

DO THE WAVE

By Ozer Bergman

For approximately the next three months, there will be an inside/outside discrepancy in the *Parashat HaShavua* (weekly Torah reading), because here in Eretz Yisrael Pesach ended on Friday, whereas “outside the Land” it ended on Shabbat. So during this period, the topics of our *Dvar Torahs* will be summery rather than weekly.

We are still in the first weeks of *Sefirat HaOmer*, the 49 days of the *Omer*-count that culminates with Shavuot, the *chag* (festival) on which we celebrate receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai. Here is a parable describing the Torah and mitzvahs (and our Sages and the tzaddikim throughout history), and why God gave them to us:

Once upon a time there was a king. He wanted to give each of his beloved subjects precious gifts and rare, exquisite presents at a certain time and place. Because he loved them so much, he made his wish known. This would allow them ample time to prepare, so they would come bathed and well-groomed for the occasion where the king and his retinue would be present. (Many of them worked in professions that involved handling various kinds of dirt and filth.)

Furthermore, they would have to prepare clothing and finery appropriate for such an august occasion. They would need to be perfumed and wearing medallions or jewelry to enhance their appearance. Could one otherwise enter the palace and the presence of the king and his ministers and nobles? Only then would they be ready and fit to receive the king's largesse.

His love moved the king to provide all the necessary materials for his subjects, for bathing and dressing. He warned them to use every available moment to prepare themselves for the special day. The king also sent trustworthy emissaries to teach his subjects the protocol and etiquette, down to the finest details, so that they would suffer no shame or disgrace due to ignorance or poor manners.

These emissaries were also charged with teaching the king's subjects what to avoid in order not to become filthy in the first place. Through these messengers, this loving king also provided cleansing spas and formulas for those who became dirty, even as a result of their own careless negligence. They would be able to clean their person and their clothing from even the most entrenched filth and foulest odors.

Again and again the king encouraged his subjects to use all he provided fully and freely, and to not hold back. Each should use his time wisely so that the king would be able to lavish upon him as many gifts as possible from the royal treasury, such gifts as no one had ever seen before.

To say that we are very fortunate is true, but an understatement. To say that we have a responsibility to show our appreciation for this opportunity and take full advantage of it is likewise true, but an understatement. What does *Sefirat HaOmer* teach about preparing ourselves to use these gifts?

The *omer* was a measure (approximately 2 quarts/1.9 liter). The *Omer*-offering consisted of barley, an archetypical animal food. On the second day of Pesach, the *Omer* was waved in the six directions of space (up, down and to the four winds). This taught and showed that all of our work in this world, wherever we are, is dedicated to the One Who creates and fills space. With the *Omer*-count, we mark all of time (seven times seven, days and weeks, so that we have a week of Sundays, of Mondays, etc.). The entire count is *la'Omer* and *ba'Omer*, from and attached to that waving. The counting implants within us the awareness that wherever we are located in time, what we choose at that moment needs to be dedicated to the One Who created and fills time.

Why wave barley? Why not wave wheat, human food? The baseline for preparing ourselves to receive the Torah is our self-control in eating. Why eating? Because eating is the means of connecting body and soul. One can survive without money or sexual activity, but not without eating. One needs to move away from animalistic eating—from using food only for the pleasure of taste or a full belly, for self-satisfaction, for comfort or self-medication, or for *noshing* and *fressing*.^{*} Wrong-eating is an indication (or clear proof!) that one holds the body and material concerns in higher esteem than the soul and spiritual concerns.

May we successfully prepare ourselves at every moment, wherever we are. Amen.

^{*} Snacking and overeating, respectively.

*a gutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!*

(Based on *Likutey Halakhot, Matanah 4:7*)

SIDEPATH

Even before we read the weekly Torah portion in the synagogue on Shabbat morning, a small passage of this reading will have already been read on three occasions during the preceding week: on the previous Shabbat afternoon, then on Monday and Thursday mornings. However, this small passage may not be applied to the Shabbat morning reading, when the entire weekly Torah portion must be read from start to finish. We may not include what was read during the week and begin from where we left off on Thursday morning.

This emphasizes the importance of always making a fresh start. A person should not look back over his past. Whatever happened, good or bad, it has passed. It's now time to face forward, forgetting what has already taken place. Start afresh. Study Torah, pray harder, do *mitzvot*. The past is gone. Look, with truth, to the future (*Likutey Halakhot, Kriat HaTorah 6:17*).

PARASHAH PEARLS

By Chaim Kramer

12:2 When a woman conceives and gives birth

Man Becomes Exalted By Guarding The Covenant

Rabbi Simla'i said: Just as man was created after all other forms of life, so too, his Torah (i.e., the laws pertaining to him) was explained after all the laws given about the other forms of life (Rashi).

Why did God create man last, after all the other creations? Two reasons are offered. First, because man is the ultimate reason for Creation. Therefore everything else was created beforehand to be ready to serve him. Second, to prevent him from arrogance. He should know that even a flea was created before him (*Sanhedrin 38a; Ein Yaakov #59*).

