



A bereaved sister who is against Memorial Day being the day before Independence Day

In the list of clichés that adorn the speeches heard at every ceremony and in every newspaper headline on Memorial Day, the most prominent cliché is that "in the merit of the fallen the country was established, and it because of them that the state exists." You families gave your dearest of all, you paid the heaviest price for the existence of the state, but the festivities of Independence Day of the same country, that exists in the merit of your dear ones, you dear families, will not celebrate. Here we draw the line. I have not carried out a survey, but I have a feeling that there are many families who feel the same way as me

When I was younger, a few years after my brother Yuval was killed, once Memorial Day ended, with a heavy heart I would go out to celebrate with my friends. My parents would encourage me to go out and have a good time, but we, so they would say, will stay at home. Today, a mom myself, I find myself trailing after my daughter from performance to performance- the shows, the sausages in rolls, inflatable hammers and silly string. I find myself trying not to spoil her celebration, but my head is in an entirely different place

We do not need Memorial Day in order to remember. The ceremonies, songs, siren, atmosphere, stories and gun salute all intensify the sadness and the longing and everything wells up. And then, suddenly, it all stops. Finished. You had 24 hours to cry. Enough. Pull yourself together because the time has come to celebrate. Enough of the depression. But it doesn't work like that. Give us at least a day to calm down, to digest, to get ourselves together, to close the albums, to dry the tears

The sadness is difficult, heavy and bothersome. It is hard to bear the pain of the families and this is evident from the questions that are asked after the tragedy: how are the parents, have they returned to work

Be strong. Actually, we want to know that everything is okay, that everything is back on track, that we are functioning again. For this reason, the transition to Independence Day is reassuring – here, you are celebrating, happy, laughing. Do you want another shish kebab

The media does not know how to deal with the proximity of the two days either. It needs to provide the yearly portion of sadness leading up to Memorial Day, but then, immediately after that, Independence Day arrives and it is all about the celebrations

I am sure that most of the bereaved parents, brothers, sisters, widows, grandfathers, grandmothers and orphans stay at home. If it is truly in the merit of our beloved soldiers that we are here, then at least allow the families to feel good, to feel comfortable, to raise their heads and to celebrate with everyone. In all the chaos that we are in, the feeling of celebrating the existence of the state can comfort us, even slightly. The closeness of the two days does not allow bereaved families to celebrate. You go ahead and celebrate- with your permission we will continue Memorial Day for a little longer

Where is it written that Memorial Day and Independence Day need to be close to one another? Would it not be possible to feel the brave connection between the two if they were not close together? You will probably tell me it is the tradition and that we cannot change it, but I say- perhaps enough time has passed and now is the time to change

Idit Harel Shemesh, sister of Yuval Harel who was killed in the Lebanon War, 8.6.82

(from the NRJ site)



A bereaved father who is for Memorial Day being the day before Independence Day

The State of Israel, following the decision of the founding fathers who were led by David Ben-Gurion, chose to mark Memorial Day for the Fallen Soldiers of Israel right before Independence Day. Immediately after Memorial Day ends, in the evening, the lighting of the torches ceremony takes place on Mount Herzl – the national ceremony that ushers in the celebrations of independence.

In 1951, three years after the State was founded, the 4th of Iyar was fixed as the Memorial Day for the Fallen Soldiers of the IDF. In the previous two years, the situation was different- the second Israel Independence Day occurred when the War of Independence ended, and the commemoration of the fallen took place on Independence Day itself. That was the case in the following year too. In the very beginning, there was no separation between the happiness of the celebration, and the sadness and pain of the fallen. The bereaved families felt that the state was not being respectful of the memory of our dear ones. The families wanted a special, separate day on which the citizens of the country could unite in memory of the fallen.

The Prime Minister and Defense Minister at the time, David Ben-Gurion, set up a special public council for the commemoration of the fallen to discuss the subject. Their suggestion was to fix a special, separate day that will not be separated from Independence Day- it will fall the day before. The Israeli government accepted their suggestion.

The rationale behind this, that accompanies us- the bereaved families, and the country's leaders- from then until today, is the commandment "In their death they commanded us to live." This outlook tries to demonstrate the deep appreciation for all those who gave their lives while defending the people and the country, and expresses the painful, close connection between death and life. In their deaths, the fallen soldiers of Israel gave us life- the ability to continue living in this country.

In the spirit of the expression, "In their death they commanded us" we are commanded every year to stop and painfully remember the fallen soldiers the day before we celebrate the happiness of independence. We can also view this as the will of the fallen- that we continue forward, living and happy without sinking into pain and loss. This is the importance of the closeness of the two days- so that the Jewish people will know that when they come to celebrate Independence Day at the end of Memorial Day- in whose merit we are celebrating, in whose merit we were given this country. In the merit of the fallen soldiers for whom we have just finished a day of unifying with their memory.

We, the bereaved families, do not celebrate Independence Day. Our lives have changed indescribably, and we remain at home with our pain. We have no need for Memorial Day. Every day we wake up and go to sleep with our fallen sons. Every day is Memorial Day. Therefore, it is important for us that the fallen are commemorated so that they will be remembered by the Jewish people forever.

The writer is Eli Ben Shem, father of Sergeant Kobi Ben Shem z"l, who fell in the Israeli helicopter disaster

(from the ynet site)

