

Counting the Omer

A Daily Devotional Toward Shavuot

William Mark Huey



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by William Mark Huey

edited by J.K. McKee

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Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, “When you enter the land which I am going to give to you and reap its harvest, then you shall bring in the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD for you to be accepted; on the day after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. Now on the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb one year old without defect for a burnt offering to the LORD. Its grain offering shall then be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering by fire to the LORD for a soothing aroma, with its drink offering, a fourth of a hin of wine. Until this same day, until you have brought in the offering of your God, you shall eat neither bread nor roasted grain nor new growth. It is to be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwelling places. You shall also count for yourselves from the day after the sabbath, from the day when you brought in the sheaf of the wave offering; there shall be seven complete sabbaths.”

Leviticus 23:10-15

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Introduction

An interesting experience happened to me on my spiritual journey between Passover and the Feast of Weeks in 2004 that actually inspired this volume. At that time, in my capacity as director of Outreach Israel Ministries, we were responsible for certain elements of a unified effort, by several independent Messianic ministries, to co-host a celebration of the festival of *Shavuot* (Pentecost) in Orlando, Florida. With the stated theme of “Unity in Spirit and Truth,” our collective efforts, among many goals, were devoted to displaying to the beleaguered Messianic community that Spirit-led followers of Yeshua the Messiah could work, worship, and minister together while celebrating the Feast of Weeks. After all, the command to convoke and declare our allegiance and dedication God is abundantly clear:

“Three times a year you shall celebrate a feast to Me. You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread; for seven days you are to eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time in the month Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. And none shall appear before Me empty-handed. Also *you shall observe the Feast of the Harvest of the first fruits* of your labors *from* what you sow in the field; also the Feast of the Ingathering at the end of the year when you gather in *the fruit of* your labors from the field. Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD” (Exodus 23:14-17).

Our primary objective was to focus on the Holy One of Israel, and attempt—while still scattered in the Diaspora (since most do not have the financial ability to convene in Jerusalem)—to follow His command to declare our desire to obey Him. As a result, almost all who attended the convocation were treated to an awesome display of how events and gatherings focused on the Lord and His work for us can be a spiritual blessing beyond description.

With the *Shavuot* gathering as a backdrop, one of my responsibilities was to encourage various Believers to consider attending so that they might receive His blessings. As we began to enter into the Spring Feasts in 2004, my attention was drawn to a command that was listed among the primary list of *moedim* or appointed times in Leviticus 23:

“You shall also count for yourselves from the day after the sabbath, from the day when you brought in the sheaf of the wave offering; there shall be seven complete sabbaths. You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh sabbath; then you shall present a new grain offering to the LORD” (Leviticus 23:15-16).

As I pondered this command, and reflected on my own personal negligence to understand how to follow it, I had a private conviction to “Count the Omer.” In my attempt to be obedient to Count the Omer, I did some examination to determine just what this verse meant and if there were any existing, systematic methods for doing it. Certainly, I reasoned, the Jewish community which has faithfully followed the commandments of Leviticus 23 over many centuries, was bound to have devised some appropriate methods for Counting the Omer. In my cursory search for outlines or programs, I found a few sources that did not totally agree. I did, however, discover a systematic way of Counting the Omer which bore witness with my Spirit that led me to reflect upon the Scriptures for the fifty-day count.

In ancient times when the altar associated with the Temple was operational, the Levites incorporated a series of psalms that were used to stimulate reflection, adoration, and worship of the God of Israel during the fifty days of Counting the Omer. As I reviewed the list of psalms and considered this systematic plan for enhancing the command to Count the Omer, it seemed to bear witness as a feasible way to proceed.

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Additionally, the readings were a logical way to encourage modern-day Messianic Believers to Count the Omer themselves, and so I chose to incorporate the list in my original correspondence and daily reflections to our ministry's e-mail teaching list.

