



The Accuracy Of Mitzvos

By Gabriel Dershowitz, Editor, 12th Grade

The Mitzvah of Sefirat Ha'Omer is a mitzvah that seems simple on the surface, yet actually requires immense continuity and accuracy. As the Torah says, "these must be seven whole and complete weeks. (Vayikra 23:15)" "Whole" and "complete" are indicators of the fragile performance of this mitzvah.

Why do we count the Omer? In anticipation of the anniversary of the holiest day in history, the day when the Jewish people received the Torah on Har Sinai. In anticipation of receiving the Torah again, freshly. And to prepare for this, we are supposed to reflect on the importance of Torah in our lives and how much we value it.

As Shlomo says in Mishlei, "Search for the Torah like one who searches for hidden treasure." Matmonim is the word for treasure, and according to Chazal this word can be split into two components: Mem-tet and monim - count 49. This indicates to us the necessity for a continuous counting - missing even one day nullifies the entire mitzvah. Additionally, the way you count must be accurate. The days and weeks mentioned must be exactly right or, once again, the mitzvah is nullified.

(Continued on page 4)

Not Just A Day Of Rest

By Moshe Acobas, 11th Grade

One of the topics discussed in this week's parsha is Shabbos. As the Pasuk Says, "Six days work should be done, and on the seventh day it is a Sabbath of Sabbaths. It is a special holiday to G-d, and you should not do any work. Wherever you live it is a Sabbath to G-d." When the Torah says not to do work (melacha), it is talking about the thirty nine melachot that were performed in the mishkan that are forbidden on Shabbos. There are certain "jobs" that are permitted on shabbos, for example, the gemara mentioned that one who guards orchards is permitted to work on shabbos. The topic of Shabbos is explained by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch: "Behold! G-d crowned his work with the seventh day of creation...and bestowed on it a constantly recurring sanctity and a blessing. A sanctity, that through it man should be continually reminded of his appointment by G-d in G-d's world to be G-d's servant. A blessing, that on the seventh day spirit and mind should always gain renewed strength for the worthy fulfilment of his duty...But how can the Sabbath become such a symbol, education, and sanctification for this task?...How

(Continued on page 5)

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Torah Teasers

By Rabbi Moshe Erlbaum, 9th Grade Rebbe

**Parshas Emor
Questions**

1. In this parsha, which law involves the sun?
2. In what two contexts is the "eighth day" mentioned in this parsha?
3. Which offering contains leavened bread (*chametz*)? Where else in the Torah does an offering contain leavened bread?
4. Which two of the seven species of the land of Israel, explicitly appear in this parsha?
5. In this parsha, which two laws involve the number seven - but the number seven is not mentioned in the description?
6. In this parsha, which item is described as "braided"? What other item in the Torah is braided?
7. In this parsha, which law refers to the numbers twelve, six, two, and one?
8. In this parsha, who is given the punishment of stoning? Who else in the Torah is given the punishment of stoning?

Answers

1. A ritually impure person who purifies himself in a mikveh must wait for sunset to be considered completely pure (Leviticus 22:7).
2. An animal is only fit as an offering starting from the eighth day after its birth (Leviticus 22:27). The festival of Shmini Atzeret is on the eighth day of Sukkot (Leviticus 23:36).
3. The sacrifice of the "Two Loaves" (*shtei halechem*) brought on Shavuos are leavened bread (Leviticus 23:17). In parshas Tzav, the loaves accompanying the Thanksgiving offering are of leavened bread (Leviticus 7:13).
4. Dates are mentioned in the command to take a branch of the date-palm tree on Sukkot (Leviticus 23:40). Olives are mentioned in the command to light the menorah in the Tabernacle with pure olive oil (Leviticus 24:2).
5. (1) A Kohen is allowed to become ritually impure upon the death of his seven close relatives (Leviticus 21:2-3 with Rashi). (2) This parsha states the command to light the seven-branched menorah (Leviticus 24:4).
6. In this parsha, the myrtle branches taken on Sukkot are called "a branch with braided leaves" (Leviticus 23:40). The chains that attach the High Priest breastplate to the apron are called "a braided work" (Exodus 28:14).
7. These are all descriptions of the Showbread, the loaves placed on the golden table in the Tabernacle. There are "twelve" loaves, placed in sets of "six" loaves each. Each ("one") loaf is kneaded with "two" solid measurements of flour (Leviticus 24:5-7).
8. In this parsha, the person who cursed Hashem is given the punishment of stoning (Leviticus 24:23). In parshas Shelach, the person who gathered sticks on Shabbat is punished with stoning (Numbers 15:36).

