



CONGREGATION TORAS CHAIM

An intimate space...Grow at your pace.

May 31- June 1, 2019 ▪ 27 Iyar, 5779 ▪ Shabbos Bechukosai
Mincha: 7:00P / Candlelighting: 8:12P ▪ Shabbos Ends 9:20P

KIDDUSH this Shabbos is sponsored by Eliyahu Rich in honor of all those who support the 6:40 AM Shacharis minyan through their attendance.
SHALOSH SEUDOS this Shabbos is sponsored by the shul. Please contact Rabbi Yaakov Rich at 972-835-6016 if you are interested in sponsoring kiddush or shalosh seudos in the future.

■ SHABBOS SCHEDULE

Friday Night, May 31st

- » Mincha/Kabbalos Shabbos/Maariv-7:00P
- » Shabbos Candle Lighting-8:08P

Shabbos Day, June 1st

- » Mishnayos shiur with Rabbi Reuven Wortrich-8:00A
- » Shacharis-8:30A
- » Chumash Shiur for Men & Women-6:30P
- » Beis Medrash Learning for Men-7:30P
- » Mincha/Shalosh Seudos for men-8:00P
- » Maariv/Shabbos Ends-9:20P

■ WEEKDAY SCHEDULE

- » Sunday Shacharis-8:00A
- » Weekday Mincha/Maariv-8:15P
- » Weekday Shacharis-6:40A

■ REFUAH SHELAIMA

Men

- » Daniel ben Chaya Bluma (Father of Tami Ellis)
- » Refalal Tevya ben Sara (Uncle of Rebekkah Bodoff)
- » Yechezkel Yehuda ben Asnah Shaynah (Howard Denmark)
- » Matan Rafael Nasanel ben Esther (Matan Efenbein)
- » Itai ben Shoshana (Son of Ehoud & Shoshana Wilson)

Women

- » Rivka Rochel bas Bluma Hinda (Tami Ellis)
- » Sorah bas Chana Rivkah (Step mother of Suzanne Luftig)
- » Raizel Bina bas Sorah (Raizel Palmer)
- » Tikva bas Salima (Tikva Zbolon)
- » Necha bas Leah (see Irwin Harris)
- » Rivka Basya bas Devorah (Rebekkah Bodoff)
- » Leah Esther bas Yenta Leah (Lori Jarmel)
- » Yenta Leah bas Shayna (Mother of Lori Jarmel)

■ WHAT'S NU

- » Congregation Toras Chaim is pleased to offer it's 11th Annual All-Night Shavuos Learning for men, 12:00-5:30 AM, Sunday (Late Saturday Night :-), June 9, 2019. Topics for study (starting at 12 AM and concluding at 5:30 AM with 15 min food and beverage breaks every hour, or so):

(Class One) The Fire of Division: Brocha on Aish of Havdallah

(Class Two) Finding Your Place: Makom Kevuah for Tefillah

(Class Three) Birthdays: A Celebration with Torah Value

(Class Four) The Wayfarer's Prayer: Journey Through Tefillas HaDerech

Sponsorship Opportunities: \$1000 Luchos HaBris Sponsorship / \$250 Per Class Sponsorship

Luchos HaBris Patrons: Anonymously sponsored in the memory of Irene Linder, a"h, beloved mother of Rebbetzin Susan Rich, may her neshama have an aliyah.

Food and Beverage Station Sponsored by Josh & Lisa Rothstein

First Day Shavuos Starting 10:30 AM — Speech by Dassie Goldberg & Ice Cream Kiddush for Women & Children Sponsored by Josh & Lisa Rothstein

■ PLUGGED IN: RABBI LABEL LAM

But if you do not listen to Me and do not perform all these commandments and if you despise My statutes and reject My ordinances, not performing any of My Commandments, thereby breaking My covenant then I too, will do the same to you; ... Your enemies will rule over you; you will flee, but no one will be pursuing you. And if, during these, you will not listen to Me, I will add another seven punishments for your sins: (Vayikra 26:14-18)

1 But if you do not listen to Me: to toil in the study of Torah in order to know the understanding of the Sages 2 and do not perform: If you do not learn the Torah, you will not perform its Commandments properly 3 and if you despise My statutes: This refers to one who despises others who perform the Commandments 4 and reject My ordinances: refers to one who hates the Sages 5 not performing: refers to someone who prevents others from fulfilling the Commandments 6 any of My Commandments: refers to one who denies that I (G-d) Commanded them.

