthropologists, Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner, suggest a deeper possibility. The fact that Israel's formative experience was in the wilderness turns out to be highly significant. For it is there that the people experience one of the Torah's most revolutionary ideas, namely that an ideal society is one in which everyone has equal dignity under the sovereignty of God.

Arnold Van Gennep, in his *The Rites of Passage*, argued that societies develop rituals to mark the transition from one state to the next – from

childhood to adulthood, for example, or from being single to being married – and they involve three stages. The first is separation, a symbolic break with the past. The third is incorporation, re-entering society with a new identity. Between the two is the crucial stage of transition when, having said goodbye to who you were but not yet hello to who you are about to become, you are recast, reborn, refashioned.¹

Van Gennep used the term liminal, from the Latin word for threshold, to describe this second state when you are in a kind of no-man's-land between the old and the new. That is clearly what the wilderness signifies for Israel: liminal space between Egypt and the Promised Land. There Israel is reborn, no longer a group of escaping slaves but "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." The desert – a no-man's-land with no settled populations, no cities, no civilisational order – is the place where Jacob's descendants, alone with God, cast off one identity and assume another.

This analysis helps us understand some of the details of the book of Exodus. The daubing of the doorposts with blood (Ex. 12:7) is part of the first stage, the separation, during which time the door

¹ Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, University of Chicago Press, 1960.

through which you walk as you leave your old life behind has special symbolic significance.

Likewise the division of the Red Sea. The division of one thing into two, through which something or someone passes, is a symbolic enactment of transition, as it was for Abraham in the passage in which God tells him about his children's future exile and enslavement (Gen 15:10-21). Abraham divides animals, God divides the sea, but the movement between the two halves is what signals the phase-change.

Note also that Jacob has his two defining encounters with God in liminal space, during his journey from his home towards the dwelling of Laban (Gen. 28:10-22, and Gen. 32:22-32).

Victor Turner added one additional element to this analysis. He drew a distinction between society and what he called *communitas*. Society is always marked by structure and hierarchy. Some have power, some don't. There are classes, castes, ranks, orders, gradations of status and honour.²

For Turner what makes the experience of liminal space vivid and transformative is that in the desert there are no hierarchies. Instead, there is "an intense comradeship and egalitarianism. Secular distinctions of rank and status disappear or are homogenised." People cast together in the no-man's-land of the desert experience the "essential and generic human bond." That is what he means by *communitas*, a rare and special state in which, for a brief but memorable period, everyone is equal.³

We now begin to understand the significance of *midbar*, "wilderness," in the spiritual life of Israel. It was the place where they experienced with an intensity they had never felt before nor would they easily again, the unmediated closeness of God which bound them to Him and to one another.

That is what Hosea means when he speaks in God's name of a day when Israel will experience, as it were, a second honeymoon:

"Therefore I am now going to allure her; 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 up out of Egypt. "In that day," declares the Lord, "you will call Me 'my husband'; you will no longer call Me 'my Master.'"

Hos. 2:14-16

We also now understand the significance of the account at the beginning of Bamidbar, in which the twelve tribes were encamped, in rows of three on the four sides of the Tabernacle, each equidistant from the holy. Each tribe was different, but (with the exception of the Levites) all were equal. They ate the same food, manna from heaven. They drank the same drink, water from a rock or well. None yet had lands of their own, for the desert has no owners. There was no economic or territorial conflict between them.

The entire description of the camp at the beginning of Bamidbar, with its emphasis on equality, fits perfectly Turner's description of *communitas*, the ideal state people only experience in liminal space where they have left the past (Egypt) behind but have not yet reached their future destination, the land of Israel. They have not yet begun building a society with all the inequalities to which society gives rise. For the moment they are together, their tents forming a perfect square with the Sanctuary at its centre.

The poignancy of the book of Bamidbar lies in the fact that this *communitas* lasted so briefly. The serene mood of its beginning will soon be shattered by quarrel after quarrel, rebellion after rebellion, a series of disruptions that would cost an entire generation their chance of entering the land.

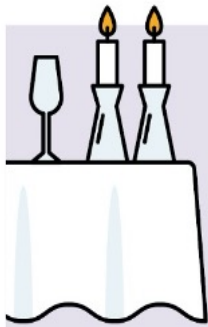
² Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process*, Transaction Publishers, 1969.

³ Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*, Cornell University Press, 1974.

Yet Bamidbar opens, as does the book of Bereishit, with a scene of blessed order, there natural, here social, there divided into six days, here into twelve (2×6) tribes, each person in Bamidbar like each species in Bereishit, in his or her rightful place, “each with his standard, under the banners of their ancestral house” (Num. 2:1).

So the wilderness was not just a place; it was a state of being, a moment of solidarity, midway between enslavement in Egypt and the social inequalities that would later emerge in Israel, an ideal never to be forgotten even if never fully captured again in real space and time.

Judaism never forgot its vision of natural and social harmony, set out respectively in the beginnings of the books of Genesis and Numbers, as if to say that what once was could be again, if only we heed the word of God.



Around the Shabbat Table

1. What do you think makes an experience “formative?” Can you think of a time when you have had such an experience?
2. What are some rituals that you have during transitions?
3. Can you relate to the idea that challenging times can lead to positive transformation? Why or why not?

● 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/liminal-space/