בס"ד
IYAR
5785

אזמרה לשמך

פסקי הלכות ותשובות מפי מורנו הגאון הגדול רבי עמרם פריד שליט"א

Hilchos Sefiras Ha'Omer

Sefiras Ha'Omer

1. Someone who forgot to count at night should count during the following day without a Bracha. He may then continue counting on the following nights with a Bracha. If he forgot to count also during the day, he continues counting without a Bracha.

2. If a person is uncertain whether he counted on a particular day or doubts the accuracy of his count, he may continue counting with a Bracha. This applies even if the individual believes he probably made a mistake [מחמת ספק ספיקא]. Even if such uncertainties are not isolated incidents but occurred several times he may still continue counting on the following days with a Bracha.

3. If he remembered to count at the end of the day after Shekiah, as long as it was within 13 ½ minutes from the time of Shekiah, he may continue counting on the following nights with a Bracha [מכיון דהוי ספק יום וא"כ יש ספק ספיקא].

4. It is preferable that women belonging to the Ashkenazi communities should count without a Bracha. However, if she is convinced that she will not leave out a single day, she may count with a Bracha.

5. A child who has reached the age of Chinuch, should be educated to count every day with a Bracha. If he left out one day, he should be educated to continue counting without a Bracha [שע"ת סי' תפ"ט ס"ק כ'].

6. There is a discussion in the Poskim regarding a child who became Bar Mitzvah during the days of Sefiras Ha'Omer, as to whether he continues counting with or without a Bracha [מנחת חינוך מצוה ש"ו, שע"ת סי' תפ"ט ס"ק כ']. If he forgot to count on one of the days preceding his Bar Mitzvah, he certainly continues without a Bracha.

To be aware of the correct count

7. It is correct to know before the Bracha which day he is about to count. Bedieved he fulfills the Mitzvah even if only after the Bracha he heard from someone else which day he should be counting.

Performing Melachos and eating before counting

8. After Shekiah, one may not perform a Melachah that tends to take an extended amount of time. So too, one may not eat more than a Kebeitzah of bread or Mezonos before counting the Omer, unless he appoints someone to remind him to count after his meal. One can be lenient to rely on setting an alarm clock or a cell-phone to remind him to count, if the words "Sefiras Ha'Omer" will appear on the screen of the device.

Omitted days/weeks

9. If he counted only the days but not the weeks, he should count again correctly but without another Bracha. Ideally he should be Yotzei with the Bracha from someone else counting that night. (This applies to any case where he counts without a Bracha). If he did not recount mentioning also the weeks, he can nevertheless continue counting on the following nights with a Bracha.

10. If he counted only the weeks and not the days – if this occurred on a day where the week is completed (e.g. the 7th or the 14th day) he counts again correctly with a Bracha. However, if this was on any other day in the middle of the week of the count (e.g. on the 8th day he counted "today is one week and one day to the Omer"), he should count again without a Bracha. If he forgot to count again, he may continue counting on the following nights with a Bracha.

11. If he counted correctly the number of days but made a mistake when mentioning the weeks, it is as if he counted only the days and follows the Halacha outlined above. Similarly if he made a mistake with the days but counted correctly the weeks, it follows the above mentioned Halachos of someone who counted only the weeks.

If the count was mentioned when asking/answering

12. If someone who had not yet counted that night was asked “How many days is it today”, he should answer "Yesterday was …". If he answered “Today is day …”, he cannot count later with a Bracha. This Halacha applies only during the first week of the Omer when the weeks are not counted. After the first week when one counts both the weeks and the days, if when answering he mentioned only how many days are to be counted but did not mention the weeks, he can count later in the evening with a Bracha. The reason for this is, since he did not say the accurate count (but omitted the weeks, as above), it is evident that he did not intend to fulfill the Mitzvah. However, if he forgot to later count properly with a Bracha, he may still count on the following nights with a Bracha. This follows the general rule that when doubts arise regarding Sefiras Ha’Omer, one can take into consideration the majority opinion of the Rishonim who contend that each day is a Mitzvah for itself. In the above case, since according to the opinions that Mitzvos done without Kavana are valid, it is considered as having counted validly when answering his friend, hence that day was not left out.

13. If when asking, he correctly specifies the count in his question, it would seem that he may later recite the Bracha when counting even during the first week of the Sefira (when weeks are not mentioned). This differs from the previous scenario where the respondent cannot later count with a Bracha, because a count framed as a question does not constitute a valid count [ואף אם נאמר שספירה מספק נחשבת לספירה, ע' דבר אברהם חלק א' סי' ל"ד, בלשון שאלה אינה נחשבת לספירה, ע' כף החיים סי' תפ"ט אות ס"א]. If he did not count again, it requires further insight as to whether he can continue to count on the following nights with a Bracha.

