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Bitachon – Don't Panic!

If Not One Road, Then Another

When a *baal bitachon* takes a certain road to a destination and discovers that the road is closed, he doesn't panic. Unlike so many of us, he doesn't get angry and stubbornly try to remove the barrier. He calmly tells himself, "**If Hashem closed the road, he must want me to travel a different way,**" and he takes a different route.

Even if he suffers a financial setback because an unscrupulous individual embezzled his money, he won't let rage and pain disturb his *menuchas hanefesh*. He will calmly take reasonable steps of *hishtadlus*, guided by his *emunah* and *bitachon*. He will remember that his efforts are simply part of the natural process that Hashem wants him to follow in order to support his family. He reminds himself that the results of his *hishtadlus* are totally in Hashem's hands: if it is the will of Hashem that the person get away with stealing the money, that is what will happen. However, even in that scenario, the *baal bitachon* knows that Hashem will provide him with the necessary *parnassah* in another way.

Likewise, if he faces a lawsuit, he will simply hire a competent lawyer and calmly keep up his schedule of Torah learning, **with the knowledge that he has done what Hashem wants and the results are in Hashem's hands.**

The *baal bitachon* maintains his equilibrium by remembering the parable of the *Chovos Halevavos* in the seventh chapter of *Shaar Habitachon*.

A man receives a favor from a minor bureaucrat who works for a minister, who in turn works for an even greater minister who answers to the King himself. It would be very foolish of him to attribute the favor he received to the power of the bureaucrat, who

is simply a powerless functionary at the bottom of a long chain of command.

A wise man realizes that the power to provide him with any benefit lies in the hands of the King, Who remains hidden in His palace.

Diligent but Calm

It's important to emphasize that the *baal bitachon* isn't apathetic or lazy. He works hard, but in the way Hashem wants him to work.

Hashem created each person with different talents and tendencies. The world benefits from this variety because everyone contributes in different ways to the maintenance of Hashem's creation. Rabbeinu Bachya (later in the *Shaar Habitachon*) recommends choosing a means of earning a living that suits one's talents and temperament. **He warns us against choosing a career that doesn't suit our nature simply because we think it will enable us to earn more money.** He tells us that we won't gain anything by that decision; it will just leave us troubled and depleted. We should work diligently in a field that suits us, and rely on Hashem to provide *parnassah*.

Bitachon guides us to a way of life that is enjoyable! We should work hard, enjoying the experience of contributing to Hashem's world, while davening with *emunah* and *bitachon* for all of our needs. While the *baal bitachon* doesn't waste his strength on unnecessary endeavors, he is capable of working day and night **when he knows that it is Hashem's will.** However, unlike so many hardworking people, he won't let worries about the success of the endeavor disturb him.

We can compare his tranquility to a conversation between two friends before cellphones were invented. The two friends would converse and each would give the other his full attention. They were able to enjoy a conversation without anything disturbing them. Today, each person constantly checks his phone, and neither is fully present. They may be speaking to each other, but their minds are unsettled and distracted throughout.

Instead of feeling fragmented and torn in multiple directions, the *baal bitachon* is able to focus all of his faculties on the task at hand. **Working in that way brings great pleasure.** A watchmaker with this outlook sits at his table repairing or building watches because Hakadosh Baruch Hu gave him the requisite talent and temperament, and because the world needs watches. He does not associate his work with a specific amount of income. He knows that he is doing the will of Hashem and Hashem will send *parnassah* in whichever way He chooses.

Since the *baal bitachon's* faculties are fully involved in a meaningful task that he is suited for, he experiences both the joy of contributing to the world and the tranquility that comes from relying on Hakadosh Baruch Hu for his sustenance.

Rabbos Machshavos

The *sefer Mareh Yechezkel** (*Haggadah shel Pesach*) writes: We see that *rabbos machshavos b'lev ish* – there are many thoughts in a man's heart. Very often, the plan that a person hoped would enrich him doesn't end up succeeding. Nonetheless, Hashem Yisbarach will sustain him by arranging for his *parnassah* to come from an entirely unexpected source.