In the Torah, the laws pertaining to man—*milah* and *tzara'at* (leprosy)—come after the laws pertaining to animals. If man merits, he is circumcised and becomes an exalted person by guarding the covenant. But if he is

haughty, he will be smitten with leprosy (see LH V, p. 360-181a).

12:3 On the eighth day his foreskin should be circumcised

Milah Influences The Infant To Reach For The Heights

Seven days represent the concept of time as we know it, the weekly cycle. The eighth day represents Binah, the World to Come, the concept of beyond time. Waiting seven days and making the *milah* on the eighth day signifies the elevation of this world to the level beyond it, to that of the World to Come. And we hope that these intentions will influence the infant to strive for the higher levels (LH V, p. 74a).

13:4 The Kohen will quarantine the affliction

Kindness Brings Healing

The Kohen represents the trait of *chesed* (kindness). *Ve-hisgir* (he will quarantine) literally means "he will close up." When a person manifests kindness in the world, he "closes up"—i.e., heals—all illnesses and attains healing for all wounds (LM II, 4: end).

13:41 If his hair falls out near his face

Haughtiness and Humility

The initial letters of the words *Ve-im Mi-pe'at Panav Yemaret Rosho* (**וּמִי מִפְּאֵת פְּנֵי יִמְרֵט** , **וְרֵאשׁוֹ** , if his hair falls out near his face) spell *PURIM* (פּוּרִים). The festival of Purim subdues the *kelipah* of Amalek, which manifests as haughtiness. Our Sages teach that *tzara'at* (leprosy) is also a result of haughtiness (*Erkin* 16a). There are four types of leprosy (*Nega'im* 1:1) and four types of humility (LM I, 14:4). Purim has the power to rectify haughtiness and instill humility (LH V, p. 360).

14:4 Two live, clean birds

Singing For God's Sake Inspires Others

Why must a leper bring two birds as a sacrifice? Leprosy is a punishment for the one who spoke slander. Our Sages teach: "Let the chattering birds come and effect forgiveness for the chattering person" (*Vayikra Rabbah* 16:7).

These two live, clean birds are the source for the "voice of holiness," which corresponds to the cherubs upon the Ark in the Sanctuary.

The Ark is the source of prophecy; thus, the word *ChaZaN* (זָרָן, singer) is related to *ChaZoN* (זִוּרָן, vision—i.e., prophecy). When a person sings for the sake of God, he draws his song from the two live, clean birds and from the inspiration of the cherubs, the source of prophecy. That kind of music can inspire many others to serve God. But when a person is motivated to sing vulgar or profane songs, or songs for personal gain, then he draws his music from the "birds of impurity." That kind of music can spiritually damage anyone who hears it (LM I, 3).

15:3 If his flesh becomes sealed

Tefilin Overcome Blemishes Of The Covenant

If a person blemishes his covenant, he "seals" his flesh with his discharge.

Tefilin are the rectification for sexual defilement. For *tefilin* represent a "seal" of purity that can help counter the harmful effects of a blemished covenant (LM II, 5:14).

15:19 She will remain in her state of separation for seven days

We Must Cry Out To God To Attain Knowledge Of Him

The seven-day waiting period between the cessation of menstrual bleeding and immersion in the mikvah corresponds to the seven "voices" of God enumerated by King David in Psalm 29, beginning with "The voice of God is over the waters" (Psalms 29:3). These seven voices parallel the cries and prayers that one must use to be drawn to God and to attain knowledge of Him. By waiting seven days and then immersing in the waters of the mikvah, purity is drawn and knowledge of God is revealed (LH IV, p. 480).

KITZUR L" M WEEKLY

12 — "A song of praise of David" (Psalms 145:1)

1. The reason why most of the learned individuals oppose the tzaddikim is because the former study the Oral Law—namely, the Talmud and Codes—with great haughtiness. Consequently, the Oral Law [so-called because it was transmitted by mouth] empowers their mouths to "speak arrogant words, proudly and contemptuously, against the righteous" (cf. Psalms 31:19). The true

tzaddikim, however, elevate and rectify all their evil words and restructure the letters of those same words into laws. Precisely through this, the tzaddikim cause great delights to ascend to God.

2. Those who study Torah with ulterior motives—especially the Oral Law, that is, the Talmud and Codes, which they study with ulterior motives—are induced to speak arrogantly against the true tzaddikim. This is the reason behind the learned individuals' opposition to the true tzaddikim.

3. When those learned individuals who oppose the tzaddikim attack and speak evil against the tzaddik, they simultaneously hate and pursue the tzaddik in the upper world—namely, the tzaddik who originated the Torah teachings that the tzaddik in this lower world is now studying. The main source of the attacker's power is the fact that he is learned in the Talmud and Codes—which is the Oral Law. But "One who studies without understanding (*da'at*), [but rather to show off and to argue,] is worse than a carcass" (*Vayikra Rabbah* 1:15). When the Oral Law—which is the Divine Presence—comes into the learned individual's mouth, it is termed "the exile of the Divine Presence." A Torah scholar like this is a "Jewish demon"—he does not see the truth and he becomes an enemy and an opponent of the true tzaddik.

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