

Sefirat Ha'Omer

With the mitzvah of counting the 49 days, known as Sefirat Ha'Omer, the Torah invites us on a journey into the human psyche, into the soul. There are seven basic emotions that make up the spectrum of human experience. At the root of all forms of enslavement, is a distortion of these emotions. Each of the seven weeks between Passover and Shavuot is dedicated to examining and refining one of them.

The prayer of omer counting here, and the daily reflection below.

Enjoy your journey. Page 283 in your Siddur, or recite below.

The Omer is counted every evening after nightfall, from the second night of Passover till the night before Shavuot

BA-RUCH A-TAH ADO-NAI E-LO-HE-NU ME-LECH HA-OLAM ASHER KID-E-SHA-NU BE-MITZ-VO-TAV VETZI-VA-NU AL SEFI-RAT HA-OMER.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us concerning the counting of the Omer.

Today is one, two, three..... day of the Omer.

May the Merciful One restore unto us the service of the Bet Hamikdash to its place, speedily in our days; Amen, Selah.

Ps 67, For the Choirmaster; a song with instrumental music; a Psalm. May God be gracious to us and bless us; may He make His countenance shine upon us forever; that Your way be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations. The nations will extol You, O God; all the nations will extol You. The nations will rejoice and sing for joy, for You will judge the peoples justly and guide the nations on earth forever. The peoples will extol You, O God; all the peoples will extol You, for the earth will have yielded its produce and God, our God, will bless us. God will bless us; and all, from the farthest corners of the earth, shall fear Him.

We implore You, by the great power of Your right hand, release the captive. Accept the prayer of Your people; strengthen us, purify us, Awesome One. Mighty One, we beseech You, guard as the apple of the eye those who seek Your Oneness. Bless them, cleanse them; bestow upon them forever Your merciful righteousness. Powerful, Holy One, in Your abounding goodness, guide Your congregation. Only and Exalted One, turn to Your people who are mindful of Your holiness. Accept our supplication and hear our cry, You who knows secret thoughts. Blessed be the name of the glory of His kingdom forever and ever.

Master of the universe, You have commanded us through Moses Your servant to count Sefirat Ha-Omer, in order to purify us from our evil and uncleanness. As You have written in Your Torah, "You shall count for yourselves from the day following the day of rest, from the day on which you bring the Omer as a wave-offering; [the counting] shall be for seven full weeks. Until the day following the seventh week shall you count fifty days," so that the souls of Your people Israel may be cleansed from their defilement. Therefore, may it be Your will, Lord our God and God of our fathers, that in the merit of the Sefirat Ha-Omer which I counted today, the blemish that I have caused in the sefirah (insert

attribute... **Chesed ShebeChesed**) be rectified and I may be purified and sanctified with supernal holiness. May abundant bounty thereby be bestowed upon all the worlds. May it rectify our nefesh, ruach and neshamah from every baseness and defect, and may it purify and sanctify us with Your supernal holiness. Amen, selah.

The seven emotional attributes are:

- **Chesed - Loving-kindness, week 1**
- **Gevurah — Justice and discipline, week 2**
- **Tiferet - Harmony, compassion, week 3**
- **Netzach – Endurance, week 4**
- **Hod – Humility, week 5**
- **Yesod – Bonding, week 6**
- **Malchut - Sovereignty, leadership, week 7**

The seven weeks, which represent these emotional attributes, further divide into seven days making up the 49 days of the counting. Since a fully functional emotion is multidimensional, it includes within itself a blend of all seven attributes. Thus, the counting of the first week, which begins on the second night of Pesach, as well as consisting of the actual counting ("Today is day one of the Omer...") would consist of the following structure with suggested meditations:

Upon conclusion of the 49 days we arrive at the 50th day — Mattan Torah. After we have achieved all we can accomplish through our own initiative, traversing and refining every emotional corner of our psyche, we then receive a gift ('mattan' in Hebrew) from above. We receive that which we could not achieve with our own limited faculties. We receive the gift of true freedom — the ability to transcend our human limitations and touch the divine.

WEEK 1 — CHESED: LOVING-KINDNESS

Day 1 — Chesed of Chesed: Loving-kindness in Loving-kindness

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 — God. 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: Find a new way to express your love to a dear one.

