

IN THE INTERIM BY RABBI GARY ATKINS

Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks (the literal translation of the name) or Pentecost in English, begins on the sixth day of the Hebrew month of Sivan. Like all Jewish holidays based on the lunar calendar, the date in the secular calendar can vary, meaning it may “fall” between May 15 and June 14. This year it begins the evening of Saturday, June 4. All Jewish holidays (and every Sabbath) begin at sunset of the date before the one generally cited on calendars. This goes back to the first chapter of Genesis, where Scripture says, “there was evening and there was morning....”

Shavuot has a double significance. To an early agrarian society, it marked the all-important ripening of first fruits and the wheat harvest in the Land of Israel. It also commemorates the anniversary of the day when God gave the Torah (Five Books of Moses) to the people of Israel assembled at Mount Sinai.

The holiday is one of the Three Pilgrimage Festivals of the Torah. Its date is directly linked to that of Passover. The Torah mandates that there be a seven-week “Counting of the Omer” (an offering of barley), beginning on the second day of Passover, culminating in Shavuot. This counting of days and weeks is understood to express anticipation and desire for the giving of the Torah. On Passover, the people of Israel were freed from their enslavement to Pharaoh; on Shavuot, they were given the Torah and became a nation committed to serving God.

Shavuot is one of the less familiar Jewish holidays to Jews outside of Israel, having neither the length nor the ceremonial celebrations of Passover and Sukkot. The holiday is celebrated in Israel for one day and generally, outside of Israel, for two days. This difference in interpretation in length of observance also occurs regarding the other two Pilgrim festivals.

One of the special celebrations of Shavuot is the Ceremony of First Fruits, or *Bikkurim*. It was the first day on which individuals could bring them to the Temple in Jerusalem. The *Bikkurim* were brought from the Seven Species for which the Land of Israel is praised: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates.

Today, synagogue sanctuaries can be adorned in greenery and even displays of fruit in honor of Shavuot. The Biblical Book of Ruth, with its depiction of the wheat harvest in early Israel, is read on the holiday. There are many traditions regarding the observance of the holiday, and many Jewish teachings about the giving of the Torah, but the essence of the holiday is as described above. One beautiful newer tradition is that of “Tikkun l'eil Shavuot,” studying the evening of the first day of Shavuot. The USCJ will be planning an all-night virtual study... information will be forwarded as it is received.

Memorial Tzedaka

Arlene Alpert in memory of Jayson Levine
 Elaine Braverman in memory of Joseph Braverman
 Richard Ekman in memory of Sonia Ekman
 Jeff Klein & Michelle Rosenthal in memory of Eugene Klein
 Sydney Levin in memory of Nathan Levine
 Nancy & Morris Steinbock in memory of Lena Steinbock

Arlene Alpert in memory of Nathan Levine
 Renee Brenner in memory of Larry Brenner
 Ruth Chevion in memory of Paul Fessel
 Eileen Kope in memory of Michael Chitister
 Debbie Manning in memory of Herbert Hirsch
 Deanne & Irving Taube in memory of Dora Taube

Maot Hittim Passover Fund

Elaine Braverman
 Ruth Chevion
 Sharon Borak & John Crites-Borak
 Elizabeth & Alan Gaby
 Al Shamash
 Nancy & Morris Steinbock
 Dina & John Weber

Other Donations

Ken Cohn & Maureen DeLeasa for Shabbaton
 Josh Gellerman in honor of Noah Gellerman
 Al Shamash Purim donation
 Harry Shepler for Shabbaton
 Judith Sydney for Hebrew School Upgrade
 Phil Tuttle for Hebrew School Upgrade

Leslie Belanger will be called to Torah at
 Temple Israel Manchester on May 28 at 10:00am



Leslie's Mitzvah Project is The Bedford Bobcats, a branch of the Special Olympics of NH.

