



# Shavuot Begins Thursday Evening, May 20

## Tikkun and Cheesecake Expected to Draw Crowds

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Shavuot, which occurs on the sixth and seventh days of the Jewish month of Sivan, falls on Friday, May 21, and Saturday, May 22, this year. Shavuot celebrates the revelation on Mt. Sinai, the giving of the Torah to Israel.

Shavuot has three names in the Bible and two in Rabbinic Literature.

In the Bible, the holiday is referred to as *Hag HaKatzir*, the "Festival of Reaping" (Shmot 23:16), referring to the reaping of the wheat that has just been harvested; *Hag Shavuot*, the "Festival of Weeks" (Shmot 34:22, Devarim 16:10), referring to the seven weeks (corresponding to the Omer-period) that have been counted since Pesah; *Yom HaBikurim*, the "Day of the First Fruits" (Bemidbar 28:26), referring to the new gift offering that was made at this time in the *Beit HaMikdash*. In Rabbinic literature, the holiday is called *Atzeret* (which the Sages used although it does not appear in the Torah), linking Shavuot to Pesah by calling it the "conclusion" of the Pesah festival (the Omer-period being deemed a long Chol Hamoed); and *Zman Matan Torateinu*, the time of the giving of the Torah. (E. Kitov, *The Book of Our Heritage*, v. III, pp. 60-61.)

Why is the celebration of the giving of the Torah linked to what appears to be a traditional harvest festival? To quote one noted author:

"The Mishnah describes a colorful procession in which farmers from small villages would gather in a large town to go together to Jerusalem. 'Arise, let us go up to Zion, to the House of our God,' the leader would announce as they set out on their pilgrimage. When they neared Jerusalem, flutists would greet them with music, and when they reached the Temple court, the priests would welcome them with hymns and psalms.

How, then, did these festivities of fruits and grains turn into a celebration of the Torah? Part of the genius of the talmudic sages was their ability to overlay old agricultural holidays with historical meaning. In the case of Shavuot, the rabbis calculated that the festival fell during the same three-month time period in which the Children of Israel had reached the wilder-

ness of Sinai after leaving Egypt. They fixed the date for both events as the sixth of Sivan and made the Sinai experience the essence of the holiday." (F. Klagsbrun, *Jewish Days: A book of Jewish Life and Culture Around the Year*, p. 157 (1996) (reprinted with permission of author).)

Indeed, as Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel remarks:

"One of the most important facts in the history of religion was the transformation of agricultural festivals into commemorations of historical events . . . [In contrast to other ancient peoples, who] celebrated what happened in the life of nature in the respective seasons . . . [t]o Israel the unique events of historic time were spiritually more significant than the repetitive processes in the cycle of nature . . . While the deities of other peoples were associated with places or things, the God of Israel was the God of events: the Redeemer from slavery, the Revealer of the Torah, manifesting himself in the events of history rather than in things or places. Thus, the faith in the unembodied, in the unimaginable was born." (R. Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man*, pp. 7-8 (Noonday ed. 1975).)

This year, Or Zarua will continue with the tradition we have been following in recent years of decorating the synagogue and bimah with greens, tree branches and flowers to celebrate Shavuot. There are different views as to the origins of this custom,

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## Good News on the Building Front!

The Capital Campaign has been successful in raising additional funds for Or Zarua's new building. A March phonathon, designed particularly to reach out to members who had not been reached before, brought in some \$36,000. In addition, the campaign has recently received gifts totaling \$430,000. In the meantime, construction documents have been completed and are now out for bidding to four contractors. Bids are expected back the week of April 26th and construction should begin in June, as planned.



## Congregation Or Zarua

A Conservative Synagogue

Founded 1989

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## Shavuot Begins May 20

(Continued)

one of which is that the greens represent the verdant mountain on which Moses received the Torah.

Yom Tov will commence with Minhah services on Thursday evening, May 20, at 8:00 p.m. After services, we will celebrate with a *Tikkun Leyl Shavuot* - a traditional study session devoted to the event of the giving of the Torah. Each year, Rabbi Wechsler chooses a portion of Nobel Prize winning author Shmuel Yosef Agnon's book *Atem Re'item (Present at Sinai)* - Agnon's study of Rabbinic literature about the event of revelation. (For those interested, it is available in English, published in 1994 by The Jewish Publication Society, translated by Michael Swirsky.) This study session is followed by an eating session devoted to the tastiest kosher cheese cake available in Manhattan this year - since it is also a tradition to eat dairy foods on Shavuot.

