



Grief & Hope: A Tisha B'av Service

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In ancient times, we connected to the Divine mainly through sacrifices in the Temple in Jerusalem, which became the focus of religion, politics, and national pride for many centuries.

In about 586 BCE the Temple was destroyed by the Babylonian Empire, and many were brought to Babylon as slaves. This led to a great challenge to our very existence; our philosophy, theology, and society had to change. When we were permitted to return and rebuild our Temple, we faced the consequences of these changes: a society split between our homeland and new communities in Babylonia.

Centuries later, under the Roman Empire, King Herod expanded the Temple complex to include the Western Wall many of us have seen in pictures or in person. This Temple was violently destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE, after a devastating siege of Jerusalem. Once again, we were thrown into Exile.

According to tradition, both Temples were destroyed on the 9th day of the month of Av. On this day we observe a day of mourning and remembrance for these and numerous other massacres, tragedies, and terrible events which we have experienced on that date since then.

A Tisha B'av Prayer

Grief, loss, devastation, distress,

Shock, numbness, denial, apathy,

Disorganization, confusion, searching, yearning,

Anxiety, panic, fear, resentment, jealousy,

Anger, hate, blame, terror, rage,

Sadness, depression, guilt, regret, isolation.

All these feelings and more, we will experience in our lives.

We often find ways to distract ourselves from the full depth of our emotions.

Today we open the floodgates and sit with those feelings we would rather avoid.

We can make space enough inside us to hold all these different emotions.

Today we take the time to get to know how we react to these feelings, how we redirect them onto others.

When we open up to grief and sit in darkness, we learn to be better human beings, and light the way for others.

Help us open not just to private grief, but to communal grief for our people and the suffering in the world.

May we learn this Tisha B'av that finding rock bottom can become a foundation for strength and growth. Amen.

Selections from Lamentations

translation adapted from JPS 1917 & 1985, and neohasid.org

1:1 Alas! Lonely sits the city, once great with people! She that was great among nations is become like a widow; the princess among states is become a thrall. **2** Bitterly she weeps in the night, her cheek wet with tears. There is none to comfort her of all her friends. All her allies have betrayed her; they have become her foes.

2:5 *Adonai* has acted like a foe, he has laid waste Israel, laid waste all her citadels, destroyed her strongholds. He has increased within the daughter of Judah mourning and moaning. **6** He has stripped His sukkah as if it were a garden, He has destroyed His place of assembly; YHVH has caused to be forgotten in Zion festival and sabbath, and has rejected in His raging anger the king and the priest. **13** What can I take to witness for you? What can I compare to you, O Daughter of Jerusalem? What can I match with you, to console you, O Fair Maiden Zion? For vast like the sea is your shattering; who can heal you? **19** Get up! Sing out in the night at the beginning of the watches: Pour out your heart like water before the presence *Adonai*! Lift up your hands to Him – for the life of your infants, stretched out by famine at every street corner!

3:40 Let us search our ways and dig deep, and turn back to *YHVH*.

41 Let us lift up our hearts with our hands to God in the heavens.

55 I called Your name, *YHVH*, from the lowest pit. **56** Hear my voice: don't hide Your ear to my (plea for) relief, to my cry.

4:5 Those who feasted on dainties lie famished in the streets; those who were reared in (noble) scarlet have embraced refuse heaps. **8** Now their faces are blacker than soot, they are not recognized in the streets; their skin has shriveled on their bones, it has become dry as wood. **9** Better off were the sword-slain than the famine-slain, for they drain away, pierced through for (want of) produce of the field.

5:15 Our heart ceased any joy, our dance overturned into mourning.

16 The crown has fallen from our head; Woe to us that we have sinned. **17** For this our heart is sickened, for these our eyes dimmed.

21 Turn us, *YHVH*, toward You, and we will turn. Renew our days, as days of old! **22** (For truly, You have rejected us, bitterly raged against us.) **OR** (You cannot have utterly rejected us, and be exceedingly angry with us!)

Hashivenu (Lamentations 5:21)

Turn us, *YHVH* (Eternal), toward You, and we will turn.
Make our days new again, like long ago.

**Hashivenu (x2) Adonai eilecha, v'nashuva (x2)
chadeish (x2) yameinu k'kedem.**

Babylon (Don Mclean, based on Psalm 137)

**By the waters, the waters of Babylon
We lay down and wept, and wept, for thee Zion
We remember thee, remember thee, remember thee
Zion**

Eli Tsiyon (author unknown, written in the Middle Ages)

Yai lai...

**Eli Tzion v'areha, k'mo isha v'tzireha.
V'chiv'tulah chagurat sak, al baal n'ureha.**

Yai lai...

**Alei galut m'shartei El, manimei shir z'mareha.
V'al damam asher shupach, k'mo meimei y'oreha.**

For Zion and her cities who are like a woman in
bitter anguish, mourning the husband of her youth.

For the exile of God's servants, who play the songs
of her melodies, and for their spilled blood, which is
like the water of her streams.