To donate, you may mail checks payable to The Bedford Bobcats to 145 Pulpit Road, Bedford, NH or email lesliebelanger052809@gmail.com



- Dina Weber for her help with proofreading and mass mailings
- Our Jewish Book Club Chairs - Benay Birch, Ken Cohn, and Aida Koocher
- Liz and Larry Eckman for our kitchen and bathroom supplies
- Our Temple Board for meaningful service options and activities
- Jeff Klein for taking care of the myriad building issues
- Stephen Singer and Jeff Klein for organizing Wednesday morning minyans
- David Winthrop for maintaining our yahrzeit boards and Torahs
- Michael Sydney for continued efforts on behalf of the Manchester Hebrew Cemetery
- The Singer/Sydney family for groundskeeping services
- John Weber for his financial acumen and continued support
- Carol Sternberg Chairperson of Kitchen Krew, Lunches and Gift Shop
- Kiddush Krew – Benay Birch, Renee Brenner, Ken Cohn, Josh Nathan, Merle Paltrow, Carol Pressman, Rachel Spierer, Carol Sternberg & David Winthrop
- Iris Atkins for photographs of the Holocaust Museum and Purim Party



Lag Ba'omer . . . Adapted from the My Jewish Learning website



Lag Ba'omer is a minor holiday that occurs on the 33rd day of the Omer, the 49-day period between Passover and Shavuot. A break from the semi-mourning of the Omer, key aspects of Lag Ba'omer include holding Jewish weddings (it's the one day during the Omer when Jewish law permits them), lighting bonfires and getting haircuts.

Why We Celebrate

There are a few explanations as to why we celebrate Lag Ba'omer, but none are definitive.

The Omer is a time of semi-mourning, when weddings and other celebrations are forbidden, and as a sign of grief, observant Jews do not cut their hair. Anthropologists say that many peoples have similar periods of restraint in the early spring to symbolize their concerns about the growth of their crops. But the most often cited explanation for the Jewish practice comes from the Talmud, which tells us that during this season a plague killed thousands of Rabbi Akiva's students because they did not treat one another respectfully. The mourning behavior is presumably in memory of those students and their severe punishment.

According to a medieval tradition, the plague ceased on Lag Ba'omer, the 33rd day of the Omer. (The Hebrew letters *lamed* and *gimel* which make up the acronym "Lag" have the combined numerical value of 33.) As a result, Lag Ba'omer became a happy day, interrupting the sadness of the Omer period for 24 hours.

Rabbi Akiva and the Bar Kochba Rebellion

The Talmudic explanation makes most sense when put into historical context. The outstanding sage Rabbi Akiva became an ardent supporter of Simeon bar Koseva, known as Bar Kochba, who in 132 C.E. led a ferocious but unsuccessful revolt against Roman rule in Judea. Akiva not only pinned his hopes on a political victory over Rome but believed Bar Kochba to be the long-awaited Messiah. Many of his students joined him in backing the revolt and were killed along with thousands of Judeans when it failed. The Talmudic rabbis, still suffering under Roman rule and cautious about referring openly to past rebellions, may have been hinting at those deaths when they spoke of a plague among Akiva's students. Possibly, also, Lag Ba'omer marked a respite from battle, or a momentary victory.

A completely different reason for the holiday concerns one of Rabbi Akiva's few disciples who survived the Bar Kochba revolt, Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai. He is said to have died on Lag Ba'omer.

Tradition teaches that Rabbi Simeon continued to defy the Roman rulers even after Bar Kochba's defeat and was forced to flee for his life and spend years in solitary hiding. Legend places him and his son Eleazar in a cave for 12 years, where a miraculous well and carob tree sustained them while they spent their days studying and praying. When they finally emerged, Simeon denigrated all practical occupations, insisting that people engage only in the study of Torah. For this God confined the two to their cave for another year, accusing R. Simeon of trying to destroy the world with his rigid asceticism.

But Rabbi Simeon's otherworldliness resonated with mystics in his own time and later, so much so that tradition ascribes to him the Zohar, the key work of the Kabbalah (although critical scholars attribute it to the 13th-century Spanish kabbalist Moses de Leon). And in Israel, on Lag Ba'omer, people flock to the site of his tomb in the village of Meron in the Galilee, near Safed, where they light bonfires and sing kabbalistic hymns. Hasidic Jews follow the custom of bringing their 3-year-old sons to Meron to have their hair cut for the first time. (The custom of not cutting the child's hair until his third birthday, when it is done in a ceremony called an "upsheren," is probably an extension of the law that forbids picking the fruits of a newly planted tree during its first three years.)

Lag Ba'omer Customs

Unrelated to Rabbi Simeon, the kabbalists also give a mystical interpretation to the Omer period as a time of spiritual cleansing and preparation for receiving the Torah on Shavuot. The days and weeks of counting, they say, represent various combinations of the *sefirot*, the divine emanations, whose contemplation ultimately leads to purity of mind and soul. The somberness of this period reflects the seriousness of its spiritual pursuits.

Finally, on yet another tack, some authorities attribute the joy of Lag Ba'omer to the belief that the manna that fed the Israelites in the desert first appeared on the 18th of Iyar.

