

Spring 2021

The WJC Sisterhood Presents



Making The Omer
Count

fifty meditations to elevate
your
SELF

and find your presence



INTRODUCTION

The tradition of Counting the Omer began over 3,000 years ago, when Moses instructed the Israelites to *spiritually prepare themselves* for receiving the Torah on Mount Sinai. Today, we continue to honor this spiritual preparation beginning on the evening of the Second Passover Seder and concluding on Shavuot when we commemorate the Israelites' receiving of the Torah from God. This period of 50 days also marks the beginning of the barley harvest, in which Jews in ancient times would bring their sheaves to the Temple to thank God for the harvest. Omer means "sheaf."

How Do We Count The Omer?

Each evening, we can recite:

***Barukh ata Adonai Eloheinu Melekh
ha'Olam asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav
v'tzivanu al sefirat ha'omer.***

**Blessed are you, Adonai our God,
Sovereign of the Universe, who has
sanctified us with your commandments
and commanded us to count the omer.**

After the blessing, we recite the appropriate day of the count. For example:

Hayom yom echad ba'omer

Today is the first day of the omer.



Tying together our modern spirituality within
ancient wisdom:

Meditations + Mantras

The practice of meditation dates back to 5,000 BCE and yet it offers the modern human a timeless, relevant wisdom. The notion of a "mantra" is literally 'a vehicle through which you can shift your mental and emotional state.'





May these
50
meditations
offer you
peace,
growth,
reflection.

Day 1, Hayom yom echad ba'omer

Just one small, positive thought in the morning can change your whole day.

- The Dalai Lama



Each morning, I begin my day reciting the Jewish Blessing, Modeh Ani,

Modeh ah-nee lifanecha, Melech chai v'kayam, she-hechezarta bee nishma-tee b'chemlah rabbah emunatecha.

I thank you, living and enduring King, for You have graciously returned my soul within me. Great is your faithfulness.

To begin each day in gratitude, we are poised for increased joy.

Curious? Try beginning your day with a positive thought, let a smile even grow on your face alongside this warm intention.

Day 2 Hayom yom shay-nee yamim ba'omer

**Who is wise? One who learns from all
- Ben Zoma, Pirkei Avot**



Instead of my asking my children, “What did you learn today at...” I often say: “What can you teach me about...” In this fashion, I am empowering my children to own their knowledge and I am recognizing that even the youngest person can offer me valuable learning from which I can grow.

Curious? Throughout the day, notice the people around you. What do you observe in them that you would be curious to assimilate into your own life?

Gam Zu L'Tovah/This Too Is Good.



There's a tale about Rabbi Akiva's traveling to a village where he was not given shelter at the tavern, so he had to sleep in the field. That evening, his donkey was eaten by a lion and his lantern was blown out by the wind. Later on, marauders looted all who were in the town, save Akiva. Had he slept at the tavern, he would have been hurt. Had his donkey brayed or his lantern shone, he would have been noticed. Instead, those initial unfortunate events led to the saving of his life. What seems bad, may actually be good, in the end. (inspired by Alan, Morinis, Everyday Holiness)

Curious? It's very easy to judge moments in our lives as "good" or "bad," but what if we reconsider all moments as *good* for how they may contribute to our journey. Picture something that happened to you that you had judged as "bad." Can you reconceive it without this judgement?

Don't worry about failures,
worry about the chances
you miss when you don't
even try. - Jack Canfield

When the goal becomes **trying**
instead of **succeeding**, we will
always win.

Curious? What task or goal in your life
have you been hesitant to begin, for fear
of failing? (Wonder what would
happen if you gave it a try, regardless
of success...)

Day 5 Hayom yom ha-mi-sha yamim ba'omer

They do not keep clocks in their houses. Instead, they listen to their heartbeats. They feel the rhythms of their moods and desires. - Alan Lightman, Einstein's Dreams



For me, a silver lining to this pandemic is that I have fewer “things” to do, leaving space to *spend* my time on only the most meaningful.

Curious? Choose to set aside a finite period of time where you can be off your devices, without an errand or committment. How does it feel to be in *this* moment?

Day 6 Hayom yom shee-sha yamim ba'omer

An invisible thread connects those who are destined to meet. Regardless of time, place and circumstance. The thread may stretch or tangle. But it will never break.

-Ancient Chinese Proverb



Thanks to the “thread” of Zoom, old relationships that had been stalled by geography can re-ignite.

Curious? Picture a friend somewhere as near as your neighbor or as far as across the globe. Place why they're important to you in your mind. Reach out to them. Perhaps today is the day they need a friend like you.

If you want **others** to be happy, practice compassion.
If **you** want to be happy, practice compassion.
- The Dalai Lama

For some people, it is easier to extend kindness to others in ways they'd never offer themselves, within their own introspective, critical thoughts.

Curious? Picture someone who has a similar attribute as you. What would you lovingly tell them about *them*? Experiment with saying these same loving words to yourself.

Day 8 Ha-yom sh'mona yamim, shehaym shavu-a e-chad v'yom e-chad ba-omer



Is there a difference between happiness and inner peace? Yes. Happiness depends on conditions being perceived as positive; inner peace does not.
- Eckhart Tolle

Curious? Gather an image of how you feel best about yourself when you are on your own, when no one is looking, separate from others' praise and judgement. Who are you in that frame? Make your self nearer to that self.

Day 9 Ha-yom tish-a yamim, shehaym shavu-a e-chad ushnay yamim ba-omer

Do not despise any man, and do not discriminate against anything, for there is no man that has not his hour, and there is no thing that has not its place.

