

# MIFGASH



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## Dairy Foods on Shavuot

– Rabbi Rami Pavolotzky, Congregation B'nei Israel de Costa Rica

It is a known custom to eat dairy foods on the first day of *Shavuot*. The objective of this article is to cite some of the reasons that would explain this savory custom. Here they are:

- 1) On *Shavuot* the people of Israel received the Torah which includes the rules of *Kashrut*. Given that the preparation of kosher meat takes considerable time, the first meal that the people ate in the desert after receiving the Torah was dairy, and in that way we remember it today.
- 2) In Hebrew the word *chalav*, milk, has the number value of 40, the number of days that Moses spent on Mt. Sinai before receiving the Torah.
- 3) Milk symbolizes purity, simplicity, and humbleness, qualities which the Torah intends to develop in man.
- 4) In the same manner that a baby needs its mother's milk to live, grow, and develop, thus the nation of Israel needs the Torah.
- 5) *Midrash* tells us that Moses was found in his basket by Pharaoh's daughter exactly on *Shavuot*. He refused to be nursed by her, which obliged her to look for a wet nurse who turned out to be Moses' mother. We also eat dairy foods on *Shavuot* in remembrance of Moses.
- 6) Some say that we should first eat a dairy meal and later, another one of meat. In this way, we have to bring bread to our table for blessing two times which reminds us of the offering of the two breads that were brought to the Temple in Jerusalem on *Shavuot*. This is similar to what we do on *Pesach* when we place a chicken bone and an egg on the *Ke'ara* in remembrance of the two sacrifices, *Pesach* and *Chaguiga*, that were sacrificed on that day in the Temple.
- 7) Some people are accustomed to eating dairy foods soaked in honey since the saying 'honey and milk are under your tongue' comes from the Torah. (quoted again in Song of Songs, 4:11).

These are only some of the reasons why we eat dairy foods on *Shavuot*. May we all be able to enjoy their rich flavor, preparing ourselves to receive the Torah once more, the basic nourishment which will permit us to grow spiritually.

*Chag Sameach!*

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## *Yom Yerushalayim* *The Memory, The Celebration and The Promise*

*– by Tamara Schagas (WUPJ)*

June 6, 1967, was the beginning of the Six Day War between Israel and the Arab countries of Jordan, Syria, and Egypt. After three days of fighting, a unit of parachutists from the Israeli Defense Forces arrived at the Wailing Wall. Hence, the Old City of Jerusalem (Yir Hatikah) was liberated. Since the Independence of the State in 1948 it had been under Jordanian rule.

We all keep in our memories the historic pictures of that moment: soldiers crying in front of the *Kotel HaMaaravi*, the Commanders *Moshe Dayan*, *Itzhak Rabin*, and *Uzi Narkis* entering the recently liberated Old City. The army's clergy, Rabbi Shlomo Goren, together with the soldiers blew the *shofar* as the symbol of reunification and liberation. Many of us also heard the recording of *Moshe Dayan* at the very moment he announced over the radio that Jerusalem had been recaptured. Naomi Shemer, who three weeks before the beginning of the war had presented the song *Yerushalyim Shel Zahav* at the Song Festival, was now singing before the soldiers. That song, almost becoming a hymn, was sung that day for the first time as we know it. Naomi Shemer, on the road from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, added a verse that surprised and filled with emotion all who were present. She wrote about the recovery of the city, the return to the wells, to the plaza, to the market, and the *Shofar* that calls from the Temple Mount in *Yir Hatikah*. That day was named *Yom Yerushalayim* and is the most recent celebration to be incorporated into the Hebrew calendar. Since then it is a holiday in Jerusalem. People from all over the country go up to Jerusalem to celebrate its reunification. Again, as on *Yom Haatzmaut*, the streets convert into meeting places. Youths, children, adults, seniors dance in groups along *Yaffo Street*, in *Kikar Safra*, and in *Kikar Tzion*, getting closer and closer each time and with more joy and fervor to the Old City. Thousands of people move through the gates and go directly toward the platform of the *Kotel HaMaaravi*.

