



פרשת אמור

WITH

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BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Counting The Days

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Part I. Learning to Count

Visiting the Gra

The following is a very queer story, but I have to tell it to you anyhow. I'm telling it to you for a good reason.

The Vilna Gaon had a sister whom he hadn't seen for thirteen years. In thirteen years he didn't meet with her even once. She lived far away and in those days traveling between countries was sometimes very difficult.

And now his sister was in Vilna and she came to see him. "Oh, my brother!" she called out when she saw him, "It's been so many years."

So the Vilna Gaon spoke a few words with her – maybe it was a few minutes, maybe a little more – and then he said goodbye to her and he went back to his sefer.

The sister was somewhat discouraged. So many years; a long lost brother! And when the

Gaon saw a tear in her eye he said, "My sweet sister, in the Next World we'll sit and talk". That's what he told her: "In the Next World, we'll have time to sit and talk." And he went back to his learning.

For Deep People Only

Now, don't tell this story to other people; it's not for the faint of heart. It's only for you to hear because we'll speak tonight about a subject that will help you understand the story.

I'll tell you something else, another story that I'm careful about telling because superficial people misunderstand it. But I'll say it anyhow because by the end of the evening, it'll be understood.

The Chofetz Chaim's son wrote about his father and he says there that his father was not such a big *machnis orech*; he didn't spend too much time with guests. You hear that? The Chofetz Chaim wasn't a big *machnis orech*! When

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a guest came, he made the bed for him; he brought in the big straw mattress and showed him where to lie down, but he didn't spend time with him. He gave the guest everything he needed – if he needed to talk, he gave him his time as well – but he didn't spend *extra* time.

Counting The Days

And so we'll make an attempt at understanding the behavior of these two *tzadikim*. We'll begin with a mitzvah in this week's parsha; the mitzvah of *sefiras ha'omer*, the counting of forty-nine days between the bringing of the Omer offering and the Yom Tov of Shavuos: וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמָּחֳרַת הַשַּׁבָּת – You shall count for yourselves from the morrow of the first day of Pesach, מִיּוֹם הַבְּיָאָכֶם אֶת עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה – from the day that you bring the Omer offering, עַד מִמָּחֳרַת הַשַּׁבָּת הַשְּׁבִיעִית – until the day after the seventh week when you will celebrate Shavuos (Vayikra 23:15).

In the Torah the Yom Tov of Shavuos is not designated by a certain day of the month; instead it depends entirely on the counting of days. "Today is day one," "Today is day two," "Today three," and so forth until we say "Today is day forty-nine," and then we know that Shavuos is tomorrow.

That's how it's been for all of our history; the whole Jewish nation stands up and counts *sefirah*. From the time Yehoshua entered the land until the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, we were counting. And even when we were exiled from our land and couldn't bring the Omer anymore, they continued to count the days from Pesach until Shavuos – we're still counting today. For forty-nine days we become the nation that counts.

But there's a question here. Because if the purpose of this counting was merely to know when to celebrate Shavuos – and it appears that way from the *possuk* – so the Torah could have merely said, "And seven weeks after the first day of Pesach you should celebrate Shavuos," and

that's all. We would look at the calendars and mark off the day of Shavuos and finished.

All Jews, Accountants

If it must be counted, let the Beis Din count; let them keep count and they'll let us know! That's how it is with counting the Shmittah years after all. The mitzvah to count the years for Shmittah and Yovel falls exclusively on the Beis Din and we don't participate at all. Only when it comes to *sefiras ha'omer* the Torah goes out of its way to obligate every single one of us to participate in the counting. The Gemara (Menachos 65b) says, וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם – And you should count for yourselves; and Chazal tell us that the plural *lachem* is used to teach, שְׂתֵהָא סְפִירָה לְכָל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד – that the counting must be done by everyone; by each and every individual.

So what's this national business of counting? What's the necessity of a special ceremony of counting the days? A whole nation of millions should stop everything to count days?! What for?

Now, I understand that you'll hear many reasons – we've spoken about them here too – reasons that correspond to the Omer and Matan Torah and to the days in between. And they're all valuable; the Torah is not one thing; many lessons are available for those who want to learn. But we'll focus now on a more general idea, an important attitude that pertains not only to these forty-nine days before Shavuos, but to the counting of all the days of our lives.

