



## The Light of the Land

We are approaching the great day of Lag BaOmer, the *hilulah*, or celebration, of the *Tanna* Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai (Rashbi), when he revealed the Holy *Sefer haZohar* to his closest disciples before leaving the world. The Zohar is much more than just the primary textbook of Jewish mysticism, the secrets of the Torah, and a *sefer* of inner light and deep wisdom. It is a guidebook to navigating the world of the soul, and it allows us to see there is a reality beyond that which we can sense, measure or understand.

*Hashgacha Pratit* (Divine Providence) is clearly revealed in the fact that in the month in which we celebrate The Zohar and Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, we also mark the return of the Jewish nation to its homeland, and rejoice over the restoration of sovereignty and the expansion of our borders as meaningful steps in the unfolding of Jewish destiny and redemption.

Indeed, the secrets of the Torah and the special days in Iyar can be viewed as a single idea. As Rav Kook taught, “The secrets of the Torah bring redemption and return Israel to its Land because the Torah of truth... demands the complete soul of the nation. Through this inner Torah, the nation begins to feel the

pain of exile and to realize the absolute impossibility for its character to fulfill its potential as long as it is oppressed on foreign soil” (*Orot*, p.95).

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai lived after the destruction of the Second *Beit HaMikdash*. When the Temple stood, *Am Yisrael's* relationship with G-d was an obvious fact. After its destruction, G-d's existence was concealed and the *Shechina* was exiled.

The Gemara relates that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, the Holy *Tanna*, said: “See how beloved Israel is to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, for wherever they went into exile, *Shechina imahen*, the Divine Presence went with them. They were exiled to Egypt, and *Shechina imahen*; they were exiled to Babylon, *veShechina imahen*. And when *Am Yisrael* will be redeemed in the future, the *Shechina* will be redeemed with them...” (Megillah 29a).

In a world darkened by destruction, exile and Divine concealment, the Zohar reveals hope and meaning by opening our eyes to our true inner life-force and the reality of G-d's plan and involvement in everything transpiring in the world. Beneath the surface of world events, there is an inner reality

that is pulsating, alive, shining with G-d's light.

The *Navi* (Melachim Alef, 6) refers to Iyar as the month of *ziv*, “shining” or splendor. This word is translated into Aramaic by the Targum as *nitzan*, “blossom.” *Nitzan* itself alludes to the sweet fragrance of the coming redemption of our Land and her people:

הַנְּצַנִּים נִרְאוּ בְּאֶרֶץ עַת הַזְּמִיר הַגִּיעַ...

“Blossoms have appeared in the Land; the time for song has arrived...”

The song of the turtledove is heard in our Land.”

(*Shir HaShirim*, 2:12)

May the merit of Rashbi open our eyes to see the great splendor of the Torah, and awaken us to the urgent need for redemption. May the joyful songs of Lag BaOmer be heard throughout the universe, and may we bask in the holiness of *Eretz Yisrael* with the great return of our nation.

Rabbi Judah Mischel is Executive Director of Camp HASC, the Hebrew Academy for Special Children, Mashpiah of OU-NCSY and founder of Tzama Nafshi.



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