

The Month of Menachem-Av

INTRODUCTION

Although this month is called 'Av' in the Torah, the Jewish custom is to add the name 'Menachem' and to furthermore prefix the name 'Menachem' to 'Av', making this month 'Menachem-Av'.

One of the reasons for this practice is that Menachem means "consolation" and alludes to the consolation of the Jewish people that will occur in the future Redemption.¹ It is this future consolation which constitutes the ultimate purpose behind the "descent" of the month of Av.

Furthermore, 'Menachem', i.e. the Redemption, is "the beginning that prefaces every descent." Our Sages explain that the Torah begins with "In the beginning... the spirit of Hashem hovered over the face of the waters" – the "spirit" that it refers to is that of Moshiach.

Since the inner purpose and foundation of everything is to eventually lead to the revelation of "the spirit of Moshiach", it therefore appeared immediately – at the very start of Creation. Accordingly, the word 'Av' of 'Menachem-Av,' which means "the father", reflects on the source and origin of everything that exists, including the realm of holiness.²

All of the above serves as a source of strength and empowers us to reveal, when faced with an - inherently external and temporary - decline, that its entire purpose is the elevation, the Menachem, therein.³

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1. "This is in addition to the fact that the Hebrew letters of the name "Menachem" are the numerical equivalent of the name "Tzemach" which refers to Moshiach - "Ish Tzemach Shmo – his name is Tzemach"; may he sprout forth (Yitzmach) and be revealed in actuality very soon!" (Rosh Chodesh Menachem-Av 5748 – Hisvaduyos p.82)
 2. "As is likewise alluded to in Shabbos Mevarchim [when we bless the coming month of] Menachem-Av. For it is called "Menachem-Av" - and not "Av-Menachem" - although its name in the Torah is simply "Av" (whilst "Menachem" was only added later). The main thing is "Menachem," i.e. the consolation for our Exile; and our consolation comes about through "Av," i.e., the 'Father' and source of Mercy (Av Harachamim). See Likkutei Sichos Vol.23 p.214 and onward." (Parshas Matos-Masei 5750 – Hisvadiyos p.83)
 3. "Its entire existence is (not simply a preparation for a second matter, rather its very

The Nine Days

COUNTER WITH POSITIVE ACTION

- Since within the Three Weeks, Rosh Chodesh Menachem-Av and the week in which the 9th of Av occurs [even in a year when the Fast is postponed⁴] contains *particular* gravity, we should therefore *further increase* in Torah and Tzedakah during those times.⁵

idea is) to reveal the elevation (the “Menachem”) within. As is well known, the very theme of Geulah (Redemption) is to take “Golah” (Exile) and add an Alef [the difference between the two words in Hebrew is the letter Alef, representing the Master (Aluf) of the Universe]. For by revealing the Master of the Universe within Exile itself, the Exile (Golah) itself becomes Redemption (Geulah).” (Parshas Pinchas 5751 – Hisvaduyos p.60)

4. “Concerning [this year’s calen dar] where the 9th of Av is postponed until Sunday: When the 9th of Av *itself* falls on a Sunday (as opposed to merely being *postponed* from Shabbos to Sunday), then the laws concerning the week in which the 9th of Av occurs only apply to that very [Sun]day. When, however, the 9th of Av falls out on a *Shabbos* (and it is only the Fast which must be postponed) there is are divided opinions as to whether the entire previous week bears the severity of “a week in which the 9th of Av falls,” or whether the postponement of the Fast to Sunday likewise causes the cancellation of the above severity to the previous week.

...It is nevertheless plainly understood, that regarding our addition in **Torah and Tzedakah** – which are obligatory throughout the entire year – there is certainly no place for such a dispute; according to all opinions there is a need to further increase [Torah and Tzedakah] during the week in which the 9th of Av falls, even in a yearly calendar such as the current year! On the lighter side, one could say [that we are to follow the principle] “Sfeika D’uraisa L’chumra - A doubt regarding a [law from a] Biblical source must be treated with stringency,” which could also be read to mean that when there is ‘a doubt’ concerning the study of *Torah* [‘D’uraisa’] (i.e. whether or not to increase our *Torah*-study etc.) - we are to “act with *stringency*!” (ibid)

5. Rosh Chodesh Menachem-Av 5749 – Hisvaduyos p.79.

“Note that within many Jewish communities, engagements are made during the Three Weeks. Yet [even in those communities] they are *not* made during the week in which the 9th of Av occurs.” (ibid, footnote 19.) See Shulchan Aruch, Orech Chaim 551:2 and in the Rema.

