

The Shul

at the Lubavitch Center

6701 Old Pimlico Road
Baltimore, MD 21209

www.chabadshul.org



August 17, 2024

VaEtchanan — Shabbat Nachamu

13 Av, 5784

The High Dive

Summer! A time for vacations, relaxation, exploration. And of course, swimming. Nothing beats the heat like a good swim. It's great exercise, too.

Sometimes we just want to sit in the pool. Sometimes we play games - marco polo, some kind of ball game, whatever. Sometimes we swim laps. Swimming pool activities are endless, fun, and almost make us glad it's ninety degrees or more.

Of course, all this water activity only works for you if you know how to swim. It's a big mitzva (commandment), to teach someone to swim - according to one opinion in the Talmud, it's as much a parental obligation as teaching a child how to earn a living.

For those who take swimming lessons, often part of those lessons includes learning how to dive. The diving lessons start at the edge of the pool and progress to the low board. Almost everyone learns how to dive off the low diving board.

But the high dive - ah! that's something different. Even very experienced swimmers aren't always comfortable climbing the high dive. Even if one's an expert off the low dive - it's a long way down. Just looking gives you an elevator stomach.

Jumping off the high dive is bad enough, but at least you're going feet first. Diving? And doing somersaults in the air? Only for the very brave!

Of course, there are those adventurous, talented, athletic types that go from the wading pool to the high dive without missing a beat.

Becoming involved in Judaism is like learning to swim. We take a Torah class - get our feet wet. Commit to a mitzva - maybe lighting Shabbat candles every week, putting on tefilin once a week, giving extra tzedeka (charity) - we learn to put our head under water. And so on.

Sometimes we master a particular "stroke" really fast. Sometimes we're very comfortable with our "skill set" - our level of observance, how many mitzvot we do, how carefully we keep them, how much Torah we learn, how intensely we study. We might look with envy or admiration at someone who's doing backflips off the high dive of Jewish life.

But, we say to ourselves, it's not for me. Too high. Too scary. Too different.

The truth is, we can, and sometimes do, look at each stage of our growth as Jews as trying to do a swan off the high dive - or, more technically, a backward flip one and a half somersault twist straight knife into the water.

The "Judaism is a high dive" attitude can intimidate us at any level - moving forward can seem beyond our reach. But it isn't. Because the high dive is just a longer short dive. That is, a dive off a low board is just as scary the first time. It is practice - and a good teacher - that makes the difference.

That's how the good divers do it: practice, of course, which makes them comfortable - the more we do a mitzva, the more comfortable and easy it is to do it again.

We have to realize it's not necessary to master the "high dive" the first time we try to swim. It takes time and practice, teacher and training, to swim at all. And mastering any skill (learning Torah and doing mitzvot is also a skill) is not only a challenge, but fun.

But we also have to realize that in fact each mitzva we do, each bit of Torah we learn, is itself a jump off the high dive - a very successful and graceful dive.

(by Dovid Y. B. Kaufmann obm from <http://www.lchaimweekly.org/>)

The Celebration of "Tu b'AV"

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:

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.

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

We happily wish Mazel Tov to
Mr. Marvin and Mrs. Mindy Pazornick
 on the **Birth of a Grandson**, born to their children
Penina and Gilad Berkowitz.



DAVENING AND SHIURIM SCHEDULE

Friday, 8/16 — 12 Av

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.

Shabbat, 8/17 — 13 Av

Shacharit — 9:00 a.m.
 Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 9:44 a.m.
 Minchah — 7:30 p.m.
 Shiur — after Minchah
 Shkiah — 7:59 p.m.
 Ma'ariv — 8:41 p.m.

Sunday, 8/18 — 14 Av

Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.
 Minchah / Maariv — 7:40 p.m.

Monday — Tu b'Av, 8/19 — 15 Av

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:40 p.m.

Tuesday, 8/20 — 16 Av

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m..
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:40 p.m.

Wednesday, 8/21 — 17 Av

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:40 p.m.

Thursday, 8/22 — 18 Av

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:40 p.m.

Friday, 8/23 — 19 Av

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Candles — 7:31 p.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.