



Rashbi

A Fusion of Opposites

The Day of Passing

Lag Ba'omer, the day of the passing of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai ("Rashbi"), is a day of joy. This is because on the day of one's passing, their entire life's *avodah* and involvement with Torah and mitzvos ascend into the higher realms.

On that note, Rashbi remarked on the day of his passing, "With one bond, I am bound to Him,"¹ reflecting his deep connection to Hashem. Then, while teaching the *possuk*, "*Ki sham tziva Hashem es habrachta chaim*,"² he passed away – before reaching the word "*chaim*," symbolizing his eternal bond with the source of all life.

Every year, the elevation achieved on the day of Rashbi's passing is relived, and this is the cause for joy on Lag Ba'omer.

The Rashbi's Greatness A Day for Everyone

The Yerushalmi³ states regarding the *semicha* of Rabbi Meir and Rashbi, Rabbi Akiva's two students, that Rabbi Akiva told Rabbi Meir to sit down first to receive ordination. When Rashbi's face reddened, Rabbi Akiva remarked, "It is enough that I and your Creator recognize your greatness." Even the holy *talmidim* of Rabbi Akiva weren't able to fully comprehend Rashbi's greatness. Only Rabbi Akiva – who was on an extremely high spiritual level – and Hashem, were able to appreciate him. However, the fact that Rashbi was on an unimaginably higher level than his contemporaries seemingly makes it hard to understand how Lag Ba'omer is a day celebrated by all.

It is said⁴ that one of the *talmidim* of the Arizal used to say "*Nachem*" in *birkas hamazon* at every meal throughout the year, mourning the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*. One Lag Ba'omer in Miron, he did as he was accustomed to. Rashbi had a *kpeida* on the student, and the latter was negatively affected.

The above can be understood when we realize that Rashbi had a *neshama* that did not experience the *churban*, and therefore there couldn't be any mourning for it on his day of joy. From this we see two points: Firstly, Lag Ba'omer has a uniqueness that sets it aside from all other Yomim Tovim, that specifically on that day, the student was punished for saying "*Nachem*." Secondly, the joy of Rashbi

לזכות
הרה"ת ר' אברהם יהודה הלוי זוזגנו
מרת דבורה לאה ומשפחתם שיחי
סאסקינד
נוביי, מישיגן



on Lag Ba'omer is shared by all Yidden, no matter what level their *neshama* may be on.

These two ideas are what the Rashbi represents – taking the highest level that there is and making it tangible.

Bringing Both Worlds Together

The Beraisa⁵ recounts a *machlokes* between Rebbi Yishmael and Rashbi. Rebbi Yishmael held that although the Torah must never cease from one's lips, the Torah also says "*V'asafta diganecha*" – one must give attention to his material needs. Rashbi argued, however, that as long as one focuses on serving Hashem, all his physical needs will be taken care of.

This reflects Rashbi's constant and unwavering commitment to Torah. Yet at the same time, Rashbi also held⁶ that if one only said *Krias Shema* in the morning and evening, he fulfills the above mentioned commandment not to let Torah cease from our lips. This again highlights Rashbi's fusion

of the highest and lowest levels – he demanded the ultimate dedication to Torah study – that one shouldn't worry about his physical needs – and simultaneously he held that one who fulfilled only the bare minimum was still *yotze*.

Rashbi also sought out a "*tikkun*" for everything that required one. Not only when he felt there needed to be a *tikkun*, but he also actively looked for ways to do so, as he asked,⁷ "Is there something that needs repair?" In one case, there was an uncertainty regarding a certain location with *tumas meis*, the strictest form of *tumah*, yet Rashbi was *metaken* it to allow even *Kohanim* to access that location. In the same vein, Rashbi stated⁸ that "I can exempt the entire world from judgment." The ability for Rashbi to do those things was precisely because of his greatness.

A Practical Lesson

Just like all stories in Torah, stories of Chazal can give us the strength to perform our personal *avodah*. In our

mission of "*Yafutzu maayanosecha chutza*," we must draw from the highest level – the wellspring itself, to "*chutza*" – outward. This will lead to "*asi mar*" – the coming of Moshiach, when he will learn Torah with the *Avos*, yet also with Jews of all levels.

We must also teach our children *pnimiyus haTorah*, the Torah of Rashbi, which will take us into the *geulah*. Then we will be able to rely on the merit of Rashbi to exempt the world from judgment, even somewhere where *tikkun* is needed, and even in a level of "*tumas meis*," to make it a proper *dira* even for *Kohanim* (the highest level) – until the whole world will be a *dira* for Hashem. **T**

Adapted from the sicha of Lag Ba'omer 5722

1. Zohar III 288; 292.
2. Tehillim 133, 3.
3. Sanhedrin 1, 2.
4. Pri Eitz Chaim Shaar Sefiras Ha'omer 7.
5. Brachos 35b.
6. Menachos 99b.
7. Shabbos 33b.
8. Sukkah 45b.