

MASHADI OMER CUSTOMS

The Time to Count the Omer

Minhag: According to Rav Ben-Haim and the custom of our community, the earliest ideal time to count Sefirat Haomer is 15 minutes after sunset. If a Minyan finished Arvit a bit early, they may count with a beracha after Shekia (sunset) even before 15 minutes have passed. This only applies to a Minyan, and not to an individual. An individual must wait until at least 15 minutes after sunset.¹

The Mashadi custom is to count the Omer in Arvit after Shir Lamaalot and before Kaddish Yehe Shelama that is said by the mourners. If the minyan is finishing before the earliest time to count the Omer, then the minyan counts the Omer after Alenu. When counting after Alenu, our custom is to add a Kaddish Yehe Shelama for mourners after counting the Omer.²

Our custom is to count the Omer every morning at the end of Shacharit as well. In case someone missed counting the night before, this is an extra reminder to count during the day so that they can continue counting with a beracha for the following night.

Minhagim During the Omer

Minhag: There are many different customs across all Jewish communities to hold certain practices of mourning during the time of counting the Omer, in memory of the students of Rabbi Akiva who died during this time, from after Pesach until Lag Baomer. The following are the Mashadi customs:

Getting Married:

Our custom is not to have weddings during this time, or to have any parties with music, even on Rosh Chodesh Iyyar. On Rosh Chodesh, it is permitted to have an engagement party but without music.³ On Yom Haatzmaut it is customary to have parties with music in honor of Israel.

According to our custom, it is permitted to get have a wedding on the day of Lag Bomer (see below, Minhagim of the Omer Until the 33rd Day). It is also permitted to have a wedding the night before Lag Ba'omer after nightfall, when the calendar date of Lag Ba'omer has already started.⁴

Getting Haircuts:

It is customary not to get haircuts during this time. Some families also have the custom of not shaving; however, most families have the custom of shaving during this time and only refrain from haircuts.

¹ Chazon Ovadia Yom Tov (Page 232). Based on Rav Ben-Haim's guidance, our custom is to wait 15 minutes after sunset in New York as the earliest time to count Omer.

² Chazon Ovadia Yom Tov (Page 235).

³ Chazon Ovadia Yom Tov (Page 258)

⁴ Morenu Rav Nissim Bassalian reported that it was commonly customary in Iran to get married the night before Lag Baomer after nightfall, when the calendar date of Lag BaOmer started already. Rav Ben-Haim has permitted such weddings as well for a community such as the Mashadi community which keeps the customs of Omer until the 33rd day (see below).

Many women also have the custom not to get haircuts during the Omer.⁵

Listening to Music:

It is customary not to listen to live or recorded music during this time. It is permitted to listen to acapella singing without instrumental accompaniment, when they are Jewish songs which bring a person closer to Hashem.⁶

Buying New Clothes:

It is customary not to buy any new clothes that would require saying Shehechyanu.⁷ If there is a big sale that will not be available after the Omer, it is permitted to buy new clothes and leave them for after the Omer. Similarly, if a couple is getting married soon after Lag Ba'omer, it is permitted for family members to buy new clothes that are needed for the wedding.

It is permitted to purchase a new house or a new car during this time, especially if one needs it.

Minhagim of the Omer Until the 33rd Day

Minhag: The Mashadi custom is to keep these customs from after Pesach⁸ up until the 33rd day of the Omer, Lag Ba'omer. The general Sephardic custom is to wait until the 34th day in the morning. Rav Ben-Haim maintains that it is proper to wait until the 34th day in accordance with the Sephardic custom; however, for those who have the custom to get a haircut on the 33rd today, it is certainly acceptable to continue the custom. If there is an occasion such as a wedding on the 33rd day of the Omer, it is entirely permitted to get a haircut on the 33rd day of the Omer for the wedding.⁹

⁵ Ben Ish Hai (Shu"t Rav Pe'alim v4 Sod Yesharim Siman 15) writes that women should also be strict not to get haircuts during the Omer. On the other hand, Chazon Ovadia (Yom Tov Page 261) is lenient. In general, the Mashadi custom is for women to be strict about getting haircuts during Omer.

⁶ Chazon Ovadia Yom Tov (Page 258). Chazon Ovadia notes there that when there is a Seudat Mitzva, such as a Berit Milah or Pidyon Haben, it is permitted to play music with instruments when it enhances the joy of the mitzvah. However, this is not our custom, and we do not play music with instruments even at a Seudat Mitzvah during this time.

