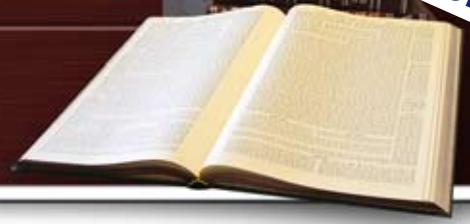


HALACHICALLY SPEAKING

BACK ISSUE



- Compiled by **Rabbi Moische Dovid Lebovits**
- Reviewed by **Rabbi Benzion Schiffenbauer Shlita**
- All Piskei Harav Yisroel Belsky Shlita are reviewed by Harav Yisroel Belsky Shlita

Volume 6 • Issue 5



LAG B'OMER

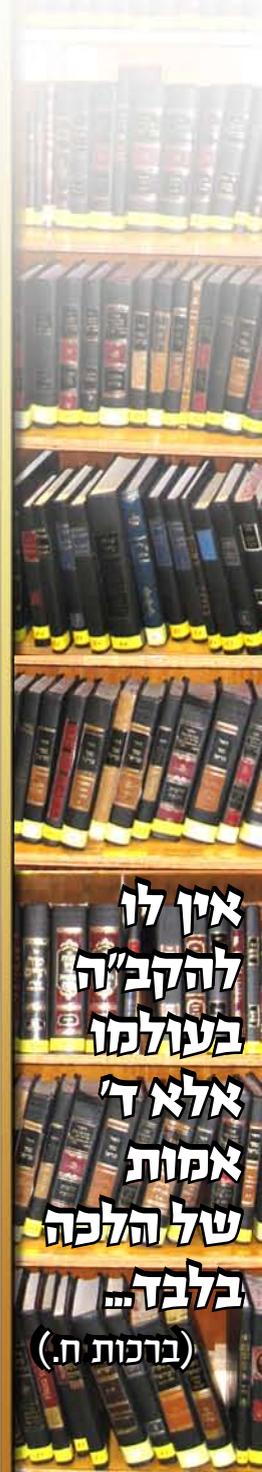
Lag B'omer is a day which people celebrate with great *simcha* and joy. What is the reason for this great celebration? When does it start? Why do so many people go to *Meron* on *Lag B'omer*? Should one go to *Meron* for an *Upsherin*? All these questions and many others will be discussed in this issue.

The day is called *Lag B'omer* and not *Lag L'omer* because *B'omer* (and *Lag*) is the numerical value of *Moshe (Rabbeinu)* and *Rav Shimon Bar Yochai* rose to the same level as *Moshe (Rabbeinu)*.¹

Lag B'omer will always fall out on the same day of the week as *Purim*.²

1. Elei Heim Moadei page 382, Ben Pesach L'Shavuos page 301, Nitei Gavriel Pesach 3:page 268 in the footnote, Ohr Mufla pages 66-67.

2. Tur O.C. 428, Shulchan Aruch O.C. 428:1. Refer to Me'or V'Shemesh page 142, Ohr Mufla pages 69-70. *Lag B'omer* also happens to fall out the same day as *Moshe Rabbeinu's Ushpezin* (Shar Yisoschor Chodesh Iyar 20:page 98, Gal Einay page 31).



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What Happened on Lag B'omer

Many different events took place on *Lag B'omer*.³ Some say that it is the day that *Rav Shimon Bar Yochai* exited the cave where he and his son hid for thirteen years.⁴ *Rav Shimon Bar Yochai* died on *Lag B'omer* and revealed the *Zohar* to us.⁵ The *Rama* also died on *Lag B'omer*, and many have the custom to go to his *kever* on *Lag B'omer*.⁶

The Simcha of Lag B'omer

We are happy on *Lag B'omer*.⁷ Some explain that the *talmidim* of *Rav Akiva* who died throughout the days following *Pesach* stopped dying on *Lag B'omer*.⁸ Some *poskim* ask that if so many *talmidim* died, why should we be happy?⁹ The answer may be that we are happy that the *talmidim* that *Rav Akiva* acquired afterwards did not die.¹⁰ The *talmidim* of *Rav Akiva* died because they did not show respect to each other.¹¹ Some say that they spoke *loshon hara* about each other.¹² Others say that although each *talmid* grew to higher levels of *Torah*, they treated each other as if they had not grown at all, because they were still friendly from their younger days.¹³

Others say that the joy is to show honor for *Rav Shimon Bar Yochai*.¹⁴ Some say that the *mon* started to fall on *Lag B'omer*.¹⁵ Others say that the reason for the joy is based on *kabbalah*.¹⁶

3. Refer to *Nesivos Sholom* 2:pages 327-331.

4. Refer to *Meseches Shabbos* 33b, *Bereishis Rabbah* 79:6, *Koheles Rabbah* 10:8, *Ben Pesach L'Shavuos* page 302:6.

5. *Birchei Yosef* 493:4, *Chayei Adom* 131:11, *Kaf Hachaim* 493:26, *Ben Pesach L'Shavuos* page 302:7, *Gal Einay* page 32. *Rav Shimon Bar Yochai* lived till about eighty years-old.

6. *Ben Pesach L'Shavuos* page 302:8, *Nitei Gavriel Pesach* 3:page 278.

7. *Darchei Moshe* 493:1, *Rama* 2, *Shulchan Aruch Harav* 5, *Yaavetz* page 163a, *Matei Moshe* 68:page 148, *Me'am Loez Vayeitzeh* page 575, *Gal Einay* page 11.

