

ליקוטי ופסקי הלכות

"חוקי חיים"

ותלמודם
"חוקי חיים"
לעשות רצונך
בלבב שלם



שע"י "חדר הזרעה" שכונת מנחת יצחק פעיה"ק ירושלם תובב"א - בראשות הרב חיים אהרן בלייער שליט"א

Halochoh compiled by HaRav Chaim Bleier – Translated from the Hebrew edition by R' Zerachya Shicker

Halochoh of Lag Ba'omer This year

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Lag Ba'omer, Challenging Times | Parshas Emor 5780

176

Lag Ba'omer Minhagim

1. Every year, tens of thousands of Jews from all ends of the earth come to the kever of the holy Rashbi, whose segulos and holiness are known. This year [5780], due to the danger in the world and Klal Yisroel from the Chinese virus, common sense and the authorities are not allowing mass trips to Meron, where he is buried. Only a limited number of people will be allowed to be at the traditional hadlakos.
2. For many people, it will be difficult to digest the reality of celebrating Lag Ba'omer without going to Meron. Therefore, we will cite several halochos and minhagim associated with Lag Ba'omer and how to connect to the powerful day from afar. [We are deviating from our norm and mentioning matters that are not strictly halachic ("inyanim") since in the current situation, many people need a lot of chizuk in the absence of the segulah of going to Meron.]

Causes Healing

3. Tzaddikim have said that in the zechus of the tzaddik buried in Meron, Hashem sends cures to sick Yidden. As a hint to this, the first letters of the words "מלך רופא נאמן ורחמן" spell out the word Meron (הגה"צ בעל "לחם שלמה משימוליא צבי לצדיק"). On this day [Lag Ba'omer], recovery and healing come to all sick Yidden who need to be saved or cured (להם שלמה משימוליא).
4. **From afar too.** The word "רפאתי" is the same gematria as "שמעון בר" (שמעון בר"ה). The posuk "שלוש שלום לרחוק ולקרוב, אמר ה' ורפאתי" is a hint that even the people who do not have the zechus or ability to go to Meron on the holy day of Lag Ba'omer can pour out their tefillos wherever they may be, no matter how far, and can get saved in the zechus of the holy Tanna (הילולא דרשב"י). As the Gemara says (פסחים נ"א): "Rebbi Shimon ben Yochai is fit to be relied on, in front of him and not in front of him."

"Chai Rotel"

5. There is a known minhag that someone who needs a yeshuah should say at the Rashbi's kever, "If Ploni ben Plonis will be remembered in the matter of yeshuah and rachamim, I hereby commit to donating on the Lag Ba'omer following the yeshuah a large measure of drink – "chai rotel" [18 rotel, which is 54 liters] – to the holy place of Meron to be apportioned to those who come to daven" (טעמי מנהגים).
6. **Public's needs.** The idea behind this segulah can be explained based on the Gemara (שבב דף לג ע"ב) that tells that after Rebbi Shimon bar Yochai emerged from the cave, he said, "Since miracles happened to me, I will go and fix things for the public." Based on this, the poskim say that if a miracle happens to someone, it is good and proper for him to involve himself with the public's needs by fixing something in the city (מג"א סי' ר"ח סק"ב ומ"ב שם סוף סק"ב).
7. Hence, a reason for the minhag and segulah of "chai rotel": being that the Rashbi himself is the source of the idea of benefiting the public after experiencing a yeshuah or miracle, people go to his kever, on his yahrzeit, in his place – the holy town of Meron – to benefit the public. And what is a more proper and fitting way to do this than by distributing drinks for the thirsty at a time when tens of thousands of Yidden come to Meron on Lag Ba'omer?
8. **Promised 'chai rotel' last year.** If someone needed a yeshuah last year and promised then that if he got it, he would give chai rotel of drink the following year at the Rashbi's kever, since he can't go to Meron this year, he should give it out on Lag Ba'omer to people in his place. For example, he can put out bottles of drink that passersby can take and say it is in the zechus of the Tanna, the Rashbi. He fulfills his promise through this since the main thing is to do something for the public and benefit people – this can be done anywhere. He does not need to wait until next year to distribute drinks specifically in Meron.

