

HAVURAT YISRAEL WEEKLY NEWS

12 Iyar 5785

SHABBAT ACHAREI-KEDOSHIM

May 10, 2025

Shabbat Shalom!

7:00 pm Mincha, Kabbalat Shabbat and Maariv
7:42 pm Candle Lighting
Count Omer #27 tonight
8:45 am Mishnayot class — Rabbi Algaze
9:00 am Shacharit
9:15 am Latest Shema
Parasha p.636-656; Haftorah p.1173
After Kedusha of Mussaf - Class with Rabbi Levitt
6:15 pm Gemara Class — Rabbi Algaze
6:15 pm Parasha Class — Rabbi Levitt
6:45 pm Perek and Torer Devorah
7:30 pm Mincha
8:42 pm Maariv & Havdalah
Count Omer #28 tonight

TOMER DEVORAH — The classical book on ethical traits by R. Moshe Cordovero, the renowned Kabbalist and teacher of the Arizal, is being discussed every Shabbat following Perek. Join us as we learn this important book with special insights and comments by our Rabbi.

Kiddush & Seudah Shlisheet sponsorships available.

Upcoming Sponsorships

May 17 — Michelle Polonetsky
June 14 — Carol & Daniel Yaghoubian
June 21 — Renee & David Hirsch

Rabbi Levitt's office hours this week: Monday and Tuesday, 11am — 1pm; Thursday noon-1:30pm

Lunch and Learn with Rabbi Levitt

Thursday May 15th at noon
Light lunch served. Contribution \$5 p/person



Journal Dinner Thursday June 19th at
Colbeh Restaurant, Great Neck
honoring
Mark Atlas
Irving Prus
Jonathan & Sarah Yokheved Rieu

The campaign to get ads and to place messages in their honor begins NOW! Start thinking of the people and stores that may be willing to place an ad and support our synagogue. Pick up some Ad blanks and bring them to your stores and professionals you patronize. They also need Havurat to thrive for them to succeed in this community.

L'Chaim Club Each person who raises and submits \$650 or more in Journal Ads by **Friday, May 16th** will receive a special bottle of wine personally selected by our own wine connoisseur **Rabbi David Algaze**.

Business ads are needed. Please Support Havurat Yisrael.



Lag Ba'omer BBQ — Thursday May 15 — 7 PM

Food, Music, Torah — Come Hungry and Ready to Party!

\$35 per person, RSVP by Wednesday May 14



Yasher Koach to everyone who participated in the mitzvah of writing and dedicating the Torah!

Rabbi David & Tamara Algaze
Rachelle Alkalay
Miriam Atencia
Mark Atlas
Mehran Arasheben
Tanya Azizi
Miriam Azrak
Abigail Barrios
Rivka Becerra
Shlomo & Lea Benazar
Shulamit Cifuentes
Carmela Chessen
Joseph & Rivka Constante
Pinhas & Rahel Contreras
Carmen del Rio

Eli Finkelstein
Ruth Finkelstein
Hadassah & Henry Flores
Ben Greenberg
Stuart & Debbie Greenberg
Yael Giraldo
Ephraim Grossbein
Todd, Sheryl & Zachary Hausman
Renee & David Hirsch
Bruce & Miriam Jacobs
Ruth Nejama Jimenez
Sy Kaplan
Ira Kleiman & Cathy Kleiman
Zackary Kleiman
Carol Krohn

Simcha Kulaya
Judy Kugelman
Rabbi Avrohom & Sharon Levitt
Caridad Luna & Salvador Tavares
Sarah & Shimon Mizrahi
Ruth Moreira
Jessica & Moshe Naghi
Esther Nelson
Louis & Rachel Ordentlich
Elisheva Palala
Maria Perez
Michelle & Jake Polonetsky
Miriam & Nachshon Portela
Irving Prus
Jerry & Jennifer Revich

Sarah Reyes
Jonathan & Sarah Rieu
Karen & Marc Rose
Arlene Ross
Lesli & Alfredo Salas
David Shamoonian
Jane Stiefel
Ignacio & Elizabeth Teller
Leon & Alicia Teitelbaum
Kim & Joseph Trigoboff
Mayer & Esther Weisel
Laura Yezep
Albert Yusupov

