

Rabbi's Message
FROM MOURNING TO MORNING

During the summer months the Torah's calendar contains no holidays save the weekly blessing of Shabbat. However, post biblical historical realities bring us a most significant commemoration on Tisha B'Av, the Ninth of Av. It was on this date in the heat of summer in the year 586 B.C.E. that the Babylonians destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem.



On the same date some six and a half centuries later, in the year 70 C.E., the Romans destroyed the Second Temple in Jerusalem.

Twice in our long, unbroken journey through history we found our national sovereignty overthrown, the seat, symbol, and reality of our government destroyed, our country overrun by oppressive enemies, and the organizational realities of our daily lives in ruin.

In the long saga of the numerous peoples and nations of the human family no group, save us, has ever outlived, overcome, and flourished beyond such overwhelming, total, and seemingly permanent national and cultural destruction.

As we have lived beyond these decimations and lived beyond the many other attempts to eliminate the Jewish People from the face of the earth, Tisha B'Av has been primarily observed as a Jewish Day of Mourning. We recall the destructions and weep as we read the Book of Lamentations.

In the reality of our own day, with the focus of summer being a time for vacations, relaxation, picnics, backyard barbeques, days at the beach, time on the tennis and golf courses, etc., Tisha B'Av has faded from the consciousness of most American Jews. Living as we do, we have little awareness of the "nationhood" of the Jewish People. As most moderns, we look back at ancient history as just that, ancient and history. We may study it, we may find it interesting, we may draw lessons from it, but, for the most part, it does not animate our daily living or flow through the emotional veins of our conscious daily life.

Yet, even in our modern day, I believe that reclaiming and refocusing the commemoration of Tisha B'Av can offer us much of value. I see Tisha B'Av not so

much as a day of mourning but as a day of morning. Yes, it does remind us of loss, of destruction, of death, of the precariousness of life; but, it also reminds us that we are still here, alive, and flourishing.

I posit Tisha B'Av as morning in that after the passing of the darkest of nights we awaken to the challenge and the possibility of rebuilding, of reclaiming, of adapting to new realities, and of going forward.

Hurricanes, tornadoes, tsunamis, economic upheavals, terrorist attacks, wars, and threatening enemies are still a part of life on this planet. No one of us is immune to the ravages of these things when they wash over our shores, blow through our towns, and shake the foundations of our society. Each of us must also encounter the threats and challenges to our personal lives when disease strikes, jobs are lost, loved ones die, and so many such things assail us.

In pausing to commemorate on the Ninth of Av, we can remember that mourning in the face of loss need not yield to despair. The Babylonians are gone, the Romans are gone, the Inquisition is no more, and the crematoria of Hitler's death camps no longer devour us; yet we are still here. We live, we thrive, we create, we struggle and inspire. We have adapted, we have adjusted, we have cried and used our tears to water and nourish new growth. Yes, Am Yisrael Chai, the Jewish People Lives!

On Tisha B'Av, both collectively and individually, we can pause, face the reality of life's destructive power, appropriately lament, and cry. We can also remember that, just as did our forbears, we can find strength and comfort in turning to God, we can draw on the collective, ancient, and ongoing strength and spirit of our People to maintain hope, to rebuild upon the ruins, to adjust and adapt to new realities, and to thrive. We can turn to the frame for life and tools for living to be found in our Torah and in the millennia of our encounter, interpretation, and application to life of its words and teachings.

I invite you to join with me in our Sanctuary on Erev Tisha B'av, which this year falls on Monday evening August 8th, as we embrace and join in our People's journey from mourning to morning.

Shalom u'v'racha,

Norman Koch, Rabbi