



Tiferet

ת פ א ר ת



TIFERET UPDATES

This Week in Tiferet

Tiferet students were privileged to hear from several interesting and informative guest speakers this week.

Rabbi Yaacov Glasser, director of Education for NCSY encouraged our students to take on leadership opportunities in their communities when they return to chutz la'aretz.

Mrs Leora Bednarsh, yoetzet halacha, discussed her role as a halachic advisor to women in the Jewish community.

Finally, **Rabbi Natan Slifkin**, otherwise known as the "Zoo Rabbi," spoke about evolution, and the ability to synthesize Torah and science.

תורת תפארת

Getting Into the Holiday Spirit **Rav Simi Sherman (simisherman@gmail.com)** **Parashat Emor**

Everyone loves the Jewish Holidays. In fact, for many, the chagim are the most engaging and uplifting aspects of their religious lives. This week the Torah teaches us the laws and regulations regarding the major festivals we celebrate throughout the year. Strangely, though, right in the middle of these laws- specifically, between the laws of Shavuot and the laws of Rosh Hashana- the Torah seems to get a bit sidetracked and mentions an unrelated agricultural law; one that we actually have already been taught. The Torah takes a brief pause from the laws of the chagim and reminds us of the law of Peah; the obligation to leave the corners of one's field unharvested so that poor people will have something to eat.

There must be a reason why the Torah chose to pause right here, in the middle of teaching us about the chagim, to remind us of the law of Peah. Virtually every classical commentary on the Chumash is bothered by this question. Many commentaries answer simply that since Shavuot is the time of harvesting the Torah took a moment to remind us of our charitable obligations during this time of the year.

The Midrash offers another explanation. It explains that the Torah is telling us that one who observes the laws Peah is as if he celebrated all of the Jewish holidays.

Perhaps, though, we can offer a third explanation which will also explain why this parsha is read right next to the day of Lag BaOmer. Every holiday has what we call Mitzvos HaYom- the obligation of that day. On Sukkot we must take the daled minim and reside in a sukka. On Pesach we must conduct a seder and eat matzah. Rosh Hashanah has shofar, and so on. Each holiday pushes us spiritually to strive for greater individual greatness. We grow into stronger Jews through the celebration of these chagim and through the proper fulfillment of these mitzvos. The one concern is that we get too tied up in ourselves. While looking to fulfill each mitzvah as best as possible we risk becoming too inwardly focused and fail to remember or focus on our outward obligations. We may, with the best of intentions, become self-centered, and lose sight of those around us.

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Tiferet students and faculty cheering on our basketball team, during their semi-final win in the inter-seminary league!



Guest Speaker, Mrs Leora Bednarsh

תורת תפארת (המשך)

The mitzvah of Peah is the exact opposite. It demands of us, in the most personal and private moments of harvesting the field we have worked all year to cultivate, to think about others- to be outwardly focused. Maybe that is why the Torah places this mitzvah- or rather reminder- right in the middle of the laws of the holidays. We must be reminded that even as we strive to personally excel in our individual Avados Hashem that we never lose sight of others who may need our help.

This may also explain why we read this parsha leading up to Lag BaOmer; when we commemorate the point when Rabbi Akiva's students finally stopped dying. We know that Rabbi Akiva lost 24,000 students because they were not Noheg Kavod Ze LaZe (they failed to show respect for one another). Many have struggled to understand how Rabbi Akiva's students - who spent all day learning Torah- could fail to exhibit basic middos. Perhaps, however, the gemara does not mean that they were disrespectful to one another but that they did not show kavod to one another. They did not have an outward focus. Showing kavod for another means being able to be as concerned for another's wellbeing as one's own. It requires us to step outside of ourselves and see the world from another person's perspective, and this where Rabbi Akiva's students fell short.

But, when did they stop dying? When they finally got this lesson. When they finally learned to read the halachos Peah right in the middle of the laws of the Chagim.

"Counting on Torah Shebeal Peh"

Dani Samet (5773)

In this week's parsha, we learn that a person is supposed to start counting sefira the Shabbat after Pesach starts. This is the opinion that tz'dukim followed, based on the Torah shebichatav. However, we differ in opinion from the tz'dukim. We believe in the Torah shebeal peh which states to start counting sefira after the first day of Pesach. What is the significance in the difference in opinions?

This is just one idea that shows our strong belief in the Torah shebeal peh. In connection with counting sefira and continuing the passing of lessons from the Torah shebeal peh, Lag Baomer is tomorrow night. Many people do not really know the reasons for why we celebrate Lag Baomer or only know some of the reasons. So what exactly is Lag Baomer? Why do we celebrate it?

Some rishonim comment that Lag baomer is when Rabbi Akiva's students stopped dying. Another thought is that this was not the day that Rabbi Akiva's students stopped dying, but was the day that Rabbi Akiva started teaching new students, one of which was Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. Additionally Rabbi Akiva gave many of his students smicha. And lastly, many people remember that Lag Baomer is Rabbi Shimon bar Yochais yahrtzeit.

The two ideas which are not noticed as often are that this was the day that Rabbi Akiva started teaching many of his new students and that many of his students got smicha. Lag baomer is showing us how much we believe in the Torah shebeal peh which connects back to us starting to count sefira on the second day of Pesach. All of these ideas foster from the Torah shebeal peh and only help us continue growing as a stronger Jewish nation.

May the Torah she bealpeh continue to have a strong impact on us and continue to help shape our lives and continue the strength of Am Yisrael.