- Ben Azzai, Pirke Avot



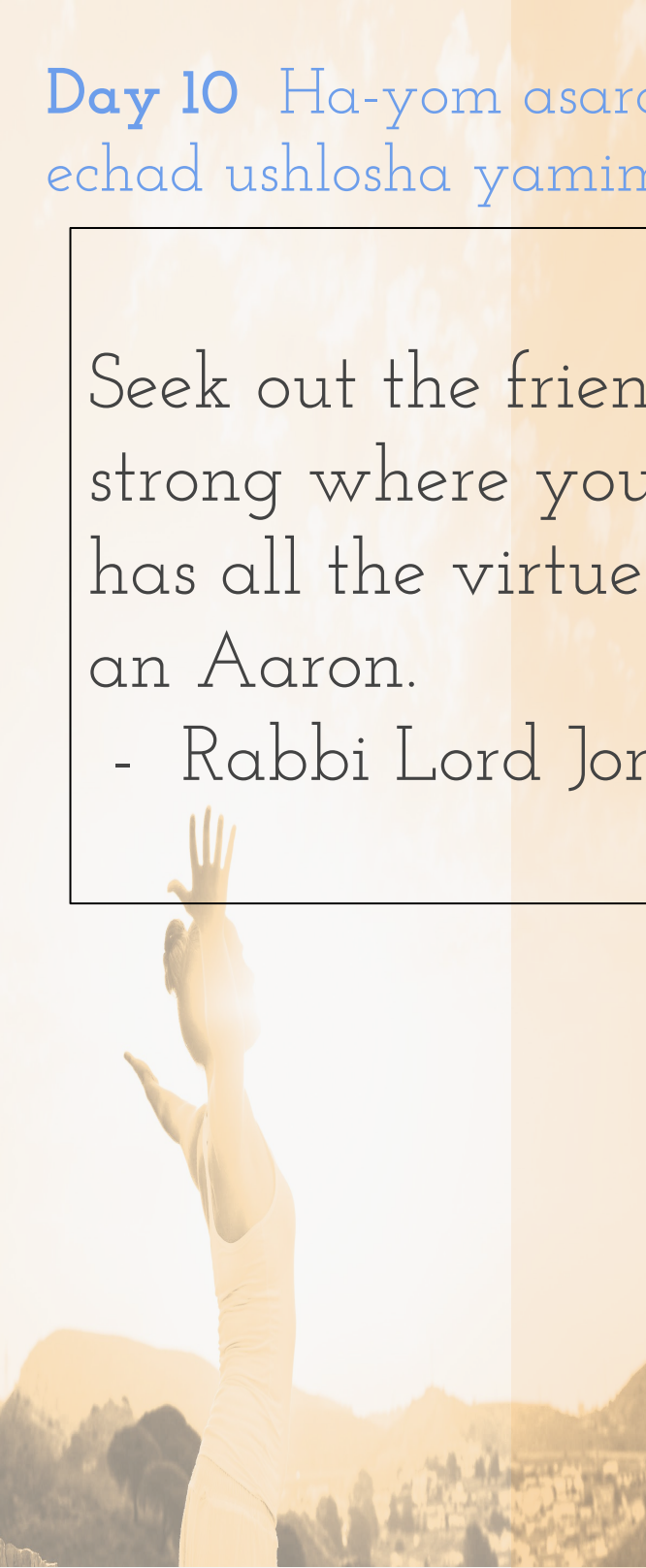
This helps me to remember with tenderness that there is worth, love and humanity within each soul and that even a person with whom we struggle to respect or like deserves our compassionate attention.

Curious? Visualize someone in your life whose presence negatively weighs you down. Play with picturing a quality within that person that is actually useful/ beneficial/ pleasant. Remember this aspect always.

Day 10 Ha-yom asara yamim, shehaym shavu-a
echad ushlosa yamim ba-omer

Seek out the friendships of those who are strong where you are weak. None of us has all the virtues. Even a Moses needed an Aaron.

- Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks



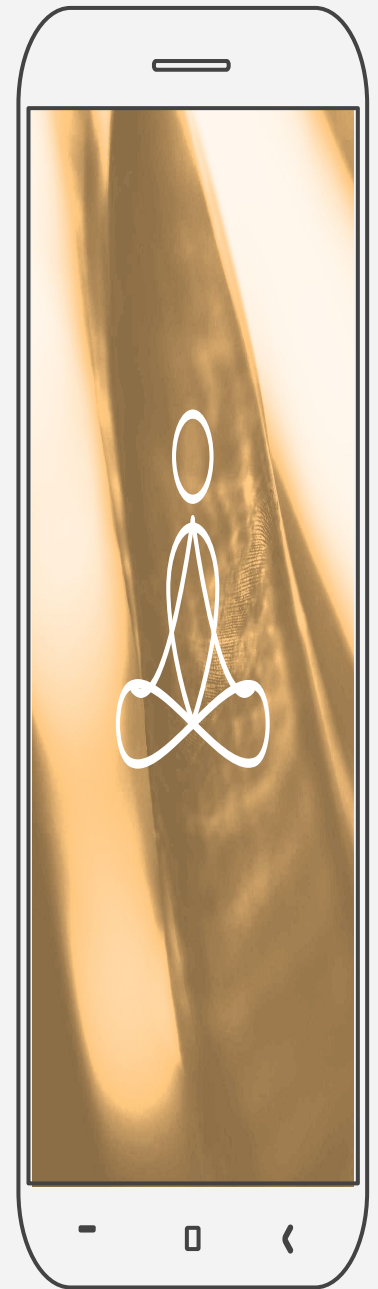
Curious? So often we choose our friends based on our commonalities. Picture a person you admire who complements your skill-set/qualities. Grow from what they can offer you.

Day 11 Ha-yom achad asar yom, shehaym shavu-a echad v'arba-a yamim ba-omer

The most precious gift we can offer others is our presence. When mindfulness embraces those we love, they will bloom like flowers. - Thich Nhat Hanh

Every time a cell phone is in my hand, the screen captures my attention, so my eyes are glued to it, often, for no better reason than habit. With concentration, I am learning to let my gaze rise to the eyes of those around me, letting the person in front of me take precedence over the screen below me.

Curious? Play with connecting your ears with your eyes. Today, when someone is speaking to you, be aware: Are you looking into their eyes as they speak? Notice if the conversation blossoms in a richer way from this fully concentrated connection.



