KEEP SHINING!

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Pesach Sheni – A Festival for People who Just Want It

Welcome, readers! Today we’ll learn about mystical Torah, the yaḥtziet of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai and about Ḥod, the true charm of every Jew.

Let’s start with the fact that Wednesday this week is Pesach Sheni. Pesach Sheni is meant for those who missed the Seder night and the Pesach offering for one of two reasons: they were tamei because of misdeeds, or they were too far away and couldn’t get to Jerusalem in time.

They come to Moshe Rabbeinu: “We know, we missed the boat, but we so want to do something. What can be done for us?”

Hashem says: You want it that much? Wonderful! I’ll give you a once-a-year opportunity: a make-up date. Pesach Sheni. Take this, make another day a festival – why? Because you want it so much.

The Hasidim asked their Rebbe: “This is basically a holiday for tamei people. What’s the big deal?”

“You’re right,” he answered. “But they were tamei people who wanted to be tahor.”

Pesach Sheni is a holiday for the people who want. They are living testimony to the fact that Hashem isn’t just in existence; He’s also into persistence. He’s wanted! A frum-from-birth woman who always does the right thing testifies to Hashem’s existence. He was, is and will be – and that’s huge. But this group of people, those who don’t feel worthy, testify that Hashem is desired.

Pesach Sheni is a time of desire. Hashem doesn’t measure you by what you actually do, but by what you want to do.

That’s how the redemption will come. "For Your servants hold her stones dear, and cherish her very dust." Those who want are on that high a level.

That’s the mystical Torah. When Israel says, “naasę ve’nishma, We will do and we will listen,” they say: First of all, I want this. Afterwards we can talk about what exactly these mitzvot are. And Hashem says, ימי יהוד ויה - Who revealed this secret to My children? The secret of desire, the secret of love.

Rabbi Shimon Reveals New Secrets of Love

Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai is a man of Halacha. After twelve years in the cave he emerges to see a man plowing his field.

“Ignoramus – why are you plowing instead of learning Torah?” He glares at him and the man bursts into flame, becoming a pile of bones.

“Rabbi Shimon, you’re antisocial,” says Hashem. “Back to your cave!”

Rabbi Simon goes back to the cave for another year. He emerges again and sees a man running, holding two myrtle branches.

“What are those for?” he asks.

“They’re for Shabbat,” the man replies. “I’m bringing home myrtles for Shabbat.”

“Where is that written – in the list of Yemima Mizrahi’s segulot? Where did you get this practice from? Who said you have to?”

“You’re right – it’s not an obligation. It’s an expression of my love for the day. I so love the mitzvot that I want to look at these two myrtle branches in my home and remember that one represents ‘You shall keep the Shabbat day’ and the other, ‘You shall remember the Shabbat day.’ I just love Shabbat.”

At that moment Rabbi Shimon transforms from a man of judgment into a man of mercy. That’s right – the Torah is not only about doing exactly the right thing! It’s also about desire, and in fact this man is running! חסיד מד יזרעאל אשה - The Israelites will keep the Shabbat – this man keeps anticipating, waiting for Shabbat to come!

Our Sages say that anyone with the name Shimon is a person of judgment. The Shimons, pardon the stereotype, don’t play well with others. But the moment Rabbi Shimon came out the second time from the cave, ready to turn myrtle-man into another pile of bones, he suddenly realizes that the man’s actions are desirable, are good; from that moment on he’s no longer simply Rabbi Shimon, but “Bar Yohai” – a transformation of personality. His father Yohai would never burn people with his gaze; he was a people person. He would go to the authorities and lobby in favor of the Jews. “From this day forth I am an advocate for this people,” says Rabbi Shimon. “As far as I’m concerned there are no more ignoramuses. I love the people of Israel.” In other words, instead of Rabbi Shimon, representative of the Attribute of Judgment, he becomes Bar Yohai – the son of the lobbyist, the Attribute of Mercy.

1 Psalms 102:15. 2 Shabbat 33. 3 Ibid.
How can Rabbi Shimon, he of truth and uprightness, countenance such segulot? He realizes that sometimes the desire to do a mitzvah is greater than the act itself.

Truth is, he knew it the whole time. The whole story behind his taking refuge in the cave was all about the intent behind an action. The Gemara talks about three sages who sat discussing Roman rule of the land. One of them said, “The Romans have done wonderful things. They built bridges, paved roads, made a huge aqueduct...”

“What difference does it make what they built?” retorted Rabbi Shimon. “They didn’t do it for the land of Israel, and certainly not for the people of Israel. כל מה שעשוי – לכוים - Whatever they did, they did for themselves!”

Rabbi Shimon’s emphasis is the intent behind the action. He’s the first one who reveals to us that intent generates faith. Much more than does the result.

**Two Prayers that Transform Judgment into Mercy**

This time is a time of transforming judgment in to mercy. Wednesday is the yahrtziet of Rabbi Meir Baal HaNes. As you know, the soul of a tzaddik is with us three days before the anniversary of his passing and three days afterwards. Take advantage of this time to light a candle for Rabbi Meir Baal HaNes, and say a few words that rend the very fabric of the heavens, words of people who didn’t want to miss out on the liberation of Pesach and requested Pesach Sheni:

לָמָּה נִגָּרַע – Why should we be left out?

People come to Moshe Rabbeinu and say, “So what? So what if I missed the boat/my dream job/my chance at a livelihood/the match of a lifetime? Why should we be left out – am I any worse than anyone else?”

It’s a prayer that splits open the gates of heaven.

Exactly two years ago on Pesach Sheni we went to Hadassah Hospital at Ein Kerem. It was the week after Independence Day, and there in the intensive care unit lay Rivka bat Yael. Her father had taken her up to the roof to see the Independence Day fireworks, and she had fallen off the ladder. She got to intensive care in an indescribable state.

I stood with Yael, Rivki’s mother, and said to Hashem, “Why should we be left out? How is this little five-year-old girl any less worthy than other girls her age who go to preschool, who gather grain stalks in honor of Shavuot, who learn about the book of Ruth? How is she any less worthy?”

The many prayers of the people of Israel, and of yours, accomplished their job, Baruch Hashem. A year later, at the end of Independence Day, Rivki’s family threw a huge thanksgiving seuda. Baruch Hashem - may He continue to send Rivka bat Yael a complete recovery.

Why should we be left out – that’s what you should say this week. “Am I any less worthy than the one whom You did give sustenance? From the one who has a wonderful mate? From the one who has a good parnassa?”

Your Time Is Not Up, and You Still Have What to Offer

Girls, anything is possible now! Even for those who think they missed every opportunity, who were too far away to make it, who felt tamei – un-pure, unworthy – Pesach Sheni waves happily at us: You think time is up? No, you still can bring your offering! Here’s your chance! On Pesach Sheni it’s customary to eat matza before noon. What does matza have to do with anything – haven’t we gone back to chametz already? Yes, we have – but nothing is chametz – soured, too late – for Hashem.

