

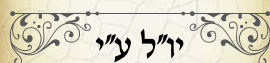
Parashas

Emor

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ט"ו אייר תשפ"ו

5786



קהילת שבתי בבית ד'

בנשיאות מורנו ורבנו הרה"צ

רבי גמליאל הכהן

רבינוביץ שליט"א

# טיב הקהילה

English edition

באנגלית

## טיב הפרשה

לא להדר במצוה על חשבון חברתה

## טיב המערכת

קוב"ה אורייתא וישראל חד הוא

*HaKadosh Bruch Hu, Torah and Israel are one*

Let us imagine that a child (not Jewish) left his school, crossed the street improperly, and was run over. The next day, the principal enters the child's classroom and says to the students: You must know mathematics better!.. And the children are puzzled and try to understand the meaning of this instruction. What is the connection between knowing mathematics and what happened to their friend?!

In our parashah we encounter the section of the blasphemer. One man, who was the son of an Israelite woman and the son of an Egyptian man, went out into the camp, and he quarreled with another man from Bnei Yisrael. In the midst of the quarrel, the man cursed Hashem, and HaKadosh Baruch Hu commanded that the blasphemer be put to death by stoning. Seemingly, here the matter should have ended, but that is not the case, because in the midst of matter, when HaKadosh Baruch Hu states the judgment of the blasphemer: "Take the blasphemer outside the camp... and let the entire congregation stone him," immediately the verse continues and says: "And to Bnei Yisrael you shall speak... and one who pronounces the Name of Hashem shall surely be put to death... and a man who strikes any human soul shall surely be put to death," and additional laws between אדם לחברו, and only at the end of the parashah do they return to the original subject, and the Torah says (24:14): הוצא 'הוצא - "And they took the blasphemer outside the camp and the entire assembly shall stone him." These matters certainly require explanation: why did the holy Torah insert laws between one man and his fellow in the middle of the section of the blasphemer?!

Last week, in Parashas Kedoshim, we learned the *posuk*: אהבת' 'אהבת - "And you shall love your fellow as yourself, I am Hashem." There we already understood that between אדם לחברו and between אדם למקום - they are one matter, and thus Chazal said (Sanhedrin 58b): "One who strikes the cheek of a Jew is as if he strikes the cheek of the Shechinah." And this is indeed what happened: that man quarreled with a Jew, and in the midst of the quarrel he stood and blasphemed with the explicit Name. Therefore the holy Torah comes to teach us that between אדם לחברו and between אדם למקום are one matter, just as we understand that it is not possible to quarrel with someone and afterwards request gifts from him; at best he will laugh at us—now you quarreled with me and you come to request gifts from me? We must know that so it is with each and every one of Bnei Yisrael: if we cause pain to a Jew—we, *chas v'shalom*, cause pain to HaKadosh Baruch Hu Himself; and when we bring joy to a Jew—we bring joy to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, for HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and the Torah, and Israel are one.

- Tiv HaTorah - Emor

*Do not enhance one mitzvah at the expense of another*

אֵלֶּה מוֹעֲדֵי ה' אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרָאוּ אֹתָם מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ לְהַקְרִיב אֲשֶׁה ה' עֹלָה וּמִנְחָה זָבַח וְנִסְכִּים דָּבַר יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ: מִלֶּבֶד שַׁבֹּת ה' וּמִלֶּבֶד מִתְּנוּחֵיכֶם וּמִלֶּבֶד כָּל נְדָרֵיכֶם וּמִלֶּבֶד כָּל נְדָבְתֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר תִּתְּנוּ לַה': (בג, לז לח)

**These are the appointed festivals of Hashem that you shall proclaim as callings of holiness, to bring an offering made of fire to Hashem, a burnt-offering and a meal-offering, a sacrifice of a peace-offering and libations each matter on its day. Aside from Hashem's Shabbasim, and aside from your gifts, aside from all your vows, and aside from all your voluntary offerings, which you will present to Hashem. (23:37-38)**

It is told about Maran the Griz of Brisk zt"l, that one of his strict practices in the baking of matzos was to bake the matzos in the "first oven," meaning immediately after the heating of the oven. Every year he would set a specific day on which he would bake the matzos in one of the well-known bakeries that existed then in Yerushalayim.

