

Making the Omer Count

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Introduction:

We have seen in previous teachings that the Counting of the Omer has been such a special time among the Nation of Yisrael for so long and recognised as a great Mitzvah or commandment as given in the Torah. Today therefore I wish to expand our understanding of the significance of this unique time in the hope that we will enhance our passion in performing our daily remembrance of it. We have already seen that traditionally it is practised among the Yahudim (the Jews) as a great time of reflection hopefully leading to the removal of character traits that could be perceived as "Leaven" with the hope of producing a purer Soul by adding positive traits to each one's character. For faithful taught ones of Yahshua this should also be a special time of reflection, that we may be better able to reflect the personality of our Master Yahshua. Shaul (Paul) implies this when he writes to the Corinthians "**be you imitators of me even as I imitate Messiah.**" Today therefore I want to look beyond our basic journey and dig deeper to see if we can discover an even greater purpose of this time since at its conclusion we will finally arrive at Shavuot (Pentecost) which in itself is a most powerful remembrance to be greatly revered.

The Review of the Count:

To understand the need for the count we first need to answer a more basic question: Why did YHWH wait 50 days after the Yisraelites left Mitsrayim (Egypt) before giving the Torah? Why didn't He simply give it to them in Egypt, or immediately after their departure?

The answer is that Yisrael was not yet spiritually equipped to receive the Torah. For over 200 years, they had been living in a Mitsrite (Egyptian) society known to be the world center for immorality and vice. Even without direct participation, these influences nonetheless permeated the air and seeped into their consciousness.

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The primary book of Kabbalah, "The Zohar," reports that in Mitsrayim (Egypt) Yisrael had slipped to the 49th level of spiritual impurity. (50 being the very lowest.) YHWH could not impart his set-apart Kadosh Torah at this point knowing how impure and immature Yisrael was at this point.

Knowing how the Society around Yisrael had so grossly affected them, is there any reason to think that we are exempt from the influence of the society that we live in.

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Every day we are bombarded with our Society's beliefs through Media, Education & many other means and even the Religious world that most of us come from, has for thousands of

years discarded many of the observances and beliefs in Scripture considering them as being unnecessary, irrelevant and unpopular and so we, most assuredly like Yisrael still need much time to break free of those constraints that we have been held by, so the same process of development is needed for us as well.

YHWH however in his mercy had given Yisrael an opportunity over the journey to Mount Sinai to mature, develop character and willingly remove Mitsrayim (Egypt) out of their minds and hearts and though they failed often and their journey was fraught with trouble they finally arrived at the place that YHWH would descend before his people on Mt. Sinai. What we can all learn from this is that we are all on this journey of refinement so that YHWH is able to impart his truth to us.

The Counting of the Omer we can now say for the small group of Talmidim (taught ones) was much more than just the process of refinement of Character as it should be for us. It was in fact the revelation of the most monumental action that YHWH had taken in this world to bring about the redemption of the World that would finally culminate in the fulfilment of His promise at Shavuot (Pentecost). Therefore it is my desire to ponder why it was so essential for the Taught ones to **wait** with great expectation upon the promise of the Father though they had already experienced the Resurrection in all its magnificence.

The Failure to wait:

Since waiting is a theme related to the counting of the Omer it needs to be taken very seriously as having enormous personal importance in the journey of preparation, something that in our day many lack. We have some amazing examples of its failure in the Fathers, so first we begin with Abraham whom we call the Father of Faith but he too had a problem of not waiting on YHWH:

We read of the promise given him from YHWH in:

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Bereshith (Genesis) 15:1-4 After these things the word of YHWH came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."

2 But Abram said, "Master YHWH, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!"

4 And behold, the word of YHWH came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir."

We read further that Abram in his desperate desire to see the promise come to pass, could not wait on YHWH to fulfil his promise but rather took the slave of Sarai who was called Hagar and she gave him a son whom he named Ishmael and we know, that by not waiting on YHWH to perfect the promise his pre-emptive action caused much problems that even have repercussions in our days.

And then there is Ya'acov (Jacob) whose mother when she had conceived and the children within her struggled we read this in the Torah:

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Bereshith (Genesis) 25: 22b- 23 she said, "If all is well, why am I like this?" So she went to inquire of YHWH:

23 And YHWH said to her: "Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; One people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger."

