

a **CALL** *to*
ACTION

PESACH SHENI

LAG B'OMER

**PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION
FROM THE TEACHINGS OF THE REBBE
5748-5752**

**A PROJECT OF
HaMaaseh Hu HaIkar**

מוקדש
לב"ק אדמו"ר מלך המשיח



לזכות

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יוסף יצחק, משה, מנחם מענדל, חנה וחי' מושקא

שיחיו גודמאן



a CALL to ACTION

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"HaMaaseh Hu HaIkar"

280 Troy Av, Brooklyn, NY 11213

Tel: (718) 363-3448 • Fax: (718) 467-6919

e-mail: info@iChossid.com

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Foreword

We are pleased to bring you this newly revised edition of *a CALL to ACTION*. Translated from its Hebrew counterpart, *HaMaaseh Hu Halkar*, this presentation is a collection of practical instruction from the Rebbe's Sichos pertaining to Pesach Sheni and Lag B'omer.

HaMaaseh Hu Halkar is a compilation of *hora'os* culled from the Rebbe's talks in the years 5748 to 5752 (1988-1992), from both edited and unedited sources (*muga* and *bilti muga*). Great effort has been extended to remain faithful to the Rebbe's calculated and instructive nuance. This English translation is rendered by **Rabbi Yaakov Paley**.

At this time, when Moshiach's arrival is imminent, the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, has emphasized the primacy of action. We are now beginning to experience the era when we will fully appreciate "the superiority of deed" above scholarship. May this take place completely and immediately!

Editorial Office of
HaMaaseh Hu Halkar
Erev Shabbos Parshas Behar, 5768

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Pesach Sheni

“It’s never too late!”

Pesach Sheni (“the Second Pesach”) is celebrated on Iyar 14 – one month after Pesach.¹

The Torah relates² that in the year following the Exodus from Egypt, the Jews made preparations to bring the Pesach sacrifice. However, a few men were disqualified on the grounds of ritual impurity, as a result of having performed burials.

Disturbed at their inability to partake in the offering, they came before Moshe and cried, “*Lamah nigara* – why should we lose out on bringing the offering of G-d in its correct time?!”

In reply, Hashem instructed the Jews in the laws of Pesach Sheni – “If any man be ritually-impure ... or on some distant journey” on Nisan 14, the day of the Pesach sacrifice, then he may instead bring the offering in the next month, on Iyar 14.

The ability to correct what had seemed to be a lost opportunity extended even to one who *deliberately* transgressed G-d's command to bring the sacrifice on Pesach. Even he received a second chance on Pesach Sheni.

The eternal message of this day, writes the Rebbe (Hayom Yom, Iyar 14), is that *it is never too late*; it is *always* possible to put things right – even if one is [spiritually] “impure” or “distant,” and even when this failing was *deliberate*, nevertheless, he or she can correct it.

-
1. [I.e., a month after the Pesach *sacrifice*, which is offered on Nisan 14 and eaten that night (Nissan 15) during the Pesach Seder.]
 2. Bamidbar 9:6-11; see *Sukah* 25a.

LET JEWS KNOW THEY CAN FIX THEIR PAST

- We should endeavor to make all Jews aware that on Pesach Sheni we are granted special powers from Above to correct any shortcomings of the past,³ in all areas of divine service, in Torah and Mitzvos – even if the shortcomings are serious deficiencies that have brought the person to a very low spiritual standing.⁴

DAY OF PERSONAL RECKONING

- [In 1991, the Rebbe instructed:] Each of us should hold a personal reckoning of all that needs correcting from the past year, i.e., from last year's Pesach Sheni until Erev⁵ Pesach Sheni

-
3. There is the well known adage of the Previous Rebbe, "*Es is nitah kein farfalen, men ken aleh 'mal farichten*, "It is never too late; it is always possible to put things right." Even those that are [spiritually] "impure" or extremely "distanced" - and even if they were *intentional* transgressors - are still able to correct their past. (Parshas Behar 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p.147)

4. **Severing self-made bonds**

... In the above adage, the stress is mainly on the possibility to correct even the *very lowest situations* - the unfortunate situation of being in a state that directly contradicts spiritual purity (or being distanced from the Beis HaMikdash [i.e., G-d's Presence]).

All the more so if this lowly standing is [in the words of the verse] "*lachem*," lit., "of you," i.e., of your own making, willfully, and even *deliberately* (*rachmana litzlan* - Heaven have mercy!)

Nevertheless, even a predicament such as this is *not* lost; it *can* be corrected. (Ibid., p.159)

5. **The importance of Erev Pesach Sheni**

There is a well known directive of the Alter Rebbe – "We should 'live with the times.'" This requires "living" with [the lessons found in] each week's Torah portion ... and it also means "living" with the lessons derived from the "Torah" of the present *time* [i.e., the time of year, significant dates and occasions.]

In our case, this requires living with ... *Erev Pesach Sheni* – despite the fact that we do recite *Tachanun* during the Minchah service on Erev Pesach Sheni" (as recorded in the Alter Rebbe's Siddur, before *Lamnatze'ach ya'anacha*). (Parshas Acharei-Kedoshim 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 278, with fn. 2 and subnote)

Note that the topic of Pesach Sheni is mentioned in Megilas Ta'anis [an ancient text that recorded every date in the year on which Jews would not fast or give eulogies].

Now, "the dates recorded in Megilas Ta'anis impose Halachic implications – such as a prohibition against fasting on the days *prior* to them as well" [which, in this case, includes *Erev Pesach Sheni*].

Although [one could argue that] "the Megilas Sheni have been cancelled" [and we

of this year.

WITH IMMEDIATE RESULTS

- We should seek to make these corrections as soon as possible.⁶

CORRECT THE DISTANT PAST

- Special powers are granted on Pesach Sheni, not only to fix the immediate past, i.e., the most recent days, weeks, months or even the past year; but even the *distant* past – up until the age of Bar/Bas Mitzvah.⁷

PERFECT YOUTH AND INFANCY

- In fact, one should even correct wrongdoings that *preceded* their Bar/Bas Mitzvah (as the Alter Rebbe states in his *Shulchan Aruch*⁸). Indeed, we find that many Sages made an effort to correct “wrongdoings” that had taken place while they did not yet have sufficient understanding to realize what they were doing – including when they were tiny babies; from the moment they entered this world.⁹

no longer observe the dates recorded within] – and therefore the prohibition against fasting and the like on the days *prior* to them have *also* been cancelled.

... Nevertheless, it is plainly obvious that even following this cancellation, the dates recorded in Megilas Ta’anis still bear some residue of their former status – which similarly extends to the days *prior* to them; [they too retain some of their former status. As such, *Erev* Pesach Sheni remains a significant date – a day whose theme we should “live” with]. (Ibid., p.290)

6. It is never too soon

The adage of the Leader of our Generation concerning Pesach Sheni is well known; he taught that the lesson that we are to take from this day is "*Es is nitah kein farfalen*," "*It is never too late.*"

Therefore, we should make this self-accounting *as soon as possible*, even on this very day of Shabbos - or at least during the following days, starting with Pesach Sheni itself, which begins immediately on Motzei Shabbos (the time of the Melaveh Malka, “The meal of Dovid, King Moshiach”). (Roshei Devarim from Parshas Acharei-Kedoshim, Iyar 13 5751)

7. Parshas Behar 5749; *Hisvaadyos* p. 159.

8. Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch*, Orach Chaim, end of ch. 343.

9. Not your fault, but your (correctable) imperfection

In his *Shulchan Aruch* (ibid.), the Alter Rebbe states regarding sins that were

FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

- In addition to contemplating actual shortcomings of the past, we should also meditate upon the fact that even a *perfect* Divine service of the past can be brought to an even greater level of perfection. With just brief contemplation, everyone is able to realize how he or she could have done even better.¹⁰

performed when one was a minor: Although he need not do Teshuvah for them now that he is an adult, nevertheless, it would be appropriate to accept upon oneself *something*, at least, in the way of Teshuvah, to gain atonement. (Parshas Behar 5749, *ibid.*)

10. *Ibid.*

Opportunity to climb higher

The message we are emphasizing (that it is possible to correct even an extremely low spiritual standing) comes *in addition* to the self-understood message of Pesach Sheni that is contained in the relevant Torah portion:

In the Torah's description of the origins of Pesach Sheni, the men who were ritually-impure through having come in contact with a corpse and were therefore unable to make the Pesach sacrifice on the correct date, were *not* on a low spiritual level, G-d forbid ... as stated in the Talmud (Sukah 25a.).

