

The Sefirah period connects the Festival of Passover with the Festival of Shavuot. We begin counting the days of the Omer from the second night of the Festival of Passover which commemorates the exodus from Egypt when we were liberated from slavery and continue to count for forty-nine days. The 50th night commences the Festival of Shavuot when we re-live the giving and receiving of our Holy Torah. The purpose of counting or measuring any quantity is to ascertain the exact number or measure of a certain thing. The quantity of which is variable. A census of the population for example is taken from time to time since the population can either increase or decrease and we want to ascertain its progress. Similarly statistics are kept for various factors, conditions, etc. Were such factors stationary and unchangeable or were they uncontrollable, there would be no real purpose served in going over such statistics periodically. Time is something over which man has no control or influence one time just marches on and we can neither slow its march nor speed it up. Nor can we make an hour last more or less than sixty minutes. From this point of view the idea of Sefirah would seem incomprehensible, moreover even where things of variable quantity are concerned, the idea of counting or measuring signifies importance. We were not merely satisfied with an estimate or general appraisal, but wish to establish the exact number of units.

We have said that unlike most other things which are changeable in quantity, time is unchangeable and beyond our control. But this is true only superficially, actually time holds out for our possibilities which do not exist in other things, for while man's influence over things under his control is limited, his influence over time is in a sense unlimited. Time is like a "vessel" which is highly elastic and with an infinite absorptive capacity. It has the power of ex-

panding or contracting depending on how much or little we put into it. We can fill our time with unlimited content or waste it away and the very same unit of time may mean an infinity to one or shrink to nothingness for another. Its true measure varies in direct proportion to what is achieved in it.

Herein lies the special significance of Sefirah - of counting the days to the time of receiving the Torah on Sinai. For the Torah "whose measure is longer than the earth and broader than the ocean" containing the infinite wisdom of G-d was given to finite beings, men limited to a life-span of short duration of "three-score years and ten, or if in strength, four-score years" at most his days shall be one-hundred-and-twenty years. Can a being so limited in time do justice to such an unlimited gift? Can a finite being like man have any grasp of the infinite Torah?

That is why in preparation for receiving the Torah we are commanded to count the days to relay the importance and the significance of time. It is thereby emphasized that although we cannot alter the flow of time either by stretching it or by retracting it, this is only superficially. In reality each particle of time even a day gives us almost infinite possibilities therefore although human life is limited on this earth to a certain number of years, one is not limited in ones possibilities of using them to accomplish as much as it would take others many, many years. Although formally, time is fixed and can only be measured but not influenced, nevertheless if it is measured in terms of its content and our accomplishments in the sphere of our infinite and eternal Torah and Mitzvot we are able not only to "stretch" time but even to turn it into infinity and eternity. In other words we can transfer and elevate our own time beyond and above time. This in essence is the significance of Sefirah, the counting of the days to the Festival Shavuot as a preparation for receiving our Holy Torah.

THE LAWS OF COUNTING THE SEFIRA

- A. It is a mitzvah to COUNT the SEFIRAH each evening starting from the second night of Passover culminating forty-nine days later.
- B. Should one have missed out a twenty-four hour period without counting, one may continue to count the Sefirah each day but WITHOUT the Blessing.
- C. Should one have to count the Sefirah without a Blessing, he should request that someone who is still counting with the Bracha, make the Blessing outloud so that he can answer Amen and then count accordingly.
- D. Once one remembers before sunset the next day to count Sefira, one counts THAT day WITHOUT a Blessing and continues the following days WITH a Blessing.
- E. Should someone request which day of Sefirah is going to be counted that evening, one should respond by giving them the day of Sefira that was counted the day before (i.e. yesterday was 32. This would avoid him from having counted the Sefira by giving this information out.
- F. Should one hear someone make a Bracha on Sefiras Ha'Omer before one has counted, he may answer Amen. He should however have in mind that when he is answering Amen, he is not included in this Bracha of counting and may count later on with his own Bracha.

COUNTING THE SEFIRA PERIOD

“The counting of Sefira which commences on the **2nd evening of Pesach (April. 7th)**, takes place 7 complete weeks prior to Shavuot. The count takes place after nightfall for the following day. One recites the Bracha in the evening. Should one have forgotten to count in the evening, one may count all day without a Bracha. One then resumes counting the next evening with a Bracha. Should one have forgotten the entire day, one continues to count the correct number without a Bracha for the remainder of the Sefirat Ha'Omer.”

