

Shalom Bayit – Vayikra

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וְאִם תִּקְרִיב מִנְחַת בְּכוֹרִים לַה' אָבִיב קְלוּי בְּאֵשׁ גֵּרֶשׁ כְּרָמְל תִּקְרִיב אֶת מִנְחַת
בְּכוֹרֶיךָ. וְנָתַתָּ עָלֶיךָ שִׁמּוֹן וְשִׁמְתָּ עָלֶיךָ לֶבְנָה מִנְחָה הוּא. וְהִקְטִיר הִכְהֵן אֶת אֲזִכְרְתָהּ
מִגְרָשָׁה וּמִשְׁמֶנָּה עַל כָּל לִבְנֵתָהּ אִשָּׁה לַה'. (ויקרא א, יד-טז)

One of the mitzvot detailed in parshat Vayikra is the Korban Ha'Omer. This special korban is brought on Pesach each year, which makes it very topical, since Pesach is fast approaching.

There is a close connection between the month of Adar and Nisan and the proximity between Purim and Pesach. According to Rashi (אסתר ד, יז), the נִהְפָךְ miracle of Purim took place *on Pesach*. When Esther commanded all the Jews to fast for three days before she approached Achashveirosh unscheduled, it was the night of the seder. Instead of having four cups of wine and eating the afikomen that year, the Jews of Shushan were *fasting*. Also, the Midrash (אסתר רבה ו, יא) tells us that just prior to this, Mordechai was reviewing with his students in the Beit Midrash the halachot of Kemitza, in preparation for bringing the Korban Ha'Omer.

Remember, at the time, the 1st Beit HaMikdash had been destroyed and the 2nd Beit HaMikdash had not yet been rebuilt. Therefore, they *could not* bring the Korban Ha'Omer in reality. Despite this, Mordechai was reviewing the halachot *as if the Mikdash was still a reality* and the Omer would be brought. The Baal Shem Tov says that the avodah we do in the month of Adar facilitates the Geulah in the month of Nisan. Since this shiur borders the two months Adar/Nisan and tonight is Rosh Chodesh Nisan B"H, we have one *last chance* to add a little extra avodah in Adar to facilitate the Geulah.

So let us dive into the Korban Ha'Omer and hopefully by the end of the shiur we will understand its true importance and power.

There are two ways to understand the Korban Ha'Omer. The first is on a practical, agricultural level and the second is on a deeper, spiritual level. We will examine both.

The Korban Ha'Omer is one of the Menachot ("meal" offerings) in the Beit HaMikdash and as we speak, the Daf Yomi are currently learning this sugya in the Gemara.

Our passuk (above) does not call it the Minchat Ha'Omer, but rather a Minchat Bikkurim. It seems a very "strange" name for this korban, since we usually associate the festival of *Shavuot* with Bikkurim, not Pesach. In truth, Pesach and Shavuot are *one integral* festival. Just as you have Sukkot for seven

days, followed by (Shmini) Atzeret, so too do you have Pesach for seven weeks, followed by Atzeret (another name for Shavuot). Bringing Bikkurim on both Pesach *and* Shavuot is therefore not so strange after all.

Rashi in the Gemara (ראש השנה טז ע"א) asks why Shavuot is called חג הַבְּכוּרִים when in fact we don't bring (tree) "fruits" at all *on* this festival itself. Shavuot indeed signals the beginning of the period *from which* the tree fruits may be brought to the Mikdash (until Sukkot), but this commences the day *after* Shavuot and does not include the chag itself. Instead, on the actual chag of Shavuot, a special korban of *bread*, the שְׂתֵי הַלֶּחֶם is brought, not tree fruits. Rashi explains that in Gan Eden, wheat was a *fruit* that grew on a tree, the עֵץ הַדָּעַת (סנהדרין ע, ע"ב).

Similarly, on Pesach, the special korban brought is also called a מִנְחַת בְּכוּרִים, when a korban made from barley grains is brought and not actual tree fruits.