Day 2 — Gevurah of Chesed: Discipline in Loving-kindness

Healthy love must always include an element of discipline and discernment; a degree of distance and respect for another's boundaries; an assessment of another's capacity to contain your love. Love must be tempered and directed properly. Ask a parent who, in the name of love, has spoiled a child; or someone who suffocates a spouse with love and doesn't allow them any personal space.

Exercise for the day: Help someone on their terms not on yours. Apply yourself to their specific needs even if it takes effort.

Day 3 — Tiferet of Chesed: Compassion, Harmony in Loving-kindness

Harmony in love is one that blends both the chesed and gevurah aspects of love. Harmonized love includes empathy and compassion. Love is often given with the expectation of receiving love in return. Compassionate love is given freely; expects nothing in return — even when the other doesn't deserve love. Tiferet is giving also to those who have hurt you.

Exercise for the day: Offer a helping hand to a stranger.

Day 4 — Netzach of Chesed: Endurance in Loving-kindness

Is my love enduring? Does it withstand challenges and setbacks? Do I give and withhold love according to my moods or is it constant regardless of the ups and downs of life?

Exercise for the day: Reassure a loved one of the constancy of your love

Day 5 — Hod of Chesed: Humility in Loving-kindness

You can often get locked in love and be unable to forgive your beloved or to bend or compromise your position. Hod introduces the aspect of humility in love; the ability to rise above yourself and forgive or give in to the one you love just for the sake of love even if you're convinced that you're right. Arrogant love is not love.

Exercise for the day: Swallow your pride and reconcile with a loved one with whom you have quarreled.

Day 6 — Yesod of Chesed: Bonding in Loving-kindness

For love to be eternal it requires bonding. A sense of togetherness which actualizes the love in a joint effort. An intimate connection, kinship and attachment, benefiting both parties. This bonding bears fruit; the fruit born out of a healthy union.

Exercise for the day: Start building something constructive together with a loved one

Day 7 — Malchut of Chesed: Nobility in Loving-kindness

Mature love comes with — and brings — personal dignity. An intimate feeling of nobility and regality. Knowing your special place and contribution in this world. Any love that is debilitating and breaks the human spirit is no love at all. For love to be complete it must have the dimension of personal sovereignty.

Exercise for the day: Highlight an aspect of your love that has bolstered your spirit and enriched your life...and celebrate.

WEEK 2 — GEVURAH: JUSTICE, DISCIPLINE, RESTRAINT, AWE

After the miraculous Exodus from Egypt, the Jewish people spent 49 days preparing for the most awesome experience in human history — the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. Just as the Jewish peoples' redemption from Egypt teaches us how to achieve inner freedom in our lives; so too, this 49-day period, called 'Sefirat Ha-Omer' the Counting of the Omer, is a time of intense character refinement and elevation.

During this time, the aspect of the human psyche that most requires refinement is the area of the emotions. The spectrum of human experience consists of seven emotional attributes, or sefirot. This week we continue Sefirat Ha'Omer, utilizing the seven dimensions of the seven emotional attributes. The first week after Pesach was dedicated to examining the aspect of chesed, loving-kindness. The second week corresponds to the emotional attribute of gevurah, discipline or justice.

If love (Chesed) is the bedrock of human expression, discipline (Gevurah) is the channel through which we express love. It gives our life and love direction and focus. Gevurah — discipline and measure — concentrates and directs our efforts, our love in the proper directions.

Day 8 — Chesed of Gevurah: Loving-kindness in Discipline

The underlying intention and motive in discipline is love. Why do we measure our behavior, why do we establish standards and expect people to live up to them — only because of love. Chesed of gevurah is the love in discipline; it is the recognition that your personal discipline and the discipline you expect of others is only an expression of love. It is the understanding that we have no right to judge others; we have a right only to love them and that includes wanting them to be their best.

Ask yourself: when I judge and criticize another is it in any way tinged with any of my own contempt and irritation? Is there any hidden satisfaction in his failure? Or is it only out of love for the other?

Exercise for the day: Before you criticize someone today, think twice: Is it out of concern and love?