... In other words, the cause of their state of ritual impurity was *not* due to a deficiency in their spiritual standing. Quite the opposite! It was due to their involvement in fulfilling G-d's will [by performing the highly exalted Mitzvah of "Meis Mitzvah," attending to the burial needs in a case where no-one else can. Clearly, rather than just making up for past deficiencies, Pesach Sheni is also (or even, *primarily*) about catching up on opportunities to reach ever greater heights]. (*Ibid.*, p. 147)

Pesach Sheni influences Pesach Rishon

[Originally, Pesach Sheni was introduced in order to *make up* for that which was missing on Pesach, i.e., offering and partaking of the Pesach sacrifice. Nevertheless,] even when our divine service on Pesach was accomplished in its *fullest* measure ... the Yom Tov of Pesach Sheni [still] comes as an *addition* ... For it is on Pesach Sheni that our spiritual service regarding the themes of Pesach are accomplished on a far higher level.

This is reflected in the name "Pesach Sheni:" The term "Pesach" means "to jump over"; Pesach *Sheni* is therefore a *dilug sheni*, a *second leap* - one that takes us far higher than our first "leap," which occurred on Pesach.

For during Pesach we merely "leaped" to a station that was far beyond our *prior* spiritual standing, i.e., we attained what could at that point be termed a state of perfection. However, contrasted with our *future* spiritual standing, i.e., when we compare the elevated state we reached on Pesach with the *additional* elevation of Pesach Sheni (the "second leap") - why, our Pesach position is still left lacking!

[And we are not talking about a *slight* lack; rather,] it is a lack which prompts the agitated complaint and demand, "*lamah nigara,*" "Why should we *lose out*...?!"

INTERACTION AND INFLUENCE

- We should contemplate our personal spiritual standing, as well as our behavior towards others – beginning with the way we guide our very own family.
- This also includes our relationship with our older children, who have long completed their period of education as defined by the Torah, i.e., until the age of twenty four¹¹ – and even if they have their *own* children by now.

EDUCATE IN SELF STOCK-TAKING

- In addition to our own soul-searching, we should educate our children to make a personal self-reckoning as well. It is relatively easy to explain to a child how, with a little more effort, he or she could have done many things in an even *better* way – such that the child will be inspired to correct and improve himself.

CHILDREN WITH SPIRITUAL GOALS

- Even regarding children whose service of G-d was *appropriate*, nevertheless, we could still inspire them to cry out [in the words of the verse], “*Why should we lose out?!*” from

Call to action for every Jew

In conclusion, Pesach Sheni carries an innovation in two directions:

On the one hand, even someone on the lowest of spiritual levels needs to be aware that nothing is totally lost and it is *always possible to correct the situation*.

On the other hand, even one whose conduct is as it ought to be (and any spiritual lack is merely due to his involvement in an *alternative* spiritual pursuit), should nevertheless take it to heart until he is *truly bothered* by that "lack."

In other words: Even one whose divine service is perfect and without deficiencies ought to contemplate how his present perfection is *deficient* in comparison to the even loftier levels of perfection he could attain. This "deficiency" should bother him to the core - until he too *demands*, “*lamah nigara?!?*”

He will then strive to do everything possible in order to reach those higher levels of perfection, climbing ever higher.” (Ibid., p. 149 - see there at length.)

11. See *Kidushin* 30a.

... On the contrary – since age brings wisdom, he (the parent or teacher) has gained further wisdom and now knows how to have an even greater effect. (Ibid., fn. 122)

performing on an even *higher* level.¹²

AIM FOR MORE EFFECTIVE INFLUENCE

- The need for soul-searching and resolving to enhance one's performance is of particular relevance to those in positions of influence, such as teachers, Mashpi'im (mentors) and Rabbonim. They should seek ways of making their influence of previous years even *more* effective than it already was.

CONTINUE PAST ACHIEVEMENTS

- They should also endeavor to influence their former students and contacts of previous years, by sending them a letter, phoning them or using other means of contact. They should even reach out to those who have now grown up and already accepted positions as teachers and mentors.¹³
- This connection (between a teacher and his or her former student) should be as enthusiastic as it was in the past, when they

12. Ibid.

Mean it like a child

... And like children, who strongly plead and request a matter that means a lot to them - to the extent that they break out in tearful crying (because the thought of such a desirable matter being withheld is too overwhelming). Through doing so, they arouse their father – [and in this case, through children being inspired to sincerely demand a higher level of spiritual service, they arouse] our "Father in Heaven" – to fulfill their will. (Ibid., fn. 124)

13. **Once a teacher, always a teacher**

... True, these former students are presently studying under *other* teachers, or may have gone to another city altogether. Nevertheless, a teacher does not forget his or her pupils... A teacher always looks for an opportunity – and Hashem grants success to such endeavors – to come in contact with former pupils and to impart something, be it via letter, telephone or personal encounter. After all, since the teacher has acquired *additional* knowledge of Judaism, general positive information, wise words or spiritual insights since then, he or she desires to share this additional knowledge with former students.

"Many years ago," the teacher explains, "we were afforded a limited number of hours to cover a specific (limited) quantity of material. Now that I have advanced in *chochmah, binah veda'as* (wisdom, understanding and knowledge), I'd like to share some additional insight..."

And this is true even when the former pupils have *themselves* become teachers... (Address to Neshei Chabad [Chabad Women's Organization], Iyar 23 5749; *Hisvaadyos* pp. 206-207)

had a formal teacher-student relationship.

However, the teacher should take into account that both teacher and student will have advanced intellectually since then, and endeavor, using more advanced methods, to expand his or her knowledge accordingly.¹⁴

PAST AND FUTURE *AHAVAS YISRAEL*

- A key focus of our soul-reckoning on Pesach Sheni should be the Mitzvah of *ahavas yisrael* (loving one's fellow Jew). As above, we should contemplate our past shortcomings in this area, as well as formulating ways in which to increase our *ahavas yisrael* in practical, day-to-day life.¹⁵

PESACH SHENI GATHERINGS

- Ideally, we should begin rousing ourselves to fulfillment of Pesach Sheni's message and directives with a well-attended and joyful public gathering (*farbrengen*); such a setting permits each person to give support to his fellow, amid a spirit of *ahavas yisrael*.¹⁶

14. Address to Neshei Chabad, *ibid*.

If not in quantity, then certainly in quality

Say, for example, that the teacher studied the laws of Kashrus, Shabbos and Yom Tov candle-lighting or the laws of family purity (*Taharas HaMishpachah*) with her students. Later, when the teacher acquires *further* knowledge in these fields, or *greater* awareness of the importance of these laws – she should, and is obligated, to inform her students of this additional information (even if they are by now teaching their own classes brimming with students).

She should now teach them the extent of the spiritual or physical goodness of observing those laws and how crucial such observance truly is, i.e., that it connects a Jew with Hashem, the Source of all blessings... (*Ibid*.)

15. **Don't just feel *ahavas yisrael* - perform it**

[The Sefirah period also marks the death of Rabbi Avika's students, who were punished by Heaven for "not conducting themselves respectfully to each other." Thus the current stress on *ahavas yisrael*] in practical, day-to-day life and in a manner of "they *conducted* themselves with respect towards one another" - actual conduct and not merely *feeling* respect within our hearts... (Parshas Behar 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 157-158)

16. **Among brothers and sisters**

In the spirit of יחד גם ימים שבת אחים – "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is, when brothers dwell together (Tehilim 133:1)." (*Ibid*. p. 160)

INSPIRATIONAL *FARBRENGENS*

- In the auspicious days between, or in proximity to, Pesach Sheni and Lag B'omer, we should hold a special *farbrengen* in every location.
- In the joyful atmosphere of these *farbrengens*, we should seek to inspire others to correct and improve all areas of their divine service.¹⁷

JOYFULLY REPAIR THE PAST

- However, we should ensure that even discussions on ways to fix the past are not conducted in a negative or depressing manner, G-d forbid; but rather, in a spirit of *joy*.¹⁸

NO *TACHANUN*

- We do not recite *tachanun* (penitentiary supplications) on Pesach Sheni; although *tachanun* is recited during Minchah of the previous day.¹⁹

17. Ibid.

Meet and mend with joy

It is customary to conclude a *farbrengen* with a practical instruction, since *HaMa'aser Hu Halkar* – "The main thing is the deed":

For a start, we spoke about arranging *farbrengens* in every location, in connection with the lesson and directive of Pesach Sheni. Our efforts at *Tikun* (correction) and *Teshuvah* (repentance) should also be done, not amidst despondency, G-d forbid, but rather, specifically with joy - and through a Chassidische *farbrengen*.

