

ב"ה

*My  
Jewish  
Birthday*

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MRS. JANE  
SAMPLE

1 Sivan / א סיון

# How to CELEBRATE YOUR JEWISH BIRTHDAY

- 1** **GIVE** extra charity on this day. (If your birthday is on Shabbat or a festival day, do so on the preceding day.)
- 2** **PRAY** with increased concentration and read from the Book of Psalms.
- 3** **STUDY** the chapter in Psalms that corresponds with the years of your life (e.g., on your 30th birthday study Psalm 31, as you are entering your 31st year).
- 4** **STUDY** Torah texts (in addition to your regular study schedule).
- 5** **STUDY** a text from the mystical portion of Torah, and repeat it to others.
- 6** **FIND** a way to lovingly and respectfully have a positive influence on another person on this day.
- 7** **SET ASIDE** a time during the day for private contemplation and stocktaking of the previous year, resolving to correct any errors or wrongdoings and to find ways to improve yourself.
- 8** **ACCEPT** a new mitzvah or positive practice in honor of your birthday.
- 9** **GATHER** with family and friends to joyously celebrate and express your gratitude to G-d.



**DEAR <<NAME>>,**

Mazal tov on your birthday! May the Almighty bless you with many years of health and happiness.

One of the most important statements Judaism makes is that each and every person is unique, and is singularly indispensable to G-d's purpose in creation. The very fact that you were born means that no other person who ever lived, nor any person who ever will live, can accomplish what you can accomplish. Only you have been entrusted by your Creator with the unique set of circumstances and abilities required to fulfill your unique mission in life.

Your birthday is the day on which this mission was inaugurated. Each year on this day, the resources you are granted from Above to accomplish your mission are available to you in a more powerful way. On this day, your mazal, the channels of spiritual sustenance connecting your soul with its source on high, operate in a heightened and more potent manner.

Your Jewish birthday is therefore an opportune time to rededicate yourself to your mission. Because your soul is more connected with its source, any good resolutions you make on this day, and any new initiatives you undertake, are especially empowered to succeed.

Your ability to be a positive influence on others and source of blessing in their lives is also heightened on this day. You can open these channels of blessing for yourself and for others by increasing your learning, praying, and good deeds on this day.

Celebrate this special occasion with family and friends to show your appreciation for the divine gift of life, and to inspire others with the message of the Jewish birthday.

**<<SHLIACH NAME>>**

<<Mosad Name>>

## THE MONTH

# Sivan



## סיון

**SIVAN IS THE MONTH** of the Torah. On the sixth day of Sivan in the year 1313 BCE, G-d gave the Torah to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai. This date is marked annually with the festival of Shavuot. The entire Jewish nation, comprised of approximately three million souls at the time, observed and experienced direct divine revelation, unparalleled in all of history and unrivalled by the claims of any other nation or religion. This tradition was then passed intact in an unbroken chain down the ages, despite dispersion and persecution without rival in history. More than the Jewish nation have preserved the Torah, it is the Torah that has preserved the Jewish nation.

### MONTH OF REVELATION

Not only its sixth day, but the entire month is associated with the Giving of the Torah. This is reflected in the Talmudic teaching that G-d gave “a threefold Torah (Chumash, Prophets, Writings) to a threefold people (Priests, Levites, Israelites) through a third born (Moshe, born after Aaron and Miriam) on the third day (of preparation) in the third month (Sivan)” (*Shabbat* 88a). Accordingly, the entire third month is associated with the revelation at Sinai.

### HARMONY OF PURPOSE

In Jewish tradition, three represents peace; it is the factor that unites two opposite extremes. The purpose of the Torah, via the other elements in the above quotation, is to bring peace to Creation by uniting it with its Creator. Sivan is a time in which

body (mind) and soul are inspired to work in harmony towards their shared mission in life, in the unifying light of the Torah’s vision.

### THANKSGIVING SEASON

The season for bringing the First Fruits (*bikkurim*) begins on the sixth of Sivan (which is why Shavuot is also called the Festival of *Bikkurim*). Jewish farmers in the Holy Land would bring the first and choicest of the species with which the Torah praises the Promised Land (wheat, barely, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates) to the Jerusalem Temple. After reciting verses of thanksgiving for the Land and its bounty, the fruits would be delivered to G-d’s representatives, the *kohanim* (priests). *Bikkurim*-pilgrimages were regional events, accompanied with public fanfare and excitement.

## THE DAY

1



**THE NUMBER 1** is represented by *alef*—א—the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It symbolizes G-d's Oneness, as expressed in the *Shema*, the ultimate declaration of the Jewish faith: "*Hear, O Israel! G-d is our G-d! G-d is One!*" (Deuteronomy 6:4). The Torah commands us to recite this verse each morning and night to recall that G-d is omnipresent, alone, unique, and indivisible. Jews try to recite the *Shema* as their lives draw to a close. In this sense, *alef* is a cognate of *aluf*—supreme chief. *Alef* also stands for *ohr*—"light." True light is divine light, and the Torah was introduced at Sinai with the letter *alef* of *anochi*, "I": "*I am the Lord your G-d who took you out of the land of Egypt*" (Exodus 20:2). The first Jew, our Patriarch Abraham, is referred to as one ("Abraham was one"—Ezekiel 33:24) in the sense that he was alone against a world steeped in paganism, and also unique and unrivaled. His descendants, the Jewish people, are similarly described in our Shabbat liturgy—"*Who is like Your nation, like Israel, the one nation on earth!*"

## TODAY IN JEWISH HISTORY

**FLOOD WATERS RECEDE:** The great flood began with forty days and nights of rain. Then, for 150 more days, the flood waters remained unchanged over the face of the earth. On this date, 1 Sivan 2105 B.C.E., the waters at last began to recede at the rate of one cubit every four days. The Ark would eventually touch down on Mount Ararat sixteen days later.

