

The Weekly *Farbrenge*



למען ישמעו • אמור תשע"ז • 409
EDITOR - RABBI SHIMON HELINGER

LAG BA'OMER

AN AUSPICIOUS DAY

On the day that Rebbi Shimon bar Yochai was preparing to leave this world, he told his son Reb Elozar and the *talmidim* who were gathered around him, "This is an auspicious time. I am now going to reveal holy secrets that I have never yet disclosed, so that I will arrive in *Olam HaBa* without reason for embarrassment. I see that today is a distinctive day, for *HaShem* and all the *tzaddikim* are rejoicing in my celebration (*hillula*)."

He instructed his *talmid* Rebbi Abba to write down what he was about to say, Rebbi Elozar to repeat it, and the other *talmidim* to listen carefully. He then revealed to them the section of *Zohar* known as *Idra Zuta*. At that time, the *kedusha* of Rebbi Shimon was so intense that none of the *talmidim* were able to gaze upon him, and throughout the day, a fire surrounded the house, keeping everyone else at an awed distance.

Rebbi Abba recalled: "While I was in midst of writing, and Rebbi Shimon was in the middle of quoting a *possuk*, he stopped at the word 'Chaim'. I waited, wanting to continue, but did not raise my head to see why he had stopped, for I was unable to look at the bright light that he radiated. Suddenly, I heard a voice call out a *possuk* that included the word 'Chaim', and then another voice called out another *possuk*. I fell to the ground and wept. When the fire subsided and the light faded away, I saw that the great luminary, Rebbi Shimon, had passed away. He was lying on his right side, with a smile on his face."

Soon afterwards, residents of nearby Tzipori came to take Rashbi to bury him in their village, but the inhabitants of Meron sent them away. Meanwhile the bed, now outside the house, raised itself in the air, while a fire burned in front of it. A voice rang out, "Come and gather for the *hillula* of Rebbi Shimon!" When they entered the cave in which he would be buried, another voice was heard, coming from within: "This man shakes up the world and all its kingdoms; many adversaries in *Shamayim* are silenced because of his merit; *HaShem* glories in him daily. Fortunate is his portion, both Above and below!"

(זהר ח"ג דף רצ"א ע"ב, רצ"ו ע"ב)

On that Lag Ba'Omer, Rashbi was illuminated by the light of *Moshiach*, thereby attaining the highest

level of his lifetime, and partially revealed that light to his *talmidim*. Hence, Lag Ba'Omer each year is a day of the revelation of *pnimiyus haTorah*, the inner, mystical dimension of the Torah.

(סדור עם דא"ח שער ל"ג בעומר, סה"ש תש"ד ע' 124)

HOLY CELEBRATIONS

AriZal taught that it is a *mitzva* to rejoice on Lag Ba'Omer, because Rashbi called his *yahrzeit* a *hillula*, a celebration. This joy is meaningful to every Yid, for Rashbi protects the entire world from judgment.

(לק"ש חכ"ב ע' 138)

CONSIDER

What is the reason for the great joy on Lag Ba'Omer? Didn't Rashbi pass away on this day? How did chassidim rejoice on Lag Ba'Omer?

For the Mittlerer Rebbe, Lag Ba'Omer was an exceptional *Yom-Tov*. From the time he settled in Lubavitch, he renewed the *minhag* of celebrating Lag Ba'Omer in a field outside the city, with a light *seuda* and *LeChaim*. He too would say *LeChaim*, something he did not usually do for health reasons, and the chassidim would sing and dance. The Rebbe would perform miracles, *bentching* many childless women to have sons who would grow up to be true chassidim. Though he usually sent such requests to his brother, Reb Chaim Avrohom, on Lag Ba'Omer he would *bentch* them himself. People waited all year long for Lag Ba'Omer.

After delivering a *maamar*, the Mittlerer Rebbe would ask the *eltare chassidim* to relate their Lag Ba'Omer memories of earlier years, and share the words of Torah and stories that used to be related. Even after he left, the chassidim would continue to *farbrenge* until evening.

(היום יום י"ח אייר, תר"מ ח"א ע' 60, סה"ש תש"ו-ה"שי"ת ע' 412)

The gaon Reb Yonasan Eybeschutz cautions that one should make good use of this holy day and not waste it on foolishness.

Similarly, in a letter to his chassidim before Lag Ba'Omer, the Alter Rebbe writes: "Rejoice on the day of Rashbi's celebration, because we drink from his wellsprings of *Chassidus*. Celebrate by singing praises to *HaShem* from *Tehillim*, and not *chas veshalom* by lightheaded frivolity."

