

Forty-Nine Gates

The Torah mentions the exodus from Egypt fifty times, hinting that there are fifty steps or aspects to coming out of the mindset of slavery. Indeed, the Torah teaches that the Israelites went up out of Egypt *hamushim* (Exodus 13:18), which literally means “armed” but may also suggest “one-fiftieth.” Thus, on the first day of Pesah, we may be said to have walked through the first of fifty gates toward genuine freedom. To complete the exodus, we must journey through another forty-nine gates.

—BASED ON THE NETIVOT SHALOM

Counting Up

The ancient rabbis say that when we count the *omer*, we are counting toward the time that we will receive the Torah. Day by day, week by week, we count, and in a highly regulated fashion: when, how, in what language, with or without a blessing, are all issues addressed by Jewish law.

But what is most noteworthy is that when we count the *omer*, we count up. Our natural tendency is to count down. We count down the seconds in anticipation of the secular New Year. We count down the days to an upcoming vacation. We count down toward a professional deadline or the end of a specific project.

I can think of only one time in my life when it was natural for me to count up: when I was pregnant. Week by week, month by month, I counted. I was excited about my due date, but I also wanted to be pregnant for nine complete months. Like other pregnant women, I knew that the period of gestation was not simply a time I needed to get past in order for the “real” event to take place; each week, each month, was vital for my baby’s development. Each day had its own significance, nurturing the growth that would be necessary for my baby to enter the world. So quite naturally, I knew to count up.

So too with receiving Torah. Torah defines us as a people; it shapes our individual identities and our character. But its transformative potential is dependent on our preparation. To truly receive Torah, we need to grow into it, to make ourselves ready for it. We count up to remind ourselves of the significance of this gestational time. We count up because each day, each week is an opportunity to identify and refine the ways we want to grow: as moral people, as people who live a life of care, as people willing to be instructed.

—AMY WALLK KATZ

The Counting of the Omer

From the second night of Pesah until the night before Shavuot, we count the omer. We rise.

I am about to fulfill the mitzvah of counting the *omer*, as it is written in the Torah:

“You shall count from the eve of the second day of Pesah, when an *omer* of grain is to be brought as an offering, seven complete weeks. The day after the seventh week of your counting will make fifty days.” *Leviticus 23:15–16*

Barukh atah ADONAI, our God, sovereign of time and space, who has provided us with a path to holiness through the observance of mitzvot and has instructed us to count the *omer*.

Barukh atah adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam, asher kid’shanu b’mitzvotav v’tzivanu al s’firat ha-omer.

We recite the line for the appropriate day, from the following pages.

ספירת העומר

From the second night of Pesah until the night before Shavuot, we count the omer. We rise.

הַנְּנִי מוֹכֵן\מוֹכֵנָה וּמְזוּמָן\וּמְזוּמָנָה לְקִיּוֹם מִצְוֹת עֲשֵׂה שֶׁל סְפִירַת הָעוֹמֵר כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב בַּתּוֹרָה:

וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמִּחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת מִיּוֹם הַבִּיאָכֶם אֶת־עֹמֵר הַתְּנוּפָה, שִׁבְעַת שָׁבָתוֹת תְּמִימַת תְּהֵי־יָנָה. עַד מִמִּחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת הַשְּׁבִיעִית תִּסְפְּרוּ חֲמִשִּׁים יוֹם.

ויקרא כג:טו-טז

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ עַל סְפִירַת הָעוֹמֵר.

We recite the line for the appropriate day, from the following pages.

THE COUNTING OF THE OMER. Unlike the other festivals, the Torah gives no specific seasonal date for Shavuot; instead, we are told to observe it exactly seven weeks after Pesah, counting and enumerating each of the forty-nine days in between, thus creating an intimate connection between the two holidays. This connection is both agricultural and spiritual. In the Temple, a daily offering of the new barley crop (a measure of grain called an *omer*) was made beginning on Pesah; barley was the first grain to be ready to harvest. Anticipating the full spring harvest approximately seven weeks later, our forebears counted the days; and then offered the

first fruits on Shavuot, a celebration of ripening and bounty.

Equally, the period of *s’firat ha-omer* commemorates the historic journey from slavery in Egypt to meeting God at Sinai. We celebrate freedom on Pesah, but recognize that the exodus is not truly complete until we receive instruction as to how to live with that freedom, on Shavuot.

Jewish mystics saw this period of counting time as one of preparation for revelation, a time of purifying the self and striving for a deeper understanding of God’s relation to the world. They saw seven circles of divine energy that needed to be entered into, in order to come to achieve the revelation.

