

Sefirat Ha'omer [Counting of the Omer] worksheet

Background:

This worksheet is based on a meditation by Harav Ginsburgh that forms the basis of an entire book titled *Klal Gadol Batorah*. To date, this volume has not been translated into Hebrew, but you can purchase the pdf through us.

The meditation is based on Rabbi Akiva's statement that the general principle of the Torah is the words, "You shall love your fellow as yourself" (וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ – זֶה פְּלִל גְּדוֹל) (בְּתוֹרָה). These 3 words appear in the Torah portion of Kedoshim, in the Book of Vayikra (Leviticus). Extrapolating from Rabbi Akiva's statement, just as the general principle of the entire Torah is to be found in the middle of the 5 books of the Torah (Vayikra is the middle book), so each book (chumash) should have its own general principle that encapsulates its essence. In his book, Harav Ginsburgh identifies these 5 "verses." We put the word verses in quotes because the "verse" for *Bamidbar* is actually 3 verses that make up *Birkat Cohanim* [the Priestly Blessing].

Together these 5 verses have 49 words, which therefore can be ordered in a square figure and create a one-to-one correspondence with the 49 days of *Sefirat Ha'omer*. It is common knowledge that there are a plethora of such one-to-one correspondences that form the major part of the *kavanot* of *Sefirat Ha'omer*.

What is special about this *kavanah* is that it highlights how the central point of tikun, of rectification that we need to focus on during *Sefirat Ha'omer* is love of our fellow Jew, וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ, which in the figurate depiction of the 49 words are situated in the exact center of the square. This is a powerful graphic illustration of the centrality of Rabbi Akiva's statement even among the other general verses of the Torah, and ties in to the fact that 24,000 of his disciples died during *Sefirat Ha'omer* for lack of devotion to loving and respecting one another.

Knowing these 5 "verses," that are the Torah's essence, by heart is the base minimum of knowing the entire Torah by heart.

Worksheet goals:

1. To identify the 5 central verses of the Torah
2. To know these verses by heart
3. To be able to draw 49 words as a square of 7

Prior knowledge:

1. Ability to find a verse in the Torah by book, chapter, and verse.
2. Ability to recognize square numbers.

Instructor preparation:

Print out and complete the worksheets for yourself.

Be prepared to discuss the story of the 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva who died during *Sefirat Ha'omer*.

Other possibilities

Ask the students to identify the middle point of the square numerically (it is 25) and point out that it too is a square number. This opens up the topic of the midpoint of a number. See our worksheets for 1st grade math focusing on the midpoint.

Every day of the *sefirah* has a particular *tzadik* connected to it. Tell stories about the *tzadikim* whose *yahrzeit* [day of passing] falls on the 24th, 25th, and 26th days of the Omer and how they in particular relate to the mitzvah of **ואהבת לרעך כמוך**.

Worksheet for Sefirat Ha'omer**Copy the correct answer**

When do we start counting the Omer?

1. On the first night of Pesach
 2. On the second night of Pesach
 3. On the night of the seventh day of Pesach
- _____
- _____

When do we finish counting the Omer?

1. On Shavu'ot
 2. On Lag Ba'omer
 3. On the day before Shavu'ot
- _____
- _____

How many weeks are there in Sefirat Ha'omer?

1. 6
 2. 7
 3. 8
- _____
- _____

How many days are there in Sefirat Ha'omer?

1. 50
 2. 51
 3. 49
- _____
- _____

What figure fits the number of days of Sefirat Ha'omer

1. The square of 7
 2. The triangle of 9
 3. The square of 8
- _____
- _____

Write the numbers from 1 to 49 (or apply 49 stickers) in the following matrix in the form of a square

Fill-in the missing words in the following 5 "pesukim."

When copying Hashem's Names, make sure to use abbreviations, such as ה' for Havayah and אלקים instead of אלהים

סֵפֶר בְּרֵאשִׁית (פָּרָק א, פְּסוּק א)

בְּרֵאשִׁית _____ הָאָרֶץ.

סֵפֶר שְׁמוֹת (פָּרָק כ פְּסוּק ב)

אֲנֹכִי _____

עֲבָדִים.

סֵפֶר וַיִּקְרָא (פָּרָק יֵט פְּסוּק יח)
 לֹא תִקֵּם _____
 ה' _____

סֵפֶר בְּמִדְבָּר (פָּרָק ו פְּסוּקִים כד, כה, כו)
 יִבְרַכְךָ _____
 יֵאָר _____
 יֵשָׂא _____
 שְׁלוֹם.

סֵפֶר דְּבָרִים (פָּרָק ו, פְּסוּק ד)
 שָׁמַע _____

Copy the correct answer

How many total words in all the pesukim?
 1. 50
 2. 49
 3. 48

You have seen this number before. What figure fits the number of total words in all the pesukim?
 1. The square of 7
 2. The triangle of 9
 3. The square of 8

Don't forget to fill the square starting with the top-right corner and then go from right to left.

Copy the words of the 5 "pesukim" into this shape of the square of 7

Answer the following questions

Now look at the figure you've made and copy the 3 words in its center (the words in the boxes with the darker border):

What do these words mean?

Who is it that said that these three words are the most general principle of the Torah?

1. Moshe Rabbeinu
2. Hillel
3. Rabbi Akiva

What special connection is there between these 3 words and Sefirat Ha'omer?
