



OUTREACH ISRAEL NEWS

REACH TEACH ENCOURAGE DISCIPLE



MAY 2012
A MESSIANIC OMER COUNT

A compass rose is visible in the top left corner. The background features the words 'OUTREACH ISRAEL' and 'NEWS' in large, stylized letters, with 'NEWS' being significantly larger. Below these words, the words 'REACH', 'TEACH', 'ENCOURAGE', and 'DISCIPLE' are arranged horizontally. The background also has some faint, circular patterns and numbers, possibly from a clock or a similar instrument.

OUTREACH ISRAEL NEWS

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STATEMENT OF BELIEF

Outreach Israel Ministries and TNN Online

There is One Almighty Creator God of the Universe, who has revealed Himself to us in the manifestations of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) came in fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies of the Scriptures and is fully God. It is mandatory for us to believe in a Divine Redeemer to be saved. Salvation is a free gift of God to all who receive Messiah Yeshua into their lives and confess of their sins. Those who reject Messiah will be consigned to eternal punishment.

The Holy Scriptures, Genesis-Revelation, are the inspired, infallible Word of God as revealed in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts.

There is only one assembly of chosen ones/elect, the congregation of Israel, of which all Believers in Messiah are a part. God does not have two groups of elect: Israel and "the Church."

The Torah (Genesis-Deuteronomy) is the foundation of all Scripture, was followed by our Messiah Yeshua, and is to still be followed and studied by Believers today.

Yeshua the Messiah is coming to gather the saints after the Tribulation period.

OIM is an *agapē* ministry, freely and benevolently giving the vast majority of its teachings and resources, without charge, to those who desire to be spiritually nourished.

For a fuller Statement of Faith, consult the OIM website

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OIM UPDATE

May 2012

This month, many followers of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, will be setting apart the time to follow the command to Count the Omer, as the seven weeks between Passover and *Shavuot* or the Feast of Weeks, will be concluded:

“You shall also count for yourselves from the day after the sabbath, from the day when you brought in the sheaf of the wave offering; there shall be seven complete Sabbaths” (Leviticus 23:15).

As I discovered many years ago, the command to Count the Omer can be so much more than simply acknowledging the individual days during this Spring Holiday season. I recently decided to go back and review my book *Counting the Omer: A Daily Devotional Toward Shavuot*, which I compiled back in 2004—especially since there has been a surprising surge of orders in both its paperback and eBook editions this past month.

Much to my delight, I was reminded of the spiritual joy I received when I had taken the time, in a concerted effort, to chronicle my thoughts in this account. I remembered how the Spirit of God was wooing me daily, as I sensed His approval that one of His children was actually attempting to follow this command, by focusing on Him and His Word. The Psalms the Holy Spirit led me to contemplate, and the insight received, were especially uplifting. So this month, I think it is appropriate for me to share a contemporary article about the Omer Count. As I have revisited this subject matter to a degree, I have been reminded that without having a Messianic perspective on the Holy Scriptures, I would have never really considered some of the significance about Counting the Omer. This month’s lead article is entitled, “**A Messianic Omer Count,**” as it touches on some current issues that might prevent many of today’s Messiah followers from *ever being exposed* to what the Omer Count actually is.

Many Christians, who recognize the Day of Pentecost, are not that aware of how this is intended to be the culmination of the Counting of the Omer. Many do not know that the Day of Pentecost is in actuality the Feast of Weeks or *Shavuot*. But this year on May 27th, both Jewish followers of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and those who have recognized Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) as Savior, are going to be remembering, or at least recognizing, remarkable occurrences on this unique day. Many Jewish people will make proclamations, and give thanks for the giving of the Torah. On the other hand, Christians will proclaim that this is the day commemorating the birth of “the Church” in Jerusalem. Messianics will be largely recognizing the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in fulfillment of ancient prophecies from the Tanakh or Old Testament. The Day of *Shavuot* is an excellent time for all of us to be unified in prayer, asking for the Lord to once again come in power—so that all might experience His redemption!