Day 9 — Gevurah of Gevurah: Discipline in Discipline

Examine the discipline factor of discipline: Is my discipline reasonably restrained or is it excessive? Do I have enough discipline in my life and in my interactions? Am I organized? Is my time used efficiently? Why do I have problems with discipline and what can I do to enhance it? Do I take time each day for personal accounting of my schedule and accomplishments?

Exercise for the day: Make a detailed plan for spending your day and at the end of the day see if you've lived up to it.

Day 10 — Tiferet of Gevurah: Compassion in Discipline

Underlying and driving discipline must not only be love, but also compassion. Compassion is unconditional love. It is love just for the sake of love, not considering the others position. Tiferet is a result of total selflessness in the eyes of God. You love for no reason; you love because you are a reflection of God. Does my discipline have this element of compassion?

Exercise for the day: Be compassionate to someone you have reproached.

Day 11 — Netzach of Gevurah: Endurance in Discipline

Effective discipline must be enduring and tenacious. Is my discipline consistent or only when forced? Do I follow through with discipline? Am I perceived as a weak disciplinarian?

Exercise for the day: Extend the plan you made on day two for a longer period of time listing short-term and long-term goals. Review and update it each day, and see how consistent you are and if you follow through.

Day 12 — Hod of Gevurah: Humility in Discipline

The results of discipline and might without humility are obvious. The greatest catastrophes have occurred as a result of people sitting in arrogant judgment of others. Am I arrogant in the name of justice (what I consider just)? Do I ever think that I sit on a higher pedestal and bestow judgment on my subjects below? What about my children? Students?

Exercise for the day: Before judging anyone, insure that you are doing so selflessly with no personal bias

Day 13 — Yesod of Gevurah: Bonding in Discipline

For discipline to be effective it must be coupled with commitment and bonding. Both in disciplining yourself and others there has to be a sense that the discipline is important for developing a stronger bond. Not that I discipline you, but that we are doing it together for our mutual benefit.

Exercise for the day: Demonstrate to your child or student how discipline is an expression of intensifying your bond and commitment to each other.

Day 14 — Malchut of Gevurah: Nobility of Discipline

Discipline, like love, must enhance personal dignity. Discipline that breaks a person will backfire. Healthy discipline should bolster self-esteem and help elicit the best in a person; cultivating his sovereignty. Does my discipline cripple the human spirit; does it weaken or strengthen me and others?

Exercise for the day: When disciplining your child or student, foster his self-respect

WEEK 3 — TIFERET — HARMONY, COMPASSION

During the third week of Counting the Omer, we examine the emotional attribute of Tiferet or compassion. Tiferet blends and harmonizes the free outpouring love of Chesed with the discipline of Gevurah. Tiferet possesses this power by introducing a third dimension — the dimension of truth, which is neither love nor discipline and therefore can integrate the two. Truth is accessed through selflessness: rising above your ego and your predispositions, enabling you to realize truth. Truth gives you a clear and objective picture of yours and others' needs. This quality gives Tiferet its name, which means beauty: it blends the differing colors of love and discipline, and this harmony makes it beautiful.

Day 15 — Chesed of Tiferet: Loving-kindness in Compassion

Examine the love aspect of compassion. Ask yourself: Is my compassion tender and loving or does it come across as pity? Is my sympathy condescending and patronizing? Even if my intention is otherwise, do others perceive it as such? Does my compassion overflow with love and warmth; is it expressed with enthusiasm, or is it static and lifeless?

Exercise for the day: When helping someone extend yourself in the fullest way; offer a smile or a loving gesture.

Day 16 — Gevurah of Tiferet: Discipline in Compassion

For compassion to be effective and healthy it needs to be disciplined and focused. It requires discretion both to whom you express compassion, and in the measure of the compassion itself. It is recognizing when compassion should be expressed and when it should be withheld or limited. Discipline in compassion is knowing that being truly compassionate sometimes requires withholding compassion. Because compassion is not an expression of the bestower's needs but a response to the recipient's needs.

Exercise for the day: Express your compassion in a focused and constructive manner by addressing someone's specific needs.

