

## RABBI'S MESSAGE

### ...and the Journey Continues

During our busy 21<sup>st</sup> Century lives, most of our schedules do not necessarily revolve around the Hebrew calendar. We participate in holiday programs and activities when they come up, but we may not pay much attention to how it all fits together. Think, for a moment, about the natural order of the world. Plants give us oxygen and we give plants carbon dioxide; but we don't really notice it. The insect and animal worlds regulate themselves through the food they eat, whether it is plants or other living beings; and it continues to perpetuate throughout past, present and future. The world was set up in a way that makes sense. And so was the Jewish calendar, both ancient and modern.

As April begins, we are concluding our most transformative time of Passover. We celebrate breaking out of the narrow confines of slavery to experience the journey of the wilderness. The seven weeks between Passover and Shavuot, which commemorates the receiving of the Ten Commandments, are meant to remind us of a spiritual journey that leads to commitment, promises and a special relationship with God. The journey includes many challenges, and the destination – the Promised Land – provides even more challenges. Our journeys continually offer us ways to grow in our knowledge, our spiritual well-being and our commitment to making the world a better place, day by day.

Post-biblically, our calendar continues to give us ways to observe important historical celebrations and challenges of the world. 33 days after we begin “counting of the Omer” (numbering each of the 49 days between Passover and Shavuot), we take a break from solemnity and celebrate Lag B'Omer, a festive time that recalls a brave revolution of Jews against the Roman Empire. Closer to present day, we have three special occurrences related to history: Yom HaShoah, honoring the memory of the Holocaust; Yom Ha-Zikaron, a day of remembrance for fallen Israeli soldiers; and the very next day, Yom Ha-Atzmaut, or Israeli Independence Day.

I think the modern calendar is trying to remind us that we still have a long way to travel. We continue to remember harsh times when enemies, whether Ancient Egypt, the Crusades or Nazi Germany, seek to destroy us. And we continue to celebrate our persistent resilience, maintaining strength despite the challenges. We stand to remember; we stand to celebrate; and we continue our journey to preserve our identity.

It isn't always easy. It isn't supposed to be. It requires dedication, commitment and learning. Survival demands us to fulfill traditions and create new ones, and make our time enjoyable and stimulating. With every hurdle we jump over, a new challenge can get in the way. The challenges make life exciting, and our ability to persevere energizes us to keep re-creating ways to be touched by deep meanings and mysterious questions.

On Yom HaShoah, we will learn with Nadira Lorin and Anita Bonanno. On Independence Day, we will laugh with Benji Lovitt. And before, after and in between, we will continue the journey seeking fun, exciting, perplexing and insightful ways to be Jewish.

L'shalom,

*Rabbi Dan Gordon*