

ניצוצי אור Sparks of Light

בס"ד



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Lag BaOmer

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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 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 BaOmer* 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)

Celebrating Lag Ba'Omer

The **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)

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 BaOmer* 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)

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 *Yiddishe* 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)

Consider This

What is the reason for the great joy on *Lag BaOmer*? Shouldn't Rashbi's passing be a reason for sadness?

Sparks of Greatness

The Pri Megadim - אייר

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-on-der-Oder. He passed away on the 10th of *Iyar*, 1792 (תקנ"ב) and is buried in Frankfurt.

For many years, the *Pri Megadim* 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 hurriedly to the *beis 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 then 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 chickens..."

Library Sparks

This week's *Torah* portion, *Acharei*, begins with the words, "And G-d spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron." Nadav and Avihu, both of whom were truly righteous men, were consumed by a great fire. Why did they deserve such a harsh punishment?

The *Midrash* offers some reasons why Nadav and Avihu died: They entered the Holy of Holies without permission; they performed their service without wearing the required priestly garments; they were not married and thus had no offspring. But what was so terrible about these infractions that it brought about their premature deaths?

Studying the cause of Nadav's and Avihu's passing, we find a common element in each infraction. Chassidic philosophy explains that Aaron's sons died precisely because of their high spiritual stature. Nadav and Avihu possessed an overwhelming love of G-d, which ultimately blinded them to their true purpose. Their deaths were caused by their good intentions which ran counter to G-d's intent in creating the world. Aaron's sons' desire to merge with G-dliness was incompatible with human existence. Their souls so longed to be one with G-d that they could no longer remain in their physical bodies, and the two men died.

On the one hand, this attests to Nadav and Avihu's high spiritual accomplishments. But on the other hand, their behavior was considered sinful because man was not created solely to fulfill his spiritual yearnings. G-d created man for the purpose of making the world holy through the performance of the *Torah's* commandments.

G-d gave us the responsibility to refine the world, purifying it and enabling physical matter to become a

receptacle for holiness. G-d desires a "dwelling place below," not for us to follow only spiritual pursuits and disdain this world. Nadav and Avihu's excess in the realm of the spiritual, to the exclusion of the physical, was their downfall.

This is why the verse reads, "...when they had come near before G-d, and they died." Their death was not the result of their actions, but rather, the essence of their sin. Aaron's sons drew so close to G-d that physical existence was impossible.

Entering the Holy of Holies without permission was therefore symbolic of ascending too high; performing the service while being improperly clothed shows an unwillingness to "clothe" oneself in *mitzvos*, which are called the garments of the soul. Nadav and Avihu wanted to take the "short cut" to G-d, without having to trouble themselves with the obstacles posed by the physical world.

Likewise, the fact that neither Nadav nor Avihu married and had children showed their refusal to lead a natural, physical existence. Such a path to G-dliness was too cumbersome for them. However, this is not what G-d wants from us.

We learn a valuable lesson from their death: Although there are certain times when we feel a strong desire and longing for G-dliness and we experience a great spiritual uplift, we must carry those feelings into our daily lives and translate them into tangible actions. This is the purpose for which we have been created--to transform our physical surroundings into a dwelling place for the Divine Presence.

Halacha Sparks

Training to Do Surgery

Rabbi Chaim Chazan

May a student doctor perform surgery (under the supervision of an experienced doctor) in order to gain experience, if it will necessitate putting the patient under general anesthesia for a longer period of time?

This question was posed by a doctor before **Rav E. Y. Waldenberg**¹, author of **Tzitz Eliezer**. The questioner reported that there is a risk associated with a general anesthesia, and that surgery done by a student doctor would take longer than if done by an experienced one. It would follow that the patient would be under a general anesthesia for a longer period of time, resulting in an increased risk factor.

The *Shulchan Aruch* rules² that one should only engage in the medical profession if he is proficient and if there is no doctor available who is more competent. One who ignores these provisions, is considered to have engaged in murder.

Though most of our doctors today are not the top in their field, it is nevertheless permitted for them³ to perform routine procedures based on accepted methods. [Furthermore, since it is impossible for the best doctor to see every patient and not everyone can afford his fee, a doctor who is not top of his field may also make more complicated medical decisions]. Likewise, it would be permitted for a medical student to administer routine medical care under supervision when there is no additional risk factor.

In our scenario, where a more skilled doctor is at hand, and prolonging the time the patient would need to be under a general anesthesia would increase the risk factor, Rav Waldenberg categorically forbade the student doctor to perform a surgery.

The doctor then questioned that this *psak* left no opportunity for student doctors to gain experience, which is vital to enable them to help others in the future. Rav Waldenberg replied that nevertheless this does not give him the right to endanger the life of the patient upon whom he desires to practice.

Rav Waldenberg proposed three possible solutions for a student to gain experience:

(1) If the law of the land permits such a practice, one would be permitted to follow it in the case of operating on a non-Jew, being that the course of action regarding his medical treatment is determined only by secular law.

(2) Practice with surgeries that only require a local anesthetic.

(3) Additionally, if prolonging the general anesthesia will not involve a greater risk to the patient, it would be permitted.

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