

Counting Fifty Years

We don't know exactly when the Yovel year begins. It's the culmination of seven cycles of seven years, each culminating in a sh'mitah—sabbatical—year. The only way to arrive at Yovel is to count seven years, then seven again and again until forty-nine years have gone by.

Similarly, the Torah never tells us precisely when to celebrate Shavuot. Unlike other holidays, there's no date assigned. Instead, we count from the second night of Passover: seven weeks, forty-nine days, to commemorate fifty days of walking from Egypt to Sinai. Just as each week of counting the Omer, the period between Passover and Shavuot, includes a day of rest for human beings, each seventh year of counting the Yovel is a sabbatical year for the land.

As we count to fifty—either years or weeks—we build anticipation, notice the passage of time, and look to the future. We don't count down—we count up, because we are excited about what is yet to come.

Pirkei Avot, an ancient tractate of rabbinic aphorisms, teaches that each significant human life stage bears certain characteristics. Fifty is the age of advice. That is: fifty is the age at which one has lived enough, studied enough, worked enough, and both succeeded and failed enough to offer advice to others. This year, we commemorate fifty years since the Six-Day war. What advice for the future can we glean from these past fifty years?

As you study the sources in this section, ask yourself how the act of counting might challenge and inspire us in this fiftieth year? What have we learned in the past fifty years? How will we move forward in the next fifty and beyond?

I. How Do We Count?

Below is the biblical description of the counting toward the Yovel year.

A. Leviticus 25:8-12

(ח) וְסִפַּרְתָּ לְךָ שִׁבְעַת שָׁבָע שָׁנִים שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים וְהָיוּ לְךָ יָמֵי שִׁבְעַת שָׁבָע שָׁנִים תִּשְׁעָה וְאַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה : (ט) וְהֶעֱבַרְתָּ שׁוֹפָר תְּרוּעָה בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּעֶשְׂרִי לַחֹדֶשׁ בְּיוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים תִּעְבְּרוּ שׁוֹפָר בְּכָל אֲרָצְכֶם : (י) וְקִדַּשְׁתֶּם אֶת שְׁנַת הַחֲמִשִּׁים שָׁנָה וְקִרְאתֶם דְּרוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ לְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל יוֹבֵל הוּא תְהִיָּה לְכֶם וְשַׁבְּתֶם אִישׁ אֶל אַחֲזָתוֹ וְאִישׁ אֶל מִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ תִּשְׁבוּ : (יא) יוֹבֵל הוּא שְׁנַת הַחֲמִשִּׁים שָׁנָה תְהִיָּה לְכֶם לֹא תִזְרְעוּ וְלֹא תִקְצְרוּ אֶת סִפְיַחֶיהָ וְלֹא תִבְצְרוּ אֶת נִזְרֶיהָ : (יב) כִּי יוֹבֵל הוּא קֹדֶשׁ תְהִיָּה לְכֶם מִן הַשָּׂדֶה תֹאכְלוּ אֶת תְּבוּאָתָהּ :

⁸You shall count seven weeks of years—seven times seven years—so that the period of seven weeks of years gives you a total of forty-nine years. ⁹Then you shall sound the shofar loud; in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month—the Day of Atonement—you shall have the *shofar* sounded throughout your land ¹⁰and you shall hallow the fiftieth year. You shall proclaim release throughout the land for all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: each of you shall return to your holding and each of you shall return to your family. ¹¹That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you: you shall not sow, neither shall you reap the aftergrowth or harvest the untrimmed vines, ¹²for it is a jubilee. It shall be holy to you: you may only eat the growth direct from the field.

- » *What can we learn about the purpose of the Yovel year from these verses? What can we learn about the process of counting toward it?*
- » *How might the build up to the Yovel year feel? What would be exciting? Frightening?*
- » *Why do you think the shofar would be sounded on Yom Kippur of the Yovel year, and not on Rosh Hashanah, when the year begins?*
- » *The instructions for counting in the first verse seem repetitive—why do you think the instructions might be written this way? What can we learn from the repetitions of the word “seven”?*
- » *Have you counted up to this fiftieth year since 1967? What emotions are you holding as we approach this Yovel year?*

B. Sevens are beloved: *Leviticus Rabbah Parashat Emor 29*

כל השביעין חביבין לעולם ... בשנים
שביעי חביב שנאמר (שמות כג)
והשביעית תשמטנה ונטשתה, בשמיטין
שביעי חביב שנא' (ויקרא כה) וקדשתם
את שנת החמשים, בימים שביעי חביב
שנאמר (בראשית ב) ויברך אלהים את
יום השביעי, בחדשים שביעי חביב שנא'
(ויקרא כג) בחדש השביעי באחד לחדש
... יהיה לכם שבתון...

