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In memory of **Chaim Yissachar z"l** ben Yechiel Zaydel Dov

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Table of Contents:

- Rav Chaim Jachter on Shabbat Night Kiddush Levanah
- Rav Soloveitchik on the BeHaG's Shita in Sefiras Ha'Omer
- Rav Mordechai Willig - Chilul Hashem and Kiddush Hashem
- Halachipedia on Using a Shaver
- Rav Jacobson Counting Days/Weeks/Confronting Mental Illness
- Rav Eliezer Melamed on Aveilus
- Rav Yehuda Nachshoni on Reasons for Counting the Omer

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Shabbat Night Kiddush Levanah
By Rabbi Chaim Jachter

The Rama

The Rama (Orach Chaim 426:2, citing the Maharil) states that one should not recite Kiddush Levanah on Motza'ei Shabbat heading into Yom Tov. The Mishnah Berurah (426:12) clarifies that it should also not be said on an ordinary Shabbat or Yom Tov night

1. The Mishnah Berurah notes that there are many Kabbalistic reasons for not saying Kiddush Levanah at this time. The Shulchan Aruch's commentaries do not dissent from the Rama, and Sephardic Poskim agree (Rav Ovadia Yosef, Teshuvot Yabia Omer 8: Orach Chaim 41 and Yalkut Yosef Orach Chaim 426:33).

Mystical Explanations. One Kabbalistic explanation is that since Kiddush Levanah is such a joyous event, "Ein Me'arvin Simcha B'Simcha," "we do not blur and dilute one Simcha with another." A second mystical reason is that, since Kiddush Levanah is compared to greeting the Shechina, one elevates himself to the heavens. It is problematic to do so n Shabbat and Yom Tov due to the prohibition of exiting one's Techum (boundary).

1 Yom Tov Sheini Kehilchata (11:6-7) follows Teshuvot B'tzel HaChochma (2:37) who writes that one who does not reside in Eretz Yisrael should not say Kiddush Levanah with with residents of Israel on Motza'ei Shavu'ot in Israel, when Bnei Chutz LaAretz observe Yom Tov Sheini. Rav Hershel Schachter agrees. Similarly, Yom Tov Sheini Kehilchata rules that Israeli residents visiting Chutz LaAretz should not say Kiddush Levanah on the night of Yom Tov Sheini.

This last idea is of enthralling Hashkafic significance, as it expresses the immense power of Kiddush Levanah to transport us to the heavens and encounter the Ribono Shel Olam, Master of the Universe! Non-Mystical Approaches

The Sha'ar HaTziyun (426:12) offers a non-Kabbalistic explanation based on the rabbinic prohibition to dance on Shabbat (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 339:3). The Sha'ar HaTziyun writes that since we are accustomed to dancing after Kiddush Levanah, we avoid Kiddush Levanah on Shabbat and Yom Tov evenings.

Another explanation stems from the various Bakashot, requests from Hashem, customarily included in Kiddush Levanah, which should be avoided on Shabbat and Yom Tov (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 576:12). he Ben Ish Chai (Vayikra 2:26) suggests that saying Shalom Aleichem counterbalances our saying "Tipol Aleihem Ameita VaFachad", that our enemies should be struck with fear, at Kiddush Levanah. He notes that we may not say this on Shabbat or Yom Tov since we are forbidden to curse or excommunicate people on these special days.

The Sdei Chemed. (Asifat Dinim, Ma'arechet Rosh Hashana 2:2) and Teshuvot Minchat Yitzchak (2:120:2) suggest (at least regarding Leil Shabbat) that the concern is about carrying on Shabbat. Since most do not know Kiddush Levanah by heart and it is customarily recited outside, there is concern that one may violate the prohibition of Hotza'ah (carrying) if we were to say Kiddush Levanah on Friday night. Similarly, the Mishnah Berurah (583:8) mentions this concern as a reason not to say Tashlich on Shabbat.

Exceptions. The Mishnah Berurah notes that the Halachic consensus permits reciting Kiddush Levanah on Shabbat or Yom Tov if it is the last opportunity to do so. Since the practice of avoiding Kiddush Levanah on Shabbat and Yom Tov is of later origin (the Maharil, a late Rishon), it has the status of a custom, which does not apply if it would cause one to miss a Mitzvah thereby.The Aruch Hashulchan (Orach Chaim 426:10) states that when saying Kiddush Levanah on Shabbat or Yom Tov, one should omit the Tefillot and Bakashot normally added to Kiddush Levanah. He writes that one should limit Kiddush Levanah to the Bracha, implying that one should not dance on such occasions. Rav Mordechai Willig follows the Aruch Hashulchan.

If one needs to rely on a community Eruv to carry a Siddur outside to say Kiddush Levanah on a Friday night, it might be preferable to recite it inside. It is customary to say Kiddush Levanah outside when possible (Mishnah Berurah 426:21 and Yalkut Yosef Orach Chaim 426:23), but it is strongly recommended to avoid relying on a community Eruv when possible (Mishnah Berurah 345:23 and Yalkut Yosef Orach Chaim 345:4). Indeed, Rav Hershel Schachter permits saying Kiddush Levanah indoors to avoid relying on a community Eruv.

How Long Beforehand? What if one has one more day after Friday to recite iddush Levanah – may one recite it on Shabbat lest the moon not be visible Motza'ei Shabbat? The Sha'ar HaTziyun (426:13) cites a dispute about this matter but does not resolve it. However, the Aruch Hashulchan (Orach Chaim 426:10) writes that in areas where it rains year-round, it should be said in such circumstances. He even relates that he permitted reciting Kiddush Levanah on several Friday nights, and that it rained on the subsequent Motza'ei Shabbat, thereby proving his ruling.

Rav Oavdia Yosef (Teshuvot Yabia Omer 8 Orach Chaim 11) even permits reciting Kiddush Levanah on a Friday night when there are two days left to say it, lest one miss the opportunity to fulfill this precious Mitzvah 2 .

2 Significantly, the Chayei Adam (118:15) and Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (97:12) permit saying Kiddush Levanah on Shabbat or Yom Tov night in a "Sha'at HaDechak", case of pressing need. These great Poskim assign the local Halachic authority to assess whether the situation is pressure-filled, warranting saying Kiddush Levanah on Shabbat or Yom Tov, instead of offering a specific amount of days left to say it.
Rav Hershel Schachter and Rav Mordechai Willig believe that one should say Kiddush Levanah on a Friday night only if it is the last night to say Kiddush Levanah. They agree that an exception might be made if the weather forecast strongly predicts rain for Motza'ei Shabbat or longer. Soldiers in Tzahal (Israel Defense Forces), medical residents, or anyone working exceptionally long evening and night hours may also recite Kiddush Levanah on a Shabbat or Yom Tov night if they are concerned that their overwhelming responsibilities make these holy days the only times they can recite it.3

Conclusion

The Minhagim our Chachamim (sages) have added over the generations, especially when influenced by Kabbalah, enhance our Mitzvah observance. However, we should never lose sight of our basic Halachic priorities. Observance of baseline Halacha is our primary responsibility. We must not risk failing to fulfill our basic Halachic obligations in the pursuit of honoring Minhagim and Kabbalistic ideas. Thus, while we normally avoid saying Kiddush Levanah on Shabbat or Yom Tov, there are times we must.