In addition, there is great practical superiority to be gained by *gathering together* to discuss the way to correct and complete all aspects of divine service to the most perfect extent. (Ibid., p. 164)

... However, regarding the actual matter that needs to be corrected or completed, one does not require another to rouse him to take action - but rather, he arouses himself, on his own initiative. That is how it was in the original episode of Pesach Sheni [as recorded in the Torah], where the men came forward on their own initiative, without anyone prompting them, and complained to Moshe, "*lamah nigarah* – why should we lose out?!" (Ibid., fn. 32)

... There are many special customs associated with Pesach Sheni, including the marvelous opportunity of an additional *farbrengen* together with many Jewish men, women and children; held in an atmosphere of *ahavas yisrael* and *achdus yisrael*. (Pesach Sheni 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 300)

18. Parshas Behar 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 160.

19. Siddur of the Alter Rebbe.

EAT MATZAH

- We should make a point of eating Matzah during the *daytime* meal of Pesach Sheni.²⁰

[The Rebbe's custom (in the majority of years) was to also eat Matzah on the *night* of Iyar 15 (Motzei Pesach Sheni).]²¹

Lag B'omer

The 33rd day of the Omer counting;
Rashbi's Day of Rejoicing

INTRODUCTION

The 33rd day of the Omer is celebrated as the day when a plague that wiped out 24,000 students of Rabbi Akivah, one of the greatest sages of Talmudic times, suddenly ceased. The plague had its origins in a spiritual deficiency, our Sages tell us, for the students "did not show respect one to the other." On their exalted level, they were considered lacking in the love of their fellow Jew.

Lag B'omer therefore reminds us to increase Jewish unity and brotherhood.

Of even greater significance, Lag B'omer is the anniversary of the passing of the great Sage, Rabbi

Before and after

We should already begin to "live" with the spirit of Pesach Sheni during the afternoon of Iyar 13. (Parshas Acharei-Kedoshim 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 278)

Whether or not *Tachanun* is recited in *kri'as shema she'al hamitah* [said before retiring at night] on the eve of Iyar 15 remains unclear. (Pesach Sheni 5743)

20. The Pesach Sheni sacrifice was actually eaten with Matzah on the eve of the Iyar 15. Nevertheless, the sacrifice was *offered* on the day of Iyar 14. Hence the custom to eat Matzah during the day of Iyar 14, commemorating the *beginning* of the festival. (See Igros Kodesh vol.2, pp. 352-353)

[See Parshas Shemini 5740, regarding some who have additional *hiddur* of eating Matzah on the *eve* of Pesach Sheni (Iyar 14) as well.]

21. Rabbi Groner. See also Sichas Pesach Sheni 5740 and 5743.

Shimon bar Yochai, known by his acronym, Rashbi – author of the Zohar.

Just prior to his passing, he instructed all Jewry to celebrate the day of Lag B’omer as his *Yom Hilula* (“Day of Rejoicing”).

On the day of one’s passing, their lifetime’s sum of Torah, prayer and good deeds is elevated and revealed. Especially in the case of a Tzadik (and certainly an unparalleled Tzadik such as Rashbi), each anniversary “causes salvations” here on Earth.

In addition, on that day, he revealed more teachings from the Torah’s innermost mysteries (Kabbalah – the “soul” of Torah) than he had done throughout his entire lifetime.²²

JOY FOR ALL JEWRY

- Lag B’omer, Rashbi’s *Yom Hilula*,²³ is a Yom Tov²⁴ and a

22. Joy at completing our refinement

[An additional insight into the significance of Lag B’omer:

Each day of the Omer counting corresponds to another attribute or *sefirah*. It is on the 33rd day of the Omer that we reach the *sefirah* of *hod shebehod* (“splendor within splendor”).

Now, the seven attributes are *chesed*, *gevurah*, *teiferes*, *netzach*, *hod* and *yesod*. Since *Yesod* facilitates bestowal from the preceding attributes into *malchus*, it is considered “external” to the preceding attributes. Thus, once we have reached the *sefirah* of *hod shebehod*, we have completed refining the “main body of the attributes.”

Association with the Rebbe Maharash

It is also worth noting that the attributes are often counted not only from *chesed* through *malchus*, but also in reverse – from *malchus* through *chesed*. According to this second way, the 33rd day of the Omer corresponds to *tiferes shebetiferes*. Thus *hod shebehod* is related to *tefures shebetiferes* – famous as the birthday of the Rebbe Maharash (author of the approach of *lechat’chila ariber*).]

23. Unparalleled in all history

Lag B’omer, the day of Rashbi’s passing, is his *Yom Hilula* (Day of Rejoicing). This is due to the immense greatness that he acquired at the time of his passing.

... Not only that, but Rashbi *instructed* us to rejoice on this day; which includes a granting of ability that *enables* us to rejoice on this day, not only as a decree from Above, but in a manner that makes rational sense that even our *nefesh habehamis* (animalistic soul) can appreciate.

Rashbi’s joy at that time influenced all those around him, and certainly his own

day of rejoicing.

- Rashbi personally introduced and announced this day as his *Yom Hilula*; and instructed the *entire* Jewish people to rejoice on this day.²⁵

students (the greater a student's level of connection with Rashbi, the greater was the quality of his joy at the immense elevation that Rashbi attained), as well as all Jewry, for all generations.

Moreover, it is an *openly revealed* joy. This is a phenomenon that has no equal, not even regarding the passing of Moshe Rabbeinu – and certainly not the other Tana'im and Amora'im [who lived in that era]. (Night and Motzei Lag B'omer 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* pp. 310-311, with fns. 43 and 45)

24. **Feasting and rejoicing**

Some have the custom to eat a festive meal on the eve of Lag B'omer as well. (Lag B'omer 5751; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 215)

... This is in addition to the festive meal that is held during the actual day of Lag B'omer. (Parshas Emor 5750; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 176)

The Alter Rebbe states in his Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 493:5), that “We have a custom to somewhat increase in joy on this day. In Igros Kodesh (p. 117), he states, “...on the 18th of Iyar, they rejoice and exult in Hashem with all heart and soul, and hold a day of feasting and rejoicing.” (Parshas Acharei-Kedoshim 5750, fn. 92; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 148)

25. Lag B'omer 5751; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 211.

No sadness permitted

Due to the rejoicing of Rashbi, we do not even permit the recital of *nacheim* [a prayer lamenting the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash and pleading for its restoration; normally reserved for Av 9]. Although *nacheim* is a prayer and request to *terminate* our exile [and therefore has a positive side], nevertheless, it emphasizes the opposite of happiness [by mentioning the destruction and consequent exile].

The scholar who died for reciting *nacheim*

... Indeed, there is a story of one [exceptional scholar] who [had the unique custom of reciting *nacheim* daily, throughout the year. However, when he] recited *nacheim* on Lag B'omer, he was penalized [from Heaven] with a most harsh punishment – the opposite of prolonged life... (Parshas Acharei-Kedoshim, Iyar 13 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 297)

Despite the fact that it was this person's custom to recite *Nacheim* *every* day of the year. (Parshas Emor, fn. 97; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 169) [Seemingly, his action should not have been perceived as “slighting” Rashbi's *Yom Hilula* by dampening the joy with the sadness of exile; after all, this scholar even recited *nacheim* on Shabbos and Yom Tov, and was *not* punished for dampening even such *Biblically* mandated joy!]

