

כל המתאבל על חורבנה של
ירושלים זוכה ורואה בבנינה...

“When the month of Av begins,
we reduce our joy...”

(Talmud, Ta’anit, 26)



TISHA B'AV & THE 3 WEEKS

All Who Mourn The Destruction of Jerusalem
Will Merit The Celebration Of Her Rebirth...

KCS

5771-2011

תשעה באב

Tisha B'Av

August 8-9, 2011 ~ 9 Av 5771

Monday evening - Tuesday

Service: Monday evening, August 8

מעריב – קריאת איכה

Ma'ariv and Reading of Megillat Eicha

8:30 PM

In the KCT Bet Midrash

Our sages teach that whoever mourns over Jerusalem will merit the future vision of her joy. As it is written in Isaiah (66:10):

"Rejoice greatly with her, all who mourn her."

שאלו
שלום
ירושלים

PRAY
FOR
THE
PEACE
OF
JERUSALEM



Preparation Through Study

Drawn from various sources, ancient, historic and modern, the following selection of personal study materials is presented by the editors with a view toward stimulating thought, study, discussion, agreement and disagreement, and evaluation approaching and leading into the days of the Three Weeks and Tisha B'Av.

What Happened on these Solemn Days?

Shiva Asar B'Tamuz (the 17th of Tammuz, this year on Tuesday July 19), begins a three-week period of semi-mourning which includes the first nine days of the month of Av (referred to as **Bein HaM'Tzarim**, meaning "between the straits", because it says in Eicha (1:3): ". . . and her pursuers overtook her between the straits", referring to the calamitous events that befell the Jewish people during that period), and culminates with **Tisha B'Av** (the 9th of Av). The Mishna describes the tragedies that occurred at various points throughout that calendar period in the times of the two Temples and through our early history, and more contemporary rabbis have extended the categorization of the calamities . . .

Five disasters are described in the Mishna to have occurred on **Shiva Asar B'Tamuz**:

1. Moshe descended from Mount Sinai, discovered the people worshipping the golden calf, and broke the *luchot* (tablets);
2. During the siege of Jerusalem before the destruction of the first Temple, the *Tamid*, the daily sacrificial offering, was suspended because the Kohanim (who had fortified themselves inside the Temple) could not get any more sheep for the sacrifices.
3. In the year 70, the Romans breached the walls of Jerusalem before the destruction of the second Temple
4. Apustumus the Wicked burned a Torah Scroll (in the First Temple; an event described in the Talmud, but we are unsure who he was. Some sources claim that he was a Roman general and that this event occurred just prior to the Bar Kochba revolt. Other sources claim that he was a general of Antiochus and that this event occurred around 168 BCE.)
5. The Romans set up an idol in the courtyard of the Second Temple, thereby defiling the Temple (described in the Book of Daniel, 12:11.)

In more recent times, many more such events occurred on this unique day in the Jewish calendar including these:

In 1239, Pope Gregory IX ordered the confiscation of all manuscripts of the Talmud.

In 1391, more than 4,000 Spanish Jews were killed in Toledo and Jaen, Spain.

In 1559 the Jewish Quarter of Prague was burned and looted.

In 1944, the entire population of the Kovno ghetto was sent to the death camps.

In 1970, Libya ordered the confiscation of all Jewish property.

On Tisha B'Av, five national calamities occurred, described by the Mishna:

1. During the time of Moses, Jews in the desert accepted the slanderous report of the Ten Spies, and the decree was issued forbidding them from entering the Land of Israel. (1312 BCE)

2. The First Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians, led by Nebuchadnezzar. 100,000 Jews were slaughtered and millions more exiled. (586 BCE)

3. The Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans, led by Titus. Some two million Jews died, and another one million were exiled. (70 CE)

4. The Bar Kochba revolt was crushed by Roman Emperor Hadrian. The city of Betar -- the Jews' last stand against the Romans -- was captured and liquidated, with over 100,000 Jews slaughtered. (135 CE)

5. One year later, the Temple area and its surroundings were plowed under by the Roman general Turnus Rufus. Jerusalem was rebuilt as a pagan city -- renamed Aelia Capitolina -- and access was forbidden to Jews.

Other grave misfortunes throughout Jewish history occurred on the Ninth of Av, including:

6. The Spanish Inquisition culminated with the expulsion of Jews from Spain by King Ferdinand on Tisha B'Av in 1492.

7. World War I broke out on the eve of Tisha B'Av in 1914 when Germany declared war on Russia. German resentment from the war set the stage for the Holocaust.