All sevens are forever beloved ... among
years, the seventh is beloved, as is written
(Exodus 23:11) *In the seventh, you shall let
[the land] rest and lie fallow.* Among *sh'mitah*
years, the seventh is beloved, as is written
(Leviticus 25:10) *You shall hallow the fiftieth
year.* Among days, the seventh is beloved, as
is written (Genesis 2:3) *And God blessed the
seventh day.* Among months, the seventh
is beloved, as is written (Leviticus 23:24)
*In the seventh month, on the first day of the
month, you shall observe complete rest [i.e.
Rosh Hashanah].*

- » *Why do you think “sevens are forever beloved”? How do these different cycles of seven—the week, the sh'mitah cycle, and the yovel cycle—connect to one another? What are the similarities and differences among these cycles of seven, according to the biblical texts quoted in this midrash?*
- » *What shared mental or practical calendars do you have with others in your family, your community, or in the broader world? How does having a shared sense of time—celebrating religious or national holidays, or even family rituals and anniversaries—make you feel connected to others?*

Leviticus Rabbah is a collection of *midrashim*—rabbinic expansions on the biblical text. It consists of homilies on the book of Leviticus and was probably compiled in the Land of Israel in the fifth century.

II. Fifty Gates

One confusion about the counting of the yovel year arises from the biblical ambiguity about whether the yovel is the last (forty-ninth) year of the seven-year cycle, or the year following (the fiftieth year). The Talmud asserts that yovel is the fiftieth year—and this has become the accepted understanding. However, mystical literature plays with this ambiguity by suggesting that the yovel year, associated with the sefirah or divine quality of binah, wisdom or understanding, is strongly connected to both what comes before and what comes after.

A. Fifty gates of understanding: Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Rosh Hashanah* 21b

רב ושמואל, חד אמר : חמשים שערי בינה נבראו בעולם, וכולן ניתנו למשה חסר אחד, שנאמר (תהלים ח) ותחסרהו מעט מאלהים.

Rav or Shmuel said: Fifty gates of understanding were created in the world, and all of them were given to Moses except for one, as it says (Psalm 8:6) *You have made him little less than divine.*

- » *What might these “fifty gates of understanding” be? In what ways might there be fifty ways of understanding in the world?*
- » *Why might one of these gates be reserved for God?*
- » *What connections might you draw between these fifty gates of wisdom and the fifty years of yovel?*
- » *What are the different ways of understanding the significance of the fifty years since 1967? Are there any modes of understanding that you feel that you lack? That you would like to achieve? That our community might lack?*

The Talmud is a compilation of law, narrative, folk wisdom, and more. It consists of the *Mishnah*, probably compiled around 200 CE, and the *Gemara*, compiled around 500 CE or later.

The Talmud is divided into 63 tractates, each mostly focused on one subject (but often including much material on other subjects as well).

When we refer to “The Talmud,” we usually mean the Talmud Bavli (Babylonian Talmud), codified in Babylonia. There is also a second Talmud, known as Talmud Yerushalmi (Palestinian Talmud), codified in the Land of Israel somewhat earlier. The latter is less complete and has been less central to the development of law.

B. Infinite sets of fifty gates: Rabbi Jacob Joseph of Polonne, *Toldot Yaakov Yosef* commentary on Deuteronomy

שמעתי בשם מורי זלה“ה [הבעש“ט] טעם שניתן רק מ“ט שערי בינה למשה ולא שער החמישים, ותירץ כי שער החמישים הוא חוזר ומתחיל נ' שערים למעלה מזה, וכן למעלה למעלה עד אין סוף, כי שנת החמשים דיובל עולה לכאן ולכאן.

