

Number Our Days

By Matthew Day

So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.

(Psalms 90:12 ESV)

We are currently in the middle of the counting of the omer—the count up from First Fruits to Shavuot or Pentecost (Lev. 23:15-16). Why are we commanded to count the days? What is so special about this time period that each day has a number?

The crossing of the Red Sea is traditionally considered to have happened on First Fruits. We know from 1 Corinthians 10:2 that the crossing of the Red Sea was regarded as a baptism. Shavuot is traditionally the day that the Ten Commandments were given. It is also the day that the Holy Spirit came down upon the disciples of Yeshua. It was a baptism of fire and the spirit.

"I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

(Matthew 3:11 ESV)

These two festivals are connected through this idea of baptism—one of water and one of fire; one through the Red Sea and one at Mt. Sinai. One is physical and the other is spiritual. One is present and the other is future. We look back to the day when our Savior rescued us from our sin—from Egypt, killing the old man. We look forward to the day when Father puts His spirit within us—to that day when the Torah is written on our hearts as described in the New Covenant. But now we are in that period in between. The counting of the omer is a picture of our lives as disciples on this earth.

Job 14:12 says the number of our days has been determined. Psalm 39:4-6 says our days are fleeting—we are a “mere breath.” What then can we do? Our time is finite—we do not go on forever. What will our lives measure up to? Our knowledge will pass away. Our riches will rust. Our fame will not be remembered. These things are vain—a “chasing after the wind” to use the words of the writer of Ecclesiastes. What then should we live for?

This is why we count the omer every year. It is to teach us to number our days as the Psalmist quoted above writes. Time is not simply a resource to be consumed like fuel. Like food, it is meant to be enjoyed. Every day has a number, a name. Each day is special. Riches, wisdom, fame, etc—these things are not the goal. There is nothing we can strive for that will satisfy us, for we will never attain it. If one could attain it, then his life would end for it would no longer have purpose. Purpose is not a goal—it is a lifestyle. It is living each day to the fullest. It is counting the number of our days.

What does that mean though? Ecclesiastes puts it beautifully:

I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; also that

everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil--this is God's gift to man.

(Ecclesiastes 3:10-13 ESV)

We are on the path of life. Every day is a mile marker. There is nothing we can do to change the path—there will be rough spots, there will be rivers, there will be mountains, there will be valleys. All paths lead to the grave. Why do we rush like fools down this path? Always wishing for tomorrow to come, always demanding the end without the work. We were not created for efficiency. Look at the fields! The seed takes time to grow and every step of the way is beautiful. Stop running, slow down. Take each day as it comes. When the rain pours, bless God. When the mountains are steep, bless God. When the flowers bloom, bless God. Everything comes forth in its season. Consider the flowers, number the rocks, dance in the rain—take the time to enjoy the work, the family, the blessings Father has given you.

There is another important part to this:

The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

(Ecclesiastes 12:13 ESV)

After searching for purpose in life, this is the conclusion that Solomon came to—fear God and keep His commandments. What commandments? Well, all of them, but I want to focus on a particular one. Yeshua quoted the greatest commandment from Deuteronomy 6. He only quoted the first part of that passage. In Judaism, Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is read every day, evening and morning:

*"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. **You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.***

(Deuteronomy 6:4-9 ESV)

There is one goal that takes exactly one lifetime to complete—that is to raise up another generation to carry on the Name. If purpose has any goal, I would say that this is it. Indeed, the very first commandment ever given is “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:28). But as I said before, it is not so much a goal as a lifestyle. It isn't just about creating another generation of disciples—it's about the relationship between the generations. It's about the family.

As I was driving home the other day, the song *Cinderella* by Steven Curtis Chapman came on the radio. This is a beautiful song about a father dancing with his daughter, cherishing every moment because he knows that “all too soon the clock will strike midnight and she'll be gone.” Life is our dance. Our family is the dance circle with YHVH in the center. Every step has a name, a number. Outside the world tempts us with all the things that don't matter. But when we dance we face each other, and in each other see the face of God (for we are the dwelling place of God).

Father, teach us to number our days that we may count every day precious. For soon the clock will

strike midnight and it will be gone.

Midrash Newsletter
May 2010