

SOME BACKGROUND BEFORE VIEWING

THE FILM: Unetaneh Tokef



The story of Yom Kippur on Kibbutz Beth Hashita

What happens to a small close-knit community when 11 of its members are buried in one day? What forms of mourning and meaning are available to this community, when religion is foresworn? And when the 11 young men all died fighting for Israel in the Yom Kippur war, how should their secular kibbutz now relate to Yom Kippur?

This moving documentary follows the trauma of Kibbutz Beth Hashita, and how composer Yair Rosenblum contributes through his music a way for the kibbutz to find an authentic Jewish Israeli voice for their pain.

In 1973 The Yom Kippur War traumatized all of Israeli society, but no more so than Kibbutz Beth Hashita, a small secular kibbutz in the north of Israel. Eleven members of Bet Hashita fell in battle. From then on the kibbutz was forced to search for the ritual and forms of remembrance that were authentic to a secular community. In 1990, Israeli composer Yair Rosenblum came to live on Kibbutz Beth Hashita. He was moved by their ceremonies and wanted to contribute. He composed a new melody to the liturgical poem Unetaneh Tokef, which was a traditional part of the High Holiday service. This powerful and far-reaching melody became one of the central focuses of the holiday.

This documentary reviews the process that Rosenblum underwent when composing the new melody, and delves into the questions and memories that kibbutz members carry with them.

Unetaneh Tokef explores the role of ritual, tradition, and creativity in coming to terms with loss and the vagaries of the human condition. At the same time the film gives us a poignant glimpse into the nature of an Israeli community driven and wounded by love of the land, of the community, and of the State of Israel in a time of war.

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