

Welcome to all our family and friends.
My thanks to Ruth and the other ladies for all their work in preparing this meal.

Today is Shavuot. As we know, most of our festivals consists of a first day, followed by 7 Intermediate days, or **חול המועד** , and then the concluding festival day, or **עצרת** .

In the case of Pesach, we apparently do not have such a concluding festival, however, our sages tell us that we can consider the period from Pesach to Shavuot as one long festival. The first day of Pesach is the opening day, the 7 weeks of the Omer correspond to the seven Intermediate days and Shavuot corresponds to the concluding day.

This year Shabbat follows immediately after the festival so we had to make **ערוב תבשילין** .

One of the original reasons for this Rabbinic device, which enables us to prepare food on the festival day for the Shabbat, was to make sure we would not be worrying about having enough food ready for any guests who might come. This concern would spoil our enjoyment of the festival and Shabbat. This shows the importance our sages put on inviting guests, or **הכנסת אורחים** .

Avraham, the first Jew, is also the first mentioned in the Bible as making the welcome of guests his prime activity. In Berashit 18:7, it says that Avraham ran himself to the herd to fetch a tender, young calf for the three angels who came to visit him. Rashi quotes here the Midrash (Berashit Rabbah) that in fact he fetched three calves and slaughtered them, just so that each visitor could have a whole tongue, which was apparently considered a great delicacy.

Due to much hard work by my wonderful wife Ruth, I am able to follow this great tradition of inviting guests throughout the year on both Hagim and Shabbatot. This always gives us great pleasure from seeing so many members of our family and so many of our dear friends.

May we all be granted many, many years of enjoying our festive occasions together, as we are doing today.

חג שמח