8. On the eve of Tisha B'Av 1942, the mass deportation began of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto, en route to Treblinka. **.K.**

Observance and Prohibition

The Mishna reminds all future generations of B'nai Yisroel that as we increase our joy when the month of Adar begins, so do we diminish our rejoicing when the month of Av begins. We do so by limiting business transactions, and by not building or planting for a joyous purpose. Engagements and marriages

are prohibited, as is the eating of meat or drinking of wine until after Tisha B'Av.

The Three Weeks

Generally, during the Three Weeks, although customs vary by community, visiting cinemas, theaters, concert halls or any other place where there is public entertainment is prohibited. With the exception of socks and undergarments, new clothes should not be purchased. Haircuts are forbidden during this time. According to some authorities, men who shave daily for business reasons may shave during this period; others allow their beards to grow.

The Nine Days

The intensity of the three week mourning period increases with the onset of Rosh Chodesh Menachem Av. So, in addition to those items mentioned above, during the days between Rosh Chodesh and Tisha B'Av, we are prohibited from:

* Building or performing alterations in one's home, unless the work is important repair work. This prohibition includes painting, wall papering and other forms of home decorations.

* Eating meat or drinking wine, except on Shabbat, or at a *Seudah Mitzvah*, such as a meal after a *Brit Milah* or a celebration after the completion of studying a section of Talmud (a *Siyum*).

* Giving clothing to or getting clothing back from the cleaners or doing laundry. Children's clothing, especially babies and infants, may be cleaned during this period. Also, this restriction doesn't apply to clothing worn directly against the body which requires frequent changing.

* Weaving, knitting and needle craft work, with the exception of repairing torn clothing, is prohibited during this period.

Tisha B'Av

The observance of Tisha B'Av begins with the *Seudah HaMafseket*, the last meal before the fast commences. In years when Tisha B'Av falls out on Motzei Shabbat, there is no *Seudah HaMafseket*.

The *Seudah HaMafseket* must be completed before sunset and resembles the meal that is served to mourners after a funeral. Thus it is customary to eat foods that are symbolic of mourning, such as eggs and lentils.

At the evening service (Ma'ariv), the entire congregation sits on the floor and recites the Book of Eicha (Lamentations) where the prophet Jeremiah weeps because of the destruction, and we weep with him.

The morning of Tisha B'Av is the saddest part of the day. We recite Kinot, and do not put on tefillin at Shacharit, because Tefillin are called "Pe-ar," "Glory," and this is definitely not a day of glory for the Jewish People.

Until Mincha on Tisha B'Av, the custom is to avoid sitting on a chair or bench. Instead, one may stand or sit on the floor, just like a mourner during the Shiva period. Beginning at Mincha sitting on chairs is permitted, and we reduce the intensity of the grief that has pervaded us so far. Also, tefillin are worn and we recite those tefillot that were omitted at Shacharit.

The prohibitions on Tisha B'Av itself are similar to those of Yom Kippur. The fast on Tisha B'Av lasts from sundown to sundown. In addition to not eating or drinking, we are not allowed to wash, anoint oneself or wear leather shoes. Sexual relations are prohibited. In a prohibition more stringent than on Yom Kippur, because study can bring great joy, the rabbis allowed only certain portions of the Tanach and Talmud to be studied on Tisha B'Av that reflected the mood of the day, such as the Book of Job, parts of the Book of Jeremiah, and sections of the Talmud which tell of the destruction of Jerusalem. .K.

Rabbi Akiva and the Fast Days

The essay below is a selection from the abstract by author/historian Yuval Shahar, describing his comprehensive book: Rabbi Akiva and the Destruction of the Temple: The Establishment of the Fast Days.

Rabbi Akiva was the most prominent and influential rabbinical scholar and leader of the Jews in Eretz Israel in the last decade before the Ben-Kochba war. He supported the rebellion, was arrested and subsequently executed during the Hadrianic persecution. Three aspects of Rabbi Akiva's world-view are intimately connected: the significance of the destruction of the Temple; the relationship between the Ben-Kochba war and the destruction of the Temple; and his part in establishing the public fasts of the 9th of Ab and 17th of Tammuz. For Rabbi Akiva, like most of his contemporaries, the destruction of the Temple was a traumatic event, calling for soul-searching and repentance. He was also unexceptional among his teachers and colleagues in assuming that the destruction would be temporary and that Jerusalem and the Temple would soon be rebuilt following the requisite repentance. Rabbi Akiva was, however, unique in the extent of his

