

Counting Up

Facilitator Guide

**What can we learn from Jewish tradition about the act of counting?
How might counting help us keep the awareness of the plight of the captives in our hearts and in the minds of others?**

FRAMING THE ISSUE

During the period between Passover and the holiday of Shavuot, there is a unique commandment to **Count the Omer**- to count each of the 49 days, seven weeks, from the second day of Passover, until Shavuot. Inspired by this Jewish concept of counting the days of the Omer, we will explore the connection between counting and making things count. We will find ways to count the days the captives have been held in captivity, and use our counting as a way to raise awareness of their plight.

LET'S EXPLORE

Study & Discussion:

After framing the topic with your learners, divide them into small groups (2-4) to engage with the text study on the source sheet and discuss the questions on the sheet.

Learn about the call to count the days of captivity:

Rachel Goldberg, mother of hostage Hersh Goldberg Polin, began marking the number of days her son was in captivity quite early on. It became part of her morning ritual, where she would write the number of days on a piece of masking tape and tape it on her shirt, over her heart. She also created a large poster on her porch, facing the street with the number of days written on it. Every day, when she wakes up and her son has not been returned, she marks the new number in both those ways. She has continued to do so every single day. To date, at the time of writing of this content, her son has still not been returned.

On the 95th day of captivity, heading towards the milestone number of 100 days in captivity, Rachel put out a public call to encourage others to share the burden of counting with her.

Watch her call here on [Instagram](#) or here on [Youtube](#).

This plea received much support and publicity around the world, and the family said they hope to reach at least one million people all over the world to join.

Info For Facilitator



Target Audience:

Middle school, High School, Young Adults, Adults



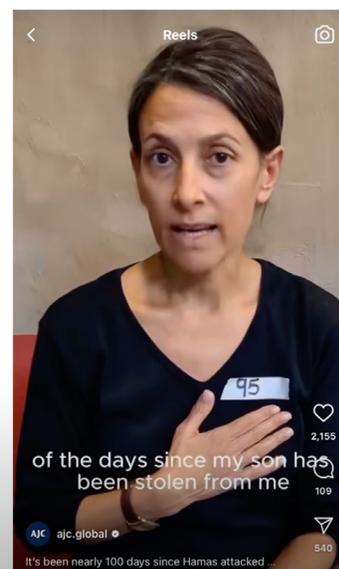
Length Of Program:

45- 60 minutes



Materials & Prep:

- Printed copies of the source sheets for each participant
- Roll(s) of masking tape
- Black sharpie markers
- For bead activity: Large safety pins, yellow paint and paint brushes, number beads, tiny ziplock bags.
- Devices for watching the video



TAKE ACTION!

We have learned about the significance of counting the days of captivity on a daily basis- whether it's a way of internally keeping the issue and awareness in our own minds, or as a way to communicate it outwardly to others.

Below are a few ways to turn daily counting into tangible action with your students:



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Masking Tape:

Inspired by Rachel Goldberg's call to join her and help carry the weight she is feeling, one way of counting the days is to write the number of days on a piece of masking tape and wear it on your shirt, above your heart. Many people have joined this call and do it on a daily basis.

Safety Pins and Beads:

The "Firehawks for Israel" students from Shalhevet High School in Los Angeles initiated a counting project. They painted large safety pins the color yellow (to resonate with the yellow ribbon) and created small packets with number beads and gave them out to others. Each day, one can put the correct number of days on the safety pin, using the beads.

This is a great activity to prepare with your students- it can also be modified to use the number beads in other ways such on bracelets or necklaces, but it should be easy to change on a daily basis.

היום שישה עשר יום שהם שני שבועות ושני ימים בעומר והם 216 יום לשבי החטופים.
הרחמן הוא ישיבם לביתם בשלום במהרה בימינו אמן סלה.

*Today is sixteen days which are two weeks and two days in the Omer and 216 days of captivity for the hostages.
May G-d return them to their homes in peace speedily, Amen.*

Social Media Images or Frames:

Tamar Meir decided to create a visual that corresponds the counting of the days of the Omer with the counting of the days of captivity (it happens they are numerically aligned, 200 days apart). She designed a powerful image which she posts on her social media accounts each day. She adds words that combine the text of counting the Omer, along with the counting of the days, as well as a short prayer for their return, to ritualize it even more.

Design with your students an image or frame that can be shared on social media, as an additional way to show the daily counting, raising awareness and encouraging conversation and questions.

These counting activities can be done to encourage your students to take on the counting as individuals, or to work together as a group, to encourage others to do so:

- **Individual:** Encourage each learner to take on a personal commitment to find a way to mark the days in captivity on a daily basis- this repetitive act keeps the issue on the forefront of everyone's minds. It can be done as a private action, (such as on your heart or in your home) or a public facing act.
- **Group:** Together, our actions are stronger and have more impact. Brainstorm with the group an opportunity to create ways or events to encourage others to count as well: asking friends, colleagues, family members, neighbors and community groups, along with community leaders and social influencers.

This could be as simple as setting up a stand at a public event and giving out pieces of masking tape with the daily number written on it or giving out safety pin and number packets to students throughout your school or organization. Or it could be a social media campaign, trying to reach an even broader circle of people.

CLOSING INTENTION

- After this session, what have I learned about the act of counting daily?
- What is one thing I am taking away from this learning and activity?