8. Refer to *Meseches Yevomos* 62b, *Meiri Yevomos* page 229, *Shulchan Aruch* 493:2, *Levush* 493:2, *Gra* 493:2, *Mishnah Berurah* 8, *Divrei Torah* 3:83, *Aruch Hashulchan* 493:5, *Taamei Haminhagim* page 251:604, *Mishnas Rav Aaron* 3:pages 13-17. Refer to *Pri Megadim M.Z.* 493:1, *Mishnah Berurah* 7.

9. *Pri Chadash* 493:2, *Moadim B'halacha* page 301.

10. *Pri Chadash* *ibid*, *Sdei Chemed Eretz Yisrael* 6:page 8. Refer to *Maharsha* to *Meseches Moed Kotton* 28a "Meis B'chamishim.

11. *Meseches Yevomos* *ibid*.

12. *Me'am Loez Vayeitzeh* page 575.

13. *Harav Yisrael Belsky Shlita*.

14. *Chayei Adom* 131:11, *Kaf Hachaim* 27, *Orchos Rabbeinu* page 92:16. Refer to *Birchei Yosef* 493:4.

15. *Chasam Sofer* Y.D. 233, *Sefer Hatodah* page 259, *Ohr Gedalyuhu Moadim* page 77:2.

16. *Ibid*, see *Bnei Yisoschor (Nissan)* 12:12.

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The Greatness of the Day

Lag B'omer is a *segula* for *parnasa*.¹⁷ Some say that it brings one to *yiras shomayim*.¹⁸ It is a day for one to ask for his needs through *tefilla*,¹⁹ and one can ask for salvation in any area of life.²⁰

Meron and Lag B'omer

The custom to go to *Meron* on *Lag B'omer* dates back to the *Rishonim*.²¹ One should not go to *Meron* by himself.²² Some say that it is meaningful to go three days before and after as well.²³ Although some question the *inyan* of going to *Meron* on *Lag B'omer*,²⁴ the custom is to go. It would seem that one who does not live in *Eretz Yisrael* does not have to be *matriach* himself to go to *Meron* on *Lag B'omer*.²⁵ One who cannot go to *Meron* should study the teachings of *Rav Shimon Bar Yochai*.²⁶

Today, animals are *shechted* on the side of the road to *Meron*. One should make sure that these animals are *shechted* properly and salted according to *halacha*. This is usually not the case, and one should be careful not to consume the meat. Furthermore, one should be careful to avoid areas where people walk around dressed immodestly.²⁷

Lag B'omer and Rav Shimon Bar Yochai

Why do hundreds of thousands of people go to *Meron* to the *kever* of *Rav Shimon Bar Yochai*?²⁸

17. Nitei Gavriel Pesach 3:page 292.

18. Sefas Emes Emor 652, Ohr Gedalyuhu Moadim page 154:4, Lag B'omer page 260.

19. Nitei Gavriel Pesach 3:pages 292-293. Some say it is a day to do *teshuva* (Yaros Devash 2:11, Ohr Mufla page 26). Others say it is a day for *hasmuda* in learning (Gal Einay page 15).

20. Bnei Yisoschor (Iyar) 2:page 98. See Ohr Gedalyuhu Moadim page 154, Gal Einay page 16.

21. Refer to Ateres Zekanim 493, Kaf Hachaim 493:26, Shaarei Halacha U'minhag page 165, Taamei Haminhagim pages 256-266 in depth for a list of who went to *Meron*. Some say if one does not go he does not see *simcha* in his days (Taamei Haminhagim page 275).

22. Nitei Gavriel Pesach 3:page 276.

23. Nachlas Yisrael 51, Taamei Haminhagim page 268:footnote 43. Refer to Da'as Torah 3:46 who seems to argue.

24. Shoel U'meishiv 5:39, Chasam Sofer Y.D. 233, Taamei Haminhagim page 271.

25. Taamei Haminhagim page 269:6.

26. Moreh B'etzvah 8:223, Moed Lechol Chai 7:8, Kaf Hachaim 493:27, Taamei Haminhagim page 272, Nitei Gavriel Pesach 3:page 277:6. The Doleh U'mashka page 196 says he did not learn the teachings of the *Zohar* etc on *Lag B'omer*.

27. Yechaveh Daas 5:35, Yalkut Yosef Moadim page 435, Mekadesh Yisrael 107.

28. Minhag Yisrael Torah 493:page 347. The *simcha* is made in America as well but on a lower level (Mekadesh Yisrael 104, see Minchas Elazar 4:60). *Kohanim* may not enter the *kever* of *Rav Shimon Bar Yochai* (Halichos Shlomo Moadim 2:page 366:23:footnote 34). Approximately 400,000-450,000 go to *Meron* for *Lag B'omer*.



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As mentioned earlier, *Rav Shimon Bar Yochai* was *niftar* on *Lag B'omer*.²⁹ Normally, the *yahrtzeit* of a *tzaddik* is a day of fasting, not a day of *simcha* and joy.³⁰ However, *Rav Shimon Bar Yochai* is different. Before he was *niftar* he called his students and revealed to them the secrets of the *Torah*. These secrets were written down and are contained in the *Zohar*.³¹ Therefore, we are extra happy and rejoice on the day that these secrets were given to us. Others say that since *Rav Shimon Bar Yochai* miraculously survived his prolonged stay in the cave,³² we celebrate his *yahrtzeit* by being happy.³³ Three thousand *halachos* were introduced on the day that *Rav Shimon Bar Yochai* died, and this is another reason to celebrate on *Lag B'omer*.³⁴

Any time the *Gemorah* mentions *Rav Shimon* without any other name, it means *Rav Shimon Bar Yochai*.³⁵ He was the *talmid* of *Rav Akiva* and *Rav Yehoshua*.³⁶

The day that he was *niftar* is referred to as the “*yom hilulei*” of *Rav Shimon Bar Yochai*.³⁷

Tachanun* on *Lag B'omer

Tachanun is not recited on *Lag B'omer* or at *mincha* on the thirty-second day of the *omer*.³⁸ One recites *lamnatz'eiach ya'anacha* on *Lag B'omer*.³⁹ However, others omit it;⁴⁰ this is not the overwhelming custom. When *Lag B'omer* falls out on Sunday (as it does

29. Taamei Haminhagim page 251:kuntres achron 604, page 271:11, Bnei Yisoschor (Iyar) 3:2:page 123b (new), Sefer Hatodah page 258, Moadim B'halacha pages 299-300, Yechaveh Daas 5:35.

