

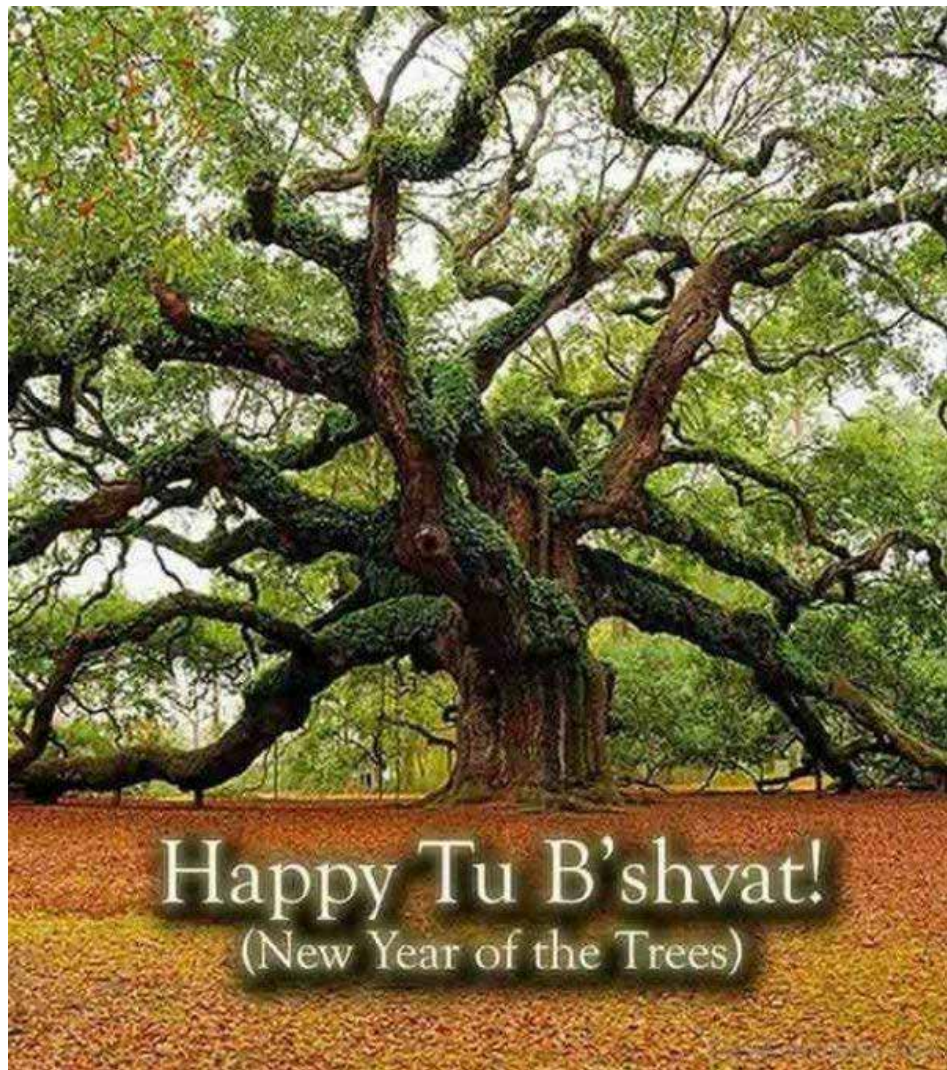


# The Shofar

Jan-Feb, 2026

Congregation House of Israel

12 Tevet - 11 Adar, 5786



Happy Tu B'shvat!  
(New Year of the Trees)

February 2, 2026

## Thank You

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## Tu B'shevat: New Year of the Trees

**By Sherrill Nicolosi**

Tu B'shevat, considered a minor Jewish holiday, is celebrated as the New Year of the Trees. It is the beginning of the season in which trees begin to bud in the Holy Land, and has earned the nickname of the Jewish Arbor Day.

Tu B'shevat occurs on the fifteen day of Shevat, this year February 1-February 2, 2026. Also known as Rosh Hashanah L'Ilanot, contemporary Israel sees the day as an ecological awareness day. Israeli school children plant trees to remind everyone of the importance of maintaining a healthy environment.

Many Jews celebrate Tu B'shevat with a Seder of dried fruits, grains and nuts, often including fifteen different varieties of fruits, connecting with the Fifteenth of Shevat. Carob is the traditional food of Tu B'shevat.

Tu B'shevat has a special place in Jewish culture. Enjoy the day and its important message of honoring our Jewish roots.