From this we see that the Pesach-Shavuot "package" is a בְּכוּרִים package, consisting of *grain crops*, not tree fruits (barley on Pesach – Omer, and wheat on Shavuot – Shte HaLechem), corresponding to the *agricultural cycle*.

Archeologists uncovered a stone tablet in the area of Gezer (between Ramla and Latrun) dating back to 1000BCE, from the period of David HaMelech, on which is engraved a yearly farming calendar - which months are used for sowing, gathering, pruning etc. The tablet is on display in the Museum of Archeology in Istanbul in Turkey. According to this ancient calendar, grains are planted the previous winter, after Sukkot, in the months of Kislev/Tevet – both barley and wheat.

Of the two grains, barley ripens first – in the month of Nisan, and wheat later, in the month of Sivan. We don't need a stone tablet to tell us this - the *Torah* states it categorically in sefer Shmot. During the plague of Hail, that took place around the time of Pesach, the psukkim (שמות ט, לא-לב) say that the barley and flax were destroyed, because the ripe (dry) barley sheaves were decimated by the hail, but not the green, unripe (flexible) wheat sheaves, which bent and sprung back (the wheat was later destroyed by the locusts).

So, on the "first part" of the "Bikkurim" festival (Pesach) you bring a korban of the crop that ripens before Pesach – barley. The psukkim above do not state that the Omer was from barley, but the Midrash (ספרא, ibid.) does - אָמַר ר' אֱלִיעֶזֶר נֶאֱמַר כָּאן "אָבִיב" וְנֶאֱמַר "בְּמִצְרַיִם". מִה "אָבִיב" בְּמִצְרַיִם שְׁעוּרִים, אָף הִלְכָה לְמִשְׁהָ (הל' תמידין ומוספין ז, יא) The Rambam (יא) says this is מְסִינֵי.

The Torah tells us that the barley grains for the Omer have to be "toasted", *בָּאֵשׁ גֵּרַשׁ כְּרֶמֶל*, before grinding them into solet. This is the only one of the Menachot that requires toasting of the grains and we will see the symbolic significance of this later in the shiur. In addition, the psukim above tell us that oil and levonah (frankincense) is added to the Omer and a portion is burned on the mizbeach.

The Rambam (הלי תמידין ומוספין, פרק ז) goes into greater detail describing the process of bringing this special korban. It is a very picturesque description and the "vibe" is one of great celebration.

On erev Pesach, the 14th of Nisan, while the rest of Am Yisrael are furiously preparing the charoset for the seder and their sheep for the Korban Pesach, messengers from the Bet Din in Jerusalem are on a different mission. They go out to the barley fields surrounding the city and seek out the most prestigious sheaves of barley, which they mark by tying them up with twine, while still connected to the ground.

That night Am Yisrael celebrate Pesach by bringing the Korban Pesach and having a seder, telling the story of *יְצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם*. The following day, the 15th of Nisan, the first day of Pesach is celebrated by bringing a Korban Chagiga in the Mikdash and feasting.

On Motzei Pesach Rishon, the eve of the 16th of Nisan, the Omer celebration begins in earnest. The inhabitants of Jerusalem troop out into the barley fields in a huge procession, carrying torches to light the way, singing, dancing and playing musical instruments as they go. They reach the field where the messengers of the Beit Din marked the sheaves of barley on erev chag.

The formal harvesting ceremony now begins. Three representatives of the Bet Din will do the actual harvesting, each carrying a basket and wielding a scythe. Each of the three harvesters, in turn, calls out "Has the sun set?", and the throngs reply in a deafening cacophony "Yes, Yes, Yes", in response to each harvester. Each harvester then holds up his scythe and, in turn, calls out "This scythe?", to which the crowd responds to each in turn "Yes, Yes, Yes". The harvesters raise their baskets and, in turn, call out "This basket?", to which Am Yisrael reply, in turn, with a resounding "Yes, Yes, Yes". If Motzei Chag Rishon is Shabbat (the Korban Ha'Omer is *דוֹחָה שְׁבֵת*, because it is one of the korbanot *תְּמִידִין*), the harvesters call out, in turn, "Is it Shabbat tonight?", to which Am Yisrael respond, in turn "Yes, Yes, Yes". Finally, the three harvesters, in turn, call out "Shall I harvest?" and a deafening response resounds three times "Harvest!, Harvest!, Harvest!"

