

# Celebration!

## Shavuos Guide

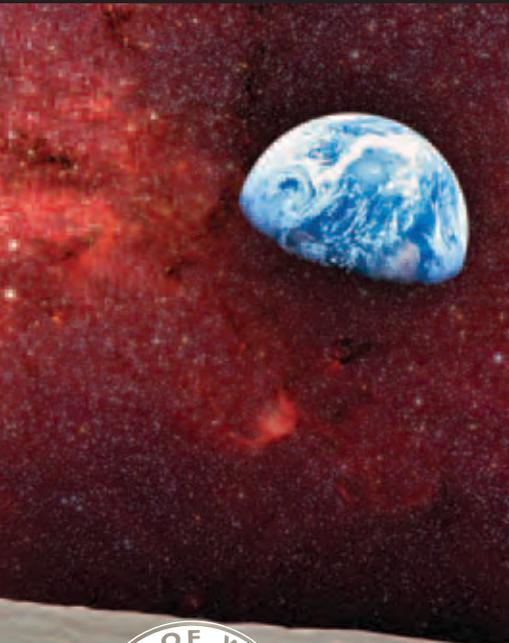
6-7 SIVAN, 5771 / JUNE 7-9, 2011



CREATION

FREEDOM

REVELATION



**The Practical & Soulful Meaning of the Holiday:**  
The Torah, The Mitzvos and their purposes.



## The **Event** that *Transformed* the **WORLD**

It was the most radical event in history. Time's most crucial moment, the watershed event of the entire human drama. Erupting in a single place in a single day, it crashed through borders of nation and culture, implanted itself in the minds of thinkers and the hearts of ordinary men and women, surfed over the bumps and barriers of time. Until nothing was left the same, no ruler could set the same rules, no mind could think the same thoughts, no mouth could speak the same words. The landscape was transformed and the innerscape of the human psyche could never return to its original self.

Even now, its echo reverberates through every

moment of our day—louder and louder as time goes on. The vision, the sounds, the smell and the trembling are branded onto the very circuitry of our souls.

This event liberated the world from captivity. It allowed us freedom of choice, offered us control of ourselves, freedom from our surroundings and the ability to reach the divine.

Every year, once a year, as sure as the spring that blossoms at that time, we gather to relive that event. The experience that wrought us into a people and forged our consciousness as individuals.

This year, be there. Again. Shavuot!

### G-d's Wisdom *Where can I get it?*

Torah is G-d's wisdom, an expression of His essence. G-d created the universe so that the Torah's ideals could be actualized. The Torah, as we experience it, is Divine wisdom distilled for consumption by the human mind. By studying Torah's laws, logic and stories, it becomes possible to wrap our rational human mind around Divine concepts.

Torah is the soul's best nourishment. So study whenever you have time, ideally twice a day: morning and evening. The Web is a great place to begin.

For starters, check out [www.chabad.org](http://www.chabad.org). (*More information about Chabad.org on page 21.*)

**For holiday schedule, candle lighting times & blessings see page 27.**

## Celebration!

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### Celebration!

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*Dedicated to the Rebbe,  
Rabbi Menachem M.  
Schneerson, OBM,  
whose boundless love and  
teachings are an  
endless source of inspiration  
and guidance.*

# THE REBBE'S MESSAGE

## *The Voice That Never Ends*

Adapted from the teachings of the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, OBM

When the Ten Commandments are repeated in the Torah as part of Moses' review of the Israelites' 40 years in the wilderness, Moses describes how G-d spoke those words in "a mighty voice that did not end" (Deuteronomy 5:19). One of the explanations offered by Rashi is that Moses is contrasting G-d's voice with human voices. The finite voice of a human being, even a Pavarotti, will fade and falter. It cannot go on forever. But the voice of the Almighty did not end, did not weaken. It remained strong throughout.

Is this all there is to teach us about the voice of G-d? That it was a powerful baritone? That it resonated? Is the greatness of the Infinite One that he didn't suffer from shortness of breath, that He didn't need a few puffs of Ventolin? Is this a meaningful way for Moses to motivate the Jews to accept the Torah?

Moses was the greatest of all prophets. He foresaw what no other prophet could see. Perhaps he saw his people becoming caught up in the civilization of ancient Greece, in the beauty, culture, philosophy and art of the day. And they might question, is Torah still relevant?

Perhaps he foresaw Jews empowered by the Industrial Revolution, where they might have thought Torah to be outdated. Or, maybe it was during the Russian Revolution that faith and religion were positively primitive.

Perhaps Moses saw our own generation with its satellites and space shuttles, television and technology. And he saw young people questioning whether Torah still speaks to them.

And so Moses tells us that the voice that thundered from Sinai was no ordinary voice. The voice that proclaimed the Ten Commandments was a voice that was not only powerful at the time, but one that "did not end." It still rings out, it still resonates, it still speaks to each of us in every generation, in every language and in every part of the world.

Revolutions may come and go but revelation is eternal. The voice of Sinai continues to proclaim eternal truths that never become passé or irrelevant. Honor Your Parents, revere them, look after them in their old age instead of abandoning them to some decrepit old age home. Live moral lives; do not tamper with the sacred fiber of family life, be sensitive to the needs and feelings of others. Dedicate one day every week and keep that day holy. Turn your back on the rat race and rediscover your humanity and your children. Don't be guilty of greed, envy, dishonesty or corruption.

Are these ideas and values dated? Are these commandments tired, stale or irrelevant? On the contrary. They speak to us now as perhaps never before. The G-dly voice has lost none of its strength, none of its majesty. The mortal voice of man declines and fades into oblivion. Politicians and spin-doctors come and go, but the heavenly sound reverberates down the ages.

Torah is truth and truth is forever. The voice of G-d shall never be stilled.

*By Rabbi Yossy Goldman, Chabad.org.*

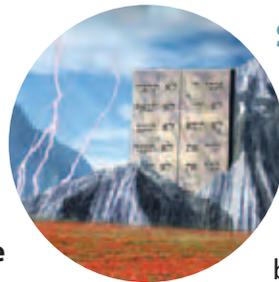


## *The Holiday of Shavuot*

The holiday of Shavuot celebrates G-d's rendezvous with the Jewish People 3,323 years ago at a humble mountain called Sinai. It was the first and only time the Creator communicated with an **entire nation**.

It took place fifty days after leaving Egypt, when G-d gave the Jews the Torah, entrusting them with the cosmic mission of bringing Divine light to the universe. Shavuot marks the beginning of the Jewish people as a nation.

This moment and mission are celebrated on Shavuot, as we rededicate ourselves to our spiritual task.



## Shavuot

*Shavuot* means "weeks," referring to the seven weeks our ancestors counted between the Exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Torah. It is the culmination of the "birth" of the Jewish people which began at the exodus on Passover.

Shavuot also means "oaths". The name indicates the oaths which G-d and Israel exchanged on the day of the giving of the Torah to remain faithful to each other forever.

What happened at that great encounter? What does it mean to us today? And how do we celebrate it? All this and more you will find in this guide.

# A Brief History of the Giving of the Torah

**S**havuos is a continuation and culmination of the redemption from Egyptian slavery.

When Moses announced to the Jewish people the forthcoming redemption, he simultaneously informed them that G-d was going to give them His Torah. The Jewish people were eagerly looking forward to that event.

On the first day of the third month after the exodus from Egypt, the month of Sivan in the year 2448 on the Jewish calendar (1316 BCE), the children of Israel reached the Sinai desert and camped near the mountain."

During the preceding weeks of traveling in the desert under Divine protection, experiencing daily miracles, such as the manna and the quail, the miraculous sweetening of the water, the crossing of the Red Sea and more, the Jewish people had become more conscious of G-d every day that passed.

Moses ascended Mount Sinai, and G-d spoke to him the following words: "You have seen what I did to Mizrayim, and how I bore you on eagles' wings,

and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be my own treasure from among all peoples: for all the earth is mine: and you shall be a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation."

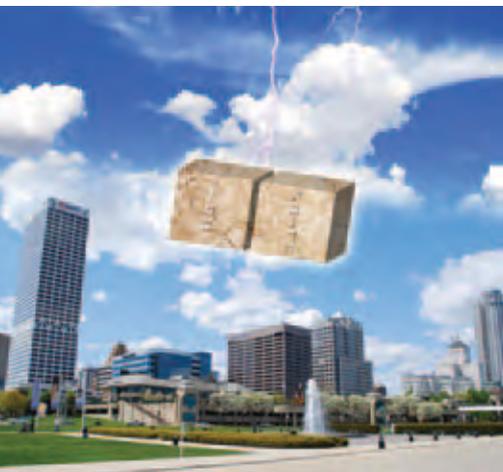
Moses returned from Mount Sinai and presented the words of G-d before the Jewish people. Unanimously, with one voice and one mind, they responded: Naaseh Venishma, "Everything G-d has said, we shall do and we shall listen."

Thus they accepted the Torah outright, with all its precepts. When Israel had voiced its eagerness to receive the Torah, G-d spoke to Moses again: "Go to the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready by the third day: for on the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai."

On the sixth day of Sivan, G-d pronounced the Ten Commandments before the entire Jewish people.

Following the receiving of the Ten Commandments, Moses ascended Mount Sinai and was there for forty days and nights. He learned every aspect of Torah with all its levels of application. This includes all the details of the 613 Mitzvot and how they would be applied in Torah guidance throughout the ages.

