



Bamidbar: Numbers

Parashat 'Bamidbar'

מתוך "ליקוטי שמואל"

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Pagiel and Achira Took on Aliases to Remind Themselves They Were in a Bad Neighborhood

Parshas [Bamidbar](#)

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

In Parshas Bamidbar, the Torah not only specifies the census of *Bnei Yisrael* when they came into *Eretz Yisrael*, it also specifies the "*sefer hadegalim*" – the configuration in which they would travel. The twelve *shevatim* (tribes) were divided up into four "machanos" (camps), which were all positioned around the *Mishkan*.

Each *machaneh* (camp) included three *shevatim*. Machaneh Don (the camp of Don) included the *shevet* (tribe) of Don and also the *shevet* of Asher, led by Pagiel ben Achran and the *shevet* of Naftali, led by Achira ben Einan. These two princes, from the *shevatim* of Asher and Naftali, had rather strange names. We have never come across anyone named either Pagiel, Achira, Achran, or Einan! None less a personage than Rabbeinu Ephraim (one of the *Ba'alei Tosefos*) comments that these four rather strange names were **not** the names given to either of these princes or their fathers at their respective *brissim*. He says that they were all adopted names.

Why did they adopt these names? Rabbeinu Ephraim explains that Machaneh Don was situated at the north side of the travel configuration. It is known that Shevet Don brought along an idol, known as *Pesel Michah*, from the time they left Mitzrayim, until they entered *Eretz Yisrael* (and even after they entered *Eretz Yisrael*). Thus, there was an *Avodah Zarah* in Machaneh Don! The unfortunate neighbors of Shevet Don were Shevet Asher and

Shevet Naftali. These two *shevatim* were none too pleased that they had a neighbor who was travelling with an idol!

Consider a situation where you know that your next-door neighbor is a drug dealer. How will that make you feel? It is not like they had the option to pick up and move because Hashem put them there! The princes of Shevet Naftali and Shevet Asher were very afraid that this proclivity for idols would rub off on them and their *shevatim*. Therefore, they changed their names to remind themselves of the fact that they were living in a very hostile spiritual environment.

The prince of Asher called himself *Pagi-el*, which is a short form of the statement "*Pagah bi El*" (G-d put me in a bad situation). Son of Achran – *Achran* means a person who corrupts Bnai Yisroel. He wished to announce "I am *Pagi-el ben Achran*: Hashem put me in this situation where I am in proximity to the people of Shevet Don, who are *ocher es Yisrael* – they corrupt the rest of *Klal Yisrael*. He gave himself this name to constantly remind himself and others "I have very bad neighbors and if I don't watch myself, I am going to wind up like that." The prince of Naftali called himself *Achi-Rah*, literally "My Bad Brother," as if to say "I am next to my bad brother." Son of *Einan* – etymologically related to the *anan* (cloud), which expelled sinners.

In other words, in order to make sure that their defenses would not slip, they changed their names. This is how they called themselves and had other people call them – to remind them all that they had to be on their toes and be constantly aware of their spiritually corrosive environment, so as not to be influenced by their neighbors.

There are three lessons to be learned from this teaching of Rabbeinu Ephraim:

The first lesson is that a person is affected by his neighbors and his neighborhood. A person can live in the best of cities but if his particular neighbors or neighborhood is not up to snuff, it eventually affects him.

The second lesson is that a person should take action when he realizes that he finds himself in a challenging spiritual position. A person should not have the attitude "Okay. Too bad. I am in a bad neighborhood." These two princes changed their names as a constant reminder. Time will tell whether such action will be effective or not. But at least they were not passive about it. They made an attempt to build up their spiritual defenses.

The third very important and powerful lesson is brought out by a famous *schmooze* from Rav Chaim Shmulevitz, *zt"l*.

The Gemara [Sanhedrin 19b] notes that a certain person in *Tanach* is called both Palti and Paltiel. Rabbi Yochanan says that his real name was Palti but he was also called Paltiel because G-d removed him from doing an *aveira* (*Palto Kel min ha'aveira*). What did Palti do? He implanted a sword between himself and his wife (who was really previously given as a wife to Dovid) in their bedroom and said "Whoever will engage in this matter shall be pierced with this sword."

Without going into the halachic *lomdus* here, King Shaul had previously promised his daughter Michal to Dovid, but Shaul held that she was not really Dovid's halachic wife. He felt free to give her in marriage to Palti. Palti was in no position to reject the king's offer to marry his daughter, but he felt that he was now living with a married woman! He recognized that this was a *nisayon* (temptation) that would be hard to withstand over the course of time. Thus, on the night of his marriage he dramatically stuck a sword between their two beds as if to say "If I touch this

woman, I deserve to be killed". Therefore, the entire time he remained with her, he never touched her.

