

# Thoughts on Sefirah

## PART 2

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THE word Sofrim or Sefirus is also related to the specially dedicated men who are qualified to write in Taharah and Kedusha our holy Sifrei Torah, Megillos, Mezuzos and of course Tefillin. Sofrim also refers to the historic period after the sad destruction of Bayis Rishon. These Sofrim formed the spiritual impetus that vouchsafed the order and content of our tefillah and the framework of the preservation of our communal Torah life. The most famous of these was Ezra Hasofer. As we learn in Talmud Yerushalmi Berachos (1:4) "the words of the Scribes are even dearer than those of

the Torah itself."

So we may not count people and we cannot count the stars of Heaven or the sand of the seashore. (Bereishis 13:16). If we count anything temporal, like money or gold, we will experience the divisiveness that physical property provokes between those who have more and those who have less. If we count the years of our life we are of necessity divided by the attributes of the generation gap.

It is the Torah alone that brings unity to those who accept and live their lives by the mitzvos both positive and negative and to those who learn Torah together. Every year we count

as one single corpus the seven times seven holy days and weeks, together leading us once more to the pinnacle of kedushah. Thereby we emphasise in speech and in action the unity of a people who as one man, with one heart, strenuously work on our self-perfection to become once more ready to receive the Torah anew from the Source of Hashem's Kisei Hakovod.

The word *monoh*, meaning a counting or a portion of a whole, is likewise related to the term meaning being prepared or to prepare, as we find twice in the book of Yonah (2:7 and 4: 6-8). So we may understand these preparatory days of Sefirah as

a spiritual prelude to being prepared once more to reach the special apex from where we shall be ready and prepared to receive the Torah anew.

We renew our pledge as one people, all counting the same number of days together, mindful of the meaning of the arduous personal and national ascent from the degradation of slavery to the whims of human brutality towards the only real freedom and holiness of accepting Hashem's Kingship over us. We count the days of ascent towards Har Sinai anew each year, to become worthy of Hashem's unique heavenly gift, the pinnacle of Hashem's Treasure House.

## Shabbos project set to launch

A BEAUTIFUL new communal programme for women and high school girls is being launched in North West London spearheaded by the learning programme Orah.

The Sheva Shabbosos Project aims to inspire people to make a greater effort in demonstrating their commitment to Shabbos for seven consecutive Shabbosos, and to increase their understanding and appreciation for Shabbos during this period.

The project is being run *l'ilui nishmas* the seven Sassoon children who tragically perished in a house fire in Flatbush, New York on the Friday night before Pesach.

The grand launch of the project, which is being organised in conjunction with TAL and *seed*, is scheduled for this coming Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> May with an opening talk from the hugely popular lecturer and American-born educator Rabbi Dovid Orlofsky. In the ensuing weeks, Orah will be hosting a series of Sunday night talks addressing topics such as *The Majesty of Shabbos*, *Shabbos Kodesh*, *The Gift of Shabbos* and *A Song for Shabbos* from speakers including Rabbi Shimshon Silkin, Rabbi Shlomo Farhi and Rabbi Yaakov Hamer.

Several North West London girls' schools including Beis Yaakov, Menorah High, Tiferes and Hasmonean have joined this communal initiative and are planning to run The Sheva Shabbosos Project within their schools, with special programmes targeting their respective students. A number of schools in New York

and Toronto will also be participating, and any additional schools wishing to take part will be warmly welcomed. Within the schools, there will be a focus on a different aspect of Shabbos during each of the Seven Weeks, including areas such as preparation and readiness for Shabbos, how to enhance Oneg Shabbos, and Shabbos tefillos. Each school is preparing different events and activities to bring out these themes for their students in the best possible way.

The project is intended to have an impact on three levels: the individual, the family, and the community. Individuals are encouraged to privately commit to do something extra for a minimum of seven weeks to enhance their own personal observance of or connection to Shabbos. Parents are asked to encourage their families to collectively agree on doing something extra to enhance their Shabbos experience – anything from singing more zemiros at the Shabbos table to preparing favourite dishes. And organisations within the community are being encouraged to share ideas and facilitate additional learning about Shabbos that might enhance the enjoyment of Shabbos for others.

It is hoped that the *zechus* of this additional learning and renewed commitment toward Shabbos will bring an aliyah for the precious *neshomas* of the Sassoon children, and a *refua shleimah* to Mrs Gayle Sassoon (Gilah bas Frances) and her daughter Tzipora (Tzipora bas Gila).

שבע  
THE  
שבחות  
PROJECT