

Sermon by Rabbi Eliezer Hirsch Shavuot 2020 "Complete"

Chag sameach. First, I'd like to acknowledge that this Shavuot sermon is sponsored by Marjie Risman and Ed Letzter, in commemoration of the Shloshim of Ed's father Dr. Fredrick Letzter, (Ephraim ben Yitzchak) z'l, which falls on 5 Sivan/May 28, and in commemoration of the Yahrtzeit of Marjie's father Dr. Joseph Risman (Yaacov ben Dov Ber Meir) z'l, which falls on 9 Sivan/June 1. May their memories be a blessing.

This Shavuot sermon is also sponsored by Henrique, Karen, Maya and Liora Setton, in celebration of Karen successfully passing the NY Bar Exam, and to thank myself and the entire Mekor Community for their meaningful and thoughtful support in these difficult times. Mazal tov and thank you! The sermon is also sponsored in commemoration of the Shloshim on Wednesday (May 27) of Karen's father, Ari ben Moshe z'l. May his memory be a blessing.

Shavuot is a unique Jewish holiday in many ways, and one of its most distinctive features is that it is the only holiday without a specific date. The Torah tells us to compute the date via the *sefirat ha'omer*, our counting of the Omer. So, in ancient times, the holiday could fall out on the 5th, 6th or 7th day of Sivan.

One of the fundamental requirements for the counting of omer is that it must be what the Torah calls *Temimot*, complete. Based on that mandate the Shulchan Aruch, the code of Jewish law, rules that if you miss even one day of the counting, you may not count any more days with a blessing. What is unusual about this ruling is that the Shulchan Aruch usually joins the majority, but in this instance, he takes the minority position of the Behag commentary. Most of the other commentators hold that each day of the Omer is a separate mitzvah, so even if you miss a day, you may still count the remaining days with a blessing.

I think the message of this ruling of the Shulchan Aruch is that we must regard the time leading up to Shavuot as a symbol of our unity. Just as we must try to not miss a single day of the Omer, we cannot be whole when even one person is missing from the Jewish people. Our Sages teach that although the Jewish people were often divided by conflict during their desert sojourn, Shavuot was the exception, where they stood at the bottom of Mount Sinai “Keish Echad Bileiv Echad”, as one person with one united heart .

This year, the Mekor community is separated physically; but if we have each other in mind as we celebrate, we will celebrate the holiday in a way that is complete. Chag sameach.