Day 12 Ha-yom sh'naym asar yom, shehaym shavu-a
echad vachami-sha yamim ba-omer

What is luck? A blessing from the almighty.
- RL Maises, We Love Anderson Cooper

We are terribly lucky. It is also true that...we
did not fall into this world we have now, we
made it. I'll tell you this: The braver I am,
the luckier I get. - Glennon Doyle, Untamed



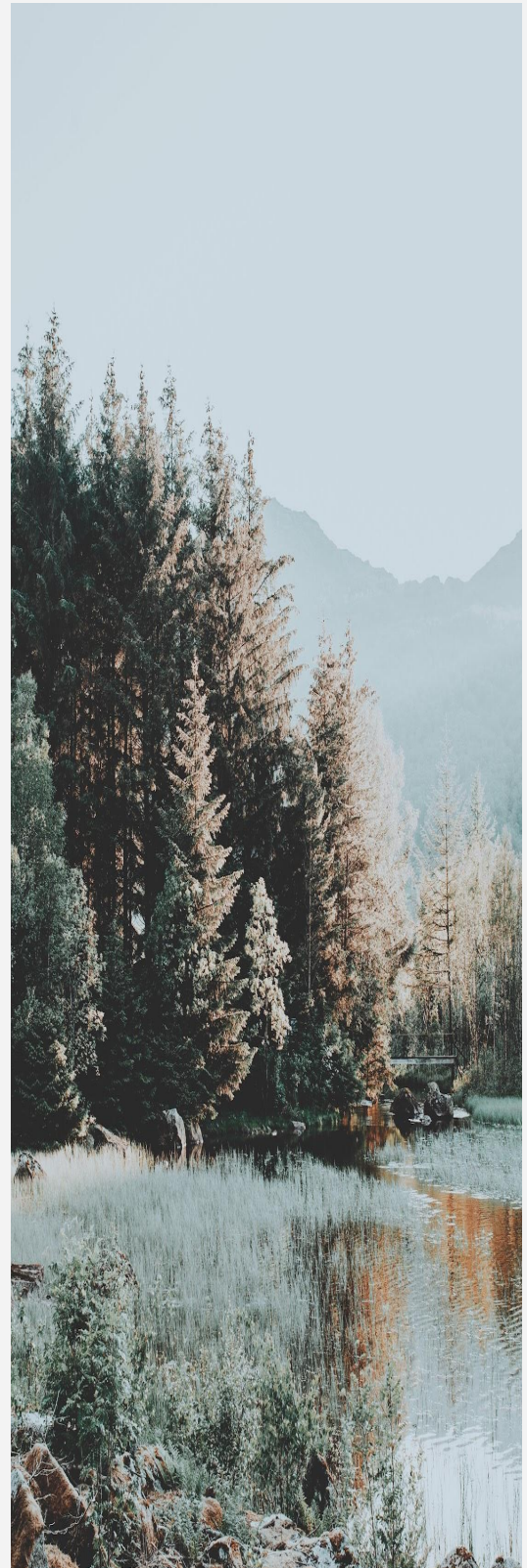
In place of wishing others
“good luck,” Israelis say,
b'chatzlaha, or literally “go
with success.” To me, that
shows it is a person’s effort
which leads to great
achievement; a far deeper
sentiment than random luck.

Curious? Feeling lucky? How would it feel if you
replaced the word “lucky” with the words “grateful
for” or “blessed?” Instead of being lucky to have...you
become grateful for that very same thing. How does
that difference change the sentiment?

Day 13 Ha-yom sh'losha asar yom, shehaym shavu-achad v'shisha yamim ba-omer

To grow,
learn from dirt.

Crop rotation is a form of regenerative agriculture in which one section of soil is used for different crops, depending on the season. It's the balance of the variety that provides the richest nutrition for the soil, thereby enhancing the health of the crops that grow from it. Like dirt, humans too should practice this balance, in order to cultivate ourselves as healthfully as possible.



Curious? Notice a moment when you feel stuck in a rut. In what small way can you step outside of that situation and try something fresh in its place?

Day 14 Ha-yom arba-a asar yom, shehaym sh'nay shavuot ba-omer

Anything that you resent and strongly react to in another is also in you. - Eckhart Tolle



Why is it that at times, it can be the people who are most like us that we can find fault with or allow to bristle us the most?

Curious? Next time someone makes you feel tense, Pause, reflect on what they are doing. Can you find yourself in their action? If so, how does this new found understanding affect the way in which you choose to respond to the person?

Day 15 Ha-yom chami-sha asar yom, shehaym sh'nay shavuot v'yom echad ba-omer

Worry pretends to be necessary but serves no useful purpose. - Eckhart Tolle



The girl scout motto is: Be Prepared. As a girl scout leader, I've thought about this a lot. I was raised to be a worrier, as though worrying is how you ensure safety. In truth though, it is through preparation, not worry, that we can best evaluate and plan for our security. Worry only adds emotion, but not assistance.

Curious? Next time you are planning for a situation that brings on worry, become aware of the feeling. Try replacing the *feeling* of worry with the *act* of preparing. Once you've organized the experience, *let it go*. All feelings surrounding it are no longer necessary. Afterwards, evaluate the experiment. How did it feel not to be burdened with the layer of worry on top of the experience itself?

Day 15 Continued...

Release yourself from the What Ifs. They only deplete you. - Dr Edith Eger, The Gift.

It feels like my job as a member of a community, a parent, a partner, etc is to always foresee the potential pitfalls in life. As a girl scout leader, I am shaped by our motto "be prepared." But there's a spectrum between the finite preparedness and the never-ending spiral of "what if" worrying. It takes patience and strength to live closer to "prepare and go in peace," but the reward feels so much better than living in the doldrums of the "what if."

Curious? In place of worrying incessantly about an upcoming situation, consider it, plan for it as best as you're able, then release yourself from the what-ifs. How do you feel? How does it affect the experience?

Day 16 Ha-yom shi-sha asar yom, shehaym sh'nay
shavuot ushnay yamim ba-omer

Mindfulness is simply being aware of what is happening *right now* without wishing it were different; enjoying the pleasant without holding on when it changes (which it will), being with the unpleasant without fearing it will always be this way (which it won't). - James Baraz

I've practiced Hatha Yoga weekly for four years. Yet, at the end of each experience, I am still pleasantly surprised by the way in which one hour of practice can bring together my body and my mind. I always feel gratitude for bringing my body back into my soul again, I am one and whole. If I step back and think upon that, I wonder how many times a day I am too busy to feel that union and its peace.

