

Counting The Omer Guide



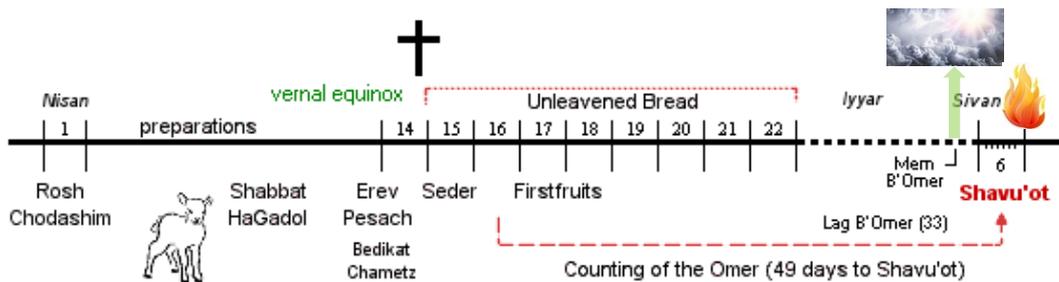
**Derech
HaMashiach**

Messianic Community

What is The Omer?

The "Omer" (literally, "sheaf") was grain from the first harvested barley that was brought to the Temple as a first fruits offering. The Counting of the Omer (Sefirat HaOmer) begins on the day after the Sabbath during Passover week when the first Omer of barley was harvested and brought to the Temple (refer timeline below).

Timeline – Pesach to Shavu'ot



The Torah tells us, in Va'yikra (Leviticus) 23:4 – 11:

“These are the designated times of Adonai, the holy convocations you are to proclaim at their designated times. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, between sundown and complete darkness, comes Pesach for Adonai. On the fifteenth day of the same month is the festival of matzah; for seven days you are to eat matzah. On the first day you are to have a holy convocation; don't do any kind of ordinary work. Bring an offering made by fire to Adonai for seven days. On the seventh day is a holy convocation; do not do any kind of ordinary work.’ Adonai said to Moshe, ‘Tell the people of Isra'el, “After you enter the land I am giving you and harvest its ripe crops, you are to bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the cohen. He is to wave the sheaf before Adonai, so that you will be accepted; the cohen is to wave it on the day after the Shabbat.”” (CJB)¹

And again, we read in Va'yikra 23:15 – 16:

“From the day after the day of rest—that is, from the day you bring the sheaf for waving—you are to count seven full weeks, until the day after the seventh week; you are to count fifty days; and then you are to present a new grain offering to Adonai.” (CJB)¹

There are several highlights in the Pesach timeline. The following is a summary, and some will be expanded on throughout this Guide.

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Timeline Highlights

- Nisan 1:
 - Biblical New Year (Nisan = month of miracles)
- Nisan 10:
 - Selecting the Pesach Lamb for Inspection
 - Yeshua's Triumphal entry (Palm Sunday) and testing by Religious Leaders
- Nisan 10 – 13:
 - Start searching for and cleaning Chametz (Leaven) from the house
 - Yeshua cleanses the Temple of money exchangers (Yochanan 2:13 – 17)
- Nisan 13:
 - Preparation Day / First Day of Matzah
- Nisan 14 (Night of Nisan 13):
 - The last remains of Chametz (Leaven) is destroyed (Bedikat Chametz)
 - Chagigah Pesach meal (Mishnah, Tractate Pesachim 6)
 - Yeshua's Last Meal
 - Yeshua's Arrest
- Nisan 14:
 - Fast to the firstborn (½ day) (Ta'anit Bechorot) (Sh'mot 13:12 – 15)
 - Yeshua's Illegal Trial
 - Yeshua's Execution (darkness 12pm – 3pm) and buried before nightfall (6pm)
 - Korban Pesach (Lamb) killed for Seder (3pm – 6pm)
- Nisan 15 (night of Nisan 14):
 - Pesach Seder
- Nisan 15:
 - Hag HaMatzot (Festival of Unleavened Bread) Day 1
 - Begin Counting of the Omer
- Nisan 16 – Omer Day 1
- Nisan 17 – Omer Day 2
 - Yom HaBikkurim (The Day of Firstfruits) or Reshit Ha'Katzir (first of the Harvest)
- Nisan 18 (Night of Nisan 17) – Omer Day 3:
 - The Tomb is found empty => Yeshua's Resurrection
- Nisan 21 – Omer Day 6:
 - Hag HaMatzot
 - Meal of Messiah
- Omer Day 33:
 - Lag B'Omer
- Omer Day 40:
 - Yeshua's Ascension
- Day 50 (Day after Counting Omer – 49 days):
 - Shavu'ot (Mattan Torah)
 - Outpouring of Ruach HaKodesh



How do we Count the Omer?