Finally, G-d gave Moses the two stone Tablets of Testimony, containing the Ten Commandments, written by G-d Himself.



## Where Can I Receive the Torah Today?

**Wednesday, June 8**

Each year on the holiday of Shavuot this historic event is reenacted, as G-d offers us His gift of the Torah with greater and more intensified love.

**Every Jewish man, woman and child should make every effort to be present in the synagogue as the Ten Commandments are read from the Torah.**

**Don't miss this one!**

### THE SHUL

Morning Service – 9:00am  
Ten Commandments – 10:15am  
Second reading of  
Ten Commandments – 5:30pm  
383 W. Brown Deer Rd. • (414) 228-8000

### MEQUON

Morning Service – 10:00am  
Ten Commandments – 10:45am  
2233 W. Mequon Rd. • (262) 242-2235

### THE SHUL EAST

Morning Service – 10:00am  
Ten Commandments – 10:45am  
3109 N. Lake Dr. • (414) 961-6100

### MADISON

Morning Service – 10:00am  
Ten Commandments – 10:45am  
1722 Regent St. • (608) 231-3450

### KENOSHA

Morning Service – 10:00am  
Ten Commandments – 11:15am  
6522 - 87th Ave. • (262) 359-0770

### CHABAD OF THE BAY AREA

Morning Service – 10:00am  
Ten Commandments – 11:00am  
Community Reading – 6:45pm  
220 Bellevue St. • (920) 482-0628

### WISCONSIN DELLS

Morning Service – 10:00am  
Ten Commandments – 11:30am  
409 Broadway • (608) 231-3450

**For other services, check your synagogue schedule.**



# The Ten Commandments, the Torah, & the Mitzvos

## THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The Ten Commandments (listed on page 9) concern both laws between man and G-d (such as Shabbat, and laws between man and man (such as not to steal). Laws concerning action and speech (do not utter My Name in vain) and even concerning thoughts and feelings (do not covet that which belongs to another). The Ten Commandments function as a summary of the entire Torah. The Sages point out that the text of the Commandments contains 613 letters, corresponding to each of the 613 Mitzvot.

## THE TORAH

The word “Torah” is popularly referred to as the 5 books written by a scribe on a parchment scroll. Originally transcribed by Moses as he heard it from G-d, it has been copied thousands of times in every generation in the exact same words and script. It is this Torah scroll that we read in the synagogue.



Torah, however, represents much more. In addition to the Five Books of Moses, the Torah includes *Nevi'im* (The Prophets) and *Kesuvim* (The Holy Writings), all of which form the “Written Torah.”

The Torah includes as well the Oral Tradition. While the written law forms the “constitution,” of the Torah, the oral law, is its interpretation. Both were given to Moses at Sinai. Both were simultaneously transmitted from generation to generation.

The word “Torah” means instruction or guide. It contains 613 commandments of which 248 are positive (do’s) and 365 are negative (don’t’s).

### The Five Books of Moses

The following is a synopsis of the content of the five books of Moses.

In *Genesis*, the first book, we learn of G-d’s creation of the world and humanity; the life story of the founding fathers and mothers of the Jewish people – Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Leah and Rachel, and their families.

In the book of *Exodus* we learn of the enslavement of their descendants in Egypt; their miraculous deliverance and exodus; G-d’s revelation at Mount Sinai, the giving of the Ten Commandments, followed by particular instructions and the building of the sanctuary.

In the third book, *Leviticus*, G-d instructs us concerning the services at the Temple (first during the forty years in the desert and later on in Jerusalem); laws concerning proper conduct between man and his fellow and man and G-d.

*Continued on page 6*

**AT MOUNT SINAI**, the entire Jewish nation, millions of men, women and children, witnessed the revelation of G-d as He spoke the words of the Ten Commandments. It is this event, the revelation of G-d Himself, without a mediator that established for all of the people, the truth and eternity of the Torah.

After the giving of the Ten Commandments, Moses ascended to the peak of Mount Sinai, and stayed there for forty days and nights. During this time, G-d taught him the entire Torah, as well as the principles of its interpretation for all time. He also gave him the two precious stone tablets, in which He engraved the Ten Commandments.

Upon his descent, Moses taught the Torah to the Jewish people. The Torah was then taught and transmitted from generation to generation, until this very day.



# The Truth of the Torah

**T**he historical veracity of any event – be it as recent as the first or second World War, the American Revolution, or as long ago as the wars of Alexander the Great – is established by the fact that from its very origin it involved and was witnessed by a great multitude of people. It would be utterly irrational to suggest that someone dreamt up a story of world magnitude, recorded it, and “sold” it to a people who accepted it as fact, especially when told that it happened to them.

According to the historical account, the Jewish people numbered six hundred thousand men, ages 20 to 60. When you add to that number the women and children, there were several million people. How is such a story accepted by anyone

being told that it happened to them, if indeed they did not experience it?

Furthermore, the more outlandish the story and the longer the period of time it claims to have taken, the less it would be accepted, especially when the implications of the story is a total change of lifestyle and the acceptance of restrictive rules, by a people – who, as recorded in the same Torah – keep questioning and rebelling from the very beginning.

No right-thinking person questions whether or not the Jewish people inhabited the land of Israel, had numerous kings, two temples, went into exile, etc. These are all unquestioningly accepted as historical fact. Why? Because these details are part of a story that was experienced by the millions of people who told it. This same story is traced further back in time – without interruption – through the enslavement in Egypt, the miraculous redemption and the following revelation at Mount Sinai.

To put it simply, it is the very existence and continuous presence of the Jewish people that absolutely establishes the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai 3,323 years ago as an undeniable historical fact.

If the passage of time does not invalidate the truth of a historical happening, why then do some people question the validity of the story of the giving of the Torah? Is it possible because they are unaware of the full story, or could it be because to accept it would mean to accept that which it obligates of us?



In *Numbers* we learn of the census of the Jewish people; their trials and tribulations during their forty year travels in the desert.

In *Deuteronomy* Moses offers the Jewish people inspiration for years to come, including the promise that G-d will never forsake them and will continue to relate to the Jewish people through His prophets; the book includes the setting of the Torah judicial system and Moses' foreseeing of the future.

## The Prophets

Following the passing of Moses, as promised G-d revealed himself, to individuals of great piety and spirituality. These are the prophets who recorded G-d's instructions and messages. There are 19 books of prophets. In all, we

had forty-eight prophets and seven prophetesses whose prophecies were recorded for their everlasting importance.

## The Holy Writings

These include the book of Psalms, Song of Songs, Ruth and Esther, and more - eleven in all. All of which were written by *ruach hakodesh* (divine inspiration).

## The Oral Law

The written Torah, its narratives and laws, is conveyed in an extremely concise fashion demanding elucidation by way of the Oral Law, which contains details of the Commandments, their meanings, and general principles for interpretation.



It is the study of these principals and the interpretations and their application that have been the occupation of the Jewish people throughout the ages.

### The Revealed and Hidden Parts of the Torah: The Kabbalah

The Torah in its origin and essence is G-d's infinite wisdom and will. It is this infinite G-dly wisdom that which informs and is invested in the practical laws of the Torah, addressing mundane worldly matters comprehended by human logic.

The Torah, as it deals with practical laws, is the revealed part of the Torah. The esoteric and mystical element of the Torah focuses on the G-dly dimension of the Torah and metaphysical significance of the Mitzvos. These are the teachings of Kabbalah and Chassidus. They are, as referred to in Jewish tradition, the *nesboma* (soul) and essence of the Torah.

Both the hidden and revealed are inseparable parts of the Torah, received at Sinai and transmitted from generation to generation throughout history.

### Significance of the Torah

In addition to being a guide for a Jew's life, the inner significance of the Torah is the fact that it is G-d's wisdom. By learning and internalizing the Torah, a person's mind becomes united with G-d's wisdom and through it "embraces" G-d Himself.

*Continued on page 8*

# Kabbalah

## What Is It?

**KABBALAH.** The mere mention of the word conjures up images of magical and mysterious otherworldly dimensions, of spiritual secrets that are profoundly miraculous and deeply inspiring. Nowadays it seems everyone—Jew or non-Jew, famous or nameless—is discovering and uncovering the divine truths of Kabbalah. Or are they?

That question raises three, more pointed ones: What is the essence of Kabbalah? Will opening the exploration of Kabbalah to the masses demean and distort this extremely difficult and highly spiritual subject, reducing it to the level of pop culture? If Kabbalah is not appropriate for popular study, is it somehow still relevant to our lives?

Kabbalah literally means "receiving"; in Israel today, the receipt you get when making a purchase is called a kabbalah. The Bible, or Written Law, is given by G-d and is available to anyone who can read it. The Oral Law—which includes the Kabbalah—is received, passed directly from teacher to pupil.

Most of Torah is considered Torah haniglet—revealed Torah, to be studied by all Jews. Kabbalah, however, was designated chochmah nisteret—hidden wisdom. In truth, Kabbalah was never literally hidden, but was not widely, or even publicly, studied.

The reason for restricting the study of Kabbalah relates to its subject matter. Kabbalah encompasses two general themes: *ma'aseh bereishit*—the theory or description of creation—and *ma'aseh merkavah*—Ezekiel's description of the Heavenly Chariot, which teaches us about the relationship between humans and the Almighty.

