

# Torah Weekly

May 3-9, 2020  
9-15 Iyar, 5780  
Torah: Emor: Leviticus 21:1-24:23  
Haftorah: Ezekiel 44:15-31  
**PARSHAT EMOR**

**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 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**  
We offer free Grape Juice and Matzah for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

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**Can You Wait?** There is an interesting agricultural mitzvah called *orlah*. The commandment states that when we plant a tree, we are prohibited to eat its fruit for the first three years. Once this time has passed, we are free to enjoy the fruit and thank G-d for the blessings He has given us. There is a mystical explanation of the mitzvah that provides an insight into one of the foundations of personal and spiritual growth. The very first failing of the very first human beings was the desire for instant gratification. The first transgression recorded in the Torah is when Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden fruit. Although this story is famous, what is not so well known is that the fruit of the forbidden tree was not intended to be eternally prohibited. Adam and Eve were created on Friday afternoon. They were instructed not to eat the fruit for only three hours, until Shabbat. Once Friday night had arrived, the fruit would have been theirs to enjoy. They lacked the self-control to delay that pleasure. The three years that we wait before eating fruit of any tree is a reminder of the three hours that Adam and Eve did not wait to eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. The delicacies of the world were given to us to enjoy. But self-control and

discipline remind us that there is more to life than just eating delicious fruit. Creating boundaries around our indulgences helps create a focus and consciousness that there is a bigger picture. Enjoying life's blessings is just a small part of an existence also filled with meaning, values and a higher purpose. Greed, lack of control, the need for instant gratification and hedonism are destructive, and create empty lives and purposeless existence. The delicious fruit trees are G-d's gift to us. But the commandment to wait three years before enjoying them is an even greater gift, the gift of discipline and self-control. *By Rabbi Michael Gourarie*

## 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 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 Yossi Goldman*

**May 4, 2020 --- 10 Iyar, 5780**

**Passing of Eli (891 BCE)**

Eli the High Priest died upon learning that the Holy Ark containing the Tablets was captured by the Philistines, and that his two sons were killed in battle. Eli was the 13th in the line of the "*Shoftim*" ("judges") who led the People of Israel during the four centuries between the passing of Joshua in 1245 BCE and the crowning of King Saul in 879 BCE.

**May 7, 2020 --- 13 Iyar, 5780**

**Passing of 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 1906, 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.

**May 8, 2020 --- 14 Iyar, 5780**

**"Second Passover" (1312 BCE)**

A year after the Exodus, G-d instructed the people of Israel to bring the Passover offering on the afternoon of Nissan 14, and to eat it that evening, roasted over the fire, together with matzah and bitter herbs, as they had done on the previous year just before they left Egypt. "There were, however, certain persons who had become ritually impure through contact with a dead body, and could not, therefore, prepare the Passover offering on that day. They approached Moses and Aaron ... and they said: '...Why should we be deprived, and not be able to present G-d's offering in its time, amongst the children of Israel?'" (Numbers 9). In response to their plea, G-d established the 14th of Iyar as a "second Passover" (*pesach sheini*) for anyone who was unable to bring the offering on its appointed time in the previous month. The day thus represents the "second chance" achieved by *teshuvah* the power of repentance and "return." In the words of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch, "The Second Passover means that it's never a 'lost case.'"

**May 8, 2020 ---14 Iyar, 5780**

**Rabbi Meir (2nd Century CE)**

Rabbi Meir, a second century scholar and scribe, was among the foremost disciples of Rabbi Akiba. His colleagues called him Meir because he "enlightened the eyes of the sages" with his genius and scholarship ("Meir" comes from the Hebrew word "*Or*," light).

Rabbi Meir's long life was rife with personal tragedy (see the links below for details). Aside for his personal travails, he lived in the troubled times following the destruction of the second Holy Temple. After his beloved teacher, Rabbi Akiva, was executed by the Romans, he fled to Babylon until the persecutions eased up. His wisdom and teachings are so often quoted in the Mishnah and Talmud that every anonymous teaching in the Mishnah is attributed to him. His wife, Beruria, was also famous for her Torah knowledge, piety, and wisdom. He is buried in the holy city of Tiberias.

**May 9, 2020 --- 15 Iyar, 5780**

**Matzah Depleted (1313 BCE)**

The supply of matzah (unleavened bread) which the Jewish people brought out of Egypt--enough for 60 meals--was exhausted on the 15th of Iyar, the 30th day after the Exodus. The people complained to Moses that they have nothing to eat. G-d notified them that He will rain down "bread from heaven" to sustain them (Exodus 16)