

INSPIRE

EMOR

15 IYAR 5780 - 9 MAY 2020

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.



LOUGHTONSHUL
MORE THAN A SHUL

Shabbos Times

FRIDAY NIGHT
CANDLE LIGHTING 8:21
SHABBAT ENDS 9:45

ZOOM THIS FRIDAY 7PM
WITH RABBI YEHUDA
ARONOVITZ

Reminder to count the omer

The Holiday of Second Chances

It's never too late to come home. Sometimes we have to experience missteps before we can travel in the right direction. We make a left when we should take the road on the right; we say yes when we should say no; we stay when we should leave, and we withdraw when we should engage. A step forward, a step back, a side step, and an inching forward slightly once again. This is the dance of life and embedded within this dance are second chances. On the 14th day of the Jewish month of Iyar, one month after the holiday of Passover, Pesach Sheni, a second Passover makes its appearance. It's time for a second chance. On the day before Passover, the Paschal Lamb was brought to the Holy Temple to be offered as a sacrifice. Anyone who came into contact with a dead body and became ritually impure could not bring this sacrifice to the Holy Temple. Nor could someone who was stuck too far away to make it to the Temple in time. But there was an issue. These citizens also wanted to participate in this pivotal holy service. They wanted to be part of something bigger than themselves, something that would connect them to their community and to God. So they approached Moses and Aaron and declared, "Why should we be deprived, and not be able to present God's offering in its time, amongst the children of Israel?" Moses asked God what to do, and God replied, "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: Any person who is contaminated by death, or is on a distant road, whether among you now or in future generations, shall prepare a Passover offering to Gd. They shall prepare it on the afternoon of the 14th day of the second month, and shall eat it with matzahs and bitter herbs...." God said I will give you a second chance despite your status, despite your present state. When you do what you need to do to change, I will change the rules. I will wait for you until you are ready. What does being "contaminated by death," and a travelling on a "distant road" have to do with us? These terms point to deeper concepts. A state of disconnection from God is a type of death. A distant road is place where we are far away from who we really are supposed to be. This is something most of us can identify with. When we are influenced by "death", when we are traversing along a distant road, cut off from our truth and our source, we have the power to change directions and come home. How? By accessing this unbelievable gift of second chances. Life gives us many second chances. How do we know when we are far away from our homestead, when we are wandering and cut off? A sense of disconnection is a place where we have lost touch with our essential self. On this road there is a chasm between what we really are and what we are becoming. When we are not the person, partner, or parent we should be, often, somewhere deep inside, we know we are far from home. Maybe it's a vague feeling, detached and blurred. Perhaps it's an explicit feeling, weighty and robust. In all cases it often leads to confusion and a robotic way of life. Disconnection is often a byproduct of unconscious living. When we let our conditioning be our compass so that our paths never change, neither will our landscape. Whether it's in relation to ourselves or to others we will feel disconnected from the inroads that lead to our essential self. But life gives us many second chances. And each time we choose to live consciously and move from judgment to compassion, apathy to care, idleness to activity, we begin to reconnect and travel towards home. Pesach Sheni, the Second Passover, thus represents the power of rerouting to our core, to our Divine connection. This is the essence of teshuvah – the power of return. Teshuvah is defined as repentance but it encompasses something far greater. It is the power to embrace comprehensive change, the power to shift from one state to another. It is the power to change our dance. Changing our waltz, samba, or freestyle is not easy. But it can be done. No matter how distant, no matter how disconnected, God gives us the power to repair and rebound. Our brush with "death" can give us life. Our "distance" can lead to greater closeness to both ourselves and to God. Pesach Sheni, the holiday of second chances, reminds us that we can always change our steps and return home.

WISHING ALL THOSE WITH YARTZEIT THIS WEEK - CHAYIM ARUCHIM

- Cowan Cyril Father Rephual ben Dov Ber HaCohen 15 Iyar
- Winter Alan Father Moshe ben Avraham 16 Iyar
- Teller Chaim Mother Yocheved bas Asher 18 Iyar
- Davis Lila Father Yedidya ben Sholom 21 Iyar
- Weigler Ruth Mother Lisa Sorah bas Binyomin 21 Iyar

Lag BaOmer is always on the 18th day of the month of Iyar. So what's up with the name? The word "Lag" is made of of the Hebrew letters lamed (7) and gimel (3), which together have the numerical value of 33.

