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## Shabbat Emor

שבת פ' אמור - פרקי אבות - פרק ד'

Sat. 8 - 9 May 2020 - 15th of Iyyar, 5780

ט"ו באייר תש"פ

Issue Number 951

Parasha - <i>Yom Shabbat Kodesh</i>	Emor	(Page-672).
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Lag La' Omer - Tuesday - 11rd May.

לג בעומר ביום שלישי י"ח אייר.

**THE SYNAGOGUE IS CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE**

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**Shahrit Sunday to Friday on ZOOM at 07:30**

**Please call Ghassan to join the sevice, tachanun from Sunday**

Daf Hayomi with Rabbi Asher Sebbag on ZOOM

Sunday to Thursday at 18:00, Friday at 17:00

Please call Ghassan or David to join the Shiur

Shabbat Candles.	20:18
Latest Shema GRA.	09:07
Sunset.	20:37
Arbit Motzei Shabbat.	21:39
Next Friday: Candles. Shabbat. Behar / Bechukotai	20:29

### What Type of Friend are You?

**Emor** 5780 (Leviticus 21-24)

May 5, 2020 | by [Rabbi Yitzchak Zweig](#)

**GOOD MORNING!** Some of you may remember reading in these pages about a person named Sam “Sonny” Goldstein. Sonny was a remarkable man who had many extraordinary experiences in his life, some of which our teacher and mentor Rabbi Kalman Packouz, of blessed memory, shared with his readers. Sonny also had a uniquely tragic life; he lost both of his children – one at age four to a sudden illness and the other, his sole remaining child, was killed in a car accident on Father’s Day. He also lost his wife, the absolute love of his life, to breast cancer after

only ten years of marriage. Furthermore, he grew up during the depression; suffice it to say that he had a unique perspective on life.

**Yet**, if you were ever fortunate enough to meet him, you would never know or even suspect what kind of suffering he experienced. He was perpetually happy and outgoing to the point that his friends dubbed him “Sunny” because of his perpetual joyful disposition. I met Sonny through a strange set of circumstances when I was only sixteen. Although we were separated in age by four decades, we instantly connected and we maintained a lifelong bond until his passing about seven years ago.

**In 2008-10**, when the financial world crumbled, the crisis hit home in a blunt force fashion. At the beginning of the crisis our school struggled to make the mortgage payments on its newly acquired campus. But by 2010 we could no longer make the mortgage payments. In fact, we could barely pay the monthly electric bill. These were difficult times and hardly anyone was spared; even the school's bank went under. The succeeding bank took over our mortgage, placed us in their troubled asset portfolio, and promptly filed for foreclosure. When I was served the notice of the court filing I was devastated. The school had extended itself to buy the campus at the absolute worst time, and the bank threatened to take away every asset the school owned.

**Sonny happened** to be visiting at the time. When he saw my despondency he wanted to know what was going on. I explained the situation and showed him the papers with which I had been served. He looked at me and said, "I don't understand why you are upset. The bank just gave you an incredible gift." I numbly looked at him, literally not understanding the words coming out of his mouth. Seeing my incomprehension he went on, "This filing is the most powerful piece of paper you have ever held in your hands. You show this to all the people that know you and care about the school and you will shortly see how many amazing friends you have."

**He was** absolutely right. Everyone jumped in to help. Many were also suffering themselves in some way, yet they all stepped up and did what they could to help me resolve the foreclosure. Eventually, I raised and borrowed enough money to satisfy the bank until I was able to permanently resolve the matter once and for all. But the greatest gift I received was that in the worst of times I was the beneficiary of an avalanche of love and support from my friends. I began to understand what friendship means.

**This upcoming week**, on Tuesday, May 12<sup>th</sup>, we will celebrate Lag B'Omer. What is this holiday all about? Between Passover and the holiday of Shavuot we have a Torah mandated obligation to count each of the 49 intervening days. This is known as the counting of the *Omer* (the *omer* was a barley offering from the first harvest that the Jews would bring to the Temple in Jerusalem. *Omer* is actually a measurement of volume equating to roughly three quarts).

**Forty-nine days** are counted from the second day of Passover and on the fiftieth day is Shavuot, the holiday celebrating the receiving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. There is actually a *mitzvah* to count each specific day, which is done at the completion of *Ma'ariv*, the evening service.

**This is** also a period of national semi-mourning, thus there are no weddings scheduled during this time. Additionally, many do not get haircuts or even shave during this time. Why? Because it was during this period that Rabbi Akiva's 24,000 students died for not showing sufficient respect for each other.

**There are** two customs for observing the semi-mourning period. The first is to observe it from the end of Pesach until the 33<sup>rd</sup> day of the *Omer*, this year Tuesday, May 6<sup>th</sup>. Many people get married on the 33<sup>rd</sup> day of the *Omer* for this reason. The second custom is to observe it from *Rosh Chodesh Iyar* (the beginning of the Hebrew month of *Iyar*,) until Shavuot. Unusual for our heritage, each year one can choose which custom to follow!

**Lag B'Omer** is the 33<sup>rd</sup> day of the *Omer* (in Hebrew the word *lag* has a numerical value of 33), the period between Passover and Shavuot. On this day, the plague that was killing Rabbi Akiva's disciples stopped. It is also the *yahrzeit* (yearly anniversary of the death) of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, reputed author of the *Zohar*, the book of Jewish mysticism. Tradition has it that the day of his demise was

filled with a great light of endless joy through the secret wisdom that he revealed to his students in the *Zohar*.

