

## OMER COUNTING AND CHARACTER STRATEGY FOR OVERCOMING

Welcome to Bible study. It is 27<sup>th</sup> day of April – the 30<sup>th</sup> day of the *Omer Count*, and the second day of week five. The Jewish calendar is a day ahead for the month, and two days ahead of the Omer Count. When the Roman Empire took Israel captive they also ordered the Sanhedrin to disband (cease functioning). The Sanhedrin was the law making body of the Jews and responsible for observing and reporting each new moon to the Jews. The calendar change from the observed new moons to a perpetual mathematical one occurred in the days of Rabbi Hillel II in 359 A.D. It is based on the nineteen year time cycle according to the movement of the sun, moon and the earth, instead of going by the new moon observations and is an amazing piece of work. However, it is close but from God's viewpoint it is still not accurate enough.

Should we serve God with a dull-bladed hoe or ax when we are given a job to do, or should we sharpen the dull blades so we can do effective work? This is a choice that we all have to make. We are all going to be judged one day according to our works – not according to our intentions but according to deeds and according to developing righteous Godly character and obedience to God's word.

Today, the 30th day of the Omer which is **day 2** of the 5<sup>th</sup> week, we are to be working on the attribute of *discipline in humility*. In Hebrew the word *Gevurah* is the quality of discipline (day 2). Week 5 the Hebrew word for humility is *Hod* and represents Aaron who had a spirit of humility. For a person to be glorious and majestic they have to be humble, otherwise the glory and majesty would go to their head as it did with *Lucifer, son of the morning*, whose name is now Satan the devil (prince of this world's system). **Ezekiel 28:13-15**—"You have been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering the sardius, topaz, the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold; the workmanship of your tabrets and of your pipes was prepared in you in the day that you were created. You are the anointed cherub that covers (*the throne of God*). And I HAVE SET YOU SO; you were upon the holy mountain of God; you have walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. You were perfect in your ways from the day that you were created, until iniquity was found in you."

*Note:* In verses **11-17**, as in **Isaiah 14:12-17** the language goes beyond the king of Tyre to Satan, inspirer and unseen ruler of all such pomp and pride as that of Tyre. There are other instances of this indirectly addressing Satan. Here, the unfallen state of Satan is described; his fall is written in **Isaiah 14**. In **Revelation 20:10** the vision is not of Satan in his own person, but of Satan fulfilling himself through an earthy king who arrogates to himself divine honors, so that the prince of Tyre foreshadows the beast (**Dan. 7:8; Rev. 19:20**).

**Isaiah 14:13**—"Your heart (Lucifer) was lifted up (became proud and rebellious) because of your beauty you have corrupted your wisdom by reason of your brightness (full of light and color and quick thinking). You have said in your heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God." Lucifer became a worshipper of self instead of God who created him and gave him such beauty and ability. Instead of being a shining bright star of the dawn, he became the advocate of the darkness (a destroyer and deceiver without wisdom). What vain thought for the devil to think that he can succeed in taking the kingdom from the one and only true God and Creator to whom the kingdom belongs, as well as, everything that is in heaven and in the earth.

During the fifth week of counting the Omer, we are practicing learning to walk humbly with our God. Humility is deflating the self and getting rid of human pride. The resulting yielding is not to be confused with weakness. *Hod* or *humility* is modesty—it is acknowledgment (from the root of the Hebrew word “hoda’ah”). It is saying “thank you” to God. It is clearly recognizing your qualities and strengths and acknowledging that they are not your own, but they were given to you by God for a higher purpose than just satisfying your own needs (self indulgence). Humility is modesty – recognizing how small you are which allows you to realize how large (influential) you can become by yielding to God. Therefore, that understanding makes humility all the more awesome. Meekness is not weakness, nor a doormat.” There is a time to stand up in God and Christ (not self glory).

