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# *a* **CALL** *to* **ACTION**

SEFIRAH  
UNITY & LOVE

PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION  
FROM THE TEACHINGS OF THE REBBE  
5748-5752

A PROJECT OF  
**HaMaaseh Hu HaIkar**

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unite so that all Jews will be united simultaneously as truly one.

In approaching the preparation for these gatherings there will surely be those who will be concerned about the expenses. The first answer is that in each place they will certainly find the necessary funds, especially since everyone knows that in matters of holiness we must participate with our money, which indicates how important the matter is.

However, if there should be a place where the problem of finances will cause a diminution in the potential activities, then, after the program has been completed, they should inform the local Merkos offices and the list of the deficits should be transmitted here, and from here the necessary funds will be forwarded to cover the expenses -- with happiness and gladness of heart.

May it be G-d's will that our good resolution accepted now will forthwith generate the reward that is fitting for Ahavas Yisroel and Jewish Unity -- the suspension of the diaspora. And we will speedily merit the true and complete redemption through our righteous Moshiach.

This is especially pertinent now, for we stand close to the end of Shabbos -- the "meal of Dovid the King Moshiach"; and with Moshiach we will celebrate -- next Shabbos -- the true great assembly of all the Jewish people for, "a great assembly will return."

And all who "rest in the dust will arise," with Moshe and Aharon among them, and Rashbi and all the righteous sages and princes of our people -- and also the previous Rebbe. The main speaker at that ultimate gathering will be our righteous Moshiach, who will teach to all the people the new, esoteric Torah, in a manner of "seeing." And then the count of the Jewish people will be completed, through Moshiach the first redeemer and the last redeemer, truly in our time.



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of Ahavas Yisroel and Jewish unity. The entire subject should be broadly covered.

Starting with Scripture: “Love your neighbor as yourself,” on which, “Rabbi Akiva said this is an important rule of Torah,” and which was also interpreted (by Hillel) as: “That is the whole Torah while the rest is commentary thereof...” Then, following through the practical halachic details, as described in Mishneh Torah of Maimonides, and finally the in-depth explanations on the profound quality of Ahavas Yisroel, as developed in Tanya -- and all the symbolic and exegetic interpretation presented by the great sages of Israel, whose Torah works have been widely accepted.

To all this we should add a special emphasis, that when we increase our love for fellow Jews and intensify Jewish Unity, the causes of the exile will be dissolved and automatically the effect -- the diaspora -- will disappear.

The subject matter for discussion should obviously be chosen with presence of mind and understanding of the audience so that it will be appreciated, comprehended and absorbed, to the point of influencing and enthusing the listeners. Hopefully, the enthusiasm will be contagious and they will go on and influence others, and strengthen and encourage others, to further the goals of Jewish Unity.

If, for some reason, these gatherings cannot take place on Shabbos then they should be scheduled for a subsequent fitting day, such as Sunday, Rosh Chodesh, etc. It is of primary importance that this call should be publicized and transmitted to the widest possible audience.

Those who will carry out this mission should involve themselves with energy, enthusiasm, vigor and excitement. They should keep in mind that this is “soulfully” essential for the Jewish people, and that we are dealing with an exceptional and unusual matter.

Practically speaking.

Preparation for these activities, and appropriate publicity should start as soon as possible and every moment of the day should be properly utilized. The approach must be in a pleasant and peaceful manner, day by day, leading up to the coming Shabbos and especially the time of “greatest delight” (late afternoon), when everyone will gather together. And although in every time zone on the globe the time of Minchah is different, nevertheless, in the spiritual realm they all

## Foreword

We are pleased to bring you this newly revised edition of *a CALL to ACTION*. Translated from its Hebrew counterpart, *HaMaaseh Hu Halkar*, this presentation is a collection of practical instruction from the Rebbe’s Sichos pertaining to the climax of the period of *sefiras ha’omer*.

