



Once, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai was engaged in a discussion with his colleagues, Rabbi Yehuda and Rabbi Yossi. They were discussing the Roman oppressors.

Rabbi Yehuda tried to find something meritorious about them and mentioned how they had brought new commerce to the land of Israel, built cities, bridges and beautiful baths.

Rabbi Yossi heard his words and remained silent. He didn't want to praise the Romans, yet he also didn't want to malign them.

Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai remembered all the evil and destruction the Romans had done – they burned the Holy Temple, killed many people, and especially delighted in torturing the sages. Fearlessly, he criticized, "Everything that they improved or restored was only for their own pleasure and benefit. All of their actions boded evil for us."

A man who had been sitting nearby heard the words of the sages and repeated them to his friends, who repeated them to their friends, until, eventually, they were heard by Roman officers, and finally, the Caesar himself, who decreed: "Yehuda, who praised us, will be greatly rewarded. He will be elevated to head of the Jews. Yossi, who stayed quiet, will be punished lightly. He will be exiled from his city. But Shimon, is condemned to death."

When Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai heard what the Romans had planned for him, he took his son Elazar, and hid in the study hall. They did not leave their hiding place, and Rabbi Shimon's wife brought them food every day.

But soon, the Romans stepped up their search and warned that anyone who helped them flee or hide would be punished. Out of concern for his wife's life, Rabbi Shimon fled with his son to a far-off cave in a desolate area. Here, Rabbi Shimon and his son were safe from their pursuers.

But, there was no one to bring them food and they were afraid to go out to find any. However, there was a carob tree next to the cave and a spring right inside. They wore their clothing only during prayers in order to preserve them and at times of Torah study they covered their bodies with sand. For twelve years, they remained in the cave, never seeing another human being, speaking only to each other, and learning Torah constantly.

After 12 years, Elijah the prophet came to the entrance of the cave and called out, "Who will tell Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai that the Roman Caesar who pursued him has died and the decree is annulled?"

Immediately, Rabbi Shimon and his son left the cave. But after twelve years they were not able to acclimate themselves to everyday life. They saw a farmer tending his field. "Why is he wasting his precious time preparing for his needs for this world when he ought to spend his valuable time making preparations for the world to come," Rabbi Shimon wondered. He looked at the man with a penetrating stare and before their very eyes the farmer turned into a heap of bones. Immediately a heavenly voice called out, "Do you want to destroy My world? Go back to the cave. The world is unable to exist with your great holiness."

Another year passed, and it was revealed to them that they must re-enter the "mundane" world. Upon leaving the cave they saw an old man running quickly to his home with two bundles of myrtle branches. They asked him, "Why do you have these myrtle branches?"

To which the old man replied, "They are in honor of the Sabbath, for they have a beautiful scent."

Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai said to his son, "Do you see how beloved and cherished mitzvot (commandments) are to the Jews." They were filled with a new understanding of the purpose of man and were able to rejoin the world.

When people saw Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai return there was great rejoicing. Rabbi Pinchas Ben Yair saw that Rabbi Shimon's body was badly scarred from his many years of immersion in the sand. Rabbi Pinchas took Rabbi Shimon to the bath house and began to wash him with the soothing waters. Rabbi Pinchas tears fell upon Rabbi Shimon's body, adding to his pain. Rabbi Pinchas exclaimed, "Woe to me that I see you in such a terrible

state." Rabbi Shimon consoled him: "If I had not been in this state, then I certainly would not have been able to achieve the high level of learning that I was able to reach."

Rabbi Shimon wanted to do a good deed in order to celebrate the great miracle of his deliverance and of his elevated level of Torah knowledge. The townspeople told him about a road under which there had been a lost grave. As Kohanim (priests) are not permitted to come in contact with dead bodies, they had to take a long detour when traveling that route. The holy Rabbi Shimon was immediately able to discern the location of the grave and the problem was corrected.

Once, one of Rabbi Shimon's students left the Holy Land in order to engage in commerce. When he returned to Israel, he brought with him great wealth. The other students saw and become envious. When this became known to Rabbi Shimon, he took them out to a valley facing Mount Miron and prayed, "Valley, valley, fill yourself with gold dinars!" The entire valley fill up with gold coins. Rabbi Shimon then said to his students, "Here is gold, go and take it. But you should know that whoever takes now is taking from his portion in the World to Come."