“A full cup cannot be filled. When filled with yourself and your needs, ‘I and nothing else’, there is no room for more. When you ‘empty’ yourself before something greater than yourself, you will find that your capacity to receive increases beyond your previously perceived limits. When you empty yourself, you have made room to receive more—energy, inspiration, kind deeds. Humility is the key to transcendence; to reach beyond your own self. Only true humility gives you the power of total objectivity. Humility is sensitivity; it is healthy shame out of recognition that you can be better than you are and that you can expect more of yourself. Although humility is silent it is not a void.” It is ability to keep your mouth quiet at the appropriate time and not to talk back or argue for *self*. “It is a dynamic expression of life that includes all seven qualities of love, discipline, compassion, endurance, humility, bonding and sovereignty.” When Christ went before the rabbis, Roman soldiers and magistrates, he was as a sheep before its shearers—“he opened not his mouth to defend himself”—he was completely humble. This shows us how God interacts with the human beings of this world. We can let his light shine through us as his instruments. In doing so, we achieve the greatest, glory, majesty and splendor.

Omer day 30 is **Gevurah** of **Hod**: Discipline in Humility—“Humility must be disciplined and focused. When should my humility cause me to compromise and when not—to take action or to submit? In the name of humility do I sometimes remain silent and neutral in the face of wickedness?” **Daniel 3:23-25** – Daniel’s three friends—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Jews set over the affairs of the province of Babylon) were humble, but they stood up and told King Nebuchadnezzar that they would not serve his gods, nor bow down and worship the golden image which he had set up. The king became furious. He commanded the furnace be heated seven times more than usual and commanded certain mighty men of valor to bind the three men fully clothed and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. The king’s command was so urgent and the furnace so exceeding hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. The King was astonished to see *four* men (“the fourth looked like the Son of God”) walking in the midst of the fiery furnace unhurt. These men had humility and faith in God. “Humility must also include respect and awe for the person or experience before which you stand humbly.”

*The Bible*, a recent 2013 TV miniseries which I watched, portrayed this story in Daniel all wrong by first putting the men in the furnace and then using firebrands to start the fire. This is not the eyewitness account given in Daniel 3. Discipline in exercising humility must be done wisely. Even in the midst of an opportunity to bear witness for Christ, do so with a humble spirit, but with unwillingness to compromise with sin or yield to temptation before the evil emissaries of Satan. “If your humility is lacking, ask yourself is it because I don’t respect the other individual or his office?” We need to be respectful of all the offices that God has created including President, Senator, Prime Minister or policeman or anyone else in a position of authority. When people are given too much authority without first receiving proper experience (trials and tests) and training then that glory just goes to their head and results in pride and conceit. Those who are not worthy of such honor will lose it, as Satan did when he became proud and lifted himself up.(Ezekiel 28). Here it is talking about Lucifer (“light bearer or shining one”) one of the two anointed

cherubs covering the throne of God at one time. God says, “I created (made) you and gave you your office in heaven and from the day you were created you were beautiful to behold until your heart became proud of your splendor and power defiling your sanctuary.” Prophetically speaking, the devil (Satan) is going to be devoured (consumed) in the Lake of Fire (**Revelation 20:10**). So we need to be very careful to strive to be humble of mind as Christ who will receive all glory, majesty and power, and not follow the example of Lucifer—Satan the devil. Satan strove for the glory, majesty and power first and forgot the lesson of staying humble and will wind up in the Lake of Fire prepared for the wicked.

Beginning the Omer count the day after Passover and counting seven complete weeks (7 days x 7 weeks = 49 days) which brings us to the 50<sup>th</sup> day which is Pentecost/Shavuot and fulfills a perfect cycle. Like a human growing from infant birth to an adult, we start out a spiritual infant and are growing into spiritual maturation (perfection) and should no longer be needing milk like spiritual babies, but eating spiritual meat like adults. We progress by answering his call and learn right from wrong, good from evil, love vs. hate, and are to become progressively proficient in knowledge, wisdom and understanding (right application) of the word of God and his commandments. By his spirit we are taught, guided, guarded and protected as his children. It is a progressive journey, just as Israel needed time to get ready to meet God at Sinai which was on Pentecost the 50<sup>th</sup> day after coming out of Egypt—we need time to grow spiritually. The Bible (Torah) record is written down for an example for us so we won’t make the same spiritual mistakes Israel made.

There is more to creatively learn within this special time of the Omer count to help keep our hearts grounded and centered in God and to fulfill God’s special purpose for us while we are here on this earth. This time has been set aside for God’s people every year to draw (walk) closer with God each year. More and more churches are beginning to count the Omer. Forget all those churches (sects) and their offshoots and divisions who ignore God’s law. In **Psalm 119:97**, David (a man after God’s own heart) said—“O how I love thy law.” One of the precepts of God’s law is “you shall count for yourself the Omer” (7 complete weeks) each year from Passover to Pentecost (generation to generation). Counting the Omer is part of keeping the annual holy days holy.

