BS"D

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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON **EMOR** - 5784

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On **Friday night** we count the **25th day of the omer**.

From: TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org>
Date: May 16, 2024, 8:45 PM
Subject: **Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz - The Avodah of Feeling**

In the aftermath of יום הזכרון and יום העמצאות, it is worthwhile to contemplate the emotions of this year, and specifically the price we have paid as a people to defend our land. Before we arrive at an approach let us discuss two questions:

When describing the prohibition of אותו ואת בנו the Torah says, "לא תשחטו ביום אחד - you shall not slaughter them on one day." It seems, though, that there is an inappropriate use of the plural form in תשחטו. The איסור is for any single individual to shecht אותו ואת בנו ביום אחד. Why, then, would the Torah speak to the plural rather than the singular?

The בעל המאור at the very end of מס' פסחים asks why we do not say a שהחיינו on the מצוה of ספירת העומר. After all, we say שהחיינו over most other time-specific mitzvos, like שופר, לולב and מגילה! The בעל המאור suggests that there is no שהחיינו because without a קרבן עומר, we are unable to perform the mitzvah in its complete sense, and that diminishes from the שמחה of the מצוה. However, Rav Soloveitchik points out, this answer only works if we assume that ספירת העומר בזמן הזה is only a מצוה מדרבנן and is connected to the קרבן עומר. The רמב"ם, though, understands that ספירת העומר is not bound to the קרבן עומר and is still a מצוה דאורייתא nowadays. How, then, would the רמב"ם explain why we don't recite a שהחיינו on ספירת העומר?

Often, the עבודה for us is to feel pain. There are undoubtedly times for introspection and times for self-improvement, but before any of that, there is an avodah to feel. The greater the tragedy the longer it takes to absorb and speak about it in a meaningful way. Perhaps that is why after the holocaust nobody spoke about it for decades.

Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Rav Mayer Twersky shlit"a made this point in the context of understanding the Rambam in the third perek of הלכות תשובה. The Rambam lists those who do not have a חלק בעולם הבא, and among the list are those who are פורש מדרכי הציבור. In הלכה י"א the רמב"ם writes that this does not mean that a person has violated עבירות. To the contrary, " אף על פי שלא עבר עבירות", one is considered to be פורש מדרכי הציבור if he lives his life outside of the context of the rest of כלל ישראל. In the Rambam's terminology, if he is, "לא נכנס בצרתן". Our עבודה when thinking about the families of our fallen soldiers is simply to be נכנס בצרתן. Rav Twersky pointed out that some Jews do this viscerally. There is no thought process or program to it. They just feel. Those of us who have not yet achieved that מדרגה are supposed to be מתבונן, to contemplate and focus on the tragedy, until we get to the point that we are נכנס בצרתן. That is our עבודה - to feel the pain of others.

We are familiar with the הלכה that when we are מנחם אבל we do not initiate conversation. This is fascinating because Chazal derive from the passuk, "והאנק דום" that silence is an indication of mourning, which suggests that the comforter is also in mourning. Essentially, we sit there silently to express to the mourner that we too are mourning - עמו אנכי בצרה - and through

that shared experience of mourning the אבל finds a small amount of comfort.

In the context of a different tragedy, my brother, Rav Avi Lebowitz shlit"a, pointed out that we cannot yet fully internalize the magnitude of the tragedy and react properly to it for another reason - the tragedy isn't over. There are still so many people in hospitals; there are still so many families that don't know if their father/brother/son will ever return home, and if so, will he ever return to normal life. There are so many whose lives have been altered in a way that one cannot recuperate from. It is just too early and too raw. As my friend Rav Warren Cinnamon said, sometimes we need a little נשמע before נעשה.

Rav Soloveitchik explains that we do not recite a שהחיינו on ספירת העומר because שהחיינו is recited when we have arrived at the destination - והגיענו לזמן הזה. The very nature of ספירת העומר is such that we are making it clear that we have not yet arrived at the destination, rather we are counting toward the destination. There is a process we must go through, and we can't skip steps. In recent years we have been enjoying access to the very best of our homeland, seeing unprecedented growth both in ruchniyus and gashmiyus, feeling that we are at the doorstep of the final geulah. But Hashem told us that there is no שהחיינו during ספירה - we aren't there yet. We haven't arrived at the destination.

Rav Zalman Sorotzkin points out in his אזנים לתורה that the גמרא חולין דף פ"ב derives from the phrase לא תשחטו in the context of אותו ואת בנו, that, " מלמד שאם שחט ראובן את האם ואחר כך שחט שמעון את הבן והתרו בו לוקה" - if Reuven shechts the mother animal and then Shimon shechts the offspring after being warned not to do so, Shimon receives lashes. Imagine two men - Reuven and Shimon - that are not brothers and have never even met each other. They don't even live in the same city. Shimon has this beautiful animal to shecht and it promises to provide his family with a delicious veal dinner. Yet, because Reuven, who he doesn't even know, has shechted that animal's mother, a normal neutral and benign action, he has generated a potential איסור דאורייתא for Shimon. Reuven has impacted Shimon's avodas Hashem and forced Shimon to modify his behavior. This highlights, Rav Sorotzkin says, that the actions and circumstances of one Jew impact every Jew.

Rav Yisrael Reisman shared an idea from Rav Gedalia Schorr on the piyyut of לחי עולמים that we say on ימים נוראים. Each phrase in this piyyut is comprised of opposites; for example, we normally say that "סייג לחכמה שתיקה", i.e. when one is engaged in דיבור it signifies a lack of דעה, and yet the piyyut mentions "הדעה והדיבור" going together. A similar combination of opposites is found in the phrase, "ההוד וההדר" - hadar is outer beauty (esrog is described as a, "פרי עץ הדר" because it has a beautiful exterior but has nothing to look at on the inside), while hod is inner beauty, as we see when Rashi explains the words, "כי קרן עור פניו" to mean קרני ההוד because it was an internal glow that emanated from Moshe Rabbeinu. We often find these qualities to be mutually exclusive. When two middos don't typically go together, their combination is only found לחי עולמים - in Hashem - but not in us. Only Hashem can have ל"ג בעומר together with a terrible tragedy and make sense of it all. Only Hashem can fully reconcile having a יום הזכרון and a יום העצמאות at the same exact time. We are incapable of feeling the depth of both of those emotions simultaneously. We are left with the simple task of feeling a Jew's pain.