Shaharit services for the first day of Shavuot will commence at 9:00 a.m. The Torah reading for the first day is from *Yitro* and includes the Ten Commandments (Shmot 19-20). Hallel is recited. Prior to the Torah reading, the Piyut "*Akdmut*" is read. The *Akdmut* was composed by Rabbi Meir ben Isaac, who was chazzan of the city of Worms (and, according to tradition, a teacher of Rashi). The *Akdmut*, written in Aramaic, is a praise of God and the Torah. The melody is noteworthy in that it also forms the traditional melody for the kiddush on erev Yom Tov. The Haftorah is from Ezekiel.

Minhah for the first day and services for the second evening of Yom Tov and Kabbalat Shabbat will start at 6:40 p.m. on Friday evening.

Shaharit services for the second day of Shavuot and Shabbat will start at 9:00 a.m. The Torah reading is the same excerpt from *Re'eh* that is also read on the eighth day of Pesah and Shmini Atzerat. The Haftorah is from Habbakuk. The Book of Ruth is also read on the second day Yom Tov. Yizkor Memorial prayers are recited after the reading of the Torah and Haftorah.

## Spring Cleaning?

We collect **used clothing** for the needy. If you have any, please prepare a list of the garments and contact Frances Freedman, (212) 988-6090.

## Hebrew School News

from Michelle Schaerf, Education Director

The last few months were really full ones at Or Zarua Hebrew school. Our model seder was a wonderful experience for parents, students and teachers alike. Each class participated in the seder and contributed to the Or Zarua Hebrew School Haggadah in original ways. Our Bet classes even presented their own version of "The Prince of Egypt" on video. Yom Ha'Atzmaut was celebrated with much creativity. The students took a mock trip to Israel and had a chance to sample Israeli food, participate in the Israeli army, be part of some Israeli singing and dancing, and create a Hebrew School wall keepsake for the day. Lag Ba'Omer was celebrated with a school-wide picnic, and all students had the opportunity to enjoy the JCC Youth Theatre production of "Lost and Found". Finally, our Gimmel students were presented with their first official siddurim (prayerbooks) at the Gimmel Siddur ceremony.

Our warmest Todah Rabbah goes to the Or Zarua faculty who have worked endlessly to provide a detailed, comprehensive and exciting program for the students this year. Yasher Koach also goes to our students! The classes have progressed a tremendous amount this year, and each student should be proud of his/her accomplishments.

Plans for the school year 1999-2000 are underway. We hope to offer classes ranging from kindergarten through High School. For further information, please contact Michelle Schaerf, Education Director.

## Or Zarua Book Club to Meet Sunday, May 16<sup>th</sup>

An invitation is extended to join the Or Zarua Book Club on Sunday, May 16<sup>th</sup>, 1999, at 7:30 p.m. for a discussion of *The Iron Tracks* by Aharon Appelfeld. *The New York Times* calls him the "quiet master" of Israeli writing, and Alfred Kazin states: "He is the most telling novelist of the holocaust." The book is available at Barnes & Noble, Amazon and the Public Library.

Everyone is welcome to come to the meeting (and please feel free to bring friends), which will be held at the home

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## Youth Hesed News

from Howard Blas, OZYH Director

Or Zarua Youth Hesed members have participated in a number of hesed activities during the past few months. In February we joined teens from all over the city for Operation Chicken Soup, making chicken soup and matzoh balls for the hungry. On March 21<sup>st</sup>, OZYH members met at Dorot to learn about the Jewish elderly. We then delivered Passover packages - filled with matzoh, gefilte fish and other treats - to homebound elderly Jewish people on the Upper West Side.

The last two days of March saw OZYH members at New York Hospital, assisting in Passover activities. For the third year in a row, our members have helped to lead the hospital Seder for patients and their families. We are especially proud of two OZYH members who have taken the time to work as "official" New York Hospital volunteers, working with patients in a variety of meaningful ways.

Although we are pleased by the success of these and other events, recent turnout has been disappointing. We would love to have feedback on future directions for OZYH. Please join us for an end-of-the-year "Pizza and Planning" meeting on Tuesday, May 18<sup>th</sup>, from 6:15-7:30 pm at Bagels & Co., York Avenue and 76<sup>th</sup> Street. If you have any questions, call Howard Blas at 230-1774.