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz asks: What did sticking the sword in the ground accomplish for him? Just as he stuck it in the ground, he could pull it out of the ground next week or next month! Rav Chaim Shmulevitz explains that Palti was a very smart man. He knew that on this first night, he was fully conscious that he was in a bedroom with an *eishes ish* (a married woman) and someone who commits adultery with a married woman is deserving of death by the sword. But he also knew that with the passage of time, a person can easily start rationalizing: Maybe Shaul is in fact correct! Maybe halachically she is **not** married to Dovid. Therefore, maybe I am just torturing myself for nothing. That is human nature. After a while, we begin to rationalize. So Palti ben Layish placed a permanent symbolic reminder in his bedroom of how he felt the first night when he knew what was right and what was wrong. The sword represented how he felt when he was not overcome with temptation by any ulterior motives to rationalize and reason. Palti knew that without such a symbol, his *Yetzer HaRah*, after many days and weeks and years, could very well wear him down. The sword was his reminder: "This is how I felt THEN and that is the TRUTH."

We can say the same thing regarding Pagiel ben Achran or Achira ben Einan. They called themselves these names as a reminder: We are next to Shevet Don. Shevet Don has this *Pesel Micha*. I don't really want to be in their neighborhood. They were afraid that after a while, they would succumb to the bad influence of *Pesel Michah*. So as soon as they moved into the neighborhood, they changed their names: We knew the *emes* when we entered the situation, and we want to have a perpetual reminder for the rest of our time in that situation!

The Lesson of a Census Anomaly

Rav Chatzkel Levenstein, *zt"l*, once noted a strange fact in the census of *Klal Yisrael*, which demographically does not make any sense. Shevet Don had an adult male population of 62,700. They were the largest tribe. Shevet Binyomin, on the other hand, had a population of 35,000. When we look back to Parshas Vayigash and see the number of grandchildren Yaakov had from each of his sons, Binyamin had ten sons and Don had a single son. Not only did Don have only one son, but he was disabled.

Chushim ben Don, *Chazal* say, was deaf. If we were to have taken bets regarding who would be the bigger tribe upon the Exodus from Egypt 210 years later, any sound statistical prediction would of course predict that Binyomin would be the larger of the two *shevatim*.

And yet, at the end of the day, Don had 62,700 adult male descendants in this census and Binyomin had 35,000. Rav Chatzkel derived the following lesson from this: A person like Don, who knows he has only one child, and a handicapped one at that, turns to the Ribono shel Olam and asks: "How am I going to survive? How am I going to see future generations?" In such a situation, a person goes to the Being who controls everything and pours his heart out. A person with ten sons will be confident and say "Let's do the math!" My grandchildren and great grandchildren will increase exponentially! Such a person does not daven as much. When someone feels confident, he feels that he can rely "on the data". There are times, however, that the "data" does not yield the projected result.

That is the lesson of this census anomaly. The lesson is that we never know!

There is a similar story mentioned by the Chofetz Chaim:

In Galicia, the custom was that on Motzai Shabbos (right before Ma'ariv), they would recite Tehillim. A fellow from outside of the city came into shul then and saw that the people were saying Tehillim. He noticed one fellow in particular, in the corner of the shul, pouring his heart out. As he recited his Tehillim, he was crying and banging on the wall. He was literally in a different world! The visitor was so inspired by this scene that he also started saying Tehillim with great inspiration and intensity. After Ma'ariv, he went over to this fellow in the corner and said to him, "I saw you saying Tehillim. It was very inspiring to me. You were crying your eyes out. Do you have a problem?"

The fellow in the corner responded, "Yes. I have a problem. I have a daughter who is not married. The whole week, I am on the road doing business and I am not at home (as was common in many parts of Europe). When I am on the road, my daughter's situation is "out of sight, out of mind." But when I come home for Shabbos and I see how broken my daughter is, it really hurts me. That is why I pour my heart out, because I don't know how I can make a *shidduch* for her. I have no money!" I don't have any idea how I can make it happen, so automatically I turn to the *Ribono shel Olam!*"

The visitor said, "Do you know what? I also have no money. But I have a son. Listen – you have no money and I have no money. Let's make a *shidduch* between our children." And so it was. The daughter of the fellow in the corner married the visitor's son.

