



GROWTH

At The

SHABBAT TABLE

PARSHAT EMOR

One Shoe Fits... One

How many liberals does it take to change a light-bulb?

None – the light-bulb is perfectly fine; we are the ones who need to change. We must accept the light-bulb for who it is.

How many psychiatrists does it take to change a light-bulb?

Just one – but the light-bulb needs to want to change.

We are currently amidst counting the days of the Omer – a commandment which is actually introduced in this week's parsha – to count the days and weeks between the holidays of Pesach and Shavuot.

There's a famous concept in Jewish law of "שומע כעונה" – that listening is akin to actually verbalizing. For instance, when it comes to the reading of the Megillah on Purim, listening to the cantor alone can work to fulfill everyone's mitzvah even without uttering the actual words. This rule is true of most verbal mitzvot.

However, when it comes to counting the Omer, the Talmud teaches that every person must actually do it for himself; it doesn't work to have someone else count on one's behalf. This raises the question: why? What makes this mitzvah unique?

R' Yisrael Majeski once shared a beautiful insight. The omer is all about growth – counting up to receiving the Torah. Being that it signifies a spiritual journey, it would be completely impossible to have someone count on another's behalf, since every individual has their own entirely unique path in life and journey to the Torah. Out of the millions of Jews and billions of people in the world, there are no 2 that share exact identical journeys, and especially when it comes to counting up to reach the Divinity of Torah, no one can truly compare their growth to that of someone else.

This carries much practical significance. I often hear people charting someone else's growth in admiration, and then looking in dismay at themselves with no hope of reaching lofty heights. The opposite is common as well: people looking down upon others for not walking the same path as them, for not taking the same steps they had taken toward leading a more meaningful life. Not only are such thoughts unproductive; they are predicated on a completely false narrative. Every individual is a fragment of the Divine – albeit a unique slice. Just as every person is to count the Omer for themselves, every individual is completely distinct in their own life story, journey, and trajectory. Personal growth is just that: personal. We are never meant to judge, compare, or put someone down for being at a different stage of their journey; nor are we meant to feel shame, less-than, or hopeless for not being on the same standing as someone else.

This touches on another aspect of the Omer: why we count upwards when normally people do a count *down*. The answer is profound: life's destination isn't as significant as the journey it took to get there – with every little step and tiny amounts of progress, and with all the ups and downs in-between. For each person on their own level, that's what real life is truly about: the expedition of *becoming*, one step at a time.

"The right advice given at the wrong time is the wrong advice."

War of Moments

Every person faces moments of inner struggle — small but decisive battles in areas such as guarding one's eyes, speech, and other personal challenges. A natural question arises: what value is there in a single victory, if one may fall again later, or if past failures already exist?

The answer is both simple and deeply empowering.

Each moment of restraint is not measured as part of a larger, imperfect track record. It stands on its own. In that instant, a real choice was made to align with the will of Hashem despite pressure, habit, history, and difficulty. And that moment is complete — it is not undone by what came before or what may come after.

One can think of it as a spiritual reality where every isolated victory is fully "counted," fully significant, and fully permanent. The only thing that matters in that moment is the battle currently in front of you.

This reframes the entire experience of struggle. A person is not being asked to be flawless across time; he is being asked to win what is in front of him right now. Even if it feels small or repetitive, the value of that victory is immense — precisely because of how real the resistance is.

Seen this way, the Yetzer Hara is not interested in effortless failure, but in breaking a person's spirit through the illusion that nothing counts unless everything is perfect. Once that illusion is removed, every individual battle regains its weight.

And so the focus becomes clear: not tomorrow's challenges, not yesterday's outcomes—but this moment alone. Win this one, and it is already a complete achievement.