

The Awesome Mystery of “Sefirat Ha Omer”

Why does Yahweh command His people to “count the Omer” each day from Passover until Pentecost? What is pictured by this “Omer count-down”? Is there a spiritual lesson in “counting the omer” for the people of Yah, today? Have Yahweh's people been overlooking a vital piece of the puzzle -- a vital ingredient in “overcoming”? Here is new truth which the end-time churches have completely missed and neglected --
VITAL KEY to becoming a spiritual OVERCOMER!

William F. Dankenbring

In the book of Leviticus Yahweh commands His people: “And ye shall COUNT UNTO YOU from the morrow after the sabbath [the Passover holy day] . . . seven weeks [correct translation] shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh week shall ye NUMBER FIFTY DAYS” (Lev.23:15-16). In this passage God commands His people to “count” seven weeks, from the day after the Passover high holy day, and to “number” or count fifty days.

In Deuteronomy, God also commands: “Seven weeks shall you NUMBER unto thee: BEGIN TO NUMBER the seven weeks from such time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn” (Deut.16:9).

Notice! THREE TIMES God commands His people to “count” and to “number” the days between Passover and Pentecost -- the Feast of Weeks!

How many of God’s people have been faithfully carrying out this divine commandment?

The Jewish rabbis refer to this as “counting the omer.” The “omer” is the “wave sheaf” of barley which is cut down and offered to Almighty God at the beginning of barley harvest, the day following the Passover holy day, Nisan 15. It was to be waved by the high priest before God on Nisan 16, the day barley harvest was to begin. Nobody was to eat anything from the harvest until this act was done, in obedience to God's command. An “omer” consisted of about 5.1 pints of grain.

Alfred Edersheim in his book *The Temple:Its Ministry and Services*, tells us that the evening following Nisan 15th:

“The law had it, 'Ye shall bring a sheaf [literally the omer] of the firstfruits of the harvest unto the priest . . .' This Passover-sheaf, or rather omer,was to be accompanied by a burnt offering . . . Now this Passover-sheaf was reaped in public the evening before it was offered, and it was to witness this ceremony that the crowd gathered around 'the elders,' who took care that all was done according to traditionary ordinance” (p.203).

Edersheim continues:

“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 'Botheusians' and the Sadducees in the time of Christ . . . 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 (Ant. 3.248-249), of Philo (Op. ii, 294), and of Jewish tradition, 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 may fall” (*The Temple*, p.204).

Though one ephah, or ten omers, of barley was cut down, only one omer of flour, about 5.1 pints, was offered in the Temple, on the second day of Passover (Nisan 16).

But what does the “omer” represent, and why and how should we “count the omer”?

What is this mysterious command all about? Is this something which applies to true Christians and believers in Christ today? Or is this just something that concerned ancient Israel?

Counting the Omer

What does this mean? Many people neglect this command of God. They may not be aware of it. Or they may consider it one of the “least commandments” (Matt.5:19). But God commands His people to COUNT THE OMER during the fifty days, from Passover until Pentecost -- numbering off the days consecutively, as they arrive -- until the Feast of Shavuot, or Pentecost, arrives! He commands us to DO IT -- for a great and overriding purpose!

Why? What does the “Omer” represent? And why are we commanded to “count” it off for seven times seven or forty nine days, till Pentecost arrives, on the fiftieth day?

Believe it or not, hidden in the mystery behind the Omer count, is a vital KEY to spiritual OVERCOMING -- A HIDDEN KEY OF POWER to enable us to achieve and enter into the Kingdom of GOD!

Let's understand this vital truth!

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 wellbeloved 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).

How, then, does this relate to the “wave sheaf” offering which was performed the day after the first high holy day of Passover in the spring? Let's understand! In the book *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services*, by Alfred Edersheim, we read of the reaping of the wave sheaf, and its presentation. At the end of the 15th of Nisan, says Edersheim, just as it was growing dark,

“a noisy throng followed delegates of the Sanhedrin outside the city and across the brook Kidron. . . . [They] emerged amidst loud demonstrations, in a field across Kidron, which had been marked out for the purpose. They were to be engaged in a service most important to them. . . . The law had it, 'Ye shall bring a SHEAF [literally the omer] of the FIRSTFRUITS of your HARVEST unto the priest [who typified, or represented CHRIST]; and he shall wave the omer before Jehovah [God the Father], to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath shall ye wave it.' This Passover-sheaf, or rather omer, was to be accompanied by a burnt-offering, of a 'he lamb, without blemish, of the

first year,' with its appropriate meat- and drink- offering, and after it had been brought, but not till then, fresh barley might be used and sold in the land” (p.256-257)

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.5:20). 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 typified Christ, our “high priest” in heaven (Heb.7:24-28; 9:24; 10:10). 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!

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! 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?

But why, then, are we commanded to “COUNT THE OMER” or the wave sheaf for seven times seven days, from Passover until Pentecost? Ah, herein lies a mystery -- a fascinating new truth hidden from the gaze of virtually all of God's people until NOW!

A Lesson from Judaism

A key to understanding this puzzle is provided in the book *The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays*. Rabbi Greenburg writes:

“The holiday of Shavuot [Pentecost] . . . celebrates and renews the covenant of the Jewish people. In accordance with the classical rabbinical method, Shavuot is the time when Jews recreate the Revelation at Sinai and then reaccept the book of the covenant.

“The reenactment of Sinai starts forty-nine days before the event. . . [T]he countdown begins on the first night after the Exodus. The Omer is counted every night from one to forty-nine, by days and by weeks. According to Maimonides' interpretation, as soon as the Israelites were out of Egypt, they looked forward to receiving the Torah. Maimonides views Sefirat Ha'Omer (Counting of the Omer) as the outcome of the extraordinary anticipation that the Jews felt for the moment of Revelation. The Israelites COUNTED EVERY NIGHT much like a child who counts the days until his or her birthday.

“Earlier rabbinic midrash [teaching] interprets the weeks between Passover and Shavuot AS A PASSAGE PERIOD FROM SLAVERY TO FREEDOM. The Israelites came out of Egypt saturated with Egyptian values; the forty-nine days enabled them to 'REMOVE' THE IMPURITIES OF EGYPT . . .

“The Omer count goes on for seven times seven days. Seven is the number/symbol of PERFECTION in biblical language, as evidenced in such facts as the Sabbath is the seventh day, the slave goes free in the seventh year, and so on. The number forty-nine communicates arrival at the pinnacle of PERFECTION. DAY BY DAY the individual WORKS ON THE INNER SELF, STRIVING TO ATTAIN THE LEVEL OF PERFECTION WORTHY OF RECEIVING THE TORAH” (*The Jewish Way*, p.80-81).

Consider this: From Passover to Pentecost pictures the Christian life. It is to be a lifetime spent in overcoming. Each and every day is vital, and important. Each day brings us nearer to the coming of Christ, and the “wedding Feast” of the Lamb, which Pentecost itself pictures! God delivered “Israel” out of Egypt at Passover. He brought them through the Red Sea, and through the wilderness to the foot of Mount Sinai. And then God “married” Israel on Pentecost, at Mount Sinai, when He gave them His covenant and they accepted it (Exodus 24:1-11; Jer.3:14).

What does this picture? Passover pictures our repentance and acceptance of Christ as our Messiah and Saviour. Going through the Red Sea pictures our baptism (I Cor.10:1-3). These things that happened to Israel were examples for us! “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Rom.15:4). “Now these things were OUR EXAMPLES, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them . . . Neither let us commit fornication [sexual immorality], as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all of these things happened unto them for ENSAMPLES: and they are written for OUR admonition, upon whom the ends of the world [age] are come” (I Cor.10:6-11).

