

LINKING TU B'AV WITH THE SIDRAH

Parshas Voeschanan

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Shabos Nachamu begins the seven Shabos'm of consolation, and the special Haftorahs in which the prophets reassure the Jewish people of their ultimate return to the Holy Land and the final redemption. The urge to return to the land of the ancestors runs through Tanach as a refrain, and is also the theme of the opening of this week's portion. The whole Shabbos is celebrated in uplifted Nachamu spirit.

Torah commentaries often project a connection of the week's Parsha with a special date in the calendar. And so what follows is a homily, seeking to bridge a major item in Parshas Voeschanan with the semi-holiday, Chamishe Osor b'Av, which is to be celebrated two days hence.

The Mishna states (Taanis 26b): "Israel has no days as festive as the Fifteenth of Av and Yom Kippur, for on those days, the maidens of Jerusalem would go out dressed in white, borrowed garments - in order not to embarrass one who had none - and dance in the vineyards.

The purpose of this event was to promulgate SHIDUCHIM. The Talmud elaborates on the varied attractions of the young ladies; some attained a higher level of wisdom, some greater beauty, others aristocratic lineage. The basic indispensable attribute common to all was fear of Hashem.

The Bnei Yesoschor expounds the timeliness of this day in the calendar, this being forty days before 25 of Elul, when the world was created. Six days later is Rosh Hashana. The Talmud teaches that the Heavenly matchmaking takes place forty days before the child is born. Thus this day is an opportune time (ais Ratzon) to be blessed with the right match, the Bashert Shiduch.

Turning now to the Sidrah, a major part is the Asereth Hadibros, the Ten Commandments. Speaking about Shabos, the reason for its

sanctification is different from the reason given in Shemos. In Shemos the reason is Zaicher Lemaaseh Beraishis, the sanctification of this day at the time of creation. In Voeschanan, the Shabos is sanctified Zaicher the Exodus from Egypt. "You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and Hashem has taken you out from there... therefore Hashem has commanded you to observe the Shabos" (Devorim 5:15).

The Halocho obligates the recital of both reasons, yet the Shemona Esra on Friday night only mentions the sanctification at creation. Only when the husband comes home from synagogue and recites the Kiddush over a cup of wine does he mention also the reason of Parshas Voeschanan, that of Exodus from Egypt. This is bewildering. Since the Halocho requires the mention of both reasons, why is the second reason omitted in the Shemona Esra?

One ventures to suggest the omission is intentional, so that the mitzvah should be fulfilled first at home over a cup of wine, in order to accommodate his wife, who is equally obligated to sanctify the Shabos.

The parallel of Tu b'Av and the Shabos Kidush is profound. Shiduchim is the art of finding the match that is most suitable and harmonious for a lifetime. This compatibility and unanimity finds most felicitous expression at homecoming from Shul on Friday night. Singing Aishes Chayil, focusing on the Shabos candles during Kidush, the whole gamut of the Shabos meal, are all expressions of Sholom Bayis.

And so is the mention of the Exodus from Egypt, from Parshas Voeschanan, omitted by the davening, reserved for the Kidush at home, in order to religiously fulfill the obligation of wife and family, a graceful expression of the concordant home. This blessedness, most keenly felt on Shabos, might have begun early on the Shiduchim project of Chamisho Osor b'Av.

