



Emor: A Time for All Things

Rabbi Shmuel Silber

“And you shall count for yourselves, from the morrow of the rest day from the day you bring the omer as a wave offering seven weeks; they shall be complete. You shall count until the day after the seventh week, [namely,] the fiftieth day, [on which] you shall bring a new meal offering to the Lord (Vayikra 23:15-16).”

God commanded us to count the days from *Pesach* leading up to *Shavuos*. A seemingly simple commandment aimed at linking these two experiences. We are taught that Exodus was not an ends; it was a means to receive the Torah at Mount Sinai. We were not taken out of Egypt simply to be free and without a human master. We were emancipated because we had (and have) something to contribute. Our nation has the ability to be a light unto the nations. But in order for the light to burn and illuminate there must be fuel. The Torah is our fuel, the commandments are the oil for our national wick allowing us to burn bright and dispel the darkness. We count the days from *Pesach* to *Shavuos* to remind ourselves that our freedom must be used for spiritual accomplishment. We count the days of *Omer* to remind ourselves of our national mandate to make this world a better place.

There is something very interesting about the verbiage used in the verse quoted above. The Torah does not simply tell us “to count,” rather, God instructs us, “*And you shall count for yourselves, U’Sfartem Lachem.*” What is the meaning of this phrase “*Lachem, for you*”?

It is intriguing that a number of our initial commandments and *mitzvos* share a common theme – time. The first national *mitzvah* was *Kiddush HaChodesh*, sanctification of the new moon. God told Moshe, “*HaChodesh HaZeh Lachem Rosh Chodashim, this month is for you the first of all months (Shemos 12:2).*” Again, we see this same word “*Lachem, for you.*” Two of our initial commandments – both focused on time. Perhaps, God was trying to convey to us an all-important lesson for meaningful living. *Kiddush HaChodesh* (sanctification of the new month) reminds us that we control our months and *Sefiras HaOmer* (the counting of the days between *Pesach* and *Shavuos*) reminds us that we control our days and our weeks. We control our time.

Time humbles all men. Influence, power and connections can get you many things. But the one thing that no amount of “*protexia*” can procure and acquire for you – is time. Time is a finite, non-renewable resource. No matter how much you yearn for more – you simply can’t create it. Although we can’t generate additional quantities of time – we can most definitely control the time we have been given. Time is the greatest treasure God bestowed upon us as a free nation. It is the currency of accomplishment and self-advancement. Without it you can do nothing, go nowhere; with it, the sky is the limit. People often say “*if only I had more time - there are so many things I would like to do.*” These *mitzvos* remind us that we have complete autonomy over how we use our time. It is true – there may not be enough time to accomplish everything you want to accomplish – so choose carefully. Decide what is important and focus your energies. We are limited in the duration of our time in this world, but have sole discretion as to how to use the time we are given. Time is the start-up capital for our greatest initiative – life. Invest it wisely.

Perhaps, this is why the Torah uses the word “*Lachem, for you*” by both of the aforementioned commandments. God is not simply telling us to count. He is instructing us to “*make it count for ourselves.*” The month is yours – decide what you are going to accomplish. The week is yours – decide what needs to get done. The day is yours – contemplate how to maximize and squeeze precious meaning and productivity from every holy moment.

Not a week goes by without a new “time saving device” being introduced in the technological marketplace. We are constantly connected, wired and plugged in. Ostensibly the goal of our devices is to maximize productivity and “save time.” But have we really saved any time? And even if we have, how do we use this newfound time-windfall? The reality is that for many of us the time saved is just used for more work. The additional time has not gone to our family, to our learning or to acts of chessed; it has gone to more emails, more meetings and more deals. For others this additional time has led to more time spent online surfing the net and posting every last bit of information (much of it too personal for public consumption) on one’s blog or Facebook page. Blogging, tweeting, friending and surfing have a (limited) place – but it can take over our life. Our time on this earth belongs to each of us. My hours and minutes belong to me and it is up to me to use them purposefully.

As we bask in the after-glow of *Pesach* and feel the anticipatory excitement of *Shavuos* let us find the courage and strength to maximize our weeks, find the meaning in each day and take advantage of every moment.