The Lesson of Counting Daily the Omer

Each day the Israelites are commanded to count the Omer, as they experienced their journey from captivity (Egypt) to freedom (Sinai). This daily count is associated with the experience of a toddler (the newly born Israelites, as it were) exploring and gaining understanding of his life's new environment (the wilderness) and the protective nature of his parent (God) who nurtures him, and provides structures and rules to safeguard him from evil.

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 -- Mount Zion.

Jewish psychologist Joel Ziff, in *Mirrors in Time: A Psycho-Spiritual Journey through the Jewish Year*, writes:

“The initial joy of liberation is fragile and impermanent, like the infatuation that marks the beginning of a romantic relationship. An infatuation become strained as differences and conflicts emerge. Pleasure that is complete and trustworthy comes only after a working through of those differences. . . .” (p.90-91).

Joel Ziff continues:

“This theme is also reflected in the other archetypal symbols associated with this time of year: the fetus must emerge through the constriction of the birth canal, the seed is covered by the dirt and the shell must rot before it can sprout, and the metal is melted in the fire of the furnace before it can be purified.

“Liberation [spiritual growth in Christ] for each of us is a complex, lengthy process. We might initially feel exhilarated, as our ancestors did when they left Egypt; however, at this stage, life can be an emotional roller coaster. The liberation is not complete. New challenges and new difficulties are encountered. We must work through these problems. We need to identify and change old habits of coping that no longer serve us before we can stabilize ourselves in the new environment. This is a painful process. We are forced to give up what seems to be our very Essence [our human nature, and old habits]. Only later do we discover that we have surrendered the outer shell” (*ibid.*, p.91).

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, 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!

We encounter problems we need to “work through.” We come upon “old habits” which must be rooted out and changed. We find out that life has its ups and downs, like a roller coaster. As we fight and struggle against our human nature, and the downward pulls of the flesh, we find it is a “painful process.” Nevertheless, we endure to the end, we keep on keeping on, till that final day

when victory shall be ours, and our triumph shall be complete -- when the “Omer” of our life's experiences has been “fully counted” and we reach that final day of “Pentecost,” at the end of a “jubilee” period of overcoming -- the day when Revelation is complete, and the Plan of God is finished, and there is “time no more” -- and the Messiah appears from heaven to inaugurate the Messianic Age, taking us to Himself as His spiritual Bride (Rev.19:7).

Fifty days after Passover, and the death of the Egyptians' firstborn, Israel met Yahweh at Mount Sinai. These fifty days are a spiritual TYPE! They typify the Christian escape from the kingdom of Evil and the power of SIN [Egypt], and picture our departing from “sin,” and captivity to “sin,” and being baptized, and journeying out of sin, and following Yah's truth, and His commandments, and a life of overcoming, and enduring to the end, till the great “Wedding Day” when Christ comes for His church, the “bride” (Rev.19:7).

The lesson of counting the “Omer” every day, for seven times seven weeks, or 49 days, till Pentecost, or Shavuot, “the Feast of Weeks,” pictures our daily fight to overcome -- our overcoming and putting sin out of our lives, till the very end! As Paul says, we are to “Walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph.5:16). As David wrote, “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Psalm 90:12).

In essence, the 50 days between Passover and Pentecost are a microcosmic “Jubilee” period, with Pentecost being the “50th day” (“Pentecost” means “Fiftieth Day”), or the anti-type of the “Jubilee Year” which is the 50th year after seven times seven weeks of years (Leviticus 25). Thus this 50-day period from Passover -- a type of our day of “conversion” -- to Pentecost -- picturing the great Wedding Day at the coming of Christ -- pictures the Christian life during which we must prepare, qualify, overcome sin, and root out every vestige of “spiritual Egypt” out of our character and lives!

During these fifty days, we ought to “count the Omer” -- each day -- and think about and meditate on OVERCOMING and preparing to meet Christ, and get ourselves READY, SPIRITUALLY, working on ourselves, striving for PERFECTION, so that we “may be accounted WORTHY . . . to stand before the Son of man” (Luke 21:36).

During this time period, we should be focusing our attention on overcoming, and growing in grace and knowledge -- praying and studying God's Word, as never before, intently, with concentrated effort and zealous endeavor. It is and ought to be a focused, concentrated time of distilled essence of Overcoming! As such, occurring at the beginning of God's sacred year, it is and ought to be the pattern or template of our overcoming sin and evil throughout all the rest or remainder of the year. It is sort of like a “nucleus of overcoming.” It sets the pattern for the entire year!

If we then fulfill the command of God to “count the Omer” daily, from Passover to Pentecost, this helps us keep in our mind our primary duty and the primary meaning of these “Days of Overcoming”! And it helps us to be in a right frame of mind of overcoming, throughout the remainder of the year! This duty and obligation helps to teach us to FOCUS!

Do you see? For years and even today, end-time churches of God have been totally neglecting this command to count the Omer daily. They simply have not been aware of it, and have not been doing it. No wonder, then, they have had such a miserable and terrible time when it comes to overcoming and putting sin out of their lives!

Many have thought that the “Days of Unleavened Bread” pictured putting sin out of our lives. However, this not precisely the case. The Days of Unleavened Bread picture coming out of Egypt -- or sin. That is, they begin with Passover (the seder meal eaten during the evening on the 15th of Nisan) and finish with Israel coming through the Red Sea (the final holy day of Unleavened Bread), which pictures Baptism (Rom.6:1-6). But Baptism is merely the beginning point of the Christian life! It wasn't all finished at your Baptism -- it had merely “just begun”!

From that point forward, as the Israelites journeyed through the DESERT, and suffered many trials and afflictions, their journey through the WILDERNESS pictures the Christian life of overcoming, and enduring, and preparing to meet God -- the Messiah -- at Mount Zion! The occasion of ancient Israel meeting God at Sinai, where the “Old Covenant” -- a marriage covenant -- was enacted, was an amazing type of our soon-coming marriage to CHRIST, when the NEW COVENANT MARRIAGE with Him will be completed, and the Church will become His spiritual BRIDE for all eternity!

The truth about the “counting of the Omer,” then, has been a sorely NEGLECTED, and ignored truth, and provides a MISSING KEY -- A POWERFUL SECRET TO OVERCOMING! Learning to “count the Omer” from Passover to Pentecost teaches us and instills in us the habit of obedience; it inculcates in us the self-discipline to REMEMBER to “count” every day and to keep IN MIND where we are going; it instills in us and helps to set within our minds and hearts our TRUE GOAL IN LIFE -- the Kingdom of GOD!

Many, by not realizing this truth, and by neglecting to count the Omer faithfully, have tended to “let down” in their own personal “overcoming,” and have also “lost sight of” the vision-Quest of the Kingdom. They have lost spiritual FOCUS. They have become entangled with the things of this life, discouragement, despair, seeing the overwhelming trials of the “wilderness” around them, and have taken their eyes OFF the true “end of the journey” -- the KINGDOM OF GOD!

The “counting of the Omer,” the countdown to the Kingdom, which it pictures, reminds us that there is EFFORT required for salvation. We cannot just “coast” into God's Kingdom! We must DO OUR PART! As Jesus Christ Himself declared: “Become ye therefore PERFECT [totally mature, spiritually], even as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matt.5:48). As He also stated: “But SEEK ye FIRST the kingdom of God, and his righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt.6:33).