Pendant la Sefira, à partir du deuxième jour de Pessa'h, nous comptons les jours, pendant sept semaines jusqu'à Chavou'ot. Puisque les jours du calendrier juif débutent au coucher du soleil, et qu'il faut faire le compte tandis que le jour commence, le compte du Omer, cette année, débute le **deuxième soir de Pessa'h (le 7 avril)**. Si on a oublié de faire le compte un soir, on peut compter, au moment où on s'en souvient, mais sans faire la prière. On peut alors continuer le compte, avec la prière au cours de la prochaine soirée. Si par contre, on a oublié pendant une journée entière, on peut continuer le compte au nombre approprié de la journée où on se souvient, mais on ne peut faire la prière pour le reste de la période de Sefira.

SOME LAWS CONCERNING THE SEEFIRA PERIOD

Unfortunately the Sefirah period has become a semi-mourning period because 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva died during this time. There are different opinions of exactly which dates are mourning period. Please consult your local Rabbi for your particular custom.

We may not:

1. Shave and cut hair
2. Listen to music
3. Have weddings
4. Have Simchas with music
5. Some people have the custom not to purchase new garments

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

April 8
ט"ז ניסן

1

א' לעומר

April 9
י"ז ניסן

2

ב' לעומר

April 10
י"ח ניסן

3

ג' לעומר

April 11
י"ט ניסן

4

ד' לעומר

April 15
כ"ג ניסן

8

ח' לעומר

April 16
כ"ד ניסן

9

ט' לעומר

April 17
כ"ה ניסן

10

י' לעומר

April 18
כ"ו ניסן

11

יא' לעומר

April 22
ל' ניסן

15

ט"ו לעומר

April 23
א' אייר

16

ט"ז לעומר

April 24
ב' אייר

17

י"ז לעומר

April 25
ג' אייר

18

י"ח לעומר

April 29
ז' אייר

22

כ"ב לעומר

April 30
ח' אייר

23

כ"ג לעומר

May 1
ט' אייר

24

כ"ד לעומר

May 2
י' אייר

25

כ"ה לעומר

May 6
י"ד אייר

29

כ"ט לעומר

May 7
ט"ו אייר

30

ל' לעומר

May 8
ט"ז אייר

31

לא' לעומר

May 9
י"ז אייר

32

לב' לעומר

May 13
כ"א אייר

36

ל"ו לעומר

May 14
כ"ב אייר

37

ל"ז לעומר

May 15
כ"ג אייר

38

ל"ח לעומר

May 16
כ"ד אייר

39

ל"ט לעומר

May 20
כ"ח אייר

43

מ"ג לעומר

May 21
כ"ט אייר

44

מ"ד לעומר

May 22
א' סיון

45

מ"ה לעומר

May 23
ב' סיון

46

מ"ו לעומר

SEFIRA CHART

Thursday

Friday

Shabbat

April 12
כ' ניסן

5

ה' לעומר

April 13
כ"א ניסן

6

ו' לעומר

April 14
כ"ב ניסן

7

ז' לעומר

April 19
כ"ז ניסן

12

י"ב לעומר

April 20
כ"ח ניסן

13

י"ג לעומר

April 21
כ"ט ניסן

14

י"ד לעומר

April 26
ד' אייר

19

י"ט לעומר

April 27
ה' אייר

20

כ' לעומר

April 28
ו' אייר

21

כ"א לעומר

May 3
י"א אייר

26

כ"ו לעומר

May 4
י"ב אייר

27

כ"ז לעומר

May 5
י"ג אייר

28

כ"ח לעומר

May 10
י"ח אייר

33

ל"ג לעומר

May 11
י"ט אייר

34

ל"ד לעומר

May 12
כ' אייר

35

ל"ה לעומר

May 17
כ"ה אייר

40

מ' לעומר

May 18
כ"ו אייר

41

מ"א לעומר

May 19
כ"ז אייר

42

מ"ב לעומר

May 24
ג' סיון

47

מ"ז לעומר

May 25
ד' סיון

48

מ"ח לעומר

May 26
ה' סיון

49

מ"ט לעומר