



WHAT IS THE COUNTING OF THE OMER ALL ABOUT?

A mitzvah

The Torah instructs us (Leviticus 23:15) to count the days from the second day of Passover to the day before Shavuot. This period, seven full weeks, is known as the Counting of the Omer. An *omer* is a unit of measure used for barley. In the days of the First and Second Temples, an *omer* of barley was brought to the Temple every day during the Period of the Omer, from the second night of Passover up until Shavuot, seven weeks later.

History

After the Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 C.E., it was no longer possible to keep Shavuot as it had been observed, since the only observances associated with it were sacrifices made in the Temple. The Sages sought to instill permanent meaning and relevance in the festival so that it would be neither lost nor forgotten. In examining the sacred texts, they noted that after the Israelites left slavery in Egypt, they traveled to Mount Sinai where, seven weeks after the Exodus, Moses ascended the mountain to receive God's Torah. Shavuot thereafter became a commemoration of the Revealing of the Torah at Mount Sinai. It is known as the time of *Matan Torah* (the Giving of the Torah) and is celebrated as the moment in history when Israel entered into a covenant with God.

Meaning

Thus, the Counting of the Omer is a countdown from Redemption from slavery, to commitment at Mount Sinai. It links Passover, commemorating our Exodus from Egypt, with Shavuot, when we entered into the covenant of Torah with God. Thus the Counting of the Omer reminds us that redemption from bondage was not complete until we received the Torah at Mount Sinai. As we count the seven weeks, we have an opportunity to prepare ourselves spiritually to receive the Torah anew into our lives.

What to do

Here, for your use, is an Omer calendar. You're welcome to print it out and hang it on your refrigerator, or somewhere in your house where you will see it daily. Every night, from the second night of Passover to the night before Shavuot, recite the blessing (see next page) and then state the *omer* count (given in the calendar on the next page). The days are counted both according to their number, as well as in both weeks and days, for example, "Today is seventeen days, which is two weeks and three days of the Omer," or "Today is thirty-two days, which is four weeks and four days of the Omer."

ENJOY THE COUNTDOWN TO
SINAI!



OMER CALENDAR FOR 5771/2011: COUNTDOWN TO SINAI

Evening of April 19 1	Evening of April 20 2	Evening of April 21 3	Evening of April 22 4	Evening of April 23 5	Evening of April 24 6	Evening of April 25 7
Evening of April 26 8	Evening of April 27 9	Evening of April 28 10	Evening of April 29 11	Evening of April 30 12	Evening of May 1 13	Evening of May 2 14
Evening of May 3 15	Evening of May 4 16	Evening of May 5 17	Evening of May 6 18	Evening of May 7 19	Evening of May 8 20	Evening of May 9 21
Evening of May 10 22	Evening of May 11 23	Evening of May 12 24	Evening of May 13 25	Evening of May 14 26	Evening of May 15 27	Evening of May 16 28
Evening of May 17 29	Evening of May 18 30	Evening of May 19 31	Evening of May 20 32	Evening of May 21 33	Evening of May 22 34	Evening of May 23 35
Evening of May 24 36	Evening of May 25 37	Evening of May 26 38	Evening of May 27 39	Evening of May 28 40	Evening of May 29 41	Evening of May 30 42
Evening of May 31 43	Evening of June 1 44	Evening of June 2 45	Evening of June 3 46	Evening of June 4 47	Evening of June 5 48	Evening of June 6 49

Evening of June 7 SHAVUOT 50

Each evening, recite this blessing and mark off the day on your calendar:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ עַל סְפִירַת הָעוֹמֵר:

**Ba-rukh ata Adonai, E-lo-hei-nu me-lekh ha-o-lam a-sher ki-de-sha-nu b'mitz-vo-tav
v'tzi-va-nu al se-fi-rat ha-o-mer.**

Blessed are you, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who makes us holy through
commandments, and commanded us concerning the Counting of the Omer.