## Music Lovers: Or Zarua Plans a Concert Benefit at Carnegie Hall on June 15<sup>th</sup>!

Conductor Vakhtang Jordania and pianist Tatsuya Nagashima to perform with the American Symphony Orchestra Shostakovich Symphony No. 15 will be given a rare performance

You'll want to join fellow Or Zarua music lovers at 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, when Shostakovich's final, reflective symphony and Liszt's dazzling E-flat major Piano Concerto will be featured at a benefit performance at Carnegie Hall. Ravel's Suite No. 2 from *Daphnis et Chloe* will complete the concert.

Shostakovich's Symphony No. 15, the composer's last symphony and final major score, is an enigmatic work that receives far fewer performances than his Symphonies Nos. 1, 5, 7 and 10. The Georgian-born conductor, Vakhtang Jordania, formerly a protégé of legendary Russian conductor and Shostakovich champion Yvgeny Mravinsky, was on hand during rehearsals for the symphony's world premiere by Mravinsky in 1972. He is currently music director of the Kharkov (Ukraine) Philharmonic and Moscow's Russian Federal Orchestra.

Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 1 in E-flat Major, a pinnacle of keyboard virtuosity, will be performed by Tatsuya Nagashima, born to a pianist father and opera singer mother, who has studied the piano since age 4. He captured First Prize in the 1993 Ibla International Piano Competition in Italy and has gone on to perform in the major venues of the world.

Cost for this benefit concert is \$50.00 per ticket. All proceeds from the sale of tickets will go to the congregation. Please call Enid Menzies in the Or Zarua office (410-6041) no later than Friday, May 21 to reserve your tickets.

### Book Club to Meet (Continued)

of Shelley and Marty Spergel, 150 East 69<sup>th</sup> Street. If you have any questions, feel free to call the Spergels at (212) 794-9305. Possible selections to be discussed at future meetings include: *Fugitive Pieces* by Anne Michaels, *Ex-Friends* by Norman Podhoretz, and *For the Relief of Unbearable Urges* by Nathan Englander.

## A Letter from Michelle Schaerf Education Director

Dear Or Zarua Families,

As the school year draws to a close, I wanted to take this opportunity to put some of my thoughts on paper. As most of you already know, I will be leaving the school at the close of this academic year. We are moving to the suburbs and I plan to spend at least the next few years as a stay-at-home mother.

It is not easy for me to say good-bye to my Or Zarua family. Being a part of the Or Zarua community has been central to my life for the past eight years, not merely on a professional level, but also personally. My husband and I had our Aufruf in the old (new) quarters at the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y five years ago. I have particularly fond memories of all the support provided by members of the congregation both during and after a lengthy period of pre-term labor. I had constant visitors and company, and many of you pitched in to keep the school up and running throughout the school year. Our daughter Emily (Elana Batya) was named by Rabbi Wechsler in the synagogue on 82<sup>nd</sup> Street.

Leaving now is particularly difficult. These are wonderful times to be associated with Or Zarua. A new building is soon to be under construction. I was involved in the planning stages, and have wonderful visions of the school programs that will one day take place there. I envy the new director who someday soon will be able to take advantage of this new home, and continue to create an outstanding Hebrew School environment.

I will miss all of you, and particularly the sense of place and belonging that my family has always had at Or Zarua. This is a Congregation with a great future, and it has been my honor and pleasure to be associated with it in its formative years.

Fondly,  
Michelle Schaerf

### Bavli-Yerushalmi Study Project

An international Jewish study project has been underway in Israel and the U.S. which seeks an anchor at Or Zarua. The Bavli-Yerushalmi Study Project involves two groups in study, one American and the other Israeli. They study the same texts weekly and meet twice a year, once in Israel and once in the U.S. The theory behind Bavli-Yerushalmi is that Americans and Israelis meet on business, fundraising and family ventures, yet they should also study together. Would you like to be part of Bavli-Yerushalmi's base at OZ? Call the office (212) 410-6041.

