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# THE THREE WEEKS AND TISHAH B'AV I

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## Exile & Destruction

The most cataclysmic events shaping the history of the Jewish people occurred on the Seventeenth of Tammuz and Tishah B'Av (the Ninth of Av). Profound mistakes in our relationship with God and our fellow Jews resulted in national tragedies that led to the establishment of these days of mourning, fasting, and introspection. This three-week period, known as "*Bein HaMeitzarim*" (lit. "between the straits"), is marked by a reduction in our joyous celebration of life as well as customs that reflect a sense of mourning.

This first Morasha Class on the Three Weeks will focus on the events marked by these days with specific emphasis on the destruction of the First and Second Temples. This exploration will extend from the beginning of Jewish history in Biblical times to the events of the past century. In the next Morasha Class on the Three Weeks we will investigate why the Temples were destroyed and what we can do to rebuild them.

This class will address the following questions:

- What events transpired on the Seventeenth of Tammuz and on Tishah B'Av that have impacted the Jewish nation throughout history?
- How do these events so early in Jewish history affect later generations?
- What tragedies do we mourn on Tishah B'Av?
- Is Tishah B'Av the only day of national mourning for the Jewish people?

**Class Outline:**

- Section I. Biblical Roots of the Three Weeks
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## SECTION I. BIBLICAL ROOTS OF THE THREE WEEKS

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As we have discussed in the Morasha shiurim on the Jewish festivals, the cycle of the Jewish year contains a dynamic spiritual energy unique to each season. The same is true of the Three Weeks. The tragic actions of the newly founded Jewish nation worshipping the Golden Calf on the Seventeenth of Tammuz and the acceptance of the negative report of the Spies on the Ninth of Av have imposed a long-term negative impact on Jewish history. At the same time, this period of the Three Weeks provides each generation with the opportunity to rectify the source of those errors and to elevate the Jewish people to the highest spiritual levels.

### PART A. THE BIRTH OF TRAGEDY

All tragedy in Jewish history stems from the mistakes of our ancestors in Biblical times. The sin of the Golden Calf and the sin of the Spies serve as the Biblical backdrop of the Three Weeks and all the calamities the Jewish people has suffered throughout time.

1. **Rabbi Aharon Kotler, Mishnas Rabbi Aharon, Vol. III, p. 49 – Although there were several events that occurred on the Seventeenth of Tammuz and Tishah B'Av, the Golden Calf and the report of the Spies are viewed as the basis for the calamities that subsequently occurred on these days.**

The destruction of the Temples and our exile

והגנה החורבן והגלות יסודם באלה הימים, מ"ז תמוז

are based on the days from the Seventeenth of Tammuz until the Ninth of Av. One who contemplates this will find amazing things. On the Seventeenth of Tammuz the Golden Calf was worshipped, and on the evening of the Ninth of Av the episode of the Spies took place. These two major events changed the entire course of the Jewish nation for generations.

Before the Golden Calf, [after having received the Torah on Mount Sinai] the Jewish people reached the stature of Adam HaRishon before his banishment from the Garden of Eden. They had achieved a totally different consciousness, close to the spiritual worlds ...

The transgression of the Spies resulted in the inability of that entire generation, including Moshe Rabbeinu (Moses), from entering the Land of Israel. If they had entered the Land at that time, they would have enjoyed a supernatural existence with open miracles like the ones they had experienced until now [the Manna, Clouds of Glory, and traveling Spring of Miriam]. Furthermore, the Temple would never have been destroyed nor would the Jews have been exiled. All these events were the outcome of the sin of the Golden Calf and the transgression of the Spies.

עד ט' באב, והמתבונן בזה ימצא כאן דברים מפליאים, דב"ז בתמוז נעשה העגל, ובלייל ט' באב מעשה המרגלים, והנה הם שני המאורעות הגדולים ששינו את מהלך עם ישראל לדורי דורות,

דקודם מעשה העגל היו כאדם הראשון קודם החטא... היינו קודם עשיית העגל היו במציאות אחרת לגמרי, קרובים לעולמות הרוחניים...

וחטא המרגלים גרם לדור המדבר שלא יכנסו לארץ ושלא יכנס משה רבינו לארץ, ואילו הכנים היתה ההנהגה כמו במדבר הנהגה ניסית גלויה, וגם לא היה אפשרי חורבן ביהמ"ק והגלות מהארץ והכל נסתבב ממועשה העגל ומוחטא המרגלים.

We can provide an analogy: The relationship forged between God and the Jewish people at Mount Sinai is sometimes referred to as a marriage. If, during the formative period of a marriage serious issues arise and are not addressed, they can be expected to resurface later, until they are resolved. Such were the challenges presented by worshipping the Golden Calf and the acceptance of the malicious report of the Spies.

The Exodus from Egypt and the receiving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai could also be viewed as the birth of the Jewish people. Mistakes that occur at the time of birth can leave long-lasting scars that may take a lifetime to resolve. Such were the sins of the Golden Calf and the Spies.

## PART B. THE SIN OF THE GOLDEN CALF

1. **Rabbi Mordechai Becher, Gateway to Judaism, p. 238 – The sin of the Golden Calf damaged the Jews' relationship with Torah and paved the way for other such transgressions in the future.**

The first calamity to occur during the Three Weeks was the sin of the Golden Calf. Only forty days after the entire nation heard God speak at Mt. Sinai, the Jewish men (not the women) created and worshipped an idol. When Moses came down from Mt. Sinai and saw what had happened, he broke the Tablets of the law that God had given him. The Jews were forgiven for this sin on the Day of Atonement and received the second set of Tablets. Nevertheless, the perfect unity of the Jewish

people with the Torah, which had been created at Mt. Sinai, was now damaged. With the sin of the Golden Calf they weakened their connection to the revelation at Mt. Sinai and created the possibility that in the future other Jews would also sever their connection to the teachings first begun at Mt. Sinai. Had they not sinned in this way, such a possibility would never have existed.

The following sources describe the connection between the Golden Calf and the future sins of the Jewish people.

2. **Shemot (Exodus) 32:23-25 – Aaron recounts to Moshe the events leading up to the Golden Calf.**

“The people said to me, ‘Make for us a god that will go before us, for we do not know what has become of this man Moshe who brought us up from Egypt.’ And I said to them, ‘Who has gold?’ They removed it and gave it to me. I threw it into the fire and this calf came out.”

And Moshe saw the people, that they were exposed, for Aaron had exposed them to disgrace among those who rise up against them. (In other words, the enemies of Israel will disgrace them by referring to the sin of the Golden Calf – Rashi.)

ויאמרו לי עשה לנו אלהים אשר ילכו לפנינו כי זה משה האיש אשר העלנו מארץ מצרים לא ידענו מה היה לו: ואמר להם למי זהב התפרקו ויתנו לי ואשלכהו באש ויצא העגל הזה:

וירא משה את העם כי פרע הוא כי פרעה אהרן לשמצה בקמיהם (להיות להם הדבר הזה לגנות בפי כל הקמים עליהם -- רש"י):

3. **Ramban (Nachmanides), *ibid.* – Moshe foresaw that the sin of the Golden Calf would weaken the connection of future generations to the revelation at Mt. Sinai and open the possibility for them to exchange God for idols.**

Onkelos explains the phrase “a disgrace among those who rise up against them” to mean “to give them a bad name for generations.” Since Onkelos explained this verse as “for generations,” it seems that the Calf would become a cause of disgrace and evil throughout Jewish history.

