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OVERVIEW

The counting of the Omer, the forty-nine days from Passover to Shavuot, is from the biblical commandment to count each day. The Omer also represents the link between Passover and Shavuot -- the wandering in the wilderness between freedom and revelation.

Each of the seven weeks between Passover and Shavuot is dedicated to examining and refining one of the seven basic human emotions. The seven weeks, which represent these emotional attributes, further divide into seven days making up the 49 days of the counting. In Hebrew, these emotions are called sefirot.

Some Jews interested in the refinement of moral character, saw the counting of the Omer as a way to meditate on the sefirot and include them in one's own life. Since a fully functional emotion is multidimensional, it includes within itself a blend of all seven attributes.

The Omer Project and how it relates to the San Francisco Avenues: There are 49 numbered avenues in the Richmond and Sunset districts, in perfect correspondence to the 49 days of counting the Omer. (Was G-d on the City Planning Commission, or what?)

Counting the Omer on the 49 streets of the Sunset and the Richmond symbolically also follows the water cycle. Evaporation from the ocean comes on-shore and washes the streets, much as the lessons from Torah wash us as we count the days. Further reinforcing the water cycle metaphor: the Torah has been symbolically compared to the ocean, and Torah scholars have been compared to the fish in the sea.

***** Differences for the count *****

The Omer count varies between Rabbinic Jews, some Kararite Jews, and others. The reason is the interpretation of the wording of the Torah commandment. The Torah instructs us to count starting the day following the day of rest. The key to the variation is the reasoning of what the day after the day of rest is. The Rabbis concluded the day of rest was the first day of Passover. The Karaites determined that the day of rest was Shabbat. Hence the different starting day. The Rabbinites begin the count on the second day of Passover, and the Karaites begin the count on the day after the first Shabbat during Passover. Some years the Omer count of the Rabbinites and Karaites start on the same day if Passover is on a Friday.

There is another issue in regards to the interpretation of the word "day". The Rabbinites count at night, since it is the start of the Jewish day, while the Karaites count in the daytime, using the literal word 'day' as opposed to 'night'.

This year Karaites are counting the Omer beginning on April 12, in the daylight, as it is the first day after Shabbat during Passover. The Rabbinites are counting the Omer beginning on April 9, during the evening, as it is the first day after Passover.

A more complete explanation of these differences in the counts, as well as others, can be found online: <https://www.thetorah.com/article/when-does-counting-the-omer-begin>

The mystical teachings associated with the counting of the Omer is not used by the Karaites, and is purely a Rabbinic practice. We include these teachings for the benefit of those who would like to use them.

We acknowledge the differences between the Karaite and Rabbinite timing of the counting of the Omer, and encourage you to count at the time and on the day that is most comfortable for you.