When I discuss matters that are tangible and open for all to see and appreciate, things that are already "revealed," it is simple for others to verify the truth of what I say. But if I am talking about angels, for example, I must be very careful. If I speculate from ignorance, what I say will be nonsense. And it may become dangerous nonsense if I fail to realize the power and meaning of what I am saying and end up defiling the Majesty of G-d.

Equally as esoteric as its subject matter is the language of Kabbalah. It is presented as a stream of abstract formulas, conveyed in Kabbalah's own unique jargon, understood only by a select cadre of scholars trained to decipher it. To avoid misunderstanding, Kabbalah had to be taught

one-on-one by a master teacher singularly attuned to the capabilities and receptivity of each student. One cannot simply open the classic Kabbalistic texts and glean their truths in a vacuum.

Unfortunately, today Kabbalah has been commercialized by those who pretend to grasp its innermost secrets. These pretenders purport to teach—and to sell—what they do not understand, to people who are not equipped to receive it. Kabbalah's mystifying formulas become nothing more than intoxicating mantras to those who mindlessly repeat them. This is like trying to cure an illness by chanting the chemical formula of the remedy.

This is not to say that Kabbalah should not be studied and learned. In fact, it is incumbent upon Jewish scholars to understand the whole map of Torah from beginning to end, the Hidden Law no less than the Revealed Law.

Throughout history, there have been those who, very quietly, achieved extensive knowledge of the Hidden Law.

But today, most of us are simply incapable of comprehending Kabbalah. For us the question is, "Is there some way we, too, can 'receive' the remarkable teachings of Kabbalah in a meaningful way, without treading upon its divine essence?"

One answer lies in the Chassidic approach to Kabbalah.

It is a basic Kabbalistic concept that the human soul is, in a manner of speaking, a spark of Divine revelation

within the world and that each human being is a microcosm of the entire universe. Chassidism shows how the rarified teachings of Kabbalah, which speak to the macro-universe, can be adapted into a structure with ethical and practical meaning for our individual lives.

In this way, Chassidism is a form of applied Kabbalah. Just as the Revealed Law frames the behavior of our bodies, the internalization of Kabbalistic notions of the Hidden Law can attune us to our soul, educating it to connect with the Divine. In this model, the power of Kabbalah is harnessed not to serve our own desires but to align them with the wishes of the Almighty.

One of the most important Chassidic books is called *Zohar Chai*, "the living Zohar." That is what Chassidism does: It gives the Kabbalah life by translating it into something meaningful in one's relationships with others and, most important, something that can quell the strife within one's own soul and calm the struggle of one's inner being.

*By Rabbi Adin Even-Yisrael Steinsaltz*



# THE MITZVOS

There are six hundred thirteen divine commandments embracing every facet of our lives, both the duties to fellow men and the way to worship G-d. The positive commandments, numbering two hundred forty-eight, equal the number of organs in the human body, implying that a person should serve the Creator with every part of his being.

The three hundred sixty-five negative commandments are equivalent to the number of blood

vessels in the human body, indicating that when we guard ourselves from transgressing these prohibitions – as we might be tempted to do by desires inherent in the blood – each one of our blood vessels, remains “unblemished” and pure. The negative commandments also equal the number of days of the year.

## Significance of the Mitzvos

Mitzvah literally means commandment. However, it also means companionship, from the Aramaic *tzavta* (companionship). Upon fulfilling a commandment, one becomes united with G-d, who ordained that precept. For, regardless of the nature of the commandment, the fulfillment of G-d’s desire, creates a relationship between the creator and the human who executed it. By fulfilling His wish, a person accomplishes an infinite purpose and is in G-d’s “company.”

This is the interpretation of our Sages’ statement (Avos 4:2): “The reward of a mitzvah is a mitzvah,” indicating that the mitzvah itself is the greatest reward, for this sets us in a companionship with the eternal and infinite G-d. All other rewards are secondary in comparison to this great merit.

## Seven Noachide Laws

In the Torah there are also instructions for gentiles. Generally described as the Seven Noachide Laws, which include universal civil laws as given to Moses at Sinai. ●



# The Torah Is...

**THE TORAH IS A MANUFACTURER’S MANUAL.** Valuable things come with a book of instructions on how to properly and optimally use them. Lawn mowers, mp3 players, minivans have a guidebook. The same applies to the valuable (and complicated) thing we call life—the Manufacturer accompanied it with an instruction book.

## THE TORAH IS A CONTRACT.

When two parties enter into a partnership, binding their financial futures to a joint destiny, they draw up a contract that spells out their respective duties and commitments. When two people marry, a



marriage contract, called a ketubah, is drawn up that does the same. The Torah is our marriage contract with G-d, the document that details the commitments and duties we assumed toward each other when G-d chose us as His people and we chose Him as our G-d at Sinai.

**THE TORAH IS IDENTITY.** What connects the red-bearded chassid in Moscow with the black-skinned Yemenite Jew? What does the West Coast Jewish filmmaker have in common with his peddler grandfather or his olive-growing ancestor? Nothing. They share no common language, facial features or diet. Any two Jews can be as culturally or even genetically diverse as any other two members of the human race. But the Shema recited today in a Canadian synagogue is the same Shema that was proclaimed in Egypt 3,500 years ago; the criteria for the mikveh built at Masada is the same as for the one in Brazil and Milwaukee. Torah bridges continents and de-gaps generations to serve as our single common expression of our Jewishness.



**THE TORAH IS VISION.** Why are we here? Where are we going? “An architect who builds a palace,” cites the Midrash, “has scrolls and notebooks which he consults to know how to place the rooms, where to set the doors. So it was with

G-d: He looked into the Torah and created the world.” Torah is the divine blueprint for creation, the vision that illuminates the foundations of existence, its purpose and its significance. To study and live Torah is to understand and experience the soul of reality.

*From Chabad.org, by Yanki Tauber*

## The Children Are The Guarantors

Before G-d consented to give the Torah to the Jewish people, He requested guarantors, who would guarantee the Torah's continuity in Jewish life.

The Jewish people offered several possible guarantors, from the patriarchs to the prophets, but G-d was not satisfied until the little children were suggested.

Only children can be the guarantors and transmitters of Torah; our commitment to their education is the best assurance of our continued commitment to Torah and mitzvot.



## The Children

*Who secured the deal with G-d at Sinai?  
The kids did.*

**When we read the Ten Commandments in the synagogue on Shavuot, we make every effort that the children – even the smallest kids – should be there, right in the front row.**

Join in the ice cream party immediately following the reading.

*(See page 4 for locations and times.)*



### THE TABLETS: Squares or Arches?

Ask anyone – What was the shape of the tablets that Moses received at Sinai? – and they'll tell you: They were longer than they were wide; a couple of inches thick, and, of course, round on top.

Wrong! Actually, the tablets were two equal square blocks, six handbreadths tall and wide and three handbreadths thick (approx. 2 ft x 2 ft x 1 ft). They were perfectly placed in the rectangular Ark whose wooden walls were covered in a thick gold casing (*Talmud, Bava Basra 14a*).

*(The well spread notion of an arch shaped top seems to have originated centuries ago with inaccurate portrayals by artists).*

## THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

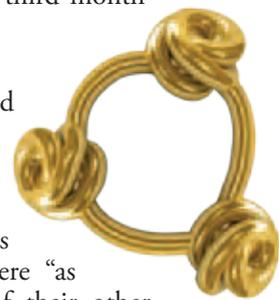
1. I am G-d your L-rd who took you out of the land of Egypt.
2. You shall have no other gods before me.
3. Do not take the name of G-d your L-rd in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and mother.
6. Do not murder.
7. Do not commit adultery.
8. Do not steal.
9. Do not bear false witness.
10. Do not covet.



and Israelites, through Moses, the third child in the family, after three days of preparation, in the third month (Sivan).

### Three Knots

The Zohar declares “Three are interlocked together: Israel, the Torah, the Holy One, blessed be He.”



### As One Man, with One Heart

Our Sages relate that when the Jews camped before Mount Sinai, they were “as one man, with one heart.” Many of their other journeys were characterized by differences of opinion and even strife. However, when they prepared to receive the Torah, the Jews joined together with a feeling of unity and harmony. This oneness was a necessary prerequisite to the giving of the Torah.

### Ladies First

To assure that the Torah would be well received and perpetuated, G-d told Moses to first address the women: “Say to the House of Jacob” (referring to the women) was followed by “Tell the sons of Israel” (Exodus 19:3) (referring to the men).

Women should be knowledgeable in Torah, to learn how to fulfill the Mitzvot in a full Jewish life.

The woman influences and affects her home and environment. It is the mother who primarily instills values in her children, encourages her husband to observe and study Torah, and affects others through her hospitality, warmth and teaching.

### Sight and Sound

The Book of Exodus relates that when G-d gave us the Torah at Mount Sinai, “The people saw the voices.” “They saw what is ordinarily heard,” remark our sages, “and they heard what is ordinarily seen.”

As physical beings, we “see” physical reality. On the other hand, G-dliness and spirituality is only something that is “heard”—it can be discussed, perhaps even understood to some extent, but not experienced first hand.

But at the revelation at Sinai, we “saw what is ordinarily heard” – we experienced the Divine as an immediate, tangible reality. On the other hand, what is ordinarily “seen” – the material world – was something merely “heard,” to be accepted or rejected at will.