In one of the years, Maran the Griz was late in arriving at the designated time for the "first oven," and they had to wait about half an hour until he arrived. The Griz, who knew very well that his delay caused a loss to the bakery owner, who was unable to utilize that time for baking matzos, immediately appealed him upon his arrival and promised that he would pay him according to his loss.

When he was asked by the bakery owner for the reason for his delay, he apologized and said that the preoccupation with the matzos caused him that he was not able to be precise properly in Kriyas Shema, and after he settled himself, he decided to return and recite it again. And it is known that "Kriyas Shema" for the Rav of Brisk would sometimes extend up to half an hour, and this was the reason for his delay.

In the course of his apology, the Rav uttered a sentence that contains a lesson for all of us, and thus he said: If I need mehudar matzos, is it permitted for me to lose the mitzvah of "Kriyas Shema" in its proper form?!

This statement must be before our eyes at every step in the service of Hashem, for behold, sometimes there awakens within us a yearning for a certain mitzvah, and due to the many preoccupations in its fulfillment we place the other mitzvos to the side, and even if we do fulfill them we are not precise to fulfill them properly. And this is from the counsel of the *yetzer*, to add light for us in one mitzvah in order to cause us to lose out from the other mitzvos. And we must know that any beautification of a mitzvah that touches upon the essence of another mitzvah—its loss is greater than its reward.

This is the matter that we see in these *posukim*. After the Torah informs us of all the appointed festivals of the year and their obligations, it concludes in the *posuk* before us: "These are the appointed festivals of Hashem... to bring an offering made by fire to Hashem, a burnt-offering and a meal-offering, a sacrifice and libations, each matter on its day," and immediately it also mentions that these obligations are in addition to the other obligations that we must perform on these days as on all the days of the year. As it states: "Aside from the Shabbosim of Hashem, and aside from your gifts, and aside from all your vows that you shall give to Hashem."

And the question is asked: for what purpose does the Torah need to exempt them—would it enter our minds, *chalilah*, that we are exempt on these days from our obligations of the rest of the days of the year?!

However, the Torah wished to instruct us regarding our obligation to be precise even on these days to fulfill all the mitzvos with the same affection with which we fulfill them on the rest of the days of the year, and let us not come, *chalilah*, to belittle them as a result of the mitzvos of the festival, which are beloved due to their being fulfilled only at intervals.

Tests of this kind are found primarily in the *moadim* of the year, in which we are commanded with additional mitzvos that we are not commanded with during the rest of the days of the year. However, even during the rest of the days of the year, the *yetzer* uses this tactic, and makes one of the mitzvos of Hashem precious in the eyes of a person, so that he will place all his focus on this mitzvah and be lightheaded regarding the rest of the mitzvos with which he is commanded.

By way of example, sometimes a desire awakens in a person to pray with intention, and this will be after he properly understands the great value of Tefillah, that through it a simple person merits to speak with the King of the world Himself, and to request from before Him all his needs in spirituality and in physicality. And through this, his understanding of the great level of prayer, he recognizes the disgrace of one who prays in haste, that aside from the fact that he does not utilize his privilege properly, he also belittles the King of the world, for he speaks to Him without thinking about what he brings out of his mouth. And from this he concludes that there is no escape but to be careful about

prayer with calmness and with intention. And indeed, on the next day when he comes to *daven*, he brings his thought into action, and prays with calmness and with intention. However, until now he prayed with the *tzibbur*, and from now on—even if he begins Pesukei D'Zimrah with the *tzibbur*—he prays individually, for he must think about what he brings out of his mouth.

This person thinks that he is “beautifying” in the service of the Creator, however the trait of piety within him has caused him to transgress a complete obligation according to the law, for prayer with the *tzibbur* is an obligation from the laws of Shulchan Aruch (see Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 90:8), whereas prayer with intention (*Kavanah*)—even though it is more desirable in the eyes of the Creator—one can fulfill his obligation with the intention of the first paragraph of Kriyas Shema and with intention in the blessing of Avos and Hoda'ah. And it is not upright to fulfill matters of piety in a place where this will cause the transgression of an obligation. Only after one is careful to fulfill everything that he is obligated in according to the law, then it is praiseworthy for a person to be among those who add and act beyond the letter of the law. Therefore, if a person wishes to be counted among those who have intention, he should rise early and advance his arrival to shul by the measure of time that he must add in order to have *kavanah* in Pesukei D'Zimrah and in Kriyas Shema and its blessings, such that at the time that the *tzibbur* comes to Shemona Esrei he will equal himself with them. And since he already began with them, his Tefillah is already considered “prayer with the *tzibbur*,” and there is no flaw if he extends further in his prayer. [However, even then he

should be careful not to place himself in a situation that will cause him to pass or to sit within four *amos* of one who is praying, for this too is forbidden according to the law.]

