

Does Texting Count?

May 16, 2024

Q After I texted my wife a *sfirah* reminder, “Today is the 19th day,” I realized that I hadn’t yet counted. May I still count tonight with a *bracha*?



A The Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 489:4) says that someone who is asked what day in the *omer* it is and responds, may no longer count with a *bracha* that night, because he already fulfilled the mitzvah with his reply. The Mishnah Brurah (ibid. 21) adds that this is so even though he didn’t add “of the *omer*.” He still must count, because he didn’t have intent to fulfill the mitzvah, but he may not make a *bracha*, because some hold that mitzvos may be fulfilled even without intent to fulfill them (M.B. ibid. 22). If one says, “It is the eighth day,” without saying “today,” he may yet count with a *bracha*, because that word is essential for the mitzvah (M.B. ibid. 20).

The Mishnah Brurah (ibid. 22) rules that this issue is only relevant during the first six days of the *omer*, before weeks are counted. From the seventh day on, the mitzvah requires counting the weeks, so “Today is the nineteenth day” is insufficient.

The notion of fulfilling the mitzvah of *sfiras ha’omer* via texting is highly dubious. R’ Akiva Eiger (Teshuvos 1:29) discusses at length whether one can fulfill the mitzvah through writing, but he ends without a conclusive ruling. Other *poskim* conclude that counting must be done verbally (see Sha’arei Teshuvah 489:6). According to that view, you may still make the *bracha*.

The Chasam Sofer (cited in Ksav Sofer Y.D. 106) argues that *sfiras ha’omer* can be fulfilled in writing, because counting is not reciting but tallying, and that can be done in any manner. One can suggest that according to his view, texting is also a valid method of *sfiras ha’omer*, so a *bracha* may not be recited after texting the count, even before day 7.

In practice, because many *poskim* assume that writing is ineffective for *sfirah*, and moreover it is questionable whether digital writing is even writing, you may make a *bracha* when you subsequently count verbally.