Curious? At a moment when you feel frazzled, Pause, close your eyes, deeply breathe in, then exhale. Take this moment to reunite your mind and body, then go forth with the rest of your day. How much better does the day continue on when you take that moment to breathe and find your balance first?

Day 17 Ha-yom shiva asar yom, shehaym sh'nay
shavuot ushlosa yamim ba-omer



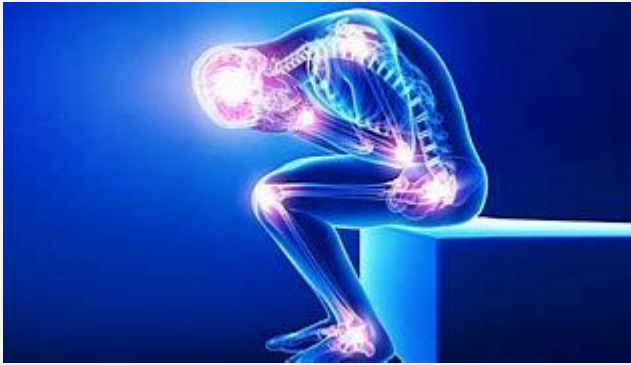
Humility is not the opposite of showing pride; it is the ability to welcome others with generosity as they are, no matter what their weaknesses are.

Curious? Find a moment when a person behaves in a way that rubs you the wrong way. In place of your disappointment or frustration, accept them as they are with warmth and generosity. When you can manage whatever they're going through, you aren't brought down by them, & you are helping them to get through whatever it is they're struggling with a bit more smoothly.

Day 18 Ha-yom shemonah asar yom, shehaym sh'nay shavuot v'arba-a yamim ba-omer

Pain is a reality.

Suffering is a choice.



-Rabbi Asher Resnick

We cannot fully control whether or not painful moments occur in our lives. However, we can own the way in which we respond to the pain: Do we feel tied down by it, or do we choose to learn how to manage it more effectively. We are not our pain, it is just one part of our multidimensional selves.

Curious? Explore your pain. If it is physical, can you breathe into it, can you relax it? If so, what happens to your well-being when you attempt to diminish the pain from controlling all of yourself? If the pain is emotional, can you recognize it as a fleeting part of where you stand today? Free yourself from feeling that it is who you are, recognize it as a passing weather system; it won't always rain.

Day 19 Ha-yom tisha asar yom, shehaym sh'nay
shavuot va'chamisha yamim ba-omer

God gave us a secret - and that secret
was not how to begin, but how to
begin again. - Elie Wiesel

Once we free ourselves from having to be who
we were, we can enable ourselves to begin to
be who we believe in and desire we become.



Curious? Pause. If you feel stuck in a negative
emotion, choose to realize that you can begin
again. Whether through action or through
perception, both will lead to a new, better, start.

Day 20 Ha-yom esrim yom, shehaym sh'nay
shavuot v'shi-sha yamim ba-omer

To go fast, go alone. To go far, go with
others. - African Proverb



It can feel easier at times, to “go it alone” without the friction of contending with other people. But it takes a minyan to feel complete and together, we can go farther.

Curious? Consider asking for help. It can take bravery; it can be a very difficult leap. But the possibility of reward from asking for help has the potential to be so far greater than the risk of asking and being denied, that it is worth the leap of faith.

Day 21 Hayom e-chad v'esrim yom, shehaym shloscha shavuot ba-omer

An American visitor was passing through the Polish town of Radin and stopped in to visit the Chafetz Chaim (A 20th Century Rabbi). Entering the great sage's simple apartment, he was struck by how sparsely it was furnished. "Where is your furniture?" the man asked. "Where is yours?" replied the Chafetz Chaim. "Oh, I am only passing through," answered the man. "I too am only passing through," was the Chafetz Chaim's reply.

- Alan Morinis, Everyday Holiness

My family and I move every few years. When other people "Spring clean," we "Spring move." These moves enable us to more frequently evaluate what we really need versus what we just have. What we no longer need, can be passed forward and shared with others, who would truly benefit from them. And when you're filled only with everything you truly need, you are full.

Curious? Pick a point in any room in your home. Look at the items that fill it. As Mary Kondo recommends: Does it bring you joy? If not, you can pass it forward to someone who may need it, let it go.

Day 22 Ha-yom sh'nayim v'esrim yom, shehaym shelosha shavuot v'yom echad ba-omer

We ignite not in the light but in lack thereof. For it is in loss that we truly learn to love. In this chaos, we will discover clarity. In suffering we must find solidarity.
- Amanda Gorman "Miracle of Morning"



Growth seems to come when we need it most. Seekers seek when they're lost, otherwise they wouldn't need to look. It takes hitting the bottom to finally know you need to go up.

Curious? Think about a time when you really learned something about yourself & grew from it. What precipitated that? Was it a challenge or difficulty?

Day 23 Ha-yom sh'losha v'esrim yom, shehaym shelosha shavuot ushnay yamim ba-omer



How much good inside a day? Depends on how good you live 'em. How much love inside a friend? Depends how much you give 'em.

- Shel Silverstein, [A Light In The Attic](#)

Our lives and relationships are only as good as we choose to make them...

Curious? Picture one relationship in your life worth nurturing. Try “watering” it a bit extra today with a text/call/visit/letter. Let your words be the sunlight this relationship needs to grow. Afterwards, notice: What blossomed from this added TLC?

Day 24 Ha-yom arba-a v'esrim yom, shehaym shelosha shavuot u'shelosha yamim ba-omer

An alter freint iz besser vi a nei'eh tsvai (an old friend is better than two new ones)



A dear friend who studied with me at The Jewish Theological Seminary, almost twenty years ago, recently sent this adage to me. The best part of old friends, is that they see you at your core. Like a tree, each year we develop a new ring. Hopefully, we love our new ring, how we look and who we are today. But an old friend not only sees who we are today, but knows us from our core as well. The roots are thick and strong, a relationship we can go back to again and again.

