

The Weekly *Farbrengens*



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מרכז אנש

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EDITOR - RABBI SHIMON HELLINGER

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 BaOmer each year is a day of the revelation of *pnimiyus haTorah*, the inner, mystical dimension of the Torah.

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

CONSIDER

What is the reason for the great joy on Lag BaOmer? Didn't Rashbi pass away on this day?

How did chassidim rejoice on Lag BaOmer?

HOLY CELEBRATIONS

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

(לקו"ש חכ"ב ע' 138)

For the Mitteler Rebbe, Lag BaOmer was an exceptional *Yom-Tov*. From the time he settled in Lubavitch, he renewed the *minhag* of celebrating Lag BaOmer 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 BaOmer he would *bentch* them himself. People waited all year long for Lag BaOmer.

After delivering a *maamar*, the Mitteler Rebbe would ask the *eltene chassidim* to relate their Lag BaOmer 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 *farbreng* until evening.

(היום יום י"ח אייר, תר"מ ח"א ע' 60, סה"ש תש"ו-ה'שית 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 BaOmer, 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' קי"ז)

BOWS AND ARROWS

Why do children traditionally play with bows and arrows on Lag BaOmer? 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 מג"א אר"ד, תר"מ ח"ג ע' 77)

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

On Lag BaOmer, 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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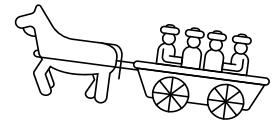
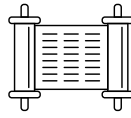
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GOOD NEWS.

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REB AVROHOM ABBA PERSON

Reb Avrohom Abba Person grew up in the city of Kresleva (Vitebsk). His family members were chassidim of the Mittlerer Rebbe and the Tzemach Tzedek. Before the Rebbe Rashab founded the yeshiva of Tomchei Temimim in Lubavitch, he gathered the group of bochorim that would start the yeshiva. The Rebbe wanted the most excellent bochorim, so he sent the group of ten to Kenigsburg to be under the supervision of Reb Avrohom Abba, instructing them to learn from his behavior and chassidische customs. Reb Avrohom Abba was like a mashpia to them, and he would farbreng with them and report to the Rebbe Rashab on each of them individually.

described it: "When I remember those farbrengens, those memories chase any feeling of pain and sadness out of me. A chassidische farbrengen is the 'chotzer' (courtyard) of Chassidus, through which one enters the 'azoros' and 'kodesh hakodoshim.' During those farbrengens, the elder chassidim's faces would shine brightly and their words would affect the listeners incredibly, in a way he would never forget."

(התמים ח"ב חוברת ו')

The Frierdiker Rebbe writes: "I really enjoyed learning mishnayos by heart, and the sedorim I knew already I would review lovingly, quickly though not skipping a letter. Reb Avrohom Abba Person once told my father that the Tzemach Tzedek told him at his first yechidus, 'Learn mishnayos by heart- the word mishna has the same letters as the word neshama. By saying mishnayos by heart the neshama illuminates the body and the body shines.' Reb Avrohom Abba Person was fluent in shisha sidrei mishna and Tanya in an astounding way."

(לקוטי דיבורים ח"ד ע' 1384)

From a young age he was fascinated by chassidische stories, and he would collect them like diamonds. He married the granddaughter of the famed chossid of the Alter Rebbe, Reb Velvel Vilenker, whose custom was to farbreng every motzai Shabbos with the local chassidim. Reb Avrohom Abba began joining these events and later on

A Moment with The Rebbe



UPLIFTED

As the preparation for the 5747 (1987) Lag BaOmer parade were in full swing, Reb Yankel Hecht was fretting. The pressure of the many logistics, coupled with this being the first internationally televised parade, drew him down.

production.

As the Rebbe turned to leave the parade, Reb Yankel approached to express his appreciation. "Der Rebbe hot mir aroisgeshleped fun mara shechoira" (The Rebbe pulled me out from gloom).

In his direct style, he wrote a note into the Rebbe, and received a response with warm words of encouragement. Rejuvenated, he continued the work, and indeed oversaw a great, successful

With a broad smile, The Rebbe corrected one word, "Ufgehoiben!" (Uplifted!). The Rebbe repeated it again, making a motion with his hand.

