

QUICK GUIDE TO MOURNING LAWS DURING THE OMER

Please note this is just a synopsis any questions should be asked to a Rav.

During thirty-three of the days of the counting of the Omer, Rabbi Akiva's [24,000] students died (2nd Century CE). Therefore, it is customary to observe some expressions of mourning during that period; we do not marry, nor do we have a hair cut (Some don't shave either). In addition, listening to music is proscribed. (Some permit recorded music although this is not the norm)

There are different customs regarding the determination of which thirty-three days (of the forty-nine) are observed [in a partial state of mourning]. According to certain customs, [restrictions] are observed from the first day of the counting of the Omer, and thus continue until Lag B'omer (thirty-third day). Even according to this custom, if Rosh Chodesh Iyar (first day of the Hebrew month called "Iyar") falls on Shabbos, it is permissible to marry and cut one's hair on the preceding day, for it is influenced by two sacred qualities ("shtei kedushos"): the holiness of Shabbos and the holiness of Rosh Chodesh.

These mourning restrictions end on Lag B'omer (and are not applied for the remaining days) because on Lag B'omer the students ceased dying. Therefore, certain aspects of celebration are carried out on that day, and Tachanun is not recited. Although some students died on this day as well, we follow the legal principle which states that: "a portion of the day is equivalent to the entire day". For this reason, we should not cut hair or marry until daybreak, and not on the preceding night .

When Lag B'omer falls on Sunday, one may have his hair cut on Friday in honor of Shabbos.

There are other communities that permit [weddings and haircuts (1)] until, and including, Rosh Chodesh Iyar, that is, a total of sixteen days. Thus, thirty-three days remain prohibited until the festival of Shavuot. (One may, however, cut one's hair on the day before the festival).

Even according to this opinion, on the day of Lag B'omer (33rd day of the Omer) there are no prohibitions (and when Lag B'omer falls on Sunday, hair may be cut on Friday, as stated above).

There are other communities which permit [weddings and haircuts] until the day before Rosh Chodesh Iyar, and the prohibitions begin on Rosh Chodesh itself. The first day of the three days of preparation [for Shavuot] ("shloshes yemei hagbalah") is included in the prohibited period. We apply, however, the principle that a portion of the day is considered as the entire day, and weddings and haircuts are permitted [from daybreak of that day] (2). According to this custom as well, on the day of Lag B'omer there are no restrictions.