



לזכות
 הרה"ת ר' לוי שיחי'
 נפרסטק
 והכלה המהוללה מרת ח' מושקא תחי'
 ראסקין
 לרגל חתונתם בשעטומ"צ
 ל"ג בעומר ה'תשע"ח
 נדפס ע"י הוריהם
 הרה"ת ר' ברוך
 וזוגתו מרת בריינדי שיחיו נפרסטק
 הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל
 וזוגתו מרת שרה שיחיו ראסקין

K'Halacha!

*The battle for the integrity
of the Jewish people*

LAG B'OMER 5730



As a young country recently recognized by the United Nations, the new Israeli government now had the daunting job of laying the law of the land. One of the main areas that needed addressing was immigration. Since Israel was to be a safe haven and open for every Jew to reside in, the prime minister at the time, David Ben-Gurion, had the task of drafting a law defining “Who is a Jew?”

Fifty scholars were contacted to advise the government on the appropriate requirements that should be considered when declaring someone Jewish or not. With an overwhelming majority,

they established that a Jew is “someone born to a Jewish mother or otherwise has received a conversion according to the requirements of *halacha*.”¹

In the following years, this definition began to be challenged by various groups and factions who refused to recognize the ruling of *halacha* as the deciding factor.

In 5730, the Israeli Knesset decided to amend the law and establish that a Jew is “someone who is born to a Jewish mother, or has gone through a conversion and is not part of any other religion.”

This new statement, amended into the law, did not include the word “*k’halacha*,” no longer making conversion according to *halacha* a requirement, as had been previously accepted.

While this amendment seemed to be successful on the political spectrum, it was a terrible thing for Yiddishkeit. The Israeli government would now be recognizing so-called “conversions” from other groups based on a broader definition, and against the laws of the Torah that conversions take place *al pi halacha*.

The Rebbe spoke at length, with great anguish about the recent development, for the first time at the farbrengen of Purim 5730, a few days after the amendment was passed. Over the months and years that followed, the topic of “*Mihu Yehudi*” would be spoken about by the Rebbe with great emotion at almost every farbrengen. The Rebbe called it “a terrible decree, the likes of which we haven’t seen before.” It would not only be a catalyst for homegrown assimilation, but also leave the next generation confused and bitter at those Jewish groups who had cruelly misled them into believing that they were legitimately joining the Jewish people.

Lag B’omer 5730 was just three months after the amendment was written into law and the Rebbe spoke publicly and strongly at the parade about its inherent dangers. Later, at the farbrengen, the Rebbe continued this theme. The Rebbe’s words were full of pain and worry, and were publicized throughout Eretz Yisroel and Jewish communities across the globe.

The following account of that Lag B’omer is culled from the diaries of a few bochurim at the time and the hanachos of the sichos as they are published in Toras Menachem vol. 60.

EXCITEMENT

In preparation for Lag B’omer, the Rebbe sent a special answer to the organizers of the parade together with one hundred dollars as a contribution towards the parade.

ת"ח ההמשך מאז! שנהנתי מאוד ממה שהתחילו כ"ז מיט א פארנעם וכו', ויה"ר שחפץ הוי' בידם יצליח למעלה מעלה מן המשוער ומתוך שמחה וטוב לבב ופירות טובות על כל השנה

Amidst the last minute hustle and bustle, the exciting news is announced: the Rebbe will be joining the parade.

כולה וכדאי הוא ר"ש לסמוך עליו ובמיוחד ביום שמחתו ולכל השייך לזה. אזכיר עה"צ. מאה דולר מצוב"ז.

The Rebbe thanks them for their work until that point and especially that they were working with great motivation and enthusiasm. The Rebbe then continues with a *bracha* that their work should shine with success, and that the success should affect the rest of the year as well. The Rebbe concludes with a famous dictum about Rashbi, the cause for the Lag B’omer celebrations, “One can rely on Rebbi Shimon, especially on his day of celebration and anything connected with it. I will mention you at the resting place [of the Frierdiker Rebbe]. One hundred dollars are included.”

