

YOM HA'ATZMAUT & THE SHEHECHEYANU BLESSING

On the 5th of Iyar 5708, corresponding to May 5th 1948, the dream of 2000 years was realised through the establishment of the State of Israel. As the political, communal and religious leaders stood in what is now known as Independence Hall, and immediately after David Ben-Gurion completed his reading of the Declaration of Independence, Rabbi Yehuda Leib Hachohen Maimon – who was among those who drafted and signed Israel's declaration of Independence - stood up and recited, with great emotion, the *Shehecheyanu* blessing.¹

However, even at the time, there were some Rabbis – including those who were deeply passionate about the State of Israel – who felt that the *Shehecheyanu* bracha should not have been recited.

This article seeks to understand this debate, and in so doing, explain how it is rooted in a broader discussion concerning both the nature of the *Shehecheyanu* bracha, as well as the nature of our celebration on *Yom Ha'atzmaut*.

I. RABBI MAIMON'S SHEHECHEYANU (5708/1948)

To begin our exploration, we will start with Rabbi Maimon, who – while not writing a responsum on the topic – outlined his rationale for reciting *Shehecheyanu*. As he explained:

בנוגע ל"שהחיינו" זוהי כידוע ברכה שיכול כל איש לברך בשעה שהשמחה במעונו ובלבבו וזה תלוי לגמרי בדעתו של אדם

*Regarding Shehecheyanu this is, as is well known, a bracha that any person can recite at a time when there is joy in their domain and in their heart, and this is entirely dependent on the mindset of that person.*²

For Rabbi Maimon, the recitation of *Shehecheyanu*³ was a religious expression of his personal joy, and given the fact that those present in Independence Hall responded to his bracha with a resounding *Amen*, it seems that they too shared this feeling of joy & jubilation.⁴

II. RABBI UZIEL'S RESPONSUM (5709/1949)

The following year, Rabbi Ben-Zion Uziel, the then Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel, received a letter from Rabbi Beirish Zaltz of Tzfat dated 9th Iyar 5709 (1949). Prior to this, Rabbi Uziel had ruled that the celebrations on *Yom Ha'atzmaut* should include the recitation of the *Shehecheyanu* bracha, as well as the recitation of *Hallel* without a bracha. However, Rabbi Zaltz challenged Rabbi Uziel's ruling, and in particular, his rationale for requiring the recitation of *Shehecheyanu* on *Yom Ha'atzmaut*.

While not disputing the principle that *Shehecheyanu* can, and perhaps should, be recited at moments of joy & euphoria, Rabbi Zaltz explained⁵ that the joy felt on the 5th of Iyar 5708 (ie. the day when the State was declared) was itself incomplete given the fact that Jerusalem was not in Jewish hands. As such, just as *Shehecheyanu* is not recited - at least according to *Tosfof*⁶ - at a *Brit Milah* since the child is in pain, so too *Shehecheyanu* shouldn't be recited on *Yom Ha'atzmaut* given the anguish that is still felt for Jerusalem.

To this, Rabbi Uziel responded⁷ that the cases are different. Regarding *Brit Milah* (for which, according to the *Rambam*⁸, *Shehecheyanu* should be recited and which too is the custom in Israel, Syria & Egypt as cited in

¹ A recording of this can be heard at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5MHjzC2OCw> at 12 mins 35 seconds

² see Y. L. Maimon, *L'Ma'ana Tz'ion Lo Echeshe* p. 10. He writes the same in *L'Sha'ab ULeDor* p. 416.

³ It should be noted that Rabbi Maimon also believed that full *Hallel* should also be recited on *Yom Ha'atzmaut*, and that weddings and haircuts should be permitted on the day as they are on *Lag BaOmer*.

⁴ It should be noted that R' Maimon supported this remark by citing the *Chatam Sofer* (Orach Chaim 55) and Rabbi Yosef Pollock's *Roshei Besamim* (*Ma'arechet Bet* No. 15), who explains that a person who feels that they have accrued a benefit for which the recitation of *Shehecheyanu* is appropriate, they themselves are obliged to recite the blessing even though the recitation of *Shehecheyanu* itself is described as a *Reshut* (optional) bracha.

⁵ It should be noted that while Rabbi Uziel does not include the full-text of Rabbi Zaltz's letter in his responsa, his responsum refers directly to Rabbi Zaltz's remarks and occasions quotes directly from his letter.

⁶ *Tosfof on Erwin* 40b *DH Dilma*

⁷ In a responsum dated 25th Iyar 5709. The responsum can be found in *She'elot UTeshuvot Mishpetei Uzziel* Vol. 8 No. 23

⁸ *Mishneh Torah, Brachot* 11:9

the *Shulchan Aruch*⁹), the joyous act of *Milah* itself causes pain. However, in the case of the establishment of the State, the pain felt for Jerusalem should be considered as a separate element to the joy felt in response to the establishment of the State. To support this argument, Rabbi Uziel referred to the Purim story which, as the Gemara¹⁰ observes, ended with the people remaining servants of Achashverosh. Yet notwithstanding this, *Shebecheyanu* is still recited on Purim prior to reading the Megillah.¹¹

Then, Rabbi Uziel turns his attention to the nature of our celebration on *Yom Ha'atzmaut*, explaining that

ושפיר שרי לך לתקן ברכה זאת בשם ומלכות ביום זה, שכל תושבי א"י נמלטו משעבוד זה שהיה כרוך בסכנת מות ליחידים וגם לציבור כולו, שהשלטון הזר (= הבריטי) שהפקיר את דמינו, וגם רדף בעונושי מות כל נושא נשק, לבלי נוכל אפילו להגן על עצמנו, ולולא הכרות המדינה שאיחדה את כל הישוב היהודי לחטיבה אחת, להיקהל ולעמוד על נפשם, כי אז שטפוננו המון צבאות המלכים שמסביבנו שנתוספו על אויבנו בארץ, ואזי המים שטפוננו נחלה עבר על נפשנו המים הזדונים, ועל כגון זה ודאי שצריך ומחוייב להודות בשם ומלכות לגואלנו ה' צבאות שמו, שהחיינו וקיימנו ליום הזה, כמו שמברכים אניסא דרבים בשם ומלכות.