ALIYAH SUMMARY

1st aliyah- The first aliyah discusses the Kohen's obligation to maintain a high level of Taharus, and the women he may marry. An ordinary Kohen is prohibited to come in contact with a meis, except to attend the funerals of his next of kin, and may not marry a divorcee as well as some other women. The Kohen Gadol is not even allowed to attend family funerals, and is required to marry a virgin.

2nd aliyah- This aliyah discusses bodily blemishes and things that are Tamei which disallow a Kohen from performing their Avodah. The aliyah then lays down the rules regarding who in the Kohen's household may eat Terumah.

3rd aliyah- Blemished animals are not allowed to be used for Karbanos. Also, this aliyah tells us that one is not allowed to castrate animals, can't sacrifice animals before they are eight days old, and can't slaughter a mother animal and her child on the same day. The aliyah concludes with the mitzvah of Kiddush Hashem, sanctifying Hashem's Name, by giving one's life rather than doing certain averios.

4th aliyah- The aliyah begins with a lengthy discussion about the Jewish Yomim-Tovim. After making brief mention of Shabbos, the Torah talks about Pesach and the mitzvah of eating matzah. On the second day of this Yuntif, a Karban Omer is brought in the mishkan. This is followed by a seven week counting period that ends with the Yuntif of Shavuos. After discussing the Shavuos avodah, the Torah briefly interrupts the holiday discussion to mention the obligation, when harvesting fields, to leave certain gifts for the poor.

5th aliyah- The Yomim-Noraim are discussed here. We are commanded to hear the shofar on Rosh Hashanah, and to afflict ourselves on Yom Kippur.

6th aliyah- The Yuntif of Sukkos is now introduced. During this 7 day holiday we are commanded to sit in sukkahs, take the arba minim and rejoice before Hashem. The final chag is Shemini Atzeres, a one day Yuntif which immediately follows Sukkos.

7th aliyah- We are instructed to use the purest of olive oils for the daily lighting of the menorah in the mishkan, and to arrange twelve "showbreads" on the Shulchan every Shabbos. The Torah then tells the story of a Jewish man who was put to death for cursing Hashem. The parsha concludes with the penalties for committing murder, property damages, and personal injury.

“Some people play checkers. I play mahjong.”

- David Nisanov, DRS GO President



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Transcribed by
Yoni Sheinman