This is why the verse says "any of My commandments" and "not any of the commandments." 7 thereby breaking My covenant: This refers to one who denies the main tenet, namely, that God is the Omnipotent Creator of all existence. (RASHI)

Rashi finds in thenot performing: [refers to someone who] prevents others from fulfilling [the commandments and if you despise My statutes: [This refers to one who] despises others who perform [the commandments];-But if you do not listen to Me: to toil in [the study of] Torah in order to know the exposition of the Sages verses the seven corruptive steps that justify seven more punishments. Each descending level is a more serious attitudinal transgression and a worsening in one's relationship to HASHEM. What Rashi outlines succinctly is the anatomy of a total abandonment of Torah and Mitzvos. This little piece needs to be studied over and over again and in great depth.

How does someone plummet from the top of the ladder to the lowest of rungs to the point they are despising Mitzvos, hating Sages, preventing others from fulfilling, Mitzvos, and denying HASHEM? How does one lose it all? How does one get it all back?

Imagine someone buys the ultimate deluxe vacuum cleaner. It costs him many-many hundreds of dollars. He even takes out a payment plan to pay it off over time. For the first few months it's humming, and doing its job as promised. At one point while the person is vacuuming the plug becomes disconnected from the wall.

The operator of the machine is unaware and he continues to massage the carpet. It becomes difficult to push the machine over the thick rug and it is obvious that it is not affective anymore. Whatever particles it rolls over remain there no matter how many times he tries and tries.

Eventually he kicks the machine repeatedly in frustration. He complains to a friend about his disappointment in the product. He discourages someone who is about to purchase the same appliance. He tells everyone he knows now not to buy this product. He stops making the monthly payments. Now things have gotten serious. His credit is affected and he fights forward in righteous indignation and out of principle.

The head of the maintenance department comes to his house to check out his claim that the vacuum cleaner is a dud and huge failure. After examining the machine he finds nothing wrong. He plugs it in and eureka, it works perfectly. Aha! At that point the fellow discovers his terrible mistake. Just plug it in! Without that live juice from the wall socket this finely tuned piece of machinery is reduced to nothing more than an oversized paper weight.

The verse reads, "But if you do not listen to Me". Without proper learning one is automatically disconnected from the source. The Torah becomes a heavy academic exercise, and the Mitzvos impossibly burdensome. The person becomes a complainer and rebel with a false cause. The solution is simple, though. Listen while learning like HASHEM is talking to YOU, and you will be plugged in.

■ SWITCHING SEFIROS: RABBI YEHUDA SPITZ

Your neighbor is planning on making a wedding on Rosh Chodesh Sivan, while a colleague did so the day after Lag B'Omer (not that he could have done it the day before even if he would have wanted; the halls were all booked on Lag B'Omer itself months in advance). Yet, a friend insists that one must wait until after Shavuos, while another bemoans that he should have made the wedding right after Pesach. Who is correct? Welcome to the annual Sefirah scenario.

The Gemara Yevamos (62b) famously and tragically details the deaths of 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva during the time period between Pesach and Shavuos, all for not according each other proper honor. Although there are many different rationales given by the commentaries to explain this catastrophe, the Tashbetz (Shu"t vol. 1: 178) elucidates that the reason they were punished so severely for a seemingly minor infraction is that their not treating each other properly ended up engendering a tremendous Chilul Hashem. In fact, according to several authorities, the reason why Lag B'Omer is a day of celebration is that it is the day when Rabbi Akiva started teaching his five new students (including Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai), allowing the Torah's mesorah to perpetuate; a feat that was previously in jeopardy after the deaths of his talmidim.

This calamity is actually the basis of the annual Sefirah restrictions, which include not getting married or taking a haircut. Yet, that does not properly explain the different and varied minhagim that Klal Yisrael keeps regarding the actual time frames of these restrictions.

And there are different minhagim. In fact, Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l lists six

different customs, and that is not including the Arizal's minhag. Yet, practically, the Pri Megadim and Mishnah Berurah break it down to three main disparate customs. The others are variations on those main opinions.

Minhag # 1 - Sefardic Sefirah The Shulchan Aruch writes that one should not get married between Pesach and Shavuot until Lag B'Omer; likewise regarding haircuts, as at that time the Talmidim of Rabbi Akiva stopped dying. Therefore, these restrictions are permitted starting from the next day - Lag B'Omer.

Minhag # 2 - LaG not LaD However, the Rema argues, stating that the Ashkenazic minhag is to allow these activities from Lag B'Omer itself, and not necessitate waiting until the next day. The reason for the allowance a day earlier than the Shulchan Aruch mandates is either due to the dictum of Miktzas Hayom K'kulo, that part of a day is considered like a full day, or that he held that the Talmidim stopped dying by / on Lag B'Omer and not LaD B'Omer. Additionally, the Rema is following early Ashkenazic authorities such as the Maharil, Mahari Weil, and the Sefer Haminhagim of Rav Yitzchak Isaac Tyrnau (Tirna), all of whom allowed haircuts and celebrations on Lag B'Omer itself.