SUNDAY May 11 / 13 Iyar	MONDAY May 12 / 14 Iyar	TUESDAY May 13 / 15 Iyar	WEDNESDAY May 14 / 16 Iyar	THURSDAY May 15 / 17 Iyar	FRIDAY May 16 / 18 Iyar LAG BA'OMER
7:30 am Gemara class 8:00 am Shacharit 9:00 am Breakfast 9:30 am Torah Class in Spanish—R. Algaze Count Omer #29 tonight	6:30 am Gemara class 7:00 am Shacharit 7:00 pm Class—R. Algaze Count Omer #30 tonight	6:30 am Gemara class 7:00 am Shacharit 7:00 pm Class —R. Algaze Count Omer #31 tonight	6:30 am Gemara class 7:00 am Shacharit Noon: Lunch and learn with R Levitt Count Omer #32 tonight	6:30 am Gemara class 7:00 am Shacharit 12:00 Lunch and Learn 7:00 pm LAG BA'OMER BBQ (RSVP) Count Omer #33 tonight	6:30 am Gemara class 7:00 am Shacharit 7:00 pm Mincha, Kabbalat Shabbat 7:49 pm Candle Lighting Count Omer #34 tonight

HAVURAT YISRAEL

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JUDAISM: A RELIGION OF LOVE

By Rabbi David Algaze

“Speak to the entire assembly of the children of Israel saying, Be holy for I am holy, Hashem your G-d...Love your fellow man as yourself, I am the L-rd.” (Leviticus 19:2 and 18)

In this sentence is captured the essence of Judaism: Love your fellow man as [you love] yourself, as Rabbi Akiva proclaimed, “This is a fundamental law of the Torah.” (Sifra) What is the significance of this statement by the famous rabbi and what does “fundamental law” (*klal gadol*) mean? The answer lies in the story of the convert who approached Hillel with the request that he teach him the entire Torah in one sentence and the latter replied, “What is hateful to you, do not do it to your fellow man. The rest [of the Torah] is a commentary [to that sentence]. Go and study it.” (Shabbat 31a) Clearly, Hillel was stating that the whole of the Torah, the whole of Judaism can be summed up in that one verse of the Torah and furthermore that all the laws of the Torah can be derived from that principle. This is what Rabbi Akiva was stating some 200 years later, that the verse “Love your fellow man as yourself” is the key to understanding what G-d wants from us.

This famous phrase is just three words in Hebrew and each presents us with serious questions. First, what is love? Second, how can we love other people? And third, how can we love others to the same extent we love ourselves? On the first question, much has been written and research reaches from the chemistry of the brain to the depths of literature and the mysteries of human psychology. In his seminal work on love by the Swiss philosopher Denis De Rougemont, *L'Amour et l'Occident* (Love in the Western World, 1939), the author attempted to shed the concept of love from the romantic ideal that is so familiar in our generation. The Western world has become obsessed with “ideal love” which is associated with romance and dazzlement. He traces this evolution from its literary beginning in the troubadours of medieval Provence to its commercialization in the cinema, music and novels of today. This “love” is always associated with death, as in the case of Tristan and Iseult, Abelard and Heloise and later in Romeo and Juliet. This love is not authentic, satisfied love but always the love with fatal consequences, love perpetually unsatisfied, a relationship that is frowned upon and ultimately doomed. This is the origin of “passionate love” where passion means “suffering.” As one troubadour intoned about his “love,” this “sweet ailment that pleases me.” Sadly, this version of love, as an anarchic unappeasable love celebrated by these troubadours has remained in our subconscious culture and affects negatively our views on marriage, its social and religious responsibility as well as the true understanding of a genuine love.

Another false concept of love stems from the lack of emotional maturity. As Erich Fromm describes it, a child says, “I love because I am loved” whereas a mature person would say “I am loved because I love.” Researchers in the brain chemistry attribute the feelings of romantic love to interplay of serotonin, dopamine and norepinephrine. Yet one more erroneous use of the word appears in connection to foods we like to eat, as when we claim “I love fish” where love of the little fish is expressed by swallowing them. If we truly “loved” the fish, we would not go around killing them.

