

## **Step by Step: Offerings for the Omer 5782 / 2022**

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*This offering is also available [as a set of google slides](#).*

## Prepared and Ready

Here I am, prepared and ready  
to fulfill the mitzvah of counting the Omer  
for the sake of the unification  
of all of God's names – for the sake  
of harmonizing word and deed –

for the sake of the tapestry  
of all peoples, the mixed multitude  
leaving oppression behind  
and journeying together  
into the wilderness where God speaks,

the wilderness where our ears open  
and our hearts open:  
to each other  
and to the divine broadcast  
that is always sounding.

*R. Rachel Barenblat*

For the sake of the unification  
of the blessed Holy One and Shekhinah,  
in reverence and compassion,  
and in love and awe,  
to unify the Name Yud-Hei with Vav-Hei  
in perfect unity  
in the name of all Yisra'el.

לְשֵׁם יְחִוּד  
קִדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא וְשְׁכִינְתֵיהּ  
בְּדַחֲלֵוּ וּרְחִימוּ,  
וּרְחִימוּ וּדְחִילוּ,  
לְיַחַד שֵׁם יו"ד ה"א בְּוַא"ו ה"א  
בְּיַחְוּדָא שְׁלִים  
בְּשֵׁם כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל.

Behold, I am prepared and ready  
to perform the mitzvah of counting the Omer,  
as is written in your Torah:  
Count from the end of the rest day.  
From the day you brought the waved Omer-offering,  
The counting shall be seven complete weeks.  
Until the end of the seventh week  
you shall count fifty days.

הִנְנִי מוּכָן וּמְזֻמָּן  
לְקַיֵּם מִצְוֹת עֲשֵׂה שֶׁל סְפִירַת הָעוֹמֵר,  
כְּמוֹ שְׁכָתוּב בַּתּוֹרָה:  
וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמַּחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת  
מִיּוֹם הַבִּיאָתְכֶם אֶת-עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה  
שִׁבְעַת שַׁבָּתוֹת תְּמִימוֹת תִּהְיֶינָה:  
עַד מַחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת הַשְּׁבִיעִית  
תִּסְפְּרוּ חֲמִשִּׁים יוֹם.

*L'shem yihud kudsha brikh hu u-skhinteh, bid'hulu u'r'himu, u'r'himu u'dhulu, l'yahed shem yud heh b'av  
heh, b'yihuda shlim b'shem kol Yisrael. Hineni mukhan u-m'zuman l'kayyem mitzvat aseh shel s'firat  
ha-omer, c'mo shekatuv ba-Torah: U-sfartem lakhem mimaharat ha-Shabbat miyom haviachem et-omer  
ha-t'nufah sheva Shabbatot t'mimot tihyenah. Ad mimaharat ha-Shabbat ha-shvi'it tispru hamishim yom.*

*Traditional prayer for counting the Omer courtesy of OpenSiddur.org*

## Olam Chesed Yibaneh (Week 1/ *Hesed* תּוֹן/ Lovingkindness)

Our journey starts with *chesed*, overflowing love  
 All week long we'll refine and become  
 The more we love, the more we'll be like God  
 Compassionate and merciful to all creation

Our ancestors counted days from seed to harvest  
 We tend spiritual growth, not literal sprouts, though  
 This year we grieve for Ukraine, the world's bread basket  
 Every wartorn place needs the balm of *chesed*

God's *chesed* is so limitless, God flows  
 Into all the shapes and stories  
 Unfolding this week: our Omer journey,  
 our cousins' Easter Feast and Ramadan Fast

*Olam chesed yibaneh* calls the Psalmist<sup>1</sup>  
 Across time and space to us here, now  
*Yibaneh*, build, future tense that can be past<sup>2</sup>  
 Makes sense, we are all a work in progress

Build the world from *chesed*, lovingkindness  
 If only there were instructions  
 Step by step, preferably with diagrams  
 Like, hey Psalmist, meet Ikea and LEGO

How to love and keep loving  
 To love without measure, *ahavat chinam*,  
 Without caprice or expectation of reward  
 Unencumbered, pure

Rabbi Simlai taught - Torah is where it's at  
 The manual, whose beginning is and end are *chesed*  
 תּוֹרָה תְּחִלָּתָהּ גְּמִילוּת הַסֻּדִים וְסוֹפָהּ גְּמִילוּת הַסֻּדִים<sup>3</sup>  
 Love on one foot

Lovingkindness is the connective tissue of creation  
 In the beginning, there were no boundaries  
 When we feel divided from each other  
 We can nourish the spark of of *chesed* inside

*R. Dara Lithwick and R. Rachel Barenblat*

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 89:3

<sup>2</sup> Biblical grammar fun!