Counting In General

The brother of the *Vina Gaon* in his *sefer Ma'alos Hatorah* (Hakdamah) teaches us a very important rule – he says it in the name of the *Gra* but it's found in the *Rishonim* as well – and it's an idea that opens up for us a panorama of opportunity. He declares that although the six hundred and thirteen *mitzvos* of the Torah are commandments on their own, yet they are also

intended to be much more. He says that they are actually six hundred and thirteen *klalim*, six hundred and thirteen general principles that serve as models that should guide us in our everyday lives. And therefore, although we do not add to the *mitzvos*, yet we can always surmise in which direction Hashem wishes that our minds should go by studying these general principles.

And so we can come back now to the mitzvah of *sefiras ha'omer* and we will try to understand it in a way that's different than we imagined until now. Because if counting days is intended as a model for us, we should spend some time trying, at least a little bit, to understand what we're being taught here. In which direction is Hakadosh Baruch Hu guiding us by commanding us to count these days?

In Tehillim (90:12) there's a *possuk* לְמַנּוֹת יְמֵינוּ. בֵּן הַיּוֹדֵעַ We say it every Shabbos morning, "Make known to us how to count our days properly". And we should take it to heart because it is of the utmost consequence to each one of us. Dovid Hamelech is saying here a supplication, a *tefillah* to Hakadosh Baruch Hu: "Please Hashem," he said, "Please teach us how to count our days."

Now, just to count days, Dovid Hamelech wouldn't need to call out to Hashem. You need Hashem to teach you to count days?! A little boy at home, even before he goes out to the *cheder*, can count days. You count, that's all!

Counting Correctly

So we look back at our *possuk* and we see that it wasn't merely how to count that Dovid wanted to know. There's an extra word there: "Teach us 'kein' how to count our days." he says. The word *kein* means 'properly' like we find בְּנֹת צִלְפָּחָד – דוֹבָרוֹת – "The daughters of Tzelofchad are speaking correctly, properly" (Bamidbar 27:7). So לְמַנּוֹת יְמֵינוּ בֵּן הַיּוֹדֵעַ means, "Make us know how to count our days correctly."

It's not enough to count; for the mitzvah of *sefiras ha'omer* it might be sufficient, but for counting the days of our lives, Dovid understood that we need more than that. We want to count our days 'kein', correctly.

Now what it means to count correctly that's a big subject – it means very many things – you'll have to keep coming to these lectures for that. But the first thing we make note of is that there's more to counting than merely ticking off the days, there's something we're aiming for here. Counting days means you understand that time is passing by, that you're here to accomplish in this world and that you won't be here forever.

Wasting His Time

Now, you have to realize that one day you're going to have to give a *din v'cheshbon*. The gift of time from Hashem is a tremendous opportunity, but it's also a tremendous responsibility: בְּיָדְךָ עֵתֵי – In Your hand, Hashem, are all my times (Tehillim 31:16). That means, all my hours are in Your hands; all my minutes are in Your hand. It's not mine, it's Yours. And if I take out of Your Hand another minute, another diamond, and I take it and throw it out of the window, so Hakadosh Baruch Hu says "Oh, that's chutzpah! I'm handing you every minute, such a precious gift! It's from My Hand, and you're taking it from Me and wasting it?"

You know how many people spend their time with their minds preoccupied with nothing at all. Here's a man who's walking around thinking about ways and means of fighting with his boss; he's spending his days thinking of ways and means how to get even with him. Or his wife; if he's separated from her, let's say, he's wasting precious time thinking how can be spiteful to her, what harm he could do to her. Or maybe she's thinking the same thing towards him.

There are people going around, and they're tense and they're worried, thinking that they're being persecuted by their neighbors and their

mothers-in-law. They spend time bemused about the injustice that is being done to them. Not lunatics! I'm talking about sane people. Their lives are being wasted away by silly and foolish imaginations.

Imaginary Wealth

And what about the people who waste their lives pursuing imaginary wealth. Instead of chasing the true wealth of *yiras Hashem*, they waste their lives pursuing imaginary pleasures.

Here's a man, he decides to make a trip someplace. For what purpose? For enjoyment, for pleasure. A trip for pleasure? You're going to waste part of your life on nothing?! I'm not saying that you can never go anywhere – sometimes people are sick, they need to heal; for mental therapy I think the best thing is to be busy, not to be on vacation. But whatever it is, just to go without *cheshbon*, without remembering how precious time is, it's a *cheit*, a sin, because it means that you don't recognize your purpose in this world.

