



From the
Beit Midrash of
Rav Julius



**Tikkun Leil Shavuot:
Reclaiming a Night of Learning,
Wonder, and Renewal**

About thirty years ago, on the first day of Shavuot, I was walking to synagogue with my close friend Bob Blau. Bob had a way of signaling that something important was coming by repeating my name. That morning, he called out, “Jules, Jules, we’re losing the holiday of Shavuot.”

I joked that it was right there on the calendar and that we were literally walking to Shavuot services. But Bob was right. Shavuot, the quietest of the pilgrimage festivals, often slips by unnoticed. There is no sukkah to build, no seder plate to arrange, no shofar blast to announce its arrival. It comes softly, asking us to remember a moment that changed the world: the giving of the Torah at Sinai.

Yet precisely because of its quietness, Shavuot offers something precious -- a chance to gather in familiarity, to learn together, and to rediscover Torah as a living inheritance.

This year, as we celebrate Shavuot in our own synagogue rather than joining larger congregations, we have an opportunity to reclaim the holiday on our own terms. With a *Tikkun Leil Shavuot* on Thursday night, May 21, a reflective Friday morning service with themed Torah study, and a Shabbat morning celebration with Yizkor on May 23 -- the latter two of which are accompanied by *Hallel*, we can shape a meaningful and deeply personal encounter with Torah.

To understand why this night of study matters, it helps to look at where the custom of the Tikkun began -- and how it grew into one of Judaism’s most beloved practices.

Where the Tikkun Began

The idea of staying awake on the first night of Shavuot does not appear in the Torah or the Talmud. It emerges later, in the mystical circles of 16th-century Safed in northern Israel. Rabbi Isaac Luria – known as the *Arizal* -- and his companions, including Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz (author of *Lecha Dodi*), developed the practice of spending the entire night immersed in Torah study. They called it *Tikkun Leil Shavuot*, a ‘repair’ for the Jewish people.

The mystics added a deeper layer: they believed that on Shavuot night, the heavens open and divine wisdom becomes especially

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**EXTRA! EXTRA!
Beth Jacob Celebrates Shavuot!**

Notwithstanding the cries of a modern would-be prophet (and one of my best friends forever -- See article on page 1) that “We are losing the holiday of Shavuot,” Beth Jacob proudly announces its assertive and profound celebration of one of the three Pilgrimage Festivals: SHAVUOT! And one of its most unique features: *Tikkun L’el Shavuot*, the night of study, **on Thursday night, May 21.**

Relive those days of yesteryear when thousands thronged to a mountain in the Sinai Desert to receive this newfangled set of laws that would not only launch a people but would also generate religious principles worldwide.

We will begin the evening **promptly at 6:00 pm** with a little bit of study, accompanied by a dairy hors d’oeuvre. And then we will alternately eat, shmooze, and study until You decide you want to go home. And maybe there will be some music

For those who need transportation assistance, please contact Rav Julius and we’ll see how we can assist. (But let’s start the process sooner than later.)

And there will be a ZOOM option, at least for the study and shmooze.

And the materials that we will study – we will provide you with coming attractions in the Weekly Announcements in the ensuing weeks.

And the Shavuot celebration continues on **Friday morning and evening May 22**, and **Shabbat morning May 23 with a Yizkor service**. And a ZOOM option for all those joining us on that platform.

Shavuot Schedule:

Thursday, May 21: 6:00 pm –
Tikkun L’el Shavuot and Dairy Dinner

Friday, May 22:
10:00 am – first day of Shavuot with Torah study

Friday May 22:
6:00 pm – Friday/Shavuot evening service

Shabbat May 23:
10:00 am – Morning service, Torah reading/study, Yizkor

accessible. The *Arizal* even composed an anthology of selections from Torah, Prophets, Writings, Mishnah, and Zohar -- a symbolic 'tasting' of the entire tradition in one night.

For them, the Tikkun was not an intellectual exercise. It was a love story. Israel and God meet again at Sinai each year, and Torah is the wedding canopy under which the covenant is renewed.

How the Tikkun Spread

From Safed, the custom spread like wildfire across the Jewish world, taking on different flavors in different communities.

