

# NCYI Youth Groups Log B'Omer

## What is Lag B'Omer

[http://ohr.edu/holidays/sefiras\\_haomer/lag\\_bomer/957](http://ohr.edu/holidays/sefiras_haomer/lag_bomer/957)

We are commanded by the Torah to count forty nine days starting from the second day of Passover. On the fiftieth day we celebrate the festival of Shavuot, commemorating the Giving of the Torah. This 50 day period is called "Counting the Omer." The Omer was a barley offering which was brought in the Temple on the day we start counting, the second day of Passover.

"Lag B'omer" is the thirty third day of counting the Omer. The word "Lag" means 33 because it is comprised of the letters "lamud" and "gimmel," corresponding to the numerical values of "30" and "3."

The Omer period is a time of heightened spiritual sensitivity and growth. The closer Shavuot draws, the greater our anticipation grows for the climactic celebration of the Giving of the Torah, the watershed event of Jewish history.

However, the greater the potential there is for growth and building, the greater the potential there is for destruction. Consequently, in eras when the Jewish People have not lived up to their potential, the Omer period has become one of tragedy.

In the time of Rabbi Akiva, who witnessed the destruction of the Second Temple and who was the greatest Torah Sage of his generation, twenty four thousand of his disciples died in an epidemic. The underlying spiritual cause of the epidemic was the students' lack of respect for each other. This sad event and others took place during the Counting of the Omer. As a result, the Omer period has become one of semi-mourning in which we don't hold weddings or festivities, nor do we shave or get haircuts. But because the epidemic was suspended on the 33rd day - Lag B'omer - Lag B'omer has become a joyous day of celebration.

After all his students died, Rabbi Akiva "started over" and began teaching other students. One of his foremost students was Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, the author of the Zohar. The Zohar, which means "The Shining Light," is the basis of the secret teachings of the Torah. Some people light bonfires on Lag B'omer and sing songs in honor of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who revealed the teachings of the Zohar to the world on Lag B'omer.

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## Why is Lag b'Omer celebrated with bonfires and bows and arrows?

by Rabbi Yossi Marcus, askmoses.com

The bonfires celebrate the immense light that was brought into the world by Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai (who passed away on Lag b'Omer), especially on the day of his passing.



The bow commemorates the fact that during Rabbi Shimon's lifetime no rainbow was ever seen.<sup>1</sup> (This was a good thing because the rainbow appears when the earth deserves punishment. The first time a rainbow appeared was after Noah's flood, when G-d said that He will no longer disrupt the world, rather he would send a sign: the rainbow. During Rabbi Shimon's lifetime, the world was filled with merit because of him and therefore never saw a rainbow.)<sup>2</sup>

(There is a Kabbalistic tradition that on Lag b'Omer a rainbow will appear in a different color, which will symbolize the arrival of the Messianic age (Bnei Yissaschar).)

### Footnotes

- 1. Breishit Rabbah 35:2
- 2. Genesis 9:8-17 and Rashi there.

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## An Inward Focus

[http://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/680232/jewish/An-Inward-Focus.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/680232/jewish/An-Inward-Focus.htm)

By Rabbi [Michoel Gourarie](#)

The 33rd day of the Omer Count is a special day in the Jewish calendar. It is known as Lag BaOmer, the day that marks the passing of the great Talmudic sage and mystic, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. This second century rabbi and kabbalist requested that the day of his passing should be marked with happiness and celebration.

One of the many Lag BaOmer traditions is for children to go on outings and play with bows and arrows. Among the many reasons for this custom is one that has an important life lesson.

To use a bow and arrow effectively, the shooter must first pull the bow towards himself. Once the bow is pulled as far back as possible, the arrow can be released with significant force and hopefully meets its target quickly and accurately.



### **The only effective way to change other people is to begin with ourselves**

The lesson here is simple but powerful. In order to conquer and affect the world around us we must first move inwards. When we look deeply into our own soul, realizing the amazing potential that we possess, only then can we influence others.

The Rebbe of Kotzk once said: "When I was younger I thought I would change the world. I then decided that I would work on my city, and later concentrated just on my family. But now I have decided just to try and change myself." I do not believe the Kotzker Rebbe meant that he would work only on himself and ignore others. After all, he led a big community and was responsible for thousands of followers. What he was saying is that the only effective way to change other people is to begin with ourselves.

Improving our own character and personality is within our control. We choose to progress or stagnate, to become angry or stay calm, to give or to hold back. We cannot control other people, but we can influence them by moving inwards. Changing ourselves will change others.

