



# CONGREGATION TORAS CHAIM

An intimate space...Grow at your pace.

May 30–31, 2014 ▪ 2 Sivan, 5774 ▪ Shabbos Parshas Naso, 46<sup>th</sup> of Omer  
Candlelighting: 8:12P ▪ Shabbos Ends 9:20P

Kiddush & Shalosh Seudos this Shabbos are sponsored by Mike & Bluma Ekshtut. "We are thrilled and grateful to HaShem to be able to sponsor the Kiddush at CTC this Shabbos. We are thrilled to be in Dallas now and glad that we have found, and are a part of, this wonderful shul and community. And, we are grateful to HaShem for providing us with so many brochas in our lives, both revealed and concealed. With much gratitude, Mike and Bluma Ekshtut." Please contact Rabbi Yaakov Rich at 972-835-6016 if you are interested in sponsoring kiddush or shalosh seudos in the future.

## ■ SHABBOS SCHEDULE

### Friday Night, May 30<sup>th</sup>

- » Mincha/Kabbalos Shabbos/Maariv–7:00P
- » Candlelighting–8:12P

### Shabbos Day, May 31<sup>st</sup>

- » Shacharis–8:30A
- » Junior Congregation for boys–9:30A
- » Mommy & Me–Canceled
- » Chassidus Chaburah (for men at Bloomenstiel home)–Canceled
- » Chumash Shiur (for men & women)–7:00P
- » Mincha–8:00P
- » Shabbos Ends–9:20P

## ■ WEEKDAY SCHEDULE

- » Shacharis Sunday–8:00A
- » **Mincha–6:00P / Maariv–9:00P (Sunday–Thursday)**
- » Beis Medrash–every night at 9:15P

## ■ WHAT'S NU AT CTC

- » **All-Night Torah Study on Shavuos:** Shavuos arrives next week and one of the ways that Jews all over the world prepare for the Giving of the Torah on Shavuos morning is to stay awake all night Erev Shavuos in order to show Hashem that we are ready to receive it. In keeping with that tradition, Congregation Toras Chaim is pleased to offer it's 6th Annual All-Night Shavuos Learning next Tuesday night, June 3rd.

**Classes will include (times are approximate):**

- **What's Missing from Shavuos? Decoding Holiday Mysteries and Anomalies, and their Significance for us.** 12:00-1:00 AM (Rabbi Michael Friedman)
- **Get Well Soon: Is it permissible for a convert to Judaism to pray for recovery on behalf of a non-Jewish parent? Is it permissible to say kaddish after that parent dies?** 1:15-2:15 AM (Rabbi Yaakov Rich)
- **Can We Have You for Shabbos? Issues related to inviting non-observant Jews for a Shabbos or Yom Tov meal.** 2:30-3:30 AM (Rabbi Michoel Bodenheimer)
- **I've Got You Covered: Is the yarmulka just a nice custom or legal obligation? We will try to discuss as well, its associated halachic ramifications.** 3:45-4:45 AM (Rabbi Yaakov Rich)
- **Mussar and Words of Inspiration before Davening:** 5:00-5:20 AM (Rabbi Yaakov Rich)
- **Davening Begins:** 5:30 AM

**Sponsorship Opportunities:** In addition to your presence, we ask that you consider sponsoring one of the four captivating classes that will be given that night to help cover the costs of the delicious food that the shul will provide in between the study sessions. In addition, your sponsorship will help support the ongoing Torah learning programs at CTC such as the daily Daf HaYomi study, the men and women's marriage classes, the weekly women's Tehillim study, and the many classes offered throughout the year that help the community prepare for the holidays.

We request a minimum donation of \$50 per class, or food sponsorship. Co-sponsorships are also welcome, and encouraged. This is a powerful time to remember a loved one, or honor a family member, or friend, and to participate in the merit the comes to all those who learn on this special night. Donate Online Securely

## ■ REFUAH SHELAIMA

### MEN

- » Eliyahu Lipman bas Leah (Father of Suri Rosenblatt)
- » Yoseif Yitzchok ben Yehudis Chaya (Brother in Law of Yoseif Meir Rich)
- » Mattisyahu Chaim ben Ettel (HaRav Mattisyahu Solomon)

