

following the commandment in the Torah, they would count ahead to Shavuot, a celebration of the full harvest. Today, while we are no longer primarily an agrarian people, we continue the practice of counting these days forward, from the evening of the second Seder to the night before Shavuot.

Like so many of our rituals, counting the Omer has acquired multiple meanings over time. Beyond its original agricultural significance, numbering these days has become a way for us to experience the link between physical freedom (marked by the Exodus from Egypt), and spiritual purpose — which began with the Revelation of the Torah at Sinai. Every year, as we tell the story of our redemption from slavery, we are reminded that the story does not end there. Freedom is just the beginning. Over time, our story becomes more complex, more heartbreaking, more interesting, and in the end more *ours* – holding at its center the obligation to remain true to the principles of Torah, and to live with a sense of God's presence in our lives.

Counting the Omer also gives us reason to think about how we make our actions count in the world. What sparks us to carry out an

(continued on page 4)

Reflections...

By Cantor Jennie Chabon



On Sunday, May 24th, Jews across the world will celebrate Shavuot, one of the most beautiful and most neglected of our holidays. In contrast to Passover—a holiday that is loved and celebrated by even the least observant Jews—Shavuot is a holiday that many Jews haven't even heard of, let alone celebrated. Yet it is the day on which we