Counting the Omer traditionally consists of five distinct steps: opening with a meditation, saying the blessing, reciting the count, reading Psalm 67, and closing with a prayer on behalf of those still in captivity. After reciting the blessing (above), we then declare the count of the omer in both days and weeks. For example, on the first day we say, "Haiyom yom echad ba'omer" (today is one day of the omer). On the eighth day we say, "Haiyom shemonah yamim, shehem shavuah echad v'yom echad ba'omer" (today is eight days, which is one week and one day of the omer).

This ritual is typically practiced at night. More details are given in the Daily Omer Count Guide, at the end of this Guidebook.

Significance of Counting the Omer

Our Rebbe's resurrection makes the counting of the Omer a season of special significance and joy. For His Talmidim, it is a time to remember the resurrected Yeshua. All His post-resurrection appearances and ascension fell within the days of the Omer count, including His ascension on the 40th day of the Omer Count. The culmination of the Counting of the Omer is the remembrance of the Giving of the Torah (Mattan Torah) which coincides with the outpouring of the Ruach HaKodesh (the Holy Spirit) on all flesh, on the 50th day of the Omer – Shavu'ot, a promise of the Renewed Covenant. There are also other aspects to the Counting of the Omer that are worthy of consideration and incorporating into our Omer Count.

Why Count 50 Days?

According to Jewish legend, the Israelites were foretold that the Torah would be given to them exactly 50 days after their Exodus from Egypt. The people were so eager for this revelation that after their deliverance they began counting the days: "Now we have one day less to wait for the giving of the Torah!" This midrash attempts to explain why the Torah commands that the days from Pesach to Shavuot are to be counted by claiming that it commemorates the eagerness with which the Torah was received by the Israelites. Consequently, every year we commemorate the Giving of the Ten Commandments (The Ten Words, or Mattan Torah in Hebrew) on Shavu'ot, and undergo a similar counting practice. Note, this is not a countdown but a count up as we ascend the mountain of the LORD.

To better understand why we count 49 days, or 7 weeks, from the day after the Sabbath of Passover week, we first need to answer a more basic question: Why did God wait 50 days after the Jews left Egypt before giving the Torah? Why didn't He simply give it to them in Egypt, or immediately after their departure?



The Sages of Israel give us an answer that is based on a more mystical level, and this is that the Jews were not yet spiritually equipped to receive the Torah. For over 200 years, they had been living in an Egyptian society known to be the world centre for immorality and vice.

According to some of the Jewish mystics, Israel had descended to the lowest level of sin, the 49th "level of sin", while in Egypt. At the 50th level HaShem would have cut them off, but instead He decided to redeem them, because of His covenant with Avraham.

The Omer count represents the way of teshuvah, one day for each of the 49 "levels of sin" that the Jewish people had degraded into while being slaves in Egypt. Just as there are 49 levels of spiritual impurity (i.e., tumah) so there are said to be 49 levels spiritual of purity (i.e., tahora). Normally a meditation is given for each of the 49 days to help you purge a sinful condition from your life in order to attain higher levels of purity (this process is sometimes called madregot hatahara, "the stairs of purity"). A brief daily guide is given in the Daily Guide section.

The high-impact adventure of the Exodus — 10 miraculous plagues and the splitting of the Red Sea — launched the Jews into physical freedom. Yet a one-time experience, as powerful as it is, does not permanently change anyone's emotional attitude.

Spiritual growth, like climbing a ladder, must be one step at a time. The growth that occurs during this time is akin to a marathon. We pace ourselves and seek to improve day by day until we reach the day that we again receive the Torah.

But life is not a race to beat the other guy; life is only a race to conquer your inner self. As we climb the ladder, it's more important in which direction we're headed rather than which rung we're on. Don't just count the Omer this year, make the Omer count!

Spiritual Accounting

Nowhere in the entire Torah is the date of Shavu'ot mentioned. It merely takes place at the end of 50 days — because the key is to get there one step at a time, by counting, the root word of which is "khä-shab", meaning to calculate or simply to count.

