

# HALOCHOSCOPE

**This week's question:**

**A mother will be celebrating the bar-mitzvah of her son during the Three Weeks or the Nine Days. May she purchase the dress during the Three Weeks and wear it on the *Shabbos* of her *simcha*, and recite *shehecheyanu* then?**

**The issues:**

- A) *Bain hametzarim*, the Three Weeks
- B) *Shehecheyanu*, the *brocha* recited on new clothing
- C) A *simcha* on *Shabbos Chazon*

## A) *Bain Hametzarim*

The three week period from the Seventeenth of *Tamuz* to the Ninth of *Av* is observed as a period of mourning for the destruction of both of the temples in *Yerushalayim*. It is commonly referred to as *bain hametzarim*, between the straits (the two fast days commemorating the Romans' breaching the walls (17<sup>th</sup> *Tamuz*), and *Tisha b'Av*, when the *Bais Hamikdash* was actually destroyed) after the verse in *Eicha* saying that the Jews' pursuers caught up with them between these straits, with nowhere to escape to. Historically, the Seventeenth of *Tamuz* commemorates the day the Jewish people worshiped the golden calf. *Tisha b'Av* was the day the spies returned from their tour of *Eretz Yisroel*, brought back their evil reports, and 'that night ordained for future trouble', the Jews wept, thus denying faith in the promise about the Land. More unfortunate events took place on these days in subsequent times, right up to our own times.

While *Tisha b'Av* is observed with full mourning practices, there is a gradual build up. On *Tisha b'Av*, apart from fasting and sitting on the ground, other mourning practices include refraining from wearing leather shoes and from washing any part of the body. Torah study, which causes joy, is limited to sad passages. On *Erev Tisha b'Av*, when eating the last meal before the fast, one may not eat more than one cooked food, or eat meat or drink wine, and one eats alone. During the week of *Tisha b'Av* it is forbidden to wash clothing, to wear freshly washed clothing and to take a haircut. From *Rosh Chodesh Av* (Nine Days) joy is minimized. Weddings are not held and fancy building and tree-planting is forbidden. The Talmud refers to a custom (though apparently this was not forbidden outright) to refrain from weaving. Court cases with gentiles should not be scheduled during this ominous period. These are the restrictions mentioned by the Talmud.

These periods are all based on a verse, prophesying the punishment of *Yerushalayim*, cited by the Talmud: Hashem will cease the celebrations of its festival, its month and its '*Shabbos*', i.e., week. The 'festival' is *Rosh Chodesh Av*. Its 'month' is the rest of the month, or at least until *Tisha Bav*. Its 'week' is the week in which *Tisha Bav* falls. Months are associated with *mazal*, destiny, good or bad. *Av* is an ominous month. [Hence, when

Av begins, reduce joy!] A week can also have *mazal*, etc. Throughout the generations Jewish communities adopted more restrictions, or extended these restrictions backwards, some of them to the Seventeenth of *Tamuz*. These have the status of *nedarim* that are binding on members of those communities. [See Taanis 29b-30a, Yerushalmi Psachim 4:1, Poskim. Tur Sh. Ar. OC 551:3-8 17, commentaries.]

### **B) Shehecheyanu**

*Shehecheyanu* is known as '*zman*', *brocha* on joy at reaching a particular time. It is required on occasion of a joyous event and the first time a particular *mitzvah* is fulfilled. The *mitzvos* included in this category occur in a cycle, such as *shofar* on *Rosh Hashanah*. *Mitzvos* that occur rarely, though not cyclically, such as redemption of the first-born, are also included. The *brocha* commemorates joy due to a time or date, and the time that personal joy is experienced. Some add *mitzvos* that combine ownership with a *mitzvah*, such as *mezuzah*. Cyclical joy includes fruit coming into season. One who eats it must recite the *brocha*. Some say the occasion is the first time the fruit is seen.

Another joyous event warranting the *brocha* is a new acquisition. Two examples are provided by the Talmud: one who builds a new house, or acquires a new utensil. Some maintain that this shows that the joy over the new utensil must be comparable to the joy over a new house. Most *poskim* maintain that it depends on the joy experienced by the one acquiring it. For a wealthy person it must be more substantial than for a poor person.

