

# Keep Your Eyes Wide Open

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It's been a while now. Night after night we count the Omer until we will have finally completed counting seven weeks, and then we will celebrate Shavuot. The name of this holiday, which literally means "Weeks," seems to hint to its connection to the weeks of counting preceding it. We also know that the number of days before Shavuot parallels the number of qualities necessary to properly receive the Torah. But what is the significance of counting the days from the offering of a measure of grain, and preparing to receive the Torah?

The process of bringing the Omer-offering included waving it in all four directions, as well as up and down. This demonstrated that everything in creation is connected directly to God and under His complete supervision. Similarly, when we say in the *Shema*, "*Hashem Echad* – God is One," we should meditate on the idea that God's dominion extends to all six directions (*Berakhot* 13b).

While it's easy to believe that the universe and the heavens are under the dominion of God, it's more challenging to

believe that every detail of our lives on Planet Earth falls under His direct supervision. Therefore we emphasize this idea every morning and night as we cover our eyes and focus our vision above, beyond, and mainly below. This is also the central idea behind every mitzvah. By fulfilling a mitzvah with a human action, we connect mundane human life to the Divine. By fulfilling His commandment, I am recognizing that my human actions are pleasing and desirable to Him. In doing this, I am demonstrating my faith in God's involvement in human life and His Oneness with every part of creation. King David therefore said, "All your mitzvot are faith" (Psalms 119:86).

To the human mind, the concept of God being interested in the details of our lives is difficult to fathom. Therefore the Omer-offering was brought from barley – animal food – because the only way we can accept this idea is if we are willing to think like an animal, which acts only out of instinct and without understanding. The animal instinctively knows that God will take interest even in him and provide for him, and continues about his life.

The Omer is a measure of grain. The reason we count from a measurement is because it's not enough to take a wide-angle look at God's awesomeness. We must zero in on the fact that He cares about every detail of our lives. When we wave a measured amount in all directions, we reinforce the notion that even when there are other measurements like time and place, still, the Infinite God cares to minimize His greatness and involve Himself with us.

On the first Shavuot morning, the Jewish People overslept. When we sleep, our eyes are closed and we are disconnected from the spiritual realities that are above us. Life's harsh events then make us feel cut off from deeper purpose. The Torah also seems cold and irrelevant.

To rectify the mistake of many years ago, and the many times

when we, too, failed to see beyond, we stay awake on Shavuot night. We force our eyes wide open to focus on God's involvement and are filled with the faith to see beyond our restrictions and lacks. By seeing God's providence, everything now becomes purposeful and liberating. With our newfound Omer-counting ability to experience God's Oneness in every constriction of our lives, we can now focus on studying the Torah, so we can receive a Torah where every mitzvah is appreciated as another opportunity to connect our mundanity to His Oneness. This is the true essence and purpose of the Torah, and only by first experiencing and appreciating God's interest in us can we properly receive it.

*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Ma'aseh U'Matan 4*