

RAV EITAM HENKIN: AM YISRAEL IN ERETZ YISRAEL

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Rav Eitam Henkin was born in 1984 to Rabbi Yehudah Herzl Henkin and Rebbetzin Chana Henkin, both important Torah scholars and educators. He learned in Yeshivat Nir in Kiryat Arba, served as a sergeant in the IDF, and married Naama, a graphic designer. He received semichah in 2011, and began learning in Machon l'Rabbanei Yishuvim and teaching in Midreshet Nishmat. He also edited and wrote for a variety of Torah periodicals, even as he completed an M.A. in history and received a fellowship toward writing a doctorate on the Chafetz Chaim. During these years, he and Naama produced four children.

In 2009, Rav Henkin published an article, *Tu b'Av — haMechoLot veHaChag* (*Alonei Mamrei 122*), about the significance of Tu b'Av — the fifteenth day of Av. In the Talmud, Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel (*Taanit 30b-31a*) introduces this day by saying, “There were no good days for Israel like the 15th of Av and Yom Kippur.” The Talmud continues to outline positive historical and ritual events related to this day; for example, this is the day when the women of Binyamin were permitted to marry outside of their tribe, after the civil war in Givah. (*Shoftim 20-21*). In another example, this was the day when roadblocks preventing Jews of the northern kingdom of “Yisrael” from travelling to the Beit haMikdash in Jerusalem were removed. But while these certainly were reasons for rejoicing, it is difficult to see how these relatively minor events could

have elevated the fifteenth of Av past our other holidays to the level of Yom Kippur, as a day of unparalleled joy. Rav Henkin, though, explained that the joy of both Yom Kippur and the fifteenth of Av is not really about ritual. It is about unity; these are two “good days for **the nation living in Israel.**” On these days the Jewish people were more unified than any other, and as Rav Henkin wrote, “There is no joy greater than the unity of the nation.”

Rav Henkin noted a similar idea expressed by the Ritva (Commentary to *Bava Batra 121a*). The Ritva noted that the Simchat Beit haShoevah celebration on Succot might be viewed as happier than Tu b'Av and Yom Kippur, given the Talmudic assertion, “One who did not see the joy of the Water Drawing [on Succot] never saw joy in his life!” (*Succah 51a*) However, Ritva explained that the joy of Simchat Beit haShoevah was among the leaders; Tu b'Av and Yom Kippur were days of celebration for the rank and file.

Rebbetzin Naama Henkin also promoted this message of Jewish unity in her graphic design work and in her writing. After Rav Eitam and Naama were murdered in a terrorist ambush on Succot 5776, people began circulating a Succah decoration Naama had designed. It displayed the *arba minim*, each one associated with the trait that made it attractive, and the midrashic statement, “Let these be bound together in one bundle, and each will atone for the other” (*Vayikra Rabbah 30:12*).



Rav Eitam Henkin Hy"d
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May the merit of the Henkins, Hy"d, bring about that which they most valued: the unification of the nation of Israel in the Land of Israel.