### WOMEN

- » Ella bas Naomi (Cousin of Naomi Goldberg)

## ■ A NEW FOUND FREEDOM: RABBI LABEL LAM

HASHEM spoke to Moshe saying: Speak to the children of Israel, and you shall say to them: A man or woman who sets himself (yafli) apart by making a Nazirite vow to abstain for the sake of the Lord... For the entire duration of his abstinence, he is holy to HASHEM. (Bamidbar 6:1-8)

Yafli: He separates himself or he does something wondrous,

because most of the world is going after their desires. (Ibn Ezra)

What does it mean to be a Nazir? Of course there are technical points having to do with stepping away for thirty days from any contact with wine, dead bodies, or cutting hair. What's the reason for this discipline? It could be that the person wants a new spiritual beginning and through the discipline of becoming a Nazir he jumpstarts the process of self-improvement.

Wine is intoxicating and the person can become too lightheaded and silly with drink. By coming into contact with dead bodies he may become morose and depressed. Therefore he is looking to strike a balance between these two tendencies. By not cutting his hair and letting it go wild, he is committing himself to change his focus, like a typical mourner, to turn his eyes inward. That is where all the solutions are found.

Nowadays it is possible for a person to change his life with a simple 30 or 40 day regimen. Why would someone take on a dramatic change? I remember going to get a coffee for my Rebbe very early in the morning. He declined the coffee and when I questioned why he had halted drinking coffee, he replied in a curious way, "I discovered the coffee was drinking me!!" I did not have an idea what he meant. I was mystified. Later I came to understand his statement and new self-discipline.

Rabbi Yosef Yozel Horowitz, the Alter from Novardok told a story to illustrate how people tend to deceive themselves about how involved they are in their indulgences. I only read my emails, headlines, sports etc. but I can stop when I want. I only smoke a few cigs a day but can halt any time. I only eat such and such but only when I'm a little anxious but I am under control.

The story he told describes a fellow being pulled forcefully by two burly policemen. As he passes by you discover it is your friend Chaim. "Chaim!" you shout out to him, "What did you do that the police are taking you away?" Chaim answers casually, "Nothing at all. I'm taking them to the jailhouse!" "Hmmm", you wonder, "If it is true that you are taking them, even though it looks like they are pulling you, then show it is true by taking 30 steps (12 steps) in the opposite direction. If you can do that without being clobbered, then I can believe what you say is true."

My Rebbe was telling me that we think we are reading the newspaper but the newspaper is reading us. We may think we are listening to the news but the radio but the radio is listening to us. We might deceive ourselves into thinking we are eating up a piece of cake but the cake is really eating us up. Someone just may feel that he is shopping at the mall but the mall is shopping him. We have yielded our freedom to these small and permissible habits that like the ropes that bound Gulliver anchor us in a given orbit of behavior.

We may believe we are free but by taking a few forceful steps in the other direction we are declaring our freedom from the powerful lure of these tiny strings that bind. This is what's so wondrous about the Nazir, as he arrests himself and thereby declares a new found freedom.

## ■ SWITCHING SEFIRAS: RABBI YEHUDA SPITZ

Your neighbor is planning on making a wedding on Rosh Chodesh Sivan, while a colleague did so the day after Lag B'Omer (not that he could have done it the day before even if he would have wanted; the halls were all booked on Lag B'Omer itself months in advance!). Yet, a friend insists that one must wait until after Shavuos, while another bemoans that he should have made the wedding right after Pesach. Who is correct? Welcome to the annual Sefirah scenario.

We all know that the main reason for the Sefirah prohibitions between Pesach and Shavuos is due to the 24,000 students of Rabi Akiva dying during this time period for not according each other proper honor, as detailed in Gemara Yevamos 62b. Yet, that does not properly explain the different and varied minhagim that Klal Yisrael keeps regarding the actual time frames of these restrictions. And there are different minhagim. In fact, Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l lists six different ones, and that is not including the Arizal's minhag! Yet, practically the Pri Megadim and Mishna Berura break it down to three main disparate customs. The others are variations on those main opinions.

**Minhag # 1 - Sefardic Sefirah** The Shulchan Aruch writes that one should not get married between Pesach and Shavuos until Lag B'Omer; likewise regarding haircuts, since then the Talmidim of Rabbi Akiva

stopped dying. Therefore, one may do so from the next day - Lad B'Omer.