**JEWISH NATION ENCAMPS AT SINAI:** On this date in 1313 B.C.E., six weeks after escaping from Egypt, the Jewish people set up camp at the foot of Mount Sinai, united in purpose and filled with overwhelming expectation. Our sages tell us that they camped there "as one man, with one heart," preparing to receive the Torah. However, because of their exhaustion from the journey, Moses would relay no specific instruction for them that day.



## Learning CENTER



**BACKGROUND:** *It has been said that your birthday is G-d saying, "You matter." The very fact that a human soul entered this world means that he or she has an indispensable role to play in the divine plan. The following text from the Talmud (Sanhedrin 37a) dwells on the fact that in the Torah's account of creation (Genesis 1:27), the entire human race was originally created as a single individual. Even the division between man and woman occurred later, when the first human being was split into two entities (see account in Genesis 2:18-24). The Talmud offers four reasons for this phenomenon, and one conclusion to be derived from it.*

Talmud, Sanhedrin 37a

לפיכך נברא אדם  
יחיד: ללמדך  
שכל המאבד נפש אחת מישראל,  
מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו איבד  
עולם מלא; וכל המקיים  
נפש אחת מישראל, מעלה עליו  
הכתוב כאילו קיים עולם מלא.  
ומפני שלום הרביות.  
שלא יאמר אדם לחבירו,  
"אבא גדול מאבך."  
ושלא יהו המינים אומרים:  
הרבה רשויות  
בשמים. ולהגיד גדולתו של  
הקדוש ברוך הוא: שאדם טובע  
כמה מטבעות בחותם אחד, בולן  
דומין זה לזה. ומלה מלכי המלכים  
הקדוש ברוך הוא טבע כל אדם  
בחותמו של אדם הראשון.  
ואין אחד מהן דומה  
לחבירו. לפיכך כל אחד ואחד  
חייב לומר: בשבילי  
נברא העולם.

This is why G-d created mankind as a single individual: (1) To teach us that whoever destroys a single life, it is as if he destroyed an entire world; and whoever sustains a single life, it is as if he sustained an entire world. (2) For the sake of peace: So that no person could say to his fellow, "My ancestor is greater than yours." (3) So that the heretics could not say, "There are numerous authorities in Heaven." (4) To demonstrate the greatness of G-d. When a human being stamps many coins with a single die, they are all identical. Yet G-d stamped every person with the template of the first human, and not one is identical to his or her fellow. Therefore, every person is obligated to say: "The world was created for my sake."



### POINTS TO PONDER

1. Today, you were created. Today, be a creator: make a difference in someone's life.
2. Sometimes, all it takes to sustain an entire world is a friendly smile or a listening ear.
3. You ponder the lives of your ancestors. Did you know that they also analyze yours? They anxiously await to see where you will lead them.
4. You were born with a purpose great enough to justify the rest of creation.
5. G-d wants you to appreciate your uniqueness and use your talents to the fullest.
6. At birth, G-d invested your soul with the powers necessary for your mission on earth. Those powers are heightened today. Make good use of them!
7. At birth, you had no achievements; it was just pure you, and that was cause for great celebration. Always remember, nothing you do can outshine the preciousness of your own self.

## JEWISH BIRTHDAY FAQs

**Q. How can I find out the date of my Jewish birthday?**

**A.** A Jewish birthday calculator is available on line at [www.chabad.org/calendar/birthday.asp](http://www.chabad.org/calendar/birthday.asp).

**Q. Why does my Jewish birthday fall on a different (secular) date each year?**

**A.** The secular calendar year has a 365-day year (366 days in leap-years), in keeping with the annual solar cycle. The Jewish calendar is based on the lunar cycle, resulting in a twelve-month year of approximately 354 days, with an additional month added every two or three years to keep the Jewish year aligned with the solar seasons. This means that a particular date on the Jewish calendar will coincide with different secular dates on different years. In fact, your Jewish birthday will fall on or within a day or two of secular birthday only once in 19 years!

**Q. Can two people born on the same date have different Jewish birthdays?**

**A.** Yes. On the Jewish calendar, the calendar day begins at nightfall and ends the following nightfall. So anyone born between nightfall and midnight will have his or her Jewish birthday one day later than someone born before nightfall on the same secular date.

**Q. Why the party? Is that a Jewish thing?**

**A.** The Torah commands to "Love your fellow as yourself" (Leviticus 18:19), and the great Talmudic sage Rabbi Akiva proclaimed this "a great principal of the Torah." So while a birthday is a time for introspection and self-assessment, also this intensely personal occasion should be utilized to engage with others and share the specialty of the day with them.

SAMPLE



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