

ABC'S OF OMER COUNTING – GOING ON TO PERFECTION

Welcome to Bible study everyone. This is the season of the Omer count between now and *Shavuot* or *Pentecost* which is on May 17 this year. I know that there is disagreement among different people and the Jewish calendar is two days early for Pentecost.

Until the Jews once again begin practicing the *visual observation* of the new moons, the Jewish mathematical fixed calendar (instituted 358 A.D. by Hillel II) with its *traditions* is not always totally accurate and can be off one or two days. This was three centuries after the time of Christ and after there was a temple. Prior to that time they had no such tradition. That tradition was an innovation in the 4th century A.D., but it was necessary because the Jews were taken captive by the Roman Empire (known as the *Diaspora*) and no longer allowed to have a Sanhedrin to do a new moon witness verification committee. Thus they reverted to a mathematical system which approximates the new moons very well for an **approximation of new moon**. It always keeps them within one or two days of the new moon, due to the nineteen year time cycle which is pretty good for two thousand years. Now that the new moons are observed in Jerusalem and can be reported accurately, we are able to observe the true calendar observed by Christ and the apostles themselves which goes back all the days to Moses. That calendar was given when Israel came out of Egypt. So today is the 9th day of Iyar by the observed new moon calendar. It is the second day, 4th week and the 23rd day of the Omer count.

Again, there is also confusion on *when the Omer count starts*. We started counting the Omer the “*morrow after the first day*” of unleavened bread which was on a Friday (March 29--Nisan 16) this year. The Sadducees and others say the Omer count is to begin on Sunday the day *after the weekly Sabbath* which falls during the days of Unleavened Bread. The Sadducees started counting the Omer on the **Sunday after the weekly Sabbath**. Each year, such people basically count 50 days *from Easter Sunday* and wind up keeping Pentecost (Shavuot) on *Whit Sunday* (observed yearly by the Roman Catholic Church) on a false Pentecost [yet claim that it has nothing to do with Catholicism].

What difference does it make? It determines on what day you keep Pentecost! Pentecost is an annual high holy day of God Almighty. If you count from the wrong day, you will end up keeping the wrong day. If the count begins from Sunday every year, it will be on the wrong day most years because of that. The Bible says we are supposed to start counting the Omer the day after the first Passover day, the day after the first day of Unleavened Bread (begin on Nisan 16). This is documented in all the historical Jewish writings. You can lead a horse to water, but cannot make the horse drink. It is possible to lead a person to the truth, but you cannot make him believe it unless he repents of being foolish.

This week a well-known baritone gospel singer died at 104 years old, George Beverly Shea (1909 -2013). I appreciated him as the greatest gospel singer of my time. There is an Internet video put out by Bill Gaither.com “*Remembering George Beverly Shea*”. His music is just as inspiring today as when I first heard it years ago. A few of my favorites are: *I'd Rather Have Jesus, The Love of God, How Great Thou Art, Amazing Grace, and It is Well with My Soul*. George was the son of a Canadian minister and well known for his singing when he accepted Billy Graham's request in 1943 to join his evangelistic team to use his voice to the glory of God all these (seventy) years. His spirit is now resting and waiting for Christ's return and the resurrection. Note of interest: “in November 2013 on the week of Billy Graham's 95th birthday, the biggest North American evangelistic event in more than 60 years of Billy Graham's ministry—*My Hope with Billy Graham*—will take place with a 30 minute broadcast in homes instead of filling a stadium or packing a park. He believes the Lord is going to let him live until he is 95. His life has

always been about the Gospel.” I believe these two men to be of a strong character, genuine faith and religious conviction.

