

Pesach 2016 – The Omer Counting Man

Nisan 21 represents the first whole day that our forefathers spent in the wilderness of Sinai desert in the Arabian Peninsula on the eastern shore of the Red Sea. Just the night before Israel crossed the Red Sea with Pharaoh and his army in pursuit, but God intervened and all the army with their chariots and horses were buried beneath the waters of the Red Sea. Israel was delivered by the might and power by God. Israel was now free.

Exodus 15:22—Israel went three days into the wilderness but found no water and ran out of water. How long can an average person survive without water? Water is the largest single component of the human body, including your brain, and it is essential for life. Generally speaking, people can only survive about a week without water. Because your body can't store it, you must replace the fluid you lose on a daily basis. When Israel came to a place called Mara (meaning bitterness), they found the water there was bitter and not drinkable. They didn't pray to God and ask for water, but instead complained to Moses who called on God for help. God healed the waters from bitterness, giving the people water to drink. God allowed this to happen as a test for Israel to see if they would keep his commandments and be thankful for His love, mercy and compassion and learn to ask for help and His intervention in their time of need. Verse 26—God said to Israel, “If you diligently listen and hear the voice of your God, and (do the right thing) do what is obedient and right in His sight according to all My commandments, and keep all of My statutes, then I will put none of the diseases” of Egypt on you. I will deliver you from them all. I am the Eternal your God (*Hebrew*: Yehovah ropheka) who heals you.” What is our attitude when trials and tests come upon us? We need to keep God's words and instruction in our mind day by day.

Leviticus 23:10— “Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, ‘When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, ye shall bring a sheaf (an omer of the barley harvest) of the first fruits of your harvest unto the priest’: And he shall wave the sheaf (5.1 quarts of barley) before the Lord *Yehovah* to be accepted on your behalf: on the day after the Sabbath (Passover: annual Sabbath) the priest shall wave it.” This takes us back to the second day of Passover, Nisan 16 when the priest was to wave the omer of barley before the Lord to be accepted by Him. **Verse 15**: “And ye shall count for yourself from the day (morrow: *Nisan 16*) after the Sabbath (Passover, Nisan 15), from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven Sabbaths (weekly Sabbaths) shall be completed (counted). Count fifty days to the day after the 7th week and you shall offer a new grain offering to the Lord.” That day is the fiftieth day—Pentecost/Shavout—the Feast of Weeks/Shavout).

Remember that we of God's church are spiritual Israel (Galatians 6:16)—the Israel of God, the ones called out to serve him and are no longer blinded to God's commandments. **Deuteronomy 16:9**—God gives another version of the same commandment. God says to His people the same commandment in different words. *Shavua* (Heb.) literally means weeks. “Seven weeks shalt thou number unto thee (count for yourself): begin to number the seven weeks from such time as thou begin to put the sickle to the corn/barley. That is from the time of the wave sheaf offering on the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread – Nisan 16. *After counting seven weeks (seven weekly Shavuas (Sabbaths) = 7 weeks of weekly Sabbaths = 49 days)*, “You shalt keep the Feast of Weeks [Hag ha *Shavout* which is *Pentecost*] unto the Lord thy God with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give unto the Lord thy God, according as the Lord thy God hath blessed thee: and thou shalt rejoice before the Lord.” Counting the Omer is a journey that our forefathers took through the desert of Midian to Mt. Sinai daily counting the Omer for 49 days on the journey.

Are you counting the Omer? There is a reason for counting the Omer. The profound experience of *counting the Omer* as God tells his people (you and me) to do is not taught or understood by teachers and ministers today in the churches. God says in both Leviticus and Deuteronomy, “YOU SHALL COUNT FOR YOURSELVES”—you and me! It is for us to learn the great spiritual purpose and that teaches a profound and very important lesson in counting the Omer which has to do with our whole Christian life in overcoming and enduring to the end and entering into the kingdom of God. It is the count to victory, triumph, success and completion of the journey and arriving at Mt. Sinai and the appearance of God with the marriage of Israel to God and the covenant of becoming His people, and His becoming our God in a literal marriage covenant.