*HaMaaseh Hu Halkar* is a compilation of *hora’os* culled from the Rebbe’s talks in the years 5748 to 5752 (1988-1992), from both edited and unedited sources (*muga* and *bilti muga*). Great effort has been extended to remain faithful to the Rebbe’s calculated and instructive nuance. This English translation is rendered by Rabbi Yaakov Paley.

At this time, when Moshiach’s arrival is imminent, the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, has emphasized the primacy of action. We are now beginning to experience the era when we will fully appreciate “the superiority of deed” above scholarship. May this take place completely and immediately!

Editorial Office of  
*HaMaaseh Hu Halkar*  
*Erev Shabbos Mevarchim Sivan, 5768*

# Sefiras HaOmer

Period of Counting the Omer

## WOMEN SHOULD PARTICIPATE

• Although women are technically exempt from the obligation to count the *omer* (since it is a time-bound commandment), nevertheless, “women in certain countries accepted the commandment upon themselves, rendering it obligatory”<sup>1</sup> – and *all* women can assist their sons and husbands, ensuring that they do not miss a day of counting.<sup>2</sup>

## COUNTDOWN TO *MATAN TORAH* APPLIES TO ALL

• Most importantly, women can and should assist in the essential theme of the counting: To awaking a yearning and longing for *Matan Torah* (the Giving of the Torah).<sup>2</sup>

## YEARN FOR GEULAH

• As we impatiently count the days leading up to Shavuot, we should impatiently express our desire for the Final Redemption – for we are also counting down the days, years and generations of our lengthy exile – and cry out, *ad masai*, “How much longer...?!”<sup>3</sup>

## TEACH YOUR FAMILY: TORAH IS OUR LIFE-FORCE

• In receiving the Torah at Sinai, G-d told Moshe to address the women *before* the men; this was due to their status as the bedrock of each Jewish household. Similarly, they should

1. Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch, Hil. Pesach 489:2.

2. Iyar 28 5751, address to the Lubavitch Women’s Organization (*Hisvaaduyos* pp. 244-245).

3. **Words with action**

We should increase our study of topics concerning the Final Redemption and the Holy Temple, for such learning helps bring these matters into reality all the sooner. (Iyar 24 5750, address to the Lubavitch Women’s Organization; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 229)

It is therefore appropriate that on the Shabbos which bestows blessing on the coming “third” month, we should conduct an exercise which enhances Jewish unity.

2) Next Shabbos is Erev Rosh Chodesh (the day before the New Moon), therefore no Tachanun (penitential prayer) is said, or, in this case no Tzidkascha Tzedek, is said during Minchah on Shabbos. There is also an halachah which rules, that the evening services of the next day may be recited before sunset -- while it is still Shabbos -- and in that scenario the Ya’aleh V’yovo (“may there ascend”) prayer of Rosh Chodesh may be said on Shabbos.

Thus, next Shabbos can incorporate the following day of Rosh Chodesh -- which is Rosh Chodesh Sivan, the day on which the Jewish people reached the wilderness of Sinai and the Jews camped before the mountain “as one man with one mind.” The unity that preceded Mattan Torah.

3) The theme and context of the portion of Bemidbar is the census of the Jewish people. A count of people brings out the idea that each person is equal to every other; a simple person does not count for less than one individual, and the prominent person does not count for more than one. Each one counts as one. This emphasizes the unity and completeness of the Jewish people, and at the same time it shows us G-d’s love for the Jewish people and how precious each and everyone is -- for that reason He counts them. This love of G-d for the Jews also leads to the love of one Jew for the other -- “for he loves that which his Beloved loves.”

This coming Shabbos, which blesses the month of Sivan and on which we read the portion of Bemidbar, is clearly the most appropriate time for Ahavas Yisroel gatherings to take place.

Therefore I propose the following soulful request:

This coming Shabbos, during the time of Minchah -- late afternoon -- Jewish people all over the world should gather in great numbers -- men, women and children: “with our youth and elders,...our sons and daughters,” in a manner of “brothers dwelling together.” There should be joyous gatherings of friends and festive meals (of course -- men & women separately).