We would like to thank each of you again, for your continued financial and prayerful support of our endeavors at Outreach Israel Ministries. Your partnership with all that we are doing, to remain vigilant in our call to minister to those being drawn into a Messianic lifestyle, has helped many as they struggle with some of the challenges of life. We continue to be humbled by your faithfulness to the Lord and His to us!

Until the restoration of all things... Mark Huey

A MESSIANIC OMER COUNT

by Mark Huey

Many years ago when the Holy Spirit guided our family to embrace a Messianic lifestyle, we were introduced to an array of Biblically sound ways to approach and worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—which were not necessarily taught or modeled during our evangelical upbringings. Much to our delight, we were exposed to a more comprehensive appreciation of the entire counsel of God, from Genesis to Revelation, primarily by studying the Scriptural principles and accounts found in the Torah or Law of Moses. For the first time during our personal and corporate spiritual journeys, the entirety of God’s revelation transcribed in Holy Scripture made much more sense, especially when considering how certain passages found in the Apostolic Writings, like this reference to the Exodus of Israel from Egypt, had been typically expounded by different Christian teachers:

“For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Messiah. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, ‘THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY’ [Exodus 32:6]. Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. **Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.** Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall” (1 Corinthians 10:1-12).

Usually and appropriately so, a classic Christian approach to this passage concentrated on the spiritual distinctions between being released from the bondage of slavery in Egypt, contrasted with the emancipation of redeemed people from the ravages of sin. Of course, these teachings were and remain useful explanations of what people can definitively receive, by faith in Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ). However, the emphasis on why these examples found in the Scriptures were written and preserved for our instruction, was rarely, if ever highlighted by those pastors and teachers we encountered in our Church experience. It was not until passages like 1 Corinthians 10:1-12 were taught from a Messianic perspective, that some considerable light would be shed, on why systematically studying these testimonies is so vital to one’s spiritual maturity.

The Jerusalem Council

When the Apostles were confronted with the growing number of Greeks and Romans in Asia Minor coming to faith in Yeshua, this caused some signifi-

cant controversies. Many of the early Jewish Believers thought that they needed to be circumcised as proselytes, and then ordered to keep the Torah of Moses as a matter of their salvation (Acts 15:1, 5). The Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 met to figure out what was to be done with all of the people from the nations coming to faith. James the Just, half-brother of Yeshua, discerned that Tanakh prophecies were in the process of being fulfilled, as the Tabernacle of David was being restored. *Why should mortals try to force things on the new, non-Jewish Believers, when prophecy as ordained by God would naturally take its course?* James issued a critical ruling, prohibiting the new, non-Jewish Believers coming to faith to abstain from pagan idolatry, sexual immorality, strangled meats, and from consuming blood:

“After they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, ‘Brethren, listen to me. Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. With this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written, “AFTER THESE THINGS I will return, AND I WILL REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID WHICH HAS FALLEN, AND I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS, AND I WILL RESTORE IT, SO THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD, AND ALL THE GENTILES WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME,” SAYS THE LORD, WHO MAKES THESE THINGS KNOWN FROM LONG AGO [Amos 9:11-12, LXX]. Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath” (Acts 15:13-21).

James’ answer to those at the Jerusalem Council who wanted to turn the non-Jewish Believers into immediate proselytes, making obedience to the Torah a matter of salvation, was that only four mandatory things had to be followed. Yet, what would the four prohibitions of the Apostolic decree mean for the early Believers who followed them? When followed, by the Greek and Roman Believers abstaining from idolatry, sexual immorality, and no longer eating meats strangled with large quantities of blood coagulated in them—what it would effectively do is cut them off from all of their old spheres of religious and social influence. Places like the local temple or shrine, a house of prostitution, or much of the marketplace where business was conducted—were now off limits for the non-Jewish Believers. *What would their new spheres of social and religious influence be?* It would be those places where the God of Israel, and by extension Yeshua the Messiah, were recognized. **It would be the Jewish community.**

