

# SEFIRAS HAOMER

*by Joshua Kruger*

## The Story

It was Friday night and the Feldman family were sitting at their table, enjoying their Shabbos meal. Everyone was appreciative that Mr. Feldman had been able to finish work early on Friday, and the family was able to start an early Shabbos. This meant that little Chavi, who had just turned five, had managed to stay awake during the meal and participate in all her favorite Zemiros. But it was now dark outside, and not long before she was beginning to yawn. "Looks like it's time for you to lie down in your bed" said Mr. Feldman. Suddenly, he remembered "The omer! We did not count in shul, because we made early Shabbos, and we should count now that it is night. If only I could remember what number to count!".

"That's easy!" said Yosef. "It's sixteen, just like my age!".

A look of concern developed on Mr. Feldman's face. "Thank you for helping Yosef, but I think you now have a problem. You have just performed the count for tonight. One is supposed to respond by indicating what number was counted on the previous night. I believe you have just lost your opportunity to make a bracha.

"Actually, Honey" said Mrs. Feldman. "I just attended a shiur on this topic this week and there are some important issues to point out."

## Discussion

Q: What is the connection between our story and the parsha?

A: The mitzva of counting the omer is found in Parshas Emor (Vayikra 23:15).

Q: Has Yosef lost his opportunity to say sefiras haomer with a bracha?

A: No. There are two reasons:

- 1) Yosef did not say the words "today is", he just said "it's sixteen". In order to perform the mitzva of counting a person must start with the words "Today is ..." (Mishna Berura, 489:20).
- 2) When we count the we not only note the number of days, but also the number of weeks. The Eliya

Raba ruled that if someone left out the number of weeks, then it is assumed that they intended not to fulfill the mitzva. They are therefore considered not to have performed the mitzva and should proceed to count normally with a bracha (Sha'ar Hatzion, 48g:28).

Q: What if the story had occurred on the fifth day of the Omer, and he said "Today is the fifth day"? Would Yosef have lost out on the mitzva?

A: In this situation, there are no weeks to be counted yet. So the mitzva only involves counting days. Therefore, Yosef is considered to have completed the mitzva. The only downside is that he has lost the opportunity to make a bracha. This is because a bracha is made before a mitzva is done, not after. However, he has definitely performed the mitzva. This means that when the next night comes he counts just as everyone else - with a bracha (Mishna Berura, 48g:22).

(Written by Josh and Tammy Kruger, in collaboration with Rabbi Yehoshua Pfeffer of the Institute for Dayanim)