## Reb Shelly's Desk



### Hanukkah Feels Very Different This Year

By Mark Zimmerman

For over 2,000 years, from the time of the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE up until the establishment of the modern State of Israel in 1948, we Jews were an extremely vulnerable people. Living in exile, we endured inquisitions, pogroms, and genocide. We were not in control of either our security or our destiny.

But if we go back some 2,100 years to the time of the Maccabees, we find a period when we were not so vulnerable. The story of Hanukkah recalls that time when a relatively small band of Jews decided that they had enough of being ruled by a cruel tyrant. We rose up in revolt against the powerful Assyrian Greeks. What followed was a resounding Jewish victory, the rededication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, and the miracle of Hanukkah which we celebrate every year until this day.

Jewish rule in Judea lasted some 200 years after the Maccabees, finally collapsing in the first century of the Common Era. During much of the next 2,000 years, without a homeland, without a military, and without the ability to ensure our own safety, we lived (or died) at the whim of various rulers, kings and tyrants. We shuddered in fear of the next crusade, pogrom, or anti-Semitic attack, relying on the good graces of the king or government to protect our communities. And often there was no protection to be found.

The American Jewish experience, of course, has been markedly different from what our people experienced in Europe. Sure, antisemitism existed on these shores as well, often just below the surface, but it was largely limited to rhetoric and discrimination. We felt safe, built robust communities, synagogues, JCC's, Jewish Day Schools and Yeshivahs. We thrived as Jewish Americans, and felt that here we were finally accepted as an integral part of the American tapestry.

But after the events of October 7th, we feel that familiar, aching sense of vulnerability once again.

Our people in Israel were brutally attacked in ways that were reminiscent of some of the worst atrocities our people suffered during the Holocaust. And what followed was equally distressing. Sure, there was sympathy and outrage at first, but that sympathy quickly gave way to an explosion of antisemitism we had hoped was long defeated.

If there is a lesson to be learned from the Hanukkah story, it is that fatalism and retreat is not the answer. Complacency is not an answer either. The answer to hate is resolve, inner strength, pride, determination and resilience.

We saw that power of the Jewish spirit on full display during the solidarity rally in Washington DC. Nearly 300,000 came together from across the country to sing, pray, and come to understand that 'never again' is now. There was a meme going around that captured it perfectly: "If there's one thing we Jewish people have learned in the past few weeks it's this: The world doesn't care about us as much as we hoped, but we care about each other a lot more than we realized."

And therein lies the Jewish people's most powerful weapon. We may disagree with one another on this or that issue, but we must never let those disagreements devolve into fracturing our sense of unity, and shared destiny. As the Talmud states, "All Israel are responsible, one for another".

All of us have some very concrete things that we can do today. Educate yourself on what's going on. Know how to answer Israel's critics and don't be afraid to do so. Contact your members of Congress, regularly. Send donations to Hatzalah and Magen David Adom and Federation. But more importantly, stand up for human decency and make your voice heard.

Sadly, these threats are not new for us. The Jewish people have been around for 4,000 years, and we are not going away anytime soon. God willing, the heroism of the Maccabees will inspire us and provide us with the courage to face whatever challenges lie ahead.

May the lights of the Hanukkah menorah continue to inspire us during these difficult days, strengthen our resolve, and give us the fortitude to achieve a more peaceful and compassionate world.

*Hag Urim Sameyach!*



# Symbols, Stories, and the Spirit of Our People

**By Josh Weinberg**

I want to begin with a symbol—one that shocked many of us upon first seeing it. For the last two years, so many of us in Israel and the Jewish world have worn a small yellow ribbon pin, a quiet but powerful reminder of the hostages still being held in Gaza. The yellow ribbons were everywhere as a symbol of hope, solidarity, and the unbreakable Jewish commitment to one of our most important mitzvot pidyon shvuyim, the redeeming of captives. The yellow ribbon is a symbol that says: We have not forgotten you. We will not forget you. And it serves as a reminder that wherever we are, we keep those in captivity at the forefront of our minds constantly.

But this week, a different symbol appeared. With the remains of one fallen soldier, Ran Gvili, still being held in Gaza, instead of a yellow ribbon, the Minister of National Security, Itamar Ben-Gvir, and a handful of his sycophants chose to adorn their lapels with a different pin shaped like a noose.

A noose.

A symbol recognized worldwide as a tool of terror, lynching, execution, and death. A symbol meant to intimidate and terrorize.

