

For the week of: May 30, 2009  
Sivan 7, 5769

# B'nai Israel Congregation

The Orthodox Synagogue For ALL Jews In Hampton Roads

## Shavuos

Day 1 - Stone Chumash: 400-414  
(Both Days) Maftir: 892  
Haftorah: 1228-1229  
Day 2 - Stone Chumash: 1012-1022  
Haftorah: pg. 1229-1231

### Davening & Learning Schedule

#### Thurs. 5/28 - Erev Shavuos

Daf Yomi 6:00 AM  
Shachris 6:45 AM  
Candle Lighting 7:58 PM  
Mincha 7:55 PM

#### Fri. 5/29—Shavuos I

Shachris #1 5:00 AM  
Shachris #2 9:00 AM  
Daf Yomi 5:30 PM  
Mincha/Maariv 6:30 PM  
Candle Lighting 6:50 PM

#### Shabbos 5/30 —Shavuos 2

Shacharis 9:00 AM  
Daf Yomi 6:05 PM  
Sefer Shmuel 7:05 PM  
Boys' Learning 7:15 PM  
Mincha 7:45 PM  
Maariv/Havdalah 9:03 PM

#### Sun. 5/31

Daf Yomi 7:00 AM  
Shachris 8:00 AM  
Rosh Hashanah class 9:00 AM  
Halacha Class 7:00 PM  
Mincha 8:00 PM

#### Mon. 6/1

Daf Yomi 7:00 AM  
Shachris 8:00 AM  
Parsha Class 7:00 PM  
Mincha 8:00 PM

#### Tues. 6/2

Daf Yomi 6:00 AM  
Shachris 7:00 AM  
Ladies' Learning 12:00 N  
Mincha 8:00 PM

#### Wed. 6/3

Daf Yomi 6:00 AM  
Shachris 7:00 AM  
Partners in Torah 7:00 PM  
Mincha 8:00 PM

#### Thurs. 6/4

Daf Yomi 6:00 AM  
Shachris 7:00 AM  
Mincha 8:00 PM

#### Fri. 6/5

Daf Yomi 6:00 AM  
Shachris 7:00 AM  
Mincha 6:30 PM  
Candle Lighting 6:50 PM

This week's Shalosh Seudos is sponsored by Aaron & Ruth Cohen in memory of Ruth's mother, Sarah Japha.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### RABBI SILVER'S WEEKLY CLASSES:

<b>Shabbos:</b>	40 minutes before Mincha: Navi (Sefer Shmuel)
<b>Sunday:</b>	9:00 AM: Gemorah Shiur: Rosh Hashanah 8:00 PM: Halacha class
<b>Monday:</b>	8:00 PM: Philosophies of the Parsha
<b>Tuesday:</b>	Noon: Ladies' only - Sefer Tehillim at the JCC

Always check Davening & Learning Schedule for cancellations.

### SHAVUOS LEARNING FOR WOMEN

Every week during the Sefira and Summer, people gather Shabbos afternoon to learn Pirkei Avos. Since this Shabbos is Shavuos, there is no Pirkei Avos, but the women of Norfolk will be gathering for words of Torah. This week's class will be held at the home of Shari Berman.

### NORFOLK GIRLS CHOIR

Sunday, June 7th

The Norfolk Girls Choir will be performing, once again under the direction of Reb-bitzen Naomi Silver, for the women of the community.

### CHAI KIDDUSH

June 13th

This will probably be the last Chai Kiddush till after the Summer, so be sure to get your sponsorships in now. Just \$18 per name.

### TORAS CHAIM HONOR

Sunday, June 14th at 11:00 AM

Toras Chaim will be honoring Grandparents of the Year: Aaron & Ruth Cohen and Parents of the Year: Gershon & Chana Leah Rothman at a special brunch to be held here at Bnai Israel. Please contact either Ephraim or Chaya Etti Adler to make reservations for event.

### TEHILLIM CLASS ON CD

Due to popular demand, Rabbi Silver's Tuesday Tehillim class is now on CD. As a special first time offer, the first seven classes will be available for \$36.00 or \$6.00 a piece. In the future, the classes will be sold in sets of five classes for \$36.00. For more information, please contact Nancy Berman.

### BIRTHDAYS

Amy Brooke	5/31
Marcy Mostofsky	6/1
Wendy Ullman	6/2
Miriam E. Wilson	10th 6/3
Shloimie Silver	6th 6/4

### ANNIVERSARIES

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Guterman	45th 5/30
Mr. & Mrs. Abbott Saks	55th 5/30
Mr. & Mrs. David Blais	13th 6/2
Mr. & Mrs. Nathan Drory	20th 6/5

### YAHREZITS

Mary Levi	5/29
John Perl	5/29
Hilliard Shapiro	5/30
Abraham Bridge	5/31
Fred Hoffberger	5/31
Hadassah Horenstein	5/31
Brian Forman	6/1
Sarah Japha	6/2
Rosa Rabinovich	6/2
Alan Rose	6/2
Alan Beer	6/3
Abe Rines	6/3
Betty Lutsky	6/4
Allen Steven Fenton	6/5
Ruth Stein	6/5

Please visit our newly designed website (after Shabbos!) at [www.bnaisrael.org](http://www.bnaisrael.org)

## **Rabbi Frand On Shavuos: If Not For This Day, We Would Just Be 'Another Joe'**

All brachos [blessings], with the exception of Birkas HaMazon [Grace After Meals], are Rabbinic in origin. However, The Shaagas Aryeh (Rav Aryeh Leib ben Asher Gunzberg; 1695-1785) argues that the bracha [blessing] recited before learning Torah is Biblical in origin. The proof, the Shaagas Aryeh says, is a Talmudic passage in Nedarim [81a], which attributes the destruction of the Land of Israel to the fact that Jews did not recite the blessing before learning Torah. The Shaagas Aryeh argues that if this bracha was not of Biblical origin, it would never have been singled out as the cause of the destruction.