During this time of the “Omer countdown,” each year, we must set ourselves daily to “count the Omer.” It becomes an exciting task and makes us look forward with sheer delight and joyful anticipation to Pentecost -- a type of the coming of Christ and the marriage supper. It makes the Kingdom of God and His purpose come alive in our minds, as a scintillating, sparkling, palpable REALITY which seems even closer at hand, and not so far off and misty and hazy.

As the apostle Paul wrote, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press on toward the MARK for the PRIZE of our HIGH CALLING of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil.3:13-14).

Counting the Omer helps to teach us to number our days, and to learn wisdom, and to set priorities, and it helps us to focus on “overcoming.” If we are willing to “get with God's program,” we will begin to make much better progress in overcoming trials, defeating sins and bad habits, and conquering obstacles. You might be amazed how God can help you make progress, and help you to grow in grace and knowledge (II Pet.3:18), if you put into practice this much ignored and overlooked commandment. Doing this also helps us to put our Christian trials and tests into proper focus and true perspective.

How To COUNT THE OMER

Let us study the command to count the Omer more closely. Says Lesli Koppelman Ross in *Celebrate! The Complete Jewish Holidays Handbook*:

“Toward the end of the second seder [i.e., beginning portion of Nisan 16] we begin anticipating Shavuot, the next holiday and in essence the conclusion of Pesakh [Passover], by counting the days until its arrival. It is customary to stand (based on the 'standing sheaves' of the Omer sacrifice [Deut.16:9]), recite the blessing, and say the count for the day:

Barukh Atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melekh Haolam, Asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav, vitzivanu al sefirat haomer.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe Who has sanctified us by thy commandments, and commanded us, concerning counting the Omer.

Hayom yom ekhad l'omer.

Today is the first day of the Omer.

“On each subsequent night of the sefirah (counting period), and always at night, when the Jewish day begins, we increase the count and state it in days and weeks. ('Today is the X day of the Omer, which equals X weeks and X days of the Omer'; Hayom X yamim, sheheim X shavuah u'X yamim la 'omer.') . . .” (p.30).

Remember, the command is to count BOTH the days and the weeks!

“And ye shall COUNT unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the SHEAF [Omer] of the wave offering, SEVEN SABBATHS [that is, WEEKS] SHALL BE COMPLETE: Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath [WEEK] shall ye NUMBER FIFTY DAYS . . .” (Lev.23:15-16).

“SEVEN WEEKS shalt thou NUMBER unto thee: begin to number the SEVEN WEEKS from such time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn. And thou shalt keep the FEAST OF WEEKS” (Deut.16:9-10).

In Leviticus 23:15 in the King James Version of the Bible is the incorrect wording “seven sabbaths shall be complete.” Why did Moses use the word “shabbatot” (usually translated “sabbaths”) in this passage, instead of “shavuot” (which means “weeks”), the word used in Deuteronomy 16:9? Why the difference? They are both obviously discussing the same thing -- seven weeks, because the expression in Deuteronomy 16:9 has to mean “weeks,” and cannot be translated “sabbaths.” Why then does God use a different word in Leviticus 23:15? There must be a hidden “lesson” here for us to dig out and understand! The truth is, this is a hidden reference to OVERCOMING! Each week pictures a process of overcoming sin, and seven weeks (perfection) pictures COMPLETE overcoming -- so that we are ready to meet God, and marry Christ, at His coming!

Let's get this, and get it good!

The Meaning of “Seven WEEKS”

Let's notice Leviticus 23:15 more carefully: The Hebrew wording, sheva' shabbatot t'miyot 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'miyot. Both shabbatot (“sabbaths”) and t'miyot (“complete”) are in the PLURAL forms, which makes t'miyot (“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'miyot 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'miyot (“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'miyot 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! 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).

In other words, by using the expression shabbatot instead of shavuot, God is showing us that these seven “weeks” picture more than just “weeks” of time as we think of them -- they are **SEVEN LEVELS OR STAGES OF OVERCOMING SIN!**

By using this expression, God is showing His people, Israel, **WHAT TO DO** with the seven weeks which lead up to Pentecost, in addition to “counting the Omer” each day, and harvesting the grain of the spring harvest every day. They are also to be working on overcoming their human nature and getting rid of every vestige or remnant of Egyptian impurities and animalistic selfish human nature still clinging to them!

There is therefore much more involved with this time, in addition to simply counting the Omer and harvesting grain. The sheva' shabbatot t'miymot pictures the “seven weeks of cycles” or “seven weeks of portions” or “seven weeks of levels” which were to be used by the Israelites to prepare to meet God on Mount Sinai when the Day of Pentecost (Shavuot, or Weeks) finally arrived.

Each one of the seven weeks corresponded to each one of the Seven Categories of Animal Nature, and the word shabbatot is used here instead of shavuot because God was emphasizing the importance of “resting” -- “desistance” -- from each of the Seven Categories of Animal Nature during the seven weeks culminating in God's Presence and the Giving of the Torah, in order for the Israelites to be in as best a condition of purification as possible, since no one “unclean” could stand in God's Presence when He arrived on Mount Sinai.

These Seven Weeks or “Seven Stages” prior to Pentecost are also descriptive of the Seven Levels of Spiritual Development each individual must go through in preparation to the coming of the Messiah! Each one of the seven weeks corresponded to new levels of overcoming SIN and growing in the qualities and characteristics of God's Holy Spirit!

The apostle Paul wrote about our human nature, which must be sacrificed, if we are to inherit the kingdom of God. He declared: “Knowing this, that our old man [human animal nature] is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. . . . Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness

unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Rom.6:9-13).

Seven Categories of SIN to be Overcome

Corresponding to the “seven weeks” or cycles of overcoming, leading from Passover to Pentecost, the apostle Paul lists the Seven Categories of Base Human Nature which we must conquer and subjugate and expunge from our lives. The Galatians were exhibiting the same traits of rebellion as had been exhibited many centuries earlier by the Israelites upon leaving Egypt. Paul listed the seven categories of human nature which fight against the Spirit of God. They are found in Galatians, chapter 5. Notice: “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these”:

- 1. Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness--** sexual sins which destructively affect one's spiritual relationship with God and other people.
- 2. Idolatry --** worshipping and obeying demonic gods and wicked evil spirits, following demonic derived doctrines (I Tim.4:1-2).
- 3. Witchcraft --** the use of black magic and other occult perversions, including attempting to control the minds and thoughts of other people and depriving them of the freedom of choice. Many churches which came out of the Worldwide Church of God, like the Worldwide Church of God itself, attempt to practice “mind control” over the members, and threaten any who think independent thoughts, or ask questions indicating their independence of mind, with immediate disfellowshipment -- a wicked scare tactic of the devil, if there ever was one!
- 4. Hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife --** these are related categories of emotional and mental attitudes of violence, and thoughts that lead to violence -- resulting in strife, destruction, and even murder. John wrote, “He that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes” (I John 2:11). He added, “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him” (I John 3:15).
- 5. Seditions, heresies --** sins against peace and unity among true believers causing division, strife and spiritual chaos -- destroying the flock, and inflicting damage upon the work of God. Sadly, we live in a time when although CHRIST is NOT divided, the remnants of the end-time church of God are bitterly divided, and seditions, heresies, and divisions are paramount! Paul asked the Corinthians, “Is Christ divided?” (I Cor.1:13). The answer? Of course not! But Paul also said to them, “For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren . . . that there are contentions among you” (I Cor.1:11). He added, “For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” (I Cor.3:3). He later plainly rebuked them, saying, “I hear that there be DIVISIONS among you” (I Cor.11:18). Seditions, treasons, false doctrines, heresies -- these all spring from the fount of heresy, the corrupted, fallen nature of man. See Jeremiah 17:9.
- 6. Envyings, murders --** sins of interfering destructively in the lives of other people; destructively interfering with another person's relationship with God. James warned: “But if ye have bitter

envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work” (James 3:14-16).

