

Shabbos: Ta'am HaChaim Tazria-Metzora 5773

(From the archives)

Shabbos in the Parasha

Counting our way out of impurity towards purity and holiness

Introduction

We have just completed the celebration of the Pesach festival, and we are now in the midst of counting the Omer. In this week's parshiyos we also encounter other forms of counting. One counting is when a woman after childbirth counts the days of her impurity. A second counting is when a metzora, one who contracts the spiritual disease of tzaraas, counts seven days from when he is cleansed before he is permitted to enter into the Israelite Camp. A third counting is when a woman has a flow and she then counts seven days and she is then purified. The Zohar states that the forty-nine days that we count from the bringing of the Omer are akin to a woman counting her days of impurity. The counting from the Omer then culminates in the festival of Shavuos.

Understanding the counting of the Omer and the mourning period for the students of Rabbi Akiva

One must wonder why it is so important to count the days of the Omer. When one wishes to know when an upcoming festival will occur, he merely has to look at the calendar and determine the correct

Keep on praying for the Redemption

date of the festival. We do not count the days until Rosh Hashanah and other festivals that we celebrate throughout the year. Why, then, must we count from Pesach until Shavuos? Another perplexing idea that requires explanation is why immediately after the joy of the Pesach festival we enter into a mourning period over the twenty-four thousand students of Rabbi Akiva who passed away between Pesach and Shavuos. How are we to comprehend the juxtaposition of this period of joy with this period of mourning?

One must search out the impurities within himself

In order to glean a better understanding of the purpose in our counting, it is worth mentioning a fascinating idea presented by the Gerrer Rebbe, the Lev Simcha. It is said (Mishlei 2:3-4) *im tivaksehna chakasef vichamatmonim tachpisena az tavin yiras HaShem vidaas Elokim timtza*, if you seek it as [it were] silver, if you search for it as [if it were] hidden treasures – then you will understand the fear of HaShem, and discover the knowledge of G-d. The Lev Simcha (Emor) writes that these verses can be interpreted to be alluding to the festivals of the year. Seeking like silver alludes to Pesach, as the word *kasef*, silver, also connotes desire, and Pesach

is a time when HaShem showed His love for the Jewish People. Hidden treasures allude to the days of counting from the Omer, as the word *vichamatmonim*, can be read *mem tes monim*, counting forty-nine. The word *tachpisenah*, if you search for it, alludes to Shavuot, as the days of counting the Omer are a preparation for Shavuot. The Lev Simcha goes on to find allusions to Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkos. It is fascinating that the word *vichamatmonim* alludes to the forty-nine days of counting from the Omer. The first letters of the word are *mem* and *tes*, which also form most of the word *tamei*, translated as impure. Perhaps the lesson contained in this hint is that one should always view himself as being in a state of impurity and that he must strive for purity and holiness. Hashem, in His infinite compassion, redeemed us from the impurities of Egypt, but we still have a long way to go until we are worthy of receiving the Torah. How, then, do we remove these impurities from our midst?

We are required to remove tainted character traits

The Gemara (Yevamos 62b) states that the students of Rabbi Akiva died because they did not treat each other with respect. It would seem from this Gemara that if the students of the great Rabbi Akiva were lacking in this area, then certainly we could use improvement on how we act towards each other. A person who does not respect his fellow man demonstrates an impurity of the soul. Shavuot is

reflective of our gathering at Sinai *kiish echod bileiv echod*, as one man with one heart. It is not enough to merely study Torah. One must internalize the lessons in Torah, and Rabbi Akiva was the one who said *viahavta lireiacha kamoche zeh klal gadol baTorah*, you shall love your fellow as yourself, this is a great rule in Torah. The word *gadol* is associated with the tribute of *chesed*, kindness. It is no wonder that the first attribute that we refer to when counting from the Omer is *chesed*, and the last attribute is *malchus*, kingship. The Gemara (Gittin 62a) states that the true kings are the Torah scholars. For one to achieve a level of kingship he must be exemplary in the attribute of *chesed*. Thus, one must “search” himself during these days to filter out all the impurities within him.

Sefiras HaOmer is when we count towards Shavuot and when we count away from our impurities

We can now understand why we count the days from the Omer, and why we count specifically during the mourning period over the passing of Rabbi Akiva’s students. We are counting towards Shavuot, but even more significantly, we are counting the days until we can finally rid ourselves of the impurities that exist within our character. Thus, we can interpret the word *matmonim* to mean counting away from the *mem* and the *tes*, which spell out the two essential letters of the word *tamei*, impurity.

The Shabbos connection

Every week we have the ability to count the days of the week until we arrive at Shabbos. The weekday certainly has its share of impurities, both from the outside world and within us. Nonetheless, by preparing properly for the Holy Shabbos, we can always anticipate that we will arrive at Shabbos in a state of purity, when all harsh judgments depart and we can bask in the Kingship of HaShem. Hashem should allow us to count these days and they should culminate in joy, brotherhood, and a true purification of our hearts.

Shabbos in the Zemiros

Eishes Chayil

Composed by Shlomo HaMelech in Mishlei

עוז-והדר לבושה ותשחק ליום אחרון, strength and majesty are her raiment, and she joyfully awaits the last day. Continuing the theme of these verses alluding to Shabbos, we can suggest that here Shlomo HaMelech refers to strength and majesty as the clothing which a Jew dons prior to Shabbos. *Oz*, strength, refers to Torah, and a Jew is supposed to increase his Torah study on Shabbos, and *hadar*, majesty, refers to the nicer clothing one wears on Shabbos. One who is always anticipating the Shabbos during the week will certainly have fulfilled the latter part of the verse, and she joyfully awaits the last day, as Shabbos is the last day of the week. It is noteworthy that the words *oz vehadar*

levushah in at bash equal the words *Shabbos hidurah*, Shabbos in its majesty.