### Blueprint

The Torah is the blueprint by which the world was designed. Everything that exists can be found in the Torah. Furthermore, “In any one concept of Torah you can find the entire world.”

### Mitzvot

The 613 Mitzvos (Commandments) are compared to a

## FROM OUR TRADITION

# About the Torah and the Giving of the Torah

### The Lowest Mountain

We all know that the Ten Commandments were given on Mount Sinai. Why Sinai? Say the Sages: Sinai is the lowest of all mountains, to show that humility is an essential prerequisite to receiving the Torah.

Why then on a mountain? Why not in a plain - or a valley? The Code of Jewish Law states at the very beginning: “Do not be embarrassed by mockery and ridicule.” For to receive the Torah you must be low; but to keep it, sometimes you must be a mountain.

### Purpose of the Torah

The Midrash relates that when G-d was about to give the Torah the heavenly angels argued that He should offer it to them! Upon G-d’s request Moses replied, “Have you been in Egypt? Do you have an evil inclination?”

This implies that the Torah was given in order to elevate humanity as well as the world in general. Precisely for those who have an evil inclination and need to be refined, was the Torah given.

### Kesser - A Crown

The Ten Commandments consist of 620 letters, equaling the number of the 613 Mitzvos and the 7 Rabbinical Mitzvos (such as Chanukah, Purim, etc.). 620 is the numerical value of the Hebrew word “Kesser”- a crown. Each mitzvah is considered a part of G-d’s crown. When fulfilling a mitzvah a person offers a crown to the Almighty.



### A Triple Torah

Everything connected with the giving of the Torah was of a triple nature: the Torah consists of Chumash (the five books of Moses), Prophets, and the Holy Writing (TeNaCH). It was given to Israel, comprised of Kohanim (priests), Levites

thick rope woven of 613 thin strands. They parallel the “rope” of the downward flow from G-d that connects the *neshama* (soul) invested in a human body with G-d. (Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi)



### A Scale

A person should view himself, and the entire world, as being equally balanced between good and bad... By doing even a single mitzvah, he could tip the scales for himself and the entire world for the good, and bring himself and everyone else redemption and deliverance. (Maimonides)

### The Torah — G-d Given

Rabbi Akiva said: Was Moses an expert hunter (that he knew so much about animals)?! Rather, the Torah recorded this (the detailed names of different species of animals, fowl and fish,) in response to anyone who might claim that the Torah is not from Heaven.

### Given in the Desert

The Torah was given to us in the barren, ownerless desert to emphasize that no man may claim any superior right to the world of G-d. It is equally the heritage of every Jew, man, woman and child, equally accessible to the accomplished scholar and the most simple of Jews.

### Daily Heavenly Echo

Our Sages declare: “Every day an echo resounds from Mount Horeb (Sinai) and proclaims: ‘Woe to those who insult the Torah...’”

Asked Rabbi Israel Baal Shemtov: Has anyone heard this echo? To what purpose, then, is this proclamation if no one hears it?

But often a person is seized by a feeling that has no identifiable source or cause. He may be struck by a sudden joy, or fear, or regret. He may suddenly resolve to better himself, to rectify a deficient past and turn a new leaf in his life. He may be suddenly driven to embark on a new initiative in his spiritual development. From where do these unprovoked awakenings come?

Every day an echo resounds from Mount Horeb.

### 49 Days of Counting

Upon their leaving Egypt, when Moses related to the Jewish people that G-d will give them the Torah, the Jewish people were extremely eager and impatiently counted the days. Hence the Mitzvah of counting the 49 days between Pesach and Shavuot. ●



# In The Desert

In the desert there are no office buildings or factories. So if you lived in the desert, chances are you wouldn't have a job. There'd be no boss bossing you, and no underlings under you.

In the desert there are no town or neighborhoods. No old money, no new money, no social climbers and no social climbed-overs.

In the desert there aren't even any department stores or groceries. You'd eat manna from heaven and wear the same pair of shoes for forty years.

That is why, say our Sages, G-d gave us the Torah in the desert.

Had He given it to us on Wall Street, He would have had to decide whom to appoint to the board and who should retain a controlling interest. Had He given it to us in the Holy Land, He'd have had to decide if He wants it in religious Jerusalem, mystical Safed or hi-tech Tel Aviv. Or perhaps He'd have preferred a Marxist kibbutz or even a neo-Zionist settlement?

G-d wanted no shareholders in his Torah, no corporate structure, no social or political context. In fact, no context whatsoever. Just us and the Torah.

Wouldn't it have been great to stay in the desert?

But as soon as G-d was sure that we'd gotten the message—that we understood that the Torah is not the product of any particular age, environment or cultural milieu, and that it belongs, absolutely and unequivocally, to each and every one of us—he sent us to the cities and the towns of His world, to its farms and marketplaces, to its universities and office buildings. He told us that now that He's done His part, it's up to us to make His Torah relevant in all these places and in all these contexts.

Still, it's nice to come back to the desert once in a while. At least for a visit.

By Yanki Tauber – Chabad.org



# Mountain Climbing

Mountains can be appreciated from various angles, levels, and vistas.

The daring sport started in 1760 when Horace Benedict of Genoa offered prize money for the first person to reach the summit of Mount Blanc, Europe's tallest peak at 15,777 feet.

Today's bumper stickers boast scaling Mt. McKinley, North America's highest, while climbers thrill to the diverse climes of Africa's Mt. Kilimanjaro. All are awed by Everest's 29,000 foot monument to Divine Creation, and Jews actually say a special blessing when beholding majestic mountains.

## JEWISH MOUNTAINEERS

Though physically small, Judaism's tallest spiritual mountain is Sinai, where we received Ten Commandments, highpoint of our current Shavuot holiday.

Today we can access Sinai in any kind of weather, any time of the year, even if we are geographically thousands of miles away. In fact, those who "ascend the L-rd's mountain" (Psalms 24) require no sticks, spikes or rope, and can climb with their eyes closed! But we surely need guts and stamina for the massive uphill struggle.

While hardly a mountain, Sinai takes us even higher than Everest. The Midrash says that little Mt. Sinai was chosen

over much taller mountains because its diminutive size represents humility.

But if humility is a virtue, why a mountain? Wouldn't a flat plain or a valley express humility even better?

Chabad's Rabbi Shneur Zalman explains: The problem with a valley is that it can denote low self esteem. It's no Mitzvah to become a doormat and be stepped all over. We must stand tall and be proud of our beautiful heritage and tradition. Humility's virtue should be balanced and complemented with strength of conviction. So the mountain of choice was modest Mount Sinai, a mountain of humility.

A story is told about a Chassidic Rabbi who would carry along two slips of paper with seemingly contradictory messages – one with the Talmudic statement "The entire world was created just for me" (Sanh, 38a), while the other quoted Abraham, "I am but the dust and ashes" (Gen. 18:27). The higher we rise spiritually, the more we recognize our limitations, vulnerability and mortality, for only G-d is eternal.

Once you top Everest – it's done; what's left but to figure out how to get back down? But Sinai's pursuit is eternal, because the higher we rise, the further we are inspired to climb.

We all have our ups and downs, but we must strive to go from strength to strength. Marking time on the same level leads to downward decline. If we don't maintain momentum, we risk losing our footing and may fall backward down the slippery slope.

Let's take it from the top, with this free translation of the Rebbe's words:

"People mistakenly think that 'only great leaders can save the world.' Actually, each and every person can raise us all higher with his or her individual prayer and Mitzvah deeds. In these extraordinary times, even a weaker person carries muster

to say "I am strong!"

A climber rallies all his strength as he nears the summit. At that point, even a small twig, crag or crevice to grasp, by hand or foot, is precious. Any Mitzvah we hold onto is critical for the last boost of energy that gets us over the top.

As we enter the homestretch of the long awaited era of Moshiach and the final Redemption, we should treasure and appreciate every Mitzvah and ray of light, studying Torah ourselves and sharing it with others.

There is a tendency to become exhausted, tired and weary right before the break of dawn, so let's not "sleep through" this most auspicious time. Let's encourage each other: "Dear brother, don't succumb before the upcoming Light of Day!"

*by Rabbi Yisroel Rubin, Chabad Shaliach in Albany, New York*



# SHAVUOS Customs

## Pull an All-Nighter

Our Sages relate that our ancestors slept late the morning they received the Torah. How could that have happened? They so anxiously awaited that occasion. They sincerely, but mistakenly thought that they would be best able to receive the Torah if their souls were not constrained by the physical body, and able to tap into subconscious realms beyond the normal human mind.

They didn't realize that ultimately G-d wants us to utilize the mundane, everyday experience, the physical, in order to make this world a holy place where He can "reside".

To compensate for that mistake we stay up the entire first night of Shavuos and study Torah, ready to receive the Torah once more when G-d again offers it to us, this Shavuos, with renewed vigor.

## Dairy Foods & Blintzes

It is customary to eat dairy foods on the first day of Shavuos. One of the reasons given for this custom is because the Torah is likened to nourishing milk.

Also, on Shavuos, immediately after receiving the Torah, the Jewish people were required to eat kosher. The only foods available for immediate consumption were milk products.

