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## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON EMOR - 5783

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This is a Sefira reminder for Friday evening, May 5.

**The count will be 30.**

Tonight will be the 30th day, which is 4 weeks and 2 day, of the omer.

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from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <[ryfrand@torah.org](mailto:ryfrand@torah.org)> reply-to: [do-not-reply@torah.org](mailto:do-not-reply@torah.org) to: [ravfrand@torah.org](mailto:ravfrand@torah.org) date: May 4, 2023, 6:09 PM subject: Rav Frand - Giving Over One's Self for the Sake of Hashem

Parshas Emor Giving Over One's Self for the Sake of Hashem print

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: #1248 – The Challenge for the Occupational

and Speech Therapist: Feeding Non-Kosher Food to a Jewish Child. Good Shabbos!

The pasuk in Parshas Emor says: "You shall not profane my holy Name, and I shall be sanctified in the midst of the Children of Israel, I am Hashem who sanctifies you." (Vayikra 22:32). This is the Biblical prohibition not to make a 'Chilul Hashem – not to profane the Name of Hashem. The pasuk also concludes with the positive Biblical commandment to make a 'Kiddush Hashem – to sanctify the name of Hashem.

Rashi here explains that 'Chilul Hashem refers to a person willfully committing an aveira, by saying, "I am going to eat this non-kosher food item; I don't care what the Torah says about that." That is a 'Chillul Hashem.' It is as if he is disregarding Hashem.

We usually think of other kinds of Chillul Hashem, such as parking in a handicap space when everyone knows your identity. There are many such "modern day versions" of Chillul Hashem. However, Rashi first refers to Chillul Hashem as knowing something is an aveira and saying "I don't care. I am going to do it anyway." That is a terrible Chillul Hashem, even if not done in public!

Rashi further says that besides the first part of this pasuk that prohibits us from desecrating the name of Hashem, the latter part of the pasuk commands us to give up our lives, if necessary, for the purpose of sanctifying the Name of Hashem. This is the concept of Mesiras Nefesh, giving oneself over!

Jews have been moser nefesh for millennia. When Jews were given the bitter "choice" of converting to Christianity, converting to Islam, or other religions, Jews were literally burnt at the stake. They were tortured and killed. This is an example of "give yourself over and sanctify My name," which Rashi says is a Biblical obligation derived from this pasuk.

Again, there are "modern versions" of Kiddush Hashem – such as the Jewish fellow who bought a desk and found \$100,000 hidden therein. He returned the money to the original desk owner and it made all the newspapers. This was a frum person who could have said "finders keepers." People would never have known about it. That was a Kiddush Hashem as well. I am not denying it. But Rashi here is defining the ultimate Kiddush Hashem: Mesor atzmecha v'kadesh es Shemi (Give yourself over and sanctify My name).

In our days, it seems that we don't have opportunities for mesor atzmecha v'kadesh es Shemi. Most of us are fortunate to live in more enlightened societies in which we are not being forced to convert, and therefore it would seem that the example that Rashi cites is no longer applicable in our time.

I would like to suggest that Rashi's example is as applicable today as it ever was. The Rambam (Yesodei HaTorah 5:10) paskens this halacha. The Rambam rules that someone who wantonly violates the Torah's rules (not out of passion but to willfully show his disdain for halacha) has made a Chillul

Hashem. He adds that if he does this in public (i.e., in the presence of ten Jews), he has made a public Chillul Hashem, which is an even worse aveira.

The Rambam then adds: “And likewise someone who abstains from sinning or does a mitzvah – not for any material advantage or with any ulterior motive but only because it is the will of the Creator – has sanctified the name of Hashem.” He cites the example of Yosef who abstained from privately sinning with Potifar’s wife as an example of such a Kiddush Hashem.

We see from this Rambam that Yosef’s behavior on that occasion is an example of “giving oneself over and sanctifying My name.” It is a great Kiddush Hashem when, despite the fact that “I would WANT to do an aveira” or “I would NOT WANT to do a Mitzvah,” nonetheless, my actions are governed not by what I want but what the Ribono shel Olam wants. Mesor es Atzmecha means you are giving up your atzmiyus – your independence, your ability to act as a “free agent.” In English, we translate the term “mesiras nefesh” as “self-sacrifice,” the sacrifice of oneself. That means when I must choose between myself and Hashem, I am doing it for Hashem. That is a Kiddush HaShem.

I used to be very turned off by people flippantly throwing around the term “mesiras nefesh.” “It was a rainy or snowy night. I invited you to a Bar Mitzvah or to a vort (engagement party). You came. You schlepped to Lakewood or New York. You walk in. “Oh! What mesiras nefesh!!” I used to think, “that is not mesiras nefesh! Mesiras nefesh is giving up your life!”

But there is a different interpretation of the word nefesh. Nefesh can also mean “will,” as in the pasuk “Im yesh es nafshechem” (If you so will it) (Bereshis 23:8). Mesiras Nefesh can also mean ‘I give up my ratzon (will).’ I don’t want to schlep to New York or Lakewood. I don’t want to go out in this lousy weather. But I do it for you. I am moser nefesh. That is an appropriate expression for overriding my will for altruistic reasons.

The Rambam is saying that mesor es atzmecha is giving up yourself for no reason other than the Ribono shel Olam. Now we can understand the example the Rambam cites. In citing that example, the Rambam refers to Yosef as “Yosef haTzaddik” (the righteous one). Why does the Rambam say Yosef haTzaddik? The Rambam does not usually give accolades when mentioning Biblical personalities.

Rav Avrohom Shor said over the following thought at an Agudah convention in the name of the Sefas Emes: The Gemara (Yoma 35b) says that after 120 years, when people come up to shomayim (heaven), if a person is poor and they ask him “Why didn’t you learn more?” and he answers “I was busy making a living,” they will tell him “You are not poorer than Hillel was, and he learned.” If a person says “I had such a large estate, so many business dealings, I was so busy that I couldn’t

find time to learn” they will tell him “You were not richer than Rav Elazar ben Charsom, who learned even though he had 10,000 cities to manage.” When a wicked person comes up and they ask him “Why did you not learn more,” if he says “I was so handsome that I couldn’t control my temptations” they will tell him “You did not have a bigger temptation than Yosef.” The Gemara concludes: “It comes out that Hillel prosecutes the poor; Elazar ben Charsom prosecutes the rich; and Yosef prosecutes the wicked.”

The Sefas Emes has a problem with this last example: Someone who goes up to shomayim and is asked “Why were you so preoccupied with your passions?” will answer “I had a strong Yetzer HaRah.” He will be told “But look at Yosef HaTzaddik...” The Sefas Emes asks that this wicked person should answer “But I am not Yosef HaTzaddik! There was only one Yosef HaTzaddik. What do you want from me? Do you think every Tom, Dick, and Harry is a Yosef HaTzaddik?”

The Sefas Emes answers that Yosef’s action implanted into the spiritual DNA of all of his descendants afterwards the potential to withstand strong temptations. It is not just you; it is your heritage; it is your legacy; it is part of your DNA. That is why there is a complaint against future resha'im. Yosef put within each member of Klal Yisrael the ability to say ‘no’ when faced with nisayonos.

That is what the Rambam means here when he describes a person abstaining from sinning – not because of fear and not because of honor – but rather, the way Yosef haTzaddik abstained. If you ask yourself “How can I?” the answer is “like Yosef haTzaddik.” He gave up his SELF (mesor ATZMECHA). You can do that as well. That is also what Rashi means when he defines Kiddush Hashem as “mesor es Atzmecha” – to give over one’s SELF for the sake of Hashem.

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This week’s write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand’s Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion.

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from: **Ira Zlotowitz** <Iraz@klal.govoh.org> date: May 4, 2023, 7:01 PM subject: Tidbits for Parashas Emor

Reminders

Friday, May 5th, is Pesach Sheni (14th of Iyar). Many do not say Tachanun; even so, many still recite Tachanun on Thursday at Minchah. Some have the minhag to eat matzah on Pesach Sheni. Pesach Sheini provided a second opportunity to bring the Korban Pesach for those who were unable to bring the Korban Pesach on time (14th of Nissan).

Friday, May 5th, marks 30 days since we began reciting V'sein Beracha in place of V'sein Tal u'Matar. After this point one is halachically considered to be accustomed to saying V'sein Beracha. Therefore, beginning with Maariv on Motzaei Shabbos, May 6th, one who is unsure if he davened correctly does not repeat Shemoneh Esrei.

Sefirah: On Friday night, May 5th, we count the 30th day of the omer.

The final day of BeHaB is this Monday, May 8th. Many shuls recite Selichos on these days.

Tuesday, May 9th is Lag Ba'omer. Tachanun is omitted, as well as during Minchah on Monday. After shekiyah on the evening of Lag Ba'omer, one should refrain from saying "tonight is Lag Ba'omer" until after counting Sefirah. However, if one inadvertently said "tonight is Lag Ba'omer", he may still count that night (and beyond) with a berachah.

The final opportunity for Kiddush Levana was late Thursday night, May 4th at 2:09 AM EST.

Pirkei Avos: Perek 4.

Daf Yomi - Erev Shabbos: Bavli: Sotah 37. Daf Yerushalmi: Demai 6. Mishnah Yomis: Shekalim 3:2-3.

Make sure to call your parents, in-laws, grandparents and Rabbi to wish them a good Shabbos. If you didn't speak to your kids today, make sure to do the same!

The final day of BeHaB is this Monday, May 8th.

Pesach Sheini is today Friday, May 5th.

Lag Ba'omer is this Tuesday, May 9th

Shavuos begins on Thursday evening, May 25th.

Parsha in a paragraph

Emor: Laws of Kohanim and their households • Parameters of acceptable Korbanos • Shabbos and the holidays • Description of the lighting of the Menorah and the arrangement of the Lechem HaPanim • The Megadeif curses Hashem, and is put to

death for his sin • The punishment for murder • The penalties for damages • See Taryag Weekly for the various mitzvos.

Haftarah: The Parashah began with discussing the laws of Kohanim. Yechezkel (44:15-31) discusses laws of the Kohanim, including the laws which will apply at the time of the third Beis HaMikdash - may it be built speedily within our days.

