



Chaplaincy Services of  
Jewish Federation of Northeastern NY

The Golub Center  
184 Washington Avenue Ext  
Albany NY 12203-5306



Jewish Life Newsletter  
Jewish Federation of  
Northeastern New York

The Golub Center  
184 Washington Avenue Ext.  
Albany, NY 12203-5306  
Phone: 518.783.7800 ext. 228  
Fax: 518.783.1557  
Email:  
bmagidson@jewishfedny.org

Rabbi Beverly W. Magidson  
Director

Robert R. Kovach  
President & CEO  
Jewish Federation of NENY

Upcoming Jewish Holidays 2020-2021	
HOLIDAY	DATE
Shavuot (2 days)	Thurs. night May 28 – Sat. May 30
Rosh Hashanah (2 days)	Fri. night Sept. 18 – Sun. Sept. 20
Yom Kippur	Sun. night Sept. 27 – Mon. Sept. 28
Sukkot (7 days)	Fri. night Oct. 2 – Fri. Oct. 9
Shmini Atzeret	Fri. night Oct. 9 – Sat. Oct. 10
Simhat Torah	Sat. night Oct. 10 – Sun. Oct. 11
Hanukkah (8 days)	Thurs. night Dec. 10 – Fri. Dec. 18
Tu B'Shevat	Sun. night Feb. 9 – Mon. Feb. 10
Purim	Thurs. night Feb. 26 – Fri. Mar. 27
Passover (8 days)	Sat. night Mar. 27 – Sun. Apr. 4



Jewish Federation  
OF NORTHEASTERN NEW YORK

Chaplaincy Services of Jewish Federation of Northeastern New York

# Jewish Life Newsletter

Chaplaincy Services are made possible through a grant from Jewish Federation of NENY in cooperation with the Capital District Board of Rabbis and Jewish Family Services of NENY.

Volume XXIV No. 5

May 2020/ Sivan 5780

## Shavuot: The Time of the Giving of the Torah: Thurs. May 28 (eve.)-Sat. May 30

### The Time of the Giving of the Torah

Seven weeks after Passover, we celebrate the festival of Shavuot, which your residents will call Shavuot (Shah-VOO-us). While Passover celebrates our liberation from slavery to freedom, on Shavuot we celebrate the giving of the Torah (the Five Books of Moses) to the Jewish people. The Torah contains God's commandments (Mitzvot), which lead us Jews on a path to holiness. Therefore, **Shavuot, also called "The Time of the Giving of the Torah," marks the moment that shaped and defined the Jews as a people. The Jewish mission is to live a holy life by observing God's commandments.**

### Counting the Omer

According to the Torah (Leviticus 23:15-16), Jews are supposed to count seven weeks—a week of weeks—from Passover to Shavuot, day by day. **This is called "counting the omer."** Every night after sundown, the observant Jew counts the new day of the omer. Shavuot begins at the end of the omer period on the 50th day.

In ancient times, this was the period from the barley harvest to the wheat harvest; and on Shavuot, farmers brought their first fruits to the Temple in Jerusalem. Today, it is a time to decorate the synagogue with greens and flowers.



Here are some foods that may remind your Jewish residents that it is Shavuot time:

- ◇ Cheese blintzes with sour cream or applesauce
- ◇ Noodle kugel (pudding) with cottage cheese in it
- ◇ Cheesecake
- ◇ Borsht with sour cream

## Helping Jewish Residents Celebrate Shavuot

While Shavuot is an important holiday in the Torah and on the Jewish liturgical calendar, it is not as widely celebrated as Passover or even Hanukkah (a minor holiday in comparison). Don't be surprised if your Jewish resident does not immediately think of ways to celebrate Shavuot. Here are some ideas for celebrating that are included in the Newsletter:

- ◇ **Special foods—particularly dairy foods such as cheese blintzes** (see box on this page and recipes on page 3)
- ◇ Decorating with flowers
- ◇ Reading and discussing the Bible, especially the Book of Ruth and the Ten Commandments
- ◇ Reminiscing about confirmations, weddings, and all-night study sessions

## Inside This Issue

Dairy on Shavuot
Celebrating Shavuot
Jewish Resident Death
Local Jewish Resources
Recipes for Shavuot
Upcoming Holidays
What non-Jewish End-of-Life Workers Should Know about Jews and Judaism



Women reading a Torah

## Eating Dairy on Shavuot

It is traditional to eat dairy foods on Shavuot. Rabbinic lore suggests that the ancient Israelites ate meat before the giving of the Torah and fell asleep from the heaviness of their meal. Therefore, we eat dairy so that we can be alert and ready to receive the Torah. Another idea is that Torah is good and sweet, like milk and honey. It is possible, however, that this practice may have originated because of the abundance of dairy products at this time of the year.

