

RABBI'S MESSAGE

BALANCING OUR BLESSINGS

What a rollercoaster the Jewish calendar provides during spring and summer! Consider these holidays, celebrations and observances (Hebrew month in italics; approximate Gregorian month in parenthesis):

Adar (March) – Purim

Nissan (April) – Passover and Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance)

Iyar (May or June) – Yom Ha-Zikaron (Israeli Memorial Day) and Yom Ha-Atzmaut (Israeli Independence Day)

Sivan (June) – Shavuot

Av (July or August) – Tish B'Av

Purim is the fun and festive, funny, silly dress-up day that commemorates Jewish survival despite our enemy's desire to annihilate us. **Passover** is the holiday that is probably observed by more Jews than any other; a defining moment in our history; it relates the story of our relationship with G-d, and just as importantly, the *Seder* celebrates our relationships with each other. These festivities are followed closely by **Yom HaShoah**, reminding us the important lessons of the Holocaust and the vital message of "Never Again!" Shortly after that, two observances come back-to-back, one day after the other. On **Yom Ha-Zikaron**, Israelis remember the brave military personnel who gave their lives for a free Jewish state; then the next day, they celebrate the victory with **Yom Ha-Atzmaut**. **Shavuot**, exactly seven weeks after Passover, celebrates our people receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai. **Tish B'Av**, a fast day, commemorates the destruction of the First and Second Temple, as well as other tragedies in Jewish history.

These seven days form a loose pattern, when looking at them emotionally:

GOOD/GOOD/BAD/BAD/GOOD/GOOD/BAD

Many of you have heard me speak about the special quality of the number seven as a number of completion. In a way, like the world that was completed in seven days, these seven observances provide a sense of variety and balance to the way we might embrace Judaism. We take the good with the bad. We celebrate victories, gifts, learning and togetherness. We mourn our losses and deaths. Our celebrations bring us together; so do our lamentations.

Being part of a community is a complete picture. Learning, praying, singing, eating...these are some of the *activities*. A community isn't just about the activities, but about being together for the whole shebang – helping our neighbors enjoy their blessings while also being present to help manage the difficulties.

Some of the seven observances on this list are more familiar than others. The concepts they teach are important to our lives. As you see from the above pattern, the list of seven includes four "good" (happy celebrations) and three "bad" (tragic observances). Perhaps we can remember that our tradition offers us the variety, but we can rejoice that we have more to celebrate than to mourn.

L'Shalom,

Dan Gordon