14. If on the 33rd day he said, “Today is Lag Ba’Omer”, since he had no intention whatsoever to count the Sefira, he counts again later with a Bracha. However, after the Shekiah at the beginning of Lag Ba’Omer he should avoid saying “Today is Lag Ba’Omer”.

The same applies to any other day, if while learning the Halachos of Sefiras Ha’Omer he said “Today is …” , he counts later with a Bracha. However, as above, one should try to avoid mentioning the relevant day of the Sefira count until he has counted with a Bracha.

15. If someone wrote “Today is … days to the Omer”, he still counts later with a Bracha. If he did not do so, it is questionable if on the following nights he can continue counting with a Bracha or not.

16. If after counting incorrectly he immediately [ר"ל תוך כדי דיבור] corrected his mistake, it is valid. [One does not have to repeat the word “Hayom”]. If he only realized his mistake later [ר"ל לאחר כדי דיבור], he must count again with a Bracha.

17. Someone who counted correctly but then impulsively re-counted incorrectly [והיינו שתוך כדי דיבור חזר וספר יום אחר בגלל שחשב שטעה בספירה הראשונה], he may continue counting on the following nights with a Bracha [שתוך כדי דיבור מועיל רק לתקן ולא לקלקל].

18. It would seem that if a person left out a day but was in Shul and heard the Chazan count on that day after Maariv, he can continue counting the following nights with a Bracha.

19. If someone is davening Mincha close to Shekiah and remembers that he did not yet count that day, he may not interrupt his Shemoneh Esrei to count. If he concluded within 13 ½ minutes from the time of Shekiah, he should then count (obviously without a Bracha). On the following nights, he may continue with a Bracha.

20. Even if someone anticipates potentially missing a day of the Sefira, e.g. he is scheduled then for surgery, he should still begin counting with a blessing (unlike women, the difference being that men are obligated Me’iker Hadin).

21. A Chazan who forgot to count on one of the earlier days of the Sefira and will be embarrassed when standing in front of the Tzibur if he were not to recite the Bracha as is customary - it is not really Lechatchila to ask one of the congregants to refrain from reciting his own Bracha and be Yotzei with the public recitation of the Chazan's. However, one who is lenient has upon whom to rely.

22. During the days of the Sefira it is preferable not to daven Maariv before sunset, even on Friday night. If one davens Maariv early, he should not count until nightfall.

Haircuts; Shaving

23. During the days of the Sefira one does not have a haircut or shave. One may trim the moustache if it disturbs him when eating.

24. Married women belonging to the Eidut Ha'Mizrach may cut their hair during the Sefira days. The same applies to girls who are in Shidduchim. Ashkenazi women may be lenient if necessary.

25. The custom is not to give a haircut even to young children during the Sefira. However, if a child's hair is disturbing him, one can be lenient.

26. It is permitted to give a child his first haircut when becoming three years old ("Chalakah") during the Sefira days. Some push it off until Lag Ba'Omer.

Haircuts for בעלי שמחה

27. Someone making a Bris for his son during the Sefira may take a haircut in honor of the Bris. He may do so already from the time of Mincha Ketanah on the day preceding the Bris. This allowance also applies to the Sandak and the Mohel. If the Bris is on Sunday and there is no other choice, he may have his haircut on Erev Shabbos.

A Bar-Mitzvah boy may have a haircut on the day preceding his Bar Mitzva, however the boy's father should preferably refrain.

One may not take a haircut in honor of a Pidyon Haben or an engagement.

According to the Arizal, one should not cut one's hair throughout the Sefira even in honor of a Bris or other festive occasions.

A Choson who is getting married on the night of Lag Ba'Omer, may take a haircut on the 32nd day of the Sefira after Chatzos. It would appear that so too, his father and brothers may be lenient.

Haircuts on Lag Ba'Omer

28. This year, that Lag Ba'Omer falls on a Friday, both Bnei Ashkenaz and Bnei Sepharad may have haircuts and shave from Friday morning. In case of necessity [e.g. when one won't manage to have a haircut on Friday, or in case of an event that needs a haircut on its honor] they can be lenient already from Thursday night. The above-mentioned leniencies do not apply to those following the custom of the Arizal.

Haircuts after Lag Ba'Omer

29. The widespread custom amongst Ashkenazim is to allow haircuts from Lag Ba'Omer onwards. Sefardim permit haircuts from the 34th day of the Omer onwards. Some quote [כ"כ בלוח ארץ ישראל] that the custom in Eretz Yisrael is to allow haircuts only from the beginning of Chodesh Sivan. Others wait until three days before Shavuot [והיינו משלושת ימי הגבלה].