30. Shulchan Aruch Y.D. 376:4, see Shulchan Aruch O.C. 568:7-9.

31. Moreh B'etzah 223, Mishmeres Shalom 38:1, Taamei Haminhagim page 256, pages 267-268 in depth, Kaf Hachaim 493:26, Ben Pesach L'Shavuos pages 314-315, Orchos Rabbeinu 2:page 96:13, see *Lag B'omer* (Artscroll) pages 50-52.

32. Refer to Rabbeinu Chananel Meseches Succah 45b.

33. Shem Aryeh O.C. 14. Before he was in the cave he was *Shimon Bar Yochai*, and after he left the cave he got the name *Rav* because of all the *Torah* he learnt there (Mekomos Hakedoshim page 18).

34. Matamim Hachodesh page 16, Shar Yisoschor Chodesh Iyar Gal Einay 23. Refer to Taamei Haminhagim pages 251, 267-268. See *Lag B'omer* page 229.

35. Rambam in Pirush Hamishnayos to Zerayim page 59b column 1, see Rashi in Meseches Shavuos 2b “mishmo.” Refer to Avos 4:17, Berochos 43b, Gittin 67a for other sayings of *Rav Shimon Bar Yochai*.

36. Refer to Medrash Rabbah (Vayikra) 21:8, Meseches Gittin 67a.

37. Zohar 3:page 291a, Moreh B'etzah 223, Chayei Adom 131:11, Aruch Hashulchan 7, Kaf Hachaim 493:27, Taamei Haminhagim pages 265-266, 272. There are different translations for the words *hilulei*. Some say it is *simcha* others say it is *hallel* (refer to Moadim B'halacha page 301, *Lag B'omer* page 212).

38. Darchei Moshe 493:3, Rama 131:6, 493:2, Levush 493:2, Pri Megadim Eishel Avraham 493:3, Shaarei Teshuva 493:2, Be'er Heitiv 5, Matei Moshe 688, Shulchan Aruch Harav 6, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 120:6, Mishnah Berurah 131:35, 493:9, Shaar Hatzyion 11, Igros Moshe O.C. 1:159, Mekadesh Yisrael Sefira 108. Refer to Chok Yaakov 493:6 who seems to say that *tachnun* should be recited on *Lag B'omer*.

39. Shulchan Aruch 292:2, Pri Megadim Eishel Avraham 403:3, Mishnah Berurah 493:9, Mekadesh Yisrael 108.

40. Pri Chadash 131:1, Siddur Yaavetz 2:page 163, Shulchan Hatohar 131:18.

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this year) one does not recite *tzidkascha tzedek* at *mincha* on *Shabbos*.⁴¹

Fasting

One may fast a *ta'anis chalom* on *Lag B'omer*. One should not fast for a *yahrtzeit* on *Lag B'omer*.⁴²

Those who have the custom to fast on their wedding day should do so on *Lag B'omer*.⁴³ Others are lenient.⁴⁴ Even one who did not fast should still say *viduy* at *mincha*.⁴⁵

Marriage

The custom is to permit marriages on *Lag B'omer*.⁴⁶ Some only permit a daytime wedding on *Lag B'omer*.⁴⁷ The *Sefardim* have the custom to marry on the thirty-fourth day of the *omer*.⁴⁸ The overwhelming custom is to permit a marriage on the night of *Lag B'omer*.⁴⁹ However, others have the custom not to get married on *Lag B'omer* as well.⁵⁰ A wedding that started on the day of *Lag B'omer* may continue into the night.⁵¹ Dancing and music are permitted at a wedding on *Lag B'omer*.⁵²

It is interesting to note that one who attends a *chasuna* during the time he is observing the restrictions of *sefira* may only dance after the *chosson* and *kallah* enter the ballroom,

41. Levush 493:4.

42. Refer to Meiri Yevomos 62b, Ben Pesach L'Shavuos 17:23-24.

43. Magen Avraham 573:1, Chayei Adom 132:43, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 146:2, Mishnah Berurah 573:7, Daas Torah 493:1, Aruch Hashulchan E.H. 61:21, Mekadesh Yisrael 111:page 156, Halichos Shlomo Moadim 2:page 365:22. Refer to Shulchan Haezer 6:3:6 and Misgeres Hashulchan 146:3 who bring lenient opinions. Refer to Otzer Haposkim 61:1:10:2 pages 261-266 in depth.

44. Elya Rabbah 573:3, Mishnah Berurah 573:7, Piskei Shemuos page 68. If the wedding is on *Lag B'omer* at night then all would agree one fasts on the thirty second day of the *omer* (Nitei Gavriel Pesach 3:page 272:8).