I heard in the name of my teacher [the Ba'al Shem Tov] the reason that only forty-nine gates of understanding were given to Moses and not the fiftieth gate. The fiftieth gate starts again and begins a set of fifty gates even higher than that, and so above and above to infinity. For the fiftieth year of *yovel* counts on both sides.

- » *Rabbi Jacob Joseph envisions infinite sets of fifty gates. How does this image relate to your sense of how time functions? How might this fiftieth year both link us to the past, and open the door to the future?*
- » *How might we collect the wisdom of each of the past fifty years, and use it to help us walk through the next fifty? What do you hope will change as we move into the next cycle? How can we bring about this change?*

Rabbi Jacob Joseph of Polonne (Poland 1710-1784) was one of the first disciples of the Ba'al Shem Tov, the founder of the Hasidic Movement, which draws from mystical thought. *Toldot Yaakov Yosef* was the first Hasidic book published (in 1780).

III. Fifty Years, Fifty Days: Omer as a Microcosm

For comparison, here is the passage in the Torah that describes the mitzvah of counting the fifty days of the Omer, from Passover to Shavuot:

A. Counting Omer: Leviticus 23:15-16

(טו) וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמַּחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת מִיּוֹם הַבִּיאְכֶם אֶת עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה שִׁבְעַת שָׁבֻעוֹת תְּמִימֹת תִּהְיֶינָה: (טז) עַד מַמְחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת הַשְּׁבִיעִית תִּסְפְּרוּ חֲמִשִּׁים יוֹם וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם מִנְחָה חֲדָשָׁה לַה':

¹⁵And from the day on which you bring the sheaf of elevation offering—the day after the Sabbath—you shall count seven weeks. They must be complete: ¹⁶you must count until the day after the seventh week—fifty days; then you shall bring an offering of new grain to the Lord.

B. Counting for a community: Rabbi Pinchas ben Joseph ha-Levi, *Sefer HaHinuch*

[ויקרא כ"ה, ח'] וספרת לך שבע שבתות שנים שבע שנים שבע פעמים. וזאת המצוה, כלומר זאת הספירה של שני שמיטה עד שנת היובל היא נמסרת לבית דין הגדול, כלומר הסנהדרין. וכן היא המצוה, שהיו מונין שנה שנה ושבע שבע שנים עד שנת היובל, כמו שאנו מונין ימי העומר, ואחר כך מקדשין שנת החמשים בשביתת הארץ ולקרות דרור לכל העבדים והשפחות, וכל הקרקעות חוזרין לבעליהן.

You shall count off seven weeks of years—seven times seven years. This *mitzvah*—this counting of the years of *sh'mita* until the year of the *yovel*—is given to the Great Court, that is, the Sanhedrin. And this is the *mitzvah*—they would count each year and each week of years until the year of the *yovel*, like we count the days of the *omer*, and afterwards, they would sanctify the fiftieth year by letting the land rest, proclaiming release for all slaves, and all the land returning to its owners.

- » *These texts describe counting the seven weeks of the omer as a mitzvah done by the individual, and counting the seven years until yovel as a mitzvah done by the Sanhedrin—the authoritative public institution. What might be the differences between counting done by individuals and counting done by a communal institution? How might each feel different?*
- » *Why do you think the responsibility of counting yovel is given to the Sanhedrin? What role should communal leadership play in marking our current fifty year cycle?*
- » *How do you think we should commemorate this fiftieth year, both as individuals and as a community?*

Rabbi Pinchas ben Joseph ha-Levi (Spain, 13th century) was the author of *Sefer HaHinuch* (published anonymously), a systematic list and discussion of the 613 *mitzvot*.

C. Our counting has an impact on the Divine: Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Rymanov, *Siftei Tzadikim* Exodus, Parashat Yitro

ועל ידי הספירה שאנו סופרין בכל יום
בכונה ישרה אנו מעלים אותה מדרגא
לדרגא עד שעלתה לשער החמשים
שבבינה הנקרא יובל (תקוני זהר, תקון
לב, עו ב) והוא עולם החירות כמו שכתוב
וקראתם דרור כו' (ויקרא כה, י) שמשם
נמשך לכנסת ישראל כל מיני חירות וכל
הטובות וברכות ממקורין עילאין ...

