אייר תשעוה' May 13, 2016

 פרשת אמור

 Becoming human

In this special time of Sefira we are given the opportunity to transform and elevate ourselves from our low animalistic side to becoming a true human. This is how the Beis Avraham explains the difference in קרבנות at this time of year. The עומרקרבןwhich is brought on Pesach is from barely- animal food.[[1]](#footnote-2) The שתי הלחםקרבןwhich is offered on Shavuos is from wheat- human food. This is the purpose of Sefira– to cleanse and transform ourselves from animal to human.[[2]](#footnote-3)

R’ ChatzkelLevenstein[[3]](#footnote-4)writes in the name of the Alter of Kelm his explanation on[[4]](#footnote-5)עיר פרא אדם יולד:first we are aעיר פרא; wild animal, but we need to give birth to the human, to rule over physicality. This requires effort as is indicated in [[5]](#footnote-6)אדם לעמל יולד: to form (יולד) the true human-אדם- we need to toil at it (עמל).

R’ Yaakov Abuchatzeraremarks thatוהבאתם את עמר ראשית קצירכם; you shall bring anעומר from your first harvest, is called so because we cut off (קציר) the קליפות; shells of impurity, during these days of Sefira.[[6]](#footnote-7)It is of course no coincidence that the Parshiyosthat come out during Sefira contain טהרה; purity:Sheminispeaks about מאכלות אסורותwhich can cause blockage to Kedusha,[[7]](#footnote-8)Tazria and Metzora are filled with טהרה, AchareiMosspeaks of Yom Kippur, the day of purity, Kedoshimdeals with Kedusha and so on.

We know מואבis from the union of לוט and his daughters.[[8]](#footnote-9) It therefore is no surprise that it yields a Gematria of 49 (levels of impurity) signifying how steeped in impurity they were. Of all people, DovidHamelech descends from this union. When is his Yartzheit? On Shavuos.[[9]](#footnote-10)This is because he rose from those 49 gates of impurity to the high level we were on Shavuos- the 50th.[[10]](#footnote-11) We should merit to cleanse and purify ourselves with the special opportunity we have during Sefira.

 A man above this world

With Lag Baomer approaching[[11]](#footnote-12) we may wonder who was R’ Shimon Bar Yochai. He was not a man of this world.[[12]](#footnote-13)We see an indication of this from his opinion that one shouldn’t work rather he should devote himself exclusively to learning Torah.[[13]](#footnote-14) Following this idea, he lived in a cave for 12 years- symbolizing a world of his own. Furthermore, while he was there, a carob tree and a spring of water were created for him and his son, as he was מלומד בנסים; accustomed to miracles.[[14]](#footnote-15)What happened when he emerged from the cave? Everywhere he would cast his gaze, the object of his vision would immediately be incinerated. R’ Shimon Bar Yochai was able to turn someone into a pile of bones by just setting his eyes upon him as he did with יהודה בן גרים.[[15]](#footnote-16)

How did the holy OhrHachaim act when he was approaching the gravesite of this holy Tanna? When the OhrHachaim(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…[[16]](#footnote-17)

On Lag Baomer many go to the grave of R’ Shimon Bar Yochai.[[17]](#footnote-18)This is nothing recent as it dates back long ago.[[18]](#footnote-19)R’Chaim Vitaal[[19]](#footnote-20)writes I have seen my teacher, the Arizal, go to the grave of R’ Shimon Bar Yochai. and his son on Lag Baomerwith his wife and family.

R’ OvadiaBartenura(1440-1516) in the year 1488wrote in a letter to his brotherthat on the 18th of Iyar, 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.[[20]](#footnote-21)

On Lag Baomer,[[21]](#footnote-22) all gates of the רקיעare opened עד בלי די; without limit.[[22]](#footnote-23)Is it any wonder that the initials of,,,**י**ושפע**ש**פע **ר**ב **ב**כל...; through this may abundant bounty flow through all the worlds, formרשבי (acronym for ר' שמעון בר יוחאי).[[23]](#footnote-24)

Many were healed[[24]](#footnote-25) from the prayers on this holy day at his gravesite.[[25]](#footnote-26)The ImreiPinchas[[26]](#footnote-27)informs us that Lag Baomer has the power to awaken רפואה since the PriEitzChaim saysthatרפואהcorresponds to הוד[[27]](#footnote-28) and Lag Baomercorrelates to הוד שבהוד. Indeed, the first letters of**מ**לך **ר**ופא **נ**אמן **ו**רחמן (ShemonaEsrei in Bracha of רפאנו) form מרון.

