

**Counting the Omer**  
**with *New Each Day: A Spiritual Practice for Reading Psalms***  
**A Seven-Week Guide**  
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At the suggestion of Rabbi Elana Rabishaw, I have identified seven Reflections for Focus from *New Each Day: A Spiritual Practice for Reading Psalms* (<http://neweachday.ccarpress.org>) that express the themes and imagery of the seven weeks of the Omer, from Pesach to Shavuot. The pieces were originally written to be used as part of a *shir shel yom* cycle, a daily practice for reading psalms, but are reframed here with relevant Biblical texts that can guide us in reflection and introspection during this season of counting. The words invite us to experience what can be new—each day, each week—as we make our way from the parted sea to standing together at Sinai.

I recommend following the Daily Directions found on pages xl–xli of the book with some slight adjustments. You may want to:

- Select your own *nigun* (wordless melody) to help prepare your heart for the practice.
- Offer the blessing (page 2) using the opening section and the closing *chatimah* (blessing), skipping the center section which numbers each day.
- Read the week’s selected Biblical passages in their larger context instead of the Psalm of the Day.

**WEEK 1**  
**UPON GOING OUT OF EGYPT**

**Biblical Text:** Exodus 14:21–22

*It is with these words that our journey from slavery to freedom, from Egypt to Sinai, from Pesach to Shavuot begins, and so too the spiritual journey of the seven weeks of counting the Omer.*

(כא) וַיִּט מֹשֶׁה אֶת־יָדוֹ עַל־הַיָּם וַיּוּלָךְ יְהוָה אֶת־הַיָּם בְּרוּחַ קָדִים עֲזָה כָּל־הַלַּיְלָה וַיִּשָּׂם אֶת־הַיָּם לְחַרְבָּה וַיִּבְקְעוּ הַמַּיִם:  
(כב) וַיָּבֹאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם בַּיַּבֻּשָׁה וְהַמַּיִם לָהֶם חוֹמָה מִיְמִינָם וּמִשְׂמָאלָם:

(21) Then Moses held out his arm over the sea and יהוה drove back the sea with a strong east wind all that night, and turned the sea into dry ground. The waters were split,  
(22) and the Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

**Reflection for Focus:** “God’s East Wind,” pages 64–65.

**WEEK 2**  
**A NEW MONTH FOR HEALING AND HOPE**

**Biblical Text:** Jeremiah 17:13–14

*The enduring words of the prophet invite people of all eras to immerse in the healing possibilities of this season of transition and transformation—to immerse in the living waters of hope as the new Hebrew month of Iyar arrives.*

(יג) מְקוֹה יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה כָּל-עֲזָבֶיךָ יִגְשׁוּ (יסורי) [וְסוּרֵי] בְּאֶרֶץ יִפְתְּבוּ כִּי עֲזָבֶנּוּ  
מְקוֹר מַיִם-חַיִּים אֶת-יְהוָה:  
(יד) רַפְּאֵנִי יְהוָה וְאֶרְפָּא הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי וְאִנְשָׁעָה כִּי תִהְלְתִי אִתָּה:

(13) O Hope of Israel! O ETERNAL One !  
All who forsake You shall be put to shame,  
Those in the land who turn from You shall be doomed,  
For they have forsaken GOD, the Fount of Living Waters.  
(14) Heal me, O ETERNAL One, and let me be healed;  
Save me, and let me be saved;  
For You are my glory.

**Reflection for Focus:** “Streams of Healing,” pages 130–131

**WEEK 3**  
**THE HEAVINESS OF HOLINESS**

**Biblical Text:** Deuteronomy 26:2

*The festival of Shavuot as described in the Torah was an opportunity for each person to gather the first fruits of the field and carry them in a basket to Jerusalem. We can imagine women and men, baskets balanced on their heads, clasped in their hands, weighing down their shoulders, as they prepared to offer their sacred gift, felt a connection to their community, and received blessing from the Holy One.*

(ב) וְלָקַחְתָּ מֵרֵאשִׁית הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר תִּבְרֵא מֵאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן  
לְךָ וְשָׂמְתָּ בַטֶּבֶל וְהִלַּכְתָּ אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשִׁכְּוֹן שְׁמוֹ שָׁם:  
(2) you shall take some of every first fruit of the soil, which you harvest from the land that your God יהוה is giving you, put it in a basket and go to the place where your God יהוה will choose to establish the divine name.