On a tzaddik’s yahrtzeit, when you say something he said, השפתים ודבבות - his lips move in his grave. He says those words together with you before Kise’ HaKavod (the Throne of Glory). So in addition to the words why should we be left out, the other thing to say this week is, “Hashem, You have already said אני על פי כל הקדושים אני – they are nevertheless called My children.” Those are the comforting words of Rabbi Meir Baal HaNes: Even though we don’t always do Hashem’s will, we are still His children. You’re not supposed to discriminate between children, Ribono shel Olam. Why should we be left out? Why should they get more than I? I might not be 100 percent, but I’m your daughter too!

That’s also a prayer that rips the heavens open, that changes judgment into mercy. It’s the big reversal that happens on Lag BaOmer and Pesach Sheni. We transform judgment in to mercy.

4 Ibid.
5 Numbers 9:7.
The Omer is a difficult period. You probably feel that yourselves; we’re climbing up a rickety ladder... but this week, this Tuesday, we start a week of the Omer called the week of Hod. It has a special light, a soul-healing light. It’s the light that shines stronger on Pesach Sheni; in the Midrash Shir HaShirim it’s called הָרֹפֵא לִשְׁבוּרֵי לֵב – that which heals the broken-hearted and bandages their sadness. And starting Saturday night (motzei Shabbos), with Hashem’s help, you’ll feel something softer, something more pleasant, something to make you feel better.

This coming Shabbat we read the parsha of Emor, which is always close to the yahrtzeit of Rabbi Meir Baal HaNes. For good reason! And it even has the same letters as the root of his name. Rabbi Meir always tried to exalt – l’haamir - Jews, especially the women, when they were at their lowest.

Rabbi Meir always knew how to uplift even the girl at the lowest possible level, where no Jewish girl ever wants to be. How exactly? He knew how to identify her as a Jew. And when Hashem sees a person vindicating everyone, exalting everyone, illuminating everyone with such powerful light, Hashem “surrenders” to that light.

We first meet Rabbi Meir in Bereshit, when Adam and Eve sin and Hashem makes them tunics of leather – עור. Rabbi Meir insists: כותנות אור – tunics of “or” – light. How characteristic of Rabbi Meir to come in at exactly that moment, talking about the pure, inner light.

Rabbi Meir lived when the Romans were in control of the land of Israel, after the destruction of the Second Temple. Bruria was his wife; she had a righteous, modest sister. The evil Romans put her in a house of ill repute. Rabbi Meir Baal HaNes went to the guard and said, “Here’s some money. Let my wife’s sister go; she doesn’t belong here.”

“But I can’t – the Romans will hang me,” the guard replied.

“Don’t worry. Any time they want to do something to you, say, ‘God of Meir, answer me!’ and you’ll be rescued,” Rabbi Meir said.

It’s a segula to say those words; Rabbi Haim Falaji says it’s permitted to say: – Elaha d’Meir ‘aneini – meaning not just the God of Meir, answer me, but ‘the God Who illuminates.’

The guard lets the woman go free and indeed, the Romans try to hang him. But whenever the hangman gets near, he freezes in place, because the guard keeps saying the words Rabbi Meir taught him. It’s this story that gave Rabbi Meir the name Baal HaNes – the Miracle Master. A miracle happened for him when he came to free women from dire trouble (his sister-in-law was not the only one he rescued). And what did he have to say to a Jewess? “You’re a daughter of Hashem. You’re the daughter of a king!”

Emor starts like this: הָרֹפֵא לִשְׁבוּרֵי לֵב – that which heals the broken-hearted and bandages their sadness. And starting Saturday night (motzei Shabbos), with Hashem’s help, you’ll feel something softer, something more pleasant, something to make you feel better.

The holy Or HaHayim explains: When you want to tell someone not to defile herself, not to engage in forbidden activity, how should you go about it? “Don’t forget you’re the daughter of a king.” Say to the Kohanim – what should you tell them? Sons of Aharon! You are the children of Aharon!

That’s all you need to remind a person; that he is the child of Hashem.

The parsha also says: הבת איש קohen כי תחלה להזונת את אביה היא מחלל - The daughter of a Kohen, if she begins to profane herself by playing the harlot, she profanes her father. In other words, what must you say to her? “You’re the daughter of a Kohen!”

Just remind someone she’s the daughter of a king. When you remind someone whose child he is, it resets his path. It restores his dignity, his innate sense of shame. His innate modesty. It’s an exalting, empowering, illuminating statement.
Somewhere over the Rainbow

Notice that every time judgment transforms into mercy it’s expressed through a rainbow:

Hashem says to Noah: I will no longer destroy the world with a flood; every time I get angry at you you’ll see a rainbow in the sky and realize that judgment has changed into mercy.

During Rabbi Shimon’s time - the sign of the rainbow was never seen. Rabbi Hayim Vital writes: Why did Rabbi Shimon pass away on Lag BaOmer? The thirty-third day, Lag, is half of galgal, wheel, as the rainbow is half a wheel shape. Halfway through, Hashem stops and forgives us.

The rainbow is the realization that Hashem has “bent” Himself over backwards to the point that the motion resembles a pile – an Omer.

It’s a great segula for launching forward to get yourself a bow – keshet, the same word for rainbow - and an arrow, and shoot it on Lag BaOmer.

The rainbow is known as a segula for children, the Hasidim write. क़ेशेट (Keshet) - His tresses are black curls – the initials are the letters of keshet. “Hashem, when You send me a child I’ll bring him here for an upsherin.”

You’ll see. From this Tuesday evening, and even more so come Lag BaOmer, Hashem will shoot you forward, give you new life, and give you reason to celebrate again.

Fruitless Tree. Vessel of Tears. And a Tzaddik

Let’s talk about women’s tears.

In a week we’ll read Behar-Behukotai, which says: אִם בְּחֻקֹּתַי תַּלְתַּלִּים שְׁחֹרוֹת – If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments...the tree of the field will yield its fruit. Rashi says: the tree in question is not a fruiting species of tree, yet the Torah guarantees that it will bear fruit.

Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai’s mother was such a non-fruiting tree. She had neither children nor a chance of bearing children. She had been married to Yohai for ten years and a day when she overhears two women gossiping in the marketplace: “Did you hear? Yohai is looking for another match because his wife can’t have children.” “What?! What is he planning behind my back?! I had no idea!” she is shocked. And starts crying. But she says nothing to him.

The night of Rosh Hashanah Yohai sees in a dream that he’s in a field full of non-fruiting trees. On each tree leans a man, while an angel comes along and waters each tree, one at a time. The trees bloom. Yohai waits for the angel to water the tree against which he’s leaning – but lo, the water in the bucket is finished before it gets to him. But the angel approaches him anyway, takes out a little vessel and waters the tree. The tree blooms and a huge, tasty fruit emerges from it.

He wakes up. “What could this dream possibly mean, dear wife?”

“I don’t know. Let’s go to your teacher, Rabbi Akiva.”

Rabbi Akiva listens. “You dreamed that on the night of Rosh Hashanah, when the barren women are remembered,” he says. “Non-fruiting trees producing fruit – that’s a sign of a barren woman being remembered. You’ll have an incredible child, with Hashem’s help.”