Why such a harsh punishment?

Two unique points [that beg explanation] emerge from the above story: 1) The actual punishment [i.e., the fact that Rashbi's dissatisfaction should result in the scholar passing away] is something totally and utterly irregular for *tzadikim* ... 2) The fact that the punishment not only occurred, but was even *publicized* – despite

TWENTY FOUR HOURS OF CELEBRATION

- The celebrations begin with the eve of Lag B'omer; the full twenty four hours are considered a time of rejoicing, with the joy being steadily increased from one hour to the next.

This is the widespread custom, which continues to reach more and more communities – and it is also the Chabad custom.²⁶

the extreme caution normally exhibited to avoid publicizing an undesirable matter even concerning an *animal* [is highly abnormal].

... However, the reasoning behind this story can be explained as follows: The extreme punishment occurred and was even publicized in order to *greatly emphasize the tremendous importance of rejoicing on Lag B'omer – and to severely negate the opposite approach* [i.e., dwelling on gloomy matters. The case of this scholar, then, served as a one-time demonstration of Lag B'omer's extreme spiritual importance. Perhaps the fact that many generations since, who now appreciate the importance of rejoicing on Lag B'omer, is retroactively credited to this scholar's serving as an (extreme) example – Ed].

Day of redemption

... On the Rashbi's exalted level, the inner secrets of the Torah were openly revealed; as a result, the entire concept of the *churban* [destruction of the Beis Hamikdash and the subsequent exile] was completely non-existent for him. It is for that reason that on his *Yom Hilula* (i.e., the day of his passing, when his entire divine service was perfected and completed), the recital of *nacheim* is utterly negated. Quite the opposite – on this day, the *Redemption* is greatly emphasized! (Ibid., 5751, pp. 211-222)

26. When do we start?

Regarding the rejoicing on Lag B'omer ... there are divergent opinions as to whether we should begin rejoicing only in the daytime, or perhaps the previous night?

With the arrival of *hod shebehod*

... We can further clarify and determine this issue, based on the famed discourse published in the *Siddur* [with Chassidic explanation] that addresses the spiritual superiority of Lag B'omer:

It is on Lag B'omer that we complete the process of refining the specific *sefiros* (attributes), from the first *sefirah* through *hod shebehod* – “the completion and conclusion of the *main body* of the attributes.” [See above, fn. 22.] This completion is initially achieved on the *eve* of Lag B'omer ... during the Ma'ariv prayer ... at the moment we recite (according to the prayer text established by the Alter Rebbe), “In the merit of counting the *omer* ... may it be rectified ... the *sefirah* of *hod shebehod*.”

... Then, following the beginning of this process on the eve of Lag B'omer, it continues and increases throughout the entire following day. [The rectification of *hod shebehod* and by extension, the “main body” of the attributes, begins at nightfall, steadily progresses throughout the day, and is finalized at the following nightfall]. However, even the night *following* that ... (especially before the hour of midnight) still receives some influence from its proximity to Lag B'omer.

JOYOUS EVENTS ALL OVER AND FOR ALL JEWS

- Each of us should do whatever we can to ensure that Lag B'omer is celebrated with great happiness²⁷ in every place where Jews are found.
- This should be accomplished by holding *farbrengens*, public gatherings²⁸ and the like, or²⁹ with children's parades.

(Night and Motzei Lag B'omer 5748; *Hisvaadyos* p. 307)

27. From darkness to great light

Lag B'omer is Rashbi's Day of Rejoicing; not mere rejoicing, but rather "great rejoicing." This is emphasized by the custom [to rejoice] despite the *restrictions* on merriment that we observe throughout the counting of the Omer.

For notwithstanding the somberness of the Sefirah period ... on Lag B'omer, we nevertheless *reverse* this conduct (in accordance with Torah), and *increase* in joy. Why, we even rejoice with a groom and bride, since it is customary to hold *weddings* on Lag B'omer [unlike the rest of the Sefirah, when weddings are prohibited].

We will in fact be celebrating a wedding *here* [in 770] this Lag B'omer; not only one, but *two* weddings... (Lag B'omer 5759; *Hisvaadyos* p. 178)

One of the causes for Lag B'omer being a day of such great rejoicing (not only in contrast with the other days of the Omer, but even compared to all other days of the *year*) is due to the magnitude of peace that follows divisiveness. It can be compared to light that follows darkness. (Parshas Emor 5749, fn. 40; *Hisvaadyos* p. 113)

Highlight of the year

See the entry for Lag B'omer in *HaYom Yom*, which states that "For the Mittler Rebbe [and his Chassidim], Lag B'omer was considered one of the most *outstanding festivals*; we would go out [from the town] into the fields ... We would eagerly await Lag B'omer an entire year!" (Ibid., in subnote)

28. In a perfect bond with Hashem

Rashbi experienced intense closeness to Hashem in an openly manifested manner, throughout his physical lifetime. As he declared on the day of his passing (Lag B'omer), "Throughout the days that I have been bound within this world, I have been in a perfect bond with the Holy One, Blessed be He..." (Zohar III p. 288a). This phrase indicates a state of *complete nullification* to G-d.

Power to all Jews

... It is from Rashbi that each Jew receives the power to replicate this state of nullification in his or her divine service; permitting our service to bear similarity and be considered a "sample" of *bechad katirana iskatrana*, a perfect bond with Hashem. This power enables a Jew to be holy in all of his or her affairs, in the spirit of the verse, "You [the Jewish people] should be holy, for I [Hashem] am Holy," and "I will be sanctified in the midst of the Children of Israel."

This, we could say, is pointedly expressed in the custom to celebrate Rashbi's *Yom Hilula* on Lag B'omer *in public* – with *farbrengens*, gatherings (*kinusim*) and

- All of these activities should be designed to draw large crowds.³⁰

LAG B'OMER PARADES

- We should strive to arrange Lag B'omer Parades in each and every location – as has indeed been done over the past few years.³¹

THEME: JEWRY IS PARADING FORWARD AND UPWARDS

- The purpose of these Parades (or “*Tahaluchos*,” as they are known) is to emphasize and display openly – for the entire world to see – that the Jewish people are parading forwards (*holchim*) to fulfill the will of their Creator.
- Moreover, our advance takes the form of constantly traveling upwards (*halichah*) from one level to the next.³²

parades in his honor. (Parshas Acharei-Kedoshim 5750; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 148)

29. **Physically manifested spiritual delight**

On Lag B'omer, we should emphasize rejoicing in all matters of divine service; we should arrange joyful gatherings, here [in 770,] and wherever else this message reaches. (Lag B'omer 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 179)

30. Parshas Acharei-Kedoshim 5750; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 149.

For the entire nation

We should strive to ensure that Lag B'omer, Rashbi's *Yom Hilula*, should become *yom simchasenu* – “the day of *our* rejoicing,” i.e., of all Jewish people wherever they may be. (Parshas Behar-Bechukosai, Iyar 8, 11 and 15 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* pp. 268-269)

31. One of the unique aspects of the Lag B'omer celebrations, as it pertains to Jewish children, is the [recently] established worldwide custom to arrange *parades* ... especially Jewish *children's* parades. (During the Lag B'omer Parade 5750; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 198)

32. **The purpose of life**

This accords with the explanation given in Chassidic discourses (also based on the Torah's “revealed” teachings) that the entire purpose of the soul's descent in this physical world is to progress from a state of *omdim*, “standing stationary” [with an established and restricted level of service and limited accomplishment] to a state of *halichah*, “going” [expanding and progressing] and *mehalchim*, “proceeding” [reaching ever higher levels]. This is expressed (amongst other ways) in an *actual, physical parade*.

