

ספירת העומר The Counting of the Omer

Second Week: Judgment and Power — דין\גבורה (Din/G'vurah)

Limits are important; without them, chaos would reign. Even love has its rules. Yet the very qualities that allow us to establish limits are the same ones that can lead to oppression and evil. Judgment—so necessary for almost every aspect of daily living—can become judgmentalism, the disparagement of others, and may even lead to fanaticism. Power—so necessary for the implementation of the good—can become drunk with itself, overpowering others. This week invites reflection on the way my competitiveness and desire to win may become hurtful to others, and how my self-concern can be dismissive of the needs of others and even be destructive. What limits should I place on my ego? What limits should I place on my desires? Perhaps I might pause to stand in awe, stopping for a moment to appreciate what is around me and better understand my own limitations.

Not incidentally, it is during this week that we memorialize those killed in the Holocaust.

בְּזוֹמָא אוֹמֵר: אֵיזְהוּ חָכֵם? הַלּוֹמֵד מִכָּל-אָדָם...
אֵיזְהוּ גְבוּר? הַכּוֹבֵשׁ אֶת-יָצְרוֹ... אֵיזְהוּ עָשִׂיר? הַשֹּׂמֵחַ
בַּחֲלָקוֹ... אֵיזְהוּ מְכַבֵּד? הַמְכַבֵּד אֶת-הַבְּרִיּוֹת...
Ben Zoma taught: Who is wise? Those who learn from everyone . . . Who is strong? Those who control their instincts . . . Who is rich? Those who are satisfied with their portion . . . Who is honored? Those who honor their fellow human beings . . . —Pirkei Avot 4:1

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From the second night of Pesah until the night before Shavuot, we count the omer. We rise.

I am about to fulfill the mitzvah of counting the *omer*, as it is written in the Torah:

“You shall count from the eve of the second day of Pesah, when an *omer* of grain is to be brought as an offering, seven complete weeks. The day after the seventh week of your counting will make fifty days.” Leviticus 23:15–16

Barukh atah ADONAI, our God, sovereign of time and space, who has provided us with a path to holiness through the observance of mitzvot and has instructed us to count the *omer*.

*Barukh atah adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam,
asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al s'firat ha-omer.*

הַלֵּל אוֹמֵר: אֵל תִּפְרוֹשׁ מִן הַצְּבוּר, וְאֵל תֵּאֱמֵן בְּעֶצְמוֹךָ
עַד יוֹם מוֹתֶךָ, וְאֵל תִּדְּיִן אֶת-חֲבֵרְךָ עַד שֶׁתִּגְיַע לְמִקְוָמוֹ,
וְאֵל תֵּאמֵר דָּבָר שְׂאֵי אֶפְשֶׁר לְשִׁמּוֹעַ, שְׂסוּפוּ לְהִשְׁמִיעַ.
וְאֵל תֵּאמֵר לְכַשְׂאֶפְנָה אֶשְׁנָה, שְׂמָא לֹא תִפְנָה.

Hillel taught: Do not withdraw from the community. Do not be sure of yourself until the day of your death. Do not judge your fellow human being until you stand in his or her situation. Do not say “It is not possible to understand this,” for ultimately it will be understood. Do not say “When I have leisure I will study,” for you may never have leisure. —Pirkei Avot 2:5

רַבִּי חֲנִינָא בְּנֵי-דוֹסָא אוֹמֵר: כָּל שִׂירָאֵת חֲטָאוּ קוֹדְמָת
לְחֲכָמָתוֹ, חֲכָמָתוֹ מִתְקִימָת. וְכָל שִׁחְכָמָתוֹ קוֹדְמָת
לְיִרְאֵת חֲטָאוּ, אֵין חֲכָמָתוֹ מִתְקִימָת. הוּא הִיָּה אוֹמֵר:
כָּל שִׁמְעֵשִׂיו מֵרַבִּין מִחֲכָמָתוֹ, חֲכָמָתוֹ מִתְקִימָת. וְכָל
שִׁחְכָמָתוֹ מֵרַבָּה מִמְעֵשִׂיו, אֵין חֲכָמָתוֹ מִתְקִימָת.

Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa taught: Those whose fear of sinning takes precedence over their own wisdom, their wisdom will survive. But those whose wisdom takes precedence over their fear of sinning, their wisdom will not survive. And he added: Those whose deeds exceed their wisdom, their wisdom will survive; but those whose wisdom exceeds their deeds, their wisdom will not survive.

—Pirkei Avot 3:11–12

הַנְּנִי מוֹכֵן\מוֹכְנָה וּמְזוּמֵן\וּמְזוּמְנָת לְקִיָּם מִצְוֹת עֲשֵׂה
שֶׁל סְפִירַת הָעוֹמֵר בְּמוֹ שֶׁפְּתוּב בַּתּוֹרָה:

וּסְפִירָתָם לָכֵם מִמְּחֵרַת הַשַּׁבָּת מִיּוֹם הַבִּיאָכֶם
אֶת-עֹמֵר הַתְּנוּפָה, שִׁבְעַ שַׁבָּתוֹת תְּמִימַת תִּהְיֶינָה.
עַד מִמְּחֵרַת הַשַּׁבָּת הַשְּׁבִיעִת תִּסְפְּרוּ חֲמִשִּׁים יוֹם.
ויקרא כג: טו-טז

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ עַל סְפִירַת הָעוֹמֵר.

On NISAN 23:

הַיּוֹם שְׁמוֹנֶה יָמִים, שֵׁהֶם שָׁבוּעַ אֶחָד וַיּוֹם אֶחָד לְעֹמֶר.
Today is 8 days—one week and one day—of the *omer*.
Hayom sh'monah yamim, she-hem shavua ehad v'yom ehad la-omer.

On NISAN 24:

הַיּוֹם תִּשְׁעָה יָמִים, שֵׁהֶם שָׁבוּעַ אֶחָד וּשְׁנַיִם יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.
Today is 9 days—one week and two days—of the *omer*.
Hayom tishah yamim, she-hem shavua ehad u-shnei yamim la-omer.

On NISAN 25:

הַיּוֹם עֶשְׂרֵה יָמִים, שֵׁהֶם שָׁבוּעַ אֶחָד וּשְׁלוֹשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.
Today is 10 days—one week and three days—of the *omer*.
Hayom asarah yamim, she-hem shavua ehad u-shloshah yamim la-omer.

On NISAN 26 (YOM HA-SHOAH, if a Wednesday night):

הַיּוֹם אֶחָד עָשָׂר יוֹם, שֵׁהֶם שָׁבוּעַ אֶחָד וְאַרְבָּעָה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.
Today is 11 days—one week and four days—of the *omer*.
Hayom ahad asar yom, she-hem shavua ehad v'arba-ah yamim la-omer.

On NISAN 27 (YOM HA-SHOAH, if neither Thursday night nor Saturday night):

הַיּוֹם שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר יוֹם, שֵׁהֶם שָׁבוּעַ אֶחָד וְחַמֵּשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.
Today is 12 days—one week and five days—of the *omer*.
Hayom sh'neim asar yom, she-hem shavua ehad va-hamishah yamim la-omer.

On NISAN 28 (YOM HA-SHOAH, if Sunday night):

הַיּוֹם שְׁלֹשָׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם, שֵׁהֶם שָׁבוּעַ אֶחָד וְשֵׁשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.
Today is 13 days—one week and six days—of the *omer*.
Hayom sh'loshah asar yom, she-hem shavua ehad v'shishah yamim la-omer.

On NISAN 29:

הַיּוֹם אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם, שֵׁהֶם שְׁנַיִם שָׁבוּעוֹת לְעֹמֶר.
Today is 14 days—two weeks—of the *omer*.
Hayom arba-ah asar yom, she-hem sh'nei shavuot la-omer.