Curious? Envision a friend in your life that has been *with* you and *for* you for years. How does thinking of this friend make you feel?

Day 25 Ha-yom chami-sha v'esrim yom, shehaym shelosha shavuot v'arba-a yamim ba-omer

Be the change you wish to see in the world. - Mahatma Gandhi

These words are so pervasive, they almost seem cliché. Except they carry so much valuable weight. Recently my daughter began a campaign at school to make the community aware of gender stereotypes. Then her friend began a club to educate her peers on climate change. These are the change makers that not only begin the change in which they believe, but also, inspire others to enact change for what they believe.



Curious? Picture something on this planet about which you care deeply. Is there a small change you could begin today to affect a greater change? Is there someone already working on it, that you could reach out to and offer your assistance?

Day 26 Ha-yom shi-sha v'esrim yom, shehaym shelosha shavuot va-chamisha yamim ba-omer

Don't ever make decisions based on fear. Make decisions based on hope and possibility. Make decisions based on what should happen, not what shouldn't.
-Michelle Obama

As a *responsible* adult, I've been trying to calculate potential pitfalls way more than I've been trying new things. I have to remind myself of the risk/reward balance...of how much of a greater value that reward is worth.

Curious? Think of a time when you took a leap of faith and did something brave. What did you get out of the experience? Is that type of leap worth jumping again?

Day 27 Ha-yom shiva v'esrim yom, shehaym shelosha shavuot v'shi-sha yamim ba-omer



Today is the first day of the rest of your life.

What a statement inviting freedom and freshness! We can all choose to begin again, at any moment. There's nothing holding us back from improving our present.

Curious? Picture one aspect of your life you wish was different. Play with a new attitude within yourself, about how you can affect change within that realm.

Day 28 Ha-yom shemonah v'esrim yom, shehaym
arba-a shavuot la-omer

Happiness, not in another place, but this
place. Not for another hour, but this hour.
- Walt Whitman



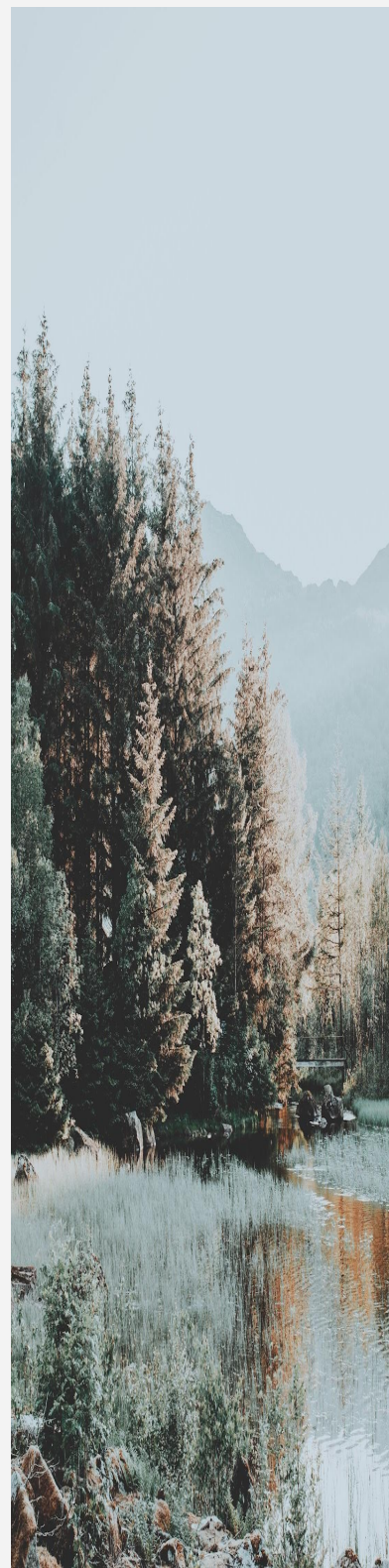
It is easy to see the greener grass on the other side.
It is easy to say that on the next rung of the ladder,
we will be gladder. But it is a worthy endeavor to
recognize the pleasure in the present. The peace
within what we have here and now.

Curious? Next time you find yourself pining for
something else to be your cure, choose to replace that
wish with something you have right now, here, that
offers you equal solace. This is worth more, because it
is already yours to keep.

Day 29 Ha-yom tisha v'esrim yom, shehaym arba-a shavuot v'yom e-chad ba-omer

Begin Again.

In meditation, I work on my concentration. My brain, used to being productive, gravitates towards collecting useful thoughts at all times. But when I meditate, my goal is to slow my mind from following new paths and just to settle where it is, at peace. "Begin again" is a welcoming mantra that I use, repeatedly, whenever I notice my mind has gotten "back to work" and I want to resettle it. In place of feeling frustrated for my mind's having "gone astray" I release all judgment and simply, *begin again*. We have the opportunity to "begin again" in our own lives, at any point, in order to be our most authentic selves.



Curious? If you find yourself in a "stuck" moment, pull this mantra from your mental toolbox and simply choose to "begin again." How does this awareness transform you?

Day 30 Ha-yom shloshim yom, shehaym arba-a shavuot ushnay yamim ba-omer

When someone vomits on you, they're the one who is sick.



When someone treats you poorly, it's not because you have a problem, but it's because they do. Not only is the sickness their own, but also, in place of being angry or sore at them, we should actually take pity on them. Their "vomit" comes from a place of suffering and because of that, we can feel sympathy for them. So when someone treats us poorly, in place of feeling weaker, we feel stronger. Not only is their treatment of us a reflection of who they are, but it is a symptom of a suffering within them, a suffering we are strong enough to feel sympathy for.

Curious? Picture a moment when you felt dejected by another's comment. Picture that person as wounded or sick, in place of powerful and disappointed in you. How does this change your perception of the interaction?