It is, without a doubt, a day like no other. I remember as though it were today, the celebrations of one year ago. It was the first time I was in Israel on this date and had actually been living in Jerusalem for six months. From the very moment I began dreaming of my *aliyah*, I knew that Jerusalem was the place where I wanted to live. Jerusalem is a distinct place, with a special energy and a strength that fills you with indescribable sensations. Jerusalem, with its thousands of years old stones who serve as witnesses to the history of our nation, is the capital of the Jewish State. And it was there I found myself, together with my friends who were also *olim jadashim*, feeling part of the celebration. I found it difficult to internalize all that I saw. On one side I saw groups of different *Yeshivot*, women on one side and men on the other, that one could differentiate by the clothes they wore and the flags and signs they carried. On the other side I saw youths from Zionist youth movements from around the world. Each one dressed in a uniform which identified them, carrying Israeli flags, and dancing and singing together. Parents carrying their children in their shoulders and the amazement on the faces of these little children who saw their country united in joy. It is a sensation that is a little foreign to us. For a few hours it appears that the internal differences of our nation do not exist, that together we celebrate the same thing in the same way.

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But at the moment in which one enters the *Ir HaTikah*, the differences begin to return one by one. If one separates a bit from the emotional image that I first described of that day in June, 1967 and tries to see a little ahead of the crowds that fill the streets today, and reenters Jerusalem with the same force of the recovery of 38 years ago, one knows there is a promise to keep. The biggest challenge has not been met. We owe it to ourselves to accomplish what the name of the city signifies -Yerushalyim, Ir Shalom, City of Peace. This day will arrive with the labor of our hands and with the strength of discussion. When we no longer speak of differences as something negative, but rather as a possibility of learning and growing, when living together is peaceful and when in the middle of our celebration, the sadness, resignation, and anger in the eyes of our neighbors do not make us turn our heads in order to ignore their presence. With this, I am not making reference to political conflicts, to status, or religion. I am referring to us all and to the respect for he who belongs to the same nation and has a different vision and for he who does not belong to our people. I speak of the Jews, the seculars, progressives, and the orthodox as well as Moslem, and Christian Arabs, residents of Israel, and non residents. I speak of Christians, Apostolic Roman Catholics or Armenians or Greeks. I refer to the moment in which we are all able to recognize ourselves as brothers and give new significance to the name of where we live.

May we find this year in ourselves and in our neighbors a partner to travel the road on which we can make of Jerusalem, *Yir SHALOM*, a city of Peace for this world and for us all.



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## **CJL: Lima Declaration**

The Executive Committee of the Latin American Jewish Congress meeting in the city of Lima on May 21-22, 2005, with the Jewish Association of Peru as the host, after examining the principal themes on the continental agenda and individual concerns of Jewish interest, resolved to make public the following Declaration, reaffirming the principles that guide its actions and expressing its concern about the negative circumstantial developments:

