

# The Weekly *Farbrenge*



**MERKAZ ANASH**  
מרכז אנאש

למען ישמעו • אמור תשפ"ו • 877  
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 BaOmer 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 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 Mittlerer 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 Mittlerer Rebbe would ask the *eltere 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, תו"מ ח"א ע' 60, סה"ש תש"ו-ה"ש"ת ע' 112)

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 מ"ג או"ד, תו"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.

(תו"מ תשמ"ז ח"ג ע' 209)



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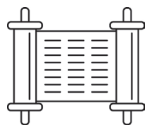
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## POSTING REVIEWS

### Can I post a negative review about a Jewish-owned business or product?

Speaking or writing something negative that can harm another Yid's reputation or *parnassa* is classic *lashon hara*, even when every word is true.<sup>1</sup> Thus, a negative review that scares people away from a Jewish business is forbidden unless it is written purely to protect others from real harm and fulfills all of the criteria below.

There are situations where you are not only allowed, but obligated, to warn others — for example, a dishonest mechanic or a seller hiding defects (see issue 833) — to prevent another Jew from being harmed.<sup>2</sup>

The conditions for *lashon hara l'to'eles* include:<sup>3</sup> (a) The information is 100% true and based on firsthand knowledge; (b) there is real financial, physical, emotional, or spiritual harm, not just annoyance or hurt feelings; (c) you tried to approach the seller first and give them a chance to fix the problem before publicizing, and there's no other effective way to prevent future damage; (d) your motive is purely to protect others, not to vent or "teach them a lesson;" (e) no unnecessary details, exaggerations, or sarcasm; and (f) the damage to the seller caused by the review is not greater than the benefit to future customers.

Even if a store is somewhat more expensive, but within the halachically acceptable range of profit, warning others constitutes "saving" the buyer's money at the storeowner's expense and is forbidden. Calling a place "overpriced," "not tasty," or "I didn't enjoy the style" is both subjective and halachically out of bounds as a public negative review.

Where there is real danger — e.g., spoiled food, a dangerous product, a book with serious hashkafic or halachic errors — one must warn, but within the framework of the above conditions.

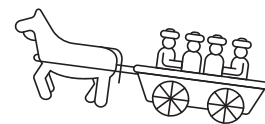
Where you post also matters. Halachically, *to'eles* requires that the information reach people who genuinely need it; posting a rant on social media usually fails this test.

Some *poskim* distinguish Amazon-style platforms, where the entire business model is built on honest customer feedback, and the seller explicitly agrees to a rating system when signing up. The seller accepts that people will say honest, non-exaggerated negatives in that forum, so there is more room to post a carefully worded, accurate review that meets the *to'eles* rules. By contrast, a Google review of a local business that never "signed up" for public ratings likely lacks this leniency, and full *lashon hara* restrictions apply.

Surprisingly, even positive reviews can be problematic. Shlomo Hamelech warns that over-public praise can backfire badly. In reviews, overpraising discounts, a product's longevity, or extreme generosity can create unrealistic expectations, pressure the seller, and trigger angry backlash from others.<sup>4</sup>

1. רמב"ם הל' דעות פ"ז ה"ה.  
2. ראה תשובות והנהגות ח"א סי' תקנח.  
3. ראה ח"ח הל' לה"ר כללי י ה"א.  
4. ראה משלי כז יד. ערכין טז ע"א.

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



## DER FETER YOSSELE

R. Yosef, the son of R. Yissochor Ber the rov of Lubavitch, was a great *gaon* and *chossid*. He was married to the sister of R. Sholom Shachna, the Tzemach Tzedek's father, and was thus affectionately known as "Der Feter Yossele" (Uncle Yossele).

a Shabbos mindset, and you speak to me of teal?"

(רשימו"ד חדש ע' 232)

R. Yosef was a *shadar* who would travel collecting *tzedaka* funds for the Rebbe.

R. Yosef was once travelling in the wintery weather on a sled on his way to Lubavitch. The sled made a sharp turn and R. Yosef tumbled out of the carriage onto the snow. Being in a state of *dveikus*, he didn't realize what had happened, and neither did the driver.

In one of the towns R. Yosef visited, he told his host to stop by his home for a tea on his next visit to Lubavitch. One *Erev Shabbos*, the *chossid* arrived in Lubavitch and looked forward to taking up R. Yosef's offer.

When other *chassidim* passed by and noticed him lying on the snow, they asked him what he was doing there. He answered, "I'm on my way to Lubavitch!"

When he arrived at R. Yosef's home, he saw R. Yosef pacing the room back and forth in a trance, clearly not noticing him. When he finally realized that the *chossid* was sitting there, he asked what he was waiting for, and the *chossid* replied that R. Yosef had invited him for a tea. R. Yosef, still in his state of *dveikus*, replied: "My eyes are popping out of my head trying to leave my weekday mindset and enter

(רשימו"ד חדש ע' 232)

There was once a big rainstorm and the streets had filled with mud. A man entered *shul* and complained about the terrible weather. R. Yosef turned to him in astonishment: "And you can do better?!"

(רשימו"ד חדש ע' 233)

## A Moment with The Rebbe



### THAT'S HOW THE CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT BEGAN

Arriving in California at the height of the feminist movement, a woman approached R' Shlomo Cunin, asking to start a women's minyan. After explaining that it's not permitted in halacha, the woman had a new proposal: to lead a women's prayer group in the shul combining *Tehillim* and other *tefilos*, without the format of a minyan.

the proposal, silence fell. The Rebbe was on the line, listening in to the conversation.

After consulting with Harav Zalman Shimon Dvorkin, who reviewed the details and ruled it was not against halacha, Rabbi Cunin wrote to the Rebbe.

After a few moments, Rabbi Chodakov returned to the phone: "The Rebbe wants me to tell you that '*minhag avoseinu b'yadeinu*,' and every Chabad House is a '*mikdash me'at*.' Therefore, the conduct within it is to be like it was in the Beis HaMikdash, where women davened in the *ezras nashim* and nowhere else."

One evening, R' Shlomo received a call from Rabbi Chodakov. After being asked to confirm details of

At that point, the Rebbe's voice was heard on the line, speaking to Rabbi Chodakov: "Tell him that this is how the Conservative movement began..."

(As told by R' Shlomo Cunin)