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FREE RENDITIONBy the Grace of G-d
13th of Iyar, 5730
Brooklyn, N. Y.

מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן

ליובאוויטש

770 איסטערן פארקוויי

ברוקלין, נ. י.

To All Students¹, Boys and Girls²
Participating in the Lag b'Omer³
Activities)

G-d Bless You -

Greeting and Blessing:

I was pleased to be informed of the forthcoming⁴ Lag b'Omer activities. May G-d grant that they be carried out with the utmost success. And "success" in this case means that these activities will stimulate in each and every one of you additional powers and vitality⁵ to march forth from strength to strength in the study of our Torah, Toras Chaim, the "guide" in the daily life, and our way of life worthy of living; the kind of study that leads to action, namely, the fulfillment of the Mitzvoth⁶ by which Jews live.

The story of Lag b'Omer, as related in the Gemoro⁷, is well known. Our Sages tell us that the disciples of Rabbi Akiva were stricken by a plague because they were not respectful towards one another. But on the thirty-third day of Sefira - Lag b'Omer - the plague stopped.

As in the case of all stories of the Torah⁸, which are also part of the Torah, meaning "instruction," the story of Rabbi Akiva's students contains a lesson for each and every one of us, particularly pupils, boys and girls.

To begin with: Since the Gemoro testifies that they were "disciples of Rabbi Akiva," it is clear that they were worthy of this title. This means that they were dedicated to the Torah and Mitzvoth with devotion, diligence and Mesiras Nefesh⁹ (self-sacrifice), as the great Tanna and exalted Sage¹⁰ had taught them.

It follows that their lack of respect for one another could not have been due to trivial matters, but was motivated by the high level of their spiritual standing as "disciples of Rabbi Akiva."

The explanation of their conduct is to be found in the saying of our Sages, of blessed memory, that people generally have different minds¹¹ and different concepts. Each individual has therefore his own manner of serving G-d, studying the Torah and observing the Mitzvoth with "Hiddur." For example, one person may do it primarily out of love for G-d, another person may do it primarily out of fear of G-d, a third may do it primarily out of a sense of complete obedience¹² and submission to the Will of G-d, and so forth, though in actual

basis

for

approach
in

Here is a letter freely translated from the original Hebrew text, dated the 13th of Iyar, 5730, and addressed to all the children participating in Lag-B'Omer festivities worldwide. Although generally the Rebbe was not accustomed to edit such translated letters, the following is a rare exception. Inasmuch as the letter was only a translation, as clearly stated at the beginning, the Rebbe edited it initially and gave it to his secretary for final corrections. Since we are privileged to possess the original, we can distinguish between the Rebbe's penciled handwriting and the secretariat's penned markings.

We shall point out the Rebbe's own corrections and translate his Hebrew comments. See page 12.



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practice, all of them, of course, fully and meticulously observe the Torah and Mitzvot in the daily life.

Now, being disciples of Rabbi Akiva, they were surely men of truth, who served G-d with the utmost sincerity and devotion, which permeated their whole being. Thus, it seemed to each one of them that his particular way was the right one, and anyone who had not attained his level was lacking in perfection. Moreover, being disciples of Rabbi Akiva, who taught, "Thou shalt love thy fellow Jew as thyself" - this is the great principle of the Torah, they were not content personally to advance from strength to strength in their own way of serving G-d, but they wished to share this with their friends and tried to influence them to follow their path. Seeing that the others were reluctant to accept their particular way, they could not respect them to the degree that was to be expected of the disciples of Rabbi Akiva.

In the light of the above, we can see that the story of Lag b'Omer in the Gemoro teaches us what should be the right conduct of each and every one of us, and the instruction is threefold:

a) Serving G-d, studying the Torah and observing the Mitzvot, both the Mitzvot between man and man, and the Mitzvot between man and G-d, must be with inspired sincerity, truthfulness, and vitality, which permeate the whole of the person and his daily conduct.

b) The above includes, of course, the great Mitzvo of V'Ohavto L'Reacho Komocho (love your fellow Jew as yourself), which must also be fulfilled with the utmost vitality and in the fullest measure.

c) Together with the above, a person must look kindly and most respectfully upon every Jew, who is fully committed to all the Torah and Mitzvot, but differs only in the manner of worship, whether it is out of love, or out of reverence, etc.

A further instruction from the above is that even if one meets a Jew who has not yet attained the proper level of Divine service, the approach must still be that of respect and affection, in accordance with the teaching of our Sages, "Judge every person in the scale of merit." It is necessary to bear in mind that the person lacking in commitment to Yiddishkeit may not be at fault, and that he simply may not have had the opportunity to receive the proper Jewish education. On the contrary, in such a case it is all the greater pity for such a person, and it is necessary to make the utmost effort to help him come closer to Yiddishkeit, and to do so in a manner of love, respect, and pleasantness.

Let the great Tanna Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai, who considered Lag b'Omer as his day of personal celebration, be an example and inspiration to all of us. For he said that he

perfect

not with men
charitable
positive 17

163
200
175
27

must have?

one must have
pity such a
person all
the more

?

is a pleasant man
84? 19

- 3 -

was prepared to give all his merits in order to save the whole world from judgment (Succah 45b). In other words, he was prepared to give of himself completely to a person who has no merits of his own, whom he has never met, and who may be at the other end of the world. How much more so should one be ready to give of himself for the benefit of near and dear ones and all friends.

May G-d bless each and every one of you, ²⁾ in the midst of all our people Israel, that you should live and act in accordance with the spirit of Lag b'Omer, as mentioned above, and that you should do so with the utmost measure of true Ahavas Yisroel, with joy and gladness of heart; and that you should go from strength to strength in all your affairs, to hasten the fulfillment of the words of the (Lag b'Omer) week's Sidra: "I have broken the bars of your yoke (in exile) and made you go upright with the promised true and final Geulah through our righteous Moshiach."

With blessing for Hatzlocho and for happy tidings,

/Signed/ Menachem Schneerson

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In the first paragraph, the Rebbe crosses out the words "and our."

On the bottom paragraph, the Rebbe circles and crosses out "manner of," and substitutes: "basis for" and also adds "approach in". A line later, the Rebbe puts quotation marks around the word "Hiddur."

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In the first paragraph, the Rebbe inserts two quotations around "men of truth." In both instances where the translator had written "way," the Rebbe substitutes it with "approach" (in right margin) with arrows to both encircled words.

In the sixth paragraph, the Rebbe circles the word "merit" of the Midrashic quote, "Judge every person in the scale of merit," and comments with a question mark (free translation): "? This is not the definition here." A few sentences later, the Rebbe circles the word "is" and substitutes "must have," and circles "for" and makes a question mark on left margin. On the last line of the same paragraph, the Rebbe omits the word "of," circles the word "pleasantness" and writes a question mark on the right margin.

On the last paragraph of the page, the Rebbe circles "celebration" and writes "joy?".

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On the final paragraph, the Rebbe circles "have broken" and replaces "will breake." A line later, the Rebbe circles the word "made" and inserts "make," circles the word "with" and writes a question mark on the right margin, crosses out the word "promised," circles the word "final" and makes a question mark. Underneath it the Rebbe writes "complete" with another question mark beneath it.

At the conclusion of the letter: "With blessing for Hatzlocho and happy tidings," the Rebbe inserts an arrow after "Hatzlocho" and "tidings" and writes (free translation): "In all the above."

