

Blessing the LORD

Blessed are You, O LORD, our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and has commanded us about the counting of the *omer*. Today is day _____, which constitutes ___ week(s) and ___ day(s) of the *omer*. The Compassionate One, may He return for us the service of the Holy Temple to its place, quickly and in our days. Amen, *Selah*.

Psalm 67

For the director; with instruments. A psalm, a song.

May God be gracious to us and bless us;

Let Your way be known in the earth,

The peoples will acknowledge You, O God;

The populations will be glad and sing joyfully,

And He will lead the populations of the earth, *Selah*.

The peoples will acknowledge You, O God;

The earth has yielded its harvest;

May God bless us,

May He illuminate His face with us, *Selah*.

And Your salvation among all nations.

All of the peoples will acknowledge You.

For He will judge the peoples evenhandedly,

All of the peoples will acknowledge You.

May God, our God, bless us.

And all the ends of the earth fear Him.

sunday	monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday	sabbath
					Nisan 14/Apr 15 Passover Seder Eve of Passover	Nisan 15/Apr 16 Unleavened Bread Count 1 after dark
Nisan 16/Apr 17 Day 1 of Omer ① ② ③ ④ Count 2 after dark	Nisan 17/Apr 18 Day 2 of Omer ⑤ Count 3 after dark	Nisan 18/Apr 19 Day 3 of Omer Count 4 after dark	Nisan 19/Apr 20 Day 4 of Omer ⑥ ? Count 5 after dark	Nisan 20/Apr 21 Day 5 of Omer ⑦ ? Count 6 after dark	Nisan 21/Apr 22 Day 6 of Omer Meal of Messiah Count 7 after dark	Nisan 22/Apr 23 Day 7 of Omer Count 8 after dark
Nisan 23/Apr 24 Day 8 of Omer Count 9 after dark	Nisan 24/Apr 25 Day 9 of Omer ⑧ Count 10 after dark	Nisan 25/Apr 26 Day 10 of Omer Count 11 after dark	Nisan 26/Apr 27 Day 11 of Omer Count 12 after dark	Nisan 27/Apr 28 Day 12 of Omer Count 13 after dark	Nisan 28/Apr 29 Day 13 of Omer Count 14 after dark	Nisan 29/Apr 30 Day 14 of Omer Count 15 after dark
Nisan 30/May 1 Day 15 of Omer Count 16 after dark	Iyyar 1/May 2 Day 16 of Omer New Moon Count 17 after dark	Iyyar 2/May 3 Day 17 of Omer ⑨ ? Count 18 after dark	Iyyar 3/May 4 Day 18 of Omer Count 19 after dark	Iyyar 4/May 5 Day 19 of Omer Count 20 after dark	Iyyar 5/May 6 Day 20 of Omer Count 21 after dark	Iyyar 6/May 7 Day 21 of Omer Count 22 after dark
Iyyar 7/May 8 Day 22 of Omer Count 23 after dark	Iyyar 8/May 9 Day 23 of Omer Count 24 after dark	Iyyar 9/May 10 Day 24 of Omer ⑩ ? Count 25 after dark	Iyyar 10/May 11 Day 25 of Omer Count 26 after dark	Iyyar 11/May 12 Day 26 of Omer Count 27 after dark	Iyyar 12/May 13 Day 27 of Omer Count 28 after dark	Iyyar 13/May 14 Day 28 of Omer Eve 2nd Passover Count 29 after dark
Iyyar 14/May 15 Day 29 of Omer Second Passover	Iyyar 15/May 16 Day 30 of Omer Count 31 after dark	Iyyar 16/May 17 Day 31 of Omer Count 32 after dark	Iyyar 17/May 18 Day 32 of Omer Count 33 after dark	Iyyar 18/May 19 Day 33 of Omer Count 34 after dark	Iyyar 19/May 20 Day 34 of Omer Count 35 after dark	Iyyar 20/May 21 Day 35 of Omer Count 36 after dark
Iyyar 21/May 22 Day 36 of Omer ⑪ ? Count 37 after dark	Iyyar 22/May 23 Day 37 of Omer Count 38 after dark	Iyyar 23/May 24 Day 38 of Omer Count 39 after dark	Iyyar 24/May 25 Day 39 of Omer Count 40 after dark	Iyyar 25/May 26 Day 40 of Omer Ascension ⑫ Count 41 after dark	Iyyar 26/May 27 Day 41 of Omer Count 42 after	Iyyar 27/May 28 Day 42 of Omer Count 43 after
Iyyar 28/May 29 Day 43 of Omer Count 44 after dark	Iyyar 29/May 30 Day 44 of Omer Count 45 after dark	Sivan 1/May 31 Day 45 of Omer New Moon Count 46 after dark	Sivan 2/June 1 Day 46 of Omer Count 47 after dark	Sivan 3/June 2 Day 47 of Omer Count 48 after dark	Sivan 4/June 3 Day 48 of Omer Count 49 after dark	Sivan 5/June 4 Day 49 of Omer Pentecost Eve
Sivan 6/June 5 Feast of Pentecost/ Shavuot				Color Key: Non-Sabbath Festival Days	Color Key: Sabbaths: Festivals and weekly	

