

## THE SEASON OF SPRING – SPRING IN NATURE, THE NATION AND THE INDIVIDUAL

(Activity for high school)

### Activity:

1. Opening – a spring-like opening game: a competition to find spring songs/memories of spring songs.
2. The small spring song (the spring season in song)
  - Every participant chooses a song from the four songs, reads it and tries to answer the questions attached.
  - Read the songs together, and ask – what characterizes spring according to this song?
    - Is there a description of the spring in the songs that I identify with?
    - How does spring influence me (if at all)?
3. Today you are going out in the month of spring (the spring season in sections from the bible).
  - We will read the sections from the bible about the exodus from Egypt and the Passover festival (without the sheaves (Omer)).
  - We will ask:
    - Why is it important to state the time as the month of spring and why is this date stated in this fashion (and not as the first month – the month of Nissan)?
    - What are the commandments relating to celebration of the festival? (the festival in Israel, first fruits, sacrifices – instructions that the crops must be brought to God before use is made of them. Note the connection with





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the land, the earth and nature, and the commitment to set aside from whatever there is).

- What is the connection between freedom and spring? (Spring denotes a new start, a breaking out and hatching in nature, the physical option of being outside, optimism).
- We will read the section about the Omer
- We will explain the commandment of the Omer – with the start of harvesting the wheat (one day after the festival of Passover) we celebrate with a ceremony of raising the sheaves – the first sheaves harvested are given to the priest, only after the sheaves have been raised and given to the priest can we start to use the crops. Starting from this date we start to count the Omer – the time of harvesting the wheat, and waiting for the wheat to mature. During this time the farmer wonders and worries whether the crops will grow well, therefore this is a tense time, and there are no happy events. The ceremony of raising the sheaves expresses the connection with the land, joy at the start of maturation of the crops, commitment to the commandment of God to maintain the ruling and spiritual system (the priests).
  - How does the Omer connect with the contents of Passover and freedom? Why are these dates and commandments adjacent to each other?
  - What is common with the contents of the songs and the personal relationship with spring in the national story of the exodus from Egypt and the Passover and Omer commandments?

For those who want to go further: you can read the sections from the Talmud and the interpretation, and try to answer: What is the importance of the spring? What denotes



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the spring? Why specifically is it a sign of happiness? What is the meaning of determining a leap year? What connection to time and nature does the leap year express? Why does this information add to the connection between nature, the individual and the nation?



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## SOURCES – PRESERVE THE MONTH OF SPRING

SPRING IN NATURE, SPRING OF THE NATION AND SPRING OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Exodus from Egypt

The festival of Passover, the festival of spring

14 Three times a year you are to celebrate a festival to me. 15 Celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread; for seven days eat bread made without yeast, as I commanded you. Do this at the appointed time in the month of spring for in that month you came out of Egypt.

No one is to appear before me empty-handed. 16 Celebrate the Festival of Harvest with the first fruits of the crops you sow in your field. Celebrate the Festival of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in your crops from the field. 17 Three times a year all the men are to appear before the Lord G-d.

Exodus 23

18 The feast of unleavened bread you shall keep. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, in the time of the month of Spring: for in the month of Spring you came out from Egypt. 19 All shall bring to me; and every firstling among your cattle, whether ox or sheep, that is male. 20 But the firstling of an ass you shall redeem with a lamb: and if you redeem him not, then you shall break his neck. All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem. And none shall appear before me empty-handed.

Exodus 34

Observe the month of spring and celebrate the Passover of the Lord your God, because in the month of spring he brought you out of Egypt by night. 2 Sacrifice as the Passover to the Lord your God an animal from your flock or herd at the place the Lord will choose as a dwelling for his Name. 3 Do not eat it with bread made with yeast, but for seven days eat unleavened bread, the bread of affliction, because you left Egypt in haste—so that all the days of your life you may remember the time of your departure from Egypt. Deuteronomy 16



## Commandment of the Omer

Bavli, Sanhedrin 11:B

Our Rabbis taught: A year may be added on three grounds: the spring, the fruit-trees and the equinox. Any two of these reasons can justify addition, but not one alone. All, however, are glad when the spring is one of them. Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel says: On account of the equinox.

### Interpretation by Steinzeltz:

Two of us: a year may be added on three grounds, the spring that has still not arrived, the time for the maturing of the wheat and the fruits of the trees that have still not matured, and the equinox that has still come (the time of equilibrium between the day and night before Passover). And it is said two of them is good even if there is not a third, but not one alone. And when spring is one of them – everyone is happy because twice the crops have matured, and nevertheless another month is added because it is forbidden to eat new prohibited fruit and when you take spring into account there is no such concern. Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel says: on account of the equinox. This was not completely clear.

Talmud Jerusalem Sanhedrin Tractate Chapter 1 Folio Db, Chapter A Halacha 2 Gemara  
A year may be added on three grounds: the spring, the equinox and the fruit trees. Any two of these reasons can justify addition, but not one alone. All, however, are glad when spring is one of them. Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel says: On account of the equinox.  
There are three lands that are of consequence regarding the spring, Judah, Transjordan, and the Galilee. If Judah was one of the lands everyone is happy because the ripening comes from there. There shall not be leap year because of the cold and the rain. There shall not be a leap year because of lambs or chicks or milk.



Mishne Torah Rambam – Halachat Kidush Hahodesh Chapter 4

1. A leap year is a year that includes an additional month. The extra month that is added is always Adar, and thus the year contains two Adars: the first Adar and the second Adar.

Why is this month added? Because of the season of spring, so that Passover will fall then, as [implied by Deuteronomy 16:1]: Take heed the month of spring. Were the month not to be added, there are times when Passover would fall in the summer, and times in the rainy season.

2. The year is full because of three factors: the equinox; the ripening of the crops, and the blooming of the fruit trees. What is implied? When the court calculates and determines that the equinox will fall on the sixteenth of Nisan or later, the year is made full. The month that would have been Nisan is made the second Adar, and thus Passover will fall in the spring. This factor alone is sufficient for the court to make the year full; other factors need not be considered.

3. Similarly, if the court sees that the barley crop has not ripened, but that it is late in sprouting, or that the fruit trees that usually bloom at the time of the Passover festival have not bloomed, these two factors are sufficient, and the year is made full, even though the equinox will fall before the sixteenth of Nisan.

4. There are three lands that are of consequence regarding the spring, Judah, Transjordan, and the Galilee. If the barley has ripened in two of these lands, but not in the third, the year is not made full. If, however, it ripened in one of these lands, but not in the other two, the year is made full if the fruit trees have not bloomed. These are the primary grounds for making the year full, so that the years will follow the solar calendar.

Song of Songs – the Festival of Passover