By our counting [the *omer*] each day with pure intention, we raise her [the Divine Presence] up one level at a time until she comes to the fiftieth gate, for *binah* [wisdom] is called *yovel* (Tikunei Zohar, 32b), which is the world of freedom, as it is written: *proclaim release* (Leviticus 25:10), for from there all kinds of freedom and all good things and blessings are brought to the congregation of Israel from their upper sources ...

- » *A core aspect of Hasidic teaching is the notion that our actions have an impact on the Divine. How does this text suggest that counting the omer affects God? What is the relationship here between omer and yovel?*
- » *What divine assistance might we be seeking during this yovel year? How might our actions impact the divine presence?*

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Rymanov (1745-1815) was an early Hasidic leader in Galica.

IV. Fifty Years in a Human Lifespan

Generally, human beings could expect to see no more than one yovel in their lifetime. Experiencing such an event, then, reminds us both of our own mortality and of the continuity of human communities beyond individual life spans.

A. Fifty years to retirement: *Hizkuni* on Leviticus 25:10

שנת החמשים שנה וקראתם דרור כמו
שמצינו בלויים מבן חמישים שנה ישוב
מצבא העבודה ולא יעבוד עוד.

The fiftieth year, you shall proclaim release—as we find with the Levites [Numbers 8:25]—at the age of fifty they shall retire from work and shall serve no more.

- » *How does Hizkuni understand the “release” of the fiftieth year?*
- » *Is this life rhythm similar to what you expect or have experienced or observed in your own life? What do you make of the idea of counting the years of one’s life towards the arrival at a radical change of experience?*
- » *How might this idea of release—or retirement—apply to this fiftieth anniversary?*

Rabbi Hezekiah ben Manoah (France, 13th century), generally referred to as *Hizkuni* wrote a biblical commentary that integrates the work of previous commentators and particularly focuses on explaining the commentary of Rashi (France, 1040-1105).

B. Release to spiritual pursuits: Abravanel on Leviticus 25

טעם מצות השמטה הוא שיזכור האדם
כמה ימי שני חייו ולפי שהתכלית בזה
הוא להשגת שלמותו

ואמנם מצות היובל היא ג' כ מזה הטעם
עצמו כי כמו שבשני השמיטות באו
במספר שבעה שנים כן היה היובל משבע
שמיטות והיה לרמוז ולהעיר שאין
כל ימי האדם ושנותיו שוים בעבודת
האדמה ומלאכתה כי הנה בימי הילדות
לא יוכל האדם לעבוד עבודה ולא גם כן
בימי הישישות אבל ימי העמל והעבודה
הם על הרוב חמשים שנה ובהגיע האדם
להם שהם בסוף ששים שנה מימיו רוצה
לומר עשרה שנים הראשונים מילדות
וחמשים שנה ימי העסק ראוי שיעזוב
אדם הדברים הגשמיים והתאוות
החמריות ויקדש עצמו ויתנהג בקדושה
וטהרה ולרמוז לזה אמר וספרת לך שבע
שבתות שנים שבע שנים שבע פעמים ...

The reason for the *mitzvah* of *sh'mitah* is so that a person will remember how many are the days of the years of their life, the purpose of this being to achieve wholeness.

The reason for *yovel* is the same—just as *sh'mitah* years come with a count of seven years, so the *yovel* is seven *sh'mitah* years. This hints that the days and years of a person's life are not equivalent with regards to labor or working the land. In childhood and in old age, a person cannot work the land. The days of toil and labor are at most fifty years, and when a person reaches sixty years of age—that is, the ten years of childhood and the fifty years of work—it is appropriate for a person to leave aside physical things and material desires, instead sanctifying oneself and acting out of holiness and purity. The Torah hints at this [Leviticus 25:8]: *You shall count off seven weeks of years—seven times seven years. ...*

- » *Abravanel's vision of the fifty years of midlife might be exhausting. What have you learned from the most tiring and demanding periods of your life? What spiritual pursuits have you looked forward to from that state of exhaustion?*
- » *Over the past fifty years, many Israeli, Palestinian, and international leaders have worked hard to try to change the reality on the ground in the West Bank, whether trying to end the occupation through the creation of a Palestinian state, or Israeli annexation of the West Bank, or in other ways. As we approach the yovel of 2017, many feel a sense of exhaustion. What wisdom do you see here regarding how to relate to these fifty years of hard work?*
- » *In his tribute to President Shimon Peres, President Barack Obama recalled, "when I asked for his advice, he told me that while people often say that the future belongs to the young, it's the present that really belongs to the young. 'Leave the future to me,' he said, 'I have time.'" After fifty years, how can we hold onto this sense that a better future remains possible?*

Rabbi Isaac Abravanel (Portugal 1437-1508) was a biblical commentator and philosopher, who often addressed the everyday concerns of his Jewish community, living under persecution.