It's hard to understand why Hashem does this. If He is going to provide this person with *parnassah*, why should Hashem care if the person receives it as a result of his business plan? Why should the person have to suffer the disappointment of his plans falling through?

It seems to me that Hashem does this so that we will become *baalei bitachon* and not claim *זה החיל הזה עשה לי את העוץ כחי ועוצם ידי* – *my strength and the power of my hand made all of this wealth for me.*

The *Mareh Yechezkel* goes on to explain that Hakadosh Baruch Hu caused Am Yisrael to travel for forty years in the desert so they would learn that they have no independent power. That truth was tangible

*Rav Yechezkel Paneth (1783-1845).

every day in the desert. Once they internalized this belief, they were able to receive *mann*, bread from the heavens, each day.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives us a taste of the *Midbar* experience when our plans don't yield the results we hoped for. At that moment, we realize that no amount of *hishtadlus* can make things happen. Unfortunately, some people don't see the positive side of those disappointments. They simply get angry and say, "I give *tzedakah*, I try to do *teshuvah*; why did my plan fail?" If they would just stop for a moment and think, they would realize what a great favor Hakadosh Baruch Hu has done for them. If each of their attempts at *hishtadlus* would succeed, they would certainly fall into the trap of *kochi v'otzem yadi*. This in turn would sever their connection with Hakadosh Baruch Hu, the Source of their *chiyus*. Without that connection, they would lose their *simchas haachaim* and their success would be short-lived.

We should ponder this lesson and practice it by simply hoping and trusting that Hashem will help us – **without thinking about how, and in which way, that help will arrive.** Over time, if we continue to practice this way of thinking, it will become second nature, and we will live a life free of worry and fear.

Resha'im Are Full of Regret

The *Mareh Yechezkel* utilizes this concept to explain the statement of the *Shevet Mussar* (based on *Nedarim* 9b), רשעים מלאים חרטה – *the wicked are full of regret*. Initially, we find it difficult to accept that assertion. Isn't a *rasha*, by definition, someone who does whatever he wants without feeling regret?

The *Mareh Yechezkel* reframes this phenomenon. Generally, when someone succeeds in business, people describe him as a great, successful man. However, if his business venture fails, people will criticize him for having been reckless. They will say that he should have known better than to get involved in that deal in the first place.

As more and more people discuss his failure, he begins to regret his decisions and wishes that he had tried to succeed in another way.

The fact that he is filled with regret and self-recrimination manifests his lack of *bitachon*.

By contrast, a person who has sincere and total *emunah* in Hashem and His ability to help him never attributes success to his own acumen and effort. He believes that with his *hishtadlus* he has simply fulfilled Hashem's *ratzon*, and views any *shefa* he receives as a gift that Hashem bestows on him. Therefore, if his business venture fails, he doesn't regret having made the decision to undertake that endeavor.

In Ruchniyus as Well

As prevalent as it is to link results to *hishtadlus* in material endeavors, it is even more common when it comes to *ruchniyus*. This is because in realms such as business, we easily notice that some people become wealthy despite having invested minimal *hishtadlus*. We also see many examples of people who fail repeatedly despite having tried everything in their power to succeed. When it comes to *ruchniyus*, however, it is far more difficult to perceive the truth.

Recently someone asked me, "Why do you say that it's forbidden to rely on *hishtadlus* even in matters of *ruchniyus*? Isn't it obvious that when it comes to *ruchniyus* we are supposed to throw ourselves into *hishtadlus* after *hishtadlus* and never give up?"

Let us try to clarify this issue.

In *Maseches Sanhedrin* (26b), we learn: מחשבה מועלת אפילו לדברי תורה
Thought is effective [in disturbing] even the study of Torah.

Rashi explains, "When a person thinks, 'This is what I will do, and this is what I will accomplish as a result of that action,' **his thoughts help ensure that he will not succeed.** For example, if a person says, 'By that date, I will finish reviewing a certain amount of *masechtos*.'"

Rashi is clearly telling us that even when it comes to learning Torah, a person should not rely on *hishtadlus* and attribute his success in Torah to his efforts. If he does so, he destroys the possibility of success.

