

# SEFIRAS HAOMER

RABBI TZVI YAAKOV STEIN

## THE AVEILUS OF SEFIRAH

- ✦ The minhag is to keep some form of mourning for thirty-three days between Pesach and Shavuot for the students of R' Akiva who died during this time<sup>1</sup>.
- ✦ There are two basic minhagim regarding the time frame of aveilus: 1) Beginning on the second day of Pesach and ending on Lag Ba'omer, 2) Beginning on Rosh Chodesh Iyar and ending on the third day of Sivan<sup>2</sup>.
- ✦ Some opinions say the "second sefirah" starts from the first day Rosh Chodesh. Some say it starts from the second day of Rosh Chodesh. There's a third minority opinion that says it starts the day after Rosh Chodesh. According to all opinions, there must be at least 33 days of mourning<sup>3</sup>.
- ✦ There are slight variations to the above opinions.
- ✦ One can change customs from year to year<sup>4</sup>.
- ✦ There are no restrictions on buying and/or repairing new clothes<sup>5</sup>.
- ✦ Some have a minhag not to buy anything that would require reciting the brachah of Shehecheyanu<sup>6</sup>.
- ✦ There are no restrictions on cutting nails<sup>7</sup>.

## HAIRCUTS

- ✦ Haircuts are prohibited<sup>8</sup>.
- ✦ Shaving and trimming beards are prohibited<sup>9</sup>.
- ✦ It's debatable if women's hair is included in the custom not to cut hair. For tznius purposes it's definitely allowed<sup>10</sup>.
- ✦ Electrolysis, waxing, etc., is permitted<sup>11</sup>.
- ✦ If one is risking financial loss by not appearing groomed properly, he may shave or take a haircut<sup>12</sup>.
- ✦ Mustache hairs that create difficulty in eating, etc. may be cut<sup>13</sup>.
- ✦ Based on this, cutting hair because it's embarrassing/annoying/Shalom Bayis is allowed<sup>14</sup>.
- ✦ Wigs may be cut since they are not one's own hair<sup>15</sup>.
- ✦ According to basic Halacha, minors can take haircuts but seems like the minhag is not to. If necessary it's certainly allowed<sup>16</sup>.
- ✦ If you think the shidduch won't work because you look bad then you can shave but beware that they may say no to you because you shaved during sefirah/3 weeks so it's your call<sup>17</sup>.

- ✦ Men that have a heter for body hair removal can also remove body hair<sup>18</sup>.

## MUSIC

- ✦ Music<sup>19</sup> and dancing are prohibited even at a seudas mitzvah<sup>20</sup>. Singing is allowed<sup>21</sup>.
- ✦ No music or dancing for a Siyum, vort or bar mitzva<sup>22</sup>.
- ✦ Recorded music is prohibited<sup>23</sup>.
- ✦ Music lessons are permitted<sup>24</sup>.
- ✦ If necessary (e.g. sadness, depression, etc.), slow inspirational or classical music is permitted<sup>25</sup>.
- ✦ Music while exercising is permitted<sup>26</sup>.
- ✦ Music to stay awake while driving is permitted<sup>27</sup>.
- ✦ Accapela is not recommended, but is permitted<sup>28</sup>.
- ✦ Any music is better than listening to the radio.
- ✦ Music is allowed during Chol Hamoed<sup>29</sup>.
- ✦ Children below the age of seven can listen to music<sup>30</sup> and there's no problem for adults to hear it (playgroups, driving etc.)
- ✦ One who's around others who can listen to music because it's not their sefirah don't have to ask for the music to be shut off<sup>31</sup>.
- ✦ Music while studying and working is allowed if it will help concentration<sup>32</sup>.
- ✦ Music while flying on a plane or to calm one's nerves, etc. is allowed. Slow or classical is preferred<sup>33</sup>.

## WEDDINGS

- ✦ Weddings can be attended even though it's during the sefira that you are keeping.
- ✦ If you'll want to shave/haircut for the wedding, change your minhag for that year.
- ✦ If you didn't realize that you'd need to shave/haircut and you won't go to the wedding unless you shave, you are allowed to shave<sup>34</sup>.

## LAG BEOMER

- ✦ Most opinions say that haircuts/shaving can start on the morning of lag beomer (it doesn't have to wait for chatzos)<sup>35</sup>.
- ✦ There are opinions that haircuts/shaving can start from

mincha time the afternoon before lag beomer<sup>36</sup>.