Today is the **23rd day** of the **Omer count**, the 4th Week and the **2nd day** of the **4th week**. The 4th Week—**Netzach-Endurance**. The second day—**Gevurah of Netzach**: Discipline in Endurance. During the fourth week of counting the Omer, we examine and refine the emotional attribute of endurance known as Netzach. *Netzach* means endurance, fortitude and ambition and is a combination of determination and tenacity. It is a balance of patience, persistence and commitment. Without endurance any good endeavor or intention has no chance of success. Endurance means to be alive, to be driven by what counts. It is the readiness to fight for what you believe, to go all the way. This, of course requires that endurance be closely examined to ensure that it is used in a healthy and productive manner. This is good advice for all of us.

Examine the discipline of your endurance. Endurance must be directed toward productive goals and expressed in a constructive manner. Is my endurance and determination focused to help cultivate good habits and break bad ones? Or is it the other way around? Does my endurance come from strength or weakness? Does it come out of deep conviction or out of defensiveness? Do I use my endurance against itself by being tenacious in my lack of determination? *Exercise for the day*: Break one bad habit today.

Jerusalem Post International (Weekly Portion, pg. 30)—“From Freedom to Independence” by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin. He talks about the Omer count and discusses the march of Israel from Egyptian slavery to Mount Sinai where they were given the Ten Commandments—*Torah* (laws of God). “Now that we have our Jewish state, what is the great challenge of religious Zionism? The festival of Passover, which recently concluded is immediately linked to the upcoming festival of Shavuot by the Hebrew Bible: “On the morrow of the Rest Day [rabbinically interpreted to mean the first festival day of Passover] you shall count for yourselves seven full weeks...and you shall bring a new gift offering to the Lord...the first fruits” (**Leviticus 23:9-17**).”

That means that you count seven weeks and then the 50th day is the *Feast of First Fruits -- (yom ha bikkurim)* which is Pentecost or *Shavuot*. That is the day that the Israelites began to bring their first fruits to the temple. Some think that the first day of the Omer count is the Feast of First Fruits. However, it is not the feast of the first fruits, that day comes on Pentecost.

“The Bible is mandating that at the advent of the second day of Mazot (the Feast of Unleavened Bread) the *kohen* (priest) should bring an omer of barley to the Holy Temple, barley being the first of the grains to ripen in Israel. All of Israel then counts for 49 days, until on the 50th day, the *kohen* brings an offering of two wheat loaves to the Temple, wheat being the last and most significant of the grains to ripen in Israel, for the celebration of Shavuot (Weeks), the Festival of the first Fruits. Hence we begin the preparation for the Festival of the first Fruits on the second day of Passover! Indeed, we make reference to this upcoming festival during the ‘study portion’ of the Passover Seder, the retelling and re-experiencing of retelling and re-experiencing of Egyptian enslavement and the Exodus into freedom.”

“The Mishna mandates that we expound “*Arami oved Avi*”—the biblical portion (Deuteronomy 26:5) that every Jewish farmer recited upon bringing his first fruits to the Temple. Hence Shavuot literally comes into the Seder. Moreover Passover is incomplete without Shavuot – the Festival of Matzot is incomplete without the Festival of the First Fruits. Our physical freedom is incomplete without the ethical, moral and ritual laws which (God gave us) are yet to come at the Revelation at Sinai (Shavuot), which will mandate responsible conduct that prevents freedom from degenerating into lawlessness. Matza itself is no more than incomplete bread, unfinished pumpernickel. Barley (the Omer sacrifice) is animal fare; bread (brought to the Temple at Shavuot) is the human’s staff of life.”

“Passover may have freed us from Egyptian slaver, but it merely thrust us into an arid desert. We were still without a homeland whose earth would provide us with nutritious grains, vegetables, fruits and natural resources; we were still without borders that would provide us with security from our enemies. Moreover, protected borders and sufficient material bounty would enable us to develop a thriving culture based on Torah – the Laws of God, our Constitution, which could well become a magnet and guide for the other nations of the world.”