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# Log B'Omer Songs

<http://www.hebrewsongs.com/lagba%27omer.htm>

## KASHTEINU AL SHICHMEINU

Words: L'vin Kipnees / Music: David Ma'aravi

A.  
Kash-tei-nu al shich-mei-nu,  
Dig-lei-nu ram ba-yad.  
La-ya-ar cha-vi-vei-nu  
Nei-lech ga-dol va-kat.  
Ha-yom lag-Ba'omer!  
Ha-yom, Ha-yom Lag-Ba'omer!

B.  
Kash-tei-nu chish nim-sho-chah  
Niz-rok l'ma-la cheitz.  
Shul-chan ya-fe na-a-ro-chah  
B'tzel tza-me-ret eitz  
Ha-yom Lag-Ba'omer!  
Ha-yom, Ha-yom lag-Ba-omer!

C.  
To-chal Tzi-por l-tanu,  
Yish-te gam pe-rach-chen.  
Chag lag-Ba'omer lanu  
Simchah l'vat u-vein.  
Ha-yom Lag-Ba'omer!  
Ha-yom, ha-yom Lag-Ba'omer!

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representatives.

## EISH, EISH

Words: Shmu'el Bass / Music: Imanu'el Amiran

Eish, eish al kol tel!  
Mi zo-re-ach? Mi zto-hel?  
Eish, eish zeh ha-leil  
Chag hu, chag l'Yis-ra-el.

Eish, eish al kol sh'vil!  
Ad or boker po nagil  
Gil, Tzliil, kol Ha-leil:  
Lag-Ba'omer l'Yisrael.

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## Log B'Omer Games

### Lag Baomer

#### Interactive Story

**Activity:** There was once man named R' Shimon Bar Yochai, and the Romans didn't let him learn Torah. One day they were chasing him, so he started running away (everyone stamping feet), and was looking for a place to hide (hands on you forehead, looking around). He sees a cave, ducks in (off chairs, ducking on floor). Soon he gets thirsty, and Hashem makes a stream of water, (cup hands and drink from it). Then he's hungry, and Hashem makes tree grow. What grows on trees? Fruits, so he picked fruit (pick fruit off tree) and drank water (sip from stream), while he was hiding from the romans (looking around nervously), who didn't let him learn torah. Then one day, there's a knock on the door (knock), and its Eliahu Hanavi, that guy who visits us at the seder, who tells him he can come out (sing and dance to Eliahu Hanavi songs).

*Courtesy of* [parshaactivities.com](http://parshaactivities.com)

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# Lag B'Omer in Homil (& Six Questions)

By [Yosef Shidler](#) from [Chinuch.org](#)

As in many Jewish communities of old, the residents of Homil had the custom of visiting the local cemetery on Lag B'Omer. Every year on this day, all the Jews would pay their respects to the dearly departed: parents, Chasidim, Torah scholars and other beloved members of the community.

The Chevra Kadisha, or Burial Society, would also make its annual visit to the cemetery on the afternoon of Lag B'Omer. Notebook in hand, its members would make the rounds of all the graves and check on the condition of the tombstones. Anything requiring repair was duly noted.

Towards evening, their inspection over, the members of the Chevra Kadisha would gather together for a communal seuda (festive meal). It was always an inspirational event, dedicated to furthering the observance of "acts of true kindness" (as Jewish burial practices are called, as the dead cannot be expected to reciprocate).

It was also customary for the famous Rabbi Isaac of Homil to participate in the gathering, joining the Chevra Kadisha in their celebration. Rabbi Isaac, one of the greatest followers of the chassidim, would make a "lechaim" and deliver some appropriate words of Torah.

Before he arrived, however, Rabbi Isaac would always conduct his own pilgrimage to visit the gravesites of his predecessors. Year after year he would follow the same schedule-till one time, something most unusual occurred.

That Lag B'Omer it was already growing late when Rabbi Isaac began his rounds, accompanied by the cemetery caretaker. The setting sun elongated his shadow, accentuating his long white beard. At each grave the Rabbi whispered something audible only to him before moving on to the next one.

At the very end of the cemetery, in the newer section where the most recently deceased were interred, the Rabbi paused in front of an obviously new marble monument. Bending down, he read the inscription to make sure it was the one he was looking for before nodding his head slightly.

"Quickly!" he suddenly turned and called to the caretaker. "Go back to town and bring an ax. A strong one, with a heavy blade." The caretaker did as he was told, and few minutes later he was back.

"Now I want you to obliterate everything it says here," the Rabbi instructed him. "Take off all the words of praise, all the flowery eulogies and tributes. Leave nothing but the name of the deceased and the date he died."

