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DAY 1

***** The Count (using the I-Count Card) *****

Please follow the "5 steps of counting the Omer" on the I-Count Card (which can be downloaded at <http://omerproject.com/assets/docs/I-Count.pdf>). When you arrive at Step #3, please use the following for the count:

Rabbinic: **Ha-yom yom echad la-omer**

Today is one day of the Omer

Karaite: The Karaites have not yet begun to count the Omer, since it is not yet Shabbat.

***** Sing *****

Ana B'Koach represents the seven sefirot and is recited in Rabbinic prayers wherever there is a symbolic ascent of Divine energy from a lower plane to a higher one, or whenever there is any movement from one reality into the next:

A·na, b'cho·ach g'du·lat y'min·cha ta·tir tz'ru·rah

(Please, with the power of Your great right hand free the bound.)

***** This Week According to Rabbinic Mystical Teachings *****

Week One – Chesed. Generosity, Expansive Lovingkindness, Pure Love, Compassion, Kindness, Flowing Love.

Chesed is the outpouring of love into the universe.

***** This Day According to Rabbinic Mystical Teachings *****

This day: Chesed shebe'Chesed . Love within Love.

One word for Chesed of Chesed: Lovingkindness.

***** This Day's Biblical Figures *****

***** with the Rabbinic Mystical Quality of the Day *****

Masculine: Abraham represents chesed - acts of lovingkindness - during this week. Soon after his circumcision, he still gets up and goes to give visitors food and water.

Feminine: The Shekhinah – During the Exodus, the Shekhinah, the Divine presence, hovers above Israel in pillars of cloud and fire. Later, in the wilderness, the Shekhinah gives Israel manna to eat and water to drink, and appears on Mount Sinai to give them Torah. Throughout history the Shekhinah is Israel's defender and nurturer, hovering over them when they pray and accompanying them when they go into exile. She appears in the renewal of the new moon, in the study of Torah, in the peace of the Sabbath. The Shekhinah is the essence of pure love and generosity. It is proper to begin the counting of the Omer with her.

***** This Day's Rabbinic Refinement of Moral Character *****

Love is the single most powerful and necessary component in life. It is both giving and receiving. Love allows us to reach above and beyond ourselves, to experience another person and to allow that person to experience us. It is the tool by which we learn to experience the highest reality -- G-d. Examine the love aspect of your love.

Ask yourself:

What is my capacity to love another person?

Do I have problems with giving?

Am I stingy or selfish?

Is it difficult for me to let someone else into my life?

Am I afraid of my vulnerability, of opening up and getting hurt?

Exercise for the day:

1) Find a new way to express your love to a dear one.

2) How can we greet the world with our full, loving, hopeful selves?