

Tisha B'Av

Compiled by Linda Lippitt from the work of Jonathan Sacks and Arthur Green

Isaiah and Jeremiah both paint horrific and valid pictures of the destruction of Jerusalem but also insist that we will not be permanently abandoned by G-d. With that assurance that what was lost could be rebuilt, 2600 years past without confirmation.

Jewish people kept hope alive and hope kept the Jewish people alive.

Temple one destroyed after warnings of their corrupt actions were ignored.

Temple 2 destroyed because of baseless hatred.

Covid emptied the streets around the world with an eerie feeling reminiscent of Eicha.

As Yitz Greenberg pointed out in his classic book, the Jewish Way, it was the total destruction of the temple and the sacrifices that opened the way for rabbinic Judaism to become dominant. Prayer replaced sacrifices. Leaders were based on merit not heredity.

When in 1948 we had a sovereign state again, in the 1950's, many people thought we should fast just half a day on Tisha B'av and celebrate that we had our land back the other half of the day.

1967: Jerusalem reunited

BUT Majority of residence of the old city were Arabs and the Temple Mount was still a mosque.

What is holy? What is set apart as part of G-d touching his creations?

Olam: sacred space

Shanah: sacred time

Nefesh: sacred person

Judaism sees time having primacy to space. In Torah, the first thing to be named as "holy" is the Shabbat; the first place called "holy" was the place where Jacob slept and dreamed of the ladder in Gen:23.

Synagogues are not built for the awesomeness of cathedrals, but dawn and dusk are sacred. Once celebrated by sacrifice, now, with the destruction of the temple,

celebrated by prayer. The Palace In Time could be erected anywhere. For 2600 years in stateless diaspora Jews longed for a Jerusalem that most would never see.

The first movement back to Israel was by Secular Zionists in the early 20th century. They sought the land to redeem the people. They were not promoting the land as holy, but as a defined place to create an independent Jewish society.

The Religious Zionists (Mizrachi movement) led by Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, supported the secularists, seeing them of part of the Divine plan of redemption, they also defended the religious minority in prestate Palestine.

Jerusalem was seen as a city of professors and religious fanatics: a city of the past, the future belonged to Tel Aviv.

1967: The Jewish people reasserted their faith in sacred space: all of Jerusalem was in the hands of Israel. The Western Wall, the Temple Mount were seen as sacred space again. And again holiness was extended to The Land. The link was not to Meah Shairm, but to the City of David, Hebron, Tiberius.

In Rabbinic tradition it was the Mishkan in the desert that was studied in the Torah. This is what is described in Torah, the portable place where G-d could be addressed. The holy spot that would become the “earthly dwelling place for Hashem” would not come to exist for hundreds of years.

2017 fifty years after the 1967 war: Old Jerusalem is still a mostly Arab city. Jewish Jerusalem is being built every day. But it is hardly the psalmist’s dream of “a city joined together (Ps 122:3)”

As we embrace the sacred space of Jerusalem

1. The architecture of the Old City was created by the Mamluks and Ottomans
2. Ultra-orthodox delegitimize other strands of Judaism and block their use of the Wall
3. Ultra-nationalists create conflict dreaming of destroying the mosque and building the 3rd temple
4. Land hunger, triumphalism and some racism can be reminiscent of the situation that led to the destruction of the first two temples.

Doniel Hartman: It is not sinat henam, but zealotry that threatens our people and place, just as it did in the time of the second temple.

On a positive note:

1. We have witnessed the rebirth of Jewish life
2. The ingathering of the tribes

3. The renewal of Hebrew as a living language
4. The rebirth of sacred space consciousness: Wall Mount Land.
The Land is holy not as ownership for us but for G-d and sabbatical and Jubilee apply and with it our obligation to protect the land.

Sfat Emet:

Any unit that is part of a larger category and becomes an exception to that category did so in order to teach something not only about itself but regard to the entire category.

Land of Israel: the whole earth

Shabbat: everyday holiness

Jews: humanity

Tsadik; each person

It is a sign of health that the Jewish people have rediscovered the love of the land, as long as it is used paradigmatically: a demonstration project that all places in G-d's created world deserve to be cherished and protected.

Tisha B'av is time to take on responsibility. This is a day to cry out loudly our fear that the future will be tainted by unholy acts.

Let us not stand idly by.

Climate Change, Front and Center

It's blazing out there. Searing, sizzling, torrid. Record high temperatures, triple digits, all over Europe. Fires are raging throughout Spain, France, Portugal and Greece, and temperatures are expected to keep rising. In the UK runways melted and trains severely disrupted due to the risk of rails buckling in the heat. In the US right now, in 28 states, people are sweltering through heat advisories and warnings. Austin Texas just broke a record hot streak with 21 straight days over 100 degrees.

Like writers searching for synonyms for "hot", leaders grope for more dramatic ways to warn the public: "Climate change kills people, our ecosystem and what is most precious to us," Spanish prime minister Pedro Sánchez said simply during a visit to an area hit by fires. "We are almost reaching a point where Mother Earth is going to shed humanity as an old skin, rid itself of all of us," opined Frans Timmermans, the EU's top climate official. "We are not just glimpsing climate change, it's being shoved in our faces," said Jean-Luc Gleyze, a district President near Bordeaux.

It feels like we are not moving nearly fast enough. President Biden came into office with big climate change goals, but still doesn't have the political support. European leaders have been better about renewables but still need oil and gas for heating in the winter. China and India, with

nearly half the globe's population, rank near the bottom of the global environmental performance index.

As citizens in democracies, we must press our leaders to act. Here in SPNI, as in other environmental NGOs around the world, we are orienting the focus of our work on climate action and its impacts: we are working top down and bottom up, influencing decision makers and kids; we are advancing nature-based solutions to mitigation and adaptation; we are rewilding historic wetlands to support wildlife and store carbon.

Don't take my word for it; come see the incredible new wetland nature reserve we just created at kibbutz Kfar Ruppin, in the Jordan Valley.

Just plan on visiting in the early morning or towards dusk, to avoid the temperatures expected to reach 120 degrees (50 celsius) this August. And wear a hat.

Stay cool,

Jay