SUNDAY, EARLY MORNING, LAG B’OMER 5730:

The Lag B’omer spirit is palpable in the air and the organizers of the parade are eager for a special day of Jewish pride and unity.

The police are almost finished barricading the streets and the last few chairs have been set up. *Bochurim* and staff are running around, most of them have been up all night working on the final preparations for the parade.

At this point, the Rebbe still hasn't confirmed if he will be coming out to join the parade.

10 AM

Amidst the last minute hustle and bustle, the exciting news is announced: the Rebbe will be joining the parade.



While the regular preparations are going on, final touches are being worked on for a new and exciting addition to this year's parade—the floats. [This would be the first year that flatbed trucks would be used to haul stunning creations and creative displays of varying scenes of Yiddishkeit.]
11AM

To the delight of the thousands of Jewish children who had gathered in front of 770, the Rebbe walked out of his room and took his place at the wooden platform that had been erected for this event.

As usual the parade began with the Rebbe addressing the boys and girls. The *sicha* lasted fifteen minutes and touched upon the *parsha* of the week—Bechukosai. The Rebbe explained that Hashem's *brachos* are dependent on the first part of the *possuk*—that we have to keep Hashem's mitzvos and learn Torah.

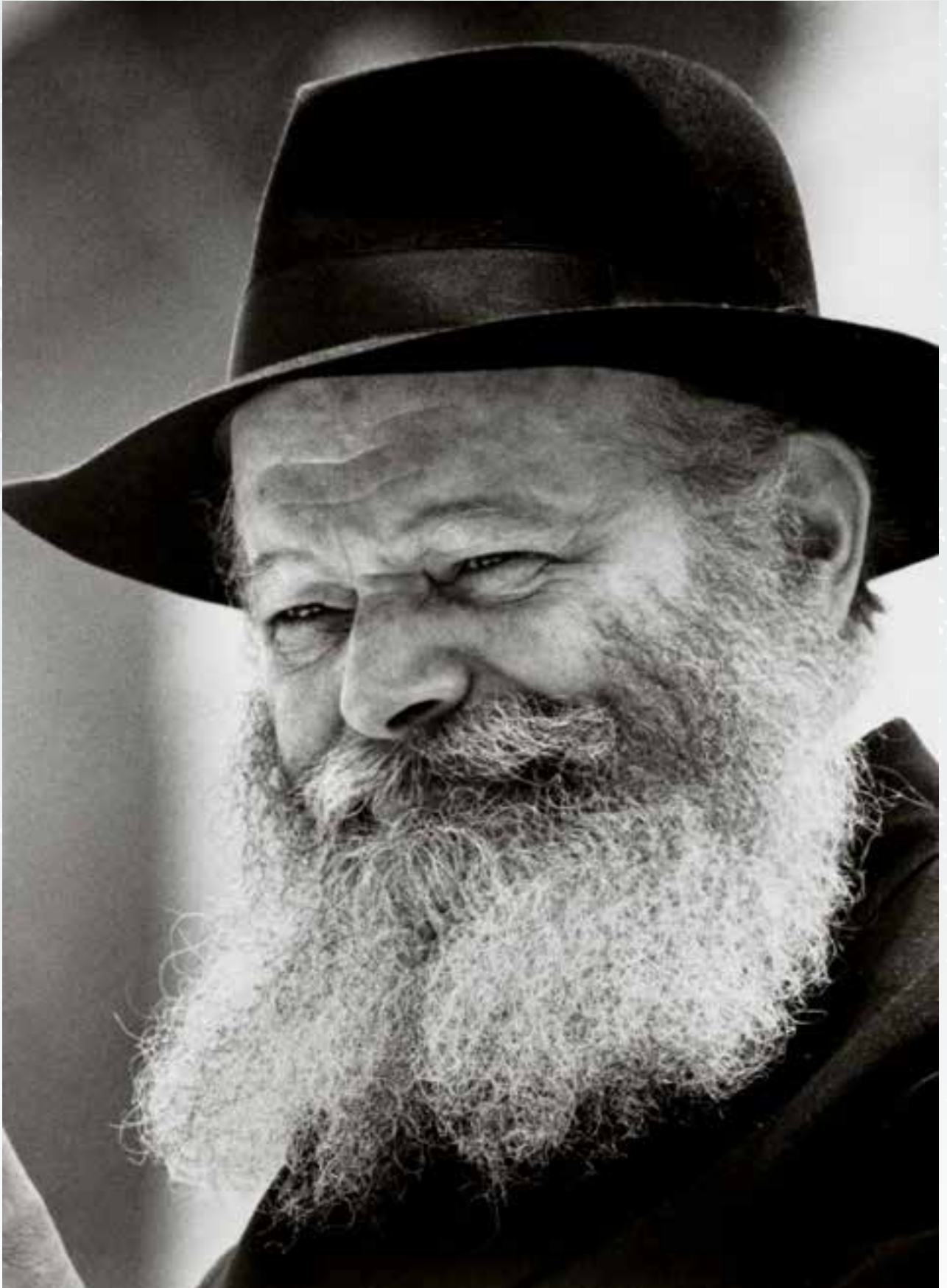
Following this *sicha* the Rebbe began a second *sicha* that lasted for thirty minutes! This was a huge

