

One of the *Mitzvot* in this week's *Parashah* is that of the *Lechem Ha'panim*, the twelve loaves of bread that were placed on the *Shulchan* / "table" in the *Mishkan* and, later, the *Bet Hamikdash* every *Shabbat*. The *Lechem Ha'panim* would remain on the *Shulchan* until the following *Shabbat*--miraculously remaining fresh--when they would be replaced by a new set of loaves and eaten by the *Kohanim*.

Our *Parashah* says about the *Lechem Ha'panim* (24:8), "Each and every *Shabbat* he shall arrange them before *Hashem* continually, from *Bnei Yisrael* as a *Brit Olam* / eternal covenant." R' Naftali Hertz Weisel z"l (1725-1805; Germany) observes that the expression, "*Brit Olam*," is not used in connection with any other *Korban* / sacrificial offering, only the *Lechem Ha'panim*. He explains: The *Lechem Ha'panim* is the only offering that is brought only on *Shabbat*, about which we read (*Shmot* 31:16), "*Bnei Yisrael* shall observe the *Shabbat*, to make the *Shabbat* a *Brit Olam* for their generations." The use of "*Brit Olam*" in connection with *Shabbat*, the conclusion of Creation, reflects the fact that *Hashem* created the world with the intention of forming an eternal covenant with mankind. ("*Brit*" means "covenant," and "*Olam*" means both "world" and "eternity.")

The substance of this covenant was to consistent of *Hashem's* ruling over His creations and resting His *Shechinah* / Presence on them, continues R' Weisel. However, mankind rejected *Hashem*, until Avraham and his descendants were chosen to be the bearers of His covenant. Thus we read, when Avraham was given the *Mitzvah* of circumcision (*Bereishit* 17:13), "My covenant shall be in your flesh for a *brit Olam*," i.e., you, the Jewish People, will be the ones who inherit all the benefits of the *Shabbat* and all it represents. (*Peshuto Shel Mikra*)

Shabbat

"You shall count for yourselves--from the day after the *Shabbat*, from the day when you bring the *Omer* of the waving--seven weeks, they shall be complete." (23:15)

The *Gemara* (*Menachot* 65a-66a) teaches that the word "*Shabbat*" in this verse does not refer to the seventh day of the week. Rather, it refers to the first day of *Pesach*, regardless of what day of the week that holiday falls. According to the Oral Law, the second day of *Pesach* is always the first day of the *Omer*, and *Shavuot* always falls 49 days later.

The *Gemara* relates, however, that a sect known as the *Tzedukim* (Sadducees) denied the legitimacy of the Oral Law and explained this verse differently--insisting that the first day of the *Omer* is always the Sunday ("the day after the *Shabbat*") after the first day of *Pesach*. The *Gemara* (*Rosh Hashanah* 22b) records that this sect went so far as to try to confuse the masses about when *Rosh Chodesh* fell in order to have them observe *Shavuot* on Sunday--49 days after the Sunday when they claimed the *Omer* count began. [Until here from the *Gemara*]

Why did the Torah refer to the *Yom Tov* of *Pesach* as "*Shabbat*," thus creating an ambiguity that the deniers of the Oral Law could exploit? In what way is the first day of *Pesach* "*Shabbat*-like"?

R' Chaim Menachem Yaakovson *shlita* (Bnei Brak, Israel) explains based on the teachings of R' Moshe Chaim Luzzato z"l (*Ramchal*; 1707-1747). The latter writes: The meaning of refraining from *Chametz* and eating *Matzah* on *Pesach* is that, before the Exodus, the Jewish People were intermingled with the Egyptians, "a nation amidst a nation" (see *Devarim* 4:34). When the Jewish People were redeemed, they became distinct from the Egyptians. Until then, the darkness and impurity of materialism enveloped them, but when they were redeemed, their bodies were purified and became ready for Torah and *Avodah* / Divine service.

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For this reason, continues *Ramchal*, *Bnei Yisrael* were commanded to avoid *Chametz* on *Pesach*--i.e., because a person's food should reflect his condition. On the one hand, the rising of dough is a natural process that makes it easier to digest. On the other hand, the rising of dough also reflects the ascendancy of the material world and the haughtiness that comes from having a *Yetzer Ha'ra*. Most of the time, our task is to live in the natural world and to deal with the temptations of the *Yetzer Ha'ra* and materialism; therefore, we do eat *Chametz* year round. However, during the holiday that reflects our Exodus from the materialistic world of the Egyptians, we avoid *Chametz* and eat only *Matzah*. [Until here from *Ramchal*]

R' Yaakovson continues: This is how *Pesach* is like *Shabbat*--both of them involve separating ourselves from the materialistic world in which we spend most of our days. Why is that connection made specifically here, in connection with counting the *Omer*? Because, at the end of the *Omer*, on *Shavuot*, we receive Torah. And the way to receive the Torah is to break away from the hold that the materialistic world has on us. Indeed, it is not coincidental that the Torah was given on *Shabbat* (see *Shabbat* 86b).

