



Temple Beth Israel - Shaare Zedek: The Rabbi's Message August/ Av -2022 אב

Welcome back from our summer "break!" This month, we will have services this Friday, Aug. 5 at 7:30 and our Torah Study Group at 10:00 am on Saturday, Aug. 6. Torah study will focus on Tisha b'Av, the Ninth of Av fast day, which begins at about 9:00 pm on that same day.

Hebrew learning will resume, as promised, in August; however, because this Sunday, Aug. 7 is Yom Tisha b'Av, the Day of the Ninth of Av, we cannot meet in observance of the fast day.

Friday, Aug. 5 at 7:30: Kabbalat Shabbat *and* Recitation of the Scroll of Lamentations:

In addition to an abbreviated Shabbat service, we will have our community's observance of Tisha b'Av, the Ninth of the Hebrew month of Av. This solemn and heartfelt holiday commemorates the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 586 BCE at the hands of the Babylonians and the beginning of the Babylonian Exile. It also memorializes the fall of the Second Temple to the Romans in 70 CE and the end of Jewish political independence and sovereignty in the Land of Israel (until 1948 CE). Finally, it has come to be highly symbolic of the Spanish Expulsion in the fifteenth century, the diversification of Sephardic Judaism outside of Spain.

Each of these moments in our Jewish history was marked by deep tragedy, but also by the change and rebirth of our community. Each loss became a new turn in the experience of Diaspora. It is possible to say of Judaism that we exist as contemporary Jews only *because of Diaspora*. Think of all of the beautiful variations of Jewish experience, cultures, music, art, liturgy, and literature. All of these owe their existence to these moments of loss and tragedy.

Theologically, during much of the times when the Jewish scriptures were being written, compiled, and edited, we located Gd in the Jerusalem Temple, and we "prayed" with sacrifices. There we sought the Presence (Shekhina) directly. Panic began with each exile. Where was Gd without the Temple? Could Gd be detected? Could Gd be prayed to or reached at all, without the offering of sacrifices, that is? These questions seem very familiar to our own experience of life today, and the theologies we have discovered to address these worries owe their birth to the Ninth of Av.

Additionally, the Scroll of Lamentations and its associated liturgy is achingly beautiful, and worth coming to hear. It is a celebration of hope in darkness. We will have myself, and a couple of congregants both chanting much of the Hebrew and reading in English. Please reach out to me if you would like to be an English reader.

Finally, this weekend is "step one" as we approach the High Holy Days. We say on Passover that we move from an emotionally low place (but a spiritually deep one) to a high place, from slavery to freedom, from shame to nobility. Similarly, this weekend, we begin in loss and fear, and we climb, Shabbat by Shabbat, to rebirth of the world on Rosh Hashanah, to forgiveness of each other and a new beginning of relationships on Yom Kippur, and to the "Rains of Blessing" that cleanse and feed the world beginning on Sukkot. We begin our climb in tears of loss, and this allows us to appreciate the droplets of blessing that feed the earth all the more. Come, join us and begin your spiritual preparation for a deep, meaningful, and transformative new Jewish year this Fall.