From time to time (during an *es razton*, a favorable time), we gather and proceed together with the entire community (for we are taught, “Do not segregate yourself from the community”), in order to emphasize and show ... that the Jewish people are

DEMOCRACIES ARE FOR PARADES EXPRESSING JUDAISM

- In particular, Jews situated in “countries of plenty” (such as America), where they are able to observe Torah and Mitzvos free from persecution, intimidation and the like, should utilize their positive situation to arrange public parades – expressing the theme of the Jewish people’s upwards journey in matters of Judaism.³³

proceeding ... *mechayil el chayil*, “going from strength to [even greater] strength.” (Parshas Behar-Bechukosai, Iyar 8, 11 and 15 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* pp. 269-270)

A complete Menorah

[On Lag B’omer 5750, during the Parade, the Rebbe explained the significance of Jewish unity at this time:

The Jewish people are likened to the seven-branched Menorah of the Beis HaMikdash; there are seven branches of divine service, based on the seven attributes. Now, although each Jew contains aspects of *all* seven attributes, nevertheless, each Jew’s *individual* divine service is predominantly colored by just one of the seven. Our patriarchs similarly displayed predominant attributes; Avraham symbolized *chesed* (kindness); Yitzchak, *gevurah* (severity); and Yaakov, *tiferes* (beauty).

However, during the counting of the Omer, *all* Jews address *all* of these attributes – indicating a unique state of unity, causing the seven branches to visibly unite into a single golden Menorah.

Achdus and chinuch

The Rebbe then continues to explain the relevance to Jewish *children* in particular (noting that “the Jewish custom (which is a veritable part of Torah) is to specifically celebrate Rashbi’s Day of Rejoicing through gathering and uniting Jewish *children*”):

Kindness and brotherhood is one of the basic tenets of Jewish education. This is seen explicitly in the passage in which Hashem speaks in praise of Avraham (Bereishis 18:19), “For I have loved him, because he commands his *children* and his household after him, that they keep the way of Hashem, *doing charity and justice*.” See *Hisvaaduyos* p. 192 ff. at length.]

33. **Lands that aid the observance and promotion of Torah**

... To the contrary – in these countries, the authorities extend their *aid and support* [to the Jews].

... We are able to point with our finger and exclaim, “Look! Over there stands a Jew, together with his wife, who spent *half a century* in a country which, via intimidation and persecution, did not permit Jews to observe Torah and Mitzvos.

Yet they allowed nothing to prevent them from progressing in Judaism, and going from strength to strength.

We are now privileged to see them right here, in immediate proximity, in this very synagogue and study hall!”

Undoubtedly, we will take [their story] to heart and derive a lesson from the living

THROUGHOUT DIASPORA AND THE HOLY LAND

- We should arrange celebrations, parades and the like, for *all* Jews, wherever they are located within the Diaspora – and certainly within the Holy Land.³⁴

INVITE EVERYONE, ENSURE TZENI’US

- Men, women and children should participate in these events – with separate arrangements obviously, for the sake of utmost modesty.³⁵

FUN KIDS ACTIVITIES

- This is all especially important regarding *children*. It has been the custom from ancient times on, to reduce schoolchildren’s Torah study on Lag B’omer; instead, they take off half or a third of the day and go out to fields.³⁶ There, the children are entertained with fun (and apparently) mundane activities, which serve as a catalyst for greater Torah study.³⁷

example provided by these Jews, who formerly lived in Communist Russia. They provide us with a lesson for our own lives in this country – for Hashem has redeemed us from a condition of state-sponsored persecution and brought us to a situation where the state actually *aids and supports* all areas of Judaism. (Parshas Behar-Bechukosai, Iyar 8, 11 and 15 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* pp. 269-270)

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 268-269.

35. *Ibid.*

... We should therefore strive to ensure that all Jewish people wherever they may be will increase in rejoicing on Lag B’omer; men, woman (separately and with complete modesty, of course) and children. (Night and Motzei Lag B’omer 5758; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 311)

36. See Parshas Acharei-Kedoshim 5750; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 148.

37. **Torah kids**

... For we are dealing with children from *Torah* institutions, who received an appropriate education. In their innocence, they perform this [spending time on mundane fun activities on Lag B’omer] in fulfillment of *Jewish* custom, which in turn, is part of *Torah*. Moreover, this all increases their desire to study Torah *following* Lag B’omer (as well as *beforehand* – as a preparation to it). For they know that the entire theme of Rashbi was *toraso umenaso*, his entire and sole occupation was the study of Torah. (Parshas Behar-Bechukosai, Iyar 8, 11 and 15 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* pp. 269-270)

One of the reasons to especially involve ... young Jewish children, is because doing so greatly underscores the unity of the Jewish people – “the young together with the adult,” and *sheves achim gam yachad*, “Behold, how good and how

PREPARE, PUBLICIZE AND PULL IN LARGE CROWDS

- To ensure the great and overwhelming success³⁸ of these parades, we should make fitting preparations, accompanied by great publicity and positive commotion (*shturem*) to draw ever more children into participating.³⁹

pleasant it is, when brothers dwell together!”

38. **The grandest parade**

We should see to it that the publicity and *shturem* (fanfare) of this year’s Parade will ... outdo all previous years (which *also* enjoyed success that defied all estimation). (Parshas Acharei-Kedoshim 5750; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 149)

Unexpected success

... Particularly after witnessing the magnitude of success enjoyed here [in Crown Heights,] during [the last] Lag B’omer [Parade] – [the same amazing success was also enjoyed elsewhere,] *especially* in those places where the organizers put in a vast amount of effort (*yagati*). Wholly unexpected levels of success were achieved, in a manner of *matzotzi* – an unexpected discovery whereby the gain is incomparably greater than the effort invested. (Parshas Emor 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 336)

Sunny skies

The Parade will certainly enjoy great success and be a cause of much pride and glory. This success includes negating the need to worry about rainfall, for the weather (and everything else associated with the Parade) will be goodly and pleasant. (Lag B’omer 5750; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 199)

The necessity for planning and order

... [The great success of previous Parades was enjoyed] after [the Rebbe’s] first encouraging [orderly advance] preparation for the Lag B’omer Parades; so that it was in fact executed with complete order [that saw the organizers] first thinking through it, then discussing it, and finally bringing it into reality...

... That year witnessed great and immense success, with many parades held in a great number of locations. That Lag B’omer was even better than previous years, including 5748 – a Hakhel year! (Parshas Behar-Bechukosai, Shabbos Mevarchim Sivan 5750; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 219)

39. **Great preparations**

Since there are only a few days left until Lag B’omer (which is the Sunday following next), we should be concerned with ensuring that all the necessary preparations have in fact been done. For as with every sacred matter, because it is an important concern, it demands preparation – *great* preparation.

Therefore, we should begin by making positive resolutions in this direction on [this very day of] Shabbos; and then follow through and act upon them throughout the coming week – on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and next Shabbos. (Parshas Acharei-Kedoshim 5750; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 149)

THE PARADE NEEDS YOU

- Each and every person – man, woman and child – should make certain to do *all they can*, to the *best* of their abilities,⁴⁰ to advance these goals.
- As well as acting personally, we should also persuade others to participate. This should be accomplished, for a start, by providing personal examples, i.e., by displaying our own enthusiastic and joyful participation.⁴¹

PUBLICIZE THESE DIRECTIVES

- We should make certain to publicize all of the above directives in each city and in every location, and particularly throughout our Holy Land.⁴²

JOYFUL PREPARATION

- We should carry out all of the said activities with *joy*, as befits the theme of Lag B’omer – Rashbi’s Day of Rejoicing.
- The necessary preparations during the days preceding Lag B’omer should be performed with joy as well – for when one is aware that a joyous day is approaching, he naturally becomes happier.⁴²

SPARE NO EFFORT – RASHBI HELPS

- Even where these activities appear to involve particularly harsh difficulties (*dochek*), you should know that we are dealing with a highly “irregular” and significant issue that is associated with Rashbi. And, as our Sages state, “One can rely upon Rabbi

40. Parshas Acharei-Kedoshim 5748; *Hisvaadyos* p. 297.

41. **Unity March**

... Especially when you consider how these parades add to the unity between all Jews (in the spirit of *sheves achim gam yachad*) and in the education of Jewish children (*chanoch lana’ar al pi darko*, “educate a youth according to his way”).

