

## Builder of Her Home: The Value of Faithfulness #4 Part I

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

In Malachi, the navi says, "*Vehi chavertecha v'eishet britecha*. She is your friend and the wife of your covenant." Rav Moshe Cordovero explains that the *Shechina's* main presence comes to a person through his wife. Therefore, an unmarried man cannot experience the *Shechina* fully. A man has two women in his life. The first is his actual wife. His role is to provide for her and to see that she has food, clothing, and shelter. Then there is the *Shechina*, which is referred to as a woman. The *Shechina* won't give man the ability to provide if he has no one to provide for. A person's life isn't just a personal drama that involves him, his wife and kids. It is rather a higher expression of Hashem's desire to give.

Marriage is different than any other relationship in that there is commitment and continuance. The husband signs the *ketubah* document, pledging to be there for his wife. She accepts the *kiddushin*, committing herself to be his wife. In other relationships, there are changes, stops, and many times separation. Marriage is a covenant which runs much deeper. It's a pledge to provide, receive, and

build. All of this is a reflection of Hashem's relationship with us. He desires to give and we must receive and create with the things he gives us. Similarly, the wife must desire to receive from her husband and the husband must want to give. Then the *Shechina* will bless him with the ability to do so. Secular society touts that both the wife and husband are expected to give and receive equally. She must move away from that misguided notion. She must let herself feel dependent on her husband.

When we say someone is alive we mean that his soul and body are joined together. This is compared to the life force of a *ma'ayan* (spring), which is called *mayim chayim*, living waters. It flows continually. Similarly the soul brings life to the body from Hashem. There's nothing static about a human. We have enormous potential because we are alive and continuously receiving and changing and giving. The primary place where this takes place is in marriage. Someone who receives from Hashem but doesn't have a continual place to give isn't called alive. When a man has no wife he has no life because he isn't moving. There is no one receiving from him.

This limits his ability to receive from above. Rashi says a man signifies the letter *yud*. This symbolizes the spark of divine creativity and wisdom with which everything begins. A woman represents the letter *hey*, bringing it all down to earth, concretizing it, and giving it an address. Together, his *yud* and her *hey* spell the divine name of the *Shechina* that rests between them.

Since he is meant to give, she should not conceal her needs from him. This will draw down his possibility of providing her with it. The fear of vulnerability and neediness that so many women feel is a tragedy. Being a faithful wife means being vulnerable enough to say, "I need," but at the same time being honest enough to say, "I need from you what a husband is meant to give. I still have friends, I'll ask a Rabbi when I have to, but I want you to give me what I need materially, emotionally, and physically." You have to be vulnerable for that but at the same time real. It's a tightrope. People tend to go to extremes. It doesn't mean you can't have a career or outside interests, it means your deepest needs are meant to be filled by your husband.

## The Mitzvah of Sefirat Haomer

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Ari Jacobson

The Gemara in Masechet Menachot discusses the *mitzvah of sefirat haomer*. The Gemara tells us that Amemer, one of the great *amoraim*, would only count days and not weeks. His rationale was that since *sefirah* is only a remembrance of the offerings, counting days is sufficient. In practice we count both days and weeks following the opinion of the students of Rav Ashi. Nonetheless, most of the Rishonim explain that Amemer's point is well taken. Although we count both days and weeks, the *mitzvah* is only a remembrance and not a Torah mandate.

The Rambam disagrees and writes explicitly that *sefirat haomer* is Torah mandated. He explains that the counting is not about remembering the omer or the *shnei halechem*. *Sefira* is a count towards receiving the Torah. Why then does the Torah express the counting in terms of the barley offering and the bread offering? Barley is considered animal fodder while wheat is human food. In Egypt we descended to the forty ninth level of impurity. When Hashem took us out he gave

us seven weeks to remove all the impurity and replace it with *tahara* (purity) and *kedusha* (holiness) until we were ready to receive the Torah. We go from the omer, which consisted of barley, and refine ourselves to the point that we're ready to offer the *shnei halechem*, baked with wheat, and to receive the Torah.

We do not make a *Shehecheyanu* on the *mitzvah of sefirat haomer*. The Ba'al Hameor explains that since the whole purpose of the *mitzvah* is to remember what was lost we cannot make a *Shechianu* on what we are lacking. How can we understand this in light of the Rambam's reason, which says we are counting towards receiving the Torah. We don't say *Shehecheyanu* because we are pained that we have to wait so many weeks to receive the Torah. Chassidut teaches something similar. We sank so low that we had to wait seven weeks to receive the Torah. That's not something to say *Shehecheyanu* about.

This is not the majority view. Tosfot cites the opinion of the Bahag that if a person forgets to

count one day he can no longer fulfill the *mitzvah*. Tosfot, and most of the Rishonim, disagree. They say each day is a separate *mitzvah*. Therefore, according to Tosfot if a person misses a few days he can still count the next day with a blessing because each day is a separate *mitzvah*. In practice, the Shulchan Aruch rules that if a person misses a day entirely he can still continue counting because maybe Tosfot is correct that each day is a separate *mitzvah*. However, the law is *safek bracha l'hakel* (when in doubt about reciting a *bracha*, you do not recite it). Since the Bahag holds that there is no *mitzvah* if you missed a day, you do not make a *bracha*.