confidence of the imminent redemption, a belief he espoused publicly and categorically. According to Cassius Dio, the sole historian of the Ben-Kochba war, the Jews rebelled following Hadrian's decision to build a pagan Roman colony, Aelia Capitolina, on the site of the ruins of Jerusalem. New numismatic evidence has confirmed that the colony was founded before the war. Rabbi Akiva based his hopes and educational agenda on the rebuilding of Jerusalem from its ruins, as had been foretold by the prophets and had actually happened after the destruction of the first Temple. Now, Hadrian's decision threatened to block this path, and redemption by active rebellion remained the only way for Rabbi Akiva and the masses supporting the war. During most of the Yavneh period (70-132 CE) up to the last years before the Ben-Kochba war, there was no actual public fast day to mourn the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, neither the 9th of Ab nor any other date. By interpreting the verses of the prophet Zechariah (8:19) about the fasts for the destruction of the First Temple, Rabbi Akiva was the first rabbi to relate to the date of the destruction of both the first and the second Temples, fixing it to the 9th of Ab. However, according to the most reliable sources - Jeremiah for the first destruction, and Josephus for the second - both events occurred on the 10th of Ab. Rabbi Akiva was also the first to date the fast of Tammuz, commemorating the breach in the wall of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, to the 17th of that month although according to the Bible this had happened on the 9th of Tammuz. To sum up: the exact dates that Rabbi Akiva fixed for the fasts of the fourth and fifth months (Tammuz and Ab) were not based on a simple tradition concerning the first destruction and we have to look for another source of inspiration. Rabbi Akiva based his hopes for redemption on the words of the prophet Zechariah that 'the fasts of the fourth month and of the fifth, the seventh and the tenth, shall become festivals of joy and gladness for the house of Judah' (8:19). This prophecy had already been fulfilled in the past, in the early days of the Second Temple period. By attributing the fasts of the prophecy of Zechariah to the destruction of the Second Temple, too, Rabbi Akiva was renewing the hope of redemption for his own times. During the period of the Second Temple, the 9th of Ab was a feast of wood offerings for the altar, connecting the whole people to the Temple. Rabbi Akiva elected this date as a fast for the destruction of the Temple. Thereby, he reminded them that, as prophesied by Zechariah, the fast of the fifth month, namely 9th of Ab, 'shall become [again soon] a festival of joy and gladness'. The same spirit led Rabbi Akiva to reinterpret the fast of the fourth month and to fix it on the 17th of Tammuz. Both according to Josephus and the Mishnah, Taanit, on

that day in the year 70 CE 'the daily whole-offering ceased'. Thus in the interim the people would fast on the traumatic date(s) . . . **.M.**

Festival of Sadness: Longing for a Better Future

This essay is written by Rabbi Yehuda Oppenheimer, the Spiritual leader of the Young Israel of Forest Hills

Unless things change a whole lot in the next few weeks, we will once again be going through the days leading up to and including Tisha B'Av, the Ninth Day of the Month of Av, the saddest day on the Jewish calendar. Year after year, we reflect on our condition in the Diaspora, and what this long, seemingly endless exile is supposed to teach us, while awaiting the long sought for Redemption.

There is an interesting anecdote recorded regarding a meeting between the prophet Jeremiah and the famous Greek philosopher, Plato. Jeremiah was mourning the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem, and Plato engaged him in conversation. Impressed with Jeremiah's great wisdom, Plato asked him, "I do not understand how a sage of your stature can weep so bitterly over something that is over and done with. Surely, what is past is finished with, and your concern now ought to be solely with the future, and how you can influence it. What possible use can there be in all of this weeping?"

Jeremiah answered, "I cannot give you a proper answer to your logical question, for you will not understand it." After all this time, how can we spend three weeks of every year going into greater and greater mourning, culminating in a day of fasting and sadness?

Was Plato not right? And surely now, 2500 years later, is it not time to focus on the present and the future, and to let bygones be bygones? Can we never forget? Can we never forgive? After all this time, how can we spend three weeks of every year going into greater and greater mourning, culminating in a day of fast and sadness?

In fact, one of the great blessings that God grants us is the ability to forget painful memories. "God has decreed about a deceased person that they should be forgotten from the heart" (*Sofrim 21*). If it was not possible to forget, if the pain of losing a close relative or friend remained always as immediate as when the loss first occurs, we would be immobilized, unable to cope with life. It is a blessing that while we always carry a memory of a departed loved one, we are able to remove the pain of the loss from the forefront of our consciousness.

Nevertheless, this general rule does not hold here, as expressed by the famous verse in Psalms, "If I forget thee O Jerusalem, let my right hand be forgotten!" We are bidden never to forget! The sages, by instituting all of the laws surrounding these three weeks, made sure that at least during one long period of the year, and several other fast days year-round, not to mention the requests in our thrice-daily prayers, that we would constantly remember and never forget to mourn for Jerusalem.