Article: El Shaddai Ministries is one of the ministries who has begun teaching counting the Omer and are still learning. *Counting the Omer* (3.13.13) by Pastor Mark Biltz. **What is counting the Omer?** In **Leviticus 23:15**, which is in the third book of the *Torah* (Moses five books of the law), it says: “You shall count from the next day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven Sabbaths shall be completed.” Omer is a Hebrew word that means ‘sheaves of a harvested crop’. Then Biltz says, “In ancient times Jews brought the Omer to the temple as an offering on the day after the weekly Sabbath during Passover week. The Torah tells us to count seven weeks from the bringing of the Omer until the evening of Shavuot (Pentecost), hence the custom of counting the Omer.” Although Jews no longer bring an omer (sheaf) to the temple the forty-nine days are still called “the Omer.” Obviously there is no temple today.

Did you catch that [on what Sabbath day they begin the Omer count], “*after the weekly Sabbath?*” *Note:* This group is following the Sadducees. But the Jews as a whole and the Pharisees (Christ said the Pharisees sit in Moses seat) in particular, and the whole nation of Israel begin the Omer count on the morrow after the Passover day (Nisan 15) the ANNUAL Sabbath holy day, not the weekly Sabbath that comes after Passover day. They always began the count on *Nisan* 16, the same day of the wave sheaf offering, and they always wound up with Pentecost (50<sup>th</sup> day) falling on **Sivan 5, 6 or 7** depending on how many days there were in the months of Abib (Nissan) and Iyar. This group is beginning to count the Omer which is starting in the right direction. God is able to lead them to the understanding of his truth in his time and way.

**“Why should followers of Yeshua Ha-Mashiach (Messiah) count the omer?** According to Jewish understanding, the counting of the Omer recounts the journey of the Israelites from Egypt, through the desert wastes, to the revelation of God at Mount Sinai when the Torah was given. This step-by-step journey through the wilderness was a time of trial and testing. God satisfied their hunger with manna from heaven (**Ex. 16:15**), revealed to his people the Sabbath (**Ex. 16:23**), caused water to spring forth from a rock (**Ex.17:6**) and intervened to protect them from attacks from the Amalekites (**Ex. 17:11**).”

While still in the wilderness on the way to Sinai, Israel was blindsided by Amalek and a bunch of Amalekites at Rephidim who were leaving their homeland to march into Egypt. History shows that they became the Hycksos shepherd kings of Egypt, a very cruel dynasty. **Exodus 17:10**—“when Moses held up the rod of God in his hand Israel prevailed in battle: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. So Moses sat down on a stone and Aaron and Hur held up Moses’ hands and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun” and Israel won the battle. The Amalakites were a type of this world’s enemies that come against Christian followers of Christ. The waving of the omer sheaf pictures God’s acceptance of his people and their harvest. God is provider, protector, defender and our fortress. As long as we obey Him, He will fight our battles and strengthen us to fight battles and will also send his angels to intervene. Sometimes we have to fight and take part in the battle as Joshua and the children of Israel had to fight after they crossed the Jordan River and entered the Promised Land. As long as they were obedient and faithful to God they were victorious over opposition of fierce giants, kings and nations.

Historically, the Roman Empire overcame the Jews in the Bar Kochbah rebellion, but it was at a great cost. After achieving the victory that killed over a million Jews, Emperor Hadrian was surveying the site, and said to a Jewish rabbi nearby, “Look what we Romans have accomplished.” The rabbi answered, “Your majesty, our God has forsaken us and given us into your hands, because our forefathers conquered much greater kings here in this valley, because God was with them. In these nearby caves, I will show you the bones of the giant kings who stood twenty to thirty feet tall that were killed by Joshua in his day.”

**“How does this apply to the followers of Yeshua, today?** This journey through the wilderness is a TYPE of the Christian life of overcoming – beginning with baptism (Red Sea) and leaving sin behind (Egypt), marching and struggling through the spiritual wilderness (this evil world, and our human nature), until we reach God’s kingdom on earth.” As we go through our Christian lives, we meet obstacles, encounter problems and face trials and difficulties. All these are reflected in the “overcoming” of 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 the coming of the Messiah. At the resurrection, those who have overcome will be given immortal (spiritual) bodies as sons of God.

