


CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday nights* קדש


Friday 26 April 2013 - 16 Iyyar 5773
Sedra Emor - eve of Lag B'Omer

BRINGING LIGHT TO THE WORLD

JEWISH TEACHING OFTEN SPEAKS OF “LIGHT”. THE FIRST ACT OF CREATION IS expressed by the words “Let there be light”. However, the light of the beginning of Creation preceded the forming of the sun, the source of ordinary daylight. It was a higher order of light, beyond the physicality of the world. The Sages tell us this light served for the seven days of Creation, and then was hidden. Where was it hidden? In the Torah¹.

Now, if there is a special radiance hidden in the Torah, how can we make access to it? Through the *inner* dimension of the Torah. The presence of this inner dimension, revealing spiritual radiance and inspiration, is celebrated this Sunday. Sunday 28 April is “Lag B'Omer”, the 33rd day of the counting of the Omer. The idea that we should count the Omer is mentioned in the Sedra². But the significance of the 33rd day of the Omer is taught by the Sages. This special day has several levels of meaning. One is that it is the Yahrzeit of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, the author of the sacred Zohar.

The word Zohar means ‘light’, and the Zohar is indeed a book of radiance, revealing the inspiration hidden in the Torah and in life. It tells us that our main task is “to transform darkness to light”. We face darkness in many different forms, including the darkness of our own

	In Loving Memory of Mrs Jeanne Gewolb-Sostrin (Yenta bas Devora) ע"ה - 15 Tevet 5772 Dedicated by her Son Dr Roger Gewolb שי'
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negative qualities. The Torah gives us guidance as to how to deal with this darkness.

On one level of Torah, we learn how to avoid that which is negative in spiritual terms. This is through the basic laws of Judaism, which map out our spiritual pathway through the world. The laws tell us the actions to avoid, such as eating non-kosher food, and which we should strive to fulfil, such as lighting candles for Shabbat and the festivals, or putting on Tefilin on weekdays.

Then comes the Zohar, and the stream of books and teachings which explain and communicate its ideas, such as Rabbi Shneur Zalman's *Tanya*, written two centuries ago. This aspect of Torah reveals the spiritual significance of the Commandments, and the fact that through them we draw holiness into the world. The world as we encounter it is often dark, in many ways: morally and spiritually. Yet our observance of traditional Jewish teaching draws light into the world and ultimately transforms all darkness into light.

The Zohar tells us "for us, it all depends on love"³. Indeed: love of G-d, love of Torah, and love of one's fellow. The three are connected, for the essence of another person is the Divine dimension within, and Torah too connects us with G-d. The Sages say the more one is aware of G-d, especially as taught in the inner teachings of Torah, the closer the bond one is able to feel with other people.

This is the inner secret of the Torah: it all depends on love. The laws of the Torah, whether of kashrut or business ethics, have the inner purpose to reveal this love, in all its forms: love of one's fellow, love of Torah, and love of the Divine.

Lag B'Omer is celebrated with parades, outings for children and bonfires. All these events suggest *revelation*, bringing out of concealment⁴. The radiance hidden in the Torah is openly disclosed, and when we consider the many Lag B'Omer parades and outings being celebrated round the globe, we feel that this radiance is reaching the street and the countryside, and is transforming us and ultimately the whole world with its message of Redemption: love of one's fellow, love of Torah, and love of the Divine.

1. See the Lubavitcher Rebbe's *Likkutei Sichot*, vol.10, p.7 ff, and *Torah Studies*, p.1 ff. 2. Leviticus chs.21-24. See 23:15-16. 3. Zohar III 128a. 4.The word *lag* in Hebrew forms the number 33. If read in reverse - *gal* - it means "reveal".

Torah teachings are holy - please treat this page with care

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*SEDRA EMOR***COUNTDOWN**

The thick black marker that Debbie was holding in her hand made a sharp steady line over the small box in her calendar. Just three and a half weeks until the big day! Debbie was counting down the days towards her cousin's wedding in Israel. In twenty five she would be on the El Al plane with her family going to Israel and they would be staying there for more than a week. Debbie could hardly contain her excitement. Every evening she would eagerly go to the calendar on the wall of her bedroom and draw a big X on the day which had passed.

Her little sister Rina, would sometimes join Debbie in her countdown. This time, while Debbie put the marker back in her drawer, Rina gazed at the calendar thoughtfully.

"You know, we have a similar countdown poster in our classroom in school. But we use it to count the days of the Omer – from Pesach till Shavuot. Every day, we stick a big sticker on the chart to mark each day as it passes. We're nearly up to number 33! My teacher said that's Lag Be'Omer!"

"That's right, we are counting down the days till Shavuot. In fact, it's a Mitzvah to count the days. There's a special blessing you say every night when you count the Omer, if you have managed to count every day. Otherwise you count without a blessing. Do you know how many days there are altogether?"

“Yes! 49!” Rina exclaimed, pleased to know the answer.
“Then the 50th day is Shavuot.”

“That’s exactly right. And do you know what’s pretty cool? That it actually mentions the Mitzvah of counting the Omer in this week’s Sedra. We learnt it in school yesterday. This week’s Sedra, called Emor, talks about all the Jewish festivals, including Shabbat, Pesach, Shavuot, Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur and Sukkot, and it also mentions the Mitzvah of counting the Omer between Pesach and Shavuot.”

“Oh, then I really like this Sedra! It talks about all my favourite times of the year, like Sukkot... and Pesach... and of course Shavuot!” Rina smiled. “And then...the trip to Israel!”

Debbie laughed. “Yeah, I wish the days would go faster till we leave!”

“Is that why we count till Shavuot? ’Cause we were excited for it? For the cheesecake?” Rina giggled.

“Well...that as well!” Debbie chuckled, “but really we count down the days because when the Jews were in the desert... um let’s see how long ago it was...my teacher did say...it was...3325 years ago I think. Yes, it was 3325 years ago. The Jews were so excited to receive the Torah from G-d at Mount Sinai that they counted the days and did many preparations for it as well.”

“So now we count the days till Shavuot because of that?” Rina asked.

“Yup! We should have the same excitement as the Jews had then, eager to receive the Torah from G-d on Shavuot!”

“And after that,” Rina added, “we can continue our countdown...”

“...for our trip to Israel!” they shouted happily.

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