The Slonimer Rebbe, Rabbi Sholom Noah Barzovsky, *zt"l*, wrote a fascinating essay on this subject, in which he noted that central to Tisha B'Av is the idea that we are not to make our peace, ever, with the fact that the Holy Temple, the Beit Hamikdash, was destroyed. To never allow ourselves the thought that we accept the post-Temple world as the new, normal, permanent reality for us as Jews. The Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed for many reasons, some more well known than others. But that was never meant to be its final disposition. The day that we stop hoping that the Beit Hamikdash will be rebuilt is the day that its destruction will really be irreversible.

This is such a basic thought that it ought to permeate all of our concerns in life. We struggle with our problems, with our kid's education, with our personal growth, with financial problems, existential problems; we look at the communal scene and the national scene both here in Israel. We listen to the pundits and "wise men" who have this solution to intractable problems or who point to that occurrence to explain the crux of our quandaries, and we forget that the main problem is Exile -- our distance from God and his Holy Temple in Jerusalem. That no matter how many problems we solve here in America and Israel, and regardless of how much we grow in our spiritual lives as Jews, we will have a huge gaping hole in our spiritual lives as long as "we have been exiled from our land, and we cannot fulfill our obligations in your great and holy House..."

Why are so many Jews distant from their spiritual roots? Why are there so many terrible, endless problems between groups of Jews? How are we ever going to be able to resolve the great issues that divide us, when those matters are based on such fundamentally different outlooks on what the Torah is, what it means to be Jewish, the nature of our Jewish obligations, and how flexible can we be about adapting them for modern times? What will it take to allow myriads of Jews who have no idea of the beauty of Shabbat, keeping kosher, learning Torah, and Jewish living to even have a real glimmer of what they are missing? How will the great problems surrounding the Land of Israel ever be resolved?

When we will be able to always feel the indescribable joy of being close to God without the inner contradictions and pain and difficulty, and existential loneliness that we so often feel in our spiritual quest? Our aching longings to reunite with God and rebuild the Temple are the building blocks of the eventual edifice.

Our aching longings to reunite with God and rebuild the Temple are the building blocks of the eventual edifice. Although in many ways Judaism teaches that what one does is more important than what one thinks or believes, it is nevertheless true that "The longing to perform a mitzvah, or to engage in a spiritual pleasure, is even greater than the pleasure itself." The active awaiting of its rebuilding, the tears shed over its absence -- the effort to not assimilate into the surrounding culture and its alien values, but rather to strive to retain our uniquely Jewish selves -- these are what will eventually bring it back. Every tear shed and every sigh over its absence is another element in the building.

Thus, says the Slonimer Rebbe, the period of the three weeks between the 17th of Tammuz and Tisha B'Av are a period of crying, but a positive period: a crying that is part of the rebuilding process. A cry of hope, of longing for a better future -- an expression from the depths of the soul that we will never be satisfied and complacent in our spiritual quest until we have achieved total *teshuvah* (repentance), back to the closeness with God that once was and is still potentially possible.

We must certainly face life with a happy, confident attitude. We must take time to enjoy our growth, to celebrate our Jewishness, and to sing with the joy of being fortunate to be engaged in building our spiritual lives inwardly, as well as in our families and communities. But we must also take the time to mourn a little inwardly; about all the potential that is there, that is not yet being fulfilled. Only thus will we continue to grow, and look forward to the day that our inner sanctuary will be fully built, heralding the time of Mashiach, speedily in our days. **.K.**

Eyewitness: The Romans Destroy the Temple

Much of what we know from the early decades of the first century of the Common Era, we know from the writings of the Jewish historian, Josephus Flavius. In the following extract, several modern historians grant us an "eyewitness" account of the terrible events of the destruction of the First Temple, with a narrative and a translation of the eyewitness account. The article "The Romans Destroy the Temple at

Jerusalem, 70 CE," EyeWitness to History, (2005) appears online at www.EyeWitnessToHistory.com

The Romans Destroy the Temple at Jerusalem

In the year 66 CE, the Jews of Judea rebelled against their Roman masters. In response, the Emperor Nero dispatched an army under the generalship of Vespasian to restore order. By the year 68, resistance in the northern part of the province had been eradicated and the Romans turned their full attention to the subjugation of Jerusalem. That same year, the Emperor Nero died by his own hand, creating a power vacuum in Rome. In the resultant chaos, Vespasian was declared Emperor and returned to the Imperial City. It fell to his son, Titus, to lead the remaining army in the assault on Jerusalem.

The Roman legions surrounded the city and began to slowly squeeze the life out of the Jewish stronghold. By the year 70, the attackers had breached Jerusalem's outer walls and began a systematic ransacking of the city. The assault culminated in the burning and destruction of the Temple that served as the center of Judaism.

