



5780 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein Parashat Emor / פרשת אמור

Lag B'Omer in Yerushalayim

In regular years, thousands of Jews leave Yerushalayim on Lag B'Omer and travel to Miron. This year, however, Lag B'Omer will be celebrated by Yerushalmim at home, within the city of Yerushalayim. What is the significance of this celebration? Is there anything special about the celebration of Lag B'Omer inside Yerushalayim?

Lag B'Omer appears in the cannon of halacha at a relatively late date. The Gemara simply states that the students of Rabbi Akiva died between Pesach and Shavu'ot but gives no further detail.¹ It is a post-talmudic tradition of the Ge'onim which first mentions Lag B'Omer as the day in which these students ceased from dying.² In Shulchan Aruch, Lag B'Omer is simply mentioned as the day when the mourning of sefirah ends according to one tradition.³

However, kabbalistic literature highlights Lag B'Omer as a highly significant date. This is seen even on the page of Shulchan Aruch. The Magen Avraham, one of the main commentaries on Shulchan Aruch, cites the Arizal that there was once a person who was accustomed to daily pray for the consolation of Yerushalayim. He continued this practice on Lag B'Omer and was subsequently punished. In one rendering of the story, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai himself communicated with the person that why was he praying mournfully on the day of great joy!⁴

This story underscores that there is a deep connection between the kabbalistic understanding of the celebration of Lag B'Omer and the rebuilding of Yerushalayim. Even if during the year one prays mournfully for a destroyed Yerushalayim, the joy of Lag B'Omer renders such mourning obsolete. What is the nature of this connection?

¹ Yevamot 62b.

² Cited in Meiri, *ibid*.

³ Shulchan Aruch 493:2.

⁴ Ateret Zekainim siman 493.



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According to the books of Chassidus, the joy of Lag B'Omer is due to the fact that Rebbi Shimon revealed the secrets of the Torah on that day to his students. While in Rebbi Shimon's days these secrets were revealed only for his elite and select students, according to chassidus these teachings are supposed to become increasingly open for everyone as we approach the time of Mashiach.⁵ Therefore, today, the secrets of the Zohar are studied more widely than ever before in history and more Jews celebrate Lag B'Omer than ever before.

Accordingly, the joy of Lag B'Omer revolves around two interrelated points: the revelation of the secrets of the Torah and the relevance of the deepest parts of the Torah for the masses of Jews. In years of course it is sensible to celebrate this phenomenon in the place where it all began – in Miron. Based on the above understanding, though, we can draw strength from the fact that this year Lag B'Omer will be celebrated in the holy city.

Yerushalayim is the place from which the deepest Torah's of Mashiach will emanate. Also, Yerushalayim represents the notion that all Jews are fundamentally equal as it is the city which makes all Jews into "friends." Therefore, it is fitting that the celebration of the revelation of the deepest elements of Torah for all Jews will occur for some in Yerushalayim. As such, let us take comfort and find new meaning in that this year Lag B'Omer will be more celebrated in Yerushalayim than ever before.

⁵ See, for example, Degel Machane Efraim parshat Beshalach.