Let’s return for a moment to the Passover in Egypt. For seven days we put all leavening out of our homes, and out of our lives during the seven days we call the Days of Unleavened Bread. Leavening in the Bible is say or, and unleavened bread is chametz (leavened). Chametz is that which is considered impure, puffed up and a type of sin—malice, arrogance, pride. Pride puffs up an individual. During the Days of Unleavened Bread, we are commanded to get rid of all leavening in our homes and not to eat or possess anything that has leavening. In the past there has been disputes and controversies in the teaching of what leaven is and what constitutes leavening which we have followed as taught.

In the book *Celebrate: The Jewish Holiday Handbook* by Leslie Koppleman Ross, page 39, writes the following words about leavening. “You may be surprised to see Pesach recipes calling for Baking Soda and Baking Powder which is used to make cakes rise. Unlike yeast and sour dough, they are not considered leavening any more so than are beaten eggs used to fluff up cakes to make Pesach pancakes. Baking powder may contain starch which is made of flour. When water is added to grain (flour), **yeast spores in the air can permeate the flour (grain) to which the water has been added within eighteen minutes which leavens the dough, and thus it is forbidden to be eaten.** Chametz is the result of a natural microbial enzymatic activity which is caused by exposing grain starch (unsterilized, i.e. by baking)—to water. This causes the dissolved starch to ferment and break down into sugars which then become nutrients to the naturally contained yeasts. A typical side effect of this biological leavening is the growth of the naturally-adhering yeasts in the mixture which produce gaseous carbon dioxide from glycolysis which causes the fermented dough to rise and become increasingly acidic.”

In adding baking soda or powder to flour and then adding water it must be baked before eighteen minutes have passed so it doesn’t get contaminated with the yeast from the air and become leavened. Further research on different websites regarding leavening, are as follows. One stated that if baking soda does not contain grain products it is kosher for *Pesach*. Baking Soda usually is bicarbonate of soda which is made from rock which is not leaven. On another site, Lee Stearn, author of the book *How to Keep Kosher*, the executive rabbi and operating officer of the Orthodox Union’s Kosher Division—the oldest and most widely accepted certifier of kosher foods—said: “Chametz means sharp or sour, denotes bread that has a sourness to it caused by fermentation occurring when a liquid is added to it of any of the five rains mentioned in the Torah. This refers to yeast, not Baking Soda or Baking Powder. The kind of wild yeast that floats in the air is the yeast that was common in ancient Egypt. They did not have baking powder or baking soda in those days.” *Wikipedia* – “chametz”—to ferment, relating to bread, leavening and baking – to become sour or acidic. *Chametz* is a product that is both made from one of five types of grain and has been combined with water and left to stand raw for longer than eighteen minutes and becomes leaven.

We began the days of Passover by putting leaven out of our homes for the seven days of Passover. On the second day of the Passover, we began counting the Omer daily until Pentecost—seven days a week for seven weeks. In the book by Rabbi Irving Greenberg, *The Jewish Way*, page 59, the Omer (a measure of grain) was brought daily to the temple and counted for forty-nine days and waved before the Lord each morning until the onset of Shavuot/Pentecost. This ceremony on the morning of each day is

commemorated in the counting of the Omer called *Sefiert ha Omer*.” It is generally done at night (the beginning of each day) during this time, and done for seven full weeks.” I do it each morning near the time of morning prayer when the priest would waive the Omer at the Temple. Alfred Edersheim, page 203, The Temple: Its Ministries and Services, discusses the wave sheaf offering. The wave sheaf offering was accompanied by a burnt offering of a lamb in its first year without blemish and the appropriate meat offerings. Not until the wave sheaf offering was made could fresh barley be sold in the land or used. It could be harvested, but had to be stored unused until after the wave sheaf offering on *Nisan 16*—the second day of Pesach/Passover (Lev. 23:11). Sometimes the word Sabbath is misinterpreted to mean the weekly Sabbath. Testimony by Josephus and Philo who lived in the time of Jesus leaves no room of doubt in this instance, it means the *annual* holy day Sabbath of Nisan 15.