Laomer Or Baomer

- Should one say B'omer or L'omer?
- The Mechaber writes that one should not get a haircut or shave until Lag L'omer (Most people say Lag B'omer). Therefore, it seems that he holds that one should say L'omer when counting.
- The Mechaber earlier said that when counting you should say the day of the omer, but on the seventh day, you should also say the number week it is of the omer. He never says whether you should say L'omer or B'omer here. The Rama, therefore, comes in and writes that one should say B'omer. The Mishnah Berurah writes that most poskim say that it's not B'omer, but rather L'omer. But he says that this whole issue is just lichatchilla.
- Aruch Hashulchan says that you should say L'omer.
- What is the difference between the two?
- L'omer is going back in time. B'omer is now.
- The Taz writes that one should say B'omer. When we count the omer, we are referring to the Karbon Omer. The Karbon Omer was brought on the second day of Pesach. The problem is that we start counting sefira the night before the second day, and therefore we can't look retrospectively and say L'omer. Therefore, we say B'omer on the first night of counting. We then just continue the rest of the nights with the same lashon of B'omer. Some could argue that nowadays we don't bring a karbon so maybe we should say L'omer.
- The Rambam writes that even though there is no karbon, the mitzvah of Sefirat Haomer is still a Diorissa. The majority of Rishonim say that it is a mitzvah D'rabbanan. Rav Sternbuch says that he doesn't like the Leshem Yichud part since we shouldn't be saying that "we are about to fulfill the mitzvah like it says in the Torah." He, therefore, suggests a slight modification.
- Rav Schechter quotes Rav Soloveitchik to say that the machlokes whether it is D'orissa or D'rabbanan is connected to the machlokes between L'omer and B'omer. Those who say that the mitzvah to count is a d'orissa would hold that one should say L'omer since they have the same status going back as when the karbon was brought.
- The biggest machloket about sefira is if you missed a night, can you continue to count the next nights? If you hold that you can continue counting, then you hold that each night is a separate mitzvah. But if you hold that counting sefira is one big mitzvah, then since you missed a part of the mitzvah, you are done with the mitzvah and you can no longer count. We paskin Sefaik and therefore if you missed an entire day, you still count just without a bracha.
- Rav Schechter writes that if it is one big mitzvah, then how come we are making 49 separate brachos of asher kidshanu bimitzvosav vitzivanu? We say that is one big kiyum hamitzvah but it's 49 separate maasim so we make 49 separate mitzvot. Maybe we can use this to explain our original question. Those who hold that one should say B'omer, hold that it is one big mitzvah. Those who hold one should say L'omer, hold that each day is separate and we are bringing each one, each day, relating to the karbon.
- The Brisker Rav points out that the Rambam holds that the mitzvah is a d'orissa. The Gemara in Menachot has a comment that a meimar would only count the days, not the weeks. Because it is only a zachar. If you hold it is d'orissa then you would say the days and the weeks when counting. But if you say that it is a d'rabbanan then you only say the days, not the weeks. Do we say that it is a Zachar Lamikdash or a Zachar Lachurban? Maybe we can argue that it is a mitzvah d'rabbanan but the machloket is what we are remembering. If you say it is Zachar Lamikdash, then you should say it like they did when there was a beit hamikdash: L'omer. But if you hold that it is Zachar Lachurban, then you should say it like we have it now: B'omer.
- One is yotzei their mitzvah whether they say L'omer, B'omer, or even neither. Rav Soloveitchik and the Brisker Rav used to say both L'omer and B'omer.

SPARKS OF CHASSIDUS



*With Max
Blumenthal*

On Lag B'Omer, there is a very well known minhag to sing the song Bar Yochai - "The son of Yochai." Rav Naftali Katz zt"l, who was a very holy kabbalist in the late 1600's, writes that singing Bar Yochai purifies the neshamah even for those, like many of us, who don't fully grasp the secrets of this song. We also sing another song on Lag B'Omer, which is Va'amartem Ko L'chai Rabban Shimon Bar Yochai. The Ben Ish Chai zt"l, another holy kabbalist from the late 1800's, explains a deeper significance of these two songs. He says that when we sing these, we should think about the greatness of Reb Shimon Bar Yochai (Rashbi), who was one of the leading Tannaim in the times of the Mishnah. We should think about his fear and love for Hashem and his accomplishments in Torah and we should try to strive to emulate his holy ways.

We don't expect to reach the greatness of the Rashbi. The seforim say that Rebbi Shimon resembled a malach. The pasuk in Daniel (4:10) says that a malach came down from heaven and the roshei teivos of the pesukim in hebrew spell out Shimon. Nevertheless, we should seek to emulate his ways, and in our own way, reach the perfection that we can attain.

Maybe this is the reason we sing Bar Yochai and the reason why we call him "The son of Yochai." We are reminded that Rebbi Shimon was a human being like all of us, had parents, and yet he reached such high levels. Therefore, if we devote ourselves to Hashem's service, we can also reach very high levels.

We tend to think of tzaddikim as people who were born totally different from everyone else. When we hear of a tzaddik's greatness, we understand the greatness of them but we think that we can't reach anything close to them. We think that they're malachim and we're just simple people. Therefore, it is important to remember that tzaddikim are human beings. They also have challenges, and they became great and holy because they passed those tests. If we pass our tests, we can also reach incredibly high levels. We should all be zocheh to reach those levels and, once we do, we will be able to reach the final geulah B'yimheira B'yameinu!

