

The Omer Count and YEHOVAH God's Weekly Cycle

Some have thought that keeping YEHOVAH God's Sabbath day according to the dictates of a lunar-based calendar completely disrupts the omer count from Passover to Pentecost. Is this true? Or, is this just another attempt to disparage YEHOVAH God's calendar and continue with the pagan Gregorian system we keep today? The very simplicity of YEHOVAH's calendar becomes apparent when we understand that YEHOVAH's weekly Sabbath days fall on the phases of the moon -- and not on a set day in man's humanly-devised calendar.

John Keyser

The Old Testament Feast of Weeks or Shavuot is more commonly known as "Pentecost" -- a Greek word from the New Testament which means "fiftieth." This term "fiftieth," or Pentecost, refers to the counting of days from a specific point in time to the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost. This counting of days is called, by the Jews, the omer count, and links the day of Pentecost to the Passover season. In fact, Pentecost is considered a continuum of the Passover season.

To find where Pentecost appears on the calendar, the English translators of the Old Testament outline a method of counting which is, to say the least, a little unclear. For example, it says in Leviticus 23:15 to count from the "morrow after the sabbath," speaking of a Sabbath within the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Nisan 15 to Nisan 22). However, it doesn't *clearly* indicate WHICH sabbath it's talking about. As a result of this uncertainty, there has been a controversy among scholars and religious groups as to *which* "day after the sabbath" to begin the omer count from. This controversy has raged for millennia! The various theories that have been promulgated include counting from the day after the first day of Unleavened Bread (Nisan 16), counting from the day after the *last* high Sabbath of that festival (both of which are lunar related), to counting from the respective Sundays following each of the above!

A careful study of all the options clearly shows that the tradition of counting the omer from the second day of Unleavened Bread (Nisan 16) is the correct one. Both Josephus and Philo support this, as do many others --

Instructions for this festival are found at Leviticus 23:15-21; Numbers 28:26-31 and Deuteronomy 16:9-12. It was meant to be celebrated on the 50th day (Pentecost means "Fiftieth [Day]") from **NISAN 16**, the day that the barley sheaf was offered (Leviticus 23:15, 16). In the Jewish calendar it falls on SIVAN 6. It was after the barley harvest and the beginning of the harvest of wheat, which ripened later than the barley. -- Exodus 9:31, 32. (*Insight On the Scriptures*, p. 598. Article, "Pentecost.")

Further, we read in *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services As They Were At the Time of Christ*:

Full seven weeks after the Paschal [Passover] day, counting from the presentation of the omer on the **16th of Nisan**, or exactly on the fiftieth day, was the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, 'a holy convocation,' in which 'no servile work' was to be done, when 'all males' were to 'appear before Jehovah' in His sanctuary, and the appointed sacrifices and offerings to be brought. -- Alfred Edersheim. Pp.261-262.

The Dead Sea scrolls also give a clear indication of how to count the omer --

...You shall count seven complete Sabbaths from **the day of your bringing the sheaf of the wave-offering**. You shall count until the morrow of the seventh Sabbath. You shall count [fifty] days. You shall bring a new grain-offering....it is the feast of Weeks and the feast of Firstfruits, an eternal memorial (From the Temple Scroll -- 11QT -- XVIII-XXI. Translation borrowed from *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls In English*, by Geza Vermes).

Besides these references, the Greek Septuagint version of the Old Testament renders Leviticus 23:11 as saying, "...and he shall lift up the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you. *On the morrow of the first day* [first day of the Feast, first day of the week -- exclusive counting] the priest shall lift it up," speaking, of course, of the barley sheaf. Then, in verses 15 and 16, it says that this is the very same day the counting is to begin --

And ye shall number to yourselves from *the day after the sabbath* [Nisan 15 -- both annual Feast day and weekly Sabbath day], from the day on which ye shall offer the sheaf of the heave-offering [Nisan 16], SEVEN FULL WEEKS: until *the morrow after the last week ye shall number fifty days*, and shall bring a new meat offering to the Lord.

The term "Feast of Weeks" is found in two places in the Old Testament: Exodus 34:22 and Deuteronomy 16:9-10. The latter verses read: "SEVEN WEEKS shalt thou number to thyself; when thou hast begun to put the sickle to the corn, thou shalt begin to number SEVEN WEEKS. And thou shalt keep the FEAST OF WEEKS to the Lord thy God, accordingly as thy hand has power in as many things as the Lord thy God shall give thee."

However, in Leviticus 23 (King James Version), it says --

And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; SEVEN SABBATHS shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the *seventh sabbath* shall ye number FIFTY DAYS [yowm]; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the Lord (verses 15-16).

Now notice the following **two points** in the above verses:

1/. Verse 15 plainly says that SEVEN SABBATHS are to be counted. Notice that the term "sabbaths" is *equated* in this passage with "weeks" in Deuteronomy 16.