7. Drunkenness, revellings -- these are sins against a person's own self and his own personal spiritual relationship with God. They are signs of the lack of self-control, self-mastery, and commitment and devotion to serving God. No drunkard or drug addict will inherit the kingdom of God (I Cor.6:9-10). This also includes smoking cigarettes, cigars, pipes, chewing tobacco and dipping snuff! All human “addictions” are contrary to God's purpose for our lives.

The apostle John tells us there are actually three categories of temptation we must overcome. He declares: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (I John 2:15-16). We must concentrate on overcoming the pulls of the flesh, the pulls of the eyes, and human pride, ego, vanity and arrogance. Paul breaks these basic three categories down into seven .

Notice! These seven categories of human nature must be conquered and overcome. This is why the word shabbatot is used in Leviticus 23:15 instead of shavuot -- the usual word for “weeks.” God was emphasizing the importance of **OVERCOMING** -- and becoming free from sin and the evil of human nature -- our reaching a level of “rest,” as we overcome each one of these categories of **SIN**, these human vices, and become loosened from their bonds, and **FREE** from their chains, as we struggle against them, and overcome them during the “seven weeks” that lead up to Pentecost -- a type of our meeting God and entering His **KINGDOM!**

We must “rest” -- come to the point of having “overcome” each of the Seven Categories of Animal Human Nature -- in preparing to meet Christ at His coming! Even as ancient Israel had to purify themselves, and prepare to meet with God (Exodus 19:10-15), since no one “unclean” could stand in God's Presence when He arrived on Mount Sinai, even so **WE** must **PREPARE OURSELVES** to become the **BRIDE** of Christ, whom He will marry, at His **Second Coming!**

Therefore, the Seven Weeks or “Seven Stages” prior to Pentecost are also descriptive of the Seven Levels of Spiritual Development each one of us as individuals must go through in preparation to the coming of the Messiah!

Overcoming our carnal human nature and the world around us, is not easy. It requires persistent, constant, energetic effort and perseverance.

Developing the SEVEN Characteristics of God's Spirit

Putting away the “negative” aspects of the flesh, and human nature, however, is only half the “spiritual equation” pictured by “counting the Omer.” Each step away from spiritual Egypt and Babylon is one positive step **CLOSER** to perfection, completion, and the Kingdom of God!

Therefore, as we put away the fleshly desires, we are to grow in the heavenly attributes of God and His Spirit! The truth is, we are called to a life of “**OVERCOMING.**” Contrary to the ideas of

many false teachers, we are not already “saved” once we accept Christ. It was not all “finished” at the cross. It all just began at the cross -- that was just the start of God's Plan and program for us! Now we must OVERCOME! (Rev.21:6). We must endure to the END! (Matt.24:13). We must put on the WHOLE armor of God (Eph.6:10-17).

How shall we do this? How shall we develop the very “mind of Christ” (Phil.2:5)? How shall we “put on the NEW MAN, which after God [i.e., according to God's character likeness] is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph.4:24)? How shall we “put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh” (Rom.13:14)?

The counting of the Omer provides a vital key.

The Word of God reveals there are seven attributes or characteristics of God's Holy Spirit. We read in the book of Zechariah of “one stone” with “seven eyes” (Zech.3:9). The “stone” refers to the Messiah, the “stone” made without hands (Dan.2:45; see also I Cor.10:4). The seven eyes of the stone are the manifestations of God's Holy Spirit, given through the Messiah. This is also described as a seven-lamp menorah or “candlestick” (Zech.4:2). The seven lamps provide complete illumination, burning with the brightness of “oil” -- a type of God's Holy Spirit, the Ruach Ha Kodesh. Thus, after describing these things, God says, “Not by might, nor by power, but BY MY SPIRIT, saith the LORD [Yahveh] of hosts” (Zech.4:6).

These seven “lamps” we are told “are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth” (Zech.4:10). They represent God's Holy Spirit! In the book of Revelation, we are told, “And unto the angel of the church of Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God . . .” God has only ONE Ruach Ha Kodesh -- therefore this is a description of the seven manifestations or facets of the one HOLY SPIRIT of God!

Now let's really understand this -- and apply this powerful, energizing truth in our own daily lives!

The Seven SEFIROT of God

In the Jewish Prayerbook entitled *Siddur Tehillat Hashem*, we read a fascinating story about Elijah -- an ancient tradition of the Jews which is ascribed to the prophet Elijah, one of the most powerful prophets of all time. In it, there are ten sefirot mentioned -- 7 plus 3. The portion declares:

“Elijah opened [his discourse] and said: Master of the worlds, You are One but not in the numerical sense. You are exalted above all the exalted ones, hidden from all the hidden ones; no thought can grasp You at all. You are He who has brought forth ten 'garments,' and we call them ten sefirot, through which to direct hidden worlds which are not revealed and revealed worlds; and through them You conceal Yourself from man. You are He who binds them together and unites them . . . These ten sefirot proceed according to their order. . . You are He who directs them, but there is no one who directs You -- neither above, nor below, nor from any side. You have made garments for them, from which souls [life] issue forth to man. You have made for them a number of bodies which

are called 'bodies' in comparison with the garments which cover them; and they are described [anthropomorphically] in the following manner . . .”

At this point, Elijah enumerates the ten “sefirot” of God's character, revealed to man, so that we may better understand and grasp His Essence -- His essential “Being”:

“CHESED (kindness) -- the right arm; GEVURAH (severity, power) -- the left arm; TIFERET (beauty) -- the torso; NETZACH (eternity, victory) and HOD (splendor) -- the two thighs; YESOD (foundation) -- the end of the torso, the sign of the Holy Covenant; MALCHUT (kingship) -- the mouth, which we call the Oral Torah; CHOCHMAH (wisdom) -- the brain, that is, the thought within; BINAH (understanding) -- the heart, by means of which the heart understands; and concerning the latter two [sefirot] it is written, 'The secrets belong to the Lord our God'; supernal KETER (crown) is the crown of kingship, concerning which it is said, 'He declares the end from the beginning' . . . Within them is the Name [whose numerical value is] forty-five (spelled thus: a'h uwaw ah dwy) which is the path of azilut (emanation); and the watering of the Tree [of the sefirot] with its arms and branches just as water irrigates a tree and it grows by that irrigation.”

