

A DAY OF MOURNING

Text: Zechariah 7:3b

Key Word: Mourning

Key Thought: Mourning is Necessary for a Healthy Life

I have noticed something gradually taking place in the Christian Church. It is our lack of mourning. It seems that we tend to stay away from tears because we believe it sends off the wrong message. After all, shouldn't we be joyful and full of life since the Holy Spirit lives within us? In fact, I just finished emphasizing in my last sermon that the children of Israel were told to be joyful to God for the both the Barley Harvest and the Wheat Harvest.

Babies cry in order to signify that something is wrong or to get our attention. As we become adults we tend to hide our tears because it is seen as a sign of weakness. **Is it healthier for us not to cry?** I don't think so. In fact, tears are a language of our soul that needs to be expressed.

“Tears resulting from sadness, anger, fear or joy vary chemically from those caused by smelling onions and may be nature's method of removing chemicals built up by stress from the body. Dr. William Frey II, of the Psychiatry Research Laboratories at the St. Paul-Ramsey Medical Center, St. Paul, Minn., believes this to be the case. Studies he has done indicate that women cry five times as often as men and that 85% of the women and 73% of the men thought that crying made them feel better. Most common reason for crying is sadness, followed in rank by happiness, anger, sympathy, anxiety and fear.”

Source Unknown

Beginning this Monday night at sunset, Jews from around the world will begin a time of fasting (2nd of 4 this year) and mourning. The book of Lamentations will be read and mourning prayers will be recited. The ark (cabinet where the Torah is kept) will be draped in black. It is known as **Tisha B'Av**. Tisha B'Av means *"the ninth (day) of Av."* It usually occurs during August. Tisha B'Av will occur on the following days of the Gregorian calendar:

Jewish Year 5774: sunset Aug 4, 2014 - nightfall Aug 5, 2014
Jewish Year 5775: sunset July 25, 2015 - nightfall July 26, 2015

What Is So Significant about this Date That Our Jewish Friends Take this Time to Weep and Mourn?

Tisha B'Av symbolizes . . .

I. A LOSS OF FREEDOM

II. A LOSS OF WORSHIP

III. A LOSS OF LIFE

I. A LOSS OF FREEDOM

Tisha B'Av is much more than just a date on a calendar. This peculiar day is expressly linked with Israel's history and destiny. **The first major event that it brings back to their memory was the day the Children of Israel were prohibited from entering the Promised Land.** God commanded Moses to send 12 spies into the land of Canaan, one from each of the tribes of Israel. They returned with tales of a land flowing with milk and honey.

However, Israel feared the inhabitants of the land. Of the 12 spies, only two, Joshua and Caleb, had faith that God would deliver the land into their hands. God had delivered them from slavery and Egypt, parted the waters of the Red Sea, protected them time and time again, and miraculously provided for their every need in the wilderness. **Yet the nation of Israel was consumed by fear and doubt. Thus, God decreed that a generation would pass away, wandering in the wilderness, before Israel would be allowed to enter His Land.**

THEY LOST THEIR CHANCE TO BE FREE BECAUSE OF FEAR. They were sent back to suffer as exiles in the Sinai desert where they spent 40 years. Not one of them with the exception of Caleb and Joshua made it into the Promised Land.

“Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the LORD fills the whole earth,

22. not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times

23. not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it.

*24. **But** because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it.”*

Numbers 14:21-24

Unfortunately this wasn't the end of their loss of freedom. They had many more lessons to learn and new generations took their place as time went on.

I. A LOSS OF FREEDOM (Contd.)

This fateful day had its way of becoming intertwined in the lives of the nation of Israel. It seemed to continually come back to haunt them. **It was on this day, in the year 135 A.D. that the famous Bar Kokhba revolt was squelched when Bethar, the last Jewish stronghold, fell to the Romans.** As a result of this war the Romans enslaved many Jews, killed 580,000 of them, captured 50 fortified cities, and demolished 985 villages. The Jewish religion was also greatly suppressed and Christianity began to make advances as it was differentiated from the Jewish religion. Jews were banned from Jerusalem and area of Judea was renamed Syria.

The fifth major event that happened on this day took place on March 31, 1492. The Spanish monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella issued a royal decree that all Jews must leave Spain. The deadline was set for August 3rd of that year. If any Jews were found in Spain after this period, they were to be killed. On the Jewish calendar, it was the 9th of Av.

If that isn't enough, the 9th of Av was also the day of:

The signing of the edict by King Edward I in 1290 expelling the Jews from England

The start of the First World War in 1914

The mass deportation of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto to the Treblinka extermination camp in Poland in 1942

In 2005, the 9th of Av marked another milestone in Israel's history. That year Tisha b'Av marked the beginning of the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. All 21 Gaza settlements were evacuated along with four of 120 settlements in the West Bank. The withdrawal marked the end of Israel's 38 year presence in the Gaza Strip. Approximately 9000 Jewish settlers were made to leave their homes. Some were forcibly removed. It took place amid a backdrop of widespread protests, and was accompanied by rumors of a civil war.

The withdrawal was seen as necessary for Israel's security. However, in the eyes of the Palestinians, the Gaza withdrawal represented victory in their armed struggle against the Israeli occupation. Israel's retreat was seen by the Arabs as the direct result of the sacrifice of suicide bombers and the almost constant barrage of mortars **and rockets on their settlements.** **The bottom line: it was a victory for terrorism.** Six months later, after being credited for bringing about the Israeli retreat, the terrorist organization Hamas claimed victory in the Palestinian parliamentary elections.