That *shidduch* produced four sons. One of them was Rav Aryeh Leib HaKohen Heller (author of the Ketzos HaChoshen, the Avnei Miluim, and the Shev Shmaytza). The second son was Rav Yehuda Heller Kahana (author of the Kuntres HaSefeikos). The third son was Rav Mordechai Heller, who was a Rav in Chodorov. The fourth son was Rav Chaim HaKohen Heller. So, from this

poor *shidduch* came, among others, the Ketzos HaChoshen. People do not study the Talmudic *masechtos* in Seder Nezikin without the Ketzos, and people do not learn Seder Nashim without the Avnei Miluim and people do not learn Yoreh Deah without the Shev Shmoytza. Likewise, people do not learn Seder Nezikin without the Kuntres HaSefeikos.

This goes to prove the old maxim: We never know!

Thoughts For Shavuos: I am “One Yosef” Because of the Power of Torah

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Rabbi Yissocher Frand

There is a commonly-quoted Gemara (Pesachim 68b) that says: “Every year on the day of Shavuos, Rav Yosef would say to his servants, ‘Prepare for me a third-born calf.’ Rav Yosef explained the reason for this lavish celebration as follows: ‘If this day had not caused me to learn Torah and thereby become spiritually elevated, how many ‘Yosefs’ are there in the market place—and I would have been indistinguishable from them!’”

The simple reading of this passage is that the Amora Rav Yosef is commenting that if not for *Matan Torah* and his personal Torah learning, he would be “just another Joe” (and he therefore celebrated the occasion of Shavuos by asking his servants to prepare his favorite dish).

Virtually every year on Shavuos, Rav Ruderman would say that the Gemara means something deeper than that. “How many ‘Yosefs’ are there in the market place” does not mean “I would be just another ‘Joe’”. Rather, it means “there would be so many of me—I myself would be so many different types of people.” In other

words, I would be all over the map, I would be so conflicted without the unifying force of Torah. That which gives unity and focus to my life and makes me into a unified person with unwavering direction is the Torah. Without Torah, I would be so many Joes—A Joe Six Pack, a Joe Ravens fan, a Joe this, a Joe that. I would be all over the place.

This, in essence, is what the Yom Tov of Shavuos is all about. It is a time to appreciate what Torah does for us.

On Shavuos we read the Megillah of Rus. Rus is not a Tale of Two Cities, but it is rather a Tale of Two People. Here we have two sisters—the same gene pool, the same upbringing, the same environment—Orpah and Rus. And yet, Rus went in one direction and made a decision which shaped her whole life thereafter. She became the Matriarch of *Klal Yisrael*, the great-grandmother of Dovid HaMelech. Orpah went on a different path.

What separated Rus and Orpah? Why did Rus choose what she chose and Orpah chose an entirely different path in life? Rav Moshe Schwab, *zt"l*, said that Orpah viewed the life that Rus was about to choose as involving too much *mesiras nefesh* (martyrdom and self-sacrifice). She was not willing to make that sacrifice. She felt it would be too hard of a life. She returned to what she perceived would be an easier life. Rus on the other hand was willing to make that which at the time seemed like a difficult choice. In the end, beyond the initial brief period of time, it turned out to not involve *mesiras nefesh* at all. It was a much more noble life. It was a much more rewarding life, and a life that was so much better in the end.

That is what we need to tell ourselves all the time. A life of *Yiddishkeit* sometimes seems more difficult, but it is so much more rewarding in the end. Not only in the World to Come, but in This World as well. We have purpose to our lives. Our lives are so

much richer than those who do not have Torah. People make this mistake. They think a Torah observant life style is so difficult, involves giving so much up, and forgoing so much fun and so many pleasures.

That is the difference between Rus and Orpah. Orpah thought she was giving so much up. Therefore, she did not make that decision. Rus recognized that she may be engaged in something difficult for the moment, but in the end, it was going to be rewarding.

L'Havdil – look at athletes. Look at the sacrifices they make. I hate to make this comparison, but look at Michael Phelps. He spent more time in a swimming pool than most of us spend in a Beis Medrash. He wound up winning more Gold Medals than anyone in the history of the Olympics. So, in the end he looks back and thinks, “Sure, it was a sacrifice—all those years of training and practice—but it paid off. In the end, it was all worth it!” He is glad that he made that sacrifice. *L'Havdil*, that is the way we can look at the sacrifice and *mesiras nefesh* we make for commitment to Torah learning and for living a Torah observant life style.

