

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

Lag B'Omer and the Strength to Start Again



RABBI
 EPHRAIM
 SKOLNIK

One of the many reasons why we celebrate Lag Ba'Omer is because the 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva stopped dying on that day. The obvious question is that we know that they all died, so what is the significance of when they stopped dying? If they were all dead, why would that be reason to celebrate a holiday? I have heard different answers over the years, but one that truly resonated with me I heard from Rabbi Dovid Orlofsky. Let us just imagine Rabbi Akiva leaving the funeral of student number 23,999 and hearing that student number 24,000 had just died. In addition to the personal tragedy, imagine the heartbreak and

feeling of despair as 24 years of hard work and toil was completely erased with the loss of every student. Surely he could look up to the heaven and tell G-d "I tried. I taught diligently. I raised students to the best of my ability for 24 years, but obviously it's not what you wanted," and move on from teaching students. But no. Rabbi Akiva got up and found five more students, and through them was transferred almost the oral Torah that we have. This is the significance of Lag Ba'Omer. Yes, all 24,000 students died, but Rabbi Akiva was undaunted. He persevered and in his old age started again. Many times in

our lives we have challenges which seem insurmountable and we want to look to heaven and tell G-d we have done all we can and it's just too much. But on this Lag Ba'Omer, let's remember Rabbi Akiva who, after losing everything, refused to give up. The next time we are faced with a seemingly insurmountable challenge, let's take that strength deep inside every one of us and keep on trying. 🕊️

A TIMELY HALACHA

RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

We began talking about the *halachos* (laws) of *lashon hara* (gossip) and discussed the many scenarios that are included in the prohibition.

Let's now go through the *halachos* of communicating potentially embarrassing or potentially damaging information when there is a qualifying need.

Suppose Reuvain saw Levi commit an act through which he harmed someone else. For example, Levi stole from Shimon. If Reuvain is sure that Levi has not yet compensated Shimon, Reuvain may now inform Shimon about Levi's theft, providing that the following eight conditions are met

1. Reuvain must know absolutely that Levi committed the act.
2. Reuvain must consider carefully and conclude that Levi was wrong.
3.
 - a. Reuvain should inform Levi privately, in a nice way, that he should correct his behavior and/or compensate Shimon.
 - b. However, if Reuvain believes that Levi will not listen or might hurt him, he need not inform Levi.
 - c. If Levi does correct his behavior then Reuvain should not tell Shimon.
4. When Reuvain recounts Levi's act to Shimon, he must not exaggerate, but just relate the facts.
5. Reuvain's intention must be to help Shimon, the victim, not to embarrass Levi, and not for personal gain.

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A TIMELY HALACHA

CONTINUED

6. If Reuvain can somehow achieve the result of helping Shimon without informing others, he should proceed that way
7. If Reuvain believes his communication will result in a more serious consequence for Levi than the consequence Levi would receive from a *Beis Din* if they would hear this case, he should consult a Rav first. Furthermore, two men together as a pair of witnesses who want to share information about Levi with Shimon should ask a Rav what they are permitted to share. Two men together have more latitude than an individual in indulging information that they know.
8. In most circumstances, if Reuvain commits the same *aveira* (sin) that he knows Levi committed, he may not indulge that information about Levi. 🕒

A LESSON LEARNED

When Rabbi Chaim Bressler, the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva Beth Moshe of Scranton, was a teenager, he would from time to time visit a certain Mr. Lieberman in a nursing home nearby. Mr. Lieberman was all alone in the world and understandably a very depressed individual. Visits were not pleasant, but Rabbi Bressler knew that Mr. Lieberman appreciated them immensely. One day when Rabbi Bressler got up to go, Mr. Lieberman decided to accompany him out of his room to the nursing room entrance. As they neared the entrance, they could hear loud voices coming from one of the public areas. What they saw were two elderly gentlemen completely engaged



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Livestream: <https://welearntogether.org/Sinai>

A PARASHA Q 4 U

RABBI DOVID SPETNER

Where in the parasha does to “come” mean to “go”?

Bring this question to the Shabbos table and see who knows the answer! 🕒

in the learning of *talmud*. Mr. Lieberman stared for a long while at the two men. They read, they spoke, they thought, they argued, but most of all they looked as if they were energized by their activity. Finally, Mr. Lieberman turned to Rabbi Bressler with tears in his eyes and said, “They have everything and I have nothing!” Rabbi Bressler left with an eternal message from this little encounter: with Torah a person has everything, and without it a person is left with emptiness. 🕒

A preview of the upcoming week's one minute videos on cincyvirtualkollel.org



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RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

Soap had traditionally been made with animal fats. This posed a problem for the kosher household, as soap could be problematic to use with dairy utensils, and even with meat utensils if it was made with *cheilev* (forbidden fats). A Jew in Lithuania named Israel Rokeach developed a *pareve* soap using coconut oil instead of animal fats, possibly the first person to use science to aid keeping kosher! When he brought his invention to Rabbi Yitzchak Elchonon Spektor, the leading *halachic* authority of Ashkenazic Jewry, Rabbi Spektor was concerned that people could take a bar of soap with meaty film from its last use and use it on a dairy dish. Also, people could come to confuse an old-style bar of animal-rendered or *traife* soap with Rokeach's new *pareve* one. Rokeach came up with a novel idea. He would produce his soap with the word “kosher” dyed all the way through the bar, with blue for dairy and red for meat. Rabbi Spektor liked the idea even so far as to give Rokeach an official *hechsher*, and with that Rokeach went into production. Rokeach moved his business to America in 1890 to flee pogroms in Russia. Once established in America, Rokeach expanded his product line to include other cleaning agents, and then entered the kosher food production business. This proved to be extremely important to the growing number of kosher consumers in America. Due to his successes in the food industry, Rokeach would come to be known as one of the most important philanthropists of the lower east side of New York, keeping only one third of what he earned and donating the rest. Some of his lasting achievements were the founding of the first kosher hospital of New York (today Maimonides Medical Center), in which he led efforts and was its first treasurer, and the establishment of three different settlements in Israel. 🕒

SOURCES: Levine, Dr. Yitzchok. “Israel Rokeach (1841 – 1933): Founder of I. Rokeach & Sons” Jewish Press. 2014.
Marks, Gil. Encyclopedia of Jewish Food. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. 2010.

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