The Hebrew word for milk is "chalav". When the numerical value of each of the Hebrew letters in the word "chalav" are added together – 8; 30; 2 – the total is 40. 40 is the number of days Moses spend on Mount Sinai when receiving the Torah.

The custom to eat cheese blintzes on Shavuos is based on a play of Hebrew words. The Hebrew word for cheese is Gevinah, reminding us of the "controversy" of the taller mountains, each claiming to be worthier than Sinai for the privilege of receiving the Torah. They were, therefore, called Gavnunim - "humps," because of their conceit, while Sinai, small and humble, was chosen for its humility.



## Ruth

In many synagogues the book of Ruth is read on the second day of Shavuos. There are several reasons for this custom: A) Shavuos is the birthday and yearzeit (day of passing) of King David, and the book of Ruth records his ancestry. Boaz and Ruth were King David's great grandparents. B) The scenes of harvesting, described in the book of Ruth, are appropriate to the Festival of Harvest. C) Ruth was a sincere convert who embraced Judaism with all her heart. On Shavuos all Jews were converts having unconditionally accepted the Torah and all of its precepts.



## Go Green

It is customary on Shavuos to adorn the synagogue and home with fruits, greens and flowers. The reason: **Fruits** - In the time of the Temple the first fruits of harvest were brought to the Temple beginning on Shavuos. **Greens** - Our Sages taught that on Shavuos judgment is rendered regarding the trees of the field. **Flowers** - Our Sages taught that although Mount Sinai was situated in a desert, in honor of the Torah, the desert bloomed and sprouted flowers.

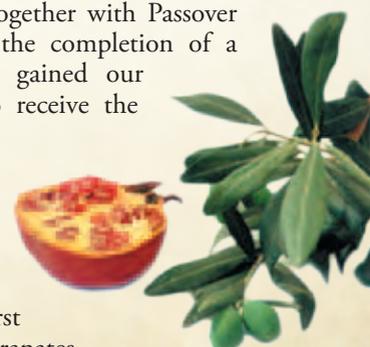
## Additional Names of Shavuos

Shavuos is also called **Atzeret**, meaning – The Completion, because together with Passover it forms the completion of a unit. We gained our

freedom on Passover in order to receive the Torah on Shavuos.

Another name for Shavuos is **Yom Habikurim** or the Day of the First Fruits. In an expression of thanks to G-d, beginning on Shavuos, each farmer in the Land of Israel brought to the Temple the first wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates that grew in his field.

Finally, Shavuos is also called **Chag HaKatzir**, the Festival of the Harvest, because wheat, the last of the grains to be ready to be cut, was harvested at this time of the year. On Shavuos two loaves of wheat bread from the new harvest were offered at the temple in Jerusalem. ●



# Classic Cheese Blintzes

Blintzes are a traditional dish for the holiday of Shavuos. Top with sour cream, apple sauce or cinnamon and sugar.

## BATTER

4 eggs  
1/2 cup milk  
1/2 cup water  
1 cup flour  
1/4 cup sugar  
1 package vanilla sugar  
Pinch of salt  
1 Tbsp. oil

## CHEESE FILLING I

1/2 pound farmer cheese  
4 ounces cream cheese  
4 Tbsps. honey or maple syrup  
juice of 1/2 lemon  
1 egg yolk

## CHEESE FILLING II

1 pound cottage cheese, strained  
2 egg yolks  
2 Tbsps. flour  
2 Tbsps. sugar  
1 tsp. vanilla sugar  
1/4 cup raisins (optional)

USE: 7 inch skillet

YIELDS: 12 blintzes

**BATTER:** In a large mixer bowl combine eggs, milk, water and blend well. Gradually add flour, then both sugars, salt and oil. Beat well until there are no lumps in the batter.

**FILLING I:** Combine all ingredients in a bowl and beat well. Or combine all the ingredients in a blender container and blend until smooth.

**FILLING II:** Combine all ingredients, except raisins, in a bowl and beat well. Or all the ingredients can be combined in a blender container and blended until smooth. Then add raisins.

## TO ASSEMBLE CREPES:

1. Prepare batter and filling of your choice. Using a paper towel or basting brush, apply a thin coating of oil to a 7 inch skillet. Place skillet over medium heat until skillet is hot but not smoking.
2. Ladle approximately 1/3 cup of batter into the skillet. Tilt pan to swirl the batter so it covers the bottom of the skillet.
3. Fry on one side until small air bubbles form, and top is set. Bottom should be golden brown. When done, carefully loosen edges of crepe and slip out of skillet onto a plate..
4. Repeat the above procedure until all the batter is used. Grease the skillet as needed..
5. Turn each crepe so that golden brown side is up. Place 3 tablespoons of filling on one edge in a 2 1/2 inch long by 1-inch wide mound..
6. Roll once to cover filling. Fold the sides into the center and continue rolling until completely closed..
7. Heat 2 tablespoons of oil in the skillet and place each crepe seam side down in the skillet and fry 2 minutes on each side, turning once.

**VARIATION:** Whole wheat pastry flour can be used instead of white flour.

*Excerpted from Spice and Spirit, The Complete Kosher Jewish Cookbook, published by Lubavitch Women's Cookbook Publications.*

# Eggplant Rollatini

A delicious dairy Shavuos dish.



## EGGPLANT AND CHEESE STUFFING:

3 medium eggplants, about 3 lbs.

Olive oil

16 oz Ricotta cheese

2 cups of your favorite prepared marinara sauce or create your own.

1/2 cup shredded Mozzarella cheese

2 garlic cloves, minced

5 basil leaves, shredded

1 egg, lightly beaten

Salt and pepper to taste

**For the eggplant and stuffing:** Preheat broiler to high. Remove the tops of the eggplants. Cut into 1/4 to 1/2-inch thick slices vertically, from top to bottom. Brush a large baking sheet with a little olive oil. Place the slices, in batches, on the sheet. Season lightly with salt and

pepper, drizzle with a little olive oil. Place on rack 4-inches from broiler and broil until lightly browned and softened, about 4 minutes per side. Remove and let cool slightly.

Meanwhile, prepare the cheese stuffing. In a medium bowl, mix together the ricotta and mozzarella cheeses. Add the garlic, basil, eggs, salt and pepper. Mix well to combine.

**To assemble:** Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Lightly grease a 13x9x2-inch baking pan with spray or olive oil. Spread about 1/4 cup of the sauce in the bottom of the pan. Spoon about 2 tablespoons of the cheese mixture on the short end of an eggplant slice and roll. Place in baking pan, seam side down. Continue with the remaining eggplant slices and cheese. Spread 1 cup of the remaining sauce on top and bake until hot and bubbly, 20 to 30 minutes. Remove from oven and let rest about 5 minutes before serving.

For additional Shavuos recipes visit [www.chabadwi.org/shavuos](http://www.chabadwi.org/shavuos).

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*(on the eve of his 17th Yahrzeit, the 3rd of Tamuz/July 5th, 2011)*

GUEST SPEAKER

**RABBI MOSHE BRYSKI**

Rabbi Moshe Bryski is the spiritual leader of Chabad of the Conejo in Agoura Hills, CA. He is a gifted teacher and the founder of the Conejo Jewish Academy, an adult Jewish educational institution that attracts thousands of students each year to its many offerings. He is a much sought after speaker and has lectured throughout the world.

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On the occasion of the upcoming 17th Yahrzeit anniversary of the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of blessed memory, on the 3rd of Tammuz (July 5, 2011), and in gratitude of his gift of love, we present the following riveting story.

## DON'T ABANDON THE JAPANESE JEWISH COMMUNITY

*As told by Marvin Tokayer*

**A**fter graduating from rabbinical school I served as a chaplain in the United States Air Force in Japan. Upon returning to the United States in 1967, I took a position as junior rabbi at a synagogue in Great Neck, New York.

The overseer of the kosher kitchen, mashgiach, was a Chabad-Lubavitch disciple. When my fiancée and I announced our engagement, he suggested, “Perhaps send a wedding invitation to the Rebbe?”

I mailed the invitation and soon received a call from the Rebbe’s secretariat, who said that the Rebbe would like to invite me and my fiancée to a private audience. The meeting was set for 1:00am several weeks later.

### **Work With the Living**

We entered the Rebbe’s study with no agenda and no requests. We simply wanted his good wishes and blessing for our marriage. The first thing the Rebbe said was, “Moshe

[my Hebrew name], I haven’t seen you for a long time! You’ve disappeared.” He then continued, “It would be so much better for you if you would be working with the living than being occupied with the deceased.”

I was not in the funeral business, I was not an undertaker. I didn’t work with the living and I didn’t work with the dead, so I replied, “Rebbe, I don’t understand.”

### **Japan Needs A Rabbi!**

The Rebbe explained that he had read an article in the newspaper about my finding a Jewish cemetery in Nagasaki, Japan, when I was the chaplain there. “Why are you spending your time looking for cemeteries? There are living people in Japan. Japan is a growing country and they need a rabbi.”

The Rebbe continued, “No community should be abandoned. We cannot abandon any ship. The captain needs to be the last to abandon the ship. There are Jews everywhere and there is a nice Jewish community in Japan, you should go to Japan and be the rabbi of the Jewish

community there.”

I was completely taken by surprise. I looked at my fiancée, who only spoke Hebrew, and translated, “The Rebbe suggests we travel to Japan so I can become the rabbi of the Jewish community.”

