

The *Awesome Secret* of Counting the Omer to Pentecost!

What is all this business about “counting the omer,” the wave sheaf offering, and counting the days to Pentecost? Most churches are thoroughly confused on this issue, and totally miss the point of this **COMMANDMENT** of God! What is the truth? What is the hidden mystery of the omer? What is an “omer,” anyway, and why should we be concerned about it? Here is vital new truth which is a **KEY** to spiritual overcoming and enduring to the end!

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One of the most potent and powerful keys to being an “overcomer” and enduring to the end is overlooked by the majority of Christians because of rejection of the Old Testament and rejection of the Laws of God in favor of pagan superstitions. Most churches forget that Jesus said that man shall not live by bread alone, but by **EVERY WORD** that proceeds out of the mouth of God, which is the Bible (Matt.4:4; Luke 4:4). Jesus said the scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35). Paul said all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, instruction, reproof, correction that the man of God may become perfect thoroughly furnished unto good works (II Timothy 3:16-17).

One of these overlooked commands of God is to count 50 days (7 complete weeks) “for yourselves,” starting on the second day of Passover – the day the wave sheaf is brought to the priest for the Omer offering on Nisan 16. Churches are even confused over what day this count should begin, are ignorant of its true spiritual meaning, and fail to observe it at all!

“You Shall COUNT . . .”

God declares, “You shall then **COUNT** seven complete weeks after the day following the Passover holiday when you brought the Omer as a wave offering” (Lev.23:15).

According to Jewish understanding, “Sefirat Ha’Omer” – counting the Omer – refers to the forty-nine days from the second day of the Passover festival, and recounts the journey of the Israelites from Egypt, through the desert wastes, to the revelation of God at Mount Sinai, when the Commandments of God were set forth from heaven, and God made a Covenant with His people Israel, and “married” His bride.

This step-by-step journey through the wilderness was a time of trial and testing. God revealed to His people the Sabbath day (Exo.16), and satisfied their hunger with manna from

heaven. When they complained of thirst, He caused water to spring forth. When the Amalekites attacked, He intervened for them and helped them fight off the vicious hordes (known as the Hyksos in Egyptian history).

Each day the Israelites are commanded to count the Omer, as they experienced their journey from captivity (Egypt) to freedom (Sinai).

Notice that there are actually TWO commands in counting the Omer! First, we are commanded to “count off” the weeks, week by week. Then we are commanded to count off the DAYS, till we come to fifty – the fiftieth day being Pentecost!

The Testimony of Josephus

Flavius Josephus was a noted Jewish historian of the first century, who was himself a priest, a famous general in the war against the Romans in 70 A.D., and a Pharisee as well. He writes about Pentecost: “But on the *second day of unleavened bread*, which is the sixteenth day of the month, 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.

“6. When a week of weeks has passed over after this sacrifice, (which weeks contain forty and nine days,) on the fiftieth day, which is Pentecost . . . they bring to God a loaf made of wheat flour” (*Antiquities*, III, x, 5-6).

Observing this day was the customary practice of the Jews in the time of Christ. Josephus tells us that ALL THE MULTITUDE followed the teachings of the Pharisees in this respect. He tells us: “. . .the Pharisees, who are one of the sects of the Jews . . . These have SO GREAT A POWER OVER THE MULTITUDE, that when they say anything against the king or against the high priest, they are presently believed” (*Antiquities*, XIII, x, 5).

Concerning the Sadducees, the other sect of the Jews, which included some of the aristocracy and some of the high priests, who counted Pentecost from the day after the weekly Sabbath which fell during the Days of Unleavened Bread, Josephus tells us: “. . . the Sadducees are able to persuade NONE BUT THE RICH, and have not the populous obsequious to them, but the Pharisees have the MULTITUDE ON THEIR SIDE. . .” (*Anti.*, XIII, x, 6).

WHY Count the Omer?

I could answer, simply, “Because God says to do it!” Would that be sufficient? It is a simple, clear-cut, direct commandment of God. If we fail to obey Him, we bring upon ourselves the curses for disobedience, and SIN – and the wages of sin lead to DEATH (Rom.6:23).

Therefore, because God commands us to count the days from Passover to Pentecost, we should acknowledge that it is a LAW OF GOD, one that we must obey, if we are to reap the spiritual benefits and avoid the consequences of disobedience!

However, Eliyahu Kitov, in his work *The Book of Our Heritage*, points out:

“Israel does not seek logical reasons for the performance of the mitzvos; the fact that God has commanded us is sufficient reason for performing

a mitzvah with enthusiasm. If our Sages nevertheless offered us 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 mitzvos, 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” (vol.2, page 680).

Defilement and Contamination

When Israel left Egypt, they left behind hundreds of years during which they had become contaminated by Egyptian influence, idolatry, and had developed the mentality of slaves, as they were oppressed and driven by harsh taskmasters. They had sunk to new spiritual lows. But at their extremity of suffering, God sent Moses to bring them out of their bondage and suffering, and to lead them to freedom and sovereignty.

They left Egypt on the day of Passover, Nisan 15, after the night when the first born of Egypt were all put to death supernaturally (Exodus 12:29).

Says Avraham Yaakov Finkel in *The Essence of the Holy Days*, “When the Israelites were in Egypt, they sank to the depth of the forty-ninth Gate of Impurity. God wanted to extract Israel from the forty-nine gates in stages, by illuminating on each day between Passover and Shavuot the Gate of Holiness that is the counterpart of its opposite Gate of Impurity. This tikkum, correction or restoration, comes to life each year in the counting of the Omer, on the forty-nine days between Passover – the day of the Exodus – and Shavuot – the day of the Giving of the Torah” (p.165, quoting Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto).

Another Jewish rabbi, Samson Raphael Hirsch, offers another profound insight into the counting of the Omer. Writes Avraham Finkel: “He notes the seven-day periods in the laws of uncleanness and purity as periods during which the individual strives to *bring uncleanness to a close in order to enter a state of purity* on the eighth day.

“Thus, a *sevenfold counting of seven-day periods*, that is, a counting of forty-nine days, would symbolize the *complete elimination of uncleanness, namely, of bondage*, to our senses. The fiftieth day [Pentecost or Shavuot] would mark our *final entry into purity*, that is, into the realm of moral freedom. The Omer count thus symbolizes the idea that we can acquire moral freedom only through *sevenfold intensive work on ourselves*” (p.166).

A Spiritual TYPE

How does this apply to God’s people, today?

This journey through the wilderness is a TYPE of the Christian life of overcoming – from baptism and leaving sin behind (Egypt), marching and struggling through the spiritual wilderness (this evil world, and our human nature), until we reach the Kingdom of God – typified by Mount Zion.

As we go through our Christian lives, we meet obstacles, encounter problems, face trials and difficulties. All these are reflected in the “counting of the Omer,” a task which identifies with our progress in “overcoming” our sins, faults, and human nature, putting sin out of our lives, and developing the holy attributes of God, from the moment of conversion and baptism, until that final time when we are changed into spirit beings, the sons of the Father, and inherit the promises of the New Covenant, at the coming of the Messiah!

There is a lot of confusion on this issue. The truth is very plain to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear and those to whom God opens their minds to perceive the truth. Let’s see what the word of God has to say about the “omer” and its incredible spiritual meaning and significance!

The Original Command

God commands His people, “When you come into the land which I give you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath [Passover/annual Sabbath] the priest shall wave it before the Lord” (Lev.23:10-11).

This was in the spring obviously. The first crop to be reaped in the spring is the barley crop (harvest). Verse 11 goes on, “wave the sheaf *the day after the Sabbath*”. What Sabbath? We are going to see that it is the Passover, an annual Sabbath and the first Day of Unleavened Bread. The sheaf is waved the day after Passover, first day of Unleavened Bread.

Verse 14 declares: “You shall not eat bread, parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that you have brought an offering unto your God; it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.” Verse 15 goes on, in the King James Version, “*you shall count for yourself (unto you), from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven Sabbaths shall be complete.*”

In the Tanakh this word “Sabbath” is translated as “WEEKS”. Many other translations agree it is weeks. We will see why the translation of *weeks* is the proper translation and understanding. Notice, seven weeks shall be *completed*, not partial weeks).

What is meant by seven complete Sabbaths? How do you count seven complete Sabbaths? A Sabbath is from sunset to sunset. In Deuteronomy 16: 9 we read: “you shall count seven *weeks*.” The Hebrew word here is *shavua* and means “week” and *shavuot* is the plural form, denoting “weeks.”

This is a commandment we are to do for our own benefit (for ourselves). The Omer Count begins from the time you put the sickle to the grain (firstfruits). Then after the seven weeks are counted, we read, “you shall keep the Feast of *Weeks* (Shavuot)” (v.10).

Notice! It is not the feasts of “Sabbaths” but the “Feast of Shavuot” – *weeks*. It is a clear distinction. It is not the feast of counting Sabbath days but the Feast of Counting Weeks! That is why the terms *Shavua* and *Shavuot* are used. This is the real meaning. Deuteronomy 16 shows clearly that we are to “count seven weeks.” Why then is the word “Sabbath” used in Leviticus 23:11 and 15?

Why the Word “Sabbath”?

If the counting is to begin the day after Passover, why didn't the command say, “Begin the day after Passover”?

First of all, that would not have been clear, because people could have thought the 14th day of Nisan were meant, the day the Passover was killed! Or, they could have thought the 15th day was meant, the day the Passover was eaten! Which would have been correct? Confusion would have abounded, without further clarification.

However, Eliyahu Kitov points out, “The Torah, when referring to Pesach [Passover], uses a different term from that used for the other Festivals, referring to it once as *Shabbat* but never as *Shabbaton*. Moreover, it is referred to as *Shabbat* only in conjunction with the mitzvah of counting the omer, and there the Torah twice refers to the Festival as *Shabbat*” (page 687).

In *The Book of Our Heritage* by Eliyahu Kitov, Vol. 2, Adar – Nisan, page 691, Joshua 5:11 relates: “And they ate from the produce of the land from the ‘morrow of Pesach (Passover)’”. Says Eliyahu Kitov, “The Torah states [**Leviticus 23:14**], ‘you shall not eat bread or parched grain or green grain until this day’ [i.e., when the omer is brought]. In the book of Yehoshua [5:11] we find: ‘And they ate from the produce of the land from the morrow of Pesach.’ [Interestingly, this is the only source in Tanach where the fifteenth of Nisan is referred to as *Pesach*.] Were you to posit that Pesach that year fell on a Shabbat as the fools [i.e., the Sadducees conjectured], how is it possible that the permission to eat new grains would be made dependent by the Torah upon something totally unrelated [i.e., the day of the week]—on pure happenstance! Rather, since this [the eating of new grain] was made dependent upon ‘the morrow of the Pesach,’ it is obvious that ‘the morrow of the Pesach’ is the reason why new grains are permitted, and we pay no attention to the day of the week” (p.691).

The Sadducees had strayed from the fold of Israel during the time of the second Temple. They said that when Torah said “on the morrow of the Shabbat” it was referring to the day following the weekly Sabbath (Sunday, rather than the day after the Festival (Passover). Says Eliyahu Kitov, “Our tradition is that [the reference is] not to Sabbath [the day] but to the Festival, and this was seen in the PROPHETS AND THE SANHEDRIN OF EVERY GENERATION who brought the Omer on Nisan 16” (p.691).

Seven “Sabbaths” or Seven “Weeks”?

In Leviticus 23:15, where we read we are to count “seven sabbaths” – does it mean literal Sabbath days, or seven weeks? The Rotherham translation has a footnote at this verse which says: “Seven sabbaths = seven weeks. Compare N.T. (New Testament) Ap. ‘Sabbath.’”

Turning to the Appendix to the Rotherham New Testament, we find a section on “Sabbath.” Rotherham says, “A few critical remarks on the word sabbath as it appears in the New Testament may be useful. First, this word seems to be sometimes an appellative [of or relating to a common noun] and sometimes a proper name (‘day of rest,’ ‘Sabbath’). Second, the term sabbath is, in several texts, used in the plural in the Greek, where, nevertheless, it is evident that only one particular day is intended. Under this head, the following texts are worthy of note: Mat.12:1, 11; Mark 1:21; 2:23; 3:2; Luke 4:16; 13:10; Acts 13:14.; 16:13. In all these passages the word in the original is in the plural, and yet it is plain that a particular, individual day is

intended. Nor is there anything surprising in this; for ‘the Hebrew at times uses plural forms where other languages employ the singular.’”

Rotherham then adds, “Third, the word sabbath is extended to signify ‘week.’ Even in this there is nothing very far fetched; since the transition from the idea of ‘rest’ to that of a ‘rest-bounded period of seven days’ is a comparatively natural one. Still the question must be considered mainly as one of fact; although, even so, more demonstrative evidence should not be demanded than the nature of the case admits of; and it often suffices to attach a new meaning to a word, that the ordinary application of it is repeatedly seen to be unnatural, illogical, bewildering, or absurd. Hence the current opinion is probably correct that finds notwithstanding that the word for ‘week’ is here sabbaton in the singular; since it would appear a very paltry boast to say, ‘I fast twice on the sabbath’ when anyone (with more pleasantry than pharisaism) might reply, ‘I fast three times.’”

Rather ridiculous, isn’t it? No one would boast about fasting twice in a single day! That would be preposterous! Obviously, the word – as in this case – sometimes means “week,” just as translators all have it!

Rotherham goes on: “To this example of sabbaton in the singular, used in the sense of ‘week,’ may now be added I Corinthians 16:2, where not only Westcott and Hort, but the entire board of Revisers find the word in the singular number; and it would seem enough simply to ask the question, Is it credible that the apostle Paul meant to enjoin on the assemblies of Galatia and on that of Corinth to lay by on ‘the first [hour] of sabbath’ without so much as specifying that it was the first HOUR of the day that he intended? If not, and if ‘first day of the day’ is impossible, what is left but to assume that he meant ‘first [day] of the week’? ‘Week’ also approves itself in Mat.28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1, 19; Acts 20:7. . . There is nothing unnatural in supposing the meaning to be ‘week’; for, as we have seen: (a) the word in the plural form may convey a singular idea; (b) the word in the singular is twice used in the sense of ‘week.’ Now let us test the two words ‘sabbaths’ and ‘week’: ‘Late in the sabbaths, as it was on the point of dawning into the first of the sabbaths.’ Will that stand? Now try ‘week’: ‘Late in the week, as it was on the point of dawning into the first of the week.’ Here everything is harmonious. With the Hebrews the sabbath closed the week. Late on the sabbath would be late in the week, and the transition is natural from the end of one week to the beginning of the next. Hence the correct rendering here is ‘week’” (Rotherham *Emphasized Bible*, Appendix, p.271).

How plain that the Greek word *sabbaton* not only means “Sabbath,” but it also clearly means “WEEK”!

What about the Hebrew language? What about the Old Testament Scriptures?

“Sheva’ shabbatot t’miymot”

Let’s notice Leviticus 23:15 more carefully: The Hebrew wording, *sheva’ shabbatot t’miymot* is mistranslated as “seven sabbaths shall be complete” in the King James Version. Notice – the Hebrew does not read *sheva’ shabbatot tam* or *sheva’ shabbatot tamam*, but rather it reads *sheva’ shabbatot t’miymot*. Both *shabbatot* (“Sabbaths”) and *t’miymot* (“complete”) are in the PLURAL forms, which makes *t’miymot* (“complete”) refer directly to *shabbatot* (“Sabbaths”). If we believe the “sabbaths” here to be literal weekly sabbaths, then the meaning

is totally unintelligible, because nothing exists in Scripture defined as either a “complete Sabbath” or an “incomplete sabbath.” All “sabbaths” are a contained unit of time and cannot be specified as either complete or incomplete. But, there is such a thing as an incomplete “week.”

Contrary to what some church groups teach, “week” is a valid alternate meaning of the Hebrew word *shabbat*. Shabbat can mean “week” in the sense that a *kodesh* (“New Moon”) can also mean “month” – a period of 29 or 30 days. In the idiomatic manner in which *kodesh* means both “new moon” as well as “month,” the Hebrew word *shabbat* means both “Sabbath” and “week.” For instance, a valid alternate reading of Isaiah 66:23 is, “from one full month [*kodesh* – “new moon”] to another, and from one full week [*shabbat* – “Sabbath”] to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me, saith the LORD.”

In Leviticus 23:15, then, one can render *sheva’ shabbatot t’miymot* as “seven weeks each one complete,” expressing nothing specific in regard to the weekly Sabbath. This is the proper rendering since the plural form *t’miymot* (“complete”) is used instead of the singular form *tam* (“complete”) or *tamam* (“complete”). The “seven Sabbaths” is not described as a single unit of complete time as would have been the case if *tam* or *tamam* were used. Rather, the usage of the plural form *t’miymot* indicates that there are as many “completes” as there are “*shabbatot*,” which forces “*shabbatot*” into the alternate meaning of “weeks” instead of referring to weekly Sabbaths which are always complete units of time with no further designation necessary.

However, the Hebrew word *tam* also means “portion” or “cycle” in addition to “complete.” Therefore, its plural form *t’miymot* can mean “portions,” “cycles,” or “levels.” Now the passage begins to become more interesting.

What is God telling us here?

By using the word *shabbatot* for “weeks” or “periods ending with a rest” WITH the word *t’miymot* meaning “periods” or “cycles” or “levels,” we have a description of a PROCESS OF OVERCOMING, DELINEATED BY “SEVEN STAGES,” or “SEVEN LEVELS” of spiritual growth and development, each stage “complete” in itself!

Thus we have God showing us that we must OVERCOME the SEVEN (complete) aspects of HUMAN NATURE which will tend to drag us down, and keep us from entering His Kingdom! We must GROW in the SEVEN COMPLETE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD’S DIVINE CHARACTER, as revealed to men!

These seven areas of human nature we must overcome are the seven categories of human nature which the apostle Paul refers to as the “works of the flesh” (Galatians 5:19-21).

The seven aspects of God’s divine nature are listed by Peter, when he writes: “Giving all diligence ADD to your faith virtue [spiritual power], 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 [useless, margin] 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” (II Pet.1:5-9).

We need to be working on developing these qualities daily.

Old Testament Evidence

Further evidence that “Sabbath” can refer to “week” and ‘sabbaths’ can refer to ‘weeks,’ is also found in the Old Testament!

In Leviticus 23:15, we read in the Rotherham, “seven sabbaths complete.” The footnote says “Seven sabbaths = seven weeks.” Because this is understood by scholars, this verse is translated often with the word “weeks” instead of “sabbaths.” For example:

The Moffatt translation: “you shall count seven full WEEKS.”

The Good News Bible: “Count seven full WEEKS.”

The New Revised Standard Version: “You shall count off seven WEEKS; they shall be complete.”

New International Version: “Count off seven full WEEKS.”

Revised Standard Version: “seven full WEEKS shall they be.”

