

I have two short vorts on ל"ג בעומר. One of them is from a sefer by R' Moshe Wolfson called Festivals of Faith. He brings down an interesting מעשה from a מדרש. There was a doctor named אבא אומנא who received שלום from שמים every single day. אבא felt bad - he only received שלום from שמים once a week. He was told that אבא אומנא merited this special greeting because he practiced unbelievable measures of צניעות in his work as a physician.

Now, אבא was one of the greatest of his generation. He was ציבור to the מרביץ תורה. The מסורה would have been lost without him. You can barely find a דף in גמרא without אבא on it. And yet, this doctor was superior in an area where אבא could not excel, and so he merited something that even אבא did not.

What does this teach us? That every Yid has something we can learn from. Many people appear to us as plain or ordinary. Some even appear to have many מידות רעות - because we don't really know the פנימיות of that Yid. But who did? Who had the ability to see the פנימיות of each and every Jew? That was רב שמעון בר יוחאי.

רב שמעון בר יוחאי was a master of secrets. His נשמה was rooted in the קודש קדשים. He had the ability to see in every Yid what they were capable of and what we could learn from them. When he explained the teaching of his rebbi, זה כלל גדול בתורה, ואהבת לרעך כמוך, he brought it to its fullest and deepest expression. On ל"ג בעומר, we learn from him that every Jew has something to teach us, something essential to make us whole.

Therefore, as we work our way towards אחד בלב אחד, that is our goal: to see the good in every Yid to the best of our ability and to elevate it. Let us learn from רב שמעון בר יוחאי the ability to see that פנימיות and the good in everyone.

רב שמעון בר יוחאי, one of the greatest תנאים, carries the great זכות of being the יום הילולא of רמ"א. However, it is also the יום הילולא of רמ"א. The רמ"א was the רבן of כל ישראל. We learn from his תורה every single day. His הגהות on שולחן ערוך give us daily direction on how to live our lives.

The רמ"א lived in the city of Cracow. In that city also lived רב שמעון סופר, the son of the סופר. He served as the Rav of Cracow, and when he passed away, his son, רב בונם, succeeded him. Every year on ל"ג בעומר, on the יארצייט of the רמ"א, they would gather in his shul and deliver דרשות in his זכות.

At one such gathering, רב בונם noted that ל"ג בעומר always falls out on either בהר אפר, פרשת אמר, or בחוקותי. And what's the רמז? The letters of אמר, when written backwards, spell רמ"א. As for בהר and בחוקותי - he explained that the רמ"א's הוראות, חוקות, his teachings became קודש to us just like הר סיני itself. That was his beautiful, clever vort as a tribute to the רמ"א, our רב.

And I think it's a worthwhile point to bring out as we celebrate ל"ג בעומר. In that זכות, may we receive the תורה anew and may משיח come quickly, אמן.

