



Dedicated in memory of Rachel Leah bat R' Chaim Tzvi

אִמְרַת תּוֹרָה WOMEN'S TORAH WEEKLY

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Parshat Behar

Personal and Communal Commitment to Torah

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur on Chassidut by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

Parshat Behar discusses the mitzvot of shmittah and yovel. Shmittah is the seventh year, when the land lies fallow and rests. Yovel occurs every 50th year. In this year, slaves go free and all land is returned to its original ancestral owner. The Zohar explains that shmittah is connected to the lowest of the seven sefirot and corresponds to Knesset Israel, the Jewish nation. Yovel relates to binah which is in the upper three sefirot, above the basic seven, and corresponds to the individual Jew.

The Shem MiShmuel explains that the Jewish nation has a dual role. We are charged to fulfill both an individual purpose and a collective purpose. Our aim is spiritual perfection. How can we attain this challenging goal? The key is ahavat yisrael, loving every Jew. When a Jew works to bring ahavat yisrael into his heart, he becomes part of one great collective, Knesset Yisrael. One Jew's good deed has the power to spiritually affect every Jew connected to Am Yisrael. This in turn brings us all to spiritual perfection.

What does it mean to be truly one? If someone suffers from a diseased hand, he will go from doctor to doctor until he finds a cure. He will not decide to just cut the hand off. Similarly, if there is spiritual malaise in one of the limbs of Klal Yisrael, we will not seek to cut it off. Rather, we will try to save it and achieve true achdut yisrael. When we as a collective people achieve this elevated state of unity, we will merit the blessings of Eretz Yisrael, Mashiach, and Olam Habah.

Shmittah represents the collective entity of Knesset Yisrael. Every Jew can claim four cubits of the land of Israel. However, at the end of seven years, he must give it up to Am Yisrael. This is an expression of unity. The Jew is saying, "I have no individual self. We are all one, and whatever belongs to me now belongs to the entire entity of Klal Yisrael."

Yovel focuses on each Jew as an individual. Every Jew's own private personal mission is to

return to the root of his soul. The Zohar says that Yovel is called shnat geulah, the year of redemption. During this year there is redemption for the land of Israel and for every Jew individually. It is a chance to free oneself of the burdens of the last 49 years and begin again. All monetary debts are cancelled, all slaves are freed, and one's inherited land is returned with a fresh opportunity to start anew.

Pesach represents the redemption of our people as a nation. Sefirat Haomer focuses on improving ourselves as individuals so we will be ready to accept the Torah. Shavuot symbolizes the redemption of self. It is the 50th day after Pesach and corresponds to the Yovel, the 50th year. Shavuot is the holiday of personal commitment. On this day Hashem said, "Anochi Hashem Elokecha, I am Hashem, your G-d." It is the day when Hashem speaks to each Jew individually on their level. It is also the day when we accept upon ourselves the gift of Torah and mitzvot with renewed enthusiasm, vigor, and dedication.

Sefirat Haomer Part I

The Special Event of Kabbalat Hatorah

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Eliezer Miller

The days of sefirat haomer are days of spiritual preparation for the holiday of Shavuot.

The Netivot Shalom notes that the order of the moadim, Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot, is a way for a person to come closer to Hashem. It starts with Pesach and peaks at Shemini Atzeret. Pesach and the period of sefirah represent the engagement of a couple. In Mitzrayim, Hashem chose Klal Yisrael as a nation. Shavuot corresponds to the wedding. The Torah represents the ring, and through that gift we became mekudeshet, sanctified, to Hashem.

Shir Hashirim says, "Heviani hamelech chadarav," the king has brought me to his chamber. On Sukkot, Hashem brings us into His home, the sukkah. Sukkah has the numerical value of ninety-one, which equals

the two names of Hashem, yud keh and adnut. On Shemini Atzeret there is a yichud ila'a, a higher union between Hashem and Klal Yisrael.