“To increase in Tzedakah distribution in addition to what is usually given before (weekday) prayers, in keeping with the Alter Rebbe’s statement in his Shulchan Aruch, “It is good to give Tzedakah before prayers, as is written ‘I will behold Your countenance in righteousness [Tzedakah]’” ... with added emphasis during the Three Weeks and specifically from Rosh Chodesh Menachem-Av. Since on these days, greater emphasis is placed on the prayers and requests of the Jewish people for Hashem’s Tzedakah, i.e., the arrival of the True and Complete Redemption, therefore, they we should likewise increase with far greater energy in matters of Tzedakah - through which the Jewish people will be redeemed.” (Rosh Chodesh

STUDY AND LONG FOR REDEMPTION

- We should add in our study of Torah-topics that are related to the Redemption and the design of the Third Beis Hamikdash, along with a strengthening of our expectancy, longing, and demanding of the Redemption.⁶

LAWS OF THE NINE DAYS

- We should create an awareness of the particular laws in the Shulchan Aruch that concern conduct during the Nine Days, and particularly those details that pertain to the week in which the 9th of Av occurs. There is also an obligation to *study* these laws of the Shulchan Aruch.⁷

ACT AND PUBLICIZE

- “The main thing is the deed.” Therefore, we should act upon all of the above, including the effort to publicize these matters everywhere, so that others may likewise act upon them.⁸

Menachem-Av 5748 –Hisvaduyos p.79)

6. Parshas Matos-Masei 5748 – Hisvaduyos p.95. See also there, p.91: “The crux of the matter is that the nullification of the Destruction and Exile is *primarily* accomplished (not so much through contemplating the gravity of our descent into Exile, rather) by contemplating the *great advantage* of the Redemption ... to arouse longing, yearning and an inner stirring, which in turn automatically produces a request and demand for the Future Redemption. We thereby hasten and accelerate the actual and physical Redemption. Furthermore, we thereby reveal the inner goodness within the Destruction and Exile itself.”
7. “In accordance with the principle “deed is the main thing,” it is necessary to raise the issue ... (in addition to the laws that pertain to the Three Weeks).” (Rosh Chodesh Menachem-Av 5748 – Hisvaduyos p.78)
 “As well as studying the laws of the Three Weeks - both the details that concern the *entire* Three Weeks and also the detailed laws relevant to the Nine Days – in order to know what to actually *do* (as long as Moshiach has not yet arrived).” (Parshas Matos-Masei 5748 – Hisvaduyos p.91)
 “In addition to “Mishpat” ... Torah-study (and specifically the laws) ... And within the study of the laws themselves, it is particularly worthwhile (during the Three Weeks) to study the sections in Torah that cover the Beis Hamikdash.” (Parshas Devarim 5749 – Hisvaduyos p.103)
8. “Practically speaking: All those who are presently hearing these words - both those physically present and those listening via various technological systems that are being harnessed for the service of Hashem – such as in this case, where in but a mere moment the message is carried to every location where there is someone to listen – not only should they *personally* fulfill the above, but rather, they should also strive to

Holding Siyumim

INTRODUCTION

One of the reasons for arranging Siyumim (lit. “completions”; celebrations that are held upon completing a section or book of Torah teachings) is that we actively seek every permissible manner to add in positive and joyful matters. Doing so reveals the inner goodness within the decline of the Three Weeks period.

It is because “The laws of Hashem are upright; they gladden the heart” (Tehillim 19) that we rejoice by the completion of the entire Torah (on Simchas Torah).⁹ We similarly find concerning the completion of a section or tractate within Torah, that the Talmud states “Whenever I see ... completing a Tractate, I arrange a festive day for the Rabbis!” (Shabbos 118b).¹⁰

Additionally, through arranging a “completion” within Torah we cause a “completion” within all other matters in the world, including and most importantly, the completion of Exile.¹¹ In fact, the appropriate term truly is the ‘completion’ of Exile and not its nullification – for we are referring to the [positive] conclusion and completeness of the Exile itself, which is wrought by drawing the א (“Alef”) [i.e. Hashem, the Master (Aluf) of the Universe] into the Exile. We thus transform Exile

publicize the above content to every location within their reach.” (Rosh Chodesh Menachem-Av 5748 – Hisvadiyos p.82)