The meditations offered here for these days are based on that mystical understanding. Early medieval authorities, perhaps out of a similar motive of self-improvement before coming to the moment commemorating Sinai, developed the custom of studying one of the six chapters of *Pirkei Avot* (often translated as “The Ethics of the Fathers,” but perhaps more accurately translated “Fundamental Principles”). This tractate (which can be found on pages 235–262), incorporated in the Mishnah in the mid-3rd century, constitutes the most explicit statement of rabbinic ethics.

First Week: Love and Kindness — חֶסֶד (Hesed)

The first week of the Counting of the Omer coincides with the celebration of Pesah, in which we reenact the experience of God's having freed us. Remembering God's unbounded, expansive love in redeeming us, it is the time of reading the Song of Songs—of feeling both loved and seeking to love. In this context, we may ask ourselves: How might I enter the world in a loving way? What obligations does love bring? As I celebrate my own selfhood and refine my understanding of being free, I might ask: How might I be kind to myself and express that kindness with others? How might I learn to love all the parts of myself and love others in all their complexity? And I might ask: What obligations does love bring?

הוא הִיָּה אֹמֵר: אִם אֵין אֲנִי לִי, מִי לִי?
וּבְשָׂאֲנִי לְעַצְמִי, מָה אֲנִי? וְאִם לֹא עַבְשָׁיו, אֵימַתִּי?

Hillel said: If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am for myself alone, what am I? And if not now, when?

—Pirkei Avot 1:14

אָמַר [רַבֵּן יוֹחָנָן בֶּן זַכַּאי] לָהֶם:
צֵאוּ וּרְאוּ אֵיזוֹהִי דֶרֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁיִּדְבַק בָּהּ הָאָדָם.
רַבִּי אֶלְיעָזָר אֹמֵר: עֵין טוֹבָה. רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֹמֵר: חֶבֶר טוֹב.
רַבִּי יוֹסֵי אֹמֵר: שָׁכֵן טוֹב. רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן אֹמֵר: הַרְוָאָה אֶת־הַנּוֹלֵד.
רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר אֹמֵר: לֵב טוֹב. אָמַר לָהֶם: רוּאָה אֲנִי אֶת־דְּבָרֵי אֶלְעָזָר
בְּנֵי־עֶרְוָה מִדְּבָרֵיכֶם, שֶׁבְּכֹל דְּבָרָיו דְּבָרֵיכֶם.

[Rabbi Yoḥanan ben Zakkai] posed this question to his disciples:
Take note, which is the right path to which one should cleave?

Rabbi Eliezer said: A generous eye.

Rabbi Joshua said: A good colleague.

Rabbi Yose said: A good neighbor.

Rabbi Shimon said: Foresight.

Rabbi Eleazar said: A generous heart.

He said to them: I prefer the answer of Eleazar ben Arakh, for his view includes all of yours.

—Pirkei Avot 2:13

On NISAN 16, the SECOND NIGHT OF PESAH:

הַיּוֹם יוֹם אֶחָד לְעֹמֶר.

Today is 1 day of the omer.

Hayom yom eḥad la-omer.

On NISAN 17, the THIRD NIGHT OF PESAH:

הַיּוֹם שְׁנֵי יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.

Today is 2 days of the omer.

Hayom sh'nei yamim la-omer.

On NISAN 18, the FOURTH NIGHT OF PESAH:

הַיּוֹם שְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.

Today is 3 days of the omer.

Hayom sh'loshah yamim la-omer.

On NISAN 19, the FIFTH NIGHT OF PESAH:

הַיּוֹם אַרְבָּעָה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.

Today is 4 days of the omer.

Hayom arba-ah yamim la-omer.

On NISAN 20, the SIXTH NIGHT OF PESAH:

הַיּוֹם חֲמִשָּׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.

Today is 5 days of the omer.

Hayom ḥamishah yamim la-omer.

On NISAN 21, the SEVENTH NIGHT OF PESAH:

הַיּוֹם שֵׁשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.

Today is 6 days of the omer.

Hayom shishah yamim la-omer.

On NISAN 22, the EIGHTH NIGHT OF PESAH
(where Yom Tov is celebrated for two days):

הַיּוֹם שִׁבְעָה יָמִים, שֶׁהֵם שְׁבֻעַ אֶחָד לְעֹמֶר.

Today is 7 days—one week—of the omer.

Hayom shivah yamim, she-hem shavua eḥad la-omer.

Second Week: Judgment and Power — דין\גבורה (Din/G'vurah)

Limits are important; without them, chaos would reign. Even love has its rules. Yet the very qualities that allow us to establish limits are the same ones that can lead to oppression and evil. Judgment—so necessary for almost every aspect of daily living—can become judgmentalism, the disparagement of others, and may even lead to fanaticism. Power—so necessary for the implementation of the good—can become drunk with itself, overpowering others. This week invites reflection on the way my competitiveness and desire to win may become hurtful to others, and how my self-concern can be dismissive of the needs of others and even be destructive. What limits should I place on my ego? What limits should I place on my desires? Perhaps I might pause to stand in awe, stopping for a moment to appreciate what is around me and better understand my own limitations.