Ironically, the greatest source of comfort is the pain that we feel. I recall how on the day after the Meron tragedy a few years ago, all day Friday I was fielding phone calls and some people just stopped by my office, to do nothing other than to cry together. To paraphrase the expression - "there is nothing as complete and whole as a broken people". It is precisely this ability to feel one another's pain that will bring about the ישועה that we so desperately daven for. B'ezras Hashem we should all see the day of הוד and הדר, the full glory of the final steps of הגיענו לזמן הזה.

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from: Destiny Foundation/**Rabbi Berel Wein** <info@jewishdestiny.com>
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subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein
Home Weekly Parsha EMOR
Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

The beginning part of this week's parsha refers to the special laws and status regarding kohanim – the descendants of Aharon. It is common knowledge that a study based on the DNA samples of many current day kohanim reveals a common genetic strain amongst a considerable number of those who participated in the study. This strain is found to be common even amongst people who live in different areas of the world, separated by thousands of miles and centuries of differing ethnicities.

The jury is still out whether these DNA findings have any halachic validity and as to what exactly these findings prove. Over the centuries of Jewish life, the kohanim have fiercely protected their lineal descent from Aharon and zealously guarded their status of legitimacy as being kohanim. Kohanim are held in high regard in the Jewish world and are entitled to certain special privileges and honors in the Jewish religious

society.
Though it seems that it is permissible for a kohein to waive some of those privileges if he so wishes, preferred behavior dictates that he not do so. The status of the kohein is to be preserved as a remembrance of their special role in the Temple services in Jerusalem. But in a deeper sense, it is to be preserved to remind us of their special mission "to guard with their lips knowledge and to teach Torah to those who request it."
They are to be a blessing to the people of Israel and they are commanded to, in turn, bless the people of Israel. Blessed are those that are commanded to bless others. Thus the status of a kohein is representative of all that is noble and positive in Jewish life and tradition – knowledge, Torah, grace, security and peace. The question of ersatz kohanim is discussed widely in connection with halachic decisions. Not every person who claims to be a kohein is really a kohein. Since true pedigrees are very difficult to truly ascertain today, the halacha adopts a position that who is really a kohein is a matter of doubt. Great rabbinic decisors, especially in the United States, have often, in cases of dire circumstances, "annulled" the kehuna of an individual.
In the confusion of immigration into the United States at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, there were people who disguised themselves as kohanim in order to earn the monies of pidyon haben – the redemption of the first born son from the kohein. These people were charlatans, but many other simple Jews assumed that they were kohanim as well, without any real proof of the matter. Even tombstones that declared that one's father was a kohein were not to be accepted as definitive proof of the matter. Therefore, the DNA results are most interesting and provocative.
The halacha has not yet determined with certainty the trustworthiness of DNA results in matters that require halachic decision. Therefore, it is premature to speculate whether DNA testing will ever be used as a method of determining one's true status as a kohein. Meanwhile the kohanim should retain their tradition of pedigree to the best of their abilities.
Shabbat shalom.
Rabbi Berel Wein

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from: **The Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust** <info@rabbisacks.org>
subject: Covenant and Conversation
COVENANT & CONVERSATION
Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt"l

The Duality of Jewish Time
EMOR
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks
Alongside the holiness of place and person is the holiness of time, something parshat Emor charts in its deceptively simple list of festivals and holy days (Lev. 23:1-44).
Time plays an enormous part in Judaism. The first thing God declared holy was a day: Shabbat, at the conclusion of Creation. The first mitzvah given to the Jewish people as a whole, prior to the Exodus, was the command to sanctify time, by determining and applying the Jewish calendar (Ex. 12:1-2). The Prophets were the first people in history to see God in history, seeing time itself as the arena of the Divine-human encounter. Virtually every other religion and civilisation before and since has identified God, reality, and truth with timelessness.
Isaiah Berlin used to quote Alexander Herzen who said about the Slavs that they had no history, only geography. The Jews, he said, had the reverse: a great deal of history but all too little geography. Much time, but little space.
So time in Judaism is an essential medium of the spiritual life. But there is one feature of the Jewish approach to time that has received less attention than it should: the duality that runs through its entire temporal structure.
Take, for instance, the calendar as a whole. Christianity uses a solar calendar, Islam a lunar one. Judaism uses both. We count time both by the monthly cycle of the moon and the seasonal cycle of the sun.
Then consider the day. Days normally have one identifiable beginning, whether this is at nightfall or daybreak or – as in the West – somewhere between. For calendar purposes, the Jewish day begins at nightfall ("And it was evening and it was morning, one day"). But if we look at the structure of the prayers – the morning prayer instituted by Abraham, afternoon by Isaac, evening by Jacob – there is a sense in which the worship of the day starts in the morning, not the night before.
Years, too, usually have one fixed beginning – the "new year". In Judaism, according to the Mishnah (Rosh Hashanah 1:1), there are no less than four "new years". The first of Ellul is the new year for the tithing of animals. The fifteenth of Shvat (or, according to Bet Shammai, the first of Shvat) is the new year for trees. These are specific and subsidiary dates, but the other two are more fundamental.
According to the Torah, the first month of the year is Nissan. This was the day the earth became dry after the Flood (Gen. 8:13)[1]. It was the day the Israelites received their first command as a people (Ex. 12:2). One year later it was the day

the Tabernacle was dedicated and the service of the Priests inaugurated (Ex. 40:2). But the festival we call the New Year, Rosh Hashanah, falls six months later.

Holy time itself comes in two forms, as Emor makes clear. There is Shabbat and there are the festivals, and the two are announced separately. Shabbat was sanctified by God at the beginning of time for all time. The festivals are sanctified by the Jewish people to whom was given the authority and responsibility for fixing the calendar.

Hence the difference in the blessings we say. On Shabbat we praise God who "sanctifies Shabbat". On the festivals we praise God who sanctifies "Israel and the holy times" – meaning, it is God who sanctifies Israel but Israel who sanctifies the holy times, determining on which days the festivals fall.

Even within the festivals there is a dual cycle. One is formed by the three pilgrimage festivals: Pesach, Shavuot, and Succot. These are days that represent the key historic moments at the dawn of Jewish time – the Exodus, the giving of the Torah, and the forty years of desert wandering. They are festivals of history.

The other is formed by the number seven and the concept of holiness: the seventh day, Shabbat; the seventh month, Tishri, with its three festivals of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Succot; the seventh year, Shemittah; and the Jubilee marking the completion of seven seven-year cycles.

These times (with the exception of Succot that belongs to both cycles) have less to do with history than with what, for want of a better word, we might call metaphysics and jurisprudence, ultimate truths about the universe, the human condition, and the laws, both natural and moral, under which we live.

