

1. LAG BAOMER, LIKE ALL OTHER JEWISH HOLIDAYS, HAS MANY FACETS TO IT, IT IS INTERWOVEN WITH MANY HISTORIC EVENTS, NUMEROUS SACRED TRADITIONS AND A HOST OF COLORFUL OBSERVANCES.
2. BUT THE ONE THAT IS USUALLY OVERLOOKED IN LAG BAOMER HAS SPECIFICALLY TO DO WITH THE KABALLAH, WITH JEWISH MYSTICISM, WHICH TO THE AVERAGE JEW REMAINS THE MOST THOROUGHLY MISUNDERSTOOD STREAM OF CREATIVE JEWISH THOUGHT. TODAY, WHEN SCHOLARS OF ALL SHADES OF OPINION HAVE BEGUN TO TAKE A SECOND LOOK AND APPRECIATE THE SWEEP AND THE GRANDEUR OF KABBALLAH, THE LAITY - BY AND LARGE - STILL THINKS OF IT AS SOMETHING TERRIBLY MYSTERIOUS OR A MAGICAL ABRA-CADABRA. WHATEVER MAY BE THE CASE, KABALLAH IS A PART OF OUR JEWISH LIVES WHETHER WE KNOW IT OR NOT. IT HAS BEEN INCORPORATED INTO OUR TRADITIONS, INTO MANY EXPRESSIONS AND ABOVE ALL INTO OUR PRAYERS, AND HENCE IT SHAPES OUR THINKING AS JEWS IN MANY UNTOLD WAYS. AND LAG BAOMER IS THE DAY OF THE CALENDAR DEVOTED TO KABALLAH
3. THE SOURCE BOOK OF ALL THE GREAT KABALLISTIC TEACHINGS IS THE ZOHAR - "BOOK OF SPLENDOR" - WHICH TRADITION ASCRIBES TO R.SHIMON BAR YOCHAI AND WHICH CONTAINS HIS TEACHINGS. AND IN THE ZOHAR WE READ THAT ON THE DAY R.SH.B.Y. DIED, HE CALLED HIS STUDENTS IN AND IMPARTED TO THEM THE GREAT SECRETS AND TRADITIONS OF THE KABALLAH. THE MANNER IN WHICH HE IMPARTED THOSE TEACHINGS IS INDICATIVE OF THE CHARACTER OF THE KABALLAH, THE PERSONALITY OF OUR SAGES, AND IS, AS WELL, A MESSAGE OF TERRIFIC IMPORT FOR US HERE TODAY. AND THAT DAY, WHEN HE DIED AND TAUGHT, WAS THE 33rd DAY OF THE OMER - LAG BAOMER. SO THAT TOMORROW IS THE "YAHREZIT" OF R.SH.B.Y. AS WELL AS THE ANNIVERSARY OF HIS TEACHING.
4. IN THE ZOHAR, WE READ (using Hebrew transl.) B'oso yom she'rabbe shimon amad le'histalek min ha'olam, ON THE DAY R.SH. WAS TO DIE, HE WAS PREPARING HIMSELF FOR THE EVENT, AND HIS MANY COLLEAGUES AND DISCIPLES CAME IN TO SEE HIM - ve'habayis hayah malei, AND THE HOUSE, THE ROOM IN WHICH HE STAYED, WAS FILLED. AND THEN, bachah rabbi shimon, R.SH. BEGAN TO WEEP, AND HE CRIED OUT, ONCE BEFORE WHEN I WAS CRITICALLY ILL AND ON MY DEATH BED, ONLY ONE PERSON WAS WITH ME, R. PINCHAS B. YAIR, BUT AT THAT TIME hikifah eish l'fanai, A GREAT FIRE SURROUNDED ME...v'achshav raissi she'paskah - v'habayis nismalei, AND NOW I SEE THAT THE FIRE HAS LEFT - AND THE HOUSE IS FULL!