Rav Soloveitchik's Explanation of the BeHaG that if One Counted Sefira by Day Without a Bracha, He can Continue the to Count Remaining Nights With a Bracha

Translated and adopted from **הררי קדם** CS

The sefer הררי קדם by Rav Michel Shurkin in the name of Rav Soloveitchik (Volume II Section 112) discusses the following.

Tosafos in Megilah 20b in discussing the laws of Sefiras HaOmer, quotes the position of the BeHaG that: ובה"ג כתב דהיכי דאינשי לברך בלילה ימנה למחר בלא ברכה אבל אם שכח לילה ויום לא ימנה עוד בברכה דבעינן תמימות וליכא *if one forget to count at night, one may count the next day without a bracha; but if one forget both night and day, one can't count with a bracha anymore*. And the הגהות יעב"ץ adds to the nusach of Tosafos in the name of the BeHaG דהיכי דאינשי לברך בלילה ימנה למחר בלא ברכה נכתב בגליון [של הגהות יעב"ץ] ושאר הימים בברכה *if one counted by day without a bracha one can continue to count in subsequent nights with a bracha*. This is because we require תמימות *completeness*, and it's lacking. The implication of the BeHaG cited in Tosafos is that if one remembered to count by day without a bracha, one may continue to count on future nights with a bracha. (Tosafos continues that ואחר שבירך על הספירה אומר י"ר שיבנה, which is our custom.)

This ruling is perplexing at first glance. If daytime counting lets you continue counting later with a bracha, it should logically warrant its own bracha; and if counting by day has no halachic validity, why does it preserve your ability to count with a bracha on subsequent nights?

The Mishnah Brurah rules according to the BeHaG and explains this ruling using a double doubt a ספק ספיקא. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 489:7 in the name of Rabeinu Tam) records that if one forgot to count by night one can count the next day without a bracha. The Mishnah Berurah states that one can go back to counting with a bracha on subsequent nights (489 note 34), which is also the ruling of the BeHag. The Sha'ar Hatziyon (note 45) cites the Ma'amar Mordechai and the Nehar Shalom as confirming this ruling, and the Sha'ar Hatzion explains that one relies on a ספק ספיקא. The first ספק is whether you can fulfill the mitzvah by counting during the day. The second ספק is whether even without any counting on a prior day, each day is a separate mitzvah. This double doubt lets you count on later nights with a bracha.

However, Rav Soloveitchik felt that the BeHaG's language does not imply a sfeik-sfeika, as his psak sounds certain, not doubtful.

Rav Soloveitchik explained the BeHaG as follows.

(i) The BeHaG says you count without a bracha if you only remember during the day, because the mitzvah requires full days, or temimos, which you don't have during the day.

(ii) If you miss a full 24-hour period, you can't count with a bracha anymore, but this isn't because all 49 days are one single mitzvah. If they were, daytime counting wouldn't help at all. Instead, each night is actually a separate mitzvah.

(iii) The real reason you lose the bracha after missing a full day is a lack of continuity. To be considered a valid counting, the sequence must be unbroken. If you missed yesterday entirely, you can't count consecutively today. You can't state yesterday's number because that's not correct, but you also cannot jump to tonight's number with a bracha because going out of sequence is not considered a ma'aseh sefirah, it is not a "counting". For example, a sequence of 1, 2, 3, 5 isn't a proper count. The Torah requires a continuous progression where each day builds on the last.

(iv) The BeHaG rules, however, (as amended by the הגהות יעב"ץ) that counting during the previous day changes things. It isn't a full mitzvah because it lacks temimos. But it still acts as a formal counting, or ma'aseh sefirah. Because each night is a separate mitzvah, this daytime counting prevents a break in the sequence. You can safely declare the next night's number, like "today is five days", because you kept the count alive during the day.

This framework clarifies the BeHaG's position. Daytime counting doesn't fulfill the core mitzvah. The mitzvah is strictly a nighttime obligation. Therefore, you can't recite a bracha during the day. However, daytime counting still constitutes a ma'aseh sefirah, a "counting", since it is a valid act of counting that preserves the sequence's continuity. It lacks the status of a full mitzvah, but it maintains the integrity of the act of "counting". This allows you to count subsequent nights with a bracha. If you miss both the night and the following day, you completely fail to count for that date. This breaks the sequence. The structure collapses, and you can no longer count with a bracha.

Rav Saadia Gaon's position supports this idea. He distinguishes between missing the very first day and missing later days. If you miss the first day, you can't continue counting. But if you miss a later day after starting properly, you can continue. This distinction seems hard to understand. Does he view Sefirah as one long mitzvah or many independent ones? Rav Soloveitchik's approach makes this straightforward. Missing the first day means no framework exists. There's no sequence to continue. But once you start counting, you establish a structure. Even if later days are flawed, the underlying framework supports continued counting.

Rav Hai Gaon's view offers a similar insight. The Tur quotes him saying you can compensate for a missed day on the following night. You do this by explicitly counting both days. You declare, "Yesterday was day one, and today is day two". Since you counted for yesterday, you haven't lost the requirement of completeness. On a simple level, this is confusing. How can a present act fix a missed past obligation? But within Rav Soloveitchik's framework, it makes perfect sense. The goal isn't to retroactively fulfill yesterday's mitzvah. That's impossible to recover. Instead, the goal is to restore the sequence's continuity. By including the missed day in tonight's count, you reestablish the necessary structure for temimos.

Note that temimos here is used in terms of complete count and temimos to disallow making a bracha in the day is full days, so they are different aspects of temimos.

This distinction explains a striking ruling by Rashi in Machzor Vitri. He says someone davening early can count Sefirah before nightfall without a bracha. This is a safeguard in case they forget later. The Rashba objects strongly to this. He argues that counting early is completely meaningless. However, Rav Soloveitchik's approach validates Rashi's ruling. Early counting doesn't fulfill the mitzvah because the proper time hasn't arrived. But it still functions as a ma'aseh sefirah. It preserves the sequence's continuity. You're still obligated to count again at night with a bracha. Yet, the early count acts as a backup to maintain temimos if you forget.

The Sefer HaChinuch disagrees with the BeHaG. He writes that a person who misses a day continues counting with all of Israel. This phrasing seems puzzling at first. But Rav Soloveitchik's analysis explains it. Even if one person failed to count, the rest of Israel didn't. The communal counting remains uninterrupted. The individual can attach themselves to that broader framework. This preserves the counting structure through the community, despite the individual's disruption.

This approach resolves a classic question about a minor. What happens if a boy becomes a bar mitzvah during Sefirah? His earlier counting wasn't a full obligation. You might argue it lacks halachic validity. This would mean he couldn't count with a bracha as an adult. However, Rav Soloveitchik says a minor's counting is a genuine ma'aseh sefirah. It doesn't generate a full mitzvah. But it successfully establishes the sequence. When he reaches adulthood, the structure of temimos remains intact. He can confidently continue counting with a bracha.

Finally, Rav Soloveitchik applies this framework to a specific case. Someone knew he wouldn't survive the entire Sefirah period. He refrained from saying a bracha from the start. This was a mistake. The BeHaG's concern only applies to past deficiencies where the sequence is already broken. Future inability to complete the count doesn't invalidate the present process. As long as the current count is continuous, the structure of temimos is intact. The mitzvah should definitely be performed with a bracha.

