

Lag Ba'omer - Being a Non-conformist in a Holy Way:

1. **Talmud Yevamos 62b:** Rabbi Akiva had 12,000 pairs of students...and all of them died in one period of time because they did not conduct themselves with respect towards one another.
2. **Jerusalem Talmud Nedarim 9,4:** Rabbi Akiva said: "Love your friend as yourself" - This is a great rule in the Torah.
3. **Arizal:** The 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva were 'gilgulim' of the 24,000 Jews who died in the desert at Shitim.
4. **Bamidbar 25, 1-** And Israel abode in Shitim, and the people began to commit harlotry with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods; and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto the Baal of Peor; and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel... And those that died by the plague were twenty and four thousand.
5. **Talmud Sanhedrin 64:** Rab Judah said in Rab's name: A gentile woman once fell sick. She vowed, 'If I recover, I will go and serve every idol in the world.' She recovered, and proceeded to serve all idols. On reaching Peor, she asked its priests, 'How is this worshipped?' They replied, 'People eat beets, drink strong drink, and then uncover themselves before it.' She replied, 'I would rather fall sick again than serve an idol in such a manner.' But ye, O House of Israel, were not so [as it is written, Slay ye every one his men] that were joined unto Baal Peor: ye were attached to it like an air-tight lid. Whereas, Whilst ye that did cleave unto the Lord your God, implies merely like two dates sticking to each other. In a Baraitha it has been taught: that were joined unto Baal Peor: [loosely] like a bracelet on the hands of a woman; whereas Whilst ye that did cleave unto the Lord your God indicates that they were firmly attached. Our Rabbis taught: Sabta, a townsman of Avlas, once hired an ass to a gentile woman. When she came to Peor, she said to him, 'Wait till I enter and come out again.' On her issuing, he said to her, 'Now do you wait for me too until I go in and come out again.' 'But,' said she, 'are you not a Jew?' He replied, 'What does it concern thee?' He then entered, uncovered himself before it, and wiped himself on the idol's nose, whilst the acolytes praised him, saying, 'No man has ever served this idol thus.' He that uncovers himself before Baal Peor thereby serves it, even if his intention was to degrade it.
6. **Midrash Rabba Bamidbar 20, 21:** There are fountains that raise warriors and there are fountains that raise weak people....the fountain waters of Shitim raised licentiousness.
7. **Midrash Tanchuma Teruma:** The Jews sinned at Shitim, were punished at Shitim, and will be healed through Shitim, as the verse says: "Shitim wood that is standing. Hashem said, "In the future I will heal Shitim....."
8. **Mesilas Yesharim Ch. 5:** We see many times that even after one has realized the truth of his obligation to serve and be careful about it, he will slack off or transgress certain aspects of it so that people will not make fun of him or so that he can continue to mingle with them...
9. **Talmud Eduyos 5,6:** It is better that the whole world should call you a fool, but that you should not be called a Rasha before Hashem for even a moment.
10. **Talmud Gittin 57a:** It was the custom when a boy was born to plant a cedar tree and when a girl was born to plant a Shitim tree, and when they married, the tree was cut down and a canopy made of the branches
11. **Song for R' Shimon Bar Yochai:** "Bar Yochai, Shitim wood which is standing
12. **Talmud Shabbos 33b:** Seeing a man ploughing and sowing, they exclaimed: "They forsake eternal life and engage in temporal life!" Whatever they cast their eyes upon was immediately incinerated. A heavenly echo came forth and announced: "Have you emerged to destroy My world? Return to your cave!" So they returned and lived there another twelve months, saying, "The punishment of the wicked in Gehinom is limited to twelve months." A heavenly echo then came forth and said, "Go forth from your cave! "Now wherever Rabbi Elazar harmed [with his look], Rabbi Shimon healed. Said Rabbi Shimon to his son, "My son! You and I are sufficient for the world."