



ACTIVITIES FOR CELEBRATING LAG B'OMER

Bonfires

Bonfires are a popular way of celebrating *Lag B'Omer*. The bonfire reminds people of the death of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who died on *Lag B'Omer*. Although this day is bar Yochai's *yahrtzeit* (anniversary of his death), people celebrate his passing because the Zohar teaches that he revealed hidden teachings before leaving this world. It is said that his passion for Judaism was such and his teaching so great that, as he taught he was surrounded by fire and intense light and heat. Build a bonfire or, if you cannot do so, create an artistic representation of a bonfire. (Students can even create their own mini-bonfires by gluing three paper-towel roles together and attaching red, orange, and yellow tissue paper.) Sit around the fire and sing songs and tell stories related to *Lag B'Omer* and the Torah.

Be Kind

According to the Talmud (*Yevamot* 62b), Rabbi Akiva had 12,000 pairs of students (others say 12,000 students) who died of a plague during the period of the counting of the Omer because they did not respect each other. As a result, the period of the Omer is considered to be a time of mourning for many people. This plague ended on *Lag B'Omer*, making the 33rd day of the Omer a time of celebration. Commemorate Rabbi Akiva's students by having your students demonstrate respect for each other. Tape a blank piece of paper to each student's back and encourage students to write one nice thing about each other on their respective sheets of paper.

Ten Commandments Relay Race

The period of the counting of the Omer leads up to celebrating Shavuot, which is traditionally the day that God gave the Torah to *B'nei Yisrael* (the Children of Israel). Celebrate the giving of the Torah by conducting a Ten Commandments Relay Race. Find one example on JTeach [here](#).

Eat Carob

A narrative in the Talmud (*Shabbat* 33b) relates that, when the Roman Emperor Hadrian was persecuting the Jews, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai hid in a cave for many years with his son. A miracle occurred and a carob tree appeared at the mouth of the cave to feed them. Take the opportunity to taste carob and to enjoy treats with carob in them. You can often find carob, both in its pod and in chip form (meant as a substitute for chocolate chips), in stores with large sections of natural and organic foods. Can't find carob? Substitute chocolate chips. Remember to be aware of food allergies in your classroom.

Balloon Shaving

Many people have the custom not to shave or get haircuts during the Omer since it is a time of mourning for Rabbi Akiva's students. This custom ends on *Lag B'Omer*, when the plague ended.



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Mark this time by having students shave blown-up balloons. Students can use plastic knives or other shaving tools. Prizes for students who can successfully shave their balloons without popping them. For younger kids use Play-Doh hair-cutting equipment to grow and cut hair.