Quite contrary to the group of Jewish Believers who wanted the new, non-Jewish Believers forcibly made into proselytes—James recognized something quite important, that can too often go overlooked: “With this the words of the Prophets agree...” (Acts 15:15). While the specific prophecy he quoted from in Acts 15:16-18 is Amos 9:11-12, we should not think that in seeing “words of the Prophets” in the plural, that James only thought that Amos 9:11-12 was what was in the process of being fulfilled. In associating Amos 9:11-12 with the salvation of the nations, James helped to associate their salvation as a critical part of the end-time restoration of Israel. Two vitally important prophecies, largely the same but

issued by two different Prophets, should help us to understand what is anticipated of non-Jewish Believers and whether or not they are anticipated to follow God's Torah:

"And it will come about in the last days that the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills, and the peoples will stream to it. Many nations will come and say, 'Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD and to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us about His ways and that we may walk in His paths.' For from Zion will go forth the law, even the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He will judge between many peoples and render decisions for mighty, distant nations. Then they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they train for war" (Micah 4:1-3).

"Now it will come about that in the last days the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways and that we may walk in His paths.' For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war" (Isaiah 2:2-4).

The very reason why the four prohibitions of the Apostolic decree were issued is seen in the perplexing explanation: "**For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath**" (Acts 15:21). This is obviously describing how there was an ancient tradition present in the Jewish community, where Moses would be proclaimed and taught every week on *Shabbat*. And, Jewish people who regularly attended synagogue services and heard the Torah, would be quite offended if non-Jewish people entering into their communities, were idolaters, sexually immoral, and consuming bloody meats. Yet when properly considered, the statement of Acts 15:21 also serves to remind us how the four prohibitions of the Apostolic decree were surely rooted within the Torah. The early Greek and Roman Believers would have needed instruction—on at least what the four prohibitions were—and this could only take place by attending synagogue services to hear the Word of God expounded upon. Modern people need to sometimes be reminded how there were no Bible bookstores, and the local synagogues of the Diaspora were the only real places where the Holy Scriptures, in their Hebrew or Greek Septuagint forms, were accessible.

The First Century non-Jewish Believers were not to be ordered to keep God's Law, or be forced into being circumcised as proselytes. This is because "the words of the Prophets" (Acts 15:15) were in play, among them not only being the restoration of David's Tabernacle—but also the expectation that the nations would come to Zion to be taught the Torah. The Apostolic decree, in getting the

non-Jewish Believers decisively cut off from their old spheres of religious and social influence, would get them implanted into a new sphere of influence **where Moses was being proclaimed and read every week.**

The Holy Spirit and the New Covenant

Among some of the most important prophecies to be considered by any faithful reader of the Holy Writ, especially for the season in which we find ourselves, is how at *Shavuot*/Pentecost the Apostle Peter attested that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit had been prophesied by Joel, and that his word was in the process of fulfillment:

“[B]ut this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: ‘AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,’ God says, ‘THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS; EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT and they shall prophesy. ‘AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE. THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME. AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED’ [Joel 2:28-32]” (Acts 2:16-21).

The word of Joel 2:28 from the Lord was that “I will pour out my spirit on all flesh” (RSV), *kol-basar* (כָּל-בָּשָׂר) or *pasan sarka* (πάσαν σάρκα). There are no limitations for whom such “all flesh” pertains to (cf. Colossians 3:10-11). While God’s Spirit being poured out would surely manifest in great supernatural occurrences—more important to be considered is how the Spirit would see to the cleansing and transformation of **all people who looked to Yeshua for salvation.** Yeshua the Messiah, as He stated at the Last Supper, came to institute the New Covenant (Luke 22:20). Such a New Covenant the Lord would institute with His people, not only would provide permanent atonement and forgiveness from sins—but would also see that His Spirit would transcribe His commandments onto their hearts and minds:

“‘Behold, days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,’ declares the LORD. ‘But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,’ declares the LORD, ‘I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people’” (Jeremiah 31:31-33).

“Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances” (Ezekiel 36:25-27).