The caretaker hesitated, frozen in place. But Rabbi Isaac was insistent. "Please, just do what I tell you," he implored him.

With trembling hands the caretaker lifted the ax and demolished the engraving, erasing the litany of good deeds the deceased had accomplished during his lifetime. When the deed was done, a look of satisfaction could be seen on the face of the Rabbi. "Good," he told the astounded caretaker. "Now I can attend the seuda with the Chevra Kadisha."

The news of what had happened quickly spread throughout Homil. Indeed, the rumor reached the ears of the members of the Burial Society even before Rabbi Isaac arrived at their celebration.

"Thank G-d I was able to do an act of kindness for a Jewish soul," the Rabbi announced as he walked in the door. It was obvious from the way everyone was looking at him that they were completely mystified by his behavior.

The Rabbi sat down and made a blessing over a glass of spirits. "L'chaim-to life!" he wished the assemblage before launching into an explanation:

"A few weeks ago," he began, "a simple Jew passed away in Homil. His funeral was small and unassuming. Only a few members of his family were present, plus representatives of the Chevra Kadisha. Like many others, despite the fact that he wasn't particularly learned or saintly, he was a warmhearted Jew who had many mitzvot to his credit. On the other hand, he also occasionally faltered like everyone else. In other words, he was your average Jew.

"After he died, his soul went up to the Heavenly Court, where his good deeds and bad deeds came under intense scrutiny. The judgment was about to be issued when, all of a sudden, an angel stood up holding a glistening white marble tablet. It was the tombstone that the deceased's children had erected over his final resting place.

"It seems that the man's children had decided to bestow upon their father - or upon themselves - a number of undeserved honors. The lengthy inscription described a lifetime of devoutness and piety, which, in reality, was only a fabrication. The Heavenly Court was disturbed by this miscarriage of justice.

"Today I did a very great favor for the soul of the departed," the Rabbi concluded. "When I erased all of the undeserved words of praise, the Heavenly Court ruled that the man's soul could now receive the true reward it was legitimately entitled to."

1. What was the minhag in Homil on Lag Baomer both during the day and at night?
2. Who was the head of Homil?

3. What was the caretaker told to bring to the cemetery?
4. In the story it says the caretaker was frozen in his place. Why was he scared to do what he was told?
5. What accusation was brought against the Yid who passed away?
6. How was the problem fixed?

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By [lafit Koldorff](http://lafit.koldorff.com) at chinuch.org

היום של ל"ג בעומר

יום של שמחה

קשת

מדורה



להמשיך



### Rabbi Shimon Knows the Romans

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai knew better than most people how cruel the Romans were. Rabbi Shimon lived not long after the destruction of the Second *Bais Hamikdosh*. Those were the times when the Romans made it illegal to teach Torah and to give *s'micha* (ordination) to future leaders of Israel. Anyone caught violating the law could receive the death penalty — and, indeed, the Romans murdered some of the greatest sages of the century because they continued to teach Torah, no matter what the Romans said.

One of them was Rabbi Akiva, the *rebbe* of Rabbi Shimon. The vicious Romans tortured Rabbi Akiva to death because of his devotion to his students. Another was Rabbi Shimon's next *rebbe*, Rabbi Yehuda ben Bavo.

Rabbi Yehuda told his students, "You are young enough to run away. Escape! Don't worry about me. Your lives are more important, because you are the future leaders of Israel!" They obeyed and dashed away just in time, but Rabbi Yehuda ben Bavo was caught and murdered.

As time went by, the persecution eased and the Romans no longer enforced their laws against Torah. Rabbi Shimon did not forget the past, however. Once he was sitting with Rabbi Yehuda and Rabbi Yosi bar Chalafta and a group of their students. The discussion turned to the

Roman government and its many successes in building and developing the lands it had conquered. Rabbi Yehuda praised the Romans for the roads, bridges, bath-houses, and markets they had built. Rabbi Shimon responded angrily that everything the Romans did was for selfish reasons, so that they could charge taxes and tolls. Rabbi Yosi listened, but took no sides.

That discussion should have remained secret — but it did not. One of the listeners couldn't resist repeating it, and eventually the Roman authorities heard the tale. They issued their decree: for praising Rome, Rabbi Yehuda would be rewarded; indeed, because the Romans trusted him, he was often able to help the Jews against Roman persecution. For not defending Rome, Rabbi Yosi would be exiled to the town of Tzipori. As for Rabbi Shimon — he would be executed!