The Ran (1290-1375) in Masseches Nedarim quotes a novel insight into this Gemara in Nedarim, in the name of Rabbeinu Yona (1200-1263). The Gemara in Nedarim is expounding a pasuk [verse] in Yirmiyahu. The pasuk in Yirmiyahu says that the destruction occurred because "they abandoned my Torah" [9:12]. Rabbeinu Yona explains that the reason why the Gemara did not want to interpret the pasuk literally (that people abandoned the Torah and simply did not learn it at all), was because the Gemara previously mentioned that prophets and scholars were consulted regarding the interpretation of this pasuk and none of them had an adequate interpretation. It would not have been difficult to figure out the literal interpretation of the pasuk. Therefore, Rabbeinu Yona explains that "they abandoned my Torah" must not refer to something blatant or overt. The Gemara indicates that it was necessary for G-d Himself to reveal to us the nature of the problem.

Rabbeinu Yona continues by explaining as follows: that generation certainly occupied themselves with constant Torah learning. That was why no one could figure out why the Land was destroyed until G-d, who knows the depths of people's hearts, revealed the real source of the problem: People did not recite the bracha over learning Torah. The Ran explains that this means that they did not consider Torah prestigious enough to be worthy of a bracha. People did learn Torah. Everyone had fixed times for studying Torah. However, they did not consider the Torah learning so important. They did not appreciate what they had. That is why they did not recite the bracha over Torah.

When one studies Chemistry or Accounting or Law, one may find it intellectually challenging. They may be deep and stimulating, but one does not recite a Bracha over them. However, a Sefer Torah, a Chumash, a Medrash - these do require a Bracha to demonstrate that we know the value of what we have been given. The generation of the Destruction apparently lacked this appreciation - to the extent that the Talmud says "they abandoned my Torah" - i.e. - they did not even possess the Torah.

The Izbiter Rebbe (Rav Mordechai Yosef Leiner of Izbice; died 1854) once quoted an amazing Hagaos Ashrei (13-14th Century glosses on Rabbeinu Asher's Commentary) in Tractate Bava Metzi'ah to explain this idea of having something, without REALLY having it. In the case cited there, Reuven bought a piece of metal, which he believed was made out of lead. Reuven paid the price based on the per pound value of lead. He subsequently sold the piece of metal (presumably lead) to Shimeon, Later, Shimeon discovered that the piece of metal was in fact silver and was worth far more than what he paid for it. Upon hearing this, Reuven wanted to either receive full compensation from Shimon or undo the whole sale.

The Hagaos Ashrei rules that Shimeon can keep the metal and need not make any further payment to Reuven because Reuven never "owned" the silver. Since Reuven never realized what he had - he thought he only had lead - he never legally acquired the value of the silver. Since Reuven did not legally own the silver, Shimeon does not have to pay him for it.

The Ishbitzer Rebbe says this is the meaning of "they abandoned my Torah". People can think they have the Torah, they can learn the Torah, and the Torah can even be in their possession. But if they do not appreciate what they have, then they do not have it. The prophet can accurately label this "they have abandoned my Torah". According to Halacha, if one does not appreciate what he has, he does not really have it.

This is one of the tasks that we must work on as we approach the Holiday of Shavuos. We can never take for granted that which Torah does for us. The Talmud relates [Pesachim 68b] that Rav Yosef would make a tremendous party on Shavuos. He would say, "If not for this special day (on which the Torah was given), look how many Yosefs there are in the market place". If not for the fact that I as a Jew have that precious gift of Torah, I would literally be 'just another Joe'.

Sometimes we forget the meaning of a world without Torah. A world without Torah is just a matter of the thickness of the veneer. It is literally a situation of "each man is prepared to swallow up his fellow man" [Pirkei Avos 3:2]. The line between a human being and a wild animal - without the guiding moral force of Torah - is indeed very thin. However, the Torah makes us different and elevates us. The Torah makes us Godly instead of beastly. Where would we be without this Torah? This is the essence of Shavuos.

On Shavuos we read the story of Rus and Orpah. Rus and Orpah were sisters, daughters of Eglon King of Moab. They were from royalty. They had to choose between going back to a strange land with a woman who was an old widow without a possession in the world or returning to their father's palace. Who really made the rational decision?

Rav Leib Chassman (1869-1935) once commented that if we look at the situation with a cold calculating eye, Orpah clearly was the one who made the logical decision. Rus made an irrational decision. Why follow Naomi? It does not add up.

Rav Leib Chassman says that the only answer is that Rus realized the difference between a life with Torah and a life without Torah. When the dilemma was put into those stark terms, Rus had a relatively easy decision. Life without Torah is not worth living. This is the essence of Shavuos.

Every Yom Tov has its own message - that idea which we are supposed to appreciate about the holiday. The main idea that Shavuos must inculcate into our psyches is "If not for this day, where would we be? What would we look like without this Torah?" The scary thing is that if we fail to properly appreciate that which Torah does for our lives, we are left with what the Talmud calls "they have abandoned my Torah". This is our challenge as we approach the Yom Tov of Shavuos. Everyone should have a good and meaningful holiday.