If we attribute results to actions in the realm of *ruchniyus*, we are making the same mistake as attributing results to actions in the material realm. The proof can be found in the *gemara* in *Maseches Niddah*. Chazal said: "What should one do in order to become wise? Ask for mercy from the One to Whom all wisdom belongs. What should one do in order to become wealthy? Ask for mercy from the One to Whom all wealth belongs." The Gemara is clearly equating *gashmiyus* and *ruchniyus* by stating that in both cases, results are in Hashem's hands.

Clearly, in order to receive any *shefa*, whether spiritual or physical, a person must first make himself *batel* to his Creator. If you believe that success depends on your own efforts, you are demonstrating that you are not *mevatel* yourself to Hashem. And as a result, you are actually preventing yourself from being successful.

When a *baal bitachon* sits down to learn, he doesn't think about the results of his efforts. He learns because Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants him to learn. He hopes that Hashem will help him, and when he receives that assistance, he simply moves on to the next topic while continuing to daven for *siyata d'Shmaya*.

The painful reality is that those who planned out their future in *ruchniyus* by imagining who, what, and where they would be in a few years don't necessarily amount to much. Even if they seem to succeed at first, their success isn't long-lasting.

I Have Toiled and I Have Found

Many people are familiar with Chazal's statement (*Megillah* 6b), יגעתו, ומצאתי תאמין - *If someone says I have toiled and I have found, believe him.* However, they are less familiar with the continuation of the Gemara:

"הני מילי בדברי תורה, ולדברי תורה נמי לא אמרן אלא לחדודי, אבל לאוקמי גירסא -
סייעתא מן שמיא היא"

This statement refers to Torah learning, and in reference to Torah learning it only means [that one can succeed] in sharpening his ability to analyze. But

when it comes to retaining and establishing your learning, it is [only] *siyata d'Shmaya*.

In other words, Hashem did set up a natural system of cause and effect. For example, if you carry a table from point A to point B, the result is that the table will now be located in point B. A person who applies himself to learning will enhance his ability to analyze and understand the text. However, לאוקמי גירסא , **the ability to assimilate, retain and internalize his learning depends not on *hishtadlus* but on *siyata d'Shmaya*.**

A person may learn diligently, review his learning and pass tests on the material he has learned. However, if he doesn't repeatedly remind himself that his *hatzlachah* depends not on his efforts but on *siyata d'Shmaya*, his talent may initially be recognized but it won't lead to true *hatzlachah*. Often, it is the person who was viewed as a *lo yutzlach* (untalented) who surprises everyone by developing into a great teacher of Torah.

We can now address the question that I was asked. The guidance of the *Chovos Halevavos* regarding *bitachon* and *hishtadlus* applies to both *gashmiyus* and *ruchniyus*. Even when it comes to Torah we aren't supposed to throw ourselves into *hishtadlus* after *hishtadlus* until we "get there." We seek the guidance of our *rebbeim*, do the appropriate *hishtadlus*, and ask Hashem to grant us wisdom.

The Secret of Successful Tefillah

This approach applies not only to *limud Torah* but also to *tefillah*. We should never view *tefillah* as an action that we perform in order to bring results. Instead, we should daven because Hashem commanded us to daven. At the same time we must have *bitachon* that He will save us from our *tzaros* in whichever way He wishes.

***Tefillah* is supposed to be an enjoyable experience**, even when we find ourselves in times of trouble. We have to train ourselves to daven in the right way so that after davening we feel joy rather than sadness.

A person who davens correctly feels that his *tefillah* has cleansed him and brought him closer to Hashem, Who listens to him and feels his pain. He doesn't need to see an immediate *yeshuah*, or a *yeshuah* that is obvious to all.

If You Abandon Me for a Day

In conclusion, it's important to remember that in order to truly acquire *bitachon*, we must constantly review the principles and habituate ourselves to thinking, speaking and acting with *bitachon*. It's a process that takes ongoing effort.

The *Sifrei* and *Talmud Yerushalmi* quote the *Megillas Chassidim* (which dates back to the time of the Mishnah):

אם תעזבני יום יומיים אעזבך

If you abandon me for one day, I will abandon you for two.