C. Consciousness along the way: *Kli Yakar* on Leviticus 25:8

לכך נאמר וספרת לך וגו', אם תספור לך לטובתך ולהנאתך כדי להוציא כל ימך בדברים רוחנים אז והיו לך ימי שבע שבתות השנים רצה לומר יהיו לך לבדך ולא לזרים אתך. אבל אם תכלה בהבל ימך לאסוף ולכנוס אז לא לך יהיה הזרע, כי תעזוב לאחרים חיל וחומה אשר בנית ואשר נטעת, כי על הרוב אין האדם יכול להחזיק בשלו כי אם מספר שנים אלו אבל שנת החמשים משנת עשרים שהוא שנת השבעים מיום הוולדו

So it says *you shall count* [literally, count for yourself]—if you count for yourself, for your own good and to benefit from it, so that your days are focused on spiritual matters, then you will have the days of *seven weeks of years*—that is, they will be fully yours, and not for another. But if you waste your days uselessly, hoarding and collecting things, then you will not be able to enjoy the fruits of your labors, the things that you have built and that you have planted.

For the most part, human beings can hold onto what is theirs for only a number of years—until the fiftieth year from the twentieth year, that is, seventy years after being born.

- » *Rabbi Shlomo says that the process of counting should have an impact not only on the end of our lives, but also on the value of our years along the way. How do you relate to his seemingly paradoxical explanation of how to benefit from our lives—to hold on by letting go, rather amassing things? And what does it mean for something to be fully ours, to have it, to hold onto it?*
- » *Holding onto the West Bank has become an increasingly challenging policy, as failing to establish a Palestinian State leaves two primary options: absorbing the West Bank Palestinians as full citizens of the State of Israel, a possibility likely to lead to greater conflict; or maintaining the status quo of two sets of laws for Israelis and Palestinians living in the West Bank. How might the *Kli Yakar's* conceptions of release and holding on respond to this situation?*

Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim ben Aaron Luntschitz (Prague, 1550-1619), often referred to by the title of his most famous work, the *Kli Yakar*, served as Chief Rabbi of Prague. The *Kli Yakar* is a homiletical commentary on the Torah.

V. Cosmic Yovel

Medieval mystics imagined the universe punctuated by cycles of 50,000 years. These sources invite us to use the yovel to connect to a time period much longer than our lifespans.

Mystical literature offers two competing visions for the nature of yovel—one proposes that this year represents a fundamental destruction, from which the world must begin again; the other sees the year as a renewal. The two texts that follow hold different perspectives on the question.

B1. Rabbi Avraham bar Hiyya HaNasi, *Megilat HaMegaleh*

ימות העולם הם תשעה וארבעים
אלף שנה וכל אחד משבעה שמשי
הרקיע מושל בעולם שבעת אלפי שנה
וכשמלימים ממשלתם בסוף מ"ט אלף
שנה הקב"ה מחריב את עולמו ומעמיד
תוהו אלף שנה ובסוף חמשים אלף שנה
הוא מחדשהו כבראשונה

The days of the world are 49,000 years long, and each of the seven suns of the heavens [the seven known planets] rules over the world for 7,000 years, and when they complete their rule, at the end of 49,000 years, the Holy Blessed One destroys the world and brings back *tohu*, nothingness, for 1,000 years, and at the end of 50,000 years renews everything as it was at the beginning.

- » *How does this much longer cycle of “cosmic days” sit with you? How does it feel to imagine God regularly “rebooting” the universe? How might this affect or change the way you think about fifty years in a human life span?*
- » *How might we reboot the possibilities for a new reality in Israel during this fiftieth year?*

Rabbi Avraham bar Hiyya HaNasi (Spain, 1070-c.1140), was an astronomer, mathematician, and philosopher. His book *Megilat HaMegaleh* was an attempt to predict the end of time and the coming of the messianic era.

