



**SERMON RESOURCE FOR SHLUCHIM**  
**VAESCHANAN / ואתחנן**  
**AFTER THE TRAUMA COMES A HOLIDAY OF LOVE**

**DISTRIBUTION DATE:**

**TUESDAY AUGUST 12, 2008 / י"א מנחם אב תשס"ח**

**PARSHA:**

**VAESCHANAN / ואתחנן**

**SERMON TITLE:**

**AFTER THE TRAUMA COMES A HOLIDAY OF LOVE**

**A PROJECT OF THE SHLUCHIM OFFICE**

DISTRIBUTION DATE: TUESDAY AUGUST 12, 2008 • י"א מנחם אב תשס"ח  
The author is solely responsible for the contents of this document.

Sponsored by Shimon Aron & Devorah Leah Rosenfeld & Family  
In loving memory of  
Emil W. Herman אה ז"ל ר' מנחם זאב בן פנחס ז"ל  
who loved and supported Torah learning.



# SERMON RESOURCE FOR SHLUCHIM

## VAESCHANAN / ואתחנן

### AFTER THE TRAUMA COMES A HOLIDAY OF LOVE

## VAESCHANAN

### AFTER THE TRAUMA COMES A HOLIDAY OF LOVE

Tu B'Shvat is a holiday we all recognize. We plant trees, eat of the Seven Species with which Israel is blessed, etc. Six months later is another holiday, Tu B'Av. Very few people are familiar with this holiday, because this holiday was celebrated during the Temple period.

What is this holiday? We all know the story of the spies, who came back and reported that the Jews would not be able to conquer the land. The whole nation agreed with them and didn't want to enter the land, as it says "The nation cried on that night." Our sages teach that that night was the ninth of Av. That was when G-d decreed "In this desert you will die"; that the Jews would only enter the land after that generation had died in the desert.

Who was this decreed upon? Only men between the ages of 20 and 60. All women, the Tribe of Levi, and anyone younger than 20 and anyone over 60 were not included. This is why they needed to wander the desert for forty years; to wait for those who were twenty to turn 60, so they would pass away and then the Jews could continue to Israel.

Every year, on the ninth of Av, the men who had turned 60 dug their own graves, said goodbye to their families and friends and departed this world. In the fortieth year, the last group, approximately 15,000 men, went through this ritual.

#### A PROJECT OF THE SHLUCHIM OFFICE

DISTRIBUTION DATE: TUESDAY AUGUST 12, 2008 • י"א מנחם אב תשס"ח  
The author is solely responsible for the contents of this document.

Sponsored by Shimon Aron & Devorah Leah Rosenfeld & Family  
In loving memory of  
ר' מנחם זאב בן פנחס ז"ל  
Emil W. Herman who loved and supported Torah learning.



# SERMON RESOURCE FOR SHLUCHIM

## VAESCHANAN / ואתחנן

### AFTER THE TRAUMA COMES A HOLIDAY OF LOVE

The next morning something very strange happened: they woke up, pinched themselves and realized with great surprise that they were still alive!

Because the months were calculated according to sightings of the moon and not with calendars, they at first suspected that they had miscalculated the dates and it wasn't yet the ninth of the month. So that night they again went to sleep in their graves but awoke the next day, as well. So it went night after night, until the fifteenth of the month, when there was no mistaking the full moon. Then they came to the conclusion that it was a miracle and G-d had done away with the decree and forgiven them, and so they established the 15th of Av as a holiday.

There is another reason behind this holiday. During the Biblical times, there were two kingdoms, Judah and Israel. Immediately after King Shlomo's death the Kingdom of Israel split in two: Shlomo's son Rechavam ruled over the Kingdom of Judah which was made up of two tribes; Yehudah and Binyamin. The remaining ten tribes were the kingdom of Israel, ruled by the wicked Yeravam ben Navat. Yeravam feared that people would make the regular pilgrimage to Jerusalem, be drawn to the Temple and want to stay there, thus strengthening the Kingdom of Judah and weakening his kingdom.