If he does so, it is a sign that indeed the awakening stems from the good. However, if he knows that he is not able to advance the time of his prayer, whatever the reason may be, and nevertheless his desire is strong to have *kavanah* in his prayer and to transgress the obligation of prayer with the *tzibbur*, he must understand that this is nothing but a tactic from the *yetzer* that desires to cause him to stumble, and he should refrain from being drawn after it.

This is the matter that we find in one of the *seforim* of the holy Chozeh of Lublin zy”a, that the printers appended with it also a list of good practices that this tzaddik wrote to one of his students. And regarding some of them the holy one wrote: “And sometimes he should do the opposite.” And the reader who does not contemplate the depth of the matters does not understand the intent of these words, for since these practices are mentioned favorably among the other practices that are fitting to be done, why is there sometimes a need to change? And likewise, it is not understood when one should change and when not. However, according to our words, the matters are well understood, for as stated, even if the practice itself is good, it is incumbent upon the one who wishes to fulfill it to first contemplate whether in his present situation it is proper in the eyes of the Creator to do it or not. And if he sees that a stumbling will come out instead of a *tikun* (correction), he will receive reward for refraining...

May Hashem grant us that our actions should always be according to His will in truth.

### ‘Silence that is worth gold’ ‘שתיקה ששווה זהב’

“My sins I recall today, but if this will give strengthening to another Jew, then that will be my reward!!!”

For many years, my weak point was speaking in shul during davening and reading the Torah.

I did not understand the severity of the matter, and I belittled anyone who protested to me. When the elders actually rebuked me, I answered them that I too, when I reach their age, will stop speaking in shul!!!

The phenomenon continued until one day I heard from one of the mispalelim who told his friend: “The best segulah for acquiring a house is to refrain from speaking during Tefillah and the Kriyas HaTorah, and in addition this merit enables one to merit great salvations of health and everything that is needed, and there are many stories of salvations in the merit of this!!!”

I heard these words and something was ignited within me. I lived in Boro Park on the third floor with narrow and steep stairs. Every ascent and descent involved great difficulty, and who can even speak about bringing up the groceries without an elevator!!!

I turned to Hashem and I requested to merit to buy a house in Boro Park on the first floor, in the merit of silence during davening!!!

Purchasing an apartment in Boro Park was, for me, in the category of a dream that in the natural way would never happen!!!

I came to shul determined not to speak. It was not easy at all. They laughed at me that I had become “frum,” and they asked me if I had already grown old, and other

hurtful questions. But that same stubbornness that I used in not stopping speaking, I now used in not being embarrassed by all those who mocked me!!!

On the anniversary of my acceptance, I received a phone call from my uncle who lives in Eretz Yisrael. He inquired about my welfare and asked if we have an apartment of our own. Of course, I answered in the negative. He was interested why I do not have an apartment, and I answered him that I do not have money for an apartment. He instructed me to go look for an apartment and to update him if I found one and how much needs to be paid upfront as a down payment in order to receive a comfortable loan with convenient payments.

On that same day I found an apartment to my liking, and he transferred to me the money for the down payment that very same day!!!

I said to him that I have no way to pay him back the money. But he answered dismissively: “I am not pressured, and when HaKadosh Baruch Hu will send you money in abundance, only then return to me the loan!!!”

Today I live in a comfortable apartment of my own, and everything is in the merit of silence during davening.

I will note that even if I would not have merited to receive an apartment, I would have continued to remain silent. Suddenly I enjoyed the davening and the Torah reading and a connection to HaKadosh Baruch Hu!!! As a friend told me: “If you come to shul to speak, where will you go to pray?!”

•פ.י

### סיב ההשגרה

We learn in the third chapter of Makkos (17a): “Rava said: Whoever’s mother gives birth—let her give birth like Rabbi Shimon.” Rashi zt”l, explains: “Whenever a woman gives birth, she should beseech mercy and declare: May it be the Divine will that he become like Rabbi Shimon.” From here is the source of the poet’s phrase—“Bar Yochai, fortunate is the one who bore you”—as we say, “Whoever’s mother gives birth—let her give birth like him.” It is evident that we ascribe praise to the mother who gave birth to so great a son as Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, of whom we sing [in the Bar Yochai song], נַעֲשֶׂה אֶדָם נְאֻמָּר בְּעִבְרָךְ, - “Let us make man” was said for your sake.”