45. Pischei Teshuva E.H. 61:9.

46. Rama 493:1, Magen Avraham 5, Levush 2, Minchas Elazar 4:60, Darchei Chaim V'sholom 636, Yechaveh Daas 3:31. If the *chosson* has one *minhag* and the *kallah* has a different one, the custom of the *chosson* is followed (Refer to Yechaveh Daas 3:31, Igros Moshe O.C. 1:158, Yismach Lev 1:page 100). Some say the dancing should be done by day and the *seuda* may be done at night (Halichos Shlomo Moadim 2:page 365:footnote 81).

47. Elya Rabbah 7, Pri Megadim Eishel Avraham 1, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 120:6, Mishnah Berurah 11, Kaf Hachaim 26, Shaarei Halacha U'minhag 222:page 165, Yismach Lev 1:page 101 quoting the opinion of Harav Chaim Kanievesky Shlita. Refer to Shulchan Aruch Harav 5.

48. Shulchan Aruch 493:1, Pri Chadash 1, Biur Halacha "yeish," Kaf Hachaim 25, Minchas Yitzchok 4:84, Yechaveh Daas 3:31.

49. Machzik Beracha 5, Aruch Hashulchan 4, Kaf Hachaim 28, Mahari Asad (Yehuda Yaleh) 2:39, Chelkes Yaakov 1:97, Igros Moshe O.C. 1:159, Shevet Ha'Levi 8:168:5, Shearim Metzuyananim B'halacha 120:13. Refer to Hilchos Yemey Ha'omer pages 40-43 in depth.

50. Divrei Yoel 26:1, Nitei Gavriel Pesach 3:page 214:footnote 17 (Minhag in Skver), see *Lag B'omer* page 178:footnote 31.

51. Igros Moshe E.H. 1:97:page 247, Nitei Gavriel Pesach 3:page 217:19, Mekadesh Yisrael 103, Chut Shani Shabbos 4:page 380.

52. Igros Moshe E.H. 2:95, Avnei Yushfei 1:113.



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as the earlier dancing is not considered being *mesameach* the *chosson* and *kallah*.⁵³ Even those who hold like the *Arizal* and are *noheg* the *issur* of haircuts throughout *sefira* may make a wedding on *Lag B'omer*.⁵⁴ No weddings are permitted on the night of the thirty-second day.⁵⁵

Haircuts / Shaving

According to the opinion of the *Mechaber*, one may not take haircuts until the morning of the thirty-fourth day.⁵⁶ The *Rama* holds that one may shave on *Lag B'omer*.⁵⁷ Many apply this to the night of *Lag B'omer* (because *tachanun* is already omitted on *erev Lag B'omer*),⁵⁸ while others say it means first thing in the morning. This is based on the concept that if one waits a little in the morning it is as if he waited a whole day (*miktzas hayom k'kula*).⁵⁹ The custom of many seems to be that shaving or taking a haircut is permitted after *neitz hachama*.⁶⁰

When *Lag B'omer* falls out on Sunday (as it does this year), shaving and haircuts are permitted on Friday because of *kovod Shabbos*.⁶¹ The logic is that *tachanun* is already omitted on *erev Lag B'omer*, so technically shaving would be permitted on *Shabbos*. Since one cannot shave on *Shabbos*, the allowance is pushed back to Friday.⁶² One may not shave on *Motzei Shabbos* when *Lag B'omer* falls out on Sunday.⁶³ Furthermore, many say

53. Harav Yisrael Belsky Shlita.

54. Harav Yisrael Belsky Shlita, see *Minchas Elazar* 4:60.

55. *Nitei Gavriel Pesach* 3:page 216:18.

56. *Shulchan Aruch* 493:2, *Biur Halacha* "yeish," *Kaf Hachaim* 25. Refer to *Kaf Hachaim* 493:18. If *Lag B'omer* falls out on Friday then even according to the *Sefardim* haircuts etc are permitted on Friday because of *kovod* for *Shabbos* (*Shulchan Aruch* *ibid*).

57. *Rama* 493:2, *Levush* 2, *Chayei Adom* 131:11, *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 120:15, *Machzik Beracha* 2, *Aruch Hashulchan* 7, *Nitei Gavriel Pesach* 3:page 222, *Ben Pesach L'Shavuos* page 249:footnote 17). This was the opinion of the *Chazon Ish* and the *Steipler* (*Orchos Rabbeinu* 2:page 95:10).

58. *Be'er Heitiv* 493:5, *Chok Yaakov* 6, *Elya Rabbah* 7, *Shulchan Aruch Harav* 5, *Mishnah Berurah* 11, *Shaar Hatzyion* 12, *Biur Halacha* "yeish," *Mekadesh Yisrael* 103.

59. *Gra*, *Mishnah Berurah* 6. Refer to *Machatzis Hashekel* 3.

60. *Shulchan Aruch Harav* 5, *Mishnah Berurah* 7,10, *Lekutei Maharich* 3:page 569 (new), *Doleh U'mashka* page 196. The *Halichos Shlomo Moadim* 2:page 364:footnote 80 is lenient, since bonfires etc. are made at night, haircuts etc should not be different.

61. *Rama* *ibid*, *Chok Yaakov* 7, *Shulchan Aruch Harav* 5, *Chayei Adom* 131:11, *Mishnah Berurah* 5, *Aruch Hashulchan* 6, *L'Torah V'horah* 2:page 19:2 quoting the opinion of *Harav Moshe Feinstein zt"l*, *Rivevos Ephraim* 6:page 294:2, *Orchos Rabbeinu* 2:page 95:11, see *Chok Yaakov* 7. This is even according to the *Sefardim* (*Bais Dovid* 208). *Lag B'omer* falls out on Sunday in the following years (5767, 70, 71, 73, 74, 77, 84, 88, 91, 94, 95, 97, 98). Some say to take the haircut on Friday after *chatzos* if possible, although taking it before *chatzos* is also permitted (*Halichos Shlomo Moadim* 2:page 364:footnote 79).