The same dialog appears in the *Hagadah*. The Wicked Son asks, “What is this *Avodah*– for you!”. The Rasha says, “I see what you are doing, but I am not willing to make that sacrifice.” Look at the answer given to the Wicked son in the Torah’s narration of that dialog (Shemos 12:26-27): “And when your children say to you: What does this *Avodah* (ceremony) mean to you? You shall say, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the L-rd who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt, for He struck the Egyptians, but our homes, He spared...’”.

Our answer to him is, “Yes, it is a sacrifice, but look what happened in the end! In the end, we were saved. The first *Korban* (sacrifice) that *Klal Yisrael* brought—the *Korban Pesach*—was the key to our salvation. That became the prototype of all future *Korbonos*. Yes, it

is a “sacrifice” in the beginning, but in the end, “*es bateinu hi'tzeel*” (our houses were saved). That is the answer to the Rasha.

The Mishna (Avos 6:4) says “This is the way of Torah: Bread with salt you shall consume, and water in measured amounts you shall drink, you shall sleep on the ground, and live a life of pain, and (yet) toil in Torah.” The way to acquire Torah involves deprivation and hardship. It is tough. But the Mishna concludes: “If you do this, ‘Happy are you and it will be good for you.’ (Tehillim 128:2) Happy are you in this world, and it will be good for you in the World to Come.”

Why does the Mishna need to say “If you do this?” The Mishna just mentioned what was involved in acquisition of Torah. Why repeat “If you do this”? The answer is that after hearing the deprivation and hardship involved in acquiring Torah, it would be quite easy to dismiss the effort – “Who needs that?” The Mishna continues – Yes, I know it sounds tough, but IF YOU DO THIS... Just try it! If you try it, do you know what the result will be? Happy are you, and it will be good for you!

Everything in life that involves sacrifice is worth the hard work. If there is no hard work, it is not worth it. That is also the way it is with Torah. IF YOU DO THIS, if you just try it, you will find out that it will make you happy in This World, and it will be good for you in the World to Come.

This is what Rav Yosef is saying. Where would I be and where would we all be without the Torah? This is the approach that we need to think about before Shavuot. Yes, it is sometimes hard to be a Jew. Yes, it is a life which involves some sacrifice, but look at the end. Look at that first *Korban* that *Klal Yisrael* brought. *Es Bateinu Hi'tzil*—as a result of that, we were saved. That is the sacrifice that, in the end, is the source of our salvation.

A Peculiar Verb Is Used to Command the Census Taking

Sefer Bamidbar begins with the counting of *Klal Yisrael*: “Take a census of the entire assembly of the Children of Israel according to their families, according to their fathers’ household, by number of the names, every male according to their head count.” (Bamidbar 1:2) Indeed, this is how the *sefer* begins, and then again, all the way at the end of Sefer Bamidbar – in Parshas Pinchas – it ends the description of the forty-year sojourn in the *Midbar* with another counting of *Klal Yisrael*. In Talmudic literature, Sefer Bamidbar is referred to as “*Chomesh haPekudim*” (the Chumash of the Counts). Even in non-Jewish nomenclature, this fourth book of the Torah is called the Book of Numbers, because it begins and ends with these counts.

Rashi here quotes the famous teaching of *Chaza!*: “Because of their dearness to Him, He counts them constantly. When they left Mitzraim, He counted them; after the Eigel Hazahav, He counted them to learn how many were lost; and when He had his Divine Presence descend upon them, He counted them: The *Mishkan* was erected on the first of Nissan, and therefore He counted them on the first of Iyar.”

The constant counting demonstrates that the Holy One Blessed be He loves *Klal Yisrael*. On the other hand, we see something that, at first glance, would seem contradictory: There is a tremendous danger involved in the counting of the Jewish people. We see this all the way back in Parshas Ki Sisa. The *pasuk* there says: “When you take a census of the Children of Israel according to their numbers, every man shall give Hashem atonement for his soul when counting them, so that there will not be a plague among them when counting them.” (Shemos 30:12). Counting *Klal Yisrael* introduces the risk of triggering a plague. In fact, in the days of Dovid HaMelech, when Dovid HaMelech counted the Jewish

people, there was a tremendous plague. Seventy thousand people from *Klal Yisrael* died (Shmuel II 24:15).

So, which is it? Is counting something we should do because it shows our endearment to the *Ribono shel Olam*, and because it demonstrates His love for us? Or is counting something that runs a terrible risk of plague?