In her deep desire to obtain the promise of YHWH we see Rivkah (Rebecca) conspiring with her son Ya'acov (Jacob) to deceive Yitzchak (Isaac) since she loved Ya'acov (Jacob) knowing that Yitzchaq (Isaac) loved Esau and wanted to bless him. The result of their scheme was that Rivkah (Rebecca) never saw her son Ya'acov (Jacob) again and Ya'acov (Jacob) spent 20 years out of the land of promise. Rivkah (Rebecca) therefore could not wait and trust that YHWH would work out his supernatural plan in whatever circumstances that arose.

Finally however we come to the great man Mosheh (Moses) whom all revere as the one that YHWH used to redeem Yisrael out of the Land of Mitsrayim (Egypt). However in his passion to help his people he too took matters in his own hands as we read:

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Shemot (Exodus) 2: 11-12 Now it came to pass in those days, when Mosheh (Moses) was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Mitsrite (Egyptian) beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. **12** So he looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one, he killed the Mitsrite (Egyptian) and hid him in the sand.

Again the result of his premature action was that upon the discovery of his action we find him fleeing to Midian. It seemed that a man in the greatest position to help his people thinking himself to be great was temporarily disqualified until he saw himself as nothing and incapable of being the deliverer of his people after many years in obscurity.

We could even say that it was these great men's failures that began to qualify them for the promise. Also we could say that all these men in their journey of faith obtained it after failures but their end was far greater than their beginning;

Abraham finally trusted YHWH so much that the messenger of YHWH says these great words:

Bereshith (Genesis) 22: 12b For now I know that you fear Elohim, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son from me.

Also the many years of Ya'acov (Jacob) under the harsh deceptive hands of Laban saw Ya'acov (Jacob) a transformed man so that when he faced death at the hands of Esau he

turned his hope to YHWH to rescue & bless him and would not let go of the messenger of YHWH until these words were spoken to him:

Bereshith (Genesis) 32:28 And the Messenger said, “your name is no longer called Ya’acov (Jacob) but Yisrael because you have striven with Elohim and with men and have overcome.

It truly seems that YHWH had a great purpose in humbling his people so that he could raise them up again to be people of spiritual worth able to fulfil his divine purpose. When we look at all the great men of faith this seems to be a common thread and so we need to learn from that. We see it in the life of Yoseph (Joseph) and of course in the life of David which also seems to be repeated in the life of Kepha (Peter) who hit rock bottom with his denial of the Master after which he wept bitterly. This should encourage us when we find we fail but the quote of Prime Minister Churchill will suffice to help here:

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he said: **“Failure is not Fatal.”**

The aim of these examples is to show that the counting of the Omer is more than just a time of building refined character but it is a time of expectant waiting for the appointed time of YHWH which for the Yisraelite slaves would be Mt. Sinai with the giving of the Torah and for the Talmidim (the Disciples) it was the expected promise of the Father as Yahshua had explicitly promised before, as we read in the following:

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Yochanan (John) 16:7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.

In truth Shavuot (Pentecost) became a remembrance of the great day that YHWH came down to deliver his Torah to mortal man therefore every year the Yahudim (Jews) make it a point to prepare themselves to be able to receive the Torah again, since life has a tendency of dragging us backwards so this time helps to renew & refine ourselves for spiritual growth. The point I would like to emphasize is that we need to learn to wait with an expectancy believing that YHWH has promised and will complete his work in us and Shavuot (Pentecost) is our yearly remembrance of the faithfulness of our Heavenly Father.

Phase One of the Journey:

With the Resurrection of Yahshua we can clearly divide the Counting of the Omer in two distinct Phases. Phase one being the Forty days that Yahshua appeared numerous times to the believers so it is prudent to consider how forty is so unique in Scripture. So often we find the number 40 appearing as a time of Judgement, a time of testing but also a time of purification:

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Some well-known examples of 40 include:

1. In the days of Noah (Noah) it rained 40 days & 40 Nights. (Gen 7:12)
2. Mosheh (Moses) fled to Midian & spent 40 years there and then was called to lead Yisrael out of bondage. (Acts 7:30-33)
3. After 40 days, Moses descended Mt. Sinai with the Torah on tablets (he did this twice) (Ex. 24:12-18 & Ex. 34:27-28)
4. The Yisraelite spies spent 40 days spying out the land of Canaan. (Num 13:25)
5. The Yisraelites spent 40 years in the wilderness before the second generation entered into the Promised Land. (Deut. 2:7)
6. Yahshua spent 40 days in the wilderness before he began His earthly ministry. (Matt. 4:1-11)
7. Yahshua spent 40 days after the resurrection appearing at different times before ascending to heaven on the 40th day of counting the Omer. (Acts 1:1-3)

There are still more examples but this lets us see the uniqueness of 40 and how much significance is associated with it remembering that all of Yahshua's appearances were within the 40 days of the Counting of the Omer.