Not incidentally, it is during this week that we memorialize those killed in the Holocaust.

בְּרִזּוּמָא אוֹמֵר: אֵיזְהוּ חָכֵם? הַלּוֹמֵד מִכָּל-אָדָם . . . אֵיזְהוּ גְבוּרָה?
הַכּוֹבֵשׁ אֶת-יָצְרוֹ . . . אֵיזְהוּ עֲשִׂירִי? הַשְּׂמֵחַ בְּחֻלְקוֹ . . . אֵיזְהוּ מְכַבֵּד?
הַמְכַבֵּד אֶת-הַבְּרִיּוֹת . . .

Ben Zoma taught: Who is wise? Those who learn from everyone . . . Who is strong? Those who control their instincts . . . Who is rich? Those who are satisfied with their portion . . . Who is honored? Those who honor their fellow human beings . . .

—Pirkei Avot 4:1

הֵלֵל אוֹמֵר: אַל תִּפְרוֹשׁ מִן הַצְּבוּרָה, וְאַל תִּתְאַמֵּן בְּעַצְמְךָ עַד יוֹם מוֹתְךָ,
וְאַל תִּדְוִן אֶת-חֲבֵרְךָ עַד שֶׁתִּגָּיַע לְמִקְוֹמוֹ, וְאַל תִּאֲמַר דְּבָר שְׂאֵי אֶפְשָׁר לְשִׁמוֹעַ,
שֶׁסּוֹפוֹ לְהִשְׁמָע. וְאַל תִּאֲמַר לְכִשְׂאֹפְנָה אֶשְׁנֶה, שְׂמָא לֹא תִפְנֶה.

Hillel taught: Do not withdraw from the community. Do not be sure of yourself until the day of your death. Do not judge your fellow human being until you stand in his or her situation. Do not say “It is not possible to understand this,” for ultimately it will be understood. Do not say “When I have leisure I will study,” for you may never have leisure.

—Pirkei Avot 2:5

רַבִּי חֲנִינָא בְּרִי-דּוֹסָא אוֹמֵר: כָּל שִׂירְאָת חֵטְאוֹ קוֹדֶמֶת לְחֻכְמָתוֹ, חֻכְמָתוֹ
מִתְקַיֶּמֶת. וְכָל שְׂחֻכְמָתוֹ קוֹדֶמֶת לִירְאָת חֵטְאוֹ, אֵין חֻכְמָתוֹ מִתְקַיֶּמֶת.
הוּא הִיָּה אוֹמֵר: כָּל שְׂמַעֲשִׂיו מְרַבֵּין מִחֻכְמָתוֹ, חֻכְמָתוֹ מִתְקַיֶּמֶת.
וְכָל שְׂחֻכְמָתוֹ מְרַבֵּה מִמַּעֲשָׂיו, אֵין חֻכְמָתוֹ מִתְקַיֶּמֶת.

Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa taught: Those whose fear of sinning takes precedence over their own wisdom, their wisdom will survive. But those whose wisdom takes precedence over their fear of sinning, their wisdom will not survive. And he added: Those whose deeds exceed their wisdom, their wisdom will survive; but those whose wisdom exceeds their deeds, their wisdom will not survive.

—Pirkei Avot 3:11–12

On NISAN 23:

הַיּוֹם שְׂמוֹנָה יָמִים, שְׁהֵם שָׁבוּעַ אֶחָד וַיּוֹם אֶחָד לְעֹמֶר.

Today is 8 days—one week and one day—of the omer.

Hayom sh'monah yamim, she-hem shavua ehad v'yom ehad la-omer.

On NISAN 24:

הַיּוֹם תִּשְׁעָה יָמִים, שְׁהֵם שָׁבוּעַ אֶחָד וּשְׁנַי יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.

Today is 9 days—one week and two days—of the omer.

Hayom tishah yamim, she-hem shavua ehad u-shnei yamim la-omer.

On NISAN 25:

הַיּוֹם עֶשְׂרֵה יָמִים, שְׁהֵם שָׁבוּעַ אֶחָד וּשְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.

Today is 10 days—one week and three days—of the omer.

Hayom asarah yamim, she-hem shavua ehad u-shloshah yamim la-omer.

On NISAN 26 (YOM HA-SHOAH, if a Wednesday night):

הַיּוֹם אֶחָד עָשָׂר יוֹם, שְׁהֵם שָׁבוּעַ אֶחָד וְאַרְבָּעָה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.