Day 17 — Tiferet of Tiferet: Compassion in Compassion

True compassion is limitless. It is not an extension of your needs and defined by your limited perspective. Compassion for another is achieved by having a selfless attitude, rising above yourself and placing yourself in the other person's situation and experience. Am I prepared and

able to do that? If not, why? Do I express and actualize the compassion and empathy in my heart? What blocks me from expressing it? Is my compassion compassionate or self-serving? Is it compassion that comes out of guilt rather than genuine empathy? How does that affect and distort my compassion? Test yourself by seeing if you express compassion even when you don't feel guilty.

Exercise for the day: Express your compassion in a new way that goes beyond your previous limitations: express it towards someone to whom you have been callous.

Day 18 — Netzach of Tiferet: Endurance in Compassion

Is my compassion enduring and consistent? Is it reliable or whimsical? Does it prevail among other forces in my life? Do I have the capacity to be compassionate even when I'm busy with other activities or only when it's comfortable for me? Am I ready to stand up and fight for another?

Exercise for the day: In the middle of your busy day take a moment and call someone who needs a compassionate word. Defend someone who is in need of sympathy even if it's not a popular position.

Day 19 — Hod of Tiferet: Humility in Compassion

If compassion is not to be condescending, it must include humility. Hod is recognizing that my ability to be compassionate and giving does not make me better than the recipient; it is the acknowledgment and appreciation that by creating one who needs compassion God gave me the gift of being able to bestow compassion. Thus there is no place for haughtiness in compassion.

Do I feel superior because I am compassionate? Do I look down at those that need my compassion? Am I humble and thankful to God for giving me the ability to have compassion for others?

Exercise for the day: Express compassion in an anonymous fashion, not taking any personal credit.

Day 20 — Yesod of Tiferet: Bonding in Compassion

For compassion to be fully realized, it needs bonding. It requires creating a channel between giver and receiver; a mutuality that extends beyond the moment of need. A bond that continues to live on. That is the most gratifying result of true compassion. Do you bond with the one you have compassion for, or do you remain apart? Does your interaction achieve anything beyond a single act of sympathy?

Exercise for the day: Ensure that something eternal is built as a result of your compassion.

Day 21 — Malchut of Tiferet: Nobility in Compassion

Examine the dignity of your compassion. For compassion to be complete (and enhance the other six aspects of compassion) it must recognize and appreciate individual sovereignty. It should boost self-esteem and cultivate human dignity. Both your own dignity and the dignity of the one benefiting from your compassion.

Is my compassion expressed in a dignified manner? Does it elicit dignity in others? Do I recognize the fact that when I experience compassion as dignified it will reflect reciprocally in the one who receives compassion?

Exercise for the day: Rather than just giving charity, help the needy help themselves in a fashion that strengthens their dignity.

WEEK 4 — NETZACH — ENDURANCE

During the fourth week of counting the Omer, we examine and refine the emotional attribute of endurance known as Netzach. Netzach means endurance, fortitude and ambition and is a combination of determination and tenacity. It is a balance of patience, persistence and guts. Endurance is also being reliable and accountable, which establishes security and commitment. Without endurance, any good endeavor or intention has no chance of success. Endurance means to be alive, to be driven by what counts. It is the readiness to fight for what you believe, to go all the way. This, of course, requires that endurance be closely examined to ensure that it is used in a healthy and productive manner.

Day 22 — Chesed of Netzach: Loving-kindness in Endurance

For anything to endure it needs to be loved. A neutral or indifferent attitude will reflect in a marginal commitment. If you have difficulty making commitments, examine how much you love and enjoy the object that requires your commitment. Do I love my work? My family? My choices? For endurance to be effective it needs to be caring and loving. Does my endurance cause me to be, or seem to be, inflexible? Does my drive and determination cause me to be controlling? Am I too demanding? Do others (my employees, friends, children) cooperate with me out of the sheer force of my will and drive, or out of love?

Exercise for the day: When fighting for something you believe in, pause a moment to ensure that it is accomplished in a loving manner.

Day 23 — Gevurah of Netzach: Discipline in Endurance

Examine the discipline of your endurance. Endurance must be directed toward productive goals and expressed in a constructive manner. Is my endurance and determination focused to help cultivate good habits and break bad ones? Or is it the other way around? Does my endurance come from strength or weakness? Does it come out of deep conviction or out of defensiveness? Do I use my endurance against itself by being tenacious in my lack of determination?

Exercise for the day: Break one bad habit today.

