

TISHA B'AV – A Time to Mourn

By Hannah Nesher

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King Solomon wrote in his wisdom that **for everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven** (Ecclesiastes 3:1). **There is a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.**

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 considered the holiest day of the year.

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!

The First Temple built by King Solomon and the Kingdom of Judah was destroyed by the Babylonians led by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC and the Judeans were sent into the 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 Jewish exile from Land of Israel.

Besides these two major catastrophes, many other tragic events in Jewish and human history began on this date. This is why Tisha B'Av is called the "**saddest day in Jewish 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 sins of unbelief, complaining, and idolatry, Israel would not enter the Promised Land.

Except for two men, Joshua and Caleb, who followed God wholeheartedly, the entire generation would be condemned to wander in the wilderness for forty years until they died.

Because of the Israelites' lack of faith, God decreed that for all generations this date would become one of crying and misfortune for their descendants, the Jewish people. (See Numbers Chapters 13–14)

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), which set the stage for the later devastation of World War II and the Holocaust.
- 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

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.

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, 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)

How can Believers in the nations, as fellow citizens in the commonwealth of Israel, (Ephesians 2:12-13,19) 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 in the flesh, 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. (Matthew 24:2)

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



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. (John 2:20-21)

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 Cor. 6:19)

The Spirit of God no longer dwells in a Temple made of hands, but rather in the heart of every true Believer. (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 (Daniel 9:26).

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** (Matthew 12:6).

The Jewish people still long for and pray daily for 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 2:4)

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.

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)

The following is a portion from the traditional Bible reading for Tisha B'av:

**Thus saith the Lord of Hosts (YHVH Tz'vaot):
Consider ye, 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!’...

**Yea, hear the word of the Lord, O ye women,
and let your ear receive the word of His mouth,
and teach your daughters wailing,
and every one of her neighbors lamentation:** (Jeremiah 9:16-19)

God is seeking intercessors 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.”** (Ezek. 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.

Love Hannah
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Ramat Raziel, Israel



About the Author:

Hannah Nesher 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 now lives in Israel with her children and grandchildren, teaching Christians about the Jewish roots of their faith.



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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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