

NOTES

The day on which the deaths in the wilderness ceased – יום שְׁכָלוּ בוֹ מֵתֵי מִדְבָּר: Many commentaries cite the following midrash: Every year, on the eighth of Av, a herald proclaimed in the camp of the Jewish people in the wilderness: Let each individual dig his grave. Everyone dug his own grave and spent the night in it. The next day, a second herald proclaimed: Let the living separate themselves from the dead, and whoever was still alive would rise up from his grave. Every year about fifteen thousand Israelites died. However, on the ninth of Av of the fortieth year, all those who had lain in a grave rose up again in the morning. At first, they thought that they had miscalculated, and that it was not yet the ninth of Av. Consequently, they slept in their graves every night for a week. When the fifteenth of Av arrived, the full moon that shone that night convinced them that the Ninth of Av had passed and that all those who were destined to die had already perished (Rashi; *Tosafot*).

The early commentaries disagree as to whether all those who were supposed to die indeed perished in the wilderness or whether some of those who were supposed to die during the fortieth year were pardoned. In commemoration of the end of the punishment, the fifteenth of Av was established as a minor holiday for all generations.

Some explain that the holiday was instituted in commemoration of the resumption of God's direct communication with Moses, which occurred when the generation of the wilderness stopped dying. According to this interpretation, the regular number of Jews died on the Ninth of Av of the fortieth year, after which a seven-day mourning period was then observed. At the conclusion of that period of mourning, on the fifteenth of Av, God's direct communication with Moses resumed, and a holiday was declared (*Tosafot* on *Bava Batra* 121a).

אָמַר רַבָּה בַּר בַּר חַנָּה אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: יוֹם שְׁכָלוּ בוֹ מֵתֵי מִדְבָּר. דָּאֲמַר מַר: עַד שְׁלֵא כְלוּ מֵתֵי מִדְבָּר, לֹא הָיָה דְבוּר עִם מֹשֶׁה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וַיְהִי כַאֲשֶׁר תָּמוּ כָּל אַנְשֵׁי הַמַּלְחָמָה לְמוֹת, וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֵלַי הִיָּה הַדְּבוּר."

Rabba bar bar Hana said that Rabbi Yohanan said: The fifteenth of Av was the day on which the deaths of the Jews in the wilderness ceased.<sup>N</sup> The entire generation that had left Egypt had passed away, as the Master said: After the sin of the spies, on account of which the Jews of that generation were sentenced to die in the wilderness, as long as the death of the Jews in the wilderness had not ceased, God's speech did not come to Moses, as it is stated: "And it came to pass, when all the men of war were consumed and dead from among the people, that the Lord spoke to me, saying" (Deuteronomy 2:16–17). This indicates that only then, after the last member of that generation had died, was God's speech delivered to me,<sup>N</sup> i.e., Moses, but not beforehand. When the Jews realized that the decree that God would not speak to Moses had been lifted, they established that day as a permanent day of rejoicing.

עוּלָא אָמַר: יוֹם שְׁבִיטַל הוֹשֵׁעַ בֶּן אֱלֵה פְרוֹסֵדְיוֹת שְׁהוֹשִׁיב יִרְבְּעֵם בֶּן נִבְטָע עַל הַדְּרָכִים, שְׁלֵא יַעֲלוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְרִגְלָא וְאָמַר:

Ulla said: The fifteenth of Av was the day on which King Hoshea, son of Ela, canceled the guards that Jeroboam, son of Nevat, placed on the roads so that the Jews would not ascend to Jerusalem for the pilgrim Festival. And Hoshea, son of Ela, said

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The speech delivered to me – אֵלַי הָיָה הַדְּבוּר: Although God did in fact speak to Moses during the travels of the Jews through the wilderness (see Deuteronomy 2:2), it was only after the last members of the generation of the wilder-

ness had died that the divine revelation took the form of *dibbur*, speech, a more direct form of communication than *amira*, saying (see Rashi, Meiri, and Rabbeinu Behaye on Deuteronomy 2:16–17).

Perek IV  
Daf 31 Amud a

BACKGROUND

The slain of Beitar – הֲרוּגֵי בֵּיתֵר: After his final suppression of the bar Kokheva revolt, the Roman emperor Hadrian issued a lengthy series of decrees against Jews and Judaism. These are the so-called decrees of apostasy that are mentioned in many places. One of these decrees was a prohibition against burying those slain in the war. These decrees were in force for at least three years, until Hadrian's death in 138 CE. The decrees were rescinded only in the reign of the following emperor. This dissolution, along with the gradual cancellation of all the decrees, was commemorated for future generations in several ways.