Day 24 — Tiferet of Netzach: Compassion in Endurance

Healthy endurance, directed to develop good qualities and modifying bad ones, will always be compassionate. The compassion of endurance reflects a most beautiful quality of endurance: an enduring commitment to help another grow. Endurance without compassion is misguided and selfish. Endurance needs to be not just loving to those who deserve love, but also compassionate to the less fortunate. Does my determination compromise my compassion for others? Am I able to rise above my ego and empathize with my competitors? Am I gracious in victory?

Exercise for the day: Be patient and listen to someone who usually makes you impatient.

Day 25- Netzach of Netzach: Endurance in Endurance

Everyone has willpower and determination. We have the capacity to endure much more than we can imagine, and to prevail under the most trying of circumstances.

Ask yourself: Is my behavior erratic? Am I inconsistent and unreliable? Since I have will and determination, why am I so mercurial? Am I afraid of accessing my endurance and committing? Do I fear being trapped by my commitment? If yes, why? Is it a reaction to some past trauma? Instead of cultivating endurance in healthy areas, have I developed a capacity for endurance of

unhealthy experiences? Do I endure more pain than pleasure? Do I underestimate my capacity to endure?

Exercise for the day: Commit yourself to developing a new good habit.

Day 26 — Hod of Netzach: Humility in Endurance

Yielding — which is a result of humility — is an essential element of enduring. Standing fast can sometimes be a formula for destruction. The oak, lacking the ability to bend in the hurricane, is uprooted. The reed, which yields to the wind, survives without a problem. Do I know when to yield, out of strength not fear? Why am I often afraid to yield?

Endurance is fueled by inner strength. Hod of Netzach is the humble recognition and acknowledgement that the capacity to endure and prevail comes from the soul that God gave each person. This humility does not compromise the drive of endurance; on the contrary, it intensifies it, because human endurance can go only so far and endure only so much, whereas endurance that comes from the Divine soul is limitless.

Do I attribute my success solely to my own strength and determination? Am I convinced that I am all-powerful due to my level of endurance? Where do I get the strength at times when everything seems so bleak?

Exercise for the day: When you awake, acknowledge God for giving you a soul with the extraordinary power and versatility to endure despite trying challenges. This will allow you to draw energy and strength for the entire day.

Day 27 — Yesod of Netzach: Bonding in Endurance

Bonding is an essential quality of endurance. It expresses your unwavering commitment to the person or experience you are bonding with, a commitment so powerful that you will endure all to preserve it. Endurance without bonding will not endure.

Exercise for the day: To ensure the endurance of your new resolution, bond with it immediately. This can be assured by promptly actualizing your resolution in some constructive deed or committing yourself to another.

Day 28 — Malchus of Netzach: Nobility in Endurance

Sovereignty is the cornerstone of endurance. Endurance that encompasses the previous six qualities is indeed a tribute and testimony to the majesty of the human spirit. Is my endurance dignified? Does it bring out the best in me? When faced with hardships do I behave like a king or queen, walking proudly with my head up, confident in my God-given strengths, or do I cower and shrivel up in fear? Exercise for the day: Fight for a dignified cause.

WEEK 5 — HOD — HUMILITY

During the fifth week of counting the Omer, we examine and refine the emotional attribute of Hod or humility. Humility — and the resulting yielding — should not be confused with weakness and lack of self-esteem. Hod or humility is modesty — it is acknowledgment (from the root of the Hebrew word "hoda'ah"). It is saying "thank you" to God. It is clearly recognizing your qualities and strengths and acknowledging that they are not your own; they were given to you by God for a higher purpose than just satisfying your own needs. Humility is modesty; it is recognizing how small you are which allows you to realize how large you can become. And that makes humility so formidable.

A full cup cannot be filled. When you're filled with yourself and your needs, "I and nothing else", there is no room for more. When you "empty" yourself before something greater than yourself, your capacity to receive increases beyond your previously perceived limits. Humility is the key to

transcendence; to reach beyond yourself. Only true humility gives you the power of total objectivity. Humility is sensitivity; it is healthy shame out of recognition that you can be better than you are and that you can expect more of yourself. Although humility is silent it is not a void. It is a dynamic expression of life that includes all seven qualities of love, discipline, compassion, endurance, humility, bonding and sovereignty.