(Gabriel Dershowitz- Continued from page 1)

The following mashal was related to explain this concept: If someone were to give you a map to a buried treasure, you would follow the map to the marked spot and begin to dig. Assume that the treasure is ten feet below ground. However, you don't know how deep the treasure lies; you would dig for six, seven, eight feet and not reach the treasure. Or, you could dig at an angle for ten feet and still not reach it.

Similarly, by Shlomo's words in Mishlei, we need continuity and accuracy while searching for the "buried treasure," the Torah. Likewise, by all other Mitzvos, we need to keep the same standards to truly appreciate and value them. If you would keep the occasional Shabbos, or partake in certain parts of Yomim Tovim, you would enjoy it, yet not fully appreciate it. You wouldn't internalize those moments, or use them to help you get closer to Hashem.

On the flip side, if you were to keep Mitzvos continuously, yet with no "accuracy," you wouldn't appreciate their value. In other words, if you were to technically keep Shabbos, but with certain compromises and rationalizations or without meaning, you wouldn't experience a true Shabbos.

So, from the high standards required for performing the mitzvah of Sefirat Ha'Omer, we learn a crucial lesson. When we are searching for the value of Torah in our lives, it must be done with continuity and accuracy. Only then will the depths of the great treasure that Torah is be revealed to us.

Tani Leitner

Chag Hasimchateinu

11th Grade

There is something interesting about this week's Parsha, Parshat Emor. In this week's Parsha, we talk about Sukkot; in the Torah, it talks about Sukkot in contradictory ways. For example, it says that it's a festival to rejoice and be happy, this being the only time it says we should rejoice by a holiday in this Parsha. Then it goes on to say that we should build "booths" to remind us of the "booths" we lived in after Hashem took us out of Egypt. During this time period, we lived with complete faith in G-d for protection and to lead us to where we needed to be. How then can the holiday of Sukkot be called "Chag Hasimchateinu?" Pesach should've had this title, as it was the time of freedom and liberation from slavery. Shavuot could have gotten this title, we got the Torah, the holiest and only item ever given to man from G-d. Sukkot also didn't have any miracles, Pesach had the Makkot, the sea split, and more. Also, everything about Ma'amad Har Sinai was a miracle, so what made Sukkot special enough to get the title of "Chag Hasimchateinu?" Rabbi Eliezer gives a classic answer to this saying that we build these huts to commemorate the Ananei Hakavod. Yet how can someone sit in a Sukkah and think, "Wow this is how the Jews leaving Egypt must have felt under the Ananei Hakavod." Rabbi Akiva said that he doesn't believe the Sukkah resembles anything, and yet this can have a powerful explanation. This means that we are building a hut to live in for 7 days for no reason and that resembles the Jews taken out of Egypt. Although they might have rebelled and complained, just like Avraham and Sarah, they traveled into the unknown with complete trust in G-d. This reminds us further to remember that we don't need solid walls with locks on them for us to feel safe; rather, like our ancestors, with G-d by our side, we could not have anything safer than that.

(Continued from page 1)

above all, does man show his dominion over the earth? In that he can fashion all things in his environment to his own purpose...He is allowed to rule over the world for six days with G-d's will. On the seventh day, however, he is forbidden by Divine behest to fashion anything for his own purpose. In this way he acknowledges that he has no rights of ownership or authority over the world...On each Sabbath day, the world, so to speak, is restored to G-d, and thus man proclaims, both to himself and his surroundings, that he enjoys only a borrowed authority." The Ibn Ezra also interprets the words "wherever you live" meaning, "In your country and outside of your country, at home and on the way". Wherever we are, we need to stop and rest on Shabbos. We need Shabbos not just as a day of rest, but of a day of reminder that Hashem is the leader of our lives, no matter how much we let the physical aspects of the world intervene. It's a time to reflect on ourselves and ask "are we doing what we should be?". Perhaps most importantly, it's a time to grow our connection with Hashem, and lift ourselves up spiritually, without mundane activities to interfere. Have a great Shabbos!