Let's say you and your wife go visit somebody else. So you sit down in the dining room, you and your wife, and he and his wife, and you talk and talk and talk. You're a *rotzeiach*, no question about it; you're killing yourself when you waste time. You're a murderer. You're killing yourself for nothing.

You have to make excuses, "I can't go tonight; I have to get some work done at home." And when somebody comes to waste your time, a *nudnik*; let's say, your next-door neighbor wants to talk a little bit, he's visiting you, so be friendly to him and then say, "I have to go to the bathroom" – something you have tell him so you can escape from him. Find some *terutz!* Save your life! Because he's a holdup man; he's a robber! Stealing your time – it's worse than stealing your money!

Now, we don't look at it that way because we are accustomed to following the footsteps of the

unthinking multitudes who don't care if they waste their time. But we're not interested in walking in those footsteps any more. *Sefiras ha'omer* is reminding us that there's a better way to live, a better way to count your days.

Part II. Counting At Sunrise

The Sun Keeps Count

Now, in order that we should comprehend the enormity of this function of counting days, the Torah doesn't wait until the mitzvah of *sefiras ha'omer* to teach this lesson. Way back in the beginning, when Hashem created the world, He already taught us about the important function of 'counting days'.

Do you know what the sun is for? Of course you know. It gives the world light and energy and vitamins and a million more things. It gives us life, no question about it. But among the purposes of the sun, the Torah tells us that one of the most important ones is the one we're speaking about right now: **וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי מְאֹרֹת בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם** – *And Hashem said: "Let there be luminaries in the firmament, לְיָמִים – for days"* (Bereishis 1:14). Not only **לְאֹתוֹת עַל הָאָרֶץ**, for light. Not only **לְאֹתוֹת וּלְמוֹעָדִים**. *L'yomim!* For days!

You hear such a thing?! The sun was created to allow us to experience days. To experience separate days, and to experience each day as it progresses from dawn to dusk and then to experience that same thing again the next day. The sun was created so that we should be able to experience the passing of time.

An Astounding Idea

Now, if you think about it, this is an astounding idea that the Torah is revealing to us, something we would never have dreamed of by ourselves. The truth is that it's such a startling statement that even after hearing it, we'll have to be very

pious people to accept it. We, little human beings on this tiny earth – compared to the sun it's tiny after all. Are we going to say that the purpose of that tremendous orb, that beautiful ball of fire, is so that we should have a calendar and note the passing of days?

Absolutely! Hakadosh Baruch Hu declares it openly: *L'yomim!* There you have it, black on white. It's not an incidental benefit, a peripheral function that Mankind has concocted on its own. No; *this* is why Hashem made the sun!

You know, if not for the sun then life would be just one long stretch of time. We'd be born in the world and we would continue always, one long day or one long night, whatever it is, and time would go by unnoticed. Until before we know it, the time is up.

No More Waste

You know what would be? People, when they would go out on a spree, it would almost always have a sad ending. Let's say a man got into a fight with the boss, or a fight with the wife, and he ran out into the street from his home or from his job and he says, "Forget about it all! It's a wasted day anyhow." That would be the end of him altogether because that wasted day would never come to an end.

Like one man from the yeshivah told me; he admitted to me that one day he was discouraged and he went to the movies. A *kollel* man! He was so disgusted; "The day is ruined anyhow," he said, "so I might as well fall down to the bottom." And if not for the sun he would have sat in the movies the whole week.

So what does Hakadosh Baruch Hu do? In His kindness He chops up life into small portions, so that we should be encouraged to make the best use of it.

So tomorrow morning when you wake up and you see the sunlight pouring through your window

– a new day, so keep that in mind when you get to the synagogue and say *בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה'שָׁם יוֹצֵר הַמְּאוֹרוֹת* – "I thank You Hashem for the sun. I thank You for reminding me that it's a new day, a new day to accomplish."

The Emergency Medical Team

Once you understand that Hashem put that great ball of fire into the sky for you, so you should be motivated to count your days, so now you'll make sure to make use of it. Every day becomes a new opportunity, a brand new day for achievement.