Learning "Toras Rashbi"

9. Someone who wants to connect to the Rashbi's holiness when he is far from Meron should learn the Rashbi's Torah – the hidden Torah found in the Zohar, Tikkunei Zohar, and the like. This will bring the Rashbi's spiritual influence onto a person. One should also not forget that the Rashbi is in the Gemara (הבית ישראל). This way, one will be zocheh to what Rebbi Shimon bar Yochai himself said: "Whenever people quote a teaching of a talmid chacham in this world, his lips speak in the kever" (יבמות צ"ט). One can learn Toras HaRashbi for the number of hours it takes him each year to travel to and from Meron...

Going to Meron

10. **Always goes.** Even if someone is accustomed to going to Meron every year without exception, it is not a neder of a good minhag or mitzvoh-related minhag since going to Meron is a matter of segulah, not a mitzvoh. Thus, although this minhag will be impossible to fulfill this year, one does not need to do hataras nedarim when he doesn't go. Additionally, he is an oneis and unable to fulfill his usual minhag.
11. **Complete purity.** Despite all the efforts that askanim put in every year in order to keep tznius safeguards and prevent those who go to Meron from mingling and transgression – both while traveling and while at the Rashbi's kever – it is very difficult and there are many issues. Thus, since Hashem orchestrated things so that it is impossible to go this year, we must find the light within the darkness and focus on the untainted kedushah and taharah that we can attain in connecting to the Rashbi without any tumah. And who knows if...
12. **Live broadcast.** The authorities and all sorts of organizations promised that there will be an option to follow the hadlakos in Meron and elsewhere over live broadcast. People should know that there is no segulah or aspect of kedushah in participating in the hadlakah over live broadcast. It is just a form of recreation and a way to satisfy curiosity.
13. **Kvittel, oil with a shliach.** One can send a kvittel with a shliach. Those who have a minhag to pour oil or burn a garment can fulfill it with a shliach (it is known that several tzaddikim of previous generations sent a garment with a shliach every year). Thus, if there is a reliable organization in Meron, one can fulfill the minhag of pouring oil through it.

Upsherin ["Chalakah"]

Upsherin

14. The Arizal's minhag was to cut the hair of three-year-old boys in Meron on Lag Ba'omer and leave them with peyos (שערי תשובה סי' תקל"א סק"ב). This is not an issur of getting a haircut since it is viewed as "making peyos," not a haircut. Thus, according to both the Mechaber and the Rama (below, 30) a boy may get an upsherin on Lag Ba'omer night (הגריש"א, הלכות חג בחג ספה"ע פ"ז הערה 58, שו"ת אור לציון ח"ג פ"ז תשובה ג'). However, the minhag is not to do an upsherin before Lag Ba'omer.
15. **In Meron or on Lag Ba'omer?** Many people of Yerushalayim always do their sons' upsherin in Meron on Lag Ba'omer. When one of their sons is almost three, i.e., more than two and a half, they do his upsherin that year; if he is less than that, they wait until the next year. This year, it will not be possible to do it in Meron, so if a boy is not yet three full years old, his upsherin should be pushed off until the crisis subsides and it can be done in Meron; since anyway there is a minhag not to do an upsherin before three (שו"ת ערוגת הבושם), this will enable it to be done in Meron as usual. If a boy is already three, the upsherin should be done wherever he is on Lag Ba'omer even though it will not be in Meron.

16. **Promised to do it in Meron.** If one davened in Meron and said at the time that if he will have a boy, he will make his upsherin at the Rashbi's kever, and he intended for it to be on Lag Ba'omer, as is customary, but he cannot fulfill the promise on Lag Ba'omer this year, he should push off the upsherin until the crisis subsides and then go with his son to Meron to do the upsherin, even if the boy is already three years old.

