



LAG BAOMER

THE KEDUSHA OF THE 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 Elozor 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!"

(זהו 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"ה שער ל"ג בעומר, סה"ש תש"ד ע' 124)

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)

CELEBRATING LAG BA'OMER

At a *seudas Shabbos* in the home of Rebbitzin Rivka before Lag Ba'Omer תרנ"ו (1897), the elder chossid Rashbatz described the Lag Ba'Omer celebration of תר"ט (1849), which was the last time the *Tzemach Tzedek* went out to the fields: "All the chassidim who had come to Lubavitch for Lag Ba'Omer arrived at the grounds of a chossid called Reb Shlomo, who had been organizing the Lag Ba'Omer celebrations since the times of the Mittlerer Rebbe.

"It was a joyous time for us. The elderly chassidim, despite their age, danced with their *tzitzis* showing, and we, the *talmidim* of the Yeshiva, pranced like rams. We then sat down to *farbreng*, open-mouthed, listening attentively to every word said by the *eltare chassidim*.

"At four o'clock in the afternoon the Rebbe arrived, delivered a *maamar* of *Chassidus*, and stayed for three hours. Before departing, he told us to sing the Alter Rebbe's *niggun*, the *Arba Bavos*. As we sang, he sat in deep *dveikus*, with eyes closed and tears on his face. When the *niggun* came to an end, the Rebbe stood up and declared that the *zechus* of the *baal hahillula*, the Rashbi, would assuredly protect all Yidden. We all spontaneously cried out in unison, "Amen!" The Rebbe smiled slightly and said, "Amen, *kein yehi ratzon*."

"After the Rebbe left, the *eltare chassidim* led by Reb Hillel gathered to *chazer* the *maamar*. They wondered why the Rebbe had asked for the Alter Rebbe's *niggun* to be sung and expressed their

concern regarding his parting words.

"On the following Monday, an urgent messenger came to Lubavitch with a letter from the printers in Zhitomir: the police had made an inspection regarding the recent printing of *Likkutei Torah*. They had checked where copies had been sent, sealed all the remaining copies in the press, and had ordered the owner, a chossid, to appear for interrogation on Wednesday.

"The rumor spread quickly in Lubavitch, and in one short hour the story's details had twisted and grown... The Rebbe's sons hurried to their father, who told them the exact story and assured them that the decree would be nullified.

"On Wednesday, when the printer reported at the police station, he was threatened and arrested. On Thursday evening, however, he was set free, and on Friday, the *seforim* were released."

(סה"ש תש"ו-ה'שי"ת, הוספות ע' 412)

Reb Elozor Azkari, known by the title of his *sefer* as *Baal HaChareidim*, was a *shammes* in a *beis midrash* in Tzfas, and was widely regarded as a simple person. No one knew of his *kedusha* and Torah scholarship. On Lag Ba'Omer one year, he traveled to the *kever* of Rashbi in Meron, and while there, he met the AriZal and his *talmidim* and danced with them for a long time. He also danced with an elderly man, dressed in white, who was dancing with intense joy. Soon after, the AriZal took hold of the elderly man's hands and danced with him for a while, and then danced with the *Baal HaChareidim* as well.

After leaving the *kever*, the *talmidim* asked the AriZal, "You must have danced with the elderly man because he is a great person, but why did you dance with the *shammes*? It is true that he is a *yerei Shamayim*, but is it fitting for you to dance with him?"

The AriZal laughed and said, "If the Rashbi danced with him, isn't it an honor for me to dance with him as well?"

(מסעות ירושלים, מאמר סדר יום עשירי, אות י"א)

CONSIDER THIS!

- What is the reason for the great joy on Lag Ba'Omer? Didn't Rashbi pass away on this day?
- How would chassidim rejoice on Lag Ba'Omer?

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MAASER FROM INSURANCE

Is one obligated to give *maaser* from money received from an insurance payment as a result of a fire *R"l* or the like?

- The Torah (Bamidbar 18:23) obligates a person to give *maaser* from certain specific agricultural products. Whether the practice to set aside *maaser* from money is an actual obligation, or merely a praiseworthy custom, is a debate among *Poskim*¹. Many *achronim* accept the lenient view².
- Once someone began giving *maaser* (some say³ even once), it acquires the status of a *neder*⁴ (vow) for this person and he is therefore obligated to continue this practice, unless he explicitly stipulated in advance that it is *bli neder* (the same is true for any worthy practice). If it becomes impossible for him to continue, a *rov* should be consulted. (For although generally vows related to *tzedakah* cannot be nullified⁵; in some circumstances it may be possible for the *rov* to annul it⁶).
- The practice of giving *maaser* on money earned applies only to the **profit**, i.e. the excess after accounting for the expenses incurred to obtain the profit⁷. Therefore in order to determine whether an insurance payment is subject to *maaser*, we would need to establish if it is considered profit. For someone to be eligible to receive an insurance payment, he needs to have had paid that months premium and have had a fire that caused damage. In other words, there was an outlay of the amount of the premium and the sum lost by the damages caused by the fire. The intention of insurance is to enable him to recover the losses caused by the fire, but not to pay him more than he lost. Therefore usually insurance is comparable to a business venture that only earned back the amount invested, and would not be subject to *maaser*.
- However, often the insurance company's objective assessment of the damage is more than the actual loss to the individual. For example: if a person CH"V has a car crash and the insurance company assesses that the car is not worth repairing and therefore gave him the value of the car. However, the owner decided to have the car fixed and managed to find someone to do it for less than the insurance payment. The difference between the sum he paid for repairing the car and the sum that the insurance paid is profit, which is hence subject to *maaser*⁸. (Needless to say, it must be determined that it is legally permitted to take the excess money from the insurance company).

