

Rabbi Fox's Message for Temple Beth Shalom's  
Iyar/Sivan 5768 (June 2008) Newsletter

Counting Ourselves In

For those of us who are able to remember as children or as parents (or even as grandparents) the intersection of children's programming and Public Television, the traversing of the distance between Pesach and Shavuot is best described by a small black and white muppet laughing with the joy of learning. "One . . . ah, ah, ah; two . . . ah, ah, ah; three . . . ah, ah, ah!" The muppet known as "The Count" – a humorous overt homage to Count Dracula – has taught generations of children the importance of being able to count and the powerful knowledge of quantifiable things.

In an even more powerful way, we are taught the same lesson as adults when we count the Omer from the second night of Pesach until the day before Shavuot. By saying the blessing and by counting the intervening days between one holiday and another, we share in the experience of our ancestors. On Pesach, we commemorate our ancestors' freedom and by doing so we honor our freedom. On Shavuot, however, we give value to that freedom by affirming our acceptance of our holy Torah, traditionally known as the day that our ancestors stood at Sinai to receive the same Jewish Law that guides our lives today.

So, what does it mean for us to count the days? We count not only to remind ourselves that each day matters not only in and of itself as another day that we are alive and free, but that our lives matter more, that we can raise the meaning of our daily human experience to something that connects us to the Divine in the Universe. All life is precious, but our tradition, especially the counting of the Omer, teaches us that our lives hold greater meaning when we live in deliberate (some might say, "holy") ways.

Great lessons can be learned from even a bundle of cloth and felt glued together and given a voice – what we do to mark our time on this earth is what determines whether we "count." It is in the climbing of this mountain of time – the 49 days of the Omer – that allows us to be in the right frame of mind to receive the Torah as OUR Torah and to see the world from a new perspective.

It is my wish for each of you that you be blessed to see the world differently this Shavuot and that your counting brings you a new appreciation of our beloved Jewish traditions.

See you on the mountain-top – *Hag Sameach!*  
Rabbi Gerald R. Fox