Counting the 49 days from the Omer offering

 SEFIRAT HA’OMER – COUNTING THE OMER *What it is, why we do it, and how to count*

 A BRIDGE BETWEEN TWO HOLIDAYS

After Pesach, something special begins. Every single night, for 49 days, Jewish people all over the world do the same thing:

 They count.

This mitzvah is called **Sefirat ha’Omer** – “Counting the Omer.” It starts on the second night of Pesach and ends right before Shabuot.

Think of it like a 49-day bridge:

 Pesach ——————— 49 days ——————— **Shabuot** *(We left Egypt) (We received the Tora)*

 WHERE DOES THIS COME FROM?

The mitzvah comes directly from the Tora! commanded us:

 “You shall count for yourselves… seven complete weeks… fifty days” (Vayikra 23:15–16)

This is not a custom someone invented – it is a **mitzvah from the Tora itself**. That makes it very important!

 WHY DO WE COUNT?

When Bene Israel left Egypt, they were not yet ready to receive the Tora. They had left Egypt with their feet – but Egypt had not yet left their hearts.

Think about it this way. Bene Israel had lived in Egypt for 400 years. And Egypt was a place full of very bad values and very bad habits. People there were cruel to each other. They didn't care if someone was suffering. They worshipped idols – stone statues that cannot see, cannot hear, and cannot do anything. They were superstitious – afraid of cats, afraid of the Nile river, believing in magic and nonsense instead of trusting in □□. People gossiped and said terrible things about each other. They lied, they stole, they did not respect their parents, and nobody cared about anyone else.

And Bene Israel had been living right in the middle of all of this for hundreds of years! □

Some of those bad habits got inside them – not because they were bad people, but because when you live somewhere for a very long time, you start to think and feel like the people around you. It is like when you spend a whole day with someone who complains about everything – without even noticing, you start complaining too!

So when □□ took them out of Egypt, something very important still had to happen. **They had to disconnect from the past.** All those bad ideas, bad values, and bad habits that had gotten inside their minds and hearts – they had to let go of them, one by one, day by day. They had to look inside themselves and ask: *"What did I bring with me from Egypt that I need to leave behind?"*

Only when they were truly free on the inside – free from the Egyptian way of thinking – could they be ready to receive the Tora. □

□□ gave them **49 days** to do this work. And the Tora was the destination – the most beautiful and powerful guide for living a completely new and holy life: to love each other, to respect parents, to tell the truth, to believe only in □□, and to be a great and holy nation.

The Omer is the journey from leaving Egypt to receiving the Tora. Not just a journey of miles – but a journey of the heart. ❤

AND WHAT ABOUT US?

Every year, when we count the Omer, we do the same thing Bene Israel did.

We also live in a world full of influences – things we see, hear, and absorb every day – that are not always good for us. Some of those influences slowly get inside our minds and hearts without us even realizing it. During the Omer, we ask ourselves the same question Bene Israel asked:

"What is inside me – in my thoughts, my habits, my character – that I need to work on and improve, so that I can receive the Tora the way it deserves to be received?"

Maybe it is the way we speak to our friends. Maybe it is how quickly we get angry. Maybe it is something we watch or hear that does not make us better. The Omer is our personal time to **disconnect from negative influences** – just like Bene Israel disconnected from Egypt – and to prepare ourselves to stand before and receive Matan Tora.

Every day of counting is like saying: *"I am one day more ready. I am one day closer to the Tora. I am one day better than yesterday."*

WHEN DO WE COUNT?

 At night – right after the stars come out Every single night – for 49 nights in a row Standing up – we count while standing

If you forgot to count at night, you can still count the next day – but **without a berakha**.

HOW DO WE COUNT?

Step 1: Say the berakha:

“Barukh Ata □□ Elohenu Melekh ha’olam, asher kideshanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu al sefirat ha’omer.”

Step 2: Announce the count:

“Ha’yom [number] yamim la’omer.” (Today is [number] days of the Omer.)