 Deeper than oil

The Gemara[[28]](#footnote-29) relates that the Romans once instituted 3 decrees against us- not to keep Shabbos, not to circumcise our sons and to have relations with Niddas. Who was the one that had these decrees ultimately abolished? R’ Shimon Bar Yochai. With this the Imrei Chaim explains the term שמן in relation to R’ Shimon Bar Yochai- שמן ששון מחבריך, שמן משחת קדש in the Zemer Bar Yochai- as שמן are the initials **ש**בת, **מ**ילה, **נ**דה, the 3 decrees he eliminated.

 The strong man

The word יד has a Gematria of 14.This alludes to the 14 knuckles one has on each hand. The number 14 is a 1 and a 4 since that is how the hand is divided up as the thumb is the 1 and then there are the other 4. The number 14 is that of a י (10) and ד (4). These two letters together make up a ה which has a Gematira of 5, referring to the 5 fingers.

The letter י is a spiritual letter[[29]](#footnote-30)as is shown in the following:

1) It is the only letter that remains aloof, above as it doesn’t touch the line, symbolizing spirituality.

2) It is with this letter that עולם הבאwas created.[[30]](#footnote-31)

The ד on the other hand refers to עולם הזה(physicality) as ד in Gematria is 4 alluding to the ד' כנפות הארץ; 4 corners of the earth. So, when we perform an action, it is becauseour mind (י) tells the hand (ד, physicality) to do it. It also tells us when not to do an action. Thus, יד is comprised of the same letters as די!

True strength is with both hands. This explains why כח has a numerical value of 28,since there are 28 knuckles on both hands.

One who is mentally strong is called a חכם. This is at age 40 as in בן ארבעים לבינה.[[31]](#footnote-32)Hence, rearranging the letters of חכםwe get כח מ (מ has a Gematria of 40).

 Get clean

The Izbitza[[32]](#footnote-33)teaches that the idea of the Kohanim washing their hands and feet (from the Kiyor) is removing נגיעות; bias. This idea is illustrated by theעגלה ערופה; the axed heifer, as it says**ירחצו**...לא ראו[[33]](#footnote-34); …our hands have not spilled this blood and our eyes did not see, meaning they had nothing to do with this murder. So too a Kohen who does the Avoda needs to do רחיצה- that is, to remove the ‘self’ and completely submit to Hashem as he should only do what Hashem wants. For the same reason we wash our hands before we daven.

Withthis we can understand a deeper reason why we wash our hands before we eat a Seuda as we are now taking part in the physical world.We therefore want it to be with the proper intentions (to serve Hashem) and not to just fulfill our desires.