Each is about creation (Shabbat, a reminder of it, Rosh Hashanah the anniversary of it), Divine sovereignty, justice, and judgment, together with the human condition of life, death, mortality. So on Yom Kippur we face justice and judgment. On Succot/Shemini Atzeret we pray for rain, celebrate nature (bringing together the lulav, etrog, hadassim, and aravot as the arba minim – the four species – is the only mitzvah we do with unprocessed natural objects), and we read the book of Kohelet, Tanach's most profound meditation on mortality.

In the seventh and Jubilee years we acknowledge God's ultimate ownership of the land of Israel and the Children of Israel. Hence we let slaves go free, release debts, let the land rest, and restore most property to its original owners. All of these have to do not with God's interventions into history but with His role as Creator and owner of the universe.

One way of seeing the difference between the first cycle and the second is to compare the prayers on Pesach, Shavuot, and Succot with those of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The Amidah of Pesach, Shavuot, and Succot begins with the phrase "You chose us from all the peoples." The emphasis is on Jewish particularity.

By contrast, the Amidah for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur begins by speaking of "all You have made, all You have created". The emphasis is on universality: about the judgment that affects all of creation, everything that lives.

Even Succot has a marked universalist thrust with its seventy sacrificial bulls representing the "seventy nations". According to Zechariah 14, it is the festival that will one day be celebrated by all the nations.

Why the duality? Because God is both the God of nature and of culture. He is the God of everyone in general, and of the people of the covenant in particular. He is the Author of both scientific law (cause) and religious-ethical law (command).

We encounter God in both cyclical time, which represents the movement of the planets, and linear-historical time, which represents the events and evolution of the nation of which we are a part. This very duality gives rise to two kinds of religious leader: the Prophet and the Priest, and the different consciousness of time each represents.

Since the ancient Greeks, people have searched for a single principle that would explain everything, or the single point Archimedes sought at which to move the world, or the unique perspective (what philosophers call "the view from nowhere") from which to see truth in all its objectivity.

Judaism tells us there is no such point. Reality is more complicated than that. There is not even a single concept of time. At the very least we need two perspectives to be able to see reality in three dimensions, and that applies to time as well as space. Jewish time has two rhythms at once.

Judaism is to the spirit what Niels Bohr's complementarity theory is to quantum physics. In physics light is both a wave and a particle. In Judaism time is both historical and natural. Unexpected, counter-intuitive, certainly. But glorious in its refusal to simplify the rich complexity of time: the ticking clock, the growing plant, the ageing body, and the ever-deepening mind.

[1] Although this, too, is the subject of an argument. In Gemara Rosh Hashanah 11b (quoted by Rashi Bereishit Chapter 8:13) Rabbi Yehoshua says this occurred in Nissan and Rabbi Eliezer counters that it happened in Tishrei.

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from: **Ira Zlotowitz** <Iraz@klalgovoah.org>

date: May 16, 2024, 7:00 PM
subject: Tidbits for Parashas Emor
This Wednesday, May 22nd, is Pesach Sheini (14th of Iyar). Many do not say Tachanun; even so, many still recite Tachanun on Tuesday at Minchah. Some have the minhag to eat matzah on Pesach Sheini. Pesach Sheini provides a second opportunity to bring the Korban Pesach for those who were unable to bring the Korban Pesach on time (14th of Nissan).
At Maariv on this Sunday, May 19th, those davening Nusach Ashkenaz will have omitted Mashiv Haruach for the 90th time. Those davening Nusach Sefard will have included Morid Hatal for the 90th time during Minchah on Sunday, May 19th. After this point, one is considered accustomed to the new text, and does not repeat Shemoneh Esrei if he is unsure if he davened correctly.
Pirkei Avos: Perek 3
The final opportunity for Kiddush Levana is Wednesday May 22nd at 11:42 PM ET
Pesach Sheini is next Wednesday, May 22nd.
Lag Ba'omer is on Sunday, May 26th.
Shavuos is on Wednesday and Thursday, June 12th-13th.
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.
"אֱמֹר 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 about this mitzvah of being careful about purity. One may understand this Midrash that Moshe Rabbeinu was to instruct the elders in "V'amarta", in that after Moshe relayed this mitzvah to them, they, the elders, should in turn relay this mitzvah to the youth. However the pasuk seems to state that the word "V'amarta" is also 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 become 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 zt"l explains that Moshe was to explain to the older generation that their adherence and approach to this mitzvah (and indeed all Mitzvos) will set the standard and tone of how the future generations will conduct themselves. One's actions live on far after he leaves this world, as the higher standard he achieves becomes the standard of his children and future generations.
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Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky
Drasha
By **Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky**
Parshas Emor
Holier Than Thou
One of the most disheartening episodes that occurred during the 40-year desert sojourn is recorded in this week's parsha. A man quarreled with a fellow Jew and left the dispute in a rage. He reacted by blaspheming Hashem. This abhorrent behavior was so aberrant that no one even knew what the punishment was!
So Hashem reviewed the grievous penalty for the deplorable act. As in any society, the ultimate act of treason was met with a capitol sentence. The Torah declared a death penalty. But curiously enough, Hashem does not leave it at that. When the Torah reveals the penalty for the heinous act of blasphemy, it continues:
"And one who blasphemes the name of Hashem shall be put to death…And if a man inflicts a mortal wound in his fellow man, he shall be put to death. If he inflicts damage then restitution shall be paid. The value of an eye for the loss of an eye, the value of a break for a break the value of a tooth for the loss of a tooth. And one who wounds an animal must be made to pay. (Leviticus 24:15-21)
Shouldn't blasphemy be in a league of it own? Surely the act of affronting G-d Almighty can not be equated with attacking human beings. And surely it has no place next to the laws of injurious action towards animals! Why, then is t Rabbi Y'honasan Eibeschutz one of Jewry's most influential leaders during the early 1700s, was away from his home for one Yom

Kippur and was forced to spend that holy day in a small town. Without revealing his identity as Chief Rabbi of Prague, Hamburg, and Altoona, he entered a synagogue that evening and surveyed the room, looking for a suitable place to sit and pray.

Toward the center of the synagogue, his eyes fell upon a man who was swaying fervently, tears swelling in his eyes. "How encouraging," thought the Rabbi, "I will sit next to him. His prayers will surely inspire me."

It was to be. The man cried softly as he prayed, tears flowed down his face. "I am but dust in my life, Oh Lord," wept the man. "Surely in death!" The sincerity was indisputable. Reb Y'honasan finished the prayers that evening, inspired. The next morning he took his seat next to the man, who, once again, poured out his heart to G-d, declaring his insignificance and vacuity of merit.