5. HERE, FRIENDS, IS THE PITHY TEACHING OF A GREAT JEWISH ATTITUDE * THAT IT IS MORE IMPORTANT TO DEVELOP FEWER PEOPLE WHO WILL BE GREAT AND GENUINE, THAN TO GIVE A SMATTERING TO THE MANY, IT IS BETTER TO HAVE ONE PERSON WHO WILL BE AFIRE WITH HOLINESS THAN TO HAVE A PACKED HOUSE OF COLD AND UNINSPIRED ONLOOKERS. WHEN THAT GREAT J. ATTITUDE BREAKS DOWN, AND JEWS BECOME MORE INTERESTED IN A FULL HOUSE, IN MERE QUANTITY AND NUMBERS, AND NOT IN THE SPARK OF G-DLINESS, THEN IT IS AN OCCASION FOR bachah r. shimon, AN OCCASION FOR REGRET AND MOURNING AND SADNESS.
6. TO JUDAISM EVERY INDIVIDUAL IS IMPORTANT. NUMBERS HAVE SOME VALUE TOO, IT IS TRUE, AND THAT IS WHY THE HALACHA DEMANDS A "MINYAN" FOR CERTAIN OCCASIONS. BUT NUMBERS ARE ONLY SECONDARY TO THE WARMTH, THE LOVE, THE HOLINESS, THE DEPTH, THE HEIGHTS THAT EACH INDIVIDUAL REACHES AND ACHIEVES. WITHOUT EACH INDIVIDUAL'S hikifah eish, ENTHUSIASM AND GENUINENESS AND INSPIRATION, THE GREAT MULTITUDES HAVE NO REAL VALUE. MULTITUDES ALONE REMAIN DORMANT UNLESS A FEW INSPIRED PEOPLE ARE WILLING TO SHARE WITH THEM THEIR eish AND DETONATE THEM.
7. JUST LOOK AT JEWISH HISTORY - THERE WAS ONE ABRAHAM, AND BECAUSE HE WAS AFIRE WITH THE DISCOVERY OF ONE G-D, HE WAS ABLE TO CHANGE THE COURSE OF HUMAN HISTORY. AND HIS RENOWN DOES NOT REST MERELY ON THE FACT THAT HE GOT MANY PEOPLE TO AGREE WITH HIM AND SAY "AMEN" TO WHAT HE PREACHED. NO, HIS FAME RESTS NOT ON THE NUMBER OF MEMBERS HE GOT - RATHER ON v'hanefesh asher assah b'charan, ON THE NUMBER OF SOULS HE DEEPENED, ON THE NUMBER OF CHARACTERS HE ENHANCED, ON THE DEPTH AND SWEEP OF HIS SPIRITUAL MESSAGES, ON THE LIVES HE RADICALLY AND IRREVOCABLY CHANGED. **THERE WERE 600,000 JEWS WHO LEFT EGYPT, BUT WITHOUT THE FIERY SPIRIT OF ONE MOSES, THEY WOULD HAVE REMAINED IN A DESERT FOR A THOUSAND, NOT FORTY YEARS. ALL OUR PROPHETS WERE PEOPLE WHO RAISED LONELY VOICES CRYING OUT IN SOLITUDE, WHILE MULTITUDES OF MUTE, COLD MEN BOWED TO THE MOLECH AND BAAL. IT WAS MAIMONIDES WHO MEANT THE SAME THING WHEN HE EXPRESSED HIMSELF IN CHARACTERISTIC