The saying is often interpreted as referring to our relationship with Torah. "If you move the distance of a day's journey from Torah, the Torah moves the distance of two day's journey away from you."

However, we can apply it to *bitachon*. As we practice learning to see the world through the lens of *emunah* and *bitachon*, if we fail to do so even for one day, we not only impair our progress but get used to a distorted view of the world that distances us from *bitachon*.

A wise man once showed me an application of this saying in the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* (1:4). While discussing the importance of "rising like a lion" in the morning, the *Kitzur* writes that if someone gets out of bed energetically for five consecutive days, he will have no difficulty getting up in the future. However, it isn't as easy as it seems because even after those five days, if a person gets lazy and stays in bed, he will immediately lapse into his old habits and will have to once again break the habit.

Most of us have spent years viewing and thinking about the world in "non-*bitachon*" ways. It takes a lot of work to fight those thoughts

with thoughts of *bitachon*. **Each time we forget to think with *bitachon*, we lapse into the habit of old thought patterns that we have repeated thousands of times in the past.**

In order to succeed, we need to pay attention to the *menuchas hanefesh* that we feel when we approach life with *bitachon*. We must also learn from the example of people who base their lives on *Shaar Habitachon*. They deal with the same challenges all of us face, but they do so successfully and with *menuchas hanefesh*. Seeing that beautiful way of life can inspire and motivate us to follow in their footsteps.

The Essence and Avodah of Tu B'Av

Incomparable Yamim Tovim

The Mishnah in *Maseches Taanis* (4:8) tells us, "There were no *yamim tovim* for Yisrael like the fifteenth of Av and Yom Kippur. On those days, the daughters of Yerushalayim would go out in white dresses, which were borrowed, so as not to embarrass those who didn't have ... and dance in a circle in the vineyards."

The Mishnah seems to be telling us that Tu B'Av is greater than Pesach, Shavuos, or Sukkos, and is equal to Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year! How can we understand this statement?

The Gemara itself asks (*Taanis* 30b), "We can understand [such praise of] Yom Kippur, for it is the day of forgiveness and atonement. . . But what is special about the fifteenth of Av?"

The Gemara proceeds to list events that occurred on Tu B'Av.

- The *Shevatim* were permitted to 'intermarry' with each other. (The first generation that entered Eretz Yisrael had to marry within their own *Shevatim* so that ownership of land would not go to other *Shevatim*.)
- Shevet Binyamin was allowed to rejoin the community. (After the sin of *Pilegesh b'Givah*, it had been decreed that Shevet Binyamin could not marry into Klal Yisrael.)
- The generation that had to die in the Wilderness finished dying, as the last of them passed away.
- Hoshea ben Eilah removed the armed guards that Yeravam ben Nevat had placed on the roads, which prevented the people of his kingdom from going to Yerushalayim on *aliyah l'regel*.

- Those Jews who were killed in the destruction of Beitar were finally able to be buried.
- Each year on this day, no more trees were cut to provide wood for the fire in the Beis Hamikdash. (Chazal explain that after Tu B'Av the heat is less intense and the wood would not dry properly.)

Dancing in the Vineyards

None of these events seem to provide sufficient basis for the Mishnah's statement that Tu B'Av is a greater Yom Tov than others. Clearly, Tu B'Av contains a deep secret that gives it its unique status. We need to discover and understand that secret, as well as the reason it is paired with Yom Kippur.

Our search must begin with the Mishnah's description of the young girls dancing in the vineyards. The Mishnah continues by describing what the girls would say:

"Bachur, raise your eyes and see what you are choosing. Don't look at beauty. Look at family. שקר החן והבל היופי אשה יראה ה' היא תתהלל - Grace is false and beauty is vain; a woman who fears Hashem, she shall be praised."

If we take this description at face value, it is very difficult to comprehend. First and foremost, many *mefarshim* wonder how such an event was at all permissible, and why the Mishnah chose to record it. There must be a hidden lesson for us in the Mishnah's description of the event and in the words of the young women.

The Gemara concludes with another cryptic statement about the significance of Tu B'Av. "From then on, one who increases will increase, and one who doesn't will end. What does 'will end' mean? R. Yosef said: his mother will bury him."