- 1 Appearance to Mary Magdalene near the tomb: Mark 16:9-11; John 20:11-18
- 2 Appearance to the other women as they are on their way to tell the Disciples: Matthew 28:8-10
- 3 Appearance to Simon Peter, date and time determined by reports after the event, Luke 24:33-35; 1 Corinthians 15:5
- 4 Appearance to two on the road to Emmaus: Mark 16:12-13; Luke 24:13-32
- 5 Appearance to eleven of the Twelve, excluding Thomas: Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-25
- 6 ? Date, time, and place unknown—Appearance to five hundred at one place: 1 Corinthians 15:6 (no details are provided, but the event may have happened while many followers of the Master were still in Jerusalem for the Feast of Unleavened Bread and had gathered to hear the testimonies of those who had seen the Risen Messiah)
- 7 ? Date, time, and place unknown—Appearance to James, His brother: 1 Corinthians 15:7 (no details are provided, but the event may have happened during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, while James fasted)
See account given by Jerome (*Lives of Illustrious Men*, 2): “But the Lord ... appeared to James. For James had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour in which he drank the cup of the Lord until he should see him rising again from among those who sleep ... ‘Bring a table and bread,’ said the Lord. He brought bread and blessed and broke it and gave to James the Just and said to him, ‘My brother eat your bread, for the Son of Man is risen from among those that sleep.’”
- 8 Appearance to the Twelve, including Thomas: John 20:26-31; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:5 (Paul may be referring to appearance 4)
- 9 ? Date unknown—Appearance to seven of the Twelve who had decided to go fishing: John 21 (placed speculatively on the 17th of the Omer based the number of fish caught, a number that must have significance in the original telling: add the days of the Omer from 1 to 17 [1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6, etc.]
- 10 ? Date and time unknown—Appearance to the Disciples on the appointed mountain in Galilee (probably took place after at least seven of them [John 21] had returned to Galilee to their families and their occupations): Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18
- 11 ? Date and time unknown—Appearance to the Disciples, who had regathered in Jerusalem: Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:3-8
- 12 Appearance to His disciples, who were remaining in Jerusalem, meeting in the Upper Room, and gathering frequently in the Temple: Mark 16:19-20; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-12

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Counting the Omer

The command to bring the first sheaf of the harvest to the Temple is of great significance to the disciples of Yeshua. It is an obscure appointment on the Biblical calendar, sometimes called the First Fruits of the Barley Harvest, but better known simply by its Biblical name, “The Omer.” The Omer is a minor festival with major Messianic implications.

The Omer and the Messiah

On the same day that Caiaphas and his associates tried the Master, three apostles from the Sanhedrin went out to a barley field not far from Jerusalem. On the same day that the Romans bound and crucified the Master, the apostles from the Sanhedrin bound up the standing barley into bundles while it was still attached to the ground so that it would be easier to reap.

