



SHAVUOT (PENTECOST) חג שבועות

The Shavuot Holiday, which takes place 49 days after “Pesach” (on the 50th day), has a number of different names. The fact that various names are attributed to this Holiday indicates that Shavuot has various different reasons for why we celebrate it. Shavuot is one of the Three Pilgrimage Holidays (**Shlosha Regalim** שלושה רגלים): **Sukkot, Pesach, Shavuot**. On these high holidays the Children of Israel went to the Temple in Jerusalem. The term “Shlosha Regalim” means that three times a year the Israelites went by foot to Jerusalem to the Temple Mount.

The Hebrew word “**Chag**” means Holiday or feast.

The 8 most well-known names of the Holiday are: **Chag Shavuot** (the Holiday of the weeks), **Chag Shvuot** (the Holiday of the oaths), **Chag HaBikurim** (the Holiday of the first fruits), **Atzeret** (gathering, rally), **Chag HaChamishim** (the Holiday of the fifty days), **Yom Hakhel** (the day of the convention, the day of the gathering), **Chag Matan Torah** (the day of the giving of the Torah), **Chag HaKatsir** (the Holiday of the harvest).

Before we proceed with the explanation of each origin of this holiday, one more comment might be helpful as a general introduction. The Hebrew name ‘Shavuot’, has a Hebrew spelling, which integrates more than one meaning. First of all, the name literally means “weeks”. It stands for the date in which the Holiday takes place, namely 7 weeks after “Pesach”. The same letters in Hebrew can also be pronounced as “**Shvuot**”. Then, due to the difference of pronunciation, these same letters

mean “**oaths**”. In the spelling of the word ‘Shavuot’ there is also the three-letter root, which reads as a separate word; “**Sheva** שבוע”, which means **seven**.

The first letter of the word ‘Shavuot’ (“**shin**” ש) is also the first letter of one of the names of God in the Bible, namely “**Shadai**” (שדי). The last letter of the name ‘Shavuot’ is the last letter of the Hebrew Alphabet (“**tav**” ת) – and is at the same time the first letter of the word “**Torah**” (תורה). This indicates that already in the name ‘Shavuot’ (“weeks”), it is hinted that at the end of the 7 weeks, the Torah was given. Also the number 7 is included in the word ‘Shavuot’: שבועות.

CHAG HASHAVUOT (FEAST OF THE WEEKS)

The Holiday we celebrate on the 6th of the month of Sivan, which means 7 weeks after “Pesach”, is called “Chag HaShavuot”. The name is derived from the book of **Deuteronomy**, chap. 16, verses 9 – 11. In verse 10 it is explicitly called “the Feast of Weeks”.

Furthermore, we learn from the above-mentioned verse 11, that all classes or social groups, should



celebrate this feast in the spirit of social equality. “and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite who is in your town, and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your midst, in the place where the Lord your God chooses to establish His name.” (NASB)

The preceding verse 10 calls for a “freewill offering”. Everyone should strive to be as generous and as good as they can.

CHAG HASHVUOT (FEAST OF THE OATHS)

This name is based on the book of **Exodus**. In chap. 24, verse 3 it says; “Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do!”” (NASB) In verse 7 we read: “Then he took the book of the covenant and read *it* in the hearing of the people; and they said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!” These statements are considered the oaths which the children of Israel took before the LORD. In verse 8 Moses confirmed the mutual covenant and said “Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.”

After these mutual declarations Moses went up on the mountain and stayed there 40 days and 40 nights. We know that after God gave him the **two Tablets of the Ten Commandments**, God told Moses that the people of Israel down below were sinning. He referred to what Moses later saw as the dancing around the Golden Calf. God was furious, and actually offered to annihilate the people, but Moses beseeched God, and appeased him by reminding him what the nations would say if God exterminated the nation he had liberated from Egypt. By that merciful act of forgiving, God actually reaffirmed his previous promises to the patriarchs.

In reference to all these above-mentioned oaths and promises from the side of the Israelites and of God, the Holiday is named as **The Feast of the Oaths: “Chag HaShvuot”**.

