

LAG BA'OMER

What is it?

A minor holiday and a VERY festive day on the Jewish calendar.

When is It? the 33rd Day of The Omer. "Lag" is a Hebrew acronym made up of two Hebrew letters, "lamed" and "gimmel" Lamed = 30 & gimmel= 3. Put It together, and you get 33. It Is the 18th day of the Hebrew month of Iyar, and this year, it is Tuesday, May 12, 2020.

What are we celebrating?

There are a few different reasons given for Lag Ba'Omer being a celebratory time.

Here are two reasons why we celebrate Lag Ba'Omer:

1. Talmud tells us that during the first 32 days of the 49 day Omer Period, a terrible plague occurred in which 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva, who was an incredible Torah sage from the time of the Mishna, died. They were incredible Torah scholars, but they lacked respect for each other. This Is a very important lesson that teaches us that as important as Torah learning is, you can't forget that everyone is created In God's image and as such, everyone needs to be treated with respect. The plague stopped on the 33rd day of the Omer, which makes It an incredibly happy time. As such, many stop observing the mourning customs that they were observing during the first part of the Omer. This means on Lag Ba'Omer many will get haircuts, listen to music, and attend weddings.
2. In 132 C.E., Shimon Bar Koseva led an incredible, but unsuccessful revolt, against the Roman Rule of Israel, which came to be known as the Bar Kochba Revolt. It Is possible that many of Rabbi Akiva's students fought In this revolt and that is how they died. One of the few survivors of this rebellion and few remaining students of Rabbi Akiva, was Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, another incredible sage in the time of the Mishna. He continued to rebel against Roman rule and was forced to flee with his son, into a cave and live there and learn Torah there for 12 years, being sustained by nothing other than Carob and water. Upon coming out of the cave on an extremely high spiritual level, he was angered by people working and not learning Torah full time., God sent him back to live in the cave for another year.

Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai was the first to publicly teach Kabbalah, and according to the traditional view, he authored the fundamental work of Kabbalah, the Zohar. He passed away on Lag Ba'Omer but had instructed that the day of his day be a very joyous day

How do we celebrate?

The most common celebration is one in which there are bonfires, a Lag Ba'omer concert, and very festive singing and dancing. In Israel, one would just need to take a drive Lag Ba'Omer night, and you would see bonfires up and down the road side. One of the the roots of the words Torah is the word "ohra", light. This matches up with what It says in Proverbs 6:23, "A mitzvah is a candle, and Torah is the light" What light burns brighter and with more force than fire? Thus, the bonfires that are lit on Lag Ba'Omer represent the incredible light that Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai brought Into this world through his deep and meaningful teachings of Torah. **Even without the bonfires, and the live concerts, one can celebrate Lag Ba'Omer, by appreciating the joy of life and the light of Torah.**

In Israel, hundreds of thousands of men and women flock to the north of Israel, to Har Meron, where Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai Is buried. They light bonfires, sing and dance. It Is a round-the-clock celebration.