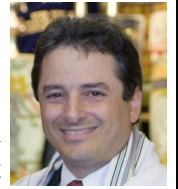


From The Rabbi



This time of year we are counting! We are counting down the days until the next holiday on the Jewish Calendar, Shavuot which begins on the evening of June 11. On the second night of Pesach we began to count the Omer. We will continue to count each night until we reach 49 days of the Omer. Then on the 50th day will be Shavuot, the holiday on which we celebrate the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai.

The rabbinic name for Shavuot is Atzeret which is based on a Hebrew root that means to stop. Therefore, in the minds of the Rabbis, Shavuot is actually the conclusion of Pesach. (And you thought Pesach was a long holiday because it is celebrated for 8 days. According to the rabbis, Pesach doesn't really conclude until 7 weeks after the second seder.) This concept is strengthened by counting each of the days between Pesach and Shavuot. The usual explanation given for the connection between Pesach and Shavuot is that on Pesach we celebrate our freedom from slavery. However, this celebration is not complete because there is no true freedom without the guidance and discipline of Torah and the covenantal relationship with God that was sealed at Mount Sinai. The exodus from Egypt was not simply *from* slavery, it was also a liberation that *lead to* a life guided by Torah.

I would like to add to this explanation by suggesting that the 8 days of Pesach and the 7 weeks of counting the Omer are there to remind us that a meaningful spiritual life cannot be sustained by periodic high moments of feeling God's presence, from event to event, from holiday to holiday or even from Shabbat to Shabbat. A spiritual life is sustained and nurtured by having a daily encounter with God that enables the Human – Divine relationship to grow each day.

My guess is that most of the people in our community are not counting the Omer and are not anxiously anticipating the celebration of Shavuot and building on the recent experience of Pesach. I would like to invite you to start counting! It is quite an easy thing to do and you might find that by the end of the counting this will have been a transforming experience and you will be moved to come to shul on Saturday night, June 11 from 8:00 pm to midnight for an opportunity to study Torah and on Sunday, June 12 to experience a reenactment of the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. Wouldn't it be amazing if our celebration of freedom on Pesach could turn into a deepening of our relationship with God. Here is a link to a good website that can help with your fulfilling the mitzvah of counting the Omer: <http://www.chabad.org/holidays/sefirah/omer-count.htm>

Speaking of spiritual experiences, here are two opportunities that are coming up. On the first Shabbat in May, on Friday, May 6 at 7:30 p.m., we will be singing and dancing as we welcome Shabbat into our lives at our monthly A Capella Musical Kabbalat Shabbat Service. If you have not yet experienced this, now is the time! On Shabbat Morning, May 7, we will be conducting our alternative service that includes guided meditation, contemporary poetry, singing, dancing and a Torah discussion in an informal atmosphere. All I can say is: Try it, you may like it!

We ended Pesach here at Congregation L'Dor V'Dor on a spiritual high with nearly 100 people at shul on Saturday, April 30th. Let's keep it up and remember this: When Moses said: "Let my people go..." the rest of his request was: "so that we may worship our God" Pharaoh let us go and we have celebrated our freedom. Now, let's worship our God together as a community and express our gratitude for our blessings in life. Hope to see you soon!

Rabbi Gordon Yaffe