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STORIES OF GREATNESS

TOLD OVER BY: YOSEF SCHAFLER

About two and a half centuries ago there lived in the town of Kosov a wealthy textile merchant named Moshe. He made his home in the best section of the city, in a luxurious mansion on a huge estate, on which grassy lawns, lush gardens, and orchards of fruit trees all flourished. Basically a simple person, his innate humility seemed to remain unaffected even as his wealth grew from year to year.

But then, all of a sudden, an unusual idea entered Moshe's mind and took hold of his heart: Moshe had become possessed by the desire to experience a revelation of Eliyahu Hanavi.

Not that he was under the illusion that he was entitled to see the Prophet because of his wealth. He knew better than that. He undertook a series of fasts and other forms of deprivations and self-afflictions, hoping that would enable him to fulfill his wish. It didn't.

He started to keep company with the Chassidim and the other strictly religious people in the community, imitating their ways. He hoped that their superior spiritual attainments would rub off on him and his resultant elevation would allow him to attain his goal. That also didn't work.

Unsure what to try next, he decided to consult the local Chassidic master, Rabbi Boruch of Kosov. The Rebbe listened intently, but then, to Moshe's dismay, said: "Reb Moshe, why are you trying to get involved in such lofty matters? Your role is to do deeds of kindness and charity; that's what your soul requires for its rectification." Moshe left the Rebbe's room, frustrated. He still felt sure he knew what he really needed.

From that day on, Moshe the merchant's behavior changed radically. He abandoned his business for days at a time, which he spent in the study hall. He no longer paid much attention to his personal appearance or the upkeep of his estate, abandoning almost completely the aristocratic lifestyle he had adapted over the years.

After some time, he went to visit the Rebbe again. Eyes downcast, the dark shadow of depression on his face, it was clear he was deeply troubled. His desire to see the Prophet left him no peace. As he told the Rebbe of his frustrations, he involuntarily emitted a deep sigh.

This time, the Rebbe seemed more accepting of Moshe's craving, though he still maintained that Moshe's mission in life lay in the path of kindness and good deeds, and instructed him to increase his charitable work. Then, after a pause, he added mysteriously: "If a poor man should approach you and request a thousand gold pieces, don't hold back from granting his request."

Once again Moshe felt belittled by the Rebbe's reply. Nevertheless, he decided to adhere closely to his advice. Any poor person that crossed his path was immediately endowed with a generous contribution, without any delay to check the recipient's worthiness. He conducted himself in this manner for several years, but still there was no encounter with Eliyahu, and his frustration gave him no rest.

One day, while he was busy at work with a number of different customers, a messenger arrived from his house. A pathetic-looking, poverty-stricken man had knocked on the door and begged for help, but he refused to accept the food that a servant had brought out to him. Instead, he insisted that he be invited into the dining hall so he could sit and eat there. His wife wasn't sure how to handle the situation, so she had sent someone to ask her husband's advice.

At first Moshe was outraged by the needy man's chutzpah. But then, remembering the Rebbe's counsel, he instructed the messenger simply to tell his wife that he would come home as soon as he could, and that in the meantime she should fulfill the stranger's unusual request and invite him in. When he arrived about an hour later, he found his wife pacing near the entrance, exasperated, impatiently awaiting him. As soon as she saw him she burst out bitterly, "Not even sitting in our dining hall satisfies this beggar! He demanded that I show him into our bedroom!"

Moshe dashed upstairs to the master bedroom. He could barely believe the sight that greeted him: a disheveled crude-looking person wearing what seemed to be more rags and patches than actual clothing sprawled across his bed, with the stains and remains of his meal spread all over himself and the fresh linens. As Moshe stood, the "guest" looked up at him and drawled, "Nu? So how about a little present? A modest sum—only a measly thousand gold pieces."

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

Reb Moshe wasn't sure whether to erupt in anger or burst into laughter. He was so taken aback he felt powerless to move or speak; he could only stand there in continued silence.

"If you won't give me right now one thousand gulden, I won't leave!" announced the strange beggar defiantly.