Those who follow the custom of the Arizal take haircuts only from the eve of the 49th day of the Omer. In a case of necessity, one can be lenient from the 48th day of the Omer, or if necessary, even from the eve of the 48th day. [However, this year, that the 48th day of the Omer falls on Shabbos, one can have a haircut only on Motzei Shabbos].

Music and Festivity during the Sefira days

30. One may not hear any kind of music during the days of the Sefira. There is no difference if he is listening to a song with words or just to a tune. There is also no difference as to whether the music is lively or tranquil and relaxing - all types are forbidden. Vocal choirs are also forbidden, but one need not rebuke those who are lenient.

Someone experiencing depression or a similar emotional condition may listen to music as a means of relaxation and to promote his recovery process.

31. Children up to about the age of six [ר"ל עד שיגיעו לגיל חינוך], may listen to music. Even if adults also hear the music in the background, it is okay since they are not intentionally listening to it.

32. One should not have live music at a Seudas Mitzvah [כגון ברית מילה, פדיון הבן, סיום מסכתא, בר מצוה בזמנה]. Many Sefaradim are lenient in the matter, if during the rest of the year they would enhance the event by playing live music. Bnei Ashkenaz can be lenient to play recorded music if they do so during the year.

After Lag Ba'Omer one can be lenient to play live music in honor of a Seudas Mitzvah, even if

his custom is to then keep the other practices of mourning.

33. Someone who began music lessons before the Sefira days, may continue during the Sefira. So too, background music that accompanies a story may be heard during the Sefira. Music that is being heard for medical reasons is also permitted.

34. Singing is permitted, but not if others are joining in and sing as a group.

35. On the eve of Lag Ba'Omer music should not be played. However, if it is in honor of the great Tannah Rebbi Shimon bar Yochai, it is permitted.

36. Some allow music after Lag Ba'Omer. However, the Mishna Berura is stringent in the matter and rules that it is permitted only from Rosh Chodesh Sivan. This is the correct practice to be adhered to.

Weddings

37. On the day of Lag Ba'Omer, Bnei Ashkenaz may conduct weddings [the Chuppah should be held before Shekiah]. In a case of need, for example, if it is difficult to find an available hall, Bnei Ashkenaz may precede weddings to the eve of Lag Ba'Omer.

After Lag Ba'Omer, many of Bnei Ashkenaz have the custom [עכ"פ בארץ ישראל] not to perform weddings until the beginning of Sivan [ויש בזה מנהגים שונים מתי בתחילת סיון (א' ב' או ג') וכל אחד יעשה כמנהגו].

Bnei Sefarad allow weddings from the 34th day of the Omer and onwards.

38. Someone who was invited to a wedding that will take place after Lag Ba'Omer, may go and participate even though his custom is to then continue the practices of mourning. Even if he enjoys the music and joins in the dancing, he has on whom to rely.

39. One should not make a "Hachnasas Sefer Torah" with music before Lag Ba'Omer. From Lag Ba'Omer and onwards it is fine. Many wait with the Hachnasas Sefer Torah until after Rosh Chodesh Sivan.

"Shehecheyanu"

40. Garments that one does not recite "Shehecheyanu" when wearing them the first time, may be purchased during the Sefira. Some refrain from buying expensive garments on which "Shehecheyanu" is recited, even though strictly speaking this too is permitted.

According to all customs one may purchase a garment with the intention of wearing it the first time after the days of Sefira.

41. A family or a couple may purchase furniture, a new car, household items and anything else that one recites "Ha'Tov Ve'Hameitiv" upon receiving them. Regarding a person living alone who recites "Shehecheyanu" (since others are not sharing his enjoyment), see above #40.

42. Some refrain from buying a new fruit to avoid reciting "Shehecheyanu" before eating it. However, Lichvod Shabbos it is permitted.

43. If a new fruit was offered to him during the week, he may recite Shehecheyanu and eat it. The reason for this is that the custom of those who refrain from reciting Shehecheyanu does not apply if he did not intentionally pre-plan the situation. However, if the fruit will remain fresh for a few more days, it is preferable to leave it till Shabbos and then recite the Shehecheyanu before eating it.

Miscellaneous Halachos

44. It is permitted to paint and renovate one's house during the days of the Sefira.

45. One may move into a new apartment. However, some refrain since the Sefira days are a time of Din.

46. One may go swimming during the Sefira.

'יישר כח' to Rav Yossef Steinmetz for his great efforts for publishing this 'אזמרה לשמך' English edition

Translated and published by:

לעובדי השם

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