

62^o Yom Ha'atzmaut

62 YEARS OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

The Masorti Movement, represented by Noam, Marom, Mercaz & Masorti AmLat, accompanies the celebrations for the 62 years of our Medinah.

Chag Ha'Atzmaut Sameach !

I had the chance to live in Israel for 10 months, and to feel what can only be felt there. While we felt far from our real homes, in my case, Argentina, we could feel like at home, in Israel. The things that developed and continues to develop there, historic and newly built places, the language and a society that, like all others, has a rare mix. Religious, secular, government supporters, opponents, staunch defenders of the state, others with their criticism. All in all, an interesting process by which Israeli society is constantly developing.

The celebration of Yom Ha'atzmaut is something worth living. It's a party in all respects. But this celebration does not begin with Yom Ha'atzmaut, but a day earlier. Yom Ha'zikaron. On this day, we remember all the fallen soldiers in the various wars in which the State of Israel has participated. It is a whole country remembering its fallen. It is an entire nation going into mourning, weeping for those who gave their lives for a common cause. It is on that very shocking minute of silence when the siren sounds that we leave whatever we were doing at the moment and stand wherever we are: On the street, on the bus, in a Mall, etc. But the most striking is the change that occurs overnight. The anguish and pain for those who have fallen is dispelled by the joy of independence. I had the opportunity to participate, in Mayanot, which works in the school of the Masorti Tnua in Ierushalaim, in the closing ceremony of Yom Ha'zikaron and the beginning of Yom Ha'atzmaut. Music, kids coming in with flags, Rikudim, all dancing and celebrating. Because it is a party. It's Israel's birthday. The celebration of another year of being a free, sovereign, independent, and self-determined nation, are reasons for carnival everywhere. The city, beyond

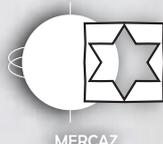
the national holiday, is dressed for a party. The traffic on most avenues is stopped and the music shows are the order of the night, for all tastes. What is felt, is that with faith, courage, and integrity, we celebrate and value the fact that we are a free nation. And beyond the differences in politics, everyone celebrates the same. All share that joy. At night, the bars stay open long hours and the streets are crowded.

But the next day, everything continues. Parks are full. It is the day when most Israelis have a barbecue. In that year, I had the opportunity to watch, at the center of the city, different plays in the street. Each of these portrayed some time in the history of the creation of the State of Israel. And we witnessed, excited, the joy we all felt to be there at that time.

Yom Ha'atzmaut is not only the anniversary of the declaration of the State of Israel. It is the celebration of a new year of life. The State of Israel is one of the achievements as Jews. As our teacher Abraham Joshua Heschel once said: "Not only is it a return to the land of Israel, but also a return to Judaism." It's a new year that we celebrate, where Israel continues to grow. In a difficult region, with a quite different reality from many other states in the world. With much more to grow, improve and continue on its path.

For us in the Diaspora, Israel is the place where we look when we pray. It is the place to where we direct our hearts, in the most important moments of life.

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MERCAZ



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