

Juneteenth for FJC

Source Sheet by Lev Meirowitz Nelson

"What is Juneteenth?" by Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

<https://www.pbs.org/wnet/african-americans-many-rivers-to-cross/history/what-is-juneteenth/>

“The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and hired labor. The freedmen are advised to remain quietly at their present homes and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be allowed to collect at military posts and that they will not be supported in idleness either there or elsewhere.” —*General Orders, Number 3; Headquarters District of Texas, Galveston, June 19, 1865*

When Maj. Gen. Gordon Granger issued the above order, he had no idea that, in establishing the Union Army’s authority over the people of Texas, he was also establishing the basis for a holiday, “Juneteenth” (“June” plus “nineteenth”), today the most popular annual celebration of emancipation from slavery in the United States. After all, by the time Granger assumed command of the Department of Texas, the Confederate capital in Richmond had fallen; the “Executive” to whom he referred, President Lincoln, was dead; and the 13th Amendment abolishing slavery was well on its way to ratification.

ביצה ד' ב

אָמַר אַבְיִי כְּוִתִּיה דְּרַב מְסַתְבְּרָא דְתַנּוּ בְּרֵאשׁוֹנָה הָיוּ מְשִׁיאִין
מִשׁוּאוֹת מְשַׁקְלְקְלוּ הַכּוֹתִים הַתְּקִינוּ שֶׁיְהִי שְׁלוּחִין יוֹצְאִין

Beitzah 4b

Abaye said: On the contrary, It is **reasonable** to say **in accordance with** the opinion of **Rav** that the second day is observed as a Festival due to uncertainty, **as we learned** in a mishna (*Rosh HaShana* 22b): **Initially**, after the court sanctified the new month, **they would light torches** on the mountain tops, from one peak to another, to signal that the New Moon had been sanctified. **After the Samaritans [Kutim] disrupted** this method by lighting torches at the wrong times, the Sages **instituted that messengers should depart** to inform the people of the start of the month. Since the messengers could not reach all Diaspora communities before the beginning of the Festival, the Sages instituted that an additional Festival day should be observed there, due to the resultant uncertainty with regard to which day was the actual Festival day.

ביצה ד' ב

וְאֵילּוּ בְּטָלוּ כּוֹתִים עֲבָדִינָן חַד יוֹמָא וְהִכָּא דְמָטוּ שְׁלוּחִין עֲבָדִינָן
חַד יוֹמָא

Beitzah 4b

Abaye continues his argument: **And** this indicates that **if** the **Samaritans had desisted** from their interference, the Sages would have restored the earlier custom and **we would observe** only **one day**. **And**, similarly, in a place **where** the **messengers arrived** from Jerusalem on time, **we observe** only **one** Festival day.

ביצה ד' ב

וְהַשְׁתָּא דִּידְעִינוּ בְּקַבִּיעָא דִּירְחָא מַאי טַעְמָא עֲבַדִּינוּ תְּרֵי יוֹמֵי
 מִשּׁוּם דְּשִׁלְחוּ מִתָּם הִזְהָרוּ בְּמִנְהַג אַבוּתֵיכֶם בְּיַדֵּיכֶם זְמַנִּין דְּגִזְרוּ
 הַמְּלָכוֹת גִּזְרָה וְאַתִּי לְאַקְלִקוּלִי

Beitzah 4b

The Gemara asks: **And now that we know the determination of the first day of the new month, what is the reason that we observe two Festival days in the Diaspora? Because they sent a warning from there**, from Eretz Yisrael: Although now there is a fixed calendar and there is no uncertainty, **be careful to observe the custom of your fathers that you received**, because **at times the monarchy will issue decrees** of persecution restricting Torah study and the fixed calendar may be forgotten. **And** the people will **come to** have their proper observance of the Festivals **be disrupted** again. However, the fundamental *halakha* is that the observance of two Festival days is based on uncertainty.

ברכות ט"ז א

חָתָן פְּטוּר מִקְרִיאַת שְׁמַע לַיְלָה הָרִאשׁוֹנָה וְעַד מוֹצָאֵי שַׁבַּת אִם
 לֹא עָשָׂה מַעֲשֵׂה. וּמַעֲשֵׂה בְּרַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל שֶׁנִּשְׂא אִשָּׁה וְקָרָא
 לַיְלָה הָרִאשׁוֹנָה. אָמְרוּ לוֹ תַלְמִידָיו: לְמַדְתָּנוּ רַבֵּינוּ שֶׁחָתָן פְּטוּר
 מִקְרִיאַת שְׁמַע? אָמַר לָהֶם אֵינִי שׁוֹמֵעַ לָכֶם לְבַטֵּל הַיְמִנִי מִלְּכוֹת
 שָׁמַיִם אֲפִילוּ שְׁעָה אַחַת.

Berakhot 16a

A groom is exempt from the recitation of *Shema* on the first night [of his marriage], until Saturday night, if he has not performed the [marital] act. There was an incident where Rabban Gamliel married a woman and recited [*Shema* even] the first night. His students said to him: Didn't our teacher teach us that a groom is exempt from the recitation of *Shema*? He answered them: I am not listening to you [and] canceling from myself [the acceptance of] the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, for even one moment.