

Yom Kippur is the antidote to our financial insecurity. Working hard, making money and being successful at your job is stressful, but don't allow it become you. Don't worship or become defined by money. Money is a vehicle, a tool. Yom Kippur helps us reshape our perspective, replace ourselves in the context of life, vis-a-vis money.

#### 5. Sukkot: :Life Is Frail

Sukkot corresponds to the issue of insecurity, feelings of frailty and vulnerability in a vast universe. Living in an outdoor hut for 8 days, outside the security of our brick and mortar homes, is a wake- up call. We come to realize that we really do not control anything. Rather, we face the fact that we are in the hands of The Almighty at all times, in G-d's embrace, surrendering to His protection.

When we remove the illusion of trusting in limited, material things and become aware of our true security, trusting in G-d who gives us breath, sustenance, and protection over and above the tsunamis of the world, we are then locked in the safe embrace of G-d. The walls of the Sukkah are considered "hugs of The Almighty". The Kaballah explains that the arm has three sections: from the shoulder to the elbow, from the elbow to the wrist, and the actual palm of the hand. These are the two walls of the Sukkah, and the little part of the third wall, which is the legal requirement of a Sukkah. If however you want a bear hug then you should build four walls.

Sukkot is called, "Zman Simchatenu"=time of our rejoicing. The celebration is the knowledge that we you in G-d's hands. Only when you surrender yourself to G-d, as expressed through the Sukkah, can you develop a new approach to the insecurities of life.

#### Shabbat: The Master Key to All Hardships

That is why The Torah introduces the discussion of the holidays with a few verses about Shabbat, since Shabbat is the antidote to the five fears and major issues of life. After the verses of the Shabbat, the Torah discusses the new bread they put on the table in the Tabernacle on Shabbat (lechem Hapanim). This represents that the source of money and bread comes on Shabbat and nourishes all the days of the week, when we do not work. Because, money is a blessing from G-d and work is only the tool. Precisely on Shabbat when one is dedicated to G-d, is the time when blessing comes into the world for material and spiritual sustenance.

Dear Friend:

The Holiday of Shavuot is celebrated on the sixth day of Sivan to commemorate the receiving of the Torah. The literal meaning of "Shavuot" is promises. G-d promised that he would never exchange the Jewish people for any other, and the Jewish people promised to be G-d's people. Each year we enact this exchange anew and celebrate by recollecting the experience of Matan Torah.

It is customary to adorn with flowers like the humble Mt. Sinai which sprouted greenery albeit in the desert in honor of the giving of the Torah, and the Harvest Festival. It is customary to eat dairy foods.

We hope you will enjoy our Whole Wheat Honey Home-Baked Challah for your holiday meal!

*Happy Shavuot,*

*Sincerely,*

*Rochelle Kaplan*  
**Rochel Kaplan**

Founder & Director, Aleph Learning Institute

Chabad Lubavitch of MD/AL  
6701 Old Pimlico Road • Baltimore, MD 21209 • 410-486-2666 x2  
www.alephlearninginstitute.org • email: alephjli@gmail.com

Lesson 7  
Holiday of Shavuot  
[June 11 (eve)-13]

ב"ה

*Chai for Challah*

www.alephlearninginstitute.org • 410-486-2666 Ext 2  
Aleph Learning  
Institute

The portion of Emor in Leviticus speaks of the five holidays in our lunar Jewish calendar-a blueprint for confronting life with dignity and courage.

The first half of the portion delineates the problem; while the second half presents us with an approach –not an answer exactly-rather an approach- to these major issues.

In life, we can't always find answers. Some questions simply do not have answers. But a perspective, and an approach, is a way of responding to a particular issue.

The five festivals in the second half of the portion of Emor represent a five-step program of birth, spirituality, renewal, transcendence and surrender, in its approach to deal with the five circumstances of death, handicap, psychological wounds, financial stress and a sense of insecurity-expressed in the beginning of the portion of Emor.

#### 1. Pesach: The Birth of the Jewish Nation

This holiday celebrates the miracle of the birth of the Jewish people. (Deut. 4:34)

*Ezekiel 16:4-6 "And as for your birth, on the day you were born, your navel was not cut, neither were you washed with water for cleansing, nor were you salted, nor swaddled at all. No eye pitied you to do for you any of those, to have mercy on you. And you were cast on the open field in the loathsomeness of your body on the day you were born."*

Pesach is the holiday when the Jewish people were born collectively and individually. An entire chapter in the book of Ezekiel describes the exodus from Egypt as a process of birth. To understand the mystery of death, it is necessary to first examine the mystery of birth.

In the book of Iyov (job) we read about Job's tormented life. "I despised my life; How long will you not desist from me? You made me as a mark for you, so that I have become a burden to myself."G-d responds not with an answer but with more questions. "Who is this who gives dark counsel with words, without knowledge? Now gird your loins like a man, and I will ask you and you tell me. Where were you when I founded the earth? Tell if you know understanding. Who set its measure ... who laid its cornerstone?"

The Almighty is saying: If you do not understand the mystery of the beginning, how do you expect to understand the mystery of the end? We ask: "Why do we die?" But do we ask: "Why were we born?" We see birth and life as natural and normal. Do we just take birth and life for granted? On the other hand when the soul leaves us and departs we see that as unnatural, shocking, painful and mysterious.

This is not an answer, but it is an approach. Pesach, time of birth, is telling us that just as Pesach was a miracle, every single birth is nothing short of a miracle.