One symbol pleads, “Bring them home.”

The other threatens, “Beware.”

This latest visual stunt is also chilling: a pin in the shape of a golden noose, worn by Ben-Gvir on Monday at a Knesset National Security Committee hearing on a proposed death penalty bill for terrorists, is his party’s latest cruel obsession.

What is most problematic is the fact that the “death penalty for terrorists” defines “terrorism” selectively, both in the case of the perpetrator and the victim. According to the bill, the courts would only be required to impose the extreme punishment on Palestinians in the West Bank who murder an Israeli citizen.

So, as we head into Shabbat and Hanukkah, I want to ask: What do our symbols say about us?

What story do they tell the world?

What story do they tell us about who we are becoming?

This Sunday, we will kindle the first light of Hanukkah, a holiday whose symbols we often take for granted—the Hanukkiyah, the dreidel, the oil, the bravery of the Maccabees. But if we look beneath the surface, Hanukkah, too, is a study in the power and danger of symbolism.

We teach that the Maccabees were champions of religious freedom. And that is true. They fought the Greek Seleucid Empire and the decrees of Antiochus so that Jews could live openly as Jews.

The Menorah symbolizes that sacred resistance.

But the story doesn’t end there.

After the victory, the Hasmonean dynasty—descendants of those same Maccabees—slid into zealotry and corruption. They expanded territory through coercion and forced conversions. They turned religious passion into religious domination and subjugation. They became, in some ways, what they had once fought against.

So, Hanukkah carries two symbols:

The pure flame of liberation, and the shadow of unchecked zeal.

Which begs the question: When we invoke the Maccabees today, which symbol are we lifting up?

The modern Zionist Movement drew deeply from the Maccabean well. The return to sovereignty, the revival of Hebrew, the building of a state that can protect and sustain Jewish life—all rooted in the ancient struggle for self-determination.

And yet, the Hasmonean mirror remains before us. Power—long denied to the Jewish people—now rests in Jewish hands. Power is not evil in and of itself. But power must be wielded with restraint, compassion, thoughtfulness, ethics, and responsibility. As Jon Polin, father of slain hostage Hersch Goldberg-Polin, shared this week from a NYC stage, “I am searching for leaders who show both strength and compassion.”

When a Minister of the Jewish state replaces a symbol of hope for hostages with a symbol of violence and intimidation, we must ask:

Are we honoring the Maccabees... or becoming the Hasmoneans?

To invoke the Hasmoneans today—especially in the context of our people and the state attaining substantial military power—requires not only pride, but reflection. Are we drawing from the part of the story that champions religious integrity and self-determination? Or from the part that warns of zealotry, excess, and the misuse

*Continued on page 5*

# Arza - World Union

*Continued from page 4*

of power?

But history complicates that symbolism too.

The Hasidim of the Hanukkah story—the pious ones who joined the fight—were not warriors by temperament. Many were willing to die rather than violate Jewish law. Some refused to defend themselves on Shabbat until Mattathias and the Hasmoneans declared that it was permitted for their followers to fight on Shabbat to protect themselves from attack.

The rabbis of the Talmud (the Babylonian Talmud was codified around 550 C.E., but much of its material dates to several centuries earlier) ultimately rejected the Hasmonean dynasty, teaching that the priests had overstepped by seizing political power that did not belong to them. In their view, the downfall of the Hasmoneans was a direct consequence of confusing religious zeal with the right to rule, a cautionary tale about the dangers of merging sanctity with statecraft.

To invoke the Hasmoneans without remembering how quickly their dynasty devolved into extremism and corruption is to romanticize the sword while ignoring the spiritual integrity that first gave rise to the revolt.

The Hasmoneans thus bequeath us two symbolic legacies: the righteous struggle for self-determination and the later temptation to wield power without restraint. Hanukkah asks us to hold both truths simultaneously—to celebrate the light while remembering how quickly it can be misused.

Symbols matter. Names matter. They shape character and expectation.

So, what do our symbols say about us—this Hanukkah, in this heavy moment?

A yellow ribbon says we are bound to every Jewish soul still in captivity.

A noose says something far darker about our moral depravity.

A menorah says we believe light can pierce even the deepest night.

A Maccabean banner says we honor courage.

A Hasmonean warning says: Beware the corruption of that courage.

And the Zionist dream—its symbols, anthem, and flag—says that the Jewish people have reclaimed agency. The question is whether we can wield that agency with wisdom, humility, and care.

