



new london
synagogue



Who Knows Eight?

We read, this Shabbat, Parashat Shmini – taking its name from a recounting of what happened on the ‘eighth day’ after the week-long celebration of the dedication of the Mishkan – the day after everything was completed.

Of course, we still remember Eight – Yamei Milah – the days before the Covenant of Circumcision. Eight is ... and I know this is overwhelmingly obvious ... the day beyond Seven. It’s the action we are called to after the cycle of Seven. There is a cycle and, as we emerge from the cycle, there is the next step. It’s actually the next step which is the important moment.

Two weeks ago, we celebrated Teen Shabbat – we had teens who, coming back after their Bar and Bat Mitzvah celebrations were taking their next step. It was very moving. In some ways more moving than the BM celebrations – more real, more worth celebrating, more capable of affecting change in our youth and, frankly, the future of our community and Am Yisrael.

There is an interesting tweak in the rules of basketball. If, while attempting to score in basketball, a player is fouled and fights through the foul to score despite being fouled, they are brought to the free-throw line with the opportunity to add to their already-scored basket. It’s known as the ‘plus-one.’ It’s a mark of a particularly valuable basketball player that they will fight for the ‘plus-one.’

It’s comparatively easy to be set a task, to complete the task and then turn away.

‘Eight’ – the plus one – is the commitment to emerge on the other side of a task ready to take a next step.

I’m tired from Pesach. Pesach was magical at New London – thank you everyone who came and supported – and it’s Shabbat already. And next week is Yom HaShoah and then comes Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzamat and we are already on our way to Shavuot. It’s the Eighth day that really defines us.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Jeremy