During the congregation's reading of the Torah, something amazing happened. A man from the front of the synagogue was called for the third aliyah, one of the most honorable aliyos for an Israelite, and suddenly Rabbi Eibeschutz's neighbor charged the podium!

"Him!" shouted the man. "You give him shlishi?!" The shul went silent. Reb Y'honasan stared in disbelief. "Why I know how to learn three times as much as he! I give more charity than he and I have a more illustrious family! Why on earth would you give him an aliyah over me?"

With that the man stormed back from the bimah toward his seat.

Rabbi Eibeschutz could not believe what he saw and was forced to approach the man. "I don't understand," he began. "Minutes ago you were crying about how insignificant and unworthy you are and now you are clamoring to get the honor of that man's aliyah?"

Disgusted the man snapped back. "What are you talking about? Compared to Hashem I am truly a nothing." Then he pointed to the bimah and sneered, "But not compared to him!"

Perhaps the Torah reiterates the laws of damaging mortal and animals in direct conjunction with His directives toward blasphemy. Often people are very wary of the honor they afford their spiritual guides, mentors and institutions. More so are they indignant about the reverence and esteem afforded their Creator. Mortal feelings, property and posessions are often trampled upon even harmed even by those who seem to have utmost respect for the immortal. This week the Torah, in the portion that declares the enormity of blasphemy, does not forget to mention the iniquity of striking someone less than Omnipotent. It links the anthropomorphic blaspheming of G-d to the crime of physical damage toward those created in His image. It puts them one next to each other. Because all of Hashem's creations deserve respect.

Even the cows.

Good Shabbos

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

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Parshas Emor

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

Speaking vs. Communicating

Hashem said to Moshe, say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aharon, and you should say to them: to a dead person you should not become impure […](21:1).

Rashi (ad loc), quoting the Gemara (Yevamos 114a), explains that the reason the word "emor – say" is used repeatedly ("say to the Kohanim" and then again "say to them") is to enjoin the adults to instruct the minors that they are not permitted to become unclean by coming in contact with a corpse.

In general, the Torah uses several different words to describe speaking – the most common ones being daber and emor (usually translated as "speak" and "say" respectively). What is the practical difference between the two words and when does the Torah choose to use one instead of the other?

We find a fascinating possuk in Sefer Bamidbar: "And when Moshe went into the Tent of Meeting to speak with Him, he heard the voice of one speaking ("medaber") from the Kapores, from between the two kerubim; and he spoke to him" (7:89). Rashi (ad loc) makes an unusual comment; Moshe was just listening in while Hashem was speaking to Himself. In other words, the term "daber" refers to the act of an utterance, even when one is merely talking to himself (e.g. reciting poetry).

On the other hand, the word "emor" refers to an act of communication. In Parshas Yisro, Moshe is told, "Thus shall you say ("somar") to Beis Yaakov, and tell the Bnei Yisroel" (19:3). Rashi (ad loc) explains that Beis Yaakov refers to the women of the Jewish people. Hashem tells Moshe to "tell" the men the laws while to the women he must speak gently.

Similarly, we find the Mishna in Shabbos (2:7) says that a man is obligated to say ("lomar") in his home on Erev Shabbos, "Have you tithed (the produce)? Have you made an eruv (for walking and carrying)? If yes, the man then says, 'light the candle.'" Here too the Gemara (Shabbos 34a) mentions that it

must be said gently.

In other words, women don't want to be spoken to, they want to be communicated with (probably not a shock to anyone who has been married). This is why the word "emor" is used in regards to women; "emor" means to communicate not dictate.

In this week's parsha, the Torah is telling us that we must be very sensitive to what we are telling the Kohanim. The Kohanim have an elevated responsibility that outstrips that of the rest of Bnei Yisroel. Here the Kohanim are told that they must not come into contact with a dead person, however, this restriction is a little counterintuitive.

After all, preparing the dead for burial and accompanying the body to the grave is considered a great kindness – known as a "chessed shel emes." This prohibition on the Kohanim is theirs alone; even the greatest of Torah scholars are permitted to become "tamei," and it is in fact considered to be performing a great mitzvah.

When asking someone to accept a higher level of responsibility or service, we must be careful not to impose it on them. This is why Hashem asked Moshe to communicate with the Kohanim, who in turn were to communicate it to their children. Asking someone to do something that others are not obligated to do requires a full explanation of why it should be done.

This is particularly true when we are dealing with our children. When we want to teach them rules that go beyond the scope of social rules, such as not to steal or not to kill, we must patiently explain to them why we do what we do. Simply telling them that they have to keep Shabbos or put on teffilin is not an effective manner of getting them to accept or follow the mitzvos. We must communicate to them the beauty and meaning behind our mitzvos. In this way, we can be sure that they will appreciate what Yiddishkeit is really all about, and ensure that they will convey the meaning to their children.

Customizing the Law

And Moshe declared the festivals of Hashem to Bnei Yisroel (23:44).

The last Mishna in tractate Megillah concludes with a verse from this week's parsha and the following teaching: And Moshe declared the festivals of Hashem to Bnei Yisroel – indicating that it is an obligation to read each and every festival portion at its appropriate time (Megillah 31a). The final Gemara in the tractate further elucidates with the following statement, "Our rabbis taught, Moshe instituted for them, (Bnei) Yisroel, that they should inquire about the matters of the day (holidays) – the laws of Pesach on Pesach, the laws of Shavuos on Shavuos and the laws of Sukkos on Sukkos" (ibid 32a).

Maimonides (Yad; Hilchos Tefillah 13:8) comments that Moshe Rabbeinu instituted that on every holiday we read from the Torah sections that are relevant to that holiday. Seemingly, Moshe also chose which sections to read on each holiday. Yet, when Maimonides discusses which portion is read on Pesach he says, "It was instituted to read from the edition of the holidays (in this week's parsha) but the custom has become to read (a different section from Parshas Bo)." Rambam is following the opinion of Abaye in the Gemara (Megilla 31a).

This seems to be very odd. Moshe Rabbeinu instructed them to read certain sections on the holidays. How is it possible that someone would abrogate what Moshe instituted? In addition, the language of the Gemara is very unusual: "Moshe instituted for them, Yisroel, that they should read […]" Why do we need the extra words "for them," why not merely say Moshe instituted for Yisroel?

In every generation, the Beis Din serves two functions; one is that they are the final arbiters of what laws are to be included in the Oral Law (i.e. using the exegetical rules that are applied to the analysis of the Torah). In other words, halacha needs to be an evolving entity in order to address new situations that arise, and the Beis Din applies the accepted methods to make a ruling on what the halacha is. In this way, they are empowered by Hashem to act as the interpreters of the Oral Law. This began with Moshe and he gave that authority to Yehoshua, and it has continued throughout the generations.