“Even those places where there is no-one currently listening – the ‘Word of Hashem’ effects that there *will* be a listener. And not simply one who ‘hears’ [the message], but also one who *derher*, ‘absorbs’ [the content] (the Previous Rebbe explains the advantage of *derher* over simply hearing what is said...)” (ibid, footnote 63)

9. Parshas Pinchas 5751 – Hisvadiyos p.64. See also Tur and Rema, Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim, 769, concerning Simchas Torah.
10. Parshas Matos-Maasei 5751 – Hisvadiyos p.79 states the sources: Gemorah Shabbos 118b at the foot of the page, and further. Rema, Yoreh De’ah 246:26.

See also Parshas Matos-Maasei 5748, footnote 120 – Hisvadiyos p.95: “To note the famous saying that explain the words of our Sages “When Av begins we decrease in joy,” i.e., that we are to “decrease” in the *negative* aspects of the Nine Days, “in joy”, i.e., via *adding* to our joy in a manner that is obviously permitted according to the Shulchan Aruch [Rema, Yoreh Dei’a, 246:26].”

11. “Beginning with the ‘completion’ of the ‘Exile’ within the Torah itself, namely, the doubts and disagreements within Torah (which stem from the side of evil), through which we will complete the literal Exile!” (Parshas Matos-Maasei 5750 – Hisvadiyos p.83)

(*Golah* - גּוֹלָה) into Redemption (*Geulah* - גְּלוּת),¹²

REMEDY: JOY OF TORAH

- We should focus on the custom of holding Siyumim¹³ on each of the Nine Days,¹⁴ in order to add in the joy of Torah in a permissible manner. We thereby nullify those matters that are contrary to joy.¹⁵

TZEDAKAH BY THE SIYUM

- We should connect the Siyum (Torah study is referred to as “Mishpat”¹⁶) with the giving of Tzedakah; as is written, “[the Jews] will be redeemed with justice (“Mishpat”) and those who return to her – through Tzedakah.”¹⁷

FOR ALL JEWS

- We should extend effort – out of the unity and love for our fellow Jews – to ensure that the Siyumim will draw great attendance,¹⁸ and will serve to unite multitudes of Jewish people¹⁹ in the rejoicing upon completing a section of Torah. This is so,

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12. Sichas Menachem-Av 5, 5748 – Hisvaduyos p.108.
 13. – Hisvaduyos p.108: “Also including the initiation of further tractates and books, as it is written in the ‘Hadran’ [recited at the Siyum immediately following the completion] ‘As You helped me to complete Tractate such-and-such, so may You help me to *begin* other tractates and to complete them.’” (ibid, footnote 51)
 14. “This is the juncture to raise the issue afresh, that if Moshiach will G-d forbid be delayed, they should continue amidst renewed energy and encouragement (for “let [The Torah] be new in your eyes each day”) to hold Siyumim over the tractates of the Talmud (‘Mishpat’, Torah-study), during the Nine Days.” (Parshas Devarim 5751 – Hisvaduyos p.95-96)
 15. Parshas Matos-Maasei 5748 – Hisvaduyos p.95.
 16. “Tziyon will be redeemed through justice, and those who return to her – with Tzedakah” (Yeshaya 1:27). One should therefore increase in giving Tzedakah, and include the aspect of ‘justice’ within Tzedakah distribution, namely, to ‘judge’ oneself and determine the amount he requires for his own needs, so he could distribute the rest to Tzedakah!” (Parshas Matos-Maasei 5748, footnote 130 - Hisvaduyos p.96)
 17. “As per the custom of recent years, the Siyumim are to be associated with Tzedakah, beginning with ‘spiritual’ Tzedakah this day of Shabbos and physical Tzedakah after Shabbos (“*nit of Shabbos geret* – not to discuss it on Shabbos...”.”) (Roshei Devarim, Sichas Matos-Maasei 5751)
 18. “In accordance with the principle ‘A *multitude* of people is a king’s glory’...”
 19. Parshas Matos-Maasei 5751 – Hisvaduyos p.80.

regardless of whether or not the participants have personally completed tractates.²⁰

ALL AGES AND GENDERS

- Both men and women should attend these Siyumim – seated separately of course²¹ – as well as minors. Both the young in years and the ‘young’ in Torah-knowledge should participate, regardless of their ability to comprehend the material being reviewed.²²

