

"Newsletter in the Meantime," by Hazzan Fortunée Belilos, MSM, BCC (examples of newsletters to keep in touch with clients during the pandemic, forwarded by Rabbi Joseph Ozarowski, posted 18 June 2020)

14 Iyar 5780 b'H
5.8.2020

Shalom! This is Fortunée, your chaplain, and friend Rabbi Milt, writing to say how much we miss spending time with you. Today is Pesah Shenī – some people eat matzah to commemorate this somewhat festive "make-up" Pesah offering opportunity one month after Passover.

I also want you to know that JCFS has set up what they call a "Warm Line" at 855.ASK.JCFS (or in all numerals 855.275.5237) if you would like to speak to a chaplain or other professional for a little support & TLC. The hours for the "Warm Line" are Mon. - Thurs. 9a – 5p & Fri. 9a – 4p.

Rabbi Milt Wakschlag D'var Torah May 6, 2020

Remember "The Count" of Sesame Street fame? He was everyone's favorite Transylvanian who had that spooky, creepy look of Count Dracula and the perfectly harmless obsession of counting things. He counted everything, from the sweet chocolate chips in a yummy cookie to the happy people strolling down Sesame Street on a bright summer day. And when he was finished counting, the grand finale always included a few moments of thunder, lightning and a hearty, haunting vampire laugh. His fans (I still "count" myself among them) knew that even though things sounded ominous, in the end everything would be alright because we identified all the sound and fury with this happy, cuddly puppet who gave little indication that his namesake was a bloodthirsty vampire. Right now we are all enduring a grim period of counting that is connected to the coronavirus pandemic. We are constantly being updated on the number of confirmed cases - and worse - in the city, in the state, in the country, in the world, and worry about where this monstrous disease is taking us and when it will be tamed. The problem is that we have no positive associations with this threatening disease, so the endless counting is a kind of torture. This

is a good time to be thinking about an altogether different kind of counting - the daily and weekly counting of the 49 days between Passover and the Feast of Weeks ("Shavuot"). This is known in Jewish tradition - I am not making this up - as The Count ("Sefira") and we are in the midst of it right now. We count the days between our liberation from slavery in ancient Egypt and the revelation of God at Mount Sinai shortly thereafter, where he gave us His Torah. Positive associations to say the least! Let's try to wrap ourselves up at least in the thrilling anticipation of this season on the Jewish calendar, marked by the steady countdown to the giving of the Torah just a few weeks away now, and let it take our minds off our constant bombardment by coronavirus statistics. The Count would want it no other way.

CANDLE BLESSINGS FOR SHABBAT & COUNTING THE OMER

♪ Ba-rukh A-tah A-do-nai E-lo-hei-nu Me-lekh ha-o-lam, a-sher kid'-sha-nu b'-mitz-vo-tav v'-tzi-va-nu l'-had-lik ner shel → Shab-bat.

Praised are You, O Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, Who has sanctified us by Thy commandments and has commanded us to kindle the Sabbath lights.

We count the Omer in the evening with a blessing or in the morning without a blessing.

Ba-rukh A-tah A-do-nai E-lo-hei-nu Me-lekh ha-o-lam, a-sher kid'-sha-nu b'-mitz-vo-tav v'-tzi-va-nu al seh-fi-rat Ha-O-mer.

Praised are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of time & space, Who has provided us with a path to holiness through the observance of mitzvot & has instructed us to count the Omer (recited by some evening/morning from the 2nd night of Passover until Shavu'ot). Excerpted & edited from Siddur Lev Shalem

(For Friday, 5.8.20, & Saturday, 5.9.20: Ha-yom sh'lo-sheem yom sheh hem ar-ba-ah sha-vu-ot u'-sh'-nei ya-meem la-o-mer. Today is 30 days - 4 weeks & 2 days - of the Omer.)

Happy Mother's Day coming up in 2 days, this Sunday, May 10th!

♪ Mama, A Rainbow – Music by Larry Grossman & Lyrics by Hal Hackady from Minnie's Boys

What do you give to the lady who has given all her life and love to you?

What do you give to the reason you are livin' -
I could window shop the world before I'm through.

Mama, a rainbow, Mama, a sunrise, Mama, the moon to wear,
That's not good enough, no, not good enough - not for Mama.

Mama, a palace, diamonds like door knobs, mountains of gold to spare.

That's not rich enough, no, not rich enough - not for Mama.

Mama, a life time crowded with laughter -
That's not long enough - not half long enough!

What can I give you that I can give you

What will your present be?

Mama, young and beautiful -

Always young and beautiful -

That's the Mama I'll always see...

That's for Mama with – love – from – me.

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Fofo's Plaint

C-19 causes pain in my spleen,
My friends are all hidden away.
While we were to meet,
Covid did us defeat,
And now we all face a delay.

Lev & Itta, so sweet!
Paula, Alice & Kay,
Arlene, Rose, dear Howie & Jo,

Sarah & Sandy & Haroun are all dandy,
When I'll see them, I'm sure I don't know.

They won't know my face
At Ye Olde Wesley Place,
And the route to get there, I confess,
Has flown out of my mind
And I never will find it again
Without my G-P-S.

For now all I can say is
God bless them & pray that
Some time soon I'll fin'ly leave home;
Then I'll speed on my way,
On that future Friday,
To wish them all Shabbat Shalom.