

# Torah Weekly

May 8- 14, 2022  
7 - 13 Iyar, 5782

Torah Reading:  
Emor: Leviticus 21:1 - 24:23  
Haftarah:  
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 Matzoh for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

Hyman & Martha Rogal Center  
5804 Beacon Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15217  
412-421-0111  
Fax: 412-521-5948  
www.alephne.org  
info@alephne.org



**ALEPH INSTITUTE**  
No One Alone,  
No One Forgotten.

## In Search of Balance

With so many demands tugging at us constantly, many of us are on a perpetual search for balance in our lives. We are looking to find that miraculous state of equilibrium and harmony that can draw the many facets of our lives inward.

*Six days shall work be done. But the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a calling of holiness; you shall do no work. It is a Sabbath to G-d in all your dwellings . . . (Leviticus 23:3)*

The six days of the week, from Sunday until Friday, represent the six basic directions of the three-dimensional physical universe: north-south, east-west and up-down. They represent the fundamental modes of reaching out to the six directions of creation.

But these six outward-bound directions could not exist without a center point. The Shabbat is the center point that draws all six points together. It is the axis or focal point at the center of the six directions. It reflects an inward look, representing how we integrate spiritual illumination into ourselves.

All week long, in our struggle to gain spirituality, we operate in a masculine mode of conquest and assault, in a state of restlessness.

Throughout these six days, we dominate and exert influence over our surroundings. We are in a constant state of conflict, choosing between those elements of our world that we are to embrace and develop and those that must be rejected and overpowered.

But every Shabbat, we enter afresh into a spiraling cycle of harmony, serenity, and peace. After having asserted ourselves and having accomplished our

goals during the weekdays, we take a respite from our battles.

On Shabbat, we refrain from the selection and suppression process altogether, as we enter into a feminine mode within ourselves and within creation, a state of harmony, peacefulness, restfulness, and receptivity. For this reason, Shabbat is referred to in the feminine, as in Shabbat hamalkah, "the Shabbat queen," or kallah, "bride."

Shabbat is the source of blessing for both the week that preceded it as well as the one that follows.

Similarly, in Judaism, a woman is considered the source of blessing for her home. Our sages declared, "A man receives blessings only through the merit of his wife," and "Joy, blessing, goodness, Torah, and protection come from the wife."

This is because though you can have an abundance of blessing in your life, it isn't really yours until you are able to stop, appreciate, and absorb its goodness.

On Shabbat, we can finally absorb the blessing of our previous week's toil, as well as invigorate ourselves to continue on the new journey of the oncoming week. We give meaning to the past while we renew our energies for the coming workweek.

The woman has been entrusted with lighting the candles to usher in this holy day which is so representative of the feminine mode. Even "if the husband wants to kindle the candles himself, his wife takes precedence." For the same reason, it is preferable for a man to recite the Havdalah prayer at the conclusion of the Shabbat, ushering in the weekday work.

With the many demands of modern life, we need the holy day of the Shabbat more than ever, to bring blessings, harmony, and balance into our lives.

By Chana Wiesberg

## Grain, Growth and Goodness

We are commanded by the Torah to bring, on the second day of Passover, a measure—an omer—of the first cutting of our barley harvest to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem as an offering to G-d, and not to partake of that year's grain crop until that offering is made. We then count 49 days, and on the 50th day, which is Shavuot, we bring the first of our wheat harvest as an offering to G-d, and we do not use of the year's wheat crop for Temple offerings until this is done.

Hence, the 49-day count leading from Passover to Shavuot is called "the Counting of the Omer"—a reference to the omer of barley that was brought on the first day of the count.

As always in the Torah, there are eternal personal and societal insights to be gleaned from particular public ritual.

In biblical tradition, barley is primarily animal food. Wheat is the key and ideal human food.

The Hebrew word for offering, *korban*, means "to draw near." This 49-day period of the Sefirat HaOmer (the Omer count), the arc between these two offerings of barley and wheat, is an opportune time for spiritual and ethical self-development. It represents the opportunity to draw close to G-dliness the entire universe of the human personality, from the

most basic drives for self-preservation to the most subtle intellectual and artistic insight.

Each one of us contains a broad range of emotional and intellectual characteristics. Regarding the emotional aspects, most of us would agree that a “barley offering” is in order. The animalistic appetites for physical pleasure and expression of ego must be controlled and tamed by connecting them to the Divine. We must offer up our physical drives and desires to control by G-d, lest they get the better of us. We see every day the harm caused to individuals and those around them, as well as to whole societies, by the untrammelled expression of the animal drives.

