

March 30th, 2018/14th of Nisan, 5778

Dear chevreh,

Passover is nearly upon us. We have cleaned and prepared (or not) as much as we are going to clean and prepare. We are cooking, getting ready for seder, finishing a work day and rushing to a seder, perhaps not attending a seder, but have freedom and yearning for liberation on the mind and in the heart.

Let us remember that tomorrow evening, the second evening of Passover, we begin to count the Omer. This is the 49-day period between the 16th of Nisan, and the 4th of Sivan, the day before Shavuot. An *omer* is a unit of measure of grain—in this case barley. It is thought to be an amount of grain large enough to require bundling. Agriculturally, *Sefirat HaOmer*, or Counting of the Omer, connects the barley harvest to the wheat harvest. Prior to eating from the newly harvested barley, an *omer* was brought on the second day of Passover to the Beit HaMikdash as an expression of gratitude and thanksgiving to G-d. On Shavuot, exactly fifty days later, two loaves of bread were brought as an offering, once again as an expression of gratitude and thanksgiving to G-d for the newly harvested wheat. Historically, *Sephirat HaOmer* connects the holiday of Passover, commemorating the Exodus in which we gained physical freedom from slavery to the holiday of Shavuot when we received the Torah at Mount Sinai. This reminds us that redemption from slavery was not complete until we were given the Torah with all of its laws and mitzvot to follow. Spiritually, *Sephirat HaOmer* has become a time of introspection. Kabbalists (Jewish mystics) set up a schedule where each week of the *Omer* represented a different spiritual quality, and each day within that week was dedicated to a different aspect of that spiritual quality. This allows for 49 different ways for introspection and personal growth (inspired by JewishEncounter.wordpress.com).

For a wonderful, inspiring read about the top ten Passover lessons from my esteemed colleague Rabbi Josh Bolton, please follow this link:

<http://www.thedp.com/article/2018/03/guest-column-rabbi-josh-bolton-pass...>

***If you are coming to KHN anytime during Passover, whether on Wednesday evening, Friday night, or any other time, please remember not to bring *chametz* into the building.

Shabbat Shalom, Chag Sameach, A Zissen Pesach, Happy Passover, and wishing a Happy Easter for those who celebrate!

Rabbi Diana