### The Cave

The great *tanna* heard about the death sentence. He and his son Eliezer managed to escape and hide in a synagogue. Rabbi Shimon's righteous, loyal wife secretly brought food every day, but he soon realized that the arrangement could not last. Perhaps the Romans would follow her or, even worse, torture her and force her to reveal his whereabouts. So Rabbi Shimon and his son fled to a cave near the little town of Peki'in on a mountainside in the Galil. A miracle happened — a carob (*bokser*) tree grew at the

mouth of the cave and a spring of water appeared. For twelve years, they studied Torah day and night without any worries except for the task of learning and understanding Hashem's wisdom. The teachings of those years were later written down to form the holy *Zohar*, a book of *Kabbalistic* knowledge that is filled with the mysteries of Hashem, the Torah, and creation.

At the end of twelve years, Elyahu *Hanovi* informed the two *tannaim* that the Roman emperor was dead and the danger to their lives was over. They emerged from the cave, but they were not prepared for what they saw. After all those years of holy study, Rabbi Shimon could not understand how people could "waste" time on working, plowing, and earning money. Whenever he expressed his annoyance, fields would be consumed in fire.

A voice was heard from heaven saying, "Have you left the cave to destroy My World? Go back to the cave!"

### Back to the World

The pair returned for one more year. Then, they heard a voice telling them they were free to leave. This time, they were ready to become part of the world again. It was *Erev Shabbos* afternoon, and they saw an old man rushing down the road with two sweet-smelling myrtle branches. They asked him what the branches were for.

He answered, "They are in honor of Shabbos. One is for the commandment to remember the Shabbos, and the other for the commandment to protect the Shabbos."

Rabbi Shimon exclaimed to his son, "Look how our fellow Jews love *mitzvos*." No longer was he disappointed in the activities of the world.

Many years later, as the day of his death approached, Rabbi Shimon gathered his students around him and taught them many mysteries of the Torah that had been known to no one else in his generation. The sun did not set until he was finished. Finally he was done. He told his listeners that they should always rejoice on that day because so much Torah was revealed on it. Then he died. It was *Lag B'Omer*, the day which has been celebrated ever since as Rabbi Shimon requested.

## Crafting with Sticks: A Bonfire Ready For L'Ag B'Omer!

<http://www.creativejewishmom.com/2010/04/crafting-with-sticks-a-bonfire-ready-for-lag-bomer.html>



For those of you who might be wondering, L'Ag B'Omer is a very exciting holiday here in Israel and especially for those of us who live up north and can easily make the trip to

Meron. What, where, who? It's like this: L'ag stands for the hebrew letters lamed and gimmel, which stands for the number 33. So L'Ag B'Omer is the 33rd day of the Omer,( the 49 day period between the 2nd night of Passover and the holiday of Shavuot.) The Omer is a period of semi mourning on the Jewish calendar, EXCEPT for the 33rd day, because on that day our very great Holy sage, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai was born and years later, left this world. And his contribution to this world was so great, that on this day we exit our state of mourning and we celebrate!

On the night of the 33rd, large bonfires are lit around the country to signify the great light of the day. Many children spend weeks collecting wood in all forms to help make their neighborhood bonfire the biggest! L'Ag B'omer is the traditional day for giving haircuts to three year old boys, and it is especially wonderful to do the haircut at the burial site of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, in Meron. The celebrating at the gravesite in Meron is a 24 hour plus affair, and many arrive days in advance to camp out in the woods nearby. Roads are closed except for buses, and tens of thousands of people arrive from all over the country and all over the world to come and join in this joyous event! Just writing about it is getting me excited! (This year L'Ag B'Omer will be on Saturday night May 1st until Sunday May 2nd at sundown.)

And now about this project!

### **You'll Need:**

- sticks (take a hike and collect some!)
- a cardboard base (I used a round recycled piece of cardboard from a frozen pizza - gasp! yes I buy those sometimes)
- modeling clay
- small wooden cubes or even small stones would be great!
- white glue
- a piece of string
- some wine cork people, from [this project](#)

### **How To:**

I think this one is pretty self explanatory, just I found that using clumps of modeling clay helps to anchor the sticks as the kids are assembling the structure. Glue the modeling clay to the base, and glue the sticks to the clay.

Oh, and what about the fire you ask? Well we've still got another week before we need to light this, so honestly i just haven't figured that part out yet! My husband and a friend of his both independently suggested using a fan to blow bits of paper around! A manly idea I guess, but a bit too complicated for me! I was thinking more along the lines of aluminum foil and orange and yellow tissue paper!

...Enjoy!