When it comes to our intellectual and creative side, however, we are inclined to believe that all intellectual and artistic endeavors are inherently positive, inasmuch as they are uniquely human and intrinsically refined. There are those who would argue that untrammelled intellectual and artistic expression is itself a fundamental good.

Torah rejects this premise. We must also bring an offering of our “wheat”—our human endeavors, the uniquely human aspects of our soul—to G-d. If we do not bind our intellect and creativity to the unchanging and transcendent G-dly values articulated by Torah and fed into our consciousness by the G-dly soul, then—no matter how profound our musings or how refined our aesthetic—we risk creating and inspiring falsehood, evil and destruction. Not all art inspires positive behavior or attitudes, not every music uplifts the soul, nor is every philosophy helpful or even benign.

Indeed, there is nothing more destructive than negative concepts, beliefs and societal paradigms. All the worst evils of a terribly violent and inhumane 20th century stemmed not from misused “barley,” greed and base animal passions, but from misused “wheat,” malignant ideologies. Archimedes of Syracuse famously said, “Give me a place to stand upon, and with a lever I will move the whole world.” That place exists; it is the human mind. The only question is—“to where the movement?” The ideas in those minds can lift the world up to the heights of virtue and peace, or cast it down to the depths of depravity and destruction. Only by shining the light of G-dliness into our souls can we distinguish between the ideas and creations that refine humanity and those that pollute it. The

process of counting and living the Omer arc gives us the ability and clarity to begin each step of our intellectual, creative, societal or political endeavor by asking: “Does this essay, or poem, or work of art, or piece of music, or speech, or campaign to mold public opinion move us closer to unity by expressing a G-dly vision of a harmonious, uplifted, and refined world?”

If we do, it will.

*By Shlomo Yaffe*

**Sunday, May 8, 2022 --- 7 Iyar, 5782**

**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 "Christian 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). Rabbi Sholomo Ephraim was a disciple of the famed Talmudist, Rabbi Sholomo Luria, author of the Yam Shel Sholomo, as well as the great Jewish kabalist and philosopher, Rabbi Judah Lowe, known as the “Maharal of Prague.”

In the year 1604, after having first headed the yeshivah in Levov, he was appointed rabbi of Prague, replacing Rabbi Lowe, who was then quite elderly. He held the position until his passing.

He is the author of a number of works, but is perhaps best known for his work *Kli Yakar* (a commentary on the Torah) and *Olelot Ephraim* (a collection of sermons).

Among his prominent students was Rabbi Yom Tov Lipman Heller, author of a classic commentary on the Mishnah called *Tosfot Yom Tov*.

**Tuesday, May 10, 2022 --- 9 Iyar, 5782**

**Passing of R. Nissan Nemanov (1984)**

R. Nissan Nemanov served as *mashpia* (chassidic mentor) at Yeshivat Tomchei Tmimim Lubavitch in Brunoy, France, where he taught and guided many thousands of students. He was renowned for his piety and for his devotion to the sixth and seventh Lubavitcher Rebbes, R. Yosef Yitzchak and R. Menachem Mendel Schneerson. It was said of him that he reached the level of the “intermediate man” as explained in Tanya.

**Wednesday, May 11, 2022—10 Iyar, 5782**

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.

**Thursday, May 12, 2022 --- 11 Iyar, 5782**

**Jewish Books Confiscated (1510)**

1,500 Jewish books were confiscated in Frankfurt am Main, Germany at the instigation of an apostate (*Meshumad*) on the 11th of Iyar.

**Passing of R. Naftali of Ropshitz (1827)**

R. Naftali of Ropshitz, a leading disciple of R. Yaakov Yitzchak Horowitz, the “Seer of Lublin,” was one of the prominent Rebbes in Galicia during the early nineteenth century. He passed away on 11 Iyar 5587 (1827).

**Friday, May 13, 2022 --- 12 Iyar, 5782**

Roman Jews Granted Privileges (1402)

On the 12th of Iyar, 1402, the Jews of Rome were granted "privileges" by Pope Boniface IX. They were given legal right to observe their Shabbat, protection from local oppressive officials, their taxes were reduced and orders were given to treat Jews as full-fledged Roman citizens.

**Shabbat, May 14, 2022 --- 13 Iyar, 5782**

**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 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.