In sum, Rav Soloveitchik's formulation fundamentally redefines the BeHaG's position. Sefiras HaOmer isn't just about whether the mitzvah is singular or multiple. It actually involves two distinct halachic dimensions. The first is the mitzvah of each day, fulfilled at night. The second is the ma'aseh sefirah, the cumulative counting process requiring temimos. Missing a day doesn't eliminate the mitzvah of future days. Instead, it disrupts the integrity of the counting structure. This structural failure causes the loss of the bracha according to the BeHaG.

LiHalacha, most poskim utilize the Mishnah Brurah's ספק ספיקא in explaining the BeHaG and extrapolating to other related issues and attribute it the the תרומת הדשן. For example, if a person forgot whether he counted on a prior night, the פרי חדש rules that the person may continue to count on subsequent nights with a bracha because of a ספק ספיקא.

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Rabbi Mordechai Willig

Chilul Hashem and Kiddush Hashem

I

"Therefore you shall keep My commandments and do them. I am Hashem. You shall not profane My holy name, but I will be made holy among the Children of Israel. I am Hashem Who makes you holy, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your G-d. I am Hashem." (Vayikra 22:31-33).

Rashi (31) interprets "'You shall guard My mitzvos' - this is mishna, learning Torah. 'And do them' - this is the action, fulfilling mitzvos." The juxtaposition to the next phrase, (32) "You shall not defile My holy name" can be understood as highlighting a consequence of one who learns Torah but does not perform mitzvos properly. In this context, mitzvos refer to mitzvos sichliyos (Rambam, Shemoneh Perakim, chapter 6), which the human mind can readily understand as laudatory actions. Their performance yields kiddush Hashem, sanctifying Hashem's name. Their violation causes chilul Hashem, desecrating Hashem's name.

The Gemara (Yoma 86a) teaches that one who learns Mishna and is honest and polite makes Hashem's name beloved. People say, "This person learned Torah, see how beautiful (na'im) his ways, how correct (mesukanim) are his deeds." Hashem is thereby glorified (Yeshaya 49:3), creating a kiddush Hashem. If he is dishonest and impolite, people will say "This person learned Torah, how damaged (mekulkalim) are his deeds, how ugly (mechu'arim) are his ways." Of him it is said (Yechezkel 36:20) "They came (vayavo) among the nations and they desecrated My holy name, when it was said of them "These are the people of Hashem and they left His land".

It emerges that the more learned one is, the greater the opportunity and obligation of kiddush Hashem are. The Gemara (Yoma ibid.) adds that for a renowned Torah scholar, even the appearance of impropriety constitutes a chilul Hashem. Complete atonement for causing a chilul Hashem is not achieved by teshuva, Yom Kippur and yissurim; they all forestall punishment, but only death achieves atonement.

Seforno (23:32) cites the aforementioned pasuk in Yechezkel. Am Yisroel is told "You shall be holy, for I, Hashem, am holy" (Vayikra 19:2). Hashem created us in His image (Bereishis 1:26). Therefore, you should be like Hashem as much as possible, in mind (b'iyun) by learning Torah, and in deed, by keeping mitzvos (Seforno 19:2). This parallels Rashi's interpretation of mishna and mitzvos, which create kiddush Hashem (22:31,32). Since you are kedoshim, do not desecrate My holy name by actions which are "lacking (chaseiros) and disgusting (megunos)", as Yechezkel taught. Perhaps these two terms used by the Seforno refer to the Gemara. Being impolite is lacking, being dishonest is disgusting, and both lead to the chilul Hashem described by Yechezkel.

Rashi explains the singular form, "vayavo" (36:20), as referring to Beis Yisrael (36:17). Rav S.R. Hirsch (36:20, the haftora of Parshas Parah) echoes the Seforno: "The moral failings of individual members" cause chilul Hashem. "The nations regard us as one inseparable unit, and take the crimes and weaknesses of even the most estranged Jew as a reflection of all Jews, and, what is worse, of Judaism itself. All the more careful must each individual be to avoid bringing discredit on Hashem!"

Sadly, the files of the outrageous and disgusting misdeeds of an estranged Jew are the subject that has consumed this country, its Congress and its President, for many months. This, as Rav Hirsch taught, is a chilul Hashem. Traditional and observant Jews, especially learned ones, are held to a higher standard, as the Gemara (Yoma ibid.) explains. Unfortunately, there are incidents of dishonesty which make headlines. Traditional Jews with massive Ponzi schemes, Orthodox Jews guilty of dishonesty or immorality, and even learned Jews with questionable business practices, all have desecrated Hashem's name publicly. We all must avoid chilul Hashem and strive for kiddush Hashem.

II

Rashi (36:20) cites a midrashic understanding (Pesicha Eichah Rabbasi 2) of the singular "vayavo" as referring to Hashem. He comes with us among the nations. He hears what our captors say: "This is the people of Hashem. He is unable to save them."

Radak elaborates: This is a chilul Hashem. Hashem left His people in exile. They desecrate Hashem's name by their sins which extend their exile. The nations say that Hashem lacks the ability to take them out of exile (see Bamidbar 14:16).

This type of chilul Hashem has existed since the time of Yechezkel, throughout the long and perilous galus. The murder of millions of Jews after churban Bayis Sheini, during the Holocaust, and everything in between, desecrates Hashem's name. The horrors of October 7 are the most recent example of chilul Hashem.

Yechezkel (36:23-28) describes how Hashem will sanctify His great name that is desecrated among the nations. "I will gather you from all the lands and bring you to your land (Eretz Yisrael). I will purify you. You will dwell in the land that I gave to your forefathers."

The Seforno (22:32) explains "I will be sanctified (v'nikdashti) among Bnei Yisrael" in this manner. "I will make wonders before all of the people (Shemos 34:10). I took you out of Mitzrayim, I am Hashem (22:33). As in the days of you coming out of Mitzrayim, I will show them miracles (Micha 7:15)."

As Rav Hirsch taught, each and every member of Am Yisrael must avoid chilul Hashem and create kiddush Hashem. As the Gemara (Yoma ibid.) states, the greater the person, the greater the opportunity for kiddush Hashem and the damage of chilul Hashem. Specific examples of kiddush Hashem are honesty and politeness of a learned Jew, which make Hashem's name beloved to others. The order of people's reaction "His ways are beautiful, his

