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IFR NEWS Sivan 5771

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Shavuot 5771

Three Tzadikim of Shavu'ot

Can We Reach the Fiftieth Gate of Understanding?

In the Torah, the holiday of Shavuot is primarily associated with its being the fiftieth and final day of the counting of the omer. Even the fact that Shavuot commemorates the day that the Torah was given to the Jewish People at Mount Sinai is essentially connected to the counting of the omer.

The Torah commands us to count fifty days of the omer. In actuality, however, we count only forty-nine days. Chassidut explains that God Himself counts the fiftieth day of the omer in our merit. What is it about the fiftieth day that precludes us from counting it ourselves?

The Fifty Gates of Understanding

The fifty days of the counting of the omer correspond to the Fifty Gates of Understanding. The first forty-nine days of the omer are days of spiritual rectification and ascent. Each day corresponds to a different aspect of the emotions of the heart which we strive to rectify in preparation for the culmination of the counting--attaining the Fiftieth Gate. This gate, however, cannot be attained in the merit of a person's Divine service. It can be revealed only by God, as it was at the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. By toiling to perfect the forty-nine attributes of our hearts in the first forty-nine days, we can merit to attain the first forty-nine, humanly-achievable gates. In the merit of this accomplishment, God then counts the fiftieth day for us and reveals to us the gift of the Fiftieth Gate. On Shavuot the light of the giving of

the Torah is revealed. On this day we can re-experience the revelation of the Fiftieth Gate and integrate this manifestation into our Divine service for the coming year.

Moses, King David and the Ba'al Shem Tov

The Lubavitcher Rebbe taught there are three souls of tzaddikim who are directly related to the holiday of Shavuot. Shavuot, the holiday of the giving of the Torah to Israel is obviously the holiday of Moses, who brought the Torah to the People of Israel. Shavuot is also the anniversary of the passing of both King David and the Ba'al Shem Tov (who was a reincarnation of King David)

The point of the inner dimension of the heart is manifest in the souls of tzaddikim. This is the point of the Fiftieth Gate, unachievable through our own Divine service. However, when we contemplate on the tzaddikim, and particularly on the three tzaddikim of Shavuot, identify with them and connect to them, we can illuminate and reveal the inner dimension of their hearts--and attempt to reveal and manifest a glimmering of the Fiftieth Gate in our own souls.

Three Levels of the Inner Dimension of the Heart

In Kabbalah and Chassidut we learn that the relation between the inner and outer dimensions of reality is the relation between the three, intellectual attributes of the soul and the seven emotional attributes of the soul. During the first forty-nine days of the omer, we toil to perfect the outer dimension

IFR

Mission Statement

The IFR is a professional organization of rabbis united by a commitment to Jewish tradition and a desire to facilitate the Jewish spiritual growth and life cycle needs of all.

IFR provides a progressive, pluralistic forum, linking member rabbis in a spirit of friendship and a sense of community.

IFR provides support for members in their professional endeavors and offers continuing education. IFR encourages professional relationships with rabbis and other rabbinic organizations.

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of our souls by striving to rectify the seven emotional attributes of the heart. On Shavuot, the fiftieth day of the omer, we strive to rectify the inner dimension of reality and of our souls. Although we cannot accomplish this through our own service, when we connect to the three tzaddikim of Shavuot we reveal in each of them one of the three intellectual attributes of the inner dimension of the soul--understanding, wisdom and knowledge.

King David--Understanding of the Heart

Our sages say that David should not actually have been vulnerable to the incident with Batsheva (and even state that whoever says that David sinned is no less than mistaken. They explain that God created the circumstances leading to this incident so that David, by personal example, would demonstrate teshuvah, repentance and return to God. David did not make excuses or claim that he did not sin. He took the rebuke of the prophet Natan to heart and returned to God from the depths of his heart. By doing so, David demonstrated to every Jew--until the arrival of the Mashiach--that no matter where he is, and no matter how severely he has transgressed, he has the strength to find God and return to Him. In the verses of the Psalms, King David movingly expresses the yearning of the heart that desires to free itself of its despair and anguish and to draw near to God.