JOYFUL RETURNS

What bracha do I say when a close friend returns from the hospital?

Seeing a friend - Halacha mandates a bracha to be recited upon seeing after a hiatus of time a close relative or a very dear friend, whom you are very excited to see, to express your joy. If thirty days have passed, you recite shehecheyanu; if twelve months passed, you recite the bracha of mechayeh hamesim. Men can say these brachos upon seeing close female relatives, and vice versa, but not for non-relatives due to reasons of tznius.¹ A father also makes shehecheyanu upon seeing his newborn daughter.²

What if you communicated with the person during that time? The Alter Rebbe writes that even if you received news about the other person in the interim—in writing or by word of mouth—you still recite the bracha due to the special joy when seeing their face.³ Modern day poskim discuss whether talking to them by phone or via video call would be different, however from the Alter Rebbe it would seem that the increased joy of a face-to-face meeting warrants the bracha.

The Rebbe notes that we don't customarily say shehecheyanu when reuniting with friends, though one who truly wishes may make the bracha and need worry that the joy isn't fullhearted, since even in doubt one may still say.⁴ Some poskim write that even if a formal bracha isn't recited by ordinary reunions for various reasons, it can be recited when reuniting after 30 days with a close friend or relative who survived from an illness or danger.⁵

Friend's salvation - After experiencing a personal salvation, one recites hagomel and makes a seudas hodaah.⁶ Family and friends who are truly happy for his salvation can choose to recite the text of birchas hagomel (meaning "Hashem did good to me—by saving you"), or a version in Aramaic, "ברוך ה' המנא א-להנא מלכא דעלמא דיהבך לן ולא יהבך לעפרא" ("Who has given you back to us and not given you to the dust").⁷

You may not say the bracha unless you are truly joyous, since reciting a bracha with Hashem's name in vain is forbidden in any language. If the person might be offended, you should recite the bracha without Hashem's name ("ברוך דיהבך...").⁸ Unlike by a personal salvation, these brachos don't require a minyan.⁹

Good news - Upon hearing good news about someone dear to you, you may express your joy by reciting the bracha of hatov v'hametiv ("Hashem did good to me and to that person").¹⁰

Thus, you can recite three brachos: hatov v'hametiv upon hearing the good news, shehecheyanu upon seeing him (if thirty days have passed), and brich rachmana once he has fully recuperated.

If one experienced a miraculous salvation in a certain place, whenever he or his offspring pass that place after a thirty-day interval, they make the bracha of "שעשה לי (לאבותינו) נס במקום הזה", and his offspring do so as well. Yet, it seems from the Alter Rebbe that this bracha is only said when the miracle is attached to a happening in that location, and not by recovering from an illness.¹¹

1. סדר ברכה"נ שם, וראה שע"ת סי' רכ"ה ס"א. כף החיים
א"ח סי' רכ"ה ס"ב.
2. סדר ברכה"נ פי"ב ס"ב.
3. סדר ברכה"נ פי"ב ה"א. ובלוח ברכה"נ פי"א סכ"ב (גם אם אחריים ג"כ שמחים לא יברך הטוב והמטיב).
4. סה"ש תשמ"ט ע' 738. וראה שם צ"ע למה.
5. ראה פסקי תשובות סי' רכ"ה ס"ב.
6. ברכות דף מו, א. יש"ש ב"ק ז, לז.
7. רמ"א א"ח סי' רי"ט ס"ד.
8. סדר ברכה"נ פי"ג ה"ד.
9. לוח ברכה"נ פי"ב ס"י. סדר ברכה"נ פי"ג ה"ד. וצ"ע למה הקצוה"ש סי' ס"ה ה' השמיט נוסח זה.
10. סדר ברכת הנהנין פי"ב ה"ז.
11. ראה סדר ברכה"נ פי"ג ה"א, משנ"ב ביה"ל סי' רי"ח. שו"ת שבה"ל ח"ז סי' כ"ח.

לע"נ מרת ציפא אסתר בת ר' שלום דובער ע"ה