**Reflection for Focus:** “Weight Off My Shoulders,” pages 54–55.

**WEEK 4**  
**A PAUSE TO PRAY**

**Biblical Text: Psalm 51:17**

*This season of counting has ancient Biblical roots yet also incorporates recognition of modern historic events, the Holocaust on Yom HaShoah and the establishment of the State of Israel on Yom HaAtzmaut. These days and each of the forty-nine days of the Omer are opportunities to open our hearts and our mouths so that words of prayer may flow.*

אֲדֹנָי שְׁפֹתַי תִּפְתָּח וּפִי יִגִּיד תְּהִלָּתְךָ:

Adonai, open my lips,  
and let my mouth declare Your praise.

**Reflection for Focus:** “Open Your Mouth Wide,” pages 86–87

**WEEK 5**  
**INFUSED WITH ABUNDANT KINDNESS**

**Biblical Text: Ruth 1:8**

*On Shavuot, communities traditionally read not only the communal story of receiving the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai that is found in the Torah, but also the more intimate and personal narrative of commitment in the Book of Ruth. It is with chesed—God's abundant lovingkindness—made manifest by human actions, that the story moves forward. Chesed is also the very first characteristic in the kabbalistic matrix often used to count each day of the forty-nine-day period, giving each day a new combination of sacred behaviors for us to express.*

(ח) וַתֹּאמֶר נְעָמִי לְשָׂתֵי כָל־תִּיהָ לָכֶנָה שׁוּבְנָה אִשָּׁה לְבַיִת אִמָּהּ (יעשה) [יעש] יְהוָה  
עִמָּכֶם חֲסֹד כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתֶם עִם־הַמֵּתִים וְעִמָּדִי:

(8) But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Turn back, each of you to her mother’s house. May Adonai deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me!

**Reflection for Focus:** “My Translation,” pages 80–81

**WEEK 6**  
**PREPARING TO STAND AT SINAI**

**Biblical Text: Exodus 20:15**

*The Biblical text records that when we gathered at Sinai we did not hear the thunder, but instead we all saw the thunder. An auditory experience became visual, and something that is usually invisible was revealed from the place where it was hidden. The psalmist of Psalm 81:8 perceived this, and we are invited to consider the possibility when it's our turn to stand at Sinai on Shavuot.*

(טו) וְכָל-הָעָם רָאִים אֶת-הַקּוֹלֹת וְאֶת-הַלְפִידִם וְאֵת קוֹל הַשֹּׁפָר וְאֶת-הַהָר עֹשֵׂן  
בִּירָא הָעָם וַיִּגְעוּ וַיַּעֲמָדוּ מֵרָחֵק:

(15) All the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the blare of the horn and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they fell back and stood at a distance.

**Reflection for Focus:** “Where Thunder Hides,” pages 70–71

**WEEK 7**  
**TORAH TO SUSTAIN US**

**Biblical Text: Leviticus 23:15–16**

*This Biblical passage describes the practice of counting seven weeks of seven days in preparation to bring an offering of bread for the celebration we now know as Shavuot. The agricultural celebration described in Leviticus was merged with the narrative of receiving the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, and the metaphor of Torah as sustaining bread for the mind and soul has endured.*

(טו) וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמִּחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת מִיּוֹם הַבִּיאְכֶם אֶת-עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה שֶׁבַע שַׁבָּתוֹת  
תְּמִימֹת תִּהְיֶינָה:  
(טז) עַד מִמִּחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת הַשְּׁבִיעִית תִּסְפְּרוּ חֲמֵשִׁים יוֹם וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם מִנְחָה חֲדָשָׁה  
לִיהוָה:

(15) And from the day on which you bring the sheaf of elevation offering—the day after the sabbath—you shall count off seven weeks. They must be complete:

(16) you must count until the day after the seventh week—fifty days; then you shall bring an offering of new grain to יהוה.

**Reflection for Focus:** “Knead Words of Torah,” pages 132–133.

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