In victory, the Romans slaughtered thousands. Of those spared from death: thousands more were enslaved and sent to toil in the mines of Egypt, others were dispersed to arenas throughout the Empire to be butchered for the amusement of the public. The Temple's sacred relics were taken to Rome where they were displayed in celebration of the victory.

The rebellion sputtered on for another three years and was finally extinguished in 73 CE with the fall of the various pockets of resistance including the stronghold at Masada.

"...the Jews let out a shout of dismay that matched the tragedy."

Our only first-hand account of the Roman assault on the Temple comes from the Jewish historian Josephus Flavius. Josephus was a former leader of the Jewish Revolt who had surrendered to the Romans and had won favor from Vespasian. In gratitude, Josephus took on Vespasian's family name - Flavius - as his own. We join his account as the Romans fight their way into the inner sanctum of the Temple:

"...the rebels shortly after attacked the Romans again, and a clash followed between the guards of the sanctuary and the troops who were putting out the fire inside the inner court; the latter routed the Jews and followed in hot pursuit right up to the

Temple itself. Then one of the soldiers, without awaiting any orders and with no dread of so momentous a deed, but urged on by some supernatural force, snatched a blazing piece of wood and, climbing on another soldier's back, hurled the flaming brand through a low golden window that gave access, on the north side, to the rooms that surrounded the sanctuary. As the flames shot up, the Jews let out a shout of dismay that matched the tragedy; they flocked to the rescue, with no thought of sparing their lives or husbanding their strength; for the sacred structure that they had constantly guarded with such devotion was vanishing before their very eyes.

...No exhortation or threat could now restrain the impetuosity of the legions; for passion was in supreme command. Crowded together around the entrances, many were trampled down by their companions; others, stumbling on the smoldering and smoked-filled ruins of the porticoes, died as miserably as the defeated. As they drew closer to the Temple, they pretended not even to hear Caesar's orders, but urged the men in front to throw in more firebrands. The rebels were powerless to help; carnage and flight spread throughout.

Most of the slain were peaceful citizens, weak and unarmed, and they were butchered where they were caught. The heap of corpses mounted higher and higher about the altar; a stream of blood flowed down the Temple's steps, and the bodies of those slain at the top slipped to the bottom.

When Caesar failed to restrain the fury of his frenzied soldiers, and the fire could not be checked, he entered the building with his generals and looked at the holy place of the sanctuary and all its furnishings, which exceeded by far the accounts current in foreign lands and fully justified their splendid repute in our own.

As the flames had not yet penetrated to the inner sanctum, but were consuming the chambers that surrounded the sanctuary, Titus assumed correctly that there was still time to save the structure; he ran out and by personal appeals he endeavored to persuade his men to put out the fire, instructing Liberalius, a centurion of his bodyguard of lancers, to club any of the men who disobeyed his orders. But their respect for Caesar and their fear of the centurion's staff who was trying to check them were overpowered by their rage, their detestation of the Jews, and an utterly uncontrolled lust for battle.

Most of them were spurred on, moreover, by the expectation of loot, convinced that the interior was full

of money and dazzled by observing that everything around them was made of gold. But they were forestalled by one of those who had entered into the building, and who, when Caesar dashed out to restrain the troops, pushed a firebrand, in the darkness, into the hinges of the gate. Then, when the flames suddenly shot up from the interior, Caesar and his generals withdrew, and no one was left to prevent those outside from kindling the blaze. Thus, in defiance of Caesar's wishes, the Temple was set on fire.

While the Temple was ablaze, the attackers plundered it, and countless people who were caught by them were slaughtered. There was no pity for age and no regard was accorded rank; children and old men, laymen and priests, alike were butchered; every class was pursued and crushed in the grip of war, whether they cried out for mercy or offered resistance.

Through the roar of the flames streaming far and wide, the groans of the falling victims were heard; such was the height of the hill and the magnitude of the blazing pile that the entire city seemed to be ablaze; and the noise - nothing more deafening and frightening could be imagined.

There were the war cries of the Roman legions as they swept onwards en masse, the yells of the rebels encircled by fire and sword, the panic of the people who, cut off above, fled into the arms of the enemy, and their shrieks as they met their fate. The cries on the hill blended with those of the multitudes in the city below; and now many people who were exhausted and tongue-tied as a result of hunger, when they beheld the Temple on fire, found strength once more to lament and wail. Peraea and the surrounding hills, added their echoes to the deafening din. But more horrifying than the din were the sufferings.

The Temple Mount, everywhere enveloped in flames, seemed to be boiling over from its base; yet the blood seemed more abundant than the flames and the numbers of the slain greater than those of the slayers. The soldiers climbed over heaps of bodies as they chased the fugitives."