Taryag Weekly

Parashas Emor: 124 Pesukim • 24 Obligations • 39 Prohibitions

1) A Kohen may not become tamei mes. 2) A Kohen must become tamei mes for specified relatives. 3) A tamei Kohen may not serve until nightfall following his immersion. 4-6) A Kohen may not marry a zonah, chalalah or a divorcee. 7) Honor the Kohen. 8-9) A Kohen Gadol may not become tamei mes even for relatives (including parents). 10) A Kohen Gadol must marry a besulah. 11) A Kohen Gadol may not marry a zonah, chalalah, divorcee or widow. 12) A Kohen Gadol may not cohabit with a widow. 13-14) A Kohen with a blemish - even a temporary one - may not perform Temple service. 15) A blemished Kohen may not enter the Kodesh Hakodoshim. 16-17) A Kohen who is tamei may not perform Temple service or eat terumah or separated challah. 18-19) A non-Kohen as well as a Kohen's toshav and sachir slave may not eat terumah, challah or bikkurim. 20) An uncircumcised Kohen may not eat kodashim or terumah. 21) A Kohenes who is a chalalah or is married to a non-Kohen may not eat kodashim or terumah. 22) Do not eat produce before terumah is separated from it. 23) Do not designate a blemished animal for a korban. 24) Bring korbanos from the finest animals. 25) Do not inflict a korban with a blemish. 26-28) Do not slaughter, offer, or sprinkle the blood of a blemished animal. 29) Do not castrate a person or animal. 30) Do not sacrifice a blemished korban of a non-Jew. 31) Animals to be sacrificed must be no less than eight days old. 32) Do not slaughter an animal and its mother on the same day. 33) Do not cause a Chillul Hashem. 34) Bring about Kiddush Hashem. 35-39) Observe the Yom Tov of Pesach, do no melachah on it; bring its Korban Mussaf on all seven days. 40) Bring the Korban Omer on second day of Pesach. 41-43) Do not eat Chadash grains. 44) Count Sefiras Ha'Omer. 45) Bring Sh'tei Halechem on Shavuos. 46-47) Observe Shavuos; do no melachah on it. 48-49) Observe Rosh Hashanah; do no melachah on it. 50) Bring the Korban Mussaf on Rosh Hashanah. 51-52) Fast on Yom Kippur and bring its Korban Mussaf. 53-55) Do not eat or perform melachah on Yom Kippur; observe the holiday. 56-58) Observe the first day of Succos; do no melachah on it. Bring its Korban Mussaf on all 7 days. 59-61) Observe Shemini Atzeres; do no melachah on it. Bring its Korban Mussaf. 62) Take the Daled Minim on the first day of Succos. 63) Sit in a Succah on all seven days of Succos.

For the Shabbos Table

“אָמַר אֶל־הַכֹּהֲנִים בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם” “Speak to the Kohanim the sons of Aharon and say to them” (Vayikra 21:1)

The Midrash explains the intent of the double expression of Emor and V’amarta is to caution the elders regarding the youth regarding this mitzvah of being careful about purity. One may understand this Midrash that Moshe Rabbeinu was to instruct the elders in “V’amrta”, in that after Moshe relayed this mitzvah to them, they the elders, should in turn relay this mitzvah to the youth. However the Passuk seems to state that the word V’amarta as well is referring to Moshe’s directives to the elders. What was the nature of this extra instruction to the elders?

There is a well known expression that a person’s luxuries becomes his child’s necessities. One who indulges periodically may set these ‘extras’ as a basic standard for his child. This is true regarding Ruchniyus as well; one who sets a high bar in performance of mitzvos sets his next generation in a position where their basic standard is on a higher level and vice versa. Rav Moshe Feinstein ztz”l explains that Moshe was to explain to the older generation that their adherence and approach to this mitzva will set the standard and tone of how one’s future generations will conduct themselves. One’s actions live on far after he leaves this world as the higher standard one sets and achieves becomes the standard of his children and future generations.

Please reach out to us with any thoughts or comments at: [klalgovoah.org](http://klalgovoah.org)

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**Ohr Somayach** :: Torah Weekly :: Parsha Insights For the week ending 6 May 2023 / 15 Iyar 5783 Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - [www.seasonsofthemoon.com](http://www.seasonsofthemoon.com) Parshat Emor :: Turning a Blind Ayin Hara “No layman shall eat of the holy...” (22:10) Why does the Torah refer to Terumah – the priestly gifts - as ‘the holy’? Why not call it by its more common name, ‘teruma’? Nothing is more holy than giving. When a person is a giver, he becomes like Hashem. Of course, Hashem is the ultimate giver because there’s nothing that we can give to Him. He already has everything. But in our own way, what makes us holy is to be, as much as we can, like Him. But being a giver also provides greatest protection from an extremely destructive force that exists in the world. The Gemara (Bava Metzia 107a) says that Rav once visited a cemetery. After leaving the cemetery, he said, “Of the 100 people buried here, only one died of natural causes. The other 99 died of Ayin Hara (The Evil Eye).” The Torah and Chazal are replete with references to Ayin Hara: Sara put an ayin hara on Yishmael (Rashi on Bereshet 21:14), which gave him a fever and he couldn’t walk.

The Midrash Rabbah says that Sarah caused Hagar to have a miscarriage with Ayin Hara. Rashi says that Yaakov told his sons when they went down to Egypt to not all enter through the same gate, to avoid Ayin Hara. One of the five possibilities of the derech ra’ah (bad path) that we should avoid is ayin harah (Pirkei Avot 2:14). Ayin Hara is also one of the things that remove us from the world (Pirkei Avot 2:16). The first set of luchot given to Moshe at Har Sinai were given with much publicity, which led to an ayin hara and destruction, while the second set, given more quietly, were able to last forever. The Torah said to give a half-shekel for the purposes of a census and to not count Jews directly to avoid an ayin hara. The Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim (241:6) says that brothers do not get consecutive aliyot to avoid ayin hara. In Baba Metzia, 107alef again, Rav Yehuda told Ravin not to buy property adjacent to the city because it would then be subject to an ayin hara that would be able to damage it. And on and on. Yes. Ayin Hara is a reality and can be enormously destructive. But before you despair completely, there’s another Gemara that quotes Rabbi Yochanan as saying “I am a descendant of Yosef, over whom ayin hara has no power.” Why were Yosef and his descendants protected from the Ayin Hara? Jealousy causes ayin hara. So, someone who is self-evidently focused on the good of others, doesn’t provoke ayin hara. A person who is a giver and not a taker, in all of his dealings with the world, will not arouse any jealousy. This is why the descendants of Yosef are not susceptible to the ayin hara – because Yosef was so selfless. Yosef was the mashbir, the provider. Yosef’s sole intent was to provide for others, both the Jewish People and the Egyptians. To the extent that our eyes are focused on others, the evil eye will not focus on us. Thanks to Rabbi Asher Resnick © 2020 Ohr Somayach International

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Rabbi Wein - Priest of the People Inbox

**Rabbi Berel Wein** Thu, May 4, 5:14 PM (7 hours ago) to [rabbiwein](mailto:rabbiwein)

Top Banner logo Rabbi Wein By Rabbi Berel Wein  
Parshas Emor Priest of the People

We can all agree that the priestly family of Aharon has always had a special rank and position within the Jewish people. Having been chosen to represent God to the Jewish people and the Jewish people to God, so to speak, they had a decisive role of influence within Jewish life. Because of this, the Torah held them to a higher standard of pedigree and behavior than the rest of the Jewish people.

The prophet taught us that the priest was to resemble an angel of God in his knowledge and observance of Torah commandments and values. The special laws for the priests regarding marriage, divorce and pedigree that appear in this week’s Torah reading were also intended to influence the rest

of the Jewish people even though they, not being from the family of Aharon, were not bound by them.

The values of marriage, probity in personal relationships, pedigree and family were all indirectly strengthened throughout the Jewish nation by the special laws that were given to the priestly family. The priest was always meant to serve as an example, a role model for all of Israel. In essence this was his true spiritual role while his officiating at the Temple services was his day job, so to speak. We can also understand why the individual priest spent relatively little time at the Temple throughout the year but was occupied as the teacher of other Jews, through actual educational methodology and, just as importantly, by personal example.

During both First and Second Temple times, priests were the pivotal force in Jewish life, perhaps even more so than the kings and rulers of the nation. The priestly clan saved the Jewish people from national and moral destruction. Yet, at other times, they were the catalyst for the people's abandonment of Torah and Jewish tradition.

The Talmud lists for us the names of families from Second Temple times who were to be eternally remembered positively because of their Torah true behavior. And the names of those families of priests who were to be remembered negatively, due to their unseemly practices and behavior, were also recorded. Many of the laws and duties regarding the priests remained valid and in force even after the destruction of the Second Temple. The Talmud ordained that the priests were to continue to receive special honors and recognition from the Jewish people. The priestly blessings became the focal point of the prayer services and the honors due the priest were constantly strengthened in the long night of our exile. The priest was seen as our living personal connection to our past Temple glories and to our future redemption.

In our current world there are a number of study groups throughout the Jewish world, especially here in Israel, which concentrate upon the study of the laws and procedures of the priestly duties vis-a-vis the Temple services. It is no wonder that the priests of Israel are proudly zealous in preserving their lineage and the special place that they occupy in Jewish life, Shabbat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

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It's a Beautiful Heart - Essay by Rabbi YY Rabbi YY Jacobson <rabbiyy@theyeshiva.net> Thu, May 4, 2023 at 3:42 PM Reply-To: info@theyeshiva.net

It's a Beautiful Heart Why We Count Days and Weeks: Mental Illness, Trauma, and Depression

By: Rabbi YY Jacobson

John F. Nash Jr. at his Princeton graduation in 1950

Counting Days and Weeks

There are three kinds of people, goes the old joke: those who can count and those who can't.

There is something strange about the way we count 'sefirah'—the 49-day count, in the Jewish tradition, between Passover and the festival of Shavuos.

The Talmud states:[1]

Abaye stated, "It is a Mitzvah to count the days, and it is a Mitzvah to count the weeks." This is because both are mentioned explicitly in the Torah:

Leviticus 23:15-16: From the day following the (first) rest day (of Pesach)—the day you bring the Omer as a wave-offering—you should count for yourselves seven weeks. (When you count them) they should be perfect." You should count up until (but not including) fifty days, (i.e.) the day following the seventh week. (On the fiftieth day) you should bring (the first) meal-offering (from the) new (crop) to G-d.

Deuteronomy 16:9-10: You shall count seven weeks for yourself; from [the time] the sickle is first put to the standing crop, you shall begin to count seven weeks. And you shall perform the Festival of Weeks to the Lord, your God, the donation you can afford to give, according to how the Lord, your God, shall bless you.