The anniversary of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai's passing on Lag B'Omer is, as per Rabbi Shimon's request, a day of rejoicing.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT
on the weekly Torah portion

Speak unto the priests (Lev. 21:1)
The name of this week's Torah portion, Emor ("say"), contains a lesson for us all: We must strive to always speak well of our fellow Jew and judge one another favorably. Just as saying something negative about someone reveals his negative qualities, words of praise reveal the inner good. (Likutei Sichot)

None of them shall defile himself, among his people (b'amav) (Lev. 21:1)
The Hebrew word "amav" is related to the word "im'um," dimming or growing dark, as in dying embers or coals that have been left to burn out on their own. Serving G-d "dimly," halfheartedly and without fervor, is the cause of all defilement and impurity. The Torah warns us against allowing our G-dly spark to grow dim. Rather, it must be constantly nurtured and rekindled. (The Rebbe of Alexander)

In the manner that he has caused a defect in someone, so shall it be done to him (Lev. 24:20)
If one finds a defect or something lacking in his fellow man, this is a sign that "so shall it be done to him" – that he himself is the one that has the defect. "He who charges others, charges them with his own faults." (Kometz HaMincha)

7:42 Candle Lighting Time
NY Metro Area
14 Iyar / May 8
Torah Portions Emor
Ethics Ch 4
Shabbat ends 8:47 pm

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"Unveil my eyes, that I may perceive the wonders of Your Torah." (Psalm 119:18)



LIVING WITH THE REBBE
from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

This week's Torah portion is Emor, which means "say." The Midrash on the first words of the portion, "Say to the Kohanim [priests]," explains, "The sayings of G-d are pure sayings." So Emor is a command to say something pure, emulating G-d. While we are generally taught not to speak about others, here the Torah is enjoining us to say something positive about another.

When we speak negatively about someone, we affect the person negatively. This is why lashon hara, evil speech, is so bad; it damages three people, the speaker, the listener, and especially the one being spoken about.

Similarly, speaking positively about someone, will affect that person positively.

But what can I see that is positive about someone who is not behaving as he/she should?

There are two answers, both found in the Mishna known as Ethics of our Fathers.

The first is, "Don't judge your friend, until you are in his situation." In this approach, when you see your friend failing in a certain area, you should consider that his circumstance is what caused him to fall short. If he would have been in more favorable circumstances, he would not have failed in this area.

The problem with this approach is, that although you have found a way to answer away your friend's failings, he is still a failure in your eyes. This, obviously, cannot be what "Emor" is teaching us.

The second is, "Judge every person favorably." In this approach, you focus on the positive. You recognize, that every person is given challenges, according to the greatness of his soul. The greater the soul, the greater the challenges and the greater the ability to overcome these challenges. In this way of thinking, you see the positive in your friend. Although there seems to be a negative, you choose not to focus on that. Eventually, if you practice this approach long enough, you will cease to see the negative and you will only see the greatness in others.

Now this is worthwhile saying. Imagine how this boost of true praise, will affect the person being spoken about. This kind of praise, can be the thing that strengthens him, to overcome his challenge. This is the kind of "saying," the name of our parsha is asking us to do.

Since I was young, I would always try to find ways to lift others spirits. Of course, I have said hurtful things too, which I regret. But over the years, I have trained myself to see good things in people, and compliment them.

Everybody has good and when you expose that good, you raise the spirit of that person. And there is nothing better than lifting the spirit of another person.

Adapted by Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz from the teachings of the Rebbe, yitzhurwitz.blogspot.com. Rabbi Hurwitz, who is battling ALS, and his wife Dina, are emissaries of the Rebbe in Temecula, Ca.

The Lesson from a Stone

Lag B'Omer is one of Judaism's days of festive celebration. One of the reasons we celebrate it is that on this day, a plague that killed 24,000 of Rabbi Akiva's students ended.

What was the reason for that plague? Because, our Sages explain, Rabbi Akiva's students did not show respect for one another.

That explanation has raised many questions. Rabbi Akiva placed great emphasis on sharing and unity. It was he who taught: "Love your fellowman as yourself" is a great general principle in the Torah." How then could his students depart from their master's path and fail to show one another respect?

Chasidic thought explains that because every person is unique in his nature and thought processes, he has a unique path in the service of G-d. Similarly, each of Rabbi Akiva's disciples had his own approach. Because they were highly developed individuals, each had internalized his particular approach to the point that it dominated his personality.