In Eastern Europe, Hasidic courts embraced the Tikkun with song, story, and fervor. Some Hasidic masters taught that melodies sung at 3:00 a.m. could reach places in the soul that daytime learning could not.

In the great Lithuanian yeshivot, the Tikkun became a night of intense study. Students pored over Talmudic passages until dawn, fueled by black coffee and the thrill of discovery.

In modern Israel, the Tikkun has become a cultural phenomenon. Jerusalem hosts all-night learning festivals in synagogues, community centers, museums, and cafés. As dawn approaches, thousands walk together to the Kotel, reenacting the ancient Festival pilgrimage.

In North America, synagogues have embraced the Tikkun as a communal learning marathon. Some rotate teachers every hour; others offer themed sessions; many include cheesecake, coffee, and the camaraderie of learning together in the quiet of the night.

Why Study? The Heart of Jewish Life

Torah study is not merely an intellectual pursuit. It is a spiritual discipline, and a communal glue. The morning blessings include *la'asok b'divrei Torah* -- "to immerse ourselves in words of Torah" -- because study is a daily practice, not an occasional hobby.

The Talmud teaches that the study of Torah is equal to all the other commandments combined -- because study leads to action.

Study is also how Jews survive. We endure because we read, interpret, argue, and reinterpret again. We are a people of the book not because we worship books, but because learning keeps us alive.

And yet many Jews feel intimidated by text study. They worry they don't know enough Hebrew, or that others will be more knowledgeable, or that they will feel lost. Shavuot is the antidote. The night of Tikkun is not a graduate seminar. It is a tasting menu. No one is expected to master anything. The goal is to encounter Torah with curiosity and openness.

In a small community like ours, this is especially powerful. We learn not as anonymous faces in a crowd but as neighbors and friends. We bring our questions, our stories, our doubts, and our hopes. Torah becomes a shared language, not a private achievement.

Suggested Texts for Our Tikkun

To make the night accessible and meaningful, we will explore texts that speak directly to the themes of Shavuot -- revelation, covenant, kindness, and renewal.

From Torah, we will look at midrashim about the thunder and lightning at Sinai, the resulting fear, and the eventual declaration of *na'aseh v'nishma* -- "we will do and we will hear."

President's Box May 2026

Shavuot is approaching, the third of our ancient pilgrimage festivals. These sacred days commemorate the giving of the Torah at Sinai, and the forging of an eternal covenant between God and the Israelites: that if we would keep and teach His Sabbath, He would be our God forever, and we would be His people forever, His Chosen. But "Chosen" never meant superior — it means "chosen" for the responsibility to bring ethical monotheism, moral teaching, and the idea of Sabbath to the world.

The Torah entrusted to Moses — the Ten Commandments and the Five Books — that became the foundation of Western civilization. Other cultures had their own systems of belief, but the Torah offered a vision of a world shaped by a single Creator, by justice, compassion, and human dignity.

Our ancestors struggled to live up to these teachings. They learned, faltered, were corrected, and learned again. Across generations, Jews interpreted the Torah in different ways, sometimes embracing commandments, sometimes wrestling with them. That diversity continues today, yet still our "cores" keep us together as a Jewish family. In times of persecution, we join together to unite our strength. In times of peace, we debate our interpretations.

As Jews spread across the world, they absorbed aspects of the cultures around them. Some nations welcomed them; others persecuted or expelled them. Yet wherever Jews lived, their learning, trust within community, and commitment to education and enterprise usually helped them prosper — and often helped their host nations prosper as well. Tragically, that prosperity sometimes fueled resentment. More than once, Jews were expelled, their property seized, their contributions forgotten.

History forces us to ask difficult questions. Could such a pattern repeat? Could a small, successful Jewish minority in a nation burdened by debt and/or social strain once again become a convenient target? Many Western countries face economic pressures, and history teaches that in moments of instability, societies sometimes turn against vulnerable minorities — particularly stateless Jews, who have risen to positions of authority and wealth.

Shavuot reminds us that our covenant calls us to vigilance, unity, and moral clarity, in addition to keeping and teaching the Sabbath, living an ethical life, and loving our neighbor as ourselves. The Torah we received is both our anchor and our charge: to stand together, to act with courage, and to help shape a world where justice and peace will prevail, within and among multi-cultural societies.