And it is correct for us to establish this bracha and recite it in full while using the name of G-d, because all the inhabitants of the land of Israel fled from this oppression which was [at the time] encroaching upon being a danger of death for both individuals and the wider community, where the alien (British) government placed no value on our blood and even pursued any one of us carrying a weapon with the threat of death penalty, such that we were unable to even protect ourselves. And so, had it not been for the declaration of the State which unified the entire Jewish Yishuv into one unit to gather together and to stand up for our own lives, then the many armies of the countries around us would have joined with our enemies in the land, at which time the waters would have carried us off and the torrent would have swept up into the seething waters.¹² For in such a situation, it is certainly required and necessary to praise [G-d] by invoking the name of G-d for redeeming us and for giving us life and sustaining us to this day, in the same manner that we recite a blessing upon a public miracle by invoking the name of G-d.¹³

As Rabbi Uziel explains, *Yom Ha'atzmaut* should be treated as an anniversary commemorating the miracle of the establishment of the State of Israel because, through the establishment of the State of Israel, lives were saved from imminent danger and greater stability and sustenance became available to the people of Israel.¹⁴ Given all this, Rabbi Uziel rules that, in contrast to *Hallel* where one can debate the propriety and necessity of reciting its bracha,

בברכת שהחיינו שהיא מחויבת בכל דבר שיש בו שמחה, מצאנו דאין כאן חידוש הלכה, אלא זאת היא הלכה פסוקה להודות לה' אשר שמחנו בישועתו ופדה אותנו ממות לחיים

in the case of Shebecheyanu, which is required in all instances where there is joy, we find that there is no halakhic innovation here [by requiring its recitation]. Instead, it is a clearly codified halakha that we should praise G-d for the joy of our salvation and for redeeming us from death to life.¹⁵

For Rabbi Uziel, like Rabbi Maimon, the recitation of *Shebecheyanu* on *Yom Ha'atzmaut* was a *birchat hoda'ah* – a blessing of praise that expressed the joy of freedom, salvation & sustenance, and as he continues ואין הכל – *this is not a doubtful bracha. Instead, it is certainly a mitzvah [to recite the bracha] according to everyone*.

⁹ See *Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deab* 265:7

¹⁰ See *Megillah* 14a

¹¹ Rabbi Uziel then adds a further example where the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 223) rules that a person who inherits money after their father dies still recites *Shebecheyanu*, thereby proving that the joy of *Shebecheyanu* is valid notwithstanding wider considerations that may be negative.

¹² Based on *Tehillim* 124:4-5

¹³ *Mishpetei Uziel* Vol. 8 No. 23

¹⁴ Rabbi Uziel contrasts the *Shebecheyanu* recited upon necessary rainfall (see *Orach Chaim* 221:2) with *Yom Ha'atzmaut*, explaining that the *Shebecheyanu* for rain was warranted for short-term sustenance, while *Yom Ha'atzmaut* allowed for long term protection and freedom in a manner comparable to Chanukah & Purim.

¹⁵ *Mishpetei Uziel* Vol. 8 No. 23

However, while Rabbi Uziel's responsum was written in 1949, it seems¹⁶ that it was not published until 1961 which meant that the debate surrounding the recitation of *Shebecheyanu* continued. This led Rabbi Maimon to write to Rabbi Meshulam Rath to clarify the issue.¹⁷

III. RABBI RATH'S RESPONSUM (5712/1952)

Rabbi Meshulam Rath had previously been a Rav and Dayan in the Ukraine and in Romania. He moved to Israel in 5704 (1944) where he was appointed as a member of the Rabbinic High Court and of the Chief Rabbinic Council. Rabbi Rath's responsum¹⁸, which itself is the best known and most oft-quoted ruling on this topic, is both long and dense. It lacks the poetic flair of Rabbi Uziel's responsum, but in its place, Rabbi Rath provides copious halakhic sources to address the question asked of him.

However, beyond the difference in tone, there is also a stark difference in focus. Rather than considering the recitation of *Shebecheyanu* on *Yom Ha'atzmaut* in terms of a *birkeat hoda'ah* reflecting personal and national joy, Rabbi Rath dedicated the majority of his responsum to the possibility of treating *Yom Ha'atzmaut* as a festive day, on par with Purim & Chanukah, with the consequent halakhic question being whether such a day carries innate spiritual significance such that the *Shebecheyanu* bracha may be recited as a *birkeat hazman* – a festive blessing. But what was the reason for this change in focus?

Between 1949 and 1952 the State of Israel saw a huge influx of immigrants while, at the same time, experiencing its first period of relative peace. However, this also impacted on the way in which *Yom Ha'atzmaut* was celebrated. Rather than being a miraculous day of euphoria, *Yom Ha'atzmaut* was now an anniversary commemorating the miracle of the State, and in terms of *Shebecheyanu*, this changed the conversation altogether. In place of reciting the *Shebecheyanu* bracha through the prism of **personal joy for the miracle of the State**, the conversation concerning its recitation now centered around **the nature of the day commemorating the miracle of the State**.

Regarding holy days, Gemara *Erwin* 40b discusses whether *Shebecheyanu* should be recited on Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur. The rationale for this discussion is that, unlike the Pilgrim Festivals of Pesach, Shavuot & Sukkot where joy is considered part and parcel of the celebration, perhaps this is not the case for Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur? At the same time, like the Pilgrim Festivals, both Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur are celebrated annually and as such, surely *Shebecheyanu* should be recited on these holy days?

After a lengthy analysis, the Gemara concludes that **אומר זמן בראש השנה וכיום הכפורים** – the *Shebecheyanu* bracha *should* be recited on Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur [in addition to the three Pilgrim Festivals]¹⁹, and that **זמן אומר אפילו בשוק**, meaning that the bracha can be recited even in the marketplace (ie. the bracha is not inextricably linked with particular mitzvot of the festivals such as the recitation of *Kiddush*).

What this Gemara teaches is that the three Pilgrim festivals, along with Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur, are considered to have innate spiritual significance such that the day itself, even in the absence of any particular mitzvah, is sacred and requires the recitation of *Shebecheyanu*. However, the question asked by Rabbi Rath, along with numerous other halakhic scholars that followed him, was whether the post-biblical festivals of Purim & Chanukah - both of which celebrate national miracles and on which the *Shebecheyanu* bracha is recited - carry innate spiritual significance? If they do, then perhaps a comparison could be made to *Yom Ha'atzmaut* for which *Shebecheyanu* could be recited. However, if they only allow for the recitation of *Shebecheyanu* due to the mitzvot ordained for these days, then perhaps *Shebecheyanu* may not be recited on *Yom Ha'atzmaut*?

¹⁶ I am not aware that this responsum was shared publicly before the publishing of *Mishpetei Uziel*, but I would be keen to find out this was not the case.

¹⁷ It is noteworthy that Rabbi Rath's responsum is dated 24th Adar 5712 (1952). Rabbi Maimon had lost his seat in the elections taking place in 1951 which may have meant that he used his extra time to explore this issue in greater detail.