deeds are correct" is reversed. His ways are polite, his deeds are honest. Being polite extends beyond the letter of the law and draws the greater admiration of the people, and love of Hashem.
Reaction to a dishonest and impolite learned Jew is in order "His deeds are damaged, his ways are ugly". The greater chilul Hashem is dishonesty, violation of the law. The lesser evil is being impolite, a terrible deficiency (chaseiros), not as disgusting (megunos) as dishonesty.
The medrash (Devarim 3:3) recounts a story. R' Shimon ben Shetach bought a donkey from a non-Jew. His talmidim found a precious stone hanging from its neck, and told him "The bracha of Hashem enriches." He responded, "I bought a donkey, not a precious stone". He returned it to the non-Jew, who responded "Blessed is Hashem, the G-d of Shimon ben Shetach."
The Yerushalmi (Bava Metzia 2:5) elaborates: R' Shimon ben Shetach wanted to hear the non-Jew say "Blessed is the G-d of the Jews" more than all the treasure in the world. Kiddush Hashem, especially for a talmid chacham, is priceless. As noted, Hashem created us in His image, so that we be like Him and sanctify His holy name.
The Smag (aseh 74) writes: now that the galus has extended more than enough, a Jew should separate himself from the emptiness of this world, and hold onto the perfection of Hashem which is truth. He should not lie to a Jew or a non-Jew and not fool them in any way. He should sanctify himself even with that which is permissible [i.e. the lost item of a non-Jew].
The Be'er Hagolah (Choshen Mishpat 348:5) states: I am writing this for the generations. I have seen many enrich themselves by fooling non-Jews. They did not prosper. All their possessions were lost, and they left nothing to their heirs. By contrast, many made a kiddush Hashem, and returned large amounts of money given to them mistakenly by non-Jews. They became great, wealthy and successful, and left a fortune to their descendants.
The Smag concludes: When Hashem comes to save us, the non-Jews will say "He did right, because we are men of truth, and the Torah of truth is on our lips." However, if we are deceitful toward non-Jews, they will say "look what Hashem did, He chose as His portion thieves and deceivers."
Honesty is the best policy. It makes Hashem beloved to others. It creates kiddush Hashem and avoids chilul Hashem. It makes a person wealthy. It will hasten the geula, and the ensuing kiddush Hashem, when the nations say that we deserve to be redeemed. May our honesty bring an end to the chilul Hashem of the extended galus and the recent attack in Eretz Yisrael. May Hashem show us miracles as He did in Mitzrayim and sanctify us by the ultimate geula.
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https://halachipedia.com/index.php?title=Shaving

Shaving

Background. The Torah says "**לא תקפו פאת ראשכם ולא תשחית את פאת זקנך**" which means one shouldn't round the corner of one's head and don't destroy the corners of one's beard. [1] There are two negative commands to which the Torah warns, one of rounding the corners of the head and other of destroying the corners of one's beard. [2] These are very serious Torah prohibitions and should not be ignored. [3] When cutting one's hair or shaving in a permissible way one should intend to fulfill the Torah commands not to round the corners of the head or the beard. [4] The Kabbalists hold that it's preferable not to cut one's beard at all. [5]
General description. It's forbidden to cut with a razor the area of "the corners of the face" or Peot HaZaken. Some say it's permissible to cut with a scissor even if it's close to the face, while some say that it's forbidden. [6] If one cuts the hair and leaves 5mm of hair, that's certainly permitted and not a violation of destroying the corners of one's face.[7] It's forbidden to cut the hair on one's neck with a razor (but a scissor close to face is permissible). [8] It's permissible to cut the hair on the back of one's neck even with a razor, however, some are strict but would be lenient to use a shaver on the back of one's neck. [9] One should not cut one's moustache with a razor and some say one shouldn't even do so with a scissor that's close to the face. [10]
Boundaries of the Peot HaRosh. The lower boundary of the peot harosh is strictly speaking the top of the jaw bone, which aligns with the middle of the ear.[11] Others say it is until the end of the cartilaginous part of the ear[12] and lastly others say it is until the bottom of the ear.[13] Boundaries of the Peot HaZaken
The five places of Peot HaZaken according to the Rishonim are as follows: Rabbenu Chananel (Tur Y"D 181) includes the 2 joints of the jaw bone to the skull bone (left and right side), the 2 edges of the moustache, and the neck. Raavan (Macot 21a) includes the 2 backmost edges of the jaw below the ear (left and right side), the 2 sides of the chin, and the middle of the chin. Rashi (Shevuot 3a s.v. VeAl) includes the 2 joints of the jaw bone to the skull bone (left and right side), the 2 edges of the jaw bone as it extends forward to the mouth, and the middle of the chin Rosh (Macot 3:2-3) in name of Rashi includes the 2 joints of the jaw bone to the skull bone (left and right side), the 2 sides of chin, and the middle of the chin. Rambam (Hilchot Avoda Zara 12:6) includes the 2 joints of the jaw bone to the skull bone (left and right side), the 2 backmost edges of the jaw below the ear, and the middle of the chin.
Because of the multitude of opinions of the boundaries of Peot HaZaken, one should not cut the entire area of the face below the Peot HaRosh (from bottom of the ear) with a razor and some say not even with a scissor close to the face. [14] Because of there is some disagreement regarding whether or not the front of the neck is included, one should refrain from using a razor in that area. [15]
Electric Shavers. There is a major dispute regarding electric shavers, some are lenient[16] and some are adamantly opposed and forbid.[17] Among those who are quoted as subscribing to the lenient approach include: Rav Moshe Feinstein,[18] Rav Chaim Ozer Grodinsky,[19] Rav Avraham Yitzchak Hacohen Kook,[20] Rav Yakov Kamenetsky,[21] Rav Yitzchak Hutner,[22] Rav Shimon Schwab,[23] Rav Aharon Soloveitchik, Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, Rav Aharon Lichtenstein,[24] Rav Ben Tzion Abba Shaul,[25] Rav Mordechai Eliyahu,[26] Rav Meir Mazuz,[27] Rav Yisrael Rozen,[28] and Rav Mordechai Willig.[29] Among those quoted as holding of the stringent approach include: Rav Yaakov Breish,[30] Rav Ovadia Yosef,[31] Rav Yitzchak Weiss, Chazon Ish, Rav Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky (Steipler), Rav Chaim Kanievsky, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, Rav Nissim Karletiz, and Rav Shmuel Wosner.[32] The opinion of the following rabbanim is ambiguous: Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach[33] and Rav Aharon Kotler.[34] According to the stringent view, it is forbidden to use an electric shaver to get a clean shave, but it is permitted to shave in a way that leaves a thin layer of facial hair.[35] One possible way to shave permissibly according to this opinion is to disable the lift portion of a shaver and not repeatedly shave any area of the face.[36]
Specific Shavers
Rotary Shavers. Rav Moshe Heinemann of the Star-K explains that Rav Moshe Feinstein would test the shaver blades by seeing if the blade was used to try to cut a hair held taught. If it didn't cut the blade was acceptable. Therefore, he concluded that blades of rotary head shavers are increasingly sharp and would be problematic.[37]

Rav Yisrael Rozen of Zomet disagrees as the blades in all electric shavers, including rotary shavers, only cut in combination with the screen. Since it functions as a scissor it is acceptable irrelevant of how sharp the blade is. Also, the blade does not touch the skin. There is a tiny gap between the blade and the skin.[38]

Foil Shavers. Rav Yisrael Belsky,[39] Rav Dovid Feinstein,[40] and Rav Shimon Schwab.[41] forbid foil shavers since there is a concern that the foil itself is sharp enough to cut the hair by itself. Rav Chaim Jachter confirms that the advertised claim that the foil is sharp enough to cut is unsubstantiated and rules leniently.[42]

Lift and Cut. Rav Yisrael Belsky[43] and Rav Dovid Feinstein[44] forbade using lift and cut shavers since according to the companies the shaver uses a double blade. They claim that the first blade catches the hair and pulls it into the shaver and the second blade then cuts the hair without the use of the screen in a razor-like manner. Removing the hair-catching spring blade eliminates this concern.[45] Rav Rozen dismissed this concern since in reality the shaver blade only cuts in combination with the screen. Rav Mordechai Willig, Rav Hershel Schachter, Rav Shimon Schwab,[46] and Rav Moshe Heinemann agree with this position that lift and cut shavers are no different than conventional shavers.[47]

OneBlade. Rav Heinemann left the status of the OneBlade as inconclusive due to the concern that it might be sharp enough to cut hair on its own.[48] Zomet approved its use since it functions with a scissor action between the screen and blade.[49]

