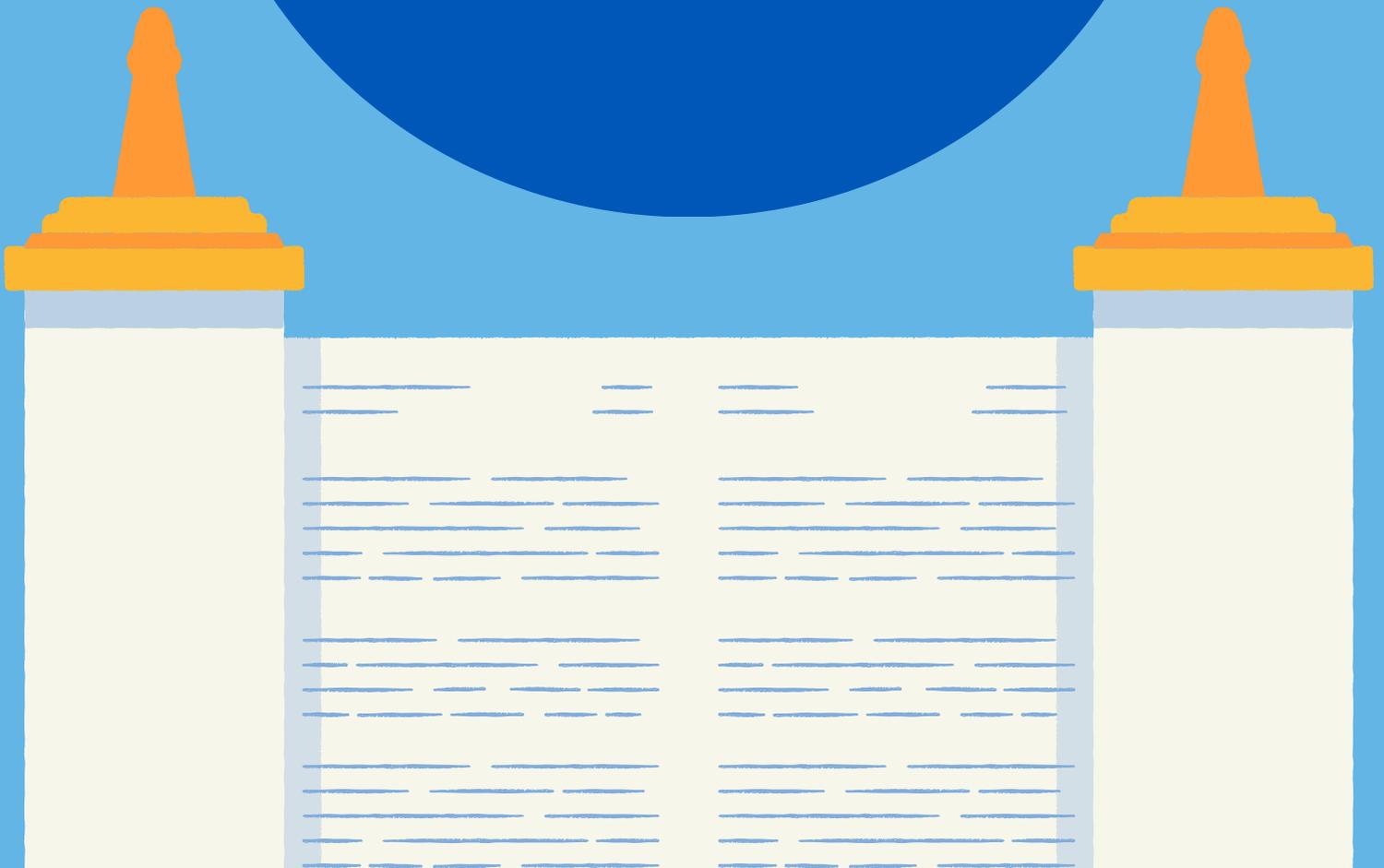




SHAVUOT AND MENTAL HEALTH HOLIDAY READER



ABOUT SHAVUOT

Shavuot commemorates the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, a momentary pause for the Jewish people between the chaos of the Exodus and their journey to freedom in the promised land. This reminds us that while growth and recovery are long journeys, to progress appropriately, we need to take time to pause, rest and reflect on how far we have come and where we are going. Thus on Shavuot, we encourage you to pause and reflect on how far you have come, how you are doing and where you are going on your road to mental wellness.



