

Reb Pinchas of Koretz

Imrie Pinchas

Lag B'Omer

Siman #224	
In the future, the Holy One, blessed be He, will bequeath to every tzaddik 310 worlds, as it is said (Proverbs 8:21): "To bequeath to My lovers yesh..."	עתידי הקדוש ברוך הוא להנחיל לכל צדיק ש"י עולמות... שנאמר (משלי ח', כ"א): להנחיל אהבי יש
(Sanhedrin 91b). And this is what is said (Sanhedrin 90a): "All Israel have a share in the World to Come," as it is said (Isaiah 60:21): "And your people are all tzaddikim."	עוקצין ג', י"ב). דזהו (סנהדרין צ', א'): כל ישראל יש להם חלק לעולם הבא שנאמר (ישעיה ס', כ"א): ונעמך כלם צדיקים
That is, "yesh" refers to 310 worlds. And he said: It seems to me that this is close to the truth.	דהינו "יש" הם ש"י עולמות. ואמר: כמדמה לי שזהו קרוב לאמת
The word "omer" without a vav is also numerically equivalent to "yesh."	"עמר" בלא וו גם כן גימטריא "יש"
And it is found in the writings (Pri Etz Chaim, Sha'ar Sefiras HaOmer, chapter 6), that each person should intend during the counting of the omer to rectify the root of his soul.	ואיתא בכתבים (פרי עץ חיים שער ספירת העומר פרק ו'), שישכנו כל אחד בספירת העמר לתקן שרש נשמתו
For "yesh" refers to Chochmah, "something from nothing," as it is said (Job 28:12): "And wisdom, from where is it found?"	כי "יש" הוא חכמה יש מאין, שנאמר (איוב כ"ח, י"ב): והחכמה מאין תמצא
And every person has a root in Chochmah.	וכל אחד יש לו שרש בחכמה
Therefore, we say the Mishnah "All Israel have a share..." etc. during the days of the omer, and it is in Tractate Sanhedrin (90a).	ולכן אומרים המשנה "כל ישראל יש להם חלק" כו' (בימי הספירה, והיא במסכת סנהדרין צ', א')
And how is it relevant here—the Mishnah of Sanhedrin? Only that we say it to rectify each one's soul and elevate it.	ואיך שיהי לזמן המשנה דסנהדרין? אלא שאומרים אותו לתקן נשמת כל אחד ולהעלות אותו
And the Avos (Patriarchs) are also the intention of the entire counting. (Likely a reference to each week corresponding to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov.)	ואבות הוא גם כן פונת כל הספירה
And the judgment between Pesach and Shavuot is greater than on Rosh Hashanah, only here it is from the side of kindness, and on Rosh Hashanah from the side of severity.	ומה שנדונין בין פסח לעצרת הוא יותר מראש השנה, אלא שבכאן מצד החסדים, ובראש השנה מצד הגבורות
And he said in these words: "Eyin (awe) takes hold there."	"ואמר בזה"ל: "אין מורא נוטל על עצמו
And Rabbi Akiva, his soul-root was also from Chochmah (see Sha'ar HaGilgulim, introduction 56, and chapter 30).	ורבי עקיבא היה גם כן שרש נשמתו מחכמה (עין), (שער הגלגולים הקדמה נ"ו; פרק ל')

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For it is said about him in the Gemara (Menachos 29b): “Be silent, so it rose in thought.” And thought is Chochmah.	דאיתא עליו בגמרא (מנחות כ"ט, ב'): שתוק, כך עלה במחשבה, ומחשבה היא חכמה.
And his soul was greater than the soul of Moshe Rabbeinu, peace be upon him. For Moshe said (Exodus 4:13): “Send through whom You will send”—and he said this about Rabbi Akiva (see Otios D'Rabbi Akiva).	ונשמתו היתה גדולה מנשמת משה רבנו ע"ה, כי משה אמר (שמות ד', י"ג): שלח נא ביד תשלח, ואמר זה (על רבי עקיבא) עין אותיות דרבי עקיבא.
And He wanted to give the Torah through him, only he was from the world of thought and could not descend into speech.	והיה רוצה לתן בידו התורה, אלא שהוא מעולם המחשבה ולא יכול לבוא אל הדבור.
Therefore Rabbi Akiva would expound upon the crowns of the letters and the ornamental strokes, which are hairs—also related to Chochmah.	ולכן היה רבי עקיבא דורש פתרי אותיות ותגין וקוצין. שהן שעירות, שהוא גם כן בחכמה.
And the students—because they did not treat one another with honor, and “kavod” equals 32 (ל"ב), the 32 paths of wisdom—they damaged a high place.	והתלמידים, על שלא נהגו כבוד זה בזה, ו"כבוד" בגימטריא ל"ב נתיבות החכמה, היו פוגמים במקום גבוה.
Therefore they died during the 32 days of the omer, until Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai died on Lag BaOmer, who was the last among them.	ולכן מתו כל"ב ימי הספירה, עד שמת רשב"י בל"ג בעומר שהיה האחרון שבהם.
And the judgments were sweetened, and Lag BaOmer is his day of rejoicing until today, as is known.	ונמתקו הדינים, ול"ג בעומר הוא יום שמחתו עד היום, כידוע.