But the Beis Din has another important function. They are also the legislative body of the Jewish people; enacting laws that enable society to function properly. As an example, even though according to Torah Law the sabbatical year dissolves all personal loans, the sages instituted a system whereby creditors would be protected so that creditors would not be discouraged from lending money (there are many such examples). These laws aren't interpretations of the Torah, they are laws instituted so that society can function properly. This legislative power is derived from the people.

Moshe Rabbeinu didn't institute the reading from the relevant Torah portions on each holiday as a Torah law. He instituted it as a way of enhancing the holiday and making it meaningful for us. This is why the double language is used; he did it for them, for their sake. As it was done as a legislative function, it was the kind of law that could be changed by a succeeding Beis Din. Thus, the custom of what to read can be determined and changed by succeeding generations as the power remains with the people.

We must also bear in mind that customs of one segment of our society have great legitimacy and efficacy, and often bear the

weight of Torah law. However, we mustn't confuse customs for actual Torah law. Whether your custom on Pesach is to eat rice, or non-gebrokts, or to put teffilin on Chol Hamoed, they are all valid ways of observing Torah and mitzvos.

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https://jewishlink.news/look-in-the-mirror-3/

Look In The Mirror

Rabbi Moshe Taragin

May 13, 2024

We watched in horror as rabid mobs chanted, "Death to the Jews." We presumed that our modern and enlightened culture would not tolerate such hatred and unabashed bigotry. The monstrosity of Jew-hatred just will not die. These violent protests are also bewildering for a number of ways. Muslim and Arab protesters are vehemently supported by average, run-of-the mill, Western college students. Why are unaffiliated students so angry at our people and so opposed to our rights to our homeland?

Astonishingly, the protests also include a broad range of minority groups, such as Black Lives Matter and members of different orientations and gender identities. Their betrayal is stinging. For years, Jews spearheaded social justice movements, campaigning to protect their rights and their dignity. Now that we need their support, they have turned their backs on us.

How did these seemingly unrelated groups get dragged into this consortium of hatred? Why are they so passionately opposed to our rights to live and breathe in our homeland? Why are they so shamelessly and falsely accusing us of committing genocide? Part of the answer lies in the powerful doctrine of intersectionality that now permeates modern culture. This ideology globalizes moral calculus by asserting that all forms of oppression or discrimination are interdependent. Because all discrimination overlaps, all marginalized groups with grievances must support one another in their respective battles for justice. The battle for equality of an African-American woman has become fused with the war in Gaza. Thus, any group struggling against any form of discrimination must vigorously protest against Israel's right to security. By asserting that all aggrieved parties share a common enemy—recently termed the "constellations of power," which systematically discriminates against the weak, intersectionality thus internationalizes social justice. This warped cultural narrative creates the ludicrous scene of gay people supporting Hamas murderers, even though Hamas terrorists would gladly toss them off a roof and drag their bodies through the street. But to people blinded by intersectionality, facts don't matter. The culture of intersectionality raises numerous moral challenges and threatens our religious values. By stressing grievances, it promotes a culture of victimhood and encourages competition for rights and benefits. In their worldview, the best way to triumph is to insist others recognize your past disadvantage. The group that in the past has been the most victimized possesses superior virtue and deserves a larger piece of the pie. The politics of victimhood demands that society acknowledges grievances and offers compensation for collective past suffering; thus, victimhood becomes a power play. Additionally, by casting themselves as passive, feeble targets of injustice, victims easily deflect personal accountability for self-improvement. Moreover, intersectionality rapidly escalates resentment into fury. Once discrimination is viewed as systemic, chronic violence is easily justified. If the system is stacked and inherently unfair, any and by all means necessary become an acceptable response. Perhaps the most troubling aspect of intersectionality is that it paints the world in very dark colors as an ongoing power struggle. This view of the world is very Marxist. According to Marx, history is driven by a class struggle between the bourgeoisie, or management, and the proletariat, or working class. The tensions and contradictions emerging from this struggle shape society.

By replacing one class struggle with another, intersectionality has become the modern version of Marxism. Instead of centering the struggle between the working class and management, it portrays a wholesale conflict between privileged white males and victimized underclasses. By stressing power dynamics and systems of control, it portrays society in a perpetual state of conflict and envisions the world as sharply divided between oppressors and victims. This pessimistic view of a society encourages "confrontationalism" and contentiousness rather than cooperation and collaboration. It perpetuates rage and promotes cycles of retaliation.

Religious people don't view the world through belligerent and militant lenses. We don't assume that conflict is necessary for progress. Society isn't shaped by class warfare but by mutual respect, cooperation, compassion, education, and, of course, religious values and moral spirit. Class warfare and social conflict are not essential for societal improvement. In fact, they detract from it. The ideology of intersectionality is what accounts for college students joining these protests of hate, as this generation was raised on intersectional belief. This ideology also accounts for minority groups joining rallies in support of murderers, since they believe they are campaigning

for broader global justice. No crime is unpardonable in the heroic battle against the global system of discrimination. Intersectionality is also responsible for inflaming the fanatical anger and rage of these protests. Flag burning, school lockouts, road closures, blockading airports, hyperbolic use of language, rioting, and of course, threats of violence and actual violence.

Look In The Mirror

Does any of this sound familiar? Turn back the clock a year. Many of these ugly scenes unfolded in our very own country, in the streets of Jerusalem, the intersections of Tel Aviv, and the highways of Ayalon. Absurdly and ironically, there was an intersectional dynamic fueling our own recent year of social discontent.

There are many fault lines that divide Israel. We are in the process of a historic project to assemble Jews from across different ethnic, racial, religious, political, and ideological lines. An ambitious project of this magnitude has never been attempted before. These protests surrounding judicial reform felt intersectional. People took positions based on religion and ideology rather than a logical assessment of facts. People were checking boxes. Most right- wing, traditional, religious Jews supported this reform. Most secular, left-leaning Jews were strongly opposed. Judicial reform is an issue that will shape our future society. Support or opposition should be based on a dispassionate assessment of the pros and cons and should not be hinged on religion or political affiliation. The radicalization of the debate and the ensuing protests reflected the intersectionality of Israeli society and how we have begun to cluster around unrelated issues. It should not be this way. We should consider important issues on their own without allowing preconceived religious or political leanings to dictate our opinions.