What I intended to do was to assist people Counting the Omer with a review of some contemplative psalms. Psalm 67 was read or recited each day as the morning oblation was being offered. When you read this psalm, it outlines and establishes the setting for the sacrifices at the altar, and to a certain extent, the order of worship:

“For the choir director; with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song. God be gracious to us and bless us, *and* cause His face to shine upon us—**Selah.** That Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for You will judge the peoples with uprightness and guide the nations on the earth. **Selah.** Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. The earth has yielded its produce; God, our God, blesses us. God blesses us, that all the ends of the earth may fear Him” (Psalm 67).

As I read this psalm, I could picture in my mind's eye the actual sacrificial ceremonies that were taking place during the Omer Count on the Temple Mount. Since this psalm is composed for the choir director, with stringed instruments, and referred to as both a psalm and a song, I could picture the various priests gathered by the altar with their different instruments designed to offer up praise in conjunction with the sacrifices. Then I could hear the officiating priest declaring what appears to be an abbreviated rendition of the Aaronic Benediction, followed by a pause, *selah*, for reflection. Next, another stanza proclaims the sovereignty of God over the Earth and His offer of salvation to the nations, and the joy this brings to those who know Him. This is followed by another pause to soak in those declarations. Finally, as the priest takes up a handful of finely grained flour (an ephah of wheat) and places it on the altar, he beseeches the Holy One for His blessing.

This seemed like such an appropriate psalm to consider each day of the Omer Count that I recommended that each day be started by reflecting on this ceremony, and how it can apply to your own personal walk with the Messiah of Israel. Then, in due course, the various other psalm selections were included for a daily reflection.

As you will discover when you begin your reading of this devotional, as I was writing my initial exhortations to encourage our e-mail subscribers to consider participating in the daily Omer Count, I found myself being spiritually exercised by this daily procedure. At first, it was not my intention to write a daily devotional. However, by Day #2, I was receiving such meaningful, personal benefits from reflecting on these selections that I began to put my thoughts to writing. By Day #3, I was personally committed to writing a daily reflection to continue the encouragement of the saints who were also perhaps Counting the Omer for the very first time.

Throughout this devotional you will read my thoughts on how various psalm selections moved me in my pursuit of obedience to Count the Omer. At times, I even noticed that the Omer Count enhanced my weekly study of the Torah portions. Frequently, I saw parallels in what was being taught in the weekly Torah and Haftarah readings that would be further illuminated by the various psalms. In time, I concluded that the Holy Spirit was rewarding me for my obedience to focus my time and thoughts on these wonderful passages from the Holy Writ.

Introduction

My prayer is that all who read this devotional, but more importantly, all who chose to follow the command to Count the Omer, will likewise be encouraged by the indwelling power of the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) as the Lord guides and teaches them. As we all draw closer to our Creator through diligent obedience to His ways, may the Holy One of Israel be glorified!

Until the restoration of all things...

William Mark Huey
February 2005

Counting the Omer

Counting the Omer

Before you read my daily devotionals for the fifty-day Count of the Omer, a brief overview of the subject is in order. The command to Count the Omer is derived primarily from the following verses in Leviticus 23:

“You shall also count for yourselves from the day after the sabbath, from the day when you brought in the sheaf of the wave offering; there shall be seven complete sabbaths. You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh sabbath; then you shall present a new grain offering to the LORD” (Leviticus 23:15-16).

In these two brief verses, the command to Count the Omer (or new grain offering) is declared. But if you are familiar with the expression, “two Jews, three opinions,” you will then understand that for millennia, the command to Count the Omer has not been universally agreed upon. First Century Jewish history reveals that there were several ways that the fifty-day count from the season of Passover to *Shavuot* was determined.

What we know for certain is that the Counting of the Omer lasts fifty days. It lasts for the fifty days between the “day after the sabbath” to the “day after the seventh sabbath.” To me, following this command should be fairly simple. During the Festival of Unleavened Bread, which lasts for seven days, there is always a regular weekly Sabbath that is observed. The command is simply to “count for yourselves from the day after the sabbath, from the day when you brought in the sheaf of the wave offering” (Leviticus 23:15).

