

Rabbi Moshe Berliner



Yom HaAtzmaut and Marriage

Yom HaAtzmaut, Israel's Day of Independence: a remarkable day, a day of Hallel for our spirit, and *mangal*, the traditional Israeli barbecue, for our bodies. After 2,000 years, the Jewish people have regained sovereignty. *Atzmaut* means independence. We live our national life in a world of interdependent nations, each having the autonomy to act according to their values and interests. Yom HaAtzmaut marks the restoration of our political independence. It proclaims our freedom to determine our fate within the family of the nations of the world. Our return to national independence is a Divinely-given miracle. Like all miracles, it took place in an historical context. We celebrate Yom HaAtzmaut each year to renew our gratitude to G-d for the precious gift we have received.

The word *עצמאות* is derived from the root *עצ*, which means the essence. Inherent in Yom HaAtzmaut are two different elements, both of which are crucial for *Am Yisrael* to live its essential purpose.

The first is for *Am Yisrael* to be independent from the nations of the world. We must be able to take responsibility for our actions within the family of the

nations. Independence also means the freedom to be the kind of nation we decide to be.

As much as Yom HaAtzmaut is a celebration of our independence from the nations of the world, it is also a crucial transformation in history which challenges us to create the ideal Jewish society in *Eretz Yisrael*, the peoplehood that G-d outlined in the Torah: *ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש* – a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. An independent Israel is to be the unique homeland of our spiritual renaissance. It is vital that our goal in celebrating Yom HaAtzmaut be twofold. To maintain the sense of the miracle by restoring our political freedom, and to strengthen our resolve to build a Torah society in the Land He returned to us.

These two elements of independence are also reflected in marriage. Marriage has its own Yom HaAtzmaut – the day of our wedding. When we marry, we transform our status from single people into a married couple. Yesterday we were distinct individuals living our own lives. As separate individuals, we lived full lives with goals to achieve and values to live by. When we marry, we create a new reality. We are a couple, a married unit. We act together, separate from the

lives we lived the moment before we married. A wedding is a momentous act we celebrate each year. We mark our anniversary as the opportunity to celebrate the extraordinary transformation our marriage brought to our lives. We embark together on a new chapter of our lives.

Moreover, celebrating our anniversary provides us with another challenge. It should also imbue us with renewed commitment to work together to build our marriage, to clarify the ideals which underpin our relationship, and to continue to craft the distinctive life which expresses those values. That is the work of a lifetime.

A wedding creates a new reality. It too is a day of *atzmaut*, a day of separation from the status of being a single person. It is also a day of independence for the couple to deepen their commitment to each other and to continue to build their unique essence, as one.

Yom HaAtzmaut Sameach!

Rabbi Moshe Berliner is an author, M.S.W. and therapist specializing in family and marriage.