The three harvesters, using the scythes, then harvest the sheaves of barley that were marked on erev Pesach, by cutting them from the ground and

placing the sheaves in their baskets. Each harvester harvests one se'ah of barley sheaves, making a total of three se'ah altogether.

The harvesters with the sheaves in the baskets then lead the procession back to Jerusalem and the Azara of the Mikdash, with the same musical fanfare that began the celebration.

The Rambam asks why there was a need to repeat everything three times with such fanfare and to make such a "show" of the whole thing, and explains that the purpose was to "engineer consciousness"!

At the time of the 2nd Beit HaMikdash, a breakaway sect called the *ביתוסים* tried to change the halacha regarding the date of bringing the Omer. The *ביתוסים* only accepted the *תורה שבכתב* and rejected the *תורה שבעל פה*. In parshat Emor, when the Torah repeats the commandment to bring the Omer it says *והניף את העמר לפני ה' לרצונכם ממחרת השבת יניפנו הכהן (ויקרא כג, י)*. The *ביתוסים*, who took the Torah literally, interpreted *ממחרת השבת* to mean - the day after Shabbat, i.e Sunday – that the Omer had to be brought on the first *Sunday* during chag Pesach. Obviously, the oral law contradicts this and it is *הלכה למשה* that the passuk *ממחרת השבת* means the day after the *first day of Pesach*, i.e the 16th of Nisan (not necessarily a Sunday). It was a very similar scenario to what we have today, with the Reform movement trying to change the Torah to suit themselves. It was a huge problem in Am Yisrael at the time, so to "engineer consciousness", the chachamim instituted that this ceremony be conducted with pomp and fanfare, to punctuate the ruling of the Chachamim and to marginalize that of the *ביתוסים*.

Once the three baskets of barley sheaves reach the Azara, that same night the Kohanim begin processing the harvested sheaves into solet. They thresh and winnow the sheaves to separate the grains from the rest of the barley plant. They then toast the barley grains in a kind of a sieve, a container that was perforated with holes, over the fire. After toasting on the fire, the grains are spread on the floor of the Azara to cool. Once cool, the toasted grains are coarsely ground in a stone mill and then sifted through thirteen sieves, to yield one isaron measure of solet (semolina in English - not fine powdery flour, more the consistency of sea sand. Any fine powdery flour was *removed* during the sifting). This isaron of barley solet was packaged well that it would not come into contact with moisture of any kind and left for the following morning.

One isaron of solet from three se'ah of produce means that there is a lot of wastage in the process. Barley is much tougher to grind and sift than wheat and the wastage is greater. In comparison, three se'ah of *wheat* sheaves used to make the Shte HaLechem on Shavuot, results in *two* isaron measures of wheat solet. Any leftover wastage from the process may be redeemed (*פדויה*) and used for other uses, either human or animal consumption (usually the byproducts of

barley are used as animal feed). If for human consumption, hafrashat challah has to be performed on it, but it is פָּטוּר from having to take trumot and maasrot.

The following morning, the 16th of Nisan, the first day of chol ha'moed, is when the Korban Ha'Omer is offered. A Kohen adds 1 log measure of oil to the isaron of barley solet and mixes it well. From experimentation in our institute, the resulting mixture is very crumbly and the closest thing it resembles in modern baking is a type of streusel/farfel. On top of this oil/solet mixture, the Kohen sprinkles one Kemitza of levonah.

They wait until after the Korban Musaf for the first day of chol ha'moed. A Kohen then takes the container with this solet/oil/levonah mixture to the southwestern end of the outer mizbeach (the end closest to the Heichal) and does תְּנוּפָה, waving.

The process of Tenufa is identical to that of waving a Lulav and Etrog – first to all four directions of the compass to symbolize the four directions of the wind, then upwards to symbolize the rain and downwards to symbolize the dew. The Tenufa is asking HKB"H for a blessing for the agriculture, that there should be favorable winds, lots of rain, lots of dew, lots of produce in the fields – *lots of parnasa*.

