

# A Humble Week

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Let's start with a Chassidic story.

*The holy Baal Shem Tov was once a guest at someone's home. He got up to go from a large room to a smaller room, but took a wrong turn and ended up in the cellar. "Check the mezuzahs," he said.*

*Someone there asked him, "Just because a person made a mistake, he has to find a reason? Maybe it was just an accident."*

*The Baal Shem Tov responded, "By me, there are no accidents."*

*From here, every person should learn to believe that everything happens due to Divine Providence. He shouldn't attribute it to happenstance, God forbid (Shivchei Baal Shem Tov #150).*

There are no accidents in your life, my life or the world's life. What happens and when is carefully orchestrated by the One Above. Since next week, the fifth week of *Sefirat HaOmer*, hosts both Pesach Sheini and Lag BaOmer, there must be some connection—especially since this week parallels the *sefirah* of Hod which is represented by Aharon HaKohen.

What are Pesach Sheini (Second Passover) and Lag BaOmer (the 33rd day of the Omer-count)? Pesach Sheini is a biblical holiday (Numbers 9:9-14). When the Beit HaMikdash (Holy Temple) stood in Jerusalem, every Jew had to participate in the bringing and eating of a Paschal sacrifice. What if he missed it? He got a second chance. He could bring it a month later, on Pesach Sheini, the 14th of Iyar. Though the Torah speaks only of accidentally missing it, the Talmud teaches that even someone who purposely refused to participate in the Paschal sacrifice could make it up on Pesach Sheini (*Pesachim* 93b).

A second chance. God gives us second chances not only when we unintentionally mess up, but even when we willfully ignore our duty, or spitefully and ungratefully decline an opportunity to grow closer to Him. This is certainly an indication of God's love and kindness for His people. It's also an instance of one of Rebbe Nachman's well-known teachings: Despair does not exist! How did the mitzvah of Pesach Sheini come to be taught?

Shortly before the first anniversary of the Exodus, God told Moshe to have the Jews bring the Paschal sacrifice. Moshe transmitted the command and all the Israelites did it, except for a few who were forbidden to do so because of they were in a state of *tumah* (spiritual impurity). They were distraught, but not devastated. Even though they were *halakhically* exempt, and even though their spiritual sensitivity was diminished by their *tumah*, they turned to their teacher, leader and guide, Moshe, and asked, "Why should we be worse?" (Numbers 9:7).

Their sincere desire elicited a never-before-known degree of

God's kindness. Not by itself, however. God's kindness became apparent because they chose to find a solution by seeking the tzaddik's advice. This is true today as well. We, too, want to be close to God. Despite our innate limitations, self-inflicted flaws and spiritual insensitivity, you and I can have such a strong desire for God that we elicit a new degree of God's kindness in our individual lives. (That kindness can expand to others. A shmooze for another day.) But we also need to go to a tzaddik to get the advice needed to find God. This brings us to Lag BaOmer, the anniversary of the passing of Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai, author of the holy *Zohar*.

The prophet Elijah once declared that the Jews will leave the final exile because of the holy *Zohar* (*Zohar* 3:124b). How can a book take us out of exile? When that book is a manifestation of the Tree of Life, and we study it and ask tzaddikim who understand it to teach us its message and advice, it takes us out of exile. The light of *teshuvah* (return to God) shines and our path out of exile is one of compassion and kindness.

What has this got to do with Aharon HaKohen? We know now that Moshe was a great tzaddik. But how did the Jews in Egypt know? Who told them that he was "an OK guy"? Aharon. Although he had been the Israelites' sole, undisputed leader for decades, when Moshe returned to Egypt, Aharon recognized and accepted his younger brother's greatness and leadership. He told the Israelites to do likewise. Aharon's humility allowed him to yield and acquiesce—the quality of *Hod*—to his superior.

Never losing hope, maintaining your desire to be a better Jew, humbly seeking guidance from tzaddikim—a tall order, but doable, if you make use of the power of *tefilah* (prayer). During the entire week of *Hod*, the Heavenly Gates of Mercy are open. Your prayers are more readily accepted. *Seize the opportunity!*

*a gutn Shabbos!*

*Shabbat Shalom!*

(Based on *Likutey Halakhot, Geviyat Chov MeiHayetomim* 3:18)