References: Josephus' account appears in: Cornfield, Gaalya ed., Josephus, The Jewish War (1982); Duruy, Victor, History of Rome vol. V (1883). .K.

Please ask about arranging for Memorial Plaques in the KCT Memorial Alcove

Thoughts on Mourning, Comfort, Redemption

By Rabbi Samuel Shor, Director of Community and Leadership Development at Isralight, and a faculty member at Kehilat Jeshurun in Manhattan.

There is a very interesting story that concludes the Talmudic tractate of Makkot. Rabbi Akiva, together with a small group of other important rabbinic luminaries, has traveled to Jerusalem to gaze upon the ruins following the Roman conquest of the Holy City. The Talmud describes that as the Rabbis began to gaze out over Mount Scopus, they collectively ripped their garments to mourn the destruction they now witnessed first-hand. When they continued on to look at the Temple Mount, they saw a fox wandering in the area that once was the Holy of Holies, the inner sanctum of the Holy Temple. While the sages began to cry, Rabbi Akiva began to laugh. The other sages were of course dumbfounded, how could Rabbi Akiva laugh when foxes are running wild on the holiest space on the Temple Mount.

Rabbi Akiva's reply is both fascinating and challenging. Rabbi Akiva cites a verse from the book of Isaiah (Chapter 8, verse 2): "V'aeeda li eidim neemanim eit Uria HaKohein, v'et Zecharia ben Yeverechayu." "And I took for myself as faithful witnesses, Uria the Priest, and the prophet Zecharia."

The Talmud asks the question - what is the connection between Uria, who lived during the First Temple Period, and Zecharia, who lived during the Second Temple Period?

Regarding the time period of Uria, the Talmud suggests, it is written: "And Zion shall be plowed as a field, Jerusalem should become a heap of ruins, and the Temple Mount a shrine in the wilderness" (Micha, 3:12). While in Zecharia it is written: "Thus said the Lord of Hosts: Old men and women shall again dwell in the broad corridors of Jerusalem." (Zecharia, 8:4)

The Talmud then continues with Rabbi Akiva's answer to the other sages:

"Until Uria's dire prediction of Jerusalem's destruction had been fulfilled, I was afraid that we might never again see the vision of Zecharia's prophecy (of men and women growing old in the streets of Jerusalem). Now that I have seen with my own eyes the destruction prophesized by Uria, I know for a fact that Zecharia's vision will one day come true as well..."

And the tractate of Makkot, concludes with this last line: "They (the other sages) replied to him: "Akiva, you have comforted us, Akiva you have comforted us..."

Rabbi Akiva, upon seeing the ruins of the Second Temple, and the city of Jerusalem left decimated by the Romans; was able to laugh, to see that destruction as a step in the fulfillment of subsequent prophecies predicting the redemption of the Jewish people, and the building of the Third Temple.

Just recently, I was sitting with the newest, hot-off-the-press work by my favorite author, Rabbi Shlomo Aviner, drinking my diet coke, in a beautiful little square in the Jewish quarter of Jerusalem's Old City; a courtyard which sits between several buildings that make up the campus of the Sephardic Educational Center. Sitting on the other side of the square was an elderly couple, speaking Russian and playing chess. Suddenly, out of nowhere, the entire area became flooded with children, apparently on a recess from school. As I ducked the soccer ball that was kicked in my general direction, my eyes caught a glimpse of that verse from the Prophet Zecharia, the very verse cited by Rabbi Akiva in our story above, which had been inscribed on a monument right there, before me in this beautiful little square.

The words:

"Ko Amar Hashem Tzivakot, od yeshvu zkeinim uzkeinot b'rehovot Yerushalayim, v'ish mishanto b'yado mairov yomim. Urechovot Hair yimaalu yeladim viyeladot mischakakim b'rechovoteha."

"Thus says the Lord of Hosts, Old men and old women shall yet again dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, every man with a staff in his hand for long days. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets."

Each day in this peaceful little courtyard between several buildings, the activity, the Jewish life that takes place in this beautiful little park, is a manifestation, a fulfillment of Zecharia's prophecy. The Jewish people have returned home to Jerusalem, once again old men and women are sitting and playing chess in the holy city, and children are playing ball right here on the cobblestones!

There are still many challenges that face the Jewish people everyday, that face the Jewish State everyday, that face the entire world each and every day. The powerful lesson inherent in our Talmudic tale of Rabbi Akiva's comforting the other Sages, is to take note of just how far we have come, even as we mourn for that which we have lost, and for that we have yet to achieve.