<sup>3</sup> Babylonian Talmud Sotah 14a, "Torah's beginning is acts of lovingkindness and its end is acts of lovingkindness."

*Each week of the Omer contains a holiday or remembrance. In week 1: Pesach. In week 2: Yom HaSho'ah and Rosh Chodesh Iyyar. In week 3: Yom HaZikaron and Yom Ha'atzma'ut. In week 4: Pesach Sheni. In week 5: Lag Ba'Omer. In week 6: Yom Yerushalayim. And in week 7: Rosh Chodesh Sivan and Shavuot. This offering arises within that structure – appropriate in this week of strong boundaries, structures, and systems.*

## **A Kavannah for the Week of *Gevurah* (Week 2 / *Gevurah* גבורה / Strength)**

As we move through the arc of the Omer,  
We discover a weekly pause.

A stepping stone.

A resting place.

To pause and ponder,  
To mourn, to celebrate.

Fusing the old with the new,  
The past with the present.

Each week finding moments,  
Stepping out of our daily routines  
Connecting with something greater than ourselves.

### ***Yom HaShoah veHaGevurah***

Holocaust Remembrance Day

Remembering also the ***Gevurah*** - the Heroism

Each act of courage: great and small

In the face of indescribable horror and suffering.

### ***Gevurah***

Strength, might,

Courage, bravery,

Fortitude, grit,

And - inexplicably - **restraint**.

Because those who show no restraint  
Who act without thinking, without caring,  
Are the opposite of ***gevurah***

**May this week be a week where we feel *gevurah* in all aspects of our lives.**

*R. Bracha Jaffe*

## Tiferet Speaks (Week 3 / Tiferet תפארת / Beauty)

“In name of the Unity of the Holy One blessed be He and the Shekhinah.” Tiferet responds:  
I am the Unity flowing between the He and She..  
On the Tree of Life, I surround the center –  
a synthesis of Hesed and Gevurah,  
without either losing its sacred character.  
In the body, I am around the heart.  
Among the angels, I am represented by Raphael.  
In the Amidah, I am the prayer for healing.  
I am the Harmony between kindness and power.  
I am the Balance between expansion and contraction.  
I am the Clarity between yes and no.  
I am the Integration of boundlessness and boundaries.  
I am Beauty, sometimes known as Harmony.  
In music, I am the third above the root creating harmony.  
I am Synthesis, sometimes known as Integration.  
I am Japheth joining Ham to Shem.  
I am Keturah joining Sarah to Hagar.  
I am Rebecca giving birth to Jacob and Esau.  
I am the Kiss at the reunion of Jacob to Esau.  
On the spectrum of colors, I am green.  
In creation, I am day three when plants and trees are created.  
I am week three coming out of Egypt.  
I am the Unity of what was, what is, and what will be in time.  
I am the Unity of here, there, and everywhere in space.  
I am the Intersection between eternity and infinity – time and space..  
I am the Paradox of free will and determinism.  
I am the Echad uniting YHVH to Eloheem  
I am the Mystery of God’s Immanence and Transcendence.  
I am the Dusk and Dawn, the in-between times  
between the times of light and dark.  
I am the Wow between Experience and Understanding.