Elijah continues:

“Master of the worlds, You are the cause of causes and producer of effects, who waters the Tree through that fountain; and that fountain is as the soul to the body, which is the life of the body. In You, however, there is no similitude or likeness to anything within or without. You have created heaven and earth and brought forth from them the sun, the moon, the stars, and the planets, and on earth -- the trees, the green herbage, the Garden of Eden, the grasses, the beasts, the cattle, the fowl, the fish, and mankind; in order to make known through them the Supernal Realms, how the higher and lower worlds are conducted, and how the higher worlds may be known from the lower. However, there is none who can know You at all. Without You there is no unity in the higher or lower realms, and You are known as the Cause of all and the Master of all. . . . [You clothed Yourself in the sefirot] only to make known to mankind Your power and strength to show them how the world is conducted through law and mercy -- for there is righteousness and justice which are dispensed according to the deeds of man. Law is GEVURAH (severity, power); justice is the middle column; righteousness is the holy MALCHUT (kingship); the scales of righteousness are the two supports of truth; hin (measure) of righteousness is the sign of the Holy Covenant. All these are to show how the world is conducted, but not that You possess a knowable righteousness -- which is law, nor a knowable justice -- which is mercy, nor any of these attributes at all. Blessed is God forever. Amen, Amen” (*Siddur Tehillat Hashem*, p.125-126).

It is a remarkable fact that there are “seven weeks” that we count the Omer. And there are SEVEN facets or emanations of God's Spirit! The word for “weeks” is shavua (see Deut.16:9). But in Leviticus 23:15, God inspired Moses to use the word for “sabbaths” which is shabbatot. The word shabbat in Hebrew literally means “a cessation from labor,” “a rest.”

But as we are to “count the Omer,” then, seven times we come to a shabbat, that is, a “cessation from labor,” meaning we have FULFILLED THAT “WEEK” of counting -- that week of “overcoming.”

Why “seven” such periods in the Omer count? “Seven,” of course, is the number of COMPLETION, of PERFECTION! It is God's number -- the number of complete perfection and fulfillment. How do these “seven” then, relate to the process of “counting the Omer”? We count each week, and then the number of days, remember. This is significant!

Joel Ziff, in *Mirrors in Time*, points out that there is tremendous meaning behind this observance. He declares:

“According to Shneur Zalman [early 19th-century rabbi and leader of Chabad hasidism], each day of the barley offering has a unique spiritual quality paralleling the learning of the Israelites day-by-day on their journey from Egypt to Mount Sinai. Although God's Essence is unified, one can differentiate various types of SPIRITUAL ENERGY, each with unique and separate qualities. In the kabbalistic system, God's Presence is experienced through archetypal energies known as the Sefirot. There are ten Sefirot: Wisdom (Chochma), Understanding (Binah), Knowledge (Da'at), Loving-kindness (Chesed), Containing Strength (Gevurah), Mercifulness/Beauty (Tiferet), Power/Victory (Netzach), Presence/Glory (Hod), Energy/Foundation (Yesod), and Manifestation/Kingdom (Malchut). . . The first three Sefirot cannot be experienced” (p.94).

The last seven of these Sefirot, or Aspects of God's Presence, or God's Essence -- that is, the Seven aspects of God's Holy Spirit, are manifestations of the Divine Nature of God. The first three are internal aspects of the Divine Nature -- qualities God has and we ought to seek, with all our being -- that is, “Wisdom,” “Understanding,” and “Knowledge.”

Notice how Solomon put this vital key in the book of Proverbs. He wrote, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Prov.1:7). He added, “Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding . . . Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding” (Prov.2:3-6).

Again, Solomon exhorted us, “Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting, get understanding” (Prov.4:5-7).

Knowledge represents the acquisition of factual data, amassing facts and statistics and making observations. Understanding builds upon knowledge, for it is the grasping of the facts, the essential understanding of the data and its meaning and relevance, awareness of the interrelationships between the data, or the bits of knowledge, seeing how they all fit together in the BIG PICTURE. But wisdom is the crown of all three of these attributes: Wisdom is the process and ability of taking this knowledge and understanding, and PUTTING IT TO USE -- the practical application of knowledge and understanding -- putting it to WORK in our lives!

With these three attributes as a basis, therefore, we can now examine the SEVEN SEFIROT of God -- also called in Scripture “those seven: they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth” (Zech.4:10).

These are in reality the true attributes of the Messiah -- the Lamb of God. We read in the book of Revelation: “And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having SEVEN HORNS [complete power and authority] and SEVEN EYES, which are the SEVEN SPIRITS OF GOD sent forth into all the earth” (Rev.4:6).

These seven “spirits” can refer to seven mighty angels, under the authority of the Lamb of God, who serve Him throughout the earth. These can also represent the same as the “seven angels” responsible for the seven churches of God (the seven branches of His true Church). As we read: “The seven stars are the ANGELS of the seven churches” (Rev.1:20).

However, since the “seven eyes” are the “seven Spirits” of God, this phrase can also be a reference to SEVEN (COMPLETE) FACETS of the Holy Spirit -- that is, SEVEN ATTRIBUTES OF DIVINE SPIRITUAL CHARACTER -- the character of God Himself.

These attributes identify YHVH -- Yahveh -- as the only true God; they are manifestations of His Holy Spirit. These “seven” or complete aspects of God reveal the awesome facets of His divine character, in a way that we human beings can begin to comprehend it. They are like the seven facets of an incredible, magnificent Diamond, shining, sparkling, dazzling in beauty. They comprise the revealed essence of God's Character -- the very character we as His children are to be STRIVING to develop, and create, into our very beings!

The SEVEN SEFIROT of God

Joel Ziff writes in his book *Mirrors in Time*:

“Shneur Zalman connects the barley offering to the Sefirot by referring to Ezekiel's vision, which is included in the reading from the Prophets on Shavuot. In this vision, the prophet experiences God's Presence with the appearance of a human figure riding on a chariot. On the sides of the chariot are four faces: a lion, an ox, an eagle, and a human

Since barley is the grain eaten traditionally by animals, the offering symbolizes nourishment of the 'animals' of the chariot, the 'animal soul' that is the material part of the self. Each of the figures symbolize one of the Sefirot. The face of the lion symbolizes Chesed; the face of the ox represents Gevurah; the eagle symbolizes Tiferet.

“During the forty-nine days of counting, we focus each week on one of the seven lower Sefirot. Each day, we focus on a particular aspect of that Sefira. Each of the seven Sefirot incorporates within itself an aspect of all the others. We can therefore meditate on the quality of Chesed in Chesed, Tiferet in Chesed, and so forth. . . .

“In the same way as a child comes to understand the abstract concept of number only through repeated counting of actual objects, we make sense of the abstract, archetypal spiritual energies in terms of our daily experience. Theoretical concepts can be understood only when they are grounded in real life. Step-by-step, we build understanding. Spirit that is, by definition, incomprehensible and infinite becomes understandable by clarifying the various different parts. Each day, by counting, we consider ONE QUALITY OF SPIRIT, separating and differentiating into comprehensible pieces. Each day, we focus on a different ASPECT OF GOD'S ESSENCE and clarify how to make a personal connection to that quality” (p.95).

You should carefully study and re-read the previous paragraphs. They contain a mountain of vital information on how we, as human beings, can develop step-by-step the very qualities of the Spirit Essence of Almighty GOD!

Each day, as we count the Omer, we should strive to integrate and internalize the qualities of God Himself in our own nature and character. In this way we become more and more like our Father and Jesus Christ in character. We become more and more “partakers of the divine nature” (II Pet.1:4). The apostle Paul wrote, “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be FORMED in you” (Gal.4:19).

Paul also writes, “That ye put off concerning the former conduct the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be RENEWED in the SPIRIT of your MIND; and that ye put on the NEW MAN, which after God [in God's likeness of character] is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph.4:22-24).

This is a process which takes time. It requires change, suffering, pain, and endurance. It is not easy, like falling off a log into a stream. It requires strenuous, rugged effort -- like climbing a mountain, hiking up steep switch-backs, to the crest of a rugged peak. It requires sheer exertion and constant expenditure of energy to make forward progress.