The Torah, in describing the Omer, says, "count for you" (Va'yikra 23:15) — because each person has to do this for himself. You have to get there at your own pace. You don't want to climb a ladder and get tripped up between the rungs and fall! Even if that ladder is Jacob's ladder (the Messiah).

To reinforce your spiritual goals write them down, keep an accurate tally or accounting of your progress. Choose a convenient time in the prayer cycle, morning, midday, and at night and commit to working on this at least 15 minutes each time every day. At the end of the Omer process, you will have experienced a journey of spiritual improvement and be ready to receive the Spirit of the Torah.

You won't just be counting the Omer; you will be making the Omer count.



Making The Omer Count

Pesach also represents the relationship between the Commonwealth of Israel and Adonai, and Shavu'ot symbolises the marriage of Israel to the Creator. The mountain (Mt Sinai) being the chupa, the cubes of sapphire with the Ten Words the ring, and the Torah the Katubah (the marriage vows). It is only logical for the wedding to follow the courtship.

Having noted this relationship between the two festivals, we now see the importance of the period of Counting of the Omer. The mitzvah of the Omer is the connector, the transition between these two. What we must ask ourselves is, how does the counting of the omer accomplish this job? What is the mechanism for preparing ourselves for the wedding?

Each step of the 49 days has its own unique spiritual awakening. We tap into, or receive, this revelation by getting as close to the Father as we can, through Yeshua and allowing Him to develop His grace within us. There are seven lower graces that we should become intimate with, and there are seven ways to look at each grace. After the Father refines us in all 49 dimensions, we are fully prepared to receive Divine revelation.

The seven lower spiritual graces are:

1. **Chesed:** Mercy, which acts as Lovingkindness in us
2. **Gevurah:** Might, which acts as restraint & awe in us
3. **Tiferet:** Beauty, which acts as harmony in us
4. **Netzach:** Victory, which acts as Perseverance in us
5. **Hod:** Glory, which acts as humility in us
6. **Yesod:** Foundation, which acts as bonding or cleaving in us
7. **Malkut:** Kingdom or Sovereignty, which acts as nobility in us

A more expanded daily guide is given in the Daily Meditation Guide section (*to be completed in the next edition*).

Are you ready to embark on your journey up the Mountain!

Firstfruits – 2nd Day of the Omer

The Torah prohibited using or eating any produce from the new cereal crops until the priesthood offered the first of the new grain (Va'yikra 23:10 – 11). The barley crop ripens first in Israel, so the priesthood always offered an Omer of barley. Until the people harvested and offered the first fruits of the barley in the Temple, the rest of the crops were not considered kosher. The commandment of the barley Omer reminded Israel that the land and its produce belong first to G-d.

In the year of Yeshua's Execution, the day of Firstfruits fell on a Shabbat, and therefore would have been delayed until the Sunday, which coincides with Yeshua's resurrection (Saturday night going into Sunday morning).



Mem B'Omer – 40th Day of the Omer

The resurrection of our beloved Rebbe, Yeshua occurred on the 3rd Day of the Omer (on Yom HaBikkurim), and all of Yeshua's post-resurrection appearances occurred during the days of the Omer count. The final appearance was on the day of His ascension, Mem B'Omer, the 40th day of the Omer, which falls on Iyyar 25 on the Jewish calendar.

The resurrection and ascension make us "alive together" with the Messiah. Yeshua enables us to live on a different level of reality, free from the "law of sin and death" (Romans 7:4 & 8:2). We now have a new and living relationship with G-d – based on the freedom and intimate revelation given by the Ruach HaKodesh – all because our Rebbe Yeshua, blessed be He, ascended on high, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

Lag B'Omer – 33rd Day of the Omer

The word "Lag" is an acronym for 33 – derived from Lamed (30) and Gimmel (3). The phrase "Lag B'Omer" indicates the 33rd day of the Omer Count, which falls on Iyyar 18 on the Jewish calendar.

Anniversary of the Kabbalah: In Jewish tradition, the 33rd day of the Omer Count is regarded as a holiday that commemorates the death of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai (i.e, Rashbi), the most famous disciple of Rabbi Akiva (50 – 135 CE). According to mystical tradition, on the day of his death, bar Yochai revealed the deepest secrets of the Torah which were later codified as the Zohar ("Splendour"), a key text of Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism). The 33rd day of the Omer Count is therefore commemorated as the anniversary of the giving of the "hidden Torah" (Torat HaNistar) to Israel, or as the anniversary of the revelation of Kabbalah. Among Jewish mystics, Lag B'Omer is regarded equal to the importance of the holiday of Shavu'ot which celebrates the giving of the written Torah to Moshe.