Rashi explains: "From the fifteenth of Av, **one who adds more learning at night to his learning of the day will increase his life.** One who doesn't will die before his time."

This mysterious statement also needs to be understood.

Light That Shines Forth from Darkness

Let us begin with the explanation of the *Shem MiShmuel* (Vaeschanan 5670).

Yamim tovim are given that title because they are days of closeness to Hashem. Each Yom Tov in its own unique way brings us closer. On Pesach, it is with the liberation of the *nefesh*; on Sukkos, with *simchah*; and on Shavuos, with *kabbalas haTorah*.

When closeness develops after a period of distance, it is stronger and more noticeable. It is like a light that shines after a period of darkness: its goodness is appreciated far more than a constant light.

The two *yamim tovim* of Yom Kippur and Tu B'Av both come after a time when we were (in a manner of speaking) distant from Hashem. Yom Kippur comes after the days of judgment which manifest the aspect of the "left hand that pushes away." That is why we read the *haftarah* לִי נִרְאָה ה' מְרֹחוֹק ה' - *From a distance Hashem appeared to me. Tu B'Av comes after the days of mourning for the destruction, when we were distanced from Hashem.* As Yeshayahu says (6:12), וְרָחַק ה' אֶת הָאָדָם - *Hashem will distance man.* Hence, we find that *kirvas Elokim* is felt and recognized much more on these two days than it is in any of the other *yamim tovim*.

Therefore, whatever the reasons may be for Tu B'Av to be considered a Yom Tov, by illuminating after darkness and expressing closeness after distance, it becomes, in the same way as Yom Kippur, greater than other *yamim tovim*.

Channeling Ahavas Hashem

The *Shem MiShmuel* now explains why it is so important to increase Torah learning from the fifteenth of Av. The Ramban* says that **when**

* *HaEmunah V'HaBitachon*, ch. 19.

a Yid experiences a feeling of *ahavas Hashem*, he must channel it into a tangible mitzvah. Therefore, since Tu B'Av is a day of great love and closeness after a period of distance, we must channel that love into a mitzvah by learning more Torah.

The *Shem MiShmuel's* explanation will help us understand why the daughters of Yerushalayim would dance in circles in the vineyards on Yom Kippur and Tu B'Av.

Shidduchim and a Celestial Shidduch

The practice certainly demands explanation. As the *sefer Nezir Shimshon** says, "All my life I was troubled as I tried to understand how it was permissible to provoke the *yetzer hara* in this way, and especially on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year. It is even more puzzling in light of the commentaries who explain that we read the *parshah* of *arayos* (forbidden relations) during Minchah on Yom Kippur in order to prevent transgressions that may result from this practice. It is hard to understand why this practice was at all necessary."

In his commentary on the Mishnah, the *Tiferes Yisrael* provides a beautiful explanation that is even more meaningful in light of the *Shem MiShmuel's* commentary.

The daughters of Yerushalayim represent *Knesses Yisrael*. The *bachur* whom they address is Hakadosh Baruch Hu (as we find in Shir Hashirim 5:15, בחור כארזים). **In these special days, when we desire with all of our hearts to draw close to Hashem Yisbarach, we say to Him, "Raise Your eyes and see what You are choosing for Yourself."** In other words: where is there a holy nation in the world like this one?

"Don't look at beauty; look at family. Although they have sinned, Your children are the descendants of those whom You tested: Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov.

*By Rav Yaakov Shimshon Shabsai Sinigalia, Rav of Ancona in Italy (1740s–ca. 1840).

“שקר החן – the charm of other nations is false, their beauty is meaningless; for when they perform good deeds, they simply want to flatter You. חסד לאומים חטאת, their ‘kindness’ is sin.”

In contrast, “אשה יראת ה' היא תתהלל – Your own nation, which appears to be small and weak, yet has *yiras Hashem* – she should be praised. She stands before You today, adorned like a bride, and declares her devotion to You.

“*She should be praised* – even the stains of her sins are her adornment and glory today, for they have been transformed to *zechuyos*.”