This is likewise evident from the teaching in Pirkei Avos (2:8): אֲשֶׁר יוֹלְדוֹתוֹ - “Fortunate is the one who bore him.” See the commentators there.

From this discussion, later authorities derived the source for the wonderful custom of Klal Yisrael to bring a three-year-old child to the holy kever [resting place] of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in Meron, and there to conduct the chalachah ceremony [of hair-cutting] which marks the beginning of the child’s education in Torah and yiras Shamayim. For Rava said that every mother who gives birth should pray, “May it be the Divine will that my son become like Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.” Therefore, we bring the child to Rabbi Shimon, so that the mother may pray at his kever that her son become like Rabbi Shimon. Surely, this holy site is most auspicious for the acceptance of such a prayer: “Whoever’s mother gives birth—let her give birth like him.”

The holy Rebbe of Munkatch zy”a wrote in his holy work Shaar Yissachar (Iyar, Gal Einai, se’if katan 5), and these are his holy words:

“Rashi zt”l, explained: ‘Whoever’s mother gives birth—let her give birth like Rabbi Shimon; whenever a woman gives birth, she should beseech mercy and say: May it be the Divine will that he become like Rabbi Shimon.’ There is an allusion in his holy words, to the well-known fact that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai stems from the soul of Moshe, the faithful shepherd. Yet to request that the newborn be like Moshe Rabbeinu is not applicable, for it states (Devarim 34:10) וְלֹא קָם כְּבִיאי עוֹד בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל, - And there has not arisen a prophet in Yisrael like Moshe. However, it is permitted to request that he become someone with the attributes of Rashbi.”

“And this is the meaning of, ‘she should beseech mercy—may it be the Divine will [רצון]—whose numerical value [346] equals משה with the kollel [inclusive count - 345], as explained many times by the Arizal, and this is the attribute of Moshe (— that he become like Rabbi Shimon.” “Hakadosh Baruch Hu fulfills the years of the [life of the] righteous from day to day (Rosh Hashanah 11a). It follows that on Lag Ba’Omer [besides being the day of his passing] Rabbi Shimon was also born. Therefore, that day—Lag Ba’Omer, the day of Rabbi Shimon’s birth—when they pray at the time of childbirth, ‘May it be the Divine will that he become like Rabbi Shimon,’ for the day itself brings us a time of favor. And that day is also called a ‘time of favor,’ because the passing of the righteous Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai on that day, as is known.

Rav David Paksher zt”l, related to me that he merited to serve the holy Rebbe, Rav Mordechai of Slonim zy”a, av beis din of the holy city of Tiberias. Toward the end of his days, when he resided here in the holy city of Yerushalayim, the tzaddik was blind and they would read aloud to him from the books. Rav David zt”l, too, while serving him,

## טיב המעשיות

### Bar Yochai—Fortunate Is the One Who Bore You

בַּר יוֹחַאי, אֲשֶׁר יוֹלְדָתְךָ, אֲשֶׁר יֵעָשֶׂה אֶדָם לְיָמֶיךָ, וְאֲשֶׁר יִעֲמִיד עִלְיָיךְ עַל סוּדְךָ [צִיּוֹנְךָ], לְבוּשֵׁי חֹשֶׁן הַמֶּדֶן וְאוּרִיךָ

**“Bar Yochai, fortunate is the one who bore you; fortunate is the people who are your students; and fortunate are those who stand by your secret [your resting place], clothed in the Choshen—Your Tumim and Your Urim.”**

often needed to read aloud to him from a sefer. On several occasions, when he erred in his reading, the tzaddik Rav Mattel, would immediately correct him—whether in the Gemara, the Rambam, or the Rishonim, and the like—for he was expert in them by heart, in their precise wording.

Among the many subjects he studied with him, the Rebbe also asked that he read aloud from the holy Zohar. One day, when he took the Zohar from the cabinet, Rav Mattel turned to him and said: “You likely wonder—what is this to us, that we should engage in esoteric matters and in the study of the holy Zohar, when we know that we are unable to grasp its secret, for the matters are exalted beyond our understanding. If the early ones, who were like angels, would toil for many days to understand a single passage of the Zohar correctly, we—who are like mere asses—what have we to do with this pursuit, which not every mind can bear? Would it not be better to utilize the time in the revealed parts of the Torah, in which we have comprehension and understanding?”

