



BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV TORONTO TORAH

שבועות - SHAVUOT

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Candle lighting: 8:25 pm  Havdallah: 9:34 pm (50 minutes after שקיעה)

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov
wishes all Toronto Torah readers
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דבר תורה **RABBI ELAN MAZER, CEO, MIZRACHI CANADA**

Preparing to Receive the Torah

For seven weeks we count the Omer, the time between Pesach and Shavuot.

There are a number of reasons given for why we count the Omer. Agriculturally, The Torah (Vayikra 23) tells us that it is the time between when we harvest the first crops of barley, and when we begin harvesting the wheat. This is a joyous occasion for the farmers who have been working hard all winter and now can begin to reap the fruits of their labors. The Torah tells us that we should direct this joy towards Hashem. The Midrash (Psikta Parshat Pinchas) explains that the Sefirah period is meant to connect the holidays of Pesach and Shavuot as a kind of chol hamoed between them, like the chol hamoed between Sukkot and Shmini Atzeret. The Rambam and Sefer Hachinuch (mitzvah 306) both say that the purpose of Sefirat Haomer is to prepare us for the receiving of the Torah. All of these reasons are causes for great joy and celebration, but yet today Sefirat Haomer is such a sad period of time for us. Why is that? What changed?

From a young age we have been taught that we mourn during this time because the students of Rebbe Akiva did not respect one another, and therefore 24,000 of them died during these weeks (Gemara Yevamot 62b). Sad as this is, how come this event changed Sefirat Haomer from a time of joy to a time of mourning for generations to come?

The Gemara (shabbat 31a) tells us the famous story of a non-Jew who wanted to convert to Judaism, and asked Shamai to tell him the whole Torah while he stood on one foot. This was a task that Shamai felt undermined the depth and beauty of Torah – since a real understanding of Torah takes years and cannot be explained in only a few moments – so Shamai kicked the man out. This man did not despair, and went to Hillel and asked him the same thing. Hillel answered: “Not doing to your friend something that you don’t want done to you is the essence of the Torah. All the rest is commentary, now go and learn.”

Hillel understood that the foundation of Torah is how we treat one another. The interpersonal commandments, Mitzvot Ben Adam L’Chavero, are not just important elements of the Torah, but rather the basis on which all Torah learning stands.

The Mishna in the sixth perek of Pirkei Avot gives a list of 48 practical guidelines to acquiring Torah knowledge; many of them pertain to learning in a group and listening to your friends. The Gemara in Massechet Shabbat (63a) says that when two people listen to each other while learning; Hashem listens to them, and when they sharpen each other while learning, Hashem helps them succeed.

The pinnacle of Torah learning is not only about learning and growing for yourself, but also about creating a collaboration of minds, a group of friends and companions who work together to bring the truth of the Torah to this world. Torah is a community endeavor, not only an individual one.

When we stood as a nation at Har Sinai to receive the Torah, we were K’Ish echad B’lev echad- as one man with one heart, united. This unity as a people formed the basis of receiving the Torah. This is what the students of Rebbe Akiva did not understand.

As we prepare for Matan Torah this year and every year, we do not celebrate during the time of Sefirat HaOmer. Rather we adopt mourning practices so that we may take a moment to realize that fundamental to our Torah learning is how we treat one another, and how the relationships that we build are necessary to truly receive the Torah.

As we transition from the emotional roller-coaster of these seven short weeks into the holiday of Shavuot, we must internalize this powerful message, and strive to create communities which work together to strengthen our collective Torah learning through unity and passion.



מדרש RABBI SHMAYA HENDEL, MAGGID SHIUR

Cardinal Numbers and a Process of Growth

Now that we have completed counting Sefirat HaOmer, we can look back at the process and better understand the meaning of the counting itself.

There are two types of numbers: cardinal numbers and ordinal numbers.

Cardinal numbers describe quantity: one, two, three. Ordinal numbers describe order and position: first, second, third.

It is interesting that Sefirat HaOmer is phrased specifically using cardinal numbers. We say, "היום עשרים ימים", "Today is twenty days of the Omer," and not "Today is the twentieth day of the Omer."

The point is not simply to identify where

we are in the process, but how many days we have accumulated within the process. The days build upon one another. Each day we acquire another level of growth, another layer of progress. It is not enough that we have technically reached day twenty, the question is whether we actually possess twenty days of progress and growth behind us.

Every single day has significance. Every day contains the possibility of growth and change. Perhaps this is why there is such a serious halachic discussion when someone misses an entire day of counting. That missed day was not merely a missing number, it was a day absent from the process

itself. It was a day not accumulated.

Sefirat HaOmer is therefore built as a continuum. Each day is constructed on top of the previous one. A person is not simply advancing technically toward Shavuot, but moving through a gradual process of becoming, day after day.

