

ספירת העומר The Counting of the Omer

First Week: Love and Kindness — חסד (Hesed)

The first week of the Counting of the Omer coincides with the celebration of Pesah, in which we reenact the experience of God's having freed us. Remembering God's unbounded, expansive love in redeeming us, it is the time of reading the Song of Songs—of feeling both loved and seeking to love. In this context, we may ask ourselves: How might I enter the world in a loving way? What obligations does love bring? As I celebrate my own selfhood and refine my understanding of being free, I might ask: How might I be kind to myself and express that kindness with others? How might I learn to love all the parts of myself and love others in all their complexity? And I might ask: What obligations does love bring?

הוא הִיָּה אֹמֵר: אִם אֵין אֲנִי לִי, מִי לִי?
וּבְשֵׁאֲנִי לְעַצְמִי, מָה אֲנִי? וְאִם לֹא עֲכָשִׁיו, אֵימָתִי?

Hillel said: If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am for myself alone, what am I? And if not now, when?

—Pirkei Avot 1:14

From the second night of Pesah until the night before Shavuot, we count the omer. We rise.

I am about to fulfill the mitzvah of counting the *omer*, as it is written in the Torah:

“You shall count from the eve of the second day of Pesah, when an *omer* of grain is to be brought as an offering, seven complete weeks. The day after the seventh week of your counting will make fifty days.” Leviticus 23:15–16

Barukh atah ADONAI, our God, sovereign of time and space, who has provided us with a path to holiness through the observance of mitzvot and has instructed us to count the *omer*.

*Barukh atah adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam,
asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al s'firat ha-omer.*

אָמַר [רַבִּן יוֹחָנָן בֶּן זַכַּי] לָהֶם:
צֵאוּ וּרְאוּ אֵיזוֹהֵי דַרְךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁיִּדְבֵּק בָּהּ הָאָדָם.
רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר אֹמֵר: עֵין טוֹבָה. רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֹמֵר:
חֵבֵר טוֹב.
רַבִּי יוֹסִי אֹמֵר: שָׁכֵן טוֹב. רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן אֹמֵר:
הַרוֹאֶה אֶת־הַנוֹלֵד.
רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר אֹמֵר: לֵב טוֹב. אָמַר לָהֶם: רוֹאֶה אֲנִי
אֶת־דַּבְּרֵי אֱלִיעֶזֶר בֶּן־עֶרְוָן מִדַּבְּרֵיכֶם, שֶׁבְּכֻלָּל
דַּבְּרֵיוֹ דַּבְּרֵיכֶם.

[Rabbi Yoḥanan ben Zakkai] posed this question to his disciples:

Take note, which is the right path to which one should cleave?

Rabbi Eliezer said: A generous eye.

Rabbi Joshua said: A good colleague.

Rabbi Yose said: A good neighbor.

Rabbi Shimon said: Foresight.

Rabbi Eleazar said: A generous heart.

He said to them: I prefer the answer of Eleazar ben Arakh, for his view includes all of yours.

—Pirkei Avot 2:13

הֲנִי מוֹכֵן\מוֹכָנָה וּמְזוּמָן\וּמְזוּמְנָת לְקַיֵּם מִצְוֹת עֲשֵׂה
שֶׁל סְפִירַת הָעֹמֶר כְּמוֹ שֶׁפְּתוּב בַּתּוֹרָה:

וּסְפִירַתְּם לָכֶם מִמִּחְרַת הַשַּׁבָּת מִיּוֹם הַבִּיאָכֶם
אֶת־עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה, שֶׁבַע שַׁבָּתוֹת תְּמִימַת הַתְּהִיָּינָה.
עַד מִמִּחְרַת הַשַּׁבָּת הַשְּׁבִיעִית תִּסְפְּרוּ הַמַּשְׁמַיִם יוֹם.
וּיקרא כג:טו-טז

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ עַל סְפִירַת הָעֹמֶר.

On NISAN 16, the SECOND NIGHT OF PESAḤ:

היום יום אֶחָד לְעֹמֶר.

Today is 1 day of the *omer*.

Hayom yom eḥad la-omer.

On NISAN 17, the THIRD NIGHT OF PESAḤ:

היום שְׁנַי יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.

Today is 2 days of the *omer*.

Hayom sh'nei yamim la-omer.

On NISAN 18, the FOURTH NIGHT OF PESAḤ:

היום שְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.

Today is 3 days of the *omer*.

Hayom sh'loshah yamim la-omer.

On NISAN 19, the FIFTH NIGHT OF PESAḤ:

היום אַרְבָּעָה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.

Today is 4 days of the *omer*.

Hayom arba-ah yamim la-omer.

On NISAN 20, the SIXTH NIGHT OF PESAḤ:

היום חֲמִשָּׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.

Today is 5 days of the *omer*.

Hayom ḥamishah yamim la-omer.

On NISAN 21, the SEVENTH NIGHT OF PESAḤ:

היום שֵׁשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר.

Today is 6 days of the *omer*.

Hayom shishah yamim la-omer.

On NISAN 22, the EIGHTH NIGHT OF PESAḤ

(where Yom Tov is celebrated for two days):

היום שִׁבְעָה יָמִים, שֵׁשָׁה שָׁבוּעַ אֶחָד לְעֹמֶר.

Today is 7 days—one week—of the *omer*.

Hayom shivah yamim, she-hem shavua eḥad la-omer.