



# Halacha Encounters

## Sefiras Haomer Uncertainty

Rabbi Yisroel Langer

If one is uncertain as to which night of the Omer it is – i.e., he isn't sure if it's the fourth day or the fifth day – can he fulfill his obligation by counting both days?

The *Magen Avraham* (*Orach Chaim* 589:2) says that one must count *sefiras ha'omer* in a language that he understands. If one counts in *lashon hakodesh* and doesn't understand what he is saying, he has not fulfilled his obligation. Rav Yaakov Emden (*Sheilos Ya'avetz*, Responsa 139) argues and holds that just like it is with Kiddush and Hallel where one has fulfilled his obligation by reciting it in *lashon hakodesh*, even if he doesn't understand what he is saying, so too, this applies to *sefiras ha'omer*.

The *Dvar Avraham* (Volume I, Chapter 34) explains that the essence of the argument is about what kind of mitzvah *sefiras ha'omer* is. Rav Yaakov Emden holds that the mitzvah is the mere "reciting" of the *omer*, and as long as you recite the proper number, you are *yotzei* and fulfill your obligation. Therefore, even if you don't understand what you saying, it's okay. The *Magen Avraham*, on the other other hand, holds that the mitzvah is "counting" which entails a conscious awareness of which day one is counting, and not a simple recitation of words.

The answer to our original questions, maintains the *Dvar Avraham*, would depend on whether the mitzvah is to recite or to count. If one is uncertain if it is the fourth day of the *omer* or the fifth day, according to Rav Yaakov Emden, he can recite both days and fulfill his obligation since he recited the correct day. But according to the *Magen Avraham*, one must count, and it is not considered counting if one is unsure as to which day it is, even if one recites both possibilities.

According to the *Dvar Avraham*, logic dictates

that the mitzvah is to count and therefore one must be certain of what day of the *omer* it is. However, he brings a proof from an early authority, Rabbeinu Zerachia HaLevi (*Ba'al Hamoar*), also quoted by the *Ran*, that seems to hold otherwise. The *Ba'al Hamoar* asks that just like we keep two days of *Yom Tov* outside of *Eretz Yisrael* (because during the times of the *Bais HaMikdash* they were unsure as to which day was *Yom Tov*), so too with *sefiras ha'omer*, we should count two numbers every night. This very question seems to offer strong support for Rav Yaakov Emden's position. If the *Ba'al Hamoar* held that you must be positive as to which number of the *omer* it is, how could he suggest that we should count two numbers every night? Clearly, he holds that the mitzva is only to recite the *omer*. Therefore, says the *Dvar Avraham*, if one was unsure as to which day of the *omer* it is, he can say both days and fulfill his obligation.

However, many *Acharonim* (*Avnei Nezer*, *Yorah Deah* 248; *Sha'arei Yoshel*, *sha'ar ha'spheikus*, chap. 5) agree with the opinion that one must be sure of what day it is in order to be called "counting." The *Taz* (*Orach Chaim* 589:8) holds that one must know what night he is counting even before making the bracha. *L'hatchila*, one should conduct himself in accordance with this view.

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