Today is 11 days—one week and four days—of the omer.

Hayom ahad asar yom, she-hem shavua ehad v'arba-ah yamim la-omer.

On NISAN 27 (YOM HA-SHOAH, if neither Thursday night nor Saturday night):

הַיּוֹם שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר יוֹם, שְׁהֵם שָׁבוּעַ אֶחָד וְחַמֵּשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.

Today is 12 days—one week and five days—of the omer.

Hayom sh'neim asar yom, she-hem shavua ehad va-hamishah yamim la-omer.

On NISAN 28 (YOM HA-SHOAH, if Sunday night):

הַיּוֹם שְׁלֹשָׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם, שְׁהֵם שָׁבוּעַ אֶחָד וּשְׁשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.

Today is 13 days—one week and six days—of the omer.

Hayom sh'loshah asar yom, she-hem shavua ehad v'shishah yamim la-omer.

On NISAN 29:

הַיּוֹם אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם, שְׁהֵם שְׁנַי שָׁבוּעוֹת לְעֹמֶר.

Today is 14 days—two weeks—of the omer.

Hayom arba-ah asar yom, she-hem sh'nei shavuot la-omer.

Third Week: Splendor — תִּפְאֶרֶת (Tiferet)

Tiferet, which literally means “splendor,” is associated with harmony and balance—specifically, a balance among ideas, values, and qualities that appear to be conflicting. This suggests that we are at our best when the various impulses within us, and the competing demands made upon us, are in balance—for example, when play and seriousness each have their place in our lives, when we practice both self-care and care for others, and when a sense of mission is mediated by a realistic appraisal of the world as it is. The Kabbalists thought that the essential balance needed in our lives was that between the aspects associated with the first two weeks—love and judgment. Love needs to know how to be mediated by proper judgment, and judgment without love is hurtful and dangerous. The Kabbalists also associated *tiferet* with *emet*, truth, reflecting their understanding that deep truths emerge from the harmonizing of seemingly incompatible values and perspectives.

שְׁמַעוֹן הַצַּדִּיק הָיָה מְשִׁירֵי כְּנִסֵּת הַגְּדוּלָּה. הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר: עַל
שְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים הָעוֹלָם עוֹמֵד—עַל הַתּוֹרָה וְעַל הָעֲבוֹדָה וְעַל
גְּמִילוּת הַסְּדִים.

Simon the Righteous was one of the last surviving members of the Great Assembly. He taught: The world stands on three things—on Torah, on worship, and on good deeds.

—Pirkei Avot 1:2

רַבִּי אוֹמֵר: אֵיזוֹ הִיא דֶּרֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁיְבֹרַךְ לּוֹ הָאֲדָם? כָּל-שֶׁהִיא
תִּפְאֶרֶת לְעוֹשֶׂהָ וְתִפְאֶרֶת לּוֹ מִן הָאֲדָם.

Rabbi [Judah] taught: What is the right path, that a person should choose? One that brings glory to the Creator and one that everyone acknowledges about you as glorious.

—Pirkei Avot 2:1

On the FIRST DAY OF ROSH HODESH OF IYAR, NISAN 30:

הַיּוֹם חֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם, שָׁהֵם שְׁנֵי שָׁבוּעוֹת וְיוֹם אֶחָד לְעֹמֶר.
Today is 15 days—two weeks and one day—of the *omer*.
Hayom hamishah asar yom, she-hem sh'nei shavuot v'yom ehad la-omer.

On the SECOND DAY OF ROSH HODESH OF IYAR, IYAR 1:

הַיּוֹם שֵׁשָׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם, שָׁהֵם שְׁנֵי שָׁבוּעוֹת וּשְׁנֵי יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.
Today is 16 days—two weeks and two days—of the *omer*.
Hayom shishah asar yom, she-hem sh'nei shavuot u-shnei yamim la-omer.

On IYAR 2 (YOM HA-ZIKARON, if Tuesday night):

הַיּוֹם שִׁבְעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם, שָׁהֵם שְׁנֵי שָׁבוּעוֹת וּשְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.
Today is 17 days—two weeks and three days—of the *omer*.
Hayom shivah asar yom, she-hem sh'nei shavuot u-shloshah yamim la-omer.

On IYAR 3 (YOM HA-ZIKARON, if Tuesday night; YOM HA-ATZMA-UT, if Wednesday night):

הַיּוֹם שְׁמוֹנָה עָשָׂר יוֹם, שָׁהֵם שְׁנֵי שָׁבוּעוֹת וְאַרְבָּעָה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.
Today is 18 days—two weeks and four days—of the *omer*.
Hayom sh'monah asar yom, she-hem sh'nei shavuot v'arba-ah yamim la-omer.