“How could that be? My wife is...”

“Correct. Your wife is utterly infertile; she has no chance of conceiving. But the angel didn’t water the tree from his bucket, but from the vessel containing your wife’s tears. This is a child of tears. You’ll have a wondrous child.”

Rabbi Shimon was born of his mother’s tears. That’s why our Sages say he has the power to pray for the childless. It’s a segula to go to his tomb in Meron and pray to have children.

It’s the Ugliness

And now I want to tell you a big secret. The secret is that suffering is always worth it and always spot-on.

Rabbi Pinchas Ben Yair was Rabbi Shimon’s father-in-law. He saw his son-in-law emerge from the cave after thirteen years in sand, his body full of lesions. How much pain he must have been in!

Rabbi Shimon says to him: אלמלא אתה בנסה... – "If you had not seen me like this, you wouldn’t have seen who I’ve become.” You don’t understand that this suffering is what has made me who I am. From my most intractable difficulty came my salvation”. That’s the big secret.

But why should there be suffering at all? Why is there
ugliness? Why is there lack? That’s the most mysterious thing of all. And the resolution is to go to the "Uman" - an artisan. The craftsman who molded us.

Rabbi Shimon’s son Elazar saw an ugly man. “Whoa, you, sir, are ugly. Why is there such ugliness in the world?”

ך ל האמן - Go to the craftsman, says the man. He refers Rabbi Elazar to the artisan of ugliness – Hashem. The same Hashem who knows that ugliness will bring us to the right place, to the right insights.

Here’s a story that I love. Rav Mani had an ugly wife, Hannah. He went to Rabbi Yitzhak Bar Elyashiv: “I can’t stand her ugliness.”

Hannah should be made beautiful! The Rabbi commanded.

Rav Mani came back home and found his wife shining with beauty.

A few days later he went back to Rabbi Yitzhak. “She’s getting haughty!” he complained. “Ever since she became beautiful she’s been acting as if I’m not worthy of her.”

Hannah should be restored to her blackness, commanded Rabbi Yitzhak.

Rav Mani returned home and found his wife ugly again. He was so happy.

Sometime later Rav Mani went to Rabbi Yitzhak and said, “Decree that my house grow bigger.”

Rabbi Yitzhak answered: “I’ve returned my ability to change things to Hashem. I realized that when Hashem sends ugliness, it means that the ugliness is nice, pretty and suitable for us.”

What words – Ugliness suits you! The way the Sages use the phrase, it means it’s appropriate for us. That it’s something we can cope with. It’s what will bring us joy in the end.

How? It’s a mystery. But that’s the way it is. On the other hand, miraculous changes don’t bring happiness. Cope with the old and familiar with joy, because that’s what suits you!

What did Hannah’s ugliness do for Rav Mani? It brought him to the tzaddik! And the tzaddik taught him a wonderful insight: be happy with what the ugliness that you have. The Sfat Emet says that true blessing is not seeking something new, but finding the novelty in what you already have. It’s the secret of blessing.

Note the important part of what we just said – that his wife brought him to the tzaddik. The same was true of Yohai. His dream brought him to the tzaddik, Rabbi Akiva. So why does Hashem send us suffering? Why does that woman have to wait so long to have children? Why do girls have to wait so long to find the right man? The ugliness, the pain that Hashem sends our way requires us to have faith in tzaddikim.

Rabbi Pinchas Bar Chama expounded: Anyone who has a sick person at home should go to a Sage and request mercy.20 The Gaon of Vilna explains: and request mercy upon him – on whom? On himself. Hashem sends illness upon a family so that even the biggest Yekkes will say, “Nu, OK, let’s at least try it – we’ll go just this once to the tomb of Rabbi Shimon, to the yahrtzeit observance, who knows?” All that suffering forces you to develop faith in the Sages. The Gaon of Vilna! It seems so opposite his usual line of thinking, but that’s what he says.

I grew up in a Yekkish household. In my house, people were called Rabbi, Chacham (sage), Gaon (genius), Baki (expert). I never heard the word tzaddik (imagine the Vilna Gaon being called "the Tzaddik of Vilna"). Sometimes I feel that some of us, sometimes, really have a hard time having faith in tzaddikim. It doesn’t sound "right" to us.

But just as Hannah’s ugliness brought Rav Mani to Rabbi Yitzhak; just as Sarah’s barrenness brought Yohai to the tzaddik. “Let’s just try going to Rabbi Akiva” – just like that, our troubles drag us to the tzaddikim. It’s all too easy to stand there on Lag BaOmer and mock: the 18 rotel custom, the bonfire, the upsheirin. “Where did all this come from?...” It’s so easy to be cynical. The Vilna Gaon says: Go to the Sage and ask for mercy, and perhaps then one’s own defects will be healed. What defect? The mockery.

That was Rabbi Shimon. When he saw people doing things he saw as superfluous, he turned them into a pile of bones. It’s a common human tendency: the essence – the word etzem in Hebrew means both “essence” and “bone” – of one’s mockery turns everyone else into a pile of bones. Actually, We’re not allowed to mock people who seem ignorant to us, or ugly. Rabbi Shimon learned that, and we have to learn that.

So what do you do with the urge to mock? Change liglig (mockery, ”ליגלי") into lag – ל"ג – 33. Lag BaOmer. Hashem is saying to you, “What do you care? Who cares whether it works - can it hurt? Try it this year.

Rabbi Shimon is reliable enough to depend on in times of stress.21 It’s

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18 Taanit 23b.
19 Reebe of Ger, Sfat Emet on the parsha.
20 Bava Batra 116a.
21 Shabbat 45.
when you’re under pressure, in the midst of upheaval, when you’re crowded into a filthy bus. Maybe Hashem caused all that ugliness, all that suffering, just so you could develop some faith in tzaddikim.

### It’s Easy to Be Difficult. Let’s Move on to Hod

We are so difficult when it comes to this. And Hashem warns us: **וַהֲלַכֶּם עִמִּי בְּקֶרִי – וְהָלַכְתִּי עִמָּכֶם בַּחֲמַת קֶרִי** - You will walk contrary to me – then I will walk contrary to you in fury.


It’s so easy to be difficult. It’s easy to dismiss all the segulot cynically. And I say that such dismissal is tumah. It’s what keeps you far away, just as in Pesach Sheni.

Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai goes through that process. He learns to be moved. He learns the secret of showing affection.

The Torah is not emotionally expressive, but the Zohar – what an emotional, moving book! Everything and everyone cries, hugs, thanks, cries out, longs, praises: **“Praiseworthy are you, Rabbi Shimon – אשריך בר יוחאי, נמשחת!”**

It’s not simple – it’s really hard, because we’ve gotten so used to being hard.

And Hashem says: Stop being so difficult! **Hard? – Finding a mate, like splitting Yam Suph (the Sea of Reeds).**

**Hard? – Your livelihood, like splitting Yam Suph.**

**Hard? – Your apertures (your health), like spitting Yam Suph.**

You’re hard! Between all your dates you prepare more and more insurmountable questionnaires: “If your son suddenly says he wants to be a Hasid, not a misnagged, what will you say to him?”