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1. This is shown to us by the Sotain that her קרבן is from barely- animal food- since she did an animalistic act (Bamidbar 5:15, Rashi). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Nesivos Shalom, Emor, SefirasHaomer.Looking at the Parshiyosof Sefira, we notice it contains the number 7 and 8. In Sheminiit is indicated in its name. In Tazria, we are told a woman who gives birth to a boy is impure for 7 days. The 8th day,he is circumcised (12:3,4). We also see the number 7 when the Kohen deals with Tzaraas later in that Parsha. InMetzora, the one with Tzaraas is sprinkled 7 times, dwells outside the tent for 7 days and so on.On the 8th day he brings a Korbon. This is just one example in Metzora as these numbers also appear by a Zav, Zava and so on. In AchareiMos we speak of Yom Kippur which is in the 7th month (16:29). In Emor we haveSuccos and Pesach- the 7 day YomimTovim, as well as Sefira.The sections of Shemita- which is every 7 years, and Yovel- which is after 7 cycles of Shemita, is dealt with in ParshasBehar. Behukosai is no exception as it says שבע... (26:18). This is the idea of Sefiraas through the 7 weeks we rise to the 8th(supernatural) week- Shavuos. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. OhrYechezkal, Elul, pg 7.He was the famed Mashgiach of the Mir in Poland and moved with them to Shanghai, China in 1941. In 1954 he became the Mashgiach of Ponovich. He passed away in 1974. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Iyov 11:12 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Iyov 5:7 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Vayikra 23:10. SeferMachsofHalavan, Emor [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. See Yoma 39a [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Breishis 19:37 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. This is one of the reasons why we read Rus on Shavuos as it delineates his ancestry (It is also Dovid’s birthday as Tzadikim are born and die on the same day). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. The Kobriner (TorasAvos,Avodas Hashem) explains אונס רחמנא פטריה(Nedarim 27a)in the following way: If you force (אונס) yourself above your natural capabilities for Hashem, then רחמנא פטריה- the mercy of Hashem is opened up. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. It is no coincidence that ParshasEmor comes out near Lag Baomer. The Gemara (Brachos 58a) states הוד refers to the BeisHamikdash, the place where the Kohen performs his Avoda. Emor deals with the laws of Kohanim, who are the Mida of הוד just as Ahron corresponds to the week of הוד. What is the Sefira of Lag Baomer? הוד שבהוד. Parenthetically, הוד can mean to admit so הוד שבהוד is complete submission. On Lag Baomer, the students of R’ Akiva stopped dying- which was caused byשלא נהגו כבוד זה לזה. So הוד שבהוד; humility, is the rectification. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. See TzdkasHatzadik 155. Incidentally, R’ Shimon Bar Yochai was a Gilgul of Moshe (in fact, משה has the same Gematria as לג בעומר- 345) who also lived in a world of beyond as he was able to not eat and drink for 40 days among other things. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Brachos 35b [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. Shabbos 33b.Meila 17b [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Shabbos 34a [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. TaamaiMinhagim, p 270. To get a glimpse of who the OhrHachaim was, here is the following story. When HarHazeisim fell to the Jordanians in 1948, they started to build a road through the cemetery. When the tractor reached the grave of the OhrHachaim, it broke down and couldn’t restart. A new tractor came the following day. Upon making contact with the grave of the OhrHachaim, it overturned and fell into the valley, killing the driver. As a result, plans for this road were halted. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. See however שו"ת חת"ס, יו"ד, 233 and שו"ת שואל ומשיב 5:39. The Zohar was revealed on Lag Baomer as well as it also being R’ Shimon Bar Yochai’sYartzheit. Incidentally, the phrase כדאי הוא ר' שמעון לסמוך עליו בשעת הדחק; R’ Shimon is worthy to be relied on as an authority in time of emergency (Gittin 19a) is interpreted with going to Meiron on Lag Baomer. That is, it is worthy to travel to Meiron even though it may be extremely overcrowded and the like, as we can get a salvation in his merit. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. It statesשמעו קלא עולו ואתו ואתכנשו להילולא דרבי שמעון; they heard a voice ascend, come and gather for the Yartzheit of R’ Shimon (Zohar ח"ג, 296). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. ShaarHakavanos, 87b [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. DarkeiTzion, 2nd letter [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. The Rebbe R’ Baruch, the grandson of the Baal Shem Tov each year on Lag Baomer would make a Siyum on the Zohar. After the Siyum he would take the Sefer Zohar in his hand and dance for hours. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. IdraZuta, Haazinu 291b. 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 Meironלכבוד שם קדשו to be happy in the Simcha of his great Yartzheit (TaamaiMinhagim, pg 269, footnote 48). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. From the Tefila in NusachSefard after Sefira.In the first Pasuk in the Torah- in בראשית ברא- we see a hint to him and his son as it forms the initials תנא אלו-הי ר' שמעון בר יוחאי andבנו ר' אלעזר. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. See TaamaiMinhagim, pg 263 of an incredible story from 1923 about a child who was a brought back to life by the grave of R’ Shimon Bar Yochai and the Tzibur recited the Bracha ofמחיה המתים. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. The Pasuk states לבי ובשרי ירננו לא-ל חי(Tehillim 84:3). לבי is rooted in לב which has a Gematria of 32 referring to the first 32 days of Sefira. Then comes בשרי which is the same letters as רשביreferring to Lag Baomer, the day of R’ Shimon Bar Yochai. This is a special day for Tefila- ירננו לא-ל חי. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. 231 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. הוד is related to הודאה, admit as when one admits that Hashem is the one who heals, he opens up the power of healing. Indeed, some recite a Tefila before taking medicine that it should be your will, Hashem that through this, I should be cured- ...שיהא עסק זה לי לרפואה... . [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. Meila 17 [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. See Shemos 15:1, Rashi [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. Menachos 29b [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. Avos5:26 [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. מי השלוח, Ki Sisa, s.v. ורחצו. The Izbita was the Rebbe of the famous R’ TzadokHakohen of Lublin. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. Devarim 21:6-7 [↑](#footnote-ref-34)