It could be that last night you went to bed and you were disgusted. Maybe you were falling off your feet and you felt like a failure; nothing went right yesterday. So you went to bed and Hakadosh Baruch Hu got busy on you. He brought a whole team of physicians who were working on you all night; they were ironing out your wrinkled emotions and they were straightening out your muscles; and they did a good job. In the morning you woke up and you're a new man now. You're ready for a new day, a better day.

Like the Chovos Halevavos says (Sha'ar Cheshbon Hanefesh – Cheshbon 11): *בֵּי הַיָּמִים מְגִלוֹת* – *The days of your life are notebooks*. Every morning you get a brand new notebook to write in. You remember when you were in school and you started with a new notebook full of ambition: "This notebook, I'm going to keep it clean and neat."

What are going to do with today's notebook? You're going to scribble a little bit on the margins?! Is that how you want to be remembered in the Next World, by some doodling?! *כְּתַבּוּ בָהֶם מָה* – *You should write in those notebooks what you want to be remembered of you* (ibid.). You want to write there that before breakfast you had a quarrel with your mother?

Get Some Sleep

Nobody wants to write down such garbage. And so, tomorrow morning, when you get up and you see the sunlight coming in through the window shade, you should think about those words of the Chovos Halevavos. It'll come in handy. Think about your new sheet of paper and say, "Today I'm going to write a new page in my life. I'm going to make this day count. And I better get busy because the sun is moving through the sky. This day is not going to be forever."

Now, if you get up with a yawn and a headache, you're not going to be able to write much. What sun? What day? "Achh, another day to face," you're thinking. "Another day to go through the grind." That's what happens when you stay up late; you wake up knocked out and disgusted! That man is a *meshugener!* He's throwing away the gift of a new day.

But the ones who go to sleep on time, the ones who learned this lesson of *l'yomim*, so when they wake up to a new day, it's a great happiness. When Hakodosh Baruch Hu delivers you safe and sound in the morning, you open your eyes and you have to say, "Thank you." They did a good job, the team of surgeons that worked on you all night. They made a new man out of you; you have a new body.

Wake Up Refreshed

What do you say to a surgeon who saved you? You can't just say, "Nice job doc; thank you." That's not enough. You have to write a big fat check. Such a check, you get sick again when you see the bill!

But Hakadosh Boruch Hu doesn't give you a bill in the morning. He only wants that you should open your eyes and learn the lesson of the sun that's introducing you to a new day; and you say: מוֹדָה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיִם – "I give thanks to You, O' Living and Enduring King, בְּחַמְלָה בִּי נִשְׁמָרְתִּי בְּחַמְלָה

– that You returned to me my life in pity, רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתְךָ – how great is Your steadfastness." Ahh! That's a glorious experience – to wake up into this world and to make use of the sun the way the Torah intended. There's no better way to use your time than by thanking Hashem.

Now, that's only the beginning of the story because as the sun moves through the sky – as far as we're concerned it moves across the sky – that's your timepiece talking to you. *L'yomim* doesn't mean you have to count only complete days. You can count hours too. That's the purpose of the sun. As we turn around on this earth and little by little we turn away from the sun, we have to realize that the purpose of this rotation is to remind us. The sun is signaling to us the passage of time.

Remembering Hashem Always

Now today, in addition to the sun we have watches. A watch today can serve as a great blessing if you'll keep your eyes on the clock. It's ten o'clock in the morning, what did I accomplish today?

Now some people will say, "It's a pity I must remain in the office today. I'd like to take off and go someplace to study Torah." No, that's not counting your time, it's just complaining and making imaginary stories. Staying in your office is your job right now and you can do it the right way. You know, being in the office you can serve Hakadosh Baruch Hu in many ways. In many ways!

I'll give one little example. In today's offices, there are a lot of things that you're not supposed to see. And if you'll make it a principle as much as possible to look only at kosher things, guarding your eyes, so you have to know that אַף לֹא פָעַלְוּ עוֹלָה בְּדַרְכֵי הַלְכוּ – Those who did not do any wrong are also serving Hashem (Tehillim 119:3). By restraining yourself from doing wrong, you're serving Hashem because you're constantly reminded of Him.

When your eyes encounter something that you're not supposed to look at – look; it's natural that your eyes have to move; sometimes you see something – but immediately you remove your eyes and remember that you're a Jew. You're *oveid Hashem* and you're serving Hakadosh Baruch Hu in the office.

