



Flushing-Fresh Meadows Jewish Center
 193-10 Peck Avenue ✦ Flushing, New York 11365 (718) 357-5100

THE BULLETIN

May-June, 2014
 Vol.12, No.6

Sivan,Iyar,Tamuz, 5774
 Rabbi Gerald M. Solomon
 Cantor Aaron Katz

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES FOR MAY

Friday, May 2
 Mincha/Maariv.....7:00 P.M.
 Candle Lighting Time.....7:34 P.M.

Saturday, May 3
 Parashat Emor - Shabbat Services..... 9:00 A.M
 Shabbat Ends..... 8:43 P.M.

Friday, May 9
 Mincha/Maariv.....7:00 P.M.
 Candle Lighting Time.....7:41 P.M.

Saturday, May 10
 Parashat Behar - Shabbat Services.....9:00 A.M
 Shabbat Ends.....8:50 P.M.

Friday, May 16
 Mincha/Maariv.....7:00 P.M.
 Candle Lighting Time.....7:48 P.M.

Saturday, May 17
 Parashat Bechukotai - Shabbat Services...9:00 A.M.
 Shabbat Ends.....8:57 P.M.

Friday, May 23
 Mincha/Maariv.....7:00 P.M.
 Candle Lighting Time.....7:54 P.M.

Saturday, May 24
 Parashat Bamidbar
 Shabbat Mevarchim Services.....9:00 A.M.
 Shabbat Ends.....9:04P.M.

Friday, May 30
 Mincha/Maariv - Rosh Chodesh Sivan.....7:00P.M.
 Candle Lighting Time.....8:00 P.M.

Saturday, May 31
 Parashat Naso - Shabbat Services.....9:00A.M.
 Shabbat Ends.....9:10P.M.

Have a joyous Shavuot



זְמַן מַתַּן תּוֹרַתְנוּ

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES FOR SHAVUOT

Tuesday, June 3
 Erev Shavuot - Mincha/Maariv.....T.B.A.
 Candle Lighting Time.....8:03P.M.

Wednesday, June 4
 First Day Shavuot Festival Services.....9:00 A.M.
 Mincha/Maariv.....T.B.A.
 Candle Lighting Time.....9:12P.M.

Thursday, June 5
 Second Day Shavuot Festival Services...9:00A.M
 Yizkor.....10:45 A.M.
 Festival Ends.....9:13P.M.

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES FOR JUNE**Friday, June 6**

Mincha/Maariv.....7:00P.M.

Candle Lighting Time.....8:05P.M.

Saturday, June 7

Parashat B'haalotecha - Shabbat Services.9:00A.M

Shabbat Ends.....9:14P.M.

Friday, June 13

Mincha/Maariv.....7:00P.M.

Candle Lighting Time.....8:09P.M.

Saturday, June 14

Parashat Shlach - Shabbat Services.....9:00A.M

Shabbat Ends.....9:18P.M.

Friday, June 20

Mincha/Maariv.....7:00P.M.

Candle Lighting Time.....8:12P.M.

Saturday, June 21 Parashat Korach

Shabbat Mevarchim Services.....9:00A.M.

Shabbat Ends.....9:20P.M.

Friday, June 27

Mincha/Maariv - Erev Rosh Chodesh.....7:00P.M.

Candle Lighting Time.....8:13P.M.

Saturday, June 28 - Parashat Chukat

Shabbat Rosh Chodesh Services.....9:00A.M.

Shabbat Ends.....9:21P.M.

Support the Program of the Queens Jewish Community Council to continue to feed the poor homebound in Queens.

During the Passover Yizkor Services we were asked to make a pledge to help support this very important program.

To donate, make out a check to FFMJC, memo it to QJCC-project Chaim, and send it or bring it to the office at 193-10 Peck Ave., Fresh Meadows, NY 11365

CONDOLENCES

Marilyn Brown on the passing of her beloved husband **Leo**

Joyce Warshowski on the loss of her beloved husband **Lou**.

LETTERS

Joyce Warshowski and family appreciate the kindness and thoughtful words of sympathy expressed by the Congregation and Sisterhood members and especially to Rabbi Solomon, upon the passing of Lou Warshowski.

SISTERHOOD

Welcome back Snowbirds and welcome to SPRING! Now that we can get out, we are planning great programs for you. Join us on May 15th at Noon for a delicious lunch and a meaningful program.

The exercise class has again started on Tuesday mornings at 11 AM. It is a class for older active adults and includes chair exercises. All are welcome. \$5.00 per session. Come try it!!

The book club continued throughout the winter and meets one Thursday each month, at 10:30 AM. Anyone who is interested may come and listen and join in on the discussion. The books are always reserved for us at the Fresh Meadows Library. The book for May 29th at 10:30 AM is "Mrs. Lincoln's Dressmaker" by Jennifer Chiaverini. Looking ahead, the book for June 26th is "The Submission" by Amy Waldman.

The Brooklyn Queens Long Island Region of the Women's League for Conservative Judaism is holding their annual Woman of Achievement Gala on Wednesday, May28, 2014. We are happy to report that this year our Sisterhood is honoring our devoted Sisterhood member, Joyce Warshowsky. Joyce has been a behind the scenes worker for the Sisterhood and is truly deserving of this honor. If you have not received an invitation for this function please call Joan at 718 428-4120. We would like to have a good representation from our Sisterhood.

