



Ask The Rabbi...

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Ohr Somayach has a NEW Internet Address: ohr@jer1.co.il

- This edition contains:
1. Parshat Hashavua - Why can't we get our acts together?
 2. Count D'Omer
 3. Engagement Ring & the Omer

Reuven from London asked:

This year, since the 8th day of Pesach fell on Shabbat, we had a special Torah reading for Pesach on that Shabbat instead of the regular Parshat Hashavua (Acharei Mot) read in Israel. The next week we read Acharei Mot, and the week after that we read Kedoshim. We are a week "behind" Israel and don't catch up for about 3 months. Why didn't we just have a double Parsha reading of Acharei Mot/Kedoshim straight away as we do sometimes in other years?

Dear Reuven,

I once heard that the Parsha readings sometimes stay behind for a while because "Chutz La'Aretz is 'slower' than Eretz Yisrael!" :-)

On a more serious note, your question is recorded in the renowned Responsa of Rabbi Yosef from Trani. He explains based on the following points:

1. Shavuot is the "New Year" for the Fruits of the Trees — Just as Rosh HaShana is a day of judgment for individuals, on Shavuot judgment is passed on the growth of the coming year's fruits.
2. Because Shavuot is the New Year for fruits, Ezra the Scribe enacted that the "curses" in Parshat Bechukotai be read **before** Shavuot. This fulfills the idea of "Tichleh HaShana v'Kileloteha" — i.e., the year's end should mark the end of curses, and the New Year should be a one of Bracha.
3. In order that the curses not be "too close" to Shavuot — which celebrates the Giving of the Torah — the custom is to read Parshat Bechukotai **two** weeks beforehand. But Parshat Bechukotai is still not "too far" from Shavuot, and therefore makes the point about finishing the year's curses.

Whenever possible, this is the preferred way to arrange the Torah readings. This year it's not possible to do so in Eretz Yisrael, but it is possible outside of Israel by remaining one week "behind" Israel until after Shavuot.

Source:

- Responsa of the Maharit - vol.2, *Orach Chaim*, #4.

Wendy from Westcliff, UK wrote:

When counting Sefirat Ha'Omer, some people say La'Omer and some say B'Omer. Which is right? Doesn't the fact that EVERYBODY says "Lag B'Omer" prove that "B'Omer" is correct and not "La'Omer"?

Dear Wendy,

Rabbi Nachman Bulman, *shlita*, explains that "everyone" calls the day "Lag B'Omer" because the main proponents of saying "B'Omer" are Rabbi Yitzchak Luria -- the *Arizal* -- and the Sephardi Kabbalists. Celebrating Lag B'Omer with bonfires, music and dancing is largely rooted in their kabbalistic teachings and traditions.

Most poskim say that "La'Omer" is correct. However, both ways are valid, so there is no reason to change one's custom. In fact, even if you say "today is day such and such" -- omitting any reference to the "Omer" -- you fulfill the mitzva.

By the way, not *everyone* calls it "Lag B'Omer." The Shulchan Aruch refers to it as "Lag La'Omer."

Which reminds me of the two Jews who argued during their entire plane ride regarding the correct pronunciation of Hawaii. Upon landing in Honolulu, they asked the first native on the island "Is it pronounced Ha*w*aii or Ha*v*aii?" "Ha*v*aii," he replied.

"Thank you," they said.

"You're welcome," said the native.

Sources:

- *Shulchan Oruch, Orach Chaim*489:1, 493:2.
- *Mishneh Brurah*489:8.

Lawrence Raigrodski wrote:

I recently purchased an engagement ring. Do I have to wait till after the Omer to give it to my fiancée?

Dear Lawrence,

First of all...*Mazal Tov!*

As you know, the Omer period between Pesach and Shavuot is traditionally one of mourning during which we refrain from performing weddings and getting haircuts. This commemorates Rabbi Akiva's 24,000 disciples who all died during this short period. The horrible massacres of 1096 in Germany gave yet another dimension of mourning to this period, as they too occurred between Pesach and Shavuot.

As to your question, we find no source that prohibits giving a gift during this period. So give her the ring and start planning for the wedding!

Sources:

- *Shulchan Oruch, Orach Chaim*493:1,2.

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Issue #63 - 9 May 1995

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