

GROWTH PERIOD

by Rabbi Yaakov Menken

"And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day when the Omer was brought, seven complete weeks will they be." [23:15]

Our Sages tell us that the period of counting between *Pesach* and *Shavuot* came to separate the Exodus from Egypt and acceptance of the *Torah* on Mt. Sinai. The Jews in Egypt were stuck at a very base, non-spiritual level, and they needed this time period in order to grow and develop spiritually in order to be prepared for the reception of the ultimate spirituality, G-d's blueprint for Creation, the *Torah*. Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin, author of *Oznaim L'Torah*, writes that the *Omer* remains relevant every year. We say this about all holidays - that in Judaism they are not merely commemorations, but an opportunity to relive the events. As the Haggadah says, "in every generation a person is obligated to regard himself as if he left Egypt."

Regarding the Omer, Rabbi Sorotzkin tells us that it has always been known to G-d that Israel - as a nation and as individuals - will fall from their spiritual heights. Therefore, he says, G-d set aside this time for us to work on spiritual growth each and every year. This period was sanctified for all time as conducive to self-purification and development.

There are several such time periods during the year, times when we can grow and accomplish more and more. The holidays form a natural spiral, leading us ever upwards in a lifetime of spiritual growth. Just... take advantage of it!

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