sharpness and wrote, IN THE INTRODUCTION TO HIS "GUIDE", THAT "WHEN I FIND THE ROAD NARROW AND CAN SEE NO OTHER WAY OF TEACHING A WELL ESTABLISHED TRUTH EXCEPT BY PLEASING ONE INTELLIGENT MAN AND DISPLEASEING TEN THOUSAND FOOLS, I PREFER TO ADDRESS MYSELF TO THE ONE MAN AND TAKE NO NOTICE WHATEVER OF THE CONDEMNATION OF THE MULTITUDE." BIG CROWDS, HE WANTED TO SAY, ARE NOT HALF AS IMPRTANT AS A FEW GOOD INDIVIDUALS.

*** AND IT IS NOT ONLY GENIUS, OR EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE WE ARE REFERRING TO. LOOK OVER THE HISTORY OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN AMERICA, AND YOU FIND, INTERESTINGLY, THAT THE GREATEST PART OF ITS GROWTH STEMMED FROM A FEW OLD YESHIVAS IN BROOKLYN AND THE EAST-SIDE OF N.Y. WITHOUT THEM THE GREATER INSTITUTIONS OF ORTHODOXY TODAY, AND EVEN THE WHOLE OF THE CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT, WOULD NEVER HAVE STOOD A CHANCE OF SUCCESS. AND THESE SMALL YESHIVOS, AS WILL SOMEDAY BE RECORDED IN A GLORIOUS HISTORY OF AMERICAN JEWRY, WERE BEGUN AND SPONSORED BY LAYMEN AND LAYWOMEN WHO WERE NO DIFFERENT FROM YOU OR ME, BUT WHO WERE SEIZED WITH AN IDEA, WHO WERE OBSESSED WITH A GENUINE RELIGIOUS DEVOTION, WHO WERE AFLAME WITH A CREATIVE DEDICATION TO TORAH. THERE WAS NO nismalei ha'bayis WHEN THEY BEGAN - BUT WE'D HAVE NOTHING TODAY IF NOT FOR THEM.