“Hence, Passover through to Shavuot creates one continuum, with the days of the *sefira* (count) being a kind of intermediate days, and the festival of First Fruits (Pentecost/ Shavuot) serving as the climax and completion of a 50-day long celebration (for this reason the talmudic Sages refer to the one day of Shavuot as “*Atzeret*,” the conclusion).” When you have a beginning, there needs to be an ending. The climax to the 49 days comes on the 50th day after they left Egypt, and the day God appeared and spoke to Israel from Mount Sinai. It is all linked together as one period of time, a very special spiritual period of time. We are at day 23 and two more days we will be right in the middle of the Omer count of this special continuum toward its conclusion on the 50th day.

We are to study and learn during the right season. **2 Timothy 4:2**—“preach the word, be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and shall be turned aside to fables.” This is the time and the season to preach about the season from Passover to Pentecost and what this season means. This is meat in due season. That is why I want to spend more time on it today, because it is so important and significant. Yet, many do not get it and remain in darkness. They walk away, because their teachers are ignorant and won’t seek, search or teach the truth. Following what they have always heard and traditions, they are stuck. God says we should not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds forth from the mouth of God (**Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3**).

Aish.com—is a Jewish website with Judaic teachings and a lot of information on Israel. They have some very good articles on the Omer and counting the Omer. One is entitled: *ABC’s of the Omer* which I downloaded this morning so I could share it with you. This is like going to class. We are here in a Bible class and learning about counting the Omer (Leviticus 23) which is a difficult subject.

“**What is the Omer?** In the days of the Holy Temple, the Jewish people would bring a barley offering on the second day of Passover (**Leviticus 23:10**). This was called the “Omer” (literally, “sheaf”) and in practical terms would permit the consumption of recently-harvested grains. Starting on the second day of Passover, the Torah (**Leviticus 3:15**) says it is a mitzvah every day to “count the Omer” – the 50 days leading up to Shavuot. This is an important period of growth and introspection, in preparation for the holiday of Shavuot which arrives 50 days later. Shavuot is the day that the Jewish people stood at Mount Sinai to receive the Torah, and as such required a seven week preparation period. The commentators say that we were freed from Egypt only in order to receive the Torah and to fulfill it. Thus we were commanded to count from the second day of Pesach until the day that the Torah was given – to show how greatly we desire the Torah.” Israel saw God’s miraculous hand in action with the miracles he performed, getting them out of the pollution of Egypt. They were freed from Egypt in order to receive the Torah. They had to learn recognize and to depend on God daily as their protector and provider for bread (manna), water, and to keep the Sabbath as a special day of rest. Spiritual lessons were necessary to be purified during that period of 49 days to get ready to meet God at Mount Sinai to receive the Torah (Laws of God). These days are important days for us to developing a pattern for the year using self introspection and Godly aspects of character development. Thus we were commanded to count from the second day of Passover until the day the Torah was given by God at Mt. Sinai, to show how greatly we desire the Torah

(ways of God). *How to Count the Omer*. We *count up to* instead of counting down, because we are daily moving closer to achieving our goal. Each day we say both the number of days and the weeks and focus on the current attribute for the week and day.

We also think of our forefathers who went before us and the characteristic of God's own attribute that they personified in dealing with mankind. Each of us have been made in the image of God and are to become like him in spirit by building these seven attributes mentioned in the Bible into our character with His help and provision. I explained what these seven *seferit* (attributes) that were given in last week's Bible study. Each day of the current week is designated to one of these seven characteristics of God with which he interacts with the world. These are: 1) **Loving kindness**—*Chesed*. 2) **Justice and discipline**—*Gevurah*. 3) **Harmony, Compassion**—*Tiferit*. 4) **Endurance, Victory, Triumph**—*Netzach*. 5) **Humility, splendor**—*Hod*. (6) **Foundation, bonding**—*Yesod*. 7) **Sovereignty, leadership**—*Malchut*. Each one of these is pictured by the seven shepherds.

