



The Fifth of Iyar

Many questioned the *Rabbanut's* decision to establish the fifth of Iyar as Yom HaAtzmaut, thinking it would be more appropriate to celebrate the day that the *Milchemet HaShichrur*, the War of Independence, was won.

The answer to this question is based on the *Gemara* in *Megillah* (17b) that makes the following observation in reference to *atchalta deGeulah*: מִלְחָמָה נִמְי אֶתְחַלְתָּא דְגָאֵלָה הִיא – “War is also considered the beginning of the redemption.” Rashi¹ explains that this refers to wars between Jews and non-Jews. Presumably, it is the final war relating to control over *Eretz Yisrael* that will take place close to the time of the arrival of *Mashiach*.

It would seem obvious that the War of Independence, which broke out immediately after *hakamat haMedina*, is the war the *Gemara* was referring to. Indeed, the fact that the outbreak of the war and the declaration of independence occurred simultaneously serves as a sign that the *hakamat haMedina* itself was truly an *atchalta deGeula*. If a Jewish government is established and this leads to the outbreak of war with enemies of the Jewish nation, it is the beginning of the war that is the *atchalta deGeula*.

The celebration of the *Chashmonaim's* victories recorded in *Megilat Ta'anit* did not commemorate the victories per se. The *Chashmonaim* celebrated when they were victorious in battle because there was a *Beit HaMikdash* in existence at that time, and their victory served to preserve the *Beit HaMikdash* and spare it from destruction or defilement. Therefore, it was logical to celebrate the *Yom Tov*

on the day of the victorious conclusion of the battle.

In contrast, if the Israeli Army is victorious over the Arab nations, though it would be appropriate to celebrate with *seudat hoda'a* and the recitation of *Hallel* on that occasion, we should not establish a *Yom Tov* that entails annual observance, since the victory did not preserve a *Beit HaMikdash*. The reason to establish a *Yom Tov* is to mark the historical event of the *atchalta deGeula*. Therefore, it was appropriate to institute the *Yom Tov* of Yom HaAtzmaut on the date of the outbreak of the War of Independence, as that day marks the *hakamat haMedina*, which was the *atchalta deGeula*.²

In 1948, when the *Medina* was established, the fifth of Iyar was a Friday and the British Mandate was to conclude at midnight. Therefore, legally, it was only possible to establish the *Medina* on Shabbat, the sixth of Iyar. Because some of those who signed the Declaration of Independence were *shomer Shabbat*, they signed the statement of *hakamat haMedina* on Friday, the fifth of Iyar, although the documents became legally binding only on the sixth.

At that time, one of the *tzaddikim* of Yerushalayim, Rav Ya'akov Moshe Charlap, was dancing from joy, exclaiming that he finally understood why these dates are alluded to in the *sefer Kol HaTor*.³ This *sefer*, the theme of which is the concept of *Mashiach ben Yosef*, was written by one of the *talmidim* of the Vilna Gaon, Rav Hillel of Shklov. Although *Mashiach ben Yosef* is mentioned in only one place in *Shas*,⁴ the idea is discussed at

length in the *Zohar*. In fact, the Vilna Gaon is quoted as having said that the insights he developed on the concept of *Mashiach ben Yosef* were his most important contributions in Torah.

The *sefer* singles out the 20th day of *Sefirat HaOmer* as being very important in the process of the final *Geula*, referring to it as “*yesod deTiferet derech malchut*.” The *sefer* reports that in 1812 (תקע"ב), on the 20th day of the *Omer*, known as *yesod sheBeTiferet*, the Gra's students laid the foundation of “*Beit Medrash Eliyahu*” in Yerushalayim. It appeared to them that this re-establishment of the *yishuv* in Yerushalayim was the first step in the removal of the “iron partition” that had been present since the *churban haBayit*. Now Rav Charlap understood how these two days mentioned in the *Kol HaTor* represented a major step towards the *Geula* – the fifth of Iyar corresponds to the 20th day of *Sefira*, *yesod sheBeTiferet*, and the sixth of Iyar to *malchut sheBeTiferet*.

Adapted from Rav Schachter on the Moadim.

1 Sanhedrin 97a, s.v. *milchamot*.

2 See *Belkvei HaTzon*, pp. 220-221; *The Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society* XVI, pp. 81-95.

3 5:1; also see 2:2.

4 Sukkah 52a.

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