She said something similar to, “It may be closer to go to the moon!” She had no idea where Japan was and neither of us spoke Japanese. We had no idea why the Rebbe was suggesting that we move there.

She said she was not interested and I told the Rebbe, “Thank you, but I do not think we are interested in going to Japan.”

No matter how I steered the conversation, throughout the rest of our audience the Rebbe kept coming back to his request. “It will be wonderful for the community, it will be good for you and you will learn so much,” he said. “You do not have children yet so you are not bound to a place with Jewish schools. You are not even married yet. Go to Japan, stay there as long as you want, and be of service to the Jewish people. You speak English, Hebrew and Yiddish. You have a college education. I think you should go there.”

The Rebbe also said, “When I send someone to be my emissary, it’s a one way ticket, they don’t come back. But you, you do not have to stay there forever.”

Despite the Rebbe’s pleas, at the end we said, “Thanks, but no thanks.” We weren’t interested in going and that was that. The Rebbe stood to give us a blessing for the wedding. He wished us well and added a blessing for peace in Israel. He told me to tell my fiancée’s family in Israel that everyone will be well and, if there will be war (this was before the Six Day War), Israel will be victorious.

With that we concluded our private audience with the Rebbe and traveled home.

My fiancée and I were both surprised by the conversation but we soon put it out of our minds.

### **Japan Again?**

Soon thereafter I received a phone call from the president of the Jewish community of Japan. He called from the airport in New York between flights and asked if it would be possible for me to rush to the airport and have a cup of coffee with him. I did not know him and had never even heard of him, but out of curiosity I went to the airport to meet him.

Once there, he asked me to come to Japan to be their rabbi. I looked at him and said, “I have heard this before. We are not interested in this offer.”

He responded, “I will be back in New York again, can I call you then?”

I told him he may, and indeed he did phone me when he was next in New York, and I again told him that we were not interested.

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He called a third time. At this point my wife and I had discussed the idea further and agreed to go for two years. We thought it would be exciting to go away on our own as a newly married couple and have the opportunity to visit Singapore, Korea, Bangkok, Hong Kong and China. We thought we would have an interesting adventure and then return to the United States.

### **Tragedy Amidst Preparations**

While we were busy packing and finding out about the Japanese Jewish community, my father unexpectedly

passed away.

When we were sitting shiva my mother and I were astonished that the Rebbe sent us a condolence letter and sent someone to console us in person. How the Rebbe found out about my father’s passing, I don’t know, but it was very meaningful to my mother and me.

After shiva (seven days of mourning), I called the Rebbe’s office to ask if I could schedule a private audience and was given an appointment immediately.

The first thing I did was thank the Rebbe for sending a visitor to console my mother and me after my father’s passing. I told the Rebbe that we found his letter very comforting and reassuring and were touched that he had sent it.

Then we discussed my impending move. In the course of our discussion, the Rebbe also asked, “What will happen if you are faced with a serious question of Jewish law? How will you answer it?”

I explained that with telephones one can receive immediate answers from the leading authorities on Jewish law.

He asked, “Whom will you call?”

I said, “Whom would you suggest?”

The Rebbe told me I should call him or Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, a leading authority in Jewish law in the past generation. I told the Rebbe I thought it would be better to call Rabbi Feinstein as the Rebbe had enough to deal with. The Rebbe gave me Rabbi Feinstein’s number and introduced me to him, which I appreciated very much.

The Rebbe wanted to make sure that my paperwork and degrees were okay before I left. As I would be the only rabbi in Japan, the Rebbe wanted to be certain I would not be challenged or questioned. And in fact I was not challenged during our stay in Japan, and was accepted as the rabbi of the Jewish community.

### **The Japanese Experience**

I served as the rabbi for two years and found it to be so fascinating, unusual and exotic that my wife and I decided it was not time to come home, there was still much to do.

We stayed for 20 years! Those were the best years of my life. I learned so much about myself - as a human being, as an American and as a Jew. I was the outreach point for everyone in the Far East, and most of the time the only rabbi in the Far East. If anyone in China or India was interested in Jews, Judaism or the Bible, I was the only telephone number to call. I knew every day there would be a phone call. I never knew who or what it would be, just that it would be a surprise and an interesting experience.

**The Far East Today**

I arrived in Tokyo in 1968, more than 40 years ago. Asia has certainly changed. My community in Tokyo was comprised of third generation Russian Jews. They are no longer there. Now the majority of the community members are American and Israeli expatriates. The day they come, they know the day they will depart.

Today in the Far East when you travel outside the big cities, the only Jewish presence is Chabad. I have been to China 25 times, and I know about China very well. I have been to India 20 times. There are Chabad rabbis all over the place.



RABBI MARVIN TOKAYER

**My Impressions of the Rebbe**

In my meetings with the Rebbe I was overwhelmed and felt like I was in the presence of a spiritual giant. He was a giant in his mental abilities. He was a giant in his learning. He was a giant in his scope of knowledge. The Rebbe was familiar with everything and concerned about everyone. He was in a class of his own.

Frequently a movement is judged after the passing of its leader. Frequently the movement fails because the charismatic leader is no longer there. With Chabad, the energy created by this charismatic leader has maintained itself. The dedication and devotion has maintained itself.

The Rebbe's legacy lives on.

*Rabbi Marvin Tokayer is a noted scholar and historian residing in Great Neck, New York. For many years he was the only rabbi living in Japan and served as the Vice President and Director of Culture, Religion and Education for the Jewish Communities of the Far East. Rabbi Tokayer has written 20 books in Japanese on Judaism and Jewish life.*



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# LIFE AFTER LIFE

*On the occasion of the forthcoming seventeenth yahrzeit of the Rebbe,  
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, OBM, on the 3rd of Tammuz, 5771/July 5, 2011.*

## LUBAVITCHER REBBE MEETS THE ACADEMY

*Excerpt from a report of an academic conference about the  
Rebbe and his philosophy (November 2005)*

**“Reaching for the Infinite: The Lubavitcher Rebbe: Life, Teachings and Impact” was more apt a title for the conference that took place this week at New York University than even its organizers may have realized.**

Trying to convey the impact of the late Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson in two dozen or so 20-minute academic presentations, which were delivered at the conference held Sunday through Tuesday at NYU’s student center on Washington Square, was a little like reaching for the infinite with arms only inches long.

Held under NYU’s auspices, the conference’s organizer, Lawrence Schiffman, a Dead Sea Scrolls expert and chairman of NYU’s department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies, explained that “the Rebbe is a major phenomenon in modern Jewish life.” There may be no other 20th century rabbi as influential, recognizable (or controversial) beyond his own religious community as Rabbi Schneerson.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe led the Chabad movement from 1951 until his passing in 2004, and helped it grow into the largest Jewish outreach network in the world.

Speakers’ approaches and topics varied widely. Some focused on esoteric aspects of the Rebbe’s particular take on kabalistic ideas, some on his Torah scholarship and others on his involvement with politics, both domestic and Israeli, or with art, music and psychology.

Several speakers were Lubavitch chasidim in academia, and others, including Schiffman, can be described as friends of the non-messianist leadership faction of Lubavitch. ...

Allan Nadler, a professor of Jewish studies at Drew University, was invited to participate. His presentation, “Mitnagdic Opposition to the Rebbe,” wandered into opposition by other chasidic Rebbes as well, and delved into how it played out in Israeli party politics.



## THE ASCENT AND CONNECTION OF THE DEPARTED SOUL

*Excerpts from a translated letter by the Rebbe*

... It is self-understood that the soul is eternal. Obviously, an illness of the flesh or blood cannot terminate or diminish the life of the soul – it can only damage the flesh and the blood themselves and the bond between them and the soul. That is to say, it can bring to the cessation of this bond – death, G-d forbid – and with the severing of what binds the soul to the flesh, the soul ascends and frees herself of the shackles of the body, of its limitations and restrictions. Through the good deeds she has performed during the period she was upon earth and within the body, she is elevated to a higher, much higher, level than her status prior to her descent into the body. As the our sages expressed it: The descent of the soul is a descent for the sake of an ascent, an ascent above and beyond her prior state.

From this it is understood that anyone close to this soul, anyone to whom she was dear, must appreciate that the soul has ascended, higher, even, than the level she was at previously; it is only that in our lives, in our world, it is a loss. And just as the closer one is to the soul, all the more precious

Several speakers mentioned the difficulty in fully grasping the Rebbe's depth and inner personality. With the Rebbe, "you pull the veil aside and there's another veil," said Elliot Wolfson, a professor of Hebrew and Judaic studies at NYU. "Even when you open up one avenue to understanding him, there's another one to open. There is always another veil.

William Helmreich, a professor of sociology and Judaic studies at the City University of New York, may have best summed up the Rebbe's complexities when he used his presentation on "The Rebbe's Relation to Jewish Communal Organizations and Religious Movements" as an opportunity to portray him as a man of paradox. For example, the Rebbe seemed "flexible yet his official stance was opposed to contamination by the outside world. He had friends in every denomination but opposed cooperation," he said.

Helmreich also adroitly plucked from the range of positions, campaigns and views the essence of what made the Rebbe successful. In his view, it was the fact that the Rebbe communicated that "each mitzvah has value unto itself." In other words, performing a mitzvah was not simply a first step, but something of infinite inherent value whose worth could also echo in higher worlds.