Once you reach 7 days, you say both the days AND the weeks:

“Ha’yom shiv’a yamim – shehem shavua ehad la’omer.” (Today is seven days – which is one week of the Omer.)

After that you keep adding both:

“Ha’yom shemona yamim – shehem shavua ehad ve’yom ehad la’omer.” (Today is eight days – which is one week and one day of the Omer.)

□ **WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU MISS A DAY?**

This is a very important halacha!

□ Missed one night but counted the next day → keep counting **with a berakha** ✔ □ Missed an entire day and night completely → continue counting, but **without a berakha** for the rest of that year ✖

□ This is why many people have an **Omer calendar** on their wall or an app on their phone – so they never forget! □

□ **THE BIG IDEA**

Pesach taught us: □□ took us out of slavery and made us free. But **freedom alone is not enough**. Freedom is only meaningful when you use it for something great.

The Omer teaches us that real freedom means **disconnecting from the bad influences of the past** and preparing ourselves – our

minds, our hearts, and our character – to receive the Tora.

Just like Bene Israel spent 49 days becoming ready for Matan Tora, we spend 49 days asking ourselves: *"What do I need to improve? What do I need to let go of? How can I be more ready for the Tora?"*

✔ Use your freedom to grow ✔ Disconnect from negative influences ✔ Prepare your heart for the Tora ✔ Every single day counts – literally!

✏ **ACTIVITIES**

**Activity 1 – Find it in the Tora! **

Open a Chumash to Vayikra (Leviticus) chapter 23, verses 15–16. Read the pasuk together with your teacher. Can you find the Hebrew word for "count" – ? Circle it or underline it in your Chumash. Now you know exactly where this mitzvah comes from!

**Activity 2 – Egypt vs. Tora **

Draw a line down the middle of a paper. On one side write **"Egypt Values"** and on the other side write **"Tora Values."** Fill each side with words or drawings showing the difference.

For example: Egypt → cruel to others, idol worship, superstition, lying, gossip, not caring about anyone. Tora → kindness, believing only in , truth, respecting parents, caring for others.

When you are done, look at both sides. Which world would you rather live in?

**Activity 3 – Counting Race! **

The teacher calls out a day number – students race to figure out how many complete weeks and extra days that is, and say

the full counting formula out loud.

Examples to use:

- Day 8 = 1 week and 1 day
- Day 15 = 2 weeks and 1 day
- Day 22 = 3 weeks and 1 day
- Day 35 = 5 weeks exactly
- Day 49 = 7 weeks exactly — Shabuot is tomorrow!

The first student to say the complete formula correctly wins that round!

**Activity 4 — Make Your Own Omer Calendar! **

Draw or print a grid of **49 boxes** arranged in **7 rows of 7**. Number each box from 1 to 49. Decorate the border with your own designs — flowers, stars, flames from Sinai, whatever inspires you!

Each night at home, after you count the Omer with your family, color in or check off that day's box. Bring your calendar to school each week to show the class how many days you have counted. Who will make it all the way to 49 without missing a single day?

**Activity 5 — My Personal Omer Commitment **

Just like Bene Israel spent 49 days disconnecting from the bad influences of Egypt and preparing their hearts for Matan Tora — you are going to do the same thing.

On a piece of paper, write or draw **one thing you want to work on improving** during the Omer. Think honestly: what is something inside you — a habit, a way of speaking, something you watch or do — that you want to work on leaving behind?

Some ideas:

- *"I will try not to say unkind things about others"*

- *“I will work on not getting angry so fast”*
- *“I will daven with more kavanah”*
- *“I will try to stop watching things that are not good for me”*
- *“I will be kinder to my brother or sister”*

You can keep it private – it is between you and □□. Or you can share it with the class if you want.

□ Cut it out and tape it next to your Omer calendar. Look at it every single day – and remember: every day of the Omer is a chance to become a little better. □