The Amplified Parallel Bible: “And you shall count from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the wave sheaf offering, seven Sabbaths; [SEVEN FULL WEEKS] shall they be.” The bracketed words are in the Amplified Parallel Bible, to explain the usage of the word “Sabbaths,” that in this case the word refers to “WEEKS.”

The Hebrew Tanakh: “And from the day on which you bring the sheaf of elevation offering – the day after the Sabbath – you shall count off SEVEN WEEKS. They must be complete: you must count until the day after the SEVENTH WEEK.”

Certainly, the Jews above all peoples ought to know the nuances of their own language! The term “Sabbath,” then, can also refer to “week,” in the Hebrew language, just as it also does in the GREEK language of the New Testament! It should be crystal clear that the word *Shabbat* can be translated as “week” and its plural as “weeks” – to argue about this fact is to create imaginary puff clouds of foolishness to befog the minds of innocent people!

Keil and Delitzch Commentary

The *Keil and Delitzch Commentary on the Old Testament* is an excellent source of information and knowledge. In the section on Leviticus 23, it declares:

“When the Israelites had come into the land to be given them by the Lord, and has reaped the harvest, they were to bring a sheaf as first-fruits of their harvest to the priest, that he might wave it before Jehovah on the day after the Sabbath, i.e., after the first day of *Mazzoth*. . . .

“**מחרת השבת** (the morrow after the Sabbath) signifies the next day after the first day of the feast of *Mazzoth*, i.e., the 16th Abib (*Nisan*), not the day of the Sabbath which fell in the seven days’ feast of *Mazzoth*, as the Baethoseans supposed, still less the 22nd of *Nisan*, or the day after the conclusion of the seven days’ feast . . .” (volume 1, p.613).

The Commentary goes on:

“The ‘Sabbath’ does not mean the seventh day of the week, but the day of rest, although the weekly Sabbath was always the seventh or last day of the week; hence not only the seventh day of the week (Exo.31:15, etc.), but the day of atonement (the tenth of the seventh month) is called ‘*Sabbath*,’ and ‘*Shabbath shabbathon*’ (v. 32 , ch.16:31). As a day of rest, on which no laborious work was to be performed (v.8), the first day of the feast of *Mazzoth* is called ‘*Sabbath*,’ irrespectively of the day of the week upon which it fell; and ‘*the morrow after the Sabbath*’ is equivalent to ‘the morrow after the Passover’ mentioned in Joshua 5:11, where ‘Passover’ signifies the day at the beginning of which the paschal meal was held, i.e., the first day of unleavened bread, which commenced on the evening of the 14th, in other words, the 15th Abib” (p.614).

States the Commentary:

“That שבתות [Shabbatot] (v.15) signifies weeks like שבועות [Shavuot] in Deut. 16:9, and τα σαββατα [weeks] in the Gospels (e.g. Matt.28:1), is evident from the predicate תמימת [tamiyot], ‘complete,’ which would be quite unsuitable if Sabbath-days were intended, as a long period might be reckoned by half weeks instead of whole, but certainly not by half-Sabbath days. Consequently, ‘the morrow after the seventh Sabbath’ (v.16) is the day after the seventh week, not after the seventh Sabbath. On this day, i.e., fifty days after the first day of Mazzoth, Israel was to offer a new meat-offering to the Lord, i.e., made of the fruit of the new harvest (ch.26:10), ‘wave-loaves’ from its dwellings . . . ‘as first-fruits unto the Lord,’ and of the wheat-harvest (Ex.34:22), which fell in the second half of May and the first weeks of June . . .” (p.615).

Nevertheless, the controversy still rages and many churches reject the Jewish interpretation and follow their own reasoning, refusing to take seriously God’s command to “count the omer.”

Why is there such a controversy over when we start counting to Pentecost? Why do some follow the Jews and count from the day after the Passover holy day (Nisan 15)? And why do so many follow the Sadducean reckoning and begin counting after the “weekly Sabbath” that falls during the days of Unleavened Bread? Could Satan the devil be stirring the pot, and creating the disorder and confusion? Isn’t he the author of confusion and lawlessness?

Such confusion – it is sheer madness!

The Witness of the Septuagint, 250 Years Before Christ

The Septuagint is the original translation of the Torah into the Greek language 250 years before Christ, before there was a Sadducee or a Pharisee. These sects developed during the days of Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabee brothers about 167 B.C. which was about 100 years later.

What does the witness of the Septuagint tell us?

I quote from the Septuagint, in Leviticus 23. Remember, this was the Bible used by the EARLY, GREEK-SPEAKING CHRISTIANS and Jews. Notice carefully the pivotal Scripture concerning the counting of Pentecost, found in Leviticus 23, quoted exactly from the LXX:

“These are the festivals for the Lord -- holy, set days, which you shall proclaim in their set times. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, between the two evenings, is the Passover for the Lord. And on the fifteenth day of this month beginneth the festival of unleavened bread for the Lord. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. Now the FIRST DAY shall be a holy, set day for you. You shall do no sacrificial service, but offer whole burnt offerings to the Lord seven days, and the SEVENTH DAY shall be a holy set day for you. You shall do no sacrificial service.

“Moreover the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, and thou shalt say unto them, When you are come into the land which I give you, and are about to reap the harvest thereof, you shall bring a sheaf, as the first fruits of your harvest, to the priest, and he shall offer up the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you *ON THE MORROW AFTER THE FIRST DAY*, the priest shall offer this up” (Lev. 23:4-11).

How interesting and plain this makes this controversial verse of Leviticus 23:11, which some claim tells us to offer the wave sheaf on the day after the weekly Sabbath. NOT SO! The Septuagint very plainly says, “on the morrow after the FIRST DAY,” and there is no way you can interpret the “first day” to ANYTHING OTHER THAN THE FIRST DAY OF THE FEAST! It clearly does not refer to the weekly Sabbath – the weekly Sabbath is the “SEVENTH DAY,” by its own definition!

Testimony of Philo, a Contemporary of Peter

The Testimony of the Works of Philo, a well-known Jewish philosopher teacher who lived during the time of Christ and Peter, who lived in Alexandria, Egypt, provides further evidence.

Philo, on page 583, states, “There is also a festival on the day of the paschal feast, which *succeeds the first day, and this is named the sheaf*, from what takes place on it; for the sheaf is brought to the altar as a first fruit both of the country which the nation has received for its own, and also of the whole land; so as to be an offering both for the nation separately, and also a common one for the whole race of mankind.”

