



Sanctify This Memorial Day Initiative 5775

What Makes This Day Special

Fast Facts on Shavuot **(A Cheat Sheet of Shavuot ideas** **to share with your members)**

The name Shavuot reflects the fact that this holiday occurs seven complete weeks (*shavuot*) - on the 49th day after the first day - of Passover. It is the only holiday in the Torah not listed by the date on which it is to be observed, but rather it is calculated by the counting of the Omer.

Seven times seven days, the count of 49, expresses the natural cycle, but Shavuot takes place one day after the seven weeks--one step beyond the natural cycle. It is, therefore, also representative of an event beyond nature: receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai. Shavuot is therefore also known as *Z'man Matan Torateinu*, the time of the giving of our Torah.

In the Torah, Shavuot is associated with several mitzvot that were performed in the Temple. The best-known of these is the offering of the first fruits, which is why the holiday is also known as *Chag Habikkurim*. Additionally, Shavuot was also the time when the Offering of the Two Loaves (*shte'i halechem*) was made.

While we are no longer able to fulfill the Temple mitzvot associated with Shavuot, there are several popular customs that are still associated with the holiday: (1) decorating the synagogue with greenery, (2) eating dairy foods, (3) staying up to learn throughout the night, and (4) reading the Book of Ruth.

(For more in-depth, but beginner friendly, explanations of these holiday points, please see the additional booklet or visit www.jewishtreats.org)

Memorial Day

On May 5, 1868, a few years after the conclusion of the US Civil War, General John Logan, National Commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, proposed Decoration Day, when Americans would decorate the graves of fallen Union and Confederate soldiers who fell during the US Civil War.

After World War I, Decoration Day was expanded to remember those who fell in all American wars, not just the Civil War. After Congressional passage of the National Holiday Act of 1971, Memorial Day is now observed in almost every state on the last Monday in May.

But for many Americans, the excitement of the onset of summer and the ubiquitous sales nationwide, have detracted from the solemnity of the day. How many of us know that in 2000, President Clinton instituted a "National Moment of Remembrance" asking Americans to pause at 3:00 pm on Memorial Day for one minute "to remember and reflect on the sacrifices made by so many to provide freedom for all." In Israel, Memorial Day for the soldiers directly precedes Independence Day and the mournful and grateful feeling within the nation is palpable.

Yizkor - Why Do We Recite Prayers for the Deceased on Jewish Holidays

According to Jewish belief, when people pass away, they move on to sojourn in the “next world,” to, hopefully, enjoy the spiritual rewards they have earned for their good acts in “this world.”

In the “next world” a soul cannot grow spiritually, perform mitzvot or earn a better place. Basically, in the “next world” the soul reaps what it had sown in “this world.” However, a soul may gain merit through the deeds of its descendants.* During the festivals, the gates of heaven are already open to accept prayer, thus making it a perfect opportunity to add a special prayer for one’s deceased parent(s) or other family members. This service, known as *Yizkor* (“He shall remember”), is recited by Ashkenazim on Yom Kippur, Passover, Shavuot and Shemini Atzeret.

The earliest reference to the act of pledging money in honor of the departed is found in the Midrash Tanchuma regarding the verse in Deuteronomy 21:8: “Atone for Your people, Israel, whom You have redeemed.” According to the Midrash, the verse implies that the deceased are redeemed through the living. This, then, is the source of the *Yizkor* service of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

It is believed that the custom of reciting *Yizkor* on the last day of Passover, Shavuot and Shemini Atzeret developed around the time of the Crusades (when entire Jewish communities were destroyed). This addition was considered particularly appropriate due to the holiday Torah portion’s description of the pilgrimage holidays and the reference therein to coming before God with a gift on the holidays - “Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God, which He has given you” (Deuteronomy 16:17).

The *Yizkor* service is more than a prayer. On a personal level, it is an opportunity to reflect upon and remember the wonderful things that made the deceased person special. It is also a promise to act properly and give charity in the name of the deceased. (This is also why there are often synagogue fundraising forms to be found attached to the *Yizkor* prayer--if people are pledging money, it is only proper for them to pledge support for the synagogue that provides for their religious needs.) It is the custom among some Ashkenazi Jews that those whose parents are both still living leave the sanctuary during the service so as not to disturb the reflections and prayers of those who are reciting *Yizkor*.