Those Who Permit All Shavers. Many poskim are of the opinion that according to the lenient view almost all electric shavers are permitted.[50]

Haircutting Machines and Trimmers. The way a haircutting machine (and also the trimmer on a shaver) is that there are two rows of blades, one that is stationary and one that moves. It's permissible to cut with the stationary side against the face as it always leaves the root of the hairs (so that if one ran one's finger opposite the grain, one would feel it). However, the usual way the haircutting machine (or trimmer) is used is by pressing the moving side against one's face and for this it depends which type of haircutting machine one uses. Some haircutting machines have the moving row of blades at least 2 millimeters away from the edge of the of stationary blades, which are permissible to use (even by placing the moving row of blades against one's face). However, some haircutting machines have edge of the moving row of blades on the same level of the edge of the stationary row of blades, and these are forbidden (unless one uses it by placing the stationary row of blades against one' face. [51]

Hair removal cream. It's permissible to use hair removal cream to remove the hair of Peot HaZaken, however, the cream should be removed with a dull edge (that wouldn't cut an apple) and not a sharp edge. [52]

Getting a Haircut

Non-Jewish Barber. Although the gemara writes that one should not get a haircut from a non-Jew[53], many poskim nowadays are lenient with this issue. [54]

Washing Your Hands. After a haircut, one should wash his hands[55] but this is not necessary after shaving [56]

Sources

1. Vayikra 19:27 2. Rambam (Intro to Avoda Zara counts Hakafat HaRosh and Giluach HaZaken as two separate negative commands. 3. Sh"t Tashbetz 3:127 s.v. Lo Nichad writes that those who constantly violate this sin consider it as if the prohibition wasn't written explicitly in the Torah and those people are considered like violating all of the Torah and their ritual slaughter isn't acceptable! 4. Pela Yoetz (Paragrah "Geluach") writes that not violating the negative command is like fulfilling a positive command and one should intend to fulfill it actively. 5. Birkei Yosef 181:10 in name of the Arizal. See also the Meor Yisrael who quotes the Bava Sali who says that have a beard and not cutting it brings forgiveness for one's sins! 6. S"A 181:10 writes that it's forbidden to cut with a razor and it's permissible to cut with a scissor close to the face. However, Bach YD 181:9 writes that one should be careful not to shave one's neck with a razor or a scissor. He is concerned for the opinion of the Trumat HaDeshen who forbids cutting the corners of the face with a scissor if it cuts close to the face. The Shach 181:7 argues that one doesn't need to be strict for the opinion. The Chatom Sofer 2:139 s.v. veod cites the opinion of the Trumat HaDeshen and explains that according to that opinion it would be biblically forbidden to shave with a scissor close to the face. Also, it seems that he holds like that opinion. 7. Peot Zekenecha (pg 18-19) 8. Rama 181:10, Taz Y"D 181:4, http://www.hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=53467&st=&pgnum=65 Peot Zekenecha (pg 65)] 9. Peot Zekenecha (pg 90) 10. Taz Y"D 181:3. Peot Zekenecha (pg 60, 64) writes that it's permissible to cut in the middle of the moustache but just not the edges. 11. Halachic Haircutting Handbook p. 4 quoting Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, Rav Moshe Feinstein, and the Eretz Tzvi 12. Halachic Haircutting Handbook p. 3 quoting the Imrei Yosher 2:183 13. Halachic Haircutting Handbook p. 2 citing the practice of Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, Rav Tzvi Sobolofsky, and Rav Michael Taubes 14. S"A Y"D 181:11 quotes the Rosh saying that one should not cut the entire area of Peot HaZaken because of the multitude of opinions. The issue of "a scissor close to the face" is discussed above. 15. Yafeh LeLev 3:121, Ein Lamo Michshol (pg 166) 16. Sh"t Har Tzvi, Sh"t Chelkat Yacov 3:39, Sh"t Teshuvot VeHanhagot 1:459 in name of Rav Chaim Ozer, Peot Zekenecha (pg 81) in name of Rav Pinchas Sheinburg and Rav Moshe Feinstein. o

Regarding Rav Moshe, Sam Chayim p. 38 quotes Rav Reuven Feinstein as saying that his father only permitted electric shavers if the blades weren't sharp enough to cut the hair on their own without the screens. Also, that leniency only existed when non-Jews didn't commonly use electric shavers, but today that it is common it is forbidden. 17. Likkutei Halachot of the Chafetz Chaim, Minchat Yitzchak 4:113 in name of the Chazon Ish, Rav Vosner in Sh"t Shevet HaLevi 4:96, Chavalim BeNeeymim Y"D 4:27, Kovetz Teshuvot 1:32 written by Rav Elyashiv, Peot Zekenecha (pg 80) in name of Rav Chaim Kanievsky in name of his father the Steipler, and Rav Nassim Karlitz (Chut HaSheni Hilchot Shabbat vol 1 at the end). 18. Though he never wrote a written responsum on the topic, Rav Moshe Feinstein's student unanimously agree that Rav Moshe Feinstein permitted electric shavers. The students of Rav Moshe who quote him as holding such a position include: Rav Yisrael Belsky (Shulchan Halevi p. 127-8), Rav Moshe Heinemann (Star-K), Rav Reuven Feinstein (Halachic Haircutting Handbook p. 36), and Rav Aharon Felder (Halachic Haircutting Handbook p. 49). While Rav Moshe Heinemann and Rav Yisrael Belsky (cited by Halachic Haircutting Handbook p. 50) quotes Rav Moshe as only permitting electric shavers after subjecting the blade to a sharpness test, Rav David J. Bleich and Rav Aharon Felder