*R. David Zaslow*

## Counting (*Week 4 / Netzach נצח / Endurance*)

It's in the middle of the Omer count  
 That we may begin to wonder,  
 What is the point  
 Of counting?  
 Why are we doing this?  
 We make note of the number  
 In relation to the numbers preceding,  
 Aware of the numbers to come  
 And to what end?  
 There is no end!  
 Counting, once begun  
 Goes on forever, infinity,  
 Like God,  
 So why stop at 49?  
 Some ancient harvest festival,  
 But what's that to us?  
 Maybe it's more of a mindfulness thing  
 Like Shabbat,  
 When we stop time  
 And declare it holy.  
 But this Omer business  
 Lasts for seven weeks and  
 Perhaps,  
 Around about now,  
 In the middle of it,  
 We're feeling very Samuel Beckett:  
 "I can't go on, I'll go on."

And then there's the counting of the days  
 And days and days,  
 The numbers themselves have no meaning:  
 It's the counting.  
 And like chanting,  
 Counting doesn't work as meditation  
 Until after you've achieved boredom.

Anyway,  
 It's not what you're counting that matters,  
 It's the counting itself.  
 It is its own justification,  
 And every number becomes a prayer,  
 A chat with God.  
 First, second, third, fourth, fifth day,  
 We give thanks that we can fulfill this  
 obligation,  
 Fourteenth, fifteenth day,  
 A holy sequence,  
 Eighteenth, Nineteenth day,  
 Yeah, yeah, whatever,  
 Twenty-third, twenty-fourth day...  
 Have we achieved boredom yet?  
 And on the twenty-eighth day of the Omer  
 With three more weeks to go,  
 We sigh,  
 We can't go on!

We go on.  
 Amen.

*Trisha Arlin*

## Not Knowing

*(Week 5 / Hod הוד / Humility & Splendor)*

The only thing I know:  
we are not "there" yet,  
and I'm not sure where "there" is  
or how we will feel  
or with what we will serve.

It's scary not having a map  
to safety. Scarier still  
that some claim the plague  
never happened, or the deaths  
aren't important...

These years are wilderness  
and sometimes I struggle to hear  
the still small voice  
calling me forth  
from my armchair, calling me

into humble not-knowing  
and into the splendor  
of not making myself afraid.  
This work isn't new, and  
we won't complete it: that's ok.

Yes, there were leeks  
in the beforetimes. I miss  
them too. But then I remember  
not everyone got to eat  
even then. We can do better.

It's all right to feel fear  
as long as we put one foot  
in front of the other.  
There is no path to Sinai  
other than this.

*With what we will serve* - see [Exodus 10:26](#). *The still small voice* - see [I Kings 19:12](#). *Not making myself afraid* - After Reb Nachman of Bratzlav, והעיקר לא להתפחד כלל / the important thing is [not to make oneself afraid](#). *Humble...splendor* - Two ways of translating הוד, the quality our mystics associate with this week. *We won't complete it* - see [Pirkei Avot 2:16](#). *There were leeks* - see [Numbers 11:5](#).

*R. Rachel Barenblat*

## **Rising // Descending (Week 6 / Yesod יסוד / Foundation)**

A final step ahead of us; but how:

*Yesod.*

Moses descends

Moses climbs up to

Mount Sinai.

The angels climb up the ladder, and then

Descend.

We descend slowly, rising up to

Mount Sinai,

The peak of love.

Base and source and sex and root.

Always the questions:

What are you

Building?

How do you spend your time?

Embedded in all that is profane

Is the mystery of becoming, of a life taking up shape:

What is? And what is becoming?

What will we carry with us?

And what will remain?

For we have set ourselves

On fire

The moment when

We first breathed in.

On the mountain.

On the ground.

In the flames.

In our hearts.

A final step ahead of us:

