

Tazria Metzorah 5781
April 16th, 2021



a kid friendly publication of Nageela West Coast Joyfully Jewish Experiences



Barley Human

by Rabbi Dani Locker

"And you shall count for yourselves... from the day you bring the omer."

You might have heard that there's a mitzvah to count the days from the second day of Passover all the way up until the holiday of Shavuot, 50 days later. You might have even heard that this counting experience is called 'sefirat ha'omer' - the counting of the omer. Recently, someone asked me, "What is the omer, and why do we count from it?"

It's a solid question. I can understand the concept of counting up to the day we were set to receive the Torah. Anticipation, preparation, math practice... all good reasons to count, but why from this random 'omer' offering, and even more baffling, why does it get the name? We could have called it "Counting up the mountain," or "The Torah Countdown." What makes it even stranger is that the Omer wasn't a

pressive or exciting offering. It was barley anything at all. No, that wasn't a typo. It was barley. Actually. You know, the grain? The one that you probably have never eaten except when your mom cooks it with mushrooms in a soup.

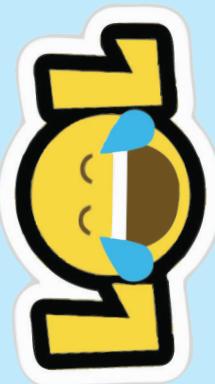
Here's one explanation that I found to be meaningful to me: When our ancestors left Egypt, we weren't exactly rocking and rolling in a spiritual sense. We barley had the merit to be freed at all. During the 49 days in between our exodus and the day God finally gave us the Torah, we changed, improved and grew. We



Honolulu	6:33
Scottsdale	6:41
Henderson	6:57
Las Vegas	6:57
San Diego	7:01
Irvine	7:05
Los Angeles	7:07
Reno	7:20
Oakland	7:28
Park City	7:48

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What does a vampire call a small serving of blood?

A platelet.

OUCH! GRRRRAAAN!
Have a better joke and want a shoutout in Nageela Shabbos? Just email it to dlocker@nageelawest.org

WHAT A WEEK

THIS PAST WEEK, WE HAD WELL OVER 100 MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS AT IN PERSON EVENTS...

MONDAY- Las Vegas (Jewnior LNL)

WEDNESDAY- Orange County

WEDNESDAY- Park City Israel Event

THURSDAY- LA Valley (Aroma Street Cafe)

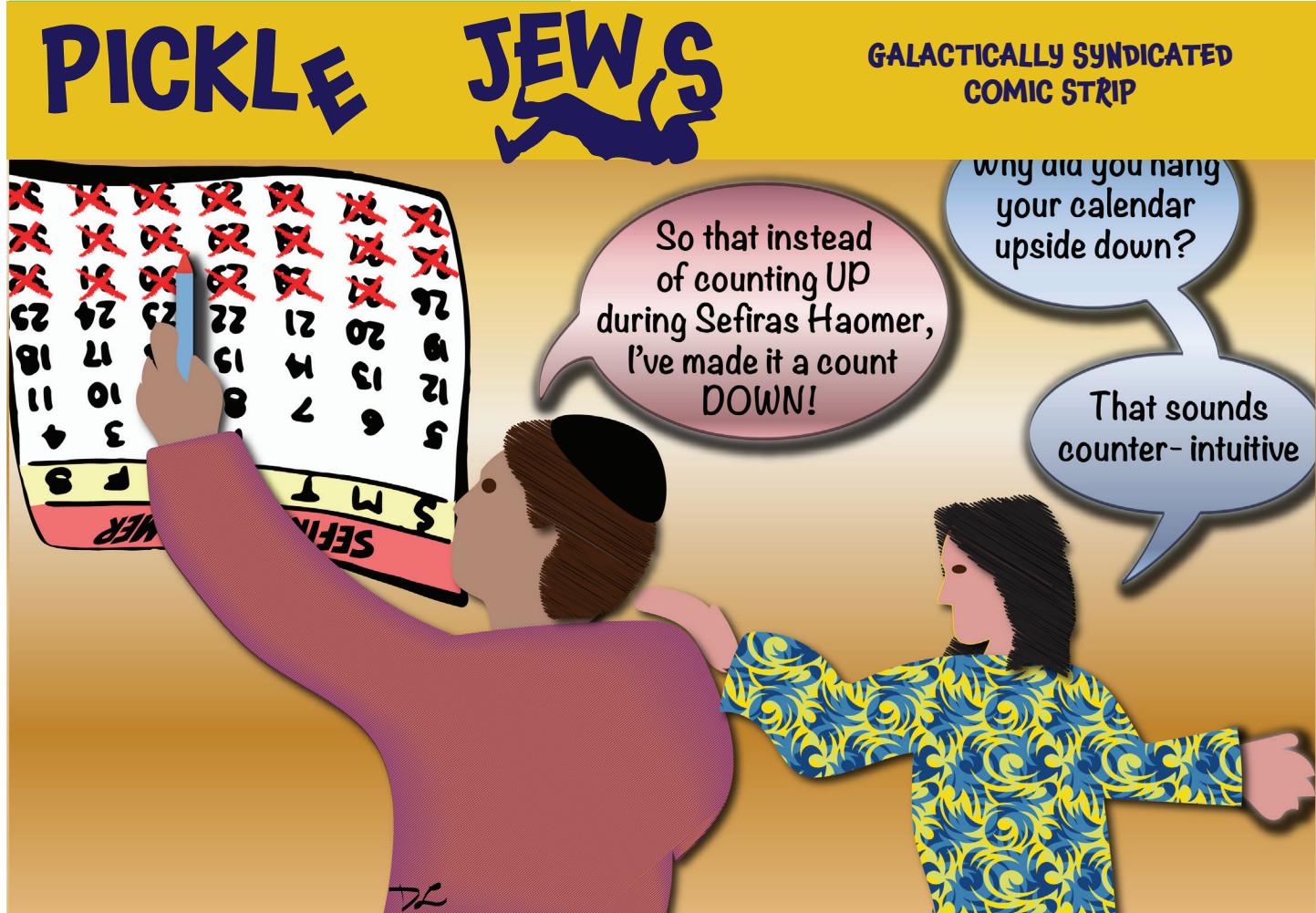
THURSDAY- LA City (STARJUICE)