If the acquired item is new to both himself and his company, the *brocha* is *hatov ve-hameitiv*, Who is good and Who does good to others. This *brocha* is recited on good tidings that affect more than one person. When they affect one person the *brocha* is *shehecheyanu*. Thus, *shehecheyanu* is really on good tidings. Logically this is the acquisition. If it was not recited then, it may still be recited as long as the joy is still felt. For an article used for *mitzvos*, some say that the *brocha* may be recited at the time of acquisition or preparation or at the time it is first used for the *mitzvah*. When building a *sukah* one could recite *shehecheyanu*, or on the first night when one sits there. Our practice is to consider the *shehecheyanu* on the *mitzvah* to be partially on the joy of preparing it.

For new clothing the ideal time for the *brocha* would be the acquisition. If alterations are made, the next joyous event, the first time it is worn, is the best time to recite it. It has become standard practice to always recite it when first wearing it. Indeed, it is common for people to wait and savor the excitement to wear it first on a special occasion.

Even new items must be substantial enough to bring uplifting joy. Determining this is debated. Some maintain that it always depends on the purchaser. For ordinary people, a coat or suit is sufficiently special, but not for a rich man. For a poor man a new shirt is special, but not for most people. Another view maintains that it always depends on the significance of the item. Only items bought at rare intervals qualify. In general, hats are not considered so special, though, as we shall see, expensive hats could qualify.

The *poskim* discuss reciting *shehecheyanu* during the Three Weeks. There are three main *minhagim*: To recite it anyhow, to refrain totally, and to recite only on *Shabbos*. Two issues arise with regard to reciting during a mourning period, the mourning and the period. Does one in mourning recite this kind of happy *brocha*? Even if a mourner recites it, this period is sad, and the *brocha* indicates joy at this '*zman*'. We should be focusing

on Hashem's punishment. Rejoicing shows a disregard for Hashem's Judgment.

To explain the debate, one view maintains that the *minhag* is founded on mourning, which does not apply on *Shabbos*. The other view maintains that a mourner must indeed recite this *brocha*. If a father passes away and leaves a large inheritance, the son recites *dayan ha'emes*, on the sad tidings, and *hatov vehamaitiv*, on the newly acquired inheritance. However, we are not told whether he should recite *shehecheyanu* if he has no-one with whom to share the good news. Maybe the wording of *shehecheyanu* is inappropriate, but *hatov vehamaitiv* is appropriate! The consensus is that a mourner recites *shehecheyanu* on cyclical *mitzvos* and new fruits, in private but not in public. The third view is based on the sadness of the three week period, possibly even on *Shabbos*.

If it is purchased but not worn now, there is still a issue of joy. However, when debating whether to recite *shehecheyanu* on a *Shabbos* during the three weeks, nobody raises the problem that the purchase must have been made during the week. Apparently, there is no problem with the purchase at this time, provided that the joy is saved for another time. [See Brochos 59b-60a, Yerushalmi 9:3, Sukah 46a, Poskim. Tur Sh. Ar. OC 223, commentaries. Vezos Habracha 18:n8. Halochoscope III:25 V:34 VIII:7.]

### **C) *Shabbos clothing and Shabbos Chazon; festivity of bar mitzvah***

The poskim cite a *minhag* to dress down on *Shabbos Chazon*. One wears weekday garments and one token outer *Shabbos* garment. [Nowadays, this custom has all but been abandoned, since it led to a laxity in honor and observance of *Shabbos*. In former times, when *Shabbos* was more widely observed, this was less of an issue.]

The basis for this custom is that during the week one should certainly not dress in a festive manner. The exception to this is a *mohel* and *sandek*, the one who has the honor of holding the baby for the *bris milah*. The father shows festivity. It is his *mitzvah*. The *mohel* is his agent for the active part. The basis for this is that the day of the *bris milah* is like a *Yomtov*. *Yomtov* is accorded more honor than *Shabbos* in this respect. Thus, while for *Shabbos* there is a custom to dress down, one may not do so for *Yomtov*.

