

# May, 2019 Newsletter

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## B'nai Portland

### Thoughts From Rabbi Laura

In 1968 the movie Funny Girl was released. Barbra Streisand starred as performer Fanny Brice. I was seven years old and just fell in love with this movie. It wasn't until I was much older that I realized why. Seeing Jewish characters like my family and myself on the screen made me seem relevant. It's why we need diversity in all art forms, so that kids can see themselves in a meaningful and valuable way. On our recent trip to Israel I pondered why we can't seem to get enough of this land. Why do we want to stay longer? Why do we ache to come back? And then I realized that it is the same thing



as seeing like people on the screen. Israel is filled with my history, my story, and my people. I am 100% Jewish and my roots trace back to this land. For me this is palpable and resonates to my soul. Whether you are born Jewish, are a Jew by choice, adopted into the culture, or married a life mate, this land is powerful because it is the beginning of what we know to be humanity, and all of us. Each of us can connect to this holy land.

Speaking of connecting, please try to join B'nai Portland and Rabbi Laura this Thursday May 2<sup>nd</sup> at St Mary's Church on Foreside Rd in Falmouth for an interfaith prayer gathering. More info in this newsletter.

And B'nai Portland's May 10<sup>th</sup> Shabbat at the Lunt Auditorium will be led by four kids in the Tuesday afternoon class. These four have worked incredibly hard this year, and I think you'll be moved by their words and voices. 6:30pm - Come show your support.

Lastly, there are some new boxes with neat information. Please take some time and read through this newsletter.

Enjoy the longer days, be creative with your time, remember to do a mitzvah.

-Rabbi Laura

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### Upcoming Shabbat Services

**All Services begin at 6:30pm  
at Lunt Auditorium in Falmouth**

**May 10<sup>th</sup>** - Creative Shabbat Service  
Designed & led by the  
Tuesday Hebrew Class -  
come and show your  
support for these hard  
working students - it will be  
fabulous!

**June 7<sup>th</sup>** - Charity to be determined



## Upcoming Events and Happenings

**The Tuesday Hebrew class** is leading a creative Friday night service on **May 10th**. Join us to show your support for these kids who have learned so much and have worked really hard all year - it will be amazing!

### **SHARE IN PRAYER FOR UNITY WITH THE FALMOUTH FAITH COMMUNITY**

The National Day of Prayer takes place annually on the first Thursday in May (May 2, 2019). If you know anything about the history of this event, it has without question grown out of the evangelical Christian movement, however, the Falmouth clergy have decided to support the broader idea of having a dedicated time of prayer for our nation that is open to all people, of all faiths. The appointed theme for this year is "Love One Another." A theme that we feel can – and should – be embraced by all people, as we work together to overcome the divisions within American society.

**Rabbi Laura, on behalf of B'nai Portland, will be participating as a faith leader in this event. It is planned for Thursday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, at 6:00 pm at Saint Mary's on Foreside Road in Falmouth.**

The event is envisioned as a simple prayer service of readings and music selected by each faith leader with a focus on the theme of Loving One Another. It should last about one hour, with a social and refreshment time afterward.

**Please join us!**

### **Yom Ha'atzmaut begins at sundown on May 8<sup>th</sup>.**

Yom Ha'atzmaut, Israel's Independence Day, is celebrated on the fifth day of the month of Iyar. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of May in 1948, a man named David Ben-Gurion, soon to be Prime Minister, established the State of Israel, rebuilding the homeland of the Jews - a people who which had been exiled for nearly 2,000 years, subject to persecution, abuse, and in the years prior, the horrors of the Holocaust. On that day, the Jewish people had come home for the first time since King Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon exiled them in 586 BCE.

That day is now celebrated as Yom Ha'atzmaut - the Israeli Independence Day. and Jewish communities around the world celebrate with festivals of food, music, and dancing.



Check out our website at  
[www.bnaiportland.com](http://www.bnaiportland.com)

Thanks to Rich Brooks & Flyte Media for their donation and help creating our site!

