



Gratz Insider, July 2012 - Story Continuation

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Summer Holiday without a Summer Feel

Overeating at backyard barbecues, lounging lazily in the shade with a book, vacationing on a sunbaked beach - all iconic summer images. But, in sharp contrast to this picture of summer tranquility is the weighty Jewish holy day of Tisha B'Av.

Taking place this year from sundown on Saturday, July 28th through Sunday, July 29th, Tisha B'Av is an annual fast day. On this day (the ninth of the Hebrew month of Av) - over 650 years apart - the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem were both destroyed. While Tisha B'Av is observed to remember these grave losses, it also marks the memory of the many other devastating events in Jewish history. Strangely, it was on the ninth of Av that a number of these disastrous events took place, such as the loss of the last Jewish fortress to the Romans in the Bar Kochba Revolt and the 1492 banishment of the Jews from Spain.

Beginning three weeks prior to Tisha B'Av is a mourning period during which various activities are prohibited. On Tisha B'Av itself, many Orthodox and traditional Jews follow the same practices that they do on Yom Kippur. Among other things, for example, they do not eat, drink, bathe or wear leather shoes. For part of the day, they also adhere to some of the Jewish mourning rituals, such as sitting on low stools or on the floor. To commemorate the destruction of the Temples, congregations read from the Book of Lamentations.

The double loss of the Temple is viewed as traumatic in Jewish history because the Sanctuary was the most sacred place on earth, where Israel could come closest to the presence of G-d. Many Jews still pray for the rebuilding of the Temple and the spiritual transcendence that the Temple symbolizes.

For more information on Tisha B'Av, see <http://www.jewfaq.org/holidayd.htm> or <http://www.ou.org/yerushalayim/tishabav/>.