On IYAR 4 (YOM HA-ZIKARON, if Monday night or Tuesday night; YOM HA-ATZMA-UT, if Wednesday night):

הַיּוֹם תִּשְׁעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם, שָׁהֵם שְׁנֵי שָׁבוּעוֹת וַחֲמִשָּׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.
Today is 19 days—two weeks and five days—of the *omer*.
Hayom tishah asar yom, she-hem sh'nei shavuot va-hamishah yamim la-omer.

On IYAR 5 (YOM HA-ZIKARON, if Sunday night; YOM HA-ATZMA-UT, if not Sunday night, Thursday night, Friday night, or Saturday night):

הַיּוֹם עָשָׂרִים יוֹם, שָׁהֵם שְׁנֵי שָׁבוּעוֹת וְשִׁשָּׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.
Today is 20 days—two weeks and six days—of the *omer*.
Hayom esrim yom, she-hem sh'nei shavuot v'shishah yamim la-omer.

On IYAR 6 (YOM HA-ATZMA-UT, if Monday night):

הַיּוֹם אֶחָד וְעֶשְׂרִים יוֹם, שָׁהֵם שְׁלֹשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת לְעֹמֶר.
Today is 21 days—three weeks—of the *omer*.
Hayom ehad v'esrim yom, she-hem sh'loshah shavuot la-omer.

Fourth Week: Time and Eternity — נְצַח (Netzah)

Psalm 90 remarks: “Teach us to count our days,” or perhaps better translated, “Teach us to make each day count.” On some level, we are all conscious of mortality. The days of our lives are limited. And so this week, we ask: What should a day look like? What would make my days seem not just busy, but rich in their fullness? Am I spending my time on what I care about most? What would make a day feel blessed? How do I deal with frustration? How can I transform my good intentions into actions and patterns of behavior? Thus, *netzah* is also associated with endurance, carrying through with our intentions over the long haul. We might ask: How does my life reflect consistent commitment?

רבי טרפון אומר: היום קצר, והמלאכה מרבה, והפועלים עצלנים, והשכר הרבה, ובעל הבית דוחק.

Rabbi Tarfon taught: The day is short, and the work is great, and the workers are lazy, and the reward is much, and the owner is urging us on.
—Pirkei Avot 2:20

בן-עזאי אומר: הוי רץ למצוה קלה כבבחהמורה, ובורח מן העברה. שמצוה גוררת מצוה, ועברה גוררת עברה. ששכר מצוה מצוה, ושכר עברה עברה.

Ben Azzai taught: Pursue a minor mitzvah as you would a major one, and flee from a transgression, for one good deed leads to another and one transgression generates another. Thus the reward for a mitzvah is another mitzvah, and the consequence for a transgression is another transgression.
—Pirkei Avot 4:2

On IYAR 7:

היום שנים ועשרים יום, שהם שלשה שבועות ויום אחד לעומר.
Today is 22 days—three weeks and one day—of the *omer*.
Hayom sh'nayim v'esrim yom, she-hem sh'loshah shavuot v'yom ehad la-omer.

On IYAR 8:

היום שלשה ועשרים יום, שהם שלשה שבועות ושני ימים לעומר.
Today is 23 days—three weeks and two days—of the *omer*.
Hayom sh'loshah v'esrim yom, she-hem sh'loshah shavuot u-shnei yamim la-omer.

On IYAR 9:

היום ארבעה ועשרים יום, שהם שלשה שבועות ושלשה ימים לעומר.
Today is 24 days—three weeks and three days—of the *omer*.
Hayom arba-ah v'esrim yom, she-hem sh'loshah shavuot u-shloshah yamim la-omer.

On IYAR 10:

היום חמשה ועשרים יום, שהם שלשה שבועות וארבעה ימים לעומר.
Today is 25 days—three weeks and four days—of the *omer*.
Hayom hamishah v'esrim yom, she-hem sh'loshah shavuot v'arba-ah yamim la-omer.

On IYAR 11:

היום ששה ועשרים יום, שהם שלשה שבועות וחמשה ימים לעומר.
Today is 26 days—three weeks and five days—of the *omer*.
Hayom shishah v'esrim yom, she-hem sh'loshah shavuot va-hamishah yamim la-omer.

On IYAR 12:

היום שבעה ועשרים יום, שהם שלשה שבועות וששה ימים לעומר.
Today is 27 days—three weeks and six days—of the *omer*.
Hayom shivah v'esrim yom, she-hem sh'loshah shavuot v'shishah yamim la-omer.

On IYAR 13:

היום שמונה ועשרים יום, שהם ארבעה שבועות לעומר.
Today is 28 days—four weeks—of the *omer*.
Hayom sh'monah v'esrim yom, she-hem arba-ah shavuot la-omer.