The answer is – it depends how the count is conducted. The key to how to count is found in the second *pasuk* in this week's parsha. "*Se'u es rosh kol adas Bnei Yisrael.*" This expression (*se'u es rosh*) is a very peculiar way of expressing counting. There are numerous ways in Hebrew to verbalize counting. Options include *Sefor* (*samech fay reish*); *Menei* (*mem nun hay*); and many other ways to say 'Count'. The most peculiar way to say 'Count' is "Se'u es rosh," which literally means "lift up the heads." Why then, of all expressions that we might use, does the Torah use the expression "*Se'u es rosh*"?

The answer is that the expression "*Se'u es rosh*" is the key to avoiding the downside of counting. The downside of counting is that by counting a mass of people, the importance of each individual can be lost. When someone takes a census and counts 600,000 people, it minimizes the importance and dignity of each individual in that conglomerate. The Torah wants to warn us that we may have 600,000 people, but each one of those people is a person by himself and has a distinct significance, which should never be forgotten.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, ob"m, the former Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, quotes a very famous economic treatise that was written by the Scottish author and journalist, Charles Mackay, in 1841. The name of the treatise was *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*. The author documents the great danger that exists in crowds. Aside from the loss of individual identity ever

present in crowds, the presence of a crowd generates a “herd mentality.” When everyone starts doing something, everyone in the crowd gets wrapped into it. The example he talks about was the “Tulip mania”.

What was the “Tulip mania”? In Holland, one tulip bulb was worth literally a fortune. People got wrapped up in the exquisiteness of tulips, and it became the greatest thing since sliced bread.

Therefore, tulips became the hottest commodity on the market and people would spend fortunes of money for one tulip bulb. This went on until suddenly someone woke up and said, “Hey guys – we are talking about a flower!” Therefore you can go into Trader Joe’s tomorrow morning and buy a dozen tulips for four dollars!

The same thing once happened in South Africa, when people went crazy about ostrich feathers. They became the rage. However, we don’t need to go back into the 1700s or the 1800s. Just think back to the “Tech Bubble” of the 1990s. How do such things happen? They happen because of a “herd mentality” – people get so wrapped up in what everyone else is doing that they lose their own perspectives.

The danger of the masses is a double danger. When we look at a crowd, we do not give proper respect to the individual members of the crowd as individuals. The people become just “numbers”.

(There was once even a commercial that stated: “In our bank you are not just a number.”) That is one danger of being part of the masses. The other danger is that people themselves lose their ability to think individually. “Everyone is buying tulips – I am going to buy tulips. Everybody is buying ostrich feathers – I am going to buy ostrich feathers.” That is not the way a Jew needs to operate. An amazingly insightful Gemara says (Berochos 58a) “Someone who sees the masses of Israel should recite the blessing: ‘*Baruch Chacham HaRazim*’”. We invoke praise of the Almighty, who looks

at this large mass of people and knows exactly what is within the heart of every single one of them. He knows that every person is different, and every person has his own personality. Every person has his own secrets. Only the *Ribono shel Olam* knows what those secrets are!

When we see a mass of people, all we see is a mass of people. We get carried away by the crowds and don't see the individuals. The Almighty sees every individual in that mass of humanity and He knows all their secrets! This is the idea of *Se'u Es Rosh* – Lift each head and never forget the importance of the head of each individual person.

G-d doesn't count his children

Written by Benjamin Rose

“Hashem spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the Tent of Meeting, on the first of the second month, in the second year after their exodus from the land of Egypt saying: “Take a census of the entire assembly of the Children of Israel according to their families, according to their fathers’ household, by number of the names, every male according to their head count.” (Bamidbar 1:1-2)

Because of G-d's love for the Jewish People he counts them frequently. (Rashi)

According to their head count: They gave a half shekel and the coins were counted since it is forbidden to count them literally by head. (Rashi)

At a shiva call years back a psychiatrist abruptly asked a rabbi, “What's G-d doing right now!” the Rabbi humbly admitted, “I don't know!” He then added, “We're not here to psychoanalyze G-d! The Almighty is not on the couch, we are!” The Rabbi wondered long afterward if he had answered him correctly. What is G-d doing right now?

According to what we learn at the beginning of this week's portion we have better than a good possibility of guessing what G-d is doing right now. He's

counting His people. Yes! Now! Not just back then. Like a parent or grandparent that looks frequently at his or her collection of photos so are we being observed and counted admiringly.

We might be misled however to conclude that it's numbers that count. How do we do it? Firstly, we are a relatively small nation. Why count us? Secondly, it's understood that that we are forbidden to count individuals by number. If the aggregate, the total is all that matters, then why should there be any limitation to the system of counting?

