

Stories of Breslov Elders: Focused Prayer & Lag BaOmer

written by Yehudis Golshevsky

May 4, 2023



The crush of people who converge on Meron during Lag BaOmer is unbelievable. One needs a lot of “holy chutzpah” to withstand the crowds and get into the cave where Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his son Rabbi Elazar are buried. Getting near the tombs is even harder.

Rabbi Yaakov Meir Schechter recounts a fascinating experience he had that taught him what a regular practice of *hitbodedut* and cultivation of the quality of selflessness can do for a person.

Rabbi Avraham Sternhertz (1862-1955), a leading Breslov figure in Uman and Israel, was Reb Yaakov Meir’s mentor. During one Lag BaOmer in Meron, Reb Yaakov Meir noticed Reb Avraham

standing to the side of the place that marks the grave of Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai. It was packed as it always is on Lag BaOmer, and Reb Yaakov Meir was afraid that Reb Avraham, who was over 90 years old, would be squeezed by the crowd, since he had no way to defend himself.

Reb Yaakov Meir made his way over to his mentor and fended off the crowd. But his actions went completely unnoticed by Reb Avraham, who was deeply involved in petitioning God with personal prayer.

Reb Yaakov Meir heard Reb Avraham beseech God in all sorts of ways to assist him in his old age. "I am already elderly and have no idea how long I will yet live. Please help me, in the merit of the great tzaddik interred here. Grant that I remain healthy until my time comes. Please protect me from illness that could burden my family or make me trouble other people, Heaven forbid. I know that this is very common, but still, I beg You to protect me from this end..."

He stood there for a long time, begging God to help him, with great tranquility of mind. Throughout his life, he had always had mental clarity. Now, despite his advanced age, he was able to beseech God for a very long time.

His prayers were answered. He lived until 93 and was of sound mind and body until his final day.