



LAG B'OMER



What & When:

The seven-week period between the Jewish holidays of **Passover** and **Shavuot** is also marked as the time of the counting of the **Omer**. (An "omer" is an agricultural measure on grain.) The name of this holiday, **Lag B'Omer**, literally means the 33rd day of the *Omer*. When placed side by side, the Hebrew letters *lamed* and *gimel* represent the number 33. *Lag B'Omer* generally occurs in early to mid-May on our Gregorian calendar.

History:

Two events took place in Jewish history which led to the celebration of *Lag B'Omer*: One year, during the 2nd Century, there was a terrible plague. Many people were dying. On the 33rd day of the counting of the *Omer* during the year of this plague, The great Rabbi Akiva's students stopped dying and, tradition holds, that Rabbi Akiva started to reveal the light of the Torah to new students. Also on the 33rd day of the Omer, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, (one of Rabbi Aviva's students) and the author of the *Zohar*, the central work of Jewish mystical traditional called *Kabbalah* died. The anniversary of death is a celebration because on the day of his death he revealed his vision of the light of the Torah to his students. Thus, the 33rd day of the counting of the *Omer* became a stand-alone-day of joyous celebration during the weeks between Passover and *Shavout*.

Observances & Customs:

Because of the mournful nature of the time leading up to *Lag B'Omer*, weddings and other celebrations are not permitted during these days. Many observant Jews also do not get haircuts or listen to live music during this time as a sign of mourning. Many end this time of mourning at *Lag B'Omer*, others continue it up until *Shavuot*. Weddings are often held on *Lag B'Omer* because of the relief it provides from the solemnity of the days that precede and follow it. Picnics, outings, games and bonfires are popular ways of celebrating the day in Israel.

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If you have any questions, please call Susan Buchbinder at X1695, or Rabbi Michael Schorin at x3253

Lag B'Omer is observed primarily by the religious Jewish community. It is not a widely known or practiced holiday among non-observant Jews. Clients who are observing the days of semi-mourning may not want to have their hair done during the weeks surrounding *Lag B'Omer*. *Lag B'Omer*, however, is celebrated as a "semi-holiday", an interruption in the counting of the *Omer* period of mourning. Weddings, festivities, music, dancing and haircuts are allowed on this one day. Many celebrate *Lag B'Omer* with outdoor picnics & large bonfires. In Israel, many travel to the grave of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in the northern town of Meron. Among other festivities which take place in Meron on *Lag B'Omer*, many 3 year old boys receive their first haircut.

For more information check out this great on-line resource:

http://www.myjewishlearning.com/holidays/Jewish_Holidays/Shavuot/In_the_Community/Counting_the_Omer/Lag_BaOmer.shtml

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