The new, non-Jewish Believers addressed in the Apostolic decree, were recipients of the New Covenant promise for God's Torah to be written on their hearts and minds—the same as the Jewish Believers who first placed their trust in Yeshua the Messiah. Admittedly, the Jewish Believers, looking at the Torah and Tanakh, had a few advantages. Not only were they raised going to synagogue, being instructed in Moses' Teaching and keeping its commandments from their infancy—but they also knew that the Tanakh was a definitive part of their ethnic and cultural heritage. Still, **the availability of the Holy Spirit was to be universal**, and as the Apostle Paul would say in 1 Corinthians 10:1, “our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea” (NRSV). The non-Jewish Corinthians *too*, were to look at the Exodus story as *their story*. The accounts of the Torah and Tanakh are a part of the spiritual heritage of non-Jewish Believers, in a similar way as it is a part of the heritage of the Jewish people themselves.

The need to see the new, non-Jewish Believers of the First Century instructed in the essentials of God's Word, was quite overwhelming. A reflection on much of the social reality of the times is witnessed in Ephesians 4:28, “He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have *something* to share with one who has need.” To steal was a flat violation of the Eighth Commandment (Exodus 20:15; Deuteronomy 5:19), and many of the Greek and Roman Believers were notably taken from the lower classes and slaves. The Corinthian correspondence actually claiming, “It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans; for a man is living with his father's wife” (1 Corinthians 5:1, RSV), is something that surely needed to be fought against! **The early non-Jewish Believers needed to be washed from the Word of the gospel** (Ephesians 5:26). All in Yeshua were to be saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8-9), but they were to be anticipated to practice good works of obedience (Ephesians 2:10). The Apostle Paul would direct the Romans how there would be no condemnation for those to be found in Yeshua, and quite importantly how those who walked by the Spirit would naturally observe the Torah:

“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Messiah Yeshua. For the law of the Spirit of life in Messiah Yeshua has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so **that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit**” (Romans 8:1-4).

The Messianic Movement Today

Each of us can know from reading the Apostolic Scriptures, and the subsequent post-Apostolic history, that not everything the Apostles anticipated would take place regarding the salvation of the nations—did actually take place. We should not be under any allusions to think that all of the non-Jewish Believers of the First Century actually followed the Apostolic decree of Acts 15:19-21. Much of the instruction witnessed in the Pauline Epistles, for example, still had to direct the early non-Jewish Believers in basic instructions regarding sexuality and

human relationships. Many of the early Jewish Believers themselves were ejected from the local synagogue, because of their Messiah faith. There were political problems present in the wider world, per the Jewish revolt in the Land of Israel, the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., and anti-Semitism that arose in the Roman Empire. Much of what the Apostles anticipated at the Jerusalem Council, regarding the reconstruction of the Tabernacle of David, was largely halted due to the forces of history.

In the late Twentieth and now early Twenty-First Centuries, we have seen some significant and monumental changes take place. The emergence of the Messianic movement, first with many Jewish people coming to faith in Yeshua, and secondly with many non-Jewish Believers embracing their Hebraic Roots—is **an important sign that something big is taking place**. *Much of where history left off at the end of the First Century, has now been resumed*. Of course, recognizing that we are all human beings with limitations, and that there are both positive and negative things we all bring from Judaism and Christianity, is also key. Yet, we might very well begin to see the “one new humanity” (Ephesians 2:15, NRSV/CJB) that Paul talked about, emerging. This is to be a single, albeit internally diverse people of God, where Jewish and non-Jewish Believers are reconciled to one another—and all recognize themselves as a part of the Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-13)—using their talents and abilities together.