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CONNECTING WITH YOUR PAST - BUILDING YOUR FUTURE

By The Blue Dove Foundation

On two holidays we celebrate the Jewish peoples' relationship with the Torah - Shavuot, a holiday following Passover, and Simchat Torah, or "Rejoicing of the Torah," a holiday following Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret. On Shavuot, we stay up all night learning Torah to commemorate receiving the Torah at Sinai. On Simchat Torah, we commemorate the completion of the annual reading of the Torah by taking the scrolls out of the ark and dancing with them around the synagogue seven times. On Simchat Torah, we commemorate the completion of the annual reading of the Torah by taking the scrolls out of the ark and dancing with them around the synagogue seven times. The Simchat Torah celebration is similar to the way a bride circles a groom seven times on their wedding day, a concept that originated from the Biblical story of Joshua circling the ancient city of Jericho seven times, after which the walls of the city collapsed.

At a Jewish wedding, just like the walls of Jericho, we want the emotional and spiritual walls separating the bride and groom to fall, allowing them to be united in spirit. On Simchat Torah, we want the walls between us and the Torah to collapse as well, symbolizing our desire to grow closer to the Torah like two people on their wedding day. On Shavuot, we express our love and excitement for receiving the Torah by staying up all night and learning it.



These holidays are about forming deeper relationships with our heritage, the Torah, and community, to build a sense of belonging that has proved to have a significantly positive impact on our mental and physical wellness.



CONNECTING WITH YOUR PAST - BUILDING YOUR FUTURE

By The Blue Dove Foundation

A study by Stanford Medicine found that by cultivating a “social connection,” people can experience longevity of life, stronger immune systems, lower levels of anxiety and depression, and higher levels of self-esteem and empathy. Social connection refers to the subjective experience of feeling close and like one belongs to a community or heritage. Additionally, having a sense of family history and knowing where you come from can give you a sense of identity and build resilience, according to SelectHealth, a not-for-profit health plan based in the United States. Connecting with your past helps people live fuller, richer futures.

For many Jews, their personal history is bound up in the stories and traditions of the Torah, and they cultivate a positive, exploratory relationship with it by studying its lessons regularly and observing the mitzvot (commandments) it prescribes that feel relevant to them. Others embrace their heritage with yearly Passover Seders with their families, lighting the Hanukkah candles or just wearing a Magen David necklace. Simchat Torah and Shavuot are our yearly reminders to embrace our stories and live our most meaningful lives.



RESTING AT THE MOUNTAIN

By The Blue Dove Foundation

One of the primary traditions associated with Shavuot, the Jewish holiday commemorating the Jews receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai, is staying up all night learning Torah. This custom is not a direct commandment in the Torah, but a number of sources reveal this has been a long-standing tradition among many Jewish communities. One of the core justifications for this practice can be found in the Midrash, a collection of commentaries on Biblical passages in the form of legends and proverbs:

"For the third day, the Lord will come down in the sight of the people." Israel slept all through the night, because the sleep of Shavuot is pleasant and the night is short. Rabbi Yudan said: Not even a flea stung them. When the Holy One, Blessed Be God, came and found them asleep, he started to get them up with trumpets, as it is written: "And it came to pass on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunders and lightnings." (Exodus 16:16) And Moses roused Israel and took them to meet the King of kings, the Holy One, Blessed Be God, as it is written: "And Moses brought forth the people [out of the camp] to meet God." (Exodus 19:17) And the Holy One, Blessed Be God, went before them, until they reached Mount Sinai, as it is written: "Now mount Sinai was altogether on smoke." (Exodus 19:18) Rabbi Yitzhak said: It was this for which He chided them through [the prophesy of] Isaiah. As it is written: (Isaiah 50:2) "Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? When I called, was there no answer? Is My hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem?"

Essentially, this interweaving of commentary and Biblical passages describes a scenario in which the Jewish people overslept on the morning they would be receiving the Torah. As a result, the practice developed to stay up all night learning Torah to ensure we do not repeat the mistakes of our ancestors as described in the Midrash.

This text may also serve as a jumping-off point for a discussion so many of us, particularly young adults, need to have. That conversation is about burnout.

RESTING AT THE MOUNTAIN

By The Blue Dove Foundation

Burnout is defined by the International Classification of Diseases-11 (ICD-11) as:

A syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterized by three dimensions:

- Feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion.
- Increased mental distance from one's job or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job.
- Reduced professional efficacy.

A study by the employment website [Indeed](#) found that rates of burnout among all age groups have soared in recent years, especially during the pandemic. Of the millennials surveyed, 59 percent reported experiencing burnout, with Gen-Zers facing similar numbers. Even older generations like baby boomers and Gen-Xers have seen increases in burnout. Of course, the recent increase has had a lot to do with the pandemic, but even pre-pandemic, studies found that 53 percent of millennials reported experiencing burnout.

