

To commemorate **ל"ג בעומר**, we're going to share a number of short vertlach, which together will add up to a substantial message we want to pass along. This is **על טעם** all of our **תפילה** that those who need **ישועות**, especially those in Gaza, should receive them **במהרה**. The **הילולא**, or the **יארצייט** of **רב רב שמעון בר יוחאי**, **ל"ג בעומר** is on **אריז"ל**. It is said in the name of the **ל"ג בעומר** that on **אריז"ל** is present and available, and gives a **ברכה** to each and every person who comes there to honor him and to be **משמח** in his **הילולא**.

There's a fascinating vort brought from R' Yechezkel Shraga, the Shinever Rov, in the sefer **שיש בהם**. (Many of you may know that Zeidy Weiss's father was named Yechezkel Shraga after the Shinever Rov). He quotes the pasuk from **תהלים צ"ב**: **שְׁתוּלִים בְּבֵית ה'** - Those who are planted in the house of Hashem, in the courtyards of Hashem, they will blossom. If you look at the words **שְׁתוּלִים בְּבֵית ה'**, the **ראשי תיבות** are **ש' ב' י'**, the **נוטריקון** for **שמעון בר יוחאי**. So the Shinever Rov explains that we ask Hashem that the beautiful lights of **קדושה** which emanate from **שמעון בר יוחאי**; **רבי שמעון בר יוחאי** - in the upper worlds, **שְׁתוּלִים בְּבֵית ה'** - to those who are far away or outside in the courtyard, in the **חצרות**, or the **חוצות** outside of the house; **יִפְרִיחוּ** - they should send us light, and they should give us tremendous **ישועות** and spread out amongst all of us.

Now, with that introduction, let's look at a very meaningful pasuk from **משלי י"ז**: **לֹעַג לְרֵשׁ תִּרְף עֲשֵׂהוּ**. It's a well-known halacha: When someone walks within four **אמות** of a **קבר**, they must cover their **ציצית**. If they don't, they're considered a **לֹעַג לְרֵשׁ**, which means to make **חזק** of those who are silent. He's being **מלעג** on those who cannot perform **מצות** anymore, because they can no longer perform **מצות** and we can. And no one argues with this, it's a **הלכה פסוקה**. The Alter of Slabodka, R' Nosson Tzvi Finkel, learned from this a profound lesson. When do we usually go to **מתיים**? Often during times of **תפילה**, especially in **אלול**. These are serious moments. And even then, the halacha is concerned that we are careful not to be flippant or careless about other people. Don't be **מצער** the **מתיים** or aggravate them with what we consider to be **מעשים טובים**. So he says, how much more so - **קל וחומר בן בנו של קל וחומר** - should we be careful not to cause distress or embarrassment to people who are alive! When we're walking among the **חיים**, everyone sees, hears, and is affected by what we say and do. We must be so careful not to embarrass others, not to mock them, not to make light of their struggles. Especially our friends and family - we must be sensitive to them. That, he says, is the deeper meaning of **לֹעַג לְרֵשׁ תִּרְף עֲשֵׂהוּ**.

Finally, to wrap up with a beautiful **השכל מוסר**, here's a vort from R' Alexander Ziskind, the author of the **ספר יסוד ושורש העבודה**. In his **צוואה** to his children, he writes:

"Once it came to my mind to share this with you, my children. I once saw a friend of mine walking, and I noticed a small rip in his clothing. I went over to him gently and said, 'Listen to me carefully. Fix the rip now, while it's still small, so you won't have to fix it later when it's big.' But even before I spoke to him, I said a short **תפילה**, which I had formulated:

I - **יוצרי ובוראי יתברך שמו**. ה', אני מוכן ומזומן לקיים מצות עשה של ואהבת לרעך כמוך, שציוונו בתורת הקדושה **ואהבת לרעך כמוך**. I said it from a place of love. Whether you're giving a friend **מוסר** about a torn garment, or about a tear in their behavior, it must come from a place of love, from **ואהבת לרעך כמוך**. Don't criticize people. Don't make sarcastic remarks. Don't speak about them. Always try to put yourself in their shoes. Ask yourself: How would I like to be spoken to? That's how we should speak to others."

Let's learn this from **ל"ג בעומר**. Let's learn it from the **תלמידים** of **רבי עקיבא**. Let's learn it from the **תורה** that we study. And in that **זכות**, may we improve ourselves each and every day of the **ספירה** - day by day, one through forty-nine - and be **זוכה** to be **מקבל** the **תורה** with **יראה**, with **אהבה**, and with **אמן**!

