What do we celebrate on the 15th of Ab?

Today is the 15th of the month of Ab. A very happy and special day.

In the Talmudic treatise of Ta'anit, Raban Shimon ben Gamliel says: *"There were no happier days for the people of Israel than on the 15th of Ab and Yom HaKippurim, since in those days the unmarried girls of Jerusalem came out dressed in white to dance in the vineyards. They would say to the young single guys: "Consider who you will choose (to be your wife) ».*

The Gemara tells that some young men were inclined to ask out the most virtuous women; other men would go for the pretty girls, and others for those coming from very good families. Many Jewish couples met for the fist time on the 15th of Ab!

To explain why this specific day was chosen for such a joyful and meaningful event, a day of SHIDUKHIM, the Talmud mentions what had happened on the 15th of Ab throughout Jewish history.

1. When the people of Israel complained against entering into the land of Israel, all those over the age of 20 were condemned to die in the desert. Forty years later, on the 15th of Ab, this decree was canceled.

2. In order to ensure the orderly division of the Land of Israel among the Twelve Tribes (which were settling in "provinces" or "states" □□□□□ □□ □□□□□□) marriages between members of different tribes were temporarily restricted. A woman who had inherited her father's land in the territory of Yehuda, for example, was not allowed to marry outside her tribe, for example with a person from the tribe of Binyamin. Since this would cause the transferring of land from Yehuda to Binyamin (Bamidbar, Chapter 36). These restrictions were lifted on 15 Ab, and marriages between people from different

tribes was allowed.

3. The 15th of Ab was also the day on which the tribe of Binyamin was readmitted into the people of Israel. The members of Binyamin were excommunicated for their behavior in the terrible episode of the rape of a woman from the Gib'ah , (Judges 19-21) an event that shook the community of Israel.

4. In the year 130 ACE Emperor Hadrian changed the name of Israel to Palestine, to definitively erase the name of Israel. He was also planning to transform Jerusalem into a pagan city. He plowed the city, changed its name to Aelia Capitolina, and gave the order to build a house of worship to the roman god Jupiter, on the site of Bet haMiqdash. This led to the revolt of Bar Kokhba, whose army managed to stop the Romans from building that house of worship. For a brief period (from 132 to 135) Bar Kokhba managed to establish an independent Jewish state. A large number of Roman troops were necessary to crush the revolt. Bar Kokhba, at the end, was defeated and he retreated to the city of Biter (Betar), located southwest of Jerusalem. It is estimated that about 400,000 Jews lived at that time in Biter, and all were massacred by the romans *"until their blood reached the Mediterranean Sea."* As an additional punishment, Hadrian did not allow the bodies of the murdered Jews to be buried. According to Jewish tradition, the bodies, miraculously, did not decompose for a period of three years.

Finally, in July 10 of the year 138, which fall on a 15th of the month of Ab, the evil emperor Hadrian died. And in those days, when a King died, all his decrees were lifted. The Jews were allowed then to bury the bodies of the Betar massacre.

With the death of Hadrian, a period of more tranquility began for the Jewish people, and the hopes of surviving and growing as a Jewish people grew. In the times of Hadrian (the rabbis referred to those days "SHEMAD" -extinction- , because *every single Jew was targeted for assassination*. Professor

Yehoshafat Harkabi asserts that 90% of the Jews of Judea were systematically murdered during the days of Hadrian □”□) the Rabbis thought to suspend marriages, and avoid bringing more Jewish children into this world, because most probably they would end up being murdered, or forced to live as Gentiles. But after the 15th of Ab of 138, as we were raising from the ashes, weddings were again celebrated in Israel.