Day 29 — Chesed of Hod: Loving-kindness in Humility

Examine the love in your humility. Healthy humility is not demoralizing; it brings love and joy not fear. Humility that lacks love has to be reexamined for its authenticity. Sometimes humility can be confused with low self-esteem, which would cause it to be unloving. Humility brings love because it gives you the ability to rise above yourself and love another. Does my humility cause me to be more loving and giving? More expansive? Or does it inhibit and constrain me? Exercise for the day: Before praying with humility and acknowledgment of God, give some charity. It will enhance your prayers.

Day 30 — Gevurah of Hod: Discipline in Humility

Humility must be disciplined and focused. When should my humility cause me to compromise and when not? In the name of humility do I sometimes remain silent and neutral in the face of wickedness? Humility must also include respect and awe for the person or experience before whom you stand humble. If my humility is wanting, is it because I don't respect another? Exercise for the day: Focus in on your reluctance to commit in a given area to see if it originates from a healthy, humble place.

Day 31 — Tiferet of Hod: Compassion in Humility

Examine if your humility is compassionate. Does my humility cause me to be self-contained and anti-social or does it express itself in empathy for others. Is my humility balanced and beautiful? Or is it awkward? Just as humility brings compassion, compassion can lead one to humility. If you lack humility, try acting compassionately, which can help bring you to humility. Exercise for the day: Express a humble feeling in an act of compassion.

Day 32 — Netzach of Hod: Endurance in Humility

Examine the strength and endurance of your humility. Does my humility withstand challenges? Am I firm in my positions or do I waffle in the name of humility? Humility and modesty should not cause one to feel weak and insecure. Netzach of Hod underscores the fact that true humility does not make you into a "doormat" for others to step on; on the contrary, humility gives you enduring strength. Is my humility perceived as weakness? Does that cause others to take advantage of me? Exercise for the day: Demonstrate the strength of your humility by initiating or actively participating in a good cause.

Day 33 — Hod of Hod: Humility in Humility

Everyone has humility and modesty in their hearts, the question is the measure and manner in which one consciously feels it. Am I afraid to be too humble? Do I mask and protect my modesty with aggressive behavior? Humility must also be examined for its genuineness. Is my humility humble? Or is it yet another expression of arrogance? Do I take too much pride in my humility? Do I flaunt it? Is it self-serving? Is my humility part of a crusade or is it genuine? Exercise for the day: Be humble just for its own sake.

Day 34 — Yesod of Hod: Bonding in Humility

Humility should not be a lonely experience. It ought to result in deep bonding and commitment. There is no stronger bond than one that comes out of humility. Does my humility separate me from others or bring us closer? Does my humility produce results? Long term results? Does it create an everlasting foundation upon which I and others can rely and build. Exercise for the day: Use your humility to build something lasting.

Day 35 — Malchut of Hod: Nobility in Humility

Walking humbly is walking tall. Dignity is the essence of humility and modesty. The splendor of humility is majestic and aristocratic. Humility that suppresses the human spirit and denies individual sovereignty is not humility at all. Does my humility make me feel dignified? Do I feel alive and vibrant?

Exercise for the day: Teach someone how humility and modesty enhance human dignity.

WEEK 6 — YESOD — BONDING

During the sixth week of counting the Omer, we examine and refine the emotional attribute of Yesod or bonding. Bonding means connecting; not only feeling for another, but being attached to him. Not just a token commitment, but total devotion. It creates a channel between giver and receiver. Bonding is eternal. It develops an everlasting union that lives on forever through the perpetual fruit it bears.

Bonding is the foundation of life. The emotional spine of the human psyche. Every person needs bonding to flourish and grow. The bonding between mother and child; between husband and wife; between brothers and sisters; between close friends. Bonding is affirmation; it gives one the sense of belonging; that "I matter", "I am significant and important". It establishes trust — trust in yourself and trust in others. It instills confidence. Without bonding and nurturing we cannot realize and be ourselves.

Day 36 — Chesed of Yesod: Loving-kindness of Bonding

Love is the heart of bonding. You cannot bond without love. Love establishes a reliable base on which bonding can build. If you have a problem bonding, examine how much you love the one (or the experience) with which you wish to bond. Do I try to bond without first fostering a loving attitude? Is my bonding expressed in a loving manner?

