

נשי
ובנות
חב"ד

IYAR

N'SHEI
U'BNOS
CHABAD

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לעילוי נשמת הורינו
ר' שמואל דוד בן ר'
אברהם משה ע"ה
ואשתו מרת הענטשא
בת ר' אליעזר ע"ה
ר' אברהם לייב בן ר' יוסף ע"ה
ואשתו מרת ליבא ח'ה
בת ר' מרדכי ע"ה
תנצ"ב

SEFIRAS HAOMER— THE WOMEN'S PART

The month of Iyar is most closely associated with the mitzvah of Sefiras HaOmer, which is observed daily throughout the entire month. Halachically, women are not obligated in this mitzvah, as it is a mitzvas aseh shehazman grama—a time-bound mitzvah. Nevertheless, the mitzvah holds significance for them as well. The Alter Rebbe records in his Shulchan Aruch that historically, some women accepted the mitzvah upon themselves as a full obligation; but even those who don't count Sefiras HaOmer themselves, can most definitely support the men in their families by reminding them to fulfill their obligation. More broadly, women can fully connect to the essence of the mitzvah—the anticipation and spiritual preparation for Matan Torah.

For the seven weeks leading up to *Shavuos*, the Yom Tov of *Kabbalas HaTorah*, we prepare through the mitzvah of *Sefiras HaOmer*, counting each day from one to forty-nine.

To understand how *Sefiras HaOmer* serves as a preparation for *Matan Torah*, we must first explore the deeper significance of the *sefirah*—the counting itself.

Typically, counting serves a practical purpose—we count money to know our balance, or ingredients to follow a recipe precisely. But counting days seems fundamentally different. We cannot alter the days themselves, nor does their enumeration change our actions within them. What can be gained by counting something beyond our control?

This very idea holds the key to our question. When we count, we do not count the actions performed during these days—days surely filled with Torah and mitzvos—for it is no novelty that Yidden are constantly involved in Torah study and mitzvah observance. Rather, we specifically count the seemingly mundane passage of time

LIFELONG INFLUENCE

Another significant aspect of the month of Iyar is Lag B'Omer, observed on the 18th of the month. This day holds a special connection to Jewish women as well.

One of the reasons we pause the mourning of the *Sefirah* days on Lag B'Omer is that it marks the cessation of the tragic deaths of Rabbi Akiva's students. It was then that he gathered new disciples, whom the Gemara describes in glowing terms.

From these descriptions, as well as how the Gemara and Kabbalah portray Rabbi Akiva himself, we gain a glimpse of his immense greatness. Yet, despite his towering stature, Rabbi Akiva famously declared, "*Sheli v'shelachem shelah hu*"—all that is mine and all that is yours (his students') belong to her—his wife, Rochel.

This episode teaches a powerful lesson for every Jewish woman. A mother's influence on her child is undeniable from a young age, but her impact does not end there. Even in relation to her brothers or her husband, a Jewish woman is granted immense abilities by Hashem to inspire and guide them toward goodness.

More than just a capability, this is her *shlichus*—her divine mission—to help draw out and reveal the potential within the men in her family, encouraging their growth in Torah and mitzvos. And if Hashem has entrusted her with this sacred task, there is no doubt that He has also given her the full strength and ability to fulfill it.

(Adapted from the sicha addressing the N'shei U'bnos Chabad convention on 23 Iyar 5736 - Sichos Kodesh 5736 vol. 2, pp. 209-10.)

itself. When Hashem chose the Yidden, He granted them the power to transform time itself into something holy. Each day, in and of itself, becomes a mitzvah—worthy of being counted.

This idea applies especially to Jewish women. Her unique role as the "foundation of the home" is not only expressed in the mitzvos she performs or helps her family fulfill, but most importantly, in transforming the entire home—even its most mundane aspects—into a place of holiness.

Where is this idea most strongly expressed? Specifically in the mitzvos uniquely associated with women.

Take lighting Shabbos candles, for example. The glow of the candles isn't confined to just one corner of the home—it spreads throughout, transforming the entire house into one illuminated with the light and sanctity of Shabbos or Yom Tov.

The same is true for the mitzvah of *kashrus*. The food she prepares nourishes her family physically, providing them with strength and vitality—but it does so in a way that is entirely holy, in accordance with the Torah's command. Beyond that, her food can also become an act of tzedakah, given to those in need for their Shabbos or Yom Tov meals. In doing so, she fulfills one of the highest forms of tzedakah—providing not just money, but ready sustenance—elevating the seemingly mundane act of cooking into a holy endeavor.

And it's not just the food that becomes holy—the kitchen

itself can become a vessel of *kedusha*. By placing a *tzedakah pushka* in the kitchen and giving tzedakah daily before cooking, the act of preparing food is infused with a higher purpose.

In today's world, another layer is added to this idea. Many women are not only the foundation of their homes but also share in providing for them financially. When she receives her paycheck and sets aside the first portion for tzedakah before using the rest for household expenses, she elevates the entire sum with *kedusha*. This adds yet another dimension to transforming the mundane into holiness, infusing even her earnings with a higher purpose.

This transformation—the elevation of the mundane to the holy, most strongly expressed by the Jewish woman—is the true message of *Matan Torah*, when Hashem chose the Yidden as His people. His choice was not limited to their spiritual pursuits or what is traditionally associated with holiness. Rather, it extended to—and is even more powerfully expressed in—their ability to elevate the mundane itself to *kedusha*. Since *Sefiras Haomer* is the preparation for *Matan Torah*, this idea lies at the heart of that journey, leading up to the revelation of this profound message. **T**

(Adapted from the sicha addressing the N'shei U'bnos Chabad convention on 28 Iyar 5751; Hisvaaduyos 5751 vol. 3, pp. 244-7.)