

Emor 2016

1.

### Esrog and the talmid chacham

#### Chofetz Chaim

“You shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of a citron tree, the branches of date palms, twigs of a plaited tree, and brook willows; and you shall rejoice before Hashem, your God, for a seven day period.” (23, 40)

"וילקחתם לכם ביום הראשון פרי עץ הדר כפת תמרים וענף עץ-עבות וערבי-נגחל ושמחתם לפני קונק אליהם שבועת ימים."

The Vayikra Raba (30, 12) relates that the four minim correspond to four different types of Jews. The Lulav has a good taste but no smell which corresponds to a Jew who has Torah but no maasim tovim (good deeds). The Hadasim smell nice but have no taste which corresponds to a Jew who has maasim tovim but no Torah. The Esrog has a good taste and a good smell which corresponds to a Jew who has both Torah and maasim tovim. The Aravos have no taste and no smell which corresponds to a Jew who has neither Torah nor maasim tovim. We tie them all together in order to help each other out and bring all the Jews together.

The Chofetz Chaim says the Esrog is different than the other minim. The Esrog has a pitom (stem) which is very delicate. Additionally, after the four minim are taken the Esrog is returned to its own delicate and special section, it is stored separately from the other minim. The Chofetz Chaim explains this is how a talmid chacham needs to act. As the Gemara in Yuma (86a) says that a talmid chacham needs to mix with people and make a kiddush Hashem. However, the talmid chacham at times needs to separate himself and make sure he is not influenced negatively, just as the Esrog is separated at times.

2.

### Why is Sefira 49 days?

“You shall count for yourselves” (23, 15)

"וספרתם לכם ממחרת."

24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva died during these days of Sefira as stated in Yevamos (62b).

**Why did they specifically die during these days which should be days of happiness as we are preparing for Shevuos, the time when we received the Torah?** The Sifsei Chaim (Moadim chelek gimme page 47) explains that during these days especially it is incumbent upon us to demonstrate proper respect for the Torah. The Alter Mi'Kelm (Chachma Vmussar chelek alef page 427) says that **every day we must work on one of the 48 ways to acquire the Torah. On the 49<sup>th</sup> day, we should review all of these ways to acquire the Torah.** Not only did the talmidim of Rabbi Akiva improperly prepare, but they additionally and problematically remained at the same level. They were therefore subject to midas hadin (strict judgment). **They died**

**specifically at this time because they lacked (at their lofty level) proper middos. The Vayikra Raba (9) says derech erez kadmah l'Torah. (Proper etiquette precedes the Torah)**

Why specifically do we count 49 days of the Omer? Rabbi Karelenstein (Kuntros benyonai Seferas Haomer page 117) explains **the gematria (numerical value) of 49 equal's לב טוב/a good heart**. The Mishna in Avos (perek beis) relates that Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai had five talmidim. He asked them; what is the correct path a person should choose in life. Numerous answers were suggested such as a good eye, a good friend, a good neighbor and one who sees the outcome of his actions. Rabbi Elazar ben Arach said a good heart! Rabbi Yochanon ben Zakai said what Rabbi Elazar ben Arach said is the best, because included in what he said is all your words. This is one of the reasons it's customary to learn Pirkei Avos during Sefira; because Avos is all about middos. **This number 49 alludes to what our focus should be during the omer; fixing our middos.**

The Bnei Yissoschor (Nissan maamar 12 os 12) explains why we have 49 days of Sefira. We can explain based on the Chida who asks a question in the name of Yalkut Dovid. He asks; why were we in exile in Egypt? Torah is spiritual and will not endure within a person who has bad thoughts and a bad heart. Torah cannot exist within such a person because the Torah is completely pure and can only coexist in something pure. Therefore Hashem needed to prepare us in Egypt to be worthy of accepting the Torah. The exile weakened the yeitzer hara (evil inclination) which dwells in the left area of the heart. This was done in order that the yeitzer tov (good inclination) which dwells in the right side of the heart could exist. This is why we count 49 days, corresponding to the Lev Tov. We weakened the yeitzer hara and now we are ready to accept the Torah. The Biurim Vhaaros explains a lev tov is necessary in order to accept the Torah.

The Brisa in Avos (perek vav) states that Torah is greater than the kehuna (priesthood) and malchus (royalty), for malchus is acquired along with 30 ways (prerogatives) and the kehuna is acquired in 24, but the Torah is acquired by means of 48 qualities etc. One of the ways to acquire Torah is by having a lev tov! This number 49 is very significant. There is a spread custom to recite Eishes Chayil on Shabbas night. There are four mehalchim (approaches) to explain this last perek of Mishlei. Some say Eishes Chayil refers to Shabbas. Every Pasuk can be explained as referring to Shabbas. Another explanation is it's referring to a wife. Another explanation is its referring to the neshama (soul) as explained by the Malbim. The final explanation is Eishes Chayil is referring to the Torah. Rav Menachem Mendel, a talmid of the Gra, elaborates and explains the Gematria (numerical value) of Chayil (חַיִּיל) is 48! There are 48 ways to acquire the Torah, which is Chayil which is 48. This is Sefira! This is what the students of Rabbi Akiva were lacking. As Rav Aharon Kutler explains, on their level they were lacking.

Thank you Yair Moshe Ausabel for typing this up.