"The Rebbe sought mitzvahs, not membership, from the Jews he met," said Helmreich. "It is this focus on mitzvahs that is Chabad's greatest contribution."

Alan Brill, a rabbinic expert on Jewish mysticism and associate professor of Judaic studies at Yeshiva University, spoke about "The Rebbe as a Modern Thinker." The Rebbe believed "that revelation is continuous and progressive, therefore our age deserves new approaches in order reach everyone."

He asserts that we are not G-dless moderns based on the Enlightenment, but that now G-d is closer than he ever was before. "The Rebbe's goal," he said, "was to bring 20th century Judaism away from materialism."

Jeff Shandler, an associate professor of Jewish Studies at Rutgers University and a maven of American Jewish culture, spoke about the Rebbe and media. Unlike all other chasidic Rebbes and fervently Orthodox rabbinic leaders who have recently banned use of the Internet, Rabbi Schneerson saw "technology as not inherently corrupting, but containing the potential to be integrated into Judaism's spiritual mission."

And indeed it was video of the Rebbe that provided one of the conference's most compelling moments, during a presentation on the Rebbe's relationship to music by Mark Kligman, a professor of Jewish musicology at the Reform movement's Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

When he played old videotape of the Rebbe, from 1973 and 1980, singing a Lubavitch niggun (wordless melody), everyone in the conference room was riveted. Because it took that grainy black-and-white footage of the Rebbe singing, and hundreds of his followers around him responding as one, to finally reveal what all the academic presentations simply could not: the power of the Rebbe's charisma.

to them is the soul's elevation, so it is with the second aspect – the intensity of the pain. For they, all the more so, feel the loss of her departure from the body and from life in this world.

Also, it is a loss in the sense that – it seems – the soul could have ascended even higher by remaining in this world, as our sages taught in the Ethics of our Fathers: "One moment of repentance and good deeds in this world is preferable to the entire world to come."

...The bond between the living and the soul who has ascended endures. For the soul is enduring and eternal, and sees and observes what is taking place with those connected with her and close to her. Every good deed they do causes her spiritual pleasure, specifically, the accomplishments of those she has educated and raised with the education that bring the said good deeds; that is to say, she has a part in those deeds resulting of the education she provided her children and the ones she influenced.

Since all of the above constitute directives of our Torah, the wisdom and will of G-d, the fulfillment of these directives is part and parcel of our service of G-d of which it is said "Serve G-d with joy." A directive of Torah also serves as the source of strength which provides the abilities to carry it out. Consequently, since the Torah addresses these instructions to each and every individual, it is within the capacity of each individual to carry it out – and more so, to carry it out in a manner of "Serve G-d with joy."

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**This Shavuos (5771/2011) marks the culmination of the 250th year of the passing of the Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chassidic movement. In conjunction with the Baal Shem Tov's teaching that you find G-d everywhere, we bring you the following story.**

# A **שוס** with a **לס**

**T**here was a winter chill in the air when I stepped into the cab to make my way to the Reno/Tahoe Airport, to begin my daylong journey to my company's corporate headquarters in McLain, Virginia.

I had rushed out of the house so quickly that I had forgotten my coat and gloves. As the steamy breath flowed out of my mouth, I told myself this was not the way I wanted to start the day.

My plane was leaving at 6:00 am so it was way too early to start my morning davening (prayer). Since I had yet to

daven with tallis (prayer shawl) and Tefillin on an airplane in front of strangers, I decided to wait until I arrived in Washington DC before davening. It would be a little late in the day but I figured it would be ok just this once.

Before boarding the plane I donned my kippa (skullcap), pulled out my siddur (prayer book) and read the prayer for travelers, asking G-D's blessing during the trip. When I was done I noticed a rather smartly dressed fellow walk by wearing a brightly colored beret. I love wearing stylish looking hats but it is not every day that you see someone with such a "distinctive" looking chapeau on his head. As he walked through the terminal I noticed how proud he was of his beret and how he appeared to enjoy showing it off.

As I reached for my kippa, to tuck it away in my travel bag, I suddenly felt compelled to leave it on. I've had a lot of first since discovering Chabad, but I can honestly say I've never worn my kippa, outside of my home or shul, for any great length of time.

But watching the fella proudly wearing his beret made me think, "This was the day to wear it in public." Filled with great trepidation over what my fellow passengers would think, I pushed my black kippa to the back of my head, like a confused cowboy, and boarded the plane. My plan was to wear it until I arrived in Denver and then take it off while running to my connecting flight.

The trip to Denver was a long two hours. I felt very self-conscious. I thought everyone was looking at me, judging me, laughing at me! In truth my fellow passengers were more interested in their morning copy of USA Today than they were about the "Yid with the Lid," but you don't always notice the truth when you are filled with anxiety.

As we approached the Denver airport a flight attendant informed us that the Denver to Washington DC flight was delayed 2 hours. Since it was only 9 am Denver time I suddenly had plenty of time for my morning prayers. After disembarking I strolled through the airport until I found a nice, quiet, private place to pray. When I was done, I carefully rewrapped my Tefillin, folded my tallis and put them away in my bag. As I reached up to grab my kippa and put it away, my friend with the brightly colored beret strolled by, walked over to the automated sidewalk and disappeared into the crowd.

I slowly withdrew my hand from my kippa and left it on my head. I figured if the guy still had his beret on, maybe I should leave my kippa on a little while longer as well. Walking to the gate I decided to leave it on until I arrived at my hotel room later that day. "Go for it Shlomo Yakov" I told myself, "make your dearly departed Great Grandfather Charlie proud."

When I found my seat on my connecting flight there was an older, rather sad looking woman sitting in the seat next to mine. We exchanged "good mornings" and got ready for takeoff. As the flight attendant showed us how to buckle our seat belts, I quietly asked if there was anyone who has

driven in a car built after 1963 that didn't know how to buckle a seat belt.

For the first time since I sat down the woman next to me smiled. The ice broken, we started talking. As time passed she shared a sad tale about her son, who was mentally challenged, as a result of a surgery that went horribly wrong. Tearing up, she told me that he was in a special rehab center and would require care for the rest of his life. She told me she was terribly angry with the doctor and just didn't know if she believed in G-D anymore.

I asked her if she was praying to G-D while her son was in the operating room. She said she had. "So you do believe in G-D," I said "You're just angry at him right now because you don't understand why this happened." "I guess you're right" she said. "I just don't understand how this could happen or how he could let it happen." Drawing upon the many lessons my good friend Rabbi Chuni Vogel (Chabad emissary to Delaware) has shared with me over the years, I spoke with my fellow traveler for over four hours. The time seemed to go by in the wink of an eye as we jetted across the country, talking about her feelings toward the surgeon who operated on her son, her husband who never wanted the surgery in the first place and her inability to do anything constructive for her son or about the situation.

We discussed how in some cases it takes time for the true blessings of a perceived negative experience to turn into a significant, life-altering blessing or learning experience. We also agreed that sometimes it is impossible to understand why bad things happen to good people, because as human beings, it is impossible to truly understand G-d's plan.

As the hours rolled by my newfound friend began to brighten up and literally surge with energy. When the flight attendant announced that we were moments away from landing, my neighbor began to cry. I asked her why she was crying and she said that she never speaks to strangers

**SHE NEVER SPEAKS  
TO STRANGERS WHEN  
SHE TRAVELS... BUT  
WHEN SHE SAW THE  
KIPPA ON MY HEAD,  
SHE FELT COMPELLED  
TO SPEAK WITH ME.**

when she travels, but this time she felt it was okay to speak with me. I asked her why and she said she was born into an observant Jewish family but had married a non-Jew and had lost her sense of Jewish identity. But when she saw the kippa on my head, she realized I was an observant Jew and felt compelled to speak with me. I started to smile and she asked what I thought was so funny. I told her that I have been on a spiritual journey for a number of

years but this was the first time I had ever worn my kippa in public.

With a look of wonder she said she travels hundreds of thousands of miles every year on business and NEVER speaks with strangers. She asked me, "Why of all days did you decide to wear your kippa today." I told her about the guy with the beret and she laughed a soft laugh. I went on to say that due to myriad problems, my seat on this flight had been changed at least four times in the past two days. "I guess it was meant to be," she whispered. "I guess so," I whispered back.

As we got up to leave the plane she said, "Steve this has been an enlightening experience. All of the pain and guilt I've carried around for the past six months is gone. When I leave here I am going to channel my energies into positive efforts. I am going home and become an advocate for mentally challenged patients like my son. The next time you see me I'll be on C-SPAN talking to a congressional panel about benefits for the mentally disabled."

And with that she said goodbye and disappeared into the undulating crowd moving through Dulles Airport. As I looked out the window at the setting sun I couldn't help but marvel at the many separate and distinct events that had transpired that day, resulting in this memorable meeting. I never saw the guy with the beret again!