“Yemima, what kind of kippah should I look for in a boy to date?” – What do you think, that you’re marrying a yarmulka? You’re marrying a human being.

A woman has to have softness, and she has to maintain that softness despite the passage of time, years, age and experience. In Song of Songs, a beautiful woman is **ךְ בִּטְנֵךְ עֲרֵמַת חִטִּים – שַׂעְרֵךְ כְּעֵדֶר הָעִזִּים – אַפֵּךְ כְּמִגְדַּל הַלְּבָנוֹן** - Your belly is a pile of wheat; Your hair is like a flock of goats; Your nose is like the Tower of Lebanon. We’re all trying to be flat and strong. I watch stunned as my daughters put their hair in the toaster every day to take out the curls.

But Bechukotai invents a new curse for hard people: **וְהֵבֵאתִי מֹרֶךְ בִּלְבָבָם – I will place faintness in their hearts.** You’ll be full of fear. Any time you’re full of fear, it’s a sign you’re being hard – on the world and on yourself.

Fear is the curse in Bechukotai. **וּפְרִיקְתי עליכם בהלה – I will command upon them fright.** Goodness gracious. Where do a person’s fears come from? From inflexibility: “This is what I want, and that’s it.” When you go to sleep at night and you’ve quarreled with someone, you get fears. You go to sleep angry at someone or something, and you get up in the morning wondering, “But what’s bothering me?”

What’s bothering you is that that someone spoke against you first thing in the morning.

You must understand, even the toughest tree will break under strong winds. Whereas the soft stalks of grain will simply bend over and stand up again. Bending down (not always, of course) is a blessing because the greatest blessing of all is peace.

Lashon Hara also causes fear. One of the curses in our parsha is **דהֹר אָבֵד קִול עָלֶה נִדָּף – the sound of a driven leaf will hound you.** It’s just a leaf, neshama – what are you running from? Says the Kli Yakar: that’s your evil talk. You get home from a wedding or bar mitzvah: “Oy, I don’t feel so good; whatshername gave me the evil eye.” No, dearie. You sat there all evening and gossiped. Nobody gave you the evil eye. You made yourself an evil mouth.

And another source of fears: boredom. Maybe you’re just bored? So get up and do something. **אם בחוקותי תלכו – If you walk in My statutes – Rashi: that you work at it.**

All the fears have increased since the internet. Every little sniffle you get makes you look on Google. And that’s where

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22 Leviticus 26:27-28 and Onkelos ad loc.
23 Pesachim 118a.
24 Song of Songs 7:3.
25 Leviticus 26:5.
26 6:5.
27 Leviticus 26:36.
28 7:9.
29 26:16.
30 26:3 and Rashi ad loc.
the scariest information is: “Wait, it says if I’m dizzy, then... uh oh. I am dizzy. Weak in the morning? Yeah, that too...a protrusion near my hand – oh, no, I never even noticed...” You get all the worst fears from that information. Don’t even look! It’s a function of boredom. Go to work in the morning; you won’t have time to worry. You don’t have work? Volunteer.

When you’re busy the less urgent things get pushed aside anyway. I’m marrying off a daughter, Baruch Hashem. The hall manager doesn’t get it: “I’ve never had a wedding where the family doesn’t want to meet with me. What salads do you want?”

“Don’t bother me, I have no time,” I say to him. Salad tastings can be accomplished by others. If I weren’t busy I’d be pestering you how to slice the cabbage. I’m busy - it’s therapeutic! And thank you, dear husband, who’s organizing it all.

In short, says Hashem, stop being so hard. Stop fighting life, trying to beat life. It’s called Hod, and this root in Hebrew has two meanings: Toda – thanks! – as well as admitting. Arrange a plea bargain with your life. Admit, and Hashem releases you from the rest.

What Is the Attribute of Hod?

This week we go from Netzach to Hod. Instead of trying to defeat life and fighting over things you don’t like (“Where is that written? What good will it do?”), move into Hod. From hardness to softness, from judgment to mercy. Start thanking!

“Hashem, thank You.
Thank You that I have parents,
Thank You that I live in Israel.
Thank You for my health.
Thank You that I’m Jewish.
Thank You that I get the chance to learn Torah.
Thank You for this child.”

That’s all you need to do this week: give thanks.

Why is it so hard to thank, and I mean to thank from the bottom of your heart? Because it looks like there’s so much more bad than good. How many blessings are there in the parsha? – 11 verses. How many curses? – 33 verses.

That’s just an optical illusion, sweetie, says Rabbi Zev Wolf Einhorn in his commentary on the Midrash. Look closely and you’ll see that the blessings go from Aleph to Tav: א- בוטואית תלל - If you walk in My statutes... and the last verse ends with Tav: ת - I will walk you upright.

But when it comes to the curses – not even close. Vav to Heh... לא יתשמש בקיל - And if you heed not My voice... lots of curses, but it concludes: י - I am Hashem.

Not only is it only vav to heh, two letters, it’s backwards. Because that’s the way it really is. A curse is an optical illusion. You have it so good – you’re in the generation of Mashiach – why do you complain all the time?

The week of Hod – say thanks to Hashem for everything. You know it’s hard. Why is it so hard? The answer, in one word: waiting. Girls can’t wait for a match, for livelihood, for joy: “Enough already. I went to Rabbi Shimon’s tomb; I did all the segulot; I cut hair at an upsherin; I donated eighteen rotel. And what did I get?...”

That pain is called “the pain between sowing and reaping”. “I sowed, I did everything I’m supposed to, so nu?”

Someone told me, “Yemima, no one wants to talk about it, but I have friends, God forbid, who have suicidal thoughts. How much more can we handle? Such a nice girl, so God-fearing, so beautiful, never did anything bad. How long?”

Waiting kills you! But Hashem says: Stop thinking that what comes easy is a blessing. It’s just the opposite - what comes with difficulty is a blessing! What you have to get down on your knees (ברך) to bring, that’s a blessing (ברכה). If you walk in My statutes and walk, and walk, and walk – ...Walking he will go...returning he shall come in song...”

31 Wait, sweetie. The real things take time, but they happen in the end.

Look at Ruth. She walked and walked. It’s no coincidence we read the book of Ruth on Shavuot, the book of stubborn walking. A Jewish woman needs patience, because Hashem says to her what Naomi told her daughters-in-law: בנה יבוא בנה – Return, my daughters, go. 32 Walk back. Walk forth. In preparing her daughters-in-law for life as Jews, she reveals the secret: it’s about the back and forth. It comes to you eventually. Wait.

31 Psalms 126:6.
32 Ruth 1:12.
Walk Patiently, Like Naomi and Ruth

Indeed, suffering is exact, and it pays. But they also lay a trap. They can cause you to fall in one of two ways:
Depression
Denying Hashem – what our parsha calls keri, the thought that Hashem acts randomly.

Those are the two fundamentals that Rabbi Shimon reveals to his disciples the day he dies – how not to fall into depression, impatience and denial as a result of prolonged suffering. How to maintain joy and patience. Joy and patience on a long journey are two great secrets.

