



WELCOMING
TEMPLE BETH-EL, BROWNSVILLE
TEMPLE BETH EL, CORSICANA
AND IRVING HAVURAH

ISRAEL INDEPENDENCE DAY

*Beginning Tuesday evening, April 28
(See Page 5)*



THE STATE IS BORN Friday, May 14, 1948, the Tel Aviv Museum of Art. At 4 p.m. - eight hours before the termination of the British Mandate in what was then Palestine - the members of the People's Council and Executive and invited leaders gathered in the museum hall. They listened with emotion as David Ben-Gurion, head of the People's Council, the Zionist Executive and the Jewish Agency, declared the creation of the State of Israel.

Jewish Federation program (*See Page 6*):

JOIN A WORLDWIDE
VIRTUAL CELEBRATION
OF ISRAEL



4.29
1PM

jewishtgether.org/YomHaatzmaut

Calendar

ONLINE SERVICES

Live at [facebook.com/frank.joseph.9041](https://www.facebook.com/frank.joseph.9041)

Services are recorded and available afterward on YouTube (search for Rabbi Frank Joseph)

Gates of Prayer will be used for all the services on this calendar. If you prefer a different prayerbook, previously recorded services available on YouTube use different books.

APRIL

28 (Tuesday) Yom HaAtzmaut service, 6 p.m.

MAY

- 1 Kabbalat Shabbat service, 6 p.m.
- 2 Shabbat service, 10 a.m.
- 3 Children's Service 10 a.m.
followed by Shacharit service, about 10:30 a.m.

- 8 Kabbalat Shabbat service, 6 p.m.
- 9 Shabbat service, 10 a.m.
- 10 Children's Service 10 a.m.
followed by Shacharit service, about 10:30 a.m.

- 15 Kabbalat Shabbat service, 6 p.m.
- 16 Shabbat service, 10 a.m.
- 17 Children's Service 10 a.m.
followed by Shacharit service, about 10:30 a.m.

- 22 Kabbalat Shabbat service, 6 p.m.
- 23 Shabbat service, 10 a.m.
- 24 Children's Service 10 a.m.
followed by Shacharit service, about 10:30 a.m.

- 28 (Thursday) Erev Shavuot Festival Service, 6 p.m.
- 29 (Friday) Shavuot Festival Service, 10 a.m.
- 29 Kabbalat Shabbat/Shavuot Evening
service, 6 p.m.
- 30 Shabbat/Shavuot Festival Service including
Yizkor, 10 a.m.
- 31 Children's Service 10 a.m.
followed by Shacharit service, about 10:30 a.m.



Praying with the Barrios family!

SPRING HOLIDAYS

Yom HaZikaron (Israeli Memorial Day)

Beginning Monday evening, April 27

A day commemorating the soldiers who have fallen fighting for Israel's independence and defending its security.

Yom HaAtzmaut (Israeli Independence Day)

Beginning Tuesday evening, April 28

Celebrates the independence of the Modern State of Israel.

Lag B'Omer

Beginning Monday evening, May 11

The holiday that marks the 33rd day of the 49-day "Omer" period between Passover and Shavuot.

Yom Yerushalayim

Beginning Thursday evening, May 21

The most recent addition to the Hebrew calendar commemorates the reunification of Jerusalem under Jewish sovereignty in 1967.

Shavuot

Beginning Thursday evening, May 28

The celebration of the giving of the Torah to the Jewish people, also known as the Festival of First Fruits.





FROM THE RABBI

Shalom,

One of the most meaningful mitzvot for me is the mitzvah of the counting of the Omer. The Omer is the 49-day period beginning on the second night of Passover, when we count each night until we begin observing the Biblical holiday of Shavuot.

In his book *Angel For Shabbat*, Rabbi Marc D. Angel recounts a story I'd like to share with you. Although the particular details are different for each of us, we can all relate to this particular experience. Rabbi Angel writes, "We had a neighbor, an elderly widow, who was vibrant, intelligent, and active. As she grew older, she became increasingly forgetful. Her condition gradually worsened to the point where she needed fulltime help at home.

