

Class on Iyar – Lesson 2

The 49 Day Trek through Desert to Sinai

After the exodus from Egypt and the splitting of the sea and having been witness to so many miracles, the Israelites were awestruck. Their leaving of Egypt began a cleansing period that is understood in the idea, “you can take people out of slavery but you can’t take the slavery out of them.” The Israelites had sunk very low on the spiritual level. They had almost reached the bottom of spiritual defilement, so they had to be cleansed before they could receive the Torah.

Counting: Misaper, sipur & sefer & sapir

The 49 steps that we take every year allows us to polish our own soul powers so that they are cleansed and clarified. We count them because the process of counting is related to the process of clarifying and making something count – making it important or at least acknowledged. Misaper means count. It’s related to sipur & sefer – telling & book/story. But it’s also related to the word sapir which means sapphire – we are counting and clarifying the aspects of our souls that forms our character until those aspects become luminous like a sapphire.

The Emotions

When we take each of the emotional sephirot and see them from all different sides, we start to become whole. Like I said before, the sephirot on the Tree of Life can only be learned by taking them each separately. But they are not separate, they are a dynamic whole. Each relates to each of the others and in order to really grasp them and how they work inside of you, it takes examining them as if they are 6-sided cubes. That way, for example, Chesed can be seen as having 6 different aspects to it. And like I wrote in the previous session, “Iyar” is composed of 3 letters that make up the acronym, “I am G-d who Heals you”. Healing comes with integrating all 7 soul powers and we do this during the 7 weeks of the Omer by counting the Omer and making them count inside of us.

Barley/Bull

Another way to look at this time of refining character is by uncovering the symbolic nature of the Omer offering itself. The Omer itself was the first barley harvest of the new year. It could not be used until thanking G-d for it and offering it as a thanksgiving offering in the Holy Temple when it stood. Barley is an animal food. So symbolically, we are elevating our animal selves – the part of us that is happy just existing and feeding our existence but not really reaching for anything higher in life. Thus, the goal of offering our “barley” selves by “counting” each sefirah is to refine and elevate the part of us that is perhaps dull and apathetic. It’s interesting that Taurus is the astrology for this month. In Kabbalah, we need to harness that bull energy, not kill it off but using its power to attain something beyond myself – to attain a higher existence that reaches beyond my own.

Bread/Challah Once the ancient Israelites got through the 49 days, on the 50th, Shavuot, they gave the next offering – 2 loaves of bread. It’s as if we take the raw earthy and earthly stuff through the power of our own hands to create something even better out of it. G-d gives us barley and wheat, but we take it to co-create something better to offer Him, to serve Him. This is the story of Life – the culmination of all of this clarifying, grinding, mixing, baking seems to me to really represent what we are to do in the world with all of the challenges that the “Sponsor” gives us. We need to bake and offer beautiful loaves.

Manna

Actually, the 2 loaves of challah that are blessed each Shabbat symbolize the 2 portions of manna that fell in the desert on Friday – 2 portions because they were not allowed to gather the manna on Saturday. In fact, if they ever gathered more than their fair share of manna and had any left over for the next day, it would spoil and they couldn’t eat it. Part of the clarifying process of those first 49 days in the desert was the miracle of being led and fed by G-d, Himself, and trusting that you would get fed.

Manna/Money

Manna in English is Mun in Hebrew. We can see that this is where we get the word for money. And we can associate our own faith in our supply of food, money, and any needs with the idea of the manna that fell from heaven. The word in Hebrew, Min = from, of, more than, also seems to be talking about our fears of where do we get our supply from. And our worries about money can be seen as coming from a lack of faith in G-d’s giving nature. I believe that we need to

cultivate this faith in G-d's desire to bless us with our portion and let go of our fears around not getting enough by focusing instead on how do I serve? G-d has blessed us with Life and wants us to prosper and be taken care of so that we can do what we are here on earth to do.