See you soon!

Marilyn and Joan



IN MEMORIAM
LEO BROWN - ARYEH BEN YOSEF HAKOHEN

*Taken from the Eulogy delivered by Rabbi Solomon, **delivered March 2, 2014***

*We are gathered around the mortal remains of one of the most dear and beloved men in our synagogue and community. We meet in sorrow at the sudden and unexpected passing of a precious soul. The suddenness of his passing has cast an enveloping air of gloom upon family but also upon our congregation and community. We all feel bereaved. We all mourn our loss.

*Leo is remembered as a devoted husband, father, grandfather, great grandfather, brother and uncle, a fine and giving person who would not deny his family anything. A veteran of the U.S. Navy, Leo will be appropriately honored for his years of devoted service. Our friend was a good navyman. And similarly in civilian life he remained ever conscious of his duties and obligations to his fellows and to those in his care. In his own special way, he always performed his duties to the very best of his ability.

*For many it is difficult to reconcile the thought that this extraordinary gentleman is no more. He was so much a part of our synagogue and community, for many years a stronghold, a fortification, a pillar upon which our synagogue rested. He knew that our faith had to be guarded and always did what he thought should be done to insure the well being of his and our beloved House of G-d. An avid shule goer, he could always be counted on to be at the minyan whenever and wherever it took place. He attended many services at Houses of Mourning in his life and now the same honor must be afforded to him.

*His devotion to our faith and his sincerity and effervescent, lively and enthusiastic, good spirited ways, endeared him to so many. Possessed of amazing energy and an engaging personality, he will always, I am sure, be remembered for being the wonderful, giving person he was and for all the wonderful things he did in his life for others.

*He chose to be, among other things, a one man social - sunshine committee, bringing cheer to religious service attendees. Everybody knew Leo. He was the jolly good fellow, the "go to guy" in the shule, the man with the smile, the man of good humor, the man who tried to bring comfort to sorrowing hearts and a smile to everyone's face. He tried to do the impossible and sometimes succeeded. He tried to please everybody. For many years, Leo worked with others to line up the honors at holiday and year round services in the synagogue, which may look easy to onlookers but which is actually fraught with difficulties. It is not an easy task to please everyone, to do the impossible. But I believe he always tried.

*He will be very much missed, I am sure by his family, his shule and community. Perhaps we may find some measure of consolation in the knowledge that he now enters the portals of Heaven there to "sing for the L-rd a new song," there to be reunited with his loved ones who preceded him in Heaven, there to rejoice together, we pray, beneath the protective shelter of G-d's Majesty, there to reside, as the Psalmist wrote, to ". . . dwell in the house of the L-rd forever," and there to receive his Heavenly reward for all the good which he had done on earth, all the abundant kindnesses he had shown, all the good he helped to promote, everything he did to improve the lives of others. All this will form the record of his life before G-d who remembers all.

*Leo was a man who posed many questions. Possessed of an inquisitive mind, he had a great desire to know the answers to the questions that troubled his mind. He wanted to learn. He wanted to know. He was not embarrassed to ask. "Lo Habyshaan lomed," states the Perek. "A bashful person will not learn." Through his questions, Leo taught all of us that to learn, we must be willing to ask questions.

*We will miss him and his singing which he loved so much, his davening which he loved so much, his harmonizing with the cantor which he loved so much, his vocals in the choir which he loved so much, his duchening, offering the priestly blessing of the congregation on the holidays which he loved so much and his kibbitzing and his

smile which we loved so much.

*Having worked as a radio engineer for CBS for over 40 years, we will miss his expertise and his know-how in audio equipment for the synagogue where he also devoted himself to getting the right sound balance for services, for public addresses, for the Shirathon, and the choirs performances and for all events requiring audio, we knew we could always count on Leo.

*He was also, always willing to help in the synagogue kitchen, whether it was for food preparation or cleanup. Whatever he could do to help, he was there. The quintessential fisherman, he would catch the fish, filet it and prepare it as well. He was pretty good at catching Jews and reeling them in for a minyan too. He was always willing to do, always there to lend a hand, always there to give and help, a seriously "gutteh neshamah."

*It is only natural that those who loved him should grieve at his passing. The greater our love, the greater must be our grief. As great as is the grief in saying goodbye, especially when it was sudden and unexpected, even greater must be the recognition that he has earned the right to rest. May the remembrance of his virtues fortify us and give us courage for the days and years to come which, sadly, will have to be without his engaging, familiar, physical presence.

*In our hearts and minds, Leo will live within us and always be a part of us, to be a blessing to us in death even as he was a blessing to us in life and an inspiration to deeds of charity, kindness and prayer even as we, through our prayers and charitable deeds performed in his memory, shall be a blessing to his soul in Heaven. We will think of him often with great fondness and affection.

*At memorial services we acknowledge that the body is temporary, the soul is eternal. The body returns to the dust, and the dust returns to the earth, but the spirit returns to G-d and for us left behind, memory is just beginning - memories we will treasure, and which will endure all the days of our lives on earth.

