

Traveling Across the International Date Line During Sefirat Ha'omer
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There are not many contemporary halachic issues regarding the holiday of Shavuos, but there is one main issue concerning counting the Omer. According to the prevailing opinions of the poskim, we view the counting of the Omer as one mitzvah and therefore, each night must be counted in order to fulfill the mitzvah. A challenge arises if one were to travel across the International Date Line during *Sefirat ha'omer*. The International Date Line is an imaginary line zig-zagging around 180° longitude through the Pacific Ocean. It separates one day from another, meaning that if it were to be 8:00 a.m. Monday morning on the eastern side of the Date Line, it would be 8:00 a.m. Tuesday morning on the western side.

From a halachic standpoint there is a debate as to where the exact locations of the International Date Line is. The Chazon Ish's opinion is rooted in the Baal Hamaor's explanation of a Gemara in Rosh Hashana. He says that the Date Line technically runs 90 degrees east of Yerushalayim. According to his opinion the Date Line runs through Australia, The Philippines, China, North Korea and Russia. The second opinion is given by Rav Yechiel Michel Tukatzinsky, zt"l. His opinion is based on Chazal's principle that Yerushalayim is "The center of the world." He says that the Date Line is 180 degrees east of Yerushalayim. The date line would run from the Gulf of Alaska through the Pacific Ocean east of Hawaii, thus placing the entire state of Hawaii on the other side of the Date Line from the United States.

Many Angelenos travel to the far east, or Australia either for work, or for pleasure. The 16 hour non stop flight from Los Angeles to Australia crosses over the International Date Line, resulting in a "loss of a day." If one were to board his 11:00 p.m. flight from Los Angeles to Australia on Sunday, the twentieth day of the Omer, he would arrive in Australia at 9:00 a.m., Tuesday morning. Due to the day change, he would have missed counting the 21st day of the Omer at Maariv, which would result in a halachic problem, because he cannot continue counting with a bracha.

There are some poskim, like the Mishneh Halachos, who rule that the traveler should count the 21st night of the Omer on Tuesday, during the day, without a bracha, and then continue counting the following days with a bracha according to the count of Australia. Other poskim like Betzel Hachahmah and the Be'er Moshe suggest that in this situation the traveler should continue counting according to Australia's count, without a bracha. Finally, there is the controversial ruling of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. The Rebbe says that the traveler should continue counting according to his personal count that he started with. The same would apply for every subsequent night, considering that he is going according to his own count. This would mean that the traveler would be a day behind Australia's count of the Omer, and would start celebrating Shavuos a day later than everyone in Australia. A consensus of poskim disagree with the Lubavitcher Rebbe and hold that the traveler continues to count according to Australia, and celebrate Shavuos on the 49th day of the Omer in Australia.

According to all Poskim one is discouraged to travel across the Date Line during the period of *Sefira*. For halacha *lima'aseh*, one should always take a question like this up with a rabbinical authority on what course of action one should take if they must travel to the Far East, or Australia during the counting of the Omer

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