

TISHA B'AV – A Time to Mourn
By Hannah Nesher
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An Ultra-Orthodox Jewish boy took part in prayers marking Tisha B'Av in Jerusalem's Mea Shearim neighborhood Aug. 8, 2011. .

(REUTERS/Ronen Zvulun <http://www.ibtimes.com/what-tisha-bav-2015-jewish-day-mourning-saddest-holiday-year-2023914>)

King Solomon wrote, in his wisdom, that for everything there is a season - a time for every purpose under heaven. There is a time to laugh and a time to weep; a time to dance, and a time to mourn. ¹

Tisha B'Av, the 9th day of the Hebrew month of Av, according to the Hebraic cycle of time, marks an international day of fasting and mourning for the Jewish people. According to some rabbis, this day is as significant to the Jewish people as is Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement), which is another day of fasting and prayer.

What exactly is Tisha B'Av? Why do Jewish people fast on this day and what is its significance to followers of Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah? According to Rabbinic Jewish tradition as written in the book of Mishnah (Taanit 4:6), several specific tragedies occurred on this day, including the destruction of both the first and the second of the Holy Temples. They were destroyed 656 years apart but on the very same date on the Hebrew calendar!

¹ Ecclesiastes 3:1 & 4

Death and Destruction

The First Temple, built by King Solomon and the Kingdom of Judah, was destroyed by the Babylonians. This conquest of Jerusalem, led by King Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. caused the Judeans to be sent into Babylonian exile.

The Second Temple, built by Ezra and Nehemiah, was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD, scattering the people of Judea and beginning the world-wide Jewish exile from the Land of Israel.



Destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, by Francesco Hayez

Why did God allow the destruction of both the first and second Holy Temples and His Holy city of Jerusalem? It was because of sin. God warned the people of Israel over and over again through His prophets but they would not listen.

Jeremiah, called the ‘Weeping Prophet’, knowing the destruction that was about to come, wept day and night for His people. **“Oh, that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!”** (Jeremiah 9:1)

Because of the sins of the nation of Israel, God said He would punish them severely, **“I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins, a den of jackals. I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant.”** (Jeremiah 9:11)

The situation was so terrible in Jerusalem that people actually cooked and ate their own children. It was a time of terrible sorrow and catastrophe for the people of Israel as God banished them from their land and scattered them to the four corners of the earth where many of the Jewish people continue to live unto this day.

“For a voice of wailing is heard from Zion: ‘How we are plundered! We are greatly ashamed, because we have forsaken the land, because we have been cast out of our dwellings.’” (Jeremiah 9:19)

And yet God never left His people without hope. He promised that one day He would rebuild Jerusalem and re-gather the outcasts of Israel – healing their broken hearts and binding up their wounds.

The Lord is Building Jerusalem

“The LORD builds up Jerusalem; He gathers together the outcasts of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.” (Psalm 147:2-3)

How can it be that the Lord is building up Jerusalem? Is it not the people who are re-building the city? The answer is found in ancient Jewish property law which states that if a disaster occurs and a two level building is destroyed, the tenant on the bottom level must first re-build and then the upper level tenant may re-build his dwelling on the second floor.

Most Jewish laws contain a hidden spiritual parallel, as in this obscure property law. The city of Jerusalem is a two-tiered city – with the bottom level being the physical Jerusalem we see today; and the upper Jerusalem being the Holy City in the spiritual dimension – the ‘New Jerusalem’, which John saw in his vision, coming down from Heaven as a Bride.

“Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.” (Revelation 21:9-11)



The New Jerusalem www.jerusalemexperience.com

The earthly Jerusalem on the bottom level, is still in bondage, and represents the Mosaic Covenant sealed on Mt. Sinai. This is the ‘Jerusalem in the flesh’, which is symbolic of Hagar and Ishmael. The Heavenly Jerusalem on the upper dimension represents freedom in the New Covenant. This is described in the book of Galatians:

“For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman (Hagar), the other by a freewoman (Sarah). But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh (Ishmael), and he of the freewoman through promise (Isaac), which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage (Mosaic Covenant), which is Hagar— for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children— but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.” (Galatians 4:22 – 26)

How does this relate to ancient Jewish property law? If, for some reason, the bottom tenants are unable or unwilling to re-build, then the upper level tenant has the right to come down and build the foundation level and live there. If, at any time, the former tenant wishes to return he must make compensation for all expenses the upper tenant incurred in re-building his lower level.



When Jerusalem was destroyed and her people sent into exile, they (the bottom tenants) were unable to re-build since they languished for many years in exile. Therefore the upper tenant, Adonai, left His heavenly abode to come down and re-build the city of Jerusalem. In His mercy, however, God is bringing back the former inhabitants of Jerusalem and allowing them to return without paying any compensation whatsoever.