Abraham Yakov Finkle, The Essence of the Holy Days, page 161, “On the second night of Passover we begin counting the Omer. We count 49 days until the first day of Shavuot which is celebrated the 50th day. The mitzvah (good deed) of counting the Omer written in the Torah: Count seven complete weeks after the Passover holy day – from the day you brought the Omer offering that is waved, until the day after the seventh week.” The significance of the Omer count (page 163). Moses announced that to Israel after their liberation from Egypt that they were going to become God’s servants at Sinai to take place after 50 days. Therefore, each person counted each day in eager anticipation of this great and historic event that lay ahead of them. Today, we are reenacting the event from the Passover. When we kept the Passover, we celebrated it as if we were there—going through the plagues, we were leaving Egypt (as being present), now it is us marching toward Sinai going through the wilderness in our own mind trusting God for our daily sustenance—manna from heaven, water from the Rock (Christ) – our sufficiency is through Christ.

Like our ancestors, we count the days as we approach Pentecost, looking forward to Pentecost—the day of the giving of the Torah and God entered into a covenant relationship with Israel. As Israel was buried by baptism when they passed through the Red Sea, so each of us was baptized into Christ when we submerged beneath the waters of baptism, and came up as a new creature with a new life in Christ to fulfill our purpose/destiny for our existence which is the kingdom of God. We are to count the Omer for the following reasons: counting the days in eager anticipation of the great event that lies ahead/the coming of Christ to redeem His people and bring us into his kingdom at His coming. The event at Mt. Sinai is a type of Christ coming in the future to receive his church to himself and marry the church, his bride. One is a type and forerunner of the other. 2) It focuses on our purpose and destiny and the kingdom of God, not things of the earth on a day by day basis. 3) Signifies and depicts the deep spiritual significance of our leaving behind the corruption and fleshpots of Egypt today and getting further away day by day by putting behind the pollution of sin in our odyssey of becoming righteous and holy.

Israel had reached the 49th level of impurity. When Israel passed through the Red Sea, then day by day they were in a process of overcoming—leaving their impurity and slavery behind them. The Omer count of 49 days depicts our overcoming and complete elimination of the spirit of bondage — the spirit of being a slave to our physical senses. Day 50 represents a new beginning. This new realm of true moral freedom can only be accomplished by our personal seven-fold intensive work. Overcoming is a day by day struggle. We are to strive toward salvation and progressively overcome daily. Concentrate, keeping your foremost thought on becoming a finished vessel in God’s hand which He can use to His glory. Make a list of the things that you want to overcome. Paul puts it nicely in **Galatians 5:18**. If you are led by the Holy Spirit, you are not condemned as a law breaker. “Human nature (works of the flesh) are evident such as these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions (those who cause divisions), heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, selfish ambitions, revelries, and similar things. I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” The things that we need to be working on are” love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” – the fruits of God’s Spirit.

Against such there is no law. **Galatians 4:19** —In this new character being formed, be zealous in the good things born of the Spirit as children of promise until Christ is formed in you. There is a need to examine ourselves daily to become more like Christ is. **Ephesians 4:1**— “walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Verses 17-19 — “the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Walk no longer as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the blindness/hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality (lewdness) so as to indulge in every kind of impurity (uncleanness) and full of greediness.”

“This is not what you learned from Christ, if you indeed have heard of Him and been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts (of the flesh), and *be renewed in the spirit of your mind* (transformed by God’s Spirit), and that you put on the new man (Omer man) which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.” Verses 25-32 — “Put away lying; speak truth with one another.” Put away sin! “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”

Colossians 3:1— “Seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth (earthly ambitions/riches). For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.” Verses 5-7 — “Put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness (which is *idolatry*) causes self-worship instead of worshipping God). Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man (as the elect of God) who is renewed in *knowledge* according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all”.

Colossians 3:14-17— “But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. *Let the peace of God rule in your hearts*, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” This is what God wants us to be doing as we count the Omer, and make the Omer count. Trust on God for the inspiration, the strength of the Holy Spirit which we need to overcome and grow into the new man in God’s image so that we might endure to the end. Every day in the wilderness, Israel had to trust on God for their needs. Learn to be an overcomer!

People who are addicted to alcohol and drunkenness are endangering their lives as well as the lives of others. Many people die from the ravages of alcoholism or drug addictions. Following “The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous” has helped free a lot of people from addiction.

