

From The Rabbi



Tisha B'Av, the 9th day of the Hebrew month of Av, is the day on the Jewish calendar on which we mourn for all of the calamities that have afflicted the Jewish People throughout history. According to tradition, it was on this day in 596 BCE and in 70 CE that the Temples in Jerusalem were destroyed. These were days on which the Jewish People suffered great humiliation, the loss of national independence and exile from our homeland.

On Tisha B'Av in the year 135 CE, the Roman emperor Hadrian established a heathen temple on the site of the Temple ruins and re-established Jerusalem as a pagan city, into which the Jews were forbidden to enter. The expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 is also said to have occurred with many of the atrocities committed against the Jews during the Crusades and, in our own era during the Holocaust.

Even though we are privileged to live in a time when so much of Jerusalem has been rebuilt and once again we have sovereignty within our homeland, it is still important for us to appropriately mark this day with the traditional observances of mourning and reading from the Book of Lamentations (a Biblical dirge that decries the desolation of the once magnificent city of Jerusalem). Tisha B'Av is a fast day on which we refrain from the luxury of wearing leather, the comfort of bathing and the joy of marital relations. By observing these prohibitions, we have the opportunity to personally feel the pain and the loss that is an integral part of the history that makes us who we are as Jews. Throughout the year, the rituals of our tradition help us to bring the joys as well as the sorrows of Jewish history into our own contemporary experience of life.

In the Book of Ecclesiastes it is written: "There is a time and purpose for everything. A time to be born, a time to die, a time to dance and a time to mourn. We will continue to mourn until we, as a people, are living in peace with our fellow Jews and in peace with our neighbors.

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