



**PhiloTorah D'var Torah**

## **ZEH HAYOM**

**ASA HASHEM - NAGILA V'NISM'CHA VO**

Yes, I'm talking about the 5th of Iyar, the day - 76 years ago - when the State of Israel was declared.

True, Yom HaAtzmaut is on the 6th of Iyar this year, and in some years it can be on the 3rd or 4th of Iyar. When you know that Yom HaAtzmaut's date is moved - more often than not - in order to avoid possible Chilul Shabbat, the day is invested with additional K'dusha.

It isn't just that the State was established on 5 Iyar that makes Yom HaAtzmaut worthy of our joyous thanks and acknowledgment to HKBH for it.

Throughout the 1878 years between the destruction of the Second Beit HaMikdash and Statehood, Jews were guests and strangers in many countries around the world - often oppressed and often with many restrictions. Even attempting to return to Eretz Yisrael, they often met with hostility and restrictions on numbers - quotas.

From 5 Iyar 5708 - May 14th 1948 - Eretz Yisrael was governed by Jews and all Jews were welcomed with open arms. Quota replaced by Right of Return.

The country is Jewish. Its official day of

rest is Shabbat. Its calendar runs from Tishrei through Elul. (Yes, the January, February calendar is also used.) You can date checks (remember those?) with only the Hebrew date. Mezuzot on doorposts is the norm, not an anomaly. We have an army (as we well know at this very moment) where all food served is kosher and minyanim are readily available.

And there's much more. But let's get to some other points.

Ever hear this: I'd celebrate Yom HaAtzmaut if it weren't in the Omer.

I've heard that more than once.

Here's my answer: The Shulchan Aruch discusses a Brit Mila during the Omer. It says that the father and Sandak (and even the Mohel) can shave and take a haircut for the Brit, because it is their Yom Tov. And if you see the Hand of God in the establishment of the Medina, then that becomes your (and our) Yom Tov. (The last sentence was mine.)

With the 33 day rule for the Omer (mourning restrictions, that is), there are different ways of counting. If you take Yom HaAtzmaut out of the mourning number of days, you can easily add a day or two to 'make up' for celebrating.

And, besides, the Omer period is not intrinsically mourning. In fact it is originally a festive period a bit like Chol HaMoed, being the intermediate days between Pesach and its Atzeret, Shavuot.

Remember that the counting at the time of the Beit HaMikdash was from the Omer offering to the Sh'tei HaLechem - nothing sad there. Just the opposite.

With the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash and the cessation of Temple service, there was a vacuum that resulted in the Omer period. That vacuum was filled by mourning the tragic deaths of the Talmidim of Rabi Akiva (and/or events during the Crusades). And it wasn't the whole period of the Omer that switched moods - reference the 33 day rule.

The 49 days of the Omer include six days of Pesach, three days of Rosh Chodesh, Pesach Sheni, Lag BaOmer, seven Shabbatot, three prep days before Shavuot... and in our time, Yom HaAtzma't and Yom Yerushalayim. The Omer has been and continues to reclaim some of its festive nature... May it continue until the building of the Third Beit HaMikdash when the mournful practices and nature of the period will only be memories that people may or may not share with their children and grandchildren.

And here's the other favorite argument: Many of the founders of the State were not religious and many were anti religious. True, but HaShem works His wonders in unusual ways, sometimes.

Let's look at excerpts from the Proclamation of Independence of the State of Israel.

The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and national identity was formed... Exiled from Palestine, the Jewish people remained faithful to it in all the countries of their dispersion, never ceasing to pray and hope for their return and restoration of their national freedom... In recent decades, they returned in their masses. They reclaimed a wilderness, revived their language, built cities and villages, and established a vigorous and ever-growing community... They sought peace, yet were ever prepared to defend themselves... Accordingly we... hereby proclaim the establishment of the Jewish state in Palestine, to be called Israel... The state of Israel will promote the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; will be based on precepts of liberty, justice and peace taught by the Hebrew prophets... We offer peace and amity to all neighboring states and their peoples... Our call goes out to the Jewish people all over the world to rally to our side in the task of immigration and development, and to stand by us in the great struggle for the fulfillment of the dream of generations – the redemption of Israel... With trust in Almighty God, we set our hands to this declaration...

A few minutes after the Declaration was finished being read, Ben Gurion called upon Rabbi Yehuda Leib Maimon (Fishman) to say the SHEHECHEYANU bracha.

This PTDT has not been an objective presentation of all points of view concerning HAKAMAT HAMEDINA. It never was intended to be that.

Hallel with a bracha? Daytime there is ample halachic foundation to do so. Yes, there are other opinions.

But the declaration of Statehood started an all-out war. Guess what? The Chanuka victory over the Greeks and the Miracle of the Oil was followed by only 26 years of Jewish self-rule, during which time, we continued fighting the Greeks. Then things got worse (and worsen, as my daughters at a young age used to say). Romans took over. Things went downhill and then the Beit HaMikdash was destroyed and we were exiled for centuries. And yet, our Sages declared that we thank HaShem for the bright spots with an 8-day festival with full Hallel throughout.

If you are looking for "And we lived happily ever after", that's the Geula Sh'leima. Until then, we thank HaShem for what He gives us - and we pray for more.

If you are still reading, I thank you and wish you, and all AM YISRAEL - MO'ADIM L'SIMCHA, LIGULA SH'LEIMA.

It's the cup half-full or half-empty thing. I believe the healthy way to look at the State of Israel is as half-full. That allows us to thank G-d for many good things. Half-empty - not the healthy way of looking at the issue.

And remember - it isn't only how you look at a half filled glass. You have to know that you can contribute to filling it up more and more. **PTDT**