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*.

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