The eternal, compelling power of teshuvah--the understanding of the heart that no matter where a Jew is spiritually, he still remains bound to God and can always return to Him--is one of the essential powers of the inner dimension of the heart of every Jew. The source of this power is in the Fiftieth Gate.

Moses--Wisdom of the Heart

Moses corresponds to the attribute of wisdom in the inner dimension of the heart. (His attribute, the entirety of the 32 Paths of Wisdom, unites with and is en clothed in the Fiftieth Gate of Understanding). Moses' appeal to God to show him His glory was actually his request to see the Fiftieth Gate. God did not fulfill Moses' request, and showed him only His back aspect, which is God's conduct of reality. The Zohar explains that although Moses did not see God's Face with his eyes, in the eye of the intellect of his heart he saw everything, including God's Face. The power to see Godliness is specifically associated with the attribute of wisdom. All the other attributes are God's conduct of reality, His back aspect. Chassidut explains, however, that God's Face is revealed only through bitul "self-nullification, the inner dimension of the attribute of wisdom and the quality epitomized by Moses.

When we connect to Moses and to his devoted service of contemplation of God, we can merit the power to see Godliness--the power to actually meet God and to see Him in the mind's eye of the inner dimension of our hearts. Furthermore, when we connect to Moses we also connect to the reason for his desire to see God. Moses desired to see God so that he could in His eyes--so that

he could love Him more and fulfill His will in the world. The inner will of the Jew to see God is replete with self-nullification to God. He wishes to minimize his own honor and to maximize the honor of Heaven (and not, God forbid, to attain a feeling of self-gratification and personal honor from the privilege of seeing God). Complete humility and self nullification--as epitomized by Moses, the most humble of men--are the only tools with which to see the inner dimension of Godliness in the heart.

The Ba'al Shem Tov--Knowledge of the Heart

The Ba'al Shem Tov would say that he came to the world in order to awaken Israel from its existential coma. He explained that the way to revive a person who has fainted is to whisper his name in his ear. When he hears his name, the yet-awake inner point of his self identification is touched, and he wakes up, said the Ba'al Shem Tov, am God's whisper in the ear of Israel. My name, Israel, is the name of the entire nation.

The Ba'al Shem Tov revealed that although Israel seemed to be limp and comatose, the heart of Israel lives. Despite Israel's slumber in the exile, its heart is awake. The nation of Israel and every individual Jew has a point of arousal to and eternal life in God.

This point is not the ability of the Jew to see Godliness, as in the point revealed by Moses. It is also not the ability to return to God from the depths of transgression, as in the point revealed by King David. The point of the Ba'al Shem Tov is the essential point of the Jew. It does not change in the loftiest of ascents or in the most precipitous of descents. It is the point in the Crown of the inner dimension of the heart. This unity with God (the attribute of knowledge) is the root of the power of wisdom to grasp Godliness, and the root of the power of understanding to return to God.

The Crown of a Good Name

On a deeper level, every point of the inner dimension of the heart is a point in the Crown. Moses corresponds to the Crown of Torah and King David corresponds to the Crown of Kingdom. The crown of the Ba'al Shem Tov (Master of the Good Name) is the ultimate crown--the Crown of a Good Name, loftier than the other crowns. In the language of the Ba'al Shem Tov, this is the Crown of Crowns.

When we connect to the David, Moses and the Ba'al Shem Tov on Shavuot, we can connect to the Crown of Crowns and re-experience a glimmer of the opening of the Fiftieth Gate in our souls.

a translated excerpt from
Harav Ginsburgh's
Hebrew booklet, "Even Yisrael"





Shavuot 5771



The Akdamut is a poem written in the 11th century by Rabbi Meir bar Yitzchak of Worms, Germany.

It is a traditional meditation honoring Shavuot found in the liturgy of Ashkenazic synagogues.

This is our humanist adaptation:

Now you, my listeners:

Be strong in your convictions

As you sit under your canopies,

And discuss the nature of knowledge

And the meaning of wisdom.

You will drink from cups of new wine.

And you will dance with the righteous.

Happy are those who believe in life,

Happy are those who never abandon hope.

Abbracci,

Francesco

Westchester Community for Humanistic Judaism..

