



We All Turn Toward the Temple

Hadar Children and Families' Division

A Text Activity for 9 Av 5781

Tishah B'Av literally refers to the ninth day (*tishah*) in the Jewish month of Av. 9 Av marks the day upon which not only the First Temple but also the Second Temple was destroyed. The Temple stood in *Eretz Yisrael* (the land of Israel) in Jerusalem and almost 2000 years ago, it was the center of all Jewish life. Three times a year, on the pilgrimage holidays of Pesah, Shavuot, and Sukkot, the Jewish people would travel from wherever they lived in order to offer sacrifices at the Temple, to give gifts to God, in order to feel an extra closeness with God. The Temple was the place where all of the Jewish people could come together on these holidays as one big Jewish people and be united.

When the Temple was destroyed, the Jewish people no longer had a central place to gather and to worship God through giving sacrifices or gifts. Instead, they built synagogues in their own communities and had to find new ways to worship God. The rabbis invented a new way to be close to God, replacing the sacrifices or gift-giving of the Temple, with some of the same prayers we pray today.



Before reading the text below, think about the following questions:

- How do you think the Jewish people felt when the Temple was destroyed?
- Have you ever had something that was really important to you get lost or destroyed?
What was it? How did you feel?

The text below comes from the Talmud from Massekhet Berakhot. This Massekhet, whose name literally means blessings from the word *berakhah*, is all about prayers and blessings. It teaches that wherever we are, even today, thousands of years after the Temple was destroyed, we should still turn toward the place where the Temple once stood when we pray. If we're outside of the land of Israel, we should face Israel. If we're in Israel, we should face Jerusalem. If we're in Jerusalem, we should face the Temple. It doesn't matter where we are or how close we are to where the Temple once stood, we can always try to be closer in our hearts and minds.

Talmud Bavli Berakhot 30a	תלמוד בבלי ברכות ל.
<p>One who was standing in prayer outside of the land of Israel, should focus their heart toward Eretz Yisrael (the land of Israel), as it is stated: "And they shall pray to You by way of their land which You have given to their fathers" (I Kings 8:48).</p>	<p>הָיָה עוֹמֵד בְּחוּץ לְאֶרֶץ - יְכוּיֵן אֶת לְבוֹ כְּנֶגֶד אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל, שְׁנֹאמֵר: "וְהִתְפַּלְלוּ אֵלַי דְּרָךְ אֲרָצָם" (מלכים א ח:מח).</p>
<p>One who was standing in Eretz Yisrael, should focus their heart toward Jerusalem, as it is stated: "And they shall pray to the Lord by way of the city that You have chosen" (I Kings 8:44).</p>	<p>הָיָה עוֹמֵד בְּאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל - יְכוּיֵן אֶת לְבוֹ כְּנֶגֶד יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, שְׁנֹאמֵר: "וְהִתְפַּלְלוּ אֵל ה' דְּרָךְ הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר בְּחָרָתִי" (שם מד).</p>
<p>One who was standing in Jerusalem, should focus their heart toward the Temple, as it is stated: "And they shall pray toward</p>	<p>הָיָה עוֹמֵד בְּיְרוּשָׁלַיִם - יְכוּיֵן אֶת לְבוֹ כְּנֶגֶד בַּיִת הַמִּקְדָּשׁ, שְׁנֹאמֵר:</p>



<p>this house” (II Chronicles 6:32).</p> <p>One who was standing in the Temple, should focus their heart toward the Holy of Holies, as it is stated: “And they shall pray toward this place” (I Kings 8:35).</p> <p>One who was standing in the Holy of Holies, should focus their heart toward the place of the ark-cover, on top of the ark, the dwelling place of God’s glory.</p> <p>One who was standing behind the seat of the ark-cover, should imagine that they are standing before the ark-cover and turn toward it.</p> <p>Consequently, one standing in prayer in the East turns to face west, and one standing in the West, turns to face east. One standing in the South, turns to face north, and one standing in the North, turns to face south; all of the people of Israel find themselves focusing their hearts toward one place, the Holy of Holies in the Temple.</p>	<p>”וְהִתְפַּלְלוּ אֶל הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה” (דברי הימים ב ו:לב).</p> <p>הָיָה עוֹמֵד בְּבֵית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ - יְכוּיִן אֶת לְבוֹ כְּנֶגֶד בֵּית קִדְשֵׁי הַקִּדְשִׁים, שְׁנֵאמַר: ”וְהִתְפַּלְלוּ אֶל הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה” (מלכים א ח:לה).</p> <p>הָיָה עוֹמֵד בְּבֵית קִדְשֵׁי הַקִּדְשִׁים - יְכוּיִן אֶת לְבוֹ כְּנֶגֶד בֵּית הַכְּפֹרֶת.</p> <p>הָיָה עוֹמֵד אַחֲרֵי בֵּית הַכְּפֹרֶת - יִרְאֶה עֲצָמוֹ כְּאִילוֹ לִפְנֵי הַכְּפֹרֶת.</p> <p>נִמְצָא עוֹמֵד בְּמִזְרֵחַ מִחֲזִיר פְּנִי לְמַעֲרָב. בְּמַעֲרָב מִחֲזִיר פְּנִי לְמִזְרָח. בְּדָרוֹם - מִחֲזִיר פְּנִי לְצָפוֹן. בְּצָפוֹן - מִחֲזִיר פְּנִי לְדָרוֹם. נִמְצָאוּ כָל יִשְׂרָאֵל מְכוּוְנִין אֶת לְבָם לְמָקוֹם אֶחָד.</p>
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The Talmud teaches that wherever one is standing to pray, one should turn themselves so that they are facing the place where the Temple once stood in Jerusalem. If a person is West of where the Temple once stood, like in the United States, then that person should face East toward the Temple. If the person is East of the Temple, like in Russia, the person should turn and face West.

It’s as if we are all standing in a circle, facing a point inside the circle, and that point inside the circle is where the Temple once stood.



Now, imagine a map. Imagine that everyone around the whole world, no matter where they are on the map, is praying and facing toward the same place in Jerusalem where the Temple once stood.

Think about these questions:

- How do you think it feels to stand and all face toward the same place when we pray?
Why do you think that's important?
- When you think of the place where the Temple once stood, what do you imagine? How do you feel?

Draw a picture or build something that shows people praying together and facing toward the place where the Temple once stood.

