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DEMYSTIFYING THE FIFTIETH DAY

וספרתם לכם ממחרת השבת... תספרו חמישים יום

UNDERSTANDING THE 50th DAY IN RELATION TO COUNTING THE OMER

Have you ever noticed something that was once completely out of your reach but you are now doing effortlessly? Have you ever found that a book that was completely beyond your comprehension you are now teaching to your children with ease?

In this week's Parsha we are told to count 50 days from the cutting of the Omer offering which took place on the 2nd day of Pesach. Rashi explains, that in truth we only count 49 days, and the verse is to be understood to tell us to count 49 days until you face the 50th day.

But the question begs to be asked: why doesn't the Torah formulate the commandment unambiguously, and simply say, count 49 Days?

This can be explained as follows. The soul is made of 49 components, and as a preparation for the receiving of the Torah, throughout the 49 days of the counting of the Omer, each day we are renovating one component of our soul.

Now we can understand the obscured silent counting of the 50th level which the Torah is alluding to when it only says to count 49 days. Indeed we only have 49 components, but the task of counting the Omer is not to jump out of ourselves, but rather to expand our pre-existing 49 components into the realm of the 50th.

Read enough easier seforim until your intellect expands to the extent that you are

able to get your head round the hard one. Give enough small donations to charity until you find it easy to give a bigger one.

UNDERSTANDING THE 50th DAY IN RELATION TO THE GIVING OF THE TORAH

Now that we understand the significance of the 50th day in relation to our efforts of preparation for the Torah, we will explore the significance of the 50th day in relation to Hashem giving us the Torah.

What is it that we are actually celebrating on the 50th day from the cutting of the Omer? Seemingly, one would answer: the giving of the Torah. But when one takes a closer look, this may not necessarily be the case.

The commemoration of the giving of the Torah is strictly contingent on its calendar date, the 6th of Sivan. This is in contrast to the festival of Shavuot which is strictly and solely identified with the 50th day from the cutting of the Omer – irrelevant of what calendar date this may be.

To demonstrate this, the Talmud tells us, in the times of the Beis Hamikdash, before we had the fixed calendar, the fiftieth day of the Omer could have also fallen on either the 5th or the 7th of Sivan.

So, seemingly, if the 50th day (Shavuot) is not about the giving of the Torah which took place on the 6th Sivan, why are the two so strongly associated with each other, to the point that every Jew will tell you that

on Shavuot - the 50th day of the Omer - we received the Torah? Have we got it all wrong?!

Two levels of giving of the Torah

When you were younger, you may have wanted your parents to help you buy something you could not afford to buy on your own, so your parents may have said to you, you pay 50% of the cost, and they will cover the rest.

Another scenario may have happened, when you became Bar / Bat Mitzva, and maybe a wealthy family friend gave you an unexpected gift of a million pounds!

These two scenarios may help us to understand the underlying difference between the 50th day of the Omer and the 6th of Sivan, and their close association with each other.

On the 50th day of the Omer, the Torah is given to each Jew, as an individual, on a personal level, according to his capability and, most importantly, commensurate to his preparation in the 49 days leading up.

[Here - in contrast to the counting of the Omer mentioned above, where he could only expand his pre-existing 49 levels - he is actually given the 50th level.]

However, on the 6th of Sivan the Torah is given in its entirety to the entire Jewish people as a whole, one nation with one heart, not in reciprocation of hard work, rather, giving just for the sake of giving.

Hence the unique name, "Matan Torah", the giving of the Torah, which is strictly reserved for the 6th of Sivan, and not for the 50th day of the Omer.

Parshah

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

If you are not a better person tomorrow than you are today, what need have you for a tomorrow? – REBBE NACHMAN OF BRESLOV

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2. What other times of the year do we read in the Torah from Parshas Emor?