



Rosh Hodesh Sivan

Tuesday, May 27, 2025 @ 5:30 pm

Program Facilitator: Stephanie Ben-Salem

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Introductions and Opening Blessing

Introduce yourself! We invite you to use your first name and your mother's first name. It doesn't matter if your mother isn't/wasn't Jewish.

Blessings:

Commentary by LilyFish Gomberg:

The reference to children in the blessing can apply to biological or adopted children, and it can also apply to anyone we nurture and teach within the community, the next generation of Jews we collectively hope to inspire.

The prayer is intended to be inclusive, speaking to our shared responsibility in helping to shape the future of the Jewish community.

In Sanhedrin 99b, Reish Lakish says, "Anyone who teaches someone else's child Torah is regarded by the Torah as though they have made them." R. Elazar adds that it is as though the teacher has "made" the child in terms of Torah, highlighting the importance of the role of teaching and mentorship in Jewish life.

May it be Your will, my God and God of my ancestors, to be gracious to me and to all my family and to give us, and all Israel, a good and long life. Remember us with goodness and blessing, and grant us salvation and mercy. Grant us abundant blessing, and fortify the places we call home. May Your Presence dwell among us as we gather here today. May we be blessed with wise and learned disciples and children, lovers of God who stand in awe of You, people who speak truth and spread holiness. May those we nurture light the world with Torah and good deeds.

Hear the prayers I utter now in the name of our mothers Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah. May Your light, reflected in these candles, surround us always. And let us say, Amen.

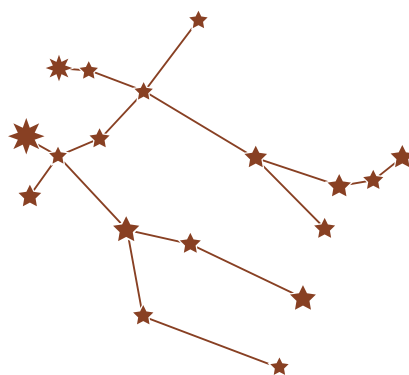
*Barukh atah Adonai
Eloheinu melekh ha'olam
shehehyanu vekiyemanu
vehigi'anu lazman hazeh*

ברוך אתה יי
אלהינו מלך העולם
שהחיינו וקיימנו
והגיענו לזמן הזה

*Blessed are you, Adonai, our God, sovereign of the universe
who has kept us alive, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this season*

What is Sivan?

Sivan, meaning 'season' or 'time,' is the 9th month of the civil year, and the third month of the religious year on the Hebrew calendar and consists of 30 days, falling in May – June on the Gregorian calendar.



What is Shavuot? שבועות

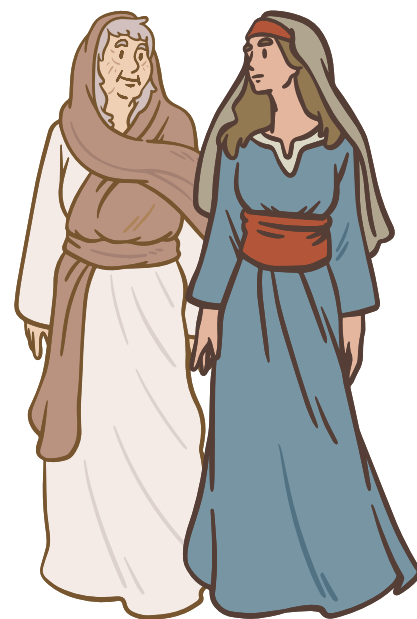


Shavuot falls on the sixth day of Sivan. It celebrates the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai and the moment the Israelites entered into a covenant with God. Shavuot is one of the *Shalosh Regalim* (three pilgrimage festivals), alongside Passover and Sukkot. It is also a harvest festival, celebrating the season of first fruits in the land of Israel.

Also known as the "Feast of Weeks" or Pentecost, Shavuot is traditionally observed by hearing the Ten Commandments, enjoying festive dairy meals, and staying up all night to study Torah (*Tikkun Leil Shavuot*), including reading the Book of Ruth.

Ruth's words to her mother-in-law, Naomi

"Where you go, I will go, and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God." — Ruth 1:16



Summary of The Book of Ruth

The Book of Ruth is set “in the days when the judges ruled,” a time of instability in ancient Israel. A famine strikes Bethlehem, prompting Elimelech to take his wife Naomi and their two sons to Moab. There, the sons marry Moabite women — Mahlon marries Ruth and Chilion marries Orpah. Over time, all three men die, leaving Naomi and her daughters-in-law widowed.