Alfred Edersheim’s Testimony

Alfred Edersheim, in *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services*, declares: “The expression, ‘the morrow after the Sabbath’ (Lev. 23:11) has sometimes been *misunderstood* as implying that the presentation of the so-called ‘first sheaf’ was to be always made *on the day following the weekly Sabbath of the Passover-week*. This view, adopted by the ‘Boethusians’ and the Sadducees in the time of Christ, and by the Karaite Jews and certain modern interpreters, rests on a *misinterpretation* of the word ‘Sabbath’ (Lev. 23:24, 32, 39). As in analogous allusions to other feasts in the same chapter, it means not the weekly Sabbath, but the day of the festival. The testimony of Josephus (*Antiq*, 3.248-249), of Philo (Op.ii.294), and of Jewish traditions leaves no room to doubt that in this instance we are to understand by the ‘Sabbath’ the 15th of Nisan, on whatever day of the week it might fall.

“Already, on the 14th of Nisan, the spot whence the first sheaf was to be reaped had been marked out by delegates from the Sanhedrim, by tying together in bundles, while still standing, the barley that was to be cut down. Then on the evening of Nisan 15, (even though it was a Sabbath) just as the sun went down, three men each with a sickle and basket formally set to work. They asked questions of the bystanders three times each of these questions: Has the sun gone down? With this sickle? Into this basket? On this Sabbath (or the first Passover-day)?— and lastly, ‘Shall I reap?’ Having each time been answered in the affirmative, they cut down the barley to the amount of one ephah, or ten omers.”

The Awesome Significance of the Omer

The “counting of the Omer” from Pesach (Passover) to Shavuot (Pentecost) is a process – a daily task – that reflects like a mirror our spiritual lives. If we are not counting the Omer as God tells us to do, it is reflective of the fact that we are not overcoming sin and temptations and distractions in our lives. If we fail to count one day, but repent, and begin counting from that time, then God forgives us, and we go onward and forward. But it is better if we are faithful from beginning to end.

The Omer count is a reflection of our spirituality. Are we developing the attributes of God and His Spirit in our lives? Are we growing daily, constantly, in love – joy – peace – longsuffering (patience) – gentleness – goodness – faith – meekness – moderation (self control)?

Each day of the forty-nine day Omer count is like a building block to salvation. It is a tool to develop and grow in spiritual maturity, so that we are ready when Christ comes, so that we will be a pure and perfect “Bride” for the KING of the Universe!

Think about such a high calling! Are you faithfully “counting the Omer”?

Even more, the Omer count is a pattern – a template – to TEACH us what we should be doing EVERY DAY OF OUR LIVES – “COUNTING THE OMER” AND DEVELOPING THE TRAITS OF GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR LIVES – EVERY DAY – DAY-BY-DAY – TILL THE MESSIAH, JESUS CHRIST, RETURNS FOR HIS BRIDE!

Each and every day should be an “Omer count” day in our journey to spiritual perfection. Each day we should “number the days,” and “count the days,” as we journey onward and upward to that thrilling time when Jesus Christ will come again, bringing the Kingdom of God with Him!

The “Omer count” then is a physical “type” or typology of a spiritual reality – the Christian life process. It represents the spiritual journey – the Odyssey – of our lives, as we go through the wilderness, overcome obstacles, and root out the negative attributes of the flesh, and develop and strengthen the positive manifestations of God's Spirit in our lives. We are on a great spiritual Quest. Each day counts. Each week is significant. Every month is a palpable unit of time which ought to be devoted to overcoming, growing, and strengthening the Spirit of God within us. Every year brings us that much closer to MESSIAH!

At Passover we begin the march to freedom with God delivering us through supernatural miracles by the hand of God. It took Israel 50 days to march to Mt. Sinai. Shavuot then is the conclusion of the march to freedom. It is the concluding feast of liberty with the marriage of

Israel to the Lord in a covenant vow where Israel becomes His people and one with Christ. That is *true freedom*. It begins with Passover and ends with Shavuot/Pentecost.

How can we be free unless we are connected to God? It is vital to our freedom. This is why counting the Omer beginning the second day of Passover is very vital to arriving at Pentecost. And “counting the omer”, becoming more and more “connected” to God, from the moment of our conversion and acceptance of Christ as our Saviour till the coming of Christ, is VITAL to our entrance into the Kingdom of God!

The Meaning of the Omer Itself

In Leviticus 23 we read, “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 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, then ye shall bring a SHEAF of the FIRSTFRUITS of your harvest unto the priest: and he shall WAVE THE SHEAF before the Lord, to be ACCEPTED FOR YOU: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.

“And ye shall offer that day when ye wave the sheaf an he lamb without blemish of the first year for a burnt offering unto the Lord” (Lev.23:10-12).

What is this “wave sheaf” offering? What does it symbolize and represent? Notice that it is a sheaf of the “first fruits,” and it is offered to God before the Israelites can harvest the spring harvest. God commands, “And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears” – that is, produce from the new harvest – “until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a STATUTE FOR EVER throughout your generations in all your dwellings” (Lev.23:14).

In the book of Romans, Paul writes to Christians, saying, “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the FIRSTFRUITS OF THE SPIRIT, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom.8:23).

Christians, those called of God during this lifetime to serve and obey Him, out of every nation, are likened to “firstfruits” of God. We have the “firstfruits of the Spirit” of God as a downpayment, or earnest (Eph.1:4-14) of our inheritance, as we are the ones who “should be to the praise of his glory, who FIRST trusted in Christ” (v.12). In writing of Christians in the region of Achaia, Paul says of them, “Salute my well-beloved Epaenetus, who is the FIRSTFRUITS of Achaia unto Christ” (Rom.16:5). In the book of James we read: “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a KIND OF FIRSTFRUITS of his creation” (James 1:18). Also, in Revelation God speaks of the members of the true Church of God as those who “were redeemed from among men, being FIRSTFRUITS to God and to the Lamb” (Rev.14:1-4).

In the book of Romans, Paul addresses our calling – which is special, and unique, in the sight of God. Of all people on earth, we are the few who have been given the Spirit of God as a begettal, indwelling within us – a priceless heritage and gift! Therefore “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us” (Rom.5:5). Paul goes on, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. . . But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of

God DWELL in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Rom.8:1-9).