Operating from within his own perspective, each considered any approach different from his own as incomplete and inadequate. Being men of integrity, they no doubt spoke their minds plainly. And since all were intensely involved in their own paths of service, none would change. The tension between them escalated, as the deep commitment every student felt to his own particular approach prevented him from showing respect for those who followed a different path.

What was wrong with the students' perspective? Nothing and everything.

Nothing, because every one of the paths proposed by the students could have been correct.

And everything, because their tunnel-vision prevented them from seeing any version of the truth other than their own.

No matter how deeply we are involved in our own service to G-d, we must remain broad-minded enough to appreciate that someone else may have a different approach. Other paths may appear inadequate, but this perception may stem from our own limitations.

Furthermore, even if someone is indeed underdeveloped, his deficiencies need not prevent us from looking upon him in a favorable light. For every individual possesses a potential for growth. We should concentrate on helping others realize that potential, rather than merely accentuating their need to do so.

Rabbi Akiva's own life serves as an example of how any person can reach greatness regardless of his background. Rabbi Akiva descended from a family of converts, and did not begin to study until the age of 40. Nevertheless, he attained such heights of scholarship that our entire knowledge of the Oral Law rests on his teachings.

We needn't wait for miracles to inspire us. Rabbi Akiva was motivated to begin studying Torah by a simple physical observation. Noticing how a rock had been worn away by the constancy of dripping water – though each drop had no apparent effect – he understood that Torah (which is likened to water) could refine even those aspects of his nature that were as rough as stone.

From Keeping in Touch by Rabbi E. Touger, published by Sichos in English

SLICE OF LIFE

Please, Holy Sage...
as told by Rabbi Tzvi Greenwald



Rabbi Greenwald during IDF reserve duty in the 1960s

It was 1947. After the Holocaust, thousands of survivors arrived in the Holy Land. They arrived with hope for an easier life after years of terror.

However, the situation in the Holy Land was volatile, with the struggle against the British growing ever more intense, as well as a war against Arab terrorists who wanted to rid themselves of every last Jew. Any young Jew who could help was drafted.

Yaakov (a pseudonym) was one such young Jew. His entire family was murdered in the Holocaust. He hoped to start a new life and a new family.

He walked down the ramp from the boat in Haifa where Lechi representatives drafted him to their ranks in order to protect the Jews of the Holy Land.

Yaakov underwent a brief training course and was dispatched to one of the units that fought in the area of Jerusalem. Tzvi Greenwald was also in his unit; tall and brawny, young and personable, he was a devoutly religious seventh generation Jerusalemite. Together with the other members of the unit, they were sent on various combat and ambush missions.

Not long after Yaakov joined the unit, he was shot by an Arab in the spine. He was brought to the hospital, but there wasn't much they could do for him. The bullet left him a quadriplegic!

The soldiers who brought him to the hospital could not stay long. But Tzvi Greenwald and another Lechi fighter were determined not to abandon him. They arranged shifts to visit him once every two days

in the hospital to cheer him up as best they could. Weeks and months passed and Lag B'Omer was approaching – the anniversary of the passing of the holy Rashbi, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

Two or three days earlier, Tzvi had gone to visit his friend Yaakov. Tzvi tried to boost his morale.

"Tzvi," said Yaakov, "Lag B'Omer is approaching, a great and holy day; that is how it was treated in our family. When I came, I dreamed of going to the grave site of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, but here I am. I have one request; please take me to Miron for Lag B'Omer. I want this so much..." and he cried.

Tzvi could not say no to his friend's request. "Listen Yaakov, in incredible divine providence, our unit is going up north for a pre-planned raid. We'll try to combine that with taking you with us to Miron."

It was the morning before Lag B'Omer, a beautiful spring day in Jerusalem, when Tzvi Greenwald and two other soldiers entered Yaakov's hospital room. They asked permission from the nurses to take Yaakov "on a short refreshing excursion to encourage him." The nurses loved the idea and agreed.

They carried Yaakov directly to a mattress that lay ready in a military truck waiting outside. The truck had a hard time climbing the narrow, winding roads leading to Miron but finally, in early evening they arrived at the tomb of the Rashbi.

They carried the mattress with Yaakov on it to the building at grave site of the Rashbi. They gently lay the mattress with Yaakov on it in a corner.