There are many authorities who say that you can count during the day. Therefore, if you didn't count at night you must count during the following day. However, since there are significant opinions that maintain that day counting doesn't count, you should only count without a *bracha*. During the rest of *sefirah* one is allowed to continue counting with a *bracha*.

## Shavuot-Accepting The Torah: Day of Rest

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

What makes Shabbat unique among *mitzvot*?

We are supposed to engage the physical world. From time to time, however, we need to step out of it in order to see what is going on. Unfortunately, we are so absorbed with the give and take of every day life that we fail to notice the Giver. Shabbat is about rising above our confined picture in order to see the larger picture.

What is the difference between spontaneity and lack of preparation? Spontaneity is walking alone in the forest and giving yourself permission to sing out loud. Lack of preparation is wishing you could have that moment without troubling yourself to get there. You have to make things happen. How do you make Shabbat happen?

The first step is involving yourself in the preparations for Shabbat. The Arizal notes that the first three days of the week are when the impressions of the last Shabbat still linger. The last three days propel you towards the coming Shabbat. This is why Shabbat is called *kallah* and *malkah*. *Malkah* is the completed image, the queen. *Kallah* is the bride. From the beginning of the week towards the end, we move from *malkah* towards *kallah* to the next cycle of Shabbat.

The soul is clothed with thought, speech, and action. The special garments of Shabbat are an essential way of honoring the day. The Arizal explained the importance of Shabbat clothes as being a reflection of desiring Hashem's imprint on your thought, speech, and action.

There's a *mitzvah* to prepare tasty food for Shabbat. Even if you're being invited out, buy something special in honor of the day. This gives you an opportunity to celebrate the goodness Hashem created. The *oneg* and *kavod Shabbat* are our ways of celebrating

what Hashem created.

There are thirty nine *melachot*, forbidden types of work. The Mishna refers to them as forty minus one. Forty signifies redefinition and rebirth. Hashem designed the world in a way that the ten *sefirot*, the channels through which Hashem's light filters through to us, find their match in the four elements of physicality. Forty is when the soul meets the body. This was the idea behind the mishkan. Hashem said, "Build me a sanctuary and I'll live in you." When we direct our creativity towards Hashem, He dwells within our hearts. Every single aspect of the *mishkan* was important in terms of how it embodied our relationship with Hashem. The Mishna makes us notice that there are 'forty *melachot* minus one' to teach us that human creativity only goes so far. The fortieth gate, the gate of completion, belongs only to Hashem.

Thirty nine (*lamed tet*) spells the word *tal*, meaning dew or moisture. Moisture sustains life. Shabbat gives us life. Each of the thirty nine *melachot* is a way of expressing creativity. A *melacha* takes abstract, unformed material and turns it into something concrete. The way we create Shabbat is by negating our own mastery and control and avoiding any creative act.

So there are two ways in which Shabbat comes into our life: one is through celebrating creation and the other is by refraining from superimposing our own creativity on Hashem's. *Shamor*, guarding Shabbat, is taking your ego out of the picture. *Zachor* is remembering what Shabbat is and celebrating it.

The surface of every physical object has six sides. The seventh side is its inner part. Shabbat, the seventh day signifies inner life and meaning. Hashem gave the day inherent power. In the creation narrative the Torah says, *vayivarech* and, *vayikadesh*. Hashem blessed

the seventh day and sanctified it. We can experience Him with a much greater depth than we possibly can at any other time.

The highest moment on Shabbat is during *kedusha* when we echo the praise of the angels, "Ayeh mekom kevodo?" Where is the place of Hashem's glory? Searching for Him on Shabbat, a day when he can easily be found, can take us to very high places.

The Shabbat meals are a focal point of the day. When you eat you are take in what Hashem created and make it part of you. When you enjoy the good food in honor of Shabbat you elevate yourself and take the world with you. The *seudot* should be accompanied with divrei Torah, song, joy, and realization. Make a point to include the children. Prepare their favorite foods. Let them join in the singing. Children think concretely. They get bored if you don't make a conscientious effort to interest them. Tell stories, pose some challenging questions, talk about the parsha and make it a joyful experience.

Beyond the atmosphere you create during the meal, do things to draw yourself closer to Hashem. For some people it is learning, for others it is singing *zemirot*, or visiting the sick or lonely and for others it may be taking a long walk and admiring the beauty of nature.

The way to ruin Shabbat while not breaking it is through anger and pettiness. Shabbat is a day of peace. Although our reality is fragmented, we must focus on the *sheleimut* (perfection) of the day. Focus on the life force and vitality amid the brokenness of this world. Let Hashem be king over you. Look at his wisdom in designing your unique situation. Ask yourself, "How can I best serve him?"

The world was created for Shabbat. May we merit to tap into its inherent holiness.