**The most traditional of the food associated with Shavuot are cheese blintzes**—crepes filled with a sweetened farmer cheese. Blintzes should be

served with applesauce or sour cream. ***We recommend that you buy the frozen version from your supermarket. If it has a kosher frozen-food section, they will probably be there.*** Otherwise, Price Chopper at **1892 Central Avenue (just west of 155)** has the best selection. We have included a recipe for “blintz soufflé,” which can be made with the frozen blintzes, but they really are good on their own.

We have also included a recipe for **noodle kugel** (pudding), another traditional Shavuot dish. One last possibility is to go out and buy a **cheesecake**. That’s another Shavuot favorite!

## Celebrating Shavuot by Reminiscing

**We celebrate Shavuot with Torah study by decorating our homes with spring flowers and greenery and eating dairy foods. Your residents may have special memories like these:**

**Torah study:** Men from Orthodox backgrounds may remember staying up all night studying at a *Tikkun Layl Shavuot* (TEE-koon LAIL Shah-VOO-us), then praying the morning service at dawn, and sleeping the entire day.

**Special Readings:** On the first day of the holiday, we read the Ten Commandments in the synagogue. We also read the Book of Ruth, whose acceptance of the Torah in her own life took place at this time of the year.

**Confirmation:** Reform Jews hold Confirmation on Shavuot. Those from Reform backgrounds may have been confirmed on Shavuot. The women may remember nice parties and pretty dresses to celebrate.

**Weddings:** Some residents may have married right after Shavuot. (Weddings are prohibited for much of the omer period that precedes it.)

**Flowers and greenery:** Just as our ancestors brought their first fruits to the Temple at Shavuot time, we decorate the synagogue with flowers and greenery. **If you bring these to a resident’s room as part of his/her celebration, be sure you mention the connection.** You may bring it any time after the beginning of the Jewish month of Sivan, the month in which Shavuot falls. This year Sivan begins on Sunday, May 24.

**Study, flowers, and food are not restricted to home or synagogue. They may be used anywhere to celebrate Shavuot.**

**This year, 2020, with many challenges facing long-term-care facilities, a celebration of Shavuot could simply consist of serving cheese blintzes topped with applesauce!**

*When a Jewish resident passes away, please inform your regular visitor (Rabbi Bev, Rabbi Zoe, Rabbi Ellen, or a volunteer), even if the visitor hasn’t been there in a while.*

*Sometimes we attend funerals or pay timely condolence (shiva) calls to the family as well. During the pandemic, many funerals and shivas are being held via Zoom, and we may attend.*

*Thank you.*



## Shavuot Recipes

### Blintz Soufflé

3 boxes frozen blintzes (18 blintzes altogether)  
 ¼ pound butter or margarine  
 7 eggs  
 2 cups sour cream  
 ½ cup sugar  
 1 teaspoon vanilla  
 ½ teaspoon salt  
 ¼ cup orange juice

Melt butter or margarine in a 13” x 9” baking dish. Arrange blintzes in dish.

Beat remaining ingredients together and pour over blintzes.

Refrigerate for at least 1 hour.

Bake at 350° uncovered for 1 hour.

Serve with applesauce.

### Noodle Cheese Kugel (a Magidson family favorite)

½ pound fine noodles  
 1 pound cottage cheese  
 3 eggs  
 1 teaspoon vanilla  
 ½ cup sour cream (non-fat is ok)  
 ½ cup sugar  
 4 tablespoons margarine, reserve 2 tablespoons

Cook noodles per package instructions, drain, do not rinse. Add all the above ingredients. Pour into a well-greased 9” x 13” pan.

#### Topping:

2 tablespoons reserved margarine  
 ½ teaspoon cinnamon  
 ½ cup corn flake crumbs  
 ¼ cup sugar

Mix all together and crumble on top of kugel evenly.