A FESTIVE MEAL

- In those places that allow for it, we should accompany the Siyumim with a festive meal and Chassidic gathering [Farbrenge], in the spirit of “A festive day for the Rabbis.” [See intro]²³

WITHOUT MEAT OR WINE

- Our custom is to hold Siyumim over tractates of Gemorah on *each day* of the Nine Days – despite the lack of a subsequent meal with meat and wine.²⁴

SHABBOS WITHIN THE NINE DAYS

- It is very worthwhile to hold a Siyum on the Shabbos²⁵ that

20. Parshas Matos-Maasei 5748 – Hisvaduyos p.95.

21. Parshas Devarim 5749 – Hisvaduyos p.108.

22. “Similar to the Siyum which is held on Erev Pesach, where it is customary to bring along even *minor* first-borns. In fact, the Siyum on Erev Pesach is not merely an example, but rather, it is directly related to the Siyumim of the Three Weeks. For the Siyum on Erev Pesach is a preparation for the future Redemption, which will be “as in the days of your exodus from Egypt (I will show you wonders)”. This theme carries extra emphasis this year, for we are standing on the threshold of the Redemption!” (Parshas Matos-Maasei 5751 – Hisvaduyos p.80)

23. Parshas Devarim 5751 – Hisvaduyos p.96.

24. Parshas Matos-Maasei 5751 – Hisvaduyos p.64. See also Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim, 551:10, where it is *permissible* to hold a Siyum that is followed by a meal of meat and wine, for the meal is a Seudas Mitzva. The Chabad custom is, as per the main text above, to hold a Siyum and follow it with a meal – yet to refrain from meat and wine nonetheless.

25. Parshas Matos-Maasei 5751 – Hisvaduyos p.64. The reason (increasing joy) is quoted above, in the introduction to ‘Holding Siyumim’.

See also Roshei Devarim, Parshas Pinchas 5751: “Likewise on the holy day of Shabbos; although there is no need to come to such [i.e. there is no need for Siyumim to counter the negativity, for on Shabbos there is already only joy], it is nevertheless good to hold them on Shabbos, too. For according to all opinions, “the

occurs within the Nine Days and to likewise connect it with a meal.²⁶ Similarly, we should increase in Tzedakah – which “hastens the Redemption” – in a permissible manner, i.e., through sharing meals and the like.²⁷

TRACTATE OF GEMARAH

- Although according to some opinions a Siyum may be held upon completing a chapter or tractate of *Mishna*, we should preferably hold a Siyum over an entire tractate of *Gemorah*, which would be a qualified Siyum according to all opinions.²⁸

SIYUM ON SET OF HALACHOS

- We should also hold a Siyum upon completing a set of laws learnt in the daily cycle of Rambam.²⁹

TOPICS THAT ARE EASY TO EXPLAIN

- It is worthwhile and fitting to arrange Siyumim over tractates whose subjects are easy to relate and explain to each and every Jew, even the simplest. For example, the four tractates of Brachos, Nazir, Yevamos, and Krisos, whose acronym is BoNaYiCh (“your sons”) and which conclude with the verse “All your sons shall be learners of [the Torah of] Hashem.” (Yeshaya 54:13)³⁰

TRACTATE TAMID

- It is preferable to hold a Siyum over Tractate Tamid, since a)

Torah was given to the Jewish people on Shabbos”. Siyumim are likewise to be held on subsequent days, even if they cannot be followed with meals and accompanied by all the due commotion.”

26. Parshas Devarim 5751 – Hisvaduyos p.96.

27. Parshas Matos-Maasei 5751 – Hisvaduyos p.79, and in footnote 94.

28. Sichas Rosh Chodesh Menachem-Av 5749 – Hisvaduyos p.86.

29. Sichas Tammuz 17 and Parshas Pinchas 5750, footnote 188 – Hisvaduyos p.55. See also Parshas Devarim 5749 – Hisvaduyos p.108: “A unique encouragement in this regard comes from the fact that a set of the laws from Rambam was *completed* this very Erev Shabbos, within which was quoted part of the Braysa of Rabbi Pinchas Ben Yair – which is likewise quoted (according to many texts) at the *completion* of Mishna Sotah. There is therefore a unique opportunity to hold a Siyum on Tractate Sotah.”

