

Tragedy

“¹² Now in the fifth month, the tenth day of the month—which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon—Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard came into Jerusalem to represent the king of Babylon. ¹³ Then he burned the House of Adonai, the king’s house, and all the houses of Jerusalem. He burned every large house with fire. ¹⁴ Then all the army broke down all the walls of Jerusalem all around” (Jer. 52:12-13)

The ninth day of Av (*Tisha B’Av*) has been designated as a tragic day for calamity and woe. We recall that in Nu. 14 the children of Israel had accepted the evil report of the Spies regarding the Holy Land and wept over it. God then promised that the time would come when Israel would have real cause to cry: *“³⁹ When Moses related these things to all of Bnei-Yisrael, the people mourned bitterly” (Nu. 14:39)*. It happened on this day – the 9th day of the fifth month. Indeed on *Tisha B’Av* the first and the second temple are destroyed. The children of Israel are ultimately dispersed into a Diaspora that lasted until May 14, 1948. *“‘Why was the first temple destroyed? Because during its period there were three cardinal sins: idolatry, immorality and bloodshed’ (Yoma 9b) “A nation that tramples upon the cardinal sins of the Torah forfeits its right to God’s protection” (Tisha B’Av, ArtScroll, 1992 pp. 19).*

When God ordains destruction (after judgment) it is not a pretty sight. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon besieged Jerusalem for 3½ years (3½ years? a coincidence? No, I don’t think so). Slowly but surely, the siege progressed and the hunger intensified: *“All her people sigh, All her people groan, as they seek bread. They traded their treasures for food to keep themselves alive. “Look, Adonai, and see! For I have become despised!” (Lam 1:11)*. Finally, the starved populace was driven to desperation: *“⁴ The nursing infant’s tongue clings to the roof of his mouth for thirst. Little children ask for bread, but no one gives it to them. ⁵ Those who used to eat delicacies are desolate in the streets. Those who were brought up in purple embrace trash heaps... ⁸ Their form has become darker than soot! They are not recognized in the street. Their skin has shriveled on their bones, withered like a tree...¹⁰ The hands of compassionate women boiled their own children. They became their food when the daughter of my people were destroyed” (Lam 4:4-5,8,10)*. Yet the city did not fall. During 3½-year siege God’s Presence remained at hand in the nearby wilderness waiting to see if Israel might somehow be humbled by its agony.

The Torah warns us that a time will come when Jews will be estranged from God and from themselves and at that time, measure for measure, they will be punished by a hostile nation (Rome) which is totally alien to Israel, a nation sharing absolutely nothing in common with the Jews, not geographically, linguistically, intellectually, or emotionally, i.e., total strangers: *“⁴⁹ “Adonai will raise up a nation against you from far away, from the end of the earth, just as the eagle swoops down—a nation whose language you will not understand, ⁵⁰ a brazen-faced nation that will not respect the old or be gracious to the young. ⁵¹ It will devour the offspring of your livestock and the produce of your soil, until you are destroyed. It will not leave behind for you grain, new wine, or oil, the increase of your herds or the young of your flock, until it ruins you. ⁵² It will besiege you within all your town gates throughout your land, until your high and fortified walls—that you trusted in—come down. It will besiege you within all your gates throughout your land that Adonai your God has given you.” (Deut. 28:49-52)*. The plowing of the Temple site was not the end

| Heb. Yr. | Com. Yr. | Event (See https://ohr.edu/holidays/tisha_bav/mourning/1088) |
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| 2448 | (1312) | Spies return from 40 days in Israel with evil reports of the Land of Israel. Jewish people cry in despair, give up hope of entering the Land of Israel. |
| 3340 | (421) | Destruction of First Temple by the Babylonians, under Nebuchadnezzar. About 100,000 Jews killed during invasion. Exile of remaining tribes in southern kingdom to Babylon and Persia. |
| 3830 | 70 | Destruction of Second Temple by Romans, under Titus. Over 2,500,000 Jews die as a result of war, famine and disease. Over 1,000,000 Jews exiled to all parts of the Roman Empire. Over 100,000 Jews sold as slaves by Romans. Jews killed and tortured in gladiatorial "games" and pagan celebrations. |
| 3892 | 132 | Bar Kochba revolt crushed. Betar destroyed - over 100,00 killed. |
| 3893 | 133 | Turnus Rufus ploughs site of Temple. Romans build pagan city of Aelia Capitolina on site of Jerusalem. |
| 4855 | 1095 | First Crusade declared by Pope Urban II. 10,000 Jews killed in first month of Crusade. Crusades bring death and destruction to thousands of Jews, totally obliterate many communities in Rhineland and France. |
| 5050 | 1290 | Expulsion of Jews from England, accompanied by pogroms and confiscation of books and property. |
| 5252 | 1492 | Inquisition in Spain and Portugal culminates in the expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula. Families separated, many die by drowning, massive loss of property. |
| 5674 | 1914 | Britain and Russia declare war on Germany. First World War begins. First World War issues unresolved, ultimately causing Second World War and Holocaust. 75% of all Jews in war zones. Jews in armies of all sides - 120,000 Jewish casualties in armies. Over 400 pogroms immediately following war in Hungary, Ukraine, Poland and Russia. |
| 5702 | 1942 | Deportations from Warsaw Ghetto to the Treblinka concentration camp begin. |