



5785 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Reuven Schreier Pesach / נפץ

Counting Toward the Chuppah Without a Home: The Pain and Promise of Sefirat Ha'Omer

We are now in the midst of *Sefirat Ha'Omer*, a period that serves as a spiritual bridge between *Pesach* and *Shavuot*. As the *Ramban* (*Vayikra* 23:36) famously suggests, these days resemble a *Chol HaMoed*-style extension of *Pesach*. Essentially, *Pesach* and *Shavuot* form one long holiday with many days of *Sefirat-Chol HaMoed* in between. These are days in which the spiritual fire of *Pesach* continues to burn. Additionally, the *mitzvah* to count reflects our building anticipation for *Matan Torah* (see *Sefer HaChinuch* 310). These days should be saturated with joy and hope.

However, this raises a striking question: if *Sefirat Ha'Omer* carries such excitement, why don't we recite *Shehechyanu*? After all, any annual *mitzvah* that brings joy is accompanied with this blessing, thanking *Hashem* for allowing us another opportunity to perform this beautiful *mitzvah*. Why is *Sefirat Ha'Omer* an exception?

The *Ba'al HaMaor* (*Pesachim* 28a) famously explains: Originally, the *mitzvah* of counting the *Omer* was biblical, rooted in the *Korban HaOmer* brought on the second day of *Pesach*. But in the absence of the *Beit HaMikdash*, this *mitzvah* now exists only on a rabbinic level—as a *zecher l'churban*, a remembrance of the destruction of Jerusalem. Far from being a moment of joy, this *mitzvah* evokes pain - “לעגמת נפשנו לחרבן” - “בית מאויינו”. Since *Shehechyanu* is reserved for happy occasions, it is not made over this *mitzvah* in which we experience pain over destruction.

The *Ba'al HaMaor* precisely identifies this enactment as a *זכר לחורבן*, and not as a *זכר למקדש*. As Rav Soloveitchik *tz'l* astutely noted, *Chazal* created two different forms of “remembrances” for the destroyed Jerusalem. Some enactments, labeled as *זכר למקדש*, a remembrance for the *Mikdash*, are hopeful and positive in tone. We shake the *lulav* all days of *Sukkot* joyfully yearning for the day in which the *dalet minim* can be taken up *lifnei Hashem* in the rebuilt Temple. But others are *זכר לחורבן*, a remembrance of the destruction, in which we mourn for the lost *Mikdash*.

Not surprisingly, we conclude our counting of the *Omer* with a yearful prayer for the Temple's restoration. This is the natural response to the pain felt over *zecher l'churban* counting.

But this leads to another layer of complexity: If the days of *Sefirah* are supposed to be so joyful and hopeful, why did *Chazal* specifically choose to create a *zecher l'churban* enactment for *sefirah*? Wouldn't a more optimistic *zecher l'Mikdash* decree emotionally align better with our yearful counting towards *Har Sinai*? (My thanks to my dear *chaver* Rav Shai Kamenetsky, whose comments inspired this question and much of this *dvar Torah*.)

The key to answering this question lies in a deeper understanding of the connection between *Pesach* and *Shavuot*. Many verses in *Tanach* and comments of *Chazal* establish *Pesach* as a day of betrothal between the



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Almighty and His chosen nation (see *Yirmiyahu* 2:2). This is why we read *Shir HaShirim* on *Pesach*; our love affair with *Hashem* began as we were freed from Egypt. *Shavuot* is the *nissuin*, the consummation of our marriage with *Hashem*. As the *Mishnah* in *Ta'anit* (26b) exegetically explains the verse in *Shir HaShirim*, ““On the day of His wedding” this is the giving of the Torah”. *Har Sinai* was the *chuppah*, and the *luchot* served as our *ketubah*. This reality transforms the days of *sefirah*. We count up to *Shavuot* in the same way a bride eagerly counts towards her wedding.

But our excitement is dashed against a harsh reality. After a marriage, the *chatan* and *kallah* are supposed to have a home, a place where they can achieve unity and build a family together. A marriage cannot thrive when it has no destination or headquarters. This is why the *Mishnah* in *Ta'anit* continues, ““and on the day of the gladness of His heart” this refers to the building of the *Beit HaMikdash*.” The process of *Pesach* and *Shavout* are only complete when Jerusalem serves as the center for our marriage to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

The loss of Jerusalem casts a dark shadow over our eager count towards our wedding day. It is the same gnawing anxiety a bride feels when there is no place for her and her husband to go when the last *sheva berachot* is over. The acute pain is unavoidable; we mourn over the loss of our home and yearnfully pray for its restoration.

May we merit fulfilling the biblical commandment of counting towards our *Chuppah* in the restored Jerusalem, speedily in our days.