¹⁸ *She'elot UTeshuvot Kol Mevasser* Vol. 1 No. 21

¹⁹ As the *Yerushalmi* (*Pesachim* 10:5) explains, this is because all festivals referred to as *Mikra Kodesh* require the recitation of *Shebecheyanu*

In terms of Chanukah, a simple reading of the Gemara *Shabbat* 23a as well as the *Shulchan Aruch*²⁰ indicates that *Shebecheyanu* can only be recited by someone who either lights the Chanukah candles or sees Chanukah candles lit. However, the *Meiri*²¹ states otherwise, noting that someone who cannot light and is not in a place where they can see lit candles should recite the bracha of *Sheasab Nissim* as well as the *Shebecheyanu* bracha. For Rabbi Rath, this source supports the argument that post-biblical festivals like Chanukah can be imbued with their own innate spiritual significance such that *Shebecheyanu* can be recited in the absence of any specific mitzvah.

Contrasting this view is the *Pri Chadash*²² who is absolute in his position that *Shebecheyanu* cannot be recited by someone who has neither lit Chanukah candles or seen them lit, and it is in response to the *Pri Chadash* that Rabbi Rath offers a number of arguments and sources to side with *Meiri*.

In a similar manner but with reference to Purim, Rabbi Rath notes that while the *Magen Avraham*²³ rules that someone without a Megillah should not recite *Shebecheyanu* on the other mitzvot of Purim, Rabbi Yaakov Emden²⁴ disagrees and rules that *Shebecheyanu* can and should be said on Purim, even in the absence of the mitzvot, because *Shebecheyanu* celebrates the day itself.²⁵ In fact, the *Mishna Brura*²⁶ not only cites this ruling of Rabbi Emden, but also the above-mentioned *Meiri* to further support this point.

Additionally, Rabbi Rath presents a rationale, based on the ruling of Rabbi Shlomo HaCohen of Vilna²⁷, that the recitation of *Shebecheyanu* prior to *Hallel* may even be considered as a recitation of *Shebecheyanu* on a mitzvah.

All the above leads Rabbi Rath to state that:

תבנא לדינא בנידון דידן, ביום שנעשה בו נס לכל ישראל מיתה לחיים ומעבודת לחירות והוקבע ליו"ט היינו יום העצמאות, לדעת הפר"ח אין לברך שהחיינו ולדעת המאירי (שהפר"ח לא ראה את דבריו ובכחאי גוונא לא אמרינן הלכה ככתראי, כידוע) ומהריעב"ץ והר"י מולכו ובעל ס' משנה ברורה צריכים לברך שהחיינו. ואם יברכו שהחיינו לפני אמירת הלל כמו"ש מהר"ש מווילנא אפשר דשפיר דמי גם לדעת הפר"ח.

*What comes out in terms of the law on this matter is that on the day when a miracle occurred to the entire people of Israel, where they went from death to life and from subjugation to freedom, and as such a festive day was established that is Yom Ha'atzmaut, according to the Pri Chadash one should not recite Shebecheyanu, while according to the Meiri (which the Pri Chadash did not see and as such we do not presume that the law follows the later halakhic authority, as is known), and Rabbi Yaakov Emden, and R. I Molcho, and the author of the book Mishna Brura, it is necessary to recite Shebecheyanu. And if you recite Shebecheyanu prior to saying Hallel, like Rabbi Shlomo of Vilna writes, it is possible that this would be effective even according to the Pri Chadash.*²⁸

Having now established the framework of *Yom Ha'atzmaut* as a modern-day festival carrying innate spiritual significance, Rabbi Rath explains that while this is a doubtful bracha, there is no concern for taking G-d's name in vain when reciting even a doubtful *Shebecheyanu* because the foundation of *Shebecheyanu* is the inner joy of a person which itself validates the bracha. As such,

העולה מכל זה לדינא, אף כי אין להטיל חובה על כל איש שיהיה צריך לברך שהחיינו ביום העצמאות, אבל כל מי שרוצה לברך הרשות בידו ואין בזה שום חשש של ברכה לבטלה, וכל מי שיודע בעצמו שנהנה ושמח במאורע של תקומת המדינה ביום ההוא שהוקבע ליו"ט אין ברכתו רשות אלא חובה. ונכון להסמך ברכת שהחיינו לאמירת הלל, היינו לפני ברכת הלל אם אומרים את ההלל בברכה (לפי שורת הדין כמו שהוכחתי לעיל) או לפני התחלת אמירת הלל אם אומרים הלל בלא ברכה.

²⁰ *Orach Chaim* 676:1

²¹ *Meiri* commentary to *Shabbat* 23a

²² In his commentary to *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chaim* 676:1

²³ Commentary to *Orach Chaim* 692:1

²⁴ *Mor U'Ketzah* on *Orach Chaim* 692

²⁵ Rabbi Rath cites further support from the R. I Molcho as cited by the *Birkei Yosef* (OC 692)

²⁶ See *Biur Halacha* on *Orach Chaim* 692 DH *veshebecheyanu*

²⁷ See *Sdei Chemed*, *Ma'arechet Chanukah* Ch. 9 No. 3

²⁸ *Kol Mevasser* Vol. 1 No. 21

Rabbi Ehrenberg then cites the *Mishna Brura* and the *Meiri*, adding that באולי מכאן באן לידי ספק שמא גם בחג – *and perhaps it is from here that they came to the possible conclusion that the bracha should be recited even on Chag Ha'atzmunt*. However, he continues to explain that the argument that *Yom Ha'atzmunt* carries its own spiritual significance as a day is untenable. This is because:

באמת אין הנדון דומה כלל לחנוכה דהתם תקנו יומי דחנוכה באותן הימים עצמם שנעשה בהן הנס וכיון שכן יש להזמין חשיבות כמו הרגלים, משא"כ בחג העצמאות שלנו מאן סליק לעילא ואמר שביום ה' באייר נעשה הנס דיותר מסתבר שיום הנס היה ב"ז כסלו יום שנתן הקב"ה בלב האומות לשחרר את ארץ ישראל בשבילנו, ויותר נכון שעיקר הנס נעשה ביום שגברו ישראל ונצחו על אויביהם מסביב או אולי באיזה יום אחר אשר אנחנו לא הרגשנו בו דאין בעל הנס מכיר בנסו, אבל בה' אייר לא הי' שום נס אלא שמ"מ כיון שהוא יום מסוים שבו קבלה החלטת האומות את תקפה בחרו ביום הזה לעשות אותו יום משתה ושמחה לזכר הנס שנעשה לנו באיזה יום מן הימים שאין אתנו יודע מתי הי' וא"כ איך אנו יכולין לברך על שהגיענו לזמן הזה....

In truth, the case in point is in no way comparable to Chanukah. In that case, they established the days of Chanukah on those very days that the miracle occurred, and given this, the timing [of the festival of Chanukah] has significance just like the Pilgrim festivals. However, this is not the case with our Chag Ha'atzmunt. Who has gone up [to Heaven] and come back to say that on the 5th of Iyar a miracle happened? In fact, it is much more logical to argue that the day of the miracle was the 17th of Kislev [5708, corresponding to the 29th of November 1947] – the day when God placed into the heart of the nations to release the land of Israel for us [through the UN Partition Plan]. More likely, the major miracle occurred on the day that we Israel were strengthened and overcame their enemies. Alternatively, it may have been another day that we did not even realise since a person is unable to recognize the miracles that occur to them. But on the 5th of Iyar, there was no miracle. Instead, since it was that specific day that the decision was made for the rule of the (British) ended, they chose this day as a day to celebrate and to remember the miracle that was done for us at some previous time. As such, how can we recite 'and has brought us to this time' on this day?

Then, Rabbi Ehrenberg continues by explaining that:

ואין לומר דמ"מ יכול לברך שהגיענו לזמן שיצאה החלטת האומות לפועל שמאותו היום ואילך אין האומות משעבדין בנו הא בורכא דלא שייך ברכה זו רק כשזוכה בדבר חדש הבא מזמן לשמחה בו משא"כ שמחת השחרור בכל יום מימות השנה איתא...
And it is insufficient to claim that one can bless 'and has brought us to this time' since this was the day when the decision of the nations came into fruition because from then on the nations were not subjugating us. This is absurd, since the nature of Shebecheyanu is to celebrate a new experience that comes around on an annual basis and that brings you joy, which is not the case simply by being freed from subjugation, because this would apply every day...

Based on this challenge, Rabbi Ehrenberg writes that the invocation of authorities like the *Meiri* & the *Mishna Berura* are misplaced in the discussion concerning *Yom Ha'atzmunt*, and as he then explains, the position of Rabbi Emden is in conflict with a remark of the *Rokeach*. Given all the above, Rabbi Ehrenberg concludes that someone who recites *Shebecheyanu* on *Yom Ha'atzmunt* transgresses *Bal Tosif* (adding onto the mitzvot), and in contrast with both Rabbi Uziel and Rabbi Rath, he states that when in doubt - such as in this instance - *Shebecheyanu* should not be recited.

It should be stressed that Rabbi Ehrenberg believed in celebrating the establishment of the State, and he even supported the recitation of *Hallel* on *Yom Ha'atzmunt*. However, he objected to the establishment of a festive day of celebration comparable to Purim or Chanukah because, while there is ample justification to celebrate on *Yom Ha'atzmunt*, this level of joy does not meet the necessary criteria for the recitation of *Shebecheyanu*.

V. RABBI GOREN'S RESPONSUM (5716/1956)

It seems that the discussion concerning the recitation of *Shebecheyanu* on *Yom Ha'atzmunt* went quiet for a few years. However, in 1956, Rabbi Shlomo Goren – who was then Chief Rabbi of the IDF – wrote a somewhat circuitous responsum on the topic which he published in the *HaTzofeh* newspaper.³²

³² *HaTzofeh*, 4th Iyar 5716 (16th April 1956). This responsum was later republished as part of a longer essay titled *Yom Ha'atzmunt L'Or Halalacha* in his book *Torat HaMoadim*.

While he made no direct reference to previous responsa on the topic, Rabbi Goren was clearly aware of the halakhic challenges posed by people like Rabbi Ehrenberg. As such, rather than focusing on the nature of the miracle celebrated on the 5th of Iyar, he sought to construct a more elaborate argument – basing himself on a nuanced reading of the *Yerushalmi* - to defend the notion of *Yom Ha'atzmaut* having innate spiritual sanctity.

Simply put, Rabbi Goren reaches a bold conclusion, based primarily on the above-mentioned *Meiri*, that the recitation of *Shebecheyanu* on Purim & Chanukah is a result of a dual duty – for the mitzvot performed on the days, and for the days themselves, concluding that:

נמצינו למדים, שעל כל פנים מדבריהם, החובה לברך "זמן" לא רק על מועדי ה' מקראי קודש שבתורה, אלא גם יום טוב שהוא מדרבנן אומרים בו זמן, ואם אין זו חובה תהא זו רשות

We learn that even though it is a rabbinic duty [to recite the bracha], the duty to recite Shebecheyanu rests not only on the festive days of G-d that the Torah refers to as Mikrai Kodesh, but also on rabbinic festivals on which Shebecheyanu should be recited, and [therefore, with reference to Yom Ha'atzmaut], even if this is not considered as a duty, at least let it be considered as something that is permitted to do.

However, because this is most certainly a חידוש הלכה, Rabbi Goren then provides a secondary reason that:

ואם אין זה זמן כמו ברגלים, תהא זו ברכת "שהחיינו" כמו על שמחת הנפש בכלים חדשים

If [the recitation of Shebecheyanu on Yom Ha'atzmaut] is not [comparable to] the Shebecheyanu recited on the Pilgrim festivals, it should be regarded as the Shebecheyanu recited for the inner joy felt when purchasing new items and other similar things.

But then, Rabbi Goren makes the following remarkable deduction:

ולכן כל יום טוב לאחר שנקבע ע"י הציבור כהודיה על נסי הבורא ונפלאותיו, שגאלנו וגאל את ארצנו-מולדתנו מכל אויבינו הרבים, ואחר שנתבררה חובת התורה לקבוע יום טוב על נסים אלו וראשית קיום חזון גאולתנו, כל שקבוע לו זמן מדי שנה בשנה, חייבים³³ אנו לברך בו שהחיינו, כמו בחנוכה ובפורים על היום טוב בעצמו

*Therefore, every festival that has been established by the community as an expression of praise for the miracles of the Creator and for His wonders who has redeemed us and who has redeemed our land and our birthplace from all of our many enemies, and having established the duty to establish festive days for such miracles and specifically for the realisation of the vision of our redemption, whatever time that is established on an annual basis [for such celebration] **demand**s (emphasis mine) that we recite the Shebecheyanu bracha, just like Chanukah ad Purim on which [Shebecheyanu is recited] for the festive day itself.*

This statement is startling. While Rabbi Goren had previously spoken about the *permissibility* of reciting *Shebecheyanu* on *Yom Ha'atzmaut* as a *birkat hazman*, while also providing a second reason that *Shebecheyanu* could also be recited on the day as a *birkat boda'ah*, here he is emphatic that even the first reason generates an **obligation** for *Shebecheyanu* to be recited.