Clearly, then, the Torah talks about two forms of counting: counting seven weeks and counting 49 days. We thus fulfill both mandates: At the conclusion of the first week, we count as follows: "Today is seven days, which is one week to the Omer." The next night: "Today is eight days, which is one week and one day to the Omer." "Today is forty-eight days, which is six weeks and six days to the Omer."

Yet this is strange. Why is the Torah adamant that we count both the days and the weeks simultaneously? One of these counts is superfluous. What do we gain by counting the week after we have already counted the days? Either say simply: "Today is seven days to the Omer," and if you want to know how many weeks that is you can do the math yourself, or alternatively, stick to weeks: "Today is one week to the Omer," and you don't have to be a genius to know how many days that includes!

Biblical or Rabbinic?

There is yet another perplexing matter.

The "Kurban Omer" was a barley offering brought in the Holy Temple on the second day of Passover (on the 16th of Nissan). They would harvest barely, grind it to flour, offer a fist-full of the flour on the altar, and the rest of the flour would be baked as matzah and eaten by the Kohanim (Omer is the Hebrew name for the volume of flour prepared; it is the volume of 42.2 eggs).

Hence the Torah states:[2] "And you shall count for yourselves from the morrow of the Sabbath, from the day on which you bring the Omer offering, seven complete weeks shall

there be; until the morrow of the seventh week you shall count fifty days..."

When the Beis HaMikdash (Holy Temple) stood in Jerusalem, this offering of a measure (omer) of barley, brought on the second day of Passover, marked the commencement of the seven-week count.

Today, we lack the opportunity to bring the Omer offering on Passover. The question then arises, is there still a mandate to do the sefiras haomer, the counting of the Omer? Without the Omer, are we still obligated to count the seven-week period?

As you may have guessed, there is a dispute among our sages. שולחן ערוך הרב אורה חיים סימן תפט סעיף ב: ומצוה זו נוהגת בארץ ובחו"ל בפני הבית ושלא בפני הבית. ויש אומרים שבזמן הזה שאין בית המקדש קיים ואין מקריבין העומר אין מצוה זו נוהגת כלל מדברי תורה אלא מדברי סופרים שתיקנו זכר למקדש וכן עיקר.

The Rambam (Maimonides), the Chinuch, the Ravva, and others,[3] are of the opinion that the mandate to count isn't dependent on the Omer offering. Even today we are obligated biblically to count 49 days between Passover and Shavuot.

However, Tosefot and most halachik authorities, including the Code of Jewish Law,[4] maintain the view that the biblical mitzvah of counting is directly dependent on the actual Omer offering. Hence, today there is only a rabbinic obligation to count, to commemorate the counting in the times of the Holy Temple. Our counting today is not a full-fledged biblical commandment (mitzvah deoraita), but a rabbinical ordinance that merely commemorates the mitzvah fulfilled in the times of the Beit HaMikdash.

So far so good.

### The Third Opinion

But there is a fascinating third and lone opinion, that of the 13th-century French and Spanish sage, Rabbeinu Yerucham.[5] רבינו ירוחם ספר תולדות אדם והוה, חלק אדם, נתיב חלק ד: ונראה לו, משום דכתוב בתורה [שתי פרשיות], שבעה שבועות תספור לך וגוי' וכתוב נמי מיום הביאכם את עומר וגוי' שבע שבתות תמימות תהיין, נמצא שלא נכתבה ספירת שבועות כי אם גבי העומר, אבל ספירת הימים [תספורו חמשים יום] לא כתיב גבי עומר, נמצא דספירת הימים הוא מן התורה אפילו בזמן הזה, וספירת השבועות בזמן דאיכא עומר. והיו מברכים זה על זה בזמן שביהמ"ק היה קיים... ובזמן הזה אנו סופרים לשבועות זכר למקדש... לכך אנו אומרים שהם כך וכך שבועות שאין זו ספירה ממש.

He says that it depends on which counting we are talking about. The days or the weeks. The counting of the days is a biblical mandate even today, while the counting of the weeks, says Rabbeinu Yerucham, is only a rabbinic mandate.

This third opinion is an interesting combination of the first two: according to Rabbeinu Yerucham, it is a biblical mitzvah to count the days also when the Beit HaMikdash is not extant, but the mitzvah to count the weeks applies only when the Omer is offered, and is thus today only a rabbinical commandment.

The rationale behind his view is fascinating. When the Torah states to count the weeks it is stated in the context of the Omer

offering; so without the Omer offering, the biblical obligation falls away. But when the Torah states to count the days it says so independently of the Omer offering. So even without an omer, there is still a mitzvah to count 49 days.

Now this seems really strange. How are we to understand Rabbeinu Yerucham? Counting is counting, what exactly is the difference between saying "Today is twenty-eight days of the Omer" and saying "Today is four weeks of the Omer"? How can we make sense of the notion that counting days is a biblical mandate while counting weeks is a rabbinic mandate?

To be sure, he offers a convincing proof from the Torah text. But that only transfers the question onto the Torah: What would be the logic to command Jews today, in exile, to count only days and not weeks? Yet Jews during the time of the Holy Temple were commanded by the Torah to do both?

The views of Rambam and Tosefos are clear. Either the entire obligation (the count of the days and the weeks) is biblical, or it is all rabbinic. But the split Rabbanu Yerucham suggests seems absurd. Why would the Torah make this differentiation? Why would it deny us the opportunity to count weeks during exile, but still obligate us to count days lacking the Holy Temple?

### Two Types of Self-Work

Let's excavate the mystery of the days and the weeks and the three views of Rambam, Tosefos and Rabanu Yerucham, from the deeper emotional, psychological, and spiritual vantage point. This explanation was offered by the Lubavitcher Rebbe during an address, on Lag B'Omer 5711, May 24, 1951.[6]

The teachings of Kabbalah and Chassidism describe seven basic character traits in the heart of each human being: Chesed (love, kindness), Gevurah (discipline, boundaries, restraint), Tiferet (beauty, empathy), Netzach (victory, ambition), Hod (humility, gratitude, and acknowledging mistakes), Yesod (bonding and communicatively) and Malchus (leadership, confidence, selflessness).

This is the deeper significance of the "counting of the omer," the mitzvah to count seven weeks from Passover to Shavuot. Judaism designates a period of the year for "communal therapy," when together we go through a process of healing our inner selves, step by step, issue by issue, emotion by emotion. On each of the seven weeks, we focus on one of the seven emotions in our lives, examining it, refining it, and fixing it—aligning it with the Divine emotions.[7]

In the first week, we focus on the love in our life. Do I know how to express and receive love? Do I know how to love? In the second week, we focus on our capacity for creating boundaries. Do I know how to create and maintain proper borders? In the third week, we reflect on our ability for empathy. Do I know how to emphasize? Do I know how to be here for someone else on their terms, not mine? In the fourth week, we look at our capacity to triumph in the face of adversity. Do I know how to win? Do I have ambition? The

fifth week—on our ability to express gratitude, show vulnerability and admit mistakes. The sixth week—on our ability to communicate and bond. And finally, in the seventh week, we focus on our skills as leaders. I’m I confident enough to lead? Do I know how to lead? Do I possess inner dignity? Is my leadership driven by insecurity or egotism?

But as we recall, the mitzvah is to count both the days and the weeks. For each of the seven weeks is further divided into seven days. Each of these seven traits is expressed in our life in various thoughts, words, and deeds. So during the seven days of each week, we focus each day on another detail of how this particular emotion expresses itself in our lives. If the week count represents tackling the core of the emotion itself, the day count represents tackling not the emotion itself, but rather how it expresses itself in our daily lives, in the details of our lives, in our behaviors, words, and thoughts.[8]

#### Transformation vs. Self-Control

When I say, “Today is one week to the omer,” I am saying: Today I managed to tune in to the full scope of that emotion, transforming it, healing it at its core.

Every once in a while you hear what we call a miracle story. Someone who was struggling with an addiction for many years has a deep insight, or perhaps they go through a therapeutic program, or another healing journey, and they come out completely healed. They have touched such a deep place within themselves, that it completely transformed their life, releasing the trauma that was eating at them. The addiction is gone. The anxiety is no more. Their anger or jealousy is no longer an issue. Like a child who is being toilet trained, at one point he stops entertaining the idea of using a diaper. He has matured. So too, there is a possibility of counting weeks i.e. completely transforming a particular emotion, completely weeding out the distortions.

#### The Day Model

This is an extraordinary experience, and in recent times we were gifted with healing opportunities that can sometimes achieve such incredible results, yet this type of radical transformation is not always available for us.

We now come to the second model of self-refinement, the “day model.” This is the model that belongs to each of us, at every moment. I am not always capable, maybe I am never capable, of the week model, but I am always capable of the day model. There is no great transformation here, the urges are there, the temptations are there, the dysfunction is there, the anxiety can still rear its crazy head, the addictions are there, the negative emotions are there, and the promiscuous cravings are intact, but I manage to refine the day—meaning I learn how to control where and how that emotion will be expressed in the details of my life. I may not have the ability to redefine the very core of the emotion—the entire “week”—but I can still choose

how it will be channeled, or not channeled, in the details of my life.[9]

Imagine you are driving your car and approaching a red light. Now you've got someone in the backseat screaming, “Go! Run the light! Just do it!” The guy is screaming right in your ear. The screams are loud and annoying, but if you're the one behind the wheel, no amount of screaming can actually make you run the light. Why not? Because you can identify the screamer as an alien voice to yourself; he is a stranger bringing up a ludicrous and dangerous idea. You may not be able to stop the screaming, but you can identify it, and thus quarantine it, putting it in context of where it belongs—to a strange man hollering stupidity.

But imagine if when hearing that voice “take the red light,” you decide that it is your rational mind speaking to you; you imagine that this is your intelligence speaking to you—then it becomes so much harder to say no.

Same with emotions and thoughts. Even while being emotionally hijacked, I still have the wheel in my hand. I may not have the ability now to transform my urge and stop the screaming of certain thoughts, but as long as I can identify that this thought is not my essence, and is coming from a part of me that is insecure and unwholesome, I need not allow that thought to define me and to control my behavior.

#### Suicidal Thoughts

A woman struggling with suicidal thoughts recently shared with me, how she learned to deal with them more effectively.

“I always believed that when I have my suicidal urges I'm not in control. After all, suicide urges were not something that I could bring up at will - I had to be triggered in a hugely discomforting way for the suicide ideas to surface so vengefully.