Saturday night, they returned to the barley field after the conclusion of the first day of Passover. Crowds from the local villages had gathered to witness the ceremony. Brandishing sickles, the three apostles of the Sanhedrin addressed the crowd, asking, “Has the sun set?” The people replied, “Yes!” They repeated the question two more times, and they received a total of three affirmations from the villagers. Then they asked three times, “Shall we cut with this sickle?” and the crowd responded with three enthusiastic affirmations. Three times the apostles from the Sanhedrin asked, “Shall we place the grain in this basket?” Each of the reapers asked, “Shall I begin to cut now?” Each time, the crowd responded enthusiastically, “Yes!” In this manner, the new harvest began.

The reapers collected three sheaves of barley in their baskets and carried it back to Jerusalem that same night. The baskets contained more than enough grain to constitute a full sheaf’s worth (an omer, עמר), enough to fulfill the Torah’s mandate:

You shall bring in the omer of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the omer before the LORD for you to be accepted; on the day after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.
(Leviticus 23:10–11)

The Torah prohibited using or eating any produce from the new year’s cereal crops until the priesthood offered up to the LORD the first of the new grain. The barley crop ripens first in Israel, so the priesthood always offered an omer of barley. The commandment of the barley omer reminded Israel that the land and its produce belong first to God. Until the people harvested and offered the first fruits of the barley in the Temple, the rest of the crops were not considered kosher.

That same night, the priests in the Temple threshed, roasted, and ground the barley into flour. All night they prepared it. The same night that our Master left the tomb, the priests refined the freshly milled flour by sifting it through thirteen sieves.

Sunday morning, while the women discovered the empty tomb, the high priest was busy mixing the barley flour with oil and frankincense to prepare it as a bread offering. The priests mixed the flour into dough with olive oil and incense. Caiaphas took the batch of dough in hand and waved it before the LORD as a wave offering. Then he touched the barley flour to corner of the altar.

After the morning sacrifice and the additional Passover sacrifices (described in Numbers 28:24), Caiaphas offered a portion of grain offering on the altar as a memorial portion. The priests baked the remainder of the dough into loaves of unleavened barley bread to be shared among the priesthood. Caiaphas concluded the ceremony by sacrificing a single male lamb as a burnt offering to accompany the new grain. That day began the fifty-day count to the festival of *Shavuot* (Pentecost).

The Pharisees and the Sadducees disagreed about the correct day for the barley ritual. The Pharisees maintained that “the day after the Sabbath” (Leviticus 23:11) referred to Nisan 16, the day following the *Yom Tov* of the festival of Passover. The Pharisees explained that the Torah referred to the *Yom Tov* as “the sabbath” because it was a special festival day with Sabbath work-restrictions.

The Sadducees maintained that “the day after the Sabbath” referred to the day after the first Saturday (weekly Sabbath) that fell during the week of Passover. In their opinion, the day for offering the barley sheaf always fell on a Sunday.

The Pharisees had the upper hand because they had the popular support of the people. In the days of the apostles, “the day after the Sabbath” meant Nisan 16. Rabbinic literature indicates that, during the days of the apostles, the Jewish people followed the Pharisaic interpretation of Leviticus 23:11, interpreting “the day after the Sabbath” as “the day after Yom Tov.” Evidence from Josephus, Philo, and the Septuagint confirms this.

On the second day of unleavened bread, which is the sixteenth day of the month [Nisan], they first partake of the fruits of the earth, for before that day they do not touch them ... They also at this participation of the first-fruits of the earth, sacrifice a lamb as a burnt offering to God. (Josephus, *Antiquities* 3:250–251/x.5)

There is also a festival on the day of the Passover feast, which succeeds the first day, and this is named the sheaf [omer], from what takes place on it; for the sheaf is brought to the altar as a first fruit ... (Philo, *Special Laws* 2:162)

And he shall lift up the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you. On the day after the first day the priest shall lift it up. (Leviticus 23:11, LXX)

In that particular year, both opinions coincided. Nisan 16 (the correct date according to Pharisaic opinion) fell on a Sunday (the correct weekday according to Sadducean opinion). By divine design, the ritual of offering the first fruit of the barley omer in the Temple coincided with the resurrection of the Messiah. Paul invoked the symbolism when he wrote, “Messiah has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20). The day of His resurrection began the fifty-day count to Pentecost.

