

A. What Happened On Tisha B'Av:

Five terrible things happened on Tisha B'av:

1. The decree that our forefathers would wander for forty years in the desert
2. The destruction of the 1st Temple
3. The destruction of the 2nd Temple
4. The fall of the Jewish rebel city of Betar (ending the great revolt against Rome in 135 CE) and
5. The plowing over with salt of the Temple grounds.

Over the course of Jewish history, other tragedies have occurred on this day, including Crusades, pogroms and the expulsion of Spanish Jewry in 1492.

B. The 5 Major Prohibitions Of Tisha B'av Are:

1. Eating and drinking in any quantity, including rinsing out the mouth
2. Bathing and washing (even just hands, beyond the knuckles)
3. Anointing (oil and cosmetics)
4. Wearing leather shoes
5. Having sexual relations, including any intimate contact.

***For those who are pregnant, nursing or ill, leniencies should be discussed with a rabbi.

C. What we do on Tisha B'av

- On Tisha B'av eve, we change into non-leather shoes and go to synagogue to hear the reading of the Scroll of Eicha (Lamentations), Jeremiah's harrowing account and lament over the destruction of the Temple. Its five chapters are sung in a heart-wrenching melody while seated on very low chairs, or the floor.
- On Tisha B'av morning, a special Torah portion is read (Deuteronomy 4:25-40), the prayer Nachem ("comfort us") is inserted in the amida (silent devotion), and the prayers are lengthened with lamentations and elegies. These cover the destruction of the Temples, but also many other tragedies, including the Holocaust and modern victims of terror.
- By the afternoon, we begin to lessen our mourning, by sitting on chairs and putting on the tefillin (phylacteries) for Mincha, the afternoon service.

D. Next Year in Jerusalem

The Talmud says that all those who mourn Jerusalem's destruction will merit to see her redemption and rebuilding. May God comfort us with a re-built Jerusalem, undivided and under Jewish control, at peace in the eyes of God and man.
Next Year in Jerusalem!!

E. End of Fast

- The fast ends at nightfall, when the stars come out. The custom is to sanctify the new moon (by saying a blessing while looking at it) and then to break the fast.
- Since the Temple continued to burn and be despoiled even after the ninth, we usually wait until mid-day of the tenth of Av (the day after) to go back to our normal routines regarding eating meat and wine, doing pleasurable activities, laundry and getting haircuts.

Do remember the past, but do not be held captive by it

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

“ALL Jews who are at all conscious of their identity as Jews are steeped in history,” wrote Isaiah Berlin. “They have longer memories, they are aware of a longer continuity as a community than any other which has survived.”

He was right. Judaism is a religion of memory. The verb *zakhor* appears no fewer than 169 times in the Hebrew Bible. “Remember that you were strangers in Egypt”; “Remember the days of old”; “Remember the seventh day to keep it holy”; Memory, for Jews, is a religious obligation.

This is particularly so at this time of the year. We call it the “three weeks” leading up to the saddest day in the Jewish calendar, the Ninth of Av, anniversary of the destruction of the two Temples, the first by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon in 586BC, the second by Titus in AD70.

Jews never forgot those tragedies. To this day, at every wedding we break a glass in their memory. During the three weeks, we have no celebrations. On the Ninth of Av itself, we spend the day fasting and sitting on the floor or low stools like mourners, reading the Book of Lamentations. It is a day of profound collective grief.

Two and a half thousand years is a long time to remember. Often I’m asked – usually in connection with the Holocaust – is it really right to remember? Should there not be a moratorium on grief? Are not most of the ethnic conflicts in the world fuelled by memories of perceived injustices long ago? Would not the world be more peaceable if once in a while we forgot? Yes and no. It depends on how we remember. My late predecessor, Lord Jakobovits, used to point out that three times in the Book Genesis God is spoken of as remembering. “God remembered Noah” and brought him out of the ark onto dry land. “God remembered Abraham” and saved his nephew Lot from the destruction of the cities of the plain. “God remembered Rachel” and gave her a child. When God remembers, he does so for the future and for life.

In fact, though the two are often confused, memory is different from history. History is someone else’s story. It’s about events that occurred long ago to someone else. Memory is my story. It’s about where I come from and of what narrative I am a part. History answers the question, “What happened?” Memory answers the question, “Who, then, am I?” It is about identity and the connection between the generations. In the case of collective memory, all depends on how we tell the story.

We don’t remember for the sake of revenge. “Do not hate the Egyptians,” said Moses, “for you were strangers in their land.” To be free, you have to let go of hate. Remember the past, says Moses, but do not be held captive by it. Turn it into a blessing, not a curse; a source of hope, not humiliation.

To this day, the Holocaust survivors I know spend their time sharing their memories with young people, not for the sake of revenge, but its opposite: to teach tolerance and the value of life.

Mindful of the lessons of Genesis, we too try to remember for the future and for life. In today’s fast-moving culture, we undervalue acts of remembering. Computer memories have grown, while ours have become foreshortened. Our children no longer memorise chunks of poetry. Their knowledge of history is often all too vague. Our sense of space has expanded. Our sense of time has shrunk.

That cannot be right. One of the greatest gifts we can give to our children is the knowledge of where we have come from, the things for which we fought, and why. None of the things we value – freedom, human dignity, justice – was achieved without a struggle. None can be sustained without conscious vigilance. A society without memory is like a journey without a map. It’s all too easy to get lost.

I, for one, cherish the richness of knowing that my life is a chapter in a book begun by my ancestors long ago, to which I will add my contribution before handing it on to my children. Life has meaning when it is part of a story, and the larger the story, the more our imaginative horizons grow. Besides, things remembered do not die. That’s as close as we get to immortality on earth. (First published in *The Times*)