

Congregation Sons of Israel

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Upcoming Events

Join Sons of Israel and Chabad of the Lehigh Valley on Sunday, May 14th, at 3:30 p.m. as we celebrate **Lag B'Omer** together with an amazing drum circle program at Chabad (4457 Crackersport Road). Cost: \$10 per person with a family max of \$50, RSVP to 610-351-6511.



Join us on Thursday, May 25th at 7 p.m.
for an evening of **Laughter and Celebration**
as we honor the King David Society members and remember its founder, Jay Scherline, z"l

Featuring comedian Mike Reiss of The Simpsons and a decadent dessert (dairy) reception

This is the shul's annual fundraiser this year. We hope you can attend, but if you are unable, please support the shul by placing an ad in the advertising journal.

We have extended our deadline for receiving ads until Wednesday, May 17th.



This year's **Phyllis Ringel Memorial Lecture and Brunch** will be held on Sunday, May 21st at 10:00 a.m. at Temple Beth El. Jett Ulaner Sarachek will speak on **"The Heart of Art Therapy"**. This is a free program for the community. Please register by calling Jewish Family Service at 610-821-8722 or www.jfslv.org.



The **1st Annual Spring Fun Run**, to benefit the Jewish Day School, will be held on Sunday, June 4th at Camp JCC in Center Valley at 8:30 a.m. You choose your path — 5k run/walk, 1 mile run/walk or just come to have fun at the carnival! Link to register: <http://tinyurl.com/JDSfunrun2017>

Regular Classes

Daily: Daf Yomi, Sunday—Friday 7:30 AM

Tuesdays:
"How to Use the Parsha to Communicate with Your Child"
w/R' Wilensky at the JDS 8:10 AM

"A Psychoanalysis of the Personalities of Moses, Aaron and Miriam"
at the JCC with Rabbi Wilensky 10:45 AM

"Chovot Halevavot: Nurturing the Inner Feelings of a Jew"
with R' Wilensky at the shul 8:30 PM

Thursdays:
"A Psychoanalysis of the Personalities of Moses, Aaron and Miriam"
at the JCC with Rabbi Wilensky 10:45 AM

Shabbos
Shabbos Morning Gemara Shiur with Dr. Henry Grossbard 8:00 AM
"Contemporary Halachic Issues from the Parsha", with R' Wilensky 12 noon



קהילת בני ישראל

Congregation Sons of Israel

Parshat Emor
17 Iyar, 5777
May 13, 2017

Announcements

Everyone is invited to a **sit-down Kiddush** after services in celebration of Rabbi Seth's Medicare birthday.

Shalosh Se'udos is presented by Barry & Carol Halper in observance of the yahrzeit of her beloved father, Ray Richman.

Due to the predicted inclement weather, **Parent Child Learning** will not take place this Shabbos and will resume next Shabbat afternoon.

Shavuot Count-Down 5777, in memory of Dr. Steven Weiner, z'l. Sign up to learn a section of the 19 Books of Neviim (Prophets) and K'tuvim (Writings) in preparation for a siyum kiddush on the 2nd day of Shavuot, Thursday, June 1st.

A Graduation Kiddush is being planned for Shabbos June 24th. If you have a graduate in your family and would like to honor them by participating in the kiddush, please call our office.

A speedy recovery to Bob Levin-Dando.

Shabbos Schedule

8:00 AM	Beginner's Gemara Class
9:00 AM	Shacharis
10:30 AM	Jr. Congregation
12:00 noon	Contemporary Halachic Issues from the Parsha: "The Philosophy and Halachah of Counting the Omer"
6:30 PM	Daf Yomi
7:30 PM	Mincha, Shalosh Se'udos
8:53 PM	Shabbat concludes

Minyanim May 14-20

	Sunday 5/14	Monday 5/15	Tuesday 5/16	Wed 5/17	Thursday 5/18	Friday 5/19	Shabbos 5/20
AM	8:30 AM	6:30 AM	6:45 AM	6:45 AM	6:30 AM	6:45 AM	9:00 AM
PM	7:50 PM	7:50 PM	7:50 PM	7:50 PM	7:50 PM	7:00 PM	7:35 PM

Parshat Emor— “A Life of Sanctification”

By Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

The conditions under which we live are many and varied. Some of us live in very comfortable, even idyllic, surroundings. Others struggle with diverse hardships, including poverty, disease, and the conditions of war. Our people have known unspeakably extreme conditions, such as those experienced during the Holocaust.

Throughout history, we have learned to obey G-d’s commands, no matter the situation in which we find ourselves. Not too long ago, we all celebrated Passover. Some of us were privileged to conduct the *seder* in the Old City of Jerusalem, in close proximity to the site of the Holy Temple. Others gathered around tables in resorts in much more unlikely venues, ranging from Florida and California to exotic Mediterranean or Caribbean isles.

Most of us enjoyed the holiday in the warmth of our own modest homes, in places as geographically distant from each other as Brooklyn and Bnei Brak. Our collective memories drew upon images of the first Passover celebrated in Egypt at the brink of freedom from centuries of slavery, as well as images of Passovers experienced in the throes of the slavery of the Warsaw ghetto, and even in the nightmarish death camp of Auschwitz.

Our observance of *mitzvot* is never negated by the conditions of our lives.