Yeravam therefore closed all borders and sealed the roads leading to Jerusalem, thereby stopping anyone from going up to Jerusalem. The mitzvah that every person has, to go to Jerusalem three times a year, was thus gotten rid of. Even more,



# SERMON RESOURCE FOR SHLUCHIM

## VAESCHANAN / ואתחנן

### AFTER THE TRAUMA COMES A HOLIDAY OF LOVE

this king cut the Jews off from their spiritual center and caused them to assimilate and worship idols.

The roads to Jerusalem were sealed until the end of the Kingdom of Israel, more than 250 years. The last king of Israel was Hoshea ben Elah, a righteous king who abolished all the roadblocks and declared "all who wish may now go up." The day he opened the roads was the 15th of Av.

Every holiday has its own character and essence and specific ways we celebrate it. Pesach we eat matzah, Chanukah we light the menorah, etc. How was Tu B'Av celebrated?

The Mishna tells us "There were no holidays for the Jews like Tu B'Av and Yom Kippur on which the daughters of Jerusalem went out and danced in the vineyards." This day had become a holiday of wedding matches. The girls would borrow clothing from each other so that no one, not even the wealthy, was wearing her own clothes. Why did they do this? In order not to embarrass any girls who could not afford their own nice dresses.

The Mishna continues that they would dance in the vineyards and all bachelors would go there. This was in essence like the singles events we have nowadays, whose only purpose is to help people find a suitable match.

The Mishna goes on to say "And what would the girls say? Young man, lift up your eyes and see what you choose. Don't look at beauty, look at family, for charm is



# SERMON RESOURCE FOR SHLUCHIM

## VAESCHANAN / ואתחנן

### AFTER THE TRAUMA COMES A HOLIDAY OF LOVE

false and beauty is foolishness, a woman who is G-d fearing shall be praised." The girls were warning the boys not to look at external things but rather to look at the families, at their lineage.

The Rebbe asks an interesting question about this: Why were the boys instructed to disregard beauty? What is so bad about it? The Torah clearly recognizes the importance of beauty as there are many laws whose purpose is to protect a woman's beauty. So why should a young man not look for beauty? They could have been told not to look only at beauty, but why are they told from the start not to look at that and to look at family and lineage?

The Rebbe teaches us something extraordinary here. The Mishna is not simply talking about boys and girls, but about something much deeper. Here the Mishna is talking about the marriage between G-d and the Jewish people. G-D is the groom and the Jewish people, the bride. At Mt. Sinai we got married to G-D and we've had a loving life together for close to 1,000 years now. Then, on the ninth of Av, the day of the destruction of the Temple something very serious occurred. There was a kind of "a separation" between the Jewish people and G-D, and every year we relive the trauma of the "separation".

Therefore in the days immediately following the ninth of Av, on the 15th of Av, the "holiday of love" we turn to G-D and we say to Him, "Young man, lift up your eyes ... Don't look at beauty..."



# SERMON RESOURCE FOR SHLUCHIM

## VAESCHANAN / ואתחנן

### AFTER THE TRAUMA COMES A HOLIDAY OF LOVE

Really the Jewish nation the “wife” in our times is not necessarily so beautiful. In our Torah and Mitzvot, our spiritual beauty, we don’t always look so good.

Therefore we turn to G-d, the “husband” and announce, “don’t look at our beauty, look at our family.” Look at where we came from, which family we come from; our forefathers, Abraham Isaac and Jacob and all the great giants all through the generations. Like it says in Song of Songs, “I am black and pleasant.” Rashi explains, “The Jewish nation says, I am black because of my deeds, but I am pleasant because of the deeds of my fathers.”

In Judaism everything is measure for measure, as is written in the Kabbala that any influence we get from above is a reflection of our actions. Depending on how we honor and treat our spouses, so will G-d treat us as His wife, until the coming of Moshiach.