For people will say, “It was not in vain that our ancestors made the Golden Calf and worshipped it, for it was this [Calf] that brought them out of Egypt. Since it was beneficial for them to worship the Calf, we shall do the same and it will also be good for us.”

This was in fact what was said at the time of Yeravam [the evil king of the Northern Kingdom who made two golden calves], who said to the people, “It is too far to go to [the Temple in] Jerusalem. These are your gods that you brought up from the land of Egypt!” (Melachim/Kings I, 12:28)

וזה כדעת אונקלוס שתרגם לשמצה בקמיהם לאפקא שום ביש בדריהון. ולפי שאמר “בדריהון” נראה שרצה לפרש כי העגל אשר עשו יהיה שמץ רעה בדורות ישראל,

כי יאמרו לא לחנם עשו אבותינו את העגל ועבדוהו, רק שידעו בו כי הוא אשר העלם מארץ מצרים ומצאו בעבודתו תועלת להם, ואף אנחנו נעשה כן, כי טוב לנו לעבדו,

כאשר היה הדבר בירבעם שאמר רב לכם מעלות ירושלים הנה אלהיך ישראל אשר העלוך מארץ מצרים (מ"א יב כח),

Moshe Rabbeinu foresaw prophetically how the Golden Calf would be the cause of transgression for generations.

ראה משה כי לדורות יפשעו בו:

4. **Rabbi Chanoch Henoch Lebowitz, Chidushei HaLev, Vol. II, p. 151 –The tragedy of the Golden Calf is not limited to that particular generation, since its disastrous effects are felt in every generation.**

One can explain from the words of the Ramban [in the previous source], who cites the Targum, that the transgression of the Golden Calf [in 1313 BCE] impacted the Jewish people to worship idols in the days of Yeravam ben Nevat [796 BCE] and for generations after him. Even though the Jewish people did not worship this calf for one full day, and the calf itself was immediately burned and pulverized ... and they no longer worshipped it; nevertheless, this serious transgression caused future generations to stumble and commit serious transgressions. This was not an unusual consequence because it is the nature of historical events to have future consequences.

מבואר בדברי הרמב"ן שדייק מהתרגום, שחטא העגל גרם והשפיע על בני"י שיעבדו ע"ז בימי ירבעם בן נבט ובדורות שלאחריו. ואף שבנ"י כאן לא עבדו לעגל אפילו יום אחד שלם, והעגל גם נשרף ונטחן מיד... ולא הוסיפו עוד לעבדו, בכל זאת גרם חטא חמור זה שדורות שלמים יכשלו בעבירות חמורות. ולא היה זה מקרה משונה, אלא כן הוא טבע הדברים.

## PART C. THE SIN OF THE SPIES

Just as the sin of the Golden Calf led to the breaking of the Tablets and a severance of the Jewish people's connection to Torah, so too the sin of the Spies led to a severance of the bond between the Jewish people and the Holy Land. Once that bond had been weakened, the possibility of exile became a distinct reality.

1. **Bamidbar (Numbers) 13:32, 14:1, 14:34 – The spies publicly reported that the Land promised to them by God was not worth entering, and any attempt to conquer it would fail.**

They delivered an evil report about the land they had spied ... the entire assembly raised their voices and cried that night [for they did not want to enter the land] ... [And God said,] "According to the number of days that you spied out the land, forty days, one day for each year, you will be punished – for forty years ..."

וַיָּצִיאוּ דִּבַּת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר תָּרוּ אֹתָהּ...  
וּתְשֹׂא כָל הָעֵדָה וַיִּתְּנוּ אֶת קוֹלָם וַיִּבְכּוּ הָעָם בְּלֵילָה  
הַהוּא:  
בְּמִסְפַּר הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר תִּרְתֹּם אֶת הָאָרֶץ אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם יוֹם  
לְשָׁנָה יוֹם לְשָׁנָה תִּשָּׂאוּ אֶת עוֹנֵתֵיכֶם אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה...

2. **Talmud Bavli (Babylonian Talmud), Ta'anit 29a – The Jewish people's response to the Spies' report was completely unjustified since God had explicitly promised the Land to them.**

You cried without cause; I will establish for you a reason to cry [on this day] for generations.

אתם בכיתם בכיה של חנם ואני קובע לכם בכיה לדורות.

The night of the spies' report was Tishah B'Av, and it was on this day that both Temples were destroyed and many other tragedies took place throughout Jewish history.

### 3. Maharal, Netzach Yisrael, Ch. 8, p. 53 – The sin damaged the Jews' connection to the Land.

The fact that the Jews cried for nothing and despised the Land of Israel established for them a crying [on this day] for generations. This actually caused them to be exiled from their land. Their crying showed that they had not forged a complete connection to the Land.

וזה שאמר שהיו בוכים בכיה של חנם ומאסו בארץ  
חמדה ודבר זה נקבע להם בכיה לדורות, שהיה גורם  
שגלו מן הארץ, כי הבכיה שהיו בוכים מורה שאין  
הארץ שייך להם לגמרי.

The underlying factor for accepting the spies' report was a lack of faith in God.

### 4. Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, Michtav M'Eliyahu, Vol. II, p. 46 – The only rectification for the unjustified crying is sincere crying throughout Jewish history.

"You cried without cause; I will establish for you a reason to cry [on this day] for generations." Crying is an expression of internal pain. What is considered "crying without cause"? It only flows from a lack of faith in God. When the Jewish people stood at the border of the Holy Land, they resisted entering by saying, "Why did God bring us to this land to succumb to the sword..." [Bamidbar 14] "Because God's hate for us did He take us from the land of Egypt to give us over to the Amoraim to destroy us" [Devarim 1].

The cause of this deficiency in trusting in God is an internal lack – in bonding with God. The only way to rectify this is through the establishment of crying throughout the generations.

"אתם בכיתם בכייה של חנם לפיכך אקבע לכם  
בכייה לדורות". בכייה הינה ביטוי לצער פנימי. מהי  
"בכייה של חנם"? – איננה נובעת אלא מחוסר  
בטחון. כשעמדו בני ישראל על גבול ארץ הקדושה  
סרבו להכנס באמרם "ולמה ה' מביא אותנו אל הארץ  
הזאת לנפול בחרב..." (במדבר י"ד): "בשנאת ה'  
אותנו הוציאנו מארץ מצריים לתת אותנו בידי האמורי  
להשמידנו" (דברים א')...

ופגם זה בבטחון, שהוא חסרון בפנימיות – בדביקות  
בהש"ת. אי אפשר היה לתקנו אלא בקביעת בכייה  
לדורות.

How can this lack of faith be understood and how does the crying enable a rectification of not wanting to enter the land?

### 5. Ner Le'Elef Booklet on Bamidbar, Shavuot, and Tishah B'Av, pp. 188-189 – The crying in the future would be the desire to come closer to God.

At that time, the Jewish people cried because they were too close to God and would continue to be so. They felt that they could not continue in the Land of Israel with the intense Divine Providence that they had experienced in the desert. They would rather go back and suffer under the Egyptians. God's response was that they would get what they wanted – distance from Him. But, He assured them, they would cry for generations and their future cries would be because of that distance. As a result of that distance they would see their Temples destroyed, and they would cry. Because of that distance they would see their land taken over by others, and they would cry in their exile. That crying would already be the right type of crying; it would be the cry of wanting to get closer to God, not further away, and it would lead to where the original crying led away from – return to the land and the ushering in of the Messianic era.

6. **Rabbi Mordechai Becher, Gateway to Judaism, p. 239 – The period of the Three Weeks is an ominous time for the Jewish people.**

In essence, all the tragedies of the Exile are products of our separation from the Torah and from the holiness of the Land of Israel. This idea is alluded to in Eichah (Lamentations), which is read in the synagogue on Tishah B'Av: "All her pursuers overtook her in dire straits."

The words "in dire straits" can also be translated as "between the calamities," a reference to the period between the Seventeenth of Tammuz and the Ninth of Av. The commentaries point out that every punishment visited upon the Jewish people carries within it a tiny measure of punishment of the sin of the Golden Calf and that of the spies that took place on those dates.

These sins so much affected the Jewish psyche that all future sins can be linked back to them. As such, any suffering visited upon the Jewish people is also attributed to these primordial national transgressions.

#### KEY THEMES OF SECTION I:

- ✧ Jewish history has meaning. Events that happen in the past have implanted spiritual energies into the world that continually bear fruit throughout time.
- ✧ The spiritual energy of the Three Weeks was created in Biblical times by the sin of the Golden Calf, breaking of the Tablets and the sin of the Spies. These events laid the groundwork for the future sins and the future calamities of the Jewish people.
- ✧ The sin of the Golden Calf and the subsequent breaking of the Tablets of the Law damaged the Jewish people's connection to the Torah. In a similar vein, accepting the negative report of the spies damaged the Jewish people's link to the Land of Israel.
- ✧ All future calamities of the Jewish people are in one way or another punishment for these sins and the effect they made on the collective Jewish psyche: a predisposition toward idolatry, a lack of firm connection to the Land of Israel, and a weakness in the collective commitment to the Torah.

## SECTION II. PRELUDE TO DESTRUCTION

Both the First Temple and the Second Temple were destroyed on Tishah B'Av. The First Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in the year 423 BCE and the Second Temple by the Romans in the year 70 CE. These tragic events have been mourned throughout Jewish history and observed by fasting. There are two additional tragedies that are also marked by fasting that relate to the destruction of the First Temple: (1) the Tenth of Tevet, when the outer walls of Jerusalem were breached prior to the First Temple destruction, and (2) the Fast of Gedaliah, marking the assassination of the Governor of Israel after the Babylonians destroyed the First Temple, which caused thousands of Jews to be slain and drove the remaining Jews into exile.

### PART A. THE FOUR FASTS

The prophet Zechariah, speaking of the First Temple, described four fasts that commemorate the destruction. As we will see in this Section, two of these public fast days center around events that were a prelude to the actual destruction.



1. **Zechariah 8:19 – There are four fasts that commemorate the destruction, which will be turned into days of joy when the Temple is rebuilt.**

So said the Lord of Hosts, “The fast of the fourth [month], the fast of the fifth [month], the fast of the seventh [month], and the fast of the tenth [month] shall be for the house of Judah for joy and happiness and for happy holidays – only love truth and peace.”

כה אמר יקוק צבאות צום הרביעי וצום החמישי  
וצום השביעי וצום העשירי יהיה לבית יהודה לששון  
ולשמחה ולמעדים טובים והאמת והשלום אהבו:

Zechariah's count of the months is from the Jewish month of Nissan. Hence the fast of the fourth month refers to the Seventeenth of Tammuz, the fast of the fifth month refers to Tishah B'Av, the fast of the seventh month refers to Tzom Gedaliah in Tishrei (discussed in the Morasha Class on Rosh HaShanah), and the fast of the tenth month refers to the Tenth of Tevet (see Rosh HaShanah 18b).

## PART B. THE TENTH OF TEVET

In terms of the chronology of the destruction of the Temples, the first events to be mourned by fasting occurred on the tenth day of the tenth month, Tevet.

1. **Rabbi Berel Wein, Tenth of Tevet, from [www.aish.com](http://www.aish.com) – The Tenth of Tevet mourns the siege of Jerusalem.**

The Tenth of Tevet marks the onset of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylonia, and the beginning of the battle that ultimately destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple of Solomon, and sent the Jews into the 70-year Babylonian Exile. The date of the Tenth of Tevet is recorded for us by the prophet Yechezkel (Ezekiel), who himself was already in Babylonia as part of the first group of Jews exiled there by Nebuchadnezzar, eleven years earlier than the actual destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem itself.

It may seem strange to mourn the day that the siege of Jerusalem began. Since we commemorate the actual destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple during the Three Weeks, one might think that the Tenth of Tevet would simply be eclipsed by these larger tragedies. What was so tragic about the beginning of the siege and what is the message of the Tenth of Tevet?

2. **Rabbi Noach Weinberg, Siege of Jerusalem, from [www.aish.com](http://www.aish.com) – The Tenth of Tevet is a wake-up call.**

In Jewish consciousness, a fast day is a time of reckoning, a time to correct a previous mistake. What happened on the Tenth of Tevet that we have to correct?

On the Tenth of Tevet, 2,500 years ago, Nebuchadnezzar began his siege of Jerusalem. Actually, there was little damage on that first day and no Jews were killed. So why is this day so tragic? Because the siege was a message, to get the Jewish people to wake up and fix their problems. They failed, and the siege led to the destruction of the First Temple.

3. **Rabbi Mordechai Becher, Gateway to Judaism, p. 238 – The Tenth of Tevet marks the day Jerusalem ceased to be the center of our spiritual world.**

Another tragedy lies within this day which is less obvious. Jerusalem is meant to be the source of inspiration to the world and the place from which Torah and the word of God reaches everyone. A



siege prevents supplies from entering a city, and it also prevents communication from the city reaching the outside world. Ever since Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, laid siege to Jerusalem, the voice of this holy city has been muted. It ceased to be the spiritual beacon for the world, it lost its role as the primary center of Torah study, and the “word of God” could no longer be heard coming forth from its gates.

The siege on Jerusalem is not the only event mourned on the Tenth of Tevet. Other events that occurred around this date are also commemorated.

**4. Rabbi Berel Wein, Tenth of Tevet, from [www.aish.com](http://www.aish.com) – The Tenth of Tevet also marks other tragedies in Jewish history: the death of Ezra and the translation of the Torah into Greek.**

There are other commemorative days that fall immediately before the Tenth of Tevet and their memory has been silently incorporated in the fast day of the Tenth of Tevet as well. On the eighth of Tevet, King Ptolemy of Egypt forced seventy Jewish scholars to gather and translate the Hebrew Bible into Greek. Even though the Talmud relates to us that this project was blessed with a miracle – the seventy scholars were all placed in separate cubicles and yet they all came up with the same translation – the general view of the rabbis of the time towards this project was decidedly negative. The Talmud records that when this translation became public “darkness descended on the world.”

The Greek translation of the Bible aided the advance of the agenda of the Hellenist Jews to bring Greek culture into Jewish life, and to attempt to reform Judaism in the image of Greek values and lifestyle. The “koshering” of the Greek language by its use in translating the Hebrew Bible had wide ramifications in Jewish society and undermined some of the efforts of the rabbis in combating the allure of Greece in Israel of then.

The ninth day of Tevet is held to be the day of the death of Ezra the Scribe. This great Jew is comparable even to Moses in the eyes of the Talmud. “If the Torah had not been granted through Moses, it could have been granted to Israel through Ezra.” Ezra led the return of the Jews to Jerusalem from their Babylonian exile. It was under his direction and inspiration, together with the help of Nechemiah, that the Second Temple was built.

Ezra staunchly opposed the flow of intermarriage that afflicted the Jews returning to Jerusalem, strengthened public and private Sabbath observance, and created the necessary schools and intellectual tools for the furtherance of the knowledge and development of the Oral Law within the Jewish people.

Ezra is responsible for the survival of Judaism and the Jews till this very day. It is no wonder therefore that Jews marked the day of his death as a sad day on the Jewish calendar. Since fasting on the eighth, ninth, and tenth days of Tevet consecutively would be unreasonable, the events of the eighth and ninth were subsumed into the fast day of the Tenth of Tevet.

## **PART C. THE SEVENTEENTH OF TAMMUZ**

Later stages leading to the destruction of both Temples are mourned on the Seventeenth of Tammuz, as well as other tragedies in Jewish history. This fast day initiates the Three Weeks of mourning over the destruction of the Temples.

**1. Mishnah, Ta'anit 4:6 – Five calamities occurred on the Seventeenth of Tammuz.**

Five tragedies occurred to our ancestors on

חמשה דברים אירעו את אבותינו בשבעה עשר

the Seventeenth of Tammuz:

1. The tablets [of the Ten Commandments] were smashed [by Moshe when he descended from Mt. Sinai and saw the Golden Calf.]
2. The two daily sacrifices were suspended [during the First Temple period.]
3. The breach of the walls [of Jerusalem by the Romans prior to the destruction of the Second Temple.]
4. The wicked Apostomus burned the Torah.
5. An idol was erected in the Temple courtyard. (The Sages of the Jerusalem Talmud disputed, one saying that this refers to the idol of Menashe during the First Temple Period, while the other said that it refers to the idol of Apostomos the Greek in the Second Temple Period.)

בתמוז...

(א) נשתברו הלוחות

(ב) ובטל התמיד

(ג) והובקעה העיר

(ד) ושרף אפוסטמוס את התורה

(ה) והעמיד צלם בהיכל (פליגי בה אמוראי בירושלמי, חד אמר צלם של מנשה, ובבית ראשון מיירי. וחד אמר צלם של אפוסטמוס שהיה משרי היונים ובבית שני היה:

The true identity of “Apostomus” is unclear. It may be a reference to Antiochus Epiphanes of Chanukah fame or to any one of a host of other Greek or Roman rulers. For us, less important than who he was, are the incidents attributed to his name.

As we noted above, the Biblical incidents illustrate the root of the problem. In this light we can come to appreciate how the five calamities of the Seventeenth of Tammuz are all linked to the original tragedy that lead to the breaking of the two Tablets of the Ten Commandments.

## 2. **Rabbi Joey Felsen, Focus: A Tishah B'Av Reader, pp. 13-15 – The calamities of the Seventeenth of Tammuz stem from the sin of the Golden Calf and its aftermath.**

The breaking of the Tablets defined the Seventeenth of Tammuz. It forged the eternal nature of this date, and the tragedies that occurred in subsequent generations on the Seventeenth of Tammuz all necessarily flow from this defining moment. With a little study, it is not difficult to see how later events are merely different expressions of the original breaking of the Tablets on this day ... Each one of these episodes demonstrates a disintegration of the bond between God and Israel – a direct consequence of the breaking of the Tablets at Sinai.

The Biblical description of the daily offering explicitly states that this practice began at Sinai: “The constant offering that was done at Mount Sinai” (Bamidbar 28:6). The termination of this offering on the Seventeenth of Tammuz was the end of a daily practice that had begun at Mount Sinai and continued without interruption for centuries. Despite the travels of the Jews in the desert, the wandering of the Tabernacle in the newly conquered Land of Israel, and the occupation of the enemy, this sacrifice had been a constant. It offered the nation a daily opportunity to present something tangible to God; it was a very real and meaningful expression of their relationship with God. But like the Tablets before it, the daily offering and the relationship it represented came to an end on the Seventeenth of Tammuz.

The connection between the breaking of the Tablets and the burning of the Torah scrolls

is straightforward. The Torah scroll is the Divine document that communicates God's instructions to His people. A public burning of a Torah represents a breakdown of the Jewish people's connection with the Sinai experience. For other nations to impose their paganism on the Jewish nation is to be expected. But for a king of Judah to profane God's Temple with an idol is another demonstration that the nation's connection to Sinai continued to disintegrate.

Finally, we have the breach of the walls of Jerusalem. Three times a year at the pilgrimage festivals, Jerusalem was the meeting place for the nation. When the masses arrived in Jerusalem, they entered a private, walled domain. The breach in the city walls transformed the space into a public domain and constituted a breach in national security. At that point, the fall of the Temple became only a matter of time.

But this breach was not merely a physical event. The walls of Jerusalem symbolized the unity of the nation and a breach in the walls therefore symbolized a breach in national unity. There was a time when all Jews would enter the city by way of the gates and the nation would live together within the city walls. Now that was no longer possible. At Sinai, the Jews stood at the mountain as one nation, "like one person with one heart" (Midrash Mechiltah 19:2) – unity was a prerequisite for receiving the Ten Commandments. A breach in the walls of Jerusalem thus represents a further departure from Sinai.

#### KEY THEMES OF SECTION II:

- ✧ There are four fasts commemorating or related to the destruction of the Temples. Each one serves to focus our attention on a different element of the tragedy.
- ✧ The Tenth of Tevet mourns the beginning of the siege on Jerusalem during the time of the First Temple. This fast teaches us to take heed of the warning signs of national tragedy. It also focuses us on the loss of Jerusalem's spiritual grandeur.
- ✧ The Fast of Gedaliah, marking the assassination of the governor of Israel after the Babylonians destroyed the First Temple, caused thousands of Jews to be slain, and drove the remaining Jews into exile.
- ✧ The Seventeenth of Tammuz marks more advanced stages leading to the destruction of the Temple, the breaching of the walls of the city, and the cessation of the daily Tamid offerings in the Temple.
- ✧ The events of the Seventeenth of Tammuz can be seen as linked to their Biblical root of the breaking of the Tablets of the Ten Commandments. This event created a rift between the Jews and the Torah that has been felt throughout Jewish history.

### SECTION III. THE TRAGEDIES OF TISHAH B'AV

Whereas the Seventeenth of Tammuz stresses our distance from the Torah, Tishah B'Av focuses on the outcome of that breach – the loss of the Land, exile, and all the calamities that have been suffered ever since.

The five calamities mentioned by the Mishnah below serve as the main focus of our mourning on Tishah B'Av. They emphasize our distance from the Land and our loss of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. But as we will see toward the end of this section, Tishah B'Av is really the national day of mourning for all the tragedies suffered by the Jewish people throughout history.

# 1. Mishnah, Ta'anit 4:6 – The five calamities of Tishah B'Av focus on the destruction of the Temple and Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel.

Five things happened to our ancestors on Tishah B'Av:

1. It was decreed upon our ancestors not to enter the Land.
2. The First Temple was destroyed.
3. And the Second (Temple was also destroyed).
4. The city of Beitar was captured.
5. Jerusalem was plowed over.

חמשה דברים אירעו את אבותינו... בתשעה באב

(א) נגזר על אבותינו שלא יכנסו לארץ

(ב) וחרב הבית בראשונה

(ג) ובשניה

(ד) ונלכדה ביתר

(ה) ונחרשה העיר:

## PART A. DESTRUCTION OF THE FIRST TEMPLE (423 BCE)

The First Temple was destroyed by the Babylonian general Nebuchadnezzar in the year 423 BCE. Two sources seem to contradict each other in giving the exact date for the destruction of the First Temple and the Talmud clarifies the intent of the verses in question.

### 1. II Melachim/Kings 25:8-9 – The destruction took place on the seventh of Av.

And in the fifth month, on the seventh of the month – that was the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylonia – Nebuzaradan, chief executioner, servant of the king of Babylonia, came to Jerusalem. And he burnt the house of the Lord and the king's palace, and all the houses of Jerusalem and all the houses of the dignitaries he burnt with fire.

ובחדש החמישי בשבעה לחדש היא שנת תשע עשרה שנה למלך נבוכדנאצר מלך בבל בא נבוזראדן רב טבחים עבד מלך בבל ירושלם: וישרף את בית יקוק ואת בית המלך ואת כל בתי ירושלם ואת כל בית גדול שרף באש:

### 2. Yirmiyahu/Jeremiah 52:12-13 – The destruction took place on the tenth of Av.

And in the fifth month, on the tenth of the month – that was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon – Nebuzaradan the chief executioner, came [and] stood before the king of Babylon in Jerusalem. And he burnt the house of the Lord and the king's palace, and all the houses of Jerusalem and all the houses of the dignitaries he burnt with fire.

ובחדש החמישי בעשור לחדש היא שנת תשע עשרה שנה למלך נבוכדנאצר מלך בבל בא נבוזראדן רב טבחים עמד לפני מלך בבל בירושלם: וישרף את בית יקוק ואת בית המלך ואת כל בתי ירושלם ואת כל בית הגדול שרף באש:

### 3. Talmud Bavli, Ta'anit 29a – The destruction began on the seventh but the Temple was only burnt down on the ninth of Av and into the tenth.

We cannot say that it happened on the seventh,

אי אפשר לומר בשבעה - שהרי כבר נאמר בעשור,

for it has already been stated that it was “on the tenth”; and we cannot say that it happened on the tenth, for it has already been stated that it was “on the seventh.” How then are these dates to be reconciled? On the seventh the heathens entered the Temple and ate therein and desecrated it throughout the seventh and eighth [of Av]. Towards dusk of the ninth they set fire to it and it continued to burn the whole of that day.

ואי אפשר לומר בעשור - שהרי כבר נאמר בשבעה. הא כיצד? בשבעה נכנסו נכרים להיכל, ואכלו וקלקלו בו שביעי שמיני, ותשיעי סמוך לחשיכה הציתו בו את האור, והיה דולק והולך כל היום כולו.

## PART B. DESTRUCTION OF THE SECOND TEMPLE (70 CE)

The destruction of the Second Temple in the year 70 CE came long after the end of the Biblical period, so it is not described in the works of the prophets. Nevertheless, Jewish tradition has preserved for us the details of its destruction.

### 1. Talmud Bavli, Ta'anit – Tradition tells us that the Second Temple was destroyed on the same day and in a like manner to the First Temple.

And [the Temple was destroyed] the second time. From where do we know this? For it has been taught: Good things come to pass on an auspicious day, and bad things on an ominous day. It is reported that the day on which the First Temple was destroyed was the eve of the ninth of Av, a Sunday, and in a year following the Sabbatical year, and the guard of the family of Jehoyarib were on duty and the Levites were chanting the psalms standing on the Duchan. And what psalm did they recite? [The psalm] containing the verse, “And He has brought upon them their own iniquity; and will cut them off in their own evil” (Tehillim/Psalms 94). And hardly had they time to say, “The Lord our God will cut them off,” when the heathens came and captured them. The same thing too happened with the Second Temple.

ובשניה, מנלן? דתניא: מגלגלין זכות ליום זכאי וחובה ליום חייב. אמרו: כשחרב בית המקדש בראשונה אותו היום ערב תשעה באב היה ומוצאי שבת היה, ומוצאי שביעית היתה, ומשמרתה של יהויריב היתה, והלויים היו אומרים שירה ועומדין על דוכנם. ומה שירה היו אומרים - וישב עליהם את אונם וברעתם יצמיתם. ולא הספיקו לומר יצמיתם ה' אלהינו, עד שבאו נכרים וכבשום, וכן בשניה.

## PART C. DESTRUCTION OF BEITAR (135 CE)

Although not directly connected to the destruction of the Second Temple itself, the destruction of the city of Beitar by the Romans sixty-five years later marked the final blow. The failure of the Bar Kochba revolt (132-136 CE) and the period of persecution initiated by the Roman emperor Hadrian served to deepen the exile begun with the destruction of the Temple.

### 1. Mishnah Berurah, Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 549:2 – Tens of thousands of Jews lost their lives in the fall of the city of Beitar.

On that day [Tishah B'Av] the large city

ובזה היום נלכדה עיר גדולה וביתר שמה והיו בה

of Beitar, containing tens of thousands of Jews, was captured. All the inhabitants were killed, and it was a tragedy as great as the destruction of the Temple.

אלפים ורבבות מישראל ונפלו כולם ביד העכו"מ ונהרגו כולם והיתה צרה גדולה כמו חורבן ביהמ"ק.

## 2. Talmud Bavli, Gittin 57a – Beitar's destruction was a tragic loss of Jewish life.

It was the custom [in Beitar] when a boy was born to plant a cedar tree and when a girl was born to plant a pine tree, and when they married, the trees were cut down and a canopy made of the branches. One day the daughter of the Roman Emperor was passing when the side of her carriage broke, so they [the Romans] lopped some branches off a cedar tree to replace it. The Jews thereupon fell upon them and beat them. They then reported to the Emperor that the Jews were rebelling, and he marched against them.

There were eighty thousand army division leaders that assembled in the city of Beitar when it was taken. Men, women, and children were slain there until their blood ran into the Great Sea. Do you think this was near? It was a whole mil (about 1 kilometer) away! It has been taught: Rabbi Eliezer the Great said: There are two streams in the valley of Yadaim, one running in one direction and one in another, and the Sages estimated that [at that time] they ran with two parts water to one part blood. It has been taught: For seven years the Gentiles harvested their vineyards with the blood of Israel without need of any other fertilizer.

דהוו נהיגי כי הוה מתיליד ינוקא שתלי ארזא, ינוקתא - שתלי תורניתא, וכי הוו מינסבי, קייצי להו ועבדו גננא. יומא חד הוה קא חלפא ברתיא דקיסר, אתבר שקא דריספק, קצו ארזא ועיילו לה, אתו נפול עליהו מחונהו. אתו אמרו ליה לקיסר: מרדו בך יהודאי! אתא עלייהו.

אלו שמונים [אלף] קרני מלחמה שנכנסו לכרך ביתר בשעה שלכדוה, והרגו בה אנשים ונשים וטף, עד שהלך דמן ונפל לים הגדול; שמא תאמר קרובה היתה, רחוקה היתה מיל. תניא, רבי אליעזר הגדול אומר: שני נחלים יש בבקעת ידים, אחד מושך אילך ואחד מושך אילך, ושיערו חכמים: שני חלקים מים ואחד דם. במתניתא תנא: שבע שנים בצרו עובדי כוכבים את כרמיהן מדמן של ישראל בלא זבל.

According to the Roman historian Cassius Dio, during the Bar Kochba revolt 580,000 Jews were killed, and 50 fortified towns and 985 villages were razed by the Roman forces. The battle for Beitar had been the last stand of the Jewish revolt against Roman occupation. Its loss on Tishah B'Av in the year 135 CE signified the end of any significant Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel until the modern era.

## PART D. TEMPLE SITE PLOWED OVER (135 CE)

In the aftermath of Beitar, the Roman emperor Hadrian sought to completely erase any trace of Jewish settlement in Israel. To this end he completely razed the site where the Temple had once stood.

### 1. Mishnah Berurah, Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 549:2 – The Temple grounds were plowed over sixty-five years after the destruction of the Temple.

On this same day of suffering [Tishah B'Av],

ובו ביום המוכן לפורענות חרש טורנוסרופוס הרשע

the Temple area and its surroundings were plowed over by the Roman general Turnus Rufus, in fulfillment of the prophecy, "Zion will be plowed over like a field" [Yirmiyahu 26:18].

את ההיכל ואת סביביו לקיים מה שנאמר ציון שדה תחרש.

## 2. **Rabbi Berel Wein, Bar Kochba, from [www.Jewishhistory.org](http://www.Jewishhistory.org) – The Temple Mount still bears the stamp of Hadrian's plows.**

After 135 CE, when the Bar Kochba rebellion was crushed, Hadrian acted even more ruthlessly and set about on a campaign to wipe away not only the remnants of the Jewish people but the memory that they had ever existed. In effect, he decided to "solve the Jewish problem" once and for all.

He realized that the final solution to the Jewish problem lay not only in killing Jews but in destroying Judaism. As long as the Jews had their religion no one would ever really be able to eradicate them entirely. Therefore, he issued decrees that outlawed Judaism on the pain of death. The decrees of Hadrian were the most fearsome in history against the Jewish people ...

Hadrian did not stop there. He forbade mention of the name Jerusalem and renamed the holy city, Aelia Capitolina. He also forbade Jews from living there. Most notable of all, he employed an army of slaves to plow over the Temple Mount. He simply lowered it almost 1,000 feet. When one goes to Jerusalem today, the mountains around the Temple Mount (such as the Mount of Olives and Mount Scopus) are taller. Before Hadrian, however, Mount Moriah (the mountain upon which the Temple stood) was the highest mountain there. Hadrian literally reconstructed the landscape in order to prove to the Jews that it would never be rebuilt again.

### KEY THEMES OF SECTION III:

- ☞ Tishah B'Av is the anniversary of the sin of the Spies and the day that our ancestors received the decree that they could not enter the Land of Israel.
- ☞ On Tishah B'Av, both the First and the Second Temples were destroyed resulting in the exile of the Jewish people from the Land of Israel.
- ☞ Sixty-five years after the destruction of the Second Temple, all the inhabitants of Beitar were killed on Tishah B'Av; this was a tragedy as great as the destruction of the Temple.
- ☞ In the aftermath of Beitar, the Temple area and its surroundings were plowed over by the Roman general Turnus Rufus to almost 1,000 feet below its previous height in order to eradicate any remains.

## SECTION IV. TISHAH B'AV THROUGHOUT THE AGES

Subsequent to the destruction of the Temple and the exile to foreign lands, tragedy has often visited itself upon the Jewish people. Apart from the events mentioned in the Mishnah above, Tishah B'Av is the date of several other significant calamities.



**PART A. EUROPEAN EXPULSIONS****i. England 1290**

1. **Martin Gilbert, Letter to Auntie Fori, p. 290 – Jews were expelled from England on Tishah B'Av in 1290.**

Jewish historical tradition holds a tragic place for the fast of Tishah B'Av ... It was also on Tishah B'Av, on 18 July 1290, that King Edward I signed the edict whereby all Jews were banished from England – in which they had lived for two hundred years. This was the first time in European history that a Jewish community had been expelled in its entirety.

**ii. Spain 1492**

1. **Abarbanel, Yirmiyahu 2:24 – A leading Jewish figure gives a first-hand account of the expulsion from Spain in 1492.**

On that day [Tishah B'Av, July 30, 1492], the expulsion from France took place, as well as other pogroms and expulsions that were forced upon the Jews in that month ... And the King of Spain decreed that all the Jews in his kingdom would be expelled or killed in three months; and the day the Jews left was the Ninth of Av, 1492. The Spanish King did not know the significance of that day; it was if the date had been determined in Heaven.

ובו ביום נעשה גרוש צרפת... וכמה עוד מהשמדות והגרושים היו בחדש ההוא לישראל... והנה כשגזר מלך ספרד גרוש על כל היהודים אשר בכל מדינות מלכותו שיצאו כמשלש חדשים בשלם והיה יום היציאה ט' באב והוא לא ידע מזה הזמן דבר כאלו מן השמים הדריכוהו למגבלת הזמן ההוא.

**iii. Other Expulsions**

Not every time the Jews have been expelled from a country has it occurred on Tishah B'Av. Nevertheless, since the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, the Jewish people has experienced more than its fair share of exile and persecution. Tishah B'Av is the appropriate day to recall and to mourn all of these events. (Note: The names of countries listed indicate those from which expulsions occurred; not necessarily were Jews expelled from the entire country at the time. Many European countries were decentralized during much of the Middle Ages and were not yet nation states.)

1. **Rabbi Shraga Simmons, Discovery – The Jewish people have suffered a long list of expulsions throughout the lands of their dispersion.**

70 Jerusalem  
250 Carthage  
379-95 Spain  
415 Alexandria  
554 Diocese of Clement  
561 Diocese of Uzzes  
612 Visigoth Spain  
642 Visigoth Empire  
855 Italy  
876 Sens  
1012 Mainz

1444 Netherlands  
1446 Bavaria  
1453 France  
1453 Breslau  
1454 Wurzburg  
1462 Mainz  
1483 Mainz  
1484 Warsaw  
1485 Vincenza (Italy)  
1492 Spain  
1492 Italy

1619 Kiev  
1648 Ukraine  
1648 Poland  
1649 Hamburg  
1654 Belarus  
1656 Lithuania  
1669 Oran (North Africa)  
1669 Vienna  
1712 Sandomir  
1727 Russia  
1738 Württemberg

1096 Crusades  
 1121 Belgium  
 1182 France  
 1182 Germany  
 1276 Upper Bavaria  
 1290 England  
 1298 -140 European Jewish communities destroyed  
 1306 France  
 1322 France  
 1348 Switzerland  
 1349 Hielbronn  
 1349 Saxony  
 1349 Hungary  
 1360 Hungary  
 1370 Belgium  
 1380 Slovakia  
 1388 Strasbourg  
 1394 Germany  
 1394 France  
 1420 Lyons  
 1421 Austria  
 1424 Freiburg  
 1424 Zurich  
 1424 Cologne  
 1432 Savoy  
 1438 Mainz  
 1439 Augsburg  
 1442 Netherlands

1495 Lithuania  
 1496 Naples  
 1496 Portugal  
 1498 Nuremberg  
 1498 Navarre  
 1510 Brandenburg  
 1510 Prussia  
 1514 Strasbourg  
 1515 Genoa  
 1519 Regensburg  
 1533 Naples  
 1541 Naples  
 1542 Prague & Bohemia  
 1550 Genoa  
 1551 Bavaria  
 1555 Pesaro  
 1557 Prague  
 1559 Austria  
 1561 Prague  
 1567 Wurzburg  
 1569 Papal States  
 1571 Brandenburg  
 1582 Netherlands  
 1582 Hungary  
 1593 Brandenburg  
 1597 Cremona, Pavia & Lodi  
 1614 Frankfurt  
 1615 Worms

1740 Belarus  
 1744 Prague, Bohemia  
 1744 Slovakia  
 1744 Livonia  
 1745 Moravia  
 1753 Kovad (Lithuania)  
 1761 Bordeaux  
 1772 - Deported to the Pale of Settlement  
 1775 Warsaw  
 1789 Alsace  
 1804 Villages in Russia  
 1815 Lubbeck & Bremen  
 1815 Franconia, Swabia & Bavaria  
 1820 Bremen  
 1843 Russian Border Austria & Prussia  
 1862 Area in the U.S. under Grant's Jurisdiction  
 1866 Galitzia, Romania  
 1880s Russia  
 1891 Moscow  
 1919 Bavaria  
 1938-45 Nazi Controlled Areas  
 1948 Arab Countries

## PART B. WORLD WAR I AND THE HOLOCAUST

More recently, the Holocaust has been linked to Tishah B'Av. The First World War, which set into motion the political and economic circumstances for the rise of the Nazis, began on Tishah B'Av, 1914.

1. **Rabbi Avraham Chaim Feuer, Tishah B'Av, ArtScroll Publications, p. 158 – Germany declared war on Russia on Tishah B'Av, 1914, precipitating the First World War, which had tragic repercussions for the Jews of Europe as it ultimately led to the Second World War and the Holocaust.**

World War I began on Tishah B'Av ... The German sweep into Eastern Europe beginning in 1914 uprooted Jewish communities and demolished a laboriously built tradition that took centuries to shape ... [T]he extreme poverty afflicting communities and *yeshivot*, the Bolshevik Revolution and the clamping of the Iron Curtain around the three million Jews of Russia, the decay of German political and economic life and the emergence of an evil genius named Hitler – all these and more were the legacy of World War I.

The Holocaust stands out in recent Jewish memory as a tragedy of epic proportion. As such, many communities have designated a specific day of Holocaust memorial apart from Tishah B'Av. It is important to remember though that Tishah B'Av is regarded as the quintessential Holocaust Memorial day, and not just

for the destruction of European Jewry in the first half of the twentieth century, but for all the holocausts of Jewish history.

The entire morning of Tishah B'Av is devoted to sitting on the ground, reading dirges and elegies in an attempt to evoke tears. Included in the program of readings are moving lamentations written about the Holocaust by rabbinic leaders of that generation. Tishah B'Av is the most suitable day to recall all the tragedies of Jewish history.

### PART C. CRYING THROUGHOUT THE YEARS

We have seen that so much has happened to the Jews – whether actually on Tishah B'Av or not – to justify our crying on this day. All this is in line with the idea mentioned above, that since our ancestors cried a purposeless cry on Tishah B'Av, God set apart the day as a time for crying for all generations.

#### 1. Talmud Bavli, Ta'anit 29a – Tishah B'Av is an appointed time for crying.

You cried without cause; I will establish for you a reason to cry [on this day] for generations.

אתם בכיתם בכיה של חנם ואני קובע לכם בכיה לדורות

But does that mean that we are being punished for the sins of the past? Does God really do such a thing? The Talmud tells us that He does not!

#### 2. Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 27b – God does not punish a later generation for the transgressions of previous generations.

“The fathers shall not be put to death for [on account of] the children” (Devarim/Deuteronomy 24:17). What does this teach us? Is it that fathers shall not be executed for sins committed by their children and vice versa? But is it not already explicitly stated that, “Every man shall be put to death only for his own sin” (Ibid.)? Hence, “Fathers shall not be put to death on account of children,” must mean that fathers shall not be put to death on the testimony of their sons, and similarly that sons shall not be put to death on account of fathers, i.e. nor sons on the testimony of their fathers.

Are children not then to be put to death for the sins committed by their parents? Is it not written, “Visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children” [Shemot 34:7]? There the reference is to children who follow in their parents' footsteps.

לא יומתו אבות על בנים, מה תלמוד לומר? אם ללמד שלא יומתו אבות בעון בנים ובנים בעון אבות - הרי כבר נאמר איש בחטאו יומתו. אלא, לא יומתו אבות על בנים - בעדות בנים, ובנים לא יומתו על אבות - בעדות אבות.

ובנים בעון אבות לא? והכתיב פוקד עון אבות על בנים! - התם כשאוחזין מעשה אבותיהן בידיהן.

God only holds us accountable for our own actions, not those of our ancestors. In the second Morasha class on Tishah B'Av and the Three Weeks we will explore more fully what led to the destruction of the Temple and how we can rebuild it. But for now, we need to appreciate how our real tears on Tishah B'Av can rectify the vain tears of our ancestors in the desert so many years ago.

### 3. Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov, Sefer HaToda'ah (The Book of our Heritage), Ch. 33 – Sincere tears on Tishah B'Av serve to rectify the vain ones of the past.

"You wept for no reason, and I shall appoint this day for you as a time of weeping throughout the generations" [Ta'anit 29b].

