



## Unintentional Counting

- The *poskim* debate whether or not mitzvos require *kavanah*.<sup>25</sup> Practically, we hold that they do. Therefore, if you unintentionally count the Omer, you are not *yotzei*, and you must count again. However, out of concern for the other opinion (that you are *yotzei* without *kavanah*), you may not make a berachah on the second counting.<sup>26</sup>
- “Last night was...”** If somebody asks you what night it is, you should answer him “last night was...” in order to avoid unintentionally being *yotzei* the mitzvah.<sup>27</sup> However, if you already counted or if you are asked at a time when you cannot be *yotzei* (before *plag hamincha*), you can answer directly. Nevertheless, it is recommended to always respond indirectly to avoid mess-ups. In a situation where you are concerned that by answering indirectly you will cause confusion, you can answer directly with explicit *kavanah* not to be *yotzei*.<sup>28</sup>
- Scenarios:**
  - If on Lag Ba’Omer you say, “Tonight is Lag Ba’Omer”** — You should be careful not to say this because it’s debated among the *poskim* whether you can be *yotzei* counting the Omer in abbreviated form.<sup>29</sup> *B’dieved*, it’s not considered as though you counted, and you can still count with a berachah.<sup>30</sup>
  - “Is tonight the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of the Omer?”** — A question is not considered counting.<sup>31</sup>
  - Signaling.** If you held up the number of fingers of what night it was, you were not *yotzei*.
  - Writing.** If you wrote down the count, it is questionable whether you were *yotzei*. Therefore, this should be avoided.<sup>32</sup>

## Mourning Customs

### The Source

- We practice certain customs of mourning during the period between Pesach and Shavuos. This is to commemorate the death of the 24,000 *talmidim* of Rabbi Akiva who died during this time because they did not show proper respect toward each other.<sup>33</sup>

### Which Days

- The specific days on which the *talmidim* of Rabbi Akiva died are debated among the *poskim*. The ramification of this determines which days we practice *aveilus*. Many minhagim have developed based on the different opinions. The most common customs regarding when to practice *aveilus* are:<sup>34</sup>
  - From the first day of the Omer until Lag Ba’Omer (widely practiced).
  - From the first day of Rosh Chodesh Iyar until the third of Sivan, excluding Lag Ba’Omer.
  - In Yerushalayim, some observe from the first day of the Omer until Rosh Chodesh Sivan, excluding Lag Ba’Omer.<sup>35</sup>
- There is an order of priorities when determining which custom to follow: **1)** custom of your city;<sup>36</sup> **2)** family custom; **3)** personal preference (you can change from year to year).<sup>37</sup>

## Forbidden Activities

- Weddings.** You cannot get married during Sefirah, but you can get engaged.<sup>38</sup>
- Haircuts.** It is the custom not to get a haircut and shave during Sefirah,<sup>39</sup> though some *poskim* allow shaving if not doing so could cause a financial loss.<sup>39a</sup> Plucking hair is permitted. If Rosh Chodesh Iyar falls out on Shabbos, you are allowed to cut your hair and shave on Erev Shabbos.<sup>40</sup>
- Music.** Many refrain from listening to any live or recorded music during Sefirah.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, in the following two cases you can be lenient:
  - If you aren’t listening for enjoyment but rather to help you exercise,<sup>42</sup> to stay awake while driving, for the sake of a spiritual *hisorerus* (*kumzitz*),<sup>43</sup> etc.
  - Practicing an instrument to keep up your skills. This should not be done in a public setting. Singing is permitted;<sup>44</sup> dancing is forbidden.<sup>45</sup>

## Lag Ba’Omer

### The Significance

- Some explain that the *talmidim* of Rabbi Akiva stopped dying on Lag Ba’Omer.<sup>46</sup> The cause for celebration is Rabbi Akiva’s response to the loss: he did not despair but rather raised five new *talmidim*, who became the conduits through which *Torah Sheba’al Peh* was transmitted to future generations.
- Others explain that the significance of this day is that it is the *yahrtzeit* of the Tanna Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai (Rashbi). Although usually the passing of a tzaddik is not a happy occasion, this is an exception. Before his death, he revealed to his *talmidim* mystical secrets of the Torah. These were written down and are contained in the *Zohar*. This revelation of Torah is cause for celebration.<sup>47</sup>

### Halachos

- Tachanun.** Tachanun is not recited during Minchah on Erev Lag Ba’Omer.<sup>48</sup>
- Haircut.** You can begin cutting hair and shaving from the day of Lag Ba’Omer.<sup>49</sup> If Lag Ba’Omer falls out on a Sunday, you can cut your hair on Friday in honor of Shabbos.<sup>50</sup>
- Music.** Those who refrained from listening to music should not listen until Lag Ba’Omer morning.<sup>51</sup> An exception would be music accompanying a bonfire in honor of Rashbi on Lag Ba’Omer night.<sup>52</sup>

### Minhagim

- Bonfires.** Some explain that bonfires are lit on Lag Ba’Omer to commemorate the light of Torah that Rashbi brought into the world when he revealed Torah secrets.
- Meron.** Many have the custom to visit the *kever* of Rashbi on Lag Ba’Omer.<sup>53</sup> Others choose to take advantage of the holiness of the day through *tefillah* and learning Torah.

ביה"ל תפס: א. 29. מ"ב תפס: סק"ב. 28. שו"ע תפס: ד. 27. מ"ב תפס: סק"ב. 26. שו"ע ס: ד. 25. גר"ש וואזנר קובץ מבית לוי בעניני ניסן עמ' פד אות ז'. 31. שעה"צ סק"ח. 30. ד"ה מונה והולך לוח א"י. 35. מ"ב תצג: ס"ק יד-טו. 34. יבמות סב. 33. שו"ת רע"א ס' כט ד"ה ויזן. כה"ח סק"ח. 32. אג"מ. 39א. שם ס"ב. 39. שו"ע תצג: א. 38. אג"מ ח"א ס' קנט ד"ה והנה. 37. מ"ב תצג: סק"ט"ו. 36. הליכות שלמה. 43. בשם רב בלסקי. 42. שלמי מועד עמ' תנג. 41. מ"ב תצג: סק"ה. 40. ח"ד ס' קב עיין הל'. 47. מ"ב תצג: סק"ח. 46. ערוה"ש תצג"פ. 45. הל' שלמה עמ' שסא הע' 44. 53. עמ' שס שו"ת שבת. 51. רמ"א תצג: ב. 50. הרב נבנצל. 49. רמ"א תצג: ב. 48. חג בחג פ"ז סלד הע' 117 כף החיים 493:26. 53. חוט שני שבת ח"ד עמ' שפ. 52. הלוי ח"ח ס' הסח' אות ה'