B2. Rabbi Menahem ben Benjamin Recanati on Leviticus 25:8

שבע שבתות שנים הם שבע שמיטות,
רמז כי יחדש הקב"ה עולמו שבעה
פעמים בכל שמיטה פעם אחת, ובכל
אחת מהן תהיה תוספת טובה והשפעת
ברכה משלפניה.

[...]

ולשון יובל מלשון [ירמיה יז, ח] ועל
יובל ישלח שרשיו, וכן אמרו בספר
הזוהר [ח"ג רצ ע"ב] מאי יובל, כמה
דאת אמר ועל יובל ישלח שרשיו, משום
ההוא נהר דאתי נגיד ונפיק ולא פסיק.
והרמז בו לתשובה כי שם ישוב הכל
ותפסק ההשפעה ויחזור הכל כתחלתו,
ויהי זה בשנת חמשים אלף, זהו
שנאמר [שם כז, כד] בשנת היובל ישוב
השדה וגו'.

Seven weeks of years—these are seven *sh'mitah* years, hinting at the Holy Blessed One renewing the world seven times, once with each *sh'mitah*. And after each one, there will be additional good and outpouring blessing.

[...]

The language of yovel comes from [Jeremiah 17:8] *sending forth its roots by a stream (yuval)*. As it says in the Zohar [Part 3 290b]: "What is *yovel*? As it says, *sending forth its roots by a stream*, because it is a river that stretches and flows forth and doesn't stop." This hints at *teshuvva*, returning—to it [*yovel*] all returns and the flow stops and everything goes back to its beginning—and this is in the fifty-thousandth year, as it says [Leviticus 27:24] *In the year of yovel the field returns*.

- » *In the previous text, Rabbi Avraham bar Hiyya described the "nothingness" existing before creation. In this text, Rabbi Menachem Recanati uses the image of a flowing stream. Which of these speaks more to you? How could focusing on a fiftieth year become a source of renewal and of the flow of blessing? How might it be destructive? Could it have elements of both?*
- » *What renewal and flow of blessing would you wish for this fiftieth year?*

Rabbi Menahem ben Benjamin Recanati (Italy, 1250-1310) wrote a mystical commentary on the Torah.

C. *Yovel's purpose is to keep this in our consciousness: Rabbi Isaac ben Judah Abravanel on Leviticus 25*

ואמרו במשנה גלות בא לעולם על ענוי
הדין ועל עוות הדין ועל שמיטת הארץ
כי היובל בכלל השמיטות הוא וכל זה
לפי שהכופר בהפסד העולם אינו מודה
במעשה בראשית ובעולם הבא כמו שזכר
הרמב"ן. הנה התבאר הדרך הג' הזה
בטעם מצוות השמיטה והיובל.

They say in the Mishnah that exile comes into the world by impoverishing justice, by corrupting justice, and by failing to observe the *sh'mitah* of the land—*yovel* is in the category of *sh'mitah*—all of this is because a person who denies that the world will be lost [in the cosmic *yovel*] does not recognize the act of creation at the beginning, or the world that is coming. This is one of the reasons for observing *sh'mitah* and *yovel*.

- » *Rabbi Isaac Abravanel challenges us: as we live our lives, day by day, year by year, what changes if we keep the origins of the universe—or its future—in our consciousness?*
- » *How might being aware of cycles much longer than what we can grasp change the way we think about our present moment? What practices would help you achieve this awareness? What do you think might help our larger community achieve this awareness, especially as it relates to the future of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories?*

Final Questions

- » *What tools do you find in these sources for relating to the past fifty years? For imagining the next fifty?*
- » *How do you see yourself in relation to this particular yovel?*
- » *We are used to commemorating events like anniversaries, *yahrzeits*, and national holidays (and noting the passage of time through census-taking and election and other cyclical occurrences). How do these commemorations help us relate to the event? What changes when we commemorate a milestone number of years—a 50th anniversary, or a national bicentennial?*
- » *In June of 2017, Jewish communities will commemorate the Six Day War and its aftermath in a variety of ways. Some will focus on the reunification of Jerusalem. Others will mourn the fifty years of military occupation that have followed. Some may combine these elements. What types of planned commemorations are you aware of or anticipating? If you were organizing an event, what would you hope to plan, and why?*