**Minhag # 2 - LaG not LaD** However, the Rema argues that the Ashkenazic minhag is to allow these activities from Lag B'Omer itself, and not necessitate waiting until the next day. The reason for the allowance a day earlier than the Shulchan Aruch maintains is either due to the dictum of Miktzas HaYom K'Kulo, that part of a day is considered a full day, or that the Talmidim stopped dying by / on Lag B'Omer and not Lad B'Omer. Additionally, the Rema is following early Ashkenazic authorities such as the Maharil, Mahari Weil, and the Sefer HaMinhagim of Rav Yitzchak Isaac Tyrnau (Tirna), all of whom allowed haircuts and celebrations on Lag B'Omer itself.

**Minhag # 3 - Second Sefirah** The Rema then mentions another popular minhag, to start the Sefirah restrictions from Rosh Chodesh Iyar, and not from right after Pesach. This Sefirah lasts until shortly before Shavuos, excluding Lag B'Omer itself. This has come to be known colloquially as 'Second Sefirah'.

But why such disparate Sefirahs? If we are all keeping the same prohibitions for the same reason, how can there be so many different minhagim in its practical application?

**Halftime Respite** It turns out that there are two main different reasons found in the Rishonim as to when the Sefirah restrictions should actually apply. The first, mentioned as a 'Midrash' by R' Yehoshua ibn Shu'aib and an 'old Sefardi Sefer' by the Baal HaMaor and Tashbatz, is that Rabi Akiva's Talmidim stopped dying by 'Parus HaAtzeres' or the halfway point before Shavuos. Since the Gemara states that we should start to learn the halachos of a Yom Tov 30 days prior to its commencement, which would mean that 15 days before a holiday would be its 'midpoint', this would squarely place the 'Parus' on Lad B'Omer (49 - 15 = 34). According to this, they stopped dying on Lad B'Omer and therefore all Sefirah restrictions cease on this day as well. As mentioned previously, the Shulchan Aruch states that he follows this opinion, and therefore he rules that from Lad B'Omer haircuts and weddings are permitted. This is the common Sefardi minhag.

**33 Days** However, there is another opinion, attributed to Tosafos. They maintain that in actuality the talmidim died throughout the entire time period from Pesach to Shavuos. Yet, they did not die on days when Tachanun was not said, including all days of Pesach, the Shabbos in between and Rosh Chodesh. This adds up to 16 days. Meaning, of the entire 49 day period, they died on 33 of those days. Therefore, as a siman to show that they died for 33 of these days (in addition to the reasons cited in a previous article "The Unknown Days of the Jewish Calendar"), Lag B'Omer, the 33rd day of the Sefirah, was chosen as a day of easing restrictions.

**Kavannas HaRema?** The question is, which of these minhagim is the Rema following? It is fairly certain that the second Minhag Ashkenaz he delineates, starting from Rosh Chodesh Iyar until shortly before Shavuos (and variations thereof; see postscript), is following Tosafos' shitta of 33 days. Since nowadays we don't say Tachanun the whole month of Nisan, the 33 days start in Iyar and go until the beginning of Sivan. But which opinion is the first custom he cites (from Pesach until Lag B'Omer) following?

The Bach maintains that this minhag as well follows the shitta of Tosafos. In other words, both minhagim cited by the Rema, 'First Sefirah' and 'Second Sefirah', are due to keeping 33 days, with minhagim dependant on which 33 days are customarily kept. However, the Gr"a writes that the Rema's 'First Sefirah' minhag is due to following the shitta of the Shulchan Aruch, which is that the Talmidim only died up to Lag B'Omer itself.

And, yes, there is a practical difference between these understandings that just might affect us, and that is the question of switching Sefirahs.

**Sefirah Switching** The Chasam Sofer, regarding scheduling weddings during Sefirah, maintained that there is "no contradiction between years" as pertaining to Sefirah observance. This means that even in one town (which needs to follow one minhag), if one year someone got

married on Rosh Chodesh Iyar, this does not prevent another from getting married during the Sheloshes Yemei Hagbalah the next year. His psak is widely followed. Additionally, we find that according to many authorities, if there is no set minhag in a certain place (and nowadays, most Jewish communities with no one central authority are considered as such) one may simply choose which minhag to follow. Following this implies that one has the halachic right to choose which Sefirah to keep in any given year, based on whatever specific circumstances affect him that year.