The Rashash writes, "The days of sefirat haomer are the root of the whole year." The way a person prepares himself for the spiritual marriage with Hashem is the way his connection with Hashem will be during the year. This is why it is so important to prepare properly. Depending on how much a person strengthens his connection with Hashem and desires closeness, that is how much light he will receive on Shavuot.

Although the holidays repeat, a new aspect of Hashem is revealed every year. There is something unique in each yom tov that will never be again. This should give us strength to start anew.

When dough starts rising and one is not ready to bake it, one knocks it down. Every year the yetzer hara rises higher, and when Pesach comes Hashem knocks it down and gives us protection. On Pesach we turn away from the domination of the yetzer hara and begin focusing on Hashem. The work of sefirat haomer is to connect to Hashem, sanctify ourselves, correct our souls, and refine our spiritual nature.

The Chiddushe Harim notes that the days of sefirah are an auspicious time for spiritual growth because during this period our ancestors were redeemed and elevated from lowly slaves to the level of receiving the Torah.

The Sefer Torat Chaim comments on the verse "Usefartem lachem." Lachem is an acronym for "kdai l'tahreinu miklipasenu," the essence of sefirah is to purify ourselves. The Ohr

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Hachaim says that Usefartem comes from the same root as sapir v'yahalom, a sapphire stone. Through counting, one polishes oneself like a sapphire. Each year Klal Yisrael go through the forty-nine days as Hashem weakens the power of the evil inclination so we can become worthy to receive the Torah.

The Shem Mishmuel says that even if a person does not feel a purpose in counting, he must believe that his soul is being purified.

This gives strength to start anew.

Sefirah is a time to work on kedusha, sanctity, and tahara, purity. Every person has their portion in Torah, and if one does not purify himself, he cannot receive it.

Rav Pinchos Koritzer notes that the or haganuz, the hidden light created at the beginning of time, is hidden in the thirty-six tractates of Shas. Baal Haturim says et ha'or

has the numerical value of 613. Every mitzvah reveals another aspect of this hidden divine light.

May the Torah and mitzvot engendered through our inner work during sefirah bring us to new levels of sanctity in serving Hashem. May we merit to receive our full portion in Torah.

The Seven Middot of the Seven Weeks of Sefira Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller-Gottlieb

Summary by Devora Kaye

Tiferet sheb'tiferet means that one's honesty and love of truth should be beautiful. When studying Torah, you do not just turn the page, you try to delve deeper to reach the truth. If you do not understand something, you push past embarrassment and ask. True beauty is found in what is eternal, and the most beautiful thing is a person of truth.

Gratitude can be expressed beautifully, loyalty can be beautiful, and allowing Hashem to rule can be beautiful.

Chesed, gevurah, and tiferet are the main middot, like parents of the other four: netzach, hod, yesod, and malchut. Chesed is the desire to have a positive impact on the world, yourself, and others. Gevurah is the willingness to fight for what matters. Do battle with

yourself. Struggle is part of life. Do not waste energy on trivial things. Hashem rewards the struggle, not just the achievement. The Talmud teaches that one who resists temptation is rewarded as if he accomplished something great. The struggle itself has value. Live with beauty. Beauty is truth. Even when life is harsh, respond with beauty.

Netzach is focusing on eternity and what truly lasts. This includes studying and supporting Torah. Hod is expressing gratitude and recognizing beauty in life and others. Yesod is creating a strong foundation in relationships based on Hashem's will, as in "Tzadik yesod olam," a tzadik is the foundation of the world. The opposite is disloyalty and not valuing relationships. Malchut is allowing Hashem to rule. It requires not seeking control for oneself,

but instead saying, "Where You want me to go, I will go; who You want me to be, I will be."

To prepare for Shavuot, one must appreciate Torah. Pirkei Avot lists 48 ways to acquire Torah. Studying one each day leading up to the 49th day aligns with sefirah. These days are precious and do not return. Even if you have not started, begin now. The goal is not just to focus on each day's middah, but to recognize that you may be tested in it and must make choices. Feel good about the struggle. Even if you fall, get up again with courage. This process leads to the point where one can say, "I am ready to stand at Har Sinai and accept the Torah as my eternal possession."