

Yom Hamyeuchas

If you look carefully at the Jewish calendar for the month of Sivan, you may be surprised to find that the second day of the month is referred to as *Yom Hameyuchas*. Generally, we understand “*meyuchas*” or “*yichus*” as “being of distinguished lineage,” so the second of Sivan is apparently the day of distinguished lineage. What does that mean and why is such an attribution attached to that particular day?

The most popular explanation is based on the Gemara, *Shabbat* 86b-87a. The second of Sivan was the day when the Jewish people were charged by God to be a *mamlechet kohanim v'goy kadosh* — a priestly nation and a holy people. The *Aruch Hashulchan*, *Orach Chaim* 494:7, notes that this is the reason why it is called *Yom Hameyuchas* — the day upon which we as a Jewish people attained our distinctive and distinguished place among the family of nations.

Others suggest that in fact the day itself has no special or unique quality, but rather since it sits squarely between Rosh Chodesh on the previous day and the *shloshet yemei hagbalah*, the three preparatory days leading up to matan Torah, it too is swept up in the overall simcha of the period. As such, *Yom Hameyuchas* achieves its prestige from its proximity to the holy days that surround it.

The *Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez* cites a parable, which apparently is attributed to the Roziner Rav, to explain this idea further. A king wanted his palace decorated, so he invited four famous artists, each to paint one wall of the palace. Three of the four worked assiduously to mix



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the paints and sketch out the drawings that would decorate their respective walls. The fourth sat by, seemingly idle, writing numbers in a note pad. As the three were finishing their work on their individual walls, the fourth finally stood up and arranged a series of mirrors on his wall. When the king arrived to judge the work, he awarded the prize to the fourth artist. He said that while the creativity and skill of each of the three artists were both evident and special, the work of the fourth artist was truly the most beautiful in that it reflected the glory and the grandeur of all that surrounded it.

Yom Hameyuchas has no intrinsic holiness, but by virtue of the fact that it sits in the midst of holiness, it reflects all that surrounds it. Ultimately, that is what *yichus* is: the opportunity to reflect all the grandeur of that which came before and that which will follow. When we think of ourselves as primarily a conduit to reflect the glory of the generations that preceded us and we pray (and work so) that the generations that follow us will also create their own beauty and dignity in which we can take pride and ultimately bask in that reflection, then we are truly *meyuchas* — we are of distinguished lineage.

This Shavuot, we are marking the end of President Joel's 14 years at the helm of Yeshiva University. I can think of no

more apt description to the individual that he is and the role that he has played than as a *meyuchas*. He is of distinguished lineage as one who has worked to create a mural that reflects the glory of all that surrounded him, all the good and all the potential that we as a community have. He has built up our Yeshiva to reflect the very best that came before us — our tradition, our history, our story as he would so often refer to it. At the same time, he has invested his entire being in unleashing the potential of the glory of who and what will follow — the generations of young men and women who have absorbed those lessons, built on them and made them their own, and will, God willing, continue to bring pride and *nachat* to us as parents, grandparents, as Jews and as citizens of the world. He has created that fourth wall that reflects the glory, the beauty and the nobility of what was and what is still to be.

As a leader, he has created a paradigm that we could all benefit from emulating — understanding that our *yichus* comes not from any greatness that we attribute to ourselves, but rather to our commitment to ennoble the past and enable the future. His artistry has brightened the future of our community, the broader Jewish community throughout the world and mankind as a whole.