Joel Ziff writes of this experience of change and growth to true maturity, in comparison with the Israelites' journey through the wilderness. He asserts:

“The Israelites did not go directly from Egypt to the revelation of God's Presence on Mount Sinai. They journey for forty-nine days. They wonder how they will sustain themselves. They need to understand and make sense of the new realities of life in different circumstances. They require time to interact with the world to achieve this understanding.

“The process of cognitive development occurs not only in childhood. As we struggle with new situations, we recapitulate the developmental process. Encountering a changed environment, we find ourselves disoriented and confused, lost in the desert. We do not know how to nourish ourselves. We do not quite know where we are going or how to get there. We may long to return to our old environment, to a world that is familiar. We find mentors and guides for ourselves. We learn through a process of TRIAL AND ERROR,

STEP-BY-STEP. In time, we may experience moments of revelation, intuitive leaps in which our goals and methods for achieving those goals become clear” (p.98).

This process of spiritual growth and development is not one of steady regular progress, like a car operating under “cruise control.” Not at all. It is more like a jerky, stop-and-go, rough ride, with fits and starts, progress for a while, then a rough patch is hit, or a wash-out on the road, and a “detour” must be navigated past the obstacle. Nevertheless, we continue onward, in faith, believing God's promises and His Word. Says Joel Ziff:

“The breath of life that emerges from the mouth of God differentiates into the various spiritual energies, the Sefirot that are associated with the seven weeks of counting. Breath cannot be seen or heard; however, differentiated into vowels, it can be perceived. God's Essence is beyond our perception, but the spiritual energies can be manifest and revealed. In the same way, we begin to differentiate the confusing, chaotic world around us into separate categories and objects” (p.99).

A New Look at the Spirit of God

There is much wisdom in the words we have read. To really grasp the essential Sefirot (Aspects) of the Spirit of God, it is most helpful to allow the Word of God to delineate and differentiate these qualities for us. The seven (or nine) aspects or special qualities of the Spirit of God are referred to as the “FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT,” in the words of the apostle Paul. Paul wrote to the brethren in Galatia, these plain 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 goodness, which go together, and meekness and self-control (temperance), then we have seven combinations of Divine Attributes -- the Seven Sefirot (Manifestations) of God! Let us compare the manifestations of the seven sefirot of God with the manifestations or “fruits” of the Holy Spirit, to obtain a much more developed “picture” of the character of our Heavenly Father!

Applying the Principles

Now let us understand! We must apply these lessons to our own lives, in striving to build the character of God by working on building into our character the very attributes (“fruits”) of God's Holy Spirit! This is something we must DO -- and FOCUS upon! It will not happen “automatically.” You cannot set your life on “AUTO-PILOT” and expect to arrive at your spiritual destination. It behooves us to take control of our lives, and the throttle, and fly as if we were at any moment going to be ambushed by agents of evil. We must avoid storms as best we can, avoid the lightning, tornadoes which may come up in our flight path, avoid anti-aircraft fire,

and enemy rockets, missiles, and aircraft. Coasting on “auto-pilot” would be a sure-fire short-cut to disaster and a crash-landing.

Joel Ziff writes again about the Passover to Shavuot, Counting-the-Omer principle:

“The days from Pesach to Shavuot, Sefirat Ha'Omer, serve as a bridge from the experience of redemption to the experience of revelation. We are pulled from slavery by miracles, by powers outside of ourselves. Changes in our lives -- both positive and negative -- pull us out of our habits, out of our constrictions. It may be a change in work life, relationships, health, a new stage in the life cycle. Then we begin to make sense, to try to understand what this means and how to deal with it.”

We may face changes in our church relationships, as well. For many, perhaps their old church affiliation which they had much confidence in, began to erode, and change, and to embrace teachings and doctrines contrary to Scripture. These changes can become very upsetting, and detrimental -- depressing and discouraging. Some become angry, and throw the “book” away, and vow never to have anything to do with “religion” ever again! Others gravitate to this group or that one, depending on where they feel most “comfortable.” Many slip back into a state of somnolent lethargy and spiritual ennui -- boredom and listlessness. The “desert, wilderness wandering” experience for such people becomes lethal. They get off track, lose sight of the goal, and plunge over a cliff or become separated from those who are continuing on toward their destination across the desert!

What happens to such people? For many, maybe they never learned to “count the Omer.” Therefore, they became “easy pickings” for false Apostles and their flock of vultures and scavengers, waiting with eyes peeled to prey on the members of the flock that stray into danger, and wander off, who become disoriented and confused. If they had learned the TRUTH about “overcoming,” the lesson taught by “counting the Omer” -- spiritual FOCUS -- then they might have avoided the dangers and perils.

How, then, can we develop the seven facets of God's perfect, righteous, character?

Joel Ziff goes on to explain:

“During the days of counting, we use the archetypal images of the Sefirot as guides. Our job is Tikkun -- repair -- of the attributes. One of the qualities of an archetype is that it is ambiguous, can be defined in many different ways. Through meditation, contemplation, and analysis, we clarify the ways in which we might interpret each of the Sefirot negatively in ways which are not helpful and positively in ways that help us with our struggles.

“Each week is devoted to one of the seven Sefirot. For example, during the first week, the Sefira of Chesed [loving-kindness] is the focus. One might meditate on a variety of topics: What are my experiences of unconditional love? What are my definitions and beliefs about love? How have my life experiences affected my understanding and beliefs? What can I learn from the experiences of others about love?

“Not only does each week have a unique focus; each day within the week also has a particular significance. Each of the Sefirot contain aspects of the others. For example, the first week is associated with the Sefira of Chesed. The days of the week are linked to the various Sefirot subsumed in Chesed: Chesed in Chesed, Gevurah in Chesed, Tiferet in Chesed, Netzach in Chesed, Hod in Chesed, Yesod in Chesed, and Malchut in Chesed” (p.103-104).

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, Mercy, Compassion. 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” (Ziff, 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 at 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 peacemaker. Peace involves and includes the quality of “mercifulness,” and it is “beautiful” in God's sight.

Netzach -- Victory, Triumph, Eternity. 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. This quality involves a related

character attribute -- longsuffering, perseverance, and patience -- tenacity and dogged determination! Moses certainly manifested these qualities, as he led the grumbling, complaining, cantankerous Israelites out of bondage in Egypt.

Longsuffering is the fourth fruit of the Spirit of God. Certainly, this characteristic was well-illustrated in the life of Moses. Despite his trials and tests, tribulations and suffering, Moses remained faithful to God and worshipped Him through it all. His long-suffering and patience and endurance in well-doing, over forty long years in the wilderness, showed the kind of metal he was made of. Moses chose “rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward” (Heb.11:25-26).

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).

Hod -- Glory, Splendor. 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. He was also noted for “unity.” 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).

Gentleness and goodness are two of the fruits of the Spirit of God which seem to fit together. These also are defining characteristics of Aaron. And David writes of the quality of gentleness, speaking of God Himself, “Thy gentleness hath made me great” (Psalm 18:35).

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).

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.3:10). The apostle Peter adds, “For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and DO GOOD; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil” (I Pet.3:10-12).