... We will thus ensure that this year’s Lag B’omer Parades will certainly be a great *Kiddush Hashem* (sanctification of G-d’s Name) among Jewry and among the entire world; and will yet further increase the unity of Jews wherever they are. (Parshas Acharei-Kedoshim 5750; *Hisvaadyos* p. 149)

42. Parshas Acharei-Kedoshim 5748; *Hisvaadyos* p. 297.

Shimon [bar Yochai] under pressing circumstances (*b'shas hadachak!*)”

So despite the difficulties involved, we should nevertheless “force” great effort into realizing the Lag B’omer activities.⁴³

PARADE SLOGAN: JEWISH UNITY

- We should arrange the children’s parades under the slogan:⁴⁴ *Yachad Kol Yaldei Yisrael*, “All Jewish children stand united!” And, in the spirit of the verse: *Hinei mah tov u’mah na’im, sheves achim gam yachad*, “Behold, how good and how pleasant

43. You can do it

... And even when that is *in fact* the situation, and it does not just *appear* to be difficult ... (Ibid., p. 297)

... Undoubtedly, you have already begun getting busy with the preparations for Lag B’omer – and increasingly so with each passing day, as we draw closer and closer to Lag B’omer.

... It is my fervent hope that all our discussion about preparing for Lag B’omer (based upon the Chassidic discourses and addresses of our Rebbeim) will have their desired effect.

... Especially since we have been running these activities for a number of years now – more than three consecutive years, which serves to imbue a “positive conduct” with the strength of legal validity (*chazakah*).

Even those who, for some odd reason, did *not* generate great positive commotion (*shurem*) over these activities in the past, should begin doing so now. They are granted the power and have a promise that they will be successful in all these matters!

After all, the [Previous] Rebbe, Leader of our Generation, declared that all the necessary divine service [of Exile] has already been *concluded*, down to the final touches (“polishing the buttons”) ... Certainly, then, everything is already prepared – and not simply “prepared,” but rather, *literally ready and waiting to go*. In our case, this includes our Lag B’omer preparations, and certainly as far as the actual Lag B’omer events are concerned. (Parshas Behar-Bechukosai, Iyar 8, 11 and 15 5748; *Hisvaadyos* pp. 267-268)

44. Children’s activities

... Special emphasis is placed on the children – particularly during Lag B’omer, with its Parade that loudly proclaims: *Yachad kal yaldei yisrael*, “All Jewish children stand united!”

Moreover, the Parade is organized in such a way that adults (parents and grandparents) *also* join the children; in the spirit of the verse, *veheshiv lev avos al banim*, “He will restore the hearts of fathers to sons,” [which can also be understood: He will restore the hearts of the fathers] *via* the sons... (Parshas Behar 5749; *Hisvaadyos* p. 160)

it is, when brothers dwell together!” For as is known, this passage is associated with Rashbi.⁴⁵

INSPIRE THE CROWD WITH A QUICK ADDRESS

- Needless to say, during the course of the parade, we should address the children (as well as the adults) – but be brief.⁴⁶
- Tell them all about Rashbi and arouse them to increase in all matters of Judaism; Torah and Mitzvos.⁴⁷

FOLLOW RASHBI’S EXAMPLE

- In particular, we should encourage them to take a lesson from Rashbi’s own conduct. Here are two such lessons:⁴⁷

1) ABSOLUTE DEDICATION TO TORAH STUDY

- Rashbi studied Torah in a manner of *toraso umanaso* – his entire and sole occupation was the study of Torah.

Each and every Jew is able to achieve at least something similar to Rashbi’s degree of diligence, by using our fixed times for studying Torah to study in a manner of *toraso um’naso* [as

45. Night and Motzei Lag B’omer 5758; *Hisvaadyos* p. 311. See below, regarding singing this passage on Lag B’omer.

One Nation

The Parade bears the slogans of:

Yachad shivtei yisrael (יחד שבטי ישראל) – “The tribes of Israel, together as one”;

Yachad kal yaldei yisrael (יחד ילדי ישראל) – “Jewish children stand united”;

Sheves achim gam yachad (יחד גם אחים) – “Brothers, dwelling together as one.” (Parshas Acharei-Kedoshim 5750; *Hisvaadyos* p. 148)

46. Short address with familiar topics

We will now conclude [this address], so that we can energetically prepare for the actual parade. After all, we cannot keep the children waiting too long... [It is with good reason that] they do not attend Cheder or Yeshiva on Lag B’omer, and we should therefore be brief in our address to them.

The address itself is based on topics taken from the teachings of both the Written and Oral Torah that the children usually study in Cheder ... [This is] especially [appropriate] since we are dealing with children who have *chochmah*, *binah* and *da’as* (wisdom, knowledge and understanding). Just from the matters that have *already* been said – the twelve passages of Torah verse and sayings of our Sages that were just now recited, for a start – they already have plenty to think about and with which to add in holy matters. (Lag B’omer 5750; *Hisvaadyos* p. 199)

47. Parshas Behar-Bechukosai, Iyar 8, 11 and 15 5748; *Hisvaadyos* p. 270.

explained below].⁴⁸

2) ABSOLUTE DEDICATION TO HASHEM

- Rashbi divine service is described as being “completely bound up with Him.” A result of serving Hashem in such a manner is that even our interaction with the *mundane* becomes part of our divine service.

Indeed, the directive to “know Him in all your paths” means that even in “*your*” paths, i.e., in our mundane affairs (in which we are not specifically commanded to engage [but do so out of necessity]), we nevertheless achieve a state of “knowing Hashem.”⁴⁹

ALSO FOR MINORS

- We are able and required to explain this last point even to extremely young children. They are also capable of “know Hashem” in all their paths; although their ways are childish, they can nevertheless “know Hashem” through them.⁵⁰

48. At least take a sample

As stated in Shulchan Aruch, the conduct of *toraso u'manaso* in its literal sense is only relevant to scholars of the caliber of Rashbi and his colleagues. Nevertheless, we are able to attain a “sampling” of this level. (Ibid.)

49. Ibid., pp. 270-271.

50. The virtue of being uncomplicated

... To know Him truly, [even] to the complete extent – “If I were to know Him, I would be Him.” Because of their innocent purity, this is more readily accepted by young children; as is indicated by the expression, “I pray with the approach of a child.”

A child has no knowledge of supernal attributes or the chain-like manifestation of the various worlds (*seder histalshelus*) and the like. Rather, he prays directly to the very Essence of Hashem Himself (*mehuso ve'atzmuso yisbarech*). This is similar to the expression used by the Alter Rebbe in his own prayers, during which he would exclaim, “Who do I have [besides You] in the Heavens; and with You I do not desire [anything else] on Earth? I desire nothing but You alone (*ich vil mer nit dich alein!*)”

On the other hand, we also need to explain to adults members of “the wise and understanding nation” that due to their efforts at comprehending everything with their intellect, accompanied with a goodly abundance of reasoning (their personal take on the matter, as well as rational explanations received from teachers, friends and certainly from students), they must be extra cautious to prevent their intellect

BAKASHAH NAFSHIS: CLARIFY THIS CONCEPT

- A personal heartfelt request: Please try to convey the above directive in a comprehension manner, employing the most appropriate wording and style of presentation for your audience.
- Start with yourself (the one who will be transmitting this message to the public) and make sure that you have thoroughly absorbed its meaning before your address. Your words will then flow from the heart – and consequently capture the hearts of your audience [inspiring them to put the directive into practice].⁵¹ [See below for more on “knowing G-d in all your ways.”]

IF IT WILL HELP, SPEAK IN THE NAME OF THE REBBE

- Conveying the above directive is the most important point; publicly acknowledging the author of the message [i.e., the Rebbe] is secondary. Indeed, it should only be done if, in your estimation, it will serve as *greater* impetus towards actual implementation of the message.

Only if, in your eyes and according to the best of your understanding, it will have this effect – then do so for the sake of the essential objective: the actual implementation of the directive.

However, this all comes after first preparing oneself, as described earlier.⁵²

from acting as a concealing factor [that obscures the purity and true essence of a matter]. (Ibid., p. 271)

51. Ibid.

52. **Splurge in Torah and Mitzvos**

... According to the directive of our Sages, *keshot atzmecha*... “correct yourself [and only then correct others].”