"BaOmer" means "of the Omer." The Omer is the counting period that begins on the second day of Passover and culminates with the holiday of Shavuot, following day 49. Hence Lag BaOmer is the 33rd day of the Omer count, which coincides with 18 Iyar. What happened on 18 Iyar that's worth celebrating? What We Are Celebrating Bonfires are a traditional Lag BaOmer feature. 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

FOOD FOR THE SOUL

You ask, "How can I be happy if I am not?" True you can't control the way you feel, but you do have control over your conscious thought, speech and actions. Do something simple: Think good thoughts, speak good things, behave the way a joyful person behaves—even if you don't fully feel it inside. Eventually, the inner joy of the soul will break through.

An open miracle is somewhat of a disappointment for G-d. Once all is said and done, He got His way only by ignoring the norms of this world He created—by breaking His own rules. If He can only perform miracles by bullying Nature, He may as well concede that our world is a place where He does not belong. So He also makes another sort of miracle—the sort that blends seamlessly into the order of things below. These are impossible miracles: They break no rules, but change everything. In truth, they are the most awesome of miracles—these that reveal the Infinite unrestrained within the finite nature of everyday things.

The Torah section of Emor ("Speak") begins with the special laws pertaining to the kohanim ("priests"), the kohen gadol ("high priest"), and the Temple service: A kohen may not become ritually impure through contact with a dead body, save on the occasion of the death of a close relative. A kohen may not marry a divorcee, or a woman with a promiscuous past; a kohen gadol can marry only a virgin. A kohen with a physical deformity cannot serve in the Holy Temple, nor can a deformed animal be brought as an offering. A newborn calf, lamb or kid must be left with its mother for seven days before being eligible for an offering; one may not slaughter an animal and its offspring on the same day. The second part of Emor lists the annual Callings of Holiness—the festivals of the Jewish calendar: the weekly Shabbat; the bringing of the Passover offering on 14 Nissan; the seven-day Passover festival beginning on 15 Nissan; the bringing of the Omer offering from the first barley harvest on the second day of Passover, and the commencement, on that day, of the 49-day Counting of the Omer, culminating in the festival of Shavuot on the fiftieth day; a "remembrance of shofar blowing" on 1 Tishrei; a solemn fast day on 10 Tishrei; the Sukkot festival—during which we are to dwell in huts for seven days and take the "Four Kinds"—beginning on 15 Tishrei; and the immediately following holiday of the "eighth day" of Sukkot (Shemini Atzeret). Next the Torah discusses the lighting of the menorah in the Temple, and the showbread (lechem hapanim) placed weekly on the table there. Emor concludes with the incident of a man executed for blasphemy, and the penalties for murder (death) and for injuring one's fellow or destroying his property (monetary compensation).

Ezekiel 44:15-31.

This week's haftorah discusses various laws that pertain to the kohanim, the priests, a topic also discussed at length in the first part of the week's Torah portion. Ezekiel prophesies about the service of the kohanim in the third Holy Temple which will be rebuilt after the Final Redemption. The prophet describes their priestly vestments, their personal care, whom they may and may not marry, and their special purity requirements which preclude them from coming in contact with a corpse, unless it's for a next of kin. He also discusses their calling as teachers and spiritual leaders. The prophet conveys G-d's word: "You shall give them no possession in Israel; I am their possession." The kohanim do not receive a portion in the Land of Israel, instead they partake of the sacrifices as well as various tithes.



HUMOUR???

A guy is driving around the back woods of Tennessee and he sees a sign in front of a broken down shanty-style house: "Talking Dog For Sale." He rings the bell and the owner appears and tells him the dog is in the backyard. The guy goes into the backyard and sees a nice looking Labrador Retriever sitting there. "You talk?" he asks. "Yep," the Lab replies. After the guy recovers from the shock of hearing a dog speak, he says, "So, what's your story?" The Lab looks up and says, "Well, I discovered that I could talk when I was pretty young. I wanted to help the Israeli government, so I told the Mossad. In no time at all they had me jetting from country to country, sitting in rooms with spies and world leaders, because no one figured a dog would be eavesdropping. I was one of their most valuable spies for eight years running." But the jetting around really tired me out, and I knew I wasn't getting any younger so I decided to settle down. I signed up for a job at the airport to do some undercover security, wandering near suspicious characters and listening in." I uncovered some incredible stuff and was awarded a bunch of medals. I got married, had a mess of puppies, and now I'm just retired." The guy is amazed. He goes back in and asks the owner what he wants for the dog. "Ten dollars," the guy says. "Ten dollars?! This dog is amazing! Why on earth are you selling him so cheap?" "Because he's a liar. He never did any of that stuff."



