Making our Days Count: Thoughts for the Omer Period

View PDF



Making our Days Count: Thoughts on Counting the Omer
by Rabbi Marc D. Angel

We had a neighbor--an elderly widow--who was vibrant, intelligent and active. As she grew older, she became increasingly forgetful. Her condition gradually worsened, to the point where she needed full time help at home.

One day, several of her grandchildren came to visit her. They brought tape recorders and note pads. They wanted to know more about her life story. They asked her questions, but she gave vague or confused replies. First she told them she grew up in the Bronx; and later said she grew up in Brooklyn. She couldn't remember names, or dates, or places. She could not remember the facts that the grandchildren were trying to learn. They were frustrated; their tape recorders and note pads were useless, since the grandmother's memory had deteriorated so badly.

They had come too late. The grandmother had lived well into her nineties, but the grandchildren had never seemed to have found time to ask her their questions or to listen carefully to her stories. Now, when she was about to die, they realized that they had better interview her before it was too late. But, in fact, it was too late. Her memory was impaired. All of her stories and adventures were locked into her mind, and were forever inaccessible to them. They were unable to retrieve information that would have been meaningful to their own lives, that would have given them greater understanding of the grandmother's life and experiences. They must have asked themselves: why did we wait so long before asking her our questions?

When people suffer the loss of a loved one, they often ask: why didn't I spend more time, why wasn't I more attentive, why didn't I listen more and listen better? When people suffer a breakdown in their relationships, they often ask: why didn't I give more time and effort to the relationship? Why did I take things for granted, why did I assume that everything would just go on forever?

In relationships, small things are often the big things: kindness, attentiveness, giving extra time and energy, expressing love and respect and appreciation, not taking others for granted. To maintain good relationships, one needs to feel a sense of urgency; the relationship needs to be renewed every day. If we let time slip by, we may lose everything.

When I was a young boy, I heard a rabbi explain the importance of the mitzvah of counting the Omer--the 49 day period between the second day of Passover and Shavuoth. He said: "We count the days so that we will learn to make our days count!" By focusing on each day, by actually counting it out, we come to sense the importance of each day. We then learn, hopefully, that each day counts--each day is important and cannot be taken for granted. None of us knows how the future will unfold; we only know what we can do here and now in the present.

The Omer period is an appropriate time to remind ourselves of the importance of each day. We can make each day count by devoting proper time to our loved ones, to our friends and neighbors, to those activities that strengthen ourselves and our society. Don't wait for tomorrow or next week or next year. Life must be lived and renewed each day. Count your days to make your days count.