



# Rabbi Silvers'

## Shabbat Message



Good Shabbes...

“All you need is love. But a little chocolate now and then doesn't hurt.” (Charles M. Schulz, cartoonist and creator of “Peanuts”)

I am sure that there was a lot of chocolate sold this past week in observance of Valentine's Day. Though many of us observe Valentine's Day, as a secular celebration, in fact its origin is from the Roman festival of Lupercalia, held in mid-February. The festival, which celebrated the coming of spring, included fertility rites and the pairing off of women with men by lottery. At the end of the 5th century, Pope Gelasius I replaced Lupercalia with St. Valentine's Day, thus its origin comes from both the pagan and Christian world.

Where does that leave us as Jews? Should we or shouldn't we celebrate Valentine's Day? (I personally hope that we celebrate the love we have for others every day!) Why don't we have a special day in our Jewish calendar devoted to love?

Guess what? We do!

Tu B'Av -- the 15th Day of Av. It is both an ancient and modern holiday. Originally a post-biblical day of joy, it served as a matchmaking day for unmarried women in the Second Temple period (before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E.). Tu B'Av was almost unnoticed in the Jewish calendar for many centuries but it has been rejuvenated in recent decades, especially in the modern state of Israel. In its modern incarnation it is gradually becoming a Hebrew-Jewish Day of Love, slightly resembling Valentine's Day in English-speaking countries.

There is no way to know exactly how early Tu B'Av began. The first mention of this date is in the Mishnah (the Oral Torah compiled and edited in the end of the second century), where Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel is quoted saying:

“There were no better (i.e. happier) days for the people of Israel than the Fifteenth of Av and Yom Kippur, since on these days the daughters of Israel/Jerusalem go out dressed in white and dance in the vineyards. What were they saying: ‘Young man, consider whom you choose (to be your wife)?’” (Talmud, *Ta'anit*)

The Talmud also attempts to find the origin of this date as a special joyous day, and offers several explanations. One of them is that on this day the Biblical “tribes of Israel were permitted to mingle with each other,” namely: to marry women from other tribes (Talmud, *Ta'anit*). This explanation is somewhat surprising, since nowhere in the Bible is there a prohibition on “intermarriage” among the 12 tribes of Israel. This Talmudic source probably is alluding to a story in the book of Judges (21): After a civil war between the tribe of Benjamin and other Israelite tribes, the tribes vowed not to intermarry with men of the tribe of Benjamin.

Like every Jewish holiday, Tu B'Av begins at sundown of the day before. It falls therefore on the night between the 14th and 15th day of the Hebrew month. This just happens to also be the night of a full moon in our lunar calendar. Perhaps not so coincidentally, this links Tu B'Av to the ideas of romance, love, and fertility, which was common for full moons in ancient cultures.

In recent decades Israeli civil culture has begun promoting festivals of singing and dancing on the night of Tu B'Av. So, the entertainment and beauty industries have found additional work and revenue from Tu B'Av.

I wonder how the chocolate industry does in Israel on Tu B'Av?

Love You All! (And to show it we'll have chocolate at the oneg after services!)

Shabbat Shalom,  
Rabbi Bob Silvers



Musical Shabbat Service Tonight with  
the Acoushticks &  
Guest Speaker Danielle Hartman  
from Jewish Family Services  
7:30 pm  
Cohen/Friedkin Sanctuary

