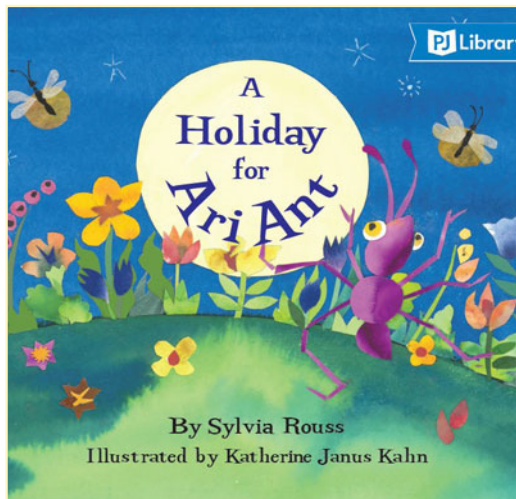


A Holiday for Ari Ant

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{What nourishes your mind and body?}



Counting Up

Preparing for Passover involves a lot of cleaning, shopping, and cooking. When the holiday finally arrives, it can feel like finally crossing a finish line after a sprint. But that finish line is actually a starting line for a marathon: Now it's time to count the Omer. The Omer refers to the 49 days between Passover and Shavuot, the holiday celebrating the gift of the Torah (the first five books of the Bible). In ancient times, these 49 days led up to the time to offer up sheaves of wheat to the Temple in Jerusalem (the Hebrew word omer literally means "sheaf"). Today, the Omer serves as a countdown (or count-up) to Shavuot in anticipation of the earth-shaking day when the Ten Commandments were given at Mount Sinai. So, now we know about the Omer . . . but what's Lag B'Omer? Read on.

HANDS ON!

Make Your Own Lag B'Omer Cave

You can enjoy having your own special hideout during Shavuot or any time of year.

Supplies:

- Couch cushions, large pillows, chairs, etc.
- Bed sheets
- Picnic food
- Favorite books
- Friends!

Set up couch cushions, pillows, and chairs and drape bed sheets on top to create a "cave." Invite friends and stuffed animals to enjoy a picnic inside your cave. You can tell Torah stories or other favorite tales or read books together.

Lag B'Omer

Lag B'Omer is Day 33 on this counting journey. "Lag" is made up of the Hebrew letters lamed and gimel, which together have the numerical value of 33. This day commemorates the death of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, a righteous sage of the second century CE. Rabbi Shimon was a master of the Kabbalah, the mystical side of the Torah. He wanted his passing to be remembered as "the day of my joy," the culmination of his life of learning, teaching, and good deeds. And so, we celebrate! Bonfires, picnics, singing, and time spent enjoying the beauty of nature are the order of the day. To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/ariant.

Laying Low

Ari Ant can't wait to hear Torah stories, but Jewish learning hasn't always been so easy to access. In Rabbi Shimon's day, the Romans ruled the Land of Israel and forbade the study of Torah, so the Jewish people had to find ways to continue learning. Teachers and students would take trips out into nature, and when they were sure no one was watching, they would duck into secret caves to study together. Rabbi Shimon and his son hid in a cave for 12 years! Maybe they learned the art of "laying low" from their tiny ant friends, who are used to keeping a low profile.

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

IN this story, Ari Ant tries out something new: Lag B'Omer. When have you tried something new?

ARI learns that long ago, Jewish people weren't allowed to listen to Torah stories. How would you feel if you were not allowed to do something that is special to you?

WHAT are your favorite things to do outside?