

Why Outrage Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai on the Day of His Celebration!?

— *Thoughts for Lag B'Omer* —

LAG B'OMER CELEBRATES THE YAHRZEIT OF RABBI SHIMON BAR YOCHAI WHO TAUGHT (ZOHAR, VOL. III, P. 130B): "WOE TO THOSE WHO EXTEND THEIR HANDS AGAINST THE PRECIOUS, SUBLIME BEARD."*

The *Gaon*, Rabbi Yeshaya Osher Zelig Margolis of Jerusalem, was sitting at a Lag B'Omer celebration in the holy city. Several *yeshivah* students from overseas joined the gathering. They had grown beards during the Counting of the *Omer*, but had removed them on Lag B'Omer. Rabbi Margolis told them: "Throughout the days of the *Omer*, you restrained yourselves from removing your beards. Today, on the day of Rabbi Shimon's celebration, you too are joining in the rejoicing. But how are you marking his holy day? By trampling on his words. This recalls the words of the *Megilah*: 'Would you assault the queen while I'm at home?!'" My words bore fruit and the students resolved never to touch their beards (*Amudei Arazim*, Jerusalem 5692, p. 64).

* The *Chafetz Chayim* writes: "Removing one's beard (even with scissors) brings about destruction and blemishes [in the spiritual worlds] Above and removes the image of G-d [*Tzelem Elokim*] from one's face. By doing so, one uproots the channels of holiness from Above... as explained in the holy *Zohar* and the works of the *Kabbalists*.... Accordingly, any person with a sensitive heart should be in dread of this severe and bitter sin. If he transgressed, he should hurry to repent and should not pay attention to his foolish friends whose evil inclinations have overpowered their minds" (*Kuntres Tiferes Adam*, Introduction, sec. 1; ch. 10).

For a comprehensive treatment of this subject, see: Sefer Hadras Ponim Zokon / by Rabbi Moshe Wiener / The Cutting and Growth of the Beard in Halachic Perspective / Published with the endorsements of the leading Halachic Authorities of our times / 1,045 pages (in expanded third edition)