**Deuteronomy 8:2-11**—“you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness to humble you and to test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So he humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know that he might make you know man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds forth from the mouth of the Lord. During this time your garments did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell. You should know (understand) in your heart, as a man chastens his son, so the Lord your God chastens you.”

I have been meditating on my progress in a particular way this week in overcoming human nature. It came about by my reading a book entitled Sugar Busters which I just finished. Debbie has read this book and found it helped her in understanding how sugar affects the body in weight gain and loss. I can better understand why we in America have increasing health problems such as obesity, cancer, cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes of which I have had since about eight years ago. This book pointed out how the American diet has changed greatly and sugar consumption has been increasingly added to our foods.

It explains that excessive intake of high glycemic foods, refined sugars and carbohydrates can create obesity, diabetes, and cardiac disease to make a long story short. The book has shown me that I am going to have to watch my diet more carefully and eliminate the high carbohydrates, high glycemic foods, and all refined sugars and stop justifying eating those things and get my eating habits back under control to become healthier. Reading labels are important and knowing terminology used for sugar. That is going to take work. The Omer count is a tool to teach us to develop a planned program (regimen) for training in overcoming habits and choices. We have to search for knowledge and understand the knowledge, then get the wisdom of how to put it into practice by develop a daily program for succeeding. Write your goals down.

**Proverbs 1:7**—“**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.**” **Job 28:12-27**—“Where can wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding? From whence does wisdom come? God understands its way, he knows its place, for he looks under the earth and sees the whole heaven, to establish a way for the wind, and portions of water are measured. He made a way for the rain and a path for the lightning and the thunderbolt. God saw wisdom and declared it. He prepared it; indeed he threshed it out, examined it—discovered it.” This is what the Omer is about, to teach us to depart from evil, to gain understanding and thereby grow in wisdom. We can chose to fear the Lord and depart from evil by diligent searching, reading, hearing and studying the word of God (the Bible). We can become an over-comer as we understand the plan and love of God. Have faith in the hand of God who is willing to work in our behalf as we yield to Him. We walk by faith and trust God’s word; His word is truth and He cannot lie.

Shavuot (Pentecost) is the conclusion of the march to freedom. It is the concluding feast of liberty. It begins with Passover and ends with Shavuot. It is a continuum—*alpha* and *omega*—the beginning and the end. Shavuot is often called the 8<sup>th</sup> day of Passover by the rabbis. Passover week is seven days—a week of unleavened bread. It begins with the first day of Passover week when we eat the Passover meal (Seder- evening of Nisan 15<sup>th</sup>) and it lasts for seven days while we eat unleavened bread. Then it continues on with the Omer count for 7 weeks (7 days x 7 weeks = 49 days) up to the 50<sup>th</sup> day which is Shavuot—Pentecost, “the 8<sup>th</sup> day” which is the next annual holy day. How can we be free unless we are connected to God? In order to stay free we have to be connected to God. Today God gives us his Holy Spirit as the connecting link to Him as long as we are nurturing (feeding and watering) the earnest of His Spirit he has given us when we are baptized, so that we will grow into the likeness of Christ. This is why counting the Omer is important from Passover to Pentecost (growing increasingly connected to God day by day, year by year). This depicts from the moment of our conversion and acceptance of Christ as our Savior at baptism until the coming of the Holy Spirit and the kingdom of God. It is a lifetime of journeying and overcoming as pictured by Israel’s journey through the wilderness (49 days learning to know and trust God) to Mount Sinai and being ready to meet God and to agree to become His betrothed (bride) on the 50<sup>th</sup> day which was *Pentecost*. We are to work on ourselves and with God’s help, rely upon Him and maintain daily spiritual connection (study, prayer and meditation) with the Most High God. Begin the march to freedom, look for His miracles.

**Luke 24:49**—before Yeshua ascended up into the heavens, he said to his disciples: “Behold. I (am going) to send you the Promise of my Father upon you, but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued (clothed with) power from on high.” **Acts 2:2-4**— “When the day of Pentecost had fully come, they (disciples) were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues (languages) as the Holy Spirit gave them the ability.”