What does this mean for families like ours, who come from evangelical Christian backgrounds? It definitely means that we have to take seriously the full power of God’s revelation to humanity, being taught systematically from Genesis to Revelation. The Tanakh or Old Testament, and not just the Apostolic Scriptures or New Testament—are most relevant for all of us. As all of us, regardless of our backgrounds (cf. Galatians 3:28), are brought together in Yeshua, **we may begin to see some significantly supernatural phenomenon occur**. When each of us is decisively born from above (John 3:16), are filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) and being led by the Spirit (Galatians 5:18), and are walking in the Spirit (Romans 8:4; Galatians 5:16, 25)—then the truth will not only set us free (John 8:32), but it will enable us to all accomplish the main calling that is upon God’s people. The Apostle Peter details,

“But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR *God’s* OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY” (1 Peter 2:9-10; cf. Deuteronomy 7:6; 10:15; Exodus 19:6; Isaiah 61:6; 43:21; Deuteronomy 4:20; 14:2; and Hosea 2:23).

1 Peter 2:9-10 associates a significant number of Tanakh concepts, regarding the original call of Ancient Israel to be a Kingdom of priests *and* Israel’s future restoration, to the salvation of First Century Believers. **This call has not changed in the Twenty-First Century**. Today, people throughout the broad Messianic community, every week during their annual trek through the Torah, are surely reminded of humanity’s common frailties. But, they are also reminded of how God’s instructions have been given to guide His people in holiness, to accomplish

His mission: “In order for you to declare the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (CJB). They should surely be reminded of the Torah’s principal commandments to love God and neighbor (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; cf. Matthew 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8). *They should definitely be moved for all people to come to saving faith in the Messiah of Israel!*

With the emergence of a vibrant and rapidly growing Messianic community of faith in our present day, the fulfillment of ancient prophecies in the Tanakh, is something which has become a conscious reality for all Messianic Believers. *The salvation of the Jewish people is surely something prophetic to take note of!* And, there is also no doubt in the hearts of non-Jewish Believers, like our own family, that we are anticipated to come to Zion to be taught God’s Law (Micah 4:1-3; Isaiah 2:2-4), and that we are a part of the Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-13) or the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16), as fellow citizens (Ephesians 3:6) grafted in by faith (Romans 11:17-18).

Our family has been a part of the Messianic movement since 1995. After multiple years of studying the Torah, we would find it most out of place—as Believers in the New Covenant promises for God to write His commandments onto the hearts of His people (Jeremiah 31:31-33; Ezekiel 36:25-27; cf. Hebrews 8:8-12; 10:16-17)—to now disregard them. We have benefited far too much from obeying the Lord, in terms of observing His appointed times, the weekly Sabbath/*Shabbat*, or even in knowing differences between the holy and profane and the clean and unclean. While walking away from a Messianic lifestyle is certainly not on the level of denying the eternal salvation of Yeshua the Messiah, it could definitely be viewed from the standpoint of *moving backward* from solid food to just the milk of God’s Word (cf. Hebrews 5:12-13). This is why it is so important for each of us to recognize **the supernatural compulsion** of the Holy Spirit, upon all men and women of faith, which is to guide them in a path of fuller and greater obedience to the Torah.

A Messianic Omer Count

With the commemoration of the Feast of Weeks or *Shavuot* soon to take place, let me cite one personal example of approaching the Holy One from a Messianic perspective. This is the often overlooked command to Count the Omer:

“You shall also count for yourselves from the day after the sabbath, from the day when you brought in the sheaf of the wave offering; there shall be seven complete Sabbaths” (Leviticus 23:15).

Even though Messianic Believers are often familiar with the appointed times as outlined in Leviticus 23, it can be rather easy to overlook the instruction regarding “the Omer of the waving” (ATS). For years, even as a Messianic Believer, I found that there was not only little teaching or emphasis on this command, but for the most part, it was widely ignored.

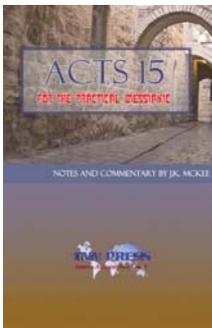
It was not until the Spirit of God prompted me, in 2004, to actually take the time to find a methodical way to Count the Omer. When applying it, I finally received some profound spiritual nourishment for my soul. The growth that I

experienced was something that would never have occurred, if I had not been studying the Torah and imploring the Lord for more of Him. By searching out ways to Count the Omer, I was led to follow a pattern of reading and meditating upon a number of Psalms, recognizing how the Levitical priests performing the ancient sacrifices at the Temple, began their worship with Psalm 67:

“For the choir director; with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song. God be gracious to us and bless us, *and* cause His face to shine upon us—Selah. That Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for You will judge the peoples with uprightness and guide the nations on the earth. Selah. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. The earth has yielded its produce; God, our God, blesses us. God blesses us, that all the ends of the earth may fear Him” (Psalm 67).