Clearly, burnout is a major issue caused by prolonged workplace-related stress — something that is particularly relevant to the circumstances of the Midrash quoted above. The slavery in Egypt lasted hundreds of years, according to the Torah. It was back-breaking and intensive work that ended only a couple of months before the Mount Sinai experience.

Within that context, it is no wonder the Jews were exhausted when they finally had a moment to pause and reflect at the foot of Sinai. The extensive period of slavery, followed by the intensity and stress of the Exodus, took its toll on the Jewish people, and what they needed more than anything was a break.

RESTING AT THE MOUNTAIN

By The Blue Dove Foundation

Now, as we commemorate the receiving of the Torah and our experience at the base of Sinai, we can pause for a moment and reflect on any recent experiences that have given us reason to rest and recuperate.

We have a number of tools at our disposal to combat burnout, but they all involve truly resting our minds, not just zoning out in front of a television or computer screen. Burnout damages the mind, which can only be repaired with activities that both relax and rejuvenate it. Suggested activities include:

- Going on long walks.
- Exercising: Ride a bike, jog, play a sport, or do some yoga. Physical activities will make you feel better.
- Taking periodic breaks from work.
- Taking in some sun.
- Meditating, practicing mindfulness and doing some deep-breathing exercises.
- Avoiding cell phones and screens before bed to ensure quality sleep.

Identify some activities that truly put your mind at ease and actually help you recover rather than numb the pain of burnout. Once you identify at least three, write them in the thought bubbles below. On the next page, create a plan for how you are going to include them in your day.



HARVESTING COMPASSION

By The Blue Dove Foundation

We celebrate Shavuot, “the feast of weeks,” seven weeks – or 50 days – after the first night of Pesach. On Shavuot, we honor the revelation and Israelite acceptance of the Torah as God’s Law given on Mount Sinai. During services on the second morning of Shavuot, we read the Book of Ruth. A Moabite woman, Ruth marries an Israelite man who dies suddenly. Rather than return to her Moabite family, she follows her Israelite mother-in-law, Naomi, back to Bethlehem.

“Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus and more may the LORD do to me if anything but death parts me from you.” (Ruth 1:16-17)

Ruth’s devotion to Naomi and the Israelite God mirrors the commitment the Israelites show to God upon receiving the Torah at Sinai. In Bethlehem, Ruth remains loyal to Naomi, continuing to care for her as long as she needs. Ruth goes on to marry another Israelite man and start a family. Five generations later comes her great-great-grandson King David, who is thought to have been born and to have died on Shavuot.

Among the eight mental health middot the Blue Dove Foundation has identified, two stand out for Shavuot and are tied to Ruth.



כל ישראל ארבים זה לזה – Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh La Zeh –

All Jews are Responsible for One Another

HARVESTING COMPASSION

By The Blue Dove Foundation

The Talmud (Shavuot 39a) teaches that members of the Jewish community are responsible for each other. In simple terms, we are interconnected and must be invested in the mental wellness and overall well-being of everyone. We must be willing, informed and prepared to help one another, because we all benefit. Ruth was committed to caring for Naomi; recognizing that Naomi was facing hardship, Ruth dedicated herself to her care, honoring the web of interdependence woven between them and, in a similar way, among Jews everywhere.

נושא בעול עם חברו – Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro –

Sharing a Burden with One's Friend

Beyond the idea that all Jews are responsible for one another (kol Yisrael arevim zeh la zeh), the rabbis teach the value of supporting another person (Pirkei Avot 6:6). The story of Ruth and Naomi's special friendship illustrates this. When faced with struggles, Naomi urges her daughter-in-law to turn back to their own land, their own people and their own gods. But Ruth refuses to leave her.

Together, Ruth and Naomi confront many difficulties but are able to overcome them, because they support each other – exemplifying the middah nosei b'ol im chaveiro.

Ruth's story takes place during the season of the barley harvest; thus, the harvest serves as an agricultural occasion for Shavuot. For this activity, consider the two mental health middot that relate to Shavuot and Ruth's story. Consider the ways you show compassion for yourself and others, and how others show compassion for you.



CARRYING OUR BURDENS, TOGETHER

By The Blue Dove Foundation

Shavuot, the festival of “weeks,” celebrates the summer harvest, when Jews of ancient times would make a pilgrimage to the temple to show gratitude for their crops. It also commemorates when the Israelites received the Torah on Mount Sinai seven weeks after the Exodus from Egypt.