Identity of the Omer or the Wave Sheaf

In the past, many have ASSUMED – and many STILL assume – that the “wave sheaf” offering referred to Jesus Christ, who was the offering for our sins upon the stake (II Cor.5:21). But does this make any sense, when we stop to think about it? It was accompanied by the offering of a male lamb without blemish – which itself typified Christ! It was waved by the high priest before God, to be accepted of the Father – and the high priest was of the Aaronic priesthood, representing the people and nation of Israel. Furthermore, this “wave sheaf” was offered AFTER the sacrifice of Christ our Passover Lamb (I Cor.5:7-8). The Passover lambs were slain in the afternoon of Nisan 14 – the precise time when Yeshua the Messiah was slain for us! Christ was still in the grave when the wave sheaf was offered!

Clearly, then, the wave sheaf – contrary to what many have assumed and believed – does NOT refer to Christ at all – but rather is made possible BY the Sacrifice of Christ, which precedes it in time sequence! The wave sheaf of firstfruits refers to **US!** We have the following sequence of events:

- 1) the sacrifice of Christ on Nisan 14, late afternoon;
- 2) the holy day of Passover – (Nisan 15)
- 3) the next evening, as Nisan 16 began, a sheaf (bundle) of grain is selected from the field across the Kidron valley, east of Jerusalem, and cut and bundled;
- 4) the next morning, Nisan 16, it is prepared and waved before the Lord and accepted of Him as “THE FIRSTFRUITS” of the harvest.

Do you begin to comprehend? Do you see? The wave sheaf offering is an offering which is a BUNDLE OF SEPARATE BARLEY GRAINS, FROM A NUMBER OF PLANTS, AMOUNTING TO AN “OMER” – about five pints, or two and one half quarts. This offering followed the offering of Christ, as our Passover lamb, who paid for our sins. It was accompanied by the burnt offering of a lamb – Christ – without blemish (Lev.23:12). The wave sheaf itself, then, is NOT CHRIST!

What then is it?

The Wave Sheaf Offering, composed of MANY individual grains, offered together, made possible by the sacrifice of Christ, represents US – TRUE CHRISTIANS – those called of God during this age, as His “FIRSTFRUITS”!

It was offered to the Father AFTER the sacrifice of Christ, because there is NO WAY the Father could accept us BEFORE our sins were pardoned, and atoned for, and wiped away and washed away by the blood of Christ! But since Christ became our Saviour, and qualified by living a perfect life, and DIED for us on the stake, this made possible OUR acceptance before the throne of God in Heaven! WE are that WAVE SHEAF OFFERING! We are the “FIRSTFRUITS”!

What could be plainer?

The Preparations of the Bride

God delivered Israel for a purpose: to bring them into union with Him and oneness of spirit THROUGH OBEDIENCE to Torah His Law. He was their redeemer, provider, protector and defender. This is one of the main reasons for counting the Omer today, because we are looking forward to the marriage to the Lamb of God with the church (those who obey and follow Him) when Christ returns. Revelation 19 talks about the great marriage supper after the bride has made herself ready.

What does the bride have to do “to make her-self ready”?

God commands us to purge out the sin and become pure – to get rid of the selfishness, envy, jealousy, wickedness, disobedience, pride, arrogance, and the lust of the flesh—so we can meet Christ at His coming being without blemish and be part of His Bride, the Church, which will enter into marriage with Him. Christ is setting apart and cleansing the Church, “with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” (Eph.5:25-27).

Pentecost is the day that the Law was given on Mt. Sinai. Technically it was on a Friday the year that Israel came out of Egypt. After so many years of slavery, the Israelites had degenerated in this pagan idolatrous society to the 49th level of contamination, and were almost gone. The further Israel got away from Egyptian influence, the less idolatrous they became and were gradually being restored forward during those 50 days to the illumination and understanding of holiness that they needed to achieve while marching toward Mt. Sinai to meet God on Pentecost. They had to set aside three days and purify themselves before they would be ready to appear before God at Mt. Sinai to accept the covenant God would make with them.

This time when Christ returns He will marry the church as His bride which he has made spiritually pure without spot or blemish. The church in turn is preparing herself to be ready to meet Him at His coming return. So we are to count the Omer daily as a reminder and remembrance of overcoming. There are 50 gates of holiness that we are to go through every day and at the same time we are getting further and further away from the contamination of sin (Heb. *tuma*) which also has 50 gates. The Jews understand this part of counting the Omer, but they don't understand that the key to the whole process is Christ.

The Template and Pattern

Counting the Omer is called Sefirat Ha Omer and is derived from the offering of the Omer on that 16th day of Nisan and is a cycle of seven and completion. It symbolizes that we can acquire moral freedom (perfection) only through seven fold intensive work on ourselves.

The various churches and off-shoots of the old Worldwide Church of God have rejected the whole process of counting the Omer, today, so they are totally ignorant of this whole process. Their sermons during this period are lackluster and inane – usually just old repetitions of sermons given years ago – blah and spiritually empty.

This should be an exciting period of time! If you knew that Christ was coming to visit your home on a specific day, wouldn't you be cleaning, sweeping and making everything spotless and orderly before the time He was to arrive?

Christ is the one who provides the Holy Spirit to overcome our human nature, the world and the devil. He is the One who instituted the countdown of the omer, and the wave sheaf offering.

When a couple marries, and enters into a covenant relationship, as head of the family the husband is responsible to Christ for both himself and his wife. For example: A groom may not explain everything to his bride before marriage. But he may decide sometime during that marriage that they are going to move from California to the state of Washington. His wife might think to say, "I did not agree to that. I'm going to stay right here. Why didn't you tell me you were going to move to the state of Washington?"

Or she could say "Yes, Lord" as Sara did to Abraham when he said they would be moving to Canaan. Sara could have reacted and said. "WHAT, you want me to live in a tent and be the wife of a sheep herder? Not on your life! I'm going to stay here in the cultural country of Babylon!"

Genesis 19 tells of Lot's family who lived in the populous but depraved cities of Sodom and Gomorrah which God was getting ready to destroy. Lot was found to be righteous, so the angels of God came to warn Lot to make haste! *GET OUT!* As his two daughters, his wife and Lot *lingered* the men (angels) laid hold upon all their hands and brought them forth and set them outside the city saying, "ESCAPE to the mountain for your life. DO NOT LOOK BEHIND YOU, or stay in any part of the plain, *or you will be consumed.*"

God granted Lot's plea to stay in a small city. Then the Lord destroyed those cities, all the plain, all inhabitants of the cities with fire and brimstone from heaven. But Lot's wife LOOKED BACK – she could not let go of her life in Sodom—and she was turned into a pillar of salt in the fiery destruction which overwhelmed the cities of the plain. Why? Because she did not obey God. She did not have faith. She disobeyed and died.