After Tenufa, the container with the mixture is presented (הִגִּישָׁה) to another Kohen, who, using his hand, moves all the crystals of levonah on top of the mixture to one side. This Kohen then takes a Kemitza of the solet/oil/levonah mixture from the area where the levonah is concentrated and places it in a כְּלֵי שֶׁרֶת. He then takes this כְּלֵי שֶׁרֶת with the Kemitza and ascends the ramp of the mizbeach. At the top of the ramp salt is sprinkled over the mixture which is then thrown on to the fire of the מְעַרְכָּה גְדוּלָה, on the south-eastern end of the mizbeach and burned.

The remaining solet/oil (most of the levonah was removed in the Kemitza) mixture in the first bowl, is then eaten by the Kohanim. It is unlikely that the Kohanim ate raw solet mixed with oil. They probably baked it and ate it together with other korbanot, perhaps sprinkled it (like streusel) on top of the other food.

On this day, Am Yisrael begin counting the Omer, 49 days until Atzeret/Shavuot.

Any grains that had been harvested in Eretz Yisrael prior to Pesach were not allowed to be used/eaten until the Korban Ha'Omer was offered in the Beit HaMikdash. The Mishna (מנחות י, ה) describes how, before the Omer was brought, some traders in the market began to toast barley grains for sale, so that they would immediately be able to sell them after the korban. According to R' Meir, the Chachamim frowned on this practice – that the traders could not wait until the Korban Ha'Omer had been brought in the Beit HaMikdash.

Until now, we have described the *practical* aspect of the Korban Ha'Omer, whose focus is one of gratitude, giving thanks to HKB"H for the barley crop.

Obviously, there is a lot more to it on a spiritual level.

Why do the barley grains have to be toasted and only ground into solet, *not* fine flour -

וּלְפִי שְׂבֵהֲתַעֲוֵרוֹת הַדָּם יִתְעוֹרֵר יֵצֶר הָרַע לְפִי שֶׁיִּתְחַמֵּם הַגּוּף, וְלָכֵן נִצְטוּיָנוּ
לְהַקְרִיב בְּזֶמַן הָאֲבִיב מִנְחַת בְּכוֹרִים לָהּ, כִּי הָאֲבִיב רָמַז לְזֶמַן הַבְּחָרוֹת שֶׁהוּא זְמַן בְּשׂוּל
וְשִׁלְמוֹת גּוּף הָאָדָם ... וּבְזֶמַן הַהוּא יִתְחַמֵּם מְאֹד וְדוֹמָה כְּאֵלּוּ הוּא קְלוּי בְּאֵשׁ, וְלִכְדּוֹ
תִּקְוֵנוּ: שֶׁיִּשְׁתַּדֵּל אָדָם לְכַתֵּת וּלְשַׁבֵּר הַיֵּצֶר הָרַע ... וְלָזֶה רָמַז בְּאֶמְרוֹ "גִּרְשׁ" שֶׁהוּא לְשׁוֹן
שְׂבִירָה וְכוּי וּמָה נִכְבָּד אֲמָרוֹ "גִּרְשׁ", שֶׁהוּא לְשׁוֹן קִצָּת שְׂבִירָה וְלֹא טְחִינָה דְקָה, לְרַמֵּז
שֶׁהַיֵּצֶר הָרַע – אֵין רְאוּי לְבִטּוֹל וְלְהַמִּיתוֹ לְגַמְרִי, שְׂאֵם כֵּן יִפְסֵד יִשׁוּבוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם וְקִיּוּמוֹ.
(אברבנל, ויקרא עמ' כח)

The Abarbanel explains that when the blood heats up, it arouses the yetzer hara. Therefore HKB"H commanded us to bring the Omer davka in the spring season, since spring symbolizes youth, the stage before we reach maturity, when the temperature of the blood is still high, almost like being toasted in fire קְלוּי בְּאֵשׁ. In the same passuk, we find the remedy – that the person should try to break and subjugate the yetzer hara. We find a hint to this in the term גִּרְשׁ which means "breaking", but not *total breaking*, not grinding completely into fine flour, to teach us that we should not totally erase the yetzer hara, for if we do, the world will not exist (the yetzer hara is essential for the mitzva of פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ).