The concluding verse of Megilat Eicha reiterates the message of Rabbi Akiva, and the lessons of our History. "Hashiveinu Hashem eilecha, v'nashuva, chadeish yameinu k'Kedem." "Return us unto you Hashem, and we shall return, renew our days as of days gone by..."

May our mourning this Tisha B'Av be tempered with some level of comfort, heeding Rabbi Akiva's powerful legacy of seeing the tragedies of Jewish history within the context of our collective destiny, and our march to that ultimate period of redemption, unity and joy, speedily and in our days... **.K.**

The Legacy of the Prophet Jeremiah

This portrait of the Prophet Jeremiah is a composite drawn from several sources, and is intended by the editors to lead the reader into a deeper understanding of the message of Eicha through a glimpse into the times and circumstances of its author.

Jeremiah lived in Judah in the late 7th century and early 6th century BCE. Jeremiah prophesized at the time of the conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, the destruction of the first Temple, and the exile to Babylon. Jeremiah fled to Egypt where he continued his prophecy and ultimately died. Tradition ascribes to Jeremiah the authorship of *Sefer Eicha* – the Book of Lamentations. He confronted the people where he found them, in the market, in the Temple courtyard and in their homes. Jeremiah summarizes his message in the first chapter when he describes his calling to uproot and to pull down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant. His message is one of doom for the people of Judah who have abrogated the covenant through both ethical and ritual sins; however, he also brings the message of hope for God's redemption of the Jewish people once they accept their shortcomings and return to the covenant.

To his chagrin, the Jews honored the Temple more in spectacle than in spirit. But, the Jews ignored him, even imprisoned him, and to his unbearable agony, he was proven right. The Temple was destroyed, the people ravaged, the nation dispersed and he was the witness.

Although the book of Eicha was composed in the wake of the end of the first Temple era, the Sages of the Midrash find it full of allusions to the destruction of the second Temple, over 500 years later. This is not at all an anachronism, because Jewish history is a continuum. Just as we live by the Torah that was

given over 33 centuries ago, so we are molded by the experiences of our forbears and the historical epochs they created.

Jeremiah weeps and we weep with him, because we can see all of Jewish history in the dirges of Eicha. This is the challenge of Tisha B'av. Can we realize that this is not merely a day of tears, but of challenge and hope? The book of Eicha calls Tisha B'av "a day of Jewish rendezvous with G-d".

Rendezvous with G-d? Festival? On a day of destruction and suffering? Yes, because Tisha B'av proves that G-d is not indifferent to Jewish conduct. We matter to him. And since we do, we know that He awaits our repentance and that there will be a third Temple, an eternal one.

The Sages say that the Mashiach will be born on Tisha B'av. Let us read Eicha with the prayerful hope that he has already been born and that this day next year will be a day of joy.

**Hashivenu Hashem Eilecha VenaShuva -
Chadesh Yameinu KeKedem
Bring us back to you Hashem, and we
shall return . . . renew our days as of old.**

~

.K.

Eicha: An Overview

The following overview was written by Rabbi Avi Geller, who is a senior lecturer at Aish Hatorah, living in Jerusalem since 1980.

Eicha (The Book of Lamentations) was written by the Prophet Jeremiah, according to some opinions before the events occurred. The verses follow the Aleph-Beit in three chapters, a hint to the three cardinal sins that caused the First Temple to be destroyed. The third chapter (some say added later) alludes to the destruction of the Second Temple, caused by unjustifiable hatred. It contains three sets of Aleph-Beit, as that sin is as destructive as the three cardinal sins put together.

CHAPTER ONE

The prophet describes all of the suffering that befell the Jewish people at the time of the destruction of the Temple. "Eicha! How is it possible? The proud majestic city of Jerusalem, in ruins! Her inhabitants in exile! Her enemies rejoicing!"

The sages point out the similarity of the word "Eicha" (How!) and the word "Ayecha?" in Genesis when God

asks "Where are you, Adam?" The answer to Jeremiah's question - How did it happen? - is that the Jewish people disregarded the Almighty, just as Adam did in the Garden of Eden.

Jeremiah paints a vivid portrait of a widow crying in the night, tears on her cheeks, with no one to comfort her, forsaken by all her friends. Likewise, Judah has been exiled and dwells in servitude among the nations, while Zion sits in mourning and desolation, missing the myriad pilgrims who would swarm her gates. Jerusalem remembers the bitter destruction, the glorious era that preceded it, and the fact that no nation came to her aid. On the contrary, the allies they depended on, reneged on them, and rejoiced over Jerusalem's desolation.

The prophet reveals the cause. Jerusalem did not have the foresight to contemplate the result of her degeneration. By forgetting her destiny she plummeted all the way down.