Moshe calmed down a bit from his initial shock. He decided to ignore the insult to his honor and simply offer the man a lesser sum. "Fifty...a hundred...one hundred fifty..." Eventually he offered him 200 gulden, not at all a small sum.

It was as if the man on his bed had sealed his ears. He kept arrogantly asserting he would take 1000 gulden and not a penny less. Reb Moshe finally lost all patience with this rude boor and signaled one of his servants to remove the impudent pest from his presence. But the object of their intentions was much too quick. Before they could lay a hand on him, he climbed out of the window and disappeared.

All this occurred just a few hours before the festival of Lag BaOmer. That night all the Chassidim gathered at the Rebbe's table in honor of the occasion. Moshe the textile merchant was among them. Rebbe Boruch spoke about the Divine revelations that are manifest on this special day, though not everyone merits to recognize them. Reb Moshe decided that this must certainly be an auspicious moment to mention his burning request. The Rebbe's response shocked him like an icy hand squeezing his heart: "But didn't you already meet a poor person who requested of you one thousand gold pieces?"

Moshe quickly told the Rebbe about the impudent beggar who had so crudely pushed his way into

his house earlier in the day.

"Ach. What a pity!" the Rebbe sighed softly. "You saw the Prophet but you didn't recognize him."

"That beggar was Elijah the Prophet?!!" Moshe cried in dismay.

"Yes," explained the Rebbe. "He appears to people according to the root of their souls and the level of their deeds."

Reb Moshe was truly broken-hearted. One result was that he and his wife decided to move to the Holy Land. They settled in the holy city of Sefad, where a change came over him almost immediately. He no longer sought greatness or extraordinary revelations. He served G-d simply and whole-heartedly.

Before Lag BaOmer he would go to Meron and devote himself to serving the tens of thousands that crowded the tomb of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai area around the clock. He rubbed shoulders with the masses of simple Jews that came to honor the great sage, taking pleasure from their company and helping to take care of their needs.

Several years later, at Meron on Lag BaOmer, Reb Moshe was hurrying to and fro to help serve the many guests, when he suddenly saw in front of him a face that was burned into his memory: it was the "beggar" who had appeared at his house so many years ago!

Moshe froze in his tracks. He stared in amazement at the person in his path. This time the eyes that looked back at him were no longer outraged and challenging; they were bright and shiny in the midst of a smiling face....

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Repeating Says

By: Dovie Hirsch, 10th Grade

The opening words of Parshas Emor are, "Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aharon, and say to them..." (Vayikra 21:1). There is an obvious question: why is the text repetitive? Why does the pasuk say: "Say to the Kohanim" AND "say to them?" Isn't one good enough?

There are many explanations. The Panim Yafos explains that the first "say" refers to teaching the kohanim the Torah Shebichtav, while the second "say" refers to teaching the Torah Shebaal Peh. For example, the laws of the kohanim not coming into contact with a corpse is learned straight from the pasuk. Other laws of tumah are learned from Torah Shebaal Peh.

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky, my Rosh Yeshiva from elementary school, offers another explanation. He says that the first "say" is to the Kohanim who are the sons of Aharon. Kohanim have a special yichus; they are the sons of Aharon and are therefore important because of this connection. Moshe is instructed to talk to the Kohanim as the sons of Aharon. However, they are also kohanim in their own

right. The second "say" is a commandment to speak to them as individuals who need to grow into their roles as kohanim. This is separate from the yichus that they are born into.

Everyone has heard of Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt'l. He was the posek Hador and a true tzaddik. Obviously, his children had tremendous yichus! However, his sons, Rav Dovid Feinstein, zt'l and Rav Reuven shlita are tzadikim in their own right. Yes, they were the sons of Rav Moshe and their yichus was tremendous, but they also became gedolei hador in their own right because of their own merit. People respect them not only for their yichus, but for their own hishtadlus that they put in to become great tzadikim themselves.

This is what Rabbi Kamenetzky meant. Kohanim have great yichus as the sons of Aharon. Moshe was commanded to speak to them with this yichus in mind. However, the kohanim could not rely on this yichus alone. They had to do their own hishtadlus to become great kohanim on their own merit.

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