Fifth Week: Glory — הוד (Hod)

How can we see life itself as glorious? How can we permeate our lives with an appreciation of the wonders of the world in which we live, the wonder of life itself? Perhaps this week we might heighten awareness of the beauty of the moment—deepening our consciousness of what is special, pulsing with life. Perhaps, this week, I might learn to say daily, “How glorious is this day!” The world becomes glorious and we reflect its glory when we enter it with a sense of appreciation and understand our lives to be a precious gift. By cultivating gratitude, we open ourselves to sensing and appreciating the glories of the world. The Hebrew word *hod* might remind us of the similar sounding *hodayah*, which means “thankfulness.”

אל תבקש גדלה לעצמך, ואל תחמד כבוד. יותר מלמודך עשה,
ואל תתאנה לשלחנם של מלכים, ששלחנה גדול משלחנם
ובתרה גדול מבתרם, ונאמן הוא בעל מלאכתה שישלם לך
שכר פעלתה.

Do not seek greatness for yourself; do not covet honor. Let your deeds exceed your learning. Do not crave the table of kings—for your table is greater than theirs and your crown greater than their crowns, and your employer can be relied upon to compensate you for your labors.

—Pirkei Avot 6:5

רבי אלעזר איש ברתותא אומר: תן-לו משלך, שאתה ושךך
שלך. וכן בָּדוּד הוא אומר: כִּי מִמֶּנּוּ הַבַּל וּמִיָּדְךָ נִתְּנָו לָךְ
(דברי הימים א, כט:יד).

Rabbi Eleazar of Bartota taught: Give everything over to God, for you and all that your own are God’s. Thus David said, “For all is from You, and from Your own hand I give to You” (1 Chronicles 29:14).

—Pirkei Avot 3:8

On IYAR 14 (PESAH SHENI):

היום תשעה ועשרים יום, שהם ארבעה שבועות ויום אחד לעומר.
Today is 29 days—four weeks and one day—of the *omer*.
Hayom tishah v’esrim yom, she-hem arba-ah shavuot v’yom ehad la-omer.

On IYAR 15:

היום שלשים יום, שהם ארבעה שבועות ושני ימים לעומר.
Today is 30 days—four weeks and two days—of the *omer*.
Hayom sh’loshim yom, she-hem arba-ah shavuot u-shnei yamim la-omer.

On IYAR 16:

היום אחד ושלשים יום, שהם ארבעה שבועות ושלשה ימים לעומר.
Today is 31 days—four weeks and three days—of the *omer*.
Hayom ehad u-shloshim yom, she-hem arba-ah shavuot u-shloshah yamim la-omer.

On IYAR 17:

היום שנים ושלשים יום, שהם ארבעה שבועות וארבעה ימים לעומר.
Today is 32 days—four weeks and four days—of the *omer*.
Hayom sh’nayim u-shloshim yom, she-hem arba-ah shavuot v’arba-ah yamim la-omer.

On IYAR 18 (LAG BA-OMER):

היום שלשה ושלשים יום, שהם ארבעה שבועות וחמשה ימים לעומר.
Today is 33 days—four weeks and five days—of the *omer*.
Hayom sh’loshah u-shloshim yom, she-hem arba-ah shavuot va-hamishah yamim la-omer.

On IYAR 19:

היום ארבעה ושלשים יום, שהם ארבעה שבועות וששה ימים לעומר.
Today is 34 days—four weeks and six days—of the *omer*.
Hayom arba-ah u-shloshim yom, she-hem arba-ah shavuot v’shishah yamim la-omer.

On IYAR 20:

היום חמשה ושלשים יום, שהם חמשה שבועות לעומר.
Today is 35 days—five weeks—of the *omer*.
Hayom hamishah u-shloshim yom, she-hem hamishah shavuot la-omer.

Sixth Week: Foundation — יסוד (Y'sod)

As we approach Sinai, which we will soon celebrate on the holiday of Shavuot, we might ask: What is at the root of my being? What is most fundamental to who I am? Hasidic masters taught that each of us has come into this world to repair what only he or she is able to heal. What is my special talent, my special task? Y'sod also represents the connection between the heavenly and earthly realms and I might ask: How might my life reflect God's presence in the world? How might I be an instrument for bringing the world around me closer to the Divine?