Once Jerusalem is re-built, He will return to build His Heavenly Kingdom above. God is so good; His mercy endures forever. **“May Adonai bless you from Zion; may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life.”** (Psalm 128:5)

The Saddest Day in History

Besides these two major catastrophes (the destruction of both Holy Temples in Jerusalem) many other tragic events in Jewish and human history began on this date. This is why Tisha B’Av is often called the *"saddest day in history."*

According to Rabbinic tradition, this was the date that God rendered His judgment against the children of Israel in the wilderness. On this day, God decreed that, because of their sin of unbelief, complaining, and idolatry, the people of Israel would not be allowed to enter the Promised Land.



Destruction of Jerusalem by Johann Georg Traufman

Because of the Israelites' lack of faith and weeping over nothing, God decreed that for all generations this date would become one of crying and misfortune for their descendants -

the Jewish people.² According to Rabbinic tradition, like an exasperated Father, God said to His children, “*Since you insist on crying over nothing, I will give you something to cry over!*”

Other tragic events that happened on Tisha B’Av are:

- The Romans crushed Bar Kokhba's revolt and destroyed the city of Betar, killing over 100,000 Jews, in 132 AD
- Following the Roman siege of Jerusalem, Roman commander Turnus Rufus plowed the site of the Temple and the surrounding area, in 133 AD
- The First Crusade was declared by Pope Urban II in 1095, killing 10,000 Jews in its first month and destroying Jewish communities in France and the Rhineland.
- The edict was given to expel the Jews from England in 1290
- The edict was given to expel the Jews from Spain in 1492
- World War I broke out on Tisha B’Av 1914 (August 1, 1914)
- The mass deportation of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto, en route to the death camp of Treblinka began on the eve of Tisha B’Av 1942.
- The Jewish community center in Buenos Aires was bombed, killing 86 and wounding 300 others, on Monday July 18, 1994

Modern - Day Tragedies on Tisha B’Av

Astounding is the realization that even in modern times, Jews have been expelled from their homes on this very same day of Tisha B’Av; but this time the expulsion was from their own land by their own people! On August 17th, 2005, all Jews were expelled from Gaza. It was expected to take several weeks, but took less than one. This land was given over to the Palestinians in a desperate bid for peace - a move supported by many left-wing liberals in Israel.



Residents riot during the forced evacuation of the Israeli community Kfar Darom. August 18, 2005

² See Numbers Chapters 13–14

Israeli Defense Forces, under direct command from their superiors, uprooted Jewish men, women and children, by force when necessary, from their homes in Gaza. A total of 1,700 families were uprooted at a cost of nearly \$900 million.

Most of the homes were razed, and synagogues dismantled. Daycare centers, kindergartens and schools were all closed. Forty eight bodies, including the remains of terrorist victims, needed to be relocated. Some Israeli soldiers refused to participate, standing in their integrity before God and man, even at the risk of a military court martial.

How could it be God's will that the people of Israel be brutally uprooted from the Land He promised to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in an everlasting covenant? **“I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; They shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them,” says the Lord your God.**” (Amos 9:14-15)



A group of residents refuse to evacuate the Israeli settlement Bedolach. August 17, 2005

Even as recently as this year, just after Tisha B'Av, Israeli police and military were ordered by the leadership of Israel to forcibly remove more Jewish settlers from their homes on the land that God has given us in an everlasting covenant through our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Truly such evil things should never be allowed to happen in the land of Israel. It seems that the lesson of the evacuation of Gaza have not been learned.



Israeli Police clashing with Jewish settlers during forced evacuation of Beit El, July 2015

Once the Jewish presence was removed, the area was quickly turned into a terrorist stronghold from which missiles and rockets and terrorist attacks are continually being launched against the citizens of Israel. Tisha B'av tragedies continue even in our day.

Weeping with Those who Weep

How can God's people in the nations, as fellow citizens in the commonwealth of Israel³, respond to the grief of the Jewish people on Tisha B'Av and pray on their behalf? There are times when we can no longer pray out of our heads, but only weep out of hearts broken with compassion. This is a time to weep with those who weep; to mourn alongside our brethren, the people of Israel.

Yeshua (Jesus) wept with compassion when he foresaw prophetically the destruction of the Holy Temple and the disaster that would come upon His brethren as a result. He said,

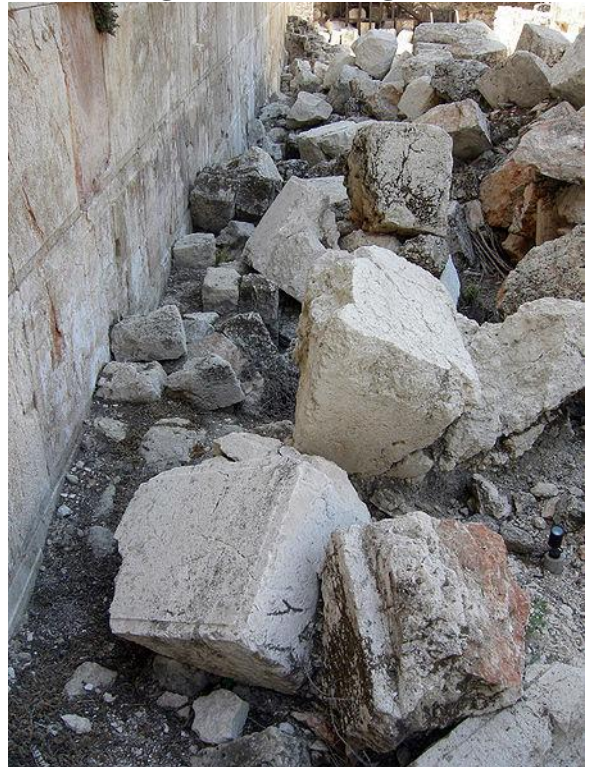
“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!