**In Israel**, there are huge bonfires across the country. From Pesach onwards, the children gather fallen branches and build pyres often 20 and 30 feet high. Then, as the sky grows dark, they are lit and the sky is filled with flames -- and smoke. The fires are symbolic both of the light of wisdom Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai brought into the world and as a "*yahrzeit* candle" to the memory of his passing. Haircuts and weddings take place on this date and there is much festivity including dancing, singing, and music.

**This period** of national mourning for R' Akiva's students has been observed for almost two thousand years. But this tragic episode in Jewish history also forces us to confront a very difficult question: How is it possible that the students of R' Akiva, the teacher who famously said, "*Love thy friend as thyself*" is a towering principle of the Torah," would be guilty of not according proper respect to their friends? How is it possible that R' Akiva's guiding principle would be ignored by his very own students?

**There are** two seemingly contradictory teachings in *Pirkei Avos* (Ethics of our Fathers). In the second chapter we find: "R' Eliezer says, let the honor of your friend be as precious to you as your own." Yet in the fourth chapter we have a quote from R' Elazar ben Shamua: "The honor of your friend should be like the reverence accorded your teacher." Well, which one is it? Should the honor of your friend be as precious as your own or as that of your teacher's?

**There is** no contradiction. There are different types of friendships and each one requires a different level of devotion. Maimonides, in his commentary on the first chapter on the teaching "acquire for yourself a friend," quotes Aristotle in explaining that there are three categories of friendships. Aristotle, in his work *Nicomachean Ethics*, outlines the three types of friendships: 1)

those based on utility 2) those based on pleasure or delight 3) those grounded in virtue.

**The first category**, (friendship based on utility) is the most common type of friendship. This is when people associate for a mutual usefulness to each other. An example of a friendship based on utility would be business partnerships; each partner needs the other and they share common interests. Likewise, a coworker is a friend because we have a mutual interest and often do things for each other. Thus, a bond develops. The second category (friendship based on pleasure) would include associations based on how the other person makes me feel; a romantic relationships will cause one to feel loved; or a hilarious friend is constantly entertaining. Both of these categories of relationships are self-oriented, with the basis of the bond being what does each individual get out of it. These are the types of friendships for which we are enjoined by R' Eliezer to treat our friends with the same respect we would want to be treated. Meaning, even though the relationship is rooted in self-centeredness we must still focus on what is good for the other person as well.

**The third** and highest level of friendship is when the focus of the bond is based on an outward focus of doing for the other. The purpose and basis of this connection is that each friend is helping the other grow and reach their potential as they learn from one another. Maimonides continues, "and this is similar to the love of a teacher to his student." In other words, there is a type of friendship in which the relationship demands that each person treats the other as if he were his teacher.

**There is** of course a dangerous pitfall to selfish friendships; sometimes they are mutually self-destructive. That is when neither party properly respects themselves and they facilitate a downward spiral for each other. Whether it's participating in self-

destructive behavior or condoning morally questionable acts, this an absolute failure in one's responsibilities as a friend. The only way to avoid this pitfall is to expect more from the people in your life.

**That is** what R' Elazar ben Shamua meant by "the honor of your friend should be as precious as the reverence of your teacher." We must put our friends on a pedestal and not tolerate their self-destructive behavior. This is what the students of R' Akiva failed to do. They only treated their friends with the respect demanded by R' Akiva's dictum of loving your friend like yourself. They failed to treat each other with the respect due a teacher.

**Unquestionably**, this is why we learn the lesson from R' Elazar ben Shamua. As the Talmud relates, he was one of R' Akiva's final students, one of the last five ordained by R' Akiva. R' Elazar ben Shamua had internalized the bitter lesson that befell the earlier students of R' Akiva. That is why he taught that it isn't enough to treat your friends with the respect you would demand for yourself. You are obligated to treat them with the same respect due to a teacher.



## TORAH PORTION OF THE WEEK

**Emor, Leviticus 21:1 - 24:24**

**This week's** portion sets forth the standards of purity and perfection for a Cohen; specifies the physical requirements of sacrifices and what is to be done with blemished offerings; proclaims as holidays the Shabbat, Pesach, Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot.

**It reminds** the Jewish people to provide pure olive oil for the Menorah and designates the details of the Showbread (two stacks of 6 loaves each, which were placed on the table in the portable sanctuary and later in the Temple once a week upon Shabbat).

**The portion** ends with the interesting story of a man who blasphemed God's name with a curse. What should be the penalty for this transgression? Curious? *Leviticus* 24:14.



In loving memory of  
Rabbi Kalman Packouz  
Kalman Moshe ben  
Reuven Avigdor  
1950-2019  
*Shabbat Shalom,*  
Rabbi Yitzchak Zweig

THE KEHILLA WISHES חיים ארוכים "LONG LIFE"  
TO THE FOLLOWING WHO HAVE YAHRZEIT

01 Iyar Miss Florence David	12 Iyar Mr Jack Fattal
01 Iyar Mrs Bekhor	12 Iyar Mr Meir Fattal
04 Iyar Mrs Annie Benjamin	15 Iyar Mrs Esther Silas
06 Iyar Mr Abraham S. Cohen	18 Iyar Mr Saul Ceasar Hannuna
08 Iyar Mr Joseph Laniado	19 Iyar Mr Abraham S. Cohen
12 Iyar Mr Harry Fattal	26 Iyar Mrs Tiba David

Quote of the Week

**Anyone who says that friendship is easy has never been a true friend.**