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FREE RENDITION

מנהל החדש שניאורסאהן

ליובאוויטש

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ברוקלין, נ. י.

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

To All Students¹, Boys and Girls²
Participating in the Activities of
the Auspicious Day Lag b'Omer⁴
G-d Bless You -

Greeting and Blessing:

I was pleased to be informed of the forthcoming Auspicious Day 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, a 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 approach in serving G-d¹², 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 obedience¹³ and submission to the Will of G-d, and so forth, though in actual practice, all of them, of course, fully and meticulously observe the Torah and Mitzvoth in the daily life.

Now, being disciples of Rabbi Akiva, they were surely "men of truth"¹⁴, 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 approach 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 love¹⁵ 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 approach, 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 Mitzvoth, both the Mitzvoth between man and man, and the Mitzvoth between man and G-d, must be perfect¹⁶ with true inspiration 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 Mitzvoth, 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 favorably." It is necessary to bear in mind that the person lacking in commitment to Yiddishkeit may not be responsible, and that he simply may not have had the opportunity to receive the proper Jewish education. On the contrary, in such a case, one must pity such a person all the more, and it is necessary to make the utmost effort to help him come closer to Yiddishkeit, and to do so with love, respect and in a pleasant manner.

Let the great Tanna¹⁸ Rabbi Shimon ben Yochoi, who considered Lag b'Omer as his day of personal joy¹⁹, be an example and inspiration to all of us. For he said that he was prepared to give all his merits in order to save ^{all} the whole world from judgment (Succah²⁰ 45b). In other words, he was prepared to give 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 you²¹, 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 realization of the words of the (Lag b'Omer) week's Sidra: "I will break the bars of your yoke (in exile) and make you go upright"²³ - in fulfillment of the true²⁴ and complete²⁵ Geulo, through our righteous Moshiach.

With blessing for Hatzlocho and good tidings in the aforementioned

/Signed/ Menachem Schneerson

בשם י"ח
(ע"ד-ט"ו)
ממש
כרלו
קמ"ל
כרלו
רובו
פעמים
הרבה
ס"ג
(19*)

(1) כולל גם עפמ"נ: וכל בניך לימודי ה' - תלמידי ה' (ישעי' נד, יג ובמצו"צ שם). (2) ו"פ הוראת הכז"ל: איזהו חכם הלומד מכל אדם (אבות רפ"ד. ולהעיר מהורת הבעש"ט בזה - נדפסה בסו"ס הזכרונות ח"א ע"שד"מ). (3) להעיר ממלאכי (ג, יז): ליום אשר אני עושה סגולה וחמלתי עליהם כאשר יחמול איש על בנו. ובשמו"ר (פי"ח, ז). (4) ענינו וטעמיו מפורשים בפוסקים ע"ד הנגלה (טושו"ע או"ח סתצ"ג ובשו"ע אדמו"ר הזקן שם), וכך ע"ד הסוד (פע"ח שכ"ב, פ"ז. ועוד). ע"ד החסידות (דרושי ל"ג בעומר). ועוד. (5) להעיר אשר לדעת מדרש ל"ג בעומר ח"י אייר הוא יום בו התחיל המן (שו"ת חת"ס חיו"ד סרל"ג. אבל מסיים שם שהוא דלא כהש"ס פר"ע. וראה קידושין לח, א. תוספתא סוטה פ"א, ב. ועוד). (6) להעיר אשר רשב"י וחבריו תורתן אומנתן (שבת יא, א) וביחד עם זה למעשה מפסיקין (ירוש' ברכות פ"א ה"ב). (7) יבמות (סב, ב) וראה ג"כ בר פס"א, ג. קה"ר פ"א. אוצה"ג ליבמות שם. ובהמאיר שם: קבלה ביד הגאונים ז"ל כו". (8) ראה זח"ג (קנב, א): ר"ש אמר כו". (9) ראה כתובות (סב, סע"ב. אדר"נ פ"ו, ב. ועוד). ברכות (סא, ב) כל ימי כו". ד"ה וירח, ש"ת (וע"פ המבואר שם ענין מס"נ זו שהיא ע"פ השכל כו" מובן שלמדה לתלמידיו). (10) ראה סנהדרין (פו, א) וכולהו אליבי דרע"ק, ספרי ברכה (לד, ל), מנחות (כט, ב) ובתנחומא (פנחס י): כאו"א יש לו דעת בפ"ע. וראה סנהדרין לח, א. (12) ראה לקו"ת ר"פ בהעלתך. ובקה"ר (שם) "שהייתה עיניהם צרה בתורה זה לזה". וראה ג"כ חדא"ג מהרש"א ליבמות (שם): ולא חש כ"א מהם על כבוד התורה של חברו דאין כבוד אלא תורה (הובא ונתבאר באוה"ת - להצ"צ - ויקרא ע' קפז). (13) ראה אגה"ק סי' זך וביאורו. הרח"ו (אוה"ח לזח"א רכו, ב). (14) להעיר אשר רע"ק גלגול (ואותיות) יעקב (ראה שער הגלגולים הקדמה לו) ואביר יעקב אותיות רבי עקיבא (ל"ת להאריז"ל פ' ויחי), ומן שית מילי איעתר (נדלים, נ"א) והי' דורש ווי"ן (יבמות סח, ב. וראה שם תוד"ה כמאן בסופו) - כגונות האריז"ל וכו". - הובאו בילקוט ראובני פ' וישב. וש"נ) ויעקב מדתו אמת, ואות ו - אות אמת (זח"ג ב, א). (15) ספרא קדושים (יט, יח) הובא בפרש"י שם. וראה תניא פ"ב. לב. (16) שאין (צורך לעוד) עבודה לאח"ז (יומא כד, א), ועיין תניא ספ"ג, ספס"ו. (17) אבות (פ"א, מ"ו). (18) ראה ירושלמי סנהדרין (פ"א, ה"ב): סמיכות כו" שאנן ובוראך מכירין כחך. וראה לקו"ת אמור (כח, א). (19) פע"ח (שכ"ב, פ"ז) הובא בעט"ז לשו"ע או"ח סתצ"ג. (20) וראה ג"כ ירוש' ברכות (פ"ט, ה"ב). זח"א רכה, רע"א. (21) ראה הל"ת לאדה"ז ספ"א: הנשים חייבות ללמוד כל כו". (22) ראה זח"ג (קכה, א) חדי ר"ש ואמר כו" אנן בחביבותא תליא מילתא דכתיב ואהבת את ה' אלקיך וכתיב מאהבת ה' אתכם וכתיב אהבת אתכם אמר ה'. (23) ר"ש אומר כו" (תו"כ עה"פ. ונתבאר באוה"ת - להצ"צ - ע' תערב). (24) להעיר ממגילה (כט, א): רשב"י אומר כו" - ובהוספות בזה בירוש' תענית (פ"א, ה"א) - ומסיים: ושב ה"א את שבותך כו" הקב"ה שב עמהן. (25) שאין אחרי' גלות. וראה שמו"ר (ספ"ח) "נס עובר אבל לעת"ל כו" ושם (פ"ט, ו"א) "לשעבר כו" אבל לעת"ל אני לבדי כו" (נתבאר באוה"ת בא ע' רחץ). וי"ל שזוהי ג"כ ההדגשה: כי אלקים יושע ציון ויבנה ערי יודא וישבו שם וירשוה וזרע עבדיו ינחלוה ואוהבי שמו ישכנו בה.