Hanukkah challenges us to shine light on ourselves. To ask which symbols ought we to elevate. To ensure that the symbols we choose reflect our highest values, not our basest fears.

As we kindle the lights on Sunday evening, may they remind us of the power of our symbols—to heal or to harm, to inspire or to intimidate, to uplift or to demean.

May we choose the symbols that sanctify and inspire, that build community, and that reflect both courage and compassion.

Hanukkah invites us to choose our symbols carefully. To ensure they reflect humility rather than triumphalism. To remember that Jewish power—new in historical terms—must be exercised with restraint, integrity, and a sense of responsibility toward all who share the land. To insist that our actions honor the original Maccabean fight for spiritual freedom rather than repeat the later Hasmonean descent into coercion.

Ultimately, symbols are mirrors that reveal not only what we believe, but who we are becoming. The challenge of Hanukkah is to ensure that the symbols we elevate illuminate our highest values rather than casting shadows over them.

Because the lights we kindle can only reveal what we ourselves choose to bring into the world.

May the lights of Hanukkah illuminate a path on which our power is guided by wisdom, and our sovereignty by justice—so that the world can look upon our symbols and see, once again, a people committed to life, dignity, and hope.

## **The Shofar**

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# Hanukkah Party 5786

What a wonderful Hanukkah party (again) this year. Our most heartfelt thanks to all the Sisterhood ladies who cooked, hung the decorations, set the tables and on and on and on. Great meal, and incredible latkes cooked outside on the portable grill (brought by David Reagler and his team).

And (of course) special thanks to Mimi Reagler, who (following tradition) took my camera and snapped over a hundred pictures, just a few of which are displayed here.

In short, ***Chag Chanukkah Sameach.***

Shelly







# Jewish Trivia for January and February

Jan 1, 1882 Ellis Island opens as Immigration Center

Jan 15, 1965 PLO founded

Jan 20, 1943 At the Wannsee Conference, the Nazis decide upon the "Final Solution"

Jan 25, 1949 David Ben Gurion elected first Prime Minister of Israel

Jan 27, 1945 Auschwitz Birkenau liberated by the Russian Army

Jan 28, 1916 Louis Brandeis is the first Jew to be appointed to the Supreme Court

## Deceased

Jan 2, 2006 Jan Murray, actor

Jan 3, 1974 Samuel Goldwyn, movie producer

Jan 8, 1975 Richard Tucker, Opera Singer

Jan 9, 2011 Debbie Friedman, singer and composer

Jan 10, 2000 Hedy Lamarr, actress

Jan 11, 2014 Ariel Sharon, Prime Minister of Israel

Jan 13, 1980 Andre Kostelanetz, Conductor

Jan 13, 1966 Sophie Tucker, entertainer

Jan 19, 1990 Arthur Goldberg, Supreme Court Justice

Jan 25, 1990 Ava Gardner, actress

Jan 26, 1973 Edward G. Robinson, actor

Jan 28, 1996 Jerry Siegel, co-creator of Superman

Feb 1, 2002 American journalist Daniel Pearl is executed by his captors

Feb 3, 1943 SS Dorchester torpedoed. Four chaplains give up their life jackets, joining in prayer as the ship went down

Feb 5, 1997 The "Big Three" Swiss banks create a fund for Holocaust reparations

Feb 12, 1924 Premiere of George Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue

Feb 14, 1949 The Knesset convenes for the first time

Feb 23, 1945 Joe Rosenthal takes the unforgettable photograph of American soldiers raising the flag over Iwo Jima

## Deceased

Feb 1, 2002 Daniel Pearl, journalist

Feb 5, 1967 Henry Morgenthau, Secretary of the Treasury

Feb 10, 2005 Arthur Miller, playwright

Feb 11, 2015 Bob Simon, newsman

Feb 12, 2014 Sid Caesar, comedian

Feb 22, 1998 Abraham Ribicoff, Connecticut Governor and Senator

Feb 22, 1965 Felix Frankfurter, Justice of the Supreme Court

Feb 24, 1998 Henny Youngman, comedian

Feb 29, 2015 Leonard Nimoy, actor (Mr. Spock)