The difficulty in being a thankful person is a long walk through faith. There’s so much walking in the Zohar. All the time. Rabbi Shimon’s group walks from here to there and back again. If you walk in My statutes – slowly. Take it slow.

The Kli Yakar says: that’s the only way out of the astrologically ordained future. Yes, there’s this thing called fortune, etched into the stars. But even that which is etched – in My statutes – can be made into a walk – תלכו – you walk.

Of course you can trample or direct fortune. If you walk in My statutes – despite the laws of heaven dictating a certain future, you can walk away from it. How? Persistent walking and toil.

Women have an incredible ability to walk. Look at Naomi and Ruth – how they walk! They walk and walk, and not just spiritually. Even Orpah, in the merit of the four steps she accompanied her mother-in-law, had a descendant, Goliath, who would rule over Israel 40 days during King Shaul's time.

The reward for steps.

Naomi undergoes a tremendous trial in the book of Ruth. The trial of poverty. As in any trial, it has side effects: shame. Being the object of gossip - הֲזֹאת נָעֳמִי - Is that Naomi? they all whisper.

And Naomi says something terrible: אני נلامה הלכה והforums נלכתי - I left full, and Hashem has returned me empty. 33

Ruth also went through horrible tests. Shameful experiences with finding a match. But she knew how to keep walking.

There’s a baraita that calls the book of Iyov “punishment” and the book of Ruth “punishment with a happy ending.” 34

And actually, where is the difference between Iyov and Ruth?

Iyov went through shattering pain, and his wife broke first: הקבר אתה נכבד - Curse God and die, 35 she advises him. She can’t walk any further.

“Oy, don’t talk like that,” he answers her. כְּדַבֵּר אַחַת הַנְּבָלוֹת תְּדַבֵּרִי. גַּם אֶת הָרָע נְקַבֵּל מֵאֵת הָאֱלֹקים וְאֶת הָרָע לֹא נְקַבֵּל - “You speak like one of the foolish women. Do we accept only the good from God, and not the bad? 36 What’s happening to you?”

Whereas in the book of Ruth the women do not break. They are like the grain stalks of Shavuot, bending low in the wind and standing up again. The strongest word in Ruth is one that occurs again and again: והתימה - She arose. Like the word and והתימה - She returned. She (Naomi) and her daughters-in-law arose, and she returned from the fields of Moav 37. What embarrassment, coming back with nothing, like those Israelis who go to America and come back dispirited.

The secret of joy belongs to women who know how to transform the trials into experience. It’s the same word in Hebrew, נסיון – nisayon. Like on a resume. Those women use their life experience to help others. That’s why you passed the test and are still alive – to help others.

Ruth says something terrible to Naomi: אל הממשי יגלה - Do not hurt/ beg me to leave you. The Midrash says: Naomi, you were supposed to die. Just like your husband and sons, Machlon and Kilyon. Hashem kept you alive only so that through your loneliness you will understand the loneliness that this convert is going through, and you’ll help her. 38

In other words, be careful. If you don’t treat what you go through as experience, your life has no justification. It’s why you’re here.

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33 Ruth 1:19, 21.
34 Bava Batra 14b.
35 Job 2:9.
36 2:10.
37 1:6.
38 1:16 and Ruth Rabba.
Stop Taking Hashem So Personally

Wake up! The source of despair is the source of the greatest, most wonderful fire. That’s the secret of Lag BaOmer joy. On Lag BaOmer Rabbi Akiva’s disciples stopped dying. To anyone who thinks this is a happy occasion, let me clarify that the reason they stopped dying is there weren’t any left. Rabbi Akiva got up on Lag BaOmer to look for new disciples, coining the saying that when you write the verse, “Hear, O Israel, Hashem is One” – the Shma – there’s a little extra line added to the Dalet of “one” without which the letter looks like a resh. Instead of “Hashem is One,” it becomes “Hashem is other.” As if to say He acts differently with us than with everyone else. But of course you’re just confused. You’ll feel like that tiny little blot of ink.

Stop taking Hashem so personally. It’s that attitude that’s the source of so much of your despair and depression. “Hashem is angry at me; He’s ignoring me; He forgot me,” you think, but don’t understand: He’s always the same. Hashem is one! says Rabbi Meir Baal HaNes. Don’t forget that.

Our parsha says נתתי פני – בכם - I will place my countenance against them. The holy Ohr Hahayim explains: as water reflects a face. The haftara has an amazing verse: בָּרוּךְ הַגֶּבֶר אֲשֶׁר יִבְטַח בַּהֲדָרָה וּלפָנַי בָּכֶם - Blessed is the man who trusts in Hashem, and whose hope is Hashem. When you trust, Hashem will give you hope. You’re guaranteed to be saved.

Rabbi Meir Baal HaNes was a scribe. Every sofer knows that when you write the verse, “Hear, O Israel, Hashem is our God, Hashem is One” – the Shma – there’s a little extra line added to the Dalet of “one” without which the letter looks like a resh. Instead of “Hashem is One,” it becomes “Hashem is other.” As if to say He acts differently with me than with everyone else. But of course you’re just confused. You’ll feel like that tiny little blot of ink.

We always project our own feelings onto Hashem: “He’s angry at me/He’s ignoring me/He hates me because I’m Sephardi/He doesn’t even look my way.” As if Hashem has moods. Rabbi Meir Baal HaNes says to us: “Be careful, sweetheart, for Hashem is one. He doesn’t change; He doesn’t have moods. 네.getString(39) - I will place my countenance against you: I will look at you the way you look at Me. If you believe in me wholeheartedly, I’ll believe in you. If you’re suspicious of Me, be afraid.

We think that when something seems delayed it’s because Hashem brought it late. Not so. There’s no coincidence to timing.

Rabbi Shimon comes out of the cave. He’s afraid the Romans will catch him. Then he sees an amazing sight – a bird trapper at work. Every time a bird is about to be caught and killed, a heavenly echo declares, it will die. And the bird dies. A bird not destined to fall prey to the hunter has a different announcement: amnesty. Rabbi Shimon heard all of that. And then he realized: If even each individual bird is individually guided by Hashem, certainly humans are! It will be alright. And he leaves the cave.

Stop being disappointed in Hashem and attributing motives to His mechanisms. Just trust Him! Be grateful! Admit you don’t understand. That’s a wonderful interpretation given by the Baal HaTanya, that in the week of Hod you have to admit you don’t understand God’s mechanisms.

How to build a fruitful Father and Son Relationship

The secret of child-rearing is on Lag BaOmer. Lag BaOmer is a concise expression of the father-son connection. Rabbi Shimon talks so much about himself and his son.

Naomi keeps calling her daughters in law My daughter (every mother-in-law’s nightmare: a Jewish mother-in-law to a shiksa for a daughter-in-law. Yet Naomi calls her shiksa daughter in law “my daughter”).

Let’s see the secrets of child-rearing as they are expressed in Lag BaOmer. There are three big secrets:
1. A light in the face
2. Excellence in learning as a value
3. The word “No.”