What about us?

All of God's servants SERVED HIM in FAITH, even though they did not know everything from the beginning. We are to keep the Omer mitzvah (good deed) in faith that there will be a blessing. If we obey God's command to count, there will be a blessing. If we disobey, there will be a curse.

It is for our benefit to help us to become overcomers and develop righteous, godly character, that God gave us this commandment.

The Spiritual Struggle

The Christian life is a life of spiritual struggle. We must learn to keep our eyes on the goal. The apostle Paul knew this.

Paul understood that we must endure to the end – that we must be FAITHFUL till our dying day, or till Christ returns (whichever comes first!). Paul wrote, of his own spiritual battle: “Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? RUN in such a way that you may WIN it. Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one. So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air; but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified” (I Cor.9:24-27, NRSV).

Notice this in the Amplified Parallel Bible: “Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but [only] one receives the prize? So RUN [your race] so that you may lay hold [of the prize] and make it yours. . .

“Therefore I do not run uncertainly (without definite aim). I do not box like one beating the air and striking without an adversary. But [like a boxer] I buffet my body [handle it roughly, discipline it by hardships] and subdue it, for fear that after proclaiming to others the Gospel and things pertaining to it, I MYSELF SHOULD BECOME UNFIT [not stand the test, be unapproved and rejected as a counterfeit].”

Seven Weeks of Concentrated Overcoming

It is a remarkable fact that there are “seven weeks” that we count the Omer. These provide us seven optimal weeks to work on ourselves – seven weeks of concentrated, distilled “overcoming.”

Paul also wrote about this battle in the second letter to the Corinthians. He declared, “For though we walk (live) in the flesh, we are not carrying on our warfare according to the flesh and using mere human weapons. For the weapons of our WARFARE are not physical [weapons of flesh and blood], but they are mighty before God for the overthrow and destruction of strongholds, [inasmuch as we] refute arguments and theories and reasonings and every proud and lofty thing that sets itself up against the [true] knowledge of God; and we lead every thought and purpose away captive into the OBEDIENCE of Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One), being in readiness to punish every [insubordinate for his] disobedience, when your own submission and OBEDIENCE [as a church] are fully secure and complete” (II Cor.10:3-6).

Notice! We are not yet “fully secure and complete.”

Rather, as Paul himself wrote to the Philippians, again quoting the Amplified Parallel Bible, “[For my determined purpose is] that I may know Him [that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and clearly], and that I may in that same way come to know the power outflowing from His resurrection [which it exerts over believers], and that I may so share His sufferings as to be continually TRANSFORMED [in spirit into His likeness even] to His death, [in the hope] that IF POSSIBLE I may attain to the [personal and moral] RESURRECTION . . . Not that I have now attained [this ideal], or have already been made perfect, but I PRESS ON TO LAY HOLD OF (GRASP) and make my own, that for which Christ Jesus (the Messiah) has laid hold of me and made me His own.” (Phil.3:10-12).

Notice Paul's attitude! He did not believe or claim to already have salvation, but sought to progressively GROW up into the likeness of Christ, so that "IF POSSIBLE" he may attain to the resurrection of the righteous dead, or salvation!

Paul goes on, saying, "I do not consider, brethren, that I have captured and made it my own [yet]; but one thing I do [it is my one aspiration]: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I PRESS ON TOWARD THE GOAL TO WIN the [supreme and heavenly] prize to which God in Christ Jesus is calling us upward." So, Paul declares, "So let those [of us] who are spiritually mature and full-grown have this mind and these convictions; and if in any respect you have a different attitude of mind, God will make that clear to you also" (verses 13-15).

Once we begin the Christian life, there is a lot of overcoming to do – straining forward to make sure that we will enter the Kingdom of God and attain to salvation! We must "PRESS ON," we must "STRAIN FORWARD," and make sure that we win the ultimate prize!

A Program for Overcoming

Since counting the Omer pictures overcoming sin and developing the righteous-ness and character of God in our lives, and becoming more and more Christ-like (see Gal.4:19), we should use these days to pray about overcoming and growing in God's holiness and righteous character.

Each day it is helpful to pray that day especially about the characteristic of God which we are working on developing in our lives, pertinent to that day. For example, the Jews derive seven major characteristics of God which are mentioned in the Old Testament, which can be applied to the Omer count. These seven attributes are also characteristic of the "seven patriarchs" mentioned in the Scriptures – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph, and David. The characteristics are:

Chesed	Loving-kindness	Abraham
Gevurah	Strength, Power	Isaac
Tiferet	Harmony, Peace	Jacob
Netzach	Victory, Triumph	Moses
Hod	Glory, Majesty	Aaron
Yesod	Foundation	Joseph
Malkut	Sovereignty	David

Developing Positive Godly Character Traits

We can also use each day to work on one of the attributes of God's Holy Spirit in our lives. Paul wrote to the brethren in Galatia, these plain and instructive words: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections [or, "passions," marginal reading] and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another" (Galatians 5:22-26).

There are actually nine fruits of the Spirit listed here. But if we combine gentleness and

meekness, which go together, and faith and self-control (temperance), then we have seven combinations of Divine Attributes. The apostle Paul lists them in Galatians 5:19-20.

1. Love
2. Joy
3. Peace
4. Patience (Long-suffering)
5. Gentleness, Goodness
6. Faith (Faithfulness)
7. Meekness, Self Control

Counting the Omer, for forty-nine days, till Pentecost, helps us to concentrate during this period and focus our minds on overcoming our sins and weaknesses and developing the attributes of God in our lives. This helps us to have a PLAN of overcoming! It is Biblically-based! And it will help you to be a true overcomer in your life!

To make the most of the Omer season, and the days of counting the Omer, it is vital to spend extra time in earnest, heartfelt prayer every day, to put your heart into your prayers for spiritual growth and overcoming. As Jeremiah wrote, “Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches, pour out your heart like water before the presence of the LORD!” (Lamentations 2:19). Become the embodiment of prayer like David who wrote, “I am all prayer” (Psalm 109:4, Tanakh, marginal reading). The apostle James wrote, “The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective” (James 5:16, NRSV).