*“You my brothers were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love . . .
15. If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.”*

Galatians 5:13,15

II. A LOSS OF WORSHIP

The second thing that this fateful date symbolizes is a **Loss of Worship**. It was on the 9th of Av, in the year 586 B.C. that the First Temple built by Solomon was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and the 70th year Babylonian captivity began. This beautifully adorned temple was left in shambles and its rich contents were taken back to Babylon and stored in its treasury.

“On the seventh day of the fifth month, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard, an official of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. 9. He set fire to the temple of the LORD, the royal palace and all the houses of Jerusalem. Every important building he burned down.”

*II Kings 25:8,9
cf. Jeremiah 52:12,13*

If that wasn't enough on the 9th of Av, 70 A.D. the Second Temple that which was standing during Christ's ministry was destroyed by the Romans precisely as Jesus predicted in **Luke 19:43,44.**

Then one year after Bar Kokhba revolt was squelched in 136 A.D. the Roman Emperor Hadrian established a heathen temple to Jupiter on the site of the Jewish Temple. Hadrian rebuilt Jerusalem as a pagan city, and renamed the land as Palestina, to distance its Jewish heritage. (This attempt to disavow the land from its Jewish roots was echoed by the British in their labeling the land "Palestine."). **The date when the second Temple area was plowed under by the Romans was the 9th of Av.**

Later in history on this same day the burning of the Talmud took place in 1242. The Talmud is a record of rabbinic discussions pertaining to Jewish law, ethics, customs, and history. It is a central text of Rabbinic Judaism, second only to the Hebrew Bible in importance. The Talmud has two components: **the Mishnah (c. 200 CE)**, the first written compendium of Judaism's Oral Law; and **the Gemara (c. 500 CE)**, a discussion of the Mishnah and related writings that often ventures onto other subjects and broadly expounds these subjects.

As we take a few moments to study the impact of these events upon the Jewish nation, it shows that they not only had a **Loss of Freedom** symbolized by this day but also a **Loss of Worship**. The temples were destroyed along with one of its most sacred scroll. Without the temple there could be no sacrifices made unto the LORD. Their sacrifices were their highest form of worship.

III. A LOSS OF LIFE

It is so memorable to the Jews that they have contained these horrible events in their main writings.

“Five misfortunes befell our fathers . . . on the ninth of Av. . . . On the ninth of Av it was decreed that our fathers should not enter the [Promised] Land, the Temple was destroyed the first and second time, Bethar was captured and the city [Jerusalem] was ploughed up.”

Mishnah
Taanit 4:6

But there is something else we need to see that is significant with this date. **It was on this very day that the declaration of the Crusades by Pope Urban II was issued in 1095.**

It was also on this fateful day that the bombing of the AMIA Jewish community center by Arab terrorists in 1994 in Buenos Aires, Argentina took place which killed 86 and wounded more than 120.

Of course, there was much death that took place in the forty years that the children of Israel wandered in the Sinai desert. **That is why Tisha B'Av is the culmination of a three-week period of increased mourning, beginning with the fast of the 17th of Tammuz (July 15/14), which takes place 40 days after the Feast of Shavuot (Weeks) began. It commemorates the day that Moses broke the first tablets; it was also the first breach in the walls of Jerusalem at the time of the destruction of the first Temple took place, a Torah scroll was burnt by the Romans and also on this day an idol was erected in the Temple.** It was just 3 days (July 18/14) after this fast began that Israeli troops entered the Gaza strip this year to defend themselves from Hamas rocket attacks. The three Israeli boys went missing on June 13/14 and found dead

During this three-week period, weddings and other parties are not permitted, and people refrain from cutting their hair. From the first to the ninth of Av, it is customary to refrain from eating meat or drinking wine (except on the Shabbat) and from wearing new clothing.

The restrictions on Tisha B'Av are similar to those on Yom Kippur: to refrain from eating and drinking (even water); washing, bathing, shaving or wearing cosmetics; wearing leather shoes; engaging in sexual relations; and studying the Torah. Work in the ordinary sense of the word [rather than the Shabbat sense] is also restricted. People who are ill need not fast on this day. Many of the traditional mourning practices are observed: people refrain from smiles, laughter and idle conversation, and sit on low stools.

It would be wrong of me to leave you with all this information. It is just not the right place to end this sermon.

“ . . . weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.”

Psalm 30:5

There needs to be a time of mourning. But there also needs to be hope for the future. Jews worldwide are looking forward toward the ultimate rebuilding of their Temple. It is a time when the 9th of Av will become a day of joy and gladness (as it was foretold in Zechariah 8:19).

Read all of Zechariah 8

We do know that the Temple will be rebuilt because Jesus, John, and Paul all make reference to it. It is possible this prophetic event will also take place on Tisha B'Av - and may happen in the not-too-distant future.

Now how is this significant to us? We are the temple of the Holy Spirit. We will go through times when we feel torn down and trampled over. We can often find a Loss of our Freedom, our Worship and perhaps even the Life that Jesus came to give us. Don't despair. There is a day when joy and gladness will overtake us.

You may have mourned in the past or even today but be prepared to rejoice. We serve a God of restoration. A God who keeps His promises. A God who loves to bless His repentant people.

I find it beyond being significant that the 29th Olympic games begun on the 08 08 08 in Beijing, China. That was the night before the **Jewish Year of 5768: sunset August 9, 2008 - nightfall August 10, 2008** when **Tisha B'Av** began.

China is known worldwide for its civil rights abuses. It may have been very significant in the prophetic realm.

Yes there has been plenty of weeping, but many of us also believe that the time for rejoicing is soon coming. We have wept long enough.

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Date: July 4/21

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30 Am

Song: The Lord is Building Jerusalem - Dm

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III. A LOSS OF LIFE - *Psalms 30:5 ; Zechariah 8:19; Read all of Zechariah 8*