(יערות דבש ח"ב דרוש י"א, אג"ק אדה"ז ח"א ע' ק"ז)

BOWS AND ARROWS

Why do children traditionally play with bows and arrows on Lag Ba'Omer? The *tzaddik*, Reb Mendel of Rimanov, explains that the rainbow is a sign of *HaShem's* anger, and no rainbow was seen throughout the lifetime of Rashbi, for in his merit that entire generation was protected.

A further explanation is given by Reb Mendel's holy *talmid*, Reb Zvi Elimelech of Dinov, who is known by the title of his *sefer* as the *Bnei Yisaschar*. It is written in the *Zohar* that an especially bright rainbow indicates the imminent revelation of the light of *Moshiach* - and since a foretaste of this light is revealed in the *Zohar*, we play with bows and arrows.

The Rebbe explains the connection of this custom to young *talmidim* of *cheder* age. An arrow is able to overcome an enemy even from a distance, *before* it comes dangerously close. This ability alludes to those activities of *kedusha*, such as *davening* and giving *tzedaka*, that overcome the *Yetzer HoRa* in advance, so that the individual is then able to study Torah undisturbed.

(בני יששכר חודש אייר מ"ג אר"ד, תר"מ ח"ג ע' 77)

In a letter addressed to all children, the Rebbe writes:

On Lag Ba'Omer, you should assemble to speak of Rashbi and his greatness, to discuss his teachings and to firmly commit to fulfill them with joy. In addition, you should organize a parade in your area, to publicize your connection to Torah - like Rashbi, whose main occupation was studying Torah. The *zechus* of Rashbi will help you fulfill the Torah and its *mitzvos* happily, and will bring the *Geula* soon.

(תר"מ תשמ"ז ח"ג ע' 209)

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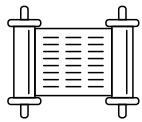
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Lag BaOmer Night

Can I give my son his upshernish on the night that precedes Lag BaOmer?

During the days of sefiras haomer we express mourning over the passing of R. Akiva's students. During this time, we are prohibited from marrying, cutting hair, reciting shehecheyanu, playing music and dancing (the first two are considered more severe).¹

There are various customs concerning which days are prohibited: some prohibited the first 33 days, while others prohibit the last 33 days. Minhag Chabad is to observe both customs and to abstain until the three days before Shavuot (shloshes yimei hagbalah).² Moreover, according to kabala, the entire time period between Pesach and Shavuot is a time of heavenly severity (dinim) when one should abstain from cutting hair (this applies on Lag BaOmer as well, except for upshernish³ or great need⁴).

Nonetheless, on the day of Lag BaOmer, all opinions agree that the activities are permitted. On that day, the students of R. Akiva stopped dying (according to some),⁵ and also, in a different year, R. Shimon bar Yochai passed away and instructed for his yahrtzeit to be a day of celebration.⁶

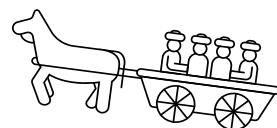
When on Lag BaOmer do the activities become permissible?

Some say that Lag BaOmer is also subject to mourning, though observing only part of the day in mourning is enough (miktzas hayom kekulo), as halacha rules regarding the final day of shiva.⁷ Accordingly, one would have to wait until after sunrise to cut hair or marry, since the accepted halacha is that only a part of the daytime is enough, but not a part of the night (these opinions still permit music on the night of Lag BaOmer since it isn't as severe). However, others argue that Lag BaOmer night is also permissible, since a part of the night suffices in this instance, or because the day of Lag BaOmer is entirely free of mourning.⁸

Another difference between these two opinions is whether to recite tachanun at mincha on erev Lag BaOmer.⁹ Whenever a yom tov begins at night, we don't recite tachanun during the mincha that precedes it. Thus, if the celebration of Lag BaOmer begins at night, one should not recite tachanun, but if it begins after sunrise, one should.

In the Alter Rebbe's siddur, which he wrote after his Shulchan Aruch, the Alter Rebbe rules that one should not recite tachanun at mincha on erev Lag BaOmer. The Rebbe concludes from this that we may marry on the night of Lag BaOmer.¹⁰ Likewise, it would be permissible to make an upshernish then as well.¹¹