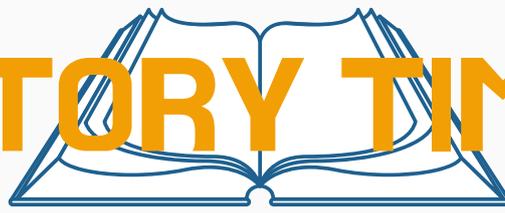
Riddle of the week

My nephew was playing with a book and he tore out pages 7, 8, 100, 101, 222, and 223. How many pages were torn out?

Answer to last weeks

deal

STORY TIME



The prayers had been said and the festive meal celebrating the auspicious day of Rosh Hashana had been eaten in great happiness and anticipation of the blessings of a good new year. The evening after Rosh Hashana, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai had retired for the night, but his sleep was disturbed by a frightening dream concerning his two nephews. In the dream his nephews stood, pale and frightened, faced with a deputation of Roman officials. The Romans demanded from them the enormous sum of 600 dinarim (local currency at the time). Bright and early the next day Rabbi Shimon headed for the home of his nephews. When he arrived they were busily involved in their business affairs. They were surprised by the arrival of their uncle; as a leader of his people he had little time for social calls. Rising from their seats they were anxious to make Rabbi Shimon comfortable, but their uncle had come with a purpose. Looking at his two nephews Rabbi Shimon said: "I think it is strongly advisable that the two of you become involved with the needs of the community. For example, you could perhaps undertake supporting the needy and the infirm. The two young men asked no questions. After all, their uncle was a great tzadik, recognised among all the Jewish people for his wisdom. They were happy to implement his idea, but they asked their uncle: "Where will we get the money to distribute? Our business is not earning much of a surplus yet." His replied, "Take the money from your earnings and keep a strict record of all your disbursements. At the end of the year I will reimburse you for your expenditures." They readily agreed, and Rabbi Shimon left feeling relieved that the arrangements had been settled. Several months later, enemies of the young men informed upon them to the Roman government, reporting that they were operating a silk business without having first obtained a state permit. A group of armed Roman soldiers entered their home and announced to the shocked young men that they were under arrest. As they were being led away to prison in chains, they were given a choice. Either they could make a costly silk garment for the emperor, or pay a fine of 600 dinarim. When Rabbi Shimon heard the terrible news he rushed to the prison and managed to speak to his nephews. He urgently inquired of them: "How much money did you distribute to tzedaka (charity) this year?" They replied that they were not certain of the exact amount, but they had kept a careful record of every disbursement, just as he had instructed them. They told him where to find their notebook, and he located it easily. When he returned to them he said: "Give me six dinarim at once!" The rabbi offered no further explanation, and the nephews immediately gave him the money without question. Rabbi Shimon took the money and approached the guard with it, offering the six dinarim as a bribe. The guard accepted it happily and to their surprise, the young men were immediately released and allowed to return home. One of his nephews turned to Rabbi Shimon and questioned him, "If the fine was 600 dinarim, how were you able to bribe them with only six? There must be more to this than you have revealed to us." Only then did Rabbi Shimon tell them his dream and the explanation for his request that they give charity. "On the evening after Rosh Hashana I dreamed that you would be required to pay the Romans 600 dinarim. I asked you to give the same sum to tzedaka, a far preferable way to spend money than giving it to the evil Roman government." The nephews were astounded by their uncle's story. "However, when I checked your accounts I saw that you were short six dinarim; therefore I asked you for the remaining sum. After you had completed payment you had the merit to be freed." "But Uncle," they protested, "if you had only told us about the dream, we would have gladly given the entire sum to tzedaka at once, and been spared from suffering the entire incident!" "That is so," replied Rabbi Shimon, "but had I told you in advance, you would not have given the money from a pure heart only for the mitzva (commandment), but only to spare yourselves from pain. It is only because you gave the money with pure intentions and without any thought of yourselves that you were worthy to be saved from punishment."