From this simple reading, you might ask, “Why is there so much confusion? What is so difficult about starting the count after the Sabbath?” But then you realize that historical differences in interpretation of when to begin significantly divided sectors of the First Century Jewish community. Each had its own way at looking at the command to Count the Omer, and was readily prepared to declare anyone who did not follow their method as being in severe error. A review of the command and what it signifies for us as Messianic Believers today is certainly in order.

How to Count the Omer

On the day after the Sabbath of the Passover season or Festival of Unleavened Bread, Israel was instructed to bring a wave offering of grain from the ripened early seasonal barley that would, in essence, be an early “Feast of First Fruits” to the Lord, celebrated in the Spring of the agricultural year. The following verses from Leviticus 23 precede the command to Count the Omer. Once again, note that there is not universal agreement about the interpretation of these commandments:

“In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight is the LORD’s Passover. Then on the fifteenth day of the same month there is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work. But for seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD. On the seventh day is a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work.’ Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, “When you enter the land which I am going to give to you and reap its harvest, then you shall bring in the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD for you to be accepted; on the day after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. Now on

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the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb one year old without defect for a burnt offering to the LORD. Its grain offering shall then be two-tenths of an *ephah* of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering by fire to the LORD for a soothing aroma, with its drink offering, a fourth of a hin of wine. Until this same day, until you have brought in the offering of your God, you shall eat neither bread nor roasted grain nor new growth. It is to be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwelling places.” Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, **“When you enter the land which I am going to give to you and reap its harvest, then you shall bring in the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD for you to be accepted; on the day after the sabbath the priest shall wave it”**” (Leviticus 23:5-14).

As you can read in these verses, there are several commands subject to various interpretations, especially in regard to the different “Sabbaths.” Since the emphasis of this devotional is *not to argue* the various viewpoints, I will simply explain my own personal interpretation and conviction, especially as it concerns Yeshua the Messiah as the “first fruit offering.”

In the Hebrew Scriptures, it is understood that the word *Shabbat* (שַׁבָּת) is the same term translated that is used for the weekly Sabbath that was originally commanded in Exodus 20:8, Leviticus 23:3, and other significant places in the Hebrew Scriptures. This word is distinct from the related word *shabbaton* (שַׁבְּתוֹן), which is indicative of “sabbath observance, sabbatism,” in many cases representing a “sabbatical year,” or used in reference to a high Sabbath day (*BDB*).¹ *Shabbaton* is used later in Leviticus 23 regarding the “rest” relating to the Day of Blowing or *Yom Teruah* (v. 24), the Day of Atonement or *Yom Kippur* (v. 32), and the Feast of Tabernacles or *Sukkot* (v. 39). (But since the Hebrew is not absolutely specific on the day to start the Counting of the Omer, I would mention that the same word for “complete rest” or *shabbaton* is also used in Leviticus 23:3, when describing the weekly Sabbath.)

The oblique use of the word *Shabbat* in Leviticus 23:15 allowed the Pharisees, and consequently their Rabbinical descendants, to conclude that the Counting of the Omer was to begin on the day after *the high Sabbath* of the Passover meal. But is it possible that the real motivation for making this determination was to invalidate the historical event that occurred when Yeshua Himself, after His resurrection, prophetically fulfilled the Feasts of First Fruits when He presented Himself to the Father as a wave offering, on the day after the weekly Sabbath during the week of Unleavened Bread?

Based on the historical record, the year that Yeshua was crucified, I believe the evening of the Passover meal was on a Tuesday night that began on 14 *Aviv/Nisan*. Yeshua had actually entered the city of Jerusalem, as prophesied by Zechariah, on the daylight hours of 10 *Aviv/Nisan* so that He could be inspected as the unblemished, sacrificial lamb for the days prior to the Passover on 14 *Aviv/Nisan*:

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout *in triumph*, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey” (Zechariah 9:9).