After posing the question he resolved it in two ways. First, our lives are like a great bazaar, where one must snatch and take from whatever is present and whatever comes to hand. The Torah has many facets—one person studies Chumash, another studies Mishnayos, and yet another studies Gemara—and the wise person takes from all of them. It is like a bazaar in which many wares are sold at especially low prices; one should take from all the wares...

Second, we are faithful to the words of Chazal, that whatever a person engages in below, he will engage in above [in the World to Come] too. Therefore, if here in this world we engage in the words of the Zohar, then certainly in the World to Come we will also engage in the study of the Zohar. And if we do not understand the Zohar, we will enter the academy of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai zy”a. When we sit there in the chamber of the Divine tanna, he will surely explain to us the depth of the intent of his holy words.

Rav Mattel concluded with a gentle smile, “Is there any greater joy than this—that the Divine tanna, Rashbi, in his own honor and presence, will teach us wonders from the words of his Torah? Surely all the treasures of the world cannot compare to it!” As the song goes, אֲשֶׁר יִעֲמִיד עִלְיָיךְ עַל סוּדְךָ לְבוּשֵׁי חֹשֶׁן וְאוּרִיךָ - “Fortunate are those who stand by your secret, clothed in the Choshen—Your Tumim and Your Urim.”

The lesson drawn from this account is that although our understanding is certainly too limited to grasp the awesome and formidable greatness of the holy Zohar, which is entirely filled with the King’s treasures—and within every letter of the Zohar are hidden great and wondrous secrets, for it was written in ruach hakodesh that descended from Heaven upon the chevra kadisha, all of whom were laborers in the field, whose deeds were wholly for the sake of Heaven, to uproot thorns from the vineyard of the House of Hashem and to raise the Shechinah from the dust—there is no measure to the sanctity and greatness of the Zohar. Rabbi Shimon himself testified that only through the power and merit of studying the Zohar will Klal Yisrael be redeemed from exile (Ra’aya Meheimna, Naso 124b).

Nevertheless, it is fitting for every Jewish man to engage in it. The study of the Zohar benefits even one who does not understand even the plain meaning of the words—and although he does not see, his mazal sees. The soul certainly merits a great light from the study of this holy sefer. Thus wrote the Ramchal in Derech Eitz Hachaim, that even if one does not understand, the language itself is efficacious for the soul.

See what is written in the holy sefer Degel Machaneh Ephraim (Likkutim, s.v. Yishakeini): that reading the text of the holy Zohar is beneficial for the soul even when one does not understand at all what he is saying. This is like one who enters a perfumery—although he takes nothing, nevertheless he absorbs a pleasant fragrance. We find a similar statement in Sefer Hazichronos in the name of the Arizal —see there.

Bearing the Suffering of Klal Yisrael

It is told of the holy Rav Yitzchak Eizik of Kaliv zt”l, that—following the path of the exalted righteous—he accepted suffering upon himself. His body was afflicted with illness and pain, as he bore upon himself the anguish of the Shechinah and the suffering of Klal Yisrael, surrounded by great pains and awesome afflictions.

Because his holy and pure body was so wounded and crushed by sickness, over the years open sores developed beneath his skin that would not heal, until worms were seen swarming there. It is impossible to describe the intensity of the pain and the dreadful suffering involved—suffering that is almost beyond human capacity to endure Rachmana litzlan.

Once he was asked how he was able to withstand all of this. He replied with wisdom: a small measure of pain, for a short time, any person can endure. Thus I reckon the accounting of the world: what has already been has already passed—it lies in the lap of the past, and I have no further business with it. As for what will be in the future, I do not worry about it at all, for the Holy One is all-powerful, and His salvation comes in the blink of an eye; He can heal me in a single moment. It follows, then, that all my suffering exists only in the present instant—and that, anyone can bear... [The past is no more; the future is not yet; and the present is but a fleeting moment.]

