



SIMCHAT SHMUEL

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This coming Tuesday evening and Wednesday, we will commemorate the sacred, yet often overlooked day of *Tu B'Av*—*Chamisha Asar B'Av*. The fifteenth day of the month of Av is filled with an inner joy that is both mysterious and deeply redemptive. The **Talmud (Ta'anit 30b)** teaches that there were no days as joyous for the Jewish people as *Tu B'Av* and *Yom Kippur*. While *Yom Kippur* offers the joy of forgiveness, *Tu B'Av* reveals the joy of reunion—of souls, of hearts, of the collective soul of *Am Yisrael* made whole again.

The **Apter Rebbe**, the **Ohev Yisrael zy'a**, explains the significance of this day through his deep teachings on the Hebrew letters. Every letter, he taught, is a vessel of Divine light, a code of spiritual reality. **Tu B'Av** is the fifteenth day of the month of Av (comprised of the letters *alef* and *bet*), corresponding to the fifteenth letter of the **Alef-Bet, Samech (o)**, that offers us a key to its meaning.

Samech is unique among the Hebrew letters: it is a perfect circle, closed and complete. A *Samech*, like all circles, has a center which is equidistant from all spaces along the circle, meaning no matter where an individual

may be standing around that circle, they all remain equally close to the center of the circle. The *Samech* teaches us that every individual remains equally close to *Hashem*, without hierarchy or condition. The *Samech* symbolizes Divine support, surrounding love, the unshakable embrace of *Hashem* for every soul.

Tu B'Av reflects that same energy. On this day, the daughters of *Yerushalayim* would dance in borrowed white garments, in the vineyards; encouraging the young men and women to forge soul-connections not based on tribe or status, but essence and values. The **Gemara (Ta'anit 26b)** tells us that those who did not have a white dress of their own would borrow, so that no one would be ashamed. Everyone danced together, equal, radiant, and beloved.

The **Apter Rebbe**, whose life and Torah were devoted to *Ahavat Yisrael*, would say that the greatest spiritual elevation comes not from asceticism or isolation, but from loving every Jew, regardless of background or level. The circle of the *Samech* has no corners—no top or bottom, no inside or outside. So too must our love and connection flow: whole, unconditional, and unbreakable.

Perhaps most beautifully, this imagery of the circle refers to the unity we will experience in the days of *Mashiach*. The **Gemara** in **Ta'anit 31a** teaches that in the future, "*Hakadosh Baruch Hu oseh lahem machol la'tzaddikim—The Holy One will make a circle dance for the righteous*". *Hashem* will stand in the center, and each soul will point and

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exclaim: "*Hinei Elokeinu, Zeh Hashem Kivinu Lo!*"—"Behold our G-d, this is Hashem for whom we have longed!"

It will be the final *Samech*. A circle of redemption. A dance of equality and Divine presence, where no one is closer, and no one is further. Each one will see *Hashem* from their place in the circle. No competition, only joy and love.

This, says the *Oheiv Yisrael*, is the spirit of *Tu B'Av*. A foretaste of the future. A glimpse at that dance that each of us will experience, as we greet *Mashiach Tzidkeinu*.

Reb Tzadok HaKohain M'Lublin zy'a, explained that the essential joy of *Tu B'Av* emerges specifically after the pain and sadness of *Tisha B'Av*, for then the consolation begins to be revealed, and from within the concealment and destruction itself, the bestowal of Divine love and mercy is revealed.

The saddest day and the happiest day of the year occur only six days apart. This is no coincidence. Redemption is born from brokenness. The deepest love often follows the deepest separation. The Jewish calendar teaches that despair is never the final chapter.

Yehi Ratson, May we merit to take to heart these beautiful teachings, and soon gather together to dance in that great circle of redemption, with *Hashem* at the center, and each of us basking in the light of unity. ■

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