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surprise and completely different than usual. The Rebbe chose to use this platform to speak about a topic that would be ongoing and the cause for much pain—*Mihu Yehudi*.

“We can see clearly,” said the Rebbe, “that three years ago on Lag B’omer we started talking about *mitvza tefillin* when there was a discussion about peace in Eretz Yisroel. Since then thousands of Yidden were saved because of tefillin... and throughout most of the time things in Eretz Yisroel have been pretty calm.... Now, however, there are problems and people have lost their lives.² This can be directly tied to when the government began saying that non-Jews are really Jewish.”







ON THE WAY TO THE OHEL, THE REBBE VISITS THE FAIR AFTER THE PARADE.

There are those who wanted to claim that the tragic events were merely a coincidence and weren't connected to the spiritual circumstances surrounding them. The Rebbe strongly negated this way of thinking and quoted the Rambam, who says that whenever a tragedy or suffering befalls the Yidden, we must search our actions and see how we can improve them. It is forbidden to say that it just happened by chance, and calling it an unconnected happening is not the way of Yidden.

Turning to the ministers in the Israeli government, the Rebbe expressed his strong opinion that it was up to them to take a stance and stand up for what is right, true, and best for all.

Following the *sicha*, the thousands of children who had gathered marched by the Rebbe. They were led by the floats, which were making their Lag B'omer debut. In a remarkable display of creativity, they brought Yiddishkeit and the Rebbe's message to life in a whole new way.

Also marching were soldiers and representatives of the United States Armed Forces. This was an incredible show of respect and honor for the Rebbe.

Many of the boys and girls waved to the Rebbe and the Rebbe happily returned this gesture.

It was indeed a magnificent scene. The Rebbe stood with his silk *kapota* and *gartel* on a tall platform that towered over the front of 770 and greeted these young children as they proudly displayed their Yiddishkeit.

Towards the end of the parade, the Rebbe encouraged the singing and dancing with great enthusiasm during which a circle of dancers formed on the street right under the Rebbe's *bimah*. The Rebbe motioned to a number of bystanders to join the circle indicating with his hand round and round.

2:00 PM

The Rebbe got into his car and left to the Ohel, as is his practice on Lag B'omer. On the way out of Crown Heights, the Rebbe's car passed the park where the fair was taking place.

EARLY EVENING

The Rebbe returned from the Ohel and went to daven *mincha*.

As *mincha* concluded, the Chassidim were overjoyed to hear that the Rebbe would be holding a farbrengen. This came as a complete surprise. There had not been a farbrengen on Lag B'omer for the

previous eight years, and the Rebbe had said two *sichos* just a few hours earlier, at the parade.

At the beginning of the farbrengen, the Rebbe announced, "We have here with us those individuals who organized today's parade and all the details that go along with it. Let them come and take this and share it with all those that had a part in it." The Rebbe then handed a bottle of *mashke* to Rabbis Shmuel Butman and Chaim Farro.