Then, basing himself on the writings of the *Noda BiYehuda*³⁴ to argue that it is always permitted to recite *Shebecheyanu* even if there is no obligation in doing so, Rabbi Goren concludes by stating that the obligation of reciting *Shebecheyanu* on the day of *Yom Ha'atzmaut* as a festive day depends on the inner joy of the individual:

מקורות ההלכה מחייבים³⁵ אמירת ברכת שהחיינו בשם ומלכות ביום העצמאות לכל מי שמרגיש בנפשו ביום זה שמחה אמיתית של יום טוב

*The Halakhic sources **obligate** (emphasis mine) the recitation of the Shebecheyanu bracha while invoking the name of God on Yom Ha'atzmaut by all those who feel in their soul on this day the true joy of a festival.*

³³ This word was replaced with רשאים (are permitted) in later versions of this responsum

³⁴ *Tz'lach* on *Brachot* 60a. It should be noted that this analysis was removed in later versions of this responsum

³⁵ This word was replaced with מאפשרים (allow for) in later versions of this responsum

What this ruling points to is a blurring of the lines between two categories of *Shebecheyanu* which, ironically, Rabbi Goren himself had clearly distinguished, and as may have been expected, a firm reply to this responsum was not slow in coming.

VI. RABBI NERIAH'S RESPONSE TO RABBI GOREN'S RESPONSUM (5716/1956)

Just under three weeks later Rabbi Moshe Tzvi Neriah, a leading religious Zionist teacher and founder of the Bnei Akiva movement, wrote a reply to Rabbi Goren.³⁶ Already from the opening line it is evident that Rabbi Neriah was not a fan of Rabbi Goren nor of his halakhic statements which he felt were often unsubstantiated. In fact, Rabbi Neriah stated that he didn't actually wish to enter into a discussion on the question of reciting *Shebecheyanu* on *Yom Ha'atzmaut*. Instead, he explained that the purpose of his response was to highlight the contradictory arguments in Rabbi Goren's ruling, and in particular, his claim that the recitation of *Shebecheyanu* on *Yom Ha'atzmaut* was obligatory. To do so, Rabbi Neriah addressed the two key sources that Rabbi Goren cited to support his conclusion.

In terms of Rabbi Goren's citation of the *Nodah B'Yehudah*, Rabbi Neriah explained that - at best - the corollary of his remarks is that *Shebecheyanu* **may** be recited, as opposed to Rabbi Goren's seeming exaggeration that 'the Halakhic sources **obligate** the recitation of the *Shebecheyanu* bracha'.³⁷

Then Rabbi Neriah turned to the *Meiri*:

המעין במקור השני, במאירי למס' מגילה, ורואה שם את המשך דבריו יזכר כי לא רק שהמאירי חולק על דעה זו ומבטל אותה לגמרי ביחס לפורים, אלא שהוא גם חוזר בו ממה שנטה להסכים במסכת שבת ביחס לחנוכה.

If we look closely at the second source to the Meiri on Tractate Megillah and see there the continuation of his words, it is clear that not only did the Meiri disagree with this position and disqualify it completely in relation to Purim, but he also revoked what he seemed to conclude upon in [his commentary to] Tractate Shabbat in relation to Chanukah.

Simply put,

המאירי קובע שאין מקום לברכת שהחיינו על היום עצמו, והדעה הקודמת דחויה היא

The Meiri established that Shebecheyanu doesn't refer to the day itself, and that his previously cited opinion is incorrect

Moreover, as Rabbi Neriah continues to explain, even if we are to take the *Meiri*'s initial approach, would it really mean that someone who neither lights Chanukah candles nor sees them lit should recite *Shebecheyanu*? As he points out, it is clearly evident from the *Rambam*³⁸ and *Shulchan Aruch*³⁹ that this is not the case, and the *Magen Avraham*⁴⁰ explicitly rejects such a conclusion clearly implying that these authorities reject the notion that either Purim or Chanukah have independent sanctity aside from the mitzvot performed on the day.

He therefore concludes by saying,

כיצד אפשר לבוא ולקבוע שברכת שהחיינו 'בחנוכה ובפורים היא על היום טוב עצמו' – דעה שגם האחד שהביאה חזר וביטל אותה? וכיצד אפשר לפסוק הלכה על פי דעה זו שהיא בנגוד לדעת הרמב"ם והשולחן ערוך? – להרב שלמה גורן פתרונים.

How is it possible to come and establish that the Shebecheyanu blessing "on Chanukah and Purim is on the festive day itself" – an opinion that even the single source that he quoted reversed and revoked? And how it is possible to render a halakhic ruling on the basis on this opinion that conflicts with the opinion of the Rambam and the Shulchan Aruch? Only Rabbi Shlomo Goren has answers!

³⁶ This response was published in *HaTzofeh*, 23rd Iyar 5716 (4th May 1956) and was republished with slight variation in Professor Nachum Rakover's *Hilbot Yom Ha'atzmaut V'Yom Yerushalayim* pp. 266-267.

³⁷ It should be added that a further challenge of Rabbi Neriah is the fact that the rationale offered by the *Nodah B'Yehudah* refers to a single instance, as opposed to supporting the recitation of *Shebecheyanu* on an annual basis

³⁸ *Mishneh Torah, Chanukah* 3:4

³⁹ *Orach Chaim* 676:3

⁴⁰ *Magen Avraham, Orach Chaim* 692:1

Considering the response of Rabbi Neriah, it is clear that this is both a scholarly and personal attack on Rabbi Goren, and in doing so, he convincingly demonstrates that the reasoning supporting the recitation of *Shebecheyanu* on *Yom Ha'atzmaut* as a *birkeat hazman* is faulty.⁴¹ At the same time, it is noteworthy that Rabbi Neriah makes no mention of the *Shebecheyanu* blessing as a *birkeat boda'ab* which, to quote Rabbi Uziel above, 'is a clearly codified halakha'. Yet, as we see in the responsa of both Rabbi Rath and Rabbi Goren, *Shebecheyanu* as a *birkeat boda'ab* was merely a secondary consideration and instead, the agenda to establish *Yom Ha'atzmaut* as a festive day with all its religious significance led both Rabbi Rath and Rabbi Goren to develop a far less convincing halakhic argument. It is the opinion of this author that it was this choice, coupled with the poorly constructed and perhaps one may even say intellectually dishonest argumentation⁴² of Rabbi Goren whose responsum was lambasted in such a forceful way such that he made a number of changes to it in later editions⁴³, that led to the almost complete erasure of the *Shebecheyanu* bracha from public *Yom Ha'atzmaut* ceremonies.

