

Kinder Torah®

Parashas Emor

בס"ד

"In appreciation of the beautiful artwork." - Anonymous

A New World

"You shall count for yourselves . . . seven complete weeks" (Vayikra 23:15). This is the mitzvah of counting the Omer. During these seven weeks, we work on perfecting ourselves in preparation for receiving the Torah. In the days of the Beis HaMikdash, the first day's Omer offering was brought from barley, an unrefined grain fit for animal food. That symbolizes the person in his rough form, before he begins working on himself. The offering brought on Shavuot, at the end of the counting, was made of refined wheat, symbolic of the refined personality, capable of understanding and acquiring Torah. Each day, we count another portion of Omer, and move up another rung in the latter of spiritual growth.

Rav Dessler explains that an elevation in one's spiritual level is actually a new world. An elevated person finds himself in entirely different spiritual environment. Yesterday, he was working on getting to school early. Today he has succeeded. This is no longer his test. However, he now has the test of not listening to loshon hora while waiting for the school bell to ring.

Rav Dessler points out that the idea goes much deeper. Every choice that Hashem places before you every moment of your life is something entirely new. No other person in history ever had the opportunity to do what you are about to do. When you exercise your free will and perform the mitzvah, you are creating a new world for yourself. This is the meaning of the *mincha chadasha* (new grain offering), that refined wheat offering brought on Shavuot. The "new" grain offering represents the "new" world that he has created.

Kinderlach . . .

Did you ever climb up a mountain, or walk up to the top floor of a tall building? Did you stop every so often to enjoy the view from the new high point that you had reached? As you got higher and higher, the view looked different. You could see things that were not visible from down below. Kinderlach, this is similar to climbing the ladder of spiritual development. Every time you pass a spiritual test by doing a mitzvah, you move up the ladder. The world looks different now. You have a new point of view. May you always merit to continue climbing that ladder and reaching new spiritual heights.

Shabbos Tranquility

"What a beautiful, calm, peaceful day, Abba."

"Today is Shabbos, Avi. The day of rest – both physical and spiritual. Hashem gives us a wonderful gift each week – Shabbos – a day of total holiness and tranquility. We make mention of this in the special addition that we make to the *Bircas HaMazone* on Shabbos."

"Can you please share it with me, Abba?"

"With great pleasure, Avi. First, let me point out that 'Retze Vi'hachalitzeinu' contains praise of Shabbos along with several requests."

"Isn't that a bit unusual, Abba? We normally refrain from making requests of Hashem on Shabbos. It is the day where we see ourselves as complete, with all of our needs fulfilled."

"Excellent question, Avi! To answer it, we must look into the things that we ask for on Shabbos. Come let us begin. 'Be pleased and strengthen us Hashem, Elokeinu with Your mitzvos.' We make two requests of the Almighty – that our mitzvos find favor in His eyes, and that He fortify us to observe them properly. How can we ask for such a thing on Shabbos? Because we are ultimately referring to the awesome mitzvah of Shabbos, as the blessing continues, 'And the mitzvah of the seventh day, this great and holy Shabbos. For this day is great and holy before You.'"

"On Shabbos we are permitted to ask for what we need to observe the mitzvah of the day – the strength 'to refrain from *melacha* (creative activity) and to rest, with love, as You [Hashem] commanded.'"

"Precisely, Avi. Our Sages¹ cite another explanation of this passage, in recounting a conversation between Dovid HaMelech and Hashem. 'Master of the Universe, why are those who love You distressed, and those who serve idols serene?' [Please give Your servants peace of mind.] For this reason, the Elders fixed 'Retze Vi'hachalitzeinu' [a request for serenity] on Shabbos. Therefore, 'hachalitzeinu' means tranquil rest. We are asking Hashem for relaxation and rest by means of His mitzvos – refraining from *melacha*, and delighting in the Shabbos."²

"It says that we rest 'with love, as You [Hashem] commanded' Abba. What does that mean?"

"The Levush (188) points out that the Torah was accepted by force at *Maamad Har Sinai*. Hashem suspended the mountain over our heads giving us the 'option' of accepting the Torah or being buried right there on the spot. However, Shabbos was commanded at *Marah*, before the forcing. That is why its rest, which was not forced upon us, is described as loving. Furthermore, we do not rest on Shabbos because we need the break from the week's hard work. Rather, we do it because Hashem commanded. Therefore, we meticulously observe all of the *halachos* of refraining from *melacha*, to show

that our rest is not from tiredness, but rather to fulfill the will of Hashem."

"How beautiful, Abba."

"Yes, Avi. We next add a prayer requesting salvation from troubles on Shabbos. Hashem promised us that Shabbos would be a *bris* (covenant) 'forever' (Shemos 31:16). What was the *bris*? Those who keep Shabbos will never be harmed on that day.³ Therefore, we ask to be saved from 'yagon' (inner distress) and 'anacha' (external suffering) on the day of rest. The Abudarham adds that since Hashem desires that we have a day of rest, He should not allow distress or misfortune to come upon us, which can bring us to desecrate the Shabbos (G-d forbid)."

"Oy vey. Desecration of the Shabbos causes much damage."

"Indeed it does, Avi. It delays the ultimate redemption, as we see in the last part of this prayer. We ask to be able to behold the comfort of Zion and the rebuilding of the holy city of Yerushalayim. The Gemora (Shabbos 118b) relates that if Yisrael would keep only two Shabboses properly, they would immediately be redeemed. Why is that? The Medrash (Shemos Rabba 25:12) explains that the Shabbos carries the equivalent weight of all of the mitzvos. The awesome merit of keeping this all-encompassing mitzvah properly will bring redemption and freedom from the *golus* (exile). Conversely, every Shabbos that is desecrated pushes off the coming of Moshiach. And so, we request from the Master of salvations and consolations that He give us the strength and tranquility to keep the Shabbos properly, in order that we merit the final redemption – the coming up to Eretz Yisrael armed, ready, and in good health."⁴

"Amen!"

Kinderlach . . .

The serenity and tranquility of Shabbos is unique in all of creation. It is a special mitzvah that we accepted with love from the Creator. It carries with it a bris that those who keep it will never be harmed on that holy day. And so, we praise the Almighty for this wonderful mitzvah, whose observance carries the weight of all 613 mitzvos! We ask Him to grant us peace and tranquility on the holy day, in order that we will not come to desecrate it. Keeping two Shabboses will bring the redemption. And so, we request from the Master of salvation and consolation to be able to behold the comfort of Zion and the rebuilding of the holy city of Yerushalayim!

¹ Yalkut Shemoni (Remez 867) on Tehilim 60:7

² Siddur Kavannas HaLev

³ Kolbo in Pathway to Prayer

⁴ Abudarham