HALAKHA

They instituted, Who is good and does good, at Yavne – תִּקְנוּ בֵּיתֵר: The Sages of the Mishna in Yavne instituted the blessing: Who is good and does good, the fourth blessing of Grace after Meals, after those who died at Beitar were brought to burial (Rambam *Sefer Ahava*, *Hilkhot Berakhot* 2:1).

לְאִיזָה שְׂרִיצוּ יַעֲלוּ.

that they may ascend to wherever they wish,<sup>N</sup> i.e., they may go to Jerusalem, Bethel, or Dan.

רַב מַתְנֵה אָמַר: יוֹם שֶׁנֶּתְנוּ הֲרוּגֵי בֵּיתֵר לְקַבְּרָה. וְאָמַר רַב מַתְנֵה: אוֹתוֹ יוֹם שֶׁנֶּתְנוּ הֲרוּגֵי בֵּיתֵר לְקַבְּרָה תִּקְנוּ בֵּיבְנָה "הַטּוֹב וְהַמְטִיב". "הַטּוֹב" שְׁלֵא הִסְרִיחוּ. "וְהַמְטִיב" שֶׁנֶּתְנוּ לְקַבְּרָה.

Rav Mattana said: There was an additional salvation on this day, as it was the day that the slain of Beitar<sup>B</sup> were brought to burial,<sup>N</sup> several years after the battle at Beitar (see *Gittin* 57a). And Rav Mattana said: On the same day that the slain of Beitar were brought to burial, they instituted the blessing: Who is good and does good, at Yavne.<sup>H</sup> Who is good, thanking God that the corpses did not decompose while awaiting burial, and does good, thanking God that they were ultimately brought to burial.

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They may ascend to wherever they wish – לְאִיזָה שְׂרִיצוּ יַעֲלוּ: Hoshea was an evil king, as Rashi notes, as the verse states that Hoshea, son of Ela, "did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, yet not as the kings of Israel who were before him" (II Kings 17:2). Hoshea was not considered as evil as the kings before him because he removed Jeroboam's guards, who were stationed to prevent people from ascending to Jerusalem on the pilgrimage Festivals. However, he was evil nevertheless, as he let the people choose whether to go to Jerusalem or attend the idolatrous sanctuaries in Bethel and Dan. In the Jerusalem Talmud, it is stated that Hoshea was punished for presenting the people of Israel with this choice. During his reign, Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, put an end to the kingdom of Israel.

during the Second Temple period, as the *baraita* cited below describes how the daughters of the High Priest, his deputy, and the priest anointed for war would each borrow clothing from each other on that day, and these priestly offices ceased with the destruction of the Temple. How, then, could the holiday celebrated on the fifteenth of Av have been instituted to commemorate the interment of the slain of Beitar, a joyous event that took place only after the destruction of the Temple?

The *Gevurat Ari* suggests that the *baraita* is referring to the celebration that accompanied Yom Kippur, whereas the holiday celebrated on the fifteenth of Av was in fact instituted after the Temple was destroyed. Alternatively, the holiday was indeed instituted in the time of the Second Temple, and Rav Mattana is saying that because several joyous events had already occurred on the fifteenth of Av, another joyous event took place on that same date. Moreover, he explains why the day is observed as a semi-holiday even nowadays.

The day that the slain of Beitar were brought to burial – יוֹם שֶׁנֶּתְנוּ הֲרוּגֵי בֵּיתֵר לְקַבְּרָה: The fifteenth of Av was evidently celebrated as a holiday

The fifteenth of Av – תְּשֵׁשׁ בֹּחֶה עֵשֶׂר בָּאָב – On the fifteenth of Av, it is the custom not to recite the prayers of supplication that usually follow the *Amida*, as is the custom on all days of celebration (*Shulhan Arukh, Orach Hayyim* 131:6).

## BACKGROUND

The strength of the sun grows weaker – תְּשֵׁשׁ בֹּחֶה שֶׁל חֶמָה – The fifteenth of Av can occur on various dates of the solar year, between July 30 and August 21. This coincides with the hottest period of the year, when humidity is low in mountainous regions. From August onward, the strength of the sun grows weaker, i.e., the average temperatures decrease and humidity rises.

For wood to dry out sufficiently for use on the altar, a few months of dry climate and low humidity are required. Since moist wood will attract the attention of bugs even after it has been chopped down, during this period the priests would stop cutting down wood for the altar.

## LANGUAGE

Box [*kufsa*] – קוּפְסָא – From the Greek κάψα, *kapsa*, or the Latin *capsa*, meaning a box or container.

רַבָּה וְרַב יוֹסֵף דְּאָמְרֵי תְרוּוּיָהּ: יוֹם שֶׁפָּסְקוּ מִלְכָּרוֹת עֵצִים לְמַעַרְבָּהּ, דִּתְנִינָא: רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר הַגָּדוֹל אָמַר: מִחֶמְשָׁה עֵשֶׂר בָּאָב וְאֵילָךְ תִּשְׁשׁ בֹּחֶה שֶׁל חֶמָה, וְלֹא הָיוּ כּוֹרְתִין עֵצִים לְמַעַרְבָּהּ, לְפִי שְׂאִינָן יְבֻשִׁין.