Using the alternative meaning of *keshot*, this message includes: “Adorn” yourself. Meaning that we should not only perform the basic rudiments of divine service (the spiritual equivalent of “bread to eat and clothes to wear”), but rather, we should “adorn” ourselves spiritually in our divine service; and to the fullest extent – the spiritual equivalent of “the twenty four adornments of a bride.” (Ibid., pp. 271-272)

EXTRA TORAH, TEFILAH AND TZEDAKAH

- [In 5749, the Rebbe wrote:] I hereby⁵³ wish to promote the proposal set forth by the public – who also resolved to implement this proposal in actual practice:

To increase in Torah, prayer and acts of kindness,⁵⁴ by -

- 1) donating to Tzedakah in amounts of eighteen (the equivalent of י"ח, “life”) – the day of Lag B’omer being Iyar 18;⁵⁵
- 2) reciting Tehilim, chapter 33 (ל"ג – “lag”), which constitutes prayer;⁵⁶
- 3) and studying the Torah portion of the week, and in particular, this day’s section.⁵⁷

EVEN AFTER LAG B’OMER

- Obviously, we should complete these activities even *after* Lag B’omer [if we have not done so earlier].

In such a case, we should apply the message of the recently

53. [From a **letter to world Jewry** that was sent by the Rebbe, dated Sunday, Parshas Pikudei, 5749. The letter opens with:

To all Jewish sons and daughters wherever they may be ...

Peace and Blessing!

We are currently within the period of [counting the] “seven complete weeks” [of the Omer]. Moreover, this is the week of Lag B’omer, and we are within and at the start of three days prior to this propitious day.

Certainly, each of us is aroused to increase in Torah and Mitzvos in particular connection with this day ...]

54. **Foundation of the Universe**

... Torah study, prayer and acts of kindness are “the three pillars upon which the world stands.”

Our adding in these three areas in honor of Lag B’omer becomes all the more relevant in light of our Sages’ attributing to Rashbi the verse, *vetzadik yesod olam*, “the righteous man is the *foundation of the universe*.”

55. ... The month of אייר (Iyar), which is the acronym of אברהם יצחק יעקב רחל – Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov and Rochel (all four matriarchs are included in Rochel).

56. ... Tehilim contains the prayers of Dovid ben Yishai [King David], who is called *na'im zemiros kal b'nei yisrael*, “the pleasant psalmist of all the Children of Israel.”

57. From the letter, *ibid*.

celebrated Pesach Sheni: *Es is nitah kein farfalen*, “It is never too late; it is always possible to put things right”; and in the spirit of *kiflayim l’toshi’ah* [i.e., while making up what we missed, we should use the opportunity to do far better than we ever would have].⁵⁷

EVERY SECOND IS PRECIOUS

- We should put effort into the divine service that this propitious day demands.
- We should utilize every single moment of its twenty four hours appropriately – right up until the moment we count the next day [in our Sefirah counting].⁵⁸

SING: *HINEI MAH TOV...*

- In connection with Lag B’omer, the Rebbe frequently called for the singing of the Chassidic melody set to the words of the verse (associated with Rashbi), *Hinei mah tov u’mah na’im, sheves achim gam yachad*, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is, when brothers dwell together!”⁵⁹

58. Lag B’omer 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 176.

Up until its last moments

... As we advance further into Lag B’omer – the time associated with the *sefirah* of *hod shebehod* – more and more is accomplished.

In addition, the very *conclusion* of the day (after the Minchah prayers, including even belated Minchah prayers...) belongs to the very *lowest* of levels within *hod shebehod*; it is the conclusion (*sof ma’aseh*, the actual implementation) in which literally radiates the very *highest* of levels (*machshavah techilah*, the origin conception in thought). (Ibid., p. 177)

59. **Lag B’omer anthem**

We will now discuss matters pertaining to Lag B’omer ... and by way of introduction, we will sing the verse *Hinei mah tov...* which is associated with Rashbi. We will sing it in the melody familiar to Chassidim. (Parshas Behar 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 167) [Once, when there was a severe drought, Rashi recited this verse and caused rain to descend.]

... Afterwards the Rebbe sang *Hinei mah tov...* (Parshas Bechukosai 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 201)

... We will once again sing the verse, *Hinei mah tov...* (Parshas Emor 5750; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 183)

... Before leaving, the Rebbe began to sing, *Hinei mah tov...* (During the Lag

LOVE EVERY JEW; EMULATE RASHBI

- On Lag B'omer, Rashbi's *Yom Hilula*, each person should accept upon themselves positive resolutions regarding matters relating to Rashbi's divine service.⁶⁰
- This is in addition to conducting ourselves with *ahavas yisrael*, love for our fellow Jew, in a manner of *nahagu kavod zeh lazeh*, acting with respect towards each other.⁶¹⁶²

B'omer Parade 5750; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 201)

60. From Rashbi to every Jew

Rashbi was of extremely elevated stature; and he said of himself (as recorded in the Zohar), "...if there is one [*tzadik*], I am he; as it is stated, *vetzadik yesod olam*, 'the righteous man is the foundation of the world.'"

... At the same time, Rashbi had *colleagues*. In other words, even during the times of Rashbi, it had already become publicized through the "revealed" teachings of Torah, that Rashbi had colleagues who were of similar caliber.

This fact has been increasingly publicized and transmitted from one generation to the next, and from one year to the following – to multitudes of people. From this we can appreciate how even the spiritual level of Rashbi (*tzadik yesod olam*) is drawn down and revealed, influencing all Jewry – at least in a manner of *ibur* (soul-transmigration) and the like, as explained in Tanya.

Especially since we are experiencing a constant increase (from one generation to the next) in the dissemination of the wellsprings of Torah; that is, the wellsprings of Torah's *inner* teachings, the mystical teachings of Rashbi.

This continual increase causes an elicitation and revelation of additional powers that are bound to the level of a *tzadik* – even from the highest level of *tzadikim* [concerning whom it is written] ...*tzadikim sheheim mu'atin*, there are precious few *tzadikim* of such caliber. Even these [elevated] levels are elicited and revealed [in this world], and they have positive effects.

... Note that the continuation of the above teaching reads, "Hashem saw that there are only a few *tzadikim*, so He arose and planted them within each generation" [i.e., He dispersed them throughout history]. The Sages specifically employ the phrase "He *planted* them," since the *tzadikim* cause spiritual *growth* that produces fruits, which go on to produce fruits of their own, etc.

Similarly, the *toraso u'manaso* of Rashbi (at least an analogical sampling thereof) is relevant to each Jew. (Lag B'omer 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* pp. 171-172)

See also (at length) Lag B'omer 5748 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 303).

61. Rabbi Akivah's top disciple

The perfection of this conduct (respect for a fellow) was achieved by Rashbi. He was one of the five greatest students of Rabbi Akivah [who were unaffected by the plague]. In fact, Rashbi was the greatest of them all; he instructed his students to "study my character traits, for they are *terumos miterumos midosov shel Rabbi Akivah*, a percentage of a percentage of the traits of Rabbi Akivah."

STUDY LIKE ONLY TORAH EXISTS

- We should create new fixed schedules⁶³ for the study of Torah, where we will study in the manner of [Rashbi, regarding whom the Sages state that] *toraso umenaso* – Torah study was his entire and sole occupation.

[How can we achieve such extreme diligence? We may not be able to keep it up constantly, but we can at least introduce similar diligence to our *study schedules*:]

During the time that we set aside for Torah,⁶⁴ we should study as if our world consisted of nothing but Torah study. During that time, nothing on Earth should hold any meaning whatsoever in our eyes, and nothing should prevent us from completing that session.⁶⁵

STUDY CHASSIDUS

- Ideally, we should add in our study of Rashbi's Torah

Now, Rabbi Akivah was the one who emphasized the great importance of *ahavas yisrael*, proclaiming it to be *klal gadol batorah*, the overarching principle of the Torah. (Lag B'omer 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 312)

62. Ibid., p. 313.

His first act

Concerning Rashbi's conduct in *ahavas yisrael*, the Talmud relates that the first action taken by Rashbi upon exiting the cave [in which he and his son hid from Roman persecution for many years and studied Torah constantly] was an act of *ahavas yisrael*: He helped Kohanim avoid an extra inconvenience, slight as it may have been. (Ibid., pp. 312-313) [There was an area containing unmarked graves which Kohanim had to circumvent, needlessly lengthening their journey. Rashbi had the exact position of the graves marked out for them, allowing them to directly pass through the area and avoid the actual graves.]

