

TorahFax: Vaeschanan

Rabbi Zalmen Marazov

Monday, Menachem Av 6, 5783 (Hakhel Year) July 24, 2023

We are now in the Hebrew month of Menachem Av. The 9th day of Av is a fast day called, called "Tisha B'Av." On Tisha B'Av we fast in mourning for the destruction of the Holy Temples in Jerusalem.

The fast of Tisha B'Av, this year begins this Wednesday evening, July 26 ending Thursday night, July 27.

Our sages say, "Mishenichnas Av Mema'atin BeSimcha" - "When [the month of] Av comes we minimize in happiness". Thus, until after the fast of Tisha B'Av, we don't celebrate or engage in joyous activities. We also do not eat meat nor drink wine (except on Shabbat) these days, until after Tisha B'Av.

The First Temple, which was built by King Solomon, stood for 410 years and was destroyed on the 9th of Av by King Nebuchadnetzar of Babylon.

The second Temple, re-built 70 years later, stood for 420 years and was also destroyed on the 9th of Av.

Although both Temples were destroyed on the 9th of Av (about 500 years apart), our sages draw an important distinction between the sins which caused the destruction of the First and Second Temples.

Our sages tell us that the first Temple was destroyed due to the sin of idol-worship.

The sin which caused the destruction of the second Temple was "Sinat Chinam" - "unjust hatred" amongst Jews.

The sin of idol-worship is one of the gravest sins in the Torah. Indeed, the second commandment of the Ten Commandments is the prohibition against idol-worship. Although the sin was so grave, only seventy years after the first Temple was destroyed, G-d forgave them for this sin, and they rebuilt the Temple.

The second Temple which was destroyed for the sin of hatred amongst Jews has not yet been rebuilt after two thousand years!

This dramatically shows us how important is the sin of lack of "Ahavat Yisrael" - Love amongst our people. Thus, during the days before Tisha B'Av, it is customary to enhance our love for each other ("Ahavat Yisrael") through acts of kindness and the distribution of extra charity (Tzadakah).

At this time of the year when we need to add in love and unity among Jews even more than usual. We pray that G-d bless our people in Israel with the blessing of peace and unity amongst all Jews.

For, through Ahavat Yisrael, unconditional love amongst us, we will merit the Third Holy Temple - with the coming of Moshiach. May it be speedily in our days. Amen.

Wednesday, Menachem Av 8, 5783 (Hakhel Year) July 26, 2023

Tonight (Wednesday night), begins the fast of Tisha B'Av – the fast of the 9th day of Av. The fast continues until Thursday night. It is the second strictest fast after Yom Kippur.

While Yom Kippur is a Biblical fast day, which is decreed in the Torah, the fast of Tisha B'Av was decreed by The Prophets. It is in commemoration and in mourning for the destruction of both Holy Temples which were destroyed on Tisha B'Av. The Second Temple was destroyed close to five hundred years after the destruction of the First Temple.

The First Temple, which was built by King Solomon, stood for 410 years, and was destroyed on the 9th of Av by King Nebuchadnetzar of Babylon. The second Temple was built 70 years later and stood for 420 years. It was also destroyed on the 9th of Av, by the Romans.

It's over 1500 years since the destruction of the second Temple, yet, Jews in every generation never lost hope and faith in the coming of Moshiach and that the third Holy Temple will be built in their days.

Three times a day, day after day, we pray in the Amidah, for the coming of Moshiach and the rebuilding of the Beth Hamikdash – the Holy Temple. In the Torah, Moshe calls the Jewish people a stiff-necked people. It also works for the positive. During the worst of times, throughout our history, in good times and in difficult times, we never gave up on our deep belief in Moshiach's coming.

A Chassid of the Third Chabad Rebbe had an inn, which he rented from the local landowner in one of the villages in Russia. He would pay the owner ten rubles at the beginning of the year for the entire year.

One year the Chassid fell ill and couldn't go to the owner in the beginning of the year. He sent his son instead to renew the contract and pay the rent for the entire year. The son decided to get a better deal. He offered the landowner thirty rubles for a five-year contract, thus saving his father twenty rubles. The owner was happy to get the extra rent in advance and agreed to the deal. He paid him thirty rubles and signed a five-year contract.

The son returned to his father all excited and told him about the deal he made and that he saved him twenty rubles over the next five years.

"Why did you do a foolish thing like this?" his father said. "Instead of saving me twenty rubles, you overpaid forty rubles for nothing. Don't you believe that Moshiach is coming any day and we will all go to the Holy Land. The money you paid for the next four years was a waste!"

One of the principles of our faith is that, we believe with complete faith each day that Moshiach is coming NOW. The fact that he didn't come until now doesn't diminish our faith. In fact, it makes it stronger, for we were guaranteed by our prophets that he IS coming, and every day brings him closer.