Chag Matan Torah (The Festival of the Giving of the Torah)

The name “**Chag Matan Torah**” is not quoted from the Torah (the Five Books of Moses). Nevertheless, this name is one of the most well-known names of this feast. The important

Rabbis of the Talmud Era based this name on passages from the Bible. Among those are the following passages: In the Book of **Exodus** in chap. 19, verse 9, God told Moses that he would announce his message to the people of Israel. In **Exodus** chap. 24, verses 4 – 8 the event of signing the covenant between God and Israel is described. (The first time the Ten Commandments were quoted was in the Book of **Exodus**, chap. 20.) Also, in the Book of **Deuteronomy**, chap. 4, verses 9 – 13 the event of the giving of the Ten Commandments is recalled by Moses. Then, in **Deuteronomy** chap. 5, verses 6 – 21 the Ten Commandments are quoted again. And in **Deuteronomy**, chap. 5, verses 22, 23 the Torah tells again of the giving of the Ten Commandments.

So, the Rabbis of the **Talmud** had sufficient Torah sources to justify the naming of the Holiday as “**Chag Matan Torah**”.

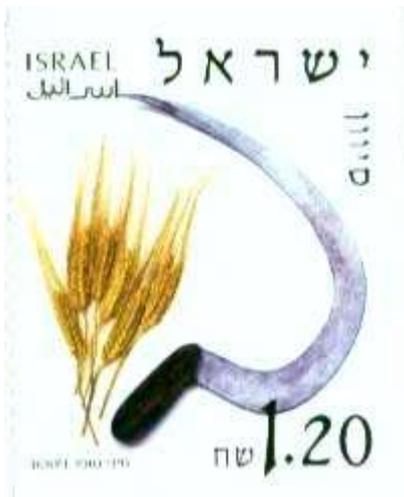
The **Ten Commandments** as they are called in English, actually contain 14 commandments. In Hebrew the Torah refers to the announcement by God at Mount Sinai with the words “**Aseret haDevarim**”. Please pay attention that in Hebrew the word “**Devarim**” does not mean commandments. “Devarim” (or “**Dibrot**” – same word – but in feminine form) means “outspoken statements”, or “the Spoken”. One may understand the Ten Commandments as the Ten Spoken (statements). We find this formulation three times in the original Hebrew Torah: In **Exodus**, chapter 34, verse 28, in **Deuteronomy**,

chapter 4, verse 12 (in English, NASB, it is verse 13), and in **Deuteronomy**, chapter 10, verse 4. The post biblical Rabbis modified the Hebrew words “**Aseret haDevarim**” to a more common Hebrew “**Aseret HaDibrot**”.

Concerning the Ten Commandments, or as we now more correctly call them “**Aseret HaDevarim**” it is worth noting, that they were actually communicated in the Torah five times: The first time was the auditory or acoustic



auditory or acoustic



announcement (see **Exodus**, chapter 20, verse 18), at Mount Sinai, when the whole people of Israel were present. Then, Moses brought down **the first two stone tablets**, which he had to destroy when he saw the

Children of Israel dancing around the Golden Calf. Later Moses went up again and brought **the second two tablets of stone** with the **“Aseret HaDevarim”**. Therefore, since we have in the Book of

Exodus in chapter 20, the text of the **“Aseret HaDevarim”**, and in **Deuteronomy**, chapter 5, again, the **“Aseret HaDevarim”**, **all together, we have five times of the “Aseret HaDevarim”** being communicated. We also know that there are a number of text differences between their formulations in **Exodus**, chapter 20 compared with **Deuteronomy**, chapter 5.