“But this time around, I realized that thoughts were just that, thoughts. And it's we who choose if to engage the thoughts and define ourselves by them. We choose if to act on our thoughts or not. It's not easy thinking new thoughts when the old familiar thoughts tell you that suicide is the only answer.”

If the only thing people learned was not to be afraid of their experience, that alone would change the world. The moment we can look at our urge or temptation in the eye and say, “Hi! I’m not afraid of you, all you are is a thought,” we have in effect gained control over that urge.

#### The Text Message

Say you get a text from your wife: “When are you coming home?” Immediately you experience a thought that produces anger. “Will she ever appreciate how hard I work? What does she think I am doing here in the office? Can’t she just leave me alone!”

But, hey, relax. All she asked was when you are coming home, perhaps because she misses you and loves you and wants to see your face. But due to your own insecurities, you can’t even see

that. You are used to your mother bashing you, and you instinctively assume she is also bashing you. But she is not. She just asked a simple, innocent question.

Can I get rid of my insecurity and my anger? Maybe one day, with the right healing and healer. But I can IDENTIFY my emotion as coming from my insecure dimensions, and I can say to myself, I will not allow that part of myself to take control over my life. I will not allow the toxic image of myself, as the man who everyone is waiting to criticize, to overtake me completely. Once I identify where the emotion comes from, I can quarantine it, and let it be what it is, but without allowing it to define me. The key is that I do not get trapped into thinking that that thought is me—that it reflects my essence. No! it is just a thought. It is not me. And it does not have to be me. I define it; it does not define me. It is part of me, but it is not all of me. It is the guy in the back seat screaming “Take the light.” I did not manage to refine the week. But I did manage to refine the day—I got control of how my thoughts and emotion will manifest themselves in the individual days and behaviors of my life.

Winston Churchill suffered from depression. In his biography, he describes how he came to see his depression as a black dog always accompanying him and sometimes barking very loudly. But the black dog was not him. The depressing thoughts were just that—thoughts.[10]

It is one of the powerful ideas in Tanya, that thoughts are the “garments of the soul,” not the soul. Garments are made to change. We often see our thoughts as our very selves. But they are not; they are garments. You can change them whenever you want to.

#### A Beautiful Mind; a Beautiful Life

It is hard not to shed a tear when you read the biography “A Beautiful Mind” about the tragic and triumphant life of Mr. Nash (later also produced as a film).

John Nash, born in 1928, was named early in his career as one of the most promising mathematicians in the world, Nash is regarded as one of the great mathematicians of the 20th century. He set the foundations of modern game theory—the mathematics of decision-making—while still in his 20s, and his fame grew during his time at Princeton University and at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he met Alicia Larde, a physics major. They married in 1957.

But by the end of the 1950s, insane voices in his head began to overtake his thoughts on mathematical theory. He developed a terrible mental illness. Nash, in his delusions, accused one mathematician of entering his office to steal his ideas and began to hear alien messages. When Nash was offered a prestigious chair at the University of Chicago, he declined because he was planning to become Emperor of Antarctica. John believed that all men who wore red ties were part of a communist conspiracy against him. Nash mailed letters to

embassies in Washington, D.C., declaring that they were establishing a government. His psychological issues crossed into his professional life when he gave an American Mathematical Society lecture at Columbia University in 1959. While he intended to present proof of the Riemann hypothesis, the lecture was incomprehensible. He spoke as a madman. Colleagues in the audience immediately realized that something was terribly wrong.

He was admitted to the Hospital, where he was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia. For many years he spent periods in psychiatric hospitals, where he received antipsychotic medications and shock therapy.

Due to the stress of dealing with his illness, his wife Alicia divorced him in 1963. And yet Alicia continued to support him throughout his illness. After his final hospital discharge in 1970, he lived in Alicia’s house as a boarder.

It was during this time that he learned how to consciously discard his paranoid delusions. "I had been long enough hospitalized that I would finally renounce my delusional hypotheses and revert to thinking of myself as a human of more conventional circumstances, and return to mathematical research," Nash later wrote about himself.

He ultimately was allowed by Princeton University to teach again. Over the years he became a world-renowned mathematician contributing majorly to the field. In 2001, Alicia decided to marry again her first sweetheart whom she once divorced. Alicia and John Nash married each other for the second time.

In later years they both became major advocates for mental health care in New Jersey when their son John was also diagnosed with schizophrenia.

In 1994, John Nash won the Noble Prize in Economic Sciences.

#### What Is Logic?

In the final scene of the film, Nash receives the Nobel Prize. During the ceremony, he says the following:

I've always believed in numbers and the equations and logic that lead to reason.

But after a lifetime of such pursuits, I ask,

"What truly is logic?"

"Who decides reason?"

My quest has taken me through the physical, the metaphysical, the delusional—and back.

And I have made the most important discovery of my career, the most important discovery of my life: It is only in the mysterious equations of love that any logic or reasons can be found.

I'm only here tonight because of you [pointing to his wife, Alicia].

You are the reason I am.

You are all my reasons.



Thank you.

The crowd jumps from their chairs, giving a thundering standing ovation to the brilliant mathematician who has been to hell and back, a few times.

And then comes one of the most moving scenes.

Nothing Is Wrong

Right after the Noble Prize ceremony, as John is leaving the hall, the mental disease suddenly attacks him in the most vicious and sinister way. Suddenly, his delusions come right back to him, and in the beautiful hallways of Stockholm, he “sees” the very characters that were responsible for destroying his life. He suddenly “sees” all of the communists who he believed were out to destroy him.

It is a potentially tragic moment of epic proportions. Here is a man who just won the Noble Prize. Here is a man who has become world-renowned. Here is a man who is considered one of the greatest minds of the century. Here is a man standing with his loving wife, basking in the shadow of international glory. And yet, at this very moment, the devil of mental illness strikes lethally, mentally “abducting” poor John Nash.

His wife senses that something is going on; she sees how he has suddenly wandered off. He is not present anymore in the real world. His eyes are elsewhere; his body is overtaken by fear.

In deep pain and shock, she turns to her husband and asks him, “What is it? What’s wrong?”

He pauses, looks at the fictional people living in his tormented mind, then looks back at her, and with a smile on his face he says: “Nothing; nothing at all.” He takes her hand and off they go.

It is a moment of profound triumph. Here you have a man at the height of everything, and schizophrenia suddenly strikes him. There was nothing he could do to get rid of it. It was still there; it never left him. Yet his hard inner world allowed him to identify it as an illness and thus quarantine it. He could define it and place it in context, rather than have it define him. He could see it for what it is: an unhealthy mental disease, alien to his beautiful essence.

No, he does not get rid of schizophrenia but rather learns how to define it, rather than letting it define him. He has to be able to at least identify it as thoughts that do not constitute his essence, and stem from a part in him that is unhealthy.

John Nash could see all those mental images and say to himself: “These are forces within me, but it is not me. It is a mental illness—and these voices are coming from a part of me that is really ill. But I am sitting at the wheel of my life, and I have decided not to allow these thoughts to take over my life. I will continue living, I will continue loving and connecting to my wife and to all the good in my life, even as the devils in my brain never shut up. I can’t count my weeks, but I can count my days.”

Nash once said something very moving about himself. “I wouldn’t have had good scientific ideas if I had thought more normally.” He also said, “If I felt completely pressure-less I don’t think I would have gone in this pattern”. You see, he managed to even perceive the blessing and the opportunity in his struggle, despite the terrible price he paid for them.

Nash was a hero of real life. Here you have a guy, dealing with a terrible mental sickness, but with time, work, and most importantly, with love and support, he learns to stand up to it. He learns how his health isn’t defined by the mental chatter and by what his mind decides to show him at the moment. He has learned that despite all of it, day in and day out he can show up in his life and be in control, rather than the illness controlling him.

The Accident

On May 23, 2015, John and his wife Alicia were on their way home after a visit to Norway, where Nash had received the Abel Prize for Mathematics from King Harald V for his work.

He did arrange for a limo to fetch him and his wife from Newark airport and them home to West Windsor, NJ. The plane landed early, so they just picked up a regular cab to take them home.

They were both sitting in a cab on the New Jersey Turnpike. When the driver of the taxicab lost control of the vehicle and struck a guardrail. Both John and Alicia were ejected from the car upon impact and died on the spot. Nash was 86 years old; his wife 80.

What Can We Achieve Now?

At last, we can appreciate the depth of the Torah law concerning the counting of the omer. The quest for perfection continues at all times and under all conditions, even in the darkest hours of exile. We thus are instructed to count not only the days but also the weeks. We are charged with the duty of learning self-control (days) and also trying to achieve transformation (weeks).[11] But it is here that Rabbeinu Yerucham offers us a deeply comforting thought.

True, in the times of the Holy Temple, a time of great spiritual revelation, the Torah instructs us and empowers us to count both days and weeks. In the presence of such intense spiritual awareness, they had the ability to also count weeks. However, today says Rabbeinu Yerucham, we don’t breathe the same awareness. We are in exile. We live in a spiritually diminished level of awareness. Hence, the biblical obligation is to count the days, to gain control over our behavior. Counting the weeks, i.e. fully transforming our emotions, is only a rabbinic obligation, simply to reminisce and remember that ultimately there is a path of transformation we strive for.[12]

[1] Menachos 66a [2] Leviticus 23:15 [3] Rambam Laws of Temidin Umusafin ch. 7. See all other references quoted in Shulchan Aruch HaRav ibid. [4] Tosefos Menachos 66a. Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim section 489. See all other

references quoted in Shulchan Aruch HaRav ibid. [5] Rabanu Yerucham ben Meshullam (1290-1350), was a prominent rabbi and posek during the period of the Rishonim. He was born in Provence, France. In 1306, after the Jewish expulsion from France, he moved to Toledo, Spain. During this time of his life, he became a student of Rabbi Asher ben Yeciell known as the Rosh. In the year 1330, he began writing his work Sefer Maysharim on civil law. He completed this work in four years. At the end of his life, he wrote his main halachik work Sefer Toldos Adam V'Chava. Various components of halacha as ruled by Rabbenu Yerucham, have been codified in the Shulchan Aruch in the name of Rabbeinu Yerucham. He greatly influenced Rabbi Yosef Karo. He is quoted extensively by Rabbi Karo in both the Shulchan Aruch as well as the Beis Yosef on the Tur. [6] Maamar Usfartem Lag Baomer 5711. As far as I know, it is the first and only source to explain the view of Rabanu Yerucham according to Chassidus. [7] Likkutei Torah Emor, Maamar Usfartem (the first one). [8] Since the focus is on the expression of emotion in the details of our life, hence there are seven days, representing the seven nuanced ways in which each emotion expresses itself, through love, or through might, or through empathy, or through ambition, etc. [9] In many ways, this constitutes the basic difference between the Tzaddik and the Banuni in Tanya. [10] It is one of the powerful ideas in Tanya, that thoughts are the “garments of the soul,” not the soul. Garments are made to change. We often see our thoughts as our very self. But they are not; they are garments. You can change them whenever you want to. [11] See Tanya ch. 14 [12] For Rambam, both counts even today are biblical. Whereas for Tosefos, both counts today are rabbinic. Perhaps we can connect this with the idea in Sefarim, that the galus for the Ashkenazim was far deeper than for the Sefardim.