1. THE LATIN AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS in its capacity as the umbrella agency of Latin American Jewish Communities reaffirms its sound and unwavering commitment to the Republican-Democratic system and a lawful state to whose validity and constant perfecting it will contribute from its unique role in the civil society as a non governmental organization. Likewise, it expresses its intent to advocate for peaceful solutions, friendship, and integration between the countries of the continent and to promote fraternal dialogue between religions and ethnic and social groups.
2. THE LATIN AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS identifies with the defense of human rights and the fight against all forms of racism, discrimination, or xenophobia, a fundamental mission directed at guaranteeing liberty and dignity for all human beings that, in the biblical conception have a common origin and form a unique human family.
3. THE LATIN AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS notices with regret and concern that a very important part of the Latin American population lives under poverty and on the fringe of society, conditions that are unacceptable according to Jewish ethics, which are based upon consideration and respect for our fellow man. Therefore, we advocate that Jewish communities increase their efforts to the maximum in solidarity with society in general, continuing and intensifying the valuable initiatives that are being carried out in countries of the region.
4. THE LATIN AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS categorically condemns all expressions of terrorism, which have presently become the worse universal calamity bringing humanity back to the age of barbarism and scorn for life and moral values.
5. THE LATIN AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS manifests its dismay at the wave of anti-Semitism that has been unleashed in Europe and around the world while using as an excuse the conflict in the Middle East. It repudiates the attempts to delegitimize the State of Israel's right to exist as well as actions against the Zionist movement that was the driving force behind its creation. We exhort a sensible and democratic opinion to react by rejecting the defamation and slander that have been put upon the Jewish State and Jews all over the world. At the same time, we reiterate our fervent desire that the actual conflict can be resolved through peaceful solutions that commence with mutual respect and harmony among the parties involved.
6. THE LATIN AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS, taking note of the final declaration of the recent South American summit of Arab Countries, adopts the response document of the Israelite Confederation of Brazil (CONIB) "No to Terror", and sends its vote of acclaim to this representative entity of the Brazilian Jewish Community for the dignified position it has adopted. The Executive Committee of the CJL for its part sees with deep concern that this

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Summit, a profit-making encounter that strived to help the economies of our countries, can transform itself into a vehicle that brings conflict which is foreign to our region. The Executive Committee of the CJL appeals to the South American tradition of rejection and struggle against terrorism in all its forms, and exhorts that this policy be once again reaffirmed on our continent in a clear and precise manner, where there is no room for ambiguous or distinct interpretations.

7. THE LATIN AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS expresses its total solidarity with the State of Israel and with its struggle to live in peace and security, without the harassment of a ruthless hostility and without the outrageous discrimination suffered at the hands of international organizations. Likewise, it sends a message of fraternal solidarity to those unfortunately numerous Israeli families in mourning due to the most abominable acts of terrorism, a message which is extended to all the victims of terror in the entire world.
8. THE LATIN AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS considers of highest importance the brotherly relationship and the intensification of the bonds and the cooperation among the Jewish communities of all the regions, and likewise between these and the State of Israel. This relationship should be without reducing the independent management of internal policies, as well as the relations that each community should maintain with the government and the civil society of each country, rejecting unsolicited interferences, as experience has shown that these may not be positive in nature.

## Around the Communities...

### **BETH ISRAEL SYNAGOGUE: ARUBA**

\*\*On the occasion of the celebration of Yom HaAtzmaut and Jerusalem Day, the Jewish Community of Aruba welcomed the Ambassador of Israel to Venezuela, Mr. Shlomo Cohen, with a well attended cocktail party and the special participation of the Regesh Israel Folk Dancing group, from Argentina, under the co-direction of Dany Chaves and Ariana Rotstein. Dany Chaves has coordinated two of our Youth Encounters with great success. His dedication and professionalism are legendary, and he is loved by our youth.

\*\*A representative delegation of the Jewish Community of Aruba will be participating in a trip to Israel organized with the cooperation of the Jewish Agency. They will be joining a group from Mexico as well as members of Kol Shearit Israel (Panama) and participants from Puerto Rico.

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## *The United Congregation of Israelites - Jamaica*

Dear All,

With the expertise and hard work of Dr. James Parrent, Executive Director, and members of the Falmouth Heritage Renewal company, the work on the restoration of our cemetery at Falmouth is nearly complete. All the graves have been restored totaling 114, a few more than we have actually recorded.

The site is to be planted with palm trees and the pathways covered with plastic and gravel. We still have to erect an appropriate sign and publish a brochure. A feature of the brochure is that the Jamaica Jewish Genealogical Society will offer anyone wishing to research a family name, access to the Jamaica Jewish Genealogical Society's center and database in the soon to be completed Jewish Museum at 92 Duke Street in the Shaare Shalom Hall.