After a short *sicha* addressing the fact that the farbrengen was taking place between *mincha* and *maariv*, the Rebbe recited a *maamar* with the *dibur hamaschil* "Lehavin Inyan Hilula D'Rashbi."

During the *sicha* that followed, the Rebbe explained that the *maamar* was based on a short *maamar* that he saw in the "*bichel*" he had recently received. For a couple of reasons, the Rebbe said it seems certain that it is a *maamar* from the Tzemach Tzedek. The Rebbe then said, "We should mention the fine individual who sent it to me—Yehuda ben Reizel," referring to Rabbi Yehudah Shmotkin of Tel Aviv.

The Rebbe then spoke at length about *Mihu Yehudi*: "This is coming as a continuation to what we began discussing earlier today; however, that was not the right setting to speak in a sharp manner..."

"As a general rule, no one can start up with a Yid unless there is already a small rupture in the Yid's connection to Hashem. Any deficiency in this connection, no matter the size, allows our enemies the opportunity to start up with us. As long as we stay fully connected to Hashem no one can bother us."

Among the many points that the Rebbe discussed that night was the misconception and total deceit of the law's amendment. People, including rabbonim, claimed that we should be thrilled that they kept being born to a Jewish mother as a requirement for being Jewish, as opposed to just the father being Jewish; they even went ahead and called it a victory for traditional Judaism. The Rebbe said that while the first line of the amendment is obviously true and in accordance with Shulchan Aruch, the second part, which omits the fact that the conversion must be according to *halacha*, is completely against Torah. This can be compared to the prohibition of serving *avoda zara* in a way of *shituf*—partnership—just like the Jews who accepted the *eigel hazahav* **alongside** their acceptance of Hashem.

Those who okayed the bill by taking part in the vote must now show regret and announce openly that they made a mistake.

The Rebbe related that he had received a letter from a rav who had signed on the bill. In his defense, the rav said that he had been lied to about the content of the amendment, but what could he do now? “Get up and say, ‘I have erred,’ but don’t write it to me! Announce it there in Yerushalayim!”

The Rebbe was adamant that time was of the essence and no one should wait for the court to issue a verdict; everyone must act quickly.

In connection with what the Rebbe had referenced to earlier at the parade regarding the loss of life that Bnei Yisroel had experienced, the Rebbe said that this was a matter of life and death and any delay was literally playing with innocent lives.

Quoting a story of the Chofetz Chaim, the Rebbe demanded that no one should be silent about this matter and doing so was absolutely forbidden.

The Chofetz Chayim had once sent messengers to work on annulling a decree against the Yidden. When they returned, they reported that they had been unsuccessful and related all the reasons for their failure.

The Chofetz Chayim listened and then asked, “Did anyone faint? If someone would have fainted from the result then we would know that they did everything they could.”

“This all comes in continuation to what we spoke three years ago regarding *mitvza tefillin*. I hoped that this mitzvah would lead to other mitzvos... burning down the walls of *galus* and we would merit the coming of Moshiach, bringing all the Yidden to Eretz Yisroel. However... we have not merited this.”

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In conclusion, the Rebbe stated that since he is speaking openly about all this, he will also express “a wild hope” that although it doesn’t seem to have any place politically, eventually all Yidden will do *teshuva*. And the good thought and resolution for peace and unity, and the decision of the ministers that they will resign from the government thereby bringing about the nullification of the decree, will be considered by Hashem as proper *teshuva* and will bring about the true and complete redemption through Moshiach Tzidkeinu speedily.

The farbrengen concluded at 10:40 p.m., after which they davened *maariv*.

THE DAYS FOLLOWING

It is interesting to note that after Shabbos Mevorchim Sivan, the Rebbe let it be known that he would not be receiving anyone for *yechidus* until after Shavuos.

Rumor had it that the Rebbetzin said that the reason for this was because the Rebbe was extremely preoccupied with dealing with *Mihu Yehudi*.

Others recall the reason to be that the Rebbe’s health was affected by the situation of *Mihu Yehudi*. ❶

1. Two letters from the Rebbe in response to Prime Minister Ben Gurion’s inquiry on this subject are published in *Igros Kodesh* vol. 18 p. 209.

2. This was during the War of Attrition.