- ✦ Even those keeping second half of sefira can take haircuts on lag beomer<sup>37</sup>.
- ✦ When Lag Beomer falls out on Sunday, haircuts are allowed on Friday<sup>38</sup> (some say to wait until after chatzos<sup>39</sup>) and if necessary Thursday night too.
- ✦ There's a debate if music/weddings are allowed the night of lag beomer. It's best to be strict<sup>40</sup>.
- ✦ Those that have the minhag to make bonfires "hilula" are relying on the opinions that lag beomer is a Yom tov<sup>41</sup>.
- ✦ It's preferable not to say, "Tonight is Lag Beomer" before actually counting sefirah that night. If it was said, sefirah can still be counted with a brachah<sup>42</sup>.

## COUNTING THE OMER

- ✦ Sefirah should be counted as early in the night as possible,<sup>43</sup> but one should not count earlier if that will cause him to count without a minyan.
- ✦ Although sefirah can be counted starting after sunset, it is preferable to wait until nightfall<sup>44</sup>.
- ✦ The preferable calculation of nightfall for counting sefirah is approximately forty minutes after shkiah.
- ✦ If one counted before nightfall, it is best to count again after nightfall without a brachah<sup>45</sup>.
- ✦ Sefirah may be counted the entire night<sup>46</sup>.
- ✦ Those making early shabbos should be careful to start the meal before shkiah otherwise the meal can't start until after shema and sfira is said. If a legitimate reminder or shomer is made then the meal can start<sup>47</sup>.
- ✦ One must understand what he's counting otherwise he is not yotzei. Therefore, one can count in any language<sup>48</sup>.
- ✦ Sefirah should be counted standing up<sup>49</sup>. If it was counted sitting down it's acceptable<sup>50</sup>.
- ✦ After the first week, both days and weeks are counted<sup>51</sup>.
- ✦ After sefirah the "Yehi Ratzon" is said<sup>52</sup>.
- ✦ Make sure to know the correct night before starting the brachah.
- ✦ It is prohibited to start eating a half-hour before the proper time to count<sup>53</sup>, unless someone is appointed to remind you to count or you set an alarm<sup>54</sup>.
- ✦ If one has a set time to daven Ma'ariv he may start eating even though he hasn't yet counted<sup>55</sup>.

## COUNTING THE OMER - BIDIEVED SITUATIONS

- ✦ If one completely missed a day of counting, he can no longer count with a brachah. However, he is still required to count every night without a brachah<sup>56</sup>.
- ✦ In this situation, it's best to have someone that is counting with a brachah say the brachah out loud and have him in mind<sup>57</sup>.
- ✦ If sefira was counted wrong then recount that night with a bracha. If this was only realized the next night then a bracha can no longer be made<sup>58</sup>.
- ✦ If one forgot to count at night, he should count during the day without a brachah<sup>59</sup> and continue counting that night with a brachah<sup>60</sup>.
- ✦ If one remembered to count the previous night's counting during bein hashmashos, he can continue to count with a brachah<sup>61</sup>.
- ✦ If one isn't sure if he counted the previous night at all, or if he counted correctly, he can continue counting with a brachah<sup>62</sup>.
- ✦ If only the days were counted and not the weeks it's acceptable<sup>63</sup>.
- ✦ If the weeks were counted and not the days, it's invalid and he cannot continue counting with a brachah<sup>64</sup>.

## COUNTING BY MISTAKE

- ✦ Before counting sefirah at night with a brachah, one should not say "Tonight is the \_ night," because that is considered counting and can no longer count with a brachah that night<sup>65</sup>.
- ✦ This applies to counting in any language<sup>66</sup>.
- ✦ If all one said was a number, that's not considered counting, and he can still count that night with a brachah. For example, if one is asked "What night is tonight?" He can answer "Three"<sup>67</sup>.
- ✦ Asking a question, such as "Is tonight the third night?" is not considered counting.<sup>68</sup>
- ✦ If one must speak out clearly the exact night of sefirah, but he hasn't yet counted with a brachah, he can say it while having in mind not to be yotzei<sup>69</sup>.
- ✦ If one mistakenly said that night's sefirah, although he can no longer count that night with a brachah, since the earlier counting wasn't done intentionally, he must still count that night without a brachah<sup>70</sup>.

