

Lag B'Omer Festival:

May 1, 2021

In News: Many people died in a stampede as tens of thousands of ultra-Orthodox Jews gathered in northern Israel to celebrate the annual Lag B'Omer festival.

About Lag B'Omer Festival-

- Lag B'Omer is an **annual Jewish festival observed during the Hebrew month of Iyar**.
- It is celebrated on the **33rd day of the Omer**, the 49-day period between Passover and Shavuot.
- Lag B'Omer is the only day during the 49-day period when celebration is permitted.
- Hence, it is common for Jews to schedule weddings on this day every year.
- Young boys, who have reached the age of three, are also traditionally brought here for their first hair cut.
- To mark the occasion, tens of thousands of ultra-Orthodox Jewish pilgrims make their way to the base of **Mount Meron** every year, to pay their respects to **Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, a second century sage** and mystic, who is believed to have died on this day.
- The Rabbi's tomb is a much revered holy site in Israel.

Who was Rabbi Shimon?

- Rabbi Shimon was said to have been a gifted Talmudic scholar and a disciple of Rabbi Akiva, one of the greatest Jewish sages of all time.
- According to some accounts, Rabbi Shimon authored the **'Zohar'**, which is the main work of Kabbalah, or Jewish mysticism.
- Jews believe that on the day of his death, Rabbi Shimon told his disciples the many secrets of the Kabbalah, which some believe is how Lag B'Omer became a day of celebration.

- Bonfires are often lit on the day to represent the knowledge and wisdom he shared with his followers.
- Others believe that a deadly plague that killed 244,000 of Rabbi Akiva's followers ended on this day.