Jeremiah describes the enemy army entering the Temple, and the people of Jerusalem dying of hunger. To all who pass by, Jerusalem cries, "May you not suffer as I have!" Is there anything to compare this to? (The suffering of Jews throughout history, up to and including the Holocaust, is beyond any historical comparison.)

Remembering Jerusalem's past glory, no consolation is possible. However in the end we accept the Divine verdict. The chapter concludes that eventually the enemies of Israel will experience the same bitter end.

CHAPTER TWO

In broad strokes, the prophet pictures the glory of Israel thrown from Heaven to the ground. Jerusalem is on fire. The prophet pictures children dying of hunger, begging their mothers for food, before expiring on their mothers' bosom. There is no comparison in history to comfort you with, proclaims the prophet.

What is the cause of Israel's suffering? False prophets lulled us into a false sense of security. (The Jews didn't believe it could happen...)

All the nations pass by (so to speak) and clap and whistle in disbelief: "Is this the glorious, beautiful Jerusalem that was the joy of all the land?!" Israel's enemies open their mouths, whistle and gnash their teeth in satisfaction. "This is the event we have waited for and have finally gotten to see."

The Jews beseech the Almighty: "Look at what You have done!" The prophet replies: "Fellow Jews

murdered (the prophet Zechariah) in the Temple courtyard (on Yom Kippur) for rebuking them about their deeds." Don't forget the other side of the coin!

CHAPTER THREE

Jeremiah cries over the fact that he witnessed punishment that previous prophets had only warned of. Jeremiah was chosen to express the pain of Jewish suffering. He sees his life as dark, as God has closed the windows of Heaven before his prayers. Jeremiah has been ambushed as by a bear or lion, and is now the laughingstock of his people who ridiculed his prophesies. They embittered his life and broke his teeth. He feels no inner peace. He has no future, yet he still hasn't lost his faith. From the depth of his pain, he turns to the Almighty in prayer. "Remember me and all of my suffering!"

Suddenly: inspiration and comfort! Jeremiah is consoled. God's kindness and mercy never ends. Miracles surround us constantly in life. God is good to those who trust in Him and seek Him out. One must never give up hope and always wait for God's salvation that will eventually come! Suffering brings us to the realization that we have free will and we should cry over our mistakes and misdeeds - the cause of all suffering. When we make a personal introspection of our deeds and fully return to God, we shall admit our responsibility. Then God will hear our prayers, fight our fights, and repay our enemies all that they have done to us.

CHAPTER FOUR

This chapter begins with another description of Jerusalem's destruction. The gold was tarnished, the shine of the Temple darkened. The precious stones (the Jewish people) thrown into the streets! Precious Jewish children, given over to cruel enemies. Their tongues stuck to their throats in thirst and no one gives them bread. The pampered children who were used to delicacies are now picking in the garbage dump. Their bodies so ravaged by hunger as to be unrecognizable. Their faces darker than soot. Their skin shriveled on their bones.

The victims of the sword were better off than those who starved to death in agony. Merciful women cooked their own children! The nations and their kings could not believe their eyes. The blind trip over corpses in the street and are covered with blood.

The Jewish people waited in vain for their allies (Egypt) to come to their aid. The Midrash says that the Egyptians were on their way when they noticed bones in the Red Sea and remembered their ancestors.

5771

JULY - AUGUST

**SCHEDULE
OF
SERVICES**

**KEHILLAT
CHOVEVEI
TZION**

FAST OF TAMMUZ (17TH OF TAMMUZ)

TUESDAY JULY 19

SHABBAT MATOT

FRIDAY JULY 22 6:45 PM 8:00 PM
SATURDAY JULY 23 9:00 AM

SHABBAT MA'ASEI

FRIDAY JULY 29 6:40 PM 7:54 PM
SATURDAY JULY 30 9:00 AM

SHABBAT DEVARIM ~ SHABBAT HAZON

FRIDAY AUG 5 6:35 PM 7:46 PM
SATURDAY AUG 6 9:00 AM

TISHA B'AV

MONDAY AUG 8 8:30 PM
(Tuesday Tisha B'Av services available at neighboring synagogues.)

SHABBAT VA'ETCHANAN ~ SHABBAT NACHAMU

FRIDAY AUG 12 6:25 PM 7:37 PM
SATURDAY AUG 13 9:00 AM

SHABBAT EIKEV

FRIDAY AUG 19 6:20 PM 7:27 PM
SATURDAY AUG 20 9:00 AM

SHABBAT RE'EH

FRIDAY AUG 26 6:10 PM 7:17 PM
SATURDAY AUG 27 9:00 AM

SHABBAT SHOFTIM

FRIDAY SEPT 2 6:00 PM 7:06 PM
SATURDAY SEPT 3 9:00 AM