Chag HaKatsir (The Holiday of the Harvest)

A central aspect of the Shavuot Holiday is the agricultural context of the harvest period. During the Bible time, and well into the post biblical **Mishna** and **Talmud** Era, the vast majority of the population of the land of Israel was directly dependent on agriculture, and the harvest. In the land of Israel, the wheat and barley harvest, which takes place in the month of Sivan, represents the agricultural harvest in general. In the Book of **Exodus** in chap. 34, in verse

22 we read “Celebrate the festival of Weeks with

the first fruits of the wheat harvest and the festival of ingathering at the turn of the year.” Therefore, the Holiday of Shavuot is also called the Festival of the Harvest, **“Chag HaKatsir”**.

Yom HaBikkurim (Day of the First Fruits)

The name of the Holiday as **“Yom HaBikurim”** is based on the explicit text in the Book of **Deuteronomy**, chapter 26, verses 1 – 4. There it says; “Take some of the Firstfruits of all that you produced from the soil of the land. The LORD your God is giving you and put them in a basket...” (NASB)



This “Mitzvah” (Commandment), refers only to **The Seven Species (The 7 “Minim” שבעת המינים)** of the Land of Israel. In **Deuteronomy**, chapter 8, verses 7 – 8 we read; “For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills. A land of wheat and barley, of wine and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey.” Honey stands for dates, the fruit of the palm trees. The description of the dates as honey results from the phenomenon which the Children of Israel saw when they observed the palm trees when the dates were so ripe that the juice was dripping from the trees. The colour of the juice of the dates resembles the colour of honey. It is also as sweet as honey. Therefore it says in the Book of **Deuteronomy**, chapter 6 verse 3 and chapter 31, verse 20 that the Land of Israel is: “a land flowing with milk and honey”.

Chag Atzeret (The feast of the ingathering of the people)

The word **“Atzeret”** is one of the names for the event of the ingathering of the people of Israel. See in the **Talmud** “Massechet (treatise) **“Rosh HaShanah”**” (New Year), chapter 1, verse 2. In the Torah, we read of the instruction for such an **“Atzeret”** on the 7th day

of **“Chag HaMatzot”** – The Holiday of the Unleavened Bread (nowadays the whole week is called “Pesach”, even though in the Torah only the first day is called **“Pesach”**). The other Holiday at the end of which the **“Atzeret”** is convened, is **Sukkot (Tabernacles)**.

Based on these two Torah instructions, the post biblical Rabbis deduced that during the third pilgrimage Holiday, namely **“Shavuot”**, the ingathering called **“Atzeret”** should also take place.

Another argument for naming the Holiday **“Atzeret”**, was that just like during the other two pilgrimage Festivals, in Shavuot all the people also came to the Temple. The pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem reminds us of the unique event when the whole people of Israel stood before Mount Sinai.



Photo: Zvi Katsir, **Kibbuz Netzer Sereni**, Alon.

Chag HaChamishim (The Festival of the Fifty)

During the time of the second temple, it was customary to call the Shavuot Holiday **“Chag HaChamishim”**, because it took place in the 50th day after **“Pesach”**. It is on the day after the 7 weeks of the Counting of the Omer from the first day of Pesach were completed, that the Shavuot Holiday took place. This name is based on the book of **Leviticus** (“Vayikra”), chapter 23, verses 15 – 17. In verse 16 we read “You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh sabbath. Then you shall present a new grain offering to the LORD.”

The name **“Chag HaChamishim”** was also used by the seventy Rabbis who translated the Torah to what is called the Septuagint. (This translation to Greek was made in the years 250 – 100 BCE.)

The number 50 also has a special meaning as the year of **Jubilee**. The Jubilee year is the 50th year after seven times of the **“Shmita”** year. The Shmita year is the seventh year during which the land of Israel must rest. So, no agricultural production is permitted on the soil within the Land of Israel.



Yom Hakhel (The day of convening the nation)

The special name, **“Hakhel”**, for the Shavuot Holiday, is based on **Deuteronomy**, chapter 4, verse 10. This special convening of the people of Israel should remind of the special unifying ingathering at the Mount of Sinai, when Israel received as one people, the Ten Commandments. That occasion was the only case in the Torah in which the text speaks for all the people of Israel in singular form: “Wa yichan sham Israel neged haHar”, “ויחן שם ישראל נגד” (Exodus 19, 2). “When they set out from Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai... And there Israel camped in front of the mountain”.