“When they had approached Jerusalem and had come to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Yeshua sent two disciples, saying to them, ‘Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied *there* and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to Me. If anyone says anything to you,

¹ Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 992.

you shall say, “The Lord has need of them,” and immediately he will send them.’ This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: ‘SAY TO THE DAUGHTER OF ZION, “BEHOLD YOUR KING IS COMING TO YOU, GENTLE, AND MOUNTED ON A DONKEY, EVEN ON A COLT, THE FOAL OF A BEAST OF BURDEN.”’ The disciples went and did just as Yeshua had instructed them, and brought the donkey and the colt, and laid their coats on them; and He sat on the coats. Most of the crowd spread their coats in the road, and others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in the road. The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David; BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Hosanna in the highest!’” (Matthew 21:1-9).

When Yeshua came into Jerusalem, I believe it was in the daylight hours of 10 *Aviv/Nisan* that just happens to correspond with the daylight of the first day of the week or Sunday. Then, in order to fulfill some of the other prophecies that He Himself declared regarding His three days and three nights in the heart of the Earth, prior to the resurrection (Matthew 12:40), I believe that the crucifixion and burial took place on the daylight hours of Wednesday on 14 *Aviv/Nisan* or the required day of the Passover:

“But He answered and said to them, ‘An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and *yet* no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:39-40).

Yeshua was in the grave on Wednesday night, Thursday night, and Friday night (three nights), and all day Thursday, all day Friday, and all day Saturday (three days), before He rose again on Saturday evening, which would be considered the first day of the new week after the Sabbath has been completed. Then in the morning light of what would be considered Sunday morning, the empty grave was discovered. It would be on this day that the priests at the Temple would have been waving the First Fruits offering of the barley harvests in accordance with waving the barley sheaves on the first day after the weekly Sabbath (Leviticus 23:14). Yeshua could then fulfill the Festival of First Fruits as this offering before the Father, just as the Apostle Paul would later write the Corinthians:

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Messiah died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep...But now Messiah has been raised from the dead, **the first fruits** of those who are asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:3-6, 20).

As you are no doubt aware, this fulfillment caused quite a stir among the Pharisaical sect of the First Century. In order to discourage belief in Yeshua and His atoning work at Calvary, I believe that the Pharisees began *in earnest* to conclude that the Counting of the Omer should commence on the day after the feast celebrating Passover or *Pesach*. To this very day, the Rabbinical authorities that are responsible for establishing the Jewish calendars Count the Omer on the basis of what was concluded centuries ago by starting the count after the High Sabbath of Unleavened Bread.

This, of course, creates some confusion because the Counting of the Omer and the fifty days that lead up to the celebration of the Feast of Weeks or *Shavuot* are frequently on different days according to the traditional rendering. Ironically, it was the sect of the Sadducees who actually interpreted the commandment of Leviticus 23:15-16 in such a way that the Omer Count begins on the day after the normal

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weekly Sabbath of the week of Unleavened Bread. According to this method, the Feast of Weeks or *Shavuot* always occurs on a Sunday after seven sets of weeks have been counted. Their logic was such that it would make perfect sense that the Holy One would want exactly seven weeks of Sabbaths to be complete before a celebration that actually means “Feast of Weeks.” I believe that their method should be followed to celebrate *Shavuot* today.

However, let me be sure to add that the Holy One of Israel is **intently observing the hearts of His devotees**. Any categorical declaration of when to begin the Omer Count and how to observe it properly today, that excludes or demeans other Believers who hold to different interpretations, is both unnecessary and ungodly. When Yeshua returns, and when He rules and reigns from Mount Zion, He will personally tell us what the correct interpretation is and when we should celebrate *Shavuot*.

Focusing on the Lord

Shavuot is a major festival that is referred to by a variety of names. These include “Pentecost,” because of the fifty day count; “latter First Fruits,” because the ripened wheat was now another agricultural offering; the “Day of Assembly” (Deuteronomy 18:16); and *atzeret* (עֲצֵרֶת), or “stop or cease from counting” as is typified with conclusion of Counting the Omer for the fifty days. Each one of these descriptions focuses on a unique aspect of *Shavuot*.