(*Mei Be'er: Nehora D'Shabta* p.117)

R' Yaakov Moshe Charlap z"l (1882-1951; rabbi of Yerushalayim's Sha'arei Chessed neighborhood and *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Mercaz Harav) writes: It is *Hashem's* will that we emulate Him, and this requires us to reach such high levels that we, too, can create something from nothing--specifically, that we create a *Shabbat*. True, the sanctity of the seventh day of the week is built into Creation. Thus, says the *Gemara* (*Berachot* 49a), we say in the *Shabbat* prayers, "He Who sanctifies the *Shabbat*"--it is *Hashem* Who sanctifies *Shabbat*. Nevertheless, the occurrence of *Yom Tov* depends on when we, the Jewish People, sanctify the new moon, as we say in the *Yom Tov* prayers, "He Who sanctifies *Yisrael* and the Festivals"--He sanctifies us and we sanctify the Festivals. And, as we read in our verse, *Yom Tov* is also referred to as "*Shabbat*."

Why is this idea alluded to in connection with counting the *Omer*? Because the period of the *Omer* is when we prepare to receive the Torah, and it is through the Torah that we rise to the level where we can emulate *Hashem* and be creators. After all, says the *Zohar*, "*Hashem* [too] looked in the Torah and created the world." [On the simplest level, the idea that the Torah was *Hashem's* blueprint for the world means that the world is perfectly suited to the opportunities and challenges that the Torah presents to us.]

(*Haggadah Shel Pesach Mei Marom* p. 80)

"You shall rejoice before *Hashem*, your *Elokim*, for a seven-day period." (23:40)

The *Gemara* (*Sukkah* 53a) records the reminiscence of one of the Sages about the *Sukkot* celebration in the *Bet Hamikdash*: "When we would rejoice at the *Simchat Bet Hasho'evah*, our eyes did not see sleep."

What does this mean? asks R' Moshe Yehoshua Hager z"l (1916-2012; *Vizhnitzer Rebbe*). Is sleep something one can see with his eyes?

He explains: *Halachic* authorities write (regarding the custom to refrain from sleeping during the day on *Rosh Hashanah*), "Wasting time is equivalent to sleeping." This, writes the *Vizhnitzer Rebbe*, is "sleep" that one can see, for his eyes are open. During the *Simchat Bet Hasho'evah* in the Temple, there was no wasted time, the *Gemara* is teaching. It was a time of such spiritual elevation that the mere thought of wasting time was impossible. Rather, those present were completely occupied with serving *Hashem*.

The *Vizhnitzer Rebbe* continues: There are those who say, "I learned today's *Daf Yomi* (or some other pre-determined quota of Torah study); now, I am free for the rest of the day." Is that really all that is expected of us? No, he answers, "We must learn more, and we must learn better," i.e., we must increase both the quantity and quality of our Torah study and Divine service.

This, concludes the *Vizhnitzer Rebbe*, is the foundation of life: Time is not *Hefker* / a free-for-all. A moment spent studying Torah lasts forever. A moment wasted is lost forever. (*Yeshu'ot Moshe: Ma'adanei Shulchan*)

Pirkei Avot

Akavya ben Mahalalel says, "Consider three things and you will not come into the grip of sin: Know from where you came, where you are going, and before Whom you will give a reckoning." (3:1)

R' Meir Margulies z"l (1707-1790; rabbi of Ostrog, Ukraine; one of the earliest disciples of the *Ba'al Shem Tov*) observes: The *Mishnah* does not say, "Where you will go eventually," but rather, "Where you are going [now]." He explains:

On the verse (*Kohelet* 12:5), "So man is going to his eternal home," the *Gemara* (*Shabbat* 152a) comments, "This teaches that every *Tzaddik* receives an abode [in the World-to-Come] befitting his honor." Where, asks R' Margulies, does the *Gemara* see an allusion in this verse to *Tzaddikim*? Our *Mishnah* provides the answer: A person who views himself as "going"--constantly, in the present tense--to his eternal home (as opposed to thinking of death and the eventual reckoning as theoretical possibilities in the far-off future) will not come to sin. He will be a *Tzaddik*!

(*Yachin U'boaz* ch.1)