



A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

RABBI EZRA STETTIN

To Live For



Don't desecrate My holy name. [Rather:] I should be sanctified among the Children of Israel. (22:32)

"Don't desecrate"—by violating My word deliberately. That would be understood [well enough] from the words "Don't desecrate." What [more] does the Torah teach with the words "I should be sanctified?" [That] you must give [your life, if necessary] and sanctify My name. (Rashi)

THAT HOLY JEWS HAVE SACRIFICED THEIR LIVES, over thousands of years of our history, makes this verse powerful to read.

Or, at least, it should. Will we read this passuk on Shabbos and tremble with the recognition of what this meant for so many of our ancestors?

The reality is, we probably won't.

I once heard, from Rabbi Yushel Poupko of Yerushalayim, the following insight: If you ask many Jews who keep a minimal level of Torah observance whether they'd be willing to give up their lives for Hashem, they will often answer "yes." The reason for this is that it's easier to *die* for what you believe in than to *live* for it.

There is often a tremendous disconnect between our beliefs and our actions. For example, most of us value our immediate family (including our spouses) as the most important people in our lives. Do we treat them that way? (Don't answer out loud.)

This verse makes it clear that Hashem must be the most important part of our lives—not just of our deaths. Let's make a change this Shabbos. 🕊

A TIMELY HALACHA

RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

Lag ba'Omer

Many different events took place on Lag ba'Omer (the thirty-third day of the Omer period, between Pesach and Shavu'os):

- Some say that it is the day that Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai exited the cave where he and his son had hidden for thirteen years from the Romans (see Talmud, Shabbos 33b).
- Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai died on Lag ba'Omer, and he revealed the Zohar (a Kabbalistic work) on his final day. (*Chaye Adam* 131:11)
- When the Jews were in the Wilderness, the manna started to fall on the thirty-third day after Pesach. (Chasam Sofer)

The Rama (O.C. 493:2) says that one should be happy on Lag ba'Omer. There are different explanations why.

- Some want to suggest that Rabbi Akiva's students, who died throughout the days following Pesach, stopped dying on Lag ba'Omer. (M.B. 493:8)

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A RIDDLE FOR YOU

How many children did Bo'az have?
The answer will appear next week.

LAST WEEK'S RIDDLE:

Q Four people were named through a prophecy given before they were born. Who are they?

- A 1) Yishma'el (B'reishis 16:11)
2) Yitzchak (B'reishis 17:19)
3) Sh'lomo (Divrei haYamim I 22:8)
4) Yoshiyahu (M'lachim I 13:2) 🕊

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Motzo'ei Shabbos
GALA BONFIRE

10:30PM Carlebach-style Havdalah
10:40 Bidding for bonfire lighting
10:45 Hadlakah (lighting the bonfire) followed by dancing
11:00 Melave Malka—bagels and lox
11:15 Inspirational stories
11:30 Kumzits and dancing



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A TIMELY HALACHA

(CONTINUED)

- Others say that the joy is in honor of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. This is why there is a custom, dating back more than 500 years, to go on Lag ba'Omer to his tomb, in Meron, in northern Israel. (*Chayei Adam* 131:11)

Several tragedies and massacres have taken place between Pesach and Shavu'os, so we observe some aspects of mourning for much of the Omer period, although there are different opinions as to exactly when. However, on Lag ba'Omer day, the custom among Ashkenazic Jews (those from most of Europe and Russia) is to conduct weddings, listen to music, and take haircuts. This year, when Lag ba'Omer falls out on Sunday, shaving and haircuts are already permitted on Friday, in honor of Shabbos. (Rama O.C. 493)

Many light bonfires and dance on the night of Lag ba'Omer, as well as shooting arrows. Other popular customs include singing the "Bar Yochai" song, and cutting the hair of three-year-old boys, especially in Meron; there are all sorts of mystical reasons for this.

The "Tachanun" prayer is not recited on Lag ba'Omer, or at Mincha on the day before. This year, the "Tzidkas'cha Tzedek" prayer will be omitted at Mincha on Shabbos.

There are certain restrictions when it comes to fasting on Lag ba'Omer. If the need arises, consult a competent rabbi.

If someone hasn't yet counted the Omer, he may still count properly, with a blessing, after saying "Today is Lag ba'Omer." He was referring to the name of the holiday—he wasn't tallying the day's number. (Rabbi Sholom Kamenetzky, *Kovetz Halachos*, p. 59) 🕊

THE GREATNESS OF SIMPLE PEOPLE

HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE STOOD IN LINE OUTSIDE the Mesivta of Ger in Borough Park, awaiting their turn to meet with the Gerrer Rebbe, who was visiting the United States. Every person who showed up was given a number, with older people receiving lower numbers to minimize their time standing in line.

As the line inched forward, an elderly gentleman walked into the building and,

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🕊️🕊️ Kollel Yisgaber K'ari (amud-a-day of Mishnah B'rurah)

Rabbi Chaim Heinemann.....
Monday–Friday 6:55–7:20 AM

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Rabbi Meir Minster.....
Sunday–Thursday 8–8:45 PM
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Sunday–Thursday 9–9:55 PM
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THIS WEEK IN JEWISH HISTORY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

On **17 Iyar, 5623 (1863)**, at the Civil War Battle of Chancellorsville, the first engagement of a completely Jewish company came to an end. This all-Jewish company of 100 soldiers from Chicago was known as the Concordia Guards, and it was Company C of the 82nd Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment. After losing its leader during the fighting, the regiment was taken over by Lt. Col. Edward Salomon, a German Jew who had immigrated to the United States. Salomon eventually became one of the highest-ranking Jewish officers in the Union Army, rising to the rank of brigadier general. Another Jewish soldier who achieved distinction was Sergeant Henry Hiller, who earned the Congressional Medal of Honor. The 82nd Illinois later participated in the Battle of Gettysburg, followed by the Atlanta Campaign and Sherman's March to the Sea. 🕊



Rabbi Heinemann and friend visit the GMS BMS for a demo

not recognizing the system already in place, made his way toward the front.

"Excuse me," some people called out, "There is a number system. You have to wait your turn."

Oblivious to the comments, the elderly man proceeded to ask the *gabbai* when he could see the Rebbe.

"Do you have a number?" the *gabbai* asked.

The man silently rolled up his jacket sleeve, revealing the number that had been tattooed on his arm in the concentration camps. "Yes," he whispered, "here is my number."

The *gabbai* and everyone standing around immediately regretted their comments. The gentleman was placed first in line. 🕊