



## The Newer Face of the Omer Period

Once upon a time, a long time ago (and IY"H soon in our future), the Omer period from Pesach to Shavuot was a happy time. We count from the second day of Pesach when the Barley Omer offering is made, up to (but not including) the New Mincha to HaShem (Sh'tei HaLechem) of Shavuot.

When the Beit HaMikdash was destroyed, a vacuum of Omer feelings and emotions was created. That vacuum was filled by the mourning of the tragic deaths of 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva. Further mournful mood was added in the wake of the Crusades.

The bright spots of the Omer period were Rosh Chodesh Iyar and Sivan, Pesach Sheni - but mostly it has been Lag BaOmer that gives a break to the mild mourning of the Omer. Then Lag BaOmer took on a life of its own, fed by a Kabbalistic and Chassidic joy that is intense.

And in more recent times - in our time - we have three significant additions to the Omer calendar - of a different nature.

Yom HaSho'a v'HaG'vura is a major reminder of yet another tragic event in a tragedy-filled Jewish History.

At the same time, it marks episodes of heroism - both physical as well as spiritual, which shine brightly in one of the darkest periods of our history.

And then comes Yom HaAtzmaut, marking and celebrating the establishment of the State of Israel.

This is not just a bright point in an

otherwise mournful period of the calendar. If we take DAYEINU from the Hagada and use it to describe the progression from the Exodus from Egypt and the passage through the Midbar, highlighting the miracles of the Splitting of the Sea and of the sustenance (and miraculous food and water and protection during the sojourn in the wilderness, Matan Torah, and then our entry into the Land of Israel, conquest and settlement and the building of the Beit HaMikdash - if we use Dayeinu for that, then we can see the 40 year period and the 440 further years until the first Beit Hamikdash, with many many years of Mishkan through out.

And we can also see the longer sojourn throughout Jewish History from the birth of our Nation with the Exodus and the Sinai Experience - from way back then all the way through history with its ups and downs, until today and tomorrow.

Then Yom HaAtzmaut is not just a bright spot on a dark background - it is a gift from G-d of a partial Geula, of several stages of Geula. And He is watching us to see if we thank Him for the massive ingathering of the Exiles - even with its problems. So too the restoration of Jewish sovereignty - even with its problems, as something to proclaim ZEH HAYOM ASA HASHEM ... And then there is Yom Yerushalayim. Neither day marks the complete Geula, but both should cause us to thank Him.