

Torah Tidbits from Rabbi Larry Moldo

Wednesday night and Thursday this week the calendar brings us to LaG BaOmer (the 33rd day of the Omer period). The Omer period is 50 days between the beginning of Passover and the festival of Shavuot. [Program plug - on Sunday, May 24 from 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. we will have a study period on the Big Ten and the Book of Ruth; on Monday, May 25 we will have a Yizkor service from 11:00 a.m. - noon.] This is traditionally a time of tenseness and partial mourning. Originally, it might have been a time of intense concern that the rain ended soon enough that the crops would grow properly. Much later, the death of Rabbi Akiba's students was connected to this time period. About the only thing that everyone agrees on is that none of Rabbi Akiba's students died on LaG BaOmer, so many things are allowed on this day that are not usually allowed the rest of the time period. Weddings, in particular.

Many celebrational events have been added to this day. Here we focus instead on Yom Yerushalayim (which coincides with the Yiddish Food festival) - celebrating the ability to reconnect with all the Jewish history within Jerusalem. (When Jordan ran the area, tourism was not encouraged, and Jewish tourism was discouraged at best).

A bit of Pirkei Avot - Jewish wisdom teachings of the Rabbis, or as I sometimes label them - "Rabbinic style Zen Koans."

"You don't have to finish the job; you are not allowed to stop working on it."

"When I am not on my own side, why should anyone else be? When I am only on my own side, do I still qualify as being human? This is the moment, there is no other now."

These bits of wisdom apply no matter which side of any divide we might find ourselves on. Each of us must be ourselves; each of us must recognize that other opinions exist and are usually equally valid; procrastination is to be avoided - and if this is difficult, it is okay to keep working towards it. It is not okay to stop our process of becoming humane and thereby making the world a better place.

That's why God partnered with us, after all.