Lag B'Omer is celebrated by lighting bonfires to commemorate not only the death of bar Yochai, but also to remember the 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva who died of a plague (due to baseless hatred) while Israel was fighting the Romans during the last of the Jewish-Roman wars (called the Bar Kochba Revolt, c.132-135 AD).

Pirkei Avot

There is also a traditional Jewish custom during the Omer to study Pirkei Avot, the Ethics of the Fathers) on Shabbat afternoons. Some have the custom of studying Pirkei Avot past Shavuot, all the way until Rosh HaShanah. At Pesach, we look out at the external world with messages of freedom and liberation, but then we transition back to the inner world with Shavu'ot and Rosh HaShanah focusing on introspection and reflection.

By studying Pirkei Avot we focus on society and fostering justice in the world, by starting with our character and personal behaviour.



From Firstfruits to Shavu'ot

During the Temple period, on the day of Firstfruits, three appointed cohanim (priests) would cut the First Fruit Barley harvest, with three sickles and three baskets. They would prepare barley, take it to the Temple and wave the sheaf (Omer) of barley before the LORD as a symbolic gesture of dedicating the coming harvest to Him. This ceremony was called "tenufat haomer" ("waving of the sheaf"). This was all carried out by the cohanim (priesthood).

During the forty-nine days of the Omer count, the wheat crop in Israel ripens. By the end of the forty-nine days, the wheat crop is ready for harvest and the priesthood offered up the first fruits of the wheat crop in the Temple for Shavu'ot.

On the 50th day, a sample of the first crop of the wheat harvest was baked into two loaves of leavened bread (called "Shte HaLechem") and waved before the altar as the climactic rite of the season (Va'yikra 23:15 – 20). This time, it was the people themselves that harvested and brought the new wheat crop to the Temple, where it was baked into two loaves of chometz, leavened bread. This was the only time that otherwise forbidden leaven was used by the priests for the avodah (service).

Counting of the Omer represents a time of preparation. It starts with a Firstfruit offering, this one is in the raw state, gathered by the cohen and offered to HaShem. It parallels us, saved by grace, through the work of our Cohen Gadol (High Priest), Yeshua.

The Count finishes at Shavu'ot with a first fruit offering, but this time it is gathered by the people, in the prepared or refined state. This represents our first fruit offering, as we make the Counting of the Omer, count in our lives.



Daily Guide to Counting the Omer

The Five Steps

Counting the Omer traditionally consists of five distinct steps: opening with a meditation, saying the blessing, reciting the count, reading Psalm 67, and closing with a prayer on behalf of those still in captivity. This ritual is typically practiced at night. This guide offers the meditations in both masculine and feminine forms.

Tick off the day at evening, as you make the Omer count for you.

Day 1 Nisan 16	Day 2 Yom HaBikkurim	Day 3 Yeshua's Resurrection	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6 Meal of Messiah	Day 7
Day 8	Day 9	Day 10	Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14
Day 15	Day 16	Day 17	Day 18	Day 19	Day 20	Day 21
Day 22	Day 23	Day 24	Day 25	Day 26	Day 27	Day 28
Day 29	Day 30	Day 31	Day 32	Day 33 Lag B'Omer	Day 34	Day 35
Day 36	Day 37	Day 38	Day 39	Day 40 Yeshua's Ascension	Day 41	Day 42
Day 43	Day 44	Day 45	Day 46	Day 47	Day 48	Day 49
			Day 50 Shavu'ot			



1. Meditation before counting

The following traditional meditation is meant to be said in the first-person-singular form.