VII. RABBI HEDAYA'S RESPONSUM (5719/1959)

Rabbi Ovadia Hedaya was a Kabbalist as well as a Dayan & Chief Rabbi of Petach Tikvah, and in the sixth volume of his responsa *Yaskil Avdi* he addresses the question of reciting *Shebecheyanu* on *Yom Ha'atzmaut*.⁴⁴

Like Rabbis Rath, Ehrenberg and Goren, Rabbi Hedaya focuses on the halakhic basis of *Yom Ha'atzmaut* as a festive day and the consequent possibility of reciting *Shebecheyanu*, and perhaps as expected, he begins with a detailed analysis of *Eruvin* 40b.

However, Rabbi Hedaya swiftly comes to the conclusion, with the support of the *Pri Chadash*, that *Shebecheyanu* as a *birkeat hazman* can only be recited in association with a physical pleasure (such as a new fruit) or spiritual pleasure (such as a mitzvah), but not simply to commemorate a miracle, and then, in a similar manner to Rabbi Ehrenberg, Rabbi Hedaya explains that *Yom Ha'atzmaut* does not itself commemorate a miracle. Instead,

בעצם היום שהוא של ההכרזה על המדינה לא אירע שום נס

On that very day of the declaration of the State, no miracle occurred whatsoever

Moreover, Rabbi Hedaya adds that,

אדרבה בו ביום כשנודע לעמי ערב על הכרזת המדינה, חברו כולם על עם ישראל, ופתחו עליהם במלחמה

On the contrary! It was on that very day when the declaration of the State was made known to the Arab nations that they all gathered upon the Jewish nation and initiated war upon us

Like Rabbi Ehrenberg, Rabbi Hedaya explains that if a day were to be chosen for celebrating, this would be the day of ceasefire, or the 17th of Kislev when the UN granted permission for the State to be established which itself was certainly a divine miracle. As such, given that *Shebecheyanu* focuses on the time, and given that no obvious miracle occurred at this time, Rabbi Hedaya concludes that *Shebecheyanu* should not be recited.

VIII. RABBI (SHAUL HANA) KOOK'S RESPONSUM (5723/1963)

From the earliest years of the State there were those who believed that *Shebecheyanu* should not be recited and that alternatives should be used, and by the early 1960's the discrediting of Rabbi Goren's responsum, along with those of Rabbis Ehrenberg & Hodaya which undermined the reasoning of Rabbi Rath's ruling led many to question the propriety of reciting *Shebecheyanu* on *Yom Ha'atzmaut*. Simply put, if the rationale

⁴¹ It should be noted that this argument also undermines the reasoning of Rabbi Rath, and as we see in later rulings, he too is criticized for his partial citation of the *Meiri*. Nonetheless, as Rabbi Neriah explained, his agenda was solely to highlight the failings in Rabbi Goren's responsum

⁴² I say this purely with reference to Rabbi Goren's corollary that the recitation of *Shebecheyanu* should be a *chiyuv* rather than a *reshut*

⁴³ See footnotes 33 & 35 above

⁴⁴ *She'elot UTesuvot Yaskil Avdi* Vol. 6 *Orach Chaim* No. 10

for reciting *Shebecheyanu* was wrong, a clear corollary was that the recitation of the bracha itself was wrong, and therefore, any such recitation would be a *bracha levatala* (a blessing in vain). However, there remained many people who were attached to the recitation of *Shebecheyanu* on *Yom Ha'atzmaut*, regardless of the debate surrounding its usage.

The question posed by Rabbi Shaul Hana Kook, brother of the famous Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook, was how to reconcile the yearning to recite the bracha, with the challenges that this is a *bracha levatala*?

Rabbi Kook begins by citing a unique formulation, originally found in the writings of the *Chatam Sofer*⁴⁵, to suit doubtful *Shebecheyanu* cases. However, he then explains that:

רבים הם החכמים שאינם מסכימים לנוסח הנוכח, ושני הצדדים מחייבי ברכת 'שהחיינו' בחג העצמאות ושוללי הברכה, לא נחה דעתם מפשרה זו.

There are many scholars who do not agree to using this above-mentioned formula, and both sides – those who require the recitation of Shebecheyanu on Chag Ha'atzmaut and those who dismiss the recitation of this bracha – are uncomfortable with this compromise solution.

Given this, Rabbi Kook offers a fascinating solution. Referring to the *Yerushalmi*⁴⁶, Rabbi Kook suggests that the *Shebecheyanu* bracha can be recited if followed immediately with words *Baruch Shem Kavod Malchuto LeOlam Va'ed* after saying the *Shebecheyanu* bracha because, by doing so, these words counteract the transgression of taking G-d's name in vain.⁴⁷

However, despite the creativity of this solution, it did not stick. Nonetheless, it was from this period onward that the question of the *bracha levatala*, more than any other element of the discussion, took priority, thereby sowing the seeds of the impropriety of reciting this bracha even further.

VIII. RABBI YOSEF'S RESPONSA (5724/1964, 5733/1973)

In 1964⁴⁸, as part of a longer responsum⁴⁹ concerning the permissibility of women reciting *Shebecheyanu* when performing positive time-bound mitzvot, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef - who, at the time, was a Dayan in a Jerusalem Beit Din – addressed the appropriateness of reciting *Shebecheyanu* in cases of doubt, and in a parenthetical remark, he touches on this question.

Rabbi Yosef had previously asserted that the rule of *safek brachot lehakel* – the principle that a doubtful bracha should not be recited - applies even with respect to *Shebecheyanu*, and as such, he challenged the conclusions of Rabbi Rath while invoking support by citing the conclusions of Rabbi Hedaya.

Moreover, while mentioning a possible work-around offered by the *Chida*⁵⁰ that wearing a new piece of clothing could enable someone to recite *Shebecheyanu* in doubtful cases, he rejects this option, noting that the *Chida* rules elsewhere⁵¹ that *safek brachot lehakel* applies even with respect to *Shebecheyanu*.

However, it is his responsum written in 1973⁵², the same year that he was appointed Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel, which is most significant to this debate.

As with his previous responsum, Rabbi Yosef addresses the recitation of *Shebecheyanu* on *Yom Ha'atzmaut* as a *birkat hazman*, and as such, a key text to the debate is *Eruvin* 40b and the surrounding discussion about the sanctity of the day of rabbinic festivals like Purim & Chanukah.

