

# Tisha B'av



Tisha B'Av, the ninth day of the month of Av (which month coincides with July and/or August), is the major day of communal mourning in the Jewish calendar. Although a large number of disasters are said to have befallen the Jews on this day, the major commemoration is of the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. and 70 C.E., respectively. Central to the observance of this day is fasting.

- **Tisha B'Av Ideas & Beliefs**

Although the exact date of the destruction of each of the Temples—the ancient centers of Jewish life and practice—are unknown, tradition dates the events to Tisha B'Av. Indeed, the rabbis of the Talmudic age made the claim that God ordained this day as a day of disaster as punishment for the lack of faith evidenced by the Israelites during their desert wanderings after the exodus from Egypt. During the course of the centuries, a number of tragedies have clustered around this day, from the expulsions of the Jews from England and Spain to more localized disasters. Tisha B'Av is therefore observed as a day of communal mourning, which is expressed through fasting and the abstention from pleasurable activities and extraneous diversions. A whole literature of dirges appropriate to this day of mourning, beginning with the biblical Book of Lamentations on the destruction of the First Temple, has been created to serve the needs of the Jewish community at this time.

- **Tisha B'Av Rituals & Practices**

A three week period of low-level mourning leads up to the holiday of Tisha B'Av; the three weeks commemorate the final siege of Jerusalem that led to the Second Temple's destruction in 70 C.E. During this period it is traditional to refrain from public celebrations, such as weddings, and many traditional men refrain from shaving, reflecting their practice during personal mourning periods.

## Tisha B'av in Rhodes

The men spent the morning in the “Kal” seated on the floor, with the lights dimmed, reading and lamenting until noon. After noon, the mood changed from: *limunio a dia bueno*. This meant from a sad day to a happy day, or from sadness to happiness.

The women were not supposed to do any house work. On the evening before Tisha b'av the women would gather in the courtyard and would pass the time singing, trying to stay awake as long as possible. The belief was that this was the night that snakes and insects would invade the house. To ward off this possibility, they would place a head of garlic on the pillow.

It seemed like many of the disasters on Rhodes happened around Tisha B'av, the last being the deportation of Jews from the island in 1944. (*Source: “I Remember Rhodes” by Rebecca Amato Levy*)