Shavuot brings us the story of Ruth and the middah (Jewish value) of nosay b'ol im chavayro, sharing the burden with one's friend.

In Jewish tradition, it's not just a mitzvah to help others; it's also a mitzvah to be helped by others. For many of us, receiving help with our mental health is hard. For starters, we put a cone of silence around mental health, and many of us feel ashamed to speak up. We may feel weak, like we don't deserve help, or like we're a burden for not being able to push through or shake off our struggles. We may think others won't believe us or take us seriously. We may fear judgment. Or we may feel alone.

In 2020 we saw the number of Americans with mental health struggles jump up to 40 percent. Yes, nearly half of Americans.

The book of Ruth highlights the special friendship between Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi. After Ruth's husband dies, Naomi decides to return to the land of Canaan. She encourages her daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, to return to their own people, as they are not Jewish. Both insist on accompanying her. At the border, Orpah turns back to rejoin her people, but Ruth responds to Naomi's urges to leave by saying:

"DO NOT URGE ME TO LEAVE YOU, TO TURN BACK AND NOT FOLLOW YOU. FOR WHEREVER YOU GO, I WILL GO; WHEREVER YOU LODGE, I WILL LODGE; YOUR PEOPLE SHALL BE MY PEOPLE, AND YOUR GOD MY GOD." (RUTH 1:16)

CARRYING OUR BURDENS, TOGETHER

By The Blue Dove Foundation

Ruth and Naomi are both widows, traveling to a land impoverished, with no easy means to sustain themselves. And yet Ruth's willingness to support a loved one makes her a hero worthy of her own book and Jewish literature. Likewise, Naomi is remembered as someone who is kind, compassionate and supportive of Ruth.

As Ruth takes care of Naomi, the two form a stronger bond. They connect in a way that is meaningful, and the struggles Ruth helps Naomi bear make them feel closer and more fulfilled.

To be able to take on Ruth's role, to be someone who offers support, is both virtuous and noble. But Jewish tradition says it is just as important to be in Naomi's position, someone who is willing to accept help and to allow someone to help them carry their burden.

With this story, Judaism tells us nobody's burden is either too small or too important to receive help.



SHARING THE BURDEN: REFLECTIONS ON SHAVUOT AND MENTAL HEALTH FROM A PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE

By Lisa Ziv

Shavuot, or the “Festival of Weeks” in Hebrew (חג השבועות, Chag HaShavuot), occurs fifty days after the second day of Passover. Although the holiday’s origins lie in the ancient grain harvest in the Land of Israel, Shavuot has long been identified as the day of the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai more than 3,300 years ago.

Much of the observance of the holiday centers on the synagogue and its rituals. Some people stay up all night on Shavuot studying Torah. We also read the Book of Ruth (מגילת רות, Megillat Ruth). The book talks about Ruth’s conversion to Judaism, which we can compare to the entire Jewish people entering into the covenant of the Torah.

The Book of Ruth is a fairly simple story with profound and timeless messages. The Jewish people accepted the Torah in fear of God’s overwhelming power. But Ruth accepted it out of love and loyalty. This is the message that most resonates with me.

With the holiday observed just a week after Mother’s Day and during May Mental Health Awareness Month, Ruth and Naomi’s story represents the deep emotions of the mother-daughter bond. While most parent-child relationships experience some conflict at times, there remains an inherent desire to love and support one another. I know how fortunate I am to have a mother who was my rock during the turbulent mental health storm I weathered with my daughter.

Na’aseh v’nishmah – we will do, and we will hear and understand – are two of the most celebrated words connected to the giving of the Torah (Mishpatim 24:7). Tradition teaches us that when the Israelites gathered at Mt. Sinai to receive the Torah, each of us heard it in a language we understood. This is a powerful concept. We were not just idle bystanders but rather active listeners in hearing and understanding the words of God.

SHARING THE BURDEN: REFLECTIONS ON SHAVUOT AND MENTAL HEALTH FROM A PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE

By Lisa Ziv

We can apply this idea to the modern day. When someone is struggling with their mental health, they often use vague language or hidden words to hint at their state of mind. It takes someone who truly listens to understand. When my daughter said, "I don't want to be here anymore," it was code-speak for her suicidal ideations and thoughts of wanting to die. When she said, "I'm not afraid of death, and I'm not afraid to hurt myself," it took a great deal of emotional strength to understand the seriousness of the situation. Not everyone verbalizes their feelings. Sadly, a caregiver's instinct is not always enough to pick up on innuendos. In the past year, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported a 200 percent increase in serious suicide consideration by U.S. adults. For U.S. teens, research showed a 99 percent increase in intentional self-harm, with a 340 percent increase in nonsuicidal self-harm in the Northeast region during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Parshat Yitro, the Torah portion with the first reading of the Ten Commandments, contains a statement by the elders, which says: "Everything that Hashem has spoken, we shall do and we shall listen." This Torah portion also describes a lot of people coming to Moshe to tell him about their challenges and shows how he listens to each person. Yitro, his father-in-law, asks, "What is this thing that you do... to listen to The thing that you do is not good, for you will not be able to do it alone."