Yesod -- Foundation, foundational strength. This quality is the integration of both netzach and hod, and is the balance between power and presence. It is the quality of a Master Builder, who always lays a perfect, sound, solid foundation -- building on “bedrock” (compare Matthew 7:23-27). This characteristic requires building with an accurate measure, a truthful plumbline, and careful attention to details. How careful are you to lay a straight foundation, to measure accurately, to build with precision?

Joseph, the son of Jacob, became the prime minister of Egypt, and virtual ruler of the world, after being enslaved as a teenager, and imprisoned 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.

Yesod refers to our “foundation.” And what is our spiritual “foundation”? It is the quality of faith. As Paul wrote, “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (II Cor.5:7). Faith is the bedrock which must undergird everything else! Paul also wrote, “Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him” (Heb.10:38).

Paul also declared, “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb.11:6). And Peter wrote that we are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time . . . Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls” (I Pet.1:5-9).

The “foundation” of salvation and overcoming is “faith.” Without it, we cannot succeed. With it, we cannot fail!

Malchut -- Kingship, Kingdom, Manifestation. 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.

As the king of Israel, after God's own heart (Acts 14:22), David knew the key to kingship, government, and true authority. David told Solomon, “The Spirit of the LORD [Yahveh] spake

by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God” (II Samuel 23:2-3).

To be a just king, and ruler, we must exercise the remaining two attributes of the Holy Spirit -- meekness, and self control (Gal.5:23). A godly king or ruler must be humble, meek, and not arrogant or proud. He must possess a humbleness of spirit and mind, and exercise power with restraint and balance, exercising self mastery and self control in all things.

David was a man who was meek, and waited on God for deliverance, rather than taking matters into his own hands. He learned to control himself, his emotions and desires, and to trust God and depend on Him, rather than do the “expedient” thing, and take action himself to bring about the Kingdom of God. He waited patiently, until God's anointed king, Saul, was killed in battle. David would not attack or slay Saul himself, but rather allowed him to live on several occasions when he could have killed him. But David was loyal to the office of the king; and he would not take matters into his own hands, but trusted God and waited for Him to act. And his meekness and humility was rewarded greatly!

Moses was a mighty man of God, but the meekest man on the earth (Numbers 12:3). David had a very low opinion of himself. He said to God, “Who am I, O Lord GOD [Yahveh]? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?” (II Samuel 7:18). The prophet Micah wrote, “What doth the LORD [Yahveh] require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Micah 6:8). God Himself says, “But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word?” (Isa.66:3). James declared, “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (James 4:6).

And what about self control? Many a good man has stumbled and been destroyed by lack of self control. Can you control your own tongue? James wrote, “Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter [margin, wood] a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: So is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell [Gehenna] . . . But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (James 3:5-8). How well are you doing in controlling your tongue?

Can you control your anger? Solomon declared, “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city” (Proverbs 16:32). Paul wrote, 'Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath” (Eph.4:26). Do you harbor grudges? Do you allow a spirit of anger to remain in your mind and heart for long periods of time? A “king” in God's kingdom must be able to control his anger, lest he cause needless great destruction and damage. Thus this final “fruit” of God's Spirit is very important -- a key to godly kingship and government!

Paul also warned: “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled” (Hebrews 12:15). No one with a bitter, hostile, angry attitude will enter God's Kingdom! We must be careful to keep our minds and hearts free from these noxious “weeds” and spiritual pollutants!

Paul fought earnestly to keep his own feelings, emotions, and human nature under control. He asserted, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (I Cor.9:27).

Paul spoke of our spiritual battle to gain the mastery of our human impulses, and the yetser ha ra - the impulse to do evil. He wrote, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;) Casting down imaginations [margin, "reasonings"], and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity EVERY THOUGHT to the obedience of Christ . . ." (II Cor.10:3-5).

These powerful Seven Sefirot of God -- and these SEVEN manifestations of the Holy Spirit -- are mighty vehicles to spiritual growth and becoming God-like. 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.

7 X 7 -- The 49 Steps to Salvation

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? We should strive to grow daily, constantly, in these attributes:

chesed loving kindness love gevurah contained strength joy tefirat beauty peace netzach victory, eternity longsuffering (patience) hod splendor, glory gentleness and goodness yesod foundation faith malkut kingship meekness and 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!

A Final Reason to Count the Omer

In Leviticus 23:13, the Hebrew word for “count” is “safar.” There are several different, but accurate, meanings for “safar.” It is only Judaism which provides the internal history necessary to discover which meaning is intended to be understood in the Biblical text. Although “safar” can mean to count up the total in order to arrive at a sum, it can also just as easily and accurately mean to inscribe by making a mark, to enumerate, or to celebrate.

Judaism teaches that the intended meaning of “safar” in Leviticus 23:15 is “to ritually inscribe by celebrating, i.e., to inscribe to ritual celebration.” Jewish author and historian Chaim Raphael, in his newly published book entitled *Festival Days: A History of Jewish Celebrations* (c.1990, Grove Weidenfeld: New York), provides us with the key to rightly understanding the use of the word “safar” in Leviticus 23:15. He informs us that:

“In the Jewish practice, an Omer (sheaf) of the new barley was offered to the Temple every day after Passover to be 'waved' ceremonially by the priest. The Omer began to be counted daily from the second day of Passover for seven weeks, at which point the festival of Shavuot ('weeks') was celebrated. 'Counting the Omer' until the seven weeks were concluded became a recognizable stretch of Jewish life with its own traditions . . .” (p.69).

This same author adds:

“The seven-week period from Passover to Shavuot had a ritual in which a sheaf of grain from the new harvest was offered to the priest every day. Every offering was COUNTED OFF DAILY until the forty-ninth day, after which Shavuot was celebrated” (p.71).

It should be clear that this ritual of “counting” was performed EVERY YEAR, as a special adjunct to the Passover celebration, at which the spring harvest BEGAN, and continued for forty nine days, until Pentecost, when the spring harvest was COMPLETED! Since the spring harvest is a TYPE of the “firstfruits” of God's creation -- true converted people of God, from the time of

the patriarchs down to true Christians -- the period of time from Passover to Pentecost represents the TIME OF GOD'S SPIRITUAL SPRING HARVEST -- with Christ Jesus, our Passover, being Himself the "the firstfruit" [the original Greek is in the singular] from the dead unto God (I Cor.15:20), "Christ the firstfruit" (verse 23); "afterward they that are Christ's AT HIS COMING" (same verse).

The apostle James wrote, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of FIRSTFRUITS of his creatures" (James 1:18).

The vast, overwhelming majority of Christians do not even begin to realize or recognize this amazing, wonderful TRUTH! Yet the Jewish people have had an inkling of it. We read in the book *Living Judaism: The Complete Guide to Jewish Belief, Practice and Tradition*:

"The sages and the mystics taught that Shavuot is the moment of eternal commitment -- - the MARRIAGE -- between God and the Jewish People. On Pesach [Passover] God and the people pledge themselves to each other. The sephirah [counting] is the period of the COURTSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT, the time when trust and love grow deeper and stronger. Safirat HaOmer thus becomes not just a time for counting toward an agricultural harvest, but a time of heartfelt emotion and excited anticipation, as the relationship between God and the Jewish People moves swiftly forward toward consum- mation toward the WEDDING at Sinai -- the time when God will give His WEDDING GIFT of Torah. Safirat HaOmer is now a time not only to count the days, but to MAKE THE DAYS COUNT, IN PREPARATION FOR THE TRANSCENDENT MOMENT OF REVELATION" (*Living Judaism*, p.177)..