63. **One Torah**

For a start, regarding Torah study: Considering how Rashbi's conduct was *toraso u'manaso*, we should add new, permanent sessions for Torah study to our schedules; for studying both the Torah's "revealed" and especially its inner teachings (these being the teachings of Rashbi). Indeed, we should seek to unite these two dimensions as one in our study. (Lag B'omer 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 176. See also p. 177)

64. **Just eighteen minutes**

We should create new study sessions – sixty minutes, thirty minutes or even just eighteen minutes in duration.

65. Lag B'omer 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 313.

teachings; that is, the inner teachings of Torah – the Zohar, which is known as “Rashbi’s Book.” We study these teachings [not in their raw, esoteric format, but rather] via the explanations and elucidations found throughout the teachings of Chassidus, that make Kabbalah accessible to our intellectual faculties.⁶⁶

UNITE NIGLEH WITH CHASSIDUS

- We should also study the “revealed” parts of Torah – studying in a manner where Torah’s “revealed” plane is permeated with its inner mysteries.

That was the innovative approach of Rashbi; he removed the divide between the inner and the revealed dimensions of Torah [showing how they are truly one].

Studying in this manner also broadens our options; each of us may choose to add [on Lag B’omer] from whichever area in Torah we so desire...⁶⁷

GEMARA, RASHI...

- For example: The Babylonian Talmud (Talmud *Bavli*) in particular is “mixed (*balul*) with Torah verses, Mishnaic teachings” and all other areas of Torah, including its inner mysteries. Why, even Rashi’s commentary on the Chumash contains “amazing matters” and “wonders” of Torah’s inner dimension...⁶⁸

BECHOL DEROCHECHA DE’EIHU

- We are instructed, “In all your paths, know Him,” meaning that in all of our mundane affairs (“*your* paths”), we should “know Him.” Not only should all our affairs be done *for the sake* of knowing Him, but rather, within the very paths that we walk while going about our daily lives, we should know Hashem.⁶⁹

66. Ibid., p. 314.

67. ... Not specifically the study of Zohar and Tikunei Zohar; but also all other areas of Torah.

68. ... As has been revealed by our Rebbeim.

69. Ibid., p. 305.

EXAMPLE: FOOD WITH A SOUL

- Take eating for example: In addition to eating for the sake of Heaven, i.e., in order to have the strength to serve Hashem, we should also be aware that the strength that we obtain from the food stems from the *sparks of G-dliness* within that food.⁷⁰

ABSOLUTE HASHGACHAH PRATIS

- In a more general sense, this means: We should contemplate how every detail of this world, each human being and all the paths he takes, are being created anew each and every moment by Hashem – and He watches over all of His creation, orchestrating every minutest detail.⁷¹

PERCEIVE THE DIVINE IN EVERYTHING

- We should seek the knowledge of Hashem from each particular matter in which we involve ourselves. This is similar to the directive of the Ba'al Shem Tov, that “from everything we hear or see (even the minutest detail), we should take a lesson for our divine service.”⁷²

... Since our entire existence, including every last detail of our affairs throughout the entire day, are permeated with “knowing Him.” (Ibid., p. 314)

70. ... The same applies to all other “permissible” [mundane] matters (“all of your paths”); even within *these* affairs, you should know Hashem. (Ibid., p. 305)

71. **A loose leaf is led from Above**

Contemplate the teaching of the Ba'al Shem Tov ... that Divine Providence extends even to a solitary leaf blown off a tree, and causes it to spin and rotate in precise movements, revolving from side to side according to the Plan... (Ibid.)

72. **The act of living**

... Begin with the very start of the day: The moment you stir from your sleep, no sooner you sense that you are alive (for one’s sense of self-existence is also considered part of “your paths”), and even before you [wash your hands and] are permitted to study Torah, thank Hashem by declaring *modeh ani lefanecha ... shehechezarta bi nishmasi...* – “I thank You ... for restoring my soul within me...” (Ibid.)

Constantly created anew

Without great exertion, and even with *ease*, we are able to discover within each matter, its association with “knowing Hashem.”

This is in addition to contemplating a fundamental truth (explained by the Ba'al Shem Tov) – that all existence is being created anew from absolute nothingness each and every moment; as it is stated, *hamechadesh betuvo bechal yom tamid (bechal rega verega) maasei bereishis*, “In His kindness, He renews the work of

CELEBRATIONS IN MERON

- In previous generations (no doubt this practice continues today as well), the Jews of Tzefas, situated in proximity to Meron (along with those who would travel from distant settlements),⁷³ had the special custom to ascend and prostrate themselves upon Rashbi's grave during Lag B'omer.

This celebration begins on the eve of Lag B'omer, with the customary kindling of bonfires in honor of Rashbi.⁷⁴

SHABBOS IN MERON

- When⁷⁵ Lag B'omer occurs on a Sunday, many have the custom to travel to Meron in advance – on Erev Shabbos. Whole families travel to Meron for Shabbos; husbands and wives, sons and daughters.

Once there, they ritually-slaughter sheep for their Shabbos meal – for it is a Mitzvah to make *every* Shabbos pleasurable by eating rich meat [and *certainly* a joyous Shabbos such as this]. They arrange all their other Shabbos needs there as well.

Having prepared on Erev Shabbos, they then celebrate the actual day

Creation constantly, each day (and each and every moment).”

There is no greater unification with Hashem than when one contemplates how at this very moment, literally, the existence of all Creation is being created anew from the Essence of Hashem (“Who has no prior origin or cause preceding Him”) – from *Him*, the True Existence! (Parshas Behar-Bechukosai, Iyar 8, 11 and 15 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 271)

73. **From Tzefas to Meron**

Jews from other parts of Eretz Yisrael had the custom to first gather in Tzefas, and then proceed to Meron together with the Jews of Tzefas. (Parshas Emor 5750, fn. 7; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 176)

74. Ibid.

Physical and spiritual illumination

... Kindling bonfires on the *eve* of Lag B'omer, at a time when their light will be clearly discernable. (Ibid., fn. 8)

Bonfires reflect the fact that Rashbi illuminated the world by revealing the light of Torah's inner teachings. For further details and insights into the custom of lighting bonfires, see *Bein Pesach LaShavuos*, 18:15-17. (Ibid., fn. 9)

... Undoubtedly, our guests from the holy city of Tzefas will also participate, taking a leading role in all the Lag B'omer activities ... including, in particular, the Chassidic *farbrengen* that will be held together with many other Jews. (Ibid., p. 177)

75. Ibid.

of Shabbos brimming with an extra special joy that stems from the Rashbi's *Yom Hilula*.

They also hold a joyous meal on Sunday, the actual day of Lag B'omer.

SUMMER PREPARATIONS FOR ONESELF AND OTHERS

- As the festival of Pesach concludes, it is fitting to begin discussing issues pertaining to the approaching summer:

1) Concerning education-based activities: We should put great effort into providing Jewish children with an education on the highest levels of sanctity – *even during the summer*. This is accomplished by enrolling them in summer camps that are permeated with a holy atmosphere. Or at least, “kosher” summer camps.

We should have all children enrolled in such camps with enough time [to ensure that they will be registered].⁷⁶

2) Regarding the spiritual service of refining our character, the Alter Rebbe states in his *Siddur* that “it is customary to recite one chapter of *Pirkei Avos* on each Shabbos between Pesach and Shavuos.”

The reason for this custom, as stated in the commentaries to *Pirkei Avos*, is due to the awakening and flourishing of nature that happens during the summer months. [The warm weather often compels people to go on vacation and to exercise, this naturally results in a greater focus on the body and its physical well-being at the expense of the soul.] As we add to our enjoyment of nature, so too there is a need to add in the service of refining one's character.⁷⁷

76. *Acharon Shel Pesach* 5748; *Hisvaadyos*, p. 174. [See also p. 151.]

77. **Start now**

We should begin complying with these directives immediately, [in the manner that we are able; i.e.], by accepting resolutions concerning these matters on this very day (*ibid.*).

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