(cited by Halachic Haircutting Handbook p. 49) quote Rav Moshe as permitted even without that test. 19. Sh”t Teshuvot VeHanhagot 1:459 20. The Halachic Haircutting Handbook p. 32 quoting Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook quoting his father as the baseline halacha permitting electric shavers. See Sh"t Orach Mishpat 128:53. 21. The Halachic Haircutting Handbook p. 30 quoting Emet Lyakov YD 181. See the letter on p. 220 where Rav Yakov expresses concern about more advanced shavers. Rabbi Jachter in The Halachic Haircutting Handbook allays those concerns. 22. The Halachic Haircutting Handbook p. 32 in the name of Rav David H. Schwartz quoting Rav Aharon Lichtenstein quoting Rav Hutner. A story about Rav Hutner's original practice to shave and his change is found in mishpacha magazine December 2020, p. 89. 23. Halachic Haircutting Handbook p. 50 quoting Rav Baruch Simon quoting Rav Shimon Schwab. Rabbi Simon quotes Rav Schwab as permitting all shavers even without any sharpness test, while his grandson quotes Rav Schwab as subjecting them to the sharpness test. 24. Haircutting Handbook p. 28 25. Yabia Omer 9:10:15 26. Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 170:2 27. Haircutting Handbook p. 45 citing Yitzchak Yiranen 5:6:3 28. Zomet 29. Haircutting Handbook p. 62 30. Chelkat Yakov YD 90 31. Yabia Omer 9:10 32. Kuntres Sam Chayim 33. See Halichot Shlomo v. 1 34. Halachic Haircutting Handbook p. 31 quotes Rav Hershel Schachter and Rav Meir Senderovic as reporting that many students in Lakewood shaved and Rav Aharon did not say anything. He also quotes Rav Moshe Heinemann as quoting that Rav Aharon forbade electric shavers. 35. Rabbi Jachter quoting Yabia Omer 9:10 and Chelkat Yakov YD 90. Lhorot Natan 3:62 agrees. 36. Binyamin Jachter 37. Rav Heinemann 38. Rav Rozen 39. OU Halacha Yomi citing Shulchan Halevi p. 128 40. Rav Baruch Simon (Peyos min 15) quotes Rav Dovid Feinstein as holding that foil shavers are problematic since the foil is sharp enough to cut on its own. 41. Halachic Haircutting Handbook p. 50 quotes Rav Doniel Schwab quoting his grandfather, Rav Shimon Schwab, as forbidding the foil shavers. 42. [https://www.koltorah.org/halachah/clarifying-peiot-and-electric-shaves-part-4-by-rabbi-chaim-jachter-and-binyamin-jachter-17?rq=electric%20shaver Rabbi Jachter (Shavers part 4) 43. OU Halacha Yomi citing Shulchan Halevi p. 128 44. Rav Baruch Simon (Peyos min 17-18) 45. [https://www.koltorah.org/halachah/clarifying-peiot-and-electric-shaves-part-4-by-rabbi-chaim-jachter-and-binyamin-jachter-17?rq=electric%20shaver Rabbi Jachter (Shavers part 4) 46. Haircutting Handbook p. 50 quotes Rav Doniel Schwab quoting his grandfather, Rav Shimon Schwab 47. [https://www.koltorah.org/halachah/clarifying-peiot-and-electric-shaves-part-4-by-rabbi-chaim-jachter-and-binyamin-jachter-17?rq=electric%20shaver Rabbi Jachter (Shavers part 4) 48. Rav Tzvi Rosen of the Star-K 49. Rav Jachter (Shavers part 5) 50. Zomet, Rav Aryeh Lebowitz (Ten Minute Halacha, Electric Shavers), Rabbi Jachter (Shavers part 5). In his work, Halachic Haircutting Handbook p. 75 culled the opinions of Rav Shmuel Fuerst, Rav Hershel Schachter, Rav Elazar Meyer Teitz, Rav Mordechai Willig as holding that all shavers are permitted. Rabbi Jachter writes that many poskim permit all electric shavers and there is no difference between the different types. He concluded that almost all are permitted like Zomet's conclusion, though he isn't aware of any that are absolutely forbidden. See Peot Zekenecha (pg 81). See also the RJJ journal (Vol 36 article on Electric Shavers by David Schwartz) which quotes various testimonies of Rav Moshe's opinion (pg 108). Rav Mordechai Eliyahu in his comments to Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 170:2 writes that although it is permitted to cut one's beard with a scissor like action even if it cut the hair so that the face is smooth, one should consult a posek about electric shavers because some cut in a scissor like fashion and some in a razor like fashion. See also Star-K article on this. 51. Peot Zekenecha (pg 74-76) 52. Peot Zekenecha (pg 64-67) 53. Avoda Zara 27a, Shulchan Aruch YD 156:1 54. see Dinonline.org 55. Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 4:19. 56. Piskei Teshuvot 4:28

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It’s a Beautiful Heart

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

By: Rabbi YY Jacobson

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 flour, and offer a fistful of the flour on the altar. 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 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.

Peninei Halacha by Rav **Eliezer Melamed (**Rosh Yeshiva Har Bracha) -- **Aveilus** *

* This chapter was prepared as part of a planned sefer intended for a more traditional audience, and therefore its style differs from the usual Pninai Halacha presentation. It was nonetheless included in the collected writings on family topics because it explains the yesodos of Aveilus and their reasons.

Translated with help of AI

[כי אם לשארו הקרוב אליו לאמו ולאביו ולבנו ולבתו ולאחיו (Emor 21:2). The laws of Aveilus are learned from this parsha and other places in the Torah. Torah and in Chazal.]

1. Baruch dayan ha'emes.

Death is a loss unlike any other. A profound sorrow fills the hearts of those close to the deceased, and they struggle to understand the meaning of the tragedy, where the neshamah has gone, and how a person who was once alive now lies without life. Questions arise, why did Hashem not save him from death, why is there death in the world, and what is the purpose of life when often tzaddikim suffer and resha'im succeed. In the face of these questions, a person is commanded to strengthen his emunah that Hashem, in Whose hand is every living soul, leads and judges the world with justice. Even when His conduct is not understood, we believe with complete faith that everything is just and ultimately for good. For this reason, Chazal established that mourners recite the bracha Baruch Dayan HaEmes. The meaning of death: Hashem commanded man not to allow evil to enter him, so that he could live indefinitely, as it says in Bereishis. However, Adam and Chava sinned by eating from the eitz hadaas and were punished. As a result, evil entered the human condition and began to affect all aspects of life, ultimately leading to death. These punishments serve man's benefit and tikkun, because without them humanity would not be able to rid itself of sin. (i) resha'im would continue acting wickedly without limit, the strong oppressing the weak endlessly, (ii) even tzaddikim would remain trapped in their failings, since no person is completely free of sin. Now that death exists, it separates the neshamah from the body and eliminates the sins attached to the body, allowing the neshamah to be purified in Gan Eden, sometimes through Gehinnom. Ultimately, the neshamah returns to Hashem, as Koheles states. Thus, death functions as a tikkun both for humanity collectively and for each individual. This process continues until the tikkun ha'olam is complete, at which time all those who chose good will rise again at techiyas hameisim. This is the emunah that must accompany Aveilus. Not only must one believe this, but mourners must act in ways that reflect the purification process of the deceased. While the body is buried and the neshamah stands before Beis Din shel Maalah, mourners sit shiva, identify with the suffering, and recall the good deeds of the deceased. Through this, the neshamah is elevated. As relatives improve their actions and do teshuvah, they further contribute to this elevation. Ultimately, those who chose good reach a higher level than before, because baalei teshuvah attain a greatness beyond even tzaddikim who never struggled. All halachos of Aveilus express kabbalas hadin together with both sorrow and emunah. The pain is real and one must cry, yet one must not fall into despair, because the suffering serves purification. Therefore (i) there is a mitzvah to mourn and honor the deceased, (ii) but it is forbidden to over-mourn or harm oneself physically, since excessive mourning reflects a lack of emunah.

2. The seven primary mourners. Family is a single unit, and the connection between its members is deep. When a person dies, something of his relatives dies with him, and therefore first-degree relatives are obligated in Aveilus. Proper mourning both honors the deceased and elevates the neshamah, and also strengthens the lives of the mourners themselves. The seven relatives obligated in Aveilus are father, mother, brother, sister, son, daughter, and spouse. Other relatives are not obligated to sit shiva but still share in the mourning and assist the mourners. The practices of Aveilus express identification with the deceased, as if partially experiencing death together. Thus (i) just as the meis does not engage in normal physical activity, so too the mourners refrain, (ii) just as the body rests in the ground, so too mourners sit low. After shiva they gradually return to life, with some practices continuing for thirty days, and for parents, up to a year.

3. Aninus. From the moment first-degree relatives learn of the death, they are in a state of aninus, meaning total focus on the meis and burial needs. During this time they are exempt from positive mitzvos, including tefillah and brachos, but must still avoid prohibitions. Even after arrangements are handed to the Chevra Kadisha, the status continues because responsibility remains. When burial is delayed, a Rav should be consulted regarding the duration of aninus.