## What It Takes Some Thoughts on Leaving 127 East 82<sup>nd</sup> Street

by Joanne Kollin Feerman

You have probably heard the story. But even if you have, it's such a good story you won't mind hearing it again. In 1993, when the real estate committee was roaming the East Side looking for a building, it found the Waldensian Church, at 127 East 82<sup>nd</sup> Street. As the committee members toured the building, some members said they had the eerie feeling that the building had once been a synagogue. That feeling was confirmed when they found a large stone Yahrzeit plaque leaning against a wall in the basement. A little research showed that before the building housed the Waldensian Church, it had been home to three synagogues. Ah, we said, this was good. We would find a new home in an old home. What could resonate better for the Jewish soul than the theme of return?

But it turns out there was even more to the story. In 1951, when the Jewish congregation that then occupied the building considered selling it to the Waldensian Church, a board member, who had been born in Europe, objected. But after he heard that Waldensians in Europe had harbored Jews during the war, he was willing to at least meet the church's board members. When he did, he recognized one of them: That man had helped hide Jews during the war. He dropped his objections: Surely, God, he thought, would be in this place.

When some of us saw the building that was to be Or Zarua's home for the first time, we were disheartened. This was not a lovable space: it was homely, cramped and graceless. Not at all what we had in mind. But then we davened in it, studied in it, had bar and bat mitzvahs and weddings in it, and slowly the building changed. It went from homely to plain to simple – from cramped to small to just a little bit too snug – from graceless to basic to refreshingly honest. We, like the members of the previous congregations, both Jewish and Christian, began to feel that yes, surely, God was in this place.

And now we leave. We know it is our responsibility to create an intermediate place for our congregation and to invite God in. Now, after our experience on 82<sup>nd</sup> Street, we know what it takes.

(Editor's Note: Joanne and Martin Feerman joined Congregation Or Zarua in June 1990)



1999

June

1999

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4 6:15 pm Minhah-Maariv 8:05 pm Candlelighting	5 9 am Shaharit, Behaalotekha Bar Mitzvah/Adar Eisenbruch 7:05 pm Minhah/Seudah Shlishtit/Maariv
6	7	8	9	10	11 6:53 pm Minhah-Maariv 8:09 pm Candlelighting	12 9 am Shaharit, Shelah Bat Mitzvah, Shira Nadel
13	14 Rosh Hodesh Tammuz Flag Day	15 Rosh Hodesh Tammuz	16	17	18 6:56 pm Minhah-Maariv 8:12 pm Candlelighting	19 9 am Shaharit, Korah
20 Father's Day	21	22	23	24	25 6:57 pm Minhah-Maariv 8:13 pm Candlelighting	26 9 am Shaharit, Hukat-Balak
27	28	29	30			

1999

July

1999

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
				1 Shive'ah Asar B'Tammuz	2 6:57 pm Minhah-Maariv 8:13 pm Candlelighting	3 9 am Shaharit, Pinhas 7:13 pm Minhah/Seudah Shlishit/Maariv
4 Independence Day	5	6	7	8	9 6:56 pm Minhah-Maariv 8:11 pm Candlelighting	10 9 am Shaharit, Mattot- Mase
11	12	13	14 Rosh Hodesh Av	15	16 6:53 pm Minhah-Maariv 8:08 pm Candlelighting	17 9 am Shaharit, Devarim Shabbat Hazon
18	19	20	21 8 pm Tisha B'Av service	22 7:15 pm Tisha B'Av service	23 6:49 pm Minhah-Maariv 8:03 pm Candlelighting	24 9 am Shaharit, Vaethanan Shabbat Nahamu
25	26	27	28	29	30 6:44 pm Minhah-Maariv 7:56 pm Candlelighting	31 9 am Shaharit, Ekev



# CONTRIBUTIONS

*All contributions listed were received on or before April 25, 1999*

*Capital Campaign contributions are not listed.*

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Mark & Hannah Kinn, in memory of her father, Abraham Achtenberg, on his yahrzeit  
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 Zanel & Sylvia Liff, in memory of  
 Sylvia's beloved mother, Pearl  
 Gottlieb Barchenko, on her  
 yahrzeit

