

Rabbi Lewis' message for Summer 2005

The holiday of Shavuot falls in the middle of June this year, “late” by our secular calendar. Shavuot marks the conclusion of our patient counting of the omer, begun on the second day of Pesach and continued for fifty days. At last Sinai is reached as the Jewish people anticipate zman matan Torateinu, the time of the giving of our Torah.

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotsk asked, “Why do we say on Shavu’ot ‘the time or the giving of our Torah,’ and not ‘the time of the receiving of our Torah?’” And he answered: “Because the giving was at Mount Sinai, while the receiving of the Torah is constant: Every time and every moment that a person studies Torah is the time of its receiving.”

The whole purpose of our Jewish Center is the study of Torah in its broadest sense; again and again, we honor Judaism by living the words of Torah. One of the highlights of the Shabbaton was seeing our own members come to the bimah and read Torah and Haftarah. As each person read, I felt like Torah was being “received” anew. In fact, that entire Shabbat celebration felt like Torah was being received over and over again as we prayed and sang (and what music!) together. Our ancestors were with us in our sanctuary as we stood with them at Sinai. While the Shabbaton honored a milestone in my rabbinic career, I felt like it honored our entire congregation. It reminded us of what we are capable of.

May the inspiration of that one Shabbat carry over into a future full of promising plans for our congregation. I am grateful both to those who came before us and to those who continue to do the work today, all those who planned a wonderful celebration and all those who participated. Hazak hazak v’nit - hazek; may we be strong and may we continued to be strengthened.

May the receiving of Torah always be constant.

Rabbi Ellen J. Lewis

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