

**Eruv Shavuot: A Perspective**  
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**Gerald Clarke**  
**Temple Aliyah, Needham**

My father, ז"ל, passed away on the night of Shavuot so for me, for a few years, that occurrence distorted my view of the Holy Day. Being unable to sit shiva leaves you adrift and in despair – you wonder if you are really a אָבִיבֵל

So here on another year as we for seven weeks, counted the Sefirat HaOmer, we Jews have looked forward, with increasing anticipation and growing joy, to the time of the giving of the Torah by Hashem to ALL Jews of then, now and the future. Shavuot, a Holy Day unlike any other, without an associated mitzvah – for who can separate out just one mitzvah from the Torah to identify the occasion of the giving of all mitzvot?

Shavuot ought to have been seen by me but for the coincidence of his passing, and for all Jews to be seen as the pinnacle of Joy and Celebration, yet from that joy there is the descent over the next Nine Weeks, most rapidly in the three weeks from Shiv'ah Asar B'Tammuz שבעה עשר בתמוז to the abyss of despair that occurs with the arrival of Tisha B'av תשעה באב. So this raises the question of how does Judaism approach the matter of despair? What is despair? It is the loss of hope, the opportunity to resign oneself to a negation of a future, of anything good to come. What is the Jewish perspective? The former Chief Rabbi of Britain, Jonathan Sacks states that in despair a Jew should ask:” What is Hashem calling on me to do in this circumstance?” Over the centuries Jews have regularly been in circumstances and suffered too many times, whether we speak of the loss of the first and second Temple, or in modern times of the Shoah, there have been many opportunities to abandon hope. Yet, the Jews perspective is to rise up from despair, whether as Joseph did on his abandonment by his brothers, or in recent times during the Shoah, the psychotherapist Viktor Frankl saving the lives of his



fellow prisoners in Auschwitz, by helping them realize that they had before them a task to perform or a mission to fulfil that they could only do by surviving. This gave them the will to live.

By comparison, another major religion (Islam) too often leads its adherents to move from despair to striking out with violence. Another major religion (Roman Catholicism) takes a circular approach to despair by suggesting that through the intercession of another, life will return to what it was or better through salvation.

The Jewish perspective is vividly demonstrated in that it takes 9 weeks to descend from the Joy of Shavuot but then less than a week to rise up from despair through Shabbat Nachamu to reach the simple yet inexplicable Joy on Tu B'av ט"ו באב, a holiday of love .

So how are we to consider Shavuot? It sets the standard for our joy, a standard that we must hold before us, to seek to rise up whatever the circumstances and to seek to accomplish what has been set before us rather than dissolve into inaction.