As I have read and reread this Psalm since first Counting the Omer in 2004, I have been reminded that *only* the Holy One will righteously judge everyone for what he or she has done, during one's personal journey through life. Our individual goal is to praise God and fear Him as Creator. When each of us comes together to remember what the Lord has done, at our congregational or familial commemorations of *Shavuot*—let us be sure to recall this. Regardless of our heritage, if we know Him and His ways, then He will be pleased that we are seeking Him in obedience to His commands, with all of our hearts and knowledgeable minds.

For the future, in which Counting the Omer for seven weeks or fifty days, should be an important way to press into the Lord and consider what He has done for us—we will definitely all need more of His Spirit. Today's Messianic community is going through a difficult period of changes, with not enough people tempered by the love and grace of Yeshua the Messiah. Some do not think that non-Jewish families like ours should be concerning themselves with Torah obedience, the appointed times, and certainly not Counting the Omer. Others would try to make Counting the Omer a rigidly legalistic experience and forced obligation—as opposed to a time when we should simply be seeking the Lord and asking for more of Him. How we navigate the different extremes, which may appear to get worse and not better for a season, may relate to how much we can understand the themes that Counting the Omer prepare us for: **the giving of the Torah and the outpouring of the Spirit.** May we relish in both!



for more detailed information on the Jerusalem Council and Apostolic decree, be sure to get a copy of the commentary

ACTS 15 FOR THE PRACTICAL MESSIANIC

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MAY 2012 EDITOR'S UPDATE

Dear Friends:

About six months ago, TNN Press announced the launch of eBook editions of our publications, for Amazon Kindle. (Yes, all the eBooks really are just \$9.99 instant downloads, and you can access them on your computer without a Kindle pad.) Since that time, many of the publishing answers that we have sought since the launch of Outreach Israel Ministries in 2002, have been received--and we have simply had to do the required labor to make it a reality. **A huge amount of labor, by the way.** By around the end of this month, we should have a total of twenty paperback and eBook TNN Press titles available. The "backlog" of TNN Press titles, that have been waiting to be released, will have finally been cleared out. The past six months have certainly been full of their fair share of new programs and technologies to learn--and they have been accompanied with many cluster headaches--but I am quite pleased and gratified with the results. I have now been in full time Messianic ministry for nine years, and am amazed at what the Lord will do if you simply be patient, wait on Him, and let the technological tools catch up with you. We have finally arrived at a season when we can "get current."

By the end of May, the commentaries *Hebrews for the Practical Messianic* and *Philippians for the Practical Messianic* should be available in both paperback and Kindle eBook. This Summer, it is my plan to have *Galatians for the Practical Messianic* and the new commentary *1&2 Thessalonians for the Practical Messianic* both available. And because of the ease of electronic publishing, the way we have it, now included with every *Practical Messianic* commentary of a full book of the Bible, will be an appendix of an author rendering of the text, incorporating the different translations proposed and defended in each volume. I am sure that this will please many of you, who when reading through the *Practical Messianic* commentaries, would like to see some of the alternative renderings incorporated into something you can read verse-by-verse.

Of course, even with twenty TNN Press titles soon to be fully available in paperback and eBook, does not at all mean that the hard work is over! I still have eight book cover images that stare at me from my Windows desktop, of titles that need to be readied this year, with some minimal updating and writing to be done here and there. *While I am perhaps more "overloaded" now than I ever have been before*, I am confident that the "grand backlog" will be taken care of by around year's end. Of course at that time, I should be able to discuss with you a number of things that I never thought we would be working on **so soon**.