See! Your house is left to you desolate;”
(Matthew 23:37-38)

Yeshua knew that not even one stone of the magnificent buildings of the Temple would remain untouched but that all would be thrown down.⁴ And yet when the Jews asked him for a sign, he answered,

“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” (John 2:19)

The Jews didn't understand – it had taken forty-six years to build the Temple. How could Yeshua claim to be able to raise it up again in only three days? But he was speaking not of the physical Holy Temple, but of His body.⁵



Excavated stones from the Western Wall of the Temple Mount (Jerusalem) knocked down to street below by Roman battering rams 70 AD

We also know and rejoice that as Believers, our bodies are now a temple for the Holy Spirit. **“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you...?”** (1 Corinthians 6:19) The Spirit of God no longer dwells in a Temple made of hands, but rather in the heart of every true Believer.⁶

³ Ephesians 2:12-13,19

⁴ Matthew 24:2

⁵ John 2:20-21

⁶ Acts 17:24

Yeshua knew that he was destined to fulfill the Messianic prophecies that the Messiah would be cut off before the destruction of the Second Temple.⁷ Despite Tisha B'Av being a day of mourning for the Jewish people, a remembrance of the terrible destruction of both the Holy Temples, we can rejoice that Yeshua is greater than the Temple.⁸

Tisha B'Av is also a day of hope – of a coming redemption. The Jewish people still long for and pray daily for the coming of Messiah and the restoration of the Temple. Plans and preparations are already being made in Jerusalem for the third temple.

In the end times, it is within this temple that **“the man of sin, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, ...will sit in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”** (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4)

Many religious Jewish people will gather on Tisha B'Av in synagogues around the world, and in Israel at the Kotel, the Western Wall, to mourn the destruction of the Temples and to read from the words of the Prophet Jeremiah and portions of the book of Lamentations.



Worshippers seated on the floor of the [synagogue](#) before the reading of [Lamentations](#) on [Tisha B'Av](#)

Even more so than the restoration of the physical Temple, however, the Jewish people need to be restored spiritually to God. We know that the Land of Israel is still far from being the ‘Holy Land’ it is destined to be. It is yet full of sin against the Holy One of Israel. But God says that yet He will not forsake Israel nor Judah:

“For Israel is not forsaken, nor Judah, by his God, the Lord of hosts, though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel.” (Jeremiah 51:5)

⁷ Daniel 9:26

⁸ Matthew 12:6

Torah Readings for Tisha B'Av

Deuteronomy 4:25-40, Jeremiah 8:13 – 9:23, Matthew 23:1-3, 16-23, 34 – 24:3, Book of Lamentations

The following is a portion from the traditional Bible reading for Tisha B'av which calls for intercessors (specifically women):

“Thus says the Lord of Hosts (YHVH Tz’vaot): Consider and call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for the wise women, that they may come;

And let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, That our eyes may run down with tears, And our eyelids gush out with waters.

For a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion: ‘How are we undone!’...

Yes, hear the word of the Lord, O women, and let your ear receive the word of His mouth, and teach your daughters wailing, and every one of her neighbors lamentation.” (Jeremiah 9:17-20)

God is seeking intercessors (men and women) willing to stand in the gap for the people of Israel. **“So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall and stand IN THE GAP BEFORE Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one.”** (Ezekiel 22:30)

Will God find intercessors willing to stand in the gap this day? God sent a messenger throughout the midst of Jerusalem to **“put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.”** (Ezekiel 9:4)

Those who were not marked were destroyed, but the messengers of death were warned **“not to come near anyone on whom is the mark.”** (Ezekiel 9:6)

Are we willing to be marked by God as intercessors who share in His grief and plead mercy for His people, Israel? To everything there is a season. Weeping may endure for a night but joy comes in the morning.

Thank you for standing with us, on behalf of the nation of Israel, with your fervent prayers and faithful financial support. May the God of Israel richly bless you from Zion.

About the Author:

Hannah Neshher grew up in an Orthodox Jewish home and received her education in a religious Hebrew school in Canada.

During a crisis pregnancy, she came to know Jesus (Yeshua) as her Messiah and Savior.

She made aliyah (immigrated to Israel) with her and is now teaching Christians about the Jewish roots of their faith.

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For further teaching materials, please visit our website: www.voiceforisrael.net

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“For out of Zion shall go forth the Torah, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” (Isaiah 2:3)

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