

## I. COUNTING THE OMER

(Justification to Sanctification to Empowered Multiplication)

15 You shall also count for yourselves from the day after the sabbath, from the day when you brought in the sheaf of the wave offering; there shall be seven complete sabbaths. 16 You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh sabbath; then you shall present a new grain offering to YHWH. 17 You shall bring in from your dwelling places two loaves of bread for a wave offering, made of two-tenths of an ephah; they shall be of a fine flour, baked with leaven as first fruits to YHWH. Leviticus 23:15-17

- A. Tied to Barley Harvest:** “In ancient Israel, the grain harvest lasted seven weeks, beginning with the barley harvest right after Passover and ending with the wheat harvest seven weeks later. The time of the Israeli barley harvest was the key to the Jewish religious calendar, because Passover could not be observed until at least some of the barley was ready for harvest. The offering of the first barley sheaf (*omer*) took place on the day after Passover. This meant that if no barley was ready for harvest, the celebration of Passover had to be delayed by intercalating a month in the lunar calendar. Since barley ripens a few weeks before wheat, the ceremony of the barley wave-sheaf offering the day after Passover marked the starting point of the fifty days countdown to Pentecost.” (Bacchiocchi, 140).
- B. Feast of Weeks:** “The term “Feast of Weeks,” (Shavuot) while used to designate the special festival day on which the first fruits of the wheat harvest were presented before the Lord, actually refers to the entire period of the grain harvest of about seven weeks, from the first cutting of barley to the completion of the wheat harvest. This is implied by the very name “Feast of Weeks,” that is, a feast extending over seven weeks. However, only the beginning and the end of the fifty days were marked by a wave-offering (a *tenuphah*). This entire period was of special significance to the Israelites, who were called to recognize God as the source of the early and latter rain that made the Spring and Fall harvests possible (Jer 5:24).” (Bacchiocchi, 140).
- C. Biblical Examples of Testing During this Time**
1. No Water: twice!
    - a. Bitter Waters (Exodus 15:22-26)
    - b. Water from the rock (Exodus 17:1-7)
  2. No food: God answers with manna, quail, & Sabbath instructions (Exodus 16)
  3. Attacked by the Amalekites (Exodus 17:8-16)
  4. Moses Overwhelmed by Leadership Responsibilities (a need to delegate) (Exodus 18)
- D. Expectancy Building...Counting Fifty Days...Until Shavuot:**
1. More Than an Agricultural Custom: “the counting of seven times seven days is more than just an agricultural custom.” The grain harvest in Israel could hardly have been completed every year precisely between Passover and Pentecost. The reason is found in the meaning of the seventh-day Sabbath, which is the basis for the seven-weeks structure of time. The Sabbath provided release and liberation from the hardship of life and social inequalities, not only every seven days but also every seven years (sabbatical year–Lev 25:4) and every seven weeks of years (jubilee year–Lev 25:8). At these annual institutions the Sabbath became the liberator of the oppressed in the Hebrew society. The land was to lie fallow to provide free produce for the dispossessed and animals. The slaves were emancipated if they so desired, and debts owed by fellow citizens were remitted (Lev 25:4-55). (Bacchiocchi, 146)
  2. Mounting Excitement: The Counting of the Omer was a time of great anticipation. This counting is comparable to that of a slave or prisoner, who counts the days to his freedom with great excitement. When one counts to a particular event or time, it demonstrates how deeply he wants to reach that point. (Sampson, 199)
  3. Get a Calendar: Have tools that help you count up to God's Fifty
- E. Faithful In Our Assignments**
1. The harvest was starting

2. Most of our assignments in life will be boring, mundane, and seemingly irrelevant
3. He sees it and it is an act of worship to Him as we are faithful in these times

**F. Testings Increase** (Intended for our good to prepare and strengthen us)

1. God is having us use our spiritual muscles by bringing “resistance” into our lives.
2. Rebukes will increase...ironically all the more for those who are attempting to do something!

*18I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. 19Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. 20Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.* Revelation 3:18-20

*4You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; 5and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reprovved by Him; 6For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives."*

*7It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? 10For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. 11All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.* Hebrews 12:4-11

- a. Those stepping “out of the boat” get the rebuke (Matthew 14:25-33)
3. Potential to develop an offense
  - a. I’m embarrassed by Your dealings with me; it would have been safer if I hadn’t ventured out.
  - b. You’re not good to me.
  - c. I deserve a better deal.
  - d. Comparison: What about him/her? (John 21:15-23)

**G. Passing the Tests: Yeshua’s Admonition to Tarry...Until** (watch and pray) (Luke 24:44-49)

1. Worship Him
2. Be Honest with Him: with your questions, your hurt, your emotional state, etc.
  - a. Use the Psalms for vocabulary.
3. Confidently Proclaim Divine Declarations
  - a. For Yahweh is Good
    - i. You’re good to me
    - ii. Dayenu (it would have been sufficient...)
  - b. And His mercies endure forever
4. Cultivate Thanksgiving: “I have a thankful heart” What are you thankful for? Make a list.

**H. Stay (or Get In) Community**

1. These festivals are intended to be celebrated together
2. In community is safety and pain
  - a. Being alone and disconnected from a family of Believers has another type of pain
3. *As for the saints who are in the earth, They are the majestic ones in whom is all my delight.* Psalm 16:3
4. Continue to plant, weed, and water your spiritual garden with others (Galatians 6:7-9)
5. Encourage the saints (Galatians 6:10)

**I. Consistent Practical Application:** Over the years our faithful consistency brings blessings and increased revelation.

**II. BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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 Sampson, Robin & Pierce, Linda. *The Family Guide to the Biblical Holidays*.

