

## Counting Towards Something

From the second night of Pesach, for forty-nine days, we are in the period known as *sefirat haOmer*, the counting of the Omer. This practice of counting each day is based directly on a biblical proof text from Leviticus 23:15-6, which instructs us, using agricultural terms, to count each day for seven weeks until the holiday of Shavuot.

It's not enough to be freed from Egypt. We have to have a trajectory towards something. And for the ancient Israelites, it was towards Sinai, towards revelation, not just of the laws of the Torah but of the communal identity that would bind them – and us – together for thousands of years.

That commitment to Jewish learning and identity gets relived every year on Shavuot, when study Torah late into the night. This year, our Shavuot will be particularly revelatory, as eight Adult B'nei Mitzvah students who have never taught Torah before will share their Torah with anyone who shows up.

Attendance at Shavuot at TBI usually has not been as high as attendance at our Passover seder. Maybe that's because it's easier to think about what we're running from than what we're looking towards. Whether it's Egypt in the story of the Exodus, or antisemitism today, we know what it is that we have to resist. And there is always something.

At the same time, we were not freed from Egypt just to be in flight. We were freed in order to receive Torah, to create beautiful communities and live holy lives. This is of course aspirational—we will not always live up to it! But Judaism cannot survive (arguably should not survive) if it only exists in opposition or defiance of something else. The counting of the Omer, whether one takes on the daily practice or not, reminds us to be oriented toward a vision of what we are becoming. Shavuot does not celebrate overcoming an earthly enemy. It celebrates our own willingness to receive a gift. And to take on a responsibility. I hope many people will join, learn from and help celebrate the Adult B'nei Mitzvah students. They themselves will not be completing a process, as I have often reminded them, but marking a milestone of their own continued becoming.