Expanding on this theme related to the yetzer hara, the Maharal gives us a greater insight into the spiritual meaning of the Korban Ha'Omer.

כְּאֶשֶׁר יֵצְאוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם הָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּמוֹ הַתִּינוּקָה הַיּוֹצֵא מִמַּעֵי אִמּוֹ שֶׁנּוֹלַד בְּגוּפוֹ ...
לְכַדּוֹ הָיָה הַקְּרִבַת הַעֶמֶר בְּט"ז נִיסָן מִן הַשְּׂעוּרִין, שֶׁהַשְּׂעוּרִין הֵם גּוֹפְנִיִּים כִּי הֵם מְאֹכְל
בְּהֵמָה ... וְקָרְבָן זֶה בְּיוֹם רֵאשׁוֹן שֶׁל סְפִירָה, כִּי הַגּוּף הוּא מוֹכֵן לְקַבֵּל מִדְּרַגַת הַשְּׂכָל ...
וְלִכְדּוֹ הַיּוֹם הָרֵאשׁוֹן מִן הַחַמְשִׁים ... יֵשׁ כְּאֵן הַקְּרִבַת הַעֶמֶר מִן הַשְּׂעוּרִים, שֶׁהוּא מְאֹכְל
חֲמָרִי, כִּנְגִיד נוֹשֵׂא הַתּוֹרָה שֶׁהוּא הַתְּחִלָּה לַתּוֹרָה. וּבְיוֹם הַחַמְשִׁים שֶׁהוּא עֲצֻרַת וְאֵז
הַקְּרִבַת שְׁתֵּי הַלֶּחֶם מִן הַחַטִּים, וּמְאֹכְל חַטִּים הוּא רְאוּי לְאָדָם הַשְּׂכָלִי. (תַּפְאֶרֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל,
עמ' עז)

As described above, the Maharal considers Pesach-Shavuot a cohesive unit. He says that when Am Yisrael left Egypt, we were like a baby who had just been born into a physical body. Therefore, the Korban Ha'Omer on the 16th of Nisan is from barley, which is considered an animalistic/physical grain (barley is mostly used for animal feed). And this korban is on the first day of the Sefira, because this signals the beginning of spiritual ascension to acquire knowledge (Chazal say that when Am Yisrael were redeemed from Egypt, we were at the 49th lowest level of impurity and if HKB"H had not redeemed us exactly at that

moment, we would have fallen over the brink and been irredeemable). The Omer therefore signifies the starting point in the process of acquiring the Torah. On the 50th day, Shavuot/Atzeret we offer the Shteit HaLechem which is made from wheat, a grain that is more fitting for an intelligent being. עֵד כָּאֵן הַמֶּהָר"ל.

The truth is that when Am Yisrael left Egypt they did *not* bring a Korban Ha'Omer. The first time the Omer was brought is only when Am Yisrael entered Eretz Yisrael *in the time of Yehoshua*, the korban only applies in Eretz Yisrael. So, what is the Maharal talking about? If we offer the Omer on Pesach in perpetuity to remember our animalistic status when we left Egypt, then why didn't HKB"H command us to bring a Korban Ha'Omer the day after we left Egypt?

I believe that the answer lies in a place called Marah.

The Maharal refers to Am Yisrael as a newborn baby. When Am Yisrael left Raamses, they were *not yet* a newborn baby. Only after the splitting of the Red Sea, were we considered a newborn baby. The Midrash (מדרש אגדה, ויקרא) compares the process of Am Yisrael emerging from ים סוף as a kind of birth. The first place Am Yisrael travelled to after Yam Suf was Marah. Why Marah? Why did HKB"H, straight after the "birth", give them the test of the bitter waters of Marah? Why not take them directly to Eilim, where there were seventy palm trees and a veritable oasis?

