

### Eid Al Banat

This day, marked on the first of the month of Tevet, celebrates the bravery, wisdom, and kinship of women throughout the generations. The day makes reference to the Book of Ezra where the community in the Land of Israel once again married Jewish women. It also marks the day Esther was brought before the king and made queen over Vashti. And as it coincides with Hanukkah, Eid al-Banat references Judith, which Tunisian tradition has slaying Holifernus on this day, and Hannah, the daughter of Matityahu, who is credited with sparking the Hasmonean Revolt.

The Baal Haturim explains that Rosh Hodesh was given to women specifically for their opportition to give their jewelry to be used for the Golden Calf. He posits that the twelve months were originally assigned in parallel to the twelve tribes of Israel. But when the men decided to give their gold to build the Golden calf, they lost the privilege and each new month became a day of camaraderie for women.

״ושמעתי מאחי הר״י טעם לדבר, לפי שהמועמדים נתקנו כנגד אבות פסח כנגד אברהם… שבועות כנגד יצחק… סוכות כנגד יעקב… וי״ב ראשי חודשי השנה, שגם הם נקראים מועדים כנגד י״ב שבטים, וכשליאור בעגל, ניטלו מהם וניתנו לנשותיהם לזכר שלא היו באותו החטא.״

* טור, אורח חיים סימן תיז אות א

Others say that the festival falls specifically on this Rosh Hodesh because Queen Esther was chosen to be queen in place of Vashti on this day. It may be that this is the source of some of the customs of the day. For example, In Tunisia they would make honey cakes and deliver them like they would the Purim Mishloach Manot. There would be gifts given to the poor as well. The ceremonies would serve as a connection between the younger generation to the older women of the community. Women would send large platter of sefunj to their married daughters.

Customs varied by region and even by family (from the book “Minhag Nashim” by Aliza Lavi)

* Lighting candles and making a special feast
* Always with music, dancing and merriment
* Some communities would have the women all gather in the synagogue, go to the teba and kiss the Torah scrolls. The area Hakham would spread out his arms and bless them. Then it was a day of visiting, feasting and camaraderie.
* Mothers send large platters of Sefunj and other delicacies to their married daughters
* More recently in Libya, the Ben Yehuda Zionist movement would put on the play “Yehudit” every year throughout Hanukah – but particularly on the women’s R”H.
* Some communities even turned it into a communal bat mitzvah celebrations for all those who became bat mitzvah that year.
* Other communities created a sense of Yom Kippur with women getting for prayer and reconciliation.

Overall, they would celebrate a sisterhood.

The myriad of traditions associated with the day refer to varying points in the stories of Esther and Judith. For example, the custom of having a feast for women, sending cookies to friends, and the general ambience of sisterhood, relates to the story of Esther, from Vashti’s feast to mishloah manot to Esther’s connection with the other women in the house of Ahashverosh. Likewise, it is customary to eat dairy, a possible reference to Judith’s tactics in killing Holifernus by serving him cheese (and wine).

The holiday is also said to have been celebrated in Thessaloniki but in a different manner. It would mirror Yom Kippur and would be a time of fasting and asking for forgiveness from each other.

Additional Resources

Video of online event:  <https://youtu.be/-zzaqeJq7Zk?si=A0hfHOQIH0fhqtAu> - overview to 16:16, later on some dance, singing (Kol isha), 45:33 a special dish with Dr. Helene Pereira.

A source sheet created by Sapir Shans on Sefaria <https://www.sefaria.org/sheets/202481?lang=bi>

Yo-yo cookies – Tunisian, from Jacklyn Fadlon

Ingredients:

3 eggs

400 gram flour

Grated peel of one orange

1 tsp baking powder

1 teaspoon vanilla sugar or vanilla extract

1 cup oil

1 cup sugar

Syrup

2 cups water

1.5 cup sugar

Juice of one lemon

Instructions:

1. Add to mixer eggs, oil, sugar, baking powder, orange peel and flour. Mix until you get a soft even dough.
2. Divide the dough into three equal portions and roll them each out to .5 cm. Cut it into approximately 7 cm circles and place on baking paper.
3. Deep fry on each side until they are golden
4. Boil all the ingredients for the syrup on medium heat until you get a sticky sauce.
5. Dip the fried circles in the hot syrup and decorate with coconut, sprinkles, or other.

Dabla from Tripoli, by Yehudit Aviv

Ingredients:

3 eggs

¼ tsp baking soda

1 tsp vanilla extract

3 cups flour

½-3/4 cup cornflour or flour

Oil for deep frying

Syrup

3 cups water

2 cups sugar

Juice from half a lemon

1 tsp cornflour (optional)

Instructions:

1. Beat eggs gently. While beating add the baking soda and vanilla.
2. Kneed together the remaining ingredients adding the flour gradually until the dough is smooth and completely mixed.
3. Put the dough at the side for an hour and a half.
4. Divide the dough into 4 equal parts. Flour a work surface with cornflour or flour and roll it out long and thin, approximately 3 cm wide and thin enough to be almost see-through.
5. Heat oil in a pan for frying on medium heat and fry the strips until lightly golden. Careful not to leave in too long as you don’t want a brown coloring. Bubbles in the dabla is a good sign.
6. For syrup: boil water with the sugar for 20 minutes. Add lemon. Juice and cook another 10 minutes until it has a syrupy texture.
7. When the syrup is ready dip the cookies carefully in the syrup for a few seconds on each side. Careful not to break them.
8. Place the cookies on a plate not teaching each other so that they do not stick one to the other or break.