[NOTE: 🌟 Summary

The text explains that every Jew has a spiritual share in “yesh”—meaning **310 worlds** of divine inheritance (cf. *Mishlei* 8:21). This “yesh” is not mere reward, but rooted in **Chochmah**—the divine wisdom of “something from nothing.” Every soul is tied to this source of being, and the **counting of the Omer** is a time for each Jew to reconnect with that spiritual root through conscious refinement.

That’s why during Sefiras HaOmer, we recite “**כל ישראל יש להם חלק לעולם הבא**”—to awaken and elevate the soul’s connection to these 310 worlds and its root in Chochmah. The discourse then shifts to the students of **Rabbi Akiva**, whose deaths during the first 32 days of the Omer reflected a spiritual flaw in honoring one another. The Hebrew word “**כבוד**” (honor) equals **32**, corresponding to the **32 pathways of wisdom** (**ל"ב נתיבות**) (**החכמה**). Their failure in interpersonal honor disrupted the divine flow of Chochmah and caused a cosmic imbalance.

It is only with the passing of **Rashbi on Lag BaOmer**, who was the last of them and who represented a pure channel of that light, that the judgments were sweetened, and Lag BaOmer became a day of **healing and joy**—a revelation of inner “yesh” through bittul (self-nullification).

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Practical Takeaway

The days of Sefirah are not just a count—they are a **cosmic mirror**, offering each person a chance to refine their soul back to its origin in divine Chochmah.

This period is especially sensitive to **how we honor others**, because the divine wisdom cannot flow where **disrespect or ego** disrupt the vessel. If “yesh” is to manifest in our lives—if we are to receive the divine inheritance—we must become proper vessels: humble, clean, refined in speech and thought.

The deaths of Rabbi Akiva’s students teach that **spiritual greatness** without **ethical refinement** can cause distortion. But Rashbi’s survival and elevation show that from within the descent—within the collapse of 32 days—a **truer light can rise**.

Approach these days with **intentionality**: meditate on your spiritual root, act with kavod toward others, and trust that even your challenges are opportunities to access the inner “yesh” from the depths of divine wisdom.

Chassidic Story: Rashbi and the Healing Power of the Cave

Source: *Shabbat 33b*, expanded in *Zohar III:287b–288b*

After Rashbi and his son Rabbi Elazar fled to escape Roman persecution, they hid in a cave for **12 years**, sustained only by carob and water. During this time, they **immersed in the fire of Torah** to such an extent that their physicality nearly dissolved. Their entire being became a conduit for **divine Chochmah**—pure yesh me’ayin. When they finally emerged and saw people engaged in mundane work (plowing fields, planting crops), their intense spiritual perspective caused everything they looked at to **burn**. A heavenly voice cried out:

“Have you come out to destroy My world? Return to your cave!”

After a 13th year in the cave—symbolizing **integration**—they re-emerged. But this time, Rashbi’s gaze was one of **healing**, not judgment. Where his son still saw fault, Rashbi saw **divine purpose in the ordinary**, and began **mending the world**.

This mirrors the core message of the DTS:

- The **inner “yesh”** is revealed not through dominance, but through **refined perception**.
- One must **descend into silence**, into the inner cave of being, to draw forth Chochmah.
- **Only through bittul and compassion** can the soul emerge as a true inheritor of divine light.

