

The Weekly Farbrengens



לחמן ישמעו • אמור תשפ"ב • 670
EDITOR - RABBI SHIMON HELLINGER

LAG BA'OMER

AN AUSPICIOUS DAY

On the day that Rabbi 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* Rabbi Abba to write down what he was about to say, Rabbi 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 Rabbi 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 Rabbi 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, Rabbi 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 Rabbi 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)

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?

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.

(לקו"ש חכ"ב ע' 138)

For the Mitteler 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 Mitteler Rebbe would ask the *elters 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 *farbreng* until evening.

(היום יום י"ח אייר, תרמ"ח ע' 60, סה"ש תש"ו-ה'ש"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' קי"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"א 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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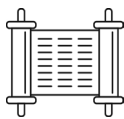
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לע"נ מרת ציפא אסתר בת ר' שלום דובער ע"ה

MAARIV BEFORE SHKIA

What is the earliest time for Maariv?

The Gemara in Brachos quotes a dispute as to the earliest time to *daven maariv*: R. Yehuda holds from *plag hamincha* (one and a quarter seasonal hours before *shkia*), while *chachomim* hold from nightfall (three stars). The Gemara's conclusion is that one may follow either one.¹

However, Shulchan Aruch adds a caveat: one must be consistent and not contradict himself. Thus, one could not *daven* both *mincha* and *maariv* between *plag* and *shkia* since that period can't be counted as both night and day.

According to most *poskim*, this applies even on different days: if one sometimes *davens mincha* after *plag hamincha*, then he considers that time as daytime, and he would not be allowed to *daven maariv* then, even on a different day.² However, an exception to this is Friday night. Due to the *mitzva* of *tosefes Shabbos*, one may *daven maariv* before *shkia*, regardless of his custom the rest of the week (provided of course that he *davened mincha* before *plag*).

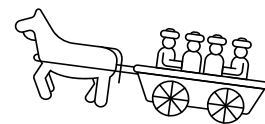
The Alter Rebbe notably writes in a *teshuva* that a custom has developed to be stringent and *daven maariv* specifically after *tzeis*. The Tzemach Tzedek adds that one who is particular about this should do so even if it means missing the *minyan* and *davening* privately later. Traditionally in Lubavitch, even Friday night *maariv* is *davened* after *tzeis*, due to halachic considerations (and to study Chassidus in preparation for Kabbalas Shabbos).

What about *mitzvos* that are *min haTorah* such as *shema*? Can they be recited before nightfall?

Most understand that the dispute applies only to the time for *maariv*, which is *derabanan*, though some *Rishonim* hold it applies also the evening *shema*.³ In practice, even one who *davens* early should recite *shema* again after nightfall.

The Alter Rebbe discusses an *onen*, whose close relative passed away *RL*, and is exempt from all *brachos* and *tefilos* during the week, but not on Shabbos when he cannot bury them. Therefore, writes the Alter Rebbe, he should *daven maariv* on Shabbos afternoon after *plag hamincha*, and he can even recite *krias shema*, since the majority of the community usually recites *shema* before *shkia*.⁴ (The fact that it is suggested for him to *daven* early indicates that this time period has an actual *chiyuv* of *maariv*.⁵) Similarly, whoever can't make *havdala* on *motzaei Shabbos* may *daven maariv* and make *havdala* after *plag hamincha*.⁶

Regarding *sefiras haomer*, you may not count for the following day even after *plag hamincha*. Moreover, if asked after *plag hamincha* what day it is and you answer with the that night's count, you may still count that night with a *bracha*. This is because the primary opinion is that after *plag hamincha* is not considered night even according to R. Yehuda, except with regards to *davening*. (In addition, your statement was lacking *kavana* for the *mitzva*). Still, you should avoid stating the count to fulfill all opinions.⁷



R. CHAIM VEILER

R. Chaim Veiler "Pandeler" (5561-5633) was a *chossid* of the Mittler Rebbe, and a *talmid* of R. Yehuda Leib Batlan, a *chossid* of the Alter Rebbe and the Rov of Dvinsk. Reb Chaim assisted R. Leib in Dvinsk, and then served as the Rov of Pandel, Lithuania. A great *gaon*, the manuscripts of his works were unfortunately lost. He was also known for his selfless acts of *tzedakah*.

At his first *yechidus*, the Mittler Rebbe instructed R. Chaim to learn Tanya and his own Imrei Binah. Over the next year he learned the two seforim and he had many questions.

When he presented his questions to the Rebbe, the Mittler Rebbe told him, "I didn't write the Imrei Binah as my father wrote the Tanya. My father was precise with every 'vav,' but I didn't write with that degree of precision."

The Rebbe concluded, "Learn it once, twice, three, four, five more times, and then you'll understand it!"

During his tenure as *rov*, he focused

his learning on Shas and *poskim*, and didn't learn anything else besides for Tanya.

Once a seforim seller arrived in shul and put out his seforim on a table for sale. Many of the seforim were still unbound, as was common in those days. The *rov* was drawn to one particular sefer, and he stood there reading it for a long while. His congregants were curious to know which special sefer had won his heart over. When they peered inside, they discovered that it was none other than his beloved Tanya...

In his town, there was a feeble-minded young man who would walk around barefoot, and so R. Chaim bought him shoes. Seeing him again walking barefoot, R. Chaim asked him about the shoes, and he responded that he was unable to put them on himself.

From that day on, R. Chaim would visit this young man's home each morning to put on his shoes, and again every evening to help him take them off.

(אהלי ליובאוויטש ח"ד ע' 7 ואילך)

A Moment with The Rebbe



SHNAYIM MIKRA VE'ECHAD TARGUM

At the Shabbos Bereishis *farbrengen* of 5712 (1961), the Rebbe related that on Shabbos Bereishis the Tzemach Tzedek would be recite the *Shnayim Mikra Ve'echad Targum* particularly at length.

"This was because the entire year follows the course of action taken on this Shabbos," the Rebbe explained.

Reb Raphael Tennenhaus, *shliach* in Broward County Florida, relates:

My birthday is in Shevat, and in the years 5730 to 5734 (1970-1974), I merited a birthday *yechidus* during the week before my birthday. In total, five birthday *yechidusim*.

In three of those years, my birthday fell out on a Friday. During those years, the Rebbe told me to be particular with reciting the *Shnayim Mikra* on Friday afternoon.

But if this happened in a place where the custom is to say *shema* after *plag*, one counts again at night without a *bracha*.⁸ The Rebbe recommended arranging that such a *minyan* that counts before *shkia* should count again in the morning by *shacharis*.⁹

8. שו"ע ר' שם סי"ב.
9. אג"ק ח"ט ע' ערב.

6. ראה שו"ע ר' סי' רצ"ג ותה"ד סק"א וסי' רצ"ט ותה"ד סק"י.
7. שו"ע ר' אור"ח סי' תפ"ט וסי' י"ו ודברי נחמיה כאן.

4. שו"ע ר' אור"ח סי' ע"א ס"ב (וראה מג"א שם סק"ג וסי' סק"א ומשנ"ב סק"י).
5. ראה נזיר ע' תרצ"א.

1. ברכות כ"ו ע"א וע"ב.
2. ראה שו"ע אור"ח סי' רל"ג ס"א.
3. ראה תוס' ברכות ב ע"ד ד"ה מאימתי.