חַמְשָׁה תַלְמִידִים הָיוּ לוֹ לְרַבֵּן יוֹחָנָן בֶּן־זַכַּאי, וְאֵלוּ הֵן: רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר בֶּן־הֶרְקֵנוֹס, וְרַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־חֲנַנְיָהּ, וְרַבִּי יוֹסִי הַבַּהֵן, וְרַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן־נְתַנְאֵל, וְרַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר בֶּן־עֲרָף.
הוּא הָיָה מוֹנֵה שְׂבָחָם: רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר בֶּן־הֶרְקֵנוֹס, בּוֹר סוּד שְׂאִינוּ מְאֻבָּד טָפָה. רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־חֲנַנְיָהּ, אֲשֶׁרֵי יוֹלְדָתוֹ. רַבִּי יוֹסִי הַבַּהֵן, חֲסִיד. רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן־נְתַנְאֵל, יָרָא חֲטָא. וְרַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר בֶּן־עֲרָף, מַעֲיֵן הַמִּתְגַּבֵּר.

Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai had five disciples, namely: Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, Rabbi Joshua ben Hananiah, Rabbi Yose Hakohen, Rabbi Shimon ben Netanel, and Rabbi Eleazar ben Arakh. This is how he characterized their merits: Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus—a plastered well that never loses a drop; Rabbi Joshua ben Hananiah—happy is the one who gave birth to him; Rabbi Yose Hakohen—a saintly person; Rabbi Shimon ben Netanel—a pious person; Rabbi Eleazar ben Arakh—an ever-flowing fountain.

—Pirkei Avot 2:10–11

הוּא [רַבִּי חֲנִינְיָא בֶּן־דוֹסָא] הָיָה אוֹמֵר: כָּל־שָׂרוּיַח הַבְּרִיּוֹת נוֹחָה הַיְמָנּוּ, רוּיַח הַמְּקוֹם נוֹחָה הַיְמָנּוּ. וְכָל־שֹׂאִין רוּיַח הַבְּרִיּוֹת נוֹחָה הַיְמָנּוּ, אֵין רוּיַח הַמְּקוֹם נוֹחָה הַיְמָנּוּ.

[Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa] used to say: One with whom people are pleased, the divine spirit is pleased; and one with whom people are displeased, the divine spirit is displeased.

—Pirkei Avot 3:13

On IYAR 21:

הַיּוֹם שִׁשָּׁה וּשְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם, שְׁהֵם חַמְשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וַיּוֹם אֶחָד לְעֹמֶר.
Today is 36 days—five weeks and one day—of the omer.
Hayom shishah u-shloshim yom, she-hem hamishah shavuot v'yom ehad la-omer.

On IYAR 22:

הַיּוֹם שִׁבְעָה וּשְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם, שְׁהֵם חַמְשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וּשְׁנַיִם יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.
Today is 37 days—five weeks and two days—of the omer.
Hayom shivah u-shloshim yom, she-hem hamishah shavuot u-shnei yamim la-omer.

On IYAR 23:

הַיּוֹם שְׁמוֹנֶה וּשְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם, שְׁהֵם חַמְשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וּשְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.
Today is 38 days—five weeks and three days—of the omer.
Hayom sh'monah u-shloshim yom, she-hem hamishah shavuot u-shloshah yamim la-omer.

On IYAR 24:

הַיּוֹם תִּשְׁעָה וּשְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם, שְׁהֵם חַמְשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְאַרְבָּעָה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.
Today is 39 days—five weeks and four days—of the omer.
Hayom tishah u-shloshim yom, she-hem hamishah shavuot v'arba-ah yamim la-omer.

On IYAR 25:

הַיּוֹם אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם, שְׁהֵם חַמְשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְחַמְשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.
Today is 40 days—five weeks and five days—of the omer.
Hayom arba-im yom, she-hem hamishah shavuot va-hamishah yamim la-omer.

On IYAR 26:

הַיּוֹם אֶחָד וְאַרְבָּעִים יוֹם, שְׁהֵם חַמְשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְשִׁשָּׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.
Today is 41 days—five weeks and six days—of the omer.
Hayom ehad v'arba-im yom, she-hem hamishah shavuot v'shishah yamim la-omer.

On IYAR 27:

הַיּוֹם שְׁנַיִם וְאַרְבָּעִים יוֹם, שְׁהֵם שִׁשָּׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת לְעֹמֶר.
Today is 42 days—six weeks—of the omer.
Hayom sh'nayim v'arba-im yom, she-hem shishah shavuot la-omer.

Seventh Week: God's Presence — מְלָכּוּת (Malkhut)

Malkhut refers to the sense of God as presence—a presence that suffuses the world. Never was the presence of God felt as deeply as it was at Sinai. As we approach the celebration of that revelation, we might ask: What mitzvah might call to me with a mysterious force? What special teaching of Torah do I want to concentrate on, this year? How do I hear the calling of my soul—the calling of the Divine?

שְׁמַאי אוֹמֵר: עֲשֵׂה תוֹרָתְךָ קֶבֶע, אָמור מְעַט וְעֲשֵׂה הַרְבֵּה,
וְהוּי מְקַבֵּל אֶת־כָּל־הָאָדָם בְּסִבָּר פָּנִים יְפוֹת.