In Parshat Behaalotecha, Moshe is challenged by the complaints and demands of the Israelites. He cries out to G-d for help. G-d's response is to gather seventy elders to "share the burden with you, and you shall not bear it alone." The Torah portion is commonly related to Moshe's leadership and dealing with the complaints as the Israelites adjust to freedom. I believe it also represents another idea: the need for community-wide mental health support.

SHARING THE BURDEN: REFLECTIONS ON SHAVUOT AND MENTAL HEALTH FROM A PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE

By Lisa Ziv

When a loved one shares their burden with us, we want to be the primary person to help them. But as much as we care, we might not be able to fully help. We might not hear everything the first time we are told. And we might not get told everything we need to know. Especially as parents, we bear that overarching responsibility to help our children. Na'aseh – we will do. We have to learn to seek help and build a support system of mental health experts and those we trust to help us help others.

We will do, and we will hear. But how can we act if we don't know? The fact is, we won't always know, and sometimes we have to act before we know. We only have the information we have to make choices. We must depend on our resources, like elders and counselors. The answers are not always clear, and knowing how to help someone is not intuitive. You might not have the "right" answer, so you may need to course-correct. I'd like to think the answers will come, but there are no guarantees.

Ultimately, I believe it's in G-d's hands. But he gives us free will to make choices – and choose we must. We must always try to help someone in need. And as my father, of blessed memory, used to say, if you don't make the "right" choice, then make another one, and another one after that if it's still not "right." As his father often said, "If you do your best, then that's good enough." In the merit of my father, his father and all the wisdom passed down to the Jewish people from Mt. Sinai to today, may we be blessed to make good choices and pass down our teaching from one generation to the next.



SHARING THE BURDEN: REFLECTIONS ON SHAVUOT AND MENTAL HEALTH FROM A PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE

By Lisa Ziv

Loving-kindness (chesed), a major theme of the Torah, plays a central role in the Book of Ruth. I pray the Jewish community — leaders of our congregations and organizations — have the courage and wisdom to listen and do what is necessary to support our community's mental health needs. I pray our Jewish community professionals and individuals will offer helpful services and perform chesed for families struggling with mental illness and substance misuse. More than ever, we need to find ways to connect with our community. No one should feel alone or without the information, support and help they need. I genuinely hope those who have serious mental health challenges find the support they need from wherever it may come.



SHAVUOT: THE HOLIDAY OF ULTIMATE AWARENESS

By Rabbi Steven Gotlib

Beginning on the second night of Passover and extending until Shavuot, many Jews count the Omer. For 49 days, Judaism maintains a special awareness of time — even for a religion that, as Abraham Joshua Heschel described, constructs a sanctuary of time each week in marking the Sabbath. But what exactly makes these 49 days between Passover and Shavuot so special?

The Zohar, a mystical 13th-century commentary on the Torah, notes on Parshat Yitro that the Exodus from Egypt is referenced 50 times in the Torah. The number 50 takes on great mystical significance, heavily aligned with the concept of “binah” or awareness. In fact, the Zohar notes that there are 50 gates one passes through before reaching true awareness, and each reference to the Exodus from Egypt represents moving through another gate. Once one reaches the final reference, the 50th gate, they are truly ready to leave Egypt and embrace the awareness not only of where they are meant to be but who they are meant to be. The holiday of Shavuot, then, represents stepping through that final gate and coming out on the other side aware of our potential.

The Zohar offers a similar explanation of Shavuot on Parshat Emor. It notes that saving the Jewish people from Egypt was primarily a divine act of Divine compassion, *chesed*, rather than on the people’s own merit. To be blunt, not all of the Jewish people were deserving of freedom at that time, but God chose to offer salvation to the entire group, making no distinction between those who were ready to be saved and those who were not. However, the giving of the Torah could not be the same type of compassionate act, due to the incredible demands observance made on the people. If the Jewish people were going to accept the Torah, they needed to truly understand and accept what they were getting themselves into. The period between Passover and Shavuot — between the original Exodus and the receiving of the Torah,—provided the Jewish people with time for introspection and growth, so they could make themselves into the type of people who were worthy of being representatives of a divine mission.