The lesson of this story has the power to instruct us with regard to this exalted day, Lag Ba’Omer, when many thousands of Jews stream to the holy resting place of the Divine tanna Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, at the sacred site of Meron. (Indeed, this is alluded to in the Talmudic phrase, “It is

worthwhile to rely on Rabbi Shimon upon in a time of duress,” hinting to that lofty moment—“the time of favor”—when the large throng swarms around his sacred cave on the day of his hillulah.)

### **Refrain from Anger and Resentment**

One must be especially careful not to become angry or resentful on this great and elevated day, lest the immense joy be marred—at a place and time when the supernal realms rejoice and those below exult in receiving the inner light of the Torah.

Standing there at the site of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, one must be aware that he was exceedingly stringent regarding the sin of anger, equating it to idolatry. As stated in the holy Zohar: “One who becomes angry introduces the poison of death within himself. Of him the Mishnah says: Whoever becomes angry is as though he serves idols, for through anger the impurity of external forces is ignited within a person.” The Zohar further elaborates at length on the gravity and spiritual harm of anger, stating: “This transgression is different from all others, for it defiles the entire body from within and without, and the entire soul is defiled—unlike other sins, which defile only the body externally.” See there for the full, awe-inspiring discussion.

Therefore, one must strengthen himself with all his might—especially on this holy day—to submit humbly before Hakadosh Baruch Hu, to clothe himself in the armor of humility and reverence, and to restrain himself completely from any anger or resentment toward any fellow Jew. In this way he will merit to receive the holiness and awe of the place and the time, and thereby the tefillos and supplications of the holy Klal Yisrael will be accepted at this sacred site.

### **The Man of Meron**

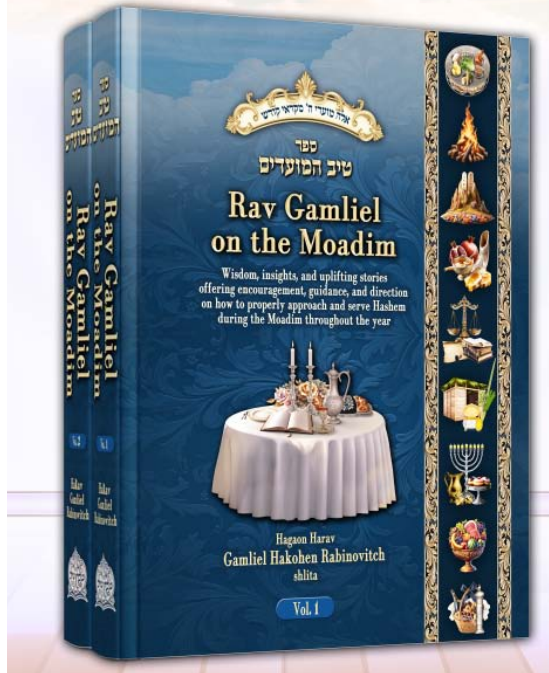
One of the righteous figures of the “Jerusalem above” in the previous generation—an outstanding scholar and truly eminent individual—was the renowned Rav Eliyahu Meizes zt”l, whom I myself merited to know in his greatness.

My revered father, the author of Maadanei HaShulchan zt”l, told me that one year, on the day of Lag Ba’Omer, when Rav Eliyahu was at the holy site in Meron, he exerted himself to the utmost in avodas Hashem. First came tefillos and supplications with copious weeping and tears, like Yom Kippur, deep within the cave itself. Then, upon emerging into the courtyard in overwhelming joy, he danced with all his might in the Simchas Torah-like rejoicing there, continuing for a long time—leaping and whirling with tremendous vigor, until his very soul seemed spent.

Those accompanying him feared for his well-being, as he had already reached advanced age, and such sustained exertion could endanger his health. They therefore tried to persuade him that perhaps he had already fulfilled his obligation in the service of Meron, and that it was possible to return home. But Rav Eliyahu would not hear of it at all. He continued his sacred service and fiery dances, aflame with intense devotion at the holy hillulah of Bar Yochai. All the entreaties of his sons—that he had exerted himself enough and should turn his attention to returning home—were of no avail.

When they saw that matters were approaching actual danger, they went with reverent urgency to

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the renowned room of the saintly gaon and kabbalist Rav Asher Zelig Margolies zt”l, who secluded himself in his well-known chamber above the site. They pleaded with him to come down to the courtyard and try to stop Rav Eliyahu from his dancing and persuade him to return home, for he had grown very weak and was in danger.