THE NUMBER SEVEN IS OF UNIQUE IMPORTANCE SINCE THE CREATION

Rabbi **Zvi David Hoffmann** has shown, that the Jewish holidays of **“Rosh HaShanah”** (the New Year) and **Yom Kippur** (the Day of Atonement) are directly related to the unique significance of the number seven in the Torah. The 7th day of the week, the **Shabbat** (the Sabbath) reminds of the week of the Creation by God. The **“Shmita”** year, the 7th year, is the year of rest for the soil in the Land of Israel. **“Rosh HaShanah”**, is the beginning of each year as well as, therefore, the basis for the calculation of the 7th year, the **“Shmita”** year. The **“Shmita”** year reminds that the land belongs to the LORD. Furthermore, after 7 times of the **“Shmita”** year (7 x 7) comes the **“Yovel” (Jubilee)** year, which is the 50th year. The Jubilee year is crucial in

the laws settling the state of ownership of land parcels in the land of Israel. The "Yovel" year is proclaimed on Yom Kippur and not on Rosh Hashana. The idea is to remind Israel of God's ownership of the land. In the Jubilee year people who lost their land due to debts can get their property back under certain conditions.

The number 7 is also of special importance concerning other major Jewish holidays from the Torah: **Sukkot** (Tabernacles) lasts for 7 days. It is one of the three major pilgrimage holidays, in which the Israelites went to the Temple in Jerusalem to celebrate. Since Jerusalem is at an elevation of ca. 860 meters in the mountains, the pilgrimage was perceived, and referred to, as holidays of ascendance, both geographically and spiritually. Also, the pilgrimage holiday of "**Pesach**", is related to the number 7. It takes place in the month of Nissan. The month of Nissan is considered in the Torah as one of the four dates which are each called a new year. (Explanations follow below under the specific Holidays.) The first day of the holiday is the actual "Pesach" Holiday according to the book of **Exodus**. It is followed by the week called in the Torah "**Chag HaMatzot**" (the Feast of Unleavened Bread). Nowadays people call all the 7 days of "Pesach", and Chag HaMatzot the "Pesach Holiday". Seven weeks after "Pesach", the Shavuot Holiday (Pentecost) takes place. During the 7 weeks counted from "Pesach" to "Shavuot" the daily special counting, called "**Sefirat HaOmer**" (the counting of the Omer), is conducted. The Omer is a biblical measure of a barley quantity which is relevant for a sacrificial offering. (One Omer is ca. 3,64 Liters).

The holidays „**Rosh HaShanah**“, **Yom Kipur** and **Sukkot** take place in the month of Tishrey, which is the 7th month of the year. The year (of the kings) begins biblically in the month of Nissan. The pilgrimage holiday Sukkot takes place in the 7th month after "Pesach". (Note: "Pesach" is in Nissan, which is one of the four Jewish dates called a New Year.)

In Jerusalem there are 7 holidays defined as non-working holidays: 2 days in "Pesach" (at the beginning and at the end), 1 day in Shavuot, 1 day in „Rosh HaShanah“ (1 day was during the Temple time and only in the city of Jerusalem. We know that „Rosh HaShanah“ is celebrated for 2 days outside of Jerusalem. Today, in Jerusalem as well „Rosh HaShanah“ is celebrated for 2 days. Further details see below under the holiday of „Rosh HaShanah“.), 1 day on Yom Kipur, one day Sukkot and 1 day on

Shemini Atzereth at the end of Sukkot. Total: 7 days.

PRAYERS AND TRADITIONS DURING THE SHAVUOT-FEAST READING THE SCROLL OF RUTH – A FAMOUS TRADITION OF THE SHAVUOT FEAST.

One of the characteristic traditions of the Shavuot Holiday is the reading and learning of the Scroll of **Ruth** from the Bible. There are a number of reasons for this custom:

* The date of the 6th of the month of Sivan in the Hebrew calendar, **when the Shavuot Holiday takes place, is also the birthday of King David as well as the date he died.** King David is a descendant of Ruth. This is a good reason to study the family tree and its special message for the future.

