The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
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סימן תפ"ט סעיף ד'-ה'

Halacha Highlight

Eating before counting the *Omer*

Rema Siman 433 Seif 4

וכשהגיע הזמן אסורין לאכל עד שיספר

Once the time for counting arrives one may not eat until he counts

Rema (סע' ד') writes that once the time for counting arrives one may not eat until he counts the *Omer*. Mishnah Berurah (ס"ק כ"ג) writes that one should be stringent even within the half hour before the time for counting the *Omer* arrives and should not eat. However, if the local custom is that the *shamash* calls people to count the *Omer,* one need not be stringent and avoid eating during this time. Mishnah Berurah's wording indicates that relying on the *shamash,* a *shomer* or davening with a fixed *minyan* may be relied upon only during the half hour before the time for counting the *Omer* arrives. Once the time for counting the *Omer* arrives one may not rely upon these leniencies and it is prohibited to eat a meal before counting the *Omer* (ע' הליכות שלמה פי"א סע' א' ופסקי תשובות אות ט"ז). Others argue that one who arranges a *shomer* who davens *ma'ariv* at a fixed time may be lenient and eat a meal even after the time for counting the *Omer* arrives. The reason is that according to most Poskim counting the *Omer*, nowadays, is a Rabbinic obligation and one does not have to be more stringent than one is regarding *krias shema* and *shemoneh esrei* where these leniencies are employed (שו"ת אג"מ ח"ד סי' צ"ט).

A member of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach's household davened *ma'ariv* in his yeshiva long after *tzais hakochavim* but wanted to eat before counting the *Omer*. Rav Auerbach maintained that one may not eat once the time for counting the *Omer* arrives, even if one davens in a regularly scheduled *minyan*. He advised this person to count right after *tzais hakochavim* without a *beracha* and with the stipulation that if he later forgets to count this counting should be considered fulfillment of the *mitzvah*. If, however, he remembers to count later the later counting with the *beracha* should discharge his obligation. As a general matter Rav Auerbach maintained that *yeshivos* should change their practice of eating before counting due to the difficulty in rearranging the yeshiva's schedule (ע' הליכות שלמה הנ"ל הע' 1).

Stories to Share

Keeping Count

ש"ע ס' תפ"ט, ה' "אם אינו יודע החשבון..."

It is sometimes difficult to remember every day of sefirah without getting confused. This is just another reason it is so important to pray with a minyan for maariv. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach warned that, in general, those who daven maariv without a minyan during this time have a hard time remembering to count unless they are very vigilant. When someone who was forced to daven alone asked Rav Shlomo Zalman whether he should count with a brochah, the gadol ruled that he should. "Since men are obligated to count, they make a brochah even if they are afraid of miscounting or forgetting to count on one of the days."

שלמי מועד, פרק פ"ד, ע' תמ"ד

One way many communities use to remind them and to ensure that they do not err in the counting is to put special cards in a holder attached to the wall. Often, the chazzan is entrusted with the task of exchanging the previous night's card with the new one. A certain chazzan, when he was about to perform his duty, wondered about whether he could do so on Shabbos. Could he remove a card to see if it the right card from a group of others, or would it be a problem of selecting? Secondly, was he permitted to replace the card from the night in its proper place by sifting through the cards until he reached its position, or must he replace the card randomly?

When he asked Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, the gaon ruled leniently in both cases. "There is no problem of sorting on Shabbos to sift through the cards, either to find the card you need or to replace the card from the night before. You can take out the needed card without a problem since you merely remove that which you need—this is not borer. Likewise, you can look for the right position to replace the old card since the prohibition of selecting only applies when one culls the undesirable card from among others."

שמירת שבת כהלכתו, פ"ג, הערה קכ"א וקכ"ג

Overview

Siman 489 Seif 4:

If someone is asked during *bein hashemashos* what number in the *sefirah* will be counted that night he should respond that yesterday was "x" for if he was to tell him the correct number he would not be able to later count with a *beracha*. Before *bein hashemashos* when it is not the time to count there is no issue to respond with the correct number. When the time to count arrives it is prohibited to eat until one counts and if a person began eating he must interrupt in order to count. If, however, he began eating before the time arrived he is not required to interrupt and may finish eating and count afterwards.

- One must certainly be careful about this matter if one is asked after *tzeis hakochavim*. (M.B. 19)
- If one did not say, "Today is..." there is no issue. (M.B. 20)
- Even if one did not say בעומר he would have *b'dieved* fulfilled the *mitzvah*. (M.B. 21)
- If one has in mind to not fulfill the *mitzvah* he may respond with the correct number. (M.B. 22)
- The concern applies only when the count does not yet include weeks but if the count already includes weeks answering with just the day does not pose an issue. (M.B. 22)
- One should avoid eating even half an hour before the time for counting arrives. (M.B. 23)
- Before counting one must also refrain from other activities that are prohibited before davening Mincha. (M.B. 24)
- Since we hold that counting is only a Rabbinic obligation one is not required to interrupt a meal in order to count. (M.B. 25)

Siman 489 Seif 5:

If one does not know the correct number and began reciting the *beracha* with the intent to conclude as he hears his friend conclude and is silent until he hears his friend count he has discharged his obligation.

- One should preferably not recite the beracha unless he knows what number he will count. (M.B. 29)

Siman 489 Seif 6:

If one began the beracha thinking that he was going to count 4 because he thought he was supposed to count 4 and realizes that he is supposed to count 5 and counts 5 or if it is the fourth night he began the beracha thinking that he would count 4 but erred and counted five – in both cases he is not required to count again.

- Later authorities disagree with Shulchan Aruch's ruling in the second case and rule that if one counted the wrong day he must repeat the *beracha* and count again unless he corrected himself within *toch k'dei dibbur*. Furthermore, even if one had the wrong number in mind when he recited the *beracha* if he corrected it within *toch k'dei dibbur* he has fulfilled his obligation. (M.B. 31)