Violent Speech

Not only were the protests surrounding judicial reform intersectional, they incited violent speech, eerily similar to, but not as vicious as, the current verbal violence of the anti-Israel rallies. Violence of speech and print quickly turn into violence of blood. Over the past few decades, the U.S. has allowed a climate of hateful speech to flourish, and that climate is now emboldening anti-Israel protesters to support rapists and murderers and to threaten the lives of Jews. Language has spiraled out of control. During last year's protests, we were careless with our own use of language and too often defaulted to vile demagoguery. Judicial reform opponents were unfairly cast as anarchists, while supporters were marked as fascists. How did a political debate about the selection of Supreme Court justices become a war between fascists and anarchists?

My own saddest memory from the year of protests was the horrible use of the term "Nazi" to describe other Jews. I hope that after Oct. 7, no Jew will ever again commit this hideous crime against Jewish history. Any Jewish mouth that defames another Jew with that odious label doesn't deserve to pray or study Torah. I don't know G-d's will or why Oct. 7 happened. I don't know why we continue to face this revolting and abhorrent hatred. No one does. One thing I do know is that these angry anti-Israel protests hold up a mirror to some of our own ugly behavior of a year ago. Face the horror of that behavior and that dark period and don't shirk responsibility for the way we acted and spoke. Pledge to yourself to never fall into that category of animosity and contempt.

Never again.

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from: **Rabbi YY Jacobson** <rabbiyy@theyeshiva.net>
date: May 16, 2024, 4:08 PM
subject: **It's a Beautiful Heart - Essay by Rabbi YY**

It's a Beautiful Heart

Counting Days and Weeks: Confronting Mental Illness, Trauma, and Depression

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 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, 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, we count as follows: "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 counting 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 "Karban Omer" was a barley offering brought to the Holy Temple on the second day of Passover (on the 16th of Nissan). They would harvest barley, grind it to flower, and offer a fistful of the flower on the altar. The rest of the flower would be baked as matzah and eaten by the Kohanim (Omer is the Hebrew name for the volume of flower 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 sefirat 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 אורח 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 Ravya, and others believe 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 Shavuos.
However, Tosefot and most halachic authorities, including the Code of Jewish Law,[3] maintain the view that the biblical mitzvah of counting directly depends on the actual Omer offering. Hence, today, there is only a rabbinic obligation to count, to commemorate the counting in the time 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.[4]
רבינו ירוחם ספר תולדות אדם וחוה, חלק אדם, נתיב ה חלק ד: ונראה לן, משום דכתוב בתורה [שתי פרשיות], שבעה שבועות תספור לך וגו' וכתיב נמי מיום הביאכם את עומר וגו' שבע שבתות תמימות תהיין, נמצא שלא נכתבה ספירת שבועות כי אם גבי העומר, אבל ספירת הימים [תספרו 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 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 even 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 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 enigmatic. 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.[5]

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. For 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.[6]

In the first week, we focus on the love in our lives. 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 to empathize. 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 is focused 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? I’m I king over myself? Do I possess inner core self-value?

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. These seven traits are 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.[7]

Transformation vs. Self-Control

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

Every once in a while, you hear what we call a wonderous journey of incredible healing and transformation. Someone who was struggling with a trauma or an addiction for many years, uncovers a deep awareness, or perhaps goes through a profound healing journey, or a therapeutic program, and they come out completely healed. They have touched such a deep place within themselves, that it completely transformed their life. The trauma is healed; the addiction is gone. 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

But that is a unique experience. And even when it occurs, it may not last forever, or we may still vacillate back to our old coping mechanisms caused by our traumas. 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 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 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 be able 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.[8]

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 behind the wheel, no amount of screaming can 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. Still, 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 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 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 hay, relax. All she asked was when you were coming home, perhaps because she misses you, 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 at the moment? No! 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 whom 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 emotions 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.

One of the powerful ideas in Tanya is 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. [9]

A Beautiful Mind; a Beautiful Life

Several years ago, John Nash, one of the greatest mathematicians of the 20th century, was killed with his wife in a devastating car accident in NJ.

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 planned 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 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 discard his paranoid delusions consciously. "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 Nobel 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 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 Nobel Prize, who has become world-renowned, and 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 happening; she sees how he has suddenly wandered off. He is not present anymore in the real world. His eyes are elsewhere; his body 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 the 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 was: 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 must be able to at least identify it as thoughts that do not constitute his essence and stem from a part of 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 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 now. 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 pick him and his wife up from Newark airport and take them home to West Windsor, NJ. The plane landed early, so they 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 truth, healing, and perfection continues at all times and under all conditions, even in the darkest hours of exile. Thus, we are instructed to count not only the days but also the weeks. We are charged with the duty of learning self-control (days) and trying to achieve transformation (weeks).[10] 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 also had the ability to 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.[11]

Indeed, as we are living today in the times of redemption, more and more we are experiencing the ability for full healing—transforming our days and our weeks, bidding farewell to our traumas forever.

[1] Menachos 66a [2] Leviticus 23:15 [3] Tosefos Menachos 66a. Shlchan Aruch Orach Chaim section 489. See all other references quoted in Shlchan Aruch HaRav ibid. [4] 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 Yoseif on the Tur. [5] 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. [6] Likkutei Torah Emor, Maamar Usfartem (the first one). [7] 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. [8] In many ways, this constitutes the basic difference between the Tzaddik and the Banuni in Tanya. [9] See Tanya Ch. 4, 6, 12, and many more places. [10] See Tanya ch. 14 [11] 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.

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How Many Should be Saying Kaddish?
By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question: **Is it better that each mourner recite only one kaddish, or that all the mourners recite all the kaddeishim?**

Answer: Most people are under the impression that whether the "mourner's kaddish" (kaddish yasom) is recited by only one person or whether many recite it simultaneously is a dispute between the practices of Germany and those of Eastern Europe. However, we will soon see that this simplification is inaccurate. There were many communities in Eastern Europe where kaddish was said by only one person at a time, and this was the universal Ashkenazic practice until about 250 years ago.

The custom that many people recite the mourner's kaddish simultaneously was accepted and standard Sefardic practice (meaning the Jews of North Africa and the Middle East), going back at least to the early 18th century (see Siddur Yaavetz, comments after Aleinu), although when this custom was instituted is uncertain. But before we explore the issue of whether more than one person may say kaddish simultaneously, let us first examine the origins of reciting the mourner's kaddish altogether.