In some Messianic circles, the Counting of the Omer has been related to a betrothal period between the engagement and the consummation of a marriage. As you might recall, when Israel was delivered from the bondage of slavery in Egypt, there were a number of judgments and miracles that took place during their deliverance. When Israel had finally crossed the Red Sea and began its wilderness trek on the way to Mount Sinai, it actually took seven weeks from their deliverance before they received the revelation of the Ten Commandments on what is considered the Feast of Weeks or *Shavuot*. This has been made analogous to waiting for the time when a couple is preparing to be wed. When the voice of the Lord was spoken from Mount Sinai, the response from Israel was one of complete reliance upon Him:

“Then he took the book of the covenant and read *it* in the hearing of the people; and they said, ‘All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!’ So Moses took the blood and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, ‘Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words’” (Exodus 24:7-8).

In some respects, the declaration that Israel made to the Holy One could state that they will obey, even before they necessarily know what they are going to be told. They were willing to make a total commitment to the Word of the Lord, prior to even hearing what He was going to say. This can be likened to the unconditional vows that are made in a marriage covenant.

Many have recommended that during the traditional period of fifty days, while we are Counting the Omer, we should be preparing our hearts to make a total commitment to our God and Savior. This betrothal period of seven full weeks is indeed a great time to be preparing our hearts for the proclamations that are typically associated with the Feast of Weeks or *Shavuot*.

As we enter into the commanded season known as the Counting of the Omer, we can once again use this opportunity to draw closer to our Creator. He is always faithful to give us a variety of admonitions that continually require us to reflect upon Him, who He is, and our relationship to Him.

Counting the Omer

Over the years, there have been a variety of systematic ways that have been formulized to make it easier for God's people to remember to Count the Omer. For the purposes of this devotional, I am beginning each day of the Omer Count with Psalm 67. Since it was used historically as a psalm of praise for the morning and evening oblation, I found it fitting to read, contemplate, and meditate upon in order to prepare my own heart for some additional psalm reflections. The following is the list of the selected psalm readings that correspond to the various days of the Omer Count:

Day	Meditation/Declaration	Psalm Reading
1	The Law of God	119:1-8
2	Obedience to Law of God	119:9-16
3	Happiness in Law of God	119:17-24
4	Determination to obey Law of God	119:25-32
5	A prayer for understanding	119:33-40
6	Trusting the Law of God	119:41-48
7	Confidence in Law of God	119:49-56
8	Devotion to Law of God	119:57-64
9	The value of the Law of God	119:65-72
10	The justice of the Law of God	119:73-80
11	Prayer for Deliverance	119:81-88
12	Faith in the Law of God	119:89-96
13	Love for the Law of God	119:97-104
14	Light from the Law of God	119:105-112
15	Safety in the Law of God	119:113-120
16	Obedience to the Law of God	119:121-128
17	Desire to obey Law of God	119:129-136
18	The justice of Law of God	119:137-144
19	Prayer for deliverance	119:145-152
20	Plea for salvation	119:153-160
21	Dedication to Law of God	119:161-168
22	A prayer for help	119:169-176
23	True happiness	1:1-6
24	Confidence in God	11:1-7
25	What God requires	15:1-5
26	The Law of God	19:1-7
27	A prayer for guidance	25:4-10
28	Longing for God	63:1-8
29	A song of thanksgiving	67:1-7(8)
30	God and His people	78:1-16
31	God and His people	78:17-31