"One day, several of her grandchildren came to visit her. They brought tape recorders and notepads. They wanted to know more about her life story. They asked her questions, but she only gave vague or confused replies. First she told them she grew up in the Bronx and later said she grew up in Brooklyn. She couldn't remember names, dates, or places. The grandmother had lived well into her 90s, but the grandchildren had never found time to ask her their questions or to listen carefully to her stories. Now, when her memory was impaired, it was too late. All of her stories, wisdom, and adventures were locked in her mind and were forever inaccessible to them. They must have asked themselves: 'Why did we wait so long before asking her our questions?' Now they would never have the opportunity to know her answers.

"When people suffer the loss of a loved one, they often ask: Why didn't I spend more time, why wasn't I more attentive, why didn't I listen better? When people suffer a breakdown in their relationships, they often ask: Why didn't I give more time and more effort to the relationship? Why did I assume that everything would just go on forever?

"In relationships, small things are often the biggest things: kindness, attentiveness, giving extra time and respect, never taking others for granted. To maintain good relationships, one needs to feel a sense of urgency: The relationship needs to be renewed every day. If we let even one day slip by, we may lose everything."

Rabbi Angel is right on target. This is why I believe the mitzvah of counting the Omer is so important. By counting each day of the 49-day period, we are forced to focus on the truth that every day counts. We live our lives most days taking everyone and everything for granted, and then events come upon us and we realize that today, this moment, is all we really have. In a moment's notice, it can all be over and gone.

This year, it is especially significant to count the Omer. By focusing on each day, by actually counting it out, we come to sense the importance of each day. We then hopefully learn that every day counts, every day matters. Each day is important and cannot be taken for granted. None of us knows how the future will unfold; we only know what we can do NOW.

If there is something we would like to express to our loved ones but for some reason we have delayed, let us express it NOW. If we are estranged from anyone with whom we would like to reconcile, now is the time to reconnect. If there is some charitable act we would like to do on behalf of someone, now is the time.

Continued on Page 4

Thank You

Donations to the Harlingen Temple General Fund

Julian Reyes

Abby Warshowsky

Eulalia Shoultz

Richard Fourzan

Andreas Holzenburg, in honor of Passover



FROM THE RABBI, *continued from Page 3*

The Omer period is an appropriate time to remind ourselves of the extreme importance of each day. We can make each day count by devoting proper time to our loved ones, our friends, our neighbors, and to those activities that strengthen ourselves, our relationships, our community, our society — and our faith. We cannot wait for tomorrow or next week or next year. Life must be lived each day. As we say, we count our days to make our days count. Right now, as I am writing this article, we are currently fulfilling the mitzvah of *p'kuach nefesh* — doing all we can to save lives by sheltering in place.

Let us continue to shelter in place. Let us continue to practice social distancing. And let us internalize the beautiful words from Psalm 118:24 — THIS IS THE DAY THE L-RD HAS MADE; LET US REJOICE AND BE GLAD IN IT!!

Laurie and I look extremely forward to our next opportunity to see everyone. You are all wonderful blessings in our lives, for which we are daily grateful.

Shalom U'Rahcha!
Stay safe and healthy.

Rabbi Frank Joseph



Our Passover Seder looked a little different this year.

ISRAEL INDEPENDENCE DAY

Beginning Tuesday evening, April 28

From My Jewish Learning

Israel's Independence Day is celebrated on the fifth day of the month of Iyar, which is the Hebrew date of the formal establishment of the State of Israel, when members of the "provisional government" read and signed a Declaration of Independence in Tel Aviv. The original date corresponded to May 14, 1948.

Most of the Jewish communities in the Western world have incorporated this modern holiday into their calendars, but some North American Jewish communities hold the public celebrations on a following Sunday in order to attract more participation. In the State of Israel it is a formal holiday, so almost everyone has the day off.