**Luke 24: 5-11**—God-fearing Jews from every nation under the heaven were dwelling in Jerusalem.

When this sound occurred it caused a multitude to come together and they were confounded. ‘How is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? We hear them speaking in our own tongues (language) the wonderful works of God’.”

**Counting with the 48 Ways**—by Rabbi Noah Weinberg ([aish.com](http://aish.com)) – *Change your life with the 48 Ways – A Way a Day!* Starting with the second day of Passover, we “count the Omer” each day, leading up toward Shavuot and the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. To receive the Torah is to study the 48 Ways to Wisdom. “The Sages say that our souls have been sent into this world for no other reason than to repair character flaws. Each of these 48 Ways is a special tool to help sharpen our personal skills and to repair character flaws.” We have to master the tools that God has given each one of us—physical, mental and spiritual—to be successful. “We were freed from Egypt in order to receive the Torah and to fulfill it. Each of these 48 Ways is a step along the process *to receive the law of God and fulfill it*—by addressing a different aspect of our spiritual and moral character: speech, patience, concentration, laughter, leadership, sensitivity, humility, diligence, friendship, joy, compassion—so that we attain authentic freedom of discipline and chose a wise goal.”

Upon completing the 48 days the 49<sup>th</sup> day is a recapitulation (summarization or overall review) of the previous 48 days of counting, and reviewing the growth accomplished. A key to spiritual growth is the realization that skillful leadership requires constant maintenance. “The 50<sup>th</sup> step is the most integral and profound. It is the step that unifies all the others. The 50<sup>th</sup> step is connecting with God. Nothing in life is possible without the assistance of the Creator and Sustainer of all life.”

When Adam and Eve sinned by eating of the tree of “good and evil” in the Garden of Eden, they became corrupted (flawed) and mankind inherited the evil desires which then became part of their human nature. This evil impulse is called “yetzer hara” in Hebrew. **Jeremiah 17:9**—“The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know (understand) it? I, the Lord searches the heart; I test the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve.” We all have that *yetzer hara* –impulse to do evil and need God’s Spirit to overcome that tendency and to replace it with the Spirit of God which gives us the impulse to do good (righteous deeds) with the strength and power needed to obey God. **2 Timothy 1:6-7**—Paul describes the gift of God’s Holy Spirit when the Spirit of God dwells in us. “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of *power* and of *love* and of a *sound mind*.” The Spirit of God gives us the power to overcome the evil that resides in our human heart.

“This necessity for self-growth is stressed in the Torah’s description of Abraham: ‘Abraham was old, he came with his days’ (**Genesis 24:1**). ‘*He came with his days*’ teaches us that Abraham used each of his days to the fullest extent. At the end of his life, he came to old age “with all his days” in hand. No day was without its requisite growth.” Abraham was consistent and persistent in his daily growth. “When it comes to children, we take for granted that growth and development is part of childhood. You don’t expect a 10-year-old to act the same way he did at age five. But somehow as adults, we lose that impulse to continue growing. Yet should a 30-year old act as he did at age 25? As adults, we could be using those five years in a very powerful way. The formula for staying young is to continue growing. Any time we’re not growing and changing, we are not living, but just existing.” The way to keep growing is to keep studying and praying and searching the scriptures daily to show yourself approved to God. Read the Psalms and pray over them as David. Make them your own prayer as you go through the book of Psalms. Study the book of Proverbs for greater wisdom, spiritual knowledge and understanding. **Luke 13:24**-- Christ said, “Strive to enter the narrow gate.” The Greek word *agoneseimi* is used from which we get the word agony.

**Taking One Step at a Time.** “A major impediment to growth is the feeling of being overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task. We are not talking about “an-all-or-nothing” proposition. If I cannot have a

thousand gold coins, does that mean I should not strive to have even one? The biggest reason people fail is that they have set a goal which is too lofty and unattainable and inevitably fall short and get discouraged.” Have a short term goal. Achieve a short term goal and the long term goal will take care of itself.

