

If spring is here, can summer be far behind?

Nope...only 36 more days until Memorial Day Weekend

Have you remembered to send in your CSH dues?

(Membership form attached)

CSH Shabbat Services

April 29 Parashat Kedoshim

May 14 Parashat Behar

May 28 Parashat Bamidbar (Rabbi Uhrbach)

April at a Glance

Thursday April 21-Sunday April 24 Chol Hamoed Pesach

Monday April 25 Pesach Day 7

Tuesday April 26 Pesach Day 8

Friday, April 22, 2011 Candle Lighting 7:19 pm (Sag Harbor)



Musings on Pesach / The Counting of the Omer / etc --

Pesach traditions in other parts of the world...

INDIA: A Jewish community has lived in Cochin in the Indian state of Kerala for more than 2,000 years. Its members go to shockingly great lengths to prepare for Passover, reports The Jewish Week.

"Pesah work," as it was called in Cochin, would begin immediately after Chanukah. In the Cochin community, it was believed that if a Jewish woman were to make even the slightest mistake in Passover preparation during the 100 days before the actual seder, then the lives of her husband and her children would be endangered.

The pursuit of chametz was a serious business. To ensure purity, the Jews of Cochin kept special rooms in which all Passover utensils, thoroughly scrubbed, were stored. Houses would be scraped and repainted immediately after Purim. Wells would be drained and scrubbed, lest they be polluted. Each grain of rice -- an essential staple even during Passover -- would be examined to ensure that it was free from cracks into which polluting chametz might find its way.

POLAND: Hasidic Jews living in Góra Kalwaria, Poland, reenact the crossing of the Red Sea in their living rooms. On the seventh day of Passover, each Jewish family pours water on the floor of their homes, hikes up their coats and says the name of the towns in the region they would pass while making their crossing,

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/04/08/top-5-passover-traditions_n_184209.html

SEPHARDI ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA: Ten Plagues - There is no dipping of fingers in wine. The mother would walk up to the father with a large bowl and a glass of water. He would recite the plagues one by one, and for each plague he would pour a bit of wine in the bowl from a special large wineglass, and the mother would pour a bit of the water. It is all done under the table - nobody is supposed to look at the "plagues" for fear of being "contaminated"! Then the mother, without looking directly at the bowl, and with everyone else looking in another direction, would go to the bathroom and flush the "plagues" down the toilet. The wine represents justice and the water mercy.

In Singapore each participant would sling the napkin containing the matzah over their right shoulder. Then the leader of the seder would ask them "Where are you from?", and they would answer "Mitzrayim -- Egypt". The leader would then ask again, "And where are you going?". They would then sling the napkin of matzah over their left shoulder and answer: "Yerushalayim -- Jerusalem!".

<http://www.sephardivic.org/synagogue/our-religious-traditions>



Counting the Omer -- From the second night of Pesach to the night before Shavuot we count the Omer. Originally this Sefirah period was a way to punctuate the ripening barley's daily growth, until the Omer of ripened barley was brought as a sacrifice to the Temple in gratitude for the harvest. When we were no longer involved with farming our sages ordered us to count, and this counting became a moral preparation for the Receiving of the Torah at Sinai.

Counting the Omer is an exercise in the discipline of mindfulness. Counting each of the days from Passover until Shavuot sounds deceptively simple, but it is not an easy task. It requires a consciousness – or a mindfulness – to remember to count each night. (Traditionally, anyone who misses a day altogether may pick up the count when she or he remembers, but without the blessing. This omission is because the blessing recognizes the commandment to do the whole counting – or to practice mindfulness for 49 days straight.) Like learning a new language, practicing an instrument, or starting an exercise routine, counting the Omer is demanding. However, just as these other disciplines reward us in both expected and unexpected ways, so too the counting for 49 days stimulates a sense of accomplishment, new awareness, and mindfulness.

Making each day count is a valuable lesson which adopting the practice of counting the Omer reinforces. Counting each of the days of the Omer reminds us that all of our days are numbered, and it is our responsibility to make each day count. The deliberate way in which the Torah numbers the days of Sarah's life, "one hundred years and twenty years and seven years" signifies both the fullness of her days and the significance of each and every day. We count the Omer in a similarly careful and focused manner in order to help us recognize the completeness of these days and of each day.

<http://www.ritualwell.org/holidays/countingtheomer/primaryobject.2007-03-14.1397722827>

Also check out: <http://www.balashon.com/2009/04/omer.html>



Birkat Ha-ilanot -- A once a year opportunity not to be missed

The month of Nisan is filled with remarkable moments (including the Pesach seder), but the one that touches me the most deeply is **the blessing of the fruit trees**. This blessing is traditionally

said when one is in view of at least two flowering fruit trees, anytime through the end of the month (though it can still be said in Iyar – or in Tishrei down under).

The brakhah goes like this:

"Blessed be You, Yah our God ruler of space and time, for God left nothing lacking in God's world, and created in it good creatures and good trees, giving pleasure through them to the children of Adam."

**Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha-olam
shelo chiseir ba-olamo k'lum uvara vo briyot tovot v'ilanot tovim
l'hanot bahem b'nei Adam**

The language of the blessing recalls part of the *borei n'fashot* blessing for food, which thanks God for creating "many souls and all their lacks" *chesronam*, yet here we say that there is nothing missing or lacking. One could say that the things we lack are themselves the essence of creation, calling us to weave relationships with all forms of life. The gift of fruit, however, embodies an even greater sense of pure abundance and blessing than almost anything else we encounter.

We have a unique intimacy with fruit trees. In scripture that goes back to Gan Eden and the tree of knowing. The connection is even more powerful in the midrashic interpretation of the statement in Deuteronomy 20, Ha'adam eitz ha-sadeh, "A person is a tree of the field" (that is, a fruit tree). (The statement in context is really a question.) For Kabbalah, a fruit tree is as true an image of God as a person (see below as well as the blessing from P'ri Eitz Hadar). The Sefirot, "the Tree of Life", are thought of as a fruit tree. The reason why is that a fruit tree embodies the principle of sharing, and is a more perfect model for how God interacts with the world than human beings can be.

Why do we need to see two trees rather than just one to say the blessing? I haven't heard an explanation, but one reason is that the trees need each other to reproduce, at least on the species level (most fruits—except dates and a few others that are gendered by tree—can also fertilize themselves). The halakhah specifically forbids saying the blessing over trees that are grafted from one species onto another – there is an idea of appreciating the awesome reality of this world in itself, separate from human "chokhmas" and power.

http://www.neohasid.org/stoptheflood/birkat_hailanot/



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In Honor of

Paula Dubrow in honor of Jan Uhrbach and Stacy Menzer

End Quote

If you've never been thrilled to the very edges of your soul by a flower in spring bloom, maybe your soul has never been in bloom. ~Terri Guillemets

Shabbat Shalom. Chag Kasher v'Sameah.

Stacy