Shalom

Ainsley Henriques

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## TIKKUN HAOLAM

*Tikkun HaOlam, the repair of the world, is a mission which, in Lurianic Kabbalah, has been entrusted to all the souls of Israel after the "breaking of the vessels", which were unable to contain the Light emanating from God in the act of Creation of the universe. Every time man fulfills one of the 613 commandments of the Torah he helps to speed up the final redemption of the world. This story is about the mutual search of man and God in this complex process, in which man keeps destroying what other men try to repair.*

A child is drowning in a river. Joshua the Fisherman saves him, but the stress of the experience proves to be too much for his ailing heart, and he dies shortly thereafter.

Because he has died saving a human life, the fisherman enters Heaven immediately, where the following dialogue (or perhaps hopeful monologue) takes place:

"I've been waiting for you," says God.

"No more than I for You," replies Joshua.

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“You are hard to reach!”

“You are even harder to find, Master of the World!”

“Yet, I keep calling you. Don’t you hear My voice, Joshua?”

“No, and mine is too weak, and too plagued by doubts to raise itself to Your ears...”

“Come, keep Me company. It gets lonely here. At times, My light is overwhelming, even to Me.”

“We need just the tiniest glimmer of Your light to understand the mystery and beauty of our lives. Why can’t we see it?”

“You are always either questioning or asking for something. Can’t you just trust Me and believe?”

“It’s so hard when, from the beginning, You taught us to search, to inquire, the straight line not being necessarily the shortest distance between You and us!”

“Sometimes I’d like to trade places with you. As human beings, in every lifetime you go through a cycle of search and self-discovery. I, on the other hand, am never born nor reborn. I simply Am... I hold all the pieces of the puzzle, you are one of them. You are prompted by the awareness of your mortality. In My eternity, years last less than milliseconds, and mean nothing. My kingdom is everlasting and I have no successors...”

Joshua, at this point, could not contain himself and burst out:

“How can You complain? In the brief time allotted to us in every lifetime look at all we have to accomplish! Do You think it’s easy to repair the world? I admit that, after the six days of the Creation You renewed Your soul with the Shabbat, and You gave us its glory and peace, but is that enough when we must re-create the world every day, and Evil is always ready to destroy our work?”

God, who rather liked Joshua, decided to ignore his impertinence, and simply replied:

“Do you have any idea of how many worlds I destroyed before I created yours? Not that My Creation was that successful! Countless times I’ve been tempted to scratch off the results of My experiment, but then I meet someone like Abraham, whose unwavering faith in Me dissuades Me at the last moment.”

“We need more rainbows,” reflected the fisherman.

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"You need more Noahs! You have polluted my Creation so much that soon you won't be able to see the rainbow, testimony of My promise to you never to extinguish life on Earth."

"Many of us wonder if we will destroy what You pledged to preserve. Is it too late already?"

The Maker chose to be silent, and Joshua shuddered.

*Martha E. Lichtenstein*

*Aruba, June 2005*



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## World Jewish Congress Latin American Branch

### THE WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS MEETS WITH THE POPE

**Vatican City**-A select delegation of Jewish leaders headed by Edgar Bronfman, president of the World Jewish Congress and Israel Singer, chairman of the Board of Directors of the organization, were received at the Vatican by Pope Benedict XVI.

The Latin American Jewish Congress was represented at the audience by its president, Jack L. Terpins and by Rabbi Henry I. Sobel, of Sao Paulo.

At the beginning of this momentous audience, Pope Benedict met with Bronfman and Singer with whom he had sustained productive encounters before his election as Pontiff. This component involved joint projects between the World Jewish Congress and the Holy Office, including social solidarity initiatives, with special emphasis on Latin America. Other important Jewish Leaders participated in the meeting, among them Shmuel Hadas, who was the first Israeli ambassador to the Vatican.