Ruth said to Naomi "Your God is my God". This statement became famous. Ever since, this statement is considered as the declaration by Ruth signifying her conversion to Judaism.

Shavuot is the Holiday of the Giving of the Torah. The rabbinic teachings of the Mishna and Talmud (the oral Torah) explained that all the souls of the people of Israel of all



generations, including the souls of all converts to Judaism, in generations to come, were spiritually present at Mount Sinai during the monumental event when God announced the **Ten Commandments** (“**Asseret HaDevarim**”). Ruth was a convert to Judaism, and reading the Scroll of Ruth reminds us, both of the giving of the Torah, and of Ruth and her descendent David, and the future coming of the Messiah.

Therefore, **Chag Shavuot** being “**Chag Matan Torah**”, is an excellent occasion to read and study the Scroll of Ruth, as well as the Ten Commandments. It is an important occasion to demonstrate the equality of converts with all the people of Israel.

The events described in the Scroll of Ruth took place during the time of the harvest of the field. Chag Shavuot is also called “**Chag HaKatsir**”. The reading and learning of the circumstances of the Story of Ruth provide a special illustration of that biblical time.

* Another interesting reason for reading the Scroll of Ruth during the “Chag Matan Torah”, the Holiday of the Giving of the Torah, is directly rooted in the numbers of the Torah Laws. Rabbinical teachings explain that Ruth, being originally a gentile, was already under the seven Noachide laws. **At Mount Sinai the Jewish tradition counts 606 Jewish “Mitzvot” given to Israel. Together 606 and the Seven Noachide Laws make the total of 613 “Mitzvot” (תרי”ג מצוות) (commandments / laws) of the whole Torah.** Hence, there is a relevant connection between the Scroll of Ruth and “Chag Matan Torah”.

* The unique story of Ruth in the Scroll of Ruth, is a touching illustration of the biblical Hebrew terms “**Chessed**” חסד (**grace, mercy**) and “**Tzedakah**” צדקה (**charity, justice**). Reading and learning the message of the Scroll of Ruth suits perfectly the central ideas of “Chag Matan Torah”. In the Scroll of Ruth, we read about the charity done by Boaz and how this “Tzedakah” reached Ruth. Ruth herself personifies the implementation of “Tzedakah” in life. When Ruth stood loyally by her poor mother-in-law, Naomi, who was a widow, and collected the rest of the harvest in the corner of the field for her, Ruth did this without expecting a material reward for it. Ruth was not only unexpectedly rewarded with a noble husband, Boaz, but became the mother of a family out of which the people of Israel were later blessed

with **King David**, and the wonderful Psalms he wrote. Ruth and David are also traditionally the tree out of which a “**Netzer**” (a shoot, or branch, or a scion) will come out of in the future. In the Book of **Isaiah**, chapter 11, verse 1 – 2 we read “There a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse (**Yishai**), a branch from his roots will bear fruit. The spirit of the LORD will rest on him.”



In Israel, a kibbutz founded by 18 Shoah-survivors in 1948, was named with this symbolic term of **Isaiah: Kibbutz Netzer Sereni**. The name also commemorates **Enzo Sereni**, a Jewish paratrooper of the **Jewish Brigade** of the British forces fighting Nazi-Germany. Sereni jumped over former Yugoslavia to try to rescue Jews from the Holocaust. But he was caught and transported to the notorious Dachau Concentration Camp near Munich, where he was executed on Nov. 18th, 1944.