Alexander & Sharon Mack, in honor of  
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 memory of Haven Bloom, daughter of  
 Barry & Fran Bloom  
 Yehuda Nir & Bonnie Maslin, in honor  
 of Ohenebra Boachie-Adjei, with  
 thanks of behalf of the Maslin-Nir  
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 Yehuda Nir & Bonnie Maslin, in  
 memory on the anniversary of David  
 Munshin's birthday  
 Laura Resnikoff, in honor of the  
 congregants who opened their homes  
 for Or Zarua's Pesach meal match  
 Leonard & Phyllis Rosen, in memory of  
 her father, Isidore Ortofo, on his  
 yahrzeit  
 Neil & Leona Schluger, in honor of the  
 new granddaughter of Sam and Fran  
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 Neil & Leona Schluger, in honor of the  
 son, Daniel born to Andy Frackman  
 and Mimi Braun  
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 Morris & Roanna Shorofsky, with  
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 their Simcha all the more meaningful  
 Edward & Elyse Siegel, in honor of their  
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 Edward & Elyse Siegel, Levi aliyah  
 Robert & Vera Silver, Passover Yizkor  
 Robert & Susan Bromberg Skolnick, in  
 memory of his father, Harry Skolnick,  
 on his yahrzeit  
 Robert & Susan Bromberg Skolnick, in  
 honor of everyone who worked on the  
 Purim Spiel  
 Shalom & Janet Staub  
 Barry & Edythe Steinberg, in honor of  
 the naming of their granddaughter,  
 Alexandra Rose Steinberg, and for her  
 parents, Sharon Weinstock and Jack  
 Steinberg  
 Molly Summers, in memory of Maxine  
 Schwartz  
 Bernard & Leah Tolpin, in honor of  
 Deborah & Jonathan Bakin



## Summer Services and Torah Reading Opportunities

Remember that the summer is a good opportunity for those of us who may have been looking for a chance to read Torah or Haftorah to do so. Please contact Yaakov Shechter at (212) 570-9413, if you are interested in doing so.

We also want to remind you to put Tisha B'Av on your calendar. Tisha B'Av falls on July 22<sup>nd</sup>. We will have a service the night before - Wednesday, July 21<sup>st</sup> - at 8:00 p.m. - as well as on the evening of Tisha B'Av at 7:15 p.m.

## CONGRATULATIONS TO

Barry and Bobbi Coller, on the forthcoming marriage of their daughter, Hilary, to Leonid Kruglyak. June 6th is the date.

David and Doris Finkel, on the birth of their granddaughter, Danielle

Cheryl Fishbein, who received the Alumna of the Year Award from the Yeshiva of Flatbush at its annual dinner

Mel Ilberman, on his engagement to Adele Shapiro. They'll wed on May 16th.

Alexander Mack and Sharon Shorofsky Mack, on the March 6th birth of their son, Jonathan Mitchell

Elizabeth Philipp, on the January 26th birth of her son, Joshua Philip Moriarity

Vicki Wimpfheimer, on the birth of her great-granddaughter, Danielle

## DID YOU OR ANYONE YOU KNOW SING IN THE ZAMIR OR HA-ZAMIR CHORALES?

Producers of a documentary film about Jewish choral music between the two World Wars, to be aired on public television, are looking for anyone who sang, or who knows anyone who sang, in the Ha-Zamir, Zamir, Shir, or Shneur Choraes.

They are especially interested in the Zamir movement in Lodz, Warsaw, Cracow and Prague. They are also looking for any descendants of Joseph Rumshinsky, Leo Low, Moshe Schneur and Isaac Sachs.

If you have any information that would be helpful, please contact Pam Cooper at Spy Pond Productions, 366 Massachusetts Ave., Arlington, MA 02474. (781) 648-5255; Fax (781) 648-5262; or (617) 491-1595. E-mail: robcoop57a@aol.com

## CONDOLENCES TO

Steven Katz, on the death of his father, Harry Katz

Enid Menzies, on the death of her sister-in-law, Marcia Stenn

Michael Pollet, on the death of his father, Benjamin Pollet

Sidney Silverman, on the death of his mother, Bertha (Bea) Silverman

Miriam Wallerstein, on the death of her mother, Goldie Patt

## OZY SERVICES

Two Youth Services, the first for children ages 2 through 5 and the second for children ages 6 through 9 (no parents), are held on the lower level of the synagogue every Shabbat morning, beginning promptly at 11 a.m. and ending at noon. At the conclusion of the Youth Services, the children are escorted to the Sanctuary to join our congregants in the concluding hymns and Kiddush.

## Congregation Or Zarua

1384 Lexington Avenue  
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ק"ק אור זרוע