This coming week:
Chummus Virtual Event

witnessed miracles at the sea, raised our common voices in songs of praise, learned to trust God to provide water and bread for us, and began to feel like a holy people. The period of sefiras haomer is centered around that growth and every year, we make a priority of raising ourselves up during this seven week period. The omer represents this. You see, barley is a grain that is usually considered animal fodder (how do I know? My fodder told me years ago). On Passover we brought this offering of animal food, and 7 weeks later, after the process of sefirah, we brought an offering called the shnei halechem which was made from wheat. People food. This is our growth curve. We started off not far ahead of animals. Intelligent animals, but we had not distinguished ourselves. By the time we were done, we were worthy of human cuisine.

continued from page 1

This is one of the goals of Sefiras Haomer. Our job is to take these 49 days and use each one to lift ourselves, day by day and level by level until we have achieved a higher form of life.



Stump the Rabbi is a forum where kids can ask ANY Jewish question.

Have a question? Please send it in to stump@nageelawest.org

Questions here are real. Names and some wording have been changed.

Note: We call this 'Stump The Rabbi' for fun, but that's not really the point.
The goal is to learn something important in an interesting way.



#167 You Are What You Eat

Hi Rabbi,

You know how some foods are kosher and some are not? Why? I mean why are some foods kosher, why does God want us to eat kosher, why do some kosher foods become unkosher when they get mixed with other things, and why do random items need kosher symbols?

Dear Lotta,

Last week we answered part of the question, explaining why random items need Kosher symbols. If you have forgotten, well, you can always access the archives (after Shabbos, of course) at nageelawest.org. We mentioned that only members of the animal kingdom can possibly be unkosher, and I'd like to discuss why.

Here's the disclaimer. If the question is "Why do we keep kosher?" then the answer is simple: Because God told us to. God is both infinitely smart and really caring. So any instructions given to us in the Torah should be followed even if we don't understand the reasons. If there are reasons we understand, you can rest assured there are many other, deeper, spiritual reasons that we can't begin to fathom. Still, fathoming is fun. So let's fathom

away, and try to understand perhaps some of the reasons why keeping kosher is meaningful.

There was a pretty cool science experiment done by Stanford University in 1971.

[Hey Rabbi, why are we talking about science?]

[Because it's interesting!]

[Geek.]

[Sigh- ence.]

A bunch of random college students were brought to a prison, and half of them were assigned to be prisoners, and half of them were assigned to be prison guards. The study found that the 'prisoners' started behaving like criminals (probably means they made up angry sounding nicknames and developed a strange appreciation of orange clothing) and the 'guards' started acting like police officers (which likely included a new appreciation for donuts with sprinkles smushed on just one corner, for some reason). This study and many, many others have shown that the things we do

Thanks,
Lotta Schmaltz

*Continued from last week



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FRIENDSHIPS, CREATIVE SPECIALTIES, WATER
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GIRLS SESSION

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BOYS SESSION

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Stump the Rabbi; continued

can actually change us. If I do things that are kind and generous, I'll become a more kind and generous person. If I do things that are violent (even if it's for a good reason) it can make me into a more aggressive, violent person! More studies found that former soldiers who have been in combat situations are more likely to commit violent crimes, because they've gotten used to violence (even though it may have been for a good reason).

That brings us to the topic of eating. Hey, most things bring me to the topic of eating. I'm Jewish, after all. [Wait, a Jewish Rabbi?] After the great flood (not the one where the washing machine door popped open and ruined

the tile. I mean the really big flood), God told us that people are allowed to eat animals. Let's think about this. A human member of the animal kingdom, killing and eating another member of the animal kingdom- that can have an effect on us. It can possibly make us into cruel, uncaring, selfish (not shellfish, stay focused here) people. Most of the Kosher rules actually help fight those influences. Let's go through them:

1. Predators are never Kosher. Since it's all about the influence, we don't want anything to do with cruel animals. Split hooves and rumination are the signs of gentle animals who are the hunted, not the hunters. Both of these features allow animals to escape and hide from vicious animals.
2. For an animal to be Kosher, it must be slaughtered in the least painful possible way. I do NOT want to ruin your Shabbos meal appetite so I won't go into details of how it's done. Minimizing the pain helps guard us against becoming heartless.
3. We don't drink blood, and we salt our meat to remove blood before eating the meat (for all you chefs

out there, Kosher meat recipes won't require as much salt, because the meat is already well salted). Ingesting a creature's life force is considered callous. Since we love scientific studies... studies show that vampires tend to be more aggressive than ordinary mortals. There's psychology for you! Actually, that's sick-ology.

4. Milk and meat is a little trickier. Since milk is the way to provide nourishment for a young mammal, it would be harsh to cook an animal in 'its mother's milk' or any milk for that matter. It's taunting and malevolent to say, "here, have some nourishment. Oh wait, you're dead, so you can't!"

In short, while we should keep kosher simply because God instructed us to, we benefit from the discipline of watching what we eat because it helps keep us kind, caring and compassionate. Also, Kosher food rocks, so yeah!

Have a Nageela Shabbat,

the Rabbi

Caleb Knopf
Matthew Lewis
BZ Locker
Bertha Cohen
Dovid Niman
Marygrace Bowler



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