

Tu B'Av - The eternal commitment of HaShem to His people

Jesse Hefter, August 13, 2022 – Shabbos Nachamu – Va'Etchanan

HaRav Leib Minzburg, zt"l, was born in Yerushalayim in 1942. He grew up in the eventually became the Manhig of the Masmidim community and leader of the Kehal Adas Yerushalayim. It was said about him that he “bridged heaven and earth” – he combined intellectual depth, proficiency in chassidus and Kabbalah, and deep knowledge of Torah Bichsav and Torah SheBeal Peh. There is a Sefer called Ben Melech that collects R. Minzburg's sichos related to the themes of the three weeks being Galut, Exile and Geulah, Redemption.

I wish to share with you this evening a section from Maamar 2 on the topic of Tu – B'Av

The Mishna at the end of Masechet Taanit teaches us that:

אָמַר רַבֵּן שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן גַּמְלִיאֵל לֹא הָיוּ יָמִים טוֹבִים לְיִשְׂרָאֵל כַּחַמְשָׁה עָשָׂר בְּאָב וְכִיוֹם הַכְּפוּרִים

Occurring just after Tisha B'Av, Tu B'Av has the essence of nechama within it. We need to tease out just how that looks. If the 9th of Av is a day marking gezayros raos, then Tu B'Av is a Yom Tov because of the cessation of certain gezayros during our history.

One bittul was the gezayra of the forty years of dying in the midbar. In the 40th year, on Tu B'Av, the people became aware that the dying of the people stopped.

Another gezayra that ended was the prohibition against people from different tribes intermarrying. This was a cause for great simcha.

Among the other bittulim was that the corpses of those killed in Beitar (when the Bar Kochba rebellion against Rome was put down) were allowed to be buried. They had been laying on the battlefield for 3 years.

When the decree that all the Jews who left Egypt would die in the desert was announced, that day, Tisha B'Av became a sad, tragic day, one that led to the beginning of galut and a slow, inexorable removal of the Shechinah from the people.

But once the people stopped dying in year 40 of our desert wanderings on Tu B'av, the gezayra was erased and Moshe, we are told, was able to once again to hear communications from HaShem.

R. Minzburg suggests that Tu B'Av stands at the threshold of something very special - the beginning of a new year. Our calendar revolves around the agricultural year and there are three segments, planting at the beginning of the year, the rainy season that catalyzes the growth of produce and, when the sunny days start to shorten, one year ends and another gets ready to start.

While the beginning of Tishray is the beginning of a new Year, the sunny days start to shorten weeks earlier – the Gemara tells us that from the 15th of Av, the strength of the sun starts to diminish, and they would no longer cut wood for the mizbayach since it would not be dry enough.

So the cessation of the gezayros occur earlier than when we would expect them to – i.e., at Rosh Hashanah. Instead, based on HaShem's rachamim, the gezayros are nullified during the time of Tu B'Av.

You know, when you sentence someone to prison, they can sometimes be released earlier based on good behavior, earlier than planned time. When a child is asked to stay in her room by a parent due to some behavior, the parent can sometimes allow them to return to play earlier. Once most of the punishment has been meted out, we can find a way to do an early-cancel on the rest. We do the same by Malkus – the Torah says 40 hits and we stop at 39 or earlier.

Have you ever wondered how Tu B'Av and Yom Kippur can be the biggest Yom Tov of the year, what about the Shalosh Regalim?

Says the Gemara in Taanis 31a,

רב מתנה אָמַר: יוֹם שְׁנֵתְנוּ הַרוּגֵי בֵיתָר לְקַבֵּרָהּ. וְאָמַר רַב מִתְנָה:
אוֹתוֹ יוֹם שְׁנֵתְנוּ הַרוּגֵי בֵיתָר לְקַבֵּרָהּ, תִּקְנֵנוּ בְּיַבְנָה "הַטּוֹב וְהַמְטִיב",
"הַטּוֹב" — שְׁלֹא הִסְרִיחוּ, "וְהַמְטִיב" — שְׁנֵתְנוּ לְקַבֵּרָהּ.

Why is this bracha established now? It is said every day, sometimes several times per day. Do we find this anywhere else other than the Exodus from Egypt? Even the miracles of Chanukah and Purim that are inserted INTO a bracha don't rise to the level of the miracle at Beitar!