Day 31 Hayom e-chad u'sheloshim yom, shehaym
arba-a shavuot u'shelosha yamim ba-omer

If you have a choice between being right and being kind, choose kind. - Dr Wayne D. Dyer, from RJ Palacio's Wonder



Growing up, I was surrounded by sarcastic people. The more sarcastic you were, the more clever you were regarded. I know people raised around sarcasm often say that for them, sarcasm feels like love. But to me, it didn't. As an adult, at times, I notice how easy it is for me to fall into choosing a "clever" comment in front of being kind, because clever sarcasm is in my DNA. But I'd prefer to choose kind. It feels better to both me and the receiver.

Curious? Picture a recent argument, or conversation in which you put "right"/"clever"/ego in front of "kind," In the end, was it worth it? If you had chosen kind, instead, how would the rest of the interaction progressed?

Day 32 Ha-yom sh'nayim u'sheloshim yom, shehaym
arba-a shavuot v'arba-a yamim ba-omer

Who is rich?

The one who appreciates what he has...

-Ben Zoma, Talmud—Avot 4:1

Read any comments written under a pic of a vacation posted on Social Media and chances are at least one person writes "I'm so jealous!" as though that's synonymous with a true compliment such as "what a beautiful place!" When did jealousy become a platform for praise/sharing in someone's joy? Social media makes it easy for people to see their deficits. It takes effort and strength to realize all the good that we already possess.

Curious? Take a moment to think of five attributes (people/things) in your life for which you are grateful. Are you already full?

Day 33 Ha-yom sh'losha u'sheloshim yom, shehaym arba-a shavuot vachamisha yamim ba-omer



The *smarter* one is, the more he is able to control.

The *wiser* one is, the more he releases from the need to control.

I've spent the first twenty years of my adulthood trying to put all the pieces in place for the sake of order and success. I'm now interested in spending the next few decades learning how to suspend my actions and still watch how everything, generally, falls into place. I don't have to be the world's puppeteer to make the earth continue to revolve.

Curious? Play with allowing yourself to relinquish control of the next situation you're in that you'd habitually try to control, manipulate, be anxious about. What happens when you just "let it go?" Do the pieces still fall into place? What would happen to all that energy we use trying to control things that are out of our control if it were set free? Would we use this energy in a more enjoyable/fulfilling fashion?

Day 34 Ha-yom arba-a u'sheloshim yom, shehaym
arba-a shavuot v'shi-sha yamim ba-omer

When you're in the dark, align yourself with
someone who believes you'll once again find
the light



The best thing we can give ourselves is a relationship with someone who believes in us. When you can't see your way out, connect with a friend who believes you'll get there, because they see all the worth inside of you that you need to set yourself free.

Curious? Reach out to a friend or relative who sees the best in you. Allow them to be your pair of glasses, while you have trouble seeing yourself clearly. How do you look when reflected through their lens?

Day 35 Ha-yom chami-sha u'sheloshim yom, shehaym chami-sha shavuot ba-omer

Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile, but sometimes your smile can be the source of your joy. - Thich Nhat Hanh



Research shows that the simple, subtle act of *smiling*, releases dopamine, endorphins, and serotonin throughout your body, making you *feel* good. Smiling reduces blood pressure, lowers your heart rate, and even relieves your pain. Studies conducted also show that when a person smiles at another, that person's body then feels compelled to smile as well, thereby bestowing upon that person all the benefits of the smile that you just enjoyed too.

Curious? Curve your lips upwards into a smile. How does it affect you? Next time you pass someone...try giving them a smile. Does one get reflected back?

Day 36 Ha-yom shi-sha u'sheloshim yom, shehaym chami-sha shavuot v'yom echad ba-omer

Our obstacles are our path.



Too often we believe that
hard = bad & easy = good
But what if the "hards" are what leads us to
our greatest insights? Our most proud
achievements?

As my meditation guide teaches me: Our
challenges can be our greatest teachers if we
look at them with patience and interest, as
opportunities to learn more about ourselves.

Curious? Think back to a moment when something
was hard for you. In what ways was the experience of
going through the hard transformational?

Day 37 Ha-yom shiva u'sheloshim yom, shehaym
chami-sha shavuot ushnay yamim ba-omer

No one outside ourselves can rule us inwardly. When we know this, we become free. - Buddha

We are fortunate to live in a society where we are free. And yet we allow ourselves to be prisoners of others all so readily. We allow people to be the boss of us, even though it weighs us down. But once we recognize that we are in charge of us, no other person's judgement/opinions/voice can overpower us.

Curious? Imagine a moment when you let someone's opinion obscure your vision. How would you have felt if their lens had no influence on your view? Would removing their opinion/lens have made your experience more pleasurable? Would it have made you feel more confident?

Day 38 Ha-yom shemonah u'sheloshim yom,
shehaym chami-sha shavuot u'shelosha yamim
ba-omer



Rest is not idleness, and to lie sometimes on the grass under the trees on a summer's day, listening to the murmur of water, or watching the clouds float across the sky, is by no means a waste of time.- John Lubbock

Throughout my adulthood, others' have commented on my energy level. I am a productive person, but the focus I put into my efforts is balanced by my immersion in complete rest peppered throughout the day. And it's that balance that enables me to thrive.

Curious? Treat yourself to a moment of true rest. Find a comfortable position and use at least three of your senses to immerse yourself in observing your stillness. How does it feel?

Day 39 Ha-yom tisha u'sheloshim yom, shehaym
chami-sha shavuot va'arba-a yamim ba-omer

Never bend your head. Always hold it high.
Look the world straight in the eye.
- Helen Keller



When you pause to consider that these words were spoken by a blind woman, they really pack a punch. Owl butterflies practice *mimicry*, a scientific phenomenon of imitating another/camouflaging for the sake of empowerment. Even the weak can be perceived as strong depending on how they envision themselves.

Curious? Think of something inside you that you've perceived as a weakness. Look at it from a new angle: How has this aspect of yourself actually made you stronger/better/more successful in life?