Sefirat HaOmer is not merely counting which day we have reached. It is counting how much of the process we have actually lived through.

The deeper message of Sefirat HaOmer is that we do not merely count days, we live a process. Every day is another stage in the building of a person, and every day matters.



מחשבה RABBI AMI YUNGER, COO, MIZRACHI CANADA

When Geulah Does Not Move in a Straight Line

Based on Kima Kima by Rav Chaim Drukman

If we are living through a process of Geulah, why does it so often look uneven? Why does history seem to move forward and then backward, toward return and then toward retreat, toward light and then back into confusion? Shouldn't redemption look more direct than this?

The answer begins with the Yerushalmi in Berachot 1:1. Chazal teach that Geulat Yisrael comes "קממא קממא", little by little. The image is dawn. Redemption does not arrive like the sudden brightness of midday. It begins while the world is still dark. The first light appears slowly, and even after morning has begun, darkness remains.

This is central to the way Chazal describe Geulah. Dawn is not only gradual. Dawn is mixed. It contains light and darkness at the same time. The fact that darkness remains does not mean morning has not begun. It means the morning is not yet complete.

The same is true of Geulah. A process can be real even when it is unfinished. A direction can be true even when the path is not straight. The return of Am Yisrael to its land can be part of Geulah even when the nation still struggles with confusion, retreat, and contradiction.

The Eim Habanim Semeichah explains that those who imagine that Geulah must begin only with the full revelation of Mashiach ben David misunderstand the nature of morning. To expect the complete sun before the first light of dawn is to misunderstand dawn itself. Geulah begins before it is complete.

But there is a deeper point. The setbacks are not only interruptions within the process. At times, they themselves become part of the process.

Chazal teach on the pasuk in Michah:

"אל תשמחי איבתי לי כי נפלתי קמתי כי אשב בחשך ד' אור לי" (מיכה ז:ח)

The Yalkut Shimoni explains: "אילולא שנפלתי, לא קמתי. אילולא, שישבתי בחושך, לא היה אור לי." Had I not fallen, I would not have risen. Had I not sat in darkness, I would not have had light.

At first, this is difficult. If I had not fallen, I would not need to rise. If I had not sat in darkness, I would not need light.

Chazal are teaching that the rising after a fall is not always a return to the previous place. Sometimes the fall exposes weakness. It reveals what was unstable. It forces a deeper rebuilding. Through the fall, a higher standing becomes possible.

Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin explains this as "ירידה שהיא צורך", a descent that is necessary for ascent. He connects it to the pasuk, "כי שבע יפול צדיק וקם" (משלי כד:טז). The tzaddik does not remain a tzaddik because he never falls. He remains a tzaddik because even the fall becomes part of his rising.

This does not make retreat good. It does not ask us to ignore failures in Jewish life or national life. It means that setbacks do not disprove Geulah. Sometimes they expose the unfinished work. Sometimes they create the conditions for the next stage.

Tehillim says, "לכו חזו מפעלות ד' אשר שם שמות בארץ" (תהילים מו:ט). Even the "shamot," the desolations, are called the works of Hashem. The Yerushalmi in Berachot 2:4 teaches that the day of destruction is also the day on which Mashiach is born. Inside churban, the next beginning is already forming.

That is how we must look at our generation. Not with blindness. Not with naivete. With broader vision.

Geulah is not a straight line. It is dawn.



Which Torah Reading Should I Hear?

Question: This year I'll be celebrating Shavuot in Israel! However, an interesting situation arises this year, something that happens every few years.

On the Shabbos following Shavuot, the Torah reading in Israel will be Parshat Naso, while communities outside of Israel will still be reading the Torah portion for the second day of Yom Tov.

I was planning to daven in a minyan of visitors from Chutz La'Aretz that will be observing Yom Tov Sheini. But since I intend to remain in Israel for several more weeks, the following Shabbos I will likely be in a regular Israeli minyan, where they will already be reading Parshat Beha'aloscha. That means I may completely miss hearing Parshat Naso this year with a tzibbur.

What should I do? Perhaps it would be better to simply attend a regular Israeli minyan next Shabbos, hear Parshat Naso, and not daven the Yom Tov tefillah?

Answer: This is actually a very complex halachic question. Therefore, I forwarded the

the question to Rabbi Yosef Tzvi Rimon — president of World Mizrachi, and one of the leading contemporary poskim.

Rav Rimon kindly responded that one should indeed attend a minyan of בני חו"ל observing Yom Tov Sheini in Israel, even if this means missing the public reading of Parshas Naso this year.

He offered several reasons for this ruling.