**Rav Kook Torah** Emor: Eating before Yom Kippur Rabbi Chanan Morrison The Ninth of Tishrei While there are several rabbinically-ordained fasts throughout the year, only one day of fasting is mentioned in the Torah: “It is a sabbath of sabbaths to you, when you must fast. You must observe this sabbath on the ninth of the month in the evening, from evening until [the next] evening.” (Lev. 23:32) This refers to the fast of Yom Kippur. The verse, however, appears to contain a rather blatant ‘mistake’; Yom Kippur falls out on the tenth of Tishrei, not the ninth! The Talmud in Berachot 8b explains that the day before Yom Kippur is also part of the atonement process, even though there is no fasting: “This teaches that one who eats and drinks on the ninth is credited as if he fasted on both the ninth and tenth.” Still, we need to understand: Why is there a mitzvah to eat on the day before Yom Kippur? In what way does this eating count as a day of fasting? Two Forms of Teshuvah The theme of Yom Kippur is, of course, teshuvah — repentance, the

soul’s return to its natural purity. There are two major aspects to teshuvah. The first is the need to restore the spiritual sensitivity of the soul, dulled by over-indulgence in physical pleasures. This refinement is achieved by temporarily rejecting physical enjoyment, and substituting life’s hectic pace with prayer and reflection. The Torah gave us one day a year, the fast of Yom Kippur, to concentrate exclusively on refining our spirits and redefining our goals. However, the aim of Judaism is not asceticism. As Maimonides wrote (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Dei&#39;ot 3:1): “One might say, since jealousy, lust and arrogance are bad traits, driving a person out of the world, I shall go to the opposite extreme. I will not eat meat, drink wine, marry, live in a pleasant house, or wear nice clothing... like the idolatrous monks. This is wrong, and it is forbidden to do so. One who follows this path is called a sinner.... Therefore, the Sages instructed that we should only restrict ourselves from that which the Torah forbids.... It is improper to constantly fast.” The second aspect of teshuvah is more practical and down-to-earth. We need to become accustomed to acting properly and avoid the pitfalls of material desires that violate the Torah’s teachings. This type of teshuvah is not attained by fasts and prayer, but by preserving our spiritual integrity while we are involved in worldly matters. The true goal of Yom Kippur is achieved when we can remain faithful to our spiritual essence while remaining active participants in the physical world. When do we accomplish this aspect of teshuvah? When we eat on the ninth of Tishrei. Then we demonstrate that, despite our occupation with mundane activities, we can remain faithful to the Torah’s values and ideals. Thus, our eating on the day before Yom Kippur is connected to our fasting on Yom Kippur itself. Together, these two days correspond to the two corrective aspects of the teshuvah process. By preceding the fast with eating and drinking, we ensure that the reflection and spiritual refinement of Yom Kippur are not isolated to that one day, but have an influence on the entire year’s involvement in worldly activities. The inner, meditative teshuvah of the tenth of Tishrei is thus complemented by the practical teshuvah of the ninth. Gold from the Land of Israel pp. 210-212. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I, p. 42. Illustration image: On the eve of Yom Kippur (Prayer), Jakub Weinles (1870- 1935) Copyright © 2022 Rav Kook Torah

**Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein** <ravadlerstein@torah.org> Thu, May 4, 5:35 PM (6 hours ago) to targumim  
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**Parshas Emor Eating and Fasting as Korbanos**  
 You shall afflict yourselves on the ninth of the month in the evening, from evening to evening you shall rest.[2]  
 A simple, concise description of what our avodah is all about:  
 We attach the Divine portion within us to its Heavenly source

through our involvement with Torah and its mitzvos. This applies to things that are outside of our own selves. There are sparks of kedushah and fallen neshamos that do not have the ability to rise up and attach themselves to their shorashim on their own, because they have been mired in physicality. Getting them there becomes our responsibility. To help them along, we are charged to attach ourselves to all the lofty madregos, so that we can push along the nitzotzos towards their ultimate goal.

Chazal teach[3] that, after the destruction of the beis ha-mikdash, a person's table achieves atonement for him. In other words, his eating is itself a korban! Explained simply, what we eat contains some of the nitzotzos of holiness that must be elevated. When we succeed in doing so – when we literally bring them closer to their Divine source – we are bringing a korban (which means something brought close) to Hashem. What we consume contains some element of Divine vitality. (The enjoyment we derive from it is a spiritual one, in part. We taste the spiritual part of the food, not just the physical.) By eating, we make that Divine vitality a part of ourselves. Now, if we then utilize that added vitality in our service of Hashem through mitzvos, and in the part of our speech that is uttered in devekus, we have brought along those nitzotzos for the ride. By attaching them to higher madregos, we have brought them as a korban to Hashem!

Ironically, fasting is also considered a korban – as if we had placed some of our body mass on the altar for consumption.[4] Our thoughts while we fast properly lead to a heart that is subdued and subservient to HKBH through teshuvah. This moves our personal shorashim above to try to pull us up towards Him. (Thus, eating and fasting work in opposite directions. Eating can be a korban when it initiates movement in our world below, and succeeds in elevating it. Fasting works to move the holy shorashim above to attach themselves to things below.)

Freeing the nitzotzos and elevating them proves to be beyond the ability of most people. Because they do not possess a rich complement of daas – the daas of ein od milvado/There is nothing but Hashem – people do not escape looking at food for its benefit to well-being and the pleasure of eating it. They cannot focus on the opportunity to unlock the holiness resident in it, and incorporate it in themselves.

Inexorably, however, eating remains an important human activity. In His kindness, Hashem created a way to allow everyone an opportunity to participate in an elevated form on eating. Therefore, He made a mitzvah out of eating on the ninth of Tishrei, the day before Yom Kippur. Even eating for the usual mundane reasons is still a mitzvah on this day. Thus, everything that he has eaten throughout the year, including the nitzotzos that he swallowed up, participate in a mitzvah experience, and are thus elevated.

The following day, everyone is afforded an opportunity to experience korban-through-fasting. Jews who could never on their own move and inspire themselves to teshuvah, routinely do so on Yom Kippur. With their teshuvah, they ignite a reaction from above to below. Moreover, this korban is the only one people can possibly bring on Yom Kippur. They need to focus on this alone. The korban that works in the other direction – from below to above – through elevating the nitzotzos has no place on Yom Kippur, when all eating and drinking are interdicted.

In this way, all forms of kedushah are united on Yom Kippur: those rising from below to above (having done so on Erev Yom Kippur), as well as those descended from above to below. This unification results in atonement for all the sins of Israel.

Based on Meor Einayim by Rav Menachem Nochum of Chernobyl ↑ Vayikra 23:32 ↑ Berachos 55a ↑ Berachos 17a ↑ Meor Einayim © 2022 by Torah.org.

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**Shema Yisrael Torah Network**

**Peninim on the Torah - Parashas Emor**

**פרשת אמור תשפ"ג**

שור או כשב או עז כי יולד והיה שבעה ימים תחת אמור... ושור או שה... אותו ואת בנו לא תשחטו ביום אחד... וכי תזבח זבח תודה לד' לרצונכם תזבחו... ולא תחללו את שם קדשי ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל

**An ox, lamb or goat, when it is born shall be with its mother for seven days... (22:27)**

**But an ox or a sheep... you may not slaughter and its offspring on the same day... (22:28)**

**When you slaughter a feast thanksgiving offering to Hashem, you shall slaughter it to gain favor for yourselves. (22:29)**

**You shall not desecrate My Holy Name, rather I shall be sanctified among Bnei Yisrael. (22:32)**

Four *pesukim* in sequence: the first three address *korbanos*, offerings; the fourth *pasuk* addresses *chillul* and *kiddush Hashem*, profaning and sanctifying Hashem's Name. Clearly, the Torah's arrangement of *pesukim* is not haphazard. Every *pasuk*, every letter, every crown, is in its specific place by Heavenly design. What is the rationale behind the positioning of these four *pesukim*? *Horav Shimon Schwab, zl* (Rav Schwab on *Chumash*), examines the common denominator in these *pesukim*. It is about life and living. First, the Torah teaches us that not just any animal, regardless of age, may be sacrificed. It must be, at minimum, eight days old. Second, it is prohibited to sacrifice a cow and its offspring on the same day. Third, the Torah discusses the *Korban Todah*, thanksgiving offering, and the importance of gratitude. The Torah leaves the sacrifices of animals and directs us toward the ultimate sacrifice: giving up one's life for Hashem. We are admonished never to profane His Holy Name, but rather,

sanctify it – in any manner possible. [One need not give up his life to sanctify His Name. Living a moral/spiritually correct life is *kiddush ha'chaim*, sanctifying life, which is also a *Kiddush Hashem*.]

*Horav* Schwab explains that the goal of Jewish life is to create a *kiddush Hashem*. The question which we must first answer is: What does life mean to us? How much do we really value life? The Torah gives us three examples which emphasize the value of life itself. First is the law that prohibits slaughtering an animal until it is at least eight days old. This demonstrates the reverence the Torah has for life. The popular notion is that a short life is an incomplete life. Every minute of life has the greatest infinite value. We have no idea of the value of a short life lived well, in contrast to a longer life which had many “gaps” of time not used to its fullest potential. General Douglas McArthur was wont to say, “Some people die at the age of thirty, but are not buried until they are seventy.”

Second, the prohibition against slaughtering an animal and its offspring on the same day underscores the revulsion associated with genocide and emphasizes the supremacy of life. Last, the *mitzvah* to bring a thanksgiving offering after one has survived a harrowing life-threatening experience demonstrates the importance of recognizing and appreciating our greatest Heavenly gift: life.

