

Evening of Prayer and Unity 5/30/20

D'var Torah by Rabbi Eliezer Hirsch

Thank you Rabbanit Fruchter and the South Philadelphia Shteibel for joining with the Mekor Habracha community for this event and thank you to everyone joining us to help us give strength, solace, and support to our communities.

Rabbi Shimshon Rafael Hirsch, in his commentary on Torah, explains that the primary aspect of Shavuot is actually the period of Omer leading up to it, during which we prepare for Torah by improving our character. He says that the name of Shavuot, which means *weeks*, derives from the importance of those 7 weeks.

Traditionally, the Mishna in Pirkei Avot 6:6 teaches us that there are 48 ways to develop one's character to prepare to obtain the wisdom of the Torah, and those correspond with the 48 days, with one extra day for review, adding up to the 49 days of the Omer. We are reminded of the importance of character development during the period of Omer, when we commemorate the death of the students of Rabbi Akiva, who died because *lo nahagu kavod zeh lazeh, they failed to respect one another*. We can see, then, that respect for others is one of the primary messages of Shavuot.

May we see the time soon, when respect for others becomes paramount for everyone in our city and across the country, so that peace and harmony may prevail. In this spirit of community, let us recite together a chapter of tehillim -- Psalm 130, a prayer for God's mercy at this difficult time.