Tzvi leaned over his friend. "Yaakov, we are now heading out to an assignment further north. You will stay here and tomorrow at dawn, upon our peaceful return, we will take you back to Jerusalem."

Night descended; the night of Lag B'Omer. Not many Jews made the effort to be with the Rashbi. Someone lit a fire and the few dozen people who had come from cities and towns across the land danced in honor of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

The next morning, the rumble of a military truck could be heard as it made its way up the mountain to Miron. The members of the Lechi unit had returned from their successful mission to pick up their friend.

Tzvi was astonished when he saw the mattress lying where he had put it the night before, but it was empty. Where was Yaakov?

There weren't many people around and so he quickly found Yaakov – walking around like anyone else! Was he hallucinating? Was this a dream? Yaakov was standing on his two feet.

"Yaakov!" he shouted as he ran over. "How did this happen?" Tzvi stammered.

Yaakov told him: "Last night, all I could do was watch the few people who danced around the bonfire, rejoicing in honor of the Rashbi. On the one hand, I rejoiced that my dream that I had in Europe had come true, but this was not how I imagined I would come here.

"Tremendous pain filled my heart. I began talking to Rabbi Shimon. 'Please, holy Sage, you know what I went through during the war. You know at the end of the war, I looked for my relatives and found out that they had all been murdered. There was nothing left for me in Europe and at the first opportunity I boarded a ship for the Holy Land where I hoped to find some peace for my soul.

"'But this is not what G-d wanted. As soon as I arrived I was drafted to help protect the Jewish people. But again my suffering did not end. I was hit by a bullet shot by an Arab. I cannot move my arms or legs. Only my mind has remained clear as ever.

"'I feel as though there is no sense in life as it is. I am turning to you, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, being that on this auspicious day I made the effort to come here in order to plead my case before you and to ask for my life back!

"With this, I burst into tears. I couldn't stop. The reservoir of tremendous pain poured forth from me. I cried and cried..."

"At a certain point, I began to feel a sensation in my fingers and toes. I thought I was imagining it but as time passed, I felt that I could move my fingers. The sensation spread to the rest of my arms and legs. I felt a strange warmth passing through my bones. I did not dare to hope... I was afraid of deluding myself but I realized that I could move my toes.

"As the hours passed, I felt I could move a hand, a foot and slowly more. Toward morning, I tried to lift myself up and my hands obeyed me. I supported myself and sat for the first in a long time. I managed to stand up and you yourself see the miracle that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai did for me!"

Since he was a young child Tzvi had heard stories about the power of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. And now with his own eyes he saw the great miracle.

When Tzvi and his comrades brought Yaakov back to the hospital, the doctors and nurses thought they were seeing a ghost.

Yaakov married and he and his wife established a family. For a long time, he lived in Tochelet near Kfar Chabad where Rabbi Tzvi Greenwald and his family settled. Their connection remained and they rejoiced in each others happy occasions!

Reprinted from *Beis Moshiah*. Rabbi Tzvi Greenwald's son-in-law Rabbi Levi Heber verified this story's accuracy.

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Freely translated

Erev Shabbos Kodesh

Rosh Chodesh Iyar, 5735 [1975]

20th Annual Convention

National Council of Nesheh U'Bnos Chabad (Lubavitch Women's Organization)

On the occasion of the forthcoming convention, taking place on the weekend of Pesach Sheni [the "second" Passover], I send greetings and prayerful wishes that the Convention should, with G-d's help, be crowned with *hatzlocho* [success] in the fullest measure.

One of the teachings of Pesach-Sheni – as my father-in-law of saintly memory pointed out – is that in matters of *Yiddishkeit* [Judaism] one should never give up, and it is never too late to rectify a past failing.

This principle has also been one of the basic factors in the work of the Rebbe's *Nesheim* [leaders] since the beginning of Chabad, who dedicated themselves with utmost *mesiras-nefesh* [self-sacrifice] to bring Jews closer to Torah and *mitzvot* [commandments], regardless of their level of *Yiddishkeit*, and not to give up a single Jew.

The task of bringing Jews closer to *Yiddishkeit* is especially relevant to women, for it obviously requires a special approach in terms of compassion, loving-kindness, gentleness, and the like – qualities with which women are generally endowed in a larger measure than men, although all Jews without exception are characterized as *rachmonim* and *gomlei-chasodim*, compassionate and practicing loving-kindness.