**Birth is G-d making a choice and saying: "I want you here for this particular period of time to fulfill a mission." At one moment in time G-d breathes a soul into our bodies and at another reclaims that sacred soul back.**

Pesach, like the Book of Iyov, is not an answer. Pesach gives us a life perspective. Life, we must understand, is a journey of a soul, dispatched by G-d to earth, in order to fulfill its mission. Birth is the beginning of that journey, death is its culmination. Indeed at every funeral, Job is quoted which highlights this perspective: "The L-rd gave and the L-rd took; may the name of the L-rd be blessed."

## 2. Shavuot: Torah is the ultimate medicine

Shavuot is the second holiday on our calendar (starting from Nissan)

Shavuot corresponds to the second theme of Emor: All the challenges connected to ill health and bodily handicaps.

The midrash relates: At the giving of the Torah, all ailments were healed, a natural result, since Torah gives an entirely different perspective on the value of the human body. This is manifest today in the redefining of the human body, giving new value even to the handicapped and ailing, thus providing a certain sense of healing. On the other hand, other cultures valued body over soul- so much so- that the Greeks for example, threw deformed children off cliffs and worshipped perfect physique, often displayed in its nakedness. Yes of course, the Torah puts significant value on the human body too. (Maimonides Laws of Injuring and damaging 5:1) "It is forbidden for a person to injure anyone, neither his own self nor another person". Radva"z: One's life is not his personal possession, rather it is the possession of G-d, as the verse states, "The souls, they are mine."

The Lubavitcher Rebbe: Healthy in Body, Mind and Spirit vol. 2: 23 Av 5736

"If a person, for some reason is physically disabled, he should not be depressed G-d forbid. Indeed, since he is physically deficient through no fault of his own...it is an indication that G-d, the creator of man, has given him or her special spiritual abilities. These enable him to overcome physical disabilities...that he is spiritually superior...he can achieve loftier than that of the average person. I therefore suggest to change the term 'disabled' and call them 'distinguished'."

"When therefore a person encounters difficulties, his hidden abilities are aroused to reveal themselves and act, and to also reveal to others that he is in a state of joy and is fulfilling his mission of increasing light, spirituality, and sanctity in the world."

Thank you G-d not only for giving us physical life, but also for you have given us the Torah. Once we have the Torah, now we can be thankful for existence. Torah gives meaning and purpose to every moment and experience in life. Torah is our life. Torah gives us an approach of meaning to help us deal with the difficult challenge of an imperfect body and difficult life circumstances.

## 3. Rosh Hashanah: A Day of Renewal

Rosh Hashana is the third holiday we address in the portion of Emor. It represents a reality of spiritual impurity, emotional turmoil, spiritual wounds, psychological challenges and mental pain.

Rosh Hashana is the opening day, the beginning of a new year. The Tanya authored by Rabbi Shneur

Zalman of Liadi (Igeret Hakodesh, letter 14) states that on each Rosh Hashana a new light comes down to the world, a new and renewed energy that has never before shone, from the Supreme Chochma (wisdom). This takes place by means of the sounding of the shofar and prayer, and this superior new light animates all the worlds for the duration of that year.

Rosh Hashana of course commemorates the day that Adam and Eve were created (in the image of G-d) and similarly each of us is recreated on Rosh Hashana.

How exactly were Adam and Eve created in the image of G-d when G-d has no human image? That is precisely the perspective of Rosh Hashana. G-d has no image and the human being does not have an image either. Rather, one is able to recreate and redefine one's self. You are not a victim of your past; you are the parent of your future.

So although Rosh Hashana doesn't always give the answer to the physiological and spiritual wounds that we have, it does give us the energy to be able to choose our course in life, to renew ourselves and become the authors of our destiny to be the person we truly are.

## 4. Yom Kippur: The Solution to Financial Stress

Yom Kippur corresponds to the fourth theme in the portion of Emor, financial insecurity; financial stress, represented by animal blemishes.

On the holiest day of the year, we transcend our physical identities, as though we are not physical creatures. Surely you're still a human being but on Yom Kippur there is an energy which allows us, to a degree, to experience ourselves as we were before birth. That is the meaning of being likened to angels on Yom Kippur. Before birth you were a soul so now you are still a soul in a body.

So in terms of financial stress, we remind ourselves that we are truly transcendent spirits. We are not money, we need money. It is not an end but rather a means to an end. There was a Chassidic master, Reb Mendel Futerfas who stated: Money comes, money goes, if you lose money, you have lost nothing. If you lose your health you lose half of your identity-the body, not the soul. But if you lose your will and courage-you lose everything.

*Aleph Learning Institute brings you our very own home made challah*  
**to satisfy body and a taste of Torah to satisfy your soul.**  
**We are your heart, your mind, your place.**

**We invite you to participate with us in this endeavor for our**  
**building campaign with any chai \$ amount \$18, \$36 \$54 \$72 Other \_\_\_\_\_**

Check enclosed (Payable to Chabad Lubavitch of MD)

Credit card (circle one)   

Name on credit card \_\_\_\_\_

Card number \_\_\_\_\_ Exp: \_\_\_\_\_ SVC: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Be a sponsor visit: [www.alephlearninginstitute.org](http://www.alephlearninginstitute.org)

**your contribution to Chabad Lubavitch of Maryland, Inc. is tax deductible**