*While we all join in mourning the passing of our dear friend, Aryeh Ben Yosef HaKohen, we join in praying that in its appropriate time, the Almighty will send His special healing to his beloved wife, our dear and beloved friend, Marilyn, his daughter Marcia and her husband Ira, his daughter Debby and her husband John, and his son Jeffrey. To grandchildren Stacy and Dror, Gail and John, Mallory and John and Mara, to great grandchildren Miranda and Zoey and brother Murray and his wife Doris and to family and friends and all who mourn his passing - We pray that you are blessed with a complete nechamah, a complete healing, comfort and consolation on the loss of this special and good soul, this devoted, venerable, loving and giving gentleman, this very talented, gifted synagogue minded and community minded soul. His contribution to the world in which he resided for his 88 years will be remembered with much respect, admiration and affection.

*For us he has not died. His soul has returned to G-d Who loved him. His achievements in the life of our congregation and community will long endure. Above all, he will live in our hearts. Leo, Lech B'Shalom, go in peace. We shall remember and love you always.

"Good night sweet prince and flights of angels sing thee to thy rest."



RABBI'S MESSAGE

A PRESENT STATE OF ISRAEL AFFAIRS

- Zvi Gabbay

“Negotiations with the Palestinians, mediated by the Americans, are going on as if Gaza does not exist. One must suppose that if an agreement is signed, Hamas or Islamic Jihad (based in Gaza), supported by Iran - which also opposes a deal with Israel – will continue to attack Israel with missiles and rockets. The current negotiations are completely cut off from the Palestinian reality, which has two entities, one in Ramallah and one in Gaza, competing for supremacy on the Palestinian streets.

Abbas is not the leader of all Palestinians. Although he sits in Ramallah, where the Palestinian government traditionally sits, he does not speak for all Palestinians. Therefore, he's in no rush to seal the deal with Israel. The goal of Palestinian leaders, who are the descendants of the leaders of gangs that fought against the Jewish pioneers, is to uproot the Jewish state from the region.

We must wait until a Palestinian leader arises who can unite all Palestinians around him; one that truly, honestly aspires to coexistence with the Jewish entity - the State of Israel. In the meantime, independent Palestinian government should be encouraged, in order to increase their quality of life and promote economic cooperation between the two peoples.” (*The writer is a former Israeli ambassador to Ireland and deputy director general of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.*) (*Ha'aretz*)

Palestinians Need More Than Borders - Tom Wilson

“PA head Mahmoud Abbas wants the next round of negotiations to focus on the borders of a Palestinian state. But the precise geographical parameters of a Palestinian state must be of less concern than the internal nature of that state. Indeed, if we could all be confident that a future Palestinian state would have the national characteristics of, say, Switzerland, then the question of the defensibility of Israel's borders might be somewhat less critical.

But because there is good reason to suspect that a future Palestinian state in the West Bank, like the Palestinian polity in Gaza, would have more in common with Afghanistan, the exact positioning of its borders should hardly be our most pressing concern.

The Palestinian Authority's nascent country-in-waiting in the West Bank has been the model of what a failed state looks like and it only remains in existence today because of phenomenal levels of international aid coupled with an IDF presence. Were it not for the Israeli military, Abbas and his governing Fatah movement would likely have been swept away long ago just as Fatah was in Gaza.

The Palestinian Authority's dress rehearsal for statehood has demonstrated what a Palestinian state would look like. As things stand, wherever the borders of a Palestinian state were drawn would present Israel with a strategic nightmare.” (*Commentary*)

Israel's Relationship with the UN Human Rights Council: Is There Hope for Change? - Michal Navot

“The UN Human Rights Council (HRC), since its establishment, has been characterized by its obsessive bias, selectivity, discriminative attitude, and double standards toward Israel. On January 1, 2014, Israel was admitted as a member of the Western European and Others Group (WEOG) in Geneva. As a full member of a regional group, Israel will be able to participate in shaping policies and be able to better defend its position.” (*Institute for Contemporary Affairs-Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs*)

A SIGN OF THE TIMES

Lutheran Nuns End Jerusalem Mission to Holocaust Survivors - Renee Ghert-Zand

“Beit Avraham (House of Abraham), run by the sisters of the Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary in Jerusalem's Talpiot neighborhood, is closing down. Since 1961 it has served as a guesthouse for Holocaust survivors.

But with so few survivors still alive, the nuns have decided their work has come to an end.

The sisters had originally come to Israel in 1957 to work as nurses in Israeli hospitals as a way of doing practical repentance for not only what the Nazis had perpetrated, but also for "the 2,000 years of Jews' suffering because of Christianity," as Sister Gratia puts it. "We as Christians had to do something in Israel. We couldn't continue as though nothing happened."

Sister Gratia, 71, who arrived in 1975 from Austria and became an Israeli citizen two years ago, has no plans to leave the Holy Land." (*Times of Israel*)

In his recent book, *The Demonization of Israel and the Jews*, Manfred Gerstenfeld reports anti-Semitism has mutated into anti-Israelism. Numerical data from various studies provides evidence that well over 150 million citizens of the European Union out of a total population of approximately 505 million, or approximately 1/3 embrace a demonic view of Israel. Because, Gerstenfeld says 80% of 400 million of these people are 16 or older, one may accept a significantly larger number as accurate. 150 million people in the European Union consider Israel a genocidal nation. The current demonic view of Israel, widespread in mainstream Europe, is a new mutation of the diabolical beliefs about Jews held by many in the Middle Ages.

