

SECOND DAY PESACH 1984
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

On the second day of Pesach we begin to count the Omer. In the ancient Temple an offering of barley was cut ^{on the second of Pesach} ~~that~~ night and offered the following day in the Temple, and from then on the new grain could be eaten. Forty-nine days later was the holiday of Shavuos at which time two loaves of bread made from wheat were waved on the altar. The rabbis explain that Pesach and Shavuos are tied together, that barley is ~~really~~ animal food, and that human beings eat wheat not barley. Freedom is important but even animals roam free. In order to be a human being, it is not enough to have freedom. You also have to have responsibilities and have a Torah which tells you how to use your freedom. This is a wonderful message, that freedom without responsibility is not freedom, that freedom can also be used to destroy as well as to build. ^U The question can be asked, if this lesson is so important, why don't we start counting the Omer from the first night? Why do we wait until the second night? What's more, we all know that counting the Omer was so important that we do not say the blessing Shechenu because we do not know if we ^{will} ~~would~~ complete it. We know ^{that} if we miss a night and a subsequent day, for example if we count the 7th day but forgot the 8th day until the 9th day, we no longer can count with a Brocha, a blessing. If this counting the Omer is so important why didn't we begin counting it from the night of the first Seder, from the very first night of Pesach? ^U We all know that in Jewish law a slave suffers from three disabilities: he cannot marry, he cannot be a witness, and he does not do any Mitzvahs that are time-bound. That's why on the Seder night we have three symbols. The Pesach, the paschal lamb, stood for the fact that we could not tell the truth. The Matzah stood for now we could control time because Matzah is only Matzah if water does not touch it for 18 minutes. ^U By the Maror we eat it shows we can have families because one of the ways the Egyptians embittered our lives was by ~~severing~~ severing families, but not allowing husbands and wives and children to be together. ^U Freedom has two parts. There is freedom of and freedom from. Freedom of means that you are left alone, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion, freedom of the press, that the State and others let you practice your religion as you want, that you can write what you want, you can speak what you want. Freedom

of is basically the freedom to be left alone to do what you want. However, there is another freedom, freedom from. Roosevelt's famous four freedom froms, freedom from hunger, freedom from fear, freedom from persecution, etc. This freedom requires a positive action. Society has to organize itself so people are not hungry. Society has to organize itself so that you are not harassed or persecuted by having a good police force, etc. Freedom from requires action. Freedom of means that the State just leaves you alone. Both freedom of and freedom from are important. Freedom from is, of course, what much of the Torah is about, how we can help our fellow human being. In fact, when we read about the counting of the Omer, immediately after it says "when you reap the harvest of your land you should not reap the corner of your field." You had to leave provisions for the poor. This requires the active cooperation of everyone. On the first night of Pesach we are celebrating freedom of. Thank G-d the Egyptians have now left us alone. We can now be free. We can sit with our families. That's why when the Temple stood only people who had made prior arrangements could be part of a Seder. You could not just drop in on a Seder. We celebrate with our family and friends. We can say what we want. We can worship how we want. The emphasis on this night is freedom of, not freedom from. Beginning the second night of Pesach the emphasis is on freedom from. The new crop can now be eaten and has to be distributed fairly and every day we can ^{not} just concentrate on ourselves, but have to make sure that society, as a whole, is just and everybody is taken care of. Therefore, if we miss a day we cannot say a Brocha. We receive no blessing from a day in which we are not concentrating ^{on} with freedom from. The whole emphasis from the second day on is on making sure that all society is well fed and well clothed. That's why we count the Omer in the synagogue, in public. It is preferable even to have the Rabbi or the Cantor count the Omer first for everyone. We just do not count it by ourselves at home because we have to make sure that freedom from is taken care of. It is concern with our neighbor to make sure his needs are met. I am reminded of the story they tell about a man who called up his friend

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in the garment business. He asked, "How is business?" His friend answered, "Business is terrific. This month I have had a 40% increase. My son, the lawyer, just won the biggest settlement ever, and I hear my son, the doctor, is going to be nominated for a Nobel prize." The man said, "Oh, I didn't know you had anybody in your office with you. I'll call you back later." We have to understand not only what he says, but also what he means. Freedom of is important and that's why we celebrate it on the first night of Pesach, but freedom from takes much more effort and much of our energy and that takes at least 49 days to accomplish.