Exercise for the day: Demonstrate the bond you have with your child or friend through an act of love.

Day 37 — Gevurah of Yesod: Discipline of Bonding

Bonding must be done with discretion and careful consideration with whom and with what you bond. Even the healthiest and closest bonding needs "time out", a respect for each individual's space. Do I overbond? Am I too dependent on the one I bond with? Is he too dependent on me? Do I bond out of desperation? Do I bond with healthy, wholesome people?

Exercise for the day: Review the discipline in your bonding experiences to see if it needs adjustment.

Day 38 — Tiferet of Yesod: Compassion in Bonding

Bonding needs to be not only loving but also compassionate, feeling your friend's pain and empathizing with him. Is my bonding conditional? Do I withdraw when I am uncomfortable with my friend's troubles?

Exercise for the day: Offer help and support in dealing with an ordeal of someone with whom you have bonded.

Day 39 — Netzach of Yesod: Endurance in Bonding

An essential component of bonding is its endurance; its ability to withstand challenges and setbacks. Without endurance there is no chance to develop true bonding. Am I totally committed to the one with whom I bond? How much will I endure and how ready am I to fight to maintain this bond? Is the person I bond with aware of my devotion?

Exercise for the day: Demonstrate the endurance level of your bonding by confronting a challenge that obstructs the bond.

Day 40 — Hod of Yesod: Humility of Bonding

Humility is crucial in healthy bonding. Arrogance divides people. Preoccupation with your own desires and needs separates you from others. Humility allows you to appreciate another person and bond with him. Healthy bonding is the union of two distinct people, with independent personalities, who join for a higher purpose than satisfying their own needs. True humility comes from recognizing and acknowledging God in your life. Am I aware of the third partner — God — in bonding? And that this partner gives me the capacity to unite with another, despite our distinctions.

Exercise for the day: When praying acknowledge God specifically for helping you bond with others.

Day 41 — Yesod of Yesod: Bonding in Bonding

Every person needs and has the capacity to bond with other people, with significant undertakings and with meaningful experiences. Do I have difficulty bonding? Is the difficulty in all areas or only in certain ones? Do I bond easily with my job, but have trouble bonding with people? Or vice versa?

Examine the reasons for not bonding. Is it because I am too critical and find fault in everything as an excuse for not bonding? Am I too locked in my own ways? Is my not bonding a result of discomfort with vulnerability? Have I been hurt in my past bonding experiences? Has my trust been abused? Is my fear of bonding a result of the deficient bonding I experienced as a child?

To cultivate your capacity to bond, even if you have valid reasons to distrust, you must remember that God gave you a Divine soul that is nurturing and loving and you must learn to recognize the voice within, which will allow you to experience other people's souls and hearts. Then you can slowly drop your defenses when you recognize someone or something you can truly trust.

One additional point: Bonding breeds bonding. When you bond in one area of your life, it helps you bond in other areas.

Exercise for the day: Begin bonding with a new person or experience you love by committing designated time each day or week to spend together constructively.

Day 42 — Malchut of Yesod: Nobility in Bonding

Bonding must enhance a person's sovereignty. It should nurture and strengthen your own dignity and the dignity of the one you bond with. Does my bonding inhibit the expression of my personality and qualities? Does it overwhelm the one I bond with?

Exercise for the day: Emphasize and highlight the strengths of the one with whom you bond.

WEEK 7 — MALCHUT — SOVEREIGNTY, LEADERSHIP

During the seventh and final week of counting the Omer, we examine and refine the attribute of Malchut — nobility, sovereignty and leadership. Sovereignty is a state of being rather than an activity. Nobility is a passive expression of human dignity that has nothing of its own except that which it receives from the other six emotions. True leadership is the art of selflessness; it is only a reflection of a Higher will. On the other hand, Malchut manifests and actualizes the character and majesty of the human spirit. It is the very fiber of what makes us human.

