**To Eat or Not to Eat: Eating Meat During the First Nine Days of Av**

There is a longstanding custom to refrain from eating meat or drinking wine from Rosh Hodesh Av through the end of Tisha B'av. The purpose of this custom is to cause us to remember not only the days on which the two Temples were destroyed, but to remember the suffering and catastrophe that led up to these events.

These prohibitions are overridden by participating in a "Seudat Mitzvah"—a meal which celebrates a mitzvah. Examples of a "seudat mitzvah" include a brit milah and celebrating when a person finishes learning a book of rabbinic text, such as a tractate of Talmud or Mishnah. This is called a "siyyum" which means "to complete."

This year at camp we will be celebrating a very special siyyum. Joshua Kulp, our Rosh Bet Midrash, has completed a commentary in English on the entire Mishnah. This commentary was part of a program called "The Mishnah Yomit" program. Every day people would receive an e-mail or a post on Facebook with the daily Mishnah. Josh began this project in 2001 and has just completed it now. Twelve years, 365 days, one mishnah every day. To give you a sense of this, if you started a project like this when you were in Kochavim you would be a senior counselor before you finished. Most a-side campers were not even born when Josh began this project. This is a unique opportunity to celebrate an amazing accomplishment. [If you are interested in learning or using this material some of it can be found at www.conservativeyeshiva.org].

As part of participating in Josh's siyyum everyone at camp is going to learn the first and the last Mishnah. In this way it is as if everyone at camp has finished the entire Mishnah as well. On Wednesday July 10, 6 days before Tisha B'av we will eat a meal meal to celebrate.

**Berachot, Chapter One, Mishnah One**

From what time may one recite the Shema in the evening?

From the time that the priests enter [their houses] in order to eat their terumah until the end of the first watch, the words of Rabbi Eliezer.

The sages say: until midnight.

Rabban Gamaliel says: until dawn.

Once it happened that his sons came home [late] from a wedding feast and they said to him: we have not yet recited the [evening] Shema. He said to them: if it is not yet dawn you are still obligated to recite.

And not in respect to this alone did they so decide, but wherever the sages say “until midnight,” the mitzvah may be performed until dawn.

The burning of the fat and the pieces may be performed till dawn.

Similarly, all [the offerings] that are to be eaten within one day may be eaten till dawn.

Why then did the sages say “until midnight”? In order to keep a person far from transgression.

**Oktzim, Chapter Three, Mishnah Twelve**

1. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: In the world to come the Holy One, Blessed be He, will make each righteous person inherit three hundred and ten worlds, for it is written: "That I may cause those that love me to inherit *yesh* (numerical value of 310); and that I may fill their treasuries" (Proverbs 8:21).
2. Rabbi Shimon ben Halafta said: the Holy One, Blessed be He, found no vessel that could contain blessing for Israel save that of peace, as it is written: "The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace."