



אור חדש

New Light Congregation

5915 Beacon Street, Pittsburgh PA 15217 • 412-421-1017 • info@newlightcongregation.org

New Light News May 2026

The Flashlight

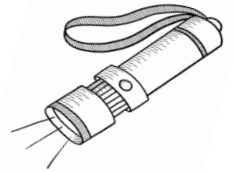
On Shavuot, we read the book of Ruth. The book poses Ruth the Moabite as a heroine. Ruth had married the Israelite son of Naomi, her marriage cut short by the tragic passing of her young husband. Naomi, also widowed, and now bereft of children, has understandably decided to return to her Israelite kinsmen, and she urges her newly widowed young daughters-in-law Ruth and her sister Orpah to return to their Moabite homes, remarry, and rebuild their lives. Naomi urges them to go do as they please – granting them freedom to turn away, a path that Orpah justifiably chooses. But it is not, as we know, the path that Ruth chooses.

In words as famous as they are poetic, Ruth declares to her mother-in-law:

“Do not urge me to leave you.
Wherever you go, I will go;
wherever you lodge, I will lodge;
your people shall be my people,
your God, my God.”

Rabbi Elliot Cosgrove teaches that the power of Ruth’s pledge is not merely its lyrical quality nor that she becomes the paradigm for a righteous convert to Judaism. Ruth’s words and deeds capture the human imagination because she does something that does not come naturally to humans. Granted freedom, she chooses responsibility. Conferred autonomy, she opts for commitment. Given the opportunity to put herself first, she does just the opposite – putting duty to others above all else. It is a theme that frames not just the opening scene but the entire book of Ruth. Ruth’s hesed in her loyalty to Naomi. Naomi’s hesed to Ruth in taking her in. Boaz’s hesed to Ruth in allowing her to glean from his field, and Ruth’s hesed to Boaz in choosing him over younger, perhaps more suitable, suitors. Far more than a quaint pastoral idyll or an inspiring tale of a gentile woman entering the covenant of the Jewish people, the story of Ruth stands as a powerful commentary on the human condition. It is the story of a person, and people, forging community by elevating their concerns for each other over their individual concerns, the quiet heroism of folk forgoing aspects of their own freedom in order to maintain and sustain the needs of the people as a whole.

Why do we read Ruth on the holiday of Shavuot? Seven weeks to the day before we celebrate Shavuot we observed Passover, our festival of freedom, when the children of Israel broke away from the yoke of Pharaoh’s bondage, liberated as free men and women. For seven weeks of seven days, we count the Omer, a temporal and physical journey from the Sea to Mount Sinai, which – unlike the Jubilee year – culminates not with a declaration of freedom, but with Shavuot’s message of law and commitment. A newly emancipated people granted the freedom to do as they please, to wander the desert, choose to direct their freedom toward establishing a



to do as they please, to wander the desert, choose to direct their freedom toward establishing a covenanted community. If Passover is the fulfillment of God's command to "Let my people go," then Shavuot signals the fulfillment of the second half of that same verse, "so that they may serve me." Liberty in the service of law, personal autonomy directed to communal commitment, self-determination hand-in-hand with duty and obligation.

On Shavuot, we stood at the base of Mount Sinai and declared: "We will do and we will listen." Israel did as a nation the very thing that Ruth would later do as an individual, the thing that is far from the most natural thing to do: They leveraged and limited their freedom in service of the needs of the greater whole. The story of Ruth, the story of Shavuot, is that community is neither formed nor sustained by way of liberty alone. Our rights and freedoms are made acceptable, made meaningful, and made sacred only insofar as they are expressed in dialogue with the needs of the wider community of individuals with whom we live.

In our day, in a world that contains the partisan bickering of one against another, we must find ways that we can unite by giving up some of our freedoms to serve the needs of the greater whole. Shavuot teaches us that we as a whole received our blessing to serve God. In Pittsburgh, we demonstrate this by learning Torah together, by attending the Tikkun Leil Shavuot at the JCC where teachers from all the movements come to learn Torah with the Jewish community as a whole.

Please come to participate in this special event which begins Erev Shavuot, Thursday, May 21st at 10 PM. At the Tikkun, we will certainly learn more about Ruth and other features of the Shavuot holiday. Come show that we are a people who say to God naaseh v'nishma, "we will do and we will learn," as a response to the revelation of Torah.

Hag Sameach,

Rabbi

Tikkun Leil Shavuot

Thursday, May 21, 10:00 PM - 1:00 AM, Pittsburgh JCC

Join your Pittsburgh community in person for a night of learning with well-known local rabbis and thinkers. Free and Open to the Community. No Registration Necessary. Cheesecake & Coffee. Dietary Laws Observed.