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IFR Rabbis enjoy March 2011 Conference

Rabbis Howard Meridy and Renae Toben



Esta and husband from Micah Parker Studios



Rabbi Leonard Sarko and his presentation



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IFR Rabbis enjoy March 2011 Conference

Cantor Jerry, ESQ and Rabbi Blane

**קול הנשיאה****Kol Hanisiya**

Rabbi Suzanne H. Carter

הרבנית שושנה רחל בת מאיר הישראלית



This year marked the IFR's 11th year of existence—a group of independent thinkers and revolutionary rabbis.

IFR Conference Delray Beach, FL 2011



Rabbis Howard Meridy, Renae Toben and David Degani



Cantor Jerry, Rabbi Shael Siegel and Shosh Carter



Rabbi and Rebetzin Sarko Delray Beach, FL

Ravenous Ravens

Rabbi Frank Tamburello's column featuring Jewish Holiday Eats and Treats



And for your Shavuot dinner:

Miniature Cheesecakes

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Prepare 24 cup mini-muffin pan lined with muffin papers.

Cooking time: 15-20 minutes

24 vanilla wafers

6 oz. cream cheese, softened

3/4 cup sugar

2 eggs

1 tablespoon lemon juice

1 teaspoon vanilla

20 oz. canned pie filling

(blueberry, cherry, or peach)

1/2 cup sliced nuts, optional

Fit a vanilla wafer in the bottom of each liner. In a small bowl, beat cream cheese, sugar, eggs, lemon juice and vanilla until light and fluffy. Fill liners 2/3 full with cheese mixture, and bake until set. Remove from oven. Top each cake with a spoonful of pie filling, and 1 teaspoon nuts. Chill until ready to serve.



SYRIAN CUCUMBER-MINT SOUP & ZUCCHINI SOUFFLÉ

Low Carb, Fat Free



In Syrian cuisine, this is not usually eaten as a soup, but rather as a sauce or dressing for other foods. On the festival of Shavuot, this cool, flavorful yogurt is enjoyed served over Zucchini Soufflé.

Yield: 6 servings

- 3 small cucumbers
- 3 (8-ounce) containers plain lowfat yogurt
- 4 ounces fat-free soft white cheese
- 1/4 teaspoon white pepper (optional)
- 3 cloves garlic, peeled and pressed
- salt to taste
- 3 tablespoons fresh mint, finely chopped, or 1 1/2 tablespoons dried

Garnish: a few extra mint leaves.

Peel cucumbers, cut into tiny pieces and set aside.

In a medium bowl, using a wooden spoon, combine the yogurt, cheese, salt, garlic, pepper and mint.

Add the prepared cucumbers. Mix and correct seasoning. Garnish with more mint.

Ravenous Ravens



IFR Rabbis News & Shmooze



Rabbi Marc Ben Meir-Birth of grandchild

Rabbi Leonard Sarko, rabbinic appointment in Spring Hill, Florida



**Rifuah Shelema to:
Rabbi Marvin Pearlman
Rabbi Dr Raphael Pazo
and Susan Pazo**

**Archived IFR Board meeting minutes
can be viewed on the IFR web site @**

www.intfedrabbis.org/eilat.html

**Enter the protected portion and click
on the IFR Board minutes located on
the menu on the left side.**

German Potato Salad

1 medium head Romaine lettuce,
washed and coarsely chopped
4 whole green onions, finely chopped
1/2 cup fresh dill, finely chopped
2 medium potatoes, boiled, peeled
and diced
1/2 cup olive oil
5 tablespoons red wine or balsamic
vinegar
2 tablespoons mayonnaise
salt and pepper (fresh ground) to
taste

Garnish:

2 hard-cooked eggs, finely chopped
2 dill pickles, sliced
2 tablespoons capers

In a large bowl, combine lettuce, onions, dill
and potatoes. In a small bowl, combine oil,
vinegar, mayonnaise, salt and pepper. Mix until
smooth. Garnish with eggs, pickles and capers.
Serve chilled.

IFR DUES 2011-2012

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ship in the IFR. Please make your check
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Send your check (s) to the IFR President**

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