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# What's Happening

## AT LUBAVITCH OF WISCONSIN

# PURIM WITH CHABAD AT UWM



***As a precursor to the opening of the "Rohr Chabad of UWM" this summer, Rabbi Yechezkel (Chezky) and Mrs. Dobie Thaler visited Milwaukee to celebrate Purim with Milwaukee college students.***

***The following is a report by one the participants.***

*By Ben Rechavel*

For the Jewish students at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, this past Purim was a truly unique experience. We were delighted to have Rabbi Chezky and Dobie Thaler join many UWM students in celebration of our happy holiday. On Saturday night, the food was plentiful and so were the spirits; everyone was happy to be together while Spring Break leaves most students out of town. The Megillah was read, and copies in original Hebrew and English were distributed for an easy-to-follow guide. After the Megillah reading, we ate dinner and schmoozed with friends. The Thalers provided excellent Mishloach Manot for us, which they explained are gifts given out on Purim so as to fulfill a specific Mitzvah on the joyous holiday of Purim. The Mishloach Manot were stuffed with great kosher candy, two coins to give out to the poor/charity, and a Purim card explaining the customs of Purim, all fit into a great Chabad coffee mug.

On Sunday, we heard the Megillah reading again, ate a feast fit for Mordechai himself, and danced, sang and enjoyed the Simcha of the holiday.

It will be great to have a new Chabad center open here in Milwaukee, catering specifically to the UWM students. Many students live far from Milwaukee, but many more call Milwaukee home year-round. With the Thalers there for all of our Jewish needs, we will be able to increase our Jewish learning, and expand and broaden our participation in all areas of Judaism. The Thalers plan on moving in the summer. This will give them the opportunity to reach out to more students than would be possible by moving when school starts in the Fall. Moving in the summer is also great because it allows for Jewish students at UWM to participate in their Judaism during a time of the year that most find it difficult to find a Rabbi to learn from or to hold a Minyan, etc. Even after the summer passes and the Fall semester begins, the Thalers and Chabad at UWM will add so much to Jewish life on a campus that houses a plethora of different people, a tiny minority being Jews. The Thalers and Chabad at UWM will help Jewish students appreciate their Judaism on a campus where that can be hard to do at times. Many students on campus who want to celebrate their Judaism will benefit with the arrival of the Thalers in Milwaukee, and the establishing of Chabad at UWM. It's Jews helping Jews to be Jewish, and we can't wait!



# In the mailbox of **CHABAD AT UW-MADISON**

**Dear Mendel and Henya,**

I feel so bad that I missed.... the senior cocktail party.... I wish.... to let everyone know how important Chabad is to me. I may have.... but I still wanted to write this personal email to tell let you know what Chabad has meant to me.

As a freshman coming into the University of Wisconsin, I did not identify myself with the Jewish Community. I felt like a stranger living in Statesider, where everyone seemed to connect on a different level because of their connection with the Jewish network.

When I came to Chabad for the first time during welcome week, I was wearing a short skirt.... Instead of looking at me through a lens of judgment, you made light of the situation and got to know who I was as a person. I was surprised about how good being at Chabad that day felt to me and found it ironic that an orthodox organization made me feel more welcome as a Jew than any other place on campus.

I am naturally a very analytical person and throughout the years you have seen my struggle with my identification with Judaism. Instead of pushing your beliefs on me, you have helped me create my own Jewish identity through religious, social, and academic experiences.

Lighting the Shabbat candles was not something that my family did growing up. At first, I felt a little nervous going to Chabad for Friday night dinners because I didn't know Hebrew and most of the prayers. I realized quickly, however, that Shabbat is about bringing people together and being thankful for the food we have on our plates and the good company that

surrounds us (Henya's delicious cooking doesn't hurt either).

No matter how long my last visit to Chabad is, you always embrace my presence and make me feel at home. That is an amazing thing about Chabad and your family; you truly care about every person that walks through your front door.

I hope you know how much I have appreciated all of the amazing Shabbat dinners, Passover Seders, and Hanukkah parties throughout the years. It is because of these positive experiences that I know I will celebrate Shabbat and the Jewish holidays when I have a family.

Sinai Scholars was also an amazing experience for me. It was a way to look at religion through an intellectual framework. The topics were really interesting and our discussions really made me reevaluate my perceptions on Judaism. For the first time, I really understand and am comfortable about my role as a Jew.

As you said at the senior farewell party, Judaism is here for us and although it acts under a religious context, it is a guide to live a good Jewish life.

Thank you for having such an open mind and allowing me to figure out my own Jewishness.

Chabad has been a home away from home and I cannot thank you enough for being so warm and welcoming. I am SO excited for Birthright (thank you again for helping me out with that process) and I will be in Madison for a few weeks this summer so you haven't seen the last of me yet! And of course, I will always stop by when I come back to visit as an alumni!

*Love, –*



# In and out of the mailbox of **LUBAVITCH OF WISCONSIN**

## **A REQUEST FROM AFGANISTAN**

From: Baker, ... L CPL USA CJTF Paladin ...  
[mailto: ... l.baker@afghan.swa.army.mil]  
Sent: Saturday, February 19, 2011 6:29 PM  
To: rms@chabadwi.org  
Subject: Tefillin Bank (UNCLASSIFIED)

Classification: UNCLASSIFIED  
Caveats: NONE

Good afternoon,  
My name is Cpl Baker and I am currently deployed to Afghanistan in support of the NATO ISAF security mission. I was admittedly not very religious or observant prior to my deployment, but since my arrival here I have found myself closer connected to my faith, and have been taking steps to make myself a more observant Jew. I do not, however, have a pair of Tefillin of my own, and I have been attempting to find a program such as yours for a few weeks now. If you have any further information, or anything else I need to know about your Tefillin Bank, I would be very happy to find out more, with my eventual goal of obtaining a pair of my own, and using them for my morning prayers. Thank you for your time and assistance.  
R/S  
Cpl Baker

Dear Cpl. Baker,  
... I am forwarding this to the Aleph institute (<http://www.aleph-institute.org/military-programs.html>) which has the mechanism for getting things to soldiers in the field quickly and efficiently. I've CC'd Rabbi Mendy Katz of Lubavitch of Florida, a good friend of mine who is in charge of the program. One way or another I hope to get tefillin in your hands quickly. I am thrilled to hear about your interest in your Judaism. As you undoubtedly know, a great resource for finding out more is our website [www.chabad.org](http://www.chabad.org). You surely know that a fundamental principal of Jewish thought is the belief in Divine Providence. Simply put, this means that wherever you are and whomever you encounter there is a mission and a purpose there. Even in Afghanistan, G-d has a Divine purpose and mission for each of us. Please let me know if there are any other Jewish soldiers there and if there is anything else you need. Either way, I'd love to keep hearing from you.

With gratitude for all you do,  
Rabbi Mendel Shmotkin

PS. If you don't hear from the Aleph Institute in a few days please write to me again and I will go through other channels. Also, I thought you might enjoy the link below, describing the Rebbe's blessing for a Jewish soldier in another conflict.  
<http://www.chabad.org/1393818/>



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# SHAVUOS CALENDAR • 5771/2011

## CANDLE LIGHTING TIMES

	Blessing	Milwaukee	Madison	Kenosha	Green Bay	La Crosse	Beloit	Superior	Wausau	Eau Claire
June 7	#1&3*	7:53	7:59	7:51	7:57	8:08	7:56	8:21	8:05	8:12
June 8	#2&3**	9:04	9:10	9:02	9:08	9:19	9:07	9:32	9:16	9:23

\* If lighting after sunset, light only from a pre-existing flame. \*\* Light only from a pre-existing flame.  
A pre-existing flame is a flame that has been burning continuously since the onset of the festival such as a pilot light, gas or candle flame.

## CANDLE LIGHTING BLESSINGS

### 1. BA-RUCH A-TOH ADO-NOI E-LO-HEI-NU ME-LECH HA-OLAM ASHER KID-ESHO-NU BE-MITZVO- SOV VETZI-VONU LE-HAD-LIK NER SHEL YOM TOV

*Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, Kind of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded to kindle the Yom Tov light..*

### 2. BA-RUCH A-TOH ADO-NOI E-LO-HEI-NU ME-LECH HA-OLAM SHE-HECHI-YO-NU VE-KI-YE-MO-NU VE-HIGI-O-NU LIZ-MAN HA-ZEH.

*Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, Kind of the universe, who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this occasion.*

## SHAVUOS SCHEDULE

### Tuesday, June 7

- We light the Yom Tov candles (at the time indicated in the candle lighting schedule) and say both blessings.
- Like every Shabbos and Jewish festival, we sanctify the day and welcome the festival with the Kiddush, and the family is treated to a festive meal.
- At night we stay up and recite *Tikun Lail Shavuos* (see page 13).



### Wednesday, June 8

- We attend services in the morning and hear the reading of the Ten Commandments.
- After nightfall, we light Yom Tov candles from a pre-existing flame (at the time indicated above in the candle lighting schedule) and say both blessings.
- Once more, we recite Kiddush in the evening and the family is seated to partake in a festive meal.



### Thursday, June 9

- *Yizkor* is recited during the Yom Tov morning services, in remembrance of the deceased.



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# Celebration!

SHAVUOS GUIDE

5771 / 2011



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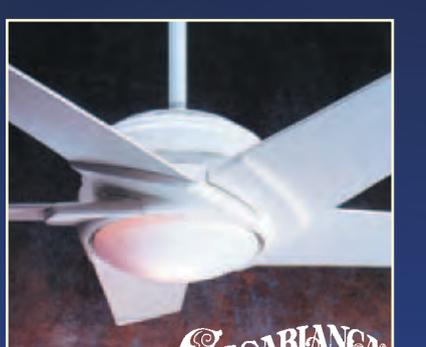
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