The second part of the audience was centered on another urgent topic of solidarity which was also coordinated by the WJC: The fight against the AIDS epidemic in Africa.

Amiram Barkat, correspondent for the Israeli daily *Haáretz*, commented that "the World Jewish Congress assigns great importance to these initiatives in that being a Jewish organization, it also actively participates in projects that benefit all of humanity, aside from matters that are of specific Jewish interest, such as anti-Semitism".

During the third session of this audience, The International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations informed the Pope about its activities. Its president, Israel Singer, at the same time chairman of the Board of Directors of the WJC, asked the Pope for his direct intervention in the work in progress for the building of bridges of mutual understanding and appreciation between Jewish and Muslim religious leaders.

The daily *Haáretz* noted that the ambassador from Israel to the Vatican, Oded Ben-Hur, observed that this inspiring audience marked the first time that Benedict XVI received such an important Jewish delegation, signifying "an additional step in the building of relations between the Vatican and Israel and the Jewish people".

The Jewish delegation was treated earlier to a festive dinner at the Vatican offered by Cardinal Walter Kasper, president of the Papal Commission for Religious Affairs with the Jewish Community.

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## **Benedict XVI reassures the Jewish Community that the Catholic Church continues with its full support of the repudiation of anti-Semitism.**

Benedict XVI assured world Jewish leaders at the first audience offered at the Vatican since he was proclaimed the new Pope that the Catholic Church continues to give its full

support of the rejection of anti-Semitism and the fight against that evil, and is prepared to deepen the reflection on the moral and historic consequences of the Holocaust.

On that occasion, the Pontiff reflected on the decisive document *Nostra Aetate*, issued by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) that proposed the development of a better understanding and mutual esteem between Christians and Jews and deplored all demonstrations of hate, persecution, and anti-Semitism.

Speaking in English, Pope Ratzinger told the world Jewish leaders gathered there and led by Bronfman and Singer that he intends to develop the legacy left by his revered predecessor John Paul II. "Upon beginning my own Papacy, I want to assure you that the Church continues to be firm in its promise, in its catechism as well as in all aspects of its existence, to implement this decisive teaching".

John Paul II, who passed away last April 2, was the first Pope to visit a synagogue, the first to make pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and the first to pay homage to the victims of the Nazi extermination camps. The Pope established diplomatic relations with the State of Israel and repeatedly condemned anti-Semitism as a sin against God.

"It is my intention to continue on this path"-proclaimed Benedict XVI. The history of relations between our two communities of faith was complex and often painful, but I am convinced the spiritual patrimony treasured by Christians and Jews is in itself the source of inspiration and wisdom capable of guiding us toward a future of hope, in accordance with the Divine plan".

Benedict XVI insisted that the agonizing past will not be forgotten. "Remembering the past continues to be for both communities a moral imperative and a source of purification in our effort to pray and work on behalf of reconciliation of justice, the respect of human dignity, and in favor of peace".

The Pope called for "a continuing reflection on the profound historic, moral, and theological matters that the experience of the *Shoa* presents", while expressly using the Hebrew term to refer to the Holocaust.

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## *Ima is Calling - By Cheryle Tacher*

*Ima* is calling  
Me home to her heart,  
Too much time has passed,  
Since we've been apart.

I hear your voice,  
Though the distance is far,  
You are always with me,  
Though I'm not where you are.

When I hear your name,  
Chills run through my spine,  
I love you so dearly,  
Beautiful mother of mine.

I hold you so near,  
Your will unbending,  
Your persistence unyielding,  
Your triumphs unending.

From dust you were born,  
You gave life to the land,  
You've been there for me,  
Now I will hold your hand.

You are my reason for being,  
My history I owe to you,  
Mama, I'm on my way,  
My visit's been long overdue.

My homeland, my birthright,  
My family, my soul,  
With Ima forever,  
That is my goal.