At these gatherings words of Torah should be spoken on the topic

“friend” to the Jewish people, and we are precious in His estimation: “I have loved you,' says the L-rd” (Malachi 1:2).

When G-d reveals His love for the Jewish people, He then redeems them, without delay.

How can we actually and practically express and reveal our Ahavas Yisroel and Jewish unity? The answer is: when Jews gather in one place “as one man with one mind,” with the goal and purpose of encouraging and strengthening their harmony and -- especially increasing Jewish unity and Ahavas Yisroel; and when such a gathering is held in conjunction with a festive meal, including the toasting of “Le'Chayim” on wine, this increases Jewish Unity, as the Gemara says:

Great is the mouthful (of food or drink) in that it draws near those who are distant. (Sanhedrin 103b)

The Alter Rebbe explained the great value of a Chassidic farbrengen (gathering) by citing the following parable:

When a father sees the conduct of his children, with love, brotherly feelings, peace and friendliness, each one carrying out the wishes of the other and each one caring for the needs of the other just like his own needs, then the father is filled with delight, and he performs wonders and fulfills all their wishes.

*(Previous Rebbe -- Letters on Saying Tehillim)*

During the Sefirah period there are, of course, restrictions regarding public celebrations and a fitting time should be chosen, which will be acceptable according to all the different halachic opinions, so that everyone will be able to participate.

It would therefore be most fitting -- and acceptable to all opinions -- to celebrate such gatherings on this coming Shabbos, which is Shabbos Mevorchim Sivan, the “third month,” and the day of Erev Rosh Chodesh, when we will read the portion Bemidbar.

Let us elaborate on some of these points.

1) The “third month” alludes to the concept of peace, for the number “three” indicates that there can be two opposing forces and a third force which makes peace between them. As such, it is appropriate that Torah is also called the “threefold Torah” (Shabbos 88a) -- for the Torah was given “to bring peace in the world” (cf. Rambam, Laws of Chanukah, end).

precede the men in the annual preparations for *Matan Torah* that takes place on Shavuos:

Women should strive to permeate their families with a longing for *Matan Torah* -- filling them with the awareness that the Torah is “*our life and the length of our days*”!<sup>4</sup>

### WE HAVE THE ABILITY TO MAKE AMENDS

- During the *sefirah*, we are given extraordinary powers to mend our character traits and fix all that requires repair.<sup>5</sup>

### TIME TO MAKE UP

- [The period of the *sefirah* is treated as a state of semi-mourning for the thousands of students of Rabbi Akiva who perished during this time. Our Sages state that they were punished for failing to] “conduct themselves with respect one to the other” (*shelo nahagu kavod zeh lazeh*).

It is now that we are granted particular ability to correct any lack in our respect for fellow Jews.<sup>5</sup>

### RESOLVE DIVISIVE ISSUES

- We should express our *ahavas yisrael* by speaking with each

4. Iyar 25 5750, address to the Lubavitch Women’s Organization (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 223).

#### 5. Full respect

During the period of *sefiras ha’omer*, Jewish law places restrictions on matters associated with rejoicing ... This is due to our “mourning the twenty four thousand students of Rabbi Akivah who died during this period.”

The Talmud relates that the cause of their death was *mipnei shelo nahagu kavod zeh lazeh*, “because they did not conduct themselves with respect one to the other.”

Now, since this involves a law in *Toras Chesed* (“the Torah of Kindness”), and because the Torah applies eternally (“Torah” comes from *hora’ah*, “instruction”) – the death of Rabbi Akiva’s students must present us with a clear, positive directive:

We are not only are to observe the aspect of “mourning” during this period, but *primarily* concern ourselves with *mending* the failure to act with respect. To do this, we should *increase* our love for our fellow Jews, and act respectfully towards each other to the *fullest* extent. (Parshas Emor 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 112)

other peacefully and in a friendly manner, and by reaching unanimous decisions on matters that previously caused a divide.<sup>6</sup>

## INSTINCTIVE LOVE FOR FELLOW JEWS

• The precise words of our Sages, *nahagu...* “conduct themselves with respect,”<sup>7</sup> teaches us that *ahavas yisrael* should

6. Ibid., p. 120.

### Diversity leads to fuller truth

The possibility for human beings to act towards each other with disrespect stems from the fact that G-d created us dissimilar, or, as our Sages put it, *ein dei'oseihem shavos*, no two minds think alike ...