The theme of the Convention, "Bringing Light Into the World – The Obligation and Privilege of Every Jewish Daughter," is especially fitting in many ways, including this detail in light that it illuminate its environs

regardless of the state of things, all of which are equally illuminated, and in a benign and friendly manner. This is the way *Torah-Or* [Torah-Light] illuminates every Jew in every respect, as it is written, "Its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace."

May G-d grant that the convention be carried through with *hatzlocho*, and should inspire each and all the participants to carry on their vital work in a manner full of light and vitality, and in an ever-growing measure...

One of the significant lessons of Pesach-sheni is never to despair even when one has not attained the spiritual heights of others.

16 Iyar 5711 [1951]

Blessing and Greeting:

I was pleased with the opportunity to exchange a few words with you. As you connected your visit with the day of Pesach-sheni which we observed on the day before yesterday, I want to make it the subject of this letter.

One of the significant lessons of Pesach-sheni is never to despair even when one has not attained the spiritual heights of others. Thus, while all the people are celebrating the Passover at its proper time, and one finds himself "far away," or otherwise unfit to enter the Sanctuary, he is told: do not despair; begin your way towards the Sanctuary; come closer and closer; for you have a special chance and opportunity to celebrate the Second Passover, if you try hard enough. Please convey my regards and best wishes to your circle.

Cordially,

MOSHIACH MATTERS

In chapter four of *Ethics* it says: Rabbi Yaakov said: "This world is like an ante-room before the World to Come; prepare yourself in the ante-room so that you may enter the banquet hall."

The World to Come – the Era of the Redemption – reflects the ultimate purpose of creation, when it will be revealed that this world is G-d's dwelling. In the present era, man's efforts are directed towards transforming the world into a dwelling for G-d. For this reason, the present era is referred to as an ante-room, a preparatory phase through which we must pass. (*In the Path of Our Fathers*, *sie.org*, *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 1)

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

This Friday is Pesach Sheni - the second Passover, and this coming Tuesday (May 12) is Lag B'Omer: What is the connection between these two "minor" festivals?

The Previous Rebbe explained that the lesson of Pesach Sheni is that "nothing is ever lost." Provision is made for a person who was impure, or far away from the Temple, to correct his situation. He is even given this opportunity if he willingly brought himself to these circumstances. This also relates to Lag B'Omer for Lag B'Omer is also associated with aiding individuals who are not in the place personally where they should be. This is obvious from Rabbi Shimon's statements: "I have the potential to free the entire world from judgment."

Indeed, this year the connection is even more than in other years. Why? Because Friday is always associated with Shabbat, as the preparations for the Shabbat meals must be carried out beforehand. Furthermore, if the Pesach Sheni sacrifice was offered on Friday; it was to be eaten on the night of the 15th – the night of Shabbat.

And Shabbat is always the day that blesses and influences the upcoming days of the week - and this week contains Lag B'Omer:

Pesach Sheni teaches us that when it comes to helping another Jew; be it an individual who is needy in a simple sense and requires charity; or one who is "spiritually needy," it is impossible to procrastinate. Particularly now, in the last moments before Moshiach comes, it is impossible to postpone performing the favor. One must act immediately and with that act, one may, to quote Maimonides, "tip the balance in one's own favor and... in the favor of the entire world and bring redemption and salvation."

This is also related to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai who desired that all Jews, without differentiation, celebrate on his day of rejoicing with open and revealed happiness.

We look forward to the day when we will once again celebrate Pesach Sheni and Lag B'Omer with Rabbi Shimon himself; may it happen NOW!

Shmuel Beilman

L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA לזכרון חיה י מושקה

The name of our publication has special meaning. It stands for the name of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson (obm), wife of the Rebbe.

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Winning Every Moment

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WHO'S WHO

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai (commonly known by the acronym of his name, Rashbi) lived in the 2nd century c.e. He openly criticized the Roman government and was forced to go into hiding. He and his son hid in a cave and immersed themselves in Torah. Emerging after 13 years he founded an academy in the Galilee. His esoteric teachings were recorded by his disciples in the *Zohar*, the most fundamental work of *Kabala*. On the anniversary of his passing on Lag B'Omer, tens of thousands gather at his tomb in Meron, in northern Galilee.