⁴⁵ See above footnote 31

⁴⁶ *Yerushalmi Brachot* 6:1 (43b)

⁴⁷ As he notes, this is how the Mahari Ibn Habib interprets the invocation of 'Baruch Shem etc.' when saying two brachot when laying tefillin (see *Beit Yosef, Orach Chaim* 25)

⁴⁸ It should be noted that the responsum is undated. However, this volume was published in 1964.

⁴⁹ *She'elot UTeshuvot Yabia Omer* Vol. 4, *Orach Chaim* 50 section 5

⁵⁰ *Birkei Yosef, Yoreh Deah* 270

⁵¹ *Birkei Yosef, Orach Chaim* 643

⁵² *She'elot UTeshuvot Yabia Omer* Vol. 6, *Orach Chaim* 42. It should be noted that the responsum is undated. However, this volume was published in 1973.

Through a lengthy and detailed discussion, Rabbi Yosef reiterates the point made by Rabbi Neriah⁵³ that the *Meiri* – upon which many authorities such as Rabbi Rath had relied – revised his position concerning the innate sanctity of Purim & Chanukah. Moreover, he also adds that the opinion of the R. I Molcho which was recorded by the *Chida* and cited as a further source by Rabbi Rath to support his conjecture, was itself rejected by the *Chida*.

This leads Rabbi Yosef to the conclusion that:

ולכן מה שסמך בשו"ת קול מבשר (סי' כא) סמיכה בכל כחו ע"ד הריב"ש וסיעתו שבדין ברכת שהחיינו לא שייך הכלל דספק ברכות להקל, וע"פ זה הרשה לברך שהחיינו ביום העצמאות, וסמכו עליו קצת מחכמי זמנינו, לפי המבואר מפי להקת הפוסקים ראשונים ואחרונים הנ"ל חבל נביאים דס"ל שגם בברכת שהחיינו שייך הכלל דספק ברכות להקל, ודאי שאין לסמוך ע"ד הקול מבשר לברך ברכה לבטלה ח"ו, לא לענין ברכת שהחיינו, ולא לענין ברכת ההלל, ונודע חומר איסור ברכה לבטלה

Therefore, regarding [Rabbi Rath's] reliance upon in his responsa Kol Mevasser (Siman 21) in absolute terms on the ruling of the Rivash and his supporters who wrote that the principle of safek brachot lebakel does not apply to the Shebecheyanu bracha, and based on this they permitted the recitation of Shebecheyanu on Yom Ha'atzmaut, and as such some other scholars of our time relied on this opinion, the fact is, as I have explained based on the rulings of the Rishonim and Acharonim cited, according to the true voice of the prophets who have ruled that the principle of safek brachot lebakel does apply to Shebecheyanu, certainly one should not rely upon the ruling of the Kol Mevasser to recite a bracha in vain G-d forbid, neither in the case of Shebecheyanu, nor in the case of Hallel, especially given the known severity of reciting a bracha levatala.⁵⁴

IX. RABBI HALEVY'S RULING (5729/1969)

Others, however, took a different view, and like his mentor Rabbi Uziel, Rabbi Hayyim David Halevy, who in 1969 was a Rabbi in Rishon LeTzion and a member of the Chief Rabbinate Council, disagreed with this conclusion.

In his book *Dat U'Medinah*, Rabbi Halevy explores a number of questions⁵⁵ including the topic of reciting *Shebecheyanu* on *Yom Ha'atzmaut*, and having just discussed the question of reciting *Hallel* on *Yom Ha'atzmaut* he writes that:

ולענין ברכת שהחיינו הוא דבר פשוט ביותר ואינה צריכה לפנינו וכפי מה שכבר ביארנו בחלק ב' מספר מקור חיים בפרק צ"ב במקום שיש ספק אם נתחייב אדם בברכת שהחיינו או לאו אף שבכל הברכות הלכה פשוטה היא סמך ברכות להקל הנה לגבי ברכת שהחיינו שכל עיקרה בא על שמחת הלב ודאי יכול הוא לברך אם שמח הוא באמת ומברך לה' יתברך על שהחיינו וקיימו עד הזמן הזה

Regarding the recitation of Shebecheyanu, which is much simpler to address [than the previous complex analysis concerning the recitation of Hallel] it does not require a deep analysis, and based on what we have previously explained in Volume 2 of 'Mekor Chaim' in Ch. 92, that 'in instances where there is a doubt whether a person is duty-bound to recite the Shebecheyanu bracha or not, even though it is a clear rule with all other brachot that safek brachot lebakel, in the case of the Shebecheyanu bracha whose entire expression is rooted in the inner joy of a person, certainly a person can recite the bracha if they are truly joyous, and they can recite a bracha to the blessed G-d on bringing him for keeping him alive and for sustaining him until this time'.⁵⁶

He then rules that,

ולכן ברור שהמברך ברכת שהחיינו ביום ה' וכ"ח אייר מתוך רגשות שמחה של אמת מצוה הוא עושה ועכ"פ חשש ברכה לבטלה ודאי שאין כאן כלל ועיקר אף גם זאת אם תבוא על כך הסכמת הרבנות הראשית לישראל יוכל כל אדם לברך ברכת שהחיינו על כל פנים כשם שמברכים בחנוכה ופורים

⁵³ Although, it should be noted, he does not refer to him directly

⁵⁴ In fact, it is reported in *Orchot Maran* p. 376 that not only did Rabbi Yosef strongly object to the recitation of *Shebecheyanu* on *Yom Ha'atzmaut*, but he also ruled that one should not respond Amen to such a bracha.

⁵⁵ He rules that *Hallel* with a bracha should be recited on both *Yom Ha'atzmaut* and *Yom Yerushalayim*

⁵⁶ *Dat U'Medinah* p. 102

It is therefore clear that someone who recites *Shebecheyanu* on the 5th and 28th of Iyar⁵⁷ as an expression of their feelings of true joy is doing a *mitzvah*, and certainly there is no concern for a *bracha levatala whatsoever*.⁵⁸

As should be clear, Rabbi Halevy's presentation about *Shebecheyanu* focused on its dimension as a *birkat boda'ah*, and as discussed in a previous essay⁵⁹, he was insistent on emphasizing the personal dimension of the *Shebecheyanu* bracha.