# Counting of the Omer

# סְפִירַת הָעוֹמֵר

You shall count for yourselves -- from the day after the Shabbat, from the day when you bring the Omer of the waving -- seven Shabbats, they shall be complete. Until the day after the seventh Shabbat you shall count, fifty days... -*Leviticus 23:15-16*

You shall count for yourselves seven weeks, from when the sickle is first put to the standing crop shall you begin counting seven weeks. Then you will observe the Festival of Shavuot your God. -*Deuteronomy 16:9-10*

According to the Torah (Lev. 23:15), we are obligated to count the days from Passover to Shavuot. This period is known as the **Counting of the Omer**. On the second day of Passover, in the days of the Temple, an omer (a sheaf) of barley was cut down and brought to the Temple as an offering. This grain offering was referred to as the Omer.

Every night, from the second night of Passover to the night before Shavuot, we recite a blessing and state the count of the omer in both weeks and days. So on the 16th day, you would say "Today is sixteen days, which is two weeks and two days of the Omer." The counting is intended to remind us of the link between Passover, which commemorates the Exodus, and Shavuot, which commemorates the giving of the Torah. It reminds us that the redemption from slavery was not complete until we received the Torah.

The omer refers to the 49-day period between the second night of Passover and the holiday of Shavuot. This period marks the beginning of the barley harvest when, in ancient times, Jews would bring the first sheaves to the Temple as a means of thanking God for the harvest.

While Passover celebrates the initial liberation of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt, Shavuot marks the culmination of the process of liberation, when the Jews became an autonomous community with their own laws and standards. Counting up to Shavuot reminds us of this process of moving from a slave mentality to a more liberated one.

One stands when counting the omer, and recites the following blessing:

בְּרִיךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,

אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל סְפִירַת הָעוֹמֵר.

*Barukh ata Eloheinu Melekh ha'Olam asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tizivanu al sefirat ha'omer.*

Blessed are you, Adonai, our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who has sanctified us with your commandments and commanded us to count the omer.

The seven-week period of the Counting of the Omer is a solemn time. In fact it is a period of semi-mourning. During the time of the Bar Kochba revolt against the Romans (132 C.E. – 135 C.E), a plague killed 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva during the seven week period between Passover and Shavuot. Over the centuries, the Jewish People experienced more tragedies such as massacres and pogroms during this same period. To commemorate these tragedies, it has become customary to observe a period of semi-mourning during the "Counting of the Omer." Weddings and other festivities are not held, music is not heard, and hair is not cut.

**Lag B'Omer** literally means the 33rd day of the Omer. On this day we stop our mourning for the day and celebrate. This year, it falls on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. Some scholars attribute Lag B'Omer to the victory of students of the well-known and revered Rabbi Akiva over the Romans. Often children play with bows and arrows on *Lag B'Omer*, commemorating the warlike activities of Rabbi Akiva's students during the time of the Bar Kochba revolt against the Romans. Also on the 33rd day of the Omer, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, the author of the central work of Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism), died. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his students had to hide in the forests and study there, because the Romans prohibited them from studying the Bible. Lag B'Omer is the one day during the 49 days of the Omer on which celebrating is allowed. Many Jews like to plan weddings on this date for this reason. However, the most popular activities on the holiday are creating a bonfire, having picnics, and playing sports. In modern times the holiday has come to symbolize the resilience of the Jewish spirit.

## KID'S PAGE

### Make an Edible Bonfire for Lag B'Omer

#### Materials:

- small plate
- frosting (or cream cheese)
- M&Ms
- pretzel sticks
- fruit leather roll-ups in flamey colors



#### How to:

Smear a circle of frosting or cream cheese on the plate. Put a ring of M&Ms in the circle. Break pretzel sticks in half and wrap a bit of fruit roll-up on a few. Stand them up and pinch together to form the flaming logs.



### How do I celebrate Lag B'Omer???

#### Build a Bonfire

Lag B'Omer falls in mid-to- late spring, making it a great time to break out the camping gear - or at least light a fire in a fire pit. Don't forget to make some delicious s'mores!

#### Pull Out the Bows & Arrows

Israeli children typically play with bows and arrows on Lag B'Omer, imitating students of Rabbis Akiva and Shimon who fooled the Romans by pretending they were hunting. Relay races are another fun holiday activity.