*Yesod.*

*R. Sonja K. Pilz, PhD*



## The View From Here (*Week 7 / Malchut / מלכות / Shechinah*)

|  |  |
|--|--|
| לא הבטיחו לכם מסע קל<br>דרך חולות של שינוי<br>כתף עצמות מתאבק עתיקות<br>קדימה לתוך מרחב עצום ובווער                                | You were not promised an easy journey<br>Through the sands of transformation,<br>Shouldering ancient wrestler bones<br>Forward into a burning vastness                                   |
| המדבר בשפה שאף פעם לא חלמתם<br>שכולכם היינו יכולים ללמוד להבין<br>ופשוט מעבר לאמונה, ראה לובש צורה<br>כמו שביל עטור ספיר דרך השממה | That would speak a language you never<br>dreamed<br>That you all might learn to understand<br>And, just beyond belief, even see taking form<br>As a sapphire path through the wasteland. |
| ואשא אתכם על כנפי נשרים<br>ואביא אתכם אלי<br>לא בשביל הנסיעה אלא בשביל הנוף<br>לראות שביל בכלל, המובילה לעתיד                      | I lifted you up on eagles wings<br>And brought you up to Me<br>Not for the ride but for the view,<br>To see a path at all, leading to a future   |
| שכדאי לאהוב למרות התשישות והפחד<br>ועתה אם שמוע תשמעו בקולי<br>ועצמות היבשות תנשמו ברוח חדשה<br>והייתם לי סגולה מלכותי             | Worth loving despite exhaustion and fear.<br>Even now, just listen inside My voice<br>And dry bones will breathe with new spirit.<br>You will be for Me a royal treasure.                |
| כי אל אשר תלכי אלך<br>והיכן שאת תצעד, אדמה יבשה תפרח<br>הבושם של עדן יעורר את התשוקה שלנו<br>וההר ידבר                             | Where you go, I will go,<br>And where you step, dry ground will bloom.<br>Eden's perfume will rouse our passion<br>And the mountain will speak.  |

*R. David Evan Markus*

*Wrestler bones* – The bones of Jacob taken onto shoulders out of Egypt (Ex. 13:19). *That would speak* – The desert itself (*midbar*) was the place of divine speech (*dibbur*). *Sapphire path* – The mystics' vision after Sinai (Ex. 24:10). *I lifted you ... even now, if you will listen* (Ex. 19:4-5). *Inside My voice* – the literal Hebrew of Ex. 19:5. *Dry bones will breathe with new spirit* – the prophetic vision of a second liberation (Ezekiel 37, the *haftarah* of *hol ha-moed Pesah*). *You will be for Me a royal treasure* – From Ex. 19:5-6: all Israel together magnetizes the Presence (*Shekhinah*, or *Malkhut*). *Where you go* – Ruth 1:16, now God will follow all of us, collectively feminized as *Malkhut*. *Dry ground will bloom* – After Isaiah 35:1. *Eden's perfume* – After Zohar Vayakhel 1:277, unifying transcendence and immanence.

## Remembering The Journey

Build the world from *chesed*, lovingkindness  
If only there were instructions  
Step by step, preferably with diagrams.

Those who show no restraint  
Who act without thinking, without caring,  
Are the opposite of *gevurah*.

Beauty is perceived when contrasting elements  
are brought together without diminishing  
that which is contrasted: horizon, sea, and sky.

And every number becomes a prayer,  
A chat with God.  
We can't go on. (We go on.)

It's all right to feel fear  
as long as we put one foot  
in front of the other.

Always the questions:  
What are you building?  
What is? And what is becoming?

Where you go, I will go  
Where you step, dry ground will bloom  
And the mountain will speak.

*Ensemble*

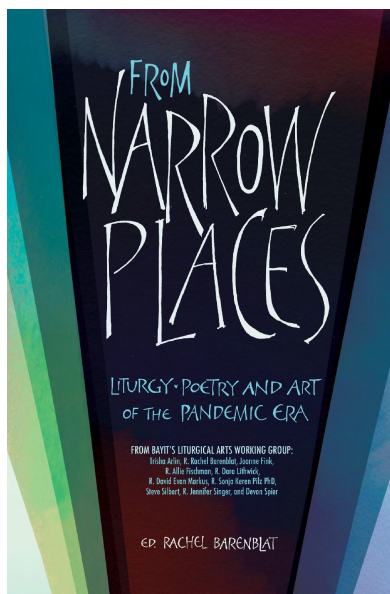
## About Us

*Co-created by members of Bayit's Liturgical Arts Working Group, 2022.*

*Bayit is building a soulful, inclusive and meaningful Jewish life for all ages and stages. Our visionary teams of clergy, liturgists, artists, educators and other thought leaders across and beyond denominational life develop, test, refine and distribute tools for a Jewish future always under construction.*

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