From the Prophets and Writings, we will read Ruth's story as a tale of loyalty, kindness, and the courage to begin again.

From the Talmud, we will examine the parable of God holding a mountain above the Israelites -- a dramatic image of covenant and choice.

From the 19th century Hasidic world, we will learn that Torah is given every day, not only at Sinai.

And from the modern era, we will read Abraham Joshua Heschel, who wrote that Torah is "God's voice in human words," a perspective especially helpful for those who feel distant from traditional study.

And more if you want it...

Why This Night Matters for Us

A small community has a gift that large synagogues often lack: intimacy. On Shavuot night, we can sit around a table or two,

share ideas, ask questions, and let the conversation wander. We can rediscover the joy of learning not as an obligation but as a delight.

The Tikkun is not about staying awake until dawn. It is about waking up -- to Torah, to one another, and to the possibility that revelation is not a moment frozen in the past but an ongoing invitation.

This year, we have the chance to make Shavuot our own, and to gently rebut my late friend Bob Blau's worry that we were losing the holiday.

We can learn together. Remember together. Honor those we miss at Yizkor two days later. And receive Torah anew -- not as a relic, but as a living, breathing source of wisdom and hope.

Shavuot asks only one thing of us: to show up with open hearts. The rest unfolds from there.

B'Shalom,
Rav Julius

Joint Exploration of Scripture and Modern Politics

As we announced last month, Beth Jacob Synagogue and Park Congregational Church are collaborating to present a unique initiative that focuses on the intersection of religious scripture and contemporary politics. The program centers on a review of the Book of Joshua, which was thought to be the concluding book of our canon. However, over time, it became clear that an additional eighteen separate books were needed to complete the canon.

In addition to examining ancient texts, participants will analyze portions of two recent books that address the widespread application of Biblical teachings — and, at times, entire religions — to international geopolitical decisions.

Members of our respective congregations, as well as seekers from all faiths or of no faith, are welcome to join us (but if you are not a member joining us, can you let us know for planning purposes.) We will meet over the course of four sessions at our respective houses of worship on these dates and times, with the study portion highlighted in **red**:

May 3 at Park Congregational

May 9 at Beth Jacob

June 6 at Beth Jacob

June 14 at Park Congregational

Service Schedules

Park Congregational:

--10:00: Prayer

--11:00: Brunch and Study

Beth Jacob:

--10:00 Prayer

--11:00 Torah reading and study

--12:00 — Lunch and Study

Donations

We gratefully acknowledge the following contributions to Beth Jacob Synagogue's Special Funds.

Building Fund

In Memory of Ashley Lorinsky

Michael & Vicki Seroussi

In Memory of Samuel and Louis Mindel

Saul & Clara Mindel Family

May Birthdays

May 10	Gail Navick Paul Deutsch
May 12	Steven Green
May 17	Jacob Federman
May 18	Lisa Gawendo
May 19	Rona Rutchik Harriet Burchman
May 21	Leah Berke
May 28	Norman Katzoff Al Ruditzky
May 29	Amy Camassar

May Anniversaries

May 12	Steve & Cathy Bokoff
May 20	Steven & Pepi Green
May 24	Michael & Vicki Seroussi
May 25	Salvador & Ellen DeLeon
May 28	Patrick & Lauren Doherty
May 30	Evert & Lisa Gawendo

Mishebeirach

Berne Vasquez Kapili	Pamela Magliano Cannata
Beth Camassar	Patricia Tilley
Billy Maynard	Tiffany Gravel
Bonnie Curkin	Tim Menard
Emma Fries	Ahoova Hana bat Gila
Shirley Christian	Chaim ben Libba
Seth Curkin	Michal ben Sarah
Rabbi Gary Atkins	Moshe Ben Rochel
Jenn Rockwell	Tzvi ben Basha
Jeremy Federman	Yosefah Chaya bat Leah
Marvin Levine	
Michelle Nash	