What then were the Talmidim (Disciples) doing during these days:

Just to repeat what I suggested in my previous teaching unlike many that think the Talmidim (Disciples) returned to their fishing until near the end of the 40 day period I suggested, based on the revelation to the women that they went to Galil (Galilee) shortly after the appearance to Toma (Thomas) after the end of Matzah (the Feast of Unleavened Bread) since we read in Mark the words of the Malakim (Angels) to the women and in MattithYahu (Matthew) the words of Yahshua as follows:

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MattithYahu (Matthew) 28:10 Then Yahshua said to them, "do not be afraid. Go report to my brothers, to go to Galil and they shall see me there.

The suggestion therefore is that the Talmidim (Disciples) went to Galil and while waiting upon the Master some of them went fishing until the encounter with Yahshua by the lake followed by the instruction on the mount appointed in Galil as reported in Mark.

I am strongly supporting the idea that after that they returned to Yerushalayim (Jerusalem) to complete the days of the Omer they engrossed themselves in intense study of the Torah after the appearances of Yahshua to prepare themselves Spiritually for the great Ministry that Yahshua was calling them to. What I hope we see from all this is that just as the great men of Old these Talmidim (Disciples) began the journey in fear and failure since Kepha (Peter) before Yahshua's death had denied him three times and the others had run away at his arrest but with the appearances of Yahshua they returned to Yerushalayim (Jerusalem) to wait but this time was spent in devoted study and discussion of Scripture, in intense prayer & fellowship with an extremely heightened expectation of the great promise of the Father that would be theirs. Therefore the empowerment by the Ruach Ha Kodesh (The Holy Spirit) would see them be complete as ministers of the "Good News" of Yahshua. I

believe therefore that they absolutely were making “the Omer” count in ways that were so superior than just seeing it as a spiritual exercise in preparing each year for Shavuot (Pentecost) since this particular time had a great promise with it of strength, and though they were in general not highly educated in the various Schools of the Pharisees they believed for revelation from on high to complete what they lacked.

Our Personal Revelation:

It is my hope that we begin to see that if we are going to make the Omer count we must realize that in our own strength we cannot change and ultimately for any of us to change it must be the work of YHWH through his Ruach (Spirit). Our part to play is ultimately in partnership with the Ruach Ha Kodesh (The Holy Spirit) believing that as we wait on YHWH with all our hearts he is able to do what we in our human strength and wisdom cannot. From the Prophet we read this:

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YeshiYahu (Isaiah) 40:31 But those who wait upon YHWH shall renew their Strength; they shall mount up with wings like Eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

The encouragement here is that though we may not have the power to significantly change, the promise of his Ruach (Spirit) should help us to know that the real blessing of Shavuot (Pentecost) is the picture of spiritual empowerment. The Disciples drastically needed this to fulfil their call and we are faced with the same need that we are able to fulfil our call.

Shaul (Paul) says it this way when speaking of the Grace or the Favour of YHWH being his empowerment:

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Corinthyah Aleph (1 Corinthians)15:10 But by the Chesed (grace) of Elohim I am what I am, and His chesed (grace) toward me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the chesed (grace) of Elohim which was with me.

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Conclusion:

The strange truth I am putting forward is in fact that the Fathers of faith did not achieve their worthiness by their apparent perfection but through their failures. When they experienced failure it caused them to put their hope in YHWH and their journey was built on their failures. The Disciples likewise through their failures were then able to put their hope in the promise of the Father rather than in themselves and so were able to wait with great expectation for the empowerment of the Ruach (Spirit) through whom they would be the

true Sh'lichyim (Apostles) that could bring the complete message of redemption to the world.

If we can learn anything from the counting of the Omer it is this. We are not made worthy to receive the Torah by perfection built on some sort of behavioural modification technique but rather by identifying our failures and weaknesses and through that revelation desiring the compassion and power of YHWH to rebuild our personalities with the help and power of his RUACH (Spirit). This is the divine means by which we are made acceptable to receive his Holy Torah implanted on humble hearts. The mistake Yisrael made was that they thought they had the strength in themselves so they said "all that YHWH has said we will do and hear." Amein!