Shabbos in Tefillah

Unity in praising HaShem

Vihaofanim vichayos hakodesh biraash gadol misnasim liumas seraphim liumasam mishabichim viomrim, then the Ofanim and the holy Chayos, with great noise raise themselves towards the Seraphim. Facing them they give praise saying. Here we see how the various angels raise themselves up towards each other and unify in their praise of HaShem. We should also realize that no matter what our background is, all Jews are unified in their praise of HaShem.

Shabbos Stories

Parshas Vayechi: Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin Curses The Hospital

The famous Maggid of Yerushalayim Rav Bentzion Yadler retold the story of a group of Askanim who came to Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin to tell him that they purchased a plot of land to build a hospital outside of the old city of Yerushalayim near Shaar Shechem. Rav Yehoshua Leib said to them, “Yehi Ratzon Shelo Tishreh Shechinah Aleha,” it should be HaShem’s will that the Shechinah will not reside there. The group was baffled. Why would Rav Yehoshua Leib curse their holy venture?

Then they realized the slyly disguised bracha in Rav Yehoshua Leib's words. The passuk says (Vayechi 47:31) that after Yosef swore to bury Yaakov in Eretz Yisroel, Yaakov turned to the head of the bed and bowed. Rashi explains that from here the Gemara (Shabbos 12b) learns that the Shechinah rests above the head of a sick person's bed. Rav Yehoshua Leib gave them a bracha that their hospital should not have many sick people in it and all of Am Yisroel should be blessed with good health! (Gilyon Pninin Al HaParsha)

Rav Zemele Volozhin Follows The Doctors Orders

Rav Zemele Volozhin the beloved talmid of the Vilna Gaon and the brother of Rav Chaim Volozhin once went with another Rov to the house of a very poor person. The host was in middle of eating and begged them to sit down and join him. Rav Zemele knew that the host did not have enough food for them so he refused, claiming the doctor told him he cannot eat.

When they left, the Rov that accompanied him asked him if it is true that he is sick. He said no he is not. "Then how could you lie? What happened to Midvar Sheker Tirchok?"

He answered that the great doctor, the Rambam, wrote that it is assur to eat from a meal where there is not enough food for the host. He indeed was just following the doctor's orders. (www.revach.net)

Shabbos in Navi

Shmuel II Chapter 3

HaShem give us Shabbos to overcome the Evil Inclination

In this chapter we learn how Ish Boshes accused Avner ben Ner of sinning with the concubine of Shaul, so Avner defected to the camp of Dovid. Avner made a treaty with Dovid, pledging allegiance to Dovid. When Avner left Dovid, Yoav came to Dovid and informed Dovid that Avner was merely seeking to entice Dovid and to learn about his comings and goings. Yoav then tricked Avner and killed him as revenge for Avner having killed Asahel, the brother of Yoav. Dovid heard about this murder and cursed Yoav, and Dovid then eulogized Avner. Dovid did not wish to punish Yoav at that point, because he claimed that the sons of Tzeruyah were more powerful than him. We mentioned above that the Gemara (Kiddushin 30a) states that the Evil Inclination is very powerful, and without HaShem's help, one would not be able to overcome the blandishments of the Evil Inclination. The incident where Yoav killed Avner and Dovid did not retaliate reflects this idea. Although Yoav was certainly a great man, Dovid had the right to kill him because he was the king. Nonetheless, Dovid felt powerless at that time to punish Yoav with death. Similarly, throughout the week we may feel an urge to subdue once and for all the forces of evil, but it can prove difficult, if not impossible. Thus, we

wait for the arrival of the Holy Shabbos, when all harsh judgments depart, and HaShem and His Heavenly entourage, so to speak, subdue all the forces of evil.

Shabbos in Agadah

Hashem gives the Jewish People the souls of the righteous for Shabbos

It is said (Shemos 16:29) *riu ki HaShem nasan lachem haShabbos al kein hu nosein lachem bayom hashishi lechem yomayim*, see that HaShem has given you the Shabbos; that is why He gives you on the sixth day a two-day portion of bread. The Tiferes Shlomo (Ibid) interprets this verse homiletically to mean that Shabbos alludes to the soul of the Tzaddik, and the Gemara (Shabbos 10a) states that HaShem declares, “I have a precious gift in My treasure house and it is called Shabbos.” Yosef symbolizes *Tosefes Shabbos* and Moshe symbols the Shabbos. Thus, Moshe was telling the Jewish People that HaShem has given you a precious gift, which is the soul of the tzaddik, and this is referred to as Shabbos. Therefore HaShem is giving you on the sixth day a two-day portion of bread, which is reflected in Yosef, as the word *lechem*, bread, when multiplied by two, equals in gematria the name Yosef. It is the idea of Yosef that HaShem is giving you as preparation for Shabbos.

Shabbos in Halacha

Insulating an Urn

When one wishes to insulate a hot water urn with normal wrapping, it is deemed to be an ‘intensifying insulation’ as the wrapping aids the rise of temperature in the water. For this reason one cannot wrap an urn completely in any sort of wrapping, even if he wraps the urn prior to Shabbos.

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Is sponsored in honor of the birth of our son. HaShem should allow us to be *machnis him libriso shel Avraham Avinu biito uvizmano* and we should be *zoche to megadeal him along with all of our children liTorah lichuppah ulimaasim tovim.* of:

Have a wonderful Shabbos

Prepared by Rabbi Binyomin Adler.

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