

# EVENTUALLY, WE GET THERE!

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

Maybe some readers are too young to remember the famous count-downs associated with rocket-ship launchings, "10, 9, 8, 7 etc. We have lift- off!" I'm not! Also, having dealt with prisons over the years I have heard many more describe the time they have left in jail with greater enthusiasm and hope than when recalling the time they have spent, "Only four more years!"

In that context we can echo and amplify a classic question about Sefira- this 49 day counting period between Pesach and Shevuos. Since we tend to count time remaining till a momentous occasion, why do we number the days and weeks that have passed leading up to that that moment when we reach again and when we re-experience the giving of Torah?

We find a curious statement with regard to Yaakov. He himself set the price of seven years to work for the hand in marriage to Rachel. When the time arrived he approached his future father-in-law Lavan and demanded his daughter, and then the Torah records oddly, "It was like a few days in his eyes due to his great love for her." (Breishis 29:20) This is no Hallmark Card aphorism. The Torah itself testifies how he experienced the passage of those seven years. It was like a few days, and why? Because he loved her so much! Do you hear the problem? If he loved her so much, a week would seem like a year and a year should be like a century and seven years a millennium. How could he have felt like it flew so fast?

The way we experience time, fast or slow, is a function of whether we are passive or active. If one is waiting for the proverbial pot of water to boil then it may seem to take forever. If one is waiting for the toast to pop, the train to arrive, Mr. or Mrs. Right to enter one's life, or even for Moshiach to come, then the passage of time, no matter how long or short may feel like a death sentence.

However, if one is readying himself to take law boards to capitalize on three years invested in intensive study, then six months of review can go awfully fast. If in one month a small percentage of the material is covered, then one might wish there would be a way to slow the pace of the clock.

Similarly, it is so with an athlete who is preparing for the Olympics and needs to be the fastest human on earth in four short years. Time would be chasing him more than anything or anyone else. Four years can go quickly when there is a real and urgent goal. About this idea, some have explained the Mishne in Pirke Avos, "The Day is short, the work is much..." When is the day short? When the work is much!

Now, maybe we can understand that Yaakov had such a profound appreciation for his bride to be

Rachel that she deserved no less than the best He took those seven years as a critical period to iron out and perfect whatever character flaws he might possess so they would not follow him into marriage. Therefore, we too are well advised to prepare for the great dates of life. Rather to be "doers" than "waiters", to prepare for marriage, and be a year readier rather than a year older and more frustrated, to actively clean house for the advent of Moshiach etc.

So it is, when it comes to getting ready for reliving the giving of the Torah, we are counting up to the event. "Five weeks and so many days passed! What have I accomplished with the time I have been granted?" Such a question inspires readiness, and helps create a richer experience when eventually, we get there! Text Copyright &copy 2005 by Rabbi Label Lam and **Torah.org**.