“In Jacob’s famous dream, God shows him a vision of a ladder reaching toward heaven. Spiritual growth, like climbing a ladder, must be one step at a time. By setting small, incremental goals, we will be encouraged by the periodic success. To make the plan foolproof, make our initial goal something you know you can reach. Tasting success will bolster your confidence and determination, and you can use this energy to strive for higher goals. Remember, the longest journey begins with just one step. What goes in slow will remain. Take pleasure in the times you achieved your goal, and use that as a motivation to improve further.” No one’s journey toward God’s kingdom is without setbacks. For every step forward, there may be two steps backward, but as long as we persist in going forward we are going in the right direction. “King Solomon tells us in **Proverbs 24:16**, “The *Tzaddik* falls seven times and gets up” The definition of a *Tzaddik* is not someone who never makes a mistake, but rather someone who, although he may fail, does not give up. He tries again and does not despair!” “Another thing that you might want to do, is reinforce your goal by writing them down. Writing helps a person to concentrate and clarify his thoughts. And then review your goals by reading them aloud.” Develop a daily program and stick to it.

When I was in college, the students had to run track at 6 a.m. After a warm-up with calisthenics, we had to run a mile which took eight laps to complete. Some of the students were not in very good shape and would quit after a lap or two. But by taking one lap at the time, they began to handle the next lap, and then the next until the mile was completed. That strategy paid good dividends and those students learned how to succeed. It was a matter of getting the right strategy and tactics and then persevering.

**Accountability.** Our goal is to reach the kingdom of God. When striving to reach that goal, “one important principle to remember is that you are not competing with anyone but yourself. Life is not a race to beat the other guy, life is only a race to conquer the self. As we climb the ladder, it’s more important which direction we are headed than which rung we are on.” **Matthew 6:33**—“Seek you first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things (food, drink, clothes) shall be added unto you; your Father knows what you have need of.” Put God first. The best investment that we can make in this life is the kingdom of God. **Matthew 6:19-21**—“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust corrupt (ruin), and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust does corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

**Luke 12:15-21**—Christ said, “Take heed, and beware of covetousness (greed) for a man’s life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses. There was a certain rich man who brought forth plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, what shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will store all my fruits and my goods. I will say to my soul, soul you have much goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry. But God said to him, You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you: then whose shall those things be, which you have provided? So is he that saves up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” If we focus here and now on God and his work and his kingdom we will be rewarded by Christ where we have put our treasures. **2 Corinthians 10:12**—“We do not dare to class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.” Comparing ourselves with others only creates enmity—envy, coveting and jealousy. Keeping up with the neighbors” is just vanity.

“Nowhere in the entire Torah is the date of Shavot mentioned. It merely takes place at the end of 50 days—because the key is to get there at your own pace, following these steps. To maintain growth, a good rule of thumb is to always be a bit uncomfortable. You don’t want to climb a ladder and get stuck between rungs!” Why is the date not written down? The Hebrew months are not all identical and the Hebrew calendar has flexible months, so Pentecost could be on Sivan 5, 6, or 7. The key feature of getting to Pentecost is to COUNT for yourself the seven weeks to the 50<sup>th</sup> day and completion. Pentecost means the 50<sup>th</sup> day, from Passover. The Hebrew word for Pentecost is Shavuot which means weeks, because you are counting weeks—the Feast of Weeks. It is an annual holy day.

After the death of Moses, Joshua was left alone to lead the children of Israel which was a daunting task. **Joshua 1:1-2**—“Now after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord it came to pass, that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, saying: Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, arise and cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—the children of Israel. I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised.” Verses 5-9—“No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. Be strong and of good courage. Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses, my servant, commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, *that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it*. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? **Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.**”

**Genesis 1:26-27** and **John 17:5** –We were created by God in his image to be part of His family and His kingdom—His plan. Whosoever believes *that Jesus Christ is born of God* (the Son of God and the witness of God) and loves Him and keeps His commandments has the promise of eternal life which is in Jesus Christ (by repenting of our sins, be baptized and receive His Holy Spirit into our life and follow Him). *Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for you serve the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Brethren, let’s count the Omer one day at the time and fight to the finish. Make the most of your days every day with a planned and consistent life strategy “*to observe and do*” which will lead us to good success and a crown of life (righteousness) from Christ (Revelation 2:10 and Revelation 3:11). Be of strong and of good courage. Fight to lay hold on eternal life that you may receive a great reward when Christ returns and He will reward you openly.