Gerstenfeld makes mention of the fact that "there are many studies that illustrate that Europeans have a very negative view of Israel. A recent Eurobarometer study asked those polled whether they considered a number of different countries a threat to world peace. Fifty-nine percent of Europeans said that Israel is a threat to world peace. No other country was considered as dangerous. Iran was in second place with North Korea, both with 53%."

We need to understand that anti-Semitism or hatred of Jews and anti-Israelism, hatred of Israel, overlap. He (Gerstenfeld) posits that there are three major forms of demonization of the Jews. They are:

1. Religious anti-Semitism
2. Nationalistic/ Ethnic anti-Semitism
3. Anti-Israelism

They all express one core motif, namely that the Jews, including Israel embody "absolute evil." The perception of absolute evil has changed over the centuries but it has always been professed by our detractors.

Dear friends, the present efforts at delegitimizing Israel are quite powerful and extensive. It has been suggested that a first step in battling the demonization of Jews and Israel is to understand how enemies operate. The fight against demonization, it has been pointed out, requires a much better organizational structure. Strategies have to be developed to do battle on the various battlefields of delegitimization. Defenders of Israel and the Jews may require a change in their thinking. One aspect of this, it has been suggested, is to integrate the thought that offense is frequently better than defense. Enemies of Israel and the Jews will have to be convinced that if they attack, there will be a heavy price to pay. Exposing their duplicitous ways, their lies, false accusations, exaggerations and fallacies will also go a long way in mitigating, if not totally eliminating their nefarious designs.

Israel is an integral part of our purpose as Jews in this life of ours. I believe that we will be taken to task for why we did not support Israel in its ongoing struggle for survival and peace if we choose not to. I believe our reward for supporting Israel cannot be measured in human, material terms. I just know and I believe each of you know deep down that it is the right thing to do. It is what our G-d requires of us. It is what forgiveness of our sins depends upon. Resolving to help the land of Israel, whether in a small or more substan-

tial way, must have a priority place on our list of things to do as we enter into the 66th year of Israel's independence. Some may consider a trip to Israel, some may choose to support a worthy organization in Israel. Some may elect to provide some service to Israel here where we reside.

In the merit of performing this great, great mitzvah of loving and caring for Israel, our holy, and true homeland, may we be blessed together with all the families of Israel throughout the world, with the blessing of seeing Israel at peace, the ingathering of the exiles, Jerusalem fully restored and the arrival of Mashiach. May we be found worthy of keeping our beloved, G-d given homeland, now and forever in good health, happiness, prosperity and shalom for us and for all Israel. Amen.

The Israel Talks Leadership Statement

The State of Israel, a vibrant democracy dedicated to the equality of all its citizens, embodies the 3,000-year connection of the Jewish people to its homeland. Israel has sparked a renewal of Jewish life both in the State and across the Jewish Diaspora, serves as a refuge for Jews anywhere threatened by anti-Semitism, stands as the international center of Hebrew language and culture, and is host to a new flowering both of a world of Torah learning and a world of extraordinary innovation in technology, science, arts, culture, business and medicine.

For American Jews to engage in active discussion and debate about Israel is healthy and welcome. In fact, it is the best guarantee of an enduring, meaningful relationship between Diaspora Jewry and the State of Israel and the surest antidote to the worrying trends of weakening relationships between these two worlds. We therefore embrace the reality that our community contains a wide range of perspectives on internal Israeli political and social issues, American foreign and domestic policy, religious affairs, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, Israel's safety and security and many other issues. And we are proud that our community remains robust enough for all those who are committed to Israel's Jewish and democratic character to take their place within it.

Yet differences of opinion regarding the State of Israel now too often serve as a cause for American Jewish communal discord and even acrimony. When disagreement becomes hostile it frays the bonds of our community. The consequences of such disconnectedness are profound and severe. We must ask ourselves what we can do to listen with more patience, to hear each other and ourselves with greater clarity, and not to impugn the character or motivations of those with whom we disagree.

To that end, we commit ourselves to the following in our engagement with each other about Israel:

- We will see our fellow members of the Jewish community of New York, and of Jewish communities all over the world, as part of *Klal Yisrael*, the family of Israel, with a shared connection to the Jewish people and to Israel.
- We will treat others with decency, honor and resilience, be curious about our differences and cherish what we have in common, even if we agree to disagree with each other.
- We will be mindful of the Jewish teaching *Derekh Eretz Kadmah L'Torah*, that proper conduct precedes the Torah. Respectful speaking and listening are possible even in the midst of a heated interchange of ideas.

The Talmud (Brachot 58a) teaches that "just as people's faces all differ, so do their opinions." Just because we may differ over Israel's course is no reason for Jews to be disrespectful to one another. Committed to our community's vibrancy and diversity, we simply have too much to lose. May our love for Israel unite, rather than divide us.

Dear friends, May 14th is the secular date of the 66th anniversary of Israel's statehood. It behooves us at this time to offer our continued love and support to both Israel and the United States as well as our talents to

encourage our families and friends, our neighbors, and our leaders to do their share in seeing to it that the relationship between Israel and the United States does not deteriorate but improves with the passage of time.

For American Jews, celebrating Yom Ha'atzmaut on the Hebrew date or the secular date has been a way to express solidarity with the state of Israel and to strengthen their alliance with it. In many communities, it is one of few occasions in which Jewish organizations and synagogues of different ideologies and denominations cooperate in forming a common celebration. Let us show our love and support for Israel at this time by celebrating its 66th anniversary even as we affirm our devotion to our beloved America.

