THE INTERVALS IN BETWEEN
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Yesterday marked the 33rd day of the Omer, or Lag B'Omer where the Hebrew characters for number 33, *lamed-gimel* form the word LAG.

The date is significant because it was on the 33rd day of the Omer about 2,000 years ago when a plague that had fallen upon the students of the great Talmudic sage Rabbi Akiva was ended.

That a plague had befallen his students during a period called the Omer was traumatic, particularly because the Omer had always been a joyous time. Thus when this 49-day span between the holiday of Passover that celebrates the redemption of the Israeli from bondage in Egyptian slavery and the receiving of Torah by those same former slaves at Mt Sinai marked by the holiday of Shavuoth; was marred by such tragedy everyone was devastated. The lifting of the plague was met with great relief and celebration – even today Jews everywhere and particularly in Israel celebrate Lag B'Omer with bonfires, cook outs and camping trips to mark the time when suffering turned to celebration.

Every calendar and culture has its holidays, big and small that mark historical events, moments in history or seasons that are worth remembering or celebrating. But is a uniquely religious thing to mark the intervals in between holidays and remembrances.

In Judaism, these times can be the holidays themselves—Passover, for example, is not one day but a week, giving us a period of time to remember the Exodus and reflect on the themes of oppression and liberation.

In the fall when we celebrate the High Holy Days of Rosh HaShanah, the New Year, and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, we do not just mark those individual days, but the period of time between them takes on heightened importance as the Yamim Nora'im, "The 10 Days of Repentance"—a week and a half to reflect, repent and take stock of our lives and behaviors.

On the contemporary Jewish calendar, we just recently marked both Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, and Yom Ha'atzmaut, Israel's Independence Day. The former marking the greatest tragedy of modern Jewry, and the latter marking one of modern Jewry's greatest achievements. And the six days between these two events give us the opportunity to reflect on the interplay between them: not just how the historical fact of one contributed to the historical fact of the other, but how tragedy and renewal, despair and hope, mourning and celebration are a continual cycle in our lives.

The lesson of the importance of the intervals between is of course not limited to calendars and holidays, its also an essential lesson in life.

Tonight, marks the beginning of a new interval for Jacob, our Bar Mitzvah boy. Contrary to the popular Jewish wisdom today you do not become a man (or Fountain pen as was once the fashion), but you are also no longer a boy, a child. Today, Jacob you enter into the interval in between, adolescence – a word who's entomology is derived in part from the fact that for the next 5 or six years you will addle, as in confuse and befuddle the essence of your parents. Its not your fault and not really in your control, though at times we might implore you to the contrary, you're in that space in between, you're on the path to becoming.

Ask most adults and they will tell you that not for a million dollars or the cost of one bedroom apartment in Vancouver would they want to go back to the period you are now entering into, with all of its teen angst, pimples and social awkwardness. But ask them if the experience was worth a million dollars in how it shaped, changed and prepared them to be the person they are today and we will all tell you its was worth that and more.

Its in this interval that you make some of the most important friendships of your life; challenge your own limits and experience more rapid growth and change than any time since infancy. To quote the great English author Charles Dickens in a Tale of Two Cities ,it was the best of times, it was the worst of times", which I would add therefore made it the most important of times.

Like so many things its never about where you start or where you end up, true learning, growth and transformation happens along the way, the journey, the interval in between those two points on our lifeline.

My colleague Rabbi Seth was reflecting on some of these ideas his congregation over Shabbat and shared that he was approached after the service by a congregant who is a runner. He explained to the Rabbi that to be a successful runner, one needs to pay attention to the intervals—the time between runs. It is his belief that the intervals are as important if not more important than the runs themselves. We need to be able to rest and recover from one run in order to perform at our best at the next one.

What interval are you in right now in your own life? Its not only about Bar Mitzvahs, each of us is between something, in transition, becoming.

We celebrate and mark the important occasions in our calendar year, but we also need to pay attention to the intervals, the time between those occasions, in the span of days, months and even years, such as a young boy coming into adulthood. These intervals are as important as the days themselves, for they allow us to fully integrate the spiritual teachings of one holiday, one moment and remind us to fully prepare for the next.