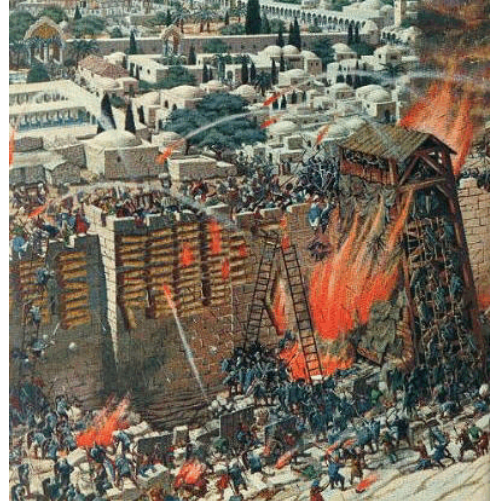


תשעה באב Tisha B'av

Tisha B'Av, the ninth day of the month of Av, commemorates the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 586 BCE. It is the most mournful day in the Jewish calendar with fasting, and prayers, including reading the Book of Lamentations.

One of the prayers in the liturgy is a cry for salvation, for the Messiah. This day is mentioned in scripture:



2 Kings 25:8-10 (CJB): In the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which was also the nineteenth year of King N'vukhadnetzar, king of Bavel, N'vuzar'adan, the commander of the guard and an officer of the king of Bavel, entered Yerushalayim. He burned down the house of *ADONAI*, the royal palace and all the houses in Yerushalayim—every notable person's house he burned to the ground. The whole army of the Kasdim, who were with the commander of the guard, broke down the walls of Yerushalayim on every side.

The prophet Z'kharyah (Zekhariah ~400 BCE) mentions this day as an established (and abused) fast day. In Z'kharyah (Zechariah) 7:2-5, the people of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regem-Melech, together with their men, to entreat Adoni by asking the priests of the house of Adoni Almighty and the prophets,

Should we go into mourning and abstain from pleasure during the fifth month, as we have been doing for all these years?

It was then that this message came to me from *ADONAI-Tzva'ot*:

Speak to all the people of the land and the cohanim. Tell them, when you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months throughout these seventy years...

Other sorrows have happened on this day as well. That is, the **fifth month** counting from Passover: Nisan, Iyar, Sivan, Tammuz, **Av**. On the 7th of Av the Babylonian general entered Jerusalem. The Temple was burned on the ninth. The event above was in the year 586 B.C.E. The second Temple was destroyed on the same date, but in the year 70 C.E. Many other tragedies happened on this date, itemized below.

- In 1290 the edict compelling the Jews to leave England was signed.
- The expulsion of the Jews from Spain took place on Tisha B'Av, August 2, 1492. There had been a magnificent Spanish Jewish community, the second greatest in

Diaspora history in wealth and significance, bested only by the modern American Jewish Community. Sephardic Jewry came to a sudden calamitous end this day.

- The generation that came out of Egypt with Moses heard the pronouncement of the forty year wandering, until their death, on this day.
- Bar Kokhba's fortress, Betar, fell to the Romans in 135 C.E., ending his revolt with the killing of Rabbi Akiva and a whole generation of religious leaders, and ushering in two millenia of exile and persecution.
- World War I begins with the declaration of war on Germany by Britain and Russia, 1914.
- First Crusade declared by Pope Urban II in 1095. 10,000 Jews killed in the first month, and whole communities were destroyed in the Rhineland and France. Traditionally, this is a day of great mourning, fasting, and prayers, including reading the Book of Lamentations. One of the prayers in the liturgy is a cry for salvation, for the Messiah.

Tisha b'Av is a biblical holiday, though not a High Holy Day, since normal work is performed on this day. It is described in Zechariah 8:19 as the fast of the fifth month. The same verse promises that the fasts of the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth months will become joy, gladness, and cheerful feasts for the House of Judah; so love truth and peace. Tisha b'Av is a day of total fasting. (NOTE: A lenient attitude is adopted toward sick persons, even those who are not dangerously or critically ill. Such persons are permitted to fast for only part of the day and are not required to complete the entire fast.)

As on Yom Kippur, eating or drinking anything from before sundown on the eighth of Av till nightfall is forbidden. The following mourning practices are in effect:

- You are not to wear regular leather shoes. (There are no prohibitions against footwear made from rubber, cloth, or non-leather materials.)
- You must abstain from washing or bathing. (This applies only to washing for personal comfort or pleasure. It does not apply to washing to wash off dirt, or to washing upon arising, or after taking care of one's needs.)
- Men abstain from shaving and women from cosmetics.
- Abstaining from sexual relations.
- Abstaining from studying the Torah, for such study gladdens the heart, as it is written in Psalm 19, verse 9: "The precepts of *ADONAI* are right, rejoicing the heart." It is, however, permissible to read or study such books as Lamentations, Job, selections of Jeremiah, and parts of the Talmud that deal with the destruction of the Temple or with the laws of mourning.

- Abstaining from doing any work (in the usual sense of the word, not in the Sabbath definition of work), at least all evening and until noon of the fast day. After noon on Tisha b'Av, it is permissible to engage in all work, if necessary, although the fasting and mourning might make it difficult to do so.
- Whenever possible, at least until noon, it is customary to sit only on lower stools after the fashion of those who sit in mourning during the week of shiva.

To emphasize the mournful character of the day, it is customary to remove the parokhet, the curtain from the Holy Ark, and the decorative cover from the Reader's table, providing a stark appearance. (In some communities, the Ark is draped in black.) It is customary in some communities to extinguish most of the lights, reciting the kinot by the dim light of candles held by the worshipers.

Because a tallit and tefillin are called religious adornments, symbols of beauty, neither is worn at the morning services of Tisha b'Av.

The reason for all these things is that a person's entire thoughts should be directed to mourning for Jerusalem. He should be like someone who has just lost a close relative. This is so that our hearts will be moved so that we should recall the evil deeds we have done and those that our fathers did, causing all these great tragedies. When we think about them, we will repent and change our ways.

The Hebrew word for mourner, Avail, Aleph- Vet- Lahmed uses the same word as Av - Aleph , Vet. Av means father. In spite of whatever punishment G-d administers, remember that He is still your Father in Heaven. There will be destruction of Aleph, the First Temple (and the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet) and Vet, the Second Temple (and the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet), on this date. Rome and Babylonia will be the two nations responsible for the destruction of the House of G-d. In Hebrew, these two nations respectively begin with the letter aleph, standing for Edom or Rome and bet or vet which stands for Bavel or Babylonia.

Sources for this summarization: www.adat.org/ad09005.htm and www.jewishgates.com/file.asp?File_ID=1278