

GREAT FOR SHARING
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!



אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

PARSHAS
EMOR

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS

בְּשַׁבָּת

THE OWNER'S MANUAL

Parshas Emor contains many *Mitzvos* - 63 according to the count of the *Sefer HaChinuch*! Many of the *Mitzvos* are specific to *Kohanim*, and others revolve around *Yomim Tovim*. There is one *Mitzvah*, though, that is basic to every aspect of Jewish life. That is the *Mitzvah* of *Sefiras HaOmer*.¹

The *Mitzvah* of *Sefirah* is to count 49 days from the second day of Pesach (which is the day the *Korban HaOmer* was brought). The count leads us into the *Yom Tov* of *Shavuos*, when we celebrate the day that Hashem gave us His Torah. Why do we do this? What idea underlies our daily count?

The *Chinuch* elucidates this *Mitzvah* with an understanding of the centrality of the Torah. He explains that our relationship to the Torah, and our learning of the Torah, isn't 'just another *Mitzvah*.' It is the entire reason that we exist as Jews! Everything that we have, everything that we live for, and everything that exists in the entire creation is because of the Torah.

The main reason the Jewish nation was removed from the terrible slavery of Egypt was so that they can properly receive this beautiful gift from Hashem. The transformation from slave to free man pales in comparison to the transformation from a nation without Torah to a nation with Torah.

Because of the centrality of the Torah, we have the *Mitzvah* to count the days that lead to this momentous occasion, the day that we became a Torah nation. Like a *Chosson* and *Kallah* counting the days to their wedding (or like a school student, counting the days to the end of school!) we count the days until we relive that day, that amazing day that we received the Torah.

We become accustomed to anything, even the fact that we have Hashem's "Guide for Life" in our own hands! At this time, though, we are reminded that we don't simply have a book of laws, or a book of philosophy, but we have access to the most treasured possession that ever existed, period.

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

Many of us have the marvelous opportunity to learn Torah on a regular basis. Nevertheless, we may find it difficult to relate to the Torah as a priceless jewel. Is there a straightforward way to recognize the value of what we have?

The more refined a particular pleasure or area of study, the more work and effort it takes to truly appreciate it. People have heard of wine and art connoisseurs; no one has ever heard of a soda connoisseur.

A true appreciation of Torah, which is the most refined area of pleasure and study, takes a lifetime of work.

However, during the period between Pesach and Shavuos, we have a built-in reminder of the value of Torah.

Every night, right before we count the day of the *Omer*, we can take just a moment to reflect, "I'm counting towards something, because that something is really special!"

Just giving ourselves a few moments, focusing on the meaning of what we are doing, can impact our entire relationship to the Torah.

¹ *Mitzvah* 306

לעילוי נשמת

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THE HAPPIEST FUNERAL

As they entered the cemetery in Ponovezh, they walked slowly, heads down. They wore the sad faces befitting a funeral, but this was not a typical burial. This solemn group carried piles of tattered *seforim*. They had come to properly bury the frayed holy books that had been gathered from *Shuls* and *Batei Midrashos* in the local area. This was a quiet occasion, but quite routine.

They were therefore surprised when the revered Ponovezher Rav himself, Rav Yosef Kahaneman, joined the procession. None could help but notice his expression; while most of the group were serious, if not sad, the Rav was upbeat and almost cheerful.

The Rav noticed the attention and explained, "Perhaps you misunderstand the nature of what we are doing. Let me illustrate - when a mother gives her child a new pair of pants, she fully expects that her child will wear through the pants in due time.

"However, there are unfortunately two types of children who do not wear out their clothing. If parents are cruel and thoughtless they will forbid their child to run and play in the manner of all the other children. That child is forced to stay indoors and can only dream of doing what the other children do. The second is the tragedy of a child who is crippled. That child doesn't have the capability to play as the other youngsters do.

"We have to be thankful that we have used these *seforim* and learned through them to the point where they are worn and tattered. There are Jews throughout the world who live in countries where their lives are at risk for the crime of learning Torah. Some of our brothers and sisters have been so far removed from the Torah for so many years that they are unable to learn, and can only dream like being those who can learn."

Taking hold of a pile of *seforim*, he exclaimed, "These tattered *seforim* are a testimony to our ability to learn, and our love of Torah!"

"We have to be thankful that we have used these *seforim* and learned through them to the point where they are worn and tattered."

** Rewritten from "Touched by a Story 2" by Rabbi Yechiel Spero*

DID YOU KNOW?

- The idea of "learning *Lishmah*" - "for its own sake" simply means learning to know and understand the Torah.¹
- A surefire way to engender a love of Torah is by learning Torah with tremendous effort.²
- Loving Torah includes supporting Torah. Those who support Torah receive blessing before those who learn Torah, and receive blessing both in this world, and in the next.³

¹ *Nefesh HaChaim Sha'ar 4, Perek 3*

² *Sefer HaMiddos of the Dubno Maggid, Chap. 14*

³ *Zohar Vayechi 242a*