Shammai taught: Set a fixed time for the study of Torah, speak little but do much, and welcome everyone with good cheer.

—Pirkei Avot 1:15

בְּנֶפֶג בִּג אוֹמֵר: הִפֵּךְ בָּהּ וְהִפֵּךְ בָּהּ, דִּכְלָא בָּהּ.

Ben Bag Bag taught: Turn it this way, turn it that way, for everything is to be found in it.

—Pirkei Avot 5:24

רַבִּי הַנְּנִיָּא בְּנִתְרִדְיוֹן אוֹמֵר: שְׁנַיִם שְׂוִישְׁבִין וְיֵשׁ בֵּינֵיהֶן דְּבָרֵי
תּוֹרָה, שְׂכִינָה שְׂרוּיָה בֵּינֵיהֶם . . .

Rabbi Hananiah ben Teradion taught: When two people sit and discuss Torah, the Shekhinah hovers between them . . .

—Pirkei Avot 3:3

כָּל־מָה שֶׁבְּרָא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בְּעוֹלָמוֹ, לֹא בְּרָאוּ אֱלֹא
לְכַבּוֹדוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: כֹּל הַנִּקְרָא בַשָּׁמַיִם, וְלְכַבּוֹדֵי בְּרָאתוֹ יִצְרָתוֹ אֶף
עֲשִׂיתָיו (ישעיהו מג:1). וְאוֹמֵר: יְהוָה יִמְלֹךְ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד (שמות טו:18).

Everything that the blessed Holy One created in God's world, God created solely for the divine glory, as it is written, "Everything that is called by My name, I created it, I formed it, I made it, for My glory" (Isaiah 43:7). It is further written, "ADONAI shall reign forever and ever" (Exodus 15:18).

—Pirkei Avot 6:11

On IYAR 28 (YOM YERUSHALAYIM):

הַיּוֹם שְׁלֹשָׁה וְאַרְבָּעִים יוֹם, שְׁהֵם שְׁשָׁה שְׁבוּעוֹת וְיוֹם אֶחָד לְעֹמֶר.
Today is 43 days—six weeks and one day—of the *omer*.

Hayom sh'loshah v'arba-im yom, she-hem shishah shavuot v'yom ehad la-omer.

On IYAR 29:

הַיּוֹם אַרְבָּעָה וְאַרְבָּעִים יוֹם, שְׁהֵם שְׁשָׁה שְׁבוּעוֹת וְשְׁנַיִם יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.
Today is 44 days—six weeks and two days—of the *omer*.

Hayom arba-ah v'arba-im yom, she-hem shishah shavuot u-shnei yamim la-omer.

On SIVAN 1 (ROSH HODESH SIVAN):

הַיּוֹם חֲמִשָּׁה וְאַרְבָּעִים יוֹם, שְׁהֵם שְׁשָׁה שְׁבוּעוֹת וְשְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.
Today is 45 days—six weeks and three days—of the *omer*.

Hayom hamishah v'arba-im yom, she-hem shishah shavuot u-shloshah yamim la-omer.

On SIVAN 2:

הַיּוֹם שְׁשָׁה וְאַרְבָּעִים יוֹם, שְׁהֵם שְׁשָׁה שְׁבוּעוֹת וְאַרְבָּעָה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.
Today is 46 days—six weeks and four days—of the *omer*.

Hayom shishah v'arba-im yom, she-hem shishah shavuot v'arba-ah yamim la-omer.

On SIVAN 3:

הַיּוֹם שִׁבְעָה וְאַרְבָּעִים יוֹם, שְׁהֵם שְׁשָׁה שְׁבוּעוֹת וְחֲמִשָּׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.
Today is 47 days—six weeks and five days—of the *omer*.

Hayom shivah v'arba-im yom, she-hem shishah shavuot va-hamishah yamim la-omer.

On SIVAN 4:

הַיּוֹם שְׁמוֹנָה וְאַרְבָּעִים יוֹם, שְׁהֵם שְׁשָׁה שְׁבוּעוֹת וְשְׁשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.
Today is 48 days—six weeks and six days—of the *omer*.

Hayom sh'monah v'arba-im yom, she-hem shishah shavuot v'shishah yamim la-omer.

On SIVAN 5 (the night before SHAVUOT):

הַיּוֹם תִּשְׁעָה וְאַרְבָּעִים יוֹם, שְׁהֵם שִׁבְעָה שְׁבוּעוֹת לְעֹמֶר.
Today is 49 days—seven weeks—of the *omer*.

Hayom tishah v'arba-im yom, she-hem shivah shavuot la-omer.