Best wishes to all for a joyous summer.
Happy 66th Birthday to Israel.
Rabbi Gerald M. Solomon

SHAVUOT

The Festival of Shavuot or "Weeks," is one of the Shalosh Regalim (Exodus 23:14); one of the three main pilgrimage festivals. It comes at the end of the seven-times-seven (a "week of weeks") cycle of the Omer, which begins on the second day of Pesach. This year Shavuot begins on June 3rd. Candle lighting is 8:03P.M.

The Festival of Shavuot is somewhat unusual. Not only is it not assigned to a specific date, but there is no real explanation given in Torah as to the meaning of the day, nor how it is to be observed ritually. In Biblical times, the period of counting seven weeks marked the transition from the very first grain crop (barley) of early spring (at Pesach) to the beginning of the summer grain (wheat) harvest (at Shavuot). Thus names for Shavuot given in the Torah are Chag Ha-Katzir - the Festival of the Harvest - and Chag Ha-Bikkurim - the Festival of the First Fruits (Cf. Exodus 23:14-19; Leviticus 23:9-22). The day is identified as a holy occasion to be observed as a Sabbath, and specific sacrificial offerings are to be brought to the Temple. But beyond that, there is no special ritual prescribed.

These agricultural origins of Shavuot probably sufficed for the agrarian society of ancient Israel while they lived in the promised land. But they didn't really allow for a meaningful holiday for Jews once they were outside the Land of Israel, where farming was on a different cycle and there was no Temple to which one could bring the seasonal offerings. In exile, Jews were left with a commanded festival with no apparent meaning. But tradition abhors a vacuum. So what inherent meaning could be found for Shavuot?

The meaning of Shavuot became apparent after considering the relationship of Shavuot with Pesach and Sukkot. All are Biblically ordained festivals. All have an agricultural connection, assigned to a specific harvest season. But Pesach and Sukkot both have historical associations as well. Pesach commemorates the Exodus and the liberation from Egyptian bondage. Sukkot, and the dwelling in the Sukkah, recall the Israelite's experience while wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. So, our sages opined that Shavuot must fit into this paradigm as well. But how? Well, 50 days after leaving Egypt, and before they set out to wander in the desert, the Israelites found themselves camped out at the base of Mt. Sinai, awaiting the revelation of God's teachings. And so, in this historical sequence, Shavuot naturally became associated with an extraordinary and significant event: the revelation of the Torah to Moses on Mt. Sinai. While Shavuot had no 'historical' event associated with it in the Torah, and the event of Revelation had no holiday to mark it, it was a perfect match. Conveniently, since Revelation and Shavuot both do not have an actual date in the Torah, the Rabbis were able to determine that Revelation coincides with Shavuot. The Rabbis had a vested interest in this transformation as well. They saw themselves as the legitimate heirs to the Temple and priestly leadership. Instead of sacrifices, Torah learning must be at the center. How could there not be a holiday to acknowledge the giving of the Torah?

The sages came to refer to Shavuot as “**Z'man Matan Toratenu**”- “**The Time of the Giving of our Torah.**” As the anniversary of revelation, Shavuot evolved into a celebration of Torah. In the synagogue, the account of the revelation at Sinai and the Ten Commandments are read as part of the service. Among Ashkenazic Jews, a custom also developed associating the Megilat Ruth- the Book of Ruth with Shavuot. There are a number of links that make this an appropriate text. Particularly, the setting of the story is at the harvest time, and Ruth's conversion to Judaism is seen as analogous to the Israelite's acceptance of the covenant at Sinai. In addition, King David, who tradition teaches was born and died on Shavuot, is identified in the book as being descended from Ruth.

Another popular custom, which originated with the Jewish mystics in Safed in the sixteenth century, is the practise of staying up all through the night of Shavuot studying Torah. This practice, called Tikkun Leil Shavuot is based on a Midrash that explains that the Israelites slept late on the morning of the revelation at Sinai, and thus almost missed the giving of Torah. By staying up all night, we atone for this lapse of our ancestors, and demonstrate our appreciation of revelation and our eagerness to recommit ourselves again and again to Torah.

Rituals and Customs

There is a custom on Shavuot to eat dairy foods, such as cheese blintzes. This custom is of uncertain origin; perhaps it is an ancient echo of the agricultural seasons when in the early summer the calves and kids would be old enough to wean, so there would be plenty of milk for the farmers. Another explanation suggests that Torah is like milk and honey (see Song of Songs 4:11). Another theory suggests that prior to the Revelation on Shavuot, the consumption of meat would have been inappropriate because of the laws of kashrut which were to be given in the Shavuot Revelation of the Torah.

There is a beautiful Sephardic custom of erecting a Chuppa (bridal canopy) over the lectern on which Torah is read on Shavuot and honoring recently married couples. The custom extends from the notion that Shavuot is like a wedding between God (the groom) and Israel (the bride), with Torah serving as the Ketubah (marriage contract). Special Shavuot ketubot are also written and read.

Other customs include decorating the synagogue for Shavuot with flowers and green plants, again echoing the ancient holiday of the “first fruits,” and “Confirmation,” a relatively new ritual (only a hundred years or so) through which teenagers are given the opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to Jewish life and living.

