

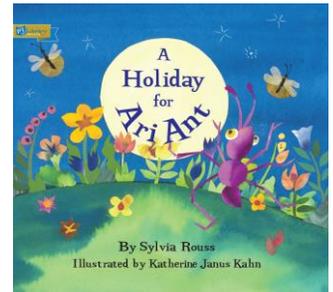
Read the PJ Library Book

A Holiday for Ari Ant (4s)

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Synopsis

When Ari Ant first hears about the holiday of Lag B'Omer, he can't wait to celebrate. Ari's first attempts at celebrating Lag B'Omer meet with disaster, but he is eventually able to experience the highlights of the holiday. He listens to Torah stories, enjoys a picnic feast, and sings around a campfire with friends.

Discuss the Jewish values and vocabulary with one another

Torah study/learning - *tal-mud to-rah* - תלמוד תורה

Counting the omer - *se-fi-rat ha-o-mer* - ספירת העומר

Introducing the value of Torah study/learning Talmud Torah

From Jewish teachings

Studying Torah is central to traditional Jewish life. In the second century when the Romans banned the study of Torah, many Jews risked their lives by attempting to study Torah in secret. The term "Torah study" refers to studying any Jewish text, from the Biblical to the modern, which offers guidance on Jewish principles. Talmudic sages compare studying Torah to "lighting a lantern" that enables one to walk in the dark without stumbling. Jewish scholars suggest that learning should be a lifelong endeavor.

For the teacher

- Torah study customarily involves asking many questions with a partner (a *chavruta*, from the word *chaver*/friend) in order to unlock the deeper meanings of a text or concept. To what can you compare this in your own experience?
- How might you encourage meaningful conversation around Jewish ideas in your classroom?



Questions for children

- What is the Torah and what does it contain?
- What does it mean to study Torah?
- Why do you think the Jewish people became sad and upset when they were told that they could not study Torah?
- Think of a Torah story that you know. What lesson or hints about good ways of behaving does it teach us?

Introducing the value of counting the omer *Sefirat ha'omer*

From Jewish teachings

It is the custom to joyfully count aloud each of the 49 days between the celebration of freedom at Passover and Shavuot, the holiday of receiving the Torah. This practice is referred to as *sefirat ha'omer*, the counting of the omer. An omer is actually a measurement of barley. (Many Jewish festivals have an agricultural component.) Contemporary sources view counting the omer as a way of pausing to notice the blessings in each day. Lag B'Omer is the 33rd day of the omer, and it is considered a scholars' holiday. For more about Lag B'Omer, read the PJ Library blog [here](#).

For the teacher

- Consider times when you count down (or up) to a significant event. What's the difference, for example, between counting up to the 100th day of school vs. counting down to a vacation?
- How can you create a meaningful counting routine for your classroom?
- How can you help your students daily blessings?



Questions for children

- Why do you think the Jewish people count the days until they would receive the Torah?
- Can you describe a time when you counted the days until something special would happen?
- Rabbis teach us that each day we count the omer, we should try to think about something for which we are grateful. What can you think of today?

Imagine your community living these Jewish values.

How would your classroom change?

How will families be involved?

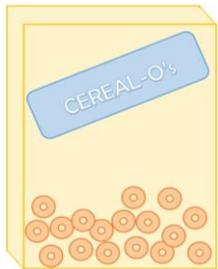
In the Classroom / Centers

- ☆ **Talmud Torah/Torah study:** Creating a classroom Torah is an excellent **language arts** exploration. Ask the children to illustrate Torah stories, or assemble a list of questions that children wonder about the Torah's contents or how a Torah is made. You might create a photo journal of children engaged in **Torah play**.
- ☆ **Talmud Torah/Torah study:** Challenge the children to create a secret Torah study cave, tent or **reading cubby** in the classroom or in a quiet corner of the school building. The children can use their hidden, cozy space to read and listen to Torah stories or Jewish music. Ask the children what materials and study aids, such as flash lights or pillows, they will need in their Torah area.
- ☆ **Sefirat ha'omer/counting the omer:** Create a tasty **math** and omer-counting experience by asking children to assemble a fruit or vegetable salad or trail mix that contains exactly 49 pieces of food. To simplify the counting process, show children how to count and arrange items into groups of seven. For example, a 49-piece baggie of trail mix could contain a combination of seven raisins, seven pretzels, seven cheerios, seven chocolate chips – and what else?
- ☆ **Sefirat ha'omer/counting the omer:** As part of your daily omer counting routine, ask one student to describe something for which they are grateful and then encourage the class to devise a **movement/pantomime** to go with the student's statement of gratitude. Keep a running list so you can avoid repetition and so that the children can watch their words of thanks multiply and grow.



Bridging Home and School

Lag B'Omer cereal drive



Ask families to participate in a Lag B'Omer cereal drive. For several weeks leading up to Lag B'Omer ask families to bring in boxes of cereals or other grain related foods (boxes of rice or noodles or loaves of bread) that will ultimately be donated to a soup kitchen or homeless shelter. In keeping with the custom of counting the omer, keep track of the number of items that are being donated. Graph your donations in a creative way, such as asking families to add an "O" to a cereal box each time they bring a donation to school.

Calling all scholars

Invite families to attend a school-wide Lag B'Omer celebration that features studying Torah "in secret." Invite local rabbis, librarians, and other adults who love reading to serve as your scholars. Equip each reader with a different PJ Library book and ask each scholar to "hide" somewhere within the school. Challenge families to find as many hidden scholars as possible, joining each for a reading session, before resuming their quest for another scholar.

Family Engagement at Home

Thank your teachers

Send home a note explaining that Lag B'Omer is often referred to as a scholars' festival, designed to honor those who teach. Encourage families to write a thank you note to an individual who has taught their family an important skill or life lesson. Perhaps the families will share some of the types of people they have thanked.

Share your stories and experiences with everyone.

What happened?

How can the learning go deeper?

Tell us a story... about how Torah study plays a role in your classroom

After we visited a nearby synagogue to see its beautiful collection of Torahs, the children had many questions about how a Torah was made. To answer some of their questions, we invited a local sofer, or scribe, to our class. We tried writing with feathered pens. Gregory said, "I'm happy we have crayons!" We opened up a mezuzah to see how it compared to a Torah scroll. Mallory thought, "The writing is so tiny, it could be fairy writing." Our class revisited the synagogue to help clean and polish some of their Torah crowns and breast plates. Everyone agreed that shiny crowns are more special looking than dull crowns.



More resources and websites for inspiration

Counting the omer with children: <http://pjfor.me/counting-omer>

Omer counters: <https://www.pinterest.com/pjgts/omer-counters/>

Studying Torah with preschoolers: <http://pjfor.me/torah-and-preschoolers>