Minhag # 3 - Second Sefirah The Rema then mentions another popular minhag, to only start the Sefirah restrictions from Rosh Chodesh Iyar, and not from right after Pesach. This Sefirah lasts until shortly before Shavuot, excluding Lag B'Omer itself. This has come to be known colloquially as 'Second Sefirah'.

But why such disparate Sefirahs? If we are all keeping the same prohibitions for the same reason, how can there be so many different minhagim in its practical application?

Halftime Respite It turns out that there are two main different rationales expressed by the Rishonim as to when the Sefirah restrictions should actually apply. The first, mentioned as a 'Midrash' by R' Yehoshua ibn Shu'aib and an 'old Sefardi Sefer' by the Baal Hamaor and Tashbetz, is that Rabbi Akiva's Talmidim stopped dying by 'Parus HaAtzers' or the halfway point before Shavuot. Since the Gemara states that we should start to learn the halachos of a Yom Tov 30 days prior to its commencement, which would mean that 15 days before a holiday would be its 'midpoint', this would squarely place the 'Parus' on LaD B'Omer (49 - 15 = 34). According to this, they stopped dying on LaD B'Omer and therefore all Sefirah restrictions cease on this day as well. As mentioned previously, the Shulchan Aruch states that he follows this opinion, and therefore he rules that from LaD B'Omer, haircuts and weddings are permitted. As mentioned previously, this is the common Sefardi minhag.

33 Days However, there is another opinion, attributed to the Baalei Tosafos. They maintain that in actuality the talmidim died throughout the entire time period from Pesach to Shavuot. Yet, they did not die on days when Tachanun was not said, including all days of Pesach, the Shabbos in between, and Rosh Chodesh. This adds up to 16 days. Meaning, of the entire 49 day period, they died on 33 of those days. Therefore, as a siman to show that they died for 33 of these days (in addition to several other reasons detailed at length in a previous article titled "The 'Unknown Days' of the Jewish Calendar"), Lag B'Omer, the 33rd day of the Sefirah, was chosen as a day of easing restrictions.

Kavannas HaRema? The question is, which of these minhagim is the Rema following? It is fairly certain that the second Minhag Ashkenaz he delineates, starting from Rosh Chodesh Iyar until shortly before Shavuot (and variations thereof; this will be addressed later on), is following Tosafos' shitta of 33 days. Since nowadays we don't say Tachanun the whole month of Nisan, the 33 days start in Iyar and last until the beginning of Sivan. But which opinion is the first custom he cites (from Pesach until Lag B'Omer) following?

The Bach maintains that this minhag as well, follows the shittah of Tosafos. In other words, both minhagim cited by the Rema, 'First Sefirah' and 'Second Sefirah' are due to keeping 33 days, with the variant minhagim dependant on which 33 days are customarily kept. On the other hand the Vilna Gaon argues that the Rema's 'First Sefirah' minhag is due to following the shittah of the Shulchan Aruch, which is that the Talmidim only died up to Lag B'Omer itself.

However, it is important to note that this discussion of figuring out the Rema's true intent is not just theoretical. It actually has practical ramifications. And yes, there is a substantial difference between these understandings that just might affect us, and that is the question of the permissibility of switching Sefirahs.

Sefirah Switching The Chasam Sofer, regarding scheduling weddings during Sefirah, maintained that there is "no contradiction between years" as pertaining to Sefirah observance. This means that even in one town (which needs to follow one minhag), if one year someone got married on Rosh Chodesh Iyar, this does not prevent another from getting married during the Sheloshes Yemei Hagbalah the next year. His psak is widely followed. Additionally, we find that according to many authorities, if there is no set minhag in a certain place (and nowadays, most Jewish communities with no one central authority are considered as such) one may simply choose which minhag to follow. Following this implies that one has the halachic right to choose which Sefirah to keep in any given year, based on whatever specific circumstances

affect him that year.

Rav Moshe's Ruling However, this is not so clear-cut, nor unanimous. In fact, and although widely and seemingly erroneously quoted as holding that one may indeed switch between 'First' and 'Second Sefirahs' in different years, Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l, actually qualified such action. He clarifies that for Ashkenazim to be allowed to do so would depend on the difference of opinions between the Bach and Vilna Gaon as to the interpretation of the Rema's 'First Sefirah'. He explains that according to the Bach, that both minhagim are based on keeping 33 days, it technically should not matter which 33 days are kept. Accordingly, one may switch 'Sefirahs' in different years.

Yet, according to the Gr"a, the 'First Sefirah' is solely due to the Talmidim dying only in the first 33 days of the Omer. If so, questions Rav Moshe, how can one switch 'Sefirahs', if each is mutually exclusive, based on different accountings? If one holds that the Talmidim only died up until Lag B'Omer, how can he, in the very next year, follow a different minhag, which is based on a shittah that they did not actually die at that time, or vice versa? Therefore, he maintains that according to the Gr"a one may not switch 'Sefirahs' from year to year.