8. WELL, WHAT ABOUT US? I AM AFRAID THAT IF R. SHIMON B. YOCAHI WERE ALIVE TODAY, HE WOULD SHOW THE SAME REACTION - bachah r. shimon, HE WOULD WEEP. HOW DIFFERENT IS THE ATTITUDE OF AMERICAN JEWS FROM THE CLASSICAL J. ATTITUDE! WE HERE HAVE BEGUN TO STRESS THE nismalei ha'bayis, AND TO OVERLOOK THE hikifah ha'eish. WE ARE "GETTING THE CROWD DOWN" BUT FAILING TO WARM THE SOUL UP. THE TEMPLES ARE FILLING UP AND THE SERVICES, AT TIMES, ARE WELL ATTENDED - BUT THEY ARE FROZEN, THEY ARE UNINSPIRED, THEY ARE COLD, THE FIRE HAS GONE OUT. STATISTICS HAVE REPLACED "KAVANAH" AND QUALITY HAS BEEN DROWNED BY QUANTITY.
9. I HAVE NO DESIRE FOR RE-HASHING WHAT HAS BEEN SAID FROM THIS PULPIT MANY A TIME AND WHAT HAS BECOME A WELL-DOCUMENTED SOCIOLOGICAL FACT - THAT WITH INCREASING MEMBERSHIP THERE HAS BEEN NO DEEPENING OF THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE, THAT WITH IDENTIFICATION WITH A SYNAGOGUE THERE HAS COME MORE, NOT LESS, UNDERLYING SECULARISM, THAT A MEMBERSHIP CARD HAS NOT ALWAYS MEANT A REAL COMMITMENT TO A WAY OF LIFE. I DO WANT TO INDULGE IN SOME SELF-CRITICISM. I DO WANT TO BLAME US, LAYMEN AND RABBIS BOTH, FOR GOING ALONG WITH THIS FLARE FOR NUMBERS AND "PACKING THEM IN", WHICH IS PERFECTLY ALRIGHT BY ITSELF, BUT WE HAVE ALSO GONE ALONG WITH THE FAILURE TO STRESS QUALITY, WARMTH, DEPTH, GENUINENESS. IN MORE THAN ONE CASE ORTHODOX LEADERSHIP, BOTH LAY AND RABBINIC, HAS FALTERED AND HAS SACRIFICED PRINCIPLE, THE SPARK OF DIVINITY, FOR THE SAKE OF GREATER NUMBERS. WE HAVE PRACTICED A COMPLETELY NON-JEWISH METHOD. WE HAVE SCRAPPED TRADITION AFTER TRADITION IN THE NAME OF nismalei ha'bayis... AND THEN HAVE FOUND THAT OUR CONQUEST WAS A PHYRRIC VICTORY * WE GAINED BUT LOST. I THINK THAT IT IS TIME FOR US TO COME TO OUR SENSES. IT IS TIME FOR US TO REALIZE THAT THERE IS NOTHING IMMORAL OR SHAMEFUL IN BEING IN THE MINORITY, THOUGH WE ASSUREDLY BELIEVE THAT THE DAY WILL COME WHEN ALL JEWS WILL RETURN TO TORAH AND G-D. BUT THERE IS NOTHING IGNOMINIOUS, NOTHING BAD, ABOUT ESPOUSING AN UNPOPULAR CAUSE, PROVIDED THAT WE HAVE THE FIRE, THE WARMTH AND DEPTH. THROUGHOUT THE AGES, AS HISTORY CLEARLY PROVES, IT WAS THE FEWER WHO WERE DEDICATED WHO KEPT UP THE TRADITION SO THAT THE MANY MORE WOULD LATER HAVE SOMETHING TO RETURN TO. IF WE WILL EXTINGUISH THE FLAME IN ORDER TO ATTRACT THE CROWDS WE WILL BE UNFAITHFUL TO THE FUTURE AS WELL AS THE PAST. FOR THERE ARE UNMISTAKABLE SIGNS THAT THINGS ARE CHANGING. THE DOGMATISM OF EARLY REFORM IS BEGINNING TO VANISH. I AM NOT REFERRING ONLY TO THEIR REVIVAL OF "CUSTOMS AND CEREMONIES", TO THEIR NEW USE OF THE YARMELKE OR MITZVOS THEY ONCE DISCARDED. I AM REFERRING TO THEIR NEW ATTITUDE OF RESPECT FOR JEWISH LAW, HALACHAH, WHICH IN MANY CASES IS MORE PRONOUNCED THAN THAT OF THE CONSERVATIVES. I REFER TO ~~THE~~ A RECENT ISSUE OF A QUARTERLY JOURNAL WHERE A REFORM RABBI SAYS THAT HE HAS COME BACK TO BELIEVE IN RESURRECTION AND THE PERSONAL MESSIAH - THE VERY FIRST JEWISH IDEAS REJECTED BY REFORM. OF COURSE, THEY STILL HAVE A VERY LONG WAY TO GO. BUT THEY WILL COME BACK, PROVIDED THEY HAVE SOMETHING TO RETURN TO. IF WE WILL NOT KEEP THE TORAH TRADITION ALIVE, IF WE WILL ALLOW THE FIRE TO DIE OUT, THEN THEY WILL NOT RETURN. AND WE WILL, THEREFORE, BE FALSE TO PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE.

10. LET US REMEMBER THAT. OUR TASK IS TO ATTRACT AS MANY JEWS AS POSSIBLE. BUT OUR FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT DUTY IS TO OURSELVES - TO SEE TO IT THAT WE BECOME BETTER INDIVIDUALS, MORE LEARNED AND INSPIRED JEWS, AND MORE LOYAL SONS OF G-D?
11. IT WAS HILLEL WHO SAID: im ein ani li mi li, IF I WILL NOT BE FOR MYSELF, WHO WILL? BUT THERE IS A FINER TRANSLATION OF THAT PHRASE: IF I WILL NOT BE MYSELF, WHO WILL? IF I WILL NOT EXPLOIT THE INNERMOST RECESSES OF MY SOUL AND FIND THAT DEEPLY INGRAINED JEWISHNESS, THAT nitzotz eloka mimaal, THAT DIVINE SPARK AND FLAME, THEN NO ONE WILL EVER BRING IT OUT FOR ME.
- (IF TIME PERMITS: ~~11~~.12. CURBAN EIROPA - LOSS OF SO MANY MILLIONS AN UNFATHOMABLE TRAGEDY BUT GREATER YET IS THE TRAGEDY OF HAVING LOST THAT KIND OF PEOPLE.....
13. ISREAL BUILT BY ONLY FEW STRAGGLONG PIONEERS WHO hikifah eish....AND NOW TOO, ONE FIERY WORKER....MORE THAN THOUSAND BLENT ONLOOKERS WHO ONLY SYMPATHIZE WITH KRECHTZ).
14. IN THE WORDS OF MOSES TO HIS PEOPLE BEFORE HE BADE THEM FAREWELL, WORDS REECHOED CENTURIES LATER WHEN R. SHIMON BAR YOCHAI BADE FAREWELL TO HIS PEOPLEM