Lag Ba'omer Bonfire

Reasons for the Minhag

17. People light lots of candles, bonfires, and torches on Lag Ba'omer in honor of the Rashbi. There are lofty ideas behind this that are known especially by people who understand the secrets of Torah. We will cite some of the more basic reasons that are given.
18. This great day is the day when the holy Tanna, Rebbi Shimon bar Yochai, passed away. That day, he revealed the secrets of Torah [the Idra Zuta], and the whole house filled with light and fire surrounded the house, making it impossible for anyone to enter. Thus, we light large bonfires to recall the great light the Rashbi brought into existence and revealed on that day – they are like massive yahrzeit candles.
19. They recall the bonfires that were lit to announce the kiddush hachodesh. Since the Romans forbade this practice, the fires became a symbol of the Jewish rebellion. Thus, on the yahrzeit of the Rashbi – the greatest of those who rebelled against the Romans – we light bonfires by his kever and in other places (זי המנהגים עמ' ק"ה). Perhaps this is the reason for the old minhag that is attested to, to also light bonfires in Tzfas at the same time – so that the bonfires are seen place by place just like in the times of kiddush hachodesh.
20. Another reason is that the seven weeks of Sefiras Ha'omer correspond to the seven times the word "קול" appears in the perek of Tehillim, "קול ה' חוצב להבות" (כ"ט) "הבו לה בני אלים." Thus, we make lots of fire on Lag Ba'omer, the fifth day of the fifth week, "הוד שבהוד" (טעמי המנהגים אות תר"ז) "הוד שבהוד".

Places that the Minhag Was Kept

21. **Meron.** There is an old minhag to make a fire in Meron by the Rashbi's holy kever. There is a great gathering of "rejoicing with trepidation" ["גילו ברעדה"] – feelings of Yom Kippur inside the tomb and joy of Torah outside, with dancing and circles (הרה"ק מרדכי).
22. **Other places.** There is also an old minhag to light big fires and lots of candles in honor of the Rashbi in all the places and batei medrash in Eretz Yisroel (לוח א"י). From there, the minhag expanded to Chutz La'aretz too (משמרת שלום סי' ל"ח אות א', בני יששכר אייר מאמר ג' אות ג').

This Year – 5780

23. **Very dangerous to make a bonfire.** This year, with danger hovering throughout the world, especially in gatherings of multiple people, it is completely assur to light a bonfire in the regular manner on the city streets since it will certainly cause people to congregate around the bonfire. In such a situation, it will be impossible to make sure that people stand at a proper distance from each other [just go out and see what people do...].
24. **"One's fire is like his arrow" [אשו משום חצין].** The liability for the harm and spread of disease that can, חו"ד, come from congregating around a fire falls on the one who lit it and the organizers. Someone cannot claim that he just lit the fire, and it is not his fault that others came to dance and congregate around his fire. He caused it and it is also assur to cause harm to others. [When it comes to this, everyone agrees that porch "minyanim" can be combined...]
25. **Rebbi Shimon can be relied on in a 'pressing situation'.** One may not, חו"ד, justify himself by saying, "Rebbi Shimon is fit to be relied on in a pressing situation" (גמי ברכות דף ט' ע"ב) and no harm will come from a bonfire made in his honor. We are in dangerous times, and when Rebbi Shimon himself was in a time of danger, he fled, hid in a cave, and acted with caution; then he was zocheh to the most mystical secrets of Torah. Rather, we should daven to Hashem that in the holy Tanna's zechus, we should emerge from the 'pressing situation' we are in and from this bitter galus.

What We Can Do

26. **Yahrzeit candle.** In order to fulfill the minhag of lighting a fire under the circumstances this year, everyone can light a yahrzeit candle in his house in honor of the Rashbi. If one wants, he can light it amid music, tunes of deveikus, and dancing with his family. They can sing "Lechavod haTanna..." before lighting. The posuk alludes to lighting amid song: the words "הללו שמו במחור" have the same first letters as "כי רוצה" – "ה' בעמו יפאר עניוים בישועה" – in his zechus, Moshiach should come.
27. **Oil.** If one wants to do more of a hiddur, he can light a wick in oil to fulfill the minhag specifically with oil, as found in the zemiros – "שמן מחבריד ששן משחת קודש", "שמן מחבריד

28. **Tiny bonfire.** If one has a big open area, e.g., a courtyard, and wants to make a bonfire specifically, he can take the smallest size empty tin can he has, like one that canned vegetables come in, fill it a third of the way with cotton wool, pour some oil in, place it in a large, disposable foil pan, and light it. This way, he can fulfill the minhag to make a bonfire. However, he must stand guard the whole time it is lit so that it doesn't חו"ד cause a fire or damage, and to keep his children and other people away from it. If he wants to leave, he must first completely extinguish it with water.

29. **Big bonfire.** If one sees a big bonfire on the city streets or in a courtyard with a big crowd around it, he can, and must, call the fire department to extinguish it.