It has often been asked why Shavuot is known as "The Season of the **Giving** of Our Torah," when perhaps it's more important for us as Jews to recall that not only did G-d give Torah to Israel, but that we freely accepted and committed ourselves to it. Shavuot, then, becomes not only Z'man Matan Toratenu - the time of the giving of our Torah, but also Z'man Kabbalat Toratenu - the time of the **accepting** of our Torah. The giving of Torah is an historical event, that happened just once. But the acceptance of Torah by individual Jews is a continual process that happens every day, anytime a Jew makes a decision based on Jewish values, wholeheartedly recites a Jewish prayer, or makes a conscious effort to better the world. Each and every experience of our lives provides us with a new context to learn and understand Torah and put it into action in our lives. This is referred to as progressive revelation. We were given Torah just once, thus allowing for this yearly anniversary of Shavuot. But we “accept” Torah continually, allowing us to live a renewed Jewish life every day.

Jews Leaving France

Josh Hasten

French anti-Semitism and French aliyah skyrocket on parallel tracks.

Against the backdrop of studies revealing rising anti-Semitism both in France and across all of Europe, as well as one particularly brutal attack in Paris last month, French Jews are flocking to Israel.

Shay Felber – the Jewish Agency’s deputy director-general for community services and resident expert on France, who made aliyah from France with his parents in the 1970s – cites three main reasons for the current trend. Two are and the difficult economic situation in France. But from a more positive perspective, the high level of Jewish education and Zionist identity prevalent in the French Jewish community is also leading to an upswing in immigration to Israel, Felber tells *JNS.org*.

In Paris during March, a 59-year-old Jewish teacher was subjected to anti-Semitic slurs and then severely beaten by a group of young men identified as being “Maghreb.” The men proceeded to draw a swastika on the chest of their victim with a marker, and vowed they would return to finish the job. No arrests have been made yet for that attack.

40 percent of all racist violence perpetrated in France targeted Jews who represent less than one percent of the population.

Felber believes that the current rise in and attacks in France is a direct result of the situation on “the street,” with many of the episodes being perpetrated by local Arabs and Muslims. Yet Felber stresses that the is not French government policy, but that the government “is trying very hard to combat” anti-Semitism.

One recent study that reveals the worrisome realities for French Jewry is the 2013 report on anti-Semitism in France compiled by SPCJ, the security unit of France’s Jewish communities. According to the report, 423 anti-Semitic acts were recorded in the country in 2013 alone. The research also indicates that last year, 40 percent of all racist violence perpetrated in France targeted Jews. The report amplifies the ramifications of that statistic by explaining the trend from a proportionality perspective.

“Since Jews represent less than one percent of the French population, what this shows is that less than one percent of French citizens were the target of 40 percent of racist attacks perpetrated in the country,” says the report.

The document also states, “Since the year 2000 – and for 14 consecutive years – the number of anti-Semitic acts in France has been very high, about seven times higher than numbers recorded in the 1990s. During this period, six people were murdered because they were Jewish, including three young children.”

The report concludes that anti-Semitism in France “cannot be considered anymore as a temporary situation associated with the situation in the Middle-East; it is a structural problem that has not been fought as such and has not been halted yet.”

Gideon Behar, director of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Department for Combating Anti-Semitism, tells *JNS.org* that while he is “concerned about the rising anti-Semitism in Europe, and it is something we are following very closely,” his office has not issued any travel advisories or warnings for France or any other European Union countries leading up to the current robust Passover holiday travel season.

Regarding aliyah – not only from France, but from Europe in general – being a result of rising anti-Semitism, Behar cites the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) November 2013 study. That study was based on a survey given to 5,847 Jews from EU member states, asking them about their own experiences and perceptions of discrimination, hate crime, and anti-Semitism.

Two-thirds of FRA respondents (66 percent) consider anti-Semitism to be a problem across the EU member states surveyed, while three-quarters of the respondents (76 percent) indicate that anti-Semitism has worsened over the past five years in the country where they live. Almost half (46 percent) of the respondents worry about becoming the victim of an anti-Semitic verbal insult or harassment in the next 12 months, while one-third (33 percent) fear a physical attack in the same period.

In the 12 months before the survey, 26 percent of all respondents reported experiencing an incident or multiple incidents involving verbal insult or harassment because they were Jewish, and 4 percent experienced physical violence or threats of violence. Seventy-five percent of respondents consider online anti-Semitism to be a problem in their country of residence, and almost three-quarters (73 percent) said that online anti-

Semitism has increased over the last five years.

The Jewish Agency, meanwhile, recently unveiled a new government plan to encourage aliyah from France. Along with the Israeli Ministry of Aliyah and Immigrant Absorption, the initiative is boosting the number of Jewish Agency *shlichim* (emissaries) in France, increasing marketing efforts, developing new immigrant absorption programs, and establishing a special committee headed by the director-general of the Prime Minister's Office to remove obstacles to French aliyah.

The proposal also sets clear benchmarks for increasing the number of immigrants, seeking to double their numbers in the coming years. The plan was developed in consultation and cooperation with French Jewish organizations, both in France and in Israel. Other partners include the World Zionist Organization, the Israeli Ministry of Jerusalem and Diaspora Affairs, and Keren Hayesod-United Israel Appeal, who are all working together for the first time in order to strengthen French aliyah.