4. Keriah. At the beginning of the levayah, mourners recite Baruch Dayan HaEmes and perform keriah on their garment. The tear symbolizes that just as the garment is torn, so their lives have been torn. The garment is worn throughout shiva. If replaced, the new garment must also be torn. One may change out of expensive clothing beforehand.

5. Kevurah and kavod ha-meis. There is a mitzvah to bury the meis promptly in a Jewish burial. Burial in the ground reflects both concealment of the shame of death and kaparah. Participants in the levayah perform a chesed shel emes. Burial in multi-level structures is still considered burial, but cremation nullifies the mitzvah. (Note flagged: organ donation is referenced as a mitzvah but not explained here).

6. Levayah and hespedim. There is a mitzvah to give hespedim, expressing the virtues of the deceased and arousing emotion. One should slightly emphasize virtues rather than understate them, but not exaggerate falsely. Silence and dignity are required during the levayah. Tehillim and pesukim are recited, followed by Kaddish and Kel Maleh Rachamim. After kevurah, mourners begin shiva.

7. Shiva. The first meal, seudas havraah, must be provided by others, symbolizing care and re-entry into life. Round foods are customary, symbolizing the cycle of life. During shiva (i) mourners sit low, (ii) refrain from work, (iii) avoid greetings, (iv) do not learn Torah except relevant topics, (v) avoid bathing for pleasure, grooming, new clothing, haircuts. Some leniencies apply where necessary.

8. Nichum aveilim. Comforting mourners is a great mitzvah. The primary comfort is participation in their pain and speaking positively about the deceased. Conversations should remain respectful and focused. It is customary to conclude with traditional phrases of consolation.

9. Counting the seven days. Part of a day counts as a full day. Shabbos suspends public mourning but counts toward the seven. Certain private restrictions continue.

10. Yomim Tovim. Biblical yomim tovim cancel shiva if it has already begun, while Rabbinic holidays do not. If burial occurs during Chol HaMoed, shiva is delayed.

11. Thirty days and year. After shiva, mourning continues in reduced form until thirty days. For parents, certain practices extend for a full year. Restrictions include avoiding celebrations, music, and new purchases. Participation in weddings may be permitted in limited ways depending on necessity.

12. Kaddish and aliyah of the neshamah. A mourner recites Kaddish for a parent for a year, which benefits the neshamah. It is

typically not said for the full twelve months to avoid implying the deceased was a rasha. If no son is available, others may recite it.

13. Matzeivah. A matzeivah is erected, usually by thirty days, listing basic identifying information. Excessive praise should be avoided. Visiting the kever and placing a stone is customary.

14. Yahrtzeit. On the yahrtzeit, relatives visit the kever and increase in Torah, mitzvos, tzedakah, and tefillah for the benefit of the neshamah. Some fast, others give tzedakah instead.

הגות בפרשיות התורה - יהודה נחשוני

Emor - **The Reason for Counting the Omer**

According to many commentators, the reason for the counting of the omer is related to a basic fact established by Chazal and disputed by the apostates known Tzeddukim (Sadducees)

As we shall see below, the Tzeddukim interpreted the Torah as commanding that the count should always start from the day after Shabbos. But Chazal interpreted that the count always begins the day after the first day of Pesach. Thus, according to Chazal, the omer is the time from the Exodus until the giving of the Torah. The counting comes to link these two events, or — to be more precise — to supply a reason for the freedom that the Jews were granted through signs and miracles.

The giving of the Torah was the purpose for which the Jews were redeemed from Egypt, and therefore, says Chinuch, "We were commanded to count from the day after the Yom Tov of Pesach until the day of the giving of the Torah, to show by our actions how beloved the great and longed-for day is to our hearts. Just as a slave who seeks refuge and always counts the time until the longed-for day that he will go free, for by counting, the person shows that his total desire is to attain that day."

This reason is also brought in Eileh HaMitzvos by R' Moshe Hagiz, who notes that this purpose was already told to Moshe when he was chosen to lead Israel, as we see in the verse (Sh'mos 3:12), “and this will be the sign for you ... when you take the nation out of Egypt you will serve God on this mountain."

The Chinuch explains why we do not begin counting the omer on the first day of Pesach, as that was the day the Jews left Egypt and that day was set aside to remember that extraordinary miracle, one which showed how Hashem created and leads the world. Thus we do not allow any other signs on that day, nor do we mix any other joy with that joy. The other commentators also see the counting along hashkafah lines, stressing the freedom we were granted when we left Egypt as a means, and the giving of the Torah as the final purpose. R' Samson Raphael Hirsch comments that just as the days of the week are counted in relation to and culminate with Shabbos, the counting of the days of the omer, a count that begins at the time of our liberation, is meant to culminate in our ultimate purpose — the receiving of the Torah at Sinai.

The Lubavitcher Rebbi states that it is due to the links between the counting of the omer and the giving of the Torah that require each individual to count for himself. This is unlike the shemittah- and yovel countings, which were only done by the beis din. As the counting of the omer is meant to symbolize our link to the Torah, the duty to count applies to each person individually, just as we find that the beginning of the Aseres HaDibros is addressed to the individual: Ani Hashem Elo-kecha "I am Hashem, your God," where the word "your" is in the singular.

Some of the commentators, though, and not only the kabbalists among them, see this as a type of counting off of days of taharah — of purity — as a niddah does before she goes to the mikvah. This taharah is meant to purify us of the impurity of Egypt, in anticipation of receiving the Torah, and is a mitzvah in itself just as in the case of niddah. A niddah, though, counts seven days of taharah, while here the count is seven times seven days. This reason is given in the Zohar and other kabbalistic works, and both rishonim and acharonim discuss it. Or HaChaim uses this reason to explain why we start counting only after the first day of Pesach. The Jews were still in Egypt for part of the first day, so that the days of taharah could only begin on the following day.

It is interesting that R' Baruch Epstein in his Tosefes Brachah uses this reason to explain why marriages are forbidden during this time period. These days are days of taharah from the impurity of niddah, and thus sexual relations are forbidden, just as, according to Or HaChaim, the counting is meant to prepare for the union between Hashem and the Assembly of Israel. (Author's note: If that is the case, then all men should have to keep apart from their wives during the entire period!)

The Meshech Chochmah uses this reason to explain why the counting of the omer must be said aloud. The counting here is one of taharah, just as that of a zav or zavah, but there is a difference here. For the zav and zavah, the count indicates the number of days that no discharge was seen; it is related to a clear physical phenomenon. With the omer, though, there is no such physical phenomenon, so in order to differentiate between what came before and the condition now, it is necessary to count aloud.

The Ridvaz gives a beautiful explanation of the reason the counting must be aloud. If a niddah begins to menstruate while counting her "seven clean days," it is evident retroactively that there had been no need to count. Moreover, if a niddah does not wish to have relations with her husband, she is not required to make a count. Thus we see that the count of the niddah is not always mandatory. The omer, though, is not optional, and therefore the count must be made aloud.

Linking Nature to God

Maharal holds that the reason for counting the omer is to link it to the Torah, and to implant in us the realization that Im Ein Kemach Ein Torah "without flour (the omer was a meal-offering of barley) there is no Torah."

A similar idea is expressed in Abarbanel. The omer relates to the labor of reaping the harvest. At that time, most Jews are engaged in working in their fields, and they are liable to forget that they are obliged to go up to Jerusalem for Shavuos. The counting thus reminds every Jew that the festival is drawing near.