This week’s Torah portion, *Parshat Emor* (Leviticus 21:1-24:23), confronts us with a *mitzvah* which must be observed in the full range of life’s myriad conditions, however challenging they may be. I refer to the *mitzvah* of *kiddush Hashem*, usually translated as “the sanctification of G-d’s name.” Permit me to explicate this *mitzvah* by first providing an

outline of the entire weekly *parsha*.

The *parsha* begins with a lengthy description of the standards of behavior required of the *kohanim*, the priests, the “sons of Aaron.” This description occupies the entire first half of the *parsha*, chapters 21 and 22. The latter half of the *parsha*, chapter 23, enumerates the major festivals of the Jewish calendar. Between these lengthy sections, we find these brief verses:

“You shall faithfully observe My commandments... You shall not profane My holy name, so that I may be sanctified in the midst of the Israelite people—I the L-rd who sanctify you... who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your G-d...” (*Leviticus* 22:31-33).

The Rabbis understand these verses to refer, first of all, to the ultimate sacrilege: profaning G-d’s holy name, or, in Hebrew, *chillul Hashem*. Conversely, these passages adumbrate the concept of the sanctification of G-d’s name, *kiddush Hashem*, the noblest, and arguably the most difficult, of all the *mitzvot*.

Why do I say “most difficult?” Because the classical rabbinic definition of *kiddush Hashem* is the willingness to suffer martyrdom rather than betray one’s faith in the Almighty. Thus, those Jews during the Spanish Inquisition who willingly chose martyrdom over baptism exemplified *kiddush Hashem*. Indeed, all of the six million victims of the Holocaust, who were killed merely because they were Jews, are said to have performed the *mitzvah* of *kiddush Hashem*.

But can this “sanctification” only occur in such dire circumstances? Is it only through one’s death that one can “sanctify the L-rd?” No one has ever responded to this question as resoundingly, and as eloquently, as did Maimonides when he wrote:

“Anyone who willingly, without being compelled to do so, violates any of the *mitzvot*, spitefully and without pangs of conscience, has thereby profaned the name of the

L-rd. But, on the other hand, whoever refrains from sin, or performs a *mitzvah*, for no other reason, not out of fear, nor to seek glory, but rather to serve the Creator, Blessed is He, as did the righteous Joseph when tempted by his master’s wife, such a person has sanctified the name of the L-rd...” (Maimonides, *Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah*, 5:10).

From this perspective, we can better understand the words of Rabbi Isaac Nissenbaum, a leader of the religious Zionist movement in pre-war Poland, and a hero of the Warsaw ghetto who was ultimately murdered there. He insisted that in the hellish conditions of Nazi persecution, it had become necessary to somewhat modify the concept of *kiddush Hashem* so that it signified something more than martyrdom.

He introduced the phrase *kiddush hachaim*, “the sanctification of life.” He wished to inspire the tortured residents of the ghetto not to “die for the purpose of sanctification of the name of the L-rd,” but rather to “live their lives in a manner that sanctified the name of the L-rd.” He urged his people to sanctify the name of the L-rd, even in the horrendous conditions of the ghetto, by doing all that they possibly could to remain alive, to survive, and to live spiritual lives to the extent that those conditions allowed.

Rabbi Nissenbaum did not survive the Holocaust. But others with similar views did. One of them was named Rabbi Gad Eisner, whose heroic deeds in the aftermath of the Holocaust have been recorded by numerous eye-witnesses.

Many of the other survivors, upon discovering that their homes were gone and that their families had been killed, were ready to surrender to the “Angel of death” rather than struggle to remain alive. “What is there to live for?” they asked.

Rabbi Gad encouraged them to remain alive and arduously walked from bed to bed in a

post-Holocaust makeshift hospital to spoon feed these tragic individuals.

More than that, after they had begun to physically recover, he inspired them to engage in spiritual practices, in Torah study, and even in joyous celebrations. He would say, in Yiddish, “*az menn lebt, zohl zein gelebt*,” loosely translated as “as long as you are alive, live to the maximum!” Then he would add, “Remaining alive, fully alive, is the greatest sanctification of the name of the L-rd, the highest form of *kiddush Hashem*.”

But one does not have to resort to Maimonides, nor even to victims or survivors of the Holocaust, to find descriptions of *kiddush Hashem*. The Talmud offers a definition which is appropriate to those of us who thankfully live in far less extreme conditions, who live “ordinary lives”.

This is the definition of *kiddush Hashem* offered by the Talmudic Sage Abaye:

“Thou shall love the L-rd your G-d.” (*Deuteronomy* 6:5) This refers to someone whose actions cause the L-rd’s name to become beloved by others. He is a person who reads Scripture, studies *Mishnah*, and associates with the wise; one who conducts himself courteously with all others, causing them to say, ‘How fortunate are his parents who taught him Torah; how fortunate is the teacher who taught him Torah. So-and-so who learned Torah, observe how beautiful are his ways, how exemplary is his conduct.’” (Talmud, Tractate *Yoma* 86a)

This is the *kiddush Hashem* of which we are all capable. We need not be martyrs, we need not be heroes. We must merely guide ourselves by the Almighty’s Torah and live our lives according to His ideals. That is how we can “sanctify His name.”