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32	God and His people	78:32-39
33	God and His people	78:40-55
34	God and His people	78:56-72
35	God, the King	93:1-5
36	God, the Judge	94:12-23
37	A song of praise	95:1-7
38	God, the Supreme King	9:1-13(14)
39	God, the Ruler of the world	98:1-9
40	God, the Supreme King	99:1-9
41	The love of God	103:1-22
42	God and His people	105:1-11
43	God's graciousness	106:1-5
44	In praise of God	111:1-10
45	The happiness of a good person	112:1-10
46	The reward of obedience	128:1-6
47	A prayer for help	130:1-8
48	A call for the universe to praise God	148:1-14
49	A prayer of thanksgiving	138:1-8
50	Praise God	150:1-6

Please remember that in spite of all of the confusion and disagreements about when Counting the Omer should begin and end, I am confident that when Yeshua returns, **we will all be given the correct interpretation.**² Until then, whether you start on the day after Passover following Jewish tradition, and observe *Shavuot* on Sivan 6, or wait until the day after the weekly Sabbath of the Passover week, the most important thing is to simply draw closer to the Holy One through a consistent reflection upon Him through His Word. Ultimately, learned opinions and/or misguided interpretations are not what really matters. He is always looking at our hearts and our desire to know Him. And of course, the atoning work of the Messiah and our trust in Him are, according to the Scriptures, the things absolutely required for salvation—not when we celebrate *Shavuot*.

“Yeshua said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me’” (John 14:6).

If you are going to count on anything, you must count first and foremost on your relationship with God, made possible by Yeshua.

I trust this introduction will give you the confidence to take the *Counting of the Omer: A Devotional Toward Shavuot* as simply one tool among many to encourage a consistent pursuit of the Holy One through His Word. May you be blessed in your endeavors as you begin your own personal count toward the Feast of Weeks.

² For a further examination of both sides of the debate of Counting the Omer, consult the FAQ entry on the TNN website “Omer Count.”

DAY ONE

“The Way to Walk”

Psalm 119:1-8

Contemplating the desire to observe and honor the command to Count the Omer is a privilege. The blessing received of dedicating the time to focus upon the Lord and His Word is beyond description. In order to establish the proper spiritual mood to enter into His presence with thanksgiving, each day of these reflections will begin with a recitation of Psalm 67, before listing and addressing the selected psalm meditation.

By letting His words that describe the priestly ceremony, which surrounds the evening and morning oblation (sacrificial offerings), perhaps the image of dedication will pave the way for deeper understanding of who He is and why our hearts earnestly seek Him:

Psalm 67:1-7

For the choir director; with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song. God be gracious to us and bless us, *and* cause His face to shine upon us—Selah. That Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for You will judge the peoples with uprightness and guide the nations on the earth. Selah. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. The earth has yielded its produce; God, our God, blesses us. God blesses us, that all the ends of the earth may fear Him.

Psalm 119:1-8

Aleph. How blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD. How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, who seek Him with all *their* heart. They also do no unrighteousness; they walk in His ways. You have ordained Your precepts, that we should keep *them* diligently. Oh that my ways may be established to keep Your statutes! Then I shall not be ashamed when I look upon all Your commandments. I shall give thanks to You with uprightness of heart, when I learn Your righteous judgments. I shall keep Your statutes; Do not forsake me utterly!

By the time one has read Psalm 67 and the first stanza of Psalm 119, additional human words become inadequate to describe what has been communicated. Imagining the ancient Temple Mount scene, with dedicated servants of the Lord faithfully performing this service, should be beyond inspiration in the minds of illuminated seekers of the Most High.

Day One

However, as you turn to meditate on the first of twenty-two selections from Psalm 119, you will note that this text is arranged in a pattern that corresponds to the Hebrew *alef-bet*. This lengthy psalm is ideally suited for easy memorization to enhance one's meditation of God's Word. In this initial stanza, the focus is on His ways and properly walking in them. From the opening verse you discover that following the Torah results in blessings:

“How blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD” (Psalm 119:1).