Yom Ha'atzmaut in Israel is always preceded by Yom Hazikaron, Israel's Memorial Day for the fallen soldiers. The message of linking these two days is clear: Israelis owe their independence — the very existence of the state — to the soldiers who sacrificed their lives for it.

THE "SWITCH"

The official "switch" from Yom Hazikaron to Yom Ha'atzmaut takes place a few minutes after sundown, with a ceremony on Mount Herzl in Jerusalem in which the flag is raised from half staff (due to Memorial Day) to the top of the pole. The president of Israel delivers a speech of congratulations, and soldiers representing the Army, Navy, and Air Force parade with their flags. In recent decades this small-scale parade has replaced the large-scale daytime parade, which was the main event during the 1950s and '60s. The evening parade is followed by a torch lighting (hadlakat masuot) ceremony, which marks the country's achievements in all spheres of life.

Other than the official ceremonies, Israelis celebrate Yom Ha'atzmaut in a variety of ways. In the cities, the nighttime festivities may be found on the main streets. Crowds will gather to watch public shows offered for free by the municipalities and the government. Many spend the night dancing Israeli folk dances or singing Israeli songs. During the daytime thousands of Israeli families go out on hikes and picnics. Army camps are open for civilians to visit and to display the recent technological achievements of the Israeli Defense Forces. Yom Ha'atzmaut is concluded with the ceremony of granting the "Israel Prize" recognizing individual Israelis for their unique contribution to the country's culture, science, arts, and the humanities.

The religious character of Yom Ha'atzmaut is still in the process of formation, and is still subject to debate. The Chief Rabbinate of the State (which consists of Orthodox rabbis) has decided that this day should be marked with the recitation of Hallel (psalms of praise), similar to other joyous holidays, and with the reading of a special haftarah (prophetic portion). Most ultra-Orthodox Jews, in Israel and abroad, have not accepted this ruling, and some Orthodox Jews chant the Hallel psalms without the blessing which precedes it.

On the other hand, HaKibbutz HaDati (Modern Orthodox Kibbutz Movement) initiated a version of the prayer Al HaNissim ("Concerning the Miracles") to be added to the Amidah (the central prayer recited while standing) on Yom Ha'atzmaut, as it is on Hanukkah and Purim.

This special addition to the liturgy of the day was not approved by the Chief Rabbinate but was adopted by the Masorti (Conservative) and the Progressive (Reform) congregations in Israel. Some rabbis argue that Yom Ha'atzmaut should be viewed in conjunction with Hanukkah and Purim, since all three commemorate a "miraculous" victory of the Jews over an enemy of superior military might. It should be noted that most Israelis do not consider Yom Ha'atzmaut a religious holiday at all.

FOR AMERICAN JEWS

For American Jews, celebrating Yom Ha'atzmaut has been a way to express solidarity with the state of Israel and to strengthen their alliance with it. In many communities, it is one of few occasions in which Jewish organizations and synagogues of different ideologies and denominations cooperate in forming a common celebration. In many North American congregations, the joint public celebration often is augmented by a religious service. In some cases, this would occur on the closest to Yom Ha'atzmaut and would consist of additional readings added to the service and, usually, the singing of Hatikvah (the Israeli national anthem).

The standard Reform prayerbook, Gates of Prayer (Shaarei Tefillah), includes a service for Yom Ha'atzmaut, while the Conservative prayerbook, Sim Shalom includes Hallel and Al Hanissim to be recited on this occasion.

There is not yet an accepted "tradition" of how to celebrate this holiday, and only time will tell whether certain customs, foods, prayers, and melodies will be linked in the Jewish mind with this holiday, as with holidays that emerged many centuries before Yom Ha'atzmaut. For Jews around the world, joining with Israelis celebrating Yom Ha'atzmaut has become a concrete link in the Jewish connection to the land of Israel.

Jewish Federation program



A Special Celebration for Israel's 72nd Birthday!