At Christ's coming, He will MARRY the Church, the "firstfruits" (Rev.19:6-9), just as He "married" Israel when He came down to Mount Sinai on that first Pentecost, or Feast of Weeks (Exodus 19-20; 24:9-11). Thus the daily "counting of the Omer" is a ritual which REFLECTS THE SPIRITUAL HARVEST OF TRUE CHRISTIANS and all the holy men and women of old who will be in the FIRST RESURRECTION, and who will "MARRY" Christ at His coming!

The daily "counting of the Omer," then, beginning with the first Omer, continues for forty nine days, until Pentecost -- and spiritually symbolizes the FIRSTFRUITS OF THE CHURCH OF GOD which have been "harvested" throughout the centuries and millennia leading up to the great day of CHRIST'S COMING, when Christ will COMPLETE THE HARVEST OF FIRSTFRUITS, and then MARRY HIS BRIDE!

What a wonderful truth! There is far more involved in "counting the Omer" than most of us have ever realized! In the words of Pogo, "We have met the Omer, and it is US!"

The Seven Churches of Revelation

It is also interesting to note that the "50 days" from Passover till Pentecost also represent a "Jubilee" period of days. A Jubilee "cycle" of years is 50 years, according to the Bible. God says, "You shall count off seven weeks of YEARS -- seven times seven years -- so that the period of seven weeks of years gives you a total of forty-nine years. Then you shall sound the horn loud; in

the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month -- the Day of Atonement -- you shall have the horn sounded throughout your land and you shall HALLOW the fiftieth year. You shall proclaim release ["liberty"] throughout the land for all its inhabitants. It shall be a JUBILEE for you" (Lev.25:8-10, Tanakh).

But in the case of Pentecost, or the Feast of Shavuot ("Weeks"), God says, "You shall count off seven WEEKS" (Deut.16:9). The book of Leviticus has it, "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 -- fifty days" (Lev.23:15-16, Tanakh). Notice the fascinating similarity. Countdown to Pentecost is a "daily" TYPE of the countdown to the JUBILEE YEAR! On the Jubilee year Christ the Messiah will return to earth, and bring LIBERTY to its inhabitants, and marry His bride, the Church of God. On the jubilee of Pentecost, we celebrate the completion of the spring harvest, when Christ will marry His bride, the Church! So Pentecost typifies the return of Christ -- the true Jubilee! We are to look forward expectantly to the feast of Pentecost, just as we look forward to the coming of the Messiah, to bring His government, His Kingdom, and His laws (Isa.2:1-4; Micah 4:1-4).

Interestingly, by "counting off" forty nine weeks, we count seven times seven weeks, symbolizing the TIME from the Passover (death and resurrection of Christ) till His Second Coming -- a time which spans the entire CHURCH AGE. The prophecy of Revelation points out that during this time span there are seven successive CHURCH ERAS -- the seven successive churches of Revelation, beginning with Ephesus, the apostolic age, and ending up with Laodicea, the present "End-time" degenerate and apostate final church era (Rev.2-3).

Thus, applying this prophecy to the seven times seven "days" between Passover and Pentecost -- that is, between Christ's first coming and His Second Coming! -- we find that each of the seven churches of Revelation is given ONE SYMBOLIC WEEK to do its "work" -- its "heyday" of existence, if you will. The dominant Church of the first century was the apostolic church, called "Ephesus" -- the capital of the Roman province of Asia. The dominant Church during the "End Time" is that of Laodicea -- a city famed for its wool, physical riches and wealth, its medical industry, and for its "lukewarm" water supply.

As we count the "Omer," therefore, each successive week it would be good to reflect on the history of God's Church down through the ages. The first week, Ephesus; the second week, Smyrna; the third week, Pergamos; the fourth week, Thyatira; the fifth week, Sardis; the sixth week, Philadelphia; and the seventh week, Laodicea. As we meditate on each of the churches, we should also reflect on their particular problems -- and the reproof and correction Christ gives to each one.

As we near the end of the countdown, we should have rising expectations and increasing joy as we look forward to and relish and eagerly anticipate the FINAL DAY OF JUBILEE, ending all our trials and tests -- the final PENTECOST when Christ Jesus the Messiah will return, the saints will be resurrected and made immortal, and God's Spirit will be poured out upon all nations, and the knowledge of the Lord will begin to fill the earth (Rev.11:15-17; I Thess.4:16-17; Isa.11:9).

The Coming "Great Pentecost"

It was on the Day of Pentecost that God first sent His Spirit upon men. After Jesus was raised from the dead, He appeared to His disciples for forty days (Acts 1:3). Jesus was slain Wednesday, buried before sunset, was in the grave 3 days and 3 nights (Matt.12:40), and arose from the dead Sabbath afternoon. Early the next morning, when they visited the tomb, Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (Matt.28: 1-9).

The Omer was offered that Friday, the day after the Feast Day, on Nisan 16. Sabbath was, therefore, day two of the Omer countdown. Jesus first appeared to His disciples after the Sabbath, on the first day of the week, which was Day 3 of the Omer count. He appeared to them for an additional 37 days, or 40 days in all (Acts 1:3). Forty days from the day He first appeared to them, Nisan 18, would have been Iyar 27 (13 days in Nisan, plus 27 days in Iyar, which equals 40 days). He ascended to heaven on Iyar 27, which was day 42 of the Omer Count. Then Jesus, being with His disciples, “gave them this command: 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but WAIT for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be BAPTIZED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT’” (Acts 1:4-5). This was the 42nd day of the Omer count; they still had eight days to go till Pentecost.

Jesus then was in heaven for seven days, which was the time required for Him to wait until He could be consecrated by the Father as our High Priest. We know this because there was a seven day “preparation period” -- called “the days of consecration” (see Leviticus 8:33) -- which had to be performed, before a high priest could be annointed and placed in office!.

If we add these seven days to the 42 days which passed from the beginning of the Omer count, on Nisan 16, we come to Day 49 of the Omer Count -- $7 \times 7 = 49$! This brings us to Sivan 5. The next day would be the “Fiftieth Day” or Pentecost -- Sivan 6! What happened on that day?

“When the day of Pentecost came [or “was fully come,” KJV], they were all together in one place [celebrating Pentecost!]. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT and began to speak in other tongues [languages] as the Spirit enabled them” (Acts 2:1-4).

God poured out His Spirit upon all the disciples on that day -- the first time in all human history that God’s Spirit was poured out, as a begettal of hundreds of individuals, all at the same time! But this event was a type of a future miracle of the same kind which is soon to occur! In the same way, when Christ returns to this earth, God says, “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on ALL people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will POUR OUT MY SPIRIT in those days” (Joel 2:28-29).

The apostle Peter explained to the Jews in Jerusalem that the pouring out of God's Spirit on that Pentecost was in fulfillment of this prophecy in the book of Joel (Acts 2:5-21). Of course, this was actually a type. The great fulfillment will occur just around the corner, at the coming of the Messiah, typified by the Feast of Shavuot, when the “weeks are completed” of this present Age - - and the Messianic Age begins!

Those final “weeks” and “days” are ALMOST COMPLETE NOW! We are nearing the VERY END -- and the time of our Spiritual REDEMPTION! Let us joyously, “count” the days, till the coming of that GREAT PENTECOST, when God will pour out His Spirit on all people!

What about you? Will you be among those blessed “first-fruits” of Yahweh? Will you “count the Omer” faithfully, and overcome your human nature, with Yah’s help, and His Holy Spirit, so that you will be numbered among those who will meet Messiah in the air as He returns?