



SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR
DIRECTOR, TORAH INITIATIVES,
OU ISRAEL

Correction:

The Simchat Shmuel column for this week - Parshat Eikev, was inadvertently shared last week in place of Rabbi Shor's article about Tu B'Av, which falls on Wednesday July 29th. As such, we have included both of these articles in this week's edition. We apologize for the confusion.

Tu B'Av

This Tuesday evening and Wednesday, we commemorated 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 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 Ratzon, 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.

Parshat Eikev

In our *sedra* this week we read the familiar verse- (*Devarim 8:10*):

וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ אֶת־ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ עַל־הָאָרֶץ הַטּוֹבָה
אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לְךָ

When you have eaten and been satiated, you shall bless the Lord your G-d upon the good land that he has given unto you.

According to the **Sefer HaChinuch**-This verse serves as the basis for the recitation of *birkat hamazon*, as well as the recitation of *brachot* in general before or after eating, as a sign of our appreciation and acknowledgment that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* has provided that sustenance to us- *Mitzva levareich et Hashem Yitbarach achar sheyaacheil haadam, vayesova milechem oh mishivat haminim*.

The **Maggid, Reb Dov Ber of Mezritch**

zy'a, taught that we learn from this verse that *birkat hamazon* requires even more *kavana* than *tefila*, since *tefila* is proscribed by our sages, and *birkat hamazon* is learned from this specific Torah verse.

Our **Chazal** in the *Gemara* in *Brachot* (35b) explain this idea further:

אָמַר רַבִּי חֲנִינְיָא בַּר פִּפְאִי: כָּל הַנִּהְנֶה מִן הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה בְּלֹא בִּרְכָה כְּאִילוּ גִזְלָל לְהַקְדֹּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא וְכִנְסֵת יִשְׂרָאֵל

Rabbi Chanina bar Pappa said: Anyone who benefits in this world without reciting a blessing is considered as if he has stolen from G-d and from Knesset Yisrael...

The concept of acknowledging that Hashem has provided us with sustenance and the importance of declaring our appreciation for that sustenance makes sense, but how are we

to understand this statement that if we fail to recite a *bracha* upon deriving benefit, that somehow we have also stolen from the Jewish People as well?

Rabbeinu B'Chaya, points to this *gemara* in his commentary on our verse. He explains that we need to understand that a *bracha* is not solely a vehicle for expressing our appreciation to G-d, but also the vehicle, the pipeline to bring further blessing, sustenance and goodness into the world. If we were to derive pleasure or benefit in this world without reciting a blessing, we would not only be coming up short in our show of gratitude to *Hashem* for that sustenance, but we would also be missing out on the opportunity to help others by the power inherent in that *bracha* to metaphysically channel and provide additional sustenance to descend into this world.

Similarly, the **Be'er Moshe**, the **Admor of**

Ozerov zy'a, explains that each time we recite a *bracha*, the spiritual cognition of the gifts that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* bestows upon us, is not only a manifestation of *Hakarat HaTov* for all we have received, but simultaneously becomes the catalyst to experience further *bracha*. When we acknowledge and are cognizant that *Hashem Yitbarach* is indeed the source of all blessing, then it opens us up spiritually and metaphysically to seeing and experiencing more and more *bracha* each and every day.

Yehi Ratzon, may each of us merit to recall the incredible dual capacity for goodness contained within every *bracha* we recite. ■



Tzitzit tying with Ruti

Beit Knesset HaNassi, 24 Ussishkin

Mondays 1:15 - 4pm

Wednesdays 1:15 - 4pm

no experience needed




ROSH CHODESH ELUL

Women's Seminar in Yerushalayim

המלך בשדה - The Call to Closeness



ZEMIRA OZAROWSKI
Director, OUI Israel Women's Division
Words of Introduction



AVIGAIL GIMPEL
Finding Emunah
in the Field



KAREN HOCHAHUSER
Elul Unocked- Personalizing
and Personifying Teshuva



SHANI TARAGIN
Elul- Who is Knocking
on Our Door?

HALLEL WITH
AVIGAIL SCHEINFELD
MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT
BY MALKA LEAH WEISS



Thursday, August 13
9:15 am - 1:00 pm

Beit Knesset Hanasi
Ussishkin 24

50 shekel
includes brunch

Register at: ouisrael.org/events/elul2026