Ramban has a similar explanation. The counting commences at the beginning of the harvest season of barley, and then the Jews bring an omer of barley. The counting of the omer ends at the beginning of the wheat harvest, and at the time they bring an offering of fine wheat flour. That is why, says Ramban, our present parashah mentions only these two offerings, and not the musaf sacrifices.

This is brought out more clearly by S'forno. These actions are meant as a prayer and as a way of expressing our thanks to Hashem. In the spring festival, Pesach, we have the prayer of spring, and our thanksgiving for our redemption. The success of

the harvest depends on the weather between springtime and the harvest. The omer is a thanksgiving for the springtime, just as one brings his first fruits, and the sacrifice that is brought with it is a prayer for the future. The counting is a daily remembrance of that prayer. The festival of the harvest (Shavuos) is thanksgiving for the quality of the harvest, while the festival of ingathering (Sukkos) is thanksgiving for the quality of the produce which was gathered in. A similar idea is found in Mateh Moshe in the name of R' Yehudah the Chassid.

This link between the counting and the seasons of nature is in essence the source for the argument between the Perushim (Pharisees) and the Tzeddukim (Sadducees). While we, the spiritual descendants of the Perushim, count the omer from the second day of Pesach, the Tzeddukim counted it from the Sunday after the first day of Pesach (as do the Samaritans today). The Tzeddukim evidently based themselves on the fact that the Torah says ממחרת השבת "from the day after Shabbos" (Vayikra 23:15) — which they take to mean the first Sunday, but the verse is used only to lend support to their hashkafah that seeks to sever the links between nature and man's spiritual life. Such a link exists only if the counting of the omer is linked to the Exodus and the harvest is linked to the giving of the Torah, namely that the counting of the omer begins with Pesach and ends with Shavuos. According to the Tzeddukim, though, there is no necessary link between these matters, for the counting of the omer can sometimes start as much as a week after the first day of Pesach and ends after the seventh Shabbos. Thus these festivals are secular events whose essence is strictly the celebration of nature itself. There is no doubt that this difference is a major — if not the decisive — reason for the disagreement between the two sides.

On the Day after Shabbos

The argument between the Tzeddukim and Chazal about the words Mimacharas HaShabbos - from the day of Shabbos continued for a long time and played a decisive role in the details of the mitzves relative to the bringing of the omer and the celebration of Shavuos. We have in our possession details of those disputes in the works of Chazal, and lehavdil, in the works of the Tzeddukim. The Tzeddukim argued that the words must be taken literally, and they also argued with the fact that we interpret Shabbos here to refer to Pesach, so that when the Torah says we have to count "seven Shabbosos" we interpret it to mean seven weeks. It would incorrectly seem, at first glance, that there is room for people to indeed interpret the Torah according to the view of the Tzeddukim, but Chazal have convincing proof that any doubts as to our interpretation can be dispelled purely by logic. Below we will give some of these proofs, which go to the very root of the fundamentals of the written Torah and the Torah She'be'al Peh.

In Menachos 65-66, the gemara lists the arguments of Chazal, quoting different tanna'im. a) The Torah says we must count fifty days. According to the Tzeddukim, if Pesach falls on a Sunday, there will be fifty-six days between the two festivals, b) The omer on Pesach resembles the Two Loaves on Shavuos. Just as the Two Loaves were brought at the beginning of the festival, the omer too had to be brought at the beginning of the festival, c) The Torah said that the months are to be proclaimed at a fixed time relative to the moon cycle. The same must apply to Shavuos, which must occur on a fixed date of the month, and that is only possible if there is a fixed date on which one begins to count the omer. d) The Torah states in one place "fifty days" while in another it states "seven weeks." How can both be correct? The answer is that they apply to two sets of circumstances: If Pesach falls on Shabbos, then we have seven full weeks, whereas if it falls in namely the middle of the week, we count the days, e) The Torah says Tispor Lach (uSefartem Lachem) "and you shall count for yourselves," namely that the counting depends on the beis din, which sets the festivals. Now, when the beis din sets Pesach, Shavuos follows based on the day set by the beis din. If, however, the counting is based on Shabbos, it has nothing to do with the beis din, because everyone knows when Shabbos is. f) The Torah says mimacharas haShabbos "on the day after Shabbos," but it does not say Mimacharas Shabbos Shel Pesach (on the day after Shabbos of Pesach). The entire year is full of Shabbosos, and had it not been for the tradition handed down by Chazal, how would we know which Shabbos is referred to? g) One verse says Sheshes Yamim Tochal Matzos "six days you shall eat matzos" (Devarim 16:8), while another שבעת ימים תאכל מצות "seven days you shall eat matzos" (Sh'mos 12:15). How do we reconcile the two? It means you may eat matzos of the old crop for seven days, but you may eat matzos from the new crop for six days.

These interpretations are brought by Chazal in Menachos 65-66 and in Sifra. The fact that there is such a major discussion and so many proofs, of which there are very few counterparts in shas, shows that this was a major debate at the time. Proofs are brought to support both views, but of course the main thing here is the kabbalah — the tradition that was handed down from one generation to the next.

According to Rambam in Hilchos Temidin U'Musafin 7, the error on the proper interpretation of this verse was created intentionally during the Second Beis HaMikdash period by "those who left Klal Yisrael." Rambam enumerates the various laws related to the omer which are meant to make public the correct date for the cutting of the omer, and to disprove those who claim that ממחרת השבת the "day after Shabbos," refers to the first Sunday after Pesach. Thus the prophets and the Sanhedrin throughout the generations always waved the omer on the 16th of Nissan, whether it was a weekday or Shabbos.

In regard to the day of the omer offering, we are told in the Torah that (Vayikra 23:14), "You shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears [from the current year's crop], until that very day," and we are further told that when the Jews entered Eretz Yisrael (Yehoshua 5:11), "They ate of the produce of the land [i.e., from the current year's crop] on the day after Pesach; matzos and parched corn." Thus we see that one is permitted to eat of the current year's crop from the second day of Pesach. If, however, one wishes to claim that that is no proof, because the year the Jews entered Eretz Yisrael, Pesach just happened to occur on Shabbos (in which case the Tzeddukim would bring the omer on the same day as Chazal), that is an illogical assumption, because why would the verse in Yehoshua connect the eating of the new grain with Pesach, if that day was not the main reason for the permission to eat, but merely happened to occur on Shabbos? Thus, when the verse in Yehoshua states "on the day after Pesach" that must mean that Pesach was the cause of the permission, regardless which day of the week it happened to fall on.

Rambam tells us here a new fact: that the view of the Tzeddukim was not an ancient one, but traced back to the time of the Second Beis HaMikdash. Of course we must search for a historical basis for that novel claim. One might be able to say that this is what we indicated earlier on the basis of the major debate on the subject that was conducted in the Talmud during that period. Thus, Rambam in his commentary on the Mishnah Avos 1:2, says clearly that the Bitsui (Boethusians) what we would call the Reform movement in our time — "wanted to remove from themselves the various obligations and rabbinic decrees and regulations. As they were unable to reject outright all of the accepted traditions and the Torah, they sought the right to explain (the Torah) as they wished, for if interpretation is open to each individual, he is able to be lenient wherever he wishes."

It was Rambam who pointed out, regarding the verse, "And they ate of the produce of the land" in Yehoshua, that there we are told "on the day after Pesach," and not "on the day after Shabbos." This proof is discussed at length by Ralbag in his commentary on Yehoshua.