To this day, **Lag BaOmer**, the day Rashbi left this world, is celebrated with fire and joy—because he taught us how to draw light even from judgment, how to transform destruction into restoration. **END NOTE]**

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Siman #227

The reason that the students of Rabbi Akiva stopped dying on Lag BaOmer is:	טעם וַשְׁפָּסְקוּ לָמוּת תַּלְמִידֵי רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא בְּל"ג בְּעוֹמֶר.
Because the 32 pathways of wisdom (ל"ב נתיבות החכמה) are included within the letter yud, which is the numerical value of 310 judgments.	כִּי הַל"ב נְתִיבוֹת הַחֲכָמָה כָּלוּל מִיּו"ד, הוּא ש"ך דִּינִים,
Therefore, after the 32 days in which the 310 judgments were completed, they stopped dying. And understand this.	וְלָכֵן אַחֲרֵי הַל"ב יָמִים וְשָׁכַר נִשְׁלְמוּ הַש"ך דִּינִים הַנ"ל, וַשְׁפָּסְקוּ לָמוּת, וְהָבֵן.
And therefore, it is forbidden to cut hair during the days of the Omer, as it resembles mourning, because during that time the souls are judged.	וְלָכֵן אָסוּר לְהַסְתֵּפֶר בְּיָמֵי הָעוֹמֶר וְשֶׁהוּא כְמוֹ אֲבֵל, מֵשׁוּם וְשִׁדְנִין אֵז נִשְׁמוֹת.

[NOTE: ☀ Summary

This passage explains that the deaths of **Rabbi Akiva's 24,000 students** during the first 32 days of the Omer were not merely tragic but mystically significant. It connects their passing to the **ל"ב נתיבות החכמה**—the 32 pathways of wisdom—as described in Kabbalah (Sefer Yetzirah). These 32 paths are said to be “included within” the letter י (Yud), which itself alludes to 310) **ש"ך דינים** judgments).

According to this teaching, each of the 32 days represents a channel through which these 310 judgments (= ש"ך 10 + 300) are "processed." After the 32nd day, these judgments are complete, and on the **33rd day—Lag BaOmer—the students stopped dying**. This is not a coincidence, but a spiritual resolution of divine severity into mercy.

Because this period is marked by judgment on the soul-level, the custom arose **not to cut hair**—a visible act of mourning—during these days. The halacha thus reflects a cosmic spiritual reality: mourning the disruption in the transmission of Torah caused by their deaths and the broader tension in divine channels during this time.

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P – Practical Takeaway

Lag BaOmer is not just a break in mourning—it is the day when divine judgment transforms into divine compassion. It reminds us that even suffering, when spiritually understood, leads toward rectification and healing. During the Omer, especially before Lag BaOmer, we are called to:

- Be cautious with **honor and relationships**, since the students died for failing to honor one another.
- Use the time to work on **intellectual refinement**—correcting not only our actions but the *source* of those actions, which lies in our thoughts and perceptions (mohin).
- Appreciate that even the customs of mourning (e.g., no haircuts) are not mere rituals—they align us with deeper realities of soul correction and transformation.

When Lag BaOmer arrives, it is not a time to merely “relax the rules,” but to **celebrate the spiritual turning point**, where judgment becomes joy.

Chassidic Story: Rabbi Akiva and the Fire of Rebuilding

Source: Midrash and Gemara (Berachos 61b), expanded in Chassidic literature

After the death of his 24,000 students, **Rabbi Akiva** did not despair. Though others were spiritually shattered, he did the unimaginable:

He began again—with five new students: **Rabbi Meir, Rabbi Yehuda, Rabbi Yose, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, and Rabbi Elazar ben Shammua**.

He said:

"My whole world was overturned—but if the Torah lives, then I must too."

Among these five, **Rashbi** (Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai) emerged as the deepest soul—the one who would later reveal the secrets of the Zohar. Rabbi Akiva planted again, even after devastation.

The **students died for lacking honor**, and Rabbi Akiva responded by teaching these new disciples with **extraordinary care, humility, and transmission of depth**.