1. A lit-up face.

When Hashem blesses us in Bechukotai, He says,حركة אני מכל הצדדים - I will turn toward you. Rashi gives an incredible interpretation: one - I will drop all My affairs and occupy Myself only with you. Hashem drops His other affairs – does He has a business? It’s an incredible lesson in teaching, in child-rearing. חפירה אני - I set aside all the crafts in the world and only teach my son Torah.
The emphasis in this case is not on teaching Torah, but on abandoning all other pursuits.

Part of the father-son connection is privacy. A room. Exclusivity. The Ramchal writes that the cave where Rabbi Shimon and his son Rabbi Elazar stayed was essentially a womb. Rabbi Shimon and his son, alone in a closed room. Then, when he could shine his face upon his son, that light would be reflected back even stronger.

Parents, don’t give up on your despairing child. Look inside him, not at his shell. Get close to him on Shabbat. Shabbat has the ability to engender mercy, says Rabbi Meir. Show him small, pure children, just as Rabbi Meir Baal HaNes did. Speak to him about the power of the tzaddik.

The kabbalist Rabbi Gamliel Rabbinowitz always talks about how he takes all sorts of wayward youth to Meron on Lag BaOmer; they cry so much it’s as if they’re getting a personal caress from Rabbi Shimon himself: “It will be all right.” Rabbi Shimon is like the sun shining on them again.

There are two concepts in Judaism: The “face of the sun” and the “face of the moon.” The moon gets its light from the sun. All it does is reflect. But the sun always shines, and does not wait for anything to illuminate it. What’s a parent’s job? To be the face of the sun, not the moon. You have to learn to shine instead of just reflecting your children’s faces — which are too often faces of depression or complaint. Shine on them, like the sun, without depending on anything. That’s Rabbi Shimon’s will and testament, Hod, illumination. As his soul was about to leave his body he was surrounded by a wall of fire, blocking out his disciples. When the flames died down he died, and his students saw him turn his face toward them, smiling.

Start to realize you’re the face of the sun. Stop waiting to receive light from everyone else. You have to shine now. You’re all grown up. You’re a wife, a mother. An integral part of that is being a lighthouse, not just a reflector.

Be a Shining Mother in Law. Be a Nice Daughter in Law

And while we’re on the subject of the sun, let’s talk about the sun-in-law. Or just your mother-in-law. And daughter-in-law. I’m about to become a mother-in-law, and I’ve got to be careful with what I say here...

“The face of the sun” — when Moshe ordained Yehoshua, Hashem tells him - You shall place some of your Hod upon him. Rashi writes, - That refers to his shining face.

Someone asked me, “Yemima, what is THE most important obligation of a mother-in-law? Of a daughter-in-law?”

So, mothers-in-law, according to the book of Ruth, you should be calling your daughter-in-law “my daughter.” The senseless practice of calling a mother-in-law “Mom” has no source. But calling your daughter-in-law “daughter” happens all the time in Ruth.

“Daughter” — what does it mean? It means neutralize your criticism. If you saw grey socks in your daughter’s white laundry you’d say, “The poor thing. She’s so busy. It’s so hard with the kids.” But about your disorganized daughter-in-law, “How neglectful. How thoughtless.”

The one thing a mother-in-law must do is negate all that criticism.

Now let’s talk about the face of the daughter-in-law.

As we say as we welcome Shabbat - let us do some receiving (Pnei Shabbat nekabella). Accept your mother-in-law! You have quite a bit to learn from her. She knows a thing or two about life in general, and about the son she raised in particular.

But we (not you, of course) daughters-in-law are so conceited. We’re so sure our youth gives us the right insights. We have no idea what a mother-in-law is. It’s the Hebrew word for warmth - חמות.

There’s a sweet Rashi in Bechukotai. A man takes a vow: I’m going to pay the Temple treasury the worth of that man. How do you measure a man’s worth? From the ages of 20 to 60, a man’s worth is 50 silver shekels and a woman’s, 30. Beyond the age of sixty, the difference between men and women disappears. The man’s value decreases and the woman’s remains the same.

Rashi says: בincinnati - ברכה בבית. זקן בבית – פַּחתָא - If there’s an elderly woman in the home, there’s blessing; if an elderly man, damage. It’s funny how Rashi let himself cut loose a little there. A man loses his life skills as he ages, says Rashi. But a woman – there’s always something to learn from her.

45 Shabbat 12a.
46 Numbers 27:7 and Rashi ad loc.
Why Does Ruth Have to Take All that Singlehood Stigma?

And since we’re already talking about the stars of Shavuot, Naomi and Ruth, there’s no more despairing verse in Tanach than what Boaz says to Ruth: לני הלילה - sleep here tonight. None.

Ruth bears a terrible pain, a pain that receives no mention in the Chumash or prophets. Other kinds of pain are mentioned – widows, the ill, orphans. But remaining unmarried, of delays in finding a match? Not a word. Why? Because that’s the pain of the times of Mashiach; it’s the pain of one woman only in Tanach, the woman who became the mother of Mashiach: Ruth. It was only the fact that she would be the mother of Mashiach that enabled her to endure the shame of all the failed matchups, a shame of being told spend the night.

Ruth was the daughter of Eglon, the king of Moav. A princess! She converts and no one even glances at her; she can’t marry anyone – what an awful prospective bride.


“But I’m 40 and he’s 87,” Ruth laments.

“That’s what there is.”

“But you know everyone says the Moabite girls are ‘easy.’ I should play into that stereotype and propose – or proposition – him?”

“Do as I tell you.”

Ruth goes there at night and lies at Boaz’s feet.

He awakes with a start.

מי את - Who are you?

Falsy כנפך על אמתך - Will you spread your wings over your maidservant? Will you marry me? Tonight, here in the granary?

OMG.

And what does he say? “Absolutely not. Sleep here tonight. Wait one more night. והיה אם יגאלך טוב, יגאל - If Tov redeems you, very well. There’s another fellow named Tov – he’s a good match for you” (you know what I’m talking about, don’t you? You do it, too – just to escape that date, even if it means foisting him on someone else).

That’s what Boaz says, and the Sages say he was ashamed of her.

וזה אני לא היאום נלאך - It will be if he does not want to redeem you, if he doesn’t want to marry you, fine; האלך - I will redeem you, By God. I swear it. There’s nothing more degrading.

She comes back in the morning and Naomi opens the door for her and asks her a bizarre question: מי את, בִּיתי - Who are you, my daughter? How did it go? What’s your last name now? What did he say when you proposed marriage – wasn’t he thrilled?"

What a crushing moment.

Ruth basically has to undergo Chalitzah and Yibbum. Then she marries Boaz; in the drama that is the book of Ruth there’s a chorus of old women. They see the elderly Boaz and his 40-year-old wife in her prime, and say, יי, זא - May Hashem make the woman entering your home as Rachel and Leah, who both built the House of Israel.

