

Emor-Seven Complete Weeks to Completeness

[From Ramban and Ahavas Sholom of Kossov]

By Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh

In Vayikra 23:15 we read, 'And you shall count for yourselves on the morrow of Shabbos, from the day of bringing the Omer, seven complete weeks.' This verse is the source for the mitzvah of counting the Omer which we do between Pesach and Shavuos. Interestingly, some Rishonim such as the Ran hold that the counting of the Omer which we do today is rabbinic since we sadly, are not able to bring the special flour offering on the second day of Pesach and its associated korbonos in our Bais Hamikdash. This view holds that the counting is dependent upon the korbonos. Even so, this verse is the source of the mitzvah and our sages held that we should count to keep this idea of counting as part of our Mesorah.

It is noteworthy that the Torah emphasizes complete weeks with the phrase *shabbassos temimos*. The Ramban explains that complete means exact and not missing or containing anything extra. The word *tamim* has the connotation of 'just right.' The Torah emphasizes for example that an animal for a sacrifice must be *tamin*, without any blemishes. One qualification specifically for a *tamim* animal is that it be well proportioned without any part being too big or too small. In our case, *tamim* means each day must be counted and not one day should be missed. The word *temimos* is also the source of the common Ashkenazi practice on the first night of Shavuos to wait until dark to daven Maariv. If one were to accept the Yom Tov early, the day would be shortened and the counting would not be seven 'full weeks'. Interestingly, Sephardim and Mid-Eastern Jewish communities do not have this Mesorah and many of them will daven early on Erev Shavuos.

The Ahavas Sholom of Kossov quotes the Midrash that states that *tam*, complete is when Am Yisroel does Hashem's will. How is this connected with counting the Omer? The Ahavas Sholom then states that the first sense is the sense of sight which comes from knowledge. When one perfects his mental faculties and purifies himself, his vision is clear. Yosef Hatzaddik perfected his mental faculties and purified himself. In Mitzrayim, Yosef was in galus. Moshe continued fixing Yosef's attributes by taking his remains out of Mitzrayim. Through this act of taking *atzmos Yosef* with him, vision was perfected as was demonstrated at Har Sinai when everyone saw the thunder as the Torah states in Shemos 20:18. Their vision was so perfected that they could see things that were not part of the visual senses. Moshe was the embodiment of the *neshamos* of all Am Yisroel. The Midrash, according to Ahavas Sholom, is teaching us that during the sefira period, our job is perfect ourselves as much as we can and be as *tam* as we can be. In particular, we should aim to perfect ourselves in Yosef's *middos* and reach true clarity not only in the physical sense but spiritual clarity as well as we work on improving our avodas Hashem.