This story teaches that Lag BaOmer is not merely the *end* of a tragedy—it is the *birth* of a new light, forged from within it. Rabbi Akiva's ability to start again, and Rashbi's emergence as a channel of mystical Torah, are the truest expressions of **ש"ך דינים שנמתקו**—the 310 judgments that were sweetened. **END NOTE]**

Siman #231

On Lag BaOmer, the students of Rabbi Akiva ceased dying (Yevamos 62b),

ב"ל"ג בעומר פסקו תלמידי רבי עקיבא למות (יבמות
(ס"ב, ב')

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for it is [the sefirah of] Hod within Hod, and that is specifically when there is rescue and healing.	כי הוא הוד שבהוד, ואז דוקא הצלה ורפואה
And regarding "Creator of healings," the intention is as stated (Pri Etz Chaim, Sha'ar Sefiras HaOmer, end of chapter 30).	ועל "בורא רפואות" הכוונה כמו שכתוב (פרי עץ חיים) שער ספירת העומר סוף פרק ל'.
"It is a time of distress for Yaakov, and from it he shall be saved"—from the blow itself the healing is rectified, etc.	ועת צרה היא ליַעקב, וממנה יושע, וממכה 'עצמה יתקן הרפואה כו

[NOTE: 🔍 1. "בל"ג בעומר פסקו תלמידי רבי עקיבא למות" – On Lag BaOmer, the students of Rabbi Akiva stopped dying. (Yevamos 62b)

This historical event—recorded in the Gemara—is not just a moment of relief in a tragic period. In Chassidus and Kabbalah, it's seen as **spiritually exact**: The dying ceased on **Day 33 of the Omer**, which corresponds to **Hod sheb'Hod** (the sefirah of "humility within humility" or "acknowledgment within acknowledgment").

Why this day?

Because **Hod sheb'Hod** is the lowest point in the lower sefirotic structure—yet it is precisely there where transformation is possible. It's the turning point where suffering can begin to birth healing. According to Kabbalistic tradition, this day carries the **energy of reversal**—darkness giving way to light.

🔍 2. "כי הוא הוד שבהוד ואז דוקא הצלה ורפואה" – For it is Hod within Hod, and then specifically there is rescue and healing

Hod is associated with **surrender**, **acknowledgment**, and **bitul** (self-nullification).

When Hod is doubled (i.e., Hod *within* Hod), we are at the most refined, stripped-down state of ego: full submission to divine will, often through suffering.

From that deep humility, comes healing.

This mirrors what the Arizal teaches: that **true healing doesn't come by escaping pain, but by sublimating it**—by *being in it* with deep surrender. That's why it's **specifically on this day** that healing comes—not despite its being low, but *because* it is.

🔍 3. "ועל 'בורא רפואות' הכוונה" – And regarding "Creator of healings," the intention is...

The phrase "בורא רפואות" ("Creator of healings") from the daily Amidah is understood here mystically. In **Pri Etz Chaim**, the Arizal explains that Hashem creates healing **from within the blow**—He doesn't wait until after the damage is done. The potential for healing is embedded **in the strike itself**.

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This reflects a deep axiom in Kabbalah: every **gezeirah (decree)** or **tzarah (distress)** is **bound to its own tikkun (repair)**. The **klipah (shell)** contains within it a **spark**—a divine opportunity for redemption.

 4. "ועת צרה היא ליעקב וממנה יושע" – **It is a time of distress for Yaakov, and from it he shall be saved**

This verse (Jeremiah 30:7) is classically understood as a prophetic message of hope: in the worst moments of Jewish history, *specifically from that very distress* comes the redemption.

Chassidus adds: It's not just that salvation comes **after** distress—it comes **from within it**. Just like **a wound creates antibodies**, or a broken heart opens a person to deeper compassion, so too the **tzaar (pain)** of Hod sheb'Hod births **refuah (healing)**.

Even more radically, the healing wouldn't be possible *without* the fall. This is the idea hinted at in the Zohar and Arizal: "**yeridah letzorech aliyah**"—a descent that exists **only** to create a greater ascent.

✨ **Summary of the Whole Concept:**

Lag BaOmer (Hod sheb'Hod) is a time of **inner paradox**: the deepest humility, even suffering—and yet, it's the *exact moment* where healing and salvation begin to emerge. The students of Rabbi Akiva stopped dying *not randomly*, but because the spiritual conditions for refuah (healing) were finally ripe. The sefirah of **Hod sheb'Hod** is the seedbed of reversal—where Hashem turns darkness into light from within, not around it. **END NOTE]**