



by Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple z"l

HOLY DAYS & HOLY WAYS

A large part of the Torah reading this week is concerned with the holiness pattern of the Jewish calendar, the series of festivals through which we re-experience the lives of our ancestors and celebrate the gifts and guidance of God.

The Vilna Ga'on used to say that the command, "Six days shall work be done" refers to the six major holy days of the Jewish year on which some melachot may be done - Pesach day one & seven, Shavu'ot, Sukkot day one and eight, and Rosh HaShana.

Of course in one sense the connection with work is that it is not done, strictly so on Shabbat and Yom Kippur, and almost as strictly on the festivals. But if the Ga'on speaks of work being done, he must have something else in mind, presumably the work of making each occasion special and memorable.

In a physical sense the work required to mark each day is done beforehand, but in an emotional, spiritual and cultural sense we have to invest the day with happiness and joy, with intellectual as well as spiritual content, with songs, psalms and prayers, with conversation

with others about the theme of the day and with thanks to God for His gifts and greatness.

SHEHECHEYANU FOR THE OMER

This week's portion commands, "You shall count from... the day you bring the omer of the waving, seven complete weeks" (Vayikra 23:15).

When we usher in a special occasion we generally say the SHEHECHEYANU blessing, but not when we start counting the Omer at the start of the seven weeks between Pesach and Shavu'ot.

This is probably because the counting was an exciting prelude to a series of rituals that took place when the Temple was standing, and now we do not have a Temple.

Some also say that though we are happy to start counting the days we never know for certain that we will complete the count and observe Shavu'ot.

Of course this is a fear that affects every bone of us at all times. We are never certain what next year or even tomorrow will bring.

The most we can do is to live today wisely and well and pray that God will bless us to complete our days in peace and blessing. -**OZ**

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH