

Tisha b'Av

The Masorti Movement, represented by Noam, Marom, Mercaz & Masorti AmLat, invites to reflect on the various tragedies of Our People, with the overriding motto of REMEMBERING.

To change the world...I'll start with me

The history of the Jewish People is full of events that have imparted to our calendar a bitter taste. Many are the sad and painful events that we can number all throughout the 5771 lifespan of this millenary people. Nevertheless, there is a day in the luach that is considered the most tragic and the saddest. The ninth of Av, the day in which we commemorate not only the destruction of the two Holy Temples in Jerusalem, but also the fall of the fortress of Betar in the second century; the beginning of the First Crusade in 1096; the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492; the beginning of World War I in 1914; the implementation of the "Final Solution" decreed by the Nazi regime in 1942; and given that the Second Temple burned until the tenth of Av, it is also worthwhile remembering the terrorist attack on the AMIA in Buenos Aires on the tenth of Av of year 5754.

All of these extremely sad events remind of death, abuse and discrimination, but above all else, it reminds us of the silence of many that enabled these events to happen.

Nevertheless, Tisha' Beav finds its central trope in the destruction of the First and Second Temple in Jerusalem by the hands of Nebuchadnezzar in the year 586 BCE and Titus in the year 70 CE respectively.

The Babylonian Talmud (treatise Yoma 9b) insists that the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem was caused by the transgressions of idolatry, murder and incest; and what caused the destruction of the Second Temple was "Sinat Chinam", senseless hatred, which can be considered even a greater sin than the other ones.

And it is precisely here where the following questions arise: Why is there a need to hate and destroy? Would it not be easier to share and build a world among all the inhabitants of the planet? Where does this imperious necessity to dominate others and not allowing them a free existence come from? Has the Jewish people really done so much harm to humanity?

I am confident that the answer to all of these questions is just the opposite to what they posit, and that, on the contrary, we should "all" struggle for a better and more constructive life in this world.

Regardless of this position, I think that today we should answer another kind of question, a question that goes beyond the others though related to it: Where is the Jewish People today vis-à-vis defending, caring and respecting itself so as not to allow the events that happened on the history of the ninth of Av to happen again?

This question could be easy to answer, but it is not.

Today, already in the 21st century, after more than two thousand years after the destruction of the First Temple of Jerusalem, we can see that in different opportunities, we find ourselves lacking commitment to small and great responsibilities that we often have to face; responsibilities that have to do not only with our daily and secular life, but also pertaining to our attitude vis-à-vis our millenary Jewish people. And it is precisely in this sense, that I start to question myself of whether we should start our reflection on this topic.

Tisha' Beav is a tragic day in the history of the Jewish People, but beyond these events, it commemorates that this People of the Book did not and will not cross its arms for any reason in the world, because it has always looked to keep growing and developing. Obviously, that to achieve this was no easy task, because there was a fundamental requirement which was the commitment of the entire people to keep alive and well our history and traditions.

On that moment, more than two thousand years ago, it was not an easy task pitted against obstacles that were hard to circumvent but were not impossible.

Today the task is in our hands. The how to is very simple: transforming ourselves in simple men and women that pursue justice and peace, so that we might find them definitively and permanently. Or, in the words of Hillel the wise in Pirke Avot 1:12: "Ohev shalom verodef shalom..." seek peace and pursue it to live in a better world.

Tisha' Beav is a day that calls us to reflect so we can think about ourselves and commit, as our brethren did after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. A commitment with Judaism, with our community, and above all else, with ourselves, that allows us not to forget the past, enables us to live in the present trying to correct our past mistakes and setting the course for a better future full of peace, justice, and equity among the people that inhabit this planet.

The famous Argentinean singer Alejandro Lerner in his song "Cambiar el mundo" (To Change the World) posits: "To change the world...I'll start with me." If we want to achieve a change in others, we should start at home.

On Tisha' Beav we remember the injustices perpetrated against the Jewish People, but at the same time we find solidarity with other peoples, men and women who many times have been forced to act in a particular way because they were forbidden to live their own traditions and cultures.

Maybe this is the moment to begin to teach that hate and lust for power not only lead nowhere, but also destroy everything that is ours as well as this marvelous earth that we were bequeathed so we could ALL inhabit it together, in SHALOM, with our traditions and respecting one another.

Tisha' Beav is a painful day that has left its firebrand in our history, which we cannot forget, and we are obligated to transmit so events like this never happen again.

BeBirkat Shalom,

Rabino Ari Oliszewski
Sociedade Israelita da Bahia
Salvador da Bahia, Brasil

*Translated by Rabbi Juan Mejia
(Southwestern Coordinator for Bechol Lashon)*



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