



# CONGREGATION TORAS CHAIM

An intimate space...Grow at your pace.

May 8-9, 2015 ▪ 20 Iyar, 5775 ▪ Shabbos Emor, 35<sup>th</sup> Omer  
Candlelighting: 7:57P (Preferably light by 7:25P) ▪ Shabbos Ends 9:05P

The Israeli-themed Kiddush and Shalosh Seudos this Shabbos is sponsored by the Jacobs family in honor of their impending aliyah and, more importantly, in honor of this fantastic community. You will all be greatly missed. 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 8<sup>th</sup>

- » Mincha/Kabbalos Shabbos/Maariv-7:00P
- » Candlelighting-7:57P (Preferably light by 7:25P)

### Shabbos Day, May 9<sup>th</sup>

- » Shacharis-8:30A
- » Junior Congregation for boys-9:30A
- » Chumash Shiur (for men & women)-6:45P
- » Pirchei for Boys (ages 8 and up) with Mr. Yehuda Harper-6:45P
- » Mincha/Shalosh Seudos for men-7:45P at shul
- » Shalosh Seudos for women-7:45P at Rich home
- » Shabbos Ends-9:05P

## ■ WEEKDAY SCHEDULE

- » Sunday Shacharis-8A
- » Weekday Shacharis-6:40A
- » Mincha-6:00P / Maariv-9:00P (Sunday-Thursday)

## ■ REFUAH SHELAIMA

### MEN

- » Yechiel Mordechai ben Devorah (Brother of Ken Jarmel)
- » Itai ben Shoshana (Son of Ehoud & Shoshana Wilson)
- » Michael ben Shoshana Gittel (Michael Medved)
- » Yoseif Yitzchok ben Yehudis Chaya (Brother in Law of Yoseif Meir Rich)
- » Mattisyahu Chaim ben Ettel (HaRav Mattisyahu Solomon)

### WOMEN

- » Brocha bas Sora (Mother of Hadassah Klug)
- » Yenta Leah bas Shayna (Mother of Lori Jarmel)

## ■ WHAT'S NU AT CTC

- » **Tzeischem L'Shalom** to Josh and Shoshana Chana Jacobs and family, as they will be making Aliyah in the coming week. We will great miss you!
- » **Mazel Tov** to Mike and Bluma Ekshtut on the Upsherin of their son Tuvi. May they be zoche L'Gadlo L'Torah, L'Chuppah U'LMaasim Tovim.
- » **Congratulations** to Adam and Noah Kimmel for defending their Horseshoe Championship crown by winning the tournament at this past week's Lag B'Omer BBQ.
- » **A Special Thank You** to Boy Scout Troop 620 for entertaining our children at the BBQ with the most incredible carnival. The kids had a great time and, therefore, so did the adults. We are so proud of you and fortunate to be the recipient of your wonderful chessed.
- » **Ezras Noshim (Women's Section):** Baruch Hashem, we are starting construction on the new Ezras Noshim this Sunday. We are going to continue to raise the capital needed to replace the pool with a playground for our children. These are exciting times. We will need everyone's physical, emotional and financial support.
- » **Upcoming Shabbaton with Rabbi Lazer Brody:** Congregation Toras Chaim is proud to present Rabbi Lazer Brody and Rabbi Dr. Zev Ballen of Breslev Israel for an evening of inspiration, Shabbos May 15-16, 2015. **Friday night** Rabbi Brody and Rabbi Dr. Ballen will speak in shul, 7 PM, between Kabbalos Shabbos and Maariv, and later in the evening for an **Oneg Shabbos/Lecture** at the home of Mike and Bluma Ekshtut, 7108 Bremerton Ct., Dallas 75252, 10 PM. The entire community is invited free of charge to the Oneg Shabbos/Lecture at the Ekshtut home. **Special Offer** Enjoy a private dinner and share conversation with Rabbi Lazer Brody and Rabbi Dr. Zev Ballen. The first 25 people to register, for only \$100/person or \$250/family, will be invited to dinner Friday night, May 15, 2015 8:30-10:00 PM at the home of Rabbi Yaakov & Rebbetzin Susan Rich, 7119 Bremerton Ct., Dallas 75252. To register for the dinner please email Rabbi Yaakov Rich. You will then be sent a link for the online payment.