Rav Yisrael Veltz (*Av Beis Din* of Pest) writes in his *sefer Divrei Yisrael*, “The words of the *Tiferes Yisrael* emanate from a pure heart and penetrate the reader’s heart, igniting *ahavas Hashem* and hastening the *geulah*. . . **If only we would all read this *mishmah* with the *Tiferes Yisrael* every day after Shacharis, aloud and with *kavanah*.** Surely this would arouse tremendous mercy and cause Hashem to send us Eliyahu Hanavi, speedily, so that Tishah B’Av becomes transformed into a joyous holiday.”

While the *Tiferes Yisrael* proposed his explanation as the *pshat* of the *mishmah*, others explain that the daughters of Yerushalayim actually did go out and dance. However, as they explain, we shouldn’t wonder how such a practice was allowed, for the great *kedushah* that reigned in Yerushalayim ensured that the *yetzer hara* would not gain control.

Be that as it may, the explanation of the *Tiferes Yisrael* is certainly true. We know that our actions in this world are reflected above; as the daughters of Yerushalayim danced, *Knesses Yisrael* was speaking to Hakadosh Baruch Hu these words of longing and devotion.

Rav Tzadok Hakohen of Lublin writes that the *aggados* of the *Churban* were included in *Maseches Gittin* because the *Churban* that occurred on Tishah B’Av was like a divorce. **On the fifteenth of Av, *Knesses Yisrael* renewed her bond with Hakadosh Baruch Hu.**

Lighting the Night with Daylight

Sefarim hakadoshim explain this phenomenon in even greater depth. There are months in which we are governed by *Din* and months in which we are governed by *Rachamim*. The *Zohar hakadosh* tells us that the months of Tammuz and Av are governed by *Din* because the *sar* of Eisav took these months from Yaakov when they wrestled. However, Yaakov Avinu wrested the second half of Av from the *sar* of Eisav. Therefore, the second half of Av is not governed by *Din*.

The *Kedushas Levi* writes that the nature of the month is expressed in its name, אב, which stands for ברוך - ארוך. The first half of the month is ארוך and dark, but the second half is ברוך and full of light. The *sefarim* explain that the second half is especially blessed because those days were originally darkened by the rule of Eisav; Yaakov Avinu not only liberated those days, but transformed them into days of blessing and light. **Light that comes forth from darkness is the most blessed form of light.**

Sweetened Din Is Greater than Rachamim

This helps us understand the words of the *Shem MiShmuel* on a deeper level. Not only is Tu B'Av a special Yom Tov because it comes after a period of separation. **The day itself was essentially a day of darkness that was then transformed and illuminated.**

המתקת הדינים, the "sweetening" of *dinim*, is even greater than the power of natural *rachamim*. The *sefarim* explain that when Hashem sends *dinim* into the world, there is great *rachamim* hidden in them. (For we know that אין רע יורד מן השמים - no evil comes down from the heavens; *Bereishis Rabbah* 51.) **We just don't have the capacity to receive that *rachamim* until we sweeten the *dinim*.** When we succeed, a mighty *shefa* enters the world.

The Avodah of Tu B'Av

We can now try to define our *avodah* of Tu B'Av. First of all, we have learned that it is a day of closeness. Therefore, **we should do all we**

can to strengthen our connection with Hakadosh Baruch Hu. One of the primary ways to accomplish this is by learning Torah with *kedushah* and *taharah*. The Baal Shem Tov and his *talmidim* emphasized that when we learn Torah in this way, we unite with Hashem.

Rashi explained that when the Gemara spoke of increasing our learning from Tu B'Av on, it specifically referred to learning at night. The simple explanation is that in Eretz Yisrael, the nights become longer from the fifteenth of Av. **Nighttime is a time that should be designated for Torah and we are expected to take advantage of the longer nighttime.**

Another, deeper explanation is that a person should increase his learning of *divrei Torah* **that will illuminate areas of his life that are dark as night.** Everyone has such areas, whether *middos* or habits or the adversity they face. We are meant to channel the power of Tu B'Av, a day of darkness that was transformed into light, into learning that will transform the darkest corners of our lives with the light of Torah.

