



On Lag B'Omer it is customary for children to go out into the fields and play with bows and arrows. For adults, there is a custom of visiting the local cemetery on Lag B'Omer. In the town of Homil, every year on this day, all the Jews would pay their respects to the dearly departed: parents, Chasidim, Torah scholars and other beloved members of the community.

The Chevra Kadisha, or Burial Society, would also make its annual visit to the cemetery on the afternoon of Lag B'Omer. Notebook in hand, its members would make the rounds of all the graves and check on the condition of the tombstones. Anything requiring repair was duly noted.

Towards evening, their inspection over, the members of the Chevra Kadisha would gather together for a communal seuda (festive meal). It was always an inspirational event, dedicated to furthering the observance of "acts of true kindness" (as Jewish burial practices are called, as the dead cannot be expected to reciprocate).

It was also customary for the famous Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac of Homil (1770 - 1857, one of the greatest early Chabad Chasidim) to participate in the gathering, joining the Chevra Kadisha in their celebration. Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac, one of the greatest followers of the early Chabad leaders, would make a "l'chaim" and deliver some appropriate words of Torah.

Before he arrived, however, Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac would always conduct his own pilgrimage to visit the grave-sites of his predecessors. Year after year he would follow the same schedule, until one time, something most unusual occurred.

That Lag B'Omer it was already growing late when Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac began his rounds, accompanied by the cemetery caretaker. The setting sun elongated his shadow, accentuating his long white beard. At each grave the Rabbi whispered something audible only to him before moving on to the next one.

At the very end of the cemetery, in the newer section where the most recently deceased were interred, the rabbi paused in front of an obviously new marble monument. Bending down, he read the inscription to make sure it was the one he was looking for before nodding his head slightly.

"Quickly!" he suddenly turned and called to the caretaker. "Go back to town and bring an ax. A strong one, with a heavy blade." The caretaker did as he was told, and few minutes later he was back.

"Now I want you to obliterate everything it says here," the rabbi instructed him. "Take off all the words of praise, all the flowery eulogies and tributes. Leave nothing but the name of the deceased and the date he died."

The caretaker hesitated, frozen in place. But Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac was insistent. "Please, just do what I tell you," he implored him.

With trembling hands the caretaker lifted the ax and demolished the engraving, erasing the litany of good deeds the deceased had accomplished during his lifetime. When the deed was done, a look of satisfaction could be seen on the face of the rabbi. "Good," he told the astounded caretaker. "Now I can attend the seuda with the Chevra Kadisha."

The news of what had happened quickly spread throughout Homil. Indeed, the rumor reached the ears of the members of the Burial Society even before Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac arrived at their celebration.

"Thank G-d I was able to do an act of kindness for a Jewish soul," the rabbi announced as he walked in the door. It was obvious from the way everyone was looking at him that they were completely mystified by his behavior.

The rabbi sat down and made a blessing over a glass of spirits. "L'chaim - to life!" he wished the assemblage before launching into an explanation:

"A few weeks ago," he began, "a simple Jew passed away in Homil. His funeral

was small and unassuming. Only a few members of his family were present, plus representatives of the Chevra Kadisha. Like many others, despite the fact that he wasn't particularly learned or saintly, he was a warmhearted Jew who had many mitzvot to his credit. On the other hand, he also occasionally faltered like everyone else. In other words, he was your average Jew.

"After he died, his soul went up to the Heavenly Court, where his good deeds and bad deeds came under intense scrutiny. The judgment was about to be issued when, all of a sudden, an angel stood up holding a glistening white marble tablet. It was the tombstone that the deceased's children had erected over his final resting place.

"It seems that the man's children had decided to bestow upon their father - or upon themselves - a number of undeserved honors. The lengthy inscription described a lifetime of devoutness and piety, which, in reality, was only a fabrication. The Heavenly Court was disturbed by this miscarriage of justice.

"Today I did a very great favor for the soul of the departed," the rabbi concluded. "When I erased all of the undeserved words of praise, the Heavenly Court ruled that the man's soul could now receive the true reward it was legitimately entitled to."

## THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the Weekly Torah Portion

**And you shall not profane My holy name (Lev. 22:32)**The opposite of profaning G-d's name is the sanctification of G-d's name. When a Jew performs a mitzva (commandment) with devotion, and with pure intent, he is sanctifying G-d's name. When a Jew behaves in such a manner that only good things are heard about him, that too is a sanctification of G-d's name. However, the opposite is also true. (Rambam)

**In the manner that he has caused a defect in someone, so shall it be done to him (Lev. 24:20)** If one finds a defect or something lacking in his fellow man, this is a sign that "so shall it be done to him" - that he himself is the one that has the defect. "He who charges others, charges them with his own faults." (Kometz HaMincha)