Yizkor may also be recited for other relatives (grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.), and it may be recited for non-relatives as well. In many communities it is also customary to recite a special prayer during *Yizkor* in memory of those who perished in the Holocaust and in memory of the fallen soldiers of Israel.

*Descendants can also be non-biological -- those one has taught or influenced in a significant manner.

The Yizkor Prayer for Soldiers

Ayl mah'lay rah'chah'meem sho'chayn bahm'ro'meem,
 hahm'tzay m'noo'chah n'cho'nah tah'chaht
 kahn'fay ha'sh'chee'nah. B'mah'ah'loht k'doh'sheem
 oo't'ho'reem k'zoh'har ha'ra'kee'ah mahz'hee'reem.
 Et nish'maht ah'chay'noo ahn'shay ha'cha'yil
 ah'sher heh'eh'roo lah'ma'vet nahf'shahm b'ahd
 ahr'tzahm. Ah'nah bah'ahl ha'rah'chah'meem
 Hahs'tee'raym b'say'ter k'na'feh'cha lo'oh'lah'meem.
 Oo'tzror hah'chah'yeem et nish'mah'tahm eem
 Nish'moht ha'tza'dee'keem ha'ohm'deem
 l'fah'neh'cha. V'ha'yah ma'ah'say ha'tze'da'ka shalom
 va'ah'vo'daht ha'tze'da'ka hahsh'kayt va'veh'tahch ahd
 oh'lahm. Lo yee'sa goy ehl goy cheh'rehv
 v'lo yil'm'doo ohd mil'cha'ma. V'nig'la
 k'vohd A'doh'nai v'ra'oo chol ba'sar yach'dav.
 Ah'mayn

א-ל מלא רחמים שוכן בפרומים.
 המצא מנוחה נכונה תחת
 כנפי השכינה. במעלות קדושים
 וטהורים פנהר הרקיע מזהירים.
 את נשמת אחינו אנשי החיל
 אשר הערו למות נפשם בעד
 ארצם. אנא בעל הרחמים
 הסתירם בסתר כנפיק לעולמים.
 וצור החיים את נשמתם עם
 נשמות הצדיקים העומדים
 לפניך. והיה מעשה הצדקה שלום
 ועבדת הצדקה השקט ובטח עד
 עולם. לא ישא גוי אל גוי חרב
 ולא ילמדו עוד מלחמה. ונגלה
 כבוד יי וראו כל בשר יחדו.
 אמן.

O God full of compassion, grant perfect rest beneath the cover of Your Presence to all who have bravely laid down their lives for our country. Shelter them among the holy and pure, who are as radiant as the luminous firmament. O source of compassion, bring them ever near to You that their souls be bound up in the bond of eternal life, as are the souls of the righteous. And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. Amen.

(Courtesy of Prayer Book for Jewish Personnel in the Armed Forces of the United States -- made available by JWB Jewish Chaplains Council)

Prayer for the United States of America

Ribbono Shel Olam! Sovereign of the Universe

We invoke Your blessings upon the members of our American armed forces, those brave men and women whose courage and commitment to our country protects us all.

Whether by air, land or sea, wherever their orders take them, we ask, dear God, that they be protected within Your sheltering Presence. Shield them from hard and from pain, assuage their loneliness, and sustain their faith in the face of the formidable enemies that they confront on a daily basis. May all of their efforts be crowned with victory, and the assurance that we who depend on their courage appreciate and understand the great difficulty of their work.

Most of all, we pray what for all soldiers is the ultimate prayer – that they be privileged to return to the loving arms of their families and a grateful country safely, speedily, and in good health. Because of their courage, may we all be privileged to know and savor the blessings of true peace and security.

Amen.