SHAVUOT: THE HOLIDAY OF ULTIMATE AWARENESS

By Rabbi Steven Gotlib

Both of these teachings emphasize the human ability to realize where we have gone wrong and improve ourselves. This is, in fact, a fundamental part of what it means to be a human, not just to be a Jew. Rav Chaim of Volozhin noted this in his commentary on Pirkei Avot. He asked why there was a teaching that “the world stands on three things: Torah, Avodah (worship), and Gemilut Chasadim (acts of kindness).” Surely the latter two are things we learn from the Torah, so the Torah is all the world really needs. He responded by pointing out that there were, in fact, examples of worship and acts of kindness spoken about in the Torah before the physical Torah was given to the Jewish people. In fact, the ability to do kindness to others and intuitively reach out to the divine were prerequisites for receiving the Torah. What the Torah provides is a framework in which to utilize our natural predisposition toward kindness and worship in a direct, healthy, and productive way.

In conclusion, then, Shavuot is the holiday of ultimate awareness. It is both the culmination of a period of introspection and the beginning of a new part of our journeys. We each have an opportunity to reassess who we want to be and where we want to go in our relationship with our God, our people, and ourselves. May we all experience a Shavuot full of learning, introspection, and spiritual growth. Chag Sameach!



ALL NIGHT, ALWAYS HONEST

By Rabbi Zachary Beer

One of the core observances of Shavuot is staying up all night, a custom known as Tikkun Leil Shavuot and traditionally justified with a Midrash, which records that the Israelites “overslept” on the morning of the giving of the Torah and presenting a lack of excitement for receiving it. Therefore, the practice of staying up all night learning was instated to serve as a tikkun, or repair, for that blunder. However, while this text seemingly gives a negative atmosphere to the night, one interpretation of the holiday speaks deeply to the human spirit, transforming Shavuot into a holiday of academia and study into radical self-love, honesty and acceptance. Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov in his work, *The Book of Our Heritage*, recasts this mistake as an outcome of, at worst, misapplied self-honesty:

IT IS SAID THAT THE CUSTOM OF STAYING AWAKE WAS ENACTED TO REPAIR THE WRONG OF THE GENERATION THAT RECEIVED THE TORAH—THAT MANY OF THEM SLEPT THAT NIGHT, AND GOD HAD TO ROUSE THEM. THIS IS NOT A CRITICISM OF THAT GENERATION, WHO WERE ALL CONSCIOUS PEOPLE WHO LOOKED FORWARD TO HEARING THE WORD OF GOD. RATHER, THEY WERE TIRED AND WERE WORRIED THEY WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO STAND IN THEIR STRENGTH, WHEN THEY HEARD GOD SPEAKING IF THEY DIDN'T SLEEP. THEY WERE ALL DEEPLY HONEST PEOPLE AND WERE NOT INFLUENCED BY HOW OTHERS WOULD PERCEIVE THEM. IF A PERSON FELT SLEEP WOULD BE GOOD FOR THEM IN ORDER TO BE AT FULL STRENGTH TO HEAR THE WORD, THEY DID SO, SINCE THERE WAS NO PROHIBITION OF SLEEPING. (BOOK OF OUR HERITAGE, SHAVUOT)

This approach gives the evening a different agenda. What otherwise seems like an overly academic holiday spent studying all night should actually be seen as a night of honesty and reflection, progenerated by the Israelite’s act of radical self-honesty at the climax of one of the most important moments in our people’s history.

ALL NIGHT, ALWAYS HONEST

By Rabbi Zachary Beer

People have found a lot of ways to connect to this holiday, spending the night doing everything from studying traditional recitations of specific Torah texts to nights of classes to nights of music and film. But one other aspect of the holiday people have connected to that goes hand in hand with this theme of honesty is the simultaneous love that is shared between us and God.

A friend of mine shared an explanation of the practice of staying up all night which amounts to this: “When you love someone, you will do crazy things for them.” We stay up all night in order to express our love for God, delving into the gift that we were given- the Torah and our Jewish tradition. And while we may not hear it explicitly, the love we exhibit on Shavuot night is not one sided. My teacher Rabbi Yaakov Medan has said “prayer is the experience of talking to God, and learning the Torah we were given is the experience of hearing God talk back to us.” In that way, learning can be a form of connection and reflection, emphasizing that despite what can be seen as misapplied honesty still ended in the loving act of our being given the Torah as an avenue to connection with God. Moreover, it affirms the goodness of practice of honesty and reflection, even if it leads to what we still qualify as a mistake.