Day 40 Ha-yom arba-im yom, shehaym chami-sha shavuot va'chamisha yamim ba-omer

There's a bit of Beatles in every song
- Rockwell Church



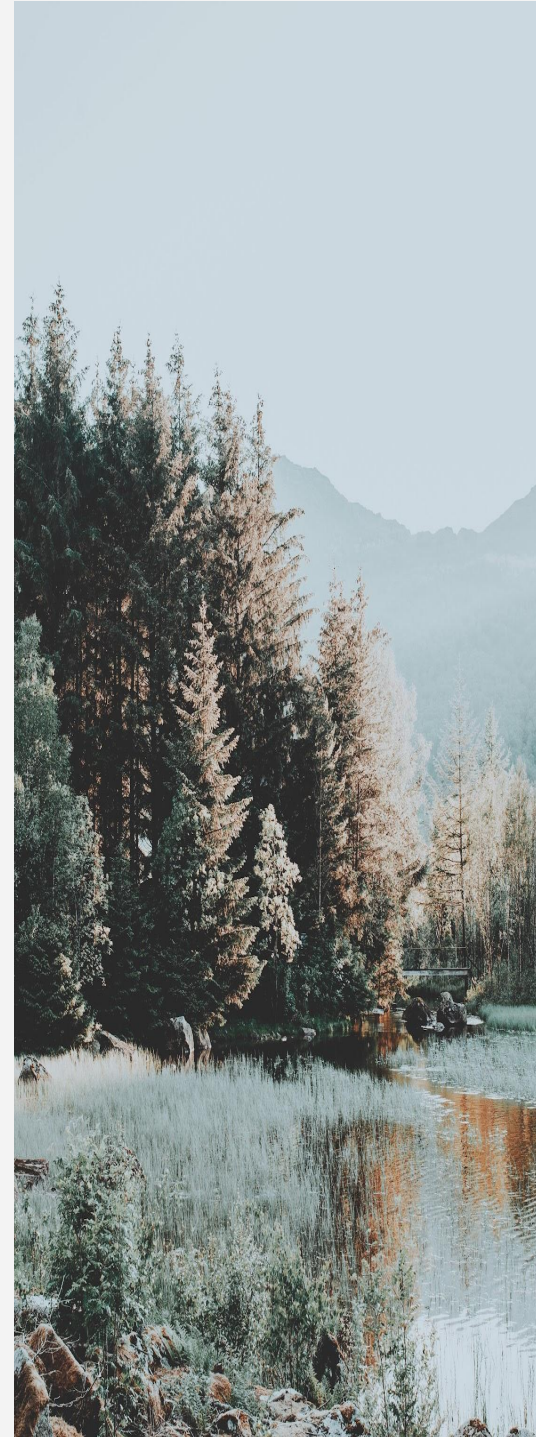
In college, I was listening to my favorite college band, and heard what sounded like a Beatles tune in one of their songs. The next time I saw the singer, I asked about it. His response was: "There's a bit of Beatles in every song." I think about this with our personal problems too. Sometimes we think we are so alone in our problems, they're uniquely ours, and that makes them feel heavier. But if we listen to the problems of the people all around us, we'll begin to notice the same tunes resounding throughout. We are not alone. And I believe that can make whatever pain we feel, a little easier to live with. I guess we can all "get by with a little help from my friends..."

Curious? Picture a moment when you told a friend a problem you were having and they could relate to it; how did that alter your perception of the problem?

Day 41 Hayom e-chad v'arbaim yom, shehaym chami-sha shavuot v'shi-sha yamim ba-omer

With every exhalation we take, we are nourishing the plant-life all around us.

Our exhaled waste, CO₂, is the perfect breath for all plant life to “inhale” - what we put out into the world, others take in. Likewise, when we mindfully exhale, our breath is signaling to our mind that it is safe to relax. When we relax, those surrounding us can connect to us/respond to us with greater ease. They may even “feed” off of our peaceful energy and absorb it for themselves.



Curious? Take a breath in through your nostrils, exhale slowly. How does your body respond to this deepened, mindful exhalation? How do those around you respond to a more relaxed version of yourself?

Day 42 Ha-yom sh'nayim v'arbaim yom, shehaym shi-sha shavuot ba-omer

Which emotions control our heart and mind?
The ones we choose to feed.



Click on the photo above or copy and paste <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzKryaN44ss> into your web browser to watch mindfulness expert Sharon Salzburg illuminate us in this 2 minute video on how we can take control of our thoughts and feelings.

Curious? Notice where you focus your energy: Do you lean towards self-compassion? Or do you fuel the flames of judgement and self-criticism? Now, imagine nourishing yourself with self-kindness. How would you benefit?

Day 43 Ha-yom sh'losha v'arbaim yom, shehaym shi-sha shavuot v'yom e-chad ba-omer

One question is always relevant:
How can I use this to move forward? -
Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller



When I was a teacher, I had two Maxes in my class, notorious for getting into fights together. They were both fantastic kids, & probably it was the fact that they were so similar that they found so much fault with one another. After a few weeks of their bickering, I met with them and told them: From now on, as soon as a squabble begins, I want you two to remove yourselves from the group and *together figure out how to solve the problem*. And something clicked. They had thought their goal was to fight, so they had for years. Simply reformulating their goal as “to solve *together*” transformed their interaction. From then on, these two were a team, even within their squabbles.

Curious? In an argument, in place of “my way or the highway,” consider envisioning a joined, pleasant endpoint as your destination and head in this direction.

Day 44 Ha-yom arba-a v'arbaim yom, shehaym shi-sha shavuot ushnay yamim ba-omer

When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves. - Viktor Frankl



'To thine own self be true' is one of the wisest phrases in literature. If we can consider change within, while still being true to ourselves, the possibility for peace is within a closer reach. We cannot change those around us, but we can change the way in which we choose to respond to them. And it is that choice that can lead to a deeper, greater peace. Recently I received a frustrating email. Instead of battling a response, I simply wrote "thank you for letting me know." The person was so touched at my recognition that she wrote back with generosity. It felt like a win win.

Curious? Play with inserting a positive/productive statement where you'd habitually pick a fight. What happens to the interaction?