The seven shepherds were: 1) **Abraham**, 2) **Isaac**, 3) **Jacob**, 4) **Moses**, 5) **Aaron**, 6) **Joseph**, and 7) **David**. This week (week 4) pictures Moses (*Gevurah*) and his endurance in leading Israel out of Egypt through the wilderness to Mount Sinai where they met God and received His laws. The 49 days are divided into seven weeks, during which one attribute reigns supreme and the week is devoted to the epitome of that attribute, i.e. the first week is devoted entirely to loving-kindness. Each day within these seven weeks is also associated with one of the seven characteristics, thus creating 49 different combinations interrelated like the facets of a diamond throughout the seven weeks with the hope of attaining spiritual improvement in our lives. When we count the Omer for 49 days from (after) the first day of the Festival of Passover it reminds us that on each day God brought Israel another step away from the defilement of Egypt and led them to enter the gate of purity so that they would be worthy of receiving the Torah.

To become more like God we have to study and work at it. If we want to think spiritually and become imbued with power from on high, then we have to use our ability to work and prepare to meet him by changing our carnal (human) inclinations—getting rid of sin. We are to examine our self, disciplining our self using spiritual exercise and constraint. During this period we are to look for better ways to relate to other people including our family, friends, neighbors and acquaintances—learning to be caring, gentle, kind, holding back our tempers and not to explode—abiding by the law of God as law abiding citizens. This dedicated time is SET APART by God for us to learn to grow ready to meet him at his coming, that Pentecost pictures. This effort is of infinite and inestimable value. Just set your mind and do it. The devil wants to keep everyone ignorant, deceived and confused so they will fail to take action and be unprepared to meet Christ at his return and become part of the kingdom of God.

Christ used his time after his resurrection to meet with and teach his disciples what to do—preach the gospel, take it everywhere—until he returns. Christ said he would be with those who follow him until the end of the world (age). They were told to stay together in the place where they were for eight days which would be Pentecost. Then Christ ascended into heaven. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples (were anointed), the 50th day after the Omer count of 49 days. The disciples were in essence set aside for eight days from the time they saw Christ ascending to heaven until out of their sight and eight days later the (fiery) Holy Spirit of God came upon them with power to do what God had called and chosen them to do.

God tells us what to do to develop holy righteous character—LOVE, DISCIPLINE, FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT, PEACE—HARMONY, THE FOUNDATION OF FAITH, OBEDIENCE and GOOD WORKS. These characteristics are all contained in the seven attributes (*seferot*) of God with which he deals with the nations of this earth—the way God reveals himself to mankind. We have to repair (Hebrew: *tikkun-*

rectification) what was damaged in Egypt by slavery (sin). So we have to repent and start a new life through the help of God and his Holy Spirit to grow and become like Christ until he is formed in us. We have to become Christ-like in word and deed, in our hearts. Egypt and Babylon represent idolatry and sin. Upon reaching the 49th day of the Omer count we take an overall review of the process of addressing a different aspect of our spiritual and moral character: speech, patience, concentration, laughter, sensitivity, humility, diligence, friendship, joy and the balance achieved. The 50th day is the most integral and profound step that unifies all the others—connecting with God. We put it all together to reach out to the world which does not know that nothing in life is possible without the assistance of the Creator and Sustainer of all life.

