

The Weekly Farbrengens



MERKAZ ANASH
מרכז אנאש

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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.

(סדר עמ 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 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 *eltere 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, תו"מ ח"א 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 מג"א אר"ד, תו"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.

(תו"מ תשמ"ז ח"ג ע' 209)



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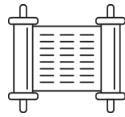
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DILUTING WINE

How much water can I add to wine for kiddush?

Wine in Talmudic times was more potent, so the Mechaber writes that it was sufficient as long as one-quarter of the mixture was wine, and the bracha remains *hagafen*. Yet, he notes, wines today are typically less strong, and a greater percentage of wine is required, with each location following its custom. The Rama comments that one-sixth (approx. 17%) of wine is sufficient as long as the mixture tastes like wine.¹

Many, including the Alter Rebbe, understand the Mechaber to be discussing how much water may be added to wine sediment to create reconstituted wine, while the Rama refers to diluting regular wine.² The 17 percent mentioned by the Rama can be understood to be regardless of local custom, while some explain to be adding to the local practice but not allowing more dilution.³

What about today?

The Kaf Hachaim writes that besides tasting like wine, contemporary wine, which is weak, must have a majority of wine against the water, and this is the accepted halacha among Sefardim.⁴ Some quote a Chabad tradition only allowing dilution up to a third of water, and some Kashrus agencies follow this given that we don't have a shortage of wine.⁵ Since many wines today already have water added during production, one would need to ascertain how much was added before adding more.⁶

Others, however, follow the Rama, and say that today as well, the primary criterion is for the mixture to still taste like wine.⁷ R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach writes that one who is stringent may hear *kiddush* from someone making *kiddush* on highly diluted wine, though he recites *shehakol* to drink from it.⁸

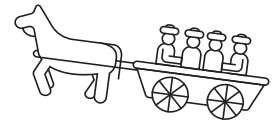
After drinking from a cup of wine, the leftover wine is considered "blemished" (*pagum*) and cannot be used for any *kos shel bracha* (*kiddush, havdala, zimun*). To rectify its impairment, one must pour any amount of unblemished wine or water into the cup. Even if pouring back into the bottle — when some consider the blemished wine to become *bottel* — the Alter Rebbe advises adding some good wine to the cup first, and only then pouring it back into the bottle.⁹

Today when wines are weak and don't require additional water, some argue that water should only be used to fix blemished wine when good wine isn't available.¹⁰ However, the Alter Rebbe rules that one may rectify the blemish with a bit of water as long as it doesn't spoil the wine and the water itself isn't *pagum*.¹¹

1. שו"ע ורמ"א או"ח סי' ר"ד ס"ה. וראה 6. ראה פסק"ת סי' ר"ד אות ח.
2. ראה משנ"ב סי' ר"ד סק"ט וסק"א. 7. פסק הר"י העלער שליט"א.
3. ראה עולות תמיד שם. 8. שלחן שלמה סי' רע"א סק"ט. וראה גם ילקו"י סי' ר"ד אות ח.
4. כף החיים שם סק"ל"א. וכן פסק הרמ"מ 9. ראה שו"ע סי' קפ"ב ס"ו, שו"ע"ר שם ס"ה.
5. ווייסמאנדל שליט"א לראגון הכשרות OK. 10. ע"פ חת"ס בהגהות לשו"ע.
6. הליכות ברכות סי' ר"ד ע"ז. וראה שו"ת 11. שו"ע"ר סי' קפ"ב ס"ה-ו.
צמח צדק או"ח סי' כח.

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

Our Heroes



REB GERSHON BER PAHARER

Reb Gershon Ber of Pahar was a chossid of the Tzemach Tzedek and later of the Rebbe Maharash. Guided by Reb Hillel Paritcher, he became known as a great *maskil* and true *ovied*.

Reb Gershon Ber is quoted for his heartfelt resolve "*Morgen vet zain gor andersh!*" (Tomorrow will be very different!), which he would proclaim after *Krias Shma She'al Hamita*, while rubbing his head with his *yarmulke*.

Reb Gershon Ber was acclaimed for relating stories. During his visits in Lubavitch, the Frierdiker Rebbe, then a young boy, would spend time listening to him gush forth tales and teachings of elder chassidim.

After one such evening with Reb Gershon Ber, the 17 year-old Frierdiker Rebbe penned a diary entry:

"It is 2:00 A.M. Outside rain pours heavily. I pleaded with Reb Gershon Ber to stay in my home until morning. He agreed. I went to my room to contemplate what I had heard that night.

"Is there a pen and scribe who can adequately describe the profound impression I have from Reb Gershon Ber? From his stories of elder chassidim, both of their personal lives as well as the way they

interacted with the simple pure-emunah folk, followers of the ways of Chassidus...

"I look at the face of Reb Gershon Ber, the well-known *maskil*. He is distressed about his spiritual situation, which in his mind, leaves a lot to be desired.

"I write the following in order that it should be as a witness for days to come:

"On this past Motzoei Shabbos, I heard stories and talks of Reb Gershon Ber. Throughout my youth, I have seen many Chassidim. I have seen *maskilim, ovdim, and baalei middos tovos*. I have heard their stories and watched their conduct. For three years my father has been acquainting me with the wonderful and hidden gifts from the lives of great chassidim of the past, and (may they be separated for good and long life) of today. Of all the chassidim, Reb Gershon Ber is unique. In him I see the quality of a broken and crushed heart; broken like a shard of earthenware ("*tzubrochen vi a kinenle*") and '*botel*' like the dust of the earth.

"While still sunken in my thoughts, a deep cry reaches me. I listen as Reb Gershon Ber reads *Krias Shma She'al Hamita*. He is saying the "*ribono shel olam*"; "*shelo ashuv od lehachisecha, velo e'eseh hara be'einecha*"... *May I not return to anger You anymore, nor do what is evil in Your eyes.*"

A Moment with The Rebbe



LEARN YOUR OWN LIFESTYLE

A non-*frum* girl was received by the Rebbe at a *yechidus*. Firmly grounded in her outlook, she argued that one has no right to impose a worldview on another, including in the area of *mitzva* observance.

Suddenly the Rebbe asked her, "Why did you come here?"

"Because I was brought here," she responded.

"But didn't you say that one shouldn't follow others' directives?" the Rebbe probed.

The girl softened up. She now turned to the

Rebbe to seek his advice on whether she should travel to India to acquaint herself with other people's way of life, or whether she should advance academically in the United States.

"If you will heed my advice," the Rebbe counseled her, "stay here. In India you will learn other people's lifestyle; here you will learn your own."

The Rebbe's words influenced her, she stayed in New York, and eventually built a warm *chassidische* family.

(Hiskashrus Issue 1235)

לזכות שאול זאב בן פרימיד
לרגל יום הולדתו