



### Tu b'AV - Day of celebration

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The Babylonian Talmud (Ta'anit 26b) states: "Mishenichnas Av memaatim besimcha". This means that our joy is diminished when the month of Av begins. However, we tend to forget about the 21 remaining days of the month. Rav Chaim of Tzanz said: "How do we reduce the pain? With joy."

Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel said: "No day has been as celebratory for Israel as the 15th of Av and the Day of Atonement (Yom HaKippurim)" (Babylonian Talmud - Ta'anit 30b).

And so it was, after the deep sorrow over tragedy, death and exile; it was customary in Ancient Israel that on the 15th of Av "the daughters of Jerusalem went out in borrowed linen garments (so that those who did not have beautiful clothes would not be ashamed) and danced in the vineyards" and "whoever did not have a wife went there" to find a bride (Babylonian Talmud - Ta'anit 26b).

How should we understand that in the same month that we must diminish our joy, we are reminded that the most joyous day is in it too? Why do we not give this celebration the same importance as the 9th of Av?

We start diminishing our joy weeks before the month of Av begins, during the three weeks before the 9th of Av (bein ha-metzarim, dee drai vokhn) we stop drinking wine and eating meat - except for on Shabbat - we do not get a haircut or shave, etc, in these ways, we diminish our joy. Why are we so self-demanding of ourselves, more than the Talmud expects us to be? Why do we not do something similar with our joy?

It is right to remember, to respect what happened, and to learn from the events so that they do not happen again, but what about the happy moments we have had?

Events which give us joy and happiness:

a) *The demise of the generation of the Exodus ceased.*

After wandering in the wilderness for forty years, they all finally died and the new generation of the people of Israel was ready to enter into the Promised Land. (Babylonian Talmud - Ta'anit 30a).

b) *The tribes of Israel were allowed to marry among themselves.*

It was forbidden for a woman who inherited tribal lands from her father to get married outside her tribe, so that her children - members of the tribe of her father - did not inherit a piece of land which had originally belonged to another tribe (Bemidbar 36). This order was imposed on the generation conquering the Promised Land; when the restriction was lifted, on the 15th of Av, the event was considered a cause for celebration. (Babylonian Talmud - Ta'anit 30b).

c) *The tribe of Benjamin was allowed to return to the Community.*

The tribe of Benjamin was readmitted to the community of Israel (Judges 19-21, Babylonian Talmud Ta'anit 30b).

d) *The dead of Betar were allowed to be buried.*

The fortress of Betar was the last link in Bar Kochba's rebellion. When Betar fell, on the 9th of Av, Bar Kochba and many of his followers were killed and their dead were not allowed to be buried. When the dead of Betar were buried, on the 15th of Av, it was a day for celebration. (Babylonian Talmud - Ta'anit 31a).

The idea is to remember times of sadness, but to not forget about our joys, which exist side by side. According to the teachings, we have to diminish our joy but that does not mean forgetting about it. We can respect, remember and dignify each of the tragic moments the people of Israel have lived, but there are many other moments we can remember with joy.

Our Masters have taught us that neither all good nor all bad exists, but on the contrary; our lives are a sum of pretty and ugly, sad and happy, good and bad.

Let us think of joy - as much as we think of sadness -or perhaps even more. Many times, there are more happy moments than sad ones. Let us not forget, "God is with us and protects us" (Genesis 28:15).

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