Genuine love must therefore have a higher meaning since the Torah commands us to love our neighbors, love the strangers and even love G-d. The Torah describes G-d Himself as being a loving G-d and thus the act of loving must in some way resemble one of the functions of G-d. The act of Creation, of giving birth, of providing, assisting and guiding—these are the actions with which the Creator blesses the world and its creatures. In the same fashion, we must act towards the world, becoming a blessing to the world as G-d is. As the Psalmist puts it, “The world is built on love.” (89:3) Just as Creation is love so is the maintenance of the world through the multiple manifestations of the giving and receiving that characterizes every function of the universe, “The love of G-d fills the world.” (33:4)

Man has a function in the world and that is to act towards the world that He created in a constructive and generous fashion. Through love Man elevates himself to the level of G-d. We cannot transcend the limitations of space and time or our physical nature, but we can become like Him through love. Since all existence flows from love, when we love we sustain the world that G-d created. Therefore, do not be poor in love or stingy with love. Bless others as G-d blesses them. As Rabbi Hirsch puts it, “G-d made you to be an angel of love in His world, to strew your path in life with blessings.” This is the reason the verse ends with the words, “I am the L-rd.” Just as I am, so you shall be. As Proverbs has it, “He who robs a poor man disgraces His maker, but he who is gracious to the destitute honors Him.” (14:31) Honor G-d by loving the beings He created.

This duty comes from the fact that G-d created us all. A favorite saying of the Rabbis of Yavneh was, “I am a creature of G-d and my neighbor is also a creature of G-d; my work is in the city, his work is in the field, I rise early to my work, he rises early to his. Just as he is not jealous of my work, so I am not jealous of his. Perhaps you will say I do much and he does little, we have learned “It matters not whether one does much or little, if only he directs his heart to heaven.” (Berachot 17a)

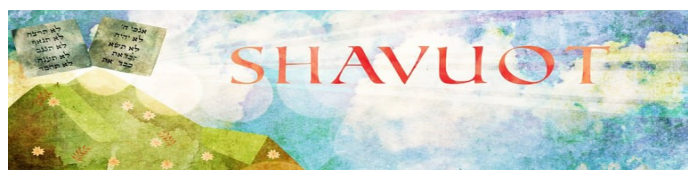
But you must become a blessing to yourself before becoming a blessing to others. That is why the Torah adds, “as yourself.” All happiness, meaning and dignity, all comes from Love. Thus, Judaism preaches a religion of love: love of the Creation, of the world, of all people. The enemies are injustice, inequality, the luxury, falsehood, fraud. Thus, the Torah commands us to be holy and pure, to honor parents, revere the elders, respect the honor and life of your fellow man, and protect the weak and defenseless, the orphan, the widow and the suffering. Despise theft, falsehood, deceit, reject bad traits like rancor and vengeance, disarm the enemies with sweetness and assistance and, in general, pursue everything that makes life better for people and avoid anything that can damage it. It all flows from the capacity to love and when one is able to love he must perforce love himself. The Torah is wise in this idea of loving oneself. Ben Azzai explains, “Do not say because I am despised my neighbor should be as despised as I am, for you are despising the image of G-d.” (Yoma 86a) Self-love has been criticized by Calvin as “a pest” yet self-love and selfishness are not identical. In fact, the selfish person does not love himself. He feels empty and that is why he tries to snatch from life the satisfactions which he thinks he cannot attain. The narcissist does not love himself either. A person should therefore develop the capacities with which G-d endowed him so that he will be able to fulfill his mission in the world and appreciate the gifts that G-d placed in him. This is the self-love that the Torah commands of us.

