



A Man Above This World

The Maharal (Netzach Yisrael, chapter 28, s.v. (דברים אלו) writes that there is no doubt there are specific places that have more Kedusha and specifically where R' Shimon Bar Yochai is buried. There is no doubt that Eliyahu revealed himself to R' Shimon in the cave many times. Even nowadays there is גלוי אליהו there.

How did the great Ohr Hachaim act when he was approaching the gravesite of this holy Tanna? When the Ohr Hachaim (1696-1743) reached the bottom of the mountain on his way to Meiron, he descended from his donkey and would go on his hands and feet... and shout- how can I, the low one, enter to such a place... (Taamai Haminhagim, p. 270)

On Lag Baomer (The Zohar was revealed on Lag Baomer as well as it also being R' Shimon Bar Yochai's Yartzheit.) many go to the grave of R' Shimon Bar Yochai. In fact, it states שמעו קלא עולו ואתו ואתכנסו להילולא דרבי שמעון ascend, come and gather for the Yartzheit of R' Shimon (Zohar 296, ח"ג). This is nothing recent as it dates back long ago. R' Chaim Vitaal (Shaar Hakavanos, 87b) writes I have seen my teacher, the Arizal, go to the grave of R' Shimon Bar Yochai and his son on Lag Baomer with his wife and family. Actually, it is said in the name of the Arizal that on Lag Baomer R' Shimon Bar Yochai stands on his Tziun and blesses each one that comes to Meiron, for the honor of his holy name (לכבוד שם) (קדשו), to be happy in the Simcha of his great Yartzheit (Taamai Haminhagim, p. 269, footnote 48).

R' Ovadia Bartenura (1440-1516) in the year 1488 wrote in a letter to his brother that on the 18th of Iyar (Lag Baomer), the day R' Shimon Bar Yochai passed away, they come from everywhere and light big torches... Many barren women were remembered and people cured through their pledges and donations offered there (Darkei Tzion, second letter).

On Lag Baomer, all gates of heaven (ריקיע) are opened עד בלי די (Idra Zuta, Haazinu 291b). Is it any wonder that the initials of יושפט, through this may abundant bounty flow through all the worlds (From the Tefila in Nusach Sefard after Sefira), spell רשבי which is an acronym for יוחאי בר יוחאי.

In the year 2014, a boy named Zelig who was getting older couldn't seem to find his other half.

On Lag Baomer, while his mother was traveling to Meiron, she called her husband and told him- "I just reminded myself that years ago in Meiron we were davening for a child where we promised if we have one, we would name him Shimon. However, when our first son was born we named him Zelig. I was thinking maybe this is what is preventing the Shidduch." After hearing this, the husband spoke to his Rebbe who instructed him to call his son Shimon Zelig. So, while in Meiron at R' Shimon, the mother davened that Shimon Zelig should find his other half and become engaged. The next Shabbos in Shul, the Gabbai called Shimon Zelig for an Aliya. Upon hearing the name Shimon Zelig, a man named Zelig inquired as to why the Gabbai now called the boy by this name. He replied that this is what the father of the boy told him to do. What happened as a result of this? Zelig had a daughter who long ago desired to become engaged to this boy but since R' Yehuda Hachasid taught that the names of the father-in-law and son-in-law not be the same, the Shidduch was called off. Now that their names were not the same, he was willing to go forward with the Shidduch. Soon after, Shimon Zelig was engaged to the daughter of Zelig!

In 5773 (2013), a certain God-fearing Jew, honorable Jew who would travel every year from America for Lag Baomer was in prison. As Lag Baomer approached, he was distraught that he couldn't be in Meiron for Lag Baomer. Lamenting his situation, he then asked his son to go daven for him there. His son told him because every year you go to R' Shimon in Meiron, but this year you can't go for a reason beyond your control, I am sure this year R' Shimon will come to you instead. His father smiled, appreciating the effort to cheer him up, although it was just wishful thinking. That year on Lag Baomer night, a fire broke out in the prison. The Jewish inmates took advantage of the fire by dancing around it singing Bar Yochai and other songs. They had a genuine Lag Baomer bonfire celebration right there in prison! Not only that but the fire caused so much damage that the jail needed repairs. As a result, there wasn't ample space for all the prisoners. Consequently, the next morning- on Lag Baomer day- the ones with the lightest sentences were freed. He then made his way to Meiron for the remainder of Lag Baomer!

The following story took place in the year תש"ט (1949) when the gates to Yerushalayim were only opened once every two weeks because of the fighting with the Arabs. In one incident, a boy that was shot by an Arab in the leg couldn't go to Shaarei Tzedek hospital for two weeks- until the road would open. As a result, by the time he arrived in the hospital, his leg was infected. The doctors said that they would need to amputate his leg. Since Lag Baomer was approaching, the boy asked his friends to bring him to Meiron where he could daven for his health. They smuggled him out of the hospital, laid him down in a truck and traveled to Meiron for Lag Baomer. The boy davened at the gravesite of R' Shimon: "My entire family was killed by the Nazis. Only I survived. I must build a family, so the family will continue. But how can I marry, if I lose my leg..." Afterwards they went to the courtyard for the dancing where at first, the boy held onto his friends and danced in that manner. But then soon after, he was able to dance on his own feet! The bandage fell off and he was healed!

Many were healed from the prayers on this holy day at the gravesite of R' Shimon. The Imrei Pinchas (231) informs us that Lag Baomer has the power to awaken רפואה since the Pri Eitz Chaim tells us that רפואה

corresponds to הוד and Lag Baomer correlates to מלך רופא . Indeed, the first letters of מלך רופא Hashem is a faithful and compassionate healer (in the Bracha of רפאונו in Shemoneh Esrei), מרון .

What about those who are unable to make it to Meiron on Lag Baomer? R' Shimon Bar Yochai remarked אני לפטור את כל העולם כולו מן הדין , through my merit, I am able to exempt the entire world from judgement for sins that were committed from the day I was born until now (Succa 45b). Just as this statement applies to those not in the proximity R' Shimon- as he said כל העולם כולו - likewise, even if one is not in Meiron on Lag Baomer, he can still take advantage of this day with Tefila. We also see this in the words כדי הוא רבי שמעון בן יוחאי לסמוך עליו בפניו ושלא בפניו, R' Shimon Bar Yochai is worthy of being relied upon in his presence and not in his presence (Pesachim 51b). We should all merit to take advantage of this special day wherever we are.

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