- admitting that one cannot control one's alcoholism, addiction or compulsion;

- recognizing a higher power that can give strength;
- examining past errors with the help of a sponsor (experienced member);
- making amends for these errors;
- learning to live a new life with a new code of behavior;
- helping others who suffer from the same alcoholism, addictions or compulsions

Twelve Steps

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. (self-examination)
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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Human nature can't overcome of itself (unmanageable), but needs a greater power than self. That power is God. Today we have to make the decision to give our lives to God and Christ—and ask Him to use us, work with us as He pleases to lead, to guide and direct us.

In the Book of Our Heritage by Eliyahu Kitov, Adar – Nisan 2, the volume on Passover also has a section on counting the Omer, page 676. “The Torah writes: and you shall count for yourselves from the morrow of the Shabbos, from the day that you bring the omer (offering) that is raised, seven complete weeks there shall be until the morrow of the seventh week you shall count fifty days.” “it is a *mitzvah* (good deed) for each individual to count the days of the omer by himself, for the Torah states: ‘And you shall count for yourselves.’ This mitzvah is applicable today even though the *Beis ha-Mikdash* (the temple) no longer stands and we no longer bring the omer offering.”

Why do the people and why do the churches of God ignore it? When God gives us a command, we should do it! It is a lesson in obedience and a lesson in overcoming with focus on the things that we need to do to get rid of sin and inculcate the Spirit of God in our lives. Do we have to be begged to do the will and command of God? We should jump for joy for the opportunity.

Page 680, “Israel does not seek logical reasons for the performance of the mitzvot; the fact that God has commanded us is sufficient reason for performing a mitzvah with enthusiasm. Understanding the reasons for the performance of a mitzvah, then the understanding—to the level that we are capable given our limited comprehension—of that reason is in itself a mitzvah; i.e. understanding that which can be understood. Just as one’s heart must fully serve God, so too are man’s other faculties and his intelligence bound to serve God to the best of their ability. When our Sages have given reasons for the *mitzvot*, it is for the benefit of all, including those who will be encouraged and motivated by having reasons, and whose will thereby be ultimately strengthened.” Many reasons have been offered for the mitzvah of

counting the omer. Rabbi Nissim writes: “When *Moshe* (Moses) told Israel while they were still in Egypt: ‘You shall worship God,’ they asked him: ‘When will this be?’ He replied: ‘At the end of fifty days.’ Each of them began counting for himself.”

The Bible speaks of the seven attributes of God. Seven shepherds of Israel’s forefathers were outstanding men who served God and personified a special attribute of God.

1. Abraham — *Chesed* — Loving-kindness,
2. Isaac — *Gevurah* — Justice and discipline, all his strength devoted to God
3. Jacob — *Tiferet* — Harmony, compassion, uprightness, perfection
4. Moses — *Netzach* — Endurance, eternity, Torah teacher
5. Aaron — *Hod* — Humility, splendor of the priesthood, loved and pursued peace.
6. Joseph — *Yesod* — Bonding, strong foundation, faith-righteous morality
7. David — *Malchut* — Sovereignty, leadership/ruler, after God’s own heart (Psalm 51)

Remember keep things simple as much as possible. Each week of the Omer count we work on each of these attributes which are all related to the others. Page 685 — “If there is no strength, then there is no lovingkindness for the latter attribute becomes soft-heartedness if it is not joined to strength. If lovingkindness lacks an element of glory, it can degenerate into sin. None of the other attributes can be considered complete if they lack an element of lovingkindness. Each attribute has a light of its own that shines forth from its combination with the others. The first week is devoted entirely to kindness. On each subsequent day of the week, the stress is placed on a different quality combined with kindness. During the second week the stress shifts to strength, with which each of the other characteristics is interwoven in turn on consecutive days. This pattern is repeated throughout the seven weeks.”

I have in my hand a *Daily Omer Meditation* by Rabbi Simon Jacobson which can be downloaded from *Aish.com* or from our website: www.triumphpro.info. Today is the first week and day seven of the Omer count, Malchut of Chesed, nobility and loving kindness. Mature love comes with and brings with it personal dignity. For love to be complete and whole, it must have the dimension of personal sovereignty. We all have to make choices how we are going to help people and best serve others. **2 Peter 1:2-8** – “through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. For this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.”

For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”. **Revelation 21:7**—“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I shall be his God and he shall be my son.”