אָמַר רַב מְנַשְׁיָא: וְקָרוּ לֵיהּ יוֹם תְּבַר מַגְלָא. מִכָּאֵן וְאֵילָךְ דְּמוֹסִיף יוֹסֵף, וְדִלָּא מוֹסִיף יֹאסֵף. מֵאִי יֹאסֵף? אָמַר רַב יוֹסֵף: תְּקַבְּרִיהּ אִימִיה.

”שָׁבְהֵן בְּנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם,” כּוּ. תְּנִי רַבְנָן: בֵּית מַלְךְ שׁוֹאֵלֶת מִבֵּית בְּהֵן גָּדוֹל, בֵּית בְּהֵן גָּדוֹל מִבֵּית סָגָן, וּבֵית סָגָן מִבֵּית מְשֻׁיחַ מִלְחָמָה, וּבֵית מְשֻׁיחַ מִלְחָמָה מִבֵּית בְּהֵן הַדְּיוּטָא, וְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל שׁוֹאֵלִין זֶה מִזֶּה, כְּדִי שְׂלֵא יִתְבַּיֵּשׁ אֶת מִי שְׂאִין לוֹ.

”כָּל הַכְּלִים טְעוּנִין טְבִילָה.” אָמַר רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר: אֲפִילוּ מְקוּפְלִין וּמוֹנָחִין בְּקוּפְסָא.

It is Rabba and Rav Yosef who both say: The fifteenth of Av was the day on which they stopped chopping down trees for the arrangement of wood that burned on the altar, as it is taught in a *baraita* that Rabbi Eliezer the Great says: From the fifteenth of Av<sup>H</sup> onward, the strength of the sun grows weaker,<sup>B</sup> and from this date they would not cut additional wood for the arrangement, as they would not be properly dry, and they would therefore be unfit for use in the Temple.

Rav Menashya said: And they called the fifteenth of Av the day of the breaking of the scythe, as from this date onward no more trees were cut down, and therefore it was a celebration for the trees. The Gemara adds: From the fifteenth of Av onward, when the days begin to shorten, one who adds to his nightly Torah study will add years to his life, and he who does not add [*mosif*] will be gathered [*ye'asef*].<sup>N</sup> The Gemara asks: What is the meaning of the phrase: He will be gathered? Rav Yosef said: It means that his mother will bury him, as he will be gathered to his grave (see Genesis 49:33).

§ The mishna taught: As on them the daughters of Jerusalem would go out in white clothes, and on the fifteenth of Av they would go out to the vineyards and dance. The Sages taught this tradition in greater detail: The daughter of the king borrows white garments from the daughter of the High Priest;<sup>N</sup> the daughter of the High Priest borrows from the daughter of the deputy High Priest; the daughter of the deputy High Priest borrows from the daughter of the priest anointed for war, i.e., the priest who would read verses of Torah and address the army as they prepared for battle; the daughter of the priest anointed for war borrows from the daughter of a common priest; and all the Jewish people borrow from each other. Why would they all borrow garments? They did this so as not to embarrass one who did not have her own white garments.

The mishna further taught: All the garments that the women borrowed require immersion,<sup>N</sup> as those who previously wore them before might have been ritually impure. Rabbi Elazar says: Even if the garments were folded and placed in a box [*kufsa*],<sup>L</sup> an indication that they had not been touched for a long time, they nevertheless require ritual immersion before being worn.

## NOTES

וְדִלָּא מוֹסִיף – And he who does not add will be gathered – יֹאסֵף: Since the Torah is called “your life and the length of your days” (Deuteronomy 30:20), one who neglects its study is effectively proving that he does not seek life (*Mikhtam*).

The daughter of the king borrows from the daughter of the High Priest – בֵּית מַלְךְ שׁוֹאֵלֶת מִבֵּית בְּהֵן גָּדוֹל – Ordinarily, one borrows from someone of a higher economic and social status. In this case, however, the Sages arranged that the daughter of a man of higher status should borrow from the daughter of someone of lower status, so that nobody would be embarrassed to borrow and everyone would be dressed in similar clothing (*Sefat Emet*).

Require immersion – טְעוּנִין טְבִילָה – Most early commentaries explain that the clothes the young women borrowed from each other required ritual immersion because they might have contracted ritual impurity by being worn by a woman who

was ritually impure. Even clothes that had been folded away in boxes required ritual immersion, so as not to embarrass those women who were indeed ritually impure and whose clothes needed to be immersed.