Earning Money Lishmah

There are better ways than that. You can think of Hakadosh Baruch Hu while you're doing work. אֲשֶׁרִי אִישׁ שְׂלֵא יִשְׁכַּחְךָ – *Happy is the man that won't forget You*. You don't have to forget Him while you're doing work; even complicated work. While you're punching the keys of the computer or punching the keys of a typewriter you can think that you're serving Hakadosh Baruch Hu because you want to support a kosher Jewish home where there are going to be kosher Jewish children who will be brought up *b'derech haTorah*. It costs money to maintain a Jewish home. It costs money to pay tuition.

And if you're thinking these thoughts, you're utilizing the lesson of counting your day. Before the hour passes, you utilize it; and every hour after that, you look at the sun and it's in a different place in the sky, or you look at your watch and the hour hand has moved, so you think, "What did I accomplish this hour?" The sun is rising and moving through the sky to keep you on your toes: "Don't forget to make today count," it's telling you.

Part III. Counting at Sunset

Seize The Day

You know, there's an old Latin saying, "*Carpe diem*." It means, 'Snatch the day'. Grab the day and make something from it. Now, the best time to grab the day, of course, is bright and early in the morning. That's what the sun is telling you as it comes up over the horizon: "Make this day count!" But maybe you were still sleeping then. And a lot

of people are sleeping even after getting out of bed too, they don't notice the sun moving across the sky. They don't pay attention to the big clock reminding them that time is passing them by and only as the sun sets they're reminded. And so for many people "*Carpe diem*" means "Grab the day before it goes lost".

If the sun didn't go down, we wouldn't have that reminder. The sun doesn't have to go down. In the Arctic Circle, there are months where the sun doesn't go down; it just circles around the horizon. For months and months it's never night. But for the rest of the world, the sun goes down beneath the horizon and that signals the end of the day. And the purpose is that we should learn to count our days, but to count them properly.

You're sitting in your office; it's wintertime and it's close to 4:30 and the sun is dipping beneath the horizon of the skyscrapers. Don't say it's nothing, it's nature, it happens every day. No! Stop for a moment and think that the sun is telling you something. It's not a *mashal*; it's not something made up from thin air.

The setting sun is letting you know that another day is passing away. It's the end of one opportunity. We don't have too many of them in our lives. And so, in case the day hasn't been utilized, make use of the remaining moments before the sun goes down and the day is gone forever. In all eternity, it will never return again. Not once more in history will you be able to relive this day. There'll be other days, yes. Hopefully you'll wake up tomorrow morning and you'll have another day, but this day is lost forever. And therefore, before it's gone irretrievably, stop for a moment and *carpe diem*, grab what you can.

Holy Hands

Suppose you're in your kitchen and you've been busy all day long with the babies; and you're baking now. You're in between a batch of one tin full of muffins and the next tin, stop for a moment

and think, “What did I accomplish today?” Of course you were busy with *ma’asim tovim* all day, absolutely. But did you count the day *kein*, correctly? Did you achieve today everything you could have achieved?

You can bake muffins or challah and you can become really great. Imagine a housewife standing in her kitchen as she is kneading the dough, she is thinking, “My hands are the hands of Hakadosh Baruch Hu; like it says, **נָתַן לָחֶם לְכֹל בְּשָׂר** – *He gives food to all the living*. How does he give bread? Does He stretch his hands from the sky and hand us something? It’s through the woman who’s making the challah.

And so in the last moments of the day as she’s preparing supper, when she looks through the kitchen window and she sees the sun going down she’s thinking, “My hands are the hands of Hakadosh Baruch Hu Who gives bread to all the living.” Ooh ahh! That’s a woman who made her day count!

The Great Dentist

And suppose a dentist, a weary dentist standing on his feet all day in the office, it’s been a long line today in the dentist’s office. He’s been grinding one tooth after the other. And he looks through his window – he wants to see how many more hours he has to work today – and sees the sun is going down and he catches himself for the last moment.