The Hebrew *ashrei* (אֲשֵׁרֵי), which begins with the letter *alef*, “happiness,” begins the psalm with one of the most profound realities that has been communicated to God's people. The very first time that this word appears is in the final words of Moses as he addresses Israel, bidding them farewell:

“**Blessed are you** [*ashrecha*, אֲשֵׁרְךָ], O Israel; who is like you, a people saved by the LORD, who is the shield of your help and the sword of your majesty! So your enemies will cringe before you, and you will tread upon their high places” (Deuteronomy 33:29).

If you contemplate the impact of how God's blessings upon Israel are also placed upon individuals who trust in Him, the importance of personal responsibility becomes paramount. The Psalmist assuredly understood that the blessings incurred via obedience—both individually and corporately—would certainly result in deliverance, shielding, and dominance for Ancient Israel over their many enemies. The challenge today is encouraging followers of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to likewise obey in order to receive similar deliverance.

The fact that you are committing yourself to observe His testimonies by Counting the Omer indicates that you are seeking Him with all of your heart! You understand that keeping the Torah establishes His ways in your pursuit of His righteousness. The Spirit confirms in your heart that you will not be ashamed when you read and look upon His commandments. You naturally give thanks to Him for giving us the instructions that lead to blessing. By learning and observing His precepts, you get to be everything He wants you to be. Finally, you cry out to Him so that He does not forsake you when your observance falters, just as Moses shared with Israel before his death:

“Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you. **He will not fail you or forsake you.**’ Then Moses called to Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, ‘Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land which the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall give it to them as an inheritance. The LORD is the one who goes ahead of you; He will be with you. **He will not fail you or forsake you.** Do not fear or be dismayed” (Deuteronomy 31:6-8).

This theme is reiterated and enhanced by the author of Hebrews, where the Messiah is clearly identified:

“*Make sure that* your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, ‘I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,’ so that we confidently say, ‘THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?’ Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. Yeshua the Messiah *is* the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:5-8).

At this point, you might understand that Yeshua, the Author and Finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:12), also followed the Torah and spoke of His yoke of obedience in meaningful terms:

Counting the Omer

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. **For My yoke is easy and My burden is light**” (Matthew 11:28-30).

While describing His easy yoke and light burden, Yeshua quotes from the Prophet Jeremiah:

“Thus says the LORD, **‘Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; and you will find rest for your souls.’** But they said, ‘We will not walk *in it*’ (Jeremiah 6:16).

Lamentably, Jeremiah had difficulties with those who did not want to walk in the ways of the Lord, as did Yeshua in His day. Thankfully, as the Spirit of the Most High is motivating His people once again, the desire to follow commands like Counting the Omer is resurging with increasing fervor. For certainly, obeying the precepts of our Father is not only possible, but is indeed the right way to walk!

DAY TWO

“Two Know Him”

Psalm 119:9-16

The opportunity to reflect upon the Scriptures in order to be enriched by the Word of Life, **is truly life changing**. Let us begin today by first considering Psalm 67 as we give thanks for God’s provision. As we think about this opening psalm, let us also be cognizant of the fact that we are not in Jerusalem watching the evening and morning sacrifices being offered up on the Temple Mount altar—but instead, scattered somewhere in the Dispersion, we are presently imploring the Holy One for His blessings:

Psalm 67:1-7

For the choir director; with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song. God be gracious to us and bless us, *and* cause His face to shine upon us—Selah. That Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for You will judge the peoples with uprightness and guide the nations on the earth. Selah. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. The earth has yielded its produce; God, our God, blesses us. God blesses us, that all the ends of the earth may fear Him.

Psalm 119:9-16

How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping *it* according to Your word. With all my heart I have sought You; do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your words I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You. Blessed are You, O LORD; teach me Your statutes. With my lips I have told of all the ordinances of Your mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches. I will meditate on Your precepts and regard Your ways. I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your word.

