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## **GUIDELINES FOR THE OBSERVANCE OF THE “SFIRA”, MOURNING PERIOD**

There are several historical reasons for the institution of mourning practices during Sfirah. During this period several national calamities took place, namely the death of thousands of Rabbi Akiva's disciples (probably at the hands of the Romans during the Bar Kochva rebellion), the destruction of Jewish communities in the Rhine region of Germany during the Crusades of 1096 and 1146, and the ravages heaped upon the Ukrainian and Polish Jewish Communities during the years of 1648 and 1649. As a consequence a period of national mourning evolved during this period.

There are several minhagim regarding which segment of the Sfirah was assigned for the mourning observance. The following two are the most common minhagim:

1. From the beginning of Sfirah (2<sup>nd</sup> night of Pesach until Lag B'Omer).
2. From Rosh Chodesh Iyar until the third of the month of Sivan (first day of Shloshas Yemei Hagbalah).  
On Lag B'Omer the mourning observances are suspended for the day.

Weddings are prohibited even if music will be absent during the festivity.

One who is observing one mourning period may attend the wedding of a couple whose minhag allows them to marry at that time.

Sheva Brachos that extends into the mourning period (e.g. wedding conducted on Lag B'Omer by one who observes minhag 2) may be celebrated including the accompaniment of music.

Marriages may be scheduled on the night of Lag B'Omer as well as during the day.

Social Events are permitted provided that no musical entertainment takes place. This ruling applies also to charity dinners.

Musical Concerts should not be attended. Musicians or others who derive their livelihood from music may continue their activities. Listening to music at home i.e. not at a social function is viewed as permissible by some Poskim. Others, however, feel one should refrain from this activity. Children, however, may practice their lessons.

Haircuts are prohibited during this period. The following are exceptions:

1. If a Bris occurs on Shabbos or Sunday, the parent, Sandek, and Mohel may have their hair cut in honor of the Bris on the preceding Friday.
2. This same permissibility is granted to everyone when Lag B'Omer occurs on a Sunday and when Rosh Chodesh Iyar occurs on a Friday.
3. Under special circumstances, women may trim their hair during this time.

New Garments may be purchased. Some Poskim demur, however, with regards to wearing them for the first time.