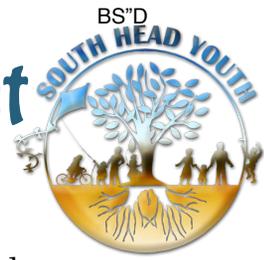




South Head Youth Parasha Sheet



PARASHAT EMOR

The Jewish year is very exciting. It is filled with many festivals and many special days, each different and unique in its very own way. Our Parasha this week speaks about all the Jewish festivals and all of the special Mitzvot that we perform on each of the festivals.



Prior to discussing the Jewish festivals, the Parasha first details all of the acts that a Kohen may and may not perform. A Kohen is a very special person. Throughout his entire life a Kohen serves in the Beit Hamikdash. The Kohen does not own his own land and he does not work at any other job. A Kohen's life is fully devoted to Hashem and therefore a Kohen must maintain a certain level of holiness. A Kohen may not become impure. This

means he is not even allowed to go to a cemetery to bury a person. The one exception is that if the deceased is an immediate family member (wife, mother, father, son, daughter, brother or unmarried sister), the Kohen is permitted to bury him/her. A Kohen Gadol is even more unique than a Kohen, therefore he is not permitted to even bury any of his immediate family! The Kohen Gadol may not even rip his clothes or grow his hair when he's in mourning for the loss of a family member. Additionally, a Kohen and a Kohen Gadol, are not permitted to marry a divorced woman or a woman who converts. If a Kohen does, then the child is not considered to be a Kohen and is not permitted to perform any of the Priestly Services in the Mishkan. Even though we do not have a Mishkan or the Beit Hamikdash, these laws still apply to Kohanim today. Furthermore, a Kohen must be completely healthy to serve in the Mishkan. If a Kohen suffers from a disability, is missing a limb or is temporarily hurt, he cannot serve in the Beit Hamikdash. He may only serve in the Beit Hamikdash once he is cured. Another interesting point is that since Kohanim work all day in the Beit Hamikdash, they don't own their own land and therefore they cannot grow their own food. Therefore it is a commandment for every Jew to give part of their produce to the Kohanim to eat. This is known as Teruma, which is a type of tax. One who is not a Kohen, is forbidden to eat from the Teruma.



The Parasha also reminds us of the condition of an animal that is to be offered as a sacrifice to Hashem. The animal may not be sacrificed until it is at least 8 days old. It cannot have any blemishes and has to be completely healthy. Additionally, the mother of the animal should not be sacrificed on the same day. The sacrifices may only be brought to the Beit Hamikdash by one who is pure. An impure person may not offer a sacrifice or even enter the Beit Hamikdash. Some of the ways that a person can become impure are by coming in contact with the dead, an impure animal and by having Tzara'at.

Now let's have a look at our special Jewish festivals. On each of the festivals we are blessed by the Kohanim. This is why we send all of the children into Shule. We want everyone in our congregation to receive Hashem's special blessings.



The first festival that the Torah speaks about is Pesach. Although this festival only lasts for eight days, the preparation for it starts many weeks before. At least a month before Pesach begins, the lady of the house begins to scrub, vacuum and clean the entire house so that when Pesach arrives she can be assured that there is no Chametz in the



home. Once Pesach arrives, we prepare for the Seder. Of course, all the children are very excited to sing the Mah Nishtana in front of the family and guests. The Mitzvot of Pesach is to eat Matzah and not to eat Chametz! We are also commanded to read the Haggadah and to teach the story of the Exodus to our children, who in turn, will then teach it to their children.

Next comes the festival of Shavuot. It is a Mitzvah of the Torah to count seven whole weeks from Pesach to Shavuot. We begin counting exactly 49 days from the second night of Pesach, until we finally arrive at Shavuot. This is called 'Sefirat Ha'Omer', 'the counting of the Omer'. We count in anticipation of the special Yom Tov on which Hashem gave us the most precious gift in the world, the Torah. The reason why this time period is called the Omer is because in the times of the Beit Hamikdash, the Jewish people were commanded to bring the Omer sacrifice on the second day of Pesach and the counting of the Omer begins on the second night of Pesach. Shavuot is a very special holiday. Hashem gave us the Torah on Mount Sinai, because she was the humblest of all the mountains. While all the other mountains boasted about how great they all were, Har Sinai just stood quietly and did not say a word. Hashem decorated Har Sinai beautifully with lots of flowers. This is why when we come to Shule on Shavuot, we see lots of beautiful flower decorations. In the time of the Beit Hamikdash, we were commanded to bring 'Bikkurim', the 'first fruits' to the Beit Hamikdash. The Mitzvah of Shavuot is to hear the reading of the Ten Commandments. It is also customary to eat dairy. This is why many Shules hold ice cream parties for the children.

Following Shavuot, the Torah speaks about the holy and auspicious day of Rosh Hashana. Rosh Hashana falls on the first of Tishrei. It is the very first day in the Jewish Calendar. It is the day on which we crown Hashem as our King. We eat apples in honey and ask Hashem that we should have a very happy and healthy sweet new year. We ask our friends to forgive us for any wrongdoing, we do Teshuva, go to Tashlich and we wish everyone a 'Shana Tova'. The Mitzvah of Rosh Hashana is to hear the Shofar.

It is only ten days later, on the tenth of Tishrei, Yom Kippur, that Shule is packed to its absolute capacity. Every single Jew in the world makes sure to come to Shule on Yom Kippur. Everyone over the age of Bar and Bat Mitzvah fasts and everyone prays to Hashem to forgive us for any sins that we may have committed. This is the day on which Hashem decides what kind of year each person is going to have and so we make sure to beg and plead with Hashem to give us a happy and healthy year, filled only with happiness and good things. It is customary to wear white. It is also forbidden to wear leather shoes or to smear creams on our bodies.

The final Yom Tov that is mentioned in the Torah is Sukkot. Sukkot is the festival where we decide that it's more comfortable to eat outside underneath palm tree leaves than to eat inside. The festival of Sukkot celebrates our faith in Hashem and the time that we spent in the desert. The Mitzvot of Sukkot are to shake the Lulav and Etrog and to sit and eat in the Sukkah. The only day of Sukkot that we do not shake the Lulav and Etrog is Shabbat. Some people have a custom to decorate their Sukkah. Following the eight days of Sukkot, we add a ninth day to the festival. This is the festival of Simchat Torah. It is one of the most exciting holidays of the year and it is one of the only times throughout the entire year that we are allowed to take all of the Torahs out of the Ark to dance with them.

Mission: Count the Omer every day this week.

**It was great seeing you in Shule!
We hope you enjoy reading this Parasha Sheet and quizzing your family!
Shabbat Shalom from Brookie and the South Head Youth Crew**