2/. Notice it says to begin counting from *the morrow AFTER the Sabbath*. The fact that the Sabbath it is speaking of here pertains to a *feast day* tends to connect *high days* to the *weekly Sabbath*. This I showed to be true in my article ***Have We Been Keeping the Sabbath At the Wrong Time All These Years?***

If we can understand that the moon was made by YEHOVAH God FOR APPOINTMENTS -- including the weekly Sabbath -- we should be able to comprehend this counting thing. Read my article ***The New Moons and the Weekly Sabbath -- Side-By-Side!*** for further information. The simplicity of YEHOVAH God's calendar is that, because we have learned that the weekly Sabbaths fall in THE QUARTERS OF THE MOON, when we count SEVEN SABBATHS, we are actually counting the fourth sabbath of the cycle, 29th day of the lunar month through the 30th or 1st day of the next month (depending on the length of the month) as ONE UNIT. Otherwise, we are not counting *sabbaths* but only *solar days* and clearly fall short of the *seventh sabbath*.

The ultimate proof of this point -- and perhaps the very KEY -- is found in verse 16 of Leviticus 23. Notice how it says "*even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days* [yowm]." There is no way you could arrive at the MORROW AFTER the seventh Sabbath if you just count seven times seven and then merely *add one* to get *fifty*.

To give the reader a clearer understanding, in the course of the Biblical directions you will pass through *seven Sabbaths* - beginning after the first day of Unleavened Bread (**full moon**) --

- 1st Sabbath....=.....3rd quarter (half moon);
- 2nd Sabbath....=.....4th quarter (at new moon -- **2 days**);
- 3rd Sabbath....=.....1st quarter (half moon);
- 4th Sabbath....=.....2nd quarter (full moon);
- 5th Sabbath....=.....3rd quarter (half moon);
- 6th Sabbath....=.....4th quarter (at new moon -- **3 days**);
- 7th Sabbath....=.....1st quarter (half moon).

If we add together the actual *solar "days"* from the sequence above, we arrive at 52 -- but have only just passed through *seven Sabbaths!* But, as the scripture above prescribes, "*unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath ye shall number fifty days* [yowm]." From this we can obviously see that the "fifty days" include the NEW MOON PERIODS with two or three *solar days* -- which by necessity are counted as ONE DAY! In my article about the weekly Sabbath I show that the "new moon" (Rosh Chodesh) can last for up to two solar days depending on the length of the month. Modern Jewish calendars clearly show this phenomena. I also show that the fourth Sabbath of the cycle (day 29) is back-to-back with the "new moon" (days 30 and/or 1st of next month). So, when the "day" (yowm) of the omer count falls on the fourth Sabbath of the cycle in counting the Sabbaths to Pentecost or the Feast of Weeks, it becomes the **SABBATH space of time** because it can cover two or three days.

Tevat

2000-January-5760

Shevat

Sun day	Mon day	Tues day	Wedne sday	Thur sday	Frida y	Satur day
					31 Sabbath 22 Tevet	1 23 Tevet
2 24 Tevet	3 25 Tevet	4 26 Tevet	5 27 Tevet	6 28 Tevet	7 29 Sabbath Tevet	8 New Moon 1 Shevat
9 2 Shevat	10 3 Shevat	11 4 Shevat	12 5 Shevat	13 6 Shevat	14 7 Shevat	15 8 Sabbath Shevat
16 9	17 10	18 11	19 12	20 13	21 14	22 Sabbath

Shevat	Shevat	Shevat	Shevat	Shevat	Shevat	15 Shevat
23	24 31	25 18	26 19	27 20	28 21	29 Sabbath 22 Shevat
30		Shevat	Shevat	Shevat	Shevat	

Month Showing 2 Day Sabbath Space of Time -- 29 Tevet-1 Shevat

Shevat

2000-February-5760

Adar I

Sun day	Mond ay	Tues day	Wedne sday	Thur sday	Frid ay	Satu rday
		1 25 Shevat	2 26 Shevat	3 27 Shevat	4 28 Shevat	5 Sabbath 29 Shevat
6 New Moon 30 Shevat	7 New Moon 1 Adar I	8 2 Adar I	9 3 Adar I	10 4 Adar I	11 5 Adar I	12 6 Adar I
13 7 Adar I	14 Sabbath 8 Adar I	15 9 Adar I	16 10 Adar I	17 11 Adar I	18 12 Adar I	19 13 Adar I
20 14 Adar I	21 Sabbath 15 Adar I	22 16 Adar I	23 17 Adar I	24 18 Adar I	25 19 Adar I	26 20 Adar I
27 21 Adar I	28 Sabbath 22 Adar I	29 23 Adar I				

Month Showing 3 Day Sabbath Space of Time -- 29 Shevat-1 Adar I

With this understanding we can clearly see that the omer count to Pentecost is not adversely affected in any way by the observance of a lunar calendar or reckoning for the weekly Sabbath. This is because YEHOVAH God, in His infinite wisdom, designed it that way!