May-June is one of the two points in the year when my family and I tend to evaluate where we have been for the previous year in ministry work, and where we are going. The nature of a ministry, like Outreach Israel and TNN Online, is to be steadily moving forward, and to serve the broad Messianic community and the needs of its people in a forthright manner. In remaining both issue- and text-focused, this means that there is a huge amount of writing and research to be conducted, to make sure that everything is documented and cited carefully. This also forces us to sit above much of the religious politics and posturing, that plagues too much of what the Lord wants to see us accomplish--in seeing Jewish people come to faith in Yeshua, and non-Jewish Believers embrace their Hebraic Roots in a very tangible way. The Messianic movement certainly finds itself in a season of significant changes and shifting, and it is my hope and prayer that we will be able to decisively and assertively provide you with fair-minded and well-reasoned answers to the issues of the day.

Thank you so much for your continued encouragement, prayers, *and* financial support! Your help means a great deal to us, particularly so that our perspective of the issues does not get "drowned out" in the midst of the sea of religious ideas.

Until next month...

J.K. McKee

KOSHER YOUR PLATE

edited by Margaret McKee Huey

It is my intention to bring our Messianic cooks timely recipes of interest in each issue of the OIM News. In this issue, I have included a wonderful kosher crockpot recipe that is easy!

Crockpot Italian Chicken

8 chicken thighs

1 jar (24 oz) of Italian spaghetti sauce

1 sliced onion

½ cup white wine

1 teaspoon oregano

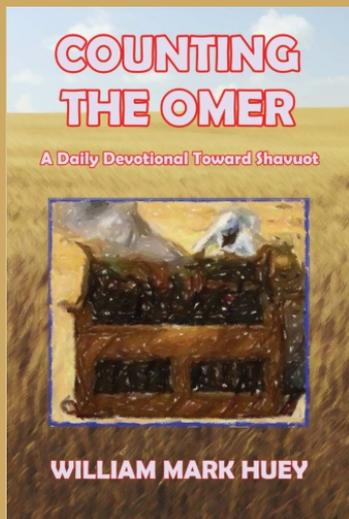
Place the chicken in the crockpot, add the sauce, onion, wine and oregano. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours. This is an easy and delicious meal!

Serve with rice and enjoy!

Please submit your recipes to Margaret Huey at the OIM office for inclusion in this column and our upcoming cookbook "Kosher Your Plate."

Available from TNN Press:

COUNTING THE OMER



A Daily Devotional Toward Shavuot

The seven-week period between the Biblical festivals of Passover and *Shavuot*, or Pentecost, is the season of Counting the Omer (Leviticus 23:10-16; Deuteronomy 16:9-11). Originally in the Tabernacle and Temple of Ancient Israel, the priests were to present special offerings before the Lord each day for the fifty-day count. Psalm 67 was among the hymns recited and employed to offer praise and adoration to Him. Since the destruction of the Second Temple, various Jewish traditions have been developed in order to make the seven-week or fifty-day Omer Count a very special time to focus on God, His blessings, and the important themes of *Shavuot*.

Today's Messianic Believers can surely benefit from any discipline where God's people can review various cripture passages for a set time, and allow themselves to be prepared for great things when the Feast of Weeks is finally observed. The awesome wisdom and goodness of our Heavenly Father are things definitely worthy of

exploration and contemplation, via a reflection upon the themes of various Psalms, and how they relate to our understanding of Shavuot and our faith in Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ).

Counting the Omer: A Daily Devotional Toward Shavuot is a compilation of insightful, encouraging messages that examines a passage from Psalms every day for the fifty-day Omer Count season. Each exhortation is intended to prepare you for the commemoration of *Shavuot* (Pentecost) at the end of seven weeks. Gleaned from the studies and notes of William Mark Huey, it is the author's intent that God's people can not only be energized to Count the Omer themselves--but be *specialy prepared* to experience His presence when the Feast of Weeks finally arrives!

\$17.99 (paperback) plus shipping and handling
\$9.99 (eBook) instant download for Amazon Kindle



**AVAILABLE
IN PAPERBACK
and KINDLE eBook**