First, since a visitor from Chutz La'Aretz is obligated to observe Yom Tov Sheini while in Israel, it is appropriate for him to participate in a minyan following that practice. Once that is considered his tefillah for the day, the Torah reading connected to that tefillah — namely the Yom Tov reading — becomes his proper kriyat haTorah, rather than the regular weekly parshah.

Secondly, Rav Rimon demonstrated that the Torah reading for Yom Tov possesses a stronger and earlier halachic foundation than the annual cycle of weekly parshiyot.

The obligation to read from the Torah on festivals according to the theme of the day is already mentioned in the Mishnah and Gemara in Masechet Megillah. By contrast, the universal custom of completing the entire Torah every single year developed later in history. As is well known, there were communities that completed the Torah only once every three years rather than annually.

Of course, if a person misses Parshas Naso, it would be ideal for him to make it up the following week by finding a minyan reading that parshah. However, if that proves difficult, he can still complete the parshah privately through Shnayim Mikra V'echad Targum.

Conclusion: Rabbi Yosef Tzvi Rimon ruled that a visitor from Chutz La'Aretz in Israel should daven with a Yom Tov Sheini minyan, even if this means missing Parshat Naso that year. If one cannot later hear the parshah with a tzibbur, he should complete it through Shnayim Mikra V'echad Targum. As always, one should consult his own Rav for practical halachah.



The Seeds of Kingship, Rooted in our Loyalty to the Land and to Jewish Values

The Book of Rut that we read during Shavuot takes place toward the end of the book of Shoftim, a period marked by profound social and spiritual crisis.

“And a man from Bethlehem in Yehuda went to sojourn in the fields of Moav...” (Rut 1:1)

Elimelech was a leading figure in Israel at the time. The text describes him as an Ephrathite, which many classical commentators understand as a designation of prominence and leadership. Yet at the height of famine and instability, he chooses to leave the Land of Israel with his wife Naomi and two sons, Machlon and Kilion.

One may ask how we would respond if a national leader were to abandon the Land of Israel during a time of war or famine. The consequences to his decision are swift and severe: Elimelech dies, and his two sons both intermarry and wed two Moabite women, Rut and Orpah. His departure from the Land is portrayed not merely as a geographic relocation, but as a loss of his identity and generational continuity.

Naomi, by contrast, remains deeply attuned to the spiritual and material condition of the Land of Israel. When she hears that conditions have improved, she immediately resolves to return.

Rut and Orpah come from Moabite royalty. They are heirs to a culture associated with the sin of Baal Peor in Sefer Bamidbar, a society characterized by outward display and moral permissiveness. Yet after encountering Naomi and witnessing what it means to live as a woman connected to Hashem, Eretz Yisrael and Jewish values, neither is eager to return to the world of Moav.

Naomi seeks to return specifically to Bethlehem, her home in the Land of Israel. This choice may also carry symbolic significance, as Bethlehem is associated with Rachel, the matriarch who “weeps for her children” and awaits their return from exile.

Several generations earlier, the story of Judah and Tamar in Sefer Bereishit constitutes the beginning of the same process of *chesed* and “establishing the name of the deceased” that reaches fulfillment in the Book of Rut. This circle is completed through the union of Rut and Boaz, a descendant of Yehuda, the very son whom Yaakov blessed with the promise of kingship.

The Book of Rut thus stands as a profound testament to our connection to our generations, boundless *chesed*, and our love for the Land of Israel during times of instability and also during times in which we flourish. It is fitting that from such acts of kindness and loyalty emerges David, King of Israel.



SHAVUOT IN TORONTO

WITH OUR MAGGIDEI SHIUR



RABBI YEHUDA MANN

12:00 AM | Or Chaim
1:00 AM | Clanton Park
Shavuot Day | Clanton Park Tikkun Yom
Shabbat Morning | Yizkor Drasha OCM
Shabbat | 7:30 PM | Bnei Torah



RABBI EZER DIENA

12:30 AM | Mishkan Avraham
2:00 AM | Shaarei Tefillah
4:00 AM | The Shavuos Guys
Shabbat Day | Mishkan Avraham



RABBI ORI EZRA

Shavuot Eve | Before Maariv | Or Chaim
12:45 AM | Or Chaim
Shabbat | Seudah Shlishit | Or Chaim



RABBI AMI YUNGER

1:15 AM | BAYT
3:00 AM | Bnei Akiva



RABBI SHMAYA HENDEL

11:00 AM | PCL | Ayin L'Tzion Zichron Yisroel
2:50 AM | Ayin L'Tzion Zichron Yisroel



RABBI CHAIM SINGER

12:00 AM | Aish Thornhill Community Shul



AVIYA EZRA

Shavuot Day | After Kiddush | Or Chaim
Shavuot Day | 5:00PM | Pakes Home



RABBI SHAANAN SCHERER

2:15 AM | BAYT

Wishing you a Chag Sameach