Making the ultimate sacrifice has greatest significance when one's life has meaning and value. Someone, who due to circumstances beyond his control, is relegated to living a wretched life of poverty, serious illness and other *tzaros*, troubles, is unable to truly value life. One who nonetheless does, is a G-dly person who sees beyond the ephemeral and recognizes that living to serve Hashem, regardless of the circumstances, is in and of itself a privilege. A person who lives in misery and feels miserable does not sacrifice as much with his life as one whose life is filled with positive joy and success. Thus, the Torah is teaching us the precious nature of life and how important it is to cherish every moment. The Torah teaches us this so that, if by some Heavenly decree, he is called upon to pay the ultimate sacrifice, he will do just that, give up something that is of ultimate value to him.

A principle in *halachah*, *pikuach nefesh* (literally watching over one's soul), enjoins us to do everything possible to preserve Jewish life. This *halachah* overrides every other rule in Judaism. When a person's life is in critical danger, most laws are not applicable. Human life is sacrosanct and takes precedence over other *mitzvos*. Thus, if someone endangers himself to save a Jewish life, or, even if it is not dangerous, but he gives of himself to save a fellow Jew, he is performing a special service to Hashem. With the aforementioned in mind, the barometer for determining the level of reward for such an act of self-sacrifice is the individual's personal outlook on life and his appreciation of its value.

The following story, related by Rabbi Tzvi Nakar, demonstrates how far an individual was willing to go to save the life of a newborn infant and the incredible reward he received. The story dates back to the early twentieth century when the Rh factor incompatibility was not yet understood scientifically. As a result, a child whose blood type was at variance with the mother's blood type (mother Rh negative; fetus is Rh positive) did not survive very long after birth. Sadly, while the medical field was searching for answers, infants who had this blood type succumbed shortly after birth. A *Yerushalmi* couple fell victim to this condition, losing their child within hours of his birth. Everyone in the community *davened*. It was all they could do, hoping for a miracle to avert another tragedy.

It was an unusual case for a medical community that was, at best, breaking ground in the field of modern medicine. The doctors were stumped. Word of the case reached a distinguished European professor who specialized in neonatal mortality. Deeply moved by the story, he contacted the parents and suggested that, given the mother's incompatible Rh factor, the fetus's blood should be immediately changed at birth by transfusing it with a compatible blood type. The parents were overjoyed. They had hope! They had, however, a problem: the transfusion had to come from someone who had a specific blood type, and it should take place immediately at birth. This meant that the donor had to be at the birth in anticipation of any complications.

It was a challenging search. This was in the days before the computer and even before the phone. The parents placed advertisements in newspapers throughout the world-Jewish community, hoping for a positive response from someone who had the heart, time and wherewithal to undertake this life-saving endeavor. It was a daunting challenge, but someone came through for them. A wealthy American Jew was willing to participate in saving a life – and, by extension, a family.

The months of pregnancy passed and, as the woman entered her ninth month, the donor from America made plans to leave home for *Eretz Yisrael*. He arrived in time and accompanied the family to the hospital where the mother gave birth to a beautiful, otherwise healthy baby. The doctor professor was on hand as blood was taken from the donor and transferred to the newborn. The grateful parents had no words to express their overwhelming sense of gratitude to the man from America. He was honored with being *sandek*, holding the baby on his lap, as the *bris* was performed. The man played down his role in the lifesaving experience. “I only did what was right. How could I turn my back on the life of a child?” he remarked.

The family shared every milestone in young Moshe's (his given name) life. From his *upsherin* (cutting his hair for the first time at the age of three), his starting to learn *aleph bais*,

then *siddur*, followed by *Chumash* and *Rashi*. They sent pictures of everything, including his starting to learn *Mishnayos*, then *Gemorah*. Moshe was an exceptional student, brilliant and diligent. He was on the road to becoming a Torah leader. The donor attended Moshe's *bar mitzvah*, being treated by everyone as a surrogate father. He beamed with *nachas* and joy as his "son" rattled off his *pshetl*, speech, as if he were a *Rosh Yeshivah* addressing his students. Moshe was accepted into one of *Eretz Yisrael's* most prestigious *yeshivos*, where, for the next eight years, he rose to the top of each class. During this entire time, his parents would make a point to share their joy and offer their profound gratitude to the American philanthropist who had given more than money – he gave life.

It was now time for Moshe to establish his own home. His parents were *redt*, suggested, an outstanding girl who was the daughter of an American family who had the wherewithal to support a son-in-law for as long as he chose to learn. They were insisting, of course, on a young man that was exceptional and not only in his erudition – but also in his character traits and *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven. They wanted a special young man for their special daughter. By now, the reader has guessed the names of the players in this *shidduch*. Moshe's *Rosh Yeshivah* suggested a young woman from America, whose father was well-known for his love of Torah and his performance of *chesed*. Money was no object. Forty days before Moshe was born, Heaven decreed that he would marry the daughter of the man who was Hashem's *shliach*, agent, to save his life. Little did the man know that he had saved the life of the child who would one day become his son-in-law. He valued life and Hashem rewarded him for it.

וספרתם לכם ממחרת השבת מיום הביאכם את עמר התניפה שבע שבתות תמימת תהיינה

**You shall count for yourselves from the morrow of the rest day, from the day when you bring the *Omer* of the waving – seven weeks, they shall be complete. (23:15)**

The *mitzvah* of *sefiras haOmer*, counting of the *Omer*, is the injunction to count every day (49 days) from the second day of *Pesach*, when the *Omer* is brought, until the fiftieth day, which heralds the Festival of *Shavuos*. Every single day of *sefiras haOmer* is an individual period of preparing oneself, refining one's spiritual attributes, yearning for the moment when we receive the Torah. The seven-week period comprised of forty-nine days follows in the Torah's tradition of dealing with a transition from a lower to a higher standard of morality, from a primitive, raw condition to one of advanced purity and sanctity, to pass through a seven-fold cycle of time before the elevated level of purity commences. *Horav S. R. Hirsch, zl*, observes that a male, in fact, can be initiated into *bris milah* only after seven days; an animal can be sacrificed only after seven days of life have passed. One who is ritually contaminated, *tamei*, can enter the environs of the Sanctuary after seven days. Likewise,

married life can continue after seven days of purification. The Jewish People, having recently been liberated from bondage in the spiritual stench that was Egypt, required a seven-cycle ritual of purification prior to receiving the Torah.

*Rav Hirsch* explains that the Torah is not the starting point of *Klal Yisrael's* world historic development; the acceptance of the Torah, was not the beginning and end of our relationship with Judaism. Rather, the entire Jewish history of the last 3,000 years is but an application of the purification process through which we pass before *Kabbolas HaTorah*, accepting the Torah, on what became the Festival of *Shavuos*. The purpose of our history is our education and preparation for the fulfillment of the verities and ideals of the Torah. In summation, *Kabbolas HaTorah* is not the process of receiving the Torah, but rather, the preparation and yearning to fulfill its commandments. *Shavuos* is not something that we have already achieved, but it is a goal for which we aim. Receiving the Torah means to prepare for our fulfillment of its mandates. It is a process renewed continuously when we study and constantly refine our character for more and deeper study. *Shavuos* is not fettered to a specific time and place. It occurs on the fifteenth day after the seven-week counting. Its meaning and goals transcend time and place.

Having said this, we now understand that each and every one of us is *mekabel Torah* individually, commensurate with his input of passion for learning and diligence in fulfilling his overwhelming desire for Torah. An entire volume of stories could be written about this – and that would only be scratching the surface. Clearly, diligence and yearning change with generations and its exposure to the culture and society in which they live. *Horav Eliezer Halevi Turk, Shlita*, writes about *Horav Hirsch Michel Shapiro, zl*, who was one of the Torah giants who made their home in the small alleys of Yerushalayim in the early twentieth century. These giants of the spirit knew nothing but Torah and *avodah*. Their lives revolved around it. He quotes from a tribute to him rendered by *Horav Yaakov Moshe Charlop, zl*, *Rav* of Shaarei Chesed and one of *Rav Hirsch Michel's* premier *talmidim*. *Rav Hirsch Michel* was a student of the *Zayis Raanan* of Kutna and a close confidante of both the *Imrei Binah* and *Maharil Diskin*. *Rav Charlop* writes that following the *petirah*, passing, of his *Rebbe*, the *Zayis Raanan*, *Rav Hirsch Michel* no longer went to sleep in his bed. He would only nap, and, regardless of where he put his head down, he was up by *chatzos*, midnight, to learn both revealed and esoteric Torah/commentary. He would learn while standing. His idea of sleep was to put his hand against the wall and lean on it. He asked his students to wake him after ten minutes. He then went to the *mikveh* prior to reciting *Tikkun chatzos*, the prayer of mourning over the *Bais Hamikdash*. After that, he rose from the floor (*Tikkun chatzos* is recited while sitting on the ground like a mourner) and learned the rest

of the night, all the while standing. He would *daven vasikin* at sunrise and then start his day by learning.

Rav Hirsch Michel's son became gravely ill and passed away on *Shabbos*. Since the laws of *aveilus* are not in force on *Shabbos*, Rav Hirsch went to a different home and spent the day learning. He returned after *Shabbos* and commenced his *aveilus*, mourning. Rav Charlop conjectures that, for Rav Hirsch Michel to cease learning, was more painful than *aveilus*. Rav Hirsch Michel became seriously ill in 1903. The doctors despaired for his life, and they told the family that the end was near. The *tzaddik* who would stand for hours learning was now relegated to bed, suffering debilitating pain and weakness. This did not put a halt to his learning. He called over his *talmid*, Rav Charlop, and asked him quickly to fetch the *Chidushei HaRan* on *Meseches Pesachim*. When Rav Charlop looked at him incredulously, Rav Hirsch Michel replied, "If not now – when?" Rav Charlop read to him from the Rav's commentary. Rav Hirsch Michel's eyes lit up and shone brilliantly, to the point that Rav Charlop forgot that his revered *Rebbe* was gravely ill. Next, Rav Hirsch Michel asked to be read from the *Shaagas Arye's* commentary on the topic discussed by the *Ran*. When this was done, he had one little favor: that the *Mekor Chaim's* questions on the *Shaagas Arye* be read to him. Following the reading, Rav Hirsch Michel lay there deep in thought – until he smiled – and offered his response to these questions. This is but one example of the extreme thirst these Torah giants had for the Torah. May we merit to be as enthused for Torah, so that "*Shavuos*" can be celebrated every day of the year.

