

Torah Weekly

May 15-21, 2022
14-20 Iyar, 5782

Torah Reading:
Behar: Leviticus 25:1 - 26:2
Haftarah:
Jeremiah 32:6 - 22

PARSHAT
BEHAR

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).

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No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

When You Mess Up

You've taken a wrong turn. You've made a decision that you now recognize is going to cost you dearly. Is there any way to get back on track? Can you make up for the lost time and momentum? Is the path of return too tedious and too impossibly difficult?

Judaism has an empowering and uplifting message, learned from the fascinating holiday of Pesach Sheni, "the Second Passover."

In the first year after the Exodus, the Jewish people were instructed to bring the Paschal sacrifice on the 14th of Nissan and eat it that evening, just as they had done the previous year. There were individuals, however, who had become ritually impure and could not bring the offering. They approached Moses, asking for some recourse.

In response, G-d established the 14th of Iyar as a Second Passover. Anyone who did not bring a [Passover](#) offering—either because of impurity or because he had willfully transgressed G-d's will—was given the opportunity to compensate for his shortcoming by bringing an offering on Pesach Sheni.

There are three points that I find fascinating about this holiday:

1. Unlike other holidays, which were unilaterally commanded by G-d, this holiday was inspired in response

to the outcry of individuals.

2. Unlike Passover, which is seven days in length, this holiday accomplishes its purpose in only one day.
3. The holiday falls a month after Passover.

The lesson of [Pesach Sheni](#) is that it's never too late.

No one is ever too lost or too forgone to make amends in their lives. When we stray or mess up, if we recognize how far gone we are and we are shaken to our core, we can rebound. But what's fascinating is that this rebounding is not the regular step-by-step conventional formula. In a single instant—or in this case, in a single day—rather than the seven-day process of Passover, we can redefine our past and mold our future.

But for this to be real, it needs to come from deep within. It's all about the inner cry—the resolve that we have to make change a reality in our lives.

And that is why [Pesach](#) Sheni needed to happen through our own motivation, by us crying out to G-d that we shouldn't be left out. This is also why it is celebrated in the month of [Iyar](#), whose theme is individual endeavor, as exemplified through the counting of the Omer and our work on self-refinement.

We all mess up. We weren't

created as perfect individuals who can always make balanced judgements. But the good news is that we don't need to. Even when we make the worst possible error, there is no cause for despair. Quite the contrary, there is cause for acknowledgement, resolve and then action.

As a great quote reads: There are those who debate whether the glass is half-full or half-empty. And then there are those who realize that the glass is refillable.

Let's refill those glasses!

By Chana Weisberg

Because It Is There

According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the sport of mountain-climbing was born in 1760, when a young Genevan scientist, Horace-Bénédict de Saussure, offered prize money for the first person or persons to reach the summit of Mount Blanc, Europe's tallest peak at 15,777 feet.

I suspect that it's been going on for much longer than that. Something tells me that for as long as there have been humans and mountains, humans have been climbing mountains. Not just for some "useful" purpose, but also for sport, for the challenge it poses, for no other reason—as one famous mountaineer put it—than "because it is there." Or rather, because we are *here*, down below, and we want to be someplace higher than here.

Consider the case of Moses. Granted, Mount Sinai was no Everest. Remember, however, that Moses was 80

years old at the time. Remember, also, that he was doing it on behalf of 600,000 people. (600,000 Jews, that is, which means that he had to contend with 600,000 opinions on which route to take, what equipment to use, etc.; indeed, Moses had to build a fence around the mountain to hold them back from having a go at it themselves.)

Now, you might say that Moses' climb wasn't just for the challenge, but for a specific purpose: to receive the Torah. Yet G-d was coming down from the heavens—an infinite number of light-years away. He certainly could have descended another few thousand feet, instead of making an octogenarian sage climb a mountainside. As, indeed, He could have programmed the [Torah](#) right into our brains, together with all the other stuff we're born knowing, instead of chiseling it into two stone tablets for us to study and decipher.