Continues R. Minzburg – the foundational principle here is the survival and success of the Jewish people even during Galut. From the time that the temples are destroyed, the Shechinah seems to depart from amongst us. It almost seems as if HaShem has left the stage and we are alone.

When the Jewish people, in the year 138, hear that the bodies of the fallen Jews, three years after the battle with Rome, were miraculously untouched and untainted and were now ready to be buried, they realized that HaShem had not forgotten them, that at the lowest point of our history, God was still with them. A miracle emerged from the clouds of darkness.

Ki Lo Yitosh HaShem es Amo

This miracle was not a one-time event. It is a mehalach, a trait or characteristic of the relationship between HaShem and Bnay Yisrael. We say in the 4th bracha of bensching:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלֵּךְ, הָאֵל אֲבֵינוּ, מְלַכְנוּ, אֲדִירָנוּ
בוֹרְאָנוּ, גּוֹאֲלָנוּ, יוֹצֵרָנוּ, קְדוֹשֵׁנוּ קְדוֹשׁ יַעֲקֹב, רוֹעֵנוּ רוֹעֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל,

HaShem is our King and it is an eternal commitment to a relationship where God is there for us:

חֲמִלְךָ הַטּוֹב, וְהַמְטִיב לְכָל, שְׂפֹכֵל יוֹם וַיּוֹם הוּא הַטֵּיב, הוּא מְטִיב,
הוּא יֵיטִיב לָנוּ, הוּא גִמְלָנוּ, הוּא גּוֹמְלָנוּ, הוּא יְגַמְלָנוּ לְעַד דָּהַר הַחַסְדִּים

Since the miracle at Beitar, we have experienced miracles in the lives of the Jews of every generation.

There are three stages of gratitude we express in bensching and each parallels the Tov and the Mazon that HaShem provides

- 1) Hazan es HaKol – God gives food to the whole universe
- 2) Al HaAretz v'al HaMazon – God specifically feeds God's people
- 3) Boneh Yerushalayim – God blesses us by being with us in Jerusalem and the Miqdash- bchol hamakom asher azkir es shmi...

But berachot 2 and 3 really applied only when we lived in the time of the miqdash in the land of Israel.

The (new) 4th bracha of HaTov vHaMaytiv was established by the rabbis of Yavneh following the miracle of those murdered in Beitar. Now, we know that HaShem will not only provide for us when we are living in the times of the Miqdash but God also provides for us when we are in Galut.

Why is Tu b'av like Yom Kippur?

God responds to Moshe after the sin of the Aygel with "salachti kidvarecha"

God responds to the Jewish people after the massacre at Beitar, when the enemy wanted to break us, I am with you and I will take care of you – the miracle of the corpses is the "salachti kidvarecha" – I haven't forgotten you!

The second set of tablets are prepared on Yom Kippur to demonstrate the renewal of the commitment, the bris, between God and Israel.

Yom Kippur tells us that even after sinning, there is a path to rachamim and selicha.

Tu B'av in galus tells us that even after we have violated the bris, broken our commitments to God and feel so lonely and forsaken, HaShem still finds, perhaps in a hidden and unobvious way, a path for us to come back. This is the nuclear bond between these two days in the calendar.

Finally, observes R. Minzburg, Yom Kippur was the day we got a second set of tablets. If the first set of tablets can be compared to the written torah, the second set can be compared to the oral torah- the one that transcends the written word.

The Gemara tells us that from the time of Tu B'av, the days begin to shorten and the nights gets longer. Rashi comments that one who uses some of that night time to learn Torah can earn a longer life. For most people, working hard all day precludes Torah study, especially when people worked in the fields, but now as the daylight portion of the day shrinks, there is more night time available and that time can be put to good use – learning Torah.

Chazal tell us in the Medrash Tanchumah that, when Moshe was up with HaShem accepting the Torah, he spend the days learning the written text and the nights learning the oral tradition.

May we merit to realize in our Birchas HaMazon, the hidden gems of meaning in the 4th bracha, the never-broken commitment from HaShem to His people and our perpetual commitment to drawing closer to HaShem through prayer, study, and positive action. Yechezkel promises us:

וְנָתַתִּי לְכֶם לֵב חָדָשׁ וְרוּחַ חָדָשׁ אֶתֵּן בְּקִרְבְּכֶם

