

CHIZUK AND IDUD

*Divrei Torah from the weekly sedra
with a focus on living in Eretz Yisrael
Chizuk for Olim & Idud for not-yet-Olim*

TU b'AV 1018

Shabbat, Parshat Va'etchanan celebrates a little-known Jewish holiday. I am referring to the holiday known as TU b'AV. In Chutz LaAretz it was noted mainly because one did not recite Tachnun. Other than that, it was unknown. Even the secular Israeli population has turned it into a memorable day of romance. Paradoxically, its origin is found in the Gemara. In Masechet Taanit 31a it states "There are no holidays as joyous for Israel as TU b'AV and Yom Kippur (because it is a day of Slichah and Michilah it is a day of forgiveness and pardon). On TU b'AV the daughters of Israel (b'not Yisrael) would go out and borrow white clothing (so that they should all look the same and not embarrass the poor) and dance in the field while saying to each bachelor - "Young man, lift up your eyes and see what you choose for yourself. Do not set your eyes on beauty but set your eyes on [good] family." As it says, "Grace is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that fears the Lord, she shall be praised." (Ta'anit 26b)

The Gemara teaches that there were three types of maidens:

1. Beautiful ones who would suggest that men davka gaze only at beauty (y'feifiot).
2. The ones who came from good families - m'yuchasot.
3. Those that did not have the qualities of the first 2 and were known as the mechu'arot.

The Maharsha uses this three-fold classification to suggest (as did Aristotle) that every action performed by man stems from one of these three motivations: TOV, AREIV and MO'IL. Every action is performed because it is right - TOV. Alternatively, there might be a monetary consideration (MO'IL) behind the act. Lastly, there could be a sensual motivation.

Rav Eitan Henkin HY"D who died al Kiddush Hashem wrote an article concerning TU b'AV published in the Torah Journal of Yeshivat Nir in Kiryat Arba, asking how can the Mishna Taanit 4:8 state there were no holidays as good as TU b'AV, implying that this was the happiest day on the Jewish calendar, since the Mishna in Sukkot 51a it states that "He who did not witness the joy of Simchat Beit Hashoeva (on Sukkot), never experi-

enced joy in their lifetime." How can these contradictory Mishnayot be understood? Rav Henkin quotes the Ritva on Bava Batra 129b saying that there is a fundamental difference between the two holidays. Simchat Beit HaShoeva catered to the elite, the important members of society. TU b'AV and also Yom Kippur, are for the participation of all, rich or poor alike and that was the reason for their joy. Today, Aliya is open to all and is a source joy to all and for all.

One of the reasons for the joy of TU b'AV is that "It is the day on which Hoshea ben Elah removed the guards which Yeravam ben Nevat had placed idols on the roads, to prevent Israel from going [up to Jerusalem] on pilgrimage, and he proclaimed 'Let them go up to whichever shrine they desire.'" King Hoshea abolished the road blocks which had been in place for over 100 years preventing the Jews (10 of the 12 tribes) from visiting the Beit HaMikdash. Yet, when the road blocks were removed, to their everlasting shame, Jews still refrained from coming to Yerushalayim and ultimately 10 of the 12 tribes were exiled and have disappeared. Today few if any countries impose any restrictions on coming to Israel and yet... and yet...

Where are you? One sure way to

guard against Jewish oblivion is bringing your family to Eretz Yisrael!

Rabbi Yerachmiel Roness

Ramat Shiloh Beit Shemesh