62. Harav Yisrael Belsky Shlita. Refer to *Nodeh B'Yehuda* 1:28:page 64 (old).

63. *Ben Pesach L'Shavuos* page 250:footnote 20 quoting the opinion of *Harav Elyashiv Shlita*, *Doleh U'mashka* page 196, *Halichos Shlomo Moadim* 2:page 364:footnote 31.

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that shaving is not permitted on Thursday night if one has time to do it on Friday.⁶⁴ One who started shaving on *Lag B'omer* may continue after *shekia* as well (even if he does not shave after *Lag B'omer*).⁶⁵

According to the opinion of the *Arizal*, shaving is prohibited even on *Lag B'omer*.⁶⁶ Shaving is permitted on *Erev Shavuos* even for those who follow the *Arizal's* opinion.⁶⁷

Meron and Upsherin

Hundreds, if not thousands of people, cut their children's hair in *Meron* on *Lag B'omer*.⁶⁸ This was the custom of the *Arizal*.⁶⁹ Some explain that the holiness of *Rav Shimon Bar Yochai* should be a *zechus* for the child.⁷⁰ Others say that *Rav Shimon bar Yochai* taught us that hair is part of the *yetzer hara* when he gave us the *Zohar*.⁷¹ Many have the custom to go to *Meron* on *Lag B'omer* and cut the child's hair even before the child has actually reached the age of three.⁷² Others say that one should only go to *Meron* if the child was born during *sefira*.⁷³ Some question the custom to cut hair at a *kever* of any *tzaddik*.⁷⁴

Saying "Today is *Lag B'omer*"

Some *poskim* say one who has not yet counted the *sefira* of *Lag B'omer* should avoid commenting that, "Today is *Lag B'omer*", since doing so may be considered counting

64. Refer to Mishnah Berurah 260:5, Rivevos Ephraim 1:338, 4:131, see Kaf Hachaim 23, Ben Pesach L'Shavuot page 250. One who did not cut his hair in this situation until Sunday was not *mezalzel* in the honor of *Shabbos* (Rivevos Ephraim 1:338).

65. Orchos Rabbeinu 2:page 96, Ben Pesach L'Shavuot page 247:7:footnote 10 quoting the opinion of Harav Chaim Kanievesky Shlita.

66. Shaarei Teshuva 493:8, Birchei Yosef 3, Moreh B'etzvah 8:221, Kaf Hachaim 13, Lekutei Maharich ibid, Shulchan Hatohar 260:8, Darchei Chaim V'sholom 628, Rivevos Ephraim 3:540:7, Minhag Yisrael Torah 493:15. Refer to Moed Lechol Chai 6:7, Minchas Elazar 3:65.

67. Kaf Hachaim 13, Ohr L'tzyion 3:17:6.

68. Refer to Pardes Yosef Tazria 13:33, Minhagei Eretz Yisrael 23:13, Shaarei Halacha U'minhag page 166, Chanoch L'nar 32:footnote 4, Yalkut Yosef 5:pages 435-436, Nitei Gavriel Pesach 3:page 316:8, Eyunei Halachos 1:page 457, Halichos Shlomo Moadim 2:page 364:footnote 32. Some go on other days to *Meron* for this even not on *Lag B'omer* (Nitei Gavriel Pesach 3:pages 312-315). Others go to the *kever* of *Shmuel* to cut the child's hair (Radvaz 2:608). The *minhag* is to permit the haircut to be done at night of *Lag B'omer* (Mekadesh Yisrael 82).

69. Ateres Zekanim 493, Sefer Hatodah page 258, see ibid:page 259, Minchas Elazar 4:10, Divrei Yoel 27, Peros Noshrim page 328.

70. Sdei Chemed marches Eretz Yisrael 6:page 7. Refer to *Lag B'omer* pages 313-314.

71. Aprakasisa D'yana 1:161. Refer to Kotzosov Taltlaim page 60 for an additional reason.

72. Ben Pesach L'Shavuot 19:13:footnote 20, *Lag B'omer* page 27:footnote 29. Some say he can even be two and a half (Kotzosov Taltlaim page 39:footnote 16).

73. Refer to Arugas Habosem O.C. 210, Aprakasisa D'yana 1:161, Chinuch Yisrael 8, Teshuvos V'hanhugos 2:246, Minhag Yisrael Torah 493:pages 351-353, Hilchos Yemei Ha'omer page 33. The Chazon Ish said if one makes an *upsheirin* earlier than he is supposed to it is damaging to the child (Teshuvos V'hanhugos 2:246).

74. Mishpatei Tzedek 74.



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the day.⁷⁵ Other *poskim* permit this, since his intention is to refer to the special day, and not to count the day.⁷⁶ This seems to be the *minhag ha'olom*.

“Chai Rotel”

Prominent in *Meron* is the drink called “*Chai Rotel*.” The *Bobov Rebbe zt”l* said that one who gives out this *mashka* on *Lag B’omer* is *zocheh* to great things including children.⁷⁷ Many people who can’t attend *Meron* on *Lag B’omer* to hand out the *mashka* pay people to hand it out for them. *Chai Rotel* is an ancient Israeli measurement which today is equivalent to 54 liters. The *minhag* used to be limited to wine or grape juice. However, today water and soda are also distributed.⁷⁸

Bonfire

Some say that the reason for bonfires on *Lag B’omer*⁷⁹ is commemorate the light that *Rav Shimon Bar Yochai* brought to the world when he revealed the secrets of the *Torah* to us.⁸⁰ Others explain that it is a remembrance of the fire that surrounded *Rav Shimon Bar Yochai* while he was in the cave.