The Seven *Sefirot* and Fruits of the Spirit

Chesed – loving-kindness. This is also known as *Ahavah* (love). This quality is associated with Abraham, the father of the faithful, who loved God so much he was willing to sacrifice Isaac, his true son, if God so required it. Abraham was also noted for his hospitality. This quality refers to unconditional acceptance and love of others – out-going concern and care.

Love is also the first of the fruits of God's Holy Spirit! Love is the bedrock of the Law of God – the first great commandment is to love God, and the second is to love our neighbor. “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (I John 5:3). “Love works no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom.13:10).

Gevurah – Strength. This quality is also known as *Yirah* – awe or fear. This quality is connected with Isaac. It refers to strength that comes from containment, the power to contain and hold the energy of love. It is the power of inhibition, the power of discrimination and judgment that allows one to make wise, right choices. Isaac’s name means “laughter.”

Joy is the second fruit of the Spirit of God – unbounded laughter and happiness. God’s Word says, “The joy of the LORD is your strength” (Neh.8:10). Thus true joy is a source of strength – *gevurah*. “Rejoice in the Lord always,” Paul wrote; “and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known to all men” (Phil.4:4-5).

Tiferet – Beauty. This quality is also known as *Rachamim* – mercifulness. “It is also a symbol of PEACE because it represents the perfect BALANCING of the left and right sides,

integrating love and containment . . . *Tiferet* is associated with Jacob” (Joel Ziff, *Mirrors in Time*, p.105).

Peace is the third attribute of God’s Spirit! Jesus Christ said, “In me ye shall have peace” (John 16:33). “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). Paul also wrote: “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil.4:7). Jacob was a man of peace. He was noted as a peace-maker.

Netzach – Victory, Triumph. This begins the second triad (or division of three qualities) of the Sefirot. This quality is associated with Moses, who triumphantly led Israel out of Egypt “with a high hand.” This quality translates *chesed*, *gevurah*, and *tefirat* into bold action and accomplishment with power, energy, planning, and activity.

Gentleness and meekness are two of the fruits of the Spirit of God which seem to fit together. These also are defining characteristics of Moses. Why did Moses achieve such *netzach* – such victory and success? Because he was a man God could use and work with, a man to whom “success” would not “go to his head” and cause him to swell up like a puffed balloon. We read of Moses: “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Num.12:3). And David writes of the quality of gentleness, speaking of God Himself, “Thy gentleness hath made me great” (Psalm 18:35). He wrote, “It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect” (Psa.18:32).

The apostle James tells us: “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality [favoritism], and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace” (James 3:17-18).

Hod – Glory. This is the quality that lights up a person's face, the inner strength that causes the face to “glow” with confidence, peacefulness, serenity, dignity, honor, and majesty. It is associated with Aaron, the brother of Moses. Aaron was noted as a “peace” maker, and a man of honor. Sometimes he went too far in seeking to be a “peace-maker,” as when he molded the golden calf for the rebellious Israelites. He sought to preserve the people in unity, so he fell into a spiritual trap. Nevertheless, he was a noteworthy man of God, and a man of wisdom and inner strength. God’s word says of such a man, “Who is as the wise man? and who knoweth the interpretation of a thing? a man’s wisdom maketh his face to shine, and the BOLDNESS [strength] of his face shall be changed” (Eccl.8:1). God also says, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in UNITY! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments” (Psa.133:1-2). A key part of true “glory” is humility, meekness – otherwise *hod* becomes puffed up pride and false glory – vanity!

Goodness is the sixth fruit of the Spirit of God. This also was a strong quality in Aaron, and a quality we must strive to inculcate into our innermost character. David writes, “Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way” (Psa.25:8). Jesus Christ declared, “A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things” (Matt.12:35). Paul wrote, “For we are his workmanship, created unto GOOD WORKS, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph.2:10).

Yesod – Foundation. This quality is the integration of both *netzach* and *hod*, and is the balance between power and presence. Joseph, the son of Jacob, became the prime minister of Egypt, and virtual ruler of the world, after suffering slavery as a teenager, and imprisonment for a crime he never committed. Yet after these harrowing trials he rose by God’s miraculous deliverance to an exalted governmental position. He is the embodiment and epitome of this characteristic. Joseph by his suffering and continual growth and strength through contact with God, and His Spirit, became the foundation of the world, delivering the whole earth from the ravages of the most terrible famine mankind had seen up to that time. His wisdom and planning and spiritual strength provided a way to save his own family, and millions of others.

Longsuffering is the fourth fruit of the Spirit of God. Certainly, this characteristic was well-illustrated in the life of Joseph. Despite his trials and tests, tribulations and suffering, Joseph remained faithful to God and worshipped Him through it all. His long-suffering and patience and endurance in well-doing finally led to his exaltation to high office where he could serve in a much greater capacity. The apostle Paul wrote: “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of PATIENCE, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry” (Heb.10:35-37). James added, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations [trials, sufferings]; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (James 1:2-4).

Connected with this trait is the quality of “self control” – self mastery – which is also one of the fruits of God’s Holy Spirit. Self-control and long-suffering go together like hash browns and eggs. They are two aspects of the same quality – endurance – and constitute a “foundation” for true achievement!

Malchut – Kingdom, kingship, royalty, sovereignty. This quality represents manifestation, the translation of energy into action and activity – and means literally “KINGDOM.” Malchut is associated with the Shekinah – the “Presence” – of God. King David is connected to this *Sefirah* as he is the one whom God used to bring the Kingdom of God to fruition and accomplishment as a type, in his day. He was himself a type of the Messianic King, Yeshua – and the promised Messiah was to be born of his descendants, of his royal lineage.

These powerful Seven *Sefirot* of God – these SEVEN manifestations of the Holy Spirit – are mighty vehicles to spiritual growth and becoming godlike. If we will meditate on these attributes of God, and ponder them, and reflect upon them, and study them in the Scriptures, and spend time thinking about them, and considering HOW we might express them more fully and completely in our own daily lives – these divine spiritual energies will provide us a powerful tool to use to become the true SONS OF GOD in actual spiritual image and character likeness.

What a glorious destiny God has in store for those who serve Him, obey Him, count the omer and make the omer count in character growth and development! One day soon, God willing, we will shine like the sun in its glory, and endure like the sun, as masters of eternity, ever-ruling sons in the expanding family of God, forever and ever!

As you “count the omer,” make the omer counting practice really COUNT – for *you!* Enter into the dazzling, radiant JOY of “counting the omer” faithfully, and you will be blessed!