

The Outer & Inner Reasons

We Celebrate Lag B'Omer

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The Gemarah tells us that between Pesach and Shavuos 24,000 of Rabbi Akiva's students died from a mysterious plague (croup, or choking, perhaps hunger.) They died because they did not act respectfully towards each other. Their death was a cruel death which is "croup." (Yevamos 62b. Midrash Bereishis Rabbah 61:3. Koheles Rabbah 11. Yalkut Shimoni, Koheles 989)

This occurs somewhere around 134-135 CE.

The consensus among the early commentators is that they died for 34 days. (Bach. Orach Chayim. Siman 493) The Meiri brings down in the name of the Geonim that "they stopped dying on the 33rd of Omer"

Why celebrate?

1. The Mechaber writes (Orach Chayim. Siman 439) that they died from the second day of Pesach till (after) the 34th day.
2. The Ramah, they died is from Rosh Chodesh till three days before Shavuos, –besides the 33rd day, Lag B'Omer. On Lag B'Omer they did not die.
3. The Maharil writes that the students died on all the days between Pesach and Shavuos, however, they did not die on the 7 Shabbasim, the 7 days of Yom Tov, and the 3 days of Rosh Chodesh= 17.
4. There are 49 days of Sefira, which 3 times 16 1/3 = 49. So once the 32 days have past, the Rov –majority has past, time to celebrate. (Maharsha) Strict Majority is 51 percent, Super Majority, is two thirds.
5. Day celebrating the Rashbi's death.

R. Chaim Vital brings down that the day of Lag B'Omer is the day of She'mes Rashbi –the joy of the Rashbi. Yet, as the Chida writes there is a missing letter, and it should say Simchas –joy of Rashbi, not S'mes, there is a missing Ches.

Why the celebration for Rashbi:

1. He asked that it be celebrated (Mishnas Chassidim)
2. Lag B'Omer is also the day the Rashbi was born. (Bnei Yissaschar. Iyyar)
3. Rashbi one of the five remaining students, was able to be buried.
4. The day he died he revealed many great secrets of Torah/Zohar, the Idra.
5. The day he left the cave. (Aruch Hashulchan. 493:7) Shabbas page 33.

Lets understand a bit better the context of the story of the death of the 24,000 students, and how Rabbi Shimon is different.

The question is why is the death of these 24,000 have more collective impact and deserve more attention, than the Spanish Inquisition, or the Chemelensky Ukrainian pogroms, or even the Holocaust?

In fact, the month of Iyyar is viewed as a time of Din/ Judgment. (Rabbeinu Yerucham. Time of Tuma-separation. Zohar) Historically, time of the effects of blood libels.

Historically, worst pillaging of the crusades occurred between Pesach and Shavuos.

Many of the harsh decrees against the Jews, in France and in Germany were between Pesach and Shavuos. (Aruch Hashulchan Orach Chayim 493:1.)

Beis Ha'Mikdash destroyed in 70 C.E.

Israel lay in ruins via battle, hunger, persecution and harsh conditions thousands of Jews died, were exiled and sold into slavery. Titus, the general (son of Vespasian, the newly crowned Emperor) erected a monument in Rome, -Arch of Titus- inscribed the words "Judea Capita – Judea is finished."

But the resilient people of Judea, the Jews did not meekly give up. In the years around 133-135 C.E Bar Kosba led a revolt. Quarter million strong, re- conquered Jerusalem, starts rebuilding the Temple.

Shimon ben Kosiba, who was called Bar Kosiba, Rabbi Akiva called at first Bar Kochva- son of the star, and was later called Bar Kuziba –son of deceit.

Revolt fails. Beitar falls, (largest city, after the destruction of Yerushalayim) Bar Kochva blames Rabbi Elizer...kills Rabbi Eliezer.

Their deaths, the crush of the revolt, marked an ending of that immediate dream, at the end Rabbi Akiva himself was martyred in the year 135 CE.

Rav Sherira Gaon (father of Rav Hai Goan. (900- 1000) of Pumpadisa (Babylon) writes in Iggeres Rav Sharira Gaon that there was a “religious persecution” during the times of Rabbi Akiva and that is connected with the deaths of the 24 thousands students, this suggests that they died in or during the Bar Kochva revolt, either as soldiers or civilians, and perhaps died of ‘choking’ ie; hunger.

R. Akiva dies, yet Rashbi gives us the gift, a light that gives us hope in exile, and thus connects us with redemption, and a light that eventually helps us out of exile. “With this book of the Zohar they will merit to leave exile in mercy.” (Zohar Parsahas Naso).

Matan Penimiyus Ha'Torah/ **The Giving of the Inner Torah**

Lag B'omer is called Hilulah — as in a wedding day. As Matan Torah is called a wedding day. (Ta'anis)

Lev –first 32 days, then there is from 33 day, Tov, 17 days.

From Lag B'omer, being the third part of the Sefira, and thus there is a Reshimu/imprint reflection from Shevuos backwards.

Lag -33 B'Omer – 312 = (33+312+) 345, the same numeric value as the name Moshe.

Rashbi Gilgul of Moshe. (AriZal)

The day of Lag B'omer always falls out on the same day of the week as the fourth day of Sukkas, Ushpiz/Guest of Moshe.

“My soul longs...L'Kel Chai/to the living G-d. When will I come and see the face of Elokim” Kel Chai is numerically=49. So we desire, and yearn for You during these 49 days between Pesach and Shavuos, we yearn for Matan Torah.

The “inner” letters of Elokim is Chaf (which comes before the Lamed) Dalet (before Hei) and Tes (before Yud) –(the letters Aleph of Elokim has no letters before, and the last letter, the final Mem, the letter before it is also Mem, so these two letters don't change) These letters Chaf -20 Dalet -4 and Tes -9 equal = 33. This is Lag B'omer, the face of Elokim.

The inner essence of Elokim is divine kindness that is immeasurable, to intense to be “revealed”, and on Lag B'omer, Lag which spells the word Gal/reveal, this inner essence of Divine judgment, sense of separation, as if Hashem is hiding from us, is revealed.

What is revealed is that there is no hiding, there is no separation, and all the barriers are imaginary, facades, empty screens. “I will surely hide from you...” (Devarim. 31:18) We become aware that it is Hashem, I that is hiding, that even in the hiding it is I, Hashem, Hashem is present. There is no place where Hashem is no present.

Even in exile.