Some have the *minhag* to throw garments in the fire on *Lag B’omer* in *Meron*.⁸¹ Some explain that *Rav Shimon Bar Yochai* did not wear clothes when he was in the cave, and when he wanted to learn he would cover his body in sand.⁸² Those who permit this say there is no *bal tashchis* by throwing the garments in the fire,⁸³ while others say that throwing the garments in the fire is indeed *bal tashchis*.⁸⁴ The *minhag* today seems to be that no one throws any garments in the fire.

Night or Day

Many have the custom to make the bonfires (and dancing) on the night of *Lag B’omer*.

75. Refer to Shulchan Aruch 489:4, Biur Halacha 489 “sh'im,” Lag B’omer page 176.

76. Ohr L'tzyion 3:16:4; footnote 4, Avnei Yushpeii 5:75:5.

77. Taamei Haminhagim pages 263-264, Gal Einay page 13.

78. Anyone interested in giving money towards this *inyan* can call 1-718-435-1661.

79. Aruch Hashulchan 493:7, Minhag Yisrael Torah 493:pages 347-348, Ben Pesach L'Shavuos pages 32-321, Lag B’omer pages 237-242, Mekadesh Yisrael 106. The Sheilas Rav page 33 one should not go to a bonfire but he should learn *Torah*. Refer to Doleh U'mashka page 195; footnote 523. Some place oil in the bonfire (Ohr Mufla page 66).

80. Harav Yisrael Belsky Shlita, see Taamei Haminhagim 606, see *ibid*:607 for an additional reason. Refer to Bnei Yisoschor (*Iyar*) 3:6:page 88a, Gal Einay page 12, Ohr Mufla pages 54-55. Some recite a special *tefilla* before lighting the bonfire (Lag B’omer page 243).

81. Sdei Chemed Eretz Yisrael 6, Taamei Haminhagim pages 272-274, Torah L'shma 400, Shem M'Shmuel 8.

82. Yehoshuas Malka 12:page 152 (Lekutei Torah), Nitei Gavriel Pesach 3:pages 280-285.

83. Urion Tlisa 52.

84. Refer to Pischei Teshuva Y.D. 251:4, Shol U'Meishiv *ibid*, Orchos Rabbeinu 2:page 96:14, Doleh U'mashka page 195.

כל השונה
הלכות
בכל יום
מובטח
לו שהוא
בן עולם
הבא...
(גדה ע"ג)

Others say that the *simcha* should start at day.⁸⁵ However, it seems that the *minhag* is to conduct the bonfire and dancing at night all over the world, not only in *Meron*.⁸⁶ However, music in the absence of a bonfire is prohibited until the next day after *neitz hachama*.⁸⁷

Bows and Arrows

The custom of many is to shoot arrows on *Lag B'omer*.⁸⁸ One reason is that *Hashem* shows a rainbow (*keshes*) in the sky when we deserve destruction, but the rainbow is the *siman* that He will not do so.⁸⁹ In a few generations, the rainbow was not seen because of the merits of some unique individuals. One of those people was *Rav Shimon Bar Yochai*.⁹⁰ Therefore, many *tzaddikim* have the custom to shoot an arrow from a bow (representing a rainbow).⁹¹ Some say that since *Lag B'omer* is a day that is *mesugal* for one's *tefillos* to be answered, we shoot a bow. The beginning letters of *shema kol tefilaseinu* spells *keshes* (rainbow).⁹²

The Bar Yochai Song

On *Lag B'omer* many people have the *minhag* to sing *Bar Yochai*,⁹³ which was composed by the *mekubel Rav Shimon Ben Labia* who died in 1584.⁹⁴ Many people have the custom to sing this song every *Shabbos* in the *zemiros*.⁹⁵ Some explain that *Rav Shimon Bar Yochai* was called *Shabbos*.⁹⁶

85. Harav Yisrael Belsky Shlita, opinion of Harav Korelitz Shlita quoted in *Doleh U'mashka* page 194:footnote 520.

86. Harav Yisrael Belsky Shlita, see *Mekadesh Yisrael* 103, *Chut Shani Shabbos* 4:page 380, *Doleh U'mashka* pages 194-195 footnote 521. The *Halichos Shlomo Moadim* 2:page 362:footnote 23 says dancing is permitted on *Lag B'omer* even if it is not for a *devar mitzvah* (refer to *Ben Pesach L'Shavuos* 15:4:footnote 4). The *Avnei Yushpei* 1:98 is not convinced that dancing is permitted at all after *Lag B'omer*.

87. Refer to *Doleh U'mashka* page 194:footnote 520, *Mekadesh Yisrael* 103.

88. Refer to *Sefer Hatodah* page 259, *Taamei Haminhagim* page 252:605, *Lag B'omer* page 249, *Nitei Gavriel Pesach* 3:page 289:20. The equivalent of *Rashbi* and *Keshes* separately is 805 (*ibid*:page 251). See *Me'or V'shemesh* page 142.

89. Refer to *Eitz Yosef* on *Medrash Rabbah* to *Bereishis* 35:2. See *Bnei Yisoschor (Iyar)* 33:3-4:page 88, *Ohr Mufla* page 64.

90. *Medrash Rabbah Bereishis* *ibid*, *Yerushalmi Berochos* 9:2.

91. *Lag B'omer* page 251, *Ben Pesach L'Shavuos* page 339.

92. *Minhag Yisrael Torah* 493:14.