Additionally, Rav Moshe holds that the 'Second Sefirah' is the true Ashkenazic minhag and that 'First Sefirah' is essentially a Sefardi minhag. He therefore concludes that an Ashkenazi may not switch from 'Second Sefirah' to the 'First Sefirah', as 'lechatchilla we should not be lenient against the shittah of the Gr"a, except under extremely extenuating circumstances', but rather only between two different versions of 'Ashkenazic Sefirah', in different years, both of which end in different days in Sivan (see Postscript).

Wedding Woes? However, and although several others contemporary authorities allow only coming for the Chuppah and wishing a brief Mazal Tov, nevertheless, Rav Moshe does fully permit one to attend a wedding of someone who is keeping a different Sefirah, including even staying for the music and dancing. Most poskim, including Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky zt"l, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv zt"l, Rav Yisrael Yaakov Fischer zt"l, Rav Chaim Kanievsky shlit"a, Rav Moshe Sternbuch shlit"a, and Rav Nissim Karelitz shlit"a, agree with Rav Moshe and allow one who is still keeping his Sefirah to fully participate in a wedding of one who is keeping / kept a different Sefirah.

Although several of these Gedolim write that this applies "if one got married when it was muttar for him to do so", implying that if one did not keep a proper Sefirah, it may not be permitted for others to stay and rejoice at the chasuna, nevertheless, it is important to note that Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l (and others who agreed with his reasoning) explicitly permitted attending even in such an occurrence. Rav Moshe explains that the halachah states (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 493: 1) that if one got married during Sefirah HaOmer (at a time when it was technically forbidden for him to do so) we do not punish him (meaning it is still valid). Rav Moshe writes "that there is no greater punishment for a Chassan and Kallah than having guests refuse to show up and rejoice at their wedding", and therefore it is still permitted to attend. In a later teshuvah Rav Moshe even allows a guest who would feel uncomfortable attending such a wedding ungroomed, to take a haircut, even though Sefirah restrictions are still personally in affect for him. On the other hand, it is known that his son, Rav Dovid Feinstein shlit"a, generally rules somewhat more stringently nowadays.

In conclusion, now that we have a clearer understanding of the various Sefirah minhagim and their sources, we can appreciate the array of customs followed by our neighbors and friends. And if you do get a wedding invitation inviting you to share in a simchah at some point between Pesach and Shavuot, you will now know how to respond - by asking your local competent halachic authority a proper sheilah.

Postscript: As mentioned previously, there are many variations as to the exact starting and ending dates for the Sefirah, and especially 'Second Sefirah'. For example, there is the Rema's basic 'Second Sefirah', which starts after Rosh Chodesh Iyar, breaks for Lag B'Omer, and continues until Erev Shavuot, as well as its alternative, the Magen Avraham, Chayei Adam, Aruch Hashulchan, and Mishnah Berurah's minhag, which starts from and includes Rosh Chodesh Iyar until the Sheloshes Yemei Hagbalah, with a break on Lag B'Omer. Another common minhag is the Derech Hachaim's minhag which starts from Isru Chag Pesach, skips Rosh Chodesh Iyar and Lag B'Omer, and ends by Rosh Chodesh Sivan. Another interesting custom is the Elyah Rabbah's minhag, keeping the entire Sefirah excluding Lag B'Omer, and concluding on Erev Shavuot. Another variation is the Taz's custom, to keep the 'First Sefirah' for haircuts, but to continue with the prohibition on weddings after Lag B'Omer until shortly before Shavuot; due to the horrific tragedies perpetuated by the Crusaders to many Ashkenazic communities during the second half of Sefirah (Gezeiras Tatn"u). And of course, there is the well-known minhag of the Arizal, which is to keep the entire Sefirah for haircuts, including Lag B'Omer, until Erev Shavuot. One should check with his knowledgeable Rabbinic authority as to which exact minhag he should personally follow.

Good Shabbos

■ SHABBOS SCHEDULE

Friday Night, May 31st

» Mincha/Kabbalos Shabbos/Maariv-

7:00P

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■ WEEKDAY SCHEDULE

» Sunday Shacharis-8:00A

» Weekday Mincha/Maariv-8:15P

» Weekday Shacharis-6:40A

■ CLASSES

» Gemara Yevamos for men (M-Fr, 6-6:40A)

» Professional's Kollel-9:00A-11:00A

» 30 Mins Makkos Shiur-30 mins before Mincha Sun-Wed

» Gemara Nazir for men (Sunday-Wednesday 8:30P)

» Menuchah Principle for Men: Thursday nights in shul

» Gates of Prayer for Women: Sunday nights at home of Ariella Bush

» Chumash for men & women (Shabbos: Check Schedule)

» Beis Medrash Learning for men including "Shabbos Malkusa" Chaburah-(Shabbos: Check Schedule)