But *why* did G-d create us with such mental diversity? So that ... through presenting a wide-spectrum of views on any given topic, together we can formulate many innovative ideas; each person innovating according to the nature of his unique intellect. The end result is a far more *correct* understanding, conclusion and ultimate decision:

Firstly, different people with varied approaches discuss a topic between them, without any of them subduing or foregoing his personal opinion on the matter; doing so would run *contrary* to G-d's purpose in creating people with diverse natures.

They then evaluate the matter from many angles, and reach a final conclusion – a far truer conclusion than if but a single opinion would have been considered.

Obviously, in addition to the friendship that is eventually forged by reaching a unanimous and well-rounded conclusion, the actual discussions need to be carried out peacefully and with full respect for each participant.

This, then, is what is required of us during the *sefirah*: ... Even where a disharmonious situation already exists (as was the case with the students of Rabbi Akivah), we are to introduce peace between the parties. By doing so, we generate far *greater* peace than that which existed *prior* to the divide. This is similar to a document whose validity has been challenged and subsequently researched and proven in Court; it now carries far greater authenticity than a document that remains unchallenged – and therefore unproven. (Ibid., pp. 112-113)

### The Torah's way

And should there remain some issue about which the two sides can not discuss and reach an agreement – let them go to a third party, who will arbitrate between them. That “third party” should be the Rabbis in their location. After hearing the Rabbis' ruling, both sides should then conduct themselves according to the directive and decision of Halachah. *This* is the way things are done according to the Torah – as should be plainly obvious. (Ibid., p. 121)

7. **Regular behavior**

... After all, this wording is completely unusual for such a phrase. Seemingly, the Sages should have phrased it, “they did not *show* respect for each other,” or more simply, “they did not respect each other” – or something along those lines.

Nevertheless, they choose the term “conduct,” in order to teach us that acting

3) The third aspect mentioned above comes into focus when we recall the Midrash:

R. Shimon B. Yochai said: “Whence can you prove that if Israel had been short even of one man the Divine Presence would not have revealed itself to them? For it is written: 'For on the third day the L-rd will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai.'”

(*Devorim Rabbah* 7:8)

We see, that Rashbi held that Mattan Torah depended on the participation of every single Jew. Torah depends on absolute unity.

The Torah portion of this week also fits into the equation. As we know,

Ezra made a regulation for Israel that they should read the curses in Vayikra (Bechukosai) before Shavuos....

(*Megillah* 31b)

This accentuates the connection between the portion of Bechukosai and Mattan Torah on Shavuos. Therefore, with Lag B'Omer behind us and Shavuos quickly approaching, we must increase and intensify the aspects of Jewish unity and Ahavas Yisroel.

In our generation -- the time of “Heels of Moshiach” -- another theme emerges. The Rashbi has a special role in the future redemption, as we find in Zohar:

...with this work of yours, which is the book of splendor...(through which) they will leave their exile with mercy. (Zohar III, p. 124b)

In other words, it is the role of Rashbi to effect the redemption of each and every Jew, together with the liberation of the Shechinah. As the Rashbi taught:

To every place to where they were exiled the Shechinah went with them.... The Holy One, Blessed be He, will return with them from the places of exile. (Megillah 29a)

