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**WEEKLY PARSHA
ARCHIVE Q&A**

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BEHAR-LAG B"OMER 5784

Lag BaOmer and Amalek

Lag BaOmer is on the 18th day of the month of Iyar. The *gematria* of the word “*Iyar*,” together with the number 18, is equal to the word “*Amalek*.”¹ In other words, there is a connection between Amalek and this day.

Whenever a person is sad, this really comes from the fact that he isn't connected to a root. He is like a branch disconnected from its root. The root has a ‘root’ as well to it: the lack of connection between the person and Hashem. By contrast, happiness is when there is connection to our Source.

It is written, “*With hardship shall you bear children.*”² The pain of child labor is called “*etzev*,” which can also mean “sadness.” Birth is a separation of the baby from its mother; when the baby was in its mother, it is considered part of the mother. Now, it has disconnected from its mother – this is the “*etzev*”/sadness of giving birth.

Childbirth, and the *etzev* which follows it, reflects the concept that a person has to be integrated with his Source. The purpose of man is to integrate himself with his root, and keep connecting himself to his roots until he arrives at the root of all roots, the Creator.

On Yom Tov we have a *mitzvah* to be happy. Yom Tov is “*moed*,” which comes from the word “*vaad*” – a meeting. When there is a meeting, there is connection, and thus there is happiness.

The Meaning Behind the Bonfires

There is a *minhag* on *Lag BaOmer* to light bonfires. We don't just light small fires like we light for Shabbos and Yom Tov. We light big fires – bonfires, which are called “*lehavah*” in Hebrew.

The inner meaning of this is to show us that we need to have a big “fire,” a *lehavah*, in our hearts, for Hashem. If a person has this inner fire, he is inwardly connected to *Lag BaOmer*. If a person is just lighting physical bonfires, but his soul is cold inside, he is not truly celebrating *Lag BaOmer*.

It is written, “*The house of Yaakov will be a fire, and the house of Yosef will be a big flame.*”³ This is referring to the inner layer of a Jew's soul, the burning desire for Hashem. At first there is a small fire, and then it becomes a huge flame, a *lehavah*. When a person increases his inner fire for Hashem until it is a big flame, then he can integrate with Hashem.

In other words, bonfires on this day are not just superficial acts of lighting big fires. They are meant to remind us of our innermost point of the soul, which is like a great, fiery desire to be connected with Hashem.

Countering The ‘Separation’ Caused By Amalek: Connecting To Hashem

1 Numerical value of *Iyar* is $221+18 = 239$. The word “*Amalek*” is equal to 240. (As is well-known, in the system of *Gematria*, the word itself counts as one. Thus, *Amalek/240* is equal to *Iyar/239*, and therefore there is a parallel between these two concepts).

2 *Beraishis* 3:16

3 *Ovadyah* 1: 18-21

It is well-known that the evil force of “Amalek” causes disparity in Creation. Amalek attacked us in “*Refdim*,” and *Chazal* explain that “*Refdim*” is from the words “*rafu y'dei hem b'Torah*” “their hands were weak in Torah,” implying a lack of connection to the Torah. When a person’s hands become weak, he loses connection to what he is holding. Our hands were weak then in “holding” the Torah - there was a weakening in our connection to Torah; and that enabled Amalek to attack us.

Of Torah it is written, “*Are My words not like fire, so says Hashem?*”⁴ - the Torah is like a ‘fire’, and it gives the person the power to enlarge its fire. Then, on our own, we must turn it into a big flame - a “*lehavah*.” This is referring to the concept of becoming totally integrated with Hashem.⁵

The power that is inherent in the day of *Lag BaOmer* is essentially the power to become connected to the Creator – the opposite of Amalek’s agenda, who wants to cause us to be separate from the Creator. This is also the inner meaning of what it means to “erase Amalek” from our midst, and thereby remove its evil. The “great flame” that can be reached on this day – integrating one’s self with Hashem – is what can prevent Amalek from coming to weaken us.