1. שו"ע"ר סי' תצ"ג ס"א. ערוה"ש סי' תצ"ג ס"א. פ"ו. וראה פסק"ת סי' תצ"ג ס"ח עור טעמים.
2. ראה שו"ע"ר סי' תצ"ג ס"ז שאפשר לקבל את שתי החומרות. אבל אין מסתפרים עד ערב חג השבועות - ספר המנהגים עמ' 44. וי"ל שזהו בגלל שלא שלמו הבריד עד חג השבועות - ראה ד"ה איש כי ימרט תרכ"ט.
3. ראה כף החיים סי' תצ"ג סקכ"ו.
4. פנ"ח שער כ"ב פ"ו. וראה שו"ת מנח"א ח"ד סי' מ"ד. אוצר מנהגי חב"ד עמ' רפ"ג.
5. מאדרי יבמות ס"ב ע"ב. וראה שו"ע"ר שם סי' מהר"ל דיני הימים שבין פסח לשבועות.
6. ראה אג"ק אדמוה"ז סי' פ"ו. פנ"ח שער כ"ב פ"ו. וראה פסק"ת סי' תצ"ג ס"ח עור טעמים.
7. מו"ק י"ט ע"א. שו"ע"ר י"ד סי' שצ"ה ס"א.
8. ראה שו"ע"ר שם סי' ס"ו. וי"ל בב' אופנים: שאין ל"ג בעומר בכלל בימי האבל או שבוה נאמר מקצת הלילה מספיק (ע"ד מ"ש בפר"ח).
9. שם.
10. שידת ליל ל"ג בעומר תשל"ו (ובפשוט חזר בו מנח"כ בבא"ק ח"ח אגרת בתקיעא להחמיר בו).
11. כן מורים רבני א"ש (ודלא כמוכא בשלחן מנחם אור"ח ח"ג ע"ל ל"ז ממכתב מ"א אירי תשי"ט - שכפ"ג חזר בו כ"ל). וכ"כ בס' נט"ג פסח ח"ג. פמ"ט סי"ח. וראה מה שאסף בהערות שם.



REB MORDECHAI DUBIN

Reb Mordechai (Mottel) Dubin grew up and lived in Riga, Latvia. His father, Reb Zalmen Ber, was a Lubavitcher chossid, and when Reb Mordechai was a young boy, he took him to yechidus with the Rebbe Rashab. As a young man Reb Mottel was involved with helping others in an extraordinary manner and eventually assumed the position of Rosh Hakohol of Riga. His house and office were always filled with throngs of people seeking his help and together with his secretaries, he would tend to each one's needs. Reb Mordechai also served as a member of the Latvian parliament, which he ultimately used to pressure the Russian government to free the Frierdiker Rebbe from prison and allow him to leave Russia with his family and library. The Frierdiker Rebbe referred to Reb Mottel as the "sar hachessed" (Minister of Kindness) for his outstanding kindness to others.

Once when Reb Mordechai was in shul he realized that someone had walked off with his coat. His first reaction was that probably the man must have been really cold and did not have the means to purchase himself a coat. "Let him wear it in good health and I will buy another one." The broad smile on his face testified that the stolen coat did not bother

him and he was happy knowing that someone would be warmer from it.

During World War II, the Russians conquered Riga and soon thereafter arrested Reb Mottel. Reb Mottel was held in jail in Saratov, until one evening he was unexpectedly released. Having nowhere to go, he walked to the nearby city of Kobishov, hoping to find a home with a mezuzah that might take him in. After many hours, a tired, hungry and sick Reb Mordechai finally arrived in Kobishov and found a house with a mezuzah. After knocking on the door for a while, the door opened a crack but was immediately shut closed. Reb Mordechai, still wearing his prisoner uniform judged him favorably, "who would risk taking in such a person?"

But with no energy left to struggle to explain himself, Reb Mottel decided to lay down right there, and what will be, will be. He soon felt his end was near and starting saying viduy. Then, suddenly a thought entered his mind, "what will be tomorrow when the yid will find me dead on his doorstep!? He will feel terrible guilt for the rest of his life!" This thought gave him strength to knock again and this time he managed to convince the yid to take him in. Reb Mordechai would say "because of my ahavas yisroel my life was saved."

A Moment with The Rebbe



MIXED SEATING AT SHIURIM

Professor Kasdan, a Russian ba'al teshuvah, was active behind the Iron Curtain and continued his activities in the USSR after settling in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He once wrote to the Rebbe that "there is a group of young women who would like to learn Torah. Would it be permissible to admit them to men's study classes?"

In an English letter of 20 Cheshvan 5739 (1978), the Rebbe responded: "In view of the extraordinary circumstances of that country [USSR], I would be inclined to take a more lenient view, to admit women into men's classes.

"However, in order to emphasize the exception due to the extenuating circumstances, and to

be mindful of the Din, two provisions should be made; one, to teach in a co-ed class such subjects as are incumbent on women... Second, that separate seating should be arranged... although we are speaking of persons who, by reason of background, are not otherwise averse to mixed dancing and socializing, it is obvious that this should not be permitted in these groups, and no heter should be implied.

"I must emphasize again that the heter... is based on... there being no other way... it should in no way serve as a precedent for other countries where those circumstances do not prevail..."

(Complete letter printed in Teshura Lee-Paylie, Kislev 5763)