* A further special reason for reading the Scroll of Ruth during the Holiday of the Giving of the Torah is that in the Scroll of Ruth we learn the immense importance of carefully paying attention to the exact and accurate reading of the Torah text. Here is the essence of the lesson: In the Torah we read in **Deuteronomy**, chapter 23, verse 4 in the Hebrew original “**Lo javo Amoni uMoavi biCehal HASHEM לא יבוא עמוני ומואבי בקהל השם**”. In English we read (in the NASB) in **Deuteronomy**, chapter 23, verse 3 “No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the LORD”. What is special in the Hebrew formulation lies in the fact, that in Hebrew grammar the word “Moavi” (**מואבי**) **refers unmistakably only to a man**, since it is unequivocally the masculine form. Based on this sentence of the Torah, Boaz went to the Rabbi gathering of his city to ask for the permission for his wending with Ruth in spite of the fact that she was a Moabitess. He argued, and the Rabbis and all the citizens unanimously agreed that the Torah restriction in **Deuteronomy**, chapter 23, verse 4 (in Hebrew) spoke only of Moabite men. Therefore, the restriction did not apply on Moabite women. For such a restriction relating to female Moabitess, the word in the Torah would have one more Hebrew letter (“Hei” ה) making the word “Moaviah” (**מואביה**). Which would undoubtedly be a female Moabitess.

Thanks to this wonderful example of accurate reading, Boaz and the Rabbis and his fellow citizens reached the correct interpretation of the Torah text. Thanks to this conclusion, **Boaz could marry Ruth** and Israel was blessed with later having **King David**.

The Yizkor Memorial Prayer

After the Torah reading and the reading of the Haftara, during the morning ceremony of the Shavuot Holiday in the Synagogue – for which in orthodox Synagogues at least a “**Minyan**”, a gathering of at least 10 grown up men (over 13 years of age) is required – a special prayer in memoriam of the souls of relatives who passed away or were murdered in the **Shoah** takes place. Before this prayer begins, all children and persons whose parents are still alive, are requested to leave the Synagogue for the short duration of the prayer. It is customary that a person praying the “**Yizkor**” prayer, makes a commitment to donate for a charitable purpose (“**Tzedakah**”). Due to religious restrictions, the payment itself is made

only after the holiday. The special “**Yizkor**” Prayer takes place during the three pilgrimage holidays: at **Shmini Atzeret** (ending the Sukkot Holiday, Tabernacles), on the 7th day of “**Chag HaMazot**” (usually called “**Pesach**”, even though actually only the first day is called “**Pesach**” in the Torah in the book of **Exodus**), and on the **Shavuot** Holiday, which takes place 50 days after “**Pesach**”.

Why is it customary in Shavuot to eat no meat and focus on dairy products?

One of the most well-known traditions of the Shavuot Holiday is that all the meals during this holiday do not include meat. For the most part, people eat only milk products. Fish is considered neutral. Therefore, it can be integrated in the Shavuot menu.

The original reason for this custom is related to **the sin of the Golden Calf**. Since the Shavuot Holiday celebrates the oral announcement of the **Ten Commandments**, the event of the sin of the Golden Calf is closely connected to it. In order to try to avoid reminding God of the Golden Calf at the time of this Holiday, neither calf meat nor any kind of meat is included in the festive meals.

A further reason for avoiding any kind of meat in the Shavuot Holiday, which is also the “**Matan Torah**” Holiday, is to prevent the People of Israel from risking any mistake or any misunderstanding during the preparations of the holiday meals. For this purpose, meat is completely avoided. In this way, one may avoid committing any sin of improperly handling the requirements derived from the explicit Torah command “Do not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk.” (**Exodus**, 23, 19 – NIV).

In modern Israel, the custom of avoiding meat and focusing only on dairy products during all Holiday meals, evolved into the practice of marketing an incredible variety of milk products. Some comedians go so far as to ironically ask whether the dairy producers had good contacts with the rabbis who defined these restrictions... One should remember that during the 40 years when the children of Israel went through the Sinai desert, they did not have this dilemma because they were blessed with the daily **Manna** provided to them by the Lord. The actual task of strictly separating between meat and milk became relevant only after the Israelites entered the Promised Land of Israel, under the

leadership of **Joshua** (1273 BCE), because there they were no longer provided with the miracle of the daily Manna.