Amalek weakened our “hands” in Torah. When our hands became weak, we lost our connection to what we were holding; thus there was a weakening in our connection to Torah. But why is this part of the body chosen to symbolize our connection to Torah? Don’t we learn Torah with our mouths and minds, not our hands?

The answer to this is that there are two points contained here. On one level, a person can only connect to something with his “hands” – in other words, when he is holding onto it. You use your hands to hold onto something, such as a person who is drowning and catches a piece of wood to hold onto. Thus the “weakened hands” in Torah meant a lack of connection to Torah.

Another point to be emphasized is, as the *Zohar* states, that if one learns Torah without feelings of love and awe of Hashem, such Torah learning does not ascend to Heaven. In other words, a person can be learning Torah, but he hasn’t yet gotten to the “fire” of Torah; his “hands are weakened in Torah” – he is missing the “hands” that can raise him higher.

When Amalek attacked, the generation had certainly been learning Torah, but they were lacking a certain connection to it on their level. They weren’t riding the “fire” of the Torah that ascends to the root; they weren’t using the power of the Torah which elevates man. Man is really a part of the Torah’s essence, and the Torah is what connects a person to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

⁴ *Yirmiyahu* 23:29

⁵ “*biskalelus*” – integrating with Hashem; see the end of “*Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh*” vol. I.

QUESTION:

1) I write this question with tears and pain over the unspeakable tragedy that happened to Klal Yisrael at the holy site of the Rashbi [several years ago] ...What can the Rav tell us to console us about the tragedy?

ANSWER:

Everything in Creation has a *chitzoniyus* (outer level) and a *pnimiyus* (inner level) to it. It is the same when it comes to this matter as well.

Of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai it is said **נעשה אדם בעבורך** "Man was made because of you." The *gematria* of the word for man, "adam," is 45. *Chazal* said that in the future, "The *tzaddikim* will be called by the name of their Creator," and a degree of this already took place on This World, with Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, whom the Zohar compares to Hashem: "The face of the master Hashem – Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai." This revelation, this *ohr*, is mainly in the End of Days, where the level called "*Keser*" (crown) is revealed. The *Keser* is the bridge between human beings and Hashem, as it were. The *ohr*, the revelations, in the End of Days are shining strongly now and it "shines" especially stronger on the *yahrtzeit* of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. There has been an ascent in this world in which there are souls who rose to the ideal level of the human being, called "adam." These 45 *neshamos* rose to the level of "adam." They rose together with Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, and they were *zocheh* to enter into the *mesivta d'Rashbi*, in the higher world. And it was a realization of **בקרובי אקדש** "With My close ones, I am sanctified," such as what took place at the inauguration of the Mishkan [with the deaths of Nadav and Avihu]. And here as well, this Lag B'Omer, there has been a day of special ascent for the soul of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, an ascent to the level of "adam," the ideal level of man along with 45 *neshamos* were very, very worthy of ascending together with Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. They are praiseworthy in their portion. That is all with regards to the *pnimiyus*, to the inner level of this event.

But in the *chitzoniyus*, in the outer level of this event, the 50th level of *tumah*, which counters the 50th level of *kedushah* was active. Whereas, the highest levels of *kedushah* bring a person above the normal human level, the lowest levels of *tumah* are able to bring a person beneath the normal human level, below the level of the adam. That is where the world has fallen into today. And, G-d forbid, even in a holy place such as Meron, these impure devices of the 50th level of *tumah* enter there daily. Even on the holy day of Lag B'Omer, in a place where *chassidus* is guarded so carefully, it is now filled with these impure devices [smart phones], which were used to take pictures of the tragedy, etc..

So, on the one hand, the great exalted light of the 50th level of *kedushah* shines, but at the same time, its opposite, which is the 50th level of *tumah*, counters it's its radiance, G-d forbid. As is known, every year on Lag B'Omer Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's soul becomes elevated again. Additionally, on the one hand, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai ascends to his high place above at his burial place, but at the same time, on the world down below, the "heads of the *Erev Rav*" take control of this place because of the 50th level of *tumah* which runs rampant today.