Counting the Omer—A Subject of Dispute

The Harvest of the Barley Omer occurs on the second day of the seven days of Unleavened Bread. It is a miniature festival within a festival. It is listed in Leviticus 23 along with all the appointed times of God.

Beginning on the day that the first omer of barley was harvested and brought to the Temple, a countdown to the next Biblical Festival began. The Torah commands the Israelites to count off 49 days and then celebrate the festival of *Shavuot* (Pentecost) on the 50th day. The day the Omer was brought was Day One of what is called Counting the Omer. The next day was Day Two of the Omer count, the next was Day Three and so on.

During the 49 days of the Omer count, the wheat crop in Israel ripens. By the end of the Omer count, the crop is ready for harvest and the First Fruits of the wheat crop can be brought to the Temple for Pentecost.

No Small Consequence

The counting of the days of the Omer is a Biblical commandment incumbent upon every Jew. Traditionally, the period of the Omer count is to be a time of spiritual introspection as the counters prepare themselves for *Shavuot*. Because it begins during Passover and concludes at *Shavuot*, the counting of the omer remembers the journey from Egypt to Mount Sinai.

The Messianic implications of the Omer and the subsequent count down are great. According to Matthew 28:1, Yeshua rose “after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week,” a Hebraic expression for *havdalah* hour that ends the Sabbath on Saturday night. We cannot help but notice that the appointed day for harvesting the barley omer coincides with the resurrection of Messiah. In a remarkable display of God’s sovereign planning, the Torah set aside the resurrection as a day of first fruits 1400 years before its occurrence. Just as the first omer of barley was brought as a first fruits of the whole harvest, so too Messiah’s resurrection was a first fruits of the resurrection of the dead. This is the imagery Paul invokes with the words, “Messiah has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.” Just as the first fruits of the barley made all the rest of the harvest kosher for harvest, so too the resurrection of Messiah makes the resurrection of the dead possible.

Counting the Days of Messiah

Because of the resurrection and the connection to Pentecost, the counting of the Omer is an important mitzvah for believers.

According to Jewish tradition, the counting is done in the following prescribed manner. After the evening prayers each day, the counter recites a blessing: “Blessed are You, LORD Our God, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us with his commandments and commanded us to count the Omer.” Then the counter simply states, “Today is X days of the Omer.” The person counting follows his formal declaration of the omer day with a recitation of Psalm 67 and a few short petitions for spiritual cleansing and renewal.

Tradition prescribes the recitation of Psalm 67 because it is composed of exactly 49 Hebrew words which correspond to the 49 days of the omer count. The psalm is seasonally appropriate because of its harvest motif. It is spiritually appropriate because it speaks clearly of God’s salvation (Yeshua) being made known over all the earth.

The Counting of the Omer creates a count down to Shavuot, the time of the giving of the Torah and the time of the giving of the Holy Spirit. As such, it guides us on a spiritual journey of preparation. It is a journey which is begun with Passover, the symbol of our Salvation in Yeshua, and completed at Pentecost, the symbol of our completion through the Spirit. The distance of days between the two events should be a time of spiritual reflection, growth, purification, and preparation.

The Master’s resurrection makes the counting of the Omer a season of special significance and joy. For his disciples, it is a time to remember the resurrected Yeshua. All of his post-resurrection appearances fell within the days of the Omer count.

At the end of the first day of the Omer, he rose and appeared to Miriam and to two of our number while they traveled to Emmaus, and also to Peter. On the second day of the Omer he appeared in our midst, among the Twelve. On the ninth day of the Omer, he appeared to us again and Thomas was with us. During the counting, he appeared to 500 of our number and then to James. During the counting, he appeared to seven of our number while they fished on the sea. On the fortieth day of the Omer, he led us out to a hill near Bethany, and we saw him ascend to heaven. Before he ascended, he commanded us not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father.

We waited and counted the days. Forty-one, forty-two, forty-three, forty-four, forty-five, forty-six, forty-seven, forty-eight, forty-nine days of the omer ... and when the day of Pentecost was fully come we were all together in one place.

Let’s work together this year as we keep the mitzvah of Counting the Omer. Let’s express the resurrected life within us by doing more mitzvahs and spreading more joy.