

The Shul
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May 2, 2020

Acharei Mot–Kedoshim

8 Iyar, 5780

Countdown

It's all getting rather tedious, isn't it? The politicking and political speeches of the primaries, that is. Each day the campaigning intensifies and before we know it, the countdown to "E" day will begin.

Amidst the fevered pitch of politics, we Jews now find ourselves in our own little counting period, known as "Sefira." But, whereas the political countdown brings with it more accusations of misdeeds, mismanagement and misconduct by opponents, Sefira provides us with an opportunity to reflect on our own character traits in an attempt to repair and correct them. The vehicle used for this introspection is the counting of the days between Passover and Shavuot, the time period when our ancestors went from the decadence of the Egyptian Exile to the heights of the Revelation at Mount Sinai.

The idea of the Sefira as an occasion for spiritual growth and self-improvement began with the very first time the Omer was counted. When the Jewish people departed from the House of Slavery, they were almost totally bare of mitzvot. Spiritually, physically and emotionally they were in a depressed state. They knew, though, that they were headed for the wilderness and the mountain where they would worship G-d and receive His most precious gift - the Torah. In their eager anticipation of this event, they counted each day as it went by. During this period, they also occupied themselves in the performance of mitzvot, in serving G-d with love and fervor, and in improving their relationships with their fellow men and women. In this way, they would be adequately prepared for G-d's great revelation. As a reward for their conduct, G-d gave them the eternal mitzva of Sefirat HaOmer - the counting of the Omer.

The Omer was an offering brought from freshly harvested barley which was then ground into the finest flour, mixed with oil, and offered as a thanksgiving to G-d for the good harvest. A splendid ceremony surrounded this ritual which took place on the second day of Passover in the Holy Temple.

Nowadays we count the Omer as a remembrance of the barley sacrifice. And it is for this reason that, after concluding the counting, we say a special prayer asking G-d to rebuild the Holy Temple, speedily in our days.

Is there any value in our merely counting the days even if we may not contemplate, meditate, deliberate or cerebrate about our attributes and how to improve them? Yes! Most definitely!

Counting the Omer is a mitzva. It's as simple as that. And in these days immediately before the arrival of Moshiach, it would be very advantageous for each one of us to beef up our own personal cache of mitzvot.

(by Shterna Citron from <http://www.lchaimweekly.org/>)

Faith Healer

"Hashem spoke to Moshe sfter the death of Aharon's two sons, when they approached before Hashem, and they died"(16:1)

The Torah introduces the Yom Kippur service by mentioning the death of the sons of Aharon. Although Aharon's sons died six months earlier, Rashi, citing the Midrash, explains the need to reiterate their deaths with the following analogy: Much the same way as a doctor warns his patient against engaging in harmful activities to avoid the tragic consequences suffered by an acquaintance, Aharon, prior to entering the Holy of Holies is reminded of the death of his sons who entered in an improper manner.

There is no greater tragedy than the loss of a child. A parent would spend a lifetime attempting to cope with this loss, never fully recovering from it. Why would Aharon need to be reminded of the loss of both of his sons, a tragedy which had occurred six months earlier?

The verse states that Hashem told Moshe to relay to his brother Aharon "al yavoh bechol eis el hakodesh...velo yamus". The term "al yavoh" is usually interpreted as a prohibition, rendering the verse "he should not violate the

(continued on the other side)

prohibition of entering the Holy of Holies to avoid the punishment of death". However, Rashi does not interpret the verse in the above manner, rather translating it as "al yavoh shelo yamus" – "he should not enter for it will cause his death". Instead of the verse establishing a prohibition and the punishment for violating it, Rashi is explaining the verse as a preventative measure to avoid a negative consequence. This interpretation of the verse is reflected by the Midrash's analogy of the doctor-patient relationship.

The message to Aharon is that his sons' deaths were not a result of a punitive strike against them for violating the decree of their Sovereign, but a consequence of their irresponsible action. Hashem does not impose His will upon us to satisfy His wishes. He gives us directives in the same way a doctor cares for his patients. These directives are for our well-being; we are the ultimate beneficiaries when adhering to His precepts. Hashem wants Moshe to relay this message prior to Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is the day of the year designated for expressing remorse over our indiscretions. The knowledge that Hashem's only agenda is our well-being insures that our feelings of remorse will be truly genuine and heartfelt.

(by Rabbi Yochanan Zweig from Project Genesis at www.torah.org)

"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.'"

(from www.chabad.org)

Yahrzeits This Week:

Rabbi Fred Lewin	8 Iyar - Friday night / Shabbat	for brother	Yoel ben Shmuel
Marvin Itzkowitz	11 Iyar - Monday night / Tuesday	for father	Chaim Dov ben Yosef Tzvi

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DAVENING AND SHIURIM SCHEDULE

Friday, 5/1 — 7 Iyar
 Shacharit — 7:00
 Candles — 7:43 p.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.

Shabbat, 5/2 — 8 Iyar
 Shacharit — 9:00 a.m.
 Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 9:32 a.m.
 Beitzah Gemora Shiur — 6:30 p.m.
 Minchah — 7:30 p.m.
 Ma'ariv — 8:45 p.m.

Sunday, 5/3 — 9 Iyar
 Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:50 p.m.

Monday, 5/4 — 10 Iyar
 Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
 Mincha / Ma'ariv — 7:50 p.m.

Tuesday, 5/5 — 11 Iyar
 Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Mincha / Ma'ariv — 7:50 p.m.

Wednesday, 5/6 — 12 Iyar
 Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Mincha / Ma'ariv — 7:50 p.m.

Thursday, 5/7 — 13 Iyar
 Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
 Mincha / Ma'ariv — 7:50 p.m.

Friday — Pesach Sheni, 5/8 — 14 Iyar
 Shacharit — 7:00
 Candles — 7:50 p.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.

CANCELED