The Jewish Agency's Felber says he is confident that based on the large aliyah figures for French Jews – he estimates that there have been 100,000-120,000 total olim from France to date – these new immigrants will also succeed in building their new lives in the Jewish state.

Europe's Alarming Push to Isolate Israel

March 11, 2014 07:12 PM

By: Alan Dershowitz

Why are so many of the grandchildren of Nazis and Nazi collaborators who brought us the Holocaust once again declaring war on the Jews? Why have we seen such an increase in anti-Semitism and irrationally virulent anti-Zionism in western Europe?

To answer these questions, a myth must first be exposed. That myth is the one perpetrated by the French, the Dutch, the Norwegians, the Swiss, the Belgians, the Austrians, and many other western Europeans: namely that the Holocaust was solely the work of German Nazis aided perhaps by some Polish, Ukrainian, Latvian, Lithuanian, and Estonian collaborators.

False.

The Holocaust was perpetrated by Europeans — by Nazi sympathizers and collaborators among the French, Dutch, Norwegians, Swiss, Belgians, Austrians and other Europeans, both Western and Eastern.

If the French government had not deported to the death camps more Jews than their German occupiers asked for; if so many Dutch and Belgian citizens and government officials had not cooperated in the roundup of Jews; if so many Norwegians had not supported Quisling; if Swiss government officials and bankers had not exploited Jews; if Austria had not been more Nazi than the Nazis, the Holocaust would not have had so many Jewish victims.

In light of the widespread European complicity in the destruction of European Jewry, the pervasive anti-Semitism and irrationally hateful anti-Zionism that has recently surfaced throughout western Europe toward Israel should surprise no one.

"Oh no," we hear from European apologists. "This is different. We don't hate the Jews. We only hate their nation-state. Moreover, the Nazis were right-wing. We're left-wing, so we can't be anti-Semites."

Nonsense.

The hard left has a history of anti-Semitism as deep and enduring as the hard right. The line from Voltaire, to Karl Marx, to Levrenti Beria, to Robert Faurisson, to today's hard-left Israel bashers is as straight as the line from Wilhelm Mars to the persecutors of Alfred Dreyfus to Hitler.

The Jews of Europe have always been crushed between the Black and the Red — victims of extremism whether it be the ultra-nationalism of Khmel'nitsky to the ultra-anti-Semitism of Stalin.

"But some of the most strident anti-Zionists are Jews, such as Norman Finkelstein and even Israelis such as Gilad Atzmon. Surely they can't be anti-Semites."

Why not? Gertrude Stein and Alice Toklas collaborated with the Gestapo. Atzmon, a hard leftist, describes himself as a proud self-hating Jew and admits that his ideas derive from a notorious anti-Semite. He denies that the Holocaust is historically proved but he believes that Jews may well have killed Christian children to use their blood to bake Passover matzah. And he thinks it's "rational" to burn down synagogues. Finkelstein believes in an international Jewish conspiracy that includes Steven Spielberg, Leon Uris, Eli Wiesel, and Andrew Lloyd Webber! "But Israel is doing bad things to the Palestinians," the European apologists insist, "and we are sensitive to the plight of the underdog."

No, you're not! Where are your demonstrations on behalf of the oppressed Tibetans, Georgians, Syrians, Armenians, Kurds, or even Ukrainians? Where are your BDS movements against the Chinese, the Russians, the Cubans, the Turks, or the Assad regime?

Only the Palestinians, only Israel? Why? Not because the Palestinians are more oppressed than these and other groups. Only because their alleged oppressors are Jews and the nation-state of the Jews. Would there be demonstrations and BDS campaigns on behalf of the Palestinians if they were oppressed by Jordan or Egypt?

Oh, wait! The Palestinians were oppressed by Egypt and Jordan. Gaza was an open-air prison between 1948 and 1967, when Egypt was the occupying power. And remember Black September, when Jordan killed more Palestinians than Israel did in a century? I don't remember any demonstration or BDS campaigns -- because there weren't any.

When Arabs occupy or kill Arabs, Europeans go ho-hum. But when Israel opens a soda factory in Maale Adumim, which even the Palestinian leadership acknowledges will remain part of Israel in any peace deal, Oxfam parts ways with Scarlett Johansson for advertising a soda company that employs hundreds of Palestinians.

Keep in mind that Oxfam has provided "aid and material support" to two anti-Israel terrorist groups, according to the Tel Aviv-based Israeli Law Group.

The hypocrisy of so many hard-left western Europeans would be staggering if it were not so predictable based on the sordid history of Western Europe's treatment of the Jews.

Even England, which was on the right side of the war against Nazism, has a long history of anti-Semitism, beginning with the expulsion of the Jews in 1290 to the notorious White Paper of 1939, which prevented the Jews of Europe from seeking asylum from the Nazis in British-mandated Palestine. And Ireland, which vacillated in the war against Hitler, boasts some of the most virulent anti-Israel rhetoric.

The simple reality is that one cannot understand the current western European left-wing war against the nation-state of the Jewish people without first acknowledging the long-term European war against the Jewish people themselves.

Theodore Herzl understood the pervasiveness and irrationality of European anti-Semitism, which led him to the conclusion that the only solution to Europe's Jewish problem was for European Jews to leave that bastion of Jew hatred and return to their original homeland, which is now the state of Israel.

