

Parashas Emor – Us'fartem Lochem – Bo'omer or Lo'omer? - David Levy

י' אייר תשע"ז – 13th May 2017 – שבת פרשת אמור

By the time you read this you will or should have counted at least 31 days of the Omer in compliance with the injunction in Parashas Emor Sefer Vayikro 23:15: **Us'fartem Lochem Mimochoras HaShabbos Miyom Haviachem Es Omer HaT'nufoh Sheva Shobbosos T'mimos Tihyehnoh Ad Mimochoras HaShabbos Tisp'ru Chamishim Yom.**

But we won't all have been counting exactly the same way will we? Those using the following Siddurim: Authorised Daily Prayer Book ("Singers"); Shilo; Rinat Yisrael; Tiferes Y'hudah; Artscroll (with English translation); Artscroll Pesach Machzor (First Edition First Impression only); or Routledge Pesach Machzor will have said Hayom Yom [Echod etc] Lo'Omer. Those using Artscroll Siddur (Hebrew only version); Tefilas Kol Peh; HaChodesh Beis Tefiloh; Koren; Artscroll Pesach Machzor (after First Edition First Impression) will have said Hayom Yom [Echod etc] Bo'Omer. (Apologies if I have omitted your personal favourite siddur).

Why the discrepancy? Rav Daniel Mann of Eretz Chemdoh Institute writing in the "Torah Tidbits" (published by OU) issue of last week explains. Omer is of course the measurement of barley that was to be brought as a Korban on the second day of Pesach. The Mitzva to count 49 days starts on the day on which it is offered. Bo'Omer most likely means "within the period of the Omer"; Lo'Omer can mean the same or it could mean "from the time of the offering of the Korban Omer". The Taz (Orach Chayim 489:3), while noting that the Ran in Pesachim brought that Lo'Omer is said, nevertheless assumed that the second explanation of Lo'Omer is the one that applies and therefore rejected that expression when counting in favour of his K'hillo's Minhag of saying Bo'Omer. He reasons that the count precedes the offering on the first night and therefore saying Lo'Omer would not make sense then so to conform throughout it should be Bo'Omer.

It may also be argued that the Brocho Al S'firas Ho'Omer "on the counting of the Omer" only makes sense if it is a period of time broken up into days and weeks which we count. If it is a Korban or the day one brings the Korban we don't count it but rather from it (though perhaps we are not meant to read anything into the wording of the B'rocho in this regard)

The Chok Yaakov (489:9) shows that in the time of the Rishonim the prevalent text was Lo'Omer. He says like the Taz that this means from the day of the Korban Omer but he argues that Bo'Omer is not right because it implies that this is one of the days when the Omer is brought which only applies on the first day itself.

Beis Yaakov in a T'Shuvoh (23) cites his father in law that both Lo'Omer and Bo'Omer mean the day "within a time period". The question therefore is which is the most appropriate prefix. In a Get and a Kesubo the letter Lamed is used for the day number within the month and the letter Beis for the day number within the week. The Bach (Even Ho'ezer 126) says that Lamed is actually the standard way of expressing this and Beis is only used to avoid confusion sometimes. But we do say Tisha B'Av; Lag Bo'Omer Tu Bishvat for days within months even when there is no concern about confusion.

Rav Mann suggests that because the Arizal and Sh'loh join most Rishonim in supporting Lo'Omer Sephardim and Nusach Sfarad tend to say Lo'Omer and perhaps because the Gra and the Remo were known to use Bo'Omer most followers of Nusach Ashkenaz use the latter. However this is not entirely borne out by my survey of Siddurim and Machzorim above and he does admit that many Ashkenaz congregations do say Lo'Omer. Mishneh B'ruroh (OC 489:8) notes that most Poskim say Lo'Omer but holds that B'dieved if you did not mention Omer at all and just said "Today is so many days" you would still have fulfilled your obligation to count. Aruch HaShulcan (OC 489:9) cites both texts and prefers Lo'Omer. Rav Moshe Feinstein in Igros Moshe OC II:23 says (in regard to leading T'filloh generally) that you should not shout out loud in a different version from the one that is the Nusach in your shul and so the Chazan at the Omud should follow the Minhag of his community regarding the wording of S'firoh (if there is one).

Apparently some Talmidei Chachomim have been heard repeating the count using both expressions. Rav Daniel Mann feels this is not necessary and indeed not preferable and is not found in the classical Poskim.

I believe the current version in North Hendon Synagogue is Bo'Omer but all Halachic questions should be addressed to the Rav please!