Hearing that the famine in Bethlehem has ended, Naomi decides to return home. She urges Ruth and Orpah to stay in Moab and remarry. Orpah eventually agrees, but Ruth refuses to leave Naomi. In a moving expression of loyalty, Ruth declares: “Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.”

The two women arrive in Bethlehem at the start of the barley harvest. To support them, Ruth goes to glean leftover grain in the fields. She happens to glean in the field of Boaz, a wealthy and kind relative of Elimelech. Boaz notices Ruth’s diligence and kindness to Naomi, and he offers her protection and special privileges while gleaning.

Naomi, recognizing Boaz as a potential *go’el* (kinsman-redeemer), encourages Ruth to seek his protection under the custom of levirate marriage*. Following Naomi’s plan, Ruth visits Boaz at the threshing floor one night, uncovering his feet (or his lower half...). Boaz praises Ruth’s loyalty and agrees to marry her, pending the refusal of a closer relative.

At the town gate, Boaz presents the case before elders. The nearer kinsman declines to marry Ruth, fearing the risk to his own estate. Boaz formally acquires the right to redeem Elimelech’s property and marries Ruth. Their union is blessed with a son, Obed, who is seen as a redeemer not just for Ruth, but for Naomi as well. Naomi takes the child as her own, and the women of Bethlehem praise her restoration.

The book concludes with a genealogy tracing Obed to Jesse, and then to David — revealing Ruth the Moabite as the great-grandmother of King David.

**Levirate marriage is the ancient practice in which a man is obligated to marry the widow of his deceased brother (or close relative) if the brother died without children, in order to preserve the deceased’s family line and inheritance. In the Book of Ruth, this concept is echoed through the role of the go’el, though Boaz is not a literal brother but a close relative who steps in to ensure the family’s continuity.*

The Book of Ruth and Naomi by Marge Piercy

When you pick up the Tanakh and read
the Book of Ruth, it is a shock
how little it resembles memory.
It's concerned with inheritance,
lands, men's names, how women
must wiggle and wobble to live.

Yet women have kept it dear
for the beloved elder who
cherished Ruth, more friend than
daughter. Daughters leave. Ruth
brought even the baby she made
with Boaz home as a gift.

Where you go, I will go too,
your people shall be my people,
I will be a Jew for you,
for what is yours I will love
as I love you, oh Naomi
my mother, my sister, my heart.

Show me a woman who does not dream
a double, heart's twin, a sister
of the mind in whose ear she can whisper,
whose hair she can braid as her life
twists its pleasure and pain and shame.
Show me a woman who does not hide
in the locket of bone that deep
eye beam of fiercely gentle love
she had once from mother, daughter,
sister; once like a warm moon
that radiance aligned the tides
of her blood into potent order.

At the season of first fruits, we recall
two travellers, co-conspirators, scavengers
making do with leftovers and mill ends,
whose friendship was stronger than fear,
stronger than hunger, who walked together,
the road of shards, hands joined.

Question for Discussion

1. What is the significance of Ruth?
2. How do you see yourself when you think about Ruth and her commitment?
3. How might being a woman like Ruth look in modern society?
4. Share a personal experience involving the Torah — on the bimah, for conversion, a mikveh, a bat mitzvah, or any other personal experience you would like to share.

Why read the book of Ruth?

In the Book of Ruth, the narrative unfolds during the time of the barley harvest — a season symbolically linked with growth, sustenance, and renewal.

This setting is significant, as it frames Ruth's personal journey of transformation and spiritual awakening. Her story culminates in her wholehearted embrace of the Jewish faith — a moment that Jewish tradition often parallels with the Israelites' collective acceptance of the Torah at Mount Sinai. Just as the Jewish people entered into a covenant with God, Ruth adopts the faith, customs, and destiny of a people not originally her own.

Ruth's famous declaration to her mother-in-law Naomi — "Your people shall be my people, and your God my God" — is more than a personal statement. It is a profound act of spiritual devotion and allegiance. Her willingness to leave behind her homeland, culture, and former identity to join the Jewish people serves as a compelling model of faith, loyalty, and courage. In this way, Ruth's story highlights the spiritual potential of the individual while also echoing the broader themes of covenant and communal acceptance that are central to Jewish identity and tradition.