Ultimately, we can all be thankful for the produce yielded by the Earth, whether we contemplate the barley, the wheat, or any other grains that have been offered up on the altar. Even though we have never witnessed a sacrificial offering on the altar at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, we can imagine it in our minds. As we reflect on these verses, the admonition of Leviticus 23:11-14 should remind us of the waving of the barley sheaf:

“He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD for you to be accepted; on the day after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. **Now on the day when you wave the sheaf**, you shall offer a male lamb one year old without

defect for a burnt offering to the LORD. Its grain offering shall then be **two-tenths of an ephah** [or omer] of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering by fire to the LORD for a soothing aroma, with its drink offering, a fourth of a hin of wine. Until this same day, until you have brought in the offering of your God, you shall eat neither bread nor roasted grain nor new growth. It is to be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwelling places” (Leviticus 23:11-14).

We then can search the Scriptures for other verses that describe these specific commandments, and we discover similar instruction is given for what is labeled the “morning and evening” oblation or sacrifice. The only difference in Exodus 29:39-42 is the amount of fine flour used for the offering:

“The one lamb you shall offer in the morning and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight; and there *shall be one-tenth of an ephah* [or omer] **of fine flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of beaten oil, and one-fourth of a hin of wine for a drink offering with one lamb.** The other lamb you shall offer at twilight, and shall offer with it the same grain offering and the same drink offering as in the morning, for a soothing aroma, an offering by fire to the LORD. **It shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations** at the doorway of the tent of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet with you, to speak to you there” (Exodus 29:39-42).

For some reason, the Holy One wanted to make the waving of the barley sheaf or the first fruits offering, to be done with twice the amount of fine flour that is generally offered when a lamb is sacrificed. This was to be a special day of remembrance, and not just the daily morning and evening oblation. Is it possible that He wanted His people to reflect on a double amount of fine flour mixed with oil and wine for some specific reason?

By now, most Messianic followers of the Messiah Yeshua who are trying to follow the instructions of Leviticus 23, have participated in some kind of recognition of the *Yom HaBikkurim* or the Feast of First Fruits. Occasionally, due to the Christian celebration of “Resurrection Sunday,” such a “first fruits” remembrance may coincide with Easter celebrations around the world. When this occurs, we actually witness some Messianic congregations and Christian groups contemporaneously remembering the resurrection of the Messiah at the same time. Somehow, through it all, when the focus is on the Messiah of Israel and His resurrection, the Holy One is glorified.

Paradoxically, perhaps without any specific knowledge of the Leviticus 23 requirements, many Christians around the globe may be considered to “symbolically” obey the Torah commandment to remember the “first fruits” celebration that Paul reminds the Corinthians Believers has been represented in Yeshua’s resurrection:

“But now Messiah has been raised from the dead, the **first fruits** of those who are asleep. For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Messiah all will be made alive. **But each in his own order: Messiah the first fruits, after that those who are Messiah's at His coming**” (1 Corinthians 15:20-23).

Now whether Christian Believers actually take barley grain and “wave the sheaf” before the Lord, or simply discuss it in their Easter services, the fact remains that the resurrection of the Messiah qualified Yeshua to be the “first fruit” offering to the Holy One of Israel.

In his teachings, the Apostle Paul also emphasizes the need for us to be imitators of the Messiah Yeshua, just as he was:

Day Two

“For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that **He would be the firstborn** among many brethren” (Romans 8:29).

Here we see a reference to Yeshua being “firstborn,” which is another way to describe Him as being the “first fruit” from the dead. Notably, the Apostle John also refers to Him as “firstborn from the dead” in the Book of Revelation:

“[A]nd from Yeshua the Messiah, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood—and He has made us *to be* a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen” (Revelation 1:5-6).

When you meditate upon Psalm 119:9-16, as has been recommended in our Counting of the Omer, you can consider your own reflection on the “word.” The Apostle John actually describes in his Gospel that Yeshua is the Word:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men...And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:1-4, 14).

With all of this said, let us take the time to not only Count the Omer, but also meditate upon the Word of God—Yeshua the Messiah—and His atoning work at Golgotha. Let us also remember to **reflect upon His resurrection and that we may fully know Him for everything that He is.**