



TU B’AV, LOVE IN THE TNUA

Mariano Wexler (Mato), Shaliach Hanoar Hatzioni B’México

There are different versions to the story of the origin of the holiday of Tu B’Av. Some associate it with a biblical festival alluding to nature, mainly due to the agricultural way of life lived at that time. Others relate Tu B’Av’s origins to the salvation of the Tribe of Binyamin, which was at risk of being exterminated due to a conflict that led the other tribes to forbid its women from marrying men from this tribe until, eventually, the other tribes canceled this prohibition, and the Tribe of Binyamin was saved. And so, there are several reasons why we celebrate Tu B’Av, and that is why we associate it with the celebration of love of the Jewish people.

Moreover, Tu B’Av represents the other angle of the month of Av, during which we also commemorate Tisha B’Av, which is associated with the “baseless hatred” which led to the destruction of the Jewish people. In Tu B’Av, we celebrate “baseless love”; we celebrate life; we celebrate the affection towards our closest and most beloved people; we celebrate the union, mutual commitment and the fact that we are not alone – we have someone to take care of, admire, love and respect.

In many occasions, Tu B’Av goes unnoticed in the tnuva, but this mainly has to do with us, with what we do and feel. Much of what happens in the tnuva and what we do as educators is rooted in love, and there are different ways of love, many of which we witness in the tnuva. I would like to mention a few of them.

One of the most familiar forms in which love is expressed in the tnuva is through the madrich-chanich connection. The connection between the educator and the participant evokes a relationship of mutual affection, respect and admiration. This connection is an example of love that transcends generations, space and time. No matter how much time passes, this affection remains alive, and we maintain it for those who were our chanichim or madrichim.

Another form of love that appears in the tnuva and, in my opinion, is essential for every educator, is the passion for what we do. We are a part of the tnuva by choice, because we like it, because we love what we do; or at least, that is how I think it should be. When we plan a peula, it is our passion that drives us to give our time and energies to make it the best peula in the world. This is how it should be! When we are passionate, we invest more; we give our best. Therefore, we must consider what happens to our passion when we find it hard to give our time and energies.

The love for oneself, for who we are, is a fundamental part of us, and it is a love we must constantly strengthen in our chanichim and madrichim. We must encourage them to respect themselves, to care for themselves, to assume responsibility for their actions and to know their limits. In the tnuva, we perceive the personal example as the most powerful means of education. Therefore, if the madrich does not respect and protect himself and does not know his limits, he cannot serve as an example to others.



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Finally, and highly importantly, in the tnuva we also mention the love for Israel as an inseparable part of our culture and Jewish identity. Israel is a central part of our education. We contemplate whether we can criticize it, we debate how it should be, and we visit whenever we can. In Israel, we experience perhaps the most significant year of our lives, and many of us decide to settle there, build a family and make our small contribution to make Israel a better society.

To summarize, I believe that, as educators, we must constantly strengthen these forms of love since that is what makes us genuine, better people, better leaders and better madrichim. In the words of the psychoanalyst and philosopher Erich Fromm in his book *The Art of Loving*: “Love tries to understand, convince, revive. For this reason, he who loves constantly transforms, captures more, notices more, is more productive, is more himself.”

Chag Ahava Sameach!