Article from Aish.com—“*Make the Omer Count*” by Rabbi Noah Weinberg. This is a class instruction toward counting the Omer to its conclusion and reaching the final goal of arriving at Pentecost (50th day). We have been exercising daily, concentrating on developing the wisdom of Torah and Godly character in our spiritual and moral character. This exercise is like climbing a ladder rung by rung. Instead of counting down toward the big day, as people normally do, we count up (1 to 50). *Why is that?* We need to ask the question, “Why did God wait 50 days after Israel left Egypt before he gave them the Torah?” Why didn’t he just give it to them right away? There is a reason why. First of all the Israelites were not spiritually ready to receive the Torah. They did not know God nor had they seen his hand in operation enough. For over 200 years, Israel had been living in Egyptian society of idolatry, vice and immorality—the world-center of Babylon. They were surrounded with pagan influences and that spirit was rubbing off on them. According to Jewish sages, the people of Israel had degenerated to the 49th level of corruption of evil because of Egyptian influences. They had become *Egyptianized* and their Hebrew language was about all Israel had retained of their heritage. They were thrust out of Egypt and had to go through a process of acclimatizing to God’s way. They had to learn to look to God for safety and security. They had to learn to trust God and depend on Him for survival (their needs), to ask for food and water; to stop fearing, grumbling and complaining.

Christ said to his disciples: “ASK and you shall receive; SEEK and you will find; KNOCK on the door and then it will be opened to you.” If people do not ask, they aren’t going to receive; if they don’t seek the truth, they won’t find it or won’t recognize it. Winston Churchill said: “Man will occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of the time he will pick himself up and continue on and as if nothing happened.” Israel had to be purified and made ready after fasting before meeting God at Sinai on the 50th day. The high impact of the Exodus of ten miraculous plagues in Egypt and the splitting of the Red Sea brought the Israelites to physical freedom. Yet the miracles of Egypt were only a “jump start” to the spiritual possibility that lay ahead. A one-time experience, as powerful as it may be, does not permanently change anyone’s emotional attitude. That is only possible through practice and adjustment over time. Going through the Red Sea was impressive and the Israelites were so impressed by seeing that incredible miracle of the water cascading down on Pharaoh’s chariots and army, they were stunned. However, it wasn’t long before the Israelites begun complaining and grumbling. It only takes one person with a bad attitude for it to spread far and wide. First it was the water, but God began to deal with them and provided more miracles—water and manna. He showed them what day is his Sabbath day thru the “miracle of the manna.” They had to surrender and learn how to serve God who called them out of Egypt.

We have to learn how to serve God who has called us out of this world of sin. He has called us to grow in spiritual likeness of himself. The process of counting begins at the 49th level of spiritual impurity and every day we peel away another layer of impurity to reveal the spiritual character God wants us to have. Peel away the pride and reveal the humility. That is why with every step, we decrease the negative number and increase the positive number. On the 50th day we will have gotten rid of the negative and our character will be transformed through the process of counting the Omer to become more like Christ.

Romans 13:10-14—“Love works no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore, let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the *armor of light*. Let us walk properly, as in the day; not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ (clothe yourself with his spirit), and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”

Ephesians 6:10-18—“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the whole of armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil, for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against Principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, TO STAND! Stand with:

- TRUTH buckled around your waist
- RIGHTEOUSNESS in place, as your **breastplate** (heart)
- Your FEET fitted (shod) with the readiness (preparation/knowledge) of the Gospel of Peace
- SHIELD of FAITH with which you will be able to quench ALL the fiery darts of the evil one
- HELMET of SALVATION
- SWORD of the Spirit which is the word of God
- PRAY always with all prayer and supplication in the power of the Spirit. Stay alert and be persistent.

What is God’s character like? **Ephesians 4:17-24**—“So I tell you this, and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the rest of the Gentiles (ungodly) in the futility of their mind (thinking). They are darkened in their understanding and alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness (hardness) of their heart; who being past feeling (lost all sensitivity), they have given themselves over to sensuality (lewdness) so as to indulge in every kind of impurity with a continual lust (greediness) for more. But you have not so learned Christ. If indeed you have heard him and been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man (self) which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be **renewed in the spirit of your mind**, and that you put on the new self (man) which was created to be like God, in true righteousness and holiness.”