Origins of kaddish

Although the Gemara refers to kaddish in numerous places (Brachos 3a, 57a; Shabbos 119b; Sukkah 39a; Sotah 49a), it never mentions what we call kaddish yasom, the kaddish recited by mourners, nor does it recommend or even suggest, anywhere, that a mourner lead the services. The Gemara, also, makes no mention of when kaddish is recited, with the exception of a very cryptic reference to kaddish recited after studying aggadah (see Sotah 49a). A different early source, Masechta Sofrim, mentions recital of kaddish before borchu (10:7) and after musaf (19:12). The fact that the Gemara says nothing about a mourner reciting kaddish or leading services is especially unusual, since the most common source for these practices is an event that predates the Gemara. The Or Zarua, a rishon, records the following story:

Rabbi Akiva once saw a man covered head to toe with soot, carrying on his head the load that one would expect ten men to carry, and running like a horse. Rabbi Akiva stopped the man, and asked him: "Why are you working so hard? If you are a slave and your master works you this hard, I'll redeem you. If you are so poor that you need to work this hard to support your family, I'll find you better employment."

The man replied, "Please do not detain me, lest those appointed over me get angry at me."

Rabbi Akiva asked him: "Who are you, and what is your story?"

The man answered: "I died, and every day they send me like this to chop and carry these amounts of wood. When I am finished, they burn me with the wood that I have gathered."

Rabbi Akiva asked him what his profession was when he was alive, to which he answered that he had been a tax collector (which, in their day, meant someone who purchased from the government the contract to collect taxes) who favored the rich by overtaxing the poor, which the Or Zarua calls "killing the poor."

Rabbi Akiva: "Have you heard from your overseers whether there is any way to release you from your judgment?"

The man responded: "Please do not detain me, lest my overseers become angry with me. I have heard that there is no solution for me, except for one thing that I cannot do. I was told that if I have a son who would lead the tzibur in the recital of borchu or would recite kaddish so that the tzibur would answer yehei shemei rabba mevorach…, they would release me immediately from this suffering. However, I did not leave any sons, but a pregnant wife, and I have no idea if she gave birth to a male child, and if she did, whether anyone is concerned about teaching him, since I have not a friend left in the world."

At that moment, Rabbi Akiva accepted upon himself to find whether a son existed and, if indeed he did, to teach him Torah until he could fulfill what was required to save his father. Rabbi Akiva asked the man for his name, his wife's name, and the name of the town where he had lived. "My name is Akiva, my wife's name is Shoshniva and I come from Ludkia."

Rabbi Akiva traveled to Ludkia and asked people if they knew of a former resident, Akiva, the husband of Shoshniva, to which he received the following answer: "Let the bones of that

scoundrel be ground to pulp." When Rabbi Akiva asked about Shoshniva, he was answered: "May any memory of her be erased from the world." He then inquired about their child, and was answered: "He is uncircumcised -- for we were not interested in involving ourselves even to provide him with a bris milah!" Rabbi Akiva immediately began his search for the son, whom he located -- it turned out that he was already a young adult. Rabbi Akiva performed a bris milah on him and attempted to teach him Torah, but was unable to do so. For forty days, Rabbi Akiva fasted, praying that the child be able to study Torah, at which time a heavenly voice announced: "Rabbi Akiva, now go and teach him Torah!"

Rabbi Akiva taught him Torah, shema, shemoneh esrei, birchas hamazon, and then brought him to shul in order for him to lead the tzibur by reciting kaddish and borchu, to which the tzibur responded, Yehei shemei rabba mevorach le'olam ule'olmei olemaya and "Baruch Hashem hamevorach le'olam va'ed."

At that moment, Akiva, the husband of Shoshniva, was released from his punishment. This Akiva immediately came to Rabbi Akiva in a dream and told him: "May it be Hashem's will that you eventually reach your eternal rest in Gan Eden -- for you have saved me from Gehennom." (This story is also found, with some variation, in the second chapter of Masechta Kallah Rabasi.)

Other versions

When a different rishon, the Rivash, was asked about this story, he reported that it is not found in the Gemara, but perhaps its origin is in Midrash Rabbah or Midrash Tanchuma. He then quotes a story from the Orchos Chayim similar to that quoted by the Or Zarua. In conclusion, the Orchos Chayim emphasizes that, for the twelve months of mourning, a mourner should recite the last kaddish of the davening, maftir on Shabbos and Yom Tov, and lead the services for ma'ariv every motza'ei Shabbos (Shu't Harivash #115).

A similar story is recorded in an earlier midrashic source, the Tanna Devei Eliyahu, where the protagonist is not Rabbi Akiva but his rebbe's rebbe, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai (see Rambam, Peirush Hamishnayos, end of the fifth chapter of Sotah). In this version, the man was punished until his son turned five and was educated to the point that he could answer borchu in shul (Eliyahu Zuta, Chapter 17). No mention is made of the son reciting kaddish. However, the halachic sources all quote the version of the Or Zarua, in which the protagonist of the story is Rabbi Akiva.

Merits for the deceased

This story serves as the basis for the practice that a mourner leads the services and recite kaddish. Relatively little of this topic is discussed until the time of the Maharil, who was asked the following question:

"Should someone who is uncertain whether his father or mother is still alive recite kaddish?"

To this question, frequent in earlier times when cell phones were not so commonplace, the Maharil replied that he is not required to recite kaddish and he should assume that his parent is still alive (see Mishnah, Gittin 3:3). Once the parent reaches the age of eighty, one should view it as uncertain whether the parent is still alive. Upon this basis, I am aware of a gadol be'Yisrael who had escaped Hitler's Europe before the war, who began to recite kaddish for his parents once the Nazis invaded the part of Russia where his parents were living.

The Maharil continues that if there are two people in shul, one reciting kaddish for a deceased parent and one who is uncertain whether his parents are still alive, the second person should not recite kaddish. This is because of the halachic principle of ein safek motzi midei vadai, someone who has a questionable claim does not preempt someone who has a definite claim or right -- the person whose parents might still be alive should not recite kaddish, rather than someone whose parents are known to be deceased. This ruling of the Maharil assumes that kaddish is recited by only one person at a time.

The Maharil explains that, for this reason, he himself did not say kaddish when he was uncertain whether his parents were still alive. He then explains that someone who is not sure whether his parents are still alive and is capable to lead the services properly should lead the services in honor of his parents (Teshuvos Maharil #36).

Conclusions based on the Maharil

We see from the Maharil's discussion that:

- Only one person recites kaddish at a time.
- Someone with living parents should not recite mourner's kaddish because he is pre-empting mourners from reciting kaddish.
- When no mourner will be leading the services, someone uncertain if he is a mourner should do so, provided he can do the job properly.

