

Kinder Torah

בס"ד

Parashas Bechukosai

The Real Fire

"Avi, are you coming with us to the Lag B'Omer bonfire?"

"I hope to, Chaim. Right now I am learning Torah."

"What a tsaddik! Everyone is out dancing around the bonfire and you are learning Torah. *Kol ha'kovod* (What an honorable deed)! What are you learning?"

"A Mishna that was taught by Rebbe Shimon Bar Yochai. I thought that it would be appropriate to learn it on Lag B'Omer, his yahtzeit. The *zechus* (merit) would bring an elevation to his neshama. Do you want to learn it with me, Chaim?"

"Well, I really wanted to go to the bonfire."

"There is plenty of time for that. Right now, we can help and honor Rebbe Shimon by learning his Torah."

"Okay, you convinced me Avi."

"Pirkei Avos chapter 6, Mishna 8. 'Beauty, strength, riches, honor, wisdom, old age, a white head, and children are beautiful for tsaddikim, and attractive for the world.'"

"How do we understand that, Avi?"

"The Medrash Shmuel explains that these are all gifts from Hashem. They can be used for good purposes - to perform mitzvos - or for selfish reasons - to gratify one's desires. Rebbe Shimon instructs us to use all the gifts that Hashem gave us for the good."

"How?"

"The Medrash Shmuel elaborates. Beauty can bring a person to righteousness, as it did with Yosef HaTsaddik. He was very attractive. He had a strong yetzer hara to

use his good looks for the wrong purposes. He conquered his yetzer and became Yosef HaTsaddik."

"That is so relevant to our days. There is a big yetzer hara to wear the wrong kind of clothes. They attract attention, instead of indicating the true beauty of a Jew - the neshama. We have to overcome that yetzer hara and become tsaddikim and tsidkanios."

"Excellent! Now, the next point of the Mishna. Strength can be used for the good - to learn Torah (which needs a lot of stamina) or for the bad - to lord over people. Similarly, wealth can be used for



tsedaka and chessed. It can give the person the time to learn Torah without interruption. Unfortunately, money used improperly to fulfill one's desires can drag a person into all sorts of nonsense and sins, causing him to lose this world and the next."

"How true."

"Honor is good for tsaddikim. Their wise words will be heard because they are held in esteem. They will not become arrogant from the honor. However, an evil person will take the admiration to heart, and do as he pleases, for there is no one to chal-

lenge him and his pride. Similarly, wisdom can be learned in order to know and teach the correct path to serve The Creator. Or it can be used to subvert the truth *chas v'shalom* (Heaven forbid.)"

"Fascinating."

"Old age and a white head are both the 'crowns' of tsaddikim. They are the culmination of a life of righteousness, and bring honor to the tsaddik and Hashem. However, one who runs after his desires his entire life will continue into his old age. Fools will honor him for his 'achievements' in this area. Lastly, children are a person's legacy in this world. His righteous descendants earn him eternal reward. However, a wicked person uses his children to carry out his evil plans."

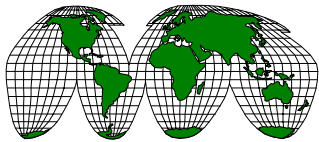
"That is wonderful. You have given me a completely new outlook on Rebbe Shimon Bar Yochai and his teachings. Let's now go to the bonfire."

Avi and Chaim reach the bonfire. The heat is intense. The boys don't seem to mind. Everyone is dancing around and singing about Rebbe Shimon Bar Yochai. Avi and Chaim sing and with intense happiness. They have been ignited with the "light" of Rebbe Shimon's teachings.

Kinderlach . . .

Lag B'Omer is much more than dancing around the bonfire. It is even more than traveling to Rebbe Shimon's kever in Meron. It is appreciating who Rebbe Shimon was. The Gemora is full of his teachings. Learn them this Lag B'Omer. Bask in the light of Rebbe Shimon's Torah. That is the real fire of Lag B'Omer.

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