

Sefiras Haomer - our job is to count the days...

Posted by ovadia - 29 Apr 2010 09:00

The following piece is a quote from the book "Living Inspired" by R' Akiva Tatz. I think that a lot of it is very relevant to our struggles.

There is a very interesting thing about the way we count the Omer. The natural way of counting towards an event is by counting down. When one looks forward to a significant day, one counts off the days remaining between the present and that day. In contrast when we count the Omer, we count the days that have elapsed from Pesach. Why is this so? Surely we should be counting the days remaining until Shavuot?

Similarly, we call the count Sefirat haomer, referring to the Korban Omer which is brought on Pesach. Why is the Mitzva named for the point of departure instead of the goal?

The idea that emerges is, that the counting is not a sentimental marking of the passage of time until a goal; it is the building of that goal. Counting is work. Counting means accounting for and developing each component of a process fully, responsibly and in current sequence. Only when each detail is painstakingly created and assembled into the process can the goal be reached – in fact that itself is the goal; the sequence is our responsibility and if it is done correctly, the certainly results. **The goal itself in spiritual terms cannot be built or achieved directly** – it is transcendent. But the finite components can be built; when that is done appropriately, **the result manifests as a gift**. The transcendence of Shavuot, Torah, is reached not by a single act which builds it, but by a deliberate painstaking building of each of the seven days of the seven weeks which leads to it. When that is done, Shavuot results. We work on the process, the pathway, not on the result, and the result happens of its own.

The clearest illustration of this is that the Torah commands "You shall count fifty days" and yet we count only forty-nine. Why do we not actually count the fiftieth day on Shavuot itself as the words clearly indicate? The answer is striking: we cannot count the fiftieth; it is pure transcendence, of another world entirely, beyond finite counting. It is Shavuot, the giving of the Torah. We would be limiting it by assigning it a finite number. It is not an element, it is totality. We can count the forty-nine human stages; when we do so, Shavuot and transcendence arrive as a gift, as the amazing result of our attention to the fragments. In fact we fulfill the Torah's command to count the fiftieth day by not counting it, by not limiting it to a finite number! That is the only way to reach Shavuot – to do all that we can and then allow the Kedusha to manifest.

And that is why we count from Pesach and not towards Shavuot. We cannot cause Shavuot; we can build the path. We build on the Omer, on what we have as a beginning at Pesach. That is our focus: "Today is one day of the Omer" – we have built one day; "today is two days of the Omer" – we have built two days. When we have built forty-nine correctly Shavuot takes over! and we and our counting become a higher reality.

Counting days, creating time. We should not be passively riding time; we should be building our lives, causing time to become real. Passively drifting through time allows time inexorably to

dissolve life; building life by building its elements consciously and actively in Kedusha causes time to transcend into eternity.

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Re: Sefiras Haomer - our job is to count the days...

Posted by Dov - 29 Apr 2010 16:02

Wow, thanks again, Ovadia!

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