93. *Darchei Chaim V'sholom* 634:page 205, *Mishmeres Shalom* 38:1, *Lag B'omer* page 278. Others did not sing this song because it had too much meaning (*Yosef Ometz* 589:page 125).

94. *Lag B'omer* *ibid*.

95. *Lag B'omer* page 280, *Otzer Hayidios (Shabbos)* page 210, *Nitei Gavriel Pesach* 3:page 288.

96. *Lag B'omer* page 281, see *Zohar Nosso* page 144b. For this reason some people wear *Shabbos* clothes on *Lag B'omer* (*Ohr Mufla* pages 25-26).



אין לו
להקב"ה
בעולמו
אלא ד'
אמות
של הלכה
בלבד
(בדמותה)

Rabbi Akiva

Omar Rabbi Akiva is a popular song on *Lag B'omer*, since the ideas expressed in the *Mishnah* coincide with the purpose of *sefira*, a period of spiritual cleaning in preparation for *Shavuot*. These words are taken from the last *Mishnah* in *Yoma*.⁹⁷

Lag B'omer on Sunday

There is a discussion in the *poskim* whether bonfires can be lit on *Motzei Shabbos* when *Lag B'omer* falls out on Sunday. The concern is that the police and security forces may have to be *mechalel Shabbos* to prepare for the event (this is especially applicable in *Meron* where there are many Jewish police officers). The *minhag* seems to be lenient with this.⁹⁸



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97. Refer to *Lag B'omer* (Artscroll) page 41.

98. *Shaarei Tzyion* (Rabinowitz) 14:pages 212-214 in depth. Refer to *Modanei Yom Tov* 1:54 who discusses the *halachos* that apply to one who wishes to sleep in his car on *Shabbos* in *Meron* before *Lag B'omer* that falls out on *Motzei Shabbos*.

כל השונה
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לו שהוא
בן עולם
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All about

VITAMINS



VITAMIN D DEFICIENCY, *a "Silent Epidemic"*



Eliezer Gruber, CN – educator, researcher and founder/developer of the Nutri-Supreme Research line of supplements – lectures widely on the role of nutrition in achieving and maintaining optimal health. Mr. Gruber's recommendations are based on cutting edge science and ongoing communication with leading medical experts. Nutri-Supreme acts as official nutritional consultant for Kof-K Kosher Supervision.

As a certified nutritionist whose oft-stated objective is to bridge the gap between nutrition and medicine, many hours of my time are spent keeping abreast of medical breakthroughs and ongoing studies related to nutrition's role in achieving optimal physical and mental health. This entails not only staying current with reports in prestigious medical journals

but networking with leading doctors and researchers from throughout the country. My conversations with these experts form the basis of the recommendations I make for those who come to me for nutritional counsel and guidance.

In recent months, much of my own research has focused on the growing field of research regarding what has been called a "silent epidemic" – vitamin D deficiency.

Bone Health, Just the Tip of the Iceberg?

Vitamin D is much more than a simple vitamin. In its active form, vitamin D is actually a "steroid hormone" that has long been known for its important role in promoting calcium absorption, which is needed for bone growth and remodeling. A

large-scale study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* confirmed that individuals who increased their intake of calcium and vitamin D were at lower risk for hip fractures than those who only increased their intake of calcium.

But, more and more, research is showing that vitamin D deficiency may have an impact on more than just our bones and may, in fact, increase the risk of a number of serious conditions, including.

- Cardiovascular disease
- Autoimmune diseases like type 1 diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis and multiple sclerosis
- Hypertension
- Muscle Weakness in Fibromyalgia
- Macular Degeneration
- Asthma
- Infectious diseases including flu and the common cold

In addition, a large population-based study published in the *Archives of General Psychiatry* showed an association between depression (and severity of depression) with decreased levels of vitamin D. And every day it seems there are reports of exciting new findings about the role of Vitamin D in preventing cancer and improving prognosis in cancer patients.

A small sampling:

- Studies published by major medical centers and universities, including Harvard School of Public Health, the University of California and Boston University, suggest that people with vitamin D deficiencies are at an increased risk for several types of cancers, including those of the breast, ovaries, colon, pancreas, rectum and prostate.
- According to Michael Thun, MD, chief epidemiologist for the American Cancer Society, there is now intriguing evidence that vitamin D may have a role in the prevention as well as treatment of certain cancers. Early evidence also suggests that vitamin D may affect cancer survival.
- The *Journal of Clinical Oncology* reported that higher levels of vitamin D can reduce the risk of colon and rectal cancer by 50%.
- A 13-year Harvard study of over 2000 men showed that those with the highest level of vitamin D had a 45% lower risk of developing aggressive prostate cancer.
- According to noted vitamin D researcher Dr. Michael Hollick of Boston University Medical Center (whose breakthrough research in vitamin D was published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*), increasing intake of vitamin D results in an estimated 30 to 50% reduction in the

risk for developing colorectal, breast and prostate cancer.

- A team of cancer prevention specialists at the Moore’s Cancer Center at the University of California, San Diego (whose research was headed by Dr. Cedric Garland, whom I interviewed) reported that vitamin D levels of 52 ng/ml (which is considered well within the normal range) were associated with a 50% reduction in the risk of breast cancer.

According to an article published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, low levels of vitamin D are independently associated with all forms of mortality.

What’s in a Number?

So what are considered to be adequate blood levels of vitamin D?

In phone conversations with vitamin D experts Dr. Robert Heaney, MD, Professor of medicine at Creighton University Medical Center and Dr. Bruce Hollis, PhD, a pediatric professor at the University of South Carolina, they shared with me their view that adequate blood levels of vitamin D are between 40-ng/ml to 60 ng/ml, with 40 ng/ml being at the low end of the optimal spectrum.