Tikun Leil Shavuot (“The Reparation Night of Shavuot”)

As we have already noted, Shavuot (Pentecost) is also called “Chag Matan Torah”, reminding of the Announcement of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai. In the Torah, in the book of **Exodus**, chap. 19, we read that Moses had to wake up the Israelites in the morning prior to the momentous event of the Announcement of the Ten Commandments. Since this shows a shameful lack of appropriate excitement prior to this historic event, ever since then, the people of Israel have been trying to make up for it. It has become a central custom and tradition of the “Matan Torah Holiday” to spend the whole night, at the beginning of the Holiday, reading and learning the Torah and the whole Bible until dawn. By this, the people of Israel try not only to compensate for not rising early on that famous morning at Mount Sinai, but also to make sure that one is awake at sunrise. This also reminds of Abraham’s eagerness to obey God, when he rose up early to the binding of Isaac.: **Genesis**, 22, verse 3 “And Abraham rose up early in the morning”

The Hebrew name “**Tikun Leil Shavuot**” indicates that the Israelites are aware of the mistake and are actively making an effort to avoid repeating the mistake and to add to the sense of atonement through additional Bible study. For the purpose of the night-long study, special books were compiled. In these books are elements / passages from all chapters of the Torah (The five books of Moses). Special chapters, like the Story of the Creation (“**Bereshit**”) and the Ten Commandments, are quoted at full length. Then, all books of the Bible are represented by famous paragraphs from each book. From a few specific books, complete chapters are quoted. For example; the extraordinary metaphorical description of the heavenly palace and the Throne of God written by Ezekiel.

As mentioned above, due to the fact that **the date of the Shavuot Holiday is both the birthday of King David, as well as the day he died**, the full text of the Scroll of Ruth is read during the night-long study. By this reading of the Scroll of Ruth, **a tribute is paid both to David and to Ruth**, and everyone is reminded again of the divine mercy of giving the Torah to Israel and the merciful behaviour of Ruth toward Naomi, and of Boaz towards Ruth.

During the first hours, the people present each read a chapter or a passage so that all are active (and do not fall asleep...), and at this stage no explanations or discussions take place. The idea is first of all to make sure that the group will manage to loudly read the elements from the whole Bible. Including the full text of the Scroll of Ruth. This custom has a very special social aspect: by letting everyone just read, all participants are equal. The scholars and the more knowledgeable Bible students do not dominate the conversation. It is important as a motivation for everyone to join without hesitation because of less experience in Bible studies.

The social integration aspect becomes even more relevant in modern Israel, because many new immigrants came to the country, sometimes having less experience in group Bible studies. It is very nice to observe how tolerant the group is, when a new immigrant – so called “Ole Chadash” – (for example from Russia or from Ethiopia) may sometimes read the unique and rare biblical words a bit slower, since some of these words are not often used in everyday modern Hebrew. If and when the whole compilation of the representative texts of all Bible books and the complete Scroll of Ruth are read, then discussions about the content may take place. Of course, the Rabbi and/or the participants may intercede in order to clarify short questions, as long as the flow of the reading is not substantially interrupted.

For the long night of the “Tikun”, many Synagogues arrange a big table around which the group gathering can sit together, like at the family table. Some families or groups of friends organize the same night-long Bible reading, even outside the synagogue. Food (of course no meat ...) and drinks are provided free of charge. The culinary aspect has two main purposes: 1. To make sure that all remain awake.... and 2. Here again a social aspect serves to remind of the spirit of “**Tzedakah**” (charity and justice), which is a central message of the Scroll of Ruth. So, all poor people know that they may join the table and eat and drink as much as they choose. In this night it is irrelevant whether they are permanent Synagogue visitors. Everyone is equal at the Bible learning table, and has equal access to food and drink, and can read from the Bible. This reading does not require the knowledge of the special melody customary among Jews from different countries, as is required by the Torah reading in the morning Torah readings on Mondays, Thursdays and Sabbaths. Often, at the beginning of such an evening, some Rabbis may even skip mentioning who donated the food.

