

OMER

INTRODUCTION TO OMER

Introduction to Omer

Omer is counted for 49 days, from the second day of Passover to the day before Shavuot. Omer connects the two holidays both physically and spiritually. In Biblical times, an omer (a specific measure of volume) of barley was brought as an offering to the Temple in Jerusalem on the second day of Passover. Once the barley offering had been brought, all grain changed status from "chadash" to "yashan" and could be eaten. Due to tragedies that occurred during the omer period, especially the death of 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva during the second century, we observe a semi-mourning period during 33 days of the 49 days of the omer.

OMER: COUNTING

Halacha and Custom in Counting Omer

The only halacha of "counting the omer" is to say the blessing and then count the omer. Anything else is custom.

"Counting the Omer" Blessing

The blessing over counting the omer is "al sefirat ha'omer."

How To Count Omer before Dark

The ideal time and way to count the omer is to wait until dark, stand up, say the blessing, and then count the omer for that day.

SITUATION You want to count the omer before dark (as is often done in synagogues at the end of ma'ariv).

STATUS Since the correct practice is to count the omer after dark, you should:

- Count again with a blessing sometime after dark, or else
- Count during the following day (but before sunset) without a blessing.

WHAT TO DO Do the counting without saying the blessing and make a condition (mentally or verbally, either is OK) that if you remember to count the omer again after dark, the first time you counted, does not count (!) Then, if you do remember after dark, say the blessing and count the omer for that day a second time.

If You Forget To Count Omer at Night

SITUATION You forgot to count omer at night.

WHAT TO DO

- Count the next morning/daytime without a blessing. Then,
- Resume saying the blessing the subsequent night.

If You Do Not Count Omer before Next Day Sunset

SITUATION You forgot to count omer at night and didn't count the following day before dark.

WHAT TO DO Do not say the omer blessing any more that year, but do continue to count the omer without the blessing.

OMER PERIOD

OMER PERIOD: HOW TO DETERMINE

Methods of Counting the Omer Period

The mourning period during the counting of the omer (sefirat ha'omer) lasts for 33 days, but there are three ways to count them:

1. Second night of *Passover* until Lag ba'Omer (33rd day of counting the omer).
2. Rosh Chodesh Iyar until the third day before Shavuot (excludes Lag ba'Omer).
3. Second day of Iyar until Shavuot.

You may change your observance from year to year, if necessary.

OMER PERIOD: WHO COUNTS

Women and Girls Counting Omer

Women and girls are not required to count the omer. But if they do, they say the blessing (if appropriate) and it is a mitzva for them.

Boy Who Becomes Bar Mitzva during Omer

SITUATION

A boy becomes bar mitzva during the omer. He has been counting the omer and has said the omer blessing without missing a day.

WHAT TO DO

He continues counting as he had been doing.

NOTE Boys should be counting the omer with a blessing from before they become bar mitzva, so there should not be any break.

OMER PERIOD: RESTRICTIONS

OMER PERIOD: FORBIDDEN ACTIVITIES

Forbidden Activities During Omer Period

These are forbidden during the chosen omer period:

- Haircuts
- Shaving
- Listening to any music, even pre-recorded
- Getting married.

OMER PERIOD: PERMITTED ACTIVITIES

Buying Clothes Allowed during Omer

You may buy and wear new clothes during sefirat ha'omer.

Cutting Nails Allowed during Omer

You may cut your nails during sefirat ha'omer.

Saying SheHecheyanu Allowed during Omer

You may say she'hecheyanu during sefirat ha'omer.

Swimming Allowed during Omer

You may swim during sefirat ha'omer.