As the cause of the exile was the lack of Jewish harmony, it is obvious that we can nullify the basis of the diaspora by adding more Ahavas Yisroel, in the form of expressing our love even if there is no reason for the love! In that way the golus will also disappear. Especially as this expression of Ahavas Yisroel will also engender G-d's love for the Jewish people, for the Holy One, Blessed be He, is the

carried on and perfected R. Akiva's teachings and placed special emphasis on the mitzvah of loving fellow Jews. Rashbi (Rabbi Shimon b. Yochai) was forced to hide with his son in a cave, and suffer great privation for 13 years, to escape the threat of arrest by the Roman authorities. Having attained the loftiest peaks of Torah knowledge while in the cave, when he emerged, he immediately utilized the first opportunity to express his Ahavas Yisroel by improving conditions for his fellow Jews. He interested himself in a persistent problem affecting the Tiberias community and opened a road that had been closed to Kohanim because of suspected tumah (defilement) (cf. Shabbos 33b). He also proclaimed: "I am able to exempt the whole world from judgment..." (Sukkah 45b).

Rashbi's devotion to the Jewish people and his insights were much more profound. The Zohar relates:

It once happened that the world needed rain...so they came to R. Shimon...he recited the verse: "A song of ascents ...Behold, how good and how pleasant it is when brothers dwell together" (Tehillim 133:1). As a result the rain began to fall. (Zohar III, 59b)

Was not the Rashbi hinting that harmonious, brotherly love and Jewish unity serve as the harbinger of material blessings from G-d!

As the Ramban expounds on the verse:

"Then will I give you rains in their seasons" (Vayikra 26:4) -- He mentioned the matter of rains first because if they come in their proper season...it is a prime cause of physical health, and all produce will increase and be blessed by it, just as He said, "and the land shall yield her produce and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit..." This is the greatest of all blessings. (Ramban, Vayikra 26:4)

The Baal Shem Tov explains that the term rain "gishmeichem" has the same root as "gashmius" -- corporeality. Thus, all physical blessings are dependent on the unity and harmony of the Jewish people.

2) The period of Sefirah serves as a preparation for Mattan Torah in that the seven supernal and human attributes (kindness -- royalty) are interwoven and refined. Since on Lag B'Omer (the 33rd day) the attribute of "Beauty in Beauty" is attained -- the major portion of the Sefirah "body" has been built.\* And then Lag B'Omer is directly connected to the state of "as one man with one mind," of Mattan Torah.

become our *minhag* -- "custom": It should be as routine and commonplace as a local custom; we should not require *effort* to act respectfully to each other...<sup>8</sup>

### PROACTIVE AHAVAS YISRAEL

- The term *nahagu* shares the root of the word *manhig* -- "leader." This indicates that each of us should "take the lead" in all matters pertaining to Jewish unity and brotherhood. And we should influence all those with whom we have contact -- so that for them, as well, it will become instinctive to act with *ahavas yisrael*.<sup>9</sup>

### RECITING SHEHECHIYANU DURING SEFIRAH

- It is our custom to refrain from reciting the blessing of *shehechyanu* on a new fruit during the *sefirah*. The exception to this custom is on Shabbos and Lag B'omer.
- Nevertheless, those who already have the established custom to recite *shehechyanu* during the *sefirah* should *certainly* not stop doing so. Quite the opposite -- may they continue making such blessings!<sup>10</sup>

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respectfully should become one's *regular behavior* ... (Parshas Behar 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 158)

#### 8. Going beyond as part of duty

... Since this conduct will have become normal or even "natural" -- or at the least, "second nature"...

In a way, a "custom" is superior to an obligation by law. It involves going *beyond* the call of duty (*lifnim mi'shuras hadin*), and is termed "pious conduct" (*midas chasidus*).

At the same time, a custom carries the weight of the dictum, *minhag yisrael torah hi*, "Jewish custom is part of Torah" -- as Rambam states regarding "the Rabbinic decrees, enactments and customs (*gezeros, takanos and minhagim*)" that spread throughout Jewry.

The directive to us in all this, is that we should conduct ourselves with *ahavas yisrael*, in a manner of "pious conduct" that goes "beyond the call of duty"; this then becomes an actual part of the Torah and its laws. (Ibid.)