The example of Christ is love, unity and humility. **Philippians 2:1**—“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection (tenderness) and mercy (compassion), then fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, or one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for your own interests, but also for the interests of others. **Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus**, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore, God also has highly exalted him and given him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jess every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Yeshua ha Machiach (Jesus Christ) is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Verse 12—“Therefore, my beloved brethren, as you have always obeyed not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God**

who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” Now is the hour and day to apply a persevering effort to develop the mind of Christ and take on his humility and glory—the firm foundation of Godly character. God wants us to be rulers in his kingdom and has called us to be kings and priests ruling with him when he comes to rule the earth. Christ has qualified to rule. **1Chronicles 29:1-13**—

“Blessed are you, Lord God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever.
Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty;
For all that is in heaven and in earth is yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord,
You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor come from you and you reign over all.
In your hands are strength and power; to exalt and give strength to all.
Now, our God, we give you thanks and praise your glorious name.”

These following verses in Hebrews are quoted from **Psalm 8:4-6** and were written by David. **Hebrews 2:5-6**—“*For he has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. But one testified in a certain place (scripture), saying: What is man that you are mindful of him, or the son of man that you take care of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of your hands, you have put **all things** in subjection under his feet.*”

Hebrews 2:8-10—“For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, **that he by the grace of God might taste death for everyone.** For it was fitting for him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, **for which reason he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, ‘I will declare Your name to my brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to you.’ And again: ‘I will put my trust in him.’ And again: ‘Here am I, and the children God has given me’.” All things will be put under man when man has qualified and been perfected—changed to a spirit being, transformed into divinity of God and his family. We are on a path to become children of God and his family.**

Matthew 5:48—“**Therefore, you shall be (become) perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.**” We are striving for perfection, pictured by the Omer count. We are daily changing our character to be more like God and his essence. We are counting day by day putting on the love of God. **Hebrews 6:1**—“Therefore leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits.”

We are to go on to perfection, proceeding onward and upward. **1 Peter 2:1**—“Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the pure (sincere) milk of the word that you may **grow up in your salvation**, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. As you come to him, the living stone rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” **Hebrews 5:8**—“though he was Son, he learned obedience by the things which he suffered. And having been perfected, He **became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey him**, called by God as High Priest ‘according to the order of Melchizedek’ of whom we have much to say and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is

unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” These people have learned to tell the difference between right and wrong, the good and the bad and the ugly.

The path toward Shavuot (Pentecost) which represents the kingdom of God –the revelation of God –and the end of this process with the final return of Christ, leads to our literal transformation into the sons of God at the resurrection into spirit beings. This mortal flesh puts on immortality. **Philippians 3:8-13**— Paul says, “I consider everything a loss compared to the excellence (surpassing greatness) of knowing Jesus Christ my Lord for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having my own righteousness (self-righteousness), which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death. If by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all of this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. I don’t consider myself to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do; Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead. **I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.**”

Christ has us by his hand and we have him by our hand. We have laid hold of each other and holding on fast (a firm grip) that we might be in the kingdom of God. This is the time of pressing forward and laying hold on the kingdom of God and eternal life. We are counting up to Pentecost to day 50 which represents sovereignty and ruler-ship—at unity and one with God. God sent his Spirit of great power on his church eight days after Christ ascended from the Mount of Olives to heaven in the sight of his disciples. We are getting to the end of this age and God said that he was going to pour out his Spirit on his people at the end of the age. There is going to a witness of power, authority and inspiration in these days and months of these last few years before the coming of the Messiah. The world has to have a witness. God has called us to be a part of that witness. Lay everything aside and concentrate on the kingdom of God and doing our part in God’s work. Realize the time is passing and rapidly fleeting, the harvest is white. Pray that God will send forth laborers into his harvest. **Genesis 24:1**—says “Abraham came to his day.” This means that Abraham made good use of his time. He used each one of his days to the fullest extent and at the end of his life with his days in hand. No day went by without spiritual growth.

Brethren, “*Redeem the time, because the days are evil.*” Let’s serve God with our **whole heart, mind and soul** and “**Make the Omer Count**”!