

Israel's Answer to Valentine's Day: Tu B'Av

Growing up in America, celebrating Valentine's Day changed during the different stages in my life.

I remember the fun-themed Valentine's Day cards that I would write in elementary school, hoping to receive a card from my Valentine, who was eight, by the way. What does an 8-year-old know of Valentine's Day, besides the heart candy saying: *Be My Valentine?*

As I got older, Valentine's Day took on a whole new meaning. In high school and in college, if you weren't in a relationship, you wanted this day to come and go as quickly as possible. Eating out in restaurants was a huge mistake, as all the happy couples were expressing their love.

Living in Israel, I was so excited to realize that Israelis don't pay too much attention to Feb. 14 because of its Christian origin.

Ok, restaurants have special (overpriced) menus and flowers are being sold. But it isn't the crazed over-the-top, hit you on the head, "Hallmark holiday" like it is in the United States.

Little did I know that Judaism has a "Day of Love" of its own!

Tu B'Av, the 15th Day of Av, was celebrated in the time of the Second Temple period (before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E.) marking the beginning of the grape harvest. It also served as a matchmaking day for unmarried women. The unmarried girls of Jerusalem dressed in white garments and went out to dance in the vineyards.

Today in Israel, it is celebrated as a holiday of love, Hag

HaAhava (חאהבה חאהבה), similar to Valentine's Day.

Sure, the marketing promotions are visible with shopping malls being decorated with pink and red hearts, bakeries selling heart-shaped cookies and cakes. But thankfully, these love-cliché items only make their appearance just a few days before, as a reminder of the love we cherish if we have it, and the love we long for if we don't.

No matter where you live, you can't escape a holiday for love. So I guess I should just embrace it instead of hiding from it. I don't think I will see many unmarried girls here dance in vineyards this year. But on Valentine's Day and on Tu B'Av, which falls this year on July 22, 2013, I will be sure to raise a glass of wine to my loved one.

For the original article, visit [here](#).