Appropriate vitamin D levels in the different pediatric age groups are still an area of active study. Dr. Helen Pappa, MD, a pediatric gastroenterologist at Children’s Hospital in Boston, feels that an acceptable

level of vitamin D in children is between 30-40 ng/ml. A consensus recently reached by a group of experts in the field of science and medicine, however, specifies 40 to 60 ng/ml of serum 25 Hydroxy as an optimal level. (In both children and adults vitamin D levels are ascertained through a blood test known as “25 (OH) D” -- or as it is also called, “25 hydroxy vitamin D.” This test is not to be confused with “1,25-Dihydroxy,” which does not test for deficiency.)

When the Sun is (Really) Out

Experts on vitamin D agree that exposure to sunlight is the best possible way of getting the nutrient into our bodies. Yet, given the skin cancer risks that have been associated with exposure to UV rays, many people are choosing to get their vitamin D from supplements. (See sidebar for fuller discussion of sun/supplement debate.)

Another way to get vitamin D into our bodies is through diet. Yet to get the 1,000 IU of vitamin D daily that vitamin D expert Dr. Michael Hollick believes most people need to satisfy the body’s requirements, one would have to eat salmon several times a week or drink at least ten glasses of milk a day - a dietary regimen most of us are not apt to follow. What’s more, as Dr. Hollick told me during a recent conversation, the daily 1,000 IU recommendation is appropriate only for those who do not have known vitamin D

deficiencies; higher, and sometimes *much* higher, amounts are necessary to restore and maintain optimal D levels.

Studies show that a majority of Americans have insufficient or deficient vitamin D blood levels. Children and adults in the Orthodox Jewish community, who do not generally expose their full arms and legs to sunshine, are at greater risk for low D according to Dr. Pappa.

Shocking Findings About Vitamin D Deficiency in Children

Most shocking of all, perhaps, are the results of a new nationwide study, which found that about 70 percent of children in this country have low levels of vitamin D. Reported in the August 3 on-line edition of *Pediatrics*, the study, which was headed by Dr. Michal L. Melamed of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University, linked the deficiency to poor diet, sedentary lifestyles and lack of sunshine.

An earlier study by Dr. Catherine Gordon and her team at Children's Hospital Boston, suggested that infants and toddlers are not getting enough vitamin D. (Because mother's milk is a poor source of vitamin D, nursing babies are at increased risk of deficiency. According to Dr. Heaney, low D levels in mother's milk result from deficiencies in the mothers themselves.)

In light of these findings and in an attempt to lower the incidence of rickets in children and teens, the American

Academy of Pediatrics recently upped its recommended dosage of vitamin D for these groups from 200 IU to 400 IU daily. Yet, given the growing and extremely exciting body of research showing that the nutrient may have significant implications for a variety of health conditions which manifest in later life (see above), many pediatricians and medical researchers believe this is still far too low a dosage. Dr. Catherine Gordon of Children's Hospital Boston, believes that a daily dosage closer to 1000 IU daily for infants would be more beneficial -- a dosage with which Dr. Heaney concurs.

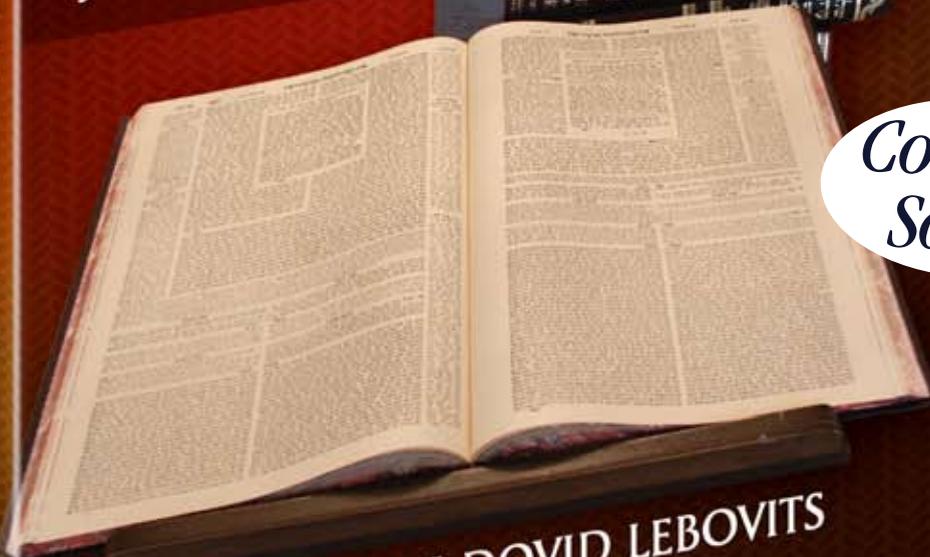
Dr. Pappa -- whose extensive research regarding vitamin D in children with Crohn's Disease, ulcerative colitis and celiac disease has been published in *Pediatrics* -- is of the view that levels below 20 ng/ml in children should be considered vitamin D deficient and warrant a supplement dosage of 50,000 IU of D2 a week (a doctor's prescription is necessary for a dosage that high) for five weeks and a retest of blood level values after five weeks. For children whose levels are between 20 and 30 ng/ml, she recommends 2000 IU daily for five weeks, and a follow-up retest.

Important note: Not all D supplements are alike. Dr. Heaney and other experts recommend D3 (a natural form of the vitamin), which is four to ten times more potent than D2 (a synthetic form of the vitamin).

To be continued...

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