

significant days on the Jewish calendar, Lag B'Omer has multiple meanings.

One is that it commemorates the death of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, an important teacher of Jewish mysticism in the 2nd century. It was said that just before his death, he revealed the most intimate secrets of the Torah to his disciples. Lag B'Omer celebrates his legacy with the lighting of bonfires among other customs, to commemorate the shining light he brought into the world.

Lag B'Omer was also the day on which a plague that had afflicted the disciples of Rabbi Akiva around the same time was lifted. Many Jews still observe the period of the Omer as one of semi-mourning; weddings are not held, nor loud or raucous celebrations. But on Lag B'Omer these restrictions are set aside, and the tradition of going on picnics and outings, and giving children their first haircuts has proliferated in many circles. It's a chance to take a fairly somber period of time and turn it – and ourselves – towards the light instead.

There's another custom that goes along with Lag B'Omer, and of all things, it's archery! Curious about this

heard of, let alone celebrated. Yet it is the day on which we commemorate revelation, the receiving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. All Jews certainly know how important the Torah is. So how did we, as a people, lose our connection to the day on which it was given to us?

On Passover we celebrate our passage through the narrow confinement of slavery into freedom. We recount the story in intricate detail, reliving the pain and rejoicing in the victory. But our story does not end there. When we made it through the sea of reeds, God did not give us the Torah immediately. We had to wait and struggle in the desert, having our faith tested time and again, before we were ready to receive the holy instructions for how to survive as a people.

We chronicle this journey, this maturing of the Jewish people, in the 49 days between Passover and Shavuot. Not surprisingly, these two holidays do not exist independent of each other. Without one, you would not have the other. Indeed, none of the Jewish holidays are observed in exclusion of the others. Our year is a cycle, each holiday preparing us for the next, gently pushing us towards the growth and self-discovery hidden behind all of our traditions.

So what are we meant to learn from Shavuot? If Passover is