Bake for 45 minutes at 350°.

## Some Important Jewish Community Resources

\*\*\*\*\*

### Jewish Funerals:

Levine Memorial Chapel  
 649 Washington Avenue  
 Albany, NY 12206

Phone: 518-438-1002

Fax: 518-438-0379

Email: [Imc649@aol.com](mailto:Imc649@aol.com)

\*\*\*\*\*

### Best Selection of Kosher (and Jewish Ethnic) Food:

Price Chopper Colonie  
 1892 Central Avenue  
 Albany, NY 12205

Phone: 518-456-9314

\*\*\*\*\*

### Local Independent Jewish Newspaper:

The Jewish World  
[Jewishworldnews.org](http://Jewishworldnews.org)

Subscriptions:

518-344-7018 or

[shelly@jewishworldnews.org](mailto:shelly@jewishworldnews.org)



Blintzes

## **Judaism 101: What non-Jewish End-of-Life Staff Workers Should Know About Jews and Judaism**

**Note in 2020:** This information is being included in awareness that those of us who work in long-term care are dealing with death in even greater numbers than usual. Although it may be difficult for actively dying residents to spend time with their loved ones, it's important to know what might have been the practice in more normal times.

- **Judaism places a very high value on human life.** This may make it particularly difficult for one to fully accept Hospice care. While the resident may intellectually understand that s/he is dying, psychologically s/he may continue to fight for life. The resident may want particularly to maintain a level of consciousness to remain in control, this is especially true for Holocaust survivors.
- **At the same time, pain and suffering do not carry a positive value.** Pain-reducing medication is definitely permitted and encouraged, even when it carries a danger to life.
- **There is no defined belief in life after death.** While some Jews believe in the hereafter, others do not. Most will tell you they just don't know. Therefore, it is inappropriate to say, "You are going to a better place."
- **Similarly, there is no one opinion about seeing loved ones.** Ask what the resident believes before stating, "You'll see your loved ones again." Seeing oneself as part of the continuum of Jewish history and tradition may be more comforting.
- **Judaism is both a religion and an ethnic culture.** Jews who say they are not religious may still respond positively to Jewish culture. Much of Jewish religious life took place at home, where it probably mixed with Eastern European Jewish culture. Yiddish (the language spoken by Jews in Eastern Europe and brought to America) may have been their first language. Stories translated from Yiddish, Yiddish music, traditional Jewish foods (e.g., gefilte fish is easily bought and soft to eat) may bring spiritual support. A *hallah* bread on Friday may be very welcome. For many Jews, commitment to Israel or social-action concerns (betterment of society) were the most important expression of their Jewish identity.
- **It's important to check the resident's personal background.** Holocaust survivors and their children may be particularly sensitive about certain issues. Elders in a family (male or female) may need to transfer "leadership" to a younger family member. Orthodox residents may be particularly modest, especially in relation to the opposite sex. Physical contact by men and women (other than one's spouse or young children) is discouraged in Orthodox practice.
- **Orthodox or very traditional Conservative patients may have special needs in observing the Sabbath or other holy days.** Ask the resident what s/he needs and how you can be helpful. Listen for hints that are not directly articulated.
- **Be aware of symbols or other items that may bring discomfort.** An offer to remove the crucifix would definitely be welcome, since most Jews don't want to offend their caregivers by requesting it. Unfortunately, it may be a reminder of past Christians' attempts to convert Jews. A German accent may remind a Holocaust survivor of traumatic events in his/her life.

(over)

- **Jewish residents may find it particularly therapeutic to resolve family issues.** Family is very important in the traditional Jewish world. Repairing broken relationships and finishing unfinished business may be very helpful.

**There is a tradition of “repenting the day before one’s death.”** There is a prayer of confession, though many Jews do not know of its existence. It may be recited by the resident or by others on his/her behalf. **There is no sacramental need to call a rabbi when someone is dying. However, a rabbinic presence, especially when the rabbi is known and trusted, may be very welcome.**

**Hospice may need to be reframed in a Jewish way.** Too often it is viewed as “giving up on life.” The Jewish prayer of healing speaks of “healing of the spirit and healing of the body.” Hospice works to heal the spirit and to bring comfort to the body.