But [G-d](#) was telling us: Yes, you are so far down below, and I am so high up, that you'll never get here on your own. The only way that there can be anything eternal, infinite or true in your lives is if I come down to you. But if I came all the way down, whatever I might give you will be meaningless to you—as meaningless to you as your own existence, to which you are oblivious because you were born into it and did not struggle to achieve it. So, says G-d, I am going to make these mountains. Mountains that will try your skills, that will consume every iota of your energy and determination. Mountains so high that they will require a superhuman effort on your part to attain their peaks. And when you reach the summit, I'll be there waiting for you.

By Yanki Tauber

Sunday, May 15, 2022 --- 14 Iyar, 5782

"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.'"

Monday, May 16, 2022 --- 15 Iyar, 5782

Jews Expelled From Russia (1727)

A few months prior to her death, Empress Catherine I, the second wife of Peter the Great, expelled all Jews from Russia.

Tuesday, May 17, 2022 -- 16 Iyar, 5782

Dachau Liberated (1945)

Dachau was the first Nazi concentration camp and the model for the other concentration camps. During the war, 200,000 Jews were housed in Dachau. More than 30,000 were killed and tens of thousands died due to the conditions and spread of disease in the camp. The camp was freed by the 45th Infantry Division of the U.S. Seventh Army on the 16th of Iyar, 1945. It was the second concentration camp to be liberated following the end of WWII.

Wednesday, May 18, 2022 --- 17 Iyar, 5782

Passing of "Noda B'Yehudah" (1793)

The 17th of Iyar marks the passing of Rabbi Yechezkel Landau (1713-1793), author of the Talmudic-Halachic work *Noda B'Yehuda* and Chief Rabbi of Prague. His famous "Letter of Peace" helped to heal the rift between the great sages Rabbi Yaakov Emden and Rabbi Yonasan Eibeshutz, which threatened to irreparably divide the Jewish people.

Thursday, May 19, 2022 --- 18 Iyar, 5782

Plague among R. Akiva's Disciples Ends (circa 120 CE)

In the weeks between Passover and Shavuot, a plague decimated 24,000 students of the great sage Rabbi Akiva--a result, says the Talmud, of the fact that they ["did not respect one another."](#) The plague's cessation on Iyar 18--the 33rd day of the Omer Count or "Lag BaOmer"--is one of the reasons that the day is celebrated each year (see "Laws and Customs" below).

Passing of R. Shimon bar Yochai (2nd century CE)

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai ("Rashbi"), was a leading disciple of Rabbi Akiva and one of the most important *tana'im* whose teachings of Torah law are collected in the Mishnah. He was also the first to publicly teach the [mystical dimension](#) of the Torah known as the "Kabbalah", and is the author of the basic work of Kabbalah, the *Zohar*. For 13 years Rabbi Shimon hid in a cave to escape the wrath of the Romans whose government he criticized. On the day of his passing--Iyar 18, the 33rd day of the Omer Count--Rabbi Shimon gathered his disciples and revealed many of the deepest secrets of the divine wisdom, and instructed them to mark the date as "the day of my joy."

Friday, May 20, 2022 --- 19 Iyar, 5782

Passing of Maharam (1293)

Renowned Talmudist Rabbi Meir ("Maharam") of Rothenburg (1215?-1293) died in his cell in the Ensisheim fortress, where he had been imprisoned for ten years in an attempt to exact a huge ransom from the Jewish community. The money had been raised, but Rabbi Meir refused to have himself redeemed, lest this encourage the hostage taking of other Jewish leaders.

Shabbat, May 21, 2022 --- 20 Iyar, 5782

Journey From Sinai (1312 BCE)

On the 20th of Iyar 2449 (1312 BCE)--nearly a year after the [Giving of the Torah](#) on Mount Sinai--the Children of Israel departed their encampment near the Mountain. They resumed their journey when the pillar of cloud rose for the first time from over the ["Tabernacle"](#)--the divine sign that would signal the resumption of their travels throughout their encampments and journeys over the next 38 years, until they reached the eastern bank of the Jordan River on the eve of their entry into the Holy Land.