(Courtesy of Prayer Book for Jewish Personnel in the Armed Forces of the United States – made available by JWB Jewish Chaplains Council)

Names of Jewish Servicemen and Servicewomen Who Have Fallen Since 9-11

Pfc. Daniel J. Agami-USA Age: 25 Hometown: Coconut Creek, FL	Age: 28 Hometown: Bay Shore, NY
1st Lt. David R. Bernstein-USA Age: 24 Hometown: Phoenixville, PA	Sgt. Foster L. Harrington-USMC Age: 31 Hometown: Ft. Worth, TX
Sgt. Aron C. Blum-USMC Age: 22 Hometown: Tucson, AZ	Lance Cpl. Jeremy M. Kane-USMC Age: 22 Hometown: Cherry Hill, NJ
Cpl. Ryan J. Clark-USA Age: 19 Hometown: Lancaster, CA	Staff Sgt. James M. Malachowski -USMC Age: 25 Hometown: Westminster, MD
2nd Lt. Seth J. Dvorin-USA Age: 24 Hometown: East Brunswick, NJ	Maj. Mark E. Rosenberg-USA Age: 32 Hometown: Miami Lakes, FL
Cpl. Mark A. Evnin-USMC Age: 21 Hometown: Burlington, VT	1st Lt. Roslyn L. Schulte-USAF Age: 25 Hometown: St. Louis, MO
1st Lt. Daniel Farkas-USA Age: 42 Hometown: Brooklyn, NY	Spec. Marc S. Seiden-USA Age: 26 Hometown: Brigantine, NJ
SPC. Jacob S. Fletcher-USA	Staff Sgt. Michael B. Shackelford -USA Age: 25 Hometown: Grand Junction, CO

Sgt. Alan D. Sherman-USMCR Age: 36 Hometown: Brick, NJ	A1C Elizabeth N. Jacobson-USAF Age: 21 Hometown: Riviera Beach, FL
Chief Warrant Officer Eric A. Smith -USA Age: 41 Hometown: Rochester, NY	1st Lt. Nathan M. Krissoff-USMC Age: 25 Hometown: Reno, NV
1st Lt. Andrew K. Stern-USMC Age: 24 Hometown: Germantown, TN	Staff Sgt. Robert J. Paul-USAR Age: 43 Hometown: The Dalles, OR
Pfc. Morris L. Walker-USA Age: 23 Hometown: Chapel Hill, NC	Cpl. Dustin H. Schrage-USMC Age: 20 Hometown: Indian Harbor Beach, FL
Sgt. Robert M. Weinger-USA Age: 24 Hometown: Round Lake Beach, IL	Capt. Robert M. Secher-USMC Age: 33 Hometown: Germantown, TN
Pfc. Colin J. Wolfe-USMC Age: 19 Hometown: Manassas, VA	A1C Matthew R. Seidler-USAF Age: 24 Hometown: Westminster, MD
Sgt. Elijah Tai Wah Wong-USA Age: 42 Hometown: Mesa, AZ	Pfc. Steven Shapiro-USA Age: 29 Hometown: Hidden Valley Lake, CA
SrA Jonathan A.V. Yelner-USAF Age: 29 Hometown: Lafayette, CA	Capt. Benjamin A. Sklaver-USA Age: 32 Hometown: Medford, MA
Sgt. Howard P. Allen-USANG Age: 31 Hometown: Mesa, AZ	PFC. Eric D. Soufrine-USA Age: 20 Hometown: Woodbridge, CT
Cpl. Albert Bitton-USA Age: 20 Hometown: Chicago, IL	Capt. Michael Y. Tarlavsky-USA Age: 30 Hometown: Passaic, NJ
PO3 Nathan B. Bruckenthal-USCG Age: 24 Hometown: Smithtown, NY	Tech. Sgt. Timothy R. Weiner-USAF Age: 35 Hometown: Tamarac, FL
Cpl. Michael R. Cohen-USMC Age: 23 Hometown: Jacobus, PA	Spec. Jeffrey M. Wershow-USANG Age: 22 Hometown: Gainesville, FL
Lance Cpl. Mark E. Engel-USMC Age: 21 Hometown: Centennial, CO	Maj. Stuart A. Wolfer-USA Age: 36 Hometown: Coral Springs, FL
Pfc. Aaron E. Fairbairn-USA Age: 20 Hometown: Aberdeen, WA	Spec. Benyahmin ben Yahudah -USA Age: 24 Hometown: Bogart, GA
Sgt. Zachary M. Fisher-USA Age: 24 Hometown: Ballwin, MO	Lt. Miroslav (Steven) Zilberman -USN Age: 31 Hometown: Columbus, OH
Spec. Daniel J. Freeman-USA Age: 20 Hometown: Cincinnati, OH	