Day 45 Ha-yom chami-sha v'arbaim yom, shehaym shi-sha shavuot u'shelosha yamim ba-omer

We don't know where we're going, we don't know what's going to happen, but no one can take away from you what you put in your own mind.
- Dr. Edith Eger, The Choice

It's a comfort to acknowledge that even in the uncontrollable, we can take control. This statement was told to Edith, as a teenager, by her mother, as they rode in a cattle car to Auschwitz. They had lost control of their situation and had no idea what was to come. But her mother found a way to carry the dignity of self-direction within them, within the cattle car to Auschwitz.



Curious? Imagine a moment when you felt helpless. Maybe you do today. How can you regain composure and security, amongst the unknown?

Day 46 Ha-yom shi-sha v'arbaim yom, shehaym shi-sha shavuot v'arba-a yamim ba-omer

Emotions, like weather systems, will pass.



We often wish good moments could last forever. And we often worry that bad experiences will last forever. But all emotions, high or low, are like weather systems. It wasn't raining beforehand and we know the rain will imminently stop. So too, with our feelings and our situations in life: It won't always storm. We can weather the weather.

Curious? Next time you notice you add a layer of heaviness on to a feeling, because you feel like that feeling will be eternal, remember that all weather passes, and this feeling will pass as well. Does this reframing affect your perception of your experience?

Day 47 Ha-yom shiva v'arbaim yom, shehaym shi-sha shavuot va'chami-sha yamim ba-omer

Not necessarily so...

One of my esteemed teachers shared this favorite mantra of hers. For anyone who has clung on to a worry to the point where the worry seemed like reality, this mantra has the power to reimagine the facts in a less heavy way, to free you from imagining the worst. Though in your mind, you can be certain of “impending doom,” it’s a comfort and a freedom to reframe your concern as *not necessarily so*.

Curious? If you find yourself visualizing the fate of a worry of yours, play with telling yourself that your imagining is “not necessarily so.” How does this transform your spiral of worry?

Day 48 Ha-yom shemonah v'arbaim yom, shehaym shi-sha shavuot v'shi-sha yamim ba-omer

If you don't have garbage, you have nothing to use in order to make compost. And if you have no compost, you have nothing to nourish the flower in you. You need the suffering, the afflictions in you. Since they are organic, you know that you can transform them and make good use of them.

- Thich Nhat Hanh

This reframes all the negativity in our lives, the shame of being host to negative experiences and feelings, because all of it- the garbage and the precious - can be used to cultivate us.. We are not damaged by our negative experiences, we grow from them.

Curious? Picture an experience from your past that you connect with shame or negativity. Reimagine that moment as material for guiding you to who you are today.

Day 49 Ha-yom tisha v'arbaim yom, shehaym shiv-a shavuot ba-omer

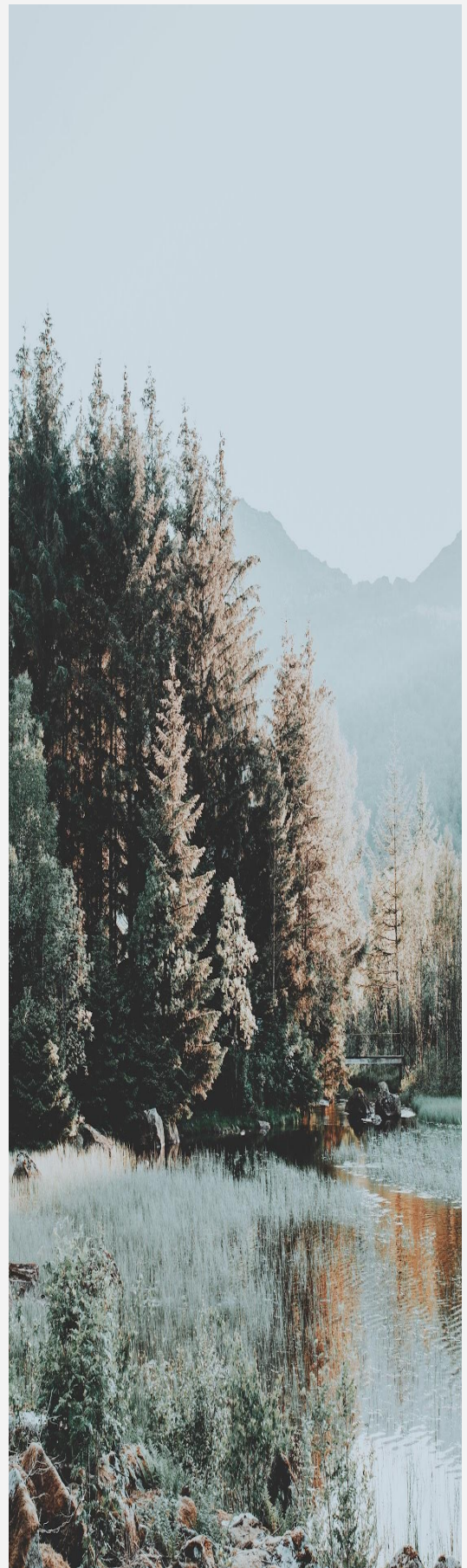
Why are the most difficult conversations easiest in the car? Because everyone is looking forward, in the same direction.



Our minds and bodies are so connected, when we are moving forward with someone physically, we can move forward with them mentally a little easier too. Also, keeping all sets of eyes on the same prize (the road ahead), may help free us to express ourselves with less critical judgement staring us down.

Curious? If you anticipate a serious conversation, try taking a walk or going for a drive with your partner. With both sets of eyes looking forward, as you head in the same direction, does your conversation follow a similar route?

Keeping your body
healthy is an expression
of gratitude to the
whole cosmos
- the trees, the clouds,
everything.
- Thich Nhat Hanh



Thank you for joining me on this fifty day journey.
I hope you've learned as much as I have along our
way

Curious to continue learning more?

Resources and guides along my journey that may also help you in yours:

Pause To Be Present, Meditation and Mindfulness

<https://pausetobepresent.com/>

434 Mamaroneck Avenue, suite 101

Liz Slade, Mindfulness and Social Emotional Learning Consultant

<https://www.lizslade.com/>

Happify

<https://www.happify.com/>

Glennon Doyle, Untamed

Dr. Edith Eger, The Choice & The Gift

Alan Morinis, Everyday Holiness: The Jewish Spiritual Path of Mussar