MINHAGIM OF SEFIRAT HAOMER

From the end of Pesach until the 33rd day of the Omer we have the tradition of keeping certain customs of mourning, in memory of the twenty-four thousand students of rabbi Aqiba who died in that period of time in the years 130 ACE.

1. Weddings or engagements are not allowed during the days of the Sefira, but in our community it is customary to allow an engagement to take place during Rosh Chodesh Iyar.

2. The first day to allow the performance of a wedding, according to the Sephardic Minhag, is on the 34th day of the Omer while for the Ashkenazi Minhag is on the 33rd.

3. Men are not allowed to get a haircut during the days of the Sefira until the 34th day of the Omer. Women are not subject to any restrictions regarding their hair.

4. It is customary not to wear any new clothing for which one would regularly say the Berakha Sheheheyanu. Since this custom is not mentioned in the Shulchan Arukh there is some leniency to it. For example: If a specific new garment will not be available after the Omer or if the price will increase after Lag laOmer it is permitted to acquire the new clothing. If the new clothing is much needed, it can be worn on Shabbat for the first time, saying Sheheheyanu for it. Buying new clothing for a wedding is permitted, for the bride the groom and their immediate family. Buying new clothing for a Brit Milah is also permitted for the family.

5. Buying a new house is permitted, but if possible, one should move into it only after Lag laOmer. If one does not have a house or an office, he can move into the new property even before Lag laOmer. It is NOT forbidden to make a contract or a closing for a house during these days. There are no restrictions for buying, renting, or selling a property as business operations.

6. During these days, one should avoid listening to live music and/or going to a movie theater.

7. In our community the celebration of Yom haAtzmaut, Israel's Independence Day, which commemorates the anniversary of the re-establishment of the State of Israel overrides the mourning restrictions of the Omer period, thus we celebrate that day with joyous prayers, banquettes, dancing, and music.

It is important to notice that all the restrictions we follow in the days of Omer are not associated with superstitions or notions of bad luck or bad Mazal. These Minhagim are related to the mourning we keep, honoring the memory of the students of Ribbi Aqiba.