- **Agricultural Theme:** The Book of Ruth is set during the harvest season, with key scenes centered around gleaning—the practice of collecting leftover crops. This ties the story to the agricultural aspect of Shavuot, a holiday that celebrates the harvest and the offering of first fruits.
- **Ruth's Conversion and Acceptance of Torah:** Ruth's choice to leave her homeland and adopt the beliefs and customs of the Jewish people mirrors the nation's acceptance of the Torah at Mount Sinai—a central theme of Shavuot.
- **Loyalty and Devotion:** Ruth's deep loyalty to Naomi, her embrace of a new faith and people, and her famous words, "Where you go, I will go," symbolize the kind of dedication and trust expected when one commits to the Torah and a life of faith.
- **Acts of Kindness (hesed):** The story highlights the value of chesed—acts of loving-kindness. This is a foundational principle in Judaism and is closely connected to the values upheld by the Torah.
- **Connection to King David:** Tradition links Ruth's story to the ancestry of King David, who is said to have been born and died on Shavuot—further tying the book to the significance of the holiday.

After Passover (Pesah), we begin counting the Omer — 49 days that link Passover to Shavuot. This period highlights the journey from physical liberation to spiritual revelation, culminating in the receiving of the Torah.

Why eat dairy?

While eating dairy on Shavuot is not explicitly commanded in the Torah, the custom is rooted in several interpretations and traditions. One well-known explanation connects it to Song of Songs 4:11, where the Torah is compared to milk and honey. Others link dairy to the description of Israel as “a land flowing with milk and honey,” celebrating the agricultural abundance of the season.

Some traditions explain the custom agriculturally—spring is a time of natural abundance in dairy, as young animals are weaned and milk is plentiful. Additional interpretations draw symbolic meaning from milk: its whiteness represents purity, and humility is evoked by the idea that milk was traditionally served in simple, earthen vessels.

A popular gematria-based explanation notes that the Hebrew word for milk, *chalav* (חלב), has a numerical value of 40, symbolically connected to the 40 days Moses spent on Mount Sinai receiving the Torah—and, separately, to the 40 years the Israelites wandered in the wilderness.

Tonight (Tuesday, May 27, 2025) we count:

היום חמשה וארבעים יום, שהם ששה שבועות ושלשה ימים לעומר.

Hayom hamishah v'arba'im yom, shehem shishah shavuot u'shloshah yamim laOmer.

“Today is forty-five days, which is six weeks and three days of the Omer.”

Blessing before the count:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ עַל סְפִירַת הָעוֹמֶר.

Barukh Atah HaShem, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav, v'tzivanu al sefirat haOmer.

Kabbalistic focus:

Tiferet she'b'Malchut — Compassion / Harmony in Sovereignty

- How can I embody gentle strength?
- Can my leadership come from love, not control?
- Where can I create beauty and balance in the way I show up for others?

SUMMER 2025 CALENDAR

JUNE

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

JULY

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

AUGUST

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

SUMMER CALENDAR KEY:

-  = Book Club
-  = B'nei Mitzvah
-  = Rosh Hodesh
-  = Men's Club
-  = Building Closed
-  = Save the Date for a Special Event

Synagogue Events

June 1-2: Center City Jewish Night of Learning — Tikkun Leil Shavuot

June 2: Shavuot Morning Service with Yizkor

June 2-3: Shavuot — Office Closed

June 4: First day of Playschool Summer Camp

June 4: Congregation Annual Meeting

June 5: Young Friends Shavuot Potluck in the Park

June 6: Book Club — *The Hotel on St. James Place*

June 6: Young Families Shabbat with Dinner

June 14: Bat Mitzvah of Judy Wertheim

June 19: Juneteenth — Building Closed

June 21: *Planting Seeds of the Divine* Lunch 'n' Learn with Yiscah Smith

June 22: Triple Chai Tour of the Rosenbach Museum

June 26: Men's Club Meeting

June 28: Pride Shabbat and Lunch 'n' Learn

June 29: Rosh Hodesh Tamuz Gathering

July 4: Independence Day — Building Closed

July 12: Auf Ruf of David Pressel and Jill Feldman

July 17: Young Friends Brews & Schmooze

July 23: Triple Chai Lunch & A Movie

July 26: Road to Recovery Lunch 'n' Learn

July 27: Rosh Hodesh Av Gathering

August 2: Bat Mitzvah of Randi Kamine

August 2: Erev Tisha B'Av Evening Service

August 14: Young Friends Brews & Schmooze

August 15: Last Day of Playschool Summer Camp

August 23: Havdalah Down The Shore

There will be Saturday morning Shabbat services all summer long, and TGIShabbat will resume on **September 5**.

This calendar is subject to change.

For up-to-date information, check

www.societyhillssynagogue.org/calendar

or contact our office.