

THE "TWO BREADS"

by Rabbi Yehudah Prero

The discussion in the Torah about Shavu'os is found in Vayikra 33: 15-22. This holiday occurs on the 50th day of the Omer counting (for more information on the Omer, see # 16 and 18). One of the commandments associated with Shavu'os is the bringing of two loaves of bread, known as the "Shte HaLechem," as an offering.

The Sefer Ha'Chinuch describes how this offering was brought. Three "se'in" (a se'ah is a measurement, and se'in is plural for se'ah) of wheat, the first of the new crop, were gathered. The wheat was then rubbed and beaten as preparation for grinding. Then, the wheat was ground. Two issaron measures of flour were taken and sifted numerous times. A chalah/loaf was made from each issaron of sifted flour. These loaves were to be leaven, unlike flour offerings brought on the altar, which were forbidden to be leaven (chametz). They were then baked according to certain size specifications. After they were baked, they were brought together with one bull, two rams, and seven lambs, which were all an "olah" offering - and offering which was to be burnt on the altar, and not eaten. In addition, it was brought with a goat, a "chatas" offering (an offering usually brought for atonement) and two lambs as a "shelamim" offering, an offering which was eaten with the Sh'tei HaLechem. Before they were eaten, the two breads and the shelamim offering were waved in a process called "tenufah." After the offerings were waved, the Kohanim ate them.

Why are we commanded to bring this offering? (See # 16 for the explanations behind giving "reasons" for commandments).

The Sefer HaChinuch tells us that the reason is the same as for why we brought a Korban Omer some 7 weeks before. It is an opportunity for us to realize that all our sustenance is from Hashem, and that we hope Hashem blesses us by providing us with sustenance in the future (see issue # 16).

However, there is a difference between these two offerings: the Omer consists of barley flour, while the Sh'tei HaLechem consists of loaves from wheat. The reason why now, when we bring an offering made from wheat, we bring loaves instead of flour, stems from what the action of bringing this offering is to accomplish. As mentioned, these loaves are made from the first of the wheat from the new crops. Wheat is a grain that, unlike barley, is used mainly to feed people, not animals. As we are to be inspired from the bringing of this offering, we bring the wheat in a form that is more meaningful to us, in the form that we benefit from it: in the form of bread. When we see these loaves of bread, we will be even more inspired as we will see that substance which is a staple of our sustenance

before our very eyes, and remember who it is that provides us with bread, with sustenance: Hashem.

Check out all of the posts on the Shavuos! Head over to <http://www.torah.org/learning/yomtov> to find the newly redesigned YomTov Home Page, and click on the holiday you are interested in to find all of the archived posts on that topic.