Though its origins are uncertain, Lag Ba'omer has become a minor holiday. Schoolchildren picnic and play outdoors with bows and arrows — a possible reminder of the war battles of Akiva's students. And every year numerous couples wed at this happy time.

In the Ghetto. . . by Ruth Chevion . . .

Usually when I recount how members of my family managed to survive the Holocaust in Poland, I focus on facts. I describe how they got false papers, where they hid, who hid them, the near-death experiences, the miracles, etc.

It's harder to talk about the feelings. But there is a certain 24-hour period in my family history I want to look at more deeply.

I'm focusing on the day in 1943 when my Uncle Alex escaped the Tarnow ghetto where the family was incarcerated, tore the yellow star off his coat, and walked to the train station.

This was not a spontaneous action. He had prepared for it carefully for months, borrowing the right clothes, thinking through the minute steps of it, studying how to look Christian, how to get past the guard at the gate, and where to go. But he made these preparations entirely in secret. To his mother, his brother, and his sister, he never revealed until just the night before, that he was planning to escape. He knew they would try to dissuade him. Only after he had the date, the time, and the method of escape fixed in his mind, did he announce to his shocked mother and brother that he would be leaving them the next night.

There is a lot to describe here about what Alex felt. But I will leave that for another day.

My focus for now is on what his mother felt, what her reaction was and what she said upon hearing that her youngest son, at age 19 was planning to escape from the ghetto and attempt to survive on his own, a free agent, in the Nazi infiltrated and Polish-Catholic dominated world.

At the table for the conversation were three people: Alex's older brother - my father Paul, their mother Miriam (my grandmother), and Alex himself. The sister did not participate. Both Alex's brother and his mother argued strenuously against Alex's plan to leave the ghetto. The idea that he would adopt the stolen identity of a Polish person and not get caught and killed, and not bring reprisal on his family, if not the whole ghetto, was anathema to them. Not only was it wildly unlikely to succeed in the context of total Nazi control of everything, it was also a betrayal of his people.

The older brother's line of argument was basically this: "You are just a snot nose kid, what makes you think you can succeed in this adventure? You are irresponsible. You are needed here, but you want to run off on your own as if you are more important. You are just a selfish child." This argument went nowhere. Alex had made up his mind.

Grandmother was heartbroken. You will "schaden," she said. 'Schaden' means 'to convert' in Yiddish.

"You are converting to Christianity. What you propose is to leave your people and become a Catholic. You won't be Jewish anymore. You will be leaving your people," she said.

"Whatever happens to our people," she said, "happens to all of us, but we don't convert. We stay together. We help each other, and we don't convert even under penalty of death."

Was grandmother wrong? In another historical context, that of the Spanish Inquisition, we are encouraged to take pride in non-conversion. In Hebrew school we are taught to applaud those Spanish Jews who refused to convert. Why is it that in the context of the Holocaust our received opinion is that we were dupes for not trying to survive at all cost?

To my grandmother, personal individual survival was less important than her commitment to Jewish life. Several centuries of Jewish life in Poland had been characterized by stolid pacifism, by balancing coexistence with separateness, by accepting that a few would die in pogroms in every generation to save bigger group.

In order to delve into grandmother's way of thinking, we have to let go of the insulting phrase "they went like sheep." Grandmother's plea to stay together, to refuse to convert, even if it might save a life was not like a thoughtless sheep running over the edge of the cliff behind a leader. It was a motivation based on her understanding of a purpose in life, of meaning beyond individual survival.

Admittedly, I come out on my uncle's side of this argument. I feel we are still Jewish even if being Jewish is not all we are. We may not keep kosher, or honor Shabbat, or go to morning minyan, but we know we are Jewish. We may seek meaning in our careers, in creativity, or in meditation, but we still have a Seder, and we still go to services on high holidays.

At least that's how it was in my family after the Holocaust. They didn't convert. They shed their Polish Catholic identities at the first opportunity. Being Jewish was extremely important to them. But they never returned to a life where the activities of daily living were structured and inspired by Judaism. They sought meaning and purpose in life largely elsewhere.

I don't have any answers to this question. On the one hand I admire those family members who escaped from the ghetto and survived. On the other hand, I sense that my grandmother was not completely mistaken.



**My grandmother,
Miriam Wilk Fessel**

P.S. Six months later, the ones who had objected to Alex escaping from the ghetto, did the same thing. They followed Alex's patent: get a false identity, use it to get false Polish papers, get past the guards, get to the train, blend into the Polish population. Blending in was the hard part but they did it. They all survived: my father, my aunt and my grandmother.

