

Everything that the **עולם של רבנו** created in this world can be utilized in **עבודת השם**. Whether it's through a **קרבת**, through our personal **עבודה**, whether before the **בית המקדש** or after - everything can be elevated. One of the greatest features of **עולם הזה** is time. Time itself is a creation of **הקדוש ברוך הוא**. Hashem exists above and beyond time - a concept that was not understood by the primitive peoples of the ancient world. Keeping that in mind, when we look at the Jewish calendar, the year divides itself into two general halves. Since we count the year beginning with **ניסן**, the first half revolves around **פסח**. **פסח** is **זמן חירותינו** - a time of freedom, of happiness, and of harvest, culminating in **שבועות**. That's one half of the year. The second half builds up toward **סוכות** and the **ימים נוראים**. This half is focused on **תשובה**, introspection, and **יראה** - on understanding our responsibilities in a more serious and weighty way. And yet, **סוכות** is still called **זמן שמחתנו**. How do we show that we connect these two halves seamlessly in our **עבודת השם**?

One way is through our relationship with time. Throughout the year, we count time in various ways. We count days until **שבת** each week. And now, particularly during **ספירה**, we count each day - one, two, three, and so on - up to forty-nine, leading us to **שבועות**. Right now we're about halfway through the **ספירה**. This halfway point represents a bridge between the two halves of the year. When we connect them, our **עבודת השם** becomes more complete.

This idea of a midpoint is not limited to the calendar. In every **ספר**, particularly in a **תורה**, there are markers that indicate the halfway point - **הצי הספר**. In the **פרשיות** of **צו** and **שמיני**, for example, there are notations marking the halfway point in words, letters, and **פסוקים**. The letter **ו** in the word **גחון** is famously the halfway point in letters. These midpoints aren't just curiosities - they carry meaning for us.

R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, one of the greatest minds of previous generations, had a unique perspective on this concept of time, and he shared it in the context of our current parsha, **אמור**. Of all things, he discussed it regarding **יום כיפור** - the peak of our year in terms of **תשובה תפילה וצדקה**. The pasuk says in our parsha (23:27) **אך בעשור לחודש השביעי יהיה יום הכיפורים הוא**. Yom Kippur is the fabulous day on which Hashem gives us a **כפרה**, offers **מחילה**, and allows us to begin again - giving us hope that not all is lost.

How do we prepare for Yom Kippur? R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld said that the spiritual preparation is immense. In earlier generations, when **ראש חודש אלול** was announced, there was a **ציטער** in the shul. The atmosphere would shift immediately. We have **תשובה** beginning with **ראש השנה**, and we start even earlier with **סליחות**. The Ashkenazim begin saying **סליחות** a few days before **ראש השנה**. The **ספרדים** begin on **ראש חודש אלול**. But R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld went even further. The greater a **צדיק** is, the more he recognizes his deficiencies and shortcomings, and the harder he works. We think these great individuals are on a high **מדרגה**, and they are - but it's because they are constantly working on themselves. So when did R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld begin his preparations for Yom Kippur?

It's a fascinating question, and one that not many people know the answer to. As we approach **שבועות** - which falls on **ו' סיון** - let's look at the days leading up to it. The first day of **סיון** is **ראש חודש**. Days three, four, and five are **שלושת ימי הגבלה**. But what about day two? Most people don't know what the second of **סיון** is. If you look on a good calendar, in small letters it says: **יום המיוחס**. Many of you are aware that **יום המיוחס** means being connected to something, having a distinguished lineage or background. So the simple explanation of **יום המיוחס** is that it's not significant on its own, but it's sandwiched between significant days - **ראש חודש** on one side, and **שלושת ימי הגבלה** on the other. But R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld treated **יום המיוחס** as a major day. Why?

Because every year, **יום המיוחס** falls on the same day of the week as Yom Kippur. Not only that, it is exactly 18 weeks before Yom Kippur. So he would get up in shul and announce: "Today is **יום המיוחס**. In 18 weeks from today, we'll be standing before Hashem on Yom Kippur, asking for **כפרה** for our **עבירות**."



Now is the time to begin the process. Now is when we start working on our ways so that Hashem will give us that כפרה when the time comes. He didn't count up like in ספירה - he counted down. There are many reasons we count ספירה ascending - 1, 2, 3, and so on. But he did the opposite. As Yom Kippur approached, he would announce each week: "Today is the last Sunday of the year. Fix what you've done on Sundays throughout the year." The same with Mondays, and so on. In fact, this was also a מנהג of the Arizal.

So now, here we are, in the middle of ספירה, a joyous period of time in the פסח part of the year. It's ספירה, we're sad in certain respects, but it's still a joyful part of the year. We're getting ready for Shavuot, קבלת התורה, with the responsibility that has. And we still have a connection to Yom Kippur, to that part of the year when we take things more seriously. We have to start thinking seriously. And by doing that, we do combine the two parts of the year through this parsha of פרשת אמור, which uses Yom Kippur as the springboard, even during the opposite end of the year, to make us into better people.