Obligatory versus voluntary kaddish

The Maharil (Shu't Maharil Hachadoshos #28) was also asked how may a minor recite kaddish if it is a required part of davening, as only one obligated to fulfill a mitzvah may fulfill a mitzvah on behalf of others. The Maharil answered that the kaddeishim that are recited by the shaliach tzibur as part of davening cannot be recited by minors. These kaddeishim are obligatory and must be recited by an adult, who fulfills the

mitzvah on behalf of the community. However, non-obligatory kaddeishim, such as kaddish derabbanan and the kaddeishim recited at the end of davening, may be recited by minors. As a curious aside, the Mesechta Sofrim (10:7) explains that these kaddeishim were established primarily as make-up for people who arrived late and missed the kaddeishim that are required.

It is curious that, already in the time of the Maharil, people assumed that the mourner's kaddeishim are more important than those of the chazzan. The Maharil points out that this is incorrect, since the kaddeishim recited by the chazzan are required, and it is greater to perform a mitzvah that is required than something non-obligatory (gadol ha'metzuveh ve'oseh mimi she'eino metzuveh ve'oseh). There is greater merit to recite the kaddeishim of the chazzan that are part of davening.

Since minors cannot be chazzan, the Maharil rules that they should be called up for maftir, which a minor may receive, since they thereby recite borchu in front of the tzibur.

Mourner's kaddish on weekdays

It appears from the Maharil's responsum that, prior to his era, kaddish yasom was recited only on Shabbos and Yom Tov. In his day, a new custom had just begun in some communities to recite mourner's kaddish on weekdays. The new custom enabled minors to recite kaddish daily and accommodated adults whom the tzibur did not want leading services.

Which kaddeishim should be said?

The Maharil writes that although the following kaddeishim are not required but customary, they should still be recited: after a shiur is completed, after bameh madlikin on Friday evening, and after pesukim are recited, such as when we recite kaddish after aleinu and the shir shel yom. He rules that someone whose parents are still alive may recite these kaddeishim. However, if his parents do not want him to recite these kaddeishim, he should not.

One at a time

At this point, let us address our opening question: Is it better that each mourner recite only one kaddish, or that all the mourners recite all the kaddeishim?

It appears that, initially, whoever wanted to recite what we call today the mourner's kaddeishim would do so. Knowing the story of Rabbi Akiva, it became an element of competition, with different people trying to chap the mitzvah. This situation sometimes engendered machlokes and chillul Hashem. To resolve this problem, two approaches developed for dealing with the issue. Sefardim followed the approach that all who wanted to say kaddish recited it in unison. This practice is praised by Rav Yaakov Emden in his commentary on the siddur (at the end of Aleinu). Among Ashkenazim, the approach used was to establish rules of prioritization, whereby one person at a time recited kaddish.

These prioritization rules are discussed and amplified by many later Ashkenazi authorities, implying that the early Ashkenazi world had only one person reciting kaddish at a time. We do not know exactly when the custom began to change, but by the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century, several major Ashkenazi authorities, among them the Chayei Odom (30:7) and the Chasam Sofer (Shu't Orach Chayim #159; Yoreh Deah #345), discuss a practice whereby kaddish was recited by more than one person simultaneously. About this time, we find another custom in some communities, in which the mourner's kaddish was said by only one person, but where everyone who chose could join in the recital of a kaddish derabbanan that was recited at the end of the daily morning prayer (see Shu't Binyan Tziyon #1:122), presumably after the rav taught a shiur in halachah.

Merged community

With this background, we can understand the following mid-nineteenth century responsum. An Ashkenazi community had two shullen and several shteiblach. The main shul was in serious disrepair, so an agreement was made to close all the smaller shullen in order to pool resources and invest in one large, beautiful new shul and have no other minyanim. Part of the plan was that the new shul would permit all mourners to recite all the kaddeishim in unison. Subsequently, some individuals claimed that the community should follow the practice of the Rema and the Magen Avraham of prioritizing the recital of kaddish and having one person say it at a time. The community leaders retorted that this would create machlokes, since there would be only one shul and many people would like to say more kaddeishim than they can under the proposed system. Apparently, the dispute even involved some fisticuffs. The community sent the shaylah to Rav Ber Oppenheim, the rav and av beis din of Eibenschutz. He felt that the community practice of having all the mourners recite kaddish together should be maintained, but first wrote an extensive letter clarifying his position, which he sent to Rav Yaakov Ettlinger, the premier halachic authority of central Europe at the time. I will refer to Rav Ettlinger by the name he is usually called in yeshiva circles, the Aruch Laneir, the name of his most famous work, the multi-volumed Aruch Laneir commentary on much of Shas. The Aruch Laneir's reply was subsequently published in his work of responsa called Shu't Binyan Tziyon.

The Aruch Laneir contended that one should not change the established minhag of Germany and Poland, in practice for

more than three hundred years, in which only one person recites kaddish at a time. He further notes that, although the Yaavetz had praised the practice that several people recite kaddish in unison, the Yaavetz himself had lived in Altoona, Germany, where the accepted practice was that only one person said kaddish at a time. (The Aruch Laneir notes that he himself was the current rav of Altoona and had been so already for several decades.)

Furthermore, the Aruch Laneir contends that one cannot compare Ashkenazic to Sefardic observance for a practical reason. The Sefardim are accustomed to praying in unison, and therefore, when they say kaddish, everyone exhibits great care to synchronize its recital. When Ashkenazim attempt to recite kaddish in unison, no one hears the kaddeishim. The Aruch Laneir notes that when the kaddish derabbanan is recited by all mourners, the result is a cacophony. He writes that he wishes he could abolish this custom, since, as a result, no one hears or responds appropriately to kaddish.

In conclusion, the Aruch Laneir is adamant that where the custom is that one person at a time recite kaddish, one may not change the practice. On the other hand, we have seen that other authorities cite a custom whereby all the mourners recite kaddish in unison.

Conclusion: How does kaddish work?

The Gemara (Yoma 86a) records that any sin that a person commits in this world, no matter how grievous, will be atoned if the person does teshuvah. This does not mean that the teshuvah accomplishes atonement without any suffering. Some sins are so serious that a person must undergo suffering in this world, in addition to performing teshuvah, before he is forgiven.

The greatest sin a person can be guilty of is chillul Hashem. Only teshuvah, suffering, and the individual's eventual demise will be sufficient to atone for this transgression. Thus, a person's death may result from his having caused a chillul Hashem.

The Maharal of Prague had a brother, Rav Chayim, who authored a work entitled Sefer Hachayim, in which he writes that most people die because they made a chillul Hashem at some point in their life. The reason a mourner recites kaddish is to use the parent's death as a reason to create kiddush Hashem – by reciting kaddish – thus, atoning for the original chillul Hashem (Sefer Hachayim, end of chapter 8). May we all merit creating kiddush Hashem in our lives.