But can we love others as we love ourselves? The Torah would not demand from us something that is impossible and loving everyone in the same manner is not realistic. We are not exactly the same lovers even towards the people in our own family. However, what is demanded is that we should see every person as a creature of G-d and thus as someone “like us.” In this sense, there is no “other” in the world created by G-d and we are all participants in G-d’s large scheme of love. Nachmanides notices a peculiarity in the syntax of the phrase in question, *veahavta le*. Everywhere in the Torah the verb “to love” takes the accusative case (with the Hebrew preposition *et*), which means that the object is near, but here the object of the verb is in the dative form (with the Hebrew preposition *le*) denoting a more distant, indirect object. The proper translation then would not be, “Love your neighbor” but rather “Be loving to your neighbor.” The difference is that while we may not be able to “love” him as much as we love ourselves, we should nonetheless act towards him with the kindness we would expect from others. Rabbi Hirsch explains that the Torah is not demanding an emotional attitude but that we perform acts of kindness and works of love towards our fellow man, because he is like ourselves. Since G-d created us both, he has the same worth and the feeling of sameness leads to love. Maimonides codifies this in his Code (Hilchot De’ot 6:3), “We are obligated to love every Jew as ourselves...we must praise others, be careful about their money just as we care about our money and our dignity. Whoever derives honor from humiliating someone else loses his share in the world to come.” Thus, the commandment is moved from the realm of emotion to the realm of action. Parenthetically, notice that the love of G-d, on the other hand, must entail an emotional connection and hence it is in the accusative (*veahavta et*)

The loving acts include visiting the sick, comforting the mourners, rejoicing with the bride and groom, hospitality, praying for someone else, smiling at people, praising them when appropriate and making them feel good. The girls in Talmudic times would attend festivities wearing borrowed garments in order not to shame the poor girls (Taanit) Nachmanides adds that we should not begrudge the success or happiness of others. As the Vilna Gaon summarized it, “A great part of the Torah is concern with bringing happiness to others.”

This is the religion of true love, altruistic, realistic and insightful. Judaism is often maligned as religion of legalism and dryness but this is a perversion of the true meaning of the Torah as expressed so clearly in this famous sentence. Judaism is not legalism; Torah contains both law and love. “Love is what holds the world together, love is what brings the world forward” (Heschel) The goal is the Torah is “Be holy as I am” (*kedoshim tihiyu*) which means that we must recreate the world as G-d envisioned it. “For He is good to all and His love extends to all His Creatures.” (Psalm 145:9)

The Torah Dedication at Havurat Yisrael May 4th , 2025 was a truly inspiring event that will be remembered as a special moment in the history of Havurat Yisrael. The Torah was first donated by Rita Jancu, one of the founders of Havurat and a dedicated member for many years. Over the years, the Sefer Torah became more difficult to use due to some letters having lost the ink and other issues. When we shared the problem with the congregation, we were delighted that a few members jumped at the opportunity to do the mitzvah of repairing the Torah: The Revich family. Ben Greenberg and Mark Atlas. Other contributions were received and this enabled us to have the it fixed and returned to its regular condition,. On Sunday, the occasion to fulfil the mitzvah of writing a sefer Torah by simply having a letter in the scroll was performed by many of our members, some in person and others by ordering ahead of time. May the donors and the ones who dedicated letters in the Torah be blessed with all the blessings of the Torah and Moshe Rabbenu. Special mention to Miriam Jacobs and Miriam Portela for producing the certificates for each dedicat-
tor. This is Bruce Jacobs special Torah and we are happy that this Torah is back with us.



Ladies of Forest Hills
**Rebbetzin Tamara Algaze, Rebbetzin Yamit Friedman
 and Rebbetzin Mushky Mendelson Invite you to join for a
 Pre-Shavuot Gathering**

"How to be a Receiver, to Receive the Torah"
with Malka Yunaev, LCSW
 and greetings from the Rebbetzins

Thursday May 22, 2025 at 7:15pm
 Hosted at Havrat Yisrael
 106-20 70th Ave , Forest Hills NY 11375

RSVP to Rebbetzin Algaze 917-456-7102 or
 Rebbetzin Mendelson 917-754-3006

Refuah Shlema Alte Ester Riva bat Devorah Shifra, Chava Naomi bat Doba Chana, Yaakov ben Leah, Tzvi ben Sara, Talia Leah bat Sarah, Miriam bat Rivka, Reuben ben Malka, Baruch Chaim ben Basha, Malka bat Simcha and, Hannah bat Yehudit, Binyamin Baer ben Chana, Hillel Zvi Yehuda ben Tzina, Joseph David ben Rachel, Abraham ben Devorah Shifra, Israel ben Devora Shifra, Sherry Plutzker, Nissan Yaakov ben Anna Malka. **Please inform us if any of these people have recovered or is out of serious condition.**