



The Greater Washington Community Kollel
**SHABBOS
 DELIGHTS**
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TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"l

Cut From the Earth

Presented by Rabbi Hillel Shaps, Director

Parshas Emor contains the mitzvah of the Omer Offering as well as the mitzvah to count the Omer. On the second day of Pesach, an *omer* measure of barley stalks was brought to the Beis Hamikdash where they were waved and then used to bring a meal offering. From that point, we count seven weeks until Shavuos when the *Shte'i Halechem* – the Two Loaves, baked from wheat flour, were brought as an offering.

The commentaries explain that this progression – from barley to wheat – reflects a spiritual journey that we embark on during the Omer. Barley is commonly used for animal feed, while wheat is generally reserved for human consumption. When B'nei Yisrael first left Egypt, they were still at the beginning of their spiritual development – still subservient to their animalistic urges and instincts. This is reflected in the Omer Offering which came from barley and, unlike any other flour offering, was brought to the Temple Courtyard intact as barley stalks – not yet ground into flour. At the same time, in order to gain control of our desires, chametz is forbidden on Pesach – reminding us that we are capable of restraining ourselves when called upon.

Rav Shimon Schwab finds symbolism for this idea in a unique halacha relating to counting the Omer. The Sages derive from the verse in Parshas Re'eh (Devarim 16:9) – which instructs us to begin counting “when the sickle first cuts the *kama* – standing grain” – that we should be standing when we count the Omer. Rav Schwab suggests beautifully that the Sages are guiding us in what our mindset should be when we count: we should envision ourselves like that grain being cut from the earth. In order to elevate ourselves during this time period, we must first cut ourselves from the earth – from earthly and material desires and needs. This process begins on Pesach when we cut ourselves off from chametz – helping set the tone for the forty-nine days that follow. By the time we reach Shavuos, we are to have elevated ourselves and gained control of our instincts. Then we are ready to bring an offering of human food – wheat, and even chametz is allowed on the *mizbeiach* (altar).

The lesson is profound. The material world is there for us to use for the sake of Heaven. We cannot, however, claim that we are engaging with the physical world for the sake of Heaven if we cannot abstain from it at other times. For example, we cannot claim that we are eating in honor of Shabbos if we cannot hold ourselves back from eating the same way during the week. The Omer, which forms a bridge between Pesach and Shavuos, is a time to contemplate how we engage with the pleasures of the world – to try to cut ourselves off a little bit, so that come Shavuos, we can reengage with those pleasures solely for the sake of Heaven.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

From the morrow of the rest day (Pesach)... (23, 15)

B'nei Yisrael counted the Omer in the desert after they left Egypt. (Tosfos Menachos 45b)

This mitzvah is incumbent on every Jewish male in every place and at all times. (Rambam Mishnah Torah, Temidim 7:24)

Since the Rambam includes the mitzvah to count the Omer amongst the laws of korbanos, it would seem that the mitzvah of counting is connected to the Omer offering and is not an independent mitzvah. If this is the case, how were B'nei Yisrael able to count the Omer after leaving Egypt, as there was no Omer offered to initiate their counting?

Parsha Riddle

Eighteen to get married. (Pirkei Avos 5, 21)

Where is there a hint to this in this week's parsha?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

You shall not eat over the blood... (19:26) Besides the prohibition to eat meat while there is blood in it, what other prohibition is derived from this verse?

Answer: The prohibition to eat before davening. (Brachos 10b)

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In *parashas Emor* (24:10-23), the Torah relates that when a certain man "pronounced the [Divine] Name and cursed,"

They placed him in the guardhouse, [until his sentence would] be specified to them by the word of the L-rd. Then the L-rd spoke to Moshe, saying: Take the blasphemer outside the camp, and all who heard [his blasphemy] shall lean their hands on his head. And the entire community shall stone him. ... And Moshe told [all this] to the children of Israel. So they took the blasphemer outside the camp and stoned him, and the children of Israel did just as the L-rd had commanded Moshe.

There are some suggestions that the treatment of the blasphemer described here involved a *hora'as sha'ah* (provisional edict) and was not actually in accordance with the Torah's standard rules of criminal justice:

* The Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 78b) cites an opinion that the incarceration was a *hora'as sha'ah*, since (as Rashi there explains) the Torah had never previously prescribed the death penalty for blasphemy, so the people must have incarcerated the blasphemer on their own initiative and not based on standard criminal procedure.

* A fundamental rule of the Torah's system of criminal justice is that a transgressor is not punished unless he was warned about the punishment for his transgression prior to his commission thereof. The *Margenisa Tava* (*Sefer ha-Mitzvos shorashim* 1:3) assumes that since the people had not yet known that blasphemy was punishable by death, they could not possibly have given him the requisite warning, and so his execution must have been a *hora'as sha'ah* (but see *Da'as Zekeinim* and *Gur Aryeh* to our *parashah*).

* The *Maskil l'David* notes that the capital crime of blasphemy requires that the sinner curse "the name of G-d with the name of G-d" (e.g., by saying: "Let such and such a name strike such and such a name" – see *Sanhedrin* 56a). He understands that the blasphemer in our incident did not do so, and thus his execution was a *hora'as sha'ah*. The U.S. Constitution explicitly prohibits both Congress (I:9:3) and the states (I:10:1) from passing any "ex post facto law." It is unclear whether the Torah has any analogous principle; if it does, then that might be another reason why the execution of the blasphemer would have been a *hora'as sha'ah*. (With regard to civil law, see *Kesef ha-Kodoshim* 231 and *Malchus Yehudah v'Yisrael* pp. 99-108.)

PRESENTED BY
RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. I am hollow.
2. I am a Kohen who can't serve.
3. I can be a sin to Hashem.
4. I am similar to sand.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I must be wanted.
2. I must be unblemished.
3. I am in your place.
4. I am brought close.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Arla (I am for the fruit, I am for the lips, I am for a baby boy, I am for the heart.)

#2 Revering one's mother and father (I am right before Shabbos, I am similar to bird sending, I flip from honor, I am a nature switch.)

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LIFE
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chaburah for women led by

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in the Small Beis Medrash

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