Yom HaZikaron, literally Memorial Day, is Israel's official Remembrance Day enacted into law in 1963. While Yom HaZikaron has been traditionally dedicated to fallen soldiers, commemoration has also been extended to civil acts of civil terrorism.

In 1949 and 1950, the first two years after the declaration of the State of Israel, memorial services for soldiers who fell in the 1947-1949 Palestine war were held on Independence Day.. Services at military cemeteries were coordinated between the Israel Defense Forces and the Ministry of Defense. A concern arose, expressed by families of fallen soldiers, to establish a separate memorial day observance distinct from the festive celebrations of national independence. In response, Prime Minister David ben Gurion established in January 1951 the "Public Council for Soldiers' Commemoration". This council recommended establishing the 4th of Iyyar, the day preceding Independence Day, as the "General Memorial Day for the Heroes of the War of Independence." This proposal won government approval that same year. .

Yom HaZikaron is the national remembrance day observed in Israel for all Israeli military personnel who lost their lives in the struggle that led to the establishment of the State of Israel and for those who have been killed subsequently while on active duty in Israel's armed forces. **As of Yom HaZikaron 2021, that number was 23,928.**

The day opens with a siren the preceding evening at 8:00 pm. The siren is heard all over the country and lasts for one minute, during which Israelis stop everything, including driving on highways, and stand in silence, commemorating the fallen and showing respect. It is a most moving sight to see all traffic stopped, even on a divided highway.

By law, all places of entertainment are closed on the eve of (erev) Yom HaZikaron, and broadcasting and educational bodies note the solemnity of the day. Regular television programs cease for the day, and the names and ranks of every soldier who died for Israel are displayed in a 24-hour television broadcast.

Since the founding of the state, Israel has chosen the Red Everlasting flower as the national memorial flower. The flower is depicted in many memorial sites and can be seen worn as

stickers on shirts and jackets throughout Yom HaZikaron. Since 2019, the non-profit organization Dam HaMaccabim has been distributing pins with the real Red Everlasting flower throughout Israel and the United States.

A two-minute siren is sounded at 11:00 the following morning, which marks the opening of the official memorial ceremonies and private remembrance gatherings at each cemetery where soldiers are buried.

National memorial services are held in the presence of Israel's top leadership and military personnel.

Memorial candles are lit in homes, army camps, schools, synagogues, and public places, and flags are lowered to half-staff. Throughout the day, serving and retired military personnel serve as honor guards at war memorials throughout the country, and the families of the fallen participate in memorial ceremonies at military cemeteries.

Many traditional and religious Jews say prayers for the souls of the fallen soldiers on Yom HaZikaron. Special prayers prescribed by the Israeli rabbinate are recited. These include the recital of [Psalm 9](#): "For the leader, on the death of the son," and [Psalm 144](#): "Blessed be the Lord, My Rock, who trains my hands for war and my fingers for battle." The official ceremony to mark the opening of the day takes place at the Western Wall.

Israeli TV channels screen the names of all civilians killed in pogroms since 1851, and all fallen from 1860 (considered the date of the beginning of the Yishuv (Settlement in Israel) by the Ministry of Defense), in chronological order (rank, name, Hebrew date deceased and secular date) over the course of the day. The day officially draws to a close at sundown in a ceremony at the national military cemetery on Mount Herzl, marking the start of Israel Independence Day, when the flag of Israel is returned to full staff.

Scheduling Yom HaZikaron right before Independence Day is intended to remind people of the price paid for independence and of what was achieved with the soldiers' sacrifices. This transition shows the importance of this day among Israelis, most of whom have served in the armed forces, or have a connection with people who were killed during their military service.

YOM HA'ATZMAUT: ISRAELI INDEPENDENCE DAY - MAY 4-5, 2022... *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*

Yom Ha'atzmaut is Israeli Independence Day, a day of great celebration held every year in late April or early May – on the day (in the Hebrew calendar) on which, in 1948, Israel declared its independence. Across Israel, events and celebrations take place to mark Independence – both on a national scale and on a more local scale, with almost every city, town, and village having some sort of celebration. In 2022, Yom Haatzmaut (Israeli Independence Day) falls from sundown on May 4 to sundown on May 5.