On Wednesday, April 29th, our community will join together for an extraordinary virtual event celebrating Israel! You can watch the event two ways:

- On JFNA's Facebook page*
- On YouTube at <https://youtu.be/LrNU5GhJkFY>.*

No Login Required to Watch This Event

1 to 2 PM Texas time

- Matisyahu sings a medley of "One Day" with voices from The Jewish Agency for Israel's Partnership2Gether communities*
- Jewish leaders from more than 30 countries, share a message of hope and celebration Support Israel - Keren Hayesod UIA*
- American TV and film star Joshua Malina shares how Israeli doctors and scientists are on the front lines of the battle against COVID-19 Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*
- The Brothers Platt — Ben, Henry and Jonah Platt — sing Ahavat Olam by composers Gabe Mann and Piper Rutman*
- Chefs from around the world debate whether falafel is the quintessential Israeli food, and Adeena Sussman, author of the bestselling cookbook Sababa, teaches us how to make it*
- Isaac Herzog, the son of former Israeli President Chaim Herzog, z"l, tells a story about Israel's War of Independence, then pays tribute to former Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, z"l*
- Exclusive footage of Israel's official Independence Day ceremony on Mt. Herzl courtesy of Jewish National Fund - USA*
- A finale where we will all sing Israel's national anthem, "Hatikva," led by two celebrity female vocalists — Rita from Israel and Caissie Levy from Canada — and a group of Israeli and Diaspora Jewish musicians*



SHAVUOT

Beginning Thursday evening, May 28

*Shavuot commemorates the spring harvest
and the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai*

From My Jewish Learning

Shavuot, the “Feast of Weeks,” is celebrated seven weeks after Passover (Pesach). Since the counting of this period (sefirat ha-omer) begins on the second evening of Passover, Shavuot takes place exactly 50 days after the (first) seder. Hence, following the Greek word for “fifty,” Shavuot is also referred to sometimes as Pentecost. Although its origins are to be found in an ancient grain harvest festival, Shavuot has long been identified with the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai.

Shavuot combines two major religious observances. First is the grain harvest of the early summer. Second is the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai seven weeks after the exodus from Egypt. The first determines the ritual for the holiday, which was one of the three pilgrimage festivals of ancient Israel, when Israelite males were commanded to appear before God in Jerusalem, bringing offerings of the first fruits of their harvest. The second determines the significance of the holiday for Judaism, tying it in with the seminal event of Jewish religious memory, namely the entering into a covenant between God and Israel, exemplified by Israel’s assumption of Divine law.

Since Shavuot is an ancient pilgrimage holiday, it is not surprising that its ritual focuses on the community. Nonetheless, there are a number of customs associated with personal practice. Chief among them is the eating of dairy products on Shavuot. Although the reasons for this custom are not completely clear, it has become traditional to eat milk and cheese products as part of the celebration of Shavuot.

Much of the observance of the holiday centers on the synagogue and its rituals. The special readings for the holiday include medieval poems (piyyutim) and the Book of Ruth. A number of reasons are given for the inclusion of the latter. Among them are that the book takes place at the time of the barley harvest, that Ruth’s assumption of Naomi’s religion reflects the Israelites’ acceptance of the Torah at Sinai, and that King David, who is alleged to have died at this time of year according to rabbinic tradition, is mentioned at the end of Ruth. Another tradition is to participate in a Tikkun Leil Shavuot, an all-night study session marking the holiday. And finally, Shavuot is one of the holidays on which both Hallel, the Psalms of Praise, is recited and Yizkor, the memorial service, is observed.

By associating an ancient holiday of the grain harvest with the exodus from Egypt, Jewish tradition has imbued Shavuot with religious significance derived from the foundational event in Jewish historical consciousness. In the specific case of Shavuot, this takes the form of the entering into a covenant or formal agreement between God and Israel at Mount Sinai. This is a joyous time, since it is the moment at which God and Israel entered into a figurative marriage with each other, the hopeful springtime of their relationship.