Rav Asher Zelig responded immediately, descended swiftly, and hurried straight to Rav Eliyahu. With great affection and friendship he tapped him on the shoulder and addressed him warmly: “Reb Eliyahu! It appears that you have already fulfilled the service of the day in the finest manner; now it is fitting to turn your thoughts toward returning home.”

To everyone’s astonishment, Rav Eliyahu replied in wonder: “But how can one leave the holy site when I have not yet seen Rabbi Shimon?”

Rav Asher Zelig responded, as one who fully understood his spirit: “You know well that if one merits it, one can see Rabbi Shimon even at home.”

Who indeed can enter the counsel of the holy ones?

### **The Magic of Meron**

By contrast, the renowned gaon Rav Pinchas Epstein zt”l, av beis din of the Eidah HaChareidis of Jerusalem, did not customarily travel to Meron on Lag Ba’Omer. One year, however, he needed on that very day to make an urgent trip to a village in the Upper Galilee to arrange the supervision of a slaughterhouse there, by virtue of his responsibility and authority within the kashrut committee of the Eidah HaChareidis (Badatz). On behalf of the Badatz a special vehicle was arranged to transport the Rav and his entourage there and back. When the Arab driver arrived at his home to coordinate travel times, he knew that many Jews gather on Har Meron that day, and assumed that the eminent Rav would certainly wish to go there as well. He therefore offered to arrive early in the morning so that they could make it to Meron, noting that the road from that village was not very far.

Rav Pinchas feared that if he refused and said he did

not wish to go to Meron, it might constitute a chilul Hashem, for the non-Jew would not understand why he was avoiding a trip that so many Jews observe. He therefore decided that, since he would in any case be traveling near the sacred place, it was fitting to stop there.

When he arrived at the holy site of Meron, he was deeply moved and profoundly stirred by the magnitude of the spiritual awakening—the Yom Kippur-like prayers and tears within, and the holy dances of Simchas Torah-like joy outside. Upon returning, he said to his close associates: “After seeing with my own eyes what Meron looks like on Lag Ba’Omer, I would be very glad if such an opportunity were to come my way again.”

### **A Parable of Purpose and Preparation**

It is related that a certain man once came to a rosh yeshivah of one of the foremost yeshivos with a request upon his lips. He greatly desired and yearned to take as a son-in-law one of the outstanding and exceptional students of the holy yeshivah. However, he stipulated one prior condition as a gift: that the young man be among the most distinguished and elite of the yeshivah. In return, he gave a clear assurance that he would fully and completely provide for all his needs, from beginning to end, so that he might immerse himself in Torah for many long and blessed years.

The rosh yeshivah complied with his request and proposed to him one of the finest and most accomplished students. The man was exceedingly pleased; the proposal found great favor in his eyes. He took the young man with him to his place of residence, dressed him in fine and dignified garments, as is the custom of respected householders who attire their sons-in-law properly, and thereafter took him along each Shabbos to the beis knesses, accompanying him as his “son-in-law.”

After a week or two, the refined and gentle-natured student approached the man and asked delicately: “Where, then, is the bride—she who is meant to be my wife?”

The man responded in astonishment: “Did we ever speak of a wedding or of a ‘bride’? We spoke only of your serving me as a ‘son-in-law,’ that you should be a son-in-law for me!” He immediately clarified his intent: “For I see how the other respected householders in our city walk joyfully each Shabbos and festival to the shul accompanied by their learned and pleasant sons-in-law. I, too, desired to go to the shul accompanied by an important son-in-law. But if you seek a kallah— sorry, I have no daughter for you!”

Within this parable lies profound moral instruction. There are many who travel to Meron simply because “everyone” is going there, or because his rav or the Rebbe is going, and the like. But if one does not give thought to the true purpose and end of the journey, and travels only because “everyone” does so, he is comparable to that man who took for himself a son-in-law merely because “everyone has one,” without possessing a daughter to marry him.

Therefore, one must reflect a little within his soul before setting out upon his way, as with any mitzvah that requires contemplation and preparation of heart and spirit. Where is he traveling? For what purpose, and for what reason? And how will he appear before the tzaddik, to whom no secret is concealed?

Thus shall a person return in repentance from his transgressions, and the living shall take it to heart—to bind himself in a lofty and firm bond to the sanctity of the soul of the Master of the hillula. And when standing at his holy resting place, he should focus his mind and heart upon the inner meaning of this attachment, with willing heart and soul, each person according to his level.