X. RABBI SHLOUSH'S RULING (1976)

Yet, despite both Rabbi Uziel and Rabbi Halevy's conception of *Shebecheyanu* as a religious expression of personal joy, the debate surrounding *Yom Ha'atzmaut* as a religious day, and the consequent attempt to establish the recitation of *Shebecheyanu* as a *chiyuv* – a religious requirement – did not lead to the desired results. This, coupled with the strong criticism by Rabbi Neriah of Rabbi Goren's ruling, as well as the weight placed on the opinion and authority of both Rabbi Hedaya and specifically Rabbi Yosef, all but silenced the debate.

In 1976, Rabbi David Shloush, the then Chief Rabbi of Netanya, published a lengthy essay concerning the nature of religious celebration of *Yom Ha'atzmaut* and including a section about *Shebecheyanu*.⁶⁰ As expected, he discusses *Erwin* 40b as well as the responsum by Rabbi Hedaya, and he then concludes by stating that

לכן זאת העצה היעוצה להכין בגד חדש או פרי חדש ולברך עליו שהיינו, ולכוון גם על היום

Therefore, the best advice I can give is to put aside a new garment or a new fruit [for Yom Ha'atzmaut], and to recite on it Shebecheyanu, and at the same time, to intend that this [bracha] also will apply to the day.

To this author's knowledge, no suggestion such as this had previously been made⁶¹. However, since then, other authorities and texts have made the same suggestion of wearing a new piece of clothing to enable the recitation of *Shebecheyanu* on *Yom Ha'atzmaut*.⁶²

XI. CONCLUSION

The story of the recitation of *Shebecheyanu* on *Yom Ha'atzmaut* began in Independence Hall in 1948 when Rabbi Maimon was overwhelmed with a sense of joy and gratitude, or what we may refer to as *simchat halev*, and he expressed his joy through reciting the *Shebecheyanu* bracha to which there was a resounding *Amen*.

Since then, as emotions towards the State of Israel have developed, so too have opinions concerning that *Shebecheyanu* and its recitation on subsequent years. For some, *Shebecheyanu* was the visible expression of the formalization of a rabbinic festive day on par with Purim & Chanukah, while for others including those who fully supported the State and believed in celebrating on *Yom Ha'atzmaut*, this was a step too far. As such, what we see played out in the responsa is not only a battle about a blessing, but in fact a battle about the nature of *Yom Ha'atzmaut*.

⁵⁷ It is noteworthy that Rabbi Halevy encouraged the recitation of *Shebecheyanu* both on *Yom Ha'atzmaut* and *Yom Yerushalayim*. Additionally, while reaching a different conclusion, Rabbi Shloush also makes mention of *Shebecheyanu* on *Yom Yerushalayim* (*She'elot UTeshuvot Hemdab Genuzab* Vol. 1 No. 21 section 74). This should be contrasted with *Responsa Bemareh HaBazak* Vol. 7 No. 45 which states that they were unaware of any discussion of reciting *Shebecheyanu* on *Yom Yerushalayim*.

⁵⁸ *Dat U'Medinah* p. 103. Immediately after this, Rabbi Halevy then adds that 'Even so, if the Chief Rabbinate of Israel were to reach this same conclusion, each person could recite this bracha in the same way that we recite it on Chanukah & Purim'. However, as should be obvious, the Chief Rabbinate did not reach such a conclusion. Nonetheless, it is not clear from this remark whether Rabbi Halevy was speaking about *Shebecheyanu* as a *birkat ha'zman* as recited on Chanukah & Purim, or merely about the notion that *Shebecheyanu* is recited by all such as on Chanukah & Purim.

⁵⁹ See my article titled 'The *Shebecheyanu* Blessing' *Conversations*, Issue 26 (Autumn 2016/5777)

⁶⁰ See *She'elot UTeshuvot Hemdab Genuzab* Vol. 1 No. 21 sections 72-74

⁶¹ In fact, as noted above, Rabbi Yosef specifically rejected this proposal despite it being rooted in the writings of the *Chida*

⁶² See *Peninei Halacha (Zmanim)* p. 84. See also 'The Koren *Yom Haatzmaut Mahzor*' p. 48 which includes guidelines on this issue written by Rabbi Binyamin Lau. While mentioning the opinions of Rabbi Rath and Rabbi Halevy, and while also noting that others have challenged these opinions, the guidelines conclude that 'if one wishes to honor the day and still adhere to the opinion above, one may wear a new item of clothing and recite *Shebecheyanu* over the clothing, whilst having the day in mind as well. A *Hazan* leading a congregation in prayer should bless *Shebecheyanu* on his new clothing before Hallel, so that the congregation can fulfill this mitzvah by answering *Amen*'.

Certainly, the 5th of Iyar was a historic day. But the question raised by those like Rabbi Ehrenberg and Rabbi Hedaya is whether it was a miraculous day as well? And certainly one should feel pride and joy for the establishment of the State of Israel, but the question raised by those like Rabbi Neriah is whether *Shebecheyanu* should be an obligatory bracha? From my research it seems that the intent to establish a festive day on par with Purim & Chanukah led people like Rabbi Goren to overstretch the *birkat hazman* dimension of the *Shebecheyanu* bracha, and this led to the further marginalisation of *Shebecheyanu* on *Yom Ha'atzmant*.

As I have explained elsewhere⁶³, it is deeply regrettable that our misunderstanding of *Shebecheyanu* has led to its misuse and marginalization, and in the case of *Yom Ha'atzmant* as celebrated today, few communities recite *Shebecheyanu*,⁶⁴ and in the few places that do, many use the round-about way of wearing a new piece of clothing or having a new fruit to create the opportunity for its recitation. However, like Rabbi (Shaul Hana) Kook's suggestion, such an action conveys a conflicting message, whereby while *Shebecheyanu* is being recited **on** *Yom Ha'atzmant*, it is being recited neither as a *birkat hazman* or a *birkat boda'ah* **for** *Yom Ha'atzmant*.

But, at least according to this author, it needn't have come to this. For *Shebecheyanu* to be authentically recited on *Yom Ha'atzmant* there was no need for the establishment of a festive day like Purim or Chanukah. Instead, all that was required were authentic feelings of *simchat halev*.

Beyond this, what we see from the above is a fascinating debate about the miracle of the State of Israel, and while some take the view that the 5th of Iyar itself is not a day of spiritual significance, others believe that the miracle of the existence of the State is sufficiently supernatural to warrant the recitation of *Shebecheyanu*, and that the 5th of Iyar is an appropriate day to do so.

⁶³ See my article titled 'The *Shebecheyanu* Blessing' *Conversations*, Issue 26 (Autumn 2016/5777)

⁶⁴ See *Responsa Bemareb HaBazak* Vol. 7 No. 45