ויניחהו במשמר לפרש להם על פי ד'

**They placed him under guard to clarify for themselves through Hashem. (24:12)**

The incident of the *megadef*, blasphemer, is a sad entry in the history of our people. It is not as if we have not had wicked, insecure people whose actions against Hashem warranted swift and extreme punishment. He was, however, the first to act so contemptibly. Thus, the punishment to be meted out to him was uncertain. Hashem had to inform Moshe *Rabbeinu* what form of execution – if any – he should receive. He was placed in a holding cell until Hashem clarified his punishment.

The *megadef* was not the only sinner spending his time in a cell. The *mekoshesh eitzim*, who collected sticks on *Shabbos*, was also there. The *mekoshesh* was clearly *mechallel Shabbos*, thus warranting the death penalty, although the manner of execution was yet to be determined. One would think that these two sinners would be sharing a cell. Ultimately, these two were the only two individuals to be incarcerated during *Klal Yisrael's* sojourn in the wilderness. Today, one cannot "choose" one's cell. Prisoners are lumped together, regardless whether the transgressor is serving time for a

misdemeanor or subject to life without parole. The Torah operates differently. The Torah does not recognize a "one size fits all" prison cell.

*Horav Shlomo Wolbe, zl*, explains that Divine judgment is very precise, to the point that sinners who are executed in unlike manners are not buried in the same cemetery. One whose death is by choking is not buried with one whose death came via stoning. Likewise, a murderer is not buried next to a thief. Their punishments are not the same; therefore, neither is their burial site.

The *Mashgiach* quotes *Horav Itzele Peterburger, zl*, who was wont to say that, if two people commit the same sin, but one groaned/felt somewhat remorseful over his actions, his lament is recorded in Heaven – to his favor. While these two sinners transgressed equally, they are not classified together. The difference between them is like night and day.

On the other hand, effort plays a defining role in *mitzvah* performance. Two people may both be learning in the *bais hamedrash*: one is well; the other has a miserable headache. Despite the pain, however, he wants to learn. He will receive greater reward. This idea applies universally to every spiritual endeavor. We must learn to apply a fountainhead approach delving into the origins and backgrounds of people; to understand the reasons that no two people are the same. Family background, acumen, recent crises, all play a role. We no longer need to apply the "one size fits all" to education, we should allow every student to learn at his own pace. Likewise, when a student acts up, it is prudent to investigate whether any changes in his life might be affecting his attention and attitude.

A teenager in *yeshivah* had recently lost his grandmother with whom he was very close. This affected his learning, and eventually, his attitude to *frumkeit*. The *rebbe* was either unaware of the cause of this boy's digression in learning, or he felt the situation should not have such an adverse effect. Different students respond to tragedy and crises in various ways. The *rebbe* obviously did not take this into consideration. Thus, he continued to apply pressure on the boy until he rebelled against *yeshivah* and, eventually, *frumkeit*. We have no question that the boy overreacted, but had the *rebbe* investigated whether anything could be having a negative effect on the boy, a tragedy might have been averted. I would like to qualify that I only heard the boy's reason. I wonder whether the *rebbe* has a different perspective.

**Va'ani Tefillah**

**והבדילנו מן התועים – V'Hivdilanu min ha'toim. And He separated us from those who stray.**

The ability to have clarity is a blessing. This is especially true in a world where so many people who think they see clearly are actually blind, and so many people who feel that they have clarity are mixed up and victims of misconception. A king built a palace community, a home for himself and homes

for his ministers. He used the latest state of the art materials. The structures were a marvel of steel and stone. The palace was outfitted with massive windows which allowed the king to look out at the entire city.

One day, a man whose vision was crossed – which caused him to see everything on a slant – walked by the edifices and screamed that they were all leaning to the side and would soon topple over. Obviously, this man’s problem was his vision. Nothing was structurally wrong with the buildings. Anyone whose vision was fine laughed at this man, understanding that his eyesight was failing. Some people, however, with limited acumen and intelligence, believed this man and, as a result, began to escape from the community. A wise man who saw what was happening made a loud declaration, “Quickly, call a doctor!” The people who were escaping looked at him like he was mad: What can a doctor do for buildings that are about to fall over? The man replied, “We do not need a doctor for the buildings, but rather, to cure that man whose vision is crossed, so that he can see clearly.”

The *Chafetz Chaim* explains the lesson to be derived from here. Our Torah and our way of life are rock solid – and most of us know this. Some people, however, have deficient vision, causing them to have a distorted view. We cry out to them, “You are blind! If only you would open your eyes and see with clarity, you would realize how wrong you are.” These naysayers said Orthodoxy was doomed. Apparently, they were quite wrong. We thank Hashem for separating us from the *to'im*.

*In honor of Dr. and Mrs. Denise and Marianne Glazer Wishing them good health and long life Hebrew Academy of Cleveland, ©All rights reserved prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum*

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***Ohr Somayach Insights into Halacha***  
***For the week ending 6 May 2023 / 15 Iyar 5783***  
***The Unknown Days of the Jewish Calendar***  
***Rabbi Yehuda Spitz***

This week, an unsuspecting person wishing to catch a minyan, who walks into a random shul in many places around the world, might be in for a surprise. After the Shemoneh Esrei prayer on Friday there will be no Tachanun. On Monday there will be Selichos; and on Tuesday there again won’t be Tachanun! Why would this be? No Tachanun generally signifies that it is a festive day;[1] yet, no other observances are readily noticeable. As for the reciting of Selichos on Monday, they are usually reserved for a fast day; yet no one seems to be fasting! What is going on?

The answer is that generally speaking, there are several separate “Unknown Days” that occur during the month of Iyar. Three of them happen to fall out over the next few days. I refer to them as “Unknown Days,” as they do not seem to have much in the

way of observance, and even that observance is minimally observed by much of Klal Yisrael  
Pesach Sheini

This Friday, the first of the “Unknown Days” that we will discuss, is the 14th of Iyar, and is dubbed “Pesach Sheini.”[2] Pesach Sheini commemorates the day when those who were unable to bring the annual Korban Pesach (special Pesach sacrifice - Pascal lamb) at its proper time (Erev Pesach), were given a second chance to offer this unique Korban.[3] Although technically not considered a true holiday, and despite the fact that it is (astonishingly!)[4] not listed in the traditional halachic sources as one of the days that Tachanun is not recited, nevertheless, the custom for many is not to recite Tachanun on Pesach Sheini,[5] in order to ‘tap into’ the merit that this particular day had during the times of the Beis HaMikdash.[6] Although the Pri Megadim[7] maintains that Tachanun should be recited on Pesach Sheini - as the original day it is commemorating was only meant for individuals in unique circumstances, and its absence of mention in the traditional halachic sources as one of the days that Tachanun is not recited speaks volumes, nevertheless, most authorities rule that one should not say Tachanun on this day.[8]

There is an interesting common custom associated with Pesach Sheini - eating Matzah;[9] but that is not quite noticeable in shul. Another interesting fact about Pesach Sheini is that it is commonly considered the Yahrzeit of Rabi Meir Baal HaNeis,[10] and many visit his kever in Teveria on that day.  
BeHa”B

We are actually currently in a semi-annual period that many do not even realize exists: a series of “Days of Tefillah” colloquially known as BeHa”B. This acronym stands for Monday (Beis - 2nd day of the week), Thursday (Hei - 5th day of the week), and the following Monday (Beis). These days are commonly observed on the first Monday, Thursday, and Monday following the earliest Rosh Chodesh after Pesach (Rosh Chodesh Iyar), and likewise after Sukkos (Rosh Chodesh Marcheshvan).[11] This coming Monday will be the third and final day of BeHa”B.

The custom of utilizing these specific days for prayer and supplication is already mentioned almost 900 years ago by the Baalei Tosafos, its importance reiterated by the Tur, and unbeknownst to many, actually codified in halacha by the Shulchan Aruch as a proper minhag.[12] Whose Minhag Is It, Anyway?

Although both the Tur and Rema refer to BeHa”B as a German-French custom, and the Shulchan Gavoa (cited lemaaseh by the Kaf Hachaim) writes that this was not the minhag in Sefarad, implying that Sefardim are not beholden to keep BeHa”B,[13] nevertheless, it must be noted that the Shulchan Aruch himself must have felt strongly about this minhag of BeHa”B, as aside for spending a whole (albeit brief)

siman on it – Orach Chaim 492, he also refers to it and its importance in at least two other locations – Orach Chaim 429:2 and 566:2-4. However, in the latter citing he does refer to fasting b'tzibbur for BeHa”B as an “Ashkenazic minhag.” Later Sefardic authorities as well, including the Knesses Hagedolah, Pri Chodosh and Chida (ad loc.) also discuss its importance. Therefore, this author finds it interesting that the general Sefardic minhag is not to recite BeHa”B. In fact, there does not seem to be any Sefardic tradition of specific liturgical tefillos for BeHa”B and the Siman referring to BeHa”B - Orach Chaim 492, is noticeably absent from the Yalkut Yosef Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, implying that it is not relevant to the average Sefardi. Indeed, in Rav Yaakov Hillel’s Ahavat Shalom Luach it simply states: “U’Bizmaneinu Bnei Sfarad lo nahagu l’hisanos – nowadays, the Sefardic minhag is not to observe BeHa”B.”[14]

And it is not just the general Sefardi populace who do not recite BeHa”B. Already in his time, the Taz noted that even among Ashkenazic communities BeHa”B observance was not widespread. More recently, Rav Menashe Klein, in a side point to the issue being addressed in a teshuva, maintains that one who does not observe BeHa”B is not considered “Poresh Min HaTzibbur” (separating himself from the general community), as even nowadays its observance is not prevalent.[15] But, among many Yeshiva communities, and especially in Eretz Yisrael, reciting BeHa”B twice annually is de rigueur.

Why Now?

The reason most commonly mentioned by the Poskim[16] why these days of prayer are following the holidays of Pesach and Sukkos, is that over the extended holidays, when there is a mitzvah of feasting and simcha, it is more likely that people may have stumbled in some area due to improper behavior and inadvertentsin, and BeHa”B is meant to help rectify any possible offense. This idea is based on Iyov (Ch. 1:5) who would bring Korbanos after “Yemei Mishteh”, or “Days of Feasting”. These sins might be due to a variety of probable offenses including: mingling - at a festive meal or even at a Drasha in the Shul (!), Yom Tov and Chol Hamoed related transgressions, Chillul Hashem, or overabundance of merriment and gastronomical pleasures.[17]

Other explanations offered to explain why BeHa”B was established include:

- To entreat Hashem to strengthen our bodies especially at the time of changing seasons when many are likely to get ill.[18]
- To beseech Hashem that we should have abundant harvests after Pesach and plentiful rains after Sukkos.[19]
- To commemorate Queen Esther’s original 3-day fast (which actually was Pesach time, and not Purim time).[20] This is pushed off until the first opportunity after Chodesh Nissan. [The Taanis Esther that we fast before Purim is not really

due to Esther’s actual fast as recorded in the Megillah, but rather to commemorate that when the Jews went to war against the anti-Semites of their day, they fasted].