30. Parshas Matos-Maasei 5748 – Hisvaduyos p.95.

its contents concern the Beis Hamikdash and thus bears a relevance to the Three Weeks,³¹ b) it is the shortest tractate that includes Gemorah,³² and c) its conclusion is easy to relate and explain: “The song that the Levites used to chant in the Mikdash...”³³

THE REBBE’S SIYUM

- [The Gemorah on Tractate Tamid ends after the fourth of the seven chapters; the last three chapters contain only Mishna.] On Rosh Chodesh Menachem-Av 5749, the Rebbe made a Siyum over Tractate Tamid and dwelt upon both the conclusion of the Gemorah (i.e., the end of the *fourth* chapter) and also upon the conclusion of the Mishna (i.e., the end of the *seventh* chapter).³⁴

31. Parshas Devarim 5750 – Hisvaduyos p.97: “Not only on a tractate that consists entirely of Mishna, but rather, those that include Gemorah – as well as those that are *partially* covered by Gemorah such as Tractate Tamid; *specifically* in the case of Tamid, which deals with service in the Beis Hamikdash and is similar to tractate Midos – which (contains only Mishna and) covers the structure of the Mikdash. For through studying topics concerning the Beis Hamikdash, “I count it as if they are occupied with building” the Beis Hamikdash. Furthermore, through doing so, ‘The construction of My House’ has *not* been ‘abandoned’.”

32. Rosh Chodesh Menachem-Av 5749 - Hisvaduyos p.86: “Tractate Tamid is the *shortest* tractate amongst those tractates that include Gemorah. When, therefore, there is a need to hold a Siyum on *each day of the Nine Days* and a short tractate that is *very easy* to complete is sought, the first [choice of] tractate is Tractate Tamid”.

See also Parshas Matos-Maasei 5748 – Hisvaduyos p.95: “The smallest tractate that is able to be learnt and completed within a short period of time”.

See also in footnote 122, there: “To note the connection between the number eight and the Redemption, for the harp [to be used in the Beis Hamikdash] in the Era of Moshiach will consist of [specifically] eight strings (Eiruchin 13b). The number of chapters in the Ramban’s laws of the Beis Habechirah [Mikdash] is [likewise specifically] eight.”

33. Parshas Matos-Maasei 5748 – Hisvaduyos p.95.

34. “...At the conclusion of Tractate Tamid in the Gemorah – i.e. the conclusion of the *fourth* chapter of Tamid – it is stated ‘Torah scholars increase peace in the world, as is written “All of your sons are learners of [the Torah of] Hashem” ... Accordingly, the conclusion of the *fourth* chapter of Tamid is particularly relevant to Rosh Chodesh Menachem-Av of this year, which occurs on the *fourth* day of the week (Wednesday). For the seven chapters of Tractate Tamid correspond to the seven days of the week, and the conclusion of the fourth chapter is bound with the conclusion of the fourth day (i.e. this very moment in time).

Once the fourth chapter has been concluded, we come to the completion of the *entire* Tractate Tamid. To preface: Although the Gemorah on Tamid ends with the fourth

INCLUDE EVERY JEW YOU MEET

• We should include even a Jew we merely encounter on the street or in the course of business etc. in these Siyumim. We could accomplish his participation by informing him that a public Siyum was held over a particular tractate, and then relating the tractate's conclusion to him – which should be a saying of our Sages that is easily comprehensible to every Jew. Why, even if he is not informed that he is currently hearing the conclusion of a tractate and thus participating in the Siyum, he has been included nonetheless!³⁵

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chapter, it is understood that the Siyum on Tamid ought to include the latter chapters too, which have no Gemorah [but only Mishna]. Particularly according to the above explanation – that the seven chapters correspond to the seven days of the week which express the continuity of time [‘Tamid’ means continuous], the completion of Tamid requires all seven chapters, to correspond to a complete week – the [complete representation of the] continuity of time.

This concept is further emphasized at the conclusion of Tractate Tamid: ‘The song that the Levites chanted in the Beis Hamikdash; on the first day of the week they would say... On the second day... etc.’ It continues through each day until [and including] Shabbos, ‘On Shabbos they would say...’ Therefore, in accordance with the above, it is fitting to also dwell upon the conclusion of the *entire* Tractate Tamid.” (Wednesday Night 5749 – Hisvaduyos p.87 and onwards)

35. “(Even without his knowledge) for ‘One may make a positive acquisition for a person [“*Zachin l’odom*” literally means ‘we cause *merit* to a person’] even when he is not present’.” (Parshas Matos-Maasei 5748 – Hisvaduyos p.96)