We can see the two aspects of the holiday as connected. There is a radical idea mentioned at the beginning of Genesis – that humanity was created in God’s image. We can derive from here that self-care, self-love and self-honesty are not just a nice thing to do, but also inherent to our connection with God (also assumed in Sanhedrin 37a and Avot D’Rabbi Natan 2:30). When we connect with our internal selves and do what is in the spirit of love of the self and honesty with the self, we also connect with God and perhaps do what is good on a spiritual, and even divine, level. In that way, the love of God and the act of self-honesty become intertwined on the same night.



ALL NIGHT, ALWAYS HONEST

By Rabbi Zachary Beer

On Shavuot night, while we shouldn't fall asleep, we should consider embodying the value that the Jewish people brought to Har Sinai and spend the night reflecting on growing and being honest with ourselves as a means of connecting with God.

In advance of the first night of Shavuot, write down a few aspects of your internal experience you wish to reflect on or things you are trying to be more honest with yourself about, and select texts or reflection practices that can best facilitate meditation on those parts of yourself.



YOUR GUIDE TO "ARGUMENTS FOR THE SAKE OF HEAVEN"

By *Max Hollander*

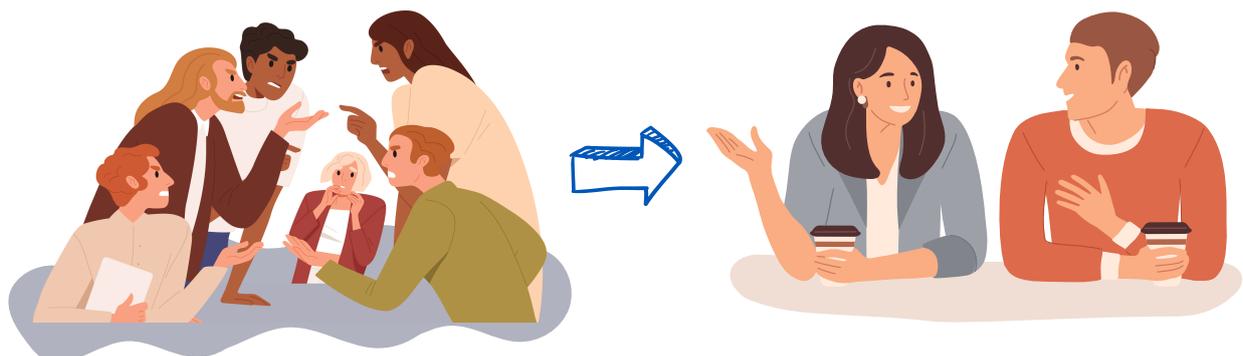
In Jewish tradition, arguments with a shared goal are holy and called "arguments for the sake of heaven!"

Every argument that is for [the sake of] heaven's name, it is destined to endure. But if it is not for [the sake of] heaven's name -- it is not destined to endure. What is [an example of an argument] for [the sake of] heaven's name? The argument of Hillel and Shammai. What is [an example of an argument] not for [the sake of] heaven's name? The argument of Korach and all of his congregation. (Pirkei Avot 5:17)

Commenting on this Mishnah, the 16th century rabbinic scholar, Bartenura, explained, "In an argument for the sake of Heaven, the purpose and aim that is sought from that argument is to arrive at the truth, and this endures; like that which they said, "From a dispute the truth will be clarified," And in an argument which is not for the sake of Heaven, its desired purpose is to achieve power and the love of contention, and its end will not endure."

Engaging in spirited debate conveys that both sides believe in the goal and care enough to fight for it. But shared goals don't always mean constructive conversations, and a destructive conversation can have negative ramifications on your mental health.

Here are three tips to ensure your arguments for the sake of heaven stay that way.



