

Tu beAv

The Masorti Movement, represented by Noam, Marom, Mercaz & Masorti AmLat, invites to enjoy this *Tu b'Av*, led by the marvellous experiences that we all have inside our hearts.

Tu Beav, the fifteenth day of the month of Av, is a minor festival in the Jewish calendar; little known and celebrated, without many customs or even references in the Jewish sources. It appears in the time of the Second Temple and marks the beginning of the grape harvest in the Land of Israel. According to the Mishnah (Ta'anit 4:8), women celebrated this holiday by dressing in white and dancing and singing through the vineyards. According to the Talmud (Bavli Ta'anit 30b), it is a holiday of great joy: "Rabbi Shimon the son of Gamliel said: there are no better days for the people Israel than the fifteenth of Av and Yom Kippur". The Talmud assumes that Yom Kippur is a very good day since, according to tradition, it was the day that the people Israel received the second set of tablets from Moses and it is the day when G-d accepts the repentance and forgiveness of each person. Nevertheless, the Sages ask why is Tu Beav among the best holidays for the people. In the Talmud, the rabbis describe six occurrences that happened on that date:

- 1) Men were allowed to marry women from other tribes and not just women of the same tribe.
- 2) On that date the tribe of Benjamin was allowed to return to the congregation.
- 3) The death of the generation that was misled by the Spies into doubting the possibility of inheriting the land was concluded.
- 4) The last king of Israel, Hoshea ben Elah, removed the guards that king Jeroboam had appointed to prevent the Israelites from coming on pilgrimage to Jerusalem.
- 5) The Romans allowed the burial of the soldiers of Beitar who fell in defense of the town during the Bar-Kochva revolt.

From a liturgical perspective, what separates this day from a regular day, is the abstention from Tachanun (petitional and penitential prayers) and hespedim (eulogies delivered in honor of a deceased person) in the framework of a burial.

If we pay attention to the different events associated with this date, as told by the Talmud, we can say that two very important values are bound with this date. Firstly, the respect for difference and the unity of the people: this is reflected by the permission to marry women from other tribes and by allowing the tribe of Benjamin to rejoin the people. Even though the tribes maintained their differences, their wealth, territories, inheritances and customs, they were still part of one people; this is what we celebrate on Tu Beav.

Secondly, the idea of repentance, forgiveness and clemency is quite prevalent: in the Sinai desert, G-d stops punishing the people, shows them mercy and forgives them. Likewise, the Romans pity the people and allowed them to bury their dead.

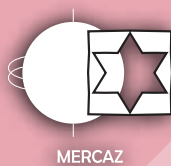
Moreover, we can find a third aspect in which this holiday finds new meaning in modernity, especially in the State of Israel. There, this holiday is called Chag Hahavah, the day of love, to the point of considering it a Jewish version of Valentine's Day –the festivity for lovers- and many couples chose to get married on this date.

Tu Beav is a day that dresses itself in white to celebrate love, unity among the people, and sincere respect for the differences among human beings, as well as compassion and clemency; pillars that we should interiorize, remember and practice daily. TuBeav reminds us of these values in order that we celebrate them on this special date and continue to bequeath them to future generations.

Tu Beav Sameach!

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