## January Yahrzeits

### Kaddish Recited January 2

**David Wigderson**  
*Father of Sue Koppel*

**Sam Karnofsky**  
*Great Uncle of David D. Reagler*  
*Great Uncle of Rachel Schulman*

**Katie Fielschmidt**  
*Aunt of Fred Korngut*

### Kaddish Recited January 9

**Mona Goltz**  
*Grandfather of Diane Goltz*  
*Grandfather of Susan Siegel*

**Jason Kandel**  
*Cousin of Mary Klompus*

**Harry Sedler**  
*Father of Ross Sedler*

**Joanne Reagler**  
*Mother of David D. Reagler*  
*Mother of Rachel Schulman*

**Martin Fleischer**  
*Father of Mark Fleischer*  
*Father of Stuart Fleischer*

### Kaddish Recited January 16

**Pearcy Crem**  
*Great Uncle of Rachel Schulman*  
*Great Uncle of David D. Reagler*

**David Reagler**  
*Father of David D. Reagler*  
*Father of Rachel Schulman*

**Dorothy Savel**  
*Grandmother of David Cohen*

**Eric B. Wolken**  
*Brother of Brad Wolken*

**Goldie Marie Schott Ballard**  
*Grandmother of Laura Castillo*

**Ida Cooper Ruskin**  
*Mother of Phyllis Hearn*

**Pauline Brown**  
*Aunt of Betty Forshberg*

### Kaddish Recited January 23

**Walter Kleinman**  
*Father-in-law of Betty Kleinman*

**Ella Robins**  
*Grandmother of Betty Feir*

**Lois Ginsburg**  
*Mother of Millie Baron*

**Steve Katz**  
*Brother of Sheri Cobb*

**Fanny Fielschmidt**  
*Grandmother of Fred Korngut*

### Kaddish Recited January 30

**Helene Leibowitz**  
*Mother of Stuart Leibowitz*

**Willisam Holtzman**  
*Father-in-law of Fred Korngut*

**Paul Forshberg**  
*Husband of Betty Forshberg*

**Caroline Suhl**  
*Grandmother of Michael Waxler*

**George Z. Ginsburg**  
*Grandfather of Millie Baron*

**Leslie Leviton**  
*Uncle of David D. Reagler*  
*Uncle of Rachel Schulman*

**Sarah S. Levine**  
*Grandmother of Cynthia Rephan*

**Helena Peterson**  
*Mother of Cheryl Cohen*

**Ed Katz**  
*Father of Sheri Cobb*

**Lewis Goltz**  
*Father of Diane Goltz*  
*Father of Susan Siegel*

## February Yahrzeits

### Kaddish Recited February 6

**Robert Burns**

*Step-father of Glenda Kirsch*

**Harriett Korgut**

*Wife of Fred Korngut*

**Richard Moss Haynie, Sr.**

*Father of Laura Castillo*

**Carol Dina Kleinman**

*Wife of Rabbi Sheldon Kleinman*

### Kaddish Recited February 13

**Eric Ross**

*Father of Elaine Wolken*

**Julia Levine Bauman**

*Mother of Cynthai Rephan*

**Rose Ginsburg**

*Grandmother of Millie Baron*

**Anni Hannah Grenman**

*Mother of Oded Grenman*

### Kaddish Recited February 21

**Pinhas Grenman**

*Father of Oded Grenman*

**Stella Weisman**

*Grandmother of Larry Levi*

**David Stafin**

*Father of Myrna Taxer*

**Sandy Carrington**

*Daughter of Betty Forshberg*

### Kaddish Recited February 27

**Sally Friedlander Boley**

*Mother of Sherrill Nicolosi*

**Marvin Barenblat**

*Brother of Betty Kleinman*

## Refuah Shelemah

*The following people are in our thoughts and prayers for healing. Please offer prayers that they have a full and complete recovery.:*

- Aria Baron
- Shoshana Baron
- Oded Grenman
- Sue Koppel
- Pat Mc Carthy
- Palma Ortiz
- Mike Richardson
- Lori Roslawski
- Steven West
- James Woodfork
- Remaining Israeli Hostage whose body still need to be returned

## Birthdays & Anniversaries

### Anniversaries

Hal and Sue Koppel	Jan 12
Lori and Randy Lewis	Feb 6

### Birthdays

Ross Sedler	Jan 8
Kay Fleischner	Jan 27
Lori Lewis	Jan 28
Ken Baim	Feb 1
Louis Reagler	Feb 2
Tillie Reagler	Feb 2
David D. Reagler	Feb 18



# January Parshiot

## Vayechi

January 3

Jacob desires to reveal the end of days to his children, but is prevented from doing so. Jacob blesses his 12 sons, assigning to each his role as a tribe: Judah will produce leaders, legislators and kings; priests will come from Levi, scholars from Issachar, seafarers from Zebulun, schoolteachers from Shimon, soldiers from Gad, judges from Dan, olive growers from Asher, and so on. Reuben is rebuked for “confusing his father’s marriage”; Shimon and Levi for the massacre of Shechem and the plot against Joseph. Naphtali is granted the swiftness of a deer, Benjamin the ferociousness of a wolf, and Joseph is blessed with beauty and fertility.

