



RABBI SHALOM

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“Why Use the Term “MeMacharat HaShabbat”?”

וְסָפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמָּחֳרַת הַשַּׁבָּת

“Begin counting from the day after the day of rest.” (Vayikra 23:15)

In Parashat Emor we encounter a famous *pasuk* that generated significant controversy throughout Jewish history. The Torah instructs us to begin counting the Omer “from the day after Shabbat.” Chazal teach that here the word **Shabbat** refers not to the weekly Shabbat, but to the **first day of Pesach**.

The *Tzedukim* (who did not believe in the Oral Torah), rejected this interpretation. They insisted that *Me Macharat HaShabbat* refers to the day after a literal Shabbat, and therefore they always began counting the Omer on Sunday. This meant that Shavuot would fall on a different date every year, detached from the fixed calendar of Yom Tov.

This raises a powerful question:

Why would the Torah use such confusing

language? Why refer to Pesach as “Shabbat” rather than simply “Yom Tov”?

TWO CATEGORIES OF MITZVOT

The Meshech Chochmah offers a brilliant and insightful explanation. He suggests that mitzvot fall into two broad categories:

Mitzvot that bring us closer to God - such as tefillah, tzitzit, and tefillin.

Mitzvot that bring us closer to other people - such as *gemilut chasadim*, terumah, leket, and other forms of support for those in need.

There is, he argues, a similar distinction between **Shabbat** and **Yom Tov**.

SHABBAT VS. YOM TOV

On **Shabbat**, we may not carry outside, leave the techum, or cook. These restrictions naturally limit social interaction. Shabbat is a day designed to pull us inward and upward, allowing us to focus more fully on God.

But **Yom Tov** is different. On Yom Tov we may cook, carry, and move more freely. The halachic framework encourages hosting, inviting, and celebrating together. Yom Tov is structured to strengthen our bonds with other people.

THE FIRST PESACH IN EGYPT

With this distinction in mind, the Meshech Chochmah reads *MeMacharat HaShabbat* in a new light. On the night of the very first Pesach in Egypt, the Jews were commanded:

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“None of you may go out of the entrance of your house until morning.” (Shemot 12:22). That first Pesach was not a social, communal Yom Tov at all. It was experienced in isolation, behind locked doors, the nation hiding from the plague of the first born that swept Egypt.

In that moment, the first Pesach resembled Shabbat far more than Yom Tov. It was a night stripped of social connection, and focused entirely on God. Therefore, explains the Meshech Chochmah, the Torah refers to the first day of Pesach as **Shabbat**, because that is precisely what it functionally resembled.

SHAVUOT: TURNING OUTWARD

It is no coincidence that when the Torah later describes Shavuot, it interweaves laws of *Pe'ah* and *Leket* - mitzvot that require us to leave behind parts of our harvest for the needy.

Perhaps the Torah is highlighting a profound shift:

Pesach in Egypt was inward-facing, like Shabbat, fostering connection with God.

Shavuot, the conclusion of the Omer, is outward-facing, calling us to embrace others, to build community, and to care for the vulnerable.

The journey from Pesach to Shavuot is thus the journey from inner faith to outer responsibility, from personal redemption to communal mission. It also underscores that

although the first Yom Tov of Pesach was an exception and was more similar to Shabbat, the first Shavuot is more of a typical Yom Tov—focusing on our connection to our fellow man.

The Meshech Chochmah explains that the Torah’s language is not confusing, but intentional, reminding us that genuine *avodat Hashem* requires both dimensions: drawing close to God and drawing close to each other.

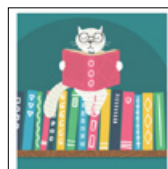
As we count the Omer, day by day, we retrace that national journey.

Each day asks us:

Are we deepening our connection with the *Ribbono shel Olam*?

Are we expanding our care for those around us?

May our mitzvot be performed with clarity and purpose, lifting us upward toward our Creator while drawing us closer together as one people. And may the journey from Pesach to Shavuot transform us—so that we stand together at Matan Torah not only as individuals who believe, but as a nation that loves, supports, and walks with one another in unity. ■



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