LO ME'RUBCHEM MI'KOL HA'AMIM CHASHAK HA'SHEM BA'CHEM VA'YIVCHAR BA'CHEM...
 KI ATEM HA'ME'AT MI'KOL HA'AMIM....KI MEI'AHAVAS HA'SHEM ES'CHEM,
 U'MI'SHOMRO ES HA'SHEVUAH ASHER NISHBA LA'AVOSEICHEM

G-d has given us His love and His care, not because of our great numbers, because we are a perpetual minority; but rather because of AVOSEICHEM, because of three solitary individuals who were faithful to the flame which raged in their breasts and with the courage of their convictions and the warmth of their characters were able to create an entire people loyal to G-d Almighty.

- 1- Topic which is before us this evening already treated mid-winter, convention can thought it sufficiently imp. to continue at this annual conv.
- 2- Unless we are truly & effectively reaching our people, all other problems we discuss at conv. & throughout year must remain suspended in the rarified stratosphere of moot & academic theorizing.
 - Unless we are reaching our people & influencing their lives, unless we are bringing the spirit of G.D. into the barren routines of their existence, we are not "Rabbis", for 27 is defined by the existence of 27, not by the existence of 27, not by the existence of 27.
- 3- I mention this not because I believe it necessary in many years. But bec. I want to set what I believe to be two perspectives. A convention can sometimes not help but develop a carnival atmosphere where that which is most sensational receives most attention, while that which sounds unglamorous, though of most profound significance, is relegated to the obscurity of a dull side show.
- 4- our subpt. "How well..." is of that nature - perhaps unglam., unsensational, but of most crucial imp.
- 5- As chairman, not my task to answer the question. Four capable & prominent people of RCF will do that. I do wish, however, for only few moments, to set the tone & organize the make our prefatory remark without encroaching

(OVER)

prerogatives speakers.

6. It is imp. in a CoA / Rn of this sort, to know how effective we have been quant. - numbers people we have interested in Numbers do count after all - that why Haladba demands / NISN and / N. why we say 2 N 1131 232, why J. Primas have stressed the number of (112) ppl at 1111 M. we will want to hear from our speakers about our results in this aspect of our work. They have thought about & we will be enlightened.

7. But greater in imp than quant is qual, greater than our horizontal influence is the vertical effect of our labors: depth, ^{loyalty} & ^{genuineness} of ~~conviction~~ conviction, & the enthusiasm which comes from genuine authentic conviction.

8. I believe this what Zohar meant when recorded words of 1111 232 on the very day he died (Heb. transl)
1011 232 on the very day he died (Heb. transl)
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1011 232 on the very day he died (Heb. transl)
1011 232 on the very day he died (Heb. transl)

- Better fewer w. hearts & souls aflame holiness than full house of cold & uninspired outsiders
what will cure am. Jewry of its spiritual diseases & religious enervation is not 1111 232 but 1111 232
... & when reverse happens - when 1111 232 1111 232, we who labor in the vineyard of the Lord must remember that it is better to pick few fruits which are sweet, than whole bushels of sour grapes...