

# 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 *Shavuous* 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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