



12 - 18 May, 2019
7 - 13 Iyar, 5779

Torah:

Leviticus 21:1 - 24:23

Haftorah:

Ezekiel 44:15-31

■ **CALENDARS**

We have Jewish Calendars, if you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi / Chaplain to contact us.

■ **FAMILY PROGRAMS**

Do you have family on the outside who are struggling, please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

■ **GRAPE JUICE & MATZAH**

Aleph offers free Grape Juice and Matzoh for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll, it is available to all prisons.

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LIFE IS A PICTURE POSTCARD....

I was planning to procrastinate, but I never got around to it.

Whether you consider the above quotation wise, witty or silly, it can actually be quite a sobering thought. How many of us can truly say we don't put off important things we know we should have done yesterday? Don't you just go green with envy when you meet those super-efficient amazons who are so punctual, organized and always put together? Don't they infuriate you...with yourself?

From my own experience I now know that if something is important I better attend to it immediately, otherwise I simply don't trust myself to "get around to it." I know I could benefit from a Time Management course. In fact, I once signed up for one but I never made it there. No time. There are still so many new ideas, projects and plans I'd like to get around to. I know that with better personal discipline they might actually materialize.

You might be surprised to learn that effective time management is not only a professional value but also a religious imperative. This week's Parshah details the Jewish Festivals, in the context of which we read about the Counting of the Omer during the 49 days between Passover and Shavuot. Just as the Israelites counted the days after the Exodus in eager anticipation to receive the Torah, so do we count these 49 days

annually.

But why count time? Time marches on inexorably, whether we take note of it or not. What value is there in counting the days? The answer is that we count these 49 days to make us conscious of the preciousness of every single day. To make us more sensitive to the value of a day, an hour, a moment. As Rabbi Sholom DovBer of Lubavitch once said, "A summer's day and a winter's night is a year."

I heard a classic analogy on this theme in the name of the saintly Chofetz Chaim, Rabbi Israel Meir Kagan (1838-1933). Life is like a picture postcard, he said. Ever had the experience of being on vacation and sending a picture postcard home or to a friend? We start writing with a large scrawl and then think of new things to say and before we know it we're at the end of the card and there's no more room. So what do we do? We start writing smaller and then when we're out of space we start winding our words around the edges of the card to get it all in. Before we know it, we're turning the card upside down to squeeze in the last few vital words in our message.

Sound familiar? Isn't life like that? We start off young and reckless without a worry in the world and as we get older we realize that life is short. So we start cramming and trying to squeeze in all those important things we never got around to. Sometimes our attempts are quite desperate, even pathetic, as we seek to put some meaning into our lives before it's too late. (Maybe that's what a mid-life

Parshat Emor

crisis is all about.)

So the Torah tells us to count our days – because they are, in fact, numbered. We each have an allotted number of days and years in which to fulfill the purpose for which we were created. Hopefully, by counting time we will appreciate it better. So, whatever it is that is important for each of us to get done, please G-d, we will all get around to it.

By Rabbi Yossy Goldman

THE GIFT OF FORGIVENESS

The Jewish year is filled with holidays that commemorate past events: Passover is celebrated on the day we were liberated from Egypt; Shavuot, on the day we received the Torah; Rosh Hashanah, the day of judgment, the day Adam and Eve were judged for the sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge. And on the day the Jewish people received the second set of tablets, which represented the atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf, we celebrate Yom Kippur.

In truth, Judaism does not believe in an anniversary as merely a celebration of the past. According to the teachings of Chassidism, the same energy that occurred in the past is available and more easily accessible on the anniversary of that event. A wedding anniversary, for example, is a day when the commitment, devotion, love and friendship that the couple experienced in the past can be readily reawakened. By the same token, on Passover the spirit of freedom is once again in the air, and on Yom

Kippur we access the energy of atonement.

Which leads us to the one exception: the holiday of Sukkot.

In the Torah reading of Emor, G-d commands Moses:

Speak to the children of Israel, saying: On the fifteenth day of this seventh month is the festival of Sukkot, a seven-day period to the L-rd. . . . In order that your [ensuing] generations should know that I had the children of Israel live in booths when I took them out of the land of Egypt. I am the L-rd, your G-d (Leviticus 23:34, 43).

We sit in the sukkah to remind ourselves that when we left Egypt, G-d had us live in huts. But why do we celebrate the holiday six months after the Exodus, on a day that is not the anniversary of any profound historical event?