None of this is to deny Israel's imperfections or the criticism it justly deserves for some of its policies. But these imperfections and deserved criticism cannot even begin to explain, must less justify, the disproportionate hatred directed against the only nation-state of the Jewish people and the disproportionate silence regarding the far greater imperfections and deserved criticism of other nations and groups — including the Palestinians.

Nor is this to deny that many western European individuals and some western European countries have refused to succumb to the hatred against the Jews or their state. The Czech Republic comes to mind. But far too many western Europeans are as irrational in their hatred toward Israel as their forbearers were in their hatred toward their Jewish neighbors.

As author Amos Oz once aptly observed: the walls of his grandparents' Europe were covered with graffiti saying, "Jews, go to Palestine." Now they say, "Jews, get out of Palestine" — by which is meant Israel. Who do these western European bigots think they're fooling? Only fools who want to be fooled in the interest of denying that they are manifesting new variations on their grandparents' old biases.

Any objective person with an open mind, open eyes, and an open heart must see the double standard being applied to the nation-state of the Jewish people. Many doing so are the grandchildren of those who lethally applied a double standard to the Jews of Europe in the 1930's and 1940's.

For shame!

(Alan M. Dershowitz is the Felix Frankfurter Professor of Law at Harvard Law School. He is a graduate of Brooklyn College and Yale Law School. His latest book is his autobiography, "Taking the Stand: My Life in the Law.")

Ron Proser (*Wall Street Journal*)

Over the past century, a plague of persecution has swept across the Middle East, emptying the region of its Christian population. At the turn of the 20th century, Christians made up 26% of the Middle East's population. Today, that figure has dwindled to less than 10%. Intolerant and extremist governments are driving away the Christian communities that have lived in the Middle East since their faith was born.

In Syrian cities like Aleppo and Damascus, Christians who refused to convert to Islam have been kidnapped, shot and beheaded by Islamist opposition fighters. In Egypt, mobs of Muslim Brotherhood members burn Coptic Christian churches in the same way they once obliterated Jewish synagogues. And in Iraq, terrorists deliberately target Christian worshippers.

Over the past 10 years, nearly two-thirds of Iraq's 1.5 million Christians have been driven from their homes. Many settled in Syria before once again becoming victims of unrelenting persecution. Syria's Christian population has dropped from 30% in the 1920s to less than 10% today.

In January, a report by the nondenominational Christian organization Open Doors documented the 10 most oppressive countries for Christians; nine were Muslim-majority states noted for Islamic extremism, tyrannical regimes that uphold archaic blasphemy and defamation-of-religion laws. The Islamic Republic of Iran has executed dozens of people for the crimes of "waging war against God" and "spreading corruption on Earth."

Israel is the only country in the Middle East with a growing Christian population. Its Christian community has increased from 34,000 in 1948 to 140,000 today, in large measure because of the freedoms Christians are afforded. Salim Joubran, a Christian Arab Israeli, has served as a Supreme Court justice since 2003.

Father Gabriel Nadaf, a Greek Orthodox priest living in Israel, recently told me: "Human rights are not something to be taken for granted. Christians in much of the Middle East have been slaughtered and persecuted for their faith, but here in Israel they are protected."

(The writer is Israel's ambassador to the United Nations.)

MAY, 2014

IYAR/SIVAN, 5774

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		On-Going Tuesdays, 11 AM Exercise Class		<i>1</i> 1 Iyar Rosh Chodesh	2  7:34	3 3 Iyar Emor <i>Ends 8:43</i>
4	5 Yom Hazikoron	6 Yom Ha'Azma'ut	7 Rabbi's Class "Talmud on Trial" 10:30-noon	8	9  7:41	10 10 Iyar Behar <i>Ends 8:50</i>
11	12	13	14 Rabbi's Class "Talmud on Trial" 10:30-noon	15 Sisterhood Meeting 12 Noon	16  7:48	17 17 Iyar Bechokotai <i>Ends 8:57</i>
18 Lag B'Omer	19	20	21 Rabbi's Class "Talmud on Trial" 10:30-noon	22	23  7:54	24 24 Iyar Bamidbar <i>Ends 9:04</i>
25	26	27	28 Rabbi's Class "Talmud on Trial" 10:30-noon	29 Book Circle "Mrs Lincoln's Dressmaker" 10:30 AM	30 Rosh Chodesh  8:00	31 2 Sivan Naso <i>Ends 9:10</i>

JUNE, 2014

SIVAN/TAMUZ, 5774

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<i>1</i> On-Going Tuesdays, 11 AM Exercise Class	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i> Erev Shavuot  8:03	<i>4</i> Shavuot  9:12	<i>5</i> Shavuot <i>Ends</i>	<i>6</i>  8:05	<i>7-9 Sivan</i> B'haalotecha <i>Ends 9:14</i>
<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>13</i>  8:09	<i>14-16 Sivan</i> Shlach <i>Ends</i>
<i>15</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>19</i> Sisterhood Meeting Noon	<i>20</i>  8:12	<i>21-23 Sivan</i> Korach <i>Ends 9:20</i>
<i>22</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>26</i> Book Circle "The Submission"	<i>27</i>  8:13	<i>28-30 Sivan</i> Chukat <i>Ends 9:21</i>
<i>29</i> 1 Tamuz Rosh Chodesh	<i>30</i>					