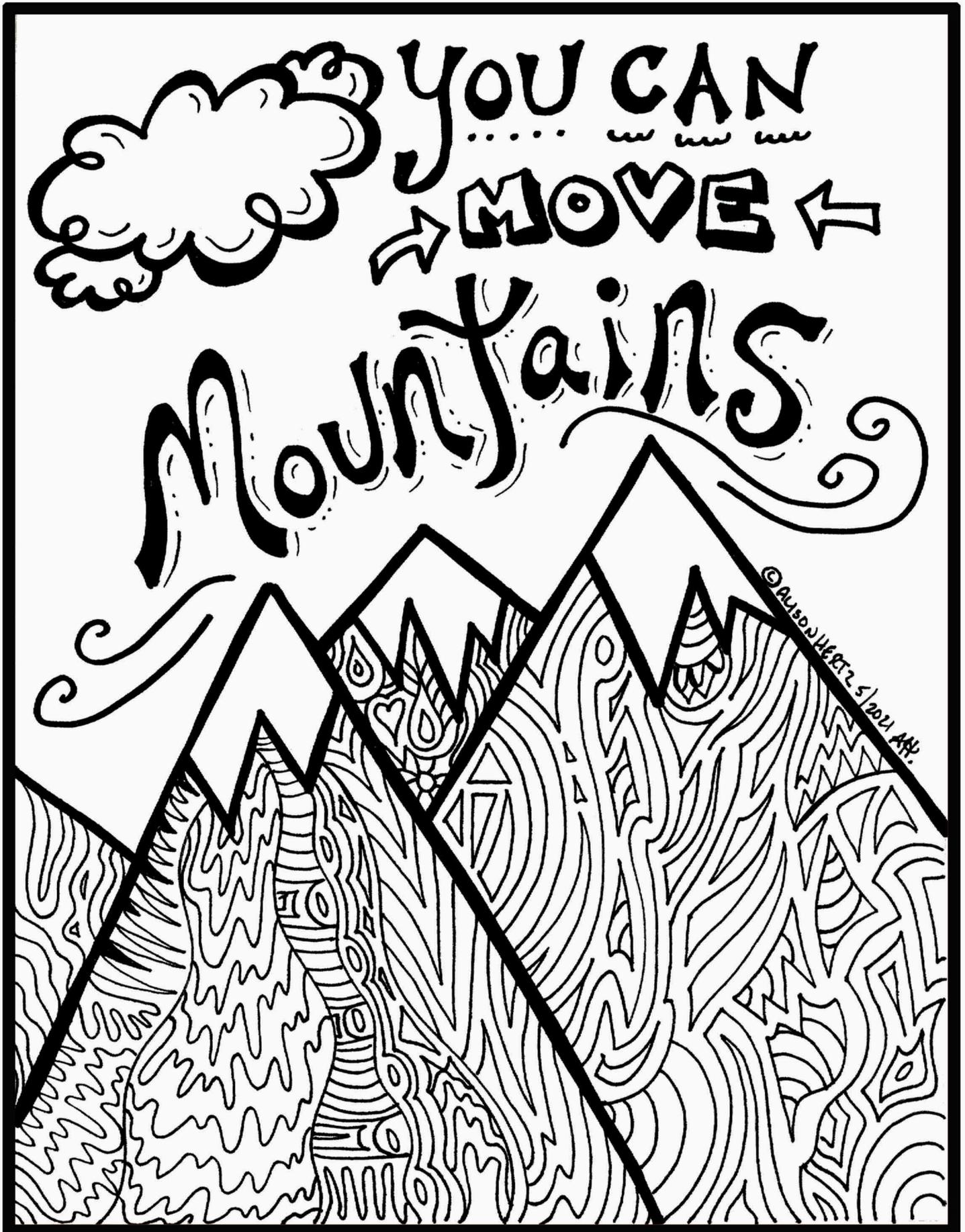
YOUR GUIDE TO “ARGUMENTS FOR THE SAKE OF HEAVEN”

By *Max Hollander*

1. **Be aware of your biases.** It's impossible to be completely objective. The best communicators can work with and around their own thoughts and beliefs rather than ignore them.
2. **Manage and care for your emotions.** Difficult conversations come with many emotions that can affect us in different ways without us realizing it. Without taking the time to check in with your feelings and having the space to ask for a pause, we can walk away from conversations hurt – regardless of the conclusion that's reached. Be cognizant of the language you use and the manner you speak in, avoiding any triggers you might not be thinking about. Sharing our emotions as well as validating those of others maintains a healthy and productive atmosphere.
3. **Set expectations.** Charged topics can be hard to talk about. Disagreement is necessary for growth, but we can get lost in our arguments and make mistakes. We may say the wrong thing or misremember something, but if you care for one another, you need to recognize that possibility and make space for mistakes. It's okay to say “I want to discuss something important, but I might not be as clear as I want to be, or I may make a mistake.” Feeling safe takes off some of the pressure to be perfect and say how you feel.



Shavuot Coloring Page



#QuietingTheSilence

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Blue Dove Foundation has a variety of resources and publications available to help bring Judaism and mental wellness to your life and community, including **publications**:



Mental Wellness and Jewish holiday resources:



The Blue Dove Foundation also is thrilled to offer a number of **incredible workshops** to help bring mental health and wellness to your community, utilizing both medically backed information and resources, and relevant and impactful Jewish sources. This gives the materials a sense of practical significance and spiritual depth.