Furthermore, the Sages wished to avoid a situation in which those who were more meticulous about ritual impurity would refrain from borrowing clothes from those who were less scrupulous in this regard (Rashi; Rid; Rabbeinu Yehonatan).

The Jerusalem Talmud, as cited by the Ra'avad and others, explains this regulation differently: The Sages enacted that all clothes must undergo ritual immersion so that the young women would be more willing to lend them. Once the garments had been taken out of storage and immersed (*Ritva*) they were wet (*Mikhtam*) and no longer pristine. Therefore, women who would otherwise have preferred not to lend their clothes would be ready to exchange them for others.

The daughters of the Jewish people would go out and dance – בנות ישראל יוצאות וחולות: The commentaries write that this custom is based on the manner by which the daughters of Jabesh-Gilead were permitted to marry the males of the tribe of Benjamin (see Judges 21:3–23; *ge'onim*). The commentaries explain at length that this was a special enactment to help those girls who were having difficulty finding a husband. The men would select potential wives, and later, after the families agreed, they would betroth them (see Ritva).

That you adorn us with golden jewelry – שתעטרונו בזהובים: The commentaries point out that elsewhere the Sages state: The daughters of Israel are pretty, but poverty makes them ugly (*Nedarim* 66a). Consequently, once they are adorned with finery, their husbands will find them beautiful and come to recognize their other good qualities. An alternative reading is: That you will be adorned with golden jewelry, i.e., if you marry a woman for the sake of Heaven you will earn wealth and honor.

A dance of the righteous – מחול לצדיקים: As explained by the early and later commentaries, this idea alludes to secret concepts of the Torah. Some write that a dance in the form of a circle signifies an endless activity, comparable to the eternal bounty that will be the portion of the righteous in the World-to-Come (Rabbeinu Beḥaye on the Torah).

Others claim that in the future everyone will attain prophecy, through which it will be possible to point to God, as it were (*Alshikh*). Furthermore, this action hints at the revelation of secrets of the Torah, which is read with a pointed finger (see *Kaṭor VaFerah*). In connection with this idea, the commentaries cite the verse: “Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old together; for I will turn their mourning into joy, and I will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow” (Jeremiah 31:12). This verse links the dance of girls on days of rejoicing to the dance of the righteous in the future (see Mahara).

“בנות ישראל יוצאות וחולות בפרמים.  
תנא: מי שאין לו אשה נפנה לשם.”

“מיוחסות שבהן היו אומרות: בחור, וכי.  
תנו רבנן: לפיפיות שבהן מה היו אומרות?  
תנו עיניכם ליופי, שאין האשה אלא  
ליופי. מיוחסות שבהן מה היו אומרות?  
תנו עיניכם למשפחה, לפי שאין האשה  
אלא לבנים. מכוערות שבהם מה היו  
אומרות? קחו מקחכם לשום שמים,  
ובלבד שתעטרונו בזהובים.”

אמר עולא בראה אמר רבי אלעזר: עתיד  
הקדוש ברוך הוא לעשות מחול לצדיקים,  
והוא יושב ביניהם בגן עדן, וכל אחד  
ואחד מראה באצבעו, שנאמר: “ואמר  
ביום ההוא: הנה, אלהינו זה; קוינו לו  
וישיענו. זה ה’ קוינו לו. נגילה ונשמחה  
בישותו.”

הדרן עלך בשלשה פרקים  
וסליקא לה מסכת תענית

The mishna also stated that the daughters of the Jewish people would go out and dance<sup>N</sup> in the vineyards. A *tanna* taught: One who did not have a wife would turn to there to find one.

It is taught that those women of distinguished lineage among them would say: Young man, please lift up your eyes and see what you choose for a wife. The Sages taught this practice in greater detail in a *baraita*: What would the beautiful women among them say? Set your eyes toward beauty, as a wife is only for her beauty. What would those of distinguished lineage among them say? Set your eyes toward family, as a wife is only for children, and the children of a wife from a distinguished family will inherit her lineage. What would the ugly ones among them say? Acquire your purchase for the sake of Heaven, provided that you adorn us with golden jewelry<sup>N</sup> after our marriage to beautify us.

The tractate concludes with a statement related to the topic of dancing. Ulla of the city of Bira’a said that Rabbi Elazar said: In the future, in the end of days, the Holy One, Blessed be He, will arrange a dance of the righteous,<sup>N</sup> and He will be sitting among them in the Garden of Eden, and each and every one of the righteous will point to God with his finger, as it is stated: “And it shall be said on that day: Behold, this is our God, for whom we waited, that He might save us. This is the Lord; for whom we waited. We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation” (Isaiah 25:9). God will be revealed, so that every righteous individual will be able to say: This is our God, as though they were pointing at Him with a finger.