#### Get a Haircut

Yes, a haircut! The Counting of the Omer is treated as a semi-mourning period, and observant Jews refrain from haircutting during such a time. Because Lag B'Omer suspends that restriction, it is a traditional time for young children to get their first haircuts.



### Check out this Lag B'Omer Activity Pack for kids:

[https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B\\_noTfpDKGR\\_YkRPaVlqbXJXd3M/edit](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B_noTfpDKGR_YkRPaVlqbXJXd3M/edit)

### S'mores Rugelach

#### Ingredients

- 2 sticks unsalted butter at room temperature
- 8 oz cream cheese at room temperature
- ¼ cup sugar
- ¼ tsp salt

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 cup marshmallow fluff
- 1 cup mini chocolate chips
- 1 ¼ cup crushed graham cracker crumbs
- 1 egg beaten with 1 Tbsp water for egg wash

#### Directions

Cream the butter and cream cheese together in a mixer until light. Add sugar and salt. With the mixer on its lowest speed, add the flour ½ cup at a time until a dough forms.

Place dough onto a well floured surface and shape into a ball. Cut the ball into quarters and wrap each with plastic. Chill in the refrigerator until firm, about 1 hour. If making ahead of time, you can also freeze the dough at this point.

Right before you're ready to take the dough out, prepare the marshmallow filling. Place 2 cups of the marshmallow fluff in a medium size microwavable bowl. Microwave for 10-15 seconds so that the fluff becomes easier to spread.

On a well floured surface, roll each ball out into a 8 inch circle. This dough can be sticky, so sprinkle more flour as necessary. Spread the marshmallow fluff across the dough in a thin layer. Sprinkle ¼ cup of mini chocolate chips and ¼ c crushed graham crackers. Use a pizza cutter to cut the circle into 12 wedges. Start by slicing the circle into quarters and then slice thirds into each quarter to ensure your rugelach will be evenly sized. Roll each wedge up, starting with the wider side.

Place cookies on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Chill for 30 minutes.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Brush each cookie with egg wash and sprinkle with remaining graham cracker crumbs. Bake 15 to 20 minutes until browned. Let cool on a wire rack and enjoy.



## Announcing a Fall Fundraiser and Social!

We are soliciting feedback and volunteers to help organize a fall social event and silent auction for the community. What better way to support the congregation while getting out for a fun evening with old or new friends? Interested in helping out? Or just have suggestions? Please email Pat Martin: [Patrick@gilmanpatrick.com](mailto:Patrick@gilmanpatrick.com).

## \* Attention Business Owners \*

Do you have a product or service that would benefit other members of our congregation? Event photography? Legal services? Baby sitting? Tutoring? This fall, B'nai Portland will introduce a **resource guide** offering you the opportunity to list your business along with a link to your website so that our community will know where to find you. Proceeds will help to offset the congregation's website and printing costs. Interested? Please email: [Bnai.portland@gmail.com](mailto:Bnai.portland@gmail.com) and put **BUSINESS OWNER** in the subject line. Please tell us the name and brief description of your business and a contact person. This is open to teens as well. More details to follow in later newsletters.



## Simchas & Sorrows

**Mazel Tov to Mara and Warren Moorhead on Eliza becoming Bat Mitzvah.**

**Mazel Tov to Liz and Chip Currier (parents), Mary and Mark Sontz (grandparents) on the naming of Baby Booker Phoenix.**

**Mazel Tov to Sara and John Bumby on Calvin becoming Bar Mitzvah in a Bedouin tent in the Negev Israel.**

**Mazel Tov to Roberta Alexander, Calli Alexander Hensley, and Isa Alexander Hensley on a 3 generation B'not Mitzvah on the Sea of Galilee in Israel.**

*Please let B'nai Portland know of any simchas or sorrows so we can share them with the Congregation.*



### Donation

Izzy Chaleff

Jacqueline Robinov

Roberta Alexander

### In Honor of

a Passover offering

in honor of Eliza Moorhead becoming Bat Mitzvah

in honor of herself, her daughter, Calli Alexander Hensley, and her granddaughter, Isa Alexander Hensley, on becoming B'not Mitzvah.

*If you would like to honor or remember someone, please consider making a tax deductible donation to B'nai Portland. All monies received are used towards programming and activities*