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August 1, 2020

VaEtchanan – Shabbat Nachamu

11 Av, 5780

### Saying Goodbye

We've all seen or been part of a scenario repeated dozens of times. At a family gathering, a synagogue event, a Jewish lecture, a simcha, someone says, "I'm leaving," and moves to get his coat. Twenty minutes later he's still there. Either in to an all-new conversation, still hugging the Bubbies and Zeidies, or noticing an old friend/relative he didn't have a chance to chat with yet. This phenomenon transcends gender, age, and country of origin. But it does seem to be particularly prevalent among Jews.

It's called a Jewish good-bye and it seems to go on forever. Because Jews never really say "good-bye." We say "shalom - peace to you." Or we say in Hebrew "Go in peace." One whose background is more Yiddish might say, "fort gezunterheit - travel in health." But we never say "good-bye."

In fact, even were you to scour the modern Hebrew language, you wouldn't find a word for "good-bye." All you'd come up with is "I'hitraot," which means "see ya later." (Some Israelis do say, "bye- bye." But pronounced with that decidedly Hebrew accent you know that it's been borrowed from English.)

At a Jewish gathering, private or public, we take a long time to go because, after all, who wants to leave the warm embrace of family - and all Jews truly are one family. All Jews share in each others simchas and each others sorrows.

Is there any basis, though, in Jewish tradition, for this seeming inability to just say "good-bye"?

The Talmud enjoins us, "Whatever your host tells you, do, except leave." One of the commentaries explains that a guest must immediately comply with everything the host tells him to do except when the host tells him it is time to leave. The guest should show the host his reluctance to take leave of his company!

In addition, Jewish teachings encourage us that when we part from a friend, we should share a d'var halacha, meaning a "word of Jewish law." But d'var halacha can also be interpreted as a "word for the way."

So, it's not hard to understand why Jews don't say good-bye. Firstly, we don't really want to leave. Secondly, even when we do realize that we absolutely must leave, we should show our reluctance to leave. And lastly, when we already have our coat on, we should share a thought for the journey (however short) with our friend.

Ultimately, though, one might speculate that not saying "good-bye" has a more eternal and confident message. For, deep within every Jew is the fundamental belief in better times, the best times, the times of Moshiach. In that era - the Era of the Redemption - we will see the fulfillment of one of the principles of Jewish belief, the revival of the dead. And at that time, we will all be reunited with our loved ones. And when we rejoice in being together again with them, we will fully understand why we never really said, "good-bye."

(from <http://www.lchaimweekly.org/>)

### The Celebration of "Tu B'Av"

The Mishnah in Ta'anit (4:8) records:

R. Shim'on ben Gamliel said: There never were greater days of joy in Yisra'el than the fifteenth of Av and Yom haKippurim. On these days the maidens of Yerushalayim used to go out in white garments which they borrowed in order not to put to shame any one who had none. The maidens of Yerushalayim came out and circle-danced in the vineyards ... likewise it says: Go forth, daughters of Tziyyon, and gaze upon King Sh'lomo, even upon the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding and on the day of the gladness of his heart. The day of his wedding, this refers to the day of the giving of the Law. And on the day of the gladness of his heart, this refers to the building of the Beit haMikdash, may it be built speedily in our days.

The opening statement here is truly astounding; comparing the obscure festival of the fifteenth of Av with the "singular day of the year" – Yom haKippurim – challenges our perception and understanding of the significance of the calendar. In analyzing this statement, the Gemara (ibid. 30b-31a, see also BT Bava Batra 121a-b and JT Ta'anit 4:7) raises the following question:

*(continued on the other side)*

I can understand the Yom haKippurim, because it is a day of forgiveness and pardon and on it the second Tablets of the Law were given, but what happened on the fifteenth of Av?

The Gemara provides six reasons for the celebration of Tu b'Av, five of which are commemorative and the sixth seasonal: (The same list appears, albeit with minor variations, in BT Bava Batra; the presentation used in this essay is from BT Ta'anit. The Yerushalmi's presentation overlaps this one but is significantly different – an analysis of these differences is beyond the scope of this shiur.)

- 1) The tribes were allowed to inter-marry.
- 2) The tribe of Binyamin was allowed to rejoin the nation.
- 3) The generation of the desert ceased dying.
- 4) The border guards, preventing people from the north to come to Yerushalayim, were removed.
- 5) The dead of Beitar were allowed to be buried.
- 6) The end of the season of cutting wood for the altar.

### ANALYZING THE LIST

There are several incongruities in this explanation. First of all, if this holiday is on a par with Yom haKippurim regarding its festive nature, why are its origins so murky? The presentation of six independent explanations indicates a lack of confidence about any of them. Wouldn't the Hakhmei haMesorah (masters of the tradition) have a firmer grasp on the genesis of this gala day?

Secondly, none of these explanations seems very convincing – why would, for instance, the cessation of dying in the desert be cause for a celebration the likes of which can only be sensed on Yom haKippurim? What is the great rejoicing associated with the end of the season of cutting wood that gives this day such a lofty place in our calendar?

Finally, if the fifteenth of Menachem Av was such a storied celebration, why does it go by nearly unnoticed by us? The omission of Tachanun isn't even a faint shadow of the day of which it can be said "There never were greater days of joy in Yisra'el". In order to respond to these questions, we'll need to take a closer look at the six explanations presented in the Bavli, attempt to identify common features between them and reassess our understanding of this holiday.

**THE LIST – EXPLICATED** — see <https://torah.org/torah-portion/mikra-5770-tubeav/>

*(by Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom from Project Genesis at www.torah.org)*

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DAVENING AND SHIURIM SCHEDULE	
<p><b>Friday 7/31 — 10 Av</b>  Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.  Candles — 8:00 p.m.  Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.</p> <p><b>Shabbat, 8/1 — 11 Av</b>  Shacharit — 9:00 a.m.  Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 9:37 a.m.  Beitzah Gemora Shiur — 7:00 p.m.  Minchah — 7:50 p.m.  Ma'ariv — 9:02 p.m.</p> <p><b>Sunday, 8/2 — 12 Av</b>  Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.  Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:50 p.m.</p> <p><b>Monday, 8/3 — 13 Av</b>  Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.  Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:50 p.m.</p>	<p><b>Tuesday, 8/4 — 14 Av</b>  Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.  Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:50 p.m.</p> <p><b>Wednesday — Tu B'Av, 8/5 — 15 Av</b>  Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.  Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:50 p.m.</p> <p><b>Thursday, 8/6 — 16 Av</b>  Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.  Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:50 p.m.</p> <p><b>Friday, 8/7 — 17 Av</b>  Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.  Candles — 7:52 p.m.  Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.</p>