Malchut is a sense of belonging. Knowing that you matter and that you make a difference. That you have the ability to be a proficient leader in your own right. It gives you independence and confidence. A feeling of certainty and authority. When a mother lovingly cradles her child in her arms and the child's eyes meet the mother's affectionate eyes, the child receives the message: "I am wanted and needed in this world. I have a comfortable place where I will always be loved. I have nothing to fear. I feel like royalty in my heart." This is Malchut, kingship.

Day 43 — Chesed of Malchut: Loving-kindness in Nobility

Healthy sovereignty is always kind and loving. An effective leader needs to be warm and considerate. Does my sovereignty make me more loving? Do I exercise my authority and leadership in a caring manner? Do I impose my authority on others?

Exercise for the day: Do something kind for your subordinates

Day 44 — Gevurah of Malchut: Discipline in Nobility

Although sovereignty is loving, it needs to be balanced with discipline. Effective leadership is built on authority and discipline. There is another factor in the discipline of sovereignty: determining the area in which you have jurisdiction and authority.

Do I recognize when I am not an authority? Do I exercise authority in unwarranted situations? Am I aware of my limitations as well as my strengths? Do I respect the authority of others?

Exercise for the day: Before taking an authoritative position on any given issue, pause and reflect if you have the right and the ability to exercise authority in this situation.

Day 45 — Tiferet of Malchut: Compassion in Nobility

A good leader is a compassionate one. Is my compassion compromised because of my authority? Do I realize that an integral part of dignity is compassion? Tiferet — harmony — is critical for successful leadership. Do I manage a smooth-running operation? Am I organized? Do I give clear instructions to my subordinates? Do I have difficulty delegating power? Do we have frequent staff meetings to coordinate our goals and efforts?

Exercise for the day: Review an area where you wield authority and see if you can polish it up and increase its effectiveness by curtailing excesses and consolidating forces.

Day 46 — Netzach of Malchut: Endurance in Nobility

A person's dignity and a leader's success are tested by his endurance level. Will and determination reflect the power and majesty of the human spirit. How determined am I in reaching my goals? How strong is my conviction to fight for a dignified cause? How confident am I in myself? Is my lack of endurance a result of my low self-esteem? Do I mask my insecurities by finding other excuses for my low endurance level?

Exercise for the day: Act on something that you believe in but have until now been tentative about. Take the leap and just do it!

Day 47 — Hod of Malchut: Humility in Nobility

Sovereignty is God's gift to each individual. Hod of Malchut is the humble appreciation of this exceptional gift. Does my sovereignty and independence humble me? Am I an arrogant leader? Do I appreciate the special qualities I was blessed with?

Exercise for the day: Acknowledge God for creating you with personal dignity

Day 48 — Yesod of Malchut: Bonding in Nobility

Examine the bonding aspect of your sovereignty. Healthy independence should not prevent you from bonding with another person. On the contrary: self-confidence allows you to respect and trust another's sovereignty and ultimately bond with him. That bond will strengthen your own sovereignty, rather than sacrifice it.

Does my sovereignty prevent me from bonding? Could that be because of deeper insecurities of which I am unaware? Do I recognize the fact that a fear of bonding reflects a lack of self-confidence in my own sovereignty?

Exercise for the day: Actualize your sovereignty by intensifying your bond with a close one.

Day 49 — Malchut of Malchut: Nobility in Nobility

Examine the sovereignty of your sovereignty. Does it come from deep-rooted inner confidence in myself? Or is it just a put-on to mask my insecurities? Does that cause my sovereignty to be excessive? Am I aware of my uniqueness as a person? Of my personal contribution?

Exercise for the day: Take a moment and concentrate on yourself, on your true inner self, not on your performance and how you project to others; and be at peace with yourself knowing that God created a very special person which is you.

After the 49 days of Counting the Omer, after having fully achieved inner renewal by merit of having assessed and developed each of our 49 attributes, we arrive at the fiftieth day. On this day we celebrate the Festival of Shavuot, the giving of the Torah (Matan Torah). After we have accomplished all we can through our own initiative, then we are worthy to receive a gift (matan) from Above which we could not have achieved with our own limited faculties. We receive the ability to reach and touch the Divine; not only to be cultivated human beings who have refined all of our personal characteristics, but divine human beings who are capable of expressing ourselves above and beyond the definitions and limitations of our beings.

Shavuot!!!!

Chag Sameach,

B'nai Elohim.