Boaz had one night with Ruth; he died that very night. Oy. And Hashem says: learn from Ruth. That woman picked herself up from terrible degradation. Go, come back; go, come back. She knows: Hashem is One. Hashem will not make me fall; He will not shame me. Hashem is one, not Other. I will keep walking and walking.

Despair and Healing Come from the Same Place

It’s all the same lesson: Lag BaOmer, Pesach Sheni and Rabbi Meir Baal HaNes. The lesson is that the same place that gives rise to the depression and despair is where you will recover. Every day of the Omer Rabbi Akiva would have to attend 750 funerals of his disciples. It ended on Lag BaOmer. He entered his huge yeshiva and stood there alone; the world was desolate.

A few years ago the Rabbi of Merkaz HaRav Kuk, who lost five of his righteous students in that terrorist shooting attack said, “Maybe I’m not worthy of being a Rabbi.” Maybe that’s the appropriate conclusion. “Maybe Hashem doesn’t want me to marry. Maybe He doesn’t want me to have children,” God forbid.

“No,” says Rabbi Akiva as he returns from the 24,000th funeral. “the recovery starts from the same place as the despair.” He doesn’t decide to get retrained as a computer programmer – he gets up and goes out: “I’m going to look for new disciples.”

He finds them. Five of them. One of them was Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai.

That’s Lag BaOmer. The same place that caused you despair will bring you recovery.
“I’m sick of sending out my resume!” – one more. “I’m sick of shidduchim!” – excellent. Go out again tonight. “My kids are getting on my nerves like you wouldn’t believe!” – you’ll have twins.

My friend had nine children. The oldest, a sixteen-and-a-half-year-old girl, went off the derech. My friend was so pained. “Have another one,” I told her. “Are you crazy? With all the problems I’ve got? What for – will you adopt him?” And she had an amazing little girl. The oldest daughter came to visit at the hospital. “Oh, she’s adorable!” “Wait a second – you haven’t done Netilat Yadayim yet today – do it before you pick up that little tzaddikah,” her mother said. That oldest daughter returned to the fold completely, and is now happily married to a sweet frum fellow.

45 Minute of Happiness. It’s Worth Everything

Rabbi Shimon’s yahrtzeit is also called a “hilula” – the same word used for a wedding. The secret of this hilula/wedding is in the bonfire that the children make on Lag baOmer. I always say we have to learn from the children. They gather wood for months – huge piles; other people come and steal them, and they collect it all again and even stand guard at night – for what? A half hour, forty-five minutes of fire? But they’re so happy. It’s worth it to them.

And you, you get annoyed – “let this just be over and done with already”. What you do accomplish you want to stay around forever. But nothing does. As someone said to me, “I went to a talk about Shalom Bayit, but what did I get out of it? He was nice for a week…”

A husband being nice for a week – do you have any idea how great that is? It’s cause for a celebration!

If we only knew how incredible even a one point of light is. Why aren’t you grateful? Why isn’t every day the Hod of Hod for you? You just want more. More more? I want to win in life, but none of my victories last. The word for bonfire in Hebrew – m’durah – evokes mador, something that’s with you only temporarily. That’s how a Jewish couple has to manage itself, gather up the beams of your life each morning. If they were stolen during the night, if they disappeared, if you got splinters, gather again and light that fire. Each morning anew.

Upsherin and Things That Can You Do with Hair

So what is Lag BaOmer? First of all it’s a day to pray for your children to be tzaddikim. It’s the day Rabbi Akiva found his five new students and prayed for them to be Torah scholars.

It’s a day to pray for our education of the children and our parenting. The first secret of parenting is a shining face. The Alter of Slabodka says parents have to have a warm expression on their faces. A parent who has a poker face will alienate his child. Your gaze must be something he internalizes. Smile.

Lag BaOmer appears to be Rabbi Shimon’s yahrtzeit. His students come and see fire burning all around him; they understand he is about to die. Rabbi Elazar his son cries out, אביך, אבי, רכב ישראל ופרשיו - My father, my father! The chariot of Israel and its horsemen!

The flames disappear and they see Rabbi Shimon on his bed. Dead, but smiling.

Rabbi Shimon’s last will and testament: smile.

Have you seen the shining faces of the people around those bonfires? The bonfire reminds us: shine!

The second secret of child-rearing is conveying the value of excellence in learning. Keep instilling in the child: “We’re an elite unit. We’re the SEALS” (My kids love to read about the SEAL unit that killed Bin Laden). Shvitz a little in Torah! Rabbi Shimon was known as the lion of his group. He basically said to his students, “We’re a secret unit. Elite! Don’t let anyone in; don’t tell anyone.”

But we don’t insist on that value. The kid finds it difficult – so he goes to the sheep-milking yeshiva instead and learns how to make cheese and play Oud. I’m not saying it shouldn’t be done, but you have to realize when it comes at the expense of excellence in learning.

The third secret is the word No. This is how Naomi trains Ruth: “My daughter, don’t you go to theaters; don’t sleep in a house that has no mezuzah.” It’s so important because we’re a generation of parents who are afraid to say No. Lag BaOmer blends that shining face with the word No – and that’s manifest in the upsherin.
The Sages say a person’s Torah learning is like hair. There’s a beautiful Gemara on the words סַלְסְלֶהָ וּתְרוֹמֶךָּ  - *Exalt her and she shall promote you.* The same word for “exalt” also means “to curl” as one curls hair. The Sages had trouble understanding the word. Until they heard a maidservant of Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi – quite a wise woman – cleaning the Beit Midrash when she saw one of the men curling a strand of his hair. “How long are you going to keep curling that?” she asked, using the verb in question. The Sages jumped. “Hey! Thank you! You just explained something we couldn’t understand! Torah is like hair!”

You can color hair, you can part it, you can push it forward like a rock star, you can cover your face with it. The secret of Torah is expressed in hair. That’s the great revelation of Rebbe’s maidservant. You can do so many things with hair! We once made a bar mitzvah for my son and a hairdresser came over. I’d never been to a salon, other than the day of my wedding (and have suffered migraines ever since). I saw how she would take flaming Inquisitorial implements of torture and bend the hair to her will. Even my little daughter Ahuva sat submissively in her chair. The hairdresser did everything imaginable to that hair: hit it, heated it, curled it and straightened it. Ahuva, of course, ended up looking just as unkempt as ever. The same with Torah.

So what is the *upsheirin*? The point isn’t the cutting. We’re not Native Americans who cut off a piece of the child’s body and call him Amputee. In Judaism the goal is leaving the peot, the edges, uncut: “Child, from now on, you have distinct borders. You have boundaries.”

The *peah* is between the mouth and ear, a strategic border. What a child hears and says must be limited.

A child is so happy at his *upsheirin*. Why? Because it’s his day. Here we are, dedicated only to you right now, dear boy.

It’s so important to *daven* for our children on Lag BaOmer! There’s an order to it:
First, a shining face.
Then, excellence in learning.

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*Tzaddikim are Not Only for Men. Reasons to go to Meron*

What is the power of tzaddikim’s tombs? Should you go to Meron? Should women go to Meron? *Tzaddikim* aren’t only for men. We’ve already said that women have always turned to *tzaddikim* (or their tombs) for help. The *tzaddikim* have always heard crying women.