1. ט"ז יו"ד סי' שלא ס"ק לב; ב"ח ביו"ד שם.
 2. שו"ת שבוי" ח"ב סי' פ"ה, שאילת יעב"ץ ח"א סי' ו, תשובה מאהבה ח"א סי' פז, ועוד
 3. ראה שער הכולל על סדר התרת נדרים, שאילת יעב"ץ שם
 4. חות יאיר סי' רכד, שו"ת חת"ס יו"ד סי' רלא
 5. שו"ע יו"ד סי' רנח ופתת"ש שם ס"ק ח בשם הרדב"ז ח"א סי' קלד
 6. ראה שו"ת חיי הלוי ח"ב סי' סב או"ק ז ואילך
 7. הסכמת הפוסקים ראה צדקה ומשפט (בלוי) פ"ה הערה לה
 8. שו"ת חיי הלוי שם סי' סג או"ק י

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

לזכות הבחור מנחם מענדל צפתמן ומרים סימפסאן שיחיו לרגל בואם בקשרי שידוכין בשעתומוצ

לזכות הילדה שטערנא שרה תחי' שיגדלוה הורי' לתורה לחופה ולמע"ט נדבת הורי' ר' מנחם מענדל וזוגתו חנה שיחיו גולדברג

לע"נ מרת רבקה בת ר' ישראל נח ע"ה גאנבורג - ט' אייר תשס"ט ולזכות רבקה שתחי' סיראטא לרגל יום הולדתה הראשונה - ט' אייר נדבת ר' מענדל וזוגתו מרת איידל שיחיו סיראטא

THE PRI MEGADIM

Reb Yosef Teomim is known by his master work on the Shulchan Aruch, the "Pri Megadim". At eighteen years of age, while living in Lvov, he published his first *sefer*. He later moved to Komarna, where he married, and served as the town *melamed*, devoting his spare time to Torah learning and writing *seforim*. Some years later, he relocated to Berlin, after which he returned to Lvov and took on the position of *Rov*. He eventually moved to Frankfurt-an-der-Oder. He passed away on the 10th of Iyar, תקנ"ב (1792) and is buried in Frankfurt.

For many years, the Pri Magadim was a *melamed* for young boys, and the parents of his pupils would provide him with meals. Once, one of the parents sent his young daughter to invite their son's Rebbe to their home. The little girl called hurried to the *bais medrash* and called the *melamed* a few times, but heard no response.

Her father then went himself to the *bais medrash* and found their *melamed* pacing back and forth, his face aflame and extremely deep in thought. The Pri Megadim continued until evening and only then did he show up for some food. He excused himself, saying that today he had finished one of his *seforim* and reviewed the entire *sefer* in his mind to make sure there were no mistakes. This had drawn him into another world... When the Pri Megadim learned that the girl had called him a few times, he blessed her with long life.

The Komarner Rebbe, Reb Mordechi Yitzchak Hakohen, heard this story from the girl, who was than an elderly woman around one hundred years old.

When he used to eat his meals by his father-in-law (on *kest*), his mother-in-law did not fancy him rushing down his food and hurrying back to his *seforim*, so she would prepare scrumptious, delectable foods for him. However, she soon realized that he did not really care for food altogether, and decided that he was a "batlan" who was oblivious to these things.

She once decided to test him: for the daytime meal, she served everyone a bowl of soup, but to him she gave a bowl of cloudy water. The Pri Megadim did not comment and drank the entire serving. His father-in-law chuckled, "Ha! What do you say, good chicken soup?!" "Yes indeed," the Pri Megadim replied. "Good soup for the chickens..."

לזכות ר' שלום מרדכי הלוי שי' בן רבקה

A MOMENT WITH THE REBBE

CLEAN TONGUE

Instead of saying "bad," the Rebbe would say "not good". Likewise the Rebbe taught us to say "the opposite of life", "the opposite of health", and "the opposite of *kedushah*."



At every opportunity, the Rebbe encouraged that hospitals in Eretz Yisroel be called *bais refuah* (home of healing), rather than the common *bais cholim* (home of the sick). In numerous letters, the Rebbe taught that the word 'secular' cannot be applied to a *Yid*, who is by definition holy.

At the *Lag Ba'omer* parade of 5726, the Rebbe taught us another lesson in speech;

During the *sicha*, the Rebbe mentioned the *possuk* "Im bechukosai telechu... (If you will keep the mitzvos... I will provide rain...)," but skipped out the words 'if' and 'rain'. When Reb Yaakov Yehudah Hecht did the translation, he did include those words. The Rebbe later explained to him the omission:

"When thousands of *Yiddishe* children are rallied together, it does not make sense to say 'if you will keep the *mitzvos*' - for of course they will. And regarding the word 'rain' - I did not think it was an appropriate thing to mention during an outdoor parade..."