## ■ OR DOES IT EXPLODE? RABBI LABEL LAM

You shall observe My commandments and perform them; I am HASHEM. You shall not desecrate My holy Name, rather I should be sanctified among the Children of Israel; I am HASHEM Who sanctifies you, Who took you out of the Land of Egypt to be a G-d unto you ; I am HASHEM. (Vayikra 22:31-33)

How are observing Commandments leaving Egypt, and sanctifying HASHEM's name all connected? Here's a story I heard from

Rabbi Shimshon Pincus ztl. Maybe it was the way he said it, but I thought I understood it. There was a group of Jews who were part of a Nazi work force. They were given plenty of pork to keep them physically robust. One of the guards reported that there was a certain member of the group who was refusing to eat the non-kosher meat. The guards were infuriated. They approached the room where the Jews were eating and noticed one fellow in the corner who had an empty plate before him. They confronted this fellow and demanded that he eat the meat there on the table or face immediate death. The fellow was startled and confused. He was about to reach out and take a piece of meat when he decided to refuse adamantly. They urged him again with the risk of death. This time without hesitation he emphatically refused. So they beat him mercilessly till he was left there in a heap broken toothed, bloody and half dead.

When the SS left the room his comrades gathered around him. They were amazed, not by his courage, but his seeming foolishness and hypocrisy. They had picked on the wrong man who was seated in a different corner. The fellow they had beaten was not a notorious observer of Jewish law and custom. He had just finished eating a full plate of the forbidden food (that was allowed for him in this situation to stay alive), and he would have eaten it voluntarily without conscience and without duress outside the concentration camp. The fellow prisoners asked the broken and beaten man, "Felix, why had you risked your life and put yourself into this weakened state for a piece of meat you would otherwise have eaten gladly?" He looked up from the floor where he lay bleeding and said with certainty, "I never knew the value of not eating non-kosher food!"

When I heard this story, maybe it was the way it was told, I felt I understood perfectly. I told it over to my wife finishing with that dramatic retort, "I never knew the value of eating non-kosher food!" All I got was a blank stare from my wife who asked calmly, "What does that mean?" I repeated it again more emphatically, "I never knew the value of not eating non-kosher food!" My wife looked at me with a look that seemed to say, "Louder doesn't make clearer" and asked again verbally, "What is that supposed to mean?" I was stuck for an explanation. I thought I had understood it earlier that day. After a full cup of tea it occurred to me to explain it this way.

Let's say we bought this house for \$158,000. Suppose, now, that one day two gentlemen with trench coats, wing tip shoes and four heavy suitcases appear at our door. We invite them in. They claim to have been sent by EXXON Corporation and they would like to make us an offer we cannot refuse. Opening the suitcases, our eyes are treated to a load of cold cash. "We would like to offer you 8 million dollars for your lovely home!"

Our initial reaction is to celebrate and acquiesce, but a second wave of thought brings my wife and I into "the other room" for a private discussion. The reasoning goes like this; "If they want our little house for 8 million dollars, they know something we don't about this property. It must be worth billions!" Returning, we refuse the tempting offer with conviction and gusto! When this fellow was confronted with a choice of eating the pork or dying, his first reaction was to easily agree. However, when he thought a little further he must have reasoned that if they are so insistent that I eat that grisly meat for the price of my life, then there must be something about not eating non-kosher food that is more precious than life itself.

Since the Exodus from Egypt and the experience of Mt. Sinai the Jewish Soul is uniquely aligned and feels truly at home with Mitzvos. Sometimes it takes jolt, but even under duress and anytime a Holy Soul meets a Mitzvah, it finds itself a diamond more precious than life.

## ■ 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 Shavuot 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 Shavuot, 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 Shavuot. 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 Shavuot. Yet, they did not die on days when Tachanun was not said, including all days of Pesach, the Shabbosos 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 Shavuot (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 Shavuot, 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 Shavuot, 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 Rabb'a's minhag, keeping the entire Sefirah excluding Lag B'Omer, and concluding on Erev Shavuot. 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 Shavuot. One should check with his knowledgeable Rabbinic authority as to which exact minhag he should personally follow.

# Good Shabbos

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## ■ WEEKLY CLASSES (see website for more detail)

- » Before Shacharis Gemara Rosh Hashana for men (M-Fr, 6-6:35A)
- » NQ Daf HaYomi Succah for men (Sunday-Thursday 8-9P)
- » Chumash for men & women (Shabbos one hr before mincha)
- » Hilchos Taaruvos for men (Sunday 7:00-8:00A)
- » Supercharge Your Sundays for men (Sunday after Shacharis for 45 mins. with R' Noach Klug)
- » Marriage Chaburah for men (Monday 7:15-8:00P)
- » Marriage Chaburah for women (Tuesday 7:15-8:00P)