A Day of Unity

We can now return to the reasons listed in *Maseches Taanis* for the special Yom Tov status of Tu B'Av. The first was that on Tu B'Av, the *Shevatim* were allowed to 'intermarry' with each other. In the Rishonim, we find two approaches to explaining this statement. Some combine it with another reason – that on this day the last of the *dor hamidbar* passed away. Others explain that on this day the *Chachamim* delved deeply into the *pasuk* and determined that the prohibition for people from one tribe to marry into another was meant only for the first generation that entered Eretz Yisrael.

The *Tiferes Shlomo* explains that it was the inherent spiritual light of Tu B'Av that allowed the *Chachamim* to understand that the prohibition of marrying into other *Shevatim* applied only to the first generation. Initially, they understood that Hashem wanted the *Shevatim* to remain separate from each other. **On Tu B'Av, their eyes were opened to the realization that this was not Hashem's will.** They now understood that

for some hidden reason, Hashem wanted each *Shevet* to retain ownership of their inherited lands for the first generation only. From the second generation on, Hashem wanted the *Shevatim* to intermingle so that they could all benefit from each other's unique light.

This also connects to Tu B'Av being the day that Shevet Binyamin was once again allowed to marry into Am Yisrael. Rav Tzadok Hakohen of Lublin (*Pri Tzaddik*, Tu B'Av 4) states:

On Tu B'Av, Hakadosh Baruch Hu enlightened the eyes of the Sanhedrin to derive (from the word ממונו in the prohibition) that it would not apply to the next generation. They allowed them to rejoin the *kahal* so that the *kedushah* of their *Shevet* would be included in Klal Yisrael.

Because they understood that the *kedushah* of the day enlightened them to this truth, they established it as a great Yom Tov.

Sefarim hakedoshim explain that along with focusing on the *avodah* of illuminating darkness, **we also have to increase our efforts to bring about unity among Jews**, so that we will be אחד בלב אחד, "like one person with one heart." There can be no true unity between Am Yisrael and Hashem unless Am Yisrael itself is unified. The aforementioned decisions that removed divisions between *Shevatim* expressed this aspect of the day.

The Secret of the Fifteenth Letter

The Ohev Yisrael and others explain that "חמשה עשר באב" can also be read as "the fifteenth letter of the *alef-beis*." **That letter is the samech, which is a circle.** Immediately after describing the daughters of Yerushalayim dancing in a circle, the Gemara in *Maseches Taanis* continues:

Ula Biraah said in the name of R. Eliezer, "In the future, Hakadosh Baruch Hu will make a circle-dance for the tzaddikim,

and He will sit among them in Gan Eden. And each one of them will point with his finger, as it says (Yeshayahu 25:9), ואמר ביום ההוא, - *It will be said on that day, behold this is our G-d! We hoped for Him and He saved us. This is Hashem for Whom we hoped; we will exult and rejoice in His salvation.*"

Once they are dancing in that circle, each tzaddik is delighted to see the many ways in which different tzaddikim serve Hashem. He rejoices in the realization that not only his *shevet* but all of the *Shevatim* are Hashem's. "**They are all equidistant from the center.** No one is above or below; the circle has no head or tail. Each *shevet* and each tzaddik serves Hashem in their unique way, and all of us serve Him together as one."

Emerging from Darkness

Tu B'Av could be called a Yom Tov *b'hester*, in hiding, because regular *halachos* of Yom Tov, such as the prohibition of *melachah*, don't apply to it. We also no longer observe the *minhagim* that were performed on Tu B'Av. Nonetheless, each of us can connect with the *pnimiyus* of the day.

The *Maor VaShemesh* utilizes an image we can all understand. One shouldn't emerge suddenly from a room of total darkness into a place of bright light, or he will have pain in his eyes and his sight may become damaged. So too, **we can't enter the brightness of Tishrei immediately upon emerging from the darkness of the first half of Av.** That is why, beginning with Tu B'Av, the light increases gradually until the days of Tishrei.

Let's utilize the opportunity of Tu B'Av to learn more Torah (more in both quantity and quality) and to enhance the connection *bein adam lachaveiro*, and *b'ezras Hashem* we'll approach the days of Tishrei with *simchah*, *achdus*, and everything we need to draw close to Hashem.



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