Yet, interestingly, although BeHa”B is traditionally meant to be a fast day, still, very few actually do fast, as in our generations people are considered weaker. Instead, most make do with Selichos (and perhaps Divrei Mussar), with the majority also reciting Avinu Malkeinu. This rationale is found in many sefarim, including the Chavos Yair, Aruch Hashulchan, Mishnah Berurah, and Kaf Hachaim, who, quoting the Elyah Rabba, cites this as the Minhag of Prague.[21] As an aside, if not actually fasting, one should replace the word ‘Taanis’ in the Selichos with ‘Tefillah’ instead.[22]

This certainly holds true with BeHa”B, as it is based on a minhag and not an actual Biblical source. That is why our fellow walking in would not likely see any other signs of a traditional fast day.

Monday, Thursday, Prayer Days...

Monday and Thursday are considered especially potent days for prayer, as Moshe Rabbeinu climbed Har Sinai to receive the Torah on a Thursday and returned with it on a Monday.[23] A mnemonic to showcase this is the first pasuk read on a public fast day Haftara, “Dirshu Hashem B’H imatzo” - “Seek out Hashem when He is to be found.”[24] The letters Beis and Hei show that an auspicious time when Hashem may be found is on Monday and Thursday;[25] therefore Mondays and Thursdays are preferable for fasting and prayer. For whichever reason BeHa”B was established, we certainly shouldn’t let this golden opportunity for tefillah pass us by.[26]

Pesach Sheini vs. BeHa”B

An interesting question is what happens when there is a rare convergence of Pesach Sheini and BeHa”B. This last occurred two years ago in 5781/2021, when the third and final day of the Chodesh Iyar BeHa”B fell out on Pesach Sheini, as it does any year that contains a Purim Meshulash and Erev Pesach Shechal B’Shabbos. This is actually next expected to occur in two more years, in 5785/2025, followed by a long break of 20 years, in 5805/2045, and then three years later in 5808/2048.

So our question essentially is - what does KlalYisrael do? Which holiday would we observe? The joyous Pesach Sheini or the official fast of BeHa”B?

As with many inyanim in halacha or minhag, there is no one-size-fits-all answer. This debate seems to be based on Megillas Taanis, which states (see Chullin 129b) that Pesach Sheini is a day in which one may not eulogize (indicating it is a full-fledged holiday), and hence strongly implying that certainly onemay not fast on it.

Yet, others counter that Megillas Taanis is no longer considered authoritative or binding (see Rosh Hashana 18b-19b; which concludes that Megillas Taanis was battel with the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash except for Chanuka and Purim), and



Pesach Sheini, as it is essentially a make-up holiday for those who were unable to offer the Korban Pesach on Erev Pesach, cannot be considered any more stringent than Erev Pesach itself. And Erev Pesach is known for its Taanis Bechorim, Fast of the Firstborn. So perhaps fasting is not only permitted on Pesach Sheini, but actually mandated when it coincides with BeHa”B. So what do we do?

Although several Poskim maintain to fast only until Chatzos on that day as a sort of compromise solution, or hold not to fast at all and rather push BeHa”B observance off until the next day (Tuesday) or several days later to the coming Thursday or the next Monday,[27] it is feasible that this is only regarding actual fasting - which the vast majority does not currently do anyway. The Chazon Ish, who generally holds of no special inyanim for Pesach Sheini, held that one may fast as usual. And in fact, in Orchos Rabbeinu it cites that this is what he and his brother-in-law, the Steipler Gaon did - i.e. reciting Selichos and Tachanun as usual. The Brisker Rav did so as well.[28]

#### No Contradiction

Interestingly, there is little mention of this issue in any early source, so it seems that there truly is no real discrepancy. As pointed out by Rav Sroya Debilitzky zt”l, Sefardim generally did not recite Tachanun on Pesach Sheini, whereas Ashkenazim did, until the ‘not saying’ minhag crept out and spread to Ashkenazic circles, via Minhag Eretz Yisrael, as the original Ashkenazic communities in Eretz Yisrael adopted several Sefardic minhagim over the years. On the other hand, as mentioned previously, only Ashkenazim classically observed BeHa”B fasting and prayers. Hence, in the classic sense, “ne’er the twain” actually met, as whenever a convergence occurred, Sefardim would observe the ‘no Tachanun’ of Pesach Sheini, whereas Ashkenazim would keep the Selichos of BeHa”B.[29] Yet, nowadays, when most of the world (Ashkenazim as well) does not recite Tachanun on Pesach Sheini anyway, the minhag of many is to synthesize the two: recite a somewhat abbreviated version of BeHa”B Selichos – utilizing precedent from other times when Selichos and ‘no Tachanun’ coincide, for example when a Bris occurs on a fast day (as per Orach Chaim 131:5), while also skipping Tachanun.[30] This is probably the most common minhag in shuls where BeHa”B is normally recited. The psak to still recite Selichos (and perhaps fast when applicable) when Pesach Sheini and BeHa”B coincide, was taught by many Poskim - including Rav Yaakov Emden, the Chasam Sofer, the Maharam Ash, the Maharsham, the Eishel Avraham (Butchatch), and Orchos Chaim as the proper minhag.[31]

#### Practically - Pesach Sheini

On the other hand, on a practical note, as most shuls in the world (unfortunately) do not “do BeHa”B” nowadays, this debate is essentially a moot point, and Pesach Sheini would trump. As Rav Yisroel Reisman wryly remarked in his

introduction to the book “Tachanun,” non-Jews cannot possibly comprehend the simchah and elation (and perhaps sigh of relief) felt when the gabbai klops on the bimah and the tzibbur skips Tachanun (especially “Long Tachanun”).

There actually is strong basis for this hanhagah in our case, as Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, and Rav Yisrael Yaakov Fischer ruled to skip a whole day of BeHa”B for Pesach Sheini, following the main Yerushalmi minhag per the Tukachinsky Luach, the Aderes, and Rav Yisrael Nissan Kuperstock - as apparently this is indeed ‘Old Minhag Eretz Yisrael,’ that Pesach Sheini entirely trumps and displaces the third and last BeHa”B when they coincide.[32] Although the origin and accuracy of such a Yerushalmi ‘minhag’ seems to be contested,[33] there is a recent sefer titled “Pischa Zeira,” which discusses various subtopics related to Pesach Sheini, who devotes a full chapter to this topic and debate, and nonetheless defends this ruling. He posits that there may be a differentiation between a Bris and Pesach Sheini when coinciding with BeHa”B. Regarding a Bris on a Taanis, it is still a day that is meant for fasting, hence Selichos are still recited, just not Tachanun in that specific location, due to the simcha of the Bris. This is opposed to Pesach Sheini, which many maintain that as it is a minor holiday and mentioned in the Torah, simply cannot be overruled as a day intended for fasting.[34]

So we see there is no clear-cut contemporary consensus to the observance of this rare convergence, and each Kehillah should follow their own minhag.[35] In any case, we still have two more years to work out what we will practically do...

#### Lag B’Omer

The third of these ‘Unknown Days’ with no other obvious observances during davening except the omission of Tachanun, is Lag B’Omer, on Tuesday, the 18th of Iyar.[36] In fact, according to most authorities, Tachanun is already not recited on Monday at Mincha, due to being Erev Lag B’Omer.[37]

There are several reasons offered for why Tachanun is not said on Lag B’Omer, including:[38]

- It is the day when Rabbi Akiva’s 24,000 students stopped dying.[39]
- It is the day when the Mann (manna) started to fall, feeding Bnei Yisrael in the Midbar.[40]
- It is the day when Rabi Shimon bar Yochai and his son, Rabi Elazar came out of the cave they hid in for 13 years.[41]
- It is Rabi Shimon bar Yochai’s Yahrtzeit;[42] however, it is important to note that this understanding might actually be based on a simple printing mistake, and many authorities, including the Chid”a and Ben Ish Chai, maintain that Lag B’Omer is not truly his Yahrtzeit.[43]
- It is the day when Rabi Akiva gave Semicha to his five new students (including Rabi Shimon bar Yochai) after the

24,000 died, allowing the Torah's mesorah to perpetuate.[44]

- It is the day when Rabi Shimon bar Yochai's hidden Torah, the Zohar, became revealed to the world.[45]

In Eretz Yisrael, this quasi-holiday is widely celebrated, with over half-a million people converging on, to visit, daven, dance, and partake in the lighting of traditional bonfires at the grave of Rabi Shimon Bar Yochai,[46] thus lending an electrified atmosphere to the sleepy mountaintop town of Meron in the Galil. Thousands customarily visit the grave of Shimon HaTzaddik in Yerushalayim as well.

Indeed, due to the tremendous influx of Chutznikim to visit Rabi Shimon on 'his day', Meron has gained the the moniker of "the Kotel of the North" (of Eretz Yisrael), with some opining that Lag B'Omer has recently become the new 'third Regel,' far overshadowing the amount of visitors to Eretz Yisrael for Shavuos,

As an aside, with enormous bonfires (mostly built by neighborhood children!) seemingly on almost every street corner, Lag B'Omer in Eretz Yisrael has since also become a pyromaniac's delight and the firefighters' and asthmatics' nightmare.

Other locales have a different sort of custom, such as the one in Krakow, Poland to visit the illustrious Rema's grave on Lag B'Omer, as it is his Yahrtzeit as well.[47] Yet, in most of Chu"tz La'aretz, there is no other real commemoration or observances of this special day, unless one counts the "traditional" game of baseball and subsequent barbeque. So, it is quite possible, and certainly out of Israel, that our clueless colleague might just wonder about the omission of Tachanun on Lag B'Omer.

In conclusion, by showcasing these relatively "Unknown Days", this article should hopefully help raise awareness and appreciation of them and their customs. As we are climbing upwards in this unique time period of Sefiras HaOmer, in anticipation of Kabbalas HaTorah, Hashem has incredibly given us an opportunity to observe a few special Yemei Tefillah. May we be zocheh to utilize them to their utmost!