“What am I living for? Just to put more checks into my drawer? And he reminds himself that he had prayed on Shabbos, **לְמַנּוֹת יָמֵינוּ בֵּן הַיּוֹדֵעַ** – *Teach us to count our days properly*. And so he gets busy grabbing the day, whatever’s left of it. “Oh, Hakadosh Baruch Hu, I know that You are **רוֹפֵא חוֹלֵי עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל**. You heal Your people; but you’re doing it through me too. How does Hakadosh Baruch Hu heal? That’s one of the ways; He sends a dentist. And therefore for the rest of the time that’s allotted to me today, I’m going to think this

thought, “I’m going to cure people of the ails of their teeth. Teeth are very important because many physical ails result from bad teeth. And I’m going to make people happy by giving them healthy teeth and I’m doing it because I’m your *shaliach*.” That’s a man who snatched a big achievement right before the end of the day.

Now, I don’t want you to make a mistake. I’m not saying that the setting sun means that there’s no more time. On the contrary, a wise Jew, as soon as he sees that the sun set, so for him begins the next day with a new resolve. **וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר**. The Jewish day begins when the sun goes down.

That’s why we count the *sefirah* at night; it’s the beginning of a new day. It’s true that the morning maybe is the best time. You have new energies in the morning. The sun rises again in the morning and the birds are singing in the morning and everything is cool in the morning. It’s a new opportunity and life starts all over again. **הַמְחַדֵּשׁ בְּטוּבוֹ** – *He renews in His kindness every day*. But it doesn’t mean that nighttime, which is officially the beginning of the day, shouldn’t be utilized to start all over again.

The Night Is Young

And so when the sun goes down, the weary laborer comes home and he thinks, “I gave away the daytime for *gashmiyus*. Part of my life, I gave away.” **בְּנַפְשׁוֹ יָבִיא לֶחֶמוֹ** – *with his soul he brings his bread*. “I gave away my soul for my bread, but now the new day is beginning – technically it’s a new day – and I’m *patur* from work.”

So he takes himself now to the Beis Hamedrash before he goes home and he prays and a little bit of learning too; he gets in a few minutes. And he goes home and then he gets back as soon as he can.

Of course, if he has a good wife she urges him, “Hurry up, Chaim. Go back to the Beis Hamedrash. You’ll miss the *shiur*.” And he runs back because

he knows that up until now, his life has not been utilized properly; even with everything we said, with doing it *l'sheim Shomayim* and great thoughts, but at night he wants nothing but *avodas Hashem*; the *avodas Hashem* of learning Gemara and *mussar*. And that's what the night is for. לַיְלָה אֶבְרִי לֹא אֶבְרִי לְגִרְסָא – *The night was created only for learning* (Sanhedrin 65a). The Jewish nation always has made use of the nights to gather to study Torah. So the nights certainly are glorious opportunities.

You're So Wealthy

The greatest wealth that a person has is a wealth of years and months and days and hours. That's real wealth! A young man is loaded down with capital. Hakadosh Baruch Hu sends him out into this world with a great wealth – he has many years ahead of him to accomplish. A young man of two, a young man of twenty, a young man of forty, a young man of sixty, a young man of eighty – he has wealth. As much as he has, it's a wealth. And yet, as great as the wealth of life is, it's only for a few moments. Relatively, life is only a fleeting pause in eternity.

Because before they know it, the *malach hamavess*, a tall dark gentleman comes into the hospital room. And he's lying in bed, this old fellow, and the *malach hamavess* taps him on the shoulder. So the old fellow says, "Can't you just give me a few more days? Now I understand how precious days are. I want to count a few more days, please. And this time I'll count them *kein*, I'll get it right."

I say "days." When the *malach Hamavess* is tapping on the shoulder then even one minute is a goldmine. One minute of life is an opportunity for greatness! Imagine we were here for just one more minute; sixty seconds from now we'd have to say goodbye to this wonderful world of opportunity. Sixty seconds?! You know what you could still accomplish?!

Your Final Minute

We'll try it together, an exercise – let's utilize these sixty seconds and think together: "There's a Borei who created the universe out of nothing and that means that there's nothing that has any intrinsic existence except for Hashem. Hashem Echad means He's the only existence and therefore He's the only thing that matters to me. And He gave me this great kindness that for the following fifty seconds I can think about Him and achieve the prime purpose of my being here, the purpose of recognizing the Borei.