Beth Jacob Synagogue

Mourns the Loss of

Ashley Lorinsky

*Daughter of Susan Lorinsky
and the late Lorin Lorinsky*

Sister of Jesse, Jared and Corey



ALL are WELCOME

BETH JACOB SUPER SHABBAT



Daven at Beth Jacob



Sing aloud at Beth Jacob



Hang out with Friends at Beth Jacob



**Number
ONE
Kiddush
Luncheon
On the
Planet**

**It's
NOSH
TIME**

Kashruth observed

Shabbat Services: 10 AM 'til Noon
NOSH Time: Noon until you're stuffed
COME ANY TIME— LEAVE ANY TIME

Beth Jacob Synagogue
 400 New London Turnpike
 Norwich, CT

A conservative Jewish
 congregation
 Julius Rabinowitz, Rabbi



MAY 2026 YAHRZEITS



May 1 **14 Iyar**
 Harold Katz
 Jennie Millstein
 Martha Gorfain
 Frances Horwitz

May 2 **15 Iyar**
 Irene Zuckerbraun —
Mother of Joel Zuckerbraun
 Goldie Mandell
 Carolyn Krohn —
Sister of Linda Adelman
 Isaac Segal
 Rebeca Trachtenberg

May 3 **16 Iyar**
 Samuel Rabinovitch
 Jacob Slosberg

May 4 **17 Iyar**
 Pauline Pollack
 Jacob Crumb
 Ruth Low

May 5 **18 Iyar**
 Harold Friedman —
Father of Larry Friedman
 Moses Gilman

May 6 **19 Iyar**
 Aaron Kivelewitz
 Morris Pearson
 Paul Agranovitch
 Tillie Segal

May 7 **20 Iyar**
 Max Steinman

May 8 **21 Iyar**
 Selle Gruskin-Littman —
Grandmother of Marc Bokoff
 Anne Abelman
 Susan Wolf —
Mother of Marc Wolf

May 9 **22 Iyar**
 Zena Bokoff
Mother of Marc Bokoff

May 10 **23 Iyar**
 Rhoda Zeiler
 Helen Frumer
 Jerry Keyes
 Jacob Kessler

May 11 **24 Iyar**
 Adelaide Gruskin
 Ida Eisenstein
 Susanne Horwitz

May 12 **25 Iyar**
 Minnie Beit
 Walter Navick —
Father of Jerry and Murray Navick
 Lee Krieger —
Aunt of Stacy Gould
 Rose Silverstein
 Arlene Meyer Cohen

May 13 **26 Iyar**
 Naomi Drelinger
 Leon Israelit

May 14 **27 Iyar**
 Howard Hirschkowitz

May 15 **28 Iyar**
 Hyman Aaron Cooper
 Gilbert Fishbone

May 16 **29 Iyar**
 Anita Goldstein
 Joseph Drelinger
 Betty Block

May 17 **1 Sivan**
 Max Korman —
Uncle of Paul Deutsch

May 18 **2 Sivan**
 William Goodman

May 20 **4 Sivan**
 Eunice Sohn —
Sister of Robert Labb
 Sam Berkman

May 21 **5 Sivan**
 Abraham Krieger —
Uncle of Stacy Gould
 Fanny Werman

May 22 **6 Sivan**
 Dr. Norman Israelite

May 23 **7 Sivan**
 Fagie Gordon —
Mother of Michael Gordon
 Fannie Furman

May 24 **8 Sivan**
 Abraham Kofman
 Toubé Ringel —
Mother of Faye Ringel
 Jennie Zurlin

May 25 **9 Sivan**
 Aaron Spandorf
 Isaac Zuckerbraun —
Grandfather of Joel Zuckerbraun

May 26 **10 Sivan**
 Ida Buss
 Jennie Feldman
 Robert McFadden —
Father of Kathleen McFadden

May 27 **11 Sivan**
 William Schwartz
 Fannie Cooper

May 28 **12 Sivan**
 Max Fishbone

May 29 **13 Sivan**
 Robert Goldstein
 Max Pevner
 Frances Lurie
 Henrietta Zuckerbraun —
Grandmother of Joel Zuckerbraun
 Samuel Weishaus
 Joseph Sadinsky
 Joseph Taffel

May 30 **14 Sivan**
 The Gejdensons
 Jacob Lurie
 Leon Krawiec —
Father in Law of Marc Kashar
 Viola Basson
 Faye Liverman

May 31 **15 Sivan**
 Barbara Bearson
 Bessie Levine
 Louis Alofsin