Does God then act out of a sense of vengeance or because He is angry? Why should subsequent generations be held culpable for the sins of that generation? Were not the children of that generation sufficiently punished by having to wait to enter the Land for forty years until their fathers passed away?

And in later generations, when their descendants were exiled from the Land because of their own sins, what connection is there between the sins of the fathers and the calamities that befell their descendants, which God ordained should take place on Tishah B'Av – the day upon which the fathers sinned?

The explanation is as follows: As punishment for the purposeless weeping, God decreed only that "in this wilderness they shall perish" (Bamidbar 14:29), referring only to the fathers. The children, who had not sinned, entered the Land and inherited it. Although the children had not evidenced their fathers' trait of ingratitude, it was nevertheless part of their makeup, for a father's influence finds expression in his children. Even though the children were not to be punished for their fathers' sins, God saw fit to purify the children of this inherited trait. Because the fathers had despised the precious Land and had shown this attitude with their purposeless crying and declaring, "Let us go back to Egypt," God ordained that there be a "weeping" in subsequent generations on this date.

The weeping of many generations of sons throughout the lands of their dispersion would serve to rectify the weeping without reason, which was the sin of the first generation. Even in times of prosperity and tranquility they would remember the Land and would shed tears, yearning to return and rebuild her desolate soil.

We thus see that God acted charitably toward Israel in setting the date for future exiles on the very date when the generation of the wilderness

'אתם בכיתם בכיה של חנם - ואני אקבע לכם בכיה לדורות' –

כלום נוקם ונוטר הוא הקב"ה ובעל חמה? ועוד ...  
ואלה הדורות מה חטאו. והלא די להם לדור של הבנים הראשונים שהמתינו בכניסתם לארץ ארבעים שנה עד תום כל דור אבותיהם?

ואם בעוונות הבנים גלו מארצם אחרי כן, מה הקשר בין חטאות האבות לפורענות הבנים שנגזרה להיות ביום שחטאו האבות, בתשעה לחדש אב?

אלא כך הוא מצע הדברים: בעוון בכיה זו של חנם לא גזר הקדוש ברוך הוא במדבר הזה יתמו אלא על האבות שחטאו, והבנים שלא חטאו באו לארץ וירשוה. תאמר שהבנים מנוקים מעוון זה של כפית טובה מכל וכל, והלא כל כחו של האב בבנו:

אכן, לא יומתו הבנים בחטא האבות, אבל שקד הקב"ה על הבנים שיהיו נטהרים משורש החטא הזה הנטוע בבנים מירושת האבות, ותחת אשר מאסו האבות בארץ חמדה בבכי של חנם ואמרו נתנה ראש ונשובה ממצרים - יהיו הבנים מתקנים חטא הראשונים בבכי של דורות רבים.

כאשר יבכו בכל ארצות פזוריהם על ארץ חרבה, וגם כי יהא להם מרגוע שם ויחיו ברוחה - לא ישכחו את ארצם ויבכו עליה בכי אמת ויזילו דמעה על ארץ חרבה וישתוקקו לעלות ולחונן עפרה גם בשממותה...

אמור מעתה, צדקה עשה הקב"ה עם ישראל, שבשעה שגזר עליהם חרבן וגלות בדורות אחרונים, קבע שעת הגזירה באותו יום של החטא הראשון, כדי שיהיו הבנים

had sinned. In this manner the tears of many subsequent generations would rectify that which the fathers had ruined with their purposeless tears.

מתקנים בבכים שבדורות רבים, את אשר קלקלו  
האבות הראשונים.

#### 4. Midrash Abba Gorion – From the seeds of destruction redemption will sprout.

From the moment the Temple was destroyed the Messiah was born.

כיון שחרב בית המקדש נולד המשיח.

#### KEY THEMES OF SECTION IV:

- ✧ Tishah B'Av has become the national day of Jewish mourning for all the calamities of Jewish history. Apart from the calamities related to the destruction of the Temple and exile from the Land of Israel, all Jewish suffering is ultimately linked to Tishah B'Av.
- ✧ Although the original Tishah B'Av in the desert established the day as one of mourning, this does not mean that we are being punished for the mistakes of the past.
- ✧ Crying real tears on Tishah B'Av throughout the generations spiritually rectifies the vain tears of our ancestors.

## ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READING & SOURCES

Rabbi Moshe Eisemann, *Tear Drenched Nights*

Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov, *Book of Our Heritage*, Vol. III, pp. 895-1002

Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan (translation), *Me'am Loez: The Story of Tishah B'Av*

## CLASS SUMMARY:

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### WHAT EVENTS TRANSPIRED ON THE SEVENTEENTH OF TAMMUZ AND ON TISHAH B'AV THAT IMPACTED THE JEWISH NATION THROUGHOUT HISTORY?

On the Seventeenth of Tammuz, Moshe Rabbeinu descended from receiving the Ten Commandments on Har Sinai, saw the Jewish people worshipping the Golden Calf and then broke the Tablets.

On Tishah B'Av the Jewish people accepted the evil report of the spies who were sent to scout out the Land of Israel. On that day they were punished with forty years of wandering in the desert.

### HOW DO THESE EVENTS SO EARLY IN JEWISH HISTORY AFFECT LATER GENERATIONS?

Jewish history has meaning. Events that happened in the past have implanted spiritual energies into the world that continually bear fruit throughout time.

The spiritual energy of the Three Weeks was created in Biblical times by the sin of the Golden Calf, breaking of the Tablets and the sin of the Spies. These events laid the groundwork for future transgressions and calamities of the Jewish people.

The sin of the Golden Calf and the subsequent breaking of the Tablets of the Law damaged the Jewish people's connection to the Torah. In a similar vein, accepting the negative report of the spies damaged the Jewish people's link to the Land of Israel.

Subsequent calamities of the Jewish people derive from the effect these events had on the collective Jewish psyche: a predisposition toward idolatry, a lack of a firm connection to the Land of Israel, and a weakness in the collective commitment to the Torah.

### WHAT TRAGEDIES DO WE MOURN ON TISHAH B'AV?

We mourn the mistakes of our ancestors in the desert; the events leading up to the destruction of both the First and Second Temples, and the destruction itself; we mourn both the loss of the Land and the spiritual center of Jewish life.

We also mourn all the calamities of Jewish history that are an extension of our exile and lack of a spiritual center, the dozens of expulsions and persecutions suffered by our people throughout the course of the last 2,000 years.

Apart from events relating to the Temple, other tragedies that occurred on Tishah B'Av are also commemorated along with all the calamities of Jewish history, no matter what date they occurred.

### IS TISHAH B'AV THE ONLY DAY OF NATIONAL MOURNING FOR THE JEWISH PEOPLE?

Tishah B'Av is not the only day of mourning, but it is certainly the most important. Other days of fasting and mourning also commemorate the destruction of the Temple, such as the Seventeenth of Tammuz, Tenth of Tevet and Tzom Gedaliah.

Mourning for other tragedies of Jewish history, though, like the Holocaust, has been subsumed within the mourning of Tishah B'Av.