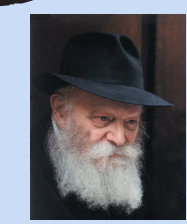
**And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Shabbat, from the day that you brought the Omer of the waving; seven complete weeks shall they be. (Lev 23:15)** This verse discusses the laws concerning Sefirat HaOmer - the counting of the Omer which takes place between Passover and Shavuot. Rashi explains that "from the day after the Shabbat" refers to the day after the festival, i.e. the second day of Passover. He further explains that the word "complete" teaches us that one begins to count from the evening (the second night of Passover) or else the weeks are not truly complete

The word "u'sefartem - and you shall count" is from the same root as the words "sapphire" and "bright" as if to say, "Work on 'yourselves' until you are shiny and bright." (The Maggid of Mezritch)

**7:34 PM Candle Lighting Time**  
 NY Metro Area  
**14 Iyar // May 1**  
**Pesach Sheni**  
 Torah Portion Emor  
 Ethics: Ch 4  
 Shabbat ends 8:38 PM

# L'Chaim

1921  
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 The Weekly Publication for Every Jewish Person  
 נוסד תוך ימי השלושים  
 Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson  
 "Jerusalem has mountains around it, and the L-rd is around His people from now and to eternity" (Psalms 125:2)



## LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

This week's Torah portion, Emor, is paired with a Haftarah from Ezekiel describing the future Third Temple. The Haftarah outlines who the Kohanim (priests) will be and the laws they must follow, including the prohibition against eating a neveila (an improperly slaughtered animal) or a treifa (an animal with a fatal defect).

The connection to Emor is clear: the portion begins with laws for the Kohanim. The Haftarah, however, introduces them with the phrase, "And the Kohanim, the Levites..."—raising a question: why are Kohanim called Levites?

On a simple level, Kohanim come from the tribe of Levi, so the term fits. But the Arizal teaches that in the future, Levites themselves will become Kohanim.

This seems difficult to reconcile with the traditional teaching, also cited by Maimonides, that the Torah's structure will not change in the era of Moshiach. We also say in our prayers that "the Kohanim will return to their service, and the Levites to their singing," implying distinct roles will remain.

To understand this, we need to look at the spiritual nature of each. A Kohen's service was to draw holiness downward into the world. Their souls are associated with water, which flows from higher to lower. In the Temple, they brought G-dliness into everyday reality.

Levites, by contrast, embodied upward striving. Their service—singing and music—awakened a deep longing in others to come closer to G-d. Their souls are associated with fire, which naturally rises.

These are two different approaches: drawing holiness down from above can inspire people in the moment, while awakening a yearning from within creates lasting inner change.

When Moshiach comes, and G-dliness has been drawn down so the world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the sea, the Kohen's job will be to create an internal yearning in the people to strive to become even closer to G-d. Being that it is not in their nature to do that, G-d will give them souls of Levites, souls of fire, so it will become their nature.

Adapted by Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz from the Rebbe's teachings. Rabbi Hurwitz, who is battling ALS, and his wife Dina, are emissaries of the Rebbe in Temecula, Ca.

## Another Chance Awakens Within You

There are moments in life when we feel we've missed something important, an opportunity, a connection, a version of ourselves we were meant to become. Yet the deeper rhythm of existence whispers a different truth: nothing is ever truly lost.

There is always another doorway. The biblical story and commandment of 'Pesach Sheni - the Second Passover', is the story about the opportunity at a second chance.

The Torah relates that in the first year after the Exodus, when the Jewish people were preparing to bring the Pesach sacrifice: There were certain men who were not able bring the Pesach offering on that day. They came to complain to Moses who said to them, "Stand and hear what G-d will command concerning you."

And then came the response, G-d said, "If any man be impure . . . or on a distant way [on the day of the Pesach offering] he shall sacrifice the Pesach offering to G-d, in the second month, on the fourteenth day at dusk". Thus, the concept of a second chance was introduced.

Their question was simple and powerful: Why should we be left out? That question echoes within every human heart. It is the voice of the soul refusing to settle for disconnection.

And the answer they received still speaks to us now: it is never too late.

Life moves in cycles. There are times of awakening that come as gifts—sudden clarity, inspiration, breakthroughs that

seem to lift us beyond ourselves. But there are also quieter seasons, where growth is slower, more intentional. In those moments, we are invited to do the inner work—to refine, to heal, to gently transform what already exists within us.

True healing doesn't come from rejecting who we are. It comes from embracing every part of ourselves and elevating it. Even the parts we once labeled as "mistakes" or "failures" can become fuel for growth. Nothing within you is wasted when you choose to grow from it.

This is the deeper meaning of a second chance: not just to start over, but to start deeper. To move forward with intention.

It is the quiet knowing that you are meant to evolve, to expand, to become more aligned with your true essence. No matter how far you feel you've wandered, that inner light never disappears. It simply waits for you to turn toward it.

Growth is not a one-time event—it is a continuous unfolding. Each stage of your journey invites you higher, deeper, closer to your authentic self. What once felt like "enough" may no longer satisfy you, not because you've failed, but because you've grown.

So when you feel behind, remember: you are not late—you are being called forward.

There is always another step. Another opening. Another chance to rise.

And the moment you choose to begin again... you already have.