Hebrew:

Women say:

הִנְנִי מוֹכְנָה וּמְזַמְנֶת

Men say:

הִנְנִי מוֹכֵן וּמְזַמֵּן:

All continue:

לְקַיֵּם מִצְוֹת עֲשֵׂה שֶׁל סְפִירַת הָעֹמֶר כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב שֶׁכָּתוּב
בַּתּוֹרָה וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמֶּחֶרֶת הַשַּׁבָּת מִיּוֹם הַבְּיָאָכֶם אֶת
עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה שֶׁבַע שַׁבָּתוֹת תְּמִימוֹת תִּהְיֶינָה. עַד מִמֶּחֶרֶת
הַשַּׁבָּת הַשְּׁבִיעִית תִּסְפְּרוּ חֲמִשִּׁים יוֹם

Transliterated:

Feminine:

Hineni mukhana umzumenet lekayem mitzvat aseh shel sefirat ha'omer kemo shekatuv batorah:

Masculine:

Hineni mukhan umzuman lekayem mitzvat aseh shel sefirat ha'omer kemo shekatuv batorah:

All continue:

u-s'fartem lakhem mi-mokhorat ha-Shabbat mi-yom havi'akhem et-ha'omer ha-tenufah sheva Shabbatot temimot tiheyenah: Ad mi-mokhorat ha-Shabbat ha-shevi'it tisperu khamishim yom ve-hikravtem minkhah khadashah l'Adonay.

English:

Here I am, ready and prepared to count the Omer, as it is written in the Torah: "You shall count from the day following the day of rest, from the day you brought the sheaf of the wave-offering, seven full weeks shall be counted; you shall count fifty days to the day following the seventh week."



2. Say the blessing

Hebrew:

Feminine G-d language:

בְּרוּכָה אַתְּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ
וְצִוָּנוּ עַל סְפִירַת הָעֹמֶר

Masculine G-d language:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ
וְצִוָּנוּ עַל סְפִירַת הָעֹמֶר

Transliterated:

Feminine G-d language:

B'rukhhah at Yah Eloheynu khay ha'olamim asher kideshatnu bemitzvotaha vetzivatnu
al sefirat ha'omer.

Masculine G-d language:

Barukh atah Adonay Eloheynu mekor khayim asher kideshanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu
al sefirat ha'omer.

English:

Blessed are you, Eternal One our G-d, source of all life, who has made us holy with
your mitzvot, and commanded us concerning the counting of the Omer.

3. Recite the count

Today is the ___ day of the Omer, which is ___ weeks and ___ days of the Omer.

We also add:

Blessed are You, O Lord our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us by Your
commandments and commanded us to be a light to Your nations and has given us
Yeshua our Messiah, the light of the world.



4. Read Psalm 67

Psalm 67, which consists of seven verses and, in the original Hebrew, forty-nine words (like the number of days we are counting), is central to the counting of the Omer, allowing us to see that the earth is already blessed and that people in many different ways, have come to this understanding.

1. G-d, bless us with Your grace and care, and make Your face smile on us!
2. For then the earth will recognize Your presence, and all the nations will know Your saving power.
3. May all nations praise You, O G-d, may all nations praise You!
4. Let the nations shout and sing for joy, You grant justice to the peoples, on earth You guide the nations.
5. May all nations praise You, O G-d, may all nations praise You!
6. The soil has given its harvest; our G-d has blessed us.
7. May G-d continue to bless us; and let G-d be embraced to the very ends of the earth.

Over the 49 days you may also wish to read 8 verses a day from Psalm 119, which is about King David's love for Torah.

Read one chapter from the Book of Ruth as it is about non-Jews being grafted into the Commonwealth of Israel during the Counting of the Omer from the barley harvest to the wheat harvest.

Read one chapter a day from Sh'mot (Exodus) chapters 19 – 33, as this is about the great adventure during the Counting of the Omer.

Read one chapter from Ezekiel 1 – 4 and 35 – 39, as this is read on Shavuot.



5. Close with prayer

Hebrew:

לְזֶכֶר יְצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם. יְהִי רָצוֹן שְׁיִשְׁחַרְרוּ כָּל הַשְּׂבוּיִים הֵן
בְּגוּף הֵן בְּנֶפֶשׁ וְשִׁנְשָׁמֶשׁ כְּעֶזֶר לְזַרְע אֱלֹהִים הַנְּטוּיָה
לְקִרְאת חֲרוּת

Transliterated:

Li-zekher yetzi'at mitzrayim yehi ratzon sheh-yishukhreru kol ha-shevuyim hen ba-guf,
hen ba-nefesh vi-sheh-neshamesh ke'ezer lizro'a Elohim ha-netuyah likrat kherut.

English:

In remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt, we pray that you release all whose bodies
and spirits remain captive and enable us to extend Your outstretched arm in the
process of liberation.

Daily Meditation Guide

Under Construction – coming in the next revision.

Chag Pesach Sameach!