Interestingly, Sukkot is the most joyous of all the holidays. While on Passover there is no explicit commandment to rejoice, and the Torah mentions the word “joy” only once in relation to Shavuot, on Sukkot the Torah instructs us to rejoice no less than three times.

Sukkot teaches us that we don’t need to wait for an anniversary, when a unique energy flows from above. Through the very act of building the sukkah, we have the power to sanctify an otherwise regular day.

This explains why the mitzvah of sukkah is unique in that it encompasses our entire being. The holiness is not reserved for a specific action, such as eating matzah or hearing the shofar, but rather it is all-encompassing. Anything we do in the sukkah—eating, drinking, reading the paper or just relaxing—is a holy spiritual act that connects us to the Divine. Because such is the power of the Jew: to sanctify the mundane and to imbue daily activities with spirituality and holiness.

On Sukkot our joy reaches its climactic peak because Sukkot represents the ability to feel closeness and love to our Beloved even on the days that are not our wedding anniversary (Adapted from the teachings of the Rebbe, Likkutei Sichos, vol. 22, pp. 132ff).

By Rabbi Menachem Feldman

LAG BAOMER

Lag BaOmer, the 33rd day of the Omer count—this year, May 23, 2019—is a festive day on the Jewish calendar.

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who lived in the second century of the Common Era, was the first to publicly teach the mystical dimension of the Torah known as the Kabbalah, and is the author of the classic text of Kabbalah, the Zohar. On the day of his passing, Rabbi Shimon instructed his disciples to mark the date as “the day of my joy.”

The chassidic masters explain that the final day of a righteous person’s earthly life marks the point at which all their deeds, teachings and work achieve their culminating perfection and the zenith of their impact upon our lives. So each Lag BaOmer, we celebrate Rabbi Shimon’s life and the revelation of the esoteric soul of Torah.

Lag BaOmer also commemorates another joyous event. The Talmud relates that in the weeks between the Jewish holidays of Passover and Shavuot, a plague raged among the disciples of the great sage Rabbi Akiva (teacher

of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai), “because they did not act respectfully towards each other.” These weeks are therefore observed as a period of mourning, with various joyous activities proscribed by law and custom. On Lag BaOmer the deaths ceased. Thus, Lag BaOmer also carries the theme of loving and respecting one’s fellow (ahavat Yisrael).

In Jewish History

Sunday, 7 Iyar, 5779 - May 12, 2019

Jerusalem Walls Dedicated (335 BCE)

The rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem was celebrated with great jubilation nearly 88 years after they were destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia.

Venetian Ghetto (1516)

On the 7th of Iyar, 1516, the Venetian City Council decreed that all Jews be segregated to a specific area of the city.

Venice’s ghetto was surrounded by water, with a canal leading to its gates. At night the “guards” patrolled the waters around the ghetto to ensure that the night curfew wasn’t violated. At the same time of the establishment of this ghetto, numerous other degrading laws were enacted, including the requirement that all Jews wear yellow stars as identification.

Despite all these restrictions, the Jewish community blossomed and functioned normally. In 1797, the ghetto was abolished by Napoleon during the course of the French Revolution.

The site chosen to accommodate the Jews had once housed the city’s foundries, gettos in Italian -- and thus the eventual popularization throughout Europe of the word “ghetto” to describe the city sections where Jews were forced to reside.

Passing of Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim of Luntschitz, “Kli Yakar” (1619)

Born in the year 1550 in Luntschitz, Poland, with just the name Ephraim, the name Sholomo was added later during a life-threatening illness (a common practice in Judaism).

Shabbat, 13 Iyar, 5779 - May 18, 2019

Jews Expelled from Berne (1427)

The Jews of Berne, Switzerland were expelled on this date in 1427. Berne had a long history of expulsions and anti-Jewish riots.

Rabbi Yisrael Aryeh Leib (1952)

Rabbi Yisrael Aryeh Leib, brother of Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, was the youngest of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak and Chana Schneerson’s three sons.

Born in Nikolayev in 1909, he quickly became renowned as a scholar of exceptional genius. At a young age, Yisrael Aryeh Leib was already teaching Tanya, the mystical foundational work of Chabad Chassidism, to an audience of eager adults.

He eventually immigrated to Israel, and in his later years he moved to Liverpool, England, to study in the local university. It was there that he passed away in 1952.

Rabbi Yisrael Aryeh Leib is interred in Safed,

Israel.