Lag Ba'omer Halochos

Haircut

30. The Mechaber holds one may not get a haircut until the morning of the 34th day (מ"ב סק"ו) starting from neitz (שו"ע סי' תצ"ג ס"ב). The Rama holds one may get a haircut on the morning of Lag Ba'omer, but not the previous night (רמ"א שם). Nevertheless, there are acharonim who hold one may get a haircut on Lag Ba'omer night (א"ר סק"ח הובא במ"ב) (סק"י, שיע"ת סק"ה). According to the Arizal's minhag, one should not get any haircuts until Erev Shavuos (Chukai Chaim Issue 90, paragraph 18).

When May One Listen to Music?

31. According to the Mechaber, one may only listen to musical instruments starting on the morning of the 34th, like a haircut. According to the Rama, one may start on Lag Ba'omer morning, but one may not listen to instruments or music on the night of Lag Ba'omer (שו"ת שבט הלוי ח"ה סי' קס"ח אות ה').
32. **In honor of the Rashbi.** Nevertheless, some in Eretz Yisroel are meikel and play musical with instruments at night when it is in honor of the Rashbi's yahrzeit (חו"ט שני שבת ח"ד עמ' ש"פ) e.g., by a bonfire lit in honor of the Rashbi; this is the accepted minhag. Thus, one may play or listen to music by a bonfire lit in honor of the Rashbi wherever it is. Music that is unconnected to the Rashbi's bonfire is assur until the morning, as mentioned above.
33. **On the way to Meron.** In a normal year, one must be careful not to listen to music on the bus when everyone is traveling to Meron on Lag Ba'omer until after neitz. This is because one may only listen to regular music after neitz on Lag Ba'omer morning, and music on the way to Meron is not considered music in honor of the Rashbi.

Wedding on Lag Ba'omer

34. According to the Mechaber, a wedding should not be held until the 34th of the Omer – by day, not night – since weddings and haircuts have the same halochah (מ"ב סק"ה). The Rama holds a wedding should not be held until Lag Ba'omer day – not night. Even the one who allows haircuts on Lag Ba'omer night (above, 30) wrote that he did not see anyone being meikel on weddings Lag Ba'omer night (מ"ב סק"י).
35. Despite all this, some allow weddings to be held after tzeis on Lag Ba'omer night; this can be relied on if necessary (פ"ר"ה ס"ב, שיערי תשובה) (סק"ה, ושו"ע הרב ס"ה e.g., if the only date halls have open is Lag Ba'omer night. Everyone agrees a wedding may not be held before tzeis of Lag Ba'omer night.
36. **Seudah extending into 34th night.** If a family has the minhag to also observe aveilus minhagim after Lag Ba'omer and they are making a wedding on Lag Ba'omer, they should lechatchilah make sure to finish the seudah and dancing before the 34th night. If necessary, they may be meikel and continue into the night (שו"ת מנח"י ח"ד סי' פ"ד אות א') (אג"מ אה"עו ח"א סי' צ"ז, חוט שני שבת ח"ד עמ' ש"פ). Some lechatchilah allow the seudah and dancing to be held at night if the chuppah was by day (שו"ת מנח"י ח"ד סי' פ"ד אות א').
37. **Attending a wedding when keeping sefirah.** One may attend a wedding that is on a day he personally keeps minhagim of sefirah aveilus if it is muttar according to the chosson and kallah's minhag. Since they may get married, there is a mitzvoh for the invitees to bring joy to the chosson and kallah's celebration (שו"ת אג"מ ח"א סי' קנ"ט), הגרש"ז"א, הליכות שלמה ניסן פ"א סי"ט, הגר"ש"א, הליכות חג בחג ספה"ע פ"ז הערה 91). This is the accepted minhag.
38. Still, some say one should be machmir and only go to wish mazel tov not participate in the dancing or seudah (קובץ מבית לוי) (הגר"ש וואזנר, קובץ מבית לוי).
39. **After Lag Ba'omer.** This year, many weddings were postponed due to the situation. If one was supposed to get married earlier but the wedding got pushed off, it may be held, in accordance with local guidelines, on Lag Ba'omer and the days after. Even if this person's usual minhag was not to hold weddings until just before Shavuos, since it is technically muttar, a wedding shouldn't be pushed off due to a minhag, among other reasons.