## Shmot

January 10

The Children of Israel multiply in Egypt. Threatened by their growing numbers, Pharaoh enslaves them and orders the Hebrew midwives, Shifrah and Puah, to kill all male babies at birth. When they do not comply, he commands his people to cast the Hebrew babies into the Nile.

A child is born to Jocheved, the daughter of Levi, and her husband, Amram, and placed in a basket on the river, while the baby’s sister, Miriam, stands watch from afar. Pharaoh’s daughter discovers the boy, raises him as her son, and names him Moses.

G-d appears to Moses in a burning bush at the foot of Mount Sinai and instructs him to go to Pharaoh and demand: “Let My people go, so that they may serve Me.” Moses’ brother, Aaron, is appointed to serve as his spokesman.

## Vaera

January 17

G-d reveals Himself to Moses. He promises to take out the Children of Israel from Egypt, deliver them from their enslavement, redeem them and acquire them as His own chosen people at Mount Sinai; He will then bring them to the Land He promised to the Patriarchs

as their eternal heritage.

Moses and Aaron repeatedly come before Pharaoh to demand “Let My people go.” Pharaoh repeatedly refuses. G-d then sends a series of plagues upon the Egyptians.

The waters of the Nile turn to blood; swarms of frogs overrun the land; lice infest all men and beasts. Hordes of wild animals invade the cities, a pestilence kills the domestic animals, painful boils afflict the Egyptians. For the seventh plague, fire and ice combine to descend from the skies as a devastating hail.

## Bo

January 24

The last three of the Ten Plagues are visited on Egypt: a swarm of locusts devours all the crops and greenery; a thick, palpable darkness envelops the land; and all the firstborn of Egypt are killed at the stroke of midnight of the 15th of the month of Nisan. The death of the firstborn finally breaks Pharaoh’s resistance and he literally drives the Children of Israel from his land. Before they go, they ask their Egyptian neighbors for gold, silver and garments, draining Egypt of its wealth.

The Children of Israel are commanded to observe the anniversary of the Exodus each year by removing all leaven from their possession for seven days, eating matzah, and telling the story of their redemption to their children.

## Beshalach

January 31

Soon after allowing the Children of Israel to depart from Egypt, Pharaoh chases after them to force their return, and the Israelites find themselves trapped between Pharaoh’s armies and the sea. G-d tells Moses to raise his staff over the water; the sea splits to allow the Israelites to pass through, and then closes over the pursuing Egyptians.

In the desert, the people suffer thirst and hunger and repeatedly complain to Moses and Aaron. G-d miraculously sweetens the bitter waters of Marah, and later has Moses bring forth water from a rock by striking it with his staff; He causes manna to rain down from the heavens before dawn each morning, and quails to appear in the Israelite camp each evening.





## February Parshiot

## February 7

On the sixth day of the third month (Sivan), seven weeks after the Exodus, the entire nation of Israel assembles at the foot of Mount Sinai. G-d descends on the mountain amidst thunder, lightning, billows of smoke and the blast of the shofar, and summons Moses to ascend.

The people cry out to Moses that the revelation is too intense for them to bear, begging him to receive the Torah from G-d and convey it to them.

## February 14

Altogether, the Parshah of Mishpatim contains fifty-three mitzvot -- 23 imperative commandments and 30 prohibitions.

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## Terumah

On the summit of Mount Sinai, Moses is given detailed instructions on how to construct a dwelling for G-d so that it could be readily dismantled, transported and reassembled as the people journeyed in the desert.

A whimsical illustration of a man in a hat and overalls riding a camel. The camel is heavily laden with various items, including a large basket of fruit, a bottle of wine, a bag of flour, and a small figure of a person. The man is holding a long stick or whip.

## February 28

The priestly garments, to be worn by the Kohanim (priests) while serving in the Sanctuary are described. All Kohanim wore: 1) the ketonet -- a full length linen tunic; 2) michnasayim -- linen breeches; 3) mitznefet or migba'at -- a linen turban; 4) avnet -- a long sash wound above the waist.