**Rav Moshe's Ruling** However, this is not so clear-cut nor unanimous. In fact, and although widely and seemingly erroneously quoted as holding that one may indeed switch between 'First' and 'Second Sefirahs' in different years, Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l, actually qualified such action. He clarifies that for Ashkenazim to be allowed to do so would depend on the difference of opinions between the Bach and Vilna Gaon as to the interpretation of the Rema's 'First Sefirah'. He explains that according to the Bach both minhagim are based on keeping 33 days; it technically should not matter which 33 days are kept. Accordingly, one may switch 'Sefirahs' in different years.

Yet, according to the Gr"a, the 'First Sefirah' is solely due to the Talmidim dying only then. If so, maintains Rav Moshe, how can one switch 'Sefirahs', if each is mutually exclusive, based on different accountings? If one holds that the Talmidim only died up until Lag B'Omer, how can he, in the very next year, follow a different minhag, which is based on a shitta that they did not actually die at that time, or vice versa? Therefore, he maintains that according to the Gr"a one may not switch 'Sefirahs' from year to year.

Additionally, Rav Moshe holds that the 'Second Sefirah' is the true Ashkenazic minhag and that 'First Sefirah' is essentially a Sefardic minhag. He therefore concludes that an Ashkenazi may not switch from 'Second Sefirah' to the 'First Sefirah', as lechatchilla we should not be lenient against the shitta of the Gr"a, except under extremely extenuating circumstances.

**Wedding Woes ?** However, and although several others contemporary authorities allow only coming for the Chuppah and wishing a brief Mazal Tov, nevertheless, Rav Moshe does permit one to attend a wedding of someone who is keeping a different Sefirah in full, including even staying for the music and dancing. Most poskim, including Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky zt"l, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv zt"l, and Rav Nissim Karelitz shlit"a, agree with Rav Moshe and allow one who is still keeping his Sefirah to fully participate in a wedding of one who is keeping / kept a different Sefirah.

In conclusion, now that we have a clearer understanding of the various Sefirah minhagim and their sources, we can appreciate the array of customs followed by our neighbors and friends. And if you do get that wedding invitation inviting you to share in a simcha at some point between Pesach and Shavuos, you will now know how to respond!

**Postscript:** As mentioned previously, there are many variations as to the exact starting and ending dates for the Sefirah, and especially 'Second Sefirah'. For example, there is the Rema's basic 'Second Sefirah', which starts after Rosh Chodesh Iyar, breaks for Lag B'Omer, and continues until Erev Shavuos, as well as its alternative, the Magen Avraham, Chayei Adam, Aruch Hashulchan, and Mishna Berura's minhag, which starts from and includes Rosh Chodesh Iyar until the Sheloshes Yemei Hagbalah, with a break on Lag B'Omer. Another common minhag is the Derech HaChaim's minhag which starts from Isru Chag, skips Rosh Chodesh Iyar and Lag B'Omer, and ends by Rosh Chodesh Sivan. Another interesting custom is the Elya Rabbah's minhag, keeping the entire Sefirah excluding Lag B'Omer, and concluding on Erev Shavuos. And of course, there is the well known minhag of the Arizal, which is to keep the entire Sefirah for haircuts, including Lag B'Omer, until Erev Shavuos. One should check with his knowledgeable Rabbinic authority as to which exact minhag he should personally follow.

# Good Shabbos

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- » Beis Medrash-every night at 9:15P
- **WEEKLY CLASSES** (see website for more detail)
- » Morning Gemara Makkos for men (M-Fr, 6-6:35A)
- » Daf HaYomi for men (Sunday-Thursday 8-9P)
- » Shabbos Chassidus Chaburah for men (10 mins before Chumash shiur)
- » Chumash for men & women (Shabbos one hr before mincha)
- » Hilchos Taaruvos for men (Sunday 6:30-8:00A)
- » Marriage Made in Heaven for men (Monday 7:15-8:00P)
- » Marriage Made in Heaven for women (Tuesday 7:15-8:00P)

All classes at 7103 Mumford Ct., except where indicated