



MACCABI WORLD UNION

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ז' באדר תשע"ו

Lag BaOmer Message

Bar Kochba and Ben-Gurion: FROM *INSPIRATION* TO *ACTION*

Dear Friends,

Military victories led by Shimon Bar Kochba gave the People of Israel nearly 3 years of national independence during 132-135 CE (Common Era); we celebrate that Great Hebrew Revolt on Lag BaOmer (May 26 this year), but it also led to the worst massacres of Jews in ancient times, and the Exile of most of our People from almost all of our ancestral Land of Israel. Bar Kochba's war began in the hills of Judea and carried so far afield as Beit She'an in Lower Galilee. It cost Rome and its Empire the utter destruction of 2 complete Legions of the 12 eventually sent to crush the rebellious Jews, a lavish expedition of huge numbers of troops led by Julius Severus, the best Roman general of the time, summoned from faraway Britannia.

That brief flicker of freedom won from Rome inspired the Fathers of the Jewish Nation in modern times. The Father of the Third Jewish Commonwealth, Israel's first Prime Minister David Ben Gurion, adopted his Hebrew family name from one of Bar Kochba's generals. The tenacity, decisive action, and total commitment to achieving independence from the oppressive yoke of Rome inspired the just struggle of Zionist leaders to restore Jewish national life in our old-new Land of Zion and Jerusalem. They focused on the *spirit* of Bar Kochba's *struggle* rather than its *tragic results*; in 1947-49 it was the only way to fight the battle the whole world saw as hopeless, the War and that led to Israel's 68th Independence Day we celebrated on May 12. Ben Gurion's *refusal* to accept the *logic of military realities* gave the Jewish People its best and most profound achievement in 1800 years since Bar Kochba: national redemption in the State of Israel. That's probably what Ben Gurion meant when he famously said: "*Anyone who does not believe in miracles is not a realist.*" Without that inspiration, without that faith in the Destiny of our People, we would today not have had our State.

May the light of our glorious Lag BaOmer bonfires illuminate our present and the bright promise of our future; may we kindle and sustain the spirit of our long national continuity in this festival!

**Lag BaOmer Sameach!
Chazak ve'Ematz!**

RABBI CARLOS A. TAPIERO
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