1. שולחן ערוך (סימן תצג סעיף א)	25. הליכות שלמה (פרק יא דבר הלכה אות כב)	48. מושנה ברורה (סימן תפט סעיף קטן ה)
2. רמ"א (סימן תצג סעיף ג)	26. קובץ הלכות (פרק ט סעיף יג)	49. שולחן ערוך (סימן תפט סעיף א)
3. נושא כלי ש"ע ס' תצ"ג סע' ג	27. קובץ הלכות (פרק ט סעיף יד)	50. מושנה ברורה (סימן תפט סעיף קטן ו)
4. קובץ הלכות (פרק ח סעיף ב)	28. אגרות משה (אורח חיים חלק א סימן קסו)	51. שולחן ערוך (סימן תפט סעיף א)
5. מושנה ברורה (סימן תצג סעיף קטן ב)	29. שמענתא דמשה (שמועות סימן תצג סעיף קטן ד)	52. מושנה ברורה (סימן תפט סעיף קטן י)
6. ליקוטי מהרי"ח	30. קובץ הלכות (פרק ט סעיף כ)	53. מושנה ברורה (סימן תפט סעיף קטן כג)
7. כף החיים (סימן תצג סעיף קטן טז)	31. שיעורי הלכה	54. קובץ הלכות (פרק ג סעיף ג)
8. שולחן ערוך (סימן תצג סעיף ב)	32. מושנה ברורה (סימן תקס סעיף קטן יג)	55. קובץ הלכות (פרק ג סעיף ד)
9. שולחן ערוך (סימן תקנא סעיף יב)	33. הליכות שלמה מועדים פרק ב' ס"ק י"ד	56. שולחן ערוך (סימן תפט סעיף ח)
10. שיעורי הלכה (פרק יא סעיף ד)	34. אגרות משה (אורח חיים חלק ב סימן צה)	57. מושנה ברורה (סימן תפט סעיף קטן לז)
11. שיעורי הלכה (פרק יא סעיף ג)	35. רמ"א (סימן תצג סעיף ב)	58. מושנה ברורה (סימן תפט סעיף קטן לב)
12. קובץ הלכות (פרק י סעיף ד)	36. באר היטב (סימן תצג סעיף קטן ה)	59. שולחן ערוך (סימן תפט סעיף ז)
13. שולחן ערוך (סימן תקנא סעיף)	37. רמ"א (סימן תצג סעיף ג)	60. מושנה ברורה (סימן תפט סעיף קטן לד)
14. קובץ הלכות (פרק י הערה ד)	38. רמ"א (סימן תצג סעיף ב)	61. חיי אדם (כלל קלא סעיף ג)
15. שיעורי הלכה (פרק יא סעיף ג)	39. הליכות שלמה פרק יא הערה 97	62. שולחן ערוך (סימן תפט סעיף ח)
16. שיעורי הלכה (פרק יא סעיף ד)	40. מושנה ברורה (סימן תצג סעיף קטן יא)	63. מושנה ברורה (סימן תפט סעיף קטן ז)
17. מסורת משה (חלק ג עמוד קמב)	41. חוט שני (חלק ד עמוד שפ)	64. מושנה ברורה (סימן תפט סעיף קטן ז)
18. הליכות שלמה פרק י"ד ס"ק ט'	42. אור לציון (חלק ג סימן טז אות ד בהג"ה)	65. שולחן ערוך (סימן תפט סעיף י)
19. ערוך השלחן (סימן תצג סעיף ב)	43. שולחן ערוך (סימן תפט סעיף א)	66. מושנה ברורה (סימן תפט סעיף קטן כ)
20. מושנה ברורה (סימן תצג סעיף קטן ג)	44. שולחן ערוך (סימן תפט סעיף ב)	67. מושנה ברורה (סימן תפט סעיף קטן כ)
21. הליכות שלמה (פרק יא סעיף יד)	45. מושנה ברורה (סימן תפט סעיף קטן טו)	68. קובץ הלכות (פרק ה סעיף י)
22. שיעורי הלכה (פרק יב סעיף ז)	46. שולחן ערוך (סימן תפט סעיף א)	69. מושנה ברורה (סימן תפט סעיף קטן כב)
23. שו"ת אגרות משה (אורח חיים חלק א סימן קסו)	47. קובץ הלכות (פרק ג סעיף ה)	70. מושנה ברורה (סימן תפט סעיף קטן כב)
24. שו"ת זכר שמחה (סימן סז)		