"So for the next forty seconds, I am going to become more and more aware of You and fulfill my purpose here. I'm looking outside at the setting sun and I know what You're saying to me Hashem; time is passing by. So I express now my gratitude to You Hakadosh Baruch Hu for everything You've given me. I love You Hashem, and I speak to You, my King, my Creator and I express my gratitude to You for the beautiful world You made for me. Thank You for my eyes and my kidneys and my feet and I especially thank You for making me part of Your chosen people."

And now we have ten seconds left. And you say, "I thank You, Hakadosh Baruch Hu, who has given me this great opportunity to count the seconds in this world and achieve my purpose in this world of thinking about You. Every second of life is an opportunity and if I could use it just to say 'I love You Hashem' one more time it was worth coming into this world."

And then time is up; you go out of this world having achieved your purpose. יֵשׁ קוֹנֵה עוֹלָמוֹ בְּשָׁעָה אֶחָת – "A person can become great in only one minute," only that you have to know how to make that minute count.

Keep Practicing

Now the fact that we're still here, that we're still breathing *boruch Hashem*, doesn't mean that

you can relax now and waste the minutes. No, our one-minute exercise was just that – an exercise for the rest of our lives. Like *sefiras ha'omer*, it was a rehearsal for the many more opportunities we'll still have!

Yes, that's what *sefiras ha'omer* is, a rehearsal. Because our counting will one day come to an end we were given the commandment in the Torah of **וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם**, "And you have to count for yourselves," so that we should be reminded of this very important function of the counting of the days of our lives; it's a model for the wise nation to count *all* of their days, to keep a record of our days.

That's why we counted today! And that's why we'll count tomorrow, and the day after that. And that's why we'll continue counting our days even long after Shavuos ends too. Because *sefiras ha'omer*, not only is it the mitzvah in itself, but it's also the rehearsal for the important function of counting the rest of the days of our lives – of making sure that every day of our lives is being counted properly.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Counting Our Days Properly

Sefiras ha'omer is not merely a specific injunction towards counting the seven weeks between Pesach and Shavuos. This mitzvah teaches us a general principle, that of counting each day of our lives, and making those days count. This week I will *bli neder* think about this each morning as I wake up and say Modeh Ani. I will also think about it once in the middle of the day and once in the evening.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

Q&A - R-26 [1971] | 61 - Counting The Days | 224 - Purpose of Sun
414 - Driving Rules on Life's Highway | 846 - Life and Time
E-53 - The Gan Eden of This World

Listen: 718.289.0899 Press 1 for English and 2 for Thursday Night Lectures



To what extent should a ben-Torah give away time from his learning in order to deal with air pollution and other problems that we are facing?



It depends on which problem. You can't cover all the problems with one blanket; but since you mentioned air pollution I'll tell you how to deal with that. I'm going to tell you now how to solve the problem of air pollution.

In the morning, as you go to *davenen* or back from *davenen*, so breathe deeply and think what the Medrash says: **כל הנשמה תהלל י-ה: על כל נשימה ונשימה תהלל י-ה** – *For every breath you have to say a hallel.* Breathe deeply from the Brooklyn air and enjoy that cocktail. Especially with the fragrance of the spring blossoms, and the morning sunshine. Enjoy it and forget about all the stupid propaganda that is being made lately. Because you have to know that the whole business of pollution is propaganda that's devised for the purpose of making a disturbance in the country. People don't understand that – they're victims of the propaganda.

Of course, it's better to have mountain-air than polluted air. But the problem is by no means anywhere near what they're making of it. The whole pollution business is a smoke screen. The real polluters are the ones who talk about pollution. Look at them. Look at the people who talk about pollution. They are the ones who want to kill babies. They're the ones! It's always those! The ones who are screaming and howling about pollution, they're the ones who approve of abortion! The ones who scream about pollution are also the ones who are hinting that it's a good thing to introduce euthanasia.

And you'll also find that it's the agitators, the Vietnam protestors, who want to legalize marijuana. It's this same gang that is always talking about pollution. Of course, sometimes an innocent victim is duped – an innocent person is also pulled onto their side. But generally it's the pseudo-liberals who raise the green and black flag of pollution. And you have to know that it's not for us – it's not our way.

Our way of dealing with pollution is by learning how to enjoy the air. Breathe deeply and enjoy the air. People aren't doing that. It's a lot of fun when you learn how to breathe deeply and enjoy the air. Breathe deeply! That's my answer to your question about pollution. How much time should you give to the problem of pollution? No time at all.