We should connect *both* of these interpretations of *nahagu*: Our *minhag* (custom) of acting with *ahavas yisrael* beyond the call of duty should become habitual. (Ibid., fn. 117)

9. ... And they should become *manhigim*, "leaders," to influence others in this regard. (Parshas Behar 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 159-159)

#### 10. New fruit

The Chief Rabbis: There are places where they have the custom to recite

## Addendum

# Jewish Unity

Shabbos Parshas Bechukosai 5746  
Reprinted from Sichos In English, vol. 31

On Shabbos Bechukosai, the Lubavitcher Rebbe Shlita delivered a discourse which emphasized the importance of Jewish Unity and Ahavas Yisroel. He indicated that these two important principles should be brought into widespread practice on the Shabbos preceding Shavuos. This would be a fitting preparation for the receiving of the Torah, “as one man with one mind.”

He urged that gatherings of this nature should be organized all over the world and that multitudes of Jewish people should attend. Such gatherings will strengthen Jewish Unity and give expression to Ahavas Yisroel, love for our fellow Jews.

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Among the important themes of the Sefirah period, Ahavas Yisroel -- love of fellow Jews -- and Jewish unity, stand out most prominently.

1) The observance of the Sefirah period (between the holiday of Pesach and Shavuos) as a time of quasi-mourning, commemorates the tragic deaths of the disciples of Rabbi Akiva, nearly two millennia ago. The Talmud relates:

R. Akiva had 12,000 pairs of disciples,... and all of them died at the same time because they did not treat each other with respect. (Yevamos 62b)

They were remiss in their Ahavas Yisroel. We must therefore make special efforts during this period of the year, to increase Ahavas Yisroel in accordance with the dictum of Rabbi Akiva:

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*shehechyanu* over a new fruit during the *sefirah*, but not on a new garment. This matter is totally dependant on local custom.

The Rebbe: Our [Chabad] custom is... [See main text above for continuation]. (Minutes taken from the Chief Rabbis of Israel's visit to the Rebbe, Iyar 11 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 134)

You should love your neighbor as yourself; this is a fundamental principle of the Torah. (Rashi, Vayikra 19:18)

2) The days of Sefirah serve as a period of preparation for Shavuos and the giving of the Torah. Therefore, just as the first preparation for Torah was effected through unity, so too, we must prepare for the Torah through Jewish unity. On the verse “And there Israel encamped (singular) before the mountain” (Shemos 19:2), Rashi explains, “As one man with one mind (heart).”

The Midrash elaborates:

The Holy One, Blessed be He, said: Because the Jewish people despise discord and they love peace and are united in their camping, this is the propitious time for Me to give them My Torah. (cf. Vayikra Rabbah 9:9)

Clearly, our annual preparation for “receiving the Torah” must include an increase in Ahavas Yisroel and Jewish unity -- “as one man with one mind.”

3) During Sefirah we count 49 days equaling seven complete weeks, as Scripture states: “You shall then count seven complete weeks” (Vayikra 23:15). Chassidus offers us a symbolic interpretation that the Jewish people are represented by a seven-branched menorah, symbolic of the seven attributes (Sefiros) and seven levels of Divine service. By uniting the seven branches of the Jewish souls which interact with each other, we, symbolically, perfect the seven complete weeks.

The cooperation of every Jew is necessary for all Jews to attain perfection. Consequently, through Ahavas Yisroel and unity we complete the seven weeks and attain a state of “complete” unity of the Jewish people, the fitting preparation for receiving the Torah. As a result also, the seven weeks become unified as one.

On the Shabbos following Lag B'Omer and in the Torah portion of Bechukosai read on that Shabbos, we find expression of these points.

1) Since Lag B'Omer represents the cessation of the plague that killed R. Akiva's students, it follows that the period after Lag B'Omer saw a new emergence of respect and increased love among the students.

Lag B'Omer is also the Hilulo (day of passing and also -- celebration) day of Rabbi Shimon b. Yochoai, R. Akiva's disciple, who