The concept of a private festival occurs when an individual offers a thanksgiving offering. That entire day is considered a *Yomtov* for him, with certain rules. These include a restriction on fasting. The Talmud cites a list of private *Yomim Tovim* observed by families who made an offering of wood for the *mizbaiach*. On these days, that entire family had to refrain from fasting and from eulogizing. Similarly, on the day that one celebrates his wedding, and according to custom, for the entire week, one does not show open signs of sadness. The same is true of one who makes a *bris milah*. There is some debate on the real cause for festivities. Some say that it is the *mitzvah* itself, while others say that it is the obligation to celebrate with a *seudas mitzvah*. Thus, there are those who distinguish between a *bris* on the eighth day, when the obligation to celebrate with a festive meal is considered somewhat Scriptural, and a delayed *bris milah*.

A wedding day is clearly cause for festive celebration. If *Tisha b'Av* falls in the early part of the week, a wedding could be held in the latter part. Thus, *Shabbos Chazon* would be the festive preceding *Shabbos*. This is known in *Ashkenazic* circles as the *aufruff*, after the Yiddish for the calling up of the *chasan* to the Torah. In earlier times it was called *spinholtz*. (The origins of the word are a little obscure.) It was customary for the *chasan*

to wear his new *Shabbos* outfit for this celebration, even on *Shabbos Chazon*. Furthermore, the original *minhag* to refrain from wearing *Shabbos* clothing on *Shabbos Chazon*, is suspended for the parents of the *chasan* and *kallah*.

The Midrash refers to a *brocha* recited by a father when his son is *bar-mitzvah*. Until that point, he is liable for his sons actions. Upon release from this liability, he recites the *brocha*. Customarily, the *brocha* is recited when the boy shows a public demonstration of his adulthood. He acts as *shliach tzibur*, reads the Torah, and/or receives an aliyah. Some wait until his first *Shabbos* as an adult. In the course of this discussion, the poskim refer to a *seudas mitzvah* to celebrate this event. The status of this *seuda* is debated, and it is resolved by having the boy relate *divrei Torah* at the meal, even if it is not his real birthday. Thus it is a *seudas mitzvah*, and is a *mitzvah* to attend. Thus, at least according to one view, a *bar-mitzvah* is the same as a *bris*, as a private *Yomtov*.

The terminology of the poskim is that the father should feast as he would on the day of a son's wedding. One connection is a Scriptural reference to *tefilin*. Another is that the son's soul comes into its own in many ways, similar to the sense of perfection at a *bris milah* or a wedding. The Zohar relates the extreme joy at a *seudas bar-mitzvah*. A major source is a Talmudic passage. There is debate whether the blind are obligated in *mitzvos*. A blind scholar promised to make a *seuda* if someone would show him to be obligated. Thus, the event obligating one in *mitzvos* is cause for celebration. In any event, *bar-mitzvah* is indeed celebrated nowadays as a major coming-of-age, even more than a *bris milah*, and certainly as much as an *aufruff*.

The mother certainly experiences the same joy as the father. Some suggest that while the mother should not recite the *brocha*, she may wear a new item of clothing and reserve her *shehecheyanu* for this occasion, to double as a *brocha* on both joyous events.

Thus, a combination of factors would indicate that the mother may purchase a dress for this occasion during this period. She will not recite *shehecheyanu* at the time of purchase. She will wear it for the first time on *Shabbos*. We no longer follow the *minhag* to refrain from wearing special clothing on *Shabbos Chazon*. The original *minhag* was suspended for the parents of a *chasan*. A *bar-mitzvah* may be compared to that. [See Taanis 26a Kidushin 31a Baba Kama 87a (Y'Sh'Shlomo) Beraishis Raba Toldos 63:14, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 131:1 4-7 225:2 (Rema, Kaf Hachayim 11 13) 551:1 559:8-9 568:2 YD 393:3, commentaries. Chavos Yair 70. Tzitz Eliezer XI:17. Yabia Omer OCI:27.]

In conclusion, the mother may purchase the dress, wear it on *Shabbos Chazon* and recite *shehecheyanu* then.

**On the parsha ..** The name of the daughter of [the wife of] Asher was Sarach. [26:46, Targum] Why does the *Targum* add that Sarach was the daughter of Asher's wife? Sarach merits mention due to her longevity. This was a reward for her sensitivity to Yaakov, as a young girl. Just as Asher could take credit for and rejoice in his daughter's actions, so too could his wife.

**Sponsored by Noah Bass and Deborah Rotenstein in memory of her father, Moshe Chaim ben**

**Meir Taub a”h, whose *yahrzeit* was on the 13<sup>th</sup> of Sivan. ׀**

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