For example, when Tamar wanted to be married to Yehudah, she went and sat - by the entrance to Einayim - eyes. Rashi explains:okus של העינים נשתת על המ紊 - קובע על אמא un a place where all eyes gaze upon, *Father Avraham’s tomb.* She went to Avraham’s grave and cried, “Avraham, Please, help me.”

What is the power of the *tzaddikim*’s tombs? The Vilna Gaon says: - the divine presence rests upon the deceased. In the absence of the Beit HaMikdash, נמצא שמקום מנוחת הצדיקים הוא מקום השראה השכינה - the resting places of the tzaddikim are the place of the Shechinah.  When you come to the grave of a *tzaddik* – especially a bona fide tomb, such as that of Rabbi Shimon – you’re in the place where the Shechihin rests.

Ask the *tzaddik* to request mercy. As Yosef did, when he threw himself upon his mother’s grave on his way down to Egypt, and Calev Ben Yefuneh, when he prostrated himself on the patriarchs’ graves in Chevron to shield him from the influence of the other spies.

Make your request in the merit of the *tzaddik*’s Torah learning. As the liturgical poem reads, תורתו מגן לנו - *His Torah is our shield.*

Ask in the merit of that *tzaddik*’s suffering. The *tzaddik* in his tomb will hear you in your pain, says the *Esh Kodesh*. Hashem in turn sees the *tzaddik*’s pain, and says: Oy. She might deserve this, but Rabbi Shimon doesn’t deserve to suffer so. I’ll give her what she’s asking for so that you, Rabbi Shimon, will not suffer. That’s why many daven and ask for things not in the merit of a *tzaddik*’s power, but in the merit of his suffering.  The *Esh Kodesh*’s son Elimelech was murdered by the Nazis before the righteous Esh Kodesh’s eyes. Now, Each person

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50 [Genesis 38:14](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1076393/jewish/30-City-of-Judah.ahtml) and Rashi ad loc.
has a verse. The first letter of the verse is the first letter of the person’s name, and the last letter of the verse is the last letter of his name. The Esh Kodesh buried his beloved son and said the verse for Eimelech:

ךָ אָמַרְתְּ לַה' “ה' אָתָּה. טוֹבָתִי בַּל עָלֶי - I have said to Hashem, ‘You are Hashem. I have no good apart from You.’

The Psalm continues: - and to the saints upon the Earth.53

I say to Hashem: Master of the world, is my good not Your doing? Is it so hard to do good for me? Am I wicked? You know what – to the saints upon the Earth – look how Your holy ones in the ground are suffering. Do good for me.”

The deceased is happy you came to him – and he reflects that.

The Rebbe of Zvhil writes:

ל”ג [שידע כל אדם שמי שעולה היום מירונה, בוודאי קיבל הזמנה אישית מרבי שמעון בר יוחאי לפקוד את נווהו, מפני sharedPreferencesו ישועה大きה - Every person should know that whoever goes today (Lag BaOmer) to Meron must certainly have received a personal invitation from Rabbi Shimon to visit his “residence” because he has arranged a great salvation.]

Whoever manages to reach the festivities in Meron on Lag BaOmer received an invitation from Rabbi Shimon himself because he has a present for you. Won’t you come?

And the Kav HaYashar writes: The very fact that you were crushed by the crowds on the way, stepped on, pushed, your bus ran late – that wipes away your sins. - Rabbi Shimon is worthy enough to on in times of stress.56 All the suffering you endure on the way to the grave of a tzaddik is redemptive.

The Segulot of Lag BaOmer

You don’t have to, but here is a bunch of sweet segulot for Lag BaOmer.

1. Say Tehillim (Psalm) 67 seven times. It’s a psalm of Hod and gratitude: - The nations shall thank You, O God! All the nations shall thank You!57 It’s chock full of thanks.

2. Under no circumstances may you be sad on Lag BaOmer. Lag BaOmer is always on the same day of the week as Purim was. It’s a day of joy, of happy reversals, of transforming judgment in to mercy.

3. 18 Rotel. Rotel is a quantity; 18 rotels are 56 liters of liquid. It’s a weird segulah, perhaps, but I’ve heard it work wonders for many women. You deliver the drinks yourself to Rabbi Shimon, or donate to an organization that makes the delivery in your name.


A terrible-sounding segulah, but that’s the way it’s recorded. You have to say, “I want a child who will be exactly like Rabbi Shimon. And if not like Rabbi Shimon, then not at all.” It refers to the Gemara: Rabbi Shimon could, through his prayers, create souls that were never supposed to be in this world. If the child is not like Rabbi Shimon, it won’t enter this world – Nurse is Aaron ben Nachman - ‘Let Us make man’ was said for you 58 – Rabbi Shimon creates new people with his prayers.

5. Ask for a home. Rabbi Shimon was a champion mover – he lived everywhere! Tzidon, T’koa, Yavne, Usha, Bnei Brak and Meron!59

53 Psalms 16:2-3.
54 Sefer Chasidim 550.
55 Cited in Rabbi Mordechai Genuth, Davar Bitto for Lag BaOmer.
56 Shabbat 45.
57 From the liturgical poem Bar Yohai.
58 Yalkut Shimi 1:2.
6. A segulah from the Chida: On Saturday night, Lag BaOmer eve, light 17 candles, the \textit{g'matriya} of \textit{Tov}, \textit{good}. From Lag BaOmer to Shavuot there are 17 days, and we ask Hashem for good days, days during which we earn receiving the Torah.

7. Rabbi Yehonasan Eybeschütz writes that Lag BaOmer is when you should repent from the biggest transgression of your life, and rabbi Shimon will personally intercede on your behalf in heaven.

\textbf{Rabbi Shimon Is Worthy Enough! E-mail of the Week}

I got an e-mail. “Hello Yemima. Please tell everyone about the miracle that happened to me. I’ve been married six years, waiting to have a child. We did all the segulot in the world; we prayed, we cried, went to Rabbis, had fertility treatments, and each time the disappointment only grew. We thought we’d gotten used to disappointment, but every time, the sack of tears would burst open again. Our heart so wants to hold a baby...

Exactly a year ago we already considered stopping the treatments, but wanted to try one more.

It was scheduled right before Lag BaOmer, and I had the sense that Rabbi Shimon was involved. We went to Rabbi Shimon’s tomb and cried there.

We underwent the treatment before Lag BaOmer, and also went to the grave on Lag BaOmer. Exactly two weeks later, the day before Shavuot, I did a test. It came out positive, baruch Hashem. The baby was born exactly nine months after Lag BaOmer. Day of the Hod of Hod. We named our son Shimon, and now want to give thanks from the bottom of our heart...”

\textit{Rabbi Shimon is worthy enough}. When he feels your pain, Hashem revokes the decree.

May we merit couplehood, shining faces, righteous children, walking joyfully and faithfully in the paths of life, to celebrations!

May it be Hashem’s will that we get a second chance at reach something new, in the merit of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai and Rabbi Meir Baal HaNes.

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