There were two brothers at opposite ends of the world in very different living conditions. One lived in a tiny apartment in Jerusalem with his wife and twelve children on a meager budget. The other was a wealthy man in a large American city but he and his wife after many years of marriage had no children. The wealthy one proposed to his brother in Israel that they make a trade. He is willing to grant one million dollars in exchange for one - any one of their twelve children. It was too tempting. Under the weight of great financial strain they agreed.

The night came to consummate the deal by choosing the child to be sent away. The parents waited for the late hour to arrive. They circulated a few times in tears as they peered at their sleeping children. Then they made their decision and called the brother in America to tell him the news. "No deal!" The other desperately countered, "You have twelve and I have none and you could certainly use the money!" Not yielding to the pressure this time the one in Israel tried to console his brother's disappointment. "The deal was based on a false premise that we have twelve children. When we looked carefully, my wife and I came to realize that it's not true. We have only one Shimon, one Rivka, one Aaron, etc." Reducing a person to a mere number serves to erase the unique quality, the special-ness of that individual.

When Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch was asked why he left the largest rabbinic position in Europe to join nine struggling families in Frankfurt Germany he is reputed to have answered an answer that perhaps begs many more questions, "G-d doesn't count Jews. He weighs them!"

Why in Midbar Sinai??

Written by Benjamin A Rose

“And Hashem spoke to Moshe in Midbar Sinai”. Why was the Torah specifically given in a Midbar? The Meforshim explain, since the Midbar is essentially Hefker (ownerless), no one has any particular claim to it. Hashem was indicating that the Torah belongs equally to everyone.

Parashas Bamidbar – Desert, Water and Fire

Written by Daniel Sandground

The famous question that everybody asks is why do we count upward towards Shavuot. Shouldn't we count down watching the days go by, as we get closer? These days are separating us from Har Sinai and we want them to go away so we can get to the magical moment already. Rav Shimshon Pincus answers this with a vort from Rav Aharon Kotler. Rav Aharon asks how is it that when Yaakov waited seven years for Rochel the Torah says that these days went by quickly in his eyes. Shouldn't the normal human emotion make it feel like an eternity as he waited for the day that he and his beloved will finally join as husband and wife? Rav Aharon answers that Yaakov was preparing himself for the building of Am Yisroel.

Rav Shimshon elaborates on these short and mysterious words with a Mashal. If someone were to tell a desperate person that he will receive one million dollars but it would only come in one hundred days, he would be elated but totally impatient during this waiting period. If however the deal was that he would get thousand a day for 100 days until he accumulates million, then each day would be fun and exhilarating as he adds up his earnings and closes in on his final goal. What is the difference? In the first case the days are empty of any meaning or progress. They are simply dead space in his way and they are separating him from his good fortune. In the second scenario, he is growing day by day as he closes in on his dream. Each precious day builds him more and more. Maybe another way to explain it would be a Chosson

and Kallah. After the engagement they are very excited to get married. This is a very special time. As long as they are preparing for the wedding, they are enjoying each day. Choosing halls, flowers, clothing, apartments, etc. Two months go by very quickly and life is just grand with no complaints. Then the preparations are all done and there is still a week to the wedding. The Chosson and Kallah haven't got much to do except wait. Boy does the time go by slowly. When oh when will the big day finally come? This week lasts an eternity.

So too says Rav Shimshon, are the days of Sefiras HaOmer. These are the days from when we finally gained our freedom, which we use to build ourselves into people who are ready to accept the Torah. This takes hard work as we work on our middos first and foremost. The Torah is not sitting and waiting to magically transform us without any effort on our part. Each day we grow. Each day we make ourselves more worthy. Each day is a wonderful day where we go to sleep feeling accomplished and more complete than we were the day before. These are great days that we don't want to put behind ourselves. We want to hold them and cherish them. We count them one, two, three... We grow in Chesed, Gvura, Tiferes... each precious day until we hit the big 50 and we are truly ready to receive the torah.

Counting the Omer means growing with it and enjoying it. If you sit around and do nothing, then not only will it feel like forever, but you will stand under the chupah totally embarrassed that you don't even have wedding suit!

Humor

Q: What do you call cheese that is sad?

A: Blue cheese.

Q. Which hotel serves the best cheese?

A: The Stilton

Q: Why does cheese look sane?

A: Because everything else on the plate is crackers.

Q. What does a cheese say on Shavuot?

A: Have E-dam good day!