For the session schedule and details please see

<https://jewishpgh.org/occasion/tikkun/>

Shavuot Services

Services will be held in Helfant Chapel and on Zoom on Friday, May 22 and Saturday (Shabbat, with Yizkor) May 23 at 9:45 AM. On Friday, May 22, we will join Beth Shalom's service at 6:00 PM.

Co-Presidents' Report

April started with Pesach seders and services. A time for families to join together to celebrate our freedom from slavery. We were pleased to be joined by members of Tree of Life Congregation for services on the first two and last two days of the holiday.

Last week, the Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition hosted a zoom presentation by TOLI. The presentation had three purposes: to review the new building design, to review the overall construction plan and timeframes, and to request support for an exception to the Zoning ordinances regarding noise abatement.

As you have perhaps seen elsewhere, the redesigned building is about 2/3s the original, sharply reducing the area where the school and social hall were located. The chapel is “right-sized,” taking about half the area of the original chapel. The other half is devoted to exhibition space. A small garden now graces the opposite end of the building (about half of the original social hall). In discussing the slides afterwards, Steve noted that the exhibition space was much less than originally planned; Barbara noted that the kitchen appeared non-existent!

Preliminary construction is slated to occur in late May, with initial work on the demolition of the interior of the sanctuary. Full construction should start in August and be completed by December 2027. The Memorial will be built June-November, 2027. The presentation from the April 22 SHUC meeting can be found here:

https://shuc.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/TOL.Community-Update.4_22_26.FINAL_.with-correction.pdf

The reason for the presentation, though, was the need to apply to the Zoning Board on May 14th for a noise abatement exception. Seems a noisy generator is required for construction as adequate other sources of power are not available. We hope the Board grants the exception so that construction can finally begin.

Next week, the 10.27 Healing Partnership is seeking to establish a forum for the three congregations to talk together. It has been many years since we have been involved with our sister congregations. The co-presidents will attend this first meeting.

Barbara Caplan & Stephen Cohen

May Board Meeting

The meeting is Monday, May 4, 7:00 PM, in Helfant and on Zoom.

Honoring Rabbi Mark Asher Goodman

Beth Shalom will honor Rabbi Goodman's years of service on Friday and Saturday, May 22 and May 23.

There will be a Friday evening service at 6:00 PM, followed by a dinner as well as a special kiddush after morning services on Saturday.

Registration is required for the dinner. The deadline to RSVP is May 8. For more information and to register, please see

<https://bethshalompgh.org/2026-celebration/>

May Birthdays

Hilda Goldhamer
Rachelle Grobstein
Aryeh Sherman

May Anniversaries

Gerry & Dr. George Tessler
Brenda & Barry Werber

Reminders

- To purchase Memorial Plaques, Simcha Tree Leaves or Stones contact Barbara Caplan.
- To purchase bricks for our “Garden of Freedom” contact Barbara Caplan.
- To purchase Giant Eagle gift cards contact Karen Coburn.
- For information on our cemetery contact Stephen Cohen.

NEW LIGHT CONGREGATION

5915 Beacon Street
412-421-1017
www.newlightcongregation.org

Rabbi
Co-President/Social VP/Yahrzeits
Co-President/Cemetery/Website
Membership
Sisterhood
Treasurer/Men’s Club
Religious Committee
Secretary/Calendar

Jonathan Perlman rabbi@newlightcongregation.org
Barbara Caplan barbaracaplan@comcast.net
Stephen Cohen info@newlightcongregation.org
Debbi Salvin dgsalvin@pobox.com
Sharyn Stein
Harold Caplan haroldcaplan@comcast.net
Carol Black, Eric Cohen, Bruce Hyde
Janet Cohen janet@newlightcongregation.org



New Light Congregation Calendar May 2026

Iyyar – Sivan 5786

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 7:57p Candle lighting Services, 6:00 PM	2 Parshas Emor 9:04p Havdalah (48 min) Services, 9:45 AM
3	4 Board Meeting, 7:00 PM	5	6 Talmud class, 6:00 PM	7	8 8:04p Candle lighting Services, 6:00 PM	9 Parshas Behar-Bechukosai 9:12p Havdalah (48 min) Services, 9:45 AM
10	11	12	13 Talmud class, 6:00 PM	14	15 8:11p Candle lighting Services, 6:00 PM	16 Parshas Bamidbar 9:18p Havdalah (48 min) Services, 9:45 AM
17	18	19	20 Talmud class, 6:00 PM	21 Erev Shavuos 8:16p Candle lighting Tikkun Leil, 10:00 PM, JCC	22 Shavuos I 8:17p Candle lighting Services, 9:45 AM Services, 6:00 PM	23 Shavuos II 9:25p Havdalah (48 min) Services, 9:45 AM
24	25	26	27 Talmud class, 6:00 PM	28	29 8:23p Candle lighting Services, 6:00 PM	30 Parshas Nasso 9:30p Havdalah (48 min) Services, 9:45 AM
31						