The Zohar HaKadosh (זוהר, פ'י נשא, קכד, ע"ב) says that what HKB"H did with Am Yisrael at Marah was equivalent to a Korban Sotah. In a Korban Sotah, a woman suspected of adultery is made to drink a potion of bitter water. The Zohar says that when Am Yisrael left Egypt, the Egyptians scoffed at them and said to the men "You think these children are your children? While you were out in the field making bricks from straw, your womenfolk were slaves in our houses. Do you honestly believe that we did not take advantage of them?" Am Yisrael could not be sure that this was a lie. So, HKB"H put the entire Am Yisrael through the test of a Sotah, and they came out squeaky clean, except for one, who the Torah mentions specifically by name – Shlomit Bat Divri from the tribe of Dan (see shiur on [Shmini 2023](#)). The purpose of a Korban Sotah is to restore Shalom Bayit between a husband and wife. A suspecting husband can only be convinced through the Divine intervention of the Korban Sotah. When he sees his wife has come through unscathed, it is as if HKB"H has given her His official stamp of approval. After the Exodus, the husband was HKB"H and Am Yisrael were the wife. To clear Am Yisrael of any doubt and restore Shalom Bayit between Am Yisrael and HKB"H, the "husband", we had to undergo a Korban Sotah on a national level.

What grain is used to make the solet in a Korban Sotah? Barley. The only two Menachot made from barley grains are the Sotah and the Omer! Because the Omer and the Sotah are *one and the same*. A Korban Sotah is an individual

korban brought by an individual. A Korban Ha'Omer is a *national Korban Sotah*, brought on a national level (מאיר פנים פרק טו, עמ' קעד).

This is the answer to the question on the Maharal – Am Yisrael in fact did in effect bring a Korban Ha'Omer – at Marah.

Pesach-Shavuot are both called בכורים, referring to grains, not fruit - barley/wheat grains, which Rashi (above) says is because in Gan Eden wheat grew on a tree. Who was the first Sotah in history? It was Chava, as the Gemara (שבת קמו, ע"א) tells us שָׁבָא נָחֵשׁ עַל חַוָּה הֵטִיל בָּהּ זֵהָמָא (שבת קמו, ע"א). The word בכורים is from the root בכור, firstborn. The first בכור in history was Kayin, born from the union of Chava and the נחש. That is how it began.

To fix this, Am Yisrael had to descend to Egypt, to be enslaved by Pharaoh, a gilgul of the נחש. Here Am Yisrael were reborn anew בְּנֵי בְּכָרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, but they had to receive HKB"H's stamp of fidelity, to verify removal of all traces of the first Sotah in history and achieve tikkun. This was accomplished at Marah and is commemorated *each year* by bringing the Korban Ha'Omer.

The Korban Ha'Omer differs from the Sotah in two things. In the Sotah there is no oil and no levonah, which are present in the Omer. Chazal tell us that oil symbolizes the Torah and levonah is the most elevated of spices in the Ketoret. The Korban Ha'Omer is the Korban Sotah *after* the tikkun. It symbolizes Am Yisrael after being exonerated (smelling good/levonah) and after receiving the Torah (oil).

The essence of the Korban Ha'Omer is the restoration of Shalom Bayit between HKB"H and Am Yisrael. It is not for nothing that the Kemitzah of the Omer is what Mordechai chose to teach his students just before that Pesach, way back in Shushan. To reverse the sin of the מְשִׁתָּה of Achashveirosh and the infidelity that resulted. To restore Shalom Bayit with HKB"H and merit redemption.

It is fitting that we concentrate this year on learning the principles of the Korban Ha'Omer as we have a convergence of multiple factors simultaneously, the war in modern day Shushan, the fact that the Daf Yomi cycle is now focusing on the Omer and the fact that Rosh Chodesh Nisan is fast approaching.

Be'ezrat Hashem our hishtadlut in studying the Korban Ha'Omer will achieve the same result it did in Shushan of old and we will merit redemption and the coming of Mashiach this year in the month of Nisan and be zocheh to bring the Korban Ha'Omer mamash in the Beit HaMikdash, with happiness and rejoicing. בבי"א.

Shabbat Shalom

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