Thursday, Menachem Av 9, 5783 (Hakhel Year) July 27, 2023

Today is the fast day of Tisha B'Av, the 9th of Av – the day in which the two holy Temples were destroyed through fire.

Our sages say, "The Temples were destroyed through fire and will be rebuilt by fire."

Q. What is the meaning of, "They will again be rebuilt by fire"?

A. Emotions are compared to fire, as they are heated and passionate. They are expressed with enthusiasm and fervor.

Our sages tell us that the Second Temple was destroyed because of "Sinat Chinam" – unjust hate amongst Jews. Instead of performing the mitzvah of, "Love your fellow as yourself," with passion, they used that fervor and passion for strife and hatred.

To rectify the cause of the destruction of the Holy Temple and thus bring about the re-building of the Temple, it is also through fire - passion and love for each other. It should also be done with enthusiasm. Thus, just as the Temple was destroyed through fire, it will be rebuilt through fire – through the fire of love, caring and feeling for each other.

The Talmud relates the following episode: When the Temple was destroyed many Jews decided to refrain from eating meat and drinking wine as a sign of mourning for the destruction of the Temple. The Talmudic sage, Rabbi Yehoshua asked them, "Why are you not eating meat nor drinking wine?"

They replied, "How can we eat meat which was once sacrificed on the Temple Altar? How can we drink wine which was once poured on the Holy Altar?"

Rabbi Yehoshua said to them, "In that case you should not eat grapes or figs, for they too were brought to the Temple as First Fruits? Do not eat bread, as bread was used in the Temple service."

Rabbi Yehoshua explained to them that although one must grieve for the destruction of the Temple, one must not do so over excessively. For we firmly believe that the day will soon come, when the Beth Hamikdash (Holy Temple) will again be rebuilt. But this time it will last forever, never to be destroyed again, with the coming of Moshiach. Amen.

The Book of Lamentations, which is read on Tisha B'Av, describing the destruction of the Holy Temple is not required to be written on parchment like the Megilat Esther, which recalls the miracle of Purim.

Reason: Purim is an everlasting holiday. The story of Purim is recorded on parchment, for it is permanent, just as the rest of the Torah. But the story of Tisha B'Av is only temporary. When Moshiach will come, we will again have the Holy Temple and the day of Tisha B'Av will be transformed into a holiday of rejoicing. May it be speedily in our days. AMEN.

Friday, Menachem Av 10, 5783 (Hakhel Year) July 28, 2023

This Shabbat, which is the first Shabbat after the fast of the 9th of Av (Tisha B'Av), we read the second Parsha of the Book of Devarim (Deuteronomy), Parshat Va'etchanan.

This Shabbat is called, "Shabbat Nachmu" ("Shabbat of comfort"). This is because the Haftorah of this week begins with the words "Nachmu Nachmu Ami" ("Find comfort, find comfort, my people"). It is a prophecy of double comfort for the Jewish people which is recited on the Shabbat after Tisha B'Av.

There are seven weeks from Tisha B'Av until Rosh Hashana. This period is called, "Shiva D'nechemta" - "Seven weeks of comfort." These seven Haftorahs are prophecies of comfort and hope for the Jewish people.

In this week's Parsha we find the "Sh'ema" - "Hear O' Israel the L-rd is Our G-d the L-rd is one. And you shall love the L-rd your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might ("B'chol M'odecha")." The Sh'ema prayer is recited three times daily as we affirm our belief in G-d and our love for Him.

According to our sages, the words "B'chol M'odecha" ("with all your might") also means that even if G-d acts with us in a measure that may not seem good, we must love Him just the same.

Our sages explain that although we may not see the good in certain situations, it is only because we have limited vision. From G-d's perspective there is a reason for everything. In the end, whatever G-d does is for the good.

Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman (Nachmanides) was a great sage, scholar, Kabbalist and physician. Once he visited one of his students who was very sick. Rabbi Moshe realized that his student's days were numbered.

He said to his student, "I have many questions as to the sufferings of our people. I want you to go before the heavenly court and ask them where is justice? Why are these terrible things happening to our people? Then you must come and reveal to me the answers to these questions."

Rabbi Moshe wrote down the questions and instructed that the paper be placed in the coffin, which they did when the student passed away.

A while later, as Rabbi Moshe was studying, his student appeared before him.

"Did you ask the questions from the heavenly court? Did you bring me the answer to the questions?" Rabbi Moshe inquired from his student.

"My dear teacher, when my soul went up to heaven, I went to ask the questions so that I can bring you the answer as promised. However, when I entered the heavenly court, I suddenly realized that in the heavenly spheres there were no questions... Up there everything looked just and perfect!"