

The Weekly Farbrengens



MERKAZ ANASH
מרכז אנאש

למען ישמענו • אחרי-קדושים תשפ"ה • 826
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 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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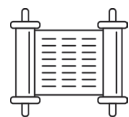
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KSAV ASHURIS

I have text printed in a Sefer Torah font. Is it holy?

The Gemara in Sanhedrin discusses two scripts of Lashon Hakodesh letters, Ksav Ivri and Ksav Ashuris, of which the latter came from Ashur (Assyria) and was transmitted to the Yidden by Ezra Hasofer.¹

Yet, the Gemara in Megilah states that the letters *mem* and *samech* engraved into the *luchos* stood in place by a miracle, implying they were completely closed letters with a suspended piece in the middle as it is written in Ksav Ashuris. (In Ksav Ivri, the form of those letters doesn't have a suspended piece and does not require a miracle.)²

The Ritva explains that, due to the holiness of this Ksav, only the *luchos* and Sefer Torah in the Aron were written in Ksav Ashuris, while anything else—even other Sifrei Torah—were written in Ksav Ivri. Over time, the details of Ksav Ashuris were forgotten. Ezra revived the Ksav Ashuris and was granted permission to use it for Sta"m, and he instituted that Sta"m be only written in Ksav Ashuris.

The Rambam writes that due to the *kedusha* inherent in Ksav Ashuris, it is disrespectful to use it for mundane matters. He notes that is why the Sefardim developed a different *ksav* — i.e., Solitreo, a precursor to cursive Rashi script — for use in mundane matters.³ The Rama quotes the Rambam's view in Shulchan Aruch.⁴

The Rebbe instructed individuals on several occasions not to use Ksav Ashuris for invitations or even *seforim*. Even when printing the Alef Beis for teaching children, the Rebbe discouraged using Ksav Ashuris, since the printed material might be disgraced.⁵

In earlier generations, even printing with block letters was reserved for *pesukim* in the Chumash or the text of the Gemara, while the commentaries were printed in Rashi script for the reason mentioned above. In more recent times, it has become more widespread to print *seforim* in block letters and rely on the absence of the *tagin* as a sufficient distinction from Ksav Ashuris.⁶

5. אג"ק ח"א ע' שמ"ח. ח"ז ע' שה.
6. אג"ק ח"י ע' קע"ז. לקו"ש חכ"ד ע'
375. תו"מ תשמ"ט ח"ג ע' 101.

1. סנהדרין כ"א ע"ב.
2. מגילה ג' ע"א.
3. שו"ת רמב"ם פאר הדור סימן ז'.
4. רמ"א יו"ד סו"ס רפ"ד.

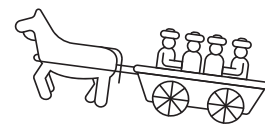
לע"נ מרת ציפא אסתר בת ר' שלום דובער ע"ה

DEDICATE AN ISSUE

in honor of a *simcha* or *yahrtzeit*

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Our Heroes



R. ABBA TSHASHNIKER

R. Abba Tshashniker (born ca. 5570) saw the Mittlerer Rebbe in his youth, and was a Chasid of Tzemach Tzedek, Rebbe Maharash, and Rebbe Rashab. Originally a *melamed* in Tshashnik, he later settled in Lubavitch, and he was one of the elder Chassidim that the Frierdiker Rebbe mentions as having made a deep impression on him in his youth, with his stories and conduct.

The Frierdiker Rebbe related:

Almost every day on my way home from cheder, as well as during my free time on Friday and Shabbos, I would visit R. Hendel and R. Abba Tshashniker who lived in the house down the hill.

The two chassidim, while both dedicated *baalei avoda*, were very different. R. Abba was a deep *baal havana* who would delve into the unity of Hashem's name and creation of the world. He would learn six hours consecutively in one spot, daven *shachris* for five hours, *mincha* for 1.5 hours, and *mairiv* for several hours. His *avoda* was always with himself, not with others.

R. Hendel, in contrast, was a heartfelt person, who would often say that love of Hashem, the Torah and Yidden, is the thread that connects Elokus with the Yidden and the world.

(ספר השיחות תשי"ח ע' 190, ה'ת"ש ע' 104)

When a member of his family would fall ill, R. Abba would not call for a doctor, and would instead give money to the *tzedaka* of R. Meir Baal Hanes. He would begin with one kopeck and add until he gave one silver ruble. If the person did not get better, he would start again from one kopeck and add.

When the Tzemach Tzedek was told of this, he said, "That is a path for R. Abba. For the rest of us, however, we just follow what the Torah says that a doctor was given the ability to heal."

(רשימות דברים חדש ע' 255)

R. Abba's son lived in Philadelphia, and in 5701 he visited the Frierdiker Rebbe in 770. During the *farbrengen*, R. Abba's son called out, "Lchaim! I will still live longer." The Frierdiker Rebbe gave him a puzzled look, and the elderly man explained, "When I was a youngster, my father took me to see the Rebbe Maharash and complained that I wasn't behaving well. The Rebbe replied, 'When he gets older, he'll get better.'

"Well," concluded the son, "I still haven't gotten better, so I will no doubt live longer!" The Frierdiker Rebbe laughed heartily at his words.

(ניצוצי אור)

A Moment with The Rebbe

לזכר נשמת מרת חוה לאה בת ר' שמשון הנהן ע"ה



NEVER TOO LATE

Reb Yoel Kahan related:

There was a certain *yeshiva* that didn't allow the bochurim to have any relationship with Chassidus, but their thirst could not be quenched. They would gather in one room in the dormitory, where one rebellious bochur owned a radio, borrow the device from him, and tune into Reb Yossel Weinberg's weekly Tanya shiur.

One day, that rebellious bochur was also present, and he overheard Reb Yossel repeating a message from the Rebbe's Pesach Sheini *farbrengen*, that had transpired a few weeks prior, that *s'iz nito kein farfalener*, no

one is ever lost. This bochur was very moved by the message, and it had a profound impact on him.

When Reb Yossel heard of this, he reported it to the Rebbe. He added, that since a few weeks already passed from Pesach Sheini, he had considered not sharing the *sicha*, but had in the end decided to say it.

"Indeed," the Rebbe responded, referring to Reb Yossel's last point. "This is the entire message of Pesach Sheini, that it is never too late!"

(As heard from Reb Yoel)

לזכות תינוק בן רחל לאה לרפואה שלמה