The major State Ceremony for Yom Ha'atzmaut takes place on the eve of (erev) Yom Ha'atzmaut at Mount Herzl, Israel's National Ceremony in Jerusalem. This event marks the end of Yom Hazikaron (Israel's memorial day, which falls immediately before), and the beginning of the celebration for Yom Ha'atzmaut. The ceremony involves performances, speeches, and a ceremonial lighting of twelve torches. These symbolize the Twelve Tribes of

Israel by twelve citizens who have made a great impact on the country. At the same time, towns and cities across the country have parties and firework displays.

The following day, parades and events take place across Israel including a spectacular military plane fly-by, parades, a famous International Bible Competition, and the ceremony for the Israel Prize which is Israel's highest award and honor. The Israel Prize is given each year to about 10-15 people in the presence of the presence of the President, Prime Minister, the Knesset chairperson, and the Supreme Court president.

Yom Ha'atzmaut is a real family day, and Israelis flock to Israel's national parks, hiking trails, and scenic spots, for barbecues and picnics.

Our New Hampshire Federation has arranged a variety of programs, including barbecues, in our local area.



May Yahrzeits



May 1	Gagnon, Leas Klein, Eugene Taube, Dora
May 2	Arlasky, Rivkah Gallant, David Kurtz, Ralph Mandell, Sadie Perlstein, Libby Smith, Louis
May 4	Ellenson, Louis Feldman, Joseph Korzon, Anna Margolis, Esther Rebecca Silber, Mollie Steinbock, Leah White, Faye
May 5	Cohen, Manya Levy, Charles
May 6	Dunn, Geva Leah Guttman, Henry
May 7	Fessel, Paul Gilman, William Gruber, Samuel Spierer, Harry
May 8	Cohen, Sylvia Cross, Edith Margolis, Samuel Pockat, Louis
May 9	Boyarsky, Abraham Brenner, Larry Cohen, Bertha Ruth Eckman, Rose Edelman, Miriam Rosenfeld, S. Schecter, Doris
May 10	Cohen, Mary Goldberg, Israel White, Benjamin
May 11	Jacobs, Seymour Mushlin, Helen Mushlin, Rose
May 12	DiNitto, Ethyl Riter Resnick, Ida

May 13	Dovner, Esther Holop, Estee Sidman
May 14	Cagan, Jay Brian Gruber Sherman, Catherine Klein, Florence Winneg, Benjamin
May 15	Firestone, Fannie Savan, Abraham Shuff, Annie
May 16	Chitister, Leonard Leifer, Fannie Mandel, Albert
May 17	Winthrop, Mark
May 18	Conn, Rose Mushlin, Morris
May 19	Eckman, Sonia Forest, Laura Schill, Dolores
May 20	Citron, Estelle Goodman, Leah
May 21	Dickstein, Philip Myers, Charles Shapiro, Benjamin Singer, Bernice
May 22	Rosenblum, Edith Spector, Louis
May 23	Goldberg, Sarah Krieger, Bessie Novak, Barnard Slosberg, Samuel I.
May 25	Cohen, Albert B. Saxe, Alvan Stein, Sarah
May 28	Kabatznick, Rose Lewis, Hyman Rosenblum, Louis
May 30	Fleet, Clarence Siegal, Pearl Wallin, Irving
May 31	Bialogowski, Henoch Braverman, Joseph Rabinovitz, Minnie Rubinsky, Henry

Hevra Kadisha of Central New Hampshire

Our Hevra Kaddisha is ready to help you in your hour of need to perform the ritual preparation of a deceased for burial in accordance with Jewish tradition. Do not hesitate to call us when needed. We are here for you!

Please call Rabbi Atkins at 860-331-0879 to initiate the process or ask any questions!





Nissan 30 to Sivan 1



May 2 - Sedra Michaelson
 May 2 - Judah Nathan
 May 4 - Joshua Sydney
 May 5 - William Cohen
 May 8 - Zoe Zeballos
 May 10 - Charlotte Gross

May 13 - Liz Eckman
 May 15 - Christy Aberg
 May 18 - Neil Themea
 May 21 - Rami Preis
 May 27 - Jessica Schneider
 May 28 - Leslie Belanger

Liz & Larry Eckman
 May 22 - 39 years

Michelle Rosenthal & Jeff Klein
 May 28 - 22 years

**Temple Israel's
 2022 Annual Meeting
 May 22 at Noon**



The slate and your ballot will be arriving via email soon.
 If you prefer a hard copy, please contact Christine at
 603.622.6171 or office@templeisraelmht.org.



Thinking of buying or selling your home?
 Contact fellow Temple Israel member
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