⁷ Ohr Letzion (v3 page 184) quotes Rav Chaim Palachi who writes that it is a good custom not to purchase new clothes during the Omer. However, Ohr Letzion himself disagrees and writes that it is entirely permissible to say Shehechyanu during the Omer. Chazon Ovadia (Yom Tov page 259) writes that it is good to be strict not to wear new garments from Rosh Chodesh Iyyar and on. The Mashadi custom is not to purchase any new clothes during the Omer at all, unless there is a big sale or if a family has an occasion soon after the Omer for which they need to buy new clothes.

⁸ Morenu Rav Nissim Bassalian reported that the older tradition in Iran was not to keep any practices of mourning during the entire month of Nissan at all. The practices of mourning were kept only for a couple of weeks, from after Rosh Chodesh Iyyar until Lag Ba'omer. According to this tradition, even weddings would be held on Rosh Chodesh Iyyar itself; the customs of mourning only started after Rosh Chodesh. When the Mashadi community came to the United States, the community Rabbanim gave the guidance to keep from immediately after Pesach up until Lag Ba'omer, and this is our custom nowadays: the practices of mourning are also kept during the month of Nissan and all the way through Lag Ba'omer.

⁹ The general Sephardic custom (Shulchan Aruch OH 493:2) is to wait until the 34th day to get married or to get a haircut while the custom of many Ashkenazim is to shave and get a haircut on Lag Ba'omer, the 33rd day (Rama ad loc.). The Mashadi custom is to keep the practices of mourning until the 33rd day of the Omer, in accordance with the Ashkenazi custom. In fact, in Iran, the day of "Lag Ba'omer" was known by the name "*Sar-Terashon*," or "haircutting day." Rav Ben-Haim notes that there is plenty of room for Mashadis who already practiced such a custom to continue to be lenient in accordance with the Ashkenazi custom. Firstly, the customs of Sefirat Haomer are a matter of custom, not De'oraita or Derabanan. Many Rishonim do not quote the custom in the first place. Moreover, the Gemara (Moed

Hallel on Yom Haazmaut and Yom Yerushalayim

Minhag: Yom Haazmaut and Yom Yerushalayim are both celebrated as festive days in the Mashadi community. Our custom is to skip Tachanun on these days and to say Hallel in the middle of tefilla. Most Mashadi minyanim have the custom of reciting full Hallel without a beracha, while Rav Ben-Haim's personal custom is to recite half Hallel without a beracha on Yom Haazmaut. Either custom is acceptable provided that no beracha is recited.¹⁰

Learning Pirke Avot During the Days of Omer

Minhag: The Mashadi custom is to learn Pirke Avot during the days of Omer, from Pesach to Shavuot. It is customary for the rabbi to teach Pirke Avot on Shabbat afternoons before Mincha, one chapter each Shabbat.¹¹

Katan 18a and many other places) has a principle that the law follows the lenient opinion when it comes to mourning. Rav Ben-Haim himself in general waits until the 34th day as a default in accordance with the Sephardic custom. However, it is very common in our community to have weddings on the 33rd day of the Omer. In such a situation, Rav Ben-Haim has ruled that the family and friends attending the wedding may certainly get a haircut on the 33rd day for the wedding, or even on the 32nd day if necessary, and Rav Ben-Haim himself will shave on the 33rd day in honor of the wedding when he is Mesader Kiddushin. Furthermore, even when Lag Baomer falls out on Sunday, Rav Ben-Haim is lenient that it is permitted to get a haircut and shave on Friday in honor of Shabbat in accordance with Rama OH 493:2, and one does not have to wait until Sunday or Monday morning.

¹⁰ See Shu"t Yabia Omer (v6 OH 41) that a beracha should not be recited on Hallel for Yom Haazmanut. At the end of the responsa, Rav Ovadia writes that if a community prefers to say Hallel in the middle of the prayers after Amida, this is an acceptable practice. The original Takana of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel is to say a full hallel on Yom Haazmaut and this is the general Mashadi custom. In recent years, Rav Ben-Haim usually says half Hallel on Yom Haazmaut, but very often will say full Hallel on Yom Yerushalayim without a beracha. He explains that the miracles of the Six Day were much more open miracles from Hashem, and Israel suffered much less casualties during the Six Day War compared to the Independence War in 1948.

Morenu Rav Nissim Bassalian reported that in Iran, it was customary on Yom Haatzmaut to additionally recite the haftara of **עוֹד הַיּוֹם בְּנֹבַל לְעַמֹּד** from Yishayahu chapter 10 in Shacharit (this haftara describes the days of Mashiach). More recently in the United States, it is not prevalent to recite this haftara.

¹¹ Yalkut Yosef (Sefirat Haomer and Shavuot, 5779 edition, page 486).