

Tisha B'Av
Monday evening August 8 (9 Av 5771)

Reading #1

Together we sit on the ground
And mourn for the peace of Jerusalem
Like the treasure we each wanted—
We pulled and we pulled
You pulled and I pulled
And yes of course
Finally we succeeded
In pulling it apart
We watched together
as it fell to the ground
and smashed at our feet
tears sprang to my eyes
tears to yours
each
separately
longing to under the moment
to walk backwards into the past
to undo the moment
the moments of pulling
to walk backwards into the past
to the moment when we
we could have shared
or taken turns
or something

Come my friend
(for haven't we become friends after all
sharing our intimate
our primal pain
come my friend
come sit with me on the ground
let us heap ashes on each other
gently tenderly
I will teach you the melody
Of my Eicha
Together we will sit on the ground
And mourn for the peace of Jerusalem.

-Merle Feld

Reading #2

With the destruction of Judah
The Holy Land
Where for centuries Judeans had
Labored
Relinquished its role.

In Babylon
began a remarkable creative process
that strengthened Judaism
its religion and culture
and had a lasting effect
Upon the lives of the Jewish people;
A transition to the form and content
of Judaism
a pattern for Jewish life.

Because of the destruction
Of both Temples
Judaism has not only survived,
It has grown in strength
In knowledge
In cultural affairs.

If we must remember,
Let us do so in a positive manner
The time for mourning must end.

Bill Mehlman z"l

Reading #3

On Tisha B'Av we mourn the Destruction of two temples central to early Jewish life. Yet the destruction led to the flourishing of Jewish religion and culture. From the shards of the temples we built a tradition based on study, prayer, and acts of kindness. As the rubble and ash scattered so did Jewish life reach beyond its confines to the extremes of the earth. How can I mourn when these events do not appear to me as eternal tragedies, but rather as historical happenings that brought me here today? How can I ask for the temples to be rebuilt, when what I want to reconstruct are the traditions of my past in light of the present and the future?...on Tisha B'Av I pray to hold in dialogue the lyrics of the past and the voices of today, that they might forever be speaking to one another in constant conversation. Tonight I pray to hold together a sense of loss and a deep gratitude for the blessings of today.

Shira Brisman

Reading #4

When the Temple was destroyed, the sages decreed if one builds a home, one leaves a space opposite the entrance unwhitewashed, and if